

TEASER

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

A janitor (name-tag TATE) spies a fern at the end of a 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 Rolex. She shoots him a concerned look.

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

DAVE
Oh, come on, that's BS. No doubt he's pulling his little boy scout, 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, sleek. He flings a folio dated 2018 on the table.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Hey Chris!

CHRIS
Yeah, hi, transfer assignment looks fine.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I mean, you're welcome to have compliance do a once over in case I missed any relevant points...otherwise, we're all done here.

DAVE

Fantastic! Really.

He 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, or-

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, looms over Chris.

DAVE

Get the Hell out!

CHRIS

Okay. Will do.

He remains frozen. Dave's fist POUNDS the table.

DAVE

Fuckwad! Enjoy your five second power trip?

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

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 know, you're going to fucking federal. Not state, God fucking damn it!

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

CHRIS

My resignation letter.

He 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. Frankly, 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 to examine the wiretap 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, claps Steve's back.

PORTER

We missed you at AA.

STEVE

I texted. I'm writing this piece on the CEO of...it's some stupid, uterine probiotic, I don't really know.

TATE

You mean like Vagina pills? Oof...

Porter waves Tate off. Beat.

PORTER

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

(nods at Chris)

Case and point. Sixty to my left.

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.

He 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 shit-fest. That face screams bagged for insider trading...

They share a cynical laugh. 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, until BLAH. He faints to a cesspool of pill-flecked vomit. Tate enters with a gym bag, recoils at mess.

INT. BATHROOM - 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 that corner office.

PORTER

Wait...what? How long've you had the cleaning gig?

TATE

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

Porter adjusts his new wallet bulge. Tate snickers at him.

PORTER

Purge it out!

Tate eye-rolls, checks his cellphone.

TATE

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. 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

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

Tate stomps to the door.

TATE

Well, 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? I'm late.

Porter growls but begins CPR. Tate salutes and skips off.
Beat. 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 Corvette snags the adjoining spot. Porter
hops out.

PORTER

Here for the detox, too?

Chris's feet shuffle, head hangs. Beat.

CHRIS

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

Porter waves, steps a hair 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?

In step, they pass the gates and cross the front lawn.

CHRIS

Where to start. Let's see, work addiction, cocaine, formaldehyde, psych meds, a drink...or ten.

PORTER

Gotcha. I do rolls, mostly.

They exchange a knowing smile as they near the entrance.

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, I think it's the Robert Durst looks. But yeah, nope, I'm solidly square. Product essentially as advertised.

PORTER

Essentially? Any kinks we better straighten out?

Chris shrugs, slightly alarmed. Porter grins.

PORTER (CONT'D)

I don't have a laugh track...

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 a 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.

CHRIS
Door's open!

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

PORTER (O.S.)
St. Christopher! Two months no see.

Chris slips a key from his pocket, 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
So. Rehab dragged you to the light?

CHRIS
Sure, possibly, but I wouldn't say I had a grand moral epiphany or anything.

Porter raises a brow. Chris squirms with palpable anxiety.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
What? Martin Skrelli didn't descend in an Aesop fever nightmare to remind me our team screwed up and-

PORTER
Slow down company man. Team?

CHRIS
It was a freudian slip.

PORTER
Was walking even your choice, then?

CHRIS
Kind of? I mean, Dave and I had a mutual, conscious uncoupling. I think that constitutes walking...

PORTER
Eh. And no goodbye goodie bags, huh? That's fucking cheap.

CHRIS
I know. Zero commemorative tchotchkes.

Porter leans towards Chris with an grin. Chris caves.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
But corporate did offer hush money for a suspiciously cryptic NDA.

PORTER
No! You didn't sign, did you?

CHRIS
Of course not. I filled in the blank with, "Eat my shit!". Or...that's the clean version.

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

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

CHRIS
Uhm, actually, 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 Risk team in October.

PORTER
Going back to the Fidi trenches.

CHRIS

Nope, thankfully, 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, I'd like to be secure.
Otherwise, you know 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, no, stop, fuck the sob story!
Instead of laundering, go back for
Dave's payout. Then shack up in
Hoboken with me. Cover my cable
bills.

CHRIS

Sorry, but I'm not taking blood
money.

Porter expands. Chris shrinks, POPS his knuckles. Beat.

PORTER

Seriously, Pennsylvania?

CHRIS

It's not all Amish red state
boonies. Taxes are low. I figure
I'll float a Toll Brothers rental
for a year. I have some family out
in Yardley.

PORTER

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

CHRIS

Thanks, that's uh...that's flattering. But honestly, 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. See, in their world, I have no higher utility than being a masochistic asswipe groveling at the alter of...

He rises, shakes his head. Porter guides him back down.

PORTER

May I state my humble opinion?

CHRIS

Fine, bring on the crystal chakra woo woo!

PORTER

K, I'll 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. Good? Yes?

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 MEETING. Chris SLAMS the laptop shut.

INT/EXT. JEEP/HIGHWAY - MIDNIGHT (TRACKING)

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

EXT. BLACK HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Chris parks by a mod, black barn house. A stoic, Stepford 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...or yeah, sorry, it's a bad habit, sadly, not my worst. 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 duffle.

Kennedy turns her back to him.

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 duffle awkwardly behind her.

INT. BLACK HOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

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

INT. BLACK HOUSE HALLWAY/CHRIS'S ROOM - DAY

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

INT. CHRIS'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

CHRIS

Fuck! It's two in the morning!

He rolls over, studies 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
always about mind games.

He pins the cellphone under his ear, pads to the door. Glances left, right. Nothing.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No, no...three weeks. I packed
benzos...so? If Armageddon strikes,
I'm in tarot spa, weed country.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

The town apothecary sells Baker
Buckets...and I'm a cockroach!

He shakes the door handle, climbs back in bed.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Tomorrow? Visiting my sister...the
Moonie wannabe from the Vice
documentary. Go look her up on
Truth Social...yeah, bye!

As if on cue, POOF! The lamp bulb fades. Chris squints at his
faint cellphone screen. 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.
(noticing glares)
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...please be seated. I know it's Saturday! But as inspired by our faith, we must resist the transmutability of existence by giving of ourselves.

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

BRETT (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

We, submissives to the Prince of Nazareth, must uphold tradition through 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, this month, we will be partnering with the Bucks County Mental Health Alliance to form a Golden Hands Fund. Our goal is to shout down the liberal shackles corrupting our communal wellness.

CHEERS. A screen drops, reveals a chart: Hands Allocations. Brett beckons Virginia. She gestures with a laser pointer.

VIRGINIA

Yes...thank you. Yes, our congregation is blessed to serve as the feeder for evangelically aligned charities within our county chapter.

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

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

And this giving period, 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 almighty guide their souls on a path of interdimensional disunion.

She raises a hand. A generic OUR FATHER ensues. Beat.

BRETT

Amen. And I've done enough talking.
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 marginalized
communities. Therefore, I am proud
to announce that we will be
sponsoring female-first healthcare
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. As long as we're not in an
armed conflict. Are we?

BRETT

That's enough, Christopher. Sit or
security can excommunicate you.

CHRIS

Wow! Excommunicate. I mean, you really don't have to go that far. I'm not even part of your community, so is that even possible?

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

VIRGINIA

(over the crowd)

Dearest Lord. Let us unburden ourselves of strangers' sins. May we...

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)

Hey! Don't not say anything while I'm speaking to you.

CHRIS

Am I supposed to talk over you, then?

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 wanna grab that IPA 12-pack 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

You know I'm not answering that!

Chris revels in her discomfort.

CHRIS

Really? It's a little late...you just did.

VIRGINIA

Forget it, you got me! All right? Thanks for the college degree!

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

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

(To Brett)

I'm not gonna handle a scene right now!

Brett ignores her, launches a tirade at Chris.

BRETT

What're you doing here, Christopher?

CHRIS

Well, I'm exploring my spirituality-

BRETT

No. That's it. You need to stop. Right now! We're not engaging with actionable intent unless you're willing to drop the facade.

CHRIS

Yeah, I don't know what that implies...you don't like my face?

Brett spews spittle. Chris stands his ground.

BRETT

Look, I know you're very busy, too. Why don't you take your elitist attitude back to your little wall street CPA casino and stop harassing my wife. Is that fair?

Chris drags his feet. Brett gnashes his teeth. Beat.

CHRIS
Actually, I'm chief risk analyst
for a top ten commodities fund...

Brett encroaches. Virginia covers her face. Chris rambles.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Clearly, not that you care...uhm,
or fine, I'll leave Jonestown 2.0
out here.

BRETT
And you had to weasel in the last
word, didn't you?

Chris shrugs. Brett's temple veins throb.

BRETT (CONT'D)
I wasn't kidding. You need to shut
up and get off my property.

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

CHRIS
(under breathe)
You're property? You pay taxes now?

He opens the Jeep's door. Virginia blocks him.

VIRGINIA
Wait! Tell me. What went so wrong
in your life that you feel the need
to come here and harass 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 on me. My truth will always
be a lie to you.

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

VIRGINIA
Whatever. I'll give you check mate
for the victim hand.

CHRIS
Oh! Wait, is this chess or poker? I
don't work at a casino, so...

VIRGINIA

What do want from us, really?

CHRIS

I have no expectations of you, Gin.

Onlookers gather. Brett suddenly smiles, performs.

BRETT

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

CHRIS

Well, forgive me, my mistake. Gin?
Your Jesus Ponzi slush fund is
truly a...visionary enterprise.

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

VIRGINIA

Chris, 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
narcissism.

Chris gently shuts his door. Virginia, Brett gesticulate wildly as he starts the engine. The crowd eats up the drama.

EXT. CHURCH LAWN - LATER

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

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 here? 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, I
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 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 know what kind of-

Brett explodes. Virginia cowers.

BRETT
No you don't! Common sense, Gin!
Fucking common sense! He's a nut-
job, borderline manipulator. They
should've tried him at the Pentagon
for 2008.

VIRGINIA
I just want to give him the benefit
of the doubt one more time. He said
we might need a legal team to help
manage, and he's not gonna lie to a
lawyer.

BRETT
Even better. He's threatening legal
action against me?

VIRGINIA
Not you.

Brett grabs his holster. Virginia stutters.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
I...I don't think he-

BRETT

No, I'm not waiting for him to
bankrupt us with his three degrees.
Go fucking call him, get an answer!

He snarls, texts HEIDI. Virginia notices, 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
Well, shame manifests
biophysically.

CHRIS
Jesus, straight from the gates.

VIRGINIA
I could say the same.

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

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)
Look, 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 assumed. I wanted to get a
dialogue going, that's all. You
said you're moving to New Hope?

CHRIS
Yeah, I'm renting for the month.
Thinking of buying before I start
at Bowman.

VIRGINIA
You're working again? Is that the
insurance place in Newtown?

CHRIS
Sort of...and it's a smaller
fintech fund.

VIRGINIA

I see. So then, what's happening with your old job? I heard you guys were funding nukes for Ukranian guerillas? Maybe I misunderstood...

CHRIS

We are. Could be worse.

VIRGINIA

Okay, cause it wasn't clear if that's why the FBI got involved or...weren't you also 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, Gin.

VIRGINIA

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

CHRIS

It was a business school 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 Warren Buffet's akashic records again?

She shuffles her pamphlets to drown him out.

VIRGINIA

I'm saying that you encounter the same low chi states. Every time, you're replaced in these corporate cages. And I'm thinking, they say the definition of insanity...

She faces him with a patronizing frown. He rises.

CHRIS

You have no idea what you're talking about. I wasn't replaced! Dave didn't want to risk a wrongful termination suit. That's why he just mind-fucked me until I-

She raises her hands, inhales audibly.

VIRGINIA

How about...can we recenter?

He releases a harsh laugh.

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

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

CHRIS

Well, now you're bastardizing Thomas Kuhn.

VIRGINIA

Why does it even matter? Point being, it's time for you to engage with other walks of life. Go visit a refugee camp-

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 that kind of racially-charged 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 lie to me, Chris!

CHRIS

And either way, I'm paying the Sacklers something...

She shoves a palm in his face. He throws the pill at a nearby compost bin.

VIRGINIA

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

She stops, points at a distant shadow. Chris follows her finger. In the distance, Brett fumbles with a fanny pack.

CHRIS

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 sneaks a glance at Brett. No ring. Beat.

VIRGINIA

It's not up to you to dictate how he wants to symbolize our union.

CHRIS

But talk about red flags?

He rises as Brett approaches.

VIRGINIA

Sit.

CHRIS

No! I'm not letting him to scratch "Cuck" on my Clinton bumper again.

VIRGINIA

You're still whining about ten years ago? Maybe you don't have the empathy to remember what he was going through...

CHRIS

Psychosis? Trust me, I remember-

VIRGINIA

Get over yourself!

Chris topples his chair, reaches in his pocket for car keys.

CHRIS

You haven't changed either, Gin.

Virginia drops a hand on his shoulder. He shakes her off and heads in the opposite direction.

VIRGINIA

(calling after him)

Wait...you can't drive high!

Brett waves at her. She glances at his palm. A pen note says: Call H.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Chris, Kennedy sit catty-cornered at the table. She types 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. Still running background.

CHRIS

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

KENNEDY

You're not that interesting.

CHRIS

Right, 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 satanic
vaccines to QAnon and paradoxically
the ADL.

KENNEDY

Nice. Where do you stand on the
Deep State?

CHRIS

Oh, uhm...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.

Beat. Kennedy deadpans.

KENNEDY

I let your 2001 speeding ticket
slide.

CHRIS

Really? I had my record expunged
which suggests...you may be doxxing
me?

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

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sorry! I'm 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 Steve as he putters around a desk in a cluttered, bohemian studio. Porter swaggers in.

PORTER

Stevie, you 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 just one of those lean-in 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. The drama's for a new article?

STEVE

(Nodding)

Saincoeur's VP, Sharon Neal wants to talk. And get this. She sent me public files from the final board meeting. It's odd, Dave only invited her and his personal attorney.

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

PORTER

Hiding behind mommy and daddy. How's that odd.

STEVE

Well, Axios put out a love-letter claiming he's not pulling a pump and dump like everyone else in the market. Unless they're taking checkbook bribes too, now.

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

TATE

Hang up, I'm 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 up an image of Dave charting a yacht on a laptop. Porter COUGHS. Tate AHS to distract Steve.

TATE

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

STEVE

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

PORTER

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 hedging with some guy named Dave?

STEVE

Huh. That's 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 had some generic John Doe on it. Most of those American psychos look the same...

STEVE

True. The industry churns out Ivy plutocrats.

He reminisces for a beat. Tate watches him, wide-eyed.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Can you imagine...once upon a time,
I was gutted first round at Bain
Capital. The recruiter told me I
was too nice for consulting. So my
mother bought me an MFA instead.

His eyes glaze over as he sways on his feet.

STEVE (CONT'D)

(CONT'D)

I found out later, Chris got the
gig when we overlapped at
Princeton. He won it as a fucking
religion major! And that's why
we're in such different places.

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

PORTER

Wouldn't sweat it. Plenty of bad
seeds stop there on the tour de
Hell. Remember, Lyle Menendez? Or
the other one who shot his dad?

STEVE

At least they made it on TV.

INT. STEVE'S BUILDING ELEVATOR - NIGHT

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

PORTER

The fuck was that? 21 questions?

TATE

Ugh, 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. Imagine, he gets a hint-

PORTER

Gag it for now. He'll finish
writing. I'll talk to him. Then we
bang a three-way win.

Porter huffs. Tate cajoles him with a grin.

TATE

No thanks, I'm out. I've gotta set a final bug tonight. And then Dave's assistant...you remember Gretchen? She kept her company card. We're flying to Velaa so I can practice my straight man.

PORTER

I thought they froze felon accounts.

TATE

We got lucky. Dave's lawyer bailed him and paid Gretch and now his old firm's going after-

PORTER

What's Villa?

TATE

Ew, you raise the soft-palate. VE-LAA.

PORTER

No asshat, where the Hell is it?

TATE

Negative idea. Use Google maps.

Tate smoothes his hair. Porter paces.

TATE (CONT'D)

What's up? Serious. You look sad.

PORTER

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

TATE

(laughing)

Man, oh man. I heard Dave asked you to Clorox his brains out. But you wanna adopt him now?

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 can't have him relapse before I get there. I'm Judas, not fate...

TATE

I got it. You're going there to
tell him-

PING. The door opens. Tate attempts a bolt but Porter's foot
blocks him.

PORTER

You're right. I'm taking the high
road. So, you better not fucking
call me on the highway.

TATE

No worries! Gretch won't give me
spending money for international
cell service.

Porter slowly lowers his foot. Tate scampers away without
looking back.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING

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

PORTER (O.S.)

Thank you, is it Kennedy like the
family?

KENNEDY (O.S.)

Yes. Named for Ethel...not Ted.

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

CHRIS

You're the other renter?

PORTER

Nice to see you, too. I was ulcered
sick with all your suicide haikus.
My brain went fuck, 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're day drinking!

He drops at the table, gestures at Chris's bottle. Chris
turns his hands, reveals a soda 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)

There's 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 alcoholic. 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 like blood.

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

Uh-uh, not buying the conversion epic. I skimmed the Jesus freak's vintage Tumblr. She said you're into false profits.

CHRIS

Oh, let me guess. I got a salaried job and became a servant of the new world order?

Porter nods and laughs between bites.

PORTER

So who brainwashed you back?

CHRIS

What, into a Korean Jew for Jesus?

PORTER

It must've been hard to shake those Reagan Jr. roots, huh?

CHRIS

More Hitchens, for the namesake...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 all your tells so I don't believe you. This is some next-level mental taekwondo.

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. They're all gentrifying the housing system. Tucker posted this brilliant op-ed...

HEIDI

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

VIRGINIA

No, you can't. It's always a trap. But you have to have alternative housing or...

Virginia opens her tote, grabs an amber jar with a scoby on top. 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

Well, I can have Brett's cousin show you options. He's with Remax in Yardley.

HEIDI

That's so sweet but I can't buy.

Virginia squeezes Heidi's shoulders. Long-haired dads ogle.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

My insurance rep called the other day. I didn't realize I don't earn widow money. He said they won't pay out since Matty fudged his application.

VIRGINIA

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

HEIDI

Totally! Because I so could've used another stimulus.

VIRGINIA

And you have no savings?

HEIDI

Nothing. We banked on Matty's disability checks but they just keep bouncing. No matter what I do.

VIRGINIA

You could always be an escort...

She trails off at Heidi's confused expression, uncaps her jar. Heidi inhales sharply.

HEIDI

You mean to guide new goldstar initiates?

VIRGINIA

Brett said you're flexible. On night shifts?

She waves her jar, splashes her top. Heidi anxiously fumbled in her bag, pulls out a napkin.

HEIDI

Here.

A birth control pack slips from her bag onto the table.

VIRGINIA

Is that from my husband, too?

HEIDI

No, Gin, please.

(hiding the pack away)

It's not-

VIRGINIA

It is.

She snatches the napkin, wipes her neck. Heidi sobs.

INT. BLACK HOUSE DEN - NIGHT

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

KENNEDY

Move your car. To the back drive.

PORTER

On a private lawn?

KENNEDY

For the HOA.

PORTER

For the fucking Kafka bureaucracy!

He slumps away. Satisfied, Kennedy takes his seat.

CHRIS

Was there a penalty charge?

KENNEDY

Paid last week.

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

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

He said you would cover his stay.

CHRIS

Of course, no, I'll comp you for everything. Would you prefer check, Venmo, Paypal-

KENNEDY

I told you. I paid.

He buckles under her gaze. Beat.

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

You've given him money before?

CHRIS

Uhm, loaned is a preferable 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 family friend.

KENNEDY

As opposed to imperfectly legal?

CHRIS

Do you think I'm tempting the IRS?

She shrugs, then abruptly walks out. Porter enters with a cigarette. He offers a drag but Chris profusely declines.

PORTER

She can't see you.

CHRIS

That's not why.

PORTER

You still can't lie!
(resuming his seat)
Where do you bet Bezos hid her off button?

CHRIS

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

He fidgets. Porter pounces.

PORTER
Is that a euphemism for...?

CHRIS
God, no!

PORTER
K. Calling it now. You're dying
alone.

CHRIS
Sure, I was planning, it's just
genetic tradition. My dad died from
a stroke, alone in his office. The
janitor found him, Monday morning.

PORTER
Aw man, how old were you?

CHRIS
'95? I was 11. Mother dearest took
my sister to a Saratoga spa and
dumped me with her psychiatrist
cousin at the funeral afterparty. I
got my first DSM-5 that summer.

PORTER
Finally, the tragic backstory...

CHRIS
Well, wait. You haven't heard the
full punchline yet.

PORTER
Hit me.

CHRIS
That's the year I learned why my
dad spent weekends in the office
with his secretary. My mother's
boyfriend kept clogging our
landline.

PORTER
Fun stuff. Wow. Ever get his name?

CHRIS
Oh yeah. Mr. David Varstmann.

PORTER
Damn! Dave? Does he know who you
are?

CHRIS

Why do you think he hired me? I'm indentured for life!

Porter whistles. Chris responds with a hollow chuckle. Beat.

PORTER

Eh, put it this way. You've still got half a life to escape.

CHRIS

But honestly, time scares me. I can't wait until I've paid my dues and I can die broken hearted, too.

PORTER

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

CHRIS

But I didn't kill Sam!

He panics. Porter puts a hand on his knees.

PORTER

Hey, hey...all I meant was carpe fucking diem! You have a chance here!

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

PORTER (CONT'D)

Come on.

Chris gives in, puffs. The shoe disappears.

PORTER (CONT'D)

There you go, Son of Sam! We've all got a dark side.

END ACT II ACT

ACT III

INT. BLACK HOUSE PORCH - RAINY MORNING

Porter watches rain pelt the pines from a screened in porch. DING. He answers his cellphone.

PORTER

Nah, no don't cry shitfaced from Copacabana, Bikini Atoll...Velaa, wherever...I spoke to Dave, told him I'm not painting red anymore...no, Gretch! That's the job you signed for. You take a knee, keep him busy!

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

KENNEDY

There's a towel under the sink.

PORTER

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

He holds up a palm with a red gash.

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 credit cards. She pauses on Chris's puke-stained Amex.

KENNEDY

(Reading)

Answer the question. Christopher... Rosenthal.

CHRIS

I guess you didn't background check me?

She hands him the card. He pockets it sheepishly. She frowns.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

But...touché.

KENNEDY

So, answer me. Or you can plead the fifth again.

CHRIS

That's a...loaded offer.

KENNEDY

Wasn't implying anything.

CHRIS

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

He shrugs, tugs his hair. She doesn't bat an eye. Beat.

KENNEDY

He needs to leave.

CHRIS

Oh...yeah, sorry, I should have mentioned something earlier, but if you want to drop the hint tonight.

KENNEDY

Not particularly.

CHRIS

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

KENNEDY

Depends. What is your relationship?

CHRIS

We're friends...in a kind of 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

And that's a 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 into a panic room?

KENNEDY

You could trip the circuit breaker.

CHRIS

No, no games never work. He'll just pull a meta-gaslight, pretend nothing's happening, and guaranteed we'll go batshit insane trying to bait him within a day.

KENNEDY

Maybe. One of us will.

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

INT. 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 taken by stoners, blue-collar workers.

BRETT

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

JONAS

Ah, yeah, but Mia does my books. She wants to buy our apartment in mainline for Lili's deaf school. They have some academy there.

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, maybe start a GoFundMe.

JONAS

That's good on you, man.

BRETT

Absolutely! We're just praying you guys stick it out over pro-Iran Starbucks, right?

Jonas laughs. Brett raises his mug. Jonas nods, cheers.

JONAS

Jah, then I will try and stay. If we make the rent.

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

BRETT

Hey!

She THUDS the box at his feet. He eyes it suspiciously.

HEIDI

It's 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 soon. I'll send you the receipts.

HEIDI

Oh! There's no rush, whenever you have a chance...

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

BRETT

We're doing lunch at the Vineyard?

HEIDI

Uhm...sorry! I thought Gin may have told you. I'm moving in 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 up the van?

HEIDI

It's okay. Em's neighbor manages the Trenton Uhaul. He's bringing a 20ft-er. Which is longer than your van, right?

BRETT

It's not too big for you?

He notices Jonas eavesdropping. She shakes her head. Beat.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Well, I guess this is it. But you know, you can always call me...and Gin. We're happy to help.

HEIDI

I know. That means a lot.

She keeps an eye on Jonas as Brett invades her space.

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 towards 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 comatose over the wheel. He POUNDS her cracked window.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Dead fucking cunt-

He spies blood on her neck and spits on her wound.

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

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

PORTER
I gotta leak.

CHRIS
Hold on...there's an Exxon
somewhere here.

He pinches the GPS to zoom in on the map.

PORTER
Nah, my waste is too precious for
human rights violators.

Chris swerves from farmland to MAIN STREET. Suddenly, he
spies the Escalade shoot past the sign for LOT 49. He points.

CHRIS
Indie coffee shop any better?

PORTER
Good enough.

EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT - LATER

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

PORTER
How goes?

Heidi feigns distress, trembles.

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

HEIDI
No-nothing. He's my...my pastor.

PORTER
Well, he tried to run you over.
That's a grade F felony.

She shivers but smiles coyly at him.

HEIDI
Are you...an undercover?

PORTER
Nah, I'm an ACAB hedgefunder.

HEIDI

Cool, that's great. So, what do you?

PORTER

I bank. Make money.

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

PORTER (CONT'D)

Shall we? I can drop you off.

DING. Porter ignores the text on his pocketed cellphone.

HEIDI

And what about your friend inside?

PORTER

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

HEIDI

Oh. Then, I guess we could go.

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

INT/EXT. CORVETTE, ALLEY - A MINUTE LATER (TRACKING)

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

HEIDI

You think he saw us?

PORTER

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

HEIDI

But you said I didn't do anything.

PORTER

I didn't see you do anything. But my guess is you flunked a hit and murder. Pastor made a run for it.

Her doe-eyed shock morphs to a calculated frown. Beat.

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.

Her eyes plead with him to believe her.

PORTER
Really.

HEIDI
He was supposed to help me put her
in the Delaware after she passed.

PORTER
That's kind of him.

HEIDI
He's a man of God.

PORTER
I don't doubt. But I'll still be on
very good behavior around you two.

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

PORTER
(Laughing)
Doesn't exist. I'm a blue-ball
McGovern yippie. My friend's the
multi-multi-millionaire.

He slows to a stop at an intersection.

HEIDI
Good. I should've told you. I don't
go for clean cuts.

She slicks his hair. He touches her cheek. She licks the scab
on his palm. He leans over the console and they tongue
through 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 husband's vintage roach clips. So I said I'd stop by her sister's place out in Langhorn...

CHRIS

As long as they're not lead...but it's your call.

PORTER

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

Chris shrugs.

CHRIS

I mean, her bag had an Ahauyasca smell and she was tailed by cops...

PORTER

So? I'll try a funky bush. And rewind, that's some word choice.

CHRIS

Uhm, my first year at a startup was a trip? My boss called me Dicky Nixon until our 3AM two-on-one with a real Kazakhstani model turned journalist. Make of that what you will.

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

KENNEDY

I found bed bugs. In the pink room.

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

PORTER

Nuke 'em with bleach. Didn't learn that life hack at MIT finishing school?

KENNEDY

I only learned how to afford an exterminator.

PORTER

(To Chris)

What was that, some kinda class warfare dig?

KENNEDY

No. I never said I would pay for the service.

Chris scoots his chair between Porter, Kennedy.

CHRIS

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 an irrefusable offer but...

Kennedy stalks to the other womb. She and Chris exchange an intense glare.

PORTER

I see. I've been voted off the island.

(stretches to his feet)

Don't kill each other while I'm on my date, kiddos!

KENNEDY

Pack protection.

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

KENNEDY (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 got a permit in my dash.

He salutes, 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

Then, it's Chekov's loaded gun.

CHRIS

Oh...uhm, yeah that reference went over my head, but I don't think he's aware either, so...and we don't exist in some pathetic, mid-age crisis tragicomedy...

Kennedy spins to face him, arms crossed.

KENNEDY

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

CHRIS

Loneliness? Maybe Stockholm Syndrome? I can't tell, yet.

Her gaze softens. He sits up, prepared to bare himself.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

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

KENNEDY

I can't. I'm color blind.

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

KENNEDY (CONT'D)

And I'm not bleaching yellow sheets.

CHRIS

Sure, I'll think about telling him-

KENNEDY

No thinking. Overcompensate.

BAM! She swings open the door, saunters outside.

CHRIS

Wait!

Chris rushes after her to the freshly dinged mailbox. They watch the Corvette disappear into the dark.

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 wanted to ride, whatever that means.

CHRIS

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

PORTER

That's the immature read. But...reminds me. I wanted to have it out with coffee man today.

CHRIS

Why? He seemed kooky, probably just a harmless, Deutschland Eddie Vedder.

PORTER

Solid terrorist material. You know he narced to the fucking fuzz.

CHRIS

But you weren't even pulled over...

PORTER

Doesn't tell me he didn't narc. And here's the rub. We're in a masculine power play. Calling was his opening move. I can retaliate.

Chris stares down at his shaking hands.

CHRIS

I think...you need two players for someone to lose, otherwise...

Kennedy enters, snorts. Porter bites through his banana peel.

PORTER

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

CHRIS

Uhm...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 diverse body quota?!

CHRIS

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

PORTER

That's fan-fucking-tastic. I could use an associate. We'll leave at 10?

Kennedy shoots Porter a frown. Beat.

CHRIS

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

PORTER

Woah, woah, woah, back up. Why do you keep shilling out for shrinks when they haven't fixed you yet?

CHRIS

Because I don't understand hegemonic social dynamics! I clearly can't navigate interpersonal conflict without-

PORTER

Wrong! There's nothing bad about being broken. And you wanna change? You've just gotta expose yourself, like an average person. You don't need to couch surf the upper east side. Start today and give me a ride.

He flips his banana. Kennedy shakes her head at Chris.

INT. BLACK HOUSE KITCHEN - A SECOND LATER

Kennedy drops a plate in the sink. Chris COUGHS. She glances at him.

CHRIS

So, I uh...I wanted to ask. 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. Lately. I'm not wedded to that plan anymore.

KENNEDY

That was fast.

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

PORTER

Final answer?

CHRIS

I'll getaway drive.
(glancing at Kennedy)
I have a history of speeding, so...

Porter faces Kennedy. She makes a point of recoiling.

PORTER
I left my towels in the hall.

KENNEDY
Use bleach. When we get back.

She runs the sink 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...we can't have a mess inside.

PORTER
Fine, have it your way. Why'd you rat on me?

JONAS
Man, no, I did nothing. Your partner called on you. He paid me to not tell.

PORTER
K. And where's the cash?

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

JONAS
I can give you the entire register.

PORTER
No, I don't need your chump shit. How else're you scrounging around out here?

JONAS
The wife. She resells old autoparts in Jersey City.

PORTER
That's stupid! You just bang 'em up, report an accident. And boom. You got an actual side hustle.

JONAS

No, man, never. We do honest work
for our Visas. Our girls.

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

PORTER

You 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

You wanted this scene.

CHRIS

I left tip about a couple leaving
an accident. I mean that's barely a
minor license suspension.

KENNEDY

But 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

Well, you accused me of being
passive, so I thought I'd take a
stand.

KENNEDY

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

CHRIS

That's not...God, no, I don't think
you-

KENNEDY

Then go. Drive.

CHRIS
I'm not putting us on the line.

KENNEDY
We're not conjoined.

Chris EXHALES, then plows ahead. Porter snatches his gun and holds it over his head away from Jonas. VROOM. The Jeep speeds around the corner.

INT/EXT. JEEP/CAFE PARKING LOT - EVENING

The Jeep circles back to the front door. Something BUMPS under the tires.

KENNEDY
I'll get it.

Chris pulls to a stop. Kennedy pops from her seat. Chris watches her as she lifts a misplaced rock. She catches his gaze, then pulls out Porter's bent gun from underneath the rock with a triumphant grin.

END ACT III

ACT IV

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

SUPER: 2019

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

CHRIS

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

DAVE

It's in the EU. Not some fucking
cold war Siberian labor camp.
What'd you think of the deal?

CHRIS

Well, I wasn't CCd on the final
draft...I should have no opinion.

DAVE

(taking the hint)
I had to keep you out. You would've
moralized me out of taking it.
Admit it.

CHRIS

That's fair. But I got a bootlegged
copy from Sharon's intern. So I
guess I'll moralize you now and say
you're asking for perjury charges.

DAVE

Come on! All the FTC gives a shit
about is responsibility. And who's
responsible? Always the legal
morons. They had one job, read the
print. They failed. That's not on
me. Or you. It's on the try hards.

CHRIS

Thanks for absolving me.

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

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Do you ever stop taking loopholes?

Dave bobs for air, spits and splashes 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
your rulebooks.

CHRIS

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

DAVE

You've always been more than that.

Chris turns away from him. Dave dives and bobs again.

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

Dave, I don't care anymore. You
have to live and die by your own
morals. Not mine.

DAVE

I never wanted to-

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

SECRETARY

(screaming)

Mr. Varstmann! Mr...is he...?

Chris jumps in, wades to Dave's body. The lawyer faints into
the secretary's sagging arms.

INT. CHRIS'S BEDROOM - DAWN (PRESENT)

Chris rolls in bed, peer out his window.

Chris's POV: Heidi swings the Corvette to the middle of the
lawn. DING.

INT. AMTRAK TRAIN - AFTERNOON

Porter dozes in a single seat by a sliding door. He jolts
awake as the wheels SPUTTER to a sign for Penn Station.

INT. STEVE'S STUDIO - LATE AFTERNOON

Tate meditates. Porter flips through a literary magazine. On his cellphone, an astrology podcast plays.

STEVE (O.S.)
Headphones are non-negotiable!

TATE
Got it!

Tate shuts off Porter's cellphone. Steve mopes inside, empties his work bag on the floor by Porter's feet.

TATE (CONT'D)
S'up, moody pisces?

STEVE
Ugh, deadlines on deadlines.

Tate organizes Steve's papers, pens, receipts.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Thanks...and of all time-sucks, I got sidetracked reading Chris Rosenthal's soul crushing Bloomberg executive profile. The fact that he even has one...

PORTER
You've pegged him as Deep Throat?

STEVE
I'm at 80%. According to Sharon, Dave wanted Chris's head on the chopping block. He makes sense as the traitor.

PORTER
You're obsessed!

STEVE
I just think he's been handed too many free passes playing the nice, sad boy in the boardroom.

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

STEVE
Wait...what? How...where?

Steve grabs a notebook from the bottom of his bag.

PORTER
Times, NPR? One of the usual
suspects.

STEVE
If that's true, then case pretty
much closed! You think you can find
the link, send it to me?

PORTER
You wanna pay me?

Porter flashes a smug grin. Steve laughs uneasily.

PORTER (CONT'D)
Sorry. I get it's a big deadline
for you...

STEVE
It would be a raise, too.

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

STEVE (CONT'D)
You look nice.

TATE
Thanks! I better. I've got a dinner
date at Nobu with a lovely bald
gentleman.

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

PORTER
Fuck! You were supposed to be my
ride to Hoboken. 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 Hoboken.

TATE
Whoopsies, I didn't realize I was
gonna get a second interview and-

PORTER
For American Greed?

TATE

Not quite. It's actually called
freelance junior copywriter 3.

PORTER

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

TATE

What if I am! I want a corner
office someday!

Porter picks up a floor pouf. Steve reaches to block him.

PORTER

Go worry about your own carcass,
Stevie. You think I'm letting him-

STEVE

Port, stop...how about let's not go
there.

Tate shakes his head and sinks on the couch. Steve joins him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Okay?

Tate snuffles, nods. Steve closes his eyes.

TATE

You?

STEVE

No. I'm just...I'm lost. What is
happening? I thought we were having
a casual...disagreement, maybe? Not
even that. Just an awkward
conversation. I don't understand,
when did shit hit the fan?

PORTER

Figure it out, Mr. New Yorker
journalist!

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

PORTER (CONT'D)

Baby, lemme guess. The 'rents
didn't buy you a private body guard
yet?

STEVE

Oh, I have no shame. The cops might
as well stop actual crime for once.

Steve dials. Porter stabs his knife in the wall and dashes
out the door. Steve drops his cellphone as Tate envelopes him
in a hug. Beat.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Good luck tonight.

TATE

Thank you, thank you. And what's on
your agenda?

STEVE

I have a meeting with Sharon
tomorrow...I should prep.

TATE

Ooh, and is she...?

STEVE

Very married.

TATE

So, very bored?

Steve laughs, deflecting.

STEVE

You know showing up late to an
interview isn't a winning strategy.

Tate nods, smiles. Steve straightens Tate's tie.

INT. STEVE'S STUDIO - LATER

Steve finishes emptying his bag. His fingers pause on a
condom box with a post-it label: See you tomorrow!

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - DAWN

Jonas enters. Brett swings his gun under the archway.

BRETT

Get in here. I need the van packed.

Jonas takes a cautious step closer.

JONAS

Mia does not want me going on.

BRETT

Tell her I'll cover a month's rent.
That should fill her up.

JONAS

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, and Gin got a community college kid to code a website. Save the bees and the dying babies, whatever!

JONAS

Jah...okay, what would I pack?

BRETT

Heidi. And Gin's brother. He's harassing her over inheritance. How does thirty grand wet your tip? For the two.

Jonas glances at triptych of the Pietà besides the arch.

JONAS

Our estate agent promised we would be at fifty when we sell the shop.

BRETT

Are you bargaining with me?

JONAS

No, man. No. But Mia 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-five would cover rent...and Lili's school year.

BRETT

Forty-three and we're done. If you want it, stop by my office, midnight. I'll give you the first twenty, all cash upfront.

JONAS

At...midnight?

BRETT

You need me to write that down?

JONAS

No, no...man, I have it.

BRETT

Good.

He lobs his gun at Jonas. Jonas catches it and scampers out the door.

EXT. BLACK HOUSE LAWN - EARLY MORNING

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

KENNEDY

She left a box inside. Last night.

CHRIS

Intel for Matushka Rossiya?

She almost-smiles as she pries at the trunk lock.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

May I?

He presses his hand 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

Is that the one you can eat?

Kennedy tenses, sucks in her breathe. Chris pokes the organ.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Do you want to...try?

She reaches a hand to him. He guides her fingers over the organ. They lock eyes.

KENNEDY

I-

VROOM! She yanks Chris behind the Corvette. Jonas parks a sedan and strolls through the open front 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 did your friend go?

CHRIS

We're not on quite speaking terms at the moment.

JONAS

Man, I got his cash. I can give you ten minutes or-

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

CHRIS

Sure, we can uh...we'll expedite the conversation. I mean, to be transparent, I'm no better informed than you are, so there's nothing for us to discuss as of now-

JONAS

But you cannot say more? You do not wish to? What is it.

Chris paces. Jonas shoves his hand in his pocket.

CHRIS

Well, first of all, those aren't statistically independent events. Really, if we were to get into the semantic weeds, cannot is probably the more accurate descriptor for uh, my circumstances depending, but...

Kennedy dislodges Porter's gun with her elbow. It DROPS softly on her feet. She kicks it to Heidi.

JONAS

Man. You-

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 inside Corvette. Heidi flings her gun and bolts towards him. Kennedy grabs the gun and looks at Chris.

KENNEDY

Your shot?

Chris's POV: He watches Heidi wrestle Jonas in the Corvette.

CHRIS

Absolutely not! I wouldn't pass a background check...or could you imagine a psych eval? I don't even think south of Delaware they'd let me-

Kennedy nudges his arm with the gun. He reluctantly takes it.

KENNEDY

Don't shoot at them. Distract.

He nods, aims at the tires. BOOM. Kennedy's glasses drop as she pancakes on the ground. Heidi muscles Jonas's gun and shoots at Kennedy.

CHRIS

Oh...shit!

He pushes Kennedy over front doorstep as the Corvette hurtles away on three inflated tires, bullets streaming behind.

Kennedy's POV: the Corvette morphs into a blurry mass. Beat.

KENNEDY

Are you...alive?

Chris joins her, holds out her glasses. She touches his wrist around his scar. They share an emotional beat.

INT/EXT. CORVETTE/CHURCH LAWN - NIGHT

Heidi toys with bloody, cut zip-ties in the Corvette's front seat.

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

INT. BLACK HOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chris watches muted news on a vintage 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.

CHRIS

Nothing dropped!

KENNEDY (O.S.)

Really.

CHRIS

Yes? I don't know...but I'm sure Dave's paying an intern to pretend I'm masterminding the leaks. If that's what you're unsubtly referencing...

Kennedy returns with her laptop, arms crossed.

KENNEDY

To what end?

CHRIS

Fine. It's a preemptive strike. He'll assassinate my character early on. I'm prepping. In case I'm subpoenaed...and I probably will be.

She slides him the laptop. He eyes it suspiciously.

KENNEDY

It's for you. Never use your IP on public wifi again.

CHRIS

Why? It's not like I'm not doing anything on the dark web...

KENNEDY

You use my network. I can see what you do.

CHRIS

Did you...hack my accounts?

She turns her back on him. He senses her discomfort

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Sorry, thank you...

KENNEDY

Yep.

A smile cracks on her lips. KNOCK.

OFFICER(O.S.)

Police! Open up!

Kennedy spins and points open-mouthed at a glass door to the porch. A light pops on. Porter waves at them. Chris steps closer to Kennedy.

CHRIS

Turn me in.

She shakes her head and dangles his car keys.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

No, I can't let you-

Porter opens the door and grabs laptop.

PORTER

Let's go! We've got a whole car ride talk feelings!

He lunges inside and drags a dazed Chris out to the porch. Kennedy nods and follows them into the dark.

THE END