

Chapman University

Capstone Portfolio

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Summary

This is the first installment of the series *Money Machine*. This story, primarily set in the 1950s, follows Elwood F. Kirkman or “Kirk,” a wealthy man in his early fifties. A clever business man and a prominent lawyer in Philadelphia, Kirk is working toward opening a bank of his own in Atlantic City. He works with his secretary, Jean and right-hand-man, Serber, to accomplish the things he needs in order to make sure his bank will go public. In doing so, his goal is to eventually become the most powerful man in the Philadelphia-South Jersey area.

about 12,500 words

Money Machine

By Natalie Ochs

1978

Atlantic City, NJ - The Marlborough-Blenheim Hotel

Kirk exhaled, situating himself directly underneath the sparkling glass dome ceiling. He surveyed the way the Tiffany & Co. crystal reflected the light, allowing the chandeliers to cast patterns across the marble floor. The fragments of light only danced where the floor wasn't covered by silk, as they never quite lined up with the oriental motifs which lined the path to the lobby. He took a step toward the lobby, brushing his hands against the papered-walls. His eyes followed the designs all the way up to the arched ceilings carved from concrete. Kirk shook his head, *the father of electricity himself had designed these walls*, "and no one will ever get to see them again," he remarked, turning to the formal dining room. It was as if the staff had been called this morning to find out they'd no longer be returning to work here. Everything was in perfect order. The Wedgwood china was laid out on each clothed-table, complemented by the Tiffany silver flatware on either side, and finished with a Waterford crystal champagne flute. The bar stayed stocked with the finest liquors. Kirk could still envision former members of the Rat Pack ordering drink after drink and constant chime of the antique cash registers which still looked as if they'd never been opened. Never had Kirk seen the place so lifeless and so quiet.

“The pinnacle of success,” Kirk mumbled under his breath.

Reese stood near the door, motioning for them to leave. “Kirk! We have to get out!”

“Right now?” Kirk hesitated, taking another quick look before running to meet him.

“*Right* now!” Reese screamed.

Kirk stopped, looking him in the eye, “What have we done?” he sighed.

“Kirk, if we don’t get out now, we’re going to go down with her.” Reese begged, yanking Kirk out of the door and toward the boardwalk. As Reese pulled him through each barricade, the charges began to sound. The concrete walls collapsed behind them. The smoke and dust rose through the salt air, clearing only slightly to reveal the structure which held the crystal top, standing proudly amongst the rubble. Kirk checked his watch. For a resounding thirty seconds, the dome stood without a twitch before leaning forward. Kirk’s eyes widened. It was almost as if the rotunda was tipping a hat to say goodbye.

“What’s going on?” Kirk just continued to watch, as it then shattered, crumbling into the pile of ruin where the once grand hotel stood.

Kirk was unable to move. “It was like yesterday when it all began.”

Reese tried shaking Kirk, but it was no use. “What began? Kirk?”

“The money machine,” he swallowed, catching a breath. “All I wanted to do was make money.”

1954

Villanova, PA – Elwood Kirkman

Kirk awoke to the light peeking through his blinds and a ringing bell. Rolling over, he checked the clock. 5:00am. He rose from his bed, slipping on his silk monogrammed robe, then made his way to the bathroom. The grey and black marble felt cold under his feet. *Where are my slippers?* He took note of the suit his valet, Roy, had laid out for him on the mahogany vanity. Kirk smiled, reaching down to grab the 24-karat gold swan handles to begin running his bath.

“Today is the day!” he stared at his glacial blue eyes in the mirror, winking at himself. He combed his red hair into a slicked back style, then made sure the sparse, wiry strands of hair that made up his eyebrows were all pointing the same direction.

“Today is my day! No one can stop me!” Kirk raised an eyebrow as Roy knocked, entering the bedroom. He unlocked Kirk’s safe, laying his monogrammed briefcase, Patek Phillippe watch and gold-initialed cufflinks on the dresser. After Kirk was fully suited, he followed Roy downstairs to the dining room table.

“Good morning,” Mary rolled her brown eyes as Kirk seated himself at the head, where a steaming plate of eggs benedict was accompanied by a flute of fresh-squeezed orange juice and Tiffany silver.

“Kirk, we need to talk about KK.”

“Karol?” Kirk exclaimed, as Mary shushed him, fluffing her chestnut curls.

“Yes. She wants to get back together with Parker--”

“God damnit!” Kirk slammed his fist down next to the flute, then continued with his breakfast. “I don’t care, Mary! I’ve got a very long day ahead of me at work, I don’t want to talk about KK’s drama.”

“Don’t forget about the party tonight!” Mary yelled. Kirk stormed from the dining room, breaking up the herd of kitchen staff listening behind the door. He then picked up his briefcase, and headed outside, stepping down onto the cobblestone driveway. He followed its circular pattern to meet Roy, who sat in the driver’s seat of Kirk’s black Cadillac.

“This is your day,” Roy winked, opening the door for Kirk. “Don’t forget it.”

#

Roy parallel parked just outside of Broad Street’s twenty-five story marble façade, the building which housed Kirk’s law firm and the largest bank of Philadelphia, Boardwalk Bank.

“I’ll pick you up at 3 so we can make it back to AC for the party.” Roy opened the door.

“Thank you, Roy.” Kirk stepped out, patting his shoulder. “Don’t forget about my tux and weekend luggage.” he smiled, starting toward the brass balusters. Once inside, Kirk strolled past the twenty four teller cages, each banker greeting him with a “Good morning Mr. Kirkman.” Kirk flashed a smile at each of them, before joining the Branch manager in front of the elevators.

“Mr. Kirkman,” he smiled. “What time shall we meet today to discuss—”

“Not today, Mr. Jenkins.” He turned to face the red-faced man readjusting his tiny glasses. “very big meeting this morning.” The ding of the elevator allowed Kirk to step inside, leaving Mr. Jenkins to manage his floor.

“Morning, boss.” The young elevator operator grinned, pressing the button marked ‘twenty five.’

“Good morning it is!” Kirk chuckled, passing the operator a small piece of paper, then taking a seat on the gold-carved bench.

“Have a great day.” The operator grinned as the doors rolled back to reveal the twenty-fifth floor, where Kirk was now eye-level with William Penn, who kept the highest watch over the city. Taking a left, Kirk came to a brass door complete with a smoked glass window where his name

was affixed in gold lettering above ten other attorneys. Greeted by five secretaries on either side, Kirk finally made his way into his office. He shook off his silk overcoat, gloves and top hat, and placed them on the brown leather loveseat next to the glass paneled-windows.

“Jean!” Kirk’s secretary, a small woman with short, black hair, stood over him.

“8:00. Your staff meeting with the firm. 9:00. Private meeting with Serber.”

“And lunch with Mr. Kimble.”

“Great.” Kirk pursed his lips, letting out a brief sigh.

“You’re having lunch with him and you’re going to see him at the party tonight?”

“We’ve got to discuss the bank. Please make us a reservation at the Union League.”

“What time, Mr. Kirkman?”

“Make it 1:00. Roy’s picking me up at three.” Kirk stepped out of his office and headed toward the conference room. His stable of attorneys filled the square table, awaiting their marching orders.

“Okay, Anderson. Update me on the progress of Mr. Gabriel.”

Mr. Anderson nodded. “We’re meeting tonight at the Continental Hotel to go over the numbers. I’ll have it all written up for you tomorrow.”

“Wonderful,” Kirk checked his watch, hardly scribbling down anything in his notebook.

“Anyone else have any updates regarding your accounts?”

“I’ve got a new client, Mr. Kirkman. He—”

“Great,” he locked eyes with Serber. “Leave all of your updated notes with Jean. I’ll review them before tomorrow’s meeting. Thank you, gentleman. Meeting adjourned.” Each associate jumped up, preparing to drop their notes with Jean on the way back to their offices. Serber made sure the door was closed behind everyone, then returned to the oblong table.

“So, what are we going to do about Kimble?” Kirk furrowed his brow.

“I’ve been thinking about it,” Serber sat back down beside Kirk. “And I think we should transfer the bank stock to Maxine.”

“Maxine?”

“We could add her to the board of directors so it wouldn’t raise any questions. She’d be open to it, right?”

“Of course,” Kirk contemplated. “But I don’t know, Serber. What if something happens between Maxine and Kimble? For him to lose what he put up for Boardwalk Bank is about as big of a deal as fixing a scratch on his car.”

“Well, what do you think would happen?”

“Divorce, death, I don’t know, but we can’t risk it. This is our livelihood on the line. If something happens to those shares, we’re done. Boardwalk can’t go public, and we’ll go bankrupt. I’ll be paying Kimble back until I’m dead.”

“You’re right,” Serber added, rubbing his blue eyes. “What if we transferred it into a trust with you as the trustee?”

“Hm, that could work.” Kirk snapped his fingers.

“You’d still be in control.”

“But the SEC... that still concerns me. They know about Kimble’s ties during Prohibition... and if it gets out, we won’t go public.”

“We have to remove Kimble from the board, then,” Serber said, nodding.

“I still have to pay him for all of the bank stock.”

“If you loan yourself the money from the bank, you have to use your shares as collateral.”

“I can’t risk the values of my shares. We need to come up with some kind of schedule.”

“What do you mean, schedule?”

“For every property sold through Chelsea Title Company and financed with Boardwalk, the one point fee would go to Kimble and the one share of stock to me.”

“That would take far too long, Mr. Kirkman. We’d need a holding company to speed up the process.”

“That’s it, Serber.” Kirk grinned. “We’ll get all of Kimble’s stock into the holding company. I’ll be able to pay him back from the one point payment upon each property settlement from Chelsea. The sale will look like a single transaction. It’s perfect!”

“And you’ll be the trustee of the holding company!” The two shook hands.

“I made the right decision in sending you to law school, Serber! I knew you were much too bright to be parking cars downstairs. The spitting image of me, only I was a roofer.” Kirk laughed. “Get it set up and I’ll sell Kimble on the idea at lunch.”

Philadelphia, PA - The Union League

Precisely at 1:00pm, Jean entered the private dining area she had reserved for Kirk's meeting with Kimble. Set for three, Kimble was already seated in the silk-upholster chair facing the double doors.

"Jean," Kimble's eyes widened, a large grin spreading across his face. "How are you?"

"Doing well. And yourself?" Jean smiled, taking a seat next to him.

"I'm just fine. How are Harry and the kids?"

"They're wonderful," she said. "Thank you for asking."

"I'm glad it's just the two of us for now, Jean. I've missed seeing you pop in for a signature." He ran a hand through his thinning brown hair.

"Oh, Watson," Jean blushed. "We've been so busy preparing for the bank to go public, I haven't had a chance to come down and see you."

"How long will Kirk be, now?" Kimble said, beginning to remove his jacket.

"He was just finishing drawing up the contract," she laid a hand on Kimble's arm. "I'm afraid we haven't got the time now." Kimble straightened his jacket, tugging it back into place.

"So we can expect him any minute?" Kimble laughed, then checked his pocket watch. Just as he latched the cover back onto the face, the double doors opened.

"Mr. Kimble," a petite woman spoke, shutting the door behind her. "Your wife has left a message for you."

"Maxine?" he grunted. "How did she know I was here?"

"Mrs. Kimble told me your secretary gave her the number."

"Alright, go ahead."

"She requests you return home immediately, there's been a problem with the caterer for your party tonight."

“Dear God, Maxine,” he huffed, “Thank you.” He flashed a smile at the young hostess, then rose from the table as she left.

“Watson,” Jean spoke, following him to the front of the dining room.

“Jean, tell Kirk I am sorry. But he’ll be at the party tonight, won’t he?”

“As far as I know.”

“Tell him I’ll discuss this with him tonight. We’ll have a private meeting in the tackle room.”

“I will.”

“It was quite lovely to see you, Jean. We’ll be seeing more of each other soon.” he put a finger on her chin, as the two inched closer.

“I look forward to it, Watson.” Jean took a step back, just as Kimble pulled the left door open. She smiled as he exited, starting back toward the table to collect her things. She popped her coat on, then slung her purse over her shoulder. She exited the private room, passing the hostess on her way out. She thanked her, then made her way to the elevator bank.

“Mr. Kirkman!” Jean’s eyebrows shot up as the doors rolled back, revealing Kirk with the documents fixed under his left arm.

“Jean,” he stepped off of the elevator, raising an eyebrow. “Why aren’t you in the dining room with Kimble?”

“Mr. Kimble had to leave. Mrs. Kimble called and said there was a problem with their party tonight, and she wanted him home immediately.”

“Oh, I can only imagine how crazy Maxine must be going. Did he say anything about our meeting?”

“He said you two will discuss this tonight.”

“Tonight? At the party?”

“You’ll have the meeting in the tackle room.” Jean nodded.

“Fuck,” Kirk began to rub his forehead. “I’ll have to deal with Mary tonight and—”

“Kirk, use this to your advantage.” The elevator dinged, unveiling an empty car as the two stepped on.

“Advantage?”

“Mr. Kimble will be drinking. Won’t that help you convince him more easily?”

“I suppose,” Kirk and Jean exited the elevator, making their way to the street. “But I’ve got to be quite careful. You know when Kimble begins drinking he comes out of his shell.”

“Oh, I know—”

“I don’t want him inviting any of the wrong people in.”

“I know you’ll play it smart, Kirk.” Jean glanced at the documents.

“I always do, Jean,” Kirk cracked a smile. “Please make a copy of these. I’ve got to tie up some loose ends with Serber.”

Ocean City, NJ – The Kimble's Party

“Kirk, this is a huge problem! Parker has gotten a divorce, and Karol wants to do the same.”

“Mary, I don’t have time for this right now.” Kirk and Mary sat in the back of Kirk’s Cadillac.

“She’s your daughter, Kirk!”

“I already told you. Kimble and I postponed our meeting for tonight. This evening is too important for me to be worrying about the new ways in which Karol chooses to be an attention seeker.”

“Kirk!” Mary gasped.

“You know what this deal means, Mary. I need you to keep Maxine occupied tonight. Make sure she’s happy, whatever it takes. I need Kimble’s full attention.

“Kirk, I am so sick of catering to Maxine. For God’s sake, you think I don’t see the way you fall all over her? It’s a God damn slap in the face to me!” Mary huffed.

Kirk rolled his eyes. “I’m serious, Mary. If you blow this deal for me, I’ll send you to live with KK and you can deal with all of her dramatics.” Kirk waved his arms, turning bright red as Mary burst into tears.

“All you care about is money and that bitch!” she turned to the window, then drew a handkerchief from her pocketbook. Just as Roy pulled into the driveway, Mary began to dab her eyes.

“Pull it together, Mary,” Kirk remarked, noticing they were making their way up the winding path. “We’re almost to the house.” The car pulled up in front of the Kimble’s residence, Northpoint Estate. Just as Mary finished drying her eyes, she shook her head and watched Roy open her door.

“Thank you, Roy.” she followed Kirk as he approached the house; the double mahogany doors open to reveal the high ceilings of the brick foyer and wall of glass facing the open bay.

“Good evening, Mr. Kirkman. Mrs. Kirkman,” The housekeeper greeted Kirk and Mary, ushering them inside. “Mr. Kimble will be with you in just a moment.” The housekeeper hurried up the circular staircase, as another staff member handed Kirk and Mary each a flute of Dom Perignon.

“Mr. Kirkman!” Kimble said, finding his way down the steps with a shallow glass in hand.

“Mr. Kimble.” Kirk smiled as Kimble embraced him.

“I’m so sorry about our lunch today,” Kimble ushered them into the Great room. “Maxine got a bit...nervous about the party.” he laughed.

“Not a problem, Mr. Kimble. We’ve got to make sure our wives are happy, now, don’t we?” Kirk grinned at Mary as she rolled her eyes into her glass, taking a swig.

“Shall we talk in the tackle room later this evening?” The three sat down on the circular couch as Kimble refreshed his drink. He toasted Mary, then downed the dark liquid.

“We could talk right now, Mr. Kimble.”

“Oh, we’ve got plenty of time for that! Why don’t you enjoy the evening with your lovely wife? Have a drink! Isn’t the Dom Perignon okay, Kirk?” Mary smiled at Kimble, finishing the last of hers.

“Oh, Mr. Kimble, it’s great—”

“Would you two excuse me for a few moments?” Kimble grinned, then got up. He started toward the door where more guests were arriving, embracing a number of them. Kirk handed Mary his flute, noticing the crowd beginning to form at the bottom of the staircase. In an instant, The pianist had stopped playing. Kirk jumped up, keeping his eyes fixed on the top of the steps. Maxine emerged from the bedroom, her blonde hair and diamond earrings sparkling under the light of the

chandelier. Her green satin gown clung to every curve. Lifting up the tulle from the skirt, she made her way to the bottom of the steps.

"I'd like to welcome everyone to Northpoint Estate. Thank you so much for joining us tonight." Kirk could hardly catch his breath as she batted her eyes at the crowd.

"Thank you for hosting this party, Mrs. Kimble," Kirk began as she stepped down onto the marble floor. "I must say what a magnificent job you've done on the house."

"Thank you, Kirk," Maxine smiled, batting her eyes. "Now if you'll all join me in the dining room, dinner is being served." The crowd found their way into the magnificent cherry-paneled dining area, as Maxine linked arms with Kirk.

"Kirk, you sit to my right. You are my guest of honor." Making their way in, they were the last to take their seats at the extensive table.

"Robert Bell," Kirk nodded, taking his seat. "How are you? How are things at the firm?"

"The firm is great. But I'm doing much better now," Bell's eyes panned to Maxine, then back to Kirk. "I think you know what I mean."

"Oh, Bob. Have you already forgotten who Maxine's guest of honor is?" Kirk laughed as they were served the first round of many dishes.

"Maxine, is this true?" Maxine took a swig of her martini, turning back around to face the two. "Kirk? Guest of honor?"

Maxine winked at Kirk. "Absolutely."

"I told ya, Bell." He shrugged, watching Bell tuck into his meal.

"Don't worry too much, Robert. There will be other dinners. Other guests of honor."

"Are you suggesting I'm not always going to be your guest of honor, Mrs. Kimble?" Kirk gasped.

“You’ll just have to wait and see.” From across the table, Mary and Bob’s wife, Betty, could not tear their eyes away from the conversation as the meal progressed.

“May I get you a fresh drink?” Kimble asked Mary, noticing her almost-empty glass.

“That’d be wonderful. Thank you, Mr. Kimble.” Mary downed the final sip of her champagne, which was quickly replaced by another.

“Oh, Kirk, you are SO funny!” Maxine caught the table’s attention with her laughter, rolling her eyes at Kirk.

“Would you excuse me, Mrs. Kirkman?” Kimble stood up, just as the staff had finished clearing each dirty piece of custom china. Kirk rose, following Kimble toward the door.

“Mr. Kimble,” Kirk caught up to him, “shall we discuss Boardwalk Bank?”

“Mr. Kirkman. I was just about to tell the girls in the kitchen to freshen the glasses. Why don’t I meet you in the tackle room?”

“Make sure Bell is there.” Kirk flashed a smile at Kimble, then made a break for the Great room.

“Mary,” Kirk panted. “I’m about to go speak to Kimble about the bank. I need you to make sure Maxine is entertained.”

“Kirk, I-I don’t want to stay. I am ready to go home,” Mary slurred between sips.

“Mary, this is the biggest deal of my career. I’m Maxine’s guest of honor, and as the wife of her guest of honor, I need you to make damn certain both Kimble’s are happy.”

“Is that what you call making her...happy? Hanging on her every damn word? You just want me to be a character in this... stupid play. I won’t!” Mary spun, almost losing her balance, then headed toward the patio.

“Mary!”

“Is she alright?” Maxine asked, rubbing Kirk on the back, as both watched her slump down onto a chaise lounge facing the bay.

“She’ll be fine. I’ll just let her sleep it off,” Kirk shook his head, then smiled. “Let’s get you another drink.” The two approached wet bar beside the great room.

“Kirk,” Maxine’s eyes darted around. “I know what you’re up to.”

“Maxine, if I can pull off this deal, I can take over the bank. If I take over the bank, we will finally have enough money to happily spend the rest of our days together. Now, let me do what I’m best at.”

“Kirk!” Mary sniffed. How...could you?” Mary let a tear roll down her face. A clamorous slam left a pile of crystal before Maxine and Kirk’s feet before Mary ran toward the back of the house.

“What now?!” Maxine gasped, turning to Kirk.

“Don’t worry. She’s drunk. She won’t remember any of this. Now, enjoy your party, and let me get to work.”

The Tackle Room

As Kirk entered the tackle room, he took a few deep breaths. He straightened his jacket and tie, then tucked any stray hair behind his ears. He made sure the door was shut behind him, then took a seat at the poker table directly across from Kimble.

“Kirkman, what took you so long?” Kimble laughed. “Cigar?”

“Watson,” he took the cigar. “Let’s discuss business.”

“I thought you wanted to discuss the deal alone, Kirk.” Kimble sipped his drink, nodding at Bell.

“I thought you might want Bell to look over the contract. What better way to bring him up to speed than for him to hear my proposition live?”

“You’re right as usual, Kirk. Let’s hear it.” Kimble leaned back in his chair.

Kirk jumped up. “So, you know I am taking the bank public, and this would not be possible without the support from our very own Watson Kimble,” he paced back and forth. However, in order for the bank to officially go public, the SEC will be keeping a close eye on us to make sure our backgrounds are clean. Now. I know they have knowledge that Kimble Glass Company manufactured and sold wine bottle to Lucky Luciano and Meyer Lansky during Prohibition.”

“How do you know about that?” Kimble shouted, slamming a fist against the arm of his chair.

“It’s my business to know everything about my partners, Mr. Kimble.” Kirk stopped in front of him, raising an eyebrow.

“Gentleman!” Bell piped up. “It’s just us here. Let’s focus on now.”

Kirk shrugged. “Bell’s right, Watson. Let’s focus on the IPO.”

“Let’s.” Kimble added, nodding his head.

“Why don’t you come take a seat at your desk? Let me spell it out for you,” Kirk spoke. Kimble took his seat, as Bell swung his chair around to face both of them. “It begins like this: All of your stock is first transferred to me, in a holding company we will set up. We continue to sell properties, and each sale is financed by Boardwalk. This way, a one point fee would go to you, and one share of stock to me will go to me, financed by a mortgage and deed transfer through Chelsea Title. This sounds like it will take a crazy amount of time, though, Watson, doesn’t it? That’s where the holding company comes in. With me as the trustee, all of this will look like a single transaction. The SEC doesn’t know we’re involved, and you still get paid. Boom. Boardwalk Bank goes public.”

Bell shook his head. “Kirk, I gotta tell ya, it’s genius.”

“It’ll clean the funds...and make us a lot while we’re at it.” Kirk clapped, keeping his eyes on Kimble.

“Bell, is this going to work?” Kimble questioned, his eyes growing wider.

“Watson,” Bell cleared his throat. “You stand to make significantly more this way. Otherwise you’d just be waiting for a bank buy-out. I think it’s a fair deal for both of ya.”

“Alright,” Kimble turned to Kirk. “Draw up the papers. If Bell approves I’ll do the deal.”

“I’ll give Bell the papers now. I’ve got a copy.” Kirk grinned, beginning to reach inside of his jacket.

Just then, Maxine burst through the cedar doors. “Kirk, may I speak with you a moment?”

“Watson, I’ll have Jean come by first thing on Monday to get your signature.” Kirk nodded at Kimble. “Of course, Maxine, what’s the matter?” Kirk stepped out from the tackle room, noticing how much the foyer had emptied.

“It’s Mary,” Maxine caught her breath.

“Oh, I’m sure Mary is fine, Maxine.” he turned away, stifling a chuckle.

“Kirk, I told the staff to search the grounds for her, but she’s nowhere to be found. I’m quite worried, what if she told someone about what you said earlier?”

“She told me before I went to speak with Watson that she wasn’t feeling well. I’m sure she went back to the apartment at Seaview to rest.”

“I would feel better if you went to tend to her.” Maxine nodded.

Kirk smiled, kissing her cheek. “Thank you for another one of your incredible parties.” Maxine blushed, lingering a few seconds before Kirk broke their gaze to signal Roy it was time to depart. “And, please, tell Watson I’ll have everything ready for him tomorrow.”

“You got it.” Mary winked, tossing back the last sip of her martini. She turned to the staircase as Kirk and Roy exited the house.

“Roy, I could just kill Mary for embarrassing me like that. She knew this was the most important night of my career!”

#

Upon arriving back at Club Seaview, Kirk and Roy entered the baby-blue and pink apartment. Without turning on any lights, Kirk took a step toward the living area, then took a left to crack open the bedroom door.

“I don’t see any of her luggage,” Kirk whispered.

Roy snuck toward the powder room. “She’s not here, is she in the bedroom?” he carefully shut the door as Kirk took a quick peak.

“Not here,” he let out a long sigh. “She must have she came back here and called Karol to take her back to Villanova.”

“Would you like me to phone one the staff in Villanova?”

“No, I’m sure they aren’t home yet, anyway,” Kirk cradled his head in his hands. “I’ll deal with her tomorrow. Be ready to leave first thing.”

Villanova, PA - Missing Mary

Early Sunday morning, Kirk and Roy had completed their drive from Atlantic City to Villanova. As they entered the estate, Kirk rushed toward his study.

“Mr. Kirkman, where is Mrs. K?” A staff member questioned Kirk.

“She’s not still in bed?”

“No, sir. Mrs. K did not come last night, we thought she was with you.” she promptly escorted him to the dining room table where his breakfast had just been laid out.

“Oh, she must have gone home with KK to Gladwyne. Roy, call Karol.” Kirk slurped his coffee as he rose from the table, hardly having touched his eggs. He grabbed the cup and stormed over to his study, firmly shutting the doors behind him. He paced for a few seconds, then took another sip. Setting the Lenox mug down on his desk, he sat down and grabbed the phone, dialing Jean’s number.

“Jean? It’s Kirk. I need to speak to you about the Kimble deal.”

“What about it?”

“He asked for you to deliver the contract personally and meet with him and Bob Bell about the stock transfer in Ocean City. Make a second copy and bring it with you. Kimble wants Bell to look over it, but don’t leave until it’s signed. Let me know immediately if there are any problems with it.”

“Alright, I’ll make sure--” Before Jean could finish, the study doors flew open.

Kirk dropped the receiver. “A closed door means no interruptions!” Kirk turned to the door, where Karol began approaching him.

“Poppy! Where is mother?”

Kirk’s eyebrows shot up, as he jumped up to embrace Karol. “Isn’t she with you?”

“No!” Karol sniffed, wiping a tear from her freckled cheek. Kirk ushered her over to the loveseat. Roy followed, grabbing the dangling receiver and situating it back on its cradle.

“Your mother was upset last night. She had a lot to drink, I know she wasn’t thinking clearly. I’m sure she’s fine. She probably flew to Delray early this morning to get away. This isn’t the first time she’s done something like this.”

“Roy,” Karol questioned, dabbing away the last of her trickling tears. “Would you call the condo?”

Roy nodded, hurrying to find a private phone. “Right away, Karol.”

“Karol,” Kirk cocked his head, stroking her shoulder. “You know your mother and I are very upset about your seeing Parker again. What are you thinking letting him come crawling back like that?”

She shoved Kirk’s arm from hers, inching away. “Poppy! You have no idea what I’m dealing with!”

“What, the kids I pay for?”

“Mother is missing and you’re worried about Parker! Why do you only care about money?”

“If I didn’t have any, Parker wouldn’t be coming back to you!”

“I can’t believe you!” Karol shot up from the sofa. “I really can’t!” she screamed, slamming the study doors behind her.

Ocean City, NJ – Seal the Deal

Jean straightened her skirt as she stood before the front doors of the Kimble estate. She glanced down at the contract, making sure the stack was neat and ready for review. She reached up to ring the doorbell, then took a deep breath.

“Mrs. Fino,” The housekeeper smiled, opening the door and waving her inside. “Welcome. Mr. Kimble will be with you shortly in the tackle room.” she escorted Jean into the room, offering her a drink.

“Thank you, I’m fine.” Jean smiled at the housekeeper, then placed the contract on the table in front of her as she watched her turn to leave.

“Jean, I am so glad to see you.” Kimble boasted, then entered the room, shutting the door behind him. “Kirk had the papers with him on Saturday night, but I told him to have you deliver them personally so we could spend some time together.”

“Watson,” Jean blushed. “You know I’m here for business. Kirk has me here to get this deal signed and finished.”

“Oh, Jean, I know that. I’m just going to drag him along a bit. Make him squirm so that we can be together more often.” Kimble buzzed for the maid to bring them some coffee, then took a seat next to Jean on the curved silk sofa. “I couldn’t pass up the offer of us spending time together.”

“Mr. Bell has arrived.” The housekeeper announced as she began pouring three cups of coffee.

“Bell! Please join us. Have some coffee. We’ve got a copy of the Boardwalk deal for you to look over.” Kimble exclaimed, then took a sip.

“Thank you,” Bell surveyed Jean and Kimble, “Watson.” He raised an eyebrow, then took a seat.

“We’re going to have lunch at Seaview Country Club.”

Maxine opened the tackle room door, approaching the three. “Good morning, Robert.”

Bell jumped up, rushing over toward her. “Maxine,” He kissed her cheek. “You look lovely as always.” he gushed as his eyes followed her glistening diamond earrings all the way down to her Ferragamo shoes.

“Thank you, Bell,” she winked. “And what do we have here?” Maxine scoffed at Jean.

Kimble huffed, scooting a touch away from Jean. “We *have* an important meeting today and lunch at Club Seaview.”

“Why go there when I can have lunch prepared for you here?”

“No thank you, Maxine. There’s some business I need to take care of at Club Seaview, so we must go there.”

“Very well, Watson. I have a Ladies’ Club meeting and will return soon,” she scoffed, turning to Bell. “Robert, may I borrow you for just a minute?” She smiled, turning toward the door.

“What can I do for you, Maxine?” The two lingered in the doorway watching Kimble and Jean resume their conversation.

“I don’t know what Watson is up to with this deal and that little whore of his, but you better make sure I’m taken care of,” Maxine whispered.

“Maxine, I don’t know why Kimble wants her around. She’s one of Kirk’s girls from the office. But whatever happens, you know my loyalty lies with you.”

“It better be. You know how much I care for you.” She smiled, then headed toward the foyer.

“Okay, let’s get this deal done.” Bell rejoined Kimble, who was now sitting even closer to Jean.

“Here’s the contract, Bell.” Kimble nodded, then turned to Jean. “Let’s get going to Seaview, shall we?”

Bell grabbed the contracts, grimacing at Kimble. "I'll meet you there after I stop at the office."

Atlantic City, NJ – Seaview Country Club

“Kirkman, table for three, please, Pierre.”

“Of course. Follow me Mrs. Fino.”

Jean and Kimble followed the host to Kirk’s table, just all the way across dining room.

“Thank you, Pierre.” The two sat down at the oversized square table.

“Well, this is certainly one of the best views in the house.” Kimble smiled at Jean, then gazed through the small panes of glass that framed the bay view.

“You know why Kirk commissioned this window, don’t you?” Kimble shook his head.

“He wanted to recreate the windows from the Marlborough-Blenheim. He loved those as a child.”

“That hotel is a marvelous work of art.”

“Kirk does really care about the things he loves.”

Kimble’s hand inched toward Jean’s. “What do you say we spend ourselves a night there?”

“What shall I get for you?” Pierre questioned.

Kimble grabbed a menu, then took a quick glance. “We’ll both have the salmon.”

Pierre nodded. “Very well.”

“So, where is Mr. Bell? Wasn’t he due to join us?”

“Oh, I’m sure he got wrapped up in this deal. It is quite a lot to review.”

“Should we give him a call?”

“That’s alright, I really don’t mind it being just the two of us.”

“Watson,” Jean blushed, “you know Kirk will be looking for me with the signed deal. As much as a night at the Marlborough sounds lovely, I need to get this back to Kirk.”

“Jean, don’t worry about Kirk,” Kimble laughed. “He will get his deal when I’m ready.”

“Very well, Watson.”

“Now, let’s enjoy our lunch... and afternoon together.”

“The afternoon? Watson, we haven’t even eaten yet.”

Kimble snapped his fingers. “Pierre, please have the hostess phone the Marlborough Blenheim and make me a reservation for a suite on the top floor. We will leave straight from here.”

“Of course, Mr. Kimble.”

“Watson—”

Kimble grinned, laying a hand on Jean’s leg underneath the table. “You will accompany me, there, won’t you?”

“Well, Mr. Kimble,” Jean grimaced. “I’m your girl.”

Philadelphia, PA – A Crowded House

“Jean!” Kirk burst through his office door, slamming his briefcase on his desk. “I waited for your call all night.”

“I got home very late. I didn’t want to wake you or Mrs. Kirkman. Mr. Bell has the papers, and is still reviewing them for Mr. Kimble.”

“Get Bell on the phone. Now!” Kirk screamed. Jean popped up and spun the rotary dial.

“Bell!” Kirk grabbed the receiver as the line connected. “Where is my Boardwalk deal?”

“Kirk, this is a very complex process you’ve laid out here. Going through Chelsea and then to a holding company is a lot of transactions. I have to 1. Make sure Kimble is getting paid proper value, and 2. Kimble is protected from any wrong-doing.”

“I don’t care how this gets done, as long as its signed. We all stand to make a great deal of money from this IPO, and I’ll be in control of AC once this is over. So, get to it!” Kirk slammed the phone down, then looked at Jean. “Get Kimble to sign the deal. The man hates everyone, but he’s really taken a liking to you. There’s a huge bonus in there if you can get it done and get it done quickly.” Kirk’s eyes shot to the phone as he took a seat at his desk.

“I’m on it,” Jean dialed again. “Watson, it’s Jean. Can we meet?” Just as she was about to hang up, Kirk’s office door flew open.

“Get out! I need to speak to my father in private!” Jean mashed the disconnect button, then hurried from the office, shutting the door behind her.

“What’s wrong, Karol? I’m in the middle of something.”

Karol sniffled. “Poppy, mother is not in Delray. None of her friends have heard from her. What are we going to do?”

“KK, I am sure she just wanted some time alone. But, if it’ll make you feel better, I’ll make a call and put my guy on it.”

“Okay, Poppy.” Karol wiped her eyes, moving closer to Kirk’s desk. “Thank you.”

“Of course.” Kirk inhaled. Karol began to twirl a piece of her overly processed blonde hair.

“I also just need to ask you something about Par—”

“God dammit!” Kirk banged his fists against his desk. “I don’t have time to discuss Parker’s childish behavior! Forget about him and just worry about taking care of your girls!”

Karol rolled her eyes, jumping up from the couch. “You can have him!” she yelled at Jean as she passed her on her way to the elevator.

Kirk grabbed the phone, dialing furiously. “Dutch! I have a job for you. Mary’s gone. She must be hiding out somewhere. I’m thinking Delray. I want you to find her and let me know where she is. You don’t have to bring her back, I’ll deal with her after my IPO. Thanks. We’ll be in touch.” Kirk nodded, hanging up.

Jean raised an eyebrow. “What’s going on?”

“Nothing, not to worry. Just give Dutch the funds to get to Delray, and then get back to Kimble. Don’t let him out of your sight until we get those papers signed.”

“I’m about to head down to Reading Terminal to see Harry. I’ll just tell him I’ve got a big work project and to have his mother help him with the kids this week.”

“Get on it.”

“Will do, Mr. Kirkman.”

“And please, send in Serber.” Jean nodded, exiting the office. A few moments later, Serber peaked through the door, then let himself in.

“Do you have the Boardwalk contracts signed?”

“No, not yet,” Kirk motioned for Serber to come in as he approached his desk. “Jean’s on it.”

“What do you need, boss?”

“I wanted to go over my interview for the SEC. I need you to go with me for the hearing.”

Kirk’s eyes widened. “I need you to have the deal in place with Kimble before you’re interviewed.”

“I don’t know if we have time. This deal will make or break all of us. If it doesn’t happen, I’ll be going back to Ducktown, and we’ll be sharing a walk-up.”

“Boss, if they find anything that links you or Kimble to organized crime, they’re going to reject the filing, Boardwalk will lose its charter, and the bank stock will be worthless.”

“Well, we won’t let them, Serber! Who are the members of the committee conducting the interview?”

“That’s another thing,” Serber rubbed his forehead. “Bradway’s on the panel, and you know he’s got it out for you.”

“Don’t worry about Bradway, “Kirk laughed as a mischievous grin spread across his face, “we go way back. There are things I know he doesn’t want exposed.”

“I just hope he doesn’t connect the dots between you and Nucky Johnson in Atlantic City.”

“Don’t worry, I’ve got him in my back pocket.”

“What about Kimble Glass Company? They all know about their activity during Prohibition. We need to clean ourselves of Kimble before the meeting!”

“Serber, you’re on top of things. I like that. But don’t worry. I’m on Kimble’s case with Bell, too.”

Philadelphia, PA – The Reading Terminal

Jean entered the Reading Terminal Market, eager to find her father-in-law's butcher shop. Zooming through the large crowds, she constantly overheard customers discussing their favorite shop or food stand. The market was the be-all end-all of fine foods in the city, and Jean enjoyed the fact that her husband was part of one of the most renown meat suppliers in the area. Once she reached Fino's Prime Meats, she greeted her father-in-law with a hug and kiss.

"Would you two like to have lunch?" he asked, slipping away from the bustling counter.

"Absolutely. That'd be wonderful."

"Just let me finish up, I'll get you set up at the Oyster Bar."

"Well, this is a nice surprise!" Harry hugged Jean from behind, planting a kiss on her cheek.

"I need to talk to you," Jean said, turning around to face Harry. "I have a very important deal I'm working on for Kirk."

"That's alright if you're home a bit late tonight." Harry smiled, removing his white smock and hanging it on the rack.

"I'm actually going to Ocean City to meet with Watson Kimble and Robert Bell over the weekend. Can your mother help with the kids?"

"Why do you need to go, Jean? Can't someone else in the office do it? I'll be working all weekend."

"No. You see, when this deal goes through, I'll get a huge bonus from Kirk. Then we can buy that bigger house in the country near my mother."

"Jean, our house is just fine!" Harry raised his voice. "We don't need anything larger, and living in the city is easier for work."

"But we could buy our own house instead of living in one of your father's! And we can do what we want."

Harry shook his head. “Dammit, Jean, you’re never satisfied with anything! You always want more!”

“It will be great! You’ll see!” Jean grabbed her coat. “I’m going to my aunt Miriam’s hotel in Ocean City. Have fun with the kids!” she huffed, storming away from the counter.

Ocean City, NJ – The Marilyn Inn

Jean entered the white Victorian mansion, setting her bags down next to the front desk.

“Hello Aunt Miriam!”

“Jean!” Miriam emerged from behind the desk and embraced Jean. “How are you? How are Harry and the kids?”

“Oh, they’re just fine,” she pursed her lips, grimacing. “I’m down here on business and would love to check in.”

“Well, I’m very happy to have you.”

“I do sometimes really miss the summers I spent here.”

“Please, take my suite. Your uncle and I are heading to Philadelphia to visit with Marilyn and the kids.” she pulled a set of keys from the drawer, then handed them to Jean.

“Thank you, Aunt Miriam. Everything still looks so beautiful, especially the woodwork.” Jean looked around as a bell-hop collected her belongings. The two embraced once more, before Jean found her way to the suite. Just as she had begun to unpack her things, the phone began to ring.

“Hello?” She cradled the phone between her neck and shoulder.

“Jean, it’s Kirk.”

“Hi Kirk. I just arrived in Ocean City. I’m going to meet Watson tonight.” She danced in front of the mirror, scanning the selections of lipsticks that poked out from her cosmetics case.

“Perfect. I just got a call from Bob Bell. He wants to make a few changes.”

“What kind of changes?”

“I don’t know. He said he wanted to be fair to all parties and protect Maxine. I told him she’s nothing to worry about, she’s got a trust from Kimble’s father for God’s sake.”

“Wow.”

“Boardwalk Bank is mine. I put my blood, sweat and tears into forming this bank, and Kimble’s putting money up that he doesn’t even care he made during Prohibition.”

“He does have more money than anyone could spend in a lifetime.” Jean rolled her eyes, smiling.

“I need him to sign that thing as is.”

“Did you tell Mr. Bell that?”

“No, but I’m going to call back and tell him that if he doesn’t recommend he sign the original, I’ll show Maxine how to double bill her trust and go into business with her.”

“Well, that ought to do it.”

“Make sure you have a copy of the original. Once we hang up, I’ll tell Bell to call Watson and nix the changes. Then you can have him sign it over dinner, and boom! Boardwalk is in business.”

“I can do that.”

“That’s my girl! Call me once you’ve got the original signed.”

“Oh, it may be awfully late by that time—”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll be expecting your call.”

“Will do.” Jean smiled and hung up.

Ocean City, NJ – The Original

The large double doors of the Kimble Estate swung open the minute the grey Mercedes pulled into the driveway. Kimble made sure to have a drink in hand, and housekeeper with a flute ready to be handed off.

“Welcome!” Kimble exclaimed as he used his free hand to embrace Jean.

“I’m so happy to be here, Watson!”

“I’m just glad to be able to spend more time with you tonight.” The doors were closed behind them as the two strolled toward the dining room.

“This is beautiful,” Jean gasped. “The Cherrywood is just wonderful.”

He batted his brown eyes. “Well, thank you.” He pulled out Jean’s chair, motioning for her to sit. “I made Kirk wait on this deal so we could spend a bit more time together.”

“Watson!” Jean blushed, letting out a small chuckle. “I assume you spoke to Bell about any changes?” she reached into her case, drawing the contract and placed it before him. She uncapped her pen, then slid it over.

“Yes, and it’s all in order now. I don’t care so much about how much money we all stand to make. Spending time with you makes me happy. In fact, I wish every night could be like the one we spent at the Marlborough Blenheim.” he grinned, placing his palm over her hand.

“That was a perfect evening, indeed. And now that you’ve signed this for me, I could make more of that a reality for us.”

Kimble took a quick glance down at the dotted line, and penned his name. “Oh, Jean. I would love that.”

“Me too, Watson. Spending the rest of our days together. Just think about it.”

“I love that,” his face fell. “I... I’m not happy with Maxine,” Kimble lowered his voice. “I would give her everything if I could get out of this marriage.”

“Don’t be crazy, Watson,” she raised an eyebrow. “It’s all your money. You worked hard for it.” she shuffled the contract back together, and tucked it back into her case.

“Yes, but it was something I did...it *was* a long time ago. If I divorced Maxine, she could absolutely use it against me.”

“Use it against you? What do you mean?”

“It’s not important. I just want to focus on us right now,” he whispered as he inched closer, ruffling the collar on her blouse.

“Watson?” Jean pulled away. “I’m very sorry to cut our time short.”

“Jean, we haven’t even been served dinner yet. I’ve had a lovely meal prepared—”

She stood up, making sure her case was firmly grasped in her right hand. “My sincerest apologies, Watson. I must be back at the Marlyn to return the keys to my Aunt Miriam before nine o’clock. I received a call before I left that they’d be back early. They’ll be in from Philadelphia, wouldn’t want to keep them waiting.” she hurried from the dining room, thanking the housekeeper as she opened the door for her.

“Jean!” Kimble called out, but she continued on.

“I’ll have Kirk call you in the morning!” she shouted back to him, making a beeline for her car.

#

Once back at the Marlyn Inn, Jean rushed up to her suite. She shoved the key into the lock, jiggling them until the door was finally open. Locking the door behind her, she set her case next to the desk, then reached for the phone.

“Come on, Kirk,” she mumbled as her fingers spun along with the dial. After only two rings, the line connected.

“Jean! Is that you?”

“Yes, Mr. Kirkman, it’s me.” she panted, catching her breath.

“Well? Do we have a deal?”

“We most certainly do.”

“Oh, yes!” Kirk shouted, the receiver buzzing. “I knew you’d pull it off! Tell me, did you have to get a few drinks into Kimble?”

“Oh, no. Nothing like that. I just told him Mr. Bell recommended everything was good to go, and he signed it. No problems.”

“Jean, you’ve done such a great job! You’ll be thrilled with the bonus you’ve earned.”

“Oh, thank you, Mr. Kirkman. For my bonus, would you be able to just issue me a share of Boardwalk Bank’s stock before it goes public?”

Kirk chuckled. “You’ve learned far more than I thought you had! Consider it done.”

“Wonderful, thank you.”

“Set up a meeting for me with Serber and Hap Farley as soon as possible. We’re full steam ahead!”

Atlantic City, NJ – Hap Farley

“Okay, Serber. Are you ready?”

“As ready as I’ll be.”

“Just keep in mind that Hap is one of, if not, the most powerful man in Atlantic City. He controls the unions, the politicians, and all cash flow.” Kirk reassured Serber as he brushed Serber’s jacket lapel.

“It’s some luck that you’re childhood friends, boss.” Serber laughed.

“It’s not luck, Serber. Even if we weren’t, he’d still be on my side,” Kirk scoffed. “Let me do most of the talking. Just watch and learn.”

“Got it.”

“Hap!” Kirk extended his hand as the door opened. “Good to see you! How is everything running?” The two stepped inside. “Let me introduce you to my right hand man, and my youngest attorney, Edward Serber.” Serber and Hap shook hands before everyone took a seat.

“Pleasure to meet you.” Hap flashed a brief smile. “Kirk, how’s Boardwalk?”

“Oh, everything’s right on track. Kimble signed over his shares yesterday, and now we’re preparing for the SEC meeting before the IPO.”

“That’s great news, Kirk! Boardwalk will be able to handle more from the city and we can grow that much faster. You know the plans I have for the city, and I need you to be able to handle the cash.”

“Absolutely, Hap. Soon we’ll be the largest bank in New Jersey and Pennsylvania! We can handle anything.” Kirk grinned. “Isn’t that right, Serber?”

“Of course!” Serber cleared his throat.

“Well, that’s great to hear. The Miss America Organization just asked me to set up the scholarship trusts they hand out every year, so I’ll need you and Serber to get right on it.”

“Mr. Farley,” added Serber, “I’d like to add them now before the IPO. It’ll boost our earnings before sales and drive the stock through the roof.”

“I understand. I’ll push the organization for the funds immediately. Kirk, I’ll need you to open more branches. The union is growing and I want the men to have better access now that you hold all the payroll.”

Kirk snapped his fingers. “Already ahead of you, Hap. We’ve got plans drawn up for four more locations, and one’s on the Boardwalk.”

“Ha! I’m going to drive Guarantee Bank out of business! You’re giving them some tough competition here, they’re the oldest bank in the city. People have questioned why I chose to give you the business over them, but I always defended your progress growth strategies over theirs. Don’t let me down.”

“Hap, you’ve got nothing to worry about. We’re on top of this deal! There’s a lot riding on this.” Kirk and Serber popped up, each securing the deal with a handshake.

Philadelphia, PA – The SEC Interview

“Mr. Kirkman,” Jean burst through the conference room door. “Mr. Bradway is here.”

Jean cradled a file folder under her left arm.

“Are those the numbers?” Kirk hopped up from the long table, glancing back at Serber.

Jean plopped the folder in front of him. “Freshly printed.”

“Boardwalk’s numbers have to be in perfect order, and this is riding on your participation.”

“I’m very aware, Mr. Kirkman.”

“And the audit?”

“It’ll be ready soon.”

“Jean, I know I’ve put a lot on your plate. But the future’s riding on this.”

Jean nodded. “Shall I bring in Bradway?”

“Absolutely.” Kirk straightened his tie, then combed his hair behind his ears. After what felt like an hour, Jean returned. She opened the door for Bradway, as well as the agents, and followed them in.

“Let’s get this started, Kirk! I’m sure this won’t take long.” Bradway chuckled as the three of them took their seats opposite Kirk, Serber, and Jean.

“Gentleman,” Serber popped up, setting a file down in front of them, “these are the documents for your review. As you can see, Mr. Kimble is in no way connected with Boardwalk Bank other than his being a large trust customer.” All three men began to peruse the documents, violently thumbing through the pages. They whispered to each other, gave a few raised eyebrows and shared a few shrugs.

“Kirk, I don’t know how you pulled this off.”

“Nothing to pull off, Bradway” Kirk smirked, nudging Serber. As the two laughed, Jean began coughing.

“Where are the audits?” Bradway’s agent piped up, sliding the file back toward Kirk.

“Jean?”

“I-I have the,” Jean stammered, losing the color in her cheeks. “I have to excuse myself for a moment, I apologize.” Springing up from the table, Jean cupped her mouth and ran toward the door. Everyone’s eyes followed her as she swung the door open and headed left.

Approaching the ladies’ room, she pushed the past the door and kneeled as soon as she hit the stall. She heaved, letting vomit spill into the porcelain bowl. Breathing heavily, she retched again, and let out the remaining bile.

#

Bradway’s eyes panned toward the door, then back to Kirk. “Kirk, what’s going on?”

“She’s not feeling very well, I presume.”

“So, you don’t have the audit?” The second agent questioned.

“Just give her a few more minutes, I’m sure she’ll be back with it any minute now.

Serber, go get one of the receptionists to check on her.”

“No, Serber, don’t bother,” Bradway stood up, buttoning his jacket. “Kirk, I personally don’t know how you removed Kimble from Boardwalk’s Board of Directors and got his shares without placing financial drains on Boardwalk’s reserves, but it makes no difference to this SEC investigation.”

Kirk paused. “What are you talking about?”

“Because you, Elwood F. Kirkman have been linked to washing money in Atlantic City for Organized Crime “Organizations,” Boardwalk Bank IPO Has been rejected.” Bradway was now close to the door, his two agents following close behind.

“You have no proof of that.”

Bradway nodded toward the document on the table. “It’s all right there in front of you.”

Kirk pursed his lips, grazing over the sheet. “Are you sure you haven’t just made this a personal vendetta against me?”

“I didn’t vote with the panel. I abstained so it was unbiased.”

“Well played.”

“You’re done and Boardwalk’s charter will be revoked.” Bradway shook his head.

“Alright, Bradway.” Kirk gripped the handle to the conference room door, letting the two agents out.

“Good luck with that grand opening, Kirkman.” Bradway chuckled.

“No need to wish me luck. I won’t need it.” Kirk scoffed as Bradway turned around and caught up with the agents. Kirk nodded for Serber to follow as they stormed back into his office from the conference room. Noticing Jean was passed out on the couch, Kirk wiped his brow.

“Get the team in here and figure this out. I’m going to run and grab something for Jean.”

#

After each team member slipped out of Kirk’s office, Serber remained to report the facts. Jean was no longer on the couch, with the help of Kirk’s medicine.

“Boss, after looking at this from every angle, we’ve managed to come up with a temporary solution.” Serber handed Kirk a file.

“Hit me.”

“I can file an injunction to block the act of revoking the charter.”

“That might work.” Kirk smiled, flipping through their notes.

“It’s worth a try, don’t you think?”

“I do. What’s your angle?”

“Then we can request a hearing to show the cause, and they’ll have to present evidence. The only problem is that we won’t have advanced notice of what it could be, so there’s no way to defend against it. If they rule in favor of Bradway’s findings, we can’t appeal, then Boardwalk goes...bankrupt.”

“Never!” Kirk slammed his fist. “I’ll never give them my money. We need to discredit Bradway so the SEC can see this is personal. You work on the legal, and I’ll work on Bradway,” Kirk yelled.

Serber nodded. “Deal.” he left the office.

Kirk dialed as he watched the room empty. “Dutch! I need you to work on something new for me immediately.”

“Boss, what about Mrs. K? I’m still working on that.”

“Dutch, I need you to get back here as soon as you can.”

“You’re not worried about your wife, Mr. Kirkman?”

“This is far more pertinent. Mary can stay in hiding for a little while longer, I’m sure she just doesn’t want to be bothered. We had a fight before she left.”

“Okay, I’ll be there as soon as I can.” The line disconnected.

Villanova, PA – Dutch

Dutch entered the estate, as Kirk was called from his study to meet him.

“How was the journey back?”

“Not too bad, Boss. What do you need?” The two strolled into Kirk’s study. Kirk shut the door behind them, turning around to face Dutch. “I need you to find out everything you can about this man.” Kirk stepped behind his desk, drawing a file from his cabinet. He handed it to Dutch, raising an eyebrow. “This is all I have, but I want you to get everything you possibly can.”

“Can do, but why? Who’s this guy?”

“Let’s just say this is a life or death situation here, Dutch. He’s on the SEC board and is trying to discredit me. I know someone has to be backing him, he couldn’t pull this off alone.”

“He’s using information against you?”

Suddenly, the phone began to ring. Kirk’s eyes shot to Dutch, and he grabbed the receiver.

“Hello?” Kirk answered.

“Kirk? It’s Jean.”

“How are you feeling?”

“Well, better, I suppose.” Jean cleared her throat. “I just called to tell you I’m going to need to take some time off.”

“Time off? What do you mean?”

“Well, yesterday, when I ran out,” she sighed. “I’m pregnant.”

“Jean, I need you now more than ever. We need to crack Broadway.”

“I’ll try to be there, but I don’t know if I can.”

Kirk sighed. “Please, Jean, I’ll double your earnings on top of your bonus.”

“I’ll do my best to make it, Kirk. I just can’t promise anything.”

Philadelphia, PA - Jean

“Mr. Kimble, please. This is Jean from Mr. Kirkman’s office.” Jean tapped a pen against the Den’s desk.

“Jean, How have you been? I’m so happy to hear from you, I feel like it’s been so long.”

“I’m sorry, Watson—”

“I thought you were angry when you left after our conversation about being together.”

“Watson, please! Please let me speak.”

“What’s wrong, Jean?”

“I,” Jean let out a long sigh. “I’m expecting.”

“Expecting? Expecting what? I know you’re upset about us not being able to be together, but—”

“A child, Watson! I’m expecting a child!” A prolonged pause fell over the conversation.

“Did you hear me? I’m expecting your child!” Jean’s voice cracked as she began sniffing.

“I’m...not sure what to say.”

“Watson, I want to run away with you. I want to raise our child.” she wiped a few tears from her cheeks, stifling the coming wave.

“Jean, we need to meet and discuss this. This isn’t a matter to discuss over the phone.”

“Well, I can’t Watson. I’ve got to get to work soon. Kirk needs me.”

Watson gasped. “Kirk needs you during a time like this?”

“I’ve got a few things to tie up first.”

“Does it have to do with the deal?”

“Yes, Watson.”

“Well, Jean, I’m involved in that too. Please say we can meet so we can discuss the baby...and the deal.”

“Okay, fine, Watson.” Jean checked the clock, then heard a click on the other line.

“Watson?”

“Yes?”

“Oh, you’re still on. Let’s meet tomorrow. I’ll call you later.” she hung up the phone, heading out of the den. She checked the kitchen as she strolled by, but the phone was still cradled on its stand. Jean cocked her head, then continued on her way out.

#

When Jean returned home that evening, she noticed none of her kids were hanging out in the kitchen, or holed up in the den.

“I’m home... Harry?” Jean placed her things beside the coat rack, then made her way into the dining room. Harry and her daughter, Jocelyn, sat together at the table.

“Hi, Jean.” Harry stared at her, Jocelyn following his lead.

Jocelyn raised an eyebrow. “Mother.”

“We need to talk about something troubling, Jean. Jocelyn told me as soon as I got home from work.”

“What about?”

“I can’t believe you’re going to stand there and pretend like you don’t know. You’re pregnant, Jean.”

Jean bowed her head. “Yes, I a—”

“With Watson Kimble’s child!”

“I heard you talking to him on the phone!” Jocelyn rose from the table, crossed her arms, and stormed out of the dining room.

“Jocelyn, you were supposed to be with Jeannette!” Jean shouted as she stormed to her room.

“I could just kill you both for this. How did you even get involved with a man like Kimble, Jean?”

“We were spending so much time together working on Kirk’s recent deal, and...I don’t know. It was stressful! He refused to give me his signature until...”

“Until, what? Jean? You seduced him?”

“It wasn’t like that.”

“Oh, so you’re in love with him?”

“Watson and I have a relationship where we can talk to each other. He tells me he’d give everything to leave his wife. I was comforting him.”

“You fell in love with his money, Jean, not with him. It’s just like I told you at the market. You’re never satisfied! You always want more. You never think of this family. You’re a self-centered, shallow, social-climbing opportunist who tries to take advantage of every person she meets.”

“Harry—”

“Now, I’m not going to let you ruin my life or my children’s any longer. Pack up your things and get out!” Harry fumed, shoving the dining room door open and thumping into the den. Jean heard the door slam behind him, then hurried into the kitchen to make a call. The trilling made Jean’s fingers tremble.

“Hello?” The line connected.

Jean paused, listening closely for a second click. “It’s Jean. Harry kicked me out, and I was thinking we could meet tonight and talk?”

“Tonight isn’t great, Maxine is having guests over in about twenty five minutes.”

“Watson, this is very serious. I have nowhere to go, Harry’s just broken up with me, I’ve got work in the morning, and I want to see you. Please, can’t you make an excuse to leave?”

“Jean, if I could, I would be on it immediately. “

“You can. Tell Maxine something came up regarding the deal.”

“I just can’t, Jean.”

“Watson, I’ll show up at the house in about an hour and inform every one of your indiscretions if you don’t. I’ll ruin your marriage and your reputation!”

“Now, Jean—”

“How would Maxine feel about that?”

Kimble chuckled. “Jean, no one would believe you.”

“They wouldn’t believe you and I have something when it’s clear how much you don’t want to be with your wife? Yeah, alright, Watson.”

“Look, Jean, I control this deal you’ve got going with Kirk--”

“And I’m having your baby! I want to be with you!”

“Listen to me! What I’m saying is, if you come into Maxine’s party, no one will believe you. You’re a secretary married to a butcher, Jean. It’s my word against yours.”

“Is that all you think of me, Watson?”

“Of course not. But think of the guests at this dinner. That’s all they know of you.”

“Oh, well, after tonight they’ll know a little more about me.”

“Alright then, you’ll cause a huge scene, upset my wife and embarrass me in front of everyone, and I’ll pull the deal with Kirk. It’s as simple as that.”

Jean took a long pause, followed by a deep sigh. “This is ridiculous, Watson. I have nowhere to go.”

“Why don’t you set yourself up in my suite over at the Bellevue downtown?”

“Will you be by later tonight?”

“I can’t make any promises, but you can stay there as long as you need to. I’ll try to make it over after the offices close tomorrow.”

“I just can’t believe you, Watson.”

“This is the best I can do for you right now, Jean. My offer stands. Be at the Bellevue for 7pm. The room will be under your name.” The flat echo sounded as Jean hung up and took herself upstairs.

Philadelphia, PA -- The Bellevue

After work, Jean settled into The Kimble suite at the Bellevue. She checked her watch, she was expecting Kimble any minute. Just as she had finished freshening up in the bathroom, she heard a knock at the door.

“Hi, Jean.” Kimble stood before her, a weak smile spreading across his face.

She raised her eyebrows. “Watson.”

He hustled inside, making sure no one was behind him in the hall. “How are you liking the suite?”

Jean shrugged. “Oh, it’s comfortable.”

“Did you sleep well?”

“Alright, I suppose.”

“Look, we need to discuss things. I’m sorry I couldn’t make it over last night,” Kimble motioned for Jean to follow him to the breakfast table. “But I *do* want to be with you.”

“So, why don’t you? I want to have your baby and raise it with you.”

“I’ve told you,” Kimble sighed, bowing his head. “I can’t divorce Maxine just like that. I thought I made that clear to you.”

“I don’t care about Maxine, Watson! All I care about is you.”

“I just can’t raise this baby while I’ve got a marriage with another woman.”

“Is that what you want for this child? For it to never know it’s father?” Jean rubbed a hand over her stomach. “Don’t you understand how that would affect it?”

“Maybe...we can be together and marry over time. If I can persuade Maxine to divorce.”

“Anything, Watson. I want you to be with me anyway you can.”

“We’ll have to be very discreet for the time being... but I think we could make it work.”

“How so?”

“I have a property near the estate in Ocean City. You can move into there for the time being, it’s suitable for a housekeeper and a small family.”

“I’d have to ask Kirk if I could work out of the Atlantic City office. I don’t know how thrilled he would be about that.”

Watson chuckled. “Don’t worry about Kirk. I can handle that if he tries to argue with you.”

“But if it means starting our life together—”

“It will be a start.”

“Alright, Watson,” Jean smiled, planting a kiss on his cheek. “*Just* until you get the divorce.”

Philadelphia, PA – New Plan

“Kirk?” Jean tapped on the door, pushing it open slightly with her knuckle.

“Oh! Jean, come in, come in.” Kirk shot up from his desk, meeting Jean halfway in the middle of the room.

“Could I talk to you for a moment?”

“Of course, there’s so much to discuss.”

“Great. Well, I—”

Kirk sat down beside Jean on the couch. “We have a slight problem.”

“A problem?”

“Bradway’s blocked me on Boardwalk’s IPO and is now threatening Boardwalk’s charter. Serber and I are working on it, but I need you to help by keeping Kimble occupied so he doesn’t find out about this.”

“Oh,” She ran a hand through her hair. “That’s actually what I wanted to talk to you about...see I’m expecting and having some problems at home. Mr. Kimble has offered me a house in Ocean City to stay in for the time being. I wanted to ask if I’d be able to work out of the Atlantic City office going forward.”

“Jean, that’d be excellent!” Kirk shouted, jumping up from the couch. “That’s wonderful! This way you can keep Kimble busy and help us with Bradway.”

“Oh, that will be perfect, Kirk! I’d be happy to help with Kimble.”

Kirk clapped, letting out a laugh. “Let’s inform Serber of the changes!” Kirk called for Serber, and he joined the pair. Kirk drew up the plans for Jean’s move, making sure she had all of the necessary information.

“Should we bring Jean up to speed on the Bradway case?”

“Yes, yes, of course. She needs to be in the loop so she can properly play her part.”

“So, we know that Bradway’s father is on the Board of Guarantee Bank. They stand to win if he knocks Boardwalk out.”

“But we need to find out how he got knowledge of Nucky Johnson’s money.”

“Exactly, and we need to find out fast!”

Suddenly, another secretary burst through Kirk’s door. “Excuse me, Mr. Kirkman, but Hap Farley is here. He’s on his way up.”

Kirk’s eyes shot to Serber, then to Jean, then back to Serber. “We must be cool, Serber! I don’t want Hap to be concerned and pull the deposits. Let me do most of the talking.” Kirk said in a hushed tone. Serber nodded. Jean quickly let herself out, leaving the door open for Hap to enter.

“Kirk!” Hap yelled, slamming the door behind him. “What the hell is going on with Boardwalk? Are we going public or going out of business?”

“Hap, Hap, don’t worry, everything is under control—”

“I’m hearing a lot of talk! A great deal of people are concerned, and I’m one of them! Tell me what the hell’s going on.”

“It’s Bradway. He’s trying to make this personal and get back at me by making sure Boardwalk never goes public.”

“Who? Why?”

“I’m not sure yet, but I—we’re working on it. He’s trying to put Boardwalk out of business and take over my assets, but I’ll never let it happen.”

“You better not, Kirk. I can’t have my name attached to this if it all goes to shit.”

“Hap, you know I’d never let Boardwalk fail.”

“Get it done and Immediately! If boardwalk goes down, I go down with it. The unions will run me out of town, and I’ll be powerless to help you.”

“You have my word. I’ll let you know something as soon as I have any new developments. All of my people are on it.”

“Kirk, we’ll be in touch. I need all of this talk behind me.”

“Of course.” Kirk smiled as Hap grunted and exited the office. Catching his breath, Kirk called for Jean.

Serber ran a hand through his hair. “Time to strategize, boss.”

“Let’s get Jean situated and then we stay as long as we have to to fix this.” Kirk closed the door behind Jean.

“Get yourself moved as soon as you possibly can. See Kimble once you get down there and make sure he stays occupied. Keep your ears open for anything about Bradway and his father. I’ll be in touch soon.” Jean nodded as Kirk let her out of the office. “Alright, now...”

Serber took a seat on the leather couch as Kirk made his way back to his desk. “Where should we begin?”

“Who would benefit most if Boardwalk failed?”

“Bradway, of course, Boss. His father, the board of Guarantee...” Serber trailed off.

“Who owns the most stock?”

“I honestly think it’s Bradway and his father.”

“Bradway could want Hap’s position in AC, but he would have to leave the SEC board. But—they don’t have that kind of money since I took over the Kimble trusts.”

“Someone with big money’s gotta be backing them, they wouldn’t be able to pull this off without that kind of support. But who?”

“That’s the kind of information I’m going to need from Dutch. I’ll have him meet me at home tonight, and we’ll meet tomorrow to start drawing up a plan.”

Ocean City, NJ – The Move

As Jean arrived to Kimble's Cape Cod-style bungalow, Kimble stood at the front of the property, waving out from behind the white picket fence.

"Welcome to your new home!" Kimble called out as Jean approached with her bags.

"Maxine sent a housewarming gift for you, but couldn't make it here to welcome you today."

"Oh, Watson, I love it." Jean surveyed the small foyer, her eyes growing bigger as she took the whole thing in.

"Will this do?"

"Absolutely. I can just see us and our baby having a wonderful life here, Watson." she smiled, embracing him.

"The house is fully furnished and completely ready for your new life here. And you have Viola!" Watson called Jean's new housekeeper's name.

Viola arrived in the foyer and fixed her apron. "Yes, Mr. Kimble?"

"This is Jean," Kimble nodded, then turned to Jean. "Viola will be with you in case you need anything. She'll help you."

"This is all so wonderful, Watson." The women exchanged pleasantries.

"Jean, as soon as you get settled, please come to the estate for the paperwork Kirk needs to go to Mr. Bell."

"I'll see you first thing in the morning!"

Watson smiled. "Sounds great, Jean."