

*Branded*

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# Branded

a love story

by T J Edwards

## Character Breakdown

Doug Wilson	male, late-30s to 40s, lead works for a PR disaster firm
Jenny Bell	female, around 40, very funny, lead afflicted with a deadly disease, SIRAD
Fleet Bell	male, 17, skinny and kind son of Jenny, also has SIRAD
Al Chase	male, 50s: hard, tough & funny runs a PR disaster firm

SCENE ONE

SETTING: Office of AL CHASE. Day.

AT RISE: AL CHASE works at his desk. There is a knock on the door.

DOUG. ( *knocking* ) Al?

AL. Dougie, Dougie, come on in.

DOUG. You, ah . . .

AL. Come on in. Be right with you. Go ahead, sit down.

DOUG. Right.

AL. Go ahead. Just finishing up.

( *Doug sits. Al speed dials his phone; it's answered.* )

AL. "Eugene? Al—. No, it wasn't gas. *Chemicals*. So the government angle is out . . . Well, a couple of things that shouldn't have been stored together *were*. The fire's under control but the place is like a freakin' mushroom cloud . . . Ten-thousand people. So first you donate three million to the Red Crescent—get good word out before the press tears you up . . . How soon you get back to me? . . . Hey, this is what you *pay* me for. *Three million*. Got your back. Right." ( *hangs up, pause* ) Bad. Bad, bad, bad . . .

DOUG. That was the fire? I heard it on the news.

AL. Whole freakin' town.

DOUG. Ten-thousand people?

AL. Maybe twenty-five. We're trying to keep the numbers down. At this point, who really knows how many people live in a garbage dump like that. Third-world shanty. Now a living hell—*literally*. But—hey—bad stuff happens. If it didn't, how would we get paid?

DOUG. Right.

AL. Sometimes I love this job and sometimes . . . One more sec. ( *into intercom* ) April, push my lunch back an hour. If he can't, tell the A-hole the deal's off. ( *intercom off* ) Well, anyway, *Dougie* . . .

DOUG. Yes.

AL. Look, I called you to say, just wanted to tell you, I think you did a bang-up job with that nasal decongestant thing.

DOUG. Thanks.

AL. Busted your butt on it, didn't you? I know you did. Word gets out.

DOUG. Well, I did.

AL. I appreciate that. How much you think they'll now make—or not lose—since their sales can continue?

DOUG. Well . . .

AL. Multiples of seven-figures. You paid my rent on that and I am thanking you.

DOUG. That's what I'm here for.

AL. *Exactly* what you're here for. Yes. *(smiles)* You know, you are turning into my medical guy and fast. You're ambitious, aren't you?

DOUG. I don't know.

AL. No false modesty. I'm gettin' the itchy you're after Carol's job.

DOUG. Carol? No.

AL. You don't want Carol's job?

DOUG. Ah . . .

AL. There's a pause before you answer.

DOUG. Al, I'm only here to serve the firm.

AL. *Ha ha, ha. Serve the firm.* Nobody wants to admit they'll reach for the brass ring. You think I'd be sitting here, with this view, with an attitude like that? No way. But the point is . . . you may get Carol's job. Or someone else may.

DOUG. Is she leaving?

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AL. Yes.

DOUG. When?

AL. Haven't decided.

DOUG. By her choice?

AL. Haven't decided, see?

DOUG. Oh. Why?

AL. Let's not go into it. Personalities. You know, Accountability. *Relationships*. But let's not go into it. I only called you here to feel you out about it.

DOUG. I'm . . . I could do that job.

AL. Good. I just wanted to stick my finger in the pot, you know? And if you do get it, you'll prove me right, huh?

DOUG. Of course.

AL. Good. Here's your next project. This is no simple nasal nostril thing. This is so big I can't trust Carol with it. Read the file. At your desk. Pharma, Dougie. Big money. Fix this problem and there's plenty goodies in your sock. And do not show this to Carol. Do not even talk to her about it.

DOUG. When she asks what—

AL. Tell her your finishing up that nasal thing. Carol's out on this. Show me you're ambitious. You show me that?

DOUG. I'll prove it.

AL. No doubts ever crossed my mind. You make the head of this Pharma company look good—any way you can.

DOUG. Okay.

AL. Great. Doug, pull the door shut behind you.

END OF ONE

## SCENE TWO

SETTING: A bare hospital office. Day.

AT RISE: DOUG is working over a desk. JENNY BELL enters.

DOUG. Oh, hello. Please, come on in. I so appreciate the time you're taking for this. (*looks at clipboard*) You're Jenny, I hope?

JENNY. No, I'm not.

DOUG. No?

JENNY. I'm not Jenny I-hope, I'm Jenny Bell. Get it? I hope. Bell. My name.

DOUG. *Ohhh.* Good one.

JENNY. Humor is what I do.

DOUG. Great. Well, Ms. Bell, have a seat.

JENNY. Cozy spot. Cheery as a mausoleum. Love the tile. Has the feel of a crypt. A joke.

DOUG. Oh, you're fast.

JENNY. Fast, funny and infected.

DOUG. Well, I guess these rooms are so bare because doctors use them as temporary offices. They're easy to sterilize. All they have to do is wipe them down—. Oh, I didn't mean . . .

JENNY. No, no, don't worry, I'm used to it. Everywhere I go they swab the seats with rubbing alcohol. Put gasmasks on children when I pass by. Doctors come in with bottles of Purell strapped to their hips like six-shooters..

DOUG. Sorry, I didn't . . .

JENNY. What's your name?

DOUG. Doug. Uh, Wilson.

JENNY. Listen, Doug—*Uh*—Wilson. Do me a favor? Don't look at me like I'm something out of *Night of the Living Dead*, nor talk like I only understand mono-syllabic words. I can reason out really

big words, like *communicable* and *pleuritic*. So just explain why I'm here and let's get on with our day. You're with Futo-Pharma, right? And you've got your little survey about my treatment? So get to it. I've got a sick boy at home and would really love to get back to him.

DOUG. ( *pause* ) Sure. Well, Ms. Bell, you're right and you're wrong. I *am* with Futo-Pharma, but the reason you're here is not for a survey about your treatment. I've had a chance to look over your results and I see you're doing very well. Which is why your doctors recommended you.

JENNY. For?

DOUG. I contacted your doctors for a list of patients receiving Felton-409. We think we might have breakthrough here. I mean, you yourself have gone from a pretty serious condition to some rather remarkable results. So there's a possibility the FDA could fast-track this. If that happens, we'd like a few testimonials ready. I'm here to see if you'd consider that. How you were *before* and how you are *now*. And it'll be paid. And if the FDA fast-tracks this, a few of the testimonials might be used to introduce others to Felton-409.

JENNY. Like a training film?

DOUG. Just a statement about your experience. If it gets wider usage, you'll be paid for that, too. We're only looking for a few people who've had success with the drug to look into a camera and talk. And for that we'll give you \$250.

JENNY. I talk to a camera. You give me \$250.

DOUG. Right. Doesn't sound hard, does it?

JENNY. Well, Doug—*Uh*—Wilson, . . . get your little camera and checkbook ready. Let's get that bad boy rolling.

END OF TWO

### SCENE THREE

SETTING: Jenny's home. Day.

AT RISE: JENNY walks in the door. Her son, FLEET, lays on a sofa.

FLEET. You're late. I'm hungry.

JENNY. No energy to put something in the microwave?

FLEET. I thought you were bringing home chicken.

JENNY. I haven't been able to eat chicken, remember?

FLEET. I meant for me.

JENNY. You want me to walk into one of those horrible free-standing poultry outfits, with that racist Southern Colonel, and gird myself from an odiferous onslaught from which I can't eat particular proteins while on my miracle drug, and all that is okay with you?

FLEET. God, you're dramatic. It's just chicken, mom.

JENNY. It's not just chicken. They torture us with those odors. Hook us by the nose.

FLEET. Isn't that what's supposed to happen when you're a kid? You're supposed to get hooked on things. Everybody else does. What do I get hooked on? Tablets. Thrilling.

JENNY. I got you a sub sandwich. (*hands to him*) Chicken. *Not deep fried*. Chicken breast. God, what do they do with the rest of the chicken? I know wings are slopped down by Neanderthals on Monday nights in sports bars, but where do the *thighs* go?

FLEET. Ground into wieners for inner city black kids. How can anybody eat something called a *wiener*?

JENNY. Potato chips. I'm not heartless. How do you feel?

FLEET. Sick. As always. Sick like crap.

JENNY. At least you're hungry. That's a good sign.

FLEET. I've been looking at pictures from the liberation of Buchenwald to put me in touch with my physical kin.

JENNY. Don't joke like that.

FLEET. You're the only one who can joke like that?

JENNY. Stop me if I joke like that.

FLEET. "It's a great day for a Subway."

JENNY. I talked to the doctors again. They're writing letters.

FLEET. They're *thinking* about writing letters. All doctors lie.

JENNY. They don't let juveniles go on trials until all the results come in for people like me.

FLEET. Here's an expression I love: "Whatever happened to my youth?" People don't usually ask that while still in their youth, but now that's the *only* question I ask. Did you hear about the new blog out there called, "The Fault Is In Our Stars"? Only kids are on it. It's for all these kids who get sick and had nothing to do with it.

JENNY. You're implying *I* had something to do with it?

FLEET. Forget it. If you upset me, I won't be able to eat.

JENNY. I'm upsetting *you*? I'm a victim here, too, buddy boy.

FLEET. At least you had choices. Of the man you'd marry.

JENNY. You are not feeling well. That's why you're trying to make me feel worse than I already do.

FLEET. But you're better, I'm not.

JENNY. You are going to get better! *Listen*, this damn thing is working and it's only a matter of time before they give it to you.

FLEET. Promises. Didn't you tell me by the time I'm sixteen I'd be the king of the prom? *Prom*. I can't even drag myself to school.

JENNY. If you're trying to give me a breakdown, it's working.

FLEET. Sorry, I feel horrible. Look at this skin. I'm like some scrawny little chicken who's been plucked and ready for the pot. I'm hungry, but I can't eat. Weird.

JENNY. I love you.

- FLEET. I love you.
- JENNY. Ready for the bad news? We've got to move.
- FLEET. Great. Where now?
- JENNY. A new complex. It's supposed to be—
- FLEET. Don't say it. I love cinderblock. Beige or blue?
- JENNY. We knew the rules. Hey, a hundred years ago—
- FLEET. —A hundred years ago, we'd be dead.
- JENNY. Right. Can't you see the silver lining?
- FLEET. So let's sing a Shirley Temple song. (*making a song up*)  
"There's always a silver lining when you're nearly dead . . ."
- JENNY. Cut it out. Enough.
- FLEET. "Always a silver lining when you can't get out of bed . . .  
No matter the disease, just get down on your knees . . ."
- (*The telephone rings. Jenny goes to get it, interrupting him.*)
- JENNY. That's not funny, *stop*. (*answering phone*) "Hello . . . Yes.  
Doug—*Uh*—Wilson, of course I remember . . . Good news? What?  
It did? . . . Sure . . . See you then."
- (*Jenny hangs up the phone.*)
- FLEET. What was that?
- JENNY. My testimonial. He said it went well. Silver lining.
- FLEET. Yeah?
- JENNY. They want to see me.
- FLEET. You're on a roll.
- JENNY. You're gonna be on a roll, too, buddy-boy. Very soon.
- FLEET. Mom, can you take this away? I feel kind of nauseous.

END OF THREE

SCENE FOUR

SETTING: An office. Day.  
AT RISE: JENNY, with DOUG, appears before AL CHASE.

DOUG. Here she is.

AL. Here she is. Here she is. The Little Lady.

JENNY. That's no lady, that's my patient.

AL. Huh?

JENNY. A joke. Little Lady.

AL. *Ohhh.* The old Henny Youngman gag. Wow. You are fast.

JENNY. Fast, funny and infected.

AL. Yeah. Ha. Well, *Jenny Bell*. I'm Al Chase, I run things here. I asked Doug to give me a little introduction.

JENNY. Pleasure. (*after waiting*) So what's up?

AL. *You* are what's up, Little Lady. I mean, *Jenny Bell*. Our client is—well, I'm here to say our client is digging you.

JENNY. Your client?

AL. Futo-pharma. Your testimonial blew their shorts off.

JENNY. Ouch.

AL. No, I mean I was at the practice round before they presented to the government. *Sobs*, lady. They had to keep running out for more boxes of Kleenex.

JENNY. I guess crying is good? And blown shorts good?

AL. In our business: called The Brass Ring.

JENNY. Who knew?

AL. So they want to squeeze you into their FDA presentation. And, best case, this goes full bore in weeks. And they want us—because we handle their account—to line up marketing so *Crimsalus* shoots out of the gates like holy blazes.

JENNY. *Crimsalus*?

AL. Your drug.

JENNY. You mean Felton-409?

AL. Oh, now it's called *Crimsalus*.

DOUG. The guy who designed the drug was Seymour Felton. And this was the company's 409<sup>th</sup> patent. So, Felton-409.

AL. But try marketing that. Too close to Formula 409. That'd be like, "Hey, you got SIRAD, drink this degreaser!" (*laughs*)

JENNY. Yeah, pour me a quart! *Ha, ha, ha.*

AL. So everything's lined up. Now we want to shoot tape, get things rolling. Doug has the contracts. These Pharma commercials can be big, sweet money.

JENNY. Hey, call me Sugar Pie.

AL. Are you SAG? Screen Actors Guild?

JENNY. Huh? Oh. No.

DOUG. I'll get that done.

AL. Great. Oh, and the CEO of Futo-Pharma wants to thank you. What's your cell number?

JENNY. Oh, we, ah, cut back. Cell phones. You know, too much . . . *noise* these days.

AL. You might like to get used to noise. Could be a lot of noise.

JENNY. I'll get one. I, I can get used to noise.

AL. Get her a phone, Doug. Jack wants to talk to her. You like musicals? 'Cause it's almost time to sing: "I'm in the money." Ha!

JENNY. I love musicals.

AL. Trust Doug. He is very close to being our medical guy now.

DOUG. *Al . . .*

AL. You found her, Douglas. And you hit this baby out of the park. We need to find you a room with a view. Boom!

END OF FOUR

## SCENE FIVE

SETTING: A soundstage.

AT RISE: JENNY faces the audience as if shooting a commercial.  
DOUG is there, listening.

JENNY. “The impact on my family was . . . devastating. Where do you turn when you start losing family members? My husband . . . *left us* . . . And my greatest fear, with a young son, was that I would be next . . .”

( *Doug steps in to interrupt* )

DOUG. Try it with your son *first*. Good hook at the beginning of this kind of thing. But that’s great. Spontaneous. It’s very . . . *real*.

JENNY. (*she starts again*) “I have a young son, and any mother’s greatest fear is leaving them alone in the world. He’d lost his father. I was next. See, SIRAD is a disease . . .

(*Doug steps in.*)

DOUG. Don’t mention the disease. They’ll figure it out. We’re here to do good for Futo-Pharma. Big picture. We’ll put a tag on at the end. But that’s a great beginning.

JENNY. Nothing about SIRAD?

DOUG. Leave it off. But mention *Crimsalus*.

JENNY. O . . . kay.

DOUG. Keep it real.

JENNY. (*begins*) “When you have a family, like I have a young son, what you fear most is leaving them behind with no one to care for them. He’d lost his father already. And I was close to dying, like millions of others . . . Then a kind of miracle happened . . . *Crimsalus*. I got so much better that I got a second life. And so my son got a second life. We are all, because of this one drug, *alive*. And it’s the good people at Futo-Pharma who did it. Futo-Pharma: they’re not about saving a life, they’re about saving families.”

(*She stops and looks at Doug, who has a big lump in his throat.*)

JENNY. Well?

DOUG. (*pulling himself together*) Good. Really good. Let's get in a studio. We got one here. But keep this messy. Don't set it. Keep it real. But that is very, very good.

END OF FIVE

## SCENE SIX

SETTING: Jenny's home.

AT RISE: JENNY enters. FLEET is on the sofa.

JENNY. I-phones!

FLEET. What?

JENNY. I-phones! *Unlimited everything*. Fleet, you cannot believe it. This guy walks into a closet and there are these boxes and boxes of I-phones. He pulls out one and hands it to me, so I think—seeing this wall of I-phones—and ask, “Can I have one more?” He smiles and says, “You sure two is enough?” I wanted to kiss him!

FLEET. *Wow . . .*

JENNY. And we pay *nothing*. Data, internet, everything. The *money*, Fleet, the *money* these people have, is *sick*. I don't mean sick like us, I mean—

FLEET. Holy crap. An I-phone. Wahoo!

JENNY. Everything! Unlimited!

FLEET. Wahoo! Wahoo!

JENNY. Okay, I'm going to send you something—but I don't know how they work! *How do I text, how do I text . . . ?*

FLEET. I am so cool, I am so cool, I am the coolest cool of cool!

JENNY. I was talking to a guy during the shoot, and it was *good*, Fleet, they were digging it—just me talking to a camera. And they had this director there, and that Doug Wilson, and this guy in the studio told me that we shot four commercials, and that *just for that* I'd get a thousand dollars per commercial! But wait—*listen*—because if the commercials get on TV, people can make a-hundred thousand dollars *per commercial*—if it plays all over the country. Can you imagine! We'd be able to get a place. *Hundreds of thousands of dollars*. And we would not have to be shoved into this Medicaid crap building and have to have handouts and move every time some agency runs out of money. We would be able to afford our own place! I could decorate. All this, all over. And have I-phones on top of it! You hear this?

*(By the time Jenny stops, she sees Fleet unconscious.)*

JENNY. Fleet. Fleet. Honey. Honey. You with me? Honey. Come on. Don't do this. Goddamit. Goddamit. Right when everything is going so great. Honey! (*dials 911*) Come on, answer. (*they answer*) "I need an ambulance, please."

END OF SIX

## SCENE SEVEN

SETTING: A hospital room.

AT RISE: FLEET is in a hospital bed, unconscious. JENNY is next to him, trying to text, without success. DOUG is about to enter.

JENNY. Who invented these? You need the fingers of elves.

DOUG. (*entering*) Hi.

JENNY. Oh. Hi.

DOUG. Got your text.

JENNY. You and half the city. They license people to operate heavy machinery. (*holds up phone*) Might be considered.

DOUG. How is he?

JENNY. Not what I'd call a positive development.

DOUG. How are you able to . . . ?

JENNY. To keep a jolly disposition? Experience. But an experience I wish on no one. Know that Smokey Robinson song, *Tears of a Clown*? When there's no one around? . . . And you get cried out.

DOUG. Can I . . . ?

JENNY. Get close to him? Doug, SIRAD is a *blood borne* disease. You could kiss him and you'd be fine.

DOUG. I didn't mean me. I didn't want to make *him* sicker.

JENNY. Oh. Thank you. It's fine.

DOUG. Sweet face.

JENNY. If you had that much morphine in you, you'd look sweet, too. Give me some of that sweet stuff.

DOUG. I called Al. He said that he's—

JENNY. You should call *Jack*, head of Futo-Pharma. Got to be some way to smuggle out some *Crimsalus*. I have large pockets!

DOUG. They can't—

JENNY. Oh, *I know*. All these freaking rules. We've obviously got a drug here that works, but still they make me travel every day to a clinic, dispense me the pill, and sit there while watching me wash it down. I can't steal any!

DOUG. Everybody's doing their best.

JENNY. No, Doug, everybody is not doing their best. They're doing what *they're told*. If you had SIRID and watched your husband die, and almost died yourself, and had to look at your child like this, you'd realize not everyone is doing their best.

DOUG. Sorry.

JENNY. Why take it out on you? Nice guy . . .

DOUG. Well, I'm here for you. If there's anything—

JENNY. *Pray*. There are no atheists in foxholes. Even this atheist. Pray for *Crimsalus*. (*beat*) And, anyway, why did they *call* it *Crimsalus*?

DOUG. Well, the marketing department—

JENNY.     *Marketing?*

DOUG.     Drugs have to sound appealing. The goal is to get people to take them. Look at *Boneva*: strengthens bones in women. So you put *Bone* in the first part and—

JENNY.     And *Eva* on the second. Latin for *Eve*. Take *Bone-Eva* and you'll get the strong bones of our first woman. Gimme that!

DOUG.     *Crimsalus* was chosen by the marketing department. They put *crimson*—the color of blood—with *salus*, Latin for health.

JENNY.     I feel better just saying it: *Crimsalus*. But poor Seymour Felton. I want to meet him, thank him, and try to get him to bootleg me some of that bathtub 409.

DOUG.     Just so you know, *Crimsalus* hasn't worked for everybody.

JENNY.     Doug, the alternative is death. There is no cure.

DOUG.     Yet.

JENNY.     There is this remarkable correlation between people without problems and optimism.

DOUG.     Maybe they don't have problems because they *have* optimism.

JENNY.     Metaphysical voodoo. We did nothing and got sick.

DOUG.     Somebody did. This is not an airborne infection. It's not genetic.

JENNY.     We don't need to go there now, okay?

( *Al Chase quickly enters the room* )

AL.         Everything's under control. We're movin' this kid, Jenny. Go up front, we got papers for you to sign. Special ambulance on the way. Best doctors in the city, Mount Sinai, whole department ready. If it's alright. Sign your son out. Ambulance be right here. And no worries, Futo-Pharma is paying for everything.

JENNY.     You're moving him?

AL.         Out of this crap hole. To Sinai, if that's okay?

JENNY.     ( *confused yet pleased* ) Oh. Oh. Yes.

AL. Seventh floor. Best floor in the city. 24-7, nurses, doctors right there. Papers up front. Go. Sign. Ambulance be right here.

JENNY. Okay. *(beat)* Thank you.

AL. Thank *you*, Sugar Pie. Kid's gonna be great. Jack McGunn has your back.

*(Still a bit still stunned, Jenny exits.)*

AL. Will you look at this dump? And they want to nationalize health care. Be great if we all could be cured in a Petri dish.

DOUG. That was fast.

AL. Jack's Rolodex could raise Lazarus. How is he?

DOUG. I guess bad.

AL. If he dies, we are *screwed*. Jack saw the tape and went out of his mind. She's got something—sparkles like a diamonds, *billions* in sales. Jack said, "I don't care what it takes, you fix her and that kid. She's our star." Like the word of God. You should see the people calling me. *(shows phone)* Nobel winner here. But if he dies, it changes the story. Hey, we gotta find one like her in Africa. I'll put you on that?

DOUG. Africa? Sure.

AL. South Africa, great wines. And you can still hunt lion there.

DOUG. Great.

AL. Fun. *(beat)* Nice looking kid. How old?

DOUG. Seventeen.

AL. What's his name?

DOUG. Fleet.

AL. Fleet. Strange . . .

DOUG. What?

AL. He's—. Nothin'.

END OF SEVEN

## SCENE EIGHT

SETTING: Jenny's apartment.

AT RISE: JENNY is getting dressed. She calls to FLEET, offstage.

JENNY. *(calls out)* Will you please hurry it up! That car will be here any minute. If we're late and I miss anything, I will kill you!

FLEET. *(offstage)* I'm hurrying!

JENNY. You finally get to do something—after years of griping—and you won't even be there when the cake is cut! If they even cut a cake. Do they cut cakes at these things?

FLEET. *(offstage)* How would I know?

JENNY. *(to mirror)* You know, *not . . . too . . . bad*. Somebody should give me credit for keeping it together after what I've been through. And that is without Wellbutrin or *Celebrex*. *(practices a speech)* "Ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost, I'd like to thank the good people at Futo-Pharma: they're not about saving lives, they're about saving families. Of course, I must also thank the unyielding devotion of Jack McGunn, Futo-Pharma's chairman, in his tireless fight to help the sick." *(calls out)* Should I thank Seymour?

FLEET. *(offstage)* What?

JENNY. *Felton*. He'll be there. Three-to-one he's a nerdy little Jewish chemist with the voice of a mouse and the mind of a giant.

FLEET. *(offstage)* Okay.

JENNY. There'll be a 20-piece orchestra! I'll dance that nerd into the ground. And I wouldn't mind a dance with that Doug Wilson.

*(FLEET appears, nicely dressed, self-conscious. JENNY eyes him.)*

JENNY. Well. Here's another little man I'll dance into the ground.

FLEET. I don't dance.

JENNY. One with your mom?

FLEET. I don't know.

JENNY. You look great.

FLEET. You look great.

JENNY. Two of the finest-looking sickos on the planet.

FLEET. What if I sit and this wrinkles?

JENNY. Jack'll pay. (*shows credit card*) Strict corporate orders to go black on everything we want.

FLEET. Did we die? Or is this is a dream?

JENNY. Then I'm never waking up. Now . . . best behavior. There'll be cameras. Some kind of documentary is being shot to make Jack look good. We're supposed to be gracious, humble, grateful.

FLEET. I go up to Jack, try to cry, shake his hand.

JENNY. All-American boy. Look him in the eyes. Laugh at his jokes, *loud*. They're awful but we have to make him look good.

FLEET. What if I get tired?

JENNY. Al volunteered to take you home if you're not feeling well. So if you get tired, go to Al. I'll hang out with that Doug. I'm supposed to stay as late as I can to show my boundless energy from *Crimsalus*.

(*Buzzer sounds. She goes to intercom.*)

JENNY. (*into intercom*) Be right down. (*to Fleet*) We are happy mother and son. The FDA has approved a drug that saved my life, will save your life, and millions of others. At this celebration, we shall party like it's 1999.

FLEET. Yow!

BOTH. (*parts of song are sung until Prince's version takes over*)

If you didn't come to party, don't bother knockin' on my door, oww!  
I got a lion in my pocket and baby he's ready to roar, yeah hey!  
Everybody's got a bomb, we could all die any day, oh!  
But before I let that happen, I'll dance my life away, oh ho!

END OF EIGHT

## SCENE NINE

SETTING: A commercial shoot.

AT RISE: JENNY faces the audience—or appears in a commercial broadcast to the audience.

JENNY. “The line between life and death can be so thin. What if a stranger appeared, an angel, who gave you something worth more than all the gold in the world? We were given a second life, all because of the good people at Futo-Pharma. Our lives, and millions of others, will be saved. One life is priceless. But millions of lives? Thank you, Futo-Pharma. And God bless you.”

END OF NINE

## SCENE TEN

SETTING: An office.

AT RISE: AL and DOUG are looking at a commercial on a screen.

AL. *God bless you.* Brilliant. There’re a few people who show up in the world—the Jane Pauleys, the Katie Courics before they go to seed—call it *the gift of Oprah*. There is something beautiful and genuine and . . . a little sexy about them. Makes every boy go back to that—*Whaddycallit*—Oedipal thing.

DOUG. With Oprah?

AL. Okay, beautiful and genuine. So here’s the news: Jack is nuts on her. Wants to lock her down. This wasn’t even my idea.

DOUG. To?

AL. Three-year contract. Spokesperson. Remember that Verizon guy: *Can you hear me now?* Dell kid: *Dude, you got a Dell!*

DOUG. You want a spokesperson for a disease?

AL. For *Futo-Pharma*. “The Face of Futo-Pharma,” Jack calls her. *Crimsalus* will gateway everything they sell, including stuff in the pipeline. If something gets before the FDA and they’ve got *Jenny* in their mind, you don’t think that puts their foot on the gas? There’s something so authentic when somebody who should be dead speaks for a cause. And the better she looks, the better Jack looks—so when he goes to trial, they’re not thinking about criminal action,

they're thinking that Jack saves million of lives. And who wants to put somebody like that behind bars? All the while we are making a bloody fortune.

DOUG. That's Sugar Pie.

AL. While Futo-Pharma's stock goes up like a rocket. And you know partner's all about dollar signs, Dougie, and this loaded 'em up for you. You want to show her the contract? Three years. Locked in.

DOUG. This will blow her shorts off.

AL. Take her to a nice restaurant. We got a pipeline of cash. And, hey, I got something for Fleet. Pass it on? Kid needs something to perk him up. Looked a little blue last time.

DOUG. He'll like that.

END OF TEN

## SCENE ELEVEN

SETTING: A table at a restaurant.

AT RISE: DOUG sits with JENNY.

JENNY. *Oh . . . my . . . god.* You hear about this place, you see it in the papers, then you're actually sitting here.

DOUG. I've got to make a confession. I've never been here either.

JENNY. Come on!

DOUG. Seriously.

JENNY. I thought all you fatcats with your expense accounts keep tents in places like this. This isn't your own table?

DOUG. I couldn't get a job here as a busboy. And I didn't get an expense account, to speak of, until—

JENNY. What?

DOUG. *Crimsalus.*

JENNY. Felton-409. Those were the days. Cheers.

DOUG. (*raises glass*) You can drink, right?

JENNY. Read me that warning label. (*hands a box to him*)

DOUG. “Notify your doctor if you develop abdominal pain; blood in your stool; excessive weight gain; swelling; lethargy; skin rash; itching; yellow skin or eyes, cerebrovascular accidents, or unusual bruising. These can be early signs of dangerous side effects.”  
(*beat*) These are the *early* signs?

JENNY. Nothing about wine there. Cheers! It’s wine that should have the warning label. “May lead to profound giddiness, full-out laughter, and doing things inhibitions should have prevented.”

DOUG. Where do you get your—?

JENNY. Hm?

DOUG. You’re smart.

JENNY. Ditto.

DOUG. You’re welcome. (*beat*) I don’t know anything about you.

JENNY. I thought your interest was only in my blood count?

DOUG. This is called a *conversation*?

JENNY. Sometimes that starts with a *question*? Like: *Who are you? What do you love to do? How do you spend your time?*

DOUG. All of the above.

JENNY. You are not original, but I’ll check off the boxes. Love to do? Look at my boy, cherish every moment he’s in my gaze. Spend my time? Dreaming. Who am I? A secret: The Great American Novelist. With five books of brilliant writing no publisher will touch, no agent will represent, and no best-seller list will rank. What can you do?

DOUG. A writer?

JENNY. Poor, brilliant, unknown and—*previously*—sick.

DOUG. I might do something about the first of those. If you’d accept a million a year.

JENNY. I could live on that.

DOUG. I’m serious.

JENNY. A million dollars?

DOUG. Here's the contract. You have a fan with a fat wallet, as well as a bulging market cap. Jack wants you as his spokesperson, not just for *Crimsalus*, but all his drugs. You're making his fortune, so he wants you to pitch everything he has, including stuff he's developing.

JENNY. I don't do hemorrhoid creams. *(beat)* A joke! You're serious? He'll pay me a million dollars!

DOUG. *Three* million. A million a year for three years. But you'll still get your commercial money, so you could easily double that.

JENNY. Can I kiss you?

DOUG. I don't—

JENNY. It's a *blood* disease. I'm no vampire, I won't bite your lip or gnaw at you. A peck on the cheek for good luck.

DOUG. For good luck.

JENNY. Sweet as sugar. *( she kisses him )*

DOUG. But this is a *contract*, okay? There's stuff in here you're contracted to do. There are obligations, projects, responsibilities.

JENNY. You have no idea how irresponsible I want to be right now. But where do I sign?

END OF ELEVEN

## SCENE TWELVE

SETTING: A commercial.

AT RISE: JENNY faces the audience or appears on a screen.

JENNY. Each life is a tiny raindrop of wonder. What does it mean when one life, that shouldn't be here, *is*? When a family torn apart by despair can again hold one another? It means there's been a miracle. Every day miracles small and large are performed by Futo-Pharma. New therapies are being developed that yesterday could only be imagined. All these raindrops are alive, as I am, Jenny Bell. Thank you, Futo-Phara. And God bless every life in this world.

END OF TWELVE

## SCENE THIRTEEN

SETTING: An office.

AT RISE: A very happy AL CHASE on the phone. DOUG enters while AL is in the middle of his call.

AL: “*Tiny raindrops of wonder*. Jack, that was off the top of her head! And the ‘*The God bless you?*’ Even an atheist has the hankie out . . . So the trial’s all set up . . . *Now* what’s your stock up to? . . . To the moon, Alice! Back attcha.” (*looks up, smiles*) Dougie, how often you see a triple crown winner? Jack wants me to call him James Mason because he thinks he’s done a Judy Garland in *A Star is Born*.

DOUG. Look at these requests for interviews. *Today Show* wants her. *GMA*. All the talk shows. She’s got the media lit up like a comet.

AL: Jack says his sales got a bump in *everything*. And you know what total drug sales are?

DOUG. Do you mean—

AL: For the whole freakin’ *world*, man, not just Futo-Pharma! *A trillion freaking dollars a year—worldwide!* Imagine if you’ve got a drug that gets just a bitty bit of that?

DOUG. Here’s the survey for Futo-Pharma and Jack’s favorability polling? Perfect hockey stick.

AL: You did your job. Jack goes to trial looking like a white knight. Bingo, bango, boom. Great. So, I’m pulling you off this. Wait till you see what I got for you next.

DOUG. Next?

AL: Next project.

DOUG. But . . .

AL: What?

DOUG. Uh, *Crimsalus* . . . ?

AL: I’m taking you off that. Turn it over to the underlings. With your brain, Dougbo, we gotta get you ramped up.

DOUG. But, ah . . . I feel like I ought to stay on this. I mean, there’s a lot I can still do.

AL: And marketing will. See, walking papers for Carol. This afternoon security taps her on the shoulder and walks her out. And you, my friend, got her fat accounts and that big office.

DOUG. Oh.

AL: *Oh?* You're not excited?

DOUG. No, I . . . just *Crimsalus* was my baby.

AL: You're not sentimental?

DOUG. Well . . . feel like I've owned it.

AL: Okay, let me show you something Carol bunged up, which is why I need you as my medical guy. Pharm-All, remember them? Had that uterine thing women used to stop getting pregnant? Copper coil up the thing? Sold a *million* of them. Now what? Women are coming out of the woodwork saying the coil caused an infection that made them infertile. My god, who *isn't* infertile these days? But once somebody smells money, brother, every woman who had that spring inside her wants ten-million bucks. So I walk into Carol's office and what's she doing? *Crying*. At her *desk*. And I see over her shoulder she's reading stories in the file by women who say they can't have kids because of the coil. Now what is our job? *What? The last line of defense*. And I got Carol bawling in her office. So she's gone. And I need you, Dougie, I need you *now* to find me another Jenny Bell who can do for Pharm-All what you did for Futo-Pharma. Who else can do this for me? You're now my go-to guy!

DOUG. And I'm all in.

AL: Good.

DOUG. But—

AL: What?

DOUG. This is so *big*. Let me take Jenny to the studio tomorrow, set it up. I'll leave when she goes to set. It's just to make sure that she . . . Hey, three million people watch that show.

AL: What if Jenny said she used the coil and she's still fertile?

DOUG. I'm saying I need to make sure she's prepped.

AL: I wonder if she used the coil. Find out. We'd have a twofer. Say something good about Futo-Pharma *and* Pharma-All.

DOUG: How about I just make sure she doesn't goof it up? And shoot back here and work on this.

AL: You are a genius Dougie. You remind me of me.

DOUG. There is only one Al Chase.

AL: God's truth. Hey, come on along, let's fire Carol together. If you're gonna be partner, you gotta learn how good it feels to kick somebody in the crotch.

DOUG. Can't wait.

END OF THIRTEEN

## SCENE FOURTEEN

SETTING: A greenroom.

AT RISE: JENNY inside with a nervous DOUG.

JENNY: You're more nervous than I am. Why?

DOUG. With three million people watching?

JENNY: I used to be one of those three million. When I was sick, I laid on the couch with Fleet all day and we'd watch all these shows. I feel like these four women are my best friends.

DOUG. I wouldn't doubt you could be part of a panel like this. You got the older one, the gay, liberal, conservative, and you—

JENNY: I'd be the sick one.

DOUG. I meant *challenged*.

JENNY: Death is challenging.

DOUG. Jenny, listen, something I've got to tell you. I've got to leave for the office when you go to set. And from now on, other guys will be handling you.

JENNY: What? What's this?

DOUG. Al gave me a promotion. Things went so well with this that he has other fires for me to put out.

JENNY: Who's "handling" me?

DOUG. Other marketing guys. I do big damage control. And things here are now under control.

JENNY: I won't see you?

DOUG. You'll come to our building, stop by.

JENNY: That sucks. Hey, stop by when you're in the neighborhood! After all you've done for me? I, like, *owe* you.

DOUG. I owe *you*.

JENNY: I might take you up on that I.O.U. Oh, forget it. Who wants anything to do with somebody who's sick?

DOUG. You're sickness has nothing to do with it.

JENNY: Are you my friend?

DOUG. Yes.

JENNY: Then act like my friend—not like somebody who dumps me after they've used me. I feel dirty.

DOUG. I didn't use you.

JENNY: You used me to promote your career. Now you're on to using somebody else.

DOUG. Hey, I happen to be very—

JENNY: What?

DOUG. . . . I think you're great.

JENNY: I think you're tremendous. And great and tremendous people should hang out—every odd month during leap years.

DOUG. We might be crossing a line.

JENNY. Don't do that! But I cross lines now, see? I should be dead, so boundries don't mean much now.

DOUG. (*looking off*) Look they're ready. The main thing—*listen*—be yourself. You're a star. Everybody loves your story. Be yourself and you can't go wrong. Human interest, you know?

JENNY: Do you have human interest?

DOUG. Time to go. You there, me out here.

JENNY: Men: always deaf when it's convenient. *User*.

DOUG. Oh, I forgot to ask you, did you ever use the coil? That pregnancy coil?

JENNY: An intimate inquiry. You just put me in a very good mood. Show time!

END OF FOURTEEN

## SCENE FIFTEEN

SETTING: An office.

AT RISE: An irritated AL pacing.

DOUG: These things always blow over. I don't think it's a big deal.

AL: Jack thinks it's a big deal. Did you prep her?

DOUG. Of course.

AL: For that?

DOUG. No.

AL: You need to take a meeting with her.

DOUG. You've got me on this coil.

AL: Screw that. Because whatever we make from Pharm-All, Futo-Pharma will be multiples. She embarrassed the crap out of Jack.

DOUG. She got blindsided.

AL: Your job is to make sure there are no blind sides.

DOUG. Have you watched that show?

AL: Doug, I got 285 employees counting on me for a paycheck, remember? But *Jack* watches that show. And when the question gets asked if she thinks *Crimsalus* is priced too high, and she can't explain *why*, then goes on to say it should be given away *free* to everybody who needs it, we got a problem.

DOUG. It'll blow over.

*Branded*

AL: She's a *star*, Doug. Because of *you*. God! Who'll come to us when we advise handing out drugs like Halloween candy?

DOUG. She just needs the pricing explained. Then she'll come up with something great and fix all this.

AL: They're running her clip on Yahoo. Y'all, free drugs!

DOUG. It's her bubbly personality.

AL: Bubble I'd like to pop. Goes on and on about how poor she was and if she didn't get *Crimsalus* free, she wouldn't be alive. And everybody should!

DOUG. This is only her *first interview*. She's booked on *Doctor Oz*, then *Tyra Banks* later, and plenty more after that.

AL: Have the underlings talked to her?

DOUG. She's not picking up her phone.

AL. Get to her. Fix this. Clear it up before she's back on TV.

DOUG. Good as done. I'll go now.

AL: Do that. And thank her for my kick in the crotch.

DOUG. If you say so.

END OF FIFTEEN

## SCENE SIXTEEN

SETTING: Jenny's home

AT RISE: DOUG checks his Blackberry. FLEET is texting.

FLEET. (*half sung*) Tweet tweet, tweet. Everybody loves to tweet tweet tweet . . .

DOUG. You know what RMDs are?

FLEET. Chinese currency?

DOUG. That's *Renminbi*. I mean, Repetitive Motion Disorder. Carpal Tunnel. Too much with the thumbs, you lose use of the thumbs.

FLEET. It's worth it.

DOUG. Losing your thumbs?

FLEET. Mom's got 383,612 Twitter followers—as of *now*. I'm assigned to handle this for her.

DOUG. Over 300,000?

FLEET. Five-hundred by midnight. I got people from all over the world writing. Everybody wants their free *Crimsalus*. For a guy like me, who had no friends, to meet all these people? Wahoo.

DOUG. It's temporary, Fleet.

FLEET. Temporary friend way better than no friend. You want pizza? Sushi? I can order anything.

DOUG. Two large servings of Peace of Mind.

FLEET. You're funny. Not as funny as *mom* . . .

DOUG. Who is?

FLEET. She likes you, you know. But also thinks you're afraid of her because of the SIRAD. But people work around that.

DOUG. They do?

FLEET. Are you? Afraid of SIRAD? Love conquers all. Even death.

DOUG. I'd rather not find out.

FLEET. It happened to mom, you know. I can't tell you how much she hated dad for this. *Hated* him. But after he was gone, she found a way to love him. Her love conquered her hate.

DOUG. Hated him because?

FLEET. He infected her. Infected me.

DOUG. You know, I never heard how you—?

FLEET. Razor. A plain everyday shaving razor. Dad was a sculptor, so there was never much money. Dad used to cut my hair to save the ten bucks a barber would charge. Then after learning dad was sick, they realized that one of the razors shaved with was also used to scrape the fuzz off my neck. Cautionary tale: throw out old razors.

DOUG. Man.

FLEET. But if he didn't have a drug habit—we also later learned—we wouldn't have had to worry about the razors. Artists: can live with 'em, can't live without 'em.

DOUG I'm sorry.

FLEET. Why? If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be alive.

DOUG You don't know that.

FLEET. I wouldn't be a millionaire.

DOUG True.

FLEET. You know the difference between people with money and people with no money? Happiness.

DOUG I thought that was caused by health.

FLEET. That, too. And when you have both? Wahoo.

( *Jenny enters at the front door.* )

JENNY. Hello! Hello!

FLEET. Mom, you've been *friende*d. See?

JENNY. (*sees Doug*) What's *this*? I thought you weren't handling me anymore?

DOUG Maybe for a night.

JENNY. Great!

DOUG No, I meant—

JENNY. Don't explain, please!

DOUG You don't turn your phone on?

JENNY. You know how many calls I got after *The View*? It just rang and beeped and tweet until I couldn't take it anymore. I turned it off and found I got, like, a-hundred voicemails. Fleet, you take the voicemails now, too.

FLEET. Roger-Dodger.

DOUG        And what if somebody from the firm had to get a hold of you? Which we did?

JENNY.      Fix that, Fleet. I want a screaming siren if Doug calls.

FLEET.      Pick a song. You get your own special ring.

JENNY.      Looks like a *Nirvana* guy.

FLEET.      *Smells like Teen Spirit!*

DOUG        Whatever, look—

JENNY.      Know what a great time I had? Thanks to *you*. After the show I had lunch with Rosie and Barb, and we all went shopping, then Barb invited me to her apartment. *To Die For* . . . We could be in that neighborhood in a year, Fleet. Barb is keeping an eye out. And her producer thinks he can get me on one of his shows!

FLEET.      You were funny.

JENNY.      Fast, funny and infected. They *loved* that line.

DOUG        Look, I, I came to see if we can have a meeting.

JENNY.      I'll meet with you anytime.

DOUG        It's not a joke. We got a little trouble.

JENNY.      Trouble is my middle name.

DOUG        So it seems.

JENNY.      With or without The Lad?

DOUG        Without.

FLEET.      I can tweet anywhere. I can tweet upside down.

JENNY.      Big, beautiful bedroom will do. Right-side up is fine.

FLEET.      Ciao. (*Fleet goes to exit, then turns*) Sure you don't want a nosh? Great Kung Pao down the street.

DOUG        Thanks, no.

FLEET.      Okay. See you in Cyberspace.

JENNY.      Love you!

( *Fleet leaves. Jenny blows him a big kiss* )

- JENNY. Why look so serious? Wine? I got a great '97 Bordeaux.
- DOUG No, thank you.
- JENNY. May lead in incontrovertible giggling. Can't let that happen. My god, the *wine* that Barb served . . .
- DOUG. Your appearance on the show? Amazing feedback. You were terrific.
- JENNY. Thank you.
- DOUG. Personally. But as spokesperson for Futo-Pharma, maybe not what everybody had in mind.
- JENNY. I took your advice: *be yourself*. And talked about the disease, being given another life—along with Fleet—and they laughed all the way through.
- DOUG. Right. But you don't represent *the disease*. You represent Futo-Pharma.
- JENNY. I kinda think I *do* represent the disease.
- DOUG But you were sent for Futo-Pharma.
- JENNY. I thought they *asked* for me?
- DOUG. And the very drug that saved your life? You told 3 million people it should be given away free.
- JENNY. To people who need it. Shouldn't it?
- DOUG. You know how many people need it?
- JENNY. If I may put on my pointy-headed cap, according to the CDC, in the US it's half-a-million.
- DOUG. Right.
- JENNY. Worldwide—twenty times that?
- DOUG. Probably.
- JENNY. So?
- DOUG. This is not candy. It's a product.

JENNY. Candy is a product.

DOUG What I *mean* is that Futo-Pharma owns the patent to this.

JENNY. That's okay.

DOUG. No, that's not okay. This isn't a charity. My god, you got a check for 3 million dollars. Where do you think that money came from?

JENNY. But if somebody can't *afford* the drug, Doug, *then* they should be given it free. We're talking about a life here.

DOUG. Then somebody has to come up with the money to pay for it. A charity or somebody.

JENNY. It's a little pill.

DOUG It's not little.

JENNY. Okay, a capsule.

DOUG. Full of lots of different micro-particles all working together.

JENNY. Fine. So charge a *dollar* instead of giving it away! What I'm saying is, what does it cost to make this thing? Here, here, look. A quarter? Just turn on the pill machine and let it run wild for a few days. Run that baby overtime and pump out a few extra million, just for the people who can't afford it,

DOUG It's not the *cost* of the drug—not the *manufacturing* cost. There's research and development. They've got to pay people—like your good friend Seymour Felton.

JENNY God bless him, he's earned every cent.

DOUG Glad you think so.

JENNY I'm sending him a bottle of wine, *kosher*.

DOUG Beautiful. Then somebody's got to run the company. You think they ought to be paid for that?

JENNY I *adore* Jack McGunn. He should be as filthy rich as he is.

DOUG Glad you approve of Jack's work. And your three million, you like that?

JENNY (*toasting*) I salute the wisdom of such a genius act!

DOUG        It's adding up. Three million for you, Jack's big salary, Seymour Felton—then you've got all the administrators, the time, *my salary* for working on this, *Al Chase*, the FDA approval trials, and I could go on down the line.

JENNY        So let's add this up. Where are we? Ten, twenty million?

DOUG.        I don't know exactly.

JENNY        Let's say *fifty*. Say *a-hundred*. A-hundred million dollars to make this wee capsule and pay all the development costs. For this little thing I'm holding in my hand. Okay, a hundred million dollars, divided by ten-million people with SIRAD: ten bucks apiece. I'll call Barb and Rosie and we'll network and pay for this in no time.

DOUG.        Your math is fuzzy.

JENNY        You're right, I'm forgetting the pill machine. The hundred-million's only for you, me, Jack, Al, Seymour—and the FDA wonks. Now we've got to pay a dime apiece for these, every day, for the rest of a patient's life. A dime a day to save a life? Doug, open your heart. Open your *wallet*. We can do this.

DOUG.        You do not understand the pharmaceutical industry.

JENNY        That could be good.

DOUG.        There are people called shareholders? And return on investment?

JENNY.        Oh . . .

DOUG.        Because if they don't get some kind of return, they won't invest in either new drugs or pharmaceutical companies.

JENNY.        *Phooey*. Let them make their money on glam drugs, there's plenty of those. "I'm feeling a little depressed, I'll take a pill!" "I'm going bald! I need a pill!" "This belly fat is really troubling, gimme a pill." Or Prilosec or Boneva or Nexium. "Gosh, this *penis* just isn't working: a pill!" Paid for by insurance companies. These are not life and death issues. There is no cure for SIRAD, Doug. This is all there is.

DOUG.        Then no one will ever develop drugs for serious diseases.

JENNY.        I said we'd pay for it! I'm giving you a-hundred million dollars.

DOUG        I need profit.

JENNY.      Why?

DOUG.      Incentive, shareholders.

JENNY.      Doug, if you're a shareholder, I'll bet you *have* insurance to pay for pills. I worry about people who don't *hold shares*—like us, people in Africa, third-world countries, you know? Let's find that ten-cents and give away these pills so they can stay alive. We don't have to charge the fifty-five dollars a day we are now.

DOUG.      The price will come down. It's a scaling issue.

JENNY.      And how many die in the meantime?

DOUG.      How many die in the future when no one is developing these drugs?

JENNY.      So here's the question: how many deaths do you trade *now* for lives in the future? Play God, Doug. How many die for your return on investment—which is used to make even *more* money in the future? Then all those future shareholders need a return on *their* investment, so they'll let even more die to make *their* return . . .

DOUG        . . . I didn't come here to fight.

JENNY.      I was hoping you came to see *me*. My friend.

DOUG.      That's not especially why I'm here either.

JENNY.      An economics lesson?

DOUG.      Tomorrow you're on *Good Morning America*.

JENNY.      Then later in the day I'm with my beau, Doctor Oz.

DOUG.      Jack called Al. Jack is hopping mad.

JENNY.      I'll talk to Jack.

DOUG        No, it's best if you steer clear of Jack. But he wants it expressed that he doesn't . . . find it *satisfactory* when you suggest that Futo-Pharma give away his drug free.

JENNY.      It's not *his* drug, it's *my* drug.

DOUG.      I think it says *Futo-Pharma* on the box? Not Jenny Bell?

*Branded*

JENNY. Six-a-one . . .

DOUG You are his spokesperson. You have a contract, performance obligations.

JENNY. Don't think for a second I'm not going to tout his drug as the best thing since gummy vitamins.

DOUG. Great. Just steer clear of the *freebie* stuff. Remember: Jack McGunn is your friend.

JENNY. I *love* Jack. I'll sing his praises to the heavens.

DOUG. Good. And if the pricing comes up—

JENNY. The fifty-five dollars a day for this pill per patient?

DOUG That money is used to pay for R&D so even more groundbreaking drugs can be developed to save even *more* lives soon.

JENNY. You don't want me to mention shareholders' return on investment?

DOUG. Not funny.

JENNY. I *am* funny.

DOUG. You're an employee. As I am. We have jobs to do.

JENNY. Doug, as you get to know me better, which I so hope you will, you'll realize that what makes me special is not only my charm and good looks and intelligence—and *modesty*—it's that I only tell the truth. I'm terrible at hiding things. So I've no intention of harming Jack McGunn or Futo-Pharma. I *love* them. But if I get asked a question, I'll say precisely what I think, and I will also take your sage advice and *be myself*. And if that leads to saving a life, or ten, or ten-million . . . Wahoo.

DOUG. Consequences be damned?

JENNY. Consequences be wonderful.

DOUG. Think about this, Jenny.

JENNY. All I ever do is think, it's my biggest problem. You're exasperated. I know the trouble: I'm irresistible. So don't resist.

DOUG. You have some extraordinary qualities.

JENNY. And a nasty disease. But love conquers all.

DOUG. I've heard that before.

JENNY. How about a glass of wine? Just *one*?

DOUG. Can't. I've got a late night. This other project.

JENNY. Damage Control. "Danger!"

DOUG. Another time.

JENNY. *Seriously?* You would *seriously* consider coming over and having a glass of wine with me? Or somewhere else? I'll pay.

DOUG. You're . . . incontrovertible.

JENNY. And charming and intelligent. And good-looking.

DOUG. And medicated.

JENNY. Salute.

DOUG. If you do, in fact, like me—*please* handle this well tomorrow.

JENNY. I'm over the moon for you, Doug. Can't you tell? I'm terrible at hiding things. I'd even get the coil. What's wrong? Tell the truth.

DOUG. The truth? I think I like you.

JENNY. Really? Is that so scary?

DOUG. If you only knew.

JENNY. Best thing I've heard in hours. I'm celebrating.

( *Doug leaves. Jenny is in a dream state.* )

JENNY. Life after death. How can it be so sweet?

( *Fleet enters, with Jenny still in a dream state.* )

FLEET. He's gone? Thought I heard the door close. Hey, mom? I didn't want to bring this up while Doug was here . . .

JENNY. What?

FLEET. I'm getting these bruises? Kind of weird. On my arms and legs? All over.

End of Act I

ACT II SCENE SEVENTEEN

SETTING: A hospital room.

AT RISE: JENNY with FLEET, who is in a hospital gown.

JENNY. Everything is better at Mt. Sinai. I've been in posh hotels that aren't as nice as this.

FLEET. At least when you're on the seventh floor.

JENNY. That hospital gown. Will you *look* at that? *Dior*. And if you don't care for something that *bourgeois*, try the Fendi or Armani. But whatever you do, stay clear of the Alexander McQueen!

FLEET. Do I have bow legs?

JENNY. Your father had bow legs.

FLEET. Skinny as a hairless chicken.

JENNY. That comes from me. I had magnificent legs at one time. Oh, beware gravity: drags everything to your bulging lower parts.

FLEET. (*holding hospital gowns*) All the same length. What difference does it make?

JENNY. You're growing.

FLEET. Might have something to do with eating again.

JENNY. Food and youth, a remarkable combination. When one is put inside the other, *vrooom*.

FLEET. Just make sure it's the food that's put in youth, and not the youth that's put in food.

JENNY. Veal has never touched these lips.

FLEET. Eggs have. Can't get younger than that.

JENNY. Don't make me Ovo-Lacto! Are you hungry now? Take advantage of that chef. How many hospital floors have their own? Just go up to him and say, "The Coq au Vin with the radicchio and strawberry vinaigrette, please." Three minutes later, *poof*, there it is on your hospital tray.

*Branded*

FLEET. I'll wait.

JENNY. How do you feel?

FLEET. Medium.

JENNY. Medium good or medium bad?

FLEET. Medium medium.

JENNY. You're not helpful. Let me see your arms.

FLEET. A couple new spots here.

JENNY. If we paint a few more here and here, we could use your arms as checkerboards.

FLEET. Wahoo.

JENNY. They'll clear it up. It's just the dosage needs adjusting. Even when I take a Bufferin, I never get it right.

FLEET. I'm not scared.

JENNY. Sure, after what we've been through? Everybody and every *body* takes time to get their dosage right.

FLEET. I love you, mom.

JENNY. Three greatest letters in the English language: M – O – M.

FLEET. That's two letters.

JENNY. No wonder I can't get my books published.

*(Doug knocks on the door or peaks his head in.)*

DOUG. Anybody home?

JENNY. Nobody here but us chickens.

FLEET. And chicken-legged.

JENNY. He is *funny*. Apple don't fall too far, you know.

DOUG. How you feel?

FLEET. The same. Maybe more tired.

JENNY. He's fine. It's *a checkup*.

DOUG. The car service is just about to pick up Doctor Rose.  
Shouldn't be long.

JENNY. My biggest problem was that I got healthy too soon. I  
never had the chance to check in to the Hotel Sinai.

DOUG. Fleet, anything you want? Jack called to say that  
anything, no matter what, I'm to get for you.

FLEET. One thing: make mom stop worrying. She's driving me  
crazy with her jokes. The more worried she is, the worse they get.

JENNY. I laugh through the pain, buddy-boy. That takes an iron  
constitution and a nitwitted personality.

FLEET. See?

DOUG. Artists: can't live with 'em.

JENNY. You know, I'm feeling a little abused? Two men ganging  
up on me?

FLEET. That's no man, that's my invalid. Rimshot.

JENNY. Now you *are* worrying me. But I know what will take  
my mind off this. Double caramel frappuccino. Run down the hall,  
will you? There's even a Starbucks on this floor! Don't run, *walk*.  
That gown is so short, all we need is some joker to pull a Marilyn  
Monroe and blow it over your head.

FLEET. Sure. I need to let the mating dance continue.

JENNY. What? What's that? How dare you!

FLEET. Anything, Doug?

DOUG. I'm good.

FLEET. You'll have to be more than good to handle her.

JENNY. Fie on thee, shameless child! Get thee to a nunnery.

FLEET. Better than a mortuary.

JENNY. Not funny. Besides, been there, done that, got the shroud.

FLEET. Bye, mommy.

JENNY. Love you, buddy.

*(Fleet throws a kiss and steps out, leaving Doug and Jenny alone.)*

DOUG. How are you?

JENNY. Dammit, I can't take this. I can't take it, Doug. I stupidly got my hopes up that all this was over. I got my mojo back, I got my smile on.

DOUG. You don't know—

JENNY. That's the whole point! What if this drug doesn't work for him? And there I was, all cried out, and the tank filled up with hope and now I just want—. But I can't cry in front of him. I am—.  
*(breaks down)* Will you hold me? I haven't had anybody hold me in so long. When you're sick, nobody wants—.

DOUG. *(holds her)* Everything's going to be fine. I'm sure.

JENNY. Did you see the bruises? How yellow he got?

DOUG. It wasn't that bad.

JENNY. *Not bad?* He's spotting like a leopard, he looks like a malarial case. Oh, why am I even discussing this with you? You're wrung me out and moved on. Until you've had a family member die in your arms, how can you even know what it's like?

DOUG. *(in time)* But I have. Had a family member die in my arms. Not a child . . . my wife.

JENNY. Oh. I'm sorry. Why didn't you say something?

DOUG. You mean, brag about it?

JENNY. No, I meant . . . share your grief.

DOUG. Like people share a bag of Doritos? Try some, it's great.

JENNY. Not that. But you don't need to keep it to yourself.

DOUG. Some grief is private. But each to his, or her, her own.

JENNY. Life is all grief . . . punctuated by a few insignificant moments of distraction. Why do you think I make jokes?

DOUG. I'm still trying to figure that out.

JENNY. I want to make a joke now.

DOUG. Go ahead.

JENNY. I can't. Looking at you . . . I feel I've got to be all serious and stuff.

DOUG. Well, not to get you off track, but we've heard from Seymour. He wants to see Fleet's results as soon as they come in. He'll be in the lab trying to figure out what's going on.

JENNY. I love Seymour. He even works on the Sabbath.

DOUG. For *Jack*. Who ordered that "The Face of Futo-Pharma" must have everything done for her within our power.

JENNY. Dear man.

DOUG. You know how different your life would be without Jack?

JENNY. You're implying? *Quid Pro Quo?*

DOUG. A reminder. They're rescheduling your TV shows. The producers told us to let us know when you're ready again.

JENNY. Thanks for handling that.

DOUG. It's my job. Actually, it's *not* my job, I've got other fires on the burner, but I did it anyway.

JENNY. I should hire you as a personal assistant. You're good.

DOUG. Very.

JENNY. Still scared?

DOUG. Could be.

JENNY. You could be a bad influence on my son.

DOUG. Worse than his mother?

JENNY. Never that. Hungry, Doug? We could get something before Doctor Rose arrives. After that, I'm sure I won't have an appetite.

DOUG. I'm in.

JENNY. The chef here does an incredible Peppered Salmon Plank. Did you know this hospital is Michelin rated? All you need is a good cough and friends who are millionaires to get a bed.

END OF SEVENTEEN

## SCENE EIGHTEEN

SETTING: Jenny's home.

AT RISE: JENNY and DOUG enter.

JENNY. I'm okay.

DOUG. You've told me that.

JENNY. Are you afraid I'm going to drink myself into a stupor?

DOUG. If you're drinking, no. You're the one who wanted the warning on the wine bottle: may lead to unrelenting giggling. If that happens, I say drink away.

JENNY. Then I'll do it by the case. But you'd better join me.

DOUG. I consent.

JENNY. He *consents* to drinking my sixty-dollar a bottle wine! You know, two months ago I had to scrimp to buy toilet paper?

DOUG. Too much information.

JENNY. You're the one who wanted to come in. The price of admission is open ears to my worries, wonders and woes.

DOUG. Start with the wonders.

JENNY. Me! You know my woes, *blah-blah,blah*. Napa Cabernet or Cote du Rhone?

DOUG. Lady's choice.

JENNY. Napa. Buy American. Just like *Crimsalus*.

DOUG. Seymour is Israeli, you know. From Tel Aviv.

JENNY. Hm. Now there's irony. An Israeli creates a miracle drug that will get most of its use in Africa, where someday one of the children of those saved will be Muslim and travel up the Red Sea to destroy Semour's extended family.

DOUG. Things will *not* turn out that way.

JENNY. No? Haven't you heard the fable of the butterfly? Flaps its wings and you get all these unintended consequences?

DOUG. Well . . .

JENNY. It's like you have a tsunami in Japan and it leads to a republican in the White House.

DOUG. How's that?

JENNY. I've thought this through, follow me. There's this butterfly in Asia that flaps its wings, causing air pressure to affect an earthquake, which develops into a tsunami destroying a large chunk of Japan—and that wipes out their nuclear power source. Japan can't produce the goods they've been exporting so prices rise in the U.S. leading to a call for increased domestic manufacturing. But the democratic president drags his—*or her*—heels on nuclear power, making them vulnerable to being labeled anti-blue collar. So the democrat ends up winning the popular vote but loses Ohio by 15,000 votes. Then, on January 20<sup>th</sup>, a republican walks down Pennsylvania Avenue.

DOUG. Because of that butterfly.

JENNY. Because of its innocent, unintended consequences.

DOUG. But that president should have taken precautions that made them vulnerable.

JENNY. But they are also an innocent victim.

DOUG. Innocence is no excuse. You have to be smarter than that. They made a bad calculation.

JENNY. Doug, bad stuff happens, and not because we calculate badly. Did your wife make a bad calculation that led to her disease?

DOUG. Did you?

JENNY. You will turn tables.

DOUG. In disaster PR, we use every tool at our disposal.

JENNY. Ah, like lies, subterfuge and guile?

DOUG. You *are* a writer. You know big words.

JENNY. Don't change the subject. Do you lie?

DOUG. No. I might accentuate the good and obfuscate the bad.

JENNY. Like with Jack McGunn? Accentuate the good? For example, his firm came up with *Crimsalus*—but you don't talk about his other drug trials and the forged research. Only later did I learn that the documentary shot at the FDA celebration—where Fleet has tears running down his cheeks thanking Jack—was to spin Jack good PR.

DOUG. That was just a very positive, true story. Besides, Jack's day in court is coming. He and Futo-Pharma will be vindicated.

JENNY. And Jack won't go to jail.

DOUG. He will *not* go to jail.

JENNY. Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."

DOUG. Don't go literary on me.

JENNY. Your strong suit is obfuscation.

DOUG. My *job* is obfuscation.

JENNY. What's your strong suit?

DOUG. I'm a lover, not a fighter.

JENNY. You're all talk.

DOUG. I'm a *lot* of talk.

JENNY. Not enough. That's why you never told me I was chosen as "The Face of Futo-Pharma" to make Jack look good in court.

DOUG. That's not why you're "The Face of Futo-Pharma." Besides, did you read your contract? Nobody twisted your arm for that.

JENNY. Three-million dollars isn't arm twisting?

DOUG. I think it's called *generosity*?

JENNY. I think it's called *coercion*? Oh, the best kind, but coercion none the less.

DOUG. Walk away if you don't want it. But don't complain about it.

JENNY. I'm not complaining about *my job*. You want me to sing Jack's praises and I'll truthfully do that. But if somebody asks a question like, "Do you think this drug should be kept from people who can't afford it?" I'll put my tally in the column of saving a life—shareholder profits be damned.

DOUG. Jenny, you don't get it. You're *branded*, you're now part of their brand. For three years they'll hang their hat on you. So when the public sees your face, they'll think of life-saving drugs, All-American goodness and Futo-Pharma.

JENNY. Instead of deceit, forged trials and shareholder profit.

DOUG. My god, you're negative. You think the world's going to stop if you're not their spokesperson? What if they dump you? What if Jack decides, "Just write Jenny Bell and her three-million off." Like he writes off drugs that don't turn a profit. Then he'll choose another spokesperson: some grandma whose arthritis he's helped, or a kid who's asthma's better. They'll put a new face on the old firm because your brand is done. Then what good does it do you? Okay, you've banked your three-million, though there's always the chance their lawyers will come after you for breach of contract. Then you'll also lose your advertising revenue, which could be millions more. What good does it do you?

JENNY. You're right, Doug. To advocate this drug is given away free does me no good. It may even do me harm. But what if it *saves a life*? I'm not worried about me. My god, I've lived so I didn't have money to buy toilet paper—though you don't need that information. You're right, I have become a brand: *I am the miracle that is Futo-Pharma*. So what if that brand turned on its heels and actually did some good instead of supporting the money changers at the temple?

DOUG. Why do you think you can't make money and do good?

JENNY. History? Personal experience? Human nature?

DOUG. You've got to be an artist. Those high ideals.

JENNY. "The world is too much with us, late and soon, getting and spending."

DOUG. I like that. Is it copyrighted?

JENNY. I'll Google it for you. Now *there's* a word I wish I'd invented. Put *Google* in the names of drugs and it'll fix everything. I'd take *Crimsgoogle*. For heartburn, we'd have *Googlecool*. And if you're depressed, try some *Googlelift*.

DOUG. Shouldn't that be for erectile dysfunction?

JENNY. *E.D.* Oh, the torment of the modern American male!

DOUG. You're spectacular.

JENNY. As well as witty and beautiful.

DOUG. I can't finish this. I hope you can to keep you in your *Googleliscious* mood. And I'm feeling fairly at ease that you're recovered from the hospital trip with Fleet. I've got to go.

JENNY. Hey, Doug . . . don't.

DOUG. I've got this other project. And need the sleep.

JENNY. *I* need the sleep. But I need the company more.

DOUG. No.

JENNY. Do you think libido is a dirty word? How often is it my son isn't around? Come on, party down!

DOUG. You have a job for three years. I'm trying to keep mine.

JENNY. I said I'd hire you. Besides, this the first time in twenty years a male hasn't been in my house. I'm kind scared?

DOUG. You'll be fine, have another glass of wine and—

JENNY. Oh, dammit! Why not admit it's the SIRAD? If I didn't have this, you'd be mauling me now.

DOUG. Listen, Jenny, I care about you. Why do you think I came here, so you'd be okay?

JENNY. Care about me *more*. Stay with me.

DOUG. Come on, come on . . .

JENNY.     ( *fully frustrated* ) Well, what do you think it's like to be an attractive middle-age woman with the media going wild over you, and have your 17-year-old babysat by the best doctors in the country, and you can't even get a little loving from a guy you're wild about?

DOUG.     It must be hell.

JENNY.     It is.

DOUG.     I'm going.

JENNY.     ( *suddenly* ) I know about your wife! Maybe if you'd been as cautious with her as you were with me, it would have saved *her* life.

DOUG.     What?

JENNY.     I know about her. Cervical cancer. Too late for Gardasil. There is nothing you can't Google these days.

DOUG.     You knew that and pretended not to? That information is private.

JENNY.     My whole life is public. I am terrible at boundaries. And I, I'm crazy about you. So I looked up everything I could. Actually, paid someone to do it.

DOUG.     We *are* different.

JENNY.     In style. But both of us . . . *branded* . . . by the crap life hands you. I did it because I like you so much.

DOUG.     I'm still going.

JENNY.     Do you hate me? For being so nosey?

DOUG.     I do. A little.

JENNY.     But do you like me? Even a little.

DOUG.     Keep drinking. ( *then* ) I'm a tad frightened. That's part of my brand. ( *leaving* ) Talk tomorrow.

JENNY.     See you in my dreams, buddy-boy.

END OF EIGHTEEN

## SCENE NINETEEN

SETTING: The set of a television show.

AT RISE: JENNY appears on a TV show, in close-up. There should be applause and laughter heard during her appearance.

JENNY. The first thing to realize is that I *love* money. Where would we be without it? And I love it when people spend it on *me!*" (*laughter*) So I want Futo-Pharma to make craters of money . . . But if you're pinning me down . . . okay, *yes*, I think if someone can't buy medicine, whether it's *Crimsalus* or some other life-saving drug—and I'm not talking Viagra, guys, that little malady is in your *own* hands, hint-wink—but if you're in this world and need medicine and can't afford it, you should be able to get it. Or have it made somewhere really cheap. Fleet and I got it and it saved our lives, and we're not better than anybody else. Okay, maybe a *little* better. Don't you agree?" (*applause*)

END OF NINETEEN

## SCENE TWENTY

SETTING: Outside Fleet's hospital room.

AT RISE: AL is waiting as JENNY walks up.

JENNY. Al?

AL. Hey.

JENNY. What are you doing here?

AL. Oh just, you know, checking up on you and the kid. Want to make sure everything's, you know, okay.

JENNY. How'd he look?

AL. Honestly?

JENNY. No, lie to me.

AL. Bad.

JENNY. Is that a lie or the truth?

AL. It's a lie. He looks horrible.

JENNY. God . . .

AL. They don't have him on life support but I'm thinking you'll have to make that decision pretty soon?

JENNY. There was a time when I could count on someone *else* making all the decisions.

AL. Miss those days, huh? Look, ah, I also came to tell you that Doug is . . . he's off. He's off the account. Completely.

JENNY. What? He can't be. I just—

AL. No, no—let me explain. He's got orders from me not to contact you again. Or give you advice on anything anymore.

JENNY. But I had a phone call with him?

AL. He's on a really important account and I feel he's not paid full attention to that account.

JENNY. But we *spoke*.

AL. My meeting must have been after you spoke. And, ah, *I've* taken over this account.

JENNY. You?

AL. 24-7. Things have gotten a bit . . . well, how should I put this? *Risky*. That's the word.

JENNY. How is it risky?

AL. Well, to make it plain, there are repercussions. There are consequences. And my feeling is that not enough attention has been paid to the repercussions and consequences.

JENNY. I think I know what you're talking about.

AL. I think you do.

JENNY. I have always been for Futo-Pharma.

AL. Do you know what a market cap is? Capitalization? Let me explain it to you. It's a way of saying what a company is worth. A company that employs *thousands*. The long and the short is that when a stock drops—say, seven-dollars a share in a few days—it can drop the market cap as much as two-billion dollars. And that is quite a bit of money.

JENNY. Aw, billion here, billion there . . .

AL. And that affects bonds and interest rates. Gets harder and harder to do business.

JENNY. You mean harder and harder to make money.

AL. Excuse me, but that's what business is? Or maybe you got the impression this is social work.

JENNY. From my understanding, Futo-Pharma will make a whole lot of money from *Crimsalus*.

AL. That was the belief—what *Mr. Market* believed. But now there is a belief that Futo-Pharma will make far less from *Crimsalus* because the impression has been given this drug will be handed out like jellybeans to anyone who wants it.

JENNY. I think the impression should be, to people who need it.

AL. Shoulda, woulda, coulda, huh?

JENNY. What?

AL. Things that aren't accurate. Aren't reality.

JENNY. I don't . . .

AL. Whole countries now are calling up Jack McGunn and asking for their free *Crimsalus* because they've got people who need it.

JENNY. Their country should pay for it.

AL. Of course! Buy why should they when "The Face of Futo-Pharma" says they can get it for free?

JENNY. I didn't say that.

AL. That's exactly what you said.

JENNY. Only if people are sick and can't afford it.

AL. You know what I think should be given away free? Puppies. Because it's a fact that if you pet a puppy, your immune system kicks in—like with *Crimsalus*—and you get better.

JENNY. Temporarily.

AL. Same with *Crimsalus*! It's not a cure, it's a finger in the dyke. So let's give every poor bastard in the world a puppy. And massages help, so let's convert our Marine Corp to the Massage Corp, then use our soldiers to give everyone free massages. And free vacations? Studies confirm people get healthy from vacations.

JENNY. Okay . . .

AL. I mean, *hell*, I wish people didn't have to work. I wish we could all drink green smoothies all day.

JENNY. So let's do it.

AL. Yeah, you artists. All about the entitlement society, huh?

JENNY. We're entitled to health.

AL. On whose *dime*? I hate to break the news to you, but there's something out there called *competition*?

JENNY. I've heard of it.

AL. Let me tell you how it works. It is the job of the company next to you to steal your business and put you *out* of business. Winners are rewarded, losers are punished. And if you don't make enough money, you are punished with the loss of your company. Or job.

JENNY. That's not going to happen here.

AL. No? How do you think Seymour Felton came to work at Futo-Pharma? They *stole* him from another company because Jack offered him six-hundred thousand dollars to work for him. That other company is out a shitload of money and they are hurting. And if we don't make money to keep people like Seymour Felton, they'll get stolen by another company.

JENNY. Coulda, woulda, shoulda, huh? Things that aren't reality? No Seymour Felton?

AL. There's another thing you're wrong about. He left Futo-Pharma this morning.

JENNY. Who?

AL. Felton. Walked into Jack's office with his resignation letter and booked a flight for Israel.

JENNY. No.

AL. Oh, yes.

JENNY. But he's . . .

AL. What? Your last hope of coming up with something for Fleet? Now, maybe, he's gone to another company for more loot? Sure would be great if Futo-Pharma had unlimited money to find something for your kid? So maybe you see the value of money now?

JENNY. Did he leave for more money? I could pay him.

AL. Three million?

JENNY. What's it to me when I could lose a son? What's it to me when it could save somebody else's son?

AL. Do with your money what the hell you want. But don't give away something that doesn't belong to you.

JENNY. *Excuse me*, but I'm giving *my opinion*, that's all. Or maybe you think people don't have the right to give their opinion in the U.S.?

AL. As long as they're not under contract not to harm the company that pays them.

JENNY. It is *words*, nothing more.

AL. Two-billion dollars in word, in market cap.

JENNY. I'm that powerful, the two-billion dollar girl?

AL. Mr. Market thinks so. But close us down, say what you like!

JENNY. (*beat*) Did Seymour really leave?

AL. Yes.

JENNY. Dammit, dammit! He said he was working on something for Fleet . . .

AL. He was.

JENNY. And just crapped out and gave up. And took off.

AL. Well . . . *no* . . . only one of the three. He didn't give up. And didn't crap out. But he did leave.

JENNY.      What do you mean?

AL.           *(holds up bag)* He left this. With, uh . . . *somebody* at Futo-Pharma. Dunno who, if you take my meaning.

JENNY.      What is it?

AL.           Instruction says, “Take instead of *Crimsalus*. May reduce side effects. In water, one milliliter, three times daily.”

JENNY.      From Seymour?

AL.           Dunno. If you take my meaning.

JENNY.      Because the problem is his side effects? Can I have it?

AL.           No. I don’t give things away free.

JENNY.      What? What are you doing?

AL.           *This is not free*, you got that?

JENNY.      What the hell are you talking about! Get to the damn point.

AL.           Somebody left this at Futo-Pharma. Maybe a researcher who had multiple therapies and only one went to market. We don’t know anything about this bag. But I’ll . . . *trade* you for this.

JENNY.      For?

AL.           Your word that you’ll cut this *free* crap. There is a reason Futo-Pharma charges what it does and you damn well know what it is. And, by the way, we’ve also got the *recipe* for this so maybe more can be found. You get this bag if I get a promise.

JENNY.      What is this, some weird extortion?

AL.           My insurance you’ll follow the obligations you’re contracted to follow. Y’follow?

JENNY.      Let me see . . . If I lie about what I believe—I get that and maybe keep my son alive. In exchange, Futo-Pharma’s stock will go up, which means billions for the company. Meanwhile, some people die who might have been helped if they got *Crimsalus* free when they couldn’t afford it. Do I have that right?

AL.           That is so complicated.

JENNY.      You’re no dummy, Al. Work through it.

AL. Why must you do so much harm when others are trying to do you so much good?

JENNY. Sounds like a line from *Antigone*.

AL. I have no idea what you're talking about.

JENNY. How could you? (*beat*) Okay, let's say I can't be bought. But you have my son's medicine. You'll let him die?

AL. I thought you'd be Pro Choice. I give you Choice.

JENNY. You know, you just messed with the wrong girl. I am not a woman who lies. So stick this in your big shorts: I'm going to my friends—on *The View*, and newspapers—and tell them exactly the deal you made me: that you bargained my son's medicine for a few points on your stock price. Want to see the damage I can *really* do to your precious market cap? And you figured out yet that I don't lie?

AL. (*pause*) Know what we call that in my line of work? Pushback. (*gives bag*) It was all a joke! I'm crazy about your kid. Reminds me of mine. And don't worry, we've got plenty more where this came from.

JENNY. Nothing has changed, jackass.

AL. Come on. I thought humor was what you do.

JENNY. Not anymore. Thank Seymour for me.

END OF TWENTY

## SCENE TWENTY-ONE

SETTING: The office of Al Chase.

AT RISE: AL and DOUG take a meeting.

AL. I am screwed, thanks to Miss Sweetie Pie. If she goes to the press, it's over: for me, you, 285 employees, Jack McGunn . . .

DOUG. She will keep her word. She would go to them.

AL. And if we sued the crap out of her?

DOUG. Think she cares? There are people like that in the world.

AL. Who make me break out in hives. Why did you let me pull you off the account?

DOUG. Why *did* you pull me off?

AL. Like a dog chasing its tail . . . *think*. We need disaster relief from our own disaster. Talk to her.

DOUG. She too headstrong. Somebody's got to tell Jack.

AL. Can you imagine the billions he'll sue us for? Libel, lost market cap—at the start of his own trial! At the very moment he most needs good PR, the firm he hired hands him the worst PR of his life. Like giving somebody a dull hatchet to chop off their own nuggets.

DOUG. Damage control. Bad to good . . .

AL. Did you see his stock price? Like the Challenger.

DOUG. What if she's right? Al? What if we came at it *her* way? From greed to giving? *What if she's right?*

AL. She would be—in a fairy tale.

DOUG. Look at Jack's stock. It's already priced in the lost revenue for free *Crimsalus*. If this goes viral, Jack'll be slammed. And if he loses his trial—which bad press assures—he'll be slammed behind bars. So give it away, if you're poor. Ethiopia, Appalachia—who cares? We'll do something never before done—a drug, under patent, without competition, becomes *exactly* like Halloween candy for the poor. We could create so much goodwill that when people think of health—*when they think of trust*—there is only one company they turn to.

AL. The Miracle of Futo-Pharma. (*beat*) Nobody would believe that!

DOUG. Has anybody *tried*? Jenny may be more brilliant than all of us. She might generate so much good PR that every other product Jack sells flies off the shelves. For the hopeless, there is hope. For the weak, strength. For the poor, the riches of health. Use it.

AL. And for me, a way out of this swamp. What the hell . . . Go to her. Stop her. I'll go ask Jack.

DOUG. If he says, *no*?

AL. Then it's on to plan two: prepare him for a good, hard kick in the crotch.

*Branded*

DOUG. I'm on it.

AL. Jenny Bell, you won. Free health care medicine for the poor. Jesus, why doesn't somebody tie me down and whip me?

END OF TWENTY-ONE

## SCENE TWENTY-TWO

SETTING: Jenny's home.

AT RISE: DOUG is with FLEET, who is on a couch.

DOUG. That recovery didn't take long.

FLEET. We're guessing Seymour looked at my blood test, checked his data base, and found a better match. It's kind of what mom was thinking he'd do all along.

DOUG. You look good. All cleared up.

FLEET. Mom stopped calling me The Dalmatian. She said you should help yourself to the wine.

DOUG. Did she plant a vineyard here or something?

FLEET. Seems like it.

DOUG. Yeah, well, is she going to be happy with my news. Everybody happy. Happy ending.

FLEET. That'd be a change. I don't think mom likes happy endings. If you read her books, you'd see they all have these tragic endings.

DOUG. I'd like to.

FLEET. But you know what'd make her *really* happy? You being, like, her boyfriend. Think you could make that happen?

DOUG. Fleet, affairs of the heart . . .

FLEET. Love conquers all. And she's crazy about you.

DOUG. Let's just nail down this bit of business, okay? Future is . . .

FLEET. Don't be a wimp, Doug. Man up.

( *Jenny enters at the front door. She is subdued.* )

FLEET. Mom, great news! You have a friend.

DOUG. Surprise! I wanted to make it a surprise.

JENNY. It is.

DOUG. See how quickly things change?

JENNY. What happened?

DOUG. I got your account back. I am the man in charge.

JENNY. Oh? Wonderful.

DOUG. But that's not all. Are you ready for some really amazing news? I mean, *really amazing*.

JENNY. Always.

DOUG. You've won: free *Crimsalus* for the world! If you're poor. Futo-Pharma is taking your advice.

JENNY. They're . . .

DOUG. Jack is *all in*. Al met with him and Jack had a change of heart. Or change of *crotch*, I should say. Ha. Anyway, it's going to be given free all over the world to the indigent. Isn't that amazing?

JENNY. Of course, yes, great.

DOUG. Now, Jenny, I am ready to party down!

FLEET. Isn't that the bomb, mom? Wahoo!

JENNY. Good you told me now. I was just at Barb's and let her know what happen and she was booking me for *The View*.

DOUG. But nothing's gone out, right? No Twitter, no blogs?

JENNY. No. And I'll get right in contact with her. She'll be thrilled.

DOUG. You'll not only be the face of Futo-Pharma, but I wouldn't be surprise if you'd get nominated for a Nobel Prize. Why not!

FLEET. Wahoo! More friends!

JENNY. Great. Great.

DOUG.        *(pause)* You don't . . .

JENNY.        What?

DOUG.        I thought you'd be ecstatic. Jumping up and down. Big hug.

JENNY.        Of course, of course, I am. Here. *( hugs him )* Wahoo.

FLEET.        Mom, what is it?

JENNY.        It's great.

FLEET.        No, not that, *you*.

JENNY.        Oh. Oh, probably nothing. Just . . .

DOUG.        What?

JENNY.        Little trip to the doctor. The old T-cell count slipped. And I got this weird nosebleed. And I'm getting these splotches all over. But that's nothing. The world has *Crimsalus*! Let's pop my one-hundred dollar champagne. And—*yes*—I'm ready to party down!

END OF TWENTY-TWO

### SCENE TWENTY-THREE

SETTING:    A video screen.

AT RISE:    JENNY does a commercial. She either faces the audience and speaks, or she is broadcast to the audience.

JENNY.        “It's amazing how the world has changed. For the first time we're seeing good being done in places never imagined. A drug that will save millions is being distributed free to those in need all over the globe. Only one company has this level of compassion. Only one company puts humanity over profits. It is the miracle called Futo-Pharma. Making *Crimsalus* available to those in need begins the campaign so that those without hope will now have health. Those living in fear will now have strength. And those forsaken will be called forth to live in a caring world. Thank you, Futo-Pharma. And God bless you.”

END OF TWENTY-THREE

## SCENE TWENTY-FOUR

SETTING: Al's office.

AT RISE: Al paces and waits, tense. DOUG enters.

DOUG. Anything?

AL. Would I look like this if there were?

DOUG. But they've come out?

AL. Right now.

DOUG. I would have gone.

AL. Right, because you're more manly. Hey, somebody's got to keep a hand on the rudder. Business doesn't stop because a verdict is announced.

DOUG. They have a feel for it?

AL. Jack said that after Jenny finished testifying—and waxed on about how only because him millions of lives were saved, the jury was choking back sobs. So the defense got a little more hopeful.

DOUG. *I was choking back sobs.*

AL. Comes down to this: Jack guilty, he goes to jail and we go out of business. Jack innocent, we get more business than we can handle. And you, partner, become *Partner*.

DOUG. That doesn't mean that much now. I should probably tell you . . . uh, Al, I, I got offered a job. I might take it.

AL. Where?

DOUG. As I was helping with *Crimsalus* distribution, folks at Futo-Pharma told me they needed someone to handle the Asia operation. I thought, you know, I want to do some good now. I haven't said *yes* . . . but maybe.

AL. Working over there? Here?

DOUG. Mostly here. But flying off to India because that's where a lot of the SIRAD is.

AL. India?

DOUG.        Yeah, ever been?

AL.            Once.

DOUG.        Like it?

AL.            Not a lot.

DOUG.        Why?

AL.            Well, you don't know this . . . but I had a kid. Son. In college he wanted to do one of those college things and fly off and see the world, went to India with his friends. He was on a bus—and this happens a lot, rotten roads in India—and the bus tipped over on a mountain side. Few people killed, lots of screaming, lots of blood. But my kid wasn't too bad. Bloodied, broken arm. But the problem was some doctor in the local village had medicine, so he comes running out with these syringes full of painkiller and shoots everybody up, trying to stop this mass of screaming. Runs up to my son, who's laying down, and shoots him up. Well, you know, this is why the U.S. has the best medicines in the world. This is why we don't peddle our drugs for pennies on the dollar. That was a bad batch of painkiller. Probably cost a penny a shot. Thirty-six people dead three days later. Who you gonna sue? Here's a picture of my boy.

DOUG.        He . . . looks like Fleet.

AL.            Weird.

DOUG.        I'm sorry, Al.

AL.            Bad stuff happens. Can't predict it. That's why we make money, Doug, to get revenge on God. Beware the do-gooder, like that Indian doctor. Sometimes they're stupid, and sometimes they make *you* stupid. (*phone rings*) There it is. (*answers*) Hey . . . All done? . . . Okay . . . Bye." (*hangs up*)

DOUG.        Well?

AL.            Sure you want to leave? 'Cause next year you'll make a million dollars, *Partner*. And that's a lot of revenge. Jack McGunn is innocent on all counts. We should party like it's 1999.

END OF TWENTY-FOUR

## SCENE TWENTY-FIVE

SETTING: Jenny's apartment.

AT RISE: JENNY enters with DOUG. They've been drinking.

JENNY. Oh, boy. Where's the couch?

DOUG. Keep going . . . *that* direction . . . you're on the runway.  
Wheels down. Landing. Touch down!

JENNY. Ahhh . . . Did I drink too much? Rhetorical question.

DOUG. You drank enough.

JENNY. To get me happy. Not enough to pass out.

DOUG. When everyone is pushing drinks in your hand, what do  
your expect?

JENNY. I thought the FDA approval celebration was big. But to  
see Jack McGunn doing the bump and grind on that table? That is  
worth my salary.

DOUG. He was more lit than you are.

JENNY. Happy ending for once. Everybody happy.

DOUG. Right.

JENNY. You know who was missing?

DOUG. Who?

JENNY. Seymour! Where *was* he? They couldn't fly him in from  
Israel for this? He's Da Bomb.

DOUG. Ohhh. I guess you didn't hear.

JENNY. What?

DOUG. Ahh, in all the hubbub . . . Word came through . . .  
Seymour . . . died.

JENNY. . . . What . . . ?

DOUG. Was killed, actually. Odd you used the word *bomb*. A  
car bomb outside of Tel Aviv. They figure a terrorist.

JENNY. Oh, my god, no . . .

DOUG. I know.

JENNY. The lives that could have been saved.

DOUG. You said it. Butterfly wings. Can't plan for it.

JENNY. Brilliant man. I owe my life to him. Doug, life can hang by such a thread. You know, it was Seymour who really branded me. Now and forever I am of his 409.

DOUG. I think we all are.

JENNY. Bless him. He saved Fleet. (*then*) You know, I never asked you why *you* didn't have a son? Or daughter? You were married twelve years.

DOUG. You love your research.

JENNY. Do you hate kids?

DOUG. We put it off. Used birth control. Then when we decided we were ready for kids . . . my wife couldn't . . .

JENNY. Infertile? How about being dad to Fleet? He's crazy about you.

DOUG. That cart is waaayyy before the horse.

JENNY. At least there's a cart and a horse. Hey, I'm drunk so I can say this. I'll buy you. I've got the money.

DOUG. Love for sale.

JENNY. Now I've even got *more* money. I didn't tell you: Barb found a publisher for my books.

DOUG. You're kidding.

JENNY. This is the way the world works. You're nobody till you're somebody. And once you're a somebody, you're a somebody even if you're a nobody. That's why so much crap gets published. Talented somebodys.

DOUG. That actually makes sense.

JENNY. Think about it. Marrying me. I won't rush you. You have till tomorrow. But might I ask you one favor till then?

DOUG. If I said *no* you'd still ask.

JENNY. Will you kiss me? I haven't had a kiss in, like, forever. Except from buddy-boy. One kiss, it doesn't even have to be long.

DOUG. What if Fleet came in?

JENNY. He was the one who suggested it! He said, *get back home and makeout with Doug*. I'll call you when Al drops me off out front so I don't surprise you.

DOUG. Smart kid.

JENNY. Well? You can conquer your fear. It's just a kiss.

DOUG. You are inscrutable.

JENNY. And attractive, charming, talented, magnetic . . .

DOUG. That's all?

JENNY. No, I'm much more than that! I'm—

DOUG. What? (*pause*) What?

JENNY. Now I'm also . . . bleeding. Rats. (*gets towel*) Sorry, another nosebleed. Maybe not a good time for a kiss? Doggone. They're coming more and more. You know, when you've got something like SIRAD, staying clear of blood is a good idea. And, now that I think about it . . . I don't think it's the hooch . . . I'm suddenly not feeling too well. Rain check on the smooch?

*(Jenny falls over, unconscious. Doug runs to her.)*

DOUG. Jenny. Jenny. (*dialing 911*) "I need an ambulance please."

END OF TWENTY-FIVE

## SCENE TWENTY-SIX

SETTING: Hospital room.

AT RISE: FLEET, with AL and DOUG.

FLEET. You want something, Al? I'll order.

AL. Naw.

FLEET. Doug?

DOUG. I'm good.

FLEET. Chef and me are best buds. Nouveau American. Have you ever tried organic udon?

AL. Tried it? I ate it by the bucket in Japan.

FLEET. What about fish sausage with baked tofu and leek?

AL. What about prawn and crab with crispy squid? I got this place on the West side, it's a knockout.

FLEET. Let's get some.

AL. I'm on it. Take you there once your mom's settled in.

FLEET. Join us, Doug?

DOUG. I'm not much of a seafood guy.

FLEET. Ginger duck? All these places have that.

DOUG. We'll see. (*with phone*) They arrested somebody in the, ah, Seymour . . . *crash*. In Tel Aviv. Weird. It was an American. It wasn't even a Muslim.

AL. He must have had enemies.

DOUG. How could Seymour have enemies? He was a researcher. He came up with a drug to save millions of lives.

AL. I told you, it's a trillion dollar business. Easy to make enemies with that much money.

DOUG. How do you make enemies helping people?

AL. It's complicated.

DOUG. It's messed up.

AL. That's Big Pharma. Lots of secrets. Look at the trouble Jack got in. All kinds of things he wished people didn't find out.

DOUG. He was innocent.

AL. He was not guilty. Thanks to Jenny. But what do I know?  
( *then* ) Fleet, if you could pick anyplace in the world to go, where'd it be? If you could get the hell out of here now like I'd like to?

FLEET. Well, when you've sat on a couch for two years, you want to go everywhere.

AL. I'll take you.

FLEET. Deal. Hey, you know where I'd *really* like to go? Kenya. Ground Zero. Meet the monkeys who came up with SIRAD and look 'em in the eye and thank 'em for changing my life.

AL. I'll take you. Got a couple of lost years to make up for. Ever shoot a gun? We could bag a few Ibex while we're there.

FLEET. Never did.

AL. S'great. *Poom*. Cull the herd. Kids love it. It's ecological, too.

FLEET. Sounds like fun.

(*Jenny enters in a hospital gown.*)

JENNY. No one should stand, though the queen doth enter. Tis hardly the kind of train one might imagine from one so royal, but this is precisely what I wear while facing my subjects.

FLEET. How'd it go, mom?

JENNY. Sensational. Stop the blood, drain the blood, spin the blood. Could I talk to somebody about something other than my blood for a while? That's all those doctors want to talk about!

DOUG. Everything okay?

JENNY. It's *great*. Another day, another look at my boy.

FLEET. And they'll give you the adjusted *Crimsalus*?

JENNY.     Yep, only needs a tweak. Like diabetes: tweak the insulin.

SIRAD: tweak the *Crimsalus*.

FLEET.     That's good news.

JENNY.     Hey, you know what I need?

FLEET.     An audience?

JENNY.     A double cappuccino with an almond biscotti. Kiddo?

FLEET.     I'm on it. Al, a cappy?

AL.         Sure.

JENNY.     Can you go with him, Al?

AL.         Hm?

FLEET.     They need time. *You know*.

AL.         Oh. Yeah. Sure.

JENNY.     Don't rush. Keep him company, Al.

AL.         Right. Fleet, I'll take you to the shooting range. They  
even let loose live rabbits you get to bag.

FLEET.     Fun.

JENNY.     Hey, Al?

AL.         Yeah.

JENNY.     Bring me back a puppy. Or a marine.

AL.         Got your back, Sugar Pie.

*(Al and Fleet leave.)*

JENNY.     I really wanted to ask Al for a guardian, but I thought  
that'd be too forward.

DOUG.     Funny.

JENNY. No, humor is not what I do anymore. No time for it. And I've got some really ugly news for you: the wedding is off. The bride declines. Oh, you'll go on. Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the worlds, she walks into mine. You're getting on that plane with Victor where you belong.

DOUG. What is this?

JENNY. Be careful what you wish for. I wanted to come to Sinai for the Four Seasons health care. Now, for health, I'd gladly take the dingy confines of City Hospital.

DOUG. I don't get it.

JENNY. *It doesn't work.* It doesn't work. I am a victim of the cosmic pulling of the wool over the eyes. Of putting candy in a capsule. Even if you called it *Crimsgoogle*, it wouldn't work.

DOUG. What do you mean?

JENNY. My cell count is dropping, my blood isn't clotting, and my blood's all poisoned.

DOUG. Well, the *Crimsalus* can—

JENNY. *No*, the *Crimsalus* only a *patch*. Ever put your thumb on a drop of mercury? The SIRAD adjusts and finds new ways of attacking the blood. Of course, this was fast-tracked because Jenny Bell did such a magnificent job, so it was rushed to market before *Crimsalus* could be explored in the long-run. Felton-409 should be renamed *Temporalis* because you can trick the SIRAD—like with Fleet now—but then it attacks even harder. There is no cure, Doug. I am dying.

DOUG. We all are.

JENNY. I'll take your brand of death over mine any day.

DOUG. You're sure this is true?

JENNY. Best doctors in the country! They showed me a map of cases all over the world. Why do you think Seymour ran out? Took his money and went to Israel? It was pharmaceutical three-card Monte and I was their ace-in-the-hole. Now Jack's probably got his stock options cashed out—now that he's got his innocent verdict and his market cap—and he's probably flying over the islands to see which one he'll buy.

DOUG. It can't . . .

JENNY. *It is. (laughs)* Free *Crimsalus!* Hope for the hopeless!  
What a joke. I sold hope and change.

DOUG. Seymour was killed.

JENNY. Serves him right.

DOUG. Maybe somebody trying to shut him up . . .

JENNY. The liar.

DOUG. You're sure of this?

JENNY. *Go ask the doctors.* There are real ones here. I've got to lie down. I'm getting an earache . . .

DOUG. Now all of this money has gone into a drug that doesn't work. The time and resources . . .

JENNY. Getting and spending. Well, there's always religion.

DOUG. What can I do?

JENNY. Stop the do-gooders out there like me.

DOUG. No, if there's one thing everybody ought to have, at least it's medicine when they're sick. Run the pill machine, give 'em hope, even if that's *all* you can give them. That's what you gave me that.

JENNY. I did?

DOUG. I never thought . . . I never thought I'd be *fond* of somebody again.

JENNY. Fond? You're *fond* of me? Ou, a wee snowball.  
Sometimes those lead to an avalanche. Sure would be nice to be around for it.

DOUG. You don't know.

JENNY. Kinda, I do. I'm a truth-teller, remember?

DOUG. Medical miracles are being performed every day.

JENNY.        Sounds like one of my commercials: “If you’re seeking false hope, go no further than Jenny Bell, The Phony Face of Futo-Pharma. Hers is a special brand of snake oil, but so good for you!”

DOUG.        You’re brand’s good for me. And it’s not snake oil.

JENNY.        Hold me? Nobody wants to hold you when you’re sick. You can even put on gloves.

DOUG.        Stop joking.

JENNY.        You never wore gloves when you were around me. Kid gloves—*yes*—but no rubber gloves. I always loved that.

DOUG.        I want you to turn out fine, Jenny. I really want it. You’re your living would be my revenge on God.

JENNY.        Go for it. (*pause*) Help Fleet if he needs it?

DOUG.        Of course.

JENNY.        Good man. I’m not being funny.

DOUG.        I’m all about disaster relief. I’ll conquer this. Someone once told me, *love conquers all*.

JENNY.        What an extraordinarily decent fellow you are.

DOUG.        I don’t know. It just sort of feels like it’s in our stars.

JENNY.        Accidents happen. Sometimes good accidents, too. Not every butterfly causes disaster.

*fini*