

Marco Messina About 1,000 words
mm@marcomessina.com
Address
Phone Number

Lemonade

A Play in Two Acts (Founder Stock Fraud Version)

by Marco Messina

ACT I

THE BUILD AND THE BETRAYAL

Scene 1 – Vision

(Bare stage, faint city skyline. Table, laptop, three chairs.)

WG

Picture this: every light in every city talking to every other light.

MM

That's the dream—if we keep the math honest.

WG

Investors don't buy honesty; they buy growth.

MM

They'll get both. Real engineering, real progress.

RB

And real numbers. That's my line of defense.

(They shake on it – a moment of shared purpose.)

#

Scene 2 – Growth

(Faster tempo – emails ping, phones buzz.)

WG We closed the Series A private funding. The investors loved the pitch.

MM Because it worked, and most are my friends and family.

WG Because I made it sound inevitable. Now—new offices, new image.

MM After the next prototype.

WG (aside to RB) Sell confidence, not prototypes.

RB Confidence I can book as equity?

WG (laughs) Relax — we started the fountain. There's more money where this came from, and we can print shares as needed — raise cash fast.

MM We are not selling any more stock until product ships as we promised. We must not dilute our primary backers.

WG Don't worry. It's harmless liquidity. They know what they're buying.

MM Do they?

(Beat — tension rises but unresolved.)

#

Scene 3 – Discovery

(Cold white light. RB alone at laptop.)

RB

Wait... those deposits — same investors, no corporate receipt numbers.

The transfer agent got orders to transfer from WG to outsiders. Oh God.

(He calls out.)

MM

What is it?

RB

He's been selling his founder stock off-books to the new investors.

They think they're funding the company — he's funding his lifestyle.

MM

That's securities fraud.

RB

It's criminal. Every signature on the board minutes makes us all accessories — personally liable for white-collar crime. Across state lines ... federal pen.

MM

Call the chair.

(WG enters mid-call.)

WG

What's the panic?

MM

You sold founder shares as new-issue company stock. You stole investor money.

WG

I sold my own equity. Perfectly legal.

RB

Not when you tell them it expands operations. You misled them, we co-signed the reports — that's criminal.

WG

They wanted in. I gave them in. Everybody wins.

MM

Except integrity — and the law.

RB

I balance books, not souls ... but this reeks of felony.

WG

You two are finished. I built this company. You'll see who the board believes.

(Lights snap — voice-over of BOD:)

“The investigation proves it. An accomplice admitted it. Effective immediately, WG is terminated.”

WG

You think you're clean? You signed the filings.

MM

We'll sign the confession too, if that's what it takes.

(WG exits. Silence.)

MM *(quietly)*

We were betrayed by a friend.

#

Scene 4 – Collapse

(Papers scattered, headlines projected: “Startup Implodes Amid Securities Probe.”)

MM *(to unseen investors)*

I'm sorry. You believed in us because I believed in this quest.

I put in everything — even our retirement.

We were betrayed by a friend — and by our own hope and dream to change the world.

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(Single spotlight. End Act I.)

ACT II

THE AFTERMATH AND REINVENTION

Scene 1 – Aftershock

(Barstool, amber light.)

MM

They said “fiduciary negligence.” They mean “you trusted wrong.”

So he gets away and we have to rebuild from ashes.

RB

You still think honor pays bills?

MM

No. But it pays for sleep.

(They clink glasses.)

#

Scene 2 – Reconstruction Attempt

(Workspace montage as before.)

RB

Investors love the tech, hate the past history. New financing seems impossible.

MM

Then we build without them.

#

Scene 3 – Second Failure

(Blue-gray. Silence of loss.)

RB

Maybe success isn't what they measure. We can't refinance. We can't go on.

MM

Maybe success is still being here with self-respect — even with a broken dream.

#

Scene 4 – Salvage and Renewal

(Bar again. Older, quieter.)

RB

You know, the way you tell it — it's a good story.

MM

A stupid, expensive story of myopic human greed.

RB

Yeah. But true.

(A Producer nearby turns.)

Producer

Say that again. May be a story worth telling. I'm a writer — tell me more?

MM

We built something real. A friend defrauded investors and friends, stole our dream and my retirement nest egg.

We tried again. We failed again. We're still standing.

Producer

If you can survive reliving it by retelling, we can stage it.

(MM and RB look at each other — a pause; pain becomes partnership.)

#

Scene 5 – Coda

(Same bar, dawn light. A single projected traffic light blinks green.)

RB

So this is success? A story and names on the billboard?

MM

This is survival.

They say talent builds — I say resilience rebuilds.

RB

To making lemonade.

MM

To making lemonade.

(Fade to gold.)

END OF PLAY

To Follow:

Plot notes

Charater Notes

Scene notes

World building notes