

THE GOOD (BAD) SHEPARD

S1:E3

Written by

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S1:E3 "NO REQUEST IS OUT OF BOUNDS"

FADE IN:

INT. RICHARDS' OFFICE - DAY

For a moment, Richards stares blankly then hangs up the phone. He flips through a notebook stopping at a page and makes a call. C.U. of the page where "Hamilton Co. Coroner" is written long-hand along with a phone number.

RICHARDS

Hey, it's Grayson Richards.

(beat)

I'm calling about that guy with the tatted cock.

(beat)

Yes, I am still interested believe it or not. Him, not his cock. Can we continue our conversation sometime soon?

(beat)

Cool, I'll swing by tomorrow.

EXT. CORONER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

With rain pelting down, Richards parks his car - a vintage yellow Karmann Ghia - in the lot and runs to the entrance of the Coroner's Office carrying a briefcase. The door is locked, so Richards pounds on it. After a moment, some lights flicker on inside the office and CODY, a youngish, male, gaunt autopsy technician wearing stained scrubs appears. He unlocks the door.

INT. CORONER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Richards steps inside, shaking off the wetness. He extends his hand.

RICHARDS

Grayson Richards. We spoke yesterday.

CODY

You don't wanna shake my hand Mr. Grayson. I'm in the middle of organ extractions at the moment. You're free to come back with me to the morgue if you want.

RICHARDS
Um, well you see--

CODY
--If you're the squeamish type, you
can sit over there until I'm done.

RICHARDS
No, no. I'm intrigued. I've never
been inside a morgue when the
sausage was being made.
(beat)
Sorry, that was a bit too on the
nose.

CODY
You're a PI and you've never been
in the morgue?

RICHARDS
I mean, I've been inside plenty.
Just not during the cutting, and
dismembering, and whatever else you
guys do in there.

CODY
Well, if you're implying
necrophilia, that hardly ever
happens. I hope that's not what
you're investigating.

RICHARDS
No. Absolutely not. Nothing of
the sort.

Cody walks off, followed by Richards, hesitatingly.

INT. AUTOPSY ROOM - NIGHT

Inside the Autopsy Room, Cody resumes examination of a corpse
on a slab. Cody addresses Richards without taking his
attention away from the task at hand. Richards removes a
notepad from his breast pocket.

CODY
What do you wanna know about Mr.
Snake Tattoo?

RICHARDS
As much as you can tell me. And
show me.

CODY

Show you? His body was removed over a year ago.

RICHARDS

I assume there are some records. Y'know, photos, tissue samples, stuff like that.

CODY

That wasn't in our agreement, Mr. Grayson.

RICHARDS

Richards. Well, can we add it to our agreement?

CODY

I don't know.

(beat)

I guess so.

Cody tosses a livid lump into a pan with a SPLAT.

CODY (CONT'D)

But it'll cost. Another G. You're asking for privileged shit. Confidential shit. The kinda shit that gets dudes like you and me stripped of our licenses. Possible criminal charges.

(beat)

You carry a leather briefcase with a clasp and a tiny lock, so I know you're prepared to pay for shit.

RICHARDS

Prepared, yes, and done. Another thou. That's fair.

Cody continues with his autopsy tasks, not speaking directly to Richards.

CODY

The dude's real name is Walter Muff. He came in here with an alias tagged to his toe, but the DNA gave him away.

Richards writes the man's name onto a pad.

RICHARDS

Would you know his date of birth, next of kin--

CODY

--Whoa! I'm not 23 and me, jack.
I just know the fucker's name.
That's it. Walter Muff: M O U G H.

Richards scratches out and corrects what he had just written.

He proceeds to unlock the clasp on his briefcase, a hint of indignance at the "tiny lock" comment, and pulls out a roll of hundreds. He drops the money into a bowl next to the autopsy table.

Cody looks at Richards annoyed, then using forceps extracts the wad of bills and drops them in a plastic bag.

RICHARDS

Now show me the good stuff. The
Glengarry leads.

Cody walks to a filing cabinet, followed closely by Richards. He pulls out a folder stuffed with papers and lays them on top of the cabinet. Richards paws through the contents, arriving at a photo of Cuttbate's tattooed cock. He takes a picture of the picture with his cell phone.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

This is good. Real good. I might
be able to retire on this shit.

INT. REAL ESTATE LAW OFFICE - DAY

Tracy approaches a RECEPTIONIST at the front desk in the Real Estate Law Office located in Queens. Tracy, as always, is dressed sharply, wearing her signature high heels.

RECEPTIONIST

May I help you?

TRACY

I hope so. I think a former
employee of mine works here.
Hannah Goldman?

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

TRACY

No, but I'm in kind of a jam with
an "all cash" deal on Malba Drive.
It's imperative I get legal
representation ASAP.

RECEPTIONIST

Let me--

TRACY

--Hannah was one of my star employees.

The Receptionist dials the phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Hannah, a Ms., Uh--

TRACY

--Shepard. Tracy Shepard. She knows me.

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Tracy Shepard to see you. She says it's urgent. And she, um, knows you? Something to do with a property on Malba?

The Receptionist hangs up the phone.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Ms. Goldman will see you presently. Can I get you something to drink?

TRACY

No thank you.

Tracy walks toward a bank of plush chairs. As she takes a seat the Receptionist remarks.

RECEPTIONIST

Your shoes are gorgeous, Ms. Shepard. Louboutins?

TRACY

Roger Vivier.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh. I'm not--

TRACY

--The haute couture line.

INT. REAL ESTATE LAW OFFICE - DAY (LATER)

As Hannah walks into the Real Estate Law Office anteroom, Tracy stands to greet her former employee. Hannah is much more polished and refined than when she last appeared. Better dressed, stylish hair-do, more svelte.

Perhaps expecting a perfunctory hug from Tracy, Hannah stretches her arms only to be met with Tracy's outstretched hand. Hannah shakes Tracy's hand.

TRACY

Hannah. So good to see you. You look great.

HANNAH

You look even better. You're involved in a real estate deal in Malba? How can I help you?

TRACY

It has nothing to do with Malba. Can we talk in your office?

INT. HANNAH'S OFFICE - DAY

Hannah's Office is rather drably appointed, offering a dismal view of the parking lot through bent Venetian blinds out the only window. Hannah's desk and credenza is blemished IKEA. A house plant in distress sits next to it. Her law degree is mounted in a cheap frame on the wall behind the desk. Tracy takes a seat by a coffee table; Hannah sits across from her.

HANNAH

What brings you to Queens? If not a real estate deal, then--

TRACY

--I came to hire you back. I need a good legal assistant now that I'm waist-deep in decision involving my husband's firm. A quality person I can trust. That's you, Hannah.

Hannah stands slowly and paces a bit.

HANNAH

Can I get you something, Tracy? I have a bottle of Stolli in the fridge.

TRACY

I'm good. Look, I'm sure you were upset with the abrupt, the sudden, um, layoff, but I had no choice. I was scammed out of a lot of money.

HANNAH

I'm sorry. I really am. And I'm not upset. Wasn't upset.

TRACY

My life was turned upside down and inside out by that bastard.

HANNAH

I know. And I sympathize.

(beat)

I'm doing OK here, Tracy. Easy cases, decent money, guaranteed benefits. I get to go home at a decent hour.

TRACY

NanoNano is growing like crazy. New markets, new products, expansion all over the world. Four hundred new hires just since January. My role has expanded beyond board member and major shareholder.

HANNAH

Wife, too, I suppose.

TRACY

Sei cattivella.

(beat)

C'mon, Hannah.

HANNAH

Tracy, I always liked working for you.

TRACY

But?

HANNAH

But, I'm content here.

TRACY

I'll triple your salary, dangle a sweet signing bonus in your face, give you a platinum health plan, and ensure the important work you do at NanoNano will make radon litigation seem like, uh, radon litigation.

HANNAH

Why me?

TRACY

You're a good lawyer, Hannah.

HANNAH

Why me?

TRACY

We work well together. Always have.

HANNAH

Why me?

TRACY

OK, the challenges inside and outside of work have reached a fever pitch. Complications abound. I need a competent person like you I can trust absolutely. A loyal subject who will--

HANNAH

--Loyal subject? Really?

TRACY

Loyalty is non-negotiable.

HANNAH

Triple salary?

TRACY

Quadruple if you say yes in 24 hours.

HANNAH

Thank you, your highness.

Giggling, Hannah curtsies before Tracy, who chuckles herself.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Richards strolls into the Police Department holding a folder of papers. He proceeds to the front desk, plopping the folder on the counter.

OFFICER

What do you want?

RICHARDS

My name is Grayson Richards. I have a FOIA for information on a deceased felon who was once arraigned in your jurisdiction. A Walter Muff.

OFFICER

Muff?

Richards opens the folder.

RICHARDS

It's spelled M-O--

OFFICER

--aka. Bush?

OFFICER #2 laughing O.S.

RICHARDS

Look, I just wanna--

OFFICER #2 (O.S.)

(chuckling)

--aka. Merkin?

Richards taps on his folder.

RICHARDS

Can you just give me the arrest records and the other items in the FOIA? Please?

OFFICER

Lemme see that fuckin' folder.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY (LATER)

Richards heads to the exit, a wide sheaf of papers squeezed under his arm. He passes by a window marked "Evidence". A portly, twenty-something EVIDENCE CLERK sits in a swivel chair in the mid-distance inside the room, scrolling on his cell phone. Richards calls out to him.

RICHARDS

Hey, dough boy. Waddle your fat ass over here.

The Evidence Clerk stares at Richards with initial befuddlement, then rises slowly and approaches the window protected by bullet-proof glass.

EVIDENCE CLERK

Whadja just say to me?

RICHARDS

Nothing. Just talking to myself. I said, "Oh Boy, what's the fastest way outta here?".

The Evidence Clerk points down the hallway.

EVIDENCE CLERK
See that exit sign.

Richards dumbly looks down the hall.

RICHARDS
Now I do.

Richards spots the Evidence Clerk's badge

RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Thanks, Officer Bockleman.

EVIDENCE CLERK
Glad I could help.

RICHARDS
Maybe you could help me with
something else. I'd make it worth
your while.

EVIDENCE CLERK
Like what?

RICHARDS
I just got a big file related to a
case I'm working on, and I might
need to check out some of that
evidence you got stored away.

EVIDENCE CLERK
Doesn't work that way, mister.
Takes a court order.

Richards nods like he gets the picture

RICHARDS
Ah, that makes sense, I suppose.
(beat)
I bet there's a lot of shit in
boxes that's been sittin' idle for
years. Decades, maybe. Nobody
caring about it.

EVIDENCE CLERK
That's for sure. Especially them
cold cases. We got a bunch.
(beat)
My favorite is the box with a
chastity belt and a set of
dentures.

RICHARDS
Ouch. What happened?

EVIDENCE CLERK
Victim died of, well, y'know,
excessive blood loss due to trauma.

RICHARDS
Do what I think happened, happen??

The Evidence Clerk nods with a foolish grin on his face.

EVIDENCE CLERK
This was way before DNA and stuff.
It's never gonna get solved.

RICHARDS
Why not just chuck that shit in the
trash? Or send it to Ripley's
Believe it or Not?

EVIDENCE CLERK
Probably should. We could use the
space.

RICHARDS
I can imagine. So much crime, so
little space. Thanks for showing
me the way outta here. Maybe I'll
see you later, sir.

EVIDENCE CLERK
Be safe out there.

INT. RICHARDS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Richards sits at his spare desk poring over the pile of papers he obtained through his FOIA request. A half full rocks glass of brown booze sits nearby. He reads, makes notes, reads some more, and then enters a query into his laptop. After a moment staring at the screen, Richards sits back and takes a nice, satisfying pull from the glass.

On the laptop screen: a minor California news outlet headline reading, "Ron Slomsky, former PicoTech exec pleads guilty." Ron's photo accompanies the article.

EXT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT - DAY

A plane lands at the San Diego Airport on a typically sunny day.

EXT. RON'S APARTMENT - DAY

In mid-afternoon, a taxi cab pulls in front of Ron's Apartment complex, a rough Section 8 property littered with bikes and broken toys on the sodless dirt. He exits the cab and walks to the Visitor's entrance carrying a briefcase. Even in his cheap PI suit Richards is vastly overdressed for the neighborhood of lower-class, mixed races.

Richards consults a piece of paper then walks towards Ron's Apartment. A teenaged BOY among several others hanging around calls to Richards as he gets near the door.

BOY

That dude's a sex offender. He's gotta tell you that.

RICHARDS

Thanks. I know what he is.

BOY

My mom's tryin' to get him 'victed.

RICHARDS

Good for her.

Richards knocks on the door. Ron opens it, standing a full step back into the dark apartment so as not to be seen by anyone outside. Ron hurriedly waves Richards in.

RON

Get in here, man.

Richards hustles in and shuts the door behind him.

INT. RON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ron's Apartment is a dreary mess: balled up clothing on the floor, dishes piled in the kitchen. A cat roams the place while another scratches in a clumpy litterbox. Ron extends his hand, which Ron shakes.

RICHARDS

Thanks for agreeing to meet with me, Mr. Slomsky. I'm Grayson Richards.

RON

The last person to call me Mr. Slomsky was a very unfair judge right after he ruined my life but good.

RICHARDS

Child porn rap. Pretty serious.

RON

I did not have child pornography on my computer. That's not my thing. Someone planted that shit.

(beat)

And whoever it was, they hid the footprints real good. My lawyer was very impressed.

RICHARDS

Who would want to do such a terrible thing? Assuming that's what really happened.

RON

Oh, it definitely happened.

(beat)

My guess: some asshole at work.

RICHARDS

That would be my guess as well. Can we sit down and go through some things?

Ron leads Richards to a card table cluttered with papers, clothing, trash. One of the cats sits among the detritus. With one arm, Ron sweeps the table clear, flinging the cat into the air.

The men sit across from one another.

RON

I'd offer you a drink, but I'm not allowed to possess alcohol. Sorry.

RICHARDS

That's OK. As I said in my letter--

RON

--Sorry about that, too, but I'm not allowed to possess a computer either.

RICHARDS

Understand. As I said, I'm a private investigator from New York City. I've come to believe you can help me with a case that has befuddled me for a very long time.

RON

Right. So, how can I help you?
And more importantly, how can you
help me?

RICHARDS

I have connections with cyber
security experts who, if what you
say is true and you really didn't
obtain or produce these files, can
construct a forensic profile and
develop an audit trail that might
form the basis of an appeal.

RON

I told you, man. I didn't possess--

RICHARDS

--I'd be willing to marshal such
forces, at my own expense, if what
you provide is critical to solving
my hard case.

RON

Look, Richards, this is intriguing,
but I have no idea how I can help
you.

RICHARDS

I think you can. You're familiar
with Walter Muff aka. Fischer
Cuttbate, yes? Among other
aliases?

RON

Um, uh...

RICHARDS

A dude with a snake tattooed on his
penis?

RON

Huh?

RICHARDS

OK, maybe you didn't know that.

(beat)

My hard case involved a rich lady
who was scammed out of a mil by a
crew whom I believe was led by the
late Mr. Muff slash Cuttbate.

RON

He's dead?

RICHARDS

You worked with Muff. I discovered that fact in an arrest record about a clumsy Ponzi scheme .

Ron shrugs.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

I'll go a step further and say you were a player in one or more of his confidence games. You see, the rich lady was connected to a company you once worked for - NanoNano. Coincidence?

Ron stands and paces the room nervously. Richards pulls a bottle of booze from his briefcase and places it on the card table.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Bring us a couple glasses, Ron. Clean ones, if you have 'em.

Ron walks into the kitchen.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

Look, I have zero interest in making trouble for you or anyone else regarding past con games. I'm just trying to figure out who killed Walter Muff.

RON (O.S.)

Why? Is there a 50 cent reward in it?

RICHARDS

Not a reward, so to speak. And not 50 cents, but maybe a payoff of millions.

(beat)

Does the name "Tracy Shepard" ring a bell, Ron?

Ron re-enters with two glasses and a rag. He polishes each glass and pours generously. Seated now, Ron raises his glass, which prompts Richards to do likewise.

RON

I haven't had a drink in almost two years. I'll probably be drunk in 10 minutes.

Richard smiles imperceptibly at that fortuitous possibility.

RON (CONT'D)
It'd be just my luck if my PO
walked in right now.

Ron clinks Richards's glass and throws back a big gulp,
whereas Richards takes a modest sip.

RICHARDS
Tracy Shepard. Know her? Stylish
broad. Great legs. Always in high
heels.

RON
I met her once. That's it. My job
was to make sure she got to the
airport late. Important to the
scam but I was just a minor player.

RICHARDS
Still, you're pretty sure Muff, as
Fischer Cuttbate, pulled a scam on
Tracy.

RON
Yeah. And it came off clean. No
one cracked out of turn. Everyone
got a slice. Unlike the next scam.

RICHARDS
Tell me about that.

RON
The scam on the rich bitch worked
so well, Walter wanted to run it
again on another woman. I
recommended someone inside
NanoNano, a well-to-do woman exec
who seemed dim enough to fall for
it.

RICHARDS
When was that?

RON
Year, year and a half ago.

RICHARDS
Hmm. Right around the time Muff
got snuffed. So, who was the lady
mark?

RON

No-can-do. Maybe I'll give you her name after I meet with your cyber guy.

Ron pours himself another drink and slurps it down. Richards rises.

RICHARDS

Fair enough, Mr. Slomsky. Based on what you've told me so far, I'm convinced you can help me.

Ron rises and wobbles slightly.

RICHARDS (CONT'D)

You'll get a call from my guy Bart Keyes - probably in the next seven to ten. He's a top notch forensic systems analyst. Can tell a bit from a byte without breaking a sweat.

RON

Keyes. OK. That'll be great. Thanks.

RICHARDS

Thank you, Ron.

Richards heads for the door.

INT. NANONANO HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Inside the spacious, modern, empty lobby of NanoNano Headquarters, Richards walks up to a pretty female RECEPTIONIST swiping idly behind an imposing marble front desk. Behind the desk on the wall in a minimalistic font is the NanoNano logo. The clock indicates 4:30.

RECEPTIONIST

Good afternoon, sir. Do you have an appointment?

RICHARDS

Oh no. I've been reading about the NanoNano company and I think I might wanna invest some money. Looks like a great company.

RECEPTIONIST

It really is, sir. So, what can I do for you?

RICHARDS

Could I get a copy of the annual report from the last couple of years? Wanna do some research.

RECEPTIONIST

Sure. Give me a minute.

The Receptionist leaves her post. In a moment, Richards observes Matt accompanied by Hannah, who carries a bulky briefcase, walking through the Lobby, past a GUARD and through a secured door. Richards turns to hide his face from notice.

The Receptionist returns to her station behind the front desk and hands a couple annual reports to Richards.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Here you go. You know, these are available on our website.

RICHARDS

Yeah, but I'm kinda anti-technology, if you know what I mean. I'd rather hold the information in my hands. Old school, I guess.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, I think you'll be impressed with NanoNano.

RICHARDS

Oh, I love their technology. Real promising.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT - DAY

As he consumes dinner at 5:00, Richards pages through the NanoNano annual report. He turns pages finally stopping on one in particular.

RICHARDS'S POV: A page with a dozen mug shots of the officers of NanoNano. Only one woman appears: Marilyn Jenkins.

ECU of Marilyn's photo citing her position and location in Malaysia.

INT. NANONANO MALAYSIA - DAY

Marilyn runs a small team meeting in her office which looks out over the Klang River. A clock on the wall reads 9:00.

Marilyn is the only American in attendance; the rest are well-dressed young men and women of Asian descent. One of the women, SYAFIQA, is sleek and polished in the style of a confident team leader. Another is RIZWAN, a young male dressed more casually than the others. From behind her desk an agitated Marilyn speaks to her team assembled in a semi-circle of chairs before her.

MARILYN

Listen people: Sales are flatlining on exfoliant one point zero. That was expected. But it was also expected that two point zero would be in market by now.

(beat)

Marketing has the whole campaign loaded, ready to go. We're holding up the whole show.

RIZWAN

We're behind, yes – but not because we're dragging our feet. We're troubleshooting unpredictable interactions. Nanomaterials don't behave like conventional powders.

Surprised at the tone, Syafiqah glances disapprovingly at Rizwan.

MARILYN

I know how this shit behaves.

(beat)

And I never accused any of you people of dragging your feet. Jesus, can someone just tell me what the hell is going on?

Syafiqah stands up before anyone else can embarrass themselves.

SYAFIQA

Ms. Jenkins, the silica nanoparticles keep agglomerating at concentrations above 2%. We can stabilize them, but viscosity is compromised. Two point zero is mud right now.

MARILYN

What's the plan?

SYAFIQA

Research thinks we can replace silica with titanium dioxide.

(MORE)

SYAFIQAH (CONT'D)

Looks very promising. Messes up the development budget, but the swap out should be smooth.

MARILYN

Schedule?

SYAFIQAH

Four months to beta with early adopters.

MARILYN

Get it down to ten weeks. Matt is killing me to get the new formula into market in some form before the shareholder meeting.

The team members sit idly in their chairs waiting for more from Marilyn. She claps her hands twice.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Go!

Marilyn rises from behind her desk, stretches her back, and consults her desk calendar.

The team exits post haste. As the last member leaves, MARILYN'S AIDE, a slim male, enters the office.

MARILYN'S AIDE

Ms. Jenkins. You have a call from the states - a Mr. Grayson Richards. He says he has some information of import to discuss with you.

MARILYN

Such as?

MARILYN'S AIDE

He said it involves an investigation he's undertaking. He said it could have relevance to you.

MARILYN

Oh, hell. You need to improve your call screening proficiency. I don't have--

MARILYN'S AIDE

--He told me to tell you he spoke at some length with a gentleman named Ron Slomsky.

MARILYN

Is he--

MARILYN'S AIDE

--On hold? Yes. Do you want me to patch him through, Ms. Jenkins?

Marilyn sits down slowly. After a moment, she responds.

MARILYN

OK.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - DAY

Tracy rolls into the anteroom of Matt's Office where Hannah stands in conversation across a desk with Matt's SECRETARY. Hannah is much more polished than when she was in Tracy's employ before the Cuttbate scam. Upon seeing Tracy, Hannah gives her a royal greeting.

HANNAH

Tracy, so nice to see you. When did you get in? What brings you--

TRACY

--Checking in on a project glitch.
(beat)
Oh, and my husband is on the other side of that door.

HANNAH

Of course.
(beat)
How's New York? How's your dad.

TRACY

I adore New York City. I idolize it all out of proportion. As for Dad - now that he can see again, he's watching every movie he missed in the past 25 years. He just blew through every Woody Allen movie.

Hannah chuckles and shakes her head. Then after a pregnant moment, Hannah closes in a bit on Tracy.

HANNAH

Listen, Tracy, I've been wanting to tell you in person. I can't thank you enough for giving me this job. I love it here. And I love San Diego. What a change from New York.

(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

(beat)

Not there's anything wrong--

TRACY

--I'm glad you're happy, Hannah.
You were always helpful to me. And
almost always gave me good counsel.

Hannah looks surprised and then glances down chastened.

TRACY (CONT'D)

You keeping Matt out of trouble?

HANNAH

Huh? I mean, sure. Absolutely.
He's awfully busy. The things he's
involved in are mind-boggling.

TRACY

Yes, the things he and I are
involved in are extraordinary,
Hannah.

(beat)

Let me be frank. I proposed you
for Matt's EA because I thought you
would serve him well. And me.
Consider yourself my EA, too.

(beat)

This business is more complicated
than you can imagine. Unscrupulous
competitors, slimy politicians,
fickle employees out to steal a
pencil.

(beat)

Matt will depend on you to keep his
calendar organized and his mail
empty. I'll depend on you for
other stuff. Understand?

HANNAH

Sure I do, Tracy. Loyal subject,
remember?

TRACY

Did I say that? It doesn't sound
like--

HANNAH

--I remember.

After a pause, Tracy smirks and responds brightly.

TRACY

Sei cattivella.

HANNAH

OK. Now I'm gonna have to look that up.

INT. MARILYN'S OFFICE - DAY

Marilyn presses the button on her speakerphone, initiating a conversation with the waiting Richards.

MARILYN

Marilyn Jenkins here. To whom am I speaking?

INTERCUT WITH RICHARDS IN THE DINER.

Richards holds a cell phone and a pen. A pad of paper sits on the table.

RICHARDS

Ms. Jenkins, my name--

MARILYN

--what is this about?

RICHARDS

Ms. Jenkins, my name is Grayson Richards. I'm a private investigator in New York. I once worked for Tracy Shepard.

(beat)

You know Ms. Shepard, right?

MARILYN

What do you want?

RICHARDS

My employment with Ms. Shepard ended a while ago, but the crux of the case intrigued me, so I kept working on trying to find out... well, I can't talk about her case at the moment, but let's just say she lost interest which I found odd given the new information I had uncovered.

(beat)

Anyway, I found out some things that directed me to you.

MARILYN

I don't know what you're talking about.

RICHARDS

Do you know a Ron Slomsky? Worked at Nanonano, then PicoTech, then became a convicted sex offender.

MARILYN

I'm hanging up.

RICHARDS

Don't you want to know what he told me? Or do you already know, and that's why you want to hang up?

MARILYN

Look, Mr. Richards--

RICHARDS

--You were the victim of a scam, just like Tracy Shepard was. Am I right?

MARILYN

No. Scam? What?

RICHARDS

Slomsky told me he was part of a crew that scammed women using a ruse involving identical twins. That crew screwed Tracy out of a lot of money, and almost screwed you too, right?

MARILYN

I'm done with this.

RICHARDS

Does the name Cuttbate mean anything to you, Ms. Jenkins? Or maybe Calvin somebody?

MARILYN

I don't know--

RICHARDS

--How about a cock with a snake tattoo?

Marilyn terminates the call with a sharp finger to the speakerphone button. She pours herself a stiff drink and walks slowly to the big window overlooking the Klang River. The morning sun silhouettes Marilyn's curvy body.

INT. SAN DIEGO RESTAURANT - DAY

Sitting over his empty dinner plate, Richards places his cellphone on the table. He revisits the NanoNano annual report still open to the page of officers. The facing page is another collection of mug shots featuring the board of directors. Tracy's photo appears second after Matt's.

Richards draws a snake connecting the photos of Marilyn and Tracy.

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Matt and Tracy sit together in slick club chairs by an art deco coffee table. A couple cocktails rest on the table. Hannah sits off to the side with her notepad. Whereas Matt and Tracy are dressed like models from Town & Country, Hannah wears a sharp business suit.

MATT

Y'know, Trace, Marilyn's update on two point zero didn't engender a lot of confidence.

TRACY

Cautiously pessimistic. Set the bar low then step over it, all the time acting as if you cured cancer.

MATT

I don't think so. She asked me to approve a requisition for a substantial quantity of some kind of chemical. Apparently she needs it to fix problems with the formula.

TRACY

Seems kinda late for that.

Matt takes a swig of his cocktail.

MATT

I think the project is in trouble. You'll have to go over there and straighten shit out.

TRACY

Me? You're not serious.

MATT

You proposed getting us into cosmetics - of all things.

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

And it was you who pitched Marilyn for the gig.

(beat)

You own this, Tracy. I have full confidence you can get your project back on track.

Slouching, Tracy dangles a high heeled shoe from her big toe.

TRACY

Chemistry is not my strong suit, Matt.

MATT

I'm surprised at you, Trace. This isn't about chemistry. It's about rallying the troops. Boosting morale. Persuasion, babe, not chemistry.

(beat)

Isn't that your métier?

Tracy abruptly sits upright, assuming a take-charge posture.

TRACY

Listen, I have a lot of--

MATT

--Have a nice flight, Tracy. Call me when you get in. And don't tell Marilyn you're coming over. I don't want to give her a chance to embellish the facts.

Scowling, Tracy drills Matt with her dagger eyes, but he casually drinks his cocktail.

TRACY

OK, Matt. But if it really is a shit-show, I expect you to do something about Marilyn when the project is over.

MATT

We'll discuss that when you get back.

(to Hannah)

Hannah, make Tracy's arrangements.

HANNAH

Absolutely, Mr. Blankenshein.

(to Tracy)

What would--

TRACY

--Come with me, Hannah.

The two women head for the exit.

EXT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT- DAY

A black limo pulls to the curb in front of the Airport's international terminal.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Tracy and Hannah sit across from one another in the cabin of the spacious Limo.

HANNAH

You're all set. Lie down seats to Tokyo and Kuala Lumpur. Your driver will be waiting for you at the KLIA Premier concourse. I reserved you a suite at the St. Regis. It's close to NanoNano Malaysia.

TRACY

I'm going to need your complete attention during this mercy mission. I can only imagine what miracles I'll have to perform to get this shit back on track.

HANNAH

I'm there for you 24 by seven.

TRACY

You'll have to do better than that, Hannah.

(beat)

Lighten up. I'm joking.

HANNAH

They use the UK outlet in Malaysia. I packed you an adapter. Also, a dollar is worth about three and a half ringgit.

Tracy knocks on the window and the LIMO DRIVER opens her door. As Tracy exits, Hannah pipes up one more time.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Have a safe flight Tracy.

EXT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT- DAY

The Limo Driver handles Tracy's luggage as he escorts her to a BAGGAGE HANDLER plying his trade on the sidewalk.

INT. JET (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy sits in her first class seat in the center aisle of the jet watching a movie, "Breakfast at Tiffany's". A sharp-dressed, good-looking Asian man, AIMAN, 31 years old occupying the seat next to Tracy's glances at her off and on. At the end of the movie Tracy removes her headphones; the Asian Man makes his intro.

AIMAN
How was the movie?

TRACY
I've seen it ten times and I still don't like it.

AIMAN
It really denigrates Asians.

Tracy pulls a folder from her briefcase.

AIMAN (CONT'D)
Business in Tokyo?

TRACY
KL.

AIMAN
Me too. What do you do?

TRACY
Look, don't take this personally, but I had a very bad experience that started with a conversation with a businessman on a plane.

AIMAN
Oh, how horrible. What did he do?

Tracy chuckles at the Asian Man's obliviousness.

TRACY
I just said-- How old are you?

AIMAN
Thirty-one.

TRACY

Hmmm. You look younger. 28. The same age as my husband.

(beat)

What do you do in KL?

AIMAN

I'm general manager of a private security firm for corporate executives and wealthy people. Big business in Malaysia.

(beat)

I'll bet you're a corporate executive. You run your own company, am I right?

TRACY

Maybe.

Aiman puts his finger to his temple and closes his eyes.

AIMAN

I see you running a company headquartered in San Diego, with a satellite in KL. And you're on your way to solve a looming crisis.

Aiman opens his eyes and smiles. Tracy turns away.

AIMAN (CONT'D)

Or not

TRACY

I don't like the way this conversation is going. Too many questions. Sounds like you're digging for something.

AIMAN

Oh dear. Forgive me. It was inappropriate for me to pry. Especially after you already told me you had a bad experience on a plane before. I shall say no more.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT comes by with a tray of wines; Tracy takes a red. Aiman puts in ear buds and sits back, eyes closed. Tracy takes a wine and sips, looking at the reclining Aiman. She touches his arm and he responds by pulling out the buds.

TRACY

I'm sorry for acting paranoid. I'm sure you're a respectable person, uh--

AIMAN
--Aiman. Aiman Hakim.

TRACY
Hannah. Hannah Goldman.

AIMAN
Nice to meet you, Hannah. Do you have a security team waiting for you in KL?

TRACY
Not particularly. I mean--

AIMAN
--An affluent woman in a position of authority like yourself... you must have protection, especially from Tonto syndicates. They specialize in extortion. Kidnapping sometimes.

TRACY
Well, I don't plan on going to Malaysia ever again.

Aiman produces a business card and hands it to Tracy.

TRACY'S POV: BUSINESS CARD READING "PACIFIC RIM SECURITY SERVICES" WITH AIMAN LISTED AS "MANAGING DIRECTOR, SE ASIA".

AIMAN
Well, maybe for your subordinates? We provide unique services customized to your needs. Concierge treatment. No service request is out of bounds.

Tracy studies the business card.

TRACY
No request is out of bounds? Interesting.

AIMAN
You have a vital exec who may be vulnerable to kidnapping, or his family? We prevent that. You have a trade secret you can't afford to have stolen? We protect that. You have a rogue employee? We insulate you from such pengkhianatan.
(beat)
Treachery.

TRACY

Really? And how do you do that?

AIMAN

Call me when you get settled in KL.
I'll go through our complete
portfolio of--

TRACY

--I'm staying at the St. Regis.

AIMAN

Lovely. Let's be in touch, Hannah.

INT. MARILYN'S OFFICE - DAY

Marilyn sits at her desk poring over papers and charts. Her ASSISTANT buzzes in on the intercom.

ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Ms. Jenkins, Ms. Shepard here to
see you.

MARILYN

Oh, good. Tell her I've been
expecting her.

INT. MARILYN'S OFFICE/ANTEROOM - DAY

Holding an expensive-looking briefcase, Tracy looks out a window, her back to the Assistant. The Assistant cups her hand over the receiver.

ASSISTANT

Um, she's not on your calendar.

MARILYN (V.O.)

I'm well aware of that. Just send
her in.

The Assistant hangs up and addresses Tracy.

ASSISTANT

Ms. Jenkins is expecting you, Ms.
Shepard. Please go in.

Tracy enters Marilyn's Office without saying a word.

INT. MARILYN'S OFFICE - DAY

Standing in front of her desk, Marilyn greets an irritated Tracy.

MARILYN

Tracy, how are you doing?

TRACY

I just flew 22 hours. How do you think I'm doing?

(beat)

And what do you mean you've been expecting me? Did Matt say--

MARILYN

--No. I was fairly confident you'd come see me personally if I stuck it in Matt's head that the project was in big trouble.

TRACY

I don't understand.

MARILYN

Something troubling has come up, Tracy, and we need to address it fast. I couldn't even mention it, let alone discuss details over the phone with you. I needed to see you face to face.

Tracy moves from irritation to worried concern, speaking haltingly with a sense of impending doom.

TRACY

What. Troubling. Thing, Marilyn?

MARILYN

Grayson Richards called me a few days ago.

(beat)

Your private investigator.

TRACY

I know who he is. I fired him over a year ago.

MARILYN

Well, he called me.

TRACY

I never mentioned your name to him. How-- why would he contact you now?

MARILYN

Apparently he continued to slog along on your case even after you fired him. He uncovered Cuttbate's real name and connected him to Ron Slomsky.

TRACY

Jesus Christ.

MARILYN

Based on what Slomsky told him, Richards thinks Cuttbate was trying to scam me too. That connects us, Tracy.

TRACY

That goddamned misshapen ogre.

MARILYN

Richards thought it was odd that you lost interest in the case after he made some breakthrough. Is that true?

TRACY

I have to think. Obviously we have to neutralize Richards. Throw him off the scent. Or off a cliff.

MARILYN

I'm not signing up for anything violent or illegal.

TRACY

Of course not. I'm just saying we have to make him leave us alone.

MARILYN

He's very suspicious.

(beat)

Do you think he's trying to solve Cuttbate's murder--

TRACY

--It wasn't murder, Marilyn!

MARILYN

His death then. Who cares?

(beat)

What if he goes on a crusade for glory?

TRACY

Or blackmail. Either way it's bad.

(beat)

Look, Richards is going to pressure you. He won't talk to me.

(beat)

I can only imagine what juicy information he's already pulled out of you.

MARILYN

I didn't tell him shit, Tracy.

TRACY

Maybe not on purpose, but he's a PI. Getting people to give up information is his profession. We can't trust him not to fuck us up. Don't be surprised if he tries to get you to implicate me.

MARILYN

I don't plan on talking to him again.

TRACY

If you crack and I go down, you're coming with me.

MARILYN

Jesus. You said we had to stick together. What's with the threats? I just told you I'm not going to speak to him again.

TRACY

Fine. But your silence won't stop him. He probably assumes one or both of us was behind Cuttbate's mur-- death, directly or indirectly.

(beat)

Given that I lost money and you didn't he's going to focus on me.

(beat)

And I'm the more lucrative blackmail target of the two of us.

MARILYN

I can't argue with that.

(beat)

Y'know, Richards mentioned the tattoo. I bet that's how he identified Cuttbate's real name.

(MORE)

MARILYN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Why did you have to tell him that sordid detail?

TRACY

I gotta go.

(beat)

Under no circumstances talk to law enforcement. Do you understand? This thing is between us alone.

Marilyn nods.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Say it.

MARILYN

This thing is between us alone.

TRACY

Good. Now, get your fucking project back on schedule. I don't have time to do deep dives and project assessments.

MARILYN

The recovery plan is on schedule, Tracy. I made a requisition that I'm sure you heard about. The budget took a slight hit, but we'll be in market as planned.

TRACY

Well--

MARILYN

--You can take credit for saving the project if that helps you with Matt.

Shaking her head, Tracy scowls at Marilyn.

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Aiman sits at a table in the St. Regis bar nursing a Gibson cocktail. He wears a tailored, dark navy tropical-weight wool suit, white shirt, no tie.

Tracy arrives in her signature heels and skirt cut above the knee. Aiman rises and extends his hand.

AIMAN

Very nice to see you again, Hannah.
I'm glad you reached out.

(beat)

I hope you had a successful day.

Tracy and Aiman shake hands, and take seats across from each other.

TRACY

Didn't turn out as I planned.

AIMAN

Oh, is that good or bad?

A WAITRESS arrives.

AIMAN (CONT'D)

What are you drinking, Hannah?

Tracy addresses the Waitress directly.

TRACY

Blanton's Manhattan. Straight up.

The Waitress departs.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Variety is the spice of death.
Isn't that the saying?

AIMAN

I thought it was life, but I
suppose the opposite can be true,
too.

TRACY

I was thinking about what you said
on the plane. About handling rogue
employees and their looming
treachery. I'm afraid I might have
a situation on my hands - someone
in a position of significant
authority, and trust, here in KL.

AIMAN

It's one of our premier services.
And believe me, we deliver on it
more often than you might think.
We plow through files, records,
emails, personal contacts and such
to make a case for termination -
voluntary or otherwise - and/or
litigation. Thorough and ironclad.

TRACY

I need something different.
Completely different.

The Waitress arrives with Tracy's cocktail. Aiman raises his glass which Tracy clinks.

AIMAN

To something completely different.

TRACY

This situation is very touchy.
Very delicate. Requires
imagination.

Aiman pulls a folded sheet of paper from his breast pocket. Tracy drinks her cocktail.

AIMAN

I always carry an NDA for times
such as these.

TRACY

Mr. Preparation. I'm modestly
impressed.

Tracy accepts the sheet of paper.

AIMAN

Modestly? OK, challenge accepted,
Hannah. Tell me your situation and
your desired outcome in complete
confidence, and I'll tell you how
we would handle it. No
obligations.

(best)

But I'm quite sure you won't find
another firm here, or elsewhere
frankly, capable of crafting and
executing a superior strategy.

TRACY

Where did you go to college?

AIMAN

I got my MBA from the Sloan School.
Then McKinsey for a stint.

TRACY

I should have guessed. Your pitch
was very buzzword compliant.

Aiman sips his drink sheepishly. Tracy checks her watch while finishing her cocktail.

AIMAN

Listen, Hannah. I may have failed to properly appreciate your dilemma. A lot of execs come to us because they don't have the courage to make the obvious moves themselves. They really just want an outsider to lay the blame on when the CFO gets shitcanned for embezzlement that should have been detected internally years earlier. It's simple CYA.

(beat)

But it's clear you're entangled in a complicated ball of wax, and boundaries must be pushed.

TRACY

Right up to the legal edge, Mr. Hakim.

(beat)

Let me look at that NDA.

Aiman hands the paper to Tracy, who glances at the text, quickly signs and returns the document. Aiman looks at the document closely, focusing on the signature.

AIMAN

So, Hannah, you're Tracy Shepard now? What's going--

TRACY

--Like I said, I had a bad experience talking to a businessman on a plane.

AIMAN

I remember.

TRACY

Hannah Goldman is my assistant. If I sign the contract, she'll be your primary contact.

AIMAN

I'm sincerely intrigued. I have to know more. Will you have dinner with me, Tracy?

TRACY

That sounds lovely, Aiman. Meet me in my suite in an hour - 2103, top floor. Beautiful view, and away from people.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

I need utmost privacy if I'm going to express my needs and desires to you.

Aiman grins like a schoolboy praised by his teacher.

AIMAN

Say no more. I'll be there.

TRACY

I truly enjoyed our little badinage, Aiman. See you soon.

Tracy leaves the bar. Aiman sips the dregs of his cocktail while he pulls out his cell phone.

AIMAN

Hey Siri. What does "badinage" mean?

INT. MATT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Matt, Hannah and CFO JACK sit around the coffee table covered with papers and open laptops.

JACK

I anticipate full-year adjusted diluted EPS to be in a range of 36 to 38 cents.

MATT

Jesus, I hate it when we have to put it in terms of cents. Makes us sound like a lemonade stand.

JACK

Well, 260 million shares are out there, Matt. Earnings are good, could be better, but we're still a young company.

MATT

Maybe we should buy back shares.

JACK

Not now. That would look bad, and be bad.

MATT

Let's cut the dividend.

JACK
C'mon, Matt. It's already a
pittance.

MATT
What else?

JACK
EPS guidance would have been higher
but we're anticipating a higher tax
rate on adjusted income.

MATT
Welcome to California.
(beat)
OK, that's enough wonk for now.
Thanks, Jack.

Jack and Hannah stand up and gather their things.

MATT (CONT'D)
Stay, Hannah.

Jack departs. Hannah sits back down.

HANNAH
What's up?

MATT
Jack's a good CFO. He had 18 years
at HP before Fiorina blew up the
company. Still, I think he's not
aggressive enough when it comes to
managing costs. Our earnings
should be at least 5 to 6 percent
higher than where they currently
sit. At least based on what I've
heard about other players in the
field.

HANNAH
That's significant.

MATT
Sure is.
(beat)
I want you to be my second set of
eyes on vendor contracts. Report
to me every month with the
unvarnished assessment of our
spending there. Are we paying for
useless or duplicate services?

(MORE)

MATT (CONT'D)

Are the pay rates consistent with industry standards? Where can we squeeze and who can we cut.

HANNAH

OK. I'm on it.

MATT

Great. I'll tell Gordon in Procurement that you'll be shadowing him for a few weeks as a career building opportunity. He'll love it because it'll make him feel important.

(beat)

Poke around discretely and let me know what you find out.

HANNAH

When should I start?

MATT

Gord-o will call you, darling. I mean, Hannah.

(beat)

Shit. I apologize. Sincerely. I don't know why I said that. What an asshole.

HANNAH

No worries, Mr. Blankenshein.

Matt shuffles to his desk facing away from Hannah, head down.

Hannah hesitates, then quickly departs the office.

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Tracy and Aiman sit across from one another at a compact table in the suite, sharing a bottle of Screaming Eagle wine. Used dishes and glasses litter the table.

TRACY

I'm sorry I couldn't be more forthcoming about how exactly my exec might be a threat, Aiman. Good performer at NanoNano, but I have trust issues.

AIMAN

NanoNano? Sorry, I don't know it.

TRACY

That's not important.

AIMAN

It doesn't really matter to me what your company does and what your trust issues are. I respect the dilemma you face. We have excellent people on staff to execute. Discrete, professional, experienced.

Tracy chuckles.

TRACY

That sounds like it should be an acronym. D-P-E. Did you trademark it?

(beat)

I'm kidding. I like your sincerity. Refreshing, actually.

Aiman smiles like a kid, as he takes a sip of wine.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I want to start ASAP.

AIMAN

I can get someone on it in two or three days. If your exec responds to our entreaties, as I predict they will, the whole project should wrap in a couple weeks. If you decide something more is required after that, we can craft a phase 2.

TRACY

I'm fascinated. I never realized firms existed - outside of the movies, that is - that do this kind of "covert" operation.

Tracy makes air-quotes.

AIMAN

Necessity is the mother of invention.

TRACY

So said Frank Zappa.

AIMAN

I'm pretty sure it was--

TRACY

--It's a joke, Aiman.

(beat)

I bet you have no idea who Frank Zappa was.

AIMAN

(sheepishly)

Um, no.

(beat)

This wine is very, very delicious. Screeching Eagle. I'll make a note of it.

Aiman pours the remains of the wine into Tracy's glass, filling it half way.

TRACY

Screaming, not screeching.

AIMAN

Oh, right.

(beat)

Shall I have the contract delivered to your suite?

Tracy finishes off the wine briskly.

TRACY

Tell me about yourself, Aiman. I want to know more of the man who develops devious plans for a living.

Aiman is taken aback slightly at the response to his question.

AIMAN

Devious plans? Is that all you think I do, Tracy?

TRACY

Maybe. Does that bother you?

AIMAN

No. Does it bother you?

TRACY

On the contrary, I wish I knew you two years ago. I could have used your expertise.

AIMAN

If what I do seems devious to you,
it's because clients like you first
seek proper solutions that don't
work.

Tracy rises from the table and calls to room service.

TRACY

(into phone)
Bring up another bottle of wine,
please.
(beat)
Screaming Eagle. 2010.

Aiman ogles Tracy's shoes, and her toned legs.

AIMAN

I can't help admiring your shoes,
Tracy. The way they, uh, um, I
mean--

Tracy approaches Aiman seductively.

TRACY

--The way they show off my legs?
Is that what you're trying to tell
me?

Aiman stands, steeling himself for Tracy's admonitions.

AIMAN

I'm sorry. I didn't- Jeez, I feel
like a real--

A bit taller than Aiman, Tracy embraces him.

TRACY

--Shut up.

She kisses him. Shocked at first, Aiman submits to Tracy.
The couple moves to the couch and continue their amorous
play. As Tracy reaches for Aiman's crotch, there's a KNOCK
at the door.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Get the door. I'll be back in a
jiff.

As Tracy heads for the bedroom Aiman rises slowly,
straightens his clothing, and answers the door. A STEWARD
appears with a bottle of wine on a cart. Aiman waves him in.

STEWARD

Shall I cork and decant, sir?

AIMAN

Uh, probably better to leave it.
I'm not sure what we're doing.

The Steward departs. Aiman examines the bottle. The SOUND of a shower in the background. He sits back at the table, munches on crudité, and fiddles with his cell phone. The shower noise ceases.

AIMAN'S POV: NanoNano website on the cell phone screen.

He scrolls the phone. Tracy emerges wearing a white robe open in front, but not exposing too much, and her high heels.

TRACY

Oh, I see they brought the wine.
Will you open it?

Tracy sits down in the corner of a large sofa next to the dinner table. Aiman proceeds to cork the wine.

AIMAN

Might your rogue exec be Matt
Blankenshein? Google says he's
head of R&D at NanoNano.

Tracy laughs hysterically.

TRACY

Oh my god. Aiman. Matt isn't head
of R&D. He's the CEO, founder and
largest shareholder at NanoNano.
(beat)
And my husband.

AIMAN

Oh shit.

TRACY

He's not my rogue exec, believe me.

AIMAN

Fuck.

TRACY

Look at you. I take a shower for
15 minutes and already you're
cracking the case of the missing
strawberries.

AIMAN

I don't know what to say.

TRACY

Don't say anything. Pour me a wine, and come over here.

Aiman pours wine into two glasses, and hands one to Tracy. Before he can sit next to her, Tracy issues a command.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Remove my shoes, please. Slowly. I'll hold your wine.

Aiman gives her his wine glass and kneels before Tracy. He unbuckles the straps and slowly takes off her shoes one at a time, placing the pair off to the side. Her feet are toned, and the nails polished with a blood-red lacquer.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Sit, Aiman.

As Tracy occupies the corner of the couch, her legs now on the couch, Aiman is forced to sit opposite her in the other corner. She hands him his wine glass, and raises hers.

TRACY (CONT'D)

To devious plans.

They both take a sip of the wine. Tracy places her glass on the floor and proceeds to unbuckle and unzip Aiman's pants with her feet. Her robe is now open enough to expose her breasts. As Tracy begins to stroke Aiman, he leans his head back, MOANING.

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL SUITE - DAY

It's the following morning. Sitting in a couch in the outer suite area, Aiman is fully dressed checking his cell phone.

Tracy emerges from her bedroom wearing a lush robe, a towel wrapped around her head. She approaches Aiman who stands to greet her. She plants a peck on his lips.

AIMAN

Good morning.

TRACY

You smell good. Amber, a touch of fruit, but not too much.

(sniffing)

I detect a hint of tobacco. Yummy.

She disengages and turns toward the bedroom. Facing away from Aiman, Tracy makes a request.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Drop off the contract with the
front desk.

After an awkward moment, Aiman pipes up.

AIMAN
I had a lovely time, Tracy.

Tracy continues to walk away from Aiman.

TRACY
Keep me apprised.

AIMAN
I most certainly will, Ms. Shepard.
(beat)
Maybe in New York. I have a
desperate client to attend to, but
I'd gladly carve out time for you.

Tracy turns and approaches Aiman. When she gets close, he takes her in his arms. They kiss.

TRACY
Remember, my dear. Discretion is
the better part of valor.

AIMAN
Is that another Frank Zappa quote?

Tracy smiles and touches Aiman's nose.

TRACY
Clever.

Aiman strokes his face and watches lustily as Tracy bends over to retrieve her shoes before heading to the bedroom.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

A plane comes in for a landing.

INT. LIMO (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy makes a call from the limo.

MATT (V.O.)

Hey babe, how was your mission of mercy?

TRACY

All good. Two point zero is on track for launch, budget only slightly bent out of shape. Finance says we can bury the overrun into the price and no one will bark.

MATT

I knew you'd straighten out Marilyn's mess. You're the best.
(beat)
Let me take you out. You can tell me all about how you pulled victory from the jaws... I mean jaws from--

TRACY

--I'm in New York. Gonna check on Dad. And other stuff.

MATT

You didn't tell me that.

TRACY

So what?

MATT

So nothing. Say hi to Charles for me. When will you be back out here?

TRACY

Not sure. Definitely for the quarterly.

MATT

You better be.
(beat)
Miss you.

TRACY

Same.

EXT. NYC HOTEL - NIGHT

Tracy's limo pulls in front of the Hotel.

INT. MARILYN'S OFFICE - DAY

Sitting behind her desk, Marilyn converses with Syafiqah.

SYAFIQA

Thankfully the TiO2 arrived ahead of schedule. We were able to swap out the silica and restart the fabrication.

(beat)

And finance located a lower cost provider, so the budget hit is almost negligible.

MARILYN

My superstar. I'll make sure your contribution does not go unnoticed by senior management, Sy.

Syafiqah rises from her chair.

SYAFIQA

I appreciate that, Ms. Jenkins.

Marilyn turns her attention to the pile of correspondence on her desk. She addresses Syafiqah without looking at her.

MARILYN

Keep up the good work.

Syafiqah smiles hopefully, but when Marilyn fails to make eye contact, she leaves the office.

Marilyn pores through the correspondence, coming upon a manilla envelope clearly distinct from the rest of the letters in the pile. The envelope is postmarked "New York City" and bears no return address.

Marilyn slits open the envelope and extracts a single sheet of paper with a sketch of a penis with a snake tattoo.

Marilyn quickly folds the sheet and stuffs it back into the envelope. She glances around the office, as if someone might be watching her.

Marilyn's Assistant buzzes in.

ASSISTANT (V.O.)

Ms. Jenkins, Mr. Blankenshein on line one.

Marilyn, nervously presses a button on the speakerphone.

MARILYN

Matt, um, what can I do for you?

MATT

Just calling to congratulate you and your team on getting two point zero back on schedule.

MARILYN

I hope so. I mean thank you, Matt.

MATT

I know there were some bumps along the way, but in the end, Tracy and you got it back on track.

MARILYN

Yeah. Me and Tracy - what a team.

MATT

OK, great. Glad it all worked out.
(beat)
Have one of your staff do a post-mortem. I'm sure the other GMs would benefit from what you learned.

MARILYN

Will do, Matt.

MATT

Super. See you soon.

Marilyn removes the sheet from the envelope and, with her hand over her mouth in grave concern, gazes at the sketch.

EXT. MALAYSIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Shot of the facade of a Malaysian Restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Marilyn sits in a booth alone in a quiet section of the Restaurant, a Jungle Bird cocktail on the table. She speaks on her cell phone as a WAITER brings a plate of food.

MARILYN

It's not a good idea to leave a detailed message so call me as soon as you get in, Tracy.

Marilyn hangs up the phone, takes a sip of her cocktail, and is about to eat when a stocky, 40-something Asian male STRANGER slips into the booth across from her. He wears an ill-fitting, off-the-rack suit. Marilyn sits up, taken aback.

STRANGER
That's a delicious looking
cocktail.

MARILYN
I-- I'm sorry. What are you doing?

The Stranger remains silent, looking intently at Marilyn. She tosses her napkin onto the table and prepares to rise.

STRANGER
Sit down, please. I want to talk
to you.

Marilyn calls out.

MARILYN
Waiter!

STRANGER
Don't be stupid, Marilyn.

As the Waiter approaches, Marilyn stands up.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
Did you like the little sketch I
sent you?

Marilyn turns her attention away from the oncoming Waiter, and faces the STRANGER with angst in her eyes. The Waiter addresses Marilyn.

WAITER
Is there something I can help you
with, madame?

STRANGER
Can you bring me a menu? And one
of those delicious looking
cocktails.

WAITER
Certainly, sir.

Marilyn slowly retakes her seat. The Waiter departs.

MARILYN

What is this about? What do you want?

STRANGER

What did you think of my sketch? Did I capture the intricacies of the design?

MARILYN

I don't know what you're talking about.

STRANGER

Yes you do. I can tell you saw it, and that it brings back memories for you. Whether good or bad, I don't know.

(beat)

That clever tattoo belonged to a man who is now deceased. Murdered actually. I think you know something about that.

MARILYN

I don't. Really. You obviously have the wrong person.

Marilyn stifles a burp that is close to vomit.

STRANGER

Things will go much smoother for you if you stop lying, and face the fact that I know what I'm talking about.

(beat)

The owner of that festooned, albeit tiny cock went by many names, one of which was Fischer Cuttbate. Someone shot him in the throat and left him for dead.

Marilyn drinks the rest of her cocktail. The Waiter arrives with a menu and a Jungle Bird. The Stranger addresses the Waiter.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

Bring my lovely friend another one of those, please.

WAITER

Certainly, sir.

The Waiter departs. The Stranger takes a sip of the cocktail.

STRANGER

Now, I could say our tattooed friend brought his ill-timed death upon himself. After all, he tried to scam you out of a sizable chunk of change.

(beat)

Does all of this match your recollections so far?

MARILYN

I was never scammed.

STRANGER

That's true, Marilyn. You were lucky to have known his victim Tracy Shepard who warned you of his evil machinations.

(beat)

You're a top exec at NanoNano based here in KL.

MARILYN

So?

STRANGER

Your promotion to general manager was Ms. Shepard's reward for killing Cuttbate, wasn't it? You hated him. Both of you did. But you took the initiative, and reaped the rewards.

MARILYN

He was killed by a teenaged prostitute who he sexually assaulted. It was on the news.

STRANGER

Oh, Marilyn, that fable did make the news for a couple days, but the victim's name was never reported. So how would you know who the hooker supposedly killed?

MARILYN

What if his death was an accident? Did that ever occur to you?

STRANGER

Sounds like what your defense lawyer will plead in court, which is where you'll find yourself if you don't play ball.

MARILYN

I didn't kill anyone.

Marilyn suddenly goes from anxious to agitated.

MARILYN (CONT'D)

Are you with Grayson Richards?

The Stranger begins to answer, then stops himself. A long pause.

STRANGER

Marilyn, you're not getting it. No one wants to see you incarcerated. No one seeks justice here. That should be obvious.

MARILYN

What is it you want?

STRANGER

Quid pro quo, Marilyn. Compensate me for my silence, stay out of legal jeopardy. Keep your hifalutin job, and your stellar reputation.

MARILYN

I see. Run-of-the-mill blackmail. I think I'll pass.

STRANGER

You worked with Ron Slomsky. He was an associate of Cuttbate when you were the target of his complex scam. He went to jail under cloudy circumstances, and he's not happy about it.

MARILYN

He's a piece of shit.

STRANGER

He's a piece of shit with receipts. You were the last person to see Cuttbate alive. Dinner at some fancy restaurant in Philadelphia.

MARILYN

Is that so? What did we have to eat?

STRANGER

Don't try the cute route, Marilyn, you're not cut out for it.

(beat)

You know what you did. Now face the music.

MARILYN

I know what I did... and didn't do. Now why don't you go away.

The Stranger slugs down his cocktail. The Waiter returns.

WAITER

Are you ready to order, sir?

STRANGER

Nah, I'm not hungry. Just give me the bill.

The Waiter produces the bill and departs. The Stranger drops a few large bills on the table.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

I'll be in touch soon, Marilyn. And don't do anything rash like contacting authorities. That will only dig you a deeper grave.

The Stranger slides out of the booth. Marilyn watches him walk all the way to and out the door.

Marilyn's phone RINGS. She checks the incoming number and decides to answer.

MARILYN

Tracy. Hello.

TRACY (V.O.)

What's the delicate message you couldn't leave?

MARILYN

Richards, or someone working with him, or... I'm not sure...

TRACY

(alarmed)

What's going on over there?

MARILYN

I'm getting pressured. It has to be your private investigator.

INT. NYC HOTEL - DAY

Tracy lounges in bed. The SOUND of a shower O.S. A pair of trousers and a white shirt drape over a chair by the window. A couple empty wine bottles sit on a nearby table.

TRACY

Stop talking.

(beat)

That fucking bastard. Let me think for a minute. Shit.

(beat)

Let's discuss things next Sunday when you're here for the quarterly. Until then, do not speak to anyone about this. And absolutely do not communicate with Richards or anyone else he might be connected with. Understand?

MARILYN (V.O.)

Absolutely.

(beat)

Tracy, I'm worried. I was just ambushed by a guy who knows an awful lot about, you know, and is threatening to blackmail me.

TRACY

For what? No, don't tell me. Sunday. We'll talk then. Bye.

Marilyn puts her phone down. The Waiter arrives to retrieve the money. Marilyn hand him her empty cocktail.

MARILYN

Another, please. More rum this time.

EXT. SAN DIEGO AIRPORT- DAY

Tracy walks toward the parked limo, her Driver in tow handling her luggage.

INT. YACHT (TRAVELING) - DAY

Matt's Yacht cuts through the choppy, green ocean off the coast of San Diego. Matt, wearing shorts and a tee shirt sits in a deck chair along with Tracy on the aft deck. A squat pitcher of Bloody Mary's sits on a low slung table.

MATT

I have high hopes for the quarterly. The planning has come together better than I expected. And I'll give credit where it's due. Marilyn's division really came through. I'm thinking of making it a key item for the shareholder meeting.

TRACY

I'm inclined to agree, dear. Her line of business has outperformed, despite the recent setback. Looks like next year could be even better. Even if there's a recession.

Matt sips his Bloody Mary and scans the horizon. He jumps up abruptly and, like a teenager seeing his first Ferrari, points at a super yacht in the near distance.

MATT

Tracy, check it out! That's Lorenzo Fertitta's ship. The Ionian. And that one behind it must be the Hodor.

TRACY

Who the hell is Lorenzo Frittata?

MATT

Fertitta. Lorenzo was CEO of the UFC. Now he's a philanthropist enjoying the finer things in life.

TRACY

Apparently.

MATT

Damn, that ship is next level. 87 meters.

TRACY

Oh, don't tell me you're having pangs of penis envy, Matt.

Just in time to hear the "penis envy" comment, Hannah appears from below deck wearing business casual and carrying a black portfolio.

HANNAH

Good afternoon, Mr. Blankenshein.
Ms. Shepard.

TRACY

Hannah. I didn't know you were
aboard.

MATT

Hannah's running the quarterly.
I've also got her doing advance
work for the shareholder meeting.
She's a real Gal Friday.

Tracy rolls her eyes, and Hannah looks down at her feet, modestly embarrassed. Matt notices the awkwardness.

MATT (CONT'D)

What? What did I say?

(beat)

Look, you're doing a great job,
Hannah. I'm glad Tracy brought you
in. What do you have for me?

Tracy addresses Hannah.

TRACY

Come back later, Hannah. Matt and
I were in the middle--

HANNAH

--Of course. I'll be in my cabin.

Hannah turns and leaves.

TRACY

She has a cabin?

MATT

What were we in the middle of?

TRACY

Marilyn's operation has the
potential to generate a good
portion of the company's revenue,
and it's the second-most profitable
division.

MATT

I know. So what?

TRACY

We have to step up security over there ASAP. All that R&D, patents, subcontractor relations, partnering deals. We need to protect ourselves. And Marilyn, of course.

MATT

Marilyn?

TRACY

She runs the whole division. She's our most senior exec in Asia, Matt.

(beat)

Have you ever heard of Tonto syndicates?

MATT

What the hell are you talking about?

TRACY

Marilyn's a prime target for kidnapping or extortion.

MATT

C'mon, Tracy--

TRACY

--Would you rather wait to receive her pinky toe in the mail?

Matt feigns revulsion.

MATT

You're right, my love. I'll get Bob Schlanger on it.

TRACY

I'll do it. He's competent enough with mundane building security - when he's not betting on horses - but this calls for top level professionals with local presence. We have to look outside. It's gonna require a thorough contract negotiation.

MATT

You know any good negotiators?

TRACY

Funny.

MATT
Give me a kiss.

Tracy stands and pecks Matt's cheek.

MATT (CONT'D)
I knew there was a reason I put you
on the payroll.

TRACY
Is that what happened?
(beat)
I'm gonna lie down for a while.

Matt ascends stairs to an upper deck. Tracy proceeds to the Master Cabin with her bloody Mary. On her way she passes the cabin adjacent to the Master. Through the cracked-open door, Tracy observes Hannah hunched over a laptop. A Burberry patterned piece of luggage sits beside her table.

INT. MASTER CABIN - DAY

Tracy slurps down the rest of her cocktail and flops on the king-sized bed. The Kandinsky painting she lost to auction hangs above the ornate headboard. Tracy makes a call.

TRACY
Aiman? Tracy. I know it's late
there. Do you have a minute?

FADE OUT.