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To Garance with forgiveness

The Players

CONTESSA, Mid-forties. Black. Strong.

JACKIE, Contessa's partner. Early forties. Jewish. An old child.

DEXEL, Contessa's half brother. Late forties.

GARANANCE, Contessa and Jackie's daughter. A charming and sardonic 18-year-old.

The Scene

The action takes place over a three-day period in an apartment in New York's Gramercy Park.

Acknowledgments

Bring Us the Head of Your Daughter was first performed by The Amoralists from April 25–June 1, 2008 at the Gene Frankel Theater in New York City with the following cast and crew:

CONTESSA SPRINGS Jennifer Fouche
JACKIE GOLDSTEIN Deshja Driggs-Hall
DEXEL Duane Chivon Ferguson
GARANCE SPRINGS Helena Lee

Director David Levy-Horton
Assistant Director Selene Beretta
Production Stage Manager Judy Merrick
Set Design Alfred Schatz
Lighting Design Keecia Buster
Costume Design Ricky Lang
Sound Design Bart Lucas
Spiritual Advisor Larry Cobra

BRING US THE HEAD OF YOUR DAUGHTER

by Derek Ahonen

ACT I

Scene One

(The inside of Contessa and Jackie's apartment in Gramercy Park. An incomplete painting rests on an easel. CONTESSA sits on the couch with her head in her hands. She weeps. The phone rings. CONTESSA ignores. The answering machine picks up.)

JACKIE. *(Via machine:)* Hi...you've reached *(Singing:)* "8675309"... just kidding. It's Jackie and Contessa. We're someplace else, but that's why God invented the cell phone. Call us on one of those gadgets or wait impatiently for whatever party we're at to stop. Bye!

MAN'S VOICE. You sinners are going to burn in the smoky ruins of hell. Your eyes will be plucked from your skulls by demon gargoyles for every second of every minute in an eternity that will be unmerciful. Get that evil love out of your hearts! Get that...

(CONTESSA has ripped the phone's cord out of the socket. She bashes the phone over the answering machine violently. After a moment, she plugs the phone back in and changes the message.)

CONTESSA. Sticks and stones...

(She aborts. Records again.)

Listen... We are strong women. We won't scrub your floors, crock-pot your dinners, or subject ourselves to your answering machine malevolence. You can *67 your phone numbers all you want, cowards, but I'm going to find you and when I do...

(She aborts. Records again.)

CONTESSA. This is Contessa and Jackie... make it quick... please.

(A drunken JACKIE grandly enters through the front door.)

CONTESSA. Where were you?

JACKIE. I was prancing around the city...talking to God as my equal.

CONTESSA. What?

JACKIE. I'm so sick of having to look all the way up to the sky when I speak to God. So today, due to years of unwarranted neck strain, I

decided to talk to him as though his height were the same as mine... like he's directly to my right. (*Demonstrates:*) How are you, God? Watch your step...you might trip.

CONTESSA. Don't speak of God in that way, Jacqueline.

JACKIE. Jacqueline? Jacqueline, Tessa? Oh so serious... Jacqueline. Can you fix me a tea, Jacqueline? Can you draw mommy a bath, Jacqueline?

CONTESSA. Jackie...

JACKIE. No, Jacqueline works, baby. Tell me, Jacqueline... How is it that such an elegant woman could beget a cannibalistic...psycho killer daughter? Tell us, Jacqueline, did you feed her roasted esophagus as a child?

CONTESSA. Please stop.

JACKIE. Jacqueline, maybe all the "vagina licking" she was raised around somehow created a...I don't know...a disgust for the female that manifested itself through the butchering of...

CONTESSA. Jackie!

JACKIE. Do you, Jacqueline, feel at all responsible for your daughter's ungodly acts? Hmm... No. Fuck the victims. More importantly, fuck the victim's poor, whiny, families! And if any of them are listening this moment I just want to say what I got to say... Watch out, you sub-human, self-righteous, scummy scumbags! Where my sweet daughter left off, Jackie...no, pardon me...Jacqueline will pick up. So enjoy the next bowel movement you make, 'cause it'll be the last time your intestines will be used for anything other than a rope to strangle you with!

CONTESSA. Feel better?

JACKIE. Is that a new painting?

CONTESSA. It's an old one I started to paint over...it's nothing. I can't stay focused for more than a few minutes these days so...it's crap.

JACKIE. Which one did you paint over?

CONTESSA. It doesn't matter...some...a landscape painting that a child could do.

JACKIE. The one with the horsies and roses and yellow sky?

CONTESSA. You just described every landscape ever painted.

JACKIE. But it was beautiful.

CONTESSA. Well it's whitewashed now and will exist only as a memory. (*A small chuckle.*) Horsies and roses.

JACKIE. Yeah.

CONTESSA. So...where were you?

JACKIE. (*Sing-talking:*) Police station is where Jackie was at. They don't believe that we don't know where she is. Don't trust that man across the street that stares at our apartment.

CONTESSA. What did they say?

JACKIE. What do they always say, Tessa? Nothing. They force me to look at pictures of the victims...I nearly vomit. They make me feel guilty for not completely vomiting... And then they try to get information out of me.

CONTESSA. We don't know anything!

JACKIE. (*Sing-talking:*) That's what I tell them, but they don't believe, Jackie.

CONTESSA. They're just harassing us so that the public knows we're being harassed! They know we haven't heard from her.

JACKIE. (*Sing-talking:*) Blame games... This world plays the blame games and right now Jackie and Contessa are losing this game of blame game.

CONTESSA. Jackie! You've obviously had a rough day, but could you please stop sing-talking?

(*JACKIE opens the refrigerator.*)

JACKIE. Why do you continue to chill red wine?

CONTESSA. It's a Shiraz.

JACKIE. It's still red.

CONTESSA. I read you could chill a Shiraz.

JACKIE. Yeah? You read that?

CONTESSA. Yeah.

JACKIE. Read that red could be chilled. Read, red... Read, red? Read, red!

CONTESSA. I read that.

JACKIE. Yeah? Well...I read that smoking is good for you.

(*JACKIE pulls a pack of Pall Malls out from inside the freezer.*)

CONTESSA. Not inside.

JACKIE. No...it's good for you!

CONTESSA. Jackie...

JACKIE. Because...if you do have cancer...you know...the cigarette smoke will just burn through the tumor and like...disintegrate it! It's similar to radiation therapy.

CONTESSA. Open the window at least.

(JACKIE smokes. She holds the cigarette outside the window and stares at an indifferent city.)

JACKIE. I'm tired.

CONTESSA. I know.

JACKIE. I'm tired like Jane Fonda at the end of, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*

CONTESSA. That's pretty tired.

JACKIE. I feel like my existence is a waste of my time. As though I somehow have better things to do than live.

(CONTESSA has violently cut and destroyed her new painting.)

JACKIE. I liked the horsies more anyway.

(CONTESSA grabs Jackie's cigarette and tosses it out the window. CONTESSA quickly grabs the Shiraz from the refrigerator and throws it in the microwave for ten seconds. Silence. Microwave dings. CONTESSA takes out the Shiraz and sets it gently in a wine rack.)

JACKIE. Never chill a red wine.

CONTESSA. Never.

JACKIE. Not if you love me.

CONTESSA. I know.

JACKIE. I love you.

CONTESSA. *(Screaming:)* Lord in Heaven!

JACKIE. Contessa!

CONTESSA. I shouldn't have been so tough on her! Why did I have to... She hates me! She's always hated me! It's all my fault!

JACKIE. It's not. She's got my fucked alcoholic genes.

CONTESSA. Only half.

JACKIE. Yeah...the fucked alcoholic half.

(Phone rings. Machine picks up.)

CONTESSA. *(Via machine:)* This is Contessa and Jackie...make it quick...please.

JACKIE. Creative.

GIRL'S VOICE. (*Silence.*) ...dah, dah, dah, dah... uh... bada, bada, bada bada... chicka, chicka, chicka... (*Sing-talking.*) ...This is not incriminating. This is not incriminating. Bada, bada, bada, bada! Scoobadee...scibadee! I love you...not you. Click... Click... Click... (*Heavy laughter.*) (*Click.*)

(*Silence.*)

JACKIE. Era...

CONTESSA. Yeah.

(*CONTESSA erases the message. JACKIE and CONTESSA look out the window to see if any commotion is going down from the man across the street. CONTESSA grabs a Sharpie and pieces of white cardboard from the kitchen.*)

CONTESSA. (*Writes.*) How did she sound?

(*JACKIE shrugs.*)

CONTESSA. (*Writes.*) I love you, not you.

(*JACKIE shrugs.*)

CONTESSA. (*Writes.*) At least she's alive.

(*JACKIE gives a thumb up.*)

CONTESSA. (*Writes.*) I heart you.

(*JACKIE begins weeping silently.*)

(*The phone rings. CONTESSA checks the caller ID.*)

CONTESSA. It's your mom.

JACKIE. Answer it.

(*CONTESSA picks up.*)

CONTESSA. Hey, Ma. What channel? Hang on... We'll call you back.

(*CONTESSA turns the television on.*)

VOICE. That's right...a new body has been discovered. This time in Naperville, Illinois...a suburb outside of Chicago. It looks to once again be the work of Garance Springs...the eighteen-year-old woman heading west across this great land and devouring housewives at random. The total of dead mothers has reached fifteen. How she has evaded police remains a mystery. With each new victim lies a picture and with each new picture...a new look. Last week she dressed as a Pocahontas-like figure. This time Miss Springs dons the classic Al Jolsen blackface. Just when I thought this lunatic couldn't get any stranger or offensive... How she looks and where she'll strike next is

anyone's guess. Mothers of America...pray to the Lord Jesus Christ that you're not next.

(CONTESSA *changes the channel.*)

GIRL'S VOICE. Yo well no doubt da first ting I be feelin 'bout Jamal was obviously dose hot pecks! (*Roaring laughter.*)

(CONTESSA *changes the channel.*)

MAN'S VOICE. The ACLU is trying to destroy Christmas! They affect to demonize the Judeo-Christian philosophy this great country was founded on!

(CONTESSA *changes the channel.*)

WOMAN'S VOICE. The jury ignores the brainwashing defense and convicts Geneva Kent on charges of...

(CONTESSA *changes the channel.*)

VOICE. Iraq, Gauntanamo, Darfur, and Global Warming are all just symptoms of the beast, Jennifer. Only an idiot would waste their time dealing with the symptoms. What you need to do is attack the beast directly and the beast is capitalism and the rampant imperialistic nature it begets. As long as the beast still breathes, the flavor of the month symptoms will never leave, they'll just change locations.

(CONTESSA *changes the channel.*)

VOICE. Did the holocaust really happen or was it all, as some call it...a hoax to perpetuate Zionist propaganda. That is the question we'll be debating tonight on...

JACKIE. Turn that fucking TV off!

(CONTESSA *turns the television off.*)

JACKIE. What's so perfectly wonderful about being human?

(*Silence.*)

CONTESSA. Are babies smarter than cats?

(JACKIE *stares at CONTESSA...baffled.*)

CONTESSA. Are adults?

(JACKIE *takes the Shiraz and puts it back in the refrigerator.*)

(*Blackout.*)

Scene Two

(The next morning. JACKIE is fixing herself a cup of coffee as she attempts to put on a dress through a nasty hangover. She is preparing for work. Phone rings. JACKIE checks the caller ID and picks up.)

JACKIE. I know I'm running a little late, but I'll be right there. Uhhuh... I'm sorry. It's been a difficult few weeks. What? Are you serious? I've managed that restaurant for ten years! Don't give me that crap...because you know this has nothing to do with tardiness! To hell with the owners! You know what...you can take your fucking shitty little café and stick it up your stretched-out twat! Well, you're going to be hearing from my daughter...I mean lawyer. You're gonna...ah shit... Fuck you!

(JACKIE hangs up. She dumps her coffee in the sink and grabs the wine from within the refrigerator. She finishes off the bottle in one chug. JACKIE tears through the kitchen looking to find more alcohol...nothing!)

JACKIE. Goddamnit!

(She storms out of the apartment slamming the door behind her. Silence. JACKIE reenters and grabs a cigarette from the freezer. She lights it as her momentum carries her out the door. CONTESSA walks out from within her bedroom. She wears pajamas and is half-awake.)

CONTESSA. What'd you say about global warming in Poland? *(To herself:)* It's cold in Poland. Boxcars...polack... Is polack racially chic...or racially passé? Polack...nigger...spic...polack...kike...camel jockey...gook...polack. Polack? Nope! Talking to yourself again Contessa? Yes...yes I am. 'Cause at the moment...there ain't no one else here. Except for you, Mr. Bug...wherever they got you hidden. If they even got you hidden. Maybe they know that we don't know what we don't know.

(CONTESSA makes herself some tea.)

But if you are here...are you happy with your life, Mr. Bug? You ever get lonely. All you ever do is listen, Mr. Bug. I never can hear you talk...that ever get boring?

(JACKIE reenters with a fifth of whisky.)

JACKIE. If I drank this bottle in five minutes, you think I'd die?

CONTESSA. Nope.

JACKIE. How do you know?

CONTESSA. I know because I'd call an ambulance and you'd have your stomach pumped in a hot second.

JACKIE. What if you didn't call an ambulance?

CONTESSA. I would.

JACKIE. But what if I didn't want you to?

CONTESSA. I'd ignore your wishes.

JACKIE. Why?

CONTESSA. Well...I need you to stay alive so you can keep buying my paintings.

(JACKIE chugs the fifth of whisky. She chokes and abandons.)

JACKIE. Christ!

CONTESSA. I guess I got me nothing to worry about.

JACKIE. I'm out of a job. They just called..Jackie's fired.

(Silence.)

CONTESSA. Thinking about the past is like watching a movie over and over. It's safe...you have your favorite moments, but more importantly...you know the outcome of all the character's choices.

JACKIE. What are you...fucking autistic?

CONTESSA. It's safe to live in the past, Jackie.

JACKIE. I'm not! I'm living in this exact second and this exact second is terrifying!

CONTESSA. Then you need to stop numbing yourself like you're living in the past.

JACKIE. What the hell does that mean, you erratic fool?

CONTESSA. You keep surrendering each day under the weight of your heavy drinking.

JACKIE. I didn't get fired because of the drinking.

CONTESSA. You wake up...start drinking...go to work...keep drinking...come home...keep drinking...pass out...go to the bathroom in our bed...wake up...repeat.

JACKIE. Do you hear what I'm saying?

CONTESSA. So what? You got fired...that's not a problem. Your need to constantly self-medicate is.

JACKIE. Contessa, we have no income! You understand? I'm out of a job!

CONTESSA. Get a new job.

JACKIE. Where?

CONTESSA. It's a big city...you're qualified.

JACKIE. I'm also infamous now. It's going to be a little difficult to find work! There's not too many unfair practice laws that extend themselves to the mothers of cannibals!

CONTESSA. Then I'll get a job.

JACKIE. No!

CONTESSA. Why not?

JACKIE. Because you're an artist!

CONTESSA. And the only person who's ever bought my work is now unemployed.

JACKIE. You're not getting a job. You create art...I work. That's how I want it to be. End of discussion.

(Silence. JACKIE goes into their bedroom. The sounds of clothing, shoes, boxes and purses falling to the ground are heard.)

CONTESSA. You alive?

JACKIE. *(Off-stage:)* Physically or emotionally?

CONTESSA. Can you separate the two?

JACKIE. *(Off-stage:)* Ouch! It's too early for the Chinese...Buddha... philosophy...blah, blah, blah.

CONTESSA. What are you doing?

JACKIE. *(Off-stage:)* I'm solving problems.

(JACKIE walks out with a hideous-looking oversized purse from the mid 1980s.)

CONTESSA. Never seen that purse before.

JACKIE. There's a lot in the back of the closet I doubt you've seen.

CONTESSA. I love it when you're subtle.

JACKIE. Blah, blah, blah.

(JACKIE opens the purse and begins taking chunks of cash out.)

CONTESSA. Okay...wow.

JACKIE. Don't you just love secrets?

CONTESSA. Not at my age.

JACKIE. A few years ago I started fooling around with the computer system at work. I figured out a way to make an item that was rung in...disappear.

CONTESSA. Like a steak?

JACKIE. Anything. Gone...like there's no record that it was ever there.

CONTESSA. So what?

JACKIE. So I had Ortiz...this waiter there come to me if a table paid in cash on a large check. I'd void the whole thing and split it down the middle with this broke Puerto Rican kid. We'd play it safe...only two or three times a week with only one large check. I never wanted to put this in the bank for fear of being audited or blah, blah, blah. So...I kept it here for cigarettes and wine.

CONTESSA. How much?

JACKIE. Six thousand.

CONTESSA. Are you a criminal?

JACKIE. No! Prove that it ever existed!

CONTESSA. Embezzlement?

JACKIE. Prove it! Contessa, it was only going to go into the pockets of those Jew owners so that they could buy their grandkids beach houses...or whatever. No way. I'll gut their wallets any chance I can get.

CONTESSA. It's probably not appropriate to use the word gut in light of the current situation. And it's probably not smart to be talking about this with people listening. Put that back in the closet and I'll pretend I never saw it. I'm going to look for a job.

JACKIE. No! If you even attempt to find work, you'll come home to find me in the bathtub with a curling iron in the water and a cigarette in my mouth.

(CONTESSA *sighs.*)

JACKIE. Now have a drink with me.

(CONTESSA *obliges.*)

JACKIE. (*Toasting:*) To not letting irony make a clown out of you.

CONTESSA. Irony?

JACKIE. That's right. To always fighting for what you believe in and...uh...I don't know...run on sentence, run on sentence...blah, blah, blah...let's just be strong...I'll drink to that.

CONTESSA. You'll drink to anything.

JACKIE. Well that's true.

(They shoot. JACKIE tries to kiss CONTESSA. CONTESSA turns her cheek.)

JACKIE. Don't do that.

CONTESSA. I'm not going to kiss you anymore when you're drinking.

JACKIE. Well you're not going to find me not drinking so deal with it.

CONTESSA. You deal with it. I'm going on an affection strike.

(JACKIE takes a hard pull of her whisky and spits it in CONTESSA's face.)

CONTESSA. Oh my eyes! My eyes are burning!

JACKIE. Good! Don't ever threaten me again!

CONTESSA. My eyes!

(CONTESSA runs into the bathroom to wash out her eyes.)

CONTESSA. *(Off-stage:)* Jackie...that hurts so much!

JACKIE. You think that hurts? Huh? Telling me you won't be affectionate is what hurts, Tessa! Telling me you won't kiss me...that hurts! Wash out your eyes...you'll see again! Take away your heart... I'll throw myself out that window!

CONTESSA. *(Off-stage:)* We're only on the second floor.

JACKIE. What?

CONTESSA. *(Off-stage:)* You'll survive!

JACKIE. Don't tell me how to kill myself!

(CONTESSA reenters with a towel as she wipes down her face.)

CONTESSA. Jackie...that hurt.

JACKIE. Don't make me feel guilty!

CONTESSA. I'm not trying to...

JACKIE. Don't fucking...don't you...passive aggressive...shit... Shit!

CONTESSA. What?

JACKIE. I forgot to buy more cigarettes!

CONTESSA. You want to drink your looks away, be my guest. Be a blue-haired, forty-whatever-year-old...fat drunk if you want. Just don't ask me to share your saliva or sleep in the same yellow sheets with you.

JACKIE. Fine. Sleep on the couch and get-off on playing with your wrinkled up, flippody-floppody, black hand.

(Silence.)

JACKIE. I'm not putting this bottle down for you. It's my life and I'll slowly end it any way I want to.

CONTESSA. Just don't ask me to watch.

JACKIE. Then fucking leave, Tessa!

CONTESSA. I will leave you, Jackie!

JACKIE. *(Hurt:)* You're gonna leave me? After all I've put you through?

CONTESSA. Pretty soon your suicide threats won't work!

JACKIE. They'll continue to scare you!

CONTESSA. Don't be so sure of yourself, Jacqueline!

JACKIE. I'll tell you again! Hey...look me in the eyes!

CONTESSA. What?

JACKIE. If you leave me, I'll make you a widow by my own hand. I am not being that indulgent girl you met twenty years ago. I'm the forty-one year old woman you will find dead and I can guarantee you that it will be in a terribly gruesome fashion. I will leave images to haunt your sweet Bappy-McBaptist soul for the rest of your life alone without me.

(CONTESSA stares at JACKIE with disgust. CONTESSA ponders. CONTESSA walks to the window and shouts.)

CONTESSA. We know you're watching us! You got something to say, come right up and say it to our faces! It's apartment 2R...buzzer 3C! And while you're down there, pick up a bottle of Shiraz that I can chill for my tragic roommate!

(JACKIE grabs the bag of money and exits to her bedroom. JACKIE reenters.)

JACKIE. You want to have a fruit and nut party?

CONTESSA. A what?

JACKIE. When I was a child, my mother and I would have fruit and nut parties. We'd buy almonds and peanuts and beautiful mackintosh apples and have a party. You want to have a party?

CONTESSA. Sure.

JACKIE. Play something worth a damn.

(CONTESSA turns the radio on. JACKIE begins putting nuts in a bowl. She slices the fruit and dances at the same time.)

JACKIE. Dance.

(CONTESSA begins dancing.)

JACKIE. Fruit and nut party!

CONTESSA. Fruit and nut party!

(CONTESSA blows kisses to JACKIE from across the room. JACKIE catches some and puts them to her face. Other kisses JACKIE throws to the ground in a childish way.)

CONTESSA. Fruit and nut party!

JACKIE. Fun, right?

CONTESSA. Fruit and nut party!

(They continue to dance with distracted enthusiasm. JACKIE and CONTESSA meet on the couch with the fruit.)

JACKIE. Now this is the best part.

CONTESSA. What is?

JACKIE. The part where we get to eat.

(CONTESSA and JACKIE indulge.)

CONTESSA. You take food for granted...it's...it's beautiful when you have those moments that...really make you appreciate food.

JACKIE. That's why we should have a party around each meal.

CONTESSA. Fruit and nut party!

JACKIE. Fruit and nut party!

(They kiss. The buzzer rings. The women break. CONTESSA walks to the door and hits talk.)

CONTESSA. Yes? (Nothing.) Hello?

(JACKIE walks to the window and shouts out.)

JACKIE. Are you buzzing us?

DEXEL. (Offstage:) I am buzzing you.

JACKIE. Who are you?

DEXEL. (Offstage:) Contessa said that you were apartment 2R and buzzer 3C, correct?

JACKIE. How do you know her?

DEXEL. (Offstage:) I know her.

JACKIE. Who are you?

DEXEL. (*Offstage:*) I used to be a bad person, but now I am a good person. Someone just gave me a dirty look on the street, but I do not retaliate.

JACKIE. What the hell?

DEXEL. (*Offstage:*) I am a good person.

JACKIE. Good for you! Are you that man in the car?

DEXEL. (*Offstage:*) Yes.

CONTESSA. Let him up.

JACKIE. Do you know him?

CONTESSA. I don't know.

JACKIE. What does that mean?

CONTESSA. Let the good person up.

JACKIE. Come on up.

DEXEL. (*Offstage:*) The buzzer must buzz first.

(*CONTESSA buzzes him up.*)

DEXEL. (*Offstage:*) Thank you.

CONTESSA. I always wanted to be a dancer.

JACKIE. But then...

CONTESSA. Dixel.

JACKIE. Dixel?

CONTESSA. Dixel.

JACKIE. What's Dixel?

(*A knock is heard at the door. CONTESSA opens the door to reveal DEXEL. A weighty moment of strange.*)

DEXEL. It was supposed to rain today.

CONTESSA. Hello, Dixel.

DEXEL. Contessa...hi.

JACKIE. How do you know this guy?

CONTESSA. Don't you just love secrets?

JACKIE. Not at my age.

DEXEL. So you are a lesbian, Contessa?

JACKIE. So you are a lesbian? Did you get struck by lightning?

(Phone rings. Silence. Machine picks up.)

CONTESSA. *(Via machine:)* This is Jackie and Contessa...make it quick...please.

WOMAN'S VOICE. Um... Hi. Hello. How are you? I'm just calling to say that in your time of need...if you ladies happen to need any support, I'm here for you and you can reach me at 646-541-FUCK YOU! A bolt of lightning should come down from the sky and zap you to the lower depths of...

(CONTESSA lifts up the phone and hangs it up.)

(Silence.)

DEXEL. Do you receive a great deal of those phone calls?

CONTESSA. Every single day.

DEXEL. I'm sorry.

CONTESSA. I don't have any idea how these jerks get our number.

DEXEL. It's on a website.

JACKIE. What?

DEXEL. So is your address. That's how I found you.

JACKIE. What does it say?

DEXEL. It encourages the harassment and unrest of you.

(JACKIE opens up her laptop.)

JACKIE. What's the website?

DEXEL. What difference does it make?

JACKIE. Excuse me?

DEXEL. Humans are brilliant at the hate mongering.

JACKIE. Why are you here? Do you have a purpose right now?

DEXEL. Purpose?

JACKIE. Were you just starring at our apartment for a week to make us paranoid or do you have some other sick voyeuristic...

DEXEL. It's only been six days across in the car.

JACKIE. Why do you speak like a cyborg?

DEXEL. A cyborg?

JACKIE. A cybernetic organism.

DEXEL. Hmm...

JACKIE. Who the fuck are you?

CONTESSA. Dexel is my brother.

DEXEL. I am her half brother.

JACKIE. Your brother?

CONTESSA. Yep.

DEXEL. We have the same father.

JACKIE. You have a brother?

CONTESSA. A half-brother...yes.

DEXEL. Did you two just recently meet?

JACKIE. Yeah...we recently just met twenty years ago.

DEXEL. You did not know of me?

JACKIE. Hell's Kitchen, bitch!

DEXEL. Pardon me?

CONTESSA. She did not.

DEXEL. I'm assuming by the child's complexion that she did not come from you, Contessa?

CONTESSA. Jackie gave birth. I stayed home and raised it.

DEXEL. So who is the mother?

CONTESSA. We both are Dexel. Why are you pouting, Jackie?

JACKIE. Why wouldn't you tell me you had a brother?

CONTESSA. You didn't need to know.

JACKIE. What?

CONTESSA. I'm allowed to keep some things private.

JACKIE. Says who?

CONTESSA. You didn't need to know.

JACKIE. Fuck you!

(JACKIE pours herself a glass of whisky.)

Dexel?

DEXEL. I haven't touched it in years.

JACKIE. Then I'll have a double.

CONTESSA. You needn't look at me any differently because I have a brother.

JACKIE. No... It's not that you have a brother that I look at you differently...it's because in the almost quarter of a century that I think I know you did you ever once mention that he existed.

DEXEL. How is your mother?

CONTESSA. Long dead.

DEXEL. Is she alright?

CONTESSA. I don't know...we'll have to get a medium in here for that answer.

DEXEL. No... I mean... How did she...

CONTESSA. She was shot. Mugged and shot.

DEXEL. How?

CONTESSA. A gun. It had bullets. They shot a bullet into her throat.

DEXEL. They?

CONTESSA. Two Chinese muggers. Long time ago. Before I met Jackie.

DEXEL. I'm sorry.

CONTESSA. Don't be. Our daughter's worse. So what brings you this way, long lost brother?

(JACKIE slams her glass down.)

DEXEL. I wanted to be here for you if in case you needed any...of me.

CONTESSA. Why would we need any of you?

DEXEL. Not me...but people help. Do you need people help?

JACKIE. You want to pay our bills?

DEXEL. I don't have any money.

JACKIE. That's half more than your half sister...blah, blah, blah.

CONTESSA. What kind of people help?

DEXEL. If people are bothering you...I can scarecrow them away.

(From outside a car alarm goes off. It keeps ringing.)

JACKIE. Jesus Christ, there's a struggle on every corner!

(JACKIE runs to the window.)

Turn that goddamn thing off!

CONTESSA. Jackie...we have a guest!

JACKIE. Didn't they make a law against alarms?

(The alarm continues. They all listen.)

CONTESSA. If you don't have any money, how'd you get the car?

DEXEL. That's a very good question.

(The alarm continues.)

CONTESSA. It's been a very long time, Dexel. I was fifteen.

JACKIE. Do you two actually plan on conversing while that thing's polluting our ears?

CONTESSA. I don't know...how much time do we have together, Dexel?

DEXEL. I have nowhere to go and nothing to account for at the moment.

CONTESSA. So we can wait till the alarm goes off?

DEXEL. Whatever your decision is.

CONTESSA. Let's talk now.

DEXEL. Yes.

JACKIE. Shut-up! Shut-up! Shut-up! Shut-up!

(The alarm ceases.)

JACKIE. What is this, a movie?

MAN'S VOICE. *(Offstage:)* Hey...you're that dyke!

JACKIE. Hey, you're that... This is a movie. Doesn't this all feel like a movie?

CONTESSA. What, Jackie?

(JACKIE closes the window.)

JACKIE. At what point did you realize he was your brother?

CONTESSA. The second I saw him.

JACKIE. Just now?

CONTESSA. Six days ago. Right when we noticed that the car was staring at us.

JACKIE. Why didn't you say something?

CONTESSA. I figured that Dexel came to me...let him come to me.

JACKIE. Why didn't you say something?

DEXEL. I saw Contessa see me...she did not say anything, so I waited. I figured, I came to her...let her come to me.

JACKIE. We thought you were the FBI...or people that...something. We don't know what's going on in this...something or other...blah, blah, blah.

CONTESSA. Would you like to stay with us, Dexel?

JACKIE. We don't have any room.

CONTESSA. We have a futon.

DEXEL. I am here to help. If you would like me to stay inside... I will stay inside.

CONTESSA. Please sleep here.

DEXEL. I appreciate your kindness.

CONTESSA. So let's catch up.

DEXEL. Where do we begin?

JACKIE. Fuck you secrecy secretive fuckin losers.

(JACKIE does a shot and chases it down with wine.)

CONTESSA. Let's pick up where we left off.

JACKIE. Gee...how long ago did you say that was?

CONTESSA. A long time ago.

JACKIE. Wow...I'm going to take a bathy batherson. If you can give me one good reason not to open my veins and create a little performance art piece for ya...make it quick.

(Group pondering.)

JACKIE. Nothing? Get your camera out...I'll be dead and ready in five. *(Mumbles under her breath:)* Losers...every fuckin one this world shows me...kill myself.

(JACKIE exits into her bedroom.)

CONTESSA. So the last time we saw each other... I was fifteen... you were eighteen... You had just raped me... I found out I was pregnant... You told me that if I told anyone that you were the father, you would stick a knife in my stomach, cut the baby out and murder us both... Then you disappeared.

DEXEL. Yes.

CONTESSA. That sounds like a decent place to start.

DEXEL. Yes.

(JACKIE opens up her bedroom door. She stands in the doorway... paralyzed.)

(Blackout.)

JACKIE. *(In black:)* Turn those fucking lights back on!

(Lights snap back on.)

JACKIE. What!?

CONTESSA. Dexel and I have a child.

DEXEL. You did not abort the baby?

CONTESSA. In Georgia? At fifteen? Adoption.

DEXEL. What gender is it?

CONTESSA. Girl.

DEXEL. Do you ever speak to her?

CONTESSA. Oh no. I never even held it.

DEXEL. Do you know where this girl is?

CONTESSA. Not at all. I don't even know its name.

DEXEL. That's interesting.

CONTESSA. What is?

DEXEL. You raised her daughter to be a cannibal and your own child is out there and it could be in fact a very adjustedly well contributor to our society.

CONTESSA. That is interesting.

(Blackout.)

Scene Three

(The next afternoon. CONTESSA and DEXEL sit on an opened up futon. The sheets are a mess. They both drink Shiraz. They are drunk.)

DEXEL. My dream job?

CONTESSA. Yes.

DEXEL. Shit...I don't know.

CONTESSA. If you could do anything you wanted.

DEXEL. Well...I don't share the sensibilities of most.

CONTESSA. What would it be?

DEXEL. I always wanted to be a black jack dealer. I'd count them cards and tip the player off as to what's gonna come next.

CONTESSA. Really?

DEXEL. Yeah...I'm all for the little guy. *(In character:)* You're gonna want to hit on that thirteen, sir. Boom...eight! How about a nice tip for your dealer? Thank you, sir. I like the way you play.

(CONTESSA laughs.)

CONTESSA. How important do you think it is to construct sentences with delicacy. Like when you're talking...making sure that each word that comes out of your mouth is exactly what you intended to say?

(DEXEL ponders.)

DEXEL. Important.

(They both laugh.)

CONTESSA. Between thought and expression lies a lifetime.

DEXEL. Shit baby...you like Lou Reed?

CONTESSA. Who?

DEXEL. Velvet Underground.

CONTESSA. Under what?

DEXEL. A band from the 60s. You ain't never heard of the Velvet Underground?

CONTESSA. No. Why?

DEXEL. Lou Reed wrote the lyric, "Between thought and expression lies a lifetime."

CONTESSA. I didn't know that.

DEXEL. But you just quoted that lyric.

CONTESSA. I thought I came up with that myself. I've been saying that shit for years. I stole that?

DEXEL. Inadvertently...yes.

CONTESSA. Amazing.

DEXEL. Don't sweat it though, baby. I really don't see how this culture leaves a man...or woman much room for originality anymore. When this generation of kids grow up...they be like homes in the suburbs...one of three motherfuckin models to choose from.

CONTESSA. What are they?

DEXEL. What are what?

CONTESSA. What are the three models to choose from?

DEXEL. Hell if I know... They're always named after flowers or some shit.

CONTESSA. You want another wine?

DEXEL. You having one?

CONTESSA. No...I'm drunk.

DEXEL. Well...I don't want to drink alone so...yeah I'll have one!

(They laugh hard.)

CONTESSA. You're not talking like you were yesterday.

DEXEL. Yeah... I know. I was nervous when I came up. I wanted to appear gentle.

CONTESSA. Gentle?

DEXEL. Um...yes. Very soft and gentle for you, mama.

(They laugh hard.)

DEXEL. Yo...how's dat bitch doin'?

(They laugh hard.)

DEXEL. But no...seriously.

CONTESSA. Let me check.

(CONTESSA walks to her bedroom door and knocks.)

Jackie?

(Silence.)

Oh girl of mine? Sweet, sweet, Jackie? Hey Jackie...J...Jacqueline? You can't stay locked up in there forever. Jackie...the sun is smiling. It's a beautiful day.

DEXEL. She don't want to see me.

CONTESSA. No...she don't want to see me.

DEXEL. She been locked up in there since I got here.

CONTESSA. Come out, Jacqueline Goldstein. I'm not sleeping on that futon a second night.

DEXEL. Y'all got a bathroom in there? Where she pissing?

CONTESSA. That's a good point. Where are you relieving yourself?

(They laugh hard. DEXEL's laugh turns into a violent cough.)

CONTESSA. Are you okay?

DEXEL. Come here.

CONTESSA. No.

DEXEL. Bring your ass over here.

CONTESSA. No.

DEXEL. Don't make me grab you.

CONTESSA. No.

DEXEL. Contessa...please. I need to tell you something.

(CONTESSA sits next to DEXEL. DEXEL grasps her face.)

DEXEL. I am so sorry, girl. I was young. I was all whacked out of my head...sick.

CONTESSA. I know...you've been apologizing enough. You were forgiven before you showed up.

DEXEL. But I want you to know that there hasn't been a second of my life since I gave it to you good that I haven't wanted to... *(Cough.)* ...kill myself.

CONTESSA. Yet I see you're still alive.

DEXEL. Fuck that mean?

CONTESSA. I guess the guilt couldn't have been that bad. It's apparently not suicide-inducing guilt.

DEXEL. If I kill myself...you win.

CONTESSA. How do I win?

DEXEL. Nevermind now! I love you, girl...that's the important thing.

CONTESSA. Love me enough to not speak to me for all these years?

DEXEL. I thought you forgave me.

CONTESSA. I do but...

DEXEL. Then why you fucking with me?

CONTESSA. I'm seriously asking you.

DEXEL. Listen...I want to start this shit up again.

CONTESSA. Start what up?

DEXEL. Us. Brother and sister in love. I love you and I got me nobody else in my life.

(CONTESSA's cuts begin to open.)

CONTESSA. Why'd you disappear? Why'd you leave me?

DEXEL. Girl, I had just raped you! I threatened to kill you, baby! I felt bad.

CONTESSA. Why didn't you find me after you stopped feeling bad?

DEXEL. I never did. I still feel bad.

CONTESSA. Why didn't you find me period?

DEXEL. You weren't in the yellow pages or whatever.

CONTESSA. What type of answer is that? If you really wanted me you would have...

DEXEL. Baby, I couldn't find you! Not until her daughter started eating motherfuckers...

CONTESSA. Our daughter.

DEXEL. Whatever. Not until the girl was on the TV did I know where you was at. I'm sorry. I'm here now... I'm here forever. Finally, I'm all yours. Hey do Jackie got a big pussy?

(CONTESSA *punches* DEXEL.)

DEXEL. Fuck!

CONTESSA. What did you just say?

DEXEL. I was playing with you.

CONTESSA. Don't you ever speak of her like that!

DEXEL. I'm sorry!

CONTESSA. Get out of here!

DEXEL. Don't talk to me like this!

CONTESSA. Get out of here, rapist!

DEXEL. Don't make me leave... I got nothing!

CONTESSA. You got even less now!

DEXEL. Baby... Baby...please! Don't make me walk out there into emptiness!

CONTESSA. I want you out of my home!

DEXEL. I'm sorry! I'm so stupid! I'm...nothing! I'm a sick and pathetic man!

CONTESSA. Leave!

DEXEL. What do I gotta say to let you make me stay? I'll say anything! I'm ugly! I'm hideous! I haven't changed a bit, but I got nothing but you, baby! Our Dad is dead! Your Mama is dead and if you

make me leave this motherfucker...I'll be dead! You gonna give my spirit a lethal injection of sadness. Don't make me go...I beg you!

(CONTESSA *begins weeping violently. She attacks herself physically.*)

DEXEL. What are you doing? Don't do that! Stop it! Baby, stop it!

CONTESSA. You want to cut me?

DEXEL. Cut you...no! Contessa, stop it! You're gonna hurt yourself!

CONTESSA. You want to hurt me?

DEXEL. No!

CONTESSA. You want to rape me?

DEXEL. No! I want you to pour me another motherfuckin drink woman!

CONTESSA. Don't mock me!

(DEXEL *grabs* CONTESSA. CONTESSA *howls. He holds her in a tight hug.*)

DEXEL. Shhhhhh. Shhhhhh. Shhhhhh. Everything gonna be all right. Like Bob Marley says. Don't you worry 'bout a thing, sister. I'm here. I ain't going nowhere! You're big brother's home. I love you so much! Just breathe. Calm down and breathe.

(CONTESSA *calms. The phone rings.*)

CONTESSA. (*Via machine:*) This is Jackie and Contessa...make it quick...please.

MAN'S VOICE. You two have big pussies? You stick your fists up each other? You...

(DEXEL *hurries to the phone and picks up.*)

DEXEL. (*Screaming:*) I will fucking beat you to death with a fire extinguisher! You gonna be corpsin if you ever call this number again! I just did ten years and I will gladly go back just to see the look on your children's faces when I start chopping you up from the floor to the ceiling!

(DEXEL *slams the phone down.*)

You see baby, I'm here for you! You need a man taking care of you through this storm! I'ma shoo these motherfuckin flies away!

(DEXEL *looks for CONTESSA's approval.*)

CONTESSA. Thank you.

DEXEL. You're welcome! Like I said... I don't give a fuck! I'll go back to jail for you!

CONTESSA. Thank you.

DEXEL. We okay?

CONTESSA. I don't know.

DEXEL. Good.

(JACKIE storms out of the bedroom and grabs a knife from the kitchen.)

DEXEL. Whoa...

(JACKIE begins cutting the dry wall from the bottom of the kitchen wall. DEXEL and CONTESSA stare in shock.)

JACKIE. Where the...where did I...

DEXEL. You need a hand?

JACKIE. I'm fine thank you.

DEXEL. What is she doing?

CONTESSA. Pretending to pretend.

JACKIE. I'm looking for something.

DEXEL. What you looking for baby?

JACKIE. There's something in these walls.

(CONTESSA exits into her bedroom.)

DEXEL. What's in those walls?

JACKIE. Cocaine.

DEXEL. Cocaine in them walls?

JACKIE. There's a bag in here somewhere.

DEXEL. In the walls?

JACKIE. *(Sing-talking:)* Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

DEXEL. So you got a little blow in them walls?

JACKIE. What did I just say?

DEXEL. You want to lie down or something? I'll fix you some soup.

(CONTESSA walks out with two pints of urine. JACKIE continues to cut away.)

CONTESSA. At least the sheets are still clean.

DEXEL. What's that?

CONTESSA. Thank you for being thoughtful, Jackie. You had me worried.

DEXEL. That piss?

JACKIE. Where the hell did I put it?

DEXEL. Your girlfriend thinks there's cocaine in the walls.

CONTESSA. I heard her. Jackie...this is unnecessary. If you're trying to get a rise out of me, find another way. This is a new low in attention getting techniques.

JACKIE. I'm not trying to get your attention. I hid a bag of nose nectar in here a while back.

DEXEL. Why'd you hide that shit?

JACKIE. So that I wouldn't do it anymore.

DEXEL. Then why not flush it?

JACKIE. You never know when you're gonna need it.

CONTESSA. Knock it off, Jackie!

JACKIE. It's in here.

CONTESSA. When did you start doing that drug?

JACKIE. The kids at work always had some.

CONTESSA. You just decided to try cocaine for the first time in your forties?

JACKIE. I've always done it.

CONTESSA. You've always done... Okay. Cute. We're playing the secret game right? I had a secret now you have a secret...

JACKIE. I'm not playing games. There's a bag in these walls and I'm trying to find it.

CONTESSA. You don't do illegal drugs!

JACKIE. I DO!!!!!!

CONTESSA. Whatever. I know you're lying, so if you want to keep this spectacle up...be my guest. Just know that I'm not impressed.

(Silence and cutting.)

DEXEL. Y'all got a photo book of your girl?

CONTESSA. Who?

DEXEL. Sweet thing...your daughter, Garage.

JACKIE. Garance.

DEXEL. What's up with that name?

CONTESSA. She named herself.

DEXEL. What?

CONTESSA. The name on her birth certificate is, Unknown Springs. We waited till she was old enough to name herself. At three she decided upon, Garance. Would you like to see pictures?

DEXEL. It would be my pleasure.

(CONTESSA grabs a photo album from the bookshelf.)

CONTESSA. Thank you Dexel.

DEXEL. For what, sis?

JACKIE. Shit!

CONTESSA. It's very nice of you to suggest something that will temporarily escort my mind out from within this madness.

DEXEL. You're welcome. Show me what you got.

(CONTESSA opens the photo album.)

CONTESSA. Can I say something real quick?

DEXEL. You ain't gotta make it quick baby.

CONTESSA. I haven't seen you in all these years, but it feels as though you just went out for a stroll around the block.

DEXEL. It feels good to be back on the Contessa side of that block.

JACKIE. Work with me universe!

CONTESSA. I just wanted to say that.

DEXEL. Say no more. That her?

CONTESSA. That's our Garance on the day she entered this world.

DEXEL. Good looking baby.

CONTESSA. Thank you, Dexel. Oh look...this is Gar at her first piano recital. Remember that day Jackie? It was such a story. So Garance is five years old right?

DEXEL. She played the piano at five?

CONTESSA. She was a terribly precocious young child. Anyway... all the children who played were horrible...messing up on notes and stopping in the middle...typical amateur stuff.

DEXEL. Yeah...

CONTESSA. So they finished their songs one at a time and all the wellmannered kids bowed politely after their songs. Now when Garance gets up to play, she blows these kids away. She plays Chopin and it sounds beautiful...

DEXEL. Chopin at five?

CONTESSA. Better than Chopin himself.

DEXEL. Chopin's good.

CONTESSA. He's fine.

DEXEL. Sheeeeeiiiiitttt.

CONTESSA. So she plays perfect...everyone is in awe. After her piece was complete, everyone gives her a standing ovation.

JACKIE. Fuck you wall!

CONTESSA. As all the other parents are regretting that she's not theirs and Jackie and I are in tears...Little Garance stands up and screams at the top of her lungs. The sound could break glass. All the parents stop clapping and there's a complete silence that engulfs the room. After Garance sees that she has everyone's attention... she sticks out her tongue and smiles. We were so shocked that all we could at that moment was snap this photo.

DEXEL. What happened?

CONTESSA. We left. The doctors put her on Ritalin...

JACKIE. And now she eats humans! I found it!

(JACKIE pulls a bag of cocaine out from within the wall.)

DEXEL. Shit in my mouth...there was blow in the walls.

JACKIE. Don't ever tell me I'm trying to get your attention again.

CONTESSA. I'm sorry...you're really a drug user...you win.

(JACKIE notices a photo. She begins weeping.)

JACKIE. Look at her. Poor little girl.

DEXEL. That the hospital?

JACKIE. She's got her Darth Vader thing on.

DEXEL. Darth Vader?

CONTESSA. Garance has one of the worst cases of asthma in the world. Deadly.

JACKIE. She practically grew up in the hospital.

CONTESSA. We call that the Darth Vader because she couldn't breathe without it. It made the... *(Imitates Vader's breathing sound:)* ...sound.

JACKIE. Poor little sick little creature.

CONTESSA. We used to watch her breathe in her cradle all night... changing shifts every few hours to assure ourselves that she never missed a breath.

JACKIE. One time the doctors told us that she wouldn't make it through the night... That they couldn't do anything to get enough air into her lungs and to say our goodbyes.

CONTESSA. A priest even came in and administered the last rites.

DEXEL. But she survived.

CONTESSA. Through the grace of God she pulled through.

JACKIE. We should have sued those fucking scoundrels!

CONTESSA. We weren't thinking like that. We were just so overjoyed that she was alive.

(JACKIE tries to kiss CONTESSA. CONTESSA turns away and sees DEXEL staring at them. CONTESSA kisses JACKIE with love.)

JACKIE. I'm sorry.

(JACKIE takes the bag of cocaine and throws it out the window.)

CONTESSA. Life is nothing but a series of beautiful tests.

(The phone rings. DEXEL checks the caller ID.)

DEXEL. Who's Katherine McCarthy?

JACKIE. My father's third ex-wife. Toss me the phone.

(DEXEL tosses JACKIE the phone. JACKIE hands it to CONTESSA.)

CONTESSA. Hello? Hi Kathy. What channel? We'll call you right back.

(CONTESSA turns the television on.)

MAN'S VOICE. Would you describe yourself as a happy little person?

(CONTESSA changes the channel.)

VOICE. I received this tape from Garance this morning.

(Plays tape.)

GARANCE. *(Via recording, singing:)* "People. People who eat people, are the luckiest people in the world." Ha! Just kidding. Um... All of the mothers in America can safely return to their sugarplum dreams

at night. My work here is accomplished. Now please leave me alone and give me a little room to live my life in peace. Thank you.

(CONTESSA turns the television off.)

DEXEL. Who's her father?

(Silence.)

Does she know him?

(Silence.)

Yo!

JACKIE. What?

DEXEL. Who is her father?

CONTESSA. Don't know.

DEXEL. They don't give names at the sperm bank?

CONTESSA. We didn't go to a sperm bank.

DEXEL. Well then what you mean by you don't know?

CONTESSA. After Jackie and I started seeing each other...um... I'm the only woman Jackie has ever been with. A year into our relationship, Jackie disappeared for a month.

DEXEL. Where'd you go?

CONTESSA. She never told me and I never asked. She needed to be alone...she was still a very young woman. But during that time... Jackie...had sex with twenty...thirty men. She claims it was all a blur. When she returned to me...she returned with all of her love and...

DEXEL. A calzone in the fridge.

CONTESSA. You can't try to untangle the web of decisions you've made that have brought you to this exact moment.

(Silence. JACKIE begins to water the various plants in the apartment.)

DEXEL. The girl should be locked up.

CONTESSA. What?

DEXEL. Rehabilitated.

CONTESSA. She's fine.

DEXEL. You really believe that?

CONTESSA. Even if that's the goal in jailing her, when she does rehabilitate, she'll still have to stay there. They'll keep her in there forever!

DEXEL. Or worse.

CONTESSA. What do you mean?

DEXEL. They'll shoot her up with some shit and girly will wake up on the other side.

CONTESSA. Why would you say that to me?

DEXEL. I'm just preparing you for the worst.

CONTESSA. I don't want to hear it!

DEXEL. And even if they don't lock her up for rehabilitation purposes, don't you think she deserves to go away for a while.

CONTESSA. That has nothing to do with it!

DEXEL. It has everything to do with it!

CONTESSA. You just heard that recording!

DEXEL. I heard it!

CONTESSA. She's done with the misconduct! If she's not going to harm anyone else, what's the point in taking her off the streets?

DEXEL. Now how do you know she ain't gonna start beastin and feastin again?

CONTESSA. She just said.

DEXEL. So?

CONTESSA. Garance is not a liar!

DEXEL. Just a cannibal!

CONTESSA. I thought you were here to help us, Dixel.

DEXEL. I'm helping you by waking you up to reality! Your daughter is a murderer and you sit around here showing me pictures like she just cured the AIDS!

CONTESSA. You asked to see them!

DEXEL. I was trying to stop you two from fighting!

CONTESSA. Well your silence would have been just as charitable!

DEXEL. She needs to be punished so that the fungus out there know they can't just go around doing whatever the fuck they want!

CONTESSA. Why can't they?

DEXEL. What if somebody ate you?

CONTESSA. Let them try!

DEXEL. That shit is so easy to say from where you sit.

CONTESSA. I was raped and threatened with my life...you don't hear me complaining!

DEXEL. Why not? Why are you so fucking forgiving?

CONTESSA. I'm a forgiving person!

DEXEL. Your daughter needs to be made an example of! I needed to be made an example of!

CONTESSA. I forgave you!

DEXEL. Forgiveness is the easiest way to ignore shit that ain't pleasant!

CONTESSA. You want to chime in here Jackie?

JACKIE. If you've stopped loving me...tell me.

(CONTESSA *sighs.*)

DEXEL. That's just how I think it should go.

CONTESSA. You believe she should...

DEXEL. I believe that it's in the hands of our judicial system.

CONTESSA. What did you go to jail for?

DEXEL. Never been there.

CONTESSA. What?

DEXEL. I was just making that up to scare that motherfucker.

CONTESSA. Then why were you so angry with what he was saying? If you agree with them...

DEXEL. It's the way in which he said... (*Coughs.*) ...This country got no class! You can't just call people up like that and...fucking letting people die with no motherfuckin insurance as they sit in church... Junkies are evil? You think junkies are Fuckin evil? Fuck that! I hate religious pieces of shit!

CONTESSA. What?

DEXEL. You know it's them bible-toting assholes who think they have the right to shove their fairy tales down your throat as they got their left hand in your right pocket...

CONTESSA. What are you talking about?

DEXEL. Letting motherfuckers die? I'm gonna fuckin live to be a hundred! They don't know what God's thinking! God should spit on the religious!

CONTESSA. I'm a Christian!

DEXEL. Then you an idiot!

CONTESSA. Excuse me?

DEXEL. What part of that religion says what you two fucking girls do is right? Y'all animals in those motherfuckers' eyes!

CONTESSA. That will change with time!

DEXEL. No it won't!

CONTESSA. We're making progress!

DEXEL. You need to turn your back on it and walk away!

CONTESSA. From what?

DEXEL. From God! From that fucking bitch around the corner with the picture of a half aborted baby!

CONTESSA. What is this conversation turning into? Let me get this correct... You're a tough on crime rapist who's seen the light but hates God?

DEXEL. I am what I am and you are what you are!

CONTESSA. And Garance is who she is!

(Unbeknownst to CONTESSA and DEXEL...JACKIE has exited the apartment.)

CONTESSA. Why'd you come here, Dexel?

DEXEL. I told you!

CONTESSA. You told me a lie!

DEXEL. No lies have been coming out this mouth!

CONTESSA. Why'd you come here?

DEXEL. You want the truth?

CONTESSA. Absolutely!

DEXEL. Like the no lie, once in a lifetime window of why I'm really here, truthfully? Like the no bullshit truth? The fucking no strings attached truthful truth?

CONTESSA. Why are you here?

DEXEL. I'm here to help.

CONTESSA. Well mind your own business.

DEXEL. Is it your business what is or isn't my business?

CONTESSA. If you're here is to help, you're failing miserably. So please...leave us!

DEXEL. That ain't why I'm here.

CONTESSA. Why are you here?

DEXEL. To help!

(CONTESSA opens the front door.)

DEXEL. Okay...shit! It's like that, huh? Like you want the truth? That what you want? Alright...baby wants the truth...I'm gonna give her the motherfuckin truth then...baby...I need some money, baby.

(CONTESSA smiles.)

CONTESSA. How much would you like?

(DEXEL is taken by surprise.)

DEXEL. Uh...what you got?

(CONTESSA shuts the door. She exits into her bedroom and re-enters with the purse. She gives it to DEXEL.)

DEXEL. What's this?

CONTESSA. Six thousand dollars.

DEXEL. All for me?

CONTESSA. That's right.

DEXEL. You ain't gonna ask what I need it for?

CONTESSA. I could care less.

DEXEL. It's for some medi...

CONTESSA. What did I just say?

(DEXEL smells the money.)

DEXEL. Wow.

CONTESSA. Is that enough?

DEXEL. I hope so.

CONTESSA. You sure?

DEXEL. I don't know what to say...

CONTESSA. Because if you're hungry for more, we can embalm the remainder of our savings for you. Here take this...

(CONTESSA forces her debit card upon DEXEL.)

CONTESSA. There's an ATM around the corner. The pin number is 1223.

DEXEL. I'm good with the cash.

CONTESSA. Positive?

DEXEL. HIV.

CONTESSA. (*Pretending not to have heard:*) Just let me know. You ever need any money at all... you just give your little sister a call... Here, let me write down my cell phone number so you don't have to stalk me for my attention.

(CONTESSA *writes her number down for DEXEL.*)

CONTESSA. Use it. I'll drop whatever I'm doing and Western Union ya my last penny.

DEXEL. Stop it, Contessa.

CONTESSA. I'm serious. What is family for?

(DEXEL *coughs violently.*)

DEXEL. Nah...fuck this. I don't want nothing from you.

CONTESSA. Now we both know that's not true, you defeated little man.

DEXEL. Nah...I'd rather die.

CONTESSA. You've come here for money...we've got money... Take it all.

(DEXEL *hands the bag back.*)

DEXEL. I don't want nothing.

CONTESSA. Don't lie!

(CONTESSA *hands it back.*)

DEXEL. Fuck that!

CONTESSA. Jackie used her brilliant questionable accounting skills to acquire that money and I don't want it in my home!

DEXEL. You two girls are sick in the head!

CONTESSA. You hear that, Jackie? We're not right in the head!

(*Silence.*)

CONTESSA. Jackie?

(CONTESSA *exits into her bedroom to look for JACKIE.*)

CONTESSA. Did you see her leave?

DEXEL. I...

CONTESSA. Shut up, animal!

(CONTESSA *looks out the window.*)

DEXEL. Emotions is crazy! One minute we're being nice...the next we're being mean...the next...

CONTESSA. Did I speak to you? *(Out the window:)* Jackie?

(CONTESSA dials JACKIE on the phone.)

CONTESSA. Please tell me you're not going to do anything to harm yourself. Call me... Forget it, I'm coming to find you.

(CONTESSA hangs the phone up. She puts on her shoes.)

CONTESSA. I'm dealing with children everywhere I go!

DEXEL. Where you going?

CONTESSA. I'm going to go on a scavenger hunt.

DEXEL. Alone?

CONTESSA. I'm always alone.

DEXEL. You want any help?

CONTESSA. When I return, be somewhere else.

DEXEL. Contes...

CONTESSA. Just leave me the fuck alone!

DEXEL. Don't curse!

CONTESSA. Take that money or don't. Just keep me the hell out of your life...it shouldn't be that difficult, Dixel.

(CONTESSA exits the apartment. DEXEL looks out the window...he follows CONTESSA down the street. DEXEL coughs violently. He sits on the couch and turns the television on.)

VOICE. They say that every one child born in an industrialized nation adds more to consumption in his or her lifetime than do thirty to forty children born in developing nations.

(DEXEL changes the channel.)

VOICE. Now, with our help, living with HIV and AIDS is as easy as living with diabetes or herpes. Call your insurance provider to see if...

(DEXEL changes the channel.)

VOICE. Immediately after the liposuction was complete, Darlene knew something was wrong with her body...something alien and evil.

(DEXEL turns the television off and throws his head in his hands. The front door creeps opens. GARANCE slides her dead around

and sizes up the scene. She wears black sunglasses and a black scarf around her head. She is elegant. GARANCE creeps into the apartment. She sneaks into her mothers' room to see if anyone besides this strange man is home. DEXEL walks to the kitchen and pours himself a glass of wine. GARANCE turns on the radio. Something like "Lil Red Riding Hood" by Sam the Sham & The Pharaohs plays. DEXEL slowly turns his head to see GARANCE. GARANCE smiles and snaps her fingers to the beat of the song. They hold eye contact.)

(Blackout.)

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene One

(GARANCE sits across from DEXEL at the dinner table. They hold each other's stare tightly. GARANCE eats an apple very slowly. When she bites, she bites violently. With each bite, DEXEL's stomach turns.)

GARANCE. What a beautiful day.

DEXEL. It's gonna rain.

GARANCE. Rain is beautiful.

DEXEL. You a fan of the rain?

GARANCE. When I was a child, I was always very ill.

DEXEL. I heard.

GARANCE. I could never play outside because of my asthma. The only time I was afforded the presence of the other children was when it rained. Hence why those clouds still make Garance smile.

DEXEL. So you still like the rain?

GARANCE. When it rains...I shine. I just love my new perfume.

DEXEL. I'm very happy for you.

GARANCE. It smells like dandelions. I love dandelions! Dandelions and rain. You want to smell me?

DEXEL. No thank you.

GARANCE. I smell delicious.

DEXEL. I trust you.

GARANCE. *(Sing talking.)* Your loss.

DEXEL. How's the apple?

GARANCE. Fine.

DEXEL. You like apples?

GARANCE. Apples are just fine.

DEXEL. That a mackintosh apple?

GARANCE. I'm not too familiar with apples.

DEXEL. No?

GARANCE. No.

DEXEL. What do you normally eat?

(GARANCE *ponders.*)

GARANCE. Pears.

DEXEL. You like the pears?

GARANCE. Oh yes.

DEXEL. What else do you like?

(GARANCE *ponders.*)

GARANCE. Pomegranate juice.

DEXEL. Pomegranate juice?

GARANCE. Yeah.

DEXEL. What else do you like?

(GARANCE *ponders.*)

GARANCE. Soy.

DEXEL. Soy?

GARANCE. Yeah.

DEXEL. You like meat?

GARANCE. Oh no.

DEXEL. No?

GARANCE. I'm a vegetarian.

DEXEL. A vegetarian?

GARANCE. Yes indeeedoo. That's why I'm eating the apple. Even though I told you that apples are just fine and I neither like nor dislike them. My mother is a pretty heavy meat eater. And if you happened to take a look inside that refrigerator, you can see that it doesn't really cater to a vegetarian's appetite.

(DEXEL *ponders.*)

DEXEL. So that's why you're eating the app...

GARANCE. Boo!

(DEXEL *jumps from his seat. GARANCE howls in laughter.*)

(DEXEL's *fright turns into heavy coughing.*)

GARANCE. Are you all right?

(GARANCE *runs to get DEXEL a glass of water.*)

GARANCE. Here.

DEXEL. Thanks.

(DEXEL's coughing has subsided.)

GARANCE. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

DEXEL. It's okay.

GARANCE. Actually, I did mean to scare you, but not to the point of... Are you sick?

DEXEL. Yeah.

GARANCE. Real sick?

DEXEL. Real... *(Coughs.)* ...shit.

(GARANCE embraces DEXEL with love.)

GARANCE. Misfortune strikes at random in this world. Is there anything I can do to help?

DEXEL. I don't know.

GARANCE. Would you just like me to be here to love you?

DEXEL. You don't know me.

GARANCE. Well we'll solve that right now. Who the hell are you stranger?

DEXEL. I'm Dexel.

GARANCE. Garance is here to love you, Dexel. Would you like a massage?

DEXEL. You gonna touch me?

GARANCE. Yeah. You lie on the couch and I'll rub your back and... you know...make you forget.

DEXEL. Forget what?

GARANCE. Wacky Dexel... Forget about the pain you feel. Wherever that pain comes from...I'll heal it with these beautifully manicured hands.

(A moment.)

DEXEL. Okay.

GARANCE. Okay, Dexel?

DEXEL. You want me to go lie on that couch?

GARANCE. I want Dexel to do whatever Dexel wants to do.

DEXEL. I'll go lie on the couch then.

GARANCE. I'd like that.

DEXEL. Listen...

GARANACE. Yes, Dexel?

DEXEL. I don't know if...

GARANACE. If what, Dexel?

DEXEL. If I'm your type, but...

GARANACE. My type?

DEXEL. Yeah.

GARANACE. In all honesty, Dexel... You're a very handsome black man, but a little too old for a delicate ingénue with a thin figured frame like me.

DEXEL. That ain't what I meant.

GARANACE. What did you mean, Dexel?

DEXEL. You know...your "type."

(GARANACE ponders.)

GARANACE. I have no idea what you're referring to, Dexel.

DEXEL. How can I put this without offending you?

GARANACE. I'm not easily offended.

DEXEL. But I easily offend.

GARANACE. I'm offended you believe me to be so uptight as to be offended by the easily offensive.

DEXEL. Alright... So far you've only been eating housewives, but if you plan on eating me while I'm lying on my stomach...don't. I'm ill. I wouldn't want my niece to catch something cruel because she's feasting on my liver.

(GARANACE howls in laughter. She jumps up and down with excitement.)

DEXEL. What's so funny?

GARANACE. You!

DEXEL. I'm serious...I'm sickly hurting.

GARANACE. Sickly hurting? Feasting on your liver?

DEXEL. Yeah.

(GARANACE howls.)

GARANACE. I'm not going to eat you, Dexel. Wait...did you just call me your niece?

DEXEL. I'm your uncle...Contessa is my sister.

GARANCE. Where the hell ya been all my life?

DEXEL. Estranged.

GARANCE. Cool. Except Contessa is not my real mother so some would find it difficult for you to be my real uncle. But if we're going to role-play...why don't you take on a more exciting role?

DEXEL. Like what?

GARANCE. Since nobody in my family knows who my father is, how about I call you dad?

DEXEL. I don't think your mother would be too pleased with that.

GARANCE. I'll just call you Dexel then. No label Dexel.

DEXEL. Alright.

GARANCE. Now relax, no label Dexel...I'm going to give you a massage.

(GARANCE straddles DEXEL's back. She gently massages him. DEXEL lets out sighs.)

DEXEL. Yeah...right there.

GARANCE. Right there?

DEXEL. Right everywhere...my body hurts everywhere.

GARANCE. Life has done a tap dance on you, NL-Dexel.

DEXEL. And a tango.

GARANCE. No waltzes?

DEXEL. No.

GARANCE. Poor Dexel has never waltzed.

(CONTESSA opens the front door. She holds a drunken JACKIE up.)

DEXEL. Keep doing it like that.

GARANCE. Hey mom! Hey Contessa!

(CONTESSA drops JACKIE and lunges toward GARANCE. CONTESSA throws GARANCE to the ground and strangles her.)

DEXEL. Contessa! Stop it!

CONTESSA. How could you do this to us?

DEXEL. Let go of her!

CONTESSA. What did we ever do to you?

(DEXEL *pulls* CONTESSA *off of* GARANCE.)

DEXEL. What's wrong with you?

CONTESSA. I told you to leave! Get out of my home!

(CONTESSA *lunges toward* GARANCE. DEXEL *intercepts* CONTESSA *and throws her to the couch.*)

DEXEL. Stop this behavior!

(DEXEL *slaps* CONTESSA.)

DEXEL. You a grown woman...act like it. (To GARANCE:) You alright?

GARANCE. Why wouldn't I be?

DEXEL. Because your mother was choking you.

GARANCE. No. My mother is on the floor drunk.

DEXEL. Did Contessa hurt you?

GARANCE. Who's Contessa?

DEXEL. My sister.

CONTESSA. Don't indulge her!

DEXEL. You calm down!

CONTESSA. She's only gonna pick apart your psychology until...

DEXEL. Quiet, woman!

(JACKIE *has risen.*)

GARANCE. Hi mom.

JACKIE. Hello, gorgeous.

GARANCE. Still hitting the bottle?

(JACKIE *laughs and punches an empty bottle of wine.*)

JACKIE. Pow...pam...boom. Knockout! Still the champion of life... Jackie Goldstein!

GARANCE. (*Laughing:*) Mom's the winner!

JACKIE. Come here my darling daughter... Give your mother an embrace.

(GARANCE *embraces* JACKIE.)

GARANCE. I've missed you so much.

JACKIE. I love you too.

CONTESSA. She didn't say she loved you. She said she missed you.

JACKIE. What's your point?

CONTESSA. You said I love you too.

JACKIE. I'm sorry, Garance. I missed you too.

CONTESSA. Because if she loved you, she never would have put you through absolute hell by disappearing only to reappear with her mouth wide open.

JACKIE. That's why she didn't say I love you. Right, baby?

GARANCE. I love you mommy.

JACKIE. I love you too.

CONTESSA. This family is sick.

DEXEL. Give me a hug, sis.

(DEXEL approaches CONTESSA.)

CONTESSA. Get away from me.

DEXEL. C'mon... Let's share in the love.

CONTESSA. Don't move any closer, Dexel.

DEXEL. Now you just being rude.

JACKIE. Come here, Dexel. You're family too. Oh baby, that's your unkie Dexie. Did he tell you that?

GARANCE. He did.

DEXEL. But since I've been MIA for so long, we decided against having a label for me.

JACKIE. Well come over here no label Dexel.

(DEXEL joins in a group hug with JACKIE and GARANCE.)

GARANCE. Feel all this love, mom?

JACKIE. It's fucking amazing.

GARANCE. You could fill a black hole with all this love.

JACKIE. Sure.

GARANCE. You know about black holes don't you, Contessa?

(JACKIE breaks the hug.)

JACKIE. Don't you talk to your mother like that.

(JACKIE takes a hard pull from the closest bottle.)

Come here, baby!

(JACKIE hugs GARANCE.)

CONTESSA. That's A-plus parenting, Jackie. Who could have imagined she'd end up a social misfit?

(GARANCE *laughs and claps her hands violently.*)

JACKIE. (*Laughing:*) What's so funny, baby?

(GARANCE *approaches CONTESSA.*)

GARANCE. I'm a social misfit?

CONTESSA. And that's a very kind label for what you really are.

GARANCE. You're gay! That's the worst type of social misfit. This country hates you with a passion!

JACKIE. They don't hate us...they're just taking time to get used to us.

GARANCE. No, they hate you. Especially old gorilla dykes like you, Contessa.

(CONTESSA *slaps GARANCE. GARANCE looks for DEXEL and JACKIE to defend her.*)

DEXEL. You deserved that one.

GARANCE. Mom?

JACKIE. You know...you run around eating people...taking pictures of yourself in blackface... You had a slap coming, sweetness.

GARANCE. I'm sorry, Contessa.

CONTESSA. I'm sorry that I strangled you.

GARANCE. Apology accepted for the strangling.

CONTESSA. I love you, Garance.

GARANCE. Oh, I don't love you. I'm just admitting that even a Nazi doesn't deserve to be treated the way I was treating you.

JACKIE. Leave the Nazis alone. They've suffered enough.

GARANCE. After all, you did single handedly raise me. You did take me for strolls around the block like a diligent little nanny while my mother drank the coherence out of herself day after day.

CONTESSA. How could you say those hurtful things to me?

GARANCE. How could you let my mother destroy herself?

JACKIE. I'm sorry!

GARANCE. It's not your fault mom. You're an alcomaholic...it's a disease. It's Contessa's fault for not helping you through it.

CONTESSA. I tried to be there for her.

GARANANCE. You ever heard of tough love, Contessa? Maybe if you had slapped her around like you just did me, I wouldn't have had to grow up around a half-vacant body that was never there even when it was! Maybe if you had slapped around my teachers like you just did me, Steven Waters wouldn't have been allowed to call me faggot baby for ten straight years of...

JACKIE. I'm sorry!

GARANANCE. It's not your fault, mom!

CONTESSA. I'm sorry!

GARANANCE. It's too late for apologies!

(*GARANANCE ponders.*)

GARANANCE. Ironic...isn't it, Dexel?

DEXEL. What you mean?

GARANANCE. Two women raised me and yet I've never had one full mother.

(*CONTESSA weeps.*)

GARANANCE. Don't waste your tears. Unless you can turn them into alcohol, they're pretty useless in this house.

CONTESSA. I'm in no position to save anyone from themselves... from their demons. I love your mother... That's all I know how to give.

GARANANCE. It's not enough.

(*The phone rings. DEXEL checks the caller ID.*)

DEXEL. It's blocked.

JACKIE. Let Garance hear.

GARANANCE. Hear what?

CONTESSA. (*Via machine:*) This is Contessa and Jackie...make it quick ...please.

MAN'S VOICE. (*Deep:*) You nigger and nigger loving carpet munchers are gonna feel my knife in between your fucking thighs. For each mother your daughter murdered, I'm gonna give your cunts a stab with my knife. I'm gonna...

(*GARANANCE picks up the phone.*)

GARANANCE. Hello? I'm not a lesbian... I'm Garance. Yes that one. I'm at my mother's home in Gramercy Park. That's a neighborhood in New York City, dummy. Kill me? Oh no...you're not even gonna jail

me. Hey hick, don't you have a sister to be sleeping with? Go screw your sister, pick up my garbage and pretend that you're relevant, because I'm a star and you're a broke hick nobody. You hear me you frozen dinner eating untalented broke hick nothing. You're gonna die and no one will shed a single tear for your loser hick life loser! I'm better than you! Hello? Hick? Hello?

(GARANCE *hangs up.*)

Nobodies always back down when you call them on it.

DEXEL. Call them on what?

GARANCE. On being a nobody...a nothing. I'm a star! I'm important! What do any of you people do for a living? Manage a restaurant? Paint worthless paintings that no one sees? What do you do, boy? Huh? You want to tell me? I'm sick of people acting like they know. Just do what I say or get out of my face because I'm something special and the rest of you people are forgettable nothings!

(*Silence.*)

JACKIE. She's so angry.

CONTESSA. You think you're smarter than everyone else, Garance?

GARANCE. I know I am. I did an IQ test on the Internet. 157. I could cure Parkinson's if I didn't find those shaking bastards so darn funny.

CONTESSA. You're very smart. You always have been.

GARANCE. Then don't question me!

JACKIE. Who is questioning you? Who has ever questioned you?

GARANCE. Everyone.

JACKIE. Garance, we love you. We want for you whatever you want for yourself.

DEXEL. If you're so smart, why did you just tell that man where you at?

GARANCE. This is what I'm talking about.

CONTESSA. What is?

GARANCE. This boy, questioning me!

DEXEL. Don't call me boy, little girl.

GARANCE. Don't tell me what to do with my life!

DEXEL. You think you the Queen of this world?

GARANCE. Shut-up!

DEXEL. You're a deranged little broad.

GARANCE. I have more power than you!

DEXEL. How do you figure?

GARANCE. I just do. I'm the most important person in America and you all are forgettable faggots!

DEXEL. Is that why you think you can murder people?

(GARANCE starts howling.)

DEXEL. No... You think you can just go anywhere you want, kill anyone you want, and leave other motherfuckers dealing with the repercussions?

(GARANCE howls.)

DEXEL. Is that what you think?

GARANCE. I'll do what I want because I'm the better than Jesus and you're a slave!

JACKIE. No slave Garance...that's not nice.

DEXEL. I'm a slave?

GARANCE. Ha, ha, ha!

DEXEL. Well what you think about this slave picking up that phone and dialing 911.

JACKIE. Don't!

DEXEL. What you think about that?

GARANCE. Do it.

DEXEL. You calling my bluff?

JACKIE. Please don't!

GARANCE. Let him do it, mom. Watch what happens.

DEXEL. Watch what happen?

GARANCE. You'll see. Do it. 9-1-1. Dial it. Tell them that Garance Springs is sitting right here.

DEXEL. What's gonna happen?

GARANCE. You'll see, boy.

DEXEL. You call me boy one more time...

GARANCE. What are you gonna do?

JACKIE. Stop making everyone angry.

GARANANCE. Call them, Dexel.

DEXEL. You gonna kill me?

GARANANCE. Not at all.

DEXEL. What's gonna happen if I call?

GARANANCE. You'll see.

CONTESSA. What's going to happen, Garance?

JACKIE. Leave my daughter alone!

GARANANCE. You want to know what's going to happen if Dexel dials 9-1-1?

CONTESSA. What?

GARANANCE. Ready?

JACKIE. Oh don't eat anyone!

GARANANCE. You ready, Contessa? You know what's going to happen?

DEXEL. What?

GARANANCE. Nothing!

DEXEL. Nothing?

GARANANCE. Nothing!

(A moment.)

CONTESSA. Why is nothing going to happen?

GARANANCE. You want to know why nothing is going to happen?

DEXEL. Because I'll be dead?

GARANANCE. No silly. You're going to live a long and healthy life. Ha! Why would you be dead?

DEXEL. Because you're going to kill me?

GARANANCE. I've never killed anyone in my entire cute little life. Why would I start with you?

DEXEL. Are you fucking with me?

GARANANCE. By no means...by all means! Don't you know that you can count me out...in.

CONTESSA. What are you saying, Garance?

GARANANCE. You want to know what I'm saying, mom?

CONTESSA. Mom?

GARANANCE. You like that? I knew you would.

JACKIE. Are we out of cigarettes?

GARANCE. You want to know why nothing will happen if No Label Dexel calls the cops? Nothing will happen because the police won't do anything. Want to know why they won't do anything?

DEXEL. Why?

GARANCE. Because I never killed anyone.

(Group pondering.)

CONTESSA. Are you being serious?

GARANCE. Of course, mom.

DEXEL. She's lying.

GARANCE. I know I am. No I am not.

CONTESSA. Did you kill anyone?

GARANCE. No.

CONTESSA. Oh, thank you Lord! I knew it to be true!

DEXEL. What do you mean you didn't kill anyone?

CONTESSA. She was framed!

GARANCE. I wasn't framed.

DEXEL. What about those pictures you took next to the bodies?

GARANCE. Exactly, NL Dexel. What about those pictures?

DEXEL. You were at the scene of those crimes.

GARANCE. True. But I don't believe we can call them crimes. You want to know why?

DEXEL. What you got?

GARANCE. Because our Government committed them. Shhhhhh... don't tell anyone.

(GARANCE howls.)

DEXEL. Our Government?

GARANCE. Yeah. I'd just show up afterward with whatever costume I was told to wear and have my picture taken.

(Group pondering.)

GARANCE. Cool, huh?

JACKIE. Nobody has a fucking cigarette?

CONTESSA. So you didn't...

GARANCE. For the last time, mom... Maybe I'll call you mom all the time again, mom. Would you like that, mom?

DEXEL. Quit patronizing your mother.

GARANCE. Sorry, boy!

(DEXEL attacks GARANCE. He strangles her.)

CONTESSA. Get off of her, Dexel!

DEXEL. I told you not to call me boy!

CONTESSA. You're hurting her!

(CONTESSA tries to pull DEXEL off of GARANCE.)

DEXEL. She's a lying murderer!

(DEXEL punches GARANCE.)

CONTESSA. Jackie, help me get him off of her!

JACKIE. I need a cigarette!

CONTESSA. Help me!

(JACKIE and CONTESSA grab DEXEL. They manage to pull him off of GARANCE.)

CONTESSA. What is going on here Garance!

GARANCE. The slaves are apparently rebelling.

CONTESSA. I'm being serious! Where have you been and why are you here now?

GARANCE. I'm here because at one point my mother had sex with a random man and...

CONTESSA. Stop making us suffer!

GARANCE. Is that what I'm doing?

CONTESSA. Did you kill anyone?

GARANCE. No!

CONTESSA. Do you know the person who did the killing?

GARANCE. No!

CONTESSA. Why were you there?

GARANCE. Because I killed them and loved it!

CONTESSA. Were those mothers really murdered?

GARANCE. No!

CONTESSA. Then what the hell is all of this?

GARANANCE. You want to see what this is?

CONTESSA. Yes!

(GARANCE screams at the top of her lungs. Silence. GARANCE sticks out her tongue and smiles.)

GARANANCE. You people are lunatics.

(GARANCE turns the television on.)

VOICE. And the vultures are just sitting there, waiting for the banks to foreclose on your homes so they can swoop in and prey upon what's left of your American dream.

(GARANCE changes the channel.)

VOICE. The countdown to the Emmys has begun. Roll out the red carpets, pop open the champagne and get ready for...

(GARANCE changes the channel.)

VOICE. *(Sounds of the ocean:)* The Caribbean. Treat yourself.

(GARANCE changes the channel.)

VOICE. That was the tenth abortion you've paid for this year, Matt! Man...at this rate it would be cheaper to have a kid, put it through gynecology school and get it to perform the rest of your abortions for you.

(GARANCE turns the television off.)

CONTESSA. What?

GARANANCE. You know what's on that TV? Nothing. You want to know why there's nothing on that TV?

CONTESSA. Why?

GARANANCE. So that you know nothing.

CONTESSA. What do you mean?

GARANANCE. I didn't kill anyone. I was paid by people that work for people that work for people in our Government to lend my face and name to what was called, "The Big Carnival."

CONTESSA. What's that?

GARANANCE. A big lie that I'm making up to get you to wonder whether or not I'm telling the truth. No, I'm just kidding...I never lie. The Big Carnival is...uh...it's a news story so captivating that it would divert the public's attention from another possible story that someone didn't want you to know about.

DEXEL. What was the other story?

GARANANCE. I don't know. I guess that means the mission was accomplished.

CONTESSA. How did you meet these people?

GARANANCE. How did I meet these people? I met them as a little girl when I created imaginary friends because I couldn't stand to look at my obliterated mother and her textbook enabler wife. No... just kidding. They were real people. I was approached last year. They had been watching me for a while.

CONTESSA. Why was anyone watching you?

GARANANCE. Because of the fact that I was raised by two dykes... a Jew and a Black. I guess they figured that would stir up enough controversy to distract the minds of the public.

JACKIE. It worked.

GARANANCE. Of course it did. I didn't ask too many questions, because I really don't care.

CONTESSA. You don't care?

GARANANCE. All I care about is power.

JACKIE. I want cigarettes.

GARANANCE. All I know is that I got paid to take a picture and become a star.

CONTESSA. Are you lying?

GARANANCE. About what?

CONTESSA. Anything...everything.

GARANANCE. Lying...hmmm...I don't think so... But to answer your question from earlier, Contessa...

CONTESSA. Yeah?

GARANANCE. The reason I came home was to see if my mother would like to leave America with me.

JACKIE. I want cigarettes.

CONTESSA. You're leaving?

GARANANCE. Part of the deal. When my job was done I had to go to Helsinki for the rest of my days. You know where Helsinki is, mom?

JACKIE. Where?

GARANANCE. It's the capital of Finland.

JACKIE. Do they have cigarettes there?

GARANANCE. You're going to have to quit smoking if we're going to be roommates again, mom.

JACKIE. Why?

GARANANCE. Because I have asthma!

JACKIE. Well I'll worry about that then.

GARANANCE. Would you like to go Finland with me?

JACKIE. Where?

GARANANCE. Finland. I've got enough money in an account there for us to live well forever.

JACKIE. Can Contessa come?

GARANANCE. Sure. But she'll have to get a job and fend for herself, because I'm only paying for the two of us. Oh, and there's also not too many black people there so maybe she can pretend to be our maid or something like...

CONTESSA. Shut-up.

GARANANCE. Excuse me?

DEXEL. Yeah, shut-up.

CONTESSA. We've failed you as parents.

GARANANCE. How do you figure?

CONTESSA. You put us through hell just for a little money?

GARANANCE. Actually, it's quite a bit of money.

CONTESSA. I don't care. You don't love us.

GARANANCE. You, no. Mom, yes.

CONTESSA. You don't love her either.

GARANANCE. Yes I do. That's why I came back for her.

CONTESSA. Garance...if you didn't kill anyone and you put us through this hell just for...*for money*...it's worse than if you did kill them. *(Cries.)* Where did we go wrong, Jackie?

DEXEL. Contessa...

(CONTESSA weeps.)

CONTESSA. Where did we go wrong?

(DEXEL holds his sister.)

DEXEL. It's not your fault.

GARANANCE. Of course it is, Dexel.

DEXEL. Don't talk to her.

GARANACE. You gonna sew my mouth shut?

DEXEL. Have some respect for people's feelings!

(GARANACE puts on a hat and big sunglasses.)

GARANACE. Mom...Jackie Goldstein that is...I'm going to shop the village for a few hours. I have a plane ticket in your name. If you want to join your daughter forever in the land of Scandinavian sensibilities, be ready to go when I return.

JACKIE. Pick me up a pack of cigarettes on your way back.

GARANACE. I love you mom.

JACKIE. Cigarettes!

GARANACE. Look at her Contessa...your wife is absolutely pathetic.

(CONTESSA weeps. GARANACE puts on her disguise and exits.)

(Blackout.)

Scene Two

(A few hours later. CONTESSA and DEXEL stare into the screen of the laptop computer. They are both befuddled. DEXEL rubs CONTESSA's shoulders.)

CONTESSA. What do I type?

DEXEL. I don't know.

CONTESSA. Is this even the way to go about this?

DEXEL. It's the information highway. Anything you need to know about everything is right up in this thing.

CONTESSA. Oh...Garance...

DEXEL. Forget about her Contessa. She's dead to you.

(CONTESSA is too drained to defend GARANACE.)

CONTESSA. So what should I type?

DEXEL. Um... Type in...American Adoption Association and shit.

CONTESSA. Is that even an organization?

DEXEL. I have no idea.

CONTESSA. Great.

DEXEL. Alright... Check this out. Type in these words and let's see what comes up.

CONTESSA. What are they?

DEXEL. Adult.

CONTESSA. Okay...

DEXEL. Adult. Adoption. Girl. Beautiful. Retrieve.

CONTESSA. Beautiful?

DEXEL. You don't think she's beautiful?

CONTESSA. I don't even know if she's still alive so how would I know if she's good looking or not?

DEXEL. She's beautiful.

CONTESSA. I don't think that will help with the search.

DEXEL. She could have won a beauty pageant or some shit.

CONTESSA. And in winning the pageant the article says that she came from Contessa Springs and her brother Dexel?

DEXEL. Take beautiful out then.

CONTESSA. Thank you.

DEXEL. All I know is she got attractive parents and the chances are she's...

CONTESSA. Enough.

DEXEL. Sorry.

CONTESSA. So we have adult, adoption, girl, and retrieve.

DEXEL. No and.

CONTESSA. What?

DEXEL. Take the and out. The and completely changes the search.

CONTESSA. I didn't have the and in the search.

DEXEL. You just said...

CONTESSA. I was just saying and to introduce the last word of our search, which is retrieve.

DEXEL. Good.

CONTESSA. Alright.

(CONTESSA hits "enter." They stare at the screen confused.)

DEXEL. Tell me something good.

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NOT OVER!**

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