

TREATMENT

SELF-HELP

Date: 1/17/23

Authors: Paris Dylan and Josh Server

Genre: Dramady - Coming of Age - Adventure Journey - Family

Tagline: Don't meet your heroes, but if you do, just try not to end up like them.

Logline: Recent College Grad, Emma, gets the opportunity of a lifetime to work alongside her idol, a Self-Help guru, but peeking behind the curtain exposes the Guru's true intentions and forces Emma to either go along with the illegal schemes or stand up for what she's been pitched to believe in by the Guru herself.

Summary:

ACT ONE

At 23, Emma resents where she is in life. Still living in her hometown, TinyTown, sharing a studio apartment with her long-term boyfriend, and getting picked up every morning by her sister to drive her to work at their dad's mechanic shop. The same job she's had since high school. Everyone around her seems perfectly content with their small town life, but Emma can't help feeling restless. Although she loves her community, deep down she's upset at herself for coming back to TinyTown after earning an Associate's Business degree at the city college that she thought would catapult her to success.

To keep her hungry mind fed, Emma obsessively consumes the teachings of Self-Improvement Speakers like Tony Robbins and Gary Vee. She applies the techniques at her job, which combined with her natural ability for customer-service, makes Emma the favorite among customers and employees alike. Emma also soaks up the mesmerizing, inspiring videos from her ultimate idol, the no-nonsense, sharp-as-a-tack, Self-Help Guru, Aphrodite Greensburg. Emma is compelled to follow in Aphrodite's footsteps as a self-made business mogul and entrepreneur.

One morning, Emma receives an email from the Aphrodite Self-Help Team certifying her acceptance into their internship program, which Emma applied to as a long-shot. Shocked yet ecstatic, she shares the news with her boyfriend whose support is shadowed by his sadness of her leaving. The thrill of the acceptance simmers as Emma realizes the weight of the decision she has to make-- jump on this opportunity of her dreams, or stay put because of the self-appointed responsibility to take care of her family and friends who she doesn't want to let down. Her

crippling guilt ultimately makes the decision, and she decides against accepting the internship. Her boyfriend is elated, which Emma uses to convince herself that she made the right choice.

That night, Emma's dad offers her a promotion to be the official Mechanic Shop Manager. **He gives some special, meaningful words to her, a quote he often says.** Overwhelmed by the thought of sealing her fate by taking the position, Emma denies her dad's offer in rude fashion, leaving him destroyed as she storms off. Little did Emma know that all of her closest friends and family were hiding behind the corner to surprise her with congratulations. Her boyfriend chases after her and calms her down. Then, he pulls out a ring. He reveals his original plan of proposing during the Surprise Party. Feeling suffocated, Emma apologizes and runs home, leaving her boyfriend absolutely crushed.

The next morning Emma wakes up dazed, hungover, and alone. She regrets her actions of last night and convinces herself that life in TinyTown is not so bad. She writes a note to her dad apologizing and accepting the Manager position even though she's not overjoyed about it. Just then, she gets a call from Aphrodite's assistant who's requesting Emma's decision on the internship, as the program is starting on Monday. Emma looks at her wall full of framed Aphrodite-isms about fulfilling dreams and taking action. Emma has always known that this is her true destiny and in that moment she realizes it's about taking a leap of faith and SHE MUST GO FOR IT! Terrified yet courageous, she accepts the internship and is told to get to the airport immediately. Feeling a surge of adrenaline, Emma packs in a frenzy, rips up the note to her dad, writes a new one saying she'll explain later, and heads out without any time to say her goodbyes.

ACT TWO

Emma arrives at Aphrodite's headquarters. She's in awe. The office is pristine and immaculate with sprawling, gorgeous views and a classy, sexy vibe. There's a high energy, exciting phone-room buzzing with people in the background. Inspirational quotes line the walls. A huge "APHRODITE" acronym poster hangs front and center; A-Adjective P-Passion H-Happy R-Rapture etc. Emma is met by a smart, articulate, and impressive young girl at the front desk. She takes Emma through the office and introduces her to the Self-Help team: The Family Man, Sales Sleeze, Cute Boy, and Goof.

She's then brought to the double-door, expansive main office at the end of the hall and is introduced to the one and only, Aphrodite. Aphrodite oozes power and confidence, completely at ease with who she is. She grabs Emma's hand and looks into Emma's eyes like Emma has never been looked at before. She feels "seen" for the first time. Aphrodite looks into her soul with a soft smile, welcomes her and thanks her for interning. Emma is then whisked away to her small desk amongst the other team members.

Emma is shown her tasks, and gets to work. She talks with the team and learns about the upcoming *Big Aphrodite Super Seminar*, which is the team's biggest undertaking yet. They explain that it's SEMINAR SEASON and over the next few months the team, including Emma

will be traveling to different smaller conferences all across the country before the Super Seminar. An advertisement comes on the office TV about a Rival Self-Help Guru. Aphrodite's team talks trash about him, convincing Emma to be wary of bad Sales-y timeshare type people like him that take advantage of customers and act without integrity.

The team of Road-Warriors begin their journey towards the Super Seminar. A travel montage of the team putting on smaller conferences, on the phones, flyer making, staying at 4 Star Hotels, eating fancy dinners, attending sporting events, living the pseudo-celebrity lifestyle. Emma and the team are all having a great time. Emma notices the team all have flashy Rolexes and ridiculously expensive engraved pens with Aphrodite's sales motto engraved: ALWAYS SELL SALES!

Emma being the rookie, mostly observes the team working hard. She fetches coffee, she answers phones, and does mundane tasks. Then one of the team members gets sick and is held up in their hotel room, so Emma is thrown in. Sink or swim, the team quickly learns how competent Emma is. They are impressed and start to accept her as one of their own, but the Goof, skeptical of her skills, isn't sold as he feels the group is going too easy on her.

On one of their outings at a swanky restaurant, they run into the Rival Self-Help Guru and his team. Aphrodite and her team all make jabs about him and perpetuate rumors they've heard about his shady business practices. Aphrodite asks Emma to grab her a drink, so she does. As Emma goes for the drink, she notices the Rival Guru talking to a disgruntled customer away from the crowd and sees that he's taking the time to listen and showing compassion to the person as he helps them out while no one else is watching. The Rival Guru finishes his convo, then sees that Emma had been spying, and he smirks. They share an understanding look and moment, then she goes on her way.

After the night out, she and Family Man have an in-depth talk. She gets to know Family Man well. And tells him how much she idolizes Aphrodite. The family man tells Emma how he got into the business and talks about his wife and 2 kids back home who he loves. Emma asks about how much Traveling the team does. He lets her know they're always on the road. Family Man discusses how he balances home and work life. Trying to give it both his best. She sees he's sincere and that he loves his family and he's a good man at his core. He's genuinely worried about how being on the road for so long affects his children, but knows that him working to pay for expenses back home is important right now. Emma says it's great to have Aphrodite keep him on the team for so long and pay him well. She then gushes about Aphrodite because she's been a fan for so long. Family Man laughs but enjoys her enthusiasm. Emma states that Aphrodite is her hero.

The next morning, Emma's boyfriend calls again and this time she answers. He asks if she's talked to her family, she says that they keep missing each other's calls. The boyfriend presses Emma about coming back home, but she gets overly defensive and becomes rude and says she doesn't ever want to go back to TinyTown and that she's finally feeling fulfilled. She

loves him and her family, but needs to do this, it's what she's always wanted and if he really loved her, he'd understand. She asks that he not call anymore.

One day, Emma unintentionally interrupts Aphrodite and Goof in a heated debate, they both stop talking immediately when Emma startles them. The air is sucked out of the room and there's a weird energy. The two stare at Emma, she feels extremely awkward and apologizes and quickly shuts the door. A little perplexed, Emma goes about her day and brushes off the strange interaction.

MIDPOINT

A small Aphrodite Conference of approx 50 people isn't going well. It seems that the team is going to miss their quota for the day and on top of that, a Customer starts screaming and yelling, threatening to go to Better Business Bureau because of an unfair price he was charged. All the other attendees are uneasy, but before the team can react, Emma steps in and uses her great sales instincts from her Mechanic Shop days to save the day and diffuses the situation. Emma knows just what to say, calms him down, and she ends up making a big sale! The event is a success! The team is very impressed and gives Emma kudos.

Aphrodite gives Emma the choice of where the team will celebrate. Then they all go out. At the club, Aphrodite pulls Emma aside for a chat. She explains to Emma how impressed she was from her quick thinking actions earlier that day and that she sees a lot of herself in Emma. She says she can help Emma achieve her wildest dreams because she has what it takes, but needs to be prepared to win at all costs. Emma is hypnotized with the idea of building an empire with her mentor and agrees that she's willing to do whatever it takes. They smile and cheers their drinks. The night turns into a blur as they party and drink, and the Cute Boy and Emma end up hooking up.

The next morning, feeling regret about the hook up, she rolls over, checks her phone, and sees that her bank account got a deposit of \$10,000. Emma doesn't understand why she received the money, and the Cute Boy informs her that it's her Commission. Emma has never seen that much money in her life. From her humble roots in TinyTown, \$10k seems like \$1M. Even though she deeply regrets her hook-up from last night and betrayal of her boyfriend, the adrenaline from the day before and money in her account supersedes that and she decides to enjoy the day.

With the new cash burning a hole in her pocket, Emma acts like a baller for the day. She shops at stores she wouldn't dream of going in before, and even ends up buying the same ridiculous pen that each of the team members have and gets it engraved with Aphrodite's motto. The team celebrates and goes out to a restaurant, and as Aphrodite reaches for the bill, Emma leans in and grabs it from her and plops down her credit card. The collective cheer from the table makes Emma feel like she's on top of the world. At the end of the meal, Aphrodite makes a toast

and surprises Emma with the chance to start selling materials at conferences just like the other team members. She's taken aback and smiles. Her dream is coming true.

Back at the office, Emma is doing her normal organizing paperwork job, but she notices something odd about the previous conference. She does some math and realizes that with 50 people at the conference at \$100 a ticket, the total income Aphrodite's team should receive is approx. \$5k, but the number imputed is above \$10k, more than double what should be. She figures it must be a mistake, so she asks the team a couple questions, but they don't want to answer. It's awkward, so Emma just pretends to not care but she can't shake her nagging suspicion.

Rival Self-Help Guru and Emma run into each other at a Conference later that week. Emma is doing well at the conference, selling Aphrodite material (books, notepads, courses, etc). Rival notices Emma's skills. He compliments her, but hints at Aphrodite's shady practices. Emma defends Aphrodite and explains those are just rumors. Rival says he thinks Emma seems like a genuine person deep down and to be careful with people who aren't who they say they are. **He SAYS SOMETHING TO HER that hits home, shakes her to her core, possibly a similar saying her dad had said about values/small town/staying true to herself/roots/etc.** This makes Emma think.

With the Rival's words circling her head, Emma picks up on Aphrodite's actions more acutely and realizes that she doesn't even follow her own positive system of self-improvement. Emma can't help but witness multiple instances where Aphrodite is saying one thing and doing another. All the principles and techniques she sells to her clients, she doesn't practice or live by. She yells at one of the team members and treats that person horribly. She doesn't have any healthy personal relationships. She also sees Aphrodite smoke, even though Aphrodite preaches non-smoking. Even though Emma begins to see behind the curtain, she is still respectful to Aphrodite and wants so bad for her mentor to be the person she romanticizes her to be. It's clear that Aphrodite is becoming more trusting of Emma while Emma is beginning to see Aphrodite's true colors.

One night, Aphrodite is showing Emma some basic accounting/work tasks on the computer when Emma accidentally clicks on a file, Aphrodite quickly clicks off the file and tells Emma to only work off of certain documents and not to worry about anything else.

After work, the team all leaves. Aphrodite leaves with Emma. As they exit the building Aphrodite tells Emma how proud she is of all the work she's been doing. She shares with Emma that she always felt that she was different than the others with unlimited potential and dangles the carrot to Emma by alluding to the fact that eventually she can see herself handing over the keys to her kingdom, if Emma just keeps working hard and staying loyal. Emma is taken aback and doesn't know how to react, she thanks Aphrodite as she walks to her Lambo.

Emma waits for Aphrodite to drive off. And immediately turns around and enters back into the office! As soon as Emma is alone in the office, she breaks into Aphrodite's computer and also starts to tear through all the files in the office. She reads the fine print on some of the tickets and connects the dots from earlier. It's worse than she could have imagined. She realizes that the company is 100% Fraudulent. The Ticket Sales are inflated, Coaching Programs are not being fulfilled, refunds are not fulfilled, over charging on online subscriptions, financial statements are inflated, social media numbers aren't accurate, she finds all the illegal activity. Her world comes crashing down. She doesn't know what to do.

Emma is shocked and alone. She needs to talk to someone. She frantically drives to the Family Man's house and knocks on the door. His wife answers, and lets Emma in. Emma describes what she found. Family Man listens and shows an internal struggle because he knows it's going on, but didn't know the extent. However, he let things slide over the years because he says he needs to feed his family. He suggests to put her head down, don't ask questions. OR get out of this life before it's too late and you become dependent on her, the money, or even worse, get complacent.

The next day at a staff meeting, Aphrodite, in front of everyone, offers Emma an official promotion to be a full time team member, and gives her the \$25,000 team watch. Emma is hesitant at first, but then accepts, even though she knows about the fraud.

Emma breaks down and calls her (ex)boyfriend back home for advice, he doesn't answer. So then she takes a deep breath and calls her dad. He answers, but isn't too enthusiastic about the conversation as he feels Emma has deserted her family and friend. However, he does leave her with his integrity quote and a bit of Fatherly advice saying that he raised her right and at the end of the day she'll know what to do. Emma isn't as comforted as she thought she'd be, leaving her feeling like more alone than she's ever been.

Emma escapes the work life for an afternoon and takes some time to self-reflect. Emma hops on her phone and scrolls through social media. By chance, the clip from Aphrodite speaking that she was watching back in TinyTown at the beginning of this story, pops up with 5M views, and as she's watching she realizes how much of a facade it is. Emma knows she's taking money and taking advantage of the people that trust Aphrodite's team to help them change their lives. Emma knows something must be done.

Emma rushes to the Family Man about unveiling Aphrodite's fraud publically. He's unsure, but encourages her. She wants his help, but says he can't as he's worried about job security and his kids, it's too risky because the ramifications would be detrimental. But he suggests that the Goof might help. Emma doesn't believe him, but Family Man convinces her that she'd be surprised how many people don't like Aphrodite running their lives. Emma goes and talks with the Goof privately. She tells Goof her plan and he surprisingly steps up and says he'll help out, as he's always felt disrespected within the group, and is sick of Aphrodite controlling his life in every way. Emma still unsure about her new ally, decides to forge ahead and is pleased that she has help in taking Aphrodite down. They both go ahead and plan their attack.

ACT THREE

The big *Super Seminar* day is upon them. Emma and Goof talk about how to expose Aphrodite as a fraud. They gather incriminating pictures of Aphrodite smoking, the evidence showing inflated earning numbers and fraudulent activity, and a secretly filmed video of Aphrodite being her true self; yelling and being mean to her staff.

The Super Seminar is underway with a packed house of 2,000 attendees. Emma and the Goof are talking backstage about their plan, but when push comes to shove, the Goof gets cold feet and tells Emma he can't go through with the plan. Emma is extremely disappointed and pleads with the Goof, but he apologizes and leaves Emma alone backstage. Aphrodite is already on the stage, commencing her program, working the crowd, and they love it. Huge rounds of applause fill the auditorium.

Emma musters up as much courage as she can, but realizes it's going to be very difficult on her own because she has to get from the A/V room, to the stage, to carry out the plan. There's no turning back now, so she decides whatever happens, happens.

Aphrodite is in her Self-Help groove, captivating the audience. Emma takes a deep breath, and slowly walks on stage with a microphone. She apologizes to the audience, but says she has something important to say. The crowd is confused and not enjoying this interruption. Aphrodite is bewildered and starting to get upset. Emma tries to get the crowd on her side to listen to her, but it's not working. Aphrodite is also not helping when she starts putting Emma down and telling her to get off the stage. Emma is about to give up, but just then, Aphrodite's mic cuts off, a spotlight hits on Emma and the Slide Projection changes to an incriminating photo of Aphrodite. Emma realizes her plan is happening and squints towards the A/V room, and sees Goof giving a thumbs up. Emma smiles and catches a boost of confidence and presses on.

The Emma and Aphrodite On-Stage-Showdown begins! Emma goes off and gives a speech outing Aphrodite for all her hypocritical behavior, telling the crowd that they have been sold a bill of goods that's all fake. Moreover, she outs the company and exposes the fraud. The Goof shows the different slides of evidence as Emma continues to air all the dirty laundry. She even uses the Self-Help knowledge that she's learned along the way to hold a mirror to Aphrodite, and finally understands what the **Integrity Quote her dad used to say really means**. The crowd can't believe it. Goof turns Aphrodite's microphone back on and she tries to explain herself, but the crowd slowly loses faith in Aphrodite, and turns on her.

Aphrodite is revealed as a fraud! The photographers and journalists are in a frenzy, most of the audience is videoing the melt-down and sharing it on their cell phones as this news goes viral. Aphrodite's world crashes down and she runs off stage.

The crowd is dispersing and the mood has calmed down. The few that are loyal to Aphrodite have all left with her. Emma is talking to Goof and Family Man. The Goof jokes that they don't have jobs, the Family Man looks a bit worried, and Emma is coming down from the whole ordeal. Just then, the Rival Guru makes his way over to the 3. Emma asks what he's doing there to which he says he came for the entertainment and got a lot more than he had anticipated. He commends Emma for finally standing up for what she believes is right and taking down Aphrodite. At the end of the conversation, he offers Emma a job.

Our movie ends with the same imagery that we begin with. We see Emma giving a seminar (to a seemingly huge crowd) but it's revealed that she is actually back in TinyTown putting on her very own Self-Help event, sponsored by her dad's Mechanic Shop, at their local recreation center. The crowd is small but is very excited and you get the sense that Emma is there to help people and make a difference. Her boyfriend is in the crowd in the back with their new baby girl and all her family and friends are in attendance. Emma looks content and truly happy for the first time ever.

She concludes her seminar and the audience claps. She steps down from stage and shakes hands with the Rival Guru, Goof and Family Man who came to see her, and are excited for her. Emma's glad that the three are all working together now. They can't stay, they have to be on their way to the next Seminar city. But before they go, the Goof and Family Man pull Emma aside and thank her for everything, they both feel like they're finally at peace. Family Man tells Emma that he gets to work from home at the start of the year. She is so happy for him.

She then hugs her Dad and has a moment with him. He is so proud of her and she thanks him for being her compass. She then talks with small business owners; you can tell this is where she belongs. We slowly pull out of the scene and see that Emma is running for City Council **and her slogan is the same Integrity Quote from her father.**