

it's actually more common than you think

A Tragicomedy

By Nate Sheehan

Setting:

Compass Bay Senior Village, United States, Near Future (Late 2020s or early 2030s)

Cast of Characters:

Arnold – An elderly man with dementia, believes he’s Donald Trump, maybe looks a bit like him too, mid 80s

Ronald – possibly a homeless man, looks as if he could be, looks a bit like Arnold, mid 80s

Gary – Compass Bay staff, primary aide to Arnold, early 30s

Isabel – Arnold’s daughter, early 50s

Melissa – Staff at Compass Bay, social worker, late 30s

Sheryl – receptionist at Compass Bay, thick Boston accent, early 30s

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ACT 1

LIGHTS UP ON:

PROLOGUE

ARNOLD, an elderly man, sits in his living room in a weighty, comfortable and worn looking chair, watching television. In front of him is a coffee table and to the side a couch.

TV VOICE

Back to this breaking news coming out of Palm Beach, Florida. Early reports, not yet confirmed, say the former president suffered a heart attack. He's now being transported to

*Three loud rasps on the door. ARNOLD turns down the volume.
ARNOLD gets up and makes his way to the door, where ISABEL's waiting.*

ARNOLD

(while opening the door, annoyed)

What do you—

(once opened)

What are you doing here?

Beat. ISABEL seems slightly startled by the question.

ISABEL

I'm taking you to your appointment. Dr. Feldman.

ARNOLD

Appointment?

ISABEL

The—

ARNOLD

Come in.

ARNOLD turns and walks back towards the living room.

ISABEL

We really don't have time. We're actually running a little late.

ARNOLD's already sat down. He's watching the news.

ISABEL

(now watching the tv)

Oh my god.

(beat.)

Do they know how?

Beat.

ARNOLD

They're saying heart attack.

ISABEL

wow....

Both sit in silence, for a moment, eyes glued to the tv. Neither look at each other.

ISABEL

Well... good riddance.

ARNOLD

(cryptically)

Hmph.

ISABEL

Anyway, we do have to get—

ARNOLD

Going. Yes, I know. I'll get my things.

ISABEL

Great.

ARNOLD

How's the job search?

ISABEL

Just came from another interview.

ARNOLD

(jokingly)

Don't you think it's time for James to step it up?

ISABEL

He does a lot. He works hard.

ARNOLD

Well, clearly not hard enough.

ISABEL rolls her eyes.

ISABEL

You were getting your things?

ARNOLD

Just need my sneakers. I think they're upstairs.

ISABEL

I thought I saw them at the front door.

ARNOLD

No, not those sneakers.

ISABEL

Got it. Where—

ARNOLD gets up.

ARNOLD

I'll get them myself.

ARNOLD exits, presumably towards the stairs. ISABEL waits, keeps her eyes on the tv. We linger with her for a moment then another. If it feels right, she releases a long and heavy sigh.

ISABEL

(calling)

Dad, we're already running late.

ARNOLD (O.S.)

Yes, yes, you said that!

ARNOLD reenters.

ARNOLD

I can't find them. I might not have them anymore...

ISABEL

So the front door sneakers?

ARNOLD

I'll make do with those.

ARNOLD locates his shoes at the front door. He puts them on.

ISABEL

Got everything else?

ARNOLD checks his pockets... Phone, wallet, keys etc.

ARNOLD

I'm set.

Father and daughter exit out the front door. ISABEL first, followed by ARNOLD. They both proceed on their way. Then, ISABEL suddenly stops.

ISABEL

We didn't lock the door, did we?

ARNOLD

Oh...

ARNOLD looks in the wrong pocket for his keys. Before he proceeds to the other pocket—

ISABEL

I got a key here.

ISABEL takes a key out from her purse, on a keychain, and approaches the front door. She locks it. Then, both exit together.

BLACKOUT.

LIGHTS UP ON:

SCENE 1

*In a nursing home bedroom, now cramming a bed, with the same television, the same weighty, comfortable and worn looking chair and the same couch and the same coffee table, sits ARNOLD again, who stares dead-eyed at the tv.
But now he looks and is dressed similarly to Donald Trump.
In the corner of the room, is a podium.
Someone also lays, seemingly passed out, under the coffee table. This is RONALD.*

TV VOICE

And back to our leading story. Sweatshirt gate. Pop sensation Olivia Rodrigo is at loose ends, reeling from her latest breakup with Formula One star Lando Norris, seen here in L.A. looking ghastly in an oversized Anderlecht FC soccer hoodie with a large stain on the pouch. Matthew, could this be Lando's sweatshirt?

ARNOLD turns down the volume on the tv. He keeps watching with the volume down for a moment or two. Then, he rises. He slowly approaches the podium.

On the other side of the stage, a woman, SHERYL, sits at a receptionist desk. The phone rings. SHERYL picks up the phone. At the podium, ARNOLD looks at his phone and begins typing.

In between the receptionist desk and the nursery home bedroom is a breakroom. Its main feature is a Bratz Doll on a table or on top of the fridge dressed in an emo outfit. MELISSA enters with a bottle of wine which she puts in the fridge. Then, from a drawer, she takes out a flowy pastel pink dress outfit sized for the doll. She changes the doll and re-exits. The phone rings.

SHERYL

Hello, Compass Bay Senior Village. Who am I speaking with?
... No, I'm afraid we're full. But I can put you on the waitlist.
... Could I get a name?

ARNOLD

(to no one in particular)

Donald.

SHERYL

Alright, I'm going to ask you a few questions about your inquiry if that's alright... Alright, what is your relationship with your applicant? ... Mhm.

MELISSA re-enters and knocks on ARNOLD's door. After a moment without response, she enters. She has a clear view of RONALD lying under the table, but doesn't seem to notice him.

MELISSA

Hi Arnold, dinner's ready in the dining room in ten. Would you like it at the dining hall or in your room?

ARNOLD turns from the podium to MELISSA.

ARNOLD

You said it's dinner?

MELISSA

Yes, would you rather have it in the dining room or in—

ARNOLD

My room.

MELISSA

Are you sure? It's good to get about—

ARNOLD

Yes, put it in my room.

MELISSA

Alright.

ARNOLD

I don't like that tone.

MELISSA

I'm sorry, Arnold. I'm not sure what you're suggesting.

ARNOLD

Yeah right.

MELISSA

I'll be back in a few.

MELISSA exits.

SHERYL

What is your applicant's current living situation?

ARNOLD

Ok. Ok. Calm down, folks. Calm down. I know, I know, they're gonna poison my food. Like we did Fidel Castro. I heard that today. Did you know we poisoned Fidel Castro? But it was a soft Democrat democratic government then. They couldn't pull it off. I have a plan. I have a terrific plan. In a long time – No one has seen a plan like this.

SHERYL

Mhm, and what type of accommodations do you anticipate for the applicant? ... Mhm.

ARNOLD

When you all see my plan, you're going to say "wow. I didn't know a plan could be that terrific." My mind is at its top mental capacity. All the doctors – A lot of people say this. A very high IQ. 170. 180. Somewhere in that range.

SHERYL

Please describe the nature of your applicant's health condition....

MELISSA knocks and reenters. With food.

MELISSA

I brought your food, Arnold. I got a tray here. Do you want it on the coffee table?

ARNOLD

Where's Gary?

MELISSA

He's tied up with another resident, so I delivered your meal instead. Is the coffee table ok?

ARNOLD

Yes, that's good.

MELISSA carries the food over to the coffee table. As she does, she almost trips herself on RONALD's leg.

MELISSA

Oh!

But thankfully for ARNOLD's dinner, recovers.

MELISSA

You have a nasty snag in your carpet. I'll see we get someone to fix it.

ARNOLD

Hm.

MELISSA

What were you watching?

ARNOLD

Olivia Rodrigo is having a bad week. A very bad week.

MELISSA

Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

ARNOLD

Yes, it's very bad for her.

MELISSA

So that's how Olivia's doing. How are you feeling today?

ARNOLD

I'm incredible given the service at this place.

MELISSA

And your hip? Have you been doing your exercises with Dr. Noah?

ARNOLD

All you have are these questions.

MELISSA

Well, I want to know how you're doing.

ARNOLD

You want to know? I was asked about my hip twice earlier today. You think I don't remember well I do remember. Everyone wants to know about my hip. My hip is doing great. It's in perfect condition.

MELISSA

So you have been doing your exercises?

ARNOLD

You know, I know why you want to know about my hip. Well I assure you, sweetheart, my hips are very powerful. Great for thrusting.

MELISSA

Well, I have to go see other residents now.

ARNOLD

They all complain about you. They all say you're mopey Melissa, that's what I hear them say about you.

MELISSA

There's no need for that—

ARNOLD

Mopey, marblehead Melissa. She's lost her marbles that's what they say.

MELISSA

Aw, Arnold, there's no need for name calling.

ARNOLD

It's very sad.

MELISSA

(with a smile)

You know, I can call your parole officer any time of day! Now go eat.

MELISSA exits, shutting the door behind her.

SHERYL

Alright, that's everything we need. We'll have one of our social workers call back for more information so we can have it on file.... Yup, we'll be in touch... Yup. Goodbye.

SHERYL sets down the phone, rises and heads for the breakroom. ARNOLD does his best at 'thrusting', which is comically poor.

ARNOLD

I don't think much of her. She's been trying to get me out of here since the day I moved in. Some people are very nasty. And mopey marblehead Melanie is a very nasty person. She thinks she has the police on her side. The police are not on her side. I've always backed our boys in blue and our boys in blue back me. If they ever make me leave this place, it will be a commie liberal judge—

ARNOLD, looking down, notices RONALD.

ARNOLD

What's that?

He lightly kicks him. Then, quickly, he stands up. He grabs his hip as he does.

ARNOLD

Who are you? Are you really there?

*ARNOLD waits for a response.
There is none.*

ARNOLD

Nevermind.

ARNOLD sits back down and digs into his food.

ARNOLD

(grumbling, to himself)

These potatoes are too soft.

ARNOLD gets up and stomps out of his room, then exits.

With the door slammed shut, RONALD, as if on cue, rolls out from under the table and starts munching on the potatoes himself.

Meanwhile, SHERYL, in the breakroom, takes out a mirror and sets it on the table. She then takes out makeup and begins to apply. MELISSA enters into the breakroom shortly after. She heads straight for the doll accessory drawer, seeming to not notice SHERYL. She adds a black leather jacket to the doll and then turns, surprised to see SHERYL.

MELISSA

Oh!

SHERYL

Fuck! You fucked me up.

MELISSA

Sorry, somehow you startled me.

SHERYL

I got a date tonight. I don't wanna look scrappy. God – this fucking –

MELISSA

I don't notice anything.

SHERYL

It's fixable. It's ok.

SHERYL applies a cotton ball to the blotch.

MELISSA

Who's the lucky guy?

SHERYL

I met him at my niece's soccer game. There's a reason I have a favorite niece – You know she plays for the US U14s.

MELISSA

Right. Like the youth US soccer girls team or-

SHERYL

I tell everybody she's going to be the next Alex Morgan. Even though she plays left-back.

MELISSA

Is that defense?

SHERYL

Yeah. But she's fast. She bombs up the field into attack. Then she runs all the way back.

MELISSA

Sounds exhausting.

SHERYL

I get tired watching her.

Both women continue in their tasks. Silence for a moment.

SHERYL

(indicating the doll)

How's Kylie doing?

MELISSA

She needs something with a little more 'rage'.

MELISSA reopens the drawer and looks through it.

SHERYL

Where did you just come from?

MELISSA

Robbie. He refused to take his meds. They called me down to calm him.

SHERYL

I always hear that about Robbie.

MELISSA

Cus he's pretty consistent with that. But before him - Arnold.

SHERYL

Crazy Donald Arnold?

MELISSA

Donald Arnold.

SHERYL

Ohhhh. Give her spiked hair. You have wigs in there, right?

MELISSA

Yup.

MELISSA takes out a spiked wig and replaces the doll's smooth blonde hair with it. She

studies the doll's new look before looking through the drawer again. SHERYL looks over.

SHERYL

That looks about right.

MELISSA

I don't know if it's quite my mood. I think we got something better.

SHERYL

Creative hair though, right?

MELISSA

Yeah, creative hair. Arnold was in a mood. Suggested I wanted to know about his hip because I wanted to fuck him.

SHERYL

Ew. You know, aybe then I'll stand this guy up.

MELISSA

(laughing)

No, you don't need to do—

SHERYL

Melissa, I would never. He's gorgeous and he has an accent.

MELISSA

(laughs)

Ok.

Beat.

SHERYL

But, I mean, Alzheimers and Dementia, right? Donald Arnold's probably already forgotten about the interaction he had with you. Actually given what I hear about him, he's probably more focused on committing some sort of infraction against another resident.

MELISSA

You're right. I'm almost glad he's staying more in his room these days...

MELISSA, re-deciding on the wig that she previously selected, places it on the doll's head.

SHERYL

His family hardly sees him. No one signs in for Donald Arnold.

MELISSA

Well, it'd be Arnold Buckley.

SHERYL

I know.

MELISSA

And, yes, also, well, he thinks he's Donald Trump.

SHERYL

Some offshoot of the dementia, right? Psychosis or delusion?

MELISSA

That's the leading theory. I just think he's got a stick up his butt. But... I try to not let him think I think that. So the guy has an accent?

SHERYL

He's French.

MELISSA

Oui-oui – Ohhh then I should give her a black and white striped shirt.

SHERYL

Yes. And a scarf.

Melissa finds said items and applies them to the doll. This takes some time. Allowing for some silence.

MELISSA

I missed Dunks this morning. I think that's why I'm moody – I had to pick up a bottle of wine. I don't know anywhere that do both coffee and wine. Then I just ran out of time.

SHERYL

I'll open a coffee and wine cafe. I know a few landlords.

MELISSA

You'd have fun doing that.

SHERYL

What's the wine for?

MELISSA

A friend's birthday. I'm actually getting off early for it.

SHERYL

That's exciting! Rick just agreed to just let you do that?

MELISSA

Have some spare hours.

(sighs)

The hair's just not fucking right.

(upon picking out a wig)

Oh! this definitely the one!

MELISSA, with childlike delight, pulls another wig out from the drawer and holds it out for SHERYL to inspect. She glances at it before looking back into her mirror.

SHERYL

That's perfect.

But now MELISSA's expression sours, not fully satisfied.

MELISSA

Almost perfect.

SHERYL

(checking the time)

Fuck, I think I'm gonna have to finish this at my desk...

She begins gathering up her things.

MELISSA

It's a Monday. If you don't adhere strictly to the timetable, it's not gonna kill ya.

SHERYL

I know, but I got written up last week.

MELISSA

(gesturing to the doll)

Is she still missing anything?

SHERYL

Maybe she needs to be a glamorous punk Bratz Kylie, not a cute punk Bratz Kylie?

MELISSA

Yes, that's it. What time is it?

SHERYL

5:04.

MELISSA

Fuck, I don't got time either.

SHERYL exits the breakroom and on the way back to her desk, GARY breezes by her.

MELISSA also rushes off, presumably to attend to other residents and patients. Meanwhile, ISABEL enters and stands at the front door of the building, but doesn't proceed to go inside, standing awkwardly outside, looking uncertain.

SHERYL

Where you headed?

GARY

I just realized I left my pager in the car.

SHERYL

M-hm.

GARY

Why are you wearing one eyelash?

SHERYL

That's just the process of life, Gary.

GARY bumps into ISABEL as he exits the lobby.

GARY

Oh!

ISABEL

Sorry.

A beat. SHERYL takes a look at ISABEL, standing outside the door. She grimaces. Moments later, GARY rushes back into the lobby, weaving around ISABEL in the process. SHERYL's back to applying her make-up, at her desk.

GARY

Hey again.

SHERYL

Got your pager?

GARY

No, I think I might've left it at home...

SHERYL

You don't just leave it in the car?

GARY

No... I don't know why. I always drive.

SHERYL

You're such a dumbass.

GARY

Like you give a shit. Also gonna check the breakroom.

SHERYL

I say it with love.

GARY

Alright then I'll say with love that one eyelash doesn't suit you.

SHERYL

I'm in the middle of doing my makeup. Got a date.

GARY

Oh, well – then one eyelash would make you memorable.

SHERYL

You know you're not wrong. How's the bachelor lifestyle treating you?

GARY

(a little too emotionally)

It's a process.

SHERYL

Like my eyelash... Marriage is a weird thing.

GARY

Yup, yeah it is. Could we actually...

GARY gives SHERYL a desperate look.

SHERYL

Not talk about that right now? Yeah, of course, I'm sorry.

GARY

No, I mean, yeah it gets me riled up and not trying to be like that at work–

SHERYL

Then want to grab a drink tomorrow? Talk about it?

GARY

Sure, why not.

SHERYL

Alright then - One other thing we should talk about though, I had that family reunion this past week. Oh my god, I've told you about my aunt and uncle, right? When I tell you the shit that went down was weird-

GARY

How was that? Dad's side, right?

While SHERYL talks, ISABEL enters and approaches the front desk.

SHERYL

Hello. What can I help you with?

ARNOLD reenters, finds his door, and enters back into his room. RONALD, hearing the door open, rolls back under the table.

ISABEL

Um, I'm supposed to sign in here, right?

SHERYL

Sheet's right there.

ISABEL

Oh. Thanks.

SHERYL

M-hm.

GARY

I gotta get to my next room.

SHERYL

Alright, tell your wife she's a bitch for me, ok?

ISABEL gives SHERYL a strange look.

GARY

Ha. Tell me more about your aunt later.

SHERYL

(to ISABEL)

Sorry.

ISABEL

No worries.

GARY exits.

ISABEL fills out the sign and sheet and then proceeds past ARNOLD's room and exits. SHERYL stares at her as she walks off, seemingly dumbfounded by her appearance. Then back at her computer. She begins typing. ARNOLD, meanwhile, is back in his room, finishing his dinner. He seems confused by the sight of his food – As if something is off. Simultaneously, something's distracting him as he keeps glancing away from his food and the TV, and towards the podium. Eventually he sets down his fork. ARNOLD rises and approaches the podium.

ARNOLD

How are you folks doing tonight?

ARNOLD waits for cheers or jeers, if there are any.

America... America... America... America... America. America. America. America, she wants to poison me. I have everything but proof. She hasn't done it yet, but she will try. I have RFK JR. on the case. This is what the FDA does. Food and drug administration that's what that stands for. There's very bad people in this government. They want to poison me and they need to be stopped.

They want to take American products off the shelves - they want us to rely on China. Do we live in China? I don't remember us living in China. This is the United States of America. But these communist democrat I.C.E. protesting terrorist sinners want to screw us over. Can you believe it? You know, they want to cancel Halloween. As your president, I will be sure that we will proudly celebrate Halloween. If you dress as an I.C.E. agent, you got the job. We need more agents. Because do you know what a democrat Halloween looks like? This is what they want to do. They bring in the illegal Mexicans, Venezuelans and Somalians and they say sorry kids, we have to have a Mexican, Venezuelan, Somalian Halloween. That means they want to have your kids learn to commit daycare fraud. That means they want your kids to speak Spanish and forget English so when the police ask about their drug deals they say "¿qué?" Biden gave us an absolute disaster. An absolute disaster, the worst of the worst flooding in. They're dressing up these rapists. They're dressing up these murderers. And they're saying they're going to make our Halloween costumes. They're not going to make our Halloween costumes. That's an American job. Halloween is American—

A knock on the door.

ARNOLD

YES?

The door begins to open. ISABEL enters. This startles ARNOLD.

ISABEL

Hey Dad, it's Isabel. Are you watching some TV?

ARNOLD

I was.

ISABEL

What were you watching?

ARNOLD

TMZ.

ISABEL

That's nice. What's new?

ARNOLD

They want me to eat in the dining hall.

ISABEL

Don't like eating there?

ARNOLD

You're being stupid.

ISABEL

It's good to talk to people.

ARNOLD

Why are you here?

Silence. ISABEL considers, careful with her response.

ISABEL

To see you.

ARNOLD

They're always trying to tell me what to do.

ISABEL

I know.

ARNOLD

Why are you acting weird? Come in.

ISABEL fully enters and shuts the door behind her.

ARNOLD

You know about the windmills?

ISABEL

Um, no I don't.

ARNOLD

Everybody's talking about them. Windmills are messing up the wind and now the whales can't sing to each other and its causing them to die. The climate crazies want to kill the whales. Typical. Typical communist socialist liberal – And these protesters are training mallard ducks with COVID and Measles vaccine to attack ICE patriots and people wearing MAGA hats. So stay away from the ponds. DON'T fall in. Don't even go near it–

ISABEL

I'm sure the ponds are fine–

ARNOLD

I've been looking at the economy.

ISABEL

How's the economy doing?

ARNOLD

It's never been better. Where's my food?

ISABEL

On the table.

ARNOLD

I knew that!

ARNOLD sits back down in his chair and mulls over his dinner. ISABEL remains standing.

ARNOLD

I saw this movie last week. Something about... what was it about? These dogs were policemen. It was very moving. Very telling of what type of country we live in right now. How we're starting to stand up for our proud boys. But we've just started– Oh!

ARNOLD drops his fork. ISABEL goes to grab it for her father.

ISABEL

Let me – OH MY GOD!

ARNOLD

You can wash it off under the sink.

ISABEL

(gesturing to RONALD under the table)

Dad, what's that?

ARNOLD

The sink? It's just over there.

ISABEL

Who's under the coffee table??

ARNOLD

Oh he's actually there.

ISABEL

Yes, he's actually there. Tell me he's alive.

ARNOLD

I don't know. I don't know him.

ISABEL gives RONALD a light nudge with her foot. He grunts.

ISABEL

What the fuck did you do?

ARNOLD

I'm innocent!

ISABEL

Who is he??

ARNOLD

I never seen him before in my life.

ISABEL

I don't believe you.

ARNOLD

Believe what you want. I don't know a thing.

ISABEL

Oh my fucking god. Do you not remember?? Do you not know how he got there!?

ARNOLD

NO, I KNOW WHEN I DON'T REMEMBER. I SAID IT VERY SIMPLE. I NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE. IN MY LIFE.

ISABEL

YOU'RE BEING HONEST!?

ARNOLD

I SWEAR TO GOD.

ISABEL

OK. Then, when did you first notice him?

ARNOLD

I SAID I DON'T KNOW!

ISABEL sighs, puts her hand over her face.

ISABEL

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BE DOING SHIT!

ARNOLD

I'M NOT DOING SHIT! YOU MAKE ME TIRED!!

ARNOLD flumps down on the couch. RONALD snores. Whitney Houston's "I Will Always Love You" blares. GARY begins to enter, headphones kinda in his ears, with a small cart of cleaning supplies, but then sees a resident with a family member.

GARY

Oh, sorry to disturb. I'll come back later.

GARY closes the door behind him.

ARNOLD

That guy always talks too much to me.

ISABEL

You do understand that this is now my mess— Dad, we have to do something about this.

ARNOLD

You will not tell anyone about it.

ISABEL

No, we have to. They'll find out.

ARNOLD

No they won't.

ISABEL

Why? What the hell happened??

ARNOLD

You're a witch on a witch hunt.

ISABEL

I have to tell somebody. There's a man sleeping under your coffee table.

ARNOLD

No, you can't do that.

ISABEL

Why?

ARNOLD

And what will they do then? They'll try to use it to throw me out.

ISABEL

Fuck, you're right.

ARNOLD returns to his meal.

ISABEL

I was going to wash off that fork.

ARNOLD holds out the fork to ISABEL, who heads to the sink and washes the fork.

ISABEL

Has the food been good?

ARNOLD

It's fine.

ISABEL hands the now clean fork back to ARNOLD. He resumes with his food. ISABEL, meanwhile, takes a blanket from the couch or bed and drapes it over the edge of the coffee table so that RONALD can no longer be seen from the door.

ISABEL

We can't exactly smuggle him out... you know what? When he's ready and probably a little more sober off whatever he's on, he'll make his own way out. Can you make sure he does that?

ARNOLD doesn't respond. He just keeps munching.

ISABEL

Dad?

ARNOLD

What?

ISABEL

Can you make sure that when he wakes up, the man under the coffee table leaves?

ARNOLD

Yes, it's fine.

ISABEL

No, I just want to make sure this is something you're ok being alone for. I do have to go back to work, but if absolutely necessary I can say an emergency came up—

ARNOLD

No, it's fine. I got it under control.

ISABEL

Promise?

ARNOLD

I'd never lie to you.

ISABEL sighs again, weighing her options.

ARNOLD

I'm starting a campaign.

ISABEL

What for?

ARNOLD

We're gonna build a wall. A big beautiful wall around Compass Bay.

ISABEL

What for?

ARNOLD

(gesturing to RONALD)

Keep them out!

ISABEL

I'm sure—

ARNOLD

A lot of people don't belong in this complex. A lot of very bad, very selfish people. They're all fakers. They're faking.

ISABEL

They're faking?

ARNOLD

They're fake Americans. That's why we put them in there. Nobody wants to tell the truth. The United States is for real Americans. That is and always has been the truth.

ISABEL

Is that so? Since when did you care so much about truth?

ARNOLD

Do you doubt me?

ISABEL

Truthful enough to tell me about the sleeping man?

ARNOLD

I woke up and he was there. He was asleep.

ISABEL

There has to be more to it than—

ARNOLD

There's not!

ISABEL

Ok.

Beat. Then, Arnold surprises Isabel's thoughts.

ARNOLD

How's your family?

ISABEL

Oh! – Brandon is starting ninth grade this fall. He's trying out for a summer baseball team... The hospital has been extra busy lately. Summer dumbness.

ARNOLD

He won't make it.

ISABEL

I know. He's a wimp.

ARNOLD

That hasn't changed?

ISABEL

No, but we love him.

ARNOLD

I always remember you doing a bad job with him.

ISABEL

I blame James. He is a good kid though. Real earnest.

ARNOLD

You were like that.

ISABEL

No I wasn't.

ARNOLD

You were.

ISABEL

Really, how?

ARNOLD

You were so stupid.

ISABEL laughs.

ISABEL

Shut up.

ARNOLD

You know you were. I blame your mother.

ISABEL

Of course you do.

ARNOLD

And you're blaming your husband?

ISABEL

I guess so.

ARNOLD

Good luck to Brandon though. And the hospital's been bad?

ISABEL

Awful.

ARNOLD

It's always bad, isn't it?

ISABEL

It is, but particularly now.

ARNOLD

I'm sorry to hear that.

ISABEL

It's just a part of work.

ARNOLD

Earnest, see?

Silence. ARNOLD stares at the TV. ISABEL does as well.

ARNOLD

Olivia Rodrigo is in so much trouble.

ISABEL

I heard about that.

ARNOLD

Never thought she could handle the pressure.

ISABEL checks the time. Grimaces.

ISABEL

Ok, that shift I got to pick up... I really have to get going.

A sudden shift in ARNOLD's energy – something that resembles 'Arnold' and not Trump.

ARNOLD

At the hospital? How's everything there?

ISABEL grimaces.

ISABEL

You know, summertime dumbness.

ARNOLD

Stuff like when you broke your leg.

ISABEL

Pretty much exactly like that.

ARNOLD

Always wondered - how did you even get the idea to. Jump. Off. Your grandpa's four wheeler?

ISABEL

I thought I could stick the landing! Saw Tom Cruise do it. I was 5?

ARNOLD

You were an ambitious 5 year old.

ISABEL

I think I still am.

ARNOLD

But you're not still doing stunts, right?

ISABEL

(laughs)

No.

ARNOLD

Did I ever tell you that your mother really wanted to be a nurse at one point...

ISABEL

Yeah, you have... but I always forget.

ARNOLD

Me too. It's just... I think she decided it'd be too hard for her.

(beat)

After his tryouts, you should bring Brandon here. He can tell me how it goes.

ISABEL

Yeah, yeah, of course. If he makes it, he'll be really busy, but I'm sure he'd love to come by.

ARNOLD

That's good. That's great. You played soccer in, what was it, middle school?

ISABEL

I wanted to like it so bad. It was just my friends were doing it.

ARNOLD

You didn't like it??

ISABEL

No! Did I never tell you this?

ARNOLD

It was just Katie making you do it?

ISABEL

Pretty much, oh my god, you still remember her.

ARNOLD

All this time I thought you had this really intense thing with it for a little bit – and you just didn't like soccer.

ISABEL

I wasn't good enough anyway.

ARNOLD

What do you mean?! You were great!

ISABEL

I really wasn't. And honestly, neither is Brandon.

ARNOLD

Such a downer. You were good at sports. If he's bad, I still blame James.

ISABEL

Yeah, he's not athletic at all.

ARNOLD

We can agree on that – I'm getting a little tired.

ISABEL

And I have my shift. But this was great. We'll talk again soon.

ARNOLD

Ok.

ISABEL

Bye Dad... And do something about the guy. On second thought, people seem to wander in here all the time– I doubt they'll really think it's your fault.

ARNOLD

Sure. Sure.

ISABEL exits the room and heads for the lobby.

ARNOLD

You know nothing. They'll try to pin anything on you. Anything!

As ISABEL passes through the lobby, SHERYL watches her leave. Shortly after, MELISSA enters and knocks on ARNOLD's door.

MELISSA

Hey, I just wanted to let you know I heard from Gary your daughter's coming by today!

ARNOLD

I just saw her nosey marblehead!! Get out of my room, bitch!!!

MELISSA

Alright, then.

MELISSA closes the door behind her.

ARNOLD

Hmph.

Behind the door, MELISSA mimes violently stabbing someone.

ARNOLD

She wants to kill me. I can feel it.

MELISSA takes a breath. She exits. ARNOLD re-approaches the podium. He takes a breath as if he's about to speak, but instead just stands there.

MELISSA reenters with a bag and out of her work clothes. She heads by SHERYL.

SHERYL

Clocking out?

MELISSA

Yep!

SHERYL

Alright... Have a good night.

MELISSA

Night.

SCENE 2

MELISSA exits into the parking lot, where ISABEL also is heading towards her own car. The two women cross paths.

ISABEL

Oh, hey! Don't you work with Arnold Buckley?

MELISSA

Yeah, I do. I'm assigned as his social worker. You're Isabel, right?

ISABEL

Anything I should know about how he's doing?

MELISSA

He's been eating dinner in his room more often.

ISABEL

I saw— is that concerning?

MELISSA

Not always. Given how long he's been ill, he's doing great.

ISABEL

Good... we talked for a bit. He kinda became himself again for a little bit today. Talking about the time I broke my leg when I was little. Also, there's this, um...

(lengthy pause)

nevermind.

MELISSA

I'm glad you two could share that. Seeing familiar people can be very helpful.

ISABEL

(with a tinge of guilt)

I know.

MELISSA

Is there anything else? Really sorry, but I really gotta be going. Any other day I'd be more than happy to talk longer.

ISABEL

(considering for a moment)

... I don't really know. It's hard. I guess.

MELISSA

We're all just doing the best we can.

ISABEL

Yeah, sorry. I actually gotta go too.

MELISSA

Ok. See ya.

MELISSA exits.

ISABEL

(softly)

Actually – Sorry, what’s your name again–

But she’s out of earshot. ISABEL starts to maybe call out - then stops herself. Instead, she heads for her car:

We see ISABEL get into her car and turn the engine on. She takes another breath before laying her head on the horn. It makes an obnoxious noise.

She lifts her head, stopping the noise, only to hear another horn. She lifts her hands in annoyance.

ISABEL

(yells)

I’m not even moving!

She starts to back out of her spot.

ISABEL

Fucker.

As she drives off, she lays on the horn a second time, this time intentionally.

ISABEL

GAHHH, you fucking psycho. It’s a tight lot. What. Do. You. EXPECT?

SCENE 3

ARNOLD, at the podium, takes out his phone.

ARNOLD

‘Windmills are killing the whales, folks. That’s eco-terrorism for you. The waves are messing up their echo-technology and the whales are dying. We won’t let the wokes sweep this under the blubber! - President DJT’ - Tweet.

‘I don’t like Jacob Elordi. Very uncharming. He looks like a blowfish. He deserves better, mostly a better face. - President DJT’ – Tweet.

‘Thanks to my work, our country hasn’t had this many jobs since world war two. This few unemployed since fighting a war around the world, folks! Hopefully the world war doesn’t need to have a third term. We’ll see. We’re monitoring the situation. - President DJT’ – Tweet.

‘Since Pope Leo wants to crucify Trump so bad, now announcing Trump on A Cross Rosary. Wear your favorite president crucified. He will rise again. Four custom designs starting as low as \$179.99. Collaboration with Dior. - President DJT’ – Tweet.

‘At first they didn’t let me black out the parts of the Epstein Files I wanted so instead I came on the best parts with me and Jeff. Told the DOJ it was whiteout. - President DJT’ Twe- Delete. Delete. Delete.

GARY enters with a small cart of cleaning supplies, medicines and other miscellaneous items. He knocks on ARNOLD’s door and then nudges open the door.

GARY

Is now a good time for me to clean up a little in here, Mr. President?

ARNOLD

Yes, go ahead.

GARY begins cleaning the room, picking up any trash and generally organizing the space. He hasn’t noticed RONALD.

GARY

Having a good day?

ARNOLD

Saw my daughter.

GARY

I heard!

ARNOLD

Right, you walked in–

GARY

Sorry about that.

ARNOLD shrugs. GARY picks up some East Asian looking artistic-looking bowl to dust under it.

ARNOLD

Don't touch that!

GARY

Right, I always somehow forget.

ARNOLD

It's very important.

GARY continues his cleaning and organizing duties. ARNOLD watches GARY... for a bit, then returns his attention back to his TV. Working around the couch, GARY notices the blanket over the coffee table.

GARY

Do you want this on the coffee table?

ARNOLD

Yes!

GARY

Alright.

Silence. Maybe the TV says something particularly interesting.

GARY

I was hoping to get your advice on something, Mr. President.

ARNOLD

What is it?

GARY

I'm trying to figure out how to explain it.

ARNOLD

It's your problems with your wife.

GARY

No, not that—

ARNOLD

Do you know what you tell her? You just tell her what she wants to hear. It doesn't have to be true. It doesn't have to be what you're going to do. But just tell her what she wants to hear and if

she brings it up again – Start complaining and start with her weight. Women are very sensitive about their weight–

GARY reaches for the blanket.

ARNOLD

Not the blanket!

GARY

Right. A little out of it today.

GARY lets the blanket be. ARNOLD bites his lip.

ARNOLD

Actually – there's something under the coffee table. I need you to help with it,

GARY

Under the blanket?

ARNOLD

Yes.

GARY lifts up the blanket. There we see RONALD lie. But GARY, clearly not seeing anything, kneels down for further inspection.

GARY

What am I looking for?

ARNOLD

The-the...

GARY

I'm not seeing anything.

(beat.)

If you don't mind me asking, Mr. President, what am I looking for? Maybe you misplaced it somewhere else.

ARNOLD

No. I just wanted to know if there was anything under there. There's a blanket over it, so I thought, maybe there's something under there. But there's not.

GARY

Ok. But you want the blanket to stay?

ARNOLD

It will stay right there.

GARY turns away from the coffee table, leaving the blanket hanging over it. A beat.

GARY

Anyway, I wanted to ask some advice, Mr. President. Not about my wife.

ARNOLD

Good. She sounds ugly to me anyway. What is it about?

GARY

Do you know anyone that's ever done something... bad? Like really bad. And you really care about this person, but it's bad. And... they tell you to tell nobody.

ARNOLD contemplates this.

ARNOLD

Yes.

GARY

Well, I have a close friend, or rather a family member – he's been in and out of rehab. And supporting him has been making things difficult for me, but he can't really be trusted in the real world no more, you know? ... I just learned that he killed somebody. I don't think it was on purpose but he got rid of the body and... he told me I had to keep it secret. And he's living in my apartment, where my children come and see me and–

ARNOLD

Larry–

GARY

I don't know what to do.

ARNOLD

Do you know who he killed?

GARY

No.

ARNOLD

That's important. First things first. You need to know how much of a risk he is to you.

GARY

Ok. That's smart.

ARNOLD

That's first. Second, get the big socks out of my sock drawer.

GARY heads for the sock drawer and opens it up. He holds up a pair of socks.

GARY
These ones?

ARNOLD
No, the other ones.

GARY
These?

ARNOLD
No, not those ones. Are you stupid?

GARY
These?

ARNOLD
Yes!

GARY hands ARNOLD the socks, who begins to change into them, but struggles significantly doing so.

ARNOLD
It's about winner's mindset.

GARY
The socks?

ARNOLD
No. Your problem. Your problem will only be solved if you have a winner's mindset. That no matter what needs to be done, you will make sure that you come up on top.

GARY
I can't turn him in. I just – you understand I can't do that.

ARNOLD
Are you an accomplice?

GARY
What? No. I don't think so. Maybe. I...

Beat. ARNOLD considers for a moment.

ARNOLD
You know, Larry, some people, they just don't have winner mentalities. Some people are losers. It's how they were born. Natural selection. Maybe you're one of the losers.

GARY

Maybe.

Silence. Maybe the TV says something else particularly interesting. GARY stops what he's doing, sighs.

GARY

You really might be right, Mr. President. My brother's struggling. My wife left me. My dog ate a canister of paint and died. I really loved her—

ARNOLD

All very unfortunate.

GARY

A guy that's a friend of my landlord named Footjob wants to kick my ass. I am not a winner right now. It's just been tough, man.

ARNOLD

You have a lot of problems.

GARY

I shouldn't have talked to you about any of this. It's just that you... (forget)-- I'm sorry.

ARNOLD

No problem. I wasn't really listening.

GARY

Oh.

Beat. GARY exchanges a few items in his cart and heads for the bathroom.

ARNOLD

Do you know why I live here, Gary?

GARY

Why's that?

ARNOLD

Everybody wants something from Donald...

ARNOLD trails off.

GARY

And what about everyone wanting—

ARNOLD

You don't always want to be found.

GARY

For you, of course, I understand that.

ARNOLD

But there's no real reason to be put anywhere. You said it was your brother that killed someone, right?

GARY appears from the bathroom. He says nothing but his expression registers a "yes".

ARNOLD

You know, it's because you sent him away. Rehab. Therapy. Strong men don't belong in places like that. They go nuts. And you know what, Larry, I think he sounds like a strong man. He's a winner. He needs a job. He needs to be busy. He got too much time to think, got too many people trying to make him soft in therapy. They want your money. That's all they want.

GARY

I was thinking he should maybe see somebody.

ARNOLD

Bad idea. I guarantee it.

GARY

Ok.

ARNOLD

That's a smart choice. You know, you're either a shark or a fish. And when you get thrown into the water – because we all have to get thrown in the water, we all have to at some point, my father did the same to me – you have to ask, are you going to swim like a shark or swim and sink like a fish? Get eaten like a fish. Sharks swim with purpose. If you've ever seen a shark swim, a shark knows where it's going. A fish? A fish has no idea what it's doing. Have you ever seen a fish that knows what it's doing? You haven't seen one. I think you haven't decided what you are yet. Fish or shark. I think there's hope for you. I really do.

GARY

I appreciate that, Mr. President.

ARNOLD

Have you developed a taste for blood?

GARY

No, Mr. President.

ARNOLD

Develop a taste for blood. That's the first step. You ever read the Twilight book series?

GARY

No, but I've seen the movies—

ARNOLD

You need to read the books. I read them to one of my granddaughters and those books tell you exactly where we're at in America right now. Understand those books, you understand how to succeed in this country.

GARY

Alright. I'll consider them.

ARNOLD

Don't consider them. Don't fuck with me, Gary.

(beat.)

Decent people like you have been wronged. But I'm going to bring back America for real Americans like yourself. I can promise that right now because I'm going to do it. I'm going to...

(smiles)

well, that's the saying, make it great.

GARY begins putting away his cleaning supplies.

GARY

Everything's set here. Do you want me to take your tray?

ARNOLDS nods. GARY grabs ARNOLD's tray. He dumps the contents of it in his portable trashcan. He smiles at ARNOLD.

ARNOLD

Now get out of my room.

GARY

Tell us if you need anything else.

ARNOLD

I think I already told you.

GARY

Alright. Goodbye!

GARY closes the door behind him. With his cart, he heads for the breakroom and begins looking about. He can't find something. He notices the changed Bratz doll.

SHERYL is looking at her computer screen. She looks up, spotting MELISSA reentering into the lobby.

SHERYL

What are you doing here?

MELISSA releases a heavy sigh.

MELISSA

I left the bottle of wine in the fridge.

SHERYL

Oh. Well, sorry.

MELISSA starts heading for the breakroom.

In the breakroom, MELISSA finds GARY doing all but tearing the place apart.

GARY

That dress on Kylie is not suiting my day.

MELISSA

I can tell... did someone say there was gold hidden somewhere in here?

GARY

No, it's my fucking pager. I've been going without it all day - But now I'm actually fucking concerned.

MELISSA grabs her bottle of wine from the fridge.

MELISSA

Oh, well, that's disappointing – I added the jacket later cus today's been a mixed bag. And the shirt because Sheryl has a french date.

GARY

I know. Baguettes and shit.

MELISSA

If I could figure it out, I'd do something different to her hair. Maybe tomorrow.

GARY

So mixed bag. Who's been naughty and who's been nice?

MELISSA

Grace bought chocolates to share with me, Bethany and Mike. Richard said he likes his new meds.

GARY

He's been very talkative lately. Is he getting a little lonely?

MELISSA

Either that or it's the meds. What's he on again?

GARY

Could be both...

(beat.)

Anyway, that's all the good things. Who were the stinkers?

MELISSA

Kelly peed on a couch, Robbie refused his meds and then threw a fit and Arnold was, well, Arnold.

GARY

You know I've always found him quite manageable.

MELISSA

Robbie or Arnold?

GARY

Arnold – where the fuck is this thing?

(GARY looks up, spotting the wine)

What are we celebrating?

MELISSA

Friends birthday. Forgot the wine.

GARY

Ok, nice.

GARY upends the corner with the microwave.

MELISSA

Anything I can do to help quick? I should be on my way.

GARY

Probably not.

MELISSA

Is that yours right there?

MELISSA spots a small electronic device under a folder on the kitchen counter and picks it up.

GARY

That's not mine.

MELISSA

Are you sure?

GARY's already turned his attention to somewhere else. MELISSA checks her watch.

MELISSA

I'll help you look for a few.

Both look, likely somewhat hopelessly.

MELISSA

Can we circle back to you saying Arnold is manageable?

GARY

We get along. He's in such fantasy land, it's almost fun to play along sometimes, you know?

MELISSA

That's one way to do it.

GARY

You're gonna say it's not good to feed into his delusions.

MELISSA

No, I get sometimes it's just easier. It's more painless, at least in the short-term. But yeah, you shouldn't be doing that.

GARY

He can be funny when he wants to be.

MELISSA

He called me marblehead Melissa.

GARY starts laughing.

GARY

You see – that's fucking hilarious - Oh! Found it!

GARY holds up a pager like it might just be the holy grail.

MELISSA

Shut up.

GARY

I'm sorry, it is!

MELISSA

Ok, it's a little bit funny. But I told him I'd call his parole officer.

GARY's laughing even harder.

GARY

Jesus fucking Christ, you're something else, Melissa.

MELISSA

I thought it was pretty good. And I'm professional. I'm so fucking professional. But some days I want to kill him. I actually want to kill him. And his daughter seems nice enough... so now I feel guilty—

GARY

Guilty for thinking something? Is that what you're fucking telling me?

MELISSA

I mean... yeah.

GARY

No, you can't hold yourself to that. You're a fucking rockstar. You're the best he could get. I mean, you read about that hospice care worker that got off on taking people on life support. You know how many people he killed before they caught him?--

MELISSA

You're fucking sick.

GARY

I'm just saying respect your work. This isn't an easy job. I gave up on Arnold 6 months ago.

MELISSA

I guess. Anyway, I really gotta be going.

MELISSA starts to leave but then turns back.

MELISSA

Her hair's not right.

MELISSA stares at the wig for a moment, then removes it from the doll. She pockets it, leaving her bald.

MELISSA

You know I'm usually so much better with it. I'll have more time later this week. And the new recreation director is doing some group music making activity on Thursday and we need to encourage—

GARY

Fuck.

MELISSA

I know.

GARY

Everyone's going to hate us.

MELISSA

Yup. See ya.

MELISSA heads for the lobby.

GARY

Actually, I'll come with you. Sheryl was gonna finish telling me about something.

MELISSA

What about?

GARY

Her family reunion.

MELISSA

She goes on for a bit, you know?

GARY

I don't mind.

MELISSA

And I can never tell if she's fucking with me. I feel like everything she says is out of a cartoon – like this French guy she meets at her daughter's soccer game.?

GARY

You actually think she's fibbing??

MELISSA

Probably not.

GARY

Exactly, they're so real. They're real and they're better than tv. That's what's tripping you out.

MELISSA

Could you ask her about how often Richard Habib has been getting visits? Since we were just talking about it.

GARY

Yeah, sure.

MELISSA

Alright, well, goodnight.

GARY

Night.

MELISSA heads for the door. GARY heads for SHERYL's desk. She's looking very intently at her computer.

GARY

Hey.

SHERYL

You know, it says here 1 in 15,000 patients with Alzheimer's and dementia suffer from that particular variant of the condition. Or 0.005%. That maaaaakeees....

(SHERYL does some typing)

about 400 Donald Trumps in the United States. 400 Donald Trumps. It's actually more common than you'd think. Weird, huh?

GARY

Yeah, it's damn weird. Actually I just saw him. But I really wanted to know what your Aunt said.

SHERYL

Where did we leave off?

GARY

You had barely started.

Spotlight on Sheryl.

SHERYL

Ok... well everyone was there. Every distant relative that I swear was made up until they appeared in Dad's backyard.

Now Unc Aidan and Aunt Edith are divorced. They haven't spoken to each other since the last reunion. That's where the papers were signed. And, you see, old Aunt Edith's eyes don't work that good anymore. Or maybe her mind a little bit too. She mistakes my cousin Nicky for his father Aidan and tells him he "had lots of nerve, showing his face here" and is looking like she's about to go nuclear. Or at least – you know – a very messy bombing, right.

Luckily Nick was quick enough to recognize the situation and calm his mother down.

But then later, and this is where it gets wild, Uncle Aidan does show up during a round of Bingo, and she mistakes him for her son and begins apologizing about earlier. Aidan, who really just came to piss off Edith said "Why are you so sorry? I'm the one that apparently put all those frown lines on your face." Aunt Edith then realizes and she screamed at him, "Get *your* ugly

fucking face out of here”, you know, before she makes it even uglier. But the rest of the night they talked about getting remarried.

GARY

Wait, are they getting back together?

SHERYL

No, they never will. They hate each other.

(pointing at the desktop)

Do you see this??

GARY

What?

SHERYL

400 Donald Trumps across the United States. All with Alzheimers.

GARY

Yeah, I know, they don’t call it a medical phenomenon for nothing.

SHERYL

Do you think it’s because – I don’t know. It was just such a long time coming and so surprising. You know what I mean?

GARY

I don’t know what you’re getting at honestly.

SHERYL

With how he died, you know.

GARY

Yeah.... I’m not sure if much can really be read into it.

SHERYL

Really?

GARY

I don’t know. I don’t know shit. You know, sometimes he feels so much like him I swear he could be.

SHERYL

Arnold Buckley?

GARY

Yeah. Arnold Buckley. Squint and is he Nicky or Uncle Aidan? It’s your choice.

SHERYL

I've never really talked to him.

GARY

No, that makes sense.

SHERYL

I am curious when I see him about.

GARY

It's not that exciting unless you make it exciting, which you shouldn't. More just... strange.

SHERYL

Yeah, sitting right here, I could already tell you that.

GARY

Yeah well you always say you can tell a lot just sitting right there.

SHERYL

Yes and no.

GARY

I gotta get back to it.

SHERYL

Alright. Don't let any of them old people hurt your feelings as much as I do yours.

GARY

I'll send them to you if they do.

SHERYL

Then maybe I'll meet Arnold after all.

GARY

Oh, you certainly would. See ya.

SHERYL

Mhm.

GARY leaves SHERYL's desk, goes and picks up his cart from the breakroom and then exits with it.

SCENE 4

ARNOLD watches TV. He startles as RONALD makes a groaning noise, but then that groaning noise turns into a snore.

ARNOLD, alone with RONALD, becomes very conscious of the unconscious man for the first time. He flips through a few channels on his tv.

He glances at RONALD.

He adjusts the volume.

He glances at RONALD.

This sort of routine repeats itself as ARNOLD gets increasingly agitated.

At some point he can't take it. ARNOLD gets up and approaches the door to his room. He opens it, as if expecting someone. No one's there.

As ARNOLD looks out his door, RONALD rolls out from under the coffee table. He stretches and spots an unexpected ARNOLD. He strides quickly towards him.

ARNOLD turns around and is startled by RONALD, standing behind him. RONALD speaks in a Trump voice. He looks a bit like him as well, but is dressed in somewhat ratty clothing.

RONALD

You're not getting a cent off me. I never had sex with Danielle Flanner and if I did, it was bad. Not very enjoyable.

ARNOLD

I— what are you doing in my room? Who are you?

RONALD

Who am I? Who the fuck do you think I am? I'll tell you who I'm not. Someone who had sex with Danielle Flanner.

ARNOLD

I don't give a damn about any Danielle Flanner, you fucking idiot.

RONALD

What did you just call me?

ARNOLD

An idiot. Who are you?!

RONALD warms up a punch, but at the last minute ARNOLD sees it. He veers out of the door so RONALD misses him entirely. Now observing a door between himself and RONALD, ARNOLD promptly closes it behind him.

RONALD looks about, taking in his surroundings. He checks out what ARNOLD was watching. But then he turns off the television. From under the coffee table, RONALD takes out a Donald Trump wig. He fits it on. Then, ARNOLD reopens the door.

ARNOLD
What are you doing here?

RONALD
In my room?

ARNOLD
Yes, in my room.

RONALD
No, in my room. Why do you look like that?

ARNOLD
Like what?

RONALD
Like ME?!

ARNOLD
No, no, no, you're mistaken. You're the one that looks like me.

From under the coffee table, RONALD takes out a red tie. He fits it around his neck.

RONALD
You want to be me so bad.

ARNOLD picks up the TV remote, points it at RONALD and hits the power button. Nothing happens. After a few more tries, he turns the TV back on.

ARNOLD
WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU??

RONALD
And it's not even convincing, you got my hair all wrong.

ARNOLD
I would never wear khakis with that shirt.

RONALD
Stop that, you piranha!

ARNOLD
I'm not stopping anything.

RONALD
What *you* would do doesn't matter.

Am I real?

ARNOLD

I'm metric.

RONALD

A knock on the door.

YES!

ARNOLD

YES!

RONALD

GARY enters.

Oh, sorry. Is this a bad time? I'll come back later.

GARY

Get out of my room!!

ARNOLD

Get out of MY room!!

RONALD

I'm so sorry, sir - Mr. President.

GARY

GARY closes the door behind him.

You also leave my room.

ARNOLD

No, you leave my jacuzzi—

RONALD

No you need to leave—

ARNOLD

No you need to leave—

RONALD

No you need to—

ARNOLD

No you—
RONALD

You—
ARNOLD

You—
RONALD

You—
ARNOLD

You—
RONALD

The two have gotten weirdly close to one another.

You. You. You. You.
ARNOLD and RONALD

They continue doing this for a bit.

This isn't your real face.
ARNOLD

You look like a beaver!
RONALD

Both men fall over. RONALD's clawing at ARNOLD's face and ARNOLD's clawing at RONALD's face.

Where's the beaver?
RONALD

Where did you come from?
ARNOLD

They separate.

I came from here.
RONALD

No you don't. I live here.
ARNOLD

RONALD

You think you live in the same place as me? I've been digging the Panama Canal! Have you dug to the Panama canal? No. Therefore this can't be your room.

ARNOLD

This is my room.

RONALD

But it's mine.

RONALD

You're a terminator, aren't you?

ARNOLD

You're a fan who went to my plastic surgeon.

ARNOLD

I don't even know what a terminator is.

RONALD

I don't even know any plastic surgeons // – That's what a terminator would say.

ARNOLD

I don't either. I don't know what you're talking about.

RONALD spots the podium. He walks up to it.

RONALD

The American people! People at the highest level want to deceive me. They want to drag my name. These communists won't discredit a perfectly good haircut like they did a perfectly good mustache. I did not have sex with Danielle Flanner! I did not!

ARNOLD

That's my podium!

RONALD

No it's not.

ARNOLD

You get your hands off my podium!

ARNOLD tackles RONALD.

RONALD

You get your slimy, small dick hands off me!

ARNOLD pushes RONALD against the wall, causing a large crash.

ARNOLD

You tell me what the hell you're doing in my room!

RONALD

I own this whole building! Suck on my penis!

ARNOLD

First of all, I would never suck a man's penis. Second of all, I felt yours. It's very small.

RONALD pushes ARNOLD off of him.

RONALD

It's big!

ARNOLD

No it's not.

RONALD

It's as big as yours, beaver.

ARNOLD

Get out! Get out now! Where's my wall?!

RONALD

Oh this great wall. Build it. See what it does.

ARNOLD

That's exactly what I'm going to do. I'm finishing off these unpure Americans!

RONALD

Are you stupid? You're very stupid. We need a 20ft garden henge.

ARNOLD

What the fuck.

RONALD

And it will be maintained by the illegal Mexicans!

ARNOLD

I will not let you take away American jobs!

RONALD

Oh, shut up.

ARNOLD

You shut up.

RONALD

How did you get in here? What do you want?

ARNOLD

I have the same questions for you.

RONALD

Listen, only one of us can live here. We can't have two of us in the same room. So I think you need to go back to whatever alleyway you came from.

ARNOLD

Do I smell homeless to you? I wear Chanel. A Chanel you couldn't even pronounce. You smell like you're homeless.

RONALD

I don't smell! I don't smell at all. You smell much worse than me-

ARNOLD

But you do. I should know. I was all over you. You smell like tacos that were left in the garbage. That's what you smell like. Who knows how you got an appointment with my surgeon, but you're definitely homeless.

RONALD

No, you're a robot from the future. It's the only good explanation. And if I smell like tacos, it's because tacos should have spice preference options. Runny noses are unAmerican. I signed an executive order on it. I just made an important law! Not you!

ARNOLD

You're insane.

RONALD

You're jealous!

ARNOLD

You're fired! Get out!

RONALD

You can't fire me, piranha!

ARNOLD

Get out! Get out now!

RONALD responds by striping down to his underwear and an undershirt.

RONALD

I can't go anywhere now.

ARNOLD

Who's Danielle Flanner?

RONALD

A hag who tried to take everything from me. Now I will take everything from you.

RONALD, who's in the kitchen area, takes a skillet out of the sink. He strides over to the podium and begins striking it with the skillet, splitting the wood until the podium is in pieces. ARNOLD grabs hold of RONALD, trying to stop his progress.

ARNOLD

Noooo!!!

But he's too late. The podium is already in ruins. RONALD turns towards ARNOLD.

RONALD

You're annoying!!

RONALD strikes ARNOLD's head with the skillet. ARNOLD crumples to the floor. RONALD looks at him, smiles, then positions himself behind what's left of the podium.

RONALD

I won! I am the head of the United States!

(observing ARNOLD)

Actually, I think I might need these after all.

RONALD begins stripping ARNOLD of his clothes and then putting them on his own body. He struggles a bit in this task, particularly with the socks. But after a bit, he's dressed himself, leaving ARNOLD in his underwear. RONALD then heads for a mirror, straightening out his clothes, his wig and anything else that might need to be straightened out. He's kept the red tie. Meanwhile, ARNOLD rolls over, regaining consciousness. He observes his nakedness, befuddled and disturbed. Then he looks about until he spots RONALD.

ARNOLD

No! You will not be me.

RONALD

But I already am.

ARNOLD

You will not—

RONALD

You're dead. You hear me? You're dead.

ARNOLD

I'll make sure your life is miserable.

RONALD gives ARNOLD a pathetic look. Then, he turns and heads for the door.

ARNOLD's slow to realize he's leaving, but once he does - he follows as fast as he can in pursuit.

RONALD rushes out of the room.

ARNOLD rushes after him. At the door, GARY intercepts him.

RONALD's nowhere to be found.

GARY

I heard some noise— What in God's holy name?

ARNOLD

He's getting away!

GARY

Who, Mr. President?

ARNOLD

The intruder is getting away! A homeless!

GARY looks past ARNOLD and into his room, observing the destruction and general mess.

GARY

(surveying the room, under his breath)

I just cleaned up this one...

(looking back at ARNOLD)

Let's get you clothes on.

ARNOLD

There's an intruder!

GARY

Staff will look for this intruder. Can you describe him?

ARNOLD

He looked a lot like me.

GARY

Ok?

ARNOLD

He was homeless.

GARY grabs ARNOLD's arm, steadying and guiding him.

GARY

Are those clothes on the floor yours?

ARNOLD just stares at the clothes, as if he's trying to remember.

GARY

(looking back at ARNOLD)

Can you put these on yourself?

ARNOLD

Yes, yes.

ARNOLD gets dressed in RONALD's clothes, which are a bit ratty. GARY types into his pager.

GARY

Ok - staff know to look out for him.

*GARY begins tidying up the mess of the room. ARNOLD sits on his bed.
There's a quiet between them.*

RONALD enters the room. ARNOLD points to the doorway.

ARNOLD

There he is!

GARY looks.

GARY

Where?

ARNOLD

He's there! He's in the doorway!

GARY looks between the doorway and ARNOLD, befuddled. RONALD smiles mischievously, in such a way that might give one chills.

ARNOLD

(as if transfixed)

I'm in the doorway.

GARY

Mr. President, I need to attend to other residents. Perhaps some rest will do you well.

Yes, maybe I will sleep.

ARNOLD

Great.

GARY

Leave the door open.

ARNOLD
(smally)

GARY hesitates.

Will do.

GARY

Thank you.

ARNOLD

GARY exits.

So are you leaving then?

RONALD

For where?

ARNOLD

Anywhere.

RONALD

You were the one that ran for the door.

ARNOLD

To get rid of you.

RONALD

No one can see you.

ARNOLD

No, it seems not.

RONALD

So you can't replace me.

ARNOLD

You can't get rid of me.

RONALD

ARNOLD

We'll see about it.

RONALD smiles. He considers for a moment.

RONALD

Call your friend back.

ARNOLD

Why?

'RONALD

Maybe they'll see me this time. Your daughter did.

ARNOLD

Did she?

RONALD

I don't know.

ARNOLD

She might have. She visited me. Recently.

RONALD

That sounds right. Call for help. Get them to get rid of me. Exactly what you want. A junkie hoping to blend in with the old folks to get a roof over his head. They'll understand it immediately. They've seen it countless times before. That they will see. That they will understand.

ARNOLD tremors. RONALD loses the Trump hair, the red tie and Arnold's dress shirt, leaving himself in his undershirt.

RONALD

Go ahead. Call for help, you pathetic fuck. Let's see how far it gets you.

(mockingly)

HEEEELP!! HEEELLP!! HEEELLLP!! I'M SEEING THINGS HELP!!! HEEELPP!!!

ARNOLD grabs his left shoulder and his chest. He suddenly finds himself heaving.

RONALD

HEEELLP!! HEEELLLP!!

ARNOLD

AHHHHH!!! HE'S HERE!! HE'S HERE!! THE INTRUDER!!

GARY rushes on.

GARY
(seeing RONALD)

Oh!

(to RONALD)

Sir, if you could come with me.

GARY takes RONALD's arm. RONALD smiles at ARNOLD.

RONALD

Stop! I live here!

GARY

I'm afraid you're going to have to come with me.

RONALD

I'll have you fired! You're SO fired!

GARY
(to SHERYL)

Found the trespasser!

SHERYL

I honestly just wonder how they keep getting by me – Maybe it's when it's Jeremy's shift – but still.

RONALD

LET ME GO! LET ME GO!

GARY drags RONALD off stage. SHERYL slowly gets up and lazily follows. At a certain point, she loses sight of RONALD and GARY. We hear several bangs, which sound like gunshots. Her face turns pale.

ARNOLD, in his room, grabs his chest and collapses in front of the coffee table.

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

LIGHTS UP ON:

SCENE 5

Arnold's room has new tv, new bedsheets and new furniture. They all appear as relics from different decades. ARNOLD himself, also is in his room, lays on the ground where he fell at the end of Act One.

SHERYL stands where she was, looking out the lobby door. GARY reenters into the lobby, coming back inside.

SHERYL

What was that? Something going on out there?

GARY

Some kids just set off fireworks.

SHERYL

At fucking 6 PM? Did you see them?

GARY

No, I think they're a few blocks down. I mean, it's the 4th this week.

SHERYL

Dumbasses.

GARY

Happy America.

SHERYL

Happy America. What did you do with the homeless man?

GARY

Just told him to skedaddle. He was on substances - I couldn't figure out a thing he was saying. Mumbled everything. And I don't think he heard me over the noise but he got the message.

SHERYL

Fucking fireworks.

GARY

The fireworks freaked him out for a second - I think he thought someone was shooting at him. Got him running.

SHERYL

I feel bad for him.

GARY

You can't feel bad for everybody. I imagine it's nothing to him. He's just a bum.

A beat. GARY stumbles and leans against the receptionist desk, or SHERYL.

SHERYL

Wow. You hurt or something?

GARY

No, it's not that... I feel like I just seen a ghost.

(he steadies himself)

My brother, the one that's staying with me, he just got out of rehab. And being so up and personal with that dude... it just... It took me back to some shit.

SHERYL

That one uncle I mentioned, Uncle Aidan, he's had problems his whole life. So...

GARY

Yeah...

(Beat. half-laughs)

I wonder what the hell he was trying to tell me. He made it seem really important.

SHERYL

You know he might've just discovered the meaning of the universe but was so far gone he couldn't tell us.

GARY

No. It was just meth.

SHERYL

That's what he was on?

GARY

Yeah.

Beat.

GARY

By the way, I found my pager.

SHERYL

Where?

GARY

Weirdest spot in here... oh and do you have on log how often Richard Habib has been getting visits? Melissa's wondering if he's getting a little bit lonely or if his meds are making him kinda wired.

SHERYL

Sure, I'll check.

SHERYL heads back to her desk. GARY follows.

GARY

Ok, thank you. I'll probably remember to tell Melissa.

SHERYL

She'll remember to ask for ya.

GARY

Yeah, you're probably right...

SHERYL

After I do, I'll need to be heading for my date.

GARY

How did you and the guy meet?

SHERYL

Ok, you know my niece plays for the US girls U14 national soccer team, right?

GARY

Yeah, I think I remember that. Not sure exactly what that means—

SHERYL

She's a hotshot. They were playing France at BC last night, so I had to pull through for her. All these accents in the crowd. Boston this time of year, who knows what to wear, right?

GARY

It's July.

SHERYL

Exactly.

GARY

Good point.

SHERYL

But it turned out to be a pretty chilly and my friend Demi's with me and she's fucking shivering to death. And Demi smashed for no reason. You know, she's Demi. She played soccer herself at some point pretty seriously, she starts kinda half moving with what's going on on the field. Kinda as a joke. Kinda to keep warm. Maybe that's why she was so drunk. That's so Demi. So she doesn't notice when she hits a guy next to her with a flailing arm or a kick of the leg. But her shoe comes flying off, and we're pretty close to the field and so it somehow hits my daughter's teammate Julie in the head as she was tussling for the ball in the 18 yard box. That kicker traveled for miles, but the ref only sees Julie fall down, and calls penalty.

GARY

Oh my god.

SHERYL

I know. Us in the stands, including the French fans see exactly what happened, and there is an outcry at the call.

GARY

But it wasn't reversed?

SHERYL

That's really not the point. The point is an attractive French man throws his own shoe on the field, which hits the ref. Then Demi takes her other shoe, and throws it at the French man. And everyone but Demi is a soccer parent, which is the equivalent to being on blow so by the end both sides were fighting, and not just with their shoes and about half the fans including me and Demi were ejected from the game and the French man gave me his number. He's apparently actually from around here. But no one cared because we won the game and my niece's teammate stepped up and scored the pen. If you ask her, I'm her favorite aunt. She'll tell you that.

GARY

The world is insane. The world is literally insane.

SHERYL

It's insane. But sometimes that gets you a date.

Silence. SHERYL glances back at her computer screen.

SHERYL

Hey headline here says the Florida attorney general just made a statement which said he agreed with the autopsy. He says it *was* a heart attack. Took them long enough, but everybody's in agreement now about how Trump died.

GARY

I still think a lot about that day.

SHERYL

I think we all do.

GARY

Of course some say he could've been shot.

SHERYL

(rolling her eyes)

And the Illuminati is putting mind-control into tofu. What else is new. I haven't told many people this, but I was actually in Florida when it happened. I was driving in the area. I swear I heard something.

GARY

Are you for real?

SHERYL

Yeah, my sister moved down to Florida and we went to Palm Beach for a day. Drove right by the mar-a-lago facilities.

GARY

And you heard it happen?

SHERYL

We heard something. Really could've been anything. Just like those dumb kids with their dumb fireworks. By the time we got set up in our spot by the water, there were sirens blaring everywhere.

GARY

Oh my fucking god, you heard it happen.

SHERYL

Well, ok.

GARY

(probably jokingly, but you can't quite tell)

Fuck. I knew it. I knew they killed him. I knew he didn't go off some heart condition.

SHERYL

On the beach, there was already gossip about it. Saying they found him face down in a bloody pool, straight outta those old crime movies.

GARY

Oh my god!

SHERYL

I know. I was scared. I thought people would take to the streets. But, listen, I'm agnostic – sorry wrong word – I'm apolitical, but if every fact says that man had a heart attack, then that's what he had.

GARY

I don't know, there's a lot of holes – and you and your sister heard something.

SHERYL

When people started talking, me and my sister went home.

GARY

Smart... I miss Trump.

SHERYL

Ok, I'm starting to think you're serious.

Gary laughs.

GARY

I'm always serious.

(beat.)

I just... I don't know. He made it feel like there's a reason there's so much chaos. But I think chaos is just the way the world is now.

(beat.)

It's been a weird year. Last few years. For me, especially.

SHERYL

C'mon, give me good news, Gary.

GARY

I'm living with my brother again.

SHERYL

That sounds fun! Is he moving or are you...

GARY

He moved in with me. Just for a bit.

SHERYL

Good to have some extra time with him?

GARY

No, I haven't seen him in too long. It'll be good to have the time together.

SHERYL

Yeah.

GARY

Anything new with you?

SHERYL

Not really.

GARY

I still somehow have to do a round on the Cedar Pine wing, so I definitely need to get to that.

SHERYL

Yeah, sounds like you better.

GARY

(rolling his eyes)

Appreciate that.

SHERYL

Preciate you. Richard last had a visit two months ago.

GARY

Thanks.

SHERYL

It's really been a slow day today. Probably don't need to wait up for Jeremy, do I?

GARY

No one wants to see Grandpa on Monday.

SHERYL

No, but I mean, even for a Monday, it's been slow.

GARY

I'm not complaining.

SHERYL

Why should ya.

GARY

Exactly. I really have to go through cleanings for the Cedar Pine wing. And Arnold's room, I tidied it up a bit, but it's a mess again.

SHERYL

Don't set off any fireworks while you do.

GARY

I'll keep that in mind. Good night.

SHERYL

Night.

GARY exits the other way. SHERYL begins to pack up her things.

ARNOLD takes a large inhale and slowly lifts himself up. He grabs his chest and then behind his back. He steadies himself against the dresser.

With ARNOLD standing, we reveal RONALD once again laying under the coffee table. A pool of blood around his chest area.

ARNOLD goes around, inspecting the new items in his room. First, he strokes the couch.

ARNOLD

(half-mumbles)

Me and Amy's first apartment. The mid 70s?... Yeah, yeah around then.

Then, he inspects the bedsheets.

ARNOLD

I was a kid...

Next he inspects photos on his dresser. He points at one photo, in particular—

ARNOLD

That's... that's—

Then he spots the East Asian artistic-looking bowl. He picks it up. He stares at it. He turns it over again and again in his hands. Then, he sets it down.

Next, he inspects the TV. He spots the remote on the coffee table, notices RONALD laying underneath it and turns on the TV.

ARNOLD

It's color!

He fiddles with the remote a little bit, flipping through channels, then he turns the TV off. And now ARNOLD's got something to say – or wait, sorry – sing. SONG: I GOT NEW NEW PANTS.

ARNOLD

I got new new pants on

I got – I got - I got –

I got a new new tv
It's smaller and don't make me hot
like my new new pants on
Today's been very weird
I got – I got – I got –
A new new me
I'm less expensive and more itchy
like my new new pants on
Bygones be bygones
I got – I got – I got –
I'm so "sheesh"
Isn't that what the kids say? They say "sheesh"?
Sheeshy, It's new
Like my new new pants on
Today's been very weird
Bygones be bygones
Biden say Bye Don
He can kiss my ass
Cus this ass got good pants

On a particular horrible sounding note, RONALD wakes up. He drunkenly stumbles towards ARNOLD, who ended up by the broken podium. We can now clearly see a bullet wound in RONALD's chest.

ARNOLD picks up a strip of wood from the destroyed podium, ARNOLD and RONALD's scuffle to thank. He begins stroking it. RONALD taps ARNOLD on the shoulder, startling him.

RONALD

Like Houdini, I'm gone and I'm back. This isn't over. You're dead. I almost have you. You're dead—

ARNOLD hits RONALD with the piece of wood, knocking him out. He wipes his forehead.

ARNOLD

Definitely homeless.

ARNOLD, very suddenly, grabs his shoulder and massages it a little. A bit uncertain of his surroundings, he cautiously walks over to his bed and sits down, the piece of wood still in his hands. As he does so, GARY knocks on ARNOLD's door. After no response, he nudges open the door.

GARY

Hey Mr. President, just checking if you needed anything after having that confrontation with the intruder. So sorry that happened—

ARNOLD

I'm fine! Everything's fine! Go away now.

GARY

Of course, as you wish.

GARY shuts the door behind him. ARNOLD looks out upon us from the edge of his bed.

ARNOLD

(gesturing, possibly to RONALD)

What should I do about you?

But you can't quite tell who he gestures to. He looks down at the body, still. ARNOLD starts making disturbing noises. It should take a second to register that he's crying. This goes on for a little bit.

After a suitable amount of time, ARNOLD grunts loudly and rises from his bed and makes his way back to the remains of the podium.

ARNOLD

I fought with the underbelly, the very bad thugs of America like him. And I beat the shit out of him. I did. Once again, Donald saves the country. I don't get paid enough for this bullshit. Saudi Arabia said they'd pay me more to run the United States than our own country ever would. True story. Very, very sad.

(beat.)

All of you are looking at me. All of you proud to be in your red white and blue. A lot of people aren't proud to be American anymore. They want to be communist Venezuela. Have you seen Venezuela? It's truly awful. Crime everywhere. America's next they say. Can you believe that? All these socialists who don't want to be American.

... Yes, boooo. Boo them all. It's far past time to get rid of them. The radical woke left wanted to take over this great nation. They've forgotten – They've forgotten we're in America. And if I'm to be honest, I'm speaking honestly, a lot of them are transgender. A lot of them cross borders illegally. A fair amount of them are gay. A lot of them are like that homeless man. And we must round them up! That's right, folks. Let's round them up! ... It's time we get the filth off the streets. You folks are great.

Everybody knows me, so I mean, I know everybody. I know exactly what the folks of this country are made of. I know everybody.

I'm on all your phones. All your computers. All your Televisions. I'm in your living rooms. I'm in your kitchen. I'm in your bedroom. I'm in your car. And whether some of you like it or not, you're all so much better off because of me. That is power, folks. I'm in there. I'm always with you all. Like those ones and zeros in computers. You see how those computers have ones and zeros. No other numbers. What's that about? Just ones and zeros. Where did all the other numbers go? Some parts of the brain firing at other parts of the brain firing at some empty space. Because none of you are very smart. Not like me. I'm Donald J. Trump, the man who's so rich, he's famous for his money. Not many people are famous for the money. Not many people who become famous for their money can become president. They say I'm so unprecedented. And maybe I am. A lot of people say I am. Because I'm important. And I changed the world. And I

float around the heads of your family members because they love me. And how could they not? Why shouldn't they? I mean, look at the way I live. Some call me the king of New York, even in the 90s when a lot of people called Biggie the king of New York they called me the king too. Look at the way I live. Who wouldn't love me.

But I'm doing what Americans have done along. I get what's mine. Americans treat the world like the world owes them. That's what makes us so great. That's what makes us so successful. Like I said, I know exactly what the folks of this country are made of. I could shoot you in the leg and you'd love me. Like a dog. Except those Haitians. They are eating those dogs and cats. They hear us saying it's raining dogs and cats and they think "oh good. Dinner!" It's awful. Awful really. Maybe I won't aim for the leg. Maybe I'll aim for the head. I am inevitable—

*ARNOLD suddenly grabs his chest. Then, he wipes a brow of sweat from his face. He slowly returns to his bed, where he lays down.
A knock on the door. GARY enters with his car, on it a tray of food.*

GARY

Good morning. Breakfast has arrived, Mr. President. Everything prepared the way you like – I heard you had an issue with the chef yesterday.

ARNOLD

Thank you very much Gary. I'm not particularly hungry.

GARY

Are you feeling alright?

ARNOLD

Of course. I've never been better.

GARY

Do you want to get out of bed?

ARNOLD

Not yet.

GARY

It's almost 10. I think it'd be best if you got on with your day.

GARY reaches for the covers.

ARNOLD

No! I don't want to. I'm tired.

GARY

I understand. I'll set up your tray by your bed. Does that sound good?

ARNOLD

Fine.

GARY begins setting up a platform so the tray can sit by the bed.

ARNOLD

You're loyal to me, right?

GARY

Of course.

ARNOLD

There's a lot of fakers out there. You don't want to know what happens to fakers, Larry. But I know. But you don't want to know.

GARY

I imagine I don't.

ARNOLD

That's right. You're dumb. That's why I liked you. So dumb you're smart.

GARY

Respectfully, I don't like to think of myself as dumb.

ARNOLD

Well you are.

GARY

What makes you go say that?

ARNOLD

You work for me and I see your habits. You're simply dumb as a brick. But I liked you a lot. One of the few ok people here. But you're still stupid.

GARY

You know better than me, Mr. President.

ARNOLD

You would kill for me, wouldn't you?

GARY

When I think about it, I'm not liking this conversation, but yes I would!

ARNOLD

You'd shoot the fakers dead. Maybe we don't need a garden hedge after all.

GARY

A garden hedge.

ARNOLD

Yes. A 20 foot garden hedge. With thorns.

GARY

You know how I hate fakers.

ARNOLD

Then we have one thing in common. You ever like throwing rocks?

GARY

Like, into water?

ARNOLD

Yes. It's about gliding on the water. Something comes at you and you bounce. Like your credit cards. Or like Jesus.

GARY

Are you sure you don't want to get up?

ARNOLD

No. I'm fine here.

(beat.)

You'd kill for me. I love that.

ARNOLD laughs. It's eerie.

GARY

I have to go now. Me, Melissa or someone else will check back in on you soon.

ARNOLD

Where are you going? Not back to your wife!

GARY

Arnold—

ARNOLD

It's Mr. President. I know you think I forgot about your sob stories. I don't forget, Larry. I'm not stupid. You're stupid.

GARY

You're quite right. I'll see you later, Mr. President.

GARY leaves ARNOLD's room. ARNOLD rolls over in his bed. MELISSA, in her work clothes, strides past GARY as he leaves ARNOLD's room.

GARY

Hey, I'm not sure if anyone debriefed you—

MELISSA

Getting some air.

GARY

It's not that that important, but I think it'd be good for you to know—

MELISSA

Tell me later, Gary. I'll be back in a few.

GARY

Ok then.

MELISSA enters into the lobby and then exits. With his cart, GARY heads the other way.

SCENE 6

*MELISSA can be found outside the nursing home, in a lot, inhaling from a vape.
ISABEL enters and walks up to MELISSA, startling her.*

MELISSA

Oh my god, this is embarrassing. I'm on my break and I found this in my son's room this morning and got curious—

ISABEL

No, that's ok... What's it like?

MELISSA

It's strawberry apple watermelon flavored, but really just vaguely fruity. They pack a lot of nicotine in these things. It explains some of, um.. his...

ISABEL

I'm not judging you when I say this. You're a terrible liar.

MELISSA

Yeah. Yes. Yes, I am.

ISABEL

Do you know how many of the nurses that work under me smoke?

MELISSA

How many?

ISABEL

All of them.

MELISSA

(laughs)

What gave me away?

ISABEL

You seem young for a son that's vaping age.

MELISSA

Not quite. He's 16, which I think might mean he's maybe outgrown vaping. It might not be cool anymore.

(beat.)

You got a son, right?

ISABEL

Going into ninth grade.

MELISSA

I'm so sorry.

ISABEL

No, he's actually pretty mild-mannered. Probably his hormones haven't kicked in yet.

MELISSA

Have you vaped before?

ISABEL

No.

MELISSA

... Want to try it?

ISABEL

Why not?

MELISSA hands the vape to ISABEL. She inhales, then coughs. They begin passing it back and forth.

ISABEL

This isn't the weed that got me through nursing school. What's in it?

MELISSA

A mix of nicotine and THC.

ISABEL

Melissa, right?

MELISSA

Yeah – and Isabel?

ISABEL

Yep.

MELISSA

I'm still relatively new with Arnold. Ellis moved to Maine so got reassigned–

ISABEL

A lot of his social workers have moved.

MELISSA

Well–

ISABEL

I know he's not easy.

MELISSA

No, not at all. I mean, I always find it's hardest on the family—

ISABEL

You don't have to say that—

MELISSA

It truly is, Isabel.

ISABEL

I'm never even here.

MELISSA

I just saw you yesterday. Of course our residents love when their family visits, but we have a lot going on here too—

ISABEL

You don't have to bullshit me. I'm in the same field as you. You don't have to bullshit me. We're vaping together for Christ sake. Don't fucking worry about— You don't need to make me feel better.

MELISSA

Ok.

ISABEL

(with vape in hand)

You know I could get you in pretty good trouble for this. I won't and I never will. But you don't know me. You don't know how I would've reacted. That was a bad judgement call on your end.

MELISSA

I honestly... I can't disagree with you.

ISABEL

Sorry for snapping.

MELISSA

You didn't snap.

ISABEL

I did. I did. You don't need to make me feel—

MELISSA

Wait, weird question, but - do I know you? I mean, have we met outside of Compass Bay?

ISABEL

You know, you do seem familiar... I'm racking my brain as to where...
(beat.)

Oh, Thanksgiving!

MELISSA

Right! I came to your family's Thanksgiving with Brook. I think it was 2015? You just got engaged.

ISABEL

Yes, you did! I remember you! You made me think my sister's a lesbian.

MELISSA

Yes, I remember that! That was so—

ISABEL

Nothing against it! Just took me by surprise.

MELISSA

I just didn't have any plans, so Brook offered. I see you still got the ring.

ISABEL

(flashing her left hand)

Still got the ring.

MELISSA

Congrats. I'm pretty sure your husband and I actually talked a lot that evening. It started with a J...

ISABEL

James. He's a big talker.

MELISSA

I have no idea what we talked about— wait. Jessica Jones!

ISABEL

Who?

MELISSA

The marvel TV show. Jessica Jones—

ISABEL

Ohhh, I pay attention to none of that.

MELISSA

It's actually so good.

ISABEL

I've probably been told that before.

MELISSA

And yeah, Brook just asked if I wanted to come along. We met at Merrimack.

ISABEL

Right, right. Are you guys still in touch?

MELISSA

Not much. Graduated and kinda lost track of each other.

ISABEL

Family not from around here then?

MELISSA

My parents passed when I was young. And didn't have much family left that was around, so...

ISABEL

I'm so sorry. That was nice of her to bring you to us.. Glad she did.

MELISSA

Yeah, you guys had a good spread. It was great for a growing appetite.

ISABEL

Oh wait. The kiddo?

MELISSA

Actually got pregnant with him that week.

ISABEL

Not with anybody from Thanksgiving—

MELISSA

(laughs)

No, no. God, no. My boyfriend at the time.

ISABEL

Ah.

(beat.)

How did your mom and dad... go? If you don't mind me asking. It's just... It never exactly gets better, does it? I think about it all the time since Dad got sick.

MELISSA

I'm not entirely sure.

ISABEL

What do you mean?

MELISSA

All I know is one night they disappeared. But it's a long time ago, you know? Sometimes life throws you surprises. They were 36 and 39.

ISABEL

I'm so sorry.... That must've been tough.

MELISSA

It was a long time ago. I've made peace with it.

(beat.)

What field of nursing?

ISABEL

Surgical.

MELISSA

Congrats. Hours must be shit.

ISABEL

They are. But it's the job. I knew what I was getting into.

MELISSA

We all thought we did.

Both laugh.

ISABEL

That's very true.

(beat.)

Is he still doing ok?

MELISSA

You know, he's been doing better.

ISABEL

That's good. Thank you for... everything.

MELISSA

Of course.

ISABEL

He's not giving you too much trouble, is he?

MELISSA

No, it's my job. It's what I'm here for.

ISABEL

Sometimes I feel like I have zero instincts with him. I guess I just try to talk how we use to...

MELISSA

That is the right instinct.

ISABEL

Really?

MELISSA

It is.

ISABEL

That's nice to hear.

Beat. MELISSA taps the vape to her nail, fiddling. She holds onto it, keeping either from continuing smoking.

MELISSA

I'm curious to hear, if you don't mind me asking, when did you first start to notice the Trump aspect of his condition? I know there's more of them popping up, but it's so unique – Sorry.

ISABEL

No, it's ok. If anyone would be interested, it's you... It wasn't overnight. And after both diagnoses of Alzheimer's and dementia. I guess the way I see it is that my family's always cared about political stuff and he's no different.

MELISSA

So you see it as psychological?

ISABEL

Every time I try to put a term I know to it, I find ways in which it doesn't quite match up. I don't know. I remember growing up my Mom loved Reagan but my Dad couldn't stand him. Both liked George H.W.. He's always been an Independent. Took pride in not letting a party make a decision for him.

MELISSA

Do you think that has anything to do with his later diagnosis? Or...

ISABEL

It's hard not to think it does. But at the same time, he wasn't even the conservative one in the house. Then the 90s hit and I'm in my grunge phase way on the other side saying I'm a socialist.

MELISSA

Still a socialist then?

ISABEL

(laughs)

I'd say so.

MELISSA

I'm hearing so much of that word these days. What does that mean... for you... if you don't mind me asking—

ISABEL

The government makes sure everybody's needs are supported. And is run communally by those it's serving.

MELISSA

Ok but, like in the United States, what does that actually functionally mean as policies and how we do things?

ISABEL

Have you heard of the Battle of Blair Mountain?

MELISSA

No.

ISABEL

I read about it and what I'd say most lead me into actually becoming a socialist. Not just a kid who likes Nirvana and says she wants to fight the system, but someone understands the politics. So it kind of explains how I see things. The Battle of Blair Mountain was part of the West Virginia Coal Wars during the 1910s.

MELISSA

Which are?

ISABEL

They weren't really taught in schools. But back in the 1910s, coal corporations would make company towns for production. That means if you worked in coal mining, you'd live in this town in which the company gave you housing, water, electricity. That also means the company controls your housing, water and electricity. This isn't too great when these companies also fire you if you try to unionize or advocate for a better working environment, meaning you're now homeless. Obviously, this allowed for a lot of abuses of those working these mines. But in 1920, a few famous organizers came to Mingo County, West Virginia, where the worst of this stuff was happening and started to try to unionize. In response, the company hired a private "detective agency" called the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency to evict the over 3000 workers who became involved with the union. But this detective agency was more like a private militia.

Not only did they violently evict workers and their families from their homes, they killed ten people in the process.

MELISSA

Shit.

ISABEL

With a little time, the police chief issued a warrant for these men. Because instead of evicting families, they killed them. His name's Hatfield and he comes up to the leader of the Baldwin-Felts, Albert Felts. and says he's got a warrant for his arrest. Albert responds he's got an arrest warrant for Hatfield.

MELISSA

That's confusing.

ISABEL

Confusing times. You'd think the chief of police would have more authority, but when the mayor comes downtown to help sort out the dispute, he takes Felt's side. This only escalates the argument. A shooting breaks out between Hatfield and Felt's men. Then they all start shooting and the police chief, barricaded in a jewelry store, kills Albert, eight of his men and the mayor—

MELISSA

Wait, I think I've heard of this. Hatfield's this hero of Appalachian pride. West Virginia first — something like that.

ISABEL

He's a miner's hero. And this event inspires more shootouts between the miners and the Baldwin-Felts agency aided by the State police for the rest of the year. West Virginia lays down martial law in Mingo county and miners face imprisonment for the smallest infraction. A few months pass. Tensions are rising. Small skirmishes continue. Hatfield goes to court, oddly not for murder, but for some other offense and while walking up the steps with his wife, some of the Baldwin-Felts guys come out of nowhere and shoot them dead. That happens and then the West Virginia governor laughs off the union organizer's demands, so 10,000 miners say they have no other choice. They're going to pick up their guns and organize an army to free Mingo country from its martial law. The National Guard comes in. The U.S. army comes in. They start bombing towns with innocent people. But then these miners with their guns meet the U.S. army — many of them are vets from World War One — ...and they just can't do it. They couldn't go out there and fight against their own country. Because they love their country. They just turned around. They surrendered themselves.

I was in high school when I first read about it. The Rodney-King Riots were just a week old. And it just got me thinking—

MELISSA

(checking the time)

Fuck — I have to go back to work. But you were saying, in brief.

ISABEL

Where was I?

MELISSA

High School. Rodney-King riots.

ISABEL

Right, right. It got me thinking that it shouldn't take uprisings and deaths and violence to make things a little bit fairer in this country. But it very often feels like that's what it takes.

(beat.)

Because I think the way we live here makes us go crazy. Nobody stays sane. We all have a ticking clock with a breaking point. Perhaps those that never did go crazy through the first three quarters of their life, like my Dad, end up at your work. And the rest of us, those that lost our sanity earlier are either dead or rocking somewhere bitterly, burnt out from all the chaos we devoted ourselves to.

MELISSA

That's a little dark, isn't it?

(waiting for ISABEL's response, but when she doesn't)

So are you still waiting for yourself to go crazy, or are you already insane?

ISABEL

It's a gradual thing, but I don't think I have the balls to be properly crazy. I'll probably end up in one of these homes. What about you?

MELISSA sighs.

MELISSA

I've gone crazy.... It would be easy to say when my parents died, or when I turned 37 earlier this year and passed my Mom. But I truly went crazy when I was 15. I wanted to die young because my parents passed 6 years earlier... I was losing friends and I was doing everything in my power to make the happenstance that I could die sooner rather than later a reality – I don't think you ever really answered my question.

ISABEL

Question?

MELISSA

Yeah, about your Dad. How he came to be... what he is now.

ISABEL

He had a ticking clock like the rest of us. I don't know.

MELISSA

I guess so. And while medicine tries to figure it out, we're doing all we can to make him comfortable–

ISABEL

Why shouldn't he be?

*MELISSA smiles, perhaps not quite sure what to say.
Silence.*

ISABEL

Why shouldn't he be Donald Trump? What better has he to do? What other choice does he have—
I'm just saying shit.

(beat.)

I've kept you long enough, probably way past your break. I'll be inside - in a moment.

MELISSA

Ok. It was nice talking to you.

ISABEL

You too.

ISABEL takes a breath. MELISSA heads back inside.

ISABEL

I just say shit.

SCENE 7

MELISSA enters into the lobby. She waves to SHERYL. As she heads for the breakroom, GARY catches her.

GARY

Hey, uh, about earlier. A homeless guy somehow got into Arnold's room last night, so it might be good to check in on him. He's been a bit freaked—

MELISSA

Shit. And I just told his daughter he's doing well – fuck.

(off Gary's confused look)

She's here today.

GARY

Like here, here? Checked in here?

MELISSA

Just was talking to her in the parking lot here.

(beat.)

I've actually been avoiding him all day.

GARY

Any reason?

MELISSA

Honestly, I just had a weird night last night and didn't want more drama.

GARY

Ah shit, I'm sorry.

MELISSA

Yeah. I guess I'll just go, you know, check on Arnold.

MELISSA heads for ARNOLD's room, where ARNOLD's asleep. MELISSA knocks and then slowly opens the door.

MELISSA

Hey Arnold, it's Melissa.

ARNOLD is slow to get up, but does, having just been sleeping. He groans in response to MELISSA. Paying no mind, MELISSA comes over to help ARNOLD sit up.

MELISSA

Oh, you're cold. How are you? I heard you had a bit of a scary confrontation last night. Just came by to check in on you.

ARNOLD

It was nothing.

MELISSA

I'm glad to hear that. Do you want to talk about what happened?

ARNOLD

An imposter – very weak by the way – he tried to take my place. I stood firm. He knew he needed to go so I sent him gone.

MELISSA

Really? From what I heard, it must've been quite dramatic.

ARNOLD

It was nothing. Overblown. The TV will tell you.

MELISSA

Well I'm glad it didn't freak you out. Do you feel safe?

ARNOLD

Much safer than he is.

MELISSA

Well, that's not very nice. That man probably doesn't have a bed to sleep in every night.

ARNOLD

Oh, I know he doesn't. He's dead.

MELISSA

Excuse me?

ARNOLD

He got hit pretty hard with a piece of wood.

MELISSA

Do you want to explain to me what you mean by that?

ARNOLD

No.

MELISSA

How did he get hit by a piece of wood? Why's that?

ARNOLD

It'd blow your mind, marblehead. It's inexplicable.

MELISSA

Ok – you know I think you’ll want to work on being a little nicer today. Your daughter, Isabel, is here to see you. I saw her in the parking lot.

ARNOLD

What?

MELISSA

Your daughter’s here today.

ARNOLD

I should get up.

MELISSA

That’d be nice.

ARNOLD

I’m gonna get dressed. You go now.

MELISSA

Alright. Thank you for talking with me.

MELISSA leaves the room, closing the door behind her. She heads for the breakroom. She begins re-stylizing the doll and gives it the hair it was lacking. Something posh but also something crazy. GARY enters with his cart.

GARY

(sarcastically)

I just love my life.

MELISSA

So you’re doing good today I take it?

GARY

(passive-aggressively)

You know what? I’m doing great.

MELISSA

I’m not convinced. I’ll give Kylie a knife or something.

GARY

Or an AR-15.

MELISSA

A little much. And not very stylish.

(looking through the drawer)

I think camo is going to have to do.

MELISSA begins to re-re-stylize the the Bratz doll.

A moment of quiet. GARY takes a bottle of milk from the fridge and begins drinking it from the pint.

MELISSA

Hey, what did happen with Arnold last night? He is definitely off.

GARY

I heard a lot of noise. Some homeless man seemed to have gotten into his room and they were fighting.

MELISSA

Ok I got from him that they were fighting. He was pretty secretive about it though. Like he thought he'd get in trouble if he told me.

GARY

Maybe he doesn't remember most of it, I don't know.

MELISSA

Honestly, that's probably it.

(beat.)

I haven't been avoiding him. I actually was just late.

GARY

Damn. I completely bought your lie. You're good at that.

MELISSA

Yeah, I was hungover.

GARY

Damn, really? Have fun last night?

MELISSA

Yeah... I think.

GARY

Did I also see you with a vape outside the Magnolia wing?

MELISSA

Fuck - was I visible?

GARY

I won't tell — Hey, I'm much worse — But I never expected that from you.

MELISSA

I don't even know why I brought it to work. And then I had the amazing idea to give, Isabel, Arnold Buckley's daughter, some of it—

GARY

You smoked with her?

MELISSA

I guess I did. She kinda chewed me out for it while vaping with me. I don't know what to expect from that woman.

GARY

Well, you really starting to let loose. Three years I've been here and first I've seen you — Showing up to work hungover. Vaping on your break.

MELISSA

I don't know if that's something I'd aspire to.

GARY

No, it's a good thing. In doses. At least for you. You can't take these people too seriously.

MELISSA

You mean the residents?

GARY

Yeah.

MELISSA

(laughing)

That doesn't sound great.

GARY

You know what I mean.

MELISSA

I think I do.

GARY

There's maybe three things worth seriousness. One of them clearly being that doll.

MELISSA

Hey! Are you making fun of it?

GARY

I'd never do that. But it's never been clear to me how it came to be...

MELISSA

A thing?

GARY

Yeah.

MELISSA

I thought it'd be fun.

GARY

You take it very seriously.

MELISSA

Still makes it fun.

GARY

Alright.

MELISSA

You know, no one's ever asked me why I brought the doll in. I think most people... well.... yeah, most people enjoy having it here but no one's ever actually asked me why I brought it in.

GARY

Really?

MELISSA

Yeah... Anyway, I gotta go... do my next thing.

GARY

That sounds like hungover Melissa.

MELISSA

Hungover and high Melissa.

MELISSA stops, considers for a moment.

MELISSA

Were you listening to Whitney Houstin earlier the other day?

GARY

How'd you know that?

MELISSA

I fucking knew it was you. I could hear it all the way down the hall.

GARY

What?!

MELISSA

IIIIIII WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOOOOUUU

GARY

I gotta get new earbuds, man.

MELISSA

No, you have great taste.

GARY

Have you heard me listening to other songs??

MELISSA

Here and there.

GARY

Fuck.

MELISSA

Didn't think of you as someone who loves all the pop divas.

GARY

That's not all I listen to...

MELISSA

I think it is.

GARY

It's really not.

MELISSA

It's basic, but it's cute.

GARY

Don't call me basic. You put a leather jacket on the Bratz and called it edgy.

ISABEL approaches ARNOLD's room. A knock... then the door creaks open... ARNOLD looks like he's just gotten dressed. Repetitively, throughout the scene, he grabs his shoulder and periodically does arm circles.

ISABEL
Hi Dad. I thought I'd stop by—

ARNOLD
I just put on my pants! Learn to knock.

ISABEL
Sorry, I did—

ARNOLD
And before you ask, I never had sex with Danielle Flanner!

ISABEL
Who—

ARNOLD
Who? You know who.

ISABEL
It's me, your daughter, Isabel.

ARNOLD
You want my money? You can't have it!

ISABEL
I'm not here for any money, Dad...

ARNOLD
You can't have it! Get out of my room!

ISABEL
Dad, it's me...

ARNOLD
Why are you even here?

ISABEL
To talk to you, ask about each other's week—

ARNOLD
If I'm to be honest and I always am – you seem like you're trying to con the Big Don. The Big Don does not get conned.

ISABEL
Ok. What are you doing with your arm?

ARNOLD

It's stiff. And I'm very busy. But I'm starting a campaign. An investor like you should know about it.

ISABEL

... What's the campaign for?

ARNOLD

A garden hedge.

ISABEL

Oh, that sounds lovely. I'm... glad you have something to do.

ARNOLD

I do many things!

ISABEL

No, I'm not saying that you don't—

ARNOLD

Then what the hell are you saying? No one's done more for this country. You clearly don't know what you're talking about. And you know nothing about me and Danielle Flanner. A big, beautiful garden hedge... 20 feet tall! With big, pointy thorns. We're going to build it. We're going to keep the bi-grant crime contained. Biden immigrant crime. I call it Biden immigrant camp time. And if we have to we'll have put them in solitary and chain them under the 100 degree sun. The solitary is very important. It's very necessary to keep them from making DACA babies. Otherwise, what are we doing? We're not even charging rent. Can you believe that? It's not perfect but it's a start. We'll improve it with time. We're keeping the immigrants out. It's very smart and I know someone like you would want in. Let's start talking properties—

ISABEL

Why do you want to keep the immigrants out?

ARNOLD

Why don't you ask Laken Riley? The bi-grants! The bisexuals! Right there. That's why.

ISABEL

What? Who's—

ARNOLD

You shouldn't even have to ask. Or you'll see a panda angry. And I'm a big bad panda.

ISABEL

I— what is this about? Is this you pushing me away? Do you want to keep me out?

ARNOLD
(confused)

Keep you out.... With the garden hedge?

ISABEL

I guess so.

ARNOLD

Yes, I'll keep you out.

ISABEL

Oh.

ARNOLD

Why are you sniffing?

ISABEL

I don't know, it's probably dumb.

ARNOLD

I'd say so.

ISABEL

Do I make things more chaotic for you?

ARNOLD looks at ISABEL blankly. Long beat.

ARNOLD

... You're a woman.

ISABEL

... Bye, Dad.... actually I'll be right back. I think.

*ISABEL exits the room, heads off in the direction MELISSA went. She exits briefly.
After she's gone, ARNOLD leaves the room as well and seemingly follows after her.*

MELISSA (O.S.)

Is everything alright?

ISABEL (O.S.)

He doesn't know who I am.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Oh...

ISABEL (O.S.)

Like at all. He didn't know me.

MELISSA (O.S.)

I assure you he was doing very well yesterday—

ISABEL (O.S.)

I'm just not here enough. Or I came back too soon—

MELISSA (O.S.)

Do you think it might help if you meet again with me there?

ISABEL (O.S.)

Maybe.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Then let's try.

The two reenter and head towards Arnold's room. MELISSA knocks.

MELISSA

Arnold.

MELISSA knocks again.

MELISSA

It's Melissa.

She nudges open the door.

ISABEL

Oh fuck.

MELISSA looks to the bathroom. No sign of ARNOLD anywhere. While they look, ARNOLD enters and sneaks past his own room. Once in the lobby, he kneels down and crawls in front of the front desk, before exiting out front.

MELISSA

He can't have gone far. I'll start checking the common rooms. Do you think you're able to go ask Sheryl at the front desk if he tried to leave since he's been acting up?

ISABEL sits on the couch.

ISABEL

Christ. I can't be hearing from the police again.

MELISSA

I'm sure you won't need to.

ISABEL

We don't know that. And also we do, we know how he is.

MELISSA

Let's cover our bases before panicking. I'm going to the common rooms, I'll get other available staff to help. Do you think you can go to the front desk and ask Sheryl if she's seen or heard anything? If not, that's ok, I can—

ISABEL

No, yes. I can do it. Of course I can—

MELISSA

Ok, great.

ISABEL

(in the existential sense)

Why is it so hard to find your father?

MELISSA

Right now, we just need to get looking.

ISABEL

Yeah.

ISABEL doesn't move.

MELISSA

How about I go and check front desk. You can collect yourself here—

ISABEL

It's just... hard... I'm sorry.

MELISSA

No, it's part of my job.

ISABEL

Right... I'll go talk to reception.

MELISSA

What if we walked and talked together?

ISABEL

No, I'm ok. I don't need that. I'll just go.

MELISSA

You sure?

ISABEL stands up.

ISABEL

Yes.

ISABEL hurries off towards reception. MELISSA watches her go and then hurries off the other direction. ARNOLD re-enters and quietly starts to make his way past SHERYL. This time, SHERYL notices him.

SHERYL

Excuse me? Do you live here?

ARNOLD redirects himself towards the sign-in sheet. He stops in front of it and Sheryl. ARNOLD picks up the pen on the front desk. He throws it at Sheryl, but it doesn't get far as it's attached to a chain.

ARNOLD

Fuck off.

SHERYL

Excuse you. Are you a resident?

ARNOLD

Don't concern yourself with it. It's not your job to give feedback.

SHERYL

And what? Does that make it yours?

ARNOLD

I'm through with this organization.

ARNOLD turns away, heading back for the exit.

SHERYL

You're Arnold, aren't you?

ARNOLD

Shut up!

SHERYL

Hey, I'm talking to you!

Well, don't!

ARNOLD

Where do you think you're going?

SHERYL

ISABEL enters the lobby.

Hey, Dad!

ISABEL

Not today!

ARNOLD

ARNOLD doesn't even turn around. He exits the building. ISABEL follows.

Dad!

ISABEL

ISABEL follows him into the parking lot..

SCENE 8

ARNOLD, walking somewhere from the parking lot. ISABEL finds him.

ISABEL

Dad, where are you going?

ARNOLD

Why do you care?

ISABEL

You live here now and you can't just go off when you live here.

ARNOLD

You don't tell me how to fucking live. That's not your job.

ISABEL

Well, I'm the reason you got anything you got. That you're at this home and not the streets or jail—

ARNOLD stops walking.

ARNOLD

You give me lip like that again.

ISABEL

I talk how I—

ARNOLD

It don't matter you little shit. I'm your pops—

ISABEL

Yes you are! Which means I help—

ARNOLD

You're not getting a cent off me!

ISABEL

What money?? What money, Dad?

ARNOLD

I'm not thinking much of this disrespect.

ARNOLD

Yeah? And with what money?

ARNOLD slaps ISABEL.

ARNOLD
How does that feel?

ISABEL
See what happens if I hit you back.

ARNOLD
I'd like to see you try.

A beat. She doesn't try.

ARNOLD
Don't talk money with me.

ISABEL
I'm not the one that brings it up.

ARNOLD
You're disowned!

ISABEL
Where the fuck are you going?!

ARNOLD
I want a burger!!

ISABEL
Then why don't you just sign out?

ARNOLD
I don't need to sign out.

ISABEL
No, it's a rule—

ARNOLD
I'm not signing out!

ISABEL
Well, you have to.

ARNOLD
They send someone with me—

ISABEL

Is that so bad? What if you forget how to get back? What if you get lost?--

ARNOLD

It's humiliating!

ISABEL

It's safer--

ARNOLD

You fucking commie, stop trying to control me!

ISABEL

(happily)

Yes! Yes I am a commie! That's me--

ARNOLD

(observing Isabel, perplexed)

I never understood you.

A beat.

ISABEL

I don't understand me either, so...

ARNOLD

That makes sense.

ISABEL

Yeah.

(beat.)

Do you want to go back to the lobby, sign out, then go get a burger?

ARNOLD

No!

ISABEL

Then what's this about?

ARNOLD

It's not the burger.

ISABEL

Then what? What is it?

Gahhhh.

ARNOLD

Just tell me what you want!

ISABEL

I– I–

ARNOLD

You're not this stupid just spit it out!

ISABEL

Silence.

Shut the fuck up!

ARNOLD

What do you need right now?

ISABEL

I want to make America great again.

ARNOLD

No, actually...

ISABEL

I...

ARNOLD

I'm sorry I yelled. Just take your time.

ISABEL

Silence.

Whatever I had... What did I have?

ARNOLD

What do you mean? I don't know.

ISABEL

Then who does?

ARNOLD

Silence.

ISABEL

You had a wife – Amy. You liked Corona’s. You got into bird watching a little after I moved out and could tell me all these random facts about different types of birds. You were a Deadhead. You used to own a Harley but you sold it when I was maybe 5 or 6. You spent time in Cambodia for a few years and you never really explained why.

ARNOLD

Cambodia?

ISABEL

It’s in Asia.

ARNOLD

I went there?

ISABEL

Pretty sure.

ARNOLD

Cambodia. What was I doing there?

ISABEL

You lived there.

ARNOLD

Why?

ISABEL

I don’t know. I think you were kinda a hippie when you were younger, maybe that had something to do with it.

ARNOLD

... I think I remember that.

ISABEL

Yeah?

ARNOLD

I know the exact route to a burger spot from here. We aren’t far from where you grew up.

ISABEL

Ok. You need to sign out though.

ARNOLD

No.

ISABEL

If you don't do it once, you're gonna start not doing it.

ARNOLD

But I know the exact route.

ISABEL

I know that. It doesn't matter.

ARNOLD

Why? It should matter, shouldn't it? I'm going to go.

ISABEL

No, you can't.

ARNOLD

Well I am.

ARNOLD begins to walk away. ISABEL heads after.

ISABEL

Hey!

ARNOLD exits, followed by ISABEL. A Burger King sign or other type of burger joint come into view. RONALD sits by it and looks high. ARNOLD reenters, followed by ISABEL. He stops when he sees the sign.

ISABEL

Dad, Dad, Dad – listen to me!

ARNOLD

No.

ISABEL

It can't be someone's job to chase after you.

Beat.

ARNOLD

It's time to go.

ISABEL

What?

ARNOLD

Burger...

ISABEL

Yes, you came here because you wanted a burger—

ARNOLD

(snaps)

I know that. Don't tell me things I already know.

ISABEL

Do you want to go inside then? We can get a burger without you signing out this one time, but in the future you can't wander off. Ok? You have to promise me.

ARNOLD

You've always been my daughter.

ISABEL

What?

ARNOLD

I'm just saying.

ISABEL

You're scaring me.

A shift in ARNOLD's energy, resembling 'Arnold' and not Trump.

ARNOLD

I don't mean to.

ISABEL

Well you are.

ARNOLD

I mean, you see how the signing out thing, it's just...

ISABEL

Yeah, I know. But you have to do it.

ARNOLD

You can't just decide you have control over me because I'm old.

ISABEL

It's not about that.

ARNOLD

But it is.

ISABEL

What do you think it's about?

ARNOLD

... I'm lost.

ISABEL

That's what I'm concerned about!

ARNOLD

No, I know where we are. We're at the Broadway Burger King. But I don't know what you're talking about.

ISABEL

Why you feel like I'm controlling you and not just fucking trying my best?

ARNOLD

I-

ISABEL

Yeah.

ARNOLD

You don't want to deal with me. You really just don't.

ISABEL

Someone has to! You think Ethan will?! You really think—

ARNOLD

Someone *has* to now, do they? I'm just a nuisance.

ISABEL

No, I like spending time with you.

ARNOLD

You don't have to lie.

ISABEL

I'm not.

ARNOLD

Then why is it every time you open my door, you look like your face is falling off?

ISABEL

You're just sick.

ARNOLD

I'm not sick. I'm just old.

ISABEL

Does it matter? Do you want a burger or not? We're here anyway. We might as well.

ARNOLD

Don't fucking patronize me.

ISABEL

I'm sorry. You just go be on your own then. See what happens.

ARNOLD

You know I can't do that!

ISABEL

Then why can't you just accept that?

ARNOLD

That's not my point. I made it to the West Broadway Burger King. That means something.

(Beat.)

... I never liked you very much. And I said that too often.

Silence.

ARNOLD

You're too hotheaded.

Silence. Maybe ISABEL glares at ARNOLD. Maybe her lip quivers. Maybe both.

ARNOLD

You're too much like me.

ARNOLD turns for the door to the burger joint. RONALD notices him.

RONALD

Sir, do you have anything to spare?

ARNOLD ignores him. He opens the door to the burger place. A bell attached to the door rings. As he walks through the door, he disappears.

A long beat. ISABEL begins to hyperventilate. With a little time, she steadies her breathing.

ISABEL

Dad... what the fuck are you— You need someone to shut you up.

(looking through the door)

Yeah, there you are. Go stand in line. Do you even have a wallet on you? No, I bet you don't. Why is it so hard to find your father? You know, even when you're sitting next to me – what is it about you? – I can't even find you then. It's not that there's something vacant in your eyes – your eyes aren't vacant. They always have some type of energy, even if tired. But most the time, it feels like you don't quite know where your soul sits within yourself... Do you think that's important?

(beat.)

I love y—

She doesn't finish her sentence. ISABEL considers for a moment, then heads for the door to the burger joint. She observes RONALD, sitting and watching her.

RONALD

Ma'am? Do you have anything to spare?

ISABEL

Sorry.

RONALD

\$5. Enough for some fries.

ISABEL

Sorry, I need to catch somebody.

ISABEL opens the door. As she walks through, she disappears.

SCENE 9

RONALD, awake again, sits on the couch in Arnold's room. He's watching the TV. We hear a commercial.

TV VOICE

Side effects may include diarrhea, nausea, kidney loss, kidney failure, intestinal damage, depression, mania, suicidal ideation, heart failure, lung failure, sudden death

On "mania" RONALD gets up and tries his best to lift the tv. He struggles but still knocks the damn thing onto the floor with a hefty thud. Just then, ARNOLD enters and seems startled by where he is.

ARNOLD

I thought I was just at the burger place.

ARNOLD observes RONALD.

ARNOLD

You're in my room.

RONALD

I know.

ARNOLD

Ok. And you're alive.

RONALD

(extending his hand)

I'm Ronald. Nice of you to acknowledge me. A little knock to the head, but I assure you I'm doing great. Better than ever.

ARNOLD

Do I know you?

RONALD

Sit down.

ARNOLD

I'll stand. That's ok.

RONALD

You look clammy. Sit down.

ARNOLD surprises himself and sits. He wobbles a little as he does.

ARNOLD

Why are you here?

RONALD

I dunno. They say I'm what the cat dragged in. Does that make me a mouse?

RONALD laughs unsettlingly.

ARNOLD

What is this?

RONALD

I think you know.

ARNOLD

(standing)

You don't mess with me!

RONALD

Relax, please. Relax. Sit back down.

And he does.

RONALD

You're losing your mind. You know this, right?

ARNOLD

Who are you? What are you doing here?

RONALD

I thought we were good friends. You really don't remember me?

ARNOLD

Just tell me who you are!

RONALD

No you tell me! What's your name?

ARNOLD

I—

RONALD

Oh really? What's your daughter's name?

(Silence.)

What's your wife's name?

(Silence.)

What's your aide's name?

ARNOLD

Mm– Me– Mme...

ARNOLD grabs his heart.

RONALD

What's my name?

ARNOLD

Robert.

RONALD

Ronald!! And what's a person without a name? They're just a shadow. I'm no different. I don't have a name. Maybe I'm your shadow. Maybe I'm your conscience. Whatever the case, without fail, you know you'll always find me. In your closet. Under the coffee table. A homeless man at Mass and Cass. We always see what we want to see. Even in people. You see your daughter and think of your wife, you sick fuck. You see your social worker and think you have a shot at that because you're so big and powerful. Who wouldn't want a piece of Donald J. Trump? Let's all get in on it. Let's all be just like him—

ARNOLD

Shut your mouth!

RONALD

No, you shut your mouth! Why should we give you the ability to speak? What use do your words do anyway if in a few hours you can't remember them? If you can't remember your own name? It's as if you're already dead!

ARNOLD

I'm not dead.

RONALD

But are you? Are you alive? What type of man would you be if you were? One who's better off dead. That's what you are.

ARNOLD

I'm not dead!

RONALD

You just don't have enough brain to see the bigger picture. Do you smell that on me? What do you smell the booze? Do you smell the dope? I'm just another homeless man sleeping in a low security senior living facility, man. But to you. To you! I am so much more.

ARNOLD

No you're not. People don't see you. I only see you. And my daughter saw you. And Gary saw you.

RONALD

What else could I possibly be?

ARNOLD

... I don't want to say it.

RONALD

But you're staring me in the face. You recognize who I am. Don't you?

ARNOLD

Yes.

RONALD

What's my name?

ARNOLD

Ronald.

RONALD

Who am I?!

Silence.

RONALD

You don't want to tell me? Ok.

RONALD rises and starts tearing apart the apartment. Breaking photographs, lamps, the television – whatever is in sight. ARNOLD rises to stop him, but stumbles.

ARNOLD

What are you doing?!

RONALD

Sit. Back. Down.

And he does.

RONALD

Do I remind you of your father? Yes? Or do I wear disappointment on my face like the gaze of your mother? No? Am I your military school instructor who had too much fun with you when you were in a tool shed when you were 12? As memories drop away, it's the earliest ones that go

last, isn't it? But where are your parents now? Where are your teachers? Nowhere. You can't find them.

ARNOLD

No. I can't.

RONALD

But I'm here. Aren't I?

ARNOLD

Yes. You're my condition. My illness.

RONALD

I'm your master. I own you. Now you tell me. Who do I own?

ARNOLD

Me.

RONALD

Who do I own?!

ARNOLD

You own me.

RONALD

I am death. Of course I do.

ARNOLD grabs his chest. He keels over.

RONALD

There you go. No need to fight it.

ARNOLD stumbles over to his bed, searching for a help button plugged in by his nightstand. RONALD kneels down to him.

RONALD

Do you have anything to spare?

ARNOLD

HEEEELLLP!!

RONALD

Really?

ARNOLD

HEELLLP!

RONALD

No one's coming. No one can hear you. Nobody will help.

ARNOLD

HEELLLP!! LARY!!

ARNOLD manages to stand and leans against the couch. RONALD, matching him, stands as well.

RONALD

Oh, you want Lary?

GARY rushes in, a rifle over his shoulder.

GARY

President Trump! I came as soon as I heard you!

ARNOLD

Help me.

GARY takes notice of RONALD. Very suddenly, GARY aims his rifle at ARNOLD.

GARY

Get away from him!!

ARNOLD

What are you doing?!

ISABEL enters and approaches ARNOLD.

ISABEL

Dad, you need to choose your order. Do you want #4, the double cheeseburger meal? I know you've gotten it in the past.

GARY

Back away from the president!! Now!!

ISABEL

(to someone unseen)

He'll have the #4.

MELISSA enters and approaches ARNOLD.

MELISSA

Hey Arnold. We have two officers outside. They're saying you punched Richard Habib with brass knuckles. Do you know anything about this or do I need to bring them in here?

ARNOLD

What? No – what –

ISABEL

(grabbing Arnold's arm)

C'mon. Let's now go wait for our orders.

GARY

Now or I'll shoot!!

ARNOLD collapses, entering into cardiac arrest. GARY keeps the rifle pointed on him.

ISABEL and MELISSA exit. RONALD watches on.

When ARNOLD stops moving, RONALD gasps as if he's now struggling for air and falls.

GARY puts the rifle over his shoulder and rushes to Arnold's side. GARY lifts ARNOLD up and places him on his bed. As he does so, ARNOLD coughs himself awake.

GARY

What happened, Mr. President? You were yelling and then shortly after I got in here, you fell.

ARNOLD

I– uh– I.

GARY

Thank God I heard some noise coming from your room, Mr. President. If I didn't get here, I don't even want to think about what would have happened.

ARNOLD

(frailly)

Ah, ah, thank you.

GARY

Are you ok? Do you need anything? Are you breathing alright?

ARNOLD

–Tired.

GARY

Are you feeling better now?

ARNOLD nods.

GARY

Is talking hard right now?

ARNOLD nods.

GARY

If it's easier to not talk, are you ok with just listening?

ARNOLD nods.

GARY

Do you remember when I was talking to you about my brother? – About whether I could trust him in my house– I should ask. Are you really interested?

ARNOLD

Tell me.

GARY

Well... He seems pretty straight right now, but I don't know how long it'll last. And I know you'd tell me there's someone to blame for his addiction. I know it's the Biden's and the illegals, but honestly everyday I'm with him – It's him. He's such a dumbass. And he knows it. He does this shit to himself and then makes it even worse when he realizes what he's doing. Nobody wants to hire him. Chili's don't want him for Christ sake. And I heard they took anybody.

ARNOLD looks into space.

GARY

What is it, Mr. President?

ARNOLD

Look...

GARY

What is it?

ARNOLD can't find the words.

GARY

You're a strange man. And you're dumb as a brick. That's what I like about you.

ARNOLD

No you are.

GARY

We all are.

ARNOLD

Ski–

GARY

Yeah. Like what you were saying about how life is about skipping rocks in a pond. I really like that. You just have to know how to finesse it. And that's hard to teach and it's even harder to learn, but I'm trying to learn. I really am. I just don't know if I have it in me anymore to just keep going. I've had a really rough year. But like a flat rock, the more times you bounce, the better. But I think I'm round. I mean, look at me, I've been getting a little bit of a belly. I don't think there's hope for me. And looking at your belly, I really doubt there's hope for you.

ARNOLD

Res—

GARY

... I know, I need the resolve to just keep trying. If I try hard enough, I'll make my way. And then I'll be rich like you. I know. I know. I know. You don't have to keep reminding me – But I've tried so much!

ARNOLD gasps.

GARY

I just gotta keep throwing that rock. You're right. You're so right. Try to get a good angle on it. You know we had the burial for my dog recently. My brother got to go cus, well, he's living with me. I got to see the kids too. It was a good ceremony. It really lifted my spirit.

ARNOLD tries to say something but can't.

GARY

I gotta go now. Please buzz if you need anything.

ARNOLD nods.

GARY

Thanks for letting me share my troubles with you again, Mr. President.

ARNOLD looks troubled by this statement. GARY exits. Once he does, ARNOLD begins to scream.

ARNOLD

GAHHH. GAHHH. GAhhha. Aaaahaahhh.

ARNOLD tries to get up but can't. A tear sheds from his eye. SHERYL, meanwhile, is finishing up a call.

SHERYL

(on the phone.)

Oh, oh – the connection's bad – it's making a noise. Sorry. You'll hear from us soon. Thank you for your interest in Compass Bay. Goodbye.

MELISSA reenters and heads for the lobby, finding SHERYL.

MELISSA

Have you seen Arnold or his daughter?

SHERYL

Yeah, I did. Why?

MELISSA

When?

SHERYL

I've had a busy morning. I'm actually not sure. Half an hour ago? An hour?

MELISSA

Just I think he's missing right now. Did um Isabel, the daughter, come up to talk to you?

SHERYL

No.

MELISSA

Fuck... Oh! Did you see them together or separately?

SHERYL

I remember both their faces signing in. I don't think it was separately. But I honestly can't remember – Really sorry.

MELISSA goes over to the sign-in sheet and scans it.

MELISSA

Have you heard of the Battle of Blair Mountain?

SHERYL

No, what's this? Is this like a Blair Witch thing?

MELISSA

I know, right? But no, it's not.

SHERYL

What is it?

MELISSA

It's just this thing Isabel was talking about. I actually have some family from the area.

(running her finger along the sign-in sheet.)

Neither of them signed out... and they signed in at different times. Him about half an hour ago... So he's here now?

SHERYL looks over.

SHERYL

I guess so.

MELISSA

I'm gonna go check his room.

SHERYL

Ok. Let me know if I need to keep an eye out.

MELISSA rushes back out of the lobby. As she heads towards ARNOLD's room, GARY tags her.

GARY

Hey – Richard Habib's having a panic attack at lunch and it's making other residents anxious – Can you come help?

MELISSA

Yes, but first I need to check if Arnold's in his room.

GARY

I saw him in there five minutes ago.

MELISSA

Really?

GARY

I just talked to him. He's weak, but should be sleeping fine. Was hysterical about something – I couldn't tell. He was yelling and looking at me like he was seeing a ghost. Creeped me out.

MELISSA

Ok. I'll check on him next.

GARY and MELISSA rush off. SHERYL receives a phone call on her cellphone.

SHERYL

(into her phone)

Hello?

(beat.)

A package? Yeah, come around to the right side of the building. That's actually our front entrance.

She listens for a bit. Then, she rises and heads out the front entrance of the building.

SCENE 10

The sets as it is, but everyone's gone except a dead RONALD still on the floor and a half-dead ARNOLD on the bed.
Then ARNOLD stumbles out of bed. He doesn't bother for the podium, heading instead for RONALD.

ARNOLD

Look at me. Listen to what I say. Look at me. Listen to what I say. Everybody knows me.

With the strength he has, he half picks Ronald up. He takes him to the bed, lays him down the best he can.
ARNOLD smiles at the incredibly still RONALD, seemingly proud of himself.
Then, he turns away, starts to head for his chair, but as he turns, he grabs his chest.

ARNOLD

I know everybody. I'm the Burger King.

ARNOLD falls to his knees, then to the floor, losing all strength in his legs.
Then, he lies still. For a while.
MELISSA enters. She heads for Arnold's room. Knocks.

MELISSA

Arnold?

She opens the door slightly ajar.

MELISSA

Arnold? Can I come in?

She opens the door all the way and rushes over to RONALD.

MELISSA

Arnold? Arnold?? Fuck.

She checks for a pulse. She frantically takes a pager from her waistband.

MELISSA

Code blue. We have a resident unresponsive in Room 1600. We need a medical team here ASAP. I'm beginning chest compressions.

And she does.
Slowly, the lights dim.

LIGHTS UP:

EPILOGUE

SHERYL types at the receptionist desk. ISABEL rushes in.

ISABEL

Hey, I got a call about my father – They say he had a stroke.

SHERYL

What's the name?

ISABEL

Arnold Buckley.

SHERYL

Let me call his social worker.

ISABEL

Ok.

SHERYL picks up the phone.

SHERYL

Hey, we have a relative of Arnold Buckley here–

ISABEL

His daughter.

SHERYL

His daughter. She says she got a call about a stroke.

A moment.

SHERYL (cont.)

Ok.

SHERYL hangs up.

SHERYL (cont.)

She's coming to you.

ISABEL

Ok.

ISABEL tries to breathe. After a moment or two, MELISSA enters.

ISABEL
How is he?

MELISSA
I'm sorry.

ISABEL
Is he...

MELISSA
He seemed to have passed in his sleep. It was peaceful.

ISABEL
(very small)
This is... sudden.

MELISSA
I know.

ISABEL
Where is he?

MELISSA
He's with the ambulance in the back parking lot.

ISABEL
I should go...

MELISSA
They'll be around front in a moment. We can follow them to the hospital.

ISABEL
We?

MELISSA
Sorry - I actually need to get back to work.

ISABEL
Got it.

We see ambulance lights across Isabel's face.

MELISSA
Do you want to follow them? If so, we need to flag them down now.

MELISSA heads for the door.

ISABEL

No – wait, it’s fine. I’ll just get there when I do. There’s not much to be done...

MELISSA

Ok.

ISABEL almost breaks down, but catches her breath. MELISSA approaches her for a hug.

MELISSA

Hey...

But ISABEL rejects it.

ISABEL

No, it’s ok.

MELISSA

Ok.

ISABEL

I guess I got nothing here. Can go back to my car.

MELISSA

Only drive when you’re ready.

ISABEL

I know...

Silence.

ISABEL

Can I see his room?

MELISSA

Of course. Do you want me to come with?

ISABEL

No I just need to...

ISABEL walks past MELISSA and heads towards Arnold’s room. It’s quiet as she does.

MELISSA and SHERYL share a look. MELISSA also exits the lobby, but instead of following ISABEL, she heads for the breakroom. It’s quiet as she does.

Slowly, ISABEL opens the door to ARNOLD’s room.

Slowly, MELISSA opens the drawer with the doll's various outfits and accessories.

Inside Arnold's room, it's orderly, as if he or Ronald were never there. But still on the floor; by the couch, lies Arnold's body.

ISABEL stands in the doorway, taking in the emotion of the moment.

MELISSA takes out a few items to re-stylize the doll. Then her expression sours. With a willful hand, she strikes the doll, knocking it off its perch and onto the floor.

ISABEL spots the corpse and kneels down to him.

We linger on both women for just a moment.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY.