

SPARK

by

Meredith Dawson

January 2018

EXT. STANFORD CAMPUS - VARIOUS

A GRADUATE, holding his gown, scurries through crowds of families to make it to his seat. Before the ceremony, we follow him until he finds his place in line.

INT. STANFORD STADIUM - MORNING

A man's VOICE (DEAN) drones one as we watch families fan themselves in the toasty indoor stadium, waiting for their graduates to receive their diplomas so they can escape to air-conditioned parties.

DEAN

I present to you, Stanford's
Graduate School of Business's
graduating class of 2018.

We move to the row of seated graduates on stage, as they stand, ready to accept their diploma. We end on NAOMI JOHNSON (27, African-American, impeccable posture) bright-eyed and waiting to be called. The dean rattles off names as each student steps closer to him.

DEAN

Clarence Jacker, MBA. Brad Johnson,
MBA. Recipient of the Alexander A.
Robicheck Student Achievement Award
in Finance, Naomi Johnson, JD MBA.

As she glides to accept her diploma, a rupturing enthusiasm extends from the audience and we see her black family: mother, cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. They are the lone black faces in a sea of mostly white. Naomi takes the diploma, shakes his hand, and rounds her way back to her seat, glowing. She sits down, looking at her diploma. The STUDENT next to her holds out his hand for a low-five. She obliges and smiles.

INT. JOHNSON HOME - KITCHEN - THAT AFTERNOON

A home that's a Crate & Barrel ad brought to life. Naomi's mother, PATRICIA, dressed in Eileen Fisher's finest, puts finishing touches on appetizers. There's a graduation party in full swing. Naomi emerges, flushed, in a colorful summer dress. Her mother stops fussing and turns to look at her daughter.

PATRICIA

I love that color on you. My sweet
JD MBA-Okay daughter.

She pulls her face in and drowns her in kisses. Naomi affectionately pulls away.

NAOMI

Mom. MOM. MOM! Stop. You're going to get lipstick all over my face.

PATRICA

Good, everyone will know whose canal you came from.

NAOMI

Gross.

She pinches her cheek and grabs a tray to bring outside. Naomi walks over to a mirror on the wall, she does indeed have an enormous lipstick impression of her mother's full lips on her right cheek. She tries to smudge it off. After a lot of rubbing, she makes her way outside.

EXT. JOHNSON HOME - BACKYARD

Light music plays, home made snacks, an open bar, and a cacophony of black folk (friends, family, neighbors) mingle to celebrate Naomi. She spots the bar and makes her way over but gets stopped by her UNCLE MAURICE (black Santa Claus).

UNCLE MAURICE

Naomi, Naomi, Naomi. Your aunt and I are so proud of you.

Naomi looks over to her AUNT DINAH, who chain smokes alone on the other side of the pool. She looks over, immediately putting out the cigarette and waving. Naomi waves back.

NAOMI

Thank you, Uncle Maurice. I'm so glad you guys could make it.

UNCLE MAURICE

You've got to be careful though. People with law degrees, especially top of their class, will be the first one's abducted in the invasion.

This is something she hears often from him. She pats his back.

NAOMI

Oh, I know Uncle Maurice -- I keep your pre-invasion kit next to my night stand.

UNCLE MAURICE
Atta girl.

Naomi walks away, only fifteen steps away from the bar. Alas, she gets stopped again. This time by her mom's co-worker CHRISTINE (Midwest sensibility, knits her own bird-themed sweaters)

CHRISTINE
Oh you sweet girl, god bless you
and your beautiful family.

She squeezes Naomi's right hand affectionately.

NAOMI
Thank you for driving out here, I
hope the commute wasn't too bad.

CHRISTINE
A breeze - finally got to finish my audiobook. I am just on the edge of my seat. This Voldemort guy sounds like ten miles of bad road.

NAOMI
You're in for a real treat.

CHRISTINE
Your mother told me you and Adrian broke up, I'm sorry to hear that. Everyone at the hospital is real torn up about it.

NAOMI
(incredulous)
Oh she did? Well, that's great.
Yes, we broke up a few months ago.
He's moving to Chicago and we
weren't serious enough for long
distance. His words, not mine.

CHRISTINE
Pity. When races mix, the babies turn out gorgeous. God's little ice cream swirls.

NAOMI
....Exactly. Okay, well gotta put something in this, I am parched.
Great to see you.

She gestures to her empty hand and walks away. She's not a mere seven steps away from the bar.

But alas, intercepted by a family friend, TRACY (Late 20s, biracial, beautifully freckled)

TRACY
Naomi, there you are. Hardest person to find!

Naomi is actually happy to see Tracy. They hug.

NAOMI
Tracy, hi, it's so great to see you. What's going on with you?

TRACY
I actually just moved back from Nashville.

NAOMI
Whoa, cool. Welcome back!

TRACY
Thank you, thank you! What's next for you, plans to work at some big law firm?

NAOMI
Actually, I'm not practicing. I'm going tech, believe it or not. I got an offer at this VC firm in SV. Moving out there and starting next week.

TRACY
That's incredible, congratulations. You'll be close enough for Pat to visit.

NAOMI
Don't give her any ideas. I'm moving to Mountain View so that should give us *some* space.

TRACY
Knowing her, I doubt it. Would I know the company?

NAOMI
It's Harvey, Larter & Saw.

Tracy's face scrunches as she looks at her drink, swirling the large ice cube.

NAOMI
Do you know them?

TRACY

I don't know anyone who works there
but I'm familiar. I heard it's...
tough.

NAOMI

Good, that's why I picked them.
They have one of the highest
success rates with their
investments, they let their first
year analysts actually invest, they
--

TRACY

-- I meant tough for certain
employees. People like us. People
who --

NAOMI

Black people, yeah I got it. I'll
be fine. I'm always the "one" in
the room, many years of practice.
Besides, I'm sure they've got at
least one other black person so I
won't be the token.

Naomi laughs, Tracy is not convinced but decides to drop it.

TRACY

Congrats again and good luck Naomi.

Tracy walks away, Naomi thinks nothing of it and FINALLY makes it to the bar. As she's making herself a cocktail, she looks at the people in her backyard celebrating. She toasts to herself, smiling. The moment is quickly ruined when another GUEST comes over to talk to her.

GUEST

Woman of the hour -- your mom tells
me you're single. I know a great
guy...Are manbuns still "in"?

Naomi takes a big gulp and feigns polite interest.

INT. NAOMI'S NEW APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT WEEK

Naomi drags the last of her moving boxes into her beautiful two bedroom palace. She's followed by DIANE, (mid 20s, black, Queen of the Amazons in another life) who carries a box with the Stanford FLAG swinging out of it. She barely misses Naomi's head.

NAOMI

Girl, watch it. You're gonna kill
us both with that thing flying
around.

Diane drops the box on the floor. She picks up the flag and proudly hangs it on the wall.

DIANE

I won't be shamed for my Tree
pride.

They both laugh at the large 'S' with the tree in the middle of it. Naomi collapses on the couch while Diane grabs two beers from the fridge. She collapses on the couch, handing the other beer to Naomi. They clink tops.

DIANE

Cheers to two sistas doing it for
themselves. Fighting the man.

NAOMI

You're working at Goldman Sachs and
come Monday morning, I'm a startup
bitch. Boo, we are the man.

DIANE

That calls for a second cheers.

The clink again and drink.

DIANE

(devilish)
....We should celebrate.

NAOMI

Double nah.

Diane stands on the couch.

DIANE

No, we have to. Hear me out. We
live on our own, I'm feeling my
NorCal self, and we have graduation
money to burn baby.

NAOMI

Counter argument - every episode of
"Frasier" was just added to
Netflix.

Naomi makes the "weighing" gesture.

NAOMI
Tough call.

DIANE
Ugh.

NAOMI
The man was supposed to be in a few episodes and turned the role into a career spanning twenty years, tying the role with --

DIANE
---You got a real blind spot for citizens of Honkey Town, USA. One drink. One little teensy, tiny, itty bitty titty committee drink.

Naomi thinks about it.

NAOMI
Nah, we good.

Diane lies down on her lap, eyes pleading.

DIANE
I want to flirt with boys and be told how 'exotic' I look.

NAOMI
Well when you put it that way...
nope.

DIANE
I'll let you order an appetizer...

NAOMI
...Ladies and gentleman we have a deal. One drink.

DIANE
One. Uno. Eins.

Naomi's eyes narrow.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR

An ordinary, lowly attended bar that boasts jukebox music, dim lighting, and a sub-par happy hour. Naomi and Diane sit at a high top table. Naomi slurps the last of her one drink and motions for the check.

NAOMI

Well this was cool, lez bounce.

As Naomi gets off the stool, the music changes to Chumbawamba's "Tub Thumping." Diane sits her back down.

DIANE

We can't leave now, it's an unforgivable sin.

(yelling)

I get knocked down! But I get back up again! You are never gonna keep me down!

The entire bar sings along. Diane motions for the bartender to bring another round.

DIANE

Come on, I know you know the words.
You know I know you know the words.
You are never gonna keep me down.

She dances around Naomi who smiles, refusing to engage to sing along. The bar gets louder. Naomi gives in.

NAOMI

*He drinks a Whiskey drink, he
drinks a Vodka drink.*

DIANE

*He drinks a Lager drink, he
drinks a Cider drink.*

DIANE

*He sings the songs that remind him
of the good times.*

NAOMI

*He sings the songs that remind him
of the best times.*

Diane pulls Naomi up and they start jumping and singing along to the music, all eyes in the bar are on them. A SERVER drops off four beers. Before she leaves, Naomi checks with her.

NAOMI

Sorry, she only ordered two.

SERVER

The other two are from the gentlemen over there.

The server points to a group of GUYS. One in particular, GINGER DUDE, waves. Diane grabs a beer and raises it to him, waving him and his friends over. Naomi elbows her.

NAOMI

What are you doing? You said one drink and now it's three, and this harem of fools is making their way over here.

DIANE

Ya welcome, bish.

Diane takes the hand of Ginger Dude and dances with him in the center of the dance floor. The other guys start to leer, fending for her attention. She shoos them away, sips from both beers and looks at her watch.

BEARDED DUDE

Late to your next appointment?

Naomi turns around to see a new guy has made his way over, BEARDED DUDE (Early 30s, manicured beard, Caucasian, eyes like sea glass.) She is startled by his beauty.

NAOMI

Wha?

BEARDED DUDE

It's 9:30PM on a Saturday night and you're looking at your watch like you're gonna be late for church.

NAOMI

Oh, I don't go to church.

BEARDED DUDE

Now that I'm looking at you, you do seem like the "burst into flames" type.

NAOMI

Sizzle sizzle.

He looks away, smirking. She's lost her cool and doesn't know how to respond. He looks back over to her.

BEARDED DUDE

(cooly)

Celebrating?

He points to Diane dancing with Ginger Dude.

NAOMI
Mourning.

BEARDED DUDE
Yikes... Sorry?

NAOMI
I mean, mourning my dwindling youth
but yes, technically, we're
celebrating. Starting new jobs this
week, but it's boring. I'd rather
talk about something else.

BEARDED DUDE
I'll clink to that.

He raises his beer glass to hers. They lock eyes intimately
as they both sip.

NAOMI
Watching anything good?

BEARDED DUDE
Aside from *this* circus display --

They look to Diane and Ginger who now make aggressively out.

BEARDED DUDE
My go-to show was just added to
Netflix, so that's been a top
priority. It's this older show
about a psychiatrist whose dad
moves in with him.

Naomi spits out her drink.

NAOMI
You watch "Frasier"?

He helps clean up her dribbled beer.

BEARDED DUDE
"Watch" is too casual, I would say
binge is a little closer to home.

NAOMI
A guest role that turned into a
career of

NAOMI
Twenty years. BEARDED DUDE
Twenty years.

They both smirk, sipping their beers.

NAOMI
Do you want to dance?

BEARDED DUDE
No. Do you?

A beat. He puts his hand on her thigh.

NAOMI
No.

CUT TO:

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Naomi and Bearded Dude kiss as their sensible clothing flies into oblivion. They continue talking between gasps for air.

NAOMI
In addition to starring, he also directed more than 30 episodes.

They hop around the room, finally making it onto the bed.

BEARDED DUDE
Don't get me started on the nominations but, in an eleven year run, it won 37 Emmys. Game of Thrones just beat it with 38 last year.

They continue to kiss and talk while getting comfortable on the bed.

NAOMI
David Hyde Pierce was nominated every single year. You can't find quality television like that today.

They're down to their underwear now. Naomi stops him for a moment.

NAOMI
Don't wake me when you sneak out at 4AM.

BEARDED DUDE
Word.

She flips the light switch off. Goodnight!

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Naomi sleeps alone, tangled in her sheets. There's a knock on her door. Naomi mumbles something inaudibly.

DIANE O.S.
Ya welcome bish!

Naomi rolls over, covering her head with her comforter.

EXT. HLS OFFICE BUILDING - THE NEXT MORNING

Naomi, dressed in a classic #imwithher pantsuit, exits a corporate-looking shuttle and stands outside an industrial building with sign reading: "Harvey, Larter, & Saw" on top of the front door. She enters.

INT. HLS OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM

Naomi, along with a handful of other bright-eyed first dayers, sits in a conference room waiting for the orientation meeting to begin. There's a fruit spread (WITH kiwi and mango!!), bagels, even lox. This job is *cush*. NICK (early 30s, attractive and lovable schlub, Caucasian) walks over to the empty seat next to her.

NICK
Taken?

NAOMI
By you. Have a seat.

She smiles as he sits down. She holds her hand out.

NAOMI
Naomi.

He shakes.

NICK
Nick.

As she's about to converse, a hush falls over the room as IYANA (Early 40s, always in heels, overly-worked physically and mentally), REGINALD (old rich white dude), and PATRICK (less old, less rich, still white dude) enter.

IYANA
Good morning, everyone. I hope
you've helped yourself to
breakfast. Young minds need fuel.

IYANA (CONT'D)
Please, allow me to introduce my
cofounders of HLS, Reginald Harvey.

Reginald nods his head to the group.

IYANA
And Patrick Larter.

Patrick also nods his head to the group.

IYANA
I'm Iyana Saw, welcome to HLS.
We've paired you with mentors to
guide you through the process. You
all come from various backgrounds
and were chosen among a highly
selective pool. We believe that
it's important to diversify our
staff in order to see the best
that's out there. Some of you are
fresh from law or business school -

Naomi looks around to see if anyone perked up at that. No one else moved, but she also notices that once again she is the only black person and one of only two women.

IYANA
Some of you from the banking world,
and even someone from journalism.

Nick elbows Naomi and points to himself. He's a real dork.

IYANA
Thank you all for joining our
mission. With your input, we will
make smart choices in deciding the
future and how we can help make
sure that we all make it there
together. We won't keep you much
longer, go forth and better our
community.

The room halfheartedly claps and disperse to meet with their mentors. Naomi looks around for hers when Iyana walks right up to her.

IYANA
Miss Johnson. I'll be your mentor
during your initial orientation
phase.

Iyana reaches out soft, cared-for hand out, Naomi shakes it firmly. Iyana grins.

IYANA

Love a woman with a firm hand
shake. Please, come with me.

We follow Iyana as she gives Naomi a walking tour of the company.

INT. HLS OFFICE - VARIOUS

Iyana walks her around the office.

IYANA

Since your initial application,
we've amended a few aspects of the
company and have experienced
exponential growth since doing so.
We're now in the alumni stages for
many of our initial investments.

NAOMI

Already? It's only been three years
since HLS was founded. Impressive.

IYANA

Yes. Last year's Q4 we had under
\$600 million in early stage
developments with nineteen early
stage deals. Our under management
assets are around \$1.9 million.

NAOMI

Jesus.

As they walk through Naomi peeks through open offices, each
ranging in different styles from surfer chic to black and
white minimalism. No two offices are the same.

IYANA

As you know, our primary industries
are media, software, and healthcare
but we're really open to new paths
forged by our younger employees.

NAOMI

And first year associates can
present options to the board?

IYANA

Of course. As your time here grows,
we want you to grow with your
companies.

NAOMI

You want us to put down roots,
smart.

Iyana stops in front of Naomi's shared office, the other side empty.

IYANA

And this is where you'll start.

She shows her in.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE.

It's one of the smaller ones, and it's simple but there's a beautiful view of the city and it's all hers.

IYANA

Get to work, the world is waiting.

Iyana leaves. Naomi sits at her desk, beaming. Before she gets too comfortable. There's a knock on her office door and Nick pops his head in.

NICK

Hey! Reginald's treating new folks to an early lunch. You free?

NAOMI

Free for free lunch? Hell yeah.

NICK

Noishe. Scoozi's at 12:30.

Nick leaves.

EXT. SCOOZI'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT - LATER

Establishing of an upscale but casual dining lunch hot spot. Naomi pulls up in front of the valet, dropping her car key off and dashing inside, late for lunch. CPT (colored people time, we always late.)

INT. SCOOZI'S - HOSTESS STAND

Naomi shuffles up to the front desk, winded. The HOSTESS (16) smiles and greets her.

HOSTESS

Welcome to Scoozi's. You entire party was just seated, followed me.

Naomi follows her into the restaurant.

INT. SCOOZI'S - MAIN DINING AREA

The hostess leads Naomi over to a large, boisterous birthday party. It's a full table for a BLACK FAMILY.

HOSTESS

Here you are, your waitress will be right with you.

The hostess begins to turn away but Naomi grabs her by the elbow.

NAOMI

Excuse me. That's not who I'm dining with.

The hostess bites her lip, worried.

HOSTESS

Oh. I'm s-sorry.

NAOMI

(pushing)

Why would you think I was here with them?

HOSTESS

I just, well, I, I'm so so sorry.

Naomi shakes her head in disbelief.

NICK O.C.

Naomi, over here!

Naomi sees Nick waving her over on the other side of the restaurant.

NAOMI

See that table over there? That's who I am dining with.

Naomi brushes past her. She quickly walks back to her stand, ashamed.

INT. SCOOZI'S - PRIVATE ROOM

Naomi joins Nick, Reginald, and three other associates at a rectangular table, who talk amongst themselves. Reginald clinks his water glass and stands.

REGINALD

Naomi, welcome. Everyone settle down. Thank you for joining me for lunch today. I always like to treat the newcomers on their first day to get acclimated, liquored up, what have you.

The group chuckles.

REGINALD

HLS is happy to have you and we want you to be happy.

Everyone raises their glass to that -- hear hear!

REGINALD

What makes *me* happy is embarrassing all of you and making you go around telling us a little about yourselves. Let's start with you, young man. Tell us how you got here.

Reginald points his butter knife to ELI (early 30s, dark features.) As Reginald sits, Eli stands.

ELI

(Inland North Ohioan accent)

My name is Eli. I played football for The Ohio State University and went on to get my business degree from The Ohio State University as well. Born and raised in Ohio. I'm allergic to peanuts. I made my first investment in my uncle's software and today it's worth about \$287 million.

He sits down. Next to him is DANIEL (mid 30s, frail, still carries silver spoon in mouth.)

DANIEL

Daniel from Manhattan. I went to Princeton for undergrad, developed my own app and sold it two years ago for an undisclosed amount. Mr. Larter is a family friend of mine and recommended I start my professional career at HLS. Here I am.

Daniel nods his head to Reginald and sits down. Next to him is WHITNEY (late 20s, giraffe, "Big Eyes"-like blue eyes, lightning white hair)

WHITNEY

I'm Whitney. I prefer to be called Whitney. I have a masters in engineering from Cornell and I like problem solving. My roommate used to work at HLS and referred me.

Whitney bows her head and sits. Nick bumps the table as he stands, shaking everyone's glasses.

NICK

Whatsup, everyone. My name is Nick, I'm from Chicago. I was the journalism kid, decided I want to pursue VC insteada' writin about it. Got my masters from Northwestern. Moved out here this past January. Uh... Go Cats!

He sits down. Naomi is last. She rises.

NAOMI

Naomi Johnson. I'm from Palo Alto. I agreed to take this job as long as my mother promised not to visit unannounced.

No one laughs.

NAOMI

I was pre-med at Harvard. Decided I was sick of Boston and sick of sick of people. Took a detour as a Rhodes scholar, but English weather is the bane of my existence, so I went to Stanford and got my JD/MBA. Wanted to keep my options open.

People look around surprised.

ELI

And how do you know one of the partners.

NAOMI

I don't. Met them for the first time during my interview.

No other follow up questions. She sits back down as the waiter arrives to take everyone's orders. Eli leans in to Daniel.

ELI
(barely a whisper)
Diversity hire.

Daniel nods along, Naomi clocks this but chooses to ignore it.

INT. SCOOZI'S - LATER

People clean their plates and their mouths as they finish lunch. A bottle of wine or two down, they seem a little more relaxed. The waitress drops the bill back off and Reginald signs it, putting the receipt into his coat pocket. He stands.

WHITNEY
I don't understand why they can't just BAN him from twitter? Simply irresponsible.

ELI
First amendment, freedom of speech.
That's why.

Nick interjects. This is something he counter argues often.

NICK
(matter of fact)
The first amendment was established to prevent the government from punishing the people. Not the other way around.

ELI
You read that in your "New York Times?"

REGINALD
Okay, okay. Let us get back to work. Use this... *passion* to fuel your ideas. Thank you for joining me.

Reginald exits first and the rest scatter as they walk out to their cars.

EXT. SCOOZI'S - VALET STAND

Everyone's left except Nick and Naomi who are mid-conversation as they wait for their cars.

NICK

I cannot believe she sat you at the wrong table. You should say something to the manager or, better yet, Reginald.

NAOMI

No, no. I don't want to be known as the complainer.

Nick shrugs.

NICK

Well can't say lunch wasn't fun, can we.

NAOMI

Both my lobster bisque and the people I was seated with were too rich.

He laughs.

NICK

Whatdya think so far?

NAOMI

I think it'll be interesting. I'm looking forward to it, I've been tracking some potential early staggers so we'll see. You?

NICK

I think good. It must be weird for you though, being the only one.

NAOMI

(defensive)

--How so?

NICK

You're probably the only person who actually earned their job offer.

He smiles, knowingly. Before she can respond, the valet comes around in Nick's Audi A8.

NAOMI

This you?

NICK

Yep. Graduation gift from my
stepmom. One whole summer of
chauffeuring her to and from
injectable appointments as penance.

The other valet drives up in Naomi's BMW X3.

NICK

This you?

NAOMI

Graduation gift from myself. Two
whole summers of life-guarding.

NICK

(playfully)

So black people *can* swim.
Fascinating.

She hits him.

NAOMI

(stern)

Hey!

(playfully)

Didn't say I was good.

He smiles and gets into his car. She tips the valet and gets into hers and goes back to work.

INT. HLS OFFICE - HALLWAY

CHYRON: SIX WEEKS LATER

Naomi walks through the hallway. She seems at ease, greeting co-workers as she walks by. NED (30s, painfully white) stops her.

NED

Hey -- see you at flag football
this weekend? We need our QB.

NAOMI

Yes, but I think my days as QB are
over, my shoulder is still crazy
sore from last week's game.

NED

Work it, girlfraand.

Naomi nods along. She continues walking but is sidestepped by a second co-worker, SHARON (real big loser).

SHARON

Naomi, I meant to tell you! Travis and I watched the first episode of "Frasier" this weekend. It's like, SO, funny.

NAOMI

Sharon, I told you. You have to start with "Cheers" first. To fully grasp his essence.

Co-Worker 2 pulls out her phone and types into it.

SHARON

It's called Cheers? Okay, we'll do that. Thanks!

Sharon scuttles away as Naomi heads into her office.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE

She walks in and plops down at her desk. Her things are slowly overflowing onto the vacant other side of it. Iyana knocks and walks in.

NAOMI

Afternoon, Iyana. How're you?

She closes the door behind her.

IYANA

Well, thank you.

She sits at the chair across from Naomi.

NAOMI

Everything okay?

IYANA

Yes of course. I just wanted to check in and see how things were progressing. A little over a month in, how are things going for you?

NAOMI

(gushing)

Honestly, I love it. Everyone's been super helpful and inviting. Our flag football team is pretty terrible but I've learned a year's worth of gossip at our post game happy hour. Mr. Saw has witnessed a lot of infidelity.

A beat.

NAOMI

Oh, the actual job. That is also great!

Naomi rummages through her messy desk looking for something. She spots a folder and pulls it out, handing it to Iyana.

NAOMI

In fact, I've been looking at some early stage companies that could use a little HLS love. There's this company, Bio-Fuse, which is outside of our primary industries but --

IYANA

--That's great. Really. I encourage your approach to take initiative.

NAOMI

Great! So Bio-Fuse's statement is --

IYANA

-- that being said, and this company sounds very promising, I would like to assign you to another company.

Iyana reaches into her purse and pulls out a mini TABLET, handing it to her. Naomi reads off the screen.

NAOMI

"HEAL: There's a right way to recover."

IYANA

The Health and Environmental Advocacy League. They've been brought to my attention by a colleague and they're looking to work with some of our younger associates. Someone who can grow with them. I think you'd be perfect.

Naomi is taken aback.

NAOMI

Me?

IYANA

Yes. You. Is there reason to believe this is not of interest or capability?

NAOMI

NO. No. This sounds perfect, I'm ecstatic you thought of me.

IYANA

I think they'll be a lucrative investment for this company in the upcoming year and frankly... woman to woman, I want to help you. I want you to succeed. We should be looking out for one another.

NAOMI

Woman to woman, I agree. Thank you.

She mulls on it, still unsure.

IYANA

It won't be easy: long hours, a lot of travel between here and New York where they're based, and highly risky career-wise. But! With potential for high reward. The founder is in town and I'd like you to have dinner with him this weekend to gauge mutual interest.

NAOMI

This weekend? That's, well, very soon. If I'm being honest, I'm hesitant to take on a company that's established and already a series C. I was hoping to do the "start small and learn from that" kind of thing. Especially working alone -- I wouldn't want to take on more than I chew. Bite off more than I can eat? You get it.

IYANA

Of course, but you will not be alone. We have a new hire coming in from our New York office, Ben. He officially transfers this week and he will be taking the other half of this office.

Iyana stands and walks out of the room for a moment. Naomi quickly drags her shit back to her side of the desk.

IYANA O.C.

Ben!

Iyana re-enters.

IYANA

Yes, you may want to re-distribute
your belongings.

There's a knock on the door. The door opens and in walks BEN aka BEARDED DUDE! However, he is now freshly shaven and even more of a smokeshow. Good for him. He holds two hangers with DRY CLEANED CLOTHES, and folds them over the back of their shared couch. Upon seeing him, Naomi knocks over a full glass of water on her desk, spilling water everywhere. He rushes to help clean up.

IYANA

Naomi Johnson this is Ben
Skarsgard. Ben, this is Naomi; your
new office mate.

He puts his hand out.

BEN

It's nice to meet you.

Does he recognize her? She shakes his hand while wiping up water.

NAOMI

Yeah, nice to meet you too...

IYANA

I'll let you two get familiar, but
Ben has already agreed to dinner.
Naomi, let me know as soon as
possible what your decision is.

Iyana leaves. Ben and Naomi kind of just stare at each other.

NAOMI

So, uh. Heeeeeyyyy.

BEN

You don't mind if I put those
shirts there, do you?

She shakes her head no.

BEN

You look familiar. Do I know you
from Yale?

NAOMI

No, we uh, hung out like a month ago.

Ben moves to organize his desk.

BEN

Hung out? Are you a family friend?

This is pure torture.

NAOMI

Not exactly. I'm, like, kind of a friend? We met at that Whiskey Bar that one night.

BEN

Ah yes yes, of course.

She can breathe again.

NICK

You're Todd's girlfriend! Yes, nice to see you again.

NAOMI

(exploding)

No, dude! We had sex.

He breaks into laughter.

BEN

I know.

He tries to contain himself.

BEN

I wanted to see how long it would take you. That was fun.

She throws a pen at him.

NAOMI

Fuck you.

They both chuckle. They then stop and it's awkward for a sec.

NAOMI

....Okay, so what's happening now? Did you live here a month ago? How did we not cover the job sitch?

BEN

You're the one who said you didn't want to talk about work! That weekend I was in town signing a lease and finalizing my contract. I too was out celebrating.

NAOMI

These fates are cruel.

BEN

If I recall, they were cruel *twice*.

NAOMI

Okay, okay, let's not. This is my place of business.

BEN

(switching gears)

Dinner this weekend with this old fart - you in?

NAOMI

Yeah, I don't know.

BEN

Are you crazy? HEAL is rumored to blow up next year and they are HANDING it us.

NAOMI

Okay sure, yeah, when you put it like that. But what if we drop the ball and blow it?

BEN

I don't drop balls. I carry them. Or throw them. Like Tom Brady.

NAOMI

I don't remember you being this cocky.

He opens his mouth for rebuttal but she beats him to it.

NAOMI

Don't be cute.

He shuts his mouth. A moment later.

BEN

I think it'll be great. If what I've heard about you is true, you're a fucking shark slash
braniac overachiever and you should be salivating over this.

NAOMI

"Shark" has a negative connotation.
Braniac overachiever will be fine on its own.

Ben grabs his bag. His phone rings, and he looks at the caller. He answers.

BEN

(into phone)

Hey, give me one second.

(to Naomi)

Okay, whatever, I've got to take this. I will see you later, desk buddy.

He moves to the door to leave, but turns around.

BEN

Sleep on it. In your bed. Unless, there's someone else in it.

He raises his eyebrows suggestively. She throws another pen at him.

NAOMI

Get out!

He leaves. She sits back in her chair, flushed as fuck.

NAOMI

Duuuuuuuude.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Naomi enters the apartment with bags of CHINESE TAKEOUT from a local dive restaurant called Mama Chen's.

NAOMI

Bish where you at? Mama brought home Mama Chen's.

She walks into the kitchen and starts unpacking the food.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Diane enters, still in her ladysuit from work. She plops down at the dining table, waiting to be served.

NAOMI

How was your day Miss Thang?

DIANE

Like, I kind of want to kill myself but then I know my ghost would be so mad at all this money I got in the bank.

NAOMI

Don't be silly. I'd take it. That's friendship.

DIANE

Coo coo, glad you've got ma back.

Naomi puts the food out like a buffet and grabs plates and silverware for them.

DIANE

Things are fine. Sister gotta hustle, you know how it is. Old Man McHenry asked me what I was today.

NAOMI

People can't be doing that. Obama only left office a year ago.

DIANE

I told him I was Creole.

NAOMI

Pssh, you African as fuck.

DIANE

He don't know the difference. I told him that and swear to Beyonce, he nodded, leaned in, and told me he was "this" close to getting on a plane to help his "good friend" Sean in Haiti.

NAOMI

HA!

They dole out food on their plates and dig in, starved.

DIANE

How was your day, boo?

NAOMI

OH like LOL, forgot to text you.
Remember that sexy beard-o who came
home with me like a month ago?

Diane purses her lips.

DIANE

He finished the toilet paper and
did not replace the roll, but like,
whatever. Yes, I recall.

NAOMI

HE WORKS AT HLS NOW.

Diane, mid bite, drops her mouth and a piece of Sweet and Sour Chicken rolls right out.

NAOMI

Girl, check yaself.

DIANE

Put this thing in reverse, and back
the fuck up. What do you mean "he
works at HLS now?"

NAOMI

Get this -- the night we met, he
was in town signing a lease. He
just moved from New York and now we
are coemployees.

DIANE

Wack. Follow up question, will you
see him around the office?

NAOMI

Who knows? I mean, we kind of share
an office now...

DIANE

You can't share an office with
someone you've shared bodily fluids
with.

Naomi gestures to her Miso Soup.

NAOMI

Can you not?

DIANE

Wild. Just wild. You win for best
day.

NAOMI

Yeah. Oh and Iyana wants me to partner up with him to lead this HEAL company for a potential investment.

Diane smacks the fork out of Naomi's hand.

DIANE

Bish! Why didn't you lead with that? That's incredible!!!!
Congratulations!!!!

NAOMI

Ugh that was a really thick piece!

She bends down to pick the fork up and continues to eat with it.

NAOMI

I haven't accepted. I was invited to meet the founder for dinner, with Ben this --

DIANE

Homeboy's name is Ben?

Naomi nods sheepishly.

DIANE

It would be. Continue.

NAOMI

So I'm supposed to meet them for dinner, but I'm on the fence.

DIANE

What's wrong with you?

NAOMI

What if it's weird working with him? I don't want to bite off more than I can chew -- ah! That's the saying. I couldn't think of it earlier.

DIANE

Listen to me. You the only sista up in there and they are GIVING you a piece of success. This is the dream scenario. Fuck Ben, scratch that you already did that. Don't think about him, think about yourself. Do what you need to do to succeed.

Diane then purses her lips, makes a stern face, and starts swishing her hair.

DIANE
(a la Tyra Banks, ANTM
opening credits)
*You wanna be on top? You wanna be
on top?*

NAOMI
(laughing)
Yes. Yes, I do.

DIANE
Now pass me some Mongolian Beef.

They continue to eat, rehashing the rest of their days.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Naomi gets into bed with her laptop. She does some googling on HEAL and reads from their website. It looks legit. She gets a text from her mom, Naomi reads it.

PATRICIA (TEXT)
Diane told me about Heal!!!

She closes out of her phone and puts it on her night stand. She gets another text.

PATRICIA (TEXT)
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

And another.

PATRICIA (TEXT)
KISSY EMOJI

And another.

PATRICIA (TEXT)
You'll be running that company in
no time. Proud of you!!!!

Naomi can't help but smile. She texts her mom back.

NAOMI (TEXT)
That's not how this company
works... but thank you. Goodnight!

She scrolls through her messages and pulls up her text conversation with Iyana. She starts to type and we see the conversation:

NAOMI (TEXT)
So...what time is dinner?

Within seconds, Iyana replies.

IYANA (TEXT)
7:00PM. Mastro's. Welcome aboard.
THUMB'S UP EMOJI

She clicks her phone off. She hears it vibrate again, sees it's more emojis from her mom. She puts the laptop on the floor, turns her lamp off and goes to sleep.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT NIGHT

Dressed in a flattering, but professional dress, Naomi hops around her bedroom looking for her other HEEL. She's getting ready for dinner. Her phone buzzes. She hops to her nightstand to see a text from a new number.

TEXT
Hey, it's Ben. Want a ride to dinner? You're on my way.

She thinks for a second, then replies.

NAOMI (TEXT)
How do you know where I live,
stalker?

She then remembers how and as she's typing, he calls her. She picks up.

NAOMI
Yes, I know how you know. Never mind.

INT. UBER - SAME

Ben sits in the backseat of the car.

INTERCUT BETWEEN NAOMI AND BEN

BEN
I'm hurt you could forget.

NAOMI
Was that all?

BEN

Do you want a ride? I'm in an uber
and kinda sorta in your
neighborhood.

NAOMI

That would be great. What's your
ETA?

Ben looks at his watch.

BEN

Now?

CUT TO:

EXT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - SAME

Ben's uber is outside of her apartment. Naomi looks out
through a window and waves.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - SAME

She puts him on speakerphone and puts the phone on her bed.
She finds her heel under her bed. She grabs it and a purse.

NAOMI

In the neighborhood, huh?

BEN O.S.

Kinda sorta.

NAOMI

Goodbye.

She hangs up, turns her light off, and runs out through the
apartment.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Diane is watching a movie on the couch. She turns her head,
watching as Naomi runs out.

DIANE

My girl's all grownsed up! Go get
em!

INT. UBER - A FEW SECONDS LATER

Naomi gets into the car and slides over next to Ben. He looks her over.

NAOMI
Nice shirt.

BEN
Right from the dry cleaner, I like em fresh and pressed. You look beautiful.

NAOMI
I know.

He smirks as they sit in padded silence on the way to dinner.

EXT. MASTRO'S STEAK HOUSE

Their uber pulls up outside of an upscale American steakhouse. Ben gets out street side, runs over and opens Naomi's door, letting her out.

NAOMI
Someone's feeling chivalrous.

BEN
Ladies always come first.

She rolls her eyes and heads into the restaurant.

INT. MASTRO'S STEAK HOUSE - ENTRYWAY

The restaurant is quiet though relatively packed with a more elegant, older clientele. Naomi holds the door for Ben and they walk over to the HOST (mid 30s, clean cut.)

BEN
Skarsgard, party of three.

The host looks through his book and finds them.

HOST
Yes, welcome. A member of your party is already here. Right this way.

They follow the host into the restaurant.

NAOMI

We never discussed that, but
Skarsgard? Really? That cannot
possibly be your last name.

BEN

It can and it is. I'm like a little
Swedish Fish.

NAOMI

You're more like an Air Head.

The host leads them to a four-top table where LAWRENCE MARTIN
(60s, silver moose, smells of freshly printed money)
overlooks a wine menu. He sees them and rises.

HOST

Enjoy your evening.

The host leaves. Ben walks over to Lawrence and shakes his
hand.

LAWRENCE

Lawrence Martin, nice to finally
meet you.

BEN

Ben Skarsgard, the pleasure is all
mine Mr. Martin.

Naomi then steps forward and Lawrence gives her a full body
look. She reaches out her hand.

NAOMI

Naomi Johnson, Mr. Martin. Thank
you for meeting with us.

He shakes her hand and pulls her in for a kiss on the cheek,
which throws her off guard.

NAOMI

Oh! Thank you.

She blushes. Lawrence pulls her chair out for her and she
sits. Ben and Lawrence sit down.

BEN

We are excited to sit down with you
sir, HEAL is really making some
headway.

LAWRENCE

As am I. But, please, save the shop talk for after we have drinks, Mr. Skarsgard. I've only had my first glass.

He shakes his wine glass that has a few drops of Pinot Noir left in it.

BEN

Of course.

Lawrence looks for their server, raises his wine glass and shakes it indicating he'd like another.

LAWRENCE

Skarsgard you said? Swedish?

BEN

Bit of a mutt, but mostly Swedish and English.

Lawrence nods approvingly. He looks to Naomi.

LAWRENCE

And what are you?

Naomi knew this would come up, she smiles graciously.

NAOMI

I'm a little Native American, a little Irish, and a lot west African. That last one was a reaaaal surprise.

She chuckles. It takes Ben and Lawrence to get it, but then they laugh along with her.

LAWRENCE

Very good, very good. You're very pretty for a black girl.

NAOMI

Oh, um, thank you.

LAWRENCE

You know what I mean. There are some not very pretty women of color, but you, you're very pretty.

NAOMI

Thank... you.

Ben restrains laughter opting to kick her leg under the table instead. The SERVER comes over, ready to take their orders.

LAWRENCE
If you don't mind, I'm happy to
order for the table.

BEN
Be our guest, Mr. Martin.

LAWRENCE
Ben, you can call me Larry.

BEN
Alrighty. Be our guest, Larry.

LAWRENCE
Do you both eat meat?

BEN
Naomi sure does.

Under the table, she kicks him back.

LAWRENCE
Wonderful.

Lawrence turns his attention back to the server.

LAWRENCE
We'll start with the snow crab
claws and Tuna Tartare. We'll have
the rack of lamb, a New York Strip,
and the twin lobster tails. On the
side, an order of the garlic
mashed, sauteed mushrooms, and
steamed broccoli. Please

The server scribbles down quickly. Lawrence turns back to Naomi and Ben.

LAWRENCE
And what will you two be having?

He laughs too hard at his joke, they play along.

SERVER
Anything to drink for either of
you?

NAOMI
I'll try the elderflower martini,
please. Thank you.

Ben looks over the wine list, undecided. He snaps the book shut.

BEN
You know what, I'll have the same.

Naomi gives him a look.

SERVER
Excellent, I'll be right back with those. Thank you.

The server leaves.

LAWRENCE
Okay. Let's talk shop. Why do you want us and why do I want you?

NAOMI
Ms. Saw, Mr. Harvey, and Mr. Larter each come from a strong background of investment success. Their total acquired amounts from investments in the past five years alone surpass \$1.9 billion and their dedication to expand is insurmountable.

BEN
If we're being straightforward, HEAL is a mature company. You're producing sales, profits and cash flow. You don't need us, but you should have someone managing the company's growth.

LAWRENCE
I've already got a team in place.

NAOMI
Right now, it's really just you and your VP. Your company is growing at an exponential rate. Now is the time to assemble a management team to execute your business plan more efficiently. We can help you do that.

BEN
We would rather invest in a bad idea led by an accomplished team than the opposite. Lucky for you, we specialize in making good ideas come together with good teams.

Lawrence mulls this over as the server returns to fill his wine glass and drops off the martinis. They each take their glass and Lawrence raises his.

LAWRENCE
A toast to you both. You have captured my interest.

Ben and Naomi look at each other, pleased. They toast their glasses and each sip. Ben winces at his martini.

NAOMI
(talking down)
Aww, is it too strong for you?

BEN
Nope, it's just perfect. I love, elderflower.

She takes a big sip without flinching and lets the drink coat her mouth.

NAOMI
Fabulous.

They continue to talk.

INT. MASTRO'S STEAK HOUSE - LATER

Empty plates are scattered on the table. A snow crab here, a sliced cut of steak there. Ben has switched to a whiskey neat. They each look spent and full. Lawrence finishes up a joke.

LAWRENCE
So the driver looks him dead in the eye and says: "Sir your question is so easy that I'm going to let my driver answer it for me!"

The three of them break out into laughter. Ben adds a little touch by wiping away a tear with his napkin.

BEN
Larry, what a joke, what a meal, what a night. I won't be able to eat another thing for the rest of the weekend.

LAWRENCE
Great. That'll give you time to start making adjustments to HEAL's business plan.

NAOMI

Does this mean you're in?

LAWRENCE

I'm in.

He smiles as the server drops off the bill. They each go to grab it, but Lawrence prevails. He hands his AMEX over and server leaves.

LAWRENCE

I got this. If I expense it, you're still technically paying for it.

BEN

You make a fair point, we'll let you have it this time.

The server returns with the receipt. As soon as Lawrence signs and puts the card back in his wallet, he grabs his coat and stands to leave.

NAOMI

Thank you for such a wonderful evening.

LAWRENCE

Truly my pleasure.

They shake hands and he turns her hand over and pats it with his other. Ben stands to shake goodbye. With that, Lawrence leaves. Ben and Naomi sit back at the table to finish their drinks.

NAOMI

Well he was interesting.

BEN

Can people still ask you what you are?

NAOMI

No, no they cannot.

They both laugh.

BEN

That went well, good job kid. I'll text our group chat with Iyana to update her.

He pulls his phone out of his pocket, sees a text and makes a face.

NAOMI
Everything okay?

BEN
Yep. Just some... New York stuff
I'm sorting out.

Ben concentrates on texting and Naomi can't help but stare at him, seeing him in a new light. He's gone from "funny, white-boy dancing, Whiskey bar guy" to "charming, articulate, work guy."

BEN
....And sent. I am officially off
the clock. Toast to that my friend.

He raises his whiskey glass. She raises her martini glass and they cheers, sipping without breaking eye contact. A PASSERBY bumps into Naomi's chair, and she spills a bit of her martini on her shirt and gets a little splash on her face.

NAOMI (to the passerby) Excuse you!	BEN (to the passerby) Excuse you!
-------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------

Naomi dabs at her shirt, making sure it doesn't stain. Ben scootches closer and uses his napkin to dry off her cheek. He pauses before doing so, asking permission with his eyes. He gently wipes away a splash of drink, and they both get shocked.

NAOMI Eep!	BEN Oooh!
---------------	--------------

They both laugh and shake it off.

BEN
That's a good way to describe you.

NAOMI
What? Frequently spilled on.

BEN
No, electric. You've got this,
this, spark about you. It's...
intoxicating.

He moves closer to her.

NAOMI
Ben, listen. We work together now.
We should keep things, you know,
super platon.

He moves even closer.

BEN

Mmm hmm.

NAOMI

Even though women don't actually have bowel movements, I don't like to shit where I eat.

BEN

Right.

He gently moves a piece of loose hair behind her ear. He's hella close to her now. Her defense is weakening, the poor girl.

NAOMI

(scrambling)

We share an office. We can share notes, and pencils, and pens, but I think sharing beds is bad news. Sharing kisses is super bad news.

BEN

Totally.

His hand is on her thigh now. She's a goner.

NAOMI

I mean, God is always, watching.
Santa too.

BEN

Ho, ho, ho.

He puts his hand on her face, their lips are centimeters from each other.

NAOMI

I guess it's like, okay, if you spend the night. You know, in case Lawrence has any questions. Or I have questions... or you have questions.

He nods. She kisses him. It's a good, juicy, liquored-up one. He stands, pulls her chair out for her, grabs her hand and leads her out of the restaurant.

NAOMI

You're paying for the uber.

BEN
As you wish.

They leave the restaurant.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - 4AM ISH

Naomi and Ben lie in bed, recuperating. Her room looks like it smells like sweat. He faces her. He pokes her nose.

BEN
Boop.

She rolls over, facing away from him.

NAOMI
Okay, good night.

He pulls her in, making her little spoon.

BEN
Goodnight.

NAOMI
Ben? Can I ask you something?

After a moment, he whispers into her ear.

BEN
This is Dr. Frasier Crane. I'm
listening.

NAOMI
Can this be, just like a two-night
stand thing? I don't like business
and pleasure.

She turns to face him, earnestly.

BEN
That can be exactly what it is.
Never again.

She turns away again. He pulls her in close again.

NAOMI
Okay good. Never again.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - OUTSIDE HER BEDROOM DOOR

Diane has her ear to the bedroom door, in her pajamas, eating out of an ice cream carton.

DIANE
(to herself)
Ya welcome, bish.

She cackles to herself and schleps back to her bedroom.

INT. HLS OFFICE - FITNESS CENTER - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Naomi runs on the treadmill while watching CNN. Nick walks in and sees her, he jots over and starts to walk on the treadmill next to her. When she sees him, she takes off her headphones and decreases her pace.

NAOMI
(winded)
Hey you.

NICK
Morning, morning.

NAOMI
I don't usually see you here,
starting your New Years resolutions
a few months early?

NICK
Last week a button popped on my
shirt, so here I am.

NAOMI
Ha! Well, welcome. We're happy to
have you.

He increases his pace to match hers.

NICK
I heard you pulled the plug on
HEAL. With Ben.

At the mention of his name, she blushes.

NAOMI
Yeah, finalized the seed amount
last week.

NICK
I don't think I've ever seen you
blush.

NAOMI
Blushing? I'm not blushing. I just
ran six miles, I'm hella flushed
from fitness maybe.

NICK

Sure, that makes sense.

She decreases her speed to a slow walk to cool down.

NICK

I'd uh, just be careful with that guy.

NAOMI

That guy? He is dork from Connecticut with tendonitis, not a hitman.

NICK

I'm just saying. When I worked at The Post, I saw a lot of horror stories with how guys like him treated women like,

He catches himself.

NICK

Just how some macho guys can behave. All aggressive and territorial and stuff. You know?

NAOMI

He's harmless. He can barely conceal his receding hairline. Besides, nothing's going on anyway.

NICK

Okay.

There's an pause.

NAOMI

(sincere)

But thank you for the counsel, I appreciate it.

He is winded from his quick walk and slows down to barely a walk.

NICK

Don't mention it. Hey! I remember you brought up that company Bio-Fuse a little while ago. I was looking into it, and I think you're right. I would love to get some money into it.

NAOMI

Really? I brought it up to Iyana
and it was a swift decline.

NICK

Don't give up on it. You're a
shark!

NAOMI

I think Shark has a negative
connotation so... you're right.
I've had my head so far up the HEAL
ass I completely forgot about it.
We should develop a presentation
and bring it to the partners.

NICK

That's a great idea. If we can put
together a strong case, maybe
they'll let us do it. Nice, nice,
niiiiice.

She stops the treadmill and hops off, toweling down her face.

NAOMI

Let's do it after work, I'm free
today?

NICK

Deal.

NAOMI

Have a great workout, I'll see you
later!

She leaves. As soon as she's out of sight, he turns off the treadmill and chugs from his water, toweling his own sweaty face.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A) INT. NAOMI AND BEN'S OFFICE - DAY - Naomi and Ben sit at their desks researching on the computers, every so often exchanging glances and throwing things at each other.

B) INT. NICK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - Naomi and Nick take turns scribbling things down on a big whiteboard under the words "Bio-Fuse." She gets a text from her mom: "Hi!! Hope Bio Fusion is going well! I LOVE YOU!" She closes out of it and goes back to scribbling.

C) INT. HLS OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - Naomi, Ben, Nick, and other associates listen during a morning meeting. Ben stands and walks around to present their updates.

As he passes Naomi, he drops a slip of paper on the floor. She discretely picks it up, opens it and reads it: "Ass on point today." She smiles, folding it and putting it in her pocket. Nick clocks this.

D) INT. PRIVATE JET - DAY - Naomi, Ben, Lawrence and his VP, CHADWICK (Early 40s, pink faced) on a flight to New York discuss strategy as a flight attendant serves them gourmet sandwiches. Ben is texting on his phone between bites.

E) INT. MAREA SEAFOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT - Naomi, Ben, Lawrence, JEFF BEZOS, and 50 CENT, dine out together. Everyone's having a gay old time.

F) EXT. MAREA - Lawrence and others peel off in cabs as Naomi and Ben wait outside of the restaurant. When Lawrence disappears, Ben grabs Naomi's hand, pulls her in and kisses her. They walk hand-in-hand down the street alongside Central Park.

G) INT. HOTEL ROOM - MORNING - Ben rolls out of the bathroom in a towel, drying off his hair. He gets dressed, kisses Naomi on the cheek as she reads in bed and leaves, while taking a phone call. She looks to the door, pensive, then back to the book on her lap.

H) INT. JOHNSON HOME - VARIOUS
Naomi drops by home every now and then to appease her mother for events she's hosting for friends: birthday parties, bridal showers, baby showers, etc. Whenever Naomi is in the middle of something her mother drags her away to introduce her to someone and brag about her successes.

I) INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Naomi stumbles into her room, exhausted. She plops down onto her bed.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - MORNING

Nick and Naomi are looking over their presentation, ready to give it at the morning meeting.

NICK
I feel good, I feel ready.

NAOMI
Me too. We've got some hella good shit right here.

NICK
World is at our feet.

NAOMI
Well I think my feet are numb and
my shoes are filling with blood.

Nick looks at her HIGH HEELS, a signature red bottom.

NICK
Damn.

NAOMI
Damn is right. I'm gonna double
check the USB, meet you there in a
second.

She taps away at the computer as Ben glides in, with his dry-cleaned shirts. He lays them on the couch. She perks up.

NAOMI
Look what the cat dragged in.

He begins to take his shirt off and changes into the clean shirt.

BEN
Meow.

She focuses back on the computer.

BEN
You and St. Nick presenting Bio-Fuse today?

NAOMI
Be nice. And yes.

He buttons up his shirt.

NAOMI
I've never seen anyone more
obsessed with an ironed shirt.

BEN
Man's gotta look good. I'm flying
out to New York shortly.

NAOMI
Again?

BEN
Again. Walk you to the conference
room.

He pats her butt, she jumps and giggles, swatting his hand away. She ejects the USB and they walk out.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Ben takes an open seat next to Reginald and Naomi grabs a seat next to Nick.

PATRICK

(stern)

Good morning everyone, I trust you've been busy. Just some housekeeping items.

(light)

Celebrations are in order. Our flag football team qualified for the silicon recreational playoffs for the first time.

Everyone snaps.

PATRICK

So congratulations to all. The final game will be next Saturday before we take our winter holiday.

IYANA

And speaking of winter holidays, we look forward to seeing you all tomorrow night at our annual holiday party. As a reminder... it would be best if you did not overserve yourself. No one wants a repeat of last year's festivities.

People all look to BRAD (Early 30s, a burly gentleman) who looks to the floor.

REGINALD

Moving on. Does anyone have any companies they'd like us to look into.

Naomi clears her throat and stands.

NAOMI

Nick and I have something we'd like to present to the board.

Nick stands and attaches his iPad to the computer and projects their presentation on the white screen at the head of the table.

She notices that as soon as she stands, the majority of the room slump in their chairs, looking plagued by having to sit through this.

NAOMI

Iyana, I mentioned to you a few months ago my interest in a Biological tech company called Bio-Fuse that's based right out of San Francisco. Nuclear fusion may be the key to clean, endless power for everything from our cars to our apartments to an entire city. Bio-Fuse is attempting to produce such energy to harness in a safe, accessible way.

As she speaks, Nick manages the slides to coordinate with her points.

NAOMI

My interest has not waned, and in fact, since bringing it up, they've raised an impressive amount of pre-seed capital. The price-to-earnings ratio is steadily increasing and we can buy in for a nominal fee that will be sure to double in the upcoming years.

NICK

Bio-Fuse will target a large marketable chunk of business and is expected to deliver large returns to its small number of current investors.

Naomi notices the room isn't giving her their full attention.

NAOMI

(a little louder)

As you can see, we've measured, evaluated, and tried to minimize risk by examining competitive initial investments compared to what else is out there and --

Iyana stands and interrupts.

IYANA

Thank you, Naomi and Nick. This is all quite thorough. Leave the drive with my assistant and we'll look it over.

She is a little stunned to be interrupted. She looks to Nick who just shrugs. They unplug and sit back down.

PATRICK

Thank you for that. Anyone else?

Brad stands and sets up his presentation. Naomi looks disappointed.

INT. HLS OFFICE - OUTSIDE THE CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

Naomi lingers by the door talking to Nick, as people file out.

NAOMI

These shoes are cursed. I'm on teams for a bunch of other investments, I hope they let us take a stab on our own.

NICK

Don't beat yourself up, we were great. Everyone's probably just zonked out ready for eggnog and filling their children's stockings with coal. Or lighting candles for a week.

NAOMI

I guess.

NICK

Let's just leave it.

Iyana is last to leave and finally walks out.

NICK

You're not giving up on this, are you?

NAOMI

I'm not giving up on this. Shark, remember?

NICK

Negative connotation, remember?

Naomi catches up to her.

NAOMI

Iyana, hi.

IYANA

Hello. Good presentation, high quality slides.

Naomi follows her as she walks through the office.

INT. HLS OFFICE - VARIOUS

NAOMI

Really?

IYANA

Yes. You know we encourage our employees to seek outside opportunities for internal consideration.

NAOMI

So is that your blessing to move forward with an offer?

IYANA

Oh.

She stops and turns to her.

IYANA

Listen, as I've said before, I love the proactive mentality. But we won't be investing in Bio-Fuse. Now is not the time. Woman to woman, I'm on board with you, but Patrick and Reginald think our active time and money would best be spent elsewhere. It's nothing personal, of course.

NAOMI

Was it the presentation itself? We can gather more data and --

IYANA

Naomi, stick with HEAL. You're doing great.

She starts to walk away.

IYANA

Think about tomorrow, it'll be a real treat. Dancing, drinks, delicious food. Yum, yum, yum!

And with that, she turns a corner and disappears. Not the conversation she was hoping to have. She turns to walk back to her office, when Ned stops her.

NED

Naoms, we really could use you for the playoff game this weekend. You around?

NAOMI

Wish I could, but I am swamped.

NED

Yeah I hear ya. I'll see you tomorrow at the holiday dinner.

(fishing)

Bringing anyone, uh, special?

NAOMI

Yes.

He deflates.

NAOMI

My roommate.

She walks away, Ned's hope is restored.

NED

Noishe.

Naomi slumps back to her office, defeated.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE

She sits at her desk, deep in thought, staring at the empty seat in front of her. She takes her phone out of her pocket and pulls up her messages. She scrolls to her conversation with Ben. She texts him: "You back from NY yet?" And hits send. Texting bubbles appear and remain for a few seconds. Then they disappear. They appear again and he replies: "I wish." She puts her phone down and moves to her computer. She looks through a few emails to see a new one pop up from Nordstrom. Holiday Sale! The mouse hovers over the email as she thinks. She shuts down her computer, grabs her stuff, and heads out in a hurry.

CUT TO:

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Diane paints her toe nails when she hears a soft knock. She gets up to open the door and sees Naomi buried in Nordstrom bags and lets her in.

DIANE

What'd you do, rob the store?
That's not what Black Friday means.

NAOMI

Bio-Fuse got straight up rejected.
I was dropped and so I shopped.

Naomi places the bags on the floor.

DIANE

Oof, I'm sorry boo. Maybe your idea
was.... *Too good?*

NAOMI

Yeah, that must've been it.

Diane moves back to the couch to finish her nails.

DIANE

I've got some corns to file down,
then tomorrow I'll be dressed and
ready to impress.

NAOMI

Good, you'll need to work hard. I
am tryna look good.

DIANE

OoOoh for Beeeeeen?

NAOMI

For myself. But also for Ben.

She smirks.

DIANE

Can't wait to meet him and ask him
what your deal is.

NAOMI

I'll kill you. But after you find
out. I don't have an answer but I
can't just ask him that.

DIANE

I was put on this earth to DTR.

NAOMI
(puzzled)
What's DTR?

DIANE
HUH? Define The Relationship.
That's been in Urban Dictionary
since 2003. Damn.

Diane rolls her eyes.

NAOMI
Whatever. Anyway, I worked up a
sweat. STMN?

Diane's turn to be puzzled.

NAOMI
(smart ass)
Shower then movie night.

DIANE
Ugh. Yes. Go wash that funk-ass!

Naomi slips into her room, Diane yells to her from the couch.

DIANE
Don't forget in between the cheeks.
(sotto)
They love in between the cheeks.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - THE NEXT NIGHT

Diane, dressed in a mock neck green velvet dress, taps her heeled foot, checking her phone.

DIANE
Bitch! Our uber's here, get that
funk ass out here.

Naomi's bedroom door slowly enters and she emerges looking like a stunna. She wears a bodycon, navy long sleeved, backless DRESS. She wears large diamond studs in her ears. Diane is in awe.

DIANE
I am in awe. You look, very, wow.

Naomi does a full spin.

NAOMI
Yeah?

DIANE
Yeah. Very sensual.

Her phone starts to buzz.

DIANE
Okay Cinderella, we gotta boogie.

They exit the apartment.

INT. UBER

Naomi and Diane sit in the back of their uber.

DIANE
So what can I ask him?

NAOMI
Where he's from, where he lives,
end of list.

DIANE
A few amendments: if he's into
marriage, how many kids he wants,
is he Jewish. End of my list.

Naomi rolls her eyes but can't help but laugh. Diane gives her arm a squeeze.

DIANE
Thanks for the invite, I'm excited
to be real black up in thur.

EXT. OPAL VENUE/ EVENT SPACE, MOUNTAIN VIEW

Their uber pulls up outside of a somewhat rundown two-story building. Naomi opens the door and they get out, a little surprised.

DIANE
Uh, I thought your bosses were
like, hella rich. This is some poor
people shit.

Naomi rolls her eyes and pulls her inside.

INT. OPAL VENUE/ EVENT SPACE

While eating their words, they enter to see a beautifully renovated space decorated with an elegant and cheerful holiday flare.

Lights strung from the ceiling, a dance floor with a chandelier above it, leather booths surrounding a fully stocked bar -- they have done quite a nice job.

NAOMI

...You were saying?

They walk in and look for a table.

DIANE

I'm so proud of you boo. You got yourself this kickass job, you're working with impressive clientele, and I'm finally about to meet your slam piece. This is the best day of MY life.

NAOMI

Okay, okay, save a little of your energy, open bar's open all night.

Naomi twirls Diane, who bumps into Nick on his way over to greet them. She spills his drink on him. He's in a tux and the boy cleans up nice. Good for him.

NICK

Oh, sorry!

DIANE

Oh, sorry!

At first he doesn't see Naomi.

DIANE

No no, all me dude. I bumped into you, thanks to this bitch.

Nick sees Naomi. His tongue practically falls out of his mouth.

NICK

Wow. Hi.

He moves closer to her, they hug.

NICK

I didn't recognize you, you look, um --

Diane reads the room, albeit incorrectly.

DIANE

She looks *banging'*. Like, the kind you bang for life, as a result of marriage and everlasting love.

Naomi elbows her.

NAOMI

You look very handsome. Diane, this
is--

Nick's gaze moves beyond Naomi to someone waving to him in the distance.

NICK

Shit, sorry. I gotta go intervene,
Eli is trying to see how long he
can hit on Whitney before she slaps
him. I'll talk to you guys later.

He hesitates before pecking her on the cheek and jogs to the other side of the room. Diane shakes her head as she purses her lips

DIANE

Honkey. Town. USA. Ben seems nice,
don't think he was picking up what
I was puttin' down but --

NAOMI

Oh, that's not Ben. That was Nick.

DIANE

Furreal? Whomever he is, he is in
love with you. I don't even know
what words were exchanged, I was so
distracted by the sound of his
raging boner ripping through his
tuxedo pants calling out for you.

NAOMI

What is wrong with you? We're
friends. Besides, I think he knows
what's up with me.

Diane impersonates a boner trying to rip out of tux pants

DIANE

(grizzled voice)

Naomi! I'm Nick's boner! Please,
touch me! Please, please, I need
your sweet womanly touch. I'm sick,
I have Jungle Fever!

Naomi shakes her head in disgust.

NAOMI

Mmm, you nasty. Let's go find a
table.

Naomi walks away, Diane follows her.

DIANE
(grizzled voice)
Okay, I'm coming. Heh heh.

INT. OPAL - LATER

Naomi and Diane sit with Eli, Daniel, Whitney, and Nick at a table as they listen to people give speeches at the front of the space. There's an empty seat next to Naomi, she looks at it with a worried look. Nick clocks it. Diane leans in to whisper.

DIANE
Yo, where's your fool? The pervert
in me is getting antsy and ready to
bounce.

Naomi pulls out her phone and texts Eli: "Where's Ben?" Eli takes out his phone, reads his text and replies: "On his way. Later flight from NY." She fails at trying to conceal a little smile. She tucks her phone away and pretends to listen to Patrick speak. After a few moments of his droning, Naomi perks up at the sound of a door opening. She stealthily turns around to see Ben entering. He stops to fix his cuff link. Boy looks GOOD all dressed up. Her heart flutters. She leans in to Diane.

NAOMI
Six o'clock behind me, that's him.

Naomi faces forwards as Diane pretends to yawn and stretch and turns to look at him. She sees Ben and she's impressed. She's about to say something to Naomi when the door opens again and a WOMAN (early 20s, Caucasian, legs for days, makes Karlie Kloss look like Iggy Pop) sneaks in behind him. She grabs his hand. Diane stinks up her nose, turns forward and leans in to Naomi.

DIANE
Who dat?

Naomi turns around. She sees this beautiful couple make their way into the room trying to find seats. A fire burns in her stomach that slowly makes its way to her neck and eventually to her eyes, something Ben notices when they finally make eye contact. He kisses the woman on the cheek and excuses himself outside, gesturing she meet him out there.

NAOMI
(to Diane)
Excuse me.

DIANE
Need me to hold your earrings?

Naomi gets up and power walks outside after Ben. Diane finishes her cocktail and then takes a big gulp of Naomi's wine from her glass.

DIANE
Shit.

EXT. OPAL - BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Ben nervously smokes a cigarette outside, awaiting his scolding. Naomi enters in a flash behind a door flown open.

BEN
You look very pretty.

NAOMI
What the fuck?

BEN
Okay, I--

NAOMI
What the actual fuck, Ben? Do you have a girlfriend? Don't fucking lie, I will jam this heel into your throat without hesitation.

BEN
(meek)
Yes.

She interrupts explanation.

NAOMI
Did you have a girlfriend the whole time we've been whatevering?

BEN
...Yes, but hear me out.

She paces madly.

NAOMI
The nonfiction bullshit you're about to spew better be Pulitzer level good.

BEN

Look, I'm sorry I didn't say anything. She insisted on coming. I didn't invite her, Susan wanted to--

NAOMI

SUSAN? What kind of dumb, sickly thin, physically breathtaking person is named Susan?

BEN

I'm just not sure I'm in love with her. Still. Being around you is really confusing.

NAOMI

Being around me is "really confusing." It's not like you're a closeted gay man and I'm the handsome stranger that moves into your parents' villa for the summer. There's nothing "confusing" about this. You lied to me--

BEN

(standing up for himself)
Hey, I never lied to you. You never asked me if I was dating anyone.

NAOMI

That is some real bullshit and you lied by keeping it from me.

BEN

Did you ever ask if I was dating anyone?

Okay, so she didn't but like, come on.

NAOMI

No, but I didn't think I had to.

She takes a big breath, collecting herself.

NAOMI

What's her deal?

BEN

We've been doing long distance while she was in New York.

NAOMI

She currently lives in New York?

She thinks for a second, doing the math.

NAOMI

Did you see her when we were there?

BEN

Yes.

NAOMI

Amazing.

She's at a loss for words. Her disintegrating affection for him and her biting hatred for him are at war with the unfathomable sadness she didn't prepare for. She digs deep to find the right thing to say.

NAOMI

You know what, you're right. I never asked you, so let me ask you now.

(flippant)

Hey Ben, I really like working with you and think you're super smart. Before we do anything that might complicate my personal and professional life, are you in a relationship with anyone?

He takes a drag from the cigarette and looks to the ground.

NAOMI

I'm doing what I should've done months ago, because I guess I had to. I didn't hear an answer. So, let me ask you again. Hey Ben. Are you. In. A relationship. With anyone?

He avoids eye contact.

BEN

Yes.

NAOMI

Great, good to know. See that wasn't so hard, was it? 'Ppreciate the honesty. Let's not fuck anymore, k?

Pissed, she turns on her heel and grabs the door handle. There's one more thing bothering her. She doesn't turn around to face him.

NAOMI

How long?

He debates answering it or not.

BEN

Six years. She's moving here.

She laughs loudly, opening the door, tossing back her hair for emotional strength and disappears inside.

INT. OPAL VENUE - TABLE

Diane arm wrestles with Daniel, it's even. With one gentle inhale, she immediately knocks his arm over crushing him. The table cheers.

DIANE

Make an app out of that! Suckaaaaa!

She spots Naomi angrily rushing over to her. She grabs both their purses and gets up to meet her. They meet in the middle of the bar.

DIANE

Fuck boi?

NAOMI

Fuck boi.

DIANE

C'mon boo, let's get you home.

Naomi nods her head. Any more dialogue and she'll burst into tears. Diane wraps her coat around her and they walk out together. Diane quickly calls an uber. As they pass the bar, Diane grabs two bottles of Veuve unnoticed and they walk out.

INT. UBER - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Diane and Naomi get into the car. Naomi sits, strong.

DIANE

Listen, Nay.

Naomi shushes her. Diane grabs her hand and they ride in silence.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - A FEW WEEKS LATER - EVENING

Naomi types away on her computer, thankful that the rest of the office has been empty. She checks her phone for the time, it switches to 6:00PM and she gets a reminder for 6:30PM: "Dinner with POS and Lawrence." She groans.

NAOMI

(psyching herself up)

It's just a check in dinner with a client and world's biggest dick hole. Has he spent more than two minutes in this office since the betrayal unfolded and exploded? No! Is he avoiding you? Who cares! Hopefully yes! You are better than him. This job means everything to you. You have taken a few weeks to mourn and move on. Other women have been through worse: Beyonce, Oprah, Harriet Tubman. Game face on.

There's a soft knock on the door.

NAOMI

(sotto)

Fuck!

(aloud)

Yes, proceed entry.

Ben's adulterating head pops in.

BEN

Mind if I come in real quick?

NAOMI

(cold)

It's your office too.

She turns to face her computer, pretending to do work. He enters, sheepishly, with his dry cleaning on a hanger. Per usual, he lays it on the couch.

BEN

Not for long, I asked to move to the one down the hall.

She looks over to him. She still has feelings but he's a dick, so this is a real "Sophie's Choice" of emotions.

NAOMI

You didn't have to do that. I hate you, but I'm not a savage. You can use your office.

He laughs.

BEN

Look, I'm sorry, I really am. I've got to figure out my own stuff, but in the mean time, I don't want to screw up HEAL. We're going to be working together and I'll do whatever you want to make this easier for you.

NAOMI

You could walk in front of a high speed train?

He stares at her.

NAOMI

We're both adults, I can be... civil.

BEN

I'll call the uber for dinner, is that a good start?

NAOMI

Uber black.

BEN

Uber black it is.

He requests a car on his phone. She turns off her computer and they walk out together.

INT. SUSHI RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ben and Naomi are joined by Lawrence at dinner. They're finishing up.

NAOMI

Well... we wanted to save the other news for last.

Naomi and Ben look at each other, Lawrence is concerned.

BEN

Typically at this stage in a high-growth segment, a lot of the companies we work with struggle to deliver a product.

A look of worry falls on Lawrence's face.

NAOMI

But HEAL is putting out high dividends for a company as young as it is AND we're on track for FDA approval within the next year.

Lawrence raises his glass.

LAWRENCE

Wonderful news! You had me worried for a second, I felt my heart stalling. It's all thanks to you both, you two make a great team. I'm happy to report this back to my team.

He looks to Naomi and smiles, appreciative. They all toast. Lawrence stands.

LAWRENCE

Excuse me, need to go to the little boys room.

He leaves for the bathroom.

NAOMI

I hate when adults say that, it's like, why? Just say bathroom.

Ben looks over at her, a serious look on his face.

NAOMI

What? Do I have caviar in my teeth? I told myself not to get it, this always happens when I get caviar.

She begins sucking at her teeth and moving her tongue around looking for loose caviar.

BEN

No, no. You're fine. You're really just, incredible. I swear, he only meets with us so he can talk to you.

She can sense where this is going and tries to shake it off.

NAOMI

Yeah yeah, old news, loser.

He scoots in closer and puts his hand on her thigh.

BEN

I can't blame him though...

She looks down at his hand, stunned. She pushes it off him.

NAOMI
Are you fucking kidding?

BEN
I can't help it. You look
incredible, I can't take my eyes
off you.

NAOMI
Hey, how's Susan?

This shuts him up. She takes the napkin off her lap, and slams it on the table.

NAOMI
You've lost your damned mind. Tell
Lawrence I said goodnight.

In a huff, she's gone, leaving Ben by himself, humiliated.

INT. HLS OFFICE - FITNESS CENTER - MORNING

Naomi walks in, ready to sweat. She gets on the treadmill, puts in her headphones, and pulls up some articles to read on her iPad. She cranks the mph UP and starts running. After a few minutes, she looks up from her iPad and sees Nick. She takes one ear bud out.

NAOMI
Morning.

NICK
Damn, I have seen you here at the
crack of dawn every morning.

NAOMI
I don't do well with down time.

She slows her pace.

NAOMI
What's up?

NICK
He hands her a NEWSPAPER with a
page dog-eared.

She takes the newspaper and reads the article. Her eyes go WIDE. She reads it aloud.

NAOMI

"Here's why Bio-Fuse IPO rumors are intensifying" You've got to be shitting me.

NICK

Keep going.

NAOMI

"Citing anonymous sources, the *Wall Street Journal* alleges Bio-Fuse is aimed to hit the stock market as early as February. Thanks to key investments from firms and deep funds from advertising, Bio-Fuse is growing quickly with sales to hit \$275 million this year" I'm going to pass out.

She stops the machine all together and chugs water.

NICK

I know, what could have been.

NAOMI

Fuck. Why did you show me that, to torture me?

NICK

As a reminder... if things get a little, I don't know rough, just remember your instincts are usually right. Go with them.

NAOMI

Well that's ominously wise.

He shrugs.

NICK

We'll get the next one. I'll see you later.

He walks off. Naomi cranks the speed backs up and hauls ass until her heart is about to explode. She pushes the stop button hard and takes a minute to rest and think. She towels herself off and hops off the machine and heads to the locker room.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

Naomi jogs into the office, late for the meeting. She shakes out her freshly showered hair and puts it into a bun. One of the INTERNS knocks.

NAOMI

Yes?

The intern sheepishly walks in.

INTERN

I have Mr. Skarsgard's dry
cleaning.

NAOMI

Ugh, why haven't you left yet?!
(to the intern)
Sorry, you can throw it on the
couch, thanks.

The intern places it delicately on the couch and leaves. Naomi angrily stares at it before "accidentally" picking it up and dropping it on the floor a couple times. She throws it back on the couch and leaves for the meeting.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Naomi sneaks into the back row of the conference room, a few minutes late for the meeting.

REGINALD

My assistant will send out data on the latest investments to all, so look out for that this afternoon. In other news, late last night HLS made an offer on a rising company that's poised to go public in the next coming months. We had to put up a royal fight, but we were able to come in at a competitive price. Ben and Whitney will be the key links between us and emerging environmental company, Bio-Fuse.

The room applauds softly. Naomi stops wringing out her hair. Did she hear that right? She looks at Nick, who shrugs.

IYANA

Okay, that's it for today. I feel these meetings are getting shorter and shorter!

IYANA (CONT'D)
Thank you all, and look out for
that e-mail later today.

Everyone gets up to go back to their desks. Naomi marches right up to Iyana.

NAOMI
Iyana, why did we invest in Bio-Fuse?

IYANA
Yes, I felt you'd have some feelings on this. Ben brought it to our attention and his argument was valid. Excellent question, love it.

She sidesteps Naomi, but she stops her.

NAOMI
But I initially suggested this company months ago and last week presented it and was shut down. Now you're doing it when it is four times more expensive? And someone else is getting to manage it?

IYANA
What do you want me to tell you? Some times these things happen. You should thank Ben for bringing it back to our attention, perhaps he'll let you join.

She sidesteps again and this time makes her way out of the room. Nick tries to intervene.

NICK
Let it go. She's right, sometimes shit just happens. But again, it means we're thinking the right way.

NAOMI
"Shit" just seems to happen to me lately.

She marches over to Ben.

NAOMI
You stole our company.

He shushes her, looking around trying to quiet her.

BEN

Don't be ridiculous. I didn't "steal" your company. It's not yours to steal, and you didn't keep up with it.

He tries to get by her, she walks along with him.

NAOMI

You knew how much time I had invested in this and you just swooped in and repeated what we said.

BEN

Well, I must've said it in a better more compelling way.

He leaves the conferences room, she grabs her bag and catches up to him.

INT. HALLWAY

She walks alongside him.

NAOMI

Don't give me that, I deserve a little bit better, surely you can agree to that.

BEN

Don't call me surely.

NAOMI

Now isn't a good time to try out your bad comedy routine.

He walks to the doorway of a small office, she follows him in.

BEN

You have great instincts, you should trust them. Then you would've kept up with it.

NAOMI

As history would show us, it would argue the opposite and tell me regardless of my instincts, I make bad decisions.

He enters into his office, again she follows him.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BEN

I've got a lot of work to do, so if you could continue whining somewhere else that'd be really nice of you.

NAOMI

I'm serious, this is poor workmanship. The least you could do is apologize.

Ben plops down at his desk and thinks for a moment. He looks at her sincerely.

BEN

Naomi, I think you're being a little hysterical.

At the mention of THAT word, she goes off.

NAOMI

Be a dick all you want but at the end of the day know I am better than you and in time that will come to fruition.

He's agitated now. He folds his hands in front of him on his desk.

BEN

Sure. Listen, I have work to do and this is no longer fun for me, so if you're not going to blow me or something, then get out of my office.

He turns to tap on his computer. Naomi's mouth hangs open.

BEN

I'll take that as a yes.

He smugly unzips his pants.

NAOMI

What. A. Mistake.

BEN

Hey man, if you weren't so willing to fuck me, it never would've happened.

NAOMI

If I weren't so fucking stupid, it never would've happened. What a colossal waste of time.

She storms out to her office.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE

She slams her door behind her, pacing angrily.

NAOMI

You've got be fucking kidding me, prematurely ejaculating piece of shit.

Her phone vibrates and her mom calls her, she answers.

INT. JOHNSON HOME- KITCHEN

Patricia, wearing a punny apron, walks around the kitchen checking various foods in their cooking stages.

INTERCUT BETWEEN NAOMI AND PATRICIA:

NAOMI

Mom, now's not a good time. Can I call you back?

PATRICIA

You can call me tonight, or tomorrow morning, or tomorrow afternoon. You know what, tomorrow night works too.

NAOMI

Sure.

Patricia pauses her fiddling and changes her demeanor.

PATRICIA

Nay, is everything okay?

NAOMI

Mom, if I'm having... trouble with a co-worker do you think I should speak to someone about it? I don't want to make things weird, but --

PATRICIA

If you think it can be resolved
properly between you and this other
person, try that first honey.

Naomi paces and stops in front of Ben's shirts.

NAOMI

Good idea, Mom. Thanks. I'll call
you, eventually.

PATRICIA

Eventually? But--

Naomi hangs up on her. She shrugs and goes back to her cooking.

END PHONE CONVERSATION

Naomi carefully takes a shirt out of Ben's dry cleaning and walks back over to her desk. She digs in her purse for a BRIGHT RED LIPSTICK. She applies a thick coat and smacks her lips a couple times. She gently kisses the inside of the shirt's collar. She goes back to her purse and pulls out a small bottle of PERFUME. She dabs a little on the inside of her left wrist and smudges it on the collar, chest, and abdomen parts of the shirt. She smiles wickedly as she carefully puts it with the other shirts. There's a knock on her door. She scurries back to her desk and sits in her chair.

NAOMI

Come in!

The intern comes back in and walks to the dry cleaning.

INTERN

Mr. Skarsgard has relocated
offices.

NAOMI

Great.

INTERN

So I'm taking them...

NAOMI

Have at it.

The intern grabs the clothes, Naomi smiles sweetly at her. When she leaves, she's finally left in peace. The day has taken a real turn for the worse. She takes a big breath and decides to get back to work.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - LATER THAT WEEK

Naomi's in her office reading articles online while on the phone with another investment of hers.

NAOMI

Frank, that's music to my ears.
Good news I needed to hear. We'll
send a diagnostic out this week.

She stands up to stretch and walk around. She looks at her watch, almost lunch time!

NAOMI

Sounds good, I'll give you a call
in a few weeks. Take care.

She hands up. She walks around her office, bored and opens her door. She takes a peep outside and everyone else working. She walks down the hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - VARIOUS

She browses past people's offices to kill time. She comes upon Ben's office and debates whether to walk by it or not, in case the door is open. She slowly creeps past it just as the door opens she quickly turns on her heel and power walks away turning a corner and hiding. She pops her head out and sees Iyana leaving Ben's office. He looks worse for wear. She gives him a pat on the back and walks away. She goes back to her office.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE.

She walks back into her office and quickly shuts the door. There's a knock.

NAOMI

(paranoid)

Who is it?

BEN

....It's Ben, can I come in?

She slowly opens the door.

NAOMI

What do you want?

He pushes his way in and closes the door behind him. He sits on her couch.

BEN

I spoke to Iyana and.... I'd like
you to join Bio-Fuse, if you'd
like.

NAOMI

Why?

BEN

You were right. You brought it to
my attention and you should be
included in it.

She's suspicious.

NAOMI

What about Nick?

BEN

Just you.

She thinks.

BEN

I've got a dinner scheduled tonight
with one of the cofounders, I'd
love it if you would come.

NAOMI

Really?

BEN

Yes.

He stands and moves towards the door.

BEN

8:30PM at Rouge, reservation under
my name.

He leaves. She's still suspicious, but dances a little to
celebrate.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - 7:45PM

Sitting at her desk, she anxiously taps her foot under her
desk continuously checking the time on her phone. She puts on
a layer of her red lipstick. She gathers all her information
on Bio-Fuse, looks it over one more time and then leaves the
office.

EXT. ROUGE - 8:10

Rouge, a red bricked classic french restaurant, is romantically lit with dim white string lights that hang from the outdoor patio. Naomi gets out of her uber and walks into the restaurant.

INT. ROUGE - SAME

She walks up to the HOSTESS, looking for Ben.

NAOMI

Hi I'm here for a reservation under Ben Skarsgard. For 3, I think? It's for 8:30.

She checks the time on the phone.

NAOMI

I am a bit early so I can wait by the bar or--

The hostess searches through her iPad.

HOSTESS

(British)

I'm not seeing a reservation. Could it be under a different name?

Naomi thinks. Was he fucking with her?

NAOMI

Maybe under Naomi Johnson?

She continues looking.

HOSTESS

No, I don't have anything under that either.

Naomi strains to look in the restaurant to see if he's in there.

NAOMI

Do you have anything under Ben?

The hostess scrolls and stops.

HOSTESS

I have a Ben for party of two--

Naomi rolls her eyes.

HOSTESS

But they've been seated. And that reservation was for 7:00.

It hits her, that stupid fuck. A quiet rage pulses through her veins.

NAOMI

I see. Thank you.

As she's about to turn and leave, she bumps into Ben and ASHLEY (early 40s) the Bio-Fuse cofounder.

BEN

(only she can hear)

Oops. Guess I forgot to tell you the dinner got moved up.

ASHLEY

Miss Johnson? Were you supposed to join us for dinner?

BEN

She was, but I think it's clear she's got enough on her plate right now. Don't worry about it.

Ben turns to Ashley, blocking Naomi from her view.

BEN

Ashley, I'll meet you outside in just a second.

She nods and exits the restaurant.

NAOMI

You're a piece of work.

BEN

You're one to talk. The lipstick in the collar was a nice touch Naomi, a bit beneath you I thought.

NAOMI

Not sure what you're referring to.

BEN

She almost ended it, it was close. I hope you're happy.

NAOMI

Being the lead manager for Bio-Fuse would've made me happy, but this feels like a small win.

BEN

Yeah well that's not going to
happen now. Have a great night and
fuck you.

He turns to leave.

NAOMI

(sotto)

You wish.

He heard that and turns back. For the first time, his face looks genuinely cold. Naomi takes a hard look at it. His eyes are puffy as if he'd been sleeping. He looks tired and worn out. This cheers her up a bit.

BEN

(cold)

There was never a world in which we
would've been together, and I feel
bad for you that you thought that.
You were something to do. Besides,
I don't date black women.

With that, he walks out on her. Of all the shit that's happened so far, this one hurts the most. An ice pick has been jammed into her heart and she feels it. She stares, watching as he walks off with Ashley.

INT. HLS OFFICE - FITNESS CENTER - THE NEXT MORNING

Naomi hauls ass on the treadmill, running off her frustration. She keeps replaying the events of the last few months: the affair with Ben, Bio-Fuse, the embarrassing dinner the night prior, etc. She increases the mph, practically stomping on the machine.

NAOMI

Did I try to solve the problem
myself? Yes. I used soft tones and
kind words.

She increases the speed a little more. She is sprinting.

NAOMI

Did it solve anything?

She continues running.

NAOMI

....Did it solve anything?

She hits the stop button and stomps off the machine grabbing her towel and water bottle and marches out of the fitness center.

INT. HLS OFFICE - VARIOUS

She marches through the hallways, on a mission. We think she's going to Ben's office but she walks right past it into -

INT. IYANA'S OFFICE AREA

She walks up to her ASSISTANT's desk.

NAOMI

I need to speak to Iyana.

The assistant looks up at her, unsure how to handle. She picks up her headset, turns away from Naomi and speaks into the headset quietly.

ASSISTANT

Iyana, I have--

She turns back around.

ASSISTANT

What's your name?

NAOMI

Naomi.

ASSISTANT

I have Naomi here for you.

She listens to the response, the assistant turns back to her.

ASSISTANT

You can go in.

Naomi barges into Iyana's office.

INT. IYANA'S OFFICE

Iyana sits comfortably at her wrap-around desk. She's shocked at Naomi's sweaty appearance.

IYANA

Oh dear, are the showers in the fitness center broken?

NAOMI

No. I'm here to talk about Ben.

IYANA

Ah yes, proceed.

NAOMI

He invited me the Bio-Fuse client meeting and intentionally told me the incorrect time so that I would show up late.

IYANA

That doesn't seem like Ben, are you sure you heard him correctly? Perhaps you wrote the wrong time down.

NAOMI

That is not something I do, I don't "write the wrong time" down. He did it intentionally. We have a strained relationship and this was retaliation.

IYANA

Naomi, the allegations you're making against Ben, someone who is only known for his exemplary work ethic, are worrisome and carry weight.

Naomi starts to back down.

NAOMI

I don't mean to start anything, but this isn't the first instance of hostility. He's made *comments* to me that have made me uncomfortable, if I'm being honest.

IYANA

What do you propose we do?

NAOMI

I.... I don't know. I don't want to cause trouble or start office gossip, I just would like this to be figured out.

IYANA

It's not really my place to act as moderator, so whatever happened between the two of you, I think it might be best if you sort it out. Just the two of you.

NAOMI

There's no one to help figure it out, we don't even have a human resources department. You're supposed to be my resource. If I need to speak to Reginald or Patrick then--

Iyana stands.

IYANA

No need for that. I'll discuss with them internally and we will....take care of it. Okay?

Naomi sighs relief.

NAOMI

Yes, thank you.

INT. HLS OFFICE - HALLWAY

She walks past Ben's office, his door is closed. She smiles to herself, finally a win.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM- LATER THAT WEEK

Naomi shuffles into the morning meeting and sits next to Nick. Per usual, Reginald starts it with updates on the company.

REGINALD

We'll be taking our winter recess this weekend. I hope you all get some much needed rest and relaxation. A few end of the year notes...

He puts on his reading glasses and looks over a piece of paper.

REGINALD

Of our junior associates this year, Naomi, Nick, and Whitney were routed on the highest number of companies with the greatest amount of return. Excellent job, you three.

The room politely claps, Naomi beams. This was a fun surprise.

REGINALD

In sadder news, because I love to sandwich news, we are pulling out of our agreement with ReNu along with seven other companies, which will be finalized later this week. Returns are not what were anticipated. And the final good news is--

Naomi is texting Diane to tell her the good news.

NAOMI (TEXT)

Guess whose gurl had one of the highest returns this year.

Text bubbles appear, Diane responds.

DIANE (TEXT)

MY GURL *poop emoji* *thumbs up emoji*

She smiles and continues texting.

REGINALD

After reviewing his work in New York and his continued success here in California, Iyana, Patrick and I are happy to promote Ben Skarsgard to partner.

Naomi looks up.

NAOMI

What?!

Meaning to say that to herself, she accidentally blurts it out, loudly, to everyone. They all turn to look at her.

NAOMI

Sorry.

Reginald continues.

REGINALD

Congratulations Ben, who is en route from New York but he has been notified. That's all, enjoy your holidays and we'll see you in the new year.

Everyone stands and exits. Iyana tries to quickly slip out, Naomi follows her.

INT. HALLWAY - VARIOUS

She chases after her.

NAOMI

Iyana.

She sighs audibly and turns around.

IYANA

Yes, Naomi? I've got a conference call to dial in to.

NAOMI

You made him a *partner*? Is that what you meant when you said you were taking care of it .

IYANA

Look, Ben has done very well and we thought it was best to reward him for such. Your notification was recorded and we have re-assigned his HEAL responsibilities solely to you. I believe you have dinner with Mr. Martin tonight, you can tell him then. Win win.

She turns back around and walks away.

NAOMI

Iyana, wait!

This time, she doesn't bother turning around and continues walking away.

IYANA

Win. Win.

INT. MASTRO'S STEAK HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Naomi sits a table for two, fidgeting. Lawrence appears, she stands and they shake hands. They sit.

LAWRENCE

And Mr. Skarsgard will not be joining us tonight, is that correct?

NAOMI

Yes, that's right. And from here on out, it'll be just you and me working together. Ben's workload has shifted, but you're in good hands with me. Don't worry.

She smiles sweetly. Lawrence smiles as well, interest peaked.

LAWRENCE

Interesting, well goodbye and best to him.

NAOMI

I went ahead and ordered our usual drinks, if that's okay. Whiskey neat for you?

LAWRENCE

That's exactly right. Clever girl.

Her hand rests on the table and he pats it. This has never happened. She doesn't want to be offend, so she just lets him rest his hand on hers. When the waiter comes over, she takes that time to point something out on the menu, freeing her hand from his grasp.

NAOMI

What is a "local sand dab"?

SERVER

It's a whitefish.

NAOMI

Ah, just wondering. Thanks.

The server leaves, Lawrence turns his attention back to Naomi.

NAOMI

So how is the management team doing? I'm continuing to watch HEAL grow, and I'm impressed at the rate of retention.

LAWRENCE

Yes, all is well. You've done a great job navigating direction. You work long hours, must be hard on your boyfriend.

NAOMI

Um, yes long hours, no boyfriend. But let's talk about some goals you have for the upcoming fiscal year.

She takes a big gulp of her water.

LAWRENCE

Well one thing I'd like in the new year is to get to know you better, since we'll be working so closely.

NAOMI

I think we know each other plenty.

LAWRENCE

Do you date white men? I've dated some young women of color in my day, before I was married of course.

He laughs to himself and points to the wedding ring on his left hand. She's unsure how to answer. The room's temperature seems to be steadily increasing.

NAOMI

Uh, well, I don't really have time to date right now so my type is... no one? How long have you and your wife been married? A lasting, faithful love like that is rare. And beautiful.

LAWRENCE

Twenty years.

She breathes, hoping to have ideally moved the conversation away from herself. He inches his chair closer to hers. He moves his left hand from the top of the table to underneath it. Onto her thigh. Instinctively, she jumps up bumping the table and making a commotion in the restaurant.

NAOMI

Mr. Martin, what are you doing?

LAWRENCE

Come on, Naomi. Let's not make a scene.

LAWRENCE (CONT'D)

We can continue discussions back at
my hotel if that's preferred.

She puts her napkin on the table.

NAOMI

I don't think so. I think we should
call it a night and perhaps re-
think the representative
arrangement in the new year.

She grabs her purse. He scoffs, standing as well.

LAWRENCE

You're really a tease you know
that, sending mixed signals,
dressing like that, wanting to work
with me alone. It was not like this
in my day.

She's confused, she hasn't behaved in that manner at all.

NAOMI

I'm dressing how my firm has asked
me to.

LAWRENCE

I bet no one else looks like you in
a skirt like that.

He pulls out his wallet and throws cash onto the table.

LAWRENCE

(unbelievable)

You're not as easy as Ben had
suggested.

He turns and leaves. Naomi fights back tears, she finally
cracks.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Diane sits on the couch eating cupcakes, watching TV. Naomi
comes bursting in, still teary-eyed. Diane doesn't look away.

DIANE

So they all just hung out at a bar
every night? I don't get it.

Naomi rushes into her room and closes the door.

DIANE
(looking up)
Woman?

NAOMI O.S.
I'm fine, just, uh food poisoning.

DIANE
Nasty!

She goes back to watching TV.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - SAME

She has collapsed onto her bed and weeps softly, feeling confused and violated.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING, 7:00AM

Naomi lies awake having barely slept the night before. Her "workout" alarm goes off, but she hits the snooze and rolls over.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - 8:30AM

Naomi rolls over again, checking the time on her phone. She forces herself out of bed to get dressed.

NAOMI
You can make it through the day.
Beyonce. Oprah. Harriet Tubman.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

She sits at her desk, barely functioning but trying to fill her body with caffeine. There's a soft knock on the door.

NAOMI
Come in.

Iyana enters and closes the door behind her. Naomi attempts to perk up hoping for some good news.

IYANA
Good morning, Naomi.

NAOMI
Morning. I was actually planning on stopping by this morning to talk to you.

IYANA

Yes, well. You seem to be under the weather lately. I don't know what your home and personal life are like, but some have noticed inconsistencies and it's taking its toll on you here at work.

NAOMI

Who has complained?

IYANA

I didn't say complain. I've discussed it with others, we think you work so hard, you deserve a little break. After the winter holiday, take a few extra... weeks to yourself. We'll let you know when to come in.

NAOMI

What about my companies?

Iyana doesn't dance around it.

IYANA

We've assigned your co-workers to help with the workload.

NAOMI

Am I being.... Fired? I didn't do anything wrong.

IYANA

No of course not, we're not firing you. We just think you deserve a break. Don't worry about a thing.

NAOMI

How can you say that? I have an excel sheet with the work that I've brought in, including the profits and revenues that no other junior associate can compete with .

IYANA

It's not about numbers.

NAOMI

Then what is it about? Tell me.
Woman to Woman.

IYANA

(snapping)

I got you in the door, didn't I? I personally recruited you and put your name on a highly competitive list of applicants. I gave you lead on a company. It's not my

(searching for the word)

Job to hold your hand. Again, it's nothing personal. I just don't think... you fit in with everyone else. But if opportunities elsewhere present themselves, it's good to have options. Have a nice holiday.

She turns and leaves. Naomi lets it sink in before grabbing her bag and walking out her office, turning off the light and closing the door.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

She walks out of her office, trying to keep it all together and her head high. She passes by Nick, who motions to come talk to her. She shakes her head 'no' and continues walking, right out the front door.

EXT. HLS OFFICE

Stonefaced, she continues walking to her car, her face incapable of registering emotion. As she gets to her car, she quickly unlocks it and gets inside.

INT. CAR - SAME

She locks the door, puts her seatbelt on and starts crying.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Naomi lies in bed. She hears Diane approach her door, and she lingers outside of it. Her shadow moves and a NOTE slips underneath the door crack. Naomi turns to her door and reads the note which says "This Too Shall Pass. Fuckers!" She appreciates the sentiment, but is still upset. She rolls over.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

She's still in bed, wrapped in covers. She looks at her phone, only a few texts from Nick. She doesn't feel like reading them. She clicks her phone off and rolls back under her sheets.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING.

Naomi lies awake on her back. She hears the front door open and can hear Diane rummaging around. Once again she hears Diane stand outside her door and again, she slips another note under the door. This one says: "Chinese in the fridge for you. Fuck them but love you." She reads it and goes back to sleep.

INT. NAOMI'S BEDROOM - LATE EVENING

It's now 11:45PM. She sits up in her bed and checks her phone. She has some missed texts from her mom and reads the first one.

PATRICIA (TEXT)
Saw this and thought of you! LOL!

She scrolls down to see her mother has sent her a picture of melted ice cream on the ground that has formed a smiley face. She thinks for a moment and dials her mom.

NAOMI
...Mom?

There's a pause.

PATRICIA O.C.
I'm on my way.

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Patricia, dressed in pajamas and looking very comfy, takes a whistling tea kettle off the stove. She's REAL Midwestern and still retains her accent and upbeat vibe.

PATRICIA
I knew it, I got this sixth sense
that told me you were in trouble
and as soon as you called me, I
just knew. Call it mother's
intuition.

She pours two cups of tea and brings them to Naomi, who slumps on the couch. She sits and sips.

PATRICIA

So let me make sure I have my ducks in a row. First you're canoodling with this boy, then you find out he was two timin' ya, then he says some provocative things at work, STEALS your idea from you--

NAOMI

I mean, he didn't "steal" it, the nature of the job is monitoring and upkeep for external entities.

She looks at her, steely-eyed.

PATRICIA

So he STEALS your idea from you, you report him to that self-interested money monster, and then that old crab ASSAULTS you at dinner---

NAOMI

He didn't assault me, he just innocently put his hand on my thigh.

PATRICIA

Naomi Johnson, nothing is ever innocent for people in power when they abuse it. You need to speak up when wrongdoings are being done.

NAOMI

I don't want to cause trouble for anyone.

PATRICIA

Imagine where we'd be if Rosa Louise McCauley Parks didn't say nothin' because she didn't want to "cause trouble for anyone."

Naomi looks away, hiding rolled eyes.

PATRICIA

Do you know where we'd be? The back of the bus, that's where.

Diane claps from inside of her room. Naomi sighs loudly.

PATRICIA

As I was sayin', so they put you
on some kinda administrative leave,
and you're home doing nothing, all
those genius Johnson cells of yours
going to waste.

She tuts.

PATRICIA

Jerks, they are.

NAOMI

...Okay, when you put it that way.

PATRICIA

Any way you put it sweetheart,
that's how it is. Let me tell you
somethin'.

She puts her cup on a coaster on the coffee table and turns to Naomi. She grabs her hands.

PATRICIA

Some times, not everything is fair
to women, to people of color and
you bet your black bottom to women
of color in particular.

DIANE O.S.

PREACH MAMA J. Preach.

Patricia looks to Diane's closed door, and shakes her head.

PATRICIA

She is so loud, that one.
(back to her point)
You know what the hardest part of
being one of the top cardiologists
in California is?

NAOMI

....Daily heart break?

Patricia hits her with a pillow.

PATRICIA

Don't be cute. The hardest part is
doing it when you're a black woman.

The conversation takes a turn for the serious, Naomi sits up and gives her mother her full attention.

PATRICIA

When I started my residency, I was competing with a bunch of richos who came from prominent families in the medical community. For a lot of them, I was the first woman of color to be in the OR. For the first couple of years, I got mistaken for the god damn nurses. I'm pretty sure it was intentional after a while, to break my spirit. Though I love the nurses I work with, that's not my job.

NAOMI

What did you do about it?

PATRICIA

I did my damn job and I did it well. The guys I worked with always tried to find some reason to leave me out. I was intelligent, articulate, and not to toot my own horn, but I was pretty darn cute. I was something they didn't understand and for a lot of people, it's threatening and scary to work with what someone or something that is not what you assume it to be.

NAOMI

But that wasn't your fault.

PATRICIA

And it's not yours, sweetheart. They expected me to talk a certain way, or dress a certain way, or a "diversity hire" because of the color my skin and I blew those jerks out of the water. I finished top of my residency class and was offered positions at

(numbers off on her hands)
The Mayo Clinic. Cleveland Clinic.
Johns Hopkins. UCLA. Northwestern.
The list goes on. I was a hot item, let me tell you.

NAOMI

I didn't know that.

PATRICIA

It's not important. What's important is that some people just want to bring you down, but you have to keep your head up, kick ass and move on. Take the time you need for this rigmarole absence and plan out your next step. No one is making you stay, but if you leave, you make sure they all know why. This job is only your first and it's not forever.

NAOMI

It's starting to look more like, never. I still don't have a return date.

PATRICIA

Who cares. As long as you've got a fire in your belly, you'll survive. I didn't single-handedly raise you to be a quitter.

NAOMI

So what am I supposed to do, file a lawsuit?

PATRICIA

Not necessarily. Bad behavior can't be condoned, just make your voice heard. Speak up! Who knows what might spark from it.

Naomi smiles, and hugs her mom. She pats her sweetly.

PATRICIA

I love you.

NAOMI

I love you.

PATRICIA

That being said, honey, I think you oughta shower. Things are ripe.

Naomi pulls out of the hug and looks at her mom, who shrugs.

PATRICIA

Just being honest. As your mom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NAOMI'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - A WEEK LATER

Naomi, looking a little more lively, sits in a mess of paper print outs with her laptop open. There's a knock at the door. She gets up to open the door, Nick walks in, holding a Banker's Box. He takes in the apartment.

NICK

Nice place.

NAOMI

Thank you for coming over. I'm glad you like my cave of shame. Can I get you something to eat?

NICK

I'm good, thanks.

He brings the boxes over to the living room floor and they sit on the couch and go through it.

NAOMI

So what's it like?

NICK

A little dramatic. People are up in arms about Ben's promotion and as a side note, people are asking what's going on with you and no one's getting answers.

NAOMI

I like being the office mystery.
How are you?

NICK

I think being miserable is apart of adulthood, and I've accepted it. I don't think I'm cut out for the VC life.

She puts her fist out and he fist bumps her.

NICK

What a nostalgic gesture.

NAOMI

What can I say, I like oldies.

NICK

You're really something else.

NAOMI

What do you mean?

NICK
(fumferring)

I mean, it's just, you're something else as in, not like everyone else, which sounds really basic, which you're definitely not.

He stops himself.

NICK
...Oldies are good. I strictly watch TV shows from the 90s. This is real dorky but, find me a show as good as "Friends", or better yet "Frasier", and I'll show you a happy man.

This grabs her attention.

NAOMI
You... watch Frasier?

NICK
Oh I love it. Martin reminds me of my dad. Eddy reminds me of my mom.

She smiles, is Nick.... hot now?

NICK
Anyway, the other reason I came over.

He pulls papers and files from the Banker's Box.

NICK
I brought everything on your desk and even, wait for it---

He excitedly pulls out a USB from his coat pocket and hands it to her.

NICK
I was able to snag documents detailing all the work you've brought in the for the company.

NAOMI
WHAT? That's amazing!! How?

NICK
When you're a loser at a big company, people forget you exist. You can just walk into their office anytime you want.

She's stunned.

NICK
(confessing)
.... It also helps if you stay
until 10PM at night, bribe the
janitor to keep quiet, and work at
a place with minimal security.

NAOMI
Still impressed. Let's see what
we've got. I'm "back at work" on
Monday but it looks like I'm being
completely cut out. Read this.

She hands her phone to Nick, who reads an email.

NICK
"Hi Naomi, thanks for reaching out
and Happy New Year to you too. I've
been told that Eli will be taking
over the account. Sorry you're
moving on, but pleasure working
with you!" Brutal.

She shrugs.

NICK
Don't be down about it.

NAOMI
Oh, I'm not. I have an idea, but I
need to be officially terminated.

NICK
Is that something that just
happens?

NAOMI
We'll find out, won't we?

She leans forward, sparking a match and lighting a candle.

NAOMI
You still got some friends from
your previous life?

She smiles, wickedly. He doesn't get it juuuust yet.

INT. HLS OFFICE - HALLWAY - MONDAY MORNING

Naomi, dressed in normal upscale business attire, walks
through the office hoping to maintain normalcy.

She holds her head up confidently. As if instructed to do so, people avoid her gaze as they see her approaching. Sharon walks towards her but as she sees Naomi, she immediately and obviously turns around. Naomi laser-focuses on her and paces up to catch up to her.

NAOMI

Sharon, just the woman I was looking for.

Sharon, caught, spins around hoping to make the interaction quick.

NAOMI

How's it going? I feel like we haven't talked in ages. You good?

SHARON

(tense)

Yes, very good. Things are good. I should go, I've got a flight out later and --

NAOMI

I know you're busy. After all, you overtook not one, not two, but three of my companies. Just wanted to say hi and check in.

SHARON

That's nice of you. Yes, very busy with those. Sorry about that by the way, you know how these things go.

NAOMI

(rattling it off)

Sure! Anyway, I also wanted to tell you one other thing. In the *Cheers* finale, Rebecca marries the plumber, Frasier moves back to Seattle, Woody gets elected as a city councilman, Norm is given a job by Woody, Cliff is promoted to Postal Assistant and last but not least, Diane comes back after six years of separation from Sam, they get engaged but mutually break it off because the bar is Sam's one true love.

Sharon looks like Hillary Clinton on November 8th, 2016.

SHARON
(angrily)
We were on episode three!!!!

NAOMI
Yeah, life sucks sometimes.

Sharon angrily storms away.

NAOMI
(realizing)
That felt good.

She thinks for a second. She spots Eli standing outside his desk. She walks over to him.

INT. OUTSIDE ELI'S OFFICE

Eli speaks quietly on his cell with a client. Naomi marches up to him and smacks the phone out of his hands.

ELI
What the hell, I was on a call!

NAOMI
Obviously. First things first, I
was not a diversity hire.

She looks around. Everyone's white, she might've been.

NAOMI
On second thought, I *might've* been
but who cares. I have a higher IQ
and lower cholesterol than you.
More importantly, Ohio State is a
stupid school and Ohio is a stupid
state. It's the "Florida of the
North", the belly button of this
country, and a breeding ground for
serial killers.

He looks stunned. She feels even better. She walks back to
her office.

ELI
(yelling, hurt)
It's The Ohio State! THE!

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Naomi, feet up on her desk, picks at her teeth as MOVERS
carry out the couch in her office. She looks at her clock.

NAOMI
(to the movers)
3PM, that's a wrap for me, am I
right guys? More important things
to do.

She stands and leaves her office.

CUT TO:

EXT. STARBUCKS

Naomi enters and joins a MYSTERY WOMAN for coffee, who wears slacks and a button down shirt. They talk.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - TUESDAY MORNING

Naomi wears a napkin bib as she eats a full rack of ribs at her desk. She blasts the musical stylings of Drake from her computer, but her door is closed. She pauses it, then glances at her door, thinking.

INT. OUTSIDE OF NAOMI'S OFFICE - SAME

She pops her head out and looks amongst the office.

NAOMI
HEY! Anyone have a problem with
Drake?

Everyone looks at her like she's crazy. We now see her full outfit. Today she's wearing jeans, a T-shirt, and a blazer that's two sizes too big for her. No one responds to her.

NAOMI
Cool, me too. That's what I
figured.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE.

Leaving the door open, she walks back to her desk. After licking her fingers clean from leftover BBQ sauce, she unpauses the music and blasts it, making its way into the hallway.

EXT. HLS OFFICE - EARLY EVENING.

Naomi walks out for the day, waving loudly to co-workers. They ignore her. As she walks to her car, she spots Ned.

She waves to him, hoping his crush on her would allow him to be polite enough to wave back. He does not. She shakes her head and pops her trunk. She eyes something we don't see.

NAOMI
(to Ned)
Hey Ned!

He looks her way.

NAOMI
Forgot to return this. Catch.

She steps out from her popped trunk and we see a football in her hand. She takes a step forward and launches it at him. We watches it as it spirals perfectly at him. He dodges it and it hits his car, setting the car alarm off. She shrugs.

NAOMI
Oops!

She gets a call from someone. She answers.

NAOMI
Hello, this is Naomi.

A beat.

NAOMI
Yes, hi! Nick said you'd be calling. I'm about to get in my car and then we can discuss a little more. Give me one second.

She unlocks her car and gets in.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - WEDNESDAY MORNING

The partners and associates sit in the middle of the meeting as Iyana talks.

IYANA
Projects for early stage companies will be in by end of the week.

Naomi bursts in the door, this time wearing a graphic T shirt that says "I Met God, She's Black", leggins, gym shoes, and her hair is in a messy bun. She squeezes by people, excusing herself. She sits next to Ben, making him make room for her.

NAOMI
Sorry I'm late, had some pipe problems if ya know what I mean.

She points obviously to her lower intestines. People grimace.

INT. OUTSIDE OF NAOMI'S OFFICE - THURSDAY MORNING

Iyana walks out of her office, fanning the air.

INT. NAOMI'S OFFICE - SAME

Naomi, sitting at her desk, puts her bare feet up on her desk, and her hands behind her head. Today she's wearing a full grey sweat suit with the hood up.

NAOMI

(shouting to Iyana)

Thanks for the boot! Gonna miss you
babe. Good talk!

She gets a text from Nick saying: "Made my calls, send to me when you're done!" She takes her feet off the desk, puts on her flip flops, and walks out of the office.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THAT EVENING

Diane chomps away at Chinese food, looking over Naomi's shoulder as she types something on her laptop.

DIANE

Yes, yes, I love it, I die for it.

Naomi shushes her. She types a few more things, skims it and then theatrically clicks on her laptop. We hear the familiar "SWOOSH" of an email being sent.

INT. IYANA'S OFFICE - A COUPLE DAYS LATER

Iyana doodles on a ruled notepad as she listens to a conference call on speaker phone.

ASSISTANT O.C.

You can't go in there, she's on a
call.

Naomi bursts into the office. Iyana immediately returns to the call.

IYANA

Excuse me a moment, I will dial
back in.

She ends the call.

IYANA

Naomi, I think our severance package was more than fair. You can't just barge into people's offices.

NAOMI

Right right.

IYANA

Look, I'm sorry things didn't work out but I hope, on your final day, we can terminate the relationship on positive terms.

Naomi nods.

NAOMI

Cool cool cool. Just wanted to give you a lil heads up, there's an interesting article in the "Times" this morning. You know how to read right?

A look of sincere dread takes over Iyana's face. She immediately begins typing away on her computer.

NAOMI

Woman to woman, I think I did a good job, but who knows. I'm not sure I "fit in" as a journalist either, but we'll see! Okey dokey, have a nice day.

She confidently strides out as Iyana's office phone and cell blow ups calls and texts..

INT. HLS OFFICE - VARIOUS

Naomi coolly walks through the office one last time. People are scrambling to read the article. We hear an excerpt in her VO.

NAOMI VO

I would like to thank the New York Times for letting me write this as a guest editor. The world of Venture Capitalist is largely about your social networks. Are you likable, do people want to do business with you, are you easy to be around?

NAOMI VO (CONT'D)

Sure it matters if you have good taste and a strong work ethic, but at the end of a day, it's about your relationships with people. I worked at a company with no infrastructure to report the sexual harassment I received from a co-worker who was promoted over me along with other qualified junior associates. Speaking of, hey Ben! How's Susan?

Ben reads the article online. He's mortified. We see he gets a phone call that he debates answering.

NAOMI VO

When I reported his behavior, I was told it would be handled. The only thing that was handled, was me at a dinner I had with a cofounder because that same co-worker told him I was easy. Instead of trying to help me or make my life easier, I was put on leave and slowly ousted from all of the companies I was on a team for, with more than half of them bringing in the highest revenue of any other associates.

EXT. HLS OFFICE

She walks to her car.

NAOMI VO

I ignored the disparaging comments on my race, hoping to put it behind me. I quietly complained about the harassment and retaliation, not wanting to cause trouble. I am not opting to personally press charges, my time is far better spent than in arbitration. But I am speaking up. I hope to bring to light my experience and encourage others to come forward with theirs. I was recently reminded that in order to start a fire, all you need is a spark to get it going. Let the other sparks speak up and let's burn it to the ground.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - A FEW MONTHS LATER

Naomi takes over a table with her laptop open; websites like LinkedIn and Monster are open, and pamphlets from companies are spread out. There's an open seat next to her, with a coffee at it. She reads a NEWSPAPER intently, she puts it down and smiles. We see a glimpse of a headline "HARASSMENT IN THE VALLEY." Nick comes shuffling in, he drops his bag down beside her. He kisses her on the cheek and then one by one plops a different NEWSPAPER in front of her. Each with headlines like "CRISIS KEEPS GETTING WORSE", "WOMEN OF SEXUAL ASSAULT", and "THE VERDICT ON WOMEN IN TECH." She gets a text from her mom with LINKS to other articles, followed by five FIRE EMOJIS. She shakes her head and puts her phone down. Nick sits across from her, they cheers their lattes, and each sip, about to start reading.

FADE OUT.