

Corporate Policy
by
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FADE IN:

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - PHILADELPHIA - NIGHT

RODNEY HOPKINS in his mid-30s sports a scruffy beard and appears oblivious about his unkempt look. He frets at a window of an intensive care unit.

MARIA HOPKINS, his wife, same age, equally worn and worried, stands next him. They both lean into the window and from their POV they watch KIT, their daughter, who lies in bed, listless. She moves a little, but with great effort. Groany.

A NURSE walks into the room and adjusts the chemical bag which feeds a three-pronged HICKMAN line that terminates in her chest.

The TV plays at the nurses station, and the news headlines attracts Rodney's attention. He walks over to the station.

NURSES' STATION - TV

TV HOST (V.O.)
... ever since The Philadelphia
Inquirer broke the story last week,
there's been pandemonium at the
Capital. Gloria Swenson is there now.
What do you have for us, Gloria?

TV switches to GLORIA - Senate Building in the background.

GLORIA (V.O.)
Peter, earlier today Senator
Almquist drilled the CEOs of both
Nebraska Mutual and N-TEC. At one
point Joseph Collins responded 'I
don't recall' to five consecutive
questions posed by the Senator
which resulted in a shouting match
between the two ...

MARIA

continues watching through the window. Kit opens her eyes. Maria quickly beckons to Rodney. Rodney promptly appears at Maria's side. He 'flicks' a kiss through the window. Kit tries to return the gesture, but can't.

SUPERIMPOSE: "SIX MONTHS EARLIER"

EXT. VON COLLN MEMORIAL FIELD, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

The Art Museum dominates the background. The Von Colln baseball field, although nicely kept, has signs of use such as the pitcher's mound, which is riddled with divots. Some CHILDREN are playing football in deep center field.

A JOGGER crosses the Ben Franklin Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue to the Art Museum where a boy is running up the 72-step entrance, Rocky-style.

The jogger turns into a nearby residential street and passes by a WOMAN who is strolling her infant BABY. This woman walks past a driveway where a mini-van and an older import are parked. The name HOPKINS is stenciled on the mailbox.

INT. HOPKINS LIVING ROOM - DAY

A nicely furnished living room conveys a slightly messy look: children live here. There is an inviting charm to the room. Family photos decorate the wall depicting smiling faces.

A livelier Kit rummages through the video tapes from a TV cabinet, tossing them wherever she feels like it. She wears a cap as if hiding her hair - or lack of it.

Maria picks up loose items in the living room while Rodney and their son, JACOB, 12, gather baseball gear.

RODNEY

Let's go Kit.

Maria instantly dotes on Kit, grabbing a coat laying on the couch and putting it on her - making sure she's warm enough.

MARIA

(to Kit)

If you're going out, you need this.

(to Rodney)

Maybe you shouldn't today ...

RODNEY

It's a beautiful day.

Rodney picks Kit up and she rubs the side of his face.

KIT

You got splinters again.

RODNEY

I know, sweetie. Daddy didn't shave this morning.

Rodney puts Kit down and hands her a baseball. He tosses a glove to Jacob. Rodney gives Maria a peck on the cheek, then takes the two bats and all three storm out the door.

Maria, alone, picks up videos left astray by Kit. She notices a video, studies it for a beat, then plugs it into the TV.

MONTAGE

As Maria watches the video, she sees a happy and vibrant self while she fast forwards to scenes of her life, like birthdays and holidays of years gone by.

JUMP CUTS of several shots of multiple videos show a contrast between Maria's face today and the shots on TV. Today, Maria appears more somber, less playful, maybe even tearful, than what the happier TV-Maria shows.

In the video sequence, we see Rodney surprising Maria with a drafting table in 'her' room, suggesting she was, or is, a designer of some kind. Magazine covers and plaques on the wall indicate she is/was a successful interior designer.

END OF MONTAGE and transition to ...

EXT. VON COLLN MEMORIAL FIELD NEAR THE HOPKINS' HOME - DAY

Rodney scrapes the pitcher's mound with his foot, like a bull just before charging the matador's cape.

Jacob steps up to home plate. Kit, bubbly, watches from the dugout. Jacob digs in.

RODNEY

Batter-up, Jacob. Let's play ball.

Rodney turns to Kit and winks.

KIT

No batter ... No batter.

JACOB

(to Kit; annoyed)
You're supposed to yell, 'No pitcher ... No pitcher'.

Kit looks at Dad who kiddingly puckers his lips as if to say he will be hurt if she says this. Kit shakes her head.

Rodney pumps his arm, over-emphasizing a windup for a fast ball. Instead, he pitches a slow one. Jacob pounds the ball. Kit claps her approval as Jacob jogs past her and encourages the make-believe people in the stands to applaud him.

Rodney quickly runs after the ball, and Jacob runs as fast as he can around the bases. Rodney grabs the ball and beats feet to home plate. Jacob arrives at home plate before Rodney.

RODNEY

You're getting faster, Jacob.

This is all Rodney can say in one breath. He bends over, hands on knees, heaving gulps of air to the ground.

KIT

My turn. My turn.

RODNEY

(to Jacob)

Whuddya think?

JACOB

I guess.

Rodney motions for Kit to get up to the plate. She grabs a smaller bat. Still, she can barely swing it.

Rodney moves in closer. He pitches and Kit swings. She hits the ball past Rodney, and he runs in slow motion after it.

RODNEY

Run, Kit. Run.

Kit runs to the PITCHER'S MOUND. Jacob and Rodney AD-LIB instructions on how to run the bases, but Kit runs from the pitcher's mound to THIRD BASE.

RODNEY

Run Home ... HOME!

Kit stands on third base. Confused as to why Jacob and Dad are ranting for her to run HOME, she runs - more of a waddle - to the outfield.

JACOB

(yelling at Kit)

Not your real home, knucklehead.

RODNEY

(laughs; to Jacob)

Get the bats, Son. It's time to go.

Jacob kicks the dirt, defiantly, as he gathers the equipment.

JACOB

(to himself)

She always ruins everything.

INT. HOPKINS' HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

Maria plops the last dish on the table, sets down her glass of wine and sits down with her family. Her motions are exaggerated, as if she might be upset.

Kit sits next to Rodney. With her cap off, her abnormally short hair points in several directions. Rodney leans over and kisses her.

KIT

I like real kisses. They're better than air kisses.

RODNEY

Me too, sweetie.

LADY, the house dog, sits by Jacob's chair. Rodney folds his hands and everyone else follows suit. They bow their heads.

RODNEY

Bless us, Lord, for this food which we are about to eat ...

As Rodney AD-LIBS grace, Jacob twirls a green bean between his fingers and motions that he's going to pick his nose with it. Kit giggles and covers her eyes with her hand.

Rodney looks sternly at Jacob. Maria glares at Rodney, then at Jacob. Kit continues to giggle.

Rodney finishes the dinner prayer and in unison,

FAMILY

Amen.

Silently, they all prepare their plates, each passing the dishes of food to the other. Rodney prepares Kit's plate.

RODNEY

Can you believe it? Sixty degrees outside, and it's January.

(pause; to Maria)

So, what did Mom do today?

MARIA

I cleaned. And watched the home videos. I got a good laugh.

Rodney nods his approval, and winks at Kit.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Kit takes her last bite and shows Rodney her plate.

KIT
May I be excused?

Rodney nods.

JACOB
Can I watch TV?

MARIA
Homework first.

JACOB
But today's Saturday.

RODNEY
Don't use that tone to your mother.

Maria sighs, gathers some plates, and heads for the kitchen.

JACOB
She's not my mother.

RODNEY
What?

JACOB
And you're not my real father.

Maria comes back with a filled wine glass. She puts it down, then picks up Jacob's silverware and slams them together.

RODNEY
If I'm not your father, then who is?

JACOB
I'm adopted.

RODNEY
Who told you that?

JACOB
Uncle Darin.

RODNEY
Oh, you poor orphaned child.
Homework!

Jacob starts to object.

RODNEY

Now!

Jacob stomps off. Maria goes to the kitchen. Rodney follows.

KITCHEN

While putting the dishes into the dishwasher,

RODNEY

My brother should've been a comic
instead of a lawyer.

MARIA

I told you this would happen. Jacob
feels neglected.

She drops a dish, picks up the pieces of ceramic and comes
back up with tears in her eyes. Rodney hugs her from behind.

RODNEY

We made a conscious decision. We
have a lifetime to give him what he
needs. What's the matter, honey?
Something else is bothering you.

Maria sniffs then leans back and enjoys the embrace.

MARIA

She's only been off chemo for a
couple of weeks, Rod. It's too cold
outside. She shouldn't ...

RODNEY

Doctor Marino said she can play
like other kids now. You should've
seen her, Maria. She hit that ball
ten feet and you would've thought
she smacked a home run.

MARIA

Rodney! The hospital sent us ...

The doorbell interrupts her and after a short pause,

DARIN (O.S.)

Anybody home?

RODNEY

It's my brother. Hold that thought.

Maria quickly wipes her eyes and motions for Rodney to greet
Darin while she composes herself.

DINING ROOM

Rodney enters and sits down at the table and faces the LIVING ROOM. DARIN, late 20's and wearing a business suite, enters.

KIT

Pick me up. Tell me a story.

Kit spreads her arms out and Darin picks her up. Grunts.

DARIN

Oh, you're getting so heavy.

(to Rodney)

I did it. I won the Bingo Case.

Maria walks into the room and kisses Darin.

DARIN

Hi, hon.

(to Rodney)

An electronic bingo board fell on her, and she claimed - get this - that it caused her to have spontaneous orgasms...

MARIA

Darin! My daughter's listening.

Darin kisses Kit. Maria leaves for the kitchen again. Rodney waves Darin on to continue the story.

DARIN

Fortunately, the hospital exam showed a concussion. I was able to sell pain and suffering to the jury and she got twenty thousand.

RODNEY

Why did you take that case, anyway?

DARIN

I was doing my partner a favor. It got very good press, you know.

KIT

Tell ME a story, Uncle Darin.

Maria walks in from the kitchen.

MARIA

Uncle Darin will take you to bed while he tells you a story.

Maria and Rodney kiss Kit. Darin turns to take her to bed.

RODNEY

And stop in Jacob's room, and tell him that he's not adopted, please.

DARIN

Where did he get an idea like that?

RODNEY

Hmm. I wonder.

As Darin carries Kit past Jacob's bedroom,

DARIN

Okay. Now let me see. A story. How's this? Not so long ago, when I was living in this very house ...

INT. KIT'S BEDROOM

Darin and Kit enter and they talk as Darin puts her into her bed and pulls the covers over her.

KIT

Because you were going to college.

DARIN

That's right. Now, just two days after you were born, first day home in this very room, when I picked you up you curled right up in my arms. And I thought I heard a purr ...

KIT

And you said, 'My, my, doesn't she purr just like a little kitten'.

DARIN

Right. And ever since then everyone has called you Kit. Thanks to me.

INT. DINING ROOM - MARIA AND RODNEY AT THE DINNER TABLE

In mid-conversation, Maria gets up, goes to the desk and retrieves a letter. She throws it on the table to Rodney.

MARIA

The hospital is sending our account to a collection agency.

HALLWAY BY KIT'S BEDROOM DOOR

Darin exits Kit's room and, as he walks down the hallway, he sees Jacob's door ajar. Darin peeks in and sees his nephew bedside doing homework.

DARIN

How's my favorite adopted nephew?

JACOB

Uncle Darin, I'm your only nephew.

INT. DINING ROOM - MARIA AND RODNEY

Rodney finishes reading the letter.

RODNEY

The insurance company paid over three hundred thousand already. What more do they want for crying out loud?

MARIA

They want more than fifty dollars a month. What if she relapses? They won't take her back. We have to do something, Rodney.

(pause)

I talked to Audra about going back to work.

RODNEY

I don't think you're ready. Do you?

Darin walks in just as Maria buries her head in her hands. Darin queries Rodney, as if to say, "What's up?"

RODNEY

Money! What else.

DARIN

Come on. Let me help. I owe you guys.

RODNEY

We have free legal service whenever we want it. That's our agreement.

(to Maria)

Kate's better. She's got a clean bill of health from the doctor, and my new rate from the promotion kicks in soon.

(MORE)

RODNEY (CONT'D)

We'll start paying a hundred
dollars next month, I promise.
Okay?

MARIA

(sighs; to Darin)
Did you talk to Jacob?

DARIN

I told him you stole him away from
very depressing circumstances.

MARIA

That's not funny, Darin.

Maria gets up retreats into the kitchen.

DARIN

(to Maria)
I'm sorry. I told him he wasn't
adopted, and that he should never
listen to me.
(to Rodney)
I'm sorry.

RODNEY

She's not upset with you. She's upset
with ... I'm not exactly sure who
she's upset with, but it's not you.

DARIN

I gotta go. I just wanted to share my
success with you guys.

RODNEY

Hey, it'll make great dinner
conversation, I'm sure.

DARIN

Racquetball soon?

Rodney nods. Jacob enters and comes over to Rodney. Darin
pats Jacob on the head, then leaves.

Jacob stands a few feet from Rodney.

RODNEY

Well, Mister Harry Potter, figure
out who your parents are yet?

JACOB

Sorry, Dad. I was just trying to be
funny.

Rodney smiles, then he hugs Jacob.

INT. N-ETC HALLWAY - CENTER CITY PHILADELPHIA - MORNING

PEOPLE strut the halls in a plush, multistory building with an opened atrium. We follow a woman on the third floor and leave her to go inside an office space.

INT. N-TEC THIRD-FLOOR COMPUTER LAB

Cubicles, separated by half-wall partitions, are equipped with PCs and desks. A round table crowds the middle of the room. A steel closet and storage cabinets line a wall.

Rodney, in one of the cubicles, sits at his desk and stares at his family picture. The telephone rings and he picks it up.

RODNEY

I'll be right there.

INT. DISTRICT MANAGER'S OFFICE - SECONDS LATER

PAUL JACOBY, 50's, white shirt and tie with sleeves rolled up, sits at a steel desk in a plainly decorated room. Rodney knocks, walks in and closes the door behind him.

PAUL

Hi, Rod. How's your daughter doing?

RODNEY

Fine. She's doing as ...

PAUL

God bless her. My cousin's kid has leukemia too. Shame. Your daughter's still in remission, isn't she?

RODNEY

Yes. She's ...

PAUL

That's great. Really. No need to lecture you about your attendance record, then. Everyone sympathizes.

RODNEY

Is that why you called me in?

PAUL

No. I need to discuss something else. Appraisals ... they're due.

RODNEY

Oh, my God! It's that time again?

PAUL

Perception is what I'm talking about.

RODNEY

What's that supposed to mean, Paul?

PAUL

Petzinger wants us to be tougher on this year's performance appraisals. Half our first-liners must be rated as average or below average.

RODNEY

We had no mid-year review, Paul, and most in my group were highly rated last year. We can't do that.

PAUL

Do you want to argue with an executive VP? Cause I don't.

Rodney grits his teeth.

NT. N-TEC THIRD-FLOOR COMPUTER LAB - A LITTLE LATER

Rodney enters just as his colleague, TATUM, 30's, dressed in business casual, walks in. BRIAN, 30's, shirt and tie, comes in right behind her waving papers in his hand. Rodney heads for his desk while Tatum hangs up her coat.

BRIAN

I have a couple of hot jobs here.

TATUM

I can tell this is going to be a putrid day. I just got in, Brian. Coffee first, if you don't mind.

RODNEY

Got out of the wrong side of the bed today, did we? Can't we be a bit more positive?

TATUM

Okay. I'm positive today is going to be a putrid day.

Tatum LEAVES. Brian tosses the jobs on the round table.

BRIAN

Got to prioritize these jobs,
Rodney.

RODNEY

Work it out with Tatum.

Brian waits a beat, then walks over to a cabinet and removes a roll of masking tape and ducks into Tatum's cubicle.

Ripping SOUNDS entice Rodney to get up and investigate. He walks into Tatum's cubicle and sees Brian wrapping Tatum's phone with masking tape.

RODNEY

She's not in a good mood for this.

Brian puts the phone in Tatum's desk drawer. It looks like a soccer ball with a wire extension hooked to it.

MIKE PEERSAL, 40's - nervous, fragile almost - walks in, puts his briefcase down, and walks to the coat closet.

Brian looks for somewhere to put the masking tape. He spots Mike's briefcase and hides it there just as Mike turns from the closet. Mike and Rodney walk back to their desks while Brian sits at the round table and waits.

Tatum appears at the door with a cleaning person. She talks Spanish to him, then finally enters with her cup of coffee. She sits with Brian.

TATUM

So pip-squeak. What's so crucial?

While Tatum ducks down to pick up a piece of paper on the floor, Brian gives Rodney a head-nod to Tatum's cubicle, and a sign for Rodney to call Tatum's telephone.

Tatum slaps the paper on the desk and grabs Brian's folder. As she reads she hears a MUFFLED RING. After a few rings,

TATUM

Am I the only one who hears that?

She gets up and follows the SOUND and opens her desk drawer.

TATUM

Okay. Who's the court jester?

Tatum looks at Brian who points at Mike's briefcase. Tatum looks in it, sees the masking tape, and points at Brian.

TATUM

I would've expected this from you.

(to Mike)

Very cute! Funny little man.

Mike shows minor confusion. Mostly, he's disinterested.

INT. PETZINGER'S VP OFFICE - MORNING - ANOTHER DAY

CHARLOTTE PETZINGER, in a pin-stripe suite, 30's, sits at her mahogany desk in a tastefully decorated room that has it's own bathroom. A knock at the door disrupts her reading.

JOSEPH COLLINS, 50's, in a business suit, enters.

PETZINGER

Well, well. If it's not the snake.

He pulls out a large printout and a piece of paper, a list, from his attaché case, and slides it in front of Petzinger.

COLLINS

We've waited a long time for this.

MONTAGE:

This sequence is intended to create suspicion that the executives have a hidden agenda. Music suggestion: 'DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY', by Bobby McFerrin. Just a suggestion!

A) A close shot on Petzinger's mouth. Then Collins' mouth. Their conversation is muted except for one word: "Layoffs".

B) A heavy-set MAN working at his desk. Busy. Loyal. To be linked with man in the scene on page 47.

C) A Close-up on Petzinger's eyes. Close-up on Collins' eyes. Whatever they're saying, they seem to be in agreement.

D) Many employees in a cafeteria, joyous, if only for now. We follow one woman. She'll be the crying woman on page 47.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S ROOM

DAN PATTERSON, 40's, comes out of his office, which is next to Petzinger's, and walks up to his secretary, DAWN, 20's. Petzinger's secretary, PRISCILLA, also in her 20's, sits next to Dawn, typing. Both ladies' spirits seem muted.

DAN
Who's in with Charlotte?

DAWN
Mr. Collins.

DAN
Joseph Collins? From the board?

Dawn nods. After a brief, thoughtful silence,

DAN
The development manager of the
results group ... what's his name?

DAWN
Rodney Hopkins.

DAN
Tell him to come up, will you?

Dan walks back into his office just as Collins and Petzinger
exit her office. Collins winks at Petzinger.

COLLINS
If you were a guy, you know what
they would say?

PETZINGER
They'd be brass and very large. But
what do I need a set of balls for
when I collect them for a hobby?

Collins belts out a chuckle, then leaves.

PATERSON'S OFFICE

Petzinger saunters into Dan's plush office space - mahogany
desk, etc. It has no bathroom, though. Petzinger inspects
pictures on Dan's wall. She spots a picture of Dan's son.

PETZINGER
I admire the way you juggle your
life, Danny. Still going to
counseling with your wife?

DAN
Yes.

PETZINGER
Have you mentioned 'us' yet?

DAN
Shhh.

PETZINGER
(closes door and sits)
They know what's going on.

DAN
Let's pretend they don't.

PETZINGER
Speaking of pretending, are we
still on for tonight?

DAN
I can't. I have to prepare for
tomorrow's speech on the re-org.

PETZINGER
Oh. That's right. I forgot.

DAN
I've tasted the pastries already.
Of course, if you give the speech,
then I'll be free ...

PETZINGER
Oh, no. That's why I hired you, to
do my dirty work.
(beat)
I guess it's business before
pleasure. But with you ... I
wonder. Which one is business,
Danny boy?

DAN
It's all business!

Petzinger laughs, thoroughly enjoying the banter.

INT. OUTSIDE A CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Dawn, Dan Paterson's secretary from the previous scene, opens the conference room door and we see a dozen PEOPLE who are having a meeting. She waves for Rodney to come out.

INT. OUTSIDE OF PETZINGER'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Priscilla walks towards Petzinger's office just as Rodney rounds the corner. They collide and the folder marked 'PRIVATE', and its contents, fly out of Priscilla's hand.

Priscilla quickly picks up the papers before Rodney can help her. Rodney offers an AD-LIB apology as Priscilla disappears into Petzinger's office. He notices a document under the desk. He picks it up.

INSERT

A list of NAMES and SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS - includes Rodney's NAME - on a NEBRASKA MUTUAL LETTERHEAD with the initials "JC" as the signatory of the letter.

BACK TO SCENE

Suspicious, he quickly goes to the copier, places the paper on the glass and hits the start key.

Priscilla comes out the office and grabs a folder from her desk as Rodney sheepishly fumbles with the copier. She goes back into the office.

But Rodney has overlooked the 'number of copies' window which displays 30. Rodney hits every button in front of him to stop the machine from spitting out copies. The machine jams.

'Sector 3' blinks on the instruction panel. Rodney opens the 'sector 3' door and pulls out the jammed paper. Priscilla's body appears in the doorway. One head-turn and he's busted.

He quickly takes the original, removes three copies from the tray, stuffs them in his notebook, races to Priscilla's work station and tosses the original under her desk.

PRISCILLA

I don't know, Charlotte. It was in the first folder. Let me look.

Priscilla storms out, begins searching around and, finally, she sees the paper under the desk - the one Rodney tossed. She sighs, picks it up, and heads back into the office.

PRISCILLA

Here it is, thank God!

Dan comes out of his office and storms into Petzinger's office just as Priscilla comes out. His secretary, Dawn, enters from another direction and spots Rodney. She sees Dan in Petzinger's room.

DAWN

You can wait in his office, Rodney.

MEANWHILE -- a 'sector 5' message on the copier blinks on and off. There is still a jam in the copier.

DAN PATTERSON'S OFFICE

Rodney walks in, sits down, takes a deep breath and holds his chest indicating 'that was a close call'.

The room carries sound fairly well. Rodney can hear partial phrases as Petzinger and Dan talk next door. As he listens, he reads a copy of the list of names and whispers to himself,

RODNEY

What's my name doing here?

DAN (O.S.)

You're telling me I don't have a choice in the matter?

PETZINGER (O.S.)

Keep your voice down. And let's not forget who works for whom here.

PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Dan stands over Petzinger and waves the list at her.

DAN

Charlotte, I don't want to do this. Let the Re-engineering Task Team do their job. You're taking advantage of ... our relationship.

PETZINGER

Calm down. It's business.

OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Dawn and Priscilla face their PCs, typing. Priscilla grabs a paper in the printer then heads towards the copier.

DAWN

You'd think they were married.

Priscilla roles her eyes. When she reaches the copier, she sees the flashing sector message. She opens the copier door.

DAN PATTERSON'S OFFICE

Rodney folds one of the copies of the list and puts it into his shirt pocket. He sits and listens.

PETZINGER (O.S.)

This is not a request.

Dan mumbles something. Petzinger raises her voice.

PETZINGER

We don't owe them anything. Let them eat cake for all I care.

Rodney ponders these words as Petzinger's door slams. Dan storms into his room and slams his door.

In a rage, Dan slaps the list down on the desk and sits. He doesn't even notice Rodney. Dan mumbles to himself.

DAN

I don't believe that shithead.

Rodney stands. Dan takes notice.

DAN

What the hell do you want?

RODNEY

You wanted to see me, Sir.

Dan takes a deep breath, summoning a calmer demeanor.

DAN

Hopkins, of course. I'm sorry.

He motions him to sit. Obediently, Rodney sits. He eyes the list. Dan moves it to an opened drawer, and then closes it.

DAN

We're assessing staffing requirements at the work centers, and I need you to retrieve some data for me.

BY THE COPIER MACHINE OUTSIDE DAN'S OFFICE

Priscilla, on her knees, AD-LIBS her frustration. Finally, she finds the paper in 'sector 5'. She recognizes the list and looks around with suspicion.

DAN PATTERSON'S OFFICE

Dan nervously taps his fingers on the desk.

DAN

I need an hourly count of customer calls for each center by month for the last three months. 'No' is not an option, Rodney. I've got an important speech tomorrow. I need this information yesterday.

RODNEY

I'll have it by the end of the day.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney storms into his cubicle while Mike, Brian, and Tatum are huddled at the round table in discussion. Rodney hides his notebook in his top drawer. He then takes the list from his shirt pocket and tucks it behind the wall calendar.

Rodney emerges from his cubicle and joins the conversation.

TATUM

Pisshead Petzinger has a set of balls this big.

Tatum indicates with her hands just how big she means.

RODNEY

What are you talking about?

TATUM

What they told us at the staff meeting while you were gone. They're getting tough on performance appraisals.

BRIAN

The same thing happened in IMS. They got tougher on appraisals just before they had layoffs.

RODNEY

Brian, did they use the word 'layoffs' at the meeting?

TATUM

They didn't have to.

MIKE

The writing has a wall message.

Everyone stops talking, looks at Mike for an awkward second.

BRIAN

You mean, 'the writing's on the wall', don't you Mike?

Mike's face twitches. He appears confused. He awkwardly retreats to his cubicle.

RODNEY

For Chrissakes people, don't get so absorbed in something you can't control.

BRIAN

That's easy for you to say. You're a second-line manager now.

RODNEY

All I'm saying is that during the last downsizing I couldn't eat or sleep. For what? I'm still here, aren't I?

TATUM

(to Rodney)

Rodney, I'm not having one of my premenstrual epiphanies. Call it something in the air. We're gonna get screwed ... royally. I feel it.

Rodney smacks his hand down on the table and,

RODNEY

Enough! We got a hot job, and we can't leave until this is done.

INT. KIT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rodney tucks Kit in bed. He notices a black and blue mark on her leg. He points to it.

RODNEY

What happened here, sweetie?

KIT

I don't know.

He inspects other parts of her body, then kisses her.

RODNEY

Sleep tight, sweetie.

KIT

Good night, Daddy.

INT. RODNEY AND MARIA'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maria, already in bed, reads a book. Rodney undresses and crawls into bed next to her.

MARIA

Did you notice the black and blue
on her leg?

The book falls from Maria's hand. She appears ready to cry.

MARIA

What did I do wrong? I shouldn't've
given her the children's aspirin
when she was an infant. Maybe I
used too much baby powder. Maybe I
should've breast fed her ...

Rodney moves closer to her. He strokes her, tenderly.

RODNEY

Maybe we should just take one day
at a time. Call Doctor Marino
tomorrow.

Rodney kisses her, strokes her face, then slowly returns to
his side of the bed. He hides more than his face from her.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - N-TEC - MORNING

Rodney sits at his desk studying 'the list'. He sighs, then
folds it and tucks the list behind the wall calendar.

TATUM (IN HER CUBICLE)

She quietly picks up her phone and dials.

MIKE (IN HIS CUBICLE)

His phone rings. He picks it up, hears a 'click' SOUND, and
gets DIAL TONE. He hangs up and his ear is smudged with ink.
He fidgets with his ear, then he touches other parts of his
face transferring the ink on his ear to the rest of his face.

Tatum appears at Mike's cubicle.

TATUM

Oh, my God, Mike. What happened?

Mike looks at his hand, sees the ink and quickly leaves.

Tatum runs back to her desk, takes an ink pad, goes back to
Mike's desk, and pounds the telephone receiver on the ink
pad. She puts the receiver back.

TATUM

Nobody farts in my church and gets
away with it.

INT. COMPANY BATHROOM

Mike washes his face. He scrubs hard, mumbling obscenities
into the mirror. He appears to be losing his composure.

INT. COMPUTER LAB, MIKE'S DESK - SECONDS LATER

Mike returns. His phone rings. He answers it. Again, dial
tone. He hangs up and a fresh imprint of ink covers his ear.

Like before, he fidgets with his ear, nose, etc. His face
looks worse than before. He sees the ink on his hand. He
picks up the phone and sees the ink on the receiver.

Tatum appears and she notices Mike's face, ink-ridden and
twitching. Rodney walks over and looks to Mike, then Tatum.

TATUM

If there's a rumble in town, you
better be wearing the same street
clothes as me.

RODNEY

Are you okay, Mike?

Mike bolts out of the room.

RODNEY

Brian was the one who wrapped your
phone with masking tape. Not Mike.
And I called the phone.

Her eyes sink. She groans under the force of her mistake.

TATUM

You turds! You could've told me.

RODNEY

It was supposed to be a harmless
joke.

INT. AUDITORIUM - LATER IN THE DAY

As Tatum and Rodney find seats, Tatum spots Mike a few rows
away and notices ink behind his ear. She sinks in her seat.

ON THE STAGE, a TECHNICIAN taps the podium's microphone. He
nods to Dan who steps up with index cards in his hand.

DAN

Bob Greene, our CEO, announced today that N-TEC will undergo a Business Unit consolidation that will better align our processes to the markets. This re-engineering initiative may impact all the employees in each BU.

Dan turns to the next index card, studies it, and looks up.

DAN

A lot of hard work was put into this analysis which has led us to the conclusion that we can become a more effective organization with a smaller work force.

Dan scans the audience, then continues.

DAN

We will obtain the desired level of support in two phases of a Management Force Reduction Program and a Non-Management Consolidation Effort.

ON THE AUDIENCE

As Dan speaks, some of employee's faces appear stunned with their jaws locked open. Others appear more stoic. Resigned.

DAN

Our data shows that we can manage our work centers with two-thirds the workforce by adjusting the hours of coverage. And two-thirds of the current support staff will be needed. Non-management and first level managers will be targeted in phase one. The focus will shift in March to second-level managers and above. That will be phase two.

ON RODNEY - his deadpan stare hides his feelings.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - A LITTLE LATER

Rodney and Tatum walk into the lab.

RODNEY

I don't believe he's drawing these conclusions from our data.

TATUM

You bend over backwards for this company and what do you get? The corporate salami, here it comes.

TATUM'S CUBICLE: she throws her pencil in anger.

RODNEY'S CUBICLE: He notices his family picture was moved on his desk. He puts it back to where it was.

He also notices his desk drawer is slightly opened. He opens it fully and searches for copies of 'the list'. Gone!

He bolts to Tatum's desk.

RODNEY

Were you in my desk?

TATUM

No. Why?

RODNEY

I found a list yesterday, and ... never mind.

Rodney bolts back to his desk and almost runs over a CLEANING LADY who enters and begins emptying garbage cans.

Tatum storms out of her cubicle and,

TATUM

Rodney. Coffee?

There's no response.

TATUM

(to the cleaning lady)
Hola, que tal, Angela.

Just as she says this, Petzinger enters. After a beat,

PETZINGER

Go get your coffee. Leave us alone.

Tatum slowly walks around Petzinger, each eyeing the other. Petzinger head-nods for Angela to leave. She leaves too.

MEANWHILE - Rodney, not realizing Petzinger is in the room, pulls his only remaining list from behind the calendar. He sighs as if he's found a precious jewel.

From nowhere Petzinger appears and grabs the list from his hand, and she stares at him for a long, hard beat.

PETZINGER

How many more of these do you have?

Rodney shakes his head indicating he has no more.

PETZINGER

You pull a stunt like this again,
Hopkins, and I'll have your ...

(more reserved, but icy)

Do NOT start with me, Hopkins. You
don't have the power to win.

(as she leaves)

You stay under the radar and
everything will be okay.

Rodney looks to the ceiling and lets out with a deep,
resonant "I'm screwed" sigh. His phone rings. He answers it.

INTERCUT a phone conversation between Rodney and Maria.

MARIA

I just came back from Dr. Marino.
He took a lot of tests. The results
should be in by Friday.

Rodney appears lost in thought.

MARIA

Did you hear me? Are you there?

RODNEY

Yes. I heard you.

INT. HOPKINS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rodney and Kit are playing Slap Jack on the floor. Rodney
turns over a 'Jack' and Kit hits it first and yells,

KIT

Slap Jack.

Rodney turns over cards until another Jack appears. He slaps
it. He starts to take the pile, but Kit takes them instead.

KIT

You didn't say 'Slap Jack'.

Kit takes her pile of cards and dumps them on her head.

She lays her head down on her arm and she shares a smile with
Rodney as he continues turning cards over. She closes her
eyes and drifts off to sleep. After a few seconds, Rodney
puts the cards down and whisks Kit away to her room.

INT. KIT'S BEDROOM

Rodney carefully lays Kit down on the bed and covers her up with the blanket. He brushes her hair back and kisses her.

RODNEY
Good night, sweetie.

INT. HOPKINS BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING, NEXT DAY

The clock reads 3 AM. Rodney lies awake. Eyes open.

TIME LAPSE: the clock reads 6 AM and Rodney's eyes are still open. The alarm sounds.

INT. PAUL'S SECRETARY'S DESK - MORNING

Paul's SECRETARY types at her desk. Rodney enters.

RODNEY
May I see the personnel files on
Mike Peersal and Brian Sykes?

INT. COMPUTER LAB - RODNEY'S DESK - A LITTLE LATER

Rodney and Tatum are sitting at the round table. The folders and a white sheet of paper lay in front of Rodney.

TATUM
So, she came in and took the copies
of the list you had? What was on
the list that was so important?

RODNEY
Names. Social Security Numbers. It
was on a Nebraska Mutual's
letterhead, initialed by JC. Mike,
Brian, and my name were on it.

Rodney hands her the white paper.

RODNEY
Those are the names I remembered.

TATUM
(as she reads)
Well, poke my buttons. Julia
Sanders! That baby-talkin' prissy
... And Preston? He's as old as the
Red Cross. But Brian, Mike, you ...
if this is a hit list of some kind,
I don't see a common connection.
(MORE)

TATUM (CONT'D)

It's not age, or gender.
 (pointing to the page)
 What do these numbers mean?

RODNEY

Number of personal days we took.
 I'm trying to find a common thread.

TATUM

Mike was sick that many days?

RODNEY

I had over thirty days because of
 my daughter. Brian had seven. But
 some had one or two, so it can't be
 attendance. I'm confused.

TATUM

Maybe they're gonna murder ya.

RODNEY

Tatum, be serious. Will you help me
 find out what's going on here?

TATUM

My humor is just a disguise, Rod.
 My dad was laid off from his job
 two years before he was eligible
 for retirement. That was five years
 ago. He hasn't recovered from that.
 Yeah, I'll help you. I have an
 attitude, and I'm ready to use it.

RODNEY

Good. Chit-chat with these people.
 See if you can find something that
 is common between them.

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE AT NIGHT

Rodney and Maria sit on opposite ends of the couch with the
 monthly bills spread between them. He divides his attention
 between the TV and writing checks.

TV HOST

N-TEC, third largest communications
 provider, said it would cut six
 thousand jobs this year.

Rodney takes the remote from the couch and shuts the TV off.
 Maria takes the remote and turns the TV back on.

TV HOST

In a related story, N-TEC stocks jumped again today making it the single highest advance this week for a Fortune Five Hundred company.

Rodney mumbles at the TV. He shuts it off again.

MARIA

What does this mean? Are you safe?

RODNEY

Don't worry.

MARIA

You're going to lose your job, aren't you? I have to do something.

RODNEY

Maria! Everything will be okay.

MARIA

I can go back to work, Rod. That was our plans, anyway.

RODNEY

You think you're ready to sit with clients and talk about how pretty you can make their houses?

Rodney gets up and goes to her side. He strokes her leg.

RODNEY

Hey, I just got promoted. They're not going to lay me off.

MARIA

What if the test results are positive? Her shoulder hurt today.

RODNEY

We need to go to group, Maria.

MARIA

I'm not baring my soul to those strangers. Don't ask me to do that again. I can't. I just can't.

Rodney relents. He returns to doing the bills.

INT. N-TEC BUILDING - IN A MEETING ROOM - MORNING

NEW FACES appear in the room with Paul and Rodney. Shirt sleeves are rolled up. People's faces show symptoms of stress. Names appear on the whiteboard in two columns.

One group is labeled 'met expectations' and the other group is labeled 'exceeds expectations'.

PAUL

Okay. Do we finally agree on this?

The participants seem reluctant to speak up. Most of them nod without conviction. Rodney looks around the room.

RODNEY

What's with you guys. Aren't you going to speak up. I don't think this is right, forcing people into lower categories.

PAUL

We are not forcing anything, Rodney.

RODNEY

What do you call it, Paul? Mike is an ace DB administrator, and Brian is the most knowledgeable analyst we got. Damn it, they should be up there with Harold and John.

Paul rubs his face in frustration.

PAUL

Knowledge does not necessarily translate to value. Mike and Brian are very knowledgeable, but what do they contribute to the process?

RODNEY

Are you saying process people are more valuable than support people?

PAUL

You were their peer most of the year. You're too emotional. Let's move on.

INT. DOCTOR MARINO'S OFFICE - FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

DOCTOR MARINO sits at his desk inspecting papers while Maria and Rodney sit patiently waiting for him to talk. Finally,

MARINO

We got a burst cell count of eight.

The looks on Maria's face tell us that this news is not good.

MARINO

Are you going to meetings?
(interpreting the silence)
There's a meeting in the hospital
in an hour. I want you both there.

Rodney nods. Maria is non-committal.

MARINO

Kit needs treatments again. We
haven't found a match in the HLA
Registry. And it's time you talk to
Jacob. If you want, I'll talk to
him as well.

Rodney nods. Maria remains silent. Withdrawn.

MARINO

What you went through before is
nothing compared with what you'll
go through with the marrow
transplant. Two weeks of intensive
chemo-radiation therapy. And if
she's strong enough to survive
that, we'll do the transplant,
which means a careful watch for a
month in isolation. Then two, three
months in a more controlled...

RODNEY

She's so frail now, Doctor.

MARINO

That's why you both must be there
for her. At least one of you every
waking second. We need Kit
emotionally strong.

(pause)

Your son is the only donor we have
with a match. But we'll search for
a better one. For right now, let's
go with moderate treatments.

Marino looks in his drawer and pulls out some papers.

MARINO

I'll start the paper work for a
transplant with the hospital today.
(MORE)

MARINO (CONT'D)

You have insurance and a good job.
You're one of the lucky ones.

The look on Rodney's face suggest otherwise. He helps Maria up from her seat and they exit the office.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL'S SELF-HELP GROUP - 2 PM

PEOPLE are talking and don't notice Maria and Rodney at the entrance. Maria refuses to step into the room. Rodney makes a motion to continue but Maria pulls back again.

MARIA

I need to prepare dinner for Audra
and your brother.

RODNEY

It's only two o'clock ...

She turns around and leaves. Rodney reluctantly follows her.

INT. DARIN HOPKIN'S LAW OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Darin's office, equipped with a bathroom, is decorated tastefully, but not lavishly. A wall of windows display a beautiful view of the Philadelphia skyline.

Hearing the buzzer on his phone, Darin stumbles from the bathroom. He is in the middle of getting dressed from a suit to something more casual. He hits the speaker phone button.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Wallace is on line two. He said he
hasn't received the deposition. And
your brother's on line three.

DARIN

Tell Wallace the deposition will be
in the mail tomorrow. And by the
way, it's getting late. Shouldn't
you be on your way home?

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Yeah, yeah. Put it in my check.

Darin activates line three - still on the speaker phone.

DARIN

What's up with Kit? Results in yet?

RODNEY (V.O.)

It's back. Kit is sick again.

Darin stops buttoning his shirt. He stares out the window.

DARIN

Damn.

(pause)

You want to cancel tonight?

RODNEY (V.O.)

No. Maria needs a diversion. I didn't want to hit you with it when you walk in the door. I also wanted to let you know we invited Audra.

DARIN

For crying out loud, Rod. Will you stop trying to hook me up with her.

(pause; beat)

Ask her to wear that red dress she wore on Thanksgiving. Very sexy.

RODNEY (V.O.)

Bye, Darin. See you at seven.

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Kit and Jacob sit in the living room eating their dinner by the TV while Rodney is trying to figure out how to set the table. AUDRA, in the red dress, and Maria come walking out from the kitchen with the china. They set the table.

AUDRA

(to Maria)

I brought my sketch book. I need help on the Stafford account. I need your magic touch.

MARIA

I don't know how creative I am these days, Audra. But I'll give it a try.

AUDRA

Oh, please. On your worst day you're the best interior designer in the city. I hate you for it.

MARIA

Okay. After dinner. I can't believe Jeremy left. He was one of the founders for crying out loud.

AUDRA

All the good people are leaving for greener pastures. We need you back, badly.

Maria looks at Rodney for his opinion.

RODNEY

It's up to you. Does the knife go on the right or the left?

MARIA

On the right. Soon, Audra. Soon.

Maria rearranges a setting Rodney just finished.

MARIA

The spoon goes on the outside of the knife. The fork goes on the left.

Rodney continues setting the table.

RODNEY

My mother always set the table.
(to Audra)
My brother thinks you're hot in that dress.

AUDRA

Rodney. Don't start.

MARIA

Yes, Rod. Don't embarrass Audra.

RODNEY

Okay. I'm just saying ...

MARIA

What's the matter with your brother, anyway. Audra's so beautiful and intelligent ...

RODNEY

Domineering, opinionated ...

AUDRA

I don't believe you two are talking like this right in front of me.

The doorbell rings and Darin enters with a bottle of wine. Jacob runs up and jumps on his back. Kit remains on the sofa.

Darin walks over to Kit with Jacob attached to his back. Darin bends down and kisses her on the cheek.

Rodney comes over and takes the wine and,

RODNEY
Doesn't Audra look nice?

DARIN
Stop with the cupid routine, will ya.

Darin loosens Jacob's grip and puts him down.

JACOB
Uncle Darin, I got the new Mario Brothers. Wanna play it with me?

DARIN
Not now, Bud. But I bet Kit would love to play that one ...

Kit perks up. She seems happy at the idea, but slow to move.

Rodney takes the wine into the kitchen. Maria follows him. Darin moves closer to Audra and whispers,

DARIN
Have you told them yet?

AUDRA
No. Not yet.

Rodney comes out with a food dish.

KITCHEN

Maria puts the bottle of wine in an ice bucket. Audra enters.

MARIA
You two make a nice couple.

Audra takes the wine bottle and fills two glasses. Maria grabs a bowl of vegetables. As they leave the kitchen,

AUDRA
(being coy)
You think?

INT. DINING ROOM - HOURS LATER

The empty plates indicate dinner is over. As Audra tops Maria's glass with wine,

MARIA

Let me get this straight. You've been dating Sir Galahad over there for two months now?

(to Rodney)

You knew about this?

RODNEY

No! I did not!

AUDRA

I haven't gotten my hooks into him yet. We're just dating casually.

(to Darin)

Isn't that right, Counselor.

DARIN

Just when you thought it safe to go back in the water.

RODNEY

Well Counselor. Dishes?

As the men collect the dishes, Darin throws a wink at Audra.

DARIN

We just started dating, really. We thought we would shut you two up.

RODNEY

I hope you know what you're doing. She's a lot to handle, bro.

The brothers chuckle while they disappear into the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Maria and Audra hover over interior design sketches. Darin is watching TV. Rodney enters from the children's bedroom.

RODNEY

Kids are in bed.

AUDRA

Why don't you two go for a walk. We need some privacy here.

DARIN

Good idea. I think the Harmony Trio is at O'Leary's tonight.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DARIN AND RODNEY - NIGHT

The brothers walk along a street smoking cigars.

RODNEY

I can't believe you kept Audra a secret from me.

DARIN

It was her idea to tell you. I was having fun watching you make a fool of yourself.

They stop by a church. Rodney looks up at the cross.

RODNEY

Remember St. Leo's growing up? I went to church every Sunday back then. I really felt close to God, like he was right there next to me. I miss that feeling.

DARIN

Maybe you should go back to church.

Rodney's face conveys a not-to-convincing 'maybe'.

The boys turn the corner and the O'Leary's Pub sign appears in the forefront of a beautiful Philadelphia skyline.

INT. HOPKINS' KITCHEN - AUDRA AND MARIA

Audra pours wine into their glasses.

AUDRA

Jen said she's got everyone in her church praying for you guys.

MARIA

I guess it's good somebody's still talking to God. He and I are not on good terms at the moment.

Audra picks up a sketch and holds it up.

AUDRA

What do you think?

MARIA

No. Too modern looking. You need something rustic.

INT. O'LEARY'S PUB - MOMENTS LATER

Rodney and Darin sit at a private table. A three piece band with a female lead singer plays in the background.

DARIN

When Dad lost his job, it was a different world. Nobody's promised a job for life anymore.

(pause)

I look at you, and I don't see Dad. I see a man who deals with life on its own terms. Besides, N-TEC has laid off people before. You survived it then, and you'll survive it again.

RODNEY

It's different this time. I found a confidential letter to our VP. A list of names including mine. Two people on the list work for me and my boss made sure their appraisals were less than they deserved. Coincidence? I doubt it. They're targeting them for some reason.

DARIN

How do you figure that, Rod?

RODNEY

Darin, you don't understand. Two of my best workers are on the list and they're forcing both of them into a lower performance category for no reason. They can't fire someone who's an exceptional worker, obviously. That would cause too many problems later on. But you can fire them if they're just average. How do you fire five thousand people? What criteria do you use?

DARIN

(nodding)

Performance appraisals.

RODNEY

Exactly. And they're targeting people as poor performers and I don't know why.

The band finishes the song. After polite applause,

DARIN

Come on. Let's go back.

They get up. Darin throws a couple of dollars on the table.

DARIN

If they do anything to my big
brother, we'll sue their asses.

INT. HOPKINS DINING ROOM - LATER

Rodney and Darin enter and they see sketches, notes, fabric and paint swatches, which cover the dining room table. Two half-filled glasses of wine sit amidst the designer's tools.

Maria is energized as she holds a color sample over a fabric making a point to Audra.

AUDRA

Genius. The woman's a genius.

Kit enters in her pajamas. She looks very tired.

KIT

I can't sleep. My shoulder hurts ...

RODNEY

C'mon, honey. We'll get some
medicine.

Maria starts to go towards Kit, but Audra grabs hold of Maria's arm and stops her.

AUDRA

Rodney's got it.

Maria nods as Rodney carries Kit off screen. Maria notices a sketch in front of her and,

MARIA

(to Audra)
This is hideous.

They both laugh with energy. But Maria shoots a look where Rodney walked off and her laugh is short lived.

EXT. HOPKINS' KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Rodney is cooking breakfast. Maria enters holding her head. She hugs Rodney from behind.

RODNEY

What are you doing up? I was going to serve you in bed.

MARIA

Please. Just coffee. My head!

She sits at the kitchen table and rubs her temples. As Rodney pours her a cup of coffee,

MARIA

You need to talk to Jacob. He got sassy with me when I told him to clean his room.

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Rodney knocks on the door, then opens it. He inspects the mess. Jacob sits on the bed while reading a book.

RODNEY

Son. I want you to clean up your room. No arguments.

Jacob slides down in the bed. Rodney sits bedside.

RODNEY

What's going on, son.

Jacob puts the book over his face. Rodney removes it.

JACOB

I don't want to give Kit my bones.

Rodney appears stunned. He pats Jacob on the shoulder.

RODNEY

It's just marrow. They suck a little out, put it in a bag. It's mixed with blood and presto ...

JACOB

I don't want to die.

RODNEY

Son. You're not going to die.

JACOB

Doctor Marino said my bones may not work because I have the same crummy genes as Kit. If I have the same crummy genes, then I'm going die before my time.

RODNEY

(holds Jacob's hand)

No. All the doctor is saying is just because you're Kit's brother that doesn't mean you're a good donor. You're not a perfect match, is what he's trying to say.

JACOB

You mean, I'm not going to die?

RODNEY

Of course not. And neither is Kit, if we do the right things.

Jacob sits up and they hug. A lively spirit envelopes Jacob.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - N-TEC - DAY

Rodney walks over to Tatum.

TATUM

I can't find any connections.

RODNEY

Neither can I. Where's Mike?

TATUM

In with Paul getting his appraisal.

RODNEY

You get yours already?

TATUM

Yeah. It was fair. Thanks.

RODNEY

Hey, you deserved it. But Mike and Brian aren't going to be so happy.

TATUM

Why?

RODNEY

They were forced into the average category. I tried, but I couldn't help them. They deserved better.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - LATER

Rodney works at his desk when the phone rings. He answers.

RODNEY
I'll be right there.

Rodney hangs up just as Mike walks over and starts to say something.

RODNEY
Not now, Mike.

Rodney starts to walk past Mike but sees the forlorn look on his face and stops.

RODNEY
I tried to get you a better appraisal. Honest. But ... listen, do you want to go back to Systems?

MIKE
Yes. I do.

RODNEY
Start looking at the internal job ads. I'll support you any way I can.

Rodney takes a step out of the room and Tatum runs into him.

TATUM
Every person I checked got average or unsatisfactory appraisals. Something's rotten in Denmark, Rodney.

RODNEY
It's what we thought. The people on the list are being targeted. It's my turn. Wish me luck.

INT. PAUL'S ROOM - SECONDS LATER

Rodney walks into Paul's room. He sits down at a round table. Paul hands Rodney his performance papers. Rodney reads them.

RODNEY
What's non-rated mean?

PAUL
It means you haven't been a second line supervisor long enough to be rated as one.

As Paul holds out his hand.

PAUL

Good job!

Rodney refuses to shake hands.

RODNEY

That's it? This is my feedback? I don't think so, Paul. Rate me as a first level manager. That's what I was most of the year, anyway.

PAUL

It's out of my hands ...

Paul's expression shows he just said something he regrets.

PAUL

... I mean, that's the way it is.

RODNEY

What does non-rated mean?

PAUL

It means nothing.

RODNEY

It means nothing!!?

PAUL

You're doing fine. Your promotion says it all.

Paul slaps papers on the table.

PAUL

They're skill sheets on your people. You need to sign them. Now.

RODNEY

Why?

PAUL

Too many people rated as average. The task force needs to separate them by their skills. I'm very tired, Rodney.

INSERT: Tatum's skill sheet: LEADERSHIP SKILL ITEMS marked with mostly HIGHS from a selection of HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW.

PAUL

Just sign the skill sheets.

Rodney signs Tatum's sheet and the others except for two.

RODNEY
You have Mike and Brian as low.

PAUL
Yeah. So.

RODNEY
Their skills are high.

PAUL
Not when their performance
appraisals aren't.

Rodney throws the pen down on the desk.

PAUL
Don't give me a hard time, Rodney.

After a beat, Rodney slams the table with his hand.

RODNEY
What does non-rated mean?

PAUL
I told you. Nothing. I need your
signature. Now sign these last two.

After a long pause, Rodney slowly slides the sheets back to Paul.

PAUL
It's not going to look good if I
have to sign these, Rodney.

Rodney shrugs his shoulders as Paul hands Rodney a folder.

PAUL
Have it your way. Tomorrow you'll be
told if any of your people have been
put into the risk pool. Read this.
It explains what you have to do.

Rodney gets up to leave.

PAUL
I would learn to choose my battles
better, Hopkins. I'm not the enemy.

INT. HOPKINS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rodney reads 'Force Management Reduction Policy' papers on the couch as Maria enters. She sits down with a sewing basket and a pair of Jacob's pants. She begins hemming the pants.

RODNEY

We find out which supervisors get laid-off tomorrow. They actually have a script I have to read if any of my people get hit.

Maria looks up. Her face shows worry.

MARIA

What about you?

RODNEY

Second-level management are in phase two. Don't ask me when that is, because I don't freakin' know.

Upset, Maria pricks her finger. She gets up and goes into the kitchen. Rodney follows her.

INT. KITCHEN

Rodney hugs Maria and whispers,

RODNEY

I'm sorry. Sometime in March. First levels get notified tomorrow.

Kit waddles into the kitchen. She looks tired. Frail.

KIT

Daddy, I can't sleep. My tummy hurts.

Rodney picks her up and tries to smile. He can not escape Maria's gaze. Kit sees the hurt in her mother's face.

KIT

(to Maria)

Does your tummy hurt too?

Maria tries to smile. She shakes her head. Kit's face indicates that she might vomit.

RODNEY

Do you have to throw-up?

Kit nods and Rodney takes her out of the room.

INT. KIT'S BEDROOM - LATER

Rodney tucks Kit into bed and sits by her side. He strokes her head and smiles. She raises her hand to her father's face and rubs his cheek causing a bristling sound.

KIT
Splinters!
(pause)
Are you mad at Mommy?

RODNEY
No. Daddy was a little frustrated
about something at work.
(pause)
Is your tummy okay now?

Kit nods, barely being able to keep her eyes open.

KIT
I love you, daddy.

RODNEY
I love you too, sweetheart.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - MORNING

Rodney, Mike and Tatum sit in their respective cubicles.

Rodney stares into the PC motionless. Frozen. Mike pokes his head around the partition.

MIKE
Did you get the packages yet?

Tatum walks over.

RODNEY
Not yet.

TATUM
It's like the Inquisition around
here. Everyone's afraid to breathe.

LATER - ON RODNEY

The phone rings. He answers it then hangs up.

INT. HALLWAY IN ROUTE TO PAUL'S OFFICE

While Rodney walks down the isle, music plays. The selection should be the same song that was picked on page 15. The suggested song is 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' by Bobby McFerrin.

As we follow Rodney, a book flies over a partition. It hits the wall and falls in front of Rodney. The man from the MONTAGE page 15 (B) comes from behind the partition.

MAN

Scum sucking jerks. I busted my ass
for these corn-fed idiots, and this
is the gratitude I get.

We follow Rodney past an office. We see a job title tag
(DISTRICT MANAGER) and the person inside the office - a
balding, overweight man who is on the phone.

DISTRICT MANAGER

I have people flipping out here.
This is a HR issue.

(pause)

You call security. Now.

From Rodney's POV, a woman from MONTAGE page 15 (D) sits at
her desk fondling the family picture of her and her three
young children. She breaks down and cries.

With the song still playing, Rodney walks into Paul's room.
As the door slams, the song ends abruptly.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Paul hands Rodney two packages. Rodney looks at the names.

RODNEY

Why am I not surprised.

PAUL

Don't start.

RODNEY

I'd be more than happy to let you
tell them.

INT. OUTSIDE BRIAN'S CUBICLE - MINUTES LATER

Rodney stops in front of Brian's cubicle. He takes a deep
breath and walks in.

INT. COMPUTER LAB AREA - LATER

Mike is working at his desk. Rodney walks in and sits down
next to Mike. Mike knows.

MIKE

Why me?

Rodney hands Mike the package then takes a deep breath. He
takes out a single sheet of paper and begins reading.

RODNEY

As you know, the Communications Unit has identified an imbalance in the supervision ranks. You have been identified as 'at risk' of involuntary termination two months from today unless you find another position in National Technologies.

MIKE

Rodney, I found a job yesterday with the System's group.

Rodney throws the paper up in the air.

RODNEY

Thank God. Which System's group?

MIKE

Frank Jackson's. But ...

RODNEY

Good! I'll call him right now. Maybe he's got a job for Brian.

Mike tries to grab Rodney's arm to stop him, but Rodney runs off-screen. As he hears Rodney dial the phone, Mike leaves the room in a hurry.

INT. RODNEY'S CUBICLE

Rodney has the phone to his ear, waiting.

FRANK

Frank Jackson. How can I help you?

RODNEY

Frank. It's Rodney Hopkins.

FRANK

Rodney. How are you?

RODNEY

I'm fine. Listen, I'm calling you because Mike just told me you have a job for him.

(pause)

Frank. You still there?

FRANK

I did have a job for him, Rodney. He's got the skills I need.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

But HR has put all 'at risk' employees under some new organization code. And I can't hire anyone who has that code.

Rodney slumps in his chair.

RODNEY

Dear God. I don't believe this.
Does Mike know?

FRANK

Yes, he does. I told him this morning.

Rodney AD-LIBs his gratitude and hangs up.

INT. SOMEWHERE ON THE FIFTH FLOOR

Mike's HAND loosens the top bolt to the glass guard rail. He jiggles it, and the bolt comes out of the casing and just hangs there. It looks like it will fall with another jiggle.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - ROUND TABLE - MEANWHILE

Rodney sits down at the round table. Tatum enters and sits beside him.

RODNEY

I got this humongous headache.

TATUM

Mike didn't look good before.

RODNEY

(nods)
I swear, I hate this.

TATUM

How did Brian take it?

RODNEY

He didn't throw anything at me.

A THUD, then a loud SCREAM startles Tatum and Rodney. They both rush to the door and see several people run to the third floor guard rail.

Rodney runs to the guard rail and looks down. Mike lays on the floor. Blood surrounds his head.

RODNEY

God help us.

Rodney rushes to the exit door.

INT. FIRST FLOOR ATRIUM -- CONTINUOUS

The first floor exit door flies open and Rodney rushes to the middle of the atrium and bends down over Mike's body. He looks up and sees the guardrail dangling from above. Glass falls and Rodney winces as it hits the floor close-by.

Commotion builds as more and more people congregate nearby.

Rodney touches Mike's head and then slowly withdraws his bloodstained hand. In shock, Rodney touches his own face, transferring Mike's blood to his cheek and forehead.

RODNEY'S POV

Rodney looks up again. People gather at the rail on the floors above. Petzinger walks up to the rail and looks down at Rodney. Dominating. Emotionless.

INT. O'LEARY'S PUB NEAR HOPKINS HOME - NIGHT

Rodney sits at the bar alone. He is playing with a cross that is chained around his neck.

A hand touches Rodney's shoulder. It's Darin.

DARIN

Maria told me. I'm sorry.

RODNEY

(sings)

And this is my brother.

Darin sits. The bartender approaches but Darin waves him off. Rodney, tipsy, fumbles with the cross.

RODNEY

Ya know, I got this from Mom and Dad for my First Communion ...

DARIN

I know.

Darin gathers Rodney's money and puts it in his coat pocket.

RODNEY

They said it would protect me. I even remember the card. It had a poem in it. Wanna hear it.

DARIN

On the way home, okay?

Darin gets off the stool and props Rodney up. Rodney yanks on the chain and breaks it. As Darin escorts Rodney out,

RODNEY

If you can keep your head when all
about you are losing theirs and
blaming it on you; If you can trust
yourself when all men doubt you ...
blah, blah. Blah. Blah.

Rodney tosses the cross on the floor. Darin picks it up.

RODNEY

(remembering)
... then my son, you are a man!

They exit.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - MORNING

Rodney walks into Brian's office and sits at the desk next to Brian. Rodney rubs his head and moans.

RODNEY

My head feels like a field of
horses trampled over it.
(pause)
I need to know something.

Brian stops what he is doing.

RODNEY

I think there's a connection
between you and the others who got
packages.

Rodney pauses for a response, but gets none.

RODNEY

I'm trying to make a connection
between you and I. And Mike.

BRIAN

(thinking)
Don't see any. Nope.
(brief silence)
I'm very sorry for what happened to
Mike. But I'm getting twenty grand
with the package. I'll be okay.

Rodney nods and gets up to leave.

RODNEY

Yeah, but you see, Mike and I took a lot of days off beyond our sick and vacation days. And you didn't.

BRIAN

Yeah. So.

RODNEY

You did take all your sick days and most of your vacation in a row. What was that about?

BRIAN

It's none of your business.

Rodney comes real close to Brian; mouth to ear.

RODNEY

Tell that to Mike's wife.

BRIAN

I had a death in the family. Okay?

Rodney backs-off and points at him.

RODNEY

I'm not going to stop pursuing this.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dan lies naked in bed. A blanket covers most of his body. Petzinger is out of bed and getting dressed.

PETZINGER

I wouldn't worry too much. From what I'm told, this kind of thing happens to men over forty who are under a lot of stress.

DAN

Jesus, Charlotte, you just don't get it, do you? I can't get it up because I feel ...

PETZINGER

Oh, please. I suppose the next thing you're going to tell me is you need to take a shower to wash my scent off of you.

Dan gets up and heads for the bathroom.

DAN

This is not about you. It's my
guilt. The choices I've made. Go!
Just go!

Petzinger finishes getting dressed and as she leaves,

PETZINGER

See you in the pit, Danny boy.

INT. RACQUETBALL CLUB - SAME NIGHT

Rodney is playing exceptionally aggressive racquetball with
Darin. Rodney wins the point.

RODNEY

What if I could get the list back?

Darin, out of breath, takes his time answering.

DARIN

The partners would never agree to
sue N-TEC. Downsizing is not
against the law.

RODNEY

The people listed on a signed
Nebraska Mutual letterhead are
being canned. All of them. It was
pre-planned. What more do you need?

DARIN

You need evidence of wrongdoing.
Now serve. It's match point.

Rodney serves. The point becomes an exceptionally aggressive
one as Rodney grunts with every hit. Rodney wins.

LATER - As they walk to the shower room,

DARIN

A judge might agree to an
injunction if we could show that
the CEO planned this layoff to,
let's say, raise the stock value
for his personal gain. Now that
would be a case worth taking.

RACQUETBALL SHOWER ROOM

Darin and Rodney enter.

DARIN

Link those names with something. We need to show the Judge they were unjustly targeted. Age discrimination. Gender. Anything.

RODNEY

How do I do that?

Rodney sits. Starts to get undressed.

DARIN

Break into Petzinger's office. I'm sure she's got documents she doesn't want anyone to see.

RODNEY

I don't believe you're saying this. That's illegal. It would be inadmissible evidence, no?

DARIN

Those laws are for the Government versus private individuals. Employee versus a company is different. Just don't get caught.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - NEXT DAY

Rodney sits at his desk for a few beats when Tatum comes into the lab and sits down next to him.

RODNEY

I want to break into an office.

TATUM

Who? Why? For what?

RODNEY

Petzinger's office. For proof they're conniving bastards.

TATUM

You're un loco, bandito. I like it.

RODNEY

I was thinking. You're friends with the cleaning people, right? You can get a master key from them.

(thinking)

But what if her desk is locked?

TATUM

Hey, I learned how to pick locks a long time ago.

(responding to Rodney's deadpan look)

Don't ask. It's a family history I'm not proud of.

(pause)

I don't know, Rodney. It's risky. I have to think about it.

(thinks, briefly)

Okay. Let's do it.

INT. EXECUTIVE SUITES - 7 PM THAT NIGHT

With janitor clothes on, and a pair of black rimmed glasses, Tatum struts down the aisle with a watering can. She waters the plants in the hallway while Rodney pushes a large garbage container along beside her.

Rodney stops at Petzinger's office door. The coast is clear, so he takes a key from Tatum and opens the door.

INT. PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Rodney checks the desk drawers. Locked! Tatum retrieves a lock pick set from her pocket and wiggles it in the key hole. The drawer opens. As she leaves,

TATUM

I'll cover you outside.

Rodney begins checking the drawers. He spots a tape recorder.

TAPE RECORDER

Two wires connect to the recorder. One comes from a mic which hidden on the snake lamp on top of the desk. The other wire goes to a power button hidden in the alcove leg area.

BACK TO SCENE

Rodney closes the drawer and opens another. He pulls out a folder. Nothing. He notices a tab marked personal. He pulls it out. Again, nothing. He finds another folder marked 'COLLINS'.

OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Tatum inspects the secretaries in-boxes when she hears someone coming. Petzinger appears.

TATUM
(loudly)
Hola. Que tal.

INSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Responding to Petzinger's voice, Rodney carefully closes the drawer, and with the Collins' folder in hand, he ducks under the desk in the alcove area. Inadvertently, he leans against the button. The recorder is turned on.

A paper falls out from the folder and he begins reading it.

OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Petzinger studies Tatum, then notices her opened door. Tatum moves the garbage canister to the door, squeezing her way into the room before Petzinger.

TATUM
Excusame.

INSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

As Tatum grabs the wastepaper basket by the desk, she gently kicks Rodney's feet out of Petzinger's potential view and then empties the basket into the canister.

Petzinger goes to the book case and looks for a binder.

TATUM
Que pasta!

RODNEY

winces, waiting for the worst.

PETZINGER

measures Tatum for a beat. She finds the binder she's looking for and heads for the door. Tatum follows.

OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Petzinger closes the door, stops, and gives Tatum a good once-over, as if Tatum looks familiar. Petzinger nods, then leaves. After a beat, Tatum walks back into the office.

INSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

TATUM

That was a close one.

RODNEY

Come here. Look at this.

Rodney points to the papers inside the folder.

RODNEY

It has all my medical claims from last year for Kit ... six months of hospital ... doctor bills.

TATUM

My God, Rod. Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars! That's a lot.

RODNEY

Don't get leukemia. It's expensive.

He pages through the papers quickly.

RODNEY

Look at the medical claims. Brian and Mike each put in for a hundred grand last year. They're canning people based on medical claims.

TATUM

I think that's illegal.

RODNEY

And look at this. A letter written by Joseph Collins, the CEO of Nebraska Mutual. Signed, JC.

(looks at Tatum)

Why the sad look. This is good.

TATUM

Mike's death ... it wasn't an accident, was it?

RODNEY

I don't know. But look at this. Mike wasn't on vacation last year for twenty days. It says here he was at CIA. CIA is the 'Center for Addictive Illness'. He was in rehab last year for substance abuse. He had a major problem, Tatum.

(MORE)

RODNEY (CONT'D)

More than we knew. And the rehab cost a lot of money.

TATUM

I think he tried to make it look like an accident so his wife could cash in on his life insurance.

RODNEY

Maybe. But listen, this is exactly what my brother's looking for. I'll copy it all and put it back.

While they continue, we take a last look at the desk lamp. And the microphone. And the recorder that is ON!

INT. N-TEC BUILDING - BRIAN'S CUBICLE - MORNING

Rodney walks into Brian's cubicle and sits down where he can look directly into Brian's face. Brian ignores Rodney.

RODNEY

I'm not leaving until we talk.

After a long pause, Brian surrenders.

BRIAN

I'm HIV positive, Rodney.

RODNEY

I know, Brian. I'm sorry you're sick.

(pause)

You cost the company a lot of money in medical expenses, no?

BRIAN

There was a lot expensive medicine. Testing. Specialists. Everything was done in the hospital.

RODNEY

That's why they laid you off.

BRIAN

Really?

RODNEY

I need your help, Brian.

Brian nods.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Rodney and Maria sit on a couch reading magazines. Maria turns a couple of pages almost ripping them from the binder.

MARIA

Why are you doing this? You can't sue the company. They'll fire you for sure.

RODNEY

They're going to fire me anyway.

Doctor Marino comes in and pulls up a chair.

MARINO

It's getting worse.

RODNEY

Is it time for the transplant?

MARINO

Children's Hospital hasn't agreed on the procedure as of yet.

RODNEY

Why, for God's sake?

MARINO

The short of it is, your catastrophic insurance is dwindling. There's not enough to cover cost of the transplant and the aftercare.

MARIA

They can't do that. They have to take Kit.

MARINO

Rodney has a good job. I'll talk to the hospital. They should listen to me. For now, we'll continue the weekly treatments. Go get your daughter. She's pretty washed out.

INT. DARIN HOPKIN'S LAW OFFICE - TWO WEEKS LATER

Darin and Rodney go over the material to be used for the Preliminary Injunction hearing. On an easel, names appear, like Frank Jackson, Brian Sykes, etc. They AD-LIB a conversation while Darin scribbles another name on the easel.

INT. MARKET STREET COURT HOUSE - COURT ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Darin and Rodney are seated at the plaintiff's table. N-TEC's crew of SEVERAL LAWYERS and Petzinger are seated at the defense table. ROSSILINI is the N-TECs lead attorney.

Brian and other PEOPLE sit behind the rail.

Darin leans over to Rodney and whispers.

DARIN

Unless the Judge asks you a question, I'm the only one who talks. Capice?

Rodney leans into Darin and whispers,

RODNEY

You mean I can't yell 'objection'? I've always wanted to do that.

DARIN

Forget that crap.

Rodney eyes Petzinger who appears cool, collected. As JUDGE BAKER comes out of his chambers, people rise, and the BAILIFF AD-LIBS the entrance monologue. Everyone sits.

JUDGE

Although this is just a Preliminary Injunction hearing, certain formalities will be observed. I will have order in this court.

The Judge waves for Darin and Rossilini to come forward. As they approach, Rossilini seems smug, self-reliant. Darin hands the Judge the subpoenaed papers. He reads it, briefly, then hands the papers to Rossilini.

JUDGE

Is this the same list you received in Mr. Hopkins' deposition?

BACK OF THE COURT

MAUREEN REIRDON enters and takes a seat. She pulls out a pad and pencil from her attaché case and rests them on her lap.

JUDGE'S BENCH

Rossilini nods and hands the papers back to the Judge.

The Judge dismisses them and as Darin heads for his seat, he sees Maureen and smiles at her. Rodney catches this and,

RODNEY

Who is she?

DARIN

A reporter-friend. We'll take all the help we can get.

JUDGE

Mr. Hopkins. You have the floor. A short synopsis, please.

Darin gets up and moves to the center of the room.

DARIN

The list before you is from Nebraska Mutual, the medical insurance provider for N-TEC. We intend to call people from that list to prove that N-TEC and the CEO of Nebraska Mutual colluded to remove employees from the N-TEC payroll to save money on medical expenses. That's it, Your Honor.

JUDGE

Thank you for being brief, Mr. Hopkins. Mr. Rossilini, would you like to say something before we begin?

ROSSILINI

(stands)

It's not corporate policy to fire employees based on how much they cost the company in medical claims. Although some employees on this list will leave the company under the Force Reduction Plan, some will not. The Hopkins' claim is fallacious and ... Well, Your Honor, these proceedings put our company in an awkward position and, considering the emotional nature of this appeal, we would like to resolve this today if we can.

JUDGE

Duly noted. Let's continue. Mr. Hopkins, will you begin, please?

Rossilini sits.

DARIN

I'd like to call George Preston.

The Bailiff opens the gate in the center of the room and PRESTON, a stout, middle-aged man comes forward.

INT. COURTROOM - MINUTES LATER

Darin stands in front of Preston.

DARIN

Mr. Preston, what rating did you get in the recent rating period?

PRESTON

Met expectations. That's average.

DARIN

It says here that you have a heart condition. How much have the medical claims been in the past two years?

PRESTON

About three hundred thousand.

DARIN

Are you one of the employees who are being laid-off by N-TEC?

PRESTON

Yes.

DARIN

Thank you.

Rossilini stands up.

ROSSILINI

Mr. Preston, how much are you receiving in the severance package?

DARIN

Objection. Irrelevant.

JUDGE

Sustained. Rephrase.

ROSSILINI

Mr. Preston, you're close to retirement, aren't you.

PRESTON

Yes.

ROSSILINI

With this severance package, are you still going to be able to retire?

DARIN

(rises)

Your Honor. How Mr. Preston feels, or what is given in the severance package, is irrelevant ...

JUDGE

I agree ...

The Judge's patience seems to be stretched.

ROSSILINI

No more questions, Your Honor.

As he listens, Rodney spots a smug-looking Petzinger. Rodney's face shows disdain. Darin looks to the Bailiff.

DARIN

Brian Sykes, please.

The stenographer swears Brian in (AD-LIB). Darin moves in.

DARIN

Mr. Sykes. Are you HIV positive?

BRIAN

Yes, I am.

DARIN

Would you tell the court how much you have filed in medical claims this past year?

BRIAN

Over a hundred thousand.

DARIN

And you're going to lose your job?

BRIAN

No.

Rodney looks at Petzinger. She winks as if to say, 'gottcha'.

DARIN

You have not been placed 'at risk'?

BRIAN

Yes, I was, but I have been placed
in a new position with N-TEC.

Darin's eyes the Judge. Trouble between them is imminent.

DARIN

I would like to jump ahead and call
Frank Jackson to the stand, Judge.

Judge nods and waves to the Bailiff.

INT. COURT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank Jackson has already taken the stand.

DARIN

Is it true that the people who were
placed 'at risk' were given a
special organization code?

JACKSON

Yes.

DARIN

Did Mike Peersal call you to be
placed in one of your open
positions?

JACKSON

Yes. He called me for a job.

DARIN

And did you hire him?

JACKSON

No. I couldn't because he was
assigned a special organization
code, and HR told me I couldn't
hire people with that org code.

BRIAN

But yet, we heard that Brian Sykes
got a job.

JACKSON

Well, what happened was HR called
me a couple of days later and said
they made a mistake.

Rodney slams down his hand on the table. He peers over to
Petzinger who appears more smug than ever.

The Judge bangs his gavel and gives Rodney an ICY stare.

Darin appears shaken.

DARIN

Mr. Jackson. Does it seem logical to you that HR would make a mistake like this?

ROSSILINI

Objection. Mr. Hopkins is asking the witness to speculate ...

JUDGE

Sustained.

Darin paces back and forth. Rodney continues to stare at Petzinger. A rage is brewing inside Rodney.

DARIN

Your Honor. I need a continuance based on this information.

Rossilini AD-LIBS his objections.

DARIN

We'll need to hear from the HR people and they're not present.

In the back of the court, Maureen, the reporter, sensing defeat, gets up to leave. But before she opens the door, Rodney burst to his feet.

RODNEY

This is horseshit.

JUDGE

Sit down Mr. Hopkins.

RODNEY

Your Honor ...
(points to Petzinger)
... that woman over there is manipulating this process.

JUDGE

Mr. Hopkins, don't make me place you in contempt.

Rodney walks in the middle of the room, and the Judge motions to the Bailiff to contain Rodney.

RODNEY
 She's in contempt, Your Honor.
 (to Petzinger)
 How many people did you get to?

JUDGE
 Sit down, Mr. Hopkins.

Rodney approaches Petzinger while the Bailiff intercepts him.
 In the back of the court, Maureen sits down and watches.

RODNEY
 What's in it for you, Petzinger?
 Money? Stocks?

The Judge bangs the gavel down hard several times.

JUDGE
 You're in contempt, Mr. Hopkins.

RODNEY
 (shouting)
 Tell them, Petzinger. Tell them
 what you said about us peons.

JUDGE
 (to the Bailiff)
 Take him away.

While the Bailiff drags Rodney away, he rants.

RODNEY
 'Let them eat cake'! That's what
 she said. Tell them, you puffed-up
 slut. Let them eat cake, she said!
 LET THEM EAT CAKE!

Darin, disgusted, approaches the bench while Rodney
 disappears through the doors, still yelling.

DARIN
 Your Honor ...

JUDGE
 He stays in overnight. Let him cool
 off.

Rossilini approaches the bench.

ROSSILINI
 Your Honor, we wanted to finish ...

JUDGE
 (to Rossilini)
 Well, it's not going to happen.

DARIN
 I need a continuance ...

JUDGE
 Tomorrow morning, I want your
 brother in my chambers. I want an
 apology.

The Judge bangs the gavel one last time and as he leaves,

JUDGE
 We'll reconvene three weeks from
 Wednesday.

INT. COUNTY JAILER'S DESK - MOMENTS LATER

The JAILER watches Rodney sign a paper for his belongings.

RODNEY
 May I make a phone call?

The jailer hands Rodney the phone. Rodney dials.

INTERCUT - CONVERSATION WITH RODNEY AND KIT (AND MARIA).

Kit answers the phone in the kitchen. She has the phone in
 one hand and an empty ice cream cone in the other.

KIT
 Hello, Hopkins' residence.

RODNEY
 Hi, sweetie. It's Dad.

KIT
 Daddy. When are you coming home?

RODNEY
 I don't know, honey. You'll
 probably be asleep when I get home.

KIT
 Mommy bought chocolate ice cream.

RODNEY
 She did. Does it taste good?

A large scoop of chocolate ice cream lies on the floor. Obviously, Kit accidentally dropped it. Lady is licking it up. Kit leans down and whispers to the dog.

KIT
Does it taste good?

Lady lifts her head, barks once, then goes back to licking.

KIT
(into the phone)
It tastes delicious.

Maria enters the scene.

KIT
(to Maria)
It's Daddy.

She takes the phone from Kit, grabs a towel from the sink, and cleans the floor while talking.

Rodney leans against the wall. He looks beaten.

INT. COURT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Darin gathers his papers and puts them into his attaché case. As Rossilini leaves, he comes up to Darin.

ROSSILINI
Better luck next time.

As Rossilini leaves, newswoman Maureen walks up to Darin.

MAUREEN
Your brother put on quite a show.

Darin gathers up his belongings. They walk out together.

DARIN
He's got to work on his delivery.

MAUREEN
If you're going down to see him,
may I go with you?

DARIN
You better. Cause I wanna kill him.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - JAIL CELL

Rodney sits on a cot. GUARD ONE, Maureen and Darin enter. The guard opens the cell door.

DARIN

What's the matter with you?

RODNEY

It was justified anger.

DARIN

Justified, my ass.

(introducing)

Maureen, Rodney. Rodney, Maureen.

(to Rodney)

Goddamn it, Bro, I told you to keep your mouth shut.

RODNEY

Petzinger got to those people.

She's ... she's ...

MAUREEN

A slut, I think you said.

(pause)

Boys. What's done is done.

DARIN

Yeah, right. And it is what it is.

Great philosophy. I gotta go. I

gotta figure out what to do next.

I'm screwed.

Darin signals the jailer. The jailer opens the cell.

DARIN

My boss is going to kill me. He warned me ... I'll tell Maria what happened.

Darin leaves and Maureen sits down on the cot.

MAUREEN

Did she really say, 'Let them eat cake'?

Rodney nods.

MAUREEN

Why are you suing one of the biggest corporations in the country?

Maureen waits patiently for his response. Finally,

RODNEY

Because I'm scared to death about what's going to happen to my daughter if I lose my job.

Maureen appears stricken with sympathy. She opens her pad ready to write.

MAUREEN

Tell me your story, Rodney.

INT. COUNTY JAIL - JAIL CELL - EARLY MORNING

Darin enters and hands the GUARD TWO a release paper.

DARIN

My God! You'd think the Lindbergh
Trial is going on.

Guard Two reads the release then picks up a set of keys.

DARIN

How did he survive the night?

GUARD TWO

He was a model prisoner.

INT. RODNEY'S JAIL CELL - SECONDS LATER

Footsteps and the jingling of the keys awaken Rodney from a slumber. He sits up.

DARIN

Let's go, Pacino. Your public is
waiting.

Guard One opens the cell door and Rodney is escorted out.

DARIN

How was your evening?

RODNEY

(sarcastically)
Oh, fine. How was yours?

They talk as they leave the jail and walk to the court house.

DARIN

Now, you listen to me. You're going
to apologize to the Judge. And
you're going mean it. You hear me?

INT. COURT HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

They walk down a hall, stop at the Judge's office and sit down on a settee bench outside the office. Darin is smiling. He has the newspaper tightly clutched under his arm.

Rodney pulls at the paper, but Darin won't let him have it.

DARIN

Practice your apology.

The Judge enters the scene. He unlocks his door, walks into his office and hangs up his coat. Rodney and Darin follow him into the room. The Judge motions for them to sit.

JUDGE

Did you see that mob?

RODNEY

What mob?

JUDGE

Oh. Yes, well ... you'll find out soon enough.

(pause)

I'm listening.

RODNEY

I'm sorry for behaving so atrociously, Judge. I don't know what happened to me. I just saw Petzinger and that smug look on her face ...

JUDGE

If smugness was a crime, we'd all be serving time. Right? Anyway ... it looks like you boys have your job cut out for you. Go ...

(waves them off)

I'll see you both in three weeks.

(to Rodney)

And I expect you to be on your best behavior next time I see you.

Rodney nods and the brothers leave.

INT. COURT HOUSE MAIN ENTRANCE AREA - MINUTES LATER

Darin and Rodney walk up the stairs. Darin hands the newspaper to Rodney. Rodney reads the front page headlines while they reach the exit doors and walk out onto the steps.

INSERT - the headlines read, LET THEM EAT CAKE

RODNEY

Holy mackerel!

EXT. COURT HOUSE ENTRANCE AREA

Rodney faces Market Street and a parking lot that is literally filled with PEOPLE. Rodney alternately looks at the newspaper article, then out to the mass of humanity.

NEWSPERSON ONE

That's him.

A thunderous roar erupts then, in rapid-fire succession, news people AD-LIB questions to Rodney and Darin. Rodney appears dumfounded, paralyzed.

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - LATE IN THE DAY

The entire Hopkins family are sitting in the living room.

DARIN

You should've seen it, Maria. It was spectacular. News people popping questions; people yelling praise from everywhere at once.

The phone rings. Maria answers. She hand-cups the phone.

MARIA

It's someone from the OPRAH show.

DARIN

Give me. I'll handle it.

Darin takes the phone and winks at Rodney.

DARIN

Hello. I'm his brother and counsel.

(pause)

Yes. Of course. Tomorrow's fine.

Yes. Okay, got it. He'll be there.

(hangs up; to Rodney)

Let's go to Chicago and meet Oprah.

Kit comes over and hugs Rodney's leg. She looks tired, sickly. He picks her up, lovingly. Maria sits down in a daze. Darin looks at his watch.

DARIN

Let's see if we got on the news.

Darin turns on the TV to a news channel.

TV HOST

N-TEC said last week it would cut six thousand jobs this year in the tri-state area. But they didn't count on an employee who, in this great city of Brotherly Love, is fighting back. His name is Rodney Hopkins.

As everyone stirs with excitement, Darin motions for silence.

TV HOST

... He sued for an injunction to stop a lay-off at N-TEC. This is what happened at the courthouse today.

The TV switches to a taped video at the courthouse. A few people in the background are yelling 'Rocky' and won't stop.

The news people hurl questions, rapidly. They must yell over the crowd. Finally, one question surfaces above the rest.

TV REPORTER

Mr. Hopkins. Do you really think you can stop them?

TV RODNEY

I don't know.

LIVING ROOM RODNEY

Oh, God. I sound so stupid.

TV DARIN

Unless we can get N-TEC employees to step forward and tell the truth, I think we have an up-hill battle.

TV REPORTER

(to TV Rodney)

Did a colleague commit suicide because he was laid-off?

TV RODNEY

I'm tired. I got no sleep last night.

Darin mutes the TV. He gets up and kisses Jacob and Kit.

DARIN

(to Rodney)

We gotta work on your delivery.

MARIA

What's going on? What's happening?

DARIN

Your husband woke up an entire city
with this law suit. Damn, he woke
up an entire country!

(to Rodney)

Get a good night sleep. I'll be
here early with a limo. We got a
lot of preparing to do.

After Darin leaves, Maria holds onto Rodney.

MARIA

Is everything going to be okay?

RODNEY

I haven't got the foggiest idea.

INT. LIMO CAR - MORNING

Papers clutter the interior of the limo. As Rodney and Darin
talk, Darin references the papers.

DARIN

I was up all night pulling this. N-
TEC's average medical cost per
employee? Three thousand. A point to
remember. If you talk about layoffs,
use euphemisms like re-engineering,
restructuring, right-sizing, down-
sizing. It makes you sound like you
know what you're talking about.

RODNEY

What's this?

DARIN

Stock quotes.
(points to a paper)
Your CEO ... his stock options.
He's worth twenty-five million.

RODNEY

Yeah, but what's that going to
prove? That he's rich?

DARIN

Now you listen to me. We have to
create a perception of wrongdoing.
Perception is reality. Got that.
Example: the ratio of your CEO's
annual salary and the line worker is
five hundred to one.

(MORE)

DARIN (CONT'D)

The Fortune Five Hundred ratio is three hundred, which means Greene is one of the highest paid CEOs? Nothing wrong with that, but against the backdrop of the huge profits while they're laying off thousands of people, it appears wrong. Criminal, if we can prove they're doing it illegally.

Darin looks at some more papers. Rodney digs in with him. They pull into the airport.

INT. HARPO STUDIOS - CHICAGO - OPRAH SHOW - MORNING

Some directors, producers, camera people and stage hands prepare for the show. Cameras are moved into position, etc.

INT. BACK STAGE - DARIN AND RODNEY

Oprah appears from afar.

RODNEY

There she is. My God!

DARIN

Calm down. Relax.

From Rodney's POV, he sees Oprah ask a question of one of the producers. The producer points towards Rodney.

RODNEY

She's coming this way. Oh, my God.

OPRAH

Hello. Which one of you is Rodney?

Rodney extends his hand. They shake.

RODNEY

I am. And this is my wife ... my brother, Darin.

OPRAH

(chuckles)

Now, Rodney, I want you to feel comfortable. I'm just thrilled that you're here. I think what you did was terrific.

RODNEY

Thank you, Miss Winfrey.

OPRAH

We'll talk a little about the business side of layoffs. But you're here to explain the human side. What you're going through. Of course, you'll have the audience and me to support you. And call me Oprah. I'm on your side.

A MAKEUP PERSON joins them.

OPRAH

Relax. You're going to be a hit.

MAKEUP PERSON

Mr. Hopkins. Follow me, please.

As the Makeup Person whisks Rodney away, Oprah and Darin walk towards the stage. We stay on them.

DARIN

When will the show air?

OPRAH

If all goes well, today. We don't usually do that, but your brother is hot news. Come. We have a special seat in the audience for you.

INT. STAGE AREA - LATER

From Darin's point of view, the pre-show hype begins. Music plays. The sound director tests the sound system. The cameraman closest to Darin checks with the control room.

The countdown begins. Finally, Oprah walks out onto the stage and faces the camera squarely.

OPRAH

Welcome to the Oprah show.

She waits for the applause to subside.

OPRAH

Over the years, millions of people have suffered tremendous hardship and humiliation because they have lost their jobs due to downsizing.

(faces the audience)

Our self-esteem is affected. Our ability to support our family is compromised. Some of you here, and

(to the camera)

(MORE)

OPRAH (CONT'D)

many of you watching, have lost your jobs, or know someone who has lost a job due to downsizing.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - OPRAH SHOW

Directors view the monitors, AD-LIB commands. Zoom in on Camera One, Position Camera Two, etc.

BACK TO OPRAH

OPRAH

Most struggle through the hardships and pick up the pieces and move on. Families are tested, sometimes beyond their means to cope. Today, we will talk to someone who decided to fight back. Rodney Hopkins sued one of the more powerful companies in America. He was driven, in part, by the desire to maintain his medical insurance continuity for his daughter who is home fighting against leukemia. This single act of courage has people all over the country buzzing their approval. Welcome, Rodney Hopkins.

The audience erupts with a standing ovation. The spirit of acceptance is extraordinary, even from the production people. It catches Oprah by surprise.

Oprah, teary-eyed from the joy given in this reception, steps back and sits down on an aisle-step.

RODNEY

looks out in front of him. He humbly accepts the praise. He sees his brother clapping with the rest of the audience. Rodney appears humble.

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE -- 4:45 PM - SAME DAY

Rodney and Darin burst through the door. Audra, Maria, Kit and Jacob are watching the Oprah show on TV.

Maria gets up and hugs Rodney.

MARIA

You are wonderful. I can't believe the reception you received. Sit.

Darin sits next to Audra; Rodney next to Maria. Kit sluggishly climbs up on Rodney's lap. The OPRAH show comes back from the commercial. Their eyes are all glued to the TV.

TV

Rodney sits on the edge of the stage. Oprah on the top step.

OPRAH (ON TV)

Some people are saying you are more popular than Rocky in Philadelphia. How does that make you feel?

RODNEY (ON TV)

No. I don't think anyone in Philadelphia can be more popular than Rocky Balboa. Besides, he's not a even a real guy, is he?

BACK TO THE HOPKINS' LIVING ROOM

Jacob runs around the couch with his hands over his head humming the tune to Rocky.

Maria buries her face in her hands.

RODNEY

I was trying to be cute.

BACK TO THE TV

Moves towards a man in the audience.

OPRAH (ON TV)

Okay. Let's talk to the audience.

MAN IN AUDIENCE (ON TV)

What do you think your chances are of winning your case in court?

RODNEY (ON TV)

I don't know. But my brother ... my lawyer is in the audience. Ask him.

Oprah runs over to Darin and hands him the microphone.

AUDRA (O.S.)

Oh. You're so handsome on TV.

DARIN (ON TV)

It's just a Preliminary Injunction hearing at this stage.

(MORE)

DARIN (ON TV) (CONT'D)

If it were a jury case, I'd feel more confident. It wouldn't be prudent to speculate further than that.

HOPKINS' LIVING ROOM

Rodney ruffles Darin's hair.

RODNEY

Your big moment.

(mockingly)

I'm sorry, I can't talk to you, cause I don't have anything to say.

Darin, enjoying his moment of glory, laughs. The phone rings.

MARIA

The phone has been ringing all day. Maureen, from The Philadelphia Inquirer called. And PEOPLE Magazine called. Twice.

Maria gets up to answer the phone.

ON THE TV - Oprah moves to another person in the audience.

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE (ON TV)

Are you married or divorced? If you're divorced, are you available.

Everyone in the audience laughs.

RODNEY (ON TV)

Yes, I am happily married, to a beautiful woman. And I have two wonderful children.

HOPKINS' LIVING ROOM

Jacob and Kit make a fuss (AD-LIB) over their dad's answer on TV. Maria interrupts.

MARIA

It's a producer. John Brown show?

SERIES OF SCENES - RODNEY GAINING MEDIA PROFESSIONALISM

A) Darin coaches Rodney about hand gestures when talking.

B) Darin watches Rodney during the PEOPLE magazine shoot. Darin is whisked onto the set for a picture with his brother.

C) Rodney, in a studio, is talking with a Michael Smerconish, a Philadelphia radio talk show host.

D) Darin inspects Rodney as he tries on clothes in a store.

END SERIES OF SHCENES

INT. PETZINGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Charlotte sits while Collins gets right into her face.

COLLINS

He's got national attention. People are not only listening to him, they're believing him. If he's going to play this in the media, then so do you.

PETZINGER

No! Greene will never go for it.

COLLINS

Don't tell him. Just do it. Hopkins is appearing on the Brown show tomorrow. I got you on it. Debate him. Neutralize him.

PETZINGER

I'm not going to dignify that prick by appearing ...

COLLINS

(calm, icy)
Let me put it another way, Charlotte. Henry Fisher, the S-E-C Henry Fisher, said we better come to closure on this real quick, else he's going to get involved. Now we don't want that, do we?

Petzinger's demeanor is one of surrender.

INT. JOHN BROWN TALK SHOW - MORNING

Backstage, Rodney is talking on a pay phone with Maria.

MARIA (V.O.)

Audra is here, thank God. But you should be here. Kit's real sick. And I can't handle this alone.

RODNEY

Please, honey. Let Audra take you
and Kit to the hospital, and I'll
be there as soon as I can.

MARIA (V.O.)

Is being on damn TV more important
than your daughter?

From afar, the director waves for Rodney to hurry up.

RODNEY

Honey. I love you. I gotta go.

He hangs up and rests his head on the wall.

INT. STAGE AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Two chairs and a small round table set the stage. Rodney sits
in one chair. The other chair is empty. Rodney places a copy
of THE READERS DIGEST under his chair.

JOHN BROWN is standing in the isle with the audience.

BROWN

So, welcome to Philadelphia's new
live afternoon talk show. And with
us today, is the man of the moment.
One man against a huge corporation.
A person who makes all
Philadelphians proud. Won't you
welcome, Rodney Hopkins.

Loud applause emanates from the audience.

BROWN

Also with us today is the executive
VP of N-TEC, Charlotte Petzinger.

Rodney, surprised, has an uneasy demeanor as Petzinger
strolls onto stage. She exudes confidence while a bevy of
'boos' overwhelms any applause. Some men whistle conveying
Charlotte's good looks.

CONTROL ROOM

TV monitors show the camera outputs. One shows Petzinger
taking her seat. Another shows Rodney appearing ill at ease.

DIRECTOR

Ten seconds to commercial.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ONE
Five ... four ... three

On one of the monitors,

BROWN (ON TV)
We'll be right back after this.

BACK TO THE STAGE

Rodney looks in the audience for Darin. Darin motions for him to calm down.

PETZINGER
(to Rodney)
I told you to back off. You
wouldn't listen, would you?

Rodney takes a deep breath and watches the production people performing their tasks. Five ... four ... three ...

Brown looks into the camera and,

BROWN
Welcome back. Okay. Let's start.
Layoffs. Why are companies
downsizing? Ms. Petzinger, you first.

PETZINGER
Corporations are downsizing for a
myriad of reasons, Mr. Brown.
Sometimes, companies have invested
in areas where they shouldn't have.

INT. N-TEC BUILDING - CEO GREENE'S OFFICE

GREENE sits at a rich desk in a room fitting for a CEO. A TV is embedded in a wall. The telephone rings. He answers it.

VOICE (V.O.)
Channel two, Mr. Greene.

Using the remote, Greene turns on the TV to channel two and sees Charlotte Petzinger in mid-conversation.

PETZINGER (ON TV)
We created Business Units years ago.
Each unit has the same processes and
several center staffs which perform
similar work functions.

Greene hangs up the phone and watches the TV intently.

BACK TO THE BROWN SHOW

A close-up on Petzinger shows her confident, self-reliant.

PETZINGER

We need to eliminate redundant functions, consolidate work centers.

JUMP CUT

RODNEY

There's many reasons for downsizing. My goal is finding alternatives to throwing people out in the street.

JUMP CUT

PETZINGER

The implications are clear - make the necessary changes today, or forfeit the future.

JUMP CUT

RODNEY

Change could be good. But if every time we change business direction we throw people off the payroll, we start to lose our core people, our experts, and it will become harder, not easier, to do business.

JUMP CUT

PETZINGER

A company's survivability depends on what is done today ...

JUMP CUT

RODNEY

You'll spend millions of dollars fixing problems created by an unmotivated, demoralized workforce. A company can't survive without the loyalty of its employees?

JUMP OUT

CONTROL ROOM

The director paces up and down watching the monitors.

DIRECTOR
Is Hopkins sweating. Zoom in on two.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ONE
Camera two, zoom in.

On the close-up, Rodney shows beads of sweat on his forehead.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Camera two, zoom back and hold.

BACK TO THE STAGE - PETZINGER APPEARS TO BE IN CONTROL.

PETZINGER
If we don't cut now, we'll have to
cut more people later when
competition will have gotten
stiffer, and N-TEC would have grown
weaker.

RODNEY
Executives like Ms. Petzinger don't
care what their actions do to the
employees and their families.
(to Petzinger)
You say you care for the employees,
but you treat us like numbers. You
talk about a viable future in terms
of financial gains ... productivity
... rising stock prices ...

INT. A MANUFACTURING BREAK ROOM SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA

EMPLOYEES are intently watching the Brown Show on the TV.

PETZINGER (ON TV)
How is a company supposed to get
high quality executives if it
doesn't offer competitive perks?

INT. ANOTHER WHITE COLLAR COMPANY BREAK ROOM

EMPLOYEES are intently watching the Brown Show on the TV.

RODNEY (ON TV)
What's your bonus this year,
Petzinger. A couple hundred
thousand?

(MORE)

RODNEY (ON TV) (CONT'D)
You can't have employee loyalty
when you lay them off while you're
buying new cars and installing
backyard tennis courts.

The employees applaud their approval.

INT. A GOVERNMENT BUILDING BREAK ROOM

EMPLOYEES are gathered around a TV watching the Brown Show.

PETZINGER (ON TV)
Executives who protect the bottom
line are being responsible. Would
you have them make it corporate
policy to ignore the bottom line?

INT. BROWN SHOW

John Brown raises his hand to stop the debate.

BROWN
Okay. Okay. Great stuff. We have to
stop here for a commercial break.

Petzinger points her finger at Rodney.

PETZINGER
You sit there pretending to care
about people when you contrived a
list and illegally positioned it in
court as evidence.

Rodney goes to respond, but can't because,

BROWN
We've got to go a commercial break.

PETZINGER
You don't know anything about
running a corporation. You lack a
fundamental knowledge of the
financial processes. You
manufactured slanderous allegations
which were already proven false.

CONTROL ROOM

The director shouts commands (AD-LIB) to go to a commercial.

RODNEY

removes his mic (lav), throws it on the table and gets up.

RODNEY

My family needs me. This is all
wrong. I have to go.

Rodney leaves the stage. A mild, unsettling chorus of 'boos'
come from the audience. Darin rushes up to Brown on stage.

DARIN

He's just going to the men's room.

INT. BACKSTAGE OF THE JOHN BROWN SHOW

Darin rushes backstage and catches Rodney walking away.

DARIN

What are you doing? You can't
leave.

RODNEY

Watch me.

Darin tags behind Rodney. They walk briskly.

DARIN

I talked to your HR people. They
say the org code was established to
give 'at risk' people first choice
of jobs. They say Jackson
misunderstood this and
misinterpreted them. Sorry to
stress you Bro, but we don't have a
case anymore.

Rodney keeps walking. Both have a mission.

DARIN

This is your only battleground. You
go, she wins.

Rodney continues walking.

DARIN

Fine. I'll call Children's Hospital
and tell them that you'll pay for
Kit's transplant with your
indignation.

Rodney turns the corner out of Darin's sight.

RODNEY
My daughter needs me.

DARIN
Then do it for her, and the
hundreds of kids like her whose
parents are getting screwed by
people like Petzinger. They don't
get the chance to fight back on
national TV.

After a couple of beats, Rodney comes back into view.

RODNEY
You melodramatic little prick.

INT. JOHN BROWN TALK SHOW STAGE - SECONDS LATER

The director AD-LIBS the countdown return from the
commercial. Finally, he motions Brown that 'he's on'.

BROWN
Well, it seems that Mr. Hopkins ...

Rodney returns from backstage.

BROWN
No. No. He hasn't left. He's here.

Rodney takes his seat and puts the microphone back on.

RODNEY
I may not know how to run a
company, but what I do know is N-
TEC made record profits for two
quarters in a row. So why are they
laying us off?

INT. N-TEC BREAK ROOM

Dan is intently watching the TV with other employees.

RODNEY (ON TV)
This year N-TEC will give a half a
billion dollars in bonuses to its
employees, most of it going to
executives. And N-TEC has twenty
billion dollars in the pension
fund. That's a lot of money. We
should be using some of it in
seeking alternate means to layoffs.

INT. CEO GREEN OFFICE

Mr. Greene sits at his desk watching the TV. Expressionless.

RODNEY (ON TV)

Look what's happened to N-TEC's stock since the announcement of the layoff. Our CEO stands to make millions from this re-engineering process. And with you're stock options, what are you worth now?

PETZINGER (ON TV)

What's your point, that executives make more money than you?

BACK TO THE STAGE

A pin could be heard dropping, it's so quiet.

RODNEY

No. Of course not. It's just obscene that corporations are reporting profits when ...

PETZINGER

N-TEC spent two million in training for the displaced employees. And our severance pay is generous ...

Petzinger appears to be fumbling. Vulnerable.

RODNEY

Severance pay! Severance pay? You just don't get it, do you, Petzinger?

Rodney reaches under his chair for the READER'S DIGEST.

RODNEY

Let me read you an article about an executive who understood the dynamics of a layoff.

(reads)

'Bud Miller, president and CEO of Arvida, a real-estate company, closed regional offices, reorganized departments and cut his work force in half. In the process, he turned a money-losing company into a profitable one.

(MORE)

RODNEY (CONT'D)

But despite the trimming, Miller, 50 years old with an upper six-figure salary, believed one layer of excess remained. So last March he resigned. "I couldn't justify me to me," says Miller. "Every fiber of my person wanted to stay. But I couldn't look at the people I let go and say I applied a different standard to me."

A quiet permeates the set.

RODNEY

You want to talk about what is right? Call Bud Miller. I'm sure he'll have a few ideas for you. I'm finished here.

Rodney tries to remove his lav.

PETZINGER

You pompous nobody. What gives you the right to launch this attack?

RODNEY

It's unethical for a company to fire people because they have medical handicaps. And when they make money in the process, it's evil.

PETZINGER

Are you implying ...

RODNEY

I'm implying nothing. I'm accusing. I accuse executives of accumulating their personal wealth on a foundation of broken families and shattered careers. I accuse myself and others like me for sitting back when we were not personally affected.

(pointing)

And I accuse you, Ms. Petzinger, of deceit and immorality. You obviously have great power over people. But you no longer have it over me.

Rodney gets up and leaves. Loud applause follow him.

Petzinger, full of rage, stands up and motions for the cameraman to follow. While Petzinger recites the following, a control room sound technician cuts off Petzinger's mic.

PETZINGER

That man is full of unsubstantiated accusations. And since he was laughed out of court, he's trying to seduce the public with his emotional platitudes.

She looks around. The stagehands and Brown are focused on her. She forces a smile as if posing for a photo. Awkward.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - ISOLATION WARD - LATER

A nurse and Doctor Marino help Kit as she has the dry heaves. Rodney and Maria stand by dressed in gowns, masks and gloves while Darin watches outside the room through a window.

DARIN'S POV: Marino shakes his head, indicating things are not well. Rodney comes out to speak to Darin.

RODNEY

She caught a virus.

Darin and Rodney hug.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - VISITOR'S LOUNGE - THAT NIGHT

Maria sleeps on a couch. Rodney slumbers in his chair. The nurse walks in and nudges Rodney. He grunts, waking Maria.

NURSE

Your daughter's condition ... it's extremely serious.

Rodney sobers quickly. The nurse leaves. Maria looks tired, unable to talk. Rodney leads her out of the room.

INT. ISOLATION WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Kit, unconscious, struggles for every breath. Rodney and Maria, wearing gowns, masks and gloves, sit by her bed. The temperature monitor reads 102.2 degrees.

RODNEY

Hold on, Kitten.

EXT. OUTSIDE ON A STREET SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY - MORNING

The sun has just risen as a newspaper truck pulls up and dumps newspapers and a magazine bundle by a newsstand.

The cover of PEOPLE shows a picture of Rodney and Darin which was taken in the SERIES OF SHOTS on page 80, scene B.

INT. ISOLATION WARD - MEANWHILE

Rodney and Maria, in gowns and masks, sit in chairs by Kit's bedside. Maria sleeps. Rodney is awake.

Kit awakens, somewhat alert. She looks healthier than before.

RODNEY

How are you feeling, sweetie?

Kit sticks out her tongue, as if to say 'yuky'.

Maria awakens, and looks at the temp monitor. It reads 98.9. She gets up and comes over to Rodney, removes her mask, and kisses him on the forehead.

MARIA

At last. Something to be grateful for.

KIT

What does grateful mean?

MARIA

It means to be thankful for what you have. Or for something good that happens to you.

Kit seems to be deep in thought.

RODNEY

Do you have anything you're grateful for, sweetie?

KIT

Oh, yes. For sure.

MARIA

What's that?

KIT

My skin. If I didn't have skin, my insides would tumble out.

Rodney and Maria chuckle.

RODNEY

Well, I would be very, very grateful for a cup of coffee.

MARIA

Me too. I'll fly if you buy.

Rodney pulls out his wallet. Gives Maria money and she leaves. Kit notices the pictures in Rodney's wallet.

KIT

Show me the pictures.

Rodney flips through the pictures in his wallet. When Kit sees her picture, she grabs his wrist and takes a long look.

RODNEY

You look very pretty in that dress.

KIT

Daddy. When you think of me, think of me when I looked like this.

Rodney struggles to smile as Doctor Marino appears at the window and gives Rodney a 'let's talk outside' head-nod.

OUTSIDE THE ISOLATION WARD ROOM

As Rodney comes out of Kit's room, Maria approaches with coffee. She hands a cup to Rodney.

DOCTOR MARINO

I don't have to say this. I'm sure you know. Last night was a miracle.

(pause)

And I have more good news. HLA found a match. We can go for the transplant.

Maria leans into Rodney and sighs as if she's been holding her breath for a month.

DOCTOR MARINO

Wait. I don't want to give you false hope. Two things. First, Kit will have two intensive weeks of radiation treatments. Her immune system ... well you saw what happened this past week. She'll be on medication all the time because she won't have a cell in her body to ward off infection.

(MORE)

DOCTOR MARINO (CONT'D)

It'll be a five month ordeal. And you two must be with her all the way.

Rodney puts his arm around Maria. They know the routine.

DOCTOR MARINO

You both need to be there every day ... every moment, if possible.

RODNEY

You said two things. What else?

DOCTOR MARINO

Children's Hospital hasn't approved the transplant yet. I'll tell them we got a match. They'll have to move on this once they hear that.

Maria's knees buckle, exhausted. The Doctor and Rodney escort her to a chair. He examines her eyes, then pulls out a pad and writes out a prescription. He hands it to Rodney.

DOCTOR MARINO

It's a mild sedative.

Dr. Marino looks straight into Rodney's eyes and jams his finger into Rodney's chest.

DOCTOR MARINO

Stop traveling around the country on your crusade and go to group.

INT. SELF HELP GROUP MEETING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Maria clutches onto Rodney's arm while they walk past the table with self-help literature. Rodney guides Maria to a chair and they both sit. The leader starts the meeting.

LEADER

Welcome. Won't you all join with me in reciting the Serenity Prayer.

They all AD-LIB the Serenity Prayer.

INT. PETZINGER'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Dan enters Petzinger's office. There is tension between them.

DAN

I left my eye drops in your bathroom.

Petzinger waves him on as she takes a folder from her inbox.

INSERT FOLDER: THE NAME 'RODNEY HOPKINS' IS ON THE LABEL.

INT. OUTSIDE PETZINGER'S OFFICE

CEO, Bob Greene, appears from down the hall. The secretaries, Dawn and Priscilla, perk up and respectfully greet him. He heads right into Petzinger's office and slams the door.

PETZINGER'S BATHROOM

Dan, startled at the sound of the closed door, slowly picks up his eye drops and moves closer to the door.

PETZINGER'S INTERIOR OFFICE

Greene walks in front of the desk and sits.

GREENE

It's quite a mess you got us into, Charlotte. Our market share has gone down five percent in two weeks. Congress is giving the SEC some heat. You know what that means? Two years of planning ... gone down the shitter ... and a lot of pissed-off people.

Petzinger leans back in her chair, defiant.

GREENE

I've canceled the force reduction plan. I'm disbanding the task force.

PETZINGER

You can't do that.

GREENE

Hell I can't. You've been careless letting a second-level manager go toe-to-toe with you on a live talk show. Stupid move, Petzinger.

PETZINGER

What about Collins?

GREENE

He doesn't want to go to jail any more than the rest of us. We're cutting our loses. It's over.

PETZINGER'S BATHROOM

Dan is glued to the door, listening. There is a long pause.

PETZINGER'S OFFICE

Green gets up from his chair and walks to window. He stares out and appears to gain some serenity from what he sees.

GREENE

We did what we did because ... it was easy, wasn't it? If my instincts are right, we'll probably pay for it for the rest of our lives.

He turns around walking past the desk to the door.

PETZINGER

What about Hopkins?

GREENE

People are listening to him, you numskull. Unless he has seriously violated corporate policy with a terminable infraction, leave him alone.

Greene opens the door and leaves.

Dan comes out of the bathroom and while exiting,

DAN

What a tangled web we weave.

Petzinger, seething, opens Rodney's folder. In it, there is a tape, presumably from the night Tatum and Rodney broke into her office.

INT. COUNTY COURT - A WEEK LATER

Many PEOPLE are in the court, including reporters. Rossilini sits with Petzinger at the defense table. Rodney and Darin sit at the plaintiff's table.

JUDGE

I have an affidavit from N-TEC's HR director here. It explains the policy misinterpretation by Mr. Jackson. As a result, the plaintiff has withdrawn the complaint.

(to Darin)

(MORE)

JUDGE (CONT'D)

Is there anything you would like to add before we adjourn?

Darin shakes his head. Rodney looks extremely disappointed. The Judge looks to Rossilini who stands and,

ROSSILINI

Your Honor. N-TEC will be making an official announcement this morning. After careful consideration of the human stress that is being caused by the recent restructuring effort, there will not be a downsizing.

Cheers erupt from the gallery. The Judge bangs his gavel, and as he gets up to leave,

JUDGE

Save your editorials for the press. This hearing is over.

The Bailiff hands Rodney a note as Rossilini comes over and shakes Darin's hand. Rodney pulls Darin to him and,

RODNEY

Kit's vomiting blood. I gotta go.

Darin reaches into his pocket and hands him his keys.

DARIN

Take my car. Sneak out the back. I'll take a taxi and meet you there later.

As Rodney walks to the back entrance, he catches Maureen's eye. He tries to smile, but can't.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - ISOLATION WARD - LATER

Kit lies in bed asleep as frail and sickly as ever. Rodney and Maria sit bedside. Somber.

INT. N-TEC - COMPUTER LAB - DAYS LATER

Rodney sits at his desk as Tatum walks in with a PEOPLE magazine under her arm.

TATUM

How's she doing?

RODNEY

She's holding her own, I guess.

Tatum's demeanor is sympathetic. She holds out the magazine and points to the inset photo of Rodney.

TATUM

These peckerheads actually hinted that you might've made up the list to save your own skin.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - SAME DAY

Rodney, a SECURITY PERSON, and Paul sit at the round table. Petzinger stands close by Paul. She waves the tape.

PETZINGER

This is a voice copy of you and Tatum Walker the night you broke into my office.

(icy)

Legal tells me I can prosecute you for breaking into my office. Consider yourself lucky. I feel compassionate today. I'm just going to fire you, since you masterminded the break-in. If you decide to fight, then I'll fire Tatum Walker. And then I'll press charges against both of you.

The security person reaches out his hand to Rodney.

SECURITY PERSON

Badge.

Rodney studies Paul. Paul looks away, cowardly. Rodney takes off his badge and hands it to the security person.

Petzinger is teeming with a countenance of a conqueror.

PETZINGER

You pick up your last check and your belongings on Friday. Now leave.

INT. TRAIN TRAVELING SOMEWHERE - LATE AFTERNOON

TWO PASSENGERS sit together. One reads a newspaper.

INSERT front page headlines which reads: HERO IS FIRED.

PASSENGER ONE

The guy who sued N-TEC got fired?

PASSENGER TWO

Yeah? Too bad. What was he thinking, anyway. Can't fight City Hall and expect to win. How the Flyers do?

Passenger One turns to the Sports section.

PASSENGER ONE

They won.

INT. HOPKINS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rodney and Maureen, the reporter, sit at the dining room table. Maureen and Rodney drink coffee as they talk.

MAUREEN

He just walked right in the news room and told me this incredible story. He waved his anonymity too. The man's got courage.

RODNEY

Dan Paterson's an honest man.

MAUREEN

The way it works is the CEO of one company sits on the board of another. They're required to buy stocks or are given the stocks or options as an incentive to make the correct, strategic decisions. It's called an Interlocking Board Of Directors. Paterson is accusing Collins, who is head of Nebraska Mutual, the company that handles your medical claims, of planning this layoff two years ago with N-TEC board members. At that time they all bought stock like it was going out of style. This should've raised a flag with the SEC. But here's the kicker. The SEC Chief, Henry Fisher, okay-ed this 'interlocking' behavior. Said it was aggressive but not illegal.

RODNEY

But they all knew full well the layoff would make the stock go up.

MAUREEN

Yes! That's why I have to prove intent. I think I can.

(MORE)

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

I can prove that Joseph Collins was promised a two million dollar bonus if he improved Nebraska's bottom line by five percent.

RODNEY

So, they layoff N-TEC people with medical problems, Nebraska Mutual has fewer pay outs, and Collins reaches that goal, no problem. But how did Collins convince Green and Petzinger to go along?

MAUREEN

Appealed to their greed. Lower pay outs by Nebraska translates to lower premiums for N-TEC and ...

RODNEY

N-TEC stock goes up some more.

MAUREEN

It gets better. Collins has colluded with more than just N-TEC. Another informer tells me that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Rodney can only shake his head. Dumbfounded.

MAUREEN

But they didn't count on one thing.

RODNEY

What's that?

MAUREEN

You. You spoiled their plan.

Maureen sees in Rodney's face more depression than pride.

RODNEY

Well, all this is interesting. But I need to go to the hospital now.

MAUREEN

I pray your daughter pulls through.

RODNEY

Thank you, Maureen.

Maureen shakes Rodney's hand and then leaves.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Rodney sits in Marino's office.

MARINO

I'm sorry, Rodney. The Children's Hospital won't do the procedure.

RODNEY

Why?

MARINO

Well, news travels fast. They know you got fired. And even with COBRA you don't have enough to pay for what needs to be done long term.

RODNEY

(fighting defeat)
What are my options?

MARINO

Money, Rodney. You need money.

Rodney leaks a gruff, sarcastic chuckle. Too tired to cry.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - DAY

Tatum is talking on her phone. Several pages of a blue-line pad are flipped up exposing the front sheet which has a list of names. All the names are crossed off except the last name.

TATUM

Amanda, baby. You got your bonus check today, didn't you?

(pause)

Yeah, me too. We gotta talk.

INSERT PAD

Tatum scratches off Amanda's name from the list.

INT. COMPUTER LAB - FRIDAY

Rodney, carrying an empty box, walks in with a security person. Tatum gets up from her desk and comes over.

TATUM

I'm so sorry, Rod. Paul took me aside, and told me what happened.

She pulls Rodney to her and they hug.

RODNEY

Couldn't see us both going to jail.

Rodney turns to pack up his belongings as the security person watches. Rodney takes out a picture of Kit, takes a good look at it, then puts it in the box.

While Rodney packs, Tatum wanders off.

INT. N-TEC ATRIUM RIGHT OUTSIDE COMPUTER LAB - SECONDS LATER

Tatum walks to the banister and whistles like a truck driver.

Several people on the floor below and above appear to be waiting for this signal. Tatum waves her hand and yells,

TATUM

It's show time.

The security guard escorts Rodney out of the computer lab and to the elevator. Rodney and Tatum's eyes meet.

RODNEY

Walk me down?

TATUM

I can't.

Rodney puts the box down and walks over to her and they hug. He picks the box up and walks to the elevator. Once he turns the corner, Tatum looks down in the atrium at the many PEOPLE who are congregating below. She looks up and sees Petzinger.

TATUM

(to Petzinger; yells)

Hey, Putz-inger. Check it out.

INT. GROUND FLOOR ELEVATOR - SECONDS LATER

The elevator doors open. Rodney's face shows surprise and confusion. From Rodney's POV, he sees two rows of PEOPLE lining the corridor down the length of the building.

As he gets out, COLLEAGUE ONE approaches and puts his bonus check into Rodney's personal box.

COLLEAGUE ONE

For your daughter, Rod.

Some employees rip out a personal check from their checkbooks. Others have cash. And some are using the back of other employees to sign their bonus checks.

PETZINGER

watches from above. She yells to the security guard.

PETZINGER
Clear the atrium.

RODNEY'S

face celebrates the occasion as COLLEAGUE TWO steps up and deposits a check in his box.

COLLEAGUE TWO
It's not much. Hope it helps.

As Rodney walks down the aisle, people continue to put money in the box. Rodney's tearful, dazzled expression tells all.

PETZINGER

shouts to the crowd to disband. In a frenzy to stop what she sees, she pushes the person next to her and,

PETZINGER
Go down there. Clear those people.

Dan walks up to the rail and joins Petzinger watching the people dump checks and cash into Rodney's personal box. She AD-LIBS commands to stop what's going on, but to no avail.

Dan pulls out a check out from his pocket.

DAN
It's not my entire bonus. I'm going to need a little cushion while I look for a new job.

RODNEY

continues accepting money while walking down the center of the building. He finally reaches the exit which is next to the elevators. The elevator door opens and Dan runs out and stands behind Brian and Tatum.

Brian puts a check into the box and tries to say something, but Rodney tosses him a forgiving look.

RODNEY
No need to say anything.

Tatum hugs Rodney. After a long, choking pause,

RODNEY

Well, wonders never cease. I've never seen you lost for words.

Dan approaches. He puts his check into the box and an uproarious moment of cheer resonates throughout the building.

EXT. N-TEC EXIT AREA

As Rodney walks down the steps, he looks up to the sky and takes a deep, soothing breath. Darin comes running up.

RODNEY

Will you look at this. People just ... gave me this.

Rodney swirls through the checks and cash he just received.

DARIN

I know. Tatum called me and told me. She engineered this, you know?

Rodney can't speak, he's so choked up. He continues to walk briskly to his car while Darin follows.

DARIN

Rodney, Maureen's writing an article for tomorrow's edition. It's going to blow the lid off ...

RODNEY

Look! I got to get to the bank, and then to the hospital. Come with me.

Darin tries to jump in his way, but Rodney keeps moving.

DARIN

You don't understand. WLLB will be here in fifteen minutes. They want to interview us and your CEO ...

RODNEY

Counselor. You've been amazing. But I need to get to the bank.

Rodney continues walking with a purpose.

DARIN

Maureen's got another executive talking. My phone's been ringing off the hook. Everybody from CNN to NBC. They know the truth ...

Rodney turns a corner and disappears from Darin's view.

RODNEY

All I want is Kit to get better,
and Maria to be happy again. And I
want Jacob to have a normal life.
Enjoy your press conference, Bro.
You've earned it.

DARIN

Tell Kit I'll see her tonight. I'll
let you know what happens.

Darin looks at his watch and with an urgency he vanishes.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL-INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DAYS LATER

We come full cycle as we pick up where the first scene began.
Rodney and Maria watch Kit through a glass window as the
Nurse manipulates the three-pronged HICKMAN line which
terminates in her chest.

The TV plays at the nurses station, and the news headlines
attracts Rodney's attention. He walks over to the nurses
station to listen.

TV HOST (V.O.)

... ever since The Philadelphia
Inquirer broke the story last week,
there's been pandemonium at the
Capital. Gloria Swenson is there now.
What do you have for us, Gloria?

TV switches to GLORIA - Senate Building in the background.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Peter, earlier today Senator
Almquist drilled the CEOs of both
Nebraska Mutual and N-TEC. At one
point Joseph Collins responded 'I
don't recall' to five consecutive
questions posed by the Senator
which resulted in a shouting match
between the two ...

MARIA

continues watching through the window. Kit opens her eyes.
Maria quickly beckons to Rodney. Rodney promptly appears at
Maria's side. He 'flicks' a kiss through the window. Kit
tries to return the gesture, but can't.

AT THE NURSES STATION

NURSE ONE listens to the TV while working.

GLORIA (ON TV)

Senator Almquist was angry today when he found out that the daughter of Mr. Fisher, the SEC chief, was given a job with Nebraska Mutual right out of college for seventy thousand dollars. Wait, here comes Fisher now. Mr. Fisher. What happened in there today ...

MARIA AND RODNEY

NURSE TWO walks onto the scene, stops and peeks in the window. She waves to Kit, then heads to the nurses station.

NURSES STATION

Nurse Two walks up to the station.

NURSE TWO

(to Nurse One)

Don't think she's going to make it.

Nurse One looks over to Maria and Rodney and nods. Sad.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SENATE BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Gloria is interviewing Maureen in front of a TV camera. Limos are parked curbside. Other NEWS PEOPLE are waiting for something to happen.

MAUREEN

(into the mic)

Well, sadly, people like Rodney Hopkins, who have no position, no power, become victims. However, no one counted on him fighting back the way he did.

Just as she says this Bob Greene, Petzinger and a host of other people, storm through the doors of the Senate building.

Maureen and Gloria rush to get closer as Greene and Petzinger try to push through. The news media hurl questions (AD-LIB). One question surfaces above the rest to Greene.

REPORTER

Is it true that you are facing a prison term? What are you being accused of exactly, Mr. Greene?

Greene does not answer, pushes the microphone away and ducks into the limo with Petzinger.

SUPER: "EIGHT YEARS LATER"

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

The third baseman pounds his glove.

The pitcher throws the ball.

The batter hits a hot shot down to the third baseman who gloves the ball with ease. As he turns to throw the batter out, the letters 'HOPKINS' appear on the back of his shirt.

In the stands, Rodney and Maria applaud. Tatum sits next to Rodney. Both are wearing spring jackets with 'EASTERN BELL' lettering on the back. Dangling from Rodney's neck is the cross and chain, the one he tossed on the bar room floor.

Darin and Audra are close-by on the first row. Audra is rocking a stroller. She peeks in and fusses over the baby.

BY THE DUGOUT - LATER

The coach is in the middle of a post-game talk. Maria stands by the dugout waiting for Jacob along with Darin and Maria.

Rodney leans on the fence by third base and watches Darin, Audra and Maria talking. Darin turns the stroller and he and Audra start to leave. Darin yells to Rodney,

DARIN

We'll meet you guys for pizza.

From Rodney's POV, he notices a woman walking up to greet Darin. They hug briefly and then Darin points to Rodney.

Rodney squints as the woman approaches him. When she gets within talking distance, Rodney finally recognizes her. Maureen comes right up to him while holding the day's newspaper tightly under her arm. They hug.

RODNEY

How's the Pulitzer Prize winner doing?

MAUREEN

I'm doing well, thank you.

RODNEY

I heard you're an editor now.

MAUREEN

That's right. And I heard that you're the director of HR at Eastern Bell.

Rodney smiles and nods several times, and then Maureen opens up the newspaper.

INSERT - EASTERN BELL TO LAYOFF 20,000

BACK TO SCENE

RODNEY

I thought editors stay in the office.

MAUREEN

Not on this story. There's too much history involved. Talk to me, Rodney.

RODNEY

We're merging with another company. There's a lot of redundancy.

MAUREEN

That sounds eerily familiar. So how do you plan to handle the layoff?

RODNEY

Our pension fund is bulging at the seams. I gave a proposal to the board last week for a full benefit VOLUNTARY early retirement package.

MAUREEN

Why haven't I heard about this?

RODNEY

Our lawyers and the IRS are trying to make it happen now. We can't announce it until they approve it.

MAUREEN

Of course. I should've known.

Maria and Jacob approach, interrupting.

RODNEY

Good game, Jacob. You played great.
 (to Maria)
 Remember Maureen? From The
 Philadelphia Inquirer.

MARIA

Yes, of course. How are you?

MAUREEN

I'm fine.

RODNEY

This is my son, Jacob.

Jacob and Maureen shake hands and AD-LIB their greetings.

From nowhere, Kit enters full of life. Vivacious.

KIT

(to Rodney)
 Can I sleep over Courtney's house?
 She's having a slumber party.
 Please, please, please?

Rodney looks to Maria. She nods.

KIT

Thank you. You guys are great. I
 love you. Bye.

Kit starts to run off, but Rodney stops her.

RODNEY

(to Kit)
 Whoa. Where's your manners?
 (to Maureen)
 Maureen, this is Kit ...

KIT

Daaaaad!

RODNEY

(to Maureen)
 I'm sorry. Her name is Katherine.
 (to Kit)
 This is Maureen Reirdon.

Kit extends her hand in a formal greeting gesture. Maureen
 takes her hand and Kit forces an exaggerated hand shake.

KIT

I'm happy to make your
 acquaintance.

(MORE)

KIT (CONT'D)
(to Rodney)
Stop calling me 'Kit'.

MAUREEN
Nice meeting you, Katherine.

Kit leaves as if there's a plane to catch.

MAUREEN
She has certainly grown into a fine
young woman.

They all watch Kit run off to greet her friends.

JACOB
Dad. Let's move it.

Maria takes Rodney by the arm and leans against him.

MARIA
Come on. You promised Jacob pizza
if he won.

RODNEY
(to Maureen)
You want to join us for pizza?

MAUREEN
I'd love to.

KIT

joins a group of girls who are alive with chatter. She looks
back and watches her parents walk away.

RODNEY

looks back to Kit. He puts two fingers to his lips and flicks
her a kiss as we have seen him do so lovingly before.

KIT

happily returns the gesture.

FADE OUT:

-THE END-