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## Chickens in Texas: A Farce in One Act

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CHICKENS IN TEXAS: A FARCE IN ONE ACT

by  
Lawson David Marchetti

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Oxford  
April 2020

Approved by

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Advisor: Dr. Matthew Shifflett

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Reader: Professor Beth Ann Fennelly

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Reader: Professor Rory Ledbetter

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ABSTRACT  
CHICKENS IN TEXAS: A Farce in One Act  
(Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Shifflett)

Herein lies a one-act farce written by Lawson David Marchetti, an English major in the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi. His emphasis is in Creative Writing, and his minors are in Theatre Arts and in Music. This farce was written as his senior thesis, for the completion of requirements of the Honors College. The play was conceived in August of 2020, and completed in April of 2021. The play itself is set in modern times, sans pandemic, and is highly whimsical in style. It requires a cast of twelve comedic actors, and several complicated technical aspects, such as pyrotechnics. This document also includes thoughts on the writing process and Marchetti's inspirations.

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*Chickens in Texas*  
A Farce in One Act

by

Lawson D. Marchetti

Commissioned by the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University  
of Mississippi

*for Jack Reynolds Holiman*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Characters in farce forget that no man is an island. That's why they're funny. When people forget reality and are observed operating within it, call it spectacle and call it hilarity. This page, however, will not be funny, because I will now attempt to remember those responsible for my achievements.

I must first and foremost thank Dr. Matthew Shifflett, whose guidance and wisdom and character lifted this bird into the air and suspended it all the way to the finish. I must thank my family, David, Buttons, Neil and Meriwether, whose sacrifices, willing and unwilling, I'll never completely understand nor appreciate. I must thank my roommates, Juan Ramone Riojas, Robert Wasson, and Keeton Landfair, for many an evening of listening to my ideas and one-liners. I must thank all my dear friends in the theatre, too numerous to name, who have adored the craft and labored alongside me, who have inspired me, whose verve bolstered me through every page. I must thank all the writers who have shown me the capacity for world-building contained in our words. Lastly, I must thank my teachers, instructors, and professors, who've poured into me for my entire life. I would be nowhere—nowhere—without my teachers.



## PREFACE

This project was born out of a few parameters. I had to write a thesis. I despise research papers. I wanted to marry as many of my interests as possible. I'm in love with words and wit and performance. I can't write music. *Voila!* Let's write a farce, I said. It'll be fun, I said. And it was! But there aren't many things as difficult as playwriting. Farce especially. You have to tell a complete story entirely with dialogue of characters. And make it funny. I often told friends, when asked, that I would go home after work every evening, have a dirty martini, and sit down to this with two goals: A) make it make sense, and B) make yourself laugh. There are certainly worse things, but there are also certainly easier.

In August, after months of procrastinating, I only knew I wanted to write a farce; I had absolutely no leads outside of that. Dr. Shiflett asked me what kind of issues I cared about, and out of the ones I listed, the one I was most familiar with, and the one I didn't feel appropriative writing about, was the environment, and, more specifically, ideas of land/property ownership and material inheritance. My father is an estate lawyer, and I'm a privileged, straight, white male. Made sense. So that's where this idea of an outrageous, self-absorbed family fighting in a New York City penthouse over a poultry empire in Texas came from. The absurdity! It was also nice in the end to write during a pandemic, in which I was free to write whatever without the constraints of also trying to stage it on a budget.

I draw on characters and styles I'm familiar with, or ones I encounter that are so outrageous, it would be impossible not to write them. Some examples: Reginald was born from a love of pompous, posh British fops, such as Henry Higgins, Merlin from *The Sword in the Stone*. They're funny to me, second-nature, and devilishly clever. The way they get annoyed is delightful. LadyMargaret came from my adoration of divas—Patti LuPone, Lady Bracknell, Lucille Bluth, Edna Mode. Marquise, on the other hand, is unlike anyone I'd ever been familiar with in literature or life, until I met an acting ornithologist in Leeds. He was so unreal, I had to write him. A number of the characters are actors, and that is certainly reflective of my interests. Once I had the premise and the characters, at its best, writing felt like simply hearing the next line as an audience member, watching these oddballs in the same room attempting interaction.

Thematically, birds are golden. Take a look at *so* much literature, and there they are, full of beauty and meaning. I knew I wanted to do something with birds since Jay Watson's Southern Environmental Literature course, the first week in which we discussed Audubon's drawings and writings. In this farce, birds are killed, comically, by another bird, Edgar, on stage; but also, they are slaughtered every day off-stage in Texas. Birds being robbed of flight, tied to the ground. In my own life, my religious faith has led most clearly to my convictions on social issues, and I think it's interesting and maybe unexpected in today's climate to have a rabbi be the reckoning of a greed-ridden family.

The most influential works for me have been Peter Bogdanovich's 1973 feature film *What's Up, Doc?*, my earliest exposure to real wit and farce, and Peter Shaffer's 1965 stage play *Black Comedy*, the first farce I had the pleasure to act in. There are countless other works and writers that come to mind in thinking about this project, and my style in general, which I will do my best to record in my bibliography.

This is an outrageous story, and one that was intensely rewarding to discover. It is my hope that it can amuse as many people as possible in whatever future it has.

## CHARACTERS

*(In No Conceivable Order Whatsoever)*

REGINALD PERRYMAN, posh British male, 40s, husband of Carol Joy, lover of Rhiannon, father of Louise  
LOUISE PERRYMAN, female, 13, daughter of Carol Joy and Reginald, babysitter of Henry  
LADYMARGARET REDD, female, 70s, mother of Carol Joy, grandmother of Louise, wife of Charlie, owner of a poultry empire  
CONTRACTOR, male, 40s, actor doubles as Isaac  
CHARLIE REDD, male, 30s, second husband of LadyMargaret  
CAROL JOY PERRYMAN, female, 40s, wife of Reginald, daughter of LadyMargaret, mother of Louise  
ALEXANDRA JOHNSON, female, 20s, second-cousin once removed of Carol Joy, NYU grad student in medieval poetry  
HENRY AUGUSTUS CAVETT III, male, 5, Louise's precocious babysittee  
MARQUISE FLEWELLYN, male, 30s, falconer, Welsh scholar, pyrotechnics specialist, polyamorist vegan, Monty Python enthusiast  
DR. BEETLE TOBOGGAN, male, 60s, batshit doctor, suffers severe malapropism, actor doubles as the superintendent  
ISAAC WEISS, male, 40s, Seattle rabbi, biological twin of Carol Joy, son of LadyMargaret, actor doubles as contractor  
SUPERINTENDENT, male, 60s, actor doubles as Dr. Toboggan  
PAXTON NIMROD, male, 40s, actor, bad at improv  
RHIANNON MCINTOSH, female, 20s, stunning, actress, lover of Reginald

This production involves many complicated technical aspects, such as pyrotechnics and live falconry.

*Key for script-reading: A dash “—” indicates overlapping lines, cut-offs, another character interrupting the thought, the line of the previous character. An ellipsis “...” indicates the character trailing off. Two adjacent slashes “//” are also used to indicate dialogue overlap. “D” is down, “U” is up, “S” is stage, “R” is right, “L” is left, “O” is off.*



The interior of a lavish penthouse apartment. There is a downstairs with a living area, complete with several items of lounging furniture. Behind this, there is an exorbitant island in a brilliantly lit kitchen, and above the kitchen there is a guest bedroom on the second floor. On the first level, there are two doors SR, the one downstage goes to the outside hall, the US one in the kitchen leads to an interior hall which goes up to the second floor/guest bedroom. SL there is one door in the kitchen that goes out to the rest of the downstairs—there is also a way upstairs from the SL door. Upstairs, the guest bedroom has one door, SR. There is a lemon tree, Flora Dern, just out from one of the prosceniums, in the area which is understood to be the balcony. A young boy and teenage girl are in the downstairs living area. The boy sits on the floor on a beautiful rug in the middle of the room, fiddling with tinker toys, while the girl sits on the couch. Their names are HENRY AUGUSTUS CAVETT III, aged 5, and LOUISE PERRYMAN, aged 13. Louise is loosely focused on a National Geographic magazine, while Henry is in his own world with the tinker toys.

The kitchen is inhabited by Louise's mother, CAROL JOY PERRYMAN, aged 41. She has her hair in a towel wrap, fabulous bath robe, maybe silk. There are loud construction noises, drilling, sawing, hammering, etc etc are heard. Carol Joy makes herself a martini in the glass, which she then stirs with the barrel of her pistol. Somewhere in this process she has fiddled on her cell phone, ringing a friend, and she has the phone in between her ear and shoulder.

CAROL JOY

Tanya! Hi, Tanya, hi!... Yes, yes, Tanya, I'd love to get drinks soon, but I'm in a terrible press for time right now (*swishes martini, flips through a tabloid magazine on the counter*)... I don't know, Tanya... (*sips, then rolls eyes, impatient*) Tanya, I really have to ask you about your brother, please, is he still an actor in the city?... Oh, thank God...Uh-huh, uh-huh, name change...He goes by *what?* That's the stupidest name I've ever heard, what's his number...(*grabs pen, begins writing on the magazine*)... Paxton...Nimrod... 7.8.1..5.0.3..7.6.8.7... Oh, well, that's a long story for another time, Tanya...Alright, Tanya, I must go... uh huh. Of course, sweetie... uh huh... Bye bye now.

She hangs up. ALEXANDRA JOHNSON, housekeeper and second cousin once removed, early 20s, enters from where the construction sound is coming, blowing sawdust noisily off her face and carrying a large potted lemon tree. She wears a purple NYU sweater. Carol Joy at this time notices her drink is needing a top-off and that she's used all the gin in the first bottle.

CAROL JOY

Gin, cuz?

Alexandra sets tree down, walks to cabinet, uninterested at best, places bottle of gin next to Carol Joy on the island, before returning to the lemon tree, dusting it off and going off to find a place for it that isn't a construction site.

CAROL JOY

Is that Laura Fern or Flora Dern?

ALEXANDRA

I don't know. She's heavy.

CAROL JOY

Whatever, be careful!

Alexandra exits USR door.

CAROL JOY

*(yelling after her.)* A-list lemons aren't cheap!

Carol Joy pours the gin into her glass. It needs ice which she retrieves. She also stoops and retrieves a white trash bag from under the island. She still stares out the window (into the audience), waiting for something. She stirs her gin with the barrel of the pistol again.

HENRY

Louise, will you marry me?

Louise looks at him squarely, over her magazine.

LOUISE

No.

Henry runs up to Carol Joy, tugging at her robe.

HENRY

Miss Perryman, can I marry Louise?

CAROL JOY

Mmmm. I'm sorry, Henry, no. Your parents are dear friends, but they don't make enough money.

LOUISE

Mom!

CAROL JOY

What? Also, Henry, please try to address all future questions to Louise, your babysitter.

Henry looks perplexed, but not defeated. He goes back to the floor by Louise. At the same time, the CONTRACTOR, male, 40s, enters from SL door. He wears construction stuff.

CAROL JOY

Oh, hi! You're the boss head man guy chief construction builder person, right?

CONTRACTOR

I'm the contractor.

CAROL JOY

How fun.

CONTRACTOR

I gotta get something from the van. (*Starting to head toward DSR exit.*)

CAROL JOY

How fun. How's the construction going?

CONTRACTOR

Good. (*continuing.*)

CAROL JOY

Uh-huh. Say listen, I know you've been talking to my husband, but is this all going to be done a week from now? I really need it done before Sunday.

CONTRACTOR

Yep. (*Hand on door.*)

CAROL JOY

Because it's just imperative it gets done before Sunday, my dying mother is coming. She's got tobogrobanpanocyclitis. She got it from a bad horsefly on a cruise in Tobago.

CONTRACTOR

What's that? (*Takes hand off door.*)

CAROL JOY

Tobago?

CONTRACTOR

No. (*beat.*) Tobo... tobogro—

CAROL JOY

Tobogrobanpanocyclitis?

CONTRACTOR

That.

CAROL JOY

I'm not sure. She's only got a couple of weeks to live now, and she'll be back from visiting the Holy Land on Sunday, so you're sure everything will be ready then?

CONTRACTOR

Yep. We're almost done. Listen, I need to go grab something pronto—

CAROL JOY

See, last time she came to the apartment she thought it was too small. She's used to her 20,000 square foot mansion in Texas, so I can't blame her. But you see, this is her last time she's going to be here before she dies, so it has to be bigger. Will it be bigger by then, and all touched up?

CONTRACTOR

Yes.

CAROL JOY

Promise?

CONTRACTOR

Yes.

Carol Joy begins dialing the number she's written down for Paxton and is zoned out of the conversation with the contractor.

CAROL JOY

You're sure?

CONTRACTOR

Yes. *(Really trying to leave.)*

CAROL JOY

You're absolutely positive?

CONTRACTOR

*(giving up, trying a new word.)* No?

CAROL JOY

*(putting her phone to her ear.)* Oh, good!...*(waiting on phone, paying no attention to contractor).*

CONTRACTOR

*(Opening door excitedly, then.)* Well, great, now I have absolutely no clue what I needed to get. *(Sighs, exits SL.)*

CAROL JOY

Hi, is this Paxton Nimrod? This is Carol Joy Perryman, I'm friends with your sister Tanya...no, no! No I'm not, wait, please don't hang up, I don't know anything about blackmail, I swear I didn't know you owed her anything, I have an offer for *you to make* money!... Yes, an acting gig... Yes, would you like to meet for a drink and I can tell you what I have in mind? You don't drink. Coffee? No caffeine...No, well, I don't really want to tell you over the phone, this is sort of a private thing... You don't do pornos...NO! I don't want you to do a porno!...I promise I don't bite, can I not tell you in person?... No please don't hang up! Fine, but this is very private, and you can't tell anyone: *(looking around, then, lowering her voice.)* I need you to play my twin...No, no cross-dressing, my twin brother...He was kidnapped in Disney World when we were eight months old, and my dead father left him everything if he ever showed up, and I need the money, so you're gonna show up, see?... Yes, of course, it's a paid gig!...Hooray, you're interested! Okay, well, we're still going to need to meet to discuss... Yes, I do have a free evening, uh-huh, why don't you come by my apartment around five...Perfect, I'll text you the address...*(something catches her eye out in the audience, ie her balcony. Urgently)* Uh-huh, I'll text you the address, I gotta go now, okay? Okay. *(She hangs up.)*

Carol Joy drops her phone on the edge of the counter, martini in one hand, trash bag and gun poised in the other, and rushes out of the room, SL door, and almost runs into the contractor, who enters right before her and stares as she makes her dramatic exit. Alexandra enters from USR door, sans potted lemon.

CONTRACTOR

*(scratching his head.)* Damn. I forgot why I came out here again.

ALEXANDRA

Me, too, brother.

CONTRACTOR

Who are you?

ALEXANDRA

I do their laundry. And everything else.

CONTRACTOR

Huh. I've never seen you before.

ALEXANDRA

I've been hiding.

CONTRACTOR

Huh. *(perplexed. beat.)* What salary does a cleaner for a family like this make?



ALEXANDRA

Free room and board.

CONTRACTOR

Ah. (*Short beat.*) What?

ALEXANDRA

Yeah I don't get paid anything, I just live here.

CONTRACTOR

What, like an indentured servant?

ALEXANDRA

Yes! YES! An indentured servant!! Thank you, that's exactly the term I've been looking for!

CONTRACTOR

Oh my God, do you need help??

ALEXANDRA

Yes!

CONTRACTOR

Shit, really??

Alexandra nods wildly. Contractor gets out his phone.

CONTRACTOR

Okay, okay—who do I call?

ALEXANDRA

The Office of Federal Student Aid!

CONTRACTOR

Do you know their number? Hold on, let me—who?

ALEXANDRA

I need help with student loans! They're trying to kill me!!

CONTRACTOR

Wait a second—I thought you were in trouble.

ALEXANDRA

I am! I'm almost finished with my masters degree in medieval poetry and I haven't a dime and no way to get one!

CONTRACTOR

*(beat.)* Who are you?

ALEXANDRA

Alexandra Johnson, medievalist housekeeper. *(Extends hand.)*

CONTRACTOR

*(not taking it.)* Yeah, okay, but what are you doing here?

ALEXANDRA

I study at NYU. *(displays sweatshirt.)*

CONTRACTOR

*(pointing down.)* In this penthouse.

ALEXANDRA

I see. I'm Carol Joy's second cousin once-removed.

CONTRACTOR

Oooh, you're family.

ALEXANDRA

I guess.

CONTRACTOR

You can tell me—do you know what Mr. and Miss Perryman do?

ALEXANDRA

Drink. Bitch. Sleep around. Buy a ton of shit.

CONTRACTOR

No, like for a living.

ALEXANDRA

You could say that.

CONTRACTOR

Say what?

ALEXANDRA

No, they don't do anything.

CONTRACTOR

What?

ALEXANDRA

Neither of them work.

CONTRACTOR

How does one not work in New York City?

ALEXANDRA

Aw, aren't you sweet. (*Whispering.*) Family money.

CONTRACTOR

Well, still, it must be a boatload of family money for neither of them to work at all.

ALEXANDRA

Yes, sir, Carol Joy's mother LadyMargaret has chickens in Texas. But not for long, may she soon rest in peace. Oh yeah! (*Sees laundry basket next to the couch.*) This is what I came in for. (*Grabs it.*) Nice chat, mister. Good luck ever getting outta here! (*Exits USR door, whilst maintaining spooky eye contact with the contractor.*)

CONTRACTOR

My God, this family's strange. (*Beat.*) Oh yeah! Allen wrenches.

The contractor makes his way to the DSR door just as Reginald opens it and hits him in the nose. REGINALD PERRYMAN, British, Carol Joy's husband, 40s, enters. Reginald is very posh in dress and manner and carriage. He comes in from shopping, sunglasses on, an ascot perhaps. He doesn't perceive that he's hit the contractor, and goes straight to the kitchen and puts bags down on the island.

REGINALD

(*calling*) Alexandra! Alexandra! Carol Joy? (*Looking around, seeing the contractor holding his nose in pain.*) Oh, hello! Where'd you come from! What an odd pose. Will the project be wrapped up by Sunday?

CONTRACTOR

(*muttering.*) Goddammit. Forget it, I don't need a wrench. (*He turns around and exits SL, slamming door.*)

REGINALD

(*beat, perplexed.*) Hmph. (*Shrugs, then, seeing Henry.*) Oh, Henry, so good to see you. Always a pleasure.

HENRY

Good to see you, too, Mr. Perryman!

REGINALD

Your dear parents left for their Alaskan cruise today, did they?

HENRY

Yes, sir, I told them to bring me a polar bear or I'd be mad, and they said maybe. I don't want another fish. Fish are stupid. Mr. Perryman, can I marry Louise?

REGINALD

*(distracted)* Hm?

HENRY

Louise—can I marry Louise.

REGINALD

*(now paying attention.)* What on earth are you talking about?

Henry points to Louise, who looks up from her magazine, annoyed. Reginald realizes.

REGINALD

Oh! No, my boy, I'm afraid not. Your parents don't make enough money.

Henry scowls. Louise throws the magazine down.

REGINALD

Oh, now, now, it's nothing personal, you understand, Henry.

LOUISE

Dad, are you kidding me?

REGINALD

What, you want to marry Henry?

LOUISE

As a matter of fact, I do not, but it's because I'm his babysitter and he's five.

REGINALD

Well there's that, too, I suppose.

HENRY

I'll be thirteen one day!

LOUISE

Unbelievable.

REGINALD

Now, Henry, have you seen *the woman*?

Several gunshots are heard. Reginald jumps and then ducks behind the counter. There are unintelligible shouts of concern of construction men off-stage. The children start, alert.

Carol Joy comes screaming in, jubilant, martini still in one hand and gun and garbage bag in the other. The bag now has a lump in it.

CAROL JOY

I got one! I got one! I got one!

REGINALD

*(coming up from behind island.)* What?

CAROL JOY

Oh. You. I shot a pigeon!

REGINALD

What? Why on earth—I thought you called the falconer this morning?

CAROL JOY

The falconer was late and I was impatient.

REGINALD

Where did you get the gun?

CAROL JOY

I'm from Texas.

REGINALD

How could I possibly forget. Now, my dear wife, where are you going to put that?

Carol Joy goes over to the roll out trash-can cabinet, opens it, drops the bag in. Reginald shrugs.

REGINALD

A real class act if I ever saw one. Carol Joy, pigeons aside please, we must discuss your parents.

CAROL JOY

*(waving the gun.)* I'm addressing mom's ornithophobia. And do not refer to Charlie as my parent, he's half my age.

REGINALD

Yes, but there is more at stake than birds or familial titles. Your mother is dying. Perhaps we should be prepared for an early arrival—the tobogrobanpanocyclitis could take a turn for the worst at any minute, you know.

CAROL JOY

Or maybe she'll just die in Israel and we'll never see either of them again.

REGINALD

Darling, we never see either of them now to begin with. They'll find a way. Wishful thinking, dear. Which is why we must make a favorable impression.

CAROL JOY

What do you suggest?

REGINALD

*(gesturing.)* Well, you might try putting some clothes on.

CAROL JOY

*(rolling her eyes.)* Anything else?

REGINALD

*(looking down at first.)* Well, just in between now and then...well, dear...you reek of gin.

Louise and Henry both wince evidently. Carol Joy, in an alcoholic's fashion, turns stark pale and stares daggers into Reginald, before storming off through the USR door.

REGINALD

*(quite pleased with himself)* Every time! *(checks his smart watch.)* Clockwork!

He waltzes over to the DSR door and opens it. At the doorway is the gorgeous RHIANNON MCINTOSH, mid-20s, American, elegant, doll-faced blonde. She is dressed in athletic gear and a warm jacket; she can't help but radiate sexy in whatever she's wearing. She has a duffel bag over her shoulder. Reginald kisses her cheekily on the lips.

REGINALD

Hello, love.

RHIANNON

Hi, Rej. Nice to see you.

REGINALD  
Come in, come in.

RHIANNON  
Oh, hi, Henry!

HENRY  
Hi, Ms. McIntosh.

RHIANNON  
Great kid.

Reginald and Rhiannon have moved behind the island. The children tinker or read, seemingly oblivious. Reginald plays with Rhiannon's perfect hair.

REGINALD  
Alright, dear. I've brought you here because you have a very important role to play for me in the coming week, and I couldn't have the possibility of anyone reading any messages.

RHIANNON  
*(listening.)* I don't think we're safely private just yet...

REGINALD  
She'll be starting her de-stress shower in... *(looks at watch.)* 3...2...1...*(points.)*

The sound of water in pipes is immediately heard.

RHIANNON  
You're a wizard.

REGINALD  
Yes. Now, to business. This is all tip-top secret.

RHIANNON  
*(pouting.)* Oh, come on Rej, who would I tell?

REGINALD  
No, no, I don't mean you would, love, but those in a legal profession who should seek after information should not be able to find it.

RHIANNON  
That serious, huh?

REGINALD  
*(stern.)* Yes, play time's over, I need your undivided attention.

RHIANNON

*(deferential.)* Sorry.

REGINALD

Carol Joy's mother, LadyMargaret, and that foul young man she married last year are about to vacation in Israel for the week. They intend to spend a few days with us here, starting Sunday, upon their arrival back to the states, before returning to Dallas, where LadyMargaret will perish of a rare tropical disease.

RHIANNON

Tropical disease?

REGINALD

Some thing she picked up from a bad horsefly in Tobago.

RHIANNON

Oh, how awful!

REGINALD

Not if we play our cards right. As you know, LadyMargaret is as old as the very Texan dirt her poultry empire is built upon, but she's still as sharp as a tack in the head, and she still has a general distaste for myself and her pitiful daughter —

RHIANNON

Right, right, Rej—

REGINALD

—and out of spite she's—

RHIANNON and REGINALD

—leaving most everything to her new husband half (your/my) age.

REGINALD

*(a little surprised/off-put.)* Yes.

RHIANNON

I keep up, Reginald.

REGINALD

I daresay.

RHIANNON

So what are we going to do about it?



REGINALD

You, my dear, shall be instrumental. I've managed to afford some reconnaissance work on our friend Charles, and he has in fact been... libertine.

Reginald reaches in one of the bags he set on the counter when he came in and pulls out a large manilla envelope marked with the classic **CONFIDENTIAL** stamp across the front. He opens it and pulls out a headshot and some other typed documents.

REGINALD

Meet Rou Rou Hutchinson.

Rhiannon gasps. The image of Rou Rou is Rhiannon's visage to a tee, just with a pageant-y hairdo and entirely too much make-up.

RHIANNON

What the hell!

REGINALD

My thoughts exactly.

RHIANNON

There's no way. I mean down to the mole! (*she references a mole above her lip*).

REGINALD

I know, love. Down to the mole. The man has run around with every whore in Texas, and this one is no exception. And now I've finally got my flawless, unstoppable plot.

RHIANNON

Wait, what do you mean?

REGINALD

Well, dear, I want you to play the Texan escort when he gets here. You shall have stalked him across the world, madly and completely smitten ever since he hired you, and you shall decide to confess your love, and LadyMargaret will find she's been cheated and divorce the bastard, and I'll get my bloody inheritance.

RHIANNON

Rej, no! Why? You literally have a confidential report from a private detective in your hands, why do you need an actress?

REGINALD

It's LadyMargaret. She loathes me and thinks that I'm a sneaky little devil.

Which, in her defense, I am. Charlie will deny everything and LadyMargaret will believe him and think I fabricated the whole affair for money. Which, of course, is precisely what I'm doing. But I'm going to be a step ahead this time, darling! A step ahead of that miserable old hag, yes, indeed!

Around now is when the shower noise stops. No one notices.

RHIANNON

And what makes you think she'll believe me?

REGINALD

Because you've got extensive research in this file on both Charlie and Rou Rou, and because Rou Rou Hutchinson of Beaumont, Texas, in the flesh, won't have any conceivable connection to Reginald Perryman, her clever British son-in-law.

RHIANNON

Alright. So I do this, LadyMargaret leaves everything to Carol Joy and yourself, and you two live happily ever after in marital bliss.

REGINALD

Yes!—no!—well now, hang on a minute, the woman's liver will expire shortly and then it will be you and me, dear, on our own island somewhere in the Caribbean.

RHIANNON

And in the meantime?

REGINALD

Hm?

RHIANNON

What's in it for me until she croaks?

REGINALD

Besides my undying love and affection?

Rhiannon is unamused.

REGINALD

Oh, in addition, I suppose I'll throw in a large monthly salary, just as undying. Forever and ever, as long as we both shall live, my darling.

RHIANNON

Alright. Draw up a contract before Sunday, and I'm in. (*Extends hand.*)

REGINALD

Of course, dear. (*Shakes her hand.*)

RHIANNON

My first acting gig in the city and I get residuals, huh?

REGINALD

Whoever said an MFA was pointless?

RHIANNON

You did. Several times.

They've drawn closer over the course of this banter and now begin to kiss. There's a buzz on the door phone.

REGINALD

Oh, hang it all! Look, (*hands her the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder.*) take this on your way out and do some good character work. Find her on social media or something and see how she talks. I'm going to quiz you later. But I've got to let the falconer up.

RHIANNON

Need it ready by Sunday?

REGINALD

Yes.

RHIANNON

And hey, look! I have a movie callback for a stripper tomorrow morning. (*She unzips her bag and pulls out a fur coat and some extravagant red lingerie.*) Costume, check?

REGINALD

That will work brilliantly.

RHIANNON

I was wondering when the hell I would use this again.

REGINALD

(*disgustingly sexy.*) Oh, we'll get plenty of use of it, I'm sure.

The contractor enters from SL door, intensely focused on his clipboard; at the same time, Carol Joy enters from the USR door, wearing real clothes now, something very respectable. Rhiannon turns around and seizes the contractor, passionately kissing the totally surprised man and pushing him back out of the kitchen, SL door.

REGINALD

Hi, darling, you look very beautiful, stunning!, thanks for changing, what brings you out into the kitchen at this time?

CAROL JOY

The door phone went off—who was that?

REGINALD

Who was what?

CAROL JOY

Rej, the girl.

REGINALD

Girl?

CAROL JOY

The girl who just pushed the contractor out of the kitchen with her face.

REGINALD

Oh, that girl. Well, my dear, I think we'd both conclude that that was the man's lover.

CAROL JOY

How'd she get up here? And I'm not paying for someone to use my penthouse for a date, I'm paying for a better penthouse. By Sunday!

Carol Joy starts to move toward where Rhiannon was gone off to.

REGINALD

Oh, you mustn't bother about it, she won't be here long.

CAROL JOY

What? How do you know?

REGINALD

Before you came in, I overheard her mention that she only had a few minutes.

CAROL JOY

Mm hm.

REGINALD

Eh—because she's in a musical and she has to rehearse. Yes, the show is still in previews, that's what she said. Yes.

What's the show? CAROL JOY

Hm? REGINALD

The show that's in previews that the girl in our home is in. CAROL JOY

Oh, yes. REGINALD

A pause, much staring.

She didn't say. REGINALD

Carol Joy immediately begins walking around the island towards the SL door.

Well, I'm going to ask her, I've been wanting to see something. CAROL JOY

Oh no, don't! REGINALD

Reginald tries his best to block her entry with his body, just as the door phone goes off again.

Why? CAROL JOY

I just thought you, my glorious homemaking wife, should see about the person who's been waiting on the street for this long, long time. I'll go ask what show she's in, darling, and I'll get back to you. REGINALD

Reginald quickly exits, smiling. Carol Joy is perplexed. She sighs and goes over to the door phone, presses the speaker button.

Hello? CAROL JOY

MARQUISE (*O.S. over the door phone*)  
Hey, I'm Marquise, falconer and children's pyrotechnical performer. I'm here with Edgar the falcon.

Carol Joy buzzes him in. Henry stands up and runs over to the island.

HENRY

I am going to get a crayon.

CAROL JOY

I am going to get a vesper martini.

HENRY

Good luck.

He runs off SL door.

CAROL JOY

And to you.

A knock on the DSR door.

CAROL JOY

Come in.

The door opens and it is MARQUISE FLEWELLYN, mid-30s. He has a singular silver earring, and has an abundance of unbelievable red curls that he wears in a messy bun. He has red scruff on his face, but most of his facial hair is prominent in an intense goatee. He is skinny, interesting, and a polyamorous vegan. This latter two words are printed on his t-shirt. He has on a falconer's glove, and it is implied that in the very large covered bird cage he carries is Edgar the female peregrine falcon. He also has a very large, heavy military grade backpack.

EDGAR

CAWWW!!

CAROL JOY

Ah!

MARQUISE

What's up, toots?

CAROL JOY

Oh, my god.

MARQUISE

Where am I needed?

CAROL JOY

Um, the balcony. (*Carol Joy points to the SL door.*)

MARQUISE

Oh, here's my card. (*Pulls card out of pocket and holding it out to Carol Joy.*) All raptor and children's show proceeds go toward my sanctuary for recovering birds. My life's work, my passion, man, is the rehabilitation of injured birds. Did you know that 365,000,000 North American songbirds a year are killed by house and feral cats? That's a million birds a day! And that's not even the leading cause of population decline!

Carol Joy nods, scared shitless. Louise is really fascinated by the idea of a real live bird of prey in her midst, and she stands and watches. Marquise leaves his card on the counter and makes his way to the door when Henry comes through in front of him, toting a box of crayons and paper in one hand and a large handsaw in the other. Marquise watches Henry before proceeding through to the balcony. While Henry takes a seat on the carpet, Marquise pokes his head back in.

MARQUISE

Is it chill if I open the sliding door once I'm out there?

Carol Joy is still a little frightened at the reality of Edgar and shoos them away with a go-ahead-with-whatever-as-long-as-it's-away-from-me gesture. They exit. Carol Joy's phone then begins to ring from the island where she set it, which she goes to and grabs.

CAROL JOY

Hello? Hi again, Tanya... Yes, I spoke with him...no, he brought up the loan, Tanya...I have not spoken to him enough to know that Tanya, I will be sure to tell you which island he plans to escape to should that come up over the course of coffee.

Carol Joy exits USR, as Alexandra comes out from USR with laundry. She sits down on the couch and begins to fold it. Meanwhile upstairs in the guest bedroom, Reginald opens the door, and shoves Rhiannon into it.

REGINALD

Stay here and quiet until I come get you! I've got to talk to the contractor and make sure Carol Joy's squared away before you make a run for it. I'll be back!

RHIANNON

But—

Reginald slams the door.

RHIANNON

Shit.

She sits on a bed, terribly disappointed and bored, occupying herself in amusing yet non-distracting ways. Meanwhile, downstairs: Henry has been coloring with a yellow

crayon and now begins trying to cut the paper with the handsaw. Alexandra notices.

ALEXANDRA

Where'd that come from??

LOUISE

*(looking up from magazine, standing.)* Henry, put that down!!

HENRY

I was just trying to make you a wedding ring. *(Holds up his sheet of paper.)*  
Alexandra, can I marry Louise?

ALEXANDRA

I don't know, depends on your star signs.

LOUISE

*(throws her hands in the air.)* You know what, you watch him! I'll be upstairs in the playroom for when he starts asking everyone's permission to marry you.

Louise exists. The contractor enters from SL, looks around, sees the handsaw he has been looking for, and takes it back out of the room, just as Marquise comes back in SL, without Edgar this time. Alexandra assumes Marquise is with construction.

ALEXANDRA

What is it you guys are doing here again?

MARQUISE

Catching birds.

ALEXANDRA

Huh?

Beat.

ALEXANDRA

You need all those tools to catch birds? What kind of birds?

MARQUISE

Pigeons.

ALEXANDRA

Pigeons live in drywall?

MARQUISE

Hm?



ALEXANDRA

You learn something new everyday.

MARQUISE

Do you live here?

ALEXANDRA

Yep.

MARQUISE

Oh, neat! Well, listen, my name's Marquise Flewellyn. I don't mostly do the kinda thing I'm doing here today. This type thing and pyrotechnics just sorta

---

ALEXANDRA

Pyrotechnics?

MARQUISE

Yeah, I do crazy light and firework shows for children. See: *(he opens his backpack and shows a bunch of explosive looking things, before zipping it back.)* Anyway, all that is just to help make ends meet. My life's work is to save North American songbirds, and, secondarily, world peace, but, really, the birds, man. I have an aviary where I rehabilitate injured birds, see. I'm trying to save money, cuz we're a little cramped right now—you can't mix barn owls and mockingbirds, you know, man, you can't do it. Times are hard. Beaks to feed. All that to say, man, I hate to be, like, this forward, but, um, any monetary donation, as much as I don't believe in money as a concept, is greatly appreciated. Or land, land is cool.

ALEXANDRA

*(smitten.)* Oh, my God. I love men who are good with animals and kids and don't believe in money. *(Beat.)* I really wish I could help.

MARQUISE

Oh, sorry, man, no worries, it's cool.

ALEXANDRA

Oh, no, I really would! It's just that I'm Alexandra, resident medievalist grad student cousin housekeeper. Also known as broke as hell, doing chores for my relatives so I don't have to pay rent. Ha!

MARQUISE

Ah, I gotcha. Your relatives are loaded, right?

ALEXANDRA

Hmph. Bet your ass. Carol Joy's got a shitload of family money from her

mom's—well, her dead dad's chicken company, and Reginald comes from a line in the house of lords in England, although he's just a gold digger at this point in world history. Don't expect them to help you, though. I've tried. They only spend money on themselves.

MARQUISE

Bummer. *(to Henry.)* Say, what's your name, kid?

HENRY

Henry Augustus Cavett the Third, but I'm five years old.

Henry looks with concentration at one hand which displays three upright fingers, and his other which displays five.

MARQUISE

That's great.

Carol Joy enters the kitchen from USR. [At this time, Edgar is about to drop her first kill. When Edgar "CAWWW!!"s and and "*(drops pigeon.)*," this is a sound cue and drop of a fake pigeon carcass from the catwalk onto the stage. So:]

EDGAR

CAWWW!! *(Drops pigeon onto counter in front of Carol Joy.)*

CAROL JOY

AAAHhhhh!!

MARQUISE

That's my girl.

CAROL JOY

*(recovering.)* I thought you said his name was Edgar.

MARQUISE

She.

The door phone buzzes. Carol Joy, still shaken, goes over to it and presses the speaker button.

CAROL JOY

What? Who are you? What do you want?

A silence.

CAROL JOY

Hello?

Beat.

CAROL JOY

Weird.

MARQUISE

So. How long have you been in the city?

CAROL JOY

Oh. Twenty years or something?

MARQUISE

Took you that long to want to do something about the pigeons, huh?

CAROL JOY

I've always hated them. I've just never gotten around to it.

ALEXANDRA

Well, that's not true. We've tried hanging snakes and mirrors, putting up nets, scarecrows. She tried to paint me up as a gargoyle once.

CAROL JOY

It would've worked. And you know it.

ALEXANDRA

She shot one with a pistol this afternoon. It's in the trash.

CAROL JOY

Go dust something.

Alexandra exits USR.

CAROL JOY

We're getting it done now, though. Finally!

A knock on the DSR door. Carol Joy starts to walk over to it. She is attempting to flirt with Marquise.

CAROL JOY

And just in time, too.

She opens the door, and LADYMARGARET REDD and CHARLIE REDD are standing in the doorway. LadyMargaret, early 70s, is wearing Tom Ford sunglasses, has a Louis Vuitton bag, and is dressed in a lavender lady's suit, very elegant, very expensive, with a large matching lavender hat; it must be grand, all of it. She has a boot on her right leg and she has crutches, which she selectively utilizes throughout.

Charlie is in a gray business suit, also very nice, with a lavender tie to match LadyMargaret. He is behind her, and is sweating, having hauled much luggage, which surrounds him in the doorway. Carol Joy continues talking to Marquise while opening the door.

CAROL JOY

My snob mother and her hick husband are coming to plague us next week.

LADYMARGARET

“Plague” is a bit on the nose to characterize the terminally ill, don’t you think, Charlie?

Carol Joy slams the door and throws her body against it, flabbergasted.

LADYMARGARET (O.S.)

If you could get your head out of the martini glass, you’d remember that after tomorrow you’re never going to see your snob mother ever again, although you might very well have to deal with her hick husband.

Carol Joy doesn’t move.

LADYMARGARET (O.S.)

Surprise, we’re here early. Will you open the door or shall we head back to Texas now? (*Beat.*) You know, Charlie, it’s high time we subscribed to modern progressivism. We could cancel Carol Joy for ableist and agist hate crimes at this very moment.

CAROL JOY

I thought you were in Israel!

LADYMARGARET (O.S.)

Yes, we were, and now we aren’t. I refuse to tell you the circumstances of this happening while yelling through your door.

Alexandra comes into the kitchen.

ALEXANDRA

What’s going on?

CAROL JOY

You let them in, I’ve got to go...dust something.

ALEXANDRA

Let who in?

Carol Joy exits hastily. Alexandra walks over to the door and opens it. She gets all but

smushed behind the door as LadyMargaret comes crutching in, followed by Charlie, heaving with all the luggage. LadyMargaret takes in the room.

LADYMARGARET

Where'd she go?

MARQUISE

Which she?

LADYMARGARET

Carol Joy.

MARQUISE

Oof. I'm terrible with names. One went back that way, and the other one just came out from behind the door, I think.

LADYMARGARET

What?

MARQUISE

Yeah, I don't know. Sorry I asked.

LADYMARGARET

How inconsiderate. Who are you?

MARQUISE

Who's asking? Are you with the government?

LADYMARGARET

*(shouting to Carol Joy.)* Who is this inconsiderate man in your living room?

ALEXANDRA

Hello, I'm Alexandra, the Perryman's resident nanny-slash-housekeeper, sorta. May I ask who you are?

CHARLIE

You live here??

ALEXANDRA

Uh..yes. Sorry, who are you?

CHARLIE

What the—why the hell do they need a nanny? *(then, yelling to Carol Joy.)* Why the hell do y'all need a nanny? You've got one teen-aged kid! And a tiny-ass New York apartment!! Oh, whatever, don't get worked up, Charlie. We're only here a day anyway. *(then, to Alexandra.)* Oh, sorry. *(Pointing to himself, then*

*LadyMargaret.*) Charlie. LadyMargaret. The Redds.

ALEXANDRA

Oh, my god, great aunt LadyMargaret! We didn't expect you till next week! You're only here one night?? Oh, I'm sorry—you probably don't remember me, it's been so long—I'm Alexandra Johnson.

LADYMARGARET

Oh. You're LindaMae's child. The one who reads old poems.

ALEXANDRA

*(overly friendly.)* Yes! About to finish up this master's degree, and then I hope to be off to a doctoral program! Ha!

LADYMARGARET

What a stupid idea. *(Yelling again off to Carol Joy.)* Carol Joy! If I hear you're housing delinquent poets, I'll personally pour your all your liquor down the nearest dispose-all! *(Shakes one crutch in the air.)*

Alexandra looks utterly defeated, and goes off USR.

CAROL JOY *(O.S.)*

She wouldn't dare!

Upstairs: Rhiannon has been lying on the bed, reading through the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder. This line by Carol Joy startles Rhiannon, and she quickly grabs the comforter and rolls onto the floor, covering all of herself but one foot with it, right as Carol Joy enters the upstairs room.

CAROL JOY

*(on her phone.)* C'mon, c'mon, c'mon, pick up!...Ugh, goddammit!...Paxton, it's me, Carol Joy, this is an emergency, please call me back immediately! *(Hangs up.)* UGHH! I'll text him. *(Texting.)* Emergency...please..call..back..ASAP. Send. Of course I'm not going to know if it delivered. *(Noticing Rhiannon's shoe.)* Weird. Why is the comforter on the floor?

Reginald enters the upstairs room.

REGINALD

I can't find her anywhere, so let's get you out of—AAHHH!!

Rhiannon is completely exposed and freezes in place, as Carol Joy lifts the comforter to put back on the bed.

CAROL JOY

What the hell's the matter with you?

REGINALD

Uh..uhhh! (*Terrified.*)

CAROL JOY

You couldn't find who anywhere??

REGINALD

Ahhhh look over there!! (*points!*)

Carol Joy looks as Rhiannon slips under the bed.

CAROL JOY

What?

REGINALD

I thought I saw a mouse, darling. Nevermind! Probably nothing! Anyway, you're needed downstairs!

CAROL JOY

What now?

REGINALD

Uhh—LadyMargaret and Charlie are here early!!

CAROL JOY

Ugghhhh! (*She storms off.*)

RHIANNON

(*poking her head out from under the bed.*) What? They're here already??

REGINALD

NO, of course not, I was bluffing. Stay put. (*He exits.*)

Rhiannon sighs and crawls back under the bed. Meanwhile, downstairs: LadyMargaret, selectively uncomfortable with the boot and crutches, has just managed to seat herself in the recliner in the living area, and Charlie is digging through all the drawers in the kitchen, holding up things and inspecting them. Marquise is on the couch.

LADYMARGARET

Inconsiderate man! Would you please fan me with that magazine?

MARQUISE

(*obliging, then.*) You live here?

LADYMARGARET

No.

MARQUISE

Oh. *(He stops, puts the magazine down, and sits on the couch.)*

LadyMargaret glares at him.

EDGAR

CAWWW!! *(Drops pigeon on counter.)*

CHARLIE

Holy shit!

LADYMARGARET

What on earth?! *(Gets up with great ease and crutches quickly to the island.)*

They both stare at bird. Reginald enters from SL, and, in an instant, sees the pigeons on the island and then the new guests, and immediately turns around back to where he came from, making a slight noise when he shuts the door.

LADYMARGARET

What was that? *(looking where Reginald just snuck out.)*

Carol Joy enters, having gained some composure.

CAROL JOY

Hi, Mom! So glad you're here! Charlie.

MARQUISE

Oh, shit, you're the rich chicken mom! *(Picks up magazine and rushes to LadyMargaret to recommence fanning.)*

LADYMARGARET

There is a bird that just dropped another bird onto your kitchen counter. And flew back outside.

CAROL JOY

Oh, my God, I am so sorry, mom. I didn't expect you until next week—the falcon is Edgar. We're getting rid of our pigeons. I know how much you hate birds and I was trying to clear that up.

LADYMARGARET

That's unnecessary. Psychopharmahypnotherapy, dear. Does wonders. *(Then to Marquise:)* Stop that.



Marquise stops and bows.

CAROL JOY

Oh.

LadyMargaret gets on eye-level with the pigeon. Alexandra and Louise enter USR.

LOUISE

Oh, hi, Mimi! I thought you weren't getting here till next week! *(beat.)* I'm really sorry about everything, I know it must be—

LADYMARGARET

Shh! I'm looking at a bird.

LOUISE

I hate all of you.

ALEXANDRA

Marquise, do you think you could give me a hand with LadyMargaret's luggage?

MARQUISE

Hm? *(Then, realizing who LadyMargaret is, very eager.)* Oh, absolutely!

CAROL JOY

Henry and Louise, would you also help? And then maybe go up to the playroom?

Louise grabs Henry away from the tinker-toys, ushering him towards their task of moving luggage, and they go off USR. Reginald peeks in again as luggage is being moved. Charlie is looking cabinets, sizing up trinkets. LadyMargaret tries to tip the luggage movers, and Marquise is the only one who accepts. They go off with the luggage.

CAROL JOY

Can I get either of you anything?

LADYMARGARET

A flight to Dallas and a Vicodin.

CHARLIE

Our flight is tomorrow morning, honey.

LADYMARGARET

And a new husband.

CAROL JOY

What? You're leaving tomorrow??

LADYMARGARET

Yes, I must hurry back to Dallas. It's not you, dear—I'd just rather not be completely miserable before I pass on.

CAROL JOY

Uh-huh. Wait, mom, what happened to your foot?

LADYMARGARET

Israel is awful. Sand everywhere. No wonder Jesus only made it to thirty.

CHARLIE

Oh, she's just sore. She fell off a camel at the Wailing Wall and rolled her ankle and wanted to come home like a big baby.

LadyMargaret glares at him.

CAROL JOY

Oh, you poor thing! Terminally ill, rolled ankle, so many hours on a plane—are you sure you don't want to stay and rest just for a little bit longer than a night before you get back in the air?

LADYMARGARET

Hm. What's your angle?

CAROL JOY

My ankle's perfectly fine. Don't you want to see Dr. Toboggan before you head back?

LADYMARGARET

Yes, and I've already arranged for him to come here tonight.

CAROL JOY

Oh.

CHARLIE

Yeah, we're leaving tomorrow. I already bought first class, and I scheduled a meeting tomorrow afternoon.

CAROL JOY

Oh. (*Pours herself more gin.*)

Upstairs, the children enter the guest bedroom, dropping luggage onto the floor and exiting, while Alexandra and Marquise follow with the heavier luggage. Alexandra is

visibly stressed. She puts her luggage down and then sits with an exasperate thud onto the queen bed, head in hands. Marquise watches her, and takes out a joint from his pocket.

MARQUISE

Five bucks for a joint?

ALEXANDRA

What? No!

MARQUISE

Suit yourself, man. You need it though.

He lights up. Reginald enters in a hurry, slams the door.

REGINALD

I wasn't bluffing. (*Seeing Marquise and Alexandra.*) AAHHH!!

ALEXANDRA

Huh?

REGINALD

Uhhh—So sorry to bother you, it's just that—the contractor has just informed me that his pet snake is loose in the house—

Alexandra screams and jumps into Marquise's arms.

REGINALD

So I've just got to check every room. If you both will just get in bed, completely under the covers, until I finish searching the room—

ALEXANDRA

What if the snake's there!?

REGINALD

Oh, Alexandra—don't be silly, everyone knows that all snakes live in mortal fear of...memory foam.

Alexandra jumps out of Marquise's arms and runs into the bed immediately.

MARQUISE

I don't know about that, man.

REGINALD

Please, sir, I don't know who you are, but I...studied with Steve Irwin—

MARQUISE

Say no more—anything for Steve!! (*Dives into bed, under covers.*)

REGINALD

Alright, here snaky snaky. Sssss. Snaky. Ssss sssss. (*He reaches under the bed and grabs Rhiannon, ushering her out of the room.*) Sssss. Snaky? Ah, well, coast is clear, ladies and gentlemen. Carry on! (*slams door.*)

Downstairs, LadyMargaret is doing real queen shit, filing her nails. Charlie has gotten out his computer, presumably for business endeavors. Carol Joy is incredibly nervous, on her phone, and swallows of gin at a time.

CAROL JOY

What time is Dr. Toboggan coming?

LADYMARGARET

I don't know, he's very unpredictable.

DR. BEETLE TOBOGGAN, 60s, male, enters abruptly DSR. He is LadyMargaret's doctor, and he is an utter malapropistic quack. He wears a Hawaiian shirt, cargo shorts, flip flops, bug-eye glasses, a lab coat, a stethoscope, a head mirror, and a toupée.

DR. TOBOGGAN

Hiya! Dr. Toboggan, Beetle Toboggan, purveyor of topical diseases.

LADYMARGARET

Oh, Dr. Toboggan! I'm so glad you found us!

DR. TOBOGGAN

Well, but, of course, anything for thee, milady! Now, what happened to our poor wittle footsie-wootsie?

CHARLIE

She fell off a camel at the Wailing Wall.

LADYMARGARET

No, Charlie, the camel threw me violently from its hump! You know what, everyone out! Just me and Beetle in this room, please and thank you!

CAROL JOY

But I didn't—

LADYMARGARET

Ah-ah-ah!

DR. TOBOGGAN

I do require complete piracy for my exaltations.

Carol Joy sighs and she and Charlie exit SL.

DR. TOBOGGAN

Alright, dear. At this point in the national regression of tobogrobanpanocyclitis, as we concede it, you will have already gone through the doormat phase, which just revolves fatigue and mild heat flashes, and the disease will now begin to pool in the feet, which will begin to turn green and secede an ambidextrous mucous.

LADYMARGARET

Oh, how terrible!

DR. TOBOGGAN

Which is then followed closely by the rapid growth of wiry, purple intrusions all along the front of the geranium, and they will smell faintly of Brussel's spouts.

LADYMARGARET

*(grabbing her necklace in fear and horror.)* Ahhh!

DR. TOBOGGAN

While, again, I must vituperate how truly sorry I am that you must ensure such a horrific disease, I am so, so, very grateful you sought our contention, dear. Your case will help inconcedably with research, so much more than you could possibly apprehend. The scientific community hasn't seen a case in 82 years. May I examine your foot?

LadyMargaret nods. Dr. Toboggan removes her shoe and sock from her un-booted foot.

DR. TOBOGGAN

Hmm. How very strange.

LADYMARGARET

What? What is it?

DR. TOBOGGAN

You don't appear to be showing the opprobrious symptoms. Very, very disconcerting. May I take a sample of under-toenail matter back to my lobotomy?

LadyMargaret nods. She looks away as he withdraws a tool and scrapes out gunk from beneath her toenail and puts it in a vial.

DR. TOBOGGAN

People of the Penthouse, I shall return! (*Exeunt DSR.*)

CAROL JOY

(*peaking out from SL.*) Is he gone? (*Seeing that he is, and entering.*) Did he say anything?

LADYMARGARET

(*still shaken.*) Just that he was going to take some under-toenail matter to the lab to run tests.

CAROL JOY

Ah. (*Beat.*) Are you sure you don't want to stay? I was planning on cooking pasta tomorrow.

LADYMARGARET

(*regaining herself*) You don't cook.

CAROL JOY

I meant Alexandra was cooking, I was planning on helping.

LADYMARGARET

You don't help.

CAROL JOY

Oh, you know what I mean.

LADYMARGARET

What does a poet know about pasta?

CAROL JOY

Her boyfriend's Italian.

LADYMARGARET

What's his name?

CAROL JOY

Michael...Angelo...

LADYMARGARET

Uh huh. Tomorrow morning!

Upstairs, Marquise and Alexandra have been making out in the bed.

ALEXANDRA

(*pulling away.*) I'm sorry, I can't—I'm too distraught.

MARQUISE

What's up?

ALEXANDRA

My trip to debtor's prison! I still have loans I haven't paid back from undergrad, I'm about to finish grad school, and I'm not gonna be competitive until I get my doctorate, and my parents won't help me with any of it!

MARQUISE

There, there, little titmouse.

ALEXANDRA

My last hope was trying to cuddle up to LadyMargaret, but it's too late! My mother has already poisoned her mind! And they're leaving tomorrow! And then she'll die next week of a rare tropical disease in Dallas and I'll be even more broke!

MARQUISE

Well, now, don't fabricate defeatism.

ALEXANDRA

No, no, it's true! She has two weeks to live! She got a fatal disease from a bad horsefly in Tobago!

MARQUISE

Oh.

Henry runs into the room and goes to a chest on the other side of the bed, opens it, grabs a wizard hat and a blue cape out of it and runs back out of the room.

MARQUISE

I have an idea.

ALEXANDRA

Huh?

MARQUISE

You got costumes?

ALEXANDRA

What?

MARQUISE

Costumes—like for Halloween type things.

ALEXANDRA

What?? Um—yeah, why?

MARQUISE

Take me to them at once. Now!!

Alexandra leads Marquise out of the bedroom. Downstairs, everyone is as last seen, continuing in their respective activities. Reginald peeks out into the room from the USB door, sees that the coast is clear, and shepherds Rhiannon, who is now in her stripper costume and fur coat, behind the island. Once they are both behind the island, they both peek up above the counter just below eye-level, and begin to edge toward the DSR exit. LadyMargaret stops filing and looks up, and the heads immediately duck back down behind the counter.

LADYMARGARET

I would like some water.

CAROL JOY

Ice?

LADYMARGARET

Just a little.

Carol Joy goes to the cabinet, gets a glass, goes to the fridge and waits the painful amount of time for ice and water at the dispenser. Reginald and Rhiannon move to the other side of the island to avoid being seen, high tensions. Carol Joy returns to the living area, as Rhiannon and Reginald move back behind the counter.

CAROL JOY

Here we are.

Carol Joy has returned to her seat and is again working on her gin. LadyMargaret is still filing, and Charlie still on his laptop. Reginald and Rhiannon are back at eye level, edging towards the exit. They peek now from the side of the island closest to the exit. Rhiannon begins to crawl toward the door. Charlie is seated in a way that his computer screen has sightline of the area in between the island and the door. Charlie begins putting headphones in, and suddenly, Reginald grabs Rhiannon by the fur and pulls her back behind the counter.

LADYMARGARET

Charlie! Charlie, what are you doing?

CHARLIE

*(Taking out earphone)* Hm? What?



LADYMARGARET  
*(overly articulate)* What are you doing, Charles?

CHARLIE  
I'm in a meeting.

LADYMARGARET  
Charlie, we're only here one day, this is family time.

CHARLIE  
What? You were just filing your nails and she was just ruining her liver in perfect silence.

LADYMARGARET  
Well, we can all be silent together.

CHARLIE  
That is exactly what I'm attempting to do.

LadyMargaret gives him a sinister look, and he sighs and shuts the computer. Reginald peeks back over the counter, and Rhiannon sticks her head out from the side and begins her crawl to the door, very slowly, with much care and awkward movement.

CHARLIE  
You know, I think I'll sell the penthouse. You and Reginald and Louise can live in the mansion with me and work at the chicken plant.

Reginald faints. His head is poking out from behind the island. Rhiannon sees this and begins to crawl back to him, with the goal of hiding and reviving him.

CAROL JOY  
Ha! No thanks.

CHARLIE  
We'll see, miss priss.

LADYMARGARET  
I haven't died yet! No fighting.

Rhiannon has made it back to Reginald and is pushing him behind the island.

LADYMARGARET  
Carol Joy, have you ever thought about going back to school?

CAROL JOY

Ha! Would you pay for it?

CHARLIE

No, there will be no paying for any school.

CAROL JOY

Oh, shut up Charlie.

CHARLIE

I've never been to school—if you need to go twice, it must be pretty useless.

CAROL JOY

Oh yes, why go to school when you can marry a millionaire four times your age!

CHARLIE

Don't talk about your mother that way.

Reginald is back up now, and both he and Rhiannon watch, Reginald with horror and Rhiannon with great fascination.

CAROL JOY

Now, listen, if we're going to talk about this type of thing, I do think Reginald should be here.

CHARLIE

*(mocking British accent)* Ah, yes, where is that daft git?

EDGAR

CAWWW!! *(Drops pigeon behind island onto Rhiannon.)*

RHIANNON

AHHHHH! *(whimpers.)*

REGINALD

*(Whispering.)* Shhh! Goddammit.

All heads have turned.

LADYMARGARET

Ahem.

Reginald stands up.

REGINALD

Excuse me, terribly sorry. The, um, the bird certainly gave me a fright.

LADYMARGARET

You've never hid the fact that you were a ninny, but that screech must've handily been in the sixth octave.

REGINALD

Oh? Hello to you, too, Ms. Callas. (*feigned deference, bowing*)

LADYMARGARET

Oh, where are my manners! Reginald, it is such a pleasure not to have seen you for so long.

REGINALD

Oh, LadyMargaret! Now that I see you've found your footing, may I delightfully pronounce—likewise.

LADYMARGARET

How is my least favorite redcoat?

REGINALD

Never been better! How is my least favorite tanned hide?

LADYMARGARET

Can't complain.

REGINALD

What a shame.

LADYMARGARET

Lousy bohemian mooch.

REGINALD

(*relishing*) Texan.

CAROL JOY

That's enough of that. What were you doing behind the counter, Reginald?

REGINALD

Oh, I was just looking for a casserole dish.

LADYMARGARET

A casserole dish?

REGINALD

Yes, LadyMargaret, a casserole dish.

CHARLIE

Hi, Reginald, it's me, Charlie. Why were you looking for a casserole dish?

REGINALD

Well, Charles, the, um, the neighbor called me when I was in the other room and asked if he could borrow a casserole dish.

LADYMARGARET

What kind of sexual favor is that code for?

REGINALD

Madame, bug off.

CAROL JOY

Which neighbor would call you?

REGINALD

Carol Joy, dear wife, I know you're not insinuating that I don't know the neighbors.

CAROL JOY

I'll just say it, Reginald, you don't know the neighbors.

REGINALD

Preposterous.

Henry comes in the USR door.

HENRY

I'm thirsty. (*Then, pointing to Rhiannon.*) What are you doing behind the counter?

REGINALD

I am finding a casserole dish for the neighbor.

HENRY

I wasn't talking to you.

REGINALD

Henry! Why don't you show the adults your magic trick you showed me last week, hm?

HENRY

Okay.

REGINALD

Okay!

Henry walks over to the other three.

REGINALD

LadyMargaret, Charlie, this is Henry.

LADYMARGARET

Hello, Harry.

Henry frowns.

REGINALD

*Henry*, this is Louise's grandmother, LadyMargaret, and this is Charlie.

HENRY

*(to Charlie.)* Is she your grandmother, too?

REGINALD

*(beginning with an exuberant, reveling and booty laugh)* Oh, no, my dear boy, believe it or not, Charlie is LadyMargaret's husband.

CAROL JOY

Alright, let's just get to the trick, Rej.

REGINALD

Yes, of course, take it away, Henry.

HENRY

Everybody sees I have two thumbs.

Reginald edges toward the door and eyes the counter as the other adults nod.

HENRY

Everybody, close your eyes.

The adults close their eyes. While Henry concentrates very intensely on hiding his thumbs inside his fists, Reginald opens the door and coughs and beckons wildly but silently. Rhiannon catches his drift and runs as fast as she can, while remaining hunched, for the door.

HENRY

Now, open them!

Reginald slams the door shut just as everyone has opened their eyes. Henry proudly displays his thumbless fists.

HENRY

I now have no thumbs!

REGINALD

Bravo, Henry! Bravo!

CAROL JOY

Reginald, why did the door slam?

REGINALD

What door?

LADYMARGARET

The door you have your hand on.

REGINALD

Oh, yes, that door! Well, you know the neighbor came for the casserole dish.

CAROL JOY

What? You didn't even get one out of the cabinet.

REGINALD

Nonsense.

HENRY

Where did Ms. // McIntosh go?

REGINALD

*(blundering and rushed)* Henry, dear boy, how many times must we go over this—she is a figment of your imagination. You're a *real* boy, and real boys have *real* friends. Henry, run along back upstairs and play. Off you go!

HENRY

But I came down to get—

REGINALD

Ah, ta ta! Spit spot!

Henry mutters and exits.

REGINALD

*(nervous laughter.)* Sometimes I fear he's deranged.

Carol Joy glares at him and gets up to go behind the counter in search of casserole dishes. Meanwhile, upstairs, Alexandra and Marquise enter the guest room. Marquise is now decked in a fabulous robe and turban, think *Sunset Boulevard*. He wears sunglasses; his goatee has been tamed and now has tassels in it, and any scruff has been shaved off. Instead of one silver earring, he now has two long gold ones, with various witchy charms and symbols. He wears gold neck rings. He also has a nose ring, and a wizard's staff. He goes to the mirror.

ALEXANDRA

This is absurd.

MARQUISE

This outfit is *it*, I promise.

ALEXANDRA

Oh, you look amazing. I just don't know that the plan, you know, if it's enough.

MARQUISE

You said she's really superstitious, right?

ALEXANDRA

Well, yeah. Carol Joy told me she broke a mirror at age eight and LadyMargaret didn't speak a word to her until she was fifteen.

MARQUISE

I have a new evasion strategy for alimony.

ALEXANDRA

Okay.

MARQUISE

And you said you're positive Carol Joy has never seen these clothes before?

ALEXANDRA

Well, yeah. I ordered them myself. She gets nervous about her friend Susan's Halloween parties at random times in the year and makes me buy costumes I think are fun for her, and then she never ends up going. The attic is a film wardrobe, practically.

MARQUISE

See? Nothing to worry about! We leave this with enough money to pay off debts and build the world's best aviary.

ALEXANDRA

Okay. What's the plan?

MARQUISE

I go down there, wow them with lights and pyrotechnics and mystic wisdom, tell her to leave everything to you or a curse will haunt her soul and her kinfolk for all eternity. You'll control the fancy lights system and the remote control furniture with the iPad from behind the counter.

ALEXANDRA

*(Nods.)* Now you're sure you know what you're going to say? And *how* you're going to say it?

MARQUISE

*(thick Transylvanian accent.)* I vas born in Transylvania in ze year 512 BC. My mozer vas a badger, and my fazer vas an incubus.

ALEXANDRA

*(looking up.)* God, spare me from what I'm about to do.

MARQUISE

It'll be *fine*. And listen! I studied Welsh at Oxford, so I'll just say Welsh stuff and that'll be the hexes and whatnot.

ALEXANDRA

What?

MARQUISE

Oh yeah, I gave Welsh subtitles to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* for my thesis. *(Beat, then in grand sorcery fashion.)* Roedd eich mam yn bochdew, a'ch tad yn drewi o elderberries. *(blows raspberry, and pats on head.)*

A pregnant beat. They start to make out vigorously. Back downstairs, Carol Joy has torn up the kitchen looking for all the casserole dishes.

EDGAR

CAWWW! *(drops pigeon.)*

CAROL JOY

There! That's every last casserole dish. All seven.

REGINALD

Well, yes, of course, dear, every last casserole dish we *had*. You see, I bought another casserole dish yesterday.

Carol Joy throws a plastic spatula at his head and he ducks.



LADYMARGARET

Ah, yes, there's the torrential marriage I remember.

CAROL JOY

You're lying!

REGINALD

No, I'm not! I'm very sorry, darling, I just forgot to mention it.

CHARLIE

*(picking up the spatula and pointing it scrutinizingly at Reginald.)* Why does one need eight casserole dishes? Come to think of it, *(approaches now Carol Joy)* why does one need *seven* casserole dishes?

Three knocks on the door.

REGINALD

Ah! I wonder who that could be!

Carol Joy goes over to the door and opens it and there is Rhiannon, scantily clad as Rou Rou, in the doorway.

RHIANNON

Well, howdy, stranger.

Charlie instantly recognizes this person and is horrified; he begins sneaking out of the room, towards SL door.

CAROL JOY

How can I help you?

RHIANNON

If you ain't just as precious as a peach. I'm here for Charlie. *(she is hamming and milking the sensual, maybe whispering part of the line.)*

REGINALD

He is right over there. *(pointing to where Charlie was.)* What? Where the devil did he go?

LadyMargaret looks up from her Louis Vuitton she's been digging through.

CAROL JOY

I'm sorry, who are you?

All of a sudden there is a huge crash and a bunch of yelling coming from construction area off-stage.

LADYMARGARET

What was that?

The contractor comes in SL dragging Charlie into the living area. He drops him, makes eye contact with everyone in the room.

CONTRACTOR

No more clients in the construction area.

CAROL JOY

What happened?

CONTRACTOR

He knocked a ladder over and fainted.

CAROL JOY

In that order?

He mutters and marches out.

RHIANNON

Aaaaahhh! My Charlie, my beautiful Charlie!

Rhiannon throws herself on him, who is still lying on the floor, and wails.

CAROL JOY

Oh my god, should we call an ambulance?

LADYMARGARET

*//(rising, holding out a singular, silencing finger in the air to Carol Joy)* Who is this vile strumpet?

REGINALD

*//(giving the "okay" symbol with his hand and mouthing\*\*)* Perfection.

CAROL JOY

What are you doing, Reginald?

REGINALD

*(continues the "okay" motion)* Oh, well, dear, I'm just pretending to throw a dart at this tumultuous, strange woman who has so rudely entered our home.

LADYMARGARET

Shut up! You, get off of him this instant!

RHIANNON

*(still hysterical.)* You must be his mother, why aren't you doing something!

Reginald is absolutely elated. LadyMargaret begins hitting Rhiannon with her Louis Vuitton.

CAROL JOY

Alright, I'm calling 9-1-1.

REGINALD

No, no, don't do that!

CAROL JOY

Why not?

REGINALD

Well, at this point, darling, from the looks of it, I don't know whether you'd be asking for an ambulance for Charlie, or the police for a domestic brawl.

He indicates the scene in front of him, which has devolved into grunting and a wrestling match over Charlie.

CAROL JOY

I'll ask for all of them. *(gets out phone.)*

REGINALD

Carol Joy, no! That won't be necessary! Listen, let's just tear the two off of him, check to see if he's breathing, and let's figure out who this bloody woman is.

CAROL JOY

And what if he's not breathing!

REGINALD

We've never liked him anyway!

Carol Joy begins messing with her phone.

REGINALD

No! Listen, um, I haven't renewed my green card!

CAROL JOY

What?

REGINALD

Let's just try to take care of this ourselves, no government officials.

CAROL JOY

You've had citizenship since '07.

REGINALD

It was revoked.

CAROL JOY

What is wrong with you.

Reginald goes to her and takes the phone gently.

REGINALD

Come now, darling, let's just get to the bottom of this. You get your mother, I'll get the other one.

They do, with a well-acted struggle from Reginald and Rhiannon, and an actual struggle with Carol Joy and LadyMargaret.

REGINALD

Now, madame, please sit here (*places her on the sofa*), a-ta-ta! Please, dear, I promise we'll get this all straightened out. I'm going to check and make sure Charlie is alright. (*then, to Carol Joy*) That's it, darling, hold her off just a little longer.

Reginald goes to listen to Charlie's breathing.

REGINALD

Oh, yes, he's quite alive. I'd even say he's bluffing.

LadyMargaret breaks free from Carol Joy enough to kick him repeatedly with her booted foot.

LADYMARGARET

Playing opossum, huh? You louse!

CAROL JOY

(*wrangling LadyMargaret once again*) Mom! Stop!

REGINALD

Yes, LadyMargaret, Carol Joy is right. Pick one animal—he can't be both.

LadyMargaret hesitantly subsides.

REGINALD

Now, see here, LadyMargaret, there's no need to kick the poor man. Let us first determine what we have going on here.

LADYMARGARET

*(very cross, and points menacingly at Rhiannon.)* Who is this woman?

REGINALD

Yes, miss, please tell us your name and why it is you are here.

RHIANNON

It doesn't matter what my name is, all that matters is I'm with my baby.

REGINALD

Would you please identify your baby?

Rhiannon points to Charlie on the floor.

LADYMARGARET

I demand to know the meaning of this.

REGINALD

LadyMargaret, I will handle this. Now, miss, please tell us your name so I can stop addressing you as miss.

RHIANNON

Rou Rou Hutchinson.

REGINALD

I'll stick with miss. How is it you came to know this sad man on the floor?

RHIANNON

Charlie isn't sad. He's my soulmate.

LADYMARGARET

You bastard!

LadyMargaret begins finding things in her purse and throwing them at Charlie.

REGINALD

Now, now, see here, LadyMargaret, this woman could be a complete imposter, just some dodgy trollop off the streets. I invite you to calm yourself until we have gathered more information.

LADYMARGARET

*(angrily.)* Take it away, Sherlock.

REGINALD

Ms. Hutchinson, do you know Charlie?

RHIANNON

What kind of question is that? He's my lover.

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*Drops pigeon on Charlie, who tries to suppress a jolt.*)

RHIANNON

(*standing up*) My sweet Charlie, did you just move your leg?

LADYMARGARET

Perhaps for the last time! (*maybe getting down on the floor close to his head.*) If you're in there, Charles, you better have some pretty marvelous explanations.

REGINALD

Now, Ms. McIn—I mean, Ms. Hutchinson, um—*how* do you know Charlie?

RHIANNON

Oh, well. Ha! I'm embarrassed. I, he was a client of mine.

CAROL JOY

Oh Lord.

REGINALD

Ah! What sort of business?

RHIANNON

I'm an escort.

CAROL JOY

Here we go.

RHIANNON

But I love Charlie like no other man I've been with.

CAROL JOY

Of course!

RHIANNON

I do! I'll quit escorting if I have to! I've left Texas now, I'll go to the ends of the earth if he'll let me.

LADYMARGARET

Alright, you vulgar harlot! So supposing that any of this delusion is somehow! (impossibly!) sound, although it isn't, and *my* Charlie is running around with women of ill repute, which he isn't—(*to Charlie*) you aren't—just when did this begin?

RHIANNON

The first time he hired me. We met up a month or so ago, at a country club.

LADYMARGARET

*(growling.)* The country club... having lots of fun “playing golf,” you bastard!

RHIANNON

Who are you, by the way?

LADYMARGARET

I’ll be asking the questions.

REGINALD

Well, now, that was technically my job // LadyMargaret.

LADYMARGARET

//You shut up.

REGINALD

Yes ma’am.

LADYMARGARET

And just how did you know we’d be here, in this penthouse, much less in Manhattan?

RHIANNON

Oh, well, I was a little naughty and I started tracking his phone when he wasn’t looking. And today I woke up and I just couldn’t bear to be without him! I saw he was in New York and I just bought the first ticket and here I am!

LADYMARGARET

*(enraged.)* The audacity!

CAROL JOY

Nothing like a brazen wench at cocktail hour, am I right? *(now with another martini.)*

REGINALD

Oh, yes, dear, they certainly don’t make gigolos like they used to.

RHIANNON

Oh, my Charlie, I’m here, I’m all yours! Just as soon as you wake up and this older relative goes to bed...

LADYMARGARET

Older relative! I am his wife! (*displaying her wedding ring.*)

RHIANNON

(*in shock.*) What? You? He never told me! Charlie, you're married? (*beat.*) It's alright, Charlie. We can work it out. We all make mistakes. We can be together. You and me, we'll just put her into a home.

LADYMARGARET

A home?! I'll put you into a home! I'll put you both into a home!

REGINALD

Go get 'em, LadyMargaret! Rah, rah, rah!

LadyMargaret removes her wedding bands and then kicks Charlie repeatedly.

LADYMARGARET

I know what you did, you miserable scum!

Meanwhile, the contractor places Rhiannon's bag, with the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder sticking out, into the kitchen. Reginald immediately recognizes it and goes over and places it back in the other room. He begins to walk back to the living area when the bag is once again placed inside the kitchen. This goes back and forth over the next bit, increasing in frequency.

RHIANNON

Leave him alone, you old hag!

LADYMARGARET

You're next, dearie!

REGINALD

Oh, no you don't! (*To the bag.*)

CAROL JOY

What are you doing over there?

REGINALD

Absolutely nothing.

LadyMargaret is now fighting with Rhiannon, maybe start with hitting her with the purse, then advancing to crutches. Carol Joy goes to the island to find out what Reginald is doing.

CAROL JOY

It looks to me like you're trying to get rid of that bag.



REGINALD

Well, yes, darling, but it's of little import. (*the bag is once again placed in the kitchen.*) Oh, hang it all!

CAROL JOY

Wait a minute, what is that bag?

REGINALD

I'm sure I don't know.

CAROL JOY

I think that actress had it earlier—is she still here??

REGINALD

Oh, no dear, she left. (*to the bag.*) Back you go!

CAROL JOY

Well, did you find out what show she was in?

REGINALD

Oh, some farce. I don't remember the name.

CAROL JOY

I thought you said it was a musical.

REGINALD

Oh.

At this time, LadyMargaret is doing something particularly painful, like hair-pulling or biting.

RHIANNON

Ah! Oh, Reginald, she's hurting me!

REGINALD

Well, now, woman, that is not my fight!

LADYMARGARET

He won't help you!

CAROL JOY

What? How does she know your name?

REGINALD

Er—well, I'm sure she heard one of you use it. And it does appear I'm the only conscious male in the immediate vicinity. (*the bag is in again.*) Now, you listen

here, you infernal piece of bloody luggage! Out, and stay out!

CONTRACTOR

We don't want it! (*door slam.*)

CAROL JOY

This doesn't make one lick of sense. Give me that bag.

REGINALD

No.

Henry enters USR and eagerly gets himself some water as Reginald and Carol Joy fight over Rhiannon's bag, and as LadyMargaret and Rhiannon fight over Charlie.

HENRY

Mr. Perryman, why is the grandson-husband on the ground?

REGINALD

I believe he's faking it.

Henry is perplexed; this doesn't answer his question. He goes over to Rhiannon.

HENRY

Ms. McIntosh, it isn't nice to fight old people!

REGINALD

Henry! Go upstairs to Louise!!

As Henry runs back away USR, Alexandra peeks in SL to see the havoc and turns right back around.

CAROL JOY

What? How does *Henry* know this person?

REGINALD

He doesn't!

CAROL JOY

Well how would *you* know!

REGINALD

I mean—he does? I don't know!

EDGAR

CAWWW! (*drops pigeon.*)

A clear, loud knock is heard that makes everyone stop.

PAXTON (O.S.)

Um, hello? Hello? Is this the Perryman residence?

PAXTON NIMROD is an adult male. It must be conceivable that he could pass as Carol Joy's biological twin brother. He has a duffle identical to that of Rhiannon.

REGINALD

Oh, what the devil now?

CAROL JOY

*(looking at her phone.)* Shit!

REGINALD

What, dear?

CAROL JOY

Don't open the door!

REGINALD

What?

CAROL JOY

It's someone I don't want to see! I think they'll just leave, just whatever you do, do not answer the door!

REGINALD

Well, alright darling—where are you going?

CAROL JOY

I've got to make a phone call! *(she rushes off)*

REGINALD

Unbelievable. I don't remember the last time she behaved that enthusiastically. And earnestly! Who could be at the door...

LadyMargaret and Rhiannon resume their wrestling, LadyMargaret now poised to jump off a piece of furniture. Reginald notices.

REGINALD

wha—Down, girl! *(he inserts himself into battle.)*

Meanwhile, upstairs, Alexandra and Marquise scurry to hide under the bed, right before Carol Joy bursts into the room on the phone.

CAROL JOY

C'mon, pick up, pick up, pick up.

They both poke their heads out at the foot of the bed.

MARQUISE

*(whispering.)* Which one's that?

ALEXANDRA

*(whispering.)* Carol Joy.

MARQUISE

*(whispering.)* Which one's that?

ALEXANDRA

*Sbbb!*

For this next bit, Reginald, LadyMargaret, and Rhiannon are pre-occupied enough to not hear/pay attention to the conversation, but the audience can hear both Paxton, who is off-stage, and Carol Joy who is upstairs, as they have a short conversation on the phone.

PAXTON (O.S.)

Hello? Carol Joy?

CAROL JOY

Oh, thank God.

PAXTON (O.S.)

Carol Joy, I'm here.

CAROL JOY

I know—listen very carefully: go away.

PAXTON (O.S.)

What? But I brought my headshot and resume.

At this time, Reginald has succeeded in effectively ending the brawl.

LADYMARGARET

*(exasperated)* I'm going to nap! *(to Charlie.)* And when I wake up, I'm calling *my* lawyer. *(exeunt).*

CAROL JOY

Listen, I need you to go away and come back in oh, probably ten minutes. Get rid of the headshots and resumes! When you come back, you are stepping into

the actual scenario, the one I called you about earlier.

PAXTON (O.S.)

What?

REGINALD

Well! That went swimmingly!

RHIANNON

*Sbbb! (pointing wildly to Charlie.)*

CAROL JOY

Skip the meeting in person over coffee, go straight to the being my long-lost brother.

PAXTON (O.S.)

But—wait, I really have no research whatsoever.

REGINALD

What? Is the person at the door talking to someone? I simply must know who this is.

CAROL JOY

I gave you the basics! Make stuff up!

PAXTON (O.S.)

Oh! So instead of an interview, this is a live improv audition? “Yes and—” the whole thing!

CAROL JOY

Yes! What—no!

Reginald opens the door to behold Paxton, who quickly hangs up the phone.

PAXTON

Hi! Is this the Perryman residence?

CAROL JOY

Shit. *(she runs off).*

REGINALD

It is! Who’s asking?

PAXTON

Oh—duh—how rude of me. I’m Stefano John Dimitri Pierre Gonzalez-Pfifferling VII. And I’m not really.

REGINALD

I see.

PAXTON

I'm sorry, is... (*mock-consulting phone*) Carol Joy Perryman home?

REGINALD

Yes. Let me fetch her.

Carol Joy comes in.

REGINALD

Ah, nevermind. Carol Joy, this nice man whose name I shall not now attempt is here to see you.

CAROL JOY

Where's mom?

REGINALD

Where are your manners?

CAROL JOY

No, she has to be here!

REGINALD

Carol Joy, what on earth must she be here for? There is a man here to see you!

CAROL JOY

Reginald.

REGINALD

If you must know, she's napping upstairs. Let the poor woman sleep.

Carol Joy begins to run off.

REGINALD

(*yelling after her.*) Your behavior is deplorable!! (*to Paxton.*) I'm so very sorry, I'm not sure what's gotten into her.

PAXTON

Truly deplorable *and* rude! (*spits.*)

REGINALD

(*beat.*) Won't you take a seat, Mr...

PAXTON

Please, call me Esteban.

REGINALD

I thought you said Stefano?

PAXTON

Yes! Stefano-Esteban. It's a hyphenate.

REGINALD

Ah.

Meanwhile, upstairs: Alexandra and Marquise have gotten out from under bed.

ALEXANDRA

Coast is clear, I think.

MARQUISE

What the hell was all that about?

ALEXANDRA

I think we're not the only ones plotting, that's what. *(bears something, whispers.)*  
Get down!

Alexandra and Marquise hit the floor. Carol Joy enters, looks around, exits.  
Meanwhile, downstairs: Paxton has sat.

REGINALD

Well, Estefan, can I offer you something to drink?

PAXTON

No, no, just give me a word.

REGINALD

Pardon?

PAXTON

A word. Any word. *(beat)*. Just say a word.

REGINALD

Um... coffee?

Immediately, Paxton begins pouring invisible coffee from an invisible pot into an invisible cup, invisible cream and sugar etc, and sips throughout the rest of the activity until/unless otherwise noted. Reginald and Rhiannon watch perplexed.

PAXTON

May I ask who you are, miss?

REGINALD

Where are *my* manners? Goodness me, this is Rhi—Rou Rou Hutchinson. Miss Hutchinson, this is—

PAXTON

Stefano-Esteban John Alexei Pierre Gonzalez-Pfifferling VII. And I'm not really.

RHIANNON

//Charming to meet you!

REGINALD

//(to himself) Este-BAN! Ban with a B.

PAXTON

Oh, it's really of little consequence, Mr...

REGINALD

Oh, yes, I'm sorry, I'm Carol Joy's husband, Reginald.

PAXTON

Reginald. Miss Hutchinson, would you like some coffee?

RHIANNON

Uh—I'm okay. Thank you though!

PAXTON

May I ask who this is on the floor?

REGINALD

Oh. Well, this is Charlie. Charlie is married, albeit not much longer, to Carol Joy's mother, LadyMargaret, whom Carol Joy is now inexplicably waking from a nap.

PAXTON

And why is Charlie on the floor?

REGINALD

Ah. Yes, well we believe he's faking unconsciousness in order that he might have enough time to come up with a way out of his predicament, his predicament being that Miss Hutchinson is his lover, or at the very least his one-time indulgence, and she has followed him to New York and made herself known to his wife, hence the aforementioned dying marriage.



PAXTON

*(looking at Reginald and Rhiannon.)* Damn. This is some really excellent stuff.  
*(then looking at Charlie)* You guys are good.

Reginald and Rhiannon are thoroughly perplexed. Meanwhile, upstairs.

MARQUISE

Now what's this other plot?

ALEXANDRA

So. From what I know—Carol Joy had a twin brother who was kidnapped in Disney World when he was like a year old.

MARQUISE

What?

ALEXANDRA

Listen, I didn't make this stuff up. From what you and I heard on the phone, sounds like Carol Joy is hiring some person to pretend to be the long-lost brother... Ralph?... Rick?...

MARQUISE

And what good would that do?

ALEXANDRA

Randall! That's his name. LadyMargaret's first husband, True Redd, who started the whole chicken empire, left everything to Randall, if he was ever found.

MARQUISE

Oh, shit.

ALEXANDRA

Right. Which means, if Carol Joy succeeds, we'd have to spook the person pretending to be the brother, which would be pointless since he'll only get what Carol Joy is paying him anyway. No, the money has to stay with LadyMargaret.

MARQUISE

Right.

ALEXANDRA

So you'll have to expose the fake brother as part of the act.

MARQUISE

Oh, great. Anything else?

ALEXANDRA

When I was down there earlier, I didn't stay for long, but there was a blonde woman who was fighting with LadyMargaret, and Charlie was on the ground. I have no idea what that was about.

MARQUISE

Is it something to worry about?

ALEXANDRA

No idea. I'll try to find out.

LADYMARGARET (O.S., *getting louder*)

I don't see why I have to come down and subject myself to meeting another person, and going all the way down those damn stairs.

CAROL JOY (O.S.)

Wait... how the hell did you get up the stairs with your foot??

LADYMARGARET (O.S.)

I don't like the question. I won't hear it and I won't respond to it.

LadyMargaret opens the door and looks into the room. Alexandra and Marquise do not have time to do anything but strike a pose and pretend to be statues.

LADYMARGARET

*(beat.)* What a strange sculpture.

CAROL JOY (O.S.)

Mom! Not in there. Although *that* is your bedroom for the night, not Alexandra's room.

LadyMargaret shrugs and exits.

ALEXANDRA

Oh, my God.

MARQUISE

I need a chain of sheets, and I need you to take me to the roof.

Alexandra leads him out. Meanwhile, downstairs: Carol Joy and LadyMargaret enter USR. Paxton stands up.

REGINALD

Here they are.

LADYMARGARET

What a handsome young man. Did you also sleep with my husband?

REGINALD

Don't mind her.

PAXTON

Yes! And// it was a truly magnificent experience.

CAROL JOY

//Ahhhhhhhhhh!!

REGINALD

Hm?

CAROL JOY

Who are you?

PAXTON

Carol Joy?

CAROL JOY

Yes?

PAXTON

Hi, I'm so sorry to just burst in here like this. My name is Esteban-Stefano Jacob Alexei Pierre Gonzalez-Pfifferling VII. And I'm not really.

CAROL JOY

*(angered)* What?!

LADYMARGARET

*(taken with Paxton.)* Don't be rude! *Some* of us have fabulous names.

CAROL JOY

You named me!

LADYMARGARET

*(ignoring Carol Joy, to Paxton.)* What brings you here, Mr. Gonzalez-Pfifferling?

PAXTON

Well, I had an interesting discovery recently and I needed to meet Carol Joy

LADYMARGARET

I'm Carol Joy's mother, LadyMargaret, and I'm far more interesting. *(offers her*

*hand.)*

PAXTON

*(he's been sipping invisible coffee, which he now puts down.)* Enchanté, mademoiselle. *(takes her hand.)*

LADYMARGARET

Oh. *(flirty.)*

PAXTON

But anyway, Carol Joy.

CAROL JOY

Yes.

PAXTON

I'm so sorry to just come in here with no warning. I—goodness, um. Well I just really don't even know how to start...

LADYMARGARET

Well, you know, dear, Julie Andrews said to start at the very beginning.

PAXTON

A very good place to start. Thank you!

Carol Joy is very uneasy.

REGINALD

*(to Carol Joy.)* My God, are they *flirting* with *Hammerstein* lyrics?

PAXTON

Well, I was born, I think, in 1979.

LADYMARGARET

Ah! That's when Carol Joy was born.

PAXTON

Right. But yes, born in '79. My parents are Stefano-Estabon Jacob Alexei Guillaume Gonzalez-Pfifferling VI, and his wife Betsy. And they're not really.

REGINALD

Naturally.

PAXTON

Yes! And my brother was a c-section.

LADYMARGARET

Did you grow up in New York?

PAXTON

Yes! And also in Australia, Bosnia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, and Fiji.

LADYMARGARET

*(shocked)* Oh, how //marvelous.

REGINALD

//Carol Joy, how do you know this person?

CAROL JOY

I don't.

LADYMARGARET

Where did you spend most of your upbringing?

PAXTON

*(begins speaking in an Australian dialect, which he will continue unless/until otherwise notated)* The land down under, mate. I was there from kindergarten to the end of middle school. My mum was a wallaby veterinarian in Queensland.

LADYMARGARET

Oh!

REGINALD

Is this not the man who was at the door when you ran away?

CAROL JOY

Yes—no! I thought it was someone else.

PAXTON

But anyway—

EDGAR

CAWWW!! *(drops pigeon on table in front of Paxton)*

PAXTON

Crikey! It's raining pigeons! *(picks pigeon up, addresses Edgar)* Ah, she's a real beaut— nice work, Sheila!

REGINALD

Ah! You're the falconer!

PAXTON

You betcha, mate. That bird there's Sheila, she's my New Guinea golden-crested gryphon. Raised her from a wee little birdlet. Best pigeon huntress in all of Aussie. Isn't she gorgeous?

LADYMARGARET

*(looking Paxton straight in the eye)* Yes, you are.

REGINALD

I knew you knew this man—did you really let him *leave* his *raptor* at our apartment?

CAROL JOY

Mr.—

PAXTON

Rodriguez-Pfifferling.

CAROL JOY

Mr. Rodriguez-Pfifferling—

LADYMARGARET

I thought you said it was Gonzalez-Pfifferling.

PAXTON

Yep, Gonzalez-Rodriguez-Pfifferling; it's a triple-hyphenate.

REGINALD

Who is this man?

CAROL JOY

Whatever your name is—

PAXTON

Call me Jack.

REGINALD

Jack??

CAROL JOY

Jack!!! Why are you here?!

PAXTON

*(beat.)* Pigeons. *(holds up pigeon by wing.)*

Carol Joy is visibly pissed. Reginald coos his hooty, gleeful laugh.

CAROL JOY

Didn't you say you had something to tell me?

PAXTON

Oh right! Yes, well—

At this moment, Henry comes in USR.

HENRY

I'm starving! Can I have a peanut-butter 'n jelly?

PAXTON

Yes, mate, you sure can! (*begins miming the acquisition of materials and creation of a sandwich*) And I'll pour you a cup o' coffee. You like it black, little guy?

HENRY

My mom's never let me have coffee before. You talk funny.

LADYMARGARET

What are you doing?

PAXTON

Making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. What are you doing?

CAROL JOY

Ahem.

PAXTON

Oh, right. LadyMargaret, sweetheart, give me a name.

LADYMARGARET

A what? A name? What kind of name?

PAXTON

(*breaking character, respite from Australian*) Carol Joy, can I get a different reader? She asks too many questions.

REGINALD

What in Christ's name is going on?!

PAXTON

(*back in character and Australian.*) Give me a name, Rej. A person.

REGINALD

(*befuddled and hopeless.*) George Clooney.

PAXTON

Now give me a place.

HENRY

Space. (*runs around the room imitating a space ship with his mouth and arms, then, pointing at the audience*). It got dark outside! I'm hungry! When's dinner?

PAXTON

So, what was it, four, five years ago, now? I get a call from Alfonso Cuarón wanting to know if I can come in to play George Clooney's stunt double in his feature *Gravity*.

RHIANNON

Oh my God, were you in *Gravity*?

PAXTON

Yes, and *First Man, Ad Astra, Lucy in the Sky, Prometheus, The Martian, Interstellar*. I do stunt work exclusively for movies in outer space.

REGINALD

Why?

At this point, Alexandra comes in, unnoticed. During the following monologue, Paxton must be near, possibly even touching not his own bag, but Rhiannon's. Alexandra sees the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder sticking out of the bag and grabs it, thinking it Paxton's headshots and resumes.

PAXTON

I'm scared of the ground. Anyway, I was doing *Gravity* and George Clooney and I got to be really good mates. Sandra was hard to work with, by the way. But anyway, one day when we were wrapping up filming, George comes up and says, "Gustave, I don't think that your—

REGINALD

Gustave? Who's Gustave?

PAXTON

Me. Esteban-Stefano Jacob Alexei Gustave Gonzalez-Rodriguez-Pfifferling VII. And I'm not really.

LADYMARGARET

(*to Reginald.*) Keep up!

PAXTON

*Improv monologue prompt! Character must reveal how he came to find out he was kidnapped in Disney World and is Carol Joy's twin while incorporating the following*



*elements:* [George Clooney, *Gravity*, Ralph the psychic rooster, Priscilla Presley's ex-doula Edith, augury/ornithomancy, an anvil-shaped asteroid, great aunt Charlotte's chifforobe, adopted parents, Tunisia, DNA test, and, of course, his ever-changing, ridiculous, made-up name.] *It must end in tears and the bugging of Carol Joy.*

All are stunned. Carol Joy is mortified at everything and does not know how to respond to this sobbing embrace.

CHARLIE

*(now getting up.)* Ha! Ha ha ha ha! Ha! Take that, woman! If I don't get any money, none of you do!

REGINALD

Ah ha! Look who decided it was a convenient time to regain consciousness.

RHIANNON

My Charlie! *(embraces him.)*

PAXTON

Dad? *(leaves Carol Joy to also hug Charlie.)*

CHARLIE

What? No, get off me! I probably won't even be your step-dad for much longer.

REGINALD

No, no, no. Absolutely not. This cannot be happening. Carol Joy, this man is very clearly a lunatic and cannot possibly be your brother.

LADYMARGARET

Indeed, it's...*(bumbling)* preposterous! Do you really think I would flirt with my own son? Have I no intuition?

PAXTON

Damn, not a one of you even understands "yes, and." Repeat after me, "yes, Jacques has an exciting story, *and* he is Carol Joy's brother."

EDGAR

CAWWW!! *(drops pigeon.)*

LADYMARGARET

You know what, *(throwing her hands up.)* I don't have to worry about this. I'm going to be dead by the end of next week. I've always said I'd rather die rich than live poor, and here we are. This is your problem now. *(pointing to everyone.)*

Immediately, Dr. Toboggan enters DSR.

DR. TOBOGGAN

People of the Penthouse, I have returned!

CAROL JOY

Oh, brother. Alright, everyone, into the next room! C'mon!

She leads everyone present but Dr. Toboggan and LadyMargaret off SL. As soon as everyone's off, the contractor comes from SL, muttering nonsense, taking tools from his pockets and tossing them about the room. He's been broken. He exits DSR.

DR. TOBOGGAN

LadyMargaret, you do not, in tact, have tobogrobanpanocyclitis. Or any topical disease, for that matter.

LADYMARGARET

What?

DR. TOBOGGAN

You've been fined this whole time, it was a misfortunate misprognosis. You should live a long, phosphorus life.

LADYMARGARET

Oh, how awful.

DR. TOBOGGAN

So sorry for the contusion. We were all really hopeful. Buh-bye now! (*Exeunt DSR.*)

CAROL JOY

(*peeking in SL.*) Is he gone already? (*Seeing LadyMargaret's pale complexion.*) That bad, huh? What did he say? (*Entering.*)

LADYMARGARET

It's all taking a turn for the worst...

CAROL JOY

Oh...how much more time?

LADYMARGARET

Inconclusive.

CAROL JOY

Oh, mom, I'm so sorry. Can I do anything?

LADYMARGARET

*(snapping back, standing up.)* Help me prove that that nimrod isn't your brother!

CAROL JOY

What?

The rest enter back SL.

CHARLIE

Now, listen son, *(following Paxton in, grabbing his shoulders)* if you are Carol Joy's brother—

LADYMARGARET

And he isn't!

CHARLIE

Shh! As I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by your mother, who spitefully left you unattended as a newborn outside a Magic Kingdom restroom—

LADYMARGARET

How dare you!

CHARLIE

Shh! Rude, hateful, mean woman. Anyway, as the long-lost, prodigal brother of Carol Joy, you are the sole beneficiary of a very vast and powerful estate and poultry empire.

PAXTON

Oh wow! I get that *and* a new family!

CHARLIE

Yes! Well—see, you probably won't get to hold on to both, but I guarantee the family isn't the part you want to keep. They're very spoiled and generally poor in spirit.

REGINALD

Now, now, see here!—

CHARLIE

Shh!

PAXTON

Alright, look, guys this isn't supposed to be about fighting. It's about play! We're having fun, living in many truths, accepting each other's ideas.

CHARLIE

Sure, sure, yes, my friend. I agree. Feng Shui (*holds up peace sign*).

Paxton bows to him. Charlie seems annoyed but bows back.

REGINALD

What is he doing? Why can't I ever understand what the bloody hell this man is doing?

CHARLIE

So, Jack. (*placing his hands back around Paxton's shoulders*.) With all these newfound responsibilities, what with a multi-million dollar enterprise and all, you'll certainly need someone to at least run the company smoothly.

PAXTON

Yes! I've never had much of an interest in free markets nor birds in the context of mass food production.

CHARLIE

Well, then, Jack. Consider this my application for CEO.

PAXTON

You've got the job! And benefits, too!

They hug.

LADYMARGARET

(*outraged*.) Unhand the man who is not my son right this instant!

REGINALD

Now, hold on, Miss Dying Woman, Not My Problem—why do you care all of a sudden what happens to the fortune you won't have in a week?

LADYMARGARET

Shut up!

RHIANNON

Oh, Charlie! We can live happily ever after in Texas now! You can give me lavish things and I can give you fantastic sex!

CHARLIE

The only thing you'll be getting from me is a cease and desist.

Henry has been rummaging through the kitchen and has finally settled on a fudge-sicle from the freezer, which he begins to eat.

PAXTON

I really don't have much use for a huge estate either.

CHARLIE

In that case—

PAXTON

*(to Henry.)* What's your name, kiddo?

HENRY

Henry Augustus Cavett the Third. But I'm five years old. *(does the thing from earlier with the hands again, incorporating the fudge-sicle.)*

PAXTON

Yes, that's perfect. I leave my entire estate to you, Henry Augustus Cavett the Third, aged five. *(aside to Carol Joy.)* Watch this! I love a good status game.

REGINALD

What! Henry is—five!! He's not even in the family!! Carol Joy, why are you so quiet? What did the deranged man just say to you??

PAXTON

Is there anything at all I can do for you, my liege? *(bowing to Henry.)*

HENRY

Anything?

PAXTON

Anything, my liege.

HENRY

I really, really, very want to marry Louise.

PAXTON

Of course, my liege. Where is this lovely fair maiden, Louise?

HENRY

Upstairs!

PAXTON

Lead the way, my liege!

They start toward USR.

REGINALD

*(barring the way.)* Stand back, fiend! You may own everything else, but you

cannot keep my daughter from marrying rich!

Paxton proceeds to make hissing-cat noises and bark at Reginald, who runs away whimpering.

LADYMARGARET

Now, see here! You say George Clooney did a DNA test—I want the papers. I want proof before you just come in here and take all my money.

REGINALD

Here, here! What the uninterested invalid said!

PAXTON

My liege, do you permit me to show these lowly peasants my documents?

HENRY

*(thinking for a moment.)* Yes. *(wipes fudge-sicle off his mouth with his sleeve.)*

PAXTON

Thank you, my liege.

HENRY

But then can we marry Louise?

PAXTON

Yes, of course, me liege. Now where did I put my briefcase...Aha!

Paxton mimes finding a briefcase and opening it on the coffee table, pulling out invisible documents.

PAXTON

See for yourself. *(hands invisible documents to LadyMargaret.)*

LADYMARGARET

What? No, this is serious, I want real documents.

PAXTON

Those documents are very real.

LADYMARGARET

You, sir, have handed me air. This may seem like a game to you, but I'll have you know this is very serious business.

PAXTON

*(long beat, irritated.)* Ah, silly me. Here are the real papers. *(does the same thing again.)*

LadyMargaret attempts to strangle him, and Carol Joy and Charlie have to pull her back. During this, Alexandra comes in with an iPad and crouches behind the island. A chain of sheets, down which Marquise will climb, must fall from the catwalk onto the “balcony area”/utmost DS area, preferably off to one side.

REGINALD

Now, see here, man, we really will need legitimate documentation.

PAXTON

Which I have twice now provided.

CAROL JOY

Are you sure you didn't just leave them at your hotel?

PAXTON

Yes! Apologies, I left them at my hotel.

CAROL JOY

Thank God. I mean, damn it.

PAXTON

My liege, let us now rescue Louise.

REGINALD

No you don't!

PAXTON

Grrrrrruf!! (*proceeds to chase Reginald around the vicinity making all sorts of aggressive animal noises*)

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*Drops pigeon.*)

The lights go out: Various outbursts of annoyance/surprise. Paxton yelps and whimpers like a dog. During this next bit, Marquise descends from the catwalk down the sheet-rope. He is lit so that the audience sees him, but it must be believable that the cast would not.

REGINALD

Oh, please, God, no, I'm so tired.

LADYMARGARET

Call the electrician!

CAROL JOY

It's your apartment.

LADYMARGARET

No, it isn't—it's his.

PAXTON

No, it isn't—it's Henry's.

REGINALD

I'm just entirely unconvinced that's even legal.

HENRY

I like this apartment.

REGINALD

Very astute of you, Henry.

Marquise has descended. A firework goes off downstage/balcony.

ALL

Ahhh!!

REGINALD

What the devil was that!

There is a quick bright flash in the middle of the room, and, lo, a single ceiling light illuminates Marquise looking as dapper as hell, smoke curling around him.

ALL

Ahhhh!!

REGINALD

Where the devil did you come from?

MARQUISE

I have been called out of ze ether for the first time in a century.

REGINALD

What?

MARQUISE

Behold! I am ze great and powerful Viktor!

At this line, all the lights flare just white bright hot in an instant before settling back down and leaving the lone spot on Marquise.

LADYMARGARET

Ahhh, oh please, God, help!!



MARQUISE

Silence! I will tell you how you may be helped soon enough. Viktor will tell all!

REGINALD

Do you have a last name, Victor?

LADYMARGARET

Shhh! Don't incur his wrath!

REGINALD

You get to meet an apparition before you die! How exciting! Let's ask questions!

MARQUISE

I haven't a last name, zis is new phenomenon. My mozer vas a badger, and my fazer vas an incubus. I am a sorcerer of ze old vorld.

HENRY

A sorcerer!? Oh, please, mister, do a spell!

LADYMARGARET

NO!

MARQUISE

As you vish. Trodd hi fi yn fadfall ddŵr!

A small explosion where he was, and that light goes out. Another explosion an instant later somewhere else in the room and a new light illuminates Marquise.

LADYMARGARET

AaaaAhhh... (*whimpers*).

HENRY

Woow. Another!

LADYMARGARET

AAaahahah!

MARQUISE

Ni yw'r marchogion sy'n dweud "ni!"

An array of fireworks and flames fly out of his robe. Utter chaos. Yelps of alarm.

REGINALD

Hang it all, man! I can't sue a spirit for property damage!

MARQUISE

Now! No more requests—I don't have much time before I shall be pulled back into ze ether.

PAXTON

*(blubbing)* What? Such an outrageous premise demands more specificity in improvisational theatre.

REGINALD

What?

MARQUISE

Silence!

Once again, a blinding flare of lights. And a few fireworks.

HENRY

Wow!

PAXTON

Carol Joy, I was not aware I could bring costumes and pyrotechnics, this is not a fair—

MARQUISE

Enough!! Dewch â'ch meirw allan!

A spotlight on Paxton in a recliner, and the chair ejects him out onto the carpet.

LADYMARGARET

AAhhhhh!!

PAXTON

What the... *(fearful for the first time.)*

MARQUISE

Lo, I have come as an agent of fate—you, LadyMargaret Redd—

LADYMARGARET

Ahooohh! *(whimpers.)*

MARQUISE

You must—

LADYMARGARET

AAHHhh! *(whimpers.)*

MARQUISE

You must leave—

LADYMARGARET

*(sniveling)* PleeEaasse nooOOoo!!

MARQUISE

Vill you shut up and let me finish!

LadyMargaret squeaks quiet.

MARQUISE

You must leave ze entirety of your fortune to your daughter's maid!

Beat.

CAROL JOY

What? *(beat.)* Alexandra?

MARQUISE

Yes.

CHARLIE

You're joking.

MARQUISE

If I made joke, it would be funny.

REGINALD

No, no, no, hang on just a minute! *(taking careful, particular pains.)* You mean to tell me that *you* are a multi-millennially-aged supernatural entity—

MARQUISE

Yes.

REGINALD

Who has come to this apartment—

MARQUISE

Yes.

REGINALD

To tell this woman—

MARQUISE

Yes.

REGINALD

That she must leave her small fortune—

MARQUISE

Yes.

REGINALD

To her medievalist second cousin?!

MARQUISE

Yes.

REGINALD

*(beat, then exploding.)* What possible outcome from such a thing would be even slightly important in the scheme of world history?!

MARQUISE

You know how zese sings go. I cannot tell you. *(beat)*. Your small mind cannot comprehend ze scheme of ze universe, and zere's only so much you can know before fate is altogezer screwed up anyway.

REGINALD

*(mocking his accent.)* Vell can you give me a hint?

LADYMARGARET

Reginald, you nincompoop, please! I'll do it, I don't mind, just stop bothering the demon!

REGINALD

You superstitious old bat! You're dying of a horrific tropical disease in two week's time. Wouldn't it be more fun to go out on a hex or something? *(Beat.)* Come to think of it—shouldn't *you* know about the tobogrobanpanocyclitis, Victor the omniscient??

MARQUISE

Qvit attempting one-uppance on an immortal, you silly man! While I certainly can dole out physical retribution, my punishments usually involve eternal torture in ze afterlife.

LADYMARGARET

AAooooHHH!!! I'll do *anything* you say! Anything!! I'll leave it all to the poet!!!

REGINALD

But—it's not even your money any more!!

LADYMARGARET

What are you talking about?

REGINALD

Woman! Do you not even remember... Ah ha! Bingo! (*quite pleased with himself*)  
Alright, Count Dracula, if you know everything, tell me: who is at this  
moment the sole beneficiary of the True Redd estate?

MARQUISE

I do not play games with cumbersome mortals. But if you are referring to ze  
man who says he is her brozer—

LADYMARGARET

Don't test him, Reginald! He knows everything!!

MARQUISE

—zat man is not who he says he is.

REGINALD

Well, no shit, Sherlock, he's been saying that since he got here. John Jacob  
Jingle-Heimer Gustave Pierre Alexei—

PAXTON

Actually it's—

REGINALD

Don't you dare correct me you blithering idiot so help me God I will find you  
in the dark and punt you into last week I'm trying to make a goddamn point  
goddammit!! Where was I?

RHIANNON

John Jacob Jingle-Heimer Gustave—

REGINALD

Yes, yes, yes, thank you. Esteban-Stefan Gonzalez-Rodriguez-Lopez-  
Pffferling VII. (*mocking*) And I'm not really. (*normal voice.*) So, many thanks,  
we did not need an old-world sorcerer to tell us that one.

CAROL JOY

But, Rej, I think what (*it is hard for her to say "Gustave"*) Gustave meant the  
whole time by saying that was that he was not actually that big long name and  
that we has actually my brother—

REGINALD

Yes, I know what he meant!

CHARLIE

But none of you seem to remember that Henry actually owns everything now.

HENRY

That's right!

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*drops pigeon.*)

LADYMARGARET

Aaaahhh!

MARQUISE

Silence! Zis man is neizer your relative nor who he says he vas not! Behold!

A great fire blazes in Marquise's outstretched hand, and in its place is now the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder.

MARQUISE

I present to you ze headshot and resume of ze actor hired to play her brozer.

CHARLIE

What are you talking about? Who keeps a headshot and resume in an envelope marked **CONFIDENTIAL**?

CAROL JOY

Wait a minute. Isn't that the folder that was sticking out of that actress's bag earlier?

REGINALD

Nonsense.

CAROL JOY

No, it was definitely sticking out of her bag when the contractor kept passing it into the kitchen.

MARQUISE

Silence! Zis is ze headshot and resume of ze actor pretending to be her brozer!

CHARLIE

Well, are you going to let us look at it?

REGINALD

No, I'm really perfectly content, I believe you wholeheartedly, Mr. Wizard, sir.

LADYMARGARET

Yes, heavens, me too! This man is not my son, and I will give everything to the maid—what's her name?

CAROL JOY

Alexandra Johnson, your second cousin.

LADYMARGARET

Alexandra Johnson, I will give everything to Alexandra Johnson, my good warlock.

REGINALD

Oh, no you won't! Hang on just a minute, man—what *exactly* will happen if Alexandra doesn't get everything?

MARQUISE

You know I cannot tell you zat.

REGINALD

See there, LadyMargaret, he's bluffing. You're a cheeky wizard, you are!

MARQUISE

Ah, but I don't bluff. I will lay a terrible spell on all of you if she does not give everything to ze maid. Zis is zat important!

LADYMARGARET

Oh no!! Please, please, no, I leave it all to her! I swear, I swear on the life of my grandson!

REGINALD

You don't have a grandson.

LADYMARGARET

*(beat)*. I swear on the life of my granddaughter!

REGINALD

Unbelievable. You know what, *I* swear on the life of *my daughter* that you *won't* leave everything to Alexandra!

PAXTON

Aye, swear all you want on whatever family members, mates. We're forgetting that Henry here is the sole proprietor of the entire estate.

Light on Henry, who is caught in the act of trying to cross his eyes by putting his index finger on his nose. He notices the light. Light off.

CAROL JOY

Nope. (*looking up to God*). I didn't want any of this. You did it all wrong.

Charlie grabs the **CONFIDENTIAL** folder from Marquise.

CHARLIE

I'm going to get to the bottom of this. (*he begins opening the folder and fiddling through its contents.*) Because I know no actor keeps a headshot and resume in a folder marked **CONF**—shit.

LADYMARGARET

And tell us what you found, detective.

CAROL JOY

Wait a minute—Viktor, can you get us a light?

MARQUISE

Nid ni bellach yw'r Marchogion Sy'n Dweud 'Ni'. Ni bellach yw'r Marchogion Sy'n Dweud 'Ecky-eky-eky-eky-pikang-zoop-boing-goodem-zu-owly-zhiv.'

A light bulb now glows from his extended hand.

REGINALD

All that for a light?

MARQUISE

Yes, zat's ze spell.

REGINALD

Well, what's the spell to turn it off?

MARQUISE

'Tis ond clwyf cnawd.

The light bulb extinguishes.

REGINALD

Brilliant.

CAROL JOY

Hey turn it back on!

REGINALD

That won't be necessary.



CAROL JOY

Fine.

Carol Joy shoves Marquise out of his spotlight and begins looking at the contents of the package.

REGINALD

You're just going to let her do that?

CAROL JOY

See, this isn't a headshot and resume! This is a private detective's report of Charlie's extramarital affairs!

PAXTON

Yeah! How do you explain that, Viktor the great and powerful?

RHIANNON

Ooooo! *(to LadyMargaret.)* You did this! You leave my Charlie alone, you old hag! Let him live his life in privacy!

LADYMARGARET

Affairsss, plural? With an "s"? My dear, you can have him. I hope a piano falls on you both. Could you arrange that, oh spirit?

MARQUISE

Enough! *(he now bangs his staff on the ground and fireworks go off again.)* I obviously grabbed ze wrong file. *(he points to the file and enchants.)* Ai llyncu Affricanaidd neu Ewropeaidd ydyw?

The file bursts into flames. Carol Joy immediately drops it.

CAROL JOY

Ahh!! What'd you do that for?

HENRY

Mr. Perryman, could you help me?

REGINALD

What's wrong, Henry? Could you give us a light, Viktor?

MARQUISE

Ydych chi'n awgrymu bod cnau coco yn mudo?

REGINALD

Well, now, see here, that light spell was much shorter than the last one.

The light comes on above Henry, who is completely and comically entangled in Rhiannon's bag. His head and torso is inside of it. Rhiannon's headshot and resume, stapled together, falls out, and lands with the headshot face down, resume face-up. Whilst Reginald is helping Henry out of the bag, Marquise notices and picks it up slyly.

CAROL JOY

Okay, is that not the bag the actress had from earlier?

REGINALD

Nonsense. (*finishes untangling Henry.*) There you go, Henry.

PAXTON

That's my bag, sweetheart.

Charlie picks up a pantie that has slipped out of the bag and holds it up, looking concernedly at Paxton.

MARQUISE

Behold! (*The lights dim and more fireworks go off.*) I present to you ze headshot and resume of ze actor hired to play her brozer!

Another fire display, and this time he holds the headshot face out.

REGINALD

Oh, good heavens!

CHARLIE

It seems you have grabbed the wrong file yet again.

MARQUISE

What? Shit.

Carol Joy once again grabs the headshot/resume from Marquise.

HENRY

That's a pretty picture of you, Ms. McIntosh.

CAROL JOY

What—this is you! My God, down to the mole!

MARQUISE

Down to ze mole.

CAROL JOY

But this is an acting resume?

RHIANNON

Awww, shucks, you caught me! Surprise! I act too.

CAROL JOY

Uh-huh. So your escort name is Rou Rou Hutchinson and your stage name is *(reading)* Rhiannon McIntosh.

RHIANNON

Why yes.

HENRY

Why are you talking so funny, Ms. Rhiannon?

CAROL JOY

*WHY* does Henry know this woman?!

LADYMARGARET

Yes, child, why do you know the strumpet?

HENRY

What's a strumpet?

LADYMARGARET

Carol Joy, the strumpet's name?

REGINALD

Is of no importance.

CAROL JOY

Is Rhiannon McIntosh.

LADYMARGARET

*(to Henry.)* Child, how do you know Rhiannon's name?

HENRY

Because she told it to me.

CAROL JOY

And when was that?

HENRY

I don't know, the first time we met.

LADYMARGARET

And in what way would you describe the circumstances of your first meeting?

Henry stares blankly.

REGINALD

Henry, why don't you run along upstairs to the playroom?

HENRY

I can't see anything, Mr. Perryman.

REGINALD

Oh, you poor child, Viktor, can you light this poor child's path to the stair?

MARQUISE

No! I vill do no more tasks for silly mortals, I grow qvite veary. LadyMargaret!

LADYMARGARET

*(cowering.)* Yes, oh spirit?

MARQUISE

Ve must now make ze binding pact vich vill supernaturally ensure your immediate transferral of ze entirety of your vealth to ze maid.

LADYMARGARET

OOoooooO. *(whimpers)*.

MARQUISE

Hither, voman!

LADYMARGARET

Yes, oh spirit!

LadyMargaret timidly joins Marquise in the center of the room in the light. LadyMargaret quakes and whimpers as Marquise does a most bizarre dance and all sorts of vocalizes and gibberish nonsense syllables in all sorts of pitches and tones just flow forth from his face. Fireworks pop off here and there. This is a bit. Sometime during this, ISAAC WEISS, aged 41, slips in DSR, in the dark, unnoticed by everyone and the audience.

MARQUISE

Ze room is now appropriately charged. Your left arm, madam.

Very frightened, LadyMargaret slowly raises her left arm away from her, her face averted. Marquise waits a beat, then grabs it passionately. LadyMargaret yelps.

MARQUISE

Now repeat after me. Sut ydych chi'n gwybod ei bod hi'n wrach?

LadyMargaret gives it her best shot.

MARQUISE

Tawel! Tawel! Tawel! Tawel!

LadyMargaret gives it a go.

MARQUISE

Mae yna ffyrdd o ddweud a yw hi'n wrach.

LadyMargaret tries.

MARQUISE

Beth ydych chi'n ei wneud gyda gwrachod?

And again.

MARQUISE

A beth ydych chi'n ei losgi ar wahân i wrachod?

And again.

MARQUISE

Felly, pam mae gwrachod yn llosgi?

And again.

MARQUISE

Felly, sut ydyn ni'n dweud a yw hi wedi'i gwneud o bren?

And again.

MARQUISE

Beth sydd hefyd yn arnofio mewn dŵr?

And again.

MARQUISE

Da iawn. Byddwn yn defnyddio fy ngraddfeydd mwyaf.

And finally. Beat.

MARQUISE

Eh. Close enough.

He claps his hands and the most fireworks go off. Screaming and whatnot.

MARQUISE

You and all your kinfolk are now bound by penalty of eternal torture by pangveens in the afterlife to henceforth immediately honor your sacred agreement to leave ze entirety of your fortune to Alexandra Johnson.

LADYMARGARET

Oh, yes, your imminence! (*traumatized, bowing.*)

REGINALD

Torture by whom?

MARQUISE

Pangveens.

REGINALD

Pang-veens?

MARQUISE

No, pangveens.

REGINALD

What the blazes is a pang-veen?

MARQUISE

Pangveens! Little aqvatic flightless black and vite birds who vaddle around like zis (*imitates penguins*) in ze Southern Hemisphere? Do you not have zem in zis millennia? Vhat a shame.

REGINALD

Oh, the bloody fool's talking about bloody penguins. What—how the devil do you suggest a host of penguins—

MARQUISE

Ah-ta-ta! A vaddle, a colony, a rookery, a crèche, a raft, or perhaps a huddle are all appropriate collective nouns for pangveens in specific circumstances, but never a host.

REGINALD

(*beat*). Well, alright, then, how do you suggest a *raft* of penguins would be capable of torturing a human spirit?

MARQUISE

Live long enough, you see...many things. (*Beat.*) Alright, time to go!

CHARLIE

Wait, man, hold on a sec, if you will—I want to know where you got the

**CONFIDENTIAL** folder.

PAXTON

Yeah! I want to know how you got her headshot and resume, you budgie smuggler!

CHARLIE

You *what?*

REGINALD

Yes. And really, you have yet to prove that Gustave Esteban over here is a fraud, and as gladly I'd like him to be, we're still going to need evidence, or else we'll all be destined to perish evermore at the beaks and flippers of a rookery.

MARQUISE

No time!

CAROL JOY

Wait a minute! Take off those sunglasses—aren't you the bird guy??

PAXTON

No, Sheila, I'm the bird guy.

Everyone groans.

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*drops pigeon on Isaac*).

ISAAC

Ahh!

Everyone perks up at the very new voice.

CAROL JOY

Who said that?

LADYMARGARET

Who's there?

CHARLIE

I thought it was you.

RHIANNON

Wasn't me.

MARQUISE

Show yourself!

HENRY

Kind of hard without a light.

ALEXANDRA

Say something, dammit!

REGINALD

Alexandra? Where the hell have you been?

ALEXANDRA

Shit.

ISAAC

Oh, it's...it's a dead bird.

LadyMargaret moans in fear of more spirits.

REGINALD

Alright, there is unmistakably a new voice in the room, so, new voice, *whence* and *from whom* do you come?

ISAAC

Oh, I'm so sorry, are you talking to me?

REGINALD

God, I hope so.

ISAAC

I am so, so sorry, I was trying to figure out what this bird was, it landed on my head...gosh, apologies, I knocked but I don't think anyone could hear me, there was a lot of chanting and bangs, I guess they were fireworks, and I just couldn't find a good time to interrupt. I'm so sorry.

CAROL JOY

Oh, we get it, believe me. But who are you?

ISAAC

Oh, I'm Isaac.

CAROL JOY

Isaac who?



ISAAC

Isaac Weiss. Oh. Mercy, I do hope I have the right address. Is Carol Joy here?

CAROL JOY

This is she.

ISAAC

Oh, Carol Joy, it's me, Isaac!

CAROL JOY

Isaac who?

ISAAC

Isaac Weiss...

CAROL JOY

Nope. Sorry, I don't know any Isaacs.

ISAAC

But, Carol Joy, we—

CAROL JOY

What'd you say your last name was?

ISAAC

Weiss...

CAROL JOY

You aren't related to Melissa, are you?

ISAAC

No, I don't think so. Are you related to Melissa?

CAROL JOY

No.

MARQUISE

Silence! (*bangs staff with more fireworks.*) It is time to make my grand exit.

ISAAC

Oh! Before you go, sir, I must say, your Welsh is perfectly flawless.

REGINALD

His what?

ISAAC

His Welsh! He speaks Welsh very well. I had a congregant who taught me the language for years—I'm a rabbi, see. Anyway, this man here just brilliantly about quoted the whole Sir Bedevere and the witch scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. "How do you know she is a witch?" "And what do you burn apart from witches?" Etc etc. And then someone would repeat it very poorly, but Welsh is devilishly tricky. Your performance, sir, on the contrary, was effortless.

MARQUISE

I know not of what you're talking. I will be going now.

REGINALD

Oh, my God, we've been had.

ISAAC

Oh, wait, before you go! I *must* know, how were you and the woman behind the counter able to synchronize the lights so well?

REGINALD

Woman behind the counter??

CAROL JOY

Jesus, we did have those professional lights installed what was it, two summers ago?

ISAAC

This performance art was just top notch! May I ask the occasion?

REGINALD

We've been duped, I tell you! Duped!

CAROL JOY

Grab him!

CHARLIE

Don't let him get away!

LADYMARGARET

Don't anger the spirit!

HENRY

He isn't a spirit, he's a sorcerer!

LADYMARGARET

You know what I meant!

REGINALD

No, you blockheads, he isn't either!

RHIANNON

Someone check for the girl behind the counter!

PAXTON

I knew he wasn't a real act!

LADYMARGARET

That's my foot, you imbecile!

CAROL JOY

Ow, dammit!

REGINALD

Careful, mind you!

ISAAC

Oh, excuse me!

LADYMARGARET

Unhand me! I am not the girl behind the counter!

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*drops pigeon*).

Just now, Marquise sets off the most fireworks for an escape attempt. This lasts for a good bit. We see utter chaos in the flashes of fireworks. Shouting, ducking, crawling, running into each other, much comedy in periodically illuminated chaotic stage pictures. Marquise finally makes it outside to the balcony and chuckles to himself and he jumps on the sheet chain rope to begin his ascent—it falls from the catwalk and he crashes onto the balcony. He sits up.

MARQUISE

Shit.

The fireworks stop. Silence. The lights turn on. We see all sorts of crazy stage pictures—how the characters have comically ended up whilst trying to cope with the copious fireworks. Beat.

REGINALD

Good, that's over.

And then immediately the smoke alarm and sprinklers go off.

CAROL JOY

Ahhhhh!!!!

Now, knocking at the door. It is the SUPERINTENDENT of the apartment building, balding male, 60s.

LADYMARGARET

Not one good thing has come through that door today!

REGINALD

Starting with you!

Reginald is standing near the door, which Paxton has gone to open. LadyMargaret charges, and Reginald jumps out of the way right as LadyMargaret jumps to tackle him, and Paxton has opened the door for the superintendent, whom she now tackles to the ground instead of Reginald.

SUPERINTENDENT

*(wind knocked out of him)* Help!

REGINALD

Look what you've done, LadyMargaret, you've tackled the superintendent.

LADYMARGARET

Well, you started it! *(getting up, disregarding the superintendent.)*

SUPERINTENDENT

I came...*(getting up.)* to see about several noise complaints...*(noticing the complete mess.)* what the hell?

PAXTON

*(no more Australian.)* Carol Joy, is the audition over? I've really got to go home and feed my cat, and I've got another audition in the morning. When should I expect to hear back from you?

CAROL JOY

*(whispering severely, between clenched teeth.)* Shut up, you idiot!

LADYMARGARET

What did you just say?

SUPERINTENDENT

What happened in here?!

REGINALD

Oh, my God... you're an actor?

PAXTON

Yes...?

REGINALD

*(beaming)* Well! You had me fooled!

LADYMARGARET

*(to Carol Joy)* What?! You hired an actor to play my son and steal all my money!

CAROL JOY

No, wait, I can explain—

HENRY

*(loud, cranky, tugging at Rhiannon's clothes.)* Ms. McIntosh, I want my piece of candy.

RHIANNON

Shhh. I don't have any candy, Henry.

HENRY

*(on the very verge of tantrum.)* Last time you kissed Mr. Perryman, you promised me if I didn't tell anyone about you kissing Mr. Perryman, you'd give me a piece of candy! I haven't told anyone and I want my piece of candy!!!

CAROL JOY

Kissed Mr. Perryman, huh?

REGINALD

Won't be getting any candy now, will we, Henry?

CHARLIE

Ah-ha! See, LadyMargaret, I never cheated on you. It was Reginald who cheated on Carol Joy and used his mistress to frame me!

LadyMargaret has found the **CONFIDENTIAL** envelope and now begins to pull out, one by one, the pictures of the girls with whom Charlie has carried on, shoving them in his face before tossing them. And finally she hits him with the folder in a fluster. Louise comes in with earphones on, sees the havoc, and takes them off, gawking. Alexandra has found Paxton's headshot and resume and now comes out in eagerness.

ALEXANDRA

See! See! You're not an actor, you're her brother!

PAXTON

Wow. I'm impressing myself today.

ALEXANDRA

I mean—No! You're an actor!

REGINALD

You poor girl, we got there a while ago.

SUPERINTENDENT

If someone does not tell me what happened in the next five seconds, I will evict every single one of you!

LADYMARGARET

I don't live here! Furthermore, I'd just as well buy the building before I deigned to permit some plebeian to direct my movements.

REGINALD

I'm terribly sorry, sir—calm down, LadyMargaret! Please excuse Her Majesty. I believe the man culpable for the damage you perceive would be the wizard.

CAROL JOY

Yes, the wizard did all of this.

CHARLIE

He had fireworks!

RHIANNON

Well, except the girl behind the counter is partially to blame.

REGINALD

Surely.

CHARLIE

And the wizard would never have shown up if it hadn't been for her! (*points at Alexandra.*)

ALEXANDRA

What? I don't know anything about a wizard, don't blame me!

CAROL JOY

Well, and we don't think he was actually a wizard anymore.

REGINALD

Right. He was just speaking Welsh.

PAXTON

Right, according to Isaac, the man we don't know who knows Carol Joy.

CAROL JOY

Right. So the wizard, or rather, the one who isn't a wizard and the girl behind the counter are the people you're looking for. Does that make sense?

The superintendent shifts his stance in utter perplexity, and accidentally steps on a pigeon, horrified.

CAROL JOY

Oh, the pigeons are the falconer's problem.

CHARLIE

Who isn't the brother anymore.

RHIANNON

Right. Well the brother isn't the brother anymore either. You see, the falconer who was the brother isn't the brother and is really an actor, so the brother, or rather, the actor who isn't the brother isn't the falconer. Does that make sense?

SUPERINTENDENT

Not one bit.

REGINALD

Well and since the big fireworks we still don't know the whereabouts of the wizard who isn't the wizard, and we've never yet known the identity of the girl behind the counter. And, really, Carol Joy, what happened to the real bird man?

CAROL JOY

Toward the end I thought he was the wizard who isn't the wizard.

CHARLIE

Ah, who therefore might be the falconer! But that doesn't help you, superintendent, because we haven't seen the wizard who isn't the wizard who might be the falconer since the fireworks.

REGINALD

Now, superintendent—

SUPERINTENDENT

*(seeing construction tools scattered around the floor)* What are *those* doing here??

REGINALD

Oh, those probably belong to the contractor.

SUPERINTENDENT

Contractor?? I didn't sign off on any construction papers!

REGINALD

Oh, well, they're just adding onto the penthouse, taking out a wall or two—

SUPERINTENDENT

What??!

REGINALD

It's really of no immediate importance, and if you really must know, we'll get to it later, but as I was saying—

SUPERINTENDENT

But—

REGINALD

Ah-ta-ta-ta!—As I was saying, since we can't place or identify the wizard who isn't the wizard who may be the falconer nor the girl behind the counter, the indirect culprit for all of this is my wife Carol Joy, who hired the falconer who might be the wizard who isn't the wizard. She hates pigeons, you see.

CAROL JOY

But I only hired the falconer because of her! (*points to Lady Margaret.*)

LADYMARGARET

And I told you, I've seen a psychopharmahypnotherapist. (*sticks her tongue out at Carol Joy.*)

REGINALD

But, in any case, she hired him. Is that clear?

SUPERINTENDENT

No, but it's consistent.

CAROL JOY

Well, but, see, look here! (*bending over, points emphatically to the scratches the furniture have made on the floor from the brawl between Rhiannon and Lady Margaret.*) This damage was done by my mother and her husband's lover!

LADYMARGARET

But she's not my husband's lover, even though he has several, she's my daughter's husband's lover.

CAROL JOY

Right, my mother and the one who isn't her husband's lover did this—so it's



his fault! (*points to Reginald.*)

REGINALD

Well, now, see here—if he hadn't slept around, then I wouldn't have gotten the one who isn't her husband's lover to play the one who is her husband's lover, and she wouldn't have fought with the one who isn't his lover, and the floor never would have been scuffed in the first place, so really it's his fault (*pointing to Charlie.*)

CHARLIE

Well I just never would've even married her if it hadn't have been for the money!

REGINALD

Oh, yes, it's all about the money. We're all fighting over her money because she's dying next week of a rare tropical disease she got from a bad horsefly in Tobago.

LADYMARGARET

No, I'm not.

ALL

What??

CAROL JOY

But Dr. Toboggan—

LADYMARGARET

Said it was an unfortunate misdiagnosis about half an hour ago. I'm perfectly healthy.

REGINALD

I want a second opinion.

CAROL JOY

So, it's her doctor's fault!!

CHARLIE

Well, I mean it's still her fault. She's got the money. Woulda happened eventually.

LADYMARGARET

Well, don't blame me! It's not my fault I have money.

RHIANNON

It's her dead husband's fault.

REGINALD

Yes! So there's your culprit, superintendent. He's awaiting his reckoning six feet under, thirty miles outside Dallas. Glad we could sort that out.

CAROL JOY

Well, and if you think about it, he only ever had money because of the chickens, so really—

LOUISE

Everybody be quiet!!!!

Radio silence for the first time this whole production.

LOUISE

You are all awful! All of you!! Look at yourselves! You are about to blame CHICKENS in TEXAS for the destruction of the apartment none of you own! The “wizard” is hiding behind Flora Dern, by the way.

Marquise, hearing the gig's up, comes out from behind Flora Dern.

MARQUISE

Oh, hey guys...

LOUISE

You're miserable, you don't enjoy anything, you've got no regards for anyone. None of you! You fight over Louis Vuitton cufflinks and vacation homes in Croatia! Who does that! Huh? No, I want to know! How did you end up like this? Hm? *(Beat.)* Nothing? *(Beat.)* Well, fine then. But I've got news for you. *(To Carol Joy.)* I took your spit off a martini glass and put it in a tube and mailed it to a personal genomics service.

CAROL JOY

No...

REGINALD

Louise...

LADYMARGARET

You wouldn't!

LOUISE

I would and I did! Nice to see you, too, Mimi. It's time you met what became of your son. He's come all the way from Seattle, and he's a good bit better than all of you, so take notes.

CHARLIE

What are you talking about?

LOUISE

Rabbi Isaac Weiss, born Randall Redd, meet your family.

ISAAC

Uh...hi.

Silence charged with shock and horror.

EDGAR

CAWWW!! (*Drops pigeon.*)

Blackout. *Fin.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following is a long list of works of writing in all sorts of media. Teleplays, screenplays, plays, novels, poems. They have influenced me, and thereby this work, in many regards—structurally, stylistically, technically, and thematically. They appear, again, in no conceivable order whatsoever.

- Peter Bogdanovich's *What's Up, Doc?*, 1973  
Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy*, 1965  
Bill Peet's *The Sword in the Stone*, 1963  
Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895  
Mitchell Hurwitz's *Arrested Development*, 2003  
Rob McElhenney's *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, 2005  
Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, 1977  
Kaufman and Hart's *You Can't Take It with You*, 1936  
Woody Allen's *Don't Drink the Water*, 1966  
Rian Johnson's *Knives Out*, 2019  
Sam Shepard's *True West*, 1980  
Monty Python's *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, 1975  
Phoebe Waller-Bridge's *Fleabag*, 2016  
John Cleese's *A Fish Called Wanda*, 1988  
Fred Ebb and Bob Fosse's *Chicago*, 1975  
Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy's *A Mighty Wind*, 2003  
Martin McDonagh's *A Behanding in Spokane*, 2010  
John James Audubon's *Writings and Drawings*, 1999  
George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, 1913  
Jonathan Franzen's *Freedom*, 2010  
Dale Launer's *My Cousin Vinny*, 1992  
Beefeater's *Gin*, 2021  
Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, 1989  
Baz Luhrmann and Craig Pearce's *Moulin Rouge!*, 2001  
Mark Perez's *Game Night*, 2018  
Beth Henley's *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, 1979  
Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*, 2004  
Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, 1993  
Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*, 2003  
David E. Kelley's *Big Little Lies*, 2017  
Alexander Payne and Jim Taylor's *About Schmidt*, 2002  
Launer, Shapiro, and Hennings's *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, 1988  
Bill Walsh and Don DaGradi's *Mary Poppins*, 1964  
Steven Levitan and Christopher Lloyd's *Modern Family*, 2009  
Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*, 2018  
Mike Mills's *20th Century Women*, 2016  
Elaine May's *A New Leaf*, 1971  
Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo's *Bridesmaids*, 2011  
William Goldman's *The Princess Bride*, 1987

Brad Bird's *The Incredibles*, 2004  
Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster's *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, 2019  
George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, 1872  
Ol Parker's *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, 2011  
Tyler Nilson and Michael Schwartz's *The Peanut Butter Falcon*, 2019  
The Coen Brothers' *Raising Arizona*, 1987  
Michael Arndt's *Little Miss Sunshine*, 2006  
Stuart Spencer's *The Playwright's Guidebook*, 2002  
Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's *Assassins*, 1990  
Darren Aronofsky's *Mother!*, 2017  
Kumail Nanjiani and Emily V. Gordon's *The Big Sick*, 2017  
Debra Granik's *Leave No Trace*, 2018  
Janet Burroway's *Imaginative Writing*, 2014  
Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, 1878  
Google Translate's *English to Welsh*, 2021  
Amy Sherman-Palladino's *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, 2017  
James Joyce's *Ulysses*, 1922  
Ari Aster's *Midsommar*, 2018  
Tracy Letts's *August: Osage County*, 2007  
Nicole Holofcener and Jeff Whitty's *Can You Ever Forgive Me?*, 2018  
Billy Collins's *Sailing Around the Room*, 2002  
Quentin Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*, 1997  
Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, 2014  
Apple's *Pages*, 2021  
Robert Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," 1842  
Richard Bausch's *Tandolfo the Great*, 1994  
Deborah Davis and Tony McNamara's *The Favourite*, 2018  
George Saunders's *Victory Lap*, 2009  
Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, 1999  
Michael Schur and Greg Daniels's *Parks and Recreation*, 2009  
John Logan's *The Aviator*, 2004  
Matt Ross's *Captain Fantastic*, 2016  
Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*, 2019

(And, of course, there are many more influences I cannot remember.)

## APPENDIX

The following is an example or possibility of a monologue for Paxton, in lieu of the improv prompt, that can be constructed using the given items on pages 69-70 of the script:

### PAXTON

Anyway, George comes up to me and says, “Gustave, I don’t think you are who you think you are.” And I said, “What do you mean, George?” And he says, “Gustave, I’ve got this pet rooster, Ralph, and see every time Ralph crows sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am, he’s not just crowing sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am, see, he’s giving a divine message as well as crowing sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am.” And I said, “Wow, George, sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am, that’s wildly specific, George. But George, what does that have to do with me?” And George says, “Well, Gustave, see, yesterday was Tuesday the fourteenth, and Ralph the rooster, at exactly 3:47am, crowed sixteen times.” And I said, “Yes, okay, Ralph, sixteen times, Tuesday the fourteenth, 3:47, but *me*, George—what about *meee*?” And George says, “Well, you see, Gustave, every time Ralph the rooster crows sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am, it means that there is a psychic message to be divined about the first person I see that day, and you see, Gustave, the first person I saw yesterday after Ralph crowed sixteen times at 3:47am—on a Tuesday the fourteenth, mind you—was you! In the parking lot.” And I said, “Yes, yes, I think that does seem correct. But what was the psychic message, George?” And George says, “Well, I’m getting there, Gustave. See, I went home after filming, and I do what I usually do when Ralph crows sixteen times on a Tuesday the fourteenth at 3:47am, which is I call Priscilla Presley’s ex-doula, Edith. See, Edith and Ralph are on the same wavelength. So, I say, ‘Edith, doll, you know what today is,’ and she says, ‘Why, yes, George, it’s Tuesday the fourteenth, did Ralph crow sixteen times at 3:47?’ And I said, ‘Yes, he certainly did crow sixteen times at 3:47, and the first person I saw was my stunt double.’ And Edith says, ‘I see, what’s his name?’ And I say, ‘Esteban-Stefano Jordan Alexei Gustave Gonzalez-Rodriguez-Pfifferling VII,’ and Edith thinks for a minute, and then she says, ‘Sorry, George, I got nothing.’ And then she hung up.” And I said, “Oh? Edith had nothing?” And George says, “I know! It was bizarre, had never happened before! But you see, then, Gustave, on the way to set this morning, Edith calls me and I pick up the phone and I say, ‘Edith?’ And she says, ‘George, this is Edith.’ And I say, ‘Yes, Edith, I have your number. What’s up?’ And Edith says, ‘George, you’d never believe what happened to me last night after your call.’ And I say, ‘Try me, Edith.’ And she says, ‘George, I got off the call and right then an asteroid in the exact geometrical shape of an anvil fell through my roof and demolished my great aunt Charlotte’s chifforobe.’ And I said, ‘Well, Edith, I’m very sorry

about the chifforobe, but how do you know it was an anvil-shaped asteroid and not just an anvil-shaped anvil?' And she said, 'Hm. I haven't thought about that. Anyway, I went to sleep and had a vision that the asteroid was the stunt double that Ralph crowed about sixteen times at 3:47am yesterday, Tuesday the fourteenth, and it is now clear to me that your friend is not where he is supposed to be, he's far from home, he's far from himself. And now that you say it might not even be an asteroid, I'm afraid he might not even be whom he thinks he is. He's probably spent his entire life with asteroids, thinking he was one, but he's really an anvil, you know? Very, very troubling. Anyway, I gotta go, the roofer's here. *(to the roofer.)* Hey, do you think this is an asteroid? Unh, just an anvil. Okay.'" And I said, "Well, that's mighty vague, George." And he says, "I know, Gustave, I know. But we're gonna get to the bottom of it." And I said, "Okay, George." And I really didn't think much about it afterward because I don't typically trust chickens with divinations. Ibises and cormorants, maybe the occasional stork, are much better for auguries. And ornithomancy in general. But you know, George is a great, great actor, you can't expect him to be top notch at everything. So, like I said, I didn't think anything of it, when about a month ago, my parents say they have to see me. Now they live in Tunisia, so it's a bit out of the way, but they say its urgent so I make it work. I get to Tunisia, and there they are in the living room with an asteroid on the coffee table, and they say, all teary-eyed, they say, "Son, we never thought this day would come. We really didn't. What are the odds? But we made a vow that if ever an asteroid came through our roof, we'd view it as a sign to tell you who you really are." And I said, "No fucking way. Maybe I can start trusting chickens for divinations." And right then George called me to say he'd taken a chunk of my hair and had just gotten around to running a DNA test and anyway, turns out my parents kidnapped me in Disney world, and, oh my God, I can't believe this moment is finally here *(begins weeping)* Carol Joy, with the help of George Clooney, you're my sister! *(he bugs her in a sweeping manner)* I mean, he helped me find you, that is.