

LIMBAWAY 17: SHRINK SHOTS

by Paul Watson

The marketing office of LimbAway, still smaller than it really should be, Angelica and Brad sitting across the table, keyboards between them, “We can’t call it LimbAhoy. It’s just old fashioned. LimbAway scans and is obvious but...”

”LimbPlus?”

”That’s good. It’s a positive word and tells people what to expect.”

”We probably want to take advantage of the psychoresponsive element too.”

”Go on.”

”LimbPlus would produce what the user expects, more or less, but we don’t know what that is. If it was, say, LimbPlus (Arms) or LimbPlus (Eyes) they’d be primed to produce the right thing. It would also give us data on what’s popular.”

”Very sneaky, Brad.”

”Plus it would mean we could charge a mark up on LimbPlus (Tits)...”

”Good idea, terrible name.”

”We’d also have to market those by sex specifically.”

”That’s true. How are you thinking we deal with LimbMix? It would need an unfeasible number of...”

There’s a hesitant knock, and then a firmer one, “Come in.”

”Hi.” Loretta says, suddenly nervous again her eyes darting at Brad.

”What can I do for you, Lori? There wasn’t a problem with the fleshlight couple was there?”

”Problem? Oh, no, no problem. But...we’re thinking about this all wrong.”

”About what specifically?”

”All of this. LimbAway, LimbAhoy, LimbMix, all of it.”

””Ooooookayyyy...”

”We’ve been thinking about how to sell the product when we should be thinking about how to sell the service! We’re not selling the gel, we’re selling what it does to you. It would be like a tattooist marketing the ink!”

”I’m not sure I...”

”Valentine and Jill, they’d pay a fortune, like four-figures-a-shot fortune for what we did. And that’s just for a weekend! There’s no way we could sell LimbAway at enough to compete with that.”

”How do you know that?” Brad sneers.

”Because they literally said it in passing as I was going out. They can’t believe we’re just giving that kind of thing out for free. Even as a product test. It would be safer, too. LimbAway especially could do all sorts of nightmare fuel shit in the wrong hands.”

”That’s dramatic.”

Lori shrugs, keeping her eyes on Angelica, “Imagine someone gets LimbAway and turns their girlfriend into a pussy without reading the safety guide because no one reads the safety guide. A week later they try to turn back and sue us for it.”

”It’s in the...”

”Even if it is, the press would pick up on it because it’s kinky sex shit and we’re definitely getting the blame. We’d be in Dolly II, Electric Boogaloo territory. With us as the starring role.”

”So what are you actually proposing?”

”Proposing? I...” she looks at Hemmings’ smug grin, “...ok, so, maybe, before we sell the gel, we sell the service. Get a studio and do the changes there. That means we can make sure people hear the safety guidance, take their details in case they don’t, and the whole thing is completely under our control. No risk of darling little Johnny wiping away his baby sister’s mouth because he found his parent’s kinky shit drawer.”

”Hmmmm. Ok, find out the costs for me. Draw up a proper proposal for Marcy. Try to get answers to all the questions she’ll ask and we’ll present it.”

”Me?”

"Your idea. I'll look over it to make sure it's good when you're done."
"I...I...right. Ok. I'll...I'll get on that." she backs out, her head spinning.
"Well, that was..."
"You're not thinking about it, are you?"
"Tell me what's wrong with the proposal, Brad."
"It's..." he pauses, "...it limits our possible expansion. We can sell to anyone, not just those who can come in off the street."
"That's true, but Lori's right. It is safer and more controllable and might be a better inroad to start off with. Maybe I picked the wrong person from the lab to be my apprentice."
Brad sits stunned.
"Your stuff here is good, by the way. It's innovative thinking on using the psychoresponse. Let me know how you'd get LimbMix, LimbGrow? What are we calling Foster's size-shifting stuff? Anyway, how you'd get those into the marketing scheme you're setting up."
"Right. Of course, Ms van Dyne." he replies, staring darkly at the closed door.

Later that day, Hemmings wanders over to the lab, walking straight to where Foster and Drone are working on the rats, ignoring Jennifer's wave of greeting. "Hey, Hank, can I grab a minute or two?" Foster looks up, pushing his glasses up his nose as Drone continues without acknowledgement of Hemmings' presence. "Sure. What are you after?"
"The shrink stuff. It...works, right?"
"It's been producing a stable, consistent response, certainly."
"And if you drink it it's all over?"
"Yes. Topical application limits the response to the area applied. Ingestion produces a body-wide response."
"How fast?"
"About as rapid as LimbAway. So under a minute. Even on ingestion, so it's not being digested to have it's..."
"Any side-effect? It reverses easily?"
"None we've noticed. And yes, so far, a similar concentration of the opposite compound reverses the effects. Why are you suddenly so interested?"
"I'm thinking is all."
"Which is always dangerous."
"Et tu, Hank? Et tu?"
"What are you thinking?"
"Just finding a use for it. Do we have an established taste yet?"
Foster looks over at Drone, who looks down at her notes. "It is reported as slightly bitter." it replies.
"Hmmm. But it isn't overpowering, right? Like, you could include it in a cocktail and it would still taste..."
"The taste is not strong. It is likely easy to mask."
"Cool, cool. Do we have concentrations that would shrink a person down to doll height?"
"That would vary by person, and the doll you mean."
"Right, right. Doesn't have to be exact, just 1/12 so if you're 6 ft you become 6 inches."
"That's within our testing parameter range, yes. Are you planning on using it for more 'human trials'?"
"I might be."
"How are you planning on restoring them? It's not like they could drink from a regular glass at that size."
"Would a wrap work? Bath in the growth serum?"
"We have been using the same delivery system for both so far. I'd definitely have to check before I'd be comfortable..."
"Of course, Hank, of course. Can you run those tests soon?"
"I suppose. We do have the baseline fairly well..."

"Good, good." he claps Hank on the shoulder, "Let me know."

Later in the week, Hank enters the office. Hemmings looks up, "Done?"

"Yes. A bath or wipe wash restores the rats, as we'd have hoped."

"Good, good. Can you get me...twenty doses? With restorative?"

"By?"

"Friday? Thursday's better."

Hank scowls and sighs. "I'll see what I can do."

"You're a pal, Hank."

"Sure." he turns and leaves the room. Angelica looks up quizzically.

"What was that about?"

"What?"

"Brad, don't play dumb. It doesn't reflect well on your opinion of me and that really sours my opinion of you. You're up to something. What is it?"

"Just expanding on 'Loretta's idea and brainstorming a service for the product."

"Are you planning on telling me what it is?"

"Do I have the authority to act on my own ideas? Or do I have to play mother-may-I for everything?"

Angelica pauses and shrugs, "Whatever. It's your plan and your neck."

Brad smiles. Angelica smiles in a far less friendly manner.

"But it is your neck, Brad. Don't fuck it up."

"As if I would."

"Don't."

Friday, with a fresh set of LimbDown, still workshopping the name, and Dalia in tow, Brad heads to one of the many bars around campus. Music blares as the door opens, the floors sticky, the place warm from body heat, "You haven't told me what we're doing here." Dalia complains, her legs bending oddly in her jeans, stepping heavily in her thick shoes.

"I'm making sales, you're here to reassure everyone."

"That...is not exactly descriptive."

"Just play along."

"How much is that worth?"

"What??"

"I work for Uncle Hank, not you. So..." she rubs her thumb and forefinger together.

Hemmings' face darkens but he puts a note in her hand. At her look he adds another, and reluctantly a third. Dalia doesn't push her luck, folding the money into her pocket.

"So, let's go and reassure people."

Hemmings makes his way to the bar, having to fight through the crush of students. After some protests from the bar staff, the duty manager does come over, looming over him with a bald head and ginger beard, and pulls him aside to someplace slightly quieter, although the music still thumps in his ear over his heartbeat.

"Whaddya want?"

"A bottle of the cheap rotgut these animals use for belly shots and some cooperation."

"Can do one, if you pay. What am I cooperating with?"

"How's business?"

"None of yours."

"So hostile."

"Getting bored now. There a point?"

"I imagine it's tough to keep these guys and girls coming in. Lots of competition, right? What if I had a way to really make your bar stand out?"

"Keep talking."

"Have you heard of LimbAway?"

"Nope."

"Well, you will. But first, we have a product that miniaturises people. Reversibly."

"Sure you do. Thanks for wasting my..."

"Get me one shot glass of rotgut and a volunteer and I'll show you. If you're not impressed, you'll never see me again."

"One glass, one girl, and if I don't like it, you're gone?"

"Exactly. Pick an adventurous one. It doesn't work on clothes."

A ginger eyebrow rises, "Is that so? Fine. It's too weird to be true, but...you don't look like you're crazy so maybe there's something beneath the bullshit. So, let's see your pitch."

A few minutes later one of the bartenders comes over, her short hair a dirty blonde, clad in regulation black top and jeans, "This is 'Chelle. 'Chelle, this is the idiot I was telling you about." he plonks a shot glass down on the small table. "One glass. One girl. Impress me."

Hemmings sours at being called an idiot but he pulls out the small bottle, pouring an equal measure into it, swirling the glass around to mix. "Here. Drink this."

'Chelle looks at the glass suspiciously. The manager nods. She shrugs and slugs it back. "Blech. Bitter."

The manager looks at her. Then at Hemmings. He slowly folds his arms. "Right. You..." and 'Chelle visibly begins to diminish, sinking into her clothes.

"What the fuuuuuccckkkkkk?!" The tight cloth gets looser and looser, her arms pulling inside her sleeves as she sinks down, clothes pooling around her. The manager looks on speechless. Hemming smirks. "Hey! Hey! What the fuck just...? Everything's so big. And I'm...I'd better be getting paid the special rate for this!"

Hemmings kneels down and puts his hand next to the pile of clothes. 'Chelle pulls herself out of the hillock of cloth and looks suspiciously down at the hand, "Your ride, m'lady."

"Don't get fresh." she warns as she climbs on and Hemmings lifts her up to the table. She walks up to the glass, putting her hand on it. "Well, boss, I think it does what he says it does. Can I get back to normal now?"

Hemmings looks at the manager. "Show me it's safe."

"Hey, what? You didn't know it was safe? You bastard!"

"I didn't think it would do anything at all!"

"Whatever."

Hemmings pulls out a wipe, comparatively the size of a sheet. Somewhat reluctantly 'Chelle lets herself be wrapped in it, protesting strongly when Hemming rubs her up and down. Soon she's growing out of the wipe until she's full-sized, if naked on the table. Her first reaction is to slap Hemmings smartly across the face. "I told you not to get fresh." Then she gathers up her clothes and sinks back into the booth to get dressed.

Hemmings rubs his cheek, "So, I have just under 20 doses of that left with my colleague." he nods towards Dalia, still near the bar and deflecting attention, "Do we have a deal that we can showcase it now?"

"Ten. And we need some money down. Insurance."

"Ten is fine. We can discuss supply agreements later "

"If it goes well."

"It'll go well." he orders a real whisky, "This could be the start of a beautiful friendship."