

INFLUENCE

Written by  
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TEASER

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

ROSS, early 40's, handsome, sleeps across a largely torn apart bed next to STACY, 30's, beautiful. A phone BUZZES repeatedly.

ROSS  
If you get calls at this hour, I don't think this is going to work.

STACY  
It's yours. And this is like the fifth time.

A beat and then Ross bolts up in bed.

ROSS  
Hand it to me, hand it to me.  
(as he grabs for it)  
Don't say anything.

STACY  
You said you were divorced.

ROSS  
I am. I'm afraid it might be my parole officer.

STACY  
Parole officer?

He gestures to silence her and then -

ROSS  
(casual)  
Hello?

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - INTERCUT

CLARK, late 30's, manic, pushes a heavy, modern looking couch through the office. He talks fast, like the words need out.

CLARK  
Where the hell are you? We were supposed to meet an hour ago. We-

As Clark goes on Ross looks at Stacy, relieved.

ROSS  
It's just my brother.

She moves warily into the bathroom, not nearly as relieved. As Clark GRINDS the couch across the floor-

CLARK  
This is important and obviously difficult for me, Ross, and I mapped out a whole new strategy and you promised that before we went in-

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
Clark. Clark. What is that noise?

CLARK  
It's the furniture. The furniture has been arranged very confrontationally, okay? I don't know how I didn't pick up on it before. That's on me. But, it's absolutely costing us business. All these tables-

ROSS  
You're at the office?

CLARK  
Yes.

ROSS  
You slept there?

CLARK  
Oh no. I haven't slept.

ROSS  
Clark-

CLARK  
I know! I'm on top of it. I did a full self assessment and in addition to the furniture issues, I've realized we're a person short. We need another person. I need another person. I've hired another person. And we should talk before-

ROSS  
Clark, you do realize we can't pay the people we already have, right?

Stacy peeks tentatively out of the bathroom.

STACY  
Exactly what sort of parole are we talking about?

ROSS  
Strictly white collar. Seriously, you can come out. I was barely even in prison.

STACY  
Prison.

She goes back into the bathroom and closes the door.

ROSS  
(to Clark)  
Look, I'm on my way. Stop moving things, okay?

CLARK  
Yes. Fine. Wait. Ross?

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSS

Yeah.

CLARK

I'm gonna keep moving the furniture. I don't know why I said I'd stop.

ROSS

I'll be there in ten minutes.

Ross hangs up, starts to dress.

STACY (O.S.)

(from the bathroom)

You said you were an architect.

ROSS

Technically, you said you were an architect first.

STACY

(stepping out)

That's because I AM an architect.

ROSS

Right. And then I said I was an architect because when people discover they suddenly have something in common they immediately feel more at ease and less like strangers. It's part of this process called 'mirroring'?

STACY

'Process'?

ROSS

Like a way to make people feel more comfortable and... connected.

STACY

By lying?

ROSS

'Mirroring'.

STACY

I missed the difference.

ROSS

Well, it's a... science thing.

STACY

Did you really go to NYU?

ROSS

I... no. I mean I went to college. Just not that one.

STACY

Is Hud really your favorite movie?

CONTINUED: (3)

ROSS  
I haven't actually seen it, but I  
youtubed the fifty eggs scene while  
you were in the bathroom last night  
and just based on that, yeah, I think  
it's safe to put it near the top of  
the list.

STACY  
Your secret love of Taylor Swift  
music?

Ross just CRINGES and shakes his head as he finishes dressing,  
moves toward the door.

STACY  
My God, are you really even divorced?

ROSS  
Yes. Very yes. I am SUPER divorced.  
Honestly, it still feels good just to  
say it out loud.

STACY  
Did you just use the word 'honestly'?

ROSS  
Look, I know it sounds a little  
strange, but it's a technique -

STACY  
Oh, well if it's a technique-

ROSS  
- we use in this new business I  
started with my brother who's like a  
genius with psychology and honestly-

STACY  
You did it again.

ROSS  
- it's all very new to me and I just  
didn't realize it would be this...  
effective. I swear I wasn't aiming any  
higher than getting your number. YOU  
asked ME to come home with you,  
remember?

She does remember. They stop in the doorway. One more chance.

STACY  
Is your name really Royce?

ROSS  
(cringing)  
It's Ross.

Her expression goes flat. Off the door SLAMMING in his face-

INT. CAR - MORNING

Ross and Clark whip into a parking space.

CONTINUED:

CLARK  
We lead with our weaknesses.

ROSS  
This is your new strategy? You understand that this is the last investor willing to talk to us? That Latrell worked this guy's assistant for a month to get us this meeting?

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

As they get out of the car-

CLARK  
I understand those things so well I was actually at the office at the agreed upon time.

ROSS  
In a way my absence is directly attributable to you.

CLARK  
I never remotely suggested you use the research to pick up women.

ROSS  
You should have.  
(dawning)  
God, maybe that's what we should be selling.

As Clark walks and talks FAST Ross struggles to keep up.

CLARK  
The studies show you're judged to be more likable if you begin by admitting to your faults rather than waiting. In fact, it actually makes you more likable than someone with no faults at all. We'd be better off making up things to admit to than appearing to be perfect.

ROSS  
I highly doubt we have to worry about appearing perfect.  
(grabs, stops Clark)  
Are we racing?

CLARK  
I'm excited.

ROSS  
Is there an excitement level just below jogging into the meeting?

CLARK  
I'm not jogging. This is jogging.

Before he can begin actually jogging, Ross grabs him.

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
Why aren't you sleeping at home?

CLARK  
Well, I wasn't sleeping, so it didn't make sense to-

ROSS  
You know what I mean.

CLARK  
There's still a lot of Beth's stuff there, and I can't get rid of it because I'm not ready to get rid of it but I can't be around it-

ROSS  
Clark, you've got to stop this. She was just some girl. You've had other-

CLARK  
No. No, not like this, not like-  
(quick beat)  
You're killing my mojo here, Ross. This is killing it. So let's do this later because right now I'm ready to shake the money tree. I'm ready to dominate. Can we go dominate? Let's go dominate.

Clark heads in. Ross stands, concerned.

ROSS  
Is there a level just below dominate?

INT. HIGH RISE - WINDOW OFFICE

Clark and Ross sit across from TED SANDERS, late 50's, balding, short, busy. Ross leads. Clark vibrates.

ROSS  
In 2008 a group of psychologists decided to see if instead of just observing people in the lab, they could use what they'd learned to actually manipulate them in the real world. Specifically, they decided to see if they could influence an election. So, the night before, in a few districts, they called voters from one party and instead of just asking IF they were going to vote, they asked WHEN, and then they asked what the person thought they'd be doing just before they went to vote, a little psychological trick that their research showed would cause the voter to create an unconscious trigger in the following day that would remind them, oh yeah, this is when I'm supposed to go vote. The results - were stunning.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ROSS (CONT'D)

Turnout from these specially scripted calls blew away traditional get out the vote calls, and just like that, it became very clear that in the right hands, these little observations about human nature that had just been lying around in academic journals could be turned into very powerful tools capable of doing nothing short of helping decide who became the next leader of the free world.

Clark suddenly stands as if he can't take sitting anymore, starts to move impatiently around the room like a boxer.

ROSS

And that got us thinking, what if instead of just trying to manipulate critical elections, you could use this vast body of knowledge to help people manipulate the most important moments in their lives. What if--

Clark can't take it. His words are unleashed in a torrent of pressured speech as he wanders the room fondling Ted's things.

CLARK

What if, Ted, what if we started the way we agreed we were going to start, which was by saying that I'm severely bipolar and my academic career recently imploded when the university became aware I was having an affair with a 22 year old undergraduate student. Also, Ross just finished a two year stint in a minimum security prison for fraud, so there's that. The point is we're not hiding anything, even though not leading with it, like we agreed to, makes it seem like we are, we're not, because we don't need to hide anything because this is an incredible opportunity. Sway the vote for the leader of the free world? Yeah, we can do that. That was my research. But maybe you don't want to get elected president. Maybe you just need help getting the job you always wanted? Or maybe you need to make sure your company is chosen for a billion dollar contract? Or that your daughter doesn't marry the dirtbag freeloading musician she's threatening to elope with. You want to play what if? What if, instead of leaving the big moments to fate, we could manipulate them with 60 years worth of research into human behavior, stacking the deck in your favor, so that when it really, really mattered, you always came out on top?

TED

You're offering me an alternative to fate? Sure, I'll take two.

CONTINUED: (2)

Clark SLAPS the desk, excited.

CLARK

There you go! Now we're cooking!

ROSS

(trying to be calming)  
Clark is a world renowned expert in the fields of human behavior, psychology, and motivation, and drawing from the most cutting edge psychological research he's able to tailor a plan to influence any situation so that at that critical, life altering moment-

Clark jumps in, unable to contain himself.

CLARK

Ted, you lost some kind of shareholder revolt you were trying to lead last year, right? We could have won that for you.

TED

You could have constructed a better argument for replacing the board?

CLARK

No, I could have replaced the board without knowing anything about your argument. I saw clips of your presentation. Series A dividends? Hell, I don't know if that was a good argument. But I know you're short. And bald. And you sound a little effeminate. And pointy shoes make you look like an elf. I know you lost when you stood up on the far left side of the conference room. No one important is ever wearing pointy shoes on the far left side of a room, Ted. Ever.

TED

So you'd have changed my shoes and the seating chart and I'd have won.

CLARK

I'd have primed your audience, Ted. Just like you did. Except you had them primed to ignore you.

(very worked up)

Don't you get it Ted? This is how people work. We don't listen to each other. No one's listening to you. No one's listening to me. We don't hear! We react to a million little things we aren't even aware of. The brain's all Jedi mind tricks and back doors and secret passageways and if you know about them- Watch this. Watch. Okay-

ROSS

Clark-

CONTINUED: (3)

Clark suddenly GRINDS Ted's desk sideways, KNOCKING things off before Ross leaps up to stop him.

ROSS

Stop.

CLARK

Ross, we can assert his power with just his feet! I'll show you. Go find me a female. Any female. Watch this.

He grabs at Ted's shoes while backing the desk up further.

ROSS

Clark! Stop!

Suddenly Ted's shoes comes off, sending Clark into the desk which goes over with a CRASH. Everyone stares. Long beat.

TED

Exactly how many fates would you say you two have altered so far?

ROSS

Well, we've only been up and running for a couple of months but we've managed to optimize several press releases and-

TED

Press releases.

ROSS

We're just beginning to educate people to the possibilities of what we can do and with an infusion of cash from you-

TED

Uh-huh. Look, I'll buy that there's some science to manipulating people-

CLARK

You'll buy it? It's not something you buy. It's not optional. The science is bulletproof. The science is science.

TED

Then maybe the science isn't the reason you're not getting any business.

CLARK

What's that mean?  
(to Ross)  
What does he mean?

TED

What I mean is, maybe when someone's life altering moment arrives, a felon and someone too mentally unstable for academics aren't the people you want pulling strings on your behalf.

CONTINUED: (4)

CLARK

I wasn't fired for being mentally unstable. I was fired for sleeping with an undergraduate.

TED

My mistake. Let me just get out my checkbook.

ROSS

Ted-

TED

Look, he's got a stunning resume when it comes to research, publications, experiments, but this is real life. And in the real life, the guy you needed money from is going to have to call a cleaning crew when you finish your pitch. Forgive me, but I think I'll wait for the next bus into this brave new world.

OFF Ross and Clark-

END OF TEASER

ACT I

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE

Ross and Clark step off the elevators, arguing. As they walk-

ROSS  
I'm not saying all the time. I'm saying occasionally. For important events. Like meetings with people who could help us pay for things like electricity and all the furniture you enjoy pushing around.

CLARK  
Look, I had a strategy and you-

ROSS  
Don't change the subject.

CLARK  
I can't take the drugs, Ross! Because you know what it's like? It's like when you go for a jog with headphones on and great music playing and it's like life has a soundtrack and then you take the headphones off and suddenly it's just dull and flat. The drugs stop the music, and the music is where the ideas come from.

ROSS  
I can think of several ideas we could have done without in that meeting.

They reach offices next to each other. MILES, mid 20's, geeky handsome, and LATRELL, late 20's, serious, step over.

CLARK  
Okay, yes, there's some bad with the good, but my condition correlates highly with creativity and some of the greatest minds in history have-

ROSS  
We're not talking about history. We're talking about right now. This exact moment in time where we just wasted our best chance to-

LATRELL  
We didn't get it?

As Clark walks into his office with Miles in tow-

CLARK  
No, Latrell. I blew it. Is that what you wanted to hear, Ross?

ROSS  
All I suggested was-

Latrell grabs Ross before he can follow Clark into his office.

CONTINUED:

LATRELL  
Hey. This is serious.

ROSS  
Does it seem like I'm taking it  
lightly?

LATRELL  
I called every contact I had left and  
practically offered to mow their lawn  
to get you in there. Ted was our  
lifeboat.

ROSS  
Then we'll just swim until we find  
another Ted. We have other-

LATRELL  
We have nothing. The landlord is ready  
to lock us out. I've talked to every  
bank and investor with a phone. There  
are no other Teds coming. We needed  
this Ted.

INT. CLARK'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

Clark paces as Miles watches.

CLARK  
You were a very promising graduate  
student Miles. You shouldn't have  
followed me here.

MILES  
I don't understand. The strategy  
didn't establish trust?

CLARK  
We didn't lead with it. And when I did  
come in it all came out wrong and-

MILES  
Did you talk about a dominance display  
or seeding behaviors?

CLARK  
I talked about a lot of things. I  
remember trying to take off his shoes.

MILES  
Why would you-

CLARK  
I was making a point about physical  
asynchronicity and power positions. I  
was going to demonstrate how putting  
his feet between himself and a female-

MILES  
The Miller-Barre studies.

CONTINUED:

CLARK

Miller-Barre! Exactly! Except I didn't say Miller-Barre, I ripped off his shoe and flipped over his desk. Where's Claire?

BACK ON LATRELL AND ROSS

LATRELL

You said you could control him.

ROSS

He's just in an up phase right now.

LATRELL

And when will he come down?

ROSS

We don't want down.

LATRELL

What do we want?

ROSS

Something in the middle. It's not an exact science. Look, try to remember, I'm the one who found you. I saw you had talent when everyone else saw a kid with a record, bad grades, and no degree, and I gave you a shot.

LATRELL

You set me up selling illegal investments out of a boiler room and you left in handcuffs! I'm not interested in another shot like that.  
(beat)  
Where were you last night?

ROSS

You're checking my place now?

LATRELL

I was guessing. Apparently I was right. You haven't changed at all.

Latrell walks away.

ROSS

(calling after Latrell)  
One thing has nothing to do with the other!

CLARK

(sticking his head out)  
You were late.

ROSS

Yes, that cost us a chance to really hone your new 'we're criminals please hire us plan'.

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK  
The studies are clear Ross-

Suddenly MEGAN, early 20's, knockout, steps over.

MEGAN  
Morning.

Megan stops everyone cold. Miles seems most excited.

MILES  
Megan. I thought you weren't coming in  
until Thursday.

Her eyes flick towards Ross, but only Clark seems to note it.

MEGAN  
Right. I was just between auditions  
and thought maybe I'd stop by. Try to  
learn a little more about the...  
science, or whatever, behind what you  
need me to do.

MILES  
(confident)  
You wanted to see me.

MEGAN  
I'm sorry?

CLARK  
(to Miles)  
I know what you're trying, but that's  
not how you do it.

MILES  
Really. It was declarative and I  
looked right at her eyes when-

Suddenly Latrell steps back over. Quickly, shocked-

LATRELL  
There's... a woman here who says she  
wants to hire us.

Surprised, they all look at each other for a beat. Then-

CLARK  
What are we waiting for? Let's go  
dominate.

Clark moves toward the lobby with renewed vigor.

ROSS  
Dominate was bad, remember? Let's try  
conversing. Let's-

Suddenly Clark stops short, looks around.

ROSS  
What?

CONTINUED: (3)

CLARK

Help me push this chair over to that plant.

INT. MEETING ROOM

Clark and Ross sit in chairs at opposite RIGHT ANGLES from SOPHIE, 40's, and her son TYLER, 10. The effect is that she has to look back and forth between the brothers.

SOPHIE

I don't even know if this is what you do. One of Tyler's doctors suggested maybe you could help. Dr. Allen? He said you used to be faculty at the same medical school.

CLARK

Yes. I was let go for throwing my lunch at a class full of first years.

SOPHIE

He mentioned that.

CLARK

I was also recently let go from another institution for having an affair with an undergraduate. In my own defense I was deeply in love with her and felt like she understood and accepted me exactly as I am.

SOPHIE

O-kay.

Clark shoots a leading glance at Ross. He SIGHS.

ROSS

I've been convicted of securities fraud and spent two years in a minimum security prison. Would you like to hear about the time I accidentally drove off without paying for gas when I was 17?

SOPHIE

Why are you telling me these things?

ROSS

That's such a good question.

CLARK

Because we want you to know we've made mistakes, but we've learned from them, and this is our chance to apply those lessons, and the expertise I've gained through a lifetime of studying human behavior, study that's frankly been at least partly an effort to understand the difficulties I have controlling my own, and use that accumulated knowledge and experience to help people like yourself.

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
Where was that answer an hour ago?

CLARK  
At the beginning of the meeting if  
you'd stuck with the plan.  
(to Sophie)  
I'm sorry, continue.

SOPHIE  
Well, Tyler has a heart condition. It  
makes him very weak and requires  
invasive surgery to repair his valves  
almost every year.

TYLER  
(smiles weakly)  
One more surgery and I'll have had as  
many broken ribs as Evel Knievel.

Clark cringes sympathetically at this thought.

SOPHIE  
The doctors have offered a new  
permanent treatment that uses stem  
cells to help regrow the valves. But  
the insurance company is saying it's  
experimental and they won't pay for  
it. We've already been bankrupted by  
Tyler's bills, so without the  
insurance we can't possibly afford the  
procedure and Tyler will just keep  
suffering through the surgeries.

Ross appears to have heard only one word and his face falls.

ROSS  
Bankrupted?

Sophie nods. Ross is done, but Clark's pacing, intrigued.

CLARK  
Who have you been talking to?

SOPHIE  
Well, we've worked our way up. I have  
a meeting scheduled with the head of  
the claims department tomorrow.

CLARK  
And he could approve the surgery?

SOPHIE  
Yes.

CLARK  
That's very good. What's he like? How  
educated is he? Is he aggressive? Do  
you have any pictures of his hands?

CONTINUED: (2)

SOPHIE

No... we've only talked a few times.  
His name is Charles Murray. I don't  
know much else.

CLARK

That's okay. We'll pull together a  
full background and figure out-

ROSS

When exactly did you declare  
bankruptcy?

He emphasizes it for Clark, who seems oblivious.

SOPHIE

About six weeks ago. I'm sorry, I  
guess I don't fully understand what it  
is you do.

CLARK

What we do is research and deploy a  
psychological strategy to make sure  
the people who've been telling you no  
decide to say yes. Simply put, we  
change their minds without them  
knowing we did it.

TYLER

Like jedi mind tricks.

CLARK

Exactly like jedi mind tricks! I just  
said that to someone this morning.  
Ross, didn't I say that?

ROSS

Yes. It went over really well.

CLARK

See, in your case we've just got to  
change one man's mind, that's called a  
single point of influence, and there's  
a number of strategies that might  
work. You said you're meeting tomorrow-

ROSS

You know what? Before we get too far,  
let us jump into a meeting. We'll get  
your contact information and get back  
to you as soon as possible.

INT. MEETING ROOM - LATER

Clark walks around as Miles, Latrell, Ross and Megan watch.

CLARK

This one's very intriguing.

ROSS

It isn't a one.

CONTINUED:

CLARK

Really? Tell the kid staring at twenty more heart surgeries this isn't a one.

ROSS

Pretty sure his phone's been cut off since they have no money.

MILES

Did you move the chairs in here?

CLARK

Yes.

MILES

I don't know this one.

CLARK

Keeping the chairs at 90 degrees avoids people directly facing each other which minimizes confrontation and makes them more likely to remember what's said.

Miles nods, interesting.

ROSS

MetroHealth has sued their own policy holders to avoid paying for conventional treatment. You've got a better chance of getting a unicorn to perform an experimental surgery than of getting them to then to pay for it.

CLARK

We're not talking about MetroHealth, we're talking about one guy, Charles Murray, and that opens up several very strong strategies-

MILES

Mirroring. Triangulated confidence structuring. Request reversal-

ROSS

It doesn't matter. They're bankrupt. There's ZERO upside.

LATRELL

Maybe the fact that it's impossible is the upside. Look, we can't nail down business or investment because no one seems to believe we can do what we say we can do. So maybe we pro bono this, get a head on the wall, and you and I have something to point to when we're trying to close people who can pay.

CLARK

Wait, are you on our side?

LATRELL

I guess I am.

CONTINUED: (2)

CLARK  
Oh. I just assumed you'd be against us. You should really be sitting over here then. And Megan, why don't you sit opposite Ross?

MEGAN  
Why?

CLARK  
Because looking at someone they're attracted to largely destroys people's ability to form a cogent argument.

She blushes and then as everyone starts to shuffle seats-

ROSS  
Stop! Just... sit down.  
(to Clark)  
You really think you can do this?

CLARK  
I've always wanted to see if these effects could be isolated outside of a laboratory enviro-  
(off Ross's look)  
Yes.

ROSS  
You understand that if this blows up then we're completely-

Ross stops like he's just seen an ax murderer in the office.

ROSS  
What in the hell is she doing here?

Heads turn and find CLAIRE, 40's, attractive. She waves.

MEGAN  
Who is she?

ROSS  
My ex-wife.

CLARK  
Our new office manager.

The two brothers stare at one another.

CLARK  
I told you I needed one more person.

Claire sticks her head in. Clark crosses to hug her.

CLAIRE  
Sorry I'm late. Where should I sit?

Clark looks at the room. He's intrigued.

CLARK  
Yes. Where should you sit?

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. ROSS'S OFFICE - DAY

Ross is fuming. Clark seems oddly composed.

CLARK  
 Claire calms me down, Ross. She's like my magic feather.

ROSS  
 Well you may have noticed she has the exact opposite effect on me! Besides, I'm your magic feather.

CLARK  
 Traditionally, yes. But we're starting a business together which turns out to be full of negative triggers like deadlines and stress and talk about money, and now you're wrapped up in those. I haven't slept in four days. Obviously you don't work anymore.

ROSS  
 (hurt)  
 I see.  
 (beat)  
 But she's not the answer. Even if you were close when we were married-

CLARK  
 When you went to prison I was trying to deliver a grant proposal and I hadn't slept for almost two weeks, and I began to believe I needed to go on a cross country mission for God. And I called her. And she came. And the minute I saw her I started to come down. If she just sat in the room with me I could focus. If she laid in the bed with me I could actually sleep. If-

ROSS  
 You slept together?!

CLARK  
 We slept in a bed together, yes. After I'd been awake for two weeks!

ROSS  
 You don't do that. You don't call my ex wife to tuck you in. We ALL got divorced! That's how it works.

CLARK  
 Were you available? I didn't know they let you out for 'brother's grant proposal has turned into interstate holy mission'. If it weren't for her I'd have ended up in Iowa mowing down satanic corn in a rental car!

CONTINUED:

ROSS

Look, I know it's stressful right now-

CLARK

It's not just work. All my journal entries indicate the fact that I let Beth get away is still causing-

ROSS

Clark, you have to stop with this... Beth was absolutely not 'the one'.

CLARK

She accepted me, Ross. Right from go. All the tricks and gags and ways to hide what I am, I didn't have to do that. She just loved me 'as is'. That doesn't happen.

ROSS

In a few weeks-

CLARK

I'm leaving her ten to fifteen messages a day, Ross. I'm sending 20,000 word emails! The amount I've spent on flowers alone-

ROSS

Clark, you can not be-

CLARK

That's why I need Claire! Why WE need Claire. She'll keep me from going to the place I was in during the pitch! Help me sleep and stop moving furniture. Get control before I'm charged with stalking a former student!

ROSS

She turned me in, Clark! I spent two years in prison because my own wife-

CLAIRE

(in doorway)

You spent two years in prison because you were a fraud.

(to Clark)

I told you he'd be like this.

ROSS

Then why the hell did you come?

CLAIRE

Because Clark asked for my help! And if he's working with you God knows he needs it.

ROSS

So when he asks you come running. When I ask you run away?

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE

He's not asking me to break the law!

ROSS

All I asked for was a little time to-  
(to Clark)  
Forget it. I can't. There's no way.

CLARK

Ross, I told you I'm not cut out for the real world. I told you I should be looking for another teaching job. But you wanted me to try, and if you want me to stay, then I need her. By which I mean, I won't do it without her.

Ross stares, sees Clark's dead serious. Claire just smiles.

CLARK

Why don't you take the rest of the day-

ROSS

I don't want to take the rest of the day. I want to help figure out-

CLARK

I'll get more done without you. Please, just let Claire sit with Miles and I. We'll figure it out.

That stings. Clark pats his shoulder, turns, smiles at Claire.

CLARK

You want to meet the gang? You're going to love them. Megan, she's an actress we use, or would use if we ever did anything, she was in an infomercial once. Did you ever see the one for that thing that was like an oven mitt for the shower?

OFF Ross, stunned at how quickly he's been sidelined.

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - LATE NIGHT

There's a whiteboard full of ideas and cross outs. A table littered with junk food wrappers and drinks. Clark and Miles look spent. Claire sleeps curled up on the couch.

MILES

I really feel like a request reversal is the best way to-

CLARK

It's a first order effect and we can't teach a nervous mother to do it in-  
(checking watch, alarmed)  
- four hours! My God. Four hours!

Clark starts to stress, pace. He recognizes this, walks over the couch, more or less sits on Claire. She wakes with a jolt.

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE  
What... what's happening?

CLARK  
Nothing, sorry, I was getting a  
little... Is this okay? You can go  
back to sleep.

CLAIRE  
It's okay. This is fine.

He relaxes some, though his leg continues to bounce rapidly.

CLARK  
We just need a way to prime his  
response.  
(light bulb)  
What if instead of focusing on getting  
him to help Sophie and Tyler  
specifically we focused on making him  
believe he's the kind of person who  
always helps people in need?

MILES  
You want to suddenly turn him into a  
kind and generous guy?

CLARK  
Yes.

MILES  
In four hours.

CLARK  
Yes.

MILES  
How?

CLARK  
Adrenalized implantation.

MILES  
(impressed)  
That's... Has that ever been tried  
under these kind of-

CLARK  
No.

MILES  
We'd need a scenario that-

CLARK  
Right.

MILES  
And implantation, we'd need someone to-

CLARK  
Exactly.

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE

Wait. Will someone finish a sentence?  
What are we talking about?

CLARK

Adrenalized implantation. It's- okay, we've known for a long time that incidents that occur when you significantly raise adrenaline levels become highly memorable, almost like they're seared into your brain. Think of a car crash, or a soldier in a firefight. And we know from talking to people who've been in these highly adrenalized circumstances, that what you do, your actions under fire, you start see those as character defining, almost like you get a glimpse of your true self. So the question became, if we created the circumstances that elevated your adrenaline levels, if we guided your reaction and your thoughts, could we essentially implant thoughts that you would begin to see as part of your deepest character?

MILES

It's almost like when you raise someone's adrenaline levels you turn their brain into wet cement, and you can write anything you want about them before it dries and they'll believe it's a deep personal truth. When I was Clark's graduate assistant I drew up a proposal to show how it could be used to get a candidate to pull out of the race for student body president.

CLARK

Which I denied because it would have been highly unethical.

MILES

My point is it would have worked.

CLARK

The question isn't always 'can you' do something, Miles, sometimes it's 'should you'. I seem to remember you getting expelled for getting that one wrong.

CLAIRE

But you think this would work on our guy?

CLARK

IF we could spike his adrenaline levels and implant the idea that he's the kind of person we need him to be, the kind of person who would be willing to help a family in desperate need, then yes, the research suggests that's exactly how he'll behave.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLARK (CONT'D)  
 (beat, to Miles)  
 You said he rides the bus to work?

MILES  
 Yes.

CLARK  
 Ok. Ok. So we put Megan in a distress scenario and then she does the implantation. And for a heavy we get-

MILES  
 Latrell?

CLARK  
 Latrell.

MILES  
 Would he do it?

CLAIRE  
 Do what?

Off Miles and Clark -

INT. RENTAL VAN - MORNING

Clark, Claire, Miles and Megan, who's dressed simply but looks striking, surround Latrell, who's dressed like a scary vagrant. As Clark hands Latrell a mic and earpiece-

LATRELL  
 You want me to fight him?

MILES  
 Just a little.

CLARK  
 (to Miles)  
 No.  
 (to Latrell)  
 No. I want you to provoke an adrenalized response.

LATRELL  
 That sounds like a fight.

MEGAN  
 I thought you meant fight too.

CLARK  
 No fight! Okay! I told you, just be threatening until he -

Suddenly the van door slides open revealing Ross, not happy.

ROSS  
 What the hell? Our first job and you're going to do it without me?

CONTINUED:

CLARK

I sent you a text. There wasn't time for anything else. We spent all night working out a plan and barely had a chance to-

ROSS

What plan?

LATRELL

They want me to get in a fight with Charles Murray.

ROSS

What?

CLARK

Latrell-

ROSS

Beat him into giving the kid an operation? That's your plan? That doesn't sound like psychological manipulation, it sounds like you spent all night watching Goodfellas.

CLAIRE

There's not going to be a fight. Latrell's just going to upset the guy until he wants to fight so Megan can redefine his character. It's called adrelanized implantation.

Clark's impressed. Ross is jealous that he's not in the know.

LATRELL

If you're all so excited about it, why can't one of you do it?

MILES

Because you're black.

LATRELL

Oh, there's no white homeless people?!

CLARK

He just means the racial differences between you and Murray will get the most adrelanized out group response. But the anger's good. Use that.

MEGAN

(looking up the street)  
I think that's him.

Heads turn to see CHARLES MURRAY, late 30's, meek, balding, bad tie, coming down far end of the block.

ROSS

Him? He's supposed to want to fight Latrell? That guy's never been in a fight in his life.

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIRE  
Tell him about his hands.

ROSS  
What about his hands? And why are you acting like you know everything?

CLAIRE  
Because I was actually there when we put the plan together.

ROSS  
He asked me to go home.

CLAIRE  
Exactly. And he asked me to stay.

MILES  
His ring finger is much longer than his index.

ROSS  
What's that have to do with anything?

CLARK  
There was a road rage study that determined the most reliable predictor of who would fly off the handle wasn't body type or appearance, but surprisingly, high testosterone exposure levels suggested by index to ring finger proportions.

MILES  
This guys' fingers indicate he's not only provokable, he might actually go into some kind of blind rage. We're filming this, right?

LATRELL  
This is not what I signed up for.

Latrell starts to take off the clothes. Megan reaches out.

MEGAN  
You'll be fine. I always get nervous before auditions. But once you open your mouth it will go away.

LATRELL  
I'm not an actor! I do business development.

MEGAN  
But I'll be with you. Just focus on me. Okay?

Latrell seems bolstered, maybe a bit infatuated.

CLARK  
Yes! Megan, that's exactly the sort of reassurance display we're looking for.

CONTINUED: (3)

MEGAN  
But I really meant it.

CLARK  
Doesn't matter. Do the implantation  
just like that. Alright. We ready?

EXT. BUS STOP - MORNING

Charles waits for the bus. Megan sits on the other end of the bench. They smile briefly at one another.

EXT. STREET - INTERCUT

Latrell, nervous, makes his way toward the bus stop. He hesitates. He speaks into a mic we can't see.

LATRELL  
Guys, seriously, I don't think I can-

EXT. CORNER - INTERCUT

Clark, Claire, and Ross watch from the end of the block.

CLARK  
(into walkie)  
Stop whining and just do it!  
(to Claire and Ross)  
Sudden negative reinforcement can help  
alleviate reluctance and-

ROSS  
I'm familiar with 'yelling at  
someone'. You don't really have to  
explain it.

CLAIRE  
I wouldn't have thought one of your  
ponzi scheme jockeys would have so  
much trouble playing a bad guy.

ROSS  
Latrell's not like that. He was only  
good because he never knew the  
investments we were selling weren't  
real.

CLAIRE  
Ah. So you lied to him too. We should  
start a support group.

As Clark watches, Ross pulls Claire a couple steps away.

ROSS  
Is that why you're here? To keep  
raking me over the coals?

CLAIRE  
Nice to see you still assume  
everything revolves around you.

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
Then what it is? You want more money?  
The lawyers took everything that-

CLAIRE  
I never cared about money. That was  
you.

ROSS  
Look, let's just be honest. This isn't  
going to work. Stop filling his head  
with this crap about needing you and  
let's just leave each other alone.

CLAIRE  
He does need me. If you want to be  
left alone, maybe you should go.

ROSS  
Me? This whole thing was my idea.

CLAIRE  
Exactly. Your ideas tend to end in  
depositions.

ROSS  
I had that under control. I was making  
it legitimate when my wife turned me  
in-

CLAIRE  
I didn't turn you in. You told me our  
whole life was a lie two days before a  
man with a badge started asking me  
questions. What was I supposed to say?

ROSS  
Nothing!

ON LATRELL who's made it to the bus stop, but just stands in  
front of Megan, frozen. She looks at him, eyes pleading.

LATRELL  
(weakly)  
Hey. You're uh... you...

But he just trails off. As Megan stares up at him-

ON CLARK-

CLARK  
(into walkie)  
Come on Latrell. Come on.

EXT. FAR CORNER - INTERCUT

Miles sees THE BUS coming down the block.

MILES  
(into walkie)  
Guys. Bus incoming. Time to go.

CONTINUED:

LATRELL GLANCES up, sees the bus. Still he can't do it.

BACK ON CLAIRE AND ROSS who continue fighting, oblivious.

CLAIRE

You know what the most insulting part was? Not that they hauled me in for questioning a hundred times. But that they just couldn't believe I didn't know the whole time. That someone could really lie to their wife about almost every aspect of their life together. They didn't think that was possible. I told them obviously they hadn't spent enough time with you.

ROSS

I was trying to protect you. I didn't-

Suddenly CLARK STARTS to come unglued.

CLARK

Will you two stop it! We're right in the middle of a delicate- and Latrell won't - and the bus is-

Clark suddenly turns around and starts to KICK the van. Over and over. Hard.

CLARK

(into walkie)

Latrell! DO IT! NOW! What is wrong with you! Why won't you- NOW! Latrell! Now! Now! Now! Now!

Suddenly Claire hugs him, pinning his arms to his side. She puts her lips right next to his ear. It's almost intimate.

CLAIRE

(whispering)

Hey. It's okay. It's okay. Relax.

Ross watches, surprised, somewhat jealous, that this actually seems to bring Clark down.

MEGAN LOOKS UP, sees the bus is almost there. She locks eyes with Latrell. She gives him a tiny smile and confident nod. Latrell absorbs that and then suddenly...

LATRELL

HEY!

Both Megan and Charles jump at the sound of Latrell's voice.

ON CLARK as he looks up, buoyed by the sound of Latrell through the walkie, actually doing it.

BACK ON LATRELL-

LATRELL

You're on my bench! That's my bench!



CONTINUED: (3)

Charles looks at her, nods.

INT. VAN

Miles drives, Claire in the passenger seat, Clark, Latrell, and Ross watching intently as they follow the bus.

CLARK

(to Ross)

See, at the moment he's completely suggestible. Everything she puts in his head now will crystallize into the new way he sees himself once the adrenaline fades.

INT. BUS - INTERCUT

Megan sits next to Charles.

MEGAN

I just... You don't meet a lot of people who are willing to stick their neck out like that. To help someone they don't even know just because it's like... the right thing.

CHARLES

It really wasn't that big a deal. I just-

MEGAN

It was Charles. If you hadn't been there, if you hadn't been... the kind of person you are... I'm just lucky you're one of the good ones.

She smiles warmly. The bus stops as this washes over him -

INT. VAN

They watch as Megan and Charles get off. She scribbles on a piece of paper and hands it to him.

LATRELL

What's she doing?

MILES

Giving him her number. Or a number anyway. It'll keep him thinking about her and by extension the type of person she believes him to be when he sits down with Sophie and Tyler.

They watch as Megan gives Charles a little kiss on the cheek as they part and he heads toward the MetroHealth building.

ROSS

And all that's really going to make him say yes?

INT. METROHEALTH INSURANCE - LOBBY - INTERCUT

Charles gets off the elevator grinning as he looks at Megan's number on a scrap of paper.

CLARK (V.O.)  
 No. But It's going to make him believe  
 that when someone's really in need,  
 he's the kind of person who says yes.

Sophie and Tyler look up from their chairs, lock eyes with Charles. A beat, then he offers them a smile, motions them toward his office. As they rise-

CLARK (V.O.)  
 We can't force him to say one thing or  
 another. It's not mind control.

INT. VAN - RESUME

Clark looks at Ross.

CLARK  
 But we can make him believe he's a  
 different, better person, and we can  
 hope that leads to a different, better  
 answer.

Suddenly the van door opens, revealing Megan.

MEGAN  
 How'd we do?

Everyone looks Clark.

CLARK  
 I'd say if we get a call in the next  
 three hours we have a... 40% chance?

MILES  
 No offense, but shouldn't you  
 overestimate. I assume you've read the  
 papers arguing that even expressing  
 false confidence can positively shape  
 outcomes?

CLARK  
 The lead confederate in a highly  
 experimental procedure we developed  
 and deployed in six hours was our  
 untrained head of business development  
 dressed a homeless person. I was  
 overestimating, Miles. By a lot.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE

Sophie, Tyler, Miles, and Latrell sit, waiting. Clark paces. He starts to move an armchair. Ross guides him to sit.

CLARK  
It's been too long. The effect can fade. If you miss the window-

ROSS  
Stop. You said yourself that it would take some time, that he'd need to create a narrative to feel like he came to the decision on his own.

CLARK  
But that wouldn't take-

ROSS  
Clark- you did a good job.

A beat as Clark takes those words to heart. He nods. From the other part of the room a phone RINGS.

MILES  
It's him.

Clark and Ross move quickly to Sophie who's now on the phone.

SOPHIE  
Yes. Yes. I understand. Right. Oh. Okay. Yes. I appreciate it.

When she hangs up she has tears in her eyes. Everyone is afraid to ask. She stands, unable to speak, and hugs Clark.

SOPHIE  
(through tears)  
Thank you.

CLARK  
Yes! Okay! For a second there I was worried that maybe we failed to sufficiently raise the level of his-

Sophie turns away, not listening, and hugs Tyler.

CLARK  
Oh, right.

Clark turns, high fives Ross and other members of the team. When he gets to Claire, they hug. Ross stares, troubled.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Clark is on a small karaoke stage passionately belting out "I Want To Know What Love Is". Megan and Claire are at one end of a long table while Ross, Miles, and Latrell are deep in excited, drunken conversation at the other.

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
I'm talking about the people with deep pockets. Politicians trying to get elected.

MILES  
Politicians trying to avoid jail.

ROSS  
Billionaire trying to take over a company.

MILES  
Or effect the stock price. There's almost nothing you can't manipulate. You could start a war if you wanted.

LATRELL  
Why the hell would you want to start a war?

MILES  
Stop a war then. You could do either.

ROSS  
The point is, once the word gets out about what we can do, there's going to be millions just there for the taking.

LATRELL  
Hey, let's not forget we just gave that kid a whole new life. That's pretty great. And there's a lot more people like that, regular, innocent people getting screwed who could use our help. Instead of just chasing the highest bidder wouldn't it be cool to actually fix some things?

Ross and Miles look at each other.

ROSS  
Work for free? Not really.

MILES  
I was more drawn to the millions part.

ON MEGAN AND CLAIRE as Claire notes Megan staring at Ross.

CLAIRE  
How'd they find you?

MEGAN  
Answered an ad. Although, when I sat down with Ross the whole thing sounded kinda sketchy. I actually turned him down.

CLAIRE  
So what are you doing here?

CONTINUED: (2)

MEGAN

He called me after. Said he was willing to bet that when most people looked at me they just saw a very pretty face, that I was the kind of person who probably got sent on a lot of auditions for parts where the character's name was just 'HOT GIRL'. Which is totally true. He said he thought I could do a lot more than that. And that if I took this job, he'd make sure I got to.

CLAIRE

(watching Megan's stare at Ross)  
Can I give you some advice? You don't want to do that.

MEGAN

What?

CLAIRE

I recognize the look. I'm not saying he's not attractive. I'm just saying it would end badly.

MEGAN

How long ago did you guys-

CLAIRE

Three years.

MEGAN

What happened?

CLAIRE

It's hard to boil years of lies down to a single sentence. Just trust me. It would feel great, and then it would hurt. Bad.

MEGAN

And so, now you and Clark...?

CLAIRE

What?

MEGAN

I recognize the look too. I'm not judging. My brother married his ex's roommate. I mean, it's not the same-

CLAIRE

No. No, no, no. We're just close friends. That's all.

As they both watch Clark finishing his song-

MEGAN

Okay.

(beat)  
How many times has he sung this song?

CONTINUED: (3)

CLAIRE

I think this is number four. His  
doctor said it was a good outlet.  
(beat)  
I had a look?

MEGAN

I thought I saw a look.

CLAIRE

Just friends.

MEGAN

Okay.

ON CLARK as he finishes with a flourish, then jumps down,  
moves to the table and dives in as if he never left.

CLARK

Also, I just remembered this Danish  
fisherman study which was interesting  
because it was scalable, so like if we  
ever got a job where you were  
targeting a whole population you-

Clark suddenly stops as he notes the COUPLE now on stage,  
singing. They LAUGH, hold hands, smile at each other.

CLARK

- they... uh... they told them...

MILES

Is this the one where they convinced  
the fisherman to tax themselves with  
mass subliminal suggestion?

CLARK

It uh... what?

CLAIRE

Clark? Are you okay?

CLARK

(still watching the couple)  
I.. yeah. Fine.  
(suddenly)  
Anyway, great night. Good job. I'm  
super tired. I'm gonna go. I'll see  
you guys tomorrow.

He barely takes a step when -

ROSS

Whoa! What's the hurry all of a  
sudden?

CLARK

Nothing. No hurry. I just need to go.

CLAIRE

I'll take you. I'm about ready myself.



CONTINUED:

GIRL  
She moved out. Like, two weeks ago.

Clark is stunned.

CLARK  
No.

GIRL  
Yeah.

CLARK  
Where?

GIRL  
I don't know. I just saw movers and-

CLARK  
NO!

The girl recoils. He rushes back to the door, BEATING on it.

CLARK  
No, no, no, no, no, no, no! BETH!

He steps away from the door, looks around, spots a large rock. He picks it up, HEAVES it through a window. The Girl rushes back into her apartment. Clark reaches through the broken glass, unlocks Beth's door.

INT. BETH'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Clark steps inside. It's completely empty. He stares in disbelief. He stalks around, manic, even as tears begin to flow. He spots a wad of paper, picks it up. It's just doodles, markouts. Trash. But he stares at it, begins to openly CRY.

He lays down, clutching the paper. And off his tears -

INT. ROSS'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sunlight. Rumpled sheets. Ross next to a RANDOM GIRL. His cell RINGS.

ROSS  
(groggy, into phone)  
What?  
(suddenly alert)  
I'll be right there.

He dives out of bed, grabs keys and bolts. Hold on RANDOM GIRL as she rolls over, discovers he's gone. As she looks around -

RANDOM GIRL  
Royce?

INT. CAMPUS POLICE STATION - MORNING

Clark sits silently off to the side as Ross talks with an OFFICER and the UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT.

CONTINUED:

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Part of our agreement was that he was not allowed back on campus. Now I don't want to press charges but-

ROSS

I understand. I do. The thing is he was off the medication and- but- we actually just brought in someone to help him. A specialist. So, if there's any way you could-

ON CLARK who watches them talking but can't hear. As they all look his direction -

INT. ROSS'S CAR

Ross and Clark drive in SILENCE.

ROSS

Should I take you-

CLARK

No.

ROSS

You could come to my-

CLARK

No.

ROSS

Clark. You need to rest. If you hadn't been awake for the last-

CLARK

Ross... not now.

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE

Clark and Ross step off the elevators to find Latrell and Miles worked up.

LATRELL

What the hell? Why aren't you answering your phone?

ROSS

Been a little busy.

LATRELL

We have a problem.

ROSS

I have one of those also.

MILES

Murray ok'd the surgery but it got kicked upstairs and-

ROSS

Miles, not now!

CONTINUED:

LATRELL  
It's been denied, Ross!

This stops Clark and Ross in their tracks. Before they can ask-

LATRELL  
Murray agreed, but they immediately convened a 'review panel' to give themselves another out. And they're-

MILES  
It's a sham. Seven people, no medical training, obvious biases, and we'd need a unanimous recommendation to go forward. We could go after them, but you're talking about planning and executing seven different-

LATRELL  
We're literally looking at eviction, Ross. We don't have time or resources to chase this and without it we've got nothing to-

CRASH! Everyone looks up to see that Clark has upended a table. Off their looks-

CLARK  
Oh, I'm sorry. You're right. It would really work better over there.

CRASH. He hurls the table to the other side of the room.

ROSS  
Clark! Stop!

CLARK  
Why, Ross! It doesn't matter. None of it matters. They're going to take it all anyway.

ROSS  
Relax. We just need to put our heads together and-

CLARK  
I don't want to put our heads together! Okay! I don't want to do this. I don't want to be your little golden goose or whatever. I told you this wouldn't work. I told you I didn't belong here.

ROSS  
You were doing fine. This is a setback. It's not-

CLARK  
I'm not doing fine, Ross! I need to get away from here. Everything here makes me think of her. I -

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSS  
Stop it with this girl! Christ!  
Whatever you think it was, it wasn't.

CLARK  
How do you know!

ROSS  
I just know! And you need to face that  
and move on.

As Clark heads for the elevators-

CLARK  
Great! Fine. I'll move on. To Alaska,  
or Spain, or some mental hospital in  
South America. But I'm not staying  
here! There's triggers all over the-

ROSS  
I can help you if you'll let me!  
Remember when dad died? You were much  
worse than this and I put you back  
together. Me. Why are you shutting me  
out?

CLARK  
Because I'm telling you I want to get  
away from here and you're not  
listening. Because you don't care  
about me, you just can't stand the  
idea of your latest get rich quick  
scheme walking out the door before you-

ROSS  
This is not about money!

CLARK  
Good! Then it shouldn't matter that I  
QUIT! But you don't seem to grasp that  
there isn't even anything left TO  
QUIT. Let me know when you're ready  
face that and move on.

Clark takes the stairs and SLAMS the door behind him. The  
others stand in silence until Ross suddenly HURLS a chair.

Latrell just stares at Ross, disappointed.

LATRELL  
Feel better?  
(beat)  
Then knock it off. Last thing I need  
is to be fighting over security  
deposits when all this goes back.

Latrell walks into an office. Off Ross -

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

INT. ROSS'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The office is mostly dark, still a mess. Ross is behind his desk. Miles walks past with a cardboard box full of stuff.

ROSS  
Miles?

A long beat. Miles reappears in the doorway. They stare.

ROSS  
Are you seriously walking out of here  
with a cardboard box?

MILES  
I guess I thought we were pretty much  
done. I mean, we're out of ideas and  
time, right?

ROSS  
That depends. How do you feel about  
moral ambiguity?

Miles steps in, puts down his box, intrigued.

MILES  
I'm pretty comfortable with it,  
actually.

ROSS  
We hold a press conference.

MILES  
(shakes his head)  
There's a million stories about  
insurance companies screwing people.  
Raking them over the coals is only  
likely to solidify their position.

ROSS  
What if I didn't want to rake them  
over the coals? What if I wanted to  
thank them?

MILES  
Thank them for what?

ROSS  
Approving the surgery.

MILES  
But they denied it.

ROSS  
No one at the press conference will  
know that.

Miles begins to see it.

CONTINUED:

MILES

You put the kid up there, 'thanks for saving my life', generate a ton of positive press, make it a feel good story and basically dare them to ruin it by backing out.

ROSS

Pretty much.

MILES

I guess I could pull together some data, try to make a real case when they come in with their hair on fire. Still, it's insanely risky. I mean the kid's no actor. You want it to seem real it would mean convincing him and his mom we'd actually gotten MetroHealth back on board, and if it went wrong and we yanked it away AGAIN-

ROSS

They'd be right where they are now.

MILES

But we'd be in very iffy legal territory. Probably beyond iffy. MetroHealth calls our bluff, we'd be toast.

ROSS

You're walking out the door with a cardboard box. I think we're already staring down the barrel of being toast.

MILES

Do you think Megan would be willing to-

ROSS

I'll get her on board.

Off Miles, a little hurt that Ross has that ability.

INT. MEGAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Megan cups a mug of coffee, still in her PJ's as she listens skeptically to Ross, who's noticeably cleaned up.

ROSS

And since Sophie never met you, she won't know you're with us.

MEGAN

It doesn't sound... legal.

ROSS

It's a gray area. But it's important. Not just for us. This kid, this changes his life.

CONTINUED:

MEGAN

Suddenly you're concerned about the kid?

ROSS

I'm concerned you'll say no to me, so I'm asking you for the kid.

MEGAN

No you're not. You know I'll say yes to you and you're only bringing up the kid so we can both pretend that's not how you got me to do it.

ROSS

Megan, I wasn't trying to-

MEGAN

Then why come over here looking all... Why not just call? Or have someone else call?

Ross doesn't have a quick answer.

MEGAN

Tell you what. I'm going to change and I'm going to help. For the kid. But for the record, I'd have done it for you. In the future I'd be really careful how you play that card.

OFF Ross as she walks out of the room-

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - DAY

Miles ushers out a group 15 ADULTS OF VARIOUS ETHNICITIES.

MILES

Thank you all very much.

Claire gets off one of the elevators, confused by the crowd.

CLAIRE

Miles?

MILES

Oh. Hey.

CLAIRE

What's-

Another elevator opens revealing a REPORTER and CAMERA CREW.

MILES

(to camera crew)

That way. Big conference room.

As the crew goes around a corner Ross comes out of his office with Megan, now in sharp business attire. Miles turns to them.

CONTINUED:

ROSS  
(to Miles)  
We on schedule?

MILES  
Yeah. Three local affiliates, someone from AP. If the pictures are compelling it could get kicked up to national.

CLAIRE  
What the hell is going on?

MEGAN  
I don't like Heather. It doesn't sound professional. I want to go with Dana. Dana Williams. Is it too late?

MILES  
Nope. Dana Williams. Got it.

Megan smiles, steps back as if practicing lines. Now Claire's alarm bells are screaming.

CLAIRE  
Where's Clark?

ROSS  
At home. I thought you guys would be spooning and massaging by now.

CLAIRE  
Ross-

Suddenly, Sophie and Tyler step off an elevator looking nervous and confused. Ross rushes over. Warmly-

ROSS  
Hey guys. How are we?

SOPHIE  
I... think my head is still spinning a little bit. I can't believe you got them to change their minds. Again. How did you-

ROSS  
It doesn't matter. What matters is that it's going to happen. Right?  
(to Tyler)  
How about you? You ready?

TYLER  
I'm a little nervous.

ROSS  
Just speak from the heart, you'll be fine.

Megan steps over.

MEGAN  
Hi. I'm Dana Williams with MetroHealth-

CONTINUED: (2)

As soon as she says it, Claire starts to drag Ross away.

CLAIRE  
Excuse us.

She pulls him around a corner.

CLAIRE  
What in the hell are you-

ROSS  
We needed a new approach.

CLAIRE  
Lying? Fraud?

ROSS  
It's not- listen, Miles has pulled  
together a ton of real... data.

Miles steps over.

MILES  
I think we're ready.

CLAIRE  
Ross.

ROSS  
(to Miles)  
Give me a sec.

Miles moves off. Ross turns to Claire.

ROSS  
Look, I know you don't think much of  
me-  
(off her HUFF)  
And you're probably right. But  
whatever happened between us, whatever  
was said, whatever I did, you know  
more than anyone that I love Clark.  
How many times did I talk about  
starting a business with him? How many  
times did I beg him to pick me over  
some research grant or associate  
professorship in the middle of god  
knows where?

CLAIRE  
Because you thought you could make a  
fortune manipulating people.

ROSS  
No. I know I can make a fortune  
manipulating people. I've been to  
prison for it. I wanted it because I  
think we're good for each other.  
Remember when he was staying with us  
for six months after the med school  
let him go? He was in good place then.

CONTINUED: (3)

CLAIRE

Yeah, because I sat with him and talked to him every day while you-

ROSS

Fine. Maybe you're the Clark whisperer. Maybe it was always you. But I was in a good place then too. Remember that? I had my act together. Stayed out of trouble. Even you and me... we were happy. So, fine, maybe he doesn't need me. Maybe I need him. Is that the worst thing in the world? To feel like you're a better person when your brother's around?

CLAIRE

Why are you telling me this?

ROSS

Because he's made it clear over and over, he's not interested in staying for me. But maybe he will for you. And if I can keep this thing alive-

MILES

Ross-

ROSS

Okay. Yeah. I'm coming.

CLAIRE

Ross, please, whatever you're planning-

ROSS

Trust me. It'll be fine.

CLAIRE

Can you think of a single time you said that to me and weren't wrong?

Ross SNORTS a laugh, smiles, walks to the others. Off Claire-

INT. CONFERENCE SPACE - DAY

There's a small dais up front, a few of REPORTERS and CAMERAS aimed at Sophie, Megan, and Tyler, who speaks nervously.

TYLER

So, I really just wanted to say thank you.

Ross and Miles watch from the side. Ross leans over.

ROSS

We should have told him to cry.

MILES

Asking someone to express a particular emotion actually makes it harder for them to do so.

CONTINUED:

ROSS

Really? Does that work for anger too?

ON TYLER at the mic.

TYLER

... and now I'm going to get a chance to see what it's like to be well. The doctors said I might even get to do some of the things I always wanted to. Like play soccer.

(beat, then tearing up)

And now my mom won't have to take care of me all the time. And maybe she'll get to do some of the things she always wanted to too.

At that Sophie breaks and moves to hug Tyler. They both CRY.

MILES

Jackpot.

But when he looks over, Ross is tearing up himself.

ON MEGAN stepping to the mic.

MEGAN

We at MetroHealth certainly thank Tyler for those kind words, but our hope is to create a world where an insurance company doing what's right isn't considered an exception. We've been accused of caring more about the bottom line than people, and sadly there have been times where the charges have seemed warranted. But MetroHealth is changing that, and-.

ON ROSS dialing his phone as Megan continues. Miles leans over to him.

MILES

Is it just me, or is this suddenly feeling more like something we could go to jail over?

ROSS

I wouldn't say MORE. The odds of it blowing up in our faces have always seemed relatively high to me.

(into phone)

Yeah. Ross Edwards, Edwards and Associates. No he doesn't, but I assure you he's going to want to speak with me before the afternoon news hits the air.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

INT. CLARK'S APARTMENT

Clark is wildly throwing things into a suitcase when he looks up, sees Claire standing in his room.

CLARK

What are you- how did you get in here?

CLAIRE

The door was open. Like, you literally left the door hanging open.

CLARK

There was a study that showed an open door makes a home a less of a target-

CLAIRE

You're leaving?

CLARK

I don't belong in this kind of environment.

CLAIRE

Then why did you do it in the first place?

CLARK

I guess Ross got me excited about the puzzle of it. Putting the research into the real world. Pull the strings. But I'm not built for the real world. I think that's obvious now. Academics-

CLAIRE

You've been fired, censured, on probation, or quit every teaching job you've ever had. Why do you keep saying that's where you belong?

CLARK

They tolerate me. Write papers, lecture, issue some apologies, repeat. I get that. I know how to do that.

CLAIRE

Tolerating you is not the same as appreciating you, Clark. It's not the same as caring about you.

CLARK

Ross doesn't really care about-

CLAIRE

He does. Believe me, he's a long way from perfect, but he absolutely cares. He cares so much I think he's about to do something colossally stupid to try to 'fix' everything and keep you here. And here's the thing. I think maybe it's a good idea.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

Not whatever he's doing, but you staying. I think maybe this is exactly where you belong. A place where people don't just tolerate you, they need you. I know when you called, when you said you needed me... that felt good. I'm not great at a lot of things, but you made me feel like I was great at... whatever it is I do for you, and that was exciting. I guess if I was really any good you wouldn't packing.

CLARK

It's not you. I... I don't know what happens, okay? Things go well for a while, and I feel like I'm building something and then it's like suddenly everything catches on fire and I just end up watching it burn.

CLAIRE

Then just tell me this- do you want to leave? Or are you afraid to stay? Because if it's the first one, I don't think I can do anything. But if it's the second one... I think maybe I could help you. I could be like, your fire department. And for once, instead of seeing everything disappear, you could see what it's like to save it.

OFF Clark, considering-

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Ross, Miles, and Megan sit across from TOM DANIELS, 60's, and two other ANGRY METROHEALTH OFFICIALS as a monitor shows a clip where Tyler tearfully hugs his mother. Ross hits pause.

ROSS

Something similar's been picked up by the cable news channels and nightly network broadcasts.

Miles brings up charts and graphs on another monitor.

MILES

Not only is the clip in the news cycle, we're seeing power law resharing on social networks that-

MEGAN

He's saying you're going viral.

MILES

Exactly. Viral. Given the cross platform exposure we'd conservatively put the promotional value of the clip at seven million dollars.

(changing graphs)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MILES (CONT'D)

Further, initial focus group testing shows that not only does the story skyrocket MetroHealth's positive name recognition, but that the new business revenue potential dwarfs the promotional value and renders the actual cost of the procedure itself completely insignificant.

All eyes go to Tom. A long beat, then he stands.

TOM DANIELS

You are, as a group, beyond delusional.

ROSS

Mr. Daniels-

TOM DANIELS

Was your hope that a few charts would make it seem less overtly criminal?

ROSS

Our hope was that you'd look at what was on them and recognize a fantastic opportunity for your company.

TOM DANIELS

The only opportunity we're remotely interested in is the opportunity to see you dismantled and prosecuted.

INT/EXT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE

Claire and Clark are rushing in when they run into Latrell.

LATRELL

What's going on?

CLAIRE

You really don't know?

LATRELL

Know what? I had a lunch in Long Beach but the guy stood me up.

CLAIRE

Ross set that?

LATRELL

Yes...

CLARK

Probably wanted to keep you clean in case it went wrong.

As they jump into a waiting elevator-

LATRELL

What 'it'? What's going on?

CONTINUED:

CLARK  
She keeps saying extortion, but I'm pretty sure it's covered by false pretenses statutes.

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE

As Clark, Claire, and Latrell step in, the group is coming out of the conference room.

ROSS  
Mr. Daniels, hold on a minute. There's no reason to turn a misunderstanding-

TOM DANIELS  
Extortion is not a misunderstanding.

ON CLARK overhearing-

CLARK  
See, I don't think anyone really understands how that's defined.

CLAIRE  
Clark-

Clark takes Latrell's briefcase, hands it to Claire.

CLARK  
Sit there, look impatient. Latrell, when I put my hands in my pockets, step over and say Dr. Barnes is very busy.

LATRELL  
What? Clark, we-

CLARK  
Just do it. Please. Now.

As Claire and Latrell look at each other, uncertain, and take seats, Clark takes a breath and walks right to Tom Daniels.

Clark looks at Ross, who's shocked to see him.

CLARK  
Is this the idiot from MetroHealth?

ROSS  
(lost)  
Clark-

CLARK  
(to Daniels)  
I told him you guys would be too stupid to accept millions in free publicity, but he kept saying win-win. Win-win. That's the difference between us. I'm more win-lose. Win-destroy.

TOM DANIELS  
I'm sorry, who are you?

CONTINUED:

CLARK

You're not sorry. You haven't begun to be sorry. That part's my job.  
(indicating Claire)  
You recognize her?

TOM DANIELS

No.

CLARK

Of course. That would imply you had some clue what you were doing. That's Dr. Claire Barnes, special liaison to the senate subcommittee on health insurance regulation and reform? You know, the people with the fate of your whole industry in their hands? See they don't think you guys should get to decide for yourselves what is and what isn't experimental. They want a panel of doctors and bureaucrats to do it for you, and they're dying for a case just like this to hammer you with. And boy are we going to hammer. Little teary Tyler and his curable heart condition are going to be sitting in front of congress and you're going to be twisting in your chair covered in so much flop sweat Mark McGuire is going to call to say you came off poorly. And when you end up with some committee telling you how and when to pay up, you're going to be sobbing at the memory that someone once offered you a gift wrapped, win-win, get out of jail free card, and you were too stupid to take it.

As Clark slips his hands into his pockets Latrell comes over.

LATRELL

I'm sorry, but Dr. Barnes really is very busy.

CLARK

Of course. Let's go into my office.

Clark turns to leave with Latrell. A beat and then-

TOM DANIELS

Wait.

Clark halts, looks back. Off Ross, cracking a smile-

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - LATER

As Ross soberly walks Tom and his associates to the elevator-

TOM DANIELS

We'll take the publicity, we'll take the business, but eventually this is going to catch up with you. I'm going to make sure of it.

CONTINUED:

Ross pulls a card from his pocket, hands it to Tom.

ROSS  
 Meanwhile, you ever find yourself in a  
 tough spot, you know who to call.

Tom steps on and the elevators close. Ross turns, a huge smile  
 on his face, and hugs Clark.

ROSS  
 That was brilliant!

MILES  
 I'm curious how you chose your  
 posture. I assume you know about the  
 threat-aggressor studies from-

Suddenly they're staring at stone faced Claire and Latrell.

ROSS  
 What? Were you guys not here? We just  
 won.

CLAIRE  
 No, you just lied and cheated to get  
 what you wanted. Like you've always  
 done. Except this time you dragged all  
 of us into it.

ROSS  
 Hey, I didn't ask you to be here. We-

CLAIRE  
 You'd be talking to the police if  
 Clark hadn't saved you.

ROSS  
 I admit it went a little sideways, but-

CLAIRE  
 If we're going to do this, there have  
 to be rules. You can't just turn your  
 new business into your old one.

ROSS  
 What is this? You don't issue demands!  
 I don't work for you!

LATRELL  
 I'm with her. If it's just going to be  
 another boiler room, I'm out.

Ross starts to respond when-

CLARK  
 Next time we find another way.

Now Ross is listening. He looks at Clark. Then, calmly-



CONTINUED:

TED  
Not exactly cutting edge.

ROSS  
I still believe in the classics.

TED  
What'd you get? Fifteen minutes?

ROSS  
Ten. Fifteen would have exceeded the maximum daily withdrawal on my ATM.

Ross seems focused on a photo on the wall. He nods toward it.

ROSS  
You fly fish?

TED  
You've got ten minutes to pitch and that's what you want to talk about?

ROSS  
Where do you go?

TED  
The Gunnison.

Ross makes a SNORT.

TED  
What?

ROSS  
Beautiful.

TED  
You know it?

ROSS  
Dad taught Clark and I to fish there. Just above Almont.

TED  
(surprised)  
My cabin's near Almont. Gorgeous. How often do you make it back?

ROSS  
Not as often as I'd like. Not...

Suddenly Ross can't do it. Maybe 'how' does matter to him.

ROSS  
Actually, I've never actually been there. My ten minutes started five minutes ago when she let me in here and I looked at your pictures. There's a sign in that one that says it's the Gunnison.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROSS (CONT'D)

Pulled it up on my phone which is the only place I've ever seen Almont and I'm pretty sure I couldn't catch a fish in a bowl. Can I be honest?

TED

The odds do seem against it.

ROSS

I'm a little mixed up at the moment about what's good strategy and what's mirroring and priming and Jedi mind tricks and what's just lying. What I do know is in the last two days we convinced an insurance company to say yes to something they said no to for over two years. And because of that this kid, this boy- what we did is going to change his life. It's a good story. I'll send you the news clips. And if you're looking for a track record, they'll have to do. But I'm telling you- if we can do something impossible once, we can do it again. And once people see that, we won't have to go looking for them, they'll be chasing us. We're not asking you to break the bank, we're asking you to help keep the lights on. And for that, you get to be part of something special. Something new. You said you believed in the science, but not us. And maybe with me that's fair, but not with Clark. With Clark it's completely backwards. The science is just science. Disconnected papers, experiments, observations. Clark's the genius who sees how to bring it to life. And the people who do things for the first time, the true pioneers, they usually aren't like the rest of us. But that's not a reason you run from them. It's why you bet on them.

OFF Ted, considering -

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - EVENING

Ross steps in, finds everything dark but Clark's office. He looks in, sees Clark resting beside Claire. He lets them be.

As he turns for his own office he sees BETH, an attractive, 23 year old in the lobby. A smile of recognition crosses her face. As Ross rushes over, the smile is not returned.

BETH

Ross, I-

ROSS

What the hell are you doing here?  
(before she can speak)  
Outside.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - EVENING

Ross is reading Beth the riot act.

ROSS  
You cannot be here, Beth. This was NOT the agreement. I paid you a small fortune to walk away never to be-

BETH  
(holding out a check)  
That's all of it. I don't want it.  
(off Ross's stunned silence)  
I know it was just supposed to be an act, but something happened. I really... I like him. I tried to go away like we said, but... I want to see if maybe we could make it work.

ROSS  
It did work. You got him fired! That's all I asked for. That was the agreement! You can't come back now!

BETH  
I'm sorry. But I can't let him go. And he obviously can't let me go either. Look, I'm not going to tell him about our deal. I swear. It would be as bad for me as it would you.

ROSS  
Oh really? Are you his brother?

INT. CLARK'S OFFICE

Clark and Claire are now sitting on the couch flipping through a magazine. They're smiling, enjoying each other.

CLARK  
(re: the picture)  
See the red dress? Red's one of the most basic sexual signals. And see how wide her eyes are? It's a two dimensional come on.

CLAIRE  
To sell a faucet?

CLARK  
To sell anything. It's called experiential transference. You confuse-

Clark suddenly stops. Claire follows his eyes to find Beth standing in the doorway, Ross just behind her. Clark slowly stands, unsure. A beat, and then he rushes to her. They kiss.

ON CLAIRE who seems troubled, maybe slightly jealous. When Clark and Beth break, Clark turns to Claire and Ross. He's practically coming out of his skin with excitement.

CONTINUED:

CLARK  
 Sorry. Claire, Ross, this is Beth.  
 Like, Beth, the, you know, Beth.

CLAIRE  
 Hello.

ROSS  
 We've met. In the lobby.

CLARK  
 (to Beth)  
 What are you... I mean, I left all  
 those messages and went to your place-

BETH  
 I know. I messed up.

CLARK  
 (beat, smiling)  
 Have you eaten?

She shakes her head. Clark grabs his coat.

CLARK  
 (to Ross and Claire)  
 I'm... I'll see you guys tomorrow.

INT. EDWARDS & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ross watches as Clark and Beth walk toward the lobby, smiling,  
 talking. Claire joins him in the doorway, watches them go.

CLAIRE  
 Why do I have a very bad feeling about  
 those two?

ROSS  
 I have no idea.

Claire grabs her purse, starts to leave. After a few feet she  
 stops. Almost as an afterthought-

CLAIRE  
 How'd it go? With your investor?

ROSS  
 We got the money.

CLAIRE  
 Congratulations.  
 (beat)  
 Look at it this way- least we got all  
 the ugly stuff out of the way early.

Nervously watching Clark and Beth kiss by the elevators-

ROSS  
 Right. Smooth sailing from here on.

END OF SHOW