

How I won Ellena Billow's heart

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FADE IN:

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

A decent kitchen in a suburban two-bedroom house. No money wasted on the decor, but everything is clean and cozy.

The kitchen is spotless, for starters.

ARNIE KARELSKY (27), zits, long hair and big eye-glasses, as nerdy as can be, fixes a small jug of orange juice for two with a \$10 IKEA juice squeezer. Patiently.

Now the jug is full. Arnie turns to the table. Two sets of everything. Breakfast for two.

The PHONE RINGS. Arnie picks it up.

ARNIE
(into phone)
Morning!

INTERCUT PHONE
CONVERSATION:

INT. SHELDON'S BEDROOM - MORNING

SHELDON MCGEE (30), long hair, dishevelled, is still in bed, half awake. Around the unkempt bed, a slovenly environment. The TV is ON, humming in the b.g.

SHELDON
Arnie, it's me!

ARNIE
Hey, dude, what's up?

SHELDON
(excitedly)
She's on is what's up!

ARNIE
Huh? Sheldon, why do you keep using sign language over the phone. At seven AM! I don't copy you, man!

SHELDON
Click to Channel 44, Arnie!

ARNIE

Bloomberg TV, are you kidding me?
Since when do I have enough money
not to watch anything but, dude?

SHELDON

What kind of gibberish is that?

ARNIE

Programmer's talk. You, of all
people, should understand.

SHELDON

Oh, shaddup, zitter... And listen!
Ellena Billow. She's on TV. Now!
Hurry!

Sheldon hangs up. He gets closer to the screen.

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN

Arnie's small TV is ON too. A Bloomberg stern screen. ELLENA
BILLOW (33), Claudia Schiffer with brains, faces a rather
plain YOUNG ANCHORMAN clearly in awe of her.

A STOCK TICKER is visible in the lower part of the screen:
quotes on the move, scrolling and blinking occasionally.

ANCHORMAN

(on TV)

As the Chairwoman of the Board and
CEO, you must be really pleased,
then? And so must your
shareholders...

ELLENA

(on TV)

Yes, absolutely. As we move into
the new fiscal year, we believe we
can still grow our revenues in the
mid-teens range. Which is quite
extraordinary considering the
current economic climate. The real
challenge for Macantek is thus to
sustain its current growth.
Internally.

ANCHORMAN

(on TV)

Are there any particular segments of the market that are more attractive than others and that would help you reach that goal?

ELLENA

(on TV)

Over the next few quarters we expect the anti spam market to grow exponentially. So far JunkWarden, our top spam detection engine, has been a strong market share gaining utility for us. And we haven't seen the end of it yet, as we're now developing third-generation analyzers that go far beyond the simple Bayesian filters of the pre-historic days of spam-fighting --

ARNIE

(over TV hum)

Mom, that's me! She's talking about my department! The stuff that we're working on.

The NARRATION STARTS, VOICED OVER the current TV program.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

Yeah, that's me all right. And that was her on TV. Ellena Billow. Can you imagine? Me, my pimples, my acne-ridden face, and that angel at the firmament of corporate America's brightest horizon? Are you saying Quasimodo and Esmeralda? Guess so. Although Esmeralda was a brunette, and Ellena is a blonde. Also, I must say I'm much more handsome than Quasimodo. And I'm not deaf. But the comparison is apt all right. I'm no Phoebus. My name's Arnie Karelsky, by the way, and this is my dear Mom Claudette.

Claudette KARELSKY (60), the All-American loving Mom, but very dignified and British, stares at the TV screen.

CLAUDETTE

Is that her? Your boss? Arnie, she's gorgeous! And she dresses well!

ARNIE

Yeah, and she's not just a bimbo. Sheldon says she's a brainiac trapped in the body of a centerfold.

CLAUDETTE

Arnie, I wish you wouldn't talk like that! And eat your cereal, please.

ARNIE

But that's not me, Mom. It's Sheldon. He says that all the time. He also says she's like a praying mantis, she eats them alive.

CLAUDETTE

Arnie, that's not nice. She looks like a very decent girl. Have you ever met her?

ARNIE

Not been there long enough. She would not condescend, though. She's not the type. Sheldon says --

CLAUDETTE

Enough, Arnie Karelsky. Drink up that hot cocoa of yours, and be on your way to work this minute.
(sweetly)

OK?

ARNIE

All right Mom. Look, I made some OJ for you!

Arnie looks at her with tender loving care. He gets up from the breakfast table, places a gentle kiss on her forehead while she sips some juice, grabs his back pack and leaves.

ARNIE

Shall I call you during my lunch break?

CLAUDETTE

No need to, my son. Off you go!

Arnie hugs Claudette and exits. Claudette smiles.

EXT. STREETS OF PASADENA, CA - MORNING

VARIOUS SHOTS OF ARNIE RIDING HIS BICYCLE...

through DENSE TRAFFIC and on BUSY SIDEWALKS. Arnie looks more like a teenager than a 27-year old. Baggy pants, black leather jacket over a loose white T-shirt, a bandanna around his neck. And a pair of black Converse on his feet.

He steers the 10-speed dexterously at seemingly high speed.

EXT. MACANTEK HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Arnie passes the tall building of MACANTEK INC., a public company listed on NASDAQ. Massive STONE MARKER with company name erected on the lawn.

Arnie veers into the underground parking lot, barely missing a long LIMO-TYPE CAR driven by a CHAUFFEUR. The chauffeur opens his window, glances up and down the length of the car, checking quickly that the bike hasn't scratched the paint along his left side. He swears under his breath.

The back window rolls down. Inside is real-life Ellena Billow, superb by all standards. She lowers her horn-rimmed glasses for a second, her gaze following Arnie as he seems to slide down the ramp to the parking lot. Ellena smiles.

INT. ELEVATORS @ MACANTEK P-1 - DAY

Arnie leaves his bike on one of the racks, grabs his backpack, and rushes to the elevators. There waits ANNETTE EKSTROM (40), the ultimate spinster-type. A shrew.

ARNIE

Morning Ms. Ekstrom!

ANNETTE EKSTROM

How do you know my name?

ARNIE

Seen you in the corporate journal.
Employee of the month seven times
in a row, man, that's awesome!

ANNETTE EKSTROM

(pleased)

Oh... That...

Annette Ekstrom is terribly embarrassed.

ANNETTE EKSTROM
Don't stare, please!

The elevator gets to their floor, and she appears relieved.

Arnie dashes into the elevator car, passing FELLOW WORKERS, including ROBERT ZABRISKIE (45), a mean, self-important VP.

Arnie finds a corner and smiles contentedly.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
It was there. And then. I didn't believe in the existence of angels till then. In that elevator, where love struck me. Like lightning. That electric feeling overpowering my every synapse. And it left me clueless, speechless. And hopeless. Boy, was that embarrassing!

Arnie watches, awestruck, as --

ELLENA SLOW MOTIONS HER WAY INTO THE ELEVATOR,

The chauffeur blocking the closing door for her. EIGHT PEOPLE are in the elevator already, including Arnie. But right now none of these people matters. There's just Arnie. And Ellena.

SLO-MO: The scene is completely unreal. Ellena ambles in. Her spectacles dance lightly over the sweet bridge of her nose.

Ellena's curly locks swing and bounce over her shoulders like in a shampoo commercial. Ellena's Chanel tailored suit opens ever so slightly, revealing a perfect ample bust caught in a blouse. A heavenly sight.

The bangles around her wrist sound like an angel's triangle. DING, DING, DING. Slowly. An invitation to bow and revere...

INT. ELEVATOR CAR - CONTINUOUS

Arnie opens his mouth as the doors close. Just a little. Ellena looks even prettier than on TV. His mouth opens wider.

ELLENA
(at correct speed)
Good morning, everybody!
(to Arnie alone)
Hello, hell rider!

SLO-MO: Arnie tries to utter something back. But nothing comes out. His throat is so constricted that no air passes through it. Then his jaw almost drops.

Arnie suddenly remembers he needs to breathe, and he sucks in air all of a sudden, noisily. As much as he can.

He hyperventilates quite quickly. Red in the face.

SLO-MO: Ellena stares at Arnie, uncomprehending. She turns to face the elevator door. Her nape is pretty, mesmerizing, and calls for caressing. Her fragrant hair undulates over it...

Arnie is under a spell. Transfixed.

ZABRISKIE (O.S.)

Hey, boy, you got asthma? Where's your air thing? Your inhaler. You got it in your pocket? This is your floor, kid!

CUT TO:

ROBERT ZABRISKIE, HIS UGLY FACE, AND DRAB REALITY

No more slow motion. No more daydreaming. Zabriskie shoves Arnie out of the elevator. Not so gently.

INT. SECOND FLOOR ELEVATORS - DAY

Arnie looks back, catches a last glimpse of Ellena Billow as the door shuts. She doesn't look at him.

ZABRISKIE

Hey, what happened to you in there?
Are you all right? Karelsky?

ARNIE

Yeah. I'm OK. I'm good. Thanks Mr. Zabriskie. I... I think I just need my morning dose of caffeine.

ZABRISKIE

OK. Go easy on the stuff, Arnie. I don't want you to blow your top. You look a little shaky already, you know that? Overworked?

ARNIE

Yeah. I... I guess. Thanks again.

Zabriskie takes a couple of steps down the hallway, then gets back to Arnie, a puzzled look on his face. He adjusts his tie, and makes sure the pocket flaps on his jacket are out.

ZABRISKIE

Hey, Arnie... How do you happen to know Ms. Billow? She a friend of yours or something?

ARNIE

Uh... No, of course not. How could--

ZABRISKIE

Then why did she call you "Hell-Rider"?

ARNIE

Well, I... I don't know, Mr. Zabriskie. Honest to God.

ZABRISKIE

Ummm. OK. And please call me Robert, all right? This is like a dot com company we're working in, goddammit! Not Enron, know what I mean? We gotta set a couple standards here, OK?

Arnie simply nods. He's now back in control of himself.

ZABRISKIE (CNT'D)

Made any progress on the lemmas?

ARNIE

Uh, yeah. Lemmatization's just fine, Sir... Robert. I mean, we take the SMTP raw mail data and get rid of the HTML code first, if necessary, then we analyze the stats of --

ZABRISKIE

Good. What about language codes?

ARNIE

You mean, when it's not included in the headers?

ZABRISKIE

Even if it is...

ARNIE

Well, right now I've got routines that take care of over 12 natural languages, and even Asian and Cyrillic alphabets. Just using the ANSI, single byte chars. Unic--

ZABRISKIE

I agree. We don't need Unicode and double byte. That's tops, Arnie. Keep up the good work!

Arnie nods again, showing victory in a quick grin. Zabriskie stops by a water fountain, draws some water for Arnie.

ZABRISKIE (CNT'D)

Here, drink this up... Who's on spyware?

ARNIE

Sheldon McGee's triplet. Rajiv, Sameer and Mona. And Bill Crayford for ASM.

ZABRISKIE

Good. Steep incline, isn't it? But real promising.

(quotes)

"Who steals my purse, steals trash... but he, that filches from me my good name, robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed." Know that?

ARNIE

Lear? I was never into lit... Macbeth?

ZABRISKIE

Othello. Close enough.

Arnie stares at Zabriskie questioningly.

ZABRISKIE (CNT'D)

You know, Arnie, I didn't make it to CTO for no reason, huh?

ARNIE

I realize that, Sir.

ZABRISKIE

Robert.

ARNIE

Yeah, Robert, sorry.

ZABRISKIE

And I'm the one reporting directly to Ellena Billow here, get it? So, nothing of what you guys in R&D find goes over my head, all right?

ARNIE

Of course.

ZABRISKIE

Good! I'm glad I made my point.

INT. PROGRAMMERS CUBICLES - DAY

SEVERAL PROGRAMMERS - an eclectic group, averaging 25 years of age - have gotten together, few working, most just hanging out. The white board on the wall is full of bad jokes and phony personal announcements.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

I enjoyed my work more than I can say. However pointless it seemed to be, some days...

INSERT : A HAND SCRIBBLES ON THE WHITE BOARD...

"Zabriskie's point... sucks!"

BACK TO SCENE:

LEONARD DEVERELL looks up from what he's just written. Smiling sheepishly. Other graffiti can be seen.

Behind him, SAMEER MOTASSADEH throws a football to BILL CRAYFORD. Bill misses the ball, which --

-- lands on SLAVOMIR TODOROV, sleeping, huddled up in his sleeping bag on the programmers' corner's couch.

By the vending machines Arnie, RAJIV SINGH, YI DOU ZHANG and MONA SILVESTRA chill out with mugs of coffee in their hands.

Arnie acts conspicuously, keeping a very low profile, dazed.

In the b.g. TWO OTHER GUYS play video games on the TV set.

MONA

Me? Sure, I love Bill Gates! I
wanna marry him! I wanna be called
Mona Gates!

SAMEER

Too late, ragazza. Bill is already
married.

BILL

(popping by with football)
No, I'm not!

SAMEER

Not you, Bill! The other one...
Come on, man, throw that ball!

BILL

(throws football)
Well, Mona, listen, anyway. I am
NOT married. Get it?

MONA

I can find better. I can have my
pick in this department alone. Ten
to twelve men for one woman. Better
than at the University of Padua.

BILL

Does this mean I'm definitely out?

ZHANG

Come on, Bill, this is getting
embarrassing!

MONA

Why, embarrassing? I think he's
cute, talking to me like that! Hey
look who's here!

They all turn to see...

Sheldon as he arrives. Grunge jacket with large pockets.

RAJIV

Hey, Sheldon, man, what's the
matter with you? Getting here so
early in the morning. That's not
like you!

SHELDON

Let go of my tail, Rajiv! I stayed
here late last night. You didn't.

RAJIV

That's what I'm saying, man. You're early! What is it? Monsoon gonna strike in Pasadena?

SHELDON

Ellena was on TV this morn. I had to watch.

SLAVOMIR

(from couch)

So did I. That chick!

LEONARD

Yeah. Blitzzy!

MONA

She's twice my age! And yours! Jeez, you guys into older women?

LEONARD

Oooh! That hurts!

MONA

I'm twice as bright as she is, big boy. I just wish I had her looks...

RAJIV

There goes Mona, on the humble track again!

ARNIE

Come on guys! Ellena Billow is thirty-three. I just checked. And no one's brighter, Rajiv...

BILL

Hey, Arnie, you're weird, you know that? Weirder than the average nerd. You even look more weird than most days, dude! What's cooking?

ARNIE

Nothing. Just gimme a break. I've had enough of you guys.

Arnie moves out of the circle sullenly, goes to his cubicle.

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

Arnie starts Outlook, checks his email. A framed picture of his mother Claudette sits on top of some books on the shelf.

Sheldon joins him.

SHELDON
So, what did you think?

ARNIE
Yeah, she's pretty. -- Not just on TV. In real life...

SHELDON
What do you mean, man?

ARNIE
She hitched a ride on my elevator.

SHELDON
(paces to and fro)
Wow! -- WOW!

Arnie looks despondent.

SHELDON (CNT'D)
You OK?

ARNIE
Yeah. Just fine.

SHELDON
Arnie, you look like lightning just struck you. What happened?

Silence.

SHELDON (CNT'D)
Don't tell me... No! Not you!

ARNIE
What?

SHELDON
Don't tell me you're in love! Man!
Arnie Karelsky is in love!
(yells out)
Hey guys! Ar--

ARNIE

Shut up, Shel! Please shut up! I don't want the whole pride to come sniffing my butt, OK? This between you and me, right?

(hands him his mug)

Go get me another coffee... Regular drip, no sugar.

SHELDON

(back to real cool self)

Sure, yeah, sure.

Sheldon leaves, thinks, hands Arnie a DVD. The home made label shows a topless porn star flashing a promising smile.

SHELDON (CNT'D)

Oh, by the way, I got that for you. Finished downloading it last night.

ARNIE

Thanks. What is it?

SHELDON

The Girls of Vivid, volume 1. It's called Spellbound. There's Jenna and Tawny Roberts. Hot, man! Just blazing hot! The only one that was missing from my coll--

ARNIE

Thanks but no thanks anyway. I'm not in the mood for solitary confinement.

SHELDON

Wow! You really out of it, Arnie!

JACKSON (O.S.)

I'll take it!

The two jump at the unknown voice that belongs to --

JACKSON LAPIER, (31), African-American. Smartly dressed. But the white shirt betrays the sales guy. He wears a diamond earring. He's lively, friendly, juiced up.

SHELDON

Who... Who are you?

JACKSON

Jackson LaPier, Sales, 5th floor. How you guys doing?

(MORE)

JACKSON (cont'd)
I started this morning. Doing my
"hello I'm here!" rounds, paying my
respects. I wanna know everybody in
this dump...

ARNIE
(defensive)
You mean... our floor?

JACKSON
Nope. The whole building. The whole
fucking company. I wanna know if
I'm gonna get my tokens back on the
stock options my fabulous gab's
gonna earn me. You dig, brother?
And I hear you guys on this floor
are the real hot shots. The crown
jewels. La crème de la crème au
chocolat! The cherry on the icing
on the ca--

SHELDON
(laughs)
This guy's cool. Yeah, man,
brother! That's us all right!

JACKSON
So I see! And what might this be?
(takes DVD)
You taking work home with you? You
guys not following protocol? Nudge-
nudge! Spank-spank!

SHELDON
No, this, er.

ARNIE
This came from outside.
Entertainment. Not work. To be
enjoyed in the privacy of your own
bedroom. D'you dig, brother?

JACKSON
Yeah. I do, little bro! In and out
cinematics, right? Boogie Woogie
Movie, hey? Thanks. I'll have a
look when I get home.
(turns to leave)
Nice meeting you two! You girls
have a good one!

SHELDON

(laughs)

Girls? Hey, I didn't even introduce my--

JACKSON

No need to. The geeks out there said I'd find Arnie and Sheldon back here. And you called him Arnie. So you must be Sheldon...

Jackson is gone. Arnie looks dubious, Sheldon mesmerized.

ARNIE

Sheldon, don't overdo it. Follow this guy's flamboyant ways and you land flat on your belly. You're not a natural; he is.

SHELDON

(pouting)

Stop using polysyllables, Arnie, for God's sake. You sound like my 8th grade English teacher!

ARNIE

And by the way, Shel... Piracy no good! For software, or skin flicks. Do me a favor, dude! Uninstall BitTorrent, and start paying for your porn! Or stop wanking!

Sheldon looks really hurt.

SHELDON

A thief makes the best cop, Arnie. How do you expect me to fight identity theft if I quit hacking?

ARNIE

Look, Sheldon, I... I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me.

SHELDON

The chemistry in your brain, man. It's all fucked up. I know. I was in love once. For a whole week!

(beat)

Salma Hayek...

ARNIE

Huh?

SHELDON
(dreamy eyes)
Yeah. I'd watch "Frida" every
night. I was, like, possessed. Then
I'd surf the web. Oh, boy!

Arnie shakes his head, hopeless.

INT. OUTSIDE ELLENA BILLOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie walks out of the elevator on the penthouse floor.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
The following week I tried every
trick in the book to see her, talk
to her, smell the fragrance in her
hair again --

BIRGITTA MEYER, 40, a gorgon of a secretary, but with good
looks, sits at a desk. The view behind her is breathtaking.
Downtown LA; the San Gabriel Mountains on the other side.

Arnie looks awkward, a box of Belgian chocolates in his hand.

ARNIE
Are you Ms Billow's secretary?

BIRGITTA
Yes. What can I do for you, errand-
boy? A package for the boss?

ARNIE
I'm not a boy. I'm a man.

BIRGITTA
OK. Errand-man, then.

ARNIE
I don't run errands. I'm an
employee like you. I work here.

BIRGITTA
Oh? Excuse me... Sir! And what is
it you do exactly?

ARNIE
I write thousands of lines of code
so that people like you can use
their computer and the web safely.

BIRGITTA
Good for you! So what's this?

ARNIE
 (embarrassed)
 Chocolate candy. Is Ms. Billow in?

BIRGITTA
 As a matter of fact she is not. And she is on a diet too. How do you think she manages to keep fit like this?

ARNIE
 Uh. I don't know.

BIRGITTA
 So you see... Thanks anyway. I'll pass it on to her. Byyyye!

Birgitta waves him off.

Arnie doesn't know what to say. He leaves.

As soon as Arnie has disappeared in the elevator again, Birgitta opens the nice box and starts eating chocolate.

EXT. MACANTEK HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Arnie, standing by his bike, sets up an ambush by the parking entrance.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 -- but none of my tricks really worked... I guess I must've looked pathetic. But I was sincere...

As soon as Ellena's limo comes out of the garage, Arnie grabs the handlebar, jumps in the saddle, and pedals fearlessly towards the massive vehicle.

SMASH! PLOP!

Arnie falls to the ground. The limo shows extensive scratches on the left side, by the driver's door. Arnie is unhurt.

The chauffeur is mad as hell, and YELLS at him.

Arnie doesn't pay attention. He cranes his head, trying to have a glimpse inside the limousine, beyond the chauffeur.

The window rolls down, revealing the mean big-shot face of PERCIVAL BOWERS, 60, dollar bills in his eyes, naught else.

ARNIE

Who. Who are you?

BOWERS

I'm Percival Bowers, and I run this company. Who might *you* be?

ARNIE

You don't run anything! Ms. Billow does!

BOWERS

I'm way above the bimbo, kid! I run the supervisory board! What's your name? Who do you report to?

ARNIE

Not to you, I don't!

Arnie, forlorn, pedals away. The chauffeur calls after him.

INT. OUTSIDE ELLENA BILLOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Birgitta, Ellena's secretary, picks up the phone, delivers a mute 'HELLO', listens, looks shocked, and leaves her workstation in a hurry.

Arnie appears out of nowhere, KNOCKS on the door.

Arnie looks sideways to the secretary's waste paper basket. His EMPTY CHOCOLATE BOX is in it.

He KNOCKS again, then pulls a fancy card out of his shirt.

INSERT - ARNIE'S VALENTINE

The heart-shaped red card, naively, says: 'A loves E'.

BACK TO SCENE:

Arnie has trouble stuffing the heart under Ellena's door.

The secretary reappears, looking mad. She UTTERS A MUTE 'WHAT YOU DOING HERE?'. Arnie fakes a hopeless gesture, leaves.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

-- and I was about to give up, stop eating and die. But then I got help from the outside.

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN - MORNING

The kitchen clock says 7:29. Claudette Karelsky fixes breakfast. Arnie trudges in, not his perky morning self.

CLAUDETTE
You're late, Sweetheart. Slept well? You OK?

ARNIE
Could be better.

Claudette looks slightly concerned.

CLAUDETTE
The walls are thin. You're starting to talk in your sleep, you know that?

ARNIE
(drinks O.J.)
Oh? And what did I say?

CLAUDETTE
The other nights I don't know. Last night, must have been a nightmare. You were riding hell. That sorta thing. I'm not sure.

ARNIE
Oh!

Claudette looks at Arnie. Arnie is embarrassed.

CLAUDETTE
You know, son... If you got things on your mind, well... I'm here. I mean... if you need me.

ARNIE
(hugs her)
I know, Mom. Thanks!

CLAUDETTE
The thing is... I won't be around for ever, you know. I mean... I'm getting old and all that, and --

ARNIE
Mom, you're the youngest! And the prettiest!

CLAUDETTE

(smiles)

Yes. But still... I'd feel better if you got yourself a girl-friend.

(beat)

And a wife. And what about grandchildren? You know I'd take good care of them...

ARNIE

And of your great-grand-children too. But I think you're jumping a couple of important steps in between.

CLAUDETTE

I guess... I'm not saying you should get married for *my* sake. I mean...

ARNIE

I know what you mean, Mom.

CLAUDETTE

Good. I made you some oatmeal... You're not eating half as much as you used to...

Arnie nods. On impulse, he switches the TV on.

INSERT - TV SCREEN

Channel 44, Bloomberg. The dumb ass anchorman is on alone, reciting debilitating news and quotes.

BACK TO SCENE:

Arnie turns off the TV, looking helpless.

Claudette is staring at her son. She knows.

CLAUDETTE

You also mentioned Ms. Billow, I think... in your sleep.

(strange beat)

That couldn't have been a nightmare...

ARNIE

Look, Mom, I... What if... I mean. You read my mind, right? But it's not cool, what I'm going through.

(MORE)

ARNIE (cont'd)

It's like, you know, that story of the worm looking up at the star, the Chinese have....

CLAUDETTE

Uh-huh. I wouldn't take that route, though. How about the princess kissing the frog?

ARNIE

(laughs)

And I'd turn into a prince? Not likely. Look at me, Mom! And look at her!

CLAUDETTE

What I see when I look at you is a real fine boy, Arnie. Your Dad would be proud of you if he could see you. From up there. And I think that boy is worthy of any shooting star or meteorite out there in the night sky. So... why don't you go for it?

Arnie is stunned.

CLAUDETTE (CNT'D)

So, what is it gonna be, Arnie?

ARNIE

I'm gonna go for it, Mom! I'm gonna conquer her with the whole kit and caboodle!

CLAUDETTE

Good!

Claudette looks pleased. Arnie has a questioning look.

ARNIE

How did you guess, Mom? I mean... how did you know for sure?

CLAUDETTE

I called you at work last night. But you'd left... obviously. I had your friend on the line, so we chatted a little bit, Sheldon and I...

Arnie flashes a fierce grin. He looks mad.

INT. SHELDON'S CUBICLE - DAY

Sheldon, in high spirits, has his legs stretched out. Heels on the desk. Next to him sits Jackson LaPier, laughing too.

Jackson greets a fuming Arnie.

JACKSON

Hey! Hi, Arnie! How you doing this mo--

ARNIE

(to Sheldon)

Shel! How did you dare?

SHELDON

Wha-- What? What did I do?

ARNIE

You miserable squelch! You told my mother!

SHELDON

Oh, er. Well, that woman has a way of making me talk, Arn. Claudette, I mean. She's so cool... I wish my Mom was like that.

ARNIE

Yeah, I bet! What do I look like now? Like the coolest moron!

JACKSON

You look fine to me, Arnie. And by the way, Sheldon told me too. So you can yell good a second time and get that out of your mind so that everybody can get on with their lives. All right? You're being real obnoxious, man!

ARNIE

Oh, shit...

Arnie, despondent, doesn't leave. Awkward silence.

SHELDON

Look, Arnie, I'm sorry, OK? But it's not such a big deal. Live with it! And Jack here has an idea...

JACKSON

It's Jackson. Not Jack. I hate Jack. Anyway... I meet that girl regularly. I know the top brass here, man. Didn't take me long to make myself fully lovable. I got that gift too, see. I have coffee on the top floor every day. And I have an idea.

Arnie can't stand it. He frets restlessly.

ARNIE

So, what is it?

JACKSON

You got a racquet, man?

ARNIE

Racket? What do you mean, Jackson?

JACKSON

Get yourself a fucking squash racquet quick. One of those Hyper Hammers, they're not that expensive. And a couple of balls. And I don't mean the ones you got in your breeches, man. Get it?

ARNIE

Gotcha. Why?

JACKSON

(self important)

Ellena Billow plays squash in the corporate gym every second day... Except Fridays. And don't try to kiss my lips, you fucking queer!

ARNIE

(alternately at both)

But, Jackson, Shel... I've never played squash in my entire life!

SHELDON

(Jackson-like)

Then fucking learn, man!

INT. MACANTEK GYM, SQUASH COURT #1 - DAY

MONTAGE - ARNIE ENDURING HELL...

-- Arnie doesn't have a bad body. Just weird shorts and runners. And a funky T-shirt that says "JunkWarden Rules!".

-- Jackson plays with him first. He knows what he's doing, and shows Arnie some tricks. He's well dressed, as usual.

-- Arnie misses squash balls repeatedly. He kisses the walls. WHAM! The floor. PLONK! He does not have so much fun.

-- Sheldon plays. Not well, but better than Arnie. And Sheldon wears that absolute grungy garb! Couldn't look worse!

-- Arnie's back-hand is non-existent. He sweats like a pig. It looks as though he wonders what he is doing in the gym.

END MONTAGE

INT. MACANTEK GYM, OUTSIDE COURT #1 - DAY

Jackson holds the door as Arnie and Sheldon, their T-shirts soaked, struggle out. Their knees buckle.

The trio moves down the hallway...

JACKSON

You done good for a first time,
Arnie!

ARNIE

You sure? I'm completely worn out,
man. Just wasted! I think I--

Arnie stops short, in front of court #3. Ellena Billow is in there, playing with a male colleague. A hunk of a guy.

There he goes again, SLOW-MOTIONING his emotions...

SLO-MO: ELLENA HITS THE BALL

A right hand, a perfect stroke. She's fitter than the fittest. And she wears that perfect mini-skirt!

SLO-MO: ELLENA COMES BACK TO BASE LINE TO SERVE

She's not even too sweaty. The privilege of angels. She doesn't see Arnie. Too concentrated. But she's quite a sight.

INSERT - A DROP OF THE SWEETEST SWEAT...

Winds its way from the base of her neck down into her décolletage. It takes ages to disappear between those two wonderful curves, and into the cleavage.

BACK TO GYM:

SLO-MO: ELLENA HITS THE BALL

Now a back-hand. A++ again. The other guy pants. She's everywhere on that court. Her body is pure perfection.

JACKSON (O.S.)
Hey, Arnie!

END SLOW-MOTION

JACKSON (CNT'D)
(laughs)
Where you been? Time for a shower!

Arnie finally comes to. They move on.

ARNIE
Who's that guy?

JACKSON
(sneers)
Hey, easy does it, little bro! That guy is gay! G-A-Y. Got it? This here outfit is full of fucking faggots and dykes. Never seen that many in my whole life before! So, careful if you drop your shampoo when showering now b--

ARNIE
Are you saying Ellena is--

JACKSON
No, no. Hold it! I'm not saying anything about Sweet Ellena, OK? She's just fine, Arnie, straight as a capital L. But I'm not so sure about the rest of the comp--

ARNIE

(shrugs)

Doesn't sound like you and I work in the same company, Jackson... And by the way... have you ever seen the shape of a capital L? Is this a joke?

Arnie draws "L" in the air. Jackson stammers.

JACKSON

Er... No, no! a small "l"! I meant: a small "l"!

Arnie, lost in his thoughts, is about to open Ellena's door.

ARNIE

I'm going in there!

JACKSON

Hey, wait a minute! WAIT! Arnie, what do you think you're doing?

ARNIE

I... I'm gonna talk to her.

JACKSON

Are you out of your mind? And what are you gonna say?

ARNIE

I... Uh.

JACKSON

Exactly! There are ways, Arnie!

ARNIE

Oh, yeah?

JACKSON

Oh, YEAH! You don't walk up to a chick like that, Arn! Do you think you gonna be whispering sweet nothings in her ear while she plays?

Arnie's thoughts are on the squash court. Ellena gives him a very quick look, and returns to her game.

ARNIE

Are you sure? Guess not....

JACKSON

Arnie, that chick happens to be your boss! El honcho numero uno! Wake up!

ARNIE

OK. Do you know how to do that, Jackson? Get a girl's attention? I mean, a girl like her?

JACKSON

(uneasy)

Uh. Yeah. Course I do.

ARNIE

Teach me those ways, Jackson! Quick!

Arnie marches towards the locker room.

Jackson lingers on, looking helpless.

The GYM MASTER (35), a servile brainless jock always looking for a tip, stops Arnie. He holds a note pad and a pen.

GYM MASTER

Hey! How you doing?

ARNIE

Fine.

GYM MASTER

I could probably give you a private lesson or two. You know... I'm not that expensive.

ARNIE

No, thanks.

The gym master looks helpless.

INT. MACANTEK GYM, LOCKERS - DAY

Arnie takes his time undressing, as if something was amiss. He's only taken his T-shirt off so far. He is ill at ease.

Jackson and Sheldon have stripped, and wait for him.

SHELDON

Hey, Arnie, you coming?

ARNIE

In a minute. Let me catch my breath again first.

Sheldon and Jackson shrug. And move on.

INT. MACANTEK GYM, SHOWERS - DAY

A bit foggy. Much heat and condensation.

Sheldon and Jackson are in one corner of the showers, using soap and shampoo, washing and scrubbing.

Sheldon suddenly sees something that catches his full attention. His eyes make a full "O". He's astonished.

Sheldon nudges Jackson, who takes a similar path. They are in complete awe of what they see.

Arnie's face shows equal wonderment.

ARNIE

What now?

SHELDON

Arnie... you seen the size of that thing between your legs?

ARNIE

Yeah, I own it. So?

JACKSON

Oh, Brother! Were you born black?

SHELDON

Like Michael Jackson?

ARNIE

(turns, his back to them)
Come on, guys! Be cool, gimme a break!

Everybody keeps silent. Sheldon thinks, then gets it.

SHELDON

Hey, I've seen one just like it in a Russ Meyer flick! That equine pendulum, man!

JACKSON

What's that, Sheldon?

ARNIE
 (to Jackson)
 A horse's dick, Jackson.
 (to Sheldon)
 I resent that, Shel!

SHELDON
 I'm sorry. I just wish I had...
 You're lucky, Arnie, man!

JACKSON
 Ah, ah! That's good!

ARNIE
 Oh, shit! Come on! Besides,
 Jackson, you've got a big one too,
 man!

JACKSON
 So the chicks tell me! But they
 ain't seen yours!

SHELDON
 (won't shut up)
 Same here!

ARNIE
 Listen, guys... my intention is to
 come play squash here every second
 day, except Fridays. So, you'd
 better get used to it!
 (beat)
 And keep *quiet* about it! OK?

Sheldon and Jackson go nod-nod, but act non-committal.

INT. MACANTEK ELEVATOR - DAY

SEVEN GIRLS of all denominations, races and creeds are
 already in the elevator when Arnie gets in.

ARNIE
 Three, please.

GIRL 1
 Oh, sure, Arnie.

ARNIE
 Thanks. You know my name?

GIRL 1
 Yeah. Who doesn't? I'm Sheila Post.

GIRL 2

And I'm LaToya Brown, Mr. Karelsky!

ARNIE

Hi! Call me Arnie!

GIRL 3

Kirstin Frentz. I was looking forward to meeting you, Rocco! I'm marketing. Know where to find me?

ARNIE

Arnie! My name is Arnie!

Arnie turns to face the door. The girls keep quiet. They all peek at Arnie. They WHISPER and GIGGLE between themselves. Arnie is embarrassed.

INT. THIRD FLOOR @ ELEVATORS - MOMENTS LATER

Arnie rushes out of the elevator and looks back, amazed.

INT. THIRD FLOOR, HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Arnie passes a pretty girl with a French accent, CECILIA FOURREAU (25). Both eager and shy.

CECILIA

Arnie, please wait!

ARNIE

Yes. Do we know each other?

CECILIA

Uh, no. I just wanted to say hello. I'm Cecilia Fourreau. I work in the localization department.

ARNIE

Oh? Sorry. Nice to meet you, Cecilia.

CECILIA

You can call me Sess.

ARNIE

OK. Sess.

CECILIA

There are some terms in the antispam help file that I don't fully comprehend. It would be nice if a pro could explain them to me. That would help me to translate them better. You understand?

Cecilia is sweet. Gallic charm.

ARNIE

Oh, sure!

CECILIA (CNT'D)

I've been here for a short while only. I don't know many people... In the whole America... Do you think maybe... we could have a drink, some night, you and I? And talk about it...

ARNIE

Well, I... I'm very busy. But I guess, er...

CECILIA

And I want to better my English. I need to. I can even pay you.

ARNIE

Hell, no, no need to pay me!

CECILIA

You accept then?

ARNIE

(non-committal)

Sure, why not? I'll see what I can do... Gimme a couple of weeks. I got tons of stuff right now.

CECILIA

Oh, great! I'm lucky.

(beat)

Arnie, is it true, what people say?

ARNIE

Let's walk, please, I'm late. What do people say?

CECILIA

Well, there's that rumor about you, that everybody's talking about.

(MORE)

CECILIA (cont'd)

Is it true? That you are very...
How can I put it? Richly funded?

ARNIE

I don't get it.

CECILIA

Well, that nature gave you some
distinct advantages over your
fellow --

ARNIE

I knew it. Well, at least you're
open about it, Sess. No. Just a
tall tale. Nothing that you
wouldn't find in Paris, take or
leave the extra inch. And where did
that tittle-tattle start?

CECILIA

Tittle-tattle?

ARNIE

Gossip? Rumor? Just checking my
dataset here. See if things add
up...

CECILIA

Oh yeah. Here, someone on your
team, I think... Who saw you in the
showers...

ARNIE

Damn it! SHEEEELLLLDON!!!

Arnie YELLS at the top of his lungs. Cecilia retreats.

Arnie marches on, towards his quarters, mighty mad. On the
way he meets Robert Zabriskie, a file in his hand.

ZABRISKIE

Anything wrong, Karelsky? Was that
you, yelling out there?

ARNIE

(cools down)

Er... No, Sir. Robert.

ZABRISKIE

Huh. OK. We want that 3.0 DLL on
the 4th floor by Friday next. Think
you guys'll manage?

ARNIE

Oh, sure! It's almost ready. I'll email it to you.

ZABRISKIE

OK. Talk later then.

Arnie moves on.

ZABRISKIE (CNT'D)

Arnie!

ARNIE

Yes, Robert?

ZABRISKIE

Are you sure you don't share a... special bond with Ellena Billow that no one is aware of?

ARNIE

Huh. Not even myself?

(beat)

Why?

ZABRISKIE

She wants to take a little... inspection tour of your floor later on today. I just told your cronies about it.

Zabriskie turns, puzzled. Arnie is elated out of his mind.

INT. PROGRAMMERS CUBICLES - DAY

Each of the programmers stands in front of his own cubicle. It is like a mock-military parade. The cubicles have been raked clean of any infantile markers. Everything is proper.

Sheldon massages his jaw and left shoulder, as if someone had been hitting him repeatedly prior to this.

Zabriskie arrives, followed by Ellena.

Arnie tries to keep his composure.

ZABRISKIE

Ellena, step over here, please...

(to all)

Guys... and girl, you know our Chief Executive Officer, Ellena Billow.

ELLENA

(friendly, serious)

Hi! "Ellena", for all of you, please. I can't stress enough how important to Macantek what you are doing here is. We have hard economic times ahead of us, stronger than ever competition from McAfee and Symantec -even Kaspersky in Europe- and we must hold our own. Each and everyone of you makes a difference, and will hopefully make a greater one in the coming months. Your ideas, your influence, your input, all that matters! This is why I insisted with Bob so much, and why I was keen on meeting each of you personally. We don't see enough of you guys in our regular meetings! And believe me, we have many of them!

They all have that short laugh to punctuate her last remark. She gives each and every one a serious look, meaning what she says. When her eyes meet Arnie's, she smiles slightly.

Arnie blushes. His malaise starts again.

SLO-MO: Ellena's lips form the following words, which, surprisingly enough, come across at regular speed, OUT OF SYNCH! Her lips are beautiful, wet and desirable.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

You all have my email address. For the newcomers, it's simply:
ellena@macantek.com.

END SLOW MOTION

Arnie, shakes his head repeatedly up and down, left and right. He somehow manages to ward off the SLO-MO.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

So start using it! Any memo that you guys are going to email me for the good of the company is welcome! Macantek has the brightest think tank in this country. So think! Think small, think big, think wild, even, but think! And show me the results. Nothing is off limits.
(MORE)

ELLENA (CNT'D) (cont'd)
 If you guys believe we're not doing something right when peddling the software tell me! If our tech support stinks, tell me! If marketing puts out crummy ads, tell me! But first and foremost, come up with new ideas and concepts that will move this company forward, and take us all up to the next level! Got that?

They all NOD and MUMBLE ASSENT. She is clearly in charge.

ELLENA (CNT'D)
 Loud and clear? Awesome! Now, Bob, please...

Zabriskie starts introducing Arnie's coworkers.

Arnie, flushed, becomes febrile and fidgety, trying to overcome his panic. He shakes his head, but it doesn't work this time. And as he turns towards Ellena one last time, she suddenly starts moving more slowly.

SLOW-MOTION: ELLENA GREETES ZHANG,

Then Mona. Great spirits. Everyone's pleased. Ellena smiles brightly. Her dimples have a subtle, lovely arc.

Arnie, in complete adoration, flashes a nerdy grin.

SLO-MO: ELLENA IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF ARNIE

Ellena moves fast. She is now in front of Arnie. She beckons to him. Ellena's eyes are on him.

ELLENA
 Hello, Arnie!

ARNIE
 (spaced out)
 Oh, hi!

Arnie receives a violent nudge from Sheldon. He comes to.

POP! SNAP!

END SLOW MOTION

ARNIE (CNT'D)
I mean. How are you, Miss Billow?
Ellena?

ELLENA
Fine! And you look well too, in
your... odd sort of way.
(smiles)
I've heard about you!

Arnie looks at Ellena questioningly, slightly worried.

ELLENA (CNT'D)
You know, I used to have one of
those bikes when I was little. It
was a fancy model. My Dad used to
call it Hell-Rider.

ARNIE
Ah, Oh? My ten-speed... Yeah. --Ms.
Billow -- Ellena, I have a question
for you if I may. Robert said we
should run everything by him before
we approach you. Is that --

ZABRISKIE
(uneasy)
Yes. There's no need to waste your
tim-

ELLENA
No, that's fine, Bob. Arnie, send
me whatever you have. I'm
interested.

ZABRISKIE
OK. Yes, well, you're the boss.

Ellena moves on to Leonard standing next to Arnie.

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE - MOMENTS LATER

Arnie looks better. Sheldon is next to him.

ARNIE
How did I do?

SHELDON
Well, you did... well, good! And I think I saved your skin out there!

ARNIE
Yes, you did. I owe you, man!
(beat)
Hey, did you hear... she called him Bob, I didn't like that!

Sheldon is scared.

SHELDON
Prepos', man, let it go, OK?

ARNIE
Yeah. I guess... Thanks!

Sheldon looks at Arnie's shelf. No picture of Claudette.

SHELDON
Hey, man, where's your Mom?

ARNIE
I dunno. She must be shopping, I--

SHELDON
Nah, not your real Mom. The one in the picture!

ARNIE
(apologetic)
Oh... That! Well, you know, the guys were giving me a hard time and stuff, so I... took it back home.

SHELDON
(disappointed)
Yeah, I see... Cool, man! You know what works best for you, right?

Arnie looks at Sheldon's face.

ARNIE (CNT'D)
Hey, Shel, what's that? In your ear?

Sheldon touches his DIAMOND EAR-RING.

SHELDON
A diamond. Fake of course.

ARNIE
Looks like Jackson's.

SHELDON
Yup. Same. Do you like it?

ARNIE
Yeah. That's cool, man! Looks good
on you!

SHELDON
Thanks!

Arnie eyes Sheldon, a worried expression on his face.

ARNIE
Look, I gotta work on that thing
for Zabriskie, man. You don't mind,
do you?

SHELDON
Course not. When you gotta go, you
gotta go. Catch later for pilsner,
maybe?

ARNIE
Won't have time.

Arnie goes to his cubicle.

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE - EVENING

MONTAGE - ARNIE AT WORK

-- Arnie relaxes in front of his computer screen.

-- Arnie fires Borland Delphi 7, and starts examining code,
horrendous, tedious, endless lines written in a Courier font.

-- Arnie types in a couple of things, changes others, hits F9
to compile.

-- Arnie focuses on the screen. A splash screen appears. It
says "SpyWarden: effective antitheft software for your PC".

-- Arnie types, compiles. Types, compiles again.

END MONTAGE

BACK TO CUBICLE:

The telephone rings. Arnie picks up.

ARNIE
Hello? Karelsky!

INT. ELLENA BILLOW'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Ellena is on the phone. Directorial setting. Nice.

ELLENA
Oh? Arnie Karelsky, right? I... I'm
sorry. I must have dialed the wrong
number.

Ellena hangs up.

BACK TO:

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE

Utmost interrogation on Arnie's face. He hangs up.

Annette Ekstrom passes by Arnie's cubicle.

ANNETTE EKSTROM
Anything wrong?

ARNIE
No... no.

ANNETTE EKSTROM
You're Arnie Karelsky, right?

ARNIE
(playful)
Hasn't changed since the last time
we talked.

ANNETTE EKSTROM
(peevied)
I'm not in the mood for small talk,
OK? That's not what I'm here for,
Mr. Karelsky. As I'm sure you're
aware, I'm at accounting, in charge
of salaries and wages. A mistake
was made on your last pay slip. You
owe us money!

ARNIE
(startled)

--

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Two hundred and fifty dollars,
everything else taken out. I can
offer no installments or anything.
So that amount will be deducted
from what we owe you for this
month. I came down in person to
apologize. And let you know. Have a
good week-end...

Annette leaves. Arnie is not in such high spirits.

Leonard pops by.

LEONARD

Hey, Arnie, you OK? You running a
fever, or what?

ARNIE

No. Why?

LEONARD

(laughs)
You sound a little hoarse today,
Dude!

ARNIE

Oh, shaddup, Len!

Arnie thinks. Not pleased. He looks at his watch. He kills
Delphi, cleans up his PC desktop. His real desktop is a mess.

Mona Silvestra pops by.

MONA

Hey, Arnie!

ARNIE

Hey!

MONA

You're going?

ARNIE

Yeah. Being an unproductive jerk
here..

MONA

Arnie, I been thinking. You think
you and I...

ARNIE

You and me what?

MONA
Well, you know...

Arnie flashes a desperate grin.

ARNIE
What about Bill?

MONA
Well, what about him?

ARNIE
Bill's been madly in love with you ever since you got here, Sweet Mona Lisa...

MONA
I know...

ARNIE
Well?

MONA
He doesn't do anything. I mean... every time a dozen people are gathered together, he goes ranting, "Oh, Mona!", But whenever we have a chance to be together, just the two of us, he clacks up like he was an oyster shell!

ARNIE
Ummm. Look, Moanie, I don't run the dear Abby column here, OK? But I can tell you one thing: things are different here than in Europe. It's perfectly all right for a chick to go up to a guy and say: "let's roll in the hay!".

MONA
Is it?
(thinks)
Well, isn't it what I'm doing right now?

ARNIE
Uh... yeah. Yeah! Gotta go! Follow my advice, Mona, OK? Bill, I mean! Not me! Stay focused, kid!

Arnie, embarrassed, leaves Mona there. She is dumbfounded.

Arnie passes Rajiv's cubicle, and stops. Rajiv is building some sort of light-weight electronic device.

ARNIE
What's this, Raj?

RAJIV
Hey, Serpent God, didn't see you...
This? The hundred buck PC...

ARNIE
Huh. Who needs this?

RAJIV
All third world nations, Arnie.
You'll see...

Arnie moves on, unconvinced, passes Leonard's cubicle.

LEONARD
Hey, Long Arnie, what's hangin',
man? You out?

ARNIE
Oh, quit it, Len! Yeah, I'm out.
(louder, to Sheldon)
Sheldon, did you hear? We're out,
Dude, time for a beer! You coming.
Len?

LEONARD
Nah. Work to do. Maybe later...

ARNIE
OK.

Arnie reaches the next cubicle. And on cue, Sheldon picks up his stuff hurriedly to leave. They make for the exit.

ARNIE (CNT'D)
Did you hear that witch Ekstrom
too?

SHELDON
Yeah. She probably in love with you
man! They all are...

ARNIE
Think so?

SHELDON
Nah! Just kidding. She's totally
uncool, man!

ARNIE

Shel, you been smoking? It smells funny, too...

SHELDON

Nah. Only in the morning. Must be my clothes... Why? You feel like reefing? I may have something in my --

ARNIE

No, thanks. You know what... I think I'll need to stretch my cash a little bit this month...

SHELDON

Don't worry, Arn, I'll buy the first two pitchers. I owe you that...

INT. EQUILIBRIUM CAFE - EVENING

Your typical sports bar. A CROWD OF MACANTEKers. Loud and cheery. Friday night, end of a long week, time for some fun.

A WAITRESS strolls down to a table where Jackson, Arnie and Sheldon sit, a full PITCHER and FROSTY GLASSES in her hand.

Sheldon hands the waitress some money. She leaves.

Jackson pours for everybody. Then raises his own glass.

JACKSON

To the longest talk of the town in years!

ARNIE

Oh, jeez!

SHELDON

Oh, come on! You love it! I know I would...

JACKSON

The point is, Arnie, we somehow managed to get you on the A-list of shaggable guys overnight. And with good reason, I might add.

ARNIE

Oh, yeah? This whole company is abuzz with rumors about the size of my penis, and I shouldn't fret?

SHELDON

You should be honored, man! No shit!

JACKSON

You've become tremendously popular in a week, Arnie!

SHELDON

Immensely popular, Dude!

JACKSON

And, as far as I can tell, closer to your ultimate goal by the minute! You're about to close the sale! Have some peanuts, man, they're good!

SHELDON

Yeah, nice and salty! Terrific with the beer!

ARNIE

No, thanks! Close what sale? I had maybe two dozen girls jump on me in the past 96 hours. I had Cecilia Fourreau beg for a class in foreign tongues, and you --

JACKSON

Sess Fourreau? She's French, right? Why not? Give her a spin, man! She just broke up with Phil Shaney, the Tech Support guy!

ARNIE

Jackson, how come you know these things?

JACKSON

Hey-hey... I'm smooth and suave and I move about, little bro! I talk to folks. And they talk back. I don't stay holed up in front of my PC 24/7, like you guys do. I live, I breathe, I take in the sun! And I keep a day-to-day journal of who-shags-who in this dump, man!

(MORE)

JACKSON (cont'd)

Gotta give if you want some gossip back! Ain't that what life is all about, Arnie? Giving and receiving?

ARNIE

Oh, spare me the lesson!

(thinks)

All right, then who sleeps with Ellena Billow? Or who does she sleep with... whatever? Do you know that?

JACKSON

Currently? Well, not you. Yet!

ARNIE

Then who?

JACKSON

Well, I... There's...

SHELDON

(cooly)

You'd better tell him, Jackson! It's gonna hurt worse later...

JACKSON

Well, all right... you're not gonna crank up again, hey, Arnie? If I tell you?

ARNIE

Oh, God! You love doing that to me, don't you?

(turns to Sheldon)

Shel, who?

JACKSON

Don't, Sheldon. Let me handle this. He's gonna get you all bruised up again otherwise...

(to Arnie)

Swear you'll be good!

ARNIE

I will.

JACKSON

I will what?

ARNIE

Be good.

JACKSON

Swear!

ARNIE

I swear!

JACKSON

Swear what?

ARNIE

I swear I'll be good.

JACKSON

Was better! Tell you what... why
don't you ask this girl coming
behind you... She's got the answer!

(to Ellena)

Hi Ellena!

Arnie jumps! And turns around in a micro-second. Shocked!

ELLENA BILLOW WALKS PAST THEIR TABLE...

Followed by Robert Zabriskie. She smiles at Jackson.

ELLENA

Hello Jackson!

JACKSON

You guys chilling out?

ELLENA

Yeah. Been a long week! Hi Arnie!
Sorry about that call!

Zabriskie looks puzzled. And displeased.

ZABRISKIE

You guys have a good time!

Zabriskie moves on to a table where other execs sit: TWO MEN
and A WOMAN, smartly dressed and looking important.

JACKSON

Oh, you know Arnie? And this is
Sheldon McGee...

SHELDON

Nice to meet you again, Ellena! I
thought you were just awesome on
TV! I thought I'd mention that...

ELLENA

Thanks!

(to Arnie)

You sure you're gonna be able to ride your bike after that? Just let me know if you need a lift home...

ARNIE

(normal speed, undazzled)

I'll be fine. This is only our first pitcher! I can handle a couple more! Thanks for the offer anyway!

ELLENA

Any time! You guys enjoy!

Ellena goes to the execs' table in a few graceful strides.

ARNIE

(pensive, to himself)

She didn't slo-mo this time!

SHELDON

Hey, man! What's wrong with you? You. You didn't stutter, you didn't pee yourself!

JACKSON

I think he's growing up, Sheldon.

(to Arnie)

What call was she talking about? You not been telling us everything?

ARNIE

Well, no. It's just that...

JACKSON

Tell me!

ARNIE

Sure. But first: who is she going out with?

JACKSON

Oh, Bobby here is trying mighty hard to score, but my take is he's not up to it. She not interested. But everybody I know thinks she is.

ARNIE

So is she, or isn't she?

JACKSON

Well, I don't know for sure. But I don't see when she'd get a chance to entertain the guy...

SHELDON

Maybe she ain't shagging at all...

ARNIE

Zabriskie again... Bastard!

Arnie looks towards Ellena's table. She doesn't look back.

Ellena talks to Zabriskie and the other execs. She smiles, listens when the others talk. Then she talks again.

SHELDON

Oh, come on, Arn!

JACKSON

Yeah, please give us a break! After tonight, I'd say the avenues are wide open for you, man! As a matter of fact I'd probably bet a couple of quarters on your willy now!

ARNIE

Not sure about that...

SHELDON

Yeah, man! Improbable, but true. How did you manage that?

Arnie looks towards Ellena's table. She doesn't look back.

JACKSON

Now, you tell us!

ARNIE

(takes his time)
Well, you gotta swear first!

JACKSON

Oh, no! Swear what?

ARNIE

That you won't tell a soul...

JACKSON

I swear!

SHELDON

Me too!

ARNIE

Swear what?

JACKSON

I won't tell a soul!

SHELDON

(over-eager)

Me neither!

ARNIE

Now the whole sentence!

JACKSON

Ah, come on, big cucumber!

ARNIE

Swear! Both of you!

SHELDON & JACKSON

I swear I won't tell a soul!

ARNIE

(playing coy)

Nah, that won't work!

Arnie looks towards Ellena's table. She doesn't look back.

SHELDON & JACKSON

Why not?

ARNIE

Cuz you guys are gonna tell the whole company the first chance you get, and I'm gonna have to deal with it...

SHELDON & JACKSON

(hopeless)

Ah? No! Come on Arnie!

ARNIE

OK, then... she dialed a wrong number a couple of hours ago... My number!

JACKSON

(clearly put off)

That all?

Sheldon and Jackson think for a second.

JACKSON (CNT'D)
You know what? I wouldn't call that
a coincidence!

SHELDON
Yeah. No way! Now, Jackson, who we
gonna tell first?

Sheldon guffaws and nudges Jackson's elbow. Arnie looks
towards Ellena's table. She doesn't look back.

JACKSON
Have some more beer, Arnie. Bottoms
up!

SHELDON
Yeah, we're gonna get you pissed,
and someone will have to give you a
ride home, dude! How d'you like
that for a plan? And fuck, stop
staring in her direction!

JACKSON
(calls out)
Yeah! Ignore her now! Hey,
waitress! What's her name again?
Anita!

ARNIE
No, wait! Let's go play squash
instead!

JACKSON
Are you kidding?

SHELDON
No way! Playing under the influence
no good, man!

ARNIE
(rises)
Come, on, let's go! I need to
relieve my tension!

Jackson and Sheldon get up without much desire to do so.

As they leave the Equilibrium, Ellena casts a prolonged
glance in their direction. But Arnie doesn't look back.

INT. MACANTEK GYM, COURT #3 - NIGHT

Arnie plays better. He is on every ball, misses few.

Jackson, then Sheldon play with him. They seem to suffer.

EXT. STREETS OF GLENDALE, CA - NIGHT

VARIOUS SHOTS OF ARNIE RIDING HIS BIKE...

going home. Arnie is completely elated. It looks as though he is riding a bronco, grasping his handlebar, trying to make it stand on the back wheel, a wild thing, finally taming the animal as he reaches his small house.

INT. ELEVATORS @ MACANTEK, ARNIE'S FLOOR - DAY

Arnie steps out of the elevator, proceeding towards his cubicle. Cecilia Fourreau stops him, smiling. Arnie eschews.

CECILIA

Arnie! I need to --

ARNIE

Look, Sess, I just don't have the
tim --

CECILIA

It's not what you think. It's...

ARNIE

I'm sorry, I don't want to hurt
you, Sess, but we're not going out,
you and I, OK? I'm in love.

CECILIA

No, that's all right, Arnie, let me
just say what I want to say!
Congratulations!

ARNIE

Huh? For what, then?

CECILIA

You made it, that's great!

Cecilia gets into the elevator, leaving Arnie clueless.

Arnie moves on, and meets Zhang on his way.

ZHANG

Congratulations, Arnie!

Rajiv and Sameer brush past him.

RAJIV
Congrats, Arnie! Good for you!

SAMEER
Awesome, Arnie! Glad I'm on your team!

ARNIE
(trying to act normal)
Thanks, guys!

Arnie breaks into a run.

ARNIE
Sheldon! What now!

INT. SHELDON'S CUBICLE - DAY

Sheldon and Jackson whisper to each other like conspirators, giggling, having a good time. Arnie arrives.

ARNIE
Who's the whispering about? Anybody I know?

SHELDON
Oh, hey, Arnie! You OK?

JACKSON
We weren't talking about you, if it's what you're asking. Congratulations, by the way!

ARNIE
What for? For Pete's sake... Everybody been saying "Congrats, Arnie!" ever since I got here, and I don't have a clue!

JACKSON
You ain't seen that email from the Queen yet?

ARNIE
What email?

SHELDON
(to Jackson)
What did I tell you?
(to Arnie)
Here, I printed it out for you...

Sheldon hands Arnie a sheet of paper. Arnie reads it, disbelief showing on his face as he goes through the email.

ARNIE

Employee of the Month for April?
Me? This a joke? What the hell is --

JACKSON

You rock man!

SHELDON

(laughing)
Cool, Dude... too cool! How did you
pull that one?

ARNIE

Well, honestly, that's what I'd
like to ask you!

SHELDON

Hey, no. I didn't do a thing, man!

JACKSON

Neither did I, li'l bro! Not us!

SHELDON

But I seen Zabriskie on your back a
couple times, right? That's
probably what he was here for! To
check you out, Dude!

JACKSON

And you passed the test!

ARNIE

But I hate his guts!

SHELDON

And he must like you! You've become
popular, man!

JACKSON

And the women love you too! Thanks
to Sheldon and Jackson here! Ain't
you pleased?

ARNIE

I dunno. Somehow I'm not convinced!

Arnie stares at them, scrutinizes their faces. But Sheldon and Jackson act nonchalantly, sustaining his gaze.

ARNIE (CNT'D)
 God save me from my friends; I can
 take care of my enemies!

JACKSON
 Hey, that's a good quote, man! Mind
 if I use it again in the upper
 floors?

ARNIE
 Sure, Jackson, help yourself, must
 be in the public domain anyways!
 (beat)
 But I swear somehow I'll get my
 revenge on you two! Swear to God!

SHELDON
 Hey, man, that's totally uncool!

Arnie exits. Sheldon looks towards Jackson, who shrugs.

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Claudette Karelsky is getting herself busy in the kitchen.
 The PHONE RINGS. She picks it up.

CLAUDETTE
 Hello!

INTERCUT PHONE
 CONVERSATION:

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Arnie has a smile on his face.

ARNIE
 Mom, it's me!

CLAUDETTE
 Oh, hello, Arnie!

ARNIE
 I've got great news, Mom! I was
 made Employee of the Month!

CLAUDETTE
 Oh? By whom? That's neat! I'm so
 proud to have a son like you! For
 all your hard -- work!

But something is wrong. Claudette holds her chest, then her hand goes to her armpit. She sits, regains her composure.

ARNIE
Mom, you OK?

CLAUDETTE
Sure, Arnie! I had to sit down!
What news this is!

ARNIE
(hangs up)
I'll see you tonight!

Claudette catches her breath. Her face shows pain.

INT/EXT. MACANTEK GYM, COURT #2 - LATE AFTERNOON

MONTAGE - ARNIE'S SQUASH...

-- Arnie plays squash with Sheldon. He's starting to play really well. Sheldon kisses the walls. WHAM! Jackson watches and laughs, then nods mute approval. Things happen over several days, as the three friends are seen wearing different clothes each time.

-- Arnie comes out of #2, and, curious, checks out #1 and #3. But there's visibly no one he knows in there. Jackson pats him on the shoulder, and they amble down the hallway.

INT. MACANTEK GYM, WEIGHT LIFTERS' ROOM - EVENING

MONTAGE -- ARNIE'S MUSCLES

-- Arnie, his hair now cut short, does some pushups, situps, pressups, lifts iron, never out of breath or lacking strength. He enjoys this.

-- Sheldon tries to do the same thing, but is continuously overcome by the weight he tries to do anything with. In the last shot his hair is pathetically short too.

-- Jackson laughs, and manages to keep up with Arnie. Sheldon has -what could be construed as- a tender look for Jackson.

-- Arnie gives Ellena's squash court a quick look: no one...

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 So work was fine, play was even
 better... But the love of my life
 was nowhere to be seen...

INT. SHOWERS - LATE EVENING

Arnie showers. The muscles on his chest are more apparent.
 He's turning into a pre-hulk. His spirits are high.

INT. MACANTEK GYM, LOCKERS - NIGHT

Arnie comes out of the showers, a towel around his waist.
 Jackson eyes him. Sheldon too.

JACKSON
 You turning into a prince, little
 frog! Now that your hair is
 alright, we gotta take care of your
 skin! And I don't mean that
 overlong foreskin of yours!

Jackson laughs. Sheldon hands Arnie a wrapped present.

SHELDON
 Here, I got you something!

ARNIE
 Thanks, Shel! But this isn't my
 birthday!

Arnie hugs Sheldon. Sheldon lingers a second longer.

JACKSON
 (laughs)
 Let's say it's your skin-day
 then...

Arnie opens the parcel. It's a bottle of Acne Mark Fading
 Peel, in Neutrogena's Advanced Solutions line. Arnie tries to
 hide his surprise.

SHELDON
 What? You need that kind of stuff,
 man! Read the label! It's
 clinically proven to reduce the
 look of post-acne discolorations
 while also helping clear and
 prevent acne.
 (MORE)

SHELDON (cont'd)

It contains a unique combination of salicylic acid and our exclusive CelluZyme™ technology—ingredients that work together to help minimize the appearance of acne marks while treating your skin to help prevent new breakouts from forming and discourage future marks.

Arnie is amused.

ARNIE

Do you realize you're turning into a mutant sales guy, Shel? Why, thanks anyway. Great surprise! That must've cost you at least twenty bucks! Much appreciated.

Arnie throws away the rest of the wrapping paper.

JACKSON

Wait, Arnie! That's not all, You just threw away my part of the present, man!

ARNIE

Oh? I'm sorry!

Arnie picks up the wrapping paper from the trash can again. Finds a SMALL-SIZED ENVELOPE in it, opens it. There's a voucher in it. Arnie reads the text with even more surprise.

ARNIE

Two hundred and fifty dollars worth of skin treatment at Francoise's of Pasadena. You're crazy, Jackson. Man, you're completely out of your mind!

Jackson hugs Arnie, who smiles. Skin on skin again. Somehow, Arnie feels ill-at-ease. Jackson doesn't show anything.

JACKSON

Yeah, that would do, for starters! You should also get yourself some contacts. Those glasses of yours don't look too trendy..

ARNIE

Who for? She hasn't been here for weeks!

JACKSON

Too busy, little brother! She's been travelling.

ARNIE

Alone?

JACKSON

Well, Bobby Zabriskie has been with her a lot... Even Percy Bowers.

ARNIE

Oh, shit!

JACKSON

And so have at least half a dozen other people. Something is cooking... She put a lot of miles on that Learjet recently, man.

ARNIE

What. What for?

JACKSON

Well, there's talk of a merger, or a buy-out. Nobody really knows with who.

ARNIE

If we get gobbled up by someone, then we're probably out of a job, right?

SHELDON

That's the catch. Shit.

JACKSON

Not necessarily. I am out of a job, maybe, but I've proven so valuable as a salesman here that I doubt it very much. They need a smooth operator like me...

SHELDON

Yeah, but you've become expensive.

JACKSON

I guess... Anyways, if the acquisition is made by any one of our competitors, you're out of a job too. But if it's anyone whose--

ARNIE

Whose product line is complementary
to ours, then we're OK...

JACKSON

You got it! Now let's get a move
on. I don't want anybody in the
company catching us half-naked
swapping beauty products in the
showers, man! I have a rep' to
defend...

INT/EXT. DERMATOLOGIST'S RECEPTION - DAY

A typical physician's reception desk, a SECRETARY behind it. Arnie comes out of the doctor's office. Arnie and the DERMATOLOGIST shake hands. Arnie looks good. He smiles.

Arnie walks past the secretary's desk, says a mute "Bye". He goes to the door, opens it and walks out.

The plate on the door says: "Dr. Raffi Gregorian; M.D. Ph. D.; Dermatology".

EXT. FRANCOISE OF PASADENA - DAY

The window of a neat little beauty salon. The name on the front banner says it all. Arnie comes out, looking great.

He dances to the next shop, which says: "Pasadena Optometry".

Arnie walks in, and --

EXT. PASADENA OPTOMETRY - AN HOUR LATER

-- comes out, no longer wearing glasses. Arnie makes sure the contact lenses are still in his eyes. He smiles.

INT. PROGRAMMERS' MEN'S ROOM - DAY

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

So I was ready for the big day! And
a bit nervous too...

Arnie, casually well dressed but wearing a tie, looking his best, walks in without making much noise, Sheldon on this tail. Arnie goes to the nearest mirror. He checks himself out, looking slightly spastic. The metamorphosis is over.

SHELDON

Let me see... You look smashing,
Dude! Let me fix this thing for
you!

ARNIE

You sure?

SHELDON

Yeah! Awesome!

Sheldon fiddles with Arnie's tie, and both freeze as
THRUSTING and MOANING noises are heard in the rest room. Both
have a quizzical expression on their face.

ARNIE

Mona? Is that you?

The MOANING stops. A pin drops.

MONA (O.S.)

Yeah -- Arnie?

SHELDON

And me... Sheldon!

ARNIE

You in there too, Bill?

BILL (O.S.)

Uh. Yeah, what's up, man?

ARNIE

Nothing, just making sure she was
with the right person. Sorry for
intruding. Have fun!

SHELDON

(laughs)

Yeah! Tons of fun! Don't forget to
flush when you're done!

Arnie walks out. But pops his head back in. Sheldon too.

ARNIE

Oh, Mona, when I said 'a roll in
the hay', I meant you could do it
in a--

SHELDON

Yeah, he didn't mean a roll of
toilet paper, you guys!

ARNIE

-- I meant, find a more comfortable place, OK?

MONA (O.S.)

Ah? Yes. Thanks for the advice again, Arnie!

BILL (O.S.)

(relieved)

Thanks, Man! I was hoping we could do that, yes!

INT. MACANTEK, CEO'S RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Arnie approaches Ellena's secretary's desk.

BIRGITTA

Yes?

ARNIE

Arnie Karelsky. I'm here to see Ms. Billow.

BIRGITTA

I recognize you. The errand-man turned programmer. Do you have an appointment?

ARNIE

No. Ellena said I could come up, via email.

BIRGITTA

Do you have a copy of that email?

Arnie somehow loses his countenance.

ARNIE

No. But I can run down and get it.

BIRGITTA

That's alright. Sit down, I'll call you. Arnie Stavisky you said?

ARNIE

Karelsky. At least you haven't heard about me.

Birgitta shrugs off Arnie's attempt at humor.

Behind Arnie, Annette Ekstrom shows up, and hands a thick file to the secretary. She looks contemptuously at Arnie.

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Here you go, Birgitta. She needs to have it A-S-A-P. No matter who or what comes up.

BIRGITTA

Gotcha. Thanks!

ARNIE

Hello Annette!

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Do I know you?

ARNIE

Uh... yeah! I'm Arnie Karelsky.

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Oh? What happened to you? You don't look half as bad as you used to!

ARNIE

Why, thanks, Annette. I --

ANNETTE EKSTROM

And where are your glasses?

ARNIE

I... I'm wearing contacts.

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Oh. Birgitta we'll need that photograph changed in the Hall of Fame. Mr. April doesn't look like Frankenstein's creature any more.

BIRGITTA

Mr. April? That him? Wow!

Birgitta eyes his crotch. Arnie doesn't feel right.

AND THINGS START IN SLOW MOTION AGAIN...

Annette laughs, her bad mouth contorting. She leaves. She's gone. Her gestures are slow, and stroboscopic.

The secretary laughs too, trying to be alluring. Her seat is empty. Next she's seated again. She moves about, and Arnie tries to make some sense out of her spatiotemporal ranting.

The clock on the wall seems to move forward fifteen minutes at a time. An hour passes in a matter of thirty seconds.

Arnie looks dizzy, by no means his best.

THE SECRETARY'S HAND IS ON HIS SHOULDER...

And this ends the slo-mo.

BIRGITTA

Mr. Karelsky? Can you hear me?

ARNIE

(wakes up)

Yes. What is it?

BIRGITTA

I think you fell asleep. With your eyes open. That was weird. You should get some sleep at night. Here's my phone number, just in case you have a moment to spare. I'm not married or anything. Zero trouble!

Arnie takes the business card she gives him: "Birgitta Meyer". Her private phone number is scrawled on it. And the dots on her first name have been replaced by little hearts.

ARNIE

Thanks. But I don't think I'll need it. Is it my turn?

BIRGITTA

Yes. Mr. Zabriskie will be out of her office in a minute.

Arnie gets ready to wait some more.

Suddenly, Zabriskie storms out of Ellena's office. He is mad!

ZABRISKIE

Karelsky, I thought I'd told you to run everything by me before you submitted it to Ellena!

Arnie is stunned, and remains seated.

ARNIE

But I... I did. Except she also said to use her direct email address... ellena@ --

ZABRISKIE

I'll make you pay for this,
Karelsky! I'll make you pay,
believe me!

Zabriskie marches down the hall as quickly as he can.

BIRGITTA

(amused)

What was that? -- If Mr. Stud would
do me the honor of following me to
the Mistress's chambers...

Birgitta precedes him to the oak door of Ellena's office.
Arnie looks small in front of that big door. She opens it.

Arnie seems to be sucked into the room.

INT. ELLENA BILLOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie still stands on the threshold. The door behind him
shuts, shoving him inside. He nearly loses his balance.

Ellena stands behind her armchair. The sun gives her
silhouette a magic halo. It is as if Arnie were in front of a
new age goddess. She doesn't move. Awkward moment.

Arnie's attention is attracted to some framed photographs on
the wall. He points at the first, which represents a young
man with very long hair, and zits.

ARNIE

Who's this?

ELLENA

My first husband Peter. He was a
musician.

Arnie points at the second photograph, that of a young man
with glasses, and pimples too, his long hair in a pony-tail.

ARNIE

And this?

ELLENA

My second husband Stefan, a German
university professor.

Ellena then takes a couple of steps. Her face is now fully
visible, and shows both pleasure, and surprise.

ELLENA

Arnie... what happened to your face?

ARNIE

Well, I... I went to see that doctor, and... you don't like it, I guess...

ELLENA

I do, as a matter of fact. But I didn't mind the pimples. And the glasses. You look more sort of like... well, no longer like a top programmer!

Ellena smiles. Arnie feels relieved. Physically, they are now on a par with each other. That much is clear.

ELLENA

And you bought yourself a beemer, I guess? Or did you keep that old bike of yours.

ARNIE

I kept the bike. I couldn't afford a car right now, I don't think.

ELLENA

Oh, good! I mean... I guess we may have to give you a raise. To buy a new bike, maybe?

Arnie sees some photographs on Ellena's desk.

ARNIE

(stunned)

And what are these?

The pictures represent Arnie riding his ten-speed.

ELLENA

Pictures of you.

ARNIE

Why would you have pictures of me on your desk, Ms. Billow? You're not going to have them framed, are you?

ELLENA

(smiles)

Those were taken by my driver, who insists you're a dangerous, reckless individual and wants me to have you sacked.

ARNIE

Are you going to do that?

ELLENA

Did Elizabeth the First ever listen to her cook while she ruled the country?

Arnie smiles, clearly more at ease.

ARNIE

Thanks. Ellena, I... I've been missing you.

ELLENA

You have?

ARNIE

Yes.

ELLENA

(playful)

How so?

ARNIE

Well, I... You've been on my mind for some time...

ELLENA

You've got the company at heart, do you? Sit down, Arnie. Please.

Ellena moves back to her armchair as Arnie sits in front of her desk. The latter is tidy, but everything on it says she's been very busy. And still is.

Suddenly, Arnie, stunned, catches a glimpse of his red A-LOVES-E heart-shaped card on the desk, delicately tucked under her calendar.

Ellena follows his gaze, sees the card too. But she doesn't say a thing. She looks smashing with her glasses on, her Chanel tailored suit, her hair done up.

Their eyes meet, but Ellena doesn't react to Arnie's questioning look. She chooses to walk around to him.

ELLENA

Arnie, I really appreciated your email...

ARNIE

Which one?

ELLENA

The one that said we should throw in the antivirus as a bundle with any of the other security products. I think this is an awesome idea!

ARNIE

But I... I didn't write that one!

ELLENA

Yes, you did! I guess you've written too many. But I read each one of them!

Ellena reads from a sheet of paper.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

"Give away our antivirus shell, VirusWarden, for free or at \$10 tops, and figure out what the return would be on the subsequent subscriptions for new virus signatures. But not the engine updates."

Arnie appears nonplussed.

ARNIE

Can I have a look?

ELLENA

Certainly. This is brilliant, Arnie! Exactly the type of initiative we're looking for!

The email looks genuine. From AKarelsky@macantek.com To Ellena@macantek.com.

ARNIE

I... I don't think I could've written this one, Ellena. This is more, like... a sales guy's type of pitch. And reasoning...

ELLENA

Exactly! But from the changes I've noticed in your general... well, attitude, I think you may be taking that route. And Arnie, thanks to you, Chad, the VP of sales is positive this may result in a 10% increase in revenues over a year!

ARNIE

Well, yeah... Awesome!

Arnie visibly doesn't like the turn this is taking.

ELLENA

(pulls a second sheet)

And what about this one? "Offer racks of CDs selling for two or three dollars at the cashier of Walmart, Rite Aid, Von's, any food seller, etc. 30-day antivirus protection, security, antispyware, antispam: Dear Customer, you are covered for a whole month!" Marketing loved it! They are probably busy rephrasing this last bit as I speak, but this is gonna fly, Arnie! As a matter of fact it IS flying! We're starting the campaign this month!

ARNIE

Look, I didn't --

ELLENA

-- think I'd be reading your emails? Well, I have!

ARNIE

I know. I --

ELLENA

Don't you feel good about it?

ARNIE

Sure. It's just that I don't remember writing any of this.

ELLENA

(laughs)

You're a genius, Arnie! We expect geniuses to live on clouds. And forget.

ARNIE

(rises)

Yeah, I guess. Swell. Look, Ellena, I gotta go... I've been here for over two hours, and I have tons to do. So I'll be on my way...

Arnie looks utterly disappointed. He makes for the door.

Ellena appears a little tense, thinking out her next move.

ELLENA

Arnie, wait!

ARNIE

Yes?

ELLENA

(hesitant)

I... I saw you playing squash, a while back... Do you think, you and I, we could...

Ellena lets it hang.

ARNIE

Yes?

ELLENA

(more cheerful)

Well... how about we play together?

ARNIE

Sure. One of these days.

Arnie pretends to march on.

ELLENA

No, wait! Tonight? Five?

Arnie turns to face her, waiting for an explanation.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

I'm currently travelling an awful lot... Don't know when "one of these days" is gonna be...

Arnie thinks, trying to mentally find the right spot in his timetable, visibly astronomically busy.

ARNIE

Yeah, I understand... Five is too early, though. Can you make it six?

ELLENA

Sure.

ARNIE

I'll let you handle the reservation. I would get nowhere myself with such short notice...

ELLENA

I'll take care of it.

Arnie leaves. Ellena flashes the brightest smile.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

I knew who was behind this, of course. And I thought their input this time had been disastrous. But mind you, only the end result counts, and I didn't have the heart to lay the blame on my friends...

INT. MACANTEK GYM, COURT #3 - EVENING

Arnie and Ellena play. They play well, and they seem to dance. They're having tons of fun together. Arnie's game has really improved. He is now at her level there too.

EXT. MACANTEK GYM, OUTSIDE #3 - EVENING

Arnie and Ellena come out, a towel around their neck. Sweaty but happy. And blessedly tired. They walk.

ELLENA

That was enjoyable!

ARNIE

I loved it!

They look at each other briefly. There are a lot of unsaid things in those four eyes. And a little bit of embarrassment.

ELLENA

I need a shower!

ARNIE

Me too. Ellena...

ELLENA

Yes?

ARNIE

Shall we go and have a beer afterwards? I'm buying!

ELLENA

Well, in that case...

Ellena walks into the women's locker room.

Arnie looks like he could do a sun dance on the spot.

INT. LOCKERS - EVENING

Arnie storms into the locker room. RUNNING SHOWERS next door.

Arnie sees Sheldon's clothes on a bench. Then Jackson's.

ARNIE

(out loud)

Hey guys! Guess what!

No reply. He strips quickly. Runs to the showers.

INT. SHOWERS

But Arnie stops dead -- shock showing on his face.

In the steaming showers Sheldon and Jackson, stark naked, are busy kissing. There is a lot of tenderness and love in that kiss. It can't be mistaken for anything else. They see him.

Sheldon, caught red-handed, breaks the embrace. Shame shows. Jackson seems to feel no better. They are stunned.

Arnie retreats to the lockers.

ARNIE

(out loud)

You guys come out. I wanna have those showers to myself.

INT. LOCKERS

Arnie sits on his bench. Sheldon comes out, followed by Jackson. They sit too.

SHELDON

Look, Arnie. This is not what you think...

ARNIE

And what exactly am I thinking?

Awkward silence. Arnie looks more determined than mad.

JACKSON

You're not gonna tell anyone,
Arnie, are you?

ARNIE

Tell them what? That Mr. Anti-Gay
Crusader, Mr. Homo-Basher himself,
that absolute champion of
homophobia in our company, and
probably in the whole state of
California, humps my best friend
when no one's around to watch the
parade?

SHELDON

We were just kissing, Arnie!

ARNIE

That's more like it! And when do
you plan to have your coming out
party, Jackson?

JACKSON

I... Do I need to? Man, this is
gonna break my legs as a top sales
exec! This is gonna kill me, Arnie!

SHELDON

Arnie, please do it for me... Don't
tell them, Dude, OK?

ARNIE

I won't. Providing you stop using
your foul mouth on anything that
spells homosexual, Jackson. Now get
moving, both of you. I need that
shower!

Arnie moves back to the showers.

INT. EQUILIBRIUM - NIGHT

Arnie and Ellena sit at a high table having that beer. They
are an odd couple: the company's top woman, and one of her
sidekicks. This draws a couple of stares.

Zabriskie, most notably, is riveted to their corner.

Ellena looks concerned for Arnie.

ELLENA
Are you all right, Arnie?

ARNIE
Yeah, sure. But. But aren't you...
well, maybe we should have gone to
a different place, I mean...

ELLENA
I don't care what people say. I've
got a question, however: why me?

ARNIE
Well, I... Because you're bright
and beautiful.

Arnie has that questioning look.

ELLENA
Is that all?

ARNIE
--

ELLENA
(rises)
Well, I'd better be on my way then.

ARNIE
Ellena, wait!

ELLENA
What? You forgot to say that I'm
rich too?

ARNIE
No. No. I don't care about money.
All I care about is you. I wanna
reach behind that public persona,
you know what I mean -- that icon
on the TV screen, and get to know
you better.

ELLENA
(sits, hopeful)
You know, Arnie... I've been
married twice. And I'm twice
divorced.

ARNIE
So you chucked them...

ELLENA

As a matter of fact, I didn't. It was more like they dumped me. But I made pretty damn sure it looked the other way round.

Arnie takes this in.

ARNIE

Why are you telling me this?

ELLENA

Because I trust you, Arnie Karelsky. When you came out of that gym you looked like you'd seen the devil in tight stockings.

ARNIE

Pretty close.

ELLENA

And yet you didn't tell me a thing.

ARNIE

(pained)

No.

ELLENA

You wanna tell me now?

ARNIE

I can't. Not just yet.

ELLENA

Because you're not that kind of person. You're a fearless hell-rider!

Ellena gets closer. Arnie stares at those magnificent eyes.

ARNIE

I like your smell too.

ELLENA

(smiles)

Pheromones, huh?

Arnie looks around for signs. They have become the center of attention. People look away. Zabriskie doesn't. He shoots a killer look at Arnie.

ARNIE

People are staring.

ELLENA

Who cares?

ARNIE

Apparently Robert Zabriskie does.

ELLENA

Bob is a top professional. But a jerk on a personal level. Look at me.

Ellena gets closer. Her right hand goes to Arnie's forehead. She strokes it gently, appreciating its smoothness.

ELLENA

You know, I liked your pimples too.

ARNIE

You didn't mind them? I know a couple of other girls who did!

ELLENA

How stupid they must have been. Just like my husbands...

Ellena gets closer. Arnie is mesmerized. She places a quick peck on his lips. Arnie likes that.

Around them people stare. And Zabriskie is now boiling.

Arnie feels ill at ease.

ARNIE

Ellena, there's. I mean. There's been a rumor. Regarding the size of my --

ELLENA

I've heard of it.

ARNIE

It's all really hyped up, you know. I mean...

ELLENA

Do you really think I may have been attracted to you for all the wrong reasons? Oh, Arnie, you don't know women. That is so funny!

ARNIE

I'm glad we talked about it.

ELLENA

Arnie, a couple of extra inches don't make a difference to a woman. Feelings do. With women, it starts in the brain. The rest follows. Don't tell me you're attracted to me because of the size of my breasts...

ARNIE

(hesitant)

Uh. No. Of course not.

ELLENA

(smiles)

I see. Well, men are different I guess...

Ellena looks around, suddenly notices all those eyes trained on her. She takes Arnie's hand, and gets up. Arnie follows.

ELLENA

Arnie, you're probably right. Let's be a little more careful. Come on, let's go. Let me show you my place... No Bloomberg journalist has ever been there.

EXT. ELLENA'S PENTHOUSE, SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

I couldn't believe my luck. Had trouble believing this was even happening. Me! And Ellena Billow!

Ellena and Arnie are mere silhouettes on the terrace, a fantastic view over the sea and the pier in a gorgeous moonlight. Lovers' locale. Arnie gets closer.

They hold hands. Ellena rests her head on Arnie's shoulder. They kiss. A long kiss. Then head for the bedroom. Slowly.

INT. ELLENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A king size bed in a sumptuous bedroom with walkins and an adjoining bathroom. The lights are dimmed low.

Arnie and Ellena are in bed. Arnie looks awkward.

ARNIE

Let's turn the lights off.

ELLENA

Oh? OK...

They are now simple silhouettes in the dark.

ELLENA

Arnie, you. You gotta take your tighty-whities off!

ARNIE

Oh! Yes. Yes, of course.

ELLENA

You too, Bob!

ARNIE

What? Zabriskie in here with us?

ELLENA

(laughs)

No, Arnie, no! There's just the two of us. Calm down. -- You've done this before, right?

ARNIE

Yeah. Yup, of course!

ELLENA

Good!

Movements in the dark. Bodies and limbs reaching out.

And suddenly Ellena manages to SHRIEK and SCREAM at the same time, expressing utter surprise.

ELLENA

Oh my God... Arnie, it was true!

ARNIE

Yeah. Do you... Do you mind?

ELLENA

Of course not! Relax! And come here, my little stallion!

ARNIE

Don't call me that! I ain't an animal -- or a freak. I'm your man, now.

ELLENA

Oh yeah? Well, show me, then...

Their mouths meet again. They make love.

INT. ELLENA'S BEDROOM - DAY

AN ALARM CLOCK wakes them up. Ellena starts.

ELLENA

Oh, my God, eight o'clock! Arnie, I forgot to reset it. I have to be at the airport before nine!

She gets out of bed, rushes to the bathroom.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

Get dressed too. My chauffeur will drop you off at the office after that...

A SHOWER is heard (OS).

INT. ELLENA'S BATHROOM

Ellena is in the shower. She applies shampoo to her hair.

Arnie joins her under the scalding water. He kisses her shoulder. Ellena turns, and they kiss again.

ARNIE

Turn the lights off!

ELLENA

What? Again? Arnie, I thought last night was, like... enough for a first date!

ARNIE

I got some news for you, Baby! Your jet is gonna have to wait!

ELLENA

(smiling)

And so will my meeting in San Jose!

ARNIE

I wish you could stay all day.

ELLENA

So do I.

Arnie stares at Ellena. She appears uneasy, and embraces him quickly. They kiss again.

EXT. SANTA MONICA AIRPORT, TARMAC - DAY

Ellena and Arnie get out of Ellena's limo in front of THREE FRETTING EXECS checking their watches. Including Zabriskie, visibly irritated. Behind them is a majestic 43-foot long LEARJET 23 with a huge "MACANTEK INC." sign on the side.

ZABRISKIE

(to Ellena)

You didn't tell him, did you?

ELLENA

No I didn't. Don't worry, Bob.

The three men board the plane. Ellena and Arnie embrace. Then she climbs on board too, and the steps are retracted.

Arnie ambles back leisurely to Ellena's Limo. And waits.

The chauffeur eventually catches the hint, and holds the door wide open for him. He doesn't look pleased at all.

The jet taxis away.

From one of the portholes, Zabriskie watches Arnie's car leave, a mean look on his face.

EXT. LOS ANGELES PARK - DAY

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

We started seeing each other regularly after that. The sweet California spring was all around us.

Ellena, wearing jeans, rides Arnie's bike, alone.

Now both are on the 10-speed. Ellena rides between Arnie and the handlebar, a la BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID. They laugh, and have a great time.

IN THE BACKGROUND...

Sheldon and Jackson, wearing identical TOMMY BAHAMA shirts and slacks, chat on the grass, and eat hot dogs with passion.

IN A CURVE...

Arnie and Ellena, still on the bike, stare at something in the distance. Their faces show surprise.

THEIR POINT OF VIEW...

Zabriskie whispers sweet nothings to Annette Ekstrom.

ARNIE AND ELLENA FALL OFF THE BIKE...

gently, and start rolling in the grass. Arnie gives his ten-speed a push, and...

THE BICYCLE PEDALS OFF BY ITSELF UNTIL...

It reaches a bush. A MUFFLED CRY is heard. Mona Silvestra, topless, appears behind the bush, and looks around. Bill Crayford stands up too, zipping up his fly.

ARNIE AND ELLENA...

kiss on the lawn, suddenly more serious. Perfect bliss shows clearly between the two of them.

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S GARDEN - DAY

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

Then Ellena and Mom met. Mom loved Ellena. And Ellena loved Mom. I couldn't be happier. Well, sort of.

Sunny day. Arnie, Ellena are about to leave Claudette's place. The back yard is not much to talk about: a hedge and a few square feet of lawn. Three plastic chairs and a table with a waxed tablecloth. On the table are THREE CUPS, COFFEE, and what's left of the SCONES. Decent.

CLAUDETTE

You should have seen him as a little boy, naked in the tub, always cuddly and sweet.

ARNIE

Mom!

ELLENA

He hasn't changed much. Just grown a little. -- Arnie, we gotta go. I'm sorry, Claudette. We'll come again! And stay longer...

Claudette and Ellena hug in front of Arnie.

CLAUDETTE

Ellena, I'm so glad Arnie found you. I've been worried about my boy.

ELLENA

A fine boy, Claudette...

CLAUDETTE

I know. And I can see that you two are in love. Nothing could make me happier. Even if I get to see him a lot less.

Ellena's cell phone RINGS. She picks up.

ELLENA

(in phone)

Yes? No. OK, I'll come over right away.

(rushed)

Arnie, I gotta go.

ARNIE

OK. I'm coming.

ELLENA

No. Alone. Duty calls. I'll see you at the apartment. I gotta go.

ARNIE

Yes, you gotta go. How long you gonna be?

ELLENA

(kisses him)

I dunno. I'll be back as soon as I can.

(to Claudette)

Claudette, thanks for the coffee and scones. You have to come over to our place some day.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 She was saying "our place", and that was nice. But she wasn't all mine. Just yet. I had her body. I wanted her soul. I wanted everything that spelled her delicious name!

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Claudette shuts the back door. Arnie sits, looking slightly worried. He cheers up as Claudette turns to him.

CLAUDETTE
 You picked the right woman for yourself, Arnie, my love.

ARNIE
 Think so, Mom? It sure feels good to have your blessing.

CLAUDETTE
 Marry her, Arnie! And the two of you found a family now! Hurry!

ARNIE
 Why should I hurry?

CLAUDETTE
 Why? Because someone might snatch her away from you, of course!

Arnie nods, seemingly unconvinced. He rises to hug her. She moves painfully towards him.

ARNIE
 Mom, you OK?

CLAUDETTE
 Yes. I'm just out of breath. And all these emotions...

Arnie and Claudette hug.

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE - DAY

Robert Zabriskie is seated at Arnie's computer. Outlook is open. He peruses emails, and gives the task all his attention. He doesn't notice Arnie approaching behind him.

ARNIE

Robert! What the h -- What are you doing??

ZABRISKIE

(embarrassed)

Just checking a couple things...

ARNIE

Who gave you my password??

ZABRISKIE

The network admin guys. I have full authority over them.

ARNIE

I'm not sure this is even legal.

ZABRISKIE

You better believe it, Karelsky! If I'd found anything in there, you'd be fried!

ARNIE

And what exactly did you expect to find?

Zabriskie shrugs, and leaves.

Arnie sits, peeved. Sheldon comes running.

SHELDON

What was he doing? This is your computer, Dude! I can't believe it! That creep touched your goddamn PC!

ARNIE

What's going on here?

SHELDON

Look at! Your keyboard's all dirty now. Yuck! Bastard! Prick!

ARNIE

You guys been up to something? Where's Jackson?

SHELDON

He's at the bank. He's selling all his stocks!

ARNIE

What? Why?

SHELDON

Macantek went up fifteen point six per cent! Since yesterday! He made ninety five thousand dollars overnight.

ARNIE

Oh, jeez. What's cooking?

SHELDON

Nobody knows. Everybody is in the dark. But something is bound to happen... Don't you know? I mean, you've been the Queen's minion for a while now, right?

ARNIE

You've got your minions wrong, Shel! And anyway, I never mix business with pleasure, Dude. You know me better.

SHELDON

Yeah. Sorry. Come on over, Arnie. The other guys are watching the tube...

INT. PROGRAMMERS CUBICLES - DAY

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

Slimy brown stuff was starting to hit the fan. -- Just starting...

The whole R&D team is gathered around the small TV Screen.

Bloomberg TV is on. Silence all around.

On the screen the same anchorman is aflutter.

ANCHORMAN

(on TV)

The stock to watch today is still Macantek Inc. We're now at a nearly two points and three quarters hike over the last sixty minutes. No comments have been made available at the Pasadena headquarters as I speak. But the London office admitted that a merger of some kind was in the works, and that a press release would be rendered public before the end of the week.

(MORE)

ANCHORMAN (cont'd)

Wild speculations announce a major battle between IBM and Microsoft to take over the Pasadena software giant. This has resulted in various
--

ARNIE

What is this??

SHELDON

Who the hell knows?

ZHANG

(questioning look)
Don't you, Arnie?

ARNIE

Nah...

ANCHORMAN

(on TV)

-- The question is: how is this merger going to affect the Macantek culture?

Slavomir turns the TV off. Leonard breaks the silence.

LEONARD

Damn good question! How this gonna affect us?

RAJIV

We're all dead, Len. I'm leaving the country. Time to get that start up running in Mumbai!

INT. MACANTEK CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

ALL 40 BOARD MEMBERS are assembled in a stately room, but quite modern, as befits the software industry. SOME ARE OLDER, but MOST are UNDER 40. NINETY PER CENT are MEN.

At the head of the overlong board table stands Ellena.

She appears calm through a major crisis. She holds a stapled three-page document, and she's on page 3.

Percival Bowers speaks uninvited.

BOWERS

I don't get it!

ELLENA

Percy, we'll take your question at the end, when we're through with the press release!

BOWERS

No! You take it right now! -- This is ca-ta-stro-phic, Ellena! From what I'd understood we needed another two weeks to conduct due diligence with them.

ELLENA

Such is the case indeed.

BOWERS

Then I'm selling. Before it's too late.

NORBERT ARAF (60) tries to understand.

ARAF

Why is it a disaster? I don't get it... Our shares are currently going through the roof! Why sell out now?

ELLENA

If they're too high, the merger won't be possible, because they'll eventually turn down our offer. This is a shares only operation. If our stock is over-evaluated then we'd be buying cheap. Very cheap, no matter how many shares we give them. And if it doesn't happen, there will be speculation, greed all around, and our shareholders will sell at a loss to save their skin. This thing will deflate like a cheese soufflé. So the seventy four dollars we're at right now will probably be down to seven or eight tomorrow. Which means that we won't be able to buy tomorrow. Or sell, or do anything tomorrow!

BOWERS

Goddammit, What happened?

ELLENA

We're positive someone leaked to the press.

ARAF

That's obvious. But who? Where?

ELLENA

"Who" we don't know. But that someone is not in the know, because the rumor actually says we're merging or selling out, whereas in fact we're buying. And "Where" is probably right here, at HQ.

Silence as everybody thinks. ZABRISKIE, who had been hiding in one corner of the room behind her, speaks:

ZABRISKIE

I think we now have a fair idea of who talked to the press at this point...

ELLENA

We do?

ZABRISKIE

Yes.

ELLENA

(fearful)

So you found something out?

ZABRISKIE

I did.

Zabriskie looks like a chess player.

ELLENA

Then who is it?

BOWERS

Tell us, Bobby!

ZABRISKIE

We believe it's a young guy at R&D.

ELLENA

(very pale)

What's his name? Who, Bob?

ZABRISKIE

A geek named Arnie Karelsky...

ELLENA

What evidence do you have, Bob? You have no evidence!

ZABRISKIE

As a matter of fact, I do, Ellena.

He pulls a sheet of paper from a folder, and holds it high.

ZABRISKIE (CNT'D)

This here is an email from this guy Karelsky to Bill Machrone of Ziff-Davis.

BOWERS

Fire the son of a bitch!

ELLENA

We don't even know if he's guilty! Bob, show it to me!

ARAF

Get rid of him! Cut his balls off!

A WOMAN next to Araf whispers something in his ear.

ARAF

Oh? That's the boy with the big -- I see. I didn't know!

Araf laughs his head off. All laugh. The room is ROARING.

Ellena reads the email.

ZABRISKIE

Well?

ELLENA

Anybody can forge an email. Even I could do it!

ZABRISKIE

Oh, you could? Are you saying I made this up?

Ellena stares at Zabriskie, looking hopeless but determined.

ELLENA

Where did you find this, Bob?

Zabriskie hesitates.

A MAN sitting next to Bowers whispers in his ear.

Bowers stares straight ahead, at Ellena. Grave.

Ellena goes even paler, averts Bowers' eyes.

BOWERS

Ellena, I don't know if this last bit is true, but... whatever. You'll have to let this guy go...

ELLENA

Why should I, Percy? I didn't tell him anything! He is not --

BOWERS

-- Guess not. Otherwise he would have gotten it right...

ELLENA

Let me finish, Percy! I don't believe for one second that Arnie Karelsky did it!

BOWERS

I think Bob has shown you enough. But anyway, even a scapegoat would do. You're going to have to choose, Darling! Clean up this mess, or go! -- Good bye!

Percy Bowers leaves, slowly. Others follow. HULLABALOO.

ELLENA

And I resent you calling me Darling! This is a clear case of...

BOWERS

Of what?

ELLENA

Of sexual harassment!

BOWERS

Come on, Token Blonde! Do your job!

Bowers laughs it off. He exits.

INT. ELLENA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

My fate was sealed. And I guess I became the first employee ever, in the whole history of the American economy, to get the sack in the President's sack...

Ellena and Arnie lie on the bed, and stare at the ceiling.

ARNIE

So this is how it happened...

ELLENA

Yes. I'm gonna sue the bastard. I've taken enough shit from Percy Bowers. I had enough witnesses in that board room to get a couple of mils out of him. Then I'll give them to you...

ARNIE

As a severance fee? So you've made your choice?

ELLENA

Arnie, don't be mad!

ARNIE

How could I not be?

ELLENA

Because we're gonna fight this! Together!

ARNIE

No, we're not!

ELLENA

What do you mean?

ARNIE

Fire me!

ELLENA

What?

ARNIE

Fire me!

ELLENA

Are you sure?

ARNIE

Yeah.

ELLENA

Look, Arnie, I've been making a consistent fifteen to twenty million a year for the past five years. We won't need your salary!

ARNIE

Thanks! Simple arithmetic, then! Is that all it is to you? So, what am I gonna be? Mr. Billow?

ELLENA

The other two didn't mind...

ARNIE

Well, I do! Why don't you give it all up?

ELLENA

What do you mean?

ARNIE

Do you love me?

ELLENA

Yes, I do. Very much.

ARNIE

But it feels like... sometimes it feels like I have your body, but I want your soul too!

ELLENA

Oooh... That's frightening!

ARNIE

No it isn't. Come live with me, Ellie. We'll find something else!

ELLENA

Arnie, this is my job.

ARNIE

It's about my job too. And I enjoy it more than I care to say!

ELLENA

It's... It's also my life, Arnie. You don't know how much I worked for all this. Few women in the world have ever reached such a position of power... Come on over here!

Arnie comes back to the bed. Ellena cajoles him.

ELLENA

We're gonna live through this together, Darling. OK? Everything's gonna be alright!

ARNIE

(rises)

No way! It's not all right! Ellena, this is not the spirit of our relationship. It can't be!

ELLENA

Oh? OK. Then what is the spirit of our relationship, Arnie?

ARNIE

Equal footing.

ELLENA

Yeah?

ARNIE

Absolutely!

ELLENA

You're such a turn on when you raise your little fist, my love!

ARNIE

(unsettled)

Really? That's cool.

INT. PROGRAMMERS CUBICLES - DAY

INSERT: FINANCIAL TIMES HEADLINE

"Macantek CEO in Sexual Harassment Probe"

FIRST FEW LINES:

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) announced yesterday that it had received protected disclosures which revealed that a former Macantek employee may have been the victim of sexual harassment while employed by the software publisher. Ellena Billow, CEO of Macantek Inc.

(MORE)

FIRST FEW LINES: (cont'd)
was not available for comments on
these allegations. ---

BACK TO
CUBICLES:

Arnie drops the newspaper. He is surrounded by the R&D crew.
All look awkward.

ARNIE

That's not it! She is suing that
guy Bowers, not the other way
around!

BILL

Read on! Protected disclosure, man!
Right now the plaintiff wishes to
remain anonymous. She is being
probed, that much is clear! --

RAJIV

Yeah, man! I wouldn't mind doing
the probing part, if they have no
one --

BILL

-- And probably sued for a shitload
of money later on. By whom? A
former employee! Do we have many
options here?

SLAVOMIR

I know of only one son of a bitch
who was fired for as long as I can
remember!

LEONARD

That sucks, Arnie! First you call
the press, now you're suing her!

ARNIE

But I didn't call anyone! I'm sure
Zabriskie did it!

SHELDON

Look guys... Anybody can squeal to
the EEOC. When Lewinsky was sort of
put on the spit for tasting the
Presidential groin, it was Linda-
what's-her-name who'd spilled the
beans. Not Monica herself. Same
here! Doesn't need to be Arnie, OK?
Come on, guys!

RAJIV
Hey, Shel, that you then?

SHELDON
Uh... No way! Come on, Rajiv!

LEONARD
Let's face it, Shel... It's Arnie
the whole enchilada is about!
(to Arnie)
Come on, quit horsing around, dude!

SAMEER
Ouch. Low blow!

SLAVOMIR
Yeah. Who was shagging the boss,
huh? She had no time for nobody
else!

SAMEER
Do you know how much money I lost
on those shares, Karelsky?

ARNIE
You didn't have to sell! They're
gonna go up again!

SAMEER
Sure! In five years' time?

There's now only hostility around Arnie.

ARNIE
Look, guys. I've been set up. And
I've lost my job! I'm here to --

RAJIV
But you're filthy rich, man! You
don't need a job anyway!

ARNIE
She is rich. I'm not. And if she
reacts like you do, I'm out of her
life too!

MONA
So what? You'll make five million
on her back with this thing.
Disgusting! I thought you were a
nice guy, Arnie! Your love story, I
mean, we all believed in it...

ARNIE

(tired)

I've been fired unjustly, Mona. --
I'm here to pick up my stuff, like
I said. Now you guys please leave
me alone.

Arnie looks terrible. He heads for his cubicle, shoulders
down, with all the weight of the world on his back.

INT. ARNIE'S CUBICLE

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

I'd become popular overnight thanks
to a whim of mother nature. I'd met
the top star in the night sky, and
made love to her... and I fell from
grace overnight too.

Arnie gets to his cubicle, Sheldon on his heels.

SHELDON

I'm so sorry, Arnie! Man, what am I
gonna do, without you around!

ARNIE

You're gonna be alright Shel. And
now you've got Jackson too, right?

Arnie gathers his meager BELONGINGS into a small box.

From one of the cubicles Leonard's head bobs up. Then
Sameer's facetious face.

LEONARD

Hey, By the way, Sheldon, Jackie
was here earlier, looking for you.

SHELDON

You mean... Jackson?

LEONARD

Yeah. That guy your date doctor,
Shel?

SAMEER

Or just your date?

SHELDON

(blushes)

I... We...

Leonard and Sameer start laughing. And vanish.

ARNIE

Don't mind them. Be brave, OK? They mean no harm. They just like playing with words...

SHELDON

Yeah. I guess... See what I mean? I need you around, man! What you gonna do now?

ARNIE

I'm gonna go up and see her first, then we'll see.

SHELDON

And then there's SpyWarden. You're the only one who knows where that thing's going.

ARNIE

I'll be your remote control, don't worry. We'll pull through this together. You just do what I tell you to. I'll be with you full time on this, Shel.

SHELDON

OK. Sure. Whatever you say, Dude.

INT. OUTSIDE ELLENA BILLOW'S OFFICE - DAY

Arnie, his miserable box in his arms, walks past Annette Ekstrom, who ignores him superbly.

ARNIE

Don't worry, Annette, you're gonna be the girl next month! Aren't you glad?

Annette shrugs. Birgitta does not to look at Arnie.

BIRGITTA

Yes?

ARNIE

I'd like to see Ellena.

BIRGITTA

I don't think she's in.

ARNIE

Get on that damn phone and ask her first!

Birgitta jumps, and picks up the phone.

BIRGITTA

(in phone)

The infamous Mr. Karelsky is here for you. -- Yes. Are you sure? -- I'll let him wait here then.

Arnie stares at her, then sits down by the door.

No sooner is he seated that the massive door opens, and shuts again. Arnie jumps, hopeful. HOWARD LOEW (60) comes out. A self-important lawyer, sweaty and slightly pathetic.

HOWARD LOEW

Mr. Karelsky? I'm Howard Loew, Ms. Billow's attorney. How are you, Sir?

ARNIE

OK.

HOWARD LOEW

Come this way with me, Mr. Karelsky. What I have to tell you is confidential.

Loew leads Arnie away from the door and the eavesdropping secretary. Then he stops and stares at Arnie, as if trying to look through him and read his thoughts.

HOWARD LOEW

We have a serious situation here, Mr. Karelsky...

ARNIE

I know. Please call me Arnie.

HOWARD LOEW

Well, I won't. And you may not use my first name either.

ARNIE

Suits you. She won't see me, then?

HOWARD LOEW
 No, she won't. For the time being.
 Mr. Karelsky, it's best if you
 abstain from contacting my client
 till this blows over.

ARNIE
 But I gotta tell her that I've got
 nothing to do with all this!

HOWARD LOEW
 She knows.

ARNIE
 Are you sure?

HOWARD LOEW
 I am. Is that all, Mr. Karelsky?

ARNIE
 Well, yes. No, wait. Tell her that
 I love her...

HOWARD LOEW
 I will.

ARNIE
 (relieved)
 Thanks. Nice meeting you, Mr. Loew.

HOWARD LOEW
 Likewise.

ARNIE
 Take good care of her!

HOWARD LOEW
 I will.

Howard Loew watches Arnie as he leaves, an ambiguous
 expression on his face: profound doubt mixed with sadism.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 And this is how I lost the love of
 my life --

INT. MACANTEK CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 -- The hearing was ugly. All kinds
 of nasty people had all kinds of
 nasty things to say.

INT. MACANTEK CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

The boardroom has been turned into a commission room, jam-packed with CURIOUS PEOPLE and OTHERS who need to be where they are: the WITNESSES...

Arnie keeps a very low profile at the back of the room.

Ellena, dignified, sits in a corner with Howard Loew.

-- ANNETTE EKSTROM takes the stand...

ANNETTE EKSTROM

Ms. Billow insisted on appointing Mr. Karelsky as the Employee-of-the-Month last April. Despite Mr. Zabriskie's fervent opposition. Nothing could have been more preposterous. And even --

HOWARD LOEW

Objection your honor! The witness uses the term 'preposterous', which by all standards, and for all intents and purposes --

Percy Bowers sits opposite the witnesses, with another FOUR PEOPLE. He interrupts vehemently.

BOWERS

-- Mr. Loew, this here is no court of law, but a simple hearing. Whether we have a trial later remains to be seen. Please sit down. -- Ms. Billow, I suggest you advise your Counsel to let the witnesses express themselves without any further impediments... But he can take notes all he wants.

The AUDIENCE LAUGHS.

-- BIRGITTA MEYER...

BIRGITTA

Ms. Billow was particularly interested in Mr. Karelsky's, well... anatomy. I don't know what to call that big thing. You see, there was that gossip about Mr. Karelsky being, well -- I mean, well-hung, so to speak.

(MORE)

BIRGITTA (cont'd)

And when I told her I could tell her eyes just went POP. So I thought to myself --

-- THE GYM MASTER...

GYM MASTER

I'm in charge of the reservations at the gym. Then I get this call from the boss herself. Never happened to me before. Usually Birgitta calls. Her secretary. She says she needs a court. I tell her I have nothing available. No slots. It was like, two hours before. So she goes, "Well make room for me, or you're gonna be in trouble!". I don't wanna be fired or anything. I mean, she's like, the boss! So I call the other guys and cancel THEIR reservation. I mean, we're all part of that next-in-line culture! And there can't be any exceptions, you --

HOWARD LOEW

Objection!

BOWERS

Sit down, Mr. Loew!

-- ROBERT ZABRISKIE...

ZABRISKIE

I saw the two of them kiss in that public place called THE EQUILIBRIUM. It's like the company's watering trough. Arnie Karelsky didn't seem interested in her at all. Poor boy. But she started getting more intimate, and stroked his forehead, and then she kissed him. She was clearly taking the initiative there. The poor boy didn't know where to hide. It's one thing to be a freak. And another to become the center of attention overnight. I don't think he was quite ready for that. He --

-- ELLENA'S CHAUFFEUR...

CHAUFFEUR

Yes it is. I mean, it's true that I drove this guy here from the boss's apartment in Santa Monica to the airport. I mean, the two of them. Then this guy was all alone in the back of my limo all the way to Pasadena. I felt like puking.

HOWARD LOEW

Objection! We need to hold this witness in contempt!

BOWERS

Oh, Shut up!

PERCY BOWERS has that shark of a smile, nonetheless. Things are taking the turn he expected.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

People can be mean. Sometimes involuntarily. Ellena was clearly receiving no support. -- Then my turn came...

-- ARNIE TAKES THE STAND...

ARNIE

Nothing of what I heard here is true. They all lied!

BOO from the AUDIENCE. ATTORNEY LOEW FACES HIM...

HOWARD LOEW

(to Head of Commission)
May I, your --

BOWERS

(beyond fed up)
Yes, you may, Mr. Loew.

HOWARD LOEW

Mr. Karelsky, as the plaintiff in this case, you --

ARNIE

But I'm not the plaintiff! I'm not complaining about anything!

HOWARD LOEW

Mr. Karelsky... I can't begin to comprehend what type of schizophrenia is at work here.

(MORE)

HOWARD LOEW (cont'd)

In you brain. I'm not a pathologist. But we're all gathered here because someone deemed that you'd been wronged, and that you needed reparation. Who that well-meaning person is, maybe we'll never know. But now, please, do not make my job more difficult than it is, and answer my questions!

BOWERS

Yeah, cut the crap, Schwantzie!

ARNIE

(hurriedly)

No! I have a statement to make! I love Ellena Billow!

LOEW's face shows hopelessness. PEOPLE LAUGH.

CUT TO:

ARNIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

ARNIE

I love Ellena Billow!

Arnie jumps. He is in his bed, sweating heavily, and wakes up from a terrible nightmare. NOISE NEXT DOOR (OS).

Arnie breathes, stares in the void.

Claudette walks in, dressed in her bed clothes. She turns the light on. She looks extremely concerned. And tired. More tired than she should be if awakened at two in the morning.

CLAUDETTE

Arnie! Arnie, are you alright?

ARNIE

Yes. Yes, Mom. I had that nightmare again!

CLAUDETTE

I heard! My poor son!

Claudette sits on the bed, and hugs Arnie.

CLAUDETTE

My big boy! Oh...

Claudette looks livid.

ARNIE

Oh, Mom! You don't know what I'm going through!

CLAUDETTE

I know! I know! I love you, Arnie!
But you're gonna have to fight. You will --

Claudette collapses in his arms. Something is wrong.

ARNIE

Oh my god! Mom! Mom!

Claudette is unconscious.

INT. LAFD AMBULANCE (MOVING) - NIGHT

SIREN ON, moving AT HIGH SPEED.

Claudette, an oxygen mask on her face, has not regained consciousness. THE PARAMEDIC goes calmly about his business. Arnie looks desperate.

ARNIE

But what... What is wrong with her!

PARAMEDIC

Looks like pulmonary embolism to me...

ARNIE

What is that?

PARAMEDIC

A blood clot blocking an artery.
With respiratory failure here.
Probably as a result of lung cancer. Has she been seeing a med?

ARNIE

I... I dunno.

A tear comes rolling down Arnie's cheek.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

By the time we got to the hospital,
Mom was dead. My life had been hanging on that last thread. And now she was gone. I felt responsible for not noticing anything. For being so selfish.

(MORE)

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING (cont'd)
 Ellena, Mom. I had lost the two
 women of my life. And this was a
 bit much.

INT. ARNIE KARELSKY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Arnie is on the phone, listening. He looks the worst.

ELLENA'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Hi! This is Ellena's answering
 machine. Thanks for your call!
 Please leave a message after the
 tone. I will return your call as
 soon as I can...

THE ANSWERING MACHINE goes BEEP, BEEP, BEEP! Over a dozen
 times in total: all the messages Arnie left previously.

Arnie hangs up without saying anything.

On the table is a gun, an old-fashioned revolver.

Arnie looks at the gun. Then stares at it.

Arnie. The gun. Arnie. The gun.

Arnie. The gun.

Arnie

The gun

Arnie grabs the gun!

Arnie points the gun to his temple!

The phone RINGS.

Arnie sighs, puts the gun back on the table. And picks up.

ARNIE
 (feebly)
 Yes?

JACKSON (V.O.)
 (on phone)
 Arnie? Arnie man, I need your help!
 It's Sheldon!

ARNIE
 What's wrong, Jackson?

JACKSON (V.O.)
He kicked me out of his place, man!
I need your help! Go and talk to
him, man, OK? Will you?

INT. SHELDON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sheldon is dead drunk on the bed. Things are helter-skelter.

Arnie paces the room, facing him.

ARNIE
So what's wrong big boy?

SHELDON
(crying)
I'm gay, man! Oh, Dude!

ARNIE
You're not gay right now... you're
just drunk!

SHELDON
Arnie, I'm telling you: I'm gay!
Oh, shit!

ARNIE
Well, I... I thought we had that
behind us. We knew you were gay
before tonight, didn't we?

SHELDON
Yeah -- No!

ARNIE
But I saw you and Jackson kissing,
remember? And I could tell that was
no joke.

SHELDON
Yeah. Kissing, yeah!

ARNIE
So what?

SHELDON
Well, kissing was just one step,
Arnie. And groping. That was
alright. But now...

ARNIE
Now what?

SHELDON

Well, tonight, see, we decided to go, sorta further. We decided to... you know.

ARNIE

Hold it, Shel. I don't wanna hear any more! This is your sex life, and I don't wanna hear about it. And I'm not gonna tell you about my sex life either, OK?

SHELDON

I wanted to. No, NO, I mean, I didn't want to. Is what I mean...
(cries)
Arnie, something's wrong with me!

ARNIE

What?

SHELDON

(cries more)
Shit, I enjoyed it! I'm fucking gay, man! This is for real!

Arnie stares at Sheldon. Beyond his own unbearable pain, he cares for his friend, that's visible.

ARNIE

Look, Shel... That's cool, man. You gotta learn to accept yourself as you are... You'll be OK... As long as you don't run away from it... See?

SHELDON

But I thought... I was straight! You know... All those years of watching skin flicks just got to me. Maybe I wasn't looking at the girls so much.

ARNIE

Yeah. Well, I know at least one girl who's gonna be disappointed...

SHELDON

Huh? Who's that?

ARNIE

Salma Hayek...

SHELDON
(laughs drunkenly)
God, you're funny, Arnie! You're so
funny! You're my pal, right?

Sheldon hugs Arnie. Arnie feels awkward, but hugs him back.

ARNIE
It's cool, Man. Yeah, I'm your pal.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Sheldon probably saved my life that
night, even though he was too drunk
to realize how bad I was feeling.
And that hug made me feel better.
Hey, what are friends for, right?

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A beautiful day for a very sad moment. Claudette is laid to rest. It's a pretty coffin, a son's last token of love.

Around Arnie and the MINISTER are LESS THAN TWO DOZEN PEOPLE: Sheldon and Jackson, and the dozen members of the R&D crew. Among them Bill and Mona hold hands.

Mona hugs Arnie, who is mighty sad, overwhelmed with grief. He wears a suit, and looks good in it.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

Arnie is all alone, facing the grave. SLIGHT NOISE behind him. He turns. Ellena Billow is standing at some distance. She is dressed in black, clearly in mourning herself too.

Ellena closes in on him. Arnie doesn't move.

Ellena kisses Arnie's cheek.

ARNIE
Who told you?

ELLENA
Sheldon. -- Arnie, I... I'm so
sorry.

ARNIE
At least she saw us together. She
loved you, Ellena...

ELLENA

And I loved her too.

ARNIE

She'd been seeing a doctor. She knew. But she never told me.

ELLENA

Oh...

ARNIE

This isn't the way it was supposed to happen. She wanted me to be happy. And she was feeling sorry for all this.

ELLENA

Arnie, I... I'm sorry about all this too. Please believe me. I've been acting... I've been behaving badly. You can't imagine how bad I feel.

She hugs him. Arnie doesn't react. She pulls back, and draws something from her purse.

It is a heart-shaped card that says: "E loves A too..."

Arnie has a brief, sad, smile. Then puts the heart in his suit pocket without a word. He looks up and stares at her.

She stares back intently, and strokes his forehead. Their eyes lock. Both appear hopeful.

ELLENA

Arnie, I wanna turn off the lights with you again.

ARNIE

And you're saying this on my mother's grave?

ELLENA

That's not what I mean. I want us to be close again. You look like you need it. -- And so do I.

Arnie raises his head, facing her. They have one tender kiss.

ELLENA

I want to be good. I swear. Don't worry. I know what to do.

ARNIE

Oh yeah?

ELLENA

Yes.

Ellena leads Arnie away, holding his arm. They walk.

ARNIE

Ellena, there is something else you can do... I need five million dollars. Today!

ELLENA

Oh? You're not going... nuts, Arnie, are you? What... What for?

ARNIE

I'm buying Macantek shares today!

ELLENA

Arnie, are you... Do you know what you're doing?

ARNIE

Yeah. Sheldon has kept working on SpyWarden, my antitheft application, under *my* supervision. You're launching it today.

ELLENA

I know, but...

ARNIE

Trust me, Ellie!

Ellena stares at Arnie, and nods.

INT. MACANTEK CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

TWICE the ATTENDANCE as during the first hearing session. Ellena is seated next to Howard Loew, who rises, ready for some grandiloquence.

Howard Loew addresses the judge

HOWARD LOEW

Your Honor, I--

BOWERS

I'm flattered, Mr. Loew. But again, this is no court of law. What have you got to say?

HOWARD LOEW

Oh, yes. Sorry, Mr. Bowers. I have that single-tracked mind, and I guess I can't express myself in any other way, shape or form. Anyway, I'm afraid I won't have the pleasure of delivering my opening statement in the case at hand. Here or anywhere. Ms. Billow would like to change her plea. She now pleads guilty to all charges of sexual harassment on the person of Mr. Arnie Karelsky and has already offered the plaintiff a settlement, which Mr. Karelsky has accepted. Ms. Billow would like to make a statement.

Bowers mutters something inaudible, trying to cover the SHOCK REGISTERED all around. Ellena rises. A little uncertain at first. Arnie, hidden in the crowd, gives her courage.

ELLENA

I fell. I fell in love with Arnie Karelsky the minute I saw him arriving on his bicycle at the company's headquarters in Pasadena about three or four months ago. I'd never felt anything quite like it before. That was love at first sight. You might say, as my counsel did, that a blinding cupid had hit me with a poisoned arrow... I was... lost. I could think of nothing else but Arnie Karelsky for days after that. I am completely guilty of all the charges brought against me.

MORE SHOCK in the audience.

BOWERS

Again, no charges yet, Ms. Billow.

ELLENA

Do not interrupt me again, Percival Bowers. Not until I'm done here.

Their eyes joust for one instant.

ELLENA (CNT'D)

I did worse than that. I used my power to award Arnie Karelsky unjustified benefits and merits. I made him Employee-of-the-Month when that honor should have gone to someone else. I allowed him to ride in my company car and to use the services of my driver. And I looked for every possible way to draw his attention, however fraudulent or illicit. That included writing memos to myself in his name, and calling him into my office for that purpose. I am guilty. Guilty of love. And guilty of committing all those offenses for the sake of love. Now, thank you for bearing with me, Mr. Bowers. You're gonna get what you have been waiting for all along. I'm stepping down. Aren't you happy? As of this minute I am officially resigning as Chairman of the Board for Macantek, proud of what I've accomplished. Mark my words... I'm leaving behind a company in absolute top shape, with your *beloved* stock price higher than it's ever been! Good luck with it!

GENERAL DIN.

EXT. MACANTEK HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Ellena and Howard Loew walk down the steps to the street. They are completely surrounded by A HORDE OF REPORTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS going wild.

JOURNALIST #1

Ellena! Miss Billow! Are you going to write a book about this?

ELLENA

Maybe.

JOURNALIST #2

Mrs. Billow! Your legal advisor mentioned a settlement.

(MORE)

JOURNALIST #2 (cont'd)
 What settlement did you offer Arnie
 Karelsky? How much?

ELLENA
 I offered Mr. Karelsky no financial
 compensation whatsoever. Mr.
 Karelsky insisted he could take
 care of himself on that level.

JOURNALIST #3
 Then what? Ellena, what did you --

Ellena somehow manages to get inside her car. Howard Loew,
 now alone, plays Mr. Important in front of the press.

HOWARD LOEW
 My client offered Mr. Karelsky to
 settle. Mr. Karelsky accepted.

JOURNALIST #1
 Yeah, so what? What was the offer?

JOURNALIST #3
 Mr. Loew, what settlement?

HOWARD LOEW
 Marriage.

INT. ELLENA'S LIMOUSINE - DAY

Ellena sits alone, pensive. She turns to the driver.

ELLENA
 Peter, you're driving me for the
 last time. From now on I'll be
 taking care of myself and driving
 my own car.

CHAUFFEUR
 I'm sorry, Ms. Billow. They forced
 me to say those things at the
 commission.

ELLENA
 Sure. Tell that to someone else.

Ellena frowns, and then somehow smiles. She looks at her left
 fingers, rubbing some imaginary ring.

Suddenly, Arnie's forceful hand opens the chauffeur's door.

ARNIE
(to driver)
Get outta here! I'll drive.

The driver exits reluctantly. Arnie grabs his cap, puts it on, sits, and drives off.

Ellena smiles even more. Arnie looks straight ahead, beaming.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
From then on it was all uphill again. My stock quadrupled in a week, after the first press reviews about the identity theft prevention tools came out. Quadrupled again the following month, when I sold. I had it made.

WHITE SCREEN: VARIOUS STILLs ARE THROWN ON THE SCREEN...

One by one, slowly, each new photograph piling up on top of the previous shot:

-- Mona in her wedding dress, and Bill, awkward in a tuxedo.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Bill and Mona got married soon after we did. They spent their honeymoon in Italy --

-- Bill being kissed by a bunch of over-friendly mock Italian characters.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
-- Bill had no other choice, I guess. He and Mona had that roll in the hay, in the restrooms and elsewhere, way too many times, and she got pregnant.

-- Rajiv in an Indian office setting.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Rajiv went back to India, true to his word, and started selling PCs en masse to fellow Indians for one hundred dollars a pop. He is now worth a couple hundred million... rupees, of course. He intends to get married, if he finds a minute.

-- Jackson amidst happy gays at a parade. He wears a T-shirt that says: "Heterosexuality isn't 'Normal', Just COMMON!"

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Jakson LaPier celebrated his coming out with friends. And found that this did not have an adverse effect on his career. His spectacular sales spoke for themselves.

-- Sheldon in a suit and... looking clean!

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Sheldon went back to college to get an MBA. He became a successful software entrepreneur, and hired his --

-- Sheldon shakes hands with Jackson in front of their new company logo: "JackShell".

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
-- first employee, who soon became his associate. I put some chips on that one too. The company is doing even better today, and they --

-- Sheldon and Jackson, surrounded by all remaining members of the R&D team.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
-- started recruiting among people they knew.

-- Robert Zabriskie smiling brightly, a Saville Row suit on, shakes hands with Percy Bowers.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
Robert Zabriskie became the new CEO of Macantek. He never managed to be as effective as his predecessor, but he always enjoyed the affluence, --

-- Annette Ekstrom, twelve months pregnant.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
-- until Annette Ekstrom found herself pregnant. And the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with it.

-- Zabriskie and Annette, their backs turned to each other.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 I guess she and Bobby never agreed
 on what to call the baby. --

-- Zabriskie, looking angry, gives a smiling Annette a check.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 -- So Annette pressed charges for
 sexual harassment, and received two
 million dollars in compensation so
 she would settle without making too
 much noise, and keep her mouth shut
 in the long run. --

-- Zabriskie looking completely dejected, turns his back to
 us, moving out of frame, under Percy Bowers's menacing index
 finger.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 As a result of this family feud
 Zabriskie was fired by the Board of
 Directors, under Percy Bowers'
 relentless scrutiny. --

-- A malevolent silhouette wearing a horse's mask drops an
 envelope into a USPS mailbox.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 -- And the press had a field day
 with it. Someone had tipped them
 off.

-- Howard Loew winning his first case in a long time, flips
 the bird to Percy Bowers, who gives him an evil look back.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING
 Howard Loew eventually allowed me
 to call him by his first name,
 after he won a five-million dollar
 compensation for sexual harassment
 from Percy Bowers. No woman
 nowadays should take any shit
 whatsoever on the job! Or any other
 form of discrimination that would
 diminish and disgrace them, for
 that matter... Thus spake Arnie
 Karelsky...

EXT. ARNIE'S MALIBU HYPERCOTTAGE - A YEAR LATER

Great sunshine. Pacific sea view. Huge pool in front of a
 gorgeous PCH home by Paradise Cove.

ZOE (5 months old), seated in her crib, BABBLES in front of her doting Dad. Arnie couldn't be happier.

Ellena comes out of the pool, grabs a towel, looking elated.

ELLENA

Arnie, you're the perfect Dad.

ARNIE

I know. Our little Zoe is such a cutie!

He sits back in his long chair. And relaxes, breathing deeply, contented. She hands him a postcard.

ELLENA

It's from Holland.

ARNIE

(looks at the card)
Sheldon and Jackson...

ELLENA

Yes, They got married last week.

ARNIE

Well, that's cool. Happiness found everyone.

ELLENA

Yeah. I could never imagine it had been so close to me. Ever since I met you.

Ellena lies down in her own chair by his side. She gives him a tender look. There's perfect bliss in the air again.

They enjoy the silence for a full three seconds.

ELLENA

Arnie, I'm glad you did it.

ARNIE

Did what?

ELLENA

The whole shebang!

ARNIE

Oh. I didn't leak to the press, Ellena. Zabriskie did.

ELLENA

I know. But you did the rest. You know what I'm talking about. I think I needed that. All that power was blinding me. I was a CEO and no longer a human being.

ARNIE

You sure?

ELLENA

Yes. I'm positive I would still be a slave if I hadn't met you. I'm at peace now, and my soul is intact. I think I was longing for that kind of... quiet life when I saw you riding your ten-speed that day. That's probably why I fell for you. Now we're happy, and I'm grateful.

ARNIE

Are you really?

ELLENA

Yes.

ARNIE

So you knew...

ELLENA

Yes. How did you do it? I thought that was clever, but I never really understood how...

ARNIE

That was real easy. Easier than developing software. Annette Ekstrom was my Linda Tripp. I literally cried in her lap, saying how mean you'd been... seducing me, firing me to protect your career, and then dropping me like a dirty handkerchief. I had to lie a little bit you see. But my cause was just. That bitch was just so eager to listen, like you wouldn't believe. I knew Ekstrom would report straight back to Zabriskie, who, in turn, would go to Percy Bowers. It was bound to work.

ELLENA

That was a hard gambit you played.
You could have lost me for ever.

ARNIE

Yeah... A bit risky, I guess. But I
knew I had to make that decision
for you. I'm not sure I would do it
again, though, if I were given --

ELLENA

No, don't you dare! -- Don't do
that again, ever... or I'll kill
you!

Ellena reaches out and holds his hand.

ELLENA

I love you Arnie!

ARNIE

I love you, Ellie!

Silence, each of them absorbed in their thoughts. Zoe smiles.

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

I'm sure Mom could see us, from
wherever she was. Her
granddaughter. Us. The three of us
together. And that felt good too.
Life was beautiful.

FADE OUT

BLACK SCREEN

ARNIE (VO) NARRATING

And thus ends the story of how I
won Ellena Billow's heart -- And
how she won mine, after falling in
love with me five minutes before I
did... Believe me: life is anything
but a bitch.

THE END