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Antigonus. Farewell!

The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw
The heavens so dim by day. A savage clamour!
Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:
I am gone for ever.

(Exit, pursued by a bear.)

—Act III scene iii, *The Winter's Tale*

Characters

All North Georgians

NAN CARTER, 27, female, pretty and quick, like a deer. She wears something comfortable for a hot day.

KYLE CARTER, 28, male, a big messy boy, like a dumb dirty dog. He wears jeans, t-shirt, camo-jacket?

SWEETHEART/PEACHES/SUPERKYLE, (all of which are the same girl) around 20, female stripper, dressed as the incredibly hot version of Kyle. She wears whatever Kyle is wearing, but hotter.

SIMON BEAUFORT, 27, pretty and strong and bitchy, like a slim cat... He wears a red cheerleading outfit...a girl cheerleader's outfit.

Setting

July 4th.

A small, musty 1-bedroom house in the North Georgia mountains: the front door opens near a tiny kitchen with sticky floor and a breakfast bar. The living room has a ratty recliner, a folding TV-dinner table, and a TV in the corner. The back wall is mostly a large glass sliding door onto the backyard and tiny patio.

It's all in a style just old enough to be in poor taste—fake wood, something dark inside. Not messy, but impossible to get really clean.

Outside, trees shade their world.

Production Notes

Note On Deer

We needn't see the bloody action, just the blood. The dead deer can be covered in a tarp so we won't worry about life-like depiction

Note On Projection

This is a play based on a stage direction, so we're allowed to see them. Along with the PowerPoint and Karaoke lyrics, projections of any **bolded stage directions** should be used to clarify time (i.e. "six years earlier"), context, or things of general wit or import.

Excerpts Include

“Crisis of Confidence” Speech by Jimmy Carter (July 15, 1979)

“Black Bear” by Wikipedia

“Nothing’s Gonna Stop Us Now” by Jefferson Starship

More Here

<https://sites.google.com/site/exitbearplayresearch/>

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR

by Lauren Gunderson

ONE.

A)

(Ding!

With bolded stage direction projected somewhere –

Spot on:

A doe's head. Stuffed.

Like it's caught in a headlight...

Which would tell us why it's stuffed.)

B)

(Ding!

Add a spot on:

NAN...

Caught in a headlight...

She looks at the deer...

so sad that it's stuffed.

so mad that it's stuffed.

The anger turns her around to face:)

C)

(Ding!

Add a spot on:

KYLE...

Duct-taped to his recliner.

So sad he's duct-taped to his recliner.

So mad he's duct-taped to his recliner.

Ding!)

NAN. Let's review.

First thing, honey. You've been recast.

(SWEETHEART, a hot girl playing KYLE, enters.)

NAN. *(Continued:)* Second: This is Sweetheart, whose stage name is Peaches, who's playing you.

SWEETHEART. Hi.

NAN. Third: This. Is what. *Just* happened.
Go!

(What Just Happened...

NAN cues SWEETHEART who bursts in "drunk.")

SWEETHEART. You dumb stupid—left the goddamn rake on the—Goddammit, the longest, dumbest day, and the traffic—and the truck, and the damn deer, and I can't even get in my own damn house without a damn booby trap—

NAN. I'm sorry.

SWEETHEART. Fuck sorry.

NAN. Why don't you sit?

(Sweetheart smacks Nan hard on the face.)

SWEETHEART. Why don't you get me a beer.

(No beer tonight, baby. NAN picks up a frying pan—then turns to KYLE.)

NAN. And then I cracked your head. Which you probably didn't notice with the whale belly full of Jack you're on.
Then I taped you to the chair. Then I finished the iced tea.

(Which the girls toast and drink)

Then you started breathing funny, then you woke up, and now you're back to life...

And just in time to see the cocked-n-locked plan I have for your consummate demise.

(He squeals. SWEETHEART claps.)

Don't get all pitchy on me. It's not gonna be that kinda slasher bad.

SWEETHEART. Might be.

NAN. But I will be very clear with y'babe: that was the very last *last* time you're ever, ever, gonna hit this girl again.

SWEETHEART. *(Affirmative.)* MmmHm.

NAN. But it'd be too easy to kick you in the crotch. Or shoot you. But honey I've gotta do something.

As Jimmy Carter said: Aggression unopposed becomes a contagious disease.

As *Nan* Carter said: I'm not sick n'more.

SWEETHEART. Amen.

NAN. So I thought: to avenge a young life, what's a girl to do?

Then I thought: what ever it is should be slow and—

SWEETHEART and NAN. Theatrical!

(He squeals.)

NAN. Quit squealin', Kyle. I'm not done talking this out.

Then I thought: that's it! I will show Kyle what he did, I will use the power of the fourth wall to expose himself to himself, and he will have—

SWEETHEART. Catharsis.

NAN. Catharsis. And he will see his horror and be sad about it, and he will watch me take his truck and leave him duct taped to the La-Z-Boy surrounded by frozen venison, which he has amassed in cruel and illegal quantity for the last year, and he will wait for them to thaw, and then the bears will come. And most likely eat him. Him means you.

(He squeals and squeals. SWEETHEART claps and claps.

NAN cues SWEETHEART who rips off his mouth tape.)

NAN. *(Continued:)* What.

(He gasps.)

KYLE. Truck.

NAN. What.

KYLE. Wrecked.

NAN. WHAT.

KYLE. Wrecked the truck.

NAN. Oh you did not—

KYLE. Hit a tree. Hit a deer then a tree, mainly a tree.

NAN. You killed a deer.

KYLE. It's in the back. Truck's cracked. Barely made it home 'fore the thing gave out. But listen—seriously—What the hell is all this. I mean I'm sorry... For whatever. The truck? Is it the truck?

NAN. KYLE.

KYLE. (*Scared:*) Don't do this, whatever this is—

(*Calm:*)

Where'd you find the duct tape?

(*Scared:*)

WHAT do you WANT FROM ME?!

NAN. SHUT THE TRUNK, KYLE.

(NAN *cues SWEETHEART to re-tape his mouth.*)

KYLE. Waitwaitwait—

NAN. I swear. The *one* night I do something for myself—*THAT's the night you—?* I am NOT WALKIN' after all this, goddammit—after EVERYTHING I'VE DONE FOR YOU.

SWEETHEART. *Everything she's done.*

NAN. (*A calming breath.*) Ok.

Ok.

I gotta text some back-up.

SWEETHEART. Back it up.

(SWEETHEART *tosses her the cell, NAN texts and talks.*)

NAN. This is all gonna be—GODDAMIT KYLE—it's gonna be fine.

SWEETHEART. Are we still—should I go?

NAN. NoNoNo. Show's still on.

SWEETHEART. Sweet.

NAN. We just gotta speed things up, and I know Simon's sitting there staring at the closet trying to decide what mood to be in. Just lemme...

(*She finishes the texts, sends them.*)

Ok. Yes. No. Let's just do the next scene before he comes.

SWEETHEART. I await your cue.

(*SWEETHEART actor-prepares in the corner.*)

NAN. (*To KYLE:*) We've been practicing for you, babe. So you can feel the acute baptism of this moment. See I've been reading—have I been reading some real quality lady business: *The Second Sex*, and Jane Austen, and National Geographic Magazine, and I'm reading all that and thinking—huh—that's not my world? Why is that not my world? So either the world's been lying to me...or you have.

(Her cell rings, she answers.)

NAN. *(Continued:)* Yeah.

No Simon, it means come over now.

Cause I'm doing it now.

And he went and busted up the truck so we're gonna—

Yes the—*yes, would you get gone*—And please take the back roads up here cause I know you think you can outsmart Atlanta rush hour but god himself could not get on the freeway right now *and I need you like tout freakin suite, Simon.*

(Small pause.)

I don't care what you wear, you're playing yourself.

COME ON.

(She hangs up. She realizes...)

Wait.

(KYLE squeals.)

Did you say you hit a deer?

(KYLE nods, mumbles.)

You said it was in the back?

(KYLE nods, mumbles.)

Of the truck?

(KYLE nods, mumbles.)

We got a dead deer in the truck?

(KYLE nods, mumbles.)

NAN *and* SWEETHEART *squeal in excitement!*

Oh my god!

SWEETHEART. Oh my god! For the scene!

NAN. For the scene! Perfect!

SWEETHEART. Ohmygod it's *perfect!*

(They run out the front door

Long beat. KYLE in the chair. KYLE looks at us. Pleads.)

(Sweetheart enters with a small dead doe maybe in a sack or wrapped in a tarp. NAN follows grossed out.

They plop it on or against KYLE.)

SWEETHEART. *(Re: deer:)* I was a Girl Scout and everything but that is just...warm.

NAN. Yeah.

SWEETHEART. You alright?

NAN. I think so.

SWEETHEART. You ready?

NAN. I think so.

SWEETHEART. Hellyes, and just so you know, because I have grown to love you and I firmly believe in what you're about...I memorized it.

NAN. You did not.

SWEETHEART. The whole thing, yes ma'am. Every line.

NAN. That is just *professional*.

SWEETHEART. And with the right props—I mean—Ok. I don't wanna get all mushy right before we start but—

NAN. Oh honey.

SWEETHEART. No seriously Nan. Most actors don't ever get to really work like this—in this kind of setting, and I think you're just giving me exactly what I need—like, emotional needs—so that I can go to LA and be really emotional.

NAN. As Jimmy Carter said: It's not necessary to fear the prospect of failure but to be determined not to fail.

SWEETHEART. You and He are—oh my god—SO right.

OK, I'm sorry. I know we got a lot to cover, I just—Ok. This is SO great. Narrate me unto the breach!

(SWEETHEART hoists/drops the deer off, exits.

KYLE tries to sneakily get un-duct-taped from the chair...)

NAN. That girl's gonna be a star. I tell you what. I mean she's doing what she has to for now, but she is really dedicated to her craft. And stripping keeps her fit.

(Bops KYLE on the head.)

Stop.

Ok! Let's do this thing!

(Narrator voice:)

"One year ago. Lights up on Nan folding t-shirts on the couch. She smells like bleach. Kyle enters drunk again." Go.

(Ding!

One Year Ago...

SWEETHEART *enters with the deer, "drunk."*)

SWEETHEART. Hey, look at this shit!

NAN. Jesus. What did you—KYLE!

SWEETHEART. I shot it, baby. Da-dead da-deer-ass dead

NAN. WHYWHY?! NO! WHY?!

SWEETHEART. Cause it's stupid and thus deserved what it—quit getting pitchy—There's a surplus of 'em and we're gonna eat it.

NAN. I AM NOT, GET IT OUT!

SWEETHEART. That's my meat!

NAN. You killed it?!

SWEETHEART. Hunting season means huntin' shit.

NAN. You don't hunt!

SWEETHEART. I shot it and it's dead so it's hunted so I hunt.

NAN. You need a license and permits and—

SWEETHEART. Self defense.

NAN. That's not what hunting is!

SWEETHEART. Stop squealing, it's a stupid animal.

NAN. No-No-No-What-do-I-do-with-it?

SWEETHEART. Cook it like ham.

NAN. I am NOT touching that thing.

SWEETHEART. Your husband tames the wild, brings you an—

NAN. I wanted a cat!

SWEETHEART. And you can't even for a second—

NAN. A LIVE CAT!

SWEETHEART. Even for a minute consider doing the right thing, and cooking it and eating it, cause I'm ENTITLED to a DEER MEAL.

NAN. NONO GOD I HATE IT NO.

(SWEETHEART has grabbed NAN, drags her to the deer—forces her hand all over the poor dead animal.

*NAN revolts but "he's" stronger,
She convulses with horror and gross-out at this—)*

SWEETHEART.

It's just a fucking deer Nan-
hshuththellup...

NAN.

Stop it stop it oh my god oh my-
god oh my god...

(Until SWEETHEART releases her and NAN flings herself away.)

NAN. Jesus Jesus Jesus.

SWEETHEART. Joke, Nan. Shit.

NAN. *(Numb, rote:)* "There should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat." Jimmy Carter.

SWEETHEART. Shut the trunk, Nan.

NAN. *(Numb, rote:)* "It is good to realize that if love and peace can prevail on earth, the joys and beauties of the outdoors will be here forever." Jimmy Carter.

SWEETHEART. "Deer steak or nobody sleeps." Kyle Carter.

NAN. *(Small:)* Stop.

SWEETHEART. Let's move on.

NAN. *(Very small:)* I hate you.

SWEETHEART. What.

NAN. I...don't know how to—

SWEETHEART. Field flay-dress—field dress. Just google it.

(SWEETHEART drags the deer outside, and comes back in.)

NAN. Jesus Jesus Jesus.

SWEETHEART. All I know is you bleed it first.

(NAN gets a knife. Goes outside.

Bends over the deer and swiftly slices its neck open.

Blood on her hands.

She comes back in. Nods to SWEETHEART, who drops her act.

Real time.

NAN looks to KYLE.)

NAN. And that was when I had the idea...to let nature in...and get the hell out.

Cause, baby, we're all animals...and we're all wild.

(BLACKOUT.)

TWO.

A)

(*Ding!*

Spot on: NAN.)

NAN. I thought you might be trying to figure out whose side you're on.

I'm not a violent person. But it's like when you get a project in your head—like an herb garden or buying new scissors—and you just can't focus till it's done? Well I just cannot rest until this's done. "This" means Kyle, and "done" means..."bear"?

God. See, that sounds awful. I don't mean it that way. I'm just...I'm—ok. Here's what I am.

I am Nan Carter. I grew up here. I loved my parents. I went to church. I married a man I thought was gonna be good. He wasn't. And my big decisions kinda stopped there. And I've seen *Thelma and Louise* so I get that I have a choice in my future; but I never felt like I could drive a Thunderbird into a canyon.

I'm one of those women that you look at and think, "Why doesn't she just leave?" Well I didn't leave until now because I'm broke, and I'm stuck, and I'm scared. I am scared.

I am Nan Carter. And I wish Jimmy Carter was my dad but he's not.

I am Nan Carter. And I wish someone had told me to wait to settle down, and to not be so sweet, and to move to Atlanta after school, and to seriously consider professional soccer—y'all I was good—and to not marry the first one, and to master the art of sedition, and to listen to my mom, and to cook healthier but Kyle doesn't like salads, like *any* salads *goddammit*.

And he wasn't always so angry, but he is angry all the time now. And he has never asked me what I want to eat. And he is awful and I wish he was dead—oh my god please forgive me but I wish he was dead. I wish he was secretly rich and then dead.

I am Nan Carter and I am alive in this wide world.

So I will be leaving tonight for good.

(*Blackout.*)

B)

(Ding!

Spot on: SWEETHEART.)

SWEETHEART. Here's my deal, y'all.

Two months ago I was on my way to audition for *Hamlet* at the Dahlonga Community Players when I first saw Nan. She was at the Subway just tearing through this foot long with all that stringy lettuce and crying and mauling those poor SunChips.

And I thought—this is real drama. Investigate.

So I asked her if she needed anything. And she told me that she didn't believe in love or justice anymore.

And I was like: whoa. Deep drama, y'all.

So I told her I was going to this audition—cause *Hamlet's* got some major justice, kids. And she went with me, and then we got some food at the Chick-Fil-A, and it was over those super puffy waffle fries that we became friends. I told her about my dreams of acting (I did not get the role of Hamlet, however), and she told me about her dream of saving animals (she works at this small vet in Canton), and I gave her my copy of *The Collected Works of William Shakespeare*, and she gave me free cat check-ups.

I even told her I was stripping at the Highway Club until I got my big break. And she didn't hate me for it. Which some people do.

And after a month of sharing books and meals and funny LOL cat pictures—she told me about Kyle and love and justice and how there was a bigger truth at stake if only she had the courage. And I said...

Let's get classical.

(Blackout.)

C)

(Ding!

Spot on: KYLE.

Still strapped to his recliner but more of his old self. Cocky, bossy, and manly.)

KYLE. I think we got off on the wrong foot here. I'm not an asshole. For real. Listen to me, I don't know why she's pitchin' this fit in front of everybody but...

OK. I hunt. Ok. She's never had a problem with it before. And I know it's not technically legal but those deer are in my back yard dammit

so it's more like lawn mowing and people don't need permission for that. And people—like—do stuff other people don't like. Like couples. That's how relationships work, goddammit, and you don't have to duct tape 'em to a damn chair! And I swear I don't know who that other one is. Who is that?!

You don't believe me. I can tell you're sittin' there thinkin' she might be right about me. That I just might deserve...

Shit. Shitshitshit—

I'll be straight with y'all—I don't know how this is gonna end. I really don't. She doesn't ever get mad, and she sure don't "act it all out" (which I'm not sure I get what that's about). The point is I don't know what the hell is going on and what the hell I did to make whatever is going on, going on.

I'm trying to say that she's lost it—And we're not safe—And I don't deserve this! Who deserves this!? THERE ARE BEARS OUT THERE—Please lord Jesus help me—she might actually kill me and I'm really hungry and my head hurts like a bitch and—JESUSLORD come on help me—y'all *know* this is crazypleasegodpleasegodPLEASE.

(Blackout.)

D)

(*Ding!*)

A spot on.

SIMON *posing in a red cheerleader's outfit.*

Shakes the pompom.

This is sarcastic, judgey, mocking, whatevah.)

SIMON. Yaaaay, he's innocent. He doesn't know what in the world he did wrong. Bless his heart!

Pregnant Pause.

Now that shitbird has f-ed with my girl. And that does not abide in the House of Simon.

Cause Nan and I have been righteous friends since we met at the Drama Club Interest Meeting on the first day of middle school. She is my soul mate, y'all. For god sakes, we went to prom together (in a slightly ironic way but we had fun)—*And* she was the first person I came out to and, y'all, she said Jesus loved me even more because I had the courage to be true to the way God made me and God made me *pretty* fabulous—*And* Junior year she played Juliet to my—well I played Balthasar so we didn't really—whatever, it was miscast—the point is we defy category and crapass husbands.

Now. Let's take a journey into the mind of one Kyle Carter.

Systematic abuse slash desperate need for women that his father and modern buddy comedies taught him ever since his very first beer at age 12, which was quickly followed by a joke about a woman with two black eyes that's supposed to be funny because the punch line is something like "you've already told her twice"—which solidified the neural pathway from whiskey, to funny, to girls-being-hit, to do-what-it-takes-to-feel-like-a-man, to being king, to realizing your kingdom is a cracked driveway in the woods and you're a dream-withered mammal dying of Cheeto-induced heart disease, to hurting my friend, to shame that would be the color of eggplants if things like that were color-coded, to drinking more, to losing his step, to losing it all, to this very moment right goddamn now.

(Silence. Pompom.)

(Blackout.)

THREE.

(Real time in the house. KYLE in the chair, passed out. SWEETHEART holds a bear-shaped jar of honey and Kyle's gun. And SIMON has just entered the building—)

SIMON. Y'all. The air in here is totally intense.

NAN. Rising action!

SIMON. And that woman is holding a gun.

SWEETHEART. Badass.

(SWEETHEART cocks the gun like a badass.)

SIMON. Ok, this is non-violent re-enactment? Which leads to a confession, which leads to everyone leaving unscathed. Right?

NAN. Right. I just added to the dramatic arc.

SIMON. Nan...

NAN. I mean the first thing you said was "I'll kill that sonofabitch," and I said "that's a great idea."

SIMON. No. No. We said make him see the error of his ways, and get him arrested—

SWEETHEART. But I think the bears make it organic.

NAN. I added bears.

SIMON. To what?

NAN. To the end. The bears take over.

SWEETHEART. Which is why there's like a billion empty squirty things of honey drizzled up the walkway. It's like neon bear catnip.

SIMON. So she's not shooting him, but she is luring every bear in the nearby bear community into this room.

NAN. Yeah. But. Realistically and unfortunately: Worst-case scenario, he just gets scratched up.

SIMON. By a *live bear*, Nan! This is not what you want to do—this is not a real plan—

NAN. This is vengeance.

SIMON. This is overkill!

SWEETHEART. I thought it was profound and foolproof.

SIMON. (*To SWEETHEART:*) Who *are* you?!

NAN. This is Sweetheart, whose stage name is Peaches, who's playing Kyle. And doing a little stage management.

SWEETHEART. It's such an honor—

SIMON. Why didn't you cast me as Kyle? You cast the *stage manager*—

SWEETHEART. And props.

SIMON. *Whatever, I'm* the man.

NAN. In a UGA cheer skirt.

SIMON. You said you needed support. This is a supportive outfit.

NAN. I said *back up* not—

SIMON. FINE. I'll put on track pants.

(*He whips out and dons red track pants - a la male cheerleader.*)

Sorry for my zeal. I was rushed, I'm doing my own costumes, left my latte on the counter—

NAN. God a'mighty.

SIMON. And you ask a girl for help, then you don't give her the male lead.

NAN. She's a professional!

SIMON. So am I!

NAN. *You* are your profession.

SIMON. Which will someday land me a daytime talk show, but for now? For now and always, I am the best friend you ever had, and

you need this cheer, and I'm here for you, and I'm so proud of us for doing this.

(NAN hugs SIMON. *He hugs back.*)

You know I heart you with all my heart.

NAN. I know. And your outfit is perfect.

SIMON. I know.

SWEETHEART. Awww.

(*Pompom within the hug.
They break.*)

SIMON. (*To NAN:*) But hey. Can we not commit to the bear until later?

SWEETHEART. Ooh, but the bear is symbolic of the male-dominated—

SIMON. (*To NAN:*) Can we wait. To make a decision. On the bear.

NAN. (*Reluctantly:*) If he learns a lesson... maybe.

SIMON. Still premeditated. Catch me up!

NAN. So we did the scene where he first starts hunting.

SIMON. Ugh.

SWEETHEART. And we used real deer!

SIMON. Ugh.

NAN. Porch freezer's full of meat—so that's ready to go.

SIMON. The truck?

NAN. Busted.

SIMON. I swear that man. Is a hamster.

NAN. But we got the money from my account plus his last two checks from the shop. Plus I got some gift cards from Barnes and Noble.

SWEETHEART. And we scored his gun—Bonus!

SIMON. So he's not dead.

SWEETHEART. Konked out.

SIMON. How konked?

SWEETHEART. It's been about an hour of in and out.

NAN. But he's like that when's he's drunk anyway.

SIMON. Y'all. This's like really really real. Like it is happening right now.

NAN. I can't believe it.

SIMON. You ok?

NAN. As long as I'm moving I'm ok.

SIMON. Then let's move.

SWEETHEART. Let's move!

NAN. We have a few more scenes of great depth and moment to share with the hamster. Then we're outta dodge with the smell of salt and sushi guiding us West!

SIMON. You said we were going to Nashville.

NAN. Now we're going to L.A.

SIMON. Which does *not* mean Lower Alabama, please Jesus.

SWEETHEART. City of Angels! I'm gonna act the hell outta life.

NAN. And I'm gonna take Pilates.

SIMON. And I was not consulted. Therefore, as I'm not sure where I rank in the power structure I can't really commit to this plan. No ma'am.

NAN. Simon. You have to.

SIMON. What *I have* is a date this weekend, not that you asked.

NAN. With who, cagey?

SIMON. The city of Atlanta.

NAN. *Simon.*

SIMON. I have a life!

NAN. *(To SWEETHEART, exposing SIMON:)* Shopping at Urban Outfitters.

SIMON. And a job—

NAN. At Urban Outfitters.

SIMON. And a blog—

NAN. *(To SWEETHEART, exposing SIMON:)*
BitchPlease.blogspot.com

SIMON. Ok, I have many and varied real-life human friends!

NAN. But not other *best* friends. And I'm frankly jealous of your urban outfitting. And I depend on you in way more ways than you

depend on me. And I so rarely have an epically good idea like this and—*Come on.* You’ve always wanted to go to California—Road trip! IHOPs! Heated pools at various La Quintas!

SWEETHEART. And I’m bringing a cat, are you allergic?

SIMON. No.

SWEETHEART. Cause I’m actually bringing two.

SIMON. Okay, wait.

NAN. If you get bored I’ll buy your ticket back, and I know you know you’re gonna cave so stop making me work so hard.

SIMON. As your best friend, I would just like to have a little more control over your decisions.

NAN. You can control the music.

SIMON. Jefferson Starship?

NAN. All the way.

SIMON. Done. Go Dawgs!

(KYLE *wakes up. Mumbles a little.*)

SWEETHEART. He’s up!

NAN. He’s up! Places!

SIMON. YOU’RE A SONOFABITCH, KYLE CARTER, AND I HATE YOU AND I’M GLAD YOU’RE GOIN’ DOWN!

NAN. *Simon.*

SWEETHEART. Hot *damn.*

SIMON. I was moved and I apologize.

NAN. Sit down. You’re not in this scene.

SIMON. Well, write me in.

NAN. It’s a monologue, *sit down.*

(*To SWEETHEART:*)

Go on, sweetheart.

SWEETHEART. Yes, m’am.

(*To SIMON:*)

This part is so pretty.

SIMON. If I don’t have any lines, I’m not really listening.

NAN. And, *scene*. Well it's a speech. Like a dream speech. She's speaking *as* me—

SIMON. So this is “theatre” with an “-re”?

NAN. Just go on.

SWEETHEART. (*Clears her throat.*) Gentlemen. I will now speak of the hole in my life thus far. The ache that I feel knowing that for me, the circle of life is just a line.

(*To NAN, out of character:*)

“Circle is a line.” Ugh. Chills.

(*Back in character:*)

But no longer. No more shall the fields of flesh be fallow. No more shall I weep in the night alone.

SIMON. (*Blahblahblah:*) Notmyline notmyline.

SWEETHEART. Because? I am with child!

(*NAN looks at the boys.*

KYLE is stunned.

SIMON is stunned.)

SIMON. I don't—wait—Is she still talking as you?

KYLE. (*Muffled:*) You're pregnant?

SIMON. You're pregnant?

KYLE. (*Muffled:*) By me?

SIMON. By him?

SWEETHEART. Was my performance not literal enough?

NAN. (*To the boys:*) It's real, y'all.

SIMON. (*Confused cheer:*) So—wait—Yaaay? Or...

NAN. Oh my god, *yes*, yay! Baby Yay!

SIMON. Yay?

(*Overlapping cheer:*)

SWEETHEART. Yay!

KYLE. (*Muffled:*) Yay!

NAN and SWEETHEART. Yay!

SIMON. (*A la cheerleader:*) O-k!

NAN. A real baby, y'all.

SWEETHEART. When purpose and cuteness combine!

(Everyone—including muffled KYLE—is happy!)

NAN. And Simon is the father.

(SIMON=shocked. KYLE=shocked. Silence.)

KYLE. *(Muffled:)* What the hell.

NAN. Kyle is the Easy Father, I want Simon to be the Real Father. If you'll accept.

(KYLE starts to hyperventilate...)

SIMON. You really want *me* to—?

NAN. You're my best friend. You've been there forever. You know me and love me and you're Funny. Brilliant. Good skin.

SWEETHEART. *Great* skin.

SIMON. Y'all...

NAN. And I am *not* raising this pup in a doghouse. So I need you. Both.

SWEETHEART. Who what both?

NAN. Sweetheart. I want you to be Mom Part Deux.

SWEETHEART. Oh my godmother.

NAN. Y'all in?

SWEETHEART. Oh hell yes.

SIMON. My mother will weep with wonder and thanksgiving. I'm in.

NAN. Oh thank god. Y'all. This baby gave me the reason and the timing, but y'all gave me the courage and the dramatic literature to get on with life.

(KYLE yells, NAN might bop him on the head with a magazine.)

NAN. SHUT UP. And I kinda hope it's a boy, truth be told. I've always wanted a girl, but my plan is to repopulate the world with gentlemen. Kind, well-toned, generous boys who are raised as feminists.

(KYLE freaks.)

SIMON. I'm so glad you can tell I've been working out.

SWEETHEART. OMG, you're so hot.

SIMON. I will never have your butt, honey.

SWEETHEART. I just work it while I got it.

SIMON. Amen to that.

(To NAN:)

She can stay.

SWEETHEART. Family!

(KYLE is royally freaking out—mad, caged-animal stuff—)

NAN. KYLE, I SWEAR, you're killin' the buzz.

I know this all seems extreme. And I know you are not a thoroughly evil person. But as I was sitting on the toilet holding that pinky cross tabulator thing I thought: Oh my god. My husband kill things for fun. He drinks like a drunk-ass fish. He is mean to me.

That is not the biology, personality, nor context in which to raise a child.

SIMON. Go dawgs.

NAN. This forthcoming little man is my reason. To protect the future, I *have* to leave you here with thawing meat and hungry bearsies, baby. That is called: pre-parenting.

SWEETHEART. Circle of life. Not a line.

(KYLE squeals. NAN nods to SWEETHEART.)

NAN. *(To KYLE, a warning:)* Be nice.

(SWEETHEART untapes his mouth.)

KYLE. *(Panting...)* Divorce me. Please.

NAN. If this doesn't work, yeah.

KYLE. This is crazy, Nan! And we have a baby? We are gonna have a real baby, Banana. A baby banana!

SWEETHEART. Cute image.

KYLE. Oh my god. Oh my god. I'm a legit baby daddy now. And that means something.

SIMON. It means you're a deadbeat.

KYLE. You can't take my child. Nan, this child is our child.

NAN. It's not a child. Yet. It's a little genetic—

SWEETHEART. Nugget.

NAN. Nugget.

KYLE. I want my nugget.

NAN. Well I'm not staying, so it's not staying.

KYLE. I'm a father!

SIMON. *Father and baby daddy are not the same thing.*

KYLE. I have rights. I'M A DAD. YOU'RE THE MOM. We are the basis of the American Dream. Don't do the bear thing. Lemme live to see the fruit of my loins. LEMME OUTTA HERE.

NAN. If you're scrappy you can fend 'em off.

SWEETHEART. It's like snake handling. You have faith and you're fine.

NAN. I'm not putting a gun to your head.

SWEETHEART. And we have a gun.

KYLE. Honey—come on—if you lemme go, I will leave you alone. I won't do anything to you or nugget or anybody. You know I love you.

SIMON. Which is painful for everyone.

KYLE. *(To SIMON:) No it's not.*

(To NAN:)

And now a child? I love you more than ever.

NAN. How is that possible, Kyle. You are unkind.

KYLE. I'm just kidding.

NAN. You mess with my head.

KYLE. I don't mean to, I just—I love you 'cause you're my sweet Banana—

NAN. And you are supposed to protect me and provide and be my home-sweet-home, and you hurt me and break my stuff and scare the hell outta me. And I'm not bringing a child into that.

KYLE. Can't you see I'm a man on edge, here? Recession, y'all. No money, no hopes—

NAN. Nobody's got money, Kyle. That don't justify your jackass.

SIMON. *(Getting way into this fantasy:)* We don't care if it's a recession, Kyle. Cause why? Cause we have dreams. And because we have dreams we will climb the highest mountain in those dreams. And we will fight to build a glorious mountain retreat on the peak of those soaring dreams. And on that peak we will laugh at life and welcome love to our triumphant mountain spa of boutique dreams in the sky.

KYLE. *What the hell are we talking about?*

SIMON. We're talking about a Love Chateaux. And you won't be invited, Kyle. Not because you are likely to be eaten tonight, but because *you don't have dreams and you kill the dreams of people who do.*

NAN. Just tape him up.

KYLE. I have dreams!

SIMON. You have muscles and a pretty face and somehow you get things for free but that is not enough to dream with us.

KYLE. Lemme speak goddammit.

NAN. This is not People's Court.

KYLE. Nan, honey, baby, come on—for the children—for *my* child in *your*...pouch.

SWEETHEART. What?

KYLE. *Lemme tell you my dreams!*

(Silence.)

I dream of...peace. And baseball—*free* baseball for poor kids. And higher voter turnout.

SIMON. For the love of—

SWEETHEART. Can I start the meat?

(SWEETHEART starts placing venison steaks all around KYLE in a little meat fort.)

KYLE. Waitwaitwait—you have HAVE TO believe me here, baby. I am sorry. I'm so sorry, and I know I hurt you, and I'll never forgive myself—

NAN. Good.

KYLE. Until *you* forgive me. You didn't give me a chance for *you* to forgive *me!*

SIMON. That's some magical thinking.

KYLE. You go from zero to bear in one night? Come on! I can change! You gotta talk to me sweetheart—you gotta tell me—

NAN. I TOLD YOU, KYLE. Every night I told you. But you'd be yelling about somethin' or fussin' at the dumbest little things or—

KYLE. A man can have some bad days—

NAN. Kyle had a bad day—tells me I'm a bitch.

KYLE. Baby—

NAN. Kyle got a ticket—I'm a bitch.

KYLE. Wait now—

NAN. Kyle spends *our* money on poker, loses it all, throws the chili on the kitchen floor, and I'm a bitch.

SWEETHEART. If I were trashier I'd spit.

NAN. And the shittiest part of it? I really did think there was somethin' I could do because I'm a good person who nurses sick cats back to health ALL DAY—and come home to you and I really thought it was *my* fault.

KYLE. It's *my* fault. And I'm sorry I didn't get that, and I'm sorry I didn't always act right, but if you woulda mentioned the *BEAR* in my future, it mighta piqued my attention.

NAN. You shouldn't need bears to be nice.

SIMON. *That* should be a decorative pillow.

SWEETHEART. (*Approaching with the duct tape for his mouth:*) Tape?

KYLE. Let me speak to my wife! My gorgeous woman who knows me and loves me and sees that it's just been a few bad years. And it's hard to be a man and have to make it all work and make money—

SIMON. She makes more fixin' cats than you do fixin' cars.

KYLE. I'm *saying*...that it's hard to be a husband and I'm sorry—I am SO sorry that I didn't think how hard it is to be a wife—my wife. And this child could be *the thing*. Cause I see that I was selfish and stupid and I'm sorry. Honey, I get it and I'm sorry.

(*Silence.*)

SWEETHEART. Tape or no tape?

NAN. It is hard. Thank you for saying that.

KYLE. I love you. I love this Future Baby. ComeonComeonILoveYouIouLoveYouPenguin.

SIMON. Nan.

NAN. I know he loves me—why does he do this—

(*To KYLE:*)

Why do you do this if you love me.

SIMON. *Nan*—

KYLE. I need you, penguin.

NAN. I can't—I can't—this is just—

SIMON. Nan.

KYLE. (*Kinda singing the Beatles song?*) *We can work it out.*

KYLE. (*Continued:*)
We can work it—

SWEETHEART.
I love that song.

SIMON.
(*To KYLE:*)
Shut up.

NAN. (*To KYLE:*) Don't pretend that you don't get it. You made me do this.

KYLE. I did not!

NAN. (*A la Kyle:*) "Look what you made me do. You know how I get. You made me."

KYLE. If you woulda told me—

NAN. Well *you* made *me*.

KYLE. If you woulda *told me*—

SIMON. That you shouldn't beat folks? Toddlers get that, dumbass.

KYLE. I did not do that. You can talk to me, baby—

NAN. When you're duct taped to a chair, I can.

KYLE. Nan. Banana. Penguin Banana wife. Mother of Nugget The First. You know I never meant to hurt you that way—

NAN. But other ways are ok?

KYLE. If you think I did something? I will fix it. This is my wake up call. I'm up! I am changed!

NAN. *You're* changed?

KYLE. Yes!

SIMON. No he's not.

KYLE. I will NOT be that kinda man. But you gotta help me, honey. I need your help. See, it worked. Your whole funky bear plan worked. I get it. And I don't wanna ever be that guy. I hate that guy. I will kill him myself, but you have to help me, penguinpenguin.

SIMON. Nan, this is what he always says.

NAN. Actually I've never heard this before.

SIMON. So these are fresh lies.

KYLE. I'm sorry about everything he mighta done.

NAN. And the deer.

KYLE. And all the little creatures he mighta shot in the head.

NAN. And the cat.

KYLE. And I'm sorry he mighta never got you a cat.

SIMON. Jesus wept, how is this working.

KYLE. And he will never touch another animal ever again in his life—no guns—no drinkin—no Fox News—

NAN. Cause that gets him mad—

KYLE. He knows it does and he will thoroughly remove all the triggers in his life—cause it's not *his* life anymore—it's *our* life—and I will take you on dates and buy you stuff—

SIMON. With what?

NAN. I want a Disney vacation and TiVo.

SIMON. NAN.

SWEETHEART. Whoa, what's she—?

KYLE. And I want a calm house—I want a sweet little man to run around and—

SIMON. Be a feminist?

KYLE. *Yes goddammit.* And we'll all be sweet and the world will be sweet and all god's children will be so damn sweet *if you please god please let me go.*

SIMON. Nan. Look at me judge this moment.

(He makes an oh-no-he-didn't face, frames it with his hand, and says...)

Face.

NAN. But—

SIMON. *Faaaaaaace.*

NAN. Wait.

SIMON. Dammit, NAN.

NAN. Don't yell at me. Don't yell at me. I can't—oh god—oh *god!*

SIMON. Shit.

SWEETHEART. Whatwhat?

SIMON. She's breaking down.

KYLE. *(KYLE knows that he's got an in:)* I love you, baby.

SIMON. He always gets her worked up and—

KYLE. Honey come on back to me.

SIMON. And she gets turned around and—

(To NAN:)

No ma'am, do NOT touch that tape.

NAN. I—I need—

KYLE. You need me baby, I know it.

SIMON. (To SWEETHEART:) She needs dessert.

(SWEETHEART runs to the freezer.)

KYLE. I need you like a fountain after ice cream.

SIMON. (To NAN:) We can't let that blood sugar drop—

KYLE. Nanner penguin, come on.

SIMON. It makes you weak minded—

KYLE. NAN.

SIMON. And I am not doin' this bear thing on my own.

NAN. Oh god I brought bears into this. This is horrible!

SWEETHEART. No! Remember how excited you were?

NAN. Bears?

KYLE. Right?

SIMON. Ice cream!

SWEETHEART. You are gonna change the world with this, Nan!

KYLE. I'll get the ice cream if you—

SIMON. (To KYLE:) Back off!

(To NAN:)

Nan you're gonna come on over, you're gonna have a snack, cool down, get some perspective.

NAN. What flavor perspective?

SWEETHEART. You got peach.

KYLE. Nan.

SIMON. Nan.

SWEETHEART. Peach!

(SWEETHEART hurries NAN to the ice cream and bowl.
NAN weepily scoops ice cream into the bowl.)

KYLE. Honey, we gotta talk fast cause they might tape me up again and I know this isn't you and you can listen to me—

SIMON. You are not listening to him, you are listening to me, and we are gonna—

(Judging the ice cream she just served herself:)

Two scoops? Girl that is not sorbet.

NAN. What?

SIMON. Crisis, yes, but cellulite.

NAN. I don't know what I'm doing!

SWEETHEART. You regret dessert after two bites.

SIMON. You'll regret your thighs.

KYLE. I love your thighs—

SIMON.
SHUT UP.

SWEETHEART.
SHUT UP.

NAN. Y'all wait.

SIMON. Nan.

NAN. Just wait.

KYLE. Nan, come on—

NAN. *WAIT, I said. Everybody wait.*

(Silence.)

(From across the holler, fireworks go off.)

(No one moves.)

Am I the kind of person that is gonna do this?

KYLE. *No.*

SIMON. Yes.

SWEETHEART. Was that rhetorical?

NAN. Revenge is a core American value. I just don't want to hurt anybody.

SIMON. Except for him.

KYLE. *Come on, PenguinPenguin!*

SIMON. WHY DO YOU KEEP SAYING THAT?!

KYLE. *(To SIMON:)* You don't get to know! *You are not a penguin!*

NAN. Dammit I can't think.

SIMON. After what he did?

KYLE. What did I do?!

NAN. I'm tired of fightin' and worryin' and plannin', y'all. I'm tired.

KYLE. *Me too.*

SWEETHEART. *(To KYLE, taping his mouth shut:)* God, you are such a scene-hog.

(To NAN...)

Now you take a time out, ok? I got this.

(To KYLE:)

Cause I can tell you exactly what you did to push your wife to this point, Mr. Kyle Carter. Because I am prepared. Because I know my lines and her lines.

(To NAN:)

You just keep eating as much of that ice cream as you want.

SIMON. *(To NAN:)* But not really.

SWEETHEART. The time? Two weeks ago. The setting? Simon's house. The YouTube clip? That nappy British lady singing that dreamin' dreams song. She is so good and so funny looking and no one believed in her and there she was singing like an angel. Thoughts course through our heads as we weep openly at the funny lady's soaring voice. It makes us think, it makes us question our lives. Begin.

(SIMON realizes it's his cue and joins SWEETHEART.)

(Ding!)

Two Weeks Ago... Simons's House

SWEETHEART plays NAN. SIMON plays himself. She sings with the end of Susan Boyle's YouTube clip. Happy tears.)

SIMON. I have got to do that song at karaoke.

SWEETHEART. She is so beautiful. On the inside.

SIMON. *Deep inside.*

SWEETHEART. I want that, Simon. I really want that kinda—like—moment in my life. When I can really be good and beautiful.

SIMON. We can get Krispy Kremes and mani / pedis?

SWEETHEART. *(Tears, tears:)* What am I doing?

SIMON. You should get bright red like Superman's hotpants.

SWEETHEART. (*Tears, tears:*) With my life!

SIMON. Get a clear coat if it's a big deal.

SWEETHEART. What, what, *what* am I doing?

SIMON. What are we talking about?

SWEETHEART. I'm sick of myself. I'm sick everyday.

SIMON. Like you need some zinc?

(**SWEETHEART** *takes out a National Geographic Magazine.*)

SWEETHEART. This came to the house by accident.

SIMON. Ok, it's...?

SWEETHEART. The world, Simon! And my world is not this. I'm not saying I need to be all White-Knight Anderson Cooper but there's stuff out there and it's big and it's beautiful and it's not this life—!

SIMON. Whose—?

SWEETHEART. (*Weep! Weep!*) Mine! And don't get me started about—like—*space*, which is glossier than I can handle right now without setting fire to things.

SIMON. What are you talking about?

SWEETHEART. I hate that I have no choice or hope or *life* because of him and I stay with him when I should get out—why don't I get out? Because I can't. I think I can't. But why? Cause I'm scared... and all my stuff's there. Why am I scared of my stuff?

SIMON. Whoawhoa—

SWEETHEART. Even when he doesn't hurt me it hurts.

SIMON. Wait. He *actually* hurts you or he's just a dumbass?

SWEETHEART. I can't tell the difference.

(*Thick pause.*)

SIMON. What does that mean, Nan?

SWEETHEART. Pretty much maybe once a week...every other day...sometimes every day...

(**SIMON** *moves to hug her SWEETHEART/NAN flinches...like she's used to dodging hands. SIMON saw that.*)

SIMON. *Sonofabitch.* I will kill him. In an alley. *With this nail file.*

SWEETHEART. That might be easier than leaving.

SIMON. He *really* did that?

SWEETHEART. Then it'd be totally done.

SIMON. Wait. Goddammit. He really—like he *really*? Like *once* or—?

SWEETHEART. Is there a quota? God, it's hard to even say, and I'm saying, and you don't care.

SIMON. I *do*. OhMyGod. I *do*. I just—I'm shocked. I—OhMyGod. Why did I not know this, Nan?

SWEETHEART. I just thought it was—like—compromise. Like marriage is supposed to be.

SIMON. Marriage is supposed to be manageably annoying, not—not—
Ok. Ok.

SWEETHEART. What do I do?

SIMON. We're getting you out.

SWEETHEART. (*Loving this idea:*) He's gonna be mad.

SIMON. He better be.

SWEETHEART. Jimmy Carter said: "If you fear making anyone mad, then you ultimately probe for the lowest common denominator of human achievement."

SIMON. Hell yes.

SWEETHEART. "America did not invent human rights. Human rights invented America."

SIMON. That's very moving—

SWEETHEART. "We should live our lives as though Christ were coming this afternoon."

SIMON. You are a Jimmy Carter search engine, I swear.

SWEETHEART. You know what I'd do if Christ were coming this afternoon?

SIMON. Hope for the best and eat a lot of cheesecake.

SWEETHEART. I would tie my husband to a chair and make him understand that what he thinks is right is not right. And I'd do it... with flair.

SIMON. Girl. That is what Jesus would do too.

(SWEETHEART *nods*. Scene over.)

SIMON *high-fives her*. They bow. NAN *claps*.)

SWEETHEART. Do not lose sight of the dream you dreamed in time gone by, Nan. You deserve better.

NAN. I really do.

SIMON. I really do, too.

SWEETHEART. This is a movement, y'all. And with our aptitude for dialogue, and this supporting cast, we can and will make the world a better place.

SIMON. And it's 4th of July, y'all. *Independence Day.* Amen.

SWEETHEART. Oh! We got sparklers?

(*SWEETHEART rips off the tape from KYLE's mouth.*)

KYLE. In the bathroom.

SIMON. The bathroom?

KYLE. Do not touch my shit, man.

SIMON. (*Grabbing NAN into a showy hug:*) You shoulda thoughta that before you touched mine.

SWEETHEART. I like how you turned that around.

SIMON. (*To KYLE, in an overwrought Hollywood action movie style.*) So when those fireworks go off in the distance? You'll feel the shudder and hear the crack of freedom. And no one will hear you scream.

SWEETHEART. You should teach.

KYLE. You're makin' her do this. I see it now. *You're* puttin' this shit in her head.

NAN. It's re-enactment, not fiction.

KYLE. Well you're doin' all the bad scenes! It wasn't all like that. Come on. Romance and—

SIMON. Romance doesn't bruise!

KYLE. I did not do that!

NAN. You know you did.

KYLE. Y'all've whipped yourselves up into a feeding frenzy of meanness to Kyle. I'm a like a bait ball, y'all. You just nip at me until I'm done, well fine. Fine! Whatever sexy lies you're telling yourself—I don't care. You love me, Nan. You know me and love me and I'm your man.

SIMON. Gross.

KYLE. Fight the frenzy, Nan. Do a love scene, huh?

SIMON. What?

KYLE. I *dare* you.

SIMON. No way.

KYLE. Do a scene of that time we went to the Olive Garden for your birthday. Huh? You had fun.

NAN. I had *wine*.

KYLE. You dressed up, and I dressed up, and we had a date. So fuck y'all—we dated!

SIMON. You went to an Olive Garden!

KYLE. You're a snob and a Democrat!

SIMON. Loud and proud, kitten.

SWEETHEART. Do we *have* a love scene?

NAN. Not scripted.

KYLE. I may have royally F-ed up a little and I already had a big ol' "forgive me Father" moment tonight. I'm changed. I'm back. Love scene. Dare ya'.

(Pause. NAN looks to SIMON. SIMON does a "Faaaaaace".)

SIMON. Face.

SWEETHEART. I mean I love love scenes. That's always my favorite part of movies and stuff? Right before the two main folks kiss—cause they always do that, don't they—where you want 'em to kiss so bad and the music's all soupy and you're like "dammit, just do it!"

SIMON. *Not helping, striper.*

KYLE. You married me for a reason, Nan.

SIMON. Not a good one.

Nan.

Nan.

KYLE. We met by the park, you were wearing that necklace, I was late, it was fun, I dare you. I dare you.

(Silence. NAN considers. NAN opens her mouth to speak—)

(Blackout.)

FOUR.**A)**

(Ding!

Six Years Earlier...At A Crossroads

NAN waits for someone. She puts on chapstick.

Cell phone goes off. Nan answers.)

NAN. Hey, talk at me for a sec, whatcha doing?

Oh, applying Cherry ChapStick. Invigorating the senses.

(Looks at her necklace.)

Well why are you calling me on *your* date?

Just get drunk. You'll feel better, he'll look better.

Because I already like my date so I don't need to get drunk—

Ugh. I know what you think, I don't wanna hear—

Simon. I only listen to you when you're right, and you're not right about—

He's sweet! He's nice! He likes me!

Ugh. I'm gonna go. Drink more. Love you!

(KYLE enters.)

KYLE. Hey there, fancy pants.

NAN. Hey.

KYLE. Sorry I'm late. I'm always late. Get used to it.

NAN. Ha. Cool.

KYLE. Naw, I'm not that bad. You wanna eat something?

NAN. I can always eat. Get used to it.

KYLE. Ha. Fattie.

NAN. Uhh...

KYLE. Not Funny. At all. Uh. Food?

NAN. Yeah. Outback has surprisingly good salads?

KYLE. Or my friend works at that pizza place up the road. Free cokes. We could drive all the way to Atlanta but—like—

NAN. We'd have to drive back.

KYLE. Sucks.

NAN. And I never know what to do down there.

KYLE. Ha. Sounds like me and—

(Points to her crotch.)

NAN. What?

KYLE. Not funny. Sorry. I forget you're not a dude. In a good way. Dammit. Anyway.

I was thinking of you and, like, *animals*? Cause you like animals, right?

NAN. Yeah. We raised rabbits when I was a kid. I told you that.

KYLE. Yeah and I just thought—'cause they have a zoo down there. And it's supposed to be super cool—with monkeys, and tigers, and a panda named SingSing—that's a prison—anyway—if you're looking for stuff to do in the city you might like it.

NAN. Thanks. I've been. It's really cool. Gorillas look like my uncle.

KYLE. We could go. Sometime.

NAN. That'd be great.

(Smile. Smile.)

KYLE. Zoooooooooooo...

Is a weird word. You think it's—like—Chinese?

NAN. What?

KYLE. Or Scottish?

NAN. Probably not.

KYLE. You are so pretty.

NAN. Oh stop it.

KYLE. It's a gigantic kinda pretty. You know you are.

NAN. You know you're a charmer.

KYLE. Tell it like I see it, you're the prettiest and coolest—

NAN. Kyle Carter, you are shameless.

KYLE. Dude, you are the mammoth T-Rex of pretty!

NAN. Oh my god, I already like you, just buy the damn pizza.

KYLE. A woman that cuts the bullshit. I like it, I love it, I want some more—

NAN. Are you coming, talky? Or am I gonna date myself?

(She winks. Then drops it.)

Out of the scene—or trying to be)

NAN. *(Continued:)* Alright. See? Done. Downhill from there—

KYLE. (*Out of the scene, to NAN:*) No. No it wasn't. Let's keep going. Dare ya. Date Two. Come on.

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) What? No.

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) Come on, that was fun. That was really fun, Nanner. Lil bit more.

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) You get *one* scene, not—

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) Just a tink more. Double dare. The next date I wasn't such a tool bag.

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) I can't believe I didn't smack you after that "down there"—

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) I know, right? Do it now!

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) No. This is done, we had our time and—

KYLE. Date two, Bowl-A- Rama!

*(Bowl-A-Rama—Two Days Later.
Sound of pins crashing victoriously,
KYLE jumps victoriously, both are in the scene.)*

KYLE. Yeeesss! Oh I am a ruler at this ancient sport of titans!

NAN. Eh, pretty good.

KYLE. You may be pretty, and you may be good, but that was not pretty good. Beware the spare, chica.

NAN. Ok, cocky. You think you're messin' with kids?

KYLE. Some advice from a champion: Don't look at the triangle, look at the—

NAN. Shut up.

(Nan "rolls" confidently, waits, watches and...sounds of ALL the pins crashing extra victoriously!)

Ooooooh! STRIKE on your face! Who is the baddest ass? *Who is it?!*

(KYLE grabs her and lifts her up—she is all smiles)

KYLE. You have just won my heart. And a free thing of nachos.

(Out of the scene—steamrolling her:)

See? This is fun! Come on—One more—The one at the zoo! With churros!

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) No. No churros.

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) What a perfect day—you remember?

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) We're not doing that scene. So don't—

KYLE. Date thirty two, at the zoo!

(Zoo Atlanta—Three Months Later.)

KYLE. (*In the scene—pointing everywhere:*) Holy crap there's some weird-looking shit here.

Llamas and pandas and pirates—

NAN. Primates.

KYLE. Awesome! You hungry? Churros on me.

God I love churros.

NAN. I know.

KYLE. And hey...

(The first time he's said this:)

I love you.

NAN. You...you just said you love me.

KYLE. From the very first time I saw you I was just drunk with it. And I'd'a never come here without you and—I dunno, I just wanted to say it.

NAN. You love me.

KYLE. Yeah. How's that sound?

NAN. Ok. Whoa—I said ok.

KYLE. Ok?

NAN. Ok.

KYLE. OK!

NAN. I love you too.

KYLE. You do?

NAN. I think...yeah.

KYLE. Well look at us. In love.

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) NO. No. It was stupid love, not real love.

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) Oh it was real and right and leading to—

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) I know where it lead to.

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) The park. That day. One year—

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) No—stop it, Kyle—you're doing this wrong—

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) The best day of my life, Penguin. If I can get back to that day, it'll be ok. It'll be back like it was.

NAN. (*Out of the scene:*) Kyle, don't—

KYLE. (*Out of the scene:*) That day. The park, the lake, the shade under the dogwood. You remember. That day, Nan. Was perfect.

(*Pause. NAN goes to KYLE. He's so in control now, and knows it.*)

(*Piedmont Park—Seven Months Later.*)

KYLE. (*In the scene—so nervous:*) So I think...I think you and I are a real good match.

NAN. Oh, really?

KYLE. Yeah. Like a... Royal Flush of...true love. And... I'm buying a house. Surprise.

NAN. Oh. Good for you.

KYLE. And your school's in Dahlonga? And my new place is gonna be around there—well that's where I'm lookin' cause—well—you could drive in and I'm working at that AutoZone so if you're car breaks down I got you covered and—

NAN. Kyle?

KYLE. And I'm saying that I'm a way better guy with you than with—like—my guys. And.

Since freshman year you were the best thing in my life. Even that summer at Daytona and all those hot girls getting drunk and I didn't do nothin' cause I had you...in mind. And you are so pretty. And you're like this precious thing. And I want you to be my—my... thing. Like for life.

NAN. Oh.

Uh...

Penguins are for life. I saw this documentary, and they raise babies in the worst weather in the world, and they take turns getting fish, and they take care of each other for their whole lives, and when they pair up and nuzzle each other, their little sloped heads make, like, a heart.

KYLE. See. That's such a girl thing. And I need those kinda things...

(*Suddenly he hugs her—like a small child would hug a mother—around the middle with his head on her chest.*

She hesitates—then completes the picture—holding his head like she was protecting him.)

I'm a fuck-up sometimes. And I know I can't give you everything just yet, but I will.

And sometimes I might need—like—space or...porn?

But more than anything I need you. And I wanted to ask your dad but—I went by the cemetery outta respect.

And I promise the ring's comin'.

If you'll...marry...me.

(NAN *smiles a big smile.*)

KYLE. (Continued:) Is that cool?

NAN. Yes.

(KYLE *releases.*)

KYLE. It is? I thought you'd say: "Your nut's cracked, dumbass. I'm too good for you."

NAN. I *am* too good for you.

KYLE. Then you're the dumbass. Not funny.

Oh my god, I love you.

I am a ruler! We gotta celebrate.

NAN. Karaoke! I love karaoke.

KYLE. Well I love bleachy-smellin' T-shirts.

NAN. Well I love wind chimes.

KYLE. Well I love you.

Be my penguin?

NAN. If you'll be mine.

(*They look at each other...lean in for that kiss...*)

SIMON. *Not this time, D-bag.*

(*SIMON pops up from out of nowhere—
just in time to thwart the kiss—
by shocking KYLE with a Taser gun.*)

(*KYLE immediately falls into the chair convulsing but quietly.*)

NAN. What did you do?!

SIMON. This just became a "Get Your Shit Together" Taser gun intervention, Nan Carter.

SWEETHEART. Damn right.

NAN. Oh my god.

(*SWEETHEART spins KYLE's chair so he's facing away from us and NAN.*)

SIMON. Now you listen to me.

NAN. But wait—

SIMON. *No talking.*

NAN. A Taser?!

SIMON. He'll be fine.

SWEETHEART. I'll spot him.

NAN. Simon!

SIMON. Nan! Shut up and let me be the hero!

(NAN shuts up.)

I know you. I have known you for a long damn time. Am I right?

(NAN nods.)

Honey, I know you thought you were supposed to love *once*, and that love was smarter than you, and that love had good taste. Can we now agree that that is not always the case?

(NAN nods.)

SIMON. *(Continued:)* I saw you going down that road, and I did not wanna drive you away, and what if you hated me for sayin' anything?

(NAN nods.)

And I knew you weren't always happy—who's always happy—but I did *not* know how bad...But any bad is bad enough.

(NAN nods.)

SIMON *checks in with SWEETHEART, who is feeling KYLE's pulse.)*

SWEETHEART. We're good.

SIMON. And Love? Is a dumb friend. But I'm not. I'm real. And real friends should be smarter about you than you are.

(NAN laughs and nods, takes SIMON's hand.)

Because I do love you. And I have a good feeling about our new stripper friend. (The Taser was her idea).

And you are in the right to break this life wide open. Because nothing's gonna stop us.

Not even a big ol'—

(BLACKOUT. Swiftly into—)

B)

(Spot on: SWEETHEART.)

SWEETHEART. Bear,—

(Ding!

She starts a PowerPoint of bear pictures...)

American Black, is North America's most common species of bear, thriving in woodland and mountainous regions like those in Appalachia and the Southern Piedmont.

(Ding!

Add a spot on:

NAN.

Switching from bears to cute baby animal pictures.)

NAN. There's always that moment...

in nature shows...

when they zoom in on the cuties.

Fresh, wobbly zebra cuties,

or squeaky seabird balls of plush—Or—god—there's nothing like a baby bunny.

And in those moments? I believe life is kind.

SWEETHEART. Though mostly non-threatening, black bears *have* been responsible for human deaths.

NAN. And you're falling in love with the cuties, and your maternal instinct is kickin' in, and just as you're really trusting your heart to the BBC?

The predator is spotted. A terrified pulse shocks the herd and you get hit with?

Bacon Moment.

SWEETHEART. Black bears rarely attack when confronted by humans, usually making mock charges, blowing noise and swatting the ground with their intimidating forepaws. But when they do...?

NAN. All of sudden, all your cuties turn into unattended strips of bunny bacon or monkey bacon or little poison dart frog bacon.

Every time I start to connect and—BACON.

SWEETHEART. Black Bear attacks tend to be motivated by hunger rather than territory.

NAN. And for once—I want the deer to win.

SWEETHEART. Bears also love honey. Just saying. Honey.

(Lights start to reveal that NAN is now talking to KYLE real-time.)

NAN. I want that doe to turn on that redneck and say: you know? I'm not your bacon anymore...

(Lights quickly spill back in for...)

FIVE.

(The room, real-time. KYLE in chair.

Adding the button to NAN's line...

SIMON and SWEETHEART high-five.)

KYLE. Hey. Hey! I was in the middle of working that—I was doing my thing and you *Braveheart*-ed in and—a Taser? God, you're a dick man. OW.

(To NAN:)

Nan, you were mine—you were with me, Nan, and you know I'm still the guy you married. We're still those people. And—

(To SIMON:)

Goddamn that shit hurt my teeth.

(To NAN:)

Nan. We may be way past anything traditional at this point, but we still got something here. There's still *us* in here – and you can't kill *us*, so you can't kill *me*, cause *us* is *me*!

NAN. *Us* is not *you*, and *us* is not *us*. And memories are not *us*. And that day is not *us*. And you are not *that* guy, Kyle, you are *this* guy.

KYLE. Wait now, penguin—

NAN. Oh! And! Emperor Penguins are actually *serially* monogamous so they find a new mate every season. And I think it's proving to be a very new season.

SWEETHEART. New season!

SIMON. New season!

(Cheers! But KYLE is done playing around. Switches gears.)

KYLE. OK, You know what? I'm done with this shit. Bring on the bears, goddammit. Get outta my sight and bring it on.

SIMON. I was thinking the same thing.

KYLE. You can't blame me for the way the world works. You can't blame me for life and biology. You can't do it. So I don't care what magazine you read, or where you think you can go to make the world any different, or what Jesus or Jimmy Carter would do—but I

am NOT the BAD GUY. I am JUST A GUY. And GUYS are different than GIRLS.

SIMON. *(With pompom:)* Insight.

KYLE. And we get madder and pushier than y'all, and it's not our fault! Power and muscle were given to us! Sexiness and cooking skills were given to you! It's the way my daddy did things and it's the way most of the goddamn world does things.

SIMON. Nono, keep going. This is great.

NAN. Kyle.

KYLE. Fuck you.

NAN. Kyle.

KYLE. You're a dumb, stupid girl.

NAN. Biological determinism has no effect on me, Kyle.

KYLE. Bring it on, I said. I'd rather have a bear on my lap than a pregnant liberal.

SIMON. Well this just got easy to wrap up.

(SWEETHEART puts a honey bear right in Kyle's crotch.)

NAN. For all the women all over the world who swallow panic every day, I say to you:
Get the meat.

(SIMON and SWEETHEART nod and go out back to get the deer.)

KYLE. FINE. FINE. I DON'T CARE. I DON'T CARE SO MUCH THAT I WILL KILL YOU WHEN I GET OUTTA THIS.

SIMON. Just try it, small man.

KYLE. You shut up, freak.

SIMON. Oh *I'm* the errant human being in this situation?

KYLE. You stole my wife and not for sex.

SIMON. And who do you think's going to hell first, cowboy?

KYLE. You've always hated me, and you poisoned my wife, and you're a sissy little shit. I bet that little freak nugget ain't even mine. I bet it's queenie's little freak, huh? You buy a syringe, and have little freak baby with a cheerleader?

SIMON. Oh yes I have pep, and moral relativism, and executive power. And guess what just got decided? BRING ON THE BEAR. SUCK IT.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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