

# The Counter Offer

written by  
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**The Counter Offer**

**Cast of Characters**

Taryn

A mediator in her late twenties/early thirties.

Sloan

A protester in her late twenties/early thirties.

Greg

A businessman in his early/mid thirties.

**PLACE**

A nearly empty meeting room in a New York City office building.

A room with just a table and three chairs. The table has a legal pad and pencil in front of each chair. TARYN is sitting there, playing with her phone. SHE manages to look both bored and interested at the same time. We hear that SHE gets a text and, after SHE reads it, SHE laughs. Her laugh is a single, solitary sound, loud and definitive. Whenever SHE laughs, it will be thus. There is a knock at the door, and SLOAN enters. TARYN stands.

TARYN

Sloan?

SLOAN

Yes. So you know, I don't have much time. We can get to know each other, but I need to get back downtown.

TARYN

Right. I'm Taryn. I'm your mediator today.

SLOAN

You're not his assistant or...?

TARYN

Oh, no. Greg should be here any second. He's very punctual.

SLOAN

And he thought he needed a mediator?

TARYN

He hired me. Don't worry, he's hired me many times, and I've been able to stay impartial.

SLOAN

But why would he need a mediator to--

(GREG enters, all business.)

GREG

I'm sorry to keep you waiting. Greg Osgood, such a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Sloan.

(HE shakes hands with her.)

SLOAN

It's just Sloan.

GREG

That is your last name though, correct?

SLOAN

Yeah, but I just go by--

GREG

So "Mrs. Sloan" isn't wrong, just formal. Taryn.

TARYN

Good to see you, Greg. Let's get started, shall we?

(TARYN and GREG sit at the table,  
GREG on one side, TARYN in the  
middle.)

GREG

You're not going to sit?

SLOAN

I sit all day. I'm fine with standing.

GREG

So, let's talk about what's going on downtown. Do you know her, Taryn?

TARYN

I do not.

GREG

She's been on tv a whole bunch lately.

TARYN

Are you an actress?

GREG

She's the leader of the protest downtown.

SLOAN

We actually don't have any official leaders. It's a collective, a group protest.

GREG

Passionate, beautiful, and modest too. No wonder the news likes talking to you so much.

SLOAN

As long as our message gets out there, I don't much care what people think of me as the messenger.

GREG

They like you. That's what they think of you. I imagine a

GREG (CONT'D)

lot of people feel the same way.

TARYN

That protest, do you think you'll get what you want?

GREG

I don't think they know what they want.

SLOAN

We are the ninety-nine percent. We are getting nothing while the other one percent is getting everything. We are looking for equality and we will not rest until we get it.

GREG

And that's why I wanted to talk to you.

SLOAN

We're not stopping the protest. If that's why you asked me here, to talk about that as a possibility, then you'll have to excuse me. I need to be back with my sisters and brothers.

(SHE gets up to go.)

GREG

Ms. Sloan, I've asked you to do nothing of the sort. Other than being a few seconds late, I think I've been incredibly courteous to you. I would ask that you do me the same courtesy and hear me out.

SLOAN

Fine.

GREG

Your degree's in what?

SLOAN

(Confused)

What?

GREG

A bright woman like you, I assume you went to college and that your college required majors.

SLOAN

Comparative literature.

TARYN

What literature did you compare?

SLOAN

The important kinds.

GREG

Not business. I was sure of that. When you negotiate, you never speak first. You never make your thoughts known, lest the other person use it against you.

SLOAN

That's great advice. If I were negotiating.

TARYN

You're not here to negotiate?

SLOAN

No.

TARYN

Then why am I here?

GREG

Taryn, if you're bored with all the setup, you can wait out in the lobby until I need you.

TARYN

The receptionist here recognized my face. It creeped me out.

GREG

Or she could have recognized you by the name you gave when you checked in.

TARYN

Yeah, that too.

GREG

Taryn was an actress of some consequence.

TARYN

Thanks for the past tense, Greg.

GREG

Sorry, did you book a gig of which I'm unaware? Or are you still working as a mediator?

TARYN

(Ignoring her, to SLOAN)

Why did you come here?

SLOAN

I had heard that there were members of the one percent who were sympathetic to our cause. Ones who understand that this kind of economic disparity can only lead, in the long term,

SLOAN (CONT'D)

to a third-world state and, ultimately, a class revolution. They've seen the writing on the wall.

(TARYN laughs her laugh.)

GREG

Something funny?

TARYN

I'm looking at pictures of your protest. Some lady is exposing her crotch to the cops.

(Holding up the phone)

That's not you, is it? The top's cut off in the picture.

SLOAN

No.

TARYN

I mean the top of her body, not the top of her ... that wouldn't be as funny of a picture.

SLOAN

We asked her to stop that. She had a sign to go with it, but we knew she'd just get arrested, so--

TARYN

What did the sign say?

SLOAN

I don't remember.

(Slight pause, then)

What was I saying?

GREG

You were hoping for a sympathetic one-percenter.

SLOAN

Yes. And I had heard you were one of them.

GREG

I have a lot of sympathies.

SLOAN

But it's not about money. So you understand that. We're not looking for corporate sponsorship or anything ridiculous like that. That would just serve to undermine everything we've achieved. We need more spokespeople, and those in the one percent group would be some of the most valuable.

GREG

So you'd like me to speak on your group's behalf?

SLOAN

If you believe in our cause.

GREG

And how much are you paying your speakers?

SLOAN

I'm ... I, I don't think you underst--

GREG

Ms. Sloan, I'm kidding.

(TARYN laughs her laugh. SLOAN  
smiles a bit.)

SLOAN

Oh, of course. Of course, sorry. Do you have any interest  
in being a part of--

GREG

Right. I'm not going to be doing that. You were mistaken  
about me.

SLOAN

I see.

GREG

But don't be too hard on yourself. You're only mistaken  
because I paid someone to tell a few people at your protest  
that I would be interested in doing that. You hardly  
could've been expected to know better.

SLOAN

Ah. Then maybe I should go.

GREG

You haven't even heard my proposal yet. You really do need  
to learn how to negotiate.

SLOAN

I have nothing to negotiate. I have a protest to attend and  
a population to convince. There is no negotiation.

GREG

You must seem like you're willing to negotiate, even if  
you're not, so that when you do give a little, it'll seem  
like mountains have been moved. That's another tip of good  
negotiation.

(Silence)

Ms. Sloan?

(SHE sits.)



SLOAN

Please make your proposal so I can answer it and go.

TARYN

Okay, here we go.

GREG

I'd like you to stop protesting.

TARYN

That's your proposal? Seriously??

GREG

That's my opening salvo.

TARYN

That's what you want me to take to her?

GREG

It's a negotiation.

TARYN

All right, all right. Sloan, he wants you to--

SLOAN

I got it. "No" is my answer.

TARYN

I need a counter offer.

SLOAN

No.

GREG

Try.

SLOAN

We're not gonna stop protesting.

GREG

I'm not asking all of you to stop protesting. I'm asking you specifically to do so.

SLOAN

Well, I'm not doing that either.

TARYN

Not ever? You'll be protesting for the rest of your life?

SLOAN

If that's what it takes.

TARYN

So a counter offer would be?

SLOAN

I don't have one.

TARYN

What if they gave you everything you wanted?

GREG

That would require them knowing what they--

SLOAN

If the wealthiest one percent would be willing to have their taxes raised, corporate welfare stopped, medicare and social security protected, revenues raised as opposed to services cut, if they could stomach that idea and more, then--

TARYN

Then you personally would stop protesting.

SLOAN

In that fantasy world, yes.

TARYN

Good. So there's room for negotiation.

SLOAN

Are you willing to do all that, Greg?

GREG

Well, no. I'd like to help you, Ms. Sloan, I would, but I can't. So I'm going to make my own counter offer.

SLOAN

I'm so glad I stuck around.

GREG

Taryn, do you have the internet on that phone?

TARYN

No, I've just been pressing numbers this whole time.

(Off of GREG's look)

Did you want me to look up something?

GREG

The population of the United States. Please.

TARYN

All right.

(SHE types on her phone.)

And the answer is ... okay. Three hundred seven million and

TARYN (CONT'D)

change.

GREG

Good. So let's just say three hundred million even.

TARYN

So glad I looked that up.

GREG

Per your terms, Ms. Sloan, there are two hundred and ninety-seven million of you and three million of us.

SLOAN

Yes.

TARYN

Wow, Greg, we are gonna lose.

GREG

We haven't lost yet. And I'm not sure you're still on my team.

SLOAN

So what's your proposal? Surrender? If so, we accept.

GREG

No. Of course not. I have been asked, though, to represent the one percent. They wanted me to talk to you. That's why you're here.

SLOAN

Oh, yeah?

GREG

Sure. It's not the protest that worries them. Not in the aggregate. They've been through a great deal of protests before. You, you're what worries them. For all of your excellent qualities. You're their concern.

TARYN

You should take that as a compliment. I've seen who Greg negotiates with.

GREG

People who don't end sentences with prepositions, for example.

SLOAN

And what does the holy one percent propose to do about me?

GREG

(Laughing)

Well, not kill you. This is not that sort of thing, if that's what you're thinking.

SLOAN

I wasn't before.

(HE picks up a pencil, writes on the legal pad and slides it to TARYN.  
SHE takes the pad and looks at it.)

GREG

This is what they're offering for her to stop protesting.

TARYN

It's--

GREG

Not for the protest to stop, you understand. That protest can go on as long as they can sit out there. They just want you out of it.

SLOAN

So it's a bribe.

GREG

It's a counter offer.

TARYN

Sloan, would you be willing to accept three hundred thousand to stop?

GREG

You're--

SLOAN

It's a lot of money, but the principle of this is worth far more than cash.

TARYN

Greg, she's not willing to budge.

GREG

You're covering it up, Taryn.

TARYN

What?

GREG

Your thumb's on the paper. You covered up the end of the number.