

(The Young and the Rest Of Us)

(Dramedy)

Tamir Yardenne

“Celebrity is the mask that eats the face.” – John Updike

## **CHARACTERS**

JESSE CHANDLER MONTGOMERY	48ish - Black, defying his age
KIT JOHNSON	20s - Soap opera good looking
COLBY ANNE	20s - Young Ingénue
DITHERS	Old - Asian, Script Supervisor
MARYAM	30s - Muslim, Jesse’s Assistant
KAREN	50s - Head Writer
PAPI	30s - Hot Purto Rican Detective
NADÈGE	40s - Jesse’s Manager

## **SETTING**

The play takes place in two locations: Jesse’s brownstone living room in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, and the sound stage of the soap opera, The Young and the Rest of Us.

## **AUTHOR'S NOTES**

### **Note on Text:**

A forward slash (/) indicates where the following line overlaps. Two hyphens (--) at the end of a line indicate an interrupted thought.

### **Note on Set:**

A floor-to-ceiling section of the bar area in Jesse's living room swivels back and forth, seamlessly transforming the space into the Jean Harlow Soundstage, which instantly becomes a set from General Hospital.

## ACT I SCENE 1

*It's 8:00 a.m. on a Friday in April.*

*Blackout. Silence hangs heavy... then, the faintest, haunting melody of the folk hymn 'I've Been Buked and I've Been Scorned' begins to drift through the speakers. The music lingers in the darkness, rising just enough to fill the space.*

*A single spotlight reveals a massive gold-framed portrait of JESSE CHANDLER MONTGOMERY... shirtless, oiled, cradling an Emmy like a baby. Nearby, a smaller portrait of a white Jesus presides over a constellation of photographs, all featuring Jesse. His image dominates every corner, like a shrine to his own legacy.*

*Stage right, a stocked bar stands next to a hallway leading to the guest bathroom and dining area, with a basement door tucked beside it. Stage left, a staircase and coat rack hint at a second floor. Center stage, French doors open into the kitchen. Nearby, an elegant sofa faces the audience, with a glass table behind it laid out with caviar and champagne. Overhead, a radiant chandelier.*

*A GUNSHOT. Then a single police siren, followed by more shots. A woman SCREAMS.*

*VOICES (overlapping, chaotic): "Don't let that NIGGER get away!" "Get his ass!" "He went that way!"*

*Darkness...*

## PODCAST HOST (V.O)

...And just when Red Hook thought the nightmare was over... it happened again. Last night, a 37-year-old woman was found murdered in her brownstone. Witnesses described a white male in a dark coat, gray scarf, and vintage Yankees cap. No suspects. No clues. No answers. Is the killer still out there in Brooklyn... watching, waiting? Could he be one of us? Find out next time. If you dare.

*(A woman's shrill SCREAM echoes.)*

## PODCAST HOST (V.O)

That's all for today's episode. Be sure to join us next time for part two of this chilling tale. Thank you for listening, and don't forget to follow us on Patreon for exclusive updates and behind-the-scenes content. Stay safe out there.

*(Rain taps steadily against the windows. The basement door creaks open, its hinges groaning. A shadowy figure lingers in the doorway. THUNDER RUMBLES. LIGHTNING flashes... He stands silent in the dark. Jesse, in a durag and slippers, leaps off the staircase landing, brandishing a butter knife.)*

PAPI

AHHHH!

JESSE

AHHHH!

*(Jesse scrambles to flip on the lights. They flood the room... revealing Papi, the hot Puerto Rican detective.)*

JESSE

Papi! What the hell are you doing standing in the dark? You scared me half to death.

PAPI

My bad. I thought I heard an intruder!

*(A woman's shrill SCREAM echoes.)*

## PODCAST HOST

Welcome back to this week's--

JESSE

Alexa! Shut up! Intruder!? You mean like a mass murderer? What... in the basement?

PAPI

I didn't say all that.

*(A loud BANG! Jesse jumps, grabs Papi close.)*

JESSE

What was that?

GUADALUPE (OFF STAGE)

Sorry Mr. Hesse.

JESSE

Damn Guadalupe!

PAPI

Guadalupe.

JESSE

Lord have mercy, not only is there a mass murderer on the loose, but now I have to worry about Guadalupe tearing up my kitchen. Nothing is going right this morning.

PAPI

The basement's clear. Chill out, this weekends gonna be great. You'll be great. And, you'll get nominated, if that's what you're worried about.

JESSE

You think they forgot? The Carrington Brothers? Please. They don't forget anything... especially not a meltdown that had the whole internet talking for weeks.

PAPI

Bro--

JESSE

You're a cop-of course you don't have any empathy. Or common sense. Every meeting, every note they give me about my performance... it's like they're just waiting... and... watching for me to screw up again. And now they're pushing Colby Anne into my storylines. You really think that's just a coincidence? Duh!

PAPI

When you get nominated this morning, you'll be back on top, and the studio won't see you the same way.

JESSE

You mean crazy?

PAPI

Yeah, kinda.

JESSE

You think so?

PAPI

Doesn't matter what I think. Doesn't matter what those chicken heads think. You don't need them, they need you. Yo, you're legit... fuck'em.

JESSE

You're right, you're right, you're right. After all, I'm Jesse Chandler Montgomery... I won my first Emmy before I knew the difference between shampoo and conditioner, thanks to crying more in one episode than most people do all year.

*(Jesse takes off his durage.)*

JESSE

They got me sweating out my baby hairs. Is my back fat showing? Does this shirt look faggaty to you? Why is it so hot in here? Say something! What... am I trying too hard?

*(MARYAM, a Muslim woman in her 30s adorned with a hijab enters carrying a tray of champagne glasses, deposits the tray on the bar counter.)*

MARYAM

Yes, you look like a man who's desperately trying not to look like he just got out of the nut house.

JESSE

Well, I'll take it! Maryam, is everything ready? Is the hors d'oeuvres platter sufficiently... plattered? Hand sanitizers refilled?

MARYAM

Yes, yes and yes, and the champagne's chilling, the silver is polished and the sternos are heating up. Now give me the knife. And by the way, you look very masculine. Just like Rhett Butler.

PAPI

Facts. Dude, if Rhett had your swagger, the South would've surrendered sooner.

MARYAM

Papi, can you grab the ice from the back patio? I'll put out more caviar. And check the breakers before it starts raining again. Con Edison was out here fiddling with it last week.

*(Papi and Maryam exit.)*

JESSE

(shouting)

Rhett Butler? Wow, that's impressive... Ah, you sure I don't look like Miss Celie from the Color Purple?

*(Jesse fusses with the TV.)*

JESSE

(shouting)

We gotta make sure this Zoom thingy is working!

MARYAM (OFF STAGE)

Leave it, I got it.

*(On the sofa under a blanket, wearing only a T-shirt and one shoe, is Dithers... who tends to get drunk and undress at parties, spastically jerks awake and flips off the couch into a plate of caviar.)*

JESSE

AHH!

DITHERS

AHH!

*(Both men run to the opposite sides of the sofa.)*

JESSE

I thought you were a killer.

DITHERS

Killer?

JESSE

How did you get in?

*(Pointing to Dither's crotch)*

JESSE

Oh, lord, put that away. Yeah, yeah, we can all see you're not your typical Asian. Now get dressed; my guests are coming.

*(Jesse rearranges the champagne glasses on the bar.)*

DITHERS

You must be excited this morning... You're almost guaranteed... Seriously, with the whole alien abduction storyline... the upside-down penis masher... best scene e-v-e-r!

JESSE

True. I really pushed myself.

DITHERS

And not to mention, your showdown with that black bear! Or the iconic episode ten thousand, seven hundred and seventy-seven when Dr. Xander won the Nobel Peace Prize for separating Siamese twins underwater while fighting off his evil twin just before he time-traveled through a hidden wormhole to retrieve the plans from Planet Starfish -3 to save the earth just before a meteorite hit it... right after his decapitation and then bringing himself back to life.

*(Jesse throws himself onto the sofa, his sobs escalating in exaggerated wails. He thrashes about, kicking and flailing his arms.)*

JESSE

What if I peaked with that toothpaste commercial in '09! This Emmy thing? If I'm not nominated, they'll spin it as proof that I've lost it. Dithers, it's over.

DITHERS

Jesse--

JESSE

Oh my God, Dithers, what if I don't... I can't... I can't do this! Cancel the catering, Cancel the party! No... no, cancel my life!

DITHERS

You're one of the best in the business.

JESSE

I'm gonna end it all with a swan dive into the Hudson River. Tell Guadalupe to light some candles... I want it to be tasteful. Why bother, no one will come anyway. Everyone hates me. My mother hates me, Mother Nature hates me, the ghost of Harriet Tubman hates me, even my stalker moved on.

DITHERS

Don't talk like that.



JESSE

No, I'm serious. Yesterday I got into a full argument with a hummingbird. I just wanted to move the damn bird feeder three inches. Why are you looking at me like that? You do think I screwed up!

DITHERS

I didn't say you--

JESSE

They are waiting, just waiting... I know it. This isn't just nerves, man... this is survival. Because it's not my fault. It was that bearded lady, the one that's always kissing up to Colby Anne.

DITHERS

The flat-chested costume designer?

JESSE

Yes, her, with the freakishly large head. I asked why my Alexander Hamilton costume was replaced with a gorilla suit. She just stared. She knew I didn't feel right in that monkey suit.

DITHERS

I'll tell you one thing, for twelve seasons as script supervisor on *Murder, She Wrote*, I never saw not one monkey suit--

JESSE

So, I'm not so crazy! It's political—a-a-a plot, a plot, I tell you! The producers, the executives... they're all plotting against me every day, all day long!

*(Crying, yelling)*

A gorilla suit! A gorilla suit! What is this, the Chitlin' Circuit? A gorilla...a gorilla... Who am I, Koko the gorilla? She's dead! Dead! That's it; maybe Colby Anne wants me dead... so she can be the bigger star on the show!

DITHERS

Jesse, you're frothing at the mouth... I think you're having a panic attack.

JESSE

No! This is a slippery slope, and it starts with me in a gorilla suit and ends with me doing the jigaboo. No, this can't happen to me! I am the GOAT, but to the studio execs, it might as well be 1838...

*(Jesse grabs, The Rights of Freed Slaves, by Frederick Douglass off the coffee table.)*

JESSE

(Imitating slave)

Massa, what dis here words say? Says I's a free man.

JESSE

(Imitating Massa)

NO NIGGER! YOU AIN'T FREE!

JESSE

(Imitating slave)

I's dones got Massa mad nah. Oh, Massa, please don't give me the lash. I's be puttin on dis here gorilla suit. And what a mighty good days fah a slave auction, sah. What y'all think? Oh, Massa, you don't look so good. Are weez sick today?

DITHERS

Don't look at me. I love Black people. Wakanda forever!

JESSE

NIGGERS, NIGGERS... NIGGERS. You get a NIGGER, and you get a NIGGER, and you get a NIGGER. You all get a NIGGER! White folks need to find out in their hearts why was it necessary to have a NIGGER in the first place, because I'm not a NIGGER, I'm a man. But if you think I'm a NIGGER, it means you need a NIGGER...then you've got to find out why--

*(YELLING is heard coming from outside.  
Maryam enters, heads outside.)*

MARYAM

What in the world?

COLBY ANNE (OFF STAGE)

You're fired!

JESSE

Tell Colby Anne to keep her voice down! I got white neighbors.

*(NADÈGE, wearing an African dashiki,  
Crocs carrying an umbrella and suitcase,  
comes barreling inside. Followed by  
Maryam.)*

NADÈGE

She's impossible! / I could strangle her!

JESSE

Who? / Strangle who?

NADÈGE

Every time Colby Anne opens her mouth, it's like, why God? Why? Why did you put so many assholes on the earth at the same time?

DITHERS

Clearly, God looked away for one second... and boom: Colby Anne.

*(Nadège places her umbrella on the coat rack.)*

NADÈGE

Oh, be quiet, Dithers, this is real talk. She's messing with my money. And, as her manager, I have a lot invested in her--

JESSE

Her manager?

NADÈGE

Yes, she's talented... young, nothing personal, Jesse. Heather Locklear, Tori Spelling, and Dolph Lundgren are all my clients. I've been featured in Time Out New York, but to her, I'm not 'representing her brand.'

*(Papi enters, from the hall Stage R. carrying bags of ice.)*

PAPI

What's up with the yelling?

NADÈGE

She fired me--

PAPI

Who?

NADÈGE

Colby Anne--

PAPI

Damn, you'd think she'd make an attempt to be nicer to folks, given how many people can't stand her. Jesse, where do you want the ice?

JESSE

You'd think so. And, I can't believe you're repping the both of us--

NADÈGE

Not anymore--

DITHERS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

JESSE

Put the ice behind the bar and the rest in the kitchen.

*(Papi moves to the bar.)*

NADÈGE

I'm the one that resurrected her career. I'm the one that advised her not to go to CPAC this year. But hell hath no fury like a white 'Evangelical' conservative mildly inconvenienced. Jesse, why is Dither's naked? Oh, never mind.

COLBY ANNE (OFF STAGE)

Nadège, get back down here! I don't want to seem more relatable! I hate the dentist!

PAPI

Bro, I'm out.

*(Papi heads for the kitchen.)*

NADÈGE

The weekend hasn't even kicked off, and she's already cranking up the drama. I need a cigarette.

MARYAM

Patio please!

*(Nadège grabs her suitcase, she and Maryam exit. COLBY ANNE enters, with her coat over her head, hair still in rollers, carrying an overnight bag:)*

COLBY ANNE

...Oh, great, now the whole world knows I have gingivitis. Where is she?

JESSE

Colby Anne, wait--

COLBY ANNE

Why is he naked?

*(Colby hands Dithers her coat. He shakes the rain off and hangs it on the coat rack.)*

JESSE

I get you're having an interesting morning, but can we talk about me for a change? I know you'll tell me the truth. Do you think it was too premature to plan this weekend's watch party and everything...

COLBY ANNE

You mean, because they dragged you off set to the funny farm--

JESSE

Wellness retreat; it was a wellness retreat. Well it'd be shocking if they didn't recognize me for an Emmy this time around, right?

COLBY ANNE

A wellness retreat, a funny farm, whatever. Jesse, the Emmys are all about talent and performance. And that was six months ago; we hardly remember a thing. Except it was actually sorta funny. You reminded me of a black version of Jessica Lange in 'Frances.'

JESSE

Wellness retreat... it-was-a-wellness-retreat.

COLBY ANNE

The whole cast and crew are up for nominations this year. It's not just about you.

JESSE

What? Why, because of what I did?

COLBY ANNE

Let me say this: after your breakdown, the network went on this anti-bias-in-the-workplace tirade, and... and... yeah, I guess the DEI training was good. To be fair, I would have cared more, but I was just too dead inside.

JESSE

Of course you wouldn't understand.

COLBY ANNE

About the monkey suit? I didn't say I didn't understand. Of course I understand.

*(Maryam enters carrying a tray of caviar  
and places it on the glass table behind the  
sofa.)*

MARYAM

You do? What do you understand?

COLBY ANNE

(remembering)

Well, yes, I understand... that... first we have to... no wait... I got it... as the world continues to ah... sort through a racial... reckoning, ignited by the police killing of... um... the guy... the one... um... you know, the one where the convenience store cashier sold him cigarettes and then he handed the cashier a counterfeit ten--

JESSE

George Floyd?

COLBY ANNE

Right, George Floyd and that girl... um... ah, you know...

DITHERS

Breonna Taylor?

COLBY ANNE

Right, Bianca Taylor--

JESSE

Bre-on-na Taylor.

COLBY ANNE

Right, because of her, more than ever, people want to know how to... anti-racist.

JESSE

Colby Anne is right, it's all about talent. I'm almost guaranteed, like Dithers says... I mean, I am daytime's biggest star.

COLBY ANNE

Okay... slow your roll, Denzel.

MARYAM

Hold on, Jesse; let her finish answering the question.

COLBY ANNE

Well... um... I-I. I... ah... Well, that's not faaaaaair. I would love to cure racism this morning but to be completely honest with you, I wasn't paying attention. I just took some Xanax, some fentanyl, a few uppers and downers I can't pronounce, two percocets, two darvocets, a dilaudid, and a half Vicodin because it was at the bottom of my purse. Oh, and I was drinking all night. So all I really heard Jesse say was, my cat's breath smells like cat food. Ditherrrrrs, help me pleeeeeease.

*(Colby Anne checks her phone.)*

COLBY ANNE

Oh look, Kit's here! Finally, someone who doesn't bore me to death... toodles!

*(Colby Anne exits front door.)*

MARYAM

Rude.

DITHERS

EVERYONE

Did I ever tell you I was born / in a Japanese internment camp?--

Yes--

DITHERS

I was born in an internment camp, a child prodigy. It will all be in my new book. In a bookstore near you. Well, to make a long story short--

JESSE

MARYAM

Too late.

Too late.

*(A spotlight isolates Dithers in a pool of blue light. A haunting MELODY of a Japanese wartime ballad fills the air. Downstairs, one can hear Colby Anne fussing.)*

DITHERS

After the attack on Pearl Harbor by Japanese aircrafts on December 7, 1941, the U.S. War Department suspected that Japanese Americans might act as saboteurs or espionage agents--

*(THUNDER/LIGHTNING, followed by a flickering of lights, followed by a LOUD CRASH off stage.)*

JESSE

DITHERS

AHHHH! The Killer!--

AHHHH! What was that?--

MARYAM

The killer? What killer? The announcements will start soon. So you go put some pants on. You'll have the whole weekend to prance around naked.

*(Dithers searches the room for his pants.  
Maryam exits, Papi enters with two  
breakfast plates wrapped in foil.)*

PAPI

It was only Guadalupe again.

JESSE

Damn, Guadalupe!

GUADALUPE (OFF STAGE)

Sorry, Mr. Hesse.

*(Colby Anne enters with KIT JOHNSON, an  
actor, wearing a dark bathrobe, gray scarf  
and a vintage Yankees cap, carrying a can of  
tuna, a carton of milk, a loaf of Wonder  
Bread, and an overnight bag.)*

COLBY ANNE

...and I'll say it again, Ashlie Babbit was a patriot. Period!

KIT JOHNSON

I'm not saying she wasn't a patriot, but we now live in a world where Joe Rogan's podcast has triple the listeners as mine. I don't understand it.

COLBY ANNE

Don't worry; Joe Rogan's podcast will not receive an Emmy nomination this year. The media is racist against white people. We all know that. He and Alex Jones should never have been canceled.

KIT JOHNSON

My Onlyfans account as of this morning surpassed Cardi B's, while Joe Rogan is a barbarian who took an interest in intellectual things, and his show is basically him bringing on slightly nervous scholars and magicians, explaining how the world works.

*(Maryam enters grabbing Kit's scarf and  
Yankees cap, hangs them on the coat rack.)*

MARYAM

Joe Rogan, come on. And don't get me started on Alex Jones. When you're more careful managing your money in video games than in real life, you have a problem--

COLBY ANNE

And you are?



KIT JOHNSON

Morning everyone--

MARYAM

What? Who am I? Uh, I worked for you, remember?

COLBY ANNE

Huh, right... I recall now. I don't like to see--

MARYAM

You don't like what?

PAPI

You don't like what?

COLBY ANNE

As I was saying... I don't like seeing anyone taken advantage of. You illegals come to America, reunite with family members already here, you work hard. You cook our food, clean our toilets, change our babies' diapers and our parents' Depends. All for people who can't even remember your name. That's brave. And thank you, Habibi, for your unsolicited lecture on the sociological motivations of white men. I don't think--

PAPI

Yo, Kit check your lady, she's trippin.

*(Papi gets in Kit's face. Jesse separates the two. Nadège enters from the patio.)*

JESSE

Ding, ding, ding, okay, I hate to interrupt the class war, but breakfast is ready.

PAPI

Let me go before I hurt somebody. Babe, I'll see you at home.

MARYAM

Okay.

*(Papi exits.)*

JESSE

Kit, I see you brought a... whole meal. No need, there's a ginormous spread in the dining room from Sardi's,

*(Jesse snatches Kit's tuna, bread and milk.)*

JESSE

Go grab a bite before the announcements. Kit, you'll be in the Cicely Tyson room in the west wing with Colby Anne—right next to the back stairs.

KIT JOHNSON

Thanks for inviting me this weekend. I'm glad you're back on the show. We missed you buddy.

COLBY ANNE

Yes, so glad you're back.

*(Actors collect their bags and begin to exit Stage R. Jesse tosses the tuna and bread in the trash. He places the milk behind the bar. Karen SHOUTS from offstage.)*

KAREN (OFF STAGE)

Jesse's help, hey, Jesse's girl help--

JESSE

Is that Karen yelling like that? What's she doing here? I didn't invite her.

*(The wall-panel BUZZES several times.)*

MAN (OFF STAGE)

Shut up, lady! It's early in the morning for--

KAREN (OFF STAGE)

Go screw yourself genius; this is Brooklyn, people are loud. Mind your own business... Come on, Jesse's domestic person! Cleaning lady! It's starting to rain out here!

JESSE

Maryam, can you take care of that?

*(The door BUZZES again. Maryam goes to answer it.)*

KAREN (OFF STAGE)

Ugh, this damn city... such rude neighbors.

*(Maryam, open the door. Karen's on her phone.)*

KAREN

*(into the phone)*

Wait a sec honey. (To Maryam) Hey Martina, can I come in? Honey, there's more breastmilk in the freezer. I have to go.

*(Karen enters, places her umbrella down.)*

MARYAM

Jesse's not...

*(Jesse ducks behind the bar.)*

KAREN

That's all right Magdalena, I need to talk to you anyway, dear.

MARYAM

Me? Why me?

KAREN

Now, darling, why would you say such a thing?

MARYAM

Because we're not friends?

KAREN

Of course we're friends.

MARYAM

Okay, I'll play. My favorite vacation spot?

*(No answer.)*

MARYAM

When's my birthday?

KAREN

Uh...

MARYAM

Okay, easy one. What's my last name?

KAREN

Uh... Mmmohammadddd... Nazirrrr-Ramadannn... Habibi?

MARYAM

Close, it's Jones. But thanks for coming.

KAREN

Wait!... Moreen, can I call you Moreen?

MARYAM

You can but my name is Maryam.

*(Karen takes a seat.)*

KAREN

It's a secret and I feel so guilty even talking about it. But, I need your help.

MARYAM

And you chose me?

KAREN

Of course, you were my assistant for--

MARYAM

Only two days, you kept patting me down for explosives when I showed up for work.

KAREN

Let me get to it. I have to win that Emmy. I just have to. I'll finally get the recognition I deserve. Then maybe he'll see me for the woman I really am.

MARYAM

He? Who's he?

*(Maryam prepares the Zoom app on TV screen for the live Emmy nomination stream.)*

KAREN

Having it all means listening to my five-year-old sob and bang on my office door in search of comfort and not being able to give it to her because of last-minute script changes. I try to tell myself my kids love their nanny. May I?

MARYAM

Help yourself.

*(Karen walks over to the bar, places her breast pump bag on the counter. She pours herself a glass of champagne. Jesse crawls over to hide behind the sofa.)*

KAREN

I love my husband. I have everything... a beautiful home, wonderful kids I'm crazy about, and I'm not bad on the eyes. And now, with an Emmy, maybe I'll finally be the kind of woman I've always wanted to be. And way better than--

MARYAM

Colby Anne.

*(Jesse peaks his head up from behind the sofa.)*

KAREN

And I'm--

MARYAM

Screwing Kit?

KAREN

Yup.

MARYAM

You didn't--

KAREN

We did. It was hot and raw, a little nasty, and I can't stop thinking about him.

*(A crash is heard from the kitchen.)*

MARYAM

Guadaaaalupeeee! Let me see what is going on... Finish your story.

*(Maryam and Karen exit to the Kitchen.  
Jesse, crosses to the kitchen and presses his  
ear to the kitchen door.  
THUNDER/LIGHTNING, flash outside,  
causing the lights to flicker.)*

EVERYONE (OFF STAGE)  
(ad libs)

What's with the lights?

*(Karen enters, stuffing paper towels into her  
bra, breastmilk leaking through her shirt.)*

KAREN

Jesse, there you are. Ooh... you simply must tell me where you got this amazing caviar from.

*(She walks over to the glass table behind the sofa, scooping up caviar.)*

KAREN

Is it Ossetra?

JESSE

Ossetra? Ew! Oh lord, no, it's Petrossian Beluga.

KAREN

Sorry, I'm making such a mess of this. Honestly, I'm no better than my kids.

JESSE

I'll get Guadalupe to clean it up, that's if she's not too busy breaking my nineteenth-century china.

*(Jesse exits. Colby Anne enters.)*

COLBY ANNE

What time is the show starting? I'm feeling lucky today.

KAREN

Here's to you, cheers! Speaking of bubbly and sparkles, that's a flashy piece of hardware around your neck. A diamond Celtic knot heart necklace?

COLBY ANNE

Yes, sweet of you to notice. And your skin is just radiant. Who does your skin grafting?

*(Kit peaks his head out from Stage R. ensuring Jesse's out of earshot.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Psst!

COLBY ANNE

You look like a surprised catfish.

KAREN

I'm so sick of your smart mouth--

KIT JOHNSON

Is he gone?

KAREN

Is who gone?

KIT JOHNSON

Jesse, is he in there?

COLBY ANNE

No.

KIT JOHNSON

Just not too long ago, Jesse threw a tantrum, destroyed all the camera equipment, and took a shit, a shit... he lit-er-ally took a shit and smeared it all over the set because of some freaking monkey costume. He's...

*(Kit does the international screw-is-loose gesture)*

KIT JOHNSON

...legitimately crazy. Nut burgers looney tunes crazy, running in the middle of traffic blindfolded with scissors crazy. And, you take him back? I love my character. It's the freakin' best role in daytime. And yeah, do I feel sorry for Jesse? Yes, he needs help, but he's way too much of a diva. I demand you get rid of him.

COLBY ANNE

I agree.

KAREN

I'm just the writer, director, and producer on the show. My hands are tied. When the Carrington brothers say jump, I ask if they want a trampoline.

KIT JOHNSON

Unleashing Jesse, an insecure spastic chihuahua who would like to be thin enough to dance between the raindrops on set is completely absurd. It, it, it... it's, the... the having to piss every five minutes, the gluten sensitivity, the bingeing, the diet pills, the coco butter, And what's with the hand sanitizer?

KAREN

Just Calm down--

KIT JOHNSON

Don't tell me to calm down!--

KAREN

I wish you could hear yourself.

KIT JOHNSON

Well, I wish I was dead, because I might as well be now that he's back--

COLBY ANNE

Keep your voices down. He'll hear you. He's still on that Black-Lives-Matter... book banning, reparations... thing. Oh, and FYI, you apparently can't call them colored anymore.

KIT JOHNSON

He's that guy who believes his fans thinks he's straight. Yeah, right... loco.

KAREN

Colby Anne and Jesse are ranked as the greatest rivals in soap opera history. Despite a small ratings slide, 'The Young and the Rest of Us' is still America's favorite daytime drama so we still need him.

COLBY ANNE

Ugh... I know, but he's well past his prime. He's gonna need a walker and dentures pretty soon. Can't you have his character decapitated again?

KAREN

No, demographics in urban areas have been declining. The Blacks watch a lot of TV, and they need to be watching more of us, not less. We're now number three after Divorce Court.

KIT JOHNSON

Well, bingo bongo and shama-lama-ding-dong for Jesse. Then find another Black guy!

KAREN

Jesse's not Kerry Washington black or O.J. black, but the right kind of black with just the right amount of threatening for the authenticity that we need--

COLBY ANNE

But the writing is... Jesse's just a little too articulate for my taste. Who does he think he is? I can actually understand him when he speaks. Hey, he's quite elderly, right? Why not write him a scene where he does one of those old Negro spirituals, or something?

KIT JOHNSON

Colby, / Please shut up!

COLBY ANNE

*Swing low, sweet chariot. / Coming for to carry me home--*



KAREN

You're worse than my kids. All three of you will be on set bright and early Monday morning. No more shenanigans. You hear, me!

*(Kit storms upstairs.)*

KAREN

We'll be holding a press conferences to officially celebrate our nominations and welcome Jesse back to the show at the same time. And I need you sober and coherent.

COLBY ANNE

Well, whenever it is, I'll be busy. And for your information, I'm clean. Now, I only do pharmaceuticals.

KAREN

Oh, so you stop shooting up for one day and now you're all pious.

*(Colby begins to exit. Karen grabs her arm, stops her.)*

KAREN

Oh, no, you don't. We're going to have this out right now.

COLBY ANNE

Take your hands off me. I have nothing to say to you.

KAREN

Good, then you won't interrupt me for a change. I have an issue with--

COLBY ANNE

Your mustache?

KAREN

No, but you will keep your filthy mouth shut and stop spreading lies about Kit and me.

COLBY ANNE

Your life is about as interesting as Fran Lebowitz, who is less interesting than watching paint dry. Plus, I don't have time to be talking about you. I have a film career--

KAREN

Hmm, a film career? That's the funniest thing you've said all night. You've been in two movies, one of them showing your boobs and the other was midget porn. You're a talentless hillbilly who never even had a chance of winning anyway, including an Emmy.

COLBY ANNE

So you campaigned against me getting nominated... you did, didn't you? What a bitch!

KAREN

You lying cunt. You repeat that to anyone, and I'll make sure you never work in this town again and wind up on a bus bench.

COLBY ANNE

There's that darkness... Any resemblance between you and a human being is purely accidental. You are an evil vicious monster sealed inside the shell of an aging whore.

*(Karen slaps Colby Anne. Colby Anne's purse falls out of her hand, sending it crashing to the floor. The contents spill out. Among the scattered items, a small bottle of pills. Colby Anne slaps Karen back. They break into an eighties catfight. Jesse and Maryam rush in, separating the two. Followed by Dithers and Nadège. Kit runs from down the stairs.)*

JESSE

Colby!... Karen! What in the white-on-white crime is going on?

KAREN

Anytime... Elly May Clampett, anytime you want more of the same, I'll be waiting! You will regret this! I'll make sure of it!

COLBY ANNE

And I'll be waiting to see the look on your face when your husband leaves your ass, and you're left with a twelve-year-old copy of Magic Mike and a half-bottle of Bordeaux.

JESSE

Enough! This is not the Waffle House up in here!

*(Colby Anne bends down, picking up the scattered items from the floor. She carefully collects the belongings, item by item.)*

COLBY ANNE

I suggest you all hear me loud and clear. I've had enough. I've reached my limit with this clown show. The circus is over. I'm suffocating, and I hate all of you and I'm done pretending! I'm done! Done!

KIT JOHNSON

What are you talking about?

COLBY ANNE

Oh, don't play so innocent with me. I know you're sleeping with that... that thing--

KIT JOHNSON

What?

EVERYONE

What?

KIT JOHNSON

We just did it twice.

COLBY ANNE

That's right. Her! But guess what? Brace yourself buckoos: affairs, embezzlements, tax fraud... no dirty secret is safe. This show's dark underbelly, marked by bullying, sexism, and, and... sexual harassment, will be laid bare. I. Know. Ev-ery-thing. About. Everybody.

KIT JOHNSON

Think about what you're saying. We're the highest-rated daytime drama... you can't.

COLBY ANNE

You bet I can, it's all in this little black book. I got the receipts, and this is my Rosa Parks moment.

EVERYONE

(ad lib)

What? Rosa Parks? What is he talking about...?

KAREN

The ratings... You could ruin the show... ruin all of us--

COLBY ANNE

Oooh, babygirl, you might as well go lather on another layer of that Dollar General Store foundation because it's waaay too late.

*(Dithers approaches Colby, snatching the black book and creating a moment of confusion as everyone tries to adjust to the unexpected turn of events.)*

DITHERS

I got the book!

*(Colby Anne moves to slap Dithers, but he quickly ducks. Her hand connects with Kit's face instead. Dithers, misinterpreting the situation, assumes Kit is the aggressor, and with a swift motion, he slaps Kit. Kit goes reeling. Colby Anne runs toward Stage R. but first headbutts Dithers, who staggers backward. Colby Anne grabs the black book from Dithers and makes a run for it. Jesse drops to the floor.)*

JESSE

Stop her--

NADÈGE

I'll get her--

*(Pandemonium ensues—a wild and epic chase unfolds, marked by leaps, tackles, and the occasional stumble over Jesse's fallen body.)*

JESSE

Not the face--

KAREN

Grab that book!

*(As the Red Carpet Host speaks on the screen, the actors on stage are fully engrossed in their brawl, shouting, lunging, and scrambling across the room, oblivious to the live broadcast.)*

RED CARPET HOST

Welcome back to Red Wave Media! Live from the illustrious Academy Theater in North Hollywood, California, we're amidst the glitz and glamour, celebrating the highly anticipated Emmy nomination announcements for the upcoming Daytime Emmy Awards. What a morning it's been so far. Now joining me is the cast from the number one soap opera in the country, 'The Young and the Rest of Us.' Thanks for hanging out.

*(Maryam and Nadège run at Colby Anne. Colby Anne grabs a vase and throws it at them.)*

COLBY ANNE

Take that, you migrants!

RED CARPET HOST

Can you guys hear me okay?

*(Kit snatches the vase out of the air in time, trips over Jesse on the floor.)*

JESSE

Ow!

*(Karen intercepts, grabbing the book from Colby Anne.)*

KAREN

Not so fast, my dear! This belongs to me now!

RED CARPET HOST

Hello?

*(Colby Anne makes a dash, aiming for the hall's exit, but is abruptly halted by Kit who grabs her from behind, covers her mouth with his hand.)*

RED CARPET HOST

Wait, are you all hearing me? Hello?

COLBY ANNE

Get your hands off me!

*(Colby Anne bites him.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Ow!

*(Kit recoils. Seizing the opportunity, Colby Anne breaks away and runs to the front door. Maryam dives in front of it.)*

RED CARPET HOST

We're back! Let's try this again—oh, hang on, the next category's up. Back to you, Billy!

COLBY ANNE

Get out the way Al-Qaeda!

MARYAM

Calm down!

*(Karen's phone pings. Kit grabs Colby from behind again.)*

RED CARPET HOST

What an upset! It's such an exciting day for daytime television. Hope you guys can hear me okay. What's your reaction to all this?

KAREN

Jesse's trending on Black Twitter... or Black X, along with Nicolas Cage saying the N-word--

JESSE

What? / Why?

KAREN

I'm checking!

NADÈGE

So, Nicolas Cage did say the N-word in front of a bunch of Black people?

KIT JOHNSON

*(looking at phone)*

You might not wanna scroll through Reddit. They're writing your eulogy over there.

RED CARPET HOST

Wow, what a lively group! Okay, so I... guess they're in party mode. Congratulations to...

JESSE

The announcements! What time is it? I got it!... I must have been nominated!

*(The group huddles in hushed anticipation, their eyes fixed on the TV (the fourth wall). Simultaneously, the audience sees the same view mirrored on a big TV screen. The room crackles with nervous energy, a collective breath held as Jesse taps the unmute tab on the TV remote. Shows end promo music plays. Papi enters the front door.)*

PAPI

Sorry Jesse, I came as soon as I heard...

EVERYONE

Heard what?

RED CARPET HOST (V.O)

That's it for us this morning. Thanks for joining us. Congratulations to all the winners this morning. And to all The Young and the Rest of Us die-heart fans out there who are disappointed—You're probably wondering why the show received only one nomination this year. That sole honor goes to Colby Anne Collins, nominated for the Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series...

*(A collective gasp fills the room.)*

RED CARPET HOST

...and none for the cast and crew, including its star, Jesse Chandler Montgomery? Maybe the show, and Jesse as the 'sexy heartthrob' Dr. Xander, are just starting to show their age. But hey, everyone loves a good comeback story... there's always next year. Have a great day everyone.

*(Jesse staggers around the room clutching his heart with force, ricocheting from wall-to-wall. Maryam cuts the TV off.)*

JESSE

Starting to show my age!? Maryam, feel my pulse...

NADÈGE

They're already on the next news cycle--

JESSE

Nadège handle this--

NADÈGE

Handling it!

JESSE

That's it. / It's all over!

NADÈGE

(texting)  
It's handled!

*(Nadège springs into action, grabs her suitcase and heads upstairs stage left as Jesse circles the living room, YELLING.)*

JESSE	NADÈGE
Once, I was young and adorable, with a working thyroid. Nadège / call my publicist!	Calling the publicist!

*(Maryam following Jesse while Kit tries to stifle a laugh.)*

JESSE

I was brilliant my first week back on set. Uta Hagen would've been proud. Oh, lord... I can't breathe. (Fanning himself) — why is it so hot in here?

MARYAM

Take a deep breath. Remember what your acting coach says.

JESSE

Good Black don't crack?

MARYAM

No! 'When faced with unfavorable feedback, embrace your inner child by scurrying off to your cuddle corner, all while doing a unicorn prance.'

COLBY ANNE

He should've at least gone to rehab like a proper soap star--

MARYAM	NADÈGE (OFF STAGE)
It was a wellness retreat!	It was a wellness retreat!

JESSE

Oh, sweet baby Jesus... And, and my fans... my adoring fans... The fans won't love me after this full-blown character assassination.

MARYAM	NADÈGE (OFF STAGE)
The fans will always love you-	Your fans are loyal--

JESSE

Is it possible to love something so much that the thought of losing it makes you want to die? My craft, my art—and you're all clawing to snatch it away. Condemned to death by crucifixion at the hands of backstabbing vultures. Parasites, all you! I poured out my youth; I bared my soul. So how did she get nominated, and I didn't? Philistines!



MARYAM

Jesse!

JESSE

Sorry, apologies, everyone. It's not that I'm not happy for you, Colby Anne. I just find myself in desperate need of a Twinkie, that's all. I, uh... I'll be right back. I think there's a Being Bobby Brown marathon calling my name... and it really, was a wellness retreat!

*(With a dramatic flourish, Jesse exits upstairs then the SOUND of Jesse breaking down offstage.)*

JESSE (OFF STAGE)

(sobbing)

Talent often walks hand in hand with loneliness... (beat) I spent my whole life becoming someone... and now they want someone else.

DITHERS

Congratulations Colby Anne... I'll go and make sure he does't...

*(Dither mimes, shooting himself in the head, exits upstairs. The remaining characters exchange perplexed glances, and as if a switch flipped on a comedy generator, the room transforms into a stage for spontaneous theatrics, with each actor vying for the spotlight in this impromptu moment.)*

MARYAM

Hey! Hey... have some compassion, people. Does anyone in this room actually care about Jesse?

KAREN

No.

EVERYONE

No?

KAREN

(on her phone)

No, Nicolas Cage did not say the N-word in front of a bunch of Black people.

COLBY ANNE

I need to hit the pipe. (Pointing to Maryam) If that's okay with Aunt Lydia here. Kit, are you coming?

MARYAM

Do that on the back patio, please.

*(Grabbing her purse, Colby Anne and Kit dash out back. Karen checks her boobs.)*

KAREN

I'm starting to leak again. I need a bathroom.

*(Karen grabs her breast pump bag and dashes down the hall.)*

PAPI

Did you see how everyone bolted out of the room? I've seen smoother exits at a department store full of black kids after the alarm went off during a smash and grab.

MARYAM

I just thought of something. Can you grab me that large suitcase at the bottom of the stairs? And, don't let Jesse see you.

*(Papi exits to the basement, Maryam exits to the kitchen. Jesse slinks down stairs, surveying the room, ensuring that no one notices his presence. He stealthily moves toward the bar.)*

JESSE

(whispering)

Guadalupe? Guadalupe? Guadaluuupeeee? Good.

*(Jesse retrieves a small vial from his pocket and casts one last glance around the room, ensuring he remains unseen. He pours a glass of champagne, then spikes it with something. Jesse searches for a place to hide the empty vial. Maryam enters from the kitchen with a bundle of knives.)*

JESSE

AHHH!--

MARYAM

AHHH!--

*(Maryam drops all the knives. Papi enters with a large suitcase; he drops it. Jesse stuffs the vial between the sofa. SITS.)*

PAPI

AHHH! What are you doing--

JESSE

Nothing! What are you two doing--

PAPI

Nothing! I was just in the basement looking for the bathroom when I realized you don't have a bathroom in the basement.

MARYAM

(ad libs)  
Nothing! Uhhh... I was ahh... looking for my, my... tweezers...

*(Jesse gets up runs over to the bar, pours a glass of milk.)*

JESSE

And I'm just making sure everyone stays hydrated, that's all. Nothing nefarious. Okay, bye.

*(Jesse exits to the patio with the tainted champagne and the glass of milk.)*

PAPI

Okay, really, what are we doing?

MARYAM

We're hiding all the knives. Now if Jesse tries to slit his wrist, he'll have to use a spoon.

*(They collect knives from the floor and put them inside the suitcase on the sofa. Papi then hides the suitcase beneath the sofa. Papi puts his hand in the sofa cushions where Jesse sat and pulls out the vile; he pockets it.)*

MARYAM

What's that?

PAPI

Nothing. Hey, have you noticed something strange about Kit? He's just so weird. I've got my reservations about him; there's something off, something's not quite right.

It's always the pretty ones: Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer... Armie Hammer... And plus, he looks like a subway masturbator.

*(Jesse enters from the patio.)*

MARYAM

Hey... I hope you're not too upset.

JESSE

Upset, who's upset?

MARYAM

I know you. I know when you're mad... Come on--

JESSE

No!

MARYAM

Come on, you can't stay mad forever... You just had a lovely breakfast catered by Sardi's, you're surrounded by friends and your meme: Raisin cookies that look like chocolate chip cookies are the reason I have trust issues. - Is still voted best celebrity meme ever, and... and you got me, you big dumb idiot.

JESSE

It is a funny meme, huh? Okaaaay, I'm not mad anymore. And how can I be mad at you? You're wonderful. A bit cranky but wonderful.

*(Jesse takes out hand sanitizer from his pocket and rubs his hands uncontrollably. Colby enters followed by a sweaty Kit, who claps his hand over his stomach.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Colby Anne, yeah, I think it was the tuna...

COLBY ANNE

Bubble guts? Is Karen still in the bathroom pum--

MARYAM

Pumping, yes, I can still hear her. Kit, use the one upstairs.

*(Kit hands Jesse the empty champagne glass, then runs upstairs. Colby Ann looks around uncomfortably and flees.)*

COLBY ANNE

Kiiiiit, wait for me! Don't leave me here with these--

PAPI

Babe, It's time to bounce; you ready?

MARYAM

I'ma hang out. Make sure Jesse is okay. Also, thank you for standing up for me earlier. That was hot... my fierce h-o-t Puerto Rican detective.

*(Papi and Maryam kiss.)*

PAPI

See you at home babe. Later Jesse--

JESS

Papi, wait! I, uhhh... I was hoping before you go, you could take a look at the bathroom toilet in the guest room.

*(Maryam exits the Kitchen.)*

JESSE

I need your help!

PAPI

Oh, hello Papi, thanks for all your help around the house this morning. It's really nice to see you.

JESSE

Hello, Papi, It's really nice to see you. I need your help--

PAPI

Yeah, the toilet, I heard--

JESSE

No, a favor.

PAPI

You've been treating me like a slave all morning. I don't hear a peep from you in six months. Not a thank you for visiting you at Bellevue... for sneaking in White Castles hamburgers. And... and certainly, no, apology for swiping my keys to the police van while I went to the bathroom so you could escape the crazy house... the same caper I'm still catching flak for by the way. Mmm, nothing. But instead, you're rattling off favors.

JESSE

I'm sorry. I was in bad shape then. My mind was so foggy, and at times it felt like a hurricane blew--

PAPI

Don't use the word hurricane to a Puerto Rican.

JESSE

Right--

PAPI

What is it? What do you want this time, Jesse?

*(Dithers peeks his head out from upstairs.)*

JESSE

Okay, let's say there's this guy, right? He's just minding his own business, innocently doing his thing, when bam! Accidentally poisons his co-worker.

PAPI

Uh-huh, go on.

JESSE

Now, this poor fella didn't mean to do it, of course. It was a total oopsie-daisy moment. But here's the kicker: he has this friend who is this smokin' hot detective who's all about law and order.

PAPI

Interesting scenario. So, what happens next?

JESSE

Well, this hot detective, let's call him... uh, Papi, for argument's sake. So Papi, the hot Puerto Rican detective, somehow found out what happened and now the accidental poison-er is sweating bullets, trying to play it cool.

PAPI

And how does Papi, the hypothetical hot detective, react?

JESSE

Oh, you know, Papi's all business. He's grilling the poor guy, giving him the third degree. But deep down, he's got this soft spot for him. So question: would the detective help the accidental poison-er get away... with... whatever... it... was?

PAPI

Sounds like quite the predicament for this hot detective. But, I would say no. So let's hope this accidental poison-er hasn't harmed anyone, right?

*(Jesse hides the tainted champagne glass behind his back.)*

JESSE

Absolutely, this is just a wild hypothetical. Totally not based on anyone we know.

PAPI

I can never tell when you're joking or not, but as a detective--

JESSE

Gotcha! And the Emmy goes to... Jesse! Wow, I'm really a dynamic actor. I'm... a, I'm pitching a... this... a new gritty noir-style murder mystery, slash love story. And you being a detective and all, I thought--

PAPI

Thought I could give you some professional advice?

JESSE

Yeah, that's good, let's go with that.

*(Jesse ushers Papi out the front door.)*

JESSE

Thank you for that; you've been so helpful already. By the way, did you know my picture is hanging on the wall at Sardi's right next to Lucille Ball's?

*(Papi Exits. Dithers enters from upstairs.)*

DITHERS

What's wrong with Kit?

JESSE

Kit?

DITHERS

Yeah, he's throwing up in the bathroom. But, Colby Anne seems much calmer. I don't think we need to panic, she talks big, but she's never followed through before. Believe me, I know. I love that girl.

JESSE

Right. Yeah. No, you're totally right. She's fine. She, she looked fine. Mostly. Just needed to... lie down. Probably just... low blood sugar or something.

DITHERS

Let's be honest, she's not wrong... we've all done things on this show we're not proud of. Maybe she's right--

JESSE

Right? Okay, now you're getting carried away. You're not only drunk, you're stupid. Colby Anne is an dreadful woman. She can't stand on any moral high ground.

DITHERS

Speaking of moral high ground, did you read the manuscript, 'The Samurai Chronicles: A Tale from Tokyo to Temptation and Transformation with Fists and Fury?' My murder mystery, semi-memoir coming-of-age story wrapped up in a Telenovela with a little bit of Kung Fu, redemption, and diversity?

JESSE

I couldn't get past the second page. I told you that months ago.

DITHERS

No, no...

JESSE

I don't have the bandwidth--

DITHERS

No, no... it's improved. My mother gave me some feedback, so I moved the inciting incident further up in the story.

JESSE

Don't you get it you nitwit? Our jobs, our livelihoods, even our lives are in jeopardy.

DITHERS

In the new draft I added in some diversity stuff, right up your alley. Just listen...

JESSE

Colby Anne is going to bury every single one of us.

*(A spotlight isolates Dithers in a pool of blue light. A haunting MELODY of a Japanese wartime ballad fills the air.)*

DITHERS

Picture this: December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor, Japan, General Tomoyuki Yamashita.... Now, what if, post-war, Tomoyuki gets sentenced to a Jewish internment camp--



JESSE

Instead of a Japanese one--

DITHERS

Instead of a Japanese one, riight. But this isn't just a tale of wartime; it's a tale of diversity. Raise your hand if you just got chills.

*(Dithers raises his hand.)*

DITHERS

I initially paint him as this brutal racist bigot, but while getting transported to the Jewish internment camp, his bus gets into a crash leading to a life-altering heart transplant.

*(Dithers prepares for the moment.)*

Brace yourself—a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

JESSE

A heart of a King Charles Spaniel?

DITHERS

And he becomes clairvoyant--

JESSE

Like a psychic?

DITHERS

Like a psychic who undergoes a spiritual transformation and converts to Catholicism. In a profound act of repentance, he starts to read people's future... Like he'll be helping random minorities, uniting them with their dead loved ones, or like giving them winning lottery numbers or clean drinking water. BOOM! Diversity! Mic drop

*(Lights up.)*

JESSE

Oh, wow and not wow in a good way. It's a no for me--

DITHERS

Friends with influence help other friends. But... okay... never mind.

JESSE

I don't like the way you said that. You're acting pretty sure of yourself.

DITHERS

Well, I may have involuntarily overheard a little convo between you and our hot little Spaniard ... Oh, how awkward for you if Kit should suddenly not make it to his next breakfast burrito.

JESSE

I thought we were friends—(gasps) You wouldn't... You would! Fine, I'll read the damn script and I'll see what I can do.

DITHERS

This calls for a celebration. In the cellar I noticed a bottle of Krug Clos d'Ambonnay--

JESSE

That's a sixty thousand dollar bottle of champagne--

DITHERS

A deal's a deal--

JESSE

Damn!

*(Dithers exits to the basement. Suddenly, Kit staggers down the stairs, resembling a disheveled Ken Doll, muttering and drooling. Jesse swiftly approaches Kit, pulling him across Stage R. with tense urgency towards the guest bedroom down the hall. Maryam enters, heading to the bar. Kit staggers back in the room, moves to the sofa, and then collapses on the floor in front of it. Jesse seizes Maryam's purse from the coat rack SL.*

*He notices Kit's vintage Yankees cap, tucks it in his pocket.*

*Jesse hands Maryam her purse, directing her towards the door, away from the unconscious Kit.)*

JESSE

Maryam, hey... you've done enough for today. Why don't you head out, go home. Guadalupe can take it from here.

MARYAM

Guadalupe?

JESSE

Seriously, go!

*(Kit makes a slight MOAN.)*

MARYAM

What was that?--

JESSE

Nothing! Uh... my phone... aaaah... new ringtone.

MARYAM

Don't you want to answer it--

*(Maryam walks over to the bar. Jesse screams.)*

JESSE

Ouch! / Owwww!

MARYAM

What's wrong?

JESSE

It's my ankle. I think I twisted it. I'm fine, I'll ice it later. Go, enjoy the day... Heerre, ya go, treat yourself to a facial. You're looking a little dehydrated--

*(Jesse hands Maryam his credit card and, fake limps as he ushers her out the door.)*

MARYAM

Jesse Chandler Montgomery, what are you up to--

JESSE

What do you mean?

MARYAM

You being so kind. I find it unsettling, like watching a Johnny Depp and Amber Heard's comedy special.

JESSE

Nonsense, you silly sausage. You are always so suspicious.

MARYAM

Because you're always up to something.

JESSE

Gooooooo, I'll call... in... an hour.

MARYAM

You just said I can have the afternoon off.

JESSE

Yes, but what if I lock myself in the walk-in freezer again?

*(Maryam is halfway out the front door;  
Jesse closes it in her face. He crosses over  
to kit.)*

JESSE

Kit... no, no, no, no... don't be dead... don't be dead. Oh, God, I think he's dead..

*(Jesse sprints to the mini bar to grab his  
phone.)*

KAREN (OFFSTAGE)

It is better to spend money like there's no tomorrow, than to spend today like there's no money. Crack open another bottle of champagne.

JESSE

Damn, she's still here!

*(Karen enters, places her breast pump bag  
on the counter.)*

KAREN

Jesse, let us drink with impunity. People talk about my drinking but never about my thirst. Where is everyone? Where's Kit? Did he pull an Irish exit?

JESSE

Ah... he... they... left... left with Colby Anne... a few seconds ago. He was in a hurry, he left the stove on. You didn't hear him whine all about it because you were in the bathroom pumping.

KAREN

Really? That's very odd. Are you sure? Colby Anne didn't seem in any condition to be--

JESSE

No, I clearly saw them leave together. Now, it's a shame you have rush off before the rain starts again.

KAREN

No, I don't have to rush off. I wouldn't mind having one more glass of champa-

*(Karen heads toward the bar. Jesse grabs Karen's breast pump bag and ushers her to the door.)*

JESSE

We're out! I'd, I'd... love for you to stay, but I'm sure you have a ton of laundry to do or whatever before tonight. And don't forget you have... three mini-midgets and an infant at home... all under the age of five.

*(pointing to his breasts)*

JESSE

...who are probably starving by now.

KAREN

I did just pump a fresh batch of breast milk.

*(Jesse slams the door in Karen's face.)*

JESSE

Don't forget to hydrate. God is good!

*(Jesse swiftly dashes to the mini bar, snatching up his phone, dials.)*

JESSE

Pick up! Pick up! Uh... hi... I know you were angry when you left here. But this is an emergency. Ah, does that lawyer confidentiality... thing extend to talent managers? Maybe I could be overreacting, and it's probably nothing, but I think Kit Johnson's dead. I um... Is that an issue? If this is the case, I could probably kiss my career goodbye, right?

*(Kit starts MOANING LOUDLY.)*

JESSE

Hey, never mind. Forget whatever I just said... um... good talking to you. Hashtag blessed, hashtag God is good. Okay, Bye.

*(Jesse runs over to Kit.)*

JESSE

Kit, if you're still alive... listen to my voice. This rug is worth over eighty-thousand dollars. If you vomit on it, I will cut your head off with a dull meat axe. Stay here; I'll get a towel.

*(Jesse gets up and exits to the kitchen.  
Dithers staggers from the basement with an  
open bottle of champagne. Jesse enters from  
the kitchen.)*

JESSE

AAAAH!

DITHERS

AAAAH!

DITHERS

I left my car keys on the sofa--

JESSE

I'll get it! Car keys? To go where? You're drunk. You can't even walk straight!

DITHERS

Uhhhh, you're right, that's why I'm driving.

*(Jesse quickly grabs Dithers' keys from the  
sofa, places them on the bar and ushers him  
up the stairs.)*

JESSE

Driving while drunk and Asian? That's a no! Go upstairs and sleep it off.

*(Dithers exits upstairs. Jesse runs over to  
Kit.)*

JESSE

Oh, Jehovah, please don't let him die on me. I swear I'll be good. If you let him live, I promise... I promise not to masturbate on Sundays... I'll even get re-baptize if you want... I can't go to jail! Please, God if you,--

*(Jesse's prayer is cut short by Kit's  
mumbling.)*

JESSE

Thank you. Thank you, thank you.... Kit, can you hear me? Did you drink anything?

KIT JOHNSON

What happened to me? One minute I was standing...

*(Kit struggles. Jesse attempt to help.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Argh... no, yes, yes I did. I just had a glass of champagne.

JESSE

Champagne? Why? You don't drink dummy!

*(Kit finally gets to his feet. Whips out his inhaler, pumps twice, coughing and wheezing.)*

KIT JOHNSON

I know, I just wanted to celebrate Colby Anne's nomination with her.

JESSE

What an idiot!

KIT JOHNSON

You're acting weird, man. I just woke up on your floor and you're pacing like a lunatic! What the hell is your problem?

JESSE

My problem? You just passed out for no reason. And... and... you probably pooped your pants, and now I have to babysit you!

KIT JOHNSON

I didn't ask to be your babysitting project old man. Where's Coby? What happen to me? Did you do something to me? She'll know what's going on.

*(Kit searches his pockets for his phone. He YELLS out for:)*

KIT JOHNSON

Colby Anne--

JESSE

Shhh! Shut the...

*(Jesse approaches, wielding a vase. Jesse swings, Kit sidesteps the blow, wrestles the vase away from Jesse.)*

KIT JOHNSON

What... you are crazy? What was that for? Why would you--

JESSE

Because you called me old.

KIT JOHNSON

Because I called you old? They should have locked you away for good.

JESSE

Unacceptable!

*(Jesse aims a punch at Kit's head. Kit evades and lunges forward, attempting to tackle him. Jesse, quick on his feet, dodges the clumsy attack and retaliates with the nearest object, a feather duster, swatting at Kit with exaggerated motions.)*

JESSE

Who's old now? You don't want none of this. You can't handle all of this.

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, get over yourself. You think you're all that.

JESSE

Oooh, okaaay, you wanna to call me the uppity n-word, don'tcha?

KIT JOHNSON

What?

JESSE

Say it and see what happens.

KIT JOHNSON

Say what?

JESSE

Go ahead, call me an uppity NIGGER. And, I'll knock your ass out.

KIT JOHNSON

Always playing the victim--

JESSE

You chicken shit! Buh-BAWK buh-buh-BAW--

KIT JOHNSON

What I'm not afraid of is knocking an old-ass man out.



*(As Kit's fist hurtles toward Jesse's head, Jesse smoothly ducks under the blow, then launches himself forward in an attempt to tackle Kit. Kit sidesteps, places the vase down on the bar then swiftly retrieves a carving knife from a bar wall hook.)*

JESSE

Heeey, look who we have here! The wannabe John Wick!

KIT JOHNSON

Very funny. But let me remind you, John Wick once killed three men in a bar with a pencil.

JESSE

Yeah, well, you're not John Wick. I once saw you struggle to open a bag of chips.

*(Jesse seizing the nearest makeshift weapon... an umbrella leaning against the coat rack... spins around, brandishing it like a Shakespearean warrior, sweeping the umbrella through the air in exaggerated moves, forcing Kit to dance and weave to avoid the swift strikes.*

*Meanwhile, Colby Anne descends the staircase in distress, holding prescription pills and her purse, gasping for breath.)*

COLBY ANNE

Help... someone, please... help me...

KIT JOHNSON

You look so stupid.

*(Vying for the boys' attention, Colby Anne makes high-pitched squeaking sounds while trying to breathe.)*

KIT JOHNSON

You know who you remind me of prancing around like that?

JESSE

Who, Errol Flynn?

KIT JOHNSON

No, the guy my Nana was in love with... the old guy with the cape and all the jewelry playing the piano.

JESSE

Who... Lib... Liberace?! Oh, screw you!

KIT JOHNSON

Dick!

*(Colby Anne's strength wanes, and she collapses onto the plush living room rug, her body convulsing in pain.)*

COLBY ANNE

Dithers... help, please... Dithers! Help...

*(THUNDER LIGHTNING.)*

COLBY ANNE

Dithers! Help me...

*(Low, pulsing ambient drone begins. A faint ticking clock in the distance.)*

KIT JOHNSON

What the fuck?

*(Jesse sees Colby Anne, springs to her side, and checks the pulse in her neck. He looks up in shock.)*

JESSE

She's...

*THUNDER, lightning. BEETHOVEN.  
Blackout.*

**INTERMISSION**

ACT 2 SCENE 1

*(Mid staircase, Jesse's hunched over, struggles to drag Colby's dead body up the steps. THUNDER.)*

JESSE

Kit, where are you? Why... why did I trust you? Of course, you're probably down at the station right now, spinning some wild story... telling them I'm the mastermind behind it all. If I ever see you again... No, you know what? I hope you were in a car crash. I'm a Christian, so I will pray for a quick death. Kit, you had one job. Kit Johnson, you are a waste of whiteness... Damn, it's hot in here. Good lord, Colby Anne, you weigh a ton.

*(A door SLAMS: Startled, Jesse stands up, lets go of the dead weight, Colby tumbles down the stairs, not missing a single step with an unmistakable CRUNCHING sound and then—SPLAT! Jesse creeps down the stairs. He snatches the hidden suitcase from under the sofa, lays it on the cushions, then pulls out a knife. Kit enters with a rope and shovel.)*

JESSE

AHHHH! SHHHH!

KIT JOHNSON

AHHHH!

JESSE

What took you so long? I've been calling you!

KIT JOHNSON

Where the hell do you think I've been? Getting supplies to bury a body, which, by the way, isn't as easy as one would think... Why is she back down here? I thought we hauled her upstairs because you said dead bodies belong under beds.

JESSE

Well, no thanks to you. I had to drag her back down the stairs by myself. I didn't realize she'd be so high maintenance for someone who's not breathing. How did you get in anyway?

KIT JOHNSON

You gave us all the code for the weekend, 'I-Am-The-Goat.' In case you had another episode and locked yourself in the walk-in freezer again, you said.

JESSE

Let me ask you something and I want the truth. Where were you on the night of August eight of last year?

KIT JOHNSON

Why?

JESSE

This is why.

*(Jesse pulls out Kit's vintage Yankees cap.)*

KIT JOHNSON

My hat! I was looking for--

*(Kit grabs the cap.)*

JESSE

Give that back, it's evidence.

KIT JOHNSON

For what?

JESSE

Were you in Red Hook on August eight or not?

KIT JOHNSON

No... we were on hiatus in August... I was in Korea... getting my nose done. Why?

JESSE

Korea? / You were Korea?

KIT JOHNSON

Yes, fucking Korea! Why?

JESSE

I'm not saying you did it. I'm just saying... those Red Hook murders? Still unsolved. And that creepy podcast said the killer was a white dude in a dark coat, gray scarf, VINTAGE YANKEES CAP. And this morning... you showed up literally wearing that exact outfit. I'm not saying it's you... but you looked real murder-y. I'm just saying.

KIT JOHNSON

So let me get this straight... gray scarf, Yankees cap, white guy? That narrows it down to half of Brooklyn in winter. Yeah, just solid detective work. I flew back from Korea mid-rhinoplasty just to murder some rando in Red Hook, wearing my limited edition Yankees cap.

JESSE

I'm sorry.

KIT JOHNSON

Makes total sense.

KIT JOHNSON

What's with all the knives?

JESSE

Oh, Maryam sometimes hides them because she thinks I'm gonna... ugh... none of your business. Just give me a hand with her before someone sees us. I don't need a hernia too.

*(Over the next few lines Jesse and Kit empty out all the knives from the large suitcase resting on the sofa. They pick up Colby Anne's dead body at the arms and legs to place her inside the suitcase. The weight of the body starts pulling them from one end of the room to the other.)*

JESSE

She's heavier than she looks.

KIT JOHNSON

Where you going? Oh my God, we're putting in the...Ouch! Careful you idiot!

JESSE

Oh, just hold up your end. Yes, in the suitcase. And be quiet.

*(Jesse lays his end of the body down.)*

JESSE

So with all the drugs... you don't think she could have overdosed?

KIT JOHNSON

No way! Someone here did this.

*(They grab her body, wrestles with it again.)*

KIT JOHNSON

So, since we established, I'm not the Red Hook Son of Sam killer, tell me again why we can't go to the police. We are not those kinds of people.

JESSE

And what kind of people is that?

KIT JOHNSON

The kind of people that hide a dead body, covers up a crime, and still make it to brunch on time. If there's a murderer on the loose, we need to go to the police.

JESSE

Says the white man.

*(They finally make it to the sofa. With effort, they position Colby Anne's body upright inside the suitcase, then awkwardly attempt to fold her into it.)*

JESSE

And as a pretty white man, I can appreciate your faith in law enforcement. But we were the only ones in the room when she came down those stairs. Overdose or murder it doesn't matter, either way it makes us look guilty. Now, let's get rid of the body. It's starting to smell like prison ass in here.

KIT JOHNSON

I'm not a genius; I'm just a working actor. But last time I checked, this was your house.

JESSE

You are correct, you're not a genius. I can already see the headlines: The world was shaken up on April Fifteenth when Colby Anne Collins, who plays the lovable Monica Brady on 'The Young and the Rest of Us,' was found dead at the age of twenty-six. The question now becomes, how did she get unalived? Until we solve the mystery--

KIT JOHNSON

But I didn't do anything. And I still can't believe you... If I were the Red Hook killer, you'd be the first one I'd kill.

JESSE

Okay, I said I was sorry. Now let me finish. Until we solve the mystery, we have to be cool. You were the last person seen with her alive, and you're the first person they're going to suspect--

KIT JOHNSON

Wait a minute, we both were--

JESSE

How can you be around me and still stay so dumb? It's always the boyfriend, ya big dummy. Don't you watch Dateline? The lover is always the killer and you're going to jail... maybe even face the death penalty. If there ever was a time to prove your manhood, that time is now. I'm just trying to keep you from being hung, comprende?

*(The wall-panel BUZZES several times.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Who's that?

JESSE

Shoot! My manager friend... I mean a friend who's my manager. I must have called her when you were dead. Whaaaat?! Don't look at me like that, I panicked--

KIT JOHNSON

Nadège? Your manager who sells Bitcoin for a side hustle? And the body?

JESSE

The freezer! Let's put the body in the freezer!

KIT JOHNSON

Where is it?

*(The wall-panel BUZZES several times.)*

JESSE

No time! The basement, hurry.

*(Jesse and Kit roll Colby Anne out of the suitcase and onto the floor. Jesse lifts Colby Anne's rug-wrapped shoulders. Kit lifts her feet, dragging her across the floor. They toss Colby Anne down the basement stairs. Again, she tumbles down the stairs, not missing a single step with an unmistakable CRUNCHING sound and then—SPLAT!)*

*(As the boys search for Colby Anne's items.  
Dithers stumbles down the stairs and into  
the kitchen.)*

JESSE

Under the sofa! Her pills! Grab the pills! Hurry... don't forget her purse, dummy.

*(Kit grabs the pills and Colby Anne's purse.  
A syringe falls to the floor. He picks it up,  
tosses it into the purse with the pills, and  
hurls the entire purse down the basement.  
Nadège continues to lean on the buzzer.  
Dithers enters from the kitchen rolling  
himself in a wheelchair.)*

JESSE

Oh, crap, what is *Dithers* doing in Guadalupe's wheelchair? Kit, go get him!

GUADALUPE

Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!

*(Kit pushes a drunk Dithers back into the  
Kitchen. Jesse BUZZES open the door  
leading to the outside.)*

NADÈGE (OFF STAGE)

Jesse?

JESSE

Uhhh... No speaka no english. No Hesse, no here in casa mi amigo.

NADÈGE

Guadalupe? Jesse, is that you?

JESSE

No, it's not me. Uh, Hesse is... chopping.

NADÈGE

I know you're in there.

KIT JOHNSON (OFF STAGE)

Chopping? What the Fu... You sound stupid.

NADÈGE

Jesse stop playing. You play too much.



*(Kit enters.)*

JESSE

Uno minuto. (To Kit) What do I do?

KIT JOHNSON

Whatever you do, don't open the door!

JESSE

*(to Nadège)*

Oh, I hear Hesse coming now.

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, great you're gonna open the door.

*(Dithers rolls himself inside. Kit sprints over and pushes him back inside the kitchen. Jesse sprays some air freshener before opening the front door. Nadège enters.)*

NADÈGE

Where is everyone? What is going on?

*(Nadège walks in. Kit reenters, dashes over to the basement door.)*

KIT JOHNSON

An audition! / We were running lines for my audition--

JESSE

Yes, an audition. He's auditioning for... um... Dora the Explorer--

KIT JOHNSON

Live action- / no, of course not... That's why he was speaking Spanish.

JESSE

Not Dora, / but for the... the... um... Well, um, Nadège... I think you know Kit Johnson, minor actor, major pain in the ass. Nadège, my manager. Nadège and I both went to NYU... isn't that nice?

NADÈGE

Yeah, of coarse we met several times. Sup?

KIT JOHNSON

Sup?

JESSE

So, uh, you got my message, I see. Well, as you can see it was all a misunderstanding.

*(Nadège looks around at the now chaotic townhouse. Kit cuts his eyes over to Jesse. Taking his cue, he migrates over in front of the basement door.)*

NADÈGE

You sounded upset over the phone. You said Kit was dead. What is that awful smell?

JESSE

Smell, what smell? Do you smell anything, Kit? / Nope, nothing at--

KIT JOHNSON

Nope, I don't smell anything. / Absolutely nothing at all.

NADÈGE

Where's Colby Anne?

KIT JOHNSON

Colby Anne?! Why are you asking for Colby Anne?

JESSE

Colby Anne?!

NADÈGE

Yes, Colby Anne, the actress, your girlfriend.

KIT JOHNSON

Why is it any of your business?

NADÈGE

She called me, said how she shouldn't have fired me and she was about to say something else. But then the line cut off. I tried calling back, but it went straight to voicemail. That was weird... she sounded weird. What was she trying to tell me?

JESSE

You're asking me? You're her manager and I can't believe you're repping a girl who claims that she coined the phrase, 'smell the fart acting.'

KIT JOHNSON

Jesse! Focus!

NADÈGE

Why are you two standing in front of the basement door like that? Is Colby Anne down there? Move out the way.

*(Nadège reaches for the door handle.)*

JESSE

No! / You can't!

KIT JOHNSON

No!

NADÈGE

No?

JESSE

No... because... you can't, cuzzzz, well... Kit's girrrr... person is down there.

NADÈGE

His girrrr person?

JESSE

Girrrr-grandmother!--

KIT JOHNSON

Girrrr -Agent!

KIT JOHNSON

Yeah... agent-grandmother. Yup, my, uh, you see, my grandmother is my agent.

NADÈGE

What is your girrrr-grandmother-agent doing down in the basement?

*(Jesse sprints over to Nadège and hustles her away from the basement door. Dithers reenters.)*

DITHERS

Wheel!... Beep Beep!

JESSE

Kit, can you... uhhh give Dithers a hand and give us a minute, please?

*(Kit rolls Dithers back the kitchen.)*

JESSE

Please don't make a scene.

NADÈGE

Negro, you called me. And why would you think I'm going to make a scene?

JESSE

No, it's just that he has this very important audition and I know you don't like him.

NADÈGE

Oh, I see now. You're ass thought, I wouldn't find out. I know exactly what you two are up to.

JESSE

You do?

NADÈGE

Yes! Of course. Look at you, look at this place... it's obvious.

JESSE

(pause)

Okay, okay, but before I confess to anything... nefarious; I have to explain something first. I--

NADÈGE

I'm talking about the two of you rubbing poles together.

JESSE

Oh, / you're not talking about... But instead you're talking about me and Kit?

NADÈGE

Nefarious? What are you talking about?

JESSE

Oh... yeah, that? Oh my God. No! I'm sure he has a man crush on me. But, no, there's nothing going on between us. That's nasty. I'm just helping him with his audition. The place is a mess because, well... Kit was giving me... some pointers on... a... uh... how to be a bigger star in daytime than Susan Lucci.

*(Kit subtly peeks out from the kitchen doorway, trying to catch Jesse's eye, waving frantically.)*

NADÈGE

This is bigger than Susan Lucci. This show is toxic. Colby Anne always said so. Stop begging for their acceptance. Monkey suit or no monkey suit, you are still picking his cotton on his plantation. Everything you dreamt of... the lights, the cameras, the fame... is all a fabrication. You want something from 'those people' you'll never get.

*(Nadège points to The Rights of Freed Slaves novel on the coffee table.)*

NADÈGE

Liberate yourself from the shackles of 'The Man.' Produce. Your. Own. Content.

*(Kit is jumping frantically around trying to get Jesse's attention.)*

NADÈGE

Now, where's Colby Anne? I know she's still here, and that white boy is up to something.

*(Jesse finally catches a glimpse of Kit's frantic gestures out of the corner of his eye.)*

JESSE

No, he's ...a... good guy, ew! / He wou--

NADÈGE

He's shady--

KIT JOHNSON

Enough already! You don't know what you're talking about.

NADÈGE

First off, you don't know me like that. So you better back off. And, secondly, and more importantly, you need to tell me where Colby Anne is...

(Nadège points a finger in Kit's face.)

NADÈGE

Because obviously something strange is going on. / Where is Colby Anne?

KIT JOHNSON

Nothing is going on. And, you better get your finger out my face.

NADÈGE

Jesse, are you in on this too? Maybe we should get the police involved.

KIT JOHNSON

The police?

JESSE

The police?

JESSE

Wh-what?... why the police?

NADÈGE

Because I don't trust that white boy.

JESSE

Okay, everybody, just calm down. There is no need for the police. Nadège go have a seat. Cool off for a minute. I'm sure we can come to some sort of an understanding. I'll go check on Kit's girrrr-grandmother-agent in the basement. And, Kit, you go do whatever you people do. Go reapply some sunscreen or something.

*(Kit walks away. Nadège moves over behind the sofa stage left.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Fine. But whaaaaat a bitch.

NADÈGE

What did you call me? / I know you didn't  
just you call me a bitch?

KIT JOHNSON

*(Nadège rushes toward Kit but slips on  
spilled caviar, crashing into the glass  
minibar. Meanwhile, as she lies sprawled on  
the floor, Kit grabs his nebulizer, and Jesse  
anxiously sanitizes his hands before  
hurriedly removing the photos of himself off  
the walls and tables and packing them in the  
suitcase on the sofa.)*

JESSE

Is she dead too?

KIT JOHNSON

I don't know. What are you doing?

JESSE

Packing my valuables, about to trade my NFTs in and then I'm heading to Myanmar  
where I won't be recognized.

*(Peeking over at Nadège's body)*

She's dead, right?

KIT JOHNSON

I keep telling you, I don't know and you keep acting like you don't hear me.

JESSE

Well, excuuuuuse me if I don't want to have to get used to taking a dump in front of  
thirty guys in cell block H.

JESSE

You're the one that assaulted her. / You  
think she's...

KIT JOHNSON

I didn't touch her!

JESSE

She knows something's up. What else did Colby Anne tell her on the phone? She won't  
stop until she finds something.

JESSE

It's them or us / and we need to do something now!

KIT JOHNSON

I didn't kill Colby Anne. And, I didn't assaulted her.

JESSE

What if Nadège is only half dead?

KIT JOHNSON

Okay, then maybe we can issue a fatwa.

JESSE

Okay, how soon? / Cuz--

KIT JOHNSON

I was kidding.

JESSE

Oh, I... I knew that.

KIT JOHNSON

Stop packing for a minute. What if we just threw them both into the Hudson River? That's what it's there for.

JESSE

Listen, dingleberry, whenever someone is missing in New York, the first place they'll look is the Hudson River.

*(Nadège moans. Both Jesse and Kit turn to look at her.)*

KIT JOHNSON

WTF? And, you don't want to call the police--

JESSE

That's because I'm trying to save your butt.

KIT JOHNSON

I'm finding that hard to believe.

JESSE

Oh, that's the thanks I get? Nadège is half-dead because of you, and now my life and career are over, and I will be left with nothing. We have to make this go away... have to think... find a way out of this. There must be a way to do it without really, really doing it.

KIT JOHNSON

Someone in this house is a murderer.

JESSE

Papi did say, he thought he heard a strange noise in the basement this morning. Maybe there really is a professional killer in the house.

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, snap, a professional killer? For real for, real? Okay, but we need to do something that'll hold up under scrutiny until we can find out who's responsible for Colby Anne's murder.

JESSE

Good... good now we're getting somewhere. I grew up in section eight housing, and to quote Kim K. for a second, I have no talent for poverty.

KIT JOHNSON

Now let's think... uh... we need inspiration, foolproof alibis--

JESSE

Hey, do you remember Luke and Laura's wedding on General Hospital?

KIT JOHNSON

No.

JESSE

And you call yourself an actor, ha! I got it!

*(Jesse, takes out his phone.)*

JESSE

What about the thing they did in 'Breaking Bad', the--

KIT JOHNSON

Finally, something from this century.

*(He searches, how did Walter White dispose a body?)*

JESSE

...chemical disincorporation? Let's do what Walter White did.



KIT JOHNSON

So, it's not like really killing Nadège right? But just disss-solving the body in the acid. We dump the liquid stuff or whatever she turns into in the Hudson up in the Bronx. What body parts are left over, the sharks'll eat. And since Colby is already dead, God rest her soul, we'll just add her in the mix too. Monday morning we'll be back on set and none the wiser. Look at us working together. It's almost like old times.

JESSE

Yeah, except for all the dead bodies. Let me think a minute. But for now, let's keep the bodies separated. I have another idea.

*(Jesse pulls his out phone, talks.)*

JESSE

Hey, can you guys come over before dinner? Let's say... around six-ish? I need, um, some help with something.

*(Jesse hangs up, searches Nadège's body.  
Finds her phone. Hands it to Kit.)*

JESSE

Smash it. Clean up the caviar, then go downstairs and get Colby Anne's purse. When you're done go upstairs and act like nothing happened until... I don't know, until we both come up with a better lie than 'the cat did it.'

*(Jesse grabs the suitcase and runs upstairs.  
Kit smashes Nadège's phone. He does a half-  
assed job cleaning up the glass and caviar.  
He lifts Nadège's arm in the air; it flops  
back down. He goes to retrieve Colby's  
purse from the basement, then exits upstairs.  
Jesse returns with a pair of old clothes and  
grabs the rope and a shovel.)*

JESSE

Okay... Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Councilor, please, give me guidance. Okay, hear me out. The gorilla suit was too much to bear. I'm the real victim in all this. I'm the good guy. Amen.

*(Jesse grabs Nadège by the arms and drags  
her down the hall Stage R.)*

JESSE

I'm the good guy, I'm a good person, I'm a good person, I'm a good person...

MARYAM (OFF STAGE)  
(shouting)

Jesse, you still home?

*(Maryam enters the townhouse carrying a bag of groceries heads to the kitchen.)*

MARYAM  
You just called a minute ago. He couldn't have left that quick.

*(Papi enters. Maryam comes from the kitchen.)*

PAPI  
So you don't want to settle down and have kids one day?

MARYAM  
Kids? Oh, you poor thing, you think you're ready? I love you and I adore you, but you are not ready for kids.

PAPI  
I thought we were--

MARYAM  
That's a new smell.

PAPI  
Yeah, what the hell is that?

MARYAM  
Smells like...

PAPI  
Smells like... potpourri and prison ass.

*(Jesse enters, out of breath carrying a rope and shovel.)*

JESSE  
Maryam, Papi, what are you doing here!?

MARYAM  
I work here, remember?

JESSE  
I know, but what are you doing here now? I said six-ish.

MARYAM

We were downstairs when you called. You seemed so upset earlier, so I thought I'd come back and make your favorite Zereskh Polo for lunch.

JESSE

You don't have to do that. You know I eat like a bird. I had a glass of water for breakfast. I'll just have half an aspirin at lunch.

PAPI

What's the story with the rope and shovel?

JESSE

Rope? Shovel?

*(Jesse hides the rope and shovel behind his back.)*

JESSE

What rope? What shovel?

*(Papi gives Jesse the side eye. Jesse looks at the rope and shovel.)*

JESSE

Oh, this rope and shovel? I-I... ah was in the back... digging... um... planting a... flower.... gar-den. Yeah, a flower garden.

PAPI

You don't garden. You hate digging--

MARYAM

And bugs--

JESSE

And dirt--

MARYAM

And being outside--

JESSE

Hi Papi--

MARYAM

Papi was just leaving--

PAPI

I was--

JESSE

No!

MARYAM

No?

JESSE

I mean, nooooo... let him stay. He looks... sad and hungry.

PAPI

And you care?

JESSE

Don't be silly, there's still plenty of food here. Hey, how about some fancy wine to celebrate my return to the show before you start your little cooking... thingy? Could you swing by Dean & DeLuca in the city and pick up that cabernet I love so much?

MARYAM

They filed for Chapter eleven...

JESSE

Okay, or the bodega on the corner. How about some of those fancy wine coolers poor people drink?

MARYAM

There's perfectly good wine in the basement. I'll get some.

JESSE

No! Don't go down there! We're out! Uhhh... when I called, I was hoping Papi could take a look at the bathroom toilet again. While he's doing that, you can head out to get the wine.

PAPI

Are you okay?

JESSE

I'm great! You still have my credit card, right? So see if Sephora is still open and get yourself lots and lots moisturizer while you're out. You're still looking a little dehydrated.

*(Jesse ushers Maryam out the door.)*

JESSE

Okay, Maryam will be back any second. I'm in real trouble. I lied to you.

PAPI

Oh, really? That's surprising—not. You lie as easily as you shit.

JESSE

Are you going to help me or just stand there and insult me? Please help me.

PAPI

No.

JESSE

No?! I beg your pardon. You owe me.

PAPI

Oh? What took you so long?

JESSE

How dare you. I've kept my mouth shut for a long time, mi amigo. And now, look at you, worried about what I'll say, huh? And please believe me, I'm not bringing this up as some form of threat or anything.

PAPI

Mmmm...

JESSE

But I don't think the boys in blue down at the station would appreciate it if they knew one of their own had a little sugar in his tank.

PAPI

Wow... wow... you're a piece of shit.

*(Papi stares at Jesse. There's a long silence.  
Papi heads toward the door.)*

JESSE

No! Don't go... I'm sorry... I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm, I'm... I'm on this new cotton ball, tissue diet, you eat up to five cotton balls or the equivalent amount of tissue paper. I guess, I'm just hangry! I didn't mean it. Please, I'm desperate. I need to do something fast... Be mad at me later.

PAPI

You are unbelievable.

JESSE

It's Nadège; I was in the back digging a hole in case I needed to hide the bod--

PAPI

Nadège? Nadège? Your talent manager who sells bitcoins as a side hustle?

JESSE

Yes, bitcoin Nadège. One minute we were talking about the reconstruction era, and next she was sprawled out on the floor, head bleeding... So I freaked out. And, and... and, I tied her up and dragged her out back.

PAPI

Did you check her pulse? Was she still alive? What happened!

JESSE

What are the words to that Whitney song? And if somebody loves you, won't they always love you?

(sings to Papi)

*I look in your eyes, and I know that you still care...*

PAPI

Jesse! No...

JESSE

*...you still care for me--*

PAPI

Jesse! Stop! Jesse, you be bringing up some old histor--

JESSE

*Annnnnnnnnnd, I'm telling you, I'm not going. You're the best man I'll ever know--*

PAPI

Please Jesse, don't--

JESSE

I'm still crazy about you. I miss you... I want to call you my Papi, my Papi Chulo. I want you to pick me up and hold me. I want to still matter to you.

PAPI

You're the most screwed up person I ever met.

JESSE

You like me for me, even when I'm too much... when I'm always on, always performing... you see me. God, I miss you. I miss you so much. I even miss your stupid Eddie Murphy impressions. No one makes me laugh like you--

PAPI

Stop...

JESSE

Am I wrong to give my love to--

PAPI

Jesse we can't--

JESSE

Is it so wrong trying to hold on to the best thing I ever had?

PAPI

Stop it! We can't do this anymore... because... because, I'm... I'm trying to find the right moment to propose to Maryam. I love her too. I want to marry her.

*(Jesse sits on the sofa.)*

JESSE

Oh, wow, that's embarrassing. I'm... sorry... I didn't know it was that serious. Maryam didn't... uh. I'm happy for her. I'm such a C-word. She's my friend--

PAPI

Only friend. Sorry you had to find out this way.

JESSE

No, don't apologize. We both love Maryam and she deserves better than us. Like my mother says, hell is real. And I know I'm going to hell for this... but I do love you. I'm scared, Papi. Really scared.

*(Papi hesitates, walks over to Jesse, sits.  
Jesse turns towards him and, quite naturally,  
folds into his arms. Jesse starts crying.)*

JESSE

The caviar was perfect, huh? It was Petrossian Beluga, in case you were confused.... So, as you know, we were going to watch the live announcements. Kit was being--

*(Papi pulls away at the mention of Kit's  
name.)*

PAPI

Kit? Did that asshole do something to you? Because if he did, I will kill him.

JESSE

No, no... no... he didn't do anything me but he's the reason Nadège fell and hit her head.

PAPI

Exactly what does that mean? Did he push her?

JESSE

No, it was an accident. Okay, so promise me you won't get mad.

PAPI

That Petrossian Beluga was on point, by the way, and yes, I promise.

JESSE

I was just so angry I wasn't nominated and I wasn't thinking and I put some, ah... nothing... I'm so stupid. It was nothing. Forget it...

*(Papi pulls out the vile; he smells it. Jesse's eyes widen.)*

JESSE

Where did you--

PAPI

I saw you stash it earlier. What was in it?

JESSE

Look at you detective... allll... detecting. Okay, you caught me. But it was just a little teeny tiny, small little itty-bitty ketamine I put it in Colby's, I mean Kit's champagne.

PAPI

Hold up, you what? Ketamine, like a K-hole? Like at a Diddy freak-off party?

JESSE

No! Not like at a Diddy freak-off party?

PAPI

But that's exactly what you did. You roofied him.

JESSE

Yes, but no! Because the way you say it, it sounds so nefarious. I just wanted him to go to sleep a little--



PAPI

You just so happen to have little teeny tiny ketamine lying around? I thought you were nuts before, but somehow you topped yourself.

JESSE

I thought if Colby, I mean if Kit, if Kit was unconscious, I would get her, him to say something incriminating, then show it back to her, him! Him... then it would force him to leave the show before the Emmys.

PAPI

Again, with the blackmailing? But why did you put ketamine in Kit's champagne? I'm a little confused. And, what the hell is that smell?

*(Papi walks over to basement. Jesse runs to block Papi from opening the basement door.)*

PAPI

Is there something you've neglected to tell me? Because now is a good time. And, you know, I hate when you lie to me.

JESSE

I'm not lying--

PAPI

Your face?

JESSE

My face?

PAPI

You made that face.

JESSE

What wrong with my face?

PAPI

You're making that face.

JESSE

It's my face; I can do what I want with it.

PAPI

God, I wish I could hate you. So, so... you want me to take care of her?

JESSE

Yes. No! I don't know... I'm just trying to save my career.

PAPI

Yo, Jesse, I'm a cop... /... yes, a good cop,  
and being a good cop means doing the  
right thing.

JESSE

And a very good cop.

JESSE

How much?

PAPI

How much what?

JESSE

How much will it take?

PAPI

No, no money... Damn, Jesse, why are you doing this to me? I love Maryam. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. I want to get out of New York and I want Maryam to come with me, but she won't as long as she's working for you. So if I choose to do this for you, knowing the risks involved, going against my oath... and not to mention potentially losing my badge. For that, you'll need to fire her.

JESSE

Ohhhhh, sure, just pluck my eyes out, why don't you? I can't--

PAPI

Shh!

JESSE

What's that?

PAPI

She's coming! You fire her, and I'll do my best. Your career or her, you choose. Hurry--

JESSE

She's like a sister to me. I can't decide... *To die, to sleep; To sleep, perchance to dream: Ay, there's the rub!* Killing for a reason is not that bad, right? Nedége, wasn't that perky on earth anyway. Sorry, Papi, for what I said earlier. Do you forgive me?

*(Both men lean in for a kiss when sounds  
from the door interrupt the moment.  
Maryam enters carrying a grocery bag.)*

PAPI  
Maryam!

JESSE  
You're back!

MARYAM  
Uhhhh, yeah--

JESSE  
Papa was just--

JESSE PAPI  
Going to fix the toilet. Leaving!

JESSE PAPI  
Leaving! Going to fix the toilet.

MARYAM  
What?

PAPI  
Well, what I wanted to say was, I'm going to leave after I fix the toilet. Oh, but uh, um, let me go see about the circuit breakers in the back first... the lights are still janky. Okay, I'll just... I'll leave now. Yeah, I'm leaving... see you at home, babe. And, Jesse, so, I won't be back until, I take care of that thing we talked about.

*(Papi exits to the patio.)*

PAPI  
What a nice guy.

MARYAM  
That was weird.

*(Papi peeps his head out.)*

JESSE  
Really? It's probably just work related, I'm sure. Let's head into the kitchen so I can watch you cook your famous... uh... thing--

*(Both exiting to the kitchen.)*

MARYAM  
Zereshk / polo.

JESSE  
Yeah, that.

*(Papi sneaks back in, heads for the basement. Dithers staggers down the stairs and heads to the basement, pauses at the basement door, turns and grabs his car keys from off the bar, and heads for the front door. Karen enters.)*

KIT JOHNSON  
Just the man I want to see.

DITHERS  
Now?

KAREN  
Yes, now! Inspiration doesn't wait, and neither do I. I just had a brilliant idea for next week's cliffhanger. It's going to blow minds, drop jaws, and probably break X. Get your phone and meet me in the bathroom, I'm leaking again.

*(Karen heads for the stairs. Dithers searches the sofa for his phone, picks it up.)*

KAREN  
Is Colby Anne doing okay?

*(Karen's phone rings, she answers.)*

KAREN  
(to Dithers)  
You're hovering... Bathroom, now! Vamoose!

*(Dithers exists. Jesse enters from the kitchen.)*

KAREN  
(into phone)  
No! I need it done tonight...

*(Jesse ducks behind the bar.)*

KAREN

Well, make it a rush job then dammit! Jacob, I went over this already... yes, a diamond Celtic knot heart... yes... yes. And, keep your mouth shut. I'll bring over tonight.

*(Karen exits to the bathroom with Jesse following closely behind. Moments later, Papi bursts in from the basement, slams the door shut, and leans against it, breathing heavily.)*

PAPI

Okay, think... think, think. Damn Jesse what did you do?

*(Papi starts toward the kitchen, hesitates. He pulls his phone from his back pocket and dials.)*

PAPI

(into phone)

Hey, it's me. Get me Joe's office. Shit! Um... tell him I'll call him right back.

*(Papi hangs up.)*

PAPI

Nadège!

*(Papi rushes to the back patio. Jesse slips in quietly, glancing around nervously before tiptoeing toward the staircase.)*

JESSE

(whispering)

Kit... Kit... the cost is clear. Kit...

*(Kit comes down the stairs.)*

KIT

What?

JESSE

Okay, Maryam will be busy for a while cooking. So, I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is, is that Papi is taking care of Nedège. The bad news is, I think he's is on to us.

KIT JOHNSON

What? How?

*(Jesse grabs the air freshener and sprays  
around the basement door.)*

JESSE

I don't know. But if I know him, that detective mind is working overtime.

KIT JOHNSON

I don't want to go to jail.

JESSE

Keep your voice down dummy--

KIT JOHNSON

Did you think of a way to get the body out of here before someone discovers it? Because there's a ninety-pound dead girl in the basement, stinking up the joint--

JESSE

I'm thinking, I'm thinking. And... oh, right! Karen's back! What a pig. How could you?

KIT JOHNSON

We only did it two times.

JESSE

Two times too many... gross.

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, put that knife of judgement away.

JESSE

Listen, earlier she was talking about her kids, and her husband. She kept saying how sorry she was. So, I think she killed Colby Anne.

KIT JOHNSON

That's it? That's all you got? Because she said she was sorry, you think she killed Colby? If she did kill her, why would she comeback to scene of the crime?

JESSE

A little murky although brilliant deduction, but it's coming from you, ew.

KIT JOHNSON

Did she mention Colby at all?

JESSE

Well, not exactly but there's more. I just overheard her mumbling something about some stupid necklace on the phone. I think she was talking to Jacob the Jeweler—maybe about doing a rush job, or maybe she lost a... uh... diamond Celtic knot heart, something or other. It sounded veeeeeerrry desperate.

KIT JOHNSON

Listen, that diamond Celtic knot heart necklace, something or other is a family heirloom. Those rare diamonds alone are worth over five hundred thousand dollars given to me by my nana in hopes of me finding the right woman.

JESSE

Wah-wah-wah. La di da for you, so?

KIT JOHNSON

So? Well, Colby, being the klepto she was, took it from my apartment two months ago, that's so. She was wearing it at breakfast. When she came down the stairs, I think it was missing. With all the craziness... her death and everything... I was--

JESSE

Okay, so she's a crackhead; she probably sold it.

KIT JOHNSON

Okay? When? When was she supposed to have sold it, Jesse? To the caterer? In exchange for extra shrimp? And, you got the nerve to call me the dummy. You're not listening, Mr. Know-it-All. Colby was wearing it this morning.

JESSE

Go on.

KIT JOHNSON

What if Karen or someone at the party killed Colby for the necklace? I know I didn't.

JESSE

I didn't do it, so it had to be Karen. She did yell out 'this means war' during their fight. But we could be reaching. It's so over the top... so All My Children-ish, ew.

KIT JOHNSON

I'm going to share something with you, but I don't want you to do that thing you do.

JESSE

Okay, I won't do that thing I do, whatever that thing is. Now tell me.

KIT JOHNSON

It was Karen's idea to put you in a monkey suit. I'm sure some of the members of the Television Academy heard about your meltdown on set, and maybe that's why you didn't get the Emmy nomination... I don't know--

JESSE

Ah-ha! I knew! You and Karen are always scheming behind--

KIT JOHNSON

See, that thing, jumping to conclusions without facts! Listen, the studio wanted to control you and keep you in your place. They needed to remind you that no matter how famous you got, you still were their bitch. So yeah, Karen came up with the monkey suit idea. I know it sounds crazy, and--

JESSE

Stupid! Well, I must be stupid because I was starting to think you were on my side but of course you're the conniving antagonist in this story--

KIT JOHNSON

I'm the antagonist? No, I'm the leading handsome man. Emmy winner four years in a row for outstanding performance by a lead actor in a daytime drama series. Yes, outstanding leeeead actor. Who? Who? Meeeeeee! Not you! Me! Just Google me.

JESSE

Welllll, not this year... / buddy boy.

KIT

Meeeeeee! Not you! Me!

JESSE

I won eleven Soap Opera Digest Awards for outstanding lead actor--

KIT JOHNSON

That's because you're good at playing bitchy. But in the same way that a small person is good at being short.

JESSE

You have the tongue of a serpent--

KIT JOHNSON

Well, you're old and fat, and you wear too much coco butter!... This is all your fault. You're the reason Papi knows everything. Wait, are you? Are you crying?

JESSE

(crying)

I'm not crying.



KIT JOHNSON

Oh, nooo, don't. Okay, please stop that. No, but really... ah, I'm not good at this. You... you... ah... you... wanna hug? Heeey, you're talented... young... well.... I'm young. But you're... also... uh... uhhh, younnng-ish-iiish. And you might finally win that daytime Emmy next year. Nineteen is the magic number. Ask Susan Lucci.

JESSE

You really mean that? Aw.

KIT JOHNSON

Don't make me repeat myself. You know how hard it is for me to compliment people. So stop crying.

JESSE

I'm not crying because you called me old and fat. I'm crying because God is punishing me because you're right; it's all my fault. When Colby Anne threatened to leave the show, I prayed for her death. Am I a horrible person?

KIT JOHNSON

Welll... no, no... sorta, kinda but not really. Colby was very difficult. Maybe He's punishing me as well. I've been naughty these past couple of days too. Believe me, if my cat could speak, the only thing he would talk about is how much I masturbate.

JESSE

(through sniffles)

That's funny.

KIT JOHNSON

Okay, where were we? So somehow we gotta get Karen to incriminate herself.

JESSE

Uhhh, yes and!... Just like Claudius, when he spies on Hamlet to discover the true nature of his madness. Or we can flip the script on Karen and set 'The Mouse Trap', like Hamlet's a play-within-a-play

KIT JOHNSON

Okay, but first things first.

JESSE

Papi, the Puerto Rican detective.

KIT JOHNSON

Papi, the Puerto Rican detective.

*(Both men pull out their cell phones.)*

JESSE

Tuesday is no good for me, teeth whitening. How's Wednesday after taping?

KIT JOHNSON

No can do... waxing. But I can... next Friday morning or Saturday afternoon.

JESSE

Noooo, recovering from a light procedure that weekend... ah... maybe...

KIT JOHNSON

Look at us getting along and shit. I even almost forgive you for drugging me.

JESSE

I didn't drug you.

KIT JOHNSON

I said almost. Don't push it!

JESSE

Okay.

*(Maryam enters from the kitchen.)*

MARYAM

What are you two scheming?

JESSE

You're hilarious. We were just-

MARYAM

Never mind, you won't tell me the truth anyway.

*(Maryam exits to the bathroom.)*

KIT JOHNSON

I wish things could have been different between us. I regret not supporting your cause at work more. So many, many regrets. I regret not winning an Oscar by now... I regret not getting that Terry Gross interview... so many things. But my biggest regret though is not being able to purge my mind of those awful images of... Two Girls, One Cup. Yuck!...

*(Maryam and Karen enter the room with Dithers, trailing behind and dictating. Jesse and Kit run behind the sofa.)*

MARYAM

...Karen, that is not at all what I said to you--

KAREN

Then I said to Marisol, 'Having it all means listening to my five-year-old sob and bang on my office door in search of comfort.' You smell an Emmy for next too, huh ? It just flows out of me. I don't know where it comes from. It just--

*(Jesse and Kit pop their heads ups from behind the sofa.)*

JESSE

There's Baby Jane in the flesh! Where's the necklace?

KIT JOHNSON

Not now! Not now!

DITHERS

Necklace?

KAREN

Jesse, give us five. I'm putting the little minion to work.

DITHERS

Yup, that's me always on the job. You never let the devil dig his claws in you.

JESSE

Oh, you had a meeting with Rich, Richard Dunghole, aka Dick Dunghole, the publisher?

DITHERS

Who?

JESSE

Dick... the... the... quote? 'You never let the devil dig his claws in you.' That's his mantra. It's a refrain he uses in his mentoring sessions.

DITHERS

Oh, that? Oh no, no, no, I made that up myself.

JESSE

That's interesting.

*(A loud THUD. A light fixture flashes.)*

JESSE/MARYAM/DITHERS

AHHHHH!

DITHERS

What was that?

KIT JOHNSON

The Red Hook killer!

JESSE

Maryam, I hope that was your stomach.

*(Maryam goes to the door. Papi enters, slowly revealing Nadège with a bloody head wrap, holding a gun to the back of Papi's head.)*

NADÈGE

Move, you twat.

MARYAM

A gun / she's gotta gun--

EVERYONE

Ahhh--

*(Everyone ducks for cover.)*

KAREN

Oh, my God, she's gonna kill us all--

DITHERS

Don't shoot!! Don't shoot--

MARYAM

Papi--

PAPI

Maryam--

JESSE

Nadège! You're / alive--

NADÈGE

Alive? Okay, everyone, take a seat. Do as I say and no one gets hurt.

*(Everyone sits. A cell phone rings, playing the theme from The Jeffersons. Dithers quickly fumbles through his pockets, finds the phone.)*

DITHERS

Perhaps, I should take my leave.

(Holding up his phone.)

DITHERS

I just got a Tinder right swipe. But before I go ladies, I need your help. How does this sound, Hey, Tinderella, can I be your Tinderfella?

NADÈGE

Man, that's awful, trash. Phooey.

MARYAM

Weak. Dumb.

KAREN

I don't recognize your authority. What is this all about? Jesse, I'm calling security--

NADÈGE

If you two don't sit your dumb-asses down, I'll take my good size thirteen and put it up your...

*(Pointing the gun. Karen and Dithers sit.)*

NADÈGE

Look, I'm not looking to hurt anyone. Let's keep this conversation calm and cooperative. I just need answers. What went down this morning?

PAPI

Nadège doesn't remember a thing that--

JESSE

Ah... um... Well, no wonder you don't recall a thing; you were as drunk as a skunk! Your memory probably did a triple backflip and landed in a cocktail shaker. Right Kit?

KIT JOHNSON

Yeah, yeah, it must've booked a one-way ticket to Amnesia Island. Did your hangover leave a note saying, 'Gone to recover, back whenever'--

NADÈGE

Regardless, I have the strangest feeling that somebody wanted me out of the way. Jesse?

*(Jesse points to Kit.)*

JESSE

No, I didn't, he did--

KIT JOHNSON

Liar--

JESSE

Liar? Yes, you did. You even wanted to dump her body in the Bronx. The Bronx, what nerve, I'm from the Bronx--

*(Whips out his inhaler, pumps twice, coughing and wheezing.)*

KIT JOHNSON

I was the one that said, 'Let's go to the police.' But, noooooo, you chose chemical disincorporation... What a stupid idea--

*(Karen get up, gathers her belongings.)*

JESSE, KIT, COLBY and PAPI all start speaking at once.

JESSE

Stupid idea? You're the one that wanted to dump her body in the Hudson River in the Bronx! You are such a liar. You lie like a rug... a stupid idea? You're the stupid one, like people who say, 'man-aze' instead of mayonnaise--

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, make me out to be the bad guy. What, I'm the white devil now, huh? Oh, the Bronx? Are you offended now? Acting like an indignant, whining grade school girl who flunked her test and swears it's everyone else's fault but her own--

MARYAM

Can't you ask for less riskier cases? I get so nervous... I understand it's your job, but these dangerous cases terrify me. I can't shake this feeling, every time you leave for work, it's like sending you off to a war zone--

PAPI

I'm so sorry this is happening. I wish I could, but it's my job, babe.. I'll do everything to come back home, safe and sound every time. This case is a little different. Jesse came to me wanting a favor--

*(Karen walks toward the front door. Suddenly, a THUNDERCLAP, causing the lights to flicker. Lights out! In the dark, a gunshot rings out—BANG! Everyone scrambles for cover. The lights flicker back on. )*

MARYAM

Jesse's dead!

PAPI

Jesse! Jesse!

*(Jesse pats himself down, searching for the gunshot wound. Nothing.)*

JESSE

My bad.

*(Nadège waves the gun in the air.)*

NADÈGE

MARYAM

Karen go sit your ass down! Papi secure the door. There's a murderer / on the loose. Murderer?

*(Papi latches the front door.)*

NADÈGE

Yes, murderer. I'm going by probability. I - I think. I remember drinking a couple of mimosas... Colby Anne and I fought... Jesse wasn't nominated and she called him an old fossil on live TV... later I got a puzzling text from Colby Anne. I replied that I was holding several residual checks for her. And I get no response from her? Oh, hell, no, no way she is way too money hungry.

KIT JOHNSON

We thought Colby Anne was with you.

KAREN

Excuse me Miss, what is this all about? Are you doing the Angry. Black. Woma- um... the... um... well, dear try not to get too upset.

JESSE

KIT JOHNSON

Oh, shut up!

Shut up!

*(Nadège stares Karen down. Karens sits.)*

KAREN

I'lllllll... take my seat now.

PAPI

What time did she text you and what did it say?

NADÈGE

It had to be around lunchtime... I was halfway through a White Castle cheeseburger when it read, 'It's time the world saw who they really are.' Not one word about the residual checks. Then about ten minutes later, she must have butt-dialed because all I heard were chimes in the background.

JESSE

That's weird.

PAPI

She's convinced Colby Anne's has disappeared. Kit, I don't suppose you've got any information on her whereabouts?

JESSE

No! No, he doesn't.

KIT JOHNSON

No!

PAPI

Maybe you forgot. It's possible. There are two staircases; you could have gone down one and come up the other.

KIT JOHNSON

That's ridiculous. Sure, I might've been the last one to see her, but all I know is she had a stomach ache from too much champagne. So, I gave her my glass of milk, and I drank her champagne. That's it! Hardly some sinister plot.

JESSE

Milk!? You gave her... your glass of milk? Oh, God is good! All this time, I thought I had ki... never mind. Carry on.

PAPI

We all had Jesse's door code. Any one of us could have gone down to the basement, come up the back stairs, slipped through the patio doors, and made it back upstairs to her bedroom unnoticed.

DITHERS

You talk like as though we're all under suspicion.

*(Nadège crosses over to the coffee table,  
picks up, The Rights of Freed Slaves novel.)*

NADÈGE

Jesse, did you know Frederick Douglass wound up with a white woman later in life?

JESSE

What?



KAREN

Frederick Douglass was with a white woman? Ohoo, how bewitching. You know, I always thought he was hot—in an Antebellum kind of way.

EVERYONE

Shut up, Karen--

PAPI

Nadège, where are you going with this?

NADÈGE

I have a point, I think. We've got to establish opportunity as well as motive.

PAPI

And let me say this: you all had opportunity, and no one is above suspicion.

*(There are several murmured protest.  
Nadège holds her hand up.)*

NADÈGE

Douglass battled oppression and injustice. Now, when it comes to our little white woman, Colby Anne found herself facing her own injustice and oppression.

KIT JOHNSON

She was pretty angry at--

JESSE

The Man--

NADÈGE

She knew things--

DITHERS

Like what?

NADÈGE

Things.

DITHERS

Things like Jesse and Papi's relationship? Could that be the reason she's missing... to keep their relationship a secret?

MARYAM

Jesse and Papi's relationship?

PAPI

Dithers--

MARYAM

Papi, what is he talking about--

JESSE

Heeeey, gang, my beautiful peeps, let's all forget this ever happened. I'm sure Colby Anne's fine. She's probably somewhere smoking gallon of crack, and laughing at how stupid we look. You know her... Nadège, just let us all go... well, me in particular.

MARYAM

What did he mean? / Jesse and Papi?

PAPI

Maryam, it's nothing--

JESSE

Uhhhh.... um... um, um it was me! She means me! I confess, I was there... Uh... Nadège, you tripped and hit your head. That's why you can't remember anything. Kit was there too. We both thought you were dead; I'm so sorry. We didn't know what to do. So I asked Papi to help. So, Maryam, that's what Nadège means, by me and Papi, that's all. Anyway, let's not get caught up on 'who tried to kill whom' or 'which one of us came up with a plan for Kit to strangle Nadège then chop her body into small pieces and stuff them into dog food bags as he flushed her remains down the toilet.' That's ancient history.

NADÈGE

It literally just happened.

KIT JOHNSON

And we're so sorry about that.

MARYAM

Jesse, what's going on?

JESSE

Nothing!--

MARYAM

What do you mean Nothing? / I heard what Dither's said. What does he mean?

PAPI

Maryam, can we talk in private?

PAPI

Maryam, hear me out. You must know, you're the most important person in my life--

MARYAM

What is it, Papi? / You're making me nervous.

PAPI

I'm trying to tell you. Sit down first--

MARYAM

Say it. Jesse and Papi, you what?

PAPI

Jesse and I have been... ah... having an affair.

MARYAM

What? What are you talking about?

PAPI

We were together.

MARYAM

Together? I don't understand what you mean by 'together?'

KIT JOHNSON

They were fucking! Unbelievable, what a charlatan, Mr. Captain Morality. Mr. Sanctimonious. What a piece of shit / you are--

JESSE

(To Papi) Wait, what's going on? Papi, are you having an affair with me?

PAPI

Oh, stop acting Jesse. It's over... she knows.

KIT JOHNSON

Acting? You call that acting? A parking ticket has more range.

KAREN

Papi, you had the means, motive, and disposition.

MARYAM

Is Karen right? Did you murder Colby Anne to cover up your affair with Jesse?

PAPI

No!

JESSE

Can I blame it on the meds?

MARYAM

No, you don't get to Jesse your way out of this. How could you Jesse? We were friends. How many times have you forced me to sit and watch *Gone with the Wind* with you? I'm pretty sure it qualifies as emotional abuse at this point.

JESSE

Ultimately, it wouldn't have worked out anyway. Papi and I are both bottoms.

MARYAM

Friends don't do what you did.

JESSE

I'm not at all defending my choice of actions but I am happy to be the poster boy for coming clean. We never went to a glory hole, although we did raw dog-it in a Starbucks bathroom once--

PAPI

Maryam, I love you--

MARYAM

Get out! Get out! I can't look at your cheating face right now!

*(Maryam crosses upstage toward the kitchen, followed by Papi, who is trying to stop her.)*

PAPI

I guess I was just as desperate as Jesse was. I'm so sorry. My brain was on fire. A... a... a sickening feeling of loneliness. For a while, Jesse made it better. It was like he knew me, knew what was inside me.

KIT JOHNSON

Yeah, uhhhh... his penis.

PAPI

It felt so, so forbidden, like, like... eating pizza with a fork... Saint Maria forgive me.

JESSE

You loved me!

*(Papi, freaks out and advances on Jesse, grabbing him by the neck, pushes him back toward the bar.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Cut it out!

MARYAM

Papi! Don't you touch him!

*(Kit crosses to Papi and tries to hold him back. Maryam rushes behind Kit. Jesse stops Kit and Maryam.)*

JESSE

Get back! Get back! It's okay.

*(A deafening bang echoes like thunder as Papi unleashes a storm of fury. Strobe lights flicker as he drives punch after punch into Jesse's torso. Jesse clutches him, absorbing the blows. Papi's rage is raw—years of self-hatred pouring out with each hit. PANTING, Papi finally collapses into Jesse's arms, crying.)*

KAREN

Now why can't I write shit like that?

EVERYONE

(ad libs)

Yeah, you suck... Yeah, what a hack... Fraud... etc...

PAPI

Being with you has destroyed me in the worst possible way.... I hate you.

KIT JOHNSON

Why is Kevin Spacey so bad at hide and seek? He comes out at the wrong time.

EVERYONE

Shut up!

*(Dithers stands.)*

DITHERS

Stop it! Stop it! Jesse you mentioned a necklace. Thing is, I accidentally opened the door to the bathroom. Karen wasn't in there pumping at all, she was mugging in the mirror. Look at her neck, check her neck. I saw it in the mirror when her boob popped out!

*(Dithers walks over to Karen, tears open Karen's blouse, exposing the necklace.)*

EVERYONE

GASP!

JESSE

According to Doofus over here, Colby Anne was wearing a Celtic knot heart necklace just like that when she went missing.

KIT JOHNSON

Nana's necklace!

NADÈGE

Thief!

PAPI

If Colby Anne is dead her body will turn up. Regardless, there's enough evidence to warrant an inquest... and I intend to get to the bottom of this.

KAREN

You're all on bath salts? My husband gave me this for our tenth anniversary.

PAPI

Okay! Everybody out, now! I need the room cleared. And don't go too far... I'll be calling you back in one by one.

*(Everyone begins to exit.)*

PAPI

Karen, Nadège, you stay.

MARYAM

Okay, sure, Karen's an awful person, but does that make her a murderer?

PAPI

She had a clear motive... their affair. Karen was obsessed with Kit, and Colby was the obstacle in her way.

MARYAM

I wouldn't mention anyone having an affairs if I were you--

KIT JOHNSON (OFF STAGE)

Uh, excuse me everyone. Just for the record, there was no affair. We just did it twice.

NADÈGE

Colby Anne hated you--

KAREN

I hated her--

NADÈGE

You kept churning out bad dialogue after bad dialogue.

KAREN

Oh, this is a crap sandwich!

NADÈGE

And because of Colby Anne's drug use--

KAREN

You're all clearly deranged--

NADÈGE

Because of Colby Anne's drug use, it became more and more difficult for her to memorize her lines every--

KAREN

She was a junkie--

NADÈGE

You were jealous--

KAREN

A junkie!

JESSE (OFF STAGE)

And you used it against her because that's what Karens like you do--

KAREN

I'm innocent!

NADÈGE

You did it! Didn't you?

KAREN

No--

NADÈGE

You're caught red-handed with the goods!

KAREN

Alright! Alright! I killed Colby Anne.

*(A collective gasp.)*

DITHERS (OFF STAGE)

I knew it!

KAREN

Whew, I feel relieved.

KIT JOHNSON (OFF STAGE)

I'm shocked! Shocked! Shocked! Well, not that shocked.

KAREN

So, what? Taking out the trash was my civic duty. I'm rich and I'm white, and you're not. No jury is going to believe a Puerto Rican and a Angry Black Woman over me.

PAPI

I believe the angry Black woman. Bernice Esmerelda Martin, you have the right to remain silent--

JESSE (OFF STAGE)

Bernice Esmerelda? Ew.

KAREN

What's going on here? You can't arrest me.

*(Maryam enters.)*

MARYAM

Oh, I didn't tell you my little secret? That my Ex boyfriend is a detective.

KAREN

Detective? This isn't exactly fair and I didn't exactly confess--

PAPI

That's exactly what you did--

KAREN

What do you mean exactly?--

*(Nadège holds up a wire tap. And hands Papi his gun.)*

KAREN

I don't understand. Was this just a set-up?

NADÈGE

It was Papi's brilliant idea after I told him I thought Kit was responsible for Colby Anne's disappearance. Being the detective that he is, he had to investigate.



KAREN

Well, she deserved it. At first, I just wanted to talk to her about leaving the show. I was going to apologize. But then she started babbling about my affair with Kit--

*(Kit enters holding up his hand in apology.)*

KIT JOHNSON

Again, people, / there was no affair!

EVERYONE (OFF STAGE)

There was no affair! We know.

KAREN

When I walked into her room, she was lying on the bed with a syringe in her arm. It was very odd looking, unlike any movie I'd seen before, but on the contrary, she looked beautiful and childlike. She looked as if, in a dream-like-state, happy. For a moment, I was almost envious and wanted to trade places with her. She called out for...

*(Lights fade on the stage. Downstage left, a spotlight simultaneously hits Colby Anne.  
THUNDERCLAP.)*

COLBY ANNE

Dithers no... help, please... Dithers. Help... Go away I don't need your help, but you need to be put down like old cattle. Nobody wants you. Kit doesn't want you. He doesn't love you. You know it, and I know it, and he knows it. He will always want me because you're a fraud. A fraud at everything. You need to take Shonda Rhimes' Master Class for beginner writers because you suck as a writer; with dopey cliffhangers, your writing is goofy and clumsy.... like an Ouroboros--

*(Spotlight light fades on Colby Anne and lights simultaneously fade up on the stage.)*

*(Everyone ad libs in agreement, bad writing, etc.)*

EVERYONE (OFF STAGE)

(ad lib)

Yeah, the writings is pretty bad...

KAREN

You know on set, she treated me like the help? Do you know how that feels?

NADÈGE

Are you really asking, black me that question?

*(Jesses enters.)*

JESSE

Not so fast... Detective?

PAPI

Not so fast.

PAPI

I was going to opine, but please, you go ahead.

JESSE

Kit, Colby Anne was a Kid Rock fan, right?

DITHERS

Is that so Detective Poirot?

*(Kit enters.)*

KIT JOHNSON

I can't believe I'm saying this, but Jesse is right. People who like Kid Rock also tend to know the exact legal amount of Sudafed you can buy from the Walmart pharmacy.

JESSE

Correct, Colby Anne played twins separated at birth. It was a lot of work. Before our scenes together, she would inhale a gram of coke and a half of ketamine. She couldn't feel her face, but she never missed a beat. Colby Anne was like a racehorse; dying from a small overdose is unlikely.

MARYAM

So the amount of drugs that Karen allegedly gave her would probably not have been enough to kill her?

NADÈGE

Wait, hold up... Ok, here's what we know: one, Colby Anne is missing, presumed dead. Two, there is no body, and Karen is a psychopath. Three, she's a Karen and an adulterer; clearly Karen is the killer.

EVERYONE

Yes!

JESSE

No! Like we young people say, the math is not mathing.

NADÈGE

You think there's still a murderer among us?

JESSE

Does Vin Diesel have a bald spot?

KAREN

It's obvious it was the butler, Manuela.

MARYAM

Me? She fired me but... / I had nothing—

KAREN

What, she caught you stealing?--

MARYAM

...to do with Colby Anne's death! What about Dithers?

DITHERS

Me?

PAPI

Dithers can be ruled out for sure.

EVERYONE

Why?

PAPI

Look at the size of his head, he hasn't the brains for it--

NADÈGE

Kit still lives at home so of course he's a serial killer--

JESSE

The pills! / That's right!

PAPI

The pills?

JESSE

Maryam, the pills? / The pills in her purse.

MARYAM

Pills? What pills?

JESSE

Here is what I think happened— The killer knew Colby Anne was diabetic and that she kept insulin in her purse for emergencies. Somehow, he or she was able to spike her insulin with poison sometime after breakfast but before Colby Anne had her meltdown and threatened to disposal us all..

KIT JOHNSON

Right, we know that because a syringe was loaded with diabetes meds when we found her lying on the floor—no! Honestly, not heerrrrr lying on the floor, but actually, we found her... um... purse with the syringe on the floor...

yeah, her purse, but not her lying on the floor... and certainly not her choking to death with foam coming out the side of her mouth but just her purse--

JESSE

Kit!

PAPI

A loaded syringe? I'm going to need that for corroborating evidence--

KAREN

So it was the butler?

MARYAM

No! Colby Anne harbored a deep fear of the paparazzi discovering her diabetic condition, a secret she was determined to keep from the public eye. Despite being fired, I continued to pick up her insulin from Duane Reade and administer those armadillo urine injections until about a year ago.

NADÈGE

White people.

PAPI

Which eliminates you--

JESSE

I don't know, but I'm just guessing is that, when Maryam stopped picking up Colby Anne's insulin a year ago is when she switched over to prescribed pills instead. Unfortunately, Colby Anne was still shooting up heroin, and the killer knew that. But, what the killer didn't know, however, was that she had stopped using the insulin medication.

PAPI

If I may, Inspector Gadget? So, you're saying this wasn't even about Colby Anne's breakdown this morning, but it was premeditated? The murderer spiked her insulin with a deadly poison, cunningly staging Colby Anne's death to resemble an overdose on a concoction of insulin and heroin, creating a ruse with the intention of misleading and diverting suspicion, casting a shadow of doubt over the true nature of the crime. This was a very carefully crafted plan, and it went wrong.

NADÈGE

So, it wasn't Karen?

KAREN

Huzzah! Let's celebrate!

NADÈGE

What kind of poison was it?

JESSE

Prison ass!

EVERYONE

Prison ass!?

JESSE

Yes, prison ass; well, not exactly. That smell wasn't prison ass we were smelling. Not that I know what prison ass smells like. I mean, I have unconsciously entertained the notion of dropping the soap in the prison shower, but that is the closest I have ever come to going to prison.--

KIT JOHNSON

Jesse!

JESSE

Right... so, I think I know who did it!

EVERYONE

Who?

JESSE

Colby Anne's body wasn't decomposing... Last year, on the show, Doctor Xander's wife attempted to kill him off with a poison called Fugu so she could run off to India to marry the Maharaja. As a method actor I researched the poison, and Fugu, kiiiiinda smells... like ...prison... ass.

NADÈGE

Fugu, Japanese blowfish? A fish more poisonous than cyanide.

JESSE

This Japanese blowfish is undetectable.

KAREN

What about your maid?

*(A loud crash from the kitchen.)*

GUADALUPE

Sorry Mr. Hesse.

JESSE

Not you Guadalupe! Parkinson, she got the shakes and ain't worth a damn but she's a good honest woman.

PAPI

The meal was catered, so it wasn't in the food. That should also exclude Jesse for now.

JESSE

God is good!

KIT JOHNSON

The murderer must have gotten a hold of Colby's purse and laced her syringe with Fugu--

JESSE

Or in her ear... It's like what Claudius did to Old Hamlet.

DITHERS

Okay, Columbo, is that fact or some more of your fancy guess work?

JESSE

Guess work? Of course... listen, it all makes sense. Karen mentioned, Colby Anne called out for...

*(Lights out, THUNDER and LIGHTNING,  
fog pumped in, then Colby Anne's voice  
echoes ominously through the speakers.)*

COLBY ANNE (OFF STAGE)

Dithers no... help, please... Dithers. Help...

*(Lights up.)*

JESSE

But what if, instead of calling for Dithers, she was warning us about Dithers?

*(Lights out, THUNDER and LIGHTNING,  
fog pumped in, then Colby Anne's voice  
echoes ominously through the speakers.)*

COLBY ANNE (OFF STAGE)

Dithers no... help, please... Dithers. Help...

DITHERS

You fools.

JESSE

Then I began to think back on something that was puzzling me from earlier: why did Dithers deny knowing Dick Dunghole? Yet he seem familiar with his catch phrase, ‘You never let the devil dig his claws.’ Why did you lie about not knowing him?

KAREN

Yeah, why did you lie? We all know your manuscript was turned down by Dick’s publishing company fourteen times.

JESSE

He said your manuscript wasn't just plain terrible, this was fancy terrible. It was terrible with raisins in it.

KIT JOHNSON

He said it runs the gamut of emotions from A to B.

DITHERS

So what... I lied. I like to lie; does that make me a murderer?

JESSE

Not by itself, but in Tad and Monica’s wedding cliffhanger last year, I remember you were the one who suggested killing off the entire wedding party by putting Fugu poison in the water supply.

EVERYONE

Gasps.

JESSE

Dithers, you are the killer.

EVERYONE

Old Man Dithers? The creepy script supervisor?

DITHERS

No, that’s impossible, I was too busy preparing for my Ted Talk so, I couldn’t have killed her.

NADÈGE

You do sound pretty guilty--

DITHERS

I’m a genius and no one cares--

KIT JOHNSON

Maybe you were a Wunderkind, but you made the dumb mistake of letting Colby sleep off a hangover at your place. Being the Klepto that she was.

*(Everyone checks their pockets.)*

KIT JOHNSON

She went through all your things. She told me she found documentation; you weren't born in an internment camp after all, but right in Hoboken New Jersey. It was all made up. Lies in the making for years to sell your book.

MARYAM

So, she was blackmailing him? Sounds like her.

KIT JOHNSON

He silenced her because she probably threatened to expose him for the fraud he is to Dick Dunghole, preventing him from ever getting a book deal.

DITHERS

Dick was a pain in the ass--

JESSE

Dick was a little hard--

KAREN

Dick had his ups and downs--

DITHERS

That's fascinating, Deputy-Do-Right, but as Jessica Fletcher would say, where there is no proof, there is no criminal. You'll never convince a jury. You don't even have a body.

KIT JOHNSON

But we have the proof.

JESSE

We do?

KIT JOHNSON

Yes, we do. You see, Jesse, being the complete narcissist that he is, loves to watch himself dance naked around the house. He has this whole place rigged with hidden cameras.

JESSE

I do?



*(Kit shoots Jesse an OMG look.)*

JESSE

I do! I... do... eeeeeeeverywhere.

NADÈGE

Keyser Söze--

PAPI

I won't dance around it... we found the body.

JESSE

How?

KIT JOHNSON

What?

*(Slowly clapping, Dithers...)*

DITHERS

Congratulations Sherlock, on your amusing theory.

PAPI

You're just making it harder on yourself. If I were you, I'd start talking.

JESSE

Did you say, you found the body?

DITHERS

Alright! Alright! I poisoned her. I'm guilty; shoot me, take me out at dawn, and hang me...She was my Voldemort. She owed a lot of money to some really mean drug dealers and she threatened to blackmail me if I didn't give her fifty thousand by tomorrow.

KIT JOHNSON

So you killed her?

DITHERS

What was I supposed to do? She was going to tell Dick Dunghole about my... well, you know. I didn't have the money... she was going to ruin my chances of ever getting my soon-to-be critically acclaimed novel published. So, yes, I did it. I killed her, and I would have gotten away with it too if it weren't for you meddling assholes.

JESSE

Dithers, why?

## DITHERS

Welllll, what-had-happened was... um... I-I, uh... uh... ugh... okaaaay, oh, what the hell. It's all your fault, with all your preaching about helping your fellow man, about diversity... and your fancy cars, your fancy stuff, and your fancy connections. If you'd just pulled some strings and gotten my book published, none of this would've happened! But you were too busy obsessing about some stupid monkey suit Karen insistent you wear. Diversity, my ass! I'm diversity, you meathead!

*(Papi moves in and handcuffs, Dithers and Karen.)*

## KAREN

Jesse, you know I'm in my heart, I'm an ally. Can you forgive me?

## JESSE

Not today, Satan. Only God can forgive you... A lot has changed since 1838 but like Fredric Douglass asks, 'have we really changed the hearts and minds?' ...Well, it's official, today I got my negro wake-up call. I—I'm done being the studio's monkey on a leash. There are young Black actors who are coming up after me (well, not as talented) but I owe it to them to show them a better way. Karen, I quit.

## EVERYONE

(ad lib)

No. You can't leave... What about your fans?... etc

*(Papi walks over to Maryam.)*

## PAPI

Forgive me. Okay... I understand if you don't... I'll come by and get my things at your convenience, okay?

## KAREN

Oh, answer the poor boy for God's sake.

*(Kit gives Jesse the thumbs up.)*

## KIT JOHNSON

Like Jesse always says, 'God is good.' Well, I'm hungry; that caviar sure sounds good. Is there still some left?

## JESSE

In the kitchen, help yourself.

## NADÈGE

Hey, white boy, I'll come with.

KIT JOHNSON

I'd like that.

NADÈGE

I like the way you helped Jesse out. Maybe in the future, we can talk about representation?

KIT JOHNSON

That would be mad cool. You have to tell me more about Frederick Douglass and this white chick. Was she a mulatto or just plain white white?...

*(Kit and Nadège exit to the kitchen. Papi walks over to Jesse. Maryam sits on the sofa.)*

PAPI

Oh, I'll handle that little problem stinking up your basement. I've already dispatched a forensics team to gather evidence; they should be here any minute.

JESSE

Oookaaaay... How did you know?

PAPI

Your face. You made that face. So I had to investigate. Just doing my job.

JESSE

Great, thanks. Question though, you really didn't think it was me, did you? No, nope, forget it, don't answer that.

PAPI

I did you a solid. Maybe you can do one for me and put in a good word for me with her?

*(Papi, Dithers and Karen exit.)*

JESSE

*And, I'm telling you, I'm not going.--*

MARYAM

Jesse, stop it.

JESSE

Welllllll, it's awkward... I don't know what to say.

MARYAM

Maybe don't say anything for once.

JESSE

*You're staying, aaaaaand you're gonna love me,- Oooooow!*

*(In pain, Jesse crosses to the sofa and sits  
net to Maryam.)*

MARYAM

I'm leaving

JESSE

You can't leave meeeee. I don't even know where the laundry room is.

MARYAM

Think it's best this way.

JESSE

Noooo, everything was normal ten minutes ago.

MARYAM

You know, I always thought I'd end up leaving this job... but I never imagined I'd have to quit both my boss and my fiancé in the same day. Honestly, that's some serious multitasking. I hate you for that.

JESSE

I know you do. Sometimes, I hate me too. So, Frederick Douglass was banging a White chick, huh?

MARYAM

I better be going?

JESSE

No! Let's produce our own content. We could do a... uh... Frederick Douglass podcast. Something titillating. We'll call it, 'Everything I Know about Racism, I Learned from A Hoe.' You know like a digging tool thingy... because slaves used hoes to dig... No bueno?... Uh... um... Promise me you'll stay. I need you to help me be a better person. I don't want to go to hell.

*(Maryam gets up, grabs her coat.)*

JESSE

Maryam! If you go... where shall I go? What shall I do?

*(Walking out the door.)*

MARYAM

Really, Jesse...

*(Jesse slowly walks upstairs. The sound of heavy rain taps steadily against the windows.)*

JESSE

*(crying)*

Tomorrow, I'll think of some way to get her back. After all, tomorrow is another day. Cuz, I'm a good person... I'm a good person... Alexa, resume podcast.

*(Lights fade.)*

PODCAST HOST

Park Slope was sleeping... but Red Hook wasn't. Welcome back to Crime Scene Confidential... where secrets don't stay buried, and every whisper could be a clue. In today's episode, we dive into the strange...