

# Keep Your Forks

Cast:

*(in order of appearance)*

EDDIE, 50, gay, an Adonis in his day. Charming and devious and petty

RACHEL, mid-30's, the daughter of Eddie's partner, Charles

CASEY, a grocery store floor manager

KEEK HEDMAN, Eddie's socialite friend, 40's [short for Kiki, shorter for Katherine]

TYLER, a savvy office associate to...

JOYCE BONNER, aka "Trigger," a fluffy pit bull. Eddie's younger sister.

SEMAJ, mid-twenties, a gay trophy husband

LORENE, a motel owner

DWAYNE, her nephew

GRANT DANE, Joyce's boyfriend

PATRICIO REYES, Charles' new boyfriend.

Doubling: [Casey/Tyler/Semaj/Dwayne] (African-American actor)

[Keek/Lorene]

[Grant/Patricio] (Latinx actor)

3M, 3W

Setting: Indiana. Today. After Arbor Day. Multiple locations, swift transitions.

Tempo: *Molto vivace*.

for George, out of thin air

**DRAFT 19 June 2016**

“Marriage is a bribe to make the housekeeper think she’s a householder.”

—Horace Vandergelder

## KEEP YOUR FORKS

### Act One, Scene One

*(Lights up on EDDIE MOUNCE, a man of fifty. Once beautiful, now with less hair and more weight around his middle than he has had to notice for some time. He stands behind a pop-up meatball tasting station in a grocery store. There is an old-fashioned electric skillet on the table in front of which are concentric circles of little white paper cups—the type one squirts salsa or ketchup into. There is a trashcan to the left of him. We first see Eddie dropping meatballs into cups with tongs. He sneaks one into his mouth. While he is chewing the meatball....RACHEL LUEDTKE enters.)*

RACHEL

Eddie?

EDDIE

Rachel.

RACHEL

Claire Randich said she'd seen you here. Selling kale chips?

EDDIE

I've been promoted to hot foods. "Careful, this skillet is hot."

RACHEL

But *Krogers*?

EDDIE

*(bright)* It's meatball night. *(pointing)* Lamb-feta, chicken and chives, and sassy seitan. The dipping sauces are up to you.

RACHEL

So I asked Dad and—

EDDIE

This is where I've landed. *(He eats a meatball.)*

RACHEL

When did it happen?

EDDIE

Arbor Day.

RACHEL

That was weeks ago. Where are you staying?

With Keek and *(face)* Pippa.

EDDIE

But you don't like dogs.

RACHEL

I hate dogs.

EDDIE

Um...do you have to work, Eddie?

RACHEL

Keek says work is therapeutic. She read that on the computer.

EDDIE

This isn't a living, though, is it?

RACHEL

Keek is my host organism, so I'm keeping to her house rules. I started as a towel boy at the university gym, but it wasn't a good fit. The men were so young, they still had hair on their legs.

EDDIE

You're funny. Should I let Dad know you're at Keek's?

RACHEL

Did he ask?

EDDIE

*(shakes her head 'no.')* I had no idea anything had happened until I ran into Claire. I had to shanghai Dad at work to get him to say you'd moved out.

RACHEL

Meatball? The seitan has a real kick to it.

EDDIE

God no I just brushed.

RACHEL

*(Eddie pops another meatball and hands Rachel the empty cup.)*

Hold this. I need to look like I'm moving product.

EDDIE

Who is going to eat meatball samples in the cereal aisle?

RACHEL

EDDIE

Fatties. People off their meds. Home-alones who want to gas on about geographically moderated wheat.

RACHEL

Genetically modified.

EDDIE

Honey, I don't want to know a thing about it. *(beat)* How's business?

RACHEL

Feels like it's more paperwork than patients. *(pause)* Eddie, do you have health insurance? *(He shrugs.)* What?

EDDIE

I'm not completely sure. If I got sick, which was never, I'd go to Sam Westrick, and Charles would pay. I never saw a bill.

RACHEL

That is so old school.

EDDIE

That was us. Miserable, but together for the sake of the children. *(tight)* I didn't move out, Rachel. Your father kicked me out.

RACHEL

What? What happened?

*(As Eddie tells the story, he hoovers meatballs, drops more in skillet, etc.)*

EDDIE

It was the morning of our Arbor Day brunch. We'd reserved a tent in case of rain. When Wickey's arrived to set up, it *seems* they'd forgotten to bring the portable omelet station. I was busy with the flowers, and your father was in the sunroom at his hoop with one of his Pink Lady Bloody Marys.

RACHEL

What is a Pink Lady Bloody Mary?

EDDIE

Ten parts vodka and a teaspoon of tomato juice. He lives on them weekends. *(dark)* There I was, up to my ass in Gerber daisies and no omelet station. I started mixing it up with the assistant caterer. He showed me the invoice on one of those crazy phones they all have now. They didn't forget the omelet station. Turns out there

wasn't going to be an omelet station. There was never going to be an omelet station, though I had specifically asked your father for an omelet station.

RACHEL

But an omelet station is so, so...

EDDIE

2004? This is Indianapolis, child. Turns out your father had gone and nixed the omelet station behind my back. He had never done anything like this before, so this act of, of, *treason* knocked me for a loop. I rushed into the sunroom and asked flat-out whether he'd canceled the omelet station. He said spoon bread and coddled eggs and frittatas were enough eggs for one brunch, and I said, "But this is Arbor Day, and Arbor Day means eggs," and he screamed, "Fuck Arbor Day!", took up his embroidery hoop, and whipped it at me, needle and all, like a Frisbee. It bounced off my temple. Raised a welt.

RACHEL

I thought Arbor Day meant trees.

EDDIE

Eggs. Faggots over forty can't get enough of them. I can't say why.

RACHEL

They're soft and filling? Mommy issues, maybe?

EDDIE

My mother sure as shit never made us eggs. She dished kibble out on the floor and made us scrap for it.

RACHEL

So then what happened?

EDDIE

Well, dear, we had an argument. We *fought*. More like he erupted like a volcano. Oh, Rachel, it was—*ugly*. It got very—*personal*. Here I'd been thinking that after thirty years we were going to get married, now that it was finally legal everywhere, and we'd honeymoon on the Baltic, a cruise, and your father would retire soon, eventually drink himself to death, leaving me to realize my potential.

RACHEL

Did you mention these things to him?

EDDIE

I did, and he laughed. Laughed like a wild thing. He was a man on fire with laughter. He said at this point he'd rather contract the Ebola virus than marry me and told me to pack my things and get out. Honey, I fled! (*beat*) I don't know what he said to our

guests, but not one of them has come to see how I've been. He got the locks changed the next day.

RACHEL

Do you think he's mentally ill?

EDDIE

No. He looks like shit on a shingle, but his mind is all there. And I get to be the wife who put her husband through medical school only to get dumped for a younger woman.

RACHEL

No, that would be my mother, who put him through law school, and he left her for you.

EDDIE

My bad. How is Nancy?

RACHEL

She's getting a new knee.

EDDIE

All that tennis come home to roost.

RACHEL

Rehabbing her will be murder. *(new thought)* Has he met somebody else? He's almost seventy.

EDDIE

So far no. Keek has been keeping tabs for me.

RACHEL

Didn't you save? Prepare for this possibility?

EDDIE

You sound like Trigger. "Didn't you keep any of your allowance?" No, Rachel. I was dyslexic Hoosier trash who helped book a trip to Cancun for your father one day back in olden times and fell in love.

RACHEL

You're not dyslexic.

EDDIE

Ever see me relax with a book? Read the fine print? Did I ever help you with your homework? I clocked your father's wedding ring, and I respected it. It's not like I didn't have six thousand competing offers. I was choice.

RACHEL

I know.

EDDIE

Charles pursued *me*.

RACHEL

I know.

EDDIE

I gave up my career for him.

RACHEL

That's one way of looking at it.

EDDIE

Oh really. And what's your way of looking at it, Rache?

RACHEL

I'd say that when the travel industry migrated to the Internet, you turned into a trophy husband.

*(Something catches in the skillet. A flame shoots up.)*

EDDIE

You see? I can't even cook a meatball.

*(They watch. More flames.)*

RACHEL

Um...that's looking like a grease fire, Eddie.

EDDIE

No way. These meatballs have next to no fat.

*(Flames get higher)*

RACHEL

Don't you want to put that out?

EDDIE

Let it burn.

RACHEL

Shouldn't you get an extinguisher?



It's not my jurisdiction.

EDDIE

*(A store alarm sounds)*

Do something, Eddie.

RACHEL

I don't have the training.

EDDIE

Then how about yelling, "Fire!"?

RACHEL

That's vulgar. You do it.

EDDIE

*(In rushes CASEY, the store manager, with a portable extinguisher.)*

Stand back!!!!

CASEY

*(Casey puts out the admittedly small fire with two blasts from the apparatus.)*

Jesus.

EDDIE

Eddie, you're fired.

CASEY

No Casey, how about I sue you for workman's comp for smoke inhalation? I'm suddenly finding it very hard to breathe.

EDDIE

What?

CASEY

You can't fire me for a fire. Not when she started it.

EDDIE

I started the fire?

RACHEL

You started pouring *corn* oil—of all things—into the skillet.

EDDIE

RACHEL

What's wrong with corn oil?

EDDIE

Trying to show *me* the proper way to brown a meatball.

CASEY

I'm sorry, ma'am, that you had to be involved in this.

EDDIE

*(to Rachel)* You should sue Krogers for emotional damages.

CASEY

Give it up, Eddie. We have it all on video.

EDDIE

So you saw it was an act of god. You can't fire me for an act of god.

CASEY

I'm not canning you because of the fire.

EDDIE

I get it. You're canning me because I'm gay.

CASEY

So you are gay?

EDDIE

Of course I'm gay.

CASEY

We took bets in the back, but really, we couldn't tell.

EDDIE

Holy shit. *(to Rachel)* Thirty years with your father has made me gender-neutral. *(to Casey)* This is a clear case of workplace discrimination. When it comes to human rights, Indiana and Mississippi are always locked in a race to the bottom.

CASEY

Our regional VP, Stan Offhaus, is very out, Eddie. Out and proud.

EDDIE

I should say so. I fucked him in 2005. How do you think I got this gig?

RACHEL

*(surprised)* Eddie? You and Dad aren't—weren't—monogamous?

EDDIE

*(surprised)* No. Why would you think that?

RACHEL

Because. Because...I guess I just assumed you were, because he and Mom were. Or she was. Until you. *(beat)* Really? Dad?

EDDIE

He's slowed down some. We all do. *(to Casey)* You will too, dirtbag.

CASEY

Hey! Be nice.

RACHEL

Were you ever monogamous?

EDDIE

Does it matter? Does it matter *now*?

RACHEL

I don't know.

*(Casey gets back to business.)*

CASEY

I'm letting you go, Eddie, not because of the fire, but because the video camera has captured you eating *(counting up on his fingers)* twenty-eight meatballs on this shift alone.

EDDIE

Impossible. Show me the packages.

CASEY

You've hidden them behind the Raisin Bran.

EDDIE

I eat my feelings. What can I say?

CASEY

It's all over, Eddie. Now clean up this mess.

*(Eddie tears off his apron, throws it on the table, then kicks it over with his foot. Crap everywhere.)*

EDDIE

No. You clean up this mess, *Junior*.

*(CASEY exits. Eddie and Rachel look at each other.)*

EDDIE

Did he say that he missed me? *(the answer is no)* You know, I saw you standing there, and I thought you might have come to bring me my jewelry box. Do you know the one I'm talking about?

RACHEL

How could I not? We've only been doing inventory since I was in second grade. "These are two cat heads, intertwined, with star sapphire eyes. This is a 1906 Indian penny, circled first by white gold, then yellow gold...."

EDDIE

Do you know how I came by those rings—which I could live off of until I get a cosmetology degree?

RACHEL

Good behavior?

EDDIE

I got a ring every time your father "cheated" on me.

RACHEL

You just said you weren't monogamous.

EDDIE

*(shrugs)* Whatever you want to call our arrangement, Charles is an atoner. He is a man with a need to atone. I never asked who the other party was, man, woman or mineral, or whether it had been a one-night stand or a two-month "something." I knew how his mind worked. He'd come home from a trip, wait a week or so and say, "Let's go make you a ring, honey." I'd design them with the jeweler, and we'd wait for it like Christmas was coming, and when it was ready, we'd bring it home together like a newborn from the hospital.

RACHEL

With mother it was bracelets.

EDDIE

Exactly. For all the lipstick I've put on that pig, in some ways he's still a breeder.

*(AN ACTOR dressed in a Kroger's uniform comes in and silently cleans up the meatball mess as they keep talking. When he's finished, he shoots Eddie a big "thumbs-up" gesture, which Eddie returns, and exits.)*

*(beat)*

RACHEL

I think what I hate most of all is his embroidery hoop.

EDDIE

Best stress-buster ever. Your father made you plenty of belts.

RACHEL

I never wore them. *(pause)* Eddie, why *didn't* you save any money?

EDDIE

Because, Rachel, there was never anything to save. How can any travel agency turn a profit here when the Indiana dream vacation is Six Flags over Georgia, or a getaway weekend in *(ughh)* Myrtle Beach. It barely broke even. Your father kept it going the last few years.

RACHEL

We figured as much.

*(pause)*

EDDIE

Could you give me a lift? I can't hang around in front of Kroger's until Keek shows up.

RACHEL

You don't have a car?

EDDIE

Child, I fled with a weekender. I mean, look at what I'm wearing. *Dad* jeans. *Brown* shoes. A *braided* belt. These are a dead man's casuals. Praise Jee-jus Keek's a pack rat.

RACHEL

Jee-jus?

EDDIE

That's Korean for Jesus.

RACHEL

He won't let you have your clothes?

EDDIE

I haven't asked for them.

RACHEL  
Why not?

EDDIE  
It's beneath me.

RACHEL  
Have you seen him?

EDDIE  
I'm waiting for the wake.

RACHEL  
How about counseling?

EDDIE  
Before your father could talk about his feelings, he'd have to locate one first. I'm a queer *refugee* until my sister takes him to the cleaners.

RACHEL  
I don't know about that. Dad's tough across a table.

EDDIE  
Have you ever seen Trigger play Scrabble? It'll come out of your inheritance, I'm sorry to say.

RACHEL  
I don't want his money.

EDDIE  
Don't be stupid.

RACHEL  
I don't want him dead.

EDDIE  
Not right this minute you don't. I do. After the check clears.

RACHEL  
No car, no money, no insurance...what a dick.

EDDIE  
Not even a phone charger—do you know how hard it is to find a charger for a flip phone?

RACHEL

You still don't have an iPhone?

EDDIE

Feel free to buy me one, Rachel. Your father stopped all of my credit cards.

RACHEL

Something is hugely wrong here. All couples drift, I guess, but the two of you have been together since...since...

EDDIE

Bush One.

RACHEL

What did you do, Eddie?

EDDIE

I am telling you, Rachel, I DON'T KNOW!!!! I HAVEN'T A FUCKING CLUE! I AM THE WRONGED PARTY IN THIS SITUATION. DID YOU COME HERE TODAY JUST TO GLOAT?

*(In response to Eddie's scream, a lone box of cereal drops from its shelf. Beat. Over the loudspeaker: "Mister Mounce, if you don't leave the store right now, I'll have security escort you from the premises.")*

*(Eddie and Rachel share a look.)*

RACHEL

I did not come to gloat, Eddie. You've been a fabulous stepmom. Always. I mean it. I came to give you a lift.

*(Lights fade on them and we move to....)*

## Act One, Scene Two

*(Keek Hedman's dining room. That afternoon. EDDIE and KEEK are setting a full table. The works: salt cellars, butter pats, salad plates, dessert forks, etc. Keek is a stylish, breezy fortysomething.)*

EDDIE

Did you get a good look?

KEEK

I said Pippa's magic word. *(They both whisper "Schnauzer.")* When she barked, he looked around.

EDDIE

And then?

KEEK

Oh Eddie.

EDDIE

Oh Keek. What?

KEEK

Oh Eddie.

EDDIE

*What?*

KEEK

He was using a key to get into the house.

EDDIE

His own key?

KEEK

I don't know. I was on the sidewalk.

EDDIE

Was Charles' car in the driveway?

KEEK

No. But there was a strange car parked on the street. I assumed it belonged to the gentleman.

EDDIE



Make and model?

KEEK

I don't notice those things.

EDDIE

*(sighs)* Rich people. Well, was it a Jaguar convertible? A hearse? A flatbed of pork bellies headed for Bob Evans?

KEEK

It was an ordinary car.

EDDIE

I'd hate to be blind with you around. *(to calm himself, Eddie looks at the table. Moves some silverware, correcting Keek.)* The tines of a dessert fork face east. The bowl of a dessert spoon faces west.

KEEK

How about ice cream forks?

EDDIE

Dealer's choice.

KEEK

Only you know these things.

EDDIE

A good thing too, or this neighborhood would still be serving sloppy joes and bottled dressing. *(pause)* Emily Post was the only useful book in the whole house. She held up the bum leg of the davenport until my Aunt Flo sent us *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, and I swapped it out.

KEEK

You might have tried the Shakespeare.

EDDIE

Imagine where I'd be today. *(pause)* What did he look like?

KEEK

He was...*of color*.

EDDIE

Huh. Jambrone? Indian push start *(he points to a dot to his head)*? Indian pull start *(mimes pulling a turban on his own head)*? *(bows)* Ciao-Ciao San? *(big nose gesture)* Camel jockey? What?

KEEK

Eddie, *please*.

EDDIE

I'm a white trash faggot. It's allowed.

KEEK

He looked Latino.

EDDIE

That doesn't help me much, Keek. (*thinks*) León and Miguel would never use the front door, even if they had keys. They're such shy creatures. Summer weekends Charles used to fill them up with beer and wait for them to piss it out against the sumacs. Wait and watch them with his bird binoculars.

KEEK

After all these years, Eddie, will I ever know when you're making things up?

EDDIE

Can you specify a shade? Latinos go from sandalwood to mahogany.

KEEK

He wasn't a gardener.

EDDIE

Why do you say that, Keek?

KEEK

Because he was holding a briefcase.

EDDIE

A college kid with a briefcase? A home security salesman, maybe.

KEEK

He wasn't a college kid.

(*Things get still*)

EDDIE

Was he wearing a suit? (*Keek nods yes*) Oh. (*Things get very still*) An adult. (*Eddie focuses on the table again. He places a hand on a pile of cloth napkins.*) Swan or swastika?

KEEK

Pardon me? Oh—swan.

(*Eddie begins folding table napkins into swans.*)

EDDIE

Who are you having to dinner tonight?

KEEK

The Seven Sisters.

EDDIE

Those nags aren't your friends.

KEEK

They're my sisters. We need a new roof for the chapter house, so we're brainstorming.

EDDIE

Why go to all this trouble? I'd just tie bags of oats around their necks.

KEEK

Be nice. And don't make me laugh.

EDDIE

It's just too soon, Keek. *(re: the man with the key)* What are you serving? Kitchen sounds mighty quiet.

KEEK

Well, here's the thing. Kee-yoon has had to stay out longer than planned, because of her fibroids.

EDDIE

*(ick)* Stop right there.

KEEK

So...

EDDIE

So?

KEEK

I was hoping you might whip up something for us.

*(beat)*

EDDIE

Excuse me? Did I hear right? Cook dinner for you and the kennel club? After all I've been through today? I just got fired for torching a pan of Kroger meatballs.

KEEK

Don't be silly. You're a stupendous cook. You put us all to shame.

EDDIE

*(tight)* What was it you were hoping I'd make?

KEEK

Why, anything you like. *(beat)* Your jambalaya and baked cheese grits.

EDDIE

Salad course?

KEEK

I bought bags of mâche.

EDDIE

And for dessert?

KEEK

Oh, I can just swing by Poupon. *(pause)* Look, really, if it's too much to ask, instead of the jambalaya, just plank some salmon.

ED

Cheese grits are a snap, but jambalaya takes hours to do right.

KEEK

But it tastes so good. Yours does, at least.

EDDIE

It's really best the second day. But you know, if I started now...

KEEK

I bought all the ingredients. Whole Foods had okra, that's how I got the idea.

EDDIE

Weren't you smart. Andouille?

KEEK

Check.

EDDIE

Smoked paprika?

KEEK

Check.

EDDIE  
Uniform?

KEEK  
Excuse me?

EDDIE  
If I'm making dinner, shouldn't I serve it too? I'm thinking black *cotton* with white piping at the collar and cuffs—and a quiet lace jabot. Extra starch for the tiara, cause it get mighty hot in de kitchen, Miz Kiki.

KEEK  
Eddie.

EDDIE  
Comfy shoes, but *leather*, so they breathe. I'm a size twelve.

KEEK  
Eddie, you're taking this wrong....

EDDIE  
Should I be French or Irish?

KEEK  
Please.

EDDIE  
It's a Creole dish, but you can get arrested for doing blackface these days.

KEEK  
Eddie, stop.

EDDIE  
(*French*) "Ce framji-là me donne envie de gerber."

KEEK  
Don't make dinner then.

EDDIE  
(*Irish*) "Three shillings for a bit of pork. I'm sure it's only the pigs can afford it."

KEEK  
Fine. I'll order in—

EDDIE

Ooh, then I can play delivery boy. (*porn star*) "Them's all the fixins' you need, Ma'am? Plenty more in my trunk."

KEEK

Stop it, Eddie.

EDDIE

I just want to know what kind of domestic you want me to be, Keek.

KEEK

Be whatever it was when you fucked all our husbands, Eddie. With your size twelve feet!

EDDIE

I did not fuck all your husbands with my feet.

KEEK

Really? Which block of Meridien did you leave out?

(*beat*)

EDDIE

I only did what you girls wouldn't. I orally *gratified* many a husband in the downstairs den with a Colts game on. I digitally *pried open* many a heinie hole. I spanked the butts of bad boys bent over my knees. For the husbands in garter belts and teddies I'd tell them how hot they looked. The ones in knock-off Geoffrey Beene I'd help with their make-up. Basically, Keek, I met their needs. It was sad how little it took to meet them. And I never judged. (*pause*) But as for actual fucking, really, not so much. AIDS and all.

KEEK

And Robert?

EDDIE

You don't want to know.

KEEK

(*backs down*) You're right. I don't want to know.

EDDIE

Why did you take me in, Keek?

KEEK

You know the saying. Keep your friends close. Keep your enemies closer.

EDDIE

(*surprise*) How am I an enemy? I mean sure, I'm a terror, but not to you. We've had a lot of fun, haven't we? Keek?

KEEK

Setting aside the down-low stuff, Eddie, I think we've all been too frightened and jealous of you to ever really like you.

EDDIE

We? Tara and Liz and Serena and...*jealous*? Jealous of what?

KEEK

You've never had any responsibilities.

EDDIE

And you have?

KEEK

Children, hello? Why couldn't you and Charles have moved to the gay ghetto?

EDDIE

Because there is no gay ghetto in India-no-place.

KEEK

Well why couldn't you have started one—somewhere else? We knew in this day and age we were supposed to accept you but once you moved in, it seems like there went Meridien. Chick and Chiclet, Tom and Wade, Bart and Jerry—

EDDIE

And Ramón—

KEEK

Bart and Jerry and Ramón. George and Richard. Jean-Pierre and the sky mattress.

EDDIE

Semaj. (*dark*) I made that little cornholer. Jean-Pierre's accident wasn't an accident, you know.

KEEK

What I'm saying is that overnight the neighborhood turned into a, into a fairy bower. Thank God most of the boys had already grown up and gone to college.

EDDIE

Well that remark alone is worth a lawsuit. Wait until Charles hears about this. (*beat. No Charles to tell.*) Do you mean to say that all these years I have been the victim of your *tolerance*?

KEEK

Oh Eddie, you're always the victim of something.

EDDIE

Property values have more than doubled since we moved in. If it weren't for me, you'd still be having fondue parties! You'd be vacationing in *Ireland*. Taking cruises to the Bahamas. Going to craft fairs. You'd have lazy susans and wallpaper borders and wind chimes. Rock gardens! Ceiling fans! Dried flower arrangements!

KEEK

When you're Irish, there is nothing wrong with a trip to Ireland. And what is the difference between a fondue pot and an omelet station?

EDDIE

Timing! I took you places, sent you places!

KEEK

Terry Thoman got raped in Mallorca!

EDDIE

How is that my fault? I told her that hotel was chancy. Penny wise, pound foolish. What about Morocco? That was a blast.

KEEK

You ditched us every night for your own—*louche* pursuits.

EDDIE

I cannot believe I am hearing this. I made you too, Kiki Hedman.

KEEK

Now you're being ridiculous.

EDDIE

You didn't know *louche* from *douche* when I met you, *Kathy Jo Stump*. I remember a certain dishwater blond—with barrettes and rosacea—who served ham steak and fried apples to her guests on Japanese china. I remember you in cargo shorts. I got you to the gym, got you sand-blasted by Adam Basner, got your jaw re-wired, made a bonfire of your pashminas and terry cloth tops, *everything*. You're a social force now, because of me. How dare you ask me to bake your grits?

KEEK

It's time for you to leave, Eddie.

EDDIE

With pleasure, *Lady Stump*. Just let me get a few things together. And a few of the gifts we gave you. You never lived up to them!



*(a beat of standoff)*

KEEK

His name is Patricio Reyes.

EDDIE

What?

KEEK

Charles's new friend's name is Patricio Reyes. He's from Honduras. He's fifty-three.

EDDIE

Fifty-three? *Fifty-three?* That's older than I am!

KEEK

Only you would know that.

EDDIE

Bitch!

KEEK

He has excellent table manners and a charming accent and his own business. Something computer-related and international. You wouldn't even guess he's gay.

EDDIE

*(the unkindest cut)* You mean, he *passes*? And you have been to dinner with this man? *(beat. Eddie starts to yell.)* Schnauzer! Schnauzer! Schnauzer!

*(There is the sound of a dog going berserk barking.)*

KEEK

Pippa! Pippa! Pippa!

*(KEEK runs from the room. Eddie plucks a large tarnish-protection bag off a silver tea service and starts filling it with flatware from the place settings.)*

EDDIE

*(loud, so Keek can hear him)* And for the record, Bob just wanted me to give him a bottle! And burp him! And you—you pathetic—withholding—*Hausfrau!*—you never would!

*(As a final gesture, he picks up a dinner plate. He turns it over. Reads the mark.)*

EDDIE

Minton! You see? I did make you! I made all of you! I hope your faces fall off in the night!

*(He breaks the plate against the edge of the table)*

*(More barking. Scene over...)*

### **Act One, Scene Three**

*(Eddie goes with his bag of silver and sits on a chair at a table in a conference room. After a moment, TYLER enters. Tyler is efficient, smartly dressed, and on headset.)*

TYLER

She's just finishing up with a client, Mr. Mounce. Can I get you something to drink? Coffee tea seltzer?

EDDIE

I'm fine. Can I ask you a question?

TYLER

Absolutely.

EDDIE

How long have you worked for Trigger?

TYLER

I've been here nine months. Ten months next week.

EDDIE

Do you like it here?

TYLER

I'm learning a lot.

EDDIE

That's code for something. Where were you before that?

TYLER

The Krannert School of Management. That's code for Purdue.

EDDIE  
Really. I'd have thought secretarial.

TYLER  
Why so?

EDDIE  
You're the secretary.

TYLER  
I'm an associate.

EDDIE  
You offered me coffee.

TYLER  
A basic human gesture.

*(beat)*

EDDIE  
Why are you throwing all this shade, girlfriend?

TYLER  
I get it.

*(Tyler starts to go)*

EDDIE  
Get what? What do you get?

TYLER  
You know all the words to the Bronski Beat. Your favorite movies are *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *The Crying Game*. You find Joe Jackson weirdly sexy. Shall I go on?

EDDIE  
What are you doing?

TYLER  
I'm carbon-dating you. I have a B.A. in gender studies from Notre Dame.

*(Door opens. A woman is finishing a phone call. We hear...then eventually, see....JOYCE BONNER, also on headset. From her sweet, pert, feminine appearance, she could be a top-selling Mary Kay saleswoman. Her language tells a different story.)*

JOYCE

So if that amendment isn't killed *this week*—then here's what's going to have to happen, Stew. I'm going to charter a plane for us, that's right, just me and you. We're going to fly up to the high desert, that delicious place of sexy fucking, and when I get you up on the high desert, Stew, I'm going to fuck you. Then I'm going to fuck you over: back, front, sideways, up the gagootz, I'm going to fuck you every which way but loose...then I'm going to cover you with Karo syrup and sprinkle you with fire ants, kind of like the crushed cornflakes on my Aunt Flo's tomato pudding. And then I'll leave you out there to bake. *(pause)* That's right. In the high desert. Love your work. *(call over. sighs)* People. *(to Eddie)* Hi, Eddie.

EDDIE

It's good to see you, Trigger.

JOYCE

Tyler, make tracks.

EDDIE

A coffee, Tyler. Three creams. No sugar. And maybe you can rustle me up a bear claw.

*(TYLER exits)*

EDDIE

You sure can pick them. *(re: Tyler)* What was that about? *(re: the call)*

JOYCE

Tea Party bullshit. I'm trying to ram a mixed-use low-income housing re-do through the council. We're this close.

EDDIE

Did you really fuck him on the high desert?

JOYCE

It's just an expression.

EDDIE

We tried to on our Mongolia trip, but the air was so thin, Charles passed out. We had to break camp early, so I never got to see the—the—the famous tribal something or other that was the whole point of going.

JOYCE

What's in the bag?

EDDIE

Flatware for eight. It would be a lovely parting gift if Keek had better taste in silver.

JOYCE  
What? She dumped you too?

EDDIE  
No. She dropped me.

JOYCE  
Which is worse?

EDDIE  
*(serious)* I can't decide.

JOYCE  
Looks like you're going to have to make some real friends now.

EDDIE  
I'd steal yours, but whoever they are, I'm sure they're not worth having.

JOYCE  
Be nice, Eddie.

*(beat)*

EDDIE  
How did he look?

JOYCE  
There's been no face-to-face. It's all email and messenger. *(beat)* Do you realize that it's been twenty years since you signed your name to anything? Leases, loans, a car title, a mortgage, a tax return, anything of value. Everything—even your bankruptcy—is in Charles's name. From a legal standpoint, he doesn't owe you a nickel, Eddie. And you've really jagged him off, because it's looking like he's not going to give you a nickel.

EDDIE  
What? What? That's outrageous. That vicious—

JOYCE  
*(bark)* NO C-WORDS, EDDIE! NO C-WORDS. After all that you've put him through, I'm surprised he hung on this long.

EDDIE  
What I put him through? Sure, take his side. Just like with Mom and Dad.

JOYCE  
That's not fair. *(a look between them)*

Can I take him to court?

EDDIE

JOYCE

Not if there was no legal contract binding the two of you together.

EDDIE

Palimony?

JOYCE

This is Indiana, kiddo.

EDDIE

Insurance?

JOYCE

He has to die first. And he's free to change his beneficiaries, so I would advise you not to rile him any further.

EDDIE

Blackmail?

JOYCE

That's a two-way street.

EDDIE

I have nothing to hide.

JOYCE

Right, you're just a middle-aged concubine kicked to the curb without his furs and jewels. Boo hoo, Eddie. You'd have better luck settling with him by throwing yourself under his car.

EDDIE

You've always wanted me to fail.

JOYCE

What is that supposed to mean?

EDDIE

I'll get another lawyer.

JOYCE

They won't be free. Or as sympathetic.

EDDIE

You call this sympathetic? You promised to strangle him with his own colon.

JOYCE

Within the limits of the law!

EDDIE

He's got a new boyfriend.

JOYCE

Immaterial.

EDDIE

A wetback. Middle-aged, so he's probably a smuggler. Call INS.

JOYCE

God, you're horrible. I don't know who raised you.

EDDIE

Actually, you do, because they raised you too. *(it sinks in)* So what you're saying, Joyce, is that after three decades of catering to that man, body, heart, and soul, cooking, cleaning, gardening, washing his clothes, ironing his shirts—

JOYCE

You've never ironed a dinner napkin—

EDDIE

Taking them to the drycleaners—and I get *nothing*? Nothing? *(genuinely bewildered)* It's not fair. It's worse than not fair. It's not...It's not...It's not right! There ought to be laws.

JOYCE

Tell that to nine-tenths of the women on this planet.

*(TYLER re-enters, with a coffee, and three rolls of wrapped mini-doughnuts.)*

TYLER

This was what they had in the machine.

EDDIE

There's a grocery store down the block.

TYLER

Take it or leave it, Chunky Pop.

*(Joyce starts laughing)*

EDDIE

I guess this means you're not going to fire his blow-dried ass.

TYLER

Guess not. Your four-thirty is here, Joyce.

*(TYLER exits. Eddie tears into a pack of doughnuts. The sight softens Joyce. He offers her some. She shakes her head.)*

JOYCE

If I start, I won't stop. *(pause)* Do you ever eat popcorn? *(Eddie makes gagging sound)* Me either. Frozen pizzas?

EDDIE

Not since Evansville.

JOYCE

Cube steak?

EDDIE

I'd eat my own puke first.

*(He keeps eating.)*

JOYCE

Really, those are the worst kind of nutrition.

EDDIE

I can't help it.

JOYCE

I've been trying to get snack sales banned in supermarket vestibules, but it's like fucking a spice jar with a salami. Walk in, and it's two for one boxes of Little Debbie's. Three bucks for a bushel of Fritos. Two gallons of pop for a dollar ninety-five. It's no wonder this country is big as a house.

EDDIE

You can count on Little Debbie. Little Debbie is dependable.

*(pause)*

JOYCE

I always hoped you would find something else to do after the travel industry went south.



EDDIE

Those skills wouldn't transfer.

JOYCE

You mean, you were afraid of the Internet.

EDDIE

Could be.

JOYCE

You could have gotten some college.

EDDIE

I was pushing thirty.

JOYCE

Or catered.

EDDIE

God no, that's *work*.

JOYCE

I hoped Charles would *make* you do something. Instead he spoiled you rotten, and you turned into this, this Gay Godzilla.

EDDIE

What I should have done is pulled a Cole Porter—gone East and acquired genuine polish. But no, I stuck around and became queen of the Hoosier Homos, which carries about as much clout as being Governor of Manitoba. *(pause)* I was never smart like you, Joyce.

JOYCE

I don't accept that. Neither did Flo.

EDDIE

Shut up.

JOYCE

Why wouldn't you get tested?

EDDIE

It cost too much.

JOYCE

*(surprise)* What are you talking about? The school district pays. The school district always pays. That's what taxes are for.

EDDIE

That's not what Dad said.

JOYCE

Dad said? Who ever took that a-wipe seriously? Aunt Flo would have helped.

EDDIE

I didn't want her to.

*(He keeps eating. Beat.)*

JOYCE

Alright. I'll keep plugging away at Charles.

EDDIE

I want to see him begging in the streets. With open, running sores.

JOYCE

Get Rachel to help. She adores you.

EDDIE

I shouldn't be a charity case. I raised her as much as her father or mother. I'm owed.

JOYCE

If she had come from your womb, we wouldn't be having this discussion.

EDDIE

Kids. The fucking ace of trumps. *(sigh)* The ultimate luxury good.

JOYCE

If they have parents who want them.

EDDIE

Kicked to the curb at forty-eight.

JOYCE

Fifty.

EDDIE

If you say so, Trigger.

JOYCE

I don't say so, I know so, because I'm forty-eight, and we are not twins. And don't call me that. *(to headset)* What? Bring it in. *(to Eddie)* There's a package for you. From Goodson and Carberry.

*(They wait in silence. Eddie eats a doughnut perhaps. TYLER enters with a cardboard box.)*

EDDIE

Open it.

TYLER

Yes, Miss Mounce.

*(Joyce laughs)*

EDDIE

The mind swims with replies.

*(Tyler produces a box cutter)*

TYLER

Suppress them.

*(Tyler slices into the box, pulls out a floor-length Artic fox fur. Eddie holds out his arms.)*

EDDIE

It's Rufus! Rufus Deering!

JOYCE

I don't believe it. I was just kidding before. You actually own a fur coat?

EDDIE

Three, but Rufus is my baby.

JOYCE

Why Rufus Deering?

EDDIE

*(putting on the fur)* Charles won a big case for a lumber company in Maine called Rufus Deering. This was my swag.

JOYCE

Where on earth do you wear it?

EDDIE

Places you'll never go.

TYLER

Very Siegfried and Roy.

EDDIE

*(serious)* Absolutely.

TYLER

“Wait. There’s more.” *(pulls out a Gap drawstring bag)* “Now how much would you pay?”

EDDIE

Mavis!

JOYCE

Mavis?

EDDIE

The hat. *(Eddie grabs at the bag, opens it.)*

JOYCE

You have a fur hat?

EDDIE

Mavis. What are THESE? *(pause)* Oh, that mean—rotten—horrible—despicable—

JOYCE

NO C-WORDS!

EDDIE

Turd.

JOYCE

What is it? Eddie?

EDDIE

My Sonny and Cher bootlegs. All their specials.

TYLER

*(amazed)* On VHS?

*(Eddie pulls a couple out. Beat.)*

EDDIE

He’s taunting me. He knows I can’t watch them. Oh, the cruelty.

JOYCE

Words fail me here.

TYLER

I guess it's really over, then, huh?

JOYCE

*(that's enough)* Tyler.

*(TYLER exits with box. Eddie draws the bag closed.)*

EDDIE

I need a place to stay, Joyce. Just for now. While I think what to do.

JOYCE

Okay.

EDDIE

*(suspicious)* Just like that?

JOYCE

Just like that. I mean, try to stay out of Grant's way.

EDDIE

Grant?

JOYCE

Yes. My boyfriend Grant.

EDDIE

You have a live-in? Who puts up with you?

JOYCE

Surprised?

EDDIE

*Grant?*

JOYCE

Grant is a perfectly serviceable name.

EDDIE

For a serial killer. What does he do?

JOYCE

Drug enforcement.

EDDIE

That's so beautiful.

JOYCE

Fine, Eddie. Take your silver and your doughnuts and go set up house in Garfield Park. Grab some soaps from the washroom on your way out. They'll come in handy for all those French baths you'll be taking in the fountains. *(into headset)* Tyler, I'm ready.

*(Eddie takes her headset and says to Tyler)*

EDDIE

No she's not, Tyler. Hold. *(pause)* What's the hitch?

JOYCE

The hitch is...I want you to do something with yourself. I want you to get out of the house every single day and do something good.

EDDIE

Define good.

JOYCE

Useful. Positive. Purposeful. Constructive. Helpful. Generous. Kind. Humane. Shall I go on?

EDDIE

I suppose by that you mean pick trash off the highway or walk retards around the mall?

JOYCE

God, you never stop. Did you *never* do charity work with Keek and Pank and Clank and Puffy? Disease galas, scavenger hunts for kidney stones.

EDDIE

That circuit isn't about charity. It's about publicity.

JOYCE

That's why I never went to those things

EDDIE

Never went? You were never invited. We could never take you anywhere, Trigger.

*(beat)*

JOYCE

Here's the thing, Eddie. I'm not ashamed of where I came from. But you. You cleaned up nice, but you still stink. You stink like a woods pussy.

EDDIE

What would be the point of this makeover?

JOYCE

Call me crazy, but I think it's never too late to become a decent human being.

EDDIE

Ha.

JOYCE

Take it or leave it, Chunky Pop. I have a four-thirty.

*(Eddie thinks. He picks up the last roll of mini-doughnuts, unopened, and wrings it like the neck of a chicken. EDDIE drops the package on the table, throws the headset, picks up his bag of silverware, and sweeps out in Rufus Deering.)*

JOYCE

*(reading the tapes)* "Sonny and Cher...The Nitty Gritty Hour." "Sonny and Cher in The New Scooby-Doo Movie." A Sonny and Cher Christmas." Jesus.

#### **Act One, Scene Four**

*(Two weeks later. An office at Heartlands, a senior living and rehab facility. RACHEL, the associate director, is having a discussion with a client, SEMAJ, a gay man in his mid-twenties.)*

SEMAJ

Does anyone, I mean, do any of the patients talk on that floor? I mean, are some of them able to talk?

RACHEL

Some manage.

SEMAJ

To each other? Are they able to talk to each other?

RACHEL

Because of their mobility restrictions, patients interact with caregivers only. On balance it's a much quieter floor.

SEMAJ

I see.

RACHEL

I can arrange a tour any time you like.

SEMAJ

No, no, that's fine. I'm just fact-gathering. Jean-Pierre can still talk, he just doesn't always make a whole lot of sense.

RACHEL

I'm sorry, Semaj.

SEMAJ

*(subject change)* How is your father doing?

RACHEL

Excuse me?

SEMAJ

Is Charles okay—we haven't seen much of him since Eddie.

RACHEL

You mean since Patricio.

SEMAJ

Have you met Patricio? He's very masculine.

RACHEL

If my father has any health issues, I'm not aware of them. If he develops any, I hope he'll contact me. *(blurts out)* What he did to Eddie wasn't right.

SEMAJ

Probably not.

RACHEL

I wouldn't do that to a dog.

SEMAJ

There are two sides to every story.

RACHEL

Not one that I want to hear. Not from the likes of you, at any rate.



SEMAJ

The likes of me? What do you mean by that, Rachel?

*(EDDIE rushes in, wearing a health aide uniform.)*

EDDIE

There you are, you cum-guzzling skank!

RACHEL

I'm in a meeting, Eddie....

SEMAJ

We're kind of done here.

EDDIE

Jean-Pierre said you were here.

SEMAJ

Jean-Pierre? You were in his room? What were you doing in Jean-Pierre's room?

EDDIE

Taking away his lunch tray, James. Fluffing his pillow, James. Changing the water in his *(scorn)* drugstore carnations, James.

SEMAJ

My name is Semaj.

EDDIE

Ooops. But you know, I grew up with reading issues, so you'll always be James to me. *(to Rachel)* He was James, originally.

RACHEL

I know.

SEMAJ

Stay away from my husband.

EDDIE

I work here.

SEMAJ

You can't work here. You have no qualifications for health care.

EDDIE

Maybe not a diploma, but if there's one thing I know how to do, it's the care and handling of old men.

SEMAJ

Did you hire him, Rachel?

EDDIE

Technically, I'm still in my probationary phase.

SEMAJ

God, the only bar lower than candystriper these days is Catholic priest.

EDDIE

No one knows better than you, Semaj, what it's like to be under a priest.

SEMAJ

You have no business being in Jean-Pierre's room.

EDDIE

Actually, I've gone undercover for the Amethyst Panthers. Not that it's a secret—to anybody in town—how that giant flat screen TV “fell” on Jean-Pierre.

RACHEL

Who are the Amethyst Panthers?

EDDIE

Put gray and lavender together and you get amethyst.

SEMAJ

*Pale* amethyst. Maybe.

EDDIE

Oh, shut up. The Amethyst Panthers exist to safeguard and promote the rights of homosexual senior citizens who aren't able to defend themselves. I have a signed statement on my person from Jean-Pierre Laroque saying that you pushed that Vizio flat screen onto him in the sunroom subsequent to his refusing your repeated requests to build a new lake house.

SEMAJ

Jesus Christ, Eddie, it fell off the wall, and we have a settlement from Best Buy to prove it!

EDDIE

Causing several fractures and accelerating his cognitive loss.

SEMAJ

We don't have an *old* lake house, Eddie, so why would I want a new one? Did Jean-Pierre tell you that?

EDDIE

Hence his admit to Heartlands.

SEMAJ

His lake house was with Norman.

EDDIE

He'd still be with Norman if you and your fast behind hadn't turned up at Keek's Oktoberfest.

SEMAJ

Turned up? I was hired to take coats, and you threw Jean-Pierre at me.

EDDIE

Yeah, you met cute. On your knees behind the coatrack cute.

SEMAJ

You hated Norman for whatever reason and got your revenge. But Jean-Pierre and me, *we* got married. Anyone could see that after years of your shenanigans Charles was never ever going to tie the knot with you.

EDDIE

*My* shenanigans?

SEMAJ

You spent money like water; you embarrassed him at company gatherings; you cut him off from his old friends—

EDDIE

*(sniffs)* Straight men, who has the time?

SEMAJ

You wouldn't work. You wouldn't even volunteer.

EDDIE

Charles wanted me in the house.

SEMAJ

You dissed him every chance you got—your contempt for him kept us all on edge. Remember that scene you made at Miss Shirley's when the waitress told us to keep our forks?

EDDIE

I wouldn't expect trash like you to know that flatware is changed for every course.

SEMAJ

It was a chicken-and-waffle house! God, it was terrible to be out with you.

EDDIE

Charles is an historic drunk.

SEMAJ

He wasn't always a drunk, Eddie. *(beat)* And from what I hear and see, he hasn't touched a drop since Arbor Day.

EDDIE

That's impossible.

RACHEL

Can you take this somewhere else, gentlemen?

EDDIE

While we're on the subject of contempt, your husband is aware of your plan to move him to a cheaper floor. I can tell you he's not happy about it.

*(beat)*

SEMAJ

Where did you hear that, Eddie? *(no answer)* Jean-Pierre doesn't know where he is, never mind which floor he's on. He thinks he's in a cabin on the S.S. France. So I don't where you're getting your information about a change of floors. *(looks at Rachel)*

*(awkward!)*

RACHEL

I might have mentioned the subject was up for discussion.

SEMAJ

Rachel!

RACHEL

It's nothing to be ashamed of, Semaj. It's the way these cases tend to go.

EDDIE

Nothing but a savings of six grand a year to put your dear, sweet Sugar Daddy on the floor with all the gorked-out babas. *(takes an all-purpose Chinese cleaver out of his uniform)* This would be cheaper, Semaj. And more dignified.

RACHEL

What is that in your hand?

EDDIE

Have you ever been on the second floor, Semaj? I didn't think so. It's where I go on cigarette breaks.

RACHEL

Eddie! There's no smoking in the facility! *Ever*.

EDDIE

The mummies down there don't seem to mind. Not that I can tell. *(he imitates the gorks)*

*(Semaj takes out his cell phone.)*

SEMAJ

Say cheese, Eddie.

EDDIE

Huh?

*(Semaj takes a picture.)*

SEMAJ

Rachel, you have in your employ an *armed* candystriper who, in violation of all state health regulations, smokes around the patients.

EDDIE

You can't just take my picture like that.

SEMAJ

On top of which, you have breached confidentiality regulations by discussing my husband's care with this employee.

EDDIE

Not without a release!

RACHEL

Please....

SEMAJ

I could shut you down. Or I could transfer Jean-Pierre to another facility. *(beat)* And then shut you down anyway.

RACHEL

What can I do to save the situation?

SEMAJ

Terminate her. Now.

EDDIE

How about this signed statement from Jean-Pierre?

*(He pats his breast pocket. Rachel snatches a piece of paper from it.)*

RACHEL

Menus for the week.

EDDIE

It's on the other side.

RACHEL

Shut up, Eddie!

SEMAJ

I am going to visit my husband now and see if he's still breathing. I will pass through this office again on my way out and expect to find you gone.

EDDIE

These are the thanks I get for getting you off the street, Semaj. Everyone takes. Nobody gives.

*(There are a million potential replies to this, but SEMAJ takes the high road and exits.)*

EDDIE

You got off easy. I figured he'd have me fired *and* blackmail you into the cheaper room.

RACHEL

Oh Eddie. Give me a smoke. *(Eddie gets out his cigarettes)* Where did you get the cleaver?

EDDIE

I was helping the kitchen staff break down boxes.

RACHEL

Give it here.

*(he does, lights his own cigarette. They smoke in silence for a bit.)*

EDDIE

Has your father stopped drinking?

RACHEL

Not that I can tell.

EDDIE

You shouldn't be in the middle of this, Rachel.

*(They smoke a bit)*

RACHEL

Are there Amethyst Panthers?

EDDIE

I made it up.

RACHEL

There should be.

EDDIE

Semaj did push that TV on Jean-Pierre. The truth will out one day. *(beat)* Maybe I should have gone into the army. Followed my first love.

RACHEL

Combat?

EDDIE

Trent Deaver. He enlisted. His home life was as chaotic as mine.

*(surprise)*

RACHEL

Did Trent love you back?

EDDIE

Oh yeah. Big time.

RACHEL

Eddie?

EDDIE

Do you remember Mike Aquino?

RACHEL

Oh God. Why bring him up?

EDDIE

Do you remember how crazy things got with Mike Aquino?

RACHEL

Crazy isn't the word. Shit like that you never forget.

EDDIE

That was Trent and me. I was cute; Trent took your breath away. Sweet for days and smart on top of it all.

RACHEL

You were smart too, I'm sure.

EDDIE

I was cunning. Which is not nothing, don't get me wrong, but it's not the same thing.

RACHEL

What happened?

EDDIE

Trent could pass. I never could. Or when I was with him, I never wanted to pass. After high school, he told me not to follow him into the army. I had this crazy idea we'd be put in the same platoon, or whatever they called it, sleep in bunk beds, make out on guard duty. When he left, I was messed up. Lord, the crazy letters I made Joyce write for me. My Aunt Flo had one of her girlfriends hire me into her travel agency. Eight months later I met Charles.

RACHEL

Huh.

EDDIE

Don't kid yourself, Rachel. Your father felt that way about Nancy once upon a time. He still drunk-calls her. To apologize.

RACHEL

He does not.

EDDIE

Ask her, if you've got a mind to. He doesn't remember in the morning. *(finishing his cigarette)* Now that I'm more than halfway through, I'm glad I knew real love.

RACHEL

Halfway through? *(Eddie looks at her—duh!)* Eddie.

EDDIE

Take my age, double it, and what do you get?



RACHEL

I'm not sure. Your age has always been a mystery.

EDDIE

Ninety-two.

RACHEL

What will you do now?

EDDIE

I have an in at St. Rita's. Semaj was right. The Catholic priesthood is in such straits, they'll take any penis with a pulse.

RACHEL

You can stay with me for as long as you like. Dad couldn't be more pissed about it, really. Mom too.

EDDIE

Thanks. Thanks for everything, kiddo. You know, watering your vegetables wasn't the worst gig in the world. You run a tight ship.

RACHEL

Where will you go now?

EDDIE

Oh, my dear girl, there's still so much further to fall. Remember my people.

RACHEL

Evansville?

EDDIE

Evansville-on-the-Ohio.

RACHEL

Is Trent Deaver there?

EDDIE

No, he's dead. To me.

*(He gets up to go)*

RACHEL

Thank you, Eddie.

EDDIE

What for?

RACHEL

For getting me through Mike Aquino. I was so....messed up.

EDDIE

No more than most, I think. Besides, that's the age for it.

RACHEL

But thank you anyway.

EDDIE

Put it on my tab.

*(EDDIE exits.)*

### **Act One, Scene Five**

*(Several weeks later, at a independently-owned motel downstate in Evansville, Indiana. DWAYNE enters, pushing a motel room cleaning cart, replete with brushes, towels, wipes, sprays, soaps, mini-shampoos, etc. He rolls it up to a room door marked 6. He takes out his skeleton key, thinks about going into the room, decides instead to sit on the floor SR and have a smoke. LORENE, the owner, enters SL and not seeing Dwayne, decides to find him.)*

LORENE

GUMBY!!!!!!!!!! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?

DWAYNE

*(pops his head out)* Right here.

LORENE

What are you doing down there?

DWAYNE

Something fell.

What? LORENE

A cat treat. DWAYNE

A what? LORENE

You need something? DWAYNE

I need clean rooms is what I need. They're not going to clean themselves. LORENE

*(considers this)* Ha. DWAYNE

The god-walkers are coming at noon. LORENE

God-walkers? DWAYNE

You know what I mean. LORENE

Do I? DWAYNE

Those two-fisted Jenny heifers who walk around in circles and pray for peace. LORENE

You mean the labyrinthers. DWAYNE

That's not a word, but yes. LORENE

I think it is a word. DWAYNE

Well it's not. LORENE

DWAYNE

We don't have a labyrinth.

LORENE

No. We don't. There's one over to New Harmony.

DWAYNE

There is?

*(beat)*

LORENE

How many months old were you when your mother dropped you on your head?

DWAYNE

You were there. You tell me.

LORENE

Do you know how long that charter takes from St. Louis? Seven and a half hours and since not one of them will have set her God-fearing ass on a bus toilet to relieve herself, their bladders are going to be the size of tether balls when they pull up, and you know what that means, Gumby, don't you?

DWAYNE

Can you collect disability for being dropped on your head?

LORENE

Don't interrupt! *(going on)* It means the godwalkers are going to need to bomb out the bathrooms, so they'll want THEM SPIC AND SPAN!

DWAYNE

*(He waves a toilet brush)* I get it.

LORENE

And this time remember to refill the butt gaskets.

DWAYNE

You know. I read where those things aren't as sanitary as they say.

LORENE

They are a, a, a...oh hell, what's the term? Butt gaskets give this place market share.

DWAYNE

They say when you pick one up after you've done your business, your hands get just as germ-y as if you didn't use it in the first place.

LORENE

I don't give a shit, Gumby. Christian women frequent my establishment secure in the knowledge that there will always be sanitary paper on hand with which to completely cover the hopper. *(pause)* Where is Rosario?

DWAYNE

I dunno.

LORENE

She was right here.

DWAYNE

She wasn't feeling so hot. I think she went into fourteen.

LORENE

Is it jetlag, or is it her period?

DWAYNE

*(Eddie imitation)* "That's not my jurisdiction."

LORENE

And where is His Highness?

DWAYNE

The antique mall.

LORENE

He can't keep paying me in forks. He knows that.

DWAYNE

That silver ain't worth shit.

LORENE

It is worth shit, just not here. I know Royal is low-balling him on every last piece.

DWAYNE

*(flirty)* What's going to happen when he runs out of silverware?

*(pause)*

LORENE

Well? *(back to work)*.

DWAYNE

*(stalling)* I just don't see how you and him ever went to prom together.

LORENE

*Junior Prom. There's a difference.*

DWAYNE

Sure.

LORENE

For a girl, the bar is way lower for junior prom. Eddie Mounce was the only boy there who went in a black tuxedo. And his bow tie was so small—no bigger'n a barrette. He got out of his Aunt's Oldsmobile with a *walking stick*. I was mortified. I told him to ditch that sucker, or I wasn't leaving the house. Thought he was Fred Astaire or something.

DWAYNE

He said you mortified him.

LORENE

He what?

DWAYNE

Your dress did.

LORENE

What did he say about my dress?

DWAYNE

He said it looked like you made it in home ec.

LORENE

I did make it in home ec.

DWAYNE

He said it was a fine dress for milking cows in. He said your dress was a waste of his corsage.

LORENE

I told you the bar was lower for junior prom! Especially when you're going with a, with a...

DWAYNE

Candy ass? But you didn't know that about him at the time, didja?

*(beat)*

LORENE

Get to work, you lazy sonovabitch.

DWAYNE

Yes, Aunt Lorene.

LORENE

I'll hunt down Rosario. *(sighs)* God, the three of you are worse than kittens in a basket.

DWAYNE

Try fourteen. She was acting weird again. I think Mexico makes her sad.

LORENE

That's just your opinion.

DWAYNE

Can't I have one?

LORENE

Not in my jurisdiction.

*(LORENE exits. Dwayne thinks about working. Unlocks the door to 6, steps in. Comes out. Sits down. Gets out a vape or a homemade pot pipe. He is starting to light it when EDDIE enters. Putting on his hairnet, Eddie sings...)*

EDDIE

"No phone, no pool, no pets, I ain't got no cigarettes...old stogies I have found, short but not too big around...."

DWAYNE

Don't be putting that song in my head again, Eddie. It gets stuck there.

EDDIE

My old man sometimes sang Roger Miller when Trigger and I were taking baths. He'd sit on the pot and strum his guitar. "Dang me, dang me, you oughta take a rope and hang me." *(re: the smoke)* I'd quit that maryjane if I were you. Your brain already runs faster than a baked Brie. Stick to Boone's Farm.

DWAYNE

That's the great thing about you, Eddie. I never know what you're talking about.

EDDIE

Brie is a French cheese of the eighties. Boone's Farm is a sweet apple wine of the seventies.

DWAYNE

Not my scene. Winos get all fat and sloppy and shit.

EDDIE

And you want to look your best when Prince Charming drives up in his Hyundai.

DWAYNE

Princess Charming.

EDDIE

"Sell while you can. You are not for all markets." Ha. *(not without pride)* That's the one line of Shakespeare I remember.

DWAYNE

"To be or not to be."

EDDIE

Bless your heart, dumbshit. Charles and I saw whichever play that was in London. Supposed to be a comedy. I laughed once, at that line. Helen Mirren was in the audience.

DWAYNE

I hate that motherfucker. I hate even hearing his Goddam name. I'd sue him, I would, for what he did to you.

EDDIE

What part of "I have no legal recourse whatsoever" don't you understand, Dwayne?

DWAYNE

It's wrong every which way.

EDDIE

If he doesn't want me, he doesn't want me. You can't fight that. You'll learn.

DWAYNE

Then blackmail the faggot.

EDDIE

*(sharp)* Hey. No 'f's. No 'f's and no 'n's. *(pause)* How old are you?

DWAYNE

Not again, Eddie.

EDDIE

I want to hear you say it.

DWAYNE

I'm twenty-two.



Plus how many months?  
EDDIE

Eight?  
DWAYNE

And you claim to have a high school diploma.  
EDDIE

I do have my diploma!  
DWAYNE

And you plan on taking over The Tarantula Arms when your aunt kicks the bucket?  
EDDIE

Hell no I'm not.  
DWAYNE

That could take years.  
EDDIE

I'm said I'm NOT.  
DWAYNE

Lorene is mighty sturdy.  
EDDIE

Shut up, OK? You know I hate this dump more than anything.  
DWAYNE

*(they look hard at each other)*

The sun is setting on your looks, Dwayne—  
EDDIE

Is not!  
DWAYNE

—so you better hop to it, make a plan, and get out of here chop chop.  
EDDIE

To, like, Cincinnati?  
DWAYNE

EDDIE

No jackass—to New York, L.A., Miami, Atlanta, Seattle, or San Francisco.

DWAYNE

Not Chicago?

EDDIE

Too risky.

DWAYNE

I'm a Black Hawks fan.

EDDIE

I'll pretend I know what that means.

DWAYNE

So you think I look good?

EDDIE

You need a dozen coats of shellac, and more of the King's English, but the basic material is in place. But lookee there—*(he points up)*.

DWAYNE

What? Look at what?

EDDIE

The sun is setting.

DWAYNE

It's noon, Eddie. High noon.

EDDIE

*It was.* It was high noon. It's getting on to 12:30 now.

*(beat)*

DWAYNE

You don't have to sell your silver, Eddie.

EDDIE

I don't?

DWAYNE

I think Aunt Lorene would let you stay here for free.

EDDIE

Why would you think that?

DWAYNE  
Because she's still sweet on you.

EDDIE  
Let me keep my breakfast.

DWAYNE  
You took her to prom.

EDDIE  
*Junior* prom. There's a difference.

DWAYNE  
She never got married.

EDDIE  
Who would have her?

DWAYNE  
She's paying Royal to buy that silver from you.

EDDIE  
How do you know?

DWAYNE  
I'm a sneak.

EDDIE  
I have to use the bathroom, Dwayne.

DWAYNE  
Just pee in the sink. Saves a flush. Climate change is real, Eddie. *(Eddie gives him a look)* Oh. Sure. *(Dwayne takes out a package of toilet seat covers and rips out a butt gasket, hands it to Eddie.)*

EDDIE  
Thank you.

*(EDDIE goes into Room 6. Dwayne starts humming "King of the Road." Tries to shut it down. LORENE re-enters. )*

LORENE  
You haven't moved one freaking inch, Gumby!

DWAYNE

I was talking to Eddie.

LORENE

Where did he go?

DWAYNE

The potty.

LORENE

Did you see Rosario? *(off his silent 'no')* I am losing my mind.

DWAYNE

Guess what, Aunt Lorene?

LORENE

Oh God what?

DWAYNE

I think Eddie is sweet on you.

LORENE

What are you talking about?

DWAYNE

I bring up your name, he gets this soft look in his eye. I say, "Lorene," and he goes...*(imitation)*

LORENE

You said he hated my prom dress.

DWAYNE

That was last week. Just now he was telling me he was ready to make the biggest possible change in his life. And guess what else?

LORENE

What?

DWAYNE

I've caught him reading the Bible in the rooms when he should be cleaning.

LORENE

Are you baked?

*(He gives her a look that means "Duh." EDDIE re-enters, worse for wear.)*

LORENE

Eddie! Why do you insist on wearing that hairnet?

EDDIE

It's a hair shirt for my head.

LORENE

You don't have to wear one.

EDDIE

I have joined the hairnet class.

LORENE

You don't handle food.

EDDIE

She's um.... She's um....

LORENE

Eddie? What's wrong? Are you okay? What is it? What happened?

EDDIE

She's dead. On the can. She's dead on the pot.

LORENE

Who is? Who's dead?

DWAYNE

Oh fuck.

LORENE

Eddie, who's dead? Eddie?

EDDIE

Rosario.

DWAYNE

Shit no. Oh fuck no.

*(Siren sounds. DWAYNE bolts. GRANT DANE, an undercover DEA officer runs in, gun drawn, with a stagehand dressed as a police OFFICER.)*

GRANT

FREEZE!

EDDIE

Excuse me?

GRANT

Lorene K. Dietz, you are under arrest for the unlawful distribution of heroin. You have a right to remain silent. You have— *(She bolts. The OFFICER chases after her.)*

EDDIE

You should know there is a dead woman in there, officer. Bolt upright on the crapper. Her eyes are open, but don't let that fool you.

GRANT

Dammit! Goddamit to hell! I suppose you gave her a glass of orange juice.

EDDIE

I did no such thing.

GRANT

Did you get a look *in* the toilet?

EDDIE

Since she was still *on* it, I didn't feel it was polite to move her.

GRANT

That's too bad, Eddie, because Rosario Castór just shat out half a million dollars worth of heroin. Goddamit!

*(pause)*

EDDIE

How do you know my name? And why am I not under arrest?

GRANT

Because you are above suspicion.

EDDIE

Why is that?

GRANT

Because your sister said you didn't have the energy to deal drugs. And after watching you strip beds these past couple of weeks, clearly you don't.

EDDIE

Trigger said that?

GRANT

No, Joyce said that.

How is it you know my sister?  
EDDIE

We co-habit.  
GRANT

You're—  
EDDIE

Grant. Grant Dane.  
GRANT

Like the dog.  
EDDIE

Never heard that one before.  
GRANT

She didn't say you were brown.  
EDDIE

I'd sure hope not.  
GRANT

*(pause)*

Lorene is in on this?  
EDDIE

Yep.  
GRANT

Dealing heroin?  
EDDIE

Powdered heroin has replaced meth and crack all over the Midwest. It's easier to deliver than pizza. The coroners can't keep up with all the overdoses. As a source city, Evansville is second, behind Dayton.  
GRANT

What's the deal with the orange juice?  
EDDIE

It corrodes the packaging. Sometimes a mule will get so jittery, they forget they're not supposed to drink Pepsi or orange juice.  
GRANT

EDDIE

How about Diet Pepsi?

*(The OFFICER brings LORENE through in handcuffs.)*

EDDIE

Well. Somebody's been a very bad girl.

*(she looks at him)*

LORENE

I never had it easy, Eddie. If anything, you should be impressed. *(to Grant)* Go easy on Dwayne. He's just a dumb kid.

EDDIE

If they catch him.

GRANT

We'll catch him.

LORENE

He knows next to nothing. *(to Eddie)* Do me a favor.

EDDIE

Maybe.

LORENE

Can you cover the desk until DréQuan gets on?

EDDIE

I can do that.

LORENE

Don't rent out room six.

EDDIE

Gotcha.

LORENE

Try to be nice to the Christian ladies, Eddie. *(beat)* They can't help who they are anymore than we can.

EDDIE

I'll take that under consideration.



(LORENE and the OFFICER exit)

GRANT

(calling after them) Give me a second.

EDDIE

I *am* impressed. Poor Rosario. She was going to night school, you know.

GRANT

We do.

EDDIE

She has two little *niños*. Had.

GRANT

They'll go to the grandmother.

EDDIE

Mariela and....

GRANT

Fernando. I said, they'll go to the grandmother. (*beat*) This will maybe sound crazy, Eddie, but Joyce and I have discussed your situation. (*pause*) Are you going to stay here?

EDDIE

With Lorene on her way to the big house, probably not. Problem is, I am about out of silver.

GRANT

Not really. Lorene bought it all back from Royal. (*off a look*) Like I said, we've been keeping watch. So. Eddie. You need to be doing something, am I right?

EDDIE

There is a dead woman in there, Grant.

GRANT

I know.

EDDIE

With—. She's gone for good.

GRANT

So what's next for you, Eddie?

EDDIE

At my age, with my skills and experience, you tell me.

GRANT

Work with me. Work with us.

EDDIE

I've always identified with the robbers.

GRANT

The pay isn't great, but the bennies make up for it. There's some travel involved.

EDDIE

To Bloomington and French Lick?

GRANT

More like Pendleton and Nabone.

EDDIE

Doing good?

GRANT

Your call. There's just one hitch, Eddie.

EDDIE

Lay it on me, muchacho.

GRANT

You're going to have to get an iPhone. *(no reaction)* Okay, then. You know where to find me.

*(GRANT exits. Long beat. Eddie practices a few Charlie's Angels poses with an imaginary gun)*

EDDIE

Freeze!

*(He takes off his hairnet and shakes his hair à la Farah Fawcett-Majors)*

**End Act One**

## KEEP YOUR FORKS

### Act Two, Scene One

*(A couple of weeks later. GRANT, EDDIE, and JOYCE are in Joyce's office. Eddie and Grant are giddy. Takeout lunch.)*

EDDIE

Can I pick my name?

GRANT

After today's sting, Eddie—the sky's the limit.

JOYCE

I wouldn't exactly call that a sting.

EDDIE

Fine, Trigger—shit on my parade.

GRANT

What would you call it, Joyce?

JOYCE

A sting implies the dismantling of an entire operation. You took one bottom feeder off the mean streets of Indianapolis. That's an arrest.

EDDIE

How about G.G.? For my name.

JOYCE

*Gigi*? God Eddie, that movie is a complete abortion. You taught me that.

GRANT

Hey. Best Picture, 1958.

JOYCE

Oh please, Grant. I stopped believing in the Oscars the year Cher won.

GRANT

How about *Ordinary People* over *Raging Bull*? How about *Dances With Wolves* over *Goodfellas*? *Crash* over *Brokeback Mountain*?

EDDIE

How about Judy Holliday over Gloria Swanson *and* Bette Davis?

GRANT

Davis split the vote with Ann Baxter. How about Grace Kelly over Judy Garland?

EDDIE

Don't go there! *(to Joyce)* Are you sure he's straight?

GRANT

Why *Gigi*?

EDDIE

*Not* the Vincent Minnelli musical bloat starring French closet case Maurice Chevalier and the wooden *danseuse* Leslie Caron. G.G. stands for Gay Godzilla.

JOYCE

Oh no.

*(And Grant, on cue, does his Godzilla imitation)*

GRANT

*(roars)* Gojira!

JOYCE

Grant.

GRANT

*(bis)* Gojira!

JOYCE

This is my office, Grant.

GRANT

*(bis)* Gojira!

JOYCE

I have to work here.

EDDIE

*(to Joyce)* That's what you said I was, a Gay Godzilla.

GRANT

Gojira!

JOYCE

He has this thing for Godzilla. *(in Japanese)* "Gojira, watashi o tabenaide! Watashi o tabenaide!"

*(silence. They kiss. beat.)*

EDDIE

Be sure to book the Newlywed Game, if it's still on.

JOYCE

We're not getting married.

GRANT

We're not?

JOYCE

Once burned.

GRANT

But—what about—last night? All the things you said. All those things you made me touch. All those things you touched in me. Joyce? *(to Eddie)* It was my first time.

JOYCE

See what you started?

EDDIE

I started?

GRANT

I thought you loved me. Joyce?

JOYCE

He was on *Guiding Light* for two seasons a thousand years ago.

GRANT

It's been a huge help in my line of work.

EDDIE

I'm not an actor.

GRANT

Oh you're way better than an actor, Eddie. You're a character. No, even better, you're a *mask*, a Roman mask.

EDDIE

What is that supposed to mean?

GRANT

You can only be yourself. I mean, you are so thoroughly absolutely Eddie, no one would ever suspect you could be anything else.

EDDIE

I know! I know! Diego just wanted a blowjob. He should have been more careful.

GRANT

If their bosses paid them more to run heroin, Diego and his buddies wouldn't be turning tricks on the side. Greed takes everyone down in the end.

EDDIE

When do I get to wear a wire?

JOYCE

Settle down, boys.

EDDIE

What is wrong with you? I did good today, and I had a good time doing it. *(mock)*  
Drugs are bad, Joyce. Heroin is really bad. Remember Flatsy Flasko.

JOYCE

I remember *Nancy Flasko. (Eddie starts laughing)* Don't.

EDDIE

Say it.

JOYCE

No.

EDDIE

Say it.

JOYCE

You can't make me.

EDDIE

C'mon, say it. It's my birthday.

JOYCE

It is not your birthday.

EDDIE

Please say it.

GRANT

Say what?

EDDIE

Then I will.

JOYCE  
No.

EDDIE  
You do her way better.

JOYCE  
She's dead, Eddie. Be nice.

GRANT  
Say *what*?

*(beat)*

JOYCE  
One day in the girls' locker room, before gym class, Nancy—

EDDIE  
Flatsy—

JOYCE  
Flasko, a sad-looking girl who grew up on a horse farm, said to her friend Libby Hensel, "I got fucked so many times this weekend, even my bra is crusty." Are you happy now, Eddie?

*(Eddie cracks up. Joyce finally starts laughing.)*

GRANT  
But what does that mean?

EDDIE  
We don't know.

JOYCE  
We've never been able to figure it out.

GRANT  
It's the "even"—

EDDIE  
I know, right?

GRANT  
—*even* my bra is crusty. Like everything else was crusty and that was the last thing to get crusty.

JOYCE

She took her secret to the grave.

EDDIE

They found her frozen to death behind a crack house. "With a bundle of burnt matches on the last day of the old year."

JOYCE

I can't believe I just did that. You're bad. *(the laughter stops)* This isn't cops and robbers, Eddie. It's dangerous work. Mexican heroin is the leading cause of death in eight Midwestern states. We're talking *white* stiff now. It's become a political issue.

EDDIE

"White stiff matter." There's a t-shirt in that.

JOYCE

That's right Eddie; just keep expanding your own special brand of personal offensiveness.

EDDIE

It was a joke, Trigger.

JOYCE

I wish! America is finally ready to re-think five decades of failed drug policies because fat white fucks—no, make that *male* fat white *dirtbag* fucks—are suddenly dying in droves because they're depressed? Because they've lost their death grip on the country and are in pain about it? Boo fucking hoo. Fuck their pain. And don't call me Trigger.

EDDIE

*(to Grant)* So what happens next?

JOYCE

Find the man a money phone.

GRANT

Let's not go overboard, Joyce.

JOYCE

It's all I ever hear about. A money phone, a money phone. You say it in your sleep.

GRANT

As opposed to your "douchebag council member twat."

JOYCE



If a douchebag council member twat had a money phone, we could own this town.

EDDIE

And a money phone would be...

GRANT

A dealer's phone, filled with customer numbers. The information is backed up onto other phones or stored on computers in Mexico.

EDDIE

I'm fine going to Mexico.

JOYCE

No one's going to Mexico. You don't speak Spanish.

EDDIE

They understood me in Oaxaca.

JOYCE

Pointing and screaming won't get you very far inside a drug cartel.

GRANT

When we seize a money phone, we have to seal it in a special bag to block cell signals, so the dealers in Mexico can't erase its memory remotely.

EDDIE

Like a silver bag, for tarnish?

GRANT

I don't know the specs.

EDDIE

Tell me again the street value of what Diego was holding.

GRANT

Six thousand dollars.

EDDIE

What's my cut?

GRANT

Your cut?

JOYCE

It doesn't work that way, Eddie.

EDDIE

It doesn't? I'm not working on commission?

GRANT

Did I say you were? I didn't say that.

EDDIE

I'm a bounty hunter whose life was on the line.

JOYCE

Oh please.

EDDIE

Have *you* ever texted with someone else's dick in your hand? *(pause)* If I don't get a commission, then when do I get a raise?

GRANT

We can discuss this later, Eddie.

JOYCE

*(fierce)* Do *not* cut him a special deal, Grant. Do you hear me? I mean it. I'll knife you in the balls if you do. Are you listening to me?

GRANT

I am.

JOYCE

He has gotten special treatment his entire life; it's high time he grew up.

EDDIE

When did I ever *ever* get special treatment? *(thinks about it)* I do good and this is the thanks I get. I can't win with you. *(to Grant)* Can you?

GRANT

It's not easy. But I'm no day at the beach.

JOYCE

Special deals always come out in the wash and they destroy city governments. We would lose our jobs, Grant, and all credibility, do you want that to happen? Do you?

GRANT

Okay okay. Back off.

*(beat)*

EDDIE

So what's to keep me from just pocketing Diego's stash and selling it myself?

JOYCE

A gun.

GRANT

A conscience.

EDDIE

How long is the wait for a gun?

JOYCE

*Eddie.*

*(TYLER enters with a carry-out bag.)*

TYLER

Rice pudding. Double espresso.

GRANT

Thank you, Tyler.

TYLER

Coffee with three creams and a bear claw.

EDDIE

Gurrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrl.

TYLER

*(to Joyce)* Becker at two.

JOYCE

Thanks, Tyler.

*(Tyler makes to exit)*

EDDIE

Wait up, Ticky Ty. *(Tyler stops)* When you were in high school, did you hold down a job?

TYLER

No.

EDDIE

How about summers?

TYLER  
I had internships.

EDDIE  
College?

TYLER  
I worked in the Dean of Students' Office.

EDDIE  
Did you ever do good?

TYLER  
Excuse me?

EDDIE  
Did you ever sing Christmas carols at a nursing home?

TYLER  
No.

EDDIE  
Did you ever teach spastic kids the Virginia Reel?

JOYCE  
*Eddie.*

TYLER  
What are you trying to say?

EDDIE  
I was just wondering whether you've ever done anything for free.

TYLER  
Not as often as I would have liked, but over a six-year period I did raise 1.8 million dollars for uninsured Indianans living with HIV.

EDDIE  
And you're how old?

TYLER  
Twenty-six.

*(pause. TYLER leaves. Beat.)*

EDDIE

Smell her.

JOYCE

He started a non-profit his junior year at Notre Dame. He's still on their board.

*(long beat)*

EDDIE

So Grant, is it back to nabbing Frito Banditos in the parking lot?

GRANT

No F-words, buddy boy.

EDDIE

Can you get me a hoodie?

JOYCE

In August?

EDDIE

I need to blend in. Someone I know might drive by the Royal Farms looking for a pool cleaner. I don't want to blow my cover.

GRANT

I can get you a hoodie.

EDDIE

Navy, no, forest green, large, with zip pockets. No logos. A hood with a lining.

JOYCE

In cashmere.

EDDIE

All cotton is fine.

GRANT

Deal. Hang with Diego's buddies tomorrow, ask questions.

EDDIE

What happens if someone wants to hire three of us at once?

GRANT

Play it as it lays.

JOYCE

The worst that could happen is you might have to help clean a pool.

## Act Two, Scene Two

*(Three weeks later. Rachel's office at Heartlands. A very nervous DWAYNE is making a paper clip chain at her desk. The sound of a loud truck rumbling by makes him get up from his chair and pull the shade. He starts to light up a cigarette. RACHEL enters.)*

RACHEL

I'm sorry, this is a no-smoking facility.

DWAYNE

Sorry.

RACHEL

Would you like a stick of gum?

DWAYNE

That would be great.

*(She gets a pack out of her drawer and extends it. Takes a piece herself.)*

RACHEL

Why is the shade down?

DWAYNE

The sun was in my eyes.

RACHEL

O-kay.

*(pause)*

DWAYNE

Spearmint. I like spearmint. Did he say when he'd get here?

RACHEL

No. He texted to say he was shopping, but he's not far away.

DWAYNE

So long as it's not antiques he's looking at. *(pause)* Wait. Eddie texted you? Wow.

RACHEL

I know. "Ch-ch-ch-ch-anges."

DWAYNE

Should I know that?

RACHEL

Sorry. Remind me how you know Eddie.

DWAYNE

We, uh, worked together downstate. Last month. For a few weeks, that is.

RACHEL

At the motel?

DWAYNE

Yeah, that's it, my aunt's motel.

RACHEL

And he said I was....

DWAYNE

His daughter. And that you were cool.

RACHEL

And you found me how?

DWAYNE

I looked you up. I'm uh...I'm diligent. It wasn't so hard to find you.

RACHEL

Are you in some kind of trouble, Dwayne?

DWAYNE

At this right exact moment? Uh, no.

RACHEL

O-kay. Did he tell you about my biological father?

DWAYNE

Yeah, he did. That motherfucker. Thirty years and out on his butt.

RACHEL

When the love is gone, it's gone.

DWAYNE

That's what Eddie said, but still.

RACHEL

I hadn't noticed how unhappy they were.

DWAYNE

Is he back staying with you?

RACHEL

He is. He has a new job.

DWAYNE

No shit. What?

RACHEL

Law enforcement.

DWAYNE

What? What kind of law enforcement?

RACHEL

That would be his decision to tell you. *(proud)* He just earned his own set of handcuffs.

DWAYNE

The fuck? Are you shitting me?

RACHEL

You didn't hear it from me, but he's made at least one arrest six days in a row.

DWAYNE

No. Please no. God no. Fuck no. *(beat)* Wait. Did you tell him it was me here to see him?

RACHEL

You said to.

DWAYNE

No I didn't.

RACHEL

Yes, you did.

DWAYNE

Fuck. Fuck. I have to get out of here. Now!

RACHEL

Calm down, Dwayne.

*(He yanks the shade up.)*

DWAYNE



Is there a back way out? Is that a creek down there?

RACHEL

It's not much of one.

DWAYNE

Will my feet get wet? How far do those woods go?

RACHEL

A couple of acres.

DWAYNE

Is there, like, an electric fence anywhere? I don't want to get electrocuted to death with wet feet.

RACHEL

Calm down, Dwayne. It's not that kind of nursing facility.

*(EDDIE enters. Dwayne turns, sees him, then runs up and hugs him. Won't let go. It has been a long time since Eddie has been held in a genuine embrace.)*

DWAYNE

Eddie, Eddie, Eddie.

EDDIE

Dwayne.

DWAYNE

You're a fed?

EDDIE

Technically, no. I'm with the state.

DWAYNE

A narc? *(Eddie assents)* Please don't turn me back in. If you do, I'll kill myself.

EDDIE

You broke parole, Dwayne.

DWAYNE

I know, Eddie. I know and I'm real sorry about that. I was going totally nuts. I couldn't run the motel with just DréQuan, and I kept seeing Rosario on all the toilets, *staring* at me, and like *judging* me...and...I remembered your advice and came to find you. I kept thinking Eddie will know what to do next. He'll tell me what to do.

EDDIE

We figured you'd gone to Kentucky.

DWAYNE

No, I came north to find you. And...and...now you're a narc. Please, Eddie, you can't send me back to that jail. There are hundreds of them in there, acting all batshit.

EDDIE

You were only in for ten days, Dwayne.

DWAYNE

Ten years it felt like.

EDDIE

What would you like me to do?

DWAYNE

Aw fuck, it doesn't matter now.

EDDIE

What did you think I was going to tell you to do?

DWAYNE

You'd tell me which city to hit, tell me how to get there, how to, you know, get along.... Like which way to cut my hair and shit.

EDDIE

Two on the sides, three on top.

DWAYNE

I don't know what that means, but right. You know me. You have my back.

*(EDDIE walks over to the door, opens it, and motions GRANT in.)*

DWAYNE

Aw fuck no, him too? *(to Eddie)* Did you tell him I was here?

GRANT

Hello, Dwayne.

DWAYNE

I'd have never picked you for a snitch.

GRANT

Hey. Be nice.

EDDIE

Dial it back, Dwayne.

DWAYNE

There's gotta be a can of Drano around here to drink.

EDDIE

*(to Grant)* Another drama queen. *(nods to Rachel)* Rachel—

RACHEL

Just him. Nobody else.

*(She extends a pack of cigarettes to Dwayne, who snatches at it.)*

GRANT

Eddie's not a snitch, Dwayne. When Rachel texted, we were already on our way.

DWAYNE

Oh. Should I be glad?

RACHEL

Why were you coming here, Detective—

GRANT

Dane. Grant Dane.

DWAYNE

Like the dog. Ha.

GRANT

Call me Grant, Ms. Leudtke.

RACHEL

Call me Rachel. *(beat)* So?

GRANT

Rachel, how well do you know Patricio Reyes?

RACHEL

Patricio? Our contact has been minimal.

GRANT

How do you mean minimal?

RACHEL

I've had brunch at my father's house twice this summer.

GRANT  
Only twice?

EDDIE  
I told you she was loyal.

RACHEL  
I'm not comfortable with his new relationship.

GRANT  
Okay. In your time together, did Patricio reveal any of his personal background, how he got here, what he does for a living, etcetera?

RACHEL  
I remember he said he was from Honduras.

EDDIE  
Typical Mexican trade up.

GRANT  
Excuse me?

EDDIE  
You know what I mean.

GRANT  
Do I?

EDDIE  
Like the Russian Jew German Jew thing. Southern Italian Northern Italian. Come on, Grant.

GRANT  
I have never been ashamed of where I came from.

EDDIE  
Then what is your real name?

GRANT  
That is my real name. *(off a look from Eddie)* García Mantanilla.

RACHEL  
I like that better than Grant Dane.

GRANT  
You and all my relatives.

RACHEL  
Why would you change it?

GRANT  
Better parts.

EDDIE  
He was an actor.

GRANT  
Am an actor. I'm still Equity. At these two brunches, did Patricio talk business, talk about what he did for a living?

RACHEL  
Not that I remember. Not that I was listening. I was more drawn to—

GRANT  
To what?

RACHEL  
To—this is going to sound weird—to how masculine he was.

EDDIE  
Excuse me?

RACHEL  
I mean, rugged. Edgy. Butch even.

EDDIE  
I'll take my Drano, neat. Make it a double.

RACHEL  
I'm sorry, Eddie. My father did say he traveled, Patricio that is, a lot.

GRANT  
To where?

RACHEL  
Mexico. *(pause)* Now that you've got me thinking, they talked about pottery—the dishes we were eating on came from Mexico, came from a firm Patricio works with. Very colorful.

EDDIE  
I suppose you were served *huevos rancheros*. *(she nods)* Margaritas? *(she nods)* Men.

GRANT

Do you remember the name of the pottery firm?

RACHEL

No.

EDDIE

When they went out of the room, did you check the bottom of a plate?

RACHEL

Who does that?

EDDIE

Homosexuals with standards.

RACHEL

Sorry.

GRANT

Did he say where he flew to or from in Mexico? Or where his connecting flights to in the States were?

RACHEL

San Diego?

GRANT

San Diego!

RACHEL

I just made that up, Grant. How should I know? Is my father in trouble?

GRANT

Not that we can say.

RACHEL

Is he in danger?

DWAYNE

Fuck yeah! Your dad's a total douche.

RACHEL

Eddie, is this one of those heroin deals? *(Grant and Eddie assent)* And that's it? So what now? You come, scare the crap out of me, and leave? Do you want me to ask Patricio for a bag of heroin next time I have brunch? This is so not fair.

*(pause)*

EDDIE

I've got it. I've got an idea; I've got a fabulous idea.

RACHEL

Be serious, Eddie.

EDDIE

I'll have to eat a bushel of crow, but it's perfect.

RACHEL

Don't go there, Eddie. Don't go home.

EDDIE

It's not my home anymore. *(to Dwayne)* Dwayne, can you say "significant contribution?"

DWAYNE

Significant contribution?

EDDIE

Like you mean it, Dwayne. Put some force behind it. And look me in the eye when you say it.

DWAYNE

Significant contribution.

EDDIE

That's some bit of better. Now say, "I'd like you to consider making a significant contribution."

DWAYNE

I'd like you to consider making a significant contribution.

EDDIE

Now say, "meaningful outreach opportunities."

RACHEL

Eddie?

EDDIE

Shush!

DWAYNE

Meaningful outreach opportunities.

GRANT

Now say, "In Hartford, Hereford, and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly happen."

DWAYNE

Uh....

EDDIE

That was a joke. Dwayne, are you interested in having your record wiped clean?

GRANT

That's not your jurisdiction, Eddie.

EDDIE

Not yet, no. But it's still a great idea.

DWAYNE

No more parole, or nothing?

EDDIE

No more parole, or *anything*. You can start over.

DWAYNE

Am I going to be in a play?

EDDIE

In a way.

*(Dwayne thinks)*

DWAYNE

Will I have to have sex with guys?

EDDIE

Not if you don't want to.

*(Dwayne thinks some more)*

DWAYNE

Wiped clean, you say?

EDDIE

Clean as a whistle.



## Act Two, Scene Three

*(KEEK and JOYCE are sitting down with cocktails in Keek's parlor. There is a silver trumpet vase with a wrapping bow stuck to it in front of them. A ball of crumpled wrapping paper.)*

KEEK

How is it that you and I have never met?

JOYCE

We have, actually. At least five times.

KEEK

Of course. Now I remember. You've changed your hair. And you're a veterinarian.

JOYCE

I'm a lawyer. I run the city housing and human rights commission.

KEEK

Lovely. Doing good is a family trait, then.

JOYCE

Eddie's last to the party, but we did have an aunt, our Aunt Flo, who taught reading to slow learners up until the very end of her life.

KEEK

I suppose this is Pearce's influence then. On Eddie.

JOYCE

You could say that.

KEEK

Such a charmer. And very handsome, don't you think?

JOYCE

He'd do after a long sea voyage.

KEEK

*(lets that one pass)* How did they meet?

JOYCE

At a Ritz-Carlton.

KEEK

*(whispers)* Which one?

JOYCE

Why are you whispering?

KEEK

Was I? He's done wonders for Eddie's disposition.

JOYCE

New love and all.

KEEK

*(picks up trumpet vase)* Eddie really didn't have to.

JOYCE

He wanted to make things right.

KEEK

*(whispers)* Is it really love, do you think?

JOYCE

You're whispering again.

KEEK

Sorry.

JOYCE

If it's not love, it's a second chance at least.

KEEK

We all need them.

JOYCE

Did you ever do anything else, Keek?

KEEK

Besides....

JOYCE

Besides whatever it is you do do and have been doing all these years that you haven't remembered me from Adam.

KEEK

Oh. I went to nursing school once upon a time.

JOYCE

What happened?

KEEK

Robert wanted me at home, and then the children came.

*(beat)*

JOYCE

Since you and I will probably never meet again, Keek, can I ask you something personal?

KEEK

Don't say that, Joyce—*(whispers)*—What if there's a wedding?

JOYCE

Please stop whispering. It's creeping me out.

KEEK

I said, what if there's a wedding? Marriage would be so good for your brother.

JOYCE

Children would be even better.

KEEK

Weeeelll....

JOYCE

That way, if things got rocky with Pearce, Eddie could leverage them just the way you have.

KEEK

Brilliant!!! *(gets suspicious)* Excuse me?

*(Joyce laughs. DWAYNE enters as Pearce, with a million dollar makeover, and a slight accent.)*

DWAYNE

Filthy habit. Sorry.

KEEK

Oh Pearce, you could have smoked indoors.

DWAYNE

And missed the Japanese garden? You must tell me who you use. We'll be needing a gardener when we get set up.

KEEK

Do you think you'll settle in Meridian?

DWAYNE

No. Eddie wants a fresh start.

KEEK

But this is such a wonderful neighborhood, interesting, diverse people, easy to get wherever...at least look at some properties, Pearce.

DWAYNE

Eddie says it wouldn't feel right, with Charles and Patricio so close by. If you want to know the truth, I had a ghastly time convincing him to come to you today.

KEEK

But that's so silly. Eddie and I are the oldest of friends. One magical day he took me under his wing and taught me how to live. Live properly.

DWAYNE

So true, Katherine. He rescued me as well.

KEEK

Friends call me Keek.

DWAYNE

He's ashamed he "borrowed" your flatware.

KEEK

Every great friendship has its bumps, and he brought it back, didn't he? He's more than made up for his—*transgression*—by bringing you to me today.

JOYCE

How old were you when your father passed, Pearce?

DWAYNE

Fifteen.

KEEK

I'm so so sorry. They say fathers are important.

JOYCE

What did you do?

DWAYNE

Mother and I were managing just fine until an uncle tried to take over the business. The legal battle dragged on through university and wasn't settled until I was practically done with military service.

KEEK

You were in the military?

DWAYNE

All the men in my family put their country first.

KEEK

How refreshing!

JOYCE

Was it settled in your favor?

DWAYNE

*(laughs)* Would I be here with you sirens if it weren't? *(Keek and Joyce laugh)* I haven't the slightest interest in running an oil conglomerate, so mother and I have been rowing lately about whether to just chuck it. The state, of course, will have other ideas—

KEEK

Remind me which state.

DWAYNE

Manitoba. Wealth management is so dreary.

JOYCE

Unless you haven't a pot to piss in.

DWAYNE

Well, absolutely. I think that Eddie's background, so different from mine—

JOYCE

Tough as balls you mean—plus the huge age difference—and the color divide—

KEEK

*(shivers with pleasure)* Isn't it all delicious?

DWAYNE

Tightens our bond. And now, gearing up to launch our venture, I can't help but feel that a higher hand has brought us together.

KEEK

Stop. You're going to make me cry.

*(Joyce chokes down a snicker. Drains her cocktail.)*

JOYCE

Time for a refill?

DWAYNE

*(handing her his glass)* Absolutely.

KEEK

*(getting up)* I'll wait a smidge.

JOYCE

Take a load off, Keek. I can find my way to a bottle.

*(JOYCE exits with glasses)*

KEEK

Pearce...I just hate the idea of you and Eddie living in some other part of the city. We simply must have you here.

DWAYNE

It's off the table, Keek. I've tried and tried.

*(brilliant idea)*

KEEK

I have it! I have just the thing!

DWAYNE

What is it?

KEEK

We must convince Eddie to let me host your kick-off here!

DWAYNE

Here?

KEEK

Absolutely. The neighborhood is crawling with—*sympathizers*! What better way to introduce you and your cause to the Meridien community? There are dozens of pockets to pick, deep pockets! *(new thought)* Best of all, when all of his friends and associates see him here—with *you* on his arm—and a humanitarian mission in the bargain, it will be an absolute triumph for him. "Eddie's Black! And Pearce has got him!"

DWAYNE

Eddie's *black*?

KEEK

Did I say that? I meant, “Eddie’s back, and Pearce has got him!”

DWAYNE

I like how you think, Keek. But, really, it’s far too much effort for you.

KEEK

Heavens, we do fundraisers in our sleep. With no overhead, the net is bigger in a private home. And this is not the umpteenth go-round for uterine cancer, it’s a brand-new, important cause—

DWAYNE

So you’ll look good—

KEEK

I was hardly thinking of that—oh you must convince him, Pearce.

DWAYNE

No you must convince him.

KEEK

We’ll do it together.

*(pause)*

DWAYNE

And yet....

KEEK

And yet what?

DWAYNE

But....

KEEK

And yet but what?

DWAYNE

You have to promise....

KEEK

Anything!

DWAYNE

Charles and Patricio.

KEEK

We'll cut them dead. What does Eddie call it? The—the—DTU. The “dead to us” file. We'll shove them in the DTU.

DWAYNE

No, Keek. You must invite them.

KEEK

Oh. Really? Are you sure it'll be good for Eddie? He can be so fragile.

DWAYNE

I want you to do it for us, for us as a new couple. Eddie would never let on, but he was devastated by Charles's rejection. More than he'll admit, even to himself. I think he must come face to face with Charles—cut him, ignore him, if he feels the need, it's up to him how to play his hand—and let Charles see that he's moved on.

KEEK

Moved on? Dear boy, he's traded up the checkerboard!

DWAYNE

I'll take that as a compliment, Keek. I think it's important, too, that he meet Patricio face to face, throw him shade if he has to. It's *his* night.

KEEK

Charles will feel so guilty, he'll write an enormous check. It's a win win win win win!

DWAYNE

Eddie told me you were a brilliant woman.

KEEK

He did? He really said that? Bless you, Pearce.

*(Keek embraces Dwayne. EDDIE and JOYCE enter, with a plate, and a tray of cocktails. EDDIE looks like a million bucks as well.)*

EDDIE

Connie Casserole coming through!

KEEK

Do I smell what I think I smell?

EDDIE

It's *gougère*.

KEEK

*Gougère!* I could cry, I've missed it so.



EDDIE

Sorry for the wait. Your pastry bag was filthy.

*(KEEK pops a ball, chews, squeals with gustatory pleasure, throws her arms around Eddie.)*

KEEK

And I've missed you too.

EDDIE

Me too, Kiki. Me too.

DWAYNE

*(dropping the Pearce "act." To Joyce)* Fuck I need a drink. What's *gougère*?

JOYCE

French cheese balls.

*(Dwayne takes a cheese ball. Tastes, gags, drops it in the trumpet vase.)*

DWAYNE

Tastes like feet. Who's Connie Casserole?

JOYCE

A cultural reference known only to gay men.

*(Keek, drawing back, but still holding Eddie)*

KEEK

While you were in the kitchen, Eddie, Pearce and I were cooking up something too. Something wonderful and delicious. Don't even listen, just say yes.

EDDIE

I'll say maybe for the moment.

KEEK

I won't let you go until you say yes.

EDDIE

What is it?

KEEK

We are going to launch your campaign in this very room.

EDDIE

Are we?

KEEK

In three weeks—right here! A kick-off fundraiser!

EDDIE

*(to Dwayne)* Oh honey, really?

DWAYNE

Really and truly...uh...darling.

EDDIE

Oh, but we can't.

KEEK

Oh, but you *must*, you simply must.

*(He assents. She releases her hold.)*

KEEK

Pick up your glasses, everyone! A toast.

*(They pick up their glasses. After a brief beat, Joyce says....)*

JOYCE

To the Amethyst Panthers of Indiana!

ALL

To the Amethyst Panthers!

*(lights out)*

## Act Two, Scene Four

*(Three weeks later. The upstairs hallway at Keek's. There is a full, portable coat rack, stuffed with coats. RACHEL is there chatting with PATRICIO, a handsome, suave, well-spoken man.)*

PATRICIO

Let us not have this discussion here.

RACHEL

No? How about downstairs in the sunroom? My father needs to deal with the repercussions of his actions. That's what he always said to me when I was a little girl.

PATRICIO

But Edward is doing so well.

RACHEL

You have no right to that opinion, Patricio, no right at all.

PATRICIO

It has been months since Arbor Day—

RACHEL

Months? Thirty years together, and you're talking *months*? Are you sure you're gay? This is why we have to have the Amethyst Panthers. If you're too chicken to call him, I will.

PATRICIO

I regret that you are upset, Rachel. I would hope that time—

RACHEL

Was Dad cheating with you before Arbor Day?

PATRICIO

Is that of any real consequence?

RACHEL

It is to me. Where did you meet?

PATRICIO

On a business trip in Scottsdale.

RACHEL

Steam room? Men's room? Hotel bar?

PATRICIO  
Really, Rachel—

RACHEL  
Dad's too Luddite for Scruff.

PATRICIO  
We met in court.

RACHEL  
*(brought up short)* In court?

PATRICIO  
I had filed an amicus brief for an associate in a copyright infringement case. Your father was lead attorney for the defense.

RACHEL  
Oh. *(fresh attack)* When was this?

PATRICIO  
Last November.

RACHEL  
Almost a year? That's just gross. You know, if my father cheated on my mother and on Eddie, he'll cheat on you too.

PATRICIO  
I understand your father.

RACHEL  
Meaning you don't care if he does? Ughh—that's even grosser. *(beat)* Are you thinking of tying the knot—for love or a green card?

PATRICIO  
Ah—you will have to ask Charles about that.

RACHEL  
So get him on the phone, why don't you? *(he makes no move)* What are you afraid of? Maybe you have a wife and family in Mexico you support?

PATRICIO  
Mexico?

RACHEL  
You know what I mean. I mean Honduras.

PATRICIO

I wonder. I do wonder. Why would you ask?

RACHEL

Because you don't seem all that gay, that's all.

PATRICIO

An optical illusion, perhaps. *(pause)* I would think you would wish your father to be happy. We are happy together, Rachel. We should all be happy with the time we have here on earth.

RACHEL

I don't want another parent. You can tell my father three is enough.

PATRICIO

Goodbye, Rachel. Your attachment to sexual fidelity is curious. I wish you well with that.

RACHEL

Pendejo!!!!

*(PATRICIO exits. RACHEL starts to rummage through the coats. DWAYNE enters.)*

DWAYNE

Dude, I checked his topcoat first thing.

RACHEL

I'm looking for cigs. *(DWAYNE produces a pack and offers it to her.)* Dunhills? Isn't that a little too-too?

DWAYNE

A smoke's a smoke. So pop's a no-show.

RACHEL

So far.

*(They light up)*

DWAYNE

Too bad. I wanted to spill something boiling hot on him.

RACHEL

It's a cold buffet.

DWAYNE

These guys are complete horn dogs. Hands everywhere.

RACHEL

They're stoked on Viagra for the cater-waiters. That's how Semaj got his foot into Meridien. Did you meet Semaj Laroque? He just moved his sugar daddy to the gork floor at Heartlands to save five hundred bucks a month. (*darkly*) People. They're the worst.

(*EDDIE enters*)

DWAYNE

Did you see him?

EDDIE

I did. First thing I'm buying is a neck-lift.

RACHEL

*Eddie.* You look great.

DWAYNE

He's a total goon. Did you speak to him?

EDDIE

I can't make small talk until after the pitch.

RACHEL

Are you nervous?

EDDIE

I am never nervous. (*to Dwayne*) Did you get acquainted?

DWAYNE

Nothing doing. Señor Patty-Cake is going to have to come to me.

EDDIE

How is that a plan?

DWAYNE

You told me to spray the room first. I'm not going to just throw myself at him. It's gotta be his idea.

EDDIE

Spoken like rough trade the world over. Did Patricio let anything slip to you, Rachel?

RACHEL

No, but I did say "Mexico." My bad.

EDDIE

Did you see where he keeps his phone?

RACHEL

I couldn't get him to call Dad.

*(KEEK enters)*

KEEK

Why cluster here? The party is downstairs. Oh, I get it. *(whispers)* Cocaine.

RACHEL

Why are you whispering?

KEEK

*(whispers)* Because we're in the coat closet.

DWAYNE

No, Keek, this is your hallway.

KEEK

You're right, Pearce; it is. *(to Eddie)* How are you feeling?

RACHEL

He's nervous.

EDDIE

I am not nervous. I am disgusted. I am disgusted by the hypocrisy of the Indianapolis faggerati.

KEEK

Really darling? I mean, you were the worst of all.

EDDIE

I was not.

KEEK

Remember how you cut Chase Roemelt? And Dale Maxwell? And Terry Maltby. And how you ran Cissy and Dudley Glover back to Toledo for their "infractions"? *(realizing her slip)* Which is why your Amethyst Panthers will be a brilliant success. Because now all of a sudden you *care* about people, and your old friends will *feel* that change in you, and will give to your cause, and you can make a fresh start.

EDDIE

No. They'll give because they all want to fuck Dwayne.

RACHEL  
You mean Pearce.

EDDIE  
Pearce.

DWAYNE  
*(to Keek)* Dwayne is my maiden name.

KEEK  
Excuse me?

DWAYNE  
I mean, my Canadian name.  
*(JOYCE enters, a little tipsy. Sees everybody.)*

JOYCE  
Goddammit!

RACHEL  
What's wrong, Joyce.

JOYCE  
I came up here to fart.

DWAYNE  
Go crop-dust the party.

RACHEL  
Start with Patricio.

JOYCE  
I have to hand it to you, Kathy Jo. They aren't *all* Log Cabin Republicans.  
*(JOYCE exits)*

KEEK  
Is that good or bad? *(whispers)* So where's the cocaine?

EDDIE  
*(whispers)* There is no cocaine.

KEEK  
Why are you whispering?



EDDIE

*(it's time)* Rachel—

RACHEL

Keek—I think it's time I met Pippa—Eddie says she's amazing.

EDDIE

For a dog.

KEEK

She's a marvel, an absolute marvel. I'm never alone with Pippa around.

RACHEL

I'm done with men.

KEEK

Now don't say that, Rachel. I know plenty of young men.

EDDIE

Ish. Young-*ish* men. Rachel—before you meet Pippa, call your father and *make* him call Patricio.

KEEK

Oh dear, is something wrong?

EDDIE

Say I've challenged him to a duel.

*(Keek thinks, starts laughing. KEEK and RACHEL exit.)*

DWAYNE

I'm freaking out, Eddie.

EDDIE

There's nothing to freak out about.

DWAYNE

I mean, if he wants to blow me...um okay, for the cause, but no kissing. And I'm not doing it to him. Not for some stinking phone.

EDDIE

Okay.

DWAYNE

I mean, what if he's carrying a gun?

EDDIE

He won't be carrying a gun.

*(pause)*

DWAYNE

Okay, I lied. We talked downstairs.

EDDIE

Good boy.

DWAYNE

It's creepy.

EDDIE

Did you do what I told you?

DWAYNE

Yeah, I only like brushed his leg five times. And I tilted my head sideways like a dog when he was talking.

EDDIE

Did you let your mouth fall open attractively?

DWAYNE

It does that anyway.

EDDIE

Did you blot your cheeks with the moisture on your highball glass?

DWAYNE

In October?

EDDIE

Fair enough.

*(beat)*

DWAYNE

I want you to know, if I don't make it....

EDDIE

Make what?

DWAYNE

Make it out alive....

EDDIE

You really are a drama queen.

DWAYNE

I'm serious, Eddie. These dudes use saws on people.

EDDIE

In Mexico, not here.

DWAYNE

I want you to know I'm only doing this for you.

EDDIE

And a clean record.

DWAYNE

I want this to work out for you.

EDDIE

And a clean record.

*(JOYCE zips back in)*

JOYCE

Rachel said it's in his left jacket pocket.

EDDIE

You're in luck, Dwayne. *(to Joyce)* Inside or outside pocket?

JOYCE

*(dialing)* She didn't say.

EDDIE

Who are you calling?

JOYCE

Grant. He'll want an update.

EDDIE

Where is he?

JOYCE

They've surrounded the block.

DWAYNE

Fuck, I'm scared. Fuck.

JOYCE

*(into phone)* Leudtke a no-show. Phone in sport coat. Dwayne on deck. Here with G.G.—*(we hear Grant's voice go "Gojira!" over the phone)* Honey, no! *("Gojira!")* I am on the phone! *("Gojira!")* This is a stakeout! *("Gojira!") (pause)"* Gojira, watashi o tabenaide! Watashi o tabenaide."

*(Joyce giggles, blows a kiss, shuts off phone. Eddie and Dwayne stare at her, waiting for the translation. It may take a while.)*

JOYCE

"Please don't eat me, Mr. Godzilla."

EDDIE

That's so beautiful. Now go find out whether it's an inside or outside pocket, please.

JOYCE

Do you have any weed?

DWAYNE

Sure thing.

EDDIE

No toking in the coatroom.

*(JOYCE exits)*

DWAYNE

How is the jacket lucky?

EDDIE

If that's where he keeps his phone, then you won't have to get him out of his pants.

DWAYNE

Why can't Grant and his SWAT team just shoot him first, then ask questions?

EDDIE

This isn't Mexico.

DWAYNE

Yeah. *(pause)* Ever been there?

EDDIE

It's a depressing dump. I hate it.

DWAYNE

No way. All them beaches? And the señoritas with the margaritas?

EDDIE

*(the honest truth)* All the sunshine and gates in the world can't hide the poor people.

*(KEEK zips in)*

KEEK

Now that's enough spooning, you lovebirds. Greta Gunderson can't wait to meet you, Pearce.

EDDIE

Go, sweetie. *(sotto voce)* Get him up here. *(regular voice)* Make sure to tell Greta you love her shoes.

KEEK

*(laughing)* Eddie! You're horrible! *(to Dwayne)* Greta Gunderson, poor thing, lost her feet to diabetes.

DWAYNE

Kill the people, honey.

EDDIE

Go shake that moneymaker.

*(Dwayne impulsively kisses Eddie on the mouth. DWAYNE and KEEK exit.)*

*(Eddie is alone for moment. He might as well practice his speech. He may have a sheet of notes.)*

EDDIE

...The Amethyst Panthers are dedicated to serving our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters...*(stops)* gay and lesbian and transgender *(rolls his eyes)* brothers and sisters and...*(stops)*...Jesus...our gay and lesbian and transgender *communities* as they face, often alone, and without financial or emotional support, the inevitable process of aging, decline, and end of life care. Much recent research has shown that, outside of an actual spouse, friend networks are more essential to the health and quality of life of senior citizens, queer, straight, or trannie, than any other single factor...

*(PATRICIO enters)*

EDDIE

*(tongue in cheek)* Have we met?

PATRICIO

Patricio Reyes.

EDDIE

Edward Mounce.

PATRICIO

I am very pleased to meet you, Eduardo.

*(they shake hands)*

EDDIE

Are you enjoying Indianapolis?

PATRICIO

It is very cold and too Republican.

EDDIE

My sister Joyce would be happy to hear you say that.

PATRICIO

We have met, and she was happy to hear it. *(pause)* I'm sorry that Charles couldn't attend. He was raking leaves yesterday and—

EDDIE

...and between his allergies and his back—I get the picture. When the time comes, Patricio, don't let him plant the bulbs.

PATRICIO

I shall look to you, Eduardo, for advice.

*(long pause)*

EDDIE

Is it true that Charles has stopped drinking?

PATRICIO

Yes.

EDDIE

And he's lost weight.

PATRICIO

Twenty-five pounds, which also improves his mood.

EDDIE

How about the smoking?

PATRICIO

Rome was not built in a day. *(pause)* He—we—are quite taken with your cause.

EDDIE

You could say Charles is the cause of my cause.

PATRICIO

Ah. I understand.

*(Beat. Eddie decides to do the job—get the phone—himself.)*

EDDIE

Do you have a picture? A recent picture?

PATRICIO

Of Charles?

EDDIE

Yes, of skinny, smoke-free, mood-enhanced Charles. Or of you with Charles, doesn't matter.

PATRICIO

A picture of me and Charles?

EDDIE

On your phone.

PATRICIO

You would like to see a picture of Charles on my phone.

EDDIE

Or the two of you, I'm a big boy. *(Takes out his phone)* Even I have one of these now.

PATRICIO

They are useful items.

EDDIE

Oh they are, especially for making memories. Pearce has already put a million selfies on this.

PATRICIO

The vanity of the young and the beautiful...

EDDIE

...is infinite. There are some snaps of me in here too. I'm not so decrepit that the sight of me would break the lens.

PATRICIO

You are still in your prime. And Pearce....

EDDIE

Will keep me ageless and evergreen. *(beat)* So, really, no phone pics of the Charles Leudtke reboot?

PATRICIO

I am afraid not, Eduardo.

*(pause)*

EDDIE

If I can get personal....

PATRICIO

Go ahead.

EDDIE

What kind of phone plan are you on?

PATRICIO

Why would you ask that?

EDDIE

Being fairly new to technology, I'm curious. And I want to make sure I have what all the other boys have, you know, keep up with the Rodriguez's.

PATRICIO

My secretary knows the specifics of my plan. But my phone is a Samsung.

EDDIE

Really? Samsung. Is that Japanese?

PATRICIO

Korean.

EDDIE

They were our enemies in the Korean War, and now they rule the world.

PATRICIO

That would actually be China.



EDDIE

That's me. Last to every party. *(pause)* I don't ever think I've seen a Samsung.

PATRICIO

No?

EDDIE

No. Does it look Korean?

PATRICIO

What do you mean?

EDDIE

*(He cannot convey what this means, so he tries one last time.)* Can I see your phone?

*(Patricio starts to reach for his phone in his jacket. He pulls it out. Eddie is getting closer closer closer. Ready to snatch it. Suddenly there is a burst of noise from below. "Speech! Speech! Eddie! Eddie!")*

PATRICIO

I believe that is your cue.

EDDIE

Thanks for the chat.

PATRICIO

Break a leg.

EDDIE

Kill the people.

PATRICIO

Pardon me?

*(he slips the phone in his jacket pocket)*

EDDIE

That's gay for "break a leg."

PATRICIO

Ah. Charming.

KEEK

*(off, close by)* Don't make me come after you, Eddie! We're all waiting.

*(beat)*

EDDIE

Tell Charles I'm sorry I made him miserable for as long as I did.

PATRICIO

It takes two, Eduardo.

EDDIE

Yes. I made myself just as miserable. See you at the cupcake tower.

*(EDDIE exits. Patricio takes out his phone and starts checking messages. DWAYNE enters. His jaw drops to see the phone. Is it really going to be this easy? It affects his impersonation skills.)*

DWAYNE

Olá. Again.

PATRICIO

Hello again. What are you doing here?

DWAYNE

I...um...I'm following you.

PATRICIO

Don't you want to listen to Edward's speech?

DWAYNE

I've heard it all before. Mucho times.

PATRICIO

I think you are onto something with the Amethyst Panthers.

DWAYNE

Really...uh...Daddy.

PATRICIO

Daddy?

DWAYNE

Papì. Yeah.

PATRICIO

But you already have a daddy, don't you?

*(Patricio starts to put away his phone.)*

DWAYNE

*(blurts out)* Do you want to take a picture of my dick?

PATRICIO

Excuse me?

DWAYNE

You got your phone out. I can get my dick out.

PATRICIO

Why would I want to photograph your penis?

DWAYNE

Uh...because...you'd like that. And I'd like that too. Papì.

*(Patricio moves closer. Dwayne instinctively backs away.)*

PATRICIO

*(closer)* Tell me about your penis, Pearce.

DWAYNE

Huh?

PATRICIO

*(closer)* Tell me what is so special about your penis that I should want to have a permanent record of it.

DWAYNE

Well, let's see, Patricio. It's big. And it's mine. And...uh...it's getting hard.

PATRICIO

Real hard?

DWAYNE

Yeah. Real good and hard and Canadian. Daddy. Papí. Oooh. It's so hard.

*(beat. another step closer)*

PATRICIO

I might just want to test its strength before I take a picture.

*(Patricio reaches for Dwayne's pants, and Dwayne freaks out. He grabs Patricio's phone and screams "Schnauzer! Schnauzer! Schnauzer! They begin to struggle intensely with the phone. Think Hitchcock.*

*From below, we hear Eddie interrupt his speech with "Schnauzer!" Rachel and Joyce start chanting "Schnauzer"!*

*Pippa starts going berserk barking.*

*EDDIE appears at the top of the stairs, holding an open silver bag—*

EDDIE

Throw it. Throw it here, Dwayne, throw it to Gigi! Throw it to Gigi!

*(More Hitchcockian struggle. Take your time. Dwayne finally wrenches the phone from Patricio and tosses it. Eddie catches it in the silver bag and zips it up.)*

EDDIE

I caught it! Omigod I caught it!

*(Patricio starts to go for Eddie. Dwayne intervenes. Patricio starts to choke Dwayne. Things look very bad, so Eddie charges Patricio, and the rack of coats falls onto Eddie. PATRICIO, seeing he can't reach Eddie under there, takes a vial from his jacket, tosses it onto Dwayne and runs out. Dwayne's screams of pain compete with Pippa's barks....)*

*(Lights out.)*

## **Act Two, Scene Five**

*(A few days later. Hospital sounds. DWAYNE is lying in a bed, with his head bandaged. LORENE is standing by, wearing a parole bracelet, and doing a Word Jumbles book. Dwayne wakes up, groggy.)*

DWAYNE

Did they catch him?

LORENE

Ever take a gander at a map?

DWAYNE

I've got an app. Why?

LORENE

Mexico is a big country. But when they do catch the motherfucking beaner, I'll take him out personally.

DWAYNE

Thanks, Aunt Lorene. How's business?

LORENE

Big bump. Room six especially.

DWAYNE

Say what?

LORENE

Goth kids line up to spend the night there. Daytimes, I charge ten dollars for them to take selfies on the Rosario toilet. They've turned it into a goddam shrine. Crime pays.

DWAYNE

That's sick. How are Mariela and Nando?

LORENE

They'll live. Eddie's sister is working hard to make sure they won't get deported.

DWAYNE

Cool.

LORENE

How do you feel?

DWAYNE

Rotten.

LORENE

Does your, uh, does it hurt?

DWAYNE

Can't feel a thing. *(beat)* If I get out by Halloween, Goth chicks can take selfies with me. I can haunt room six. Do more for the war on drugs.

LORENE

Dwayne...

DWAYNE

I mean, acid? Who does that? That's like some James Bond shit.

LORENE

You'll keep getting grafts until they make it right.

DWAYNE

I'd make you donate, except you're ten shades off.

LORENE

Nah, they'll just take more off your lazy ass.

DWAYNE

Ha.

*(Knock at the door.)*

EDDIE

*(calling out)* Stand back. It's the feds.

DWAYNE

Come in.

*(EDDIE enters, with a fast food bag, GRANT and RACHEL and JOYCE following.)*

GRANT

How do you feel, Dwayne?

DWAYNE

Like going to Hollywood.

GRANT

How so?

DWAYNE

It's time to make horror movies, cash in on my, my...

GRANT

Film is a really tough medium to break into.

JOYCE

That was a joke, you douche.

GRANT

Oh.

*(Eddie laughs, holds out his bag.)*

DWAYNE

Extra cheese? Extra bacon? *(Eddie nods)* Thanks man. Aunt Lorene says they haven't caught Patricio.

GRANT

Not yet.

EDDIE

We will.

*(pause)*

DWAYNE

Was it worth it? The money phone?

GRANT

Are you kidding, Dwayne? We captured dozens of numbers. It was a huge sting. Eddie got a big promotion.

RACHEL

The state of Indiana owes you a medal.

LORENE

That state of Indiana owes him the left side of his face and a humongous settlement.

*(awkward)*

DWAYNE

Is it that time?

GRANT

Getting to be.

*(Dwayne taps Lorene's bracelet)*

DWAYNE

Show's over, Aunt Lorene. Take it from Gumby. Breaking parole is only worth the skin off your ass.

*(She leans over to kiss him. He lets her)*

DWAYNE

Thanks for coming.

LORENE

Sure thing, baby. First thing I get home, Dwayne, I'm walking the labyrinth for you.

DWAYNE

Don't be an idiot.

GRANT

*(quick kiss to Joyce)* Bye babe.

*(LORENE and GRANT leave. Eddie unwraps the burger. Holds it out.)*

DWAYNE

I only got the one hand.

RACHEL

For now.

EDDIE

I'll hold. You bite.

*(Eddie holds the double cheeseburger in front of Dwayne, who takes a big bite)*

JOYCE

They giving you all the meds you need?

DWAYNE

Yep.

RACHEL

You have to keep ahead of the pain.

DWAYNE

*(chewing)* Fuck that's good.

EDDIE

Keep asking, even after the pain goes away.

RACHEL

Eddie!

EDDIE

Always—*always*—keep a stash going.

DWAYNE

No shit. *(takes another bite)* Eddie.



Dwayne. EDDIE

Was it worth it? DWAYNE

It was. EDDIE

But my....(*still can't say it*) DWAYNE

Scars can be sexy on a man. EDDIE

Women love them. JOYCE

Don't be bullshitting me. DWAYNE

You just have to know how to wear them. Think of Zorro. Or the Phantom of the Opera. JOYCE

Who the fuck are they? DWAYNE

Or that Oscar winner with the harelip. I'd fuck him. JOYCE

Oscar *nominee*, Trigger. Three noms, no wins. EDDIE

I'd still fuck him. JOYCE

Or Harry Potter. RACHEL

Dipshit wizard has a scar? DWAYNE

He does. RACHEL

DWAYNE

Huh.

EDDIE

Bite?

*(Dwayne takes a bite, chews in silence. Eddie takes his own bite.)*

EDDIE

Charles called.

DWAYNE

No. O no. I hope you told that motherfucking asswipe bitch where he can put his fudgepacking dicksmoking candyass!

*(Joyce and Rachel know that it's time to go.)*

JOYCE

I'm heading back to the office. Do *not*, do you hear me, *do not* cut a deal with the state until you run it by me first.

DWAYNE

Or you'll chop off my balls.

JOYCE

Good boy.

RACHEL

I'll be in the lounge if you need me.

*(RACHEL and JOYCE exit)*

DWAYNE

"White stiffs matter"—how about my face? I didn't lose half my face so you two motherfucking cracker faggots can ride off into the sunset.

*(beat. Take your time)*

EDDIE

I didn't tell Charles where to get off.

DWAYNE

No? What did you say then?

EDDIE

I didn't say anything. I deleted the message.

DWAYNE

DTU?

EDDIE

That's right. DTU. *(Dwayne whoops with glee, then grimaces)*

DWAYNE

Ouch! Fuck!

EDDIE

Don't make a mess. *(He dabs Dwayne's chin with a napkin.)* Bite.

*(He feeds him another bite of burger.)*

EDDIE

Keek dropped by.

DWAYNE

You know, Eddie. I got Keek figured out. For all that polish, she's as dumb as I am.

EDDIE

No, dumber, but guess what. You and I raised nineteen thousand dollars for the Amethyst Panthers.

DWAYNE

No shit.

EDDIE

And this was *after* the raid.

DWAYNE

Holy fuck, those choppers were *unreal*! All the sirens and the screaming f-words. And that old bag without the feet who pissed herself when she saw the guns! And—nineteen grand, you say. *(beat)* Fifty-fifty? No. Sixty-forty on account of my, my...Seventy-thirty!

EDDIE

Gotcha. Seventy-thirty. Or....

DWAYNE

Or what? *(no answer)* Or what?

EDDIE

I've been promoted.

DWAYNE

I've got ears. So now you're a righteous motherfucker.

EDDIE

No. I'm a Roman mask.

DWAYNE

The fuck is that?

EDDIE

I'm good at my job. *(They eat.)* You said yourself it was more fun playing Pearce than being Dwayne.

DWAYNE

I said that? Fuck. Are you sure I said that? When did I say that? Fuck me. I never said that. Fuck.

EDDIE

Fries?

DWAYNE

*(Pearce voice)* Marvelous. *(regular voice)* I mean, sure.

*(Eddie pulls out a package of French fries. Eats some first. Then feeds Dwayne. Lights fade to the tune of Roger Miller's "King of the Road.")*

**END OF PLAY**