

CONFLUENT

Written by

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Address  
Phone Number

## TEASER

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

A janitor (name-tag TATE) spies a fern at the end of a bland corporate hall. He nestles a wiretap in the dirt, then slips out the fire escape.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AT THE SAME TIME

The table head is DAVE VARSTMANN, (70s), an aging frat boy. To his right is SHARON NEAL, (50s), his girl-boss No. 2.

SHARON  
When's he coming?

DAVE  
Two minutes. I told him 7.

He checks his watch. She shoots him a concerned look.

SHARON  
Play nice, okay? He had a breakdown  
at the HR meeting last week.

DAVE  
Oh, come on, BS. No doubt he's  
pulling his little private school  
routine. Waiting for his big  
fucking pay out.

SHARON  
Aren't we all?

KNOCK! Sharon exhales. Dave plasters on a grin.

DAVE  
Come in!

Enter CHRIS ROSENTHAL, (40s), half-Korean, clean-cut, tweedy.  
He flings a folio dated 2018 on the table.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Hey Chris!

CHRIS  
Yeah, hi, transfer assignment looks  
fine. I mean, you're welcome to  
have compliance do a once over in  
case I missed any relevant points  
but otherwise, we're all done...

DAVE  
Fantastic! Really.

Dave eyes on rosé atop a credenza. Chris swings pit-stained arms. Sharon jumps in.

SHARON  
Chris, I know it's been a while. Do you have any final questions we can answer?

CHRIS  
Right, so I did want to clarify what's happening with the Bucharest accounts now that the patents have been dumped...

Dave, Sharon gulp. Chris paces.

SHARON  
We're waiting to hear from our counterparts. But fingers crossed, we see sales movement next week.

CHRIS  
Sure, and what about transferring the rest of the assets to Grand Cayman? Isn't that the offshore promised land...or did it shift to the Communist block permanently?

SHARON  
Well, we did consider-

Dave silences her with a glare. He looms over Chris.

DAVE  
Get the Hell out!

CHRIS  
Okay. Will do.

Chris remains frozen. Dave's fists pounds the table.

DAVE  
Fuckwad! Enjoy your five second power trip? Cause the minute you walk, you're not sucking another dime off my payroll.

CHRIS  
Dave, I'm not interested in your money.

DAVE

Really? I wouldn't be so nonchalant  
if I were you. You're going to  
fucking federal, Chris. Not state,  
God fucking damn it.

Chris calmly nods, slides the folio closer to Dave. Dave  
flares an inquisitive nostril.

CHRIS

My resignation letter.

Chris wipes sweaty palms on his thighs. Dave huffs.

DAVE

Et tu, Christopher?

BANG. Two FBI agents kick in the door. Chris closes his eyes.

AGENT I

FBI! Hands where we can see them!

AGENT II reads tax evasion charges against Dave, Sharon.  
Sharon raises her arms. Dave struggles against Agent I.

DAVE

You made seven figures cleaning my  
shit! That wasn't enough for you?

CHRIS

No, it wasn't. I wanted-

Dave lunges at Chris. AGENT I tackles Dave. Chris backs out  
the door to windows facing NYC. The fern's shadow flickers in  
the glass. Chris wanders over, examines the wiretap glinting  
in the soil.

**END TEASER**

ACT I

INT. HOTEL BAR - MONTHS LATER

Red-eyed Chris sulks at a glitzy bar over a gin. He shreds a cocktail umbrella, prods his cellphone (date Jan. 2019).

CHRIS

God...

Artsy, champaign socialist STEVE ZHAO, (40s), Chinese-American, passes Chris on his way to a booth. Behind him trots THADDEUS "TATE" WHITMAN, (30s), a handsome waiter.

TATE

Grandpa!

Tate peace signs at a granola silver fox. PASCAL "PORTER" HARVEY, (50s), slides into the booth.

PORTER

We missed you at AA, Stevie.

STEVE

But I texted. I'm writing this piece on the CEO of...it's some fucking stupid, uterine probiotic class action.

TATE

You mean Vagina pills? Oof...

PORTER

(Waving Tate off)

K. Here's a thought. I snooped on a platinum-plated circle jerk at Soho House last night. Should've seen how many nepo-babes were coked on toad venom. You don't need that kinda high life, trust me.

STEVE

(Nodding at Chris)

Case and point. Sixty to my left, right?

PORTER

Cautionary tale, indeed.

Steve, Porter exchange a smirk. Tate watches Chris dry swallow a pill from his pocket.

TATE

Oops! Poor thing's outta medicine.

Tate slinks to the bar, tops Chris's glass.

STEVE

I refuse to feel empathy for him.

PORTER

Eh. Then you find out his life is a total shitfest. That face screams bagged for insider trading...

They share a cynical nod. Tate returns, grabs Steve's arm.

TATE

(Singing like Linda Perry)  
What's going on?

PORTER

Ribbing Mr. Wall Street Rogers,  
that's all.

TATE

Aw, no! I feel like he just needs a little TLC.

Porter snorts.

PORTER

Fuck, you can do better. His breed of douche canoes, they don't make it to the c-suite with a human conscience.

TATE

Okay, but maybe he's going through a spiritual crisis. Like why pop all that xanny?

PORTER

He was sacked? And now he's gotta struggle bus it to Jersey City?

The trio laughs. Chris overhears, staggers to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

A distorted face sneers in mirror. Chris punches the glass, then quickly draws back his bruised fist.

CHRIS

You didn't. You didn't-

He convulses. BLAH. He faints to a cesspool of pill-flecked vomit. Tate enters with a gym bag, recoils at mess.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Porter kicks Chris's waist, slips a wallet. Inside: Amex, card for BETTY FORD CLINIC. FLUSH. He stuffs his loot in his pants. Tate (janitor) emerges from a stall, corners Porter.

TATE

I saw that move.

PORTER

What the Hell'd you give him, mushrooms?

TATE

McAllen with Tribeca tap! It's way cheaper than my stash!

PORTER

Hundred percent?

TATE

(Nodding)

And now I've gotta scrub down his midtown lair. You should see, he's packing so much more than you'd expect in the corner office.

PORTER

Wait, how long've you had the cleaning gig?

TATE

Dunno, two-ish months? I saw the top boss at the swinger's club where I bar-back, got hired on the spot for catching him with Kristen Chenoweth's understudy and-

Porter adjusts the wallet bulge. Tate snickers at him.

PORTER

Purge it out...

Tate eye-rolls and checks his cellphone.

TATE

I'm late! Can I spill my guts later? And you clean him up? Pretty please?

Porter reluctantly faces Chris.

PORTER

K. But watch your perky ass,  
because I'm tracking your debt.

TATE

Don't worry, Gramps. I'm banking  
sixty grand to tap around the  
office in case Mr. Rogers is a  
traitor. Oh and I better forget the  
understudy.

PORTER

Really! Our job economy's that  
dead? Come on, you were earning big  
boy bucks at that marketing firm.

Tate stomps to the door. Beat.

TATE

If you're jealous and you want in,  
I'll play double-Dutch.

PORTER

What's the catch?

TATE

No catch, pinky swear. Other than  
you've gotta learn some electrical  
stuff. But can we like shop chat  
tomorrow?

Porter growls but begins CPR. Tate salutes and skips off.  
Chris's eyes flutter open on Porter's weary face.

EXT. REHAB FACILITY - DAY

Cloudy dawn. Chris locks a Jeep in the lot of a suburban  
brick compound. A red Corvette snags the adjoining spot.  
Porter hops out.

PORTER

Detoxing, too?

Chris's feet shuffle for a beat.

CHRIS

Uhm, yeah...I'm here to receive the  
wisdom of Betty Ford.

Porter waves, stepping a hair too close. Chris offers a limp  
hand flop back.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
I wish there was a slicker hand  
signal for, "I'm a closet junkie!"

PORTER  
Agreed. What's your vice?

Together, they pass the gates and cross the front lawn.

CHRIS  
Where to start. Work addiction,  
cocaine, formaldehyde, psych meds,  
a drink...or ten.

PORTER  
Gotcha, all good. I do cigars,  
mostly.

They exchange a knowing, insider's smile.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
(CONT'D)  
Wanna room? I only saw A-cup size  
12s on the Hudson.

CHRIS  
I...or, what am I saying, yes!  
You're willing to take me off the  
mean streets of Scarsdale, New York  
no questions asked?

PORTER  
Nah, guessing you're a good kid who  
fucked up forty. Not assuming  
anything. You could be a serial  
killer.

CHRIS  
Okay, wow, thanks, it's the Durst-  
ness. But yeah, nope, I'm a solid  
square. Product essentially as  
advertised.

PORTER  
Essentially? Any kinks we better  
straighten out?

Chris shrugs, slightly alarmed. Porter grins.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
It was a joke...

CHRIS

Whew! I was going to say, I'm very,  
very vanilla. Chris, by the way.

PORTER

Vanilla Chris. Porter.

They shake. Chris peeks in the window, spies a fern by doorway. Suddenly, he dashes to the Jeep. Porter runs after him.

EXT. SCARSDALE HOUSE - EARLY EVENING, TWO MONTHS LATER

Street lamps bathe an old-money enclave in pink light. Porter's Corvette speeds to the drive of castle No.13.

INT. CHRIS'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Chris languishes, yuppie Dante in better-than-Pottery Barn Hell. Over the marble island: Princeton degree, Wharton MBA, calendar (May 2019). Chris reads a legal doc from MORTON &

WHITE. DING DONG!

CHRIS

Door's open!

He stuffs the doc in a drawer, grabs cokes from a wine rack.

PORTER (O.S.)

St. Christopher! Two months no see.

Chris takes a key from his pocket and locks the drawer.

INT. CHRIS'S FAMILY ROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

Porter manspreads on the leather sectional. Chris hunches over the coffee table, TAPS his feet.

PORTER

Rehab dragged you to the light,  
huh?

CHRIS

Sure, possibly. I wouldn't say I  
had a grand moral epiphany...

Porter raises a brow. Chris squirms with palpable anxiety.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I mean, Martin Skrelli didn't descend in an Aesop fever nightmare to remind me we screwed up.

PORTER

Slow down company man. We?

CHRIS

God, it was a freudian slip.

PORTER

So was walking even your choice, then?

CHRIS

Kind of? Dave and I had a mutual, conscious uncoupling. If you call that walking.

PORTER

And no goodbye goodie bags? Fucking cheap.

CHRIS

Oh, Zero commemorative tchotkies. But corporate offered hush money for a suspiciously cryptic NDA.

PORTER

You didn't sign, did you?

Porter leans towards Chris with an grin.

CHRIS

Course not. I filled in the blank with, "Up yours!". That's the clean version.

PORTER

Word. Ditching Styx, bold move. Keeping that heart intact.

Porter taps Chris's knee. Chris fidgets, glances out a window.

CHRIS

Uhm, actually...so I'm not fully free from the swamp yet.

PORTER

What'd you forget? Head or ass?

CHRIS

The former? I sold my soul to HR at the Bowman Fund last week. And now I'm joining the compliance team in October.

PORTER

You're going back to Fidi.

CHRIS

Nope, no more city. It's out in New Hope, Pennsylvania of all places.

PORTER

Ugh. You need another cog job?

CHRIS

Well, I could use the behavioral health coverage and padding for my Roth.

PORTER

Cause you're headed to the poor house with that fifty mill 401K~

CHRIS

Yeah...or no, I'd like to be secure. Otherwise, plan B is cash the crypto, pull an Andy Kaufman, go hide in a DMZ bunker from the IRS. I may have to call you from a burner-

PORTER

Naw, fuck the sob story! Instead of laundering, go back for Dave's payout. And then shack up in Hoboken with me. Pay my cable.

CHRIS

Sorry, I'm not taking blood money!

Porter expands. Chris shrinks, POPS his knuckles.

PORTER

Seriously, Pennsylvania?

CHRIS

It's not all Amish red state boonies.s

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Fine, taxes are low. I figure I'll float a Toll Brothers rental for a year. And I have some family out in Yardley.

PORTER

Oh, Christopher, you're better than fucking conformist Toll Brothers!

CHRIS

Thanks, that's uh...that's flattering, but really I'm not. I never told you? It's my dirty suburban fantasy to live the white-picket life.

PORTER

Eh. Take it from me. The bungalow and Subaru deal zaps testosterone real quick. When you're dropping self-respect on crap like weed killers to wet your lady friend...

CHRIS

But-

PORTER

But what?

CHRIS

I don't have a self to respect. That's why I'm addicted to serving psychopaths. They know I'll keep crawling back for more abuse. Because in their world, I have no higher utility than being a masochistic asswipe groveling at the alter of...

He rises, cuts off, shakes. Porter guides him back down.

PORTER

May I state my humble opinion?

CHRIS

Why not? Bring on the East, Pray, Love crystal chakra woo woo!

PORTER

K, give you a quickie. Enjoy a nice vacation, think on the money.

CHRIS

Right, so I did line up a rental in  
Lahaska next month as a trial run.

PORTER

There you go! Let your brain heal.

CHRIS

I'll try my best to deprogram.

PORTER

And you're not alone. You call me.  
We'll keep each other on the  
straight and narrow.

Chris forces a smile. Porter watches with paternal concern.

INT. CHRIS'S OFFICE - MIDNIGHT

Chris faces his laptop at a desk. PING. On screen: A text  
from V. R. LAMB. He groans. PING. He opens an email from  
Dave. RE: ATTORNEY. Chris slams the laptop shut.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MIDNIGHT

Chris's Jeep ascends a rocky trail skirting a lake past pine-  
dotted peaks. Chris steers one-handed, scrolls on his  
cellphone. On screen: Morton & White LLP.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Chris parks by a mid-century, black barn house. A stoic-  
faced, Steppford housewife (pastels, gingham, cat specs)  
opens the door.

CHRIS

Hi, Kennedy? I'm Chris Cho...I  
wasn't sure if you got my last  
message? Signal was out on the  
bridge in Lambertville.

KENNEDY GARZA, (40s), Argentinian-American waves pageant-  
style. Dark curls flail in the wind. She folds her arms.

KENNEDY

You text and drive.

CHRIS

No, yeah, sorry, it's a bad habit,  
uhm...sadly, not my worst.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

God, what am I saying, I don't want to jeopardize my renter status.

KENNEDY

You weren't scheduled until 3.

CHRIS

(Checking his watch)

Can we round up five minutes?

KENNEDY

Yep.

Chris opens the Jeep's back door, struggles with a duffel.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

I left a spare key in the lockbox.  
Front closet. Either guest bath works. Please don't take more than seven minute showers. What else. Assuming you've used a TV before. That's my spiel.

CHRIS

Okay...uhm, great, thanks.

She floats inside. He lugs his duffel awkwardly behind her.

INT. BLACK HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Chris's eyes drink in dark walls cluttered with retro art. He pauses under Ethel Garza's Stanford comp sci degree.

INT. BLACK HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Chris drops his duffel in a 70s bedroom. Kennedy slinks by doorway. They lock eyes. She wanders off. He watches her for a beat, then sinks on the bed.

INT. BLACK HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

BUZZ. Chris yanks a lamp chord, picks up his cellphone.

CHRIS

Fuck! It's two in the morning!

He rolls over to study his fetal shadow on the ceiling.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Not stellar. They demoted to me to a hobbit hovel across from a janitor's closet...yeah, it's a hazing mind game. I'm the old leech on the block.

Pinning the cellphone under his ear, he pads to the door, glances left, right. Nothing.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No, it's three weeks. I packed benzos...so? Armageddon strikes, I'm in tarot spa, weed county. The town apothecary sells Baker Buckets.

He shakes the door handle, climbs back in bed.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Tomorrow? Visiting my sister...the Moonie wannabe from the Vice documentary. Look her up on Truth Social...bye!

On cue, the lamp bulb fades in a POOF. Chris squints at his cellphone. On screen text: Tomorrow. 4 PM?

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - MORNING

Chris stares down an Eichleresque triangle topped with a giant cross. A door sign reads: GOLDEN BLOSSOM VALLEY.

CHRIS

Jesus fucking Christ!

He weaves past rows of Harley's, rusted vans stamped Coexist.

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - MORNING

Chris pokes around a melange of Christian, new age kitsch, Oxford Divinity degrees. He follows a corner arch to...

INT. CHURCH SANCTUARY - MORNING

A treehouse auditorium. Crunchy whites embrace a stage. A plump, dreadlocked ginger strums a dulcimer in the first pew.

CHRIS

God, shit. Or...sorry, sorry! Poor word choice!

Buckley Jr. at Woodstock, he's pelted with glares as he traverses open toes, muddy denim, hemp bags to an free spot.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I forgot it means something here.

He looks up. A mic'd couple emerges on stage. BRETT LAMB, (50s), a man-bunned lumberjack and VIRGINIA ROSENTHAL LAMB, (40s), half-Korean, an earth-mother hippie ingenue.

BRETT

Welcome all, please be seated. I know it's Saturday! But as great theologian Kierkegaard decrees, duty bounds us radically to faith in all facets of transmutable existence.

AMENS all around. Brett dials up the charm. Chris snorts.

BRETT (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

And the Great Specter has called upon us, chosen stewards of Jesus, Prince of Nazareth, to fight for unity in this epoch of divisional crisis.

The crowd laps up Brett's speech. He struts the stage.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Now, as you may have seen on yesterday's livestream, we will be partnering with the Bucks County Mental Health Alliance to form a Golden Hands Fund. Our goal is to resist the liberal shackles of radical oppression corrupting our communal wellness.

CHEERS. A screen backdrop reveals a chart: Hands Allocations. Brett beckons Virginia. She motions for quiet with a clicker.

VIRGINIA

Yes...thank you. With generous hearts, our congregation may serve as the maternal well-spring for evangelically aligned charities within our county chapter.

CLICK. The screen displays an obit for SGT. MATHEW O'BRIEN.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

And this annum, we ask that all financial contributions be made in the name of the late Sgt. Mathew O'Brien and his widow, Heidi Reiss O'Brien. May God bless their souls on a path of cosmic disunion.

She raises a hand. A generic prayer ensues. Beat.

BRETT

Amen. And I think it's time to turn things over. Heidi, we'd love to hear more, whenever you're ready?

He beams at the dulcimer player. HEIDI O'BRIEN, (40s), tiptoes on stage. Her vocal-fried speech is riddled with up-speak.

HEIDI

Thank you. I'm honored to continue my husband's legacy of conservative ally-ship with oppressed communities. And as such, we will be sponsoring female first groups including the Pro-life, anti-human genocide...

Chris checks his cellphone. BUZZ. Heidi gasps. Brett aims a finger at Chris.

BRETT

Excuse me. We have a zero tolerance policy for illegal media devices during service.

A HUH ripples through the crowd. Brett fumes. Chris stands.

CHRIS

Well, soliciting monetary donations as an unregistered religious organization is also illegal, assuming you haven't filed a 990...

BRETT

Sir, will you please take a seat?

Chris raises hands. Brett attempts composure.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Sir, I'll ask again for you to stand down.

CHRIS

Sure, will do...as long as we're not in an armed conflict. Are we?

BRETT

Enough Christopher. Sit or I'll call security, have you excommunicated.

CHRIS

Wow, excommunicated. I mean you can try, but would that work? I'm not a cult member here, so...maybe you call it a forced removal?

Whispers rise. Brett leads shaky Heidi to her pew. On stage, Virginia basks in her spotlight.

VIRGINIA

Dearest Lord, let us unburden ourselves of stranger's sins. May we stay pure and untainted by the wayward impulses of lost souls.

Eyes close, heads bow. Chris stomps out the archway.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

Virginia's SHOP LOCAL tote swings as she rushes after Chris.

VIRGINIA

Hey! Chris! Stop!

His feet dig trenches in the mud. She huffs.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Don't not say anything when I'm speaking to you.

CHRIS

Am I supposed to talk over you?

VIRGINIA

Obviously, that's not-

Brett lowers the window of a nearby Escalade. He yells at Virginia. She spins around to glare at him.

BRETT

Gin, let's go! I wanted to get that IPA deal at Whole Foods.

VIRGINIA  
Give me a minute!

She turns back to Chris. Behind her, Brett chats up Heidi.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)  
You didn't have to threaten us in  
service. I told you to call me.

CHRIS  
Whoah! Are you denying my first  
amendment rights?

VIRGINIA  
Oh no...no, I'm not answering that!

Chris revels in her discomfort.

CHRIS  
It's a little late, you just did.

VIRGINIA  
Got it. Thanks for educating me!

Brett darts over, smacks the Jeep's hood. Virginia pouts.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)  
(To Brett)  
I can't handle a scene right now!

Brett ignores her, launches a tirade at Chris.

BRETT  
What're you doing here?

CHRIS  
I'm exploring my faith.

BRETT  
That's it. You need to stop. You  
know, we're not engaging with  
actionable intent unless you drop  
the facade.

Brett spews spittle. Chris stands his ground.

CHRIS  
Yeah, I don't understand what that  
means. You're throwing around a lot  
of big words.

BRETT  
Listen, let's just quit while we're  
ahead.

(MORE)

BRETT (CONT'D)

I know you're very busy, too. So why don't you take your elitist attitude back to your little wall street CPA casino and stop harassing my wife. Okay?

Chris drags his feet in place. Brett gnashes his teeth.

CHRIS

Actually, I'm chief risk analyst for a top ten biotech hedge-fund...

Brett encroaches. Virginia covers her face. Chris rambles.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Clearly, not that you care...uhm, or yeah, I'll leave you to running Jonestown 2.0 out here.

BRETT

Oh, but you had to weasel in the last word.

Chris shakes his head. Brett's temple veins throb.

BRETT (CONT'D)

I wasn't kidding. You need to get off my property. Right now.

Chris lifts a foot. Brett pats his gun holster(Glock 42).

CHRIS

You're paying taxes now. That's great!

He opens the Jeep's door. Virginia blocks him, shrieks in distress.

VIRGINIA

Wait! What went so wrong in your life that you feel the need to hurt us?

Chris shrugs. Virginia's fists ball.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Fucking say it, Chris! I dare you.

CHRIS

Why? There's no incentive to play your game. You keep changing the rules. I don't know what your definition of truth is this round.

He lifts his jacket sleeve, reveals a wrist scar. She hisses.

VIRGINIA  
I'll give you check mate for the  
victim card. What do want from us?

CHRIS  
I have no expectations of you.

Onlookers gather. Brett suddenly smiles, steps up to perform.

BRETT  
Sir, we don't tolerate gender-based  
discrimination in our community.

CHRIS  
Oh, well, my mistake. You know  
what, Gin? Your Jesus Ponzi slush  
fund is truly a visionary  
enterprise.

He climbs into the Jeep. Virginia muscles his door ajar.

VIRGINIA  
I don't have the emotional  
bandwidth to keep fighting you.  
I've more than repented for  
whatever you think I've done to-

Brett snakes an aggressive arm around her, yanks her back.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)  
You're living a lie, Chrissy! I  
can't save you from your own-

Chris gently shuts his door. Virginia, Brett gesticulate. The crowd eats up the drama. Chris BEEPS the horn and backs out.

EXT. CHURCH LAWN - LATER

Brett, Virginia leans on the Escalade. He texts on his cellphone. She smokes a joint and sniffles.

BRETT  
Was he weird about the job title?

VIRGINIA  
That's just how Chris operates.  
Every interaction is an ego battle.

BRETT

It's pathetic. And I thought you said he was canned. Is that why he's asking for handouts?

He lowers his cellphone. She looks away from him. Beat.

VIRGINIA

You went through my emails?

BRETT

I needed the Amazon password, happened to see his name. It's not like I was-

She stubs her joint on her arm. He violently grabs her wrist.

BRETT (CONT'D)

What's he want with your mother.

VIRGINIA

It's just his yearly power of attorney reminder. He's paranoid I'm dipping into Ma's estate.

BRETT

And don't tell me you believed him?

VIRGINIA

Well, I-

Brett explodes. Virginia cowers.

BRETT

Common sense, Gin! I get feeling loyal because he's your brother. But can we come back to reality for a sec? He's a nutjob, borderline manipulator.

VIRGINIA

I'm trying to give him the benefit of the doubt. He said we might want a legal team to help manage. And he's not stupid enough to lie to a lawyer.

BRETT

Oh, even better. He's threatening me.

VIRGINIA

Not you.

Brett grabs his holster. Virginia stutters.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I...I don't think he-

BRETT

Whatever, I'm not waiting for him  
to drag us to court with his three  
degrees. Go fucking call him, get  
an answer.

He snarls, texts HEIDI. Virginia notices and storms inside.

**END ACT I**

**ACT II**

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - EVENING

Chris weaves past blue-collar farmers, Republican signs.  
Virginia waves from a tent, points at two camp chairs.

VIRGINIA  
You haven't changed, Chrissy.

They sit. Chris scoots away from her, tugs his hair.

CHRIS  
I'm grayer.

VIRGINIA  
That's the price you pay for  
enabling capitalism...

CHRIS  
Jesus, straight out of the gates.  
Have at me.

VIRGINIA  
I could say the same.

An awkward beat ensues. She sits upright for round two.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)  
I just didn't feel comfortable  
signing anything for Ma before we  
had a chance to catch up.

CHRIS  
She's not the only reason I'm here.

VIRGINIA  
I know. I wanted to get a dialogue  
going, that's all. You said you're  
moving to New Hope?

CHRIS  
Renting for the month, thinking of  
buying before I start at Bowman.

VIRGINIA  
The insurance place in Newtown?

CHRIS  
Smaller fintech fund.

VIRGINIA

So then...can I ask? What's happening with your old job? I heard you guys were trading nukes in...was it Moscow?

CHRIS

I hope not. I mean, as far as I'm aware, we're not funding war criminals, uhm...

He shakes his head at her. She doubles down.

VIRGINIA

Okay, because it wasn't clear if that's why the FBI got involved or were you in some kind of lawsuit?

He sulks. She rearranges a pile of pamphlets on a side table.

CHRIS

Since when do you care so much about my professional life.

VIRGINIA

No, I just remember how much you struggled at Deutsche Bank, all the red flags you kept missing.

CHRIS

It was a college internship!

VIRGINIA

Exactly, I told you to back out early...you didn't pay attention.

CHRIS

Wait. You're claiming you predicted the subprime crisis before it happened? Were you having transcendental visions from Buffet's akashic records?

She shuffles her pamphlets to drown him out.

VIRGINIA

I'm saying that you repeat the same low chi states. Every time, you're replaced in these corporate cages. And I'm just thinking, Rumi's definition of insanity...

She faces him with a patronizing look of concern. He rises.

CHRIS

What are you talking about! I wasn't replaced! Dave didn't want to risk a wrongful termination suit. That's why he just mindfucked me until I-

VIRGINIA

(Raised hand mudra)

How about...can we recenter?

She inhales audibly. He releases a long-suppressed laugh.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

I'm trying to help you, Chris. At some point, you have to redefine your paradigm shift, you know what I'm saying?

CHRIS

Well, you're bastardizing Kuhn.

VIRGINIA

Why does it even matter? Point being, it's time for you to engage with other walks of life. Go visit a section-8 housing project. Live in a refugee-

CHRIS

Yeah, thanks for the advice Gin, but I'm not cut out to be a global, messianic cult leader like your husband.

VIRGINIA

I don't appreciate the racist humor.

Ignoring her bait, he takes a med bottle from his pocket.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Put it away.

CHRIS

God, it's Ambien, not Oxy.

VIRGINIA

Don't fucking lie to me, Chris!

CHRIS

Either way, I'm paying Sacklers, so...

She offers a palm. He throws the pill at a compost bin.

VIRGINIA

Next time, there's a drug recycling  
at the municipal building.

CHRIS

(Hands clasped in prayer)  
Jesus, Sweet Prince, forgive my  
sins! I-

Suddenly, Virginia points at Brett in the distance. He  
fumbles with a fanny pack. Chris studies Brett's hands.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

He's missing a ring.

VIRGINIA

Why are you looking...down there?

CHRIS

At his dick? He strapped a phallic  
pouch on it. Is that his Viagra  
stash?

VIRGINIA

Pervert! And it's not up to you to  
dictate how he wants to symbolize  
our union.

CHRIS

Sure, fine, but talk about red  
flags.

Virginia sneaks a glance at Brett. No ring. Chris rises.

VIRGINIA

Sit.

CHRIS

No, I don't want him to scratch  
"Beta Cuck" on my car again.

VIRGINIA

You're still whining about ten  
years ago? We were kids.

CHRIS

He was big boy. Forty-five?

VIRGINIA

Well, maybe you don't have the  
empathy to remember what he was  
going through...

CHRIS  
Delusions of grandeur. I  
remember...

He pops up and topples his chair.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
You haven't changed either, Gin.

Chris pulls out his car keys. Brett waves.

VIRGINIA  
You can't drive high!

She glances at again Brett's palm. A pen note says: CALL H.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chris, Kennedy sit catty-cornered at the table. She codes on a laptop. He scrolls on his cellphone, texts Porter.

KENNEDY  
Better?

CHRIS  
Getting there....and by the way, I  
meant to apologize for my pillow  
screaming rant. I didn't realize  
you were home.

KENNEDY  
I don't own a car.

CHRIS  
Right...

He tugs his hair. She looks up from her screen.

KENNEDY  
A new renter wants to tour.  
Tomorrow.

CHRIS  
No problem, I can leave after  
breakfast, really, whenever works  
for you.

KENNEDY  
You can stay. He may not show. I'm  
still running background.

CHRIS

Oh, yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I don't know why didn't I think about background searches.

KENNEDY

You're not that interesting.

CHRIS

Of course, no, I'm forgettable as Hell and not hiding any major secrets!

She raises a brow. He blushes, rambles.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

My sister's Reddit prayer circle thinks I'm a lizard hawking government funds to QAnon and paradoxically the ADL.

Beat.

KENNEDY

Where do you stand on the Deep State?

CHRIS

Oh um, I wasn't planning to plead the fifth, but now I may have to.

KENNEDY

Nice. Before you do. There is something I meant to bring up.

CHRIS

Sure, go for it.

KENNEDY

I let your 2001 parking ticket slide.

CHRIS

So I had my record expunged which suggests, you may be doxxing me?

She slams the laptop and rushes out. He calls after her.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sorry! That was the kind of verbal dysentery that got me into Wharton. Oh God, and now I'm scatologically namedropping which isn't-

He peeks over his shoulder. She's gone. He texts Porter.

INT. STEVE'S STUDIO - AT THE SAME TIME

Tate comforts harried Steve as he putters around a well-used desk in well-furnished studio. Porter swaggers in.

PORTER

Stevie, fucking ghosted me at  
Katz's!

STEVE

In my defense, I pulled an all-  
nighter on this lead. I don't want  
to call her anal but...

PORTER

What kind?

STEVE

Retentive? She's one of those lean-  
in, third wave types with an  
agenda.

He frantically overturns drawers, papers, notebooks. PING.  
Porter checks Chris's text on his cellphone: SOS!

PORTER

K. One-time pass. This a new  
article?

STEVE

(Nodding)

I just bagged Dave's VP Sharon  
Neal. And get this. She sent me  
pubic files from the final board  
meeting. It's odd, he only invited  
her and his personal attorney.

Porter lights a cigarette from his pocket, plops on the sofa.

PORTER

Head honcho was armed and ready.  
How's that odd?

STEVE

Well, he blabbed to Axios that he  
had no idea he was running a pump  
and dump. It's all on tape.

Steve face palms in frustration. Tate taps Steve's elbow.

TATE

Hang up, I'm like confused. Who are we hating on, again?

Porter eyes Tate to shut up. Too late. Steve's hooked.

STEVE

I showed you...Roman Abramovich's yacht?

Steve pulls an image of Dave charting a yacht on a laptop. Porter COUGHS. Tate AHS to distract Steve.

TATE

Someone ratted him out. Do we know our working class hero?

STEVE

Not yet. He could be any number of castrated ex-employees. I've been sorting three decades of HR files, but it's rough...given Saincoeur's executive turnover rate?

PORTER

And you're stuck on it being an inside job?

Porter slips between Steve, Tate. Steve so-so gestures.

TATE

Ooh, how about Mr. Business from the Acheron bar last year? I feel like didn't you say he's in hedge stuff with some guy named Dave?

STEVE

Huh, not a bad guess. I thought that may have been Chris Rosenthal...Dave's risk manager? I should check his file again.

PORTER

Nah. Can't be. Caught his ID in the bathroom when he OD'd. Could've sworn it said something else. And most of those American psychos look the same, right?

STEVE

It's true, the industry churns out robot plutocrats. Can you imagine...once upon a time, I was gutted first round at Bernhard Cap.

(MORE)

STEVE (CONT'D)

The recruiter told me I was too nice for consulting. So I bought an MFA instead.

His eyes glaze over as he sways on his feet.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

Chris got the gig when we overlapped at Princeton. As a fucking English major. And that's why we're in such different places. Career-wise, financially, I bet he's married...

Porter grabs Steve's arm to prevent him from sinking.

PORTER

Wouldn't sweat it. Plenty of bad seeds stop there on the tour de Hell. The Menendez brothers?

STEVE

At least they made it on TV.

Tate grabs Steve's other arm.

INT. STEVE'S BUILDING ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Tate preens in a wall mirror. Porter blows smoke at his hair.

PORTER

The fuck was that?

TATE

I'm almost done with Dave's stuff. And now I want to see where Stevie's at. He's quick when he's off booze and the second he gets a hint-

PORTER

He'll finish writing. Then we bang a three-way. Win, win, win.

Porter huffs. Tate cajoles him with a grin.

TATE

Well, I'm out. I'm setting up a final bug tonight. And I forgot. Dave's assistant-you met Gretch? She kept her company cash.

(MORE)

TATE (CONT'D)

We're flying to Velaa so I can try my straight man.

PORTER

I thought they froze felon accounts.

TATE

Right? But we got lucky. This lawyer, Morton? He bailed Dave and paid Gretch and now his old firm's going after-

PORTER

What's Villa?

TATE

Raise the soft-palate. VE-LAA?

PORTER

No asshat, where the Hell is it?

TATE

Far, far away. Use Google maps.

Tate smoothes his hair. Porter paces for an agitated beat.

TATE (CONT'D)

What's up, Gramps? Serious.

PORTER

Chris isn't dicking around for hush money. I've gotta respect that.

TATE

No shit! I heard Dave asked you to Clorox his brains out, not adopt him. Now, like the morality of hanging around your victim's between you and the up top but...

DING. The door doesn't budge. Tate jabs buttons.

PORTER

That's why I'm headed to his rental later. He keeps crisis texting...I don't want his relapse on my conscience.

TATE

So, you're going there for your savior complex?

The door opens. Tate tries to bolt. Porter's foot blocks him.

PORTER

Insult all you want, I say I'm  
taking the high road. So you better  
not fucking call me on the highway.

TATE

Oh no, I won't. I can't afford  
international service.

Porter snarls and shoves Tate into the lobby.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING

Chris slumps over a Pop Tart, squints into a bottle.

PORTER (O.S.)

Thank you, it's Kennedy?

KENNEDY (O.S.)

Named for Ethel.

She leads Porter to Chris. Porter basks in her attention.

CHRIS

Are you the other renter?

PORTER

Nice to see you, too. I was ulcered  
sick with all your suicide haikus.  
My brain went shit, is he back on  
molly, punching out walls again?

Chris scans Kennedy's face. She's unfazed. He exhales.

CHRIS

I was busy.

PORTER

Busy my ass. You were day drinking!

He drops the table, gestures at Chris's bottle. Chris reveals  
a kombucha logo.

PORTER (CONT'D)

I see. Got me once, shame on me!

Porter nods to Kennedy as she slips behind their backs.

PORTER (CONT'D)

She's got a few wires crossed up  
there, no?

CHRIS

Whoah! She just met you and now she knows you're friends with an underemployed pill-head. With all due respect, I'd run from us too.

Porter eyes the Pop Tart. Chris cedes his plate. Porter digs in. Red jam oozes down his chin.

PORTER

Spill. What'd you do out here?

CHRIS

I didn't plan an itinerary.

PORTER

You're a shitty liar!

CHRIS

Fine, I found salvation at my sister's church, took a NyQuil nap, the end.

PORTER

Not buying the conversion epic. I skimmed the Jesus freak's Tumblr. She said you're into false profits.

CHRIS

Well, that's on the nose. Let me guess. I got a 9 to 5 and became a servant of the new world order?

PORTER

Uh-huh. So who brainwashed you back?

CHRIS

What, into a Korean Jew for Jesus?

Porter nods and laughs between bites.

PORTER

I can imagine. It was hard to shake those Ron Reagan roots?

CHRIS

More Hitchens, but yeah. This time I was suckered by an I-95 billboard with a salvation hotline.

Porter leans in to study Chris's bloodshot eyes.

PORTER

Nah. You're pulling your tells so I don't believe you. This is some next-level mental jujitsu.

CHRIS

Because I'm mysterious and inscrutable, perhaps?

Chris steeples his hands. Check mate. Porter gulps.

PORTER

K. I'll wave my white ass flag. But I want the real story later.

They laugh. Kennedy peeks in at them. Silence.

EXT. BEER GARDEN - AFTERNOON

Virginia, Heidi smoke hookah pipes in a beer garden teeming with counterculture gen-xers.

VIRGINIA

I can't stand fascist co-op boards gentrifying the housing system. Tucker posted this brilliant op-ed...

HEIDI

Yes, I saw that. I'm definitely not doing co-op again.

VIRGINIA

Ugh, it's always a trap. But you do have alternative housing or...

Virginia opens her tote, grabs a jar of gold liquid labeled: Scoby DAY 2. She places it on the table in front of Heidi.

HEIDI

My sister offered her converted garage. Which is, you know, doable for a month.

VIRGINIA

I'll have Brett's cousin show you options. He's with Remax in Yardley.

HEIDI

Oh, that's so sweet, but I can't afford anything. My insurance rep called the other day.

(MORE)

HEIDI (CONT'D)

I didn't realize. I don't earn widow money. They won't pay since Matty fudged his application.

Virginia squeezes Heidi's shoulders. A few long-haired dads ogle the pair.

VIRGINIA

So ridiculous! The patriarchy steals our tax dollars for the socialist state. But it's okay to not fund welfare programs for women?

HEIDI

Totally! Because I so could've used another stimulus. I'm a maybe week from eviction?

VIRGINIA

And you have no savings?

HEIDI

No, see we banked everything on Matty's disability checks. They keep bouncing. And my Etsy account was just banned for anti-semitic content.

Virginia uncaps her jar, sips. Heidi inhales sharply.

VIRGINIA

You could always be an escort.

HEIDI

You mean to guide new goldstar initiates?

VIRGINIA

Well, Brett said you're flexible on night shifts.

She waves her jar, splashes her top. Heidi reaches in her bag. A birth control pack falls out.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

Is that from Brett?

HEIDI

No, Gin, please. It's not what you-

VIRGINIA

It is.

She grabs the pack and shoves it into her jar.

INT. BLACK HOUSE DEN - NIGHT

Chris, Porter chat on womb chairs in a mod brick den. Kennedy enters, nods at Chris, stops before Porter.

KENNEDY  
Move your car. To the back drive.

PORTER  
On a private lawn?

KENNEDY  
For the HOA.

PORTER  
Fucking Kafka bureaucracy!

He slumps away. Satisfied, Kennedy takes his seat.

CHRIS  
Was there a penalty fee?

KENNEDY  
Paid.

Chris offers her an apologetic look. She folds her arms.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)  
He said you would cover his stay.

CHRIS  
Of course, I'll comp you for everything. Do you prefer check, Venmo, pay-

KENNEDY  
Don't.

He buckles under her gaze. Beat.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)  
You've given him money before?

CHRIS  
Loaned is the better term. He was between theatre gigs, telemarketing for this subsidiary of Herbalife and yeah...I felt for Mephisto.

KENNEDY  
You handed a drug dealer cash.

CHRIS  
I mean, I wouldn't put it so  
crudely. I made a series of  
perfectly legal direct deposit  
transfers to a friend.

KENNEDY  
I bet.

CHRIS  
You think I'm avoiding the IRS?

She shrugs.

KENNEDY  
You just prefer small town life?

CHRIS  
No! I'm not hiding from-

She abruptly walks out. Porter enters, smoking. He offers a  
drag but Chris profusely declines.

PORTER  
She can't see you.

CHRIS  
That's not...why.

PORTER  
So then let's debrief. Where'd  
Bezos hide her off button?

CHRIS  
She's not that uncanny. We Turing  
tested, she passed, uhm...

He fidgets. Porter pounces.

PORTER  
Is that a euphemism?

CHRIS  
God, no!

PORTER  
You're dying alone.

CHRIS  
Sure, it's genetic, my dad died  
alone from a stroke in his office.

PORTER

Damn, heart stroke. How old were you?

CHRIS

'88? I was 7. Mother dearest took my sister to a Saratoga spa and dumped me with her psychiatrist cousin at the funeral afterparty.

PORTER

And finally, we get to the tragic backstory...

CHRIS

Wait, you haven't heard the full punchline yet.

PORTER

Hit me.

CHRIS

I found out my mother was cheating. Her paramour kept clogging our landline.

PORTER

Classic. You got a name?

CHRIS

David Varstmann?

Porter whistles. Chris responds with a hollow chuckle.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

My dad knew, he gave up...

PORTER

Eh, put it this way. You caught yourself from the same fate. You still got half a life to live.

CHRIS

That's what scares me. Honestly, I can't wait until I've paid my dues and I can go out in my sleep, too.

PORTER

No you don't. You screwed the home-wrecker, closed the oedipal cycle.

CHRIS

But I didn't kill Sam! I-

PORTER

All I meant was carpe fucking diem!

He nods at Kennedy's shoe behind the door, hands Chris his cigarette.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Come on, Son of Sam!

Chris gives in, puffs. The shoe disappears.

**END ACT II ACT**

ACT III

INT. BLACK HOUSE PORCH - RAINY MORNING

Porter watches rain pelt the pines from a screen-porch. DING.  
He answers his cellphone. Caller: GRETCHEN.

PORTER

Don't cry shitfaced from  
Copacabana...pardon, Velaa. I spoke  
to Dave, told him I'm not painting  
red anymore...no, you entertain  
him!

He SLAMS his cellphone on the wall, slices his palm. Kennedy  
opens the door.

KENNEDY

There's a towel under the sink.

PORTER

Ethel, I'm bleeding out and you  
think I want a used dishrag?

KENNEDY

You didn't make a deep cut.

She turns to go. He licks his palm at her like Goya's Saturn.

INT. BLACK HOUSE GUEST BED - LATER

Chris trails Kennedy as she riffles through Porter's  
overnight bag on the bed in a pink chintz guest room.

KENNEDY

How did you meet him?

CHRIS

It's been four months.

She examines Porter's gear: cologne, cigarettes, stolen  
cards. She pauses on Chris's puke-stained Amex.

KENNEDY

(Reading)

Answer the question. Christopher  
Rosenthal.

CHRIS

Touché.

She hands him the card. He pockets it sheepishly.

KENNEDY  
You can plead the fifth again.

CHRIS  
That's a...loaded offer.

KENNEDY  
It wasn't implying anything.

CHRIS  
Right, what I didn't want to say  
was that he dragged me to rehab  
with him so I feel indebted.

He gulps. She doesn't bat an eye.

KENNEDY  
He needs to leave.

CHRIS  
Yeah, I should have mentioned  
something earlier, but if you want  
to drop the hint tonight-

KENNEDY  
Not particularly.

CHRIS  
Or, no it's on me, I'll text him.  
He can go fuck himself after this  
morning. Unless you think that's  
overcompensating?

KENNEDY  
Depends. Define the relationship.

CHRIS  
We're friends in a...Fustian way?

KENNEDY  
Then appeasement isn't an option.

CHRIS  
Okay, but I'm really more of an  
isolationist when it comes to  
conflict management.

KENNEDY  
Passive excuse.

She flips the duvet, picks lint off the sheets. He watches her with growing curiosity.

CHRIS

What if we lock the bilco doors and turn the basement a germ free panic room?

KENNEDY

You could trip the circuit breaker.

CHRIS

Well, maybe that's good in theory, but he'll pull a meta-gaslight, pretend nothing's happening, and guaranteed we'll go batshit insane in a day.

KENNEDY

One of us will.

He laughs. She turns to go. He involuntarily jumps. She smiles to herself, then rejoins him. DING DONG. Flustered, they repack the duffle. The front door CREAKS open.

INT. LOT 49 CAFE - DAWN

Brett chats at a steampunk coffee bar with JONAS LEICHENBERG, (30s), the grungy German barista. Behind the counter, marquee letters spell LOT 49. Few tables are full.

BRETT

I feel you. My cousin said it's a rough buyers quarter.

JONAS

Ah. But Nena does our books. She wants to buy our apartment in Germantown for Lili's deaf school.

He tinkers with an espresso machine, slides Brett a mug.

BRETT

Thanks...and listen, I'll have Gin put a word on our socials for Lili. Hopefully, we'll drive more traffic out here, start a little fund.

JONAS

Good on you, man.

BRETT

Absolutely! Bottom line, we're praying you guys stick it out over pro-Israel Starbucks.

Jonas laughs. Brett raises his mug.

JONAS  
Jah, then I will try and stay.

BANG! Heidi kicks the door, drags a box marked: DONATE.

BRETT  
You made it!

She THUDS the box at Brett's feet. He eyes it suspiciously.

HEIDI  
Mostly Matty's golf shirts, jeans,  
I wasn't super organized...

BRETT  
Don't worry, this is perfect. I  
should be getting the Salvation  
Army write off. I'll send you the  
receipts.

HEIDI  
No rush, whenever you have a  
chance...

His hand sneaks to her waist. She stiffens at his touch.

BRETT  
Should we do lunch at the Vineyard?

HEIDI  
Oh! I thought Gin may have told  
you. I'm moving to my sister's  
today.

BRETT  
She may have mentioned it...I  
forgot. We've been so swamped.

His thumb brushes her belly. She twists away. He concedes.

BRETT (CONT'D)  
How about I pack the van for you ?

HEIDI  
It's okay. Em's neighbor manages  
the Trenton Uhual. He's bringing  
his 20ft-er. Which is longer than  
your van, so...

BRETT  
It's not too big?

She shakes her whole body. He notices Jonas eavesdropping.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Well...this it? Because you know,  
you can always call me...and Gin.  
We're happy to help with anything.

HEIDI

I know. That means a lot.

BRETT

Always.

He slips a check down her blouse. She pulls his hand away,  
then scampers off. Jonas winks at Brett.

INT/EXT. STATION WAGON/CAFE PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Heidi rips the check in a station wagon. Brett kicks the box  
to his Escalade a few spots down.

BRETT

What are you...?

She floors to him. BOOM. She misses, rear-ends a nearby oak.  
He zips through smoke to the wagon. She hangs over the wheel.  
He pounds her cracked window.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Dead fucking bitch-

He spies blood on her neck and drags himself to the Escalade.

INT/EXT. CHRIS'S JEEP, MAIN STREET - AT THE SAME TIME

The Corvette crawls fields, barns. Chris toys with a GPS.

PORTER

I gotta leak.

CHRIS

There's an Exxon somewhere

He pinches the GPS to zoom in on the map.

PORTER

Nah, my piss is too precious for  
human rights violators.

He swerves from farmland to MAIN STREET. Chris spies the  
Escalade shoot past LOT 49. He points at the sign.

CHRIS  
Indie coffee shop for your bladder,  
comrade?

PORTER  
Good enough.

EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT - LATER

Porter leaves through the front door and spots Heidi, sitting on the wagon's dented trunk. She clutches her box.

PORTER  
How goes?

Heidi feigns distress, trembles.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Saw that coked up Escalade push 95  
in a school zone. What's he got  
over you?

HEIDI  
He's my...my pastor.

PORTER  
Sweetie, he ran you off the road.  
For doing nothing. That's a grade A  
felony.

HEIDI  
Are you...an undercover?

She shivers.

PORTER  
Nah, I'm an ACAB hedgefunder.

HEIDI  
That's nice...so, what do you?

PORTER  
I make money.

Sirens BLARE. Jonas motions from the door. Behind him, Chris ducks out of view, fiddles with his cellphone.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Shall we? I can drop you off.

DING. Porter ignores the text.

HEIDI  
What about your friend inside?

PORTER  
He's a big boy with a big wallet,  
he'll find a ride home.

HEIDI  
Oh. Okay. I guess...

Porter offers his arm. Together, they hobble to the Corvette.

INT. CORVETTE - A MINUTE LATER (TRACKING)

Porter careens down an alley. A police car pivots at a cross street, missing the Corvette. Heidi squirms.

HEIDI  
You think he saw us?

PORTER  
No chance. I know how to pull a  
decent aid and abet.

He doe-eyed shock morphs to a calculated frown.

HEIDI  
You said I didn't do anything.

PORTER  
Well, I didn't see you. But my  
guess is you flunked a hit and  
murder.

Her face falls as she squeezes box.

HEIDI  
He fucked me. Blackmailed me. Told  
me to rot in Planned Parenthood  
Hell.

Her whole body heaves. He gestures flippantly at the box.

PORTER  
And what's the gift. Benjamins?  
PCP? Hypodermics? Someone special?

HEIDI  
My grandmother.

She eyes plead with him. Beat.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

He was supposed to help me put her in the Delaware.

PORTER

Of course he was...I'll still be on very good behavior around you.

HEIDI

Oh! You weren't before? What happened to my white-collar banker?

PORTER

(Laughing)

Sorry, I'm a blue-ball McGovern yippie. Friend's the multi-multi-millionaire.

HEIDI

Jesus, fuck my karma!

She slicks his hair. He licks her fingers. They tongue past a red light.

INT. KENNEDY'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Kennedy examines a raised, splotched toilet seat. A bullet floats in the water. Calmly, she fishes it out with a tissue.

INT. BLACK HOUSE DEN - AT THE SAME TIME

Chris curls on a womb. Porter fixes his shirt in the windows.

PORTER

She asked if I'd dig her ex's ceramic bong. And I said I'd stop by her sister's place out in Langhorn...

CHRIS

Ceramic over Murano? I don't know...it's your call.

PORTER

Half-ass! Do I stick it or forget her?

He hand motions sex suggestively. Chris shrugs.

CHRIS

Her bag had an Ahauyasca musk and she was being tailed by cops.

PORTER

So? I'll try a funky bush. And  
rewind, you dropped some  
interesting word choices there.

CHRIS

Goldman first year was a trip? My  
boss called me Dicky Nix until our  
Oak Room 2AM one-on-one. Make of  
that what you will.

Porter laughs. Kennedy enters, nods at Chris. He looks away.

KENNEDY

I found bed bugs. In the pink room.

She holds a bloody tissue in Porter's face. He snatches it.

PORTER

Nuke 'em with bleach. You didn't  
learn that life hack at Stanford  
finishing school?

KENNEDY

I learned how to afford an  
exterminator.

PORTER

(To Chris)

What was that, some kinda  
proletariat dig?

KENNEDY

I didn't say I would pay for  
service.

Chris scoots his chair between Porter, Kennedy.

CHRIS

I'm sorry, I'll give you a check  
and we'll leave first thing  
tomorrow.

KENNEDY

That's not what I asked for.

CHRIS

Right, I thought it was a semi-  
irefussable offer but...

Kennedy stalks to the other womb. She and Chris exchange an  
intense glare. Porter yawns, stretches to his feet.

PORTER

I see. I've been voted off the island. Don't kill each other while I'm on my date, kiddos!

KENNEDY

Pack protection.

Porter freezes. Chris covers an open mouth. Kennedy smiles shyly at Chris, then pulls the bullet from her pocket.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

You left the seat up.

She flings the bullet at Porter's feet. He snorts.

PORTER

Oh well, Little sex-ed for you, there's two of us here who do it that way.

KENNEDY

Not in my bathroom.

Porter shifts his feet, weighing his options.

PORTER

I keep a nice, clean permit in my dash.

He nods, then marches off. Chris follows him out.

INT. BLACK HOUSE FOYER - A MOMENT LATER

Kennedy watches the windows. Chris hunches on the stairs.

KENNEDY

Does he have a permit?

CHRIS

He said it's a prop from when he was in The Seagull at the Keswick. I'm willing to take it, face-value.

KENNEDY

Reason being...

CHRIS

Occam's razor?

KENNEDY

It's Chekov's loaded gun.

CHRIS

Uhm, you know that reference went over my head. But I don't think he's aware either, so-

KENNEDY

You barely knew him. And you gave him carte blanche with your life. How does that work?

CHRIS

Loneliness? A little Stockholm Syndrome?

Her gaze softens. He stands, prepared to bare himself.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Look, I wanted a friend who wouldn't take advantage of me and ironically my only option was to buy one. There, shoot me.

KENNEDY

I'm color blind.

She wipes her glasses. Outside, the Corvette's engine GROANS.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

I'm not bleaching pink sheets.

CHRIS

Sure, I'll consider-

KENNEDY

No considering. Overcompensate.

BAM! She swings open the door and saunters outside. He runs behind her to the dinged mailbox at the driveway's end.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Chris spoons ice cream at the table. Towel-clad Porter rummages in the fridge, grabs a banana.

PORTER

She needed a ride, whatever that means.

CHRIS

You don't think she went to check if her car was towed?

PORTER

Possible. Reminds me. I wanted to have it out with coffee man today.

CHRIS

Why? He seemed kooky but harmless. A tad Deutschland Eddie Vedder...

PORTER

That's solid terrorist material. He narced to the fucking fuzz.

CHRIS

You weren't pulled over...

PORTER

Doesn't tell me he didn't narc. And see, here's the rub. We're in a masculine power play. Yesterday was his move. It's my turn.

Kennedy enters, snorts. Porter bites his banana peel.

PORTER (CONT'D)

No need to kvetch and moan. I'll get out of your hair. Chrissy, wanna be my second?

CHRIS

Yeah, I don't know, I'm usually more of a background extra when it comes to masculine power plays.

PORTER

Then let's bring you to the foreground.

Chris tugs his hair, mortified. Kennedy sits besides him.

CHRIS

I can maybe lend moral support.

KENNEDY

As what? The body quota?

CHRIS

No! I have applicable skills. Proficient in disassociation during high intensity dick measuring contests. That's my LinkedIn summary.

PORTER

Well, fan-fucking-tastic. I could  
use an associate. Leave at 10, k?

Kennedy shoots Porter a judgmental frown. Beat.

CHRIS

Realistically? I think I should  
pass without behavioral health  
insurance and-

PORTER

Back it up. Stop and answer. Why do  
you keep shilling for shrinks when  
they haven't fixed you yet?

CHRIS

Because I don't understand  
hegemonic social dynamics? I can't  
navigate interpersonal conflict!

PORTER

Try exposure not couch surfing the  
upper east side. You can start  
today. I need a ride.

Chris nods slowly. Porter flips his banana with a triumphant  
grin. Kennedy GAGS at them.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - A SECOND LATER

Kennedy drops a plate in the sink. Chris COUGHS nervously.

CHRIS

Uhm, if you're not doing anything.  
Would you care to watch two  
geriatric blowhards duke it out  
over a phone call?

KENNEDY

I thought you were dying alone.

CHRIS

I've reconsidered. I'm not wedded  
to that plan anymore.

KENNEDY

What changed?

Chris shrugs, blushes. KNOCK. Porter returns fully clothed.

PORTER

Final answer?

CHRIS  
I'll getaway drive.

PORTER  
Good, I owe you some dark shit!

Porter faces Kennedy. She makes a point of recoiling.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
I left my towels in the hall.

KENNEDY  
Use bleach. When we get back.

She runs the tap. Porter mouths DATE? at shocked Chris.

INT/EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT, JEEP - MID-MORNING

Jonas, Porter square off. Jonas spots the Jeep by the oak.

PORTER  
I'd prefer to finish inside.

JONAS  
Please, my wife cannot close a sale  
with mess in there.

PORTER  
Have it your way. Now, you cater to  
me. Why'd you rat?

JONAS  
Man, I did no such thing. Your  
partner. He called on you. Paid me.

PORTER  
Liar, liar. Where's the cash?

Porter's gun pokes from his jacket. Jonas raises his hands.

JONAS  
I can give you the register.

PORTER  
That's chump shit. How else you  
scrimping out here?

JONAS  
My wife. She resales old autos.

PORTER  
Stupid, you bang 'em up, report an  
accident. And boom, you got an  
actual side hustle.

JONAS  
Never! We do honest work for our  
Visas. And the girls.

PORTER  
Aha. You made babies in the woods?

JONAS  
Jah, twins. They keep me living.

Porter glances at the Jeep. Jonas takes a chance, backs away.

PORTER  
All righty, I'll let you keep your  
Berlin walls up.

Jonas steps further away. Porter shakes his gun.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
But narc again, you'll find your-

Jonas throws a punch. BANG! Porter shoots. Jonas flops,  
snatching at Porter's ankles. They grapple for the gun.

INT. JEEP - AT THE SAME TIME

Chris watches the fight through slatted fingers. Kennedy  
drops a hand on the shift.

KENNEDY  
Why did you set them up?

CHRIS  
I left tip about a couple leaving  
an accident. That's a minor license  
suspension.

KENNEDY  
You knew exactly what would happen.

She clenches her hand as if to pull. He leans on the wheel.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)  
You wouldn't waste your time if  
there wasn't a benefit to you.

CHRIS  
You accused me of being passive...  
I thought I'd take a stand.

KENNEDY  
I said you were making excuses. And  
now you're using me as one?

CHRIS  
Oh, God, that's not...no! I-

KENNEDY  
Go.

CHRIS  
I'm not putting us on the line.

KENNEDY  
We're not conjoined.

Chris exhales and plows ahead. Porter snatches his gun to shoot at Jonas. VROOM. The Jeep speeds around the corner.

EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT - EVENING

Kennedy pops from the Jeep. Chris watches her wide-eyed.  
CRUNCH. She reaches down to grab Porter's gun.

**END ACT III**

ACT IV

EXT. DAVE'S MANSION - MID-MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Dave lounges on mansion patio facing a grecian pool. Chris paces, waving a legal pad (date: 2019).

CHRIS

You're claiming you were unaware  
Bucharest came with loopholes?

DAVE

It's the EU, not some third world  
labor camp. And I'll throw it back.  
What did you think of the deal?

CHRIS

No opinion. I wasn't CCd on the  
paperwork.

DAVE

I had no choice. You would've  
moralized me out of it.

CHRIS

Fair enough, I'll do it now. You're  
asking for perjury charges.

DAVE

Come on! All the FTC gives a shit  
about is responsibility. Who's  
responsible? Always legal. They had  
one fucking job, read the print and  
they failed. That's not on me. Or  
you.

He wanders to the pool's edge. Chris watches him plunge head-  
first into the shallow water.

CHRIS

Do you ever stop taking loopholes?

Dave bobs for air, spitting water on the grass.

DAVE

You're not talking me down.  
Loopholes are a faster means to the  
same end I'd get after checking you  
little rulebooks.

CHRIS

I'm your risk manager. It's my one job to follow rules for you.

DAVE

You're more than that.

Chris turns away from him. Dave dives, bobs, repeats.

DAVE (CONT'D)

When I take the stand, what I am supposed to say? Do you want me to face the firing squad? I will...

CHRIS

I don't care. You live and die by your own morality. Not mine.

DAVE

Chris, I never wanted-s

Chris COUGHS. Suddenly, a secretary appears on the lawn flanked by a stuffy lawyer. Dave back floats.

SECRETARY

Mr. Varstmann?

Chris jumps in and wades to Dave's body. The secretary SHRIEKS as the lawyer faints into her arms.

INT. CHRIS'S BEDROOM - DAWN (PRESENT)

Chris rolls in bed to peer out his window.

Chris's POV: Heidi swings the Corvette to the middle of the lawn. DING DONG. Chris drops back, eyes squeezed shut.

INT/EXT. AMTRAK TRAIN - AFTERNOON

Porter dozes on a train. He jolts awake as the wheels SPUTTER into Penn Station.

INT. STEVE'S STUDIO - LATE AFTERNOON

Tate meditates to an astrology podcast. Porter lays over a pouf, flipping through a literary journal.

STEVE (O.S.)

Headphones are non-negotiable.

TATE

Sorry!

Tate shuts off his cellphone. Steve enters moping and empties his work bag onto the floor.

TATE (CONT'D)

S'up, moody Pisces?

STEVE

Ugh. Deadlines on deadlines.

Tate begins organizing papers, pens, receipts.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Thanks...and of all dipshit time-sucks, I got sidetracked reading Chris Rosenthal's soul crushing Bloomberg profile.

PORTER

You have him pegged as Deep Throat?

STEVE

So, according to Sharon, Dave wanted Chris's head on the chopping block. He makes sense as a whistleblower.

PORTER

Does he? Or are you obsessed?

STEVE

Not obsessed! I just think he's been handed too many free passes playing the quirky, sad boy in the boardroom.

PORTER

I heard he was iced from Dave's last deal.

STEVE

How...where?

Steve grabs a notebook from the bottom of his bag.

PORTER

Washpo, NPR? One of the usual suspects.

STEVE

Damn. If that's true...case closed!  
You think you can find the link,  
send it to me?

PORTER

Can I share your profits?

Porter flashes a smug grin. Steve laughs uneasily.

PORTER (CONT'D)

Listen, I get it's a big deadline  
for you...

Tate YAWNS to cut the tension. Steve throws him a smile.

STEVE

You look nice...

TATE

I better. I've got a diner at Nobu.

Porter's lip curls menacingly. Tate raises his shoulders.

PORTER

Fucker! You were supposed to be my  
ride to Bayonne. Told you, I'm  
dropping rent at my landlord's.

TATE

You don't have a backup nurse?

PORTER

Naw, if I'm paying a private  
escort, we better be screwing  
deeper south central than Bayonne.

TATE

Okay, whoops, I didn't realize I  
was gonna get a second interview  
and-

PORTER

For what, American Greed?

TATE

Temp junior copywriter 1.

PORTER

I knew it! You're job hunting in  
those saggy-ass chinos.

TATE  
So what if I am! I want to deserve  
a corner office someday!

Porter picks up the pouf. Tate intercepts Porter's arm.

STEVE  
Port, please let's not fucking go  
there-

PORTER  
You think I'm letting some anorexic  
twink screw me over? Worry about  
your own carcass, Stevie.

Tate drops Porter's arm, sinks on the couch. Steve joins him.

STEVE  
(To Tate)  
Okay?

Tate snuffles but nods.

TATE  
You?

STEVE  
I'm just...I'm lost. What is  
happening? I thought we were having  
a casual...a disagreement? Not even  
that. Just an awkward conversation.  
I don't understand, when did shit  
hit the fan?

PORTER  
You figure it out, Mr. New Yorker!

Porter whips out pocket knife. Tate GASPS. Steve fingers his  
cellphone.

PORTER (CONT'D)  
Oh baby, lemme guess. You're rents  
didn't buy you a private body guard  
yet?

STEVE  
No, but I'll call...I have no  
shame. Cops might as well stop  
actual crime for once.

Steve dials. Cackling, Porter spits at Steve, then slams the  
door. Tate envelopes Steve in a hug.

STEVE (CONT'D)  
Good luck tonight.

TATE  
Thank you, thank you. What's on  
your agenda?

STEVE  
Interview with Sharon...I should  
prep.

TATE  
Is she...?

STEVE  
Very married.

TATE  
And bored?

Steve laughs, deflecting an answer.

STEVE  
And you know that showing up late  
to an interview isn't a winning  
strategy.

Tate nods. Steve straightens Tate's tie.

INT. STEVE'S STUDIO - EVENING

Steve finishes emptying his bag. His fingers pause on a  
condom labeled: XO, Sharon.

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - DAWN

Jonas crouches in the doorway. Brett hulks under the arch,  
swinging his gun.

BRETT  
Get in here. I need the van packed.

Jonas cautiously moves closer.

JONAS  
Nena does not want me going on with  
you.

BRETT  
So tell her I'll cover a month's  
rent. That should shut her up.

JONAS  
And is the money all yours?

BRETT  
You wired?

Jonas pats his body. No wires. Brett nods assent, whispers.

BRETT (CONT'D)  
It's ten percent off the tithe funds. I send the checks to this phony non-profit. Gin got a community college kid to run a website. Save the bee children, whatever!

JONAS  
Jah...okay. What do I pack?

BRETT  
Heidi. And Gin's brother. He's harassing her over inheritance.

Jonas GASPS, realizing Brett's intent. Brett's feet TAP.

BRETT (CONT'D)  
Does thirty grand wet your tip?

JONAS  
Our house agent promised we will have fifty for the shop.

BRETT  
You're bargaining with me?

JONAS  
No, man. No...but Nena will.

BRETT  
So screw it in her head. Forty's my best and final.

Brett yanks his gun from his holster. Jonas retreats.

JONAS  
Forty...I...I will think.

BRETT  
Done. Stop by my office, midnight. I'll give you twenty, all cash upfront.

JONAS  
I will show. Midnight. Jah?

BRETT  
You need me to write that down?

JONAS  
Man, I have it, I have it.

Brett nods, and lobs his gun at Jonas.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE LAWN - EARLY MORNING

Chris stands on the front steps. Kennedy examine the Corvette's license(KGB99V). He sidles over to her.

KENNEDY  
She left a box inside. Last night.

CHRIS  
Intel for Matrushka Rossiya?

She almost laughs as she pries at the trunk lock.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
May I?

He presses down. The trunk SNAPS open on Heidi's box (lid missing). Inside: a red, veiny mass. Kennedy jumps back.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
What is-

KENNEDY  
Placenta.

Chris pokes the organ.

CHRIS  
Do you want to...try?

She reaches to him. He guides her fingers over the veins.

KENNEDY  
You can eat-

VROOM! She yanks Chris behind the Corvette. Jonas parks, strolls to through the open door.

INT. BLACK HOUSE FAMILY ROOM - A MINUTE LATER

Jonas paces besides Chris. Heidi, Kennedy back to a corner bookcase. Porter's gun rests on the top shelf.

JONAS

I want a good story, jah? Where is your friend?

Chris spies Brett's gun bulging in Jonas's pocket.

CHRIS

We're not really on speaking terms at the moment, uhm...

JONAS

Man, I have his cash. I need to go-

CHRIS

Sure, we can expedite the conversation. But to be transparent, we're no better informed than you are, so there's nothing for us to discuss as of now, and-

JONAS

You cannot say more? You do not wish to?

CHRIS

Well, first of all, those aren't statistically independent events. And really, if we're getting into the semantic weeds, cannot is probably the more accurate descriptor for the circumstances depending on...

Heidi dislodges Porter's gun with her elbow. It THUDS at her feet. Jonas jumps back.

JONAS

I do not follow.

BANG. Heidi shoots at Jonas. He ducks, then high tails for the hallway.

INT. BLACK HOUSE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Chris, Kennedy follow Heidi while she shoots erratically.

EXT. FRONT LAWN - A SECOND LATER

Jonas cowers in the Corvette. Heidi flings her gun and bolts towards Jonas. Kennedy looks at Chris.

KENNEDY

Your shot?

CHRIS

Absolutely not! I wouldn't pass a background check or imagine a psych eval? That would really kibosh on my gun-totting chances...

They watch Heidi wrestle in the Corvette's front seats.

KENNEDY

Don't shoot at them. Distract.

She nudges his arm. He shoots the pickup's tires with Heidi's gun. BOOM. Kennedy's glasses drop as she pancakes on the ground. Chris closes his eyes.

CHRIS

Did I hit...?

KENNEDY

No idea.

Heidi muscles Jonas's gun and aims at Kennedy. Chris pushes her onto the front doorstep as the Corvette hurtles away, streaking bullets.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

(Teasing)

I think they're gone now.

Chris joins her, holding out her glasses. She wipes blood off his wrist and touches his scar. They share a charged beat.

INT/ EXT. CORVETTE, CHURCH LAWN - NIGHT

Heidi toys with bloody zip-ties in the Corvette.

Heidi's POV: Jonas (blood spattered) chats with Brett in the windows. She revs the engine.

INT. BLACK HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chris watches muted news on a 90s TV (bottom third: NEW SAINCOEUR LEAK DETAILS). Kennedy appears behind him.

KENNEDY

What dropped this round?

She disappears out the entrance. He calls after her, impassioned.

CHRIS  
Nothing dropped!

KENNEDY (O.S.)  
You're positive.

CHRIS  
Yes? I really don't know. I bet  
Dave's paying an intern to pretend  
I'm masterminding the leaks.

Kennedy returns with her usual laptop.

KENNEDY  
To what end?

CHRIS  
Oh, it's a preemptive strike. He's  
assassinating my character for the  
more than likely event I'm  
subpoenaed.

She slides him the laptop. He eyes it suspiciously.

KENNEDY  
I overhauled the software. Never  
use your IP on public wifi again.

CHRIS  
Okay. I'm not doing anything on the  
dark web.

KENNEDY  
You're on my network.

CHRIS  
But all my accounts have been  
hacked! And actually, you just  
admitted to hacking me right now.

She visibly tenses. He senses her discomfort, backpedals.

CHRIS (CONT'D)  
Sorry, thank you...

KENNEDY  
Yep.

A smile cracks on her lips. KNOCK. She peers at the entry.

OFFICER(O.S.)  
Police! Open up!

Kennedy spins around. Chris points open-mouthed at the porch.  
Porter frantically waves at them.

CHRIS

I'm telling Porter to turn me in.  
If we go down, please forgive-

KENNEDY

No. Let's go!

She dangles his car keys. He nods and grabs the laptop.  
Together, they follow Porter into the night.

**THE END**