

CHARACTERS: There are no “characters” per se. The play utilizes six actors; 3 females and 3 males.

SETTING: The events are set any time after 2012, but references an event occurring in 2017.

#### PRODUCTION NOTES:

The prime directive is to never show the actors’ face or skin. The premise is that the actors could be anyone. If the actors are seen, they stop being “anyone” and become someone to the audience, whether consciously or not. Until the end, it is imperative that the actors always remain physically unidentifiable in any way to assure audience members don’t associate identifying markers of the actors with what they believe personally about domestic violence. Hiding is primarily accomplished with masks and lighting.

Ideally, the stage can accommodate two areas created by a scrim going across a portion of the stage. In front of the scrim, the lighting should be designed so bodies are seen well enough to appear as prominent, but not be bright or intense. “In shadows” refers to lighting that allows the actors to “hide” without needing a mask. “Behind the scrim” refers to lighting that allows soft silhouettes to be seen. The lighting needs to hide the actors, but not make shadow puppets out of them.

Some episodes have indented text to distinguish speakers. Text starting at the margin is the “primary” text; indented text is the “secondary” text. Sometimes, the text is blue; this identifies additional actors speaking or a special situation. “Spoken offstage” means an actor has lines, but isn’t among the actors on stage.

Each episode will have notes explaining any specific instructions for presenting them and the structure of the text.

Stage directions within the script are in parenthesis and indented further to the right pass any secondary text.

This script is currently setup as I saw the flow of the episodes happening. However, except for the first and last episodes, the rest may be rearranged, even excluded. They are written to be self-contained stories standing alone if only particular episodes are of productional interest.

OPENING SCENE: A barely lit stage. Behind the scrim, a choreographed piece for two, male and female, takes place. The movement is very entwined between the two; it's smooth, amorous and sensual, but not sexual. Gradually, the movements become more antagonistic, greater distances separate the actors/dancers. The tranquility at the beginning morphs into moments of restraint and resistance. Their actions transition into a choreographed fight scene that remains influenced by modern dance rather than physical combat, evolving into clear acts of aggression, desperation and assault. The male actor/dancer moves to slap his female counterpart. The path of his hand is vast, starting from behind his head, stretched out the full span of his arm; the rise of his motion is quick, but the downward swing is meticulously slow. The female character continues to struggle. Inches away from her face, the male actor/dancer concludes his approach with a rapid strike across the female's face; the momentum carries his hand to the other side of him. The woman screams "help", as if she's screaming to God high above, and the lights promptly go dark.

Projection: call anyway

(Four actors visible, two females and two males.)

(NOTES: What follows is a continuation of what started behind the scrim. The struggle that was once private, is now public, performed in shadows. The caller is behind the scrim, watching the events. The primary lines are the dispatcher, spoken offstage; the secondary text is the caller.)

(The female actor/dancer enters running, chased by the male actor/dancer. He catches her on the opposite side of the stage and tries to take her back in the direction they entered; she struggles. The image of the caller can now be seen. The sound of a phone call is heard. The dancers' actions precede what is said during the phone call.)

911, what is your emergency?

Outside my home, there's a man and woman arguing. It looks like she's trying to get away from him, but he won't let her go.

Where are you located?

It's the 6000 block of Main Street, between Maple and Glenn Avenue. Oh my God, he just hit her. He's hitting her with his fist, over and over.

The police are on the way. Can you describe the man?

It's too dark. I can't see him. I can't see his face.

What is he wearing?

He's still hitting her. She's not moving at all. Her body looks like it's dangling from his hand.

The police should be there any moment now. Can you tell me what he's wearing?

It's some kind of t-shirt and jeans. I can't tell. It's too dark.

Can you see anything that stands out, that could help identify him?

No, I can't. I can't see anything except his fist punching her over and over. Where are the police, for goodness sake?

The police and an ambulance are on their way.

(Enter the second male actor.)

Oh, my neighbor's going out to help her. Thank you God for that. He's pushing the man away from her. She must be unconscious. She fell right to the ground. She's not standing. My neighbor's trying, but I don't he can.

(Sound of sirens approaching.)

Oh no. Oh my God, no. He just pulled out a gun. He's pointing it at my... oh my God, he shot him. He shot my neighbor. Oh my God, my neighbor. He shot him.

Ma'am, are you safe?

Oh my God. He's dragging her away. He's dragging her down the street. She's not moving. Not at all. I think she's dead. I think he killed her too.

(A red revolving light comes up.)

Stay where you are. The police will want to talk to you.

What? No, I don't want that. No. I can't. I can't.

(Sound of the phone hanging up and the scrim goes dark.)

Hello? ... Hello? ... Are you still on the line? ... Hello?

---

Projection: best friends

(One actor, female, behind a mask.)

(NOTE: There are well defined street sounds that the actor must compete with.)

She was my best friend.  
Not just a friend,  
my very best friend.  
Been friends since the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.  
She was new to the school.  
Didn't know anybody.  
So I picked her to be my friend,  
because I knew no one else would.  
She was always sittin' by herself,  
lookin' sad.  
I got that,  
you know,  
'cause didn't nobody ever pick me either.

We used to talk all the time,  
whenever we wanted to.  
We'd talked about whatever came to mind.  
We did a lot of trash talkin' about our parents.  
We talked about school—mostly about skippin' it.  
We talked about music, clothes, personal shit, people—  
famous people though, not everyday ones,  
and her favorite topic of all,  
God-damn religion.

Sometimes, we'd even talk about what could be.  
You know,  
things we wanted to do, our big plans for someday,  
bein' brave, makin' a change in life, doin' something, goin' someplace.  
You know, big things.  
And then at some point,  
we started talkin' about sex.

We kissed once.  
Just once mind you.  
Not because we didn't like it,  
or anything like that.  
It was ok.  
And we weren't worrin' about bein' lesbians,

or anything like that either.  
We just didn't wanna get our ass kicked.  
We saw a lot of queers gettin' jumped.  
Didn't matter what kind of queer,  
or even if they weren't queer at all.  
Anything that looked queer, got it.  
Not just once, mind you,  
but practically every day.

One boy killed himself.  
Took his uncle's gun and,  
you know.  
But before he did,  
he put his picture on Snapchat holdin' the gun to his head.  
Then some asshole posted  
he wanna see the after pictures.  
That's was bad enough,  
but even more fucked up,  
was a lot of ignorant fools  
gave him the thumbs-up.

Another boy tried to kill somebody.  
He mighta succeeded too,  
if the teacher hadn't stopped him.  
Everybody called the teacher a hero.  
But the truth is,  
it was totally by accident.

He was tryin' to get his fat ass out the cafeteria,  
except he tripped and fell into the kid with the gun,  
knockin' him down.  
The crazy school counselor got the gun,  
and they called her a hero too.  
I know all this because we saw the whole thing  
and was laughin' our asses off  
because we didn't care about gettin' shot.

I'm tellin' you,  
we were BF to the core.  
We promised one another,  
we'd always have each other's back.  
And I believed that shit,  
up until she moved away with that prick.

I tried to tell her,  
warn her,  
that he wasn't all that.  
But she was in love.  
I knew that was a bunch of bull too.  
All she wanted, was to get away from her father.  
She left one prick for another.

And it wasn't like her father was a total asshole.  
He was just real strict, big into religion.  
The southern Baptist type.  
Was totally into the fire and brimstone bullshit.  
Neither one of us bought into that,  
so her father was always on her case  
about one thing or another.  
Includin' her seein' me all the time.

I think he was afraid,  
you know,  
of us bein' too close  
and knowin' each other too well.  
You know,  
in the biblical way.

We thought it was funny.  
Sometimes,  
when he was tryin' to be in our business,  
we would wink at each other  
to get rid of him.  
He'd turn around and stomp out the room  
with a trail of black smoke followin' him,  
mumbling some shit about eternal damnation.  
We'd laugh our asses off,  
real loud,  
so he could hear us,  
because she wanted to make sure,  
they weren't ever gonna meet in the after-life.

Anyway,  
I knew she was reachin' her limit.  
But I never,  
not in my entire life,  
woulda ever thought she'd fall for some asshole—  
and then follow him somewhere.  
She didn't even tell me she was leavin'.

A few weeks later,  
she calls me up,  
to bullshit like we used to.  
That was the only time though.  
Haven't heard from her since.

I know what happened.  
He stopped her.  
I bet you anything,  
that's what it was.  
Because when she was still livin' here,  
he tried to keep her from talkin' to me then.  
I know this because she told me so.

I don't know where she is now.  
Or what's she's up to.  
I just know I miss my best friend.  
I hope she's doin' ok.  
Personally, I don't think so.  
But who knows?  
She could be livin' the good life  
forgettin' all about me.  
Or maybe she's dead.  
Who knows?

Don't think I'm queer or anything like that,  
but I sure wish I coulda kissed her one more time  
and get to say good-bye to her.

You know,  
I'm really pissed that fucker took her away.  
Seriously pissed-off.  
Like,  
atomic bomb explosion  
pissed-off.  
Not that it matters anymore.

I just hope she's alive and okay.

---

Projections: the knights of the round table

(Two actors: male & female, in mask; two other actors are off stage.)

(NOTES: Who starts each section is a directorial decision; the sections are demarcated by periods. Capitalized text is spoken by both actors. Secondary dialogue is either the victim in black, or the abuser, in blue; their lines are spoken off stage.)

We try.

We do what we can

to encourage victims to leave, sometimes to prosecute,

but we can't make them do either.

Not only are there external factors...

Like police, prosecutors, judges, advocates ...

Not only do you have to consider them...

There's also family and friends.

But the external sources don't always know best.

The victim does.

You have to listen, recognize and acknowledge

**WHAT IT IS THE *VICTIM THINKS* WILL KEEP HER SAFE.**

It may not be the police hanging around her house,

I know they're tryin' to help, but sometimes, they're the ones makin' things worse.

who are trying to convince her to press charges

The longer the police stay, the more he thinks I'm tellin' shit on him.

or to leave the home.

Nobody likes to have shit told about 'em. And he ain't no different. Sometimes I'm better off right here, with no police hangin' around.

Everybody wants the victim to leave.  
To just pick up her belongings,  
what little she may have,  
and go somewhere else, away from him.  
Some places,  
places created to help victims,  
require she leave the abuser  
in order to use their services.  
Leave the abuser, our doors are wide open.  
Stay, and our doors remain locked.  
They force her to make a choice  
between what she knows, is accustomed to,  
and can maneuver, day-to-day, blind-folded.  
They force her to choose between someplace foreign,  
lacking familiarity and a routine,  
without any guarantee they can actually help her.  
She has to choose one or the other.  
So she chooses what feels natural to her.  
What makes the most sense.  
That she thinks will keep her alive.  
After all, everyone should know,  
**BLACK AND BLUE IS STILL ALIVE AND BREATHING.**



I'm always bein' told to turn against him. Send him to jail. Lock him up. Make him pay for what he's done.

Some victims, for good reasons,

All I want is not to be afraid anymore, especially for my kids. But he ain't gotta be locked up for that.

don't trust or believe in the justice system.

He just needs a little help, that's all. Why don't you all help him instead of always wantin' to lock him up?

They refuse to prosecute just to avoid going to court

or having someone they love incarcerated.

I don't want that.

And they know all too well,

a restraining order is a legal document with a bunch of words.

How is that gonna protect her from me? I know her. I know her routine. I know her phone number. I know her car. I know the route she takes to work. I know when she gets to work and when she gets off work.

That amounts to nothing more than a piece of paper.

I know her friends. I know who her best friend is. I know the sister she goes to when she's scared.

Offering a lot of lip service about promises,

I know where the kids go to school. I know what time they get dropped off and when they get picked up. I know her mother is the one who does all that and I know where she lives too.

with no assurances that they can be kept.

I know everything about her. So, how the fuck is a piece of paper gonna keep me from doin' whatever the fuck I want to her? How? It can't, 'cause that court order, ain't nothing but bullshit to me.



There are multiple reasons why a woman won't leave,  
and it's not always about the physical harm.

Or because she's stupid, lacks self-worth, or can't be strong.

Each victim has her own way of calculating  
the gains and losses of leaving and staying.

She knows what they are.

And no one else.

She knows too, she'll be judged,  
if her conclusion determines she stays.

It won't matter what the reasons are.

And if she takes the dare to leave,  
she knows she might not make it

**AND INSTEAD, END UP SIX FEET UNDER.**

Society wants her to walk out and leave the abuser.

But from her perspective, society is asking her to leave her husband, her children's father, her home, the person she loves.

Sometimes, her extended family, friends she's known for years, the only city and state she's ever lived in and the neighborhood where she grew up.

The church she found redemption in, the places she shopped every day, where she got her hair done, or where she bought her clothes.

The mechanic she trusts not to rip her off,  
and that lucky store where she buys her lottery tickets.

Society is asking her to leave what is known,  
for the unknown.

In essence, to retreat back to the beginning and build a new life,  
with different people, at some top-secret location,  
with practically nothing to start over with.

No home, no job, no idea of what her future will be.

And no one seems to think, when they tell her to leave,

THAT THAT'S A LOT TO ASK OF ANYONE.

Especially, someone already living in fear, every minute of every day.



Why you takin' my kids away? Why you gotta take 'em?

In some places,

if she doesn't leave her abuser,

I want my kids with me. I'm their mother.

she'll lose everything.

They should be with me.

Including the things she loves most of all.

I need to be with them.

She can't protect her children if they aren't with her.

And sometimes, foster homes aren't havens,

sometimes they're more harmful than safe.

What did I do? Why you wanna take my children?

She knows how to protect her children from the abuser.

She knows how to take the attention away from them

and put it on herself.

She's taught them where to hide  
and when it's safe to come out.

What did I do?

And every time she's hit,  
she proves that her love for them,  
can survive anything.

Sometimes, her children are her greatest motivation to survive.

You all don't get it. She loves me and that's why she stays.

And perhaps one day, for leaving.

She knows I don't want her to leave.

But it must be her choice.

Because she's knows what's up.

Her right to choose which direction she takes.

She's gonna stay right here with me.

In her time, when she knows it's best for her.

Because she knows if she doesn't,

Not every victim will make it out.

I'll kill her—and maybe her children too.

All we can do is be ready with options,  
devise the best possible plan,  
and offer support in making that life changing decision.

To show her the safest way to escape.

And hopefully, for everyone else,

TO STOP THINKING THEY UNDERSTAND,  
WHEN NO ONE CAN UNDERSTAND,  
EXCEPT THE VICTIM.

---

Projection: but i know you

(One actor, female, in shadows with a mask.)

(NOTES: Photos of women and men, with missing faces, are projected on the scrim. The faces can be hidden in any number of ways—distorted, blocked, covered, hiding, turned away, erased, whatever. How isn't as important as not being able to see the faces. The photos must be diverse in every way and predominantly females—roughly 75%. The images have captions on them. It is **important** that not all the men are labeled as batterers and abusive; nor should all the women be labeled as victims or survivors. The captions to be used are: I'm a batterer; I'm a victim; I'm a survivor; I'm abusive; I'm scared; I'm a perpetrator; I'm violent; I'm hiding; I'm in jail; I'm in a hospital; I almost died; I control; I don't give a damn about you; I'm dead. Excluding the last two, the order of the captions is a directorial decision, as is the number of photos shown; captions may be used more than once except for the last two.)

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
i was pretty,  
and vain.  
i would stare at the mirror  
to see my reflection,  
hoping others would like what I saw.

Then,  
at some point,  
i saw myself as ugly,  
hideous.  
i stopped looking at mirrors  
cause i didn't want to see me.  
or what other people saw.

Now,  
i can see other people,  
hiding their faces,  
afraid to show themselves  
like I am.

because we can tell,  
our faces  
are reflections of each other.

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
i had a beautiful voice  
and people would listen to it.

Then,  
at some point,  
it stopped being pleasant  
and people stopped listening.

Now,  
i can hear  
the same unpleasant sound  
coming from the mouth of others,  
and it hurts my ears.

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
i had a family.  
who stood by me,  
backing me up  
no matter how  
I lived my life.

Then,  
at some point,  
they turned away,  
no longer able to be there  
to support what i did.

Now,  
i have a new family.  
a chosen one,  
that keeps me mindful,  
kin isn't always about blood.  
sometimes,  
family is compassionate love,  
given  
without a need to understand  
*everything*.

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
i was popular  
and had lots of friends.

Then,  
at some point,  
they disappeared  
one by one,  
gone.

Now,  
i have different friends.  
friends who saw i was secluded  
and reached out to me  
so i wouldn't be alone anymore.

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
that i loved life  
and enjoyed every minute  
of being alive.

Then,  
at some point,  
my infatuation was displaced,  
and I saw life  
as cruel and callous,  
not worth living.

Now,  
i almost believe  
life has value and purpose  
and i fight every day  
to keep it that way.

Used to be,  
once upon a time,  
that i shied away  
from those like me.  
keeping a distance  
i thought was safe,  
to avoid amplifying  
my pain,  
with their pain.

(She emerges from the shadows.)

Then,  
at some point,  
i stopped fearing them.  
and i became close to them,  
talking to them,  
commiserating,  
because they were like me.

Now,  
i look for them.  
i keep a watchful eye,  
searching for that familiar look  
on faces trying to hide,  
like i tried to do.

It used to be,  
once upon a time,  
i didn't understand.

But then,  
at some point,  
i understood.

And now,  
The mystery is gone.

There is no need to be alone.  
None of us should ever be alone.  
We should all be a chosen family to each other.

---

Projection: sweetness, how you doin’

(Three actors: female and male, with masks; one male in shadows.)

(NOTES: Two of the actors, one female and one male, are near each other, though not together; the third actor is separate of them, but remains in the picture. The primary text is for the female character. The secondary text is for the male actors; black is conversing, blue is decoding.)

He was pretty damn cute.  
Not the cutest boy I ever saw,  
he woulda had to been G-Easy or Lupe for that.  
But he was cute enough to turn my head around and stare.

He noticed me,  
he must have,  
since he strutted his fine self over to me.  
He wasn’t the cutest, that’s for damn sure,  
but his speakin’ was like magic.  
You know the shit ain’t real,  
but who gives a fuck?  
Cause, you know, honestly  
bein’ real is over rated.

Hey girl, what’s up?  
Lookin’ so fine.  
You ought to be in pictures.  
Pictures with me  
sittin’ in my convertible  
with the top down  
and the wind blowin’ my kisses  
straight to your lips.

Code for: I wanna fuck you, but I ain’t tryin’ to scare you off before I can hit on that.

Needless to say  
I was smilin’,  
but not on the outside  
where he could see.  
I was playin’ him  
‘cause, you know,  
you can’t come across as easy.

I have to say sweet thing,  
you is lookin' good.  
Lookin' like you should be in my arms  
where I can hold you tight  
and squeeze you close to me  
and whisper sweet promises in your ear.

Code for: I wanna keep your ass close to me, and own you, like I own my dogs.

My best friend didn't care for him  
She told me later she didn't like his vibes.  
Who still says that?  
Vibes is like a granny word,  
something old people used to say.  
Although my friend, she's like anything vintage.  
So, if anyone can make that word kick ass,  
it's her.

Hey, why you doin' me like that?  
You know I find you sizzlin' hot.  
Makin' me sweat like no man should.  
Causin' all kinds of spasms in my body.  
Jerkin' my mind, thinking about what could be,  
if our bodies were wrapped around each other.

Code for: I ain't about workin' hard for your ass. You know I want you, so stop actin'  
hard to get.

Nuthin' my friend said stopped me of course.  
I went on ahead and talked to him,  
'cause I liked how he was makin' me feel special.  
Plus, he was turnin' me on like no one ever had.  
He was a man.  
Not a school boy out to prove he's a stud.  
I could tell he was about makin' a girl feel good,  
and that kinda excited me.  
But I didn't want him to know that,  
so I got up,  
and started walkin' away with my friend.

Hey, where you goin' sweetness?  
Don't just walk away.  
Hang for a while.  
Let me tell you what's possible,  
if you let me touch you gently  
tender like

real steady  
in a particularly way.  
To show you what I'm all about.

Code for: I'm about over this bullshit sweet talk. Let's get right down to business. I'm jonesin' to fuck you.

I was still playin' him.  
To see how interested he was.  
How bad he wanted to hang with me.  
But that's not for real.  
If my friend hadn'a been there,  
draggin' me down with her attitude,  
I woulda gone off with him,  
and think nuthin' of it.

Hey, who are you?  
To be so magnificent,  
so glorious  
that I fall to my knees.  
Limp.  
Breathin' heavy.  
Out of breath.

Code for: Who do you think you are bitch? Tryin' to make me beg for somethin' you should be givin' up anyway.

He was into me.  
I could tell.  
He kept right on talkin' his shit,  
all the while followin' us.  
And we weren't goin' nowhere in particular.  
Just walkin'.  
I knew my friend was about to explode,  
so I said,  
I ain't got nuthin' for you.  
Go on about your business.  
But did he?  
Um-hum.  
He just kept on talkin' shit.  
Shit that I liked hearin', by the way.

Sweet thing, don't say that.  
Just give me a chance  
to sniff what you got goin' on.  
If you let me,

if I can,  
I'll do a shout-out to the world,  
smilin' my ass off,  
letting everyone know,  
how sweet you are.

Code for: When I get you alone, we'll have some fun, all right. Then when I'm done, I'm goin' on twitter, lettin' everybody know how I fucked me a virgin whore. I might even post the video I got of us gettin' busy, just for the hell of it bitch.

He was so nice and talked so sweet.  
I knew he was the one for me.  
Don't ask me how I knew,  
I just knew.  
With all that sweet talk,  
he had to be the one.  
The only one who could make me feel,  
somethin',  
like bein' special.

Code for: Innocence lost.

---

Projection: but she never listens

(Three actors: 2 females, one male; in masks.)

(NOTES: The primary lines in black is the mother; the text in blue is the father. The secondary text is the daughter/sister speaking.)

Honey, we want you to talk to your sister. Maybe she'll listen to you.

We talk and talk and talk, but nothing. Quite honestly, we're tired of trying. I sure as hell am.

We all know her boyfriend is abusive to her.

We didn't raise you two to be stupid. We taught both of you to think first, so you don't end up in bad situations. She's no dummy. So I don't understand why she's acting like one.

Neither one of us understands why she's doing this. Why she's staying with him.

You know what he's doing to her. You've seen the black eyes, the bruises all over her body. The broken arm "from a bad fall". We all know that's bull. And don't forget the broken ribs. We never would have known anything about that except for the damn hospital bill. I don't think she was ever going to tell us. Imagine getting a hospital bill for something you didn't even know about. I don't know which angers me most. The bill or her not telling us a damn thing.

No matter how you look at it, the whole thing's a mess.

Why she doesn't leave him is a mystery to us. I don't understand. I just don't understand why she would stay with him.

We've tried everything, as you know.

We've spent a lot of money trying to get her back on track. And all for nothing. That's a point of anger for me, too.

We're her parents. Why doesn't she at least talk to us? We're here for her.

It's crazy. The whole thing is crazy. I'm starting to think she's crazy. She has to be.

She's not crazy. She's in love. And she believes in him. She's not trying to spite you all. She's only trying to show how much she loves him.

Are you in contact with her? Have you been talking with her?

Occasionally. Not very often.

When was the last time you talked to her?

I don't remember exactly. Maybe a little over a week.

A week? And you haven't said a word to us?

What do you two talk about? Does she ever say why she's staying with him?

I just told you. She loves him and wants to support him. What don't you get about that?

What don't we get about that? We don't get anything about that! It's asinine, what she's doing.

As her sister, I would think you'd want to do something about this.

Are you even trying? I hope you're not encouraging her.

No, of course not. But you can't make her do something she doesn't want to. You just have to trust her.

Are you kidding me? Trust her how? To continue to make stupid decisions.

Is he keeping her against her will? Is she a hostage in any way?

No. She's there because she wants to be.

She wants to be beaten up?

No. That's not why she stays. She wants to give him time to change.

You have got to be kidding me. Change? Men who hurt don't change. They just keep on hurting. He's never going to change.

She believes he can. And will, because she knows he loves her too. And no amount of bullying by you or anyone else is going to make her think otherwise.

So what are we supposed to do?

You want us to sit back and wait until he kills her? Then we get to pick up her dead body because he's done with it. Are we supposed to just watch him destroy her and do nothing?

I don't know! I don't have all the answers. All I know, is that we have to wait on her. And not harass her if she asks for help. We just have to wait and hope she's right about him. At least enough not to kill her.

Of course he's going to kill her. Hell, he's doing that right now. She might as well be dead .

Projection: superhero skills not required

(One actor, male, in shadows.)

(NOTES: Ideally, the actor is sitting in an overstuffed chair, center stage. He remains sitting throughout the text, but he is in emotional and physical anguish the entire time, causing his body to be unsettled. The relaying of his story is like torture to him; his memories are vivid and entrenched in his body, down to the cellular level. In the background are *faint* sounds of violence: objects being thrown or smashed and screams; there is also the music the actor is playing.)

Have you ever wished you were someone else?  
Someone smarter, so you would know what to do?  
Someone informed, so you'd know what to say?  
Someone unafraid to step up and do something  
about the evil in the world?  
A superhero, brave and invincible.

I have, many times over.

I hate who I am.  
Who I allow myself to be.  
What I do out of fear,  
protecting my own safety and well-being.  
I hate that about me.

I live next door to a scary man with two personalities.  
A man who, when you meet him on the street,  
comes across as nice and genuine.  
He's always polite to me.  
Always says hello with a smile.  
Never has a bad thing to say.

But sometimes, I can hear him inside his house.  
I can hear the ruckus going on.  
Furniture being upturned and thrown about.  
He yells sometimes, so I know what he is yelling about,  
and who he is yelling at.  
But his punching bag never talks or screams or calls for help.  
But I know it's her he's hitting,  
his wife.  
And not a sound ever comes out of her.

I wonder every time,  
is she silent because she can't make a sound?  
Or because she fears what might happen if she does?  
Or is she that brave and determined to endure his blows,  
never giving him the satisfaction  
of hearing her beg for mercy?

While she's being pummeled,  
I sit in my self-created panic room,  
Hiding.  
Hiding so I can't be seen  
and expected to help,  
only to make it worse if I did.  
Like it was for my mother,  
trying to avoid my father's blows,  
who became angrier at my childish efforts,  
inciting him to take it out on her,  
because I was my mother's child, not his.

Sometimes I turn on music,  
or the TV really, really loud,  
so I can't hear him.  
But it never works.  
Because the sound is in my head.  
From the past, the present, and I suspect the future.

I can't get that sound out of my head.  
Of my mother screaming as my father sets her on fire  
and forces me to watch.  
All because I wanted to help her.  
Because he was angry at *his* mother,  
who did nothing when my grandfather used him as an ashtray.  
And found it amusing to piss in his mouth,  
making my father swallow the pee  
and then lick him clean.

She never stood up for him,  
or try to protect him,  
or steal him away in darkness.  
The only thing she ever did,  
was leave her husband,  
abandoning my father as a sacrifice  
to save herself.  
Making him a very angry child,  
who grew-up to be a madman.

I don't want to kill another person.  
And calling the police does no good,  
because he's such a charming man.  
So polite and convincing,  
they leave without ever looking at her.  
And he returns to what was abruptly interrupted,  
beating the shit out of her.

How I wish I was someone else.  
Brave enough to do something.  
Smart enough to know what to do.  
Willing to do whatever needed to be done.

But the reality of my life  
is that I'm no superhero.  
I'm not even a hero.  
But I do try to be a friend,  
when he's not around to see me.  
When she needs to hear she's not alone.  
To tell her she does have choices,  
when she's ready to hear them.

Because I have a friend, a very good friend,  
who is braver and smarter than I am.  
Who can be the superhero,  
that I'm not.

---

Projection: a ballpark figure

(Two actors, both female, in mask.)

(NOTES: Set up as an interview. The interviewer has the primary lines; the interviewee has the secondary lines.)

Give my viewers an idea of the numbers, a ballpark figure, of victims affected by domestic violence?

This is from data collected by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. These figures are from 2014. As I say these numbers, know that cases of domestic violence are often under-reported. The numbers I'm providing today, are probably higher in reality. But here's what we know for sure. On one day, in one state, domestic violence programs assisted over 1,000 victims while another 160 were turned away due to a lack of resources. In another state, on one day, almost 2500 victims were assisted by DV programs. In 18 states, there was one day, not the same day, but one day for each state, that when combined, totaled 18,795 victims receiving services for domestic violence. That averages out to be no less than 1,000 victims requiring DV services on any given day. One last statistic for you. During 2014, in two states alone, DV programs turned away over 35,000 victims because of insufficient resources. That comes out to be, for just those two states, 1400 victims per month being denied services and protection because resources were deficient. Two states, 1400 victims, turned away every month. Those are the numbers we're dealing with.

---

Projection: one way or another

(Three actors, female, male, optional.)

(NOTE: The primary text is the dispatcher; the secondary text is the caller. Both are spoken off stage. The male actor is not yet visible; he has no text.)

911, what is your emergency?

My husband's broken into my house. I have a restraining order. He's not supposed to come near me. He's not supposed to be here.

Where are you located?

I've locked myself in my bedroom. But he knows I'm here. He's come to kill me. He said that he was, and he's here in my house.

Ma'am, where are you?

What? I just told you. I'm in my bedroom.

Your location, what's the address?

Oh, sorry. It's 2262...

Ma'am? ... Ma'am, are you still there? ... Hello?

I smell smoke. I think he set the house on fire.

Ma'am, the police are on their way. Do not leave the room where you are. Stay there.

Did you hear me? He set the house on fire. I have to get out of here.

Ma'am, try and remain calm. The fire department is being notified.

I can't wait for them. I have to get out now while I can.

Ma'am, listen to me. Are you listening? This is very important. Can you see smoke coming in from under the door? Ma'am? ... Ma'am, are you still there?

I'm here, yes. But I gotta get out.

Ma'am, this is very important. Look for smoke coming in under the door. Do you see any? Look for smoke.

I see it. There's smoke. It's coming into the room.

Is there a bathroom in the room you're in?

Yes.

Look for things to block the smoke with, like towels, and wet them. As many as you can, and put them around the door. ... How's it going? Have you gotten the towels down yet?

I'm doing that now.

Great. After you do that, hang something out the window. Something light and big if you have it, so the firefighters can see where you are. ... How's it going? Did you hang something yet?

(The third actor comes out of the shadows, to be seen.)

I'm going right now. ... Oh my God, I see him. He's across the street. He's just standing there, watching. He's gonna get me one way or another. He's gonna kill me, just like he said.

(Sound of sirens approaching.)

No he's not. The police and fire department are arriving. Can you still see your husband? ... Hello? ... Hello? ... Ma'am, are you still there? ... Hello?

---

Projection: i've seen all kinds

(Two actors, male and female, in mask. Two other actors are behind the scrim; they're medical personnel in a life-and-death situation.)

(NOTES: This is an interview. While the interview proceeds, an emergency behind the scrim takes place. Neither events affect the other in any way. The primary lines are the interviewer; the secondary text in black is the interviewee; secondary text in blue are the emergency personnel.)

When you went into plastic surgery, did you think you would use your skills for this?

No, not at all. But I'm okay with that, because this is where I'm needed most.

(The lights come up on the scrim.)

She's badly beaten. Stab wounds to the face. Her right hand is severed.

How long have you been doing this?

Five years now.

She's also pregnant.

I understand you collaborate with tattoo artists. How did that come about?

She's got bruises on her stomach. He must have hit there too.

I read an article about a tattoo artist hiding the scars of victims. So I stole the idea.

The baby's heart rate, I can barely hear it.

I can attest, tattoo artists are not only underrated, they're under-used.

She's losing blood.

How do they help women of domestic violence?

This baby has to come out now.

They do what I can't do. They turn scars into artwork. They transform negative associations into peaceful images.

If we don't, we'll lose it.

Tattoo artists bridge the gap for those who are medically healed from mutilation, but haven't emotionally recovered from the scars on their bodies.

Get an IV on her already.

What's been the worst situation you've ever attended to?

And we need more blood.

They're all equally bad. Any reconstructive surgery, is never better than another.

Her blood pressure is dropping.

Has any situation affected you more than another?

We can't wait for an OB. We have to get the baby out now.

Some. It's hard not to be affected.

Her heart rate is dropping.

Can you tell us about one?

Come on people, let's do this.

I worked with a model who had acid thrown on her by a stalker. This not only affected her appearance, it devastated her sense of self-worth. Her entire being was interwoven with how she saw herself and what other people saw. Two years later, she still won't come out of her room. Not just her house, the room her parents set up for her. Prior to that, she attempted suicide three times. The guy who did this, knew exactly what he was doing. He knew it would terrorize her more than a bullet to the heart. Afterwards, he casually strolls to a near-by bar, has a drink, steps into the men's room and shoots himself. He's dead, but where's the justice in that? He's not around to suffer the repercussion of his actions, but she is. She's my image of the walking dead. And in her case, I'm not sure the dead should be walking amongst the living.

She's going into arrest.

How many victims have you helped?

Too many. I've seen far more than I should.

Paddles.

One last question. How is the clinic funded?

Ready. Clear.

By the goodness of others and the occasional grant from a foundation, but basically we depend on donations. And no amount is too small.

Again. Ready. Clear.

If we have 100 people donating five dollars a month, by the end of the year, we'd have six thousand dollars.

Increase to 250. Ready. Clear.

There's a lot we can do with that six thousand.

Again. Ready. Clear.

Any small amount is *always* better than nothing,

Increase to 400. Ready. Clear.

because it all adds up to something bigger down the road.

Shit! Time of death, 3:10 pm.

---

Projection: i know what you're thinking

(One actor, female, wearing a mask.)

(NOTES: This should be spoken with a fast cadence; a quick beat between stanzas, but never breaking the overall rhythm, except for the 20 + seconds of silence identified in the text.)

i know what you're thinking

you think just like everyone else

you see me with the blackeye  
the bruises on my arms  
the fat lip

you think

i got slapped around good  
by my boyfriend  
nah  
my old man  
you're betting it was my pimp  
maybe some john, wanting me to fake an orgasm

and i forgot to scream.

(She fakes the orgasm.)

Fuck that shit.

you're thinking some guy did me over for fun  
taught me a lesson or two  
made me pay for not having dinner ready  
saw me flirting and had to remind me i'm his bitch  
or i came home three hours late  
when my old man expected me at seven

i spent too much money on a pack of gum  
asked for some new clothes  
forgot to say thank you

after getting fucked

my shirt was too revealing  
i had a drink  
i dirty-up the car  
i didn't shut up

i talked

you're thinking he hit me with his fist  
that's how i got the black eye

maybe he slapped me around a few times  
with a beer bottle in his hand

maybe he took hold of my arms  
squeezing as hard as he could  
then shook me furiously

i'm the rag doll of an angry child

you figure the fat lip came when he pushed me into the wall  
not then exactly  
maybe when he pulled my head back  
using my hair as a handle  
so he could slam my face into the coffee table

you're thinking

wondering

if he forced himself on me  
his lips on my lips  
his tongue down my throat  
his teeth biting my nipples  
his finger wiggling inside me

you're wondering

doubting

if i fought back  
if i struggled with him to keep from getting hit  
if i screamed for help  
even though we all know  
that's a fucking waste of energy

you suspect i like what he does to me  
why else would i stay with him  
i must be getting high from the blood I swallow  
stoned out of my mind not to feel the pain  
flying high in the stratosphere  
thinking i'm in heaven

you probably pegged me for a masochist  
in love with a sadistic bastard  
yeah that's me all right  
fifty shades of black-and-blue  
and the safe word is  
(silence for at least 20 seconds)  
there is no safe word stupid  
you just play dead

you think i should leave him  
that i should grow a backbone  
stand up for myself  
lock him away  
run  
literally  
'cause i ain't got a car  
shit,  
i don't even have money for a bus pass

ever been on the street asking people for help  
or are you the one who sits in your car  
windows closed  
eyes straight ahead  
your money deep in your pocket

ever thought of having food and water in your car  
to hand out instead of your damn precious money

and you want me to run  
to what  
not to you  
that's for damn sure

you don't know which is the worse of two evils  
being the abuser  
or the idiot who doesn't stop being abused

yeah

i know what you're thinking

you think just like everyone else

you think my abuser is some crappy dude  
but you're wrong

she ain't a man at all

i don't do men.

---

Projection: no visible bruises, no harm

(Two actors, male and female, behind the scrim.)

(NOTES: The actors are situated at a table. The female is on stage; the male enters. The primary lines are the female; the secondary text is the male.)

Good Morning. ... Oh, God, you have that look about you. This is not good.

I've been doing some reading.

That's nice. You should know, before you start sharing, that I have this important meeting I need to be at. And I can't be late, either.

I was reading about coercive control. Where one person exerts control over another.

I mentioned the meeting so you wouldn't do this, share with me what you've read.

I think that's what's happening with my brother. She has control over him.

Your brother is a grown man. I doubt very seriously if any one, let alone his wife, is controlling him.

You actually believe that, knowing her and my brother?

Do you seriously think he can't stand up for himself?

He's been bullied all his life. Why would it be any different now?

I don't know. It just doesn't sound right. An adult male being bullied by his wife. That's more like cheap humor you might see on TV or in a stupid movie

Let me read this to you. Then tell me if you still think I'm crazy.

I didn't say you were crazy. That's not what I said. And I can't listen right now. I have a meeting to be at that I can't miss. We'll talk tonight, okay?

Coercive control. A strategic course of self-interest behavior meant to secure, expand, and establish a regime of domination in another person's life. (beat) This is basically describing her. It's a perfect description of a bitch.

That's not at all what I heard. And clearly, you're not hearing me.

Three things help to define coercive control: there's oppression that's ongoing, one; that results in accumulative harm, two; and three, involves rational behavior that is multi-faceted.

I still don't see where you're going with this.

I'm not done yet. The intent of coercive control is to establish and maintain power over another person—like a husband for instance. This is accomplished one of two ways: hurt and intimidation or isolation and control. This leads to what is termed “entrapment” that is characterized by subordination and subjugation. Are you starting to get it now?

If I say yes, will you stop so I can go to my meeting?

Why would you tell me that and expect me to say yes?

I don't know. That was pretty stupid of me.

Quite. Coercive control is a form of abusive behavior. It is less about physical harm, though it may include physical violence, and is more about the psychological and emotional manipulation of another person. The abuser's strategies lead to a loss of autonomy, independence, and security that could have long range implications.

Okay. Am I good to leave now?

Think about it. Coercive control is not about beating the crap out of someone. It's about making a person dependent on their abuser and fearful of them. To destroy that person's ability to make their own decisions. Now, if you really think about it, doesn't that sound like what's going on with my brother?

Are you actually calling her an abuser now?

What do you mean, “now”? I've always thought she was abusive. The only thing that's changed now, is that I know what to call it.

Honey, I'll agree that your sister-in-law is a bit of a—

...bitch.

Okay, a bitch. But that doesn't make her an abuser. You know what it sounds like to me? Like your contempt for her is causing you to find reasons to hate her. You may never like her, but you need to accept, she's your brother's wife. Like it or not, he picked her. Stop looking for cause to break-up their marriage.

It's true, I don't like her. I never have. But you're wrong about my motivation for calling her what she is, an abuser. Just because she doesn't hit him with a baseball bat, doesn't mean she isn't abusive. Everything I've read so far, describes their relationship. Who does he defer to all

the time? When he wants to go somewhere, do something, buy something, he has to go to her and get permission.

We tell each other all the time what we're doing and where we're going. We both check with one another before buying anything big. Does that make either one of us an abuser?

You don't see the difference? We *inform* each other. He asks for permission. He doesn't do one thing without first, going to her to get approval.

Maybe because she makes more money than he does. Or she manages their budget. It could be any number of reasons for that.

So let me clarify what you're saying. Because she makes more money than he does, she gets to control his every action and desire? Is that what you're saying?

No, that's not what I'm saying.

Interesting. Because that's what I heard.

Let me re-phrase.

Yes, please do. Re-phase it. See if you can make it sound less idiotic.

What I was trying to say was...is that...is that I'm wrong, and you're right. That was very idiotic of me to say. Money should never determine how people relate to each other.

Thank you. And another thing. Have you noticed how she bad-mouths him? She intentionally embarrasses him in public. She constantly bosses him around or shuts him down whenever he's trying to have some fun. In the few times they've come to a family affair, he can't eat until she's done eating, which takes all night for her to do. By the time she's done, there's practically no food left. Not that it matters, because she makes them leave before he has a chance to even get a slice of turkey.

What can I say? It sucks.

It sucks. That's it? That's all you have to say?

I don't know what else to say. Granted, she's not nice to him. But if he doesn't mind, why should we get involved in it? It's his marriage. How it works is up to them, not us.

The other day, I tried to talk to him about his marriage. He wouldn't.

Not everybody wants their business to be public knowledge.

That wasn't it. He was literally too scared to say anything to me. When he heard her coming, he hung up before I could say good-bye. When I called him back, she answered and told me he wasn't available to talk. I was just talking to him. How did he suddenly become unavailable?

Honey, I know you're all riled up and want to do something about this, but I *need* to leave. Can we finish talking about this later tonight, after dinner?

I called him this morning, and you know what he said to me?

Not a clue.

That he couldn't see or talk to me anymore. I'm his twin sister, and he can't see me anymore. He said it. *He* said it. He told me he couldn't see me anymore. That bitch told him to do that. And you want me to wait to do something about this. After we finish a nice leisurely dinner discussing work and contemplating where the hell we should vacation this year. He's my brother. My twin brother. And he can't see me anymore.

All right. Let me call in and have them reschedule the meeting. Then you can tell me more about this coercive control so I understand it better. And then we'll figure out what to do. Okay?

I hate her. I really, really hate her.

I know. I'm starting to hate her, too.

---

Projection: how un-lady like

(One actor, female, wearing a mask. A male voice and a female voice are off stage.)

(NOTES: The text is predominantly spoken by the one actor. The secondary text in blue is the male voice. At the end, the secondary text in black is the grandmother.)

I tell her I plan to get a divorce,  
and there it is.  
That smug look I was expecting to see.  
The one that reveals her low regard for my plans.

I can hear her fussing in the back of her mind...

That I'm not trying hard enough to make the marriage work.  
That I'm not giving my husband time to deal with his anger issues.  
That the faltering marriage probably is my fault  
and I deserve everything he did to me.

I already knew that my decision would be deemed "un-lady like".

Yes, it's true. Divorce is un-lady like. The shame of it all.  
In case you're wondering where that came from in this day-and-age,  
you'd have to know the one thing that shapes my entire family.  
My grandmother.  
She was a southern belle, when being a belle was a really big deal.

Okay, here's a thought.  
Are southern belles still a southern belle once they become a southern belle?  
Is it like graduating from school, and therefore, you're always a graduate?  
Or do you lose that status after a certain time, a particular age?  
Can you become too old to be a southern belle?  
She still sees herself as one.  
So is she?

Who cares, right?  
Why am I wasting precious brain cells thinking about this?  
Because that's what I do. I stray a lot from linear lines.  
It's indicative of how I process information.  
And also my behavior, exhausting my family to no end.

Anyway—as I start to stray again—back to the original storyline.  
Bear with me. This is going somewhere, I promise.

My grandmother had a debutante ball,  
with the whole nine yards.  
Guaranteed, the first week of every month,  
she pulls out the memory book and takes a stroll.  
She never fails to present as evidence,  
her dance card,  
proving her popularity among the boys.

Of course it would be boys,  
because she wouldn't dance with girls,  
given the time, the place, the mentality.  
And my grandmother being my grandmother.  
Right, moving on...

Being that she's my grandmother,  
I politely pay attention.  
I at least listen.  
Okay, half listen.  
Alright, I don't listen anymore.

If I could close my eyes, I would.  
If I could sashay out the room,  
I would do so singing Dixie  
with a Shirley Temple smile on my face.

But even for me, that would be too blatantly rude.

Grand would throw a confederate fit  
with my disrespect for the south  
and her memories of growing up there.  
That's what we call her, by the way,  
Grand.  
Just in case you thought I was being lazy.

She actually prefers Grand,  
because she has always seen herself  
as *being* "grand".  
I kid you not.  
After all, she is a southern belle  
and a Daughter of the Revolution  
or some crazy shit like that.  
She thinks very highly of herself  
and she passed that on to her daughter,  
who is, of course, my mother.

I guess she could have had more than one daughter,  
in which case, she could have passed it on to an aunt.  
Though knowing her,  
her attitude would have been passed on to all of them,  
which would include my mother.  
But she only had the one daughter,  
so it was, of course, my mother—  
just to be clear.

And I'm moving on now...

Status is everything for a southern belle.  
A woman doesn't create status for herself,  
she marries into it;  
meaning who you marry is paramount.

Mother and mother did their best  
to pass on their better-than-thou attitude.  
But me being me,  
turning linear lines into erratic curves,  
I saw myself as having evolved  
beyond such trivial, racist and misogynist traditions.

I maintained this illusion until I fell in love with,  
and agreed to marry,  
a guy my lineage approved of.  
A nice southern boy,  
raised properly in a good home,  
who had a promising future  
as a partner in his father's very prestigious law firm.

I should have known something was amiss right away.

First off,  
the matriarchs were giddy with delight.  
Giddy, I tell you, giddy.  
I should have recognized this as a warning,  
but instead,  
I found it entertaining.

Second,  
they bantered about  
the one hundred guests they wanted to invite.  
Mind you,  
there wasn't a date yet set for this joyous occasion.  
I found this amusing, but not alarming.

Then came the final red flag.  
They began considering  
honorable southern names—  
like Robert Lee—  
for the instantaneous grandson  
born ten months into the marriage,  
that I wasn't even sure I wanted at all.

With all those warning signs,  
I should have known,  
something was wrong with this picture.

Duh.

Grand wanted to hear exactly what happened.  
I'm fairly certain  
she was hoping to identify  
what I had done wrong  
so she could tell me how to correct it.

I went on to describe the events  
leading to my decision,  
even though I knew  
if she couldn't find fault,  
it would be extremely unlikely  
she would believe whatever I told her.

The story starts with my husband  
coming home from work.  
It was easy to tell  
he was in a bad state of mind.  
My rule for dealing with disgruntled people is simple  
avoid them.  
With my husband,  
this turned out to be impossible.

He trailed behind me  
from one room to another.  
I would find an excuse to leave,  
hoping he'd stay put and mope.  
But no such luck.  
As you already know,  
my wishful thinking  
was utterly and begrudgingly wasted on the moment.

He followed me into each room  
ranting about his father  
being too damn demanding  
and expecting too much of him,  
just because he was his father's son.

He was saying all of this  
in-between gulps of an expensive whiskey bourbon  
his father gives him every Christmas and birthday.  
It wasn't hard to tell  
he was getting a little wasted.  
Okay, a lot wasted.

Anyone else drinking what he had consumed,  
would have passed out long ago.  
But his body was accustomed  
to handling the 100 percent proof alcohol,  
so he's was only slightly—  
and I use that term loosely—  
affected by the whiskey's potency.

I thought I was causally mentioning to him  
that perhaps he should stop drinking,  
or at least slow down.  
He apparently didn't like this idea.  
I may be going out on a limb here,  
but based on what he said,

[Don't be my father. I don't need another damn father!](#)

I got the impression  
he was confusing me with my father-in-law.  
I was going to tell him  
that I wasn't trying to be his father,  
when out of nowhere,  
he pushes me into the wall,  
knocking the wind out of me.  
In sheer panic,  
I dropped to the floor  
trying to catch a breath of air.

He approached me,  
stood over me,  
stared down at me,  
and said,

I'm sorry. I know you're not my father. I'm sorry.

He extended his hand,  
as an offering to help me get up,  
but I passed on that kind gesture  
and got myself up.  
The rest of the night was a fairly quiet one.

The second time he was “rough”,  
Grand’s word, not mind,  
I wasn’t home when he returned from work.

I was out with some friends,  
enjoying myself and passing the time,  
trying not to be bored as a stay-at-home wife.  
My status didn’t allow me to work,  
except for being involved  
with charitable projects for the less fortunate.

I know this is going to sound crazy,  
but I have these insane moments  
where I feel a bit unfortunate myself.  
This wasn’t the life I imagined having.

Now-and-again,  
I feel depressingly sorry for what I’ve become,  
which I know is preposterous,  
but here’s a news flash—  
rich people are human too.  
They just have more money  
and time to hide their misery.

Occasionally,  
I contemplate switching places  
with someone less fortunate,  
like the Prince did with the Pauper.  
Although with me,  
it wouldn’t be about curiosity  
or experiencing something different  
from the daily routine.  
I would do it  
so that the feelings I have,  
would be completely justified.

Okay,  
I know,  
back to the story.

When I arrived,  
the house was dark.  
I thought maybe  
he hadn't gotten home yet,  
but that proved to be false.

He stepped out from the shadows,  
and gave me quite a scare.  
I immediately turned on the lights  
so I could confirm it was indeed him.

He had a glass of whiskey in his hand.  
The bottle itself was sitting on the table,  
next to the lovely,  
expensive  
crystal decanter that was empty.  
He asked,

Where were you?

I told him,  
not thinking much of it.  
I saw no reason to lie.

He poured himself another drink,  
and said while pouring,

You should be here when I come home.  
I shouldn't have to wonder where you are.

My non-linear behavior kicked in.  
On my way to the bedroom,  
I heard myself say,  
"Just because we're married  
doesn't mean I bow to you.  
I'll do what I please,  
when I please."

Two things:  
if you say something  
that most likely will anger someone,  
don't do it while you're in grabbing distance.

It's a really dumb thing to do.

And two,  
don't assume an angry person  
won't retaliate  
because they haven't in the past.  
Things can change rapidly,  
right before your eyes.

I went on to explain to my grandmother  
how he grabbed me  
and tried to kiss me  
even though I was pushing him away.  
How he slapped me  
and pinned my arms in-between us  
so I couldn't use them.  
He forced me backwards  
onto the couch  
and then exercised his husbandly right  
to have sex with me,  
despite knowing I didn't want to.

Then I told her what he said,  
after he had gotten off me,  
put his little hot dog away  
and poured himself another drink.

That was exactly what I needed.  
It felt good.  
You know,  
I like it when you struggle.  
Really got my heart pumping.  
Let's do that more often, ok?  
Is there any food in the house?  
I haven't eaten since lunch.  
If I don't soon, I'll get a headache.

Always the funny one,  
even during the most inappropriate times,  
I told her  
he had forgotten his southern manners  
and didn't say thank you.  
I mean really,  
it was the least he could have done.

Not surprisingly,  
and sadly,  
her facial expression never changed.  
Not once.  
She gathered herself,  
positioning her head just so,  
in that grand manner of hers,  
looked at me sternly,  
in a scolding fashion,  
and very indignantly informed me,

That's what we do,  
us wives.  
We make our husbands happy.  
That is your duty to him.  
He shouldn't have to thank you.  
Consider yourself lucky.  
He shared his feelings with you.  
He didn't just walk away.

That's when it happened.  
I finally understood  
the inner workings of my grandmother.  
And when I did,  
this heavy cloak of sadness covered me,  
knowing what it meant to be a southern belle.  
Because for her,  
unlike for me,  
she couldn't leave.  
Only men could walk away.

---

Projection: always there

(Two actors, both female, in mask.)

(NOTES: This is a continuation of a previous episode with the short interview. The interviewer has the primary lines; the interviewee has the secondary lines.)

Beyond emergency shelter, talk about what the ideal DV program offers?

A lot. Counseling, safety planning, bilingual services, accessible transportation. Advocacy and help with legal procedures, support for court appearances, resources for non-citizens. Child care and support via provisions like clothing, enrichment programs for both the victim and their children. Referrals to resources outside of DV programs, relocation assistance—sometimes to out-of-state sites, financial vouchers for a deposit on an apartment, one-on-one direct contact with victims, and notifications or updates about the status of abusers. Within the organization, a lethality probability is calculated. This allow case workers to evaluate safety plans, increase their contact with victims and keep track of abusers. Other things that make a big difference for a family in crisis are the little acts of kindness. Donations make it possible for us to give holiday gifts to the kids in the shelter, do Halloween within the building or have monthly celebrations for those who have birthdays during the month. Whatever we can do, we do it. Whatever resources we have available to us, we use them.

Talk to me about those who come to your door. What kind of person usually requires your services?

People trying to escape the immediate danger of domestic violence. That's about the only sure thing you can expect. Otherwise, it could be literally anyone. Including the preacher's wife living next door to you.

Assuming you have the space, do you take everyone who comes to you?

No. Not everyone in a DV crisis is best served at a shelter. Some victims have a mental illness that shelter staff aren't trained to handle, nor should they be. That's why we have mental health professionals. Some of them are suicidal. They shouldn't be in a shelter. The best place for them is a facility that can offer a 24-7 suicide watch. A person with a drug addiction, may be in crisis because her boyfriend-dealer just beat the crap out of her, but is a DV shelter the best place for her? Not until she has the addiction under control. Until then, she's not thinking about her physical well-being. She's thinking about where and when she can find some dope. She needs to deal with that first. Occasionally, a homeless person trying to find a bed and a meal will claim to be a victim. We can't accept them because we need that space for legitimate victims requiring our services.

What happens to those not accepted into the shelter? Do you just send them on their way?

As easy as that would be, we don't just send them on their way. We make every effort to find a placement that's more appropriate. It may sound cold-and-heartless, but it's an issue of properly managing the resources you have, for the purpose you have them.

---

Projection: look for the purple house

(Two actors, one female, the other optional.)

(NOTE: A 911 emergency call. The dispatcher is behind the scrim; a frightened child, in the shadows. The primary lines are the dispatcher; the secondary text is the child.)

911, what is your emergency? ... Hello? ...Do you have an emergency?

(Crying and whimpering, barely audible.)

I hear you crying. Can you tell me what's wrong?

(Sniveling, louder.)

What's your name? Will you tell me that? ... All right then. Will you at least tell me if you're okay? Are you hurt?

No.

Is someone else there hurt?

Yes.

Who's hurt?

My mother.

Can you tell me what's wrong with her?

She's not moving.

How long has she not been moving? A little while or a long time?

A little while.

Okay. Do me a favor and look at her chest. Is it going up and down, like when you breathe?

Yes.

Okay, that's a good sign. Is she bleeding? Do you see any blood? Maybe on the floor around her.

No.

Okay. These are good things. You know, I'm a little bit scared for you and your mom. Are you scared too?

Yes.

Maybe we can help each other not be scared. If you stay on the phone with me, I won't be scared anymore. And I'll stay with you, so you won't be scared. How about that? Does that sound good to you?

Yes.

I feel better already. Now let's try and make your mother feel better too. For me to send someone there to help her, I have to know where you live. Do you know your address?

No.

Do you know what street you live on?

Carlyle.

Okay. Can you tell me what other streets are near your house?

Hilltop.

You're doing great. What about buildings around you? Like a grocery store, a church, anything?

I don't know.

That's okay. What school do you go to? Do you know the name of it?

Glenmore.

Glenmore. Okay. Tell me, does your mother walk you to school? Or does she drive you? Do you ride a bus there?

She walks me there.

Is it a long walk, or a short one?

Short.

This is good. You're helping me to narrow down where you live. Now, can you tell me if your family lives alone in a house or in a building with lots of other people?

A house.

Do you have a bedroom upstairs? Or is everything on one floor?

I sleep upstairs.

I bet you have a pretty house too. Can you describe it to me? What color is it?

White.

Okay. Tell me some more things. What's special about your house? Does it have a porch?

No.

How about your front door? What color is it painted?

Blue.

That's a nice color. I like blue. Do you have a fence around your house?

In the backyard.

Terrific. The houses next to you, do you remember what color they're painted?

No.

That's okay. Can you look out a window and see them?

Yes.

Great. Will you do that for me? ...What color do you see?

Yellow.

All right. Go look at the other house. ... Can you see it?

Yes.

Terrific. What color is that one?

Purple.

Purple is a very unusual color for a house. That helps me a lot.

My mother doesn't like it.

What about you? Do you like it?

Yes.

I like purple too. And I have good news for you. The people who are going to help you and your mother, are in your area. They're looking for that purple house right now. Tell me, are you still near your mother?

No.

Can you go to her and tell me how she's doing? Is her chest still going up and down?

I can't. He came back.

Who's he?

The man who comes sees my mom.

Can you see him from where you are?

Yes.

Can he see you?

I don't know.

Okay, listen, whatever you do, don't hang up the phone. Do you hear me? Don't hang up, okay?  
... Hello? ... Hello? ... Oh no, not today. Please, not today.

---

Projection: a kid's game

(Two actors, female and male, in mask.)

(NOTES: The characters are playing a game of hide-n-seek. The female is hiding, the male seeking. This should have more movement than the other episodes have; though this is done in dim light, it is important to be able to see them move about the stage. If inclined, it is encouraged to include the audience in the game; in this case, the characters should wear an off color for their clothing that **cannot** be associated with any group of people. The female actor says the primary lines; the secondary text is for the male actor.)

ali, ali ump en free,  
come out, come out where ever you are.

hide and seek,  
a kid's game, right?  
or is it?

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.  
ready or not, here I come.  
anyone around my base is it.

I hide, you seek.  
how much more simple can it be?  
it's a kid's game, right?  
or is it?

I see you behind the tree.  
I see you under the porch.  
I see you next to the trash can.  
you can't hide from me.

stay quiet, don't move.  
breathe light, don't make a sound.  
get ready to run.  
get ready to run.  
get ready to run,  
to the one safe place to be.

ali, ali ump en free,  
come out, come out where ever you are.

no, it's a trick.  
stay where you are.  
wait.  
be patient.  
don't move.  
stay quiet.  
get ready to run.  
get ready to run.  
get ready to run.

come out, come out where ever you are.

get ready to run.  
get ready to run.  
get ready to run.  
Now! RUN!

gotcha!  
I see you.  
I got you before you made it to base.

it's a frickin' simple child's game, right?  
or is it a training exercise for survival?

---

Projection: caught in the middle

(Five actors: two adult females, two adult males, one male child. The adults are in mask. The child is behind the scrim; he is situated between the adults.)

(NOTES: This episode is about a custody battle for the son. The parents are meeting with their lawyer. The primary text in black is the female lawyer; the secondary text in black is the mother. The primary text in blue is the male lawyer; the secondary text in blue is the father. Lines that are capitalized are spoken by either both lawyers or parents.

Projected over the son is either a live feed or a video of him drawing. The picture starts off nice and typical; nothing alarming. As he continues, the drawing becomes more disturbing and violent in nature. As the scene moves towards the end, he begins to furiously scribble over the drawing with a black crayon/marker until the entire paper/video frame is solid black, blocking his presence entirely.)

The court will award him to me, right? I'm his mother. They always give the child to the mother, right?

Not always. Sometimes the father get's custody.

This is everything? No surprises, nothing that might be uncovered, detrimental to your character?

That's it. I'm not hiding anything. Not anymore.

But I'm his biological mother. Doesn't the court favor the mother?

Not so much anymore. Plus, you have some things here that could be used against you.

But you can hide or down-play them, right?

I might, but his lawyer won't.

I think we have a strong case showing she's unfit as a mother and that you'd be the better choice.

So you think I could win this and get full custody?

All of that was in the past. Isn't there some law about not using your past against you?

That's typically applied in rape cases, but it could have some bearing here.

A LOT DEPENDS ON THE JUDGE AND WHAT THE CUSTODY EVALUATOR WROTE. THE ONE THING THAT SHOULD COUNT MOST IS, WHAT'S IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD.

I'M IN THE BEST INTEREST OF OUR/MY SON. NOT HER/HIM.

That's for the judge to decide.

He's not fit to have custody of any child, let alone my son.

Don't forget that "your son" is not yours alone. Your husband is the biological father. As such, he has legal rights too.

I can't imagine some judge seeing her as more fit than me.

I know this is a new-day-and-age, but not everyone has caught up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A judge could see her as being more fit, despite everything against her. Shit happens, you know?

That's a joke. Our whole marriage was a joke.

I should inform you that there's a statute on the books that favors the "friendly parent" over the "hostile parent". The court looks for the parent who's "cooperative". You might want to tone down your contempt for your soon to be ex-husband and be a bit more congenial.

You're kidding me, right?

There's something I want to make you aware of, because this may become an issue later on, especially if you get any type of custody. Have you ever heard of parental alienation?

No. And it's kinda important, if you're looking to improve your chances for custody.

But he's fucking queer!

Right there. That kind of stuff. You can think them all you want, but don't blurt them out.

Parental alienation is a mind game. It's when one parent tries to turn the children against the other parent. In your case, she might use your sexual orientation against you, alienating your son with stories of you trying to make him gay. Or degrading your life style, saying how terrible you were to marry her, knowing you were gay, and then having sex with men. She might make it sound like your actions were unfair to both of them.

But I didn't know I was gay when I married her. Not for sure, anyway. And I haven't slept with anyone, man or woman. I made a point of it, so she couldn't use it against me.

Doesn't matter. She won't care about any of that. Her only purpose will be to destroy the relationship between you and him.

I'm his biological mother and he's queer. I don't even know why there's a custody hearing at all.

Because you have a criminal record. Courts aren't fond of giving custody to someone with a history of assault.

She tried to kill me! She attacked me with a frickin' butcher knife and almost killed me. And she has the nerve to make me the bad guy in this relationship?

I'm just telling you what's possible and what you need to be prepared for. I wouldn't be surprised if her lawyer used temporary insanity as a defense.

Temporary insanity my ass. How is that even possible?

The argument would be something like, she momentarily lost touch with reality when you told her about being gay. It sounds crazy, and it should. That's the point. It's what I would do if I was her lawyer.

How would you feel after five years of marriage having your husband tell you he likes men more than you, his wife? Of course I was pissed. I can't imagine any woman who wouldn't be.

But not every woman would try to kill him. With a conviction of two assaults and being on probation, it doesn't look good.

That little fagot fucker! I wish I had killed him.

More blurting out. Really?

I wouldn't say that out loud in court. I'm not stupid.

I hope so. Because if you add that to the affidavits from your co-workers and neighbors attesting to your frequent bouts of anger, verbal attacks and physical battering, there is a real chance you might lose custody. Best case scenario, you'll get joint custody.

Hey, you're supposed to be my lawyer, but you're not sounding like it.

I was assigned your case by my firm. It is my duty to represent you to the best of my ability. But there is no mandate by my firm, the ABA or the judicial system that I like you in the process of doing my job.

So you'd rather my son be raised by some queer?

What I would prefer, is that the judge makes the right decision for what's best for him. Whoever and whatever that may be.

**I'M WHAT'S BEST FOR HIM!**

Projection: i don't understand

(Three actors, females, in veils.)

(NOTES: This episode focuses on immigrants in domestic violent situations and the additional challenges there are in helping them escape violence that is often culturally endorsed. The three actors represent a different culture, speaking a different language. They speak one line at a time; the order of language spoken is a directorial decision. The cultures are Hispanic, African, and Pakistani. Ideally, there would also be someone signing.)

While the actors are speaking, there are projections, which may be repeated or added to if needed; there's no set order to them, though some projections are better suited for certain moments in the episode. The one exception to this is "support"; it should be shown in a calculated manner and at the end of the episode. The projections are meant to help translate for others, the gist of what is being said. The words are: cultural differences; tradition; illegal immigrant; unregistered; no English; deportation; immigrations; sent back home; lose your children; in police custody; no money; no job; no family; no compassion; my children; the children come first; who to trust; constant lies; hostage; customs; family shame; no honor; honor killing; alone; denied information; options kept secret; no friends; hands reaching out; learn anew; risks; opportunities; a new life; new thinking; new beginnings; remain strong; stay brave; don't believe the lies; for me and my children; take a chance; the possibilities; support.)

He was angry.

He came after me.

He was shouting at me.

He was scaring the children.

I try to protect them.

I don't want them to see.

But he grabbed me and hit me right in front of them.

I can hear my daughter crying,

Mommy, mommy, mommy.

Out the corner of my eye,

I can see my son hiding his face.

He is afraid his father will see him cry.  
My husband, he has a knife in his hand.  
I am afraid he will use it this time.  
But he is too drunk to stand anymore.  
He falls and hits his head.  
I gather the children.  
I take them to my friend's house.  
We spend the night there.  
But tomorrow there will be hell to pay.  
He will say I was the cause of his falling.  
He will be more angry than before.  
So I will leave the children with my friend.  
He will ask where his son is.  
He won't care about our daughter.  
He will tell me he is sending me back home to our native land.  
He says he will call immigrations on me.  
He says I will be deported for not being a good wife.  
He tells me if I ever call the police, they will take the children.  
He tells me they will take my children to break my heart.  
Or that he will keep them to tear my heart apart.  
He will talk about the shame I bring to my family.  
How I have no honor.  
He will say I can leave whenever I want.

He will show me the door.

And then he will ask how will I live.

He will remind me I have no job, no skills, no money, no English.

He will ask how can I survive without him.

I have no place to turn to.

I have no money to live on.

I have no way to take care of my children.

I cannot speak the language.

So who do I turn to?

I feel like there is no one.

Like there is no place to go.

Like I am stuck here forever.

But I meet a woman who lives in my building.

She talks to me about a group I might enjoy.

She has invited me to come and see.

She says other women like us will be there.

That we will talk and share.

That we will laugh and smile.

And the children can come too.

So that they are not left alone.

I wonder if this is a good idea.

I wonder what will happen if I do go.

I wonder what will happen if I don't go.

But when he is not there.  
I go to see what it is like.  
And I find women like me.  
Just like me who knows my life.  
And like the woman, who opened her home to us.  
She talks about having rights.  
About how we can protect ourselves.  
How we can get help.  
Not just with home.  
But with becoming an American citizen.  
Becoming legal without our husbands.  
She tells us there are ways for us to learn skills.  
To learn the language.  
To find a way out.  
But we must be willing to think differently.  
To forget what we have learned, taught to us by tradition.  
And to expect our family to turn their backs.  
To talk about us poorly or treated like a stranger.  
But she offers us a new life if we want to stop being afraid.  
She talks of places that will take care of us.  
That will make sure we are safe.  
And that our children are safe.  
She knows we will not leave our children.

She makes it known to us, our children will not be left behind.

She knows we will not leave without our children.

She says, when we are ready, she will help us.

And that her house is always open and we are always welcomed.

That we can come to talk and laugh and smile.

To see our children play happily, without fear.

(In unison with broken English.)

This kind woman,

She offers her home and her kinship to us.

She says, we are family. We must help take care of each other.

And I think she is right.

We must take care of each other.

---

Projection: and what about them

(Two actors, both female, in mask.)

(NOTES: This is a continuation of the previous interviewing episodes. The interviewer has the primary lines; the interviewee has the secondary lines.)

The male victims, how do you assist them?

The same way we help women victims. There's virtually no difference in providing them services. We do our best to recognize a victim as a victim, regardless of their differences—whether it's being trans-gender, gay, they have a negative history, compounding factors, or their status as a US citizen. We see all of them for who they are—a victim of domestic violence.

Are DV facilities co-ed? Do you house men and women together?

No, that wouldn't be a good idea. We have arrangements with local hotels to house our male victims. We also use hotels for women in special situations. Say for instance, a mother who has teenaged boys. They can't stay in the shelter either. So the entire family is placed in a hotel.

What about the abusers? Are they addressed in any way or are they outside the purview of DV programs?

For those organizations who have the space and personnel, there are batterers' intervention programs that some abusers are required to attend by court order. But any abuser who chooses to, can go.

Our time is almost up. Before we end, can you talk about the differences in states, comparing the best state with the worse state for services and occurrences of domestic violence?

Really, it doesn't matter if one state is better than another. The bottom line is that none of them are adequate to meet the needs generated from domestic violence. Even though it's becoming more taboo with increased awareness, domestic violence acts like a hydra. You cut off one head, and it grows two or three more. So clearly, the answer isn't in attacking one aspect of domestic violence. It's about attacking the heart of the beast. And that's not easily done with so many heads to account for simultaneously.

Projection: not my fault

(Two actors, both males, behind the scrim.)

(NOTES: Actor #1 is sitting at a bar drinking. Actor #2 enters. Actor #1 has the primary lines; Actor #2 has the secondary lines.)

Hey. How's it going?

Don't ask.

One of those days, hum?

Yep. One of those days.

Work?

Nope.

If it ain't work, it must be home.

Bingo. Give the man a prize.

She catch you cheating? Or was she cheating on you? I heard on the radio 63% of married couples cheat on each other. I cheated. But I told her about it. Told her I never woulda, if she hadn'a been acting like some damn virgin. She wasn't one when we met, and she sure as hell ain't one now. What was I supposed to do? A man needs what he needs, right? I went out and found me a whore. Then I told the wife about it. Told her if she's wasn't so stuck up, I wouldn'a have to go find a whore to do her job.

It's nothing like that.

Good for you. My wife, when I told her, had the nerves to get all upset about it—yapping on-and-on about me catching something and passing it on to her. I tell her, it ain't looking like I'll ever get a chance to do that. I ask her, if you don't want me to go elsewhere, what am I supposed to do? Make you do it? She'd probably like that too. Have me arrested for assaulting her so she can send me up on criminal charges. Then she can do whatever the hell she wants. That ain't happening. I'm too damn smart for that.

I don't cheat.

Not yet anyway. Just between us, of course, are you still able to, you know?

Yes, I can. No troubles there. I do just fine.

Relax. I didn't mean nothing by it. But you know, sometimes it happens. Ain't nobody's fault, it just happens.

That's not a problem. There's nothing wrong with me.

All right. I got it. Everything's good down there. But if it ain't work or the little fellow, what's eating at you?

I don't wanna talk about it.

Buddy, you're at a bar with no women to pick up. If you ain't here to talk, what the hell are you here for?

I needed to get away.

You have a fight or something like that?

Something like that. I kinda lost my temper.

So what happened? Tell me. I might be able to help you. You never know.

It's nothing. It's just that sometimes she gets on my nerves and irritates me.

I know that feeling all too well. What she do this time to get on your nerves?

I work all day. I work hard. I ain't got no cushy desk job. I work construction. On a day like today, with the temperature up in the nineties, it ain't fun. It's a killer. So I'm working my ass off and you know what she's doing all day? Shopping. She's out shopping. Like I got money for her to spend on shoes and new clothes. She's got enough of 'em. So I tell her, she has to take 'em back. We can't afford this crap. She says no. We go back-n-forth for a while until I get tired of arguing with her. I say fine. I took everything she bought outside and burnt them all. Pisses her off big time, right? But I don't give a shit anymore. I find her purse and I take all her credit cards. She's ready to kill now, right? But I take off, so I don't kill her first.

That's some crazy shit all right. But I bet she won't ever do that again.

Pissed me off. If she wanna spend money like she's the first lady, then she needs to marry a rich man or get a damn job. I can't afford to foot the bill for that kind of shit.

Sounds like my wife. She claims she needs new things because I'm always spilling beer on her. You wanna know why? Because when I go to kiss her, she pushes me away, talking about me being drunk and what-have-you. If she'd just let me kiss her, I wouldn't spill my beer. It ain't like I'm trying to waste it, you know? It's really her fault, but she blames me. And she blames me for the house being dirty. Says I'm filthy.

I'm out there working my ass off. And for what? So she can go shop for some fancy shoes?

I tell her, it's not my fault the house is dirty. What else you got to do, I ask her. She tells me she had to do her nails. Hands and feet both! She's spending the whole day doing her nails, 'cause they gotta dry. The whole day doing nails. For who? That's what I wanna know.

Then she has to get new clothes to wear with the shoes. She ends up spending over a hundred dollars. Money that I was keeping for a reason.

Like her female friends? She hangs out with them more than she does me. Says she likes their company. What the hell she trying to tell me? That she's some damn dyke? Maybe that's the reason she keeps putting me off. Cause I ain't got what she wants, you know?

The problem is, she's use to nice things. That's her. Always has been. I knew that when I married her. But she knew too I wasn't a rich man. That we'd have to be careful with our money.

But that ain't right. I'm her husband and she needs to do right by me. Being her husband, that should still count for something. I got spousal rights, you know?

She likes nice clothes, that's for sure. And she looks good in 'em too. I guess I can't fault her for what she did. She can't change who she is overnight.

You know, I do right by her. I wouldn't go find some whore if she'd just do right by me. You see, that's the problem with females today. They're selfish. Want everything their way. They couldn't care less about anyone else, including their husbands. Hell, especially their husbands.

I got so mad though. I couldn't think straight. What sane man burns a hundred dollars' worth of clothes because his wife won't take 'em back?

I should take my friend's advice. Teach her a lesson. Remind her of her place. Be the man in the house, you know?

The thing is, I was saving that money for us to take a trip somewhere. To go someplace nice when this job was done, so we could do something fun. Now the money's gone, the clothes are gone, and neither one of us is happy.

I think that's exactly what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna teach her how to be a good wife. Give her a lesson to the inch of her life. Then we'll see. She won't be spending all day doing her damn nails anymore.

I shoulda told her what I was doing with that money. That's what I shoulda did. Let her know so she wouldn'a spent it like she did.

She'll do what she's supposed to then. I shouldn't have to spend good money on a whore, when I have one at home bought and paid for already, right? Hey, ain't this a curve ball?

What?

I thought I was gonna help you, and here you are helping me. Wasn't expecting that.

Help you? Help you how? I didn't do anything.

Yeah you did. And the next time you see me here, I'll be a much happier man. Count on it.

(Actor #2 exits. Actor #1 makes a phone call.)

Hey, don't hang up! I'm calling to say I'm sorry about the clothes. I shouldn'a done that. I wasn't thinking clear. Can we talk? I wanna explain why I got so mad. Can we do that? When I get home. Talk about it?

---

Projection: this is a test

(Six actors, 3 male actors, wearing masks. Three female actors, in shadow.)

(NOTES: This episode deals with batterer intervention and the assessment for participation in a batterers' group. Three chairs are arranged in a circle, with the chair facing the audience being the "hot seat"; this chair is for the actor speaking. The male actors are identified as Actor #1, #2 and #3, in order of them speaking. The mask they wear has a distinct shape appropriate for their personality and story. The female actors alternate asking questions in rapid-fire succession; they remain in shadow. One female is paired with one male when dealing with the individual stories. The primary text are the males; secondary text are the females.)

(The male actors enter, as if they were in a police line-up.)

This is an assessment, to evaluate your acceptance into the program.

You must answer each question truthfully, without omission.

If we find you have given false information, you will forfeit your space in the group.

The court will be informed of your non-participation.

In addition to the person you listed as your victim and/or partner.

If you are under a court order to attend these classes, your dismissal may mean you will serve the rest of your sentence.

You are expected to attend every class. Miss two classes and you are dropped from the group.

You are expected to be on time. And you may not leave early.

Two days of not attending a full session equals a day absent.

You cannot make up a missed class.

You must pay the ten dollars at every session. No exception.

Do you understand and accept these terms?

Yes, absolutely.

Of course. What other choice do I have?

What he said.

Do you understand and accept these terms?

Didn't I just say that? You need me to say the damn words? Okay, I fucking understand and agree. There, you happy now?

We're starting.

(The actors sit down.)

Are you here voluntarily or due to a court order?

How do you identify your race?

Are you currently employed?

Do you have any special learning needs?

Are you related to the victim?

Is the victim male or female?

How long have you been involved with the victim?

Do you currently live together?

Has an "order for protection" been issued against you?

Do you take any prescription medication?

Do you use recreational drugs or alcohol?

Sometimes I do.

How has your drug or alcohol use affected your life?

I wouldn't say it has.

Has your life been affected by your use of drug or alcohol?

Nothing bad.

How has your life been affected, in any way, by your use of drug or alcohol?

Are you asking me if I can function day-to-day? Well, I haven't lost my job, if that's what you're after. Has it affected me? Yeah, it's saving my life. It keeps me from feeling pain. The kind of pain that doesn't go away. It screams. It screams like pain would, if pain had a voice. It lingers as part of a bad dream re-playing itself on my eyelids. The kind where you keep trying to figure out the details. You know enough to know it was a dream, but not enough to know exactly what happened. You get a headache from trying to remember. You get distracted from thinking about it. You lose track of time and space because you're so focused on what the dream was really about, because it was so bizarre. It's a dream, and you know it's a dream, but it feels so real to you. You can't shake the feeling that it actually happened. That it's a real life experience. The alcohol helps to quiet the pain. It helps me to sleep and get through the day. Sometimes, it helps me to forget the dream. It's such a bizarre dream. I can see it clearly every minute. There's a woman. She's half naked, lying on a bed of sharp needles. You think it's needles, until you look up close and can tell the needles are really tiny knives, poking through her. She's calling out my name. Not loud, a whisper. She can't shout because her mouth is taped. You see, that's one of the bizarre things. She's whispering my name, but her mouth is taped. Then I get it. It's not her mouth, it's her eyes. When I look into her eyes, they call out to me. Then the dream rewinds. It literally rewinds. She gets up off the bed and walks backwards towards the closet where she picks up her clothes that fell before she could put them in the suitcase she was trying to pack. She runs backward, not walk, runs into the living room. Sits on the couch. No, it's not really sitting. She's in the process of getting up after pushing someone or something off of her. I'm not sure if it's a man or a monster. I can't see its face. It's missing. And the body is distorted, misshapen. For a moment, I think it's a vampire, because it looks like he's trying to bite her neck, but he's not. He's trying to kiss her. His right hand is pulling her shirt up, so he can latch onto her breast. His hand is huge, enormous. It looks like a squid, with tentacles, attaching itself. Then everything freezes. People, time, space. Nothing is moving. I find myself watching the two of them, through a window, my nose flattened against the glass. I can see the horror on her face, the struggle in her body. I want to help, but the glass is too thick. I can't break it. I wake up. Or I think I do. Because when I look beside me, she's lying there, her eyes whispering my name. But her body, it's flat and lifeless. It's a terrible dream, so I drink to silence the pain.

Why are you here?

Because of my fiancé.

Has there been a violent episode in your relationship?

Once. I hit her. And we both agreed not to move forward until I saw a therapist, to work on things. To get the dream out of my head. He suggested I come here. So, I'm here.

That's all for now.

Next.

(The actors switch chairs.)

For each statement, describe your attitude towards the role of men in society.

Men are more knowledgeable than women.

Men are strong, women are weak.

Men are better drivers than women.

Men handle pressure situations best.

It's a man's world, rightfully so.

Men are more logical than women.

Men are more interesting, period.

Men are better with finances than women.

Men are more decisive in crisis situations.

Men are more direct and truthful, women are evasive, and deceptive.

Men should rule, women should serve.

Boys should be like their father. Do you agree?

I guess. I wouldn't feel bad if my boys were like me.

What do you teach them?

I teach them how to be strong in today's world and how to hold their own. Not to be a push-over. That they need to manage their affairs intelligently, to know what's going on around them.

What do you remember most about your father?

Well, two things come to mind. He was a strict disciplinarian. Didn't take any crap from us or anyone else. And he didn't like wasting his money. He felt he worked too hard to earn it, and he'd be damned if he'd throw it away. He always taught us to keep a close eye on our money, how it was spent and where. Some people would call him cheap, but that wasn't him at all. He liked a good deal. Wouldn't spend a penny on something he thought was over-priced. If he saw the bargain in it, and it served a purpose, he would spend the money. But you also had to be clever. Know how to get him to spend the money. Like my mother. She knew how. I remember we had this old washing machine. Everyone knew it was coming time to replace it, even my father was aware. But it was still working just fine, so he didn't see the need for a new one. Naturally, my mother wanted a new machine before the old one actually died. But she knew she couldn't ask my father more than once. We all knew once was the limit. He didn't like to be asked for the same thing over and over. But he never forgot what you said to him. For example,

if my mom told him we needed new shoes and she showed them to him, so he could see for himself, he would nod his head and go about his business. Later, at some point, he would come home with new shoes he determined was a bargain. They weren't always the nicest looking shoes, but they were a bargain and they did the job. And that was all that matter to him. He spent his money on things that did the job. My mom knew this about him, because they had been together since high school. She knew when and how to approach him. Timing was everything. Pick the wrong time, and you might get dressed down for not being money conscious. Every-now-and-then, he would give us a good slap upside the head, as a reminder not to be wasteful. Mostly though, he was a brooding kind of guy. Not big on physical punishment, but he had a way about him that kept you in order. My mom knows my father won't even start looking until the last drip of water is drained for good. She knows it's going to take him forever, because he won't buy one until he finds a bargain. My mom, knowing this, fiddles with the old washer so it looks worse than it really is. When he comes to evaluate for himself, he nods and goes back to his business. When she needed to wash, she'd fix it again, do her laundry and then mess it back up. Meanwhile, she's dropping hints about needing money soon to go out to do laundry. And true to form, he comes home one day with a new machine, just before the old one sputtered its last bubble. You just had to know how to work my father. He was a tight-wad, but he wasn't a cheap bastard like some people thought. You just had to know when it was safe to approach him. That's all. You learned. And it didn't take long to learn either.

Why are you here?

Honestly, I don't know. I mean, I know what they told me was the reason, but I don't know why it's a reason.

Who referred you?

The court did, but it was really CPS. Someone said I was abusing my kids. I was asked about hitting 'em. I'm a pretty honest guy, so I told the truth. I've hit 'em on occasions, but only for disciplinary reasons. Like my father would smack us from time-to-time. I wasn't hitting 'em to be mean or anything like that. Only for discipline. When I was growing up, that was no big deal. Families were left alone to manage their affairs. Now, you put a finger on your kid, and they're ready to put you in jail and take 'em away. I'm not looking to lose my kids, so here I am. But honestly, I really don't know why.

That's all for now.

Next.

(The actors switch chairs. Throughout the text, he finds the whole thing amusing. He enjoys the shock value of what he says and so is always pushing for it. He chuckles routinely, to flaunt his flagrant disregard for the entire process and for women. It's reasonable to think that if he hasn't been diagnosed a psychopath, he's just a thin line from being one.)

These are questions to assess your level of anger and violence.

Do you get angry quickly?

When angry, do you act before you think?

Do you like how it feels when you're angry?

How long do you hang on to your anger?

When did you first use physical violence?

Have you been arrested multiple times for assault?

Which of the following have you done when angry or violent?

Break things, throw things, hit your fist into a wall, kick down doors?

Restrain, shove, grab, punch, kick, choke, burn?

Chase with a vehicle, poison, intentionally injure a fetus, deny medical care?

Force your partner to do drugs, watch pornography, have unwanted sex?

Force her to have painful sex, have sex in front of others, physically attack sexual parts of her body?

Prevent the use of birth control, withhold information about possible STD's?

Use a gun, knife, or an object that could be a lethal weapon to harm, threaten or kill your partner, her family, friends or a pet? ... Have you?

Have I what?

Used a gun, knife, or an object as a lethal weapon to harm, threaten or kill your partner, her family, friends or a pet?

Probably. At some point in time. Not all at once though. But there's a thought.

Is your partner afraid of you?

If she is, she ain't never said a thing to me.

Does your partner have reason to fear you?

I don't know. Ask her. If you can find her. I sure as hell can't.

When was the first time you were physically violent with a woman?

I'm supposed to remember that? It was years ago.

Approximately when was the first time you were physically violent with a woman?

I guess when I was about fourteen. I made this girl I liked kiss me. Twice. I enjoyed it, so I did it again.

What was your worst incidence of physical force against a woman?

How the hell do I know? Ask the police. Have 'em check the reports. I don't keep track of shit like that.

Which act of violence do you remember most?

Angie. For sure, Angie. I remember her real good.

Why's that?

I was gonna marry her. But she OD'd before I could ask her. I think she woulda said yes. We got along real good, me and her.

What made her special?

Well, first off, it never bothered her. Me getting angry. She musta liked me that way, 'cause she worked pretty damn hard at making me mad at her. We fight for a little bit, then I'd jump her, pin her down and fuck her. She was a screamer. Real loud too. She'd scream the whole time, 'cause she knew I liked it. Made me fuck her harder. After, we'd smoke some pot and sit down to watch TV. But then we get back into it, fighting over which show to watch. That's what made her special. Why I remember her best. We both liked to fight and fuck.

Describe what happened.

Why? You thinking you want some of the same?

Describe what happened.

Lots of things happened. I don't remember it all.

Describe what you remember happening.

What the fuck for? Why you gotta know? It's over. It's no big deal.

Describe what you remember.

Start the damn class so I can get the hell out of here.

Describe what you remember.

Fuck, okay. I slapped her around a bit. Punched her in the stomach once or twice. Pulled on her hair and burnt some of it. I threw her up against the wall. I pissed on her. I had her strip down and stand in the window. I told people passing by to watch her give me a blow job. Had a pretty good crowd too. A lot of them were doing videos. I didn't mind 'cause they were getting my best side, so it was all good. I remember shoving her up against the wall at one point. I remember biting her tits until I saw blood. I pretended it was my moma's milk. I put something up her ass, but I don't remember exactly what it was. I recall that it was kinda painful. Then I shot her up with some heroin to ease the pain. I musta used too much. The next thing I knew, I was fucking a corpse. She wasn't screaming, so I knew something was wrong. I was gonna ask her to marry me that night. Even stole a ring to give her. I couldn't hang around there, so I left. I needed a place to stay, so I gave the ring to some girl I met. I knew she would put me up if I gave it to her. Girls are crazy for shit like that. They're about the stupidest creature alive. But I truly believe, there's nothing better for fucking than a girl's cunt. I almost feel sorry for fag boys 'cause nothing can take the place of a good cunt. Almost, but not enough to really give a damn. So, can we get the damn class going now? I got places to go and cunts to fuck. I got some free time if you're interested.

Our assessment of you indicates you would not benefit from these classes.

We are informing the court that you were not accepted.

We are recommending to the judge that you serve the full amount of your jail time.

And have a psychiatric evaluation.

(The lights slowly fades out on Actor #3.)

Anyway I can make you change your mind? If you're the cunt I think you are, I can give you an awesome fuck. After class, we can do it up. Maybe ask one of the other guys to join in. Would you like that, cunt? If you want, you can come suck my dick right now. It's nice and hard, all ready to go.

(As darkness pervades, he laughs; it's sinister in nature; not boisterous or maniacal, but nevertheless, audible with an undertone of crazy.)

Fuck all of you bitches. I don't give shit about any of you.

Projection: Goin' Somewhere

(Three actors, 2 females and 1 male.)

(NOTES: This episode starts in a bedroom, behind the scrim, and ends in front of it. The female actor is packing; the male actor is not yet visible. The third actor is in shadow; she's the narrator speaking the lines. The main actors are living out the events as silhouettes; the images of them should make the audience be voyeurs watching through sheer curtains. This is the one episode where the actors should come across as characters, without violating the prime directive. This is also the only episode where there are staging needs to accommodate the action. The secondary text is the male actor.)

I can hear him in the kitchen  
opening the refrigerator door  
pushing aside leftovers  
condiments  
the filtered water he never drinks

I know what he's looking for  
I know what will happen next

Hey hon, where's the beer?

I will tell him  
though he won't believe me  
I will tell him anyway  
Because that's our routine  
"You drank it all last night."

Couldn't have. I woulda remembered doin' that.

He never does  
Because every single time, he passes out  
Awake, asleep, he doesn't care anymore  
Not when the beer is gone

Are you sure?

"Positive."

I can hear him walking from the kitchen towards the bedroom  
where I am  
He grabs the keys to his old junker along the way

Hey honey, you got any money?

He turns the corner to see me packing

Goin' somewhere?

He asks oh, so nicely  
as if there's no hidden purpose to his question  
But I don't answer  
I keep on with my business

So, where you goin'?

I ignore him again  
I don't want to give him the chance to say no  
cleverly disguised so he doesn't tip his hand  
It's too early for him to command my obedience  
Instead, he will say

Hey hon, how 'bout we go out? Just the two of us. Like old times.

It's a nicer way to hold me hostage  
Because  
you know  
I would be a bitch if I didn't go

I'm talkin' to you. Where you goin'?

His gaze on me is shifting  
He doesn't like it when I'm not his sweetheart  
Not the woman he fell in love with  
Who he sweet-talked into his back pocket  
where he keeps me just for himself

His gaze is becoming a steady stare  
I must stay alert and watch him out the corner of my eye  
I can't blink, because if I do  
the world disappears

I become blind and all I can do is feel  
Feel the slamming of his fist into my face  
Once  
Twice  
Three times  
I lose count  
I lose consciousness

I lose everything I always thought about myself  
Dreams, future plans  
Everything

Are you goin' to answer me?

I turn to him  
He's waiting for me to say something  
but all I do is look at him with my own stare  
The one that took two years to perfect  
That started on the first day the world disappeared

He sees there's something new about me  
He can sense that something has changed  
is changing  
and it makes his brain re-calculate  
to re-evaluate  
to develop a new plan of attack

I return to my packing  
without a word said  
I expect a lesson on proper behavior  
Instead he just stands there and tosses the keys high above his head  
He waits for them to fall  
knowing with certainty  
the keys will come right back to him

I can read his thoughts, on his face, as he thinks of them  
I have read them many times  
He is thinking I am nothing more than a set of keys  
That the law of what-goes-up-must-come-down, applies to me too  
It's just a matter of how high must he throw me  
to make me fear him again  
To welcome, even embrace, a return to our everyday life

So where you goin'?? Can't you just say that? Are you leavin' me?

The thought has crossed my mind many times  
but only after he yanked me across the states from one corner to the other  
promising a bigger and better someday, that he swears, will arrive  
but doesn't

He pulled me away from my family  
my friends  
my comfort zone  
He was the only face I knew in a strange land

So I clung to him  
like a small frightened child clings to her father

There's no answer that would satisfy us both  
No magical response that will keep me safe  
or keep me from puking the words of a lie

If only this was a child's fairytale  
A Disney movie  
A dream  
I would even settle for a nightmare  
You wake up from a nightmare  
It stops when you're awake

I don't want you to leave. Why would you go anyway?

Why?  
I want to laugh at this question  
right in his face  
but I don't  
I know better than to push his buttons as he pretends to be sincere and clueless  
Laughing might be fun for me  
but it would tick him off, big time

Would you talk to me, already?

No  
Because talking is a trap  
It goes on forever with no one, especially him, understanding anything  
He keeps me talking  
until I'm exhausted and I give up trying  
Until I can no longer explain myself  
because he knows, to understand would be a mistake he can't correct

Did I do somethin'?

You always do something you fucking idiot

If I did, you gotta tell me. So I can make it right by you.

As if that was ever possible  
As if he really wanted to

I don't know how much longer I can take this no talkin'. Are you leavin' me? Just say yes or no. For Christ's sake, say somethin'.

No  
because you will ask another question  
Then another  
and another  
and another unending

I will not answer you  
I will not answer your questions  
I will not answer to you  
I'm done answering

Damn woman. Don't you love me anymore?

I absolutely will not answer that question  
No way

I still love you. You know that, right? I still love you. I ain't never stopped lovin'  
you. Never will either. I can't. Just talk to me. One word. That's all.

No  
Don't  
Don't do it  
Hold on  
It's almost time to leave  
Just stay the course  
Stay the course

Hey, what's this?

He's holding my hat  
The pink hat bought for me by a co-worker  
By my only friend  
The only one who understands  
Who doesn't look the other way  
Who doesn't believe my lies  
Who doesn't give up on me, because I haven't given up living with him  
Who offers to help, more than just once  
The only one who understands  
leaving isn't as easy as everyone thinks it is

Why do you have this? I know what this is for. The guys were talkin' about these  
hats down at Joe's. You thinkin' you're goin' to that march?

Sometimes he surprises me with what he knows  
and what he pretends not to know

What he hides from me  
then exposes on a whim  
like a pervert flashing his what-all  
just to see how I'll react  
But I can't give him what he wants this time  
I must stay the course

How you planin' on gettin' there? You ain't got no car. And I sure as hell ain't  
takin' you. How you gettin' there?

The winds are changing  
A hurricane is approaching  
At 95 miles per hour  
hurricane winds of this strength should be avoided  
Shelter should be sought immediately  
Bunker down and don't come out until the storm stops being a storm  
No telling how long that will be  
Next best action  
stay calm  
hide your fear  
keep breathing  
and stay the course

You're not leavin' this damn house. You're not goin' to that damn fuckin' march.  
Your ass is stayin' right here.

Thank you  
Thank you for being an asshole  
For reminding me why I'm leaving  
For proving that my decision is the right decision  
Thank you

I pick up my things and head for the door  
He takes a stand in the hallway to block my path  
He has just made this easier than I could have hoped for  
I quickly close the door and lock it  
then I rush to the window

Outside waiting is my one and only friend  
The one that said she'd be there for me  
The one who kept her word and came when I called  
We continue with our plan but with greater urgency than before  
She takes my bags  
and the banging on the door gets louder  
as the storm gains momentum

You better not let me get my hands on you. You fuckin' bitch.

He's kicking the door now  
The difference in the sound increases my fear of being caught  
I know what the door is going through  
I know the feeling of being kicked hard  
to be broken down

I'm half way out the window  
My head ducks under to make it three-fourths  
Then my right leg crosses over the boundary line  
separating peace from terror  
I hear the door slam without mercy against the wall  
I may have escaped to a foreign land  
but I have yet to find my freedom

(The light on the screen begins to fade out and gradually shifts over to the stage.)

I wish I could lay down on the grass beneath me  
I wish I could watch the moon switch places with the sun  
I wish I could have a glass of wine under a shady tree  
Or read a book in a hammock by a stream  
I wish I had a dog I could walk in a park  
Sit quietly on a beach and watch the sun rise  
Have dinner at a fancy restaurant  
Meet some friends at a cheap bar  
I wish I could sleep an entire night  
And wake up late with nothing to do  
I wish he was dead  
so I could relax and breathe again  
But he's not  
and I am reminded of this  
with his voice shouting from the window

You can't run fast enough to get away from me bitch. I'll chase your skanky ass down. You'll never escape. I won't let you.

(The light on the screen goes dark and the stage is lighted. The actors transition from being behind the scrim to being in front of it.)

I see him pulling his head back in  
and I run faster than I ever have  
Because I know how fast he is  
and what will happen if he catches me  
I will be his excuse for being violent

(Except for the narrator, the other actors enter as the female's support group. They are not wearing masks and can be seen. The victim runs onto the stage. The abuser comes out from behind the scrim.)

He's already opening the front door as I near the car  
but I have stopped worrying  
because my friend is here  
And she has brought her friends  
both women and men  
all wearing pink caps  
all standing beside me

(The narrator gradually enters to join the support group, without a mask.  
The victim and abuser are still wearing a mask.)

When he sees the circle around me  
he stops  
dead in his tracks  
and looks at them  
He looks at me with murder in his eyes  
but he doesn't dare move  
I put on my pink cap  
and I yell loud and clear  
for him to hear

(The female actor/victim removes her mask and takes over speaking the lines.)

“You wanna know if I'm goin' someplace  
I'm goin' to that women's march on Washington  
The one you said I couldn't go to  
You wanna know how I'm gettin' there  
I got a ride as you can see  
You wanna know if I'm leavin' you  
You bet your fuckin' ass I am  
You wanna know where I'm goin'  
Where ever the hell I want to  
And you best believe  
I *am* goin' somewhere.”

(The group remains lighted; the abuser disappears into the shadows. There is a symbolic gesture of unity among the actors; it should be understated and simple, barely noticeable. As this happens, the last actor, the abuser, joins the group without his mask. The closing lines are done as a direct address, with each actor saying a line.)

I smile as I get into my friend's car  
Because I know from now on  
The world won't disappear  
I will not be a set of keys  
What I will be is yet to be determined  
And I think to myself

(The cast, in unison.)

It's about damn fuckin' time too.

(Projection.)

May there be peace  
at the end  
of your journey.