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JUST CAUSE

A Serious Comedy

by

Greg Younger

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Just Cause
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

6W / 5M

SUZY: Private in US Army
PAUL: Suzy’s Husband; former P.O.W.
MANAGER BOB: Manager EarthFoods; calm and chill
SHIRLY: Manager Bob’s wife; high maintenance
RICHARD: General Manager, EarthFoods
TOODIE: A regular at EarthFoods; Desert Storm veteran
YOGI DEV: Another regular at EarthFoods; white-gowned yogi
PATROLPERSON BETSY: No nonsense policewoman
PATROLPERSON JEN: Betsy’s lover and patrol partner
CINDY: Gum snapping mall rat; wise beyond her years
BETH: Cindy’s BFF; sharp and energetic

SETTING

TIME: Present Day
PLACE: EarthFoods, a natural foods co-op

SCENES

ACT I; Scene 1: In an aisle in EarthFoods; morning.
ACT I; Scene 2: In an aisle in EarthFoods; closing time at 6 pm.

ACT II; Scene 1: In an aisle in EarthFoods; late at night when closed.
ACT II; Scene 2: In the Manager’s office at EarthFoods later that night.
ACT II; Scene 3: In an aisle in EarthFoods early the next morning.
Just Cause
by Greg Younger

ACT I; Scene 1

(AT RISE: An aisle in a medium-sized organic supermarket. A large sign is suspended above with the heading “AISLE 5” and below a list of items found in the aisle; Aspirin, Diuretics, Vitamins, Creams, Supplements, Remedies, Tinctures and Powders. SOFT MUSIC plays in the background amidst SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE AND DISTANT EXPLOSIONS. SUZY, wearing fatigues, enters, searches for PAUL, and exits. MANAGER BOB, an extremely cuddly man, enters with PAUL, who opens a box and begins counting its contents.)

MANAGER BOB

So?

PAUL

Hey.

MANAGER BOB

Find the purpose of the pricing gun? Helping customers?

PAUL

Consumers. (Muttering) Consumers.

MANAGER BOB

(Opening box) Consumers. Okay. Well? Want the job?

PAUL

(Pause) Pain is weakness leaving the body.

(PAUL tries to price a box of goods. The gun jams up with tape.)

Dammit!

MANAGER BOB

It's not that bad. What's wrong?

PAUL

The thing is down. Everything is wrong. Headaches. This.

MANAGER BOB

It's not like you haven't handled a gun before.

PAUL

Ha ha.
MANAGER BOB

Now there's a smile.

(RICHARD, the general manager, enters.)

RICHARD

SIR!!!

PAUL

What?

RICHARD

Sir! That...is not...a toy. Surrender it immediately to your superior.

PAUL

The pricing gun?

MANAGER BOB

Paul, give it up. That's right. Put it down. Now kick it over.

PAUL

He can't be serious.

MANAGER BOB

Gently, gently. Here you are, Dick.

RICHARD

Thank you sir. Train the new hire properly. You allowed him access to... (Mumbling) this is unacceptable, look at this...look! Sir, do you... Has the new hire been trained on the pricing equipment?

PAUL

I just started yesterday!

RICHARD

Was I talking to you? Was I? Bob, we all know the training procedures. Do not deviate from them. And you, sir, watch the attitude. We have eyes, and we are watching.

(RICHARD exits.)

PAUL

Watch my...!

MANAGER BOB

Slow down, Paul. Take a breath. One more. Good.
(MANAGER BOB fiddles with the pricing gun, fixes it and prices a few items.)

PAUL

Guns don’t price people, people price people. Bob, can we talk? Are we fenced in?

(RICHARD is heard over loudspeakers.)

RICHARD, O.S.

Management to office.

MANAGER BOB


PAUL

Negative. And there's the electronic babysitter in the corner. Just in case. I don't know. I'm a basket case.

MANAGER BOB

You're fine. It's good to have you back. Really. I'll be right in the office if you need me. Breathe. It's not a battle zone. You're not a prisoner.

PAUL

Tell that to Dick.

MANAGER BOB

He's a pussycat, once you get to know him.

PAUL

If you say so.

RICHARD, O.S.

Senior staff to office.

PAUL

How many senior staffers are there?

MANAGER BOB

Just me. Be right back.

(MANAGER BOB exits. PAUL begins pricing again. The gun jams.)
PAUL
For the love a...

(SUZY enters, wearing fatigues. PAUL is preoccupied.)

How may I help you? Hold up. The tape just goes, there, no, there...

Hi.

PAUL
Howdy do. Damn!

SUZY
Paul?

PAUL
Um...yeah. Just gotta stock this here, okay? One minute. Alright?! Sorry.

SUZY
Just takes spit.

(SOUND: EXPLOSION; PAUL stops struggling with the gun.)

PAUL
Ahhh crap!

SUZY
Are you okay?

PAUL
Headache. I gotta go.

SUZY
Paul?

PAUL
How do you know me? Look, ah, I just gotta get...you want something? (Wincing) Damn! I'll call someone, miss, okay? Okay?

SUZY
Darling, it's me! I've missed you so. So much. I've been looking everywhere!

(SUZY runs towards him for an embrace. SOUND: GREATER EXPLOSION AND GUNFIRE; PAUL backs away.)
Son of a...! I'll find someone. I can't...Sorry miss.

Paul!?

Sorry!

(PAUL exits. SUZY is alone, dumbfounded. BETH and CINDY enter, chattering.)

And did you see the look on his face?

GOD!

Right? Right?

So queer.

(BETH and CINDY notice SUZY.)

You okay?

(To herself) Paul, you, you don't recognize me? How is that possible? How can that be? (To BETH and CINDY) He doesn't know me.

Why don't you sit for a minute, honey?

(SUZY sits on some boxes.)

Don't get her in trouble.

Stop it lighten up. (To SUZY) So, he who?

Yeah who's he?
Paul! My Paul! Do you two work here?

No. We just shop here. A lot.

A lot. It's a freak show.

(Giggling) Yeah right? So yeah we're in school, kinda Montessori but more like homeschool.

You really look sad.

She looks freaked out.

That too.

You okay?

No. No. Thanks for asking. Not okay. Not at all. I'm so far from okay...

Maybe we should leave her alone.

Who's Paul?

Leave her alone, Beth.

No. No, it's okay.

Don't tell me to leave her alone, I can leave her alone if I want. You're not the boss of me.

He doesn't recognize me. He...he just looked past me. Like I was a stranger.
(SUZY nearly falls; BETH catches her.)

BETH
I think it might be a good idea to keep sitting.

CINDY
Poor thing.

BETH
Can we, you know, like help or something?

SUZY
I left my post. I had to! They wouldn't tell me anything.

BETH
Is that good? Do you get court martialed and stuff when you do that?

CINDY
Beth be cool!

You be cool.

CINDY
Cooler than you. (Pause) Go on honey, you can talk to us we are totally cool, more than everybody.

Everybody. We're not judgey.

SUZY
I get here, all the way from Iraq, greasing every palm in sight, go AWOL for the rest of my life to just...what? I love him. The way he smiles, the way he holds a glass. The way we—

(Cutting her off) True love?

BETH
The truest! You have no idea. We were stationed in different countries. It was only going to be for a few months. A few months! What does that mean? Two? Eight? A few? A few turned into a year, and when I asked after him, the brass said it was classified. Classified! For a year, longer, no letters. No calls. Nothing. I thought...

CINDY
Go.
Yeah go.

I thought. I thought he was dead.

But he isn't, right? And it's true love?

That's what she said, Cindy. True, as in blue. As. In.

If it's true love, you can't give up. You gotta get him back. No matter what.

You gotta get him back. He'll remember.

(SUZY nearly passes out; BETH holds her up.)

Oh my god. You need a doctor. Like my dad! Right?

He's a lab rat, B. Wait. What does he do again?

It's like penicillin, that's what he always tells me.

How is it like penicillin?

Like, Daddy takes a little of the cause, the bug he says, and turns it to medicine or something like that.

“Hair of the dog.”

The cure in the cause...the cure is in the cause.

Yeah, like that.
SUZY
The cause. So what is the cause? (Pause) I can stand, thanks. Okay, I know. I know now.

BETH
Know what?

CINDY
He's not dead, dummy.

BETH
Don't say dummy, Cin-Cin. You're the dummy.

CINDY
No you are.

BETH
What you are, but what am I? Be easy.

SUZY
He's not dead. My love, he's alive. And he's worth fighting for.

BETH
True blue love O'rama!

SUZY
The cause is the cure. Right.

CINDY
Medicine.

SUZY
I won't abandon him, and therapy is not my first option. Girls, I have a mission.

BETH
Thought you said you went AWOL.

CINDY
I get it, B. She means a different kinda mission. A love mission. Change O plan-o.

SUZY
For the better, but I need your help. I'm Suzy. And you're willing to help? Really?

CINDY
Sign me up.
BETH
Me too.

CINDY
I'm Cindy, this is B. Beth. She's my bestie. And we're all about love...love is all there is. So, we're here for ya. Reporting for duty. This is da bomb.

BETH
Boo-yea! Ten hut and all that. What are our orders?

SUZY
Thank you. Thank you both. Welcome to my army. Okay, here's what I'm thinking...

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT I; Scene 2

(AT RISE: PAUL and MANAGER BOB stocking shelves. TOODIE enters.)

TOODIE
Yo.

PAUL and MANAGER BOB
Toodie.

TOODIE
Whoa! I'm a needin' it bad dudes. Yo. Paul. Paul m'man, can ya flip me that vita-6 with Garlic over there while I scope out the new powders. Yeah, that one.

PAUL
Affirmative.

(PAUL tosses bottle into TOODIE's basket.)

TOODIE
Man, this, this country is pushin' and pushin' me hard...Is this new? This stuff, this Spirolica booster stuff over yonderola? Yeah, this. Yeah, this stuff...just to stay alive in this dime and five, man. So is it good? I'm tellin' ya, not to beat it dead with a big whiney stick n all, but in no uncertain terms if this weren't here, if these medicinins you know, this, and this...I'd be AWOL. Haha! Woo! Ya like that? A waste of life. (Shopping while speaking) So why do I stay? If it's so bad here, why don't I do up a do and skiddoo. Just go. And I'll tell ya, I'll tell ya, oh I tell ya alright, cause I'm tied. Tied in, tied up, and tied together secure. Obligations. I jack you not. Brothers, sisters, nephews nieces my gimpy Ma...family. (To PAUL; pointing at bottle) Hand me that willya? (Paul throws a bottle to him.) I'm tied! And it's good to be
TOODIE, *Continued*

needed, you know, to have love, and you know you gotta be there for the clan, Stan...So I keep er together cuz I gotta keep her afloat. And that, boys, is the business end a that stick.

**MANAGER BOB** and **PAUL** and **TOODIE**

I jack you not.

**TOODIE**

Hubba hubba dang dang doodle. And this here, if any fickin' body's got even a jigger of a clue-in, is how to fortify the defenses. Sandbag the parameter. I jack you not. Say soldier, and could ya hand me the usual? Yeah, that there Retin-A with the organically modified doohicky, K?

**PAUL**

Yeah. (To **MANAGER BOB**) *War.*

**MANAGER BOB**

*War*...I’ll get it. Anything for our customers.

**PAUL**

Consumers.

**MANAGER BOB**

Consumers?

**PAUL**

Oil, sugar...

**TOODIE**

Hell yeah and howdy marine, and there’s a platoon of bad units out there best be gettin’ here. I absolutely jack, you, not. Feel me on this? You guys feel me, do you feel me? This is the shit, this is the moment, where we all, all of us, every damn one gotta step up... But maybe that’s why this USofA is the way it is, no bodys...why don't you let me swear in the store? Yeah yeah yeah I know...crud, crap. Crap is alright right? So anyway, lotta people lotta lotta, they just they can’t...they won't...they, they almost what from whatever, you know? Better know I know I know it. Didn't I do what I did? I did it. I did my time. Am I way off base here?

**PAUL**

You did your duty.

**TOODIE**

Yuppers. I did indeediola. (*TOODIES’ pager rings. He checks it.*) Hold up. I gotta get this. *(On phone)* Uh huh. Wait a sec. *(To **PAUL** and **MANAGER BOB**) Stand down, people! *(On phone)* Yup. Uh huh.
MANAGER BOB

(To PAUL) Paul, do you still have the pricing gun?

PAUL

Yeah. Um. It's...

TOODIE

1600 gotta boog. Semper Fi, man. (Slaps PAUL on back) Gotta answer the call of duty. Hooah!

PAUL

Back atcha, Tood.

TOODIE

Lock and load.

(TOODIE exits.)

MANAGER BOB

Paul...

(SHIRLY enters.)

SHIRLY

Hella hella. Robert, my love, I just wanted to drop the Datsun and trade keys. I need the Volvo.

MANAGER BOB

Uh-hmm.

SHIRLY

How are you sweetie? The keys?

MANAGER BOB

Sure. (Fishes in pocket) Here.

(MANAGER BOB and SHIRLY exchange keys.)

SHIRLY

(Noticing PAUL) And who might you be?

MANAGER BOB

Shirly, Paul. Paul, this is my wife, Shirly.

SHIRLY

How are you?
(SHIRLY takes PAUL's hand.)

PAUL
Fine.

MANAGER BOB
New hire. Old friend. He's just come back...well, sorta. He was in the war, taken prisoner.

PAUL
That part is a little fuzzy.

SHIRLY
(Still holding PAUL's hand) Ahh, poor baby. I'm so sorry. Don't you remember anything?

MANAGER BOB
You can let go of him now. Honey, we have work to do.

SHIRLY
Of course. Nice meeting you. If you need to process-

MANAGER BOB
Shirly. Please.

SHIRLY
I'm just trying to help, Robert. (To PAUL) You'll be okay. (To MANAGER BOB) I'll leave the Datsun out by the loading bay.

(YOGI DEV enters as SHIRLY exits.)

PAUL
She's a friendly. Definitely a consumer.

MANAGER BOB
Too friendly. Can you make sure the tinctures are alphabetized? I'll be back.

(MANAGER BOB exits.)

YOGI DEV
Smiling.

PAUL
Back at 'cha. You're Yogi Dev?

YOGI DEV
Yes.
PAUL
Something happened this morning, put me out of whack. There a full moon or what?

YOGI DEV
Why?

PAUL
Anything on the radar I should know about?

YOGI DEV
You?

PAUL
I'm afraid for no reason. I'm really scared, and you're into that mystical stuff right? Do you understand?

YOGI DEV
If there is fear, watch it dance, do not identify with it.

PAUL
But the cause, what would the cause be? Are aliens landing? Is the world ending tomorrow? You can tell me.

YOGI DEV
There is no cause. No effect. Perfection.

PAUL
Who said anything about perfection?

YOGI DEV
You as 'you' will never know. Give up being somebody.

PAUL
Yogi Dev, is it? So this is your advice? Give up?

YOGI DEV
Give up and allow.

PAUL
Oh I give up alright.

YOGI DEV
Good! Excellent!

PAUL
It is what you said.

I was exasperated.

You as a wind were, but 'I' was never.

Uh huh. Is it possible to have an actual conversation with you?

Of course, but who would be having it?

Good point. Forget I asked.

Forgotten. Mugwort?

Bottom left.

I thank you.

(YOGI DEV exits.)

Deep breath. Take a deep breath. Man, I miss the woods.

(PAUL exits; Pause; TOODIE enters.)

If my brain weren't attached to my head...hey! Hey?

Ssssst!

Eh?

Soldier...
TOODIE

Come out! I'm armed!

(SOODIE sneaks through the aisle like it's enemy territory. SUZY enters, creeps up behind him and grabs him.)

SUZY

At ease.

TOODIE

Nice moves for a girl. Frickin awesome. I’m not going anywhere. I’m fine right where I amski. Could you pinch me right in the arm, near my elbow? I dig that shit.

SUZY

I'm a soldier, soldier.

TOODIE

Suit yourself, cupcake. OW!

SUZY

I ain't nobody's cupcake, jarhead.

TOODIE

Easy...easy. That I'm not so into.

(SUZY releases him.)

SUZY

Do we have an understanding? I need to know if you can chill and listen. Otherwise we go back to the fun stuff. Well?

TOODIE

Can I tell you you're cute when you're angry?

(SUZY grabs him again.)

SUZY

Not the direction I want this to go.

TOODIE

Kidding! Way kidding like three d kidding!

SUZY

Had enough, loverboy?
(Squeaking) Yeah I'm done.

(SUZY releases him. TOODIE falls to the ground, gasping. SUZY paces.)

SUZY
See, I have a problem. And you are going to help me. How long have you known Paul?

TOODIE
We went to grade school him and me. Then he went off the map for a way long time, and then he just showed up last week. I think you whacked out my alkaline ratio.

SUZY
Can it, soldier. What was he doing off the grid?

TOODIE
Grid?

SUZY
Where was he before he came back?

TOODIE
Redwood Curtain for a year, man. Hardcore. His reflexors are off. Don't tell him I told you.

SUZY
And before that?

TOODIE
Military. Prisoner of war n' stuff. Least that's what my pal Gurney said he said, but he never said that to me direct. We're not all that tight.

SUZY
Prisoner? How? How did he...was he sent home?

(Manager Bob is heard approaching. SUZY runs off.)

TOODIE
Where ya goin'?

(Manager Bob enters.)

MANAGER BOB
You're on the floor.

TOODIE
Protein deficiency. Toss me a bottle of fish oil caps.
(YOGI DEV enters, wearing a caftan. He mills around the aisle for a moment.)

YOGI DEV
On the floor? Might stop eating that.

MANAGER BOB
He was worse before. Can I help you?

YOGI DEV
Cumin?

MANAGER BOB
Cumin isn't a supplement. It's designated as a spice here.

YOGI DEV
Where would this designate be?

MANAGER BOB
What?

YOGI DEV
Cumin?

MANAGER BOB
The spice?

YOGI DEV
It's designate?

MANAGER BOB
Yes, as a spice.

TOODIE
God! Look in the cooking section, aisle whatzitz.

MANAGER BOB
Seven.

YOGI DEV
That would be where it's found?

MANAGER BOB
What?
TOODIE
Yes. Thanks for calling! You get the prize! Are we clear? Is the mission, like—

MANAGER BOB
Toodie, take a breather.

TOODIE

YOGI DEV
Thank you.

(YOGI DEV exits. TOODIE tries to put the cap on the fish oil bottle, but is shaking too much. MANAGER BOB takes the bottle from TOODIE.)

MANAGER BOB
It's cool. Just go home and take whatever it is you take. A nap might help.

TOODIE
Okay, but first I gotta know, just a question and it goes like what was Pauley's deal in the war? After the prisoner stuff?

MANAGER BOB
(Pause) I need to get an interpreter.

(RICHARD is heard over loudspeakers.)

RICHARD, O.S.
Management to Checkstand 3. Checkstand 3, management.

MANAGER BOB
I'm going to have to leave, okay?

TOODIE
Affirmative. Yeah buddy. Tell ya, er, ask you later about that thing I was going to say or ask.

(MANAGER BOB exits. TOODIE whistles for SUZY, looking through the shelves. PAUL enters. TOODIE is trying to find SUZY, oblivious of PAUL.)

TOODIE
Hey. Hey sisterlady? You there? Hey Marine! Or were you infantry, cause that's cool as cool can be too.

PAUL
I hate to interrupt, but I gotta do something.
TOODIE
(Surprised) Holy crap! Hey! Hey hey hey, Paulo! Someone, and I don't know if this is classified, cause I don't get the dossiers, you feel me? Hahaha! (Takes deep breath) Lookin'.

PAUL
Looking?

TOODIE
More like asking.

PAUL
Asking.

TOODIE
Yeah.

PAUL
Someone.

TOODIE
Yeah.

PAUL
About?

(THOOGIEs pager goes off, distracting him.)

TOODIE
About? I gotta get this. (Exiting) Back atcha later, dude!

PAUL
But... (To himself) Move on. Who cares. Boom. Never happened. Okay then.

(PAUL begins unpacking box. SUZY enters. PAUL ignores her.)

SUZY
Hi.

PAUL
Hey. (Grabs his head) Damn!

SUZY
You look like a deer in the headlights.
PAUL
You talkin' to me?

SUZY
Taxi Driver.

(PAUL freezes.)

PAUL
Miss...

(Long Pause; PAUL and SUZY stare at each other.)

SUZY
Paul?

PAUL
Do I love you, er, know...you?

(SHIRLY enters, breezes past SUZY and towers over PAUL.)

SHIRLY
New man. Where is my husband?

PAUL
I don't know. You're standing a little close.

SHIRLY
My husband didn't let you use the car, did he?

PAUL
Yes Maam.

SHIRLY
You used the Volvo?

PAUL
Date last night.

SUZY
(Screaming) Paul!

(SUZY exits.)

PAUL
Postal. The lady's gone postal. Hey, about the car—
SHIRLY
The car? The car? Did she just scream?

(RICHARD enters, fuming.)

RICHARD
What was that? I'm asking you a direct question, sir. I heard something! I will not tolerate screaming in my store! (To SHIRLY) Was it you?

SHIRLY
No, little man. It was most certainly not me, and frankly I don't appreciate you taking that tone with me. I am an owner!

RICHARD
(Humbled) Sorry Miss. It won't happen again.

I think you should call the police.

SHIRLY
Yes ma'am. You may have to be questioned however. You too, sir.

(RICHARD exits.)

SHIRLY
Do you know her?

PAUL
It was a date.

SHIRLY
No. Not the woman you were with last night who helped spill popcorn all over the Volvos' upholstery. Not her. I'm not talking about her. I'm referring to the woman in fatigues who screamed your name. I'm talking about her. The woman who just screamed. That one.

(MANAGER BOB enters. SHIRLY runs to him and holds onto him for dear life.)

MANAGER BOB
Paul? It's okay, baby. Yes, that's a good girl. I'm here.

SHIRLY
(In tears) Who's my butterball?

MANAGER BOB
Pooky wook is right here, boo boo.
SHIRLY
Ba ba need candy.

MANAGER BOB
Kissie to my missy.

PAUL
I'm gonna lose my lunch if you two don't stop.

MANAGER BOB
Break rooms calling ya.

PAUL
Funny, I thought I heard your name.

MANAGER BOB
(To SHIRLY) Okay honey, let's get sometin' for da boo boo.

(PATROLPERSON JEN helps SHIRLY towards the exit, then stops as PATROLPERSON JEN and PATROLPERSON BETSY enter.)

PATROLPERSON JEN
Hello Bob. New guy. I heard ah that you’ve been having ah some altercations on the premises. Truth to that?

MANAGER BOB
Nothin’ we can’t handle…just the usual Martians.

(PATROLPERSON JEN grunts in acknowledgement.)

PAUL
Well? Can I... (Looks at her gun) help?

PATROLPERSON JEN
What are you gettin’ at?

PAUL
Just want to help.

PATROLPERSON JEN
Do I look like I need help?

PAUL
No.
PATROLPERSON JEN
Then why did you ask? Or am I interrupting your thoughts? Is that it, big shot?

PAUL
I'm fine.

PATROLPERSON JEN
I don't think you are. Just keep it in line. Just keep it in line. Do we understand each other?

PAUL
(Turning away, bristling) Yes.

PATROLPERSON JEN
I didn't hear you.

MANAGER BOB
Jen, cut him some slack.

PATROLPERSON JEN
Have you done a background check on him?

(PATROLPERSON BETSY enters.)

PATROLPERSON BETSY
Got it?

PATROLPERSON JEN
No, Mr. Man over here decided to give me a little beef.

PATROLPERSON BETSY
Yeah?

(PATROLPERSON BETSY picks a bottle off the shelf.)

PATROLPERSON JEN
Not that one.

(PATROLPERSON BETSY puts bottle back.)

Watch the attitude, Buster Brown. Bob, tell him to watch his attitude. Clean up your act and fly right buddy boy, or you’re in for a world of hurt. You fit parameters we watch. And we ARE watching. (To BETSY) Statements?

(BETSY grunts.)
PATROLPERSON BETSY

Bob?

MANAGER BOB

Overreaction. You know how Dick gets.

(SHIRLY steps away from MANAGER BOB.)

SHIRLY

She was hysterical!

MANAGER BOB

Shhh...

PATROLPERSON BETSY

It upset her.

(MANAGER BOB and PATROLPERSON BETSY exchange glances.)

PATROLPERSON BETSY

Okay. Okay. I get it.

(PATROLPERSON JEN puts arm around SHIRLY.)

PATROLPERSON JEN

You come down to the station if you want.

SHIRLY

I can't. I've got a hair appointment.

PATROLPERSON BETSY

Do you a world a good. Jen, let's go.

PATROLPERSON JEN

What about him?

PATROLPERSON BETSY

You sure he's clean?

MANAGER BOB

He’s just new.

PATROLPERSON BETSY

Your call.
PATROLPERSON JEN

Got it?

(*PATROLPERSON BETSY picks a bottle off the shelf.*)

PATROLPERSON BETSY

Yup.

PATROLPERSON JEN

That's it.

(*PATROLPERSON JEN and PATROLPERSON BETSY exit.*)

SHIRLY

The keys?

MANAGER BOB

I gave them to you, didn't I?

SHIRLY

Yes. I'm late. Take the cleaning charges out of Paul's paycheck.

(*SHIRLY exits.*)

PAUL

What did the big boss want?

MANAGER BOB

Some deer got into the produce.

PAUL

Deer?

MANAGER BOB

Yeah, they're everywhere around here.

PAUL

Deer.

MANAGER BOB

Huh?

PAUL

Never mind. Just reminded me of something I miss, and I don't even know what it is. A habit. A habit I liked.
Cleaning charges?

PAUL
Popcorn in the Volvo. Sucky date. Big mistake. I ate 2 bags to avoid her.

MANAGER BOB
How is the cottage?

PAUL
It's good. Thanks for letting me stay there.

MANAGER BOB
My pleasure. Anything for a friend. Stay as long as you like.

PAUL
Thanks again.

MANAGER BOB
You know, Toodie asked me something. Well, in his way. What did happen when you were taken prisoner?

PAUL
I'd rather not talk about it.

MANAGER BOB
Just thought it might help.

PAUL
I know. I know. It's not that I can't.

MANAGER BOB
You wanna try?

PAUL
Why? What's the point? You're not getting all touchy feely on me, are ya?

MANAGER BOB
Paul. We all got feelings.

PAUL
Not me. Not anymore.

MANAGER BOB
Let's put that to the test.
PAUL
I don't know.

MANAGER BOB
Come on, Paul. Give it a shot. Might be good for you.

PAUL
Never is. What do you wanna know?

MANAGER BOB
How did it happen?

PAUL
It's fuzzy, Bob. I remember getting taken. The war going out of me like a sigh. Relieved I didn't have to break into people's houses anymore, roomfuls of family. No more domination. No more killing.

MANAGER BOB
Did you?

PAUL
Yeah. Twice. From a distance. I didn't know standard issue could kill at that range.

MANAGER BOB
Didn't know?

PAUL
You know what I mean. Not really. It was just an intense video game until then. But I found out different, I saw the blood wasn't green. He wasn't an alien. He wasn't even a bad guy. I was the bad guy. He was just in his own country fighting for his life, for his family, for his friends, his faith. I was just policing. Doing a job. Defending freedom. Freedom! Whose? Whose freedom? Not mine. Not theirs. In all the raids, going into peoples' houses, while they were in the middle of a meal or getting ready for bed or...not once did I set anything or anyone free. (Pause) Yeah, we were the shit. We had the guns and the gear. IEDs started multiplying, soldiers you ate with, partied with getting vaporized. Nothing left but a foot. It got me real angry, now I just see it as payback.

MANAGER BOB
Don't be so hard on yourself.

PAUL
If I'm not, who will be? Who cares enough?

MANAGER BOB
You always had a sense of rightness. You're a good person.
PAUL
I was a police soldier, protecting and serving the oil. Fed a load of hypocrisy so damn deep...

MANAGER BOB
Go on. What happened?

PAUL
Our Humvee ran over a bomb. All in slow motion. Then I was out. Woke up in the dark, another dark. With a sack on my head.

MANAGER BOB
Sorry.

PAUL
That was nothing. Then they...I don't know, Bob.

MANAGER BOB
You're doing great.

PAUL
Doesn't feel great.

MANAGER BOB
Thought you said you don't have feelings.

PAUL
They...they started interrogating me. Pulled out the coals with huge tongs. Started beating me. One guy had tattoos all over. I didn't know where I was. Where anyone was. No rescue for this grunt. I tried to hang on...no.

MANAGER BOB
Keep going.

PAUL
Keep going. Yeah, keep going. Why?

MANAGER BOB
Paul.

PAUL
I just erased. I was erased, so I erased. Everything, everyone. Gone.

MANAGER BOB
Hey...
Everyone gone.

We can stop.

The sack doesn't come off this heart.

Take it off.

I couldn't if I wanted. Bob, a whole part of my life I don't even remember anymore, just a blank space. Empty.

Gone?

Vanished. Gone. Dead. The part that means the most. Don't we need to alphabetize or something?

Wanna take a break?

Please give me something to do.

(After pause) The...the tinctures need to be faced.

Thanks. Sorry.

The date went pretty bad, huh?

Handfuls of popcorn. Couldn't stuff it down fast enough.

Good for the intestines. (Gently pats PAUL on the back) Good to have you here.

I'm not here. I'll never be back.
MANAGER BOB
Yes you are, Paul. It'll all come back.

PAUL
What if it doesn't? Years of my life gone, love...gone...trust...lobelia, Lavender...

MANAGER BOB
Why don't you take the day?

(TOODIE enters.)

TOODIE
Dudes.

MANAGER BOB
Toodie.

PAUL
Toodie.

TOODIE
Whoa. I'm picking up some major sad vibes. Bad hair day?

(CINDY enters.)

CINDY
Um...Hi...um...Not to be all judgey, but I just got directions from some guy in a like head towel over on aisle 12, next to fruits and veggies--um, ah, Hel-LO, earth calling...

MANAGER BOB
Aisle 3. This is earth. And what planet you call home?

CINDY
Yeah what-EVER. As if.

(RICHARD enters; stares at CINDY.)

RICHARD
Can I help you miss? Are you finding everything okay?

CINDY
What's it to ya?

RICHARD
I'm the Manager of the store, miss.
How nice for you.

Store closes in 10 minutes.

(PAUSE.)

Does anybody feel crowded?

(LIGHTS FLICKER; BETH enters.)

Cin-Cin, I found cherry lip-gloss. Way bomb-o. And you know Robbie... (Notices everyone else) Take a picture, last ya longer. Judgey wudjers. Now?

Did anybody notice the lights?

That was not authorized.

A blackout? Huh.

(Pause) Did I miss any other ones?

What is with the new hire?

What's with you?

Sir. Can I help you?

(LIGHTS SUDDELY OUT.)

W-T-F!

I'm scared.
TOODIE
You're not supposed to say that in the store.

CINDY
Bite me, soldier man/boy.

TOODIE
Bare it.

MANAGER BOB
Toodie.

BETH
Eeew! I'm not scared now. I'm gonna hurl if I hear another—

TOODIE
Crack? Hahahaha! *(Snorts)* Get it. I said crack. As in—

RICHARD
*SIR!*

*(As emergency lights come on, LIGHTS UP DIM & STARK.)*

BETH
This is creepy, Cin-Cin.

CINDY
Yeah. I'm going to another aisle, B.

BETH
Yeah, let's go to another aisle. Right?

CINDY
Right. Like she said.

*(CINDY exits.)*

BETH
Yeah, me too. Wait up!

*(BETH exits.)*

TOODIE
Gotta boog.

MANAGER BOB
Toodie.
I'm allowed to shop.

(TOODIE exits.)

RICHARD
I'd like to have a meeting. New man, take notes.

MANAGER BOB
Here? Now?

RICHARD
Yes. We need to resolve a few issues, and we can't just table them. Are we clear? New man, did you get that down?

PAUL
I don't have a pen.

RICHARD
Packet?

MANAGER BOB
Here's a pen, Paul.

(MANAGER BOB gives PAUL a pen.)

RICHARD
It should have been part of his hiring packet.

MANAGER BOB
It was.

(RICHARD glares at PAUL. CINDY and BETH enter, marching up to MANAGER BOB.)

CINDY
Take us to your leader. Are you the leader?

BETH
Cin-Cin, it doesn't go like that.

CINDY
Right. Okay. I got it.

BETH
Right? Right? You linked up?
CINDY
Right ON, double snap and a half, B girl.

(BETH and CINDY do their “secret handshake”, which involves lots of movements of hands and arms.)

BETH
Sweet. Did Preston call you today?

CINDY
Just Facebook.

BETH
Poke or message?

CINDY
Poke.

BETH
He'll call. He gets so emo.

(BETH and CINDY do another brief exchange of gestures.)

RICHARD
May I help you, ma'am and ma'am?

CINDY
He's gotta be the leader.

BETH
The boss.

CINDY
The big blogger.

(CINDY steps up to RICHARD.)

BETH
Go.

CINDY
We have terms.

RICHARD
For what?
The release of hostages.  

That's not yet.  

Should we call her?  

I'm out of minutes.  

(CINDY takes out her cellphone.)  

Hold up, I've got a text.  

Ladies!  

Hold UP!  

(PAUSE as CINDY reads.)  

Ma'am, may we help you?  

(In another aisle) CLEAR!  

More yelling! This must cease!  

Dial it down, fatty.  

Go, Cindy, go Cindy.  

We're here to discuss terms.  

Terms?
CINDY
We're going to capture...she said capture, right?

BETH
Double snap in a circle. Cap – sure.

CINDY
We need the guy named Paul.

Me?

PAUL
Me?

BETH
Look, he knows his own name. Cheese!

CINDY
Melted, on white.

TOODIE, O.S.
(In another aisle) CLEAR!

(CINDY's cellphone rings with a pop tune ringtone.)

CINDY
(Checking phone) Oh my GOD!

What?

BETH
What?

CINDY
It's him! It's him it's him it's him!

(CINDY and BETH scream and dance, then immediately get very cool. CINDY answers.)

Hello? Hey Preston, what's up?

RICHARD
I don't have time for this! Ma'am!

TOODIE, O.S.
(In another aisle) CLEAR!

MANAGER BOB
Dick...
RICHARD

Zip it!

(SUZY enters in fatigues, holding a gun.)

SUZY

Everybody DOWN!

(CINDY drops phone. TOODIE enters.)

TOODIE

All clear! Hooah!

SUZY

Hooah.

RICHARD

What is this!? This is unacceptable.

TOODIE

Get down, everybody! Hands out, no funny stuff!

(CINDY and BETH start to get on their knees.)

SUZY

(To CINDY and BETH) Not you two.

PAUL

Hey, you're...

SUZY

Yes?

PAUL

That lady.

SUZY

Down! Now!

(Pause; SUZY fires the gun; BLACKOUT.)

END ACT I
ACT II; Scene 1

(AT RISE: 4 A.M. at the store. The usual aisle. Lighting is muted, but not emergency red as in previous act. SOUNDS OF SMALL GUNFIRE AND EXPLOSIONS in the distance. PAUL enters, with a muslin sack over his head, followed by MANAGER BOB and RICHARD. RICHARD’s mouth is taped shut. They are exhausted. Halfway down the aisle, the three captives collapse on the ground. TOODIE enters, following.)

TOODIE
Yella yella!

MANAGER BOB
Toodie, stop it. Please.

TOODIE
Yella yella.

PAUL
Toodie, I know that's you.

MANAGER BOB
It is. Fat lot of difference it makes. We've been marching through the store for hours, Toodie. What is the point?

RICHARD
Mmmm mmmmph!

PAUL
I agree.

TOODIE
Yella yella!

(RICHARD, MANAGER BOB, and PAUL rise with much grunting and groaning. SUZY enters and motions TOODIE to keep them moving. TOODIE makes a sign back, very military, and ushers them offstage. SUZY is alone onstage.)

SUZY
He gave so much. He gave everything. Where did you leave your heart, Paul? Let's find it, love. Don't worry, I remember what it looks like. Don't worry. Am I the only one who knows it? Who really knows you? You see how depressed you are, like you've never been anything different? I know you're there, inside there, and because I love you, because I have a duty to you above all others, to this love, I take this risk. I hear your voice from somewhere, an echo maybe, when you were a prisoner, whispering to me. Or it seems like a whisper. I'm so sorry I couldn't hear it then. I might have, I don't know. I hear it now. I feel impossible longing, and
SUZY, Continued

that echo, pleading for an answer. This is my reply; this is my answer to your call. This. It's crazy, illegal, plain nuts, but it's all I have. What makes a cause just? To find that part of you that makes living life, that is the cause of joy, of compassion, what could be more right? I still have that part, and it breaks seeing you like this. It kills me. Buck up Suzy, it's worth it. This is a just cause. More than the war, that war that took him. Paul, come back. Come back to me. We'll get it all back. Whatever it takes. We'll get it back.

(CINDY and BETH enter and take snacks off the shelves.)

CINDY

I'm kinda like tired.

BETH

Way past my bedtime. I have never ever been up this late. Ever.

CINDY

Nuh uh. 'Member the slumber party last Saturday, B? 'Member?

BETH

Truth or dare, right?

CINDY

Yeah. Yeah. Oh my God! What Bethany did. Do you remember that?!

BETH

Yes! That was so queer!

SUZY

Let's keep on task, girls. You can go home too. Thanks so much for your help.

CINDY

Anything, Suzy. We feel you. We're all over what you're doing.

BETH

Yeah, all over it.

SUZY

Thanks. Like I said, you should go if you're too tired. Go.

BETH

I'll stay. Cindy is the tired one.

CINDY

Nuh uh.
BETH
Are too. You're buggin'.

CINDY
I am not! Am not am not am not! I can't believe you think that. Judger. You're not the boss of me. Don't make me open up a can on you! I was the one who figured it all out, I'm the one who, who, you know, GOD let me think!

SUZY
Cindy, come over here. That's good. It's alright. I know you're a super trouper. You did great. Get some rest. Does your mother know where you are?

Sleepover with Cindy.

BETH
You're Cindy.

CINDY
Duh. Right? With Beth. You're Beth. I'm Cindy.

SUZY
Take a rest in the breakroom, okay?

Are you sure?

CINDY
Yes. It's okay.

SUZY

(CINDY exits.)

(Yawns) Thanks Suz. Chillaxin'.

(CINDY exits.)

SUZY
Beth, I need you to relieve Toodie so I can speak with him.

BETH
Sure thing. 10-4. Um. I really believe in what you're doing.

SUZY
Thanks, Beth. I appreciate that. Now get a move on, soldier!

(BETH exits. YOGI DEV enters.)
Hello.  

YOGI DEV

Hello.  

SUZY

Abiding.  

YOGI DEV

How did you get in here?  

SUZY

I never left.  

YOGI DEV

I cleared the building.  

SUZY

Ah yes. We were meditating in produce, near the broccoli.  

YOGI DEV

We?  

SUZY

We are never alone.  

YOGI DEV

Then why do I feel that way so often?  

SUZY

Who is this “I” you refer to?  

YOGI DEV

Let’s take this somewhere else.

(SUZY ushers YOGI DEV off as TOODIE enters with RICHARD, MANAGER BOB and PAUL, not seeing SUZY.)

TOODIE

We’ll bivouac here. Er... (Motioning to floor) Yella.

MANAGER BOB

What? What do you want us to do?
PAUL
That's the only word he's been saying all night. Can I take this thing off? Can you? Come ON!

TOODIE
Yella!

MANAGER BOB
He wants us to sit.

(MANAGER BOB helps PAUL and RICHARD sit. RICHARD is beyond exhausted.)

TOODIE
(Indicating a bottle on the shelf) Yella!

MANAGER BOB
WHAT DO YOU WANT NOW!?

(TOODIE is taken aback. He motions to the bottle again, more emphatically.)

TOODIE
Yell...

MANAGER BOB
No! Just tell me, Toodie.

TOODIE
I can't. SPIDERS!

RICHARD
Mmph?

(TOODIE drops his gun, which fires. It glances off the side of a shelf and explodes a jar of a red liquid supplement, which splashes on TOODIE. EVERYONE freezes.)

TOODIE
I'm hit. I'm hit. Man down! Medic!

(PAUL faints; BETH runs in.)

BETH
OH...MY...GOD! Who did you kill?! WHO? TELL ME, you freak!

(BETH notices PAUL slumped against a lower shelf.)

MANAGER BOB
It's not like you think. It's beet root. Taste it.
(TOODIE grimaces, then tastes the liquid.)

TOODIE

Yummers.

(BETH hits TOODIE)

BETH

He's the reason we're doing this, I mean, he's the man she's talking about. How could you even fire a gun? Did you not know it was loaded? OH...MY...

MANAGER BOB

Don't panic. He's okay. He's not hurt, he just passed out. Wait. You said he is, was, is...

BETH

Shut up...maggot.

TOODIE

I didn't kill him. Watch the mouth.

(BETH picks up the gun.)

BETH

I'm relieving you.

TOODIE

Stand down. Stand down. Stand down. How many times I gotta say?

SUZY, V.O., Off

(Over loudspeakers) All military personnel to office. Doubletime. (Pause) Toodie, this means you.

TOODIE

I gotta go. Gimmee that.

(TOODIE grabs gun from BETH. TOODIE removes and pockets the clip, then gives the gun back to BETH.)

BETH

(Mouth open) Wha?? How am I gonna guard 'em, military dude man, without bullets?

TOODIE

Just intimidate.

BETH

Okay.
TOODIE
It's easy. Roger that? Roger dodger sister? Ya got er down? Ya kickin it with the ole instructionales, or do I gotta send you back to basic training, um, ah, maggot?

BETH
Don't ever call me that again, wangsta, or I'll tear your eyes out.

TOODIE
Excellent! Carry on.

(TOODIE exits.)

MANAGER BOB
Just take it easy, er...what's your name?

BETH
Are you talkin to me?

MANAGER BOB
I was just asking...

BETH
Are you talkin to me? (Getting very DeNiro) Are you talkin to me? There's nobody else here, who you talkin to? You talkin to me...?

(PAUL rises for a moment, groggy. MANAGER BOB takes the sack off PAUL's head.)

MANAGER BOB
Take it easy, Paul.

BETH
(Threatening MANAGER BOB) I will use this. Don't put it back on. Poor guy.

MANAGER BOB
Who are you again?

BETH
Are you talkin to me? Who are you talking to?

PAUL
Taxi driver?

(PAUL collapses, unconscious.)

BETH
He got it! Sweet! It's him.
MANAGER BOB

Who did you think he was?

BETH

You insist on talking to me. Why? She said it was his favorite movie, as if it's any of your business, mister manager. Tell ya what. Like why don't you shut up for awhile, and I'll get back to my texting. Yes, I think that's how we're gonna fly now. K? Hear me? Or do I have to get medieval?

MANAGER BOB

What?

BETH

*(Goading him)* What what?

MANAGER BOB

What did you just say?

BETH

You talkin to me?

MANAGER BOB

Just please tell me what you said. His favorite movie. Whose favorite? Paul's?

*BETH pulls out her cellphone and starts texting.*

MANAGER BOB

Dick?

RICHARD

Mmmmmph?

MANAGER BOB

I think I know what she's trying to do, and I'm telling you right now if it's that, it's not going to work. I've known Paul all my life, since he was born, and torturing him again is just plain cruel. She can't know what his experiences during the P.O.W. years were. We have to think of something and quick. Cause otherwise, and, well he's a trouper, we know and we know that well, but she might just break him completely. And I can't let that happen!

BETH

You're breaking my consecration, er concentration, stop talking.

MANAGER BOB

Look, Beth.
BETH
I AM TEXING! (Pause) You'll just have to wait. They'll bring food, okay, if that's why you won't shut up. Or here...

(BETH grabs a power bar and hits MANAGER BOB with it.)

MANAGER BOB
Ow!

BETH
It has Spirolina so shut up and eat it. Oh my GOD! Stop! Stop! You did NOT!

(BETH types furiously on her cellphone, gasping now and then, as LIGHTS fade to BLACKOUT.)

ACT II; Scene 2

(AT RISE: RICHARD's tiny office; SUZY cleaning her gun. The office is very stark, ordered, and too neat. Every spot is labeled. TOODIE enters, and stands at attention. He waits for her to respond.)

SUZY
At ease.

(TOODIE “relaxes” then begins moving or replacing labels, moving them around in random order. SUZY watches him, and motions him to sit.)

I'm cool.

SUZY
No really. Sit.

Couldn't be more relaxed, sister soldier.

SUZY
Have you had any sleep?

TOODIE
Sleep?

SUZY
Have you slept?
TOODIE
Don't need neat need need it. Ready for some backtelling sir!

SUZY
I need you on your best game, soldier. Take a few deep breaths.

*(TOODIE heaves a few quick breaths.)*

TOODIE
Ready.

SUZY
Slower.

*(TOODIE breathes slower.)*

TOODIE
Got it. Yeah, yeah I got it. Relaxed as a cucumber.

SUZY
You sure?

TOODIE
No, yeah. Yeah yeah yeah I got the relaxing thing. Go.

*(TOODIE leans against a cabinet.)*

SUZY
I need some intel. What was your rank? What did you do?

TOODIE
I was munitions. Just a grunt. I saw a little action, heard of a lot more.

SUZY
Like?

TOODIE
Well...

SUZY
What?

TOODIE
Usually it was just us guys.
SUZY

And?

TOODIE

I usually don't talk about, in front of a girl, don't talk about s-e-x ...you know...

SUZY

You're a gentleman.

TOODIE

Yeah.

SUZY

I'm not interested in the action you're talking about. I want the war action. Same thing, sometimes, god knows, but I want to know what you heard about interrogation, grunts getting captured. And don't skimp on the gory details. I'm a soldier, Toodie, just like you. Men and women both have blood running through their veins, and a trigger only takes a soft squeeze to kill, then it's just a corpse on the other end. And sex isn't an issue. Let's forget you're a gentleman on this one, okay?

TOODIE

Oh okay. Yeah. It'll take some getting used to.

SUZY

You wanna take a minute?

TOODIE

I'm good.

SUZY

Did you ever talk to P.O.W.s?

TOODIE

And how. Especially since I been back. One guy, Eddie, had his balls-

SUZY

Skip that one for now.

TOODIE

Well, I know the basics. Waterboarding.

SUZY

That one was on the daily news. Next.
TOODIE
Forced standing; that happened to a pal of mine. They put him in chains where he had to stand, hands behind his back, and he darn near crucified himself cause he couldn't go much longer without leaning forward.

SUZY
I thought only Americans did that. Go on.

TOODIE
Ah, let's see, there's about a zillion ways of it. Cutting off fingers or toes.

SUZY
Don't think I need to worry about that, I hope. Keep going.

TOODIE
Judas chair but I think that's old school, wire cutters, whips, slapping, cold cell...

SUZY
What's that?

TOODIE
Put a guy naked in a fridge around 50 degrees, douse him with cold water same temp. Rinse, repeat. Really it's worse than it sounds.

SUZY
Go on.

TOODIE
Big one was the ole blowtorch to the skin. Anywhere.

SUZY
Right.

TOODIE
Timmy with the eye patch, he had his eye taken out when he wouldn't give intel. He lives up near White Rabbit in a tent.

SUZY
White Rabbit?

TOODIE
It's a place on BLM land. Remote.

SUZY
I can imagine. Poor guy. Just...keep going.
TOODIE
Well, Timmy, he was dragged by a car for about a mile before they took his eye out.

SUZY
Oh.

TOODIE
Electrocution, that's a good one. You get hung from the ceiling and get some voltage, but I never knew anyone it happened to. One guy, Tommy Bartless, he had his clothes ironed onto him.

SUZY
Ironed?

TOODIE
Yeah, a hot iron.

SUZY
A hot iron.

TOODIE
Yup.

SUZY
Eye taken out.

TOODIE
And hooks, lifts, chains, saws...

SUZY
Okay, okay, okay! It could have been anything. Anything. What would make him crack? What would cause him to blank everything out? How about psychological torture?

TOODIE
Another guy, didn't give me his name, was insulted, then treated well, then back again.

SUZY
Oh?

TOODIE
Yeah, for about a year.

SUZY
So he couldn't tell if they were on the level or not. I've heard.
TOODIE
Has serious trust issues now.

SUZY
I just hope that's it. Something did it. Something had to make him go there. How am I going to jog his memory?

TOODIE
Maybe it won't come back, you know? Maybe it's gone, it happens.

SUZY
I can't believe that. I won't. You know that's the whole point of this. To get his memory back, wake him up, something! Your orders are to revive him.

TOODIE
The whole point. The big reasonoli. Yeah yeah I got it.

(There is a knock on the door. TOODIE stands at military attention and looks to SUZY for orders.)

SUZY
Go ahead.

(TOODIE opens the door. YOGI DEV enters.)

TOODIE
Rank and serial number? Which outfit you from?

YOGI DEV
I'm a specialist.

SUZY
What can we do for you?

YOGI DEV
If you love something...

SUZY
Let it free. If it never comes back, it never was yours...

YOGI DEV
But it could come back.

SUZY
What difference does it make to you? Who are you?
JUST CAUSE
by Greg Younger

YOGI DEV
Someone who cares. Why are you doing this?

TOODIE
Hey Suzy, can I put him in the brig? Do we have a brig?

SUZY
That won't be necessary, soldier. I saw Paul...and he didn't know a thing. And I need to have him back. I need our connection. I want him, only him, and I will do everything it takes, everything it takes to, everything it takes -

Including opening up to him?

TOODIE
Wow.

SUZY
I tried that.

YOGI DEV
What you are doing now will only leave both of you separate for much much longer.

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT II; Scene 3

(AT RISE: The market aisle. PAUL is still unconscious, MANAGER BOB is resting, and RICHARD is nearly comatose. BETH is still texting. TOODIE enters.)

TOODIE
What died? (ALL turn to him; he pauses.) What did I say? Geez, the Ibuprofens are on the top shelf, guys. Or if ya need somethin' stronger, and it sure as Shirly Temple looks like it, ya can take chamomile and Valerian root see, tea it up for about five minutes, then chase it with a shot of Robitussin. (Pause) You can take that to the bank. (Pause) What's up with Paulo?

MANAGER BOB
Surprised you noticed. Paul? Paul?

TOODIE
Orders are to wake him. Give him a slap.

MANAGER BOB
I already did.
TOODIE
Well it didn't work, did it?

MANAGER BOB
Toodie, give it a rest.

TOODIE
Slap 'im! That's an order.

MANAGER BOB
I told you I already did. Toodie, could you...

(MANAGER BOB lightly taps PAUL's face. YOGI DEV enters.)

YOGI DEV
Interesting.

MANAGER BOB
C'mon y'all. Really. Gimme some breathing room here. I got it under control.

BETH
Should somebody like call an ambulance?

(ALL murmurs.)

TOODIE
Or maybe the manager.

BETH
Duh. Wait... (Texting; to herself) Oh no you didn't.

MANAGER BOB
I am the manager.

BETH
You don't look like the manager.

YOGI DEV

TOODIE
Listen up, I'm the manager now. Now slap 'im. A little harder. That'll do the trickers.

BETH
Slap him. If you're the manager, you can slap him. Just do it and get it over with.

(MANAGER BOB slaps PAUL a little harder.)
There.

Again.

Toodie, you're overtired.

I am not! Orders are to have him awake ay fickin sap, okay? Do it!

Why don't you?

He doesn't dare. You're closer to him.

He's a close friend; I don't want to hit him. Is that what friends do in your world? Total strangers kill each other but good friends only maim. Okay Okay I'll try again, but only because if he can speak to her...this madness might stop.

(MANAGER BOB slaps PAUL again, trying to rouse him. PAUL mumbles.)

It's working.

Paulie?

I think he needs another slap.

Toodie, really, take a breather.

I'm already breathing.

Paul? We're here with you.

Where am I?
TOODIE

You slapped him too hard.

MANAGER BOB

It's me. Bob. Your pal, remember? Come on, you remember me, ole buddy.

PAUL

Leaping.

MANAGER BOB

Paul?

TOODIE

Way too hard.

BETH

He's delirious.

(PAUL sees RICHARD.)

PAUL

Paul R. Jones. Private. 624787.

MANAGER BOB

Paul, it's me. Bob.

BETH

I think he still like thinks he's in like Iraq still probably.

TOODIE

Well he isn't. Why would he be thinking that?

MANAGER BOB

Take the tape off Richards's mouth.

TOODIE

Maybe you should slap him again. Who's Richard?

MANAGER BOB

Him. The general manager.

TOODIE

Oh yeah. Right a roonster.

(TOODIE rips the tape off RICHARD's mouth.)
RICHARD

Sir...

*(RICHARD passes out then lets out a snore.)*

PAUL

Am I?

MANAGER BOB


BETH

Excuse you? I'm not just people.

MANAGER BOB

Let me help you up.

*(MANAGER BOB helps PAUL to his feet.)*

PAUL

I'm not...there.

Where?

MANAGER BOB

Captive. Is it over? I remember praying for rescue, for you all, for...

For what?

PAUL

For one person, for love, for...but I was abandoned. Yeah. I was, I am...Is that Toodie?

TOODIE

Yeah man. I'm here for ya bro.

PAUL

But you marched us around all night, just like those towel heads who kept me...and they didn't WANT anything! Just wanted to see another dirty American suffer...

MANAGER BOB

It's over, Paul.

*(PATROLPERSON BETTY and PATROLPERSON JEN enter, followed closely by SHIRLY, who runs to MANAGER BOB. PAUL freezes, seeing the guns.)*
SHIRLY
Robert, are you all right? I tried calling you after our show and ice cream time, and you never stay past closing. So I tried to feel your aura and astral project to you but I think an entity was trying to block it. By then, I think it was, what was it, yes, it was about 5 am. In the morning! So I called here and got the message on the machine. It was horrible! By then I just had to call the police. Oh, I was so worried, punkin. Is my boo boo okey dokey, huh? Is he? Is he? He looks so tuckered.

MANAGER BOB
I'm fine, poodiekins. Tired, but okay.

SHIRLY
I was so worried, woo wookins.

MANAGER BOB
Boo boo is with you now.

SHIRLY
Ooooh, Boo.

PATROLPERSON JEN
Ma'am.

SHIRLY
Oh...yes. Bob, what happened?

MANAGER BOB
Some lady took us all hostage.

PATROLPERSON BETSY
A woman? She, she took you hostage? That's a very serious allegation.

(SUZY and CINDY enter. EVERYONE tenses.)

TOODIE
She's the one. Be careful. She took me down. (OTHERS look at him.) I overdid the gingko. Don't touch me.

CINDY
I wouldn't touch you if you were the last chance at the prom, soldier boy.

BETH
You okay, Cin-Cin?

CINDY
Yeah, got great shutface. Way baby. You?
BETH
Tommy texted Karl went dumb gaga at Julies party.

CINDY
He did not!

BETH
So sick!

PATROLPERSO N JEN
Okay, okay! Is this the woman who allegedly took you hostage?

MANAGER BOB
Not the girl.

CINDY
I'm not a girl.

TOODIE
Are too.

CINDY
Am not.

TOODIE
Too.

PATROLPERSO N JEN
Stop! Which one then?

SUZY
Me.

PATROLPERSO N BETSY
There was a report of gunfire.

YOGI DEV
I disarmed them.

PATROLPERSO N JEN
Hmmph. Is there truth to this?

SUZY
Yes. I created a situation. I held everyone against their will. That man is my husband.
CINDY

Husband?

YOGI DEV

You're married to this man?

SUZY

We were married two years ago. A year later, we were stationed in different countries.

TOODIE

Do I need a lawyer?

PATROLPERSON JEN

Everyone slow down. I don't see any weapons, just a lot of folks who are very tired.

PATROLPERSON BETSY

But the party's over.

PATROLPERSON JEN

Who is your alleged husband?

SUZY


PATROLPERSON JEN

Sir?

RICHARD

Yes.

PATROLPERSON JEN

Not you.

PAUL

I don't know! I...can't.

SUZY

Paul...

(PATROLPERSON BETSY's radio beeps.)

PATROLPERSON JEN

I got this. Go ahead.

(PATROLPERSON BETSY exits.)
SUZY
We were married. And we loved each other. I love you so much. Don't you feel it too?

PAUL
Please. *(Turns head away)* I don't know you! I can't!

PATROLPERSON JEN
He doesn't know you. Now for a gun being fired, and holding others against their will. Those are serious allegations.

SUZY
Yes, I took everyone hostage. I fired a gun. I'll go quietly. Just take me away. Take me away from here. Anywhere.

*(SUZY holds out her wrists. PATROLPERSON BETSY enters.)*

PATROLPERSON BETSY
Hey, hurry it up, we got a call about some deer.

PATROLPERSON JEN
They can attack.

PAUL
Deer?

SUZY
What did you say?

PAUL
Deer. I remember...deer.

*(PATROLPERSON JEN and BETSY hold SUZY back, who strains towards PAUL.)*

SUZY
Deer. Jumping over our fence.

PAUL
Every morning. They'd been sleeping...

SUZY
...In our yard. When we came out. At first, we didn't know how they got there. Such a big...

PAUL
Stop it! No yard, no deer, no wife, nothing. No war. Nothing.
SUZY
The deer, Paul. Stay with me. Please stay with me.

PAUL
The fence. Our property. Ours. The first morning, when we moved in, we saw them sleeping.

SUZY
Our yard.

PAUL
Our new yard. With a long fence. I wondered how they got in, wondered how they would get out. (Pause) How would I get out!? I have no country, all those I loved...where are they? Where are you? Up at dawn, kicked up, moldy rice, no English spoken.

SUZY
They were so cute, remember? Remember the does. Remember the family, nestled together. We'd watch them.

PAUL
Steel biting my wrists.

SUZY
Just the fence, that's all. Paul? The first time, when we first moved in. The gate was locked and we didn't have a key for it.

PAUL
Where was I? You brought out the carrots. That was you? The deer, tell me about the deer.

SUZY
You didn't want to encourage them.

PAUL
In the dream, I thought, this is where they live. And I'm invading.

SUZY
You grabbed the carrots.

PAUL
I tried to be quiet. Just drop the carrots near the fawn.

SUZY
You got closer, but stepped on a twig.

PAUL
They all looked up at the same time. Big wide eyes.
Big black eyes. Staring.

They all got up in unison. At the table, finishing a meal. The intel said to look in the bedroom. There was no bedroom, just the...eyes, staring.

We didn't know what they would do.

I thought the bigger one might attack.

But they moved towards the fence.

Keeping them in. A pen.

Go on, Paul. Come on buddy.

They were trapped? The animals in the backyard, like.

They...

They were never captives. Not really.

I'd never seen it like that before. Up close. There they were. So graceful. Airborne.

One by one.

Over that fence. Every morning.

Every morning. They jumped.

Over the fence. As if it were nothing. At all.
SUZY
All of them. Almost with joy. We watched them every day after that.

PAUL
Every morning. We watch them leap. So beautiful.

SUZY
So free.

PAUL
Suzy? Suzy?

SUZY
I'm here, Paul.

PATROLPERSON JEN
You know her?

PAUL
Suzy? Help me! I...I can't see! Where am I?

(SUZY runs to PAUL and holds him. He struggles, tears at himself.)

SUZY
Paul...shhhhh, I'm here. We're all here. Here for you.

PAUL
Suzy, they won't let me go. I can't jump the fence. It's too tall. It's too damn tall. And I'm so tired. Where are you?

SUZY
Here, my darling, right here. We're all here.

(PAUL begins shaking.)

CINDY
Oh wow. Like look at him!

BETH
He's shaking! Like all weird and stuff. Somebody help!

(ALL surround PAUL)

SUZY
We're here, Paul. We're all here.
PATROLPERSON JEN
I'll get a medic. Betsy?

PATROLPERSON BETTY
Making the call.

YOGI DEV
Wait! I've heard of this. He's releasing the trauma.

TOODIE
He's freaking out. Make the call! This is what Gurney did before he left for the woods again!

Let him be! Hear me out!

(ALL listen to YOGI DEV.)

PATROLPERSON JEN
What is it?

YOGI DEV
In the African wilds, if a Zebra got attacked by a lion or another predator, and somehow managed to get away, the Zebra would go to the rest of the herd.

TOODIE
Well that makes sense. That makes a whole buncha sense. Ain't jackin' you on this one.

RICHARD
Who was in charge? What did they do?

YOGI DEV
No one was in charge! The Zebra would go to the middle of the herd—right into the middle of it, and start shaking. It would go on for awhile, with the herd around it.

PATROLPERSON BETSY
Safe. A safe place.

YOGI DEV
After the animal stopped, the trauma was gone. It would get up and the other more obvious wounds would be tended. Let him shake.

PATROLPERSON JEN
They're doing that in VA hospitals. Just thought of it. Everyone, make a safe space. Paul, we're here for you.
(ALL offer consolation; ad libbing. “Paul, you're safe. We care, etc.”)

SUZY

He’s starting to relax. Give us some room!

(ALL except SUZY back off.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes