

TAT
or
THE QUESTIONING OF N-POW

A Two Act Play

by

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Cast of Characters:

Jermaine Philips - Muscular, late 20's to early 30's, African-American houseboy to Senator (John). He wears all black leather: Biker boots/ arm bands/ vest/ collar/ chaps w/ jock strap or pants.

The Senator (John) - Mesomorphic early to late 50's, Caucasian male. A masterful man, over the years he has gotten used to things going his way. He is up for re-election next year. He wears expensive pajamas and robe.

Frank Asher - Calm and cool, late 30's to mid-40's, Jewish chief-of-staff to Senator (John). He has worked for the Senator long enough that, at times, the line between friend and co-worker has become somewhat blurred. He is wearing a suit and tie, dress pants and a crisp dress shirt.

Wanetta Black - Alluring, early 30's, African-American press secretary to Senator (John). She is smart, but ambitious and always smartly dressed with high heel shoes and tasteful jewelry. In spite of her position, she chooses to wear her hair in a natural style.

Marco Barrera - Late 20's to early 30's, Afro-Latino male. A bit pensive seeing he hasn't been working in the office for very long. He is the secretary of new media to Senator (John). He is hoping to establish himself professionally. He wears glasses that somehow make him look more attractive and a nice, but inexpensive dark blue suit.

Rebecca White – Edgy, but extremely talented, long standing political analyst to Senator (John). In her early 30's, she is the opposite of Miss Black. Caucasian, simply dressed, she tends to wear flats and very little jewelry around the office.

Raymond Miller - Late 30's to mid-40's, Caucasian henchman to Senator (John). He is discrete and his skill at what he does would best be described as calculative. He wears dress pants and a crisp dress shirt.

The play takes place over several hours in the early winter morning.

Production Notes

Frank Asher and Raymond Miller are played by the same actor.

&

Jermaine Philips and Marco Barrera are played by the same actor.

An * denotes dialogue that overlaps.

The Title of the play –

TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) is a projective psychological test developed in the 1930's by the American psychologist Henry A. Murray and lay psychoanalyst Christiana D. Morgan at the Harvard Clinic at Harvard University. Proponents of the technique assert that a subjects' responses, in the narratives they make up about ambiguous pictures of people, reveal their underlying motives, concerns, and the way they see the social world.

N-POW (Need for power) is a term that was popularized by renowned psychologist David McClelland in 1961. McClelland's thinking was influenced by the pioneering work of Henry Murray who first identified underlying psychological human needs and motivational processes. McClelland continued to further develop Murray's theory on needs through his theoretical proposal that most people are consistently motivated by one of three basic desires: the need for affiliation, the need for achievement, or the need for power.

In McClelland's book *The Achieving Society*, N-Pow helps explain an individual's imperative to be in charge. According to his work there are two kinds of power, social and personal.

Terminology in the play

A Turn-up for the book(s) (English/Australia) Meaning "A remarkable, unusual, and unexpected event, occurrence, or piece of news."

A Turn of the screw (English) Meaning "An action which makes a bad situation worse, especially in order to force someone to do something."

Assalaam Alaikum (Arabic) Meaning "Peace be unto you."

Wa Alaikum Salaam (Arabic) Meaning "And unto you peace."

ACT I**“THE SENATOR HAS HIS WAY”**

TIME: Present – Around twelve-thirty am.

SETTING: Winter - A hallway in the senator’s home. It is conservatively furnished/ A painting and mirror hang on the wall/ there is also a hall table with a lamp and flowers and a side chair/ Curtains can be seen hang on the left and right side of the hall.

(JERMAINE turns on the lamp (lights fade up) that is sitting on the hall table upstage center/ He has brought with him a pair of black dress shoes that he has just finished polishing/ In his mind/ Carla Thomas’ ‘I Kinda Think He Does’ begins to play/ Taking out a rag/ he gives the shoes one final rubdown before placing them next to the door located center stage right/ JERMAINE proceeds to press his body in a slow sensual dance against the closed door/ He is longing for the door to allow him entry but alas it does not/ The music comes to an end/ JERMAINE is still lingering at the door when a sound (inaudible to us) catches his attention/ JERMAINE exits stage left only to reappear holding an envelope in his hand/ He looks at the envelope before deciding to go and knock on the door)

JERMAINE

(Knocking)

Sir...

(Knocks louder)

Excuse me Sir...

(Knocks again)

THE SENATOR

(From inside the room)

Yes... Who's there? *(Pause)* Jermaine... Is that you..?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... It's me.

THE SENATOR

One moment...

*(The door eventually opens/ The SENATOR
steps forward wearing a robe and pajamas/
His feet are bare/ He may or may not have
been sleeping)*

Jermaine...

JERMAINE

Sorry to disturb you sir.

THE SENATOR

What is it this time?

(JERMAINE hands the SENATOR the envelope)

THE SENATOR

What's this..?

JERMAINE

I don't know sir...

THE SENATOR

You don't know?

JERMAINE

No sir... They told me I was to make sure to give it to you.

THE SENATOR

Who?

JERMAINE

They...

THE SENATOR

They..?

JERMAINE

They... (*Hesitant*)

THE SENATOR

Did they?

(Grabs JERMAINE)

You wouldn't be lying to me now...

*(Twisting JERMAINE's arm behind his back/
He forces him down onto his knees)*

Would you?

JERMAINE

No sir..!

THE SENATOR

Because you know how much I hate it when people lie to me.

JERMAINE

Yes sir...

THE SENATOR

I would hate to have to punish you Jermaine. *(Pause)* Do you understand... Or shall I go ahead and get the riding crop?

JERMAINE

No sir... I understand.

THE SENATOR

(Bites one of JERMAINE'S ear lobes)

That's a good boy...

*(The SENATOR throws JERMAINE to the ground/
He holds him down by placing one of his feet on
the side of his head/ JERMAINE submits)*

Now let's start again shall we.

JERMAINE

Yes Sir...

THE SENATOR

They told you to give this to me...

JERMAINE

Yes...

*(The SENATOR presses down harder/ JERMAINE
cries out)*

JERMAINE

Yes sir! They told me I was to make sure to give it to you ASAP.

THE SENATOR

Is that it?

JERMAINE

Yes sir...

THE SENATOR

*(Opens the envelope and reads the letter/
Removing his foot the SENATOR moves
away/ JERMAINE sits up)*

And you're sure this was the only thing they gave you?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... That was it.

THE SENATOR

So you want me to believe that this was the only thing they told you to give to me?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... ASAP... That's what I was told... Give it to him. That's what they said.

THE SENATOR

Have I ever accused you of being a liar before?

JERMAINE

No sir...

THE SENATOR

Should I start wondering if indeed you are a liar..? That you've been lying to me all this time..?
Have I not been respectful of your limitations, physically and emotionally..? In all the time
we've known each other, have I ever put you in a situation that caused you harm in any way?

JERMAINE

No sir... *(Pause)* That is what they told me... They said "Whatever you do... Make sure you
give it to him... For me.

THE SENATOR

(Grabs JERMAINE by his woolly hair)

You didn't let them know that it's me that does the giving around here did you?

JERMAINE

Why no sir.

THE SENATOR

(Letting go)

Good! *(Pause)* I believe you.

JERMAINE

Thank you sir.

THE SENATOR

(We cannot be sure if he had been expecting something else)

And there's nothing else you have to give to me?

JERMAINE

No sir... Just that...

(The SENATOR seems disturbed by the letter)

Are you angry with me sir?

THE SENATOR

With you? *(Pause)* Oh no Jermaine... I'm quite happy. *(Pause)* ... And you?

JERMAINE

I'm very happy... *(Pause)* I'm very happy that you're happy sir.

(Silence – JERMAINE gets up and stands erect)

THE SENATOR

(Walks over and punches JERMAINE in the chest)

And you don't have any idea who it was that gave this to you?

JERMAINE

No... No sir.

(The SENATOR places the palm of his open hand on the very spot he punched)

It was pretty dark when I made my way to the door... *(Pause)*

THE SENATOR

(Moving away)

So it was waiting there?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... You see the doorbell...

THE SENATOR

Had stopped..?

(We can't be sure if JERMAINE is making this up as he goes along)

JERMAINE

Yes sir... *(Pause)* Sir, now I remember... The bell... The bell had stopped being rung by the time I'd made my way to the door. When I open it, there it was...

THE SENATOR

Waiting...

JERMAINE

Outside.

THE SENATOR

But I thought you said they told you to give it to me?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... ASAP.

THE SENATOR

I don't understand then?

JERMAINE

The phone...

THE SENATOR

I don't recall hearing the phone ring?

JERMAINE

You must have been sleeping... The phone rung, sir.

THE SENATOR

Before the bell rang?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... You see I had just finished polishing your shoes... I'd sat them down there...
By the door when I heard the phone ring.

THE SENATOR

So is that when they told you...

JERMAINE

Yes sir, that's when they told me.

THE SENATOR

To give this envelope to me?

JERMAINE

Yes sir...

THE SENATOR

ASAP.

JERMAINE

Yes sir... ASAP.

THE SENATOR

I see...

(The SENATOR goes back into his room as JERMAINE quietly goes and stands next to the table and chair/ The SENATOR begins talking to someone while inside the room)

Hey... Yeah, Jermaine just handed it to me. *(Pause)* What do you mean, what do I make of it? Isn't that what I pay you for? *(Pause/listening)* To be honest, I'm not sure what the hell to do about it... I mean it seems a bit cryptic don't you think? *(Pause/listening)* Why of course... I find it to be completely absurd. *(Pause/listening)* So that's all you've got for me? Listen... I don't think you understand. We don't have a couple of months. *(Pause/listening)* I swear you're starting to sound an awful lot like Frank... You people act like you don't know that I'm up for re-election next year. *(Pauses/listening)* Jesus Christ... Did you hear what I just said..?

(JERMAINE hears something/ Turning his head stage left in the direction of the inaudible sound)

So you're saying you agree with him..? You think this whole thing is going to blow over? *(Pause listening)* No, I know you can't make those types of guarantees. I just thought we might want to get something out there... You know... Before...*(Pause/listening)* Well, if that's your advice...

(FRANK enters/ He looks at JERMAINE's attire but doesn't have time to address it)

FRANK

Evening Jermaine... I hope you don't mind... I let myself in.

JERMAINE

Evening Mr. Asher.

FRANK

Is he in a good mood?

JERMAINE

I can't really say, sir.

*(The SENATOR comes back out still on his cellphone/
FRANK acknowledges the SENATOR with a nod/
JERMAINE exits as FRANK gets a text)*

THE SENATOR

Look, I've gotta go. Frank just walked in... And hey... There needs to be something on my deck that I can use when I get in...

(JERMAINE returns carrying a tray/ On the tray is a crystal decanter filled with bourbon and two crystal glasses/ JERMAINE sits the tray on the table and proceeds to pour two drinks/ He hands them off to the men/ Then returns to his previous station next to the table)

I'm going to need something big... Big words... I wanna make sure we get something strong out there before any of those cocksuckers have a chance to beat us to the punch... You got that..? All right... You have a good night as well.

(Call ends)

Hey...

FRANK

Hey... *(Texting)* Sounds like you've seen it already.

THE SENATOR

Yeah...

FRANK

I told Raymond to drop it off on his way home.

THE SENATOR

That explains it.

FRANK

(Finishes texting/ Puts cellphone away)

I thought you'd wanna take a look at it, as soon as possible. *(Pause)* Was that Marco?

THE SENATOR

Yeah...

FRANK

What did he say..?

THE SENATOR

(Gets a text/ reads/ starts texting)

What did he say? *(Pause)* Listen Frank, when this is over, I want us to sit down and really take a good look and see if it's really worth paying someone to do this shit.

FRANK

You talking about Marco?

THE SENATOR

Yeah... I'm talking about the kid... Who the hell else would I be talking about?

FRANK

I don't know. *(Pause)* But I'm telling you, the kid's good.

THE SENATOR

(Finishes text/ Places cellphone in robe pocket) Oh yeah?

FRANK

Yeah... *(Pause)* Everyone I've talked to says he's the best at what he does.

THE SENATOR

Well would you mind, remind me what it is exactly that he does?

FRANK

Come on John, you know...

THE SENATOR

No Frank... See that's where you're wrong... Because with all the shit that's gone down in the last five or six months... No Frank, I can't for the life of me figure out what exactly he does that in the long run, benefit's me?

FRANK

You know that's not fair... The kid's been busting his ass.

THE SENATOR

Frank... If I didn't know any better... *(Pause)* I'd swear you two were fucking each other.

FRANK

What..? No!

THE SENATOR

I'm just saying... Besides, it wouldn't matter to me one way or the other, just as the job gets done.

FRANK

I can assure... We're not fucking ok..!

THE SENATOR

Ok... *(Holds up hands as if to surrender)* If you say so...

FRANK

I do.

THE SENATOR

I have to admit...

FRANK

(Looking over at JERMAINE)

What..?

THE SENATOR

The first time you introduced me to the kid... I thought he was a fucking model or something.

FRANK

Or something..? Jesus, really John?

THE SENATOR

What..? I'm just saying you two do seem to be a bit... chummy around the office.

FRANK

Chummy..? I'm your chief of staff and that kid happens to be your secretary of new media, remember..? *(Pause)* I'm telling you the kid knows his stuff.

THE SENATOR

Yeah well, right about now... I could give a shit what that kid knows...

FRANK

What's the problem..? The kids smart... Ambitious...

THE SENATOR

How long have we been working together Frank? *(FRANK gives him a 'really' look)*

You and I both know that smart aleck kids like him come and go.

FRANK

Your point..?

THE SENATOR

I don't have a point, ok? *(Pause)* There's just something about that kid I can't quite put my finger on... If I tell you I don't like him. I don't like him... Where's your fucking loyalty?

FRANK

Alright already, you son-of-a-bitch... When this is over we'll sit down and see if it's worth it to keep him on the payroll... Will that make you happy? *(The SENATOR smiles a devilish smile)*

You're such a prick you know that...

THE SENATOR

(Rubbing his crotch area)

I've got your prick alright.

(Silence follows)

FRANK

So...What do you want us to do about this?

THE SENATOR

I got no clue Frank... Can you believe it? More than thirty years in this fucking business and I haven't got a single clue?

FRANK

So... *(Pause)* What did the kid have to say..?

THE SENATOR

Nothing...

FRANK

Really..?

THE SENATOR

Yeah... He suggested we do absolutely nothing.

FRANK

Well I think you already know how I feel about the situation.

THE SENATOR

Yeah, well... *(Pause)* I'm telling you Frank... There's something about all of this, that's starting to stink bad...

FRANK

Oh yeah...

THE SENATOR

... And I'll tell you something else... Something about this feels different.

FRANK

Different..? How..?

THE SENATOR

I don't know... Maybe this is something we shouldn't ignore. I mean what if this doesn't go away, huh..? Did you and your little boyfriend ever stop and think about that?

FRANK

First of all, my wife and kid wouldn't appreciate that you're going around calling Marco my boyfriend...

THE SENATOR

I'm kidding... I'm kidding... Will you give me a break..?

FRANK

... And secondly, we can't afford to suddenly let ourselves start getting paranoid... Not with elections coming up next year. *(Pause)* Besides, you still haven't said what you want us to do about this?

THE SENATOR

I don't know... I just don't know.

FRANK

So therein lies the problem.

THE SENATOR

You're tellin' me...

(Silence)

You know it used to be much easier back in the day...

FRANK

Do you really think so..? Maybe you've been doing it for too long..?

THE SENATOR

There used to be a time when you just paid people a little something and the problem would go away.

FRANK

You ever thought about doing something else, John?

THE SENATOR

Yeah right... Me, do something else? Are you fucking kidding me..? I like the power too much.

(Silence)

I tell you... It's all these goddamn tablets and cellphones...

FRANK

Welcome to the digital age... What do you expect?

THE SENATOR

I expect people to stay in their places. Instead...

FRANK*

We're in a sort of social media revolution.

THE SENATOR*

Everyone's running around as if they're fucking New York Times reporters.

FRANK

All right... Calm down. *(Pause)* You know I don't think I've ever seen you like this before?

THE SENATOR*

Yeah, well...

FRANK*

(Cellphone rings)

One moment sir... *(Takes call)* Hello... Hey... *(Pause)* What! *(Pause listening)* Are you sure? *(Pause listening)* Ok, I'll let him know, but he's not going to be happy.

(Ends call)

THE SENATOR

Well..?

FRANK

Listen...

THE SENATOR

What the hell's going on?

FRANK

Sir, you might want to sit down first...

THE SENATOR

Frank would you just spit it out for Christ's sake!

(Realizing his glass is empty THE SENATOR holds it out/ JERMAINE immediately comes forward and fills his glass)

FRANK

Ok... But I'm telling you... You're not gonna like it.

THE SENATOR

What the hell is it?

FRANK

That was Marco... It seems he just got word that their calling on a boycott...

THE SENATOR

A boycott..?

FRANK*

... of the Oscars.

THE SENATOR

Are you fucking kidding me..?

FRANK

No sir.

THE SENATOR

I thought you said this would all blow over soon..? As a matter of fact, if I remember correctly Frank, you assured me it would... Now you're telling me they're planning on boycotting the Oscars?

FRANK

Yes... It looks that way sir.

THE SENATOR

Oh man... You all are really starting to give me a fucking ulcer. *(Pause)* Didn't I tell you we should have dealt with this when it first started to get out of hand?

FRANK

Yes sir...

THE SENATOR

I know one thing... You people better start getting your asses in gear because I'm not happy right about now... Not in the way we've been handling this... Not in the least bit... *(Pause)* It's like I've been trying to tell you Frank... There are those that you just cannot rationalize with...

(Silence)

FRANK

Sir..?

THE SENATOR

Quiet..! I need time to think... *(Contemplating)* Think... *(Stops)* Yes... Yes... That's it! *(Has an idea)* Leave it to the ole man.

FRANK

Sir?

THE SENATOR

Jermaine... Would you come over here for a second? *(JERMAINE walks over to the SENATOR)* I'd like you to read something for me.

FRANK

Sir... Do you really think that's a good idea?

THE SENATOR

You got a better one..?

(FRANK remains quiet)

THE SENATOR

That's what I thought... Besides, Jermaine's one of us. *(Pause)* He's been a part of our little family for... Tell Frank how long you and I have been together Jermaine?

JERMAINE

Close to five years now, sir.

THE SENATOR

Hear that Frank... Five years. *(To himself)* I don't know why I didn't think of this before.

(Shoving the letter into JERMAINE's hands)

Go on... Read it...

(JERMAINE reads the letter then tries to give it back)

THE SENATOR

What do you think Jermaine..? What do you make of it..?

JERMAINE

Sir..?

THE SENATOR

Come on Jermaine... This isn't the time for you to decide you want to play around with me... Not now... When I give you a command I expect you to obey it.

(JERMAINE seems reluctant to answer)

Jermaine... As your master I demand that you...

(The SENATOR throws his glass against the wall where it shatters – Silence)

Will you just tell me what the fuck it means!

FRANK*

(Surprised)

John what the hell's going on here?

THE SENATOR*

Answer me Jermaine, or you will be punished.

FRANK

John?

THE SENATOR

Frank stay out of this...

JERMAINE

(Looking back down at the letter)

It means exactly what it says sir... Black lives matter.

THE SENATOR

Jermaine... Jermaine... Jermaine...

(Walks over to JERMAINE and takes the letter back)

Why of course they do. *(Pause)* Black lives matter to Black people... Just as White lives matter to White people... And Jews matter to Jews... but you don't see us boycotting, now do you?

JERMAINE

(Frozen)

No sir.

THE SENATOR

Jermaine, I don't think you fully grasp what's at stake here. *(Pause)* Your people have to understand that all they have to do is wait...

JERMAINE

Wait sir?

THE SENATOR

Yes Jermaine... Wait... You see we've all had to wait our turn.

JERMAINE

But sir... We've been waiting for an awful long time, don't you think?

THE SENATOR

I know you have Jermaine... Believe me... I've built my entire career on serving people... On serving your people... *(Pause)* I mean... If they would've asked me, I'd have gladly gone to Ferguson and marched, Jermaine... I'd of been right up there alongside them shouting 'Kumbaya' or 'We Shall Overcome' or whatever the fuck they say now-a-days.

FRANK

(Tries to interrupt)

Sir..!

THE SENATOR

(Gives FRANK a look that says 'Stay out of this')

Let's be honest here... If you were to ask most people what they want to be, do you know what they'd say?

JERMAINE

No sir.

FRANK

Right about now... I have absolutely no idea what you're taking about.

THE SENATOR

I'm talking about the damn elephant in the room, Frank. That's what I'm talking about...

THE SENATOR con't

I'm talking about the fact that no one wants to admit that deep down inside everyone secretly wants to be White.

FRANK

Oh, I knew you were under a lot of pressure, but I'm telling you... You've lost it John... You're out of your fucking mind.

THE SENATOR

Don't play liberal card with me.... Not now, Frank. *(Pause)* All three of us in this room know that that's exactly how it is.

(Speaking to both JERMAINE and FRANK)

See... There was this documentary I saw once. Oh it was years ago, where they asked little black children to choose between a black and a white doll... And do you know which one they chose?

JERMAINE

No sir..?

THE SENATOR

The white doll...

FRANK

Sir, you're way out of line...

THE SENATOR

Frank, I swear to God they chose the white ones.

FRANK

John..! I'm telling you as your friend... You need you to stop whatever this is you think you're doing... It's getting out of control.

THE SENATOR

Are you kidding me? You think I'm out of control? *(Pause)* Frank, the whole fucking country is out of control.

(Stops/ Trying to think straight the SENATOR begins walking about the room)

You know for the life of me I can't understand you?

FRANK

Me..? What the fuck have you been doing to Jermaine?

THE SENATOR

What have I been doing..? I'm trying to open his eyes... That's what I'm doing. *(Pause)* ... And for the first time in a long time Frank... I'm trying to be completely honest with another human being.

FRANK

This is your idea of honesty..? *(Pause)* ... And what the fuck is he wearing?

THE SENATOR

Frank I don't expect you to get it... But right about now... I just need Jermaine to understand how things really work in this country... So I sure as hell don't need you trying to dress it up in some Jewish liberal bullshit... Haven't we done enough of that already?

FRANK

(Starts to walk away)

Screw you John!

THE SENATOR

(Looks towards JERMAINE and then back to FRANK)

That's exactly what I'm planning to do when all of this shit blows over. Frank, look at me... I'm not as young as I used to be. We're not as young as we used to be.

FRANK

What are you talking about? What does that have to do with anything?

(JERMAINE and the SENATOR stare at each other)

FRANK

Oh..? *(Finally understands)* Oh shit..! You... You're..? The two of you...

THE SENATOR

Yes... I'm head over heels in love Frank... Can you believe it..? I mean, at my fucking age?

FRANK

Damn..! I had no idea...

THE SENATOR

No one does... That is except you... And I'd like to keep it that way for a while.

FRANK

Oh man... I never would have guessed.

(Looking at JERMAINE's attire then at the SENATOR)

A leather man huh..?

THE SENATOR

Frank... Did you hear what I said? I wanna keep this quiet for at least a little while longer...

FRANK

Sure John... I hear you... My lips are sealed... You know that.

THE SENATOR

See we love each other and I'm not about to let them get a hold of this... When it comes out, it's going to be on my terms Frank...

FRANK

How long has this been going on?

THE SENATOR

I've known since I was a kid... My tendencies have always leaned towards homosexuality and dominance.

FRANK

I meant you and Jermaine... Is that why you went into politics?

THE SENATOR

Oh... Yes...

JERMAINE

For three years... We've been together for the past three years.

FRANK

Why you dirty old bastard. I can't believe you kept this from me?

THE SENATOR

Frank, if you don't mind... I'd like to get back to the problem.

FRANK

Ah sure... Go right ahead.

(The SENATOR walks back over to JERMAINE and puts his arm around his neck/ Walking JERMAINE downstage center)

THE SENATOR

Frank, you and I both know that on the outside it looks like the system allows everybody to come to the table... But we both know that at the end of the day, when you walk out the door, those son-of-a-bitches still call you out for being a Jew... Am I right or am I wrong?

FRANK

If we're being honest here... Yes... I've always thought that to be true... Of course I had no proof... That is until now...

THE SENATOR

That's all I was trying to say earlier, Frank. You see, I need Jermaine to understand that no matter what happens, I'm on his side... *(Pause)*

It's all that damn talk about change... I knew nothing good would come out of it.

FRANK

John... With this new information... I mean if it were to come to light now... Well, don't you think we should probably leave Jermaine out of this?

THE SENATOR

No... As a matter of fact I don't... That's where you and I are different Frank... *(Pause)* Did you stop and think that maybe that's the problem, not letting them speak? Not giving them a voice... Besides you said yourself... You never would've suspected we were sleeping with each other had I not told you. *(Pause)* So I say... Why not let the black man speak..? I mean, seeing we've got a live one standing right here in front of us.

FRANK

John, you can't possibly expect him to speak for every black person in America. Just like you can't expect me to speak for every Jewish person out there.

THE SENATOR

And why the hell not..? Why it's brilliant really! *(Pause)* I say we let Jermaine make a statement on my behalf?

FRANK

Sir you can't do that...

THE SENATOR

The hell I can't..! Besides... I'd be right there coaching him on what he can and can't say. *(Pause)* What do you say Jermaine? Your ole man needs you.

FRANK

Jermaine, you don't have to answer that.

THE SENATOR

Come on... Talk to me Jermaine...

(The SENATOR may or may not realize he has tightened his grip around JERMAINE's neck/ JERMAINE manages to get free)

JERMAINE

Abraham Lincoln.

FRANK

What did he say?

THE SENATOR

It's all right, Jermaine.

JERMAINE

Abraham Lincoln.

FRANK*

John, what's going on?

THE SENATOR*

It's all right Jermaine... I'm not going to hurt you...

(JERMAINE has quickly returned to standing at the side of the table)

JERMAINE*

Abraham Lincoln.

THE SENATOR*

I promise...

FRANK*

This is kinda freaking me out John...

THE SENATOR*

(Addressing FRANK)

It's his safe word.

FRANK

His what?

THE SENATOR

When you engage in S&M play, it's important that each partner establish a safe word. When your partner uses the safe word, it's your cue to stop.

JERMAINE

Abraham Lincoln.

FRANK

Ok?

THE SENATOR

It's ok Jermaine. You know I would never hurt you... But I need you to talk to me... *(Silence)*
Please Jermaine... I need you to tell me what I should do about this?

FRANK

Do you really think this'll work? I mean... Jermaine's so different from other black men I've met...

FRANK

(JERMAINE and the SENATOR both turn toward FRANK)

Sorry Jermaine... What..? It was just an observation.

(Silence)

JERMAINE

You should do nothing.

THE SENATOR

Nothing..?

JERMAINE

Nothing... *(Pause)* Marco's right... At the end of the day, it's safe to say... No one cares.

THE SENATOR

... And you're sure about that?

JERMAINE

Yes... Sadly I am... You see, as long as we continue to act as if we're the only group of people in the world being discriminated against, our cause is lost.

THE SENATOR

(Excited) Did you hear that Frank... The cause is lost..!

JERMAINE

(Continues)

You see, we've never been good at forming alliances... Black people that is... Not really... I'm sure it must have something to do with our issues regarding the trust ability of the White man.

FRANK

I'm afraid I don't quite follow you...

JERMAINE

Just take this boycott for instance... We all know the history of Hollywood, Mr. Asher... You Jews want to talk about the promise land... Why in America... Hollywood was and for the most part still is your promised land... Why the very values we claim to be American have been shaped and defined for us by Jewish aesthetics ... Warner Brothers, Paramount, MGM...

JERMAINE con't

(Pause) So you see Mr. Asher... we as Black people shouldn't be talking only about Black people... We need to be talking about all people of color and the lack there of when it comes to your Hollywood. *(Pause)*

(Addressing the SENATOR and FRANK)

You don't think it strange that no one from the Latino community has stepped up to join our causes?

FRANK

Well now that you say that...

JERMAINE

If I'm not mistaken, I believe they make up 17 percent of the United States population..?

THE SENATOR

He's right Frank... Go on...

JERMAINE

Well I don't think any of us here would argue over the lack of opportunities for Latinos in Hollywood. *(Pause)* So you see Mr. Asher, because we as Black people refuse to open up the dialogue to include all minorities, we simply end up doing the exact same thing as you white folks do.

FRANK

The marginalizing of other races...

JERMAINE

Exactly! *(Pause)* You see... lots of minorities face similar, if not the same issues... Job opportunities... Police brutality... The lack of equal education... Healthcare... *(Pause)* But that never gets said does it..? No... We Americans have learned how to compartmentalize our prejudices and racism into lots of neat little individualized boxes... *(Pause)* Why, if you're rich, you should hate the poor. If you're poor, you should hate the rich. The North hates the South just as much as the South the North... If you're Christian, you should hate the Muslims. If you're Muslim, you hate the Jews. *(Pause)* If you're straight, you hate the gays and if you're gay, well... You should hate straight people. If you're Black, you should hate the Whites.

JERMAINE con't

If you're White, you should hate the blacks. So the Blacks and the Whites begin to hate the Latino's and the Asians and that doesn't even include the boxes that exist within the boxes, that make it almost impossible to honestly talk about the scope in which the level of discrimination runs rampant throughout in this country ... And I'm not even talking about Black on Black prejudices... The teen pregnancy rate... Drugs? *(Pause)* The truth be told... Many of us should probably be walking around with signs on our chests that say "I live in the third world of the first world..." *(Pause)* That's why I said give it a few months... Mark my words... Something else will come along that we'll have to attend to. *(Pause)* In the end, something always does.

THE SENATOR

Sort of like when you're battling multiple fires.

JERMAINE

I guess that's one way of looking at it? Yeah... There's just too many problems to put out all at once.

(Silence)

FRANK

I have to admit it, John... I think he's right...

THE SENATOR

(Pauses to think)

Ok then Frank, I want you to let the staff know we're gonna let this one burn itself out. Let everybody know that if the press asks us for a quote... We tell them we have too many other pressing issues in this country that need to be dealt with.

FRANK

(Excited)

Yes sir! *(Begins sending out texts)*

THE SENATOR

Jermaine... Thank you...

JERMAINE

You're welcome.

FRANK

(Finishes sending out messages)

Done..! *(Pause)* Well if you don't mind, I'm gonna head out now before it gets bad out there... That is unless you have anything else for me?

THE SENATOR

No... I think that's all for tonight Frank.

FRANK

See you in the morning?

THE SENATOR

Shall we say seven?

FRANK

Seven o'clock it is, you old bastard.

(The SENATOR exits into his room)

FRANK

Good job Jermaine... I'll see myself out.

JERMAINE

As you wish, Mr. Asher.

FRANK

(Holds out his hand)

Frank... Call me Frank.

JERMAINE

(They shake hands goodnight)

Frank...

FRANK

You take care of him...

JERMAINE

It's my pleasure...

FRANK

(Starts out but – Pauses)

By the way...

(Turns around/ He is holding his business card)

Should you ever get tired of...

(JERMAINE refuses)

FRANK

That's a shame... I bet someone with your training takes punishment well.

(JERMAINE seems surprised)

You see, I've always had a real fondness for dark meat.

(FRANK takes back his business card/ He moves closer to JERMAINE/ FRANK doesn't notice that his card has fallen to the floor/ He reaches down for JERMAINE's crouch. JERMAINE moves away)

Bashful huh? I like that... *(Pause)* I was right about you Jermaine... You're not like other black men I've met.

THE SENATOR

(Speaking from inside the room)

My fucking bladder...

(The sound of a toilet flushing is heard)

FRANK

Oh well...

(Loud enough that the SENATOR can hear but still looking at JERMAINE)

You all have a real good night.

THE SENATOR

(Still inside the room)

You too Frank.

(FRANK exits/ JERMAINE looks in his direction/ Silently JERMAINE begins picking up the broken glass/ The SENATOR returns as Master/ He has removed his robe and pajamas/ He is in all leather/ Pants/ vest/ wrist and arm bands/ biker cap and boots/ He has a large cigar in his mouth)

THE SENATOR

What a night, huh?

JERMAINE

Yeah...

THE SENATOR

What was that?

JERMAINE

(Looking up from the floor)

Sorry... Yes sir!

THE SENATOR

That can wait until tomorrow... Besides... It's getting late.

JERMAINE

Yes sir.

(JERMAINE stands up – Silence)

THE SENATOR

Jermaine, you were most helpful to me tonight.

JERMAINE

Thank you sir... I'm glad I could be of service.

THE SENATOR

I'd like to show my appreciation... *(Walks over to JERMAINE)* Here... This is for you... For being a good boy.

(He pushes JERMAINE's mouth down on to one of his nipples)

JERMAINE

(JERMAINE sucks then comes up for air)

Thank you sir.

THE SENATOR

You're welcome.

(Silence – the SENATOR looks at JERMAINE who has lowered his eyes)

JERMAINE

Will that be all, sir?

(The SENATOR takes one hand and places it into JERMAINE'S mouth/ When he removes it, JERMAINE's mouth remains open/ The SENATOR smiles)

THE SENATOR

Good boy...

(The SENATOR spits into JERMAINE's open mouth before giving him a hard kiss/ Pointing towards the room)

Get in there?

JERMAINE

Sir..?

THE SENATOR

Enough... Are you questioning my authority?

JERMAINE

No Sir...

THE SENATOR

Besides... You don't have much choice now do you?

JERMAINE

No sir... It's just that I was thinking about what Mr. Asher said earlier... About not adding more fuel to the fire?

THE SENATOR

On your hands and knees boy.

THE SENATOR con't

*(The SENATOR straddles JERMAINE/
Holding him by his collar)*

I shall have my way, you know?

JERMAINE

Yes sir.

THE SENATOR

... And am I to assume you've chosen to accept your situation?

JERMAINE

Yes sir... If that is what you wish...

THE SENATOR

That's what I wish.

JERMAINE

I was only thinking of you sir...

THE SENATOR

*(The SENATOR releases his grip as he thinks
for a moment)*

Get up.

*(The SENATOR once again kisses JERMAINE
intensely)*

This isn't going to be easy you know. Besides, I'm old enough to...

JERMAINE

(Interrupting)

Some people like old, sir.

THE SENATOR

So I'm learning. *(Pause)*

(The SENATOR and JERMAINE stare into each other's eyes for a moment)

THE SENATOR

Enough of this... I'll have to punish you for talking back just now.

JERMAINE

Yes sir.

THE SENATOR

I love you Jermaine.

JERMAINE

I love you too sir.

THE SENATOR

Now get your ass in there...

JERMAINE

Yes sir.

(The SENATOR smiles as JERMAINE exits into the room/ Realizing the light has been left on the SENATOR goes over and turns it off/ Starting for the room he sees FRANK's card lying on the floor/ Picking it up he looks in the direction of FRANK's exit/ Then back towards the only light now coming from the room/ He rips up the card and making his way to the room/ Slowly closes the door behind himself)

(LIGHTS FADE OUT)

THE END OF ACT I

INTERMISSION

ACT II

“THE WAITING”

TIME: Present – Hours after Act I.

SETTING: A conference room – Upstage Windows covered with blinds run along the length of the room/ Upstage right is a coat rack/ Centerstage is a large conference table and chairs. A door with And exit sign is visible up stage left/ An additional table sits down stage right with a coffee maker/ cups/ napkins and bottles of water/ It is snowing outside.

(Mahalia Jackson’s ‘Consider Me’ starts/ WANETTA enters the room/ Turns on lights as she looks around/ It’s clear she is tired from worrying/ WANETTA proceeds to remove her coat and head scarf/ She puts on some coffee before sitting down at the conference table/ REBECCA enters/ Removing her coat and gloves/ She does not speak to WANETTA/ After hanging up her coat, she simply sits down at the conference table/ After a while/ MARCO enters shivering from being out in the cold/ He removes his top coat and sits down/ MARCO and WANETTA converse briefly, but we cannot hear their conversation/ By the time the song ends REBECCA is knitting and WANETTA, who’s eyes are now closed, has folded herself deep into her chair/ SILENCE – MARCO walks over to the window and looks out through the blinds)

WANETTA

(Opens her eyes at the sound of movement – Pause)

You might want to come away from the window.

REBECCA

I wouldn’t be surprised if in a fit of anger they decided to throw a brick or something through that window.

WANETTA

Perhaps you'll be standing there when they do.

REBECCA

Do you hear how she speaks to me Mr. Barrera?

(Silence)

MARCO

Don't you think we have an obligation to know what's going on?

WANETTA

An obligation..? To whom..? Him?

MARCO

Yes!

WANETTA

No... It won't do any good.

REBECCA

It won't do any good? *(Pause)* I'll have to report that you said that, you know.

WANETTA

By all means. Please... Go right head... As a matter of fact...

(Calling REBECCA's bluff/ She reaches into her purse and takes out a pen and paper which she offers to REBECCA from her seat/ REBECCA goes back to knitting as WANETTA gets back to MARCO)

Truth be told... With everything that's been going on... Well... As far as I'm concerned, my only obligation at this point is to be black and die.

MARCO

*(Not the answer he was hoping for/ MARCO
walks over to the coffee maker and pours
himself a cup of coffee/ Addressing REBECCA)*

Miss White, you were here when I arrived... Had you been waiting long?

REBECCA

No... I don't think so...

MARCO

You don't think or you don't know?

REBECCA

Your questioning is making me feel as if I'm being picked on, Mr. Barrera...

MARCO

Why no... I was simply trying to make small talk, Miss White.

REBECCA

You see, I don't care very much for time. It always seems to makes people anxious and excited. I prefer things to be calm... Remain still... Don't you agree?

MARCO

I don't understand? Are you telling me you don't know how long you've been waiting or you don't wish to respond?

REBECCA

No...

MARCO

Well which one is it..? Think... Maybe it's simply a matter of not being sure?

REBECCA

Perhaps... But I don't think so. *(Pause)* I was rushing to get here... You see I... I thought I had over slept.

MARCO

This morning you mean..?

REBECCA

I didn't want to be late... We all know how much he hates people being late.

WANETTA

Now that he does...

REBECCA

... And yet she's late every day.

WANETTA

Guilty as charged. *(Pause)* Oh, the thought of that man... *(Becoming tickled)* Ranting and raving because he somehow got it in his thick head that someone... Anyone, might possibly be wasting his time. *(Pause)* Why you'd think that God himself put us all down here just to do his bidding. *(Sighs)* I guess having too much money can do that to a person?

REBECCA

Having much money can make you do what?

WANETTA

Make you blind to suffering... To other people. ...And yes, for the record, I admit that I choose to be late every day.

MARCO

(Continuing his line of questioning)

So you were anxious to get here?

REBECCA

Well I would assume we all were in one form or fashion... Considering...

MARCO

Considering?

REBECCA

Considering the fact that everything is happening so fast... Why we were all just here yesterday laughing...

WANETTA

Is that what you think we were doing here yesterday? Laughing? Well if someone were to ask me... I'd tell them that pressure comes fast and can do that to a person you know.

REBECCA

I know he's not a spring chicken and all... I'm talking about the initial shock of it... Coming as it has.

WANETTA

So fast..? Well I've always heard people say that one is "Here today and gone tomorrow."

REBECCA

I really wish you would refrain from using such words at a time like this.

WANETTA

What words..? What did I say..? Believe you me... I'm praying just like everyone else in this room that everything works itself out... That he's ok.

REBECCA

Oh Miss Black, I'm sure you are.

WANETTA

All I'm saying is that we've been dealing with this for some time now.

REBECCA

A little too long if you ask me.

WANETTA

Now that's where you and I both agree on something, Miss White... This has been going on for far too long. Long before me and you were even born... Some might even go as far as to say that the way we've handled this is the ultimate example of, passive-aggressive behavior. It's gone on for far too long... What we are witnessing right now, is indeed a turn-up for the books and with just the slightest turn of the screw... Well... Mark my words Miss White... All of this may come crashing down around us...

REBECCA

Whose side are you on Miss Black?

WANETTA

It's not about sides Miss White. Not at a time like this.

REBECCA

Well I'm a good Catholic, Miss Black, and I tell you I refuse to allow someone to bully me into giving into their demands. Wouldn't you agree Mr. Barrera?

WANETTA

How many lives must be lost before we admit that the system is broken?

MARCO

I'm not Catholic, Miss White.

REBECCA

Not Catholic? I thought your people all were?

MARCO

I'm Muslim.

REBECCA

(Wanetta laughs)

What?

WANETTA

Assalam Alaikum, Mr. Barrera.

MARCO

(Pleasantly surprised)

Wa Alaikum Salaam, Miss Black.

(Silence)

MARCO

My parents are from Spain, Miss White. Grenada to be exact.

WANETTA

Ah... The Moors. That explains it Miss White. *(Pause)*

The Alhambra... The Generalife.

MARCO

Have you seen them?

WANETTA*

Why, yes, of course...

REBECCA*

No, I'm afraid I haven't.

WANETTA

They are, after all, some of the greatest wonders of the world.

MARCO

Yes they are... My grandparents still live there.

WANETTA

That's wonderful, Mr. Barrera. Unfortunately, my Grandparents are both deceased.

MARCO

I'm sorry to hear that Miss Black.

REBECCA

(Feeling left out)

I think it has something to do with my birth.

MARCO

I beg your pardon... Your birth..?

REBECCA

Yes... My not caring much for time. *(Pause)* You see, I've been told they had to perform a C-section...

WANETTA

When you were born?

REBECCA*

I was rushing so fast that it seems that I forgot my watch.

MARCO*

Who told you that?

REBECCA*

No... My mother did.

(Silence)

WANETTA

It wasn't long before you arrived, Mr. Barrera... As a matter of fact, you arrived ten minutes after she did.

REBECCA

And how do you know that..? Are you monitoring us?

WANETTA

No...

MARCO

Then you have a watch?

WANETTA

Yes... I mean no... They confiscated it along with my cellphone when I arrived.

REBECCA

They assured me, we would get them back by the end of the day.

WANETTA

It just so happened that I was looking at the clock behind you.

MARCO

When I walked in the door?

WANETTA

It was twenty minutes into the hour.

MARCO

So you're saying she arrived at five ten..?

WANETTA

More or less...

REBECCA

More or less..? Well which one is it?

MARCO

Either she arrived at five-ten or she didn't.

WANETTA

Well that would depend on her now wouldn't it?

REBECCA

On me?

WANETTA

On just how good your memory is, I mean.

REBECCA

In regards to when I got here?

WANETTA

I'd like to think in regards to everything...

MARCO

(Turning to REBECCA)

Is she telling the truth..? Is that when you arrived or is she just making it up?

WANETTA

Why would I make up a thing like that?

MARCO

For the sport of it, that's why?

REBECCA

No... I think I know why...

WANETTA

Well go on then... The suspense is killing me...

REBECCA

It's because she's afraid.

WANETTA

Me... Afraid?

REBECCA

Yes... Now that he's taken ill.

MARCO

But I don't understand what it is she's afraid of?

REBECCA

The truth Mr. Barrera... The truth... (*Pause*) It would be my guess that he's not taking any chances with her around.

MARCO

Who?

WANETTA

Frank?

REBECCA

You weren't here this summer, Mr. Barrera... But she was.

WANETTA

And so were you.

REBECCA

Well, it's been my experience that in situations such as this, there is always that one person who is willing to take a chance and leak information...

MARCO

You mean the tapes being released?

REBECCA

It was awful. *(Pause)* He immediately got on the phone to the appropriate parties to demand that they take the blame for a system that has "allowed" for police misconduct to go unheeded. ...And he of course, immediately offered his assistance, to those who promised reform and accountability and yet. *(Pause)* They never seem to be satisfied.

WANETTA

(To MARCO)

You may want to be careful... I think they've put her in here, in order to spy on us?

MARCO

Why would they do a thing like that?

WANETTA

Because Mr. Barrera, in situations such as this, lines begin to be drawn... Erased even and drawn again... Lambs are eagerly brought to the slaughter... Or maybe they just want to see what we're made of... Besides, in this town one is only as good as their last hit and we all know that as of late, his track record hasn't been that good.

REBECCA

Why that's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard in my life.

WANETTA

Oh Miss White, I find that very hard to believe.

MARCO

You really think that she's here to report back on how we've been getting on?

REBECCA

Why she's ridiculous.

WANETTA

We are the minority. *(Pause)* Just remember what I said to you Mr. Barrera... Lines are drawn...

REBECCA*

Did you ever stop and think that maybe she's the plant?

WANETTA*

...And erased.

MARCO

I think it safe to say that seeing the circumstances, we're all a little bit anxious...

WANETTA

Are you taking her word over mine..?

MARCO

No... of course not. I'm just saying that...

REBECCA*

I told you... I left my watch at home... The traffic on 285 was so bad this morning that I thought I was going to be late and that is all there is to it.

WANETTA

(Changes subject)

A C-section, huh?

REBECCA

Yes... *(Pause)* You know in all the time we've worked together I've never asked you if you had any children of your own?

WANETTA

Me? No.

REBECCA

Oh..?

WANETTA

Why the oh..?

REBECCA

Nothing...

WANETTA

What... You think that because I'm Black, I must have a slew of children lying around somewhere?

REBECCA

Well in all honesty, I've never met one of your people that doesn't. *(Pause)*

She has no children Mr. Barrera... Can you believe that? *(Pause)*

(MARCO doesn't respond)

Planned Parenthood?

WANETTA

No... Miscarriage.

REBECCA

I am sorry.

WANETTA

Don't be... It was a long time ago.

REBECCA

High school?

WANETTA

College...

REBECCA

Let me guess... The star basketball player?

WANETTA

No... The football team.

REBECCA

(To MARCO)

From what I know of her, I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't enjoy that sort of thing.

MARCO

That's messed up, Miss White.

WANETTA

Jealous..? *(Pause)* Like I said... It was a long time ago. *(Pause)*

The doctors said I'd never be able to have children again.

REBECCA

Really..? *(Pause)* You poor dear.

WANETTA

Yes... You see they were quite large.

REBECCA

The football team?

WANETTA

Their members. *(Pause)* But as I said before... It's water under the bridge.

(Silence)

MARCO

(Anxious MARCO gets up to pour himself another cup of coffee)

Any idea how long this might take?

REBECCA

Don't you think that's a bit inappropriate?

WANETTA

Who knows with a thing like this... Seconds, minutes, hours... Days... Months... Years even... *(Pause)* No... It's not up to us. We the people, to say... No... Only the good Lord knows how long this is going to take.

MARCO

True...

REBECCA

Don't you think you're being a bit inappropriate?

WANETTA

Is he? Being inappropriate I mean?

MARCO

I guess I can see how one might think that ... Sorry, I didn't mean anything by it. *(Pause)* It's... It's...

WANETTA

Well what is it? Spit it out. Mr. Barrera.

MARCO

It's just that I have these tickets...

WANETTA

Tickets?

REBECCA

The man is dying and he wants to talk to us about tickets.

WANETTA

Presumably dying... All we know for certain is that he's been rushed to the hospital and that he's unconscious...

MARCO

(Speaking to both but really asking WANETTA)

It's just I bought these tickets months ago...

WANETTA*

My grandmother... *(Crossing herself)* May she rest in peace...

MARCO*

It's one of my favorite bands you see...

WANETTA*

She used to say... "We must learn to let the dead bury the dead."

MARCO

They're from England...

WANETTA*

She was right you know... Life is for the living after all.

MARCO*

It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance really... You see they're playing at this really small club...

REBECCA*

The man is dying and he continues speaks to us about a British band.

MARCO

I can't imagine when I'd ever get the chance to see them again. I mean... This close-up and personal.

REBECCA

Well I'll tell you one thing...

MARCO

What's that?

REBECCA

When the man says wait... We wait! (*Pause*) I will have to report this Mr. Barrera.

MARCO

I was only asking because I was trying to figure out...

REBECCA*

What could you possibly be trying to figure out at a time like this?

MARCO

I was trying to figure out if I should try and find someone else to use the tickets.

REBECCA

Well, Mr. Barrera... By the way you've been talking, come mid-afternoon there's a good chance you won't have to worry about finding someone else to use those tickets because none of us will have a job... (*Pause*) I mean... Depending on what happens and who they may want to get to replace him.

WANETTA

(Addressing REBECCA)

Now who's being inappropriate?

(Addressing MARCO)

Oh don't mind her... I'm sure it'll all work out eventually. Things like this always do.

REBECCA

Do they?

WANETTA

Yes... I believe they do... Don't you?

REBECCA

The text I received said we were to keep our calendars open...

MARCO

*(Reaches for his cellphone but remembers
he doesn't have it)*

That's funny... I'm sure mine said that I just needed to be here.

REBECCA

(Addressing MARCO)

Maybe it's because you haven't worked here as long as we have... In any case, it doesn't matter...

(Addressing WANETTA)

Have you forgot..? Frank was the one that sent it to us.

WANETTA

No I haven't forgotten... Besides, I doubt if you'd let me forget.

MARCO

It just seems like we've be waiting...

REBECCA

(Interrupting)

For a lifetime..?

MARCO

I was going to say hours.

WANETTA

I hadn't really noticed... I guess as an African-American one is by nature used to waiting... First for freedom... Then the right to vote... For fair housing, equal opportunities... Justice.

REBECCA

(Annoyed)

Perhaps you have somewhere better to be, Mr. Barrera, than here?

MARCO

No... I didn't mean it like that.

REBECCA

Like what?

WANETTA

Oh Rebecca, it's much too early... Leave him alone.

REBECCA

Oh now it's Rebecca? *(Pause)* You'd like that wouldn't you?

WANETTA

What are you rambling on about now?

REBECCA

You'd like for me to leave him to you, wouldn't you?

WANETTA

(Tries to curl back up in her chair)

Is it really too much to ask that you be quiet?

REBECCA

Don't you dare take that masochistic tone with me...

WANETTA

Fine... By all means, do whatever the hell you wanna do... It doesn't matter to me one way or the other. ... but please... Could you leave me out of it?

REBECCA

Leave you out of what?

WANETTA

Whatever this is, that you're doing.

REBECCA

Miss Black... I have no earthly idea of what you're talking about?

WANETTA

It's quite obvious to me that you're just itching to get started.

REBECCA*

Maybe I am... Why we both know that for years I've had to sit back... Quiet... Watching... Biting my tongue as you leisurely strolled about this office as if you ruled the roost. *(Pause)* Do you know why she can do that, Mr. Barrera?

MARCO

No Miss White... I can't say I do.

WANETTA

Rebecca...

REBECCA

Oh, come now, Mr. Barrera... You're being much too modest... Surely you must have heard the office talk..? Gossip even..?

(MARCO is not sure how to respond)

REBECCA

You do realize she's only been working here for three years... And yet the way she moves about the office... About us... With such...

WANETTA

Ease..?

REBECCA

No... I was going to say, assurance. *(Pause)* Isn't that amazing Mr. Barrera..? So much self-assurance and to think... She has only been working here for three years.

WANETTA

... And your point, Miss White?

(Silence – REBECCA goes and pours herself a cup of coffee before sitting back down)

REBECCA

Do you believe in fate Mr. Barrera?

MARCO

I can't say I do.

REBECCA

Neither do I, Mr. Barrera... So maybe we shouldn't call Miss Black's effrontery within this office fate... No... One might say she was lucky?

MARCO

Lucky?

REBECCA

Yes... Very lucky. *(Pause)* You see Mr. Barrera, I've worked for him for over ten years...

MARCO

I didn't know that, Miss White... You seem so...

REBECCA

Young..? Yes well, I started straight out of college.

MARCO

Where did you go?

REBECCA

(Face becomes animated)

Sweet Briar... I graduated magna cum laude. That means with great honor you know?

MARCO

Yes, I know.

REBECCA

I was such a young girl then... When I started working here... Naïve one might say... You see I'd graduated by the time I was twenty.

MARCO

Wow... That's very impressive.

REBECCA

Yes... Yes it is, isn't it? *(Pause)* Mathematical Economics... That's what I hold my degree in... To this day I'm still amazed that I was able to land this job... My parents were so proud... I mean, straight out of college... To be working for such a brilliant man.

REBECCA

Who would have imagined... Me... Chosen to be his political analyst... *(Pause)* Isn't it funny how one can be so smart in some things and ignorant in others..?

MARCO

Yeah, I guess so.

REBECCA

But we weren't talking about me, were we... No... We were talking about her and her self-assurance. *(Pause)* Do you have any idea where it comes from Mr. Barrera?

MARCO

No, Miss White... I'm afraid I don't.

REBECCA

Why it comes from between her legs.

(Silence)

WANETTA

I'm sorry... Would you excuse me for a moment, Mr. Barrera?

*(WANETTA calmly gets up from her chair/
Walks over to REBECCA and slaps her
across the face/ Returning to her chair)*

Something else my grandparents use to say to me is that if you're going to tell a story then please, "Make sure you tell it right."

(Silence)

She's right you know... Miss White... She had been working here close to seven years before I got hired and in many ways I suppose we were quite similar... We were both young and extremely smart. But that's where it stops really... Oh, I'm sure people would say we're both beautiful. I'm not quite so sure. I'd like to think of her as being... "Pretty." Wouldn't you agree?

(Silence)

MARCO

College?

WANETTA

Bernard... I graduated from Bernard, summa cum laude... The highest honor. *(Pause)* So you see Mr. Barrera, I've always been what one might call ambitious. *(Pause)* Why even as a little girl in grade school, I always had to give you a little bit more... Something special, you know? I'm sure it had something to do with the way in which I was raised. You see as an African-American and a girl, I was always being told that I had to do better. Be better than my white counterparts. I'm sure you must understand that, being Latino?

MARCO

Yes... As a matter of fact, I do.

WANETTA

Then you know what I'm talking about when I speak of having to watch what you say or do... Having to smile as if to say, "thank you so much for the complement," when they proudly bestow upon you that greatest of endowments... The telling you of just how different you are from the rest of your race... Oh, I can still remember the day when one of my fellow classmates at Barnard had the gall to earnestly ask me if one of my parents were white. *(Laughs)* So believe me when I tell you that I'm not about to start making excuses for my behavior around this office. *(Pause)* I do think it important though, that you have the full backdrop to this little story.

(Addressing REBECCA)

Wouldn't you agree?

(REBECCA remains silence)

MARCO

Yes...

WANETTA

(To REBECCA)

Shall I continue?

MARCO

Please do.

WANETTA

Well, one of the first things I did when I started working here, was to find out as much as possible about 'who' these people were that I was dealing with... You feel me?

MARCO

Yeah I do.

WANETTA

... And as Miss White has stated earlier... She had been working for the man some seven years before I came along. Well... It didn't take long for me to begin to take notice that there seemed to be something there...

MARCO

There?

WANETTA

Yes... Something between Miss White and our illustrious boss.

MARCO

Oh..?

WANETTA

When I would look at them... It was as if I were looking through a slightly out of focus camera lens... I wish you could have seen how cool they were about it back then... The subtle ways in which they sometimes looked at each other... Or the repelling movement of their bodies when they found themselves a bit too close to one another in a crowded room... *(Pause)* Like I said earlier... I've always been ambitious... So I told myself, "Girl, you follow that trail because there is gold to be found in them there hills." *(Pause)* Well, it didn't take long for me to figure out what was really going on... You see... I had already begun asking around. What can I tell you..? A hand job here and there goes a long way when you're looking for clues. *(Pause)* You see, I discovered much to my delight, that they had been lovers once... Oh, it had ended badly long before I'd come along. *(Pause)*

WANETTA con't

But what made this little liaison special you see, was that much to everyone's surprise, he had decided to keep her on because she was that good at what she did. ...And of course the fact that he's that sort of man...

MARCO

What sort of man is that?

WANETTA

Oh... The sort of man who can separate his business from pleasure... *(Pause)* And yet, there still lingered between them, something along the lines of an ember long since lost, but still burning, somewhere unnoticed or unchecked in that far off place I suppose love goes when one is done and has cast it aside... From all accounts of those who had been with him the longest, she had not been the first...

(WANETTA has by now slowly walked back over to where REBECCA is sitting immobile/ Tears gently streaming down her face/ WANETTA who now stands behind her runs the back of her hand down REBECCA's face/ Caressing her tears)

MARCO

But I thought you said you were different?

WANETTA

Yes... I was... I am. *(Pause)* You see even as a child, I've always felt as if I were seeing life through the lens of an adult's eyes... I think it has to do with the fact that I was raised by my grandparents... I've always preferred the company of people who are much older than I. *(Pause)* By the time he started making advances towards me, I had already come to know all there was to know about him and his sexual appetite.

MARCO

Oh...

WANETTA

Let's just say he's into things that some people, who are less open-minded than me or you, might deem, peculiar. *(Pause)* Things that he later told me she didn't like to do.

MARCO

Because they were... peculiar?

WANETTA

(Looking down at REBECCA)

Maybe peculiar isn't quite the right word...

(To MARCO)

He had his preferences.

MARCO

In all fairness, don't we all?

WANETTA

Yes, I suppose you're right. Like many men with power, he was drawn to a time that had long since come and gone. *(Pause)* By the look on your face, I take it you don't understand?

MARCO

Sorry.

WANETTA

(Takes both hands and pulls REBECCA's head back)

Should we try and explain it to him?

(Moving REBECCA's head up and down then side to side before releasing)

No?

(Addressing MARCO as she moves away from REBECCA back to her own seat)

In Europe it's said that everyman wants to be the king of his castle... But we don't have castles here in America... So if one were wanting to be honest, we would have to acknowledge that deep down; Everyman wishes to be master of his plantation. *(Pause)*

WANETTA con't

That is what he prefers... When I speak of a time in this country much earlier... I am speaking of the time of the whip and the lash... He takes great pleasure out of it, Mr. Barrera... If only you could have been there to see the joy on his face the first time he took me to the racks.

MARCO

The racks?

WANETTA

I tell you there was an excitement in his eyes that I had never seen before. The mere thought of finding someone who would allow him to use a level of force upon them that had long since been abolished, seemed to bring him to pure ecstasy. For is it not a fantasy for which most men can now only dream of? *(Pause)* One afternoon, not long after I'd been working here... I allowed him to take me by force... Right here on this table, as a matter of fact.

(REBECCA becomes nauseous)

WANETTA

Afterwards... After he'd had his fill of me... He told me that he had hired me because somehow he knew I was the one he had been waiting for. *(Pause)* ...And so we continued.

MARCO

Here?

WANETTA

He has a place. A special room... Full of whips and chains and other devices designed to give pleasure and pain. It was in that room that he first tied me to the racks and flogged me until I cried out at the first sight of blood.

MARCO

Why didn't you report it to anyone?

WANETTA

Report it..? Can it be that you've misunderstood me, Mr. Barrera? There was nothing to report. We both understood what we were doing. We are adults after all and it was consensual... *(Pause)*

WANETTA con't

That's why she's so bitter. You see... I was able to give him what she couldn't... My body... To do as he wished in exchange for...

REBECCA

(Interrupts)

Let me guess... Money.

WANETTA

Sure that was part of it... But more importantly power. *(Pause)* You see unlike society, he could only do to me that which I would allow him to do... No more or no less. So you see for the first time in my life I found myself being treated as an equal. He had no greater power over me than I had over him... At least that's what we started out telling ourselves... We were merely exchanging services. *(Pause)* But in the end one cannot be that intimate and not expect something to stir... To begin to grow...

REBECCA

My God you're sick?

WANETTA

You're call me sick? *(Pause)* Why that's the pot calling the kettle black. *(Pause)* Oh, how he used to laugh hysterically when he would recall what it was like being with you... "She was a sweet girl," he used to say... "But a tease never-the-less..." "She'd let me cum on her face," he'd say... "Wouldn't even swallow." *(Pause)* Can you imagine that, Mr. Barrera? *(Pause)* Why the most fun he ever got out of her, was when she'd occasionally allow him to slip a finger or two inside... But even then, he said he always got the impression that quote, "Sex just wasn't her thing."

REBECCA

Now you know why she could never join us for lunch... What a whore... I tell you she loved having him poking around inside of her all afternoon?

WANETTA

No not terribly... You see Mr. Barrera, in some ways he's quite a "small" man and if I am to be honest, I do prefer something a bit bigger.

MARCO

Because of the football team?

WANETTA

Yes!

REBECCA

I heard he gave her the fist once and she loved it.

WANETTA

No... Never his fist. *(Pause)* But he did like to give me golden showers from time to time.

REBECCA

You're disgusting.

WANETTA

No... I'm not actually... Just ambitious, like all of us... But should he die... *(Pause)* I shall be indeed disgusting... I shall be me disgustingly rich.

REBECCA

Oh I hate you.

WANETTA

My dear Miss White... If only you would tell me something I don't know. *(Pause)*
But then again... It's all water under the bridge...It all seemed to change starting last year...

MARCO

Change...

WANETTA

He seemed to grow distant...

REBECCA

Preoccupied?

WANETTA

Yes... Our time together became less and less. Until finally it just stopped. *(Pause)* He assured me my job was safe and that he'd always lookout for me. *(Pause)* So, there you have it, Mr. Barrera... My story in a nutshell... Nothing more, nothing less...

MARCO

Thank you, Miss Black!

*(Silence – REBECCA goes over to the window/
glazing out through the blinds)*

MARCO

Have they gone?

REBECCA

No... My god... There must be hundreds of them out there now.

MARCO

Do they have signs?

REBECCA

Some...

MARCO

What do they say?

REBECCA

Vile things... Things that are not worth repeating.

MARCO

And the press..?

REBECCA

Just look at them lapping it up... Why they're no better than they are. *(Pause)* To think that a great man is dying and in spite of it they still come here to do this... On a day like today...

(Moves away from the window but doesn't sit down)

I tell you they have no regard whatsoever...

WANETA

When did he ever have regard for them?

REBECCA

Why on earth would you say such a hateful thing?

WANETTA

What have I said..? I was simply stating the truth. You and I know this... Everyone knows it... He doesn't give a rat's ass about them, no more than you do. The truth of the matter is we all know he's never had great track record when it comes to civil rights or for human rights for that matter. *(Pause)* But regardless of what does or doesn't happen in the next few hours...

(REBECCA looks towards her)

We have a job to do and I would hate for all of this to cloud our judgement... That's all.

REBECCA

... And what about respect..?

WANETTA

What about it?

REBECCA

When it comes to dying there's a level of respect one must show in a civilized society?

WANETTA

... And what about them? (*Referring to the people outside*)

REBECCA

What about them..?

WANETTA

Do they not deserve a level of respect?

REBECCA

Why of course they do... But... (*Pause*)

know what you're trying to do... You're trying to twist my words around. I was only trying to...

WANETTA

(*Interrupting*)

Oh, I know what you were trying to say and believe me, I think you've said quite enough.

MARCO

(*Uncomfortable*)

I think I'll step out into the hallway... I need to get some air.

WANETTA

Knock yourself out, Mr. Barrera.

(*Silence – Eventually the silence is broken by the arrival of RAYMOND*)

WANETTA

What are you doing here? Where's Frank?

REBECCA

Well it's about time.

RAYMOND

*(Shaking off the snow/ RAYMOND places his
his coat and hat in the corner/ He heads
straight for the coffee to warm up)*

Can you believe how fast it's coming down out there? I wouldn't be surprised if we didn't get nine or ten inches before it's all said and done.

REBECCA

So... *(Pause)* Is he..?

RAYMOND

Yes... About an hour ago... *(Pause)* I left Frank and the family back at the hospital.

(Drinking his coffee)

Hard to believe...

REBECCA*

I know...

RAYMOND*

He's gone.

REBECCA

A great man has died today. *(Pause)* Raymond, I swear he was the smartest man I knew.

WANETTA

Really..? *(Seriously)* Well maybe you should get out more.

REBECCA

How can you be so cruel?

(RAYMOND tries to comfort REBECCA)

WANETTA

It's really quite easy you know... See I've have had years of experience. (*Pause – Softens*) Rebecca, I really am sorry... I know he meant a great deal to you. You're upset... All I'm asking is that we don't go and start turning the man into a saint... Lord knows there will be enough of that in the coming weeks.

RAYMOND

She's right you know... That man did have his faults.

WANETTA

Just like the rest of us.

RAYMOND

Come on Rebecca... Pull yourself together. (*Pause*) Frank should be here pretty soon to let us know how he wants to proceed.

(*MARCO reenters*)

MARCO

Have we heard anything?

WANETTA

He's dead.

MARCO

What...When?

RAYMOND

About an hour ago.

MARCO

Did we get a statement from the family yet?

WANETTA

No... But Raymond says Frank'll be here soon.

RAYMOND

(Turning up his machismo)

Well... Who's this?

WANETTA

Oh, I'm sorry... Raymond this is Marco... Marco this is Mr. Miller.

(They approach each other and shake hands)

MARCO

Marco Barrera.

RAYMOND

Ah Marco... The new press secretary.

WANETTA

Excuse me? Raymond is there something I need to know about?

MARCO

(Trying to defuse)

My title is actually, secretary of new media.

RAYMOND

What the fuck does that mean?

MARCO

I handle his entire online infrastructure.

RAYMOND

You don't say... But don't you mean you were in charge of...

MARCO

(Seems unsettled by RAYMOND)

Oh, God yes... He's dead... Sorry.

RAYMOND

You can say that again.

MARCO

He's dead.

(MARCO and RAYMOND laugh)

WANETTA

(WANETTA sensing something in the air)

Mr. Barrera works for me Raymond.

(Rising from her chair/ WANETTA walks over and steps in between MARCO and RAYMOND to get some coffee/ RAYMOND moves away)

What Marco was trying to say is that he handled the Senator's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

MARCO

(Not wanting to seem soft to RAYMOND)

No... I do much more than that.

RAYMOND

Ok you two... *(Pause)* Well while we're waiting for Frank, why don't you tell me exactly what you do, do, Mr. Barrera?

MARCO

Sure thing, Mr. Miller.

WANETTA

(Having made her coffee/ WANETTA looks at MARCO then RAYMOND/ She then proceeds to walk back to her seat with her cup of coffee)

I'm warning you, Raymond.

RAYMOND

(Addressing WANETTA)

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

(Addressing MARCO)

Call me Ray.

MARCO

I'm afraid Miss Black prefers we keep things in the office on a professional level and call each other by our last names.

RAYMOND

(Walks over and puts his arm around MARCO's shoulder)

Does she now... Well Marco, I'm sure she won't mind... Besides, I insist.

MARCO

Ok Ray... Well... *(Pause)* You know how Miss Black serves as his press secretary and verbally acts as his spokesperson?

RAYMOND

Yeah...

MARCO

Well I do the exact same thing you see... Only I do it using online technology to engage our supporters.

RAYMOND

Get out of here... *(Pause – Looking over at WANETTA)* You better watch your job Wannie... With this kid around... They might start asking what's the point in doing things the old fashion way.

WANETTA

(Doesn't find RAYMOND's humor funny)

Raymond, I've asked you not to call me that.

RAYMOND

So you have...

(Silent tension)

WANETTA

You know, you might be right Ray... But then again, what the hell do you know? After all, I'm only the man's press secretary.

RAYMOND

You mean you were... *(Pause)* He's dead, remember.

(Silence)

MARCO

What exactly do you do here Mr. Miller? I mean Ray...

(WANETTA and REBECCA both perk up)

It's just that I don't think I've ever seen you in the office before.

WANETTA

Now that's a good question Marco... *(Pause)* Now that I think of it... I don't really know what it is that you did for the man? Do you Rebecca?

RAYMOND

I took care of things.

WANETTA

You mean like a handy man?

RAYMOND

No... Ah... More like... Stuff.

MARCO

Stuff?

(RAYMOND walks to the other side of the room)

WANETTA

What sort of stuff?

RAYMOND

Oh you know... Miscellaneous...

REBECCA*

Stuff...

WANETTA

(Having a real good go at RAYMOND)

Complicated?

RAYMOND

Extremely. *(Pause)* You see it's sort of secret, if you know what I mean...

REBECCA

You mean like intelligence?

WANETTA

Is that what it is Raymond... You were his intelligence officer?

RAYMOND

Yes... That's a good way of describing it... You see Marco, he'd call me from time to time, to handle, sensitive information.

WANETTA

Must be nice..? ...And tell us Raymond, does one have to go to college in order to handle this sensitive information?

RAYMOND

No.

WANETTA

I'm sorry... Could you speak up Ray, I didn't quite hear what you said?

RAYMOND

I said I didn't go to college.

WANETTA

And there you have it Mr. Barerra... The decline, as we know it, of western civilization.

RAYMOND

Oh you're a real bitch, you know that...

WANETTA

So I've been told on more than one occasion.

(MARCO has made his way over to RAYMOND)

MARCO

Well nice to finally meet you Ray, in spite of the circumstances.

RAYMOND

The same here kid...

MARCO

I guess you could tell by the way I walked in that I'm not very good at waiting around.

RAYMOND

No problem... Frank should be here soon so, there's nothing to worry about.

MARCO

I'm not worried...

RAYMOND

That's good. (*Pause*) So how long have you been working with us Marco?

WANETTA

A couple of months...

RAYMOND

A couple of months... You don't say.

MARCO

Yes...

RAYMOND

I bet when you took this job you were expecting something a little more glamorous?

MARCO

To tell you the truth, I'm not sure what I expected.

RAYMOND

Yeah well, I'm sure you didn't expect the guy to keel over?

MARCO

Oh God no... It's just that often times it felt like we spent an awful lot of time just wasting time... You know... Waiting around.

RAYMOND

Doing nothing...

MARCO

Exactly!

RAYMOND

(Addressing WANETTA)

Wannie... I sure hope you're staying on top of things or else you're gonna find yourself out of a job.

RAYMOND

(Addressing MARCO)

So... Where are you from Marco?

MARCO

Texas...

RAYMOND

The lone star state... You know... I was a lot like you when I first moved to this town... Surprised by the pace at which things actually get done around here...

REBECCA

What are you over there going on about?

RAYMOND

Stick around long enough. You'll see what I mean.

RAYMOND con't

(Addressing REBECCA)

I'm talking about the networks...

REBECCA

What about them?

RAYMOND

I blame the networks for creating a society that lacks patience... Thirty minutes to an hour... *(Pause)* Marco that's what they give you to deal with things around here... Oh and I forgot... That doesn't even take into consideration commercial breaks... After a while we all start to believe that, that window is an accurate timeframe for coming up with real solutions to real problems. Fit everything neatly into a time slot they'll tell you.

REBECCA

And when it doesn't?

RAYMOND

We end up having to deal with shit like we have outside right now...

REBECCA

I hear you Ray.

RAYMOND

Am I right Wannie?

WANETTA

Ray, I'm just doing my job.

RAYMOND

And how's that working out for you?

WANETTA

Look... We all knew what we getting ourselves into when we signed up for this...

REBECCA

And what exactly is that?

WANETTA

Long hours and very little recognition. *(Pause)*

RAYMOND

Jesus Wannie... You really need to learn how to lighten up... You should learn how to grow a thicker skin...

WANNETTA

Let me guess... Like a certain Jewish fellow around here?

RAYMOND

Hey... You better be careful. Frank wouldn't like it... As a matter of fact...

RAYMOND

(RAYMOND's cellphone interrupts/ Reads text)

That's Frank now... He wants me to meet him in his office before he comes down.

(Snaps his finger and points to MARCO)

Quick, give me a piece of paper.

(MARCO hands RAYMOND one of his business cards/ Raymond writes down his number on the back and hands the card back to MARCO)

RAYMOND

Here's my number... Call me kid...

MARCO*

Ok!

WANETTA*

Don't you want my number Ray?

RAYMOND

What for..? I'd only end up throwing it away.

(Speaking to WANETTA and REBECCA)

See ya' round girls.

(RAYMOND exits – Silence)

MARCO

*(MARCO walks back over to the window
and looks out through the blinds)*

I really wish they'd come on

WANETTA

You really should come away from that window...

REBECCA

Is it still snowing Mr. Barrera..?

MARCO

I'll say... Why if you ask me, Miss White, I think it's beginning to get worst.

REBECCA

Worst..?

WANETTA

I fear winter is upon us, Mr. Barrera...

(MARCO turns/ Starting back towards the conference table/ A brick suddenly comes smashing through the window/ Startled/ MARCO and REBECCA quickly move downstage right)

No... Mr. Barrera, I don't think that anyone has a clue of just how bad things are about to get.

*(Gazing in the direction of the broken window/
WANETTA has remained frozen in her seat/
From outside the sound of protestors can be heard)*

(LIGHTS FADE OUT)

THE END OF ACT II