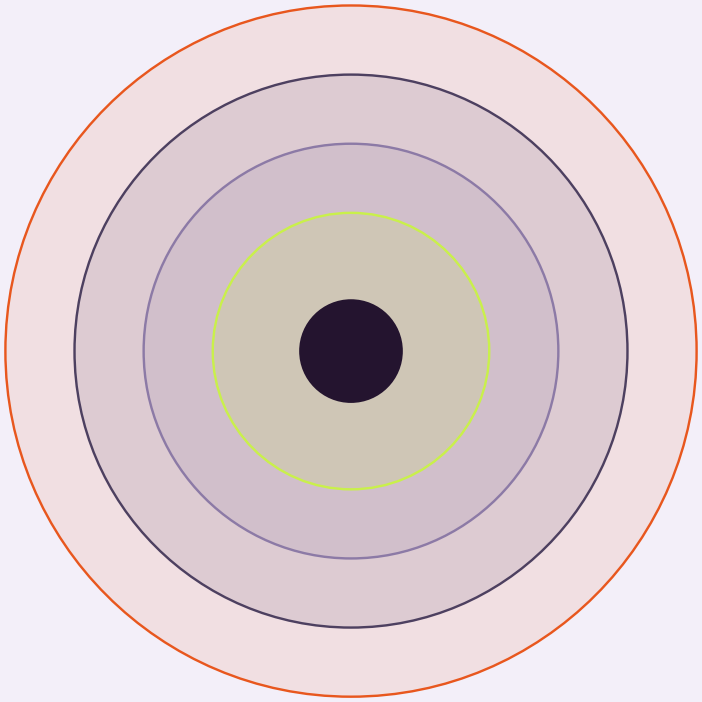


# Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup

A reading of the book by John Carreyrou (2018)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

John Carreyrou is a longtime investigative reporter at The Wall Street Journal. Bad Blood tells the story of Theranos, the blood-testing startup Elizabeth Holmes founded in 2003 as a 19-year-old Stanford student, which claimed it could run a wide range of lab tests from a few drops of blood. The book follows the company through its deals with Walgreens and Safeway to the point where Carreyrou's reporting, starting with a Journal story in October 2015, showed that its own devices did not work as promised. It is built on interviews with former employees, including the whistleblowers Tyler Shultz and Erika Cheung, and on the records they kept. Read as a lesson, it shows how secrecy, pressure and a promise that sounded too good kept a company going long after the warning signs were there to see.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### A promise that skips the proof stage is a story, not a product.

Theranos pitched a full lab in a finger prick, and investors, partners and the press bought the pitch before anyone outside had checked the machine. The book shows the company's own Edison device could not do what was claimed, so many tests were quietly run on modified commercial analysers made by other companies. The question that would have caught it early was simple: who outside the company has seen this work?

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Secrecy that protects an idea can also hide the fact that the idea does not work.

Teams at Theranos were kept apart, and staff were told not to discuss their work with colleagues in other groups. That made it hard for any one person to see the whole picture. When nobody is allowed to compare notes, a problem can stay invisible for years.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Famous names are not the same as people who know the field.

The Theranos board was full of former cabinet secretaries, senators and military leaders, and almost nobody with a background in lab medicine. Their names made the company look checked when it had not been. When you weigh a claim, ask whether the people vouching for it could tell if it were wrong.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### When asking questions costs people their jobs, the questions are the point.

Carreyrou follows employee after employee who raised a concern and then left or was pushed out. Each departure removed one more person who might have said no. A place that treats doubt as disloyalty is telling you what it fears.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Courage often looks like one junior person keeping careful notes.

Tyler Shultz and Erika Cheung were young employees in the lab, not executives. They saw test results they could not trust, raised it inside, and were brushed off. What they had seen, and later told regulators and a reporter, was a large part of how the truth got out.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## A partner's fear of missing out is not due diligence.

Walgreens opened Theranos testing centres in its stores, starting in 2013, without independently checking that the technology worked. The prospect of being first can make a careful organisation skip the checks it would demand from anyone else. Pressure to move fast should slow you down.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Threats aimed at critics tell you something about the claim.

Theranos used its lawyers to press former employees and to try to stop the Journal's story before it ran. Tyler Shultz faced that pressure while his own grandfather, the former Secretary of State George Shultz, sat on the board. Honest work can usually survive a question without a lawsuit.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Someone always pays for the gap between the pitch and the lab.

Here it was patients and doctors, who made decisions on test results that could be wrong. In 2016 Theranos voided two years of results from its Edison devices. The cost of a too-good claim rarely lands on the person making it first.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Check a story the way a reporter does: more than one source, and the records.

Carreyrou did not run the story on one tip. He found several former employees, spoke to doctors, and asked for documents before publishing. You can use the same method on a job offer, an investment or a headline: find people who are not selling it, and look at the evidence yourself.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your show-me list
- [ ] Find one independent checker
- [ ] Set a no-rush rule
- [ ] Read what you are asked to sign
- [ ] Know where you would report

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Keep a dated record
- ◯ Ask how we know
- ◯ Find one source that is not selling

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

## Write your show-me list

Pick the biggest claim you are being asked to trust right now, from a job offer, an investment or a product.

Write down three things you would need to see with your own eyes before you believe it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

## Find one independent checker

Name one person outside the deal who knows the field: an accountant, a doctor, an engineer, a friend in the industry.

Send them the claim this week and ask what they would check first.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

## Set a no-rush rule

Decide now that any big decision waits at least 48 hours, however hard you are pushed.

Write the rule down where you will see it when the pressure comes.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

## Read what you are asked to sign

Before you sign a contract or a confidentiality agreement, read it in full and note anything that stops you talking about problems.

If it worries you, ask a lawyer before you sign, not after.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

## Know where you would report

Look up who regulates your field and whether your workplace has an ethics or whistleblowing line.

Save both in your notes, so you are not searching for them on a bad day.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Keep a dated record

When something at work seems wrong, write down what you saw, when, and who was there, the same day.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

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## December 2026

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| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Ask how we know

Once a week, in a meeting or a conversation, ask the plain question: how do we know this works?

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

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| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Find one source that is not selling

Each time a big claim reaches you, find one source that does not come from the company or person making it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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## December 2026

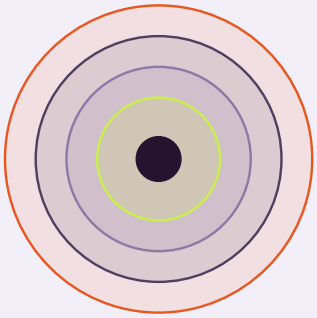
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



# The more a claim needs your silence, the more it needs your questions.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER JOHN CARREYROU