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Cast of Characters

WHITE, the candidate for the position within the agency. Any gender.

RED, a member of the agency. A part of the interview process. Any gender.

BLACK, another member of the agency. A part of the interview process. Any gender.

BLUE, another member of the agency. A part of the interview process. Any gender.

DR. RUNNELS, the hiring director and head of this branch of the agency. Any gender.

Production Note

All characters may be any gender. Male pronouns are used throughout the script, but they may be adjusted to suit your cast.

Production History

The Candidate was first performed at Laney High School in Wilmington, North Carolina, in April 2021 with the following cast.

RED	Caleb Caron
WHITE	Kaiden Dunn
BLUE	Vincent Costagliola
BLACK	Nate Contreras
DR. RUNNELS.	Doug Hernandez

THE CANDIDATE

by Brent Holland

(When the lights come up, there are four characters in a plain room. They are each wearing a shirt of a different color. One is wearing Red, one is wearing Blue, and the others are White and Black. They are waking up as the lights come up.)

BLACK. What happened?

WHITE. *(Groggily:)* Where am I?

BLUE. My head hurts.

RED. Mine too.

BLUE. *(To them all:)* Who are you?

RED. Who are you?

WHITE. *(Slowly:)* I can't remember my name.

BLACK. I can't either.

RED. I don't remember anything. Do any of you remember anything about who you are?

BLUE. *(Panic rising:)* I don't. I don't remember anything at all.

RED. *(Indicating WHITE:)* How about you?

WHITE. What?

RED. Do you remember anything at all?

WHITE. I don't. How is that even possible?

BLACK. *(Finding the door:)* The door is locked.

RED. *(Moving him aside:)* Watch out.

(He kicks the door.)

RED. It's solid.

(He kicks it again and then throws his body against it.)

RED. Nothing.

WHITE. We're prisoners.

BLACK. Why would we be prisoners?

RED. Maybe we're criminals.

WHITE. I'm not a criminal.

BLUE. How can you be sure about that?

WHITE. What?

BLUE. Do you remember anything about what you've done before you woke up?

WHITE. No. But I still don't think I'm a criminal.

RED. (*Still focusing on the door.*) I don't think we can get out of here by force. This door isn't movable.

BLACK. Why would someone be keeping us prisoner?

BLUE. That's impossible to answer since we can't remember anything.

WHITE. I've been thinking . . . I'm trying to remember anything I did before I woke up in this room. I have nothing at all.

RED. Me either.

BLACK. So what do we do?

RED. What CAN we do? The door won't open.

BLUE. They wouldn't just put us in here to die would they?

WHITE. I have no clue. I mean, who are "they"?

BLUE. Good point.

BLACK. So what do we do?

RED. I guess we wait.

WHITE. I don't want to just sit around and wait.

BLACK. Well what do you suggest we do?

WHITE. Are they monitoring us? Are there any cameras?

BLUE. I assume there must be somewhere.

WHITE. That's what I'm thinking.

(They are all looking around.)

RED. I don't see anything.

BLACK. Me either.

WHITE. Check the corners really well.

BLUE. I am, but I don't see anything.

WHITE. Cameras can be really small, you have to look close.

RED. It's kind of hard to look close since we don't have any way to get close to the ceiling.

BLUE. That may be something.

(He points at a spot on the ceiling.)

WHITE. Where?

BLUE. *(Indicating:)* There.

WHITE. Maybe. That could be something.

RED. *(Crossing to them and looking at the camera:)* If you're watching us, we want out of here right now! You have no right to hold us!

BLACK. But maybe they do.

BLUE. True . . . We never did settle the question about whether or not we're criminals.

WHITE. If we were criminals, would they have done all of this?

RED. *(To the camera:)* Let us out. Now!

BLACK. Done all of what?

WHITE. Put the four of us in the same cell. Four people who can't remember anything.

RED. I don't think anyone's listening. Or if they are, they don't care.

BLACK. Or they aren't allowed to answer.

WHITE. Allowed?

BLACK. I don't know. Just a guess.

(A faint whistling noise starts. It gets louder over the course of a few seconds.)

WHITE. What's that?

BLUE. The whistling sound? I don't know.

RED. It's getting louder.

BLUE. What does it mean?

(At the end of the whistling sound, there is a crash of cymbals. All four collapse, unconscious, right before the lights go out. When the lights come back on, three of the characters are wearing plain black beanies. All except RED, who has nothing on his head at all. The four start to awaken again.)

WHITE. That hurt.

BLUE. It's like something hit me.

RED. Did everyone lose consciousness?

BLACK. I did.

WHITE. Me too.

BLUE. Yeah, I definitely did.

WHITE. How did we all just drop like that?

RED. What?

WHITE. We all heard that whistling noise and then there was a crash and that's all I remember. That doesn't make sense.

BLUE. Just another thing to add to the list of things that don't make sense here.

WHITE. Maybe we've been hypnotized.

RED. How would that work?

WHITE. Maybe we've been programmed to black out when we hear that crashing sound.

BLUE. Maybe.

WHITE. Can any of you remember anything?

BLUE. I can remember the whistling sound and getting hit . . . I remember waking up in here with you all before.

WHITE. (*Feeling his head:*) I have on a hat.

(*He takes it off and a loud buzzing sounds, scaring them.*)

BLACK. Put it back on!

(*BLUE does and the sound stops.*)

WHITE. Where did that sound come from?

BLACK. I don't know, but don't take your hat off again. That noise didn't sound friendly.

BLUE. It's just sound.

BLACK. Maybe so, but if they wanted us to take these hats off, I don't think a loud nasty noise would happen when we did.

WHITE. This doesn't make sense.

RED. (*Feeling his head:*) I don't have a hat.

BLACK. You're right. That's weird. The rest of us do.

RED. I wonder why I don't have one.

WHITE. Maybe our captors forgot to put yours on.

RED. That doesn't make sense.

BLACK. Does anything about this make sense?

(*A beat passes.*)

RED. *(To BLUE:)* Hey. Can you take off your hat for a second?

BLUE. Why?

RED. Just do it. I want to see something.

BLUE. *(Takes off his hat and the loud buzzing starts again:)* Can I put it back on?

RED. *(Over the sound of the buzzing:)* Yes!

(He does and the sounds stops.)

RED. *(To BLACK:)* Now take yours off.

BLACK. I don't want to.

RED. Why not? I want to see if all three are the same.

BLACK. What difference does that make?

RED. It might make a big difference.

BLACK. In what?

RED. Just take off your hat before I walk over there and take it off for you.

BLACK. Are you trying to scare me?

RED. I'm going to count to three . . . If your hat isn't off at three, I'm going to take it off for you. One . . .

BLACK. Chill out.

RED. Two . . .

BLACK. Fine! I'll take it off!

(He does, and the buzzing starts again until BLACK puts the hat back on.)

RED. The hats are apparently important.

WHITE. Obviously, but how?

RED. I don't know.

BLUE. I don't understand how the hats could be important.

RED. I don't know either, but they are.

(A beat passes.)

RED. I wonder if not having a hat is a bad thing.

BLUE. What do you mean?

RED. Maybe it's a test. Maybe the person who doesn't have a hat loses?

BLACK. Loses what?

WHITE. Why would someone test us like that, what's the point?

RED. All I know is that I'm the odd man out here and I don't like it.

BLACK. Maybe not having a hat is a good thing. Maybe that means you're the winner.

RED. That doesn't make sense.

WHITE. Does any of this make sense?

RED. I keep thinking that the guy without the hat may be the loser.

BLUE. Loser? What can you possibly lose?

RED. I don't know, but I don't think I want to find out.

(At this, RED snatches the hat off of WHITE. The buzzing sounds until RED puts the hat on his own head.)

WHITE. Hey!

RED. Sorry buddy. The hat might be important.

WHITE. Why would it be important? Important for what?

RED. I don't know . . . but I don't want to find out.

WHITE. *(After a moment:)* Give me back my hat.

RED. Why? It's probably not important. Right?

WHITE. But it's my hat. I want it back.

(WHITE is closing in on RED.)

RED. What, are you going to try to take it back from me?

WHITE. It's my hat.

RED. *(Menacingly:)* You don't want to try to take this off of me.

(The whistling sound starts again.)

WHITE. *(Seemingly backing down:)* You're probably right.

RED. Guess we'll find out in a few moments if the hat is . . .

(Before RED can complete the sentence, WHITE strikes. WHITE punches RED several times, knocking him to the ground. He then wrestles the hat off of him in time for the cymbal to crash and all four to be knocked unconscious. The lights fade, and when they come back up again, RED is nowhere to be seen. WHITE's shirt and arms are splattered with blood, and there is a knife on the floor by him. They are no longer wearing hats.)

WHITE. *(Sitting up:)* Why are they doing this to us?

BLUE. I guess the hats were important.

BLACK. Our hats are gone.

BLUE. And so is the guy that was wearing red.

(They all notice. WHITE turns to them and they see the blood.)

BLACK. How did you get that blood on your shirt?

(WHITE notices the blood.)

WHITE. I have no clue. *(Feeling around:)* It's not mine.

BLACK. *(Seeing the knife:)* Is that your knife?

WHITE. No. I don't have a knife. At least I don't think I had one.

BLACK. Did you kill Red?

WHITE. No!

BLUE. Are you sure?

WHITE. Yes!

BLACK. You attacked him . . . We both saw that.

WHITE. It's stupid, but that was to get my hat back. I hit him a couple of times and then . . .

BLACK. I saw that right before I lost consciousness.

BLUE. That's when I blacked out too.

WHITE. *(Defensively:)* It was no different for me!

BLACK. Then how did you get the blood on your shirt?

(BLACK and BLUE seem very wary of WHITE at this point.)

WHITE. I don't know! When that whistle sounded it was no different for me than it was for you.

BLACK. But you have a knife and there is blood on your shirt. How do we know that you didn't actually stab Red to death and then pretend to lie on the floor like you were knocked out?

WHITE. Why would I do that?

BLACK. Well why is there blood on your shirt and hands and that knife that just happened to be right by you?

WHITE. Don't you think if I had stabbed Red to death that I would have hidden the evidence?

BLUE. Not if you managed to do it right before blacking out.

BLACK. Yeah. That's what I'm thinking.

WHITE. But I would remember it! I remember everything that happened right before the crash and we all hit the floor.

BLACK. (To BLUE:) He would lie about it if he did it.

BLUE. I know.

(WHITE, seeing their suspicion, picks up the knife.)

BLACK. If you come close to me, we're both going to jump you. You can't get us both.

WHITE. I didn't kill Red.

BLUE. Then why did you just pick up the knife?

WHITE. Because you two think I did!

BLUE. (Sarcastically:) Yeah . . . we're going to believe that.

WHITE. Believe what you want. I don't care.

BLACK. I think you need to put down the knife.

WHITE. Why would I do that? So you two can take it and use it on me?

BLUE. We're not going to do that.

BLACK. We're not the ones covered in blood. Just drop the knife, White.

WHITE. No.

BLUE. (To BLACK:) Should we go over there and take it from him?

WHITE. If you try, I will defend myself.

BLACK. We don't have to do this. Just drop the knife and kick it to us.

WHITE. Not going to happen.

BLUE. We're going to have to take it from him.

BLACK. I know.

WHITE. It's going to be messy

BLUE. Just like it was with Red?

(BLUE and BLACK look like they are about to pounce.)

BLACK. Last chance, White. Drop the knife.

WHITE. No can do, Black.

BLACK. Is that your final word?

WHITE. My only word.

(At this, the whistle starts.)

BLUE. Looks like it's now or never.

WHITE. It's your move.

BLACK. On three. One . . . Two . . .

(The whistle increases in volume, and the cymbal crashes. All three fall to the floor as the lights fade. When the lights come back on, the knife is gone, but there is a Connect Four board on a table in the middle of the floor.)

BLUE. *(Looking around:)* Well, we're still alive.

WHITE. *(Sitting up:)* I didn't kill Red.

BLUE. Maybe you didn't.

BLACK. But maybe you did. Doesn't really matter since it doesn't look like you have the knife anymore.

(Realizing this, WHITE looks around for the knife.)

BLUE. *(Seeing the Connect Four board and crossing to it:)* Looks like our captors want us to be entertained.

WHITE. That's weird.

BLACK. *(Crossing to the board:)* I used to love this game. I wonder why it's here?

WHITE. Who cares?

BLUE. I don't know, White. We may be in for a long stay here. Want to play?

WHITE. No.

BLUE. Why?

WHITE. Because it's stupid. We're prisoners and someone keeps screwing with us.

BLUE. Is there anything we can do about it?

WHITE. There has to be. Help me look at this door again.

BLUE. We've already tried the door. We can't get out that way.

WHITE. *(Inspecting the door:)* We'll see.

BLUE. How about you, Black, you up for a game?

BLACK. Sure. I get to be black.

BLUE. Is that a joke?

BLACK. What? (*Realizing it:*) Oh . . . because of the shirt? Nah. I just always like being black.

BLUE. Well, I don't mind being red I guess. Well, that's assuming White doesn't kill me like he did the last guy that was Red.

WHITE. Not funny.

BLUE. Because it cuts too close to the truth?

WHITE. (*Hitting the door:*) I didn't kill Red.

BLUE. (*Putting in a piece; BLUE and BLACK are playing while this scene goes on:*) I don't think black is going to be able to kill red either.

BLACK. Are you talking junk?

BLUE. (*As he puts in another piece:*) My Connect Four game is strong, Black.

BLACK. (*Puts in a piece, winning:*) Connect four.

BLUE. Crap. Best two out of three?

(WHITE is looking at the walls again.)

WHITE. The more I look at it the more I'm convinced that spot up there is actually a camera.

BLUE. (*Back to playing:*) So?

WHITE. So? We're being watched.

BLUE. And that matters?

WHITE. Are most prisoners observed like this?

BLUE. I don't know. If I have ever been in jail before I don't remember. (*After BLACK puts in a piece:*) Nice move.

BLACK. Thanks.

WHITE. I think I can see where the wiring connects, come look at this.

(BLACK puts in a piece.)

BLUE. In a minute. I've got Black on the ropes here.

BLACK. In your dreams.

WHITE. Seriously? Put the game on hold for a second.

BLUE. Why? Are we in some sort of hurry now?

WHITE. Don't you want to get out of here?

BLUE. Of course I do, but apparently we're not supposed to.

WHITE. (*Getting frustrated:*) That's no reason to stop trying!

BLUE. Connect four. Next match is for all the marbles.

BLACK. You've got winner, White.

WHITE. I don't want to play.

BLACK. We have to have a champion here.

BLUE. Agreed.

WHITE. Not interested. In between games can you two come look at this?

BLACK. We've already started.

BLUE. You're going to lose, Black.

WHITE. I think I can trace the wiring along the wall.

BLUE. And what good is that?

WHITE. Maybe there's a weak spot in the wall we can exploit.

BLACK. Exploit for what?

WHITE. If we can find where the wiring comes into the room, we may be able to use that spot to bust out of here.

BLACK. While they watch us from the camera? Yeah right.

(He puts another piece in.)

WHITE. Well we have to try something.

BLACK. Why?

WHITE. Why?? How can you two just sit there and play a game while we're being held prisoner?

BLUE. Because there's nothing we can do.

WHITE. That's true if we sit here and don't try anything. That game could be here to distract us from getting out of here.

BLACK. It's working great. You're going down this time, Blue.

BLUE. Yeah, yeah.

(Another piece goes in.

WHITE is inspecting a point on the wall.)

WHITE. I think the electricity comes in here.

BLUE. Fantastic.

(WHITE lowers his shoulder and hits the wall.)

WHITE. It's solid.

BLUE. Of course it is.

WHITE. I can't believe you two are playing Connect Four.

BLUE. I can't believe that I actually lost a match to this guy.

(He puts in a piece.)

BLACK. You're about to lose another.

BLUE. Ha. Yeah right.

WHITE. *(Looking higher up the wall:)* Can you two give me a boost? I think there's a spot I can get a run on up there.

BLACK. *(Putting in a piece:)* Game over, Blue.

BLUE. What? Where?

BLACK. *(Indicates:)* Here.

BLUE. That sucks!

WHITE. Good, you're done. You can help me now.

BLACK. You have to play me first.

WHITE. I don't want to play.

BLACK. We need to have a room champion.

WHITE. No we don't. We need to get out of here.

BLACK. We can do that after I whip you in Connect Four.

WHITE. I concede. You're the champion. Now give me a boost.

BLUE. You can't concede.

WHITE. I just did. Now help me help us get out of here.

(A beat as neither of them move.)

WHITE. Seriously?

BLACK. If you beat me, then you have to play Blue, but you're not going to beat me.

WHITE. I'm not going to play. I'm going to find a way out of here.

BLACK. Well, I'm not helping you until we resolve this.

WHITE. You do what you have to do, but I'm not playing a child's game while I'm being held prisoner.

(The whistling starts.)

WHITE. Great. Freaking great timing!

BLACK. I guess we won't have an overall champion after all.

(The whistling grows louder, and the cymbal crashes. The three collapse as the lights fade. When the three wake up and the lights

come back on, the Connect Four board is gone, and the table now has three small boxes and a sign that says "Pick one . . . or else" on it.)

WHITE. (*Waking up:*) I wonder if that ever gets easier?

BLACK. I don't think I want to find out.

BLUE. We have a new game on the table.

(They get up to inspect it.)

BLACK. "Pick one, or else." Guess they're done being subtle with us.

WHITE. I wonder what's in the boxes?

BLUE. I guess we're going to find out.

WHITE. Do you really think we should pick one?

BLUE. Duh. Of course I do.

WHITE. Why?

BLUE. Because it says "or else" and whoever has us already can knock us out at will so I'm pretty sure if they want me to pick a box, I'm going to.

(He picks a box but doesn't open it.)

BLACK. I'm with Blue on this one.

(And he picks a box.)

WHITE. You guys are just going to roll over like that?

BLACK. Do you see an alternative?

WHITE. I don't want to play their game anymore.

BLUE. I don't think this is a game. Whoever is holding us is definitely up to something.

WHITE. Well, whatever it is, I don't want a part of it. I'm not choosing.

BLUE. That's stupid.

BLACK. Plus it doesn't really matter, you have already chosen.

WHITE. What?

BLACK. By not choosing, you chose that last box. (*Indicating:*) That one's yours.

WHITE. Not if I don't pick it up.

BLACK. So, you really want to find out what "or else" means?

BLUE. I don't.

(He opens the box and pulls out a collar.)

BLUE. Looks like a dog collar. There's a note inside. *(Grabbing the note:)* It says "Put this on." Should I?

(At this, a warning buzzer emits a sound and repeats every couple of seconds.)

WHITE. What's that?

BLACK. I don't know.

BLUE. It started after I read the note.

BLACK. Put the collar on!

WHITE. No, don't!

(The sound grows louder.)

BLACK. I think you have to.

WHITE. Don't play their game!

BLUE. I don't want to find out what "or else" means.

(He quickly puts on the collar, and the sound stops. It is followed by a "ding" bell sound.)

BLACK. Well, I guess that was the right thing to do.

WHITE. The bell sound was a cheesy touch.

BLUE. I think it's there to let us know when we do something right.

WHITE. This is stupid.

BLUE. I'm wearing a dog collar, stupid has become the new normal.

(BLACK has opened his own box.)

BLACK. I have a collar in mine too. I wonder what all of this is for?

WHITE. I wouldn't put it on.

BLACK. *(Holding up a piece of paper:)* But the note says to.

(The warning buzzer starts again.)

BLACK. Yeah, yeah . . . I'm putting it on.

(He puts on the necklace and gets the pleasant "ding" sound again.)

BLACK. Mine's different than yours.

BLUE. Oh yeah?

BLACK. Mine has triangles on it.

BLUE. *(Realizing he didn't look at his before putting it on:)* What does mine have?

BLACK. Yours has squares.

WHITE. Mine will probably have circles. I wonder what that means?

(A moment passes.)

BLUE. Are you going to put yours on, White?

WHITE. Nope.

BLACK. I'm pretty sure you have to.

WHITE. I'm not even going to open the box.

BLUE. Why?

WHITE. Because I don't want to know what happens when I do and have to put on my own collar.

BLACK. Just open it up and get it over with.

WHITE. Get it over with?

BLACK. We're in a cell. We can't get out. Whoever is holding us wants us to jump through these hoops and I don't think any of us are going anywhere until we do what they say.

BLUE. He's got a point there.

BLACK. Just open your box.

WHITE. Fine.

(He opens his box expecting a collar.)

WHITE. Mine's different.

BLACK. Circles?

WHITE. No. Mine doesn't have a collar at all . . . It's got . . . I don't know what this is. It's a remote control with two buttons on it.

BLUE. Is there a note?

WHITE. Yeah there is. *(Reads it silently.)* I told you I shouldn't have opened my box.

BLUE. What's it say?

WHITE. It says "Bad News: Someone is about to die. Good News: It's not you."

BLUE. *(Grabbing the note:)* What? *(Reading:)* That's sick!

WHITE. I told you this was a bad idea.

BLUE. I didn't think they'd kill one of us.

BLACK. They killed Red.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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