

BILLIONS

Trust

by

Claire Elaine Newman

planetwriter@gmail.com

(626) 344-0593

(626) 644-3030

www.planetwriter.net

PREVIOUSLY, ON BILLIONS:

US ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES still seeks a way to prosecute billionaire hedge fund leader BOBBY 'AXE' AXELROD.

Chuck hopes that Axe Capital buying the debt for the upstate New York city of Sandicot - then forcing them into austerity measures to pay it back - will provide that opportunity, as well as lending steam to his own future campaign for Governor.

However, he must hide the fact that his own father CHUCK RHOADES SR. conspired with political 'Kingmaker' BLACK JACK FOLEY to kill the casino deal that led Axe to buy the debt in the first place.

Meanwhile, Axe and his top employees - including MIKE 'WAGS' WAGNER, 'DOLLAR BILL' STERN, and Axe's gender non-binary protégé TAYLOR MASON - work to make deals that will rescue their financial quarter from the major hit that is Sandicot...

...unaware that Chuck's team at the US Attorney's office - BRYAN CONNERTY, KATE SACKER, and LONNIE WATLEY - are looking into leveraging Taylor as an informant.

Following her resignation, Chuck's wife WENDY RHOADES has finally agreed to return as Axe Capital's in-house performance coach, but refuses to work directly with Axe after he falsely accused her of sharing confidential information with Chuck.

Wendy and Chuck remain separated over Chuck's theft of that information from her laptop, and while their relationship has recently improved, that may be threatened if Chuck learns of her one-night-stand with former client CRAIG HEIDECKER.

Suspicious of Wendy's loyalties, Axe's wife LARA AXELROD is pleased when Axe offers to not have sessions with her. But this victory is short-lived, as Wendy soon reveals it was her own condition for coming back.

Combined with Axe's lack of support for Lara's business idea, the Axelrod marriage is under tension for the first time.

**AS THE SONG "BOBBY'S GIRL" PLAYS...**

INT. THE RHOADES HOME, MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY

WENDY RHOADES sits up in bed, worrying at her lip.

Getting out of bed, she goes to her closet and pulls out the BLACK DRESS she wore the night she slept with Craig Heidecker.

Balling it up, she tosses it in the trash.

Then her gaze lowers to a SILVER SUITCASE below her clothes. Gaze thoughtful, she strokes her hand over it.

INT. AXELROD HOME, MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY

BOBBY 'AXE' AXELROD and LARA AXELROD collapse onto their backs on their bed: naked, sweaty, and exhausted.

Axe smiles in satisfaction.

Lara's smile is only partway there.

Axe leans over and kisses her, then jumps out of bed.

INT. HOME OF CHUCK RHOADES SENIOR, OFFICE -- DAY

CHUCK RHOADES SR. sits at his desk, fuming with rage as he looks down at something laid out there.

He looks up at his PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, nods to dismiss the man, then picks up his PHONE.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET -- DAY

Chuck walks to work.

His PHONE BUZZES and he takes it out - almost not answering when he sees it's his father. But in the end he SIGHS and:

CHUCK

Yes, Dad?

He frowns and slows, then looks around him urgently.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET -- MOMENTS LATER

Crossing the road, Chuck rounds a corner and enters a --

INT. SMALL MOM AND POP STORE -- CONTINUOUS

Chuck heads straight for the newspapers and searches out a specific TABLOID.

INSERT: The HEADLINE reads "Bobby's Girl" over a PHOTO of Wendy in a bikini top and a bare-chested Axe with his arm around her, looking as if they're about to kiss.

Chuck's eyes bulge as they roam further down the page.

INSERT: TWO MORE PHOTOS, now of Chuck and Lara, each alone and caught looking angry. Large type text reads "Bad Boy Billionaire Caught Cheating With Top Prosecutor's Wife."

STORE OWNER

You gonna buy that?

CHUCK

Buy it? I wouldn't wipe my ass on it if you *paid* me to!

Chuck SLAMS the paper down and storms out, the STORE OWNER staring after him.

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- DAY

BRYAN CONNERTY leans against a desk, but pushes upright as a somewhat calmer Chuck marches into the office.

Chuck SIGHS at the look on Bryan's face.

CHUCK

Don't worry, Bryan, you don't need to break the news.

He heads for his office, Bryan falling into step at his side.

CONNERTY

I would've called, but I only just found out myself.

CHUCK

Found out what? That the fourth estate are a bunch of rapacious, dim-witted fools, eager to prey upon the desperate yearning of our fellow countrymen to see everyone with a modicum of success fall on their face?

CONNERTY

Uh...

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES' OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Chuck enters followed by Connerty. He tosses his briefcase onto a chair and paces behind his desk.

CHUCK

The question is, did this 'article' appear out of the blue, or is it Axe's attempt to divert attention from what's going on in Sandicot?

KATE SACKER and LONNIE WATLEY enter, drawn by all the noise.

CONNERTY

You really think he'd do that? It doesn't exactly make him look good.

CHUCK

No, but it *does* make it look as if I'd have an ulterior motive for investigating him.

Connerty CLEARS HIS THROAT.

CONNERTY

Look, I'm just gonna ask -

CHUCK

(with contempt)  
Of course it's not true.

Sacker and Watley exchange a look.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

If it were, they'd have a damn sight more than a four-year-old photograph. That *I* took!

CONNERTY

You took that photo?

CHUCK

Yes.

The others look relieved.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

So: thoughts?

SACKER

I... don't see Axelrod doing this.

WATLEY

Why not?

SACKER

For all his faults, he seems devoted to his wife.

CONNERTY

She's as hard-headed as they come.  
Maybe she agreed to it?

WATLEY

There's no way *my* wife would.

CHUCKS

It's a possibility though. Let's  
check it out anyway. If Axe *did* do  
this, we may have him more on the  
ropes than we thought.

CONNERTY

And if he didn't?

CHUCK

Then one of us has a leak.

CONNERTY

What do you mean?

CHUCK

The only ones who had the pictures  
from that weekend were the four of us.

CONNERTY

Wait - you went on vacation with Axe  
and his wife?

CHUCK

Not by choice.

EXT. SPA HOTEL, UPSTATE NEW YORK -- DAY -- *FOUR YEARS EARLIER*

Chuck and Wendy walk up the steps to an exclusive spa hotel.  
Chuck pulls out his phone, winces and starts texting.

CHUCK

Sorry. This really isn't a good time  
to be gone... And *dammit*, I think I  
left my charger at home -

WENDY

Chuck.

Wendy stares at him. Chuck breathes out, calming himself.

CHUCK

You're right. You're right.

He lowers the phone.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

The job doesn't start until Monday.

A BELLHOP passes them with their luggage on a cart. The SILVER SUITCASE we saw earlier sits atop the rest.

Chuck's attention is riveted as it goes past.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

You brought it?

WENDY

I said I'd make sure you relaxed,  
didn't I?

Wendy slides Chuck's phone back into his pocket, taking the opportunity to TWIST HIS NIPPLE - *hard* - through his shirt.

Chuck sucks in a breath, then eagerly follows Wendy as she walks ahead.

But as they enter the -

INT. SPA HOTEL, LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

- Chuck and Wendy come to a halt, staring at the front desk, where Axe and Lara are checking in.

CHUCK

(warningly)

Wend...

Axe notices them.

AXE

Wendy?

WENDY

Bobby.

They step forward and embrace.

As they separate, Axe and Chuck eyeball each other, while Lara and Wendy exchange polite smiles.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I didn't expect to see you here.

LARA

Bobby mentioned this place, and I  
thought it sounded fantastic.

Lara glances questioningly at Axe.

LARA (CONT'D)  
Quite a coincidence.

AXE  
Wendy's the one who told me about it.

Lara loops her arm around Axe's.

LARA  
Well, we should let you two get  
checked in.

Axe grins and walks her away.

Chuck fakes a smile until they're out of sight, then GROWLS  
and takes out his phone.

WENDY  
What are you doing?

CHUCK  
Finding us another hotel.

WENDY  
Really? You're going to let him force  
you out of here?

CHUCK  
What? No.

WENDY  
It's a big place. We won't see them  
again.

CHUCK  
You swear?

Wendy makes the Scout's sign. It's oddly sexy on her.

WENDY  
Scout's honor.

CHUCK  
Fine.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- DAY -- *PRESENT DAY*

Wendy strides confidently through the office, noticing a few  
additional stares her way but shrugging them off.

Rounding the corner, she finds TAYLOR MASON waiting outside  
her office. Taylor stands as Wendy approaches.

TAYLOR

Do you have a few minutes?

WENDY

Of course.

INT. WENDY'S OFFICE, AXE CAPITAL -- DAY

Taylor sits in the chair opposite Wendy.

TAYLOR

I like being direct.

WENDY

Well, you can tell me anything.

TAYLOR

I know. That's your job.

WENDY

It is, yes. Which means I actually prefer it when people are direct.

(sensing the problem)

But often, people are confusing about what they mean, or what they want. Isn't that right?

TAYLOR

Yes.

Wendy settles back in her chair.

WENDY

Is there a specific example you'd like to discuss?

TAYLOR

Wags made a point of coming over to me yesterday. He said "Nice work."

WENDY

And...?

TAYLOR

He was grinning when he said it... and he started *laughing* as he walked away. I don't know how to interpret this without asking him.

WENDY

And you don't want to do that.

TAYLOR

It would make me look weak. I just want to know if he was laughing at me, or if he takes me seriously.

WENDY

Oh, I think Wags takes you very seriously.

(after a beat)

Let me ask you something, Taylor: do you think Axe Cap is lucky to have you?

TAYLOR

(no hesitation)

Yes.

WENDY

And how do you think Wags feels about this company?

TAYLOR

He wants it to be successful.

WENDY

Yes, but how does he *feel* about it.

TAYLOR

He... loves it?

WENDY

He doesn't just love it. He *delights* in it. *Revels* in its successes. Wags is positively *gleeful* whenever he thinks of every single way Axe Cap is able to beat someone else.

Taylor blinks, slowly getting it.

TAYLOR

You're saying he was just... happy, because I work here?

WENDY

And not somewhere else.

Taylor pauses a moment, processing this, then stands up again.

TAYLOR

Thanks. That helps.

Wendy watches Taylor leave, then raises her eyebrows as MIKE 'WAGS' WAGNER appears in the doorway.

He gives his customary bright smirk.

WAGS

You haven't seen the news.

WENDY

What's Bobby done this time?

WAGS

I don't think he's done *anything*, but  
in this case you'd know better than I.

Curious, Wendy fires up her computer and types. A moment later her eyebrows go up in amusement.

WENDY

You'd think people could find better things to write about.

She looks up to find Wags more serious than usual.

WENDY (CONT'D)

What? Come on, you know it's ridiculous.

WAGS

It's not my reaction you should be worried about.

WENDY

(realizing)

Lara.

WAGS

Something tells me she won't be amused.

Wendy studies the article again, then shrugs.

WENDY

Well, she was there when this was taken. She of all people knows nothing happened.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- DAY -- *FOUR YEARS EARLIER*

Chuck lies back on the bed in the dimly lit hotel room. Bare-chested except for a LEATHER HARNESS, he stares up at --

Wendy, who towers over him in full DOMINATRIX REGALIA.

She SLAPS a CROP hard onto Chuck's bare thigh.

CHUCK

Ow.

Wendy presses her gloved hand against his throat.

WENDY

*Take it.*

Chuck stares up at her in awe -

Then jerks as a BIT GAG is forced between his teeth.

WENDY (CONT'D)

That's right, my boy.

Wendy takes a PAIR OF HANDCUFFS from the SILVER SUITCASE lying open by the bed, then pushes Chuck's arms up over his head.

WENDY (CONT'D)

You need to be taught how to behave.

Chuck squirms and GRUNTS as she shoves his wrists through gaps in the antique iron headboard, then cuffs them there.

As Chuck tests his restraints, delight spreads across his face, until --

A LOUD DOUBLE KNOCK at the door startles them.

Wendy looks down at Chuck, who tries to speak through the gag.

THREE MORE RAPID KNOCKS sound from outside.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Who is it?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

(muffled by the door)

It's the hotel. We found a charger for your phone.

Wendy swings her booted leg over Chuck's body and stands up, grabbing her robe from a chair and pulling it around her.

WENDY

Can you leave it outside the door?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I'm afraid I'm not allowed to, ma'am.

Chuck SQUEALS agitatedly from behind his gag.

Wendy hastily tosses his robe over him, then ties her own tightly closed and heads for the door.

WENDY

Just a minute!

Chuck GRUNTS frantically to attract her attention, his eyes bulging, but ceases all noise as she reaches the door.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

A BELLHOP (late teens) waits outside their room.

Wendy opens the door a fraction and forces a smile.

WENDY

Thank you.

As she reaches for the charger, her robe's collar gapes open, revealing part of the BLACK BUSTIER below.

The Bellhop's eyes widen.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

On the bed, Chuck BREATHES HARSHLY through his gag, terrified of being discovered.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Wendy notices the Bellhop's reaction and smiles, but pulls her collar closed.

WENDY

Anything else?

BELLHOP

N-no ma'am!

Blushing, the boy hurries away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Wendy closes the door and turns around, then lets her robe drop to the floor and moves provocatively away from it...

Chuck GRUNTS urgently from the bed.

Wendy stops.

WENDY

Right.

She turns back and locks the door, then returns to Chuck, again throwing her leg over him and sitting on his chest.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Now where were we...

But Chuck's red in the face and in no mood to play.

Frowning, Wendy - with a little difficulty - removes his gag.

CHUCK

What the *fuck*!!

Chuck stretches his jaw furiously.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

(hissing in rage)

You opened the *door*?!

WENDY

There was no way he could see in.

CHUCK

What if it hadn't been a Bellhop?!  
What if it'd been hotel security? Or  
a fucking *reporter*??

WENDY

Oh come on -

Wendy's phone VIBRATES SOFTLY on the bedside table. The name LARA AXELROD appears in big letters on the front.

CHUCK

Don't answer that!

Staring at him, Wendy picks the phone up and answers.

WENDY

Hi Lara.

INT. SPA, PRIVATE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Lara, wrapped in a robe, lies on one of two beds in a luxurious massage room, sipping champagne from a glass.

LARA

Hi. So I was just lying here waiting  
for a couples massage, and I thought  
I'd give you a call, see if you and  
Chuck are free for dinner?

INTERCUT: WENDY, LARA:

Chuck glares at Wendy, mouthing NO!

WENDY

Well, Chuck's a little tied up right now...

Chuck's face - oh, if looks could kill.

WENDY (CONT'D)

But I'm sure he'll be free by then.

LARA

Great! We're in the Aphrodite Villa. Seven pm?

WENDY

It's a date. See you both at seven.

Chuck stares at Wendy, incredulous, as she ends the call.

EXT. AXELROD BOYS' PRIVATE SCHOOL -- DAY -- *BACK TO PRESENT*

Lara drops their two boys, DEAN and GORDIE, off at the entrance, kissing them both goodbye for the day.

But as she watches them go inside, she notices OTHER MOTHERS giving her sideways looks.

She smiles confidently back at them all and gets into her car.

INT. LARA'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

But once inside, Lara digs out her PHONE.

INSERT: The screen shows two missed messages from MO.

Lara immediately makes a call.

LARA

(into the phone)

Mo, it's Lara.

She listens in silence, her face tightening with strain.

LARA (CONT'D)

No, I didn't see it yet. Thanks for letting me know. Yeah, of course it's BS.

Ending the call, Lara sets her jaw and starts the car.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- DAY

TAYLOR sits at their desk, working - but also distracted.

Finally, they stand up and head for Axe's office.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Axe looks up from his phone as Taylor enters. He waits expectantly then - as Taylor stays silent - waggles the phone.

AXE  
Should I go ahead with my call?

TAYLOR  
I might know something.

AXE  
I should hope so, given what I'm paying you.

TAYLOR  
No... I mean, I believe I know something useful.

Axe gestures to a chair, and Taylor sits.

AXE  
(after a beat)  
I'm not going to guess.

TAYLOR  
Sorry.

Taylor lets out a determined breath.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Some of us went to a... club last night.

AXE  
Night club? Dance club?

TAYLOR  
You said you weren't going to guess.

Axe smiles and raises his hands.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Someone you know was there.

AXE  
I know a lot of people.

TAYLOR  
Jeff Wilding. He was there.

Axe waits, but when nothing else is forthcoming he goes to stand up -

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
 (in a rush)  
 I think he's about to leave Wildner  
 Tech.

Axe lets himself relax back into his chair.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
 Which, as the acknowledged genius  
 behind most of their IP, will likely  
 cause their stock price to plummet.

AXE  
 What did you hear?

TAYLOR  
 There was nothing directly said.

INT. LGBTQA KARAOKE CLUB, MANHATTAN -- NIGHT -- *FLASHBACK*

A LOUD, festival atmosphere with DANCERS in thongs up on  
 podiums and plenty of SAME SEX COUPLES making out.

DOLLAR BILL STERN leads BEN KIM, MAFEE, and Taylor through the  
 CROWD toward a busy bar. They RAISE THEIR VOICES to be heard.

TAYLOR  
 Do you often come here?

MAFEE  
 Try never!

Mafee pushes his way to the front, where Dollar Bill has just  
 ordered pricey shots.

MAFEE (CONT'D)  
 What are we doing here?

DOLLAR BILL  
 Hey! Try having some respect, you  
 fucking bigot.

MAFEE  
 What?

Dollar Bill nods behind Mafee to where Taylor is.

DOLLAR BILL  
 Thought Taylor'd feel, y'know, more  
 comfortable in a place like this.

Mafee shakes his head.

BEN

Holy fuck...

DOLLAR BILL

Hey, I'm trying to be sensitive!

BEN

No...

Ben points toward the KARAOKE STAGE.

BEN (CONT'D)

...isn't that Jeff Wilding up there?

ON THE KARAOKE STAGE:

JEFF WILDING (40s) - dressed all in black and sporting a pony tail - drunkenly **SINGS "My Way"** to an equally drunk AUDIENCE.

DOLLAR BILL

That prick. Fucker screwed up my first quarter earnings last year.

As the SONG ends, Jeff leans over and French Kisses the GUITAR PLAYER, who deftly turns him back around to the microphone.

DOLLAR BILL (CONT'D)

Huh. Didn't know he was queer.

MAFEE

Oh yeah, real sensitive.

DOLLAR BILL

What? I'm just saying, I didn't.

JEFF

(over the microphone)

I'd like to dedicate my next song to my soon-to-be ex. Hit it, boys!

The **intro to "These Boots are Made for Walking"** starts up.

Dollar Bill passes out shots then downs one from each hand.

DOLLAR BILL

Okay: get drinking, and I'll go sign us up for "My Heart Will Go On."

Ben looks worried as Dollar Bill disappears into the crowd.

BEN

He's kidding. Right?

MAFEE  
 (uncertainly)  
 Yeah.

But Taylor ignores the guys and the shots.

Moving toward the stage, Taylor frowns up Jeff Wilding as he launches into the **SONG**.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- DAY -- *BACK TO PRESENT*

Axe watches Taylor with interest.

AXE  
 Your point?

TAYLOR  
 Since Wildner Tech went public last year, Jeff Wilding has been hitting the bars. A lot.

AXE  
 And you know that how? You practically live in this office.

TAYLOR  
 It's in all the magazines and tabloids.

Taylor hands Axe a tablet, which he scrolls through casually.

TAYLOR  
 He has a different boyfriend every night.

Axe grimaces at something and glances up at Taylor.

AXE  
 You read this stuff?

TAYLOR  
 (dead serious)  
 I read *all* the news.

Axe hands the tablet back.

AXE  
 You know you can't always believe what the gossip rags say.

TAYLOR  
 No, but I've asked around at some of the clubs. I've been able to verify the main points.

AXE

Okay. So last night, you see Jeff Wilding getting drunk and singing breakup songs dedicated to his 'ex'...

TAYLOR

But he isn't seeing anyone seriously.

AXE

And from that, you deduce -

TAYLOR

It's his *business partner* he plans to break up with. Rube Horner.

A long pause from Axe.

AXE

That's quite a leap.

TAYLOR

I know. For example, his lover may simply be in the closet, and that's why no one knows about them.

AXE

But you still thought it was worth bringing to me.

TAYLOR

Yes. Due to your past history.

AXE

Our underestimation of their IPO's value.

TAYLOR

Axe Cap made the wrong call.

AXE

That was over a year ago.

TAYLOR

Have you forgotten?

A wide grin spreads over Axe's face.

AXE

No.

(after a beat)

Okay. Look into it. Pull in anyone you need.

TAYLOR

Anyone?

AXE

That's what I said.

Taylor heads for the door.

AXE (CONT'D)

Taylor? Make sure you find us a credible reason to short.

Taylor nods and leaves the room.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

Taylor pauses, studying the roomful of ANALYSTS and RESEARCHERS, then makes a beeline for --

MAFEE'S DESK

Mafee is hard at work, just picking up his phone.

TAYLOR

Stop what you're doing and follow me.

Mafee looks past Taylor toward Axe's office.

MAFEE

Job for the boss?

TAYLOR

Aren't they all?

Taylor turns and walks away.

Mafee looks reluctantly back at his screen, then gets up.

ACROSS THE OFFICE

DOLLAR BILL watches, not sure if he likes this, as Mafee hurries to catch up to his former researcher.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Axe's PHONE BUZZES - it's Lara.

AXE

Hey -

INT. LARA'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Lara speaks via bluetooth as she drives.

LARA

Did you know about the story claiming you and Wendy Rhoades are having an affair?

INTERCUT AXE/LARA:

AXE

Don't worry, our lawyers are all over it. It's a pile of crap...

(almost amused)

All they have is a four-year-old photo they cut you out of!

LARA

So you've spoken to the lawyers already? But you didn't think to mention it to me. Your *wife*.

AXE

I was about to call. But come on, you know I'm not screwing Wendy behind your back.

LARA

Oh do I? Really?

AXE

Lar... I know you don't trust Wendy, but you gotta trust me.

LARA

I know you lied about her, Bobby.

Axe tenses.

AXE

What do you mean?

LARA

I know *she* set the rule about no sessions, not you.

Axe stands up, highly disturbed.

AXE

Lara, listen to me -

LARA

I don't even *know* you right now.

Axe looks stunned - and even hurt - when Lara ends the call.

INT. SPA, PRIVATE ROOM -- DAY -- *FOUR YEARS EARLIER*

Axe and Lara enjoy a 'couples massage,' a MASSEUR and MASSEUSE respectively working on each of their backs.

Axe looks relaxed - yet he still has his PHONE next to him on the bed, beside his head.

LARA

By the way, I asked them to dinner.

AXE

Hmm - who?

LARA

Chuck and Wendy Rhoades.

AXE

(half laughing)

What?

LARA

She's one of your oldest friends -

AXE

And she's married to a tool.

The Masseurs encourage them to turn over, draping the sheets over them discreetly and moving to their legs.

LARA

He might be a tool, but he *is* a newly minted US Attorney.

Axe says nothing but smiles absently.

Then his eyes flick toward his phone. Reaching out, he picks it up and holds it to his ear.

AXE

Yes?

(after a beat)

Okay... yeah.

(to the Masseurs)

Can you give us a minute?

Axe waits for the Masseurs to leave... then lowers the phone.

Lara frowns at him.

LARA

Trouble?

AXE

Not yet.

Axe gives Lara a meaningful look.

LARA

Really? Because of what I said?

AXE

You made it sound like I'm seeking certain... favors from him.

LARA

I didn't mean it like that.

AXE

I know. It's just good to be careful.

Axe takes in Lara's oiled torso.

AXE (CONT'D)

So how's your massage going?

LARA

Pretty good.

She runs her eyes over him.

LARA (CONT'D)

Although... I've had better.

Axe reaches out and runs a finger down Lara's upper breast.

AXE

It's supposed to be erotic, right?  
Get us in the mood?

LARA

That's what the website said.

Lara smirks at him.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE MASSAGE ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The two Masseurs stand waiting, one glancing at the time.

They both look down at a sound from the floor, in time to see a WAD OF HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS appear from under the door.

One of them picks it up and looks at the other, who shrugs and grins.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- DAY -- *BACK TO PRESENT*

Axe exits his office, pulling his jacket on as he goes.

WAGS

Axe, we need to -

AXE

I have to go out.

(as he leaves)

If Taylor gets more on Wildner, let me know.

INT. WENDY'S OFFICE, AXE CAPITAL -- DAY

Dollar Bill paces in front of a seated Wendy.

DOLLAR BILL

I mean, Taylor's been here, what, three months? And Taylor's already giving orders to Mafee?

WENDY

And that troubles you?

DOLLAR BILL

It's just weird, you know?

(hastily)

By 'it' I don't mean Taylor.

WENDY

I know.

(after a pause)

Just ask yourself this: do you bring something to Axe Cap that no one else does?

DOLLAR BILL

I guess...

WENDY

Are there things you do for Axe Cap, that no one else can do? That no one else is *willing* to do?

Dollar Bill smirks, swelling with pride.

DOLLAR BILL

Yeah. Yeah, there's *lots* of things.

WENDY

And are those things valuable, to Axe?

DOLLAR BILL

Damn straight!

WENDY

Then I don't think you have any reason  
to worry, do you?

Dollar Bill hops up from his seat, looking happier.

DOLLAR BILL

You're right! I gotta get back out  
there.

Wendy smiles as she watches him leave, then ponders something.  
Going to her desk, she picks up her phone.

INT. U.S. ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES' OFFICE -- DAY

Chuck gets up and reaches for his coat a moment before  
Connerty and Sacker enter the room.

CHUCK

Find anything yet?

SACKER

I tracked down the journalist -

CHUCK

I think 'muck raker' is a better  
descriptor, but go on.

SACKER

He's a real hack. Started out strong,  
but when I confronted him with that  
photo being years out of date, it took  
him aback.

CONNERTY

(to Chuck)

It gets better.

SACKER

He let slip that he believed it came  
from a private investigator... hired  
by one of the wounded parties.

CONNERTY

Which would be you or Lara Axelrod.

CHUCK

Yes. Yes, I can do the math on that  
without your assistance, Bryan.

SACKER

So far, that's all we have.

CHUCK

How about Sandicot - any sign Axe is feeling the heat there?

CONNERTY

Heat, maybe... Under pressure? Not so much. He's delegated selling off the town's assets to various specialized auction houses and repo firms. So far, they're the ones taking all the flak for it.

CHUCK

Hmm. Well, we'll just keep pushing at it. This is new territory for Axe, he'll make a mistake eventually.

SACKER

We're also going forward with the surveillance you requested.

CHUCK

Good, good.

CONNERTY

My gut still tells me something hinky went on with those casino rights, too.

Well aware that his own father was responsible, Chuck looks away and busies himself with putting on his coat.

CHUCK

Yes, well, maybe, but Axe clearly didn't benefit, so...

He shrugs.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Looks to me like a dead end.

Connerty frowns but lets it go.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Anyway... I have to go out.

As Chuck heads for the door.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Oh, and don't dig into that article any further.

CONNERTY

You don't want to find out if Axe planted it?

CHUCK

Yes... but I won't be accused of using department resources for personal business, and my father's keen to put the family pitbull onto it anyhow. I'll let you know what he finds out.

Chuck hurries from the room. After he's gone:

CONNERTY

This starting to feel familiar to you?

SACKER

Like we don't know everything Chuck does? Yep.

INT. COFFEE SHOP -- DAY

Wendy and Chuck sit down with overpriced coffees.

CHUCK

Apoplectic is the word I'd use.

WENDY

Not a surprise. And when he found out there wasn't any truth to it?

CHUCK

Well, of course, then it all became about how much we could *sue* them for.

WENDY

(worried he might)  
You're not *going* to?

CHUCK

And make it a bigger story? God, no. Demand an apology and public retraction, yes.

WENDY

Good. I mean, I didn't like the idea of just letting it go, but -

CHUCK

Agreed. But you know my father, not exactly low key. If I'd told him we were meeting today, he'd probably have demanded we turn it into a photoshoot.

WENDY

Perhaps the press could sit in on our counseling sessions, too?

CHUCK

Don't be ridiculous. No, no, they'd have to wait outside the room.

Wendy and Chuck both smirk at the joke.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

This feels a little like old times. I'm glad you called.

WENDY

I'm actually surprised you didn't call me first.

CHUCK

Traditionally, I believe it is the cuckold who makes the first move. To apologize, and all that.

WENDY

I thought I'd already apologized enough for that evening.

CHUCK

Do not remind me of it.

EXT. SPA HOTEL, APHRODITE VILLA -- NIGHT -- *FOUR YEARS EARLIER*

Chuck, Wendy, Axe and Lara sit eating out on the villa's TERRACE next to its own PRIVATE POOL.

LARA

The sand... the fish... the whole trip was incredible.

WENDY

Sounds like it.

LARA

And the boys adored it.

CHUCK

I'm sure they did.

LARA

We're going to the Maldives in early December - your son should join us.

CHUCK

Oh, no.

AXE

Why not?

CHUCK

We don't want him missing school.

LARA

Neither do we. That's why we'll have a private tutor on the boat.

CHUCK

I... don't think it would be appropriate.

AXE

That's a shame. You're depriving him of a great experience. Even if you wanted to pay your own way, I know you guys can afford it.

LARA

Bobby -

CHUCK

As a matter of fact, I don't have access to my trust while I'm in my current job.

AXE

I was actually thinking of Wendy's salary.

As Chuck's eyes flare --

WENDY

How about cooling off in the pool?

LARA

Sounds great.

Lara stands up, Axe following suit.

CHUCK

No, I, uh... I think I'll go back to the room.

Chuck heads for the door, but Wendy follows him.

WENDY

What are you doing?

CHUCK

Look, I know he's your boss, but -

WENDY

They're making an effort. Can't you?  
Just this once?

Chuck grimaces, then thinks of something.

CHUCK

I didn't bring my swimsuit.

WENDY

That's okay. We're all going in naked  
anyway.

Chuck gapes at Wendy's bland expression... until she SNORTS  
out a laugh.

WENDY (CONT'D)

*Kidding.*

She nods toward the bag sitting by the door.

WENDY

I brought one for both of us.

CHUCK

Oh joy.

INT. LARA'S CAR -- DAY -- *BACK TO PRESENT*

Lara looks tense as she drives along the open road.

She glances at the time before pulling off onto a turning  
signed "Marina."

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD -- DAY

Axe's LAMBORGHINI flies along the road.

INT. AXE'S LAMBORGHINI -- DAY

Axe looks deeply frustrated as he drives, taking it out on the  
pavement, **HEAVY METAL MUSIC** pounding through the car.

EXT. MONTEBELLO PRIVATE RACING CLUB -- DAY

The Lamborghini ROARS up the long driveway, fishtails into a  
turn and accelerates again, before finally pulling into a --

INT. LARGE PRIVATE GARAGE -- CONTINUOUS

KYLE RAYMOND (40s) - confident but a little geeky - stands up  
from where he's been leaning against his own HYBRID car.

He watches as the Lamborghini's engine THROBS then dies.

A moment later, Axe climbs out... and it's as if he'd never been upset, a wide smile plastered onto his face.

The two men hug, clapping each other on the back.

KYLE

Axe.

AXE

Hey Kyle, good to see you again.

Kyle steps back and admires Axe's car.

KYLE

Great ride. No need to ask how you're doing.

AXE

Yeah, life's treating me pretty well.

Axe walks over to where HELMETS and RACING SUITS await.

AXE

How about you, how's Deb and the kids? Sorry... one kid... Daniel, right?

They both start to get changed.

KYLE

Dylan. But great memory! Yeah, they're both good.

(grinning)

Hey, I saw that crazy story about you and Wendy.

As Axe just stares back, unsmiling, Kyle's grin fades.

Then Axe LAUGHS.

AXE

I'm just messing with you.

Kyle LAUGHS too, in relief.

KYLE

Oh, man, you had me going there, you know?

AXE

Sorry, couldn't resist. You know, some people actually take that crap seriously?

KYLE

They obviously never knew you guys in school. I told Deb, if it didn't happen back then -

AXE

So anyway, thanks for meeting me up here.

KYLE

Uh, sure. No problem.

AXE

I like to do this every couple of weeks. You know, clear out the cobwebs.

KYLE

Hey, I love this shit. Plus I'm glad you wanted to talk about my idea again.

(hiding nerves)

When you never got back to me, I, uh, I didn't think you had much interest in it.

AXE

Well, I gotta admit, the idea of investment software with my name and face all over it... makes me kinda twitchy.

Suited up, they grab their helmets and head outside.

EXT. RACE TRACK -- CONTINUOUS

Bright sunlight hits them as they keep walking.

AXE

I mean, if your customers lose money, what's to stop them blaming me?

KYLE

You'd only be endorsing the product, giving general advice - they know it's not the same as actually *investing* with you.

AXE

You sure about that?

KYLE

Yeah! Look, the people who buy my software, they're not geniuses, but they know they can't do what you do.

AXE

So why put my name on it at all?

They reach the TWO SPORTSCARS awaiting them: RED and BLUE modified BMWs.

KYLE

Because it's all about aspirations. Because deep down, they all want to *be* you. They want the luxury...

Kyle gestures around them.

KYLE (CONT'D)

They want *this...* the high life.

AXE

Put *your* name on it, then.

KYLE

Oh, no. I'm doing well, don't get me wrong. But I'm no Bobby Axelrod.

Axe grins and climbs into the RED BMW, Kyle the BLUE, with TWO MECHANICS coming forward to help buckle them in.

EXT. WATERFRONT CAFÉ -- DAY

Lara paces, checking the time on her phone, increasingly annoyed.

Somebody's late.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- DAY

Chuck's distracted as he hurries back toward the office -  
- and nearly collides with a MAN ahead of him.

CHUCK

Sorry.

Chuck goes to move past, but the Man touches his arm, and Chuck looks up to see it's BLACK JACK FOLEY'S BUTLER.

BUTLER

If you have a moment, sir?

Chuck hesitates, then reluctantly follows him.

INT. LIMOUSINE -- DAY

Chuck climbs in, taking a seat next to BLACK JACK FOLEY as the door behind him shuts.

BLACK JACK FOLEY  
Apologies for the unannounced visit.

The limo starts to move.

BLACK JACK FOLEY (CONT'D)  
I felt it was... necessary. Given recent developments.

Foley holds a copy of the TABLOID on his lap.

CHUCK  
Didn't my father tell you? It's fake.

FOLEY  
Ah, if only that were the truth. But you yourself admit the photograph, at least, is very real.

CHUCK  
Well, yes, but there's no scandal here.

FOLEY  
I beg to differ. The public has a strange way of viewing things, I'm afraid. From now on, many will see you as a bitter, revenge-seeking husband, not as a justice-seeking white knight.

CHUCK  
Even though the paper's printing a retraction?

FOLEY  
And what will that say?

CHUCK  
For one thing, that Lara Axelrod's in the original photo, right next to my wife!

FOLEY  
Because your wife cheating on you with two Axelrods is so much better.

CHUCK

*Fine.* Then it'll say I was there too  
- that I took the goddamn photo.

FOLEY

Thus destroying the illusion that you  
and Bobby Axelrod are poles apart.

CHUCK

I am *nothing* like that man.

FOLEY

Of course not. You merely run in the  
same circles... vacation in the same  
places...

Foley smiles, the smile of a Great White Shark.

FOLEY (CONT'D)

Share the same hot tubs.

CHUCK

Look, where is all this coming from?

FOLEY

You've made a name for yourself by  
being tough on a certain type of  
criminal. But pretty soon...

Foley stabs at the paper on his lap.

FOLEY (CONT'D)

...particularly if more stories like  
this one come along, the voters are  
going to notice you're not so  
different from the Bobby Axelrods of  
this world after all.

This time Chuck holds his tongue. Finally, he grinds out:

CHUCK

What do you suggest I do?

FOLEY

Keep a close eye on Sandicot, as  
you're doing. But give up this  
obsession you have with Axelrod.

CHUCK

(sarcastically)

Perhaps I should give up prosecuting  
*all* white collar crime?

FOLEY

Don't be foolish. I merely suggest  
that you *personally* find another  
target on whom to focus.

Foley leans forward and RAPS on the divider.

FOLEY (CONT'D)

Corrupt union bosses always seem  
popular in this part of the world.  
Don't you think?

The limo slows to a halt.

CHUCK

I'll give it some thought.

Foley smiles as Chuck climbs out.

EXT. MONTEBELLO RACE TRACK, STRAIGHT -- DAY

The two BMWs ROAR along the track, seeming evenly matched.

The Red car stays ahead of the Blue as they fly along the  
straight.

INT. RED BMW -- CONTINUOUS

Axe's eyes glitter with excitement through his helmet as he  
changes gear and turns the wheel.

EXT. MONTEBELLO RACE TRACK, CORNER -- CONTINUOUS

As the cars come out of the corner, the Red car drops back.

The Blue car takes the lead as they head into the final  
straight.

INT. BLUE BMW -- CONTINUOUS

Kyle's eyes flicker to his mirrors, seeking proof that Axe's  
car is really behind his own.

EXT. MONTEBELLO RACE TRACK, FINAL STRAIGHT -- CONTINUOUS

With a burst of speed, the Red car eases forward into the  
Blue's slipstream, using the aerodynamic effect to shoot  
forward.

Red overtakes Blue easily and is the first over the finish  
line, welcomed home by a vigorously waved checkered flag.

INT. LARGE PRIVATE GARAGE -- DAY

Jubilant, Axe and Kyle enter, Axe plucking a waiting BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE from an ice bucket.

Kyle backs up, laughing.

KYLE

You're not gonna spray that all over me, are you?

Axe POPS the cork.

AXE

Nope. I never waste the good stuff.

He drinks from the bottle, then hands it to Kyle, who takes a slug too.

AXE (CONT'D)

You know what, maybe this partnership between us could work.

KYLE

You mean that?

Axe takes another slug of champagne.

AXE

Sure. Why not.

He hands the bottle back to Kyle.

AXE (CONT'D)

We could be the next... Wilding and Horner.

Kyle SPLUTTERS and almost chokes on the drink.

KYLE

God, I hope not. Those guys can barely *stand* each other!

AXE

Really?

KYLE

Yeah! I mean, I know everyone thinks Wildner's like some fucking miracle drug -

AXE

I believe the Wall Street Journal called them a "perfect marriage of techspert wizardry and business smarts."

Kyle SNORTS.

KYLE

Maybe at the beginning. But from what I've heard, Wilding turned into a total fucking perfectionist and Horner can't get him to push stuff out fast enough.

Kyle takes another swig of champagne.

KYLE (CONT'D)

You know something's gonna blow before too long.

AXE

Huh.

Kyle lowers the bottle, seeming to suddenly realize who he's talking to.

KYLE

But, I mean, I could be totally wrong.

AXE

Oh, sure.

KYLE

You know how rumors go. I can't even remember who told me... and you know they make everyone who works there sign killer NDAs.

AXE

Oh yeah, I know that.

Axe smiles, then claps Kyle on the back and unzips his racing suit as he heads over to their clothes.

Kyle puts down the champagne and awkwardly follows.

KYLE

So I'll send you a mock-up of the product to look over?

AXE

Sure. I'll be in touch.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- DAY

Taylor looks over what Mafee's found.

MAFEE

Wilding sold ten percent of his stock,  
right after the last quarterly  
earnings report two months ago.

TAYLOR

Why are you looking at *his* trades? He  
isn't stupid enough to be caught.

MAFEE

Okay... only other thing I got is  
this.

Mafee indicates his screen.

MAFEE (CONT'D)

Hudson Inc., small brokerage firm,  
shorted Wildner stocks around the same  
time. They had to cover the short  
after a few weeks; took a big loss.

TAYLOR

And?

MAFEE

That's it. So far.

TAYLOR

We need to find out who made that  
trade.

MAFEE

Not like Hudson's gonna tell us.

TAYLOR

(thoughtfully)  
No, but someone will.

INT. AXE'S ASSISTANT DEB KAWI'S OFFICE -- DAY

Taylor, followed by Mafee, walks in and addresses DEB KAWI.

TAYLOR

We need to see all the resumés Axe  
Capital received in the last two  
months.

Deb looks uncertainly at Mafee, but Wags overhears and steps  
into the room.

WAGS

Do it.

Deb shrugs and starts typing at her keyboard. His work done, Wags walks away again.

INT. AXE'S LAMBORGHINI -- DAY

Axe looks twitchy as he drives back from the race track.

AXE

Call Lara.

OVER A SPEAKER, Lara's phone RINGS, then goes to VOICEMAIL:

LARA (O.S.)

(over the speaker)

You've reached Lara. Leave a -

AXE

Redial.

More RINGS, then:

LARA (O.S.)

You've reached -

Axe jabs his finger at the dash, ending the call.

AXE

*Shit.*

He drives in silence for a moment, then:

AXE (CONT'D)

Call the house.

More RINGS, then:

RYAN (O.S.)

(over the speaker)

Mr. Axelrod?

AXE

Is my wife at home?

RYAN (O.S.)

No, sir. I think she's having lunch out today.

AXE

You know where?

RYAN (O.S.)

I'm sorry, no.

EXT. WATERFRONT RESTAURANT -- DAY

Lara looks up as a shadow falls over her.

A GOOD LOOKING MAN (late 30s) stands on the other side of the table, his face serious.

Lara straightens up in her chair, looking him in the eye.

LARA

Thanks for meeting me here.

INT. ORGANIC FOOD RESTAURANT, MANHATTAN -- DAY

KELLIE PARVANI (20s) - nervous but eager - sits across from Taylor at a window table.

They hand their menus to a WAITER, who then walks away.

KELLIE

So... is this, like, a pre-interview?

TAYLOR

In a sense.

KELLIE

It's just... I sent in my resumé because Axe Cap would be the job of my dreams. I don't care how entry level my position is.

TAYLOR

Good. That'll help.

Kellie frowns uncertainly at this.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

There was some... reluctance, to meet with you, after what happened at Hudson. The Wildner short.

KELLIE

Uh...

TAYLOR

It's common knowledge it was your trade, but I felt you had the right to defend yourself.

KELLIE

My trade? Try my boss's. They didn't even discipline the jerk because he's the chairman's godson.

TAYLOR

Good. In that case, let's get on with the questions.

Taylor leans forward, completely focused.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

How would you assess whether a company has correctly amortized its intangible assets?

Kellie looks taken aback by Taylor's intensity.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- CONTINUOUS

FROM ACROSS THE STREET, someone SURVEILS Taylor's meeting, taking HIGH-ZOOM PHOTOS through the restaurant window.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Wags leans against the wall, listening, as Taylor fills Axe in on what's been discovered to date.

TAYLOR

The broker's name is Harry Devine. He and Jeff Wilding were at Berkeley together.

WAGS

Rumor has it they're old friends.

AXE

Bet they're not any more.

TAYLOR

It seems plausible Wilding told him he'd be leaving Wildner Tech, then changed his mind.

WAGS

Huh. The idiot's lucky. It was clumsy at best.

TAYLOR

There are any number of ways Devine could have justified the trade, had it proved profitable. A careful analysis of the short term sector forecasts in Asia versus the US, for example.

AXE

Yeah, well, we won't be needing that.

Taylor frowns.

TAYLOR

You want us to drop it?

AXE

My source confirms Wilding and Horner are ready to blow.

TAYLOR

Then -

WAGS

As with so many things in life,  
Taylor, *timing* is everything.

AXE

Jump too soon, we're on the hook.

TAYLOR

So we need to know for sure when  
Wilding will walk out.

AXE

Or it might never happen at all.  
Sure, these guys are fighting as their  
company grows and evolves, but some  
partnerships make it through all that.

WAGS

(happily)

Like us!

AXE

Or like a good marriage. And you know  
what keeps a marriage together?

WAGS

On-demand blow jobs?

AXE

*Trust.* In my experience, provided  
partners still trust each other, they  
can make it through a lot.

Taylor considers this.

TAYLOR

But we don't know if they trust each  
other any more.

AXE

No, we do not.  
 (thoughtfully)  
 And perhaps they don't either.

WAGS

You know, when I'm having marital problems, I sometimes - ahem - *interview* potential candidates for the next Mrs. Wagner.

(to Axe)

You know I don't do well on my own.

(to Taylor)

All I'm saying is, I wouldn't be shocked if either Wilding or Horner were doing the same thing.

AXE

Trawling titty bars in Soho?

WAGS

It's an *an-a-lo-gy*. Please.

TAYLOR

You think Wilding might be looking for another tech company to join.

WAGS

Or funding to start one up.

AXE

And if I were Horner, I'd be after the smartest person I could find to fill the void when Wilding leaves.

WAGS

Surely either partner would be upset by proof of the other's iniquities?

Axe taps his fingers thoughtfully on his desk.

AXE

Let me think about it some more.

Wags grins at Taylor and gestures for them to leave.

As they do, Axe's PHONE BUZZES. He glances at it - then grabs it and answers in a hurry.

AXE (CONT'D)

Lara!

EXT. MARINA -- DAY

Lara stands looking out at the boats.

LARA

Sorry I missed your calls. I didn't hear my phone.

INTERCUT AXE/LARA:

AXE

Look... I'm sorry I didn't call right away when I found out.

LARA

It's okay. You're right, it's nothing I should be worried about.

AXE

Yeah, but I still should've called.

A pause on both ends.

LARA

Well, I was just headed home.

AXE

I'll see you tonight. I'll be there in time for dinner.

LARA

That'd be nice.

INT. US ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES' OFFICE - DAY

Connerty, Sacker and Watley stand while Chuck sits at his desk, going through a FILE. Finally, he looks up.

CHUCK

This is it? One lunch meeting with a low-level analyst looking for a job?

CONNERTY

Taylor Mason is a workaholic. She's either at home - sleeping - or at the office.

SACKER

*They're* either at home or at the office.

CONNERTY

Yeah. Right.

CHUCK

You think the time is right to bring -  
uh - *them* in?

WATLEY

I say we stick with the surveillance a  
little longer. Get some dirt we can  
use on them.

Chuck GROANS.

CHUCK

I feel as if we're putting all our  
eggs in one basket here, people.

SACKER

I agree. Past experience tells us  
Axe's people are *remarkably* loyal.  
Unless we catch Taylor Mason  
committing treason, I'm not sure  
they're gonna roll on him.

CONNERTY

Taylor Mason voted for the *Green Party*  
in twenty sixteen. I'm betting Taylor  
has a conscience.

WATLEY

And I'm saying it'll help to have  
something to nudge it with.

Chuck stands up, getting their attention.

CHUCK

Okay! For the time being, we stick  
with the surveillance. But let's  
revisit this in a few days.

Connerty, Sacker and Watley leave Chuck's office, heading out  
into the --

CORRIDOR

Connerty checks his PHONE, and --

CONNERTY

Crap.

SACKER

What?

CONNERTY

Looks like Taylor's going out tonight.

Watley raises his hands.

WATLEY

Sorry, in-laws are coming for dinner.  
I gotta get home.

As Watley hurries away, Connerty turns to Sacker.

CONNERTY

Looks like it's just you and me.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN -- NIGHT

Connerty and Sacker watch as Taylor accompanies Axe into a fancy restaurant in Manhattan.

SACKER

You think *they're* having an affair?

CONNERTY

Doubtful. It's probably just a business dinner.

SACKER

But is it just the two of them -

CONNERTY

Or are they meeting someone else?

Connerty checks the time.

CONNERTY (CONT'D)

Let's give it ten minutes, then we'll send someone inside.

Sacker shakes her head.

SACKER

Not without a warrant, we won't.

CONNERTY

(incredulous)  
It's a *restaurant*.

SACKER

No, it's more of a... private club for the very rich.

CONNERTY

How do you...? Oh.

Sacker shrugs.

Connerty blows out a breath.

CONNERTY (CONT'D)

So what's the food like in there?

SACKER

You don't wanna know.

CONNERTY

That good, huh?

SACKER

Oh yeah.

Trying to resign himself to the situation:

CONNERTY

Well, at least we'll have shots of everyone who goes in and out.

Sacker stiffens.

SACKER

Unless they use the other entrance.

CONNERTY

*Other* entrance?

Sacker gets up and moves back in the van.

SACKER

I'll get someone on it.

Connerty watches her go.

INT. FANCY, LOW-LIT, DISCREET RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Axe and Taylor sit in a PRIVATE BOOTH sheltered from prying eyes by a thin curtain.

Taylor looks down at the MENU by candlelight.

INSERT: The menu has no prices. At all.

AXE

Taylor, has anyone ever told you you're irreplaceable?

Taylor can't help puffing up a little.

TAYLOR

Uh... no.

AXE

Good. Because you're not.

As Taylor tries to hide disappointment, Axe smiles.

AXE (CONT'D)

Not yet, anyway. Very few people are, despite what they might think.

TAYLOR

(slowly)

You're talking about Jeff Wilding.

AXE

Actually, I'm talking about what Rube Horner had better be doing, if he even has an *inkling* Wilding's about to quit.

TAYLOR

Interviewing replacement CTOs.

AXE

Now - if you're Jeff Wilding, and you find that out...

TAYLOR

It might trigger you to leave.

AXE

With an ego like his? Yeah, I'm pretty sure it would.

TAYLOR

So we just need proof. But what if Horner's being secretive? He could be talking to them over Skype.

AXE

Trust me: you have a multi-billion dollar company and your current business partner's a crazy guy? You'll want to meet in person. Get a real feel for whoever you'll be spending that much time with.

TAYLOR

What if he's planning to hire someone who already works for him?

AXE

He could be. But I'm guessing Horner's too smart to only consider internal candidates.

Axe takes a leisurely sip of his water.

AXE (CONT'D)

Tell me: if you're looking to impress someone, but you can't bring them to your ritzy ditzy office space, where do you take them?

Taylor becomes aware of their surroundings. Glancing around, it's impossible to see any other diners, due to the low lighting and carefully angled, curtained-off private booths.

TAYLOR

I assume to a place like this.

Taylor pauses, staring at Axe.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

Is Horner here right now?

Axe smiles and nods through a GAP in the curtain toward another BOOTH, diagonally across from them.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)

How do you even know that?

AXE

I had someone following him. Don't know who his companion is, though. They arrived separately. For all I know, it could be his mistress.

Axe's PHONE BUZZES on the table. Looking suddenly serious, he checks it, then gets to his feet.

AXE (CONT'D)

Order the guinea fowl, it's not to be missed.

TAYLOR

You're leaving?

Axe pulls on his jacket.

AXE

Charge it to my account.

TAYLOR

But what am I supposed to do?

Axe shrugs.

AXE

Use your initiative.

INT. US ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES' OFFICE -- NIGHT

Chuck's preparing to go home when Watley walks in.

WATLEY

Thought you'd like to know: Axelrod's lawyers were all over the tabloid today. Got that reporter fired, not just disciplined.

CHUCK

Really? Well, that's interesting.

WATLEY

You think he was blindsided by this too?

CHUCK

It's looking that way, isn't it.

WATLEY

Unless he's playing some kind of long game.

CHUCK

It's Bobby Axelrod. He's *always* playing a long game. And a short game. Basically, every game he can get his sticky little hands on.

Watley smirks.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Speaking of long games... I thought I said we should let this drop?

WATLEY

Figured it couldn't hurt if they kept us in the loop.

CHUCK

*Ex gratia?*

WATLEY

Of course.

Chuck smiles approvingly.

CHUCK

Nice job.

(after a beat)

By the way, where are Connerty and Sacker?

WATLEY  
 (playing dumb)  
 I think they went home.

CHUCK  
 Oh.

Watley turns and leaves the office, looking amused.

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Axe exits and walks to where his car awaits.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN -- CONTINUOUS

Connerty and Sacker watch it on video.

SACKER  
 Looks like dinner was a bust.

CONNERTY  
 Where's Taylor, then?

SACKER  
 I'll check with the guys on the other  
 entrance.

As Sacker disappears, Connerty's STOMACH GROWLS in hunger, and he rubs it with a wince.

INT. FANCY, LOW-LIT, DISCREET RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

Taylor sits alone at the table, nervous, keeping an eye on the BOOTH across the aisle.

WAITRESS (O.S.)  
 Your deconstructed eggplant parmesan.

Taylor jumps as a WAITRESS puts a plate down on the table.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)  
 May I bring you anything else?

TAYLOR  
 No, thank you.

As the Waitress leaves, Taylor spots movement through the curtain in the other booth.

RUBE HORNER (40s) - heavy jowled but muscled - stands in the aisle helping an ATTRACTIVE WOMAN (late 20s) to climb out too.

Nervous as hell, Taylor starts taking a VIDEO with their PHONE and waits until the Couple have passed -

- then holds just the phone out through the curtain, keeping it low. Taylor cranes their neck, making sure the Couple are in the frame, and zooms in awkwardly on them.

After a few moments of talking, the Woman disappears through into the main restaurant, leaving Rube standing alone.

Taylor quickly pulls the phone back, nervous as hell as they sense Rube coming toward them -

- but he strides past, heading for a back exit.

Taylor can breathe again.

Cradling the phone in their lap, Taylor replays the video.

INSERT: on the screen, Rube and the Woman each say something. Then she LAUGHS and leans in to kiss him on his cheek.

TAYLOR

*Dammit.*

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN -- NIGHT

Connerty and Sacker look tired as they watch DUAL VIDEO showing both the restaurant's front and back doors.

The Woman leaves by the front, heading for the valet stand.

CONNERTY

What do you think? Bad date?

SACKER

She looks pretty happy.

CONNERTY

Maybe she got to kick him in the balls.

SACKER

They frown on that kind of thing here.

CONNERTY

Huh. Sounds like a boring place.

Sacker grins, then frowns at the sight of Rube Horner exiting through the back door and climbing into his car.

SACKER

Does he look familiar to you?

CONNERTY

No.

SACKER

Hmm.

Sacker's still trying to place him when -

Taylor appears on the first screen, also leaving through the front door.

CONNERTY

Well, Taylor's leaving.

SACKER

Does that mean we can go home?

CONNERTY

Only when the subject does. And Taylor likes to use the subway.

SACKER

(as if to Taylor)

Please take a car.

They both hold their breath until... *yes*, a black towncar pulls up and Taylor climbs into it.

CONNERTY

Thank you, rich and selfish.

SACKER

They could still be going out somewhere -

CONNERTY

Don't even think that.

EXT. AXELROD HOME -- NIGHT

Axe answers his PHONE as he walks toward his front door.

AXE

Success?

INT. TOWNCAR -- CONTINUOUS

Taylor's on the phone in the back of the towncar.

TAYLOR

I got video, but it was his mistress.

INTERCUT AXE/TAYLOR:

AXE

You sure?

Taylor's about to answer 'yes' but then pauses.

TAYLOR

Well... no. But she was young,  
attractive, and kind of dressed like a  
hooker, so -

AXE

Huh. Never thought you'd be one to  
jump to conclusions.

TAYLOR

Why? Because I'm -

AXE

Smarter than that? Yeah.

Taylor looks chastened.

AXE (CONT'D)

Send me the video. We'll see what we  
have.

INT. AXELROD HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

Lara, Dean and Gordie sit at the dining table, about to start  
eating, when Axe walks in.

Lara looks pleased.

LARA

You made it.

AXE

(mildly)  
I said I would.

LARA

Gordie, set another place for your  
father.

Axe comes over and ruffles Gordie's hair affectionately before  
sitting down between Lara and Dean.

AXE

So, what did you guys do today?

DEAN

Gordie lost a tooth.

AXE

(to Gordie)  
You did?

GORDIE

Yeah - see?

Gordie finishes laying the table and Axe inspects his mouth.

AXE

And which tooth is that?

GORDIE

Lateral incisor.

AXE

Good boy.

DEAN

I aced my math test.

LARA

Ninety-five percent.

AXE

That's great. We'll work on those other five percent, okay?

DEAN

(happily; accepting)

Okay.

Axe looks across at Lara.

LARA

I had lunch with Mo. After, uh, after we spoke this morning.

AXE

Lara -

Lara quickly shakes her head. Not while the boys are there.

LARA

We figured out some new ideas for the business. Taking on board the points you made.

AXE

That's great. Let me know how I can help, okay?

Lara sips her wine and smiles at him.

LARA

Okay.

They hold each other's gaze.

EXT. SPA HOTEL, APHRODITE VILLA -- NIGHT -- *FOUR YEARS EARLIER*

Chuck looks uncomfortable as hell as he sits next to Wendy in the Jacuzzi part of the pool, while Axe and Lara sit opposite, each holding a glass of champagne.

Lara raises her glass toward Chuck.

LARA

To Chuck's impressive new title.

WENDY

To Chuck.

Axe raises his glass with a smile, but doesn't speak.

Lara reaches around for her PHONE.

LARA

Oh, we should get a photo.

CHUCK

Oh, no -

LARA

Yes, of the four of us.

Lara looks around and starts to get up, moving past Wendy.

LARA (CONT'D)

I'll find someone to take it -

Chuck takes the phone from her.

CHUCK

No, no - I'll take it.

He moves around so he's across from the others, Lara now sitting on the other side of Wendy to Axe.

WENDY

Chuck...

AXE

Don't force the man to be in it if he doesn't want to be. Some of us are just a little camera shy... isn't that right, Chuck?

Axe smirks at him.

AXE (CONT'D)

Unless it's a press conference for sending some poor schmuck upstate, of course.

WENDY

*Bobby.*

Axe turns to face Wendy, still grinning, and she can't resist smiling back, *just* for a second --

**And that's when Chuck takes the PHOTO.**

On the far side of Wendy, Lara's caught in the frame watching the two of them, something not quite happy in her eyes.

But after a moment, it's gone again.

LARA

I'll get more champagne.

WENDY

I'll help.

Lara takes back her phone as she leaves the pool, Wendy following her back onto the terrace.

Chuck goes to get out too, but Axe blocks his path.

AXE

By the way... I know all about the freaky little power dynamic you have going on with Wendy at home.

CHUCK

I'm sorry?

AXE

You know, real men don't get off on that kind of thing. But I guess I can see why you would.

Chuck shoots Wendy a look of fearful disbelief.

CHUCK

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

AXE

I mean, you take a brilliant, powerful woman like Wendy... married to a silver spoon rich dick like you...

Chuck is rigid, white-knuckling the sides of the pool.

FROM THE TERRACE:

Wendy glances up and notices Chuck's body language.

BACK IN THE JACUZZI:

Axe has closed further in on Chuck.

AXE (CONT'D)

Of course you're going to want to play  
Lord of the fucking Manor... turn her  
into the little housewife... hmm?

Chuck's eyes flicker wildly as he realizes Axe has things  
*TOTALLY BACKWARDS*.

Wendy interrupts, holding a towel out to Chuck.

WENDY

Chuck, do you mind if we call it a  
night? I am just so tired.

Chuck gratefully gets out and wraps the towel around himself.

AXE

That's a shame. Guess Chuck and I  
will have to chat some other time.

His back to the pool, Chuck seethes as he walks away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Wendy climbs into bed next to a still off-kilter Chuck.

WENDY

Nice job avoiding being in the photo,  
by the way.

CHUCK

I've no desire to become the  
prosecutorial version of Donald  
Rumsfeld, thank you very much.

WENDY

What's that supposed to mean?

CHUCK

You realize Bobby Axelrod is exactly  
the kind of person I'm expected to  
prosecute in this job?

WENDY

So what, we're going to pretend I  
don't work there now?

CHUCK

No... although sometimes, I wish we could...

As Wendy glares at him, Chuck holds up his hands.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

I'm just suggesting we keep things more... separate, from now on.

Wendy hesitates, then SIGHS as she gets into bed.

WENDY

Maybe that's for the best. It's not as if you guys get on, and Lara...

CHUCK

What?

WENDY

It's like she's jealous of how long I've known Bobby. Of the bond we have.

CHUCK

Speaking of that *bond*... he had a few words for me this evening. About *our* home life.

Wendy looks puzzled.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Something about me acting like the 'Lord of the Manor'?

WENDY

God. I can't *believe* Bobby...  
(guiltily)

Chuck, I *swear*, I don't make a habit of talking about you to my coworkers.

CHUCK

Out of interest, what exactly did you tell him?

Wendy HUFFS and resigns herself.

WENDY

You remember a few weeks ago, you got in late and threw a fit over the plates still being in the sink?

Chuck looks ashamed.

CHUCK

Ah. Yes. Not my finest hour.

WENDY

Well, I was pissed, and the next morning I ran into Bobby and... I guess I...

CHUCK

You vented.

WENDY

I did.

(debating)

Maybe about a few things. And it was completely wrong of me -

CHUCK

No, no, you were entitled to it.

(after a beat)

Truth is, for a moment there, I thought maybe you'd trusted him with...

Chuck's gaze falls on the locked silver suitcase.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Other things.

Wendy follows his gaze, and looks stunned.

WENDY

You don't think I'd -

CHUCK

Just for half a second. I swear.

Mollified, Wendy lies down in the bed next to him.

WENDY

Good. Because you know me better than that.

Chuck takes Wendy's hand and kisses her fingertips.

CHUCK

I do, my lady.

Wendy can't resist smiling at him.

EXT. SPA HOTEL, APHRODITE VILLA -- NIGHT

Axe and Lara lounge in the Jacuzzi, looking up at the night sky.

LARA

Did Wendy seem off to you tonight?

AXE

No. Why?

LARA

Maybe it was just seeing her with  
Chuck. The odd couple, you know?  
Like, they never really seem to fit.

Lara leans back against Axe's chest.

LARA (CONT'D)

Not like us.

Axe strokes Lara's hair and kisses her head.

INT. AXELROD HOME, MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY -- *BACK TO PRESENT*

Lara wakes up, but Axe isn't in the bed.

LARA

Axe?

INT. AXELROD HOME, KITCHEN -- DAY

Lara comes downstairs but there's no sign of Axe.

CHEF RYAN stands at the counter making breakfast.

RYAN

Mr. Axelrod had an early meeting. He  
said you seemed tired, so he didn't  
want to wake you.

LARA

Thanks.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- DAY

Taylor enters to find Wags and Axe waiting with big grins.

TAYLOR

I'm guessing it *wasn't* Horner's  
mistress.

WAGS

Not unless he's sleeping with Silicon  
Valley's latest superstar.

Wags walks over and hands a TABLET to Taylor, who looks down  
to see the VIDEO from the previous night ready to play.

AXE

Paula Goodwin may not be instantly recognizable to us, but I'm sure Wilding will get the picture.

WAGS

(to Taylor)

Well go on, play it.

INSERT: on the tablet, the VIDEO PLAYS - but now it's even more zoomed in on the couple and we can hear them SPEAKING.

Taylor frowns.

TAYLOR

I was too far away to get audio.

AXE

My guy enhanced it a little.

WAGS

Oh, oh - listen - this is my favorite part.

RUBE HORNER (O.S.)

(slightly muffled)

You'll consider the job?

PAULA GOODWIN (O.S.)

(slightly muffled)

I'll give it serious thought.

WAGS

They really should've Skype'd.

Wags shakes his head in mock sadness then swivels to face Axe.

WAGS (CONT'D)

So are we a go?

AXE

I think it's worth the risk.

Axe glances at Taylor.

AXE (CONT'D)

Particularly given the issues with Wildner's management structure, and the US technology sector in general.

WAGS

Yes yes yes - but *aside* from the ass-coverage, are we doing this?

AXE

Short Wildner. A hundred mill.

INT. WILDNER TECH HEADQUARTERS -- DAY -- MONTAGE

**AS "THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR WALKING" PLAYS:**

- A COURIER carries a PACKAGE to the reception desk.
- An ASSISTANT opens the package and takes out a DIFFERENT TABLET with a NOTE attached.
- IN HIS OFFICE, Jeff Wilding looks up from his desk as the Assistant hands him the note and tablet.
- As Jeff watches the video, fury spreads over his face.
- IN A CONFERENCE ROOM, Rube Horner sits listening to an EXECUTIVE when Jeff bursts in and starts ranting at him.
- The two men argue, then Jeff throws the tablet at Rube's head. He ducks and it SMASHES into pieces on the wall.
- SECURITY GUARDS enter, but before they can touch him Jeff yells "I QUIT!" and storms out of the room.
- OUTSIDE THE BUILDING, Jeff Wilding emerges with the Security Guards at his back.
- As amazed EMPLOYEES look on from inside, Jeff lets loose with MORE VITRIOL then marches to his car.
- The Courier - waiting by his bike - discreetly VIDEOS the whole thing.

INT. AXE CAPITAL -- DAY

ON A TV SCREEN: the VIDEO plays with the subtitle "Wildner stock falls as Co-Founder and CTO Jeff Wilding quits."

Axe, Wags, Mafee, Taylor and Dollar Bill stand watching it.

WAGS

Makes my worst meltdowns look almost tepid.

AXE

They've been quick to announce Goodwin as his replacement, but it'll go down to at least one sixty.

TAYLOR

If we cover the short at that point, we net almost... twenty eight million.

MAFEE

Nice.

AXE

Let's take another look after that,  
see if we want to buy more.

MAFEE

You think Wilding's gonna change his  
mind again, come back?

AXE

No, but in the end he was making the  
company unstable.

WAGS

My second wife could suck dick like a  
vacuum cleaner, but when she came at  
my balls with a pair of garden shears  
I still said Sayonara baby.

MAFEE

But I thought Wilding was a genius?

AXE

Horner gets to keep the IP and a lot  
of very smart people. I think they'll  
be fine in the long run.

TAYLOR

Besides, no one's irreplaceable.

Axe grins.

AXE

I said *very few* people were  
irreplaceable, Taylor. Not no one.

Taylor looks thoughtful as they watch Axe head for his office.

INT. AXE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Axe walks over to his desk and finds a package waiting there.  
He sits down and picks it up to study.

INSERT: it's a mock-up of Kyle's investment software, with  
Axe's face and name all over it.

Axe grimaces and tosses it into the trash.

INT. CHUCK RHOADES SR.'S HOME OFFICE -- DAY

Chuck Rhoades Sr. sits back in his chair, on the phone.

SENIOR

Well, I've taken care of everything,  
as always. Reporter's been fired and  
the paper'll print a retraction  
tomorrow.

INT. US ATTORNEY CHUCK RHOADES' OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Chuck listens skeptically, knowing Axe's lawyers did this.

CHUCK

(silky)

Fired? Not just disciplined?

INTERCUT CHUCK SENIOR/JUNIOR:

Chuck Sr. shifts in his chair as he lies.

SENIOR

I thought it was appropriate. Pulled  
a few strings.

CHUCK

I suppose I should say thank you,  
then.

SENIOR

If you really want to thank me, you  
can get up to Sandicot more often.  
Make sure the public associate you as  
the face of opposition to the *terrible*  
things happening there.

CHUCK

Doesn't it ever occur to you that your  
actions are just as responsible? You  
and Foley, pulling your puppet  
strings?

SENIOR

Now don't be like that -

CHUCK

I suppose you want me to haul Wendy  
and the kids up there, too. Maybe a  
nice family shot of us all chained to  
a railing when they come to haul the  
town's snow plows away?

SENIOR

You and Wendy have made it quite clear  
to me that I'm to stay out of your  
relationship issues.

Chuck's relieved but a little surprised.

CHUCK

Well good. I'm glad you understand that.

SENIOR

Never get between a man and his wife, that's my motto.

CHUCK

Unless you're sleeping with her, isn't that right, Dad?

SENIOR

(ignoring this)

Although you might bring the kids up some time. They're never too young to gain an interest in civic duty.

CHUCK

Yes, well, I'll keep it in mind. Goodnight, Dad.

SENIOR

Goodnight, son.

Chuck's father ends the call, then leans forward and picks up something lying on his desk.

INSERT: a PHOTO of Wendy and CRAIG HEIDECKER, leaving the house the next morning after spending the night together.

He stares at the photo in dislike, then picks it up and locks it into his desk drawer for safekeeping.

INT. US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

On his way out, Chuck passes Connerty eating a take-out dinner whilst going through some FILES.

CHUCK

Oh - did you find anything incriminating on Taylor Mason?

CONNERTY

Not unless you count eating in a douchy restaurant.

CHUCK

What...? Never mind.

CONNERTY

Sure is spending a lot of time with Axelrod, though.

CHUCK

In that case, perhaps we should make our approach sooner rather than later.

CONNERTY

On the other hand, the longer we wait, the more chance Taylor knows something useful, has his trust.

CHUCK

And vice versa, unfortunately.

Chuck nods and walks out.

Connerty opens up another file containing STILLS from the stakeout videos -

- including ones of Rube Horner and Paula Goodwin leaving the restaurant right before Taylor does.

EXT. MIDDLE OF NOWHERE -- NIGHT

A CAR already sits waiting when a SECOND CAR pulls up alongside.

INT. HALL'S CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Axe's shady investigator HALL waits as FOOTSTEPS approach.

The passenger door opens and Axe climbs in.

AXE

Tell me.

HALL

The reporter, Kelvin Deeks, was hauled over the coals by his editor yesterday morning. He immediately went to a PI's office in Queens.

Hall hands Axe a SHEAF OF PHOTOS.

The FIRST PHOTO shows TWO MEN arguing in an open doorway. **The SECOND MAN is the mystery man Lara met at the Waterfront Café.**

Axe frowns at the photo and points to him.

AXE

He looks familiar.

HALL

That's the PI, Adam Killian. I followed him from the meeting...

Hall reaches over and removes the top photo, revealing a SECOND PHOTO showing Lara and Adam at the café together.

Axe clenches his jaw.

AXE

That's how I know him. He and Lara went to school together.

Hall removes that photo too, revealing a THIRD PHOTO showing Lara slipping Adam a STUFFED ENVELOPE of something.

AXE (CONT'D)

She gave him money?

HALL

Presumably in exchange for passing on the photo.

AXE

(after a long pause)

She was testing me. To see how I'd react.

HALL

Or...

AXE

What?

HALL

She was establishing a pattern of behavior. Trying to make you look guilty.

Axe stares off into space, processing that.

HALL (CONT'D)

How do you want to proceed?

Axe looks back at Hall, his face unreadable as we --

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW