

blue bird

a new play
by liza lentini

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CHARACTERS

KATE 20 years old, very petite, quiet, thoughtful.

DE DE 40, give or take a few years. Hard and tired.

AMY 18. Tough and outspoken.

CLOP Tall and spindly, as though malnourished. May
look as though in need of a shower.

SCOTT A young-ish, neat-looking "official".

SETTING

A rundown suburban kitchen of DE DE's home on the less desirable side of the tracks, present day, morning, Summer.

AT RISE:

A young woman, KATE, around 20, is sitting at a round kitchen table, staring downward. Her mother, DE DE, still somewhat attractive, around 40, is at the stove fervently preparing breakfast. The kitchen has a visible back screen door which is un-locked and only shuts with a loud clap. It's a sunny mid-morning.

DE DE

So, I went to the town meeting about the dam last week. Yeah, I know, another meeting. They told us they were going to drain it again 'cause they never found Shelly Lipinski's body. Did you know she drowned?

(She puts a full egg breakfast down in front of KATE, who doesn't even bother to look up.)

Did you know her? I asked you that already. She wasn't in your crowd. I know, I know. Anyway, tiny little thing she was. Drinking, I'm sure. Tiny thing. Smaller than you, even. Actually no. No one's smaller than you. Anyway, you were so lucky you missed it. It's not even Shelly you feel sorry for - it's her parents. They didn't even cry at the memorial. They just sort of sat, stone-faced in front of a picture of Shelly. They had to frame the thing I guess, but I don't know why they had to make it so big. A small picture would have done just as well. The big, framed photo just seemed so...big. A big, dead...daughter. I guess when you can't find the body that's what you do...try to fill up space.

(Beat.)

How did I get on that? Oh! The dam. Anyway, every time they drain that dam they run a risk of breaking something and flooding us all to high heaven. Terrible about Shelly, of course, but maybe they could send more divers or...radar. Is that what they call it, Katie?

(She mindlessly picks up KATE's plate, not noticing it hasn't been touched.)

KATE doesn't acknowledge her mother.)

No...sonar. Isn't that it? Well, radar...sonar. I'm sure they could use one of them to find Shelly. Look, I

understand her parents' need for a body, every grieving parent deserves closure, but just think of what they might find? Maybe it's just better to remember her like her picture. She was such a pretty little thing. Was she smaller than you, do you think?

(AMY, eighteen, dressed in a softball uniform and smacking gum, bounces into the room making her presence known. She is attractive and boisterous.)

AMY

Who?

DE DE

Shelly Lipinski. Do you want some breakfast?

AMY

Shelly wasn't smaller than Kate. Fourth graders aren't smaller than Kate.

DE DE

I'm making eggs. Do you want, Amy?

AMY

Did you see the eggs finally hatched?

DE DE

What eggs?

AMY

(Sarcastic.)

The ones in the fridge. They just hatched out of nowhere.

DE DE

Don't be a smart ass.

AMY

The nest. In the overhang. Jesus, Ma, sometimes I think you've gone completely daft in your old age.

DE DE

My dear...you-

AMY

Have a young mother. Yeah. Awesome.

DE DE

Do you want me to make breakfast?

AMY

Naw. I'm gonna have cereal.

DE DE

It's now or never. Don't ask me in an hour, 'cause the kitchen will be closed.

AMY

I don't want eggs, Ma.

DE DE

You do this every time, Amy.

AMY

Do what? I want cereal!

DE DE

Don't ask me in an hour—

AMY

Fine! Gimme some eggs.

DE DE

Are you sure you really—

AMY

Yes! Please give me some eggs. *Yum.*

(DE DE puts KATE's untouched breakfast plate down in front of AMY.)

DE DE

So. What are you girls going to do today?

AMY

I have practice.

(AMY stabs the food on her plate, disgusted.)

DE DE

Oh, good. Why don't you take your sister?

AMY

Weird to think we eat these things...after seeing the eggs hatch and those little baby birds come out.

DE DE

They're not the same eggs, Amy.

AMY

Thanks, Ma. I didn't know that.

DE DE

Do you want them, or not.

AMY

It seemed like it took forever...no announcement, nothing. Just one day little squeaks coming from that rotten board over the door. Couldn't see much but I knew they were there. The mother keeps bringing worms and all sorts of crap back to the nest. It's so freaking cute.

DE DE

Well, don't touch them, whatever you do, they carry diseases.

AMY

Now that might be the only thing on this planet smaller than Kate. A baby bird.

DE DE

It's such a beautiful day, maybe you could take your sister with you.

AMY

She looks a little like a bird, too. A pretty little bird. You know how birds look like if you hug them they'll break...that's Kate.

DE DE

Why don't you take her with you today?

AMY

Poor birds...

DE DE

Kate, do you want to go with your sister?

AMY

Kate hates softball.

(Beat. She re-thinks, and looks at KATE.)

You could just sit and watch. If you want.

(Beat. Silence.)

She doesn't want to.

DE DE

Of course she does. It's a beautiful day—

AMY

Leave her alone! She doesn't want to go!

DE DE

It's only right next door, Kate. A mere block away. It wouldn't take you a minute to come home if you change your mind.

AMY

I think she knows the neighborhood, Ma!

DE DE

She can't sit inside one more day, I won't have it.

AMY

Maybe she likes sitting here.

DE DE

She's always in the kitchen, she won't even go into her room.

AMY

Maybe she likes being with you.

(AMY snorts at the thought.)

Yeah, I think that's it.

DE DE

It's like she's waiting for something.

(To KATE.)

Kate, you can't sit inside one more day. I won't have it.

AMY

(Sarcastic.)

You tell her, Ma.

DE DE

Before your father I dated this handsome baseball player. This was in high school, of course. My hair was red back then, do you girls remember me with red hair? Maybe just from pictures. Oh, that's right! I wore a wig when I had Kate because for whatever reason my hair started falling out. Okay, well...oh, yes...Kevin Picadillo. Oh, I had dreams I was going to end up DeDe Picadillo. Wouldn't that have been the cutest name? We dated for about a year. Rumor had it Kevin was going to be drafted to the minor leagues, but I never...well, I dropped out before I could...well, no use dwelling on the past. He was such a gentleman. A gentleman's not old fashioned, girls, you want a man who opens the door for you and treats you like a lady. I raised you girls to be ladies, remember that.

(AMY, who's not been listening to her mother's story, starts to eat.)

AMY

Uck. These fucking eggs are cold.

(She drops her fork and slaps her hand over her mouth.)

DE DE

What did you just say?

(She starts wringing a dishtowel. AMY gets up from her chair, terrified.)

AMY

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It just slipped-

DE DE

Not in my house. *Not in my house!*

(DE DE tries to whip AMY who keeps skirting out of her reach. KATE is reading the paper.)

AMY

Please, Ma!

DE DE

Don't you *please Ma*, me! I will not have you in my house talking like a cheap piece of trash!

(At the screen door appears SCOTT, a young professional in a suit. He knocks timidly.)

DE DE

Can we help you?

SCOTT

I'm looking for Kate Foster?

KATE

(Stands.)

I'm Kate Foster.

(She locks eyes with SCOTT.)

DE DE

(To KATE.)

Don't just give out your name to every stranger who asks for it. You're just asking for trouble, Katie. Now sit down.

(To SCOTT.)

And who are you?

SCOTT

My name is Scott Greenwood. Your contact at the military base said they informed you—

DE DE

They did. But I told them there was no need for an investigation.

SCOTT

I believe you did. All I want is a moment of your time.

(Beat.)

Can I come in?

DE DE

Well, we're very busy right now. This is our family time you're infringing upon.

SCOTT

Yes, I believe I witnessed some of your family time as you chased your daughter around the kitchen trying to whip her with a dish towel.

(Pause.)

It won't take long.

(After a moment, DE DE unlatches the screen door and allows SCOTT to let himself in.)

SCOTT

(Awkwardly.)

May I sit down?

(DE DE nods.)

DE DE

(Bitterly.)

Would you like some eggs?

AMY

(Whispers.)

Say no.

DE DE

Amy, go.

AMY

I wanna stay.

DE DE

Don't you have practice?

AMY

I'm not going to practice.

DE DE

Go to practice.

AMY

No way—

DE DE

(In a crazed fury.)

Go to practice! Go! Get out!

(AMY exits. There's a long, awkward silence.)

SCOTT

I don't...want any eggs. Thank you.

DE DE

Well, I'm just trying to make this worth your time. There's no need for an investigation. We've all made our peace with...these events. This case is closed, as far as we're all concerned.

SCOTT

Yes, you've made that clear—

DE DE

I hope so, I've said it a hundred times to anyone who will listen.

SCOTT

Well, please just let me explain. I work for an organization which investigates cases of military personnel who have filed a grievance—

DE DE

Kate isn't in the military anymore. She was discharged.

SCOTT

I know, but when the incident occurred she was active military.

DE DE

But she's not now.

SCOTT

(Clears his throat.)

This case was brought to my attention by...well, several parties—

DE DE

Our lawyer doesn't work for us anymore. I don't think you understand—

SCOTT

With all due respect, Mrs. Foster, this investigation has nothing to do with you. I came out here today to ask Kate a few questions.

(DE DE begins to protest and SCOTT holds up his hand.)

SCOTT

This is easily our fifteenth attempt to contact Kate. There is some notion that Kate hasn't received my messages, and an even greater notion that perhaps her best interest has not been, and currently isn't best represented in her case. I am here today to make sure and certain, from Kate, that she doesn't intend to press charges or move further with her claim. That's my job, that's what I do. I am a voice for the injured party.

DE DE

That's insane. Do you have any idea what I did to get that fancy lawyer for her?

SCOTT

You won't need a lawyer today—

DE DE

I had to second mortgage the house, that's what I had to do. Lawyer's don't come cheap, as you well know. And to top it all off, there wasn't even a case. As you already know. So all that money just so one guy could talk to another guy about some claim my daughter made and then drop. How do you think it makes me feel to know I'm working my ass off so some moron who went to law school can vacation to Palm Beach on my dime?

SCOTT

I know how you—

DE DE

It's feels pretty awful, that's how it feels. You may have noticed we aren't exactly made of money here, Mr. Greenbaum.

SCOTT

It's Greenwood. But you can call me, Scott.

DE DE

I don't think we'll be talking long enough to get acquainted.

(Checks her watch.)

Besides, I have to get ready for work.

SCOTT

(Beat. Sighs, shakes his head.)

I know, you're right. Lawyers...they're all the same.

DE DE

They are. This one guy...he didn't even do anything for us, you know? We just needed someone to...talk it out. Thousands later...he's drinking pina coladas and I'm working third shift serving burgers to drunk college guys like you.

SCOTT

Oh, you got me pegged all wrong, Mrs. Foster. I'm all military.

DE DE

You are?

SCOTT

Yep. Born and raised.

DE DE

What branch?

SCOTT

My father met my mother when he was a Marine and she was in the Navy.

DE DE

Oh! A love story. Are they still married?

SCOTT

Oh, yeah. Forty three years now.

DE DE

Isn't that beautiful... That's what I hoped would happen for Kate. But... Did I offer you something to eat, Scott? Would you like some eggs?

SCOTT

I'm not hungry, thank you.

DE DE

Well at least sit down. Would you like some coffee?

SCOTT

Um-

DE DE

(Pours him some coffee.)

My dad was a Marine, too.

SCOTT

What your mother military, also?

DE DE

Oh, no. She was a waitress with overactive ovaries.

(She laughs, a little too much.)

No, no...I mean, she was a nice lady, but...she died. So...

SCOTT

Oh, I'm sorry-

DE DE

I wanted to enlist, but I couldn't on account of my epilepsy. But I did succeed in marrying an Army man! And we have our two beautiful girls.

SCOTT

Oh, are you still married?

DE DE

No.

(Beat.)

No.

(Beat.)

And if you happen to see him anywhere tell him his suitcases have been sitting in the basement for the past 15 years.

(Awkward pause. DE DE laughs, a little too long.)

SCOTT

Well...I joined the Air Force right after high school.

DE DE

You're a military man, too...

(She purrs a little.)

Well, get a look at you... See, Katie? This is what I wanted for you. He's smart, he took advantage of everything the military had to offer.

(To SCOTT.)

And you stayed on.

SCOTT

Well...I was lucky.

DE DE

You were smart.

SCOTT

I was lucky.

DE DE

Oooohh...you're so modest. There's no need. The cream rises right to the top and anyone can see...you're all cream.

SCOTT

(Awkwardly.)

Thank you.

(Beat.)

Well, we've gotten off the subject...a little.

(He takes a sip of coffee.)

Coffee's great, Mrs. Foster.

DE DE

Please...DeDe.

(She cozies up to him.)

I make good coffee.

SCOTT

(Beat.)

So...the reason for my visit is this. I'm acting on a complaint—

DE DE

Right, right. But we already went through this. And now it's off the table.

SCOTT

No, DeDe. It's very much on the table.

DE DE

Why.

SCOTT

Because someone has put it there. And it needs to be addressed.

DE DE

Do I need to hire a lawyer?

SCOTT

Let's not put the cart before the horse. The purpose of my visit today is to hear what Kate wants. That's all.

DE DE

Is this visit gonna cost us?

SCOTT

Not unless you want it to.

(DE DE looks at him confused. He smiles
and laughs. She is relieved.)

DE DE

How do we get this over with?

SCOTT

Okay. Well, a lot of attention has fallen upon Kate's
claim, lately-

DE DE

The closed case.

SCOTT

Right. The closed case.

(Beat.)

Can I ask why you closed it?

DE DE

We didn't. The...officers closed it. Lack of evidence.
Something like that...

(Beat.)

No, um...in the end, Kate refused to speak.

SCOTT

(Delicately.)

There are many, many people who believe that Kate was
misrepresented and received an unfair outcome-

DE DE

If you came out here to dig this thing up-

SCOTT

I promise you that's not-

DE DE

We have no interest in re-visiting this-

SCOTT

Someone re-opened Kate's case—

DE DE

Doesn't matter. There's nothing new to tell.

SCOTT

My job today is collect the facts and hear from Kate exactly what she'd like to do with them. I can submit what I believe, or I can submit what you tell me. It's up to you.

(Beat.)

I just want to hear Kate's story. I need to know what she wants to do.

(DE DE looks at KATE, who doesn't meet her eyes.)

DE DE

Well, go ahead. And make it quick.

SCOTT

Actually, Mrs. Foster—

DE DE

Please...De De.

(To KATE.)

You don't have to answer anything you don't want, Katie.

SCOTT

Actually, Mrs. Foster—

DE DE

De De.

SCOTT

De De. That's not entirely true. Kate would be best served to answer all of my questions.

DE DE

Not without her lawyer present she doesn't.

SCOTT

This isn't a trial.

DE DE

It's still her life. It's her reputation. What does a girl have besides her reputation?

SCOTT

Fine. Would you like to call your lawyer then?

(DE DE goes to the screen door and steps out, hollers across the yard.)

DE DE

Cloppy get your ass in here! Cloppy!

(She steps back inside.)

He plays bocce in the mornings sometimes.

SCOTT

(Confused.)

Your counsel?

DE DE

Yep. Our...counsel.

SCOTT

You are kidding, right?

(CLOP bursts through the door in dramatic stance. He's around 60 or so, and looks like some windblown caricature out of a Dickens novel. His clothes are ill-fitting, un-matching, and foppish. His hair is slicked back and in need of a good wash. He appears in the doorway, and strikes an arrogant pose.)

CLOP

You rang, Madame?

(Beat. He notices SCOTT.)

Oh, hello. Clarence Plopodopoulos the First, Esquire.

(He holds out his hand for SCOTT to shake.)

SCOTT

Scott Greenwood.

CLOP

Scott Greenwood, eh?

(He has something caught in his throat and starts scraping at it, audibly.)

Something tells me we're kindred spirits.

SCOTT

Really?

CLOP

(Sniffs around him.)

Fee fi fo fum...I smell a military man!

SCOTT

What gave me away?

CLOP

The hair. And everything that goes along with it.

(Beat. He sniffs.)

You smell good. Mmmmm...

(Beat.)

Where did you earn your wings, my good man?

SCOTT

Air Force.

(Beat.)

And...where did you earn your-

CLOP

(Loud and proud.)

Justice and Liberty University.

SCOTT

Um...what-

CLOP

Dot com. Yeah, I...got my law degree right at home, courtesy of cyber space. And a small inheritance from my aunt with a bad spleen.

SCOTT

Wow.

CLOP

Air Force, huh? Flying through the open air...oh, how I miss it.

SCOTT

You're a pilot, too?

CLOP

No. But I have flight in my heart.

(CLOP laughs. SCOTT doesn't get the joke.)

Well...have a seat. Can I offer you a Bud?

SCOTT

I never drink before breakfast—

DE DE

Oh, can I make you some eggs?!

SCOTT

No, I—

CLOP

Give the boy some room to breathe, Deirdre. Please sit. Relax.

(SCOTT sits.)

SCOTT

Well, I'm glad you could be here Mister...uh...

CLOP

People call me Cloppy for short, Clop for even shorter.

SCOTT

Okay...well, I'm very happy you're here today. I'd heard that you...had appointments in the mornings.

CLOP

Gotta take advantage of life while you have it. Isn't that right, Scottie?

SCOTT

That's right.

CLOP

It really can change, just like that.

(CLOP snaps his fingers in SCOTT's face,
making SCOTT jump a bit.)

SCOTT

Absolutely. Well, let me explain why I'm...Mister Clop did
you need any...files...or anything...

CLOP

M'boy...I have everything I need right up here...

(He taps his head methodically, as though
SCOTT will know exactly what he's referring
to. SCOTT takes his files out of his
briefcase.)

SCOTT

Then you won't mind if I move forward?

CLOP

Not one bit.

(Beat.)

And what will you be doing?

SCOTT

I had a few simple questions for Kate.

CLOP

Kate? What for?

SCOTT

For the case between—

CLOP

Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. I'm sorry, but maybe you
didn't hear. That case has been closed.

SCOTT

Actually, Mister Clop—

CLOP

Just Clop.

SCOTT

Clop. I'm not sure if you're aware, though as Miss Foster's attorney you...one would expect you to be. But there's quite a bit of interest in this case and, even some interest in re-opening the case.

CLOP

(He paces around.)

Well, now, I've heard of cases being re-opened, of course, I mean...it's not completely unheard of or anything, I just...wasn't aware...and...well, I guess I just will have to postpone my bocce game and...be a lawyer this morning.

SCOTT

Fine, then. Won't you have a seat?

CLOP

I'd like a postponement!

SCOTT

This isn't a trial. It's just a meeting.

CLOP

Well...then...I object!

(He starts laughing, DE DE laughs along with him, obnoxiously.)

SCOTT

Look, I'll be straight with you. I have a cab waiting outside with the meter running. I want this to be over and done with as soon as humanly possible.

CLOP

No shit?

SCOTT

Um...no.

CLOP

And why, pray tell, do you not have your own automobile?

SCOTT

I don't actually live here. I flew in from the base-

CLOP

Can you not drive yourself?

SCOTT

(Beat. Annoyed.)

I was offered a military police escort-

CLOP

Oh, whoa, whoa now! No need to bring the coppers into the situation. We're all professionals, are we not? Let's sit at this table and...answer all your questions.

(CLOP sits. They all stare at each other for a while.)

DE DE

Would anyone like some eggs?

(No response.)

SCOTT

I'd like to start.

CLOP

Uh, huh. Did you make an appointment?

SCOTT

You know what...I don't have to be here. I don't.

(He begins to pack up.)

I'll just...make something up. I'll have a look at the previous report and we'll just go from there. How's that sound to everyone? They'll go ahead and make their assumptions about the slutty little girl, her hysterical mother, and the incompetent lawyer that screwed everything up. Is that all right with everyone?

CLOP

Whoa! Slow down, Master Greenwood. No need to call anyone incompetent. Is there? I'm sorry if we haven't been more accommodating. Please sit back down. Get yourself comfortable. Do you need some water, anything to make things easier for you? Whiskey? Tequila?

DE DE

Cloppy-

CLOP

Hush.

DE DE

But, Clop-

CLOP

Shut up!

(Pause.)

Please. Proceed.

SCOTT

Thank you.

(Beat.)

Hi, Kate. I'm Scott. Can I ask you a few questions? If you answer my questions today, and we have some resolution, I'll never come to this house again. Ever.

(He opens one of his files and pulls out some papers.)

Now, I have a copy of the initial report here. I'd like to read it to you.

DE DE

The report?

CLOP

Do you have to read it?

SCOTT

Well, yes...I'd like to.

DE DE

Out loud?

SCOTT

Yes.

(DE DE suddenly bursts out into tears.)

DE DE

I know...I know you blame me. You might not say so, but you do. I know I had her young and I did my best. It's not like mother's give birth and they also squeeze out some kind of operations manual, you know. I mean...I mean...what's a mother? Well, I'll tell you. A mother isn't just some haggard old bag who makes breakfast and braids hair and works third shift to pay the lawyer's bills. She's a freaking warrior! So before you dig into that report and point fingers just remember to keep me out of it. I don't want anything to do with this!

(Pause.)

CLOP

Good point, I mean...why do we need to go through all this again?

SCOTT

You're right.

(SCOTT collects his things and begins to pack up.)

CLOP

Now, now, now! That's the thing with you young...people. You always have to have something *now*. Today is the first day of summer, is it not? Let's kick up our heels and start the day off right.

(Beat.)

De De...I'm ready for my eggs now.

DE DE

(Brightly.)

Aye, aye, Cap'n!

CLOP
 And you, Master Greenwood. Should ask all the questions
 you wish today. Ask away! This is a no fear zone you've
 entered.

SCOTT
 Really?

CLOP
 You bet.

SCOTT
 All right.
 (He settled back down.)
 Kate...this won't take long-

CLOP
 Objection!

SCOTT
 I haven't said anything yet!

CLOP
 Keep your pants on, Scottie boy. Just keeping you on your
 toes.

SCOTT
 Please, just let me do my job.

CLOP
 If your job is to harass young girls on the first day of
 summer-

SCOTT
 Kate is twenty years old. She's an adult.

DE DE
 Hey! You watch what you say. Katie will always be my
 little girl.

CLOP
 Mr. Goodwater, what exactly are your credentials?

(He takes a pencil out of his shirt pocket and licks the tip, ready to write.)

SCOTT

(Beat.)

What difference does it make?

CLOP

It makes a great difference. As you well know, this case...this *incident*, shall we say, had potential to create quite the *scandale* for the United States military. And, seeing as how the military has been in the press quite a bit lately with similar cases, I think it would behoove everyone involved to just...*let it go*.

SCOTT

Believe me, I'd love to. But I can't. There are lots of things I'd rather be doing today-

CLOP

Tell me about it! I got a crock pot that's just waiting for me to flip its switch. And a lonely badminton net that hasn't seen my face in nearly six whole days. What kind of a family man am I?

SCOTT

You have a family?

CLOP

Well, not at the moment. I have a wife, you know...by marriage. She doesn't live with me right now. But thank God. That's what I have to say. Thank God I don't have a family.

(Beat.)

Yes, that's right. We might as well bring God into the equation because he's the reason we're all here, isn't he? Him and all his...*greatness*.

(He salutes to the heavens.)

You're in the presence of military greatness, Scottie?

SCOTT

(Referencing KATE.)

I know, Sir. I read everything in her file.

CLOP

Not, her. Me. One word: Nam. Three words: Vi-et-nam. The war that wasn't even really a war. Huh. Don't be like everyone else kid, don't you forget those who made your country safe and sound.

SCOTT

You think we live in a safe and sound country?

(DE DE, who has been putting eggs on CLOP's plate, gasps and turns and the eggs go flying onto the floor.)

CLOP

War's a terrible thing. But it's not called war by accident. Right? Bad things are going to happen to good people. Just look at Katie and me.

SCOTT

I'd like to just get back to my-

CLOP

(Jutting towards SCOTT, with his sleeve suddenly rolled up.)

See that? See that? That's a cigar burn. Torture, that's what that is.

SCOTT

Where?

CLOP

What do you mean where? There! Plain as day.

SCOTT

To tell you the truth...I can't really see-

CLOP

A fellow soldier put out cigar on my arm. It's not torture in the Bosnian sense. It's torture in the Asian sense. Vi-et-nam sense. To you.

SCOTT

Where was he from?

CLOP

Who?

SCOTT

The soldier. Where was he from?

CLOP

I don't know where he was from. That's not the-

SCOTT

Was he American?

CLOP

Yes. As a matter of fact, he was.

SCOTT

So, that's not Asian torture. It has nothing to do with Vietnam. Does it?

CLOP

No. It's Americans against Americans. That's what I'm trying to explain, Scottie. Things happen in war. Things that can't be explained.

KATE

Pinochle.

SCOTT

What?

DE DE

She's...not herself today.

KATE

Pinochle.

SCOTT

What are you talking about, Kate?

CLOP

I think...what the girl's referring to is...the minor detail of...my losing a pinochle game and...thus...not having the money to pay my debts...hence...the cigar burn...but that's neither here nor there. I shouldn't have ever told the kids that story considering it has nothing to do with torture and justice and any of the stuff we're discussing here today.

SCOTT

Well...I'm happy we clarified that. Now, let's turn our attention back to-

DE DE

Can I just say one thing?

(Beat. She is already very emotional.)

Katie is a good girl. We are good people. We don't do nothing to hurt nobody here. All we want is to be left in peace. Why can't you just let the past be the past? We closed the case, we forfeited all options to move forward. We just want to get on with our lives.

SCOTT

Who is "we"?

DE DE

Well...all of us here...in this kitchen. I'm not sure I understand...

SCOTT

On May first of this year someone filed a motion to re-open the case.

DE DE

Impossible! We...we decoded-

SCOTT

Mrs. Foster...what do you believe is the true nature of my visit? I already told you I didn't want any eggs.

DE DE

No, no...there must be some kind of mistake-

CLOP

Boy, please allow me to clarify—

SCOTT

No, Esquire, please *allow me* to clarify. Or, rather, for further clarification you can see the eleven attempts at sending certified mail to your office. Though, now that I understand it's likely a garden shed, I understand why they were never received—

DE DE

Oh, no. No. No, no, no. There's some sort of mistake.

SCOTT

There's no mistake, Mrs. Foster.

(Beat.)

Kate, tell us. Is there some sort of mistake?

CLOP

I'll speak for Kate. She's in no state to speak for herself.

DE DE

You see, Scott, my daughter...well, after the incident, she was...

(She speaks in an Irish whisper.)

Put away in an institution.

SCOTT

I know. I have her records.

DE DE

So, you see, she's in no state to...sign for anything.

SCOTT

I don't think you both understand what it takes to file papers against the US military. It's quite a tedious and detailed task. Someone would have to be pretty determined.

(Beat.)

You did file, didn't you Kate?

(Pause. Silence.)

I know you did.

CLOP

Objection! This girl is unstable, unbalanced, and unhinged, if you will! She's not a reliable witness.

SCOTT

How would you know? Let the girl answer a question.

CLOP

Her mother and I—

SCOTT

I don't care. I didn't ask you.

(Beat.)

What do you want, Kate? Did you file a suit?

(DE DE bursts into tears. CLOP gets up to console her.)

CLOP

(To SCOTT.)

Shame on you...you're breaking up a family.

(Beat.)

There, there...no need to cry, DeDe. It's just a horrible, terrible mistake.

KATE

No.

(Beat.)

I filed. Myself.

(DE DE cries even harder. SCOTT makes a note on his pad. CLOP shoots KATE an angry look.)

DE DE

Bad enough you had to tear your family apart once, and now you're going to do it again. Shame on you, girl.

SCOTT

Mrs. Foster, your daughter is an adult. If she decided she wanted to create a lawsuit it is her right.

CLOP

Whose side are you on?

SCOTT

Whose side are *you* on? You're supposed to be her lawyer!

CLOP

I believe a good lawyer looks out for the best interest of his client. I have nothing short of Kate's best interest at heart.

(Beat.)

Mr. Goodman, I have to postpone until further notice.

SCOTT

Mr. Plopodopopulos, I'm afraid you have no concept of what's happening here. Either you go ahead and follow through with this, in court, or you try to let me handle it, here. Today. No matter what, I came here to help.

(Beat.)

My one and only interest is in Kate. What she wants will determine everything for everyone.

(Beat.)

What do you want, Kate?

CLOP

I see. So, that's the way your game is played.

(He sits back down.)

DeDe...I won't be needing my eggs anymore. Just bring me a cup of my *special coffee*...will you, sweet nip?

DE DE

Okay.

(She wipes her eyes.)

All I wanted was a bit of peace...

(She prepares the coffee to brew.)

We're just a regular family. We're normal people. I just want us to be happy and normal. That's all I want...

(AMY enters, storming in and throwing her softball glove on the kitchen table.)

AMY
Fucking Malinowsky, man!
(Spotting SCOTT.)
Oh, hi.

SCOTT
Hi, Amy.

AMY
Who're you?

SCOTT
Scott Greenwood. I'm working on your sister's case-

AMY
Right.

(She plops down in a seat.)

DE DE
Amy...you need to leave.

AMY
No, I don't.

DE DE
Why aren't you at practice?

AMY
Malinowsky's plastered again.

CLOP
Now, Amy. That's not very generous of you.

AMY
Sorry...*tipping the sauce*. Is that better?

SCOTT
Who's Malinowsky?

AMY
My softball coach. He's this big, fat, drunken pervert.

DE DE

Amy!

AMY

The truth's the truth whether you say it or not. Everyone knows.

DE DE

It's not very ladylike to say things like that.

AMY

You're right. It's better to say that he's an overweight, confused gentleman who likes to watch us shower while he sips his flask and massages his genitals.

CLOP

That's better.

DE DE

Amy...you need to leave right now.

AMY

No way.

(DE DE raises her spatula as though to strike.)

AMY

Careful, Ma. We have guests.

(DE DE lowers her spatula and puts on a pleasant smile.)

DE DE

Can I...get anyone anything?

AMY

A shoebox full of twenties!

CLOP

Morphine!

SCOTT

We're all right, Mrs. Foster. I think the next thing is-

DE DE

Amy...leave the room. Now.

SCOTT

Actually, I think it would be helpful if your daughter would stay. Would you like to stay Amy?

(AMY surveys the faces of those around her, DE DE's is distinctly tense.)

AMY

Bet your sweet ass I would.

SCOTT

Kate. Would you like your sister to stay?

KATE

(Pause. Everyone is waiting.)

Yes.

SCOTT

Good. It's settled. From here on out anyone who wishes to stay in this room must be perfectly silent. That includes you, Mrs. Foster.

DE DE

DeDe.

SCOTT

That includes you, DeDe.

DE DE

Fine.

(Beat.)

But can I say just one thing?

(Beat. She seems really upset.)

We don't want any trouble. We're just a regular suburban family trying to make it one day at a time. Katie's a good girl. She is.

SCOTT

No one is judging your daughter's character...DeDe.

DE DE

I know. They said that before, but it's not true. They do judge her. They do, you know they do.

SCOTT

You shouldn't care what people think.

DE DE

That doesn't help us when we walk down the street.

SCOTT

I can only imagine how difficult all this is for you. Let me assure you all that I'm a person like the rest of you. And I can tell you that my only interest is to represent Kate's best interest.

(Beat.)

I mean it, Kate. This all starts and ends with you. It's all about what you want.

CLOP

Now, hold on there Scottie. Kate may not be fit to—

SCOTT

Kate filed the claim. She must want to speak with someone.

CLOP

Have we officially...verified that yet?

(SCOTT impatiently flips open a folder.)

SCOTT

May 3rd, registered mail. Signed by Kate Foster. May 9th, registered mail, signed by Kate Foster. May 11th, registered mail, signed by Kate Foster. May 13th, registered mail, signed by Amy Foster—

DE DE

Amy! How could you!?

AMY

What did I do? I just signed like everyone else signs.

DE DE

I thought we talked about this!

SCOTT

What did you talk about?

(All is silent. SCOTT looks to AMY
and DE DE quickly raises her spatula
at her, so SCOTT can't see.)

SCOTT

What did you agree on?

AMY

(Pause. Smiles.)

Nothing.

SCOTT

Amy...let me ask you. How did you feel about your sister
joining the military?

AMY

Oh, great. I mean, we have two choices when we graduate
high school. We could join the military or we could get
married.

SCOTT

Those were your only options?

DE DE

It wasn't quite like that. Amy, you exaggerate.

AMY

(Standing just like her mother, perfectly
imitating her voice.)

"Amy. When you graduate from high school you have two
choices. You can either get married or join the military."

DE DE

Amy! You can't believe everything she says.

AMY

Check it out for yourself. It's totally true.

DE DE

Well, out of context you make me sound like some sort of monster.

(Pause.)

CLOP

I guess she didn't want to go into the military.

(He chuckles. No one else does.)

SCOTT

I'm not here to judge—

DE DE

You probably think we're trash or something, with the stories Amy's telling you.

SCOTT

Absolutely not. I don't think anything of the sort—

DE DE

I mean...you won't *analyze* any of this, will you?

(Beat.)

We're really just a regular family. I promise you.

SCOTT

So...Amy...did you feel proud of your sister when she finally...enlisted?

AMY

Well...I knew she wasn't going to get married, if that's what you mean.

(AMY snickers a bit and looks at KATE.)

SCOTT

Why not?

AMY

Kate? Oh, she could never make up her mind! One guy would drop her off and she'd be out the back door with the next. Marriage could not have been the farthest thing from her mind. *The farthest.*

(AMY bursts into laughter, and expects her sister to chime in. When she doesn't, she senses that maybe she's said something wrong. DE DE puts her head in her hands. CLOP thinks hard about a way to get out of this.)

CLOP

Greenwood, I don't want you to get the impression that she was a full-fledged...how shall I say...*ass peddler* or anything of the sort. Kate was merely a curious girl who was very...popular. End of story.

(Beat.)

And no, you can't print that.

SCOTT

(Looking in his folder.)

Well, she was voted "Most Likely to [FILL IN THE BLANK]" her Senior Year. You're supposed to fill in the blank yourself, right?

(Beat.)

Were you not, Kate?

(KATE just looks down.)

AMY

Why can't we just tell the truth? Yes, she was popular. Boys liked her and she liked them. That doesn't mean that she asked for it!

CLOP

Amy! Scottie, I need a word with my client.

(CLOP grabs AMY forcibly and pulls her towards him.)

This isn't Romper Room, young lady. I strongly recommend you watch what you say.

AMY

Or what? We're not little kids, you can't whip us over your knee anymore.

DE DE

Amy! The girl exaggerates. We're just your normal, American family.

AMY

(To SCOTT.)

Okay, put this on your permanent record—

(CLOP physically picks AMY up and throws her outside, slams the door and locks it. AMY bangs on it for a few seconds, and then eventually stops. CLOP sits back down.)

CLOP

Maestro...as you were.

SCOTT

(Pause.)

Kate...the night of October 31st, you were going to a party, is that right? Tell me about it.

(Pause. Silence. SCOTT pulls out the report And reads from it.)

You and your friend Jessica had been to a Halloween party on base. First you went by the Halloween masquerade ball. The alcohol was free there, wasn't it?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

And then you were drinking at the party, too, is that right?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

You were wearing a little red top and a short red skirt.

CLOP

How do you know that?

SCOTT

I have the report right here.

CLOP

Why does it matter how short her skirt was.

SCOTT

I don't know, does it?

CLOP

Some would say it does.

DE DE

Has anyone here every seen "Ashley's Law"?

SCOTT

DeDe...please let's address any other questions after, okay?

DE DE

Well, this might be important.

(She makes a "time out" symbol with her hands.)

If you haven't seen "Ashley's Law" I highly recommend it. Thursday nights at 9:00. Fucking awesome, if you pardon my French—

CLOP

Oh! Isn't that the show about the 17-year-old lawyer with the ripe peach-like tits?

DE DE

Yeah. It is, but it's also all about the law. You learn a lot about...legalities. And they had this case about this girl...and the case was...well there was this girl...and she was...raped. By multiple men. At a party. And...well, they did an investigation, too. And in the end, the girl won. In her own way. But the details of the case don't matter because the message is what really counts, you know? The message was, you can still be a lady without your virginity. But you need a reputation. A good one. And...I think maybe that's what we need to focus on here. Forget the details. Let's just see how we can preserve Kate's reputation. Keep it good. Make it good. Make this whole case go away before it ruins everyone.

(KATE spots AMY's face in the kitchen window, AMY's trying to say something, but DE DE casually closes the curtains on her.)

SCOTT

It's all up to Kate.

KATE

I only want to tell the truth.

SCOTT

Isn't it true you all just found out you'd passed your tests?

(He looks down at his files.)

You and Sheila and Jessica and some other women in your flight program?

KATE

Yes. That's true.

SCOTT

That must have made you feel good.

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Isn't it also true that you and Jessica and Sheila had been put on probation for your drinking just a mere five days before?

CLOP

Objection!

DE DE

You're out of line!

KATE

You're right. We were. I was.

DE DE

That's not true, Kate! Take that back! Kate was always a good girl.

KATE

It's true. It's on record, there's no need to deny it.

CLOP

Isn't it also true that you weren't offered any counseling? That truly your emotional needs were not met by the military during that harsh, confused time?

KATE

No. It's not true. They gave us a brochure and told us if we needed some sort of program that they had them on base.

CLOP

(Persuasively.)

Are you sure, Katie?

DE DE

She's confused. She gets like this.

KATE

I know what I'm saying.

SCOTT

I believe you. It's very standard procedure.

CLOP

Counsel, please refrain from leading my witness.

SCOTT

What are you talking about?

(AMY bursts into the room.)

AMY

Yeah, what are you talking about?

CLOP

How did you get in?

AMY

Front door. That lockout shit only works in the movies, jackass.

(She sits down next to KATE, as she was before.)

What did I miss?

DE DE

It's going to be very difficult to continue with Amy here?

SCOTT

Why's that?

DE DE

Well...she's young and this is such a sensitive thing. I'm sure you understand.

(Beat.)

Look, Scott...may I call you Scott?

SCOTT

Sure.

DE DE

You need to understand that...we don't want any trouble from anyone. We do what we need to get by around here. I'm sure you don't understand—

SCOTT

I'm sure I do. I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. I joined the military with the same hopes and dreams of anyone else—

AMY

You're a flyer, too?

SCOTT

Well, wanted to be. Yeah. But right before I graduated I got a...softball in my eye and it blew my twenty-twenty. By that time my dad had died and my mother was sick and I...I do this now.

AMY

See, Katie. There are lots of things you can do. Many of forks in the road. Many paths to Oz. Many yellow brick roads.

SCOTT

I'm sure there are lots of things she can do. We just...need to get past this...interview session. Which I sincerely doubt is going to happen before my next birthday.

DE DE

Scott, honey...let me just tell you a story and I promise I'll shut up and let you go on.

AMY

Make sure you get it in writing, Scottie.

DE DE

When I was a girl, I was very popular. Like Katie. Katie was very popular in school. I had all the boys chasing me. My hair was all different colors. Boobs so perky they bruised my chin. You get the picture. I was hot. Anyway, there was this one boy named Kevin Picadillo-

CLOP

Oh, yeah, "Butt Boy".

DE DE

He was not called Butt Boy.

CLOP

That's what I called him. Back in the day.

DE DE

Back in the day, he was an absolute superstar.

CLOP

Back in the day he was a queer.

DE DE

What? He was in love with me!

CLOP

(Scoffs.)

DeDe, give up the ghost. He was in love with me.

DE DE

I don't know what you're talking about right now. Can I please tell my story?

CLOP

You can tell your story, but make sure to add a disclaimer that it's pure fiction.

DE DE

Well...now I don't know where I was...

CLOP

Something about Butt Boy dying your hair different colors.

DE DE

He did not dye my hair. Though...he did comment on it a lot.

(Beat.)

Anyway, Kevin was *not* queer, I just know it. Believe me, I know.

CLOP

Ha! So do I!

DE DE

Shush! This is my story! It's mine! No one asked you anything about Kevin or me or anything about anything! So you can just shut your mouth and let me tell it the way I remember it! Just shut your mouth! Shut it!

(Pause.)

Kevin Picadillo loved me. And, I'll have you know that I loved him. I did. And he wasn't a Butt Boy. Not at all. I know.

(Pause.)

I would walk into a room and Kevin...all the boys...noticed I was there. I never went unnoticed in those days. We were poor, but, well, things were different then. We had our pride. And you could become something. You could make something of yourself. Kevin is a perfect example. Well, he grew up in the same neighborhood as this, this exact same neighborhood, and he went on to do investment banking. He never even went to college. But he could do it because times were different then.

(Beat.)

Jerry and me...well, I just wanted a family. And Jerry...wanted a gas station. But, boy, did he look great in that uniform. Pumping... So...we got those things...for a time...and...well, when we had the girls...two girls...can you imagine? What were we going to do with two girls? I mean, we'd really only planned to have one child to begin with and Jerry really wanted a boy-

AMY

He did?

DE DE

Sorry, Amy, but you were a mistake, all around.

(Beat.)

Well, you're the one who said we should tell truth, didn't you? You're the one who said it's there whether you speak it or not? Your father was very disappointed to have two girl babies...he'd had his dream of maybe moving uptown...owning a Texico station...you know. *Big dreams.* He told me that if we had girls they had to go into the military right out of high school. Or get married. Someone had to take care of them. He was right...to a certain extent. We had no money to send them to

school...especially by the time Jerry had...disappeared. There just wasn't enough to go around. We didn't have a choice. I guess what I'm trying to say is, if you're looking for someone to blame, please don't blame the parents. People always blame the parents and especially the mother. So, please don't blame me. Not that there's anything to blame me for. We're simple people and we want to live simple lives. Simple, quiet lives.

(Beat.)

We'll keep this quiet, won't we?

(Beat.)

People talk. Even my co-workers. Last fall. I wasn't supposed to know it, but they were. And I know...they think I'm a bad mother. I just want it on record that I did what was best for my kids and...

SCOTT

No one's here to judge you, DeDe.

DE DE

Right.

(Beat.)

Is anybody hungry?

IN UNICIN

No!

DE DE

I think I'll make a potato salad. Looks like it's going to be a hot one today.

(DE DE gets up and goes to the sink. CLOP has dozed off during DE DE's story, but no one really notices. DE DE starts washing and peeling potatoes.)

SCOTT

All I want to know is what you want to do, Kate.

(Beat.)

Do you understand?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

I'm not sure you do. Everyone wants to know what you want to do. Not your mother, not your lawyer, not your sister. It's about what you want. What you want will determine how everyone moves forward. Everyone. Do you understand?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

What are you feeling right now?

KATE

I feel good.

SCOTT

You do?

KATE

I feel great.

SCOTT

Really?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Really?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Really?

KATE

Yes, yes, yes. Yes.

SCOTT

(Sits back in his chair.)

Good. Tell me all about Halloween night.

DE DE
Amy! Could you run to the store and get me some milk?

AMY
Now?

DE DE
Yes, now.

AMY
Um, let me think about it.
(Beat.)
No.

DE DE
Amy!

SCOTT
(To DE DE.)
Please!
(Beat.)
Kate...you said you went out that night, you were drinking.

KATE
Yes. We went to the Halloween ball on base and then went out to a party.

SCOTT
Whose party was it?

KATE
Jimmy Tate. Jimmy Tate's party.

(CLOP suddenly awakes.)

CLOP
Objection!

SCOTT
Objection to what?

CLOP

(Confused.)

Carry on.

(He dozes off again.)

SCOTT

So, you went to the party?

KATE

Yes, we got there around...one-thirty in the morning.

SCOTT

And you all had already been drinking?

KATE

Yes. We'd had quite a bit to drink.

SCOTT

About how much would you say you had to drink?

(KATE stops and looks towards CLOP,
who is now snoring. She's not sure how
to answer.)

KATE

Um...I don't know.

SCOTT

An estimate will be fine.

KATE

I'm telling you the truth. I really don't know.

SCOTT

A six pack? By yourself?

KATE

Yes. Maybe more.

SCOTT

Kate, how tall are you?

KATE

I'm just under five-foot.

SCOTT

How much would you say you weigh?

KATE

I haven't weighed myself-

SCOTT

I'd say you're about ninety pounds. Could that be right?

KATE

Could be.

SCOTT

A six pack is quite a lot for someone of your height and weight, wouldn't you say?

KATE

I have a pretty high tolerance. But ordinarily I would say, yes.

SCOTT

Why do you think you have such a high tolerance?

KATE

I guess it just runs in the family.

SCOTT

I see.

(Beat.)

So...would you say that you were intoxicated by the time you got to the party?

KATE

You tell me.

SCOTT

What makes you say that?

KATE

I could walk perfectly fine. My speech wasn't slurred. Jessica was having trouble walking kept throwing up.

SCOTT
But you all made it to the party in one piece.

KATE
Yes.

SCOTT
Did you drive?

KATE
No, we walked.

SCOTT
How long of a walk was it?

KATE
I guess, maybe, half a mile. A little bit more. Not long.

SCOTT
Witnesses say that you and Jessica caused quite a ruckus on your way to the party. Is that correct?

KATE
I suppose.

SCOTT
Would you tell me why?

KATE
We were singing.

SCOTT
Which song were you singing?

KATE
It's...a sailor's song.

SCOTT
Which one?

KATE

(Can't recall the name, so she hums
and sings a little.)

Um...hmmmm...mmmm...when I was a little boy so my mother
told me...way haul away...

SCOTT

Okay. And where did you learn that?

KATE

My father. Remember, Amy?

AMY

(Sings.)

First I met a Yankee girl and she was fat and lazy, to me.
Way haul away, we'll haul away Joe!

DE DE

(Mortified.)

Amy!

AMY

Then I met an Irish girl, she damn near drove me crazy—

DE DE

Stop it!

(AMY stops.)

AMY

Good old Dad.

SCOTT

Kate, is it true that you had relations with Jimmy Tate
before?

KATE

Before?

SCOTT

In a statement, Jessica and Sheila both said that you had
ongoing relations with Jimmy Tate.

(KATE doesn't say anything.)

SCOTT

Sheila also said she'd had relations with Jimmy Tate during that time. Beth, too.

KATE

Sheila and Beth had relations with a lot of men. That I know of.

SCOTT

Men on base.

KATE

On and off.

SCOTT

That you know of.

KATE.

Yes.

(Suddenly, a bird flies right into the kitchen window and plops lifeless on the outside sill. DE DE shrieks.)

CLOP

(Jolting awake from the noise.)

What the...?

(AMY gets up to look.)

AMY

Oh, no! It broke its neck!

DE DE

It's not dead, Amy. It's not.

(AMY runs outside and grabs the bird, and inspects it, which we can see through the window, almost in pantomime.)

DE DE

(Yelling through the window.)

Don't touch it, Amy! Those things have rabies!

CLOP

(Yelling through the window.)

Don't let its head fall off, Amy! I've been wanting to stuff one of those critters since Reagan was president!

(To SCOTT.)

I do a little light taxidermy on the side...

(CLOP winks at him.)

DE DE

Just prop it up on the sill and come inside! Give it a chance to revive itself!

(AMY tries to prop the bird on the sill, but it keeps falling on the ground.)

CLOP

Don't get it dirty, Amy!

(He runs outside. Quickly, he and AMY are behind the window, squabbling silently over the bird.)

DE DE

Just prop it up on the sill, Amy! It'll look...perky that way.

(AMY props the bird up, but it keeps falling over.)

DE DE

No, prop its head with a stick. It looks like its head's busted.

(AMY yells, muted, through the glass.)

AMY

It is!

DE DE

No one will have to know!

(DE DE turns to speak to SCOTT, and throughout her monologue, AMY and CLOP begin fighting over the bird. Though nothing can be heard, it's obvious they both want it, grabbing at it, feathers flying, both grabbing a wing in a tug of war.)

DE DE

You see, Scottie, I told him to put in the screens. I told him back in April that's what I wanted, but he said "no, wait for the rain to pass." And here it is, the first day of summer and there are still panes of glass on my windows. I promise you it's the first summer this has happened. I take great pride in my house, I can assure you of that. I always have my screens installed at least by the first of May, every single year. If he had just done what I told him this never would have happened. Would it? Creatures are dying because he couldn't be bothered to put up screens. Details. It's all about the details.

(AMY and CLOP give the bird a final tug and both get a piece, falling backwards, out of view.)

DE DE

Oh, my.

CLOP

(Coming in through the screen door, holding the bald bird carcass.)

Well, this really is my lucky day! It's against the law to kill one, but if it dies on its own, its fair game!

(Beat.)

Hey, DeDe, you got one of those two-ply freezer bags I could borrow? My freezer's on the fritz at the moment.

DE DE

(Horrified.)

I do not see that bird. That bird is not in my house.

AMY

Yeah, take it to your own house, dead bird lover.

(Amy tosses him the bird's head, which he catches in one hand.)

CLOP

DeDe? Bags?!

DE DE

Can't we just tie it to the fence or something? Make it look like its singing. Can't we just do that?

AMY

Its head's ripped off, Ma. Unless you have a plan for somehow reversing the obvious, that thing might as well be buried out back with Baxter and Fluffy.

DE DE

But...do we really have to put it...in the freezer?

(CLOP has found himself a measuring tape.)

CLOP

Here, Amy.

(He gives it to AMY, and then stretches the headless birds wings out.)

Wow! It's a beauty! Measure, Amy, quick! The left one's holding on by a thread.

(AMY measures as she's told, quickly.)

CLOP

She's a beauty, huh?

(He puts it in the plastic bag, along with the head.)

DE DE

I just don't see why we can't put it back outside. It would take days before...

CLOP

That bird ain't doin' no more singing, Deirdre. But I'll fix her up, put her head back on, and no one'll be the wiser.

(KATE suddenly speaks up. All eyes are on her.)

KATE

There has to be pressure. There has to be pressure to lift up. There must be weight, too. Based on the wings the lift is, forced, in a way. It's forced. If it's designed to fly, it will fly. It's math. It's proven. It's the angle of the attack. Exposure. Air. Speed. Density. Lack of something and more of nothing. And there is flight. It's planned. It's designed. If it's not designed to fly it will fall. Without weight it can't fly. Floating is not flying. There has to be the push. It all works together. The push, the weight, the wings. All of it. The center. The time. The take-off. Always with resistance. That's flight.

SCOTT

(Kindly.)

Did you always know you wanted to be a flyer?

KATE

Yes. Always.

SCOTT

When I was in aviation school, they always said that true flyers were a certain kind of person. Do you think that's true?

KATE

You tell me.

SCOTT

I did...but I knew that I wasn't. Really. I had too much fear. I analyzed too much. Thought too much.

(Beat.)

But you have that spark. The need for danger. You have what it takes. You have to be a little bit...

Crazy.
KATE

Do you think you are?
SCOTT

Yes.
KATE

DE DE
When Katie was little she named her dog after Chuck Yeager.
What kid does that?

AMY
Chuckie's buried in the back with Baxter and Fluffernutter.
Fluffy, for short.

DE DE
He was a good dog.

AMY
He was a good dog.

(Pause.)

CLOP
(Looks up to the sky, as though speaking to
the heavens.)
Oh, Chuckie, if you can hear us now, know that we miss the
grand yellow turds you used to leave on my front steps.
And we are all sorry your slobber, the way your eyes would
cross, and your sad, sorrowful, untimely death.
(He laughs cynically, alone.)
I'm just kiddin', just kiddin'. He was a beautiful dog, he
was. I wanted to stuff him, but the girls protested.

DE DE
You hadn't had much practice at that point.

CLOP
True, true.

SCOTT
How did you all find each other?

CLOP

Come again?

DE DE

Well, Cloppy's always lived next door and I've always lived here and he's like family.

CLOP

You used to wear sparkles around your eyes, remember?

DE DE

Silver. It was silver liner.

SCOTT

So, I guess...you were the obvious choice to be...Kate's lawyer on the case.

DE DE

Well, of course...who else.

SCOTT

Clop...what would you say was or is your main objective with Kate's case?

CLOP

How do you mean?

SCOTT

Well...what do you think—

KATE

I can speak for myself.

SCOTT

I suppose, that was my question.

CLOP

You need me—

KATE

No. Not now.

DE DE

Now, Katie, that's a terrible thing to say! You just apologize right now! Say you're sorry!

(Beat.)

She didn't mean it, Clop. I know she didn't. You know how emotional she can be.

KATE

No one can help anymore. I have to handle this myself.

DE DE

Mister Greenwood, I think you should leave us alone. This is a family matter.

(She holds up her spatula again.)

KATE

You don't scare me.

(KATE stands out of her chair for the first time.)

Put it down.

(Very slowly, DE DE lowers her spatula and quickly segues into a babyish whimper.)

DE DE

Why are you so hurtful all the time? Why are you like this? Did I raise you to be this way? Do just want to hurt me? As if I haven't been hurt enough...because of you!

(KATE sits back down.)

CLOP

So...uh...am I still the lawyer, or no?

(Pause.)

DE DE

(In sniffles.)

I'm going back to my potato salad.

SCOTT

Clop...how do you plan to handle Kate's institutionalization?

CLOP

Handle it? How do you mean?

SCOTT

Right before Christmas of last year, Kate checked herself into the state mental institution. How do you plan to handle that?

CLOP

Well, she made it out, didn't she?

DE DE

We don't like to...talk about that in front of Kate. It's a sensitive subject.

KATE

No it's not.

DE DE

Of course it is, Katie.

(Beat.)

We don't like to make her upset.

KATE

I'm not upset.

SCOTT

(To KATE.)

Is it true that on December 23rd of last year you checked yourself into—

(DE DE screams in horror.)

SCOTT

What now?!

(DE DE collapses. CLOP looks at her for a moment, and then bends down to check and see if she's all right.)

CLOP

I'm sure she's fine.

(He pokes her. She stirs.)

KATE

(To SCOTT.)

I had a very nice Christmas. I emerged from the hospital renewed and stronger than ever. I promise you.

SCOTT

That's good to hear.

(Beat.)

Says here you also sustained an injury.

(Beat.)

Broken arm.

(Beat.)

Says here it was badly broken in three places.

(Beat.)

You all healed now?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Are you okay?

KATE

Yes.

(Beat.)

Yes.

SCOTT

Good.

(Beat.)

You've been through a lot.

(No response.)

And you checked out...

(He checks his files.)

On April 1st.

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Hmmm.

(Beat.)

Who was responsible for firing your initial counsel?

DE DE

Me. I was.

SCOTT

Your attorney, Fred Bayer, seemed to want to move forward and fight.

(Everything goes silent.)

CLOP

What exactly do you want from us?

SCOTT

Well, correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought that this was about Kate—

CLOP

No.

SCOTT

No?

CLOP

That's where I stepped in. Just in the nick of time.

SCOTT

What are you talking about?

CLOP

It's not about winning. Sure, that other guy was doing a good job and all, but we didn't want a fight, we didn't even want to win...we just wanted...out.

SCOTT

Out?

CLOP

Yes. Out.

SCOTT

I don't think I understand.

DE DE

We wanted our lives back. That's all.

SCOTT

So, what you're telling me is...you would compromise this girl's past, present, and future. Her reputation, her career, because it was an inconvenience.

DE DE

That makes us sound shallow.

CLOP

We're not.

SCOTT

Kate, if you want to fight, you have to let me know right now.

DE DE

She doesn't want that. You don't want that, Kate.

AMY

Will you shut up and stop speaking for her?

(DE DE is furious and gets out her dish towel again.)

DE DE

What did you say?

AMY

You heard me.

(Beat.)

Go ahead. Go ahead and whip me right in front of our company. Go ahead.

(Beat.)

Make my day.

(The two stare at each other for a while.)

AMY

Mr. Greenwood, you can ask me a few questions if you like.
I'm not scared.

SCOTT

Are you eighteen?

AMY

Just turned last month.

SCOTT

All right. Amy...how much younger are you than your
sister?

AMY

Two years.

SCOTT

Do you remember when she left for basic training?

AMY

Oh, yeah. I remember...feeling jealous of her. Wanting
her to come take me, too.

SCOTT

How come?

AMY

Because it was an adventure. We don't get much of that
around here.

SCOTT

Has your impression of military life changed because of
Kate's situation?

DE DE

Is that what you call it? A situation?

SCOTT

What would you call it, Dede?

(DE DE scoffs and goes back to her cooking.)

SCOTT

If you'd like to comment, now's your chance. What would you call what happened to your daughter?

DE DE

(Yells.)

Don't you get it? Nothing happened to my daughter?

(She claps her hand over her mouth,
almost shocked.)

SCOTT

Excuse me?

DE DE

Forget it.

SCOTT

Absolutely not.

CLOP

Understanding that I've just been fired and all that, I'd still like to point out that there is such a thing as post traumatic stress. We veterans understand that.

SCOTT

(To DE DE.)

I'd like it if you would elaborate.

DE DE

I...Clop's right...I shouldn't have said...that...

CLOP

War. Trauma. Cigar burns. It's a horrible thing.
Horrible.

SCOTT

I don't believe that.

AMY

Neither do I.

DE DE

You watch your mouth.

AMY

I've been watching it. It's doing everything it's told to do.

DE DE

Mr. Greenwood...when you're a mother...

(She's flustered, and wipes her brow.)

Can someone open a...no, nevermind. I don't want the windows open because I don't want the bugs to get in. I don't have a house with bugs in it. You know? It's just so hot in here...

SCOTT

Do you have house with a daughter who's a whore?

(Shocked silence.)

DE DE

What?

SCOTT

Mrs. Foster...I'm asking you a question...do you have a house with a daughter who is a whore? A daughter who created a serious scandal? A daughter who caused herself and her whole family a great deal of humiliation because of her...promiscuity?

DE DE

We don't...talk like that in this house.

SCOTT

What do you talk like?

AMY

We lie.

SCOTT

What?

DE DE

Amy...

AMY

We do. We lie.

SCOTT

(Opens his folder.)

At 3:30AM on November 1st of last year, Kate Foster went into base security and claimed that her boyfriend Jimmy Tate and two of his friends, had pinned her down and raped and sodomized her on the lawn outside their barracks. No one in the vicinity claimed to see anything. Tests proved that Kate had received forcible sex with these three men.

(Beat. To KATE.)

Then you got a lawyer, you were doing great. You fired him, hired...this guy...and called it quits. Why?

DE DE

Why do you care?

SCOTT

I want to hear it from Kate.

(Beat.)

Amy...when you said that you lie, what did you mean?

AMY

I mean...the truth is too hard. Sometimes. Like, with my dad. He wasn't here before he was gone. We knew he didn't like us. Forget about love, he didn't even like us. We knew he didn't want to be here. He was never with my mom. Always running around. It's true. We all knew it. But no one was allowed to say it.

(Beat.)

And when Kate signed up...we knew there was a war. We knew she shouldn't have been there. We knew all the risks. But we did what we were told 'cause...we had to. We lied and said she'd be okay. But she wasn't. She didn't need to go to war...to experience it. War found her.

DE DE

The military's no place for a girl.

(Beat.)

I suppose you're gonna blame me now. Men...men can't help themselves, and you get into a war-type situation and there's just nothing left. You know? They have their urges. You can't blame men for everything. I know people like to. But...the military's no place for a girl. It's human nature for everything to get...confused.

SCOTT

So, what about you, Amy? Are you going into the military or are you getting married?

(Pause.)

AMY

I enlisted on my birthday.

SCOTT

Does your mother know?

AMY

She went with me.

SCOTT

(To DE DE.)

So, you deny that you're daughter got raped?

DE DE

I don't deny anything. Sometimes things happen. They change you. They're unfortunate. But that's the way it is. You take it...and you...get on with your life.

SCOTT

You mean...you can't blame men for forcing her to have sex with them?

DE DE

(Pause.)

No.

SCOTT

There are photos of your daughter. Bruises on her wrists from where she was held down. Scraped on the back of her neck from where they forced her head down in the dirt. Her nose was smashed from being pushed. Her stomach burned from being dragged. Are you going to tell me you don't have a problem with this?

DE DE

You have to understand...we're not bad people. We're a good, normal family. We don't want any trouble with anyone...

SCOTT

Mrs. Foster, your daughter went to officials and they concluded there was something very seriously awry with that incident, and yet she was dishonorably discharged. One minute she was a promising, decorated soldier, the next she was told to get out. And had to leave her wings behind. And you're telling me you have no problem with this?

DE DE

My daughter has one chance. She has one chance left. It's not about her past. It's not about her present. It's about her future. What do you honestly believe is going to happen for her? When I look at that girl, I know she's not the same. Everyone knows it. So, what are we gonna do? Get her name cleared? Well, I'm sorry to tell you this but that simply ain't gonna happen. There's no clearing that girl's name. Period. It doesn't matter what happened that night in the barracks. No one cares. They only care about what she was and is right now. She's a cheap, easy girl, who liked to drink a lot who just got out of a nuthouse. You can flip through your folder all you like, Mr. Greenwood, but that's story, in sum. You can spend the rest of your life trying to clear her name and achieve justice or whatever you wanna call it, but we have to live here. Do you know what that means? It means, real life. And around here, no one cares about the outcome of a trial like that. She can't win. They care about who you are. And there's no changing who you are in their eyes. They decided who Kate was a long time ago. It doesn't matter if

it was right or wrong, that's just how it is. That's real life.

SCOTT

That's real life?

DE DE

Yes.

(Pause.)

CLOP

Well, things sure are gettin' mighty *serious* around here!
(Silence. CLOP goes to the freezer and retrieves his frozen dead bird.)

I think me and my dead bird are gonna go home and take a nap. Not together.

(He holds his hand out for SCOTT to shake.)

It was a pleasure meeting you, Greenwood. You'll make a real good civilian some day.

(He walks out.)

AMY

I'm not scared, you know.

(She exits.)

SCOTT

(Pause. To DE DE.)

Could I speak to Kate alone, just for a minute?

(No response.)

De De?

DE DE

(In a low voice.)

Yes.

(She goes to KATE.)

The world isn't right, honey. It's just not. But the one thing you can count on is family. And you'll always have us.

(Beat.)

When you get right down to it...what else do you have?

(She exits out the back door. SCOTT and KATE sit in silence for a good while. Finally, SCOTT gets up and begins cleaning the table, rinsing the cups and wiping the dishes.)

SCOTT

(In a kind, soft tone.)

Well, you certainly have a nice family. Crazy, but nice. They think they're looking out for you, and really that's what counts, right? Intentions. It's all about intentions. I intended to come out here today to...to see you...to speak with you...I never thought it would be so hard to do.

(Beat.)

Now maybe you can tell me what you want to do. Forget about your mom and your sister... She's really enlisted, huh? You have one heck of a family. No one wants to break the military lineage, not even for...well...let's face it...most people might think twice after their daughter claims she was gang raped on a military base.

(Beat.)

But not yours. Good for them.

(Beat.)

Now...why don't we revisit the events that brought us together...

(Gently takes a seat. He looks at KATE, but doesn't take out his notebook or any pretense of recording the facts.)

You were hanging out in the barracks...drinking, smoking, whatever else. You and Jessica took a leisurely stroll home. Singing. Loudly. It was a nice night, right? One of those warm, fresh nights where you can smell the green in the grass right after it rains. It had rained a lot that day, huh? A perfect Fall night. A perfect night.

(He reminisces, it seems, fondly.)

When I saw...you're name. I saw the file, and I saw your name and I thought...I know you won't believe this but I thought...good for her. Good for her. I did. I just grabbed up that file and I thought...good for her. It's good for women to feel...empowered. It is. I'm all for it. After all, who wants a woman who doesn't fight?

(Pause.)

Who wants a woman who doesn't fight?

(Pause.)

Who? Who wants a woman like that?

(Pause.)

Without girls like you, guys like me wouldn't have any fun.

(He chuckles, pulls out his file, reads.)

At 3:30AM on November 1st of last year, Kate Foster went into base security and claimed that her boyfriend Jimmy Tate and two of his friends had pinned her down and raped and sodomized her on the lawn outside their barracks. No one in the vicinity claimed to see anything. Tests proved that Kate had received forcible sex with these three men.

(Beat. To KATE.)

Then you got a lawyer, you were doing great. You fired him, hired...this guy...and called it quits. Why?

(Beat.)

Why the second thoughts, Kate? Why re-ignite the case? You sure you want to do that? I need to know. I need to know now if I'm gonna have to come back again.

(Beat.)

Do you think your mother can deal with all the hype that would go along with a case like this? Having everyone know what a cheap whore her daughter is? You want to put your mother through that. Do you want that scandal for your family?

(Beat.)

My job today is to collect the facts and hear from you, Kate, exactly what you want from this. I can submit what I believe, or I can submit what you tell me. It's up to you.

(Beat.)

I just want to hear your story. It's just me and you. I need to know what you want to do.

(Pause.)

You're mother's right. The military's no place for a girl.

(KATE leans over and spits in his face.

SCOTT isn't angry, he merely takes a moment to clean up and collect himself. After a moment, he laughs. He laughs so hard and uncontrollably and for so long, yet KATE keeps a stoic gaze on him the whole time.)

SCOTT

Why did you fire you're lawyer?

(Long pause while KATE stares SCOTT in the eye.)

KATE
Because there's no law.

SCOTT
No?

KATE
No.

SCOTT
You sure about that?

KATE
Yes.

SCOTT
(Beat.)
Hmmm. Okay. Then why did you file the claim in the first place? I have to say your rape kit was...
(He chuckles, as if recalling a ridiculous incident.)
Pretty...fucking gross.

KATE
You saw?

SCOTT
Of course. That's how I knew—

KATE
Knew, what?

SCOTT
Wha—

KATE
Say it.

SCOTT
I don't know what kind of—

KATE

Say it.

SCOTT

You're fucking—

KATE

Say it, cock sucker. Spit it out.

(Pause.)

SCOTT

You got a big mouth. You got a lot of big things. Some of them feel good and some of them don't.

KATE

Everything feels big to a guy with a small prick.

(Beat.)

Especially when him and his buddies are pinning a drunk girl down.

SCOTT

(Beat.)

Look, I don't really need to carry on with you like this all over again. Last time...someone got hurt. At least you did the right thing. Now you're stirring shit up. Makes me think maybe you don't know how bad things can get.

KATE

I'm not scared.

SCOTT

No?

KATE

No.

SCOTT

Now, Amy...I see the resemblance. She's got spunk. I like a girl like that. Too bad she probably won't be stationed near me...chances of that are slim. But, you know what they say, we're all one big happy military family. I know guys everywhere. So, in a sense, wherever she is, I'll be.

(Pause. KATE doesn't react.)

You must be scared for her.

No. KATE

You are. SCOTT

No. KATE

Fuck you. SCOTT

No. KATE

SCOTT
I know guys all over who would love to get a taste of
little Amy...mmmmmm...they'd really enjoy her, too.
(Pause. KATE doesn't react.)
I don't know how you sleep.

Like a baby. KATE

SCOTT
Well, I guess we've got a lot of years to work on her.

KATE
You won't do nothing to Amy.

SCOTT
Maybe I will, maybe I won't, but—

KATE
Shut up.

SCOTT
Did you just tell me to shut up?

KATE
Shut up. Cock sucker.

SCOTT

Does someone want another broken arm? Is that what this is all about, Katie? Excruciating pain tends to give you some sense.

KATE

I got two arms. I got two legs. I got a back and I got a neck and I got a skull. And most of all I got a spine. Which is a lot more than you got.

SCOTT

You're just some scared little girl.

KATE

No.

SCOTT

Well, you sure were scared that night.

KATE

I'm not scared now.

SCOTT

You are.

KATE

No.

SCOTT

Remember how it felt when we broke your arm? You were a feisty little bitch then, too, but that sure did the trick. Snapped like a tree branch. You cried and cried.

(He softly imitates her crying, like a baby.)

KATE

There are worse things.

SCOTT

Yeah. You're right. You'll get to know 'em pretty good if you decide to move forward.

KATE

I can't wait.

SCOTT

You got some serious shit coming your way, girl.

KATE

I look forward to it.

(Beat.)

Just keep your tiny dick to yourself. There's nothing more horrifying than that.

(He abruptly stands to leave.)

SCOTT

You're lucky we're not alone.

KATE

We are alone.

SCOTT

I mean really alone.

KATE

(She looks around.)

We're alone.

(Beat.)

Or, what?

(Beat.)

Go back to base. I'll see you soon enough.

SCOTT

Don't count on it.

(Beat.)

Hey, uh...on the way down I read a story about some girl who drowned near here. They're gonna...try to find her. Sad story. Friend of yours?

KATE

Yes.

SCOTT

Terrible thing. Terrible. Her family must be devastated. So sad. Pretty girl like that...rotting at the bottom of some murky dam all this time. Hope it wasn't too painful for her. Sure hate for that to be you.

KATE

Shelly didn't know how to swim.

SCOTT

Doesn't matter if she did. Maybe someone put her there. Maybe she deserved it. Maybe that's where you'll wind up.

KATE

I've been at the bottom of that dam many, many times. It's as awful as you think it is. But I can swim. And I can fly. And no matter what happens to me I'm gonna haunt you in your dreams.

(Beat.)

What's scarier than that?

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY