



FEATURE-LENGTH

≈90 min
Thriller/Dark Comedy

Holdings Elbows

PITCH DECK

Ever wonder how far you'd go for a seat at the table? When would enough be enough? What if there was no red line?

“ I could've told you
it'd end badly...

Maybe not.

What'd I know?**”**

– Penny Wallace

logline

When wanna-be “girl boss” Penny gets a seat at the table at tech's hottest company, she's living the dream. But her life spirals into a nightmare when she discovers the lengths that the good-old-boys in charge expect her to go in order to get everything she's ever wanted.

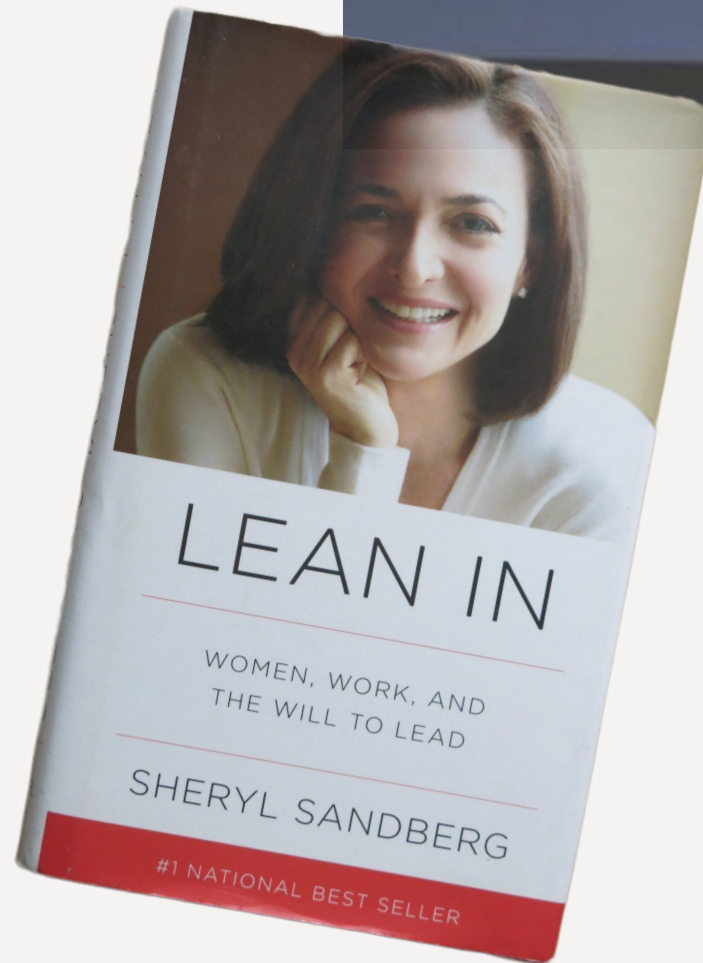
why now?

Tech has gone from an industry of dreams to one fueled by nightmare investors and growth-at-all-costs. An entire generation of women have spent a lifetime banging their heads against a glass ceiling in business that promises little more than a cracked skull. Disillusionment has set in for Millennials and Gen Z alike as they realize that unchecked capitalism and technological advancement in the hands of robotic founders will be the death of us all.

The time is ripe to peel back the mask of those in power and how we went from optimism to desperation.



Scene: mid-2010s startups



who is it for?

Recovering “girl-boss” Millennials

- 29 - 44 year old women
- Spent the large part of their early adulthood scrambling up a corporate ladder for a seat at the table.
- Disillusioned by capitalism, Boomers, and a “male loneliness epidemic” that still threatens their sense of security.



Jaded, “always on” adult Gen Z

- 18 - 28 year old women
- Socially conscious, diverse, and flexible generation, but feel “hooked” on the social media they can’t turn off
- Jaded and turned off by the “cringe” of their Millennial sisters and mothers, hungry for a little schadenfreude.





Comps: Anna Kendrick, Hayley Williams,
Stephanie Hsu, Ali Showkat

Penny Wallace

hot-mess turned girl-boss

32-38 | American

- Floating through life a little too long for comfort
- Desperate to prove she belongs, but knows - deep down - she never will
- Drinks the Kool-Aid until it starts to eat her from the inside
- Devolves from plucky upstart to ice cold as she unravels and is rebuilt in The Hive's leadership image

main character

Penny thinks of herself as many things. A feminist, a power-house, ultra-competent, a real girls-girl who can win on her own terms.

The ultimate unreliable narrator, we enter her world believing that she's done everything she can to rise above the good-ol-boys of business, slowly uncovering the truth as she steps into her own power.

synopsis

Holding Elbows is a classic “fish out of water” thriller - a sort of adult *Alice in Wonderland* . Penny Wallace escapes an unfulfilling life to join the hot startup, The Hive, and leaves everything she knows behind to chase after the intoxicating dream of fortune and power in a foreign land.

She finds out who she actually is isn't all it's cracked up to be when faced with the choice between her integrity and unlimited opportunity.

Act 1:

arrival, assimilation, illusion

Our story begins in the mid-2010s, years into Penny's time at tech upstart The Hive. She's reached her limit and is trying to back out of the annual company celebration, hosted on a remote island in the Stockholm archipelago.

Over the course of the first act, we flash back to her yearning 20's, the disappointment of never quite being the girl-boss she aspired to, and the heady experience being plucked from corporate obscurity by Hive's CMO - Rebecca - changing her entire life by relocating to Stockholm.

Penny takes to the inspiring, cult-like atmosphere of The Hive, quickly becoming the token woman leader the executives—and the brand—need. The Swedish core of The Hive - Fredrik, Linnea, Anders, Henrik, and Marcus - treat her as both mascot and shield: an American face to front their "egalitarian" values while they maintain their deeply dysfunctional, bro culture. Rebecca and Dan are her only champions until, one day, Dan abruptly demotes and disappears Rebecca from her life.

"In the beginning it was everything I ever wanted..." - Penny

World: the hive



Act 2:

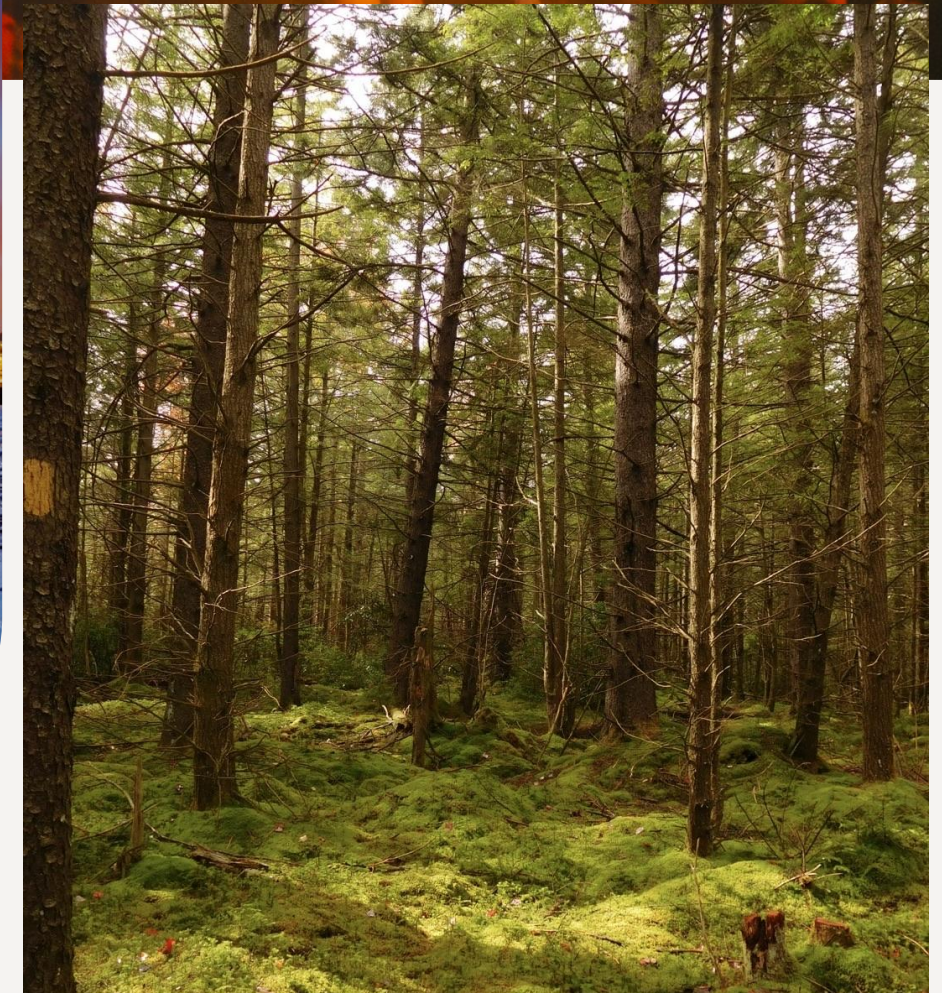
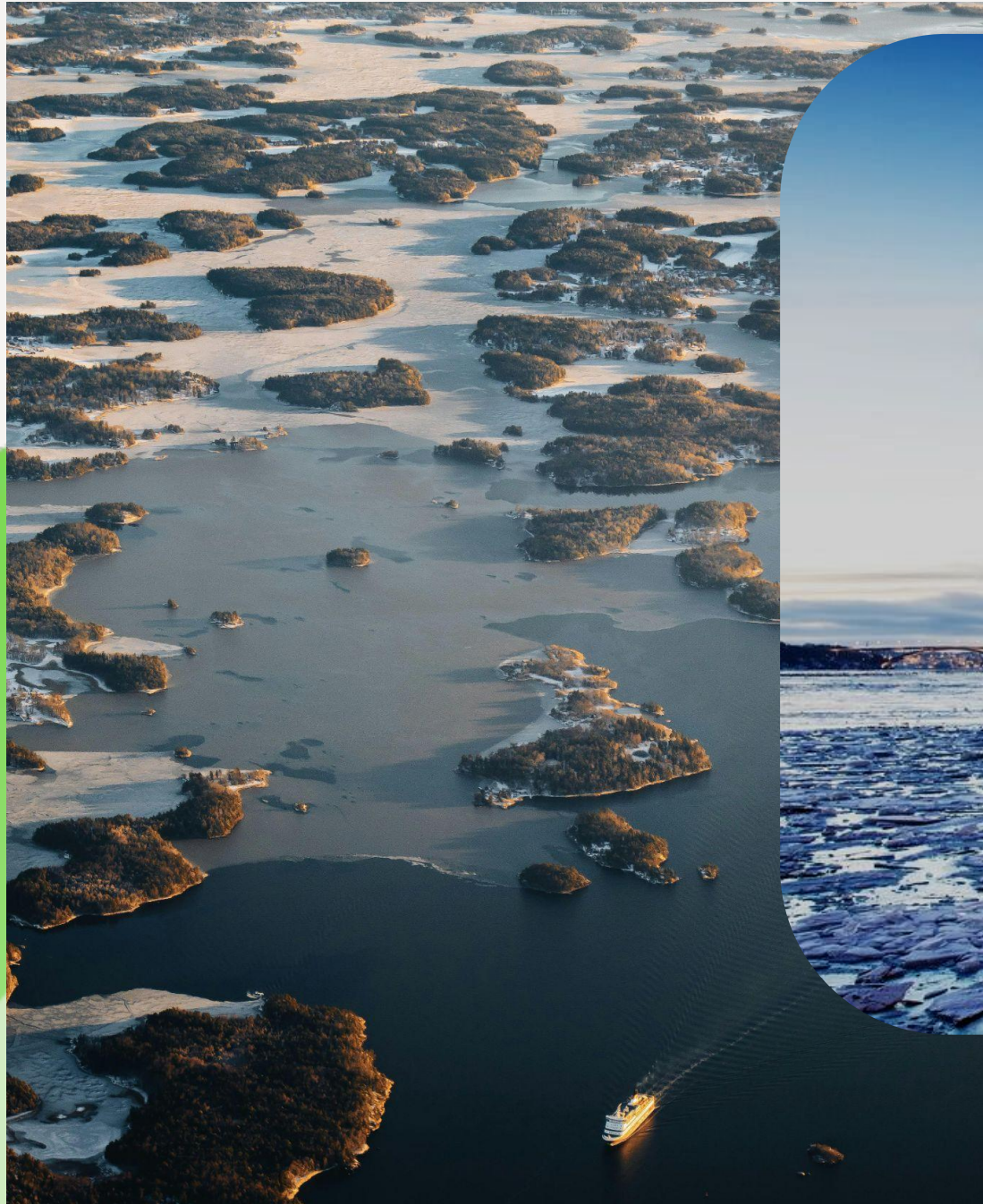
disillusionment, decay, dissociation

As Rebecca's role in her life fades with her new promotion, Penny faces a harsh new reality. The lavish business travel, brutal performance reviews disguised as "growth," and endless – increasingly sinister – team building exercises calibrated to produce loyalty through exhaustion, Penny rises in visibility but sinks in emotional stability. Her role expands, but her influence does not. Her raises are coordinated illusions; her "leadership opportunities" are superficial. She turns to booze, sex, any sort of distraction to

Still, Penny stays. Because the money is good. Because the applause feels good. Because she wants to believe she has finally joined something bigger than her own failures. She bears witness to disturbing culture of predation and cruelty that Linnea fosters, watches people burn out, break down, or disappear entirely. She watches the regular emotional and physical submission that Astrid and Beth are subjected to, but she begins to look away. Being included – however reluctantly the men around her seem to tolerate her presence – feels better than being "right."

"You're a woman with integrity, Penny, and because of that you'll always suffer..." - Linnea

World: sweden



Act 3:

revelation, reckoning, revolution

Penny grows increasingly disaffected and disturbed by shocking deaths and odd goings on. When the vile behavior of her leadership drives her back to her mentor, Rebecca, for help, she finds no relief. We return to the beginning, her attempts to escape. Before she can flee, she's forced to board the boat to the island retreat – The Gathering.

On the island, it's a party to end all parties. Penny wanders through the bacchanalia and finds herself in the cellar of the venue, the executive leadership of the company waiting amidst a horror show - a vast room of organs, blood, and bodies. Linnea reveals the truth of The Hive – the very bodies of their cultish staff feed the longevity, potency, and power of the inner circle. And they want Penny to join them.

Her rejection triggers the party to devolve into an orgy of blood and an ultimate realization of The Hive employees cutting the head off the executive snake with Penny, Astrid, and Beth leading the explosive hyper-violence.

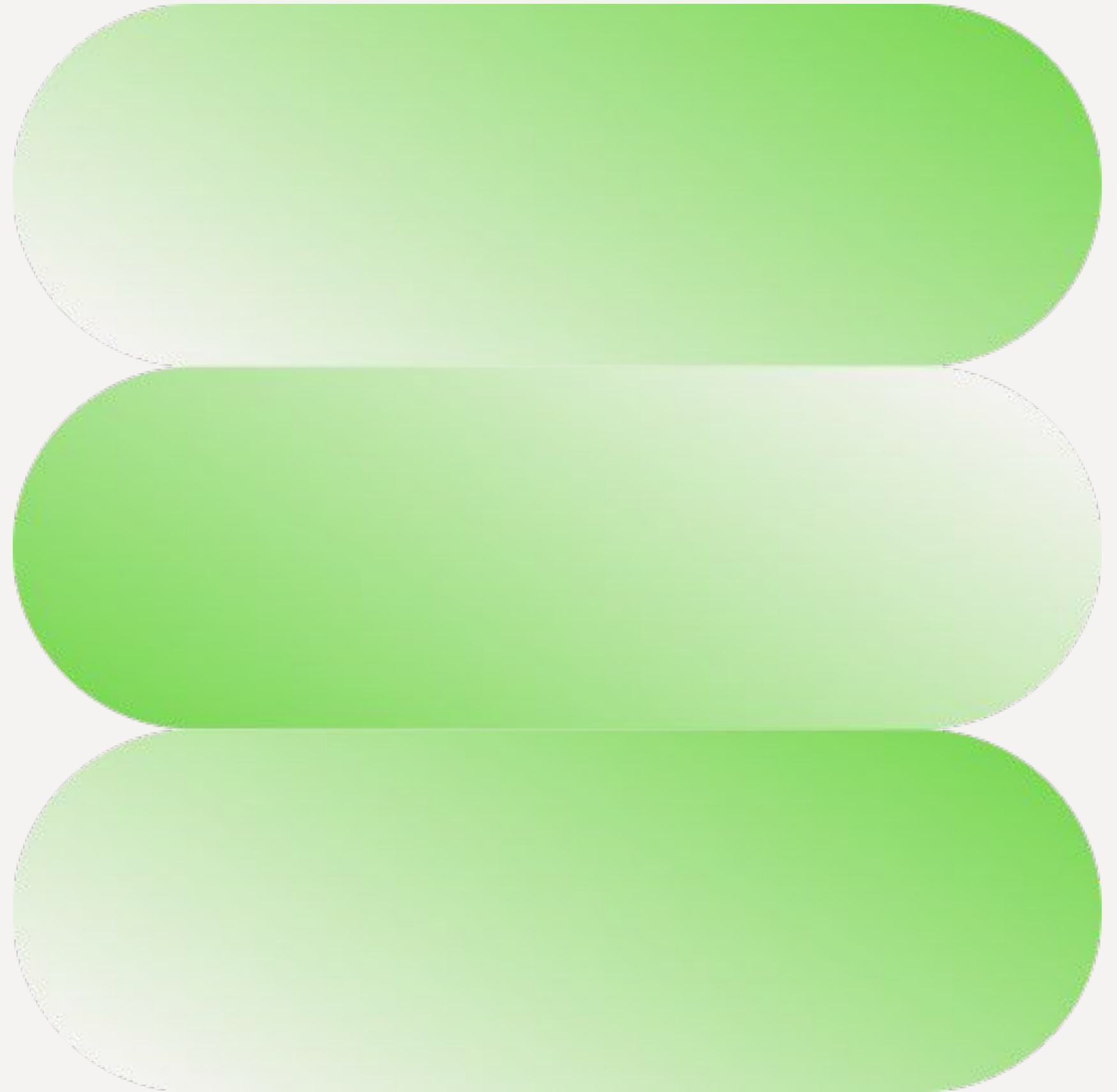
We close with Penny stepping into the CEO position of The Hive, but at a cost. She has, once again, traded her integrity to step into the inner circle powered by the lives of the staff.

“You refuse to admit the truest fact you’ve learned the past few years: You’re us.” - Dan

meet the hive

Penny meets a cast of characters along her voyage to the deep, dark, heart of the board room.

Here are her champions, mentees... and enemies.





Rebecca

the hive's chief marketing officer
mentor & angel on Penny's shoulder
40-48 | American

The vibe: Tessa Thompson, Constance Wu,
SZA, Katie Lowes



Linnea

the hive's chief-HR-officer
the power behind the throne
48-58 | Swedish

The vibe: Olivia Colman, Noomi Rapace, Josephine
Bornebusch, Lena Olin

hive women

the moral poles

Rebecca thinks The Hive can be more than the sum of its bro-culture parts. She's striving for something bigger - a world she thinks she deserves. In Penny, she sees a chance to mould a potential leader and a way into the inner circle that's left her out... so far.

Linnea is something else entirely. From her position over all the people of The Hive, she whispers into the CEO's ear and pulls strings of the men by wielding the type of power men respect. She's a battle axe, but only in so much as it serves her own ambitions.



Astrid

Ander's girl friday
shrewd, cunning, cold
26-30 | Swedish

The vibe: Amy Deasismont, Rachel Zegler, Hailee Stanfield, Lina Leandersson



Beth

Henrik's punching bag
hungry to fit in
24-28 | Brit

The vibe: Chloë Grace Moretz, Sadie Sink, Madison Wolfe

hive women

barely contained furies

Our two oracles, Astrid and Beth are eager for Penny's arrival at The Hive because it signals a change in the way they can envision their future in the testosterone-soaked company.

Their sweet visions of success curdle as Penny reveals herself to be as casually cruel as the men around them.

No one is looking out for them and, in the end, all they have is one another.



Anders

hive's business lead
& enfant terrible
35-40 | Swedish

The vibe: Bill Skarsgård,
Aleander Abdallah,

Henrik

Ander's right-hand
& sinister control-freak
40's | Swedish

The vibe: Gustaf Skarsgård, Erik Johansson,
Dan Stevens

Marcus

hive's biz dev dude
& team fuck-up
30's | English

The vibe: Nicholas Hoult, Will Poulter,
Archie Renaux

hive men

the swinging dicks

The self-appointed business geniuses set loose with other people's money and god complexes to grow at any cost.

They see the employees of The Hive as a means to an end. This is doubly true for the young women that work for them - Astrid and Beth.

They may cower before Linnea, but Rebecca and Penny represent unsavory stumbling blocks on their path to total domination.



Fredrik

the hive's founder/ceo
wunderkind, puppetmaster
30-34 | Swedish

The vibe: Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Will Poulter,
Egon Ebbersten, Frank Dorsin



Dan

the hive's chief tech officer
brain and brawns
40's | American

The vibe: Kumail Nanjiani, Joel Kinnaman,
Vincent Cassell (younger)

hive men

the quiet powers

Fredrik may look supernaturally young, but his grip on the carnival that is The Hive is absolute. He sees the future of humanity and means to shape it... with Linnea's help.

For Dan, the roiling party atmosphere of the start-up world is a necessary evil in inventing a machine-powered, optimized future. Obsessed, stubborn, and always thinking.

For these men, humanity is a distraction from greatness. A weakness to overcome.



Katy Perry

hive's superstar mascot
hanger-on, butt of the joke

can't forget

the genie in the bottle

Yes, really.

She's a constant presence at The Hive - and not always a welcome one.

Maybe she owes Fredrik her career? Maybe Anders has pictures she'd rather not see the light of the day?

The guys at The Hive is about to find out that having a corporate shill is all fun and games **until the bloodshed begins.**

Holding Elbows is a through the looking glass Thriller that combines darkly satirical comedy with shocking moments of visceral and surrealistic horror.

genre

themes

- Discovery of the Self
- Integrity vs. Temptation
- Consumption, Corruption & Decay
- Unreliable narrator

like...



fit in until you get in...

"Sorry to Bother You" (2018) - Boots Riley (Annapurna/Focus Features)



but don't become the monster.

"The Devil's Advocate" (1997) - Taylor Hackford (Warner Bros)

from...



just happy to be there to...

Andy Sachs in "The Devil Wears Prada" (2006) - (20th Century Fox)

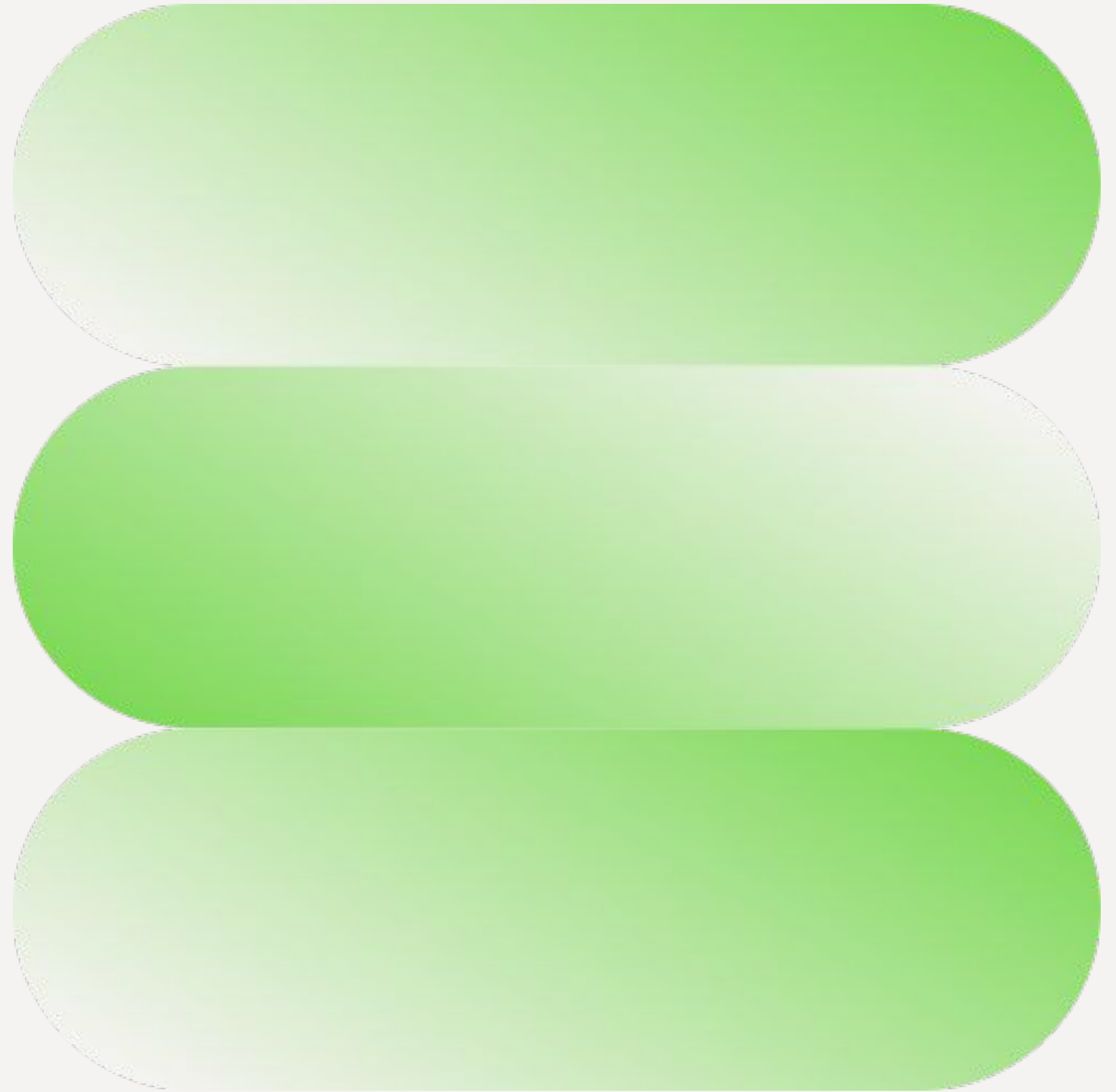


the ultimate unreliable narrator.

Amy Dunne in "Gone Girl" (2014) - (20th Century Fox)

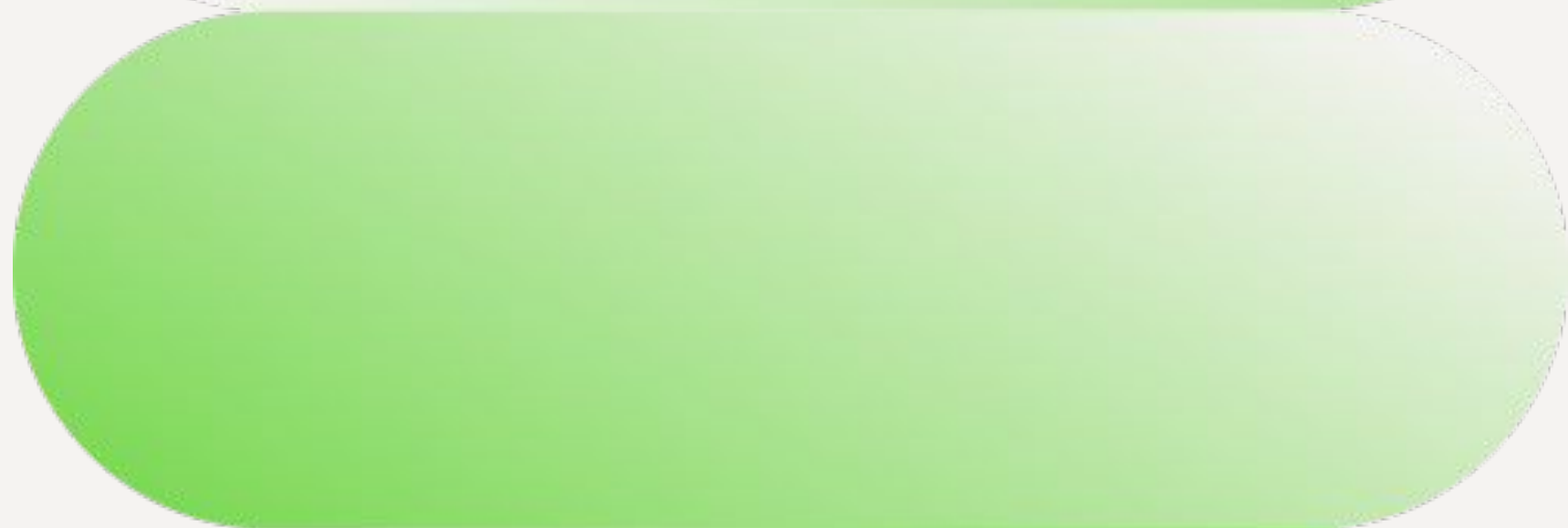
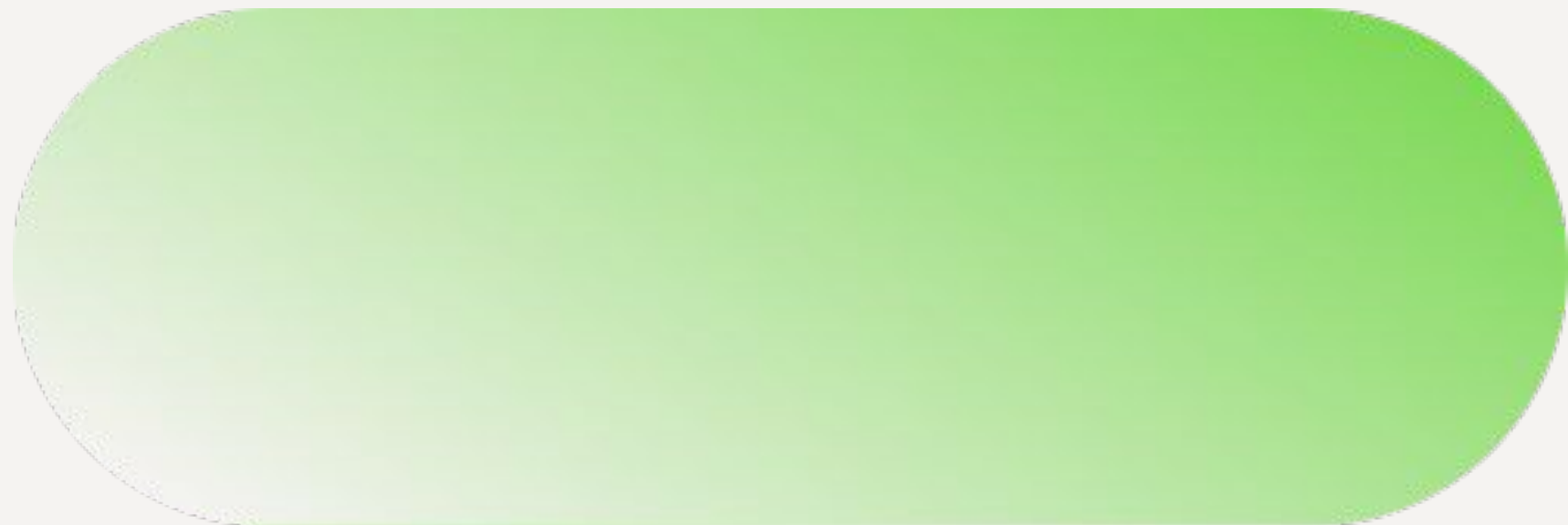
the vibe

The mid-2010's in Stockholm is a clash of cultures. It's the time of Robyn's "Body Talk," Charlie XCX "Boom Clap," and Avicii. The combination of young engineers on scooters in their company swag clashes with the older money crowd dressed in Acne-studios upcycled leisurewear. Everyone is on a substance – snus, caffeine, hot shots, coke – pick your poison. Everyone is high on tech optimism and the heady rush of having a lot of money come from nowhere to fund the playpen that is work.



two worlds





the sound

Play now ▶

production notes

Potential locations**

- Stockholm
- Finland or Estonia
- Norway or Denmark



*Based on comps with similar complexity, audience engagement, and analytic estimation with the themes

**Mature film industries, 25-35% tax breaks



Jess Forbes

the writer

swedish by passport, american by birth
teller of tall tales just a bit too close to reality

Jess spent nearly 25 years in the tech industry salt mines at companies like Spotify, where she held senior management positions and flew a little too close to the silicon sun and decided to change tack. If the experience she's built since the advent of the consumer Internet has taught her anything, it's that the stories we tell one another shape the world we live in.

Her screenwriting project range from thrillers to comedies to family dramas. She works across both feature-length film and a range of TV series formats because she believes that the format should serve the story she wants to tell.

A life-long wanderer and storyteller, Jess wants to bring stories of getting lost and found in faraway places while finding home in the great crush of humanity.


wanna learn more?

Holding Elbows is a completed, 89-page feature screenplay. Dive into the world of Penny and all things at The Hive yourself by requesting a copy to read.

Holding Elbows has placed as a finalist in a few recent competitions, including:

- Los Angeles International Screenplay Awards (Diversity Initiative)
- Outstanding Screenplays Competition, 2025
- New York Film & Female Actress Award (Official Selection), 2025

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