

SWINDOLL

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE - 2:50 PM

We open with a view of Manhattan, then ZOOM IN on a gorgeous office building at the southern tip of city. SUITS are walking in and out of the front doors.

INT. KLARKSON FRONT ENTRANCE

MARY HANSON (40s, tall, confident) walks quickly, swiping her id at a turnstile and stepping in to an elevator. The entrance is imposing, all marble and cavernous. PAN TO a sign reading 'KLARKSON AND CO' over the front desk.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mary steps out of the elevator, continues down the hallway, and stops in front of a door with 'MARY HANSON, PARTNER' etched into a small metal plate. A beat. She steps in.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The room is spartan, Swedish design, but for a large glass desk in front of floor-ceiling windows, holding a laptop and an espresso cup. The only personal touch is a framed contract on the wall with the words 'JAMES HEAVY INDUSTRIES' printed in large letters. It is silent. Mary pulls the office chair over to the window and sits down. She plays with a pen thinking about what to do. She is furious, if she wasn't playing with the pen she might have thrown the laptop out the window. We PAN around the room to the door. GEORGE ILKS (short hair, goatee, suit) knocks and comes in. He is confident and relaxed. There is no other seat in the office so he stands in front of the desk.

GEORGE

Hey Mary, you wanted to see me?

Mary turns her seat to face George. She has regained her composure but just barely.

MARY

(sarcastically)

So glad you could make it. Why
don't you grab a seat from outside.

George leaves and returns with a small rolling chair. He sits in front of the desk and looks up at Mary, waiting.

MARY

How was your weekend?

GEORGE

Nothing special, mostly getting
ready for the restructuring now
that we closed with Slack.

MARY

Closed with Slack ... You do realize the game is over now, why bother keeping this up?

George has no idea what she is talking about and stares at her blankly.

MARY

George I know. You and your new pal beat me. Congratulations.

George does not react for a moment as he tries to understand what she means. Finally:

GEORGE

You mean Ed? I thought everything was settled after Friday.

She is clenching the pen in one fist, both hands on the table. Brows furrowed:

MARY

George ... I was so good to you. Everything you wanted, all the toughest projects. And after everything, even a promotion, you turned on me. Was it not enough?

INT. AN UPSCALE MANHATTAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Flashback to that Friday. Mary is at dinner with the Slack Corp CEO ED PALMER in a trendy New York restaurant; the converted warehouse look. They are surrounded by beautiful people. The lights are dimmed. Mary is sitting directly across from Ed at a square table. Ed, 30's with younger Bill Murray looks, is very solemn. Mary expected this to be a celebration as Ed signed the contract selling Slack to Mary's firm. A WAITRESS brings over a bottle of champagne and pours two flutes. Mary raises one:

MARY

Ed, I'd like to make a toast to what may just be the biggest deal of the year. It has been a pleasure getting to know you and I know that once this goes through we'll have the capital to make your strategic vision a reality.

She reaches out her glass. Ed, smiling, reaches out his own and the sound of the clink reverbrates.

ED

I couldn't have asked for a better partner.

MARY

Do you have the contract? Let's finish up with business and celebrate.

ED

Of course, we deserve it.

Ed slowly takes an unmarked folder out of his briefcase and places it on the table between them. Expressionless, his complete attention is focused on Mary. Mary reaches out and opens the folder. She stares at the contents in confusion. Inside is the very contract she has hanging on the wall in her office. The words 'JAMES HEAVY INDUSTRIES' and 'JAMES PALMER' are clearly visible.

MARY

But this isn't ... Where did you get this?

This moment is the culmination of years of patience. Ed is calm, savoring every word. He smiles:

ED

It looks familiar doesn't it?

MARY

Of course, I was the one who wrote it. What does it have to do with anything?

ED

Mary. Maryyyy. Did I really not seem familiar to you? We met once, years ago. Right before you tore up my father's company. Certainly worked out well for you didn't it?

MARY

James is your father? I'm so sorry, I should have realized...

Mary is trying very hard to be polite but this has gotten off to a bad start.

ED

I hear that deal was the one that pushed you up to partner. Everyone ate it up, even the Wall Street Journal. But Mary, you and I both know what really happened. Each and every one of the lives you destroyed.

MARY

Ed I have no idea why you're bringing this up. But if you aren't comfortable closing the deal for
(MORE)

MARY (cont'd)

Slack now we can meet again next week.

Ed ignores her, telling his story without wavering. He is tightly controlling his glee.

ED

Because you told my father that you would keep the company together. That you would take care of the employees who had dedicated their lives to his vision. And then, just a few days after the sale, you started cutting their jobs. You fired them, one by one, with some story about corporate restructuring. You split it up and sold it like so much scrap metal.

MARY

Ed I never broke my word. I told James I would keep the company together as long I could and I did, but it was hemorrhaging money every day. Bankruptcy was my only other choice. Your father was living in a dream if he thought things could go on like that.

Ed shakes his head, flipping over the contract in the folder. Behind it are a series of photos. Mary glances at them. ZOOM IN on a photo of a man with his family.

ED

This is Frank. Did you know Frank? I guess not. He worked for James for thirty years. THIRTY YEARS. And right before his retirement came around you took over.

Silence. Mary is trying to stay calm.

ED

(pensively)

Family man you know. Two beautiful daughters.

Ed flips to the next picture, an older woman standing at an assembly line wearing overalls.

ED

And this is Martha. You would have met her as well if you had taken the time to talk to the people you fired. Her husband left her a few weeks later.

Mary interrupts, trying to get them back on track. She is overly polite and apologetic.

MARY

Ed listen, I understand. You're angry. And you're right, I made some tough decisions. If it's any consolation I really am sorry for the way things turned out. But you know that I was just doing what had to be done. Why do you think your father sold the company to me in the first place?

She takes a folder out of her bag along with a pen. Inside the folder is an unsigned copy of the Slack contract.

MARY

Here, I brought an extra copy just in case. Why don't we sign this now and then we can talk about James. I had no idea he took things so hard.

Ed looks down at the contract and begins speaking with pride:

ED

You know you took the bait even faster than I expected. When I floated the idea of selling Slack at such a ridiculously low price you were almost the first person to make an offer. Always looking for a bargain aren't you? Of course there was so much money to be made I knew you would put everything else on hold. How could you not? It would have been plenty even for YOU to retire on.

MARY

What do you mean the bait?

Ed is twirling the pen around his fingers and takes a sip of champagne.

ED

Well if you haven't figured it out by now, Slack isn't for sale. It never was. So sorry we had to wait till the end of the year to find out.

Mary, shocked, stand ups and puts her hands on the table. Ed continues unfazed.

ED

There there try to look on the bright side of things. Maybe the board will force you to retire anyway. I mean it'll be pretty tough to talk your way out of this one. And George. Nice kid that one, even more gullible than you. Imagine that.

Everything is in the open now. Ed never intended to close the deal. He drew Mary in, dangling the profit in front of her for a year, knowing he would pull out at the last moment. Mary grabs her bag and jacket. Dripping sarcasm:

MARY

Well Ed congratulations, you got me. I hope you choke on your goddamn revenge. Give James my regards.

She stalks out. We watch Ed for another moment as he finishes off his champagne and pours another glass. He can't hide his smile as he flips through the contract Mary put on the table. The food arrives and he calmly cuts into his bleeding steak.

FADE OUT

INT. MARY HANSON'S OFFICE - SAME

The flashback ends, George is sitting in front of Mary. He realizes the deal with Slack fell through but doesn't know the back story between Mary and Ed. Mary assumes George was working with Ed.

GEORGE

Mary I'm so sorry, he told me everything was set and he would sign on Friday. I know how much you have done for me, I owe you everything. How could I have known he would back out?

MARY

George ... you still think I don't get it? You spent all this time working with Ed; it never even occurred to me that he might win you over. It's my fault really. I should have thought twice after that glowing presentation you gave about the acquisition. You sold me a shiny car with a fucking bomb in the trunk.

George still thinks this is just another one of Mary's blow-outs. She has a tendency for wild overreactions on the rare occasion when things don't go her way. George did

everything he could for Slack; if the deal fell through it wasn't his fault.

GEORGE

I'm not sure what you mean. Did I make a mistake in the analysis? I went through everything more than once so I'm pretty sure the numbers weren't far off. If I missed something I promise you it won't happen again. Just tell me how to make it right.

MARY

No George, it won't happen again. I trusted you with Ed. I put everything on the line. You must be making quite an effort to keep the grin off your face; Ed definitely didn't.

George has resigned himself to accepting whatever blame Mary wants to put on him. He has a great deal of professional respect for her and owes her for his last promotion.

GEORGE

OK, Mary, I understand. You're angry, the deal fell through at the last minute and the year is about to end. What can I do to help fix this?

Mary is incredulous, speaking quickly and without thinking.

MARY

You really aren't going to admit it are you? You smug little fuck. What did George offer you? A job? Money? Jesus I don't care. I'm going to have plenty to do keeping my own job. You're fired. Pack up your shit and get out of the building.

There is a moment of silence, then George starts laughing.

GEORGE

Oh come on Mary, I don't know what you think happened but George hasn't given me anything. I was just doing my job and evaluating his company. That's all. Can't we talk about this tomorrow, once things have calmed down?

MARY

(slowly)

Don't come back here again. Ever. Get out.

It dawns on George that Mary is serious. He starts thinking about what it means to be fired. Like many young people in finance George lives large, not month to month but not far off it either.

INSERT - BANK ACCOUNT GRAPHIC

Bar moves up to \$20,000, then slowly down, each move accompanied by an expense. Food - \$1000, rent - \$5000, travel - \$1200, etc. Things will be tight if he doesn't find some extra income quick.

GEORGE

Um, Mary, I'm not sure whether or not you're serious about this but if you are I've never been fired before. Do you want me to just leave? Will I get a last paycheck or something? What do I need to do?

MARY

Fine. You have an hour to move your things. Talk to HR about the check, and you should be thankful I'm not having you escorted out by security.

George stands up and wheels the chair back out into the corridor.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET

The closet is dark. George opens the door part way and turns on the light. He looks around, picks up a few boxes and settles for a classic banker's box. It is disassembled and has a little diagram explaining how to put it together. His hands are shaking so badly it takes him two or three tries to get it right.

INT. GEORGE'S CUBICLE

George is clearing his desk and filling the banker's box. The cubicle is tiny, just enough room for two people to stand. There is an engraving with his name on it at the entrance. The desk is covered with books, electronics, and files. He takes out his phone and writes a message to MARK SUH.

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

TEXT MESSAGE

Hey looks like I just got fired.
Let's drink later?

TEXT MESSAGE

Shit man, how about 6 at Todd's?
What happened?

TEXT MESSAGE

Strange story, I'll tell you
tonight.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT

Mark and George were roommates in college. Mark is now a freelance programmer. He has a beard and wears tight jeans; thoroughly hipster. The apartment is modern but comfortable. There is a guitar in the corner, photography on the walls. Mark is sitting on the couch in front of his laptop smoking a joint. LINDIE HARRIS, his girlfriend, is sitting next to him reading a textbook. She is a graduate student at NYU studying business and lives with Mark.

MARK

Want some of this?

Lindie nods, Mark passes her the joint.

MARK

Also I think George just got fired.

He shows her the text message conversation.

LINDIE

Wow. He was in private equity
right?

MARK

Yup, he was really good. I think
they just closed a big deal last
week. Wonder what happened.

LINDIE

Either way please please please try
to be nice, I'm sure he's having a
tough day.

Lindie takes a puff of the joint. Exhaling:

LINDIE

Hey why don't we just drink here?
Todd's will be crowded.

MARK

Fair.

Mark sends a message to George

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

TEXT MESSAGE

Let's meet at my place instead.
Lindie is here as well.

INT. GEORGE'S CUBICLE - SAME

JOELLE THOMSON walks by the cubicle, sees George packing his things into the box, and comes over. She is George's age, very professional. They worked on the same team for a few months just after George was hired. Joelle knows George is well regarded at the company and was recently promoted so she assumes he is changing offices.

JOELLE

Hey, you didn't tell me the
promotion came with a new office as
well ...

George is embarrassed and confused about what happened. He wants to finish packing and leave as soon as possible.

GEORGE

(still packing)

Hey Joelle, strange as this may
sound I just got fired, supposed to
be out of here in an hour. I was
going to come by on my way out.

Joelle is silent as she takes in what he said. All she can muster is a look of disbelief. This is the proverbial snowball in hell. George looks up at her:

GEORGE

I know, I didn't expect it either.
Mary is furious, yelled at me for
ages and then told me to leave.

JOELLE

I'm so sorry I had no idea. It's
going to be quiet around here
without you. What are you going to
do?

Losing control of himself George's voice rises:

GEORGE

For the moment I'm going to pack
this fu ...

He catches himself, takes a deep breath and continues:

GEORGE

Pack this box and get out of here.

She grabs his hand.

JOELLE

George, look. What can I do to
help? Mary hasn't left yet, I could
go by her office. Maybe she's
calmed down.

GEORGE

I really appreciate it but this
isn't your problem.

He looks up at her and realizes how distraught she is.

GEORGE

Oh come on, please don't make me
leave like this. I really enjoyed
working here, plenty of good
memories.

Struggling to remember one of said good memories:

GEORGE

Remember that night we saw Mary at
the Barrister?

The Barrister is a popular club in downtown Manhattan.

JOELLE

(trailing off)

Yeah that was something.

Joelle puts some books in the box.

JOELLE

I guess we all thought you were on
the fast track. The partners all
loved you, you got promoted so
fast. What happened?

GEORGE

To be honest I'm not entirely sure.
Apparently the deal with Slack fell
apart and Mary thinks it's my
fault.

JOELLE

What do you mean?

GEORGE

She kept saying that Ed tricked her
and I helped him. I wasn't at the
dinner so I don't know what
actually happened but last I knew
Ed agreed to everything and they
were going to celebrate.

JOELLE

So he backed out? How is that your
fault?

George shoves a paperweight into the box; it rips. He sits
on the desk.

GEORGE

I have no idea. Mary asked me to come to her office and just started ranting. I thought she was angry that it didn't go through but something else must have happened.

He throws a book at the wall.

JOELLE

(trailing off)

Well at least you did the right thing. Mary must be worried about her own job, the Slack deal was pretty much all we had for the year.

GEORGE

Maybe

He remembers that Mary told him to go by the HR office.

GEORGE

Hey I've got to run over to HR before leaving. Stay in touch yeah? Let's talk after things cool down.

They hug.

JOELLE

Of course. Take care of yourself.

FADE OUT

INT. HR OFFICE

PAN TO a motivational poster on the wall that reads 'LIFE IS 10% WHAT HAPPENS TO ME AND 90% OF HOW I REACT TO IT - CHARLES SWINDOLL' with a picture of a puppy. The desk is cluttered with papers and photos of family members, along with a printer and keyboard. The office is empty. George knocks on the door and after waiting for a response he enters.

GEORGE

Hello?

Silence. He looks around at the random collection of stuff in the office, and then walks over to the poster. He takes a marker from the desk and changes 'SWINDOLL' to 'SWINDLE' on the poster, chuckling. He takes a blank page from the printer and writes: 'Dear Beth, Just got let go and Mary told me to come ask what I should do. Supposed to be out of the building in 10 minutes so could you give me a call or send me an email? Thanks, George'. He leaves it on the keyboard.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE - 4:30 PM

George is having trouble getting past the turnstile with his overflowing box. People are staring, an ONLOOKER helps him get it over.

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - 5:00 PM

A studio apartment in midtown, big lcd screen, xbox, quite messy. Classic bachelor pad. George walks in to the living room, drops the box on the floor and eats some leftover pizza in the fridge. He makes himself a gin tonic and sits on the couch with his laptop, searching 'What to do when you get fired'.

GEORGE
(to himself)
Fucking ridiculous.

He takes a shower, finishes the drink, and heads over to Mark's.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - 5:50 PM

Mark and Lindie are still on the couch. George knocks and comes in. He has a bottle of scotch.

GEORGE
Hey guys, sorry didn't realize I
would get here so early. Brought
some scotch though. Started the
party without me?

Lindie walks over and gives him a hug.

LINDIE
I heard what happened. Hope you're
holding up alright.

GEORGE
Jesus people are acting like I had
a leg amputated or something. It
sucks but it really isn't THAT big
of a deal.

MARK
Not to be a downer but it sort of
is a big deal...

George tosses the bottle of scotch at Mark.

GEORGE
And there I was thinking you might
just be positive for once. Let's
drink.

Lindie gets some glasses and ice from the kitchen. Mark pours the drinks.

MARK

So what happened?

GEORGE

Really want to know? I feel like I keep telling this story and it makes less sense every time. How about you tell me what's going on with that beard. Lindie how come you haven't put your foot down yet?

LINDIE

I actually kind of like it. Very prickly.

MARK

Right I won't ask then.

LINDIE

On the up side maybe now we'll see some more of you. No more midnight calls from the office.

George and Lindie are old friends; George introduced her to Mark. George's phone rings.

GEORGE

Speak of the devil. Sorry guys, I have to get this. It's the HR lady. Keep it down for a minute.

He answers the phone and puts it on speaker.

GEORGE

Hey Beth, thanks for calling.

BETH

Hi George, sorry I missed you earlier. Got your note. By the way are you the one who graffitied my poster?

Mark bursts out laughing.

GEORGE

(embarrassed)

Sorry about that, not sure what I was thinking. His name did sort of sound like swindle though.

BETH

If that's your way of going out with a bang ... Anyway so Mary fired you?

GEORGE

Yeah just about. It was all pretty sudden.

BETH

I see. Well I'm sorry to hear that. Standard process is that we'll pay you three months regular salary upfront to tide you over while you look for another job. You just have to sign a noncompete and we should be all set.

GEORGE

Three months? Really? That's great. If you don't mind my asking what exactly are the terms of the noncompete?

BETH

Just that you can't work in the field for two years beginning today. Standard stuff to protect our strategy.

GEORGE

That's fine, I'm planning to try some other things anyway ... If you send over the papers I'll sign tonight.

He covers the phone with his hand.

GEORGE

(to Mark)

Sweet!

GEORGE

(to the phone)

Beth I can't tell you how thankful I am. It's been great working with you.

BETH

Good luck George. We'll all miss you here, stay in touch.

He hangs up.

MARK

Nice man, that's pretty generous. You won't have to stress about finding another job.

LINDIE

Alright now that that's done with, cheers!

They clink glasses. Mark rolls another joint and they pass it around.

LINDIE

Have you told Sarah?

GEORGE
(sheepish)
Not yet. Trying to think of the
right way.

Mark laughs.

MARK
Hey man when I quit I came straight
home and told Lindie.

LINDIE
Yeah the tear stains are still on
the carpet. He didn't leave the
building for a week.

GEORGE
You know this isn't the same.
Really think I should call her?

MARK
(snarky)
Maybe get some newly unemployed -
themed flowers or something. What
does she do again?

GEORGE
Works at a bank.

MARK
Better go with diamonds then.
Perfect use for that severance
package.

He realizes Mark is joking.

GEORGE
You're so full of shit. You'd think
I would have learned not to take
you seriously by now.

LINDIE
You guys are BOTH obnoxious. Let's
go up to the roof?

MARK
Sure thing Madame Voice of Reason.

They take their glasses and walk out the front door.

EXT. BUILDING ROOF - 8:00 PM

View of Manhattan. The roof has some chairs scattered around
and a grill.

MARK
So George, anything we can do to
relieve your career angst? Maybe
some sort of group cuddle?

GEORGE

Funny. Really though I'm fine. I just want to do something silly tonight and forget about what happened.

MARK

How about a party then?

GEORGE

Sure.

LINDIE

It is a Monday though ... But I bet between us we could get twenty or thirty people over.

MARK

Alright let me see who's around.

He steps off to the side to call SOME FRIENDS.

LINDIE

Hey if you don't want to talk about what happened that's fine but I hope you're feeling ok. You seem like you're in shock.

GEORGE

Yeah it probably hasn't sunk in yet. You know the strangest part is that I still don't really know why I got fired. Everything was going so well and then BOOM, next thing I'm packing my boxes.

LINDIE

You really don't know why?

GEORGE

My boss thinks I tricked her into working on a huge deal that fell apart. Which is ridiculous because I spent almost a year working on it. Obviously I wanted it to go through just as much as she did.

LINDIE

So she thinks you set her up?

GEORGE

More or less yeah. Anyway I think I would have taken things much worse if I actually knew what I did.

LINDIE

That makes sense. Well I guess what's done is done. Any ideas on what to do next?

GEORGE

I don't know it's weird to think that I'll have some free time; there are so many things I want to try. Why don't you ask me again tomorrow?

FADE OUT

EXT. BUILDING ROOF - 10:30 PM

FRIENDS have started to arrive. Some lights are strung around the roof and a bar table is set up with drinks. SARAH MILLS walks in looking pissed off. She is hands down the most attractive woman at the party, guys are already eyeing her. George, talking to Mark near the door, sees her enter and turns quickly before she notices him.

GEORGE

Did you invite Sarah?

MARK

(not sorry at all)

Oops.

Poking George in the chest:

MARK

Better get it over with. I know you man, if you put it off now you'll never tell her.

GEORGE

Alright well keep her busy for a minute. I'm taking you up on that flowers idea.

Mark shakes his head laughing and waves at Sarah as George sneaks out behind her. Sarah comes over.

MARK

Hey thanks for coming. George should be back in a minute.

SARAH

Did he tell you what happened? I really can't understand why he didn't call.

MARK

Nothing much but he's in a surprisingly good mood. Between you and me I think he might just be embarrassed, he's always worried that you'll think he's incompetent.

SARAH

Typical. You know he refused to tell me how much his bonus was until a few weeks ago? He thought I made more and wouldn't take him seriously if I knew.

MARK

Just a pride thing, he's always been like that. Why don't we go get you a drink?

SARAH

That would be great.

They walk over to the bar table, Mark pours two glasses of wine. George enters from the back door.

MARK

Well here he is now. I'm going to check in on Lindie.

To himself, incredulous:

MARK

Flowers?

EXT. BUILDING ROOF - SAME

George walks over to Sarah with the flowers. He's holding them like an offering.

GEORGE

(to Sarah)

Hey Sarah.

SARAH

There you are, I was worried you might do something really stupid. Why didn't you call?

George is stumped.

SARAH

You do realize it's a little strange I heard from your friend first right?

GEORGE

Well it sort of happened all of the sudden.

He hands her the flowers.

GEORGE

I just wanted to have some time to think before talking to you.

Today's been really bizarre, you

(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)
breaking up with me would have fit
the theme quite well.

SARAH
(laughing)
Well you got me, I was just dating
you for your attractive paycheck.
It's got such a great sense of
humor. Nice body too.

Staring dreamily off into space.

SARAH
Paper Benjamin Franklin is such a
hunk.

George laughs.

SARAH
You really thought I would break up
with you for getting fired? Nice
flowers by the way, very
apologetic.

GEORGE
I'm glad you think so. I guess I
didn't actually think you would but
everyone is overreacting. At this
point nothing would surprise me.

SARAH
I wish you would tell me these
things ... anyway what happened?

GEORGE
Oh god not again.

Mark wanders back over and overhears.

MARK
Be nice...

GEORGE
(to Mark)
Asshole.

GEORGE
Well basically my boss thinks I set
her up. The deal I was working on
just fell through and she fired me.

MARK
And he graffitied the HR person's
office.

SARAH
What??

GEORGE

Come on. I just changed some of the writing on her poster, she seemed to think it was funny.

SARAH

You're ridiculous.

The music starts all of the sudden, a heavy bass beat. We SPEED UP. People are dancing. ZOOM IN on some of the friends, then OVERVIEW of the rooftop. Mark is dancing with Sarah, George is standing by the wall looking over the city. Mark sees him alone and comes over to try and cheer him up. George doesn't want to talk.

MARK

Hey man, you know this party is for you right? And it's taking place ON the roof. More or less directly behind you.

GEORGE

Yeah well I'm drunk and according to Lindie in shock. Not feeling much like a party at the moment.

Mark tries to keep the conversation going a few times but George is very curt:

MARK

Sorry about Sarah.

GEORGE

Don't worry about it. I wouldn't have told her.

MARK

Listen, if you're worried about money I can get you a coding gig until you work things out.

GEORGE

(aggressive)

Oh yeah so I can lie around and smoke weed all day? Thanks but no thanks.

Mark realizes he isn't wanted.

MARK

Alright well if you need to talk you know where to find me...

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - 6:00 AM

George and Sarah are sprawled on the bed. Sarah's alarm goes off on her phone, she jumps out of bed. George throws a pillow at her.

GEORGE

So that's it, now that I'm fired
I'm just a one night stand to you?

SARAH

(joking)

You're welcome to come with me if
you want. Us working folk have to
get up on Tuesdays. Want some
coffee? About to make a pot.

She walks out of the room.

GEORGE

(shouting)

No think I'd prefer to sleep. I
know you're jealous!

She comes back with a cup, drinks it quickly, kisses George
and rushes out.

SARAH

(over her shoulder)

Please stay out of trouble.

He is already sleeping.

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - 8:45 AM

George wakes up and looks at his phone. He curses, gets out
of bed and showers. He runs out the door.

INT. KLARKSON FRONT ENTRANCE - 9:10 AM

George rushes through the turnstile. People are giving him
strange looks but he doesn't notice.

INT. A HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

George passes Mary's office and sees Ed sitting across from
her.

INT. GEORGE'S CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

He sits down at his desk. It is completely empty, and there
is a blank spot at the entrance to the cubicle where his
name used to be engraved. Silence. We hear a clock tick.

Mary is standing at the entrance.

MARY

What are you doing here? Was I not
clear enough yesterday?

George is confused and sputtering.

GEORGE

Mary I'm so sorry please don't fire me. What am I going to do? This is the only job I've ever had.

MARY

Stop grovelling and move on with your life. I have to clean up your mess.

Ed walks up to the entrance.

ED

Yeah George, she's plenty busy with me.

Mary slides her nail up Ed's neck to his lips, very sensual.

GEORGE

Sorry I didn't realize ... Oh god I'm so sorry.

Ed and Mary are both smiling at George, showing teeth. He passes out on the desk.

INT. GEORGE'S APARTMENT - 10:00 AM

George sits up in bed shaking; it was just a dream. He checks his phone. There is a missed call from an unknown number. He makes a pot of coffee in the kitchen, sits down at the counter, and calls back.

GEORGE

Hello this is George, sorry I missed your call earlier.

ED

Hey George, it's Ed. How about lunch?

George spits out his coffee.

GEORGE

You must be kidding.

ED

Look I heard Mary fired you and I had an offer I thought you might like to hear.

A beat. George puts the phone on speaker and walks over to the fridge. It is completely empty. He rubs his temples and finally shrugs.

GEORGE

Fine, what time?

ED

Let's say twelve thirty at
Cafeteria. I'll send a driver over.

GEORGE

I'll take the train.

George hangs up, cleans the spilled coffee and texts Sarah.

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

TEXT MESSAGE

Apparently Ed wants to have lunch

TEXT MESSAGE

You say yes?

TEXT MESSAGE

Yup, meeting him at 1230

TEXT MESSAGE

Maybe he'll explain what happened
with Mary ...

INT. RESTAURANT - 12:30 AM

The restaurant is bright and airy; everything is white. Ed is sitting at a table immaculately dressed in a suit and tie, wearing a watch. He looks pleased, slowly sipping a coffee. George enters, sees Ed. Ed stands as they shake hands.

GEORGE

Ed.

ED

George, thanks for coming.

They sit.

ED

How are you holding up?

George is confused. Ed is very calm, smiling. Listing slowly, voice rising:

GEORGE

Well I just lost my job and I'm not
entirely sure why. I'm not sure
when I'll be working again. I'll
probably have to move out of my
apartment.

Ed is nodding.

GEORGE

(sarcastically)

But other than that things are just
dandy.

ED

I see. Well as you know I backed out of the deal with Klarkson.

GEORGE

Indeed I do know. Now. But Mary seems to think I knew all along. And that you paid me off to help convince her the deal would go through. What the hell did you tell her?

Lying through his teeth:

ED

Well obviously that's ridiculous. What happened between Mary and myself was very unfortunate. We couldn't agree on some of the particulars of the deal and it was clear that it just wouldn't work out. But that's besides the point. I wanted to talk to you because I feel responsible for what this will do to your career. I didn't intend for you to take the hit when the deal fell apart.

A WAITRESS comes by and pours them both water.

WAITRESS

What can I get you gentlemen?

ED

I'll have the salmon, it sounds wonderful.

GEORGE

Quinoa salad for me.

ED

Good choice, they have lovely salads here.

WAITRESS

Sure thing it will be right over.

She leaves.

GEORGE

Look I don't understand. What happened on Friday? Just the day before you told me everything was set and you were ready to sign. You told me to tell Mary it was a celebratory dinner.

ED

Ah yes, Friday. Look I don't want you to get too held up on what happened. Mary and I didn't see eye to eye, that's all. I guess in the end I got along better with you than I did with her.

George doesn't care about any of this, he just wants to know why he lost his job.

GEORGE

If that's the case then why did I get fired? Why did she think I was working for you?

ED

You have to understand that Mary had a lot riding on this deal. She put everything else at Klarkson on hold. When she realized it wasn't going to happen she probably needed to give the other partners a head or lose her own job. You were her only choice.

GEORGE

(in disbelief)

So you're saying all those things she said were just part of a story to convince the other partners it wasn't her fault?

ED

I wouldn't put it in such crass terms but effectively, yes.

GEORGE

So what does this have to do with you?

ED

Like I said, I feel guilty for giving you such a strong impression that I would sign and I know what happened will hurt your career. So I wanted to make things right.

Ed takes a check out of his front pocket. It is made out to George in the sum of \$500,000.

ED

Here's some seed money to start your own fund. This should let you get off the ground, rent an office, that sort of thing.

George is completely lost now. He looks from Ed to the check and back again.

GEORGE

Jesus you really are nuts.

ED

Either way you're out of a job and I know how good you are at what you do. Give this a try, see how it goes. If you can get someone else to match it I'll throw in another \$5 million. All I'm asking is that you run any investment ideas by me first so it doesn't all go up in smoke.

Very slowly, savoring the taste of the words:

GEORGE

Five million dollars.

Pause. He takes the check and turns it over. Nothing unusual, except for the words 'BREAK A LEG' printed along the top.

GEORGE

Why?

ED

Because I don't want you to have to pay for what happened between Mary and me. And to be honest I have a feeling this will turn out to be one of my better investments.

GEORGE

And Mary?

ED

What about her? You definitely don't owe her anything, she threw you under the bus as soon as things got tough.

George really wants to say yes to this.

GEORGE

So in short you feel guilty about how I got fired. And to make up for it you want me to start a hedge fund with your money?

ED

That's right. Even though things didn't come together in the end we worked on the deal for quite a while. I'm pretty confident in your ability to manage money.

GEORGE

I need to think about this.

ED

Of course you do. Well keep the check, let me know when you've made up your mind. I'll be down the block at Speakeasy later tonight if you decide by then.

George carefully folds the check and puts it in his pocket. The food arrives.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - THAT EVENING

Mark is strumming the guitar. George is lying on the couch throwing a tennis ball up and down. He sits up.

GEORGE

Would you stop for a minute?

Mark puts down the guitar.

GEORGE

I had lunch with Ed today.

MARK

The guy who got you fired?

GEORGE

Yeah. Look at this.

George puts the check on the table.

MARK

Holy shit. HOLY SHIT.

GEORGE

He wants me to start a hedge fund. And he'll put in another five mil if I can get someone to match this.

MARK

You lucky bastard. This is why I never take your problems ser...

GEORGE

(interrupting)

Anyway I don't want to do it alone.

Mark doesn't get it. He sits next to George and comforts him.

MARK

Oh you poor baby. Handling all that money on your lonesome. You must be so unhappy.

George pushes him away.

GEORGE

Are you in?

MARK

In what?

GEORGE

Let's do it together.

Mark gets up and pours them each a scotch.

MARK

I don't know anything about this stuff.

GEORGE

(laughing)

You too scared to go big? Might be hard on your relationship with this couch.

Mark sips the scotch, then spins the cup watching the patterns it makes. He looks up at George:

MARK

Look at me.

Pointing around the apartment:

MARK

I've got a nice place, plenty of money, a girlfriend. Why would I jump ship?

GEORGE

Let's be honest, you make websites and smoke weed.

MARK

You have a problem with that?

GEORGE

Mark, I need you. This is our chance.

MARK

Ahh since when are you the one making stupid decisions.

He walks around the room in silence, then stops to look out the window. Finally he shakes his head and turns back to George.

MARK

Fuck it I'm in. Cheers.

They clink glasses solemnly.

MARK

We need a name.

George stands up, gesturing grandly as if entering a palace.

GEORGE

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to
Kluck Flarkson Associates.

In a deep voice:

MARK

Established in 1904, we have been
flarking the business world for
generations.

They drink in silence. George remembers the poster in the HR
office:

GEORGE

How about Swindoll and Co?

Mark savors the words:

MARK

Swindoll and Co. Swindolllll

GEORGE

Yeah?

MARK

Yeah.

GEORGE

Alright I'll tell Ed. We need to
figure out the other 500 k though.

MARK

Mhmm

GEORGE

And there's one other thing. I
signed a noncompete with Klarkson.
I'll need to find a way out of it.

Mark is busy rolling a huge joint, a real monster. George
swats it out of his hand.

MARK

What the hell man?

GEORGE

Mark listen, this is real. It's
probably going to be the hardest
thing either of us has ever done.

MARK

What's your point?

GEORGE

You're going to have to clean up your shit. No more weed.

MARK

Woah easy there cowboy you must be confused. We're partners not parents.

George isn't joking.

GEORGE

Mark please, whatever you think we are, we'll need to have our minds clear. Maybe yoga or bootcamp or something but definitely not weed.

MARK

(indignant)

Phelps smoked weed.

GEORGE

Yeah and look at all the great publicity it got him. Just give it a try, one week. If it doesn't work out we'll talk.

MARK

(sheepish)

Fine.

George gets up and puts on his coat.

GEORGE

I'm going to run over and meet Ed.
Be back in an hour.

He leaves.

INT. A BAR

Ed is sitting alone at the bar drinking a coke. It is old-fashioned, lots of polished wood. Obviously not popular anymore but still kept in good shape.

George enters.

GEORGE

Hey Ed, it'll be Swindoll & Co.

ED

Great so you'll do it. Think you'll be able to match the money? I'll give you a week if you need some time.

GEORGE

I'm not sure, haven't had a chance to ask around but I hope so. We'll incorporate next week. I have a partner by the way, he'll be taking care of the tech side of things.

ED

That's fine. I'm heading back to Connecticut tomorrow morning, get in touch when you've made progress and we'll make plans to meet. Remember though, I need you to run any ideas by me first.

GEORGE

Alright.

George motions to the BARTENDER and gestures that he wants whatever Ed is having. He sips the drink.

GEORGE

Is this just coke?

Ed sips his own, smiling.

ED

Ah yes sorry about that. I don't drink much anymore.

George pushes his cup away. He is about to leave but stops to ask one last question:

GEORGE

Just out of curiosity am I your first fund?

ED

I've never done this before if that's what you mean. Happy to help you as much as I can though, my rolodex is pretty well-stacked.

George leaves muttering under his breath.

GEORGE

A rolodex, of course ...

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - SAME

Mark and Lindie are sitting on the couch trying to think of people to raise money from. Mark has a pen and a notebook. So far they have successfully written 'FUNDING' in large letters across the top of the page.

MARK

Thoughts on who we could ask?

LINDIE

I honestly have no idea. Your parents? They can definitely afford it.

MARK

Yeah but they don't trust me.

LINDIE

Maybe Sarah then?

MARK

Hmm. Not sure what George will think but it's worth a try.

He adds Sarah to the list.

LINDIE

What about people from the place you were working last year?

MARK

That's good.

He adds Spark to the list just as George walks in.

GEORGE

Hey guys. Alright it's set with Ed.

Mark pumps up his fist.

GEORGE

Don't get too excited yet, we still have two major problems: the money and the noncompete. Ed's deadline for the rest of the money is one week. The good news is that I think I've got a way to solve both problems at once.

MARK

Shit that's really soon. Did you tell Ed about the noncompete?

GEORGE

Of course not. And if this works I won't have to. I'm going to try and meet with Mary. Hopefully she's had a chance to cool down and from the way Ed describes it she might even feel a little guilty about what happened. I'll just ask her to match Ed's money. Then she'll get a cut of whatever we make so the noncompete won't be an issue.

MARK

That's a great idea if you can convince her to meet with you.

They are all grinning like fools, hopeful and excited. George sees the notebook, Mark passes it to him.

GEORGE

If it doesn't work out we can talk to Ed about other options. What have you two been working on by the way?

MARK

Just thinking about other ways to raise the money.

GEORGE

Great well let's not go down that road till we have to. For the moment we're going to need a prospectus.

MARK

There's coffee in the kitchen. Let's get it done.

They begin working. ZOOM OUT through the window, view of Manhattan skyline at night.

INT. KLARKSON CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

A long, sleek wooden table is the centerpiece. The room is enclosed by glass walls. Mary, Joelle, and George are sitting at the head of the table around a thin folder. Written along the bottom in small letters are the words 'IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED, TRY, TRY AGAIN'. George is dressed casually; jeans, button up shirt, and blazer. Mary and Joelle are in pantsuits, Mary is wearing a thin silver watch.

MARY

Just so we're on the same page here, you're starting a fund that so far is entirely Ed's money.

GEORGE

That's right.

MARY

And you're looking for additional investors?

GEORGE

We just need to pull together another half million.

Mary is making sure everything is as she expected so she can use George and his fund to get back at Ed.

GEORGE

I'm asking for Klarkson to match Ed's seed money.

Ignoring the question, Mary checks her watch.

MARY

Right. Joelle can I talk to you outside?

We follow Mary and Joelle outside the conference room. George is visible through the glass. He is mouthing the words written on the front of the folder to himself.

MARY

Was he always this much of an idiot? Don't answer that. Obviously I have him by the balls, if he so much as sneezes at a hedge fund without my ok I'll sue him myself. I just need to be absolutely sure we aren't missing anything. Presumably the fund is Ed's way of paying George off for cooperating on the Slack deal?

JOELLE

I haven't talked to Ed but I did ask George how this whole thing came about. Apparently Ed felt guilty for George losing his job and wanted to make it up to him.

MARY

That bastard, of course he's guilty. He would take candy from a baby, hell he would take the carriage too. Doubt he cares in slightest about George. This whole thing was his fault.

Calming herself:

MARY

Ok. Alright. Does Ed know about the noncompete?

JOELLE

Definitely not. George was hoping to resolve it by having you invest in the fund.

MARY

Good. And does Ed know George is asking for our money?

JOELLE

As far as I can tell he doesn't.

MARY

(gleefully)

Perfect. Listen carefully then: I'm going to give him money out of my office's discretionary budget. The compliance people would have a fit if they knew but it won't be for very long. I need you to keep your mouth shut if anyone asks. Understand?

JOELLE

Of course.

MARY

Alright then. Thanks for bringing George in. Why don't you go back to your office and I'll let you know if anything comes up.

Joelle leaves down the hallway. Mary looks at George through the glass for a moment before entering the conference room.

MARY

So George, would you care to share your investment strategy with me?

GEORGE

Sure, here's the prospectus if you want to take a look.

He opens the folder and takes out a glossy booklet. Mary flips through it disdainfully for a moment, then looks up at him. She barely had time to read the first sentence:

MARY

Here's the deal. I'll give you the money ...

George immediately stands up and reaches to shake Mary's hand. She looks at his hand steadily:

MARY

BUT you will play by my rules. You will not make any trade or investment without my approval. My funds will be paid out preferentially in case the fund is liquidated or at any other time I choose to withdraw. You will guarantee a five percent return. There will be no other investors. And you will not tell Ed where you got the money.

GEORGE

Mary you know that's extortion. I can't agree to this.

MARY

Tell me, do you actually read papers before you sign them or do you just hope they'll disappear? Your noncompetitor is sitting on my desk right now. Your only choices are to take my offer or go into another line of business.

MARY

(derisively)

There are all sorts of great opportunities in retail these days.

She notices the writing on the folder.

MARY

A little motivation for your investors? How sweet. You'll be the first hedge fund manager whose strategy is a positive attitude.

As far as George is concerned Mary is simply taking advantage of the situation to make more money. He isn't aware that she is planning to use him against Ed.

GEORGE

Alright Mary, I'll do it. It isn't right but I don't have a choice at the moment.

Laughing:

MARY

You really never understood the people aspect of this job did you. You walk into my building, put your head on the chopping block, and then expect a good deal? If I don't agree you have nothing, and even if you did raise the money somewhere else I would shut you down before you could think of another faggoty quote to recite.

George is obviously unhappy with the terms of the deal but in the end he got what he needed.

GEORGE

Fine. I'll take the terms. And you will put in the 500 thousand so the noncompetitor doesn't apply. I'll also still get my salary then?

MARY

Sure you will. Send over your bank details and I'll wire you the salary and the funding once you've

(MORE)

MARY (cont'd)
signed our deal. By the way I
suggest you read the contract this
time before signing it.

George leaves, walking slowly. This meeting was a
trainwreck. Mary sits back down at the table and continues
looking through the prospectus.

FADE OUT

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT MORNING

There are papers strewn all over the apartment. Mark is
sitting on the floor staring at the prospectus. A plate of
half-eaten eggs is next to his foot. George is on the couch.
Sarah opens the door and enters. She looks around, faintly
disgusted, and moves some papers off the counter to make
room to sit.

GEORGE
Sorry about the mess. We've been at
it all night.

SARAH
Job-hunting I hope? I can't stay
long, this is my lunch break. Got
any food?

GEORGE
Might be something in the fridge.

She jumps off the counter and walks over to the fridge. It
is pretty bare but she finds a yoghurt.

SARAH
So what did you want to tell me?

GEORGE
Right I guess you haven't heard any
of this. Remember how I had lunch
with Ed?

SARAH
How could I forget?

GEORGE
Well get this: he asked me to start
a hedge fund. We should have six
million dollars all together by
next week.

SARAH
That's literally the LAST thing I
expected you to say.
Congratulations! You sure you'll
have time to do it on the side?

GEORGE

Well actually the plan is to do this full time. I still have my salary from Klarkson for the moment so there's no pressure.

SARAH

You mean you want to do this instead of finding a job? Hate to bring this up but something like 20 percent of new funds don't make it through their second year ...

GEORGE

I know, I know, it'll be hard, but Sarah, I need to try something new, get my blood flowing. And I'll be doing this with Mark.

Sarah is not thrilled at the prospect of an unemployed boyfriend.

SARAH

Look I love that you want to try this. I really do. But just make sure you think about whether it's the right move in the long term. If you decide to get a job later it'll be hard to explain the gaping hole in your resume.

George jumps up, goes over to the counter, picks her up, and swings her around. He's giddy with excitement and lack of sleep.

GEORGE

Come on where's your fire!? This is going to be amazing. Why don't you do it with us? We'll be the Three Financiers!

Sarah laughs as she wraps her arms around George's neck.

SARAH

Well aren't you energetic. The three financiers huh? That what they teach you in private equity?

GEORGE

I'm serious!

SARAH

Alright alright take it easy. I'm not quitting my job, although it's a very generous offer. I'm sure the two of you offer SPECTACULAR perks to your employees.

Looking around:

SARAH
Although maybe not desks...

GEORGE
Fine have it your way. You'll be
sorry when we're on the cover of
Forbes.

George receives a text message from Joelle.

INSERT - TEXT MESSAGE

TEXT MESSAGE
You alright?

TEXT MESSAGE
Got the money if that's what you
mean

TEXT MESSAGE
I heard. Just wanted to tell you to
be careful. Mary's acting a little
strange

TEXT MESSAGE
I know, she screwed me with the
noncompete. Annoying but not really
a big deal

George looks up from his phone. To Sarah:

GEORGE
Anyway, Mark and I should probably
get back to work. We need to find
an office and come up with some
investment ideas before the money
comes through.

Sarah finishes her yoghurt, George wanders back over to his
laptop.

INT. SWINDOLL OFFICE - MORNING

One week later. The office is in a coworking space in Soho.
'SWINDOLL & CO' is written in large letters over a pair of
desks. Other startups are scattered throughout the office,
there is a low hum of people whispering. PAN AROUND the
office before settling on Mark and George. Large windows let
in plenty of light. Taped over George's desk is a copy of
the poster from the Klarkson HR office.

George and Mark are both standing at a desk staring at the
computer. '\$5,983,271' is visible in enormous font.

GEORGE
It's beautiful.

MARK
So many digits.

GEORGE
You have the champagne?

Mark takes out a bottle of champagne and pops the cork.

MARK
I guess this is really happening
then. Our chickens have finally
hatched!

George jumps up on the desk. Shouting:

GEORGE
SWINDOLL IS IN BUSINESS!!

The entire floor goes silent. A MAN walks over from a
neighboring office. He is buttoned down, reeks of boring.

MAN
Everything alright?

GEORGE
You could say that. Want some
champagne?

MAN
Thanks but actually alcohol isn't
allowed in here. I know you two are
new so I won't report you if you
put it away. This is a workplace,
not a frat.

GEORGE
(snickering)
Right how could I have forgotten.
We'll just go to the kitchen then.

George and Mark walk over to the kitchen, exuberant.

INT. SWINDOLL KITCHEN - SAME

A few other WORKERS, 20-somethings with too much money, are
milling around the kitchen snacking on food.

GEORGE
(shouting)
Anyone want some champagne?

The Workers stop for a moment, looking at the pair of them.
One shakes his head. Muttering vague things about having
work to do they walk out of the kitchen one by one. Under
his breath:

WORKER
It's 11 AM.

GEORGE
Way to tell the time. You must have
been practicing.

GEORGE

(To Mark)

Jesus well I guess it's just us then. Starting to think we shouldn't have signed that lease.

MARK

Hey I'm not complaining, this champagne is pretty fine stuff.

They pour the champagne and have a toast.

GEORGE

Well now that we have the money let's go over the trades we talked about one more time and then

He finishes his glass. Resigned:

GEORGE

Then I'll run them by Mary.

George is terrified of going back to see Mary.

MARK

I think I know most of them by heart ... Any in particular you were worried about?

GEORGE

A few, especially going long CSX. I think transportation is risky and if they don't go through with the merger the stock is almost definitely going to tank.

MARK

Look we've been through this. That merger is almost a sure thing. And anyway, Ed's already had a chance to take a look. I'm sure he would have caught any serious mistakes.

GEORGE

So am I but I'd rather not seem like an idiot. And Mary's been in this business for much longer. Ed probably just ran over the numbers to make sure we were diversified and thinking about taxes. The basic stuff.

MARK

Alright alright. What else?

GEORGE

Imperva. You seemed pretty set on that one but I realized this

(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)
morning that I actually know the
founder. We were at the same
reception two years ago. He looked
a little funny, not confident
enough.

Mark starts nodding, throws back the rest of his champagne.
Playfully:

MARK
Ahhh I see what's going on here.
You're getting cold feet aren't
you? Afraid big bad Mary will be
critical?

GEORGE
What if I am? We need to start
well. If she changes her mind and
pulls the money it's all over. You
do know that right?

MARK
It'll be over even faster if you
walk in there and shit your pants
before you even start talking. Pull
yourself together man.

GEORGE
You weren't there when I asked her
for the funding. She was brutal.
I've never been that afraid of
someone in my life. So yes, I want
this to be a sure thing.

MARK
George look at me.

Eye contact. Speaking slowly:

MARK
This is a sure thing. We did the
due diligence, everything is set.
Think about this like an investor
meeting. You are just TELLING her
what we are doing. If you sound
confident she'll think she doesn't
have a choice. We've got some
really good ideas, worst case
she'll give you a tough time to
make sure you really believe what
you are saying.

GEORGE
Easy for you to say.

They leave the kitchen.

INT. MARY HANSON'S OFFICE - THAT AFTERNOON

George and Mary are standing in the office. Mary is looking over a list of the trades on a piece of paper, George is watching her for a reaction.

Mary runs her finger down the page and proceeds to demolish his plans in a calm voice, as if nothing is out of the ordinary. George gets increasingly agitated.

MARY

George this simply won't do. What were you thinking?

GEORGE

Well I thought ...

MARY

(interrupting)

No no no.

GEORGE

You mean you won't agree to any of them?

MARY

I wish I could but these are terrible.

GEORGE

Look I know you have much more experience than I do but I've spent the entire week going over these trades. They WILL work, just give me a chance.

Mary puts the paper down on her desk and picks up another.

MARY

Why don't you take a look at these? I knew you would you have a hard time getting started so I thought of a few of my own.

She hands George the paper. He looks at it quickly, face sinking.

GEORGE

But I don't know anything about these companies. And it looks to me like some of them are penny stocks?

MARY

I wouldn't think too hard about that. Trust me, I have a pretty good sense of the markets.

George is reluctant to agree.

GEORGE

What about CSX? Mark and I are really confident about that one. There's talk of a merger in the next few weeks.

Brushing this off:

MARY

Oh come on, you don't actually believe that do you? They've been spouting that bullshit every couple of years since the nineties.

GEORGE

There must be something in my list you can ok. I gave you almost fifty options.

Mary picks up his list again and reads it more carefully.

MARY

Actually now that I look through it again there is one. I could sign off on Imperva.

GEORGE

Ok great. So we'll go long Imerva to start.

MARY

You mean short?

GEORGE

Short ... That's a mistake, it shouldn't say that.

MARY

Well it says here short. That happens to be on my list as well actually.

GEORGE

(suspicious)

Is that the only one you will agree to?

MARY

Let's start with that. Then you'll have a chance to read through my suggestions, I'm sure you will agree with them.

George wants to put up more of a fight but he is worried about irritating Mary further.

GEORGE

Shorting Imperva was definitely a typo, but I'll look into it and read over your ideas.

MARY

George remember who's in control here. Whether or not you look over them you will execute my trades.

GEORGE

I understand but it isn't that simple. I have the same deal with Ed and he signed off on every one I brought you. He won't be happy if I go back to him with a completely different set.

He leaves.

INT. KLARKSON FRONT ENTRANCE

Walking through the entrance George passes Joelle.

JOELLE

Hey, didn't expect to see you.

GEORGE

I was just meeting with Mary. Actually do you have time to talk later? The meeting was a little strange and I remember you mentioned something was going on a few days ago.

Joelle is not comfortable talking about this in the building. Looking around she responds curtly then quickly walks away:

JOELLE

I'll let you know.

GEORGE

(trailing off)

Alright thanks.

He leaves through the front entrance.

INT. RESTAURANT - THAT EVENING

George and Sarah are out for dinner at a high-end Italian restaurant. George is exhausted but ecstatic about his work, high-strung but too tired to notice. Sarah looks like she just walked off a Prada photo shoot. Both are eating while talking.

SARAH

So everything going alright? You look like you haven't slept in ages.

Waving it off:

GEORGE

Sure it's going well but tell me about you. I wish I saw you more.

SARAH

Well it won't get any easier. You know it isn't too late to think about other options. I was actually talking to a friend who offered to set up a few interviews.

GEORGE

Sarah please, I don't have time for interviews. I love what I'm doing, give it some time.

SARAH

Alright just remember. The longer you wait the harder it will be.

GEORGE

Can we talk about something else please?

Painful silence.

SARAH

Fine. What happened with Mary today?

GEORGE

Oh right. Strangest thing. I spent the whole week preparing a list of ideas with Mark. Ed ok'ed the whole thing. Then I went in today and she shot them all down. All except one. And that one was a typo! On top of that she gave me a list of her own ideas and the few I recognized were terrible. Here, take a look.

He passes her the paper from Mary. Sarah looks over it quickly and starts laughing.

SARAH

These are penny stocks. Is this some kind of joke?

GEORGE

That's what I thought. Obviously I can't follow through on these, and
(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)
she won't accept any of mine. I'm
meeting with a friend from Klarkson
later tonight though, I think she
might know what's going on.

SARAH
Should be interesting. I wish my
world was as filled with intrigue.

GEORGE
You say that now but honestly you
should be thankful it isn't.

They eat. Then, speaking quickly as if she had been trying
to resist but couldn't hold back:

SARAH
George I know you don't want to
talk about this but it isn't fair
to either of us. We've both put a
lot into this relationship. But
you've never opened up to me, taken
my advice, nothing. And that's
fine. We're both pretty independent
people. But this time things are
different. If you ARE serious about
starting you're own fund you'll be
working all the time. Way more even
than you used to. We won't see each
other. And when it doesn't work,
because to be honest it probably
won't, you're going to be a mess.

GEORGE
What is it with you? You're always
pushing me to do what's normal,
it's like you want to be dating a
warm drone. Why shouldn't I try
this? Are you afraid it might
actually work out?

SARAH
And I think you're just feeling
bitter about getting fired and
doing something self-destructive
with the same people who screwed
you over before.

George stands up. Raising his voice:

GEORGE
This isn't fair. You could be
supportive, you could just not say
anything, but no. It has to be a
criticism. I did get fired. And so
what? Should I just roll over and
lie in bed? If you can't be onboard
(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)
with this I don't think we can be
together.

As he walks out Sarah stands as well:

SARAH
I don't deserve to be dating a
child. People kept telling me you
would never grow up ...

INT. A BAR - LATER

Joelle is standing at the bar holding a drink. George walks
in. He looks like he just got hit by a bus.

GEORGE
Hey Joelle, I'm so sorry I'm late.
Today's been a goddamn disaster.

JOELLE
I'm really sorry to hear that. I
haven't been waiting long though.
If you don't mind let's go to the
back, it'll be a little quieter.

George orders a drink and they sit down at a table.

GEORGE
Right sorry again. How are you?
Everything alright at work?

JOELLE
Oh you know, just like it used to
be. Things have been pretty slow
since you left. How's the fund?
Congratulations on getting it off
the ground by the way. It must be
really exciting.

GEORGE
Thanks. It's been a huge amount of
work but I think things are moving
in the right direction now. We got
an office and everything, you
should come by and visit if you get
a chance.

JOELLE
I'd love to. Anyway you mentioned
there was something you wanted to
ask? Sorry for being rude in the
lobby by the way. I was worried
Mary might see us talking.

GEORGE
Well you sent me that message the
other day about Mary acting
(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)
strangely. And then today I took a bunch of potential trades to her. She turned every single one down and gave me a list of terrible ideas. Almost as if they were meant to fail. I thought you might know why?

JOELLE
I see. To be honest I really shouldn't be talking to you about this at all so please, whatever comes up keep it between us.

GEORGE
Of course, you know I would never say anything.

JOELLE
Ok I hope you're ready. It's pretty bizarre. If you remember the day you came in to ask for the funding Mary and I talked for a few minutes in front of the conference room. She didn't explain what exactly happened between her and Ed but she kept saying he was a bastard and it was his fault you lost your job.

GEORGE
Yeah she told me that as well when I got fired.

JOELLE
Anyway she was very focused on the fact that Ed was planning to invest so much money with you and that the noncompetes gave her total control.

GEORGE
Not really surprising.

JOELLE
This is where it gets weird. She told me she was taking the money out of her discretionary budget and that I should make sure the compliance people didn't hear.

Suddenly completely focused on what she is saying:

GEORGE
Jesus is that true? So nobody at Klarkson knows she gave me the money?

JOELLE
As far as I can tell.

This is the holy grail, a chance for George to take back control of his fund. He gets on one knee and looks up at Joelle.

GEORGE

Joelle, I swear to god if there is ever anything you need from me it's yours.

JOELLE

(embarrassed)

That's very sweet but let's not exaggerate. What are you going to do?

GEORGE

I'm going to go print out the record of Mary's bank transfer and take it to her office. It's over, she has nothing on me any more. If she doesn't cancel the noncompete and the ridiculous contract she had me sign for the funding I'll send it to the Klarkson partners. She's already on thin ice after Slack, there's no way she would risk it.

JOELLE

What if she asks how you found out?

GEORGE

I'll tell her I realized the partners would never have approved this so soon after she fired me. Joelle don't worry, she won't know you were involved. In fact she probably won't even ask.

Contemplating what it will be like to wipe the smug look off Mary's face:

GEORGE

She'll be too busy trying to apologize.

FADE OUT

INT. MARY HANSON'S OFFICE - THE NEXT MORNING

Mary is working calmly at her desk. George barges in with nothing but a piece of paper, leaving the door open behind him. The tables have finally turned.

MARY

What are you doing here?

GEORGE

I just thought I would stop by. Check in on you. How are things?

MARY

George this is not funny. Get out of my office or I'll call security.

GEORGE

But Mary don't you want to chat? It seems so lonely in here.

George sits on the edge of her desk, getting uncomfortably close. The tension rises. Mary picks up her phone, George slaps a paper down on the table.

GEORGE

Just a minute, let's not rush in to anything. It would be such a shame if I had to do something rash in the heat of the moment.

Still holding the phone she glances at the paper.

MARY

What the hell is this?

GEORGE

This is the bank transfer for your funding. I thought you might want to know how much it means to me. The fact that you would risk your own job to help get me started ... it's just so touching.

Mary stands up slowly and closes the door to the office.

MARY

What are you talking about?

GEORGE

Mary I know. I know you took this out of the discretionary budget. And I know that if someone happened to email this to the other partners there would be hell to pay.

A last attempt to save the situation:

MARY

I have no idea what you are talking about.

GEORGE

Yes, you do. I knew they wouldn't let you gamble all that money with such a bad track record for the year. There's only one way you could have gotten it.

MARY

I'm calling security.

She reaches for the phone again.

GEORGE

Mary I really don't want to call your bluff. We ended on bad terms but if you tear up the noncompete and the funding contract I'll forget about this.

MARY

What about the money?

GEORGE

Money stays with me. I'll pay you under the same terms I have with Ed. But you keep your hands off my fund.

MARY

That's all?

GEORGE

That's all. Out of curiosity though, why did you do it?

MARY

Ed.

MARY

(pensively)

Just Ed ...

She trails off. George looks at her for a moment, searching for words. Too much has happened over the past few days.

GEORGE

Mary whatever it is that happened between you two I really wasn't trying to hurt you. I know you don't believe me and I'm sorry it came to this but I had no other choice. I have to keep moving forward.

George leaves as Mary turns to look out the window. A beat. She stands up and takes the framed contract off the wall, gently placing it on her desk.

EXT. A STREET - SHORTLY AFTER

George is walking quickly. Things are finally looking up. He takes out his phone and calls Sarah.

GEORGE

Sarah before you say anything I'm sorry. I was wrong. Can we meet somewhere?

FADE OUT

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - NOON

The lunchtime crowd swamps the park. George is waiting by the monument. A MUSICIAN plays Yann Tiersen 'Sur Le Fil'. We PAN AROUND the park. Sarah walks up. Cut music.

GEORGE

Sarah I don't want things to end like this, you mean too much to me. I'll find a job if that's really what you want.

They hug.

SARAH

That isn't what I want.

GEORGE

What then?

SARAH

I want to know that you care about us.

GEORGE

I do. Of course I do. But what I would like more than anything else would be to create something amazing with you.

Silence.

GEORGE

I love you. I want for us to go on an adventure. To make something. We could be an amazing team and we would be together.

SARAH

George I wish I could. I do. But you can't be sure it will work. I have a job, if I let it go I won't get another chance.

George takes her hand and they walk towards the fountain.

GEORGE

You're right. There's no guarantee that this will work. We might drown, lose all our money.

Stepping up onto the lip of the fountain and pulling her up with him:

GEORGE

But great things aren't easy. They hurt. All I can say is that this will hurt so much less if we are in it together.

He lets himself fall backwards into the fountain. Sarah teeters on the edge then falls in with him laughing.