

"THE C.E.O.'S WIFE"

INT. GETTY AND CHASE DEPARTMENT STORE, HAMPTONS, N.Y. - DAY

Sleek, compulsive, high-maintenance HILARY DARLING SWANSON, 55, skims through a rack of evening dresses. A sign overhead, "TRENDSETTERS", is lit by spotlights, as if a movie were premiering below. Even at the half-century mark, Hilary's figure has kept pace with the best of them. That's probably why she treats the task at hand like Vera Wang planning her fall line.

Across the rack, Hilary's younger sister ARLENE *putzes* along in a torpor. Arlene wears men's Levis, mud-stained hiking boots and a Steelers football jacket. Unlike Hilary, it's evident that her own humble origins have stalled on that side of the tracks. Just out of curiosity, she grabs a dress, reads the tag.

ARLENE

Incredible.

HILARY

Don't look at the price, Arlene. I told you, it's my treat.

ARLENE

This would have covered my back rent. Why didn't you treat me to that?

HILARY

You're nothing but a pill.

A roving SALESWOMAN spies Hilary chinning a Ralph Lauren satin with an exaggerated boatneck.

SALESWOMAN

Very nice. I've got a pair of shoes that would match that to a T.

HILARY

Do you? Well, then. I'll be over in a few.

Arlene snags another dress from the rack.

ARLENE

Hilary, you think she has shoes to match this?

Little Sis appears to be holding the shredded remnants of a power suit last worn during a nuclear holocaust.

HILARY

That's a mis-rack.

Hilary points to some clearance Halloween costumes on sale nearby. As Arlene reracks the dress, Hilary spots something even more peculiar.

HILARY

Look over there.

In the accessories department, a pretty ACTRESS with a face familiar to us all is browsing the merchandise. And she's toting a bag from Saks.

ARLENE

Isn't that -

HILARY

Don't gawk, Arlene. Give her her privacy.

ARLENE

Why? Nobody else is.

She means the TWO UNDERCOVER SECURITY EMPLOYEES staking out the celebrity from different angles.

ARLENE (CONT.)

Boy, that last movie she was in really tanked, poor thing.

HILARY

When you get to her level, it doesn't matter. I'm trying these on.

Hilary marches off towards the fitting room.

ARLENE

I bet it matters to her.

Arlene lingers to watch the actress surreptitiously slip a ruby-studded belt into the Saks bag. The detectives smile, knowing an arrest is imminent. Arlene resolves to go warn the perpetrator of her doom.

HILARY (O.S.)

Arlene, where are you?

Like a tether attached to a ball, Arlene's forward progress halts and her mission is aborted. She grabs the first dress she sees and follows Hilary to the back of the store.

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

Hilary sashays out of her stall in an alluring boatneck, check the fit in a full-length mirror. Arlene makes sure the coast is clear before stepping out in her number. The costume calls to mind a Bavarian windmill.

Hilary gives it a perfunctory glance, then refocuses her attention on the more appealing image in the mirror.

ARLENE

This is why I shop the boys' department at Sears.

HILARY

You're not serious.

ARLENE

They have husky sizes.

HILARY

So, all you have to do is cut off the little bugle boy.

Without warning, the actress sweeps into the room. With several selections draped over her arm, she enters the middle stall with an emphatic LOCK of the door. Curious, the sisters retreat back to their stalls on either side.

ARLENE'S STALL

Arlene hears the strange sound of SAWING, like a jeweler's file on plastic.

HILARY'S STALL

As Hilary takes off her dress, the sight of her own bust in the mirror causes her to wax philosophical.

HILARY

I could have been an actress.

The sound of something SPILLING next door causes her to look down at the floor. Sure enough, a swarm of little capsules roll across and right up to her Rockports. Hilary doesn't know what to make of this at all.

FITTING ROOM

Suddenly the middle stall opens and the actress flies out, as if late for a curtain call. Her Saks bag is bulging. The sisters emerge from their stalls in unison. They check the middle stall and find a pile of security tags on the bench.

HILARY

My God, she's just robbed Getty and Chase. (beat) Whatever for?

ARLENE

Remember that time she checked into a psych ward - after the break up with what's his name? She's a sick puppy.

HILARY

Well that doesn't give her the right to - Arlene, what are you doing?

Arlene grabs some loose tissue paper, scoops up the tags, and stashes them in her purse.

ARLENE

I don't want her to get caught.

HILARY

This is not your affair, Arlene. Now put those back before a clerk walks in here.

This time, Arlene ignores the order and gathers up their dresses and other returns in the room. She sticks the whole heap in the middle stall.

ARLENE

Let's go.

Too shocked to argue, Hilary gets her purse and follows Arlene out. Moments later, the two security employees blast into the room. They search the stalls, find nothing conclusive. One of them pulls out a two-way radio.

SHOP FLOOR

A THIRD SECURITY EMPLOYEE is shadowing the actress's getaway when he hears a disgruntled voice on his radio.

FIRST GUARD (V.O.)

Wait for the alarm.

But he actress exits the store without a peep.

HAT SECTION

Arlene eyes an ELDERLY MATRON dressed like the Duchess of Windsor. When the old dame isn't looking, she dumps the tags into the lady shopping bag.

Meanwhile, the shoe saleswoman we saw earlier is bearing down on Hilary. She waves a pair of heels in the air.

Hilary panics and bolts for the door. Arlene catches up to her and they exit the store together.

EXT. GETTY AND CHASE - DAY

As the sisters step out into daylight, a Jaguar driven by the actress burns rubber past the entrance and is gone. The sisters make a dash for a Mercedes parked a little ways up the block. Hilary activates her remote car keys.

HILARY

Arlene, we could have been arrested.

ARLENE

We're still in present tense here.
Hurry up.

The guards emerge from the store in hot pursuit. That is, until the ALARM sounds back at the entrance. They turn back to see the elderly shopper looking completely distraught.

Arlene cringes with guilt as the guards rush back to snare the wrong culprit. Hilary revs up the Mercedes, lurches away from the curb and skids off down the road.

INT. MERCEDES, ALONG HIGHWAY 27, THE HAMPTONS - DAY

Both sisters look back in their mirrors, relieved that no one's following behind.

ARLENE

Who says the rich lead blasé,
predictable lives?

HILARY

Of course we don't. But it doesn't
normally involve felonies at the
street level.

As Hilary reaches her usual cruising speed of around 75 mph, Arlene grabs the *New York Times* from the back seat and starts reading.

ARLENE

I wonder what she's doing in the
Hamptons.

HILARY

Arlene, don't you know, this is the
Beverly Hills of the East Coast.

Hilary indicates the palatial estates surrounding them on either side of the highway.

ARLENE

More like Russia before the
Bolshevik Revolution.

HILARY

Russia? What are you talking
about?

ARLENE

I'm talking about that.

Arlene points out an estate with an elaborate manmade
waterfall alongside the entrance.

HILARY

Oh, I know, it's so lacking in
subtlety. Douglas and I looked at
that place.

ARLENE

Speaking of felonies, how's hubby
dealing with the probe?

HILARY

The S.E.C. called yesterday looking
for him. This whole Congo mess has
been a nightmare.

ARLENE

I can't believe people fell for
such a third rate scam. "There's
gold in them there hills."

The Westhampton Yacht Club rolls into view outside Hilary's
window.

HILARY

It's not gold. It's called coltan.
They use it to make cell phones and
micro chips.

ARLENE

I know what it is. The warlords
fund their massacres with the
profits. Anyway, those investors
should have seen it coming.

HILARY

Well, I guess we can't all be
political geniuses like you. So
Arlene, did you apply for food
stamps yesterday?

Hilary exits the highway, turns onto a road leading into a
gated community.

ARLENE

The line was too long.

INT. 70TH FLOOR, LOWER MANHATTAN HIGHRISE, NEW YORK - DAY

An elevator door opens and DOUGLAS SWANSON, 60, wipes away cocaine residue from under his nose. He's a good-looking hunk, with bushy blonde locks and a two-day beard. Douglas is wearing a new pair of jeans and a black silk shirt under a leather blazer. Before he gets off the elevator, his BODYGUARD blocks the way while he brushes white powder off the boss's shirt.

INT. SWANSON'S PRIVATE OFFICE SUITE - DAY

The CEO enters his spacious leather lair. From the floor to ceiling windows, we get a tantalizing sweep of the Manhattan skyline. An assortment of swords along one wall. Some antique pinball machines in the corner. A surfboard is mounted behind a large walnut desk. Below it, the firm's name in blue letters: "WAVE SECURITIES".

As soon as Doug enters, he finds his lawyer, NEIL FEINSTEIN, 68, seated on a sofa. Across a coffee table, two sullen-faced banking investigators, BROOKS and PARKER, stand up to meet the chief executive.

NEIL

There you are. Doug, these nice gentlemen are from the Securities Exchange Commission. Jeffrey Brooks and Michael Parker.

DOUG

Fine.

Snubbing his guests, Doug proceeds straight to the desk and flips open a laptop. As he waits for it to boot, he stares at a photograph of Hilary and him foisting cocktails on a yacht.

BROOKS

Mr. Swanson, we're looking into the Malakoff Diggings affair. We just have some questions we need to ask you.

Doug brings up the EBAY home page and logs in.

NEIL

Like I said, someone else here handled those transactions. Doug doesn't have a clue.

PARKER

You're talking about James Ogadipo?

NEIL

That's right. Doug signs off on deals everyday, based on whatever James suggest.

BROOKS

That's not how Mr. Ogadipo remembers it. He's cooperating with our probe.

Doug brings up an auction, quickly types in a bid.

PARKER

Mr. Swanson, three months before the rebels seized the mines, you actively promoted the stock to your investors. Isn't that right?

DOUG

(mumbling)

Like I knew what the banshees were up to.

BROOKS

What's that?

NEIL

Look, I can make this simple. The Malakoff mine promised good returns. And everybody knew it. The ore in the ground would have fetched maybe \$300 million. Wasn't that the figure, Doug?

No answer. Neil pulls a document from his briefcase, hands it to Brooks.

NEIL (CONT.)

Here's the prospectus. It was all done on the up and up, just like every other transaction we manage.

PARKER

Then why did you sell out the week before the attacks?

NEIL

The stock topped out at a hundred twenty a share. The geopolitics had nothing to do with it. I'm telling you, this is all much ado about nothing.

BROOKS

Again, not what Mr. Ogadipo tells us.

NEIL

Ogadipo will tell you Osama bin Laden was in on the deal if it'll save his ass. He's Nigerian, for chrissake. Doug never should have hired him. Now why don't you two go back to your own highrise and let Doug get back to work.

Brooks and Parker trade a look, wondering what Doug really is doing over there at his desk.

PARKER

Alright. We'll be in touch.

NEIL

Look forward to it, guys. Ciao.

Doug doesn't even notice when they're gone. He feverishly fires off another bid.

NEIL

Well, that went well. Except for the part where you got here an hour late.

DOUG

She's wants a divorce, Neil. And fifty million dollars.

NEIL

Who, Hilary? You don't think she knows anything about this, do you?

DOUG

She wouldn't know a junk bond from a breakfast bar... She might have overheard me on the phone.

NEIL

Well, whatever it was, she's got no ground to stand on. We can invoke spousal privilege.

DOUG

She must have something on me. Why else would she get a lawyer?

NEIL

Gee, I don't know, maybe it has something to do with that 16 year-old you did down in Cancun last week. Trust me, she's not going to turn state's evidence. It's her money, too.

DOUG

She'll spite me for a nickel...
Shit!

Neil walks behind Doug's desk, checks the screen.

NEIL

What are you bidding on now?

DOUG

A small town in California.

NEIL

I heard things were bad there. Anyway, you know her father's a retired steelworker. It's not like we're dealing with the Carnegies here. As for this other thing, why don't we go ahead with the press conference first thing Monday and announce Ogadipo's out.

Doug shrieks in anger. He's lost the auction. He goes to the window, paces and acts like Black Friday has come.

DOUG

It's just so devious, what she's doing. Like a cheetah holed up in a tree, waiting to lunge at me and grab fifty million dollars.

NEIL

That's only half what you and Ogadipo made on this stock deal. Don't worry, we'll make another 75 million down the road. For now, let's concentrate on the feds. When Ogadipo gets on that boat in a couple days, we can relax.

DOUG

I'm taking care of this myself.

Doug dials his cell phone.

NEIL

Fine. Who're you calling?

DOUG

Sergey.

NEIL

What, are you going to send your guard dogs to rough up the S.E.C. commissioners?

DOUG

She needs to be taught a lesson.

NEIL

(swipes phone away)

What do you mean, a lesson? What's going on?

DOUG

Nothing. Give it to me.

NEIL

I'll give it to you, alright. We're this close to nine indictments for insider trading. And the U.N. Security Council's about to stick its oar into the trough. Meanwhile, you're trolling Ebay auctions and playing tit for tat with trailer trash. You should have got the pre-nup like I told you.

Doug grabs the yacht portrait, smashes it in frustration. Neil returns to the sofa, packs up his gear.

NEIL

Calm down. I'll drive out to the Hamptons and talk to her. Is her sister still at the house?

DOUG

No, stay away from them. They're both history.

NEIL

That better mean you're giving her the divorce. Otherwise, I'll turn you in myself. Get some rest, Doug. And lay off the cocaine. You're going to have a meltdown if you don't watch it with that stuff.

As soon as Neil's out the door, Doug redials the phone.

DOUG

Yeah, go back to your law library
and suck lemons.

INT. SECURITY ROOM, SWANSON ESTATE, WESTHAMPTON - DAY

Located on the second floor, with a balcony overlook. A surveillance console with various camera shots occupies much of the room. The largest screen has a live shot of Hilary and Arlene sunning by the pool.

Out on the balcony, SERGEY, Doug's chief thug, surveys the grounds alongside two other scary-looking MUSCLE MEN. When the phone RINGS, he comes inside to answer it.

INT. POOLSIDE - DAY

Jazz plays on a boom box. Despite the brisk and breezy weather, Hilary is decked out on a lawn chair in a one-piece bathing suit. Over that is a terry-cloth bathrobe with the insignia of a luxury hotel. She reads a *Land's End* catalog between sips of her banana daiquiri.

Still dressed as we last saw her, Arlene lies across the diving board, on her back. A bottle of Heineken is balanced on her stomach.

Hilary is struggling to extract a pen from her robe.

HILARY

Damn it, these pockets are like
Hobbit burrows. Arlene, the food
will be here any minute.

ARLENE

Does anyone ever actually swim in
this pool?

HILARY

What business is that of yours?

ARLENE

I've just never seen anyone.

HILARY

It's autumn. Who swims in the
fall?

ARLENE

Nobody swam here in July, either.
(sticking hand in water) Wow,
that's hot. Boy, if I had this much
money to throw around, I'd --

HILARY

You don't. Now I'm trying to work.

Hilary finally retrieves her pen, fills out the *Land's End* order form.

ARLENE

I'd give it all to the Global Fund for Women. And the Dalai Lama.

SECURITY OFFICE

Sergey finishes his phone call with Doug. He motions his subordinates to come into the office and starts briefing them in Russian.

POOL

The housekeeper, LOURDES, brings lunch. Arlene is so hungry she springs off the diving board and over to the table before Hilary has even closed her catalog. Hilary adjourns to the meal in a more dignified manner.

HILARY

This isn't right, Lourdes.

LOURDES

It's fish and chips.

HILARY

I asked for garlic fries.

LOURDES

I don't know, Mrs. Swanson, I just bring it out.

HILARY

Well, are you skilled enough to take it back?

LOURDES

If you want.

Lourdes reaches for the plates.

ARLENE

I'll keep mine.

HILARY

No, take them both. (She wrestles away Arlene's plate.) And tell Cook if he can't follow my instructions, he doesn't have to worry about dinner.

After Lourdes withdraws:

ARLENE

Jesus, Hilary, what do I care about
garlic fries? I'm starving here.
I've downed three of these already.

She indicates the empty Heineken bottles on the table.

HILARY

You're a guest in this house, now
start acting like one.

ARLENE

It's only till I get back on my feet.

HILARY

What feet? You were born with a
tin cup in your claws.

ARLENE

Well, it's not like you're fricking
Ms. Magazine cover material.

HILARY

Ms.? Don't insult me.

ARLENE

Alright, *Good Housekeeping*.

HILARY

Tuh!

ARLENE

Fish and Game?

They wait. The breeze picks up and a swirl of leaves blows across the patio. They both sense something ominous about that. When a MAINTENANCE SERVANT cleaning the pool moves to the far end, Hilary decides to share a secret.

HILARY

You remember that man who came over
last week, Ogadipo? He called here
the next day and left a message. I
don't think he realized that he'd
dialed the general line. Douglas
has a private one with the same
announcement. Anyway, Douglas sold
his shares in Malakoff Diggings
right after that.

Arlene's face starts to turn white.

HILARY (CONT.)

So I taped the message on my voice recorder, then saved it as new. Smart, huh? I have evidence to put that cheating statutory third world rapist behind bars. Or me behind a Mazzerati. But now I can't find the cassette... Can't remember where I put it. So, Arlene, what do you think?

Arlene has not heard any of this. She's listing to one side in her chair. Whimpering:

ARLENE

I wouldn't have drank this much knowing lunch was gonna take so long.

Lourdes reappears with the food.

HILARY

Get a grip.
(to Lourdes)
Well, that's more like it.

Arlene immediately bites into a garlic fry. It's frozen.

HILARY (CONT.)

Now you see, dear, that wasn't so difficult.

LOURDES

No, no trouble. If that will be all.

HILARY

For now. But stay within range.

Hilary indicates the bell on the table. Lourdes leaves, signaling the maintenance man to follow her. As Hilary sets her napkin daintily across her lap, she sees tartar sauce oozing from Arlene's mouth as she devours her food.

HILARY (CONT.)

How repulsive.

Hilary gently lifts one fry, as if to suggest that this is how civilized people eat. Then she discerns the tiny ice crystals on the fry. That's when Sergey and his muscle men burst onto the patio, yank the women from their chairs.

HILARY (CONT.)

What on earth! Let go of me.
Sergey, call off these beasts.

ARLENE

We didn't steal anything from that store.

Sergey rifles through their purses, doesn't find anything of interest. He motions his men follow with the prisoners.

EXT. ENTRANCE, SWANSON ESTATE - DAY

An iron gate rolls open. Sergey drives Hilary's Mercedes down from the house and parks. The sisters are pulled from the back and tossed onto the main road along with their purses. Sergey throws them some car keys. The gate rolls shut and the three men return to the Mercedes.

HILARY

You'll all be sorting garbage down at the landfill when this gets straightened out.

Sergey translates what she says for his grunts. They laugh, board the car and accelerate back up the drive.

HILARY

He must have found it.

ARLENE

Found what?

HILARY

Wake up Arlene. The world's going by. We're filing charges. Damn, I left my cell on the table. Give me yours.

ARLENE

It's in my room.

HILARY

In your room? Well, what good is it there? The whole point of a cell phone is its mobility. It goes where you go. Now what?

ARLENE

I guess the idea was for us to take that.

There's an old, beat-up BMW parked on the side of the road.

HILARY

That's the servant's car.

(Arlene offers her the keys.)

No, you drive. I'm beyond upset.

ARLENE

And I'm just a little plastered.

INT. BMW - DAY

They get in and fasten their seatbelts. Arlene, in the driver's seat, inserts the key but doesn't turn the ignition. Something doesn't feel right.

HILARY

Well, what are you waiting for, the green flag?

ARLENE

It just seems like - this car - this is happening too fast.

A delivery truck comes rumbling down the road. The DRIVER stops alongside the BMW. He has a cell phone.

ARLENE

Hil, unroll your window quick.

Hilary unrolls her window.

HILARY

We're fine. Thanks.

Before Arlene gets a word in edgewise, the truck drives away. Arlene drops her head on the wheel, defeated.

HILARY (CONT.)

That rubbernecker would have called the *New York Times* if we told him what happened. I can just see Page One tomorrow.

End excerpt

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