

# Service

## SCENE 1

“A Nightmare”

**ODTHWORPE**

(*grumble*) Where is the spoiled shit?!

**FIGGLESTICK**

Who shows up late to receive grant money?

**ODTHWORPE**

Probably just another silver-diapered, putrescent prince of pamperdom.

**GIDEON**

This twerp doesn't give a damn about this, (*growing in anger*) or his project, or doing good, or OTHER PEOPLE IN GENERAL!

**FIGGLESTICK**

And why should he?

**ODTHWORPE**

He's white.

**FIGGLESTICK**

He's wealthy.

**GIDEON**

He's well educated.

**ALL**

Another wealthy well-to-do laze-about.

**RAMSAY**

I'm so sorry I'm late.

**ODTHWORPE**

Ah, is this him?

**FIGGLESTICK**

I don't know, I've never seen a picture of him.

**GIDEON**

Are you ah... let's see here (*taking out a stack of papers, blowing dust off them*) Alfred Baines?

**RAMSAY**

No...

**GIDEON**

Ah, sorry that was last year's recipient. What's your name?

**RAMSAY**

Ramsay. Kay.

**FIGGLESTICK**

Was that a question?

**ODTHWORPE**

What kind of a jig is this?

**RAMSAY**

K-A-Y. My last name.

**ODTHWORPE**

Do you think we can't spell, you arrogant prick?

**FIGGLESTICK**

You're not the only one who went to college, you know.

**GIDEON**

(*sigh*) Just give him the check. I'm afraid I might die from simply not caring enough, I might just forget to breathe because I don't know why I still do and fall asleep, or rather, fall dead...

*Breaking off to a different place in the space, new tone, dream jump.*

**ODTHWORPE**

Ah, death, the long sleep. How I long for a long sleep, my life has been nothing but labors, nothing but labors, travails, troubles, and labors...

**GIDEON**

Just a nice bed to lay my head down upon, that's really all I ask for, the peace, to be left alone in my old age...

**FIGGLESTICK**

Who are we to look after the world? All we want is our own little square to care for, and peace, tranquility... peace... peace...

**ODTHWORPE**

Pish posh you two, you know nothing but the finest luxuries and pleasantr...

*Snapping back into old location.*

**FIGGLESTICK**

Don't you get all high and mighty on us Odthworpe, you have lived just as sugar-coated a life as we...

**GIDEON**

If not more so, didn't I hear that you married for money? How silly, your family's already made of it, Odthworpe... or so I thought...

**RAMSAY**

Excuse me, might I...

**FIGGLESTICK**

UGH! Give the boy his money so he will leave us alone! I can't stand to have such a dirty-footed misguided flippy-hippy in such proximity.

**GIDEON**

Fine. Odthworpe, I believe you agreed to take this one on.

**ODTHWORPE**

Me?! But everyone knows I'm in dire straits, I can't even afford to pave my driveway with gold, let alone the whole city!

**FIGGLESTICK**

Are you saying you can't keep up, Odthworpe? Shall we have to banish you from our little club we have here? The little club you called just last Christmas "your only life force"...

**ODTHWORPE**

Fine... fine... I shall suffer this one... (*takes out a gigantic check book*) Mr. Ramsay Kay. I present you with the 2009 William Penn Grant for... Socially-Oriental... So-called Justice... Socialite Juice-maker? How does it go again?

**RAMSAY**

The Penn and...

**ODTHWORPE**

...Whatever it doesn't matter, I just have to sign it as something, here's your money, now please leave.

**GIDEON**

*(Taking him aside)* Congratulations Mr. Kay! Congratulations! Now that you've received your grant, you're part of our family. Welcome Mr. Kay! Welcome! Oh, but before you go, remember that as part of the family you'll be required to attend the monthly board meetings, be a weekly contributor to all Penn publications, maintain a full-time job, graduate on time, achieve genius, raise a family, become an invaluable contribution to society, save at least six people from imminent death, befriend nine "ethnic" people, consider yourself associates with twenty-five people below the poverty-line, become a part-time faculty at any of these fine establishments (*unrolls tiny list*), visit all of our mothers in their sickbeds and be sure to kiss mine on the left cheek, Odthworpe's on the forehead, and Figglesstick's on the hand, as she doesn't like people fussing up her makeup, oh and if you wouldn't mind running to the store to pick up some garlic and sherry that would be most excellent. Well, goodbye now!

**RAMSAY**

What?

**ALL**

Goodbye!

*PROFESSOR comes up behind RAMSAY*

**PROF**

We are all SO proud of you, Ramsay. Our first graduate student to receive uh... that... grant that you won!

**RAMSAY**

Thank you, Professor. I'm really... honored and...

**PROF**

And so are we! Honored to have you with us, Ramsay. Honored that you'll be presenting your thesis as the poster-child of the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work in front of the entire school, your entire family, the dissertation examiner, the state department, the mayor, the prisoners of San Quentin, Ghandi, and Jesus Christ. We're really very pr...

**RAMSAY**

I don't want to present in front of all those people! Why are you doing this?!

*RAMSAY starts running away.*

**PROF**

Ramsay, you have to! With great power comes great anxiety!

*RAMSAY running by people*

**SARAH**

You've become a ghost! Where have you been?! I never see you anymore!

**RAMSAY**

*(out of breath, still running)* I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...

*RAMSAY's parents pop up*

**PARENTS**

We're so proud of you Ramsay! And looking forward to reading your first draft!

**RAMSAY**

Stop saying that! I don't know what I'm doing!!!

*A dark hooded figure, MARTY In Disguise, pops up.*

**MARTY I.D.**

Then how the fuck are you going to help me, huh? If you can't even deal with your own life.

**RAMSAY**

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I don't know, I don't know.

**MARTY**

*(shedding hood)* You don't know? What are you doing here? Loitering around community service, get the hell outta here do you hear me?! We don't need you whiny political brats hanging around here.

**RAMSAY**

AHHH!!!

**GIDEON**

Well, did you get my garlic and sherry?

**RAMSAY**

No...

**GIDEON**

Pathetic.

**FIGGLESTICK & ODTWORPE**

Pathetic.

**ALL**

**PATHETIC!!! BURN HIM!!!**

*They rush towards him. **BLACKOUT.** Music.*

**SCENE 2**

*A Confrontation*

***RAMSAY** is asleep at his desk with his face buried in his books. A desk lamp on. **SARAH**, his friend, enters.*

**SARAH**

Hey. (***RAMSAY** grumbles/whimpers/flinches*) Ramsay. (*patting him on shoulder*)

**RAMSAY**

(*startling awake*) GUH! (*catches breath*)

**SARAH**

(*beat*) You ok?

**RAMSAY**

...Nightmare.

**SARAH**

What about?

**RAMSAY**

The grant... everything.

**SARAH**

Come on. Up we go. (*pulling him up from his chair*)

**RAMSAY**

Where are we going? (*she continues to pull him up*) (*he yanks his hand free, suspecting*)  
Wait! (*beat*) Sarah, you know I hate surprise parties. And my birthday was a month ago, what's this about?

**SARAH**

*Stops, lets him go.*

You're an ass.

**RAMSAY**

What?

**SARAH**

It's my birthday.

**RAMSAY**  
(*beat*) Fuck. I'm sorry.

**SARAH**  
It's ok, I'll forgive you... eventually.

**RAMSAY**  
I'm really sorry.

**SARAH**  
We're going down to the bar for a bit before everyone comes over, so hurry up.  
*She starts to exit.*

**RAMSAY**  
Wait.

*She turns around. Beat. He looks at his research.*

I know this is going to sound horrible, but...

**SARAH**  
...I can't believe it...

**RAMSAY**  
...I started field research today and if I don't put my notes down I might forget them, and I have three books due back tomor...

**SARAH**  
You were just asleep!

**RAMSAY**  
It was a long day, you don't understand. I need to work now.

**SARAH**  
I have barely even seen you since you got that stupid grant, and I live here!

**RAMSAY**  
I know, I've been really bad about coming out...

**SARAH**  
Of your room... of the library...

**RAMSAY**  
This is a big deal!

**SARAH**

So is my twenty-fifth birthday! I feel old!

**RAMSAY**

I'm sorry, but this is a huge grant for a pathetic little Social Work dissertation. If I don't impress these people, I'm just going to end up unemployed and powerless like everyone else!

**SARAH**

Where is this coming from?

**RAMSAY**

I don't...

**SARAH**

What?

**RAMSAY**

If I do this half-ass, it'll be a total waste of everyone's time and money... I need to take it seriously, and make some sacrifices...

**SARAH**

Ah, got it.

**RAMSAY**

Sarah, come on...

**SARAH**

No, I got it. Our friendship needs to be sacrificed so you can impress your rich and powerful benefactors.

**RAMSAY**

It's only for a little bit, it's due in six weeks...

**SARAH**

Only for a little bit?! (*beat*) Eww!

*She starts to exit, RAMSAY stops her.*

**RAMSAY**

Please stop, that came out wrong.... Listen, I mean if you had to do something really important I would totally understand if you needed to disappear for a little while.

**SARAH**

Oh thank you, Ramsay... Do you even know what I do at my job?!



**RAMSAY**

Of course, I...

**SARAH**

...You get a fancy name attached to your check and suddenly you're the only one doing anything important.

**RAMSAY**

No, I...(stops, sighs, beat) Damn it. (beat) Why do I suck so much?

**SARAH**

Oh come on, don't be dramatic.

**RAMSAY**

You're right, though! I always do this! I think I'm working so hard to do some good, but it's just about my own success.

**SARAH**

Ramsay, relax. (beat, she sits with him) You don't have to beat yourself up, you just... you need to do a better job balancing work with everything else. It's not always...

**RAMSAY**

...I'm coming to the bar.

**SARAH**

(beat) Really? Ok, but I don't want you getting emotional and ruining my birthday. Here, tell me about your day...

*(They exit)*

### **SCENE 3**

"Kafkoffice"

*Other actors shift, or have shifted, or have the set set-up in another part of the space and simply withdraw a curtain to reveal the "commserv office." KAREN enters or has already entered, with clipboard, at desk or something. MARTY is 'offstage' at his desk.*

**MARTY**

*(Sips, spits out coffee)* KAREN!!! *(about coffee)* Karen, what is this crap?

**KAREN**

It's not crap, it's coffee.

**MARTY**

You know what I mean, this stuff sucks.

**KAREN**

We've been over this Marty, you can't drink regular because of your blood pressure, so I brew one pot of regular for the drivers, and then I brew a mixed pot, half decaf and half regular for you and me.

**MARTY**

You're not my mother, remember that.

**KAREN**

Somebody's gotta take care for you.

**MARTY**

What was that?

**KAREN**

Get back to work.

**MARTY**

I'm going to Dunkin's for some joe...

**KAREN**

If you do I'm calling your doctor!

**MARTY**

*(half off-stage)* God damn it...

*RAMSAY enters.*

**RAMSAY**

Hello um, I called in yest...

**KAREN**

*(cutting him off)* Name?

**RAMSAY**

Ramsay. Kay.

**KAREN**

Ramsay K-what?

**RAMSAY**

No, uh K-A-Y.

**KAREN**

Hmmm... I don't have you on my list, you sure you're scheduled for today?

**RAMSAY**

I called in yesterday...

**KAREN**

Yesterday? Who'd you talk to?

**RAMSAY**

*(pulls out sticky-note)* Mr. Myers.

**KAREN**

Marty!!!

*(MARTY half enters)*

**MARTY**

What is it?

**KAREN**

This boy here says he spoke to you yesterday about coming in today?

**MARTY**

What's his name?

**KAREN**

Ramsay Kay.

**MARTY**

K-what?

**KAREN**

K-nothing, it's his last name.

**MARTY**

*(looks at planner-book)* Mmm... nope, didn't talk to me. *(He turns to go, exits)*

**RAMSAY**

Wait, I think...

**KAREN**

I can schedule you for tomorrow.

**RAMSAY**

But we agreed on eight this morning. I made an appointment...

**KAREN**

*An appointment?* We don't make appointments for community service; you're scheduled, you show up, sign in, and then you go and work.

**RAMSAY**

What? No, I'm not here to do community service...

**KAREN**

Well then, you probably have the wrong building then don't you?

**RAMSAY**

*(looks at sticky-note)* This is thirteen-hundred Olive street, isn't it?

**KAREN**

Let me see that. *(takes note)* Yup, you have the right building... *(beat)* Huh, this is strange. Marty!!!

**MARTY**

Gah!

*MARTY re-enters, he is scribbling something down in his datebook-planner.*

What is it?

**KAREN**

He says he has an appointment today at our address.

**MARTY**

We don't make appointments.

**KAREN**

I know, that's what I told him, he said he spoke to you...

**MARTY**

.... Send him over to info.

**KAREN**

That's your answer for everything...

**MARTY**

I'm too busy. All they do is eat pastry.

**KAREN**

I'll send your mother over there too, if she comes in.

**MARTY**

She came in?

**KAREN**

No, you ass, but if she does I'm sending her over to info, tell her to ask for the nearest nursing home.

**MARTY**

You don't send my mother anywhere.

**KAREN**

I'm just saying...

**MARTY**

Bahh...

*(Turns, grumbling as he exits)*

**KAREN**

She's all alone in his house, it's really terrible. Alright, anyways, Mr. K, you're gonna go out those double doors, then you're gonna take two lefts, you're gonna see a big stone courthouse across the street and there's an info desk in the lobby.

**RAMSAY**

I thought I was at the right address...

**KAREN**

That would appear to be the case, but you see, we don't make appointments here, so pardon the cliché, but there must be some mistake...

**RAMSAY**

Ok, but...

**KAREN**

*(Gets up to usher him out)* Just tell the people at information that you have an appointment at this address, but that this office gives no appointments to community servers, and they should be...

**RAMSAY**

But I'm not doing community service! I made an appointment to talk with Mr. Meyers today at eight a.m. I'm doing research.

**KAREN**

Research? Well then that's a whole different ballgame, come on now, you gotta give me all the information up front or, you know—**MARTY!!!**

***MARTY** re-enters, this time on a cell phone and still jotting something in his planner.*

**MARTY**

*(on cell phone)* Yes, sorry, give me two seconds, yeah, yeah, two of 'em. *(to Karen)* What is it?

**KAREN**

Okay, Mr. K is not a community server, he's here on research.

**MARTY**

Research?! Mr. K-who?! Give me one second. *(on cell phone)* Hey, John, I'm gonna have to call you back in two seconds... Yeah I know I just called you. BYE. *(hangs up, holsters it)* What's this about research? Is it evaluation day or something? Are you with H.R.? What's going on?

**RAMSAY**

No. I'm a student. I called in yesterday to see if I could come and talk with you about community service.

**MARTY**

Community service?! Karen, what are you doing letting this comm-server waste our time?

**KAREN**

Marty! Focus!

**MARTY**

You don't need to do research, just call in and we'll schedule you. Talk to Karen, here. *(Turns to exit)*

**RAMSAY**

NO!! *(MARTY turns back around, slightly surprised)* I am *not* here to do community service. I am here to *talk* with you about the community service program. We spoke on the phone yesterday, I'm a grad student, and I'm doing research for my dissertation. Ok?!

**MARTY**

*(beat)* Nah, nah nah, this wreaks of a cover-up. You're my evaluator aren't you? God damn it, I knew they'd pick the worst possible day to send someone down. *(“shakes it out,” rubs face, claps hands)* Let's do this. *(beat)* I'll show you my office.

**RAMSAY**

I'm not here to evaluate you. This is my own research project. I'm a grad student at Bryn Mawr and...

**KAREN**

Bryn Mawr?! That's a girls school!

**RAMSAY**

The graduate programs are all co-ed.

**MARTY**

I don't get it, what do you need from me? A urine sample?

**RAMSAY**

No, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

**MARTY**

Oh! Questions? Great, I'm good with those. Go ahead. Shoot.

**RAMSAY**

*(Beat, awkward, caught off guard, takes out notebook, MARTY asks KAREN to get something from the table and she sticks her butt into him, highly distracting)* Umm.... well... I was wondering if you could tell me... about... um... how you think doing community service affects the rehabilitation... of—can we go to your office or something?

**MARTY**

Sure, let's go. *(he starts to lead him to his office, turns suddenly)* Wait, do you have an appointment?

**RAMSAY**

*(breath)* Yes. We just went over that. I spoke to you yesterday

**MARTY**

*(looks in day planner)* Ah, right! Ramsack. Strange name. Follow me.

*(MARTY leads RAMSAY offstage and we can hear them doing some mumbled improv'd chatter on their way out. KAREN pulls out a book and begins to read. RYAN enters, rushing in, out of breath.)*

**RYAN**

Did I make it?

**KAREN**

*(eyes him, looks at her watch)* Nope. *(she goes back to reading)*

**RYAN**

Fuck! Shit! FUCK! Ah, FUCK!

**KAREN**

You're automatically scheduled for a week from today. Would you like to schedule your penalty day now, or call in later?

Fuuuuuuuuck!

**RYAN**

Call in later, sounds good.

**KAREN**

... Do you have any idea how hard it is to get here from Merion by 7:30?

**RYAN**

No. I have no idea. How hard?

**KAREN**

I got up at 5:15 to catch the train into center city, and of course SEPTA was delayed again...

**RYAN**

I got up at 4:45. I win.

**KAREN**

You are such a b...

**RYAN**

...Such a... second penalty day?

**KAREN**

AGHH!!! I hate this fucking place!

**RYAN**

Amen, brother.

**KAREN**

I shouldn't even have to be here, it's bull shit.

**RYAN**

Yeah, I hear that a lot... it's strange...there must be something wrong...

**KAREN**

(*beat*) Fuck it. I'm just going to stop coming.

**RYAN**

Ah, good, I'm glad you're here to tell me. I'll get the paperwork started for your arrest warrant.

**KAREN**

**RYAN**



What the fuck!

**KAREN**

Change your mind?

**RYAN**

Do you treat everyone like this?

**KAREN**

Like what?

*MARTY and RAMSAY re-enter*

**RAMSAY**

But you haven't answered a single one of my questions...

**MARTY**

Mr. Ramsack, I don't have all day to talk with interesting students. I've got ten missing comm-servers to track down and a judge on hold that wants to ring my neck because we're keeping him from assigning any more hours...

**RAMSAY**

See, *that's* the stuff I need to hear, can I just listen in on your conversation?

**MARTY**

Are you joking? I could be killed for that broach in... security.

**RAMSAY**

Please! I need this!

**MARTY**

No ifs ands or buts. Karen, no more visitors!

*He starts to exit.*

**RAMSAY**

Just one question! Please! Just answer one question.

**MARTY**

*(beat)* Make it quick.

**RAMSAY**

*(reading off of notebook)* Are people assigned to do community service as part of their sentence *more* or *less* likely to get arrested again in the future?

**MARTY**

Hmm... (pause) I would say... that... yes, comm-servers are more or less likely to be arrested again, yeah. Ok, back to work.

*MARTY exits.*

**RAMSAY**

*(beat, defeated, to KAREN)* Can I make another appointment for tomorrow?

**KAREN**

I'm sorry, we don't make appointments.

*KAREN gets up and exits. RAMSAY throws his bag down in frustration and collapses. RYAN who has been fuming and watching in a chair nearby stares at RAMSAY.*

**RYAN**

Hey. *(RAMSAY stops and turns, RYAN catches up)* What are you doing here?

**RAMSAY**

I. *(beat)* Nothing.

**RYAN**

Are you a journalist or something?

**RAMSAY**

No... I'm... working on my dissertation.

**RYAN**

Your dissertation! What's it about?

**RAMSAY**

Criminal rehabilitation.

**RYAN**

Ha! Seriously?!

**RAMSAY**

Yeah...

**RYAN**

Sorry, it's just... it's funny to see someone like you here.

**RAMSAY**

Like me?

**RYAN**

Look at you... well-intentioned and all...in graduate school... (*beat, RAMSAY looks at himself*) So they wouldn't answer your questions?

**RAMSAY**

Let alone listen to them.

**RYAN**

(*quick aside*) Yeah, they're dead inside.

**RAMSAY**

What was that?

**RYAN**

You probably confused them because they're used to dealing with dickheads like me all day. People trying to get out of their hours and stuff...

**RAMSAY**

So you've done community service before? (*takes out notebook*)

**RYAN**

Twenty-four hours down, sixteen... thirty-two to go.

**RAMSAY**

Would it be all right if I asked you a few questions?

**RYAN**

Absolutely...

*RYAN stacks a few chairs or stage-cubes, or something to create a high-chair, or "throne."* **RAMSAY** remains on the ground, but will stand at some point.

There we go... go ahead...

**RAMSAY**

So, basically....

**RYAN**

Wait, I'm sorry, what's your name?

**RAMSAY**

Ramsay.

**RYAN**

Ramsay, nice to meet you. (*shakes hand*)

**RAMSAY**

So the basic premise of my research is that by getting people who have broken the law to...

**RYAN**

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be rude, but don't you think it's a little weird that I know your name, but you don't know mine? I hate it when that happens.

**RAMSAY**

Right, of course, I'm sorry. What's your name?

**RYAN**

Tartarus.

**RAMSAY**

Tartarus?

**RYAN**

You know, from Greek mythology... the dungeon of torture and torment right below Hades... Not actually my name though, that was a joke... it's what I like to call the comm-serv office.

**RAMSAY**

What's comm-serv?

**RYAN**

Community Service.

**RAMSAY**

Ah.

**RYAN**

Don't feel bad, I often fall on deaf ears. Name's Ryan. (*shakes hand*)

**RAMSAY**

Ryan, then. As I was saying...

**RYAN**

Sorry, just one more interruption... I'm probably going to miss the next bus back to Merion if I stay, do you think you could spot me a few bucks to get me back to center city?

**RAMSAY**

Uh... I... I don't think I have any cash...

**RYAN**

Oh shoot, is that my bus there? I should probably just get going...

*Gets up to leave.*

**RAMSAY**

Wait! Uh... *(takes out wallet)* I've got six bucks, here, take it, that's all I have.

**RYAN**

That's very generous of you, thank you, now you were saying...

**RAMSAY**

Right... By having offenders actively participate in community service, the county creates a system wherein they are simultaneously punished and rehabilitated; the offenders are inconvenienced by the unpaid hours of physical labor and they are publicly shamed by working alongside the highway or around government-funded housing projects in bright orange vests, but therein they are also given the opportunity to become involved in their communities, working off their guilt and replacing it with the pride of seeing the fruits of their labor: cleaner, safer neighborhoods. As a result, theoretically, the individual would then choose to make more community-oriented decisions in the future, and there would be a drop off in repeat-arrests. It's supposed to be a win-win situation: providing the curative and punitive medicine of punishment, and the preventive medicine of rehabilitation. Now obviously this is a little idealistic and more of a mission statement than a summary of results, so that's why I came here: to collect first-hand reports about community service from those in charge of running the programs... and now those participating in them, too.

**RYAN**

*(disapproving thinking)* Hmmm...

**RAMSAY**

What?

**RYAN**

Seems a little bit like ass-smoke.

**RAMSAY**

Ass-smoke?

**RYAN**

Like you're blowing smoke up my ass... community-oriented decisions after eight hours picking up trash next to 476? Come on...

**RAMSAY**

So you don't think it works?

**RYAN**

I think it does the opposite.

**RAMSAY**

What would be the opposite?

*RAMSAY gets ready to take notes and scribbles furiously while RYAN talks.*

**RYAN**

Let's see... well let's say I come in to community service in emotional-psychological state X, and leave community service in state Y. If we chart X and Y on four separate graphs measuring desire to get fucked up, or desire to fuck things up, or desire to fuck with people, or desire to do nothing at all, I would say value Y would be higher than value X in all four cases.

**RAMSAY**

Uh huh.

**RYAN**

So you see, through my statistical analysis that Community Service is in fact detrimental to the spirit of the offenders thereby punished.

**RAMSAY**

Well... that was really just subjective not statistical...

**RYAN**

Not at all! After my last day of community service I went home and consumed eight full beers in the course of two hours. That's as many beers as I consumed in four days without doing any community service. The first day I did community service, I decided to call in sick to work that evening because I felt so down-trodden after a day of commserv. So, if we take the opportunity cost of going into work, I opted for three hours of recumbent inebriation enjoying the likes of Maury and one hour of deep sleep in the stead of four hours of paid labor at Starbucks. You see, community service is incredibly harmful to all aspects of my life...

**RAMSAY**

I see. Are you in college?

**RYAN**

Why yes.

**RAMSAY**

Where?

**RYAN**

The fine establishment, Community College of Philadelphia. But I used to go to 'Nova.

**RAMSAY**

Used to?

**RYAN**

Rather not talk about it.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Sorry, but I mean... I paid you six bucks, so... you think you could tell me about it?

**RYAN**

Oh, I see, so I'm your sociological prostitute, huh?

**RAMSAY**

No, I just meant...

**RYAN**

Fine. *(beat)* I was chilling with like three dudes in my friends' apartment, watching the Phillies and playing cards on a Tuesday night. We had a 30-rack of Natty Light, but it wasn't like we were getting tanked and roudy, it was an off-night. But the crazy fuckers next door were throwing this ridiculous rager, sounded like a 50 person wrestling match set to the Venga Boys or something. The cops show up, of course, and I guess the people next door saw the cop-car pull up outside so they turned their music off. The cops weren't sure which place it was, so when they busted in on us and saw the beer they assumed we had been the jackoffs making all the noise. I was 20 at the time, only two weeks before my 21<sup>st</sup>, so I got a citation, my third. I got kicked out of campus-housing by Nova, I lost my scholarship, and since my family's not loaded or anything, I had to drop out.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* I'm really sorry to hear that.

**RYAN**

Well you asked for it.

**RAMSAY**

Yes. *(beat)* I hope this doesn't seem rude, but... do you think after this experience you're more or less likely to participate in illegal activ...

**RYAN**

Shit, what time is it?

**RAMSAY**

Uh...8:25.

**RYAN**

Fuck I gotta run. If I'm not doing comm-serv today maybe I can still get my shift back at Starbucks. Gotta make money if I'm not in school, you know?

**RAMSAY**

Oh... ok.

**RYAN**

Yeah, yeah, take care. Good luck with your project.

*He runs off.*

**RAMSAY**

*(Starts to narrate his note-taking)* As Ryan, the Villanova drop-out, sprinted after the bus he had probably been planning to catch the entire time, I was left there sitting outside the community service office, breathing in the gas fumes from the idling community service vans. I felt as if I were on the edge of some great horrible realization... that everything in nature was fixed in little cycles... cycles of decay. Everything not changing, but dying. Not evolving, revolving... *(beat)* Maybe this isn't for me... What if I ran away with the grant money... bought a small cabin in Maine... farmed a little plot of land just for myself... the wild creatures would be my friends... and I would die alone, having hurt no one, having escaped suffering...

*RAMSAY collapses, whimpering into his notebook. A lawyer in a suit walks on, talking on a blackberry. RAMSAY listens and gradually becomes more interested, until he is finally standing behind PATRICK recording what he is saying.*

**PATRICK**

*(totally emotionless, always)* The worst case scenario in this trial is that you spend the next fifteen years in jail. *(beat)* Well this is my job, I'm extremely calloused to these things, I don't know how you want me to say it. *(beat)* With more emotion? *(beat)* I regret to inform you that you may go to jail for fifteen years. I am sorry. *(beat)* Not any better? *(beat)* I will try to be more sensitive in the future. *(mini-beat)* But I feel the responsibility to stress the reality of the situation; you may be in jail until your children are out of college. *(pause)* Hello? Mr. Traber? Hm. *(Presses "end," pockets cell phone turning to RAMSAY)* Can I help you?

**RAMSAY**

Uh... sorry.

**PATRICK**

So you're a spy from the D.A.'s office, eh? What's your name I'll have you arrested for spying on a private attorn... *(starts breathing heavily, reaches into pocket and takes out bottle of pills and inhaler, uses in haler, opens bottle and pops two pills, puts bottle and inhaler back)* If you were with the D.A. you would have run off by now. Who are you?

**RAMSAY**

I'm Ramsay... I'm doing research for my social work dissertation.



**PATRICK**

Trying to record conversations in front of a courthouse is a felony. I could have you behind bars in a month.

**RAMSAY**

No! No, please, I'm sorry. I just... I was taking notes before and...

**PATRICK**

I was just stating the facts, I'm not going to do anything about it. Don't have time.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* You're a lawyer?

**PATRICK**

Who wants to know?

**RAMSAY**

Just me.

**PATRICK**

Regrettably, yes.

**RAMSAY**

Why regrettably?

**PATRICK**

I'm sixty-years old and I have the health of a ninety-five year old. Most days I feel like I might just snap in half. Like an old cracker. And most nights I have the same recurring nightmare.

**RAMSAY**

What happens...

**PATRICK**

I'm standing on one side of a velvet rope and there's an endless line of people on the other side. Everything's in black and white. The next person in line steps up to the velvet rope, they look me in the eye and then they are smashed by a gigantic wooden gavel. I look above me and realize there's a giant judge in a black robe, a thousand times bigger than me. Instead of a human face, it has a grey patch of blurriness. He smashes the next five or six people in line, with me standing there, doing nothing. And then I wake up, sweating.

**RAMSAY**

Oh... my god.

**PATRICK**

I've had that approximate dream over ninety-thousand times over the past thirty years. The first time was the day I became a public defender.

**RAMSAY**

You were a public defender? I've actually thought about doing that if I ever go to law school...

**PATRICK**

...Don't.

*Beat.*

**RAMSAY**

Ok.

**PATRICK**

Don't do it. *(beat)* What's your dissertation about?

**RAMSAY**

Criminal rehabilitation.

*PATRICK gives a short very abrupt laugh and then face snaps back to neutral.*

Specifically whether the county's current methods achieve their goal of cutting both crime rates and imprisonment rates. If they do, I'll look into ways that other counties might benefit from learning from us, or if they don't, I'll look into how we might improve ourselves.

**PATRICK**

*He does a strange giggle, then back to neutral.*

I apologize. You sound very much like I did when I was younger.

**RAMSAY**

Really?

*PATRICK makes a strange sobbing noise, stops abruptly, makes the noise again, stops.*

Was that...Are you crying?

**PATRICK**

Forgive me. I was momentarily lost in a blissful memory of youth and the abrupt return to my present state caused a "mood swing" of a strength that I am not accustomed to.

**RAMSAY**

Of course, take as much time as you need...

**PATRICK**

As I understand it, the state's methods of punishment for minor crimes, especially community service, do little to nothing to abate future arrests of those same offenders. The stress of having to pay fines and commit several hours each week may even drive once minor-criminals to pursue a more rough-and-tumble path than before. Additionally, the work done community service does not teach the right lessons because there is no incentive to work hard. Criminals are not punished for slacking off and are thus rewarded for this behavior.

**RAMSAY**

So you wouldn't say the state's methods of rehabilitation are successful?

**PATRICK**

Under no circumstances. Additionally, law enforcement officers are more likely to pull over and generally suspect individuals with any prior arrests.

**RAMSAY**

So there is clearly a myriad of repercussions...

**PATRICK**

Additionally, many government and public service jobs become unavailable to individuals with a criminal record, making it increasingly difficult for offenders to find a way in to the straight-and-narrow.

**RAMSAY**

You make it sound like it would be impossible to ever escape a single slip-up.

**PATRICK**

That is often the case. Especially if you cannot afford a lawyer.

**RAMSAY**

But the state provides a public defender to everyone, don't they?

**PATRICK**

In the eyes of the judge, a public defender might as well be a mute constable: silently bringing in clients and handing them off to the authorities.

**RAMSAY**

That seems completely unjust.

**PATRICK**

*(beat)* There is a nickname for public defenders that you may have heard.

**RAMSAY**

What is it?

**PATRICK**

*(beat)* Public pretenders. *(Same awkward short laugh. Beat. Same awkward short sob.)*

**RAMSAY**

Why doesn't the judge listen to them?

**PATRICK**

If a judge were to give ample time to every case, we would need two million more judges in this country to run at the current pace. If a public defender spent the same amount of time on every client as a privately-paid lawyer, they would need a 50-hour day. A public defender representing a prior offender might as well not even show up.

**RAMSAY**

But they do show up?

**PATRICK**

I often wonder why... *(looks at watch, still monotone)* I'm late. *(Takes two hard steps, stops, takes out pills, pops two, bottle back in pocket)*

**RAMSAY**

Could I get your card, in case I have any more questions?

**PATRICK**

*(burdened)* Here. Please don't call unless it's necessary. Goodbye.

**RAMSAY**

Goodbye. *(looks at card)*

*Lights dim, Cue music (maybe "Wig Wise" by Duke Ellington? Or should Dinosaur Jr. provide the whole soundtrack?). RAMSAY and PATRICK exit or help change the set to "Bar." Lights come back up, music volume lowers.*

#### **SCENE 4**

"Careless"

*Group of friends including RAMSAY singing "Happy Birthday" to SARAH. Rousing finish with lots of applause, people are buzzed. She says thank you, improvised chatter, then someone starts chanting "Speech" until everyone's going and then SARAH quiets them down, and/or stands up on a chair or something.*

**SARAH**

Ok, ok, ok, shut up! I'll give you your damn speech... Because we have far too many drinks to attend to and far too many memories to be made and or re-hashed, I won't waste everybody's time conjuring you the most grandiloquent and effusive praise a group of friends has ever received, though I could! I could! ...Instead... I just want to say that you are all the best friends I could have hoped for... and though we're all getting more and more caught up in our own semi-adult lives, I believe it's *imperative* that we remember... each other... and that no matter how important some of us become, or how jobless and poor, or how jaded and depressed, we remember that we're not alone, that we never have been, and never will be. And that's all I want to say.

**MUSA**

Speech! Speech!

**SARAH**

I said that's it!!

**WALDEAN**

To Sarah!

**SARAH**

To all of you!

**EVERYONE**

To everyone!

*They drink.*

**SARAH**

Now someone help me down.

*The rest of the group begins to chatter, RAMSAY comes over and helps SARAH down.*

**RAMSAY**

Bravo!

**SARAH**

I was lucky not to fall off the chair.

**RAMSAY**

No it was great. The message, the remembering... it was great. You're great.

**SARAH**

*(laughs)* Glad to see you're enjoying yourself.

**RAMSAY**

I am! But I assure you I am not drunk! I could drive us home right now.

**SARAH**

And why would we want to go home to that sad apartment with all these wonderful people here?

**RAMSAY**

They're *your* friends, I don't really know them...

**SARAH**

You're not even trying to be friendly.

**RAMSAY**

Fine, I'm going to go charm their pants off.

**SARAH**

No! I was kidding. We haven't even caught up, other than you telling me about your bizarre day.

**RAMSAY**

I'm sorry, it was the *worst!*

**SARAH**

The *worst?*

**RAMSAY**

THE WORST!

**SARAH**

You really are becoming a martyr.

**RAMSAY**

Well, I guess it wasn't *that* bad... I got some good stuff for my dissertatio... er, sorry. (*beat*) Sarah, I really am sorry I haven't been around more recently.

**SARAH**

Hey, we're done with apologies, ok? You came out for my birthday.

**RAMSAY**

(*beat*) Thanks.

**SARAH**

Thank you.

**RAMSAY**

Really.

**SARAH**

Okay.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* In college, did you ever think...

**SARAH**

No.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* But... we were so close the whole way through... You never...

**SARAH**

No, I... *(beat)* Yes! Of course I thought about it! Are you an idiot?!

**RAMSAY**

Oh my god! It never seemed like it.

**SARAH**

Well I tried not to let it show.

**RAMSAY**

And now we're living together... that was sneaky...

**SARAH**

You said you were looking for a roommate!

**RAMSAY**

I said it to a group of people... *(beat)*

**SARAH**

And did *you* ever think about...

**RAMSAY**

This really changes things!!!

**SARAH**

Oh god...

**RAMSAY**

I mean, we're both a *little* tipsy... but I can see it now... tomorrow morning...the awkwardness... me having to close the bathroom door!... being afraid that you're watching me sleep! Or will I be watching you?!

**SARAH**

I'm not going to watch you sleep! Conversation is over; we're drunk.

**RAMSAY**

We can't end it now! That's even worse!

**SARAH**

You're not going to remember it.

**RAMSAY**

I'm not that drunk!

**SARAH**

Prove it.

**RAMSAY**

*(long awkward beat, stare down)* I just did.

**SARAH**

What?

**RAMSAY**

I didn't kiss you!

**SARAH**

*(beat)* Oh. *(beat)* Maybe you should get another drink...

**RAMSAY**

I don't *need* a drink...

**SARAH**

Everyone's standing right there.

**RAMSAY**

Then let's leave.

**SARAH**

It's my birthday... I have to be at my own party.

**RAMSAY**

Not if you don't want to...

**SARAH**

What are we going to say?

*Just then one of the friends vomits.*

**SHARADA**



Oh my god, Jerry did you just puke?!

**WALDEAN**

All over the bar. Quick let's get out of here, I hate dealing with bartenders.

**SHARADA**

What about Sarah?

**WALDEAN**

We'll call her, just go.

**SHARADA**

Ok... bye...

**MUSA (JERRY)**

Where are we going?...

*They all flee, helping the sick friend, Jerry, walk.*

**RAMSAY & SARAH**

That was lucky. *(beat)*

**RAMSAY**

Come on.

**SARAH**

I hope he's ok...

*RAMSAY and SARAH run around behind the audience and hop in their "car." Maybe two chairs mounted on a dolly or something, just so long as it can roll. Someone dressed in all black could push them, or it could be foot-powered... it just needs to be able to move. Music (maybe "Feel the Pain" by Dinosaur Jr.) softly playing in the background.*

**SARAH**

Are they going to be mad about us ditching them...

**RAMSAY**

Turn off your cellphone. It ran out of batter right? We didn't know where they went...

**SARAH**

Very nice...

**RAMSAY**

*(suave)* Thank ya.

**SARAH**

Are you sure you're ok to drive?

**RAMSAY**

It's like fifteen blocks.

**SARAH**

That's not very comforting...

**RAMSAY**

You don't trust me?

**SARAH**

It's not a matter of trust.

**RAMSAY**

*(searching around)* Where's that CD?

**SARAH**

Stop, I'll look for it. You watch the road. What CD?

**RAMSAY**

No, that'll spoil it...

**SARAH**

It's a two minute drive.

**RAMSAY**

It's to bring inside...

**SARAH**

Oooh, your "loove" mix?

*She goes to tickle him, they swerve.*

**RAMSAY**

SARAH!

*They straighten out.*

Don't do that.

**SARAH**

I forgot you were freakishly ticklish.

*Long beat. They start to laugh, laugh builds. RAMSAY jokingly swerves the car. Red and blue lights start to flash.*

**RAMSAY**

Oh. Are you FUCKING KIDDING ME?!

**SARAH**

Shit, are you sure it's you? Maybe they're trying to pull someone else over.

**RAMSAY**

There's no one else. Fuck, find the mints, find the mints. Turn off the music.

*Music goes off. They are rousting around.*

**SARAH**

What do they look like?

**RAMSAY**

Like mints! I don't know, it's a little box... fuckfuckfuck.

**SARAH**

Ramsay, sit up, he's coming... or no, she's coming.

*COP taps on car window, RAMSAY rolls it down. COP shines mag-lite in RAMSAY's face.*

**COP**

Sir, would you care to explain why you were swerving in between lanes?

**RAMSAY**

I'm s... I'm sorry officer, I, I was just looking for a CD on the ground and then my hand slipped and...

**COP**

Would you step out of the car please.

**RAMSAY**

What? Ok.

*He does.*

**COP**

Please follow the tip of this pen...

**RAMSAY**

What?

**COP**

With your eyes! Follow the end of the pen.

*She tests him.*

Please stand on one leg.

*He does, and he kind of has to hop to stay balanced.*

Breathe into this.

*She holds out breathalyzer. He breathes. She looks at breathalyzer.*

One more time.

*Again.*

Ok, sir you are under arrest for driving under the influence. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in the court of law. You have the right to have an attorney present during questioning. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you. Do you understand these rights?

**RAMSAY**

...Y-yeah.

**COP**

Will your friend be able to drive herself home or is she also intoxicated?

**SARAH**

We... I live close to here. I can walk.

**COP**

Leave your keys in the car, I'll have someone come and tow it. Follow me, sir.

**RAMSAY**

I'll call.

*Lights dim, Music picks up, SARAH gets up and walks away. The blue-and-red lights continue. RAMSAY is paraded around the space in handcuffs. VOICES come through the curtains.*

**ODTHWORPE**

I heard the boy we gave that grant to was arrested!

**FIGGLESTICK**

For what?

**ODTHWORPE**

Drunk driving, can you believe it?!

**GIDEON**

Drunk driving?! Has he gone *MAD*?

**FIGGLESTICK**

Do we pull the grant? I for one vote yes!

**ODTHWORPE**

Let's wait and see how bad the paper is. If it's god awful, we'll take back the money and say it was because he was arrested.

**GIDEON**

Brilliant!

**FATHER**

I can't believe you, Ramsay. I would have expected this of you in high school, but grad school?! You're supposed to be an adult!

**MOTHER**

My little boy has grown up. Into an idiotic alcoholic!

**PROF**

As a result of your actions Ramsay, we will no longer be asking you to speak at graduation, and in fact we would appreciate it if you did not come. If anyone asks, you did not attend the Bryn Mawr School of Social Work.

**SARAH**

Everything was going so great. And then he got arrested. I'm married now, to Jerry the guy who vomited that night. Whatever happened to Ramsay?

**PATRICK**

Often, a single slip up can completely ruin someone's live, career, chance at happiness.

**KAREN & MARTY**

We look forward to working with you, Mr. K! You little shit...

*RAMSAY is led behind the curtains, where the set should be changed to his room. Music continues to play into **BLACKOUT**.*

**SCENE 5**

"Call #1"

*RAMSAY dials on his cell phone looking at a little business card. PATRICK answers from another part of the theatre. Perhaps he is lit like he is watching TV?*

**PATRICK**

Patrick Martin.

**RAMSAY**

Hi, Patrick, this is Ramsay. I met you outside the courthouse yesterday.

**PATRICK**

*(long beat)* Yes?

**RAMSAY**

... Last night I was arrested for drunk driving.

**PATRICK**

That was a terrible mistake. Were you breathalyzed?

**RAMSAY**

Yes.

**PATRICK**

What was the reading?

**RAMSAY**

Point-oh-nine.

**PATRICK**

Did you receive a blood test?

**RAMSAY**

No.

**PATRICK**

It is highly unlikely I will be able to keep you from getting the maximum penalty.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* What if I go unrepresented?

**PATRICK**

I cannot recommend it. The judge could view it as a sign that you are not taking it seriously, and then you could potentially get more than what is legally the maximum penalty. I've seen it happen.

**RAMSAY**

I don't know if I could afford a lawyer for this.

**PATRICK**

What about your parents?

**RAMSAY**

I don't want to go to them.

**PATRICK**

I find that decision bold and respectable, if not self-righteous and completely unwise.  
(*beat*) What is your court date?

**RAMSAY**

(*looking at sheet of paper*) March 12<sup>th</sup>. Shit! I thought it said May 12<sup>th</sup>! That's a week from now! How is that possible?

**PATRICK**

They must have had a cancellation. I'll see you then.

**RAMSAY**

Wait. How much do you cost?

**PATRICK**

How much can you pay?

**RAMSAY**

(*looking at bank statement*) Um... three... four hundred dollars.

**PATRICK**

(*beat*) March 12<sup>th</sup>, be on time.

**RAMSAY**

Is there anything I should do? Or know about going to court?

**PATRICK**

Wear a suit.

**RAMSAY**

A suit?

**PATRICK** hangs up. Lights on him go out. *Beat.*

Patrick, I know you may not be the person to talk to about this but... I'm really scared... I feel like this is going to completely screw up my life... if they take away my grant... or if my school refuses to give me my degree... I just don't even know what could happen, and that's what's scariest ... Is there anything you can say that might comfort me, or... anything? Hello? Patrick?

**BLACKOUT****SCENE 6**

“Nightmare #2”

*Eerie music begins to play. Lights are same as first nightmare. Some nightmare people are dispersed as audience. Curtain is opened on **JUDGE, CONSTABLE** and **DEFENDANT**.*

**JUDGE**

NEXT!

**DEFENDANT**

But!

**JUDGE**

NEXT!!

***CONSTABLE** drags **DEFENDANT** away. **ZOMBIES** cheer. He drags on **RAMSAY**.*

**CONSTABLE**

This sir is Mr. Ramsay-Kay-Nobody.

**JUDGE**

Ramsay-Kay-Nobody, that’s got a nice ring to it, every think about pursuing a career in music or film, Mr. Ramsay-Kay-Nobody?

**RAMSAY**

What?

**JUDGE**

Never you mind, boy, I’m just making friendly conversation. Now let’s see... OH MY GOD!!! A DRUNK DRIVER?!!!

***ZOMBIES** freak out.*

Do you know what happens to drunk drivers in Judge Manslaughter’s courtroom?

**RAMSAY**

P-p-please, your honor, I can explain.

**JUDGE**



Oh p-p-PLEASE, Mr. Ramsay-Kay-Nobody, I would absolutely LOVE to hear your explanation. (*gets down, right in his face*)

**RAMSAY**

I... It was a simple mistake, I was only driving fifteen blocks!

**JUDGE**

Oh, fifteen blocks, that's perfectly understandable.

**RAMSAY**

Yeah, yeah, I... what? Really?!

**ALL**

NO!!!

**JUDGE**

What kind of ignorant piss-and are you?! YOU think, no matter how shit-housed, how slosh-faced, how down right piss drunk you are it don't matter if it's only for fifteen blocks? Boy you may think the law is a silly puddy toy which you may bend and twist however you like, but you are mistaken.

**RAMSAY**

Please... please... no...

**JUDGE**

I am the law and I am made of stainless steel, you little prick.

**RAMSAY**

Please! I have a future!

**JUDGE**

BAILIFF, FIRE UP THE ELECTRIC CHAIR! WE EATING FRIED ALCOHOLIC TONIGHT!!!

*They bring **RAMSAY** to his desk chair, **CONSTABLE** mimes or pulls the electric switch for the chair just as we hear a loud phone ringing. The nightmare characters flee or just drop lifeless.*

**SCENE 7**

“Call #2”

*Sound of phone ringing, **RAMSAY** is startled awake, having fallen asleep in his chair. **PATRICK** is in his same spot as before.*

**RAMSAY**

Hello?

**PATRICK**

Patrick Martin.

**RAMSAY**

Patrick Martin?... *what time is it?!*

**PATRICK**

Three a.m. got a minute?

**RAMSAY**

*Three a.m.* are you serious?

**PATRICK**

You said you wanted to go over things after the trial...

**RAMSAY**

I figured we'd do it tomorrow...

**PATRICK**

This was the first time I had available. *(beat)* I have good news. I had a different nightmare tonight.

**RAMSAY**

Oh.

**PATRICK**

You were in it. You were being walked to a guillotine in a big public square, a screaming mass of people with flaming torches and pitchforks were calling for your execution. You turned to look up at me, and in the reflection in your eyes, I could see that I was the executioner. I reached for the rope to let the blade go...

**RAMSAY**

Why are you calling me Patrick?

**PATRICK**

*(strange sudden laughing noise, sudden sobbing)* Sorry. *(beat)* I should have informed you of this, but every few dozen cases the judge in Del-co picks a defendant of mine to make an example of... looks like you ran out of luck.

**RAMSAY**

What? I thought everything went smoothly. Did something happen afterwards?

**PATRICK**

One second... *(he looks through some files)* Ramsay Kay... Misdemeanor, probation, community service... Oh. I apologize. I must have confused you with... Ralph Kinkade...

**RAMSAY**

Jesus Christ! You can't f... Ahh! *(sigh)* What do I do from here?

**PATRICK**

The following: stay 100% clean, do not consume any drugs or alcohol, do not drive, do not miss your probation appointments, do not forget the probation mail-in forms, do not fail a drug test, do not step into a car with an intoxicated person, do not bike after taking cold or cough medication, do not use mouth wash, do not drink another sip of alcohol for the rest of your life, do not speak to anyone who has taken a sip of alcohol for the rest of your life, do not become involved in any conspiracies or terrorist plots, do not join any cults or unofficial religious communities, do not make any inappropriate jokes about judges, cops, or lawyers, do not change your name, do not flee the country, do not undergo any surgery that might drastically change your appearance including skin color, do not purchase any dangerous pets, do not write a memoir about your experiences, do not pretend to be cool now... and do not miss any of your community service hours.

**RAMSAY**

Jesus... How many hours do I have?

**PATRICK**

Sixty-four.

**RAMSAY**

Sixty-four! I can't do that!

**PATRICK**

If you absolutely can't do the community service hours, there is another option.

**RAMSAY**

What's that?

**PATRICK**

Six months in jail.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Was that supposed to be a joke?

**PATRICK**

*(strange abrupt laugh)* I'll never know.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Good bye, Patrick.

**END OF ACT 1****Act 2 SCENE 1**

*“Commserv Office” setup. KAREN is sitting, like before with magazine. Maybe she is eating donought or using microwave.*

**KAREN**

Marty, get this, Entertainment Weekly says that over 70% of Hollywood celebrities have done some mandatory community service in their lifetime.

**MARTY** (*offstage*)

What’s that?

**KAREN**

I said most Hollywood celebrities have done some mandatory community service.

**MARTY**

(*entering*) What do you mean? In this county?

**KAREN**

No, Marty, Jesus, I mean in general.

**MARTY**

Oh. (*beat*) Have you seen my coffee mug?

**KAREN**

“World’s best son,” or the one with the picture of you fishing on it?

**MARTY**

Either.

**KAREN**

I’m borrowing the fishing one.

**MARTY**

Karen!

**KAREN**

I like it! And besides, my Christmas mug you borrowed last week is still in the sink waiting for you to clean it.

*(sigh)* I'll be at my desk. *(he exits)*

**KAREN**

Don't be such a grump, I'll give it back as soon as I'm done.

**RAMSAY** *comes running in.*

**RAMSAY**

Shit, am I late?

**KAREN**

In general?

**RAMSAY**

I'm scheduled for community service today.

**KAREN**

... Oh yeah... You're the appointment guy. Listen, I told you, we don't make appointments here. You're gonna want to go out those double-doors

**RAMSAY**

No, I'm actually here for community service today.

**KAREN**

Who do you think you are? We can't just let journalists or whoever go out on our work crews... These are real criminals, and you can't just take advantage of them

**RAMSAY**

...No, I mean, I'm required to do community service today.

**KAREN**

What do you mean, required?

**RAMSAY**

I mean... by the court.

**KAREN**

*(beat, pissed)* So you were lying to us that entire time?

**RAMSAY**

No, I wasn't doing community service then, but I am now.

**KAREN**

Uh huh, great story kid. Unbelievable. Name?

**RAMSAY**

Ramsay Kay.

**KAREN**

Ramsay... Ramsay... Ah, yeah, here you are you (*muttered swearing*)... You tricked us. I can't stand you criminal types.

**RAMSAY**

I wasn't trying to trick you...

**KAREN**

Uh huh, yeah, you just happened to get charged a week later... Convenient, very convenient.

**RAMSAY**

(*beat*) So what am I supposed to do?

**KAREN**

Well, you're late.

**RAMSAY**

...does that mean...

**KAREN**

But lucky for you, one of the van drivers is still missing so we have a van going out late today. HEY MARTY!!!

**MARTY** (*offstage, then entering*)

What is it?

**KAREN**

Any word on Joe?

**MARTY**

Nothing.

**KAREN**

Then you have to drive van seven.

**MARTY**

Me? Why? I'm loaded with work here, why don't you do it?

**KAREN**

You know I haven't done the van driver training.

**MARTY**

All you have to do is drive and yell, you'll be fine.

**KAREN**

What if something happens, Marty? If Joe or Vince knew that I went out without doing the training while you were sitting on your ass here, he'd flip a shit! If you don't do it I'm gonna call in.

**MARTY**

Fine, fine. Jesus. Where are we going?

**KAREN**

*(checking her clipboard)* Mary St. between third and ninth.

**MARTY**

Ugh. Can I just drive them to a parking lot or something?

**KAREN**

Get outta heere...

**MARTY**

*(muttered)* I'm gonna beat the crap out of Joe... *(he starts to exit)*

**KAREN**

Take the kid with you.

**MARTY**

Huh?

**KAREN**

Him.

**MARTY**

Come on. *(starts to leave, stops, beat, recognition)*... Hey... aren't you that kid who's trying to get me fired?

**RAMSAY**

What? No. I'm just here to do community service.

**MARTY**

*(beat, inspection)* I'll be keeping a *close* watch on you, ya hear? Let's go.

*They exit.*

**Act 2 SCENE 2**

*The “Mary St.” set has been arranged, with garbage all around. All the commservers, RYAN, LAURA, LUKE, RAMSAY, and GHOST (hooded figure, next to mute, scary, face barely visible) sitting on a bench or a curb or something in front of MARTY who is addressing them.*

**MARTY**

Alright, listen up. You don't want to be here. I don't want to be here. Nobody wants to be here, but we've got six blocks to clean up in this neighborhood by three o'clock. If we pushed it we could be done by noon. But you know what would happen then? They'd give us six *more* blocks to clean up, because it's not about how much you get done, but how *long* you work for. So we are going to stretch this *two* hours of work into *eight*. Got it?

*Comm-servers grumble in agreement.*

Now maybe that sounds like a day off to you guys, but no, that's not what it means. What it means is that you will have to focus on the minimal work that needs to get done and not act like a bunch of babies with shit in your diapers, ok, because I am *not* going to change you. (*beat*) Meaning I'm not going to parent you... or... (*clears throat*) You're gonna come up here, take a bag, a vest, and a pair of latex gloves. Then you're gonna pick up everything you see around here and it is going to take you (*looks at watch*) one-hundred-twelve minutes. Then we'll drive around for twenty minutes, and then lunch. Sound ok?

*Some grumbling agreement.*

**MARTY**

I said, does that sound ok to everyone? I'm doing you a favor.

*More assertive agreement.*

**MARTY**

Alright, let's get going then.

*They go through the line, improv-ing some dialogue, pick up their things, struggle to get the gloves and the vests on, people put the vests on in unique ways, people rip their gloves and have to go back and get a new pair, and eventually everyone is milling around, cleaning things up, slowly. RAMSAY is going a little faster than everyone, picking things up fairly rapidly.*

**MARTY**

(to **RAMSAY**) Hey, superman, you heard what I said?

**RAMSAY**

Huh?

**MARTY**



Hold your horses. You gunning for a medal or somethin'?

**RAMSAY**

...Sorry. *(he starts to just kind of awkwardly walk around, looking at everyone else)*

**LUKE**

Yo, I am *not* picking up any condoms.

**MARTY**

That's why you have gloves.

**LUKE**

Someone else can, I'm not touching it.

*RAMSAY picks it up, throws it away.*

What's wrong with you man, that shit's gross.

**RYAN**

Hey gross boy! I got some nasty ass tissues or something over here for ya. *(beat, RAMSAY comes over)* Hey you're that guy I talked to like a week ago, right?

**RAMSAY**

Oh yeah, what's up?

**RYAN**

So they let you on a work crew finally?

**RAMSAY**

Yeah, well...uh... I got arrested.

**RYAN**

No shit?! My do-gooder-duder's a convict!

**LAURA**

Fuck, is that a syringe?!

**LUKE**

A real one?

**MARTY**

Everybody, you've got gloves on, as long as you don't rub the shit on your face, it's not going to touch you.

*LAURA and LUKE mumble reactions, scoff, etc.*

**RYAN**

So what'd you do?

**RAMSAY**

Drunk driving...

**RYAN**

HA! Old good-for-nothing-drop-out me, I'm here because I had a brew or two at a friend's house, and here's mister model citizen, grad student with the disseration to save the world, and he's in on *drunk driving*.

**RAMSAY**

I was only going to drive for like ten blocks.

**RYAN**

You didn't even make it ten blocks?

**LUKE**

OW! Hey, what if a piece of glass rips through the gloves?!

**MARTY**

That's your own fault.

**LUKE**

Are you serious?

**LAURA**

I'm pretty sure you can't make us do this shit.

**MARTY**

Yeah? Are you *pretty sure*? Well I'm *very sure* if you don't start picking this shit up, I'll drive you all back to the office and give everyone a penalty day.

*LAURA and LUKE improvise mumbled reactions again.*

**RAMSAY**

It was actually my friend's fault though.

**RYAN**

Oh yeah? Was he feeding you beers er somethin'?

**RAMSAY**

No... *She* was trying to tickle me.

*RYAN laughs.*

**LAURA**

My brother got tetanus once from a rusty nail on our playset, and he couldn't open his mouth for like three days. I am not going to get some disease because of comm-serv...

**MARTY**

If you don't quit complaining, *I'll* give you a disease!

**LAURA**

Oh my god, what's wrong with you?!

**RAMSAY**

Is it always like this?

**RYAN**

*(beat)* More or less.

**RAMSAY**

Hey! It's ok. I'll pick up whatever you don't want to.

**LAURA**

Have fun... gross boy...

**MARTY**

Hey! What the... *(moves through audience, goes up to RAMSAY, pulls him to the side)*  
Hey! Are you trying to upstage me? Turn them against me?? Lead a mutiny?! What angle are you working here?!

**RAMSAY**

What are you talking about?!

**MARTY**

Oh, I'll play you the fool, you...

**RAMSAY**

I'm not trying to get you fired, and I don't have an angle! I just want to do the work and get out of here.

**MARTY**

*(beat)* I don't trust you. Maybe they got Judith like this, but you are *not* going to take me down. Not like this. *(breaking off from RAMSAY)* Everybody else can take a break, Captain Community Service here is going to pick up everything on this block.

**RAMSAY**

What?

**MARTY**

This is *my* domain.

**RAMSAY**

That's ridiculous!

**MARTY**

I'll show you ridiculous. You keep up the charades and I'll file a complaint to the courts about your behavior. I'll get your community service time switched to a few nights in County. How does that sound? Ridiculous?

*RAMSAY takes a deep breath, and then begins picking things up.*

**MARTY**

That's right. I'm still on top here, and you can tell that to whoever sent you down here to get me out.

*The smokers, RYAN, LUKE, LAURA, are over on the other side. GHOST continues to meander, disappearing, reappearing, hardly ever working, maybe picking random things up and inspecting them.*

**LUKE**

Either of you have a cigarette I could bum?

**RYAN**

Yeah.

*They light and smoke.*

**LUKE**

Wish this had some weed in it.

*Beat.*

What's wrong, you guys don't smoke weed?

**LAURA**

How old are you like fifteen?

**LUKE**

Seventeen.

*Beat.*

**RYAN**

Seem like fifteen.

**LUKE**

Screw you.

*Beat.*

What are you guys here for?

**RYAN**

I went to the zoo and fucked a zebra.

**LAURA**

And I taped it.

**LUKE**

What the fuck...? (*beat*) I'm just here cus I like weed, you know, and I like to sell it to...

**LAURA**

...More interestingly, what's *he* (*referring to GHOST*) here for?

**RYAN**

You don't know about Ghost?

**LUKE**

I know about Ghost, you're such a loser.

**LAURA**

Shut up. What's his deal?

**RYAN**

They say he's done over a thousand hours of community service.

**LUKE**

I heard a hundred-thousand!

**RYAN**

Yeah bull shit, buddy. Nobody knows what he did, but they say he's too dangerous to put in jail.

**LAURA**

No way.

**RYAN**

And, apparently he never speaks.

**LAURA**

So he's deaf... or dumb.

I've heard for a fact he isn't. **LUKE**

Hey Ghost! **LAURA**

Are you crazy?! **RYAN**

Duck! **LUKE**

*LUKE ducks, the other two just stand tensely. GHOST stops moving. Beat. He goes back to same movement.*

Ok, so he can hear. **LAURA**

I can't believe you just did that! **LUKE**

What? **LAURA**

The man is a community service legend... **LUKE**

**RYAN**  
You know what, shut the fuck up, you been here one day. Basically, he's just a scary motherfucker that everybody knows about and is always here and never talks. That's it.

**LAURA**  
... I'm going to see if I can make him talk...

**RYAN & LUKE**  
NO!

*RAMSAY holding a letter, laughs.*

**RYAN**  
What you got there snoop?

**RAMSAY**  
It's a letter...

**LAURA**

What's funny?

**RAMSAY**

"Baby, all I think about is when I finally bust out of here, I'm going come over and eat your dessert up. So you better have a homemade pie ready everyday..."

**MARTY**

Hey, what is that? You're not allowed to steal anything from the garbage...

**RAMSAY**

Just let me finish this part: "Just thinking about your cherry cobbler has me going crazy."

**MARTY**

Put. It. Down.

**RAMSAY**

"And maybe after dessert, we could have some sex on your coffee table."

*RAMSAY laughs harder than everyone, the rest chuckle maybe.*

You get it?! Because you figure he's been talking about sex the whole time, but he was really just talking about pie!!

**MARTY**

That's it, shit head. You're going back to the office.

*He walks toward RAMSAY.*

**RYAN**

Hey, ease up buddy, it was just for a laugh.

**LAURA**

Fucking relax!

**MARTY**

Shut up dip-shits.

**RAMSAY**

Look, (*puts it in his trash bag*) it's like nothing happened.

**MARTY**

You ignored me when I was yelling at you!

**RYAN**

Oh fuck you, you idiot!

*MARTY stops. Stare down.*

**MARTY**

What did you say?

**RYAN**

We'll all pick it up and do an extra block before lunch. It'll make you look good, and you won't have to make the extra trips back and forth from the office.

**MARTY**

*(beat, fuming)* If this were three months from now, when my pension is secured, I would kick the living shit out of you for everyone to see. It would be worth getting fired for.

*(beat)* Y'all got three extra blocks to do before lunch break, so get working.

*MARTY walks away.*

**RAMSAY**

Thanks for that.

**RYAN**

Now don't be such a dumbass. Thought you grad-school kids were supposed to be smart.

**RAMSAY**

But it was pretty funny right?

**RYAN**

Yeah, put it in your dissertation.

**MARTY**

CUT THE CHIT CHAT AND MOVE IT!

**ALL**

Alright!

*Cue music. Actors go into fast-forward, picking up trash, reacting, saying things sporadically and then finally they gather back behind the curtain. Cut music. They yell "Lunch break!"*

### **Act 2 SCENE 3**

*Public park area set-up. Stage is empty on lights up, they walk on.*

**MARTY**

Well I don't really care what your professor said. By the time you're my age you're going to be living off manufactured oxygen, in a *POD!* You're all gonna be *pod people!*



**RAMSAY**

*Pod people?!*

**LAURA**

Do you make this shit up?

**LUKE**

How long is lunch?

**MARTY**

*(looks at watch)* Eh... five quarters of an hour.

**LUKE**

*(thinks)* Yesss. *(he puts his head down on the table and falls asleep)*

*They all sit down at a picnic table or two.*

**MARTY**

I'm so damn hungry, feel like a killer whale er something.

**RYAN**

Killer whale ain't nothing but a baby. Gotta be that Megalodon!

**MARTY**

Megalodon? What's that? That don't even exist. Sounds like a god damn pokemon. Now a hippopotamus, that's a killer—you know a hippopotamus is the most deadly animal on earth?!

**RYAN**

A Hippopotamus? That goofy gap-toothed son-of-a-bitch?

**MARTY**

Kills more humans than anything else.

**RYAN**

Bulllllogna.

**MARTY**

My brother told me. He works at the Philadelphia Zoo. He's a dangerous animal specialist.

**RYAN**

*(beat)* A dangerous animal specialist?

*They go into silent miming as the focus switches to **RAMSAY** and **LAURA***

**RAMSAY**  
It's about crim... criminal rehab.

**LAURA**  
Well what you want to talk to me for? I'm not a criminal.

**RAMSAY**  
You're not?

**LAURA**  
No.

**RAMSAY**  
Then why are you here?

**LAURA**  
I took money that my job owed me without telling them.

**RAMSAY**  
So you... stole.

**LAURA**  
Is that what I said?

**RAMSAY**  
What, is it not?

**LAURA**  
Half my tips got stolen every week, that was my money.

**RAMSAY**  
Stolen?

**LAURA**  
You haven't waited have you?

**RAMSAY**  
Not at a restaurant, I worked at a café in high school.

**LAURA**  
Ha! What'd you do, sweep up the money that fell out of people's pockets?

**RAMSAY**  
(*defending himself*) Actually, it was hard work.

**LAURA**

Let me see your hands.

**RAMSAY**

What for?

*LAURA grabs RAMSAY's hands, looks at them.*

**LAURA**

As I thought.

**RAMSAY**

What?

**LAURA**

How many hours you work at that café?

**RAMSAY**

I dunno... ten hours a week for a year-and-a-half.

*LAURA laughs.*

**RAMSAY**

*(defending himself)* I was in high school, screw you! And I've done a lot of internships since then. One didn't even pay a dime.

**LAURA**

Uh-huh and I'm sure everybody loved pinching the new intern's ass and taking chunks out of your paycheck out without telling you. I'm sure you had lots of physical injuries getting paper cuts and tripping over the cubicle walls.

**RAMSAY**

Stop condescending!

**LAURA**

Fine.

**RAMSAY**

You know, I'm not doing this because I think you're immoral or lazy or something.

**LAURA**

You want to be helpful? Find me my next job.

*Shift. RYAN is getting MARTY more and more angry for fun, he is not actually invested in this argument.*

**RYAN**

A hippo kills more humans than a great white, a mountain lion, *and* all poisonous snakes?

**MARTY**

YUP!

**RYAN**

No way. I don't believe it.

**MARTY**

That's it. I'm calling my brother. (*takes out cell phone*) Petey, it's Marty. Ah, you're at work?... When did you tell me not to call you at work?... Well I'm sorry... I *do* mean it... I'm sorry I won't do it again... Oh come on, Petey don't say that, that's mean... Ah shit... Well can you answer one question or not?... One question!... I'm here with this punk from community service and... he won't believe that thing you told me last week at Cheryl's birthday... about the hippo... about how the hippo kills... Yeah, yeah, ok. Oh, and (*to RYAN*) one second. (*whispering to Petey*) If the kid asks, you're a dangerous animal specialist at the zoo, ok?... No, come on... Petey! Please! (*to RYAN*) Okay, here he is.

**RYAN**

YO! Name's Ryan nice to meet ya, so what proof you got about this hippo? ...Your friend Roger? I thought you worked at the z...

**MARTY**

(*Grabs phone*) Petey! I told you (*semi-whispered*) You're a dangerous animal specialist from the zoo. (*not whispered*) Oh! You're tired of my pointless calls are you? Well I'm tired of my pointless brother! Screw you too! (*hangs up*)

**RYAN**

Everything ok?

**MARTY**

Shut up.

*Switch.*

**LUKE**

I'm trying to sleep!

**RAMSAY**

It will take no more than five minutes.

**LUKE**

Agh... make it two.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Why are you at community service?

**LUKE**

I'm a volunteer.

**RAMSAY**

Second question, why are you at community service?

**LUKE**

*(sigh, "Oh my god...")* I dealt pot. *(reclines like he's going to go back to sleep)*

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* How'd you get caught?

**LUKE**

My friend was a fucking dumbass and got his hands on some coke.

**RAMSAY**

So would you have done anything differently?

**LUKE**

Yeah, I would have dealt alone.

**RAMSAY**

If just your friend had been arrested, and not you, you would have continued to deal?

**LUKE**

I would have been an idiot not to, I was making bank.

**RAMSAY**

Why don't you work hard at community service?

**LUKE**

Why don't I work hard? Are you kidding me? Why the hell would you work hard at this shit?

**RAMSAY**

Maybe you feel guilty and you want to feel better about yourself... maybe you want to do some good for your community.

**LUKE**

I don't feel guilty because I didn't do anything out of the ordinary. And this isn't my community. I live in the suburbs, not the... ghetto. I was probably helping people pay rent around here...

**RAMSAY**

You don't feel guilty at all?

**LUKE**

It's a free country. If there's profit in it, somebody's gonna do it.

**RAMSAY**

Do you realize what a criminal record can do to the rest of your life?!

**LUKE**

And who the fuck are you? You're here just like me. I overheard you're a D.U.I.! What are you getting off on giving me all this shit? I'm in high school, I'm supposed to fuck up.

**RAMSAY**

I... yes, you're right... what I did was stupid. But that's why I'm trying to do some good work while I'm here.

**LUKE**

Whatever man, that's your deal.

**RAMSAY**

So what are you going to do after this?

**LUKE**

You mean am I going to keep dealing?

**RAMSAY**

Yeah.

**LUKE**

Probably not... but it's a shit-ton better than some lame ass job.

**RAMSAY**

Going to college?

**LUKE**

I don't know man, quit fucking hounding me.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat, referring to GHOST)* You know anything about him?

**LUKE**

He doesn't want to answer your stupid questions, I know that.

**RAMSAY**

Why not?

**LUKE**

Because he's a scary motherfucker that's why!

*Beat. RAMSAY walks in GHOST's direction.*

**LAURA**

(to **RYAN** and **MARTY**) That guy's going to talk to Ghost.

**RYAN**

Hey buddy! Be careful.

(to **MARTY**) You got a gun or a taser or something?

**MARTY**

Two of 'em, they're called my fists.

**RYAN**

(to **LAURA**) This guy is ridiculous.

**RAMSAY**

Excuse me... My name's Ramsay, do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

*GHOST reaches into his jacket like he's going to pull out a gun.*

NO! Don't—

*GHOST pulls out a tattered notebook. Beat.*

**RAMSAY**

Oh... sorry...

**GHOST**

I'm not too dangerous for prison, I've only been here two hundred hours, and I come voluntarily.

**RAMSAY**

You're here voluntarily?

**GHOST**

Please, let me explain. (*beat, clears his throat, prepares his speech*) My options: a house in Chester where my mom is watching shitty-ass daytime TV. A hundred hiring fast-food places within 5 miles of my house. A hundred other jobs that I would *much* rather work at. Four or five gangs that are always looking for new members. Problem? I don't want to listen to my mom nag at me for another second, I will *not* work in fast food, other jobs don't want black highschool dropouts with no work-record, and I'd like to live to see my late-twenties. Solution: commserv, where no one bothers me, no one expects anything of me, and I'm allowed to...space the fuck out.

**RAMSAY**

You just decided to show up at community service one day?

**GHOST**

My friend had some hours and I came with him as a joke once... then I never stopped.

**RAMSAY**

That's... ridiculous!

**GHOST**

(*sarcastic*) What an amazing guy right?!

**RAMSAY**

Yeah... so why do you like it so much here?

**GHOST**

Gives me room to think.

**RAMSAY**

About what?

**GHOST**

Nothing... nothing for your *paper*.

**RAMSAY**

No, I... it doesn't have to be anything. I just... you know, the truth.

**GHOST**

(*laughs a little*) Look at you.

**RAMSAY**

What?

**GHOST**

Okay, right now, you're thinking, "Holy Shit! A weird black guy who likes to think and doesn't talk like a thug! He'll be my poster-boy!"



**RAMSAY**

That's ridiculous, am I talent agent or something?

**GHOST**

In a way.

**RAMSAY**

No screw that, just tell me what's true.

**GHOST**

But you're still expecting it; you're all jazzed up, I can tell.

**RAMSAY**

What does it matter what I expect?

**GHOST**

What does it matter what you expect?! Are you kidding me?!

**RAMSAY**

What? It's you answering.

**GHOST**

*(beat, dawning on him)* You're a horse! A racehorse! We are *exactly* like horses!

**RAMSAY**

...Horses?

**GHOST**

We race with blinders on. We, we, we cut out all the stuff we think we don't need out so it's easier, so we can run faster, fuck more, and sleep easier, without thinking about everything. When things meet our expectations it's like a little, "Oooh! Aren't I smart?!" and when they don't, we either beat them to death or ignore them as anomalies. *(pulls out notebook, starts writing) (to himself) ...horses, expectations, blinders...*

**RAMSAY**

*(while Ghost is muttering)* But we're cutting stuff out we *do* need to see.

**GHOST**

Yes, duh! Thank you!

**RAMSAY**

Is this the kind of stuff you think about? Can I see that?

**GHOST**

No way.

**RAMSAY**

Please?!

**GHOST**

*(sighs, takes pity)* Knock yourself out.

**RAMSAY**

*(Ghost hands him notebook)* “They say that the colors of the sunset are just from the deflection of light because of dust in the atmosphere, but I say it’s because we need a reason to want to see the sun again the next day.” *(flips page)* “Remember to order water-jet foot massager for mother’s day,” *(flips page)* “Decide whether the moon landing was real or not, leaning towards no.” Are you real?

**GHOST**

I told you it’s not good stuff for your paper. Give it back.

**RAMSAY**

Could I make a copy of that?

*RYAN is getting loud.*

**RYAN**

Fuck no! At four o’clock, when I’m done with this shit, all I want to do is go home and get wasted again.

**LUKE**

Amen!

**RYAN**

Shut up.

**MARTY**

That’s the problem with you punks. Somebody makes you pay back and all you do is bitch and moan. I’m here everyday and you don’t hear me complaining.

**RYAN, LAURA, LUKE**

You’re getting paid!

**MARTY**

That’s because *I* didn’t fuck up like you assholes. I’m here to make a living. You’re here because you screwed over society.

**RYAN**

Fuck that, the *cops* screwed up.

**LUKE**

Yeah, *I* wasn't the one who started dealing coke.

**MARTY**

Of course, of course, it's not your fault. It never is. (*trailing off*) Pieces of shit...

**LAURA**

What is it with you? We're not the fucking devil's children.

**MARTY**

Well, dear, most of the time you are, so it's best to be prepared.

**GHOST**

(*to RAMSAY*) You see that horse just take off? *Great Expectations!*

**RAMSAY**

(*not quite getting it*) Yeah...

**LAURA**

People give you shit because they don't want to be here.

**MARTY**

So I give 'em *my* shit right back.

**RYAN**

You're a bully on the playground, you know that?

**MARTY**

One more smart word out of you and I will bury you in penalty days.

**RYAN**

Would you prefer a dumb one?

**MARTY**

Oooohh!...

**RAMSAY**

(*beat, RAMSAY has taken out his notebook and has been scribbling furiously*) **YEAH!**  
Keep going!

*Awkward beat, all characters look at RAMSAY then go back to conversation.*

**RYAN**

Anyways...

**LAURA**

Comm-serv's just a waste of everyone's time.

**MARTY**

You're the one wasting it!

**RYAN**

No she's not! What good are we doing here? I'm just getting more pissed off, and this place is going to be just as dirty next week. We're picking litter off a land-fill and calling it service.

**GHOST**

Woah!

**RAMSAY**

Poetry!

**RYAN**

It's not good for us: we feel like shit, and our jobs and school-work suffer as a consequence. At best we're substituting for a street cleaner. Meanwhile, the state is paying for another twenty employees to run the comm-serv department. Then they have to buy the vans, the gas, the insurance...

**RAMSAY**

So what *should* you be doing? They can't just let you get off free.

**MARTY**

You all just need to suck it up, get back in the van, and pick up the trash when I tell you to. Lunch break is over.

**RAMSAY**

NO! *This* is the work that needs doing.

**MARTY**

HAH! So that's your angle, huh? Get everyone all riled up and then lead a mutiny? Changing of the guard right? Out with the old guys, in with the new. Well, you can go fu...

**RAMSAY**

I'm not trying to get you fired!

**MARTY**

Like hell you aren't!

**RYAN**

He's right though, we oughtta be *thinking* about what we're doing here. Not just pissing around like a bunch of idiots.

**LAURA**

I don't give a shit, I just want to do my hours and get out of here.

**LUKE**

I'm with her.

**MARTY**

At last someone talking sense. Now get moving assholes, you're cutting into your lunch break.

**RAMSAY**

Just twenty more minutes! PLEASE!

**MARTY**

Alright. That's it. Let's go buddy. You and me.

**RAMSAY**

What?

**RYAN**

Oh shit!!!

**MARTY**

Don't act surprised, you knew this was coming. Put your fucking hands up!

**RAMSAY**

I'm not going to fight you.

**MARTY**

Oh yeah? Why not? Afraid you'll get hurt?

**RYAN**

Kick his ass!

**LUKE**

Yeah! Kick his ass!

**MARTY**

Yeah, you heard 'em, (*gravelly, taunting*) kick my ass.

*MARTY puts his fists up, challenging him, RAMSAY stares at him in disbelief. MARTY begins to bring back a fist to punch and everyone goes into super slow-mo except RAMSAY.*

**RAMSAY**

*(something dawning on him)* I considered raising my hands... but I was lost staring into his eyes... this crazed middle-aged man, raging out of some paranoid delusion, ready to punch my face in. I envisioned something... with crystal clarity... a hidden world, deep inside us: the gaping void of isolation and fear... the thin wobbly towers of self-interest that rise and collapse and rise and collapse... the corroded framework of ancient bridges that once gave us access to one another... And at the bottom of that world, I saw a dim orange light glowing deep deep within, like an ember at the center of the earth, a second heart slowly pulsing behind the first... I imagined it was an unborn world, where people care for each other not out of charity or paternalism, but because they see the fiction of their separation, that heavy wet blanket of false comfort, that foggy window of nasty nature that has been blurring our vision for millenia. I was caught up in that vision, lost in its utopia, and then I saw something else, coming... very slowly...

*RAMSAY is punched in the face. As soon as the fist makes contact with the face, we go back to real time, RAMSAY goes flying backward into LUKE and LAURA.*

**RYAN**

OH SHIT!!

*GHOST comes flying in and punches MARTY out, into RYAN.*

**RYAN**

OH SHIT!!!

*BLACKOUT. Cue music.*

#### **Act 2 SCENE 4**

*RYAN, LAURA, LUKE, GHOST and MARTY are around the space. Monologues are cued by a shift in the lights, focusing on whoever is speaking. Lights focus on LUKE.*

**LUKE**

I didn't get anything out of commserv. It was a waste of forty hours, hanging around with scumbags, doing nothing. *(beat)* That's what I tell most people... and it's mostly true. But there *was* one thing. *(beat)* We were cleaning up around a public housing project... and spent the entire morning working on this one house... It was disgusting: trash everywhere, smelled like shit, stuff written and smeared on the walls, broken furniture... At one point when we were cleaning, this young guy, a neighbor I guess, just walked in, took the baby cradel from the living room, walked straight out the door and carried it over to his house. He didn't say a word, and nobody said a word to him. I assumed the house had been abandoned for a while. *(beat)* We were picking up trash around the back porch and there was this... stink. I would catch a whiff every few seconds and I would have to turn away and cover my mouth before I puked. Someone grabbed a rake to see what was under the porch and they pulled out this white plastic trash bag that was so old and soggy it just ripped right in half. Dozens of month-old dirty

diapers just poured out of the bag. Shit, and maggots, and the worst smell you could ever, ever imagine. *(beat)* I looked up, about to puke... and I saw this little boy standing at the second floor window. He was shirtless... and expressionless, just watching us, these strangers in orange vests clean up his shit.

*Shift*

### MARTY

Ah, yeah, my love affair with community service. Well the romance started twelve years ago. I had been working for a waste management company for seven years before that. I was relatively happy there, making a good living with good benefits, blah blah blah. But the company was state-sponsored, so when a slew of new private programs were approved in ninety-five, our job-security went out the window. The state program flopped, and none of the new guys wanted to hire me; one, because I was already in my late thirties, and two, because there were a few reports of my... anger-management problems. I was unemployed for four months. My dad had just died a year before of lung cancer so my mom had been living alone. She had a fall one day and me and my brother and sister decided she couldn't live alone anymore. I was the only one without a family of my own and I had an extra bedroom, so I took her in, still unemployed. My brother and sister pitched in a bit, but they made me promise to get a job within a year. A buddy of mine who had cut out of the garbage business early had found a position driving vans at community service. He offered to put in a good word for me. So... here I am... a real American Love story, huh?...*(beat)* They better not fucking fire me for punching that brat. Just three more months and I'm done.

*Shift*

### LAURA

I finished at comm-serv, and I didn't know what the hell to do... my license was suspended... I wasn't in school... and obviously not working. I couldn't do the old shit, like drink and smoke, first of all because I had no money, and also because I knew if... if I got arrested again somehow... that would be *it*. My step-mom was one step away from kicking me out of the house anyways. So for the first week I just sat at home... watching TV... doing nothing. I was so bored by accident I didn't eat for a day and a half. *(beat)* The worst part, though, was just being alone. At comm-serv at least I was with other people, even if they were douche bags. After like two weeks of doing nothing, I started acting like I was going crazy. Like a totally different person. I would go for runs in the middle of the night. Probably not safe, but... you know, I wasn't running far at first, but after a few weeks I was up to like *ten* miles. I do crosswords now, and I fill out surveys online for money. It's...it's fucking weird, it's not the old me at all...but... I don't know it's something... it feels alright.

*Shift*

### RYAN

I got arrested again and I'm gonna write a book about my experiences being a white guy in jail. *(to audience)* Seriously, what do you want me to say? *(beat)* I got fired by

Starbucks for shifting my schedule around too much and I'm going to have to do another year at comm. college before any good schools are going to give me financial aid. So yeah, life sucks... *(beat)* I was about to say "but I'm used to it" but you know what... I'm not used to it. Why would you go on living if you were positive life currently and always will *suck*? No, I'm still thinking things are gonna get better somehow, that somebody's going to realize that I should *not* be in fucking community college. Yeah, sure, a lot of people shouldn't be in community college, and maybe a lot of people who aren't should be... but fuck that it's not happening to me! *(beat, quieter, to himself)* Better not...

*Shift*

### GHOST

*(reading from his notebook, as if he were at a reading an audience of fans)*

Chapter eleven: "After The Punch." They told me I couldn't come to community service anymore, which was probably getting off light considering I punched out a government employee. It was probably time for me to move on anyways, now that I'd started to interact with other people. *(beat)* I miss the reason to get up in the morning, and the excuse to get out of the house... then again it was only commserv so I'm not too torn up. My mom freaked when I told her what happened, so if I want to have a place to live, I'm going to have to take a job at Popeye's or Rita's, or something... which blows... *(beat, chipper)* In other news my uncle said I could clean up his basement and turn it into my... I dunno, my writing studio I guess. Not quite the island getaway of my dreams, but... a place to escape to anyways. *(pause)* Chapter twelve: "Where the hell from here?"

### PATRICK

When I finished community service I was twenty-two. I tossed my trash in the dumpster, went back to my apartment and got so stoned I couldn't see. *(laughs, cries)* I'm going to retire in five years... if I can last that long. *(beat)* I'd like to think I've made a difference during my career, but I don't know what that difference would look like anymore. Yes, I've kept a few innocent kids out of trouble. But I've lost just as many. Anyone with a decent law degree could do that. *(beat)* Maybe when I'm retired I'll see what my whole life has been about. *(beat)* I am not a normal person, am I? *(strange crying)* No! I used to be! I used to go to concerts and make my own tea! I dated a girl with fifteen earrings! Or... was that me? Did I read that? Was that a client?... What a terrible feeling. *(beat)* *(beat)* I wanted to do good once. *(beat)* When do I find out what I've done? Who can tell me that?

*Lights dim on them.*

### Act 2 SCENE 5

**RAMSAY**, in a wheelchair, with nose heavily bandaged, is pushed to center-stage by **SARAH**. We understand that he is looking at himself in a mirror, though it appears that he is looking directly out at/over the audience.

**RAMSAY**



I look terrible.

**SARAH**

It's not that bad.

**RAMSAY**

I've never had a broken bone before.

**SARAH**

It's broken?

**RAMSAY**

Look at it!

**SARAH**

*(beat)* I hope he gets fired.

**RAMSAY**

He won't.

**SARAH**

What? Why?

**RAMSAY**

I talked to him in the hospital...

***MARTY** appears as a light turns on him suddenly, to the audience's left in front of the light-booth, lights dim on **RAMSAY** and **SARAH**. This is a flash-back to when **MARTY** talked to **RAMSAY** in the hospital after they'd both been in the E.R., although **RAMSAY** is absent from the flashback.*

**MARTY**

I wanted to say, I'm sorry kid... and... I don't know what came over me... You see, I have a history of a short temper and...

***KAREN** enters into light*

**KAREN**

*(clearly distressed)* **MARTY**! There you are!

**MARTY**

Karen, what are you doing here?!

**KAREN**

Shush it. Is it true? Did you punch the appointment guy?

**MARTY**

I can explain, they had me cornered, I...

**KAREN**

Marty, shut up! *(she kisses him fervently, just a pull-down lip kiss, no tongue)*

**MARTY**

*(flabbergasted)* What... Karen! What the...

**KAREN**

Tough love, Marty. We need, Tough. Love.

*The lights change to shift focus back to RAMSAY and SARAH. MARTY and KAREN exit.*

**RAMSAY**

So... I just said I wouldn't press charges or anything as long as he didn't go out on anymore work crews, and that he retired when his retirement plan was secured.

**SARAH**

Well... I guess that was noble of you.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Sarah... I don't know what I've got myself into.

**SARAH**

*(beat)* I know.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Like, I am in *WAY* over my head.

**SARAH**

*(beat)* I know. We all are.

**RAMSAY**

We all are?

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* We live kinda like fish.

**SARAH**

*(beat)* What?

**RAMSAY**

No, no, like *flying* fish... only rarely popping up above the surface, getting a glimpse of the other side, where there is so much air, but nothing to push off of. Most of the time we're down under, in the water, barely breathing enough to live, not seeing past the five feet around us, darting around for a bite to eat or a bubble to burst.

**SARAH**

*(beat)* You're on drugs, right?

**RAMSAY**

*(beat, he remembers)* Ah, yeah, I am.

**SARAH**

Let's get you home and into bed. You've got some great drug-induced dreams ahead of you. *(She starts to push him off)*

**RAMSAY**

Wait. Hold on a second.

**SARAH**

What?

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Sarah. I want to kiss you right now, but if I stand up, I might fall over.

**SARAH**

That's... *kind of* romantic.

**RAMSAY**

*(beat)* Screw it. *(He attempts to stand up quickly, teeters one way, SARAH pulls him back, he teeters into her and they kiss, embracing (no tongue) for 3-5 seconds. Suddenly, RAMSAY collapses into wheelchair)* Ohhhhhh, Head rush, holy shit holy shit. *(He buries his head between his knees to get the blood to flow back into it, groaning)*

**SARAH**

*(beat)* Well, we'll try again soon.

**RAMSAY**

*(groans)* Let's go home.

**SARAH**

My thoughts exactly.

*She starts to roll him upstage right, as the curtain closes slowly and closing music fades up. Curtain opens for "curtain call." Rounds of cast emerge, some with orange vests and gloves, all with trashbags, they come to center, bow, and then go around the space to*

*start to clean up, and maybe give bags to audience members. If audience is still clapping, the whole cast will run to center stage one more time for a final bow, and the curtain will close. Otherwise, if the applause is tapering out, the cast will gradually leave their bags with audience members and trickle backstage until the audience is left cleaning up to the music. Music fades out.*

**FIN**