

June 5, 2019

THE FIT
A Play about Money and Tribalism

By Carey Perloff

Contact: Leah Hamos
Gersh Agency
212 634-8153
lhamos@gersh.com

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CHARACTERS

PAUL MANDEL *The Managing Partner of a major venture capital firm in Palo Alto. Mid-50's.*

JEREMY LEE *A young partner at Paul's VC firm, Chinese-American, late 20's or early 30's*

SAKINA BANERJEE *A new associate at Paul's VC firm, Indian-American, roughly the same age as Jeremy*

MARCIA MANDEL *Paul's wife, a high-powered lawyer, 50's*

CHING ARCENAS *A cleaner at Paul's VC firm, Filipina, 50's. CHING speaks perfect English but puts on a Tagalog accent when she's cleaning at the office*

PLACE

A successful venture capital firm on Sand Hill Road in Palo Alto, California.

TIME

The present

SCENE BREAKDOWN

THE FIT moves fluidly between various locations at Paul's venture capital firm, including Paul's office, Jeremy and Sakina's office, the hallways where Ching cleans, and the ladies' room.

Scene One

PAUL'S office. Friday morning. PAUL is at his desk, leafing through a deck. CHING enters with her cart.

CHING Happy Friday, boss!

PAUL *(without looking up)* What's happy about it?

CHING I have a surprise!

PAUL Oh yeah? Let me guess.... chocolate room spray?

Ching produces a bottle of Port City, the firm's new craft beer, "Port City".

CHING Look what just came!

PAUL *(looking up)* Port City! It's about fucking time! *(delighted, he grabs the bottle from Ching)*

CHING Exciting, di ba? Want me to open it?

PAUL At 9 a.m.? *(he grins)* Not yet. Let me just stare at it for a while! *(he does. Smiles)* Listen! Can't you hear the revenue pouring in, Ching? *(Ching leans close to the bottle and listens. Jeremy enters)*

JEREMY Hey Paul!

PAUL Jeremy! *(holding up the bottle)* Check it out! Our new investment has arrived!

JEREMY I know! John's drinking it for breakfast.

PAUL Really? Then what are we waiting for? *(he holds the bottle out to Ching, who opens it. While he does so, Jeremy goes to the cart and takes a beer for himself)*
Cheers!

JEREMY Cheers!

PAUL swigs. The phone rings. Paul answers it.

PAUL Katie! Happy Friday! *(Beat. Correcting himself with amusement)* Kathy, right! *(he grins. Jeremy laughs)* A bad time? No, as a matter of fact, this is a good time, a very good time! What can I do for you? *(Beat. Annoyed)* I'm sorry? *(beat)* My wife? *(Beat)* Of course I'm happy she won her breastfeeding case, she's my wife! *(he swigs)*

his beer) You bet. I support people's right to lactate whenever they choose. The *food space* is where it's at, even if it means breast milk. But beer is even better! And while I *have* you, let's talk about *alternative meat!* (*She demurs. He listens*) I *know* the fake food market is saturated but wait till you hear about this new company! Think fake *spare ribs!* Pork chops! *Brisket*, like you mother made it! We're about to single-handedly disrupt-- (*she responds. She has to go*) Fine. I'll do that. You too. And when you get a *real* job-- like the *Wall Street Journal*—you be sure to let me know. (*He disconnects*) Moron!

JEREMY That was TechCrunch?

PAUL No. Mashable! Some idiot rookie, totally breathless about Marcia's breast-feeding case and would I like to comment on the changing status of *women* in tech!

JEREMY Unbelievable!

PAUL Okay, let's talk money. Tell me about your micro-loan idea.

JEREMY The company's called Flip.

PAUL What if it flops? (*he smiles*) Kidding. Go on.

JEREMY It's about mobilizing street vendors to distribute their products via a simple app. (*CHING's ears perk up. She listens carefully*) It's going to launch in Southeast Asia-- they already have a huge pushcart network, right, Ching?

CHING You bet, Mr. Jeremy. We Filipinos love pushcarts... like I keep telling you...

PAUL (*looking at the deck*) Flip. It's a good name. (*Ching listens*)

JEREMY Easy to remember and sounds fun, right? The CEO's super smart--

PAUL That kid Harvey?

JEREMY (*correcting him*) Howard.

PAUL Howard, whatever. His Executive Summary looked good. Even if he can't string two words together.

JEREMY Be nice, Paul! As engineers go, he's not so bad. At least when he tries to talk to people, he looks at *their* shoes instead of his own.

PAUL Right. We'll work through his numbers at Monday's meeting. My advice—link the app to WeChat or What'sApp or something. The only thing people trust in Southeast Asia is family, *(to Ching)* right?

CHING You bet, bossing.

PAUL God, this beer is good! Thanks, Ching.

CHING Any time! *(She smiles to herself and exits)*

PAUL Okay. What about Miss M.I.T.? Anything happening there?

JEREMY She's got an interesting company to present. Might be good.

PAUL Might be? *Better* be. This is her third strike.

JEREMY Give her a chance—she's trying.

PAUL What is this, Girl Scouts? You don't get participation points for *trying*! Did you know she went to HR last week? To ask about how we *assess investments*?! What's up with *that*?

JEREMY I think she wanted in on the ski trip.

PAUL She told me she doesn't ski! Why should we let her in on the ski trip if she doesn't ski?

JEREMY Because that's where we make deals.

PAUL *(smiling)* So tell her to take a few ski lessons!

JEREMY Right. *(beat)* Any news on your meat company?

PAUL We're still fighting the FDA - some stupid food coloring issue—but we're getting close! It's genius, Jeremy. The magic ingredient in this stuff is called "heme". I was in the lab yesterday while they were testing it. They've solved fake *blood* and the smell of *charcoal*, now they need *texture* that's got some muscle! Then we can pull off ribs and stuff. The product is so close to beef you can almost hear it *moo*.

JEREMY Amazing. Who would've imagined—

PAUL Who would've imagined? *(he grins)* Me!

Blackout.

Scene Two

SAKINA and JEREMY in their office. Later that morning. They sit at adjacent desks, or maybe they just have laptops at a common table.

JEREMY (eager) So on a scale of one to ten, how was last night?

SAKINA The food was a two.

JEREMY (stung) What?! It was a Thursday Thrill on Thrillist!

SAKINA But the tequila wasn't bad. Thanks for letting me rehearse my presentation.

JEREMY Of course!

SAKINA Have you heard anything? From the team?

JEREMY (Quickly) Everyone's busy. Be patient.

SAKINA I feel like I'm invisible around here!

JEREMY How could you be invisible? You're beautiful *and* smart! Who gets that lucky?!

SAKINA It's not *luck*. I'm an electrical engineer from M.I.T!

JEREMY As you remind me *constantly*...

SAKINA Maybe it's my *name*. What do you think? Maybe if I were named Carly...

JEREMY *Carly*? That's the most loathed name in the Valley!

SAKINA So what. She's rich. Incredibly rich.

JEREMY You're *Indian*, why should you be named Carly?

SAKINA You're Chinese, why should you be named *Jeremy*?

JEREMY My parents thought it would make me employable.

SAKINA Jeremy?!

JEREMY (Proudly) It's British.

SAKINA They don't like me.

JEREMY My parents? They've never met you.

SAKINA Paul. Paul and his henchmen. I wish I could stand at the urinal and hear what they really talk about.

JEREMY You don't want to know.

SAKINA I need them to pay *attention!* I'm about to offer them something tremendous.

JEREMY Don't worry... I'll work with you before you present!

SAKINA Really? Can you do it now?

JEREMY *Now?*

SAKINA (*interrupting*) I'll be fast. Really fast. Help me, Jeremy.

JEREMY (*closing his laptop*) Okay. Ten minutes.

SAKINA (*teasing*) And this time you have to *listen*. Not flirt and get drunk and... you know...

JEREMY (*blushing*) I wasn't drunk!

SAKINA Yeah, right. Okay. (*she stands facing him, starting her pitch*) This is background information on a visionary new company called... Shivatech.

JEREMY (*he pretends to push a buzzer*) Bzzzz! Terrible name! I told you so last night! What does it even mean?

SAKINA You know. *Shiva*. God of everlasting change. (*JEREMY looks blank*) Wow, Jeremy, didn't they teach you anything at UCLA? Shiva is the god of many disguises, responsible for the creation, upkeep and destruction of the world.

JEREMY Uh huh. You'll need to tell the founder to pick something else. Good start-up names have four letters and *punch*. Like Uber. Etsy.

SAKINA I find "Shivatech" very suggestive.

JEREMY It sounds like what Jews do when they mourn the dead.

SAKINA Shivatech's based on ancient wisdom! They've got an awesome product in development.

JEREMY What's the problem it's trying to solve?

SAKINA The problem is not knowing what's happening in our own bodies. This device gathers real information in real time. Not what we *say*, but what we *feel*—

JEREMY (*Making a buzzer sound to shut her up*) Never say "feel", it sounds squishy.

SAKINA You mean it sounds *female*.

JEREMY Well...

SAKINA Too bad. It's true. Imagine how awful it is if you have to constantly monitor your heart rate. Or prick your finger five times a day to check your blood sugar before giving yourself insulin --

JEREMY Make your point. You get five minutes plus questions.

SAKINA (*With visionary zeal*) What if, woven into your clothes, you had bio-sensitive sensors that could gather that information for you? What if you could measure your exertion, your glucose levels, your stress, whatever, just by wearing a certain pair of shorts!

JEREMY *Shorts?* (*beat*) You're pitching us *shorts*?

SAKINA Did you not hear me say that last night?

JEREMY (*smiling*) I must have been distracted...

SAKINA It's all in the Executive Summary! Wearable technology that will make thousands of lives more livable.

JEREMY And what if someone doesn't look good in shorts?

SAKINA Then they can choose a different delivery mechanism! The sensors just have to be close to the skin.

JEREMY What if they get wet?

SAKINA You coat them. Like a Fitbit! That's the easy part! The hard part is figuring out what's going on under the skin.

JEREMY Like?

SAKINA Like in the blood.

JEREMY Watch out for blood—look what happened to that creepy Theranos woman!

SAKINA Trust me. This company has “unicorn” potential, (*British accent*) *Jeremy*.

JEREMY Who's the founder?

SAKINA (*rapturously*) A total genius!

JEREMY (*worried*) You don't have a thing for him, do you?

SAKINA How do you know it's a *him*?!

JEREMY (*relieved*) Oh good, it's a *her*?

SAKINA No. It's not. (*beat*) But ... you shouldn't *assume*--

JEREMY Of course not. Never assume. (*beat. Worried again*) So do you? Have a thing for him?

SAKINA Relax, Jeremy. He's almost my *father's* age. But even if I *did*—

JEREMY Is he Indian? Don't tell me—(*jealous, teasing*) he talks softly and drinks chai and sits on the floor in a fetal position...

SAKINA *Lotus* position and you know it. (*she smiles*) His work space is full of beautiful art and real books that people have actually *read*—and everywhere you turn, you hear the sound of a *fountain* gurgling...

JEREMY You're so tribal.

SAKINA We're all tribal! Wouldn't you like to be with a Chinese-American woman if you could?

JEREMY No!

SAKINA (*teasing*) Come on! As long as she sent pork buns on Saturday like your mother, you'd be good to go!

JEREMY Get over the pork buns! Would it make you happy if my mother sent papadams instead?

SAKINA Nope, sorry. Papadams have gluten. Anyway, I'm trying to make a point here! I want to work with people who have *vision*.

JEREMY Take it easy. You don't have to change the world your first few times out! Remember that asshole with the artisanal *messenger bags* who said he was "making the world a better place, one bag at a time"?

SAKINA (*laughing*) Idiot.

JEREMY Paul *hated* that guy! Okay. The pitch sounds good. When you make your power point, use "Prezi". That's the platform they like—it's got wild colors and great graphics—it works every time. If you distract them with what's on the screen, you won't have to look them in the eye so much. And don't get cute—no jokes, no anecdotes, just the facts. Okay?

SAKINA No jokes?

JEREMY *Sakina--*

SAKINA Even my stupid Indian accent? (*she does a kind of parody Indian accent*) It's very good for loosening the sphincters of uptight white assholes at early morning meetings.

JEREMY Stop it! Why do you always do that? It's so demeaning!

SAKINA It's what they're thinking anyway! That I'm some clueless Indian girl with an axe to grind.

JEREMY So don't give them more ammunition!

SAKINA Why not? Let them know we *know*! It's fun. I love watching them squirm. (*Indian accent*) I will start by telling them the good news: "reincarnation is making a comeback".

JEREMY *Sakina--*