

FADE IN:

EXT. COASTAL MOUNTAIN ROAD (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA) - DAY

A sticker shock-hot convertible wends its way along, top down and heading fast toward the sinking sun.

INT./EXT. CONVERTIBLE - DAY (MOVING)

The good-looking guy behind the wheel is TOM SWAIN, 30s, a natural charmer with classic cool. He wears a shirt and tie, but doesn't bother with any "hands off" phone--business for him is hands-on.

TOM
(into cell)
It's got nothing to do with me. If Peter wants to fire the party people, let Peter pay the party piper.

INT. POWERSERVE - AMANDA'S OFFICE - SAME

AMANDA MCKINLEY, V.P. Sales and Marketing, tall, beautiful, razor sharp. She paces while talking into her headset:

AMANDA
(into headset)
This is still your company too, Tom. You're the one on the ropes here. Making this deal stick should be your only priority.

INTERCUT:

TOM
Well, merging with Snork!, we'll all end up on the mat. It's a major risk, that's all I'm saying.

AMANDA
So you said before throwing your little conniption in front of the board. We all heard you.

TOM
Position. I argued my position with passion and finesse, you used to like that, Amanda.

AMANDA

You used to lead with passion and sense. The old Tom would never have freaked out like that --

TOM

I did not freak out.
(aside; to the sky)
I freaked out!

AMANDA

You could not contain and Peter kept his cool and now you --

TOM

(through static)
Lost you for a sec, I'm passing through a canyon. What?

AMANDA

You're now in charge of the Snork! signing party.

TOM

Really? Let's see, Veep of Biz Dev throws merger block party with company called "Snork!" that's more over-valued than tickets to Lord of the Dance -- "No, he's not off his meds." Amanda, you of all people should be in my corner on this. I'm telling you it's wrong.

AMANDA

It's business, Tom, strictly and personally. That's what you taught me, isn't it?

TOM

Oh, that bites --

AMANDA

Sorry, I lost you.

BLIP!--the connection goes dead.

TOM

Aggh! She think's I'm paranoid. How could I be paranoid if I'm not paranoid about my own paranoia? Am I paranoid? -- Who said that?

On which the cell CHIMES. Tom answers quick.

TOM
 (into cell)
 I'm not paranoid, Amanda!

INT. CUBICLE - DAY

TIGHT SHOTS of a dumpy little MYSTERY NERD whose face we cannot see--Birkenstocks over socks, Band-Aids on several fingertips. He huddles the phone, speaks hushedly while disguising his voice:

MYSTERY NERD
 (into phone; heavy voice)
 Mr. Swain?

INTERCUT:

TOM
 Who's this?

MYSTERY NERD
 Tom Swain?

TOM
 Yeah, who's this?

MYSTERY NERD
 You can call me...

His eyes dart about, searching--there's nothing but Snork! paraphernalia everywhere. He regards the pliable squeeze-relaxer in his free hand, a colorful chipmunk character.

The Nerd smiles.

MYSTERY NERD
 Call me, Alvin... ator.

TOM
 What do you want, Alvinator?

A SNORK! BOSS drops a stack of papers on Alvinator's desk.

SNORK! BOSS
 I need the figures on my desk before
 you leave.

ALVINATOR
 (regular whiney voice)
 Yes, ma'am, right away.