



### **PreCogs in AdLand -**

TV GUIDE - Advertising executives are visited by a psychic marketer who claims to be able to predict the future of their agency; a partnership which starts lucrative, stretches into ludicrous, all of it ending in a fatal final act of...finality.

### **CAST -**

CEO - **Larry Driven** - Brian

President - **Pamela Hustlebound** - Ingrid

Psychic/Pre-Cog - **Claude Hotchkiss** - Paul

Secretary - Leslie - Lexy Rose

**OUTBOUND INTRO** - Picture in your mind a dark and empty operating theatre. In the center, a slack jawed businessman lies on a steel table, his enlarged pupils fixed on the overhead lamps.

Lying next to his exposed scalp, a knife with a twisted blade, pulsing blue sound waves.

The man on the table is, I mean, was Claude Hotchkiss - a psychic marketer, and a pretty good one too.

It's curious to note that even *his* predictive gifts failed to envision and evade the version of the future which placed him dead on a slab, his advertising agency bosses standing over him.

The CEO, convinced the procedure wasn't going to kill him, the company President, secretly hoping it would.

Both, now staring, horrified at what they'd done.

But this is what happens when you begin at the end - everything is so, final.

For Larry Driven and Pam Hustlebound, things would return to normal at the shop - with the PreCog gone they could continue their pointless, but profitable, fights about data interpretation -

go back a few years, that's how this whole thing, started....

### **SCENE 1 - HIGH RISE**

(High Rise Office SFX)

**CEO, Larry** - Leading.

**President, Pamela** - Lagging.

**Larry** - Leading!

**Pamela** - Lagging!

**Larry** - How do you know for sure Pam?

**Pamela** - How do you, Larry?

**Larry** - (*woosh sound as we go into his brain*) - (*internal whispering monologue*)

*"Remember the retreat in Aspen? If you lose your cool, she wins? Take a deep breath (breathing) good - now laugh a little....and say something deflective*

*(woosh out - laughing it off)*

Ha! Look, we can lob *\*that\** old ball back and forth, or we can move on - I don't want to replay Aspen!

**Pamela** - (woosh sound as we go into her brain) - (internal whispering monologue)

*“He’s never gonna forget the Aspen retreat, is he? Mediocre men - memory of an elephant balls of a mouse - Ignore his smile and take control by letting him think HE’S in control”*

(woosh out)

Aspen? I almost forgot about that - but I *haven’t* forgot the purpose of this meeting. You said so yourself - this is our last chance to pull out of a nosedive -

**Larry** - You’re right, you’re right. We have to turn things around, I just don’t know how and the data should be helping, but it’s not. We waste so much money on marketing...

(gesturing to blocks in the air) Predictive - forecasting - for advertising -

I know we can do it with the data, so why don’t we trust the numbers we *\*have\** as leading indicators?

**Pamela** - Hey! Don’t start that again - data is a tool, not a blank slate or a crystal ball - we’ll never 100% know if an ad is gonna work or not - that’s why seeing data as a lagging indicator -

(intercom SFX - “a note for you sir”)

**Larry** - (frustration noise) Bring it in, Leslie.

(high heel walking sfx, drops note, walks out)

(hmmms of interest, shock as he reads)

**Pamela** - Well, what does it say?

**Larry** - (reading note) (music picks up)

*“I am in the bar downstairs. I am a psychic, and I can tell you what a good ad is. I know you don’t know. It will mean much to me to have you know what it is, and it will mean much to you. If you wish to know what a good advertisement is, send the word ‘yes’ down with the bell boy. Signed - Claude Hotchkiss, Pre-Cognitive Marketer (music stab)*

**OG OUTBOUND INTRO -**

## **SCENE 2 - IN THE BAR -**

(they sit at a table w/ three chairs, Claude is twisting a glass on the table as the CEO and President stare at him incredulously)

**Larry** - So, your note is definitely intriguing, though I don’t know how I’d be able to verify that you’re a (looks at note) ‘precognitive marketer’?

**Claude** - Of course not.

**Pamela** - And asking you about your past experience, like a typical interview, doesn't test your power either?

**Claude** - Correct.

**Larry** - Then, why are we here Mr. Hotchkiss?

**Pamela** - Yeah, feels like a waste of our time.

**Claude** - But not like during the Aspen retreat, right? (music stab)

**BOTH** - Huh? What'd you say?

**Claude** - Look - You're obviously here because things aren't great up there, right?

You're fighting. Data is a lagging indicator, or a leading indicator, well, what if I told you, that all the data you collect is an indicator of...nothing?

(piffles of dismissal)

Don't believe me? Mr. Driven - By how many percentage points are your goals off every quarter?

**Larry** - (woosh into brain) *uhhhh - oh - boy - wasn't it like 10 percent? That can't be right! After a while, numbers round down anyway...*

*(woosh out)*

Less than 2.

**Claude** - Wrong, it's 11.

*(ceo snaps his fingers, "dammit" - Claude turns to President)*

Pam - Of the total traffic and CTR to your most recent ad campaign, what percentage was automated click bots?

**Pamela**- (woosh)

*The bots \*have\* gotten out of control! You can't admit that metrics look good because of bots, how could you when it's almost half the traffic? No one can verify these things either way...so....*

*(woosh out)*

(laughing embarrassed) Close to zero - who is this guy?

**Claude** - Wrong, it's closer to 60%!

*(yeesh sound from President)*

Now - how do I know this?

It's not just because I'm psychic,

No, it's because I intimately know the marketplace, inside and out. I'm a marketer first, a precog second, and I'm always. Always; right.

*(long room silence)*

**Larry** - Well. So what? *(laughs dismissively)*

You know a few competitive benchmarks and can do research, this still doesn't prove that you have psychic abilities.

We don't need more people telling us what things looks like, we need someone who can describe the future.

**Claude** - Alright.

*(zoom in) - music dials in*

In seventeen seconds, the guy sitting at the corner stool, is going to drop a glass. The waitress will come up and apologize and ask us if we need anything else. You'll order a beer, you a Manhattan, and you cover the next round too because after I pitch the first ad campaign - I'm hired on the spot.

*(glass breaks - jeers - waitress complains, walks over, music builds)*

**Waitress** - Sorry bout the ruckus folks - Tim can't keep a lid on it, as usual - but he's harmless - You uh, want anything else?

*(woosh into brains)*

**CEO & President** - Woah!

*(woosh out in to music and sound swells to jump cut)*

### **SCENE 3 - HIGH RISE OFFICE - weeks later**

**Larry** - Two weeks on and the numbers are looking GREAT Pam! (slaps paper)

Hiring a PreCog was the best decision we've made.

**Pamela**- On paper it's hard to argue, but in the office, the staff have taken a, less than favorable, view of him.

He's strange.

He's particularly nasty to Bob in the stand up meetings.

**Larry** - Well Bob is strange too, I guess a bit weird -

**Pamela** - Having a mindreader on staff is WEIRD Larry.

Bob is harmless, it's Claude that's creating problems.

How do we even know if he's REALLY a psychic, I mean, it could still be a lie -

**Larry** - It's not "psychic" it's "precog"

And the problems Claude is creating, is extreme profits and the potential to make more. Let's not examine this gift horse too closely Pam, I'm reminded of the time my uncle taught me about Palomino breeding in Chile during the

*(intercom SFX - "a note for you sir")*

**Larry** - (frustration noise) Bring it in, Leslie.

*(high heel walking sfx, drops note, walks out)*

*(hmmms of interest, shock as he reads)*

It's from forensic. Apparently Bob Strauss from accounting, your friend from the standups, is being brought up on charges of embezzlement -

he's been stealing from us Pam.

*(Pamela gasp - huff of frustration)*

*(intercom SFX - "Claude Hotchkiss to see you, sir")* Send him in, Leslie.

*(walking SFX)*

Claude my boy! Good to see you - the numbers are looking mighty fine

*(slaps paper)*

**Claude** - Sir, I - I came to apologize.

**Larry** - For - for what?

**Claude** - About Mr. Strauss, sir. I should've let you know, the moment I sensed it - but I didn't want to cause more stress than I already was. So,

I chose to sit on it and I, I -

**Larry** - *(hand on shoulder - scolding Pam with a look)*

Now now, I am sure you made the right decision - and we have Mr. Strauss's situation well in hand, so relieve yourself of that guilt -

that's not why you're here.

*(music fades in)*

Let's start talking about the next campaign, I'm sure you have some ideas up there that you'd love to share because son, I really do think this, I think we are going to be doing some amazing things with your concepts and my guidance - there will be a few that don't like what we're doing...but isn't that the way of the world sometimes when geniuses have to walk among common folks, heck I know about that from my days breeding German Shepards that lineage is more about character of strength rather than fortitude.

**Pamela** - *(woosh into narration fades in over Larry blabbing)*

It was amazing - really - watching Larry and the PreCog talk so confidently about the future of our agency.

Men, usually so full of themselves thinking they know everything...

now, they really did.

What happened next?

*(music pumps up)*

We dominated for the next 3 quarters - left the other shops in the dust.

We also left, other things behind, on our rise to the top -,

With a precog, the agency didn't require testing, focus groups, A/B anything - so we downsized forecasting and analytics departments by the truckload!

Since budgets were reduced, ROI multiplied, profit and revenue rose in tandem

and so, as the shareholders rejoiced and the coffers filled up, the offices emptied out, until,

right around Christmas,

it was just leadership and assistants in the entire building.

But, that's when I saw the job posts on LinkedIn. *(computer notification)*

The other shops had heard about the psychic, and were all looking to hire PreCogs of their own. I had to tell Larry.

*(high rise office sfx, high heels walking fast)*

This was the end of the line I thought - if the competition each had a Claude on staff, then what? There'd be no secrets or distinction, I mean - what would be the point of advertising at all? What would be the point of leadership? What would be the -

**Claude** - Pam!?

*(walking sfx stops)*

**Pamela** - (startled) Oh, Hi! Claude.

**Claude** - Hey I uh, heard about the LinkedIn posts and I, have an idea.

**Pamela** - I'm positive you do, Claude, but Larry and I would like to discuss this in private first before we -

*(door opening)*

**Larry** - Claude, Pam, come in - both of you!

**Claude** - (gesturing to doorway) After you -

*(walking Sfx for 3 - close door TRANSITION)*

#### **SCENE 4 - HIGH RISE OFFICE - (Office SFX)**

**Larry** - War Games? What are you talking about Claude?

**Claude** - It's the only way to beat them sir. Mutually Assured Disruption.

**Pamela** - Ok - explain that last part, one more time?

**Claude** - Sure - I knew this was going to happen - I just hadn't planned it being so soon -



If every agency has a precog, we have to assume that they know our plans, and they in turn assume we know theirs.

So - in order to disrupt their precogs, along with our actual client work, we need to create and fully execute ad campaigns that won't ever exist in the real world.

**Pam** - That, is such -

**Larry** - Pam - let him finish.

**Claude** - These campaign fakes resemble War Games, but instead of running simulations to train for reality, we're attempting to trick the other agency precogs into mistaking one of our simulations for our actual go-to-market strategies.

**Pamela** - How many fake campaigns do we have to set up? Who is going to work on all the fake campaigns Larry - we have to pay them real money for fake work?!

**Claude** - That's the best part.

The precognitive marketplace will run completely separate from our client work - 100% contained in the mental realm.

**Pamela** - I get that - but,

**Claude** - Ok - so then you get that there's no *real* problem here, only an imminent psychological threat we can solve, right now.

Look, guys, this is the best option - and we don't have much time!

**Larry** - Is there any other way to stop another psychic, Claude?

Can we block our minds, or cut off *their* abilities in some way?

**Claude** - Mutually Assured Disruption is the only choice, Mr. Driven. If we keep it M2M, it's humane, could be lucrative.

**Pamela** - Humane? What do you mean?

**Larry** - Pam there's really no -

**Claude** - No it's ok, it's a good question - There is one surefire way to reverse precognition but it's not pleasant.

*(a little scared of admitting this)*

You need something called a Psychic Knife and a kind of, interdimensional hypnosurgery. It's painful and extremely dangerous.

**Pamela** - Ohhhkay - And, what does “M2M” mean?

**Claude** - Medium to Medium - these campaigns are developed, distributed and viewable, only in the psychological realm, from medium to medium.

*(pamela hmms)*

**Larry** - See, Pamela? *(laughing)*

We'd need Psychic Cutlery to solve the problem any other way! Soooo,

*(turning to Claude)*

Claude, you've got all the budget you need to make this happen - set up this psychic marketplace, and let me know when we're ready to launch M2M!

*(woosh into LARRY'S brain)*

**Larry** - *(narration) (music pensive - then picks up)*

At the time I was excited, thought it was genius, but now I wonder...

Did Claude know where this was headed? That Pam and I would - ?

I have to think, with the amount of money the psychics made, and how quickly they made it, they all knew how this was going to end.

Whole theoretical universes, with made up currency and products, to test and re-test and launch campaigns that only happen in a theoretical realm?

In the first few weeks, M2M marketing started to take off, Limitless currency, space, supplies, demands, growth.

But limitless, doesn't mean without consequence.

We started losing clients - Our ads became homogenized. The precogs were in a stalemate with each other in the actual marketplace while the precognitive market was going gangbusters.

Turns out, having all the answers wasn't a realistic way to profitability.

But profit and reality, were the last things on the marketplace's mind.

Enamored with precognitive marketplaces, stock brokers began piling funds into psychic portfolios in the fall, and the markets inverted.

Bedrock valuations buckled in the face of such monstrous and imagined value, and that's when corporate, on behalf of a globally concerned market, ordered us to intervene.

I found a psychic knife and surgeon, and followed their instructions on how to arrange the hypnosurgery without Claude's knowledge.

If this was going to end us - we had to end it first.

*(intercom SFX - "Claude Hotchkiss to see you, sir")* Send him in, Leslie.

*(walking SFX)*

**OUTRO -**

You'd think, a person that could predict the future, would benefit from that knowledge, rather than be destroyed by it.

You'd think that answers are more valuable than questions.

Well - you'd be wrong. And the parable of Claude Hotchkiss, precognitive marketer, reminds us why...

Answers & facts are poor, questions are rich,  
People make more money off, "what if?"

It's all just another line of predictive text, typed into the ethernets of your mind, sent to the inbox labeled, OUTBOUND.