

Catalog

by

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DESCRIPTION

How far will venture capitalism go to get market share? This is the question as Mr. Rieper proposes some novel ideas for catalog sales.

CHARACTERS

- B. GOODE, young successful entrepreneur
- MR. RIEPER, man seeking a business deal
- The 10:30 appointment
- VOICE (can be doubled with RIEPER)

SETTING

- Corporate office

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Well-appointed office—exudes solid modernist wealth. Large desk with a large nameplate: “B. GOODE.” Flown in and lit is a sign in modernist lettering, brassy-looking: “Howie, Fuckim, and Goode, Inc.” The person behind the desk is talking on the phone.

GOODE

Look, Harry, I gotta admit that the balloon angioplasty kit for home use might work, especially given health care costs today, but it's just not something we'd promote....Why?....To be honest, and I mean no disrespect to your genius, it's just not cutting edge enough. You gotta remember who we are, Harry—the “avant garde” venture capitalists, anointed so by INC. last year. No more fops in SoHo lofts anymore—the frontiers of imagination pass through this office, we handle the cultural passports....Thanks, Harry, I wrote that for the promo piece myself. Good luck. Sayanoraciao.

Hangs up. The voice of the receptionist cuts in.

VOICE

A blond, blue-eyed Nordic type to see you, goes by the name of Rieper. Says you two have a rendezvous with destiny? I don't know what he means, but you don't have destiny on your calendar. His name's there, though.

GOODE

Send the person in for glory.

Rieper enters—can be played by either gender.

GOODE

Hey, you're not blond and blue-eyed!

RIEPER

Testament to my powers of persuasion.

Hands GOODE a glossy catalog; GOODE leafs through it.

RIEPER

And before you tell me I only have 30 seconds of the time you devote to "surfing the razor's edge of tomorrow's technosocial flux" - see, I've read your stuff - let me pitch—

GOODE holds up the catalog, which has a big silver question mark on its cover.

GOODE

What is this? You're selling death?

RIEPER

Not exactly - I'm selling style. We all have to die, correct? And what could be worse for all those people who have sucked the system dry over the past 20 years for all the pleasures it could give them than to die in some antiseptic anonymous room without the glory that should attend their ennobled persons? What I want to do is offer the upper echelons an exit that honors their engorged wealth and electrifies their jaded sensibilities. For instance, perhaps Newt Gingrich would like page 35, the "Julius Caesar," or Ben Cohen might take to the "Timothy Leary." I know Bill Gates would go for the "Myst," where, through the miracle of psychopharmacology, he would feel as if his soul were being absorbed into the upper levels of a video game. And, because of favorable tax laws, you could stage your death as a charitable event, allowing tax deductions for the guests and generating proceeds to cover any taxes owed on the estate.

GOODE

(leafing through)

The "Chatterton," for "tortured, poetic souls" - possible substitution, the "Kurt Cobain." The "Jesus Christ," complete with empty-tomb party. Wouldn't some of these get you into trouble?

RIEPER

Your guide here is Jack Kevorkian. He's blazed a wide trail, and the next logical step is to capitalize on his pioneering spirit and do what you do best: turn ethics into a salable commodity. The problem is finding investors who have Dr. Jack's courageous craziness as well as a kind of funky taste for walking on the wild side of the existentially pragmatic, given the right market parameters—know what I mean?

GOODE

Parameters, right.

(throws catalog on desk)

I can't promise anything, but I'll bring it up to my partners.

(pauses, picks up the catalog again)

You know, it does have a kind of—

RIEPER

The idea lingers, doesn't it? Like one of those smoky cognacs. What about you? Which would appeal to you?

VOICE

Your 10:30 is here.

GOODE

I'll be right there.

(turns slowly)

Which one? How would I know? It's not something I give a lot of thought to.

RIEGER

Ah, yes.

(takes two catalogs)

For your partners. I can expect to hear from you soon. Have a nice day, if you're so inclined.

RIEGER leaves.

VOICE

Should I send the 10:30 in?

GOODE

In a moment.

GOODE opens the catalog and turns the pages, occasionally pausing.

GOODE

There'd always be a market—

(over intercom)

Send him in.

GOODE sits down, continues looking through the catalog as the PERSON speaks.

PERSON

Thanks for seeing me. I have this great idea about getting actors to sell the rights to their bodies so that they could be digitized and stored on disk. You see, one of the biggest costs in movies is labor, especially the actors. But if their forms could be computerized, then a director could pull up the combinations he wanted without having to worry about caterers and toilets and all that human paraphernalia....

Suddenly, GOODE starts violently. He looks at the audience and then the PERSON absolutely horrified. The intercom buzzes

VOICE

Mr. Rieper is back, says he forgot something in your office. Could he interrupt for just a moment?

LIGHTS BUMP OUT

