

DOUBLE BLIND TEST

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FADE IN:

INT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

A GATE AGENT, a short, sturdy black woman, stands behind a bulky airline counter scanning the floor for stragglers, one of whom is FISCHER, an dumpy, ordinary-looking man in his 40s. A few PASSENGERS on standby nag around anxiously. The Gate Agent makes an announcement over the intercom.

GATE AGENT

(Into microphone)

This will serve as the final boarding call for Delta flight 701, nonstop to Los Angeles, departing at seven o'clock from Gate B20. All ticketed passengers should proceed at once to the gate.

The moment the Gate Agent takes her thumb off the mic, TRACY gets in her face. Tracy is a tall, professional-looking woman in her 40s. She wears a stylish black suit cut above the knee and expensive heels that show off her toned legs.

TRACY

Listen. You've got to let me on that flight. I absolutely have to be in LA by noon. I'm mediating a dispute--

The Gate Agent turns away.

GATE AGENT

(Flatly)

--Impossible.

TRACY

I know you're deadheading at least one stewardess. Give me her seat and send her on the next flight.

GATE AGENT

We don't call them "stewardesses" anymore. They're 'flight attendants' now. Don't you know that?

Tracy glowers at the Gate Agent. Before tempers flare out of proportion, Fischer steps up to the counter. In her heels, Tracy towers over him.

FISCHER

I don't mean to butt in, but I couldn't help overhearing your predicament, ma'am. I'd be happy to trade my seat with you for one on the next flight. I'm in no hurry.

TRACY

Really? Oh, my. That's very generous of you sir, but I wouldn't want you to miss your flight.

Tracy's expression makes it clear she intends to accept the offer. The Gate Agent shakes her head in resignation.

FISCHER

It really is no trouble, ma'am, no troub--

Tracy extends her hand which Fischer shakes.

TRACY

--Tracy Shepard. Please, call me Tracy.

FISCHER

OK, Tracy. No trouble at all. I'm very familiar with deadlines and business commitments and all that stuff. Don't think twice about it. Take my place.

TRACY

Why, I can't thank you enough, Mr.--

FISCHER

--Cuttbate, Fischer Cuttbate. I go by Fish.

TRACY

Really? Fish? I mean, thank you so much... Fish.

Exuding a tiny bit of smugness Tracy turns toward the Gate Agent who hands over a boarding pass. Tracy walks to the jetway and just before disappearing waves to Fischer. Fischer waves back and walks to an airport bar.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/LA - DAY

Two groups of BUSINESSMEN mill around on opposite sides of a long conference table, talking, drinking coffee, eating bagels and donuts. Occasionally members of one group look with contempt at their counterparts across the table. Tracy stands at the head of the conference table, checking her watch. RON, a big man with acromegaly approaches Tracy.

RON

Ms. Shepard? I'm Ron Subytic, CFO for NanoNano. We're glad you could make it out here on time.

TRACY

So am I. I almost missed the flight.

RON

That's what I heard.

TRACY

You did?

MATT, late-20s, handsome, stylish haircut, elegantly casual clothes, steps in.

MATT

Hi. Matt Blankenschein. CEO and founder of NanoNano. Can we get started?

TRACY

Let's go.

MATT

OK, everyone. Take a seat and try not to spit on each other, huh? You all know why we're here. This is Tracy Shepard. She's going to mediate this dispute between our companies. I'm Matt Blankenschein of NanoNano and this fine gentleman...

Matt gestures to FOGLE, a 60-year-old with a comb-over.

MATT (CONT'D)

... is Sumner Fogle, Chief of PicoTech.

FOGLE nods to the rest of the Businessmen.

MATT (CONT'D)

You wanna say anything, Sumner?

FOGLE

Just this: Can we stop fucking around and get on with business?

TRACY

OK. Thanks for that input, Mr. Fogle. Gentlemen, you own 65 percent of the nanotechnology market. Congratulations. Of course, you want more. You deserve more. Greed is good, right? That's what they say in the movies.

(beat)

Let me tell you something: lust is better. Greed clarifies, but lust compels. The greedy die with the gout, the lustful go out in the saddle. While you all sit in this stuffy conference room, enjoying artisan bagels and fair-trade coffee, your competition - however meager - is chasing after your clients with a veiny hard-on. Lusting for your business. It's insidious.

The Businessmen look around at each other uncomfortably. Did she just say "veiny hard-on"?

TRACY (CONT'D)

The world of nanotechnology is moving fast. You're slouching toward extinction as long as you continue to lock heads over patent violations, employee poaching and slimy marketing campaigns.

FOGLE

(Points at Matt)

So you know, it was NanoNano that escalated this when they hacked into our database and stole the design specs--

BUSINESSMAN #1

--That's bullshit and you know it! One of your disgruntled employees posted that stuff on Slashdot--

TRACY

--Come now, gentlemen, that's not how you're going to resolve--

BUSINESSMAN #1

--Yeah!? And what do you propose, Mrs. Mediator?

TRACY

Well, I could ask all of you to lay your cocks on the table and I'll choose the winner with a ruler... or you can shut up for a nanosecond and let me outline a plan that no one will like but no one will completely despise either.

Tracy scans the Businessmen sternly, leaning forward supported by both hands on the table. The Businessmen sit back ready to hear the proposal.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Good. Now let's look at the net present value of the damage each of you will inflict on each other absent a resolution.

Tracy presses a button, projecting a graph on a screen.

TRACY (CONT'D)

The y-axis is in millions of dollars.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/LA - DAY (LATER)

SERIES OF SHOTS - ACTION IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM

- A) Tracy lecturing vigorously
- B) Businessmen arguing across the table
- C) Tracy balling out a Businessman
- D) Ron separating jostling Businessmen
- E) Businessmen listening politely to Tracy
- F) Matt and Arthur conversing privately in a corner

FADE OUT.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/LA - DAY (LATER)

Tracy sits near Matt who secretively ogles her feet. Fogle fiddles with a pen.

TRACY

It all comes down to NanoNano licensing a couple patents as penance for...

(Quotes with fingers)

... "borrowing" the design specs from PicoTech. And I mean borrowing. No more talk about stealing.

Matt rises.

MATT

Listen. It's been a very long day. What's a couple patents between enemies. I'm not going to speak for Sumner, but he and I--

FOGLE

--You're gonna speak for me anyway, aren't you Blankenshein?

MATT

Me and Sumner are copacetic - right Sunny?

(beat)

Right?

FOGLE

Shit. Yeah. Copa-fucking-cetic.

TRACY

Fantastic. Shake on it.

After the two exchange a perfunctory handshake, Fogle retreats to his team of Businessmen. Matt lingers by Tracy.

MATT

Impressive, Ms. Shepard. Tracy. You've got quite a pair for a lady.

TRACY

Well, thank you. I guess.

MATT

If someone had told me yesterday that today I'd be shaking hands with that mick leprechaun, I'd've shit in his hat.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

But it's a good deal. Hell, I'm glad the whole fucking thing is finally over.

TRACY

I'm glad you're glad, Mr. Blankenshein.

MATT

Matt - call me Matt.

TRACY

Matt.

MATT

Yeah, I'm glad this stupid dispute is finally over. Now we can proceed to Defcon One - nuclear winter for PicoTech. What's next for you, Tracy?

TRACY

Me? Go back to the hotel. Shower off the coating of testosterone. Have a cocktail by the pool.

MATT

No, I meant--

TRACY

--My next mediation? As I recall, it's a dispute over oil leases in Texas. Someone probably laid pipe where they shouldn't have.

Matt grins.

EXT. FANCY LA HOTEL - NIGHT

Casually dressed, Tracy lounges by a lighted pool as tony-types swim and carouse. At a cabana nearby, FAMOUS MOVIE PEOPLE argue over the terms of a movie contract. Tracy smiles and shakes her head at another looming disagreement needing a resolution.

INT. JET - DAY

Tracy walks onto the Jet looking sharp and confident. A slouching, rumped-looking Fischer sits in the aisle seat of row 2 reading a newspaper.

TRACY

Fisch...er? Is that you?

Fischer is surprised and happy to see Tracy. He folds his newspaper and straightens up.

FISCHER

Well, good morning, Tracy. How are you? Did you make it to your meeting on time the other day?

Fischer stands to let Tracy pass in front of him. Her sexy ass rubs the front of his pants.

FISCHER (CONT'D)

(Sniffing)

Uh... Van Cleef and Arpels?

TRACY

That's right. You have a good nose.

Tracy takes her set by the window.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I can't thank you enough for giving up your seat for me. You're a true gentleman, Fischer. A white knight. I wish I could make it up to you.

FISCHER

Think nothing of it. My meeting with the venture capitalists wasn't until the next day. And please, call me Fish.

TRACY

OK, Fish.

Tracy kicks off her designer shoes. Fischer notes the fine definition of her feet.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You know, Fish, I travel all over the country for my business, and that was the first time they ever threatened to bump me. The other day though, my limo driver overslept and I got to the airport just a few minutes before the flight took off.

(beat)

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I didn't want you to think I'm a scatterbrain. I'm not.

FISCHER

Hey, it can happen to anyone, Tracy. Bottom line: you got on the plane and made your meeting. Someone else might've caved in and gone on standby - or worse, gone home and cried about it. Your perseverance paid off.

Tracy smiles in appreciation for the compliment.

INT. JET - DAY (LATER)

Tracy listens to music. Fischer reads "A Life Decoded."  
Tracy studies the book cover, then pulls out the earbuds.

TRACY

You had a meeting with venture capitalists? What sort of business are you in, Fischer?

Fischer puts down the book.

FISCHER

I co-own a biotech firm with my twin brother Fletcher. RodCone Laboratories. I'm sure you've never heard of it.

Tracy shakes her head.

FISCHER (CONT'D)

We're developing a therapy for a rare ophthalmologic affliction, and so far all the preliminary test results are encouraging.

Fischer retrieves a business card and hands it to Tracy.

FISCHER (CONT'D)

We're about ready to start clinical trials. That's when the serious financing is critical, hence my meeting with the VCs.

TRACY

What's the rare eye affliction?

FISCHER

Retinitis pigmentosa.

TRACY

My God!

FISCHER

It's a type of progressive retinal dystrophy, a genetic disease. It starts with tunnel vision and usually leads to total blindness.

TRACY

Yes! My father suffers from RP. He's essentially blind now. Poor man. He used to teach at Columbia. Physics. But now...

Tracy turns away to look out the window for a moment.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I'm excited you're working on an RP cure. Tell me - what kind of results have you seen so far?

FISCHER

Well, first off, it's not a cure. It's a therapy. Patients have to take a pill every day to improve and maintain their vision. But back to your question: the results have been remarkable. In recent animal tests we've seen 75 percent regeneration of retinal cells.

TRACY

That sounds impressive. So what did the VCs say, Fish? When will you start the clinical trials?

FISCHER

That's the problem. You see, my brother Fletch doesn't want to bring new investors into the business. He's worried they'll take over the operations and interfere with the research.

TRACY

Jesus.

FISCHER

He means well I suppose, but he has no concept of what it takes to launch a new drug into the market. The VCs are hot for the project, but Fletch won't budge.

(MORE)

FISCHER (CONT'D)

And without the outside funding,  
we're stuck.

TRACY

Why don't you bring the VCs on  
board anyway? You know, go around  
your brother.

FISCHER

Fletch and I inherited the business  
from our father. We each own  
exactly 50 percent of the shares.  
I can't make a major decision like  
bringing new investors in without  
Fletch's vote. The bylaws of the  
corporation are quite clear on that  
point.

TRACY

I see.

FISCHER

What really pisses me off - excuse  
me - what irritates me most is that  
Fletch is completely hands-off. He  
never involves himself in the day-  
to-day operations. I haven't even  
seen him in three months.

A moment of silence as Fischer sulks and Tracy mulls the  
possibilities.

TRACY

Y'know, Fish, I'm a professional  
mediator. A pretty good one at  
that. I help resolve differences  
for a living. Perhaps I could be  
of assistance in getting your  
brother to change his mind. I  
really would hate for progress on  
your new drug to grind to a halt.

(beat)

Besides, I owe you one for giving  
up your seat the other day.

FISCHER

Really, Tracy, you don't owe--

TRACY

--I want to help Fischer. I really  
do. My father... Let me help you  
on this.

FISCHER  
Well, OK.

TRACY  
Perfect.

FISCHER  
I bet top mediators like you charge more than the value of a first class seat. Let me at least pay you something.

TRACY  
That's not--

FISCHER  
--I insist.

TRACY  
Well, if you insist. Let's say... a thousand dollars?

FISCHER  
Deal!

TRACY  
My favorite word.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Fischer stands on line waiting for a taxi. Tracy struts out of the airport pulling a stylish suitcase and heads directly for her limo where a Middle Eastern-looking DRIVER stands by the open back door. He takes the suitcase to the trunk. Fischer jumps out of the line and runs to Tracy just as she steps into the back seat.

FISCHER  
Tracy!

TRACY  
(Startled)  
Fish?

FISCHER  
I was wondering, Tracy, if you'd like to hear a presentation on the eye drug. I'd be happy to tell you all about it. Interested?

TRACY  
Sure. That'd be great.

FISCHER  
 Alright. I'll set it up.

The Limo drives off into a sea of yellow cabs.

INT. LIMO (TRAVELING) - DAY

Relaxed in the back seat, Tracy is on the phone.

TRACY  
 (Into phone)  
 Midland, Texas? OK. Not next  
 week, I have that other thing.  
 (beat)  
 Shale oil? Alright. Pull the base  
 research. What else, Carla?  
 (beat)  
 Woody Johnson? What's that? A  
 brand of dildo?

Tracy chuckles, and cups her hand over the phone. She calls  
 to her Driver.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 Yusef, take the Whitestone.  
 (Into phone)  
 Oh, he's the owner of the Jets?  
 Player contract issue, right? OK.  
 Did you tell my father I'm coming  
 over?  
 (beat)  
 Good. I'll call in later, Carla.

EXT. WHITESTONE BRIDGE - DAY

Tracy's Limo crosses the bridge.

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Tracy's Limo pulls to the curb in front of the Brownstone  
 where her father CHARLES lives. The Driver opens the door  
 and she proceeds up the steps to the door. Tracy reaches in  
 her purse, pulls out some keys, unlocks the door and enters.

INT. BROWNSTONE/KITCHEN - DAY

Tracy walks in and places her purse on the kitchen counter.

TRACY  
 Dad? It's me. Where are you?

O.S. a toilet flushes followed by the SOUND of water running then a thump of an object falling on the floor.

CHARLES (O.S.)

Damn it!

TRACY

Dad? Are you alright?

INT. BROWNSTONE/BATHROOM - DAY

Charles stands at an old-fashioned pedestal sink gripping it with both hands for support. He is frail-looking and wears a belt and suspenders. His blind eyes wander.

CHARLES

Tracy Rae? I'm in here. I dropped the soap. Can you help me find it?

Tracy enters the Bathroom, locates the soap, rinses it off and places it in Charles's palm.

TRACY

I'll be in the living room. Do you want anything from the kitchen?

CHARLES

How about some juice? I'll be out in a jiff.

Tracy rubs Charles's shoulder and pecks him on the cheek.

INT. BROWNSTONE/KITCHEN - DAY

Tracy roots around in the refrigerator and pulls out a quart of milk. She sniffs it and recoils. Tracy dumps the lumpy contents down the sink and reaches into a drawer for a towel. Hidden under the towel is a semi-automatic pistol. Charles feels his way into the kitchen, running his hands along the wall.

CHARLES

What a pleasant surprise. What's new, Tracy Rae?

Tracy quickly stows the pistol in her purse, then takes Charles by the arm and leads him out.

TRACY

Nothing special, Dad.

INT. BROWNSTONE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charles grabs at the air around him until he latches onto the arms of his chair. He sits down with an audible sigh. Tracy takes a seat nearby.

TRACY

Well, maybe one thing. I had a conversation with the owner of a lab here in the City. He's working on a cure - I mean a therapy - for retinitis.

Charles jerks his head from side to side like a lizard, attempting to pinpoint his daughter's exact whereabouts.

CHARLES

Really!? That's fantastic! When will it be available?

TRACY

They're almost ready to go to clinical trial, but they need a cash infusion. The owner wants to bring some venture capitalists in, but his brother doesn't want to. Right now they're stuck.

CHARLES

Hell, Tracy. You're a mediator. Get them to agree.

TRACY

That's what I hope to do. I'm going to Jersey tomorrow to meet with the brother.

CHARLES

Tell them I'll be a volunteer. Tell them that, will you?

TRACY

Okay, Dad. But it's still experim--

CHARLES

--I have to have hope, Tracy. It's been four years since I've read a book, or seen your face. Please, try to get them to agree.

TRACY

Sure, Dad.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING/LOBBY - DAY

The Lobby of the Office Building is dusty, cramped, poorly lit space. A doorman's desk sits against the wall unattended. Tracy scans the environs then steps up to a glass case displaying the names of various businesses that occupy the building. She spots the entry "RodC ne Labs - Suite 212."

EXT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Tracy stands outside a plain door with the number 212 stencilled on it. She presses a button and is buzzed in.

INT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Tracy walks into Suite 212 which is occupied by a few WORKERS who sit at steel desks arranged in a row. One Worker heads to a copying machine. A RECEPTIONIST stands and greets Tracy.

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Shepard? Mr. Cuttbate is expecting you. Can I get you something to drink?

TRACY

Nothing, thanks.

The Receptionist leads Tracy toward the Suite 212 Conference Room. She glances down at Tracy's shoes.

RECEPTIONIST

I love your shoes, Ms. Shepard. Blahniks?

TRACY

Christian Louboutin.

The Receptionist nods, impressed.

INT. SUITE 212/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Receptionist escorts Tracy into the Suite 212 Conference Room. Three men who are seated at the long conference table stand up to greet Tracy. They are Fischer, KNECHT and TORRENT. Knecht, RodCone's business director is mid-30s, dressed in a dark business suit and tie. Sixty-something Torrent, the chief scientist, wears a white lab coat over a shirt and tie. Fischer greets Tracy as the Receptionist leaves.

FISCHER

Tracy. I'm glad you could make it.  
Please, sit down. Can I get you  
something?

TRACY

No thanks, Fischer. I'm good.

Fischer leads Tracy to a seat at the table. He sits next to her; Knecht sits across the table. Torrent stands awkwardly at a lectern.

FISCHER

Tracy Shepard. Let me introduce  
you to my business director, Chad  
Knecht.

Fischer pronounces it "Connect." Knecht reaches across the table and shakes Tracy's hand.

KNECHT

Nice to meet you, Ms. Shepard.

TRACY

Same here.

FISCHER

And our chief scientist, Dr. James  
Torrent.

Torrent nods from the lectern.

FISCHER (CONT'D)

OK, Tracy. I know you're busy, so  
we won't waste any time. Jim there  
will give you a high-level overview  
of our research. I think you'll be  
impressed.

TRACY

I hope so.

FISCHER

Yes... And then when you meet with  
Fletcher, you'll be fully prepared.

(beat)

OK, Jim. Take it away.

Torrent presses a button on the lectern causing the lights to dim. A gruesome picture of a needle piercing an eyeball appears on the screen. Tracy recoils in disgust.

TORRENT

This is how some researchers have tried to cure retinitis pigmentosa, Ms. Shepard. Barbaric, wouldn't you say?

TRACY

(Grimacing)

Good lord.

TORRENT

We're working on a better way. A therapy. A pill patients will take every day to gradually improve their vision. Here's what we're doing.

Torrent clicks a button and a ball-and-stick model of a molecule appears on the screen.

TORRENT (CONT'D)

This is a protein called rhodopsin.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUITE 212/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (LATER)

A large question mark is projected on the screen. Torrent raises the lights.

TORRENT

Any questions, Ms. Shepard?

TRACY

I don't know. I guess not. That was pretty technical, but I think I got the basics. Really remarkable.

FISCHER

It's expensive work, Tracy. We really need to get Fletch on board with the VCs, Tracy. I hope you can use your mediation magic on him - although I wouldn't blame you if you didn't get through to him. It wouldn't surprise me if he refuses to see you.

TRACY

Would it surprise you if Fletcher already agreed to meet with me?

FISCHER

You mean he--

TRACY

--I'm taking the train to Hamilton Square tomorrow morning.

FISCHER

Wow. You're good.

Tracy smiles, pleased to receive Fischer's praise. She stands up, followed by Fischer and Knecht, and heads for the door. Just before exiting Knecht intercepts her.

KNECHT

Thank you for coming by today, Ms. Shepard. I'll email you a copy of Dr. Torrent's presentation.

FISCHER

Let me know how you make out, Tracy.

TRACY

I certainly will. Bye bye.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy walks into her spacious apartment on Sutton Place with a handsome view of the Queensborough Bridge. An original Kandinsky painting hangs on the wall. Tracy checks some mail, tossing envelopes into a bowl on the table beneath the Kandinsky.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Tracy sheds her clothing. She puts her expensive shoes into a slot in her closet which contains 100 pairs.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - DAY

Tracy lounges in a luxurious bath.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Wearing a terrycloth robe, her hair wrapped with a towel, Tracy reaches into a dresser drawer, gingerly removes her father's pistol by the grip and carefully looks it over.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

With the pistol atop her desk Tracy sits in front of her laptop typing.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - GOOGLE SEARCH BAR

Into which she types "how to disarm a pistol"

BACK TO SCENE

Tracy studies the laptop screen, clicks on a website and reads the instructions. Holding the pistol at arm's length while pointing it at the floor she turns her head to the side and presses a button causing the magazine to pop out and fall to the floor. Shaking her head sadly, she picks up the magazine and puts it and the pistol into her drawer.

She returns her attention to the laptop.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - EMAIL PROGRAM

Where a long list of emails await her attention, among them one from Chad Knecht titled "RodCone Presentation."

BACK TO SCENE

Tracy prints out the document. As pages spit forth from the printer, Tracy continues working on the laptop.

EXT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW/PORCH - DAY

Toting a rich-looking alligator briefcase, Tracy rings the doorbell. After a moment during which Tracy paces the porch, FLETCHER opens the door. He holds a telephone to his ear. Fletcher's dirty blonde hair is combed straight back, and he sports huge, boxy eyeglasses. Tracy extends her hand.

TRACY

Good afternoon, Mr.--

FLETCHER

--You're early. Wait here until I'm done with my call.

Fletcher closes the door. Tracy does a double-take, then sits on a hard, cast-iron chair.

EXT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW/PORCH - DAY (LATER)

Tracy paces the porch, checks her watch, and just as she's about to leave, Fletcher opens the door. Tracy turns around and steps up.

FLETCHER

I'm ready now, Mrs. Shepard.

TRACY

Ms. Shepard. Ms. Tracy Shepard.  
How do you do, Mr. Cuttbate?

Tracy extends her hand again. Fletcher hesitates, then belated shakes it.

FLETCHER

How do you do, Ms. Shepard?

Fletcher turns and Tracy follows him in.

INT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Fletcher's Bungalow is cluttered with books and magazines, computer equipment, an electric guitar, and an easel propping up a painting of a surgical-like image vaguely reminiscent of Frida Kahlo's pain-filled self-portraits. Tracy examines the surroundings.

TRACY

What a pleasant house you have here, Mr. Cuttbate. Very cozy.

FLETCHER

No, it's not. But it's all I can afford.

(beat)

Have a seat.

Tracy looks around for the least-grungy chair and sits down, placing her briefcase on the floor. Fletcher plops into an overstuffed divan.

TRACY

I saw a very interesting presentation about your company's drug the other day. It seems like it could be revolutionary. But I'm just a layperson. What's your assessment?

FLETCHER

It has its pluses and minuses.

TRACY  
Are you confident that it's ready  
for clinical trial?

FLETCHER  
Maybe.

SOUND - TELEPHONE RINGING O.S.

Fletcher rises and exits.

TRACY  
(Sotto voce)  
Good Lord, what a stiff.

Tracy wanders around the room, picking up some magazines on the coffee table. She runs her fingers across the strings of Fletcher's electric guitar. Fletcher returns, startling Tracy.

FLETCHER  
Sorry about that. Where were we?

TRACY  
Oh... Uh...

Fletcher and Tracy return to their seats.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
I think we were talking about...  
the drug. Is it ready to be  
tested, in your opinion?

FLETCHER  
Possibly.

TRACY  
Look, Mr. Cuttbate. I only came--

FLETCHER  
--Why did you come here? Why do  
you care so much about this? Does  
someone you know have retinitis or  
something?

TRACY  
(Angrily)  
Yes, as a matter of fact. Someone  
I love very much - my poor father -  
suffers from this hideous disease.  
(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

And it disturbs me that a promising drug won't see the light of day just because you can't come to terms on something as mundane as financing. It's a goddamned shame.

Tracy stands abruptly and reaches for her briefcase. Fletcher's imperious demeanor melts into one of a chastened boy.

FLETCHER

Wait. Please don't go, Ms. Shep... Tracy. I... I'm really sorry for acting like a jerk. I mean it... sincerely. Please, sit down. Fischer didn't tell me your father has retinitis.

Fletcher's voice cracks.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Can he... see at all?

Tracy shakes her head imperceptibly.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry to hear that. Please, Tracy. Don't leave.

Tracy sits back down slowly.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Can I get you something to drink?

INT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW - DAY (LATER)

Tracy sits next to Fletcher on the divan sipping lemonade from a glass. A notebook full of mathematical equations and scribbles sits open on the coffee table, along with a pitcher of lemonade and a bowl of potato chips.

FLETCHER

I suppose Jim Torrent told you all about the wonderful therapy he's working on. His daily regimen?

TRACY

Mmm-hmm. I received a copy of his presentation yesterday.

Tracy points to her briefcase.

FLETCHER

A therapy, not a cure. Kind of like blood pressure medicine, or Somavert - you have to take it every day for the rest of your life. And if you stop, you regress. You know what I mean?

TRACY

I understand.  
(beat)  
What's Somavert?

FLETCHER

Uh, it's, uh, a treatment for acromegaly. Anyway, what would you say if I told you I'm working on an actual cure for retinitis?

Fletcher taps the notebook proudly.

TRACY

Really!? That's fantastic.

FLETCHER

Not according to Fischer. You see, a life-long therapy stands to make a hell of lot more money than a one-time cure. He and Torrent and Chad Disconnect don't want to sell a cure. Not good business.

TRACY

But--

FLETCHER

--I'm against Fischer's plan to bring in the venture capitalists because they don't care about cures and quality of life and all that shit... excuse me. They just want to hijack the whole operation. It's only about the money to them.

TRACY

Hmmm. I can see your point. How far along are you with your cure?

Fletcher looks down at his hands sheepishly.

FLETCHER

Well, uh, it's in the early study phase. Not too far along, actually.

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(beat)

If I could only get the money to take it all to the next level... I wish I was good with business like my brother.

(beat)

Fischer never let's me see any of the finances. For all I know, he's planning to cut me out of the action if his drug gets approved and RodCone Labs goes public.

TRACY

Do you really think that's a possibility?

FLETCHER

I wouldn't put it past him.

TRACY

That's a pretty seri--

--Listen, Tracy. I behaved like a boor earlier because I thought you were another one of Fischer's mind-games. But I know now you're here because you're genuinely interested in a cure for this ugly disease. More lemonade?

TRACY

Sure.

Fletcher pours some lemonade into Tracy's glass. Tracy snacks on a few potato chips.

FLETCHER

It was nice of you to come all the way out here. I thought it would be a waste of time, but if you could convince Fish I'm serious, that might do some good.

TRACY

I'll be glad to let him know.

FLETCHER

Uh, Tracy, don't tell Fischer about what I said about him cutting me out of the action.

TRACY

Of course not.

FLETCHER

I shouldn't have said that. And don't tell him about my cure. It's too soon for that, OK?

TRACY

If you say so. It's important that my clients trust me.

FLETCHER

I trust you, Tracy.

TRACY

Well, thank you.

(beat)

Do you play the guitar, Fletch?

FLETCHER

Yeah, a little. Well actually, I've been playing since I was about nine. I bought that Fender 20 years ago at an auction - it's the same kind that Keith Richards plays. 1955 Telecaster.

Fletcher walks to the guitar sitting on a stand. He turns on the amp and plugs in the cord which emits a SCREECH. Tracy looks on with concern that he might actually start playing.

TRACY

I really should get--

Fletcher faithfully plays the first bars of "Honky Tonk Women." Tracy nods, impressed.

FLETCHER

Who's your favorite rock star, Tracy?

TRACY

Geez. That's tough. I was a big Bowie fan as a kid, Ziggy Stardust period.

Fletcher plays the opening chords of "Moonage Daydream."

FLETCHER

(Singing)

I'm an alligator. I'm a mama-papa coming for you.

Fletcher nods to Tracy who hesitates at first then blurts out the next lyric.

TRACY

(Singing)

I'm a space invader, I'll be a rock-  
n-rollin' bitch for you.

Fletcher nods encouragingly.

FLETCHER

(Singing)

Keep your mouth shut, you're  
squawking like a pink monkey bird.  
And I'm busting up my brains for  
the words. Keep your 'lectric eye  
on me babe. Put your ray gun to my  
head. Press your space face close  
to mine, love. Freak out in a  
moonage daydream!

Tracy laughs with pleasure and applauds.

TRACY

Wow, Fletch. You're really good.  
Do you play in a band?

FLETCHER

Not anymore. No time.

Tracy reaches for the glass of lemonade, just as a car horn  
HONKS O.S. She glances at her watch and bolts upright.

TRACY

Shit! The train back to the City  
leaves in 20 minutes. I'm sorry,  
Fletch, I've got to go. I enjoyed  
spending the afternoon with you.

Fletcher places the guitar on the stand.

FLETCHER

Me too. I'm glad it turned out  
better than it began.

Fletcher escorts Tracy to the door.

EXT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW/PORCH - DAY

Fletcher shakes Tracy's hand.

FLETCHER

Have a good trip back, Tracy.

TRACY

Thanks, Fletch. I will.

Fletcher watches Tracy walk to a cab waiting at the curb. He continues to watch as the cab drives down the lane and out of sight, then he turns and walks back inside, singing to himself.

FLETCHER  
(Singing)  
Don't fake it baby. Lay the real  
thing on me.

INT. TRAIN (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy sits in a plush, first class seat reading Fortune Magazine as the train lumbers along. She puts down the magazine, retrieves the printout of RodCone Labs's presentation and thumbs through the material until she reaches a page with a big question mark like the one at the end of Torrent's pitch. Tracy discovers several additional pages marked "Confidential" that contain business spreadsheets.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy sits at her desk, poring through the business spreadsheets and consulting her laptop. She sits back and shakes her head.

TRACY  
Goddamn. Fletcher was right.  
RodCone Labs is cooking the books.

Tracy's laptop makes a "ping" SOUND grabbing her attention. She sees an email has arrived from Knecht.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - EMAIL

Which reads "Dear Ms. Shepard, I accidentally sent you the wrong file yesterday. Please discard it and replace it with the correct version which I have attached. Let me know if you have any questions. Sincerely, Chad Knecht."

BACK TO SCENE

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Sure thing, Mr. Disconnect.

INT. GOTHAM BAR AND GRILL - DAY

The MAITRE'D escorts the odd couple to a table in the back. He holds the chair for Tracy while casting a disapproving look toward Fletcher. He presents menus and leaves.

FLETCHER

I'm sure you already guessed this, but I'm not used to going to nice restaurants, especially not with a well-dressed beautiful woman. I hope I'm not embarrassing you too much, Tracy.

Tracy rolls her eyes as if it's the most ridiculous thing she's ever heard.

TRACY

Oh, Fletch. I'm just glad you could make it on such short notice. I really thought it necessary to meet with you right away. It's about the financials of RodCone Labs.

A WAITER steps brightly to the table. Fletcher picks up the menu.

WAITER

Pardon me, madame, sir. Would you care for sparkling, still or tap?

Tracy looks to Fletcher for a response but he is engrossed in the menu.

TRACY

Still, please.

FLETCHER

What's CON-fit?

WAITER

Cone-FEE, sir, is the French method of preparing salted duck legs in rendered fat.

Fletcher snaps the menu shut.

FLETCHER

Sounds good, that's what I'll have. Tracy, what about you?

Unprepared to order so quickly, Tracy fumbles with the menu.

TRACY

I'll have the... uh, tuna, medium rare.

WAITER

Very good, madame, sir.

The Waiter leaves with the menus.

FLETCHER

What is it you wanted to tell me,  
Tracy? I assume it must be  
something bad.

Tracy pulls the RodCone presentation from her purse and lays  
it out on the table. Fletcher cranes his neck to view them.

TRACY

Chad Knecht mistakenly emailed me  
these confidential spreadsheets.

FLETCHER

Jesus, what is all this stuff?  
What does it mean?

Tracy points to a chart with a butter knife.

TRACY

In this column are actual expenses,  
and the one next to it seems to  
contain fabricated expenses. And  
these figures here are used to  
calculate a phony I.R.R.

FLETCHER

I.R.R.?

TRACY

Internal rate of return? It's kind  
of like N.P.V... uh, net present  
value--

FLETCHER

--How do you know about all this  
gorp?

TRACY

Um, I have an MBA. I worked at  
Salomon Brothers before I started  
my own mediation firm.

FLETCHER

MBA, huh? I'm impressed. Where  
from?

TRACY

Uh, Columbia. My father was a  
physics professor there.

(beat)

Aren't you concerned about the  
situation at your company?

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

What Fischer might be involved in?  
It could amount to serious fraud,  
Fletch. What are you going to do?

The Waiter arrives with the food.

FLETCHER

What am I going to do? Eat lunch  
with you, of course.

TRACY

Seriously, Fletch. I'm concerned  
for the cure... and for you too,  
of course. Maybe you should hire a  
forensic accountant before the  
whole enterprise folds up and you  
lose everything.

The Waiter places the food on the table, offers fresh ground  
pepper, and retreats.

FLETCHER

You're right. I'll call my lawyer.  
I sure hope Fischer's not involved.  
That would disappoint me... but  
not really come as a surprise.

Fletcher hacks at the duck leg. Tracy places a luscious  
piece of fatty tuna into her mouth.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

When I was a little boy, my mother -  
rest her soul - told me I was the  
first to be born. She told me when  
I was born Fischer was holding my  
heel. I think that says it all.

Tracy tilts her head like she doesn't understand.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Jacob and Esau? Genesis, chapter  
25? Nevermind.

Tracy and Fletcher eat quietly for a moment

TRACY

I couldn't help noticing the  
painting in your den, Fletch. It  
kind of reminds me of Frida Kahlo's  
work. Did you paint it?

FLETCHER

Yeah. I know it looks like I copied her style, because I did. After Mama went blind--

TRACY

--Your mother was blind?

FLETCHER

Yeah. Glaucoma. Anyway, I acquired a greater appreciation for the pain of blindness. That's what I was trying to capture on the canvas.

(beat)

I bet you know a lot about art, Tracy. Do you have a favorite artist?

TRACY

I guess I would say... Wassily Kandinsky.

FLETCHER

Who?

TRACY

Uh, Kandinsky? He was a Russian artist. I have one of his Bauhaus paintings.

Tracy sips her water, trying not to come off as an art snob.

FLETCHER

Kandinsky? I'm going to look him up. Is that with a "C"?

TRACY

"K".

FLETCHER

Maybe I can see it sometime.

TRACY

Uh, sure. Maybe. Sometime.

FADE OUT.

EXT. MIDLAND BUILDING - DAY

Smoking a cigarette, Tracy talks on a cell phone while standing in the shade of a lone tree on the sidewalk outside a large office building in Midland, Texas. She fans herself with a folder.

TRACY

(Into phone)

I'm still waiting for those 1990s gas-well leases.

(beat)

Yeah, I got those. I need 1997 through 1999.

(beat)

Hot? Shit, it's already a hundred and three and it's only 11 o'clock here. What else?

(beat)

RodCone Labs? What do they want?

(beat)

Well, if it's urgent, alright.

Send me those leases. Bye.

Tracy stamps out the cigarette and walks toward the building entrance.

INT. MIDLAND BUILDING - DAY

Inside the lobby Tracy takes a seat in a modern chair facing a refreshing-looking fountain. She makes a call on her cell phone.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

RodCone Laboratories. How may I help you?

TRACY

(Into phone)

This is Tracy Shepard. Someone there asked me to call? Something urgent?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Oh, yes. Thank you, Mrs. Shepard. It's been a hectic day. Let me check my notes.

(long pause)

OK, Mrs... uh...

TRACY

(Into phone)

Ms. Shepard.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Yes. I'm afraid we won't be able to remit the money for your bill. The one for \$1,000 for... let me see... for alternative dispute resolution? You sent us an invoice last week - well, I'm afraid we can't pay it.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Why not?

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

We can't pay for anything right now. The FBI raided our company on Monday and froze our accounts.

Tracy leans forward on the low-slung chair, dumbfounded.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Mrs. Shepard?

TRACY

(Into phone)

Yes, yes. I'm still here. What happened? What's going on? Let me talk to Fischer... Mr. Cuttbate. I'm a friend of his.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

No one knows where he is. Mr. Cuttbate disappeared before the FBI came in. So did Mr. Knecht.

TRACY

(Into phone)

I don't... I mean... Well, if he comes in have him call me.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

I'm sorry, Mrs. Shepard, I have to go.

Tracy stares at her cell phone as though it were a sacred oracle gone silent, leaving the natives in the dark.

TRACY

(Mutters)

Holy shit.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Jet lands on the runway.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY (LATER)

Tracy's limo pulls away from the curb.

EXT. TRACY'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

The limo pulls to the entrance of Tracy's apartment building. She strides past the DOORMAN into the building.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy sits at her desk and as the laptop boots up, she inspects the paper mail. Tracy tosses one piece after the other into the trash can, stopping at a particular envelope. She slits open the envelope and pulls out a check and a letter which she reads.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - A LETTER

Which reads: "Dear Tracy, I took your advice and hired a forensic accountant to analyze the charts you gave me. Unfortunately you were right: someone at the lab was keeping two sets of books. I decided to call the FBI. I know now that many people were involved, including - sadly - my brother. I also learned the lab can't pay its bills, so please accept the enclosed personal check from me for \$1,000 to cover the fee you and Fischer agreed to. Sincerely, Fletcher Cuttbate."

BACK TO SCENE

Tracy sits back in her chair and twists her hair.

INT. BROWNSTONE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tracy and Charles sit together on the sofa.

TRACY

Honestly, Dad, you wouldn't believe the way these so-called business leaders behave. Sometimes I feel like I'm deciding who gets to play next with the dump-truck in the sandbox.

CHARLES

Why don't you cut back on the work?  
Take a rest. Travel.

TRACY

I already travel too much.

CHARLES

Find a nice man. Fall in love.

TRACY

I don't know... I'd like... It's  
just sometimes I... I don't know.

Tracy looks down at the floor and rubs her hands together,  
then not wanting to be a buzzkill, perks up.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Hey Dad, have you ever heard of  
Woody Johnson?

CHARLES

Sure. He owns the Jets. And he's  
the heir to the J&J fortune. Why  
do you ask?

TRACY

My next assignment - should I  
choose to accept it - is mediating  
a contract dispute involving the  
Jets and some high-flying college  
fullback or hunchback or--

CHARLES

--Whatever happened to that lab  
that was working on that retinitis  
therapy?

TRACY

Uh, they, uh, they're still trying  
to figure it out.

CHARLES

(Downbeat)

Oh.

TRACY

(Upbeat)

But, one of the owners is working  
on something even better than a  
therapy. A real cure. He just  
needs money to get it rolling.

CHARLES

Money? That's all? Why don't you help him out, Tracy?

TRACY

Geez, Dad. I'm not a banker. Besides, he's still far from getting anything into the market. It'll take time.

CHARLES

I see. Well, actually, I can't see.

TRACY

Believe me, Dad. When Fletcher gets farther along I'd be happy to invest. You know, helping to run a real business with real products would be a breath of fresh air.

Tracy checks her watch.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I gotta go, Dad. See you later.

Tracy kisses her father's cheek.

CHARLES

Let me know how the big football player affair turns out.

INT. LIMO (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy receives a phone call.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Hello?

INTERCUT with Fletcher's Bungalow.

FLETCHER

(Into phone)

Tracy, it's Fletch. How're you? Is this a good time to talk?

TRACY

(Into phone)

Sure. I'm heading home. You really didn't have to send me--

FLETCHER

(Into phone)

--I've got something important to tell you, Trace. I feel a little stupid for not confiding in you before, knowing now what a fine woman you are.

TRACY

(Into phone)

What are you talking about, Fletch?

FLETCHER

(Into phone)

Can you meet me Friday night for dinner? I have some things I'd like to show you. My treat.

TRACY

(Into phone)

I, uh, I have to, uh, check with my secretary, y'know. She manages my calendar.

FLETCHER

(Into phone)

Oh.

(Long pause)

OK.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Screw it. Yes, Fletch, I would love to have dinner with you. I'm intrigued. Where shall I meet you?

INT. PER SE LOBBY - NIGHT

Tracy waits in the Per Se lobby. She is dressed to kill. From O.C. Fletcher walks toward Tracy. He also looks sharp in a double-breasted suit, white shirt and stylish tie. Tracy spots him but isn't sure it's him - he looks too good.

TRACY

Fletch?

He freezes and does a foppish model-like 360 degree turn.

FLETCHER

Wha'dya think, Trace? Do I look better than I did last time?

TRACY  
 Wow, you look great. I'm  
 stunned... I mean... You look  
 great. Very sharp.

FLETCHER  
 It's an Armadillo Zeg-na suit.

TRACY  
 (Chuckling)  
 Sharp.

FLETCHER  
 Needless to say - but I'll say it  
 anyway - you look gorgeous Trace.  
 I hope you like the restaurant I  
 picked out.

Tracy loops her arm underneath Fletcher's and they walk  
 toward the elevator together.

TRACY  
 I know I will.

INT. PER SE - NIGHT

Fletcher and Tracy sit across from one another at an  
 elegantly set table eating artistically presented food.  
 Wait-staff come and go, filling water glasses, pouring wine.

TRACY  
 So, after yet another sexist remark  
 about me in front of a client, I  
 decided to quit the world of  
 investment banking and try  
 mediation instead.

FLETCHER  
 What're you working on next, Tracy?

A WAITER pours the last of a bottle of wine.

WAITER  
 Excuse me, sir. Would you care for  
 another bottle?

FLETCHER  
 Sure.

The Waiter leaves with the empty bottle.

TRACY

Mediating a dispute involving the New York Jets, a bratty college football star and his aggrieved agent.

FLETCHER

Kinda like Jerry Maguire, huh?

TRACY

Probably not. This agent sounds like a whiny loser. But I can envision college-boy shouting "Show me the money!"

The Waiter returns with a bottle of wine and shows Fletcher the label.

FLETCHER

Is that the same stuff?

WAITER

Certainly, sir. Château d' Armailhac, 1996.

FLETCHER

Perfect.

The Waiter pours the wine and departs.

TRACY

Fletch?

FLETCHER

Yeah?

TRACY

Where do you think Fischer went? What's going to happen to the lab - and all the retinitis research?

FLETCHER

I honestly don't know, Trace. Deep down Fischer's a good man. Maybe he got in over his head. No doubt that bastard Chad Disconnect exploited his trust.

(beat)

All this drama throws RodCone Labs into Limbo.

TRACY

It's so sad. I suppose the pressure warped his judgment.

FLETCHER

Doesn't make any difference now. Whether Fischer was a dupe or the mastermind, he was part of the fraud. If they find him, he'll probably do time.

(beat)

Our assets are frozen and the creditors are starting legal action.

(beat)

This rabbit is really good. I never had it before.

Tracy dabs the corners of her mouth with a napkin, stifling a hiccup.

TRACY

You're amazing, Fletch. You're so calm. How do you do it? If it was me, and my company was in deep trouble, and my brother was on the lam, I'd be going crazy. How can you stay so tranquil, so optimistic?

FLETCHER

Why am I so optimistic?

Fletcher smiles and drinks his wine coyly.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I'll tell you... because I trust you, Tracy.

The Waiter arrives with food.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Wow. Is that the venison? It looks like pudding.

INT. PER SE - NIGHT (LATER)

Fletcher and Tracy have moved through the meal.

FLETCHER

You remember those equations I showed you back at my house? Those weren't just idle theories. A colleague at Penn State is helping me test formulas on animals. The results are more than promising.

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
We're close to a real cure for  
retinitis pigmentosa, Tracy.

TRACY  
I, I don't understand. Are you  
saying--

The Waiter arrives.

WAITER  
Excuse me madame, sir. May I bring  
another bottle of wine.

TRACY  
No thank--

FLETCHER  
--Absolutely.

The waiter departs.

FLETCHER  
I know I led you to believe I was  
just messing around, because I  
didn't want anyone to know about  
it, but, yeah, I'm on the verge of  
a real cure.

TRACY  
My God, Fletch! That's fantastic!  
An actual cure. My God. Why di'nt  
you show the formula to Fischer?  
(beat)  
Oh wait, right, he wanted to do a  
ther-hic-apy. Better for bizness.

The waiter returns with another bottle. He pops the cork and  
refills the glasses.

FLETCHER  
That's one reason. But when I  
learned he was courting venture  
capitalists, I got worried. Why  
share a good thing with a bunch of  
clowns who know the cost of  
everything and the value of  
nothing?

TRACY  
So sayeth Oscar Wilde.

Tracy takes a solid swig of wine.

FLETCHER  
Did he say that? Here I thought I  
made it up.

INT. PER SE - NIGHT (LATER)

The table has been cleared of plates. Tracy picks at a dessert. A half-drunk snifter of Cognac sits nearby, and she appears a bit tight. Fletcher drinks bourbon from a rocks glass.

TRACY

An actual cure... amazing.  
Y'know, my dad wants t' volunteer  
t' be a test subject.

FLETCHER

Well, just like with Fischer's  
therapy, I have to line up funding  
for clinical trials. That ain't  
cheap.

TRACY

What're you gonna go? I mean,  
how're you gonna get the money,  
Fletch?

FLETCHER

After my father died, he left Fish  
and me each a half million dollars  
in stocks and bonds. Fish spent a  
good chunk of his inheritance on  
toys - a speed-boat, nice  
furniture. I denied myself all the  
comforts of life and invested.  
You've seen my dumpy house and my  
ancient appliances. Would you  
believe I have more than a million  
dollars in the bank now?

TRACY

Really? That's fantastic. A  
million dollars. So, when do you  
start the clinical trails?

FLETCHER

After I line up another mil. It'll  
cost at least two million. I have  
to hire some people, buy insurance,  
post a bond, deal with a shitload  
of FDA bureaucracy.

Fletcher slugs the rest of his bourbon.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

That's why - don't laugh - I'm  
meeting with a new vulture capital  
firm tomorrow.

TRACY

What? You're gonna take VC money?  
I don't und--

FLETCHER

--As much as I despise them, it seems that's the way research turns into a product. Unless you're a multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical company. I don't have a choice, really.

TRACY

Gee, Fletch. I don't know...

The Waiter drops off the check. Fletcher leans onto his left butt cheek and retrieves his thick wallet. He counts out large bills. Tracy sips her Cognac.

FLETCHER

Can I ask you a question?

TRACY

You jus' did.

FLETCHER

Huh? Oh, I get it.

TRACY

(Giggling)  
I'm sorry, Fletch. What is it?

FLETCHER

How do you keep your legs in such beautiful shape? You must work out, or swim a lot. You have the most gorgeous legs I've ever seen. And your feet--

Taken aback, Tracy is uncharacteristically flummoxed.

TRACY

--Well, uh, thank you, Fletch. I try. I'm... I'm... I'm glad you noticed.

Tracy looks down like a shy schoolgirl and awkwardly examines a fingernail. After a moment, she pushes her hair away from her eyes and smiles.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Ready to go?

EXT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE - NIGHT

Fletcher and Tracy stroll around the periphery of Central Park by Columbus Circle. They talk and laugh. Tracy touches Fletcher's shoulder and he turns toward her. As Tracy is taller by a few inches, Fletcher looks up into her somewhat glassy eyes. After a moment, she kisses him on the lips.

TRACY

Would you like to see my apartment in Sutton Place? I could show you my Kandinsky.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy and Fletcher roll around naked in her king-sized four-poster bed. After a moment they maneuver into the sixty-nine position with Fletcher on top. Suddenly, Tracy pulls her head back.

TRACY

Oh my God! Seven is my lucky number. Where did you ever...?

The outburst at first startles Fletcher, but he quickly chuckles knowingly. He slips off of Tracy and lies next to her.

FLETCHER

It was after a Lou Reed concert--

TRACY

--I didn't know you could get a tattoo on your--

FLETCHER

--Balls? Yeah. I guess anything is possible when you're wasted... like I was after that concert. My buddies told the guy to tattoo snake-eyes but I protested - or so they told me. I said if you're gonna tattoo a pair a dice on my sack, make it lucky seven.

TRACY

A three and a four. Amazing. Nice shading.

Tracy laughs, then after a moment of mutual silence she speaks in mock-seriousness.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 You've rested long enough, mister.  
 I want more.

Tracy and Fletcher tumble some more.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 Lie back. I wanna try something.

FLETCHER  
 Uh oh.

Fletcher lies on his back.

TRACY  
 You said you admire my feet.  
 I caught your brother staring at  
 them. It must run in the family -  
 this foot-fetish.

FLETCHER  
 Could be.

TRACY  
 I can peel a banana with my feet.  
 Did you know that? Of course you  
 don't. Let me show you what else  
 these little piggies can do.

Tracy sits in front of a supine Fletcher. He rolls his head  
 backward and lets out a moan.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Tracy lies in bed motionless. Fletcher tiptoes quietly out  
 of the bathroom fully dressed. Tracy rolls onto her right  
 side and faces Fletcher, groaning in agony.

TRACY  
 Fletch? What are you doing?

FLETCHER  
 Good morning, Tracy. I didn't mean  
 to wake you. How're you feeling?

TRACY  
 Ugh... terrible. I never  
 should've had that second Cognac.

Tracy sits up, then abruptly lies back down.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 Ooh... I feel awful.

After a moment Tracy bolts past Fletcher into the bathroom. Wretching sounds O.S.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY (LATER)

Tracy limps from the bathroom licking her lips. Fletcher waits for her with a glass of water and aspirins.

FLETCHER

I'm sorry you feel so bad. Let me help you back to bed.

Fletcher takes Tracy's arm and walks her toward the bed.

TRACY

I'll be OK. Just let me rest by the window. Would you open it for me, please?

Fletcher leads Tracy to a lounge chair and opens the window. He places the glass of water a couple of aspirins on a nearby table. Fletcher caresses Tracy's cheek with the back of his hand.

FLETCHER

I had a wonderful evening, Trace. I'll call you later and let you know how my meeting with the VCs went.

Tracy sits up quickly.

TRACY

I forgot. When is your meeting?

FLETCHER

Three o'clock.

TRACY

Where?

FLETCHER

The Marriott Marquis.

TRACY

I'd like to go with you... as an observer. Or an advisor maybe.

FLETCHER

Really? I mean, that's OK. You don't have to do that - I can manage. Besides, you don't feel well.

TRACY  
VCs... They'll want to... I'll  
feel better by 3.

FLETCHER  
Are you sure? I think can handle  
it.

TRACY  
I'm sure you can. Still though,  
I'd like to help. In the  
meantime, I'll try to get some  
sleep.

FLETCHER  
Really, I--

TRACY  
--Don't do anything without me.

INT. MARRIOTT MARQUIS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A trio of VCs, all men in their 40s and 50s each dressed in a dark suit and armed with reams of market data sit on one side of a conference table. The eldest among them is a squat, bald man with manicured fingernails. Tracy and Fletcher sit on the other side. Tracy appears a bit haggard.

SQUAT VC  
Tell me, Mr. Cuttbate. Why do you  
want to develop a cure when a  
therapy seems the better way to go?

Fletcher angrily slaps his palm on the table; he looks ready to walk out of the conference room. Tracy gently reaches for Fletcher's forearm and coaxes him back into his seat. Then she takes control of the meeting.

TRACY  
Development of a cure for retinitis  
pigmentosa is non-negotiable.  
Period. No life-long therapy.  
That's not the objective of Mr.  
Cuttbate's company.

SQUAT VC  
And why, may I ask, Mrs. Shepard,  
is that not the objective?

TRACY  
Providing a cure is the right thing  
to do--

The other VCs grin and snicker derisively.

TRACY (CONT'D)

--and the clinical trials for a cure will cost significantly less than the trials for a therapy. The time to market will be reduced by a factor of two. The risk of competitive encroachment will be reduced dramatically. Get it?

The VCs stop grinning. The FACTS VC in charge of the figures stammers as he glances at his colleagues and rummages through his charts and tables.

FACTS VC

Well... I'm not so sure... I don't know... about that--

SQUAT VC

--OK, look. You're the scientific expert Mr. Cuttbate. We're just simple financiers. Far be it from us to tell you how to conduct R&D. If you think a cure is a better play than a therapy, so be it.

Fletcher looks over at Tracy and smiles at the display of her business acumen. She remains stoned faced, refusing to look at Fletcher.

SQUAT VC (CONT'D)

So, Mr. Cuttbate, do we have a deal? Or at least the foundation for a deal?

Fletcher is about to respond when Tracy speaks up.

TRACY

Mr. Cuttbate will take it under consideration. That's all.

Tracy stands up abruptly and extends her hand, indicating to everyone's surprise that the meeting is over. The three VCs file out of the conference room, grumbling and visibly annoyed. When they are gone, Tracy turns to Fletcher.

FLETCHER

What the hell, Tracy?

TRACY

Be cool, Fletch. Those people are just like the VCs your brother courted. Vultures.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

There was no upside for you and your company in any of their proposals.

FLETCHER

I don't know...

TRACY

Trust me. They'll rip you off.

FLETCHER

So where am I going to get the funds to go on? I'm out of ideas.

TRACY

From me, Fletch. Let me be your angel investor. You have a million, you need another million. Well, I've got a million. What do you say?

FLETCHER

You? You'd loan me the money?

TRACY

No, Fletch, not loan. Invest. I would take an equity position. If you're interested, we'll assemble our lawyers to work out a mutually beneficial arrangement.

FLETCHER

I don't know what to say. I'm speechless.

TRACY

Remember, Fletch, I expect to make money on the cure, too.

FLETCHER

Of course, of course. I'll call my lawyer right away. How about tomorrow?

TRACY

Let's make it next week, Fletch. I have to check on my guy's availability.

FLETCHER

Whatever you say, Trace.

(beat)

This is so great. Let's celebrate. Have a drink with me?

TRACY  
Now? It's only 5.

Fletcher shrugs "so-what".

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Oh, what the hell. I'm mostly  
recovered from last night. Where  
do you want to go?

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tracy and her lawyer HANNAH exit the limo and walk to the Office Building. Hannah is the same age as Tracy, much shorter and dressed in a dark, conservative suit. She carries an overstuffed briefcase.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING/LOBBY - DAY

HANNAH  
What a dump.

Hannah starts for the elevator, then heads for the stairwell when she notices Tracy climbing the stairs.

HANNAH (CONT'D)  
(Mumbles)  
Shit.

Hannah labors up the steps with the heavy briefcase.

INT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Fletcher stands by the open door. Tracy appears, followed closely by Hannah. Fletcher ogles Tracy's feet for a moment. Noticing, she grins imperceptibly.

FLETCHER  
C'mon in Tracy. I'm playing  
receptionist today. I had to let  
our girl go.

TRACY  
Nice to see you again Fletcher.  
This is my lawyer, Hannah Goldman.  
Hannah, meet Mr. Cuttbate.

Hannah puts down the briefcase and she and Fletcher shake hands.

HANNAH

How do you do, Mr. Cuttbate.

FLETCHER

Doing fine. Let's go to the conference room. I can't wait to do this. I'm so excited, Tracy.

Fletcher escorts Tracy and Hannah.

INT. SUITE 212 CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Two middle-aged men, ANDREWS and ZWIEBEL, wait inside. Andrews is gaunt, Zwiebel is well-tailored and chubby. Both stand when Fletcher, Tracy and Hannah walk in.

FLETCHER

Gentlemen. This is Tracy Shepard, my angel investor. And Hannah Goldstein, her lawyer.

HANNAH

Goldman.

Fletcher points to each man in succession.

FLETCHER

That's Arthur Andrews, my accountant and Bernard Zwiebel, my attorney general.

After all parties shake hands and nod heads, they sit at the conference table. It's Tracy and Hannah on one side and Fletcher and his team on the other. Hannah opens her laptop. Andrews consults some papers.

ANDREWS

RodCone Labs has filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 7. Liquidation. Mr. Cuttbate has formed a new corporation, Cuttbate Associates which will purchase the key assets of the defunct RodCone Labs. Equipment, computer programs, and most importantly, six patents. Office furniture and the like is going on the auction block.

Tracy nods. Hannah takes notes on her laptop.

ZWIEBEL

Mr. Cuttbate here is the sole owner of the molecular models and  
(MORE)

ZWIEBEL (CONT'D)

mathematical formulations for the retinitis cure. RodCone Labs has nothing to do with this intellectual property, so no legal or financial claims can be attached to it by some pissed-off creditor. In short, Cuttbate Associates begins operations debt-free and ready to develop the cure.

TRACY

Very good.

ANDREWS

The incorporation bylaws state that Cuttbate Associates will have three board seats. Right now, Mr. Cuttbate is the Chairman and Zwiebel here is holding a seat temporarily, leaving one seat open. The company has issued a million shares to Mr. Cuttbate with a par value of \$1, and is authorized to issue up to another ten million shares.

FLETCHER

About that open board seat--

ANDREWS

--Ms. Shepard, I understand you've expressed an interest in making a substantial investment in Cuttbate Associates. I've recommended to Mr. Cuttbate that his company issue \$1 million in 20-year Class A debt paying 3.875 percent over Treasuries.

TRACY

I didn't come here to loan money, Mr. Andrews. I came to take an equity stake. Make an investment. Mr. Cuttbate already knows that's my position, and so do you, so let's just cut the crap.

Surprised, Fletcher glances at Tracy, then he addresses Andrews.

FLETCHER

That's right, Art. I already told you that.

ANDREWS

I'm merely stating what I recommended to you, Mr. Cutt--

ZWIEBEL

--Mrs. Shepard, Cuttbate Associates is prepared to issue a second lot of 999 thousand shares to you in exchange for your \$1 million investment. Under no circumstances will Mr. Cuttbate relinquish majority ownership of his company.

TRACY

I understand and appreciate your position, Mr. Zwiebel, as Fletch's legal advisor. But I have an alternative proposition to make. Grant me ten million options at ten cents exercisable upon IPO--

ZWIEBEL

--Well, I... uh, um--

Zwiebel looks at Andrews for some guidance. Hannah peers up from her laptop and smirks at the floundering lawyer.

TRACY

--And appoint me to the open seat on the board. Cuttbate Associates needs someone like me on the executive team.

ZWIEBEL

Now, Mrs. Shepard--

TRACY

--Ms. Shepard.

ZWIEBEL

I'm sorry, Ms. Shepard. Now, Ms. Shepard--

TRACY

--Mr. Cuttbate, what do you think?

Fletcher looks at his advisors who glare back at him.

FLETCHER

Well, Tracy... uh, Ms. Shepard, there's no major difference, at least to me anyway, whether you own a million shares or options for ten million.

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Either way the retinitis drug can go to clinical trial. That's all I want.

ANDREWS

You know, Mr. Cuttbate, if your company goes public, Ms. Shepard here stands to become the majority shareholder.

FLETCHER

Yeah, I know Art. If - a big 'if' - we go public. In the meantime, Tracy here is sticking her neck out a long way. It seems reasonable that she should be rewarded if it pays off.

Silence for several seconds. Tracy nods to Hannah.

HANNAH

If you are amenable to Ms. Shepard's offer, I'll delliver the detailed term sheet. Do you have a printer here somewhere, or did you lose it in the fire sale?

Both Andrews and Zwiebel look down and shake their heads at Hannah's impudent remark. Tracy isn't pleased.

TRACY

Just email it to them, Hannah.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy lies in bed, the sheet pulled up to her breasts. She speaks on the phone while the sound of shower water splashes O.S.

TRACY

(Into phone)

That's right, Dad. Yeah. The retinitis cure is going forward.

(beat)

I know. Yeah. The new company secured enough financing for... That's right. The trials will start... Well, I made a small investment myself. Yeah.

The sound of shower water splashing O.S. ceases. The sound of a shower door opening O.S.

TRACY (CONT'D)

(Into phone)

I have to go Dad. Listen, I'll be on the road a lot over the next couple of weeks. That football player thing I told you about. Yeah, me too. Bye.

Tracy hangs up the phone. Fletcher walks into the bedroom with a towel twisted high around his head and another wrapped around his waist. He wears a pair of Tracy's high heels.

FLETCHER

How do you walk in these things?

TRACY

Fletch! Be careful. They cost \$1200.

FLETCHER

Are you kidding?

TRACY

Turn around.

Fletcher turns 360 degrees.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Hmmm. They make your legs look pretty good, Fletch.

FLETCHER

Is that your secret?

TRACY

One of many. Come over here.

Fletcher lies next to Tracy on the bed wearing the shoes.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I'm really excited about the cure, Fletch.

FLETCHER

Me too. Andrews thinks we can get things rolling in a couple weeks.

TRACY

Great. That's good timing because I'm going to be on the road a lot this coming month.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I have to drive out to Jersey tomorrow morning to meet with the Jets' front office people. Then I have to fly to Dayton, Ohio of all places.

FLETCHER

Oh yeah, that's right. You mentioned that before. Jerry Maguire and the magical football player.

TRACY

Something like that. Did you know the name of the Jets' owner is Woody Johnson?

FLETCHER

Uh uh.

TRACY

Would you believe that when I was in college I had a dildo that I nicknamed Woody Johnson?

FLETCHER

Seriously?

TRACY

Seriously.

Tracy reaches into a bedside drawer and pulls out a dildo. She shows it to Fletcher who crosses his arms, reluctant to touch it.

TRACY (CONT'D)

See. It kind of looks like it's made out of wood.

Fletcher inspects the dildo hesitantly.

TRACY (CONT'D)

It came with a strap.

(beat)

Let's try something.

Fletcher's eyes widen.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Tracy and Hannah sit by the window at a tony midtown Restaurant. Each picks at food on tiny plates.

TRACY

I can't believe I have to fly through Atlanta to get to Dayton. What a pain in the ass.

(beat)

So what's up with Cuttbate Associates? Everything copacetic?

HANNAH

Yes. Your bank wired the money this morning.

TRACY

Good.

HANNAH

The term sheet I got from Bernard Zwiebel grants you the options and the board seat. They propose comping you ten k for being on the board. You OK with that?

TRACY

Sure. I don't care. What else?

Hannah pulls out a folder of papers from her briefcase.

HANNAH

Here are the incorporation papers. Zwiebel set up the first board meeting for a week from yesterday--

TRACY

--No good. Have him move it out another week after I'm done with the football player thing.

(beat)

I want this company to succeed. I want that cure to fly through the FDA. What do you think of Zwiebel?

HANNAH

Seems competent.

TRACY

Cuttbate Associates is going to need a high-quality lawyer to deal with all the government red tape. I'm thinking of moving him out. I'll need your help.

HANNAH

Really? Of course. I can start--

TRACY

--Do some research on lawyers with pharmaceutical background and give me a list of five or ten good ones.

HANNAH

Uh, sure. I'll get right on it.

Hannah writes a note on a piece of paper.

TRACY

Can I drop you off on my way to the airport?

HANNAH

Alright.

INT. JET - DAY

Tracy sits in first class reading Sports Illustrated.

INT. DAYTON CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Tracy sits at a conference table in a hotel off the interstate accompanied by MILTON, a sports agent, BRADLEY, a college football player, and his father, HAL.

HAL

I spoke with the Jets' front office. They'll pay you off.

MILTON

That's not how business is done, my friend. Why am I talking to this douche-bag? Bradley signed with me.

TRACY

Hal, I told you not to talk to--

HAL

--That paper Bradley signed, that wasn't a contract.

MILTON

Like hell it wasn't.

TRACY

Gentlemen--

BRADLEY

--This whole thing is messing... I don't want to miss the first day of training camp.

MILTON

You shoulda thought of that before, sonny. I'm your agent!

HAL

Go to hell!

Hal stands like he's going to physically confront Milton. Tracy steps between them.

TRACY

Let's start over... again.

INT. JET - NIGHT

Tracy sleeps in first class with shades over her eyes.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy shuffles into her apartment. She tosses the key on the table and places her briefcase on the chair. The clock on the wall reads 12:30.

EXT. JETS FRONT OFFICE - DAY

With her briefcase in hand, Tracy walks toward the entrance of the Jets Front Office. Her cell phone rings and she stops to answer it.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

Tracy? It's Fletch. How're you doing?

TRACY

So so. I'm about to go to a meeting, Fletch.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

The football thing?

TRACY

Yeah. I'm on my way to give the Jets an update. Can I call you later?

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
Sure. I just wanted to make sure  
you can make the first board  
meeting later this week.

TRACY  
Didn't my lawyer tell you? I'm not  
available until next week.

FLETCHER (O.S.)  
Next week, huh? OK. No problem.  
Glad I called. Have a good  
meeting, Tracy.

TRACY  
Thanks. I'll be in touch.

Tracy walks to the entrance of the Jets Front Office.

INT. DAYTON BAR - NIGHT

Tracy and Milton sit together in the bar.

TRACY  
You know the Jets are going to get  
what they want in the end.

MILTON  
Probably. But it won't come free.  
I'll fuck over that little prick.  
And his asshole father too.

TRACY  
How did you get to be so charming,  
Milt?

MILTON  
Milton.

TRACY  
Give me a dollar figure.

MILTON  
You trying to bribe me?

TRACY  
It's called indemnification.

MILTON  
I have shit on Hal that will  
devastate Bradley.

TRACY

Oh, right. You mentioned that to me before. But I know you're bluffing.

MILTON

How so?

TRACY

Someone logged into your computer. All he could find was some child pornography.

MILTON

What the fuck! That's a goddamn lie.

TRACY

That's not what he told me. And he's very good at what he does, if you follow my meaning. He can make a computer do almost anything.

MILTON

You fucking--

TRACY

--Give me a number right now, or I'll assume zero and drop a dime on your internet browsing habits.

MILTON

I have devastating information about Bradley's old man.

TRACY

You can't be Bradley's agent, Milton. Move on. Find another superstar to rep. You can do it.

MILTON

I'm ready to go to the New York fucking Post with my info. It's devas--

Tracy folds her arms and glares at Milton.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Alright. 200. Thousand.

Tracy sips her cocktail.

TRACY  
35 it is. Thousand. Can I buy you  
another drink, Milt?

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy walks in, places her briefcase on the table beneath the Kandinsky and tosses a Jets jersey across a chair. She paws through some mail. She checks her answering machine.

ZWIEBEL  
(Over answering machine)  
Ms. Shepard. This is Bernard  
Zwiebel. Just a reminder that the  
board meeting is scheduled for  
Thursday at one in the former  
RodCone Labs office. See you  
there.

Tracy erases the message and walks into her bedroom.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy takes a stylish dress from her closet and lays it out on the bed. She retrieves a few pairs of shoes and matches them up to the dress, deciding on the appropriate pair. She makes a phone call.

TRACY  
(Into phone)  
Carla? Sorry for the late call.  
Did you confirm my Botox  
appointment with Dr. Hammond?  
Nine? Super. What about the spa?  
(beat)  
10:30. OK. What?  
(Laughing)  
None of your business little girl.  
Thanks. Talk to you later. Bye.

Tracy hangs up the phone, looks at the dress-shoes combination and chooses a different pair.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tracy steps out of the limo. Her Driver mans the door.

TRACY  
Take the rest of the day off,  
Yusef.

The Driver smiles and tips his hat. Tracy heads for the entrance.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING/LOBBY - DAY

Tracy sizes up the awful conditions of the Office Building Lobby. She notices that the glass case with the names of various businesses still has the entry "RodC ne Labs - Suite 212."

TRACY

I have to get on Zwiebel's case  
about moving out of this dump.

Tracy heads for the stairs.

EXT. SUITE 212 - DAY

As Tracy approaches Suite 212 she sees that the door is missing. Her pace slows. She peers inside, then tentatively walks in.

INT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Suite 212 is a mess, looking as though gutted for renovation. Wearing expensive shoes, Tracy gingerly steps around detritus on the floor. Sound of scraping O.S.

TRACY

Hello? Is anyone here?

The scraping stops. An old CLEANING LADY steps out of a restroom.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Where is everybody? Isn't this  
Cuttbate Associates?

CLEANING LADY

Dejaron. Estoy raspando mierda de  
la planta. ¿Te gustaría ayudarme?

TRACY

Do you speak English?

CLEANING LADY

Si. Un poco.

TRACY

Where is everybody?

## CLEANING LADY

They leaves. Two weeks ago.

The Cleaning Lady flashes Tracy a creepy toothless smile. Tracy bolts for the door.

## INT. OFFICE BUILDING/STAIRWELL - DAY

Tracy runs down the stairwell, nearly tripping when her heel catches a loose tread.

## EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tracy runs onto the sidewalk. She scans the block.

## TRACY

Fuck. The limo.

Tracy walks briskly down the sidewalk.

## EXT. BISTRO - DAY

Agitated, Tracy takes a sidewalk table at a Seventh Avenue BISTRO. A WAITRESS steps up to take an order.

## WAITRESS

May I offer--

## TRACY

--Bring me a vodka on the rocks.

The Waitress pirouettes and heads back toward the bar. Tracy takes out her cell phone and dials.

## TRACY (CONT'D)

(Into phone)

Hannah? What the fuck is going on with Cuttbate Associates!

At the next table a YUPPIE COUPLE with a TODDLER shush Tracy for the use of profanity. She shrinks at the admonition.

## TRACY (CONT'D)

(Into phone)

Listen. Something is really wrong. The office is empty. No one is there except a cleaning lady.

(beat)

Yeah. Call me back ASAP.

Tracy hangs up, takes a long drink, lights another cigarette.

EXT. BISTRO - DAY (LATER)

Tracy sits at the table with an ashtray full of butts. She nurses a drink. Her hair is mussed. The Toddler plays in Tracy's purse. Tracy's phone rings and she answers.

TRACY  
(Into phone)  
Yeah?

INTERCUT with Hannah's Office.

HANNAH  
(Into phone)  
Here's what I have so far. The Cuttbate website is down. I did a database search. The incorporation filing for Cuttbate Associates was rejected earlier in the week.

TRACY  
(Into phone)  
Jesus.

HANNAH  
(Into phone)  
I tried to contact Bernard Zwiebel and Arthur Andrews but their phones have been disconnected.  
(beat)  
Are you OK?

TRACY  
(Into phone)  
Yeah. Go on.

Tracy drinks again.

HANNAH  
(Into phone)  
The lease on Suite 212 expired seven months ago. The rent was paid in cash on a month-by-month basis since then. The bungalow in Hamilton Square is currently available for rent.

TRACY  
(Into phone)  
Good god. Listen, check through the records of all the people I met with regarding RodCone Labs and Cuttbate Associates.  
(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Find someone who can shed some  
light on this fuh--

Tracy glances at the Yuppie Couple who are staring at her.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
(Into phone)  
--ugly mess.

Tracy closes the cell phone. She rubs her temples, lights another cigarette and sits back, resigned.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
(Sotto voce)  
Fletcher Fucking Cuttbate.

INT. FBI FEDERAL PLAZA/TAFT'S OFFICE - DAY

Tracy sits in the antiseptic FBI office of Special Agent TAFT who sports a conservative suit and military haircut. Tracy is dressed in a dark suit.

TRACY  
I met this man, Fischer Cuttbate on a flight to LA. He told me his company was working on a cure - I mean a therapy - for an eye disease. It's the same disease my father suffers from.

Taft nods sympathetically.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Anyway, Fischer told me his brother Fletcher was interfering in the business, so I agreed to try to sort it out for him, but what I discovered was that Fischer was trying to screw over Fletcher. Or so it seemed.

TAFT  
How did you come to that conclusion?

TRACY  
I mistakenly received...

Tracy hesitates.

TAFT  
Yes?

TRACY

Uh, I received a spreadsheet that showed Fischer was cooking the books. Anyway, I passed on the information to Fletcher who then called the FBI and they shut down the company. Fischer disappeared. Then I found out from Fletcher that he had a real cure for the eye disease that he had kept secret from his brother.

(beat)

You have to understand Agent Taft... a cure for retinitis would be a godsend for my father. It would change his whole life. I had to see that it got developed.

TAFT

Completely understandable.

TRACY

So I invested money - a million - into Fletcher Cuttbate's company. Believe me, I did due diligence. My lawyer checked on patents, incorporation documents, tax data. Anyway, two weeks later I discovered it was a scam.

Taft grabs a box of Kleenex. Tracy scowls

TRACY (CONT'D)

Agent Taft... I'm not going to cry. I'm going to see that Fischer and Fletcher Cuttbate get the chair, or the needle, or whatever form of torture still exists on the books.

Taft puts the box down.

TAFT

OK, OK. We don't execute people for scams, but I appreciate your outrage, Mrs. Shepard. Let's go back to the part about the FBI raid on, uh...

(Checks his notes)

... RodCone Labs. Tell me more about that.

TRACY  
I got a call from the Labs'  
receptionist when I was in Texas.

Taft works on his computer as Tracy speaks.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
She told me that the FBI raided the  
place and that Fischer and his  
business director, Chad Knecht had  
gone missing. They couldn't pay  
for my--

TAFT  
--There's nothing in our records  
about any raid on RodCone Labs, or  
any warrants on Cuttbate or Knecht.  
Nothing. I'm sorry.

Tracy stares nonplussed for a moment.

TRACY  
N-nothing?

TAFT  
It appears that not only was  
RodCone Labs a front, but that the  
raid was fabricated as part of the  
scheme to get you to ally yourself  
with the brother. I'm so sorry,  
Mrs. Shepard. We'll initiate an  
investigation. I must tell you  
though that a con involving so many  
people in so many places over such  
a long period of time would have  
to've been perpetrated by a clever  
cast of characters.

TRACY  
I... I... uh--

TAFT  
--Do you have any pictures of the  
culprits?

TRACY  
Uh, no. I don't.

TAFT  
OK. Let's see if we can develop a  
composite picture of this guy  
Cuttbate.

INT. FBI FEDERAL PLAZA/FORENSICS UNIT - DAY

Tracy sits on an uncomfortable wooden chair across from a COMPOSITE ARTIST, a young, blonde woman with a pony tail. She wears an FBI uniform. The Composite Artist sits in front of a computer screen.

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
Before we get started putting together a composite sketch, give me some basics, Ms. Shepard. Hair color and style?

TRACY  
Dirty blonde, medium length, combed straight back.

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
Facial shape?

TRACY  
Uh, oval-ish?

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
Ears? Close to the head? Sticking out?

TRACY  
Ears? I would say... normal. Not pasted to his head but not jug-eared either.

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
Lobes?

TRACY  
Geez. Lobes? Regular. I don't know.

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
I know it's difficult, Ms. Shepard. If you had been robbed we could show you a book full of mug shots--

TRACY  
--I was robbed.

COMPOSITE ARTIST  
I mean, robbed at gunpoint or something like that. There aren't too many mug shots of successful confidence men.

Tracy shakes her head. The Composite Artist types on the computer keyboard.

COMPOSITE ARTIST (CONT'D)

I understand that the person who conned you had an identical twin.

TRACY

That's right. Clearly he was party to the crime.

COMPOSITE ARTIST

Do you think it's possible these twin brothers were actually one man?

TRACY

What?

COMPOSITE ARTIST

Did you ever see them together?

Tracy sits upright and absentmindedly strokes her face for a moment.

TRACY

Well, no, I never did actually, y'know, see the two of them together. They didn't get along.

COMPOSITE ARTIST

I see. Before I forget, can you tell me: did either one of these men have any distinguishing physical characteristics that might help identify them? A scar, maybe, or a tattoo? Anything like that?

The Composite Artist places the eraser end of a pencil in her mouth as she waits for a response.

TRACY

Uh, um... Tattoos? No. No tattoos. None that I know of.

COMPOSITE ARTIST

Alright. Let's move onto the eyes. Color and shape?

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy and RICHARDS, a private investigator sit at a table. Tracy hands Richards a thick folder.

TRACY

Here's everything I know. As I explained to you on the phone Mr. Richards, I want this bastard Fletcher Cuttbate found and prosecuted. The FBI doesn't impress me.

RICHARDS

I understand, Ms. Shepard. My firm has a solid track record.

TRACY

On top of your fee, you can keep half of any money you recover as an added incentive. I expect results, Mr. Richards.

RICHARDS

From what you've already told me, Ms. Shepard, I am convinced that Fischer and Fletcher Cuttbate - no doubt aliases - are one and the same person.

Tracy shrugs.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Have you ever seen Vertigo, Ms. Shepard? Great movie. Jimmy Stewart, Kim Novak, San Francisco?

TRACY

Not in a long time.

RICHARDS

It's about a man who murders his wife with the cooperation of a woman who poses as her double. You should check it out sometime.

Tracy checks her watch. Richards opens the folder.

TRACY

What else?

RICHARDS

How do you think this Cuttbate fellow knew to meet you at JFK airport and to be ready to forfeit his seat for you? That couldn't have been a coincidence.

TRACY

I don't have any idea.

RICHARDS

Well, I do. You said you were flying that day to meet with some clients in LA.

Richards looks at a paper in the folder.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

NanoNano and PicoTech, correct?

TRACY

That's right.

RICHARDS

My guess, Ms. Shepard, is that Cuttbate had a co-conspirator inside one or both of these companies. Someone who knew you were planning to fly that day at that exact time and what carrier you would take. You said you met Cuttbate again on the return flight. Coincidence? Not in my business, I'll tell you. Nothing is a coincidence. Everything is planned.

Tracy nods sadly.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

I'd even go so far as to postulate that members of Cuttbate's gang were on that plane to ensure first class was overbooked by the time you showed up at the airport. You told me your limo driver was late picking you up that morning... Do you trust him?

TRACY

(Flustered)

Well, I, never, uh--

RICHARDS

--I'll need a list of everyone who attended the meeting you had with these two companies. That's where I'll start. OK?

TRACY

Whatever you say, Mr. Richards.  
You're the expert.

RICHARDS

Call me Gray.

TRACY

No thank you, Mr. Richards. I  
prefer to keep this professional.

RICHARDS

I understand completely. Thank you  
for your time today, Ms. Shepard.  
I'll keep you up to speed.

Tracy escorts Richards to the door. They shake hands. As Richards steps out, Tracy pipes up.

TRACY

One more thing I forgot to mention.  
Fletcher Cuttbate has a pair of  
dice tattooed on his scrotum. A  
three and a four. One on each, uh,  
ball.

Richards raises an eyebrow slightly, takes out a pad of paper and writes a note on it.

RICHARDS

I'll check with some of the tattoo  
parlors and see if I come up with  
anything. Good day.

Tracy closes the door, cradles her head in her hands and bursts into tears.

FADE TO WHITE.

EXT. CHARLES SCHURZ PARK - DAY

Tracy sullenly strolls the park in the drizzle.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Tracy drinks coffee and works a newspaper puzzle.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tracy is on the phone with Richards, her PI. From the intercut action it is clear she is not impressed with his status.

INT. AUCTION HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracy's Kandinsky is on the block. An AUCTIONEER drives up the price between two BIDDERS. The Gavel comes down.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

INSERT: TITLE CARD "THREE MONTHS LATER"

Tracy sits at her desk in front of her laptop. She is dressed casually. The Kandinsky is no longer on the wall. Somber jazz music plays in the background.

SOUND - TELEPHONE RINGING

Tracy answers the telephone.

TRACY  
 (Into phone)  
 Hello? Ah, Special Agent Taft.  
 Has it been another month already?  
 Don't tell me, let me guess...  
 Fletcher Cuttbate remains at large.  
 (beat)  
 Right, yeah, I know.  
 (beat)  
 I understand. Thanks.

Exasperated, Tracy hangs up the phone. She trains her attention back to her laptop.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - NANONANO WEBSITE ANNOUNCING I.P.O.

BACK TO SCENE

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 Very interesting.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt's Office is a sleek place, furnished in blonde, adorned with mid-century art.

A flat-screen TV on the wall broadcasts silently. Matt sits at his desk browsing a brochure for Citation jets.

SOUND - BUZZER

SECRETARY (O.S.)

(Over speakerphone)

Mr. Blankenschein. A Ms. Tracy Shepard is asking to speak with you. She says she's done business with you in the past.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

Sure. I know her. Great legs. Put her through.

(beat)

Tracy Shepard... the Medea of Mediation. How're you? What can I do you out of?

INTERCUT with Tracy's Apartment.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Calling to congratulate you on the IPO, Matt. Mazel Tov.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

Why that's sweet of you Tracy. We're very happy how it turned out. What're your series B shares worth now? 50K?

TRACY

(Into phone)

That's about right. Fifty.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

You were a smart cookie to take your fee in stock instead of cash for that mediation session with PicoTech.

(beat)

If you don't mind my asking, how many shares did they give you?

TRACY

(Into phone)

None. I took cash from them. I didn't think their future was as rosy as yours, Matt.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I've read a lot about nanotechnology and I like what I see. I want to increase my stake in the company.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

That's a nice vote of confidence. Listen, we're having a little dinner party next week to celebrate the IPO. Why don't you come out here as my guest? It'll be fun and you can meet the board and the executive team.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Meet the executive team. I can't think of anything I'd like to do more.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

Did you know we moved our headquarters to San Diego? No core talent in LA. I'll have my admin send you the particulars.

TRACY

(Into phone)

Sounds wonderful. Ciao, Matt.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy hangs up the phone and smiles deviously.

TRACY

Meet the executive team. The rat-infested executive team. Beautiful.

EXT. SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

A jet lands on the runway.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Numerous ATTENDEES of the NanoNano IPO party enjoy meals at large round tables in the San Diego Restaurant.

Tracy sits on Matt's right at one of the tables situated in a prime spot, accompanied by six others: NanoNano EXECUTIVES and their WIVES and GIRLFRIENDS. Food has already been served and everyone eats. MARILYN, a bubbly, 40-year-old with salt-and-pepper hair sits across from Tracy.

MATT

Did anyone else order the burricotti with braised artichokes? These currants and the mint pesto really go well together.

EXECUTIVE #1

I got the burrata with leeks vinaigrette and mustard breadcrumbs. A far cry from crackers and Easy Cheese, huh Blankenshein?

MATT

Jesus. Don't remind me. That was the staple back at Stanford. There's something not quite right about aerosol cheese, but it makes sense when you think about it.

TRACY

I didn't know you were a Stanford grad, Matt.

MATT

Hell yeah, Tracy. All the good technology shit we enjoy today came out of Stanford. Google, GPS, spy satellites, the internet--

EXECUTIVE WIFE #1

--Easy Cheese?

MATT

(Chuckles)

Shit. Maybe. Wouldn't be surprised. The guys at this table, Tracy - my dream team, my brain trust - all Stanford boys.

MARILYN

I went to Vassar.

MATT

Oh, right. I forgot. Marilyn here is our VP of Personnel--

MARILYN

--Human Resources.

MATT

I brought Marilyn on board to hedge against a y-chromosome bubble. She came over last year from Oracle.

TRACY

Oracle. Must be a big change coming to a start-up.

MARILYN

Oh yeah. All good though. It's easy to get lost in big company bureaucracy. Very frustrating at times. I needed something more personal. Besides, my options were under water.

EXECUTIVE #2

Join the club.

MARILYN

When I hired in I got options at 45. Unfortunately, the next time the stock hit 45 was never.

MATT

I remember when Oracle dropped below eight bucks. I was gonna short the pig, but my old man advised me to load up on it instead. Hell, eight bucks? I picked up just about a million shares. Dumped it two years later when it hit 22.

Oohs and ahs from the Executive team.

MATT (CONT'D)

I bought the Astondoa with the proceeds. You should have seen the look on the dealer's face when I told him I'd pay cash for it.

The table laughs. Tracy rolls her eyes.

MATT (CONT'D)

I threw my dad a C-note for his sage advice.

Clapping now. Attendees at other tables gawk enviously. After the table settles down, Marilyn presses on.

MARILYN

I'm hoping my financial luck will turn around. I've been talking to a biologist who's looking for an investor for his cure for acromegaly. Ron Subytic introduced me to him.

MATT

(To Tracy)

Ron Subytic was our corporate strategist, but he quit and joined the enemy - PicoTech.

Boos and hisses.

MATT (CONT'D)

He has acromegaly. Huge hands, fingers like sausages. I think you met him in the mediation meetings last year. Looks a lot like that huckster on TV, uh... Tony Roma.

MARILYN

Robbins. Anyway, this biologist - Calvin - is close to a cure for acromegaly, but his twin brother won't help him get the money to move it along. His brother wants to develop a pill you have to take everyday. I guess that makes more money than a cure. Calvin's ready to go to clinical trial but he's stuck. He doesn't really want to deal with VC's - he calls them vulture capitalists.

EXECUTIVE #2

I resemble that remark, Ms. Jenkins.

MATT

Clinical trials are super expen--

TRACY

(Aggitated)

--Marilyn, did this Calvin guy have dice tattooed on his balls!? A three and a four!?

The entire table stops what they're doing and stares at Tracy. Instantly mortified by her intemperate remark, Tracy is stunned.

MARILYN

Why... Absolutely, not!

TRACY

I meant his arms, his biceps. A three and a four on his biceps. I meant to say biceps, not... a three on one bicep and a four on the other. Did he... maybe?

Tracy grins wanly and looks around the table to assess the damage. After an uncomfortable moment, Matt breaks the silence.

MATT

Jesus, Tracy, you've got me a trifle worried. I hope a serious shareholder of NanoNano such as yourself can tell the difference between a man's nuts and his guns.

A delayed response from the table until it is clear that Matt is OK, then everyone laughs, including Tracy, albeit forced.

MATT (CONT'D)

I mean, is it even possible to get a tat on your balls? That might fuck up your sperm, you know. Make you squirt ink like a squid.

EXECUTIVE #2

Oh, for God's sake, Matt.

Matt grins and reaches for a glass, annoyed to find it empty. He snaps his fingers at an ELDERLY WAITER

MATT

Garçon!

The Elderly Waiter cringes then turns and approaches Matt.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT/DINING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Dinner's over, the band plays non-intrusive music. Attendees of the IPO party mill around. Matt and Tracy stand off to the side alone.

MATT

That was weird, Tracy. A tattoo on some guy's balls?

TRACY

A simple malapropism.

MATT

Mm-Hmm. Y'know, I read your book on mediation tactics. Very Machiavellian. I bet you could persuade a man to do anything you want.

TRACY

What do you think I want you to do?

MATT

Bring you into the action. Put you on the NanoNano board, perhaps?

TRACY

You could use someone like me on the board. Too many Stanford frat-boys on the team.

MATT

Yeah, you may be right. Where are you staying?

TRACY

I'm not. Taking the red-eye back to the city.

MATT

That's a shame. I was going to offer you a ride on the Astondoa. I'm taking her out tomorrow afternoon.

(beat)

It's a yacht.

TRACY

I know what an Astondoa is, Matt.

(beat)

Y'know, you're cute. The rich son of a rich father... squashing your competition, conquering the world. Young and fulla cum. I like that.

MATT

You'd better come back out here soon, Tracy. I want to talk to you some more.

Tracy walks toward the Lobby.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hey.

Tracy stops and turns around.

MATT (CONT'D)  
Love the shoes.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT/WOMEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tracy stands over a sink and washes her hands. She examines her face in the mirror.

TRACY  
(To herself)  
Good going, Trace. Tattoos on balls. Shit.

Tracy sees the image of Marilyn in the mirror fidgeting behind her. Tracy turns around and faces her.

MARILYN  
Um, he does have dice tattooed on his... balls. A three and a four.

INT. SAN DIEGO BAR - NIGHT

Tracy and Marilyn sit in a booth drinking exotic-looking cocktails.

MARILYN  
Tell me, Tracy - you don't mind if I call you Tracy, do you?

Tracy shakes her head serenely.

MARILYN (CONT'D)  
How did you know about the tattoo? I mean, what did I say that caused you to blurt out such a crazy question? How do you know Calvin?

TRACY  
I don't know anyone named Calvin. And neither do you, Marilyn. This guy is using an alias. When I knew him he called himself Fletcher Cuttbate. He had a twin brother, supposedly.  
(beat)  
What is Calvin's brother's name?

MARILYN  
Collier.

TRACY  
What do they look like?

MARILYN

Calvin is a bit taller than me, and shorter than you. Blondish hair. He combs it straight back. Of course, Collier looks just like him, although he parts his hair on the side.

TRACY

Uh-huh. Did you ever see them together, in the same place at the same time?.

MARILYN

Hmm. nNw that you mention it, I don't remember ever seeing them together.

TRACY

How odd. Listen, Marilyn, you're in the middle of being conned.

MARILYN

What?

TRACY

I said, you're being conned.

MARILYN

I've seen Calvin's work - his computer printouts, and stuff. I've spoken to his chief scientist. I've done my own research, Tracy. Ron Subytic, who I worked with for almost a year, vouched for Calvin.

Tracy counts out the arguments on her fingers.

TRACY

Computer printouts? Easily fabricated. Chief Scientist? One of Calvin's stooges. Ron Subytic? I met him during the mediation sessions between NanoNano and PicoTech. Most likely a co-conspirator. A common thread.

MARILYN

That's quite a conspiracy theory, Tracy. Very "grassy knoll."

Tracy narrows her eyes with thinly-veiled contempt.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Matt showed me a magazine where they called you the "Medea of Mediation". Well, Medea was a jealous bitch.

TRACY

For God's sake, Marilyn, I'm not jealous. Forget that stupid magazine article. Listen to me. Calvin's story about cures and therapies is a scam. He's preying on your good nature, inventing a phony twin brother as a foil.

MARILYN

C'mon, Tr--

TRACY

--How much does he want from you?

Marilyn looks askance, checking whether anyone is listening. She scrunches down and whispers.

MARILYN

Two hundred and fifty thousand.

TRACY

Is that all? He wanted a million from me. And guess what - I gave it to the bastard. Two weeks later he and his entire charade of a business were gone. Disappeared. No trace. Do you get what I'm saying?

MARILYN

(Swallowing hard)

A million dollars?

TRACY

You're a smart woman, Marilyn. That's obvious. Think - deep down - do you really believe there are two different guys in the world with dice tattooed on their nutsacks? Two different tattooed-balled breakthrough-drug-developers who have identical, greedy twin brothers? And the dice add to seven?

MARILYN  
 Sounds impossible, I must admit.  
 (beat)  
 So, what do you want from me,  
 Tracy?

Tracy smiles and touches Marilyn's hand.

TRACY  
 I was supposed to fly back tonight  
 but this is too important. Tell me  
 more about Calvin. Ron Subytic put  
 you on to him. Then what?

MARILYN  
 I felt bad for Ron. I wanted to  
 help.

TRACY  
 Help how?

MARILYN  
 I thought I could connect him to  
 some investors, but Calvin was wary  
 of them. He called them vulture  
 cap--

TRACY  
 --Yeah, I know.

MARILYN  
 Then I thought, why not make an  
 investment of my own.

TRACY  
 Persuasive little man, isn't he?  
 (beat)  
 I know you wanted to do good,  
 Marilyn. I admire that.

Tracy sips her drink.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
 Um, you saw the tattoo so you  
 obviously, y'know... Where did  
 this take place?

MARILYN  
 I'm not going--

TRACY  
 --I'm saving your ass, Marilyn.  
 You owe me details.

MARILYN

What for?

TRACY

I have to know. I have to know everything so I can get satisfaction. I got taken for a million, Marilyn. I have to try to get some of it back.

Marilyn slouches and sips her drink.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Please.

MARILYN

Alright. Jesus. I fucked him if that's what you're so intrigued about.

TRACY

Where was this?

MARILYN

His house... in a little town in Jersey. Calvin's attractive in a vulnerable sort of way.

TRACY

Well, I'll go along with that, I suppose. Tell me about his house.

MARILYN

Small place. Worn out furniture. Nothing special.

TRACY

What else?

MARILYN

He has a weird painting of a man with veins coming out of his eyes. Kinda creepy. Let's see... what else? Oh, he has a rare vintage electric guitar.

Tracy chuckles and shakes her head in disgust.

TRACY

I suppose he played rock tunes for you. Am I right?

MARILYN

Well, I mentioned I liked Boston.  
He played "More Than a Feeling."  
He's really pretty good.

Tracy - the "Medea of Mediation" - is feeling jealous now.

TRACY

Jesus Christ. That fucking  
bastard. What an operator. OK.  
I've heard enough. Calvin is  
Fletcher Cuttbate. Do you believe  
me?

MARILYN

Well, I have to admit it sounds  
convincing.

TRACY

Tell me you believe me, Marilyn.

Marilyn plays with her cocktail glass for a second.

MARILYN

Yeah, OK. I believe you.

TRACY

Finally. When are you meeting  
Calvin Shithead again?

MARILYN

Never. Not after all this.

TRACY

I mean, when would you have met him  
again if you hadn't found out what  
a scumbag he is?

MARILYN

I was supposed to meet him next  
month for dinner in Philadelphia,  
y'know, to, uh...

TRACY

To what?

MARILYN

Make my investment.

TRACY

I see.

Tracy writes on a piece of paper and passes it to Marilyn.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Take this. Now, listen carefully. I want you to accept Calvin's swell dinner invitation. Insist he take you back to his place in Jersey afterwards. And see to it he gets nice and drunk. I know he can pound the booze. I've seen him in action.

MARILYN

I don't und--

TRACY

--I need you to reconnect me with Fletcher, Calvin, Collier, whatever. I need to see him again. To get some restitution. To get him to confess to his crimes. To put an end this unfunny comedy of errors.

Marilyn scratches the back of her neck and nibbles on a cuticle. She sips her drink to delay responding.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I need your help. Please.

MARILYN

(Sternly)

I don't want to get involved.

TRACY

Hell, Marilyn, you are involved! You're vulnerable! We both need to bring this bastard to justice before he fucks up another woman!

A few nearby PATRONS stop conversing among themselves and look over to size up Tracy's outburst.

MARILYN

Why don't you just call the police or the FBI? Why do you have to meet him in person?

TRACY

Do you know what Lex Talionis is?

(beat)

Nevermind. Look, Calvin is a con artist, Marilyn. A very good con artist. He and his cronies left no tracks. I've been to the FBI already... they're stumped.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

So is my expensive PI.

(beat)

And even if I turned him over, they'd probably let him go for insufficient evidence. I've got to get him to confess on tape.

MARILYN

How are you going to get him to do that?

Tracy smiles smugly.

TRACY

I'm a professional negotiator, Marilyn. I'll negotiate for his confession.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Matt presses a button on his office phone.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

Tracy Shepard. How was your flight back to Gotham City?

TRACY (O.S.)

(Over speakerphone)

I decided to stay. Your invitation for a ride on your boat was too tempting. Of course, that's if you still want me to come.

MATT

(Into speakerphone)

I want you to come. I'll send a driver for you, Tracy.

TRACY

Should I buy some Dramamine?

MATT

The Astondoa is 115 feet long. You won't feel a swell... unless you want to.

INT. SAN DIEGO MARINA - DAY

Tracy struts into the Marina where Matt, drinking a Bloody Mary, awaits. She's decked out. He's a bit foppish in a maritime-inspired outfit. Matt stands and greets her.

MATT

Ms. Shepard. You look marvelous.

TRACY

Why thank you, Admiral  
Blankenschein.

MATT

Cute. If you're a good girl, I'll  
let you pilot her out of the harbor  
- of course, the real pilot has to  
stand next to you.

TRACY

That's OK, I'd rather hang out on  
the fo'c's'le.

(beat)

You do have a fo'c's'le, don't you?

MATT

Um...

INT. YACHT (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy and Matt stand mid-ship by the rail looking out at the  
coast in the distance. Each holds a glass of red wine.

MATT

Why didn't you go back on the red-  
eye, Tracy?

TRACY

What else? I succumbed to your  
irresistible charms. I also got  
into a long conversation with  
Marilyn last night and missed my  
flight.

(beat)

Your boat is amazing.

MATT

The Astondoa is a work of art. I  
christened her Brobdingnagian.

TRACY

Ironic coming from the maker of  
Lilliputian devices.

MATT

Thank you! That was my intention.  
You're the only one who noticed.

(beat)

You're quite perceptive, Tracy.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

Maybe I do need someone like you on the board. What advice would you give a bright young CEO like me?

TRACY

Seriously? Let me think.

(beat)

Okay. I just want to say one word to you - just one word.

MATT

Yes?

TRACY

Are you listening?

MATT

Shit yeah, Tracy. What is it?

TRACY

(Gravely)

Plastics.

Matt stares dumbly for a split-second, then laughs.

MATT

That's good. You're good.

A moment of silence. Tracy smiles and sips her wine.

TRACY

Where are we, Matt?

Matt points to the horizon at the Hotel Del Coronado, its red shingles gleaming in the sunset.

MATT

That's Coronado Island. And that's the Hotel Del Coronado.

TRACY

Ah, the Del.

MATT

That's right. I'll bet you're a movie buff, aren't you Tracy? Plastics. You had me going.

TRACY

I know "Some Like it Hot" was filmed at the Del. My father is a huge Billy Wilder fan. I've seen all his movies a dozen times each.

(beat)

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

Even though he can't see now, he still listens to the dialog and follows along.

MATT

Your father is blind? That's too bad. I'd like to meet him sometime. Chat about the classic American films.

TRACY

I know he'd enjoy that.

(beat)

This wine is excellent. What is it?

MATT

1997 Screaming Eagle. I have a case of 1992, but I like to save that for very special occasions.

The breeze kicks up. Matt drapes his sport coat across Tracy's bare shoulders.

TRACY

You have nice hands.

Matt looks down at Tracy's sexy feet.

MATT

And you have nice... would you like to go below deck? Relax a bit? Taste that '92?

Tracy turns her back on Coronado Island and gives Matt a sexy look.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

The Astondoa cuts through the waters.

INT. PHILADELPHIA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Marilyn and CALVIN (Fletcher) sit at a table near the wall and next to a potted plant. WAITERS remove the plates of food. A few PATRONS remain in the mostly empty Philadelphia Restaurant. STAFF mill around, checking watches, anxious to close up.

CALVIN

I gotta take a leak, Marilyn. Man, I'm pretty smashed.

(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I hope you can drive. I'll be back  
in a minute. Get th' check, will  
ya?

Calvin weaves his way around the corner from the slick bar. When he's gone Marilyn dumps her vodka-tonic into the potted plant and refills it with bottled water. She hails the Waiter who arrives table-side.

MARILYN

Another Manhattan for him.

The Waiter leaves.

INT. PHILADELPHIA RESTAURANT - NIGHT (LATER)

Calvin returns to the table where a tall Manhattan straight up awaits him.

CALVIN

Wha' the fuck's this, Marilyn? I  
can't drink another one.

MARILYN

Are you sure, baby?

Fletcher slumps into his chair.

CALVIN

Well... maybe one more. But  
this's the las' one.

MARILYN

OK, baby. I just want to savor the  
moment. This is such a nice place  
and it's been such a nice  
evening... so far.

Marilyn gives Calvin the sexy-eyes.

CALVIN

You're a - errrp - vixen, y'know  
that?

Calvin takes a sip and purses his lips.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I just hope I don't fuckin' blow  
chunk.

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Calvin fumbles with his keys as he attempts entry. He finally stumbles in. Marilyn looks over her shoulder, then follows Calvin in, closing the door behind her.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Calvin pivots clumsily, embraces Marilyn and plants a slobbery kiss on her lips. He mauls her tits. Marilyn looks like she wants to back away, but she finds the courage to force her hand against Calvin's crotch.

MARILYN

Ooo, I feel something waking up.  
Is that lucky seven calling? Why  
don't you get ready for bed, Cal,  
and I'll freshen up a bit. I  
missed you.

She squeezes Calvin's crotch again.

CALVIN

Ouch! Not so hard, Mare.

Calvin slips off his belt and kicks off his shoes, one of which strikes a floor lamp. As he ambles toward the bedroom, his pants fall around his ankles revealing his pale legs.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Marilyn locks the bathroom door. She slowly washes her face and hands, then makes a cell phone call.

MARILYN

(Into phone)  
Where are you?

INTERCUT with Tracy in the Driveway outside Calvin's House.

TRACY

(Into phone)  
Right where I'm supposed to be -  
parked next to your car. I saw you  
and Mr. Shitface go inside. Where  
are you now?

MARILYN

(Into phone)  
In the bathroom. He's in the  
bedroom. You better be on your  
toes.

(MORE)

MARILYN (CONT'D)

He's really drunk, but, amazing,  
still able to get around. At least  
a little.

TRACY

(Into phone)

I'll be ready. I've been ready.  
Is the door unlocked?

MARILYN

(Into phone)

Yes. I made sure.

Marilyn hangs up the phone. She takes one last look at herself in the mirror, breathes deeply and shuts off the light.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Calvin's bedroom is almost pitch dark; the only light comes from a cheap plastic digital alarm clock on the table next to the bed. A pile of clothes lie on the floor. Marilyn strides to the side of the bed and sits on the mattress next to Calvin. He is spread out, naked.

CALVIN

What - errrrp - took ya s'long,  
Mare. I got a killer hard-on.

Calvin reaches for Marilyn's leg.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

How cum yer not undressed?

After a moment, Marilyn collects Calvin's clothes from the floor.

MARILYN

I have to go. Goodbye, Calvin.

Marilyn turns and strides briskly out the bedroom.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Marilyn approaches the door.

CALVIN (O.S.)

Wha' th'hell, Mare? Wha'd I do?  
D'I do sump'n wrong? Wha'bout the  
money?

Marilyn opens the front door.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Calvin rolls out of bed and bangs his shin on a space heater.

CALVIN  
Fuck! Fuckin' fuck that hurts!

SOUND - Door slamming O.S.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Come back, Marilyn!

Calvin slumps onto the edge of the bed and rubs his shin.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
Wha' the fuck's wrong wi'tha'  
bitch?

TRACY (O.S.)  
The better question would be "what  
the fuck is wrong with you"?  
(beat)  
Hello, Fletch. How's the head?

Calvin (Fletcher) looks at a silhouette in the doorway of a tall, imposing female figure.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Aren't you going to say "hello"  
Fletch? Don't you miss me?

FLETCHER  
Wha' d'ya want, Tracy? Why're you  
here?

TRACY  
I think you know why. Stand up and  
turn on the light.

FLETCHER  
I'm goin' t' bed. I'm tired and a  
li'l drunk. Lock the door on your  
way out, please.

Fletcher flops back onto the bed and exhales long and loudly. Tracy flicks on the light switch; Fletcher shields his eyes.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)  
Shut that off!

TRACY  
I said stand up you misogynist  
piece of shit.

Fletcher stands up slowly after spotting Tracy pointing a pistol at him. It's her father's old semi-automatic.

FLETCHER

Easy, Tracy. Shit. What d'ya want? Your million dollars? I ain't got it. It got split up an' spent. I'm sorry, but tha's the way it is.

Tracy notes the painting with veins coming out of eyes.

TRACY

I see you're still ripping off Frida Kahlo.

FLETCHER

Why're you pointin' a gun at me?

TRACY

I came to negotiate for something that might make us whole again. Complete the transaction.

(beat)

You took a lot of money from me and you didn't hold up your end of the bargain. You let my father down, too. That wasn't nice, Fletch.

FLETCHER

Sorry.

TRACY

I read somewhere that Keith Richards' middle finger is insured for one point six million. Did you know that? One point six mil. I'm sure you do, a big fan like you.

Tracy steps to the end of the bed and tosses a paper bag onto the mattress. It bounces, suggesting heft.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Open the bag, Fletch.

Fletcher hesitantly opens the bag and peers inside.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You're a very good guitar player, Fletch. I really enjoyed your performance that day in Jersey at your - it was yours, wasn't it? - your bungalow.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

You know, you may be as good a guitarist as Keith Richards, but your middle finger isn't possibly worth as much as his. In fact I'm sure your whole arm isn't worth as much as his middle finger. Still, I'm willing to accept a finger in exchange for the million you stole from me.

Fletcher removes a brand new pair of sheet-metal snippers from the bag and looks at Tracy incredulously. She maintains her emotionless disposition. Fletcher's expression turns to horror.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Place the tool on your middle finger, Fletch.

Tracy extends her arms straight out, bringing the gun closer to Fletcher's face.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Do it now.

FLETCHER

Listen, Trace--

TRACY

--Put the fucking shears on your fucking finger. Now!

Tracy cocks the pistol. Fletcher cowers. He opens the snippers, then pukes all over his legs and feet. Tracy recoils.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Put the cutters on your finger, you worthless piece of shit!

FLETCHER

C'mon--

TRACY

--Now!

Fletcher slides the snippers onto his middle finger.

FLETCHER

(Whimpering)

Fuckin' bitch... fuckin' bitch.

Gripping the snippers, Fletcher stands before Tracy shaking, completely naked, hair tussled, chunks of barf spattered on his shins. Tracy grips the pistol steadily in both hands, her legs spread slightly for stability.

TRACY

Cut it off, Fletch. It's a good deal. You owe me a million dollars, plus interest, but I'll take your finger instead. That, or I can lodge a bullet in your cranium. Or you can confess your sins on tape. I have the video camera in my bag ready to go. As a negotiator, I always like to offer my clients options.

FLETCHER

You're a cunt, you know that? A worthless cunt. You're angry at yourself - not me - 'cause you wanted t' be the big hero. Instead you fell for a scam like a stupid schoolgirl. Tracy the bigtime hero - curin' diseases, provin' your worth to your lame-o father. Hah! I owe you nothin', cunt!

TRACY

Shut up!

FLETCHER

Is that gun even loaded?

TRACY

Cut off your fucking finger now or I will kill you! Or you can confess your--

Suddenly, Fletcher lunges at Tracy with the snippers. Tracy flinches. The pistol fires a bullet through Fletcher's throat and he falls to the floor, face up. He clutches his throat and writhes like a fish out of water. A wheezy gurgling sound emanates from the hole in his throat, then a hiss, and then silence. Tracy drops the pistol and stares aghast at the body. She stoops down and reaches toward his neck to feel for a pulse, but stops short.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tracy throws up in the sink, runs some water, blots her face, and throws up again. She sits on the closed toilet, cradling her head.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy walks tentatively toward Fletcher's spread-eagle body. In death, he still grips the snippers. Tracy walks around to face him head on and spots his tattooed balls.

Tracy sneers, bends down and after a moment gouges Fletcher's face with her fingernails. Then she presses her spiked heel into his scrotum, tearing the skin.

TRACY

Scumbag.

INT. CALVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tracy cursorily polishes door knobs and other surfaces to wipe away any fingerprints.

EXT. CALVIN'S HOUSE/DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Tracy climbs into her car. Fletcher's clothes lies on the passenger seat where Marilyn stashed them. Tracy puts on a pair of gloves, reaches into a pants pocket and retrieves Fletcher's cell phone. She backs the car out of the Driveway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Tracy drives down the dark, desolate highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT (LATER)

Tracy pulls off the highway.

EXT. PINE FOREST - NIGHT

Tracy drives into the Pine Forest, turns off the lights and shuts off the car. She steps out, removes her heels and does a few seconds of jumping jacks. Puffing, she walks away from the car to place a call on Fletcher's cell phone.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

(Over phone)

Nine one one. What's your emergency?

Tracy affects an agitated, young-girl voice.

TRACY

(Into phone)

I need help! I just shot a guy who tried to rape me! I don't know where I am!

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

(Over phone)

Calm down dear. You say you shot someone? Is he dead?

TRACY

(Into phone)

I don't know! I'm not sure! I'm afraid he might come after me!

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

(Over phone)

OK, dear. OK. Where are you? Where do you think you are?

TRACY

(Into phone)

He attacked me! I ran out of his house into the woods. I'm lost! I think he's... oh my god!

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

(Over phone)

Stay where you are and leave your cell phone on. We can track you with it. What's your name?

TRACY

(Into phone)

Tiffany. He forced me to go with him. He was drunk. He attacked me with a big pair of scissors. I shot him with his gun.

911 OPERATOR (O.S.)

(Over phone)

How old are you dear?

TRACY

(Into phone)

Sixteen.

Tracy drops the cell phone, still powered on, onto a bed of pine needles. Unintelligible squawking sounds come from the cell phone. Tracy runs to the car.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Tracy peels out onto the highway.

EXT. CAMDEN - NIGHT

Driving through a dicey section of Camden, Tracy tosses Fletcher's wallet out the window where it lands in the gutter.

EXT. GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - NIGHT

Tracy throws the pistol out the window into the river below.

EXT. MANHATTAN RENTAL CAR JOINT - NIGHT

Tracy hands the keys to an attendant.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frazzled, Tracy takes a bottle of vodka from the freezer and pours a stiff one which she downs in one gulp. She pours another.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tracy examines her body as though looking for a wound. In the background, water fills the bathtub. Tracy climbs into the bathtub with the glass of vodka. She stretches out.

FADE OUT.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Tracy prepares for the day, applying makeup, getting dressed. The TV drones in the background. She steps around the bed and glances at the morning news report.

TV NEWSCASTER

(Over TV)

The Brooklyn DA's office is scheduled to make a formal statement at noon.

(beat)

Now let's go to Hamilton Square where Barry Wettend is standing by. Barry?

Tracy stops and pays attention

BARRY

(Over TV)

Ernie, I'm standing on County Road 524 which runs past the pine forest you see behind me where State Police recovered a cell phone they say belonged to a man who was killed last night in his home in Hamilton Square. According to 9-1-1 records a young girl called from this forest with the very cell phone of the man she claimed had attacked her in his home with a knife. The man who police found shot to death in his bedroom. I had a chance to talk to Sergeant Baldwin of the New Jersey State Police earlier this morning and here's what she had to say.

TRACY

Shit.

BALDWIN

(Over TV)

After receiving the 9-1-1 call, we dispatched troopers who followed the cell signal to the pine forest, where the phone was found lying on the ground. Just a few minutes ago we discovered the body of a middle-aged man shot once through the throat.

TRACY

Shit.

BARRY

(Over TV)

Do the police have a positive ID on the victim?

BALDWIN

(Over TV)

Not yet.

BARRY

(Over TV)

Did the cell phone belong to the victim?

BALDWIN

(Over TV)

We think so. And other details cited in the 9-1-1 call match the scene we found at the house.

BARRY

(Over TV)

A source tells me the body of the deceased bore some marks. Scratches. Mutilation. Is that true?

TRACY

Shit.

BALDWIN

(Over TV)

I'm not going to comment on speculation. Although I will say that it appears the victim turned the tables on the attacker.

BARRY

(Over TV)

What about the girl who called 9-11?

BALDWIN

(Over TV)

Still looking for her. Undoubtedly she was frightened beyond imagination.

BARRY

(Over TV)

I can't imagine. Thank you, Sergeant.

(beat)

Ernie, back to you.

TV NEWSCASTER #1

(Over TV)

Barry Wettend reporting live from Hamilton Square. Thank you, Barry. What would you do if your husband recorded having sex with you and sold DVDs of the action on line? We'll talk to a woman in Staten Island--

Tracy shuts off the TV.

TRACY

Shit.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Tracy hands a boarding pass to the same Gate Agent who gave her a hard time before.

GATE AGENT

Welcome, Ma'am.

Tracy walks a few steps toward the jetway.

GATE AGENT (CONT'D)

Glad to see you have your own ticket this time, Ma'am.

Tracy freezes in irritation, then deciding against confrontation, walks the plank to the jet.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Tracy and Matt sit at a coffee table in Matt's big office nursing glasses of wine. Papers are strewn about the table.

MATT

I expect year-on-year revenue growth to exceed 150 percent, and if we get that contract with the Defense Department we'll surpass our earnings per share target of nine cents.

TRACY

Have you looked at the cosmetics industry? I read that nanotechnology could be used to make some of the ingredients.

MATT

That's true, but we haven't focused there. Why do you ask?

TRACY

Just seems like a lucrative segment. Women are always open to trying new twists in makeup, cleansers and the like.

MATT

I hadn't thought of that.

TRACY

Y'know, you may want to promote one of your female execs in advance of entering a female-oriented market. Your uber-male management team could be liability.

MATT

I'll definitely look into it.

Tracy looks at her wristwatch.

TRACY

Damn! I have to go Matt. Meeting someone for lunch.

Tracy stands, followed by Matt.

MATT

You will go to dinner with me tonight, won't you?

TRACY

Love to.

EXT. SAN DIEGO BISTRO - DAY

Tracy walks to the big plate-glass window of the Bistro and sees Marilyn inside seated at the bar with a drink in her hand. Tracy backs away and takes a couple of deep breaths.

INT. SAN DIEGO BISTRO - DAY

Tracy walks up to Marilyn and sits on a bar-stool next to her. Some BUSINESSMEN sit farther down the bar.

TRACY

Marilyn. So nice to see you again.

The two women exchange air-kisses.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I can't thank you enough for helping me with Fletcher, Calvin, whatever.

A BARTENDER arrives.

BARTENDER

Good afternoon, ma'am. May I get you something?

TRACY

I'll have a Martinez. Hendrick's  
if you have it.

MARILYN

I'll take another Dirty Shirley.

The Bartender acknowledges the orders and departs.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

How did your meeting go with Matt?

TRACY

Very well. We had a really nice  
conversation, and he didn't even  
bring up the "tattooed nutsack  
incident", as I now refer to it.

Marilyn chuckles. A WAITER arrives and sets a plate of food  
on the bar between the women.

WAITER

Compliments of the chef, ladies.  
Mustard glazed pork belly, green  
lentils, eggplant caviar, and  
plums. Enjoy.

Marilyn spears one of the slimy-looking hors d'oeuvres and  
stuffs it in her mouth.

MARILYN

I didn't have time for breakfast  
this morning.

Marilyn picks up another chunk of belly and devours it like a  
hungry dog.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

I hope I don't spoil my appetite.  
The lunches here are awesome and  
I'd hate to spoil my appetite.

Marilyn eats another belly. The Bartender brings the drinks.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

I'm really anxious to hear how you  
worked things out with Calvin in  
the end. I'll bet he shit his  
pants when you walked into the  
bedroom.

(beat)

Oh wait, he wasn't wearing pants.

TRACY

Uh, Marilyn. I've got something--

MARILYN

--What did the FBI say?

TRACY

I've got something to tell you about my encounter with Fletcher, uh, Calvin. Whatever.

(beat)

Things didn't go exactly quite as planned.

Tracy sips her drink and eyes Marilyn's reaction which is unremarkable.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Now be cool, Marilyn. Calvin, Fletcher. They're... I mean, he's... he's dead. I shot him. I had to shoot him.

Marilyn stops chewing and widens her eyes. After a second she swallows the glob of food.

MARILYN

Wha... what? You... you killed him?

The Businessmen look over. Tracy clutches Marilyn's forearm.

TRACY

Be cool, Marilyn. Jesus, do you want the whole place to hear you? I know this is unsettling--

Marilyn yanks her arm from Tracy's grip.

MARILYN

(Whispering)

--Unsettling? You call it unsettling?

TRACY

Listen. I didn't plan on killing the fucker. I tried to reason with him, but instead of working with me he attacked me. He lunged at me with a knife... a sharp object. Do you understand? He tried to kill me. It was self-defense.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I thought in his drunken condition he'd be easy to handle, but he caught me off-guard. I had no choice, Marilyn. Do you understand? No choice.

MARILYN

I... don't... know, Tracy. This is serious. You know I didn't want to get involved from the beginning. I told you that a million times. Now you've connected me to a homicide.

Tracy arches her eyebrows.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

OK - self-defense. But even if you did kill him in self-defense, everyone's going to think you killed him out of revenge for scamming you. And in two seconds, they'll connect me to the crime too - another ditzy broad who was sucked into one of his scams. It looks bad, Tracy.

(beat)

What were you doing there with a gun anyway?

TRACY

Doesn't matter.

(beat)

OK, it was for intimidation. I didn't know it was loaded. Honest. I popped out the magazine but... what difference does it make now? It's under control, Marilyn. The police think he was killed by an underage prostitute. The weapon is gone. No one's going to connect us to it. I've been monitoring the local news, and that's the way the winds are prevailing. He was killed during the commission of debauchery. He attacked a young girl and she blew him away. Stomped on his nuts.

MARILYN

What?

TRACY

We were never there, Marilyn.  
We're two successful female  
executives with better things to do  
than consort with a slug like  
Fletcher Cuttbate. Let's not  
descend into a folie à deux. I  
need your cooperation.

Marilyn samples her drink coyly, delaying a response.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Maril--

MARILYN

--You want my cooperation? OK,  
you're a big-time negotiator,  
Tracy. Negotiate for it.

TRACY

C'mon Marilyn. I saved you a  
quarter million dollars. Isn't  
that enough?

MARILYN

I don't feel any richer than I did  
yesterday. Besides, it's not about  
money.

TRACY

I see. Power, authority, position,  
status.

MARILYN

Something like that.

TRACY

Ultimately all negotiations come  
down to self-worth. How much of it  
you're willing to sacrifice... How  
much you can exact from someone  
else.

MARILYN

What are you going to do for me,  
Tracy?

Tracy plops an hors d'oeuvre in her mouth.

TRACY

Satisfy your sense of self-worth,  
of course. What do you know about  
nanotechnology and cosmetics,  
Marilyn?

EXT. RICHARDS' PI OFFICE - DAY

Tracy's limo pulls to the curb outside Richards' PI Office in Brooklyn. A NEW DRIVER, a stocky, white man in a uniform opens the door and Tracy struts to the door.

INT. BROWNSTONE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tracy, Matt and Charles sit together on the sofa eating popcorn and watching "Ace in the Hole" on TV. Charles sits between Matt and Tracy.

CLOSE-UP - TV

Showing Kirk Douglas's character Chuck Tatum falling wounded to the floor, ending the movie.

BACK TO SCENE

CHARLES

How about that, Matt? Good movie, huh?

MATT

Very good. Great suggestion, Charles.

CHARLES

"I don't go to church. Kneeling bags my nylons". What a great line.

MATT

And the one about belts and suspenders. Genius.

Charles fingers his belt sheepishly.

TRACY

While you two recount the entire movie, I'm going to make some coffee.

Tracy leaves.

CHARLES

Is she gone?

MATT

Yeah.

CHARLES

Tracy's a great woman, Matt. A real winner. I hope you respect that.

MATT

Sure. I do.

CHARLES

She works too hard. Never really had any lasting relationships. Maybe you can change that.

MATT

I think so.

Matt reaches into his pocket.

MATT (CONT'D)

I want to show you something. Hold out your hand.

Charles extends his palm. Matt places a diamond engagement ring into it.

CHARLES

What's this?

MATT

What do you think it is, Charles?

CHARLES

Is it a diamond? It's too big to be a diamond.

MATT

That's what eight carats feels like.

CHARLES

Good God, Matt. Eight carats?

MATT

Shhh. I'm going to ask Tracy when she comes out to San Diego next week. Of course, I want your blessing.

Charles begins to tear up. His feeble eyes dart around.

CHARLES

Oh, Matt. Of course you have my blessing.

Sound of cups clinking O.S. Matt quickly stuffs the ring back into his pocket. Charles blots his eyes. Tracy walks in carrying a tray with coffees and creamers.

TRACY  
What's wrong, Dad?

CHARLES  
Nothing dear. Something in my eyes.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

GUESTS of NanoNano sit at several tables at the same San Diego Restaurant where NanoNano celebrated its IPO party. Some Guests dance to Latin music. Matt and Tracy sit together at a center table with a few other EXECUTIVES including Marilyn and her BOYFRIEND.

INSERT: TITLE CARD "ONE MONTH LATER"

EXECUTIVE #1  
Hey, did you hear about Ron Subytic?

Most of the table pays attention. Tracy continues chatting with the person sitting next to her.

MARILYN  
What?

EXECUTIVE #1  
He got fired from PicoTech. Someone told me they found kiddie porn on his computer.

MATT  
Jesus. What an asshole.

MARILYN  
(Shocked)  
I can't believe it.

Marilyn studies Tracy's face but discerns nothing untoward.

MATT  
Good thing he left us. That kinda press we can do without.

Matt shakes his head, then stands and clinks his glass to attract the attention of the room. The band stops playing.

MATT (CONT'D)

May I have your attention everyone. We are gathered here today to celebrate the union of our fair maiden NanoNano and the deep-pocketed Department of Defense in the holy sacrament of government contracts. Hang on to your options, boys and girls.

The room erupts in applause. Matt waits for the noise to die down.

MATT (CONT'D)

The contract will give us the cash flow us to pursue R&D that may one day cure a variety of eye diseases - a market we believe is very lucrative.

More applause. Tracy nods sublimely.

MATT (CONT'D)

Now, I have another announcement to make. Marilyn, would you please stand up.

Marilyn stands and modestly clasps her hands in front of her.

MATT (CONT'D)

I'm thrilled to announce that Marilyn Jenkins has been promoted to General Manager of our soon-to-be opened facility in Malaysia where we will start our cosmetics operation. Marilyn brings enormous experience to the role, and we're happy to have such a talented woman on the senior executive team.

Marilyn acknowledges the applause.

MATT (CONT'D)

You all better get your face time with Marilyn tonight. She leaves for Kuala Lumpur tomorrow morning and we won't be seeing her much around here after that.

Tracy smiles deviously. Guests step up to congratulate Marilyn, including Tracy.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT/WOMEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tracy stands at the sink, examining an eyelash in the mirror. She sees the reflection of Marilyn watching her from behind. Tracy turns to face her.

TRACY  
Hello Marilyn.

MARILYN  
(Testily)  
I earned my promotion, Tracy.

TRACY  
Of course you earned it. Why would you even bring it up?

MARILYN  
I brought up the idea of cosmetics with Matt a long time ago, just so you know.

TRACY  
Insightful, Marilyn.

MARILYN  
I don't want you telling people I asked you for help... I mean negotiated for... Shit!  
(beat)  
Now that you're screwing my boss, I don't want anyone thinking you had something to do with my promotion. Like payback for saving your ass on that Calvin thing--

TRACY  
--Jesus Christ, Marilyn! What's wrong with you? Did you drink too many Dirty Shirleys again?

Tracy bends down low to inspect the stalls for the telltale feet of accidental interlopers, finding none.

TRACY (CONT'D)  
Look, you're a General Manager now, Marilyn. The biggest big-shot woman in nanotech. You got what you wanted. Don't blow it.

MARILYN  
You don't think I deserve it, do you?

TRACY  
C'mon, Marilyn. Deserve's got nothing to do with it. You should know that. You don't get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.

MARILYN  
Is that a fact?

TRACY  
Just keep your big mouth shut, understand? Forever. You do that and I promise you'll go far in our company.

MARILYN  
Huh? What? Our... what does that mean?

TRACY  
Didn't you hear? Matt proposed last night and I said yes.

MARILYN  
Amazing.

TRACY  
And I'm joining the board of NanoNano at the next meeting.

MARILYN  
Unbelievable.

TRACY  
Congratulations again on your promotion, Marilyn.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Tracy and Matt dance among others to a Latin version of "Day and Night."

FADE OUT.

THE END