

The Side Effect Pill

Book & original story by Don DiVecchio

Music & Lyrics by Terry Crystal

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Dramatis Personae

Liz - Undercover Journalist (Mezzo)

Justin - Research Scientist (Tenor)

Susan - Head of Research & Development (Soprano)

Max - President of Pillco Corp. (Baritone)

Aldo - Head of Marketing (Tenor)

Place:

Pillco Pharmaceutical Company,
Northeast Massachusetts

Time:

Present

Lights dim.

Scene 1

Stage is dark. Trumpet solo (**Side Effects** intro). Light rises on Justin, sitting in desk chair stage-left. Second light rises on Liz, also sitting in desk chair stage right. Both are reading paperwork and underlining important facts. Justin pretends not to notice Liz. As they continue to read their material, he begins to glance at her and she at him. This continues for a few minutes until tune ends. Liz drags her desk over and sits.

Liz

I haven't seen you here before.

Justin

Th-they sent me up from level three.

Liz

How long you been with the company?

JUSTIN

About six months.

LIZ

Ahhh...Fresh meat.

JUSTIN

Wh-What does that mean?

LIZ

Just kidding.

(moves closer)

Usually it means they want you for something special—something weird and kinky...Kidding.

JUSTIN

How do you know this?

LIZ

I'm a three year Pharma-Veteran...Liz is my name. I'm a second level researcher. Got my PhD in Neuro-Biology...What about you?

JUSTIN

What about me?

LIZ

Yeah...What's your game...and your name?

JUSTIN

I'm J-Justin...Micro-Bi-Biology research scientist.

LIZ

Well Justin Micro-Biology research scientist, something weird is going on here...It's strange that their calling you up after six months...I've seen them come and go...And sweetie, you're one of the quickest climbers of the bunch.

JUSTIN

I-I was a little surprised they gave me the advancement...I'm expected to pa-participate in some new research study.

LIZ

Hmmm...In house...Using one of their own...That's really odd.

JUSTIN

Odd? They strike me as being considerate and ge-generous.

LIZ

Are we talking about the same company?

JUSTIN

Why are you so suspicious?

LIZ

The question is...Why aren't you?

SINGS

(SIDE EFFECTS)

RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE
DON'T THINGS SEEM OUT OF PLACE?
SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE
CAN'T YOU SEE?
RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE

JUSTIN

What?

LIZ

TAKE YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE SAND
LOOK AROUND, IF YOU CAN
SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE
CAN'T YOU SEE?
TAKE YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE SAND

WE ARE WORKING FOR ONE OF THE BIGGEST
DRUG COMPANIES IN THE LAND
AND THEIR PILLS, THEIR PRODUCT,
WHAT THEY CALL THEIR MEDICATION
HAVE EFFECTS

JUSTIN

What are you talking about?

LIZ

SIDE EFFECTS
SIDE EFFECTS
LOTS OF NASTY SIDE EFFECTS

JUSTIN

STANDARD OPERATING PROTOCOL
FOR DRUGS THAT GET RESULTS
YOU'VE GOT TO EXPECT
A FEW LITTLE PROBLEMS DOWN THE LINE

LIZ

A few little problems? This company may be under investigation
for the side effects of their drugs.

JUSTIN

IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU SEE
IF YOU CAN'T LET THINGS BE
WHY DO YOU STAY HERE?
WHY NOT LEAVE?
IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT YOU SEE

LIZ

I've been thinking about it until you came along.

JUSTIN

What does that mean?

LIZ

Do you ever have that feeling? Like when you meet someone and there's something in them that brings something out in you... Like you're in some kind of danger and need my help.

JUSTIN

Danger!? M-maybe the danger is you!

JUSTIN

ALL THE DRUGS THAT WE MAKE
ALL THE PILLS THAT WE TAKE
THAT IS THE NATURE
OF THE BUSINESS WE'RE IN
ALL THE DRUGS THAT WE MAKE

WITH EVERY UPSIDE
THERE'S A DOWNSIDE
LIFE IS MESSY
DON'T YOU AGREE

LIZ

You don't understand.

JUSTIN

Look...I need this job...I feel per-perfectly fine here. So don't worry. I can take care of myself.

LIZ

Fine! But I'm not giving up!

JUSTIN

I have work to do.

LIZ

TAKE YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE SAND
LOOK AROUND, IF YOU CAN
SOMETHING IS WRONG HERE
CAN'T YOU SEE?
TAKE YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE SAND

LIZ & JUSTIN

WE ARE WORKING FOR ONE OF THE BIGGEST
DRUG COMPANIES IN THE LAND
AND THEIR PILLS, THEIR PRODUCT,
ALL THEIR MEDICATION HAVE EFFECTS

SIDE EFFECTS
SIDE EFFECTS

TAKE A STAND YOU GET SIDE EFFECTS
 IF YOU TAKE AN ACTION
 YOU GET A REACTION
 AND YOU GET

*They stare at each other for a few
 seconds.*

SIDE EFFECTS!

*Lights go out. Music begins. The desk-
 chairs are removed*

Scene 2

On second word of song, Spotlight opens
 to reveal three executives sitting
 center stage at boardroom table
 (wearing bowler hats?).

ALDO, MAX, SUSAN
 Sing

A SITUATION

All

WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE
 THE SOLUTION FOR IT IS NOT CLEAR
 OUR SALES, THEY ARE FALLING
 OUR LAWYER'S ARE CALLING
 WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING
 THAT IS CLEAR

WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE
 OUR STOCKS ARE DOWN AND IT'S A BEAR
 MARKET FOR OUR DRUGS
 STARING AT OUR MUGS
 WONDERING IF THE END IS NEAR

Susan (soprano)
 OUR ADVERTISING IS NOT WORKING

Aldo (tenor)
 OUR MERCHANDISE, IT IS NOT MOVING

Susan and Aldo
 OFF THE SHELVES

Max (baritone)

TELL ME
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS
COULD IT BE AS BAD AS YOU SAY?

Susan – BAD AND GETTING WORSE

TELL ME
AFTER ALL OUR CARE
HOW COULD THINGS WORK OUT THIS WAY?

Aldo and Susan – IT IS GRIM, IT IS GRIM, IT IS
VERY, VERY GRIM

All

THE LAST THREE QUARTER WERE A BUST
OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE LOST THEIR TRUST
FOR WHAT IT IS THAT WE ARE SELLING
THE INTEREST IS FLAT
CAN WE MAINTAIN A BUSINESS
LIKE THAT?

Aldo

OUR MARKET SHARE, IT IS RECEDING

Susan

OUR STOCKHOLDERS WILL BE STEAMING

All

WHEN THEY FIND OUT

WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE
THE SOLUTION FOR IT IS NOT CLEAR
OUR SALES, THEY ARE FALLING
OUR LAWYER'S ARE CALLING
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING
THAT IS CLEAR

WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE
OUR STOCKS ARE DOWN AND IT'S A BEAR
MARKET FOR OUR DRUGS
STARING AT OUR MUGS
WONDERING IF THE END IS NEAR

Max

FAILURE IS NOT AN OPTION

Susan – NOT AN OPTION

BANKRUPTCY A LAST RESORT

Aldo and Susan – A LAST RESORT

All
WE NEED
SOMETHING BIG
SOMETHING NEW
TO REPORT!

(beat) Light rises. Susan stands and points to a paper chart. (Their dialogue is quick and lively.)

SUSAN

As you can see, the sales on all our prescription drugs are falling...Some drastically...If you look at the sales of our most popular selling drugs "Senbril" and "Toloft", you'll see that they have fallen 20% from last year, "Fuesta" is off 15%, "Pestor" 10%, "Cimera" 20%. Our current line of anti-depressants are down 30% including "Kozac". If our sales follow this current trend, we are looking at roughly four billion in revenue losses.

ALDO

In short...Adults are feeling more anxious and out of control, more fearful, but they're not buying our drugs.

SUSAN

Our campaign to convince parents to put their children on anti-depressants at age five was successful for a while, but that has tapered off. The teen market has also fallen...And we're still recovering from our disastrous line of hormone replacement drugs.

Aldo walks around the table.

ALDO

On the upside, the only drug that's doing well is our testosterone enhancing pill and "Reagra"...Our research is showing that people are finding their lifestyles more distressful and joyless. They want more passion and lust in their lives.

MAX

Well done.

(coughs)

Excuse me.

Max walks over to a side table, pours some water in a glass, stares blankly at the wall, takes pill out of bottle

and swallows. He then walks back to his seat at boardroom table.

MAX (cont'd)

Where were we?

ALDO

We were talking about our sales profile, and-

MAX

Let Susan speak.

SUSAN

Essentially the side effects from our drugs are causing major problems. The data is pouring in, and we're beginning to see the long term harmful effects of our top selling pharmaceuticals.

ALDO

The pattern is consistent sir...Thousands of people are suffering serious if not deadly side effects from our drugs.

MAX

We always factored that in...The number of deaths and permanent injuries—all the potential lawsuits matched against our profits...And we always come out sixty billion dollars ahead.

SUSAN

True...But none of these drugs have endured twenty or thirty years of sustained usage—and the results are devastating.

MAX

What devastating! What...The F.D.A. approved all our pharmaceuticals—God bless 'em.

ALDO

(paces)

What Susan is saying is: More people are experiencing ill effects from our drugs than any good they are doing.

MAX

(coughs)

That's not possible!

ALDO

The data is irrefutable.

SUSAN
(sings rapidly/piano tremolo)
LIVER DAMAGE, HEART ATTACK,
SEIZURES AND STROKE,
SUICIDE, DEPRESSION AND DEATH.

ALDO
(sings rapidly/piano tremolo)
BRAIN DAMAGE, BONE LOSS,
KIDNEY FAILURE, STROKE
PULMONARY THROMBOSIS, DEATH.

SUSAN
Some drugs we created to decrease suicide have actually increased it...Especially in teens.

ALDO
What we are paying out in lawsuits, which is roughly one billion, has increased by 30%.

SUSAN
The cost of maintaining these drugs is seriously cutting into our profitability margins.

MAX
So what's the bottom line?

ALDO
The bottom line is-

MAX
Let Susan talk!

SUSAN
Well sir...Since more people are becoming sick from our pharmaceuticals—they're beginning to look at more natural, more homeopathic solutions.

MAX
This is the worst news!

SUSAN
Not necessarily.

ALDO
R&D has come up with a few possible solutions.

SUSAN

If we create one pill that would counter the side effects of all our drugs, we'd be reversing the downward spiral.

ALDO

And, if we inject into that pill a compound that will increase the libido for both sexes, we'll have a winning combination and make a fortune.

MAX

What were you saying?

ALDO

One pill that would do it all!

MAX

Right! Can it be done?

SUSAN

We're developing it as we speak sir.

SINGS (**ONE PILL**)

ONE PILL
 ONE PILL
 ONE PILL TO SATISFY YOUR COMPLAINTS
 ONE PILL
 ONE PILL
 AND NOW THE PAIN IS GONE
 THE PAIN YOU DIDN'T HAVE BEFORE
 YOU TOOK OUR OTHER MEDICATION

Aldo & Susan

WE TRIED AND CREATED A PILL THAT WORKS
 TO HEAL THE ACHE THAT'S BOTHERING YOU

Aldo

ONE PILL
 ONE PILL
 ONE PILL, A ROSY PICTURE WE'LL PAINT

ONE PILL
 ONE PILL
 AND NOW THE WORRY'S GONE
 WE RID YOU OF THE SIDE EFFECTS

Aldo & Susan
NO FEAR OR WORRY WHEN TAKING OUR DRUGS THAT WORK
TO HEAL THE ACHE THAT'S BOTHERING YOU

Aldo
GOT A HEADACHE?

Susan
RELIEF!

Aldo
GOT A HEART-ACHE?

Susan
RELIEF!

Aldo
DO YOU FEEL ALONE
GOT A KIDNEY-STONE?

Aldo & Susan
WE'VE GOT A PILL THAT WILL KILL

Aldo
WHATEVER YOU'VE GOT
WHENEVER YOU'RE NOT

Aldo & Susan
FEELING LIKE YOU SHOULD YOU CAN TAKE A PILL
JUST POP ONE OF THESE AND RELIEVE

Susan
OH WHY
DOES MY BODY HURT ALL OVER?

Aldo
DO MY FEET SWELL, MY BREATH SMELL,
AND OVER ALL FEEL UNDER THE WEATHER?

Susan
OH WHY
DO I FEEL SO BAD ALL OVER?

Aldo
TAKE A BLUE ONE, A PINK ONE,
A YELLOW ONE, A GREEN ONE AND FEEL BETTER.

MAX

Very inventive!

ALDO

(paces)

One commercial could have our scientist coolly saying how healthy, horny and side effect free she feels.

MAX

(hits table)

If you weren't my nephew, I'd say you were after my job!

ALDO

(laughs)

No sir...I'm happy where I am.

MAX

Do you have a scientist in mind? Is it a woman?

ALDO

We're starting with a man and his name is Justin Hobart, a third level researcher. He's been with us for about six months.

MAX

Have you talked with him?

SUSAN

Only briefly sir.

ALDO

We plan to start our major trials in a few days...He'll be fully briefed...And of course he'll be expected to participate.

SUSAN

We selected him because he's boyishly handsome, intelligent looking, and falls within the twenty-to-thirty age group...And he's using one of our heart murmur pills.

ALDO

Of course we want our side effect pill to appeal to all ages, but everyone identifies with the young.

MAX

Fabulous!..Is that it!

ALDO

We need a name for it.

MAX

(looks at his watch)

Of course.

SUSAN

People seem to like a drug with a name ending in "era" or "esta" like "umera" or "unesta" or "il" like "axil" or "fenbril".

ALDO

How about something celestial like "Venutia" or "Saturna"?

MAX

No...These are planets for God's sakes—too Astronomical.

SUSAN

What about "Raptura"?

MAX

Nope...Too close to the religious "Rapture" folks and "Ecstasy" drug users.

ALDO

How's "Collabria"?

MAX

Too Mafia.

SUSAN

"Remora"!

MAX

That's a monster Godzilla fought.

ALDO

I got it..."Centera" or "Pentera". The worry free pill that restores confidence and passion.

MAX

Not bad...Pass it on to advertising and see what they say.

ALDO

Sir...If I may—

MAX

What now!

ALDO

The projected profits from the side effect pill are off the charts. We could virtually destroy the competition.

MAX

Let's not get too greedy...After all we're not ruthless scoundrels...We have families like everyone else...And we don't want to attract too much attention...Is that it?

ALDO

Nothing else sir.

Max

(looks at his watch)

I have another meeting in five minutes, keep me in the loop.

Max exits.

SUSAN

That was weird.

ALDO

The way he snubbed me and deferred to you?

SUSAN

No!..This is the second week running...he seems a little off...Not all there...

ALDO

You know...If Max retires, I'm next in line.

SUSAN

I wouldn't count on it.

There is a knock on the door.

ALDO

Come in.

Enter Liz.

LIZ

You paged me sir?

ALDO

Right...We're running a little behind...We have an exciting new project we'd like you to be a part of—it comes with a salary increase and a new job title...I'll give you the details in about an hour.

LIZ

Sounds intriguing sir.

ALDO

Call me Aldo...Have you met Susan?

LIZ

No I haven't...Nice to meet you.

SUSAN

We've been hearing great things about your work.

LIZ

We don't get a lot of praise in our department...I feel like a mole working in an isolation chamber.

ALDO

Well we're going to change all that.

(beat)

(seductively)

I have to say...You're the prettiest mole I've ever seen.

Susan rolls her eyes.

LIZ

Thank you sir...I mean Aldo.

ALDO

We'll talk in about an hour.

LIZ

(to Susan)

Nice to meet you.

SUSAN

Same here.

Liz exits.

SUSAN (cont'd)

(laughs)

Prettiest looking mole I've ever seen? What a line! Is that from the Marx brothers?

ALDO

I couldn't help it...She's really hot...And I get what I go after.

SUSAN

You always come on too strong...Does sexual harassment ring any bells?

ALDO

I can't help myself.

SUSAN (sings - **Stop & Think**)

THAT IS SO PATHETIC
REALLY NO EXCUSE
THAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL WHAT YOU DO

DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU
THAT THE THINGS THAT YOU SAY AND DO
MIGHT OFFEND MORE THEN A FEW
I WOULD CONTEND
THAT THE THINGS THAT YOU SAY AND DO
THEY OFFEND MORE THAN A FEW
AND THEY DAMAGE A LOT MORE THAN YOU CAN MEND

DO YOU EVER STOP AND THINK ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS?
DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY?
DO YOU EVER STOP AND THINK
THAT WHAT YOU SAY AND DO
HAS VERY LITTLE TO RECOMMEND

ALDO

No!

Susan

YOU ALWAYS SHOOT FROM THE HIP
FROM YOUR BRAIN TO YOUR MOUTH
THERE'S NO ZIP-PER
DID YOU THINK THAT YOUR WORDS MIGHT ATTRACT HER?
THEY ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO UPEND

ALDO

Rubbish!

Susan

DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU?
 THAT THE WOMAN MIGHT EVEN SUE
 WHEN THE THINGS THAT YOU SAY AND DO
 THEY OFFEND
 DID IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU?
 WHAT SOME WOMEN MIGHT SAY OR DO
 WHEN YOU DAMAGE SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU CAN MEND

DO YOU EVER STOP AND THINK ABOUT YOUR ACTIONS?
 DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY?

DO YOU EVER STOP AND THINK
 THAT THE THINGS YOU SAY AND DO
 MIGHT HURT SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU INTEND

ALDO

Sometimes ya have to break a few eggs—

SUSAN

It's gotta change around here—I'm in over my head.

ALDO

Buck up Sue...That's the business we're in...People want relief from their pain, and we give it to them.

SUSAN

We're giving it to them all right.

ALDO

Relax...It'll work out.

SUSAN

I don't know...The lawsuits against us are burning down the house. That side effect pill better work.

ALDO

You're magicians in R&D. You can do anything. Just toss in a little of this and a little of that...Throw in the kitchen sink and poof, a new pill.

SUSAN

Maybe that's been our problem all along...You know we're under investigation.

ALDO

We're always under investigation...C'mon, stop your worrying.

(looks at watch)

It's lunch time...I'm buying.

Aldo puts his arm around Susan. She frowns and pulls it off. Aldo and Susan exit.

*Brief instrumental interlude:
(Looking out for number one)*

Max enters. He's on his cell phone speaking rapidly. He walks toward table to pick up papers.

MAX

Hi Bill...It's me...What?..It's Max—ya know Max, your client from the Pillco Corporation...Your my lawyer. Have you been smoking weed? Ohhhh...You're feeling dizzy from some allergy medication...One of ours?..Yeah...Don't worry, the side effects are temporary...Yeah...Yeah...I know things are getting rough for the company...That's why I'm visibly pretending to slip a little. We talked about this, remember?..Yeah...Yeah...Well if the company keeps failing, I'll show more visible signs of deterioration...Then I'll quietly slip away with a generous retirement package leaving my conniving little nephew to assume control...Yeah, he'll take the blame...I don't think Aldo knows we're under serious investigation...Yeah, I know I should be nice to him, but not too nice or he'll suspect something... Okay...Ciao...And stop taking our medication, you sound drunk. Talk to you later.

Max closes phone and looks directly at the audience.

MAX (cont'd)

(to audience)

What?

SINGS

[Looking out for number one]

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

IS IT A SURPRISE?

THAT THIS CEO
WOULD WANT TO TAKE A DIVE

LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE
IS IT ANY WONDER?
THAT THIS CEO
WOULD PUT IT ALL ASIDE

SOME MIGHT SAY MY ACTIONS ARE SELF SERVING
I WOULD SAY I'M GETTING WHAT IS DUE
WHO'S TO SAY IT'S WRONG WHAT I AM DOING
TO CALL IT QUILTS AND SAY THAT I AM THROUGH

ALL MY LIFE WAS DEDICATED TO THE COMPANY
NOW I WANT A LITTLE BIT OF TIME FOR ME

FEATHERING MY NEST
IS IT ANY SIN?
IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG
WITH CASHING IN

ALWAYS DONE MY VERY BEST
IS IT ANY CRIME?
WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE TIME
THAT I PUT IN

SOME MIGHT SAY THAT I'M A WORKAHOLIC
I WOULD SAY THAT THIS IS PROBABLY TRUE
NOW IT'S TIME TO GO SOMEWHERE BUCOLIC
SOMEWHERE I CAN REST AND HAVE A VIEW

ALL MY LIFE WAS DEDICATED TO THE COMPANY
NOW I WANT A LITTLE BIT OF TIME FOR ME

AND IF THINGS START GOING SOUTH
I WILL BE PREPARED
SHOULD THE COMPANY GO DOWN,
I WILL BE SPARED

BUT IF THINGS START LOOKING UP
THERE'S NO NEED TO FRET
SINCE THIS CEO IS HEDGING HIS BETS

I'LL BE READY TO ASSUME POWER
IF THIS HARD TIME TURNS AROUND
BUT IF THINGS START LOOKING SOUR
I'LL BE READY TO GET OUT!

Light dims

Scene 3

Light rises downstage on Justin sitting at his desk busily underlining words and shuffling papers. Liz enters.

JUSTIN

Hey.

LIZ

Hey.

JUSTIN

Wh-what have you been up to.

LIZ

I just came from upstairs.

JUSTIN

Y-you look a little pale.

LIZ

They offered me one of the head research positions in this new study.

JUSTIN

(chuckles)

An-and you want to leave them.

LIZ

Aldo, one of their bozo exec's was hitting on me...Ugh...I feel like puking.

JUSTIN

(coughs)

It's-it's shitty, but that's what male exec's do sometime.

LIZ

Are you defending them?

JUSTIN

No!

LIZ

So what is it with guys?

JUSTIN

Oh...God...Here we go!

LIZ

You put a single woman in a room with one or more guys and suddenly something goes off in their brains and they think you want to screw them all!

JUSTIN

Y-you're talking as if I'm not a guy.

LIZ

You're not like them.

JUSTIN

B-but I'm still a guy.

LIZ

Do you want to be like them!? Is that it?..Like Aldo the Neanderthal.

JUSTIN

(coughs)

Of course not! But I'm n-not impervious to urges.

LIZ

Are you trying to tell me something?

JUSTIN

No. What gave you that idea?

LIZ

Look...Women like sweet...We like sensitive...What are you afraid of? You have a cute little stutter...I like that...I think it's sexy.

JUSTIN

I-I can live with that.

(beat)

It's too bad you have t-to deal with Aldo.

LIZ

I can handle myself around men like him.

Justin coughs. He pulls out a bottle of pills and takes one.

LIZ (cont'd)

What are you taking?

JUSTIN

I have a heart murmur.

LIZ

Let me see.

He gives her the pill bottle.

LIZ (cont'd)

These are one of our company's medications...How often do you take them?

JUSTIN

One pill twice a day. Th-that's one of the reasons they want me in this study...I think it's the s-same one you're in.

LIZ

Are you experiencing side effects?

JUSTIN

Yeah...L-lethargy...Depression...Sometimes intense fatigue.

LIZ

I'm going to look into it.

JUSTIN

W-what do you mean look into it?

LIZ

I don't think you need to take them.

JUSTIN

N-now you're suddenly taking an interest in your job?

LIZ

This drug has terrible side effects.

JUSTIN

How can I t-trust you when you're criticizing the company behind they're back...And now y-you're heading up their research team.

LIZ

Yeah...So?

JUSTIN

Doesn't that make you a hypocrite?

LIZ

It depends on your perspective.

JUSTIN

Oh...T-tomaytoe-Tomahto.

LIZ

Look...I have my reasons...I don't think you should be in the study...Do you want my help or not?

JUSTIN

No thank you!

LIZ

All right! Forget it then...Jesus you're so stubborn.

JUSTIN

An-and you're so controlling.

They glare at each other.

LIZ

By the way, they want you upstairs.

Justin moves closer to her.

JUSTIN

Liz...I-I didn't mean to-

LIZ

Forget it...We have work to do.

JUSTIN

I'll-I'll see you later.

Justin exits.

LIZ

(mumbles)

Research scientists.

She takes out her cell phone and dials a number.

LIZ (cont'd)

(speaks rapidly)

Hi, It's me...Yeah...Yeah...I have more evidence...They're planning something big...Yeah...That's for sure...Working undercover for three years has finally paid off...Yeah...They made me head researcher on this new pill. Can you believe it?! What a bunch of morons...Yeah...I need to get into their vault- It has important info on all their drugs...I'll call you in a couple of days...Man, I'll be glad when all this is over. I deserve a six month vacation and a Pulitzer...Yeah...Oh, I forgot...I have a friend who has a heart murmur and he's taking ACD inhibitors. Will you look into it to see if it's necessary...I'll fax over the details...Yeah...Talk to you later.

Liz puts away cell phone.

SINGS

[Murmur of the Heart]

SOMETHING IS STIRRING
IT'S BEEN A WHILE
WHAT IS THIS I FEEL?

A LOVE WHICH IS PROFOUND
IT HAS ELUDED ME
BUT WHEN I SEE HIS FACE
IT JUST CONFUSES ME

MURMUR OF THE HEART
JUST A HALTING WHISPER
I CAN BARELY HEAR
WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY

STIRRINGS OF THE HEART
WANT TO SIT AND LINGER
WHY DO I KNOW
YOU'RE HERE TO STAY

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO TO LET HIM IN

CAN'T TAKE THE RISK, TO LET HIM KNOW
 MY PRESENCE HERE, IT ISN'T WHAT IT SEEMS
 BUT TO LOVE HIM, I'D HAVE TO SHOW

MURMUR OF THE HEART
 FEELINGS FRAUGHT WITH DANGER
 I CAN BARELY HEAR
 WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY

STIRRINGS OF THE HEART
 MUST REMAIN A STRANGER
 WHY DO I KNOW
 YOU'RE HERE TO STAY

I TRY SO MUCH IN VAIN TO HIDE THESE FEELINGS
 THAT SOMETHING IS NOT QUITE RIGHT
 I TRY SO MUCH IN VAIN TO HIDE THESE FEELINGS
 BUT WHEN YOU ARE IN MY SIGHT

MURMUR OF THE HEART
 HOW MY HEART IS BEATING
 I CAN BARELY HEAR
 WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY

STIRRINGS OF THE HEART
 THIS IS NOT SO FLEETING
 WHY DO I KNOW
 YOU'RE HERE TO STAY

Scene 4

*Lights dim. Liz exits. The desk chairs
 downstage are pulled off to the side.
 Lights rise on the boardroom table.
 There is a fourth empty chair. Max,
 Aldo and Susan enter.*

MAX

OK, let's get down to business...Fill me in on the latest
 campaign. Did we get a name for it yet?

ALDO

We're going with Pentera—the all purpose pill that gets rid of
 side effects while enhancing your love life.

MAX

And our spokesman?

ALDO

Justin Hobart. We're expecting him any minute now...He has the looks—he fits our profile...We need to get a speech therapist to work on his stutter, and he'll need to ditch the glasses.

(paces)

We could do a before and after scenario...We'll film him with his whimpy stutter...Then after taking the side effect pill—coupled with an intense weight lifting program...We'll show the new and improved hot and buffed Justin...The manly man, sex machine.

MAX

(hits table)

Yes!..Smart and Sexy...He's not only our key employee...But he's a client!

ALDO

Maybe we could say as an added feature, the pill cures stuttering.

MAX

Might have some problems with legal on that one.

SUSAN

One thing.

MAX

What?

SUSAN

Will he go along with it?

MAX

Are you kidding?..We'll be giving him all the incentives...The usual benefits and perks.

SUSAN

But if all this goes south...He could get hurt.

ALDO

He'll get over it.

MAX

(to Susan)

You're not getting soft on me?

SUSAN

Of course not sir.

MAX

The future of this company and our families are on the line...And we need to stay the course...Did I say stay the course?...I guess I did...Well you know what I mean...

(beat)

Moving on to other business—until we have the new pill in production, I want more happy looking people in our drug commercials.

ALDO

That's brilliant sir.

SUSAN

Am I missing something?

MAX

Who's going to pay attention to the side effects when you see a bunch of good looking people having fun.

There's a knock on the door.

MAX

What is it?!

Justin is standing in the shadows.

MAX (cont'd)

Come in son...Have a seat...This is Susan, head of Research and Development and you've met Aldo, head of Marketing.

Justin shakes their hands.

MAX (cont'd)

And you can call me Max.

(beat)

So do you know why you're here?

JUSTIN

Y-yes...I think so.

MAX

Aldo...Explain it to him.

ALDO

We're developing a revolutionary new pill that will eliminate all the side effects from our current drugs...And this side effect pill will have virtually no side effects...Do you understand?

JUSTIN

I-I think so.

MAX

You're taking ACD Inhibitors for a heart murmur.

JUSTIN

That's right sir...I have a mi-mitral valve prolapse. The drug stabilizes my heart beat.

MAX

May I see the bottle.

Justin gives him the bottle of pills.

MAX (cont'd)

Yup! This is one of our best sellers...It's a great little pill!

He hands the bottle back.

MAX (cont'd)

It does have a few side effects as I'm sure you know.

(beat)

Anyway...How would you like to be on the ground floor of our study researching this new drug?

JUSTIN

Well I-

MAX

Not only do we want you in the study taking our side effect pill. We want to create an elaborate advertising campaign centered on you.

ALDO

In other words, you're one of our research scientists, but your also our product user.

JUSTIN

I need to think—

MAX

It'll mean a hefty salary increase and you could come out of it with a V.P. position in marketing...Plus you'll be a celebrity.
...What do you say?

JUSTIN

I'm overwhelmed sir...I'd still like to th-think about it.

ALDO

We forgot to mention...The new pill has an added benefit...It will increase your libido by 70%.

MAX

It will add extra spice to your love life!

Aldo looks at a folder.

ALDO

Looking at your work profile, we see that you have floated through three jobs in the last four years...And not long ago you broke up with your girlfriend of five years.

JUSTIN

How did you know that?

ALDO

Your personality profile shows that your self confidence level is still on the downswing—

MAX sings

[Welcome Aboard – You have arrived]

AND DID WE SAY THAT THERE ARE PERKS
YOUR OWN PRIVATE JET AND A MAID
YOU'LL BE TAKING TRIPS TO THE BAHAMAS
AND FOR ALL OF THIS YOU WILL BE PAID

Aldo

WE'LL BE SURE THAT YOU ARE DRIVEN IN A CHAUFFEURED LIMOUSINE

Susan

ALL THE RESTAURANT'S YOU'LL GO TO HAVE THE FINEST HAUTE CUISINE

Max
WITH A COMPANY ACCOUNT
WE CAN WRITE OFF THIS AMOUNT
WELCOME ABOARD
YOU HAVE ARRIVED

Susan
YOU'LL BE DRESSED IN THE FINEST ATTIRE
ITALIAN SUITS, CRISP WHITE SHIRTS, AND NEW SILK TIES

Aldo
YOU'LL BECOME AN OBJECT OF DESIRE
ALL YOUR CLOTHES CUSTOM FITTED TO YOUR SIZE

Susan
AND DID WE MENTION THE SHOES?
SO MANY PAIRS OF SHOES
NOT ONE, TWO THREE OR FIVE

Justin
BUT HOW WILL I CARRY THIS OFF?
HOW CAN I PASS FOR SOMETHING I'M NOT?

Aldo
PEOPLE WILL SEE WHAT WE WANT THEM TO SEE

Max
AND YOU'LL BE THE PERSON YOU WANT TO BE

Susan
THAT'S THE GENIUS OF IT DEAR
ALL YOUR FEARS WILL DISAPPEAR
WE WILL FIRST REMOVE YOUR SPECS
YOUR HANDSOME FACE FOR ALL TO SEE

Aldo
AT THE GYM, WE'LL BUILD YOUR PECS
A PRIVATE TRAINER WILL BE KEY

Max
YOU WILL SPEAK IN PERFECT ENGLISH
THE WORDS WILL ROLL OFF YOUR TOUNGUE

Aldo
AND THE WOMEN THEY WILL FLOCK
TO THIS NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Max
YOU'LL BE CATNIP TO THEIR FELINE

Justin
I DON'T KNOW
THIS ALL SOUNDS CYNIC
DO YOU THINK I CAN BE BOUGHT?
DO YOU THINK I HAVE NO PRINCIPLES?
NO MORAL CENTER, SHAME, OR THOUGHT?

Max
YOU'LL ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE
FOR PROGRESS THAT YOU'LL FIND
PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT WE KNOW

Aldo
IT WILL BE A BOON TO MANKIND

Max
THINK OF ALL THE SUFFERING PEOPLE
OUR RESEARCH YOU WILL HELP

Susan
THINK OF ALL THE SUFFERING PEOPLE...

Justin
YES, YES, I WILL ACCEPT
I BELIEVE I CAN DO WHAT YOU SAY
I WILL DO THIS THING THAT YOU ASK OF ME
AND I DON'T MIND AT ALL GETTING PAID

Max
I THINK HE JUST SAID YES

Aldo and Susan
YES, HE DEFINITELY SAID YES

Aldo, Max, Susan, Justin
WE ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF SCIENCE
AND HELP MANKIND AS WELL

Aldo, Max, Susan
WE'RE GLAD YOU CAN JOIN US IN OUR QUEST

Max
WELCOME ABOARD

Aldo
WELCOME ABOARD

Susan
WELCOME ABOARD

Aldo, Max, Susan
YOU HAVE ARRIVED

Lights out

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

Brief instrumental [**Side Effects**]
*Light rises on Liz's desk-chair
 downstage. She's on her cell phone.*

LIZ

Yeah...It's me...How are things going?..Yeah...Besides feeling I need to take a shower four times a day, I'm okay...Yeah...Well ya know what they say about lying with dogs, not to insult dogs, I feel like I have a mess of fleas all over me.

(laughs)

Yeah...I hated the testing—dispensing all those drugs...I've become part of the problem...Yeah, I know...The ends never justify the means...So far the pill has no side effects—they've already sold several million of them...Yeah...Yeah. They're using a dummy corporation...I have to get into that Vault. It contains all the toxic levels on their pharmaceuticals...I need more time.

(laughs)

Right! And I have a little surprise for them...Gotta go.

She closes her cell phone, shuffles papers, and crosses out words. Aldo enters and circles her.

ALDO

If it isn't old Lizzie B...How's it going?

LIZ

(coyly)

I'm okay.

He puts his arm around her.

ALDO

You don't look it...You should be ecstatic. The side effect pill is a huge success...Your guy Justin has become an overnight celebrity.

Liz gently pulls Aldo's arm off.

LIZ

Justin is not my guy.

ALDO

Really...I thought you had a thing for him.

Liz stands. Walks around Aldo.

LIZ

(slyly)

Aldo...Everyone knows I have a thing for you.

She puts her arm around him.

ALDO

You're such a tease!

LIZ

Remember your promise?..You were going to show me the vault...That sexy, mysterious, hot vault.

ALDO

C'mon Liz...The vault's off limits...Why the vault?

LIZ

(circles around him)

We all have a kinky side. Now don't we...For me it's dark moist vaults with sleek iron doors.

ALDO

Okay,okay...But you can't tell anyone...I'll lose my job.

LIZ

Of course not...You wild piece of beefcake.

Sings

[**Secret Passion**]

SECRET PASSION
DRIVE ME WILD WITH DESIRE
THIS ATTRACTION
TO YOUR TOUCH I DO ASPIRE
IN THIS BASTION
IN THE PLACE I NEVER TIRE
IN THE VAULT

MAN OF ACTION
DRIVE ME WILD WITH DESIRE
WITH ABANDON
I WILL DO WHAT YOU REQUIRE

IF WE ACT ON
ANY WHIM, I WILL NOT TIRE
IN THE VAULT

THE STEEL, SO HARD, SO SLEEK, SO COLD TO TOUCH
UNLOCK THE DOOR, AND I WILL SHOW HOW MUCH

Instrumental continues
[**Secret Passion**/choreography]

*Aldo and Liz dance tango, ending with
Aldo kissing Liz.
Justin enters seeing them kiss.*

ALDO (cont'd)
(points to Liz)
See you after work.

*As Aldo leaves, he bumps into Justin.
Liz is off to the side wiping her mouth
and quietly retching from her
encounter.*

ALDO (cont'd)
(to Justin)
Well if it ain't the celebrity.

JUSTIN
Hey Aldo.

ALDO
They need you upstairs.

JUSTIN
I'll be there in a minute.

Aldo leaves. Justin approaches Liz.

JUSTIN (cont'd)
What did he want?

LIZ
What every man wants I suppose...Really nothing.

JUSTIN
It didn't look like nothing.

LIZ

He's an annoying little mosquito.

JUSTIN

Is that what men are to you?

LIZ

Don't say that! That's not fair!

JUSTIN

I'm sorry...I didn't mean it.

(beat)

LIZ

I don't see much of you anymore.

JUSTIN

They've been keeping me busy.

LIZ

How do you like it upstairs?

JUSTIN

It's pretty good.

LIZ

I hear you've become quite the movie star.

JUSTIN

Yeah...Because of all the ads I did, I'm going to play the lead in a science fiction movie.

LIZ

That's great...You deserve it.

JUSTIN

Thanks.

(beat)

LIZ

You lost your stutter.

JUSTIN

Isn't it terrific!

LIZ

It was one of the first things I liked about you...You were cute and innocent.

JUSTIN

Let me tell you about cute and innocent...Being a nice guy has got me nowhere. Nice guys are stepped on...And the assholes always get their way.

LIZ

Ya think so...And you don't think you got anywhere with me? Are you that blind?! Ya big baboon!

JUSTIN

You never liked me. You felt sorry for me.

LIZ

Really?..And who are you to decide what I feel?!

They move closer.

JUSTIN

You were over protective-almost motherly...I don't need a mother!

LIZ

You don't understand!

JUSTIN

That's part of the problem. Isn't it! You don't open up.

(beat)

This side effect pill has worked wonders for me...I feel so alive!

LIZ

There are things you don't know!

JUSTIN

Like what?

LIZ

I can't tell you.

JUSTIN

There you go with your goddamn secrecy.

(beat)

JUSTIN (cont'd)

Anyway...I didn't come here to argue...I-I wanted to thank you...You were right...I didn't need that heart murmur medication.

LIZ

So you don't have to take the side effect pill.

JUSTIN

I suppose not...I got used to taking it.

(beat)

Anyway, I thought you'd like to know...I have to go

Justin turns to leave.

LIZ

Justin.

He turns facing her.

LIZ (cont'd)

I wanted to tell you...I wanted to tell you how happy I am for you.

JUSTIN

Thanks.

Justin exits. Liz covers her face crying.

Instrumental [**Murmur of the heart**]

Scene 2

Light rises center stage on the boardroom table. Max, Aldo and Susan are seated looking at paperwork.

MAX

Outstanding!..Amazing!..So let's re-cap...All the preliminary tests came out positive...No side effect issues, and the FDA approved it. God bless them again.

ALDO

They're so easy...Given the right incentives.

MAX

And...And...We've already sold five million pills!

ALDO

(claps)

It's estimated by the end of our fiscal year, we will have sold about one hundred million pills with an estimated profit of five hundred million dollars...And we're just starting.

SUSAN

We're already driving our competitors crazy.

MAX

Incredible!..Isn't this country great!..All this is for the short term...What about twenty years from now when we get the lawsuits...Who knows what side effects, the side effect pill will have.

ALDO

C'mon boss...We'll handle it the way we always do...The hundreds of billions we'll make in profits will more than offset any litigation.

MAX

(hits head)

Right! How stupid of me...And we don't have to drop our more toxic drugs because after all we have a side effect pill to neutralize them.

(beat)

SUSAN

Justin seems to be adjusting as our spokesperson...Funny though-

MAX

What? What's funny?

SUSAN

He seems different.

MAX

Different! I should hope so! We spent a lot of money on him...He's Mr. Side Effect Pill.

(beat)

Is there any other business?

ALDO

Actually there is...Children and young adults.

MAX

Of course...They're our future.

*Aldo paces around the table.
Optional: sound of storm.*

ALDO

(rapidly)

That's right...But that future is full of terrible stresses and fearful unknowns. The world is a tough, highly competitive place, a scary place, with high pressure exams, ADD, ADHD, Autism and Cancer. Kids react to it all...They become anxious, depressed, difficult.

MAX

(rapidly)

Which is why they need drugs to relax!..To feel safe...We will keep them focused and in control...And on top...But relaxed!

ALDO

(rapidly)

Right!..And as you know, we've been pitching this same scenario to adults for years...And adults have been lapping it up... Thanks to sympathetic doctors.

MAX

(rapidly)

God bless those convention incentives!

ALDO

(rapidly, almost maniacally)

But now...Now we're going to advertise directly to kids...Get it!..We'll be advertising on their computers, near the playgrounds, in their schools, and on T.V...We'll work through the child psychologists and social workers...Anti-anxiety medication is the key here...Everyone wants their child to be an Alpha kid...It's an Alpha centered world!

*Optional: Thunder and lightning.
Red spotlight.*

Sings [**Alpha World**]

THE COMPETITION IS FIERCE
YOU WANT TO BE IN CONTROL
YOU WANT TO SPARE THEM THE GRIEF
YOU WANT THEM FOCUSED, ON TOP, ON A ROLL

IT'S AN ALPHA WORLD WE LIVE IN
WHERE THERE'S ROOM FOR JUST A FEW
WHERE THE DOG EAT DOG TO FIT IN
WHERE WE'RE TOLD JUST WHAT TO DO

GOT TO QUASH THAT THINKING SPIRIT
ANYTHING THAT INTERFERES
WITH THE PATH THAT LEADS TO WIN IT
GOT TO RID YOU OF YOUR FEARS

ON THEIR CELLPHONES THEY'LL SEE
OUR NEW ADS ON TV
AT THE PARKS AND THE SCHOOLS
WE WON'T BREAK ANY RULES
TO BE SEEN

IT'S AN ALPHA WORLD WE LIVE IN
WHERE THERE'S ROOM FOR JUST A FEW
WHERE THE DOG EAT DOG TO FIT IN
WHERE WE'RE TOLD JUST WHAT TO DO

GOT TO QUASH THAT THINKING SPIRIT
ANYTHING THAT INTERFERES
WITH THE PATH THAT LEADS TO WIN IT
GOT TO RID YOU OF YOUR FEARS

CHILD PATHOLOGISTS
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS
ANTI-ANXIETY
MEDICATION THE KEY
CAUSE YOU KNOW

IT'S AN ALPHA WORLD WE LIVE IN
WHERE THERE'S ROOM FOR JUST A FEW
WHERE THE DOG EAT DOG TO FIT IN
WHERE WE'RE TOLD JUST WHAT TO DO

GOT TO QUASH THAT THINKING SPIRIT
ANYTHING THAT INTERFERES
WITH THE PATH THAT LEADS TO WIN IT
GOT TO RID YOU OF YOUR FEARS

WE'LL GO RIGHT TO THE KIDS

WITH THE NAMES OF OUR PILLS
 OUR PERSCRIPTIONS THEY'LL FILL
 WE'LL BE TOP OF THE HILL
 CAUSE YOU KNOW

ALDO (cont'd)

We're on the vanguard of a new frontier!..The names of our drugs will be on the lips of thousands of young people. Which is why we're creating a side effect pill for children and teens minus the libido enhancing compound—not that they don't get horny—

MAX

Stop! You're scaring me!

(he laughs)

Sorry...I'm kidding...But honestly, do you believe that crap!..Why did I say that?

ALDO

It's already being done...You approved this strategy a while ago...I'm only reminding you.

MAX

Okay then...I have another meeting...Let's stay on track with the side effect pill...It's a winner...One more thing...Erectile Dysfunction! Are we winning the war on sagging dicks? Think about it.

ALDO

Right sir.

Max exits.

ALDO (cont'd)

I think the boss is really losing it.

SUSAN

Maybe...But you were laying it on a little thick.

ALDO

Hey...I love my work...What can I say...I'm sorry if you don't feel as passionate about your work as I do...I'd like to think we're doing some good here.

SUSAN

I guess it depends on your perspective...Sometimes I think we are but—

ALDO

But what!..It's a crazy toxic world out there...And we're trying to make it more-

SUSAN

Digestible?..More sugar coated?

ALDO

More tolerable I guess...I don't know...Jesus Sue, if I didn't know you-

SUSAN

Forget it...I don't know why I said it.

ALDO

Look...We're not perfect...Why did I say that?

Susan looks at her watch.

SUSAN

It's 5:30. I gotta go...See you tomorrow.

Susan exits. Aldo rubs his eyes and sadly stares into space. Liz enters carrying a handbag.

ALDO

Hey Liz.

LIZ

How's it going hot stuff.

ALDO

I'm a little tired.

LIZ

(seductively)

Let's see if we can change that.

ALDO

Ohhh...You are a vixen aren't you.

He pours them both drinks and hands her a glass. He toasts her.

ALDO (cont'd)

To us.

They quickly drink, slamming glasses on the table. Liz looks around the room.

LIZ

So this is it...The inner sanctum, where all the important decisions are made.

ALDO

Yup...This is it! The power center! The finely tuned engine that drives a multi-billion dollar industry.

LIZ

Wow!..You sound like you're already head of the company.

ALDO

(whispers)

Just between you and me, Max is on his way out...We think it's Alzheimer's...I'm next in line.

He moves closer to her.

ALDO (cont'd)

And with it comes all the privileges.

LIZ

(seductively)

Isn't that interesting.

She moves away from him and around the table.

ALDO

Lucky for you.

He tries to get closer. She moves away.

LIZ

Lucky for you if there's a vault around.

ALDO

Ahhh...The Vault!..So doing it in a vault gets you hot?

LIZ

What can I say...Is it nearby?

He keeps moving toward her. She keeps moving away.

ALDO

Why should I tell you?

LIZ

It'll be the best sex you ever had.

*He catches up to her.
She kisses him.*

LIZ

It's in the next room isn't it?

ALDO

Maybe.

He tries to kiss her.

LIZ

Wait a sec...Close your eyes.

He shuts eyes.

ALDO

(smiles)

Let the games begin.

She takes a pair of panties out of her handbag and soaks them in chloroform.

LIZ

Let's start with this...Open your eyes!

She dangles her panties.

ALDO

Yours?

LIZ

What do you think?

She walks closer to him.

ALDO

Let me smell them...Please...

LIZ

Okay you baaad, bad, boy...Close your eyes.

She walks up to him and shoves her panties in his face, knocking him unconscious, to the table. Liz leaves her underwear near his nose while she searches for the vault keys. She finds them and pours herself a drink. Liz gargles and spits on the floor in disgust. She calls her editor.

LIZ

Hi it's me...Yeah...Yeah...I have the keys to the vault...Yeah...Ugh...Don't ask...Men and their willies.

(she laughs)

What this girl has done for Queen and country...Yeah...I'll call you when I've photographed everything...Okay, see ya.

Liz exits. Aldo is still unconscious and mumbling.

ALDO

Mommy...Come here...Over here...No-no-no. I built it...Tommy didn't...It was me.

Justin enters. He stares at Aldo mumbling away. He lifts his head up by his hair and abruptly drops it down.

Liz enters.

ALDO

(mumbling)

Tommy's running.

JUSTIN

What are you doing here!

Liz walks over to Aldo, abruptly lifts his head, pushing her underwear closer to his nose.

LIZ

It's not what you think.

JUSTIN

And what am I supposed to think!?

LIZ

Well, what do you think!?

JUSTIN

No-no-no...Y-you tell me!

LIZ

No you tell me!

ALDO

Mommy!

JUSTIN

This is ludicrous.

He begins to leave.

LIZ

(speaks rapidly)

All right!..I'm an investigative reporter doing a piece on the unethical and possibly illegal activities of this company. I've been undercover for three years and the vault has invaluable research notes on the toxic levels of all their drugs including the side effect pill.

(beat)

JUSTIN

That was easy.

LIZ

You wanted the truth!

JUSTIN

W-why couldn't you trust me?

LIZ

In my line of work it's hard to...Besides, you said you needed the job...And then you got promoted.

JUSTIN

What did you do to Aldo?

LIZ

I drugged him...I needed to get into the vault...There was nothing between us.

She moves closer to Justin.

JUSTIN

Y-you used him...Were you using me?

LIZ

No...Never! What I feel for you is real! But—

JUSTIN

What?

LIZ

There's more.

JUSTIN

Oh no.

LIZ

In the trials I made sure you didn't get the side effect pill...You got a placebo.

JUSTIN

Are you kidding?!

LIZ

Whenever you requisitioned more side effect drugs, I made sure you got more sugar pills.

JUSTIN

Jesus Liz.

LIZ

Don't you see!..All that confidence...All that extra energy...It's from you and nobody else...You didn't need the heart murmur pills...You don't need pills.

JUSTIN

Wh-what do I need?

Liz moves closer to him.

You need this.

LIZ

Liz kisses Justin.

You're stuttering.

LIZ (cont'd)

I-I know.

JUSTIN

Sings [**In love at last**]

TO BE LOVED FOR WHO YOU ARE
SOME TIME AGO
BEFORE I WAS A STAR
SOME TIME AGO
CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING

YOU SAW ME AS I WAS WHEN WE FIRST MET
AND OH HOW LUCKY WE ARE NOW TO GET
ANOTHER CHANCE AT
LOVE

I KNEW THE MOMENT I SAW YOU LOOK AT ME
THE FIRST DAY THAT WE MET
WE WERE MEANT TO BE, AND YET

NOTHING HAPPENED
I WAS TOO AFRAID
YOU WERE NOT AFRAID, BUT COULD NOT SAY
THE THINGS THAT YOU WERE UP TO ON THAT DAY

BUT HERE WE ARE AT LAST
ANOTHER CHANCE AT WHAT I THOUGHT WAS LOST
IN LOVE AT LAST

Liz

SO MANY TIMES I WANTED TO TELL YOU
I LOVED YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE
SOME TIME AGO
BEFORE YOU WERE A STAR
SOME TIME AGO
CAN'T SAY I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING

I SAW YOU AS YOU WERE WHEN WE FIRST MET
AND OH HOW LUCKY WE ARE NOW TO GET
ANOTHER CHANCE AT LOVE

I KNEW THE MOMENT I SAW YOU LOOK AT ME
THE FIRST DAY THAT WE MET
WE WERE MEANT TO BE, AND YET

NOTHING HAPPENED
YOU WERE TOO AFRAID
I WAS NOT AFRAID, BUT COULD NOT SAY
THE THINGS THAT I WAS UP TO ON THAT DAY

Justin & Liz
BUT NEVER MIND THE PAST
CAUSE HERE WE ARE AT LAST

Liz
WE NEVER GAVE UP ON THE PROSPECT

Justin
ANOTHER CHANCE AT WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS LOST

Liz
WE NEVER GAVE UP ON THE PROSPECT, SO

Liz & Justin
HERE WE ARE IN LOVE AT LAST!

*Justin starts to exit with Liz behind
him. Liz begins to leave.*

LIZ

Wait a sec.

*She returns to Aldo, grabbing her
underwear. She hits Aldo in the back of
the head, and joins Justin to exit.*

Fade to Black

End of Act II

ACT III

Light rises on Susan watching Max and Aldo nervously pacing around the boardroom table. You can hear an angry crowd protesting outside. They keep looking out the windows, wringing their hands and pacing.

CROWD VOICES

No more pills! No more pills! Stop the bad drugs! Your drugs kill!

MAX, ALDO, SUSAN
sing [**Barbarians at the Gate**]
(a song in the punk style/with drums)

Max

WHAT IS GOING ON OUT THERE?
WHAT IS GOING ON?
WHAT IS GOING ON OUT THERE?
WHAT IS GOING ON?

Aldo & Susan

THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
THEY DON'T LIKE US
XXXX (*drums*)
THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
THEY DON'T LIKE US
XXXX (*drums*)

Max

WHAT IS GOING ON OUT THERE?
WHAT IS GOING ON?
WHAT IS GOING ON OUT THERE?
WHAT IS GOING ON?

Aldo & Susan

THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
THEY DON'T LIKE US
XXXX (*drums*)
THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
THEY DON'T LIKE US
XXXX (*drums*)

Aldo, Susan, Max
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!

CROWD VOICES: No more pills! No more pills! Stop the bad drugs! Your drugs kill!

Max
 THEY'RE YELLING AT US. WHY?
 WHY ARE THEY YELLING?
 THEY'RE YELLING AT US. WHY?
 WHY ARE THEY YELLING?

Aldo & Susan
 THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
 THEY DON'T LIKE US
 XXXX (*drums*)
 THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
 THEY DON'T LIKE US
 XXXX (*drums*)

Max
 THEY'RE YELLING AT US. WHY?
 WHY ARE THEY YELLING?
 THEY'RE YELLING AT US. WHY?
 WHY ARE THEY YELLING?

Aldo & Susan
 THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
 THEY DON'T LIKE US
 XXXX (*drums*)
 THEY DON'T LIKE US, SIR
 THEY DON'T LIKE US
 XXXX (*drums*)

Aldo, Susan, Max
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!
 BARBARIANS AT THE GATE!

CROWD VOICES: No more pills! No more pills! Stop the bad drugs! Your drugs kill!

Max
 WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?
 GET THE POLICE!
 WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

GET THE POLICE!
GET THE POLICE!
GET THE POLICE!
GET THE POLICE!

CROWD VOICES

No more pills! No more pills! Stop the bad drugs! Your drugs kill!

MAX

My God!..What's going on out there! They're yelling at us...Why are they yelling? Get me the police!

SUSAN

Actually sir, they have the right to protest as long as they keep moving-

MAX

They're trying to get through the front door! Get me security... Why are they doing this?

SUSAN

Well sir...It seems that our side effect pill has a few side effects.

MAX

So that's the problem! That's it?

SUSAN

The research is in and it looks like our new pill puts people into a heightened state of consciousness. They're more self aware and critically aware...It's a smart pill and a truth drug rolled into one.

MAX

What are you talking about?! Make some sense!

SUSAN

Basically, people are looking at themselves and the world more truthfully and they don't like what they see...It's like a veil has been lifted.

MAX

So what the hell does that have to do with us?!

ALDO

Simply this...They're tired of the bullshit...They're pissed at us...And they're not buying our drugs.

SUSAN

Our pharmaceutical sales have fallen by 80%.

MAX

80%!..My God!..What's your name?

SUSAN

Susan sir.

MAX

(paces)

We need to take the pill off the market immediately!..And we need to create another drug to offset the side effect pill...A dumbing down pill.

ALDO

That's brilliant...But I have a better idea...Keep the side effect pill on the market and promote the dumbing down pill as an enhancement drug—a new and improved side effect pill...This way people will be paying for both and they'll be back where they started from—buying all our drugs again...I have to say it's a pretty devious plan...Why did I say that?

MAX

Damned if I know...Frankly you're smarter and more corrupt than I thought—

Susan laughs.

ALDO

Sir?

MAX

Sorry I said that!

(coughs)

I was telling my lawyer that if things went bad with the company, I'd retire—sneak out and leave you holding the bag.

ALDO

Hell, I deserve it...Even though you've become a senile old fart.

They give each other a shocked look.

SUSAN

What's going on? Have you two gone mad?

ALDO

I didn't mean what I said.

MAX

Neither did I.

Aldo taps his head. Max digs wax out of his ears.

MAX (cont'd)

We've got to grab hold of ourselves...Let's have a drink.

He pours three drinks. They quickly gulp them down.

MAX (cont'd)

Something weird is happening here.

SUSAN

Duh! No kidding! I'm working with idiots...Sorry sir.

(beat)

There's another problem.

MAX

What now?!

SUSAN

One of our head research scientists, a Liz Collins is actually a journalist working under cover for the Times.

ALDO

I knew it!..That sneaky little—

MAX

What does she have on us?

SUSAN

We have a videotape of her in the vault taking pictures of sensitive material.

ALDO

It was me sir...She played me to get into the vault.

MAX

You are one dumb bastard.

ALDO

Believe me I know.

SUSAN

Liz is close to Justin Hobart, the scientist we focused our advertising campaign on.

MAX

Okay!..So what we'll do is kidnap Justin and hold him until she gives back all the incriminating evidence.

SUSAN

(chuckles)

You are a despicable weasel.

She covers her mouth in horror.

MAX

What?!

SUSAN

I'm sorry sir...But you are.

She covers her mouth again, in shock.

MAX

Both of you bring me Justin...Tie him up and put him in my side office.

Aldo and Susan exit. Max stares out the window. The crowd continues to protest.

CROWD VOICES

No more pills! No more pills! Pharmaceuticals kill! Side effects kill!

Max takes out his cell phone and calls his ex-wife.

MAX

Hi Tracy it's me...Yeah...I'm having a real bad day...No I haven't heard the news...What?...Major lawsuits against the company?!..Can't say as I blame them...I didn't mean to say that...What I meant to say was...I'm sorry for being such a jerk all those years...You deserved better...No...I'm not myself—then again, maybe I am.

(speaks rapidly)

You had a right to divorce me. I had one mistress on the side and I was after another. Damn...Yeah it's me talking...And no it's not...Something weird is happening. I'll call you later...Wait a sec—

(takes a deep breath)

By the way, I know I owe you ten years of child support...Yeah I'm a selfish pig...I gotta go.

Max dials another number.

MAX

Hi Pam it's me...You were right...I was an insensitive bastard.

Aldo and Susan enter.

MAX (cont'd)

I've gotta go—

Max closes cell phone.

ALDO

We have Justin tied up in the outer office.

Aldo walks over to the window staring out.

CROWD VOICES

People before drugs!..People before drugs!..Stop the side effects!

ALDO

In a way ya gotta admire them.

MAX

What?

ALDO

Nothing sir.

MAX

I suppose you're right.

(beat)

I've been having this wild craving to call my ex-wives and apologize to them.

ALDO

Maybe there's a virus going around.

SUSAN

It's strange...We're showing symptoms of-

MAX

Aldo...I want you to go downstairs and explain to Liz the situation. Tell her we want all the incriminating evidence...And if she doesn't give us what we want...We'll hurt Justin—only a little, nothing too harsh.

Max taps his head.

MAX (cont'd)

Just do it!

ALDO

Right!..I would have acted more despicably...But that's me.

Aldo slaps his own face.

ALDO (cont'd)

I'm leaving now.

Aldo exits. Max and Susan stare at each other for a while. The protestors are heard in the background. Max taps the table.

SUSAN

Those protesters are making themselves heard...Maybe we should listen.

MAX

Ya know...I was always fond of you.

SUSAN

Me sir?

MAX

Yeah...But I guess I never saw myself worthy of your affection.
I'm a rough edged, competitive, sex addict—more Aldo's type.

SUSAN

You're right about that...But I'm sure you have a sweet side.
Even though this job knocks every bit of gentleness out of you.
Look how much I've compromised.

MAX

I have a sweet side?

SUSAN

Yeah I think so...Somewhere under that cast iron exterior lies a
tender heart.

Sings

[Underneath That Tough Exterior]

UNDERNEATH THAT THOUGH EXTERIOR
LIES A BREATHING HUMAN BEING
AS I THINK ABOUT OUR TIME TOGETHER
IT'S A FACE I'VE NEVER SEEN

UNDERNEATH THAT ROUGH EXTERIOR
SITS A FAIRLY DECENT CHAP
HE MAY SEEM A BIT BULL TERRIER
ALL HIS MOTIVES ARE ULTERIOR
HIS BEHAVIOR IN THE PAST IS MOSTLY MEAN
BUT I NOW SEE YOU'RE A BREATHING HUMAN BEING

Max:

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP
SO NO ONE UNDERSTANDS
TO RUN A COMPANY SUCH AS THIS
MAKES LARGE DEMANDS
IF I BEHAVED LIKE A DICK, I'M SORRY
GLAD TO HAVE FOUND OUT IN THE NICK OF TIME

UNDERNEATH THIS TOUGH EXTERIOR
SITS A FRIGHTENED LITTLE CHILD
AND THE WORDS YOU'VE USED
ARE ANYTHING BUT WILD
IF I ACTED SO SUPERIOR
IT'S BECAUSE I FELT INFERIOR
TO THE TASK THAT I HAVE LATELY BEEN ASSIGNED
BUT I'M GLAD YOU SEE THIS PERSON CAN BE KIND

MAX (cont'd)

If my father heard that, he'd kill himself all over again.

(beat)

I can't believe I'm opening up to you.

Susan:

THAT'S OK WE'RE BOTH UNSCRUPULOUS
AND SHAMELESS FOLKS NEED COMFORT TOO
DID I SAY THAT?

Max:

THAT'S OK
WHERE ALL FEELING SKEWED

Max & Susan

IT'S THE PRICE OF ALL THIS TRUTHFULNESS
WHEN WE GET DOWN TO OUR HUMANNESS
THINGS ARE NOT QUITE AS AMBIGUOUS AS THEY SEEMED
WE'RE BOTH SCHEEMING, CRAFTY, BREATHING HUMAN BEINGS

SUSAN

Sir...There's something I need to tell you-

*Liz and Aldo enter. Aldo speaks rapidly
to Liz.*

ALDO

So you're saying my acting like a "creep" goes way back to my
dad's male behavior...That makes sense...I wanted you the minute
I saw you...It's the way I've been all my life...Objectifying
women—assuming every girl wants me...It has to go way back.

LIZ

(speaks rapidly)

And you didn't care whose feelings you hurt.

ALDO

(speaks rapidly)

No I didn't...It's because I'm so damn insecure. Who would like
me the way I am unless I bullied my way around.

LIZ

Well said! You're a perfect candidate for therapy.

MAX

Excuse me! You have something of ours?

LIZ
I want to see Justin first.

MAX
(to Aldo)
Bring in Justin.

Aldo exits.

MAX (cont'd)
Don't worry, we would never hurt him.

Max taps his head.

MAX (cont'd)
Then again you never know...We want what you took from us.

SUSAN
(to Liz)
I'm guessing you know something about the strange feelings we're experiencing.

LIZ
I might.

MAX
Well girl...You better come clean!

LIZ
Not until I see Justin.

(beat)

MAX
So you're an investigative reporter.

LIZ
Yup.

MAX
And you've been working undercover for three years.

LIZ
Don't think you're going to get away with this!..People are waking up and they're not buying your lies.

MAX

You're right!..They deserve to know! I mean...All we want is the incriminating evidence.

Aldo and Justin enter.

ALDO

(to Justin)

I was always jealous of you...You seem like such a decent guy-kind, sensitive, not like the rest of us.

JUSTIN

(speaks rapidly)

I'm far from perfect...I-I got sucked into your world d-didn't I...But Liz tried to warn me.

ALDO

She's something special.

LIZ

Thanks.

MAX

Hello!

ALDO

Shut up Max.

MAX

Okay.

JUSTIN

I-I think the point is you have to work at b-being a decent person...Do you know what I mean?

Sings [**It Takes Work**]

IT TAKES WORK
 FROM THE MOMENT YOU ARE BORN
 TILL THE FINAL DAY WHEN YOU ARE DEAD
 IT TAKES WORK
 FROM THE TIME THAT YOU WAKE UP
 TILL YOU SAY YOUR EVENING PRAYER AND GO TO BED

 TO BE A BETTER PERSON
 FROM THE ONE YOU WERE BEFORE

TO BE A BETTER PERSON
IT TAKES WORK

JUST A LUMP OF CLAY
TO BE A CERTAIN WAY WE'RE PREDESPOSED
BUT THEN WE HAVE A CHOICE
TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE
DO YOU SUPPOSE?

Aldo:

I THINK YOU'RE OVERTHINKING THIS
BLATHERING AWAY
HOW MUCH MORE IS THERE TO SAY?

Justin:

IT TAKES WORK
FROM THE TIME OF YOUR INCEPTION
TILL THE DAY YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR GOOD
IT TAKES WORK
FROM THE MOMENT YOU ARE CONSCIOUS
TILL THE DAY YOU'RE FLAT WHERE ONCE YOU STOOD

Justin with Aldo (*italics*)

TO BE A BETTER PERSON
HERE WE GO. HERE WE GO.
FROM THE ONE YOU WERE BEFORE
ON AND ON. ON AND ON.

TO BE A BETTER PERSON
IT TAKES WORK

BORN A CERTAIN WAY
TO BE A CERTAIN WAY WE'RE PREDETERMINED
HOW MUCH MORE IS THERE TO SAY?

BUT DOES THAT MEAN WE'LL STAY?
STAY THE WAY WE ARE
OR ARE WE CONDITIONED?
IS THERE REALLY MORE TO SAY?

Justin:

IT TAKES WORK
FROM THE MOMENT THAT YOU BLINK
TILL THE MOMENT THAT YOU GO TO BED
IT TAKES WORK
FROM THE MOMENT THAT YOU THINK
TILL THE MOMENT WHEN YOUR BRAIN IS DEAD

TO BE A BETTER PERSON
 FROM THE ONE YOU WERE BEFORE
 TO BE A BETTER PERSON
 IT TAKES WORK

Aldo:
 COULD IT BE THIS WAY?
 I THINK I FINALLY SEE WHAT YOU ARE SAYING
 TO BE A BETTER MAN
 TO BE OUR BETTER SELF INSTEAD OF STRAYING

Justin and Aldo:
 HOW MUCH DO WE GET A SAY?
 HOW MUCH IS OUR DNA?
 I BELIEVE WE MAKE OUR WAY (*HE BELIEVES WE MAKE OUR WAY*)

MAKING THE CHOICE
 TAKING THE STEP
 WORKING TO BE
 A BETTER MAN!

ALDO
 (to Justin)
 Just for the record...Liz and I did nothing...I was chasing her.

SUSAN
 (to Liz)
 You spiked the water cooler with the side effect pill!

Max and Aldo look horrified.

LIZ
 Finally! Ya got it!..A taste of your own medicine.

MAX
 Of all the sneaky-

LIZ
 (to Justin)
 Did they hurt you?

JUSTIN
 I'm-I'm fine...How about you?

LIZ
 Okay.

MAX

Are you done with the high school reunion...You have something for us.

Max looks hurtfully at Liz. She fumbles in her purse for the disc.

MAX (cont'd)

We trusted you...How could you betray us?

JUSTIN

C'mon guys...You should be ashamed of yourselves...L-look at what you've done...Y-you've deceived a lot of people.

LIZ

Way to go Justin!..You've been very bad boys.

MAX

Indeed we have.

The protesters are shouting and chanting. Aldo walks over to the window.

ALDO

(yells)

Yeah...Down with the man!..Stop the bad drugs!

SUSAN

Aldo.

ALDO

What?

SUSAN

They're shouting at us!

ALDO

Right!

He yells to the crowd.

ALDO (cont'd)

You have the right to be upset! We're greedy and unscrupulous!

(shouts)

No scruples! No scruples!

Max walks to the window and pushes Aldo aside.

MAX

Let me try.

(shouts)

MAX (cont'd)

We've made billions off you poor schlubs!..We are corrupt and despicable!

(beat)

(chants)

We are corrupt! We are corrupt!

ALDO

(yells)

And I think we're sorry!

MAX

Well that was fun! I haven't felt this good in a long time.

JUSTIN

An-an attack of conscience?..Too bad it took a pill to do it.

LIZ

(to Susan)

You don't seem to be too penitent.

SUSAN

I never liked office water...And never liked my job to begin with.

ALDO

Ya know what...I think we should screw the incriminating evidence—turn ourselves in...And confess the whole damn thing... How does that sound?

MAX

That should be my decision...But it's the brightest idea you had in a while.

JUSTIN

Wh-why don't we go down to the Attorney General's office and tell our story.

MAX

Why not!

ALDO

(to Justin and Liz)

Listen...I may have been a creep, but I know love when I see it.

LIZ

Maybe there's hope for you yet.

Liz puts her arm around Justin.

JUSTIN

S-some time the truth is a hard pill to swallow.

MAX

(laughs)

Man that's corny...But you're right kid!

SUSAN

What happens when the side effect pills wear off?

ALDO

God!..I never thought of that.

MAX

Will we be stuck with our old selves?

LIZ

Who knows...Maybe the changes are permanent.

ALDO

(yells out window)

Did you hear that?!..Yes we're despicable...But we can change!

Aldo, Justin, Liz, Max, Susan

Sing

[**Change**]

ONE PERSON AT A TIME
 THE CHANGE WE SEEK WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES
 ONE PERSON AT A TIME
 THE PATH WE SEEK, OUR SPIRIT DOES COMPEL
 THE WORLD WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE
 IF WE PUT ON A DIFFERENT FACE
 WE SAID WHAT WE MEANT
 AND WE MEANT WHAT WE SAID

ONE PERSON AT A TIME
 THE CHANGE WE SEEK WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES
 ONE PERSON AT A TIME
 THE PATH WE SEEK, OUR SPIRIT DOES COMPEL
 WE OPEN UP OUR HEARTS TO SEE
 THE PEOPLE WE WERE MEANT TO BE
 NOT THE LIES WE WERE FED
 IT'S THE TRUTH THAT IS OUR MEDICINE

CHANGE
 IT DON'T COME EASY
 BUT CHANGE
 IS WHAT WE NEED
 WE LOOK INTO OUR SOULS
 AND WE SEE
 WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID

Aldo

THE TRUTH, IT'S NOT JUST MINE
 THE CHANGE WE SEEK WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES
 AND IT'S JUST IN TIME
 BEFORE WE FIND OUR BAD BEHAVIOR GEL
 TO SEE YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE
 STANDING UNDERNEATH THE SUN
 THERE IS MUCH MORE AT STAKE

Max

ONE LOOK AND YOU'LL BE FINE
 THE CHANGE WE SEEK WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES
 ONE LOOK AND YOU'LL RESIGN
 YOU'LL LOOK INSIDE AND SEE THAT THING THAT SMELLS
 SPINNING WHEELS TO MAKE A BUCK
 MAYBE THIS IS MY LUCKY BREAK

Aldo, Max, Susan, Justin & Liz

CHANGE
 IT DON'T COME EASY
 BUT CHANGE
 IS WHAT WE NEED
 WE LOOK INTO OUR SOULS
 AND WE SEE
 WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID

Liz

JUST LAY IT ON THE LINE
 THE CHANGE WE SEEK, WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES

Justin

AND IF YOU TAKE A SHINE
TO THE SPECIAL ONE YOU'D LIKE TO TELL
NOT TO WORRY WHAT THEY THINK
YOU'LL JUST NEED TO GROW A SPINE

Susan

IT PAY'S TO BE MORE KIND
THE CHANGE WE SEEK WE FIND IT IN OURSELVES
FIND THE FRAME OF MIND
BEFORE THE SOUL INSIDE YOU DOES REBEL
TO FEEL MORE DEEPLY ALL THE TIME
WOULD NOT BE A MISTAKE

Aldo, Justin, Liz, Max, Susan

AND AS WE SIT HERE NAVEL GAZING
THE FATE OF THE WORLD DEPENDS
IF ENOUGH OF US WAKE UP TO SEE
IT COULD TURN ON A DIME
WILL WE GET THERE ON TIME
WE HAVE RUN OUT OF RHYMES
TO CHANGE
ONE PERSON AT A TIME

End of play.