

Cleopatra's Mountain

By Andrew Lansdale

The Mores and Manners of Corporate America.

Scene - An Office in America

Carla Valentine is the CEO of the Ablatine conglomerate which includes mining, logging, forestry, chemicals, oil and cattle ranching. She is looked upon as the 'ball-busting' hit-person of Corporate America; the takeover queen of Wall Street. She travels frequently from the corporate headquarters in Charleston, West Virginia. She takes the company jet with her husband whom she has enrolled on the company payroll as her PA. She is also in almost daily contact with her hairdresser, Gary and her make-up expert, Dee-dee Cavallo, who are nearly always on hand to repair the ravages of travel, of stress and the signs of premature ageing.

Also on her entourage are her style counsellor, who advises her what clothes to wear and packs them carefully for the journey; and her manicurist, who ensures that the corporate nails are sharpened for the fray.

Scene - Office on the top floor of the HQ Building

Present are Carla Valentine, Donald Woods, CEO of South Atlas Corporation and Wayne Rosen, a Vice President of the Ablatine Corporation.

Carla Valentine (replacing the receiver)

Don't adopt that attitude with me. You're not in possession of all the facts.

Donald Woods (sarcastically)

And you are?

Carla

Of course I am. You used to be the largest individual shareholder in the South Atlas Corporation as well as the chief executive. That was my stockbroker on the telephone. I now own more than 90% of the shares. My offer is now unconditional. I own South Atlas lock, stock and barrel. Especially the stock part, particularly yours.

Wayne Rosen smirked and leant back in his chair.

Donald

You used to be an honourable person.

Ashleigh That's very kind of you, Mrs. Valentine. I've told the workforce that their jobs are now safe.

Ashleigh walks to the windows overlooking the shopfloor. The workforce give him the thumbs-up.

Ashleigh Mrs. Valentine. The workers are showing their appreciation. Come and give them a wave.

Carla gets up lazily and walks over to the windows. She gives a token wave and the workers leave their machines and clap their hands. She walks back to the desk.

Carla I think that just about wraps up everything today. Thank you Mr. Winters.

Ashleigh No, Mrs Valentine. Thank you. Thank you for all you have done for us and for the local community.

Scene - In the limousine on the way to the airport.

Carla Get the security people into the plant one hour after the late shift ends. Seal all the factory entrances. Get the engineers in to disconnect the machines. We'll have them shipped out before the day shift arrives. And then out to the new factory in Brazil by the end of the week.

Earl That'll stir them up a bit.

Carla Yeah. I'd like to be fly on the wall when Mr Ashleigh bloody Winters arrives in the office.

Scene - Office on the top floor of the HQ building.

Wayne Rosen (on the telephone)
 Carla Valentine is not in the country at the moment. She is on the way to Johannesburg.

Wayne listens and smirks.

Wayne Is that right? Nothing left at all?

Wayne listens again and smirks.

Wayne Well, you know what women are like. They feel that they have to change their minds all the time to prove they are female. Why don't you send an e-mail. Goodbye.

Carla Ashleigh Winters?

Wayne Yup. Twittering on about tearing a community apart.

Carla Just getting them up off their fat backsides. The Brazilians will produce twice as fast in half the time at about 20% of the cost.

Scene - Hairdressing Salon within the HQ

A male hairdresser is just rinsing the hair of a woman in a small room with a single sink, a spray, a mirror and a hairdressing chair. On the walls are shelves with different coloured bottles and jars. The man is dressed in green shoes, yellow trousers, red shirt with a green scarf and a yellow baseball cap with a blond pony tail hanging out of the back.

Carla Valentine This is the best investment the company's ever made. It saves me so much time. Your being able to get away at almost a moment's notice to look after me is beyond price.

Hairdresser (Gary) Oohh yes, it's such a good idea and takes another worry off your shoulders. A girl's got to look her best, hasn't she? Goodness knows how I get the time to look after myself. My personal life is in tatters. Anyway, what's Madam got on the cards today?

Gary now lifts her head and very gently towels her hair dry.

Carla Well, I've called this meeting for later today There's a company that really dovetails into ours and I'm determined to take it over if it's the last thing I do in corporate life.

Gary Ooh, you do have ever such a lot of things going on and so interesting. No wonder your hair needs constant attention.

Carla Ain't that the truth. It's most stressful. Being pampered by you makes all the difference. It makes me feel I can take on the whole of Wall Street.

Martin Oh yes, Flourtown Pennsylvania. I'll try and arrange a meeting. Neutral venue? Business Suite at the Ritz Hotel in New York? Friday 1030?

Carla Yup. That'll do me. Book me into another suite with rooms for the whole war party. Phone Gary as well. I'll need him.

New York

Meeting in an hotel suite. Present are Carla Valentine, her husband and PA, Martin, Earl Jenkins and Wayne Rosen. The telephone rings.

Earl Jenkins Hello, Carla Valentine's Office. (pause). Yes. Please come right up, Sir. Suite 5. (replaces receiver). He's on his way up.

Carla Right; let's see the cut of his jib. We'll have to play this very much by ear.

The buzzer goes. Carla nods. Wayne Rosen walks over and opens the door.

Wayne Rosen On your own, Sir? Come in.

Chay Mallory (his voice very deep and booming)
Yup. I don't usually need anyone else.

Carla remains seated but holds out her hand. He walks to the desk and takes it.

Carla This is my PA, Martin. This is Earl Jenkins and Wayne Rosen.

Chay Mallory Chay Mallory.

Mallory is large and beefy with a large head and thick black hair. He has large hairy hands and is dressed in a blazer, jeans and an open neck shirt displaying a large triangle of chest hair. He pulls up a chair and sits down.

Mallory I understand you wish to discuss a merger between Ablatine and Poole Mallory.

Carla We would like to look at ways in which both our companies could benefit from a co-operative agreement, where both our interests could be dove-tailed together, thereby

reducing both cost bases and improving the bottom line and our shareholder's income.

Mallory As I said, a merger. There's no need to gift wrap it for Christmas. What you mean is a merger, whereby you chuck out half the workforce, increase profits, sell off the bits that don't match and you become Time magazine's Business Person of the Year.

Carla Well, we'll study the interaction between the various core components of....

Mallory As I said, a merger.

Carla The appropriate elements of all the units in our...

Mallory Yes, a merger.

Carla Well, in the loosest sense of the

Mallory A merger, or not a merger, that is the question.

Carla Well, yes I suppose semantically, if one dictionises the expression..

Mallory A merger?

Carla I suppose it may be....

Mallory A merger?

Carla Well, OK a merger.

Mallory I can see that this is going to be a tortuous road we'll be walking if you only find it possible to say what you mean in our President's English, rather than the Queen's.

Carla Well, I think it is important to cover all eventualities in one's discussions, so that there is no possibility of error. I have always said that it is necessary to talk things through to the point of exhaustion.

Mallory What are you exhausting, Ma'am, Webster's dictionary or us?

Carla I find your manner somewhat hostile, Mr Mallory. I give you fair warning. Do not cross swords with me.

Mallory And I think you're a fraud. When I talk business, I like to think that the person I'm sitting across the table from is the real person, not some manufactured talking dummy.

Carla stands up with a look of fury.

Carla How dare you speak to me like that. Who do you think I am.

Mallory That's what I'm trying to decide Ma'am. You're don't appear to be a real person. You're a sort of Pamela Anderson of the business world, in my view.

Carla (icily) And from what perspective are you looking, Mr. Mallory?

Mallory I like things to be open and above board Mrs. Valentine. From where I'm looking they're not.

Carla (still icily) In what way, may I ask?

Mallory Well, lets look at you from the top. In your graduation photo your hair was dark. In your first passport you were described as having "hair colour: dark brown". Now it's blonde, whereas at the age of 45, it should be turning grey.

Carla I am not 45.

Mallory You say you've just turned 40, but unless you graduated from high school at the age of thirteen, then the figures just don't add up.

Carla (uncomfortably) I may have slightly exaggerated my date of birth.

Mallory So. We have your hair colour and your age. You were born with rather a large and crooked nose. That's been surgically changed.

Carla nodded. It was essential, it impaired by breathing.

Carla (sitting down slowly but still fizzing)

It is juvenile and immature to allow personal perceptions to cloud one's business judgements, but there is a limit and you have overstepped that limit.

Mallory Then you won't like the proposal I am about to make.

Carla Go on.

Mallory Well. I think I would like to see the real deal; the real you.

Carla And how do you plan that?

Mallory In order to move this any further forward we need to spend some time together. Alone. Without the acolytes with which you surround yourself.

The Vice Presidents and Martin stiffen.

Mallory I suggest that we go camping in the mountains for a week. Just a change of clothes. No war paint, just jeans and a teeshirt. We'll fish and shoot, live off the land. Just two tents and sleeping bags.

Carla (standing up again)

Is this your idea of a joke? As I said before and should have insisted upon. I will call security and have you removed. This meeting is at an end. Goodbye Mr. Mallory.

Mallory I'll be in New York for another couple of days. If you change your mind...

Carla Never. They'd be advertising winter sports holidays in hell before I discuss anything further with you again. Get lost.

Scene - Near a small town in America outside a camping shop.

Mallory It's a lovely day isn't it.

Carla (witheringly) Not if you've got a zillion e-mails waiting for you back at the office.

Mallory Oh it's only a week. We all need a break.

Carla But not with you!

Mallory It'll be interesting anyway. I talked to the storekeeper. He says you can change in there and he'll look after your things for a week; he'll keep them in the office.

Carla Change? I'm going like this, thank you.

Mallory That wasn't the deal. It was jeans and tee shirt with a change of the same clothes.

Mallory gestures to her tight trousers, her heeled loafers and her tight designer shirt.

Mallory That's not what was decided upon and what have you got in those bags? We aren't having any Sherpas and I'm sure as hell, not carrying any of your things. What's in here anyway?

Mallory picks up one of the bags, unzips it and upends it onto the tailboard of the pickup. Out falls lots of lacy underwear, blouses, skirts, dresses and shoes as well as a bag of pantyhose.

Carla barges in and starts thrusting the stuff back in its bag.

Carla (eyes blazing)
How dare you.

Mallory Well, I can see that you're determined to cheat right from the outset.

Carla For your information, I never pack for myself. It's all done for me by my style consultant.

Mallory Well clearly someone has disobeyed your instructions. Where's your rucksack and tent and sleeping bag and other things.

Carla I'll have you know, that this is not how I would chose to spend a week. I am not familiar with its... its.... its primitive and uncivilised aspects.

Mallory OK, let's get you kitted out in the shop. Where are your jeans.

Carla (coldly) I don't wear jeans. I wear these.

Carla gestures to her pants.

Mallory Well I have to warn you that if you wear trousers that tight, after five miles in the mountains, you'll feel that you've spent the night with both Bill Clinton and the 101st Airborne Division.

Carla Well, I'll just have to take that risk won't I. Let's buy the necessities.

They go into the shop.

Mallory Hi Mac. We need a small tent and a sleeping bag, one or two other things and a little advice.

Shopkeeper Hi Mister. Well let's see now. These tents here are very popular. They're light and easy to put up. They have a little porch to put your things in. Low-aspect if the wind gets up as well. These sleeping bags over here are popular. They breathe well so they're hot when it's cold and you're cool when it's hot.

Mallory OK. We are looking for a trek of about a week up in the hills. Do you have a map with the trails marked on them?

Shopkeeper (with map)

Sure do. Here. The trails are marked in red, yellow, green and black according to length and difficulty. If the lady is a little new to the game --

Carla snorts derisively.

Shopkeeper -- the green trails would be a good ones. Reasonable elevations, good water, good places beside lakes and rivers to pitch your tent, to swim, to fish and to shoot pheasant and duck.

Mallory That's great. We need a backpack for the lady. Could you pick out one with straps for the tent and sleeping bag to hang. She can put her other things inside.

Shopkeeper Sure, here this is a good one. Lots of hanging points, good wide shoulder straps to prevent chafing. Good frame for

support and not too heavy. Made with Gore-Tex and Aluminium. It's not cheap mind you!

Mallory That's OK.

Mallory passes the rucksack, tent and sleeping bag to Carla.

Mallory Why don't you put in your change of clothes and I'll just buy a couple more things and settle up.

Carla And I'll suppose you'll want to see what I'm taking.

Mallory No, I know what you're taking. Trousers, tee-shirts, toothbrush, socks, sensible underwear and night-clothes.

Carla And that's it.

Mallory Yup. That's about it.

Mallory (Carla stalks out and Mallory turns to the shopkeeper)

I'd like two pairs of pre-washed jeans 34 waist and 31 leg. Two pairs of men's boxers, medium. Woollen socks medium and a pair of good hiking boots size 6. Gore-tex lined would be the best with suede uppers. I'll just get my rucksack to put them in. I don't want the lady to know though. Oh and I'll need the map. Any cougars or bears up there?

Shopkeeper There's a bear which is a nuisance up at Indian Lake. I'll give you a few pepper cartridges in case he gets too inquisitive.

Mallory OK thanks. Give me a box of birdshot as well, 12 gauge. And perhaps an extra cutlery set and a cup and plate.

Shopkeeper OK. Fetch your backpack, I'll pack it for you.

Shopkeeper touches the side of his nose conspiratorially.

Mallory Visa?

Shopkeeper Yup. That'll do nicely.

Scene - Up in the hills with thick woodland but wide grassy trails.

Both Carla and Mallory have large rucksacks with loads hanging off them and strapped on top. Mallory has a shotgun strapped on the back.

Carla *Phew.* Can we rest for a while. I'm not used to all this.

Mallory Where is it affecting you?

Carla All over, I think. Legs and shortage of breath and my back is killing me.

Mallory OK. I'll lift your backpack off - here.

Mallory lifts Carla's backpack off and lays it on the ground. Then he removes his own. He sits down. Carla disappears into the trees.

Carla (returning) Ah that's better. I'll just have a sit down for ten minutes or so.

Carla lays down on her back and closes her eyes.

A short time later

Mallory Come on. Wakey-wakey. Here's the map. If we walk for another forty minutes or so, we'll be by this lake. I can catch lunch for us there.

Carla (groaning) OK, OK. Every muscle I've got has started to hurt and I don't think I've got any skin left on my shoulders and my feet are agony.

Mallory leans down and pulls her up.

Mallory Here I'll strap your tent onto my pack.

Carla No you won't. You're already carrying more than me. Don't patronise me, you scumbag. I'm as good as you any day.

Mallory OK have it your own way. Maybe we'd better call it a day after lunch. Just make camp and prepare for tomorrow. It is more of a steep climb from there on.

Carla Well let's see how we feel.

Carla and Mallory load up and continue the gentle climb into the hills.

Scene - Beside a large blue lake.

Mallory This seems to have been used before. There's the odd tent peg here and there. There is the remains of a camp-fire and another one over there.

Mallory pointed.

Mallory Let me help you off with your backpack.

Mallory lifts it down and Carla sits down on the ground and puts her head on her knees.

Carla Ah. I feel dead. I hurt everywhere.

Mallory It'll wear off in a short time. Why don't you take your shoes off and paddle in the water. I'll get my fishing rod ready.

Carla doesn't answer and Mallory rigs up his telescopic rod and reel. He takes out a folding shovel and digs the ground getting a few worms for bait. He takes his rig down to the water's edge and casts into the water. Carla raises her head from her knees and gazes at him. She slowly takes off her shoes and socks, walks down to the water's edge and walks slowly in up to her ankles.

Carla I won't scare the fish will I?

Mallory I doubt it. They'll probably come over for a look-see, just out of curiosity.

Just then Mallory strikes and the rod bends.

Mallory This looks like part of our lunch at least. Can you collect some dry grass and some sticks and we'll have a fire in no time.

Carla just stands there in the water.

Mallory Unless you want Sushi of course.

Carla (grudgingly) OK. What did your last slave die of?

Carla goes up, dries her feet and puts her shoes on again. She walks painfully away, disappears into the trees and comes limping back with an armful of wood and kindling. Mallory brings the fish to the shore, kills it and carries it to the campsite where he lays it on a flat piece of rock. He lays the fire and lights it and

skilfully blows it into life. He cuts sticks with a small axe and builds a support for the pan over the fire, gets a little butter from his pack and starts cooking the fish in two halves.

Carla (bitingly) Quite a little housewife aren't we?

Mallory Well my father used to bring the family for camping holidays and I kinda watched how he did it. We never starved doing it his way so I guess he couldn't have been totally wrong.

Carla (slightly less biting) Well so long as we don't die of salmonella.

Mallory Oh it's not salmon, it's a large trout.

Carla Ha. Très amusant.

Mallory Just get your plate and your knife and fork out and we can eat. I saw some wild garlic up by the trail. I'll just run and get some. The leaves will bring out the flavour. Then some water from the lake, just upstream from where you rinsed your feet and we're done.

Carla Plate? Knife and fork?

Mallory Sure. What do you usually eat off, a palm leaf?

Carla I didn't think of bringing those.

Mallory No matter, we can share mine. Lucky we got you a sleeping bag, otherwise tonight might have been interesting !!

Carla I'd rather share my sleeping quarters with an alligator thank you.

Mallory OK suit yourself.

Mallory went along the path and comes back with a handful of leaves.

Mallory Wild garlic. I'll throw some in the pot. Could you collect a few more small sticks, we need a bit more heat.

Carla gets up and walks into the woods. Mallory quickly gets out the new cutlery set, the plate and the mug and lays them on the ground opposite where he is

sitting. He dashes down to the lake and fills her mug with water, just getting back before Carla reappears.

Carla returns with a reasonable armful of sticks.

Mallory That's great, the fish will finish off nicely now.

Carla (noticing the place setting)

Did you just rub your lamp Mr. Genie or this some sort of conspiracy?

Mallory Not at all. I didn't think you had thought this through entirely, so I decided to bring another set along just in case. We would probably have lost some of the things anyway and had to share.

Carla Thanks a lot. Sharing cutlery with you would have been like sharing a toothbrush. Necessary, but probably not a pleasant experience.

Mallory How is your choice of clothing working out?

Carla Very good thank you.

Mallory Yeah?

Carla Yeah. Except that my feet hurt.

Mallory Is that right?

Carla Yeah. And your little quip about Bill Clinton and the 101st Airborne seems to be coming true.

Mallory Trousers a bit tight and rubbing, huh?

Carla Yeah just a bit, but I find Bill Clinton and the paratroopers preferable to your smug "I told you so" kind of attitude.

Mallory grabs his backpack and pulls out four packages.

Mallory So you wouldn't dump Bill and the rapid reaction force for these then?

Mallory throws two pairs of stone-washed jeans onto the ground. Carla picks them up, stands up and holds one up to herself.

Carla But they're huge!

Mallory Yup, but that's why they don't rub. And here's a belt to keep them up. What about these.

Mallory throws a packet of men's boxer shorts onto the ground.

Carla You expect me to wear these?

Mallory You can if you want. No one is going to see and they also don't rub.

Carla And what do I do with this hole in the fly?

Carla sticks her finger through and holds it up in the air, wagging it to and fro.

Mallory Well when the insects start biting, you stick your fingers through the hole and have a good scratch. Now what about these?

Mallory throws out a pair of hiking boots.

Carla I'll look like a soldier in those.

Mallory Yup. One of the 101st I shouldn't wonder.

Carla And they're too big!

Mallory Well I can either take them back or you can wear these under them.

Mallory throws out a pair of thick woollen socks.

Carla Well I'll go and try them on, but I need a mirror.

Mallory If you had a mirror, you'd never wear them. Let's eat lunch first and you can think about it.

Mallory spooned out the fish into two dishes, went down to the lake shore, cleared the water surface and refilled the cups with water to drink. They started to eat.

Carla (after her first mouthful)

This is delicious. Where did you learn to cook like that? Don't tell me 'this is what Daddy did.'

Mallory

Well yes. But it's really the fish. No restaurant could ever serve fish this fresh, so we have an advantage straight away. However when my small supply of butter runs out or turns rancid, the food won't taste as good.

Carla

What will we cook with then?

Mallory

I hope to shoot a duck for our dinner tonight. I'll save some of the fat for later.

Carla finished her food and lay back in the sun.

Carla

You know, things ain't as bad as I first thought.

Mallory

What about this afternoon, when you're dressed up as Calamity Jane?

Carla

Oh yes, I'd forgotten about the late arrivals at the fancy dress ball.

Mallory

I'll do the dishes in the lake, we can pitch our tents and I'll go and shoot us some dinner.

Carla

What, stay here the night?

Mallory

Why not. There's no point in overdoing it.

Later, the tents have been put up either side of the campfire. There is a small washing line between two trees at the side.

Mallory (picking up his gun)

I'll just have a recce and see what game there is about. If you hear any bangs, don't be too alarmed. I'll just be on the borders of the lake. I'll probably be a coupla' hours

Carla

OK Doc, gets yerself a wabbit.

She crawls into her tent and after a while comes back out in baggy jeans pinched in at the waist with a belt, tee shirt and hiking boots. She jumps up and down to

test the footwear and then peers over her shoulder and downwards to try and see her bottom.

Carla (aloud) Well the boots and jeans are very comfy, but I must look a fright. I need a shower or something.

Carla looks around carefully, then walks down to the lakeside and sits at the edge. She slowly looks around again and then unlaces her boots and takes off her socks. She stands up and after a quick look around, slips out of her clothes. She moves forward into the water and gasps and then sighs as she gets used to the temperature. She bends down and splashes handfuls of water over her.

Carla Ah bliss.

She walks around a bit and dives in and swims. After playing around for a while she walks out of the water and stands on the foreshore, wiping the water away. She goes up to the tent and takes her towel out, returns to the shore where her clothes are in a pile and dries herself. She puts on boxers and jeans, tightening the belt up. She cups her breasts as if weighing them.

Carla Spaniel's ears, indeed. Huh.

Carla pulls on a tee-shirt and tucks it in, sits down and pulls on socks and boots.

Later

Mallory walks back into camp with his gun in one hand and a dead duck hanging from the other.

Mallory COOEEE. Anyone at home?

Carla (her head appearing from her tent)
Hi Chay. How did ya get on?

Mallory (lifting up the duck)
Well we won't starve tonight at any rate. I saw some water plants back there by the waterlilies. I didn't want to get my boots wet, but I'll have a swim and bring some back. The sun'll be going down in about three hours so I'd better start preparing things before we lose the light.

Carla (coming out of her tent)
OK anything I can do?

Mallory Hey I like the outfit.

Carla I know you're just saying that. I must look awful. The only saving grace is that there's no one else here to see me.

Mallory That's true. The man in the store said that only a couple of people come up here and that's generally in the fall. There are bears though.

Carla (in alarm) Bears?

Mallory Yup, but not grizzlies, just nice cuddly brown bears.

Carla (relieved) Oh that's alright then.

Mallory Even Yogi Bear couldn't tell the difference between Gloria Vanderbilt trousers and Levi Outbackers.

Carla Huh, wise guy.

Mallory *"Hey Boo-Boo, what does that lady look like in those clothes."
"I don't know Yogi, you'd better ask the Ranger."
"Hey, Mr Ranger Sir....."*

Carla OK comedian, I get the picture. I hate to admit it, but you were right, these clothes are much more comfortable for up here. That Sergeant in the 4th platoon gave me a hard time. Bill Clinton was OK though. That reminds me, I'd better go and clean my teeth.

Mallory Who's the comedian now?. If you could get the fire going again, I'll go and pick the vegetables.

Mallory picks up his towel and goes down to the lake edge. Facing the water, he takes off his boots, removes all his clothes and strides naked into the water and then dives, making swift progress out into the lake. Then he swims back and, standing up to his waist, washes himself with his hands in the water. He swims off towards some lake plants and starts picking them. He occasionally smells them. He swims back one handed and climbs out of the water, standing naked, facing the camp and dries himself off. He dresses and comes back to camp.

Carla What are those plants?

Mallory I don't know their name but they smell of thyme and rosemary. This is wild mint. They'll go well with camp food. These are water nettles; taste like spinach.

Mallory goes down to the lake again and prepares the duck on a rock. He throws the innards and other things into the lake and leaves the feathers in a small heap. He comes back up.

Carla (gesturing towards the lake)
 Is that ecologically sound?

Mallory I know it looks a bit untidy, but if a wild animal catches a duck, it would leave the inedible bits and nature would take care of them. Feathers for nesting material, the fish will eat the rest.

Carla Suppose so.

Mallory cooks the duck pieces in the pan with the water plants and adds some more wild garlic. They eat contentedly with the occasional 'mmm' and then sit side by side and watch the sun go down.

Mallory Time to turn in.

Carla Yup. My strains and bruises feel better now.

Mallory Oh good, I was just about to ask.

Carla And my hair is a sight, I'm sure. My nail polish is all chipped.

Mallory Nail polish? Out here?

Carla My mother used to say that if a girl's nail polish was chipped, it casts a serious doubt over the state and cleanliness of her underwear.

Mallory Should I be concerned about yours?

Carla Probably not. They're so baggy, they never touch anywhere important.

Next Morning - Campsite - ext

Carla comes out of her tent to find Mallory cooking bacon.

Carla I wondered what that smell was.

Mallory I brought a little with me. Thought it'd make a nice treat with the rest of our bread. Coffee?

Carla About a gallon please. Kenya Roast with a touch of Brazilian.

Mallory Coming up.

Carla I wanted to ask about the log carriers you have. Do they lift logs from the Far East.

Mallory Not usually. I only allow them to lift logs from sustainable forests such as they have in Europe or New Zealand and Australia. I don't agree with the destruction of rain forests. Where does your logging operation take place?

Carla The Philippines and Indonesia, mainly.

Mallory So, illegal logging then.

Carla I don't know and I don't care. I took over the operation from James Gillespie. He was a reluctant seller, but we persuaded him to merge with us.

Mallory How did you do that.

Carla Oh he and his teenage daughter were lay preachers. He preached about saving the planet and people's souls. She preached about virginity and chastity and no sex before marriage.

Mallory So?

Carla I sent James a video of his daughter in a hotel room in Vegas. It sure wasn't words from the bible she was getting her tongue around.

Mallory You did that?

Carla Sure. Why not? Bloody hypocrites. So instead of having his daughter getting laid on the internet, I got his logging concessions in the Far East.

Mallory Does Gillespie still work for you?

Carla Nah. He resigned from the company and from the church.

Mallory Why was that?

Carla (getting up) That video mysteriously found its way onto the internet anyway.

Mallory You released it?

Carla You couldn't believe I would do something like that. There must have been a second copy.

They take down the tents, break camp, pack up their rucksacks and head out up the path.

Later in the Day

Mallory This looks like a nice place to stop for lunch.

Carla Good, my shoulders are killing me.

Mallory How's about your feet and the other bits?

Carla Oh they're fine. Bill Clinton has left office and the 101st have gone back to barracks.

Mallory Let's make a fire then and we'll go to the river and you can try and catch us some lunch.

Carla But I've never fished in my life.

Mallory Never too old to learn.

Later

Mallory and Carla are standing by the river, Carla is holding the rod.

Mallory Keep an eye on the float. It's usually in those little back eddies, under the overhang, where the fish rest and feed.

The float dips a little.

Carla There, the float moved.

Mallory Yes the fish is just have a little nosy around. When the float gets sucked under

Carla strikes and the water starts to get all stirred up. Carla jumps up and down.

Mallory Carefully does it now. Gradually wind in the line and I'll pick him up.

Carla (when the fish is landed)
 My first fish.

Mallory Yes it's a nice rainbow trout, about two pounds. Ideal for lunch for two. After the head, tail and other things are taken away, it's like a half pounder without the bun.

They prepare the fish and cook it in duck grease. They do the dishes in the river, pick up their loads and start walking again.

Later in the day.

Mallory This looks like a good place. By another lake. We'll put up the tents and I'll get supper. Pheasant tonight? I heard them calling back there.

Carla That sounds good. I could eat a horse.

Mallory OK, I'll shoot it, you can carry it back.

Carla Smart-arse

Carla drops her pack down.

Mallory Do you want a hand with your tent or have you got the hang of it now.

Carla No I can do it. I'm a real old backwoodsman now you know.

Mallory My Dad always used to say 'Study the terrain when you're pitching yer tent. Study the terrain. It didn't get there by accident.

Carla You and your Dad

Mallory (putting up his tent)
 OK. I'll go and try and bag our supper.

Carla 'Bag our Supper'? What are you, shooting at a country house in li'l ol' England?

Mallory It's just a phrase.

Carla OK Jeeves. Go and bag our supper, there's a good chap.

Mallory sticks a finger up, grabs his gun and walks off. Carla puts up her tent and collects firewood.

Mallory comes back after an hour with a pheasant. He goes down to the lake and prepares it.

Carla It looks a bit small.

Mallory Yeah, you'd think they'd be a size of a chicken but they're a lot smaller.

Carla You couldn't have shot two?

Mallory Not really, you shoot one and the others get the hell out of there. They don't often hear gunfire up here.

Carla S'pose.

Mallory We'll see after it's cooked.

They cook and eat and do the dishes in the lake as the sun goes down.

Mallory I see you've put your tent up in a kind of hollow. That's a sort of natural runaway for the rain water when it rains. You may have a river running through your tent if we have a storm.

Carla (looking up at the sky)

Well I'm not going to move it now. Anyway it doesn't look like rain. Why didn't you say something before?

Mallory I mentioned the terrain. Anyway, I've only just noticed it.

Carla Well it's just too bad.

Later in the night. - Ext.

Thunder and lightning and torrential rain. Carla unzips her tent, sticks just her head out and looks up at the sky. She dashes over towards Mallory's tent, stops halfway, dashes back to hers and zips up the side, dashes back to Mallory's, unzips it and climbs in. By this time she is saturated.

Mallory's Tent -Int.

Mallory I wondered how long it would be before you came a'visitin.

Carla Smart-arse bastard, I am absolutely soaked.

Mallory Well you're in danger of creating an epidemic. Take off your wet clothes and put them outside. Where's your towel?

Carla (taking off her night-dress in the dark, putting it outside and hugging herself)

Hanging up outside on the line getting wet.

Mallory Here, use mine but try not to touch the tent sides or it'll start leaking.

Carla (shivering) Brrhh, I'm so cold.

Lightning flashes and sillouettes her naked body.

Mallory Was it a stream or a river running through?

Carla It was like the mighty Mississippi. I'm sure I'll catch my death of cold. Brrhh, I'm frozen.

Mallory Here, come and get in here and try and warm up a bit.

Carla climbs in beside him and turns her back. Lightning flashes again showing her teeth chattering.

A while later - Int.

Carla I'm feeling a bit warmer now.

Mallory Good.

Carla There's not much room in here, though.

Mallory No, I tend to bring all my equipment into the tent with me.

Carla I wondered what that was, digging into my back. Is that a fishing rod or are you just pleased to see me?

Mallory C'mon, try and get to sleep, it's a long way to the next lake tomorrow.

Carla Hmmmm. You're no fun.

Next morning - Int.

It is light but the rain is still lashing down and there is the occasional flash of lightning and rumble and crash of thunder.

Mallory (after Carla stirs)

It's unusual for storms to last this long in the mountains. When the rain stops we'll be able to build a fire and make some coffee. We can get things dried off then.

Carla It's quite cosy in here though. It's a bit like being a child. I had a bedroom under the eaves and with the windows open, the rain never came in. When we had summer storms, I used to curl up in my duvet in a chair in front of the window and watch the lightning flashing and count the time out loud until the thunder came.

Mallory Yeah, I used to do that too.

Carla Last night was a bit of a nightmare.

Mallory Not a nice experience.

Carla What none of it?

Mallory Well the wet and cold bit wasn't good.

Carla I notice that you've put your fishing rod outside.

Mallory Now you're being smutty. Why don't you go back to the 101st Airborne.

Carla A bird in the hand! Mmm this is warm and cosy. Oh and what's this? Going fishing again?

Mallory Stop it, you're a married woman.

Carla So was Cleopatra.

Mallory Yeah but look what happened to her.

Carla I know, I was just thinking about that. If Hollywood got it right, what happened to her was what every woman secretly dreams of. You do have a passing resemblance to Richard Burton, you know. Ooh that's better.

Mallory What are you doing?

Carla You know damn well what I'm doing. C'mon, you've got to help. Those spaniel's ears you were so rude about, start playing with them, give them a gentle stroke. Ah that's better. Mmm. This is the bit of camping they never tell you about.

Mallory Are you sure this is the right thing to do?

Carla Feels good to me. I had a Wendy-house in the garden when I was a little girl. I used to have sleepovers in it. It sure wasn't anything as good as this though.

Mallory It's all down to age and experience I expect.

Carla C'mon, loosen up. I'm still only forty.

Mallory Forty-five.

Carla Whatever. What's a girl got to do to get a half-decent orgasm round here? Where's all this experience you talk about?

Later - Ext.

The rain has stopped and Mallory has strung a washing line between the trees. Carla is hanging up her tent, sleeping bag and wet clothes. The sun comes out.

Later - Ext.

Mallory and Carla are walking up the trail. It is afternoon and they stop by a small lake.

Mallory Why don't you catch us a fish or two and I'll put up the tents and make camp.

Carla OK. Do I just put the worm on the hook?

Mallory That's right.

Carla Ooh, I could never do that.

Mallory Well if you dig up some worms, I'll put them on the hook for you.

Carla OK thanks.

Carla gets some worms, Mallory puts them on the hook and Carla starts fishing. Mallory goes into the woods to get firewood to start a fire. After a while Carla gets a bite, lands a small fish and casts again. She catches another fish and puts it on the ground behind her and casts again. There is a noise behind her.

Carla Hey Chay. I've already caught two fish and I'm trying for a third.

No reply.

Carla Chay! Chay?

Carla turns round and there is a large brown bear, eyeing her fish. Carla jumps up and shouts

Hey, get out of here.

The bear eyes her and reaches out to pick up one of the fish.

Carla Hey, they're mine.

Mallory The storekeeper sold me some pepper cartridges. It is full of little pepper bombs which burst on impact and get into the animals eyes, nose and mouth. As I say, he won't be back.

Carla Thank goodness.

Mallory Any luck with the fishing?

Carla Yup. I caught a couple but the bear was after them. I don't know whether they're still there.

Later - New Camp - by a stream - Ext.

Carla This is a great place. Let's stop here.

Mallory Fine. You do the tents and fire, I'll do the fishing.

Carla OK with me Captain.

Later - Ext.

Carla and Mallory have washed the dishes in the water. They sit, side by side next to the stream

Carla Another cup of coffee before we turn in?

Mallory No I don't think so. I'm tired after the bear and all that heroic stuff.

Carla Yes I am a bit as well.

Carla looks at Mallory quizzically.

Mallory What?

Carla Your place or mine?

Mallory hesitates.

Carla C'mon, make your mind up.

Mallory OK, yours. But you know about Cleopatra, don't you?

Carla Not her again. What about her?

Mallory Well, she used sex to get what she wanted. I hope you aren't doing the same thing just to say, boost your share price.

Carla Not at all. This was going to be your reward for saving my life. Cleopatra used it to gain power over people. This is just to say thanks.

She reaches over and kisses Mallory on the lips.

Carla Hope you've brought your fishing rod out with you.

Mallory Dirty cow.

They undress each other, lie down and make love passionately and loudly beside the stream as the sun gets low in the sky.

EXT (later)

Mallory gets up and holds out a hand to Carla.

Mallory So, was that half-decent?

Carla What?

Mallory You asked last night what a girl has got to do.....

Carla Oh that. Fishing for compliments are we?

Mallory Well in business, a man's got to know when he's hitting his targets.

Carla And?

Mallory Well, if I hit the targets, I want to know.

Carla Well, I've seen worse performances.

Mallory Yeah but have you ever seen better?

Carla Well a 6 from all the judges for interpretation, 5.9 for artistic impression. The big question is did the energy levels and the enthusiasm reach a championship-winning score?

Mallory And you're forgetting that nowadays, performers often have to be judged on the length of their presentation and audience appeal. Did that attract a high score.

Carla Your presentation seemed to be the perfect length. As for the audience appeal, this spectator was most appreciative. Top marks.

He ran his hands over her body and kissed her.

Mallory Time for the next act?

Carla I definitely like the sound of that. Mmm, don't even think of stopping. Let's go to my place for Act 2.

Scene - On the trail again - ext

Mallory Ever done any shooting?

Carla I may look like a cross between Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane, but that's as far as it goes.

Mallory Well, I just thought you might like to shoot some pheasant for tonight. We are more likely to get more than one if I drive them towards you.

Carla You'll have to give me a refresher course. I only fired off a 4-10 shotgun on my uncle's farm, shooting rabbits.

Mallory Well, this is similar. You just have to brace yourself a bit more.

Carla OK I'll give it a go.

They stop near a lake and put their back packs down. Mallory takes out a shoulder pouch.

Mallory These are the cartridges in this bag. This is the gun. Turn this lever and the gun breaks open. Put the cartridges in here and click it shut. This is the safety. On and off. Now you try but point the gun away from everybody else with the barrel pointing to the ground until you are ready to shoot.

Carla No wonder that bear disappeared. I must have loaded the wrong shot.

Mallory Yes, it hit the tree branches and rebounded back into your face, I think.

Mallory walks out of the water and looks around. Lying on the ground not far away are two pheasants. Mallory picked them up and sniffed them.

Mallory Well, pepper also affects birds. Ready-seasoned pheasant.

Carla staggered out of the lake. Mallory showed her the birds.

Mallory Some of the pepper got through. The birds must have flown through the pepper shower crash landed and broken their necks.

Carla's eyes were red, as was her face.

Chay Every cloud.....

Mallory Yup. Here lets hang up your clothes and try and dry your boots. We'll stay here the night.

Mallory unbuttoned her shirt and helped her off with it. He reached down and undid the belt buckle. He looks at her bare breasts

Mallory What happened to the Wonderbra?

Carla Now that the goods have been on display, there's no point is there?

Mallory reaches into Carla's rucksack and pulls out a towel and hands it to her.

Mallory Here, I'll unlace your boots.

Together, the now naked Carla and Mallory hang up her clothes and put her boots in the sun. She picks up her towel and lays it down on the ground.

Carla I'm going to have a sunbathe. Wanna join me?

Mallory takes off his clothes and lies beside her.

After a while, Carla reaches for his hand.

Carla What's a girl gotta do?

Mallory Pepper has some remarkable properties. I never heard of this one though.

Scene - Back outside the Camping Shop - Ext

Carla and Mallory stand beside the Dodge pickup, Carla still in her baggy jeans and hiking boots and with no make-up.

They stand by the tailboard.

Carla Well, how'd did we do?

Mallory We?

Carla Yes, we. You and me.

Mallory I guess we did OK.

Carla I guess we did too. So how about the deal.

Mallory What deal?

Carla You know what I'm talking about. Now that we know each other so well, what about the merger discussions.

Mallory Do you think we really know each other well by now?

Carla We couldn't really know each other much better could we? Especially after all that.

Mallory All what?

Carla Don't be so obtuse. You know what I'm talking about. After the bear and the storm and the pepper and the other.

Mallory Other?

Carla Yes, the other. Sharing tents together. You know.

Mallory Oh that? The mergers we practised.

Carla (impatiently) Yes, those. I don't think two people could know each other better after all that. So what about the real merger? You know all about me and I sure as hell know all about you.

Mallory Oh, I've already made up my mind. Arrange a meeting next week and they can discuss all the details.

Carla (grinning broadly) Great. Let's shake on it. *Our word, our bond.*

They shake hands. Just then a compact pulls up and a man, dressed in green shoes, yellow trousers, red shirt with a green scarf and a yellow baseball cap with a blond pony tail hanging out of the back gets out of a car and walks up.

Carla (spotting him) Gary! What are you doing here?

Carla (to Mallory) Gary's my hairdresser.

Carla (to Gary) I know my hair's a mess, but it can wait until we get back.

Gary (walking past Carla and up to Mallory) Ooh Geoffrey, I've missed you so much.

Mallory I've missed you too, Gary.

Carla looks on, her mouth drops open.

Carla Geoffrey?

Gary puts his arms around Mallory and kisses him full on the lips.

Gary (again) Ooh Geoffrey, I've missed you so much.

Mallory I've missed you too, Gary.

Gary So how did it go then? You look so butch in those clothes but you smell like a badger's armpit.

Gary puts his hand on the top of Mallory/Geoffrey's head and gives his hair a firm tug and push. it moves.

Gary Well at least the rug stayed on. I told you that stuff in the tube would do the trick for about a week. Ooh, take me home.

Carla I can't believe what I'm witnessing here. How do you two know each other. And why is Gary calling you Geoffrey, Chay?

Mallory We've known each other for a long time. I'm not Chay Mallory, I'm Geoffrey Lange. I'm a journalist with the *Pennsylvania Herald*.

Carla Not Chay Mallory?

Geoffrey Not Chay Mallory.

Carla *Pennsylvania Herald*. That's Mallory's newspaper. Well I'll deny everything. And I'll sue you and your paper for everything you've got if you print a word about me. And your proprietor, Mr Chay Mallory, I'll sue that bastard as well. It's just your word against mine. There's not a shred of evidence or an ounce of proof.

Two men come down the trail with cameras, long lenses and silver camera cases

Geoffrey (calling out)
 Got everything you wanted, boys?

Camerasmen You bet. Lots of it. All the good bits and then some.

Geoffrey turns to Carla and lifts his wig off to reveal a shiny bald head.

Geoffrey Cheerio, Cleopatra.

Carla You bastard.

Geoffrey (turning) Can I quote you? I could wait until the Ablatine shareprice has fallen through the floor. It could be a follow-up article.

Carla I'll still sue.

Geoffrey Oh and by the way, do you remember Donald Woods, late head of the South Atlas Corporation. He was my uncle.

Geoffrey and Gary walk off hand in hand.

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