

POKER FACE

Written by

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Pilot for a half hour comedy series

EPISODE: "Grand Slam"

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**LOGLINE:**

Can a brilliant and beautiful brain expert help a low life, world champion card shark regain his 'poker face' after an accident destroys his social filter?

**COMPS:** *Scrubs* meets *Ted Lasso*

**MAIN CHARACTERS:**

CHERYL ROXBURY (30) - A doctor at the B.R.A.I.N. Institute.

BILLY 'THE BLANK' BOGNOSSO (27) - A world class poker player.

LEON HEADLY (33) - A doctor at the Institute and Cheryl's fiancé.

'UNCLE'PHIL TESTA (60) - An underworld character of color.

SANDY MAGGIORE (27) - A former hostess who loves Billy.

PROFESSOR REX BAGBY (65) - The head of the B.R.A.I.N. Institute

**SERIES OVERVIEW:**

'POKER FACE' is a single camera, half hour comedy that follows the repressed Dr. Roxbury's efforts to turn a foul-mouthed sow's ear into a socially acceptable silk purse. Being around the abrasive Billy teaches Cheryl to speak up and that its okay not to care so much about what other people think. And Billy learns that being a 'blank' may not be as rewarding as letting his feelings out.

'POKER FACE' is a comedy about the unexpected ways we can change each other. It's also a satire warning how too much political correctness can stifle our truth.

INT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Standing in front of an imposing collection of lab coats and suits, DR. CHERYL ROXBURY (30, black and struggling to stay composed) addresses the assembly.

CHERYL

The subject's name is William Bagnosso. Other-wise-known as 'Billy the Blank.'

INT. ARENA IN LAS VEGAS (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

At a Grand Slam Tournament, BILLY (27) sits at a poker table. He wears shades and an expression that reveals nothing.

CHERYL (V.O.)

That's him. He's about to win a million dollar prize in Vegas.

He stares down his opponent, BOBBY G. (50 and polyester-sweating). Billy adds a huge stack of chips to the pot.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And 'The Blank' is all in. It's up to Bobby G to call.

Bobby G can't cover it. He folds. Billy reveals his hand. It's junk. Twos and threes. The CROWD goes wild.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

He had nothing! 'The Blank' had NOTHING! He bluffed for the win!

Bobby G promptly faints. Confetti cannons BLAST. Billy's mouth shows the slightest upturn. He's pleased.

INT. BALLROOM IN VEGAS (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

Seated at a table, Billy signs autographs for a long line of FANS. He still wears his shades and his 'blank' expression. A pretty but trashy girl, SANDY (20s), tugs at Billy's arm.

SANDY

C'mon, baby. Let's go. Why don't we go someplace nice? Just you and me.

BILLY

Uncle Phil!

UNCLE PHIL (60, old school slick) rushes to him. Billy whispers something in his ear. Phil grins and nods.

INT. VEGAS HOTEL HALLWAY (FLASHBACK) - MORNING

Sandy, sipping a giant slushee, walks up to the suite and tries to open the door with her key. It doesn't work.

SANDY  
What the hell--?

The door whips open and a BELLMAN (22) wheels out two very pink and flowery bags.

SANDY (CONT'D)  
Hey! Those are mine.

The Bellman closes the door and walks off down the hall.

SANDY (CONT'D)  
(putting it together)  
Son of a bitch!

She throws her slushee against the door. It splatters all over her bags and her shoes. She SCREAMS with anger.

CHERYL (V.O.)  
Billy took off for Cabo San Lucas without telling her. This shows that his 'blank-ness' isn't just an act. It's a way of life.

EXT. CAFE IN CABO SAN LUCAS (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Billy and Uncle Phil share drinks with some GIRLS. Despite the reverie, Billy's stone-face has a tinge of sadness.

UNCLE PHIL  
You didn't need her. If you want your face licked, get a dog. Right?

Phil laughs. Billy doesn't. He just drinks.

EXT. OCEAN OFF OF CABO BEACH (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Uncle Phil pilots a boat, loaded with the GIRLS and booze. Tethered to the craft is Billy, parasailing above. He sips a Margarita as he impassively 'sails' along.

CHERYL (V.O.)  
Down in Cabo, the party raged on.

Phil drinks and flirts, not paying attention to steering.

CHERYL

And that's when it happened.

Billy looks up from his drink and sees a very large rock formation coming at him. Fast! His stony expression switches to one of 'Oh Shit.' CRASH!

BLACKOUT

FADE IN TO TITLE: 'POKER FACE'

INT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Cheryl continues her presentation. She switches the picture on the screen to an x-ray of Billy's badly dented head.

CHERYL

The force of the blow shattered his skull. There was major damage to the frontal occipital lobe.

She clicks the remote. A picture of Cheryl dancing like mad appears on screen. The assembly grumbles, confused.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Uh, no. That's my sister's wedding.

Mortified, she switches the image. More banged-up brains.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

After three surgeries he was stabilized and moved here for further therapy and research.  
(she clicks off the image)  
If I'm awarded the Dorfman grant I'll use the time and money to study the subject's ability to regain full functionality.

DR. HENRY PESKOFF (45, with an impressive comb-over) stands and speaks. He's clearly got a dog in the hunt.

PESKOFF

With all due respect to Dr. Roxbury, there is nothing new about her proposal. We've studied 'brain rejuvenation' for years and--

CHERYL

(loudly)  
If I may be allowed to finish!

Chastised, Peskoff sits. Cheryl glances into the crowd at DR. LEON HEADLY (33, and the only other black person in the room). Leon shakes his head with disapproval.

Undaunted, she clicks the remote with angry authority.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

What's unique about this case is what happened when Billy 'The Blank' woke up from his coma.

A video image of Billy in a hospital bed appears.

VIDEO ON SCREEN:

Billy's head is heavily bandaged. He's attached to an array of monitors. Dr. Roxbury is there with an UNSEEN ASSISTANT who shoots the video. Billy's eyes snap open.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Mr. Bagnasso? Can you hear me?

BILLY

Huh. I--  
(getting upset)  
What the hell!!!!

CHERYL

It's all right. Stay calm.

BILLY

Calm? CALM! Where the hell am I?  
(looking under the sheet)  
What's that sticking in my junk?

CHERYL

It's a catheter.

BILLY

Get it out of there. Call the doctor! Get me a doctor!

CHERYL

I'm your doctor.

BILLY

No no. Get me an old, bald jew!

CHERYL

What?!

BILLY

You're not touching my man parts! I want an old, bald jew. Now!

CHERYL

Mr. Bagnosso, you don't know what you're saying. You've had a head injury. You need to settle down.

During this, Billy looks at a TV and sees a dog food ad.

BILLY

Puppies!

Billy instantly bursts into tears.

BACK IN THE AUDITORIUM:

Cheryl freezes the image of his anything but 'blank' face.

CHERYL

The severe damage to his amygdala has completely disabled his social filter. He's gone from 'blank' to being an emotional open book.

(stepping forward)

I believe he can be trained to grow a new 'filter.' With your support I intend to prove that the will is more important than the wiring. I hope you'll choose me. Thank you.

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - DAY

Soon after, Cheryl and Leon are walking briskly down a hall.

LEON

Your whole manner was too abrasive. Especially with Dr. Peskoff.

CHERYL

He interrupted me.

LEON

He's on the board! You can't talk to him that way.

CHERYL

Why? Because I'm black?

LEON

No.

CHERYL

Because I'm a woman?

LEON

No. I mean, yes. Maybe a bit of both. I'm not saying this as your fiancé. I'm saying this as your mentor. You have to be polite. And that video was totally offensive. All the talk of 'old, bald Jews.'

CHERYL

It was an illustration of how little social awareness he has.

LEON

Have you looked at our board? Most of them are 'old, bald Jews.' I knew you weren't ready to head up a team. I've been here twice as long as you and I'm not ready.

CHERYL

Well, that's you. Not me.

LEON

(stopping)

What the hell does that mean?

Seeing she's bruised his ego, she backtracks.

CHERYL

It means that maybe you're not ready but I am. That's all.

LEON

What I saw today was not someone who's 'ready.' I saw someone who was impertinent and disrespectful.

CHERYL

Are you saying that as my mentor or my fiancé?

LEON

Both. I'm just looking out for you. I love, Cherrie. I really do. You have so much...potential.

(looking at his watch)

I'm late for a consult.

CHERYL

Okay. Hey, how about we go out tonight and celebrate?

LEON

Celebrate what?

CHERYL  
My presentation.

LEON  
Sure. I guess. Pick a place.

He moves off. Cheryl is left alone, drained and defeated.

EXT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE - DAY

A rental car drives up to the entrance. Inside the car, Sandy checks her phone and sees a photo of the institute in an article about Billy. Yup. This is the place.

She pulls up to the gate and presses the intercom button.

SANDY  
Hey! I wanna see Billy.

VOICE  
Billy?

SANDY  
Billy 'The Blank.' He's my guy. At least I think he is. I read that he's in there.

VOICE  
I'm sorry. The institute is not open to the public. We can't--

SANDY  
Look. I need to see him. I gotta know what's going on with us.

VOICE  
This isn't a dating service, Miss. It's a foundation for neurological research.

SANDY  
Yeah well-- That's your problem!

Sandy floors the gas and drives over hedges around the gate.

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - DAY

Cheryl moves toward Billy's room. Seeing her, 'Uncle' Phil rushes at her. He's dressed like the slimy card shark he is, complete with a porkpie hat and tooth pick in his mouth.

UNCLE PHIL

Hey you! Mrs. Doctor lady! How come  
I can't get in to see him?

CHERYL

I told you yesterday. Only staff  
and immediate family can go in.

UNCLE PHIL

Well, I may not be too 'immediate'  
but I'm all the family he's got.  
And I want to see him. Pronto!

CHERYL

He's really in no condition to see  
people.

UNCLE PHIL

Why not?

CHERYL

Because he's easily disoriented and  
emotionally unstable.

UNCLE PHIL

So he's awake. That's great!

He moves to Billy's door but Cheryl blocks him.

CHERYL

How did you get in here?

UNCLE PHIL

I greased some palms and asked  
around. What's the difference?

CHERYL

You can't just 'hang around.'  
(moving him away)  
Leave your number at reception and  
I'll call when you can see him.

UNCLE PHIL

Oh no. I invested a lot of time in  
that kid. And I'm gonna see him.

Moving to it, Phil yanks on the door. It doesn't open.

CHERYL

The door's locked.

UNCLE PHIL

Don't you think I can see that?

Phil goes back to yanking on the door.

CHERYL

If you don't stop it I'll have to call security.

UNCLE PHIL

Go ahead. Call'em.

Phil starts picking the lock. Cheryl pulls out her iPad.

CHERYL

We did a background check on you. To see if you're really a relative. (reading from it) Phillip Alan Testa. Born in 1965 in Pittsburgh. Dropped out of high school to gamble full time. In 2010 you were barred from every casino in the country for card counting and recurring lewd behavior.

UNCLE PHIL

(while picking the lock) Hey, I thought the chick was into me. Live and learn.

CHERYL

Then you latched onto Billy. And became his 'coach.'

UNCLE PHIL

I'm not just his coach. I'm his 'uncle.' His protector.

CHERYL

You were doing a heck of a job 'protecting' him when you slammed his head into those rocks.

UNCLE PHIL

And your point is?

CHERYL

The point is I want you out of this building. Or I'll call the police.

Phil doesn't like to be threatened. He stops jimmying the lock and moves close to her. Very close.

UNCLE PHIL

Look girlie. You don't know nothing about that kid. He's a mess. And you ain't gonna 'fix' him.

CHERYL

I'm sure as hell going to try.

UNCLE PHIL

Just because you wear a white coat  
that don't make you God.

CHERYL

And just because you have a tooth  
pick that doesn't make you tough.

UNCLE PHIL

Don't cross me, lady. Or you'll  
find out just how tough I am.  
(moving off)  
Tell Billy I'm here. Waiting.

Cheryl watches him go off down the hall. She stands, arms  
folded. Defiant on the outside, frightened on the inside.

INT. BILLY'S WARD - DAY

Billy's sitting up in bed. He's nervously riffling a deck of  
cards. He watches HECTOR (30, a male nurse) check his vitals.

BILLY

Now you look like a doctor. But  
you're a nurse, right?

HECTOR

That's right.

BILLY

Boy, that must've been some talk  
you had with your folks. "Mom, Dad.  
I want to be a nurse." They must've  
thought you were gay.

HECTOR

I need you to sit still.

Billy bursts out laughing.

BILLY

Ha! Nailed it, right? You are gay.  
Are you the one who put in that  
cather-rater thing? So you saw my  
junk. Impressive, right?

HECTOR

Please be still.

BILLY

I can't 'be still.' I want to get  
outta here. When am I gettin' out?  
(getting agitated)  
I wanna go home! Now! Home! Now!

Cheryl enters and rushes to the bed. Hector intercepts her.

HECTOR

He's been like this all morning.  
Should I sedate him?

CHERYL

No. Did he sign the consent form?

HECTOR

He says he doesn't want treatment.

CHERYL

He's confused. It's time I start to  
get him acclimated. Standby.  
(moving to the bed)  
Billy! How are you doing?

BILLY

I need to get outta here. Now! I  
got a tournament in two weeks.

CHERYL

Do you know what day it is?

BILLY

Uh. It feels like a Wednesday. Am I  
right? I bet I am.

Cheryl sits on the bed next to him.

CHERYL

Billy, after your accident you went  
into a coma. You were asleep for  
three months.

BILLY

Three months? You mean--  
(tearing up)  
I missed Christmas?

Billy burst into tears, crying uncontrollably. Hector moves  
in with the needle but Cheryl waves him off.

CHERYL

Yes, you did. But the good news is  
you're alive. You almost died. But  
you kept fighting.

BILLY  
 (calming down)  
 My head hurts. I hit my head,  
 right? You got any aspirin?

Cheryl swings a monitor into place. She shows him a picture of his brain with a large black area in the front.

CHERYL  
 An aspirin won't cure what you  
 have. Look.  
 (pointing at the screen)  
 You slammed into a rock ledge. Some  
 of the granite is so deeply  
 embedded in your Neocortex that we  
 had to leave it there.

BILLY  
 So you're sayin' I got rocks in my  
 head?

CHERYL  
 To put it crudely, yes. What do you  
 remember about the accident?

BILLY  
 I was in Mexico with Uncle Phil. Is  
 that where we are? That would  
 explain the gay, Mexican nurse.

HECTOR  
 I'm not Mexican. I'm Puerto Rican.

BILLY  
 But you are gay, right? You got a  
 boyfriend?

HECTOR  
 (irritated, to Cheryl)  
 Can I sedate him now?

CHERYL  
 (to Billy)  
 We're not in Mexico, Billy. You  
 were moved here, to San Jose, to be  
 at the institute.

BILLY  
 Institute?

Cheryl points to the initials on her smock. B.R.A.I.N.

CHERYL

Yes. This is a foundation for the study and cure of neurological disorders. See?

(pointing at the letters)

The British American Institute of Neurology.

BILLY

That don't make any sense.

CHERYL

The doctors thought it was best. So we could study your--

BILLY

No. The letters. They're wrong. It should be BAIN. Not BRAIN.

CHERYL

(confused)

What? I don't--

BILLY

You can't just put the period anywhere you want. You said British American. B. A. Not B. R. A.

HECTOR

Ha! He's right.

CHERYL

Regardless. The doctors in San Diego thought your best chance to make a full recovery was to send you here.

BILLY

To the BAIN Institute.

Hector laughs. Billy laughs with him.

CHERYL

Yes. The Brain Institute--

BILLY

That's another thing. If institute is part of the whole name thing you can't use it again. It's not an 'institute institute.' Am I right?

HECTOR

(laughing)

That's true!

BILLY

For a bunch of 'brain' people  
you're not too sharp.

Hector is really laughing now. Cheryl scowls at him.

CHERYL

Hector, please leave us alone.

HECTOR

Okay. Catch you later, Billy

BILLY

Adios, Nurse Ratchet.

Still laughing, Hector leaves the ward. Cheryl draws close to him, adopting her most sympathetic tone.

CHERYL

Billy, I'm sure you've noticed some  
changes since your accident.

BILLY

Except for the headaches and this  
funnel in my salami I feel fine.

CHERYL

The injury to your brain was very  
serious. During the surgery the  
doctors removed parts of the  
frontal lobe that were severely  
damaged. One of those parts was in  
the area of your social filter.

BILLY

My what?

CHERYL

The part of the brain that lets you  
choose how to react to things. For  
instance.

She waves her hand in front him. Billy recoils in terror.

BILLY

AAAH! What the hell are you doin'?

CHERYL

I introduced the stimulus of my  
hand and you reacted as if I was  
going to hit you. If your social  
filter was working properly you'd  
know I wasn't going to do that.

BILLY

So, you're screwin' with me? That's not nice.

CHERYL

I'm just trying to show you how vulnerable you are. We can't re-introduce you to society until you rebuild and relearn how to act.

BILLY

Look, I know you're trying to help me. You seem smart. Real smart. And you got nice set of maracas on ya.  
 (catching himself)  
 Oh God! I-- I'm so sorry.  
 (bursting into tears)  
 I don't know what I'm saying.

CHERYL

Exactly. But I can help you. The amazing thing about the brain is that it can rebuild itself.

BILLY

(trembling)  
 I'm scared. I want to go.

CHERYL

You can't go. If you walk out that door you'll be defenseless. Everything will be a threat and--

Billy looks over at the tray table. He beams with delight.

BILLY

Pudding! Oh wow. I loooove pudding. Can I have some pudding? Please?

Startled but sympathetic, Cheryl smiles.

CHERYL

Sure.

INT. INSTITUTE BREAK ROOM - DAY

PROFESSOR REX BAGBY (65, fussy and flirtatious) steeps a cup of tea when Leon enters and goes to the vending machines.

LEON

Professor Bagby, when will the board be making their decision about the grant?

BAGBY

Someone's an eager beaver.

LEON

It's just that all of us on team Yakimoto are eager to get the funds and start our work.

BAGBY

Well, I wouldn't be too hasty.

LEON

Dr. Yakimoto's study is ground breaking. His idea to use hypnosis to cure erectile dysfunction is one the world has been waiting for.

Leon slides his credit card in the machine. Bagby sighs.

BAGBY

Sad to say, the world will have to remain boner-less a while longer.

LEON

What do you mean?

BAGBY

Between you, me and the vending machine, the board has made their decision. Yakimoto is out.

LEON

What?

BAGBY

I'm so sorry. However, you'll be happy to know that your fiancé, Dr. Roxbury, made it to the final four.

LEON

How can that be?

BAGBY

The board thinks a high profile case like Billy 'The Blank' will raise the profile of the institute and help us raise money. So--

LEON

But her proposal is so...lacking.

Leon punches a button. The bag of chips he wants gets stuck.

BAGBY

I'm curious. Why aren't you a member of her team?

LEON

She wouldn't let me. She was afraid our relationship would suffer if we worked together.

Leon bangs on the machine to dislodge the bag of chips.

BAGBY

Oh. I see. Can't risk any trouble in paradise. Can we?

(moving close to him)

Please don't tell anyone what I told you. The official announcement isn't until tomorrow.

(moving very close)

And I wouldn't want anyone to accuse me of being...indiscreet.

Unsettled by his manner, Leon turns back to the machine. He violently shakes it but the chips won't drop.

BAGBY (CONT'D)

While the board didn't see merit in the Yakimoto proposition, I myself find an impotence cure fascinating.

(hand on his shoulder)

Tell me. Is it a theory you've had to practice yourself? First hand?

LEON

(flustered)

What? No! I don't have that. I can assure you. I do not need any help.

Bagby gives the vending machine a perfectly placed nudge with his elbow and the chips fall. Annoyed, Leon walks away.

BAGBY

Don't you want your chips?

LEON

I'm not hungry.

INT. INSTITUTE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Sandy is arguing with a FEMALE RECEPTIONIST (20s) as a SECURITY GUARD (40) stands by on alert.

RECEPTIONIST

There are no 'patients' here, Miss.

SANDY

Listen, this guy ran off. But I know he cares for me. He used to cry himself to sleep in my arms.

(seeing Phil inside)

There! He knows him. Hey! You! Uncle Phil!

The Guard stops her from running after him.

GUARD

Miss, you have to stay back. This is a secure area.

SANDY

Then how'd that creep get in?

Uncle Phil jogs over to them.

UNCLE PHIL

Let her go, Captain. I'll deal with this. How are you Sandy?

SANDY

I'm friggin' pissed. That's how I am. You two left me stranded.

UNCLE PHIL

I left you some money.

SANDY

I don't want money. I want an answer. And I want Billy!

UNCLE PHIL

(moving her off)

Why don't we discuss this outside?

Phil motions to the GUARD to call someone.

EXT. INSTITUTE - DAY

Moments later, Sandy is being cuffed and loaded into a police car. She screams at Phil who is standing with the Guard.

SANDY

God damn it! You can't do this to me. He's my guy. Not yours! MINE!

The door SLAMS. The car takes off as Phil turns to the Guard.

UNCLE PHIL

The road to romance is paved with  
disappointments.

GUARD

Ain't it the truth.

Phil jams a twenty into the Guard's hand as he walks inside.

EXT. RONA ROSA RESTAURANT IN SAN JOSE - NIGHT

From outside the upscale Mexican restaurant, the sounds of a  
Mariachi Band playing a festive song can be heard.

INT. RONA ROSA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

As the MARIACHI BAND serenade the diners, Cheryl toasts Leon  
with a Margarita at their table. She's exuberant. He is glum.

CHERYL

To the Dorfman Grant. May the best  
man, or woman, win!  
(noticing his mood)  
You okay, babe?

LEON

Yeah. I had a run in with Bagby. It  
was-- It's not important.

CHERYL

I spent more time with Billy today.  
He's so vulgar. And honest. I'm not  
sure if that's a result of the  
trauma or if it's his nature.  
That'll be a central focus of my  
study when I get the grant.  
(catching herself)  
I mean if I get the grant. Can't be  
too 'impertinent' right?

LEON

Can we not talk about the grant  
tonight? Please?

CHERYL

Sure. I'm just nervous. This is  
life changing stuff. If I won,  
maybe all those very white guys in  
their very white coats would treat  
me better. More like a colleague.

LEON  
 (growing angry)  
 Look. Can we just--?

CHERYL  
 You don't get it. You're a guy. And  
 you're rockstar there. That's why  
 you'll probably win it all.

LEON  
 Would you please stop talking? I'd  
 like to eat our dinner in peace!

Cheryl is startled silent. Just then, the Mariachis stroll  
 over to their table.

SINGERS  
 (singing and playing)  
 Ay yi yi yi! Canta Y No Liores.

Leon shoots them a 'get the hell out of here' look. They  
 immediately stop playing.

LEADER  
 (to the band)  
 Okay boys. Take cinco.

INT. CHERYL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cheryl and Leon are in bed. They are trying to make love but  
 something isn't working. Leon stops.

CHERYL  
 What's wrong, sweetie?

LEON  
 Nothing it's just that-- I'm just  
 not feelin' it babe. Sorry.

He gets up out of bed and moves to get dressed.

CHERYL  
 Hey. Don't give up. We're supposed  
 to be celebrating. Why don't you  
 put the brilliant Dr. Yakimoto's  
 theory into practice?

LEON  
 (pulling on his underwear)  
 Not funny, Cheryl.

CHERYL

No. I mean it. Isn't part of his theory to align your thoughts with your emotions?

LEON

Yeah. So?

CHERYL

So? Do that. Talk dirty to me.

LEON

I'm not in the mood.

CHERYL

We've never done this. We're always so damned proper. Let's try it. Say something.

LEON

Like what?

CHERYL

Something nasty. Like, "You got a nice set of maracas."

LEON

No. The decision is made.

CHERYL

All right. I'll try. "You want to park that dinghy in the harbor?"

LEON

(furious)

Stop it! The board made their decision. You're in and I'm out. There. You happy?

Cheryl is stunned but thrown off by his mood.

CHERYL

Hell yeah. You bet I'm happy. I'm friggin' thrilled. Aren't you happy? For me, I mean.

LEON

I'm delighted. Congratulations.

Leon angrily continues pulling on his clothes.

CHERYL

Come on. Stop. This doesn't change anything.

LEON

It changes everything. I was your mentor. And I was going to be your husband.

CHERYL

You're breaking up with me?

LEON

I don't know. Maybe.

CHERYL

This is crazy. You can't let this destroy what we have. Come on, baby. We're the same two people we were yesterday. Nothing's changed.

He exhales and moves back to her.

LEON

You're right. I'm sorry. I can't let this get the better of me. You and me, we're the same. Right?

CHERYL

Right. Exactly the same.  
(he leans in for a kiss)  
Except that I won and you lost.

LEON

(back to furious)  
That's it! I'm leaving. You want to gloat? You can do it by yourself.  
(pulls on his shoes)  
And you better be careful, Cheryl. Hanging around that low-life, head case has made you forget how to be a lady. And show respect. When you remember how to do that, call me.

He storms out. Cheryl exhales. She reaches for a glass of wine and sips it. After a second she laughs to herself.

CHERYL

(imitating Billy)  
Pudding. I loooooove pudding.

EXT. SPORTS BAR IN SAN JOSE - NIGHT

Seated in a nearly empty sports bar is Sandy. She's downing her third wine spritzer as she pours her heart out to JEFF (35), the bartender, who pretends to listen as he closes up.

SANDY

You know, hope is a horrible thing. It's why I hate Christmas so much. All that bright, shiny paper never matches up with the crap that's inside. But I guess you gotta have it. Hope, I mean.

JEFF

Last call.

SANDY

I gave up a great hosting gig to run off with this guy. And what do I get for it? Locked out. And locked up! It's that Uncle of his. He's the one that turned Billy against me.

She sips her drink as Jeff puts a check down in front of her.

JEFF

\$18.50

Angered, she digs in her purse and puts down a twenty.

SANDY

What is it with you guys? Why can't you talk to people? Why is talking about your feelings so God damned difficult?

BARNEY (70), an old drunk at the bar, chimes in.

BARNEY

I got feelings. You want to hear feelings? I got lots of'em.

SANDY

No. Thanks. I want to hear Billy's feelings. I know he's got a lot going on inside that blank thing he does. I can see it in his eyes.

(to the bartender)

I keep hoping and praying that he'll suddenly open up and be, like, normal. You know?

Jeff picks up the twenty.

JEFF

Good luck with that.

SANDY

I don't need luck. I was lucky to meet him. Now I need a miracle.

INT. BILLY'S WARD - NIGHT

In the darkened ward, Billy is sitting up at a table playing cards with Hector.

BILLY

Deal'em out. Come on, Nancy-pants.

HECTOR

Would you stop calling me that?

BILLY

It's nothing to be ashamed of. So you like backdoor action. So what?

HECTOR

I married the love of my life two years ago. And, yes, he's a man.

BILLY

Ha! I knew it. I could tell. You know how? You're very tidy.  
(looking at his cards)  
Oh boy! Man! Wowee!

He shifts from joyful to furious, slamming the cards down.

HECTOR

What's the matter?

BILLY

I'm totally screwed. Ruined!

HECTOR

Why?

BILLY

I got all giddy over my hand! I used to be able to control that. Now I'm a walking 'tell.' God dammit!

Billy flips the table over. The cards go flying. He sinks in the chair and starts crying. Moved, Hector pats his back.

HECTOR

It's okay. You'll get better. You just have to try.

BILLY  
 (crying)  
 I can't. I got nothin'. Nothin'.

HECTOR  
 You got me. I'm here for you. But  
 if you call me 'Nancy-pants' one  
 more time I'll knock your teeth in.

Billy goes from crying to laughing. Hector laughs with him.

HECTOR (CONT'D)  
 Come on. Let's give it another try.

BILLY  
 Okay okay.  
 (struggling to remember)  
 Hector.

Hector smiles and sets up the table.

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Listening in by the locked door is Uncle Phil. He rolls the  
 toothpick around in his mouth, waiting to make his move.

EXT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE - MORNING

Cheryl drives into the parking lot. She gets out of her car,  
 dressed to impress in a suit, and struts toward the building.

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - MORNING

Cheryl walks toward Billy's room. Spotting her, Leon runs up.

LEON  
 Big day.  
 (she doesn't respond)  
 You look great.

CHERYL  
 Thank you.

LEON  
 I'm...really sorry, Cherrie. I let  
 my ego get the better of me. I  
 should have celebrated with you.

Cheryl looks around and becomes alarmed.

CHERYL

Wait a minute. Something's wrong.

LEON

Something was wrong. Me. And I want to join your team.

CHERYL

No. Where's Uncle Phil?

LEON

Oh yeah. He was standing by the door. He said he needed to see his nephew. It was an emergency. So I--

CHERYL

What?! No!

She rushes to Billy's door and uses her ID to open the lock.

INT. BILLY'S WARD - MORNING

Cheryl bursts in and finds Uncle Phil with Billy. He's disconnected from the machines, pulling on a fresh shirt.

CHERYL

What's going on?

BILLY

Hi Doc. This is my Uncle Phil.

CHERYL

We've met.

(to Phil)

What the hell are you doing?

UNCLE PHIL

I'm springin' him.

CHERYL

(panicking)

But-- You can't. I need him. He needs me.

UNCLE PHIL

That's what you say. He says he wants to go home so we're goin'.

CHERYL

But you have no right--!

Phil waves a sheet of paper in front of her.

UNCLE PHIL

This little piece of paper says I do. Power of attorney. He just signed it.

Leon walks in during this.

CHERYL

That can't be legal.

UNCLE PHIL

It's more legal than you forcing him to stay here.

(to Billy)

You ever give her permission to treat you?

BILLY

I don't think so. I was out cold.

(showing the shirt)

Hey Doc. Nice, right?

LEON

(to Cheryl)

You never got his permission?

CHERYL

It's just a technicality.

LEON

A very important technicality. How do you expect to win the grant if you don't even have his permission?

UNCLE PHIL

What grant?

LEON

She's in the running for a \$3 million dollar research grant to prove she can unscramble your nephew's eggs.

UNCLE PHIL

\$3 million bucks! Man!

Cheryl moves close to Billy who is pulling on his sneakers.

BILLY

Is that your boyfriend? Christ! He's a real jerk.

CHERYL

Forget about him. You have to stay.  
We've just started your treatment.

BILLY

Look. It's not about you. I know I  
said that thing about how I wanted  
an 'old, bald jew.' I only said  
that because one of my step-dads  
was an old, bald jew named Gary. I  
really liked him. And I like you.  
But Uncle Phil hates you. Right?

UNCLE PHIL

That's right.

LEON

You totally blew it, Cheryl. I told  
you weren't ready. I told you--

CHERYL

(blowing up)

You told me, yes! You told me over  
and over.

LEON

The ceremony's in twenty minutes.  
What the hell are you going to do?

CHERYL

I don't know. But you're not  
helping. So, as my mentor and my  
fiancé, I want both of you to get  
the hell out of here. Now!

LEON

(horrified)

I don't know you anymore.

Leon walks out. While Billy struggles to tie his shoes, Uncle  
Phil pulls Cheryl aside.

UNCLE PHIL

Listen, sweetheart. I'd hate to see  
you lose all that money.

CHERYL

I don't care about the money. He  
can't function in the world. Not  
yet. He needs time to recover.

UNCLE PHIL

I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you treat him if you cut me in for ten percent of that dough.

CHERYL

I can't do that.

UNCLE PHIL

Sure you can.

CHERYL

It's foundation money. If I misuse those funds I could go to jail.

UNCLE PHIL

We can find somebody smarter than my idiot cousin to do the books.

CHERYL

I am not going to be blackmailed. Don't you have any decency?

UNCLE PHIL

Nope. None. You give me ten percent or it's bye-bye Billy boy.

INT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM - DAY

The room is packed with the staff of the institute and the members of the board. Professor Bagby is onstage at a podium.

BAGBY

It's with great pride that I'd like to announce the finalists for this year's Dorfman Foundation grant. After much careful deliberation the board has selected four candidates.

Cheryl breathlessly arrives and stands in the back of the auditorium. She looks completely spent and undone.

BAGBY (CONT'D)

The candidates in the running for the \$3 million dollar grant are Dr. Martin Abeles for his proposed study of what makes someone a dog or a cat person.

The assembly applauds. Cheryl drops her head in anguish.

INT. INSTITUTE HALLWAY - DAY

Hector is wheeling Billy out toward the reception area. Uncle Phil walks next to him.

UNCLE PHIL

You missed a few big tournaments.  
But there's plenty more coming up.

BILLY

(looking around)  
Where's the Doc?

UNCLE PHIL

Forget about her. I gotta get you  
back up to speed. I'll announce a  
comeback tour. 'The Blank is back!'

Billy looks around, growing agitated.

BILLY

Hector! Where's Dr. Cheryl? I want  
to say good bye to her.

HECTOR

She's in the auditorium. They're  
having a big ceremony.

BILLY

Take me there.

INT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM - DAY

The applause dies down as Professor Bagby continues.

BAGBY

And finally, Dr. Cheryl Roxbury,  
for the proposed study of--

CHERYL

Wait. Stop!

Cheryl runs to the front of the auditorium and goes up on stage as the crowd murmurs confusion.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

Professor Bagby, I need to withdraw  
my proposal from consideration.

BAGBY

(shocked)  
Do you mind telling us why?

CHERYL

My patient has decided to decline treatment. I'm terribly sorry.

BAGBY

This is most irregular. Are you certain you wish to withdraw?

CHERYL

Yes. I'm sorry. I really wanted to help this patient but--

LEON

Tell them the truth.  
(standing up)  
She never got his permission. She went ahead without it.

The crowd murmurs. Dr. Peskoff, comb-over in place, stands.

PESKOFF

This is an outrage! It's totally unfair to the other teams who prepared more carefully and were passed over. She needs to go!

The upset in the assembly grows. During this Hector wheels Billy into the back of the auditorium. Uncle Phil tags along.

BAGBY

Dr. Peskoff, please let's keep order. She said she was sorry.

PESKOFF

I don't care. Dr. Roxbury must be punished. This kind of carelessness can't be tolerated.

The angry murmurs from the lab coats infuriate Cheryl.

CHERYL

Dr. Peskoff, I couldn't get his permission. He was unconscious.

PESKOFF

You showed very poor judgement. And that poor judgement reflects badly on us all. I propose we vote to expel her from the institute.

LEON

Peskoff is right! Let's vote!

The anger in the crowd builds. Cheryl loses her shit.

CHERYL

Stop! Look! I get it. Dr. Headley and Dr. Peskoff are pissed because my team got selected and their's didn't. But I--

PESKOFF

My study of the effect of stress on baldness has great interest.

CHERYL

Maybe to you, chrome dome!

Cheryl is shocked at her own outburst. The crowd grumbles with outrage while Billy laughs his head off.

PESKOFF

(furious)

This woman has no respect for me or this institution. She needs to go. All who agree with me say 'Aye!'

The majority call out 'Aye.' Including Leon. Cheryl sees it.

PESKOFF (CONT'D)

Those who are against her removal--

BILLY

No! No God damned way!

Everyone turns to see who it is. Hector wheels Billy up to the front of the room. Uncle Phil stays in the back.

Billy struggles to get out of the chair, Hector helps him up.

HECTOR

This is Billy 'The Blank' Bagnosso. A world champion poker player. And a terrific patient.

BILLY

Thanks Hector.

(to the crowd)

What the hell's going on here? All this chick ever did was try to help me. If I had any manners, which I don't, I'd be thanking her. But you crusty, old assholes should know better. You should be nice to her. Look! She wore a suit!

BAGBY

With all due respect, Mr. Blank.  
She misled our committee in  
pursuit of the \$3 million dollar  
Dorfman grant.

BILLY

That's what this is about? Money? I  
tell you what. I'll call your three  
and I'll raise you a million.

The crowd murmurs with confusion.

BAGBY

What are you saying?

BILLY

I'm saying I'll make a \$4 million  
dollar Bagnosso grant. And award it  
to Doctor skinny legs here.

PESKOFF

This is crazy. The man doesn't know  
what he's saying.

BILLY

Sit down, baldy! I know exactly  
what I'm saying. I need to get my  
life back. And she's gonna give it  
to me. And any of youse don't  
believe I got the \$4 million, ask  
my Uncle Phil back there.

Everyone turns and looks to the back of the hall.

UNCLE PHIL

Oh he's got it. But he ain't gonna  
have it long if he don't get back  
to those tables.

BILLY

Okay. So here's the deal. I'll give  
the institute \$4 million bucks. And  
you give her the tools she needs  
and the respect she deserves.

(looking at Cheryl)

The kind of respect I hope I can  
learn to show her.

Cheryl moves to him. She smiles, hugging him.

CHERYL

Thank you, Billy.

BILLY  
 (to Bagby)  
 And change that friggin' sign. It's  
 BAIN not BRAIN!  
 (to Hector)  
 Let's get outta here.

He gets back in the chair and Hector wheels him out.

EXT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE - DAY

Sandy drives up in a new rental car. She pulls up to the side of the institute. There's a very big ladder in the back seat.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Billy is being wheeled by Hector back toward his room. Uncle Phil follows, shaking his head, talking to Cheryl.

UNCLE PHIL  
 This is nuts, you know that?

CHERYL  
 The word 'nuts' is frowned on here  
 at the institute.

BILLY  
 (to Phil)  
 Coach, I want you to call the bank  
 and transfer the money. Right away.

UNCLE PHIL  
 Sure thing, kid.  
 (hushed, to Cheryl)  
 I can stop this. I can say he's  
 still screwy from that crack in the  
 head he got.

CHERYL  
 But you're not going to do that,  
 are you 'Uncle' Phil? Because if  
 you do, Dr. Skinny Legs will call  
 the cops on your sorry ass. So  
 you'd better do like he says.

She confidently walks off as Uncle Phil takes out his phone.

INT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Professor Bagby approaches Leon as everyone exits.

BAGBY

Looks like you and team Yakimoto  
might have another shot. But you'll  
need a strong ally on the board.

LEON

What are you suggesting?

BAGBY

(nostrils flaring)  
Drinks, dinner and then...karaoke?

EXT. B.R.A.I.N. INSTITUTE GROUNDS - DAY

Phil is on his cell phone, away from the building. He stands  
by the eight foot wall that surrounds the place.

UNCLE PHIL

(into phone)

Rocco, listen to me. We gotta  
locate some of that cash. Find  
some, quick, before the kid gets  
wise to what we done.

During this, a person climbs to the top of the wall. It's  
Sandy. She sees Uncle Phil and gets a wild look in her eye.

UNCLE PHIL (CONT'D)

(into phone)

I need that cash before everything  
comes crashin' down on me.

Sandy lets out a BANSHEE WAIL and dives off the wall. She  
lands on Phil and pins him to the ground.

SANDY

You God damned son of a bitch!

UNCLE PHIL

(feigning delight)

Hey there Sandy. How's it goin'?

BLACKOUT

END CREDITS