

THE GOOD (BAD) SHEPARD

S1:E1

Written by

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S1:E1 "THE CURE AND THE CON"

FADE IN:

INT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

A female GATE AGENT stands behind an airline counter scanning the floor for stragglers, one of whom is FISCHER, an ordinary-looking white man in his 40s. A few PASSENGERS on standby shift 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 mike, TRACY gets in her face. Tracy, a tall, professional-looking woman also in her 40s 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, disinterested in listening to the pleas of a latecomer.

GATE AGENT

--Impossible.

TRACY

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

The Gate Agent serves Tracy a look.

GATE AGENT

We don't call them stewardesses. They're flight attendants now.

Tracy glowers at the Gate Agent. Before tempers flare out of proportion, Fischer steps up to the counter. In 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 in the end.

FISCHER

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

Tracy extends her hand which Fischer shakes.

TRACY

--Tracy Shepard.

FISCHER

OK, Tracy. No trouble at all. I know all about deadlines and business commitments and that kind of stuff. Take my place, I insist.

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.

Familiar with how rich people always get their way, the Gate Agent already has a boarding pass ready. Tracy walks to the jetway and just before disappearing waves to Fischer. Fischer waves back and walks toward 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 suffering from acromegaly approaches Tracy.

RON

Ms. Shepard? I'm Ron Slomsky, 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? Who told--

MATT - late-20's, handsome, stylish haircut, elegantly casual clothes - interrupts.

MATT

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

TRACY

Let's go.

Matt addresses the crowd.

MATT

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

Matt gestures to FOGLE, a 60-year-old portly businessman sporting 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.

Tracy addresses the audience.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, together you own 65 percent of the nanotechnology market. Congratulations. Of course, you want more. Greed is good, right? That's what they say in the movies.

(beat)

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

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

TRACY (CONT'D)

The world of nanotechnology is moving fast. You're losing share while you lock heads over patent violations, employee poaching, slimy marketing campaigns--

FOGLE

(Points at Matt)

--Just 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, Fogle! One of the assholes you fired posted those specs 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)

Without sound Tracy lectures the Businessmen who then engage in a vigorous argument. Tracy balls them out but two of them begin jostling. Tracy shakes her head and smirks at the childish behavior. Ron separates them and fellow Businessmen lead the two jostling fools back to their seats. Tracy resumes her presentation. Fogle walks to a corner of the Conference Room and lights a cigarette. Matt follows him. The two begin a conversation.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM/LA - DAY (LATER)

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

TRACY

OK, so it all comes down to NanoNano licensing a couple patents as penance for...

(Quotes with fingers)

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

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 Blankenschein?

MATT

Me and Sumner are copacetic - right Summy?

Fogle grimaces, then relents.

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 told me yesterday that I'd be shaking hands today with that mick leprechaun, I'd've shit in his hat. But it's a good deal. Hell, I'm glad the whole fucking episode is finally over.

TRACY

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

MATT

Matt.

(beat)

Yeah, I'm glad it's 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 with a cocktail by a lighted pool as TONEY TYPES swim and carouse. At a cabana nearby, FAMOUS MOVIE PEOPLE argue over the terms of a movie contract. Tracy shakes her head at what seems to be a looming disagreement seeking a resolution. Her cell phone RINGS.

TRACY

Tracy Shepard.

(beat)

Oh, hello, Matt.

(beat)

Tomorrow? I'd love to, but I'm flying back to New York early.

(beat)

OK. I promise. Next time I'm out this way. Yes. I will. Thanks.

INT. JET - DAY

Tracy walks onto the Jet looking sharp and confident. A slouching, rumped-looking Fischer sits in the aisle seat of first class reading a newspaper. Tracy is surprised to see him.

TRACY

Fisch...er? Is that you?

Delighted to see Tracy again, Fischer folds his newspaper and straightens up from his slouch.

FISCHER

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

Fischer stands to let Tracy pass in front of him.

TRACY

Excellent. And yes, thanks to you I made my meeting.

FISCHER

(Sniffing)

Hmmm... Van Cleef and Arpels?

TRACY

That's right. Very good.

Tracy takes her seat by the window.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I can't tell you enough how grateful I am to you for giving up your seat. You're my white knight, Fischer. 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 kicks off her designer shoes. Fischer notes the fine definition of her feet.

TRACY

You know, Fish, I travel all over the country for my business, and that was the first time I almost got bumped. My driver overslept and I got to the airport just before the flight took off.

(beat)

I wouldn't want you to think I'm some kind of a scatterbrain.

FISCHER

Hey, it can happen to anyone, Tracy. Bottom line: you got on the plane and made your meeting.

(MORE)

FISCHER (CONT'D)

Someone else might've caved in and waited 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 progressive retinal dystrophy.

TRACY

I know!

FISCHER

It starts with tunnel vision and usually leads to total blindness.

TRACY

I know! My father has it. He's essentially blind now, poor man. He used to teach Physics at Columbia. But now...

Feeling weepy, Tracy turns away before continuing.

TRACY (CONT'D)

I'm so excited you're working on a cure. What kind of results have you seen so far?

FISCHER

Well, first off, it's not a cure. It's a therapy. Patients would have to take a pill every day. But back to your question: the results are remarkable. Up to 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. My brother Fletch doesn't want to bring new investors into the business. He's worried they'll take over and interfere with the research.

TRACY

Oh, no.

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. And without the funding, we're stuck.

TRACY

Why don't you bring in the VCs anyway? Go around your brother.

FISCHER

Fletch and I inherited the business from our father. He set it up so 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.

TRACY

I see.

FISCHER

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

Silence as Fischer sulks and Tracy mulls the possibilities.

TRACY

Y'know, Fish, I'm a pretty good professional mediator. 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. That would be great.

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 it'll make you feel
better, let's say... \$1,000?

FISCHER
Deal!

TRACY
My favorite word.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - DAY

Fischer is on the sidewalk talking on a cell phone. Tracy struts out of the airport pulling a stylish suitcase and heads directly for her waiting limo where a DRIVER stands by the open back door. Fischer spots Tracy and runs to her just as she steps into the limo.

FISCHER
Tracy!

TRACY
(Startled)
Fish?

FISCHER
I was wondering, Tracy, if you'd
like to see a presentation on the
eye drug. I'd love 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 speaks on the phone to her
SECRETARY.

TRACY
 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? Some
 kind of dildo?

Chuckling, she cups the phone and calls to her Driver.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 Yusef, take the Whitestone.

Tracy continues her phone conversation.

TRACY (CONT'D)
 The owner of the New York Jets?
 Player contract issue, right? OK.
 Did you tell my father I'm coming
 over?
 (beat)
 Thanks, Carla.

EXT. WHITESTONE BRIDGE - DAY

Tracy's Limo crosses the bridge.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Fischer shuffles to a crappy car covered in pigeon droppings and throws a piece of luggage into the trunk. He hops into driver's seat, turns the key and hears a series of CLICKS suggesting the battery is quite dead. Fischer bangs the steering wheel with both hands.

EXT. DAD'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

Tracy's limo pulls to the curb in front of DAD's Brownstone. The Driver opens the door and Tracy proceeds up the steps to the door. She pulls keys from her purse, unlocks the door and enters.

INT. DAD'S 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.

DAD (O.S.)

Damn it!

TRACY

Dad? Are you alright?

INT. DAD'S BROWNSTONE/BATHROOM - DAY

Dad 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.

DAD

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 Dad's palm.

TRACY

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

DAD

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

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

INT. DAD'S 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. She's disturbed at the presence of a weapon.

Dad feels his way into the kitchen, running his hand along the wall.

DAD

So nice of you to visit me. What's new, Tracy Rae?

Tracy quickly stows the pistol in her purse. She pours a glass of juice, takes Dad by the arm and leads him out.

TRACY

Nothing special, Dad.

INT. DAD'S BROWNSTONE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dad grabs at the air around him until he latches onto the arms of his chair. He sits down with an audible SIGH. Tracy hands Dad the glass of juice and takes a seat nearby.

TRACY

Well, maybe one thing. I met the owner of a bio-tech lab here in the City. He's working on a cure, or a therapy, something - for retinitis.

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

DAD

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.

DAD

Hell, Tracy. You're a mediator. Can't you get them to agree?

TRACY

That's what I hope to do, Dad. I'm going to Jersey in a few days to meet with the brother.

DAD

Tell them I'll be a volunteer.

TRACY

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

DAD

--It's been four years since I've read a book, or seen your face. Please, I'll happily be their guinea pig. Tell them.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING/LOBBY - DAY

The Lobby of the Office Building is a dusty, cramped, poorly lit space. A doorman's desk sits by 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 "RodCone Labs - Suite 212."

EXT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Tracy stands outside a plain door with the number 212 stenciled 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. 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 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 Conference Room and leaves. 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. Sixty-something Torrent, the chief scientist wears a white lab coat.

FISCHER

Tracy. I'm glad you could make it. 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 his name "Connect." Knecht reaches across the table and shakes Tracy's hand.

FISCHER (CONT'D)
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
foolishly tried to cure retinitis
pigmentosa, Ms. Shepard.

TRACY
(Grimacing)
Good lord.

TORRENT
We're working on a better way. A
therapy. A pill patients will take
every day to gradually improve and
maintain the quality of 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" appears on 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. I hope you can use your mediation magic on him - although I wouldn't be surprised 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 with
Fletcher, Tracy.

TRACY

I certainly will. Bye bye.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tracy enters her spacious apartment on Sutton Place with its handsome view of the Queensborough Bridge. An original Kandinsky painting hangs on the wall. Tracy checks mail.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Tracy sheds her clothing. She places her expensive shoes into a slot in her closet which holds 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"

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 hesitantly presses a button causing the magazine to pop out and fall to the floor. Shaking her head sadly she retrieves the magazine and stashes it and the pistol into her drawer.

Tracy then turns her attention to the laptop.

TRACY'S P.O.V. - A long list of emails awaiting her attention, among them one from Chad Knecht titled "RodCone Presentation."

Tracy prints out the document sent by Knecht.

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. Can you wait here until I'm done with my call?

Fletcher shuts the door in her face.

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

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

FLETCHER

I'm ready now Mrs. Shepard.

TRACY

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

Tracy extends her hand again. Fletcher hesitates, then belatedly shakes it. Fletcher turns and Tracy follows him in.

INT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Fletcher's Bungalow is cluttered with books and magazines, 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.

FLETCHER

No, it's not.
(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

Do you think it's ready for clinical trials?

FLETCHER

Maybe.

SOUND - TELEPHONE RINGING O.S.

Fletcher rises and exits. Irritated, 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 (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Where were we?

The two retake their seats.

TRACY

We were talking about... the drug. Is it ready to be tested, in your opinion?

Fletcher waits a long time to respond.

FLETCHER

Possibly.

TRACY

Look, Mr. Cuttbate. I only came--

FLETCHER

--Why did you come out here? Why do you care so much about this, Mrs. Shepard? I don't suppose you know someone with retinitis?

TRACY

(Angrily)

Yes, as a matter of fact I do.
Someone I love very much. My
father. And it disturbs me greatly
that a promising cure might not see
the light of day 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 that of a chastened
school-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.

(beat)

Can he... see at all?

Tracy shakes her head.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

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

Tracy sits back down slowly.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

(Teary-eyed)

Can I get you something to drink?

INT. FLETCHER'S BUNGALOW - DAY (LATER)

Tracy sits next to Fletcher on the divan sipping lemonade. A
notebook full of mathematical equations and scribbles sits
open on the coffee table.

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

A therapy... not a cure. You understand the difference, right? 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 taking it, you regress. Understand?

TRACY

I understand.
(beat)
What's Somavert?

Fletcher squirms a moment.

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 his men 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. It's all 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.

(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 lets me see any of the company's finances. For all I know, he's gonna cut me out of the action if his drug gets FDA approval and RodCone 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--

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

Sure.

Fletcher pours some lemonade into Tracy's glass.

FLETCHER

It was nice of you to come all the way out here. I thought it would be a waste of time, but I'm glad I got the opportunity to explain my side.

TRACY

Me too.

FLETCHER

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

(MORE)

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have mentioned that.
And don't tell him about my work on
a cure either. It's way 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.

Tracy scans the room and sets her eyes on the guitar.

TRACY (CONT'D)

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. 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. A horn HONKS
O.S.

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 Bowie
fan as a kid. Ziggy Stardust
period, y'know, glitter--

Fletcher plays the opening chords of "Moon age 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

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.

Tracy and Fletcher sing along together.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

Put your ray gun to my head. Press
your space face close to mine,
love. Freak out in a moon age
daydream!

Tracy laughs happily 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 back on its stand.

FLETCHER

Me too. And 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 to the city,
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 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 first class seat reading Fortune as the train lumbers along. She puts down the magazine, retrieves the printout of RodCone Labs' presentation and thumbs through the material until she reaches a page with a big question mark - 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. She circles some numbers and writes the letters "WTF" next to them.

Tracy's laptop makes a "ping" SOUND. 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 corrected version which I have attached. Let me know if you have any questions. Sincerely, Chad Knecht."

Tracy shakes her head contemptuously.

INT. UPSCALE BAR AND GRILL - DAY

Fletcher, dressed way too casually, and Tracy, looking sharp, arrive at the Bar and Grill. The MAITRE'D escorts the odd couple to a table in the back. He holds the chair for Tracy while casting a disapproving gaze toward the unkempt 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

I'm just glad you could meet me on such short notice. I really thought we should get together right away. It's about the financials of RodCone Labs.

A WAITER arrives. Fletcher picks up the menu.

WAITER

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

Tracy looks to Fletcher, but he's 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, the tuna,
medium rare.

WAITER

Very good, madame, sir.

The Waiter leaves with the menus.

FLETCHER

What's the bad news you came to
tell me, Tracy? I assume it's
something bad, right?

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

TRACY

Chad Knecht emailed me these
confidential spreadsheets by
mistake.

FLETCHER

Jesus, what is all this stuff?

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

What's that?

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

--How do you know all this gorp?

TRACY

I have an MBA. I worked at Salomon
Brothers before I started my own
mediation company.

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

Columbia. My father was a physics professor there.

(beat)

Aren't you concerned about what might be going on at your company? What Fischer might be involved in? It might be serious fraud, Fletch. What are you going to do?

The Waiter arrives with the food.

FLETCHER

Have a nice lunch with you.

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.

FLETCHER

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

Confused, Tracy tilts her head.

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. 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 came to appreciate how painful blindness can be. That's what I was trying to capture.

(beat)

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

TRACY

I guess I would say... Wassily Kandinsky.

FLETCHER

Who?

TRACY

Kandinsky. He was a Russian artist. I have one of his 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.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tracy talks on a cell phone while pacing the lobby of a large Office Building in Midland, Texas.

TRACY

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

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

(beat)

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

(beat)

Hot? Shit, it's already 103 and it's only 11 o'clock. What else?

(beat)

RodCone Labs? What do they want?

(beat)

Well, if it's urgent, alright. Send me those leases ASAP.

Tracy hangs up, takes a seat in a mid-century modern chair facing a fountain and makes another call.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)

RodCone Laboratories. How may I help you?

TRACY

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

RECEPTIONIST

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

(long pause)

Yes. I'm afraid we can't 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

Why not?

RECEPTIONIST

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

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

TRACY

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

RECEPTIONIST

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

TRACY

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

RECEPTIONIST

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

The Receptionist hangs up.

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 inspecting the mail. She tosses one piece after another into the trash can, stopping at a particular envelope. She slits open the envelope and pulls out a check and a letter.

FLETCHER (V.O.)

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 my brother.

(MORE)

FLETCHER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
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.

Tracy sits back in her chair and twists her hair.

INT. DAD'S BROWNSTONE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tracy and Dad 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.

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

TRACY
I already travel too much.

DAD
Find a nice man. Fall in love.

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

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

TRACY (CONT'D)
You know what they say: a hard man
is, I mean a good man is hard to
find.

(beat)
Hey Dad, have you ever heard of
Woody Johnson?

DAD
Sure. He owns the Jets.

TRACY

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

DAD

--Whatever happened to that lab that was working on a retinitis cure?

TRACY

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

DAD

Oh.

TRACY

But, one of the owners is working on something even better. He just needs money to get it rolling.

DAD

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.

DAD

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

Tracy checks her watch.

TRACY

I gotta go, Dad. Talk to you later.

Tracy kisses her father's cheek.

DAD

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

INT. LIMO (TRAVELING) - DAY

Tracy receives a phone call.

TRACY

Hello?

INTERCUT with Fletcher's Bungalow.

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

--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

What are you talking about, Fletch?

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

Oh.
(Long pause)
OK.

TRACY

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

EXT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

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

TRACY

Fletch?

FLETCHER

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

Fletcher spins around.

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

It's an Armadillo Zeg-na suit.

TRACY

(Chuckling)
Very nice.

FLETCHER

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

TRACY

I know I will.

Tracy loops her arm underneath Fletcher's and they walk into the Restaurant.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - 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 3-way dispute with the New York Jets, a 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 easily imagine 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 as before?

WAITER

Certainly, sir. Château d'Armailhac, 1996.

The Waiter pours the wine and departs.

TRACY

Fletch, 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 Knecht was behind it.

(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, 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

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.

FLETCHER

I'm optimistic.

TRACY

How come?

The Waiter arrives with food.

FLETCHER

Is that the venison? It looks like
pudding.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT (LATER)

Fletcher and Tracy have moved along into the meal.

FLETCHER

You remember those equations I
showed you back at my house? Those
weren't just theories. A colleague
at Penn State is helping me test
formulas on animals. The results
are more than promising. We're
close to a real cure for retinitis
pigmentosa, Tracy.

TRACY

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 (CONT'D)

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. Why didn't you
show the formula to Fischer? Oh
wait, right, not good for business.

(beat)

I think all this wine is going to
my head.

The waiter returns, pops the cork and refills the glasses.

FLETCHER

That's one reason. But when I
learned he was talking to 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 swig of wine.

FLETCHER

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

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT (LATER)

Tracy picks at a dessert. A half-drunk snifter of Cognac
sits nearby, and she's a bit tight. Fletcher drinks bourbon
from a rocks glass.

TRACY

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 do? 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 on toys and nice
furniture. I denied myself the
comforts of life and invested.
You've seen my dumpy house. Would
you believe I have more than a
million dollars in savings?

TRACY

Really? That's fantastic. So,
when will you start the clinical
trials?

FLETCHER

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

(beat)

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 only 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 pulls out his wallet and 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 great 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 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. UPSCALE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Fletcher and Tracy stroll the sidewalk outside the Restaurant. 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?
I could show you my Kandinsky.

INT. TRACY'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tracy and Fletcher roll around naked in her bed. Tracy moves her head down low. Suddenly, she sits up.

TRACY

Oh my God! Where did you ever...?

The outburst at first startles Fletcher, but he quickly chuckles knowingly.

FLETCHER

It was after a Lou Reed concert--

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

--Penis? Yeah. I guess anything's possible when you're wasted enough. One of my buddies picked out a design of a snake and the guy tattooed it around like it was climbing a tree. It hurt like hell the next day when I sobered up.

TRACY

(Laughing)

I can imagine.

(beat)

Lie back. I wanna try something.

FLETCHER

Uh oh.

TRACY

You said you admire my feet. I caught your brother staring at them. This foot-fetish thing must run in your family.

FLETCHER

Could be.

TRACY

I can peel a banana with my feet.

FLETCHER

Really?

TRACY

Lie back.

Fletcher lies back and a moment later 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.

Suddenly, Tracy bolts past Fletcher into the bathroom. Retching 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?

Fletcher leads Tracy to a lounge chair and opens the window. He places the glass of water and aspirins on a nearby table.

FLETCHER

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

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.

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 can handle it.

TRACY
I'm sure you can. Still though, I'd like to help. I'll try to get some sleep. I'll be better by 3.

FLETCHER
Really, I--

TRACY
--Don't do anything without me.

INT. HOTEL CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Two VCs, both men in their 50s dressed in dark suits and armed with reams of market data sit on one side of a conference table. Tracy and Fletcher sit on the other side. Tracy appears a bit haggard.

VC #1
Tell me, Mr. Cuttbate. Why do you want to develop a cure when a daily regimen seems the better way to go?

Fletcher angrily slams his palm on the table; he's ready to walk out of the conference room. Tracy gently reaches for Fletcher's forearm and coaxes him back into his seat.

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.

VC #1

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

TRACY

Providing a cure is the right thing to do--

VC #2 grins 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?

VC #2 stops grinning. He glances nervously at VC #1 and rummages through his charts and tables.

VC #2

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

After uncomfortable rambling from VC #2, VC #1 intervenes.

VC #1

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.

VC #1 (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 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. There's 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 4:30.

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 in a comely woman in her 20s. 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 already 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 shakes Fletcher's hand.

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.

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 Goldman, her lawyer.

Fletcher points to each man in succession.

FLETCHER (CONT'D)

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 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.

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. Mr. Cuttbate already knows that's my position, and so do you, so let's just cut the crap.

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

ANDREWS

You know, 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 deliver 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, speaking on the phone while the SOUND of shower water splashes O.S.

TRACY

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.

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

The trials will start... Well, I made a small investment myself. Yeah.

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

TRACY (CONT'D)

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

Be careful. They cost \$1200.

FLETCHER

Are you kidding?

TRACY

Each. 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.

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. 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. 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 guh.

TRACY

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

FLETCHER

Seriously?

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

TRACY

See. The finish? It kinda looks like it's made out of wood.

Fletcher inspects the dildo hesitantly.

TRACY (CONT'D)

It has a strap.

Fletcher's eyes widen in trepidation.

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)

(MORE)

TRACY (CONT'D)

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

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 deflates.

HANNAH

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

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 BAR - DAY

Tracy sits in a booth in the back 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 (V.O.)

Tracy? Fletch. How're you doing?

TRACY

So-so. I'm about to go to a
meeting.

FLETCHER

The football thing?

TRACY

Yeah. Can I call you later?

FLETCHER

Of course. 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. After
this I gotta go back out to Dayton.

FLETCHER

Next week, huh? OK. No problem.
Glad I called. Have a nice time in
Dayton.

TRACY

Nice time? Have you ever been
there?

Tracy walks to the entrance of the Jets Front Office.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DAYTON BAR - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a typical sports bar.

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 his fucking father
that will devastate Bradley.

TRACY

Ah, yes. You mentioned that to me.
But I know you're bluffing.

MILTON

How so?

TRACY

Someone I work with hacked into
your computer. The only
devastating stuff he could find was
a bunch of child pornography.

MILTON

That's a goddamn lie!

TRACY

That's what he told me. And he's
very good at what he does, if you
follow my meaning. He can make a
computer do anything.

MILTON

You fucking whore.

TRACY

Give me a number right now, or I'll
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. Move
on. Find another superstar to rep.
You can do it.

MILTON

I'm ready to go to the New York
fucking Post. 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 checks her answering machine.

ZWIEBEL (V.O.)

Ms. Shepard. This is Bernard Zwiebel. Just a reminder that the board meeting is Thursday at one in the former RodCone Labs office. See you there.

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

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

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

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Tracy, looking sharp, steps out of the limo. Her Driver mans the door.

TRACY

Take the rest of the day off.

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 "RodCone Labs - Suite 212." Tracy shakes her head in disgust at the piss-poor condition of the lobby, then heads for the stairs.

EXT. SUITE 212 - DAY

Tracy notices 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. A CLEANING LADY steps out of a restroom.

TRACY (CONT'D)

Where is everybody? Isn't this
Cuttbate Associates?

CLEANING LADY

(In Spanish with
subtitles)

They left. I'm scraping shit off
the bathroom floor. Would you like
to help me?

TRACY

Do you speak English?

CLEANING LADY

Si. Un poco.

TRACY

Where is everybody?

CLEANING LADY

They leaves. Two weeks ago.

The old 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 and scans the block. No limo. She walks briskly down the sidewalk.

EXT. BISTRO - DAY

Agitated, Tracy takes a sidewalk table at a 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)
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.

TRACY (CONT'D)
Listen. Something is really wrong.
The office is empty. No one is
there except a cleaning lady.
(beat)
Yeah. Call me back ASAP.

The Waitress returns with the vodka. Tracy hangs up, takes a long drink, and lights a cigarette.

EXT. BISTRO - DAY (LATER)

Tracy sits at the table; an ashtray holds several butts. She nurses a drink. Her hair is mussed. The Toddler plays in Tracy's purse. Tracy's phone RINGS and she answers.

TRACY
Yeah?

INTERCUT with Hannah's Office.

HANNAH
Here's what I have so far. The
Cuttbate website is down. I did a
database search.
(MORE)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

The incorporation filing for
Cuttbate Associates was rejected
earlier in the week.

TRACY

Jesus.

HANNAH

I tried to contact Bernard Zwiebel
and Arthur Andrews but their phones
have been disconnected.

(long pause)

Are you OK?

TRACY

Yeah. Go on.

Tracy takes a drink.

HANNAH

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

Good god. Listen, check through
the records of all the people I met
with regarding RodCone Labs and
Cuttbate Associates. Find someone
who can shed some light on this fuh-

-

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

TRACY (CONT'D)

--ugly mess.

Tracy hangs up and rubs her temples. She lights another
cigarette and sits back, resigned.

FADE OUT.