

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, female 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

HECTOR RIVERA (30) - A male nurse at the Institute

SERIES OVERVIEW:

POKER FACE is a single camera, half hour comedy that follows the repressed Dr. Cheryl Roxbury's efforts to turn a foul-mouthed sow's ear into a socially acceptable silk purse. Being around the abrasive Billy encourages Cheryl to speak up and learn 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 people can affect and change each other. It's also a satirical warning about 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 brilliant) nervously addresses the assembly.

CHERYL

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

She clicks a remote. VIDEO of BILLY BAGNOSSO (27, handsome but icy) at a poker table appears onscreen. He wears shades and a blank expression.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

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

The 'blank' stares down his opponent, BOBBY G. (50 and sweating). Billy adds a huge stack of chips to the pot.

Bobby G 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.

CHERYL

(clicking the remote)

And here he is, later that night.

CELLPHONE VIDEO shows Billy signing autographs for FANS. He still wears his shades and his 'blank' look. A pretty but somewhat trashy girl, SANDY (20s), tugs at his arm.

SANDY

C'mon, baby. Let's take off. We'll 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.

CHERYL

Next morning the girl went to her suite and found this.

A hotel SECURITY VIDEO shows Sandy, sipping a giant slushee, at her door. The key won't work. The door whips open and a BELLMAN (22) wheels out two very pink, flowery bags.

SANDY

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.

In the auditorium, one of the 'suits' stands. It's PROFESSOR REX BAGBY (65, British and prissy to his ruffled cuffs).

BAGBY

Dr. Roxbury, what is the crux of all this?

CHERYL

The crux?

BAGBY

Yes! The point.

CHERYL

The point. Yes. Well, Billy took off and didn't tell her. That shows his 'blank-ness' isn't just an act. It's a way of life.

(clicking the remote)

He and his 'uncle' then jetted off to Cabo San Lucas to celebrate.

A CELLPHONE VIDEO shows Uncle Phil piloting a boat, loaded with the GIRLS and booze. Tethered to the craft is Billy, parasailing above, sipping a Margarita.

Phil drinks and flirts, not paying attention to steering.

CHERYL (CONT'D)

And that's when it happened.

Billy looks up and sees a large rock formation coming at him. Fast! His stony expression switches to '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 PHOTO 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)

I'm not finished, Dr. Peskoff!

Chastised, Peskoff sits. Cheryl glances into the crowd at DR. LEON HEADLY (33, pompous 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 of Billy in his hospital bed appears.

VIDEO ON SCREEN:

Billy's head is heavily bandaged. He's attached to an array of monitors. Dr. Roxbury stands 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)
And what's this thing in my weeny?

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.' And prove that the will is more important than the wiring. I hope you'll choose to fund this research. 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 a senior colleague! You can't talk to him that way.

CHERYL

Why? Because I'm black? Because I'm a woman?

LEON

Right, both times! I told you, the way to get along with these people is to be professional and polite. And that video didn't help. All that talk about 'old, bald Jews.'

CHERYL

It was to illustrate how socially unaware Billy is.

LEON

Have you looked at our board? Most of them are 'old, bald Jews.'

CHERYL

That's not my problem--

LEON

No. Your problem is you're too hot headed. Too passionate.

CHERYL

That never was a problem before. Not with us.

LEON

(stopping)

I'm not talking about 'us.' I'm talking to you as a colleague. And as your mentor. 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

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 rude and impetuous.

(looking at his watch)

I'm late for a consult.

He gives her a quick kiss and starts to move off.

CHERYL

See you later. Hey, how about we go out tonight and celebrate?

LEON

Celebrate what?

CHERYL

My presentation.

LEON

Sure. I guess. Pick a place.

He walks away. 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! 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. I
want to see him. Pronto!

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 visit.

UNCLE PHIL

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

Moving past her, 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 call
security.

UNCLE PHIL

Go ahead. Call'em.

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

CHERYL

I don't think you want that. I did
a background check on you.
(reading from it)
Phillip Alan Testa. Born in 1962 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 there's a warrant out for your
arrest for recurring lewd behavior.

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

CHERYL
 In 2011 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
 Go play doctor someplace else, will
 ya?

CHERYL
 No. I won't. 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 slink 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

(laughing)

Ha! Nailed it, right? You are gay. You're probably the one that put in that catheter-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 bursts into tears, sobbing 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

(composing himself)
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 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

Huh. I never thought of that.

CHERYL

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

BILLY

To the BAIN Institute.

Hector can't help but laugh. 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 continues to chuckle. 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 reintroduce 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

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 Bagby steeps a cup of tea. Leon enters and heads to the vending machines.

LEON

Professor Bagby, can you tell me when the board will 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 machines, 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 increase donations. 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.

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 find the concept of 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. Smirking, Bagby walks off.

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

(jogging over)

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 some
answers. 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's 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-- Never mind. How was your day?

CHERYL

I spent more time with Billy. 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 'impetuous' 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 it, maybe all those very white guys in their very white coats would treat me better. More like an equal.

LEON

(growing angry)

Look. Can we just--?

CHERYL

You don't get it. You're a guy. And you're already a rockstar there.

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 it's not happening. 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 pants)
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 that. 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. I can't. The decision was--

CHERYL

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

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

Sandy's in a nearly empty sports bar, downing her third wine spritzer. She pours her heart out to JEFF (35), the barkeep.

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

SANDY

(digging out some cash)

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 behind that blank face of his. 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

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. Sure. Thanks.
(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. I'd really
like to join your team.

CHERYL

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 inside. Billy'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 locked up here.

(to Billy)

You ever give her permission to treat you?

BILLY

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

(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! What a 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

(appalled)

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

But it's foundation money. Have you no decency at all?

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 board members. 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 first candidate in the running for the grant is Dr. Leo Jenicek for his proposed study of what makes someone a dog or 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

Where's the Doc?

UNCLE PHIL

Forget about her. I gotta get you out there. I'll announce a comeback tour. 'The Blank is back!'

Billy looks around, growing anxious.

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
 Do you mind telling us why?

CHERYL
 I'd rather not. I'm terribly sorry.

BAGBY
 This is most irregular. Are you
 certain you need to withdraw?

CHERYL
 Yes. I really wanted to help my
 patient but he-- he won't--

LEON
 (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 fraud! And
 totally unfair to the other teams
 with legitimate proposals.

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 unethical
 behavior 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
 (to the crowd)
 Her terrible judgement reflects on
 all of us. I propose we expel her
 from the institute.

The anger in the crowd builds. Cheryl turns to Peskoff.

CHERYL

Look. I get it. You're pissed
because my project got picked and
your tired one didn't.

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 raucously laughs.

PESKOFF

This woman has no respect for me or
this institution. She has to go.

LEON

(standing)

Hold on. She withdrew her project.
Let's just pick another finalist.

PESKOFF

No. She must be removed. We can't
have this kind of person here.

LEON

What 'kind of person' is that?

PESKOFF

(ignoring him)

All who agree with me say 'Aye!'

The majority call out 'Aye.' Leon doesn't know what to do.

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.' An
awesome poker player. And a
terrific patient.

BILLY

Thanks Hector.

(to the crowd)

What the hell's with you? All this chick ever did was try to help me. I should be thanking her. And you crusty, old assholes should treat her better. Look! She wore a suit!

BAGBY

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

BAGBY

What are you saying?

BILLY

I'm gonna donate \$4 million bucks and give 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 wise-up.

BILLY

So here's the deal. I'll give this joint the dough 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 out
front. 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, 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