

Conversations about an Empty Suit

By

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Cast of Characters

Abby	50s. Artistic director of a mid-sized theatre company. White
Suzannah	Late 20s. Lighting designer. Heavy set. Not glamorous. Any race
Gregory	40s-50s. Actor and company member. African American
Sarah Kennedy	50s. Highly successful director and screenwriter. Polished. White
Stage Manager	Only heard from the booth

Place

A small, professional theatre

Time

The present

ACT ONE
Scene One

The stage is awash in light except for a dark area where a desk and chair are pre-set far upstage left.

STAGE MANAGER
(Calling from the booth)

Going dark!

CAST
(From their offstage locations)

Thank you, going dark.

Blackout

Sounds of the front door to the theatre being unlocked. Work lights are flipped on. ABBY comes onstage, carrying an armful of men's suits, some mail including an American Theatre magazine, a script, her purse and the keys. She dumps the suits on the desk and drops everything else on the chair. She gestures to the stage manager to bring the stage lights back up. She crosses back to the work lights, turns them off and comes back and observes the stage.

ABBY

Son of a bitch.

Front door is opened.

Suz?

SUZANNAH enters with coffee and a bag of doughnuts.

SUZANNAH

Yup.

Abby gestures to the stage.

ABBY

I need this special.

SUZANNAH

I need another dimmer pack.

ABBY

We don't have the money for another dimmer pack.

Suzannah plops down at the desk and begins sipping her coffee and flipping through the magazine

SUZANNAH

Then you don't get your special.

ABBY

But I need the special.

SUZANNAH

Then get me another dimmer pack or move the desk.

ABBY

How can I move the desk? We can't move the desk.

SUZANNAH

Abby, I've seen you move mountains. Move the fucking desk.

She grunts at something in the magazine

ABBY

We need this playing area isolated and separate so we can look into the past without jumbling it into the present.

SUZANNAH

Then get me-

ABBY

-don't have the money. Can you ask-

SUZANNAH

-Did. They're doing *Angels in America*. They got nothing to spare. They asked me for extension cords, which gives you an idea.

ABBY

How about across the-

SUZANNAH

Asked.

ABBY

Freddy and-

SUZANNAH

Nope.

ABBY

Shit.

SUZANNAH

No shit. So, jumbled or find the money.

ABBY

Can you re-focus? Tweak? Work your Suzannah magic?

SUZANNAH

Have. This is tweaked. This is magic. (*Gesturing to the suits*) For the second act?

ABBY

Yeah.

SUZANNAH

I liked what I saw of rehearsal last night. It's going to be fierce.

ABBY

Yeah, it's coming together. How's the toilet in the ladies? Still?

SUZANNAH

Still.

ABBY

I went on youtube. I think it might be a seal. I'm going to fiddle with it.

SUZANNAH

God, I hate this magazine.

ABBY

What? Oh. We all hate that magazine.

SUZANNAH

Where do they get this money? Look at that! Do you know how many gels and instruments it takes to make that effect?

ABBY

You do that with no money and the seven coffee cans and three flashlights I give you to light our shows.

SUZANNAH

Yes, I do. But I still need another dimmer pack or your special won't be special. Your special won't even exist. (*Refers to magazine*) And this part. How can a director in Brooklyn be so excited about can't-pronounce-it-theatre in Budapest doing this show I've never heard of but obviously should of 'cuz this dude's so moved and thrilled they're doing it? Shit, I have trouble plowing through all the plays I'm fucking designing for. Oh, man, now I'm depressed.

ABBY

You're always depressed.

SUZANNAH

No, I'm unappreciated. And I'm in tech. Which is actually the exact same thing.

ABBY

I appreciate you.

SUZANNAH

Is it just theatre? Do other businesses have people that seem to do more with their 24 daily allotment of hours? I am 15 episodes behind on *Game of Thrones* and I have an entire season of *Doctor Who*. I can't even talk to my brother anymore because he keeps slipping spoilers. Am I a failure?

ABBY

Yes. I'm embarrassed to be seen in public with you.

Suzannah tosses the magazine aside and pulls out her smart phone.

SUZANNAH

I knew it. A failure at 28. Well, bitch-cousin-Morgana-don't-call-me-Morgan will be happy. I hate when my mother posts on my Facebook page! Why does she do that? Do I look like I want to see inspirational videos with kittens?

Abby is staring at the desk sitting in the dark spot.

Hey, didn't this guy teach at your school?

ABBY

Maybe I'll call Paul at Fox and Hound. Maybe they could loan us one.

SUZANNAH

He died.

ABBY

WHAT!? Paulie died!?

SUZANNAH

No! The guy at your college.

ABBY

Who?

SUZANNAH

Fredrick Henderson. You went where he was the honcho, right?

Suzannah holds up her phone for Abby to see.

ABBY

Yes. What? He died?

SUZANNAH

Yup. His headshot looks old, he looks old in it, so he must have been really old.

Abby is now reading Suzannah's phone screen.

ABBY

I graduated almost thirty years ago so...

She gives Suzannah her phone back and pulls out her own.

SUZANNAH

So, what was he like? He won a Tony once, right?

ABBY

Yeah, before he came to head up the department.

SUZANNAH

What was he like to study with?

Abby talks while she reads her phone.

ABBY

I don't know. You had to apply for a spot to study with him. And he favored certain students and I wasn't one he...favored. So I don't know. In the Open Session he could be....he could be...adversarial. He called it "respect". Some students were good with that. I never was. Man, look at all these posts already.

SUZANNAH

Was Sarah Kennedy one?

ABBY

What? Yes. Sarah Kennedy was a favorite.

SUZANNAH

So is this like an emotional thing? Is hugging to be expected?

ABBY

(Putting her phone away)

God, no. This is completely not an emotional thing.

SUZANNAH

Color me relieved. I suck at the hugging you seem to favor. But I would hug you for a dimmer pack.

ABBY

You aren't getting a dimmer pack

SUZANNAH

Thusly, you are not getting your special. Do you want me to take these empty suits backstage?

ABBY

Yes. No. No, I'll do it.

Suzannah exits, coffee and doughnuts in hand. Abby drags the desk into the light with the suits still on top of the desk. Door opens again.

GREGORY

(Offstage, calling)

Abby?

ABBY

Here, Gregory.

Gregory enters, carrying two suits.

GREGORY

Oh, good! You got some. I pried these loose from Danny's closet.

ABBY

Take 'em back. These should be enough.

GREGORY

I'm not taking them back. Took me two days to get these outta the pack rat's hands. And they looked dreadful on him when they DID fit him. I picked up voicemail. Theatre Beat is coming.

ABBY

And I heard from Muriel. So that's two reviews. No Moby Dick, of course.

GREGORY

Have we heard from She Who Shall Not Be Named?

ABBY

When in god's name is Voldemort going to die? Or retire? Or get canned?

GREGORY

Never. People do too many musicals. *She Who Shall Not Be Named* loves the musicals.
(Pause) We could do a musical.

ABBY

Yes! Let's do *Annie*, *Love Boat The Musical*, and wrap the season up by farting out *The Sound of Music* performed by disadvantaged toddlers.

GREGORY

I bet there's a grant for farting toddlers.

ABBY

God but people love helping "the youth."

GREGORY

Could they be farting disadvantaged toddlers of color? We so need a new computer for the booth.

ABBY

We need everything. Dimmer packs. Computer. Audiences. Grants. Critics that don't hate everything I do. Remind me why we're doing this again?

GREGORY

The money. The fame. The glamour. The world-wide recognition. Oh, and all those Tony awards. How's the toilet?

ABBY

Really. Why are we doing this?

GREGORY

Well, why I'm doing it? Professional satisfaction. Working with you and everybody in the company. Playing roles that other theatres only give to white guys.

ABBY

Speaking of white guys, how was the anniversary dinner?

GREGORY

The lamb was sublime and Camille gave us dessert on the house. You?

ABBY

I don't like lamb.

GREGORY

Abigail.

ABBY

How am I?

GREGORY

Yes. Why are you doing this? This usually hits during tech week.

ABBY

I'm never getting a Tony Award, you know.

GREGORY

Do you want a Tony Award?

ABBY

YES! Of course, I want a fucking Tony Award! Who doesn't want a Tony Award?

GREGORY

I think you may be working in the wrong city if you want one of those.

ABBY

Wrong city. Wrong state. Wrong gender. Wrong age. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

GREGORY

Well, you're white. You've got that going for you.

ABBY

True.

GREGORY

Many people think you're doing plenty of things right.

ABBY

All seven of our subscribers.

GREGORY

Four hundred and seventy-three. And you won-

ABBY

- Six years ago. A MIDWESTERN theatre award. It's like winning best sushi bar in Yosemite.

GREGORY

Well, aren't we the New York snob today! You create vibrant, provocative theatre for actual real people, the...the...

ABBY

99%? The point zero nine percent of the ninety-nine percent who actually come. I am a small business owner in a crappy location, in an overpriced rental space, a landlord broker than me, questionable plumbing in a freezing bathroom-

GREGORY

-but with a fabulous paint job.

ABBY

I should get you pom-poms.

GREGORY

I demand a fetching sweater as well.

ABBY

One of those skirts.

GREGORY

Goodness no. Have you seen my legs?

ABBY

Fredrick Henderson died.

GREGORY

I'm so sorry. Who is Fredrick Henderson?

ABBY

The department head of the theatre department at my university. He won a Tony in the sixties, late fifties maybe, for directing. He died.

GREGORY

I'm so sorry. Is this why...why you're asking-

ABBY

-no. And no, I am not sad. I don't know what I am but I am absolutely certain I am not sad. Is that bad?

GREGORY

What are you?

ABBY

I said, I don't know. I think I should be sad but...shit, I'm grand. Lovely. I'm just all *(breaks into song)* "What's it all about, Alphie?"

GREGORY

See! We should do a musical!

ABBY

You aggravate my middle-aged, post-menopausal ass.

Suzannah enters

SUZANNAH

What's that from? Hey, Gregory.

ABBY

What?

GREGORY

Suz. Where's my donut?

SUZANNAH

You weren't here. Donut gone the way of all donuts in my possession longer than 10 minutes. The song. My mother sings that.

GREGORY

Alfie?

GREGORY AND ABBY
(Singing in unison)

"What's it all about, Alfie?"

SUZANNAH

Oh, god. Yeah.

ABBY

Song from that Michael Caine movie.

SUZANNAH

Who's Michael Caine?

GREGORY

Dear god in heaven! How can you not know who Michael Caine is?!

SUZANNAH

Do you know who Matt Smith is? Jackson Rathbone? Daniel Radcliffe?

GREGORY

I know that one! The last one. I know his name.

ABBY

Rose loves Daniel Radcliffe.

SUZANNAH

Okay, I was thinking, if we move some money from props we can rent a dimmer pack from-

ABBY

-We don't have the money for another dimmer pack! I told you last week. I told you Monday. I told you yesterday. I told you three times today. What we have is what we have. It's not enough but it is what we have. OKAY?

GREGORY

Abby, let me.

ABBY

Gregory-

GREGORY

-Abby.

SUZANNAH

-Abby.

ABBY

-Suzannah.

GREGORY

Abby, let me.

ABBY

No! I have this! SUZ-

GREGORY

-ABIGAIL!

SUZANNAH

-Oh Abs, don't make it a thing. You make everything a thing.

ABBY

YOU! YOU! YOU'VE been making it a thing!!!

SUZANNAH

Because it's my job to make it a thing so I get the things I need to do my job.

GREGORY

Okay, everybody, let's calm down.

ABBY

Well, it's my job to give you a job, give you a budget, keep you in that budget, and create a complete world out of nothing, on nothing, while everyone demands something, and it is still never fucking enough! So just do your job like I hired you to do with what I said we had to do it with, OKAY?!

Abby storms off stage. Suzannah strolls off in the other direction.

Gregory looks after Abby, then Suzannah, drags the desk back into its previous position and then proceeds to calmly begin folding the suits.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

Abby sits in the audience, staring at the stage. The stage lights are up as before, dark spot still on the far upstage corner. She gets up, picks up a few tiny bits of paper or small nails off the stage floor, puts them in her pocket, and returns to her seat. After another moment she gets up, and pacing the stage slowly, begins reading her smart phone. She finally settles in the chair in the dark spot and continues to read. Suzannah comes on stage with either a ladder or scaffolding.

SUZANNAH

Hey. Didn't know you were still here.

ABBY

Still here.

SUZANNAH

Price of power, eh?

ABBY

I guess. Hey, I'm sorry about-

SUZANNAH

(Waving the apology away)

-please. You're a powder puff compared to Johnny-Dickface-Packer-Fan-Shithead Simmons.

ABBY

Hah! How's *God of Carnage* going at Johnny Simmons' Theatre of Money?

SUZANNAH

Living up to its billing.

ABBY

Lots of money?

SUZANNAH

Lots of carnage.

Climbing the ladder, she refocuses a lighting instrument, casting a warm light on Abby.

ABBY

Whoa! Hello!

SUZANNAH

Don't get too excited. I took this from downstage right Henry-Gregory monologue spot.

ABBY

Oh.

SUZANNAH

You seem troubled, Obi Wan. I sense a rift in the universe. Like millions of voices screamed and then suddenly went silent.

ABBY

Oh, nobody's going silent.

SUZANNAH

Can you stand up?

Abby does and the light flickers on and off her head and shoulders.

ABBY

Were you ever inspired by a teacher?

SUZANNAH

Step up six inches.

Abby steps upstage and is now out of the light.

Damn. Come back. Yeah. Sure. My college lighting instructor. And my dad. I guess he qualifies. And there was the shop teacher in middle school.

ABBY

How?

SUZANNAH

How did they inspire me? I dunno. Made me feel good at doing what I was good at. Weren't boring. Were into what I was into. I didn't have to be girly-spangled-bedazzled to be special.

ABBY

They made you feel special?

SUZANNAH

Oh, Abs, a little too Hallmark Lifetime Channel Presents for me. What's up?

ABBY

This. THIS! All this.

She holds up her phone.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Stacks of posts about Fredrick. His inspiration. How great he was. How he gave everyone all this...inspiration. I feel like I missed the meeting. The dude scared the shit out of me. Was I in the wrong class? This guy, he...he was really distant. Like only a few measured up and I certainly wasn't one of them. But all these messages. Everybody must have been blessed by his wisdom and insights except me.

SUZANNAH

Read me one. But do it sitting at the desk.

Abby sits

ABBY

Okay, this is by Hank Tobias. He did one scene in Open Session sophomore year.

SUZANNAH

Lean back a bit. Open Session?

ABBY

Open Session was when anyone could come in and present a prepared, rehearsed scene for the entire acting department. Once a week. A big thing. Hank and this other guy did a scene from...a movie. Um...*Officer and a Gentleman*. Okay. Whatever. It wasn't Strindberg but they were sophomores putting themselves out there. And Fredrick ripped Hank a new one. He called Hank lazy. Guilty of complacent acting. Lacking in the courage to take an artistic risk, the whole shebang. Hank cried for a week. He came back from break 15 pounds heavier. Never did Open Session again. Alright? This is what Hank wrote. *"I wept when I heard this dreadful news. Fredrick inspired me to be a better artist and a better human being. His high standards I carry with me to this day."* Along with that fifteen extra I'm sure. *"My experiences"*-notice the plural-experiences. *"My experiences in Open Session guided my artistic and theatrical growth like no other teacher ever did again. I treasure my time in Fredrick's presence to this day."*

SUZANNAH

What's this Hank doing now?

ABBY

Let me see.

She taps at her phone for a moment

Looks like...computer analyst in San Francisco. Some theatre but mostly community. Added another twenty to the Fredrick fifteen but still amazingly attractive. Wait! Listen to this one. This is from Kathy Lipkiss. Musical Theatre major. Big voice, tall blonde, but Fredrick only really liked tiny, earthy brunettes. She wrote, *"Fredrick made me dig deep, deeper than I ever had as an artist."* Once she did Open Session, did a Billie Holliday song. Fredrick said something like, "Is this really what Open Session is for? Rehashing material which is totally out of your wheelhouse? As an artist you need to understand your type, your strengths, your weaknesses and what you should not even attempt until you have at least a modicum of life experience under your belt"

SUZANNAH

Did you ever do an Open Season?

ABBY

Open Session.

SUZANNAH

Shit, same difference. Did you?

ABBY

Junior year. I did a scene from *Crimes of the Heart*. Very popular play back in my day.

SUZANNAH

I've heard of Crimes of the Fucking Heart. I lit it for a community theatre. So? What did the guy say?

ABBY

Nothing.

SUZANNAH

Meaning actually nothing? Or you were nothing? What?

ABBY

I did the scene with Cindy Taylor. One of his favorites. He praised her up and down. How in the moment and present she was. How, even though he knew the play, he didn't know what she was going to do next and he was enraptured. And that was it.

SUZANNAH

Nothing about you. Your work.

ABBY

Nope.

SUZANNAH

Where is this gal now?

ABBY

Cindy? L.A. for ages. She was just on *Two Broke Girls* as a customer. And she does some stand-up.

SUZANNAH

So that teacher's pet really set the world on fire, eh?

ABBY

Sarah Kennedy did.

SUZANNAH

How well did you know her? Sarah?

ABBY

We were friends. College friends. You know, we would sit in the bar, late into the night, talking intensely about art, life, you know.

SUZANNAH

So? What was she like?

ABBY

She was...she was like most everybody else. East coaster. Nice enough. Okay actress. She was still an actor then. She was bold, I remember that. Spoke up alot. Convinced she was right. Lots of confidence. And now she owns Hollywood.

SUZANNAH

By the way, Foster Klein was mine.

ABBY

Who?

SUZANNAH

Foster Klein is my Sarah Kennedy. But he was a prick. Would come to all the parties, leer at girls' chests', leave when the beer was gone. Called me too fat to fuck, dropped out junior year, went to London and is now a super successful production designer. Tim Burton, Ridley Scott, he works with all of them. Like I said, a prick.

ABBY

Talented?

SUZANNAH

(Pauses)

Determined. Disdainful of anything that wasn't what he considered true art. Like...there was no wiggle room. If something was on TV, it automatically sucked. If it wasn't a very, very specific, identifiable genre, it was worthless.

ABBY

Why are they there and we're here?

SUZANNAH

Pricks get ahead? Was Kennedy-

ABBY

-a prick? I heard stories later, of what she became. Can't say for sure. How can anyone be objective about the past? But why?! Why was she considered one of the "ones"? Why not me? Did Fredrick see something in her I didn't have?

SUZANNAH

She did go to New York.

ABBY

And I didn't.

SUZANNAH

And I didn't drop out and go to London.

ABBY

Why didn't I have the confidence? Did I know I didn't have the talent or was it just the fear that I didn't have the talent? Not by the lack but by the fear of the lack?

SUZANNAH

I can say for a fact, you have the talent. I didn't know you then but what you get out of actors now. Designers too. There's a reason I work for you for nothing but beer money. Johnny Simmons has to pay through the nose to get me. When you did that scene, if Fredrick had praised you instead of Cindy, would it have changed things?

ABBY

I don't know. I think...I think I cared too much and it showed.

SUZANNAH

Needy is very unattractive. Which completely sucks. But you have to admit, it was a bitch of a choice he set up for you all.

ABBY

How?

SUZANNAH

Do you want to be ripped to shreds by the guru, or just ignored, on the slim chance you might enter the favorites fold? The dude sounds like a dick.

Suzannah makes an adjustment and Abby is suddenly blasted with a strong flood of light.

ABBY

Really?

SUZANNAH

Really.

ABBY

Really?

SUZANNAH

If half of what you're telling me is true, yup. Big, fat, famous Tony-winning dickwad.

ABBY

But don't you have to push people? That was the party line.

SUZANNAH

Explain downstage.

Abby moves downstage

ABBY

That if you didn't call people out on sub-standard work, you weren't respecting their ability to do better. That it was insulting to-

SUZANNAH

-be nice? To be not verbally and emotionally abusive?

ABBY

To be satisfied.

SUZANNAH

And Fredrick was the one who decided what was satisfactory. He decided what was art, what was crap, and there was no middle ground.

ABBY

Yes. But he was preparing us for the real world of rejection.

SUZANNAH

Really, Abs?

ABBY

What?

SUZANNAH

It wasn't the real world, Abs! You were paying the dude to train you, not be a substitute producer training you in how to be rejected and dismissed. Oh boy. Let's dump a hundred grand into this guy's pocket so he can not cast me. Wow. Sign me up. Look at it. All these places do it. Sign one marquee name to pull people in. Oh, look, our staff has won this many Nobel, Pulitzer, Tony, Forbes-business whatever awards. Give us your whatever, time, talent, work for shit-pay, tuition, whatever, and maybe, just maybe, you'll get to ride the elevator with the schmuck.

ABBY

But connection to that person can play out. Connections, who you know, it's so important.

SUZANNAH

Then they should sell THAT. Truth in marketing. Work for shit-pay and you get fifteen minutes a month with...I dunno, Warren Buffet. Or Fredrick. Or whoever. What did you get for your hundred grand and four years spent at Henderson's feet? Looks like a severe case of Man-I-Suck.

ABBY

So what's your argument?

SUZANNAH

Oh! Aren't we going all debate team! Okay. I'd say for a teacher, someone who was entrusted with nurturing young artists to explore, grow and learn about themselves and their craft, and actually being paid by ALL those artists for that service but only giving that service to a few...yes, that Fredrick Henderson was guilty of not only not

providing you with the service implied when you went to your pretty prestigious institution of higher learning but he was also pretty much the definition of being a big, pompous dickwad.

ABBY

How did you get so smart?

SUZANNAH

Me? I'm not smart.

ABBY

Yes, you are. When I was twenty-five-

SUZANNAH

-eight.

ABBY

-Twenty-eight, I didn't have your...your...

SUZANNAH

Cursing ability? Encyclopedic knowledge of all things science fiction? Gift of making gobos out of tin cans and gaff tape?

ABBY

Your fabulous disregard for-

SUZANNAH

-The Man!

ABBY

Exactly! I have no perspective. It took you five minutes to figure out what it took me thirty years to see.

SUZANNAH

Actually, thirty fucking years. Does it bother you?

ABBY

Yes. It really, really bothers me. Not you figuring it out.

SUZANNAH

You not.

Abby nods.

SUZANNAH

That's why I like lighting. Easier to see the big picture from up here.

Suzannah shuts the instrument she is working on so it goes dark.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE

Work lights come up. Abby rolls a mop bucket and mop on stage while she talks on her cell phone. Her voice is raised and she is speaking very clearly.

ABBY

It has no swearing but does have adult themes and some violence...there is one murder but it happens off stage....The Royal Thread...no, that's the title, The Royal Thread...yes, you can buy tickets at the door but we don't hold tickets at the door....it is better to purchase before...yes. Yes. Okay, we'll see you then! Thank you!

Abby balances her phone between her ear and shoulder and begins to slowly mop the stage while she speaks.

Yes, I'm sure....yes, it is secure. We have never had a problem...There is a link through the...the brown button on the right side of the website, the one that says "to purchase tickets, click here"...Okay. That's terrific...We'll see you then....okay...okay...Thank you! Okay...Yes, I'm sure...okay, thank you! Bye-bye. Okay...Bye-bye. You too! Thank you so much...You have a great day! Thank you.

Fumbling to hang up the phone, she drops it in the bucket of dirty water.

OH MY FUCKING GOD IN HEAVEN!

She scoops it out. She begins jumping around the stage, chanting while she shakes the phone out.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck him. Fuck him!

Gregory enters

GREGORY

I love the new warm up.

ABBY

My phone. I dropped my fucking phone in the fucking water and now it is dead and I am so, so, so....oh, shit. I'm in one dark place, Gregory.

GREGORY

I've noticed.

ABBY

Sorry about rehearsal last night.

GREGORY

Oh, it was fine. Jeri needed a fire lit under her ass anyway.

ABBY

That isn't my directing style.

GREGORY

It was fine. People trust you.

ABBY

I felt like a dick.

GREGORY

And you successfully passed that feeling along. Along with quite a bit of colorful swearing, might I add. Sorry! Don't look at me like that! We'll survive.

ABBY

Oh god.

GREGORY

Abby, I've been thinking-

ABBY

Uh oh. What!? I'm sorry. I'll apologize in an e-mail to the cast-

GREGORY

Don't you dare. Abby, okay.

He hesitates

Just go with me on this.

ABBY

Oh god. Okay.

GREGORY

Do you remember when you finally felt safe to strut? Really safe?

ABBY

What the heck are you talking about?

GREGORY

Getting this place going took some strut. Moxie. Fire. Tenacity. And you have it in spades. But you didn't do this when you were twenty.

ABBY

I was still trying to act.

GREGORY

Phhft. The starter career. Like the starter house.

ABBY

Strut? Well, after I gave up acting for sure. I think...probably around...I think after when Bob and Rosie were in that car accident. And then my brother died.

GREGORY

You had cancer.

ABBY

Yeah. That wakes a gal up. I suppose I figured...hell, I wanted work! And so I decided to make it. Not wait for it.

GREGORY

The whole "clock is ticking" thing?

ABBY

Exactly. Lost a tit and some lymph nodes but geez, I got a whole lotta clarity in return. I just I stopped giving a shit what other people thought.

GREGORY

Goodness, what a delicious discovery. That kind of clarity. You do excel at it. The vision. Clarity for the company. The mission. Talking to subscribers and funders and aldermen. What we're doing and how to do it. You're like Suz with better manners.

ABBY

But why did it take so long? Why!? You're a man. Is it a guy thing? Guys seem to get it so much sooner!

GREGORY

Oh Abby, I'm a gay black man raised Baptist in southern Indiana. Strutting with safety took, maybe...thirty years? Still I'm valued as a whole human being, complex and worthy, by a very narrow population.

ABBY

I love you.

GREGORY

As you should. I'm marvelous. But what I'm saying is...Abs, you're not the only one who goes through this. Danny's brother Simon, his big-shot newscaster brother, evening anchor in Kanas? Family star? Going out to dinner with Simon is like being in Beyonce's entourage...in Wichita. Get a couple of shots of Kentucky bourbon in him and you'll get Simon's Richard Engel story. They went to Stanford at the exact same time. Now Richard Engel is NBC News international Arabic-speaking, hot-shot, sniper-dodging superstar and Simon is fluent in teleprompter. It burns him up six ways from Sunday. Everybody has a Sarah Kennedy in their life.

ABBY

What burns me is that yesterday morning, if anyone asked, I was a big success. Geez, Abby is fabulous! Artistic director of a cool theatre company in a theatre-loving city, a woman artistic director, award winning director, mom to an amazing kid, happily

married, flexible day job with cool people. Stacks of great reviews all over our lobby walls, critical and audience hits. A few big hits.

GREGORY

And today?

ABBY

Today? I'm a medium success. A Coulda-Been-Big-If-I-Was-More...something. I basically live off my husband, my daughter is going away to college and incurring college debt because we...I don't make enough; I work a crappy day job with no pension in a room with florescent lighting. My business barely makes ends meet, I haven't attained the big recognition, the Tony or the Oscar, I've gotten some flat-out dreadful, brutal reviews, all of which I still have in a file by the way. Voldemort hates me because I have the audacity to not do musicals or do whatever I do completely wrong. I've seen people walk out of my shows. And I'm old. Did I blow my chance?

GREGORY

What chance?

ABBY

To be the BIG success? I think I've missed it.

GREGORY

So who really got in your head? Sarah Kennedy or Fredrick?

ABBY

You been talking to Suz?

GREGORY

She worships you. And when you're down, the cranky bounces off the walls.

ABBY

I've played it too safe. I have a half-assed life, create half-assed art, in a half-assed way.

GREGORY

You are respected and loved. Everybody knows you, knows us-

ABBY

-in professional, *storefront* theatre. Wow. Is that the New York Times calling on my cell phone?

GREGORY

You have built this from nothing. Without you-

ABBY

But Gregory, I...I...I have never been on the cover of anything! No one will ever interview me, asking for my wisdom. I mean, I will NEVER be interviewed by Terry Gross on Fresh Air!

GREGORY

Because, god knows, that certainly is the definition of success, eh?

ABBY

A Terry Gross interview? Kinda sorta is, Greg.

GREGORY

Alright, I'll give you that. Okay, Abigail, let's give this all a little context, shall we?

ABBY

PLEASE!

GREGORY

I love Sarah Kennedy's work. I do. Danny and I have all her stuff on DVD. She is a gifted storyteller, no doubt. She is also rich, white, raised by a rich, white family, in a world basically still run by rich white families, and thus a culture which values stories about rich white people above all else.

ABBY

I love it when you go all Malcolm X.

GREGORY

She grew up connected, raised from birth with an understanding of how to talk to power. How power likes to be talked about. If she stumbled here and there, where was she going to fall? Upper East Side?

ABBY

Connecticut, I think.

GREGORY

Where would you have fallen?

ABBY

Cedar Rapids.

GREGORY

Richard Engel, Simon's arch nemesis, you know his background? Grew up on, drum roll please, yes, the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Elite prep-school. Dad? Worked at Goldman Sachs. Mom? Antiques dealer in Manhattan. Does this make him any less of a brilliant reporter and journalist? Absolutely not. But you? Simon and Danny? Danny grew up in so far from the seats of power, it made Cedar Rapids look like D.C.

ABBY

I gotta ask.

GREGORY

Rhineland, Wisconsin. They went to Duluth for their wild times. You all had to be twice as talented and three times more ambitious to get half as far.

ABBY

I don't know, Greg. Cream always rises to the top.

GREGORY

Really? You really believe that?

ABBY

Yes. I think. Maybe?

GREGORY

Kennedy's first big hit. What was it?

ABBY

Um...god, let's see. That play about the scandal.

GREGORY

The lacrosse team.

ABBY

Which was a metaphor for-

GREGORY

-Abs, it was about a goddamn lacrosse team!

ABBY

I see your point.

GREGORY

Richard Engel, Seth Kennedy? Both dripping with talent. No question. But both also had a really big head start. Incredibly big. Not just with money. They grew up with the power brokers as neighbors. The smell of success was in their Desitin.

ABBY

That's a brilliant idea. I think you just solved our cash flow problem. Diaper rash ointment that smells like success.

GREGORY

I'm telling you. But what I'm saying is Sarah knew he could strut with safety. From day one, she internalized being embraced. Her viewpoint being of more value. What she saw and lived was the gold standard. Sure, I'm sure the gal worked her ass off. Not every upper class entitled white person makes it. But knowing the....tailor of the success suit already has your measurements in the rolodex kind of helps with the risk taking, don't ya think?

ABBY

I think I wasn't brave enough.

GREGORY

Was bravery encouraged? This Fredrick Henderson. Did he encourage you to take a chance? Dive in? When his students risked, excuse me, when his unconnected

students with the stink of the Midwest all over them mind you, risked, was it rewarded? Recognized even?

Abby shrugs.

Abby, the fix was in long before you got to college.

ABBY

Really? You really believe that? That there is no way to win, to get ahead? That we are locked into our...class? Our social strata?

GREGORY

Oh no! I didn't say that. I'm saying we are all products of a long history and to blame oneself for hundreds, thousands of years of baggage, to put it all on our shoulders when we choose to sit back one day and define ourselves...well, it might be helpful to look at the bigger picture. I have a little gift for you. I purchased you a ticket.

ABBY

Okay? You do know we are staring down tech week soon. Rehearsals every-

GREGORY

-Oh, this takes precedence. I've already arranged for Chris to run rehearsals this night. Right?

STAGE MANAGER

(From the booth)

Yup.

GREGORY

We all need a good old fashioned line-through away.

ABBY

What did you do?

GREGORY

A ticket to a TED talk this Friday at the Hilton.

ABBY

A TED talk?

GREGORY

A very big thing these days. Danny loves them. All over youtube. Technology, Entertainment, Design "leaders and innovators" sharing their insights and wisdom.

ABBY

Oh! Yes, yes, yes! My sister has sent me links to some.

GREGORY

And look who your TED talk speaker is.

Gregory hands her a piece of paper.

ABBY

Sarah Kennedy.

END SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR

Sarah Kennedy stands holding a handful of dirt in one hand and a balloon in the other. She is casually dressed. Abby is sitting in the audience.

SARAH

So that's what I encourage all of you to do. Tell the truth no matter what the cost. And put dirt in your balloon.

Laughter and applause. The lights fade and the work lights come up. Sarah pulls off her ear mike and, checking her phone, begins to leave.

ABBY

Sarah?

SARAH

Thank you so much for coming.

She grabs her hand, shakes it, and continues to exit and then stops.

Abby?

ABBY
(Laughing)

Yeah.

SARAH

Abby. Oh! Wow.

They hug

God, it's great see you again. Wow, you haven't changed a bit.

ABBY

You either.

SARAH

Ha! A little grayer. I hope all is well with you? So good to see you again. You look marvelous.

ABBY

You too. It was a great talk.

SARAH

Thank you. It is...well, being profound for 20 minutes is a study in LA-Meets-New York-Meets-Youtube indulgence but I see the need. Shit, Abby, actually, I have an appointment. Running late is my default mode, I swear. But how are you doing? Are you still-

ABBY

-No. Not acting.

SARAH

It's tough. Yes, but, so crazy. Are you married? Kids?

ABBY

I'm artistic director of my own theatre. I'm a director. A director too. And married. A teenager. Not married to a teenager! I mean-

SARAH

-Yeah. That's terrific, Abs.

ABBY

-I have a teenager.

SARAH

And your own theatre company. Brava!

ABBY

I also read your piece in the Times on Fredrick. It was...beautifully written, of course. I just have a quick question.

SARAH

Thank you. Such a loss. God, I hate this but I have to run.

ABBY

Wasn't Fredrick actually a mean, sour, bitter son-of-a-bitch?

SARAH

What?

ABBY

Fredrick. In your essay, your article in the Times. I read it about five times. And all the Facebook posts. Because it was driving me crazy. It still is. Did you really experience that? Did he really-

She reads from a piece of paper.

“Drive you to embrace your personal excellence by demanding only that”? Because I just remember a very few people getting praised and a whole bunch of others getting shamed.

Sarah slides his phone into her pocket and stares at Abby. After a moment, Abby continues.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Fredrick Henderson ignored me. I paid the exact same amount you paid. Dollar for dollar, the university got the same dime out of each of us but you got more for your money.

SARAH

Maybe I made more of what was offered for the money? Perhaps it wasn't Fredrick. Perhaps it wasn't the university, the system. Perhaps it was you.

ABBY

Yes. Yes, I agree. I struggle with that. But I wasn't alone. I do clearly remember that. For the five or six students he favored, there were dozens ignored. Dismissed. Waved away for not meeting the imaginary mark of "worthy of Henderson's attention, time and wisdom."

SARAH

I think the accolades recently received just might prove you wrong.

ABBY

Yes. You would think.

SARAH

Yes.

ABBY

When you heard he died, what was the first thing you felt? You know what I felt? I felt 20 again. But in a bad way. All my work, my accomplishments, my power suddenly fell away and I was not-good-enough again. Seth, I think...I think...I think Fredrick was a bad teacher.

SARAH

For you.

ABBY

Not just for me. But I am the only one to say it.

SARAH

Then why say it? He's dead. Who cares?

She steps off the stage.

ABBY

Sarah, I gotta ask? When you wrote that essay, were you putting air or dirt in your balloon?

She pauses and then exits.

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE

Gregory is sitting at the desk. Abby is in the first row of the audience.

GREGORY
(Standing)

If one could look ahead-

ABBY

You can't stand.

GREGORY

But it feels-

ABBY

You aren't lit if you stand.

GREGORY

Oh, yes. Got it. *(Pause)* Could I sort of hunch?

Abby just shoots him a look

Alright.

He sits. Suzannah wanders in. Both Abby and Gregory ignore her. Long pause.

FUCK! I forgot the entire monologue. It just left my head. It's gone. God, I am a terrible actor.

ABBY

Ok. We're done here

GREGORY

No. No, I can-

ABBY

-Stop. We'll work it tomorrow

GREGORY

Why do I act again?

ABBY

The money. Fame.

SUZANNAH

You done?

ABBY

God, yes.

SUZANNAH

Good. 'Cuz there's a lady who wants to see you.

ABBY

What? Who?

*Suzannah waves someone in. Sarah
Kennedy enters.*

Blackout

End Act One

ACT TWO
Scene One

Sarah. ABBY

Abby. SARAH

ABBY
Wow. Okay. Hi. Gregory, this is Sarah. Sarah Kennedy. Gregory. Sarah.

They shake hands.

And you met Suzannah.

SUZANNAH
Yup. She met me.

ABBY
Have you been here long? Suz, did you let her-

SARAH
I got here about fifteen minutes ago. Suzannah was unwilling to interrupt rehearsal.

Suzannah flashes an extra-wide smile.
Which is as it should be.

SUZANNAH
Yup.

GREGORY
Come on, Suz. Let's find a drink elsewhere.

SUZANNAH
I think-

ABBY
See you guys later.

GREGORY
(To Sarah)
Nice meeting you. Come on, Suz.

SUZANNAH
Bye, Sarah. *(To Abby)* We'll be at Sidecar if you need us.

Gregory and Suzannah exit

ABBY

I will admit to being very, really very surprised to see you here.

SARAH

Nice space.

ABBY

Thank you.

SARAH

How many you seat?

ABBY

Ninety. Ninety-five if we get creative.

SARAH

How long have you been in business?

ABBY

Sarah, if you're here, you googled me, you googled us, you know exactly how long we've been open, all our seasons, every show, every grant we ever got, and probably how much we have or don't have in the bank.

SARAH

Yes. Except the part about the bank. So you do mostly new plays.

Abby nods.

Bold.

Abby nods.

Nice.

Abby waits.

You sat through my TED talk not because you wanted to hear what I had to say, or wanted to see me again. Or even hit me up for money, or a job, or shove a script in my hand. And even though you said it was about Fredrick, I don't think it was. Was it?

ABBY

I wanted to see if you would say anything different than what I would have said.

SARAH

Did I?

ABBY

The balloon bit was bullshit but I liked the middle.

SARAH

People like props. And it makes for a good photo.

ABBY

You're pissed about what I said about Fredrick, aren't you? Is that why-

SARAH

-I remember you in class.

ABBY

Okay.

SARAH

Directing Styles and...Scene Work, I think? The one in that really hot room on the third floor.

ABBY

Script Analysis.

SARAH

You had it. Insight. Flair. A feel for people and what was really going on in a scene. But...you didn't...

ABBY

But what? WHAT? What didn't I do?

SARAH

That's why. That's why you came.

ABBY

Yes.

SARAH

It's been ages since I've been in a theatre like this.

ABBY

Did you make your appointment yesterday?

SARAH

I was flying back home.

ABBY

Oh. Miss your flight?

SARAH

Actually, I have my own plane. Well, the company's jet.

ABBY

Your company's.

SARAH

Yes.

ABBY

What's that like?

SARAH

Bizarre at first. Then, awesome. Then, routine. Then, a necessity. Then bizarre that it's a necessity. So, Abby?

She waits.

ABBY

Sarah, how did you become you?

SARAH

Meaning Sarah Kennedy, show runner?

ABBY

Yes. Why you and not somebody else?

SARAH

Why not you?

ABBY

I know why not me.

SARAH

Why not you?

ABBY

I have no idea. I was lying just then.

SARAH

How honest do you really want me to be?

ABBY

Honest but not mean. Fine line, I know.

SARAH

You're saying honest-but-not-Fredrick-style-honest, aren't you?

Abby nods

Okay. Whew. Okay. First, you didn't go to New York or LA.

Abby nods

That's the big one. But...okay...the construct that Hollywood and New York being filled with desperate wanna-bes is true. But what people don't say is that there are also a massive amount a crazy-talented people also not making it. Whatever making it is.

ABBY

Sarah. Please. You know what making it is.

SARAH

Okay. What's making it?

ABBY

Spoken like someone who has. Artistic freedom. Public respect. Work. And, okay...money! Money for what you do! And shallow, shallow but getting Emmys, Oscars, Tonys, whatever. Status. Being listened to. Good reviews. Power. Don't be a jerk, Sarah. You know.

SARAH

Yeah. I do. But...I'm sorry Abby but there are hundreds of you. Thousands of you. In LA. In New York. Everywhere. I'm sorry. There are. All freakishly talented. With so much to give. It just makes it easier for everybody to think that whoever doesn't end up with a series or movie deal or Tony doesn't deserve it because they don't have "it". Abby, I don't know. All I can guess is you aren't me because you aren't me.

ABBY

I'm not sure if that's mean or New Age.

SARAH

Abby, don't you see, I don't know!? I worked my ass off? I make a shitload of money, buckets of money, because I worked myself crazy and produce work that makes people mountains of money by selling the feeling I manage to create. And I did it when I was supposed to.

ABBY

Supposed to? You said in your essay that Fredrick taught you-

SARAH

-“There are no rules but excellence”? Bullshit. There are rules. Tons of rules. Do it young. There is a window of opportunity. Being young and brazen is more valuable than being any age and nice. Money talks. People hire their friends. Connections do help. ALOT. Being from New York or LA is a huge advantage. Once you are inside, you're in the famous club. Just don't get ugly. By that I mean physically ugly. Crack-smoking ugly. Being white helps unless you're a rapper. The rules are there until something so delicious and profitable comes along, they get waived.

ABBY

Except the crack-smoking ugly. I can't see that ever getting waived.

SARAH

You've obviously never sat next to Mickey Rourke at a dinner party.

ABBY

So there is a set of unwritten rules. I knew it.

SARAH

Everybody knows it. They just don't say it. You know what my mom told me, again and again? Not my dad, mister workaholic. My MOM. "Your ideas are just as good as anybody else's, it's not personal, and see the big picture." It wasn't your talent but, Abby, it was you. You believed your ideas weren't as good, you took it personally, and you didn't see the big picture. And if you really wanted it so bad, why did you do this? Come here? Not go to New York?

ABBY

I thought...I knew New York or LA would swallow me up. It scared the shit out of me. I had no idea how to do it. I thought it was a calculated plan, coming here, getting experience, but maybe I was just scared.

SARAH

Think I wasn't?!

ABBY

Yes! I think you weren't. Because you already knew in your bones that you were more. You had a safety net. You had friends, style, and that...that...rich thing that people have!

SETH

You had the goods, Abby. You would whisper all this great stuff to me in class, remember? And then I would raise my hand and say it. And it was good.

ABBY

But I would say it and be dismissed. I thought it was me. Obviously, according to you, it was.

SARAH

Why didn't you say it again? You weren't enough of a bitch, Abs. A bad-ass. You have to be a nice fucking bad-ass. And sometimes you'll be wrong, sometimes you'll be right. So what?! Trust me, no one's keeping track.

ABBY

So, why are you here, Sarah?

SARAH

If people think you know the truth, they stop telling you the truth. It's been a long time since I was surprised by what somebody said to me.

ABBY

What I said about Fredrick?

Sarah nods

SARAH

Why do you think I collaborate with the same people again and again? Not because they agree with me but because they know me. They can do stuff I can't do. And they

just do it, without that surprised look. That “Sarah? You can’t do that too? I’m shocked!” look. Abby, I’m not exempt. Guess how many times I’ve sat at those awards shows and not heard my name called?

ABBY

Oh god, you have got to be kidding me.

SARAH

-Oh, Abby, don’t give me that. Like you haven’t played your advantages? American, smart, inoffensively non-ethnically pretty, middle class, middle income, which means INCOME so college educated, sane parents, I’m guessing. You didn’t scratch your way up from Harlem or Appalachia or Ethiopia yourself.

ABBY

But if what you are saying is right, there is so much awesome greatness not being tapped because of some really stupid reasons.

SARAH

It works in reverse too. The only difference between the hick ignorant racist working at the garage and the slick ignorant bigot at the member’s only bar is just a trust fund and one smart, lucky ancestor with good timing and little conscience. I have so many friends. No. Not friends anymore. Some friends. Some...frustrated, stunted by advantage and no passion. I was back home for my dad’s birthday last month and this guy I went to high school with-

ABBY

-was it private? A prep school.

SARAH

You know it was, Abby. Anyway, he tried to give me a script to read. His family is worth two billion dollars. Billion. And he’s giving me a script so maybe he can make it in Hollywood.

ABBY

What’s the big picture? What your mom said. Did she tell you?

SARAH

Big picture? She didn’t tell me.

ABBY

But you came up with something, didn’t you?

SARAH

(Nodding, she pauses for a moment)

Every business is an animal. They need food. Ideas. Every business, every business is a voracious animal, trolling for more. Be the food. Don’t talk about it. Don’t question it. Just do it. You have to care enough to churn out a ton of work and have the ability to churn out a ton of work. I could churn out story. Some people can churn out other stuff. I mean there’s a reason I’ve won five Emmys and not the Field’s medal for mathematics. I figured out there was no perfect, just quality and quantity. And if you

spit out enough quantity, eventually, if you pay attention and aren't too much of a shit, you'll begin to get some quality. If you have the talent to begin with.

ABBY

Our first season or two, I lived and died by every show. Now-

SARAH

It's not one thing, right?

ABBY

Yes! It's the act of it. It's more a conveyor belt than an explosive, artistic epiphany.

They both laugh.

ABBY

If there was a recipe for making it, what would it be?

SARAH

Contacts and voracious ambition.

ABBY

That sounds pretty cynical even for a Hollywood hotshot.

SARAH

It does. Sorry.

ABBY

Are there some nobodies that make it?

SARAH

Many. Many! But...what isn't talked about is you have to have the DNA, the hardwiring to survive the lifestyle.

ABBY

Meaning you can't be an agoraphobic travel writer.

SARAH

Exactly. I was born with a thick skin. My mom said once, when I was three, I flipped off my pre-school teacher.

ABBY

Perhaps you were just-

SARAH

-precocious?

ABBY

Confident. Entitled.

At *three*?

SARAH

Even three year olds can sense when mom and daddy have clout. Was Teach really going to kick out a Kennedy?

ABBY

I never thought of that.

SARAH

Maybe you started getting that thick skin then. But it wasn't a thick skin. Flip off a teacher once, see it doesn't get you kicked out, you know it's safe to do it again. It wasn't a thick skin.

ABBY

What was it then?

SARAH

You knew you were safe. Safe to challenge. Rich and powerful Kennedy kid flips off a teacher, it's leadership qualities. Abigail from Cedar Rapids does it-

ABBY

-Parent-Teacher conference.

SARAH

Maybe.

ABBY

My husband Phil says I don't feel alive unless I'm sticking it to the man. Some man. Anybody.

SARAH

And I am overwhelmed with a churning stomach and flop sweat if I am.

ABBY

Really?

SARAH

Oh yeah. It's gotten better but...yes.

ABBY

You acted for awhile, didn't you?

SARAH

Abby nods

Me too. Why did you stop?

SARAH

ABBY

Why did you?

SARAH

It began to feel silly. Hundreds, hundreds of exactly 5 foot 5, exactly 115 pound...they would see the fat 120 pound actresses after three...smart, college educated grown women fighting tooth and nail for one line on a deodorant commercial? I knew I was smarter than that.

ABBY

I thought the ones getting all the parts were smarter than me. That they knew something I didn't.

SARAH

They didn't.

ABBY

I figured it out. Just took me longer.

SARAH

Now that you do casting, that you are the other side of the table, don't you see his side a little more?

ABBY

Whose?

SARAH

Fredrick's.

Abby nods slightly

There are just so many. Too many! In every field. It's not just ours, Abs. Business, law, restaurants...the Food Channel? Shit, Phil loves the Food Channel and there are shows on the Food Channel to have a show on the Food Channel. Can you imagine the casting call for that? Everybody wants to be a star. Rich and famous and powerful. What sets one person apart from another? Maybe a personal recommendation?

ABBY

A connection.

The lobby door opens.

Hello?

Gregory enters.

GREGORY

Suz forgot her keys. We had to come back. We're in and out. I'm so sorry.

SARAH

Actually, I think she's convinced I'm screwing with Abby's mind.

Suzannah enters with a six-pack.

Pretty much.

SUZANNAH

I like you.

SARAH

I thought your last movie sucked-

SUZANNAH

Suz!

GREGORY

SUZANNAH

-no way a five foot seven, hundred pound nineteen year old Victoria's Secret model is beating up Vin Diesel and Dwayne The Rock, I don't care how much Kung Fu they got.

SARAH

And here I was, worried about script notes.

SUZANNAH

Got those too.

GREGORY

Suz, just get your keys, okay? Abby, I'm so sorry.

Suzannah takes a beer over to the stage manager

SARAH

Is that Blue Moon?

SUZANNAH

Yup.

SARAH

I love Blue Moon.

Suzannah gives a beer to Abby

ABBY

Suzannah...

Suzannah strolls over and finally hands one to Sarah.

GREGORY

Let's go, Suz!

ABBY
It's okay. Stay.

GREGORY
Really?

ABBY
Really.

SARAH
Yeah. Stay. Gregory, you want a-

ABBY
Gregory hates-

GREGORY
I have wine in the office.

Gregory exits

SUZANNAH
(Calling after him)
Gregory, you're a snob. Let's get some chairs.

Abby begins following Suzannah backstage. Suzannah stops and glares at Sarah.

HELP!

Sarah jumps and the three go backstage and return with a few more chairs. They sit and Gregory strolls back with wine in a plastic cup.

ABBY
(Toasting)
To old friends.

They all drink

SUZANNAH
So did this Fredrick dude mess with your head too?

SARAH
Are you a reporter?

SUZANNAH
Nope.

SARAH

Are you taping, recording, going to tweet or text this following conversation to anyone?

SUZANNAH

Nope.

SARAH

Are you going to hit me up for a job, recommendation, give me a script or in any way expect anything of me after we are done here tonight?

SUZANNAH

I thought about it. At Sidecar. I thought, is Abby going to be that connection to the big, rich honcho director, get me my break? And then I thought, Suzannah, your life isn't about these two old timers battling out their personal demons. They don't give a shit about you.

ABBY

-I do, Suz-

SUZANNAH

-Talking here, Abs! Me. My turn. Anyway, you seem like someone I could knock back a beer with but I like Abby more. And she hires me and you're never going to hire a lighting chick from Chicago storefront theatre anyway. So I came back for Abby. I was afraid you were going to be a bitch to her and mess up her head even more and I like her head like it is. And my keys were in my backpack the whole time.

Sarah looks at Gregory

GREGORY

I'm here because Suz is a big, fat liar and I'm too gullible, I love Abby. And Suz is a wild card I was certainly not leaving unattended. But sure, I'm going to tweet every word. Then update my webpage...site, then twitter, and then I'm go dancing with Samuel Radcliffe. I'm thinking tango.

SUZANNAH

Daniel Radcliffe.

SARAH

Yes, he did mess with my head.

SUZANNAH

Awesome! I knew it! How? He wasn't a perv, was he?

ABBY

Suz! Geez! Fredrick wasn't a pervert! *(Pauses. To Sarah)* Was he?

SARAH

(Laughing)

No. Not a pervert. *(No longer laughing)* But he was mean. And so I was mean.

ABBY

You weren't mean. I would have remembered.

SARAH

No. Later.

GREGORY

His behavior gave you permission.

SARAH

Exactly. I thought it was acceptable. Necessary even. But it wasn't.

ABBY

What about that young and brash rule?

SARAH

There's a whole lotta turf between brash and bastard. I did some things I'm not proud of. I treated people...poorly. For awhile. Occasionally. My professional reputation is spotty for good reason.

ABBY

I note the past tense of "treated people poorly." What changed?

SARAH

Phil. He called me on...well, let me put it this way, you two *(she jabs his finger at Suzannah)*; I think you two were separated at birth.

SUZANNAH

So you feel bad. So you spend your evenings crying into a big bag of money.

SARAH

Pretty much. *(Looking at Gregory)* You auditioned for me once, didn't you?

Gregory nods

ABBY

Really!?! Greg! If you remembered, he must have been wonderful. Gregory is a wonderful actor.

SARAH

Yes. It was on videotape-

GREGORY

So someone actually does watch those auditions?! It's not just-

SARAH

-Yes. Yeah, we do.

SUZANNAH

What was it-

SARAH

-the doctor who becomes the terrorist because he-

ABBY

-That part!?! Oh my god. That was an amazing part!

SARAH

Yeah, well it wasn't an amazing part when you auditioned. Once I rewrote it-

GREGORY

-no nobody would even be considered.

SUZANNAH

So he didn't even have a chance?

SARAH

Nope. Not once it got good.

SUZANNAH

That blows.

GREGORY

That's business.

SARAH

Exactly.

SUZANNAH

Who-

ABBY

-Lawrence Fishbourne.

GREGORY

He was terrific. I was happy to have even been up for the same role he got! But, goodness, it really adds up. Between parking, lost hours at work, that audition and two callbacks cost me probably over \$300. *(To Abby)* Another reason why trust fund babies do so well. They can afford to hang in longer.

SUZANNAH

For one part you didn't get. Shit. *(To Sarah)* And according to you, he wasn't ever going to get.

SARAH

Yup. Sorry. But he signed on.

ABBY

I say this with all due respect and yes, he did sign on but, Sarah, you're the power.

SARAH

Meaning? Come on, Abby. The system is the system. I cannot, I should not reinvent the system. This is how it's done.

SUZANNAH

But you're the one renting the room.

ABBY

Yeah! You're the one behind the desk, the one in the thousand dollar suit. Even just minor adjustments can have major impact. You can make sure people aren't screwed over.

SARAH

And how exactly am I supposed to do that?

ABBY

I don't know. You can set a higher standard?

SARAH

First, my standards are just fine. Second, over a thousand people work on one major motion picture, from casting, pre-production, to distribution, all of it. I can't babysit the world. And, Abby, shit, you know this! Being the boss sucks. I have to be a bitch sometimes. Hell, I have to be a bitch most of the time. Right? Right?

She nods

Sometimes people get screwed over. Sometimes a project changes and somebody gets screwed. Or sometimes their agenda is getting stroked or loved or praise or laid, and your agenda is to get the work done. And they get pissed or disappointed and bad mouth you all over town, forever, because you are...what, Abby?

ABBY

What?

SARAH

You know what people call you behind your back.

ABBY

Oh, I'm a bitch. Don't appreciate people. Don't recognize true talent. Abby is only all about Abby. Cheap. Full of herself.

SARAH

God, people around here are nice!

SUZANNAH

People think I'm a dyke because I do tech and I only wear black and don't try to be pretty.

GREGORY

People think I'm must have voted for Obama because I'm black.

SARAH

Oh. Yeah, exactly Gregory. Yes, everyone has a truth far beyond-

GREGORY

-I'm just messing with you, Sarah. God, I love doing that.

SARAH

What I was saying was it's not my problem. It's not our problem. It's not. My job is to make top-notch, top-grossing movies and television series. That's what I do. I'm not UNICEF or the Peace Corps.

SUZANNAH

Can we get back to what started all this?

SARAH

What started all this?

SUZANNAH

The old fart croaking.

SARAH

Fredrick.

SUZANNAH

Yeah. I did some digging and-

ABBY

God, I wish I had the internet when-

GREGORY

-goodness, me too!

ABBY

Greg, I thought you didn't like-

GREGORY

Oh, I don't know how to navigate all of it but what it has done for me? For my community? For young gay men in small towns. It's...it lets you know that if your home isn't a home-

SARAH

-somewhere-

GREGORY

-someplace, there are others like you. If we had Facebook and all that, Stonewall would have happened decades soon.

ABBY

Young kids today, they have all this...this...stuff at their fingertips. They are more cynical but also have more power. They don't trust it just 'cuz it's written down somewhere.

SARAH

The means of production have left the hands of-

SUZANNAH

-Stop! Blah, blah, blah, get it. Heard it. My question.

SARAH

Alright, what's your question?

SUZANNAH

Fredrick was old, even when you were there. So why are old guys such assholes? Really, the older guys get, the grumpier they get. More Republican. Intolerant. Disdainful of anything done after they were, what, doing their awesome shit in the fifties or whenever. It's like they walk around with this constant snob face on.

GREGORY

It's a hard thing, for men who once have had power and influence to face that-

ABBY

-their penises have shriveled up.

SARAH

What?!

GREGORY

Abs!

ABBY

That's always my first thought. When some bastard, gray-haired guy launches on me on politics or starts sneering at anything that isn't on his short-list of "Acceptable politics or art," I think, "shriveled penis."

SUZANNAH

I love that.

ABBY

It so helps.

SARAH

What about frustrated old women?

ABBY

The only reason they are grumpy is that they have to live with the frustrated old guys and spend their days having to prop up the jerk's ego.

GREGORY

Cynical much?

SARAH

Is it worse having power and then having it slip away or never having power at all?

ABBY

Like love?

SARAH

Sort of.

SUZANNAH

So Fredrick was part of the shriveled penis posse?

ABBY

SHIT! That's why you're really here. All evening, it's been in the back of my mind. Why is uber-successful Sarah Kennedy hanging out with me? With us? Something is slipping away.

SARAH

You won't get it.

ABBY

Try me.

SARAH

(Looking at Suzannah)

Okay, but not you.

SUZANNAH

Try me.

SARAH

Nope.

SUZANNAH

I promise-

SARAH

-Nope.

ABBY

We need more beer, Suz.

SUZANNAH

What?! But-

GREGORY

And a couple of those candy bars Brad sells behind the bar too. No nuts.

SUZANNAH

You're making me *leave*?

ABBY

Just for this part.

SUZANNAH

This totally blows. *(To stage manager)* What do you-

STAGE MANAGER

-Sour cream and onion chips. Second choice, BBQ.

Abby reaches for her purse but then Sarah pulls out her wallet and hands Suzannah some money.

SUZANNAH

(Stomping off)

I can be discreet, you know. Acting like I'm some sort of newbie-kid. This sucks.

She exits muttering. Loudly. Things like "This blows. I am so discreet. It's like 'cuz I'm not eight million years old I don't understand things. Jesus." The lobby door slams shut.

SARAH

God, I like her.

ABBY

She's a sweetie.

Abby and Gregory wait. The lights dim to a more intimate setting.

GREGORY

(Handing Sarah a beer)

Last one.

SARAH

So...I spent the last six months developing a series for HBO. And they passed on it. I was so...so...well, I shrugged and said bullshit like "That's show business" but this one hurt. And it isn't as though I haven't had this happen before. It is the business. But I was...I am...rattled.

ABBY

Any particular reason?

SARAH

Reason I'm rattled or reason they passed?

ABBY

Take your pick.

GREGORY

It's a good word. Rattled.

SARAH

(Nodding)

Yes. Shook but more primal. It's popular to trash network execs. Even premium cable. But there are actually some rather smart people in the upper echelon. And the comments I got...well...

ABBY

Well?

SARAH

Boiling it down, they basically said, it is the same stuff we've seen before from you. And, oh, I got indignant! This work has made multiple networks and studios hundreds of millions of dollars! Employed stacks of people! On and on. But, at that TED talk yesterday, I realized, after you left, Abby, that all my excuses were all...empty air in my balloon. They were right. I am rehashing me. There is a chance my best work is behind me. I just might have run out of story.

ABBY

And the beast must still be fed.

SARAH

Shit, I'm scared that I'm...empty. And all these young guys aren't. And amidst all my awards you keep harping on, I never have won a Tony.

GREGORY

Your accomplishments are extraordinary.

SARAH

I know, I know, I know. But, at this last writer's meeting, I was... you don't know when you have made it. You don't. In retrospect, you see those pivotal meetings, choices, fragments that changed everything but that is only looking back. Is this the moment, that event, that is the tipping point for when it all begins to slip away? Am I becoming...Fredrick?

GREGORY

I thought he was your mentor?

SARAH

He was. But Phil saw what you saw, Abby. I was going on one night, complaining about never scoring a Tony, talking about Fredrick and he said...how did he put it? "He got a Tony. He did. But then he traded in the artistic momentum for a staff, full benefits, adoring minions, and a nice retirement package."

GREGORY

Goodness, you two. Stop! He was just a guy! Sounds like a slightly pompous fella, pretty good at theatre, with lousy social skills. The emperor has clothes, they're just an off-the-rack suit and a JC Penney dress shirt like the rest of us are sporting.

SARAH

Which makes him no emperor.

ABBY

Oh my god! Are we Fredrick? Are we The Man? Am I?

The lobby door is heard banging open and Suzannah comes storming in, with a six pack and a paper bag. She is breathless.

SUZANNAH

So?!

ABBY

So?

GREGORY

Did you get me candy bar? With no nuts. I can't have-

SUZANNAH

Greg, you tell me every single fucking time about the nuts. I know. So, are you all done talking about stuff I'm too young and fragile to handle? Huh?

She tosses a bag of chips to the stage manager.

ABBY

Yes. Don't be a grouch.

SARAH

So, Abs. What about you?

ABBY

What about me?

SARAH

What's your identity...artistic...Fredrick-triggered crisis?

ABBY

My midlife crisis crazy-ass breakdown so I stalk you thing?

SUZANNAH

Do I have to leave for this part too? 'Cuz I'm not going to.

Abby, Sarah, and Gregory ignore her.

GREGORY

Your menopause meltdown?

SARAH

Existential drift?

ABBY & GREGORY

(Singing in unison, SETH joining in for "Alfie?")

"What's it all about, Alfie?"

ABBY

I think...no one wants to think they're ordinary. Am I a half-assed artist? Am I am half-assed person, short the one bit of flair that moves me into being touched by God? If I just had done one thing better, turned a different corner, kicked down a door somewhere along the line, would my work, would I, matter? That's what an award is, you know. A group of people, and we ARE defined by each other, no matter what anybody else says, fuck Buddha, saying, "Yes, you matter. Your truth is our truth. You got it." Awards, promotions, money, interviews, praise, all of it. It means your viewpoint, your existence, your work, labor, sweat and involvement are of value. And that sounds so fucked up and needy and awful but isn't it a little bit true too? I think I fear that my art has no meaning. Really. That's it. That my art...no...that **I** have no meaning. That after all my plans, dreams, work, I made the wrong choices so I'm not even a...dent in the car crash of life!

GREGORY

Well, now we know why you aren't writing plays.

ABBY

Stop. I know, it's a shitty metaphor. But maybe this is an existential crisis. Have I done enough? Is doing this all enough? Did I waste my allotment of talent, gifts, and...and...opportunity? Was Fredrick right?

SARAH

I don't think so.

SUZANNAH

I know he wasn't. Look at all you've done.

GREGORY

Shit, I really, really hope not.

ABBY

Because you've thrown your artistic lot in with a half-assed, post-menopausal loser?

GREGORY

Because it means I might have really screwed some people over.

What?
 ABBY

Elaborate.
 SARAH

Greg, you're pretty bad-ass for an old fart-
 SUZANNAH

-Stop. I know. I'm fabulous. But you forget. I also taught for a couple of decades before working my way up here to nirvana.
 GREGORY

I did forget.
 ABBY

Never knew.
 SUZANNAH

College?
 SARAH

Oh no! High school. History, social studies.
 GREGORY

You do have sort of a teacher vibe going on.
 SUZANNAH

But, listening to you both talk about this Fredrick. You both had such different experiences. And, well, teachers are human. I have been looking back and, well, there are special students. There are! Ones you have more a connection with. It's like anything. Like, Abby, you keep casting Christina. There are stacks of fabulous actresses in their forties but you two click. You and Fredrick didn't. *(To Sarah)* You and Fredrick did. I think he was more to you than what we have said tonight.
 GREGORY

Sarah nods

You're being nice. Nice to Abby. But for whatever reason, there was an additional connection. And there were probably other teachers that cheered you on, right Abby?

Abby nods

But he was the head guy.
 SUZANNAH

GREGORY

Yes, certainly. And it sounds like he could have navigated it more...gracefully. But we are human. All of us. I know I was. Jocelyn Cooper. She was brilliant. So engaged. She's teaching anthropology at Dartmouth. One of my students! Allen Simmons. He wrote papers with this wit, this insightfulness, connecting history with pop culture. Incredible. Funny, smart, wonderful students. But there was also...this kid, Richie. Dumb as a stump in my class. Honestly, I couldn't look at him. He had this perpetual empty, blank stare. Like a linebacker in a...perfumery. But Ross, the Applied Arts teacher? LOVED Richie. Said Richie could make anything three dimensional, wood, metal, electronic, work, almost "sing" according to Ross. I suppose we can't be everything to everyone.

SARAH

(Looking around the theatre)

Are we, all of us, are we having fun? Do you three have fun? Doing this?

ABBY

I worry a lot about money. My feelings get hurt more than I really want to admit. I worry that I'm not enough. But, yes, when that all falls away, fun is there.

Sarah looks at Suzannah

SUZANNAH

When people aren't kicking me out or not getting me the dimmer pack I totally, absolutely need, Abby, yes, I'm having a hoot.

Sarah looks at Gregory

GREGORY

Goodness, Sarah, you are a wonderful gal, more than I even would have given you credit for even a few hours ago, and I get what you are going for but "fun"? Really?

SUZANNAH

Go for it, Gregory.

GREGORY

Fun is a rich man's luxury. I have it, I see Abby and Suz and all of us having it, but first is survival, second is figuring out how to be an authentic person in the deeply, horribly flawed and violent world. After that comes about fifty or sixty more really difficult hoops to make it through. Fun is lovely but it is the free mint after you've fought for your place at the table and got your serving, you know?

SARAH

You're probably right.

GREGORY

Yes, I am. And, yes, I'm having fun.

ABBY

But don't start writing plays anytime soon.

GREGORY

The mint metaphor?

SUZANNAH

Sorta blew, Gregory.

SARAH

So, Suzannah, what is your take on all of this? I suspect your wry and witty aside are covering some rather nuanced thoughts on all of this.

SUZANNAH

“Nuanced”? “Wry and witty”? No wonder you do so good in Hollywoodland.

SARAH

You’re an ambitious theatre artist. Why are you here?

SUZANNAH

Okay. I’ll share. Even though you completely shut me out on your sharing. Guess I’m just more mature than you all.

GREGORY

Clearly.

ABBY

Absolutely.

SARAH

Jury’s still out.

SUZANNAH

Bitch. Okay. I looked at the hand I was dealt and what I really, really wanted to do. If I did go to New York or London, was I really going to get to light the shit I get to light here? I can do what I want, right now. Abby, I also think, even though you were totally right, and ass-hat Fredrick was...an ass-hat, maybe...maybe you weren’t the bomb in college. You are the wildly awesome bomb now but maybe then, you were just another face. And he was a tired, old sort-success who didn’t have time for every needy actor panting at his feet.

SARAH

(Glancing at Abby)

She’s getting it.

ABBY

Yup.

SUZANNAH

I’m getting what?

ABBY

You’re becoming The Man.

SUZANNAH
I am so not becoming The Man.

ABBY
(Shrugging)
Okay.

SUZANNAH
Am I?

SARAH
Somebody has to.

GREGORY
Does somebody have to? Does somebody have to be The Man?

SUZANNAH
But me The Man? I don't want to be the bad guy.

SARAH
Shit, stop it. "Bad guy." "Bitch." Whatever. It's bullshit. Someone has to run things. Make things. DO! And would not any of you, all of you, seized my advantages if you had them?

GREGORY
It's not that-

ABBY
-It's the reverse. Seth, if you were in my skin, Cedar Rapids, female, middle class skin, would you be "you" today? Or in Gregory's body? Born black, Baptist, gay, in southern Indiana instead of Connecticut?

SARAH
Does it matter?

ABBY
YES! It does.

SARAH
To you.

ABBY
Yes, to me.

SARAH
No. I probably wouldn't be me. I wouldn't be Sarah Kennedy, rich guy-show runner.

GREGORY
(To Abby)

Does it help? Does hearing that help?

ABBY

Yes. I think it does. Does that make me shallow? Shit, I don't care! Shallow, superficial, whatever, yes, it helps. Screw you all.

GREGORY

Atta girl!

SARAH

Brava.

SUZANNAH

Cool, Abs. Now go kick some ass so we can get me my dimmer pack. *(To Sarah)* Or you could donate one or two or eight, rich guy.

SARAH

I asked if you were going to ask me for anything. You said *no*, young lady.

SUZANNAH

Lying to you has devastated me. How will I survive? Tell me, oh great and powerful Oz.

House lights come up

GREGORY

We're getting kicked out.

ABBY

(Calling)

Chris, go. We'll lock up. *(To Gregory)* I'll check the bathrooms. That toilet. Augh-

GREGORY

I'll get the back-

They exit. Suzannah begins cleaning up the beer bottles and candy wrappers. After a brief glare at Sarah, she begins to help.

SARAH

I know how Abby became Abby, I have a bead on Gregory but you. How-

SUZANNAH

-How did I evolve into this fabulous truth-teller, with my fetching devil-may-care je ne-say quoi?

SARAH

Yup.

SUZANNAH

Put those chairs upstage. My dad, probably. He was sort of like Gregory. But straight. Short. Fat. White. Only wore Bears sweatshirts. But he had this “Really?” thing going on.

SARAH

Really?

SUZANNAH

Really.

SARAH

No. I meant-

SUZANNAH

Just fucking with you. No. He would watch TV. Or listen to me talk about something. And he would say “Really?” really calmly. And I would go, “Really.” And he would go “REALLY? You really think-” whatever. Did I really think something was right. Or wrong. Or stupid. He had this way of dissecting people’s bullshit with just a few words. Even when he was in...when he was...

Suzannah stops

When he...we would watch *Star Trek* and *Battlestar* and *Deep Space Nine*. And the news. CNN. Fox. Maddow. BBC. All of it. And he kept asking me what I really thought. What I really felt. He said...he couldn’t give me money but he could give me my gut. Trust in my gut.

SARAH

How did he-

SUZANNAH

Stomach cancer. He said “My gut is getting eaten up, Suzy. The least I can do is to get you to trust yours.” So now, every time I start bullshitting-

SARAH

-you think of him.

SUZANNAH

And I can’t. I can’t do it.

SARAH

Wow. That is...the most amazing legacy.

SUZANNAH

That’s my dad. That was my dad.

Abby and Gregory return. Sarah has stopped and is staring at the stage floor.

ABBY
You okay?

SARAH
This is how I felt.

ABBY
How you felt when?

SARAH
When Fredrick died. I felt like something was over but it wasn't complete. Like I was on an empty stage after a show but I was unsatisfied with the ending. But I didn't know how it I wanted it to end; just what had happened wasn't enough.

ABBY
Tonight wasn't enough?

SARAH
I think you got an answer-

ABBY
-but you didn't.

Sarah nods

GREGORY
What was your question?

SARAH
That's the problem. I know I have one but I'm coming up empty on what exactly it is.

ABBY
You'll get it.

STAGE MANAGER
Going dark.

ALL
Thank you, going dark.

BLACKOUT

End Scene One

SCENE TWO

Soft stage lights come up. Abby, Suzannah and Gregory are hanging suit coats and pants along the upstage wall.

GREGORY

I think this is all a little too literal for a play titled *The Royal Thread*.

SUZANNAH

I like it.

GREGORY

You just like it because you can light it.

Abby stands back and scans the stage for a moment

ABBY

Probably right, Greg, but it is cheap and affordable symbolism which we can re-purpose right back into costume stock for the spring show.

GREGORY

You are such an uncompromising artist.

ABBY

Hey, watch it. I might do Willy Wonka next and load the stage up with nut-heavy chocolate bars.

SUZANNAH

(Calling to the stage manager)

Hey, can you bring up all the dimmers?

STAGE MANAGER

(Wearily)

Again?

SUZANNAH

Just once more. Please. It's just so fucking pretty!

The stage is flooded with light

I think from now on, a brightly lit stage will be a The Sarah Kennedy cue. *(Calling to the stage manager)* Go it?

STAGE MANAGER

Yup.

ABBY

Having fun?

SUZANNAH
God yes.

ABBY
Want to have some more?

SUZANNAH
What?

Abby and Gregory exchange a look.

What!? No. I don't want to have fun. I want to be suspicious and surly. What?

ABBY
I had an offer, from Paulie at Fox and Hound, to direct their season opener.

SUZANNAH
Good. So?

ABBY
And I'm going to go after more freelance directing work after this season. And, well, I have a friend at Northeastern, she's been on me about teaching a class or two.

GREGORY
Abigail, you will make a marvelous teacher.

SUZANNAH
Yeah. At least you'll know what not to do, eh?

ABBY
Anyway, along with getting Rosie ready to go off to college, well, it will all be very time-consuming. So we need an interim artistic director for next season.

SUZANNAH
So you want me to start being nicer to Gregory?

GREGORY
Oh, sweetie, this isn't about me.

SUZANNAH
ME?!

ABBY
Yes.

SUZANNAH
Really?

Really. ABBY

REALLY?! SUZANNAH

Yes. Really. ABBY

GREGORY
(To Abby)
 Take out your phone quick. I've never seen her speechless. Get a picture!

Suzannah gives Gregory the finger

SUZANNAH
 You guys, lighting designers, techies, are not artistic directors.

Why? ABBY

Because...because, we aren't. SUZANNAH

GREGORY
 Because The Man says so? Oh honey, you have to let that go.

SUZANNAH
 Look at me. Do I look like an artistic director?

ABBY
 What does an artistic director look like?

Suzannah points to Abby.

ABBY
 Thank you, Gloria Steinham.

SUZANNAH
 Who's Gloria Steinham?

GREGORY
 Dear god in heaven.

SUZANNAH
 Ha! Gotch ya!

ABBY
 Seriously, we do have to spruce you up just a tad. Because you're coming with me.
 Now.

Where?
SUZANNAH

Meeting the Driehaus folk.
ABBY

The grant people?! Me? Shit.
SUZANNAH

Abby grabs one of the suit jackets off the wall.

This will work.
ABBY

Abby begins pushing Susannah's arms into the jacket.

No! Stop! *(She takes a look at herself, looking down)* Oh, wait. Okay.
SUZANNAH

Wait.
GREGORY

Gregory goes to her and pops the collar and generally begins "fluffing" her.

Stop. Stop!
SUZANNAH

You look fabulous. You'll charm the pants off them.
GREGORY

You have met me, right?
SUZANNAH

We'll be great. Come on.
ABBY
(Grabbing her purse)

Do I have to pick the season? Next year?
SUZANNAH

You want to pick the season?
ABBY

Shit. I don't know. Maybe we can do it together.
SUZANNAH

Abby stops, frozen for a moment.

Abigail? GREGORY

Oh my god. I know. Let's ask Sarah write us a play. ABBY

We'll make Suz ask her. GREGORY

I like! ABBY

Me? But Abby's the one he- SUZANNAH

-She has a sweet spot for you. ABBY

And you can bully her into it. GREGORY

Really? But come on. She's a hot shot. So we drank some beers together and got touchy-felly one night. Doesn't mean- SUZANNAH

-She needs us. She's scared and she needs us. ABBY

It's nice, isn't it? To be needed. GREGORY

Hey! Does this mean we're The Man for The Man? SUZANNAH

Yes. Yes, it does. ABBY

Well done. GREGORY
(To Abby)

Gregory goes to Abby and gently and gallantly kisses her hand.

Thank you. ABBY

Gregory turns to Suzannah

SUZANNAH

Don't even think about it.

*Gregory, with a sweet smile, gives her
the finger*

STAGE MANAGER

Good job, everybody. Let's run curtain call and then we're outta here.

Blackout

END OF PLAY