

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

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

Sleek, compulsive, high-maintenance HILARY DARLING SWANSON, 52, skims through a rack of dresses at one of the Hampton's top designer venues. Even at the half-century mark, Hilary's figure has kept pace with the best of them. So naturally, she treats the task at hand like Vera Wang planning her fall line.

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

ARLENE

Incredible.

HILARY

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

ARLENE

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

HILARY

You're nothing but a pill.

A roving SALESWOMAN espies Hilary chinning a Ralph Lauren satin dinner dress with an exaggerated boatneck.

SALESWOMAN

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

HILARY

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

Arlene brandishes another selection.

ARLENE

Hilary, you think she has shoes to match this?

The dress calls to mind the shredded remnants of a power suit after a nuclear explosion.

HILARY

That's a mis-rack.

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

HILARY

Look over there.

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

ARLENE

Isn't that -

HILARY

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

ARLENE

Why? Nobody else is.

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

ARLENE (CONT.)

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

HILARY

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

Hilary marches off towards the fitting room.

ARLENE

I bet it matters to her.

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

HILARY (O.S.)

Arlene, where are you?

Like a tethered ball, Arlene stops dead in her tracks and the rescue mission is aborted. She grabs the first dress she sees and follows Hilary to the back of the store.

INT. FITTING ROOM - DAY

Hilary sashays out of her stall in the alluring boatneck. She checks the fit in a full-length mirror. It's perfect. Arlene makes sure the coast is clear before stepping out in her ensemble. Rather than a style of fashion, this number calls to mind a Bavarian windmill.

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

ARLENE

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

HILARY

You're not serious.

ARLENE

They have husky sizes.

HILARY

So, all you have to do is cut off the little bugle boy. What do you think? It's Ralph Loren. I like it.

Without warning, the actress sweeps into the room. She has several selections draped over her arm, plus the bulging Saks bag. She enters the middle of three stalls with an emphatic LOCK of the door. Curious, the sisters retreat back to their stalls on either side.

ARLENE'S STALL

As she redresses, Arlene hears the unexpected sound of SAWING, like a jeweler's file on plastic,. Then some fumbling with hangars. Now more sawing. A BEAT. Then the sound of a PURSE UNZIPPING and something being removed. There's a pop of a plastic bottle.

HILARY'S STALL

Trying not to pry, Hilary has ignored the activity next door. Leisurely removing her dress, she stops to wax philosophical at the sight of her bust in the mirror.

HILARY

I could have been an actress.

The sound of something SPILLING next door jars her back to reality. She looks down at the floor. A swarm of little capsules roll past the divider, right up to her Rockports.

FITTING ROOM

The middle stall opens and the actress flies out, as if late for a curtain call. Her Saks bag is ready to burst. The sisters emerge from their stalls in unison. They check the middle stall and find a pile of security tags on the bench, along with the ruby-studded belt.

HILARY

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

ARLENE

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

HILARY

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

Arlene grabs some tissue paper, scoops up the sawed tags and stashes them into her Steelers jacket.

ARLENE

I don't want her to get caught.

HILARY

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

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

ARLENE

Let's go.

Too shocked to argue, Hilary takes her purse and follows Arlene out. Moments, the one of security guards blasts into the room. He searches the stalls, find nothing really conclusive. He pulls out a two-way radio.

SHOP FLOOR

The second guard is shadowing the actress's getaway when he hears a disgruntled voice on his radio.

FIRST GUARD (O.S.)

Wait for the alarm.

The actress exits the store without a peep.

HAT SECTION

Arlene eyes an ELDERLY MATRON with a saddlebag-sized purse trying a felt hat with feathers. While the old dame is distracted, she dumps the tags into an open flap on the purse. The lady doesn't notice her at all.

Meanwhile, the shoe saleswoman we saw earlier is bearing down on Hilary. She waves a pair of high heels in the air. Hilary panics and bolts for the exit. Arlene catches up to her and they leave the store together.

EXT. GETTY AND CHASE - DAY

As the sisters reach daylight, a Jaguar driven by the actress burns rubber past the entrance and speeds away. The sisters make a dash for their Mercedes parked a little ways up the block. Hilary activates her remote car keys.

HILARY

Arlene, we could have been arrested.

ARLENE

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

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

Arlene cringes with guilt as the guards make an about face and go snare the wrong culprit. Hilary revs up the engine, lurches away from the curb and skids off down the road.

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

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

ARLENE

Who says the rich lead blasé, predictable lives?

HILARY

Of course, we don't. But it doesn't usually involve felonies at the street level. And since when did you become a shoplifter?

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

ARLENE

I don't steal. I wonder what she's doing in the Hamptons.

HILARY

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

Hilary points out the palatial estates along the highway.

ARLENE

More like Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution.

HILARY

Russia? What are you talking about?

ARLENE

I'm talking about that.

Arlene points out an estate with an elaborate manmade waterfall between Greek columns and large statues.

HILARY

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

ARLENE

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

HILARY

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

ARLENE

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

HILARY

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

ARLENE

I know what it is. The warlords fund their massacres with bribes from the mining companies.

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

ARLENE (CONT.)

Anyway, those investors should have seen it coming.

HILARY

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

ARLENE

The line was too long.

Hilary exits the highway, heads for a gated community on a hill.

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

An elevator door opens and DOUGLAS SWANSON, 60, wipes away cocaine residue from under his nose. Like his wife, Doug's oblivious to being middle aged. He's in stellar athletic shape and accentuates the physique with tight slacks and a silk shirt under a neatly trimmed leather blazer. Beside him, his BODYGUARD cuts off his exit to brush white powder off his clothes. Then Doug step out into the corridor.

INT. SWANSON'S PRIVATE OFFICE SUITE - DAY

The CEO blows into his spacious leather lair. From the floor to ceiling windows, we get a tantalizing sweep of the Manhattan skyline. An assortment of Japanese swords along the side wall. Some old, restored pinball machines near the windows. Behind a large walnut desk a surfboard is mounted. Below it, the company name on a plaque: "WAVE SECURITIES".

Doug sees his lawyer, NEIL FEINSTEIN, 68, seated on a sofa across the room. Facing Neil across a coffee table are two sullen-faced banking investigators, JEFFREY BROOKS and JIM PARKER. Both rise to meet the chief executive.

NEIL

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

DOUG

Fine.

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

BROOKS

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

Doug brings up the EBAY home page and logs in.

NEIL

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

PARKER

You're talking about James Ogadipo?

NEIL

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

BROOKS

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

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

PARKER

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

DOUG

(mumbling)

Like I knew what the banshees were up to.

BROOKS

What's that?

NEIL

Look, I can make this simple. The Malakoff mines promised good returns. And everybody knew it. The ore in the ground would have fetched at least \$800 million. Wait a minute... Here's the prospectus. It was all done on the up and up, just like every other deal we do here.

PARKER

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

NEIL

The stock topped out at a hundred thirty-five. That was preloaded for selloff on the Dow. What was happening on the ground had nothing to do with it.

BROOKS

Again, not what Mr. Ogadipo tells us.

NEIL

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

Brooks and Parker trade a look. Neither of them have a retort, although they doubt this explanation of events.

PARKER

Alright. We'll be in touch.

NEIL

Look forward to it, guys. Ciao.

Doug doesn't even notice when the men have left. He feverishly fires off another bid.

NEIL

Well, that went well. Except for the part where you got here an hour late. God, I have to take a leak.

DOUG

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

NEIL

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

DOUG

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

NEIL

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

DOUG

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

NEIL

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

DOUG

She'll spite me for a nickel.
Shit!

Neil walks behind Doug's desk, checks the screen as Doug types in another bid.

NEIL

What are you bidding on now?

DOUG

A small town in Michigan.

NEIL

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

Doug SHRIEKS in anger. He's lost the auction. He goes to the window and starts to unravel.

DOUG

It's just so devious, what she's doing. Like a cheetah waiting to lunge.

NEIL

You say she wants twenty million? That's a quarter of what you and Ogadipo made on this stock deal. And we'll mske a lot more than that on the back end. Once Ogadipo gets on that boat in a couple days, then we can relax.

DOUG
I'm taking care of this myself.

Doug dials his cell phone.

NEIL
Fine. Who're you calling?

DOUG
Sergey.

NEIL
What, are you sending your guard dogs out to rough up those agents?

DOUG
She needs to be taught a lesson.

NEIL
(swipes phone away)
What do you mean, a lesson? What's going on?

DOUG
Nothing. Give it to me.

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

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

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

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

NEIL
That better mean you're giving her the divorce. Otherwise, I'll turn you in, myself. Get some rest, Doug. And lay off the cocaine.

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

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

(end excerpt)

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