

Wedekind

Advanced Human Behavior
by Crisman Cooley

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Cast of Characters

MOSI, 26 years old, female, DSP Salinger, Kenya
HERA GAY, 49 years old, female, Executive Director, Wedekind California, USA
CYNTHIA, secretary (voice)
VICKI BROMBERG, 57 years old, female, Chief Financial Officer, Wedekind, Inc.
CHARLES RANDEM III, "CHIJA", 35 years old, male, Rosco client
MARIBEL, 55 years old, female, SIC Salinger, USA
KENDRICK ROSS, 65 years old, male, Salinger client
SCARLET, 72 years old, female, Salinger client
JOE SWEENEY, 68 years old, male, Salinger client
BENTLEY, 66 years old, male, Salinger client
FINN (voice), male, client
BEATRIZ, 35 years old, female, Staff-In-Charge (SIC) Salinger, USA
YOLANDA, 39 years old, female, DSP Salinger, Colombia
CONNOR JETT (voice), male, client
VERN ROBERTS, 87 years old, male, client
OSWALD DEETS, 37 years old, male, Program Admin Salinger, USA
PARIS TRUHEART, 53 years old, female, People Operations Director, Wedekind California, USA
ZARAYA, 29 years old, female, Direct Service Provider (DSP), Jamaica
AKUA, 28 years old, female, DSP Salinger, Ghana
VELIANE, 33 years old, female, DSP Salinger, Ghana
KAYLA, 32 years old, female, SIC Rosco, USA
KUMBARE, 44 years old, female, SIC Rosco, Jamaica
ESI, 23 years old, female, DSP Rosco, Ghana
GRAYSON, 32 years old, male, Rosco client
MINA, 45 years old, female, Program Director, Wedekind California, USA
OPERATOR, (voice)

2 POLICE OFFICERS
4 EMTs

Place

Wedekind Behavioral Health in Nowhere, CA
Two consecutive days: Sept 29 & 30 (Thursday & Friday) 2022

Scene 1. Homesick.

(The Wedekind Campus. Birds sing. Many varieties: water birds on the slough, woodland birds in the trees around. The bird songs, along with a mild, shifting breeze and the distant sound of ocean waves breaking on the sand, form an ever-changing backdrop to all the scenes.)

MOSI

Mr. William Kipchirchir Samoei arap Ruto, my President. Why mine? Because, he is for all of us! He say we are hustlers. A word I give myself. And sometimes wish I never said! Sometimes, I ask myself why I make this long journey to this place so far from home! I leave my family behind! (As she walks, MOSI picks up two sticks and plays with them.)

The birds sing, and the wind blows, and the ocean sing its song. But the buildings—closed! Only four still open! The other buildings of this once grand place...board over windows. They tell me laughing children play here once, years ago. Now, the children are silent—gone. I should be happy: I have a new job in a new country! So why is my spirit gloomy? I am a hustler. I am homesick. (She beats the two sticks together.) Hokambe! Homesick! Hokambe! Homze!

Safari eh, howa safari ya bamba ni machero
safari eh, howa safari ya bamba ni machero
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Hokambe, homze,
Hokambe, homze,
pole, pole,
chere muthithe
heyaa!
Hokambe, Hokambe,
Safari eh, howa safari ya bamba ni machero
safari eh, howa safari ya bamba ni machero
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.
Hokambe, homze,
Hokambe, homze,
Hokambe, homze,
Hokambe, homze!

Scene 2. VISIT.

(CHIJA roars quite near, with ferocity of a wild beast. The roar repeats at intervals during the scene, sometimes near, sometimes far away, as CHIJA walks or runs in circles around the campus. The phone rings in the office of the Executive Director.)

HERA

Yeah, Cyn.

CYNTHIA

(Voice on phone.) Vicki Bromberg, CFO from Corporate's on for you. What do I do?

HERA

Well, for one thing, calm down.

CYNTHIA

What do you want me to say? Are you in?

HERA

Of course I'm in! Put her through. (Rings through.) Wedekind Behavioral Health, California. Executive Director's Office. Hera Gay, speaking.

VICKI

Hera. It's Vicki Bromberg.

HERA

Well, hello Vicki! To what do I owe the pleasure?

VICKI

I know that tone.

HERA

Tone?

VICKI

Where you're saying one thing, but you mean another.

HERA

Oh dear! Have we been doing this too long? (They laugh—HERA with some relief, Vicki in spite of herself.) You and I both know the numbers—that's no surprise. But...am I really getting so predictable?

VICKI

I take no pleasure in what I'm about to tell you.

HERA

Is something the matter?

VICKI

Yes.

HERA

I mean—something other than the deficit? We're working away at it.

VICKI

Yes, I know, and I—

HERA

Our last new hire is at People Ops as we speak. We've filled all our open shifts *and* cut payroll 27% over the past year. Did you see how we did it?

VICKI

I saw your memo. Progress, certainly.

HERA

But did you see? We're removing all the agency people. And eliminating double shifts for employees. It's the Internationals, like magic!

VICKI

I don't mean to sound ungrateful or diminish what you've done, Hera. But the numbers just don't—

HERA

Call outs are rare—show-up rate for Internationals is 97%! These girls are amazing. They're performing well. A few staff kerfuffles, yes. Not all are a hundred percent settled... But, we're pretty excited about the changes.

VICKI

That's great, Hera.

HERA

But? I hear a but—

VICKI

We got a call from Immigration.

HERA
Oh?

VICKI
Someone from their office got an anonymous tipoff. From California.

HERA
Tipoff? How do you mean? Didn't legal go over this whole thing?

VICKI
Of course. But Immigration. They're Federal. Once these people get involved, no matter what you're doing, all our lives are going to get very weird very fast.

HERA
I hate to be blunt, Vicki. But what do you expect me to do about it? Karlheinz signed off. By the end, it was *his plan*—not mine.

VICKI
That was very clever, Hera. Making him believe it was his plan.

HERA
Like a boy—he forgets the toy was ever not his!

VICKI
I'll let that pass. But since the call from Immigration, it's become *your plan* again. And *not* highly regarded.

HERA
A mayfly flies / In May or June. / Its life is over / Far too soon. / A day or two / To dance, / To fly— / Hello / Hello / Good-bye / Good-bye.

VICKI
For heaven's sake, Hera. I like you! But I never liked this idea of yours. To me, it looks like indentured servitude.

HERA
So you've said.

VICKI
I'm not alone. Not anymore. Our CEO agrees that my fears are well-founded. You and Karlheinz may once have believed you'd got this whole issue solved company-wide. But I beg to differ.

HERA

Don't beg, Vicki. It doesn't become you.

VICKI

You do not seem to understand the severity of the problem! Please, let's avoid insouciance, shall we? Whatever costs you're cutting they're getting swallowed up in legal fees. We've had to hire outside legal counsel to help us sort out this mess!

HERA

I see. Vicki, I—

VICKI

I'm coming out.

HERA

Out here? Flying...? When?

VICKI

I'll be there tomorrow.

HERA

(Hiding the shock.) I see. Did Karlheinz ask for this?

VICKI

He had no choice.

HERA

What do you mean, 'no choice'?

VICKI

I told him that with Immigration breathing down our necks, we better damn well have our ducks in a row out in California! (Roar, close.) What was that?

HERA

Chija.

VICKI

Chija?

HERA

You'll know him as Charles Wayne Randem III.

VICKI

Charles Randem, III. Your meal ticket, isn't he?

HERA

Who's playing coy now? The numbers lady. Every month, you see his thirty round roll in, all cash. You know every what, why and wherefore of that money!

VICKI

You can't live without him.

HERA

My job is running Wedekind, California, Vicki. I do what I need to do to keep the doors open. And give these lost souls a place to call home. Anyway, Chija's refusing his meds.

VICKI

Again?

HERA

Yes. The doctor increased the dose and also started him on a new PRN, supposed to reduce his aggression. But, we've seen this before. Whenever there's a change, Chija goes bonkers.

VICKI

Has he attacked anyone?

HERA

No, no. That was an isolated incident.

VICKI

Okay, well anyway. My flight arrives at 10:45 AM tomorrow.

HERA

Right. Tomorrow. I'll have Cyn pick you up.

VICKI

Thank you. And I'm sorry. I would have given you more notice, but we just decided this morning.

HERA

Such a hurry!

VICKI

We think it justified. The future of the institution hangs in the balance.

HERA

Don't be dramatic.

VICKI

Concerning California, it isn't hyperbole.

HERA

Well...it'll be great to see you!

VICKI

Do you mean it?

HERA

Oh Vicki! Don't let analysis kill the last vestige of human kindness.

VICKI

These are tough times. For all of us. What with this economy. And the pandemic. And all.

HERA

Self-pity's a luxury I can't afford. None for me till 5PM! Well, travel safe. And I'll see you tomorrow. Bye. (Hangs up phone and closes her eyes.) 'We think it justified.' 'Concerning California, it isn't hyperbole!' (Opens her eyes again and dials.) Cyn? I'll need you to pick up Vicki Bromberg from the airport tomorrow, ten forty-five in the morning, please.

CYNTHIA

She's coming?

HERA

If her plane doesn't crash. Tell Paris to convene a meeting of the Core Emergency Staff today. Everyone on CES. Mark it mandatory. Understand?

CYNTHIA

Yes ma'am. Oh God! The CFO!

HERA

Plus, I want that new PA from Salinger. What's his name?

CYNTHIA

Oswald Deets?

HERA

Deets. We'll test his mettle. Let's hope he's as good as Mina seems to think. We're all going to need to be a little better from here on out. One last thing.

CYNTHIA

Yes ma'am?

HERA

Do a trace on all calls out of this campus for the past two weeks. See if you can find one that matches the public phone number of the US Department of Immigration. Give me your results before the end of the day.

CYNTHIA

Yes ma'am.

HERA

Thanks. (Hangs up. Another scream outside. HERA looks up and smiles bitterly.) Give 'em hell, Chija.

Scene 3. Greetings.

MARIBEL

C'mon Kendrick. Let's go inside now, buddy!

KENDRICK

I 'on't want to.

MARIBEL

I know you don't want to. But that doesn't change anything. It's dangerous in the parking lot. You gotta go in now.

KENDRICK

Why?

MARIBEL

I just told you why, Kendrick.

KENDRICK

Van wy.

MARIBEL

Nope. No van ride today. We don't have any drivers, except me. But I'm Staff In Charge. I can't leave! Sorry buddy.

KENDRICK

Van wy.

MARIBEL

No van ride.

(KENDRICK screams, short.)

MARIBEL

Don't make me take your shoe.

KENDRICK

No. No! (MARIBEL bends down to take one of his shoes.) Nooooooooo! Nooooooooo! I 'ont want to. Nyooooooooo! (More like screaming than words.)

MOSI

Do you need some help?

MARIBEL

You must be the new staff?

MOSI

Yes. I just finish training. They send me here for three to eleven. Is this...?

MARIBEL

Salinger Center.

MOSI

Salingah. Yes. I am Mosi.

MARIBEL

Well hi, Mosi. I'm Maribel. Nice to meet you! They told me you'd be coming today. I understand you're the last of the Internationals. Is that right?

MOSI

I don't know.

MARIBEL

Where are you from, Mosi?

MOSI

Kenya.

MARIBEL

Ah, Kenya. Esther is from Kenya too. She's been here a month. Have you met Esther?

MOSI

No.

MARIBEL

She works at Day Program. Has anyone shown you around?

MOSI

No. First time.

MARIBEL

C'mon in! I'll introduce you to everyone. This is Mr. Kendrick Ross, who loves to go for van rides. Don't you, Mr. Ross? But not right now.

KENDRICK

No! Go way! Little boy! Go way!

MARIBEL

(Laughs uncomfortably at Kendrick's rebuff.) Let's go inside. Most people are in their rooms right now. As you can see, the TV is not working.

SCARLET

(A voice from the couch.) No, it's not because the TV is not working. That is wrong, wrong, wrong! It's because somebody took the remote! That's why the TV is not working. And I don't know about you, but I think that's stupid! And I don't want to hear about it anymore! Until I get out of this place and find a place of my own, and get a little peace and quiet, and get away from all these stupid people, I don't want to hear anymore about the TV not working! Meanwhile, I have to put up with any of these damn people always taking the remote! And that's just my opinion and it's a free country and if you don't like to hear about it, you can just go to Hell!

MARIBEL

Mosi, this is Scarlet. And Scarlet, this is Mosi. She's a new International staff here.

SCARLET

Well, I feel sorry for you. (Laughs.)

MARIBEL

Okay, let's see who else is up. This is Aiden Butts' room. He's a painter. He made that nice painting over there on the wall. People say he paints like Van Gogh. It's amazing too because Mr. Butts has bad eyes and lacks fine motor control. His roommate is Ernie Buchold, a deaf gentleman. We communicate with Ernie by writing notes on his magnetic tablet. And what do you know. Well, well, well... If it isn't the Sheriff of Salinger hall, Mr. Joe Sweeney! Mosi, meet Joe.

MOSI

Hi Joe.

JOE

Are you my staff?

MOSI

(Looks at Margarit, who shakes her head.) No.

JOE

You not my staff? (Folds arms and sticks out his lower lip.)

MOSI

No.

JOE

Then get out of here. You're fired!

MARIBEL

You can't fire her, Joe! This is only her first day.

JOE

I don't care. You're fired.

MARIBEL

C'mon now, Joe. Be nice.

JOE

(Makes a fist.) I want my staff! (Shakes it at MOSI.)

MARIBEL

Okay! Moving right along. Let's check in on Bentley and Finn. (Opens a door.) Bentley? Finn? Please meet our new staff, Mosi. She's from Kenya.

FINN

Kenya, huh?

MOSI

Yes.

MARIBEL

Oh, Bentley. I think you must have a surprise in the oven. Whewee! (Fans her nose. Puts her head out the door and calls to the Staff Corner Office) Beatriz! Can you please come check Bentley? I think he needs changing. And meet Mosi, she's a new International Staff!

BEATRIZ

(Sotto voce) Why does she want me to do it? Get the new girl to do it! She needs to get broken in on a big steamin' pile! (To Yolanda, also in the office.) How come she wants me to do it, huh?

YOLANDA

Es porque. You are her Mexican slave, puta. That's why.

BEATRIZ

Chinga tu madre. Pinche pulpa. You the one with the broom between your legs, Colombian bruja.

YOLANDA

You gonna be like that, I won't give you my secret spell that will solve your problem.

BEATRIZ

What secret spell? Okay, I'm sorry. Your mama's the virgen.

YOLANDA

Mentira. It's almost three. You could wait for the shift change when you're Staff In Charge, then make the International girl do it.

BEATRIZ

Genius. Fucking genius, Yolanda! I take it back, pinche! (They laugh.)

YOLANDA

That's what they're here for, right?

BEATRIZ

Get wipey with the steamin' pile. (They laugh.)

YOLANDA

If it gets on their skin, it's invisible!

BEATRIZ

I've got four of 'em working for me next shift.

YOLANDA

Eww yah. Slave driver on the cane plantation! Crack that whip!

BEATRIZ

Hyah! Hyah! Git to work you lazy buncha—

MARIBEL

Beatriz?

BEATRIZ

Yes?

MARIBEL

Are you coming for Bentley?

BEATRIZ

I'll be right there.

YOLANDA

Um hmm. Right on it. (They laugh.)

BEATRIZ

What do you bet Connor goes on a tear tonight?

YOLANDA

Whaddya mean?

BEATRIZ

'N', puta. Screamin' 'N'.

YOLANDA

You mean, calling a spade a spade? I'd practically stay overtime to hear that shit.

MARIBEL

(Leading Mosi down the hallway.) This is Connor Jett's room. Hi Connor. Can you say hi to Mosi? She's a new staff.

CONNOR

Fuck you. I want Rocky, okay?

MARIBEL

That's not very polite, Mr. Jett. (To MOSI.) He likes watching Rocky.

MOSI

Rocky?

MARIBEL

It's a movie. About a boxer. But we don't like to expose him to all that violence. Especially if he's going to be insulting the staff. Isn't that right, Mr. Jett? What goes around, comes around!

CONNOR

Fuck you. Okay? I want Rocky. Rocky, okay!?

MARIBEL

Here comes the tirade. We're gonna leave Connor, till you learn to behave!

CONNOR

I want Rocky, okay! (Shrieking now.) I want Rocky! Rocky, okay!?

MARIBEL

(She leads MOSI to the next room. We can still hear Connor Jett screaming, overcome by the sound of 3 TVs playing in the room they enter.) This is Vern Roberts, our sports enthusiast. Good afternoon, Mr. Roberts! Can you say hi to Mosi?

VERN

Hi. What was your name?

MOSI

Mosi.

VERN

Oh, hi.

MOSI

Hi, Mr. Roberts. What game are you watching?

VERN

That TV down here is just for religion, because I'm a baptist. Are you a Baptist?

MOSI

No.

VERN

This one is major league baseball. Up here, it's the Davis Cup finals. You know who won the US Open?

MOSI

No.

VERN

American gal, only 19. That's pretty good, don't you think?

MOSI

Yes, pretty good.

VERN

Do you play tennis?

MOSI

No. But the winner of Wimbledon doubles last year was from my country. Angella Okutoyi.

VERN

What country are you from?

MOSI

Kenya.

VERN

Oh, I see. Have you ever been to New York?

MOSI

No.

VERN

That's where they play the US Open. She's only nineteen, a black girl from America. That's pretty good in the finals, don't you think?

MOSI

Yes, pretty good.

VERN

You play any sports?

MOSI

No.

VERN

Oh I see.

MARIBEL

See you later, Mr. Roberts! (Mar & MOSI go out.) It's three o'clock! Beatriz will be your Staff-In-Charge. She'll introduce you to the other clients and tell you what to do. My time is up! All too soon! (She leaves with no further ceremony.)

MOSI

Thank you for... (Stops when she realizes Margarit is gone.)

Scene 4. Emergency

HERA

Thanks everyone for coming on short notice. I'll cut to the chase. Corporate CFO Vicki Bromberg is landing at the airport tomorrow at 10:45 AM. Cyn and I will get her settled into her hotel, then I'll take her to lunch. After that, we're going to need an all-hands meeting with her so she can air all her grievances.

It's no accident that Corporate is sending our biggest antagonist. It saves them time and money in the long-term to send the one person least likely to make any concessions that might fulfill our needs, which they see as diametrically opposed to theirs. She heads the Us and Them Committee. Traveling with a well-sharpened axe to cut our dreams down to size. If we let her.

Why is she doing this, you ask?

I'll be frank. It may shock some of you, who are more familiar with the side of me that holds confidence in reserve for reasons of strategy. But we're well past that now. She's coming for battle. Mark my words. Her ultimate aim is to shut us down.

So. (Reading from a paper.) Oswald Deets. You're the new Program Administrator at Salinger?

OSWALD

Yes ma'am. Pleased to meet you.

HERA

(Pause, looking at him. Nods with mild approbation at his reticence.) Likewise. Mina and Paris seem to be impressed with what you're doing over there.

OSWALD

I appreciate their confidence.

HERA

You're the sixth PA we've had in four years at Salinger Center. Did you know that?

OSWALD

I understand you've had trouble finding anyone capable of managing it.

HERA

(Laughs.) Salinger's no Rosco House! But yes, Salinger has its challenges—fifteen clients as opposed to five, older clientele, many non-ambulatory. Am I to understand that we finally found someone who can bring that house in line?

OSWALD

Yes ma'am. I'd like to think so.

HERA

Mina tells me you've been instrumental in helping us reduce expenses over there.

OSWALD

Yes. We cut all agency staff. Just this week, we've eliminated all staff doubles. Plus, no open shifts.

HERA

That's remarkable. I've been here a long time, and that's a first.

OSWALD

We couldn't have done it without the Internationals. We'll be having a Salinger staff meeting tomorrow to iron out any difficulties. I've been looking for other savings, too. We deny them breakfast, since last week. Any staff caught eating breakfast at Salinger will be written up.

HERA

Good. That's very creative. And speaking of the Internationals, how are they doing, Paris?

PARIS

We've been very selective, of course. After years struggling to find anyone to work at our facility for the wages we're able to pay... Having to take every stray and straggler who could manage to show up and punch a time clock. These Internationals are like a breath of fresh air. Our International hires—from Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Zambia—all are thoroughly vetted. They come to us through Christian churches and WHO-affiliated charities. So, they're very well-behaved, God-fearing Christian girls. Plus, they're highly qualified! Even over-qualified, compared to what we've had to put up with here in the past, you might say! They all have undergraduate degrees, some have Masters—in the health field. Because of the huge economic disparities between our country and theirs, all are thrilled to be here in the United States. No grumbling or belly-aching from them!

HERA

How are they performing on the floor, Oswald?

OSWALD

They arrive on time, unlike our local staff. They don't waste time on shift, either. Because of new rules I've implemented, with help from Paris and Mina.

MINA

Oswald has really taken leadership.

OSWALD

Staff breaks are exactly ten minutes—they take timers with them. They have no lunch or dinner break, of course. The Staff-In-Charge keeps a timer too, so they'll know if staff are even 10 seconds late returning from break. They are only to use the break room in the house, no breaks elsewhere, so we always know where they are, in case we need to interrupt for help. And we've had everyone sign sworn agreements that they're never to use their cell phones on shift for any reason. All are to carry pagers to respond immediately to client needs. And walkie-talkies, so the SIC can tell them what to do at a distance.

We've also made headway in the food area, cutting the budget by a projected 31%, eliminating whole meats, buying more canned goods and the cheaper frozen entrees from Sysco. We're increasing the dietary percentage of pastas, breads and grains—basic food triangle nutritional stuff. It's amazing. The clients love it. The new cook has been very cooperative. It makes her job easier: just heat and eat!

MINA

Tell them our new nickname for him.

PARIS

Nickname?

MINA

For your new Salinger PA.

PARIS

(Laughs.) We call him 'The Wizard of Oswald.'

(OSWALD, MINA and PARIS laugh, then look at HERA who is silent. A scarcely visible smile crosses HERA's face.)

HERA

How do they get to work?

OSWALD

Uber, mostly. Some walk. But that takes time away from their night's sleep. Most of them work overnights at least one or two days a week—some three or four, so sleep is at a premium.

HERA

How's their home life, Paris? Are they finding housing?

PARIS

All but the most recent hires have found places to live.

HERA

Not easy in this town. And expenses? Rent, food, so forth? They're making out? We can't bury this under the rug, you know.

PARIS

Of course not. It helps that they're all working six days-a-week. Because of the benefits plan, and the generous \$1/hr increase you gave them, they're really thriving.

HERA

That was mandated by the State of California.

PARIS

Of course.

HERA

(Pause. HERA looks around. A nod.) Well, alright then. I don't know about you. But I feel more confident than I did ten minutes ago. I hope you're feeling it too. We're making the right moves here. Remember that. When Vicki Bromberg sits down, in this room, at this table, tomorrow, just remember, we're doing everything we must do to serve the clients. And we're doing it despite the odds—despite all challenges we're encountering. Don't for a second lose sight of the fact that she is the agent of our difficulties; they arise from the case she has against us.

You're all heroes in my book. Don't forget that. It's not only the line staff we celebrate with our healthcare hero banners. You're the real healthcare heroes! They can't function without you. They're in the trenches. To be effective, they need your wisdom and guidance and discipline. You are the majors and colonels and sergeants—officers in this army. Feel that in your heart tomorrow when you look at the Corporate CFO. She may be dead-set on turning our clients out into the street. But we'll face her down, kindly, respectfully, courageously! Leave the talking to me. You just look her in the eyes and let her know you're proud of everything we're doing here at Wedekind, California. Any questions? Okay then, meeting adjourned.

(HERA motions to OSWALD. Exeunt all others.)

May I speak with you confidentially? (He hesitates, then comes forward.) Someone placed a call from Salinger Center to the US Department of Immigration Tuesday a week ago at 1:14PM. Find out who. By any means necessary. Understand?

OSWALD

Yes ma'am. My pleasure.

Scene 5. Salinger.

Scene 5a. Dining Hall

ZARAYA

What do you want for snack, Bentley? (J. is a very fat man who uses a walker. He's sitting at a tray away from the other clients because of his habit of taking other people's food.)

BENTLEY

Oh... I'll have my Rocky Road ice cream with the chocolate drizzle sauce and candy corns on top. And a Dr. Pepper.

BEATRIZ

Where's the new girl?

ZARAYA

Mosi?

BEATRIZ

Yeah, her.

ZARAYA

She's getting cookies and a Coke for Ruth.

BEATRIZ

I thought I told her to... Mosi!

MOSI

(From the small kitchen.) Yes?

BEATRIZ

Bentley needs a bathroom check. Before snack. He's not allowed to eat while he's soiled.

BENTLEY

Wait. What? Oh God. Here we go. Now I gotta get up and walk all the way back down to the bathroom.

BEATRIZ

You know the rules, Bentley.

BENTLEY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure, rules! Fine. (Muttering.) Anything to make you happy. Do this! Do that! Rules. Oh, the rules. (MOSI leads him away.)

Scene 5b. Staff Office

(AKUA & VELIANE are looking at the assignments. CONNOR JETT is still shouting.)

CONNOR

Turn the light on! Turn the light on! Turn the light on!

AKUA

His shouting too much.

VELIANE

His light?

AKUA

It *is* on. I'm going to shut his door.

VELIANE

We can't.

AKUA

Why not?

VELIANE

New rule from Oswald. He can't remain unobserved.

AKUA

(Looking at Assignments sheet.) What?

VELIANE

What's wrong?

AKUA

Beatriz is making us do everything. Look at this! (Points to task list.) She's not doing anything!

VELIANE

Oh. Yeah. Well. That's just how she is.

AKUA

Is she passing meds?

VELIANE

She isn't certified. Jane is the LVN.

AKUA

She has no shift with Morey. She has no staff-to-client. She isn't working in the kitchen. The only thing she's doing is weighing the clients!

VELIANE

Ask her about it.

AKUA

I did ask her. She said she is SIC and do things I don't even know about. But I am here three months. I know what she does. She's lying. Just to cover up how lazy she is!

VELIANE

I'll take a photo of the task sheet.

AKUA

What good is that?

VELIANE

No good. You better help Mosi. She never had to change Bentley before. Or do you want to watch Morey while I go?

AKUA

I can smell it from here! Poor Mosi.

VELIANE

She has to get used to it, just like we did.

AKUA

I just don't understand how he can sit there in his own poop for hours!

VELIANE

Not just him. Ruth is the same. And Dixie. Connor too.

AKUA

Like babies.

VELIANE

Except these don't grow up.

AKUA

They grow down. (Laughs.)

VELIANE

I think it's what happens from always having someone to care for them all the time. They forget how to care for themselves. They give up responsibility for their own care.

AKUA

I'll help Mosi.

Scene 5c. Dining Room

(In the dining room. MOSI and ZARAYA have finished dinner. They sit, talking and showing each other pictures of their family.)

MOSI

(With cell phone...) Here is a picture of my daughter.

ZARAYA

Oh, she's so beautiful! How old?

MOSI

Four years.

ZARAYA

She is in Kenya?

MOSI

Oh yes. She is with my grandmother there.

ZARAYA

My son too is with my mama! (VELIANE enters.)

VELIANE

Oh, are you showing pictures? Let me see! (MOSI shows a picture of her daughter.)

MOSI

You have children, Veliane?

VELIANE

Yes, two girls. Five and two.

MOSI

Do you have pictures?

VELIANE

Yes, here. (Shows her phone.)

MOSI

So cute!

VELIANE

No one here understands what we have left behind—

BEATRIZ

(Appears suddenly.) What are you doing?

ZARAYA

Finishing our dinner.

BEATRIZ

You have nothing left on your plates.

VELIANE

We were just talking for a minute.

BEATRIZ

Didn't I tell you to clean the small kitchen?

VELIANE

Yes.

BEATRIZ

Then why are you sitting here?

MOSI

We were just having a conversation.

BEATRIZ

Did I ask you? I'm talking to Veliane.

VELIANE

Okay, okay! I will go to clean the small kitchen.

BEATRIZ

And you. Didn't I tell you to clean the big kitchen? It's a total mess!

MOSI

We just served dinner! Is there some way I can clean the serving dishes before it is served?
If so—

BEATRIZ

Now, it's served. So why are you still sitting here? Go clean it!

ZARAYA

I was just going to ask Mosi to help me change Connor. He's soaking wet.

(BEATRIZ looks at Zaraya suspiciously. ZARAYA to BEATRIZ:)

Unless *you* want to help me instead.

BEATRIZ

No, no. Go ahead, Mosi. Is that your name? Go help Zaraya, then come back and do the big kitchen.

(ZARAYA and MOSI walk together, talking quietly. Beatriz follows them.)

MOSI

(Looks over her shoulder and whispers to ZARAYA.) Why is she following us?

BEATRIZ

I heard that. I'm not following you! I have to check meds in the staff office!
(MOSI keeps walking with ZARAYA towards CONNOR's room. BEATRIZ pulls out her phone and drops back for privacy.)

BEATRIZ

(On the phone.) Yolanda I thought you might want to share this moment.

YOLANDA

Why? What's going on?

BEATRIZ

They're headed to Connor's room to change him. The new girl. And Zaraya.

YOLANDA

Oh! The bet! He won't do it. He doesn't always do it. It's getting rare. He hasn't called me that in two weeks.

BEATRIZ

Money? Put money on it.

YOLANDA

Really. Okay, two bucks says he won't say it.

BEATRIZ

Two bucks, raise you three. Five bucks says he full-on screams.

YOLANDA

You're on!

(Beatriz stops and waits behind the door. Silence for a full minute.)

CONNOR

Fuck you. No. Go away. Don't touch me! (Crescendo.) Don't touch me! Don't touch me!

ZARAYA

We need to change you, Connor! You're soaking wet!

CONNOR

You're a nigger. (Screaming now.) You're a nigger! You're a nigger! You're a nigger!

BEATRIZ

(Laughing, walking towards the staff office.) You owe me five bucks.

YOLANDA

Oh! I do! But it was worth it!

CONNOR

You're a nigger! You're a nigger! You're a nigger!

BEATRIZ

Ten! (Bent over double, laughing hysterically. Gasping...) You owe me ten!

Scene 6. Staff.

(The next day. In the Courtyard behind the Administration Building.)

OSWALD

We need everyone to do their progress notes on the clients. Everyday. Understand? I've got a list of people here who in the past week didn't do all of the progress notes. I can read it out if you like. (Pause. Silence.) You know who you are.

MARIBEL

It's really important that everyone does their progress notes, guys. If you don't do your progress notes, we're not able to show our oversight bodies that we are providing client care. It costs us money!

OSWALD

Exactly. If we don't document it, it didn't happen. Clear?

AKUA

(to MOSI) Easy for her to say. Since she assigns them to staff and never does them herself.

OSWALD

Akua? Did you have something to share with the group?

AKUA

No.

OSWALD

Okay. I thought I heard you sharing something.

MOSI

I read all the progress notes last night.

OSWALD

Oh! That's great, Mosi. Good job. Okay, next item.

MOSI

And I have a few questions about them.

OSWALD

Sure. Go ahead, Mosi. Shoot.

MOSI

Why does it say that Joe Sweeney walks and wears a helmet? When he is in a wheelchair.

OSWALD

A few of the progress notes are a minute out of date.

MOSI

But, if I understand, JS has been here almost five years. And was put in a wheelchair four-and-a-half years ago.

(OSWALD is silent. Begins to frown.)

Also, it said Aiden and Bentley are “transitioning to Salinger.” When Bentley arrived four years ago. And Aiden has been here more than seven years. I’m just new, so...

OSWALD

As I say, some of the progress notes are a bit out of date. But we’re getting them updated. The case manager is working on that.

MOSI

I understand from some of the staff that have been here a long time that they have been asking for the progress notes to be updated and have been told that “case manager is updating the progress notes” for more than six years. And she has never updated anything in all that time. I’m just learning my way. Could you explain?

OSWALD

You’d have to ask the case manager.

AKUA

But, meanwhile, how are we supposed to help the clients achieve their goals, when their “goals” were out of date five years ago?

OSWALD

You can answer the progress notes for the clients using current information.

MOSI

So you want us to make up goals for them?

OSWALD

No! Of course not! That’s not your job!

VELIANE

But if it’s not our job, then why do we have to do it?

OSWALD

Look! That's about enough! Okay? On the progress notes. (Shuffling some papers.) Next item... I've heard that people are still eating breakfast. I'm not going to mention any names. Guys. The rule is: no breakfasts. Does anyone *not* understand that?

MOSI

What happens with the leftovers from breakfast? There was a lot of leftovers now in the refrigerator: scrambled eggs, turkey sausage, potatoes. Are those to be used later?

OSWALD

On a Friday, possibly. The weekend staff have to cook. Sometimes they use the leftovers.

AKUA

I work Saturday and Sunday morning. I never saw anyone use leftovers. And clients never ask for it either. And if they did want eggs, someone would scramble them fresh.

VELIANE

Yolanda, the night staff throws it all away.

OSWALD

Now—

MOSI

I'm new here so I don't know. I was hungry this morning. Because I didn't know there was a rule of no breakfast. But why couldn't we eat food that's going to be thrown away?

OSWALD

We are cutting costs.

MOSI

How does it cut costs to throw food away?

OSWALD

Look, a rule is a rule, okay? These meetings are not rule negotiations. If you want to work here, follow the rules. That's all. (Beat.) Also... I heard a report from this shift that someone was using a cell phone on the floor. If I hear of that again, you're going to get written up. And if you get written up twice, you're out of here! Does anyone *not* understand *that*?

(All the staff sit, staring at their hands dejectedly.)

Okay. Good. Finally we have some consensus! That's at least a basis for continuing. Swear to god this meeting's been like being surrounded by a swarm of crows! (Beatriz laughs, then covers.) Beatriz? Something to say?

BEATRIZ

(Stifling a smirk.) No. Nothing.

OSWALD

We want you guys to be happy and we've done everything we can to make you feel at home here at Wedekind. But, really. Enough is enough!

One last thing. And we're not going to adjourn the meeting until this gets resolved. Last week, Tuesday at 1:14 PM someone used the phone at Salinger to call US Immigration. Who did that? (No one answers.) Like I say, we're not leaving until somebody either takes responsibility or reports whoever it was to me confidentially.

BEATRIZ

(Being helpful.) Was it the office phone in the staff corner?

OSWALD

Yes. The office phone in the staff corner.

BEATRIZ

I don't work Tuesday mornings. Maybe Maria saw someone do it. She works then. I can call her if you want.

OSWALD

(Ignores BEATRIZ) Now, I don't know why someone would use the Wedekind phone instead of their own, and I don't know why they'd use it during work hours instead of on their own time... (Pause.) Nobody? C'mon people. Either you used the phone or you didn't! This is not complicated. (Long pause.) Unbelievable. My confidence in this group just went down. Fine. You wanna play hardball? If somebody doesn't fess and say who used that phone, I'm gonna write up every single one of you! That'll be one strike against you. And in this game, two strikes and you're out! Got it? (Setting a timer on his phone.) I'll give y'all five minutes to prove to me somebody here has an honest bone in their body.

MARIBEL

C'mon you guys. Let's cooperate with Oswald. Don't make this difficult.

BEATRIZ

Yeah. If you did it, just say it. It's not the end of the world!

(After two minutes of silence, ZARAYA timidly raises her hand.)

OSWALD

Zaraya! What is it? Wait... You? You called Immigration? (She nods, close to tears.) Okay. Meeting adjourned. Zaraya, stay where you are.

(Exeunt all but OSWALD & ZARAYA He scribbles in a notebook, then tears out the page.)

OSWALD

I need you to come to this administrative meeting at 3:30 today. Stay clocked in, you'll be paid. Then clock out when the meeting ends.

ZARAYA

Where is the meeting?

OSWALD

(Pointing.) Administration. Building right in front of us. Let yourself in, and go to the main conference room. Today. Three-thirty. Understand?

ZARAYA

(Nods.) Yes.

Scene 7. Rosco.

(GRAYSON, a client, sits at a table across from the kitchen. KAYLA waits. ESI and KUMBARE enter.)

KAYLA

Hi Esi. Did I get that right?

ESI

That's right. Hi Kayla.

KAYLA

Welcome to Roscotown! Hey Kumbare. Yeah. Last shift was pretty hard. Chija still refuses to take his meds. Bryce was one-on-one today. He said it was one of his hardest days.

KUMBARE

I never ask you. How did he get that name Chija?

KAYLA

There was a time, a few years ago, around when I first started. It was one of Chija's brief "good periods." I mean, he actually seemed to be making progress. As you know, he's totally nonverbal. But there were a few weeks there where he was pointing to himself and saying something that sounded like Chija. So it caught on as a nickname. It makes all of us feel like things are getting better. He still likes it better when you call him Chija. His real name seems to make him angry.

KUMBARE

Chija. I've been calling him Charles all this time. I didn't mean to interrupt.

KAYLA

Oh! Well, right. Anyhow. The goods times are over. Now, Chija's just being very aggressive. So Bryce is going to be happy to see you! Good news: Chija's loving going outside and walking or running. So if you're up for some exercise, Esi, today's a good day for it! You're one-on-one with Chija, right?

ESI

Yes. It's only my second time.

KAYLA

Has someone briefed you?

ESI

Anything you tell me might help. I'm feeling nervous.

KAYLA

Okay, let's start at the beginning. Chija's at the extreme low end of the autism spectrum. Or, according to the new DSM, near the black middle of the "autism flower." He has every negative effect of autism, except a lack of physical skills. Meaning, he runs kicks and punches very effectively! He isn't using his ipad to communicate at all these days. His testosterone is raging. Twice a day, he masturbates in the hallway. Don't let it freak you out. You just have to get used to it.

ESI

Oh, dear God.

KAYLA

No one told you?

ESI

No.

KAYLA

A staff that used to work here let him do it. Now he throws a fit if you try to stop him, he'll actually run after you from the playroom, halfway down the hall, you know it? Takes off his pants. Et cetera.

KUMBARE

I should have told you, Esi. It's another...habit.

KAYLA

Today, he refused his meds—threw them on the floor. Try again this afternoon, though, Kumbare, okay?

KUMBARE

Oh, yes. Yes.

KAYLA

You'll be fine. I mean if he starts getting aggressive, just take him outside. We've been trying to tire him out so he'll take a nap. But so far, no dice. You're SIC now, Kumbari, right?

KUMBARE

Yes.

KAYLA

And you've been with Chija a good bit, yeah?

KUMBARE

I was his one-on-one my first month. He was okay with me. I think he trusts me. Depends on the day.

KAYLA

Between the two of you, you should have no problem. As for the other clients, everyone is fine. Pete needs his catheter drained soon. So just keep an eye on the levels. Maxwell's in his room with the TV on, as always. Keep the cupboards locked so Paul doesn't steal people's food. Grayson is just making art, right Grayson?

GRAYSON

What?

KAYLA

You're busy being an artist?

GRAYSON

Yep. Wanna see?

KAYLA

Yes, I'd love to see your work! (CHIJA enters.) Oh, hi Chija! Where's Bryce? Hey Bryce! You there? I hope he didn't leave already. Esi, I don't see Bryce. Do you mind coming over here and starting with Chija? Chija, this is Esi. She's going to help you today.

ESI

(With obvious reluctance.) Okay. (Before she arrives, CHIJA makes a sudden dash towards GRAYSON.)

KAYLA

Chija! Stop! (CHIJA runs, crashes into Grayson, knocking him over in the chair. They hit the floor with a loud crack!) Get the lead blanket!

ESI

Where is it?

(KAYLA Hurries over to the pile on the floor.)

I don't know! Maybe in his room. (Esi goes out.) Chija, get off Grayson! Grayson, are you okay? Can you get out? Jesus we're going to have to inform the police.

GRAYSON

My arm hurts.

KAYLA

Can you get out? God, I hope you didn't break any bones!

KUMBARE

Do you want me to call the police?

KAYLA

Hold on, let me get Grayson out of here and make sure he's okay. (Grayson finally crawls out.) You're okay? Nothing broken?

GRAYSON

I think I'm okay. You know what? I think Chija wants my necklace. He doesn't mean to hurt me. Probably because he can't talk. This is the only way he knows how to ask for it. I'll give it to him.

KAYLA

Grayson, you are such an angel! I'm not sure that will help, though! (Esi comes in with the lead blanket and throws it over CHIJA, who stays down on the floor. Grayson takes off the necklace.)

ESI

Bryce is not there. I think he left.

KAYLA

God, that's so irresponsible. He's not usually like that.

GRAYSON

(Holds the necklace out to CHIJA.) Is this what you were wanting, Chija? Here. A truce. My peace offering. Take it.

KAYLA

Are you sure you want to... (CHIJA takes the necklace, still lying on the floor.) Well, I guess it's too late now.

KUMBARE

Do you want me to call the police? Client on client contact...

KAYLA

You're right, Kumbare. I know we're supposed to. But this happens so often. Third time this week that Chija has attacked Grayson. The police don't do anything, anyway. They see Chija has autism and want nothing to do with him. I mean, he's worse than usual, of course. But, just say it happened on my shift. I'll do the declaration. (Examining the chair.) He broke this chair! Look Grayson?

GRAYSON

Really? Wow.

KAYLA

Look! I heard that loud crack—it was the chair! Grayson, I need to do a body check on you, make sure you're not broken! Okay, buddy?

(ESI and KUMBARE remain standing, looking from CHIJA lying supine on the floor, to each other apprehensively. He's looking with great interest at the necklace that GRAYSON gave him. Suddenly, he hurls it at the two women. It hits the wall behind them. The metal bends and the plastic inside it shatters. It leaves a dent in the wall.)

ESI

(Little shriek.) Kumbare, can you help? I feel afraid.

KUMBARE

He's worse than I've ever seen him.

ESI

It's only 3:15. Seven hours, forty-five minutes left.

KUMBARE

Don't worry. I'll help you.

ESI

I'm scared.

KUMBARE

I know. Try not to be. He can sense it. Somehow makes him worse, I think. Like an animal.

KAYLA

(Returns, smiling.) Grayson is okay, thank god. Well, okay you guys. You know if you need anything, you can call over to Hanley House. Felix is over there. He probably knows Chija better than anyone else besides his parents. Good luck, you two. I'm really sorry to leave you this way.

KUMBARE

We'll be okay. Esi's a little nervous. That's all.

KAYLA

Look, I'll help you get Chija up and back in his room. Or wherever he's headed next. Hey Chija! Wanna take a shower? Wanna get up from the floor and take a shower? (She helps lift off the lead blanket.) C'mon, let's go take a shower, okay? C'mon, buddy. (CHIJA gets up suddenly. He seems to do everything suddenly. He walks briskly back to his room,

undresses and gets in the shower.) Okay, Esi. Hopefully that helps calm him down a bit. See if he'll take his PRNs at four. (Kumbari nods.) See you guys. (Exits.)

(Clock on the wall reads 4:00)

KUMBARE

Esi, is Chija out of the shower yet? Esi! (From the direction of Esi, in CHIJA's room down the hall, Kumbari hears a shriek.) Esi?! Are you okay! Oh, no! (She runs towards CHIJA's room. She sees ESI lying on the floor and CHIJA running towards her. He crashes into KUMBARI and knocks her over. He falls, she gets up fast.) Stay down! Chija? Stay down! (She lies on top of him.) Calm down! Okay, just calm down. (Pause.) Esi? Are you okay? I've got him pinned down here. At least for now.

ESI

(Whimpering.) Yeah. He pull my hair really hard, then knock me down. My knee hurt. My head hit the shower tile.

KUMBARE

Maybe Felix can come over from Hanley.

ESI

Tell the EOD. I want to go home. I'm not staying. Too much for me! (She begins to cry.) I don't even know why I come here!

KUMBARE

To Rosco Villa? They assign you here, right?

ESI

No! United States of America!

KUMBARE

Chija, I'm going to get up. I want you to stay down on the ground for a minute, okay? Understand? Stay down. (She stands. Touching her phone.) Yes, EOD? Kumbari, SIC Rosco Villa. Yes, you want me to use the SIC phone. Forget about that. This is real life. We have an emergency. Charles knock Esi down in the shower. She hit her head. She can't stay—needs to go home. So I need a one-on-one for Charles. Send someone to be one-on-one for him. You understand me? He attack Grayson, break a chair. Esi he knock her head in the bathroom wall. He knock me over too. I have to pass meds. Not yet with Charles. I'm going to try. But please, just assure me you're going to send someone. You try? That's all? You try? This dangerous situation, understand me! Staff is already hurt, and she may need to see a doctor. Okay. Thank you. Thank you. (She dials again. CHIJA starts getting up.) Chija, you stay down one minute more. (To the phone.) Felix? This Kumbari at Rosco. Felix. Problems here with Chija. Aggressing on everyone. Hitting us, knocking us down. Esi needs to go home with head injury. Can you come over? Till they send a one-on-one for

Chija. Please? Only one staff at Hanley? I see. I want you to come over anyway. Can you, anyway? Oh God. Thank you. Thank you for coming over. In ten minutes? Okay, fine. Dear God, thank you. (Hangs up.) Okay, Chija. Now let's go get your meds. Then you can have some dinner, okay? Let's get your meds. Esi, can you come with me?

(ESI is rubbing her head, feeling the size of the knot, wincing, tears still in her eyes.)

ESI

Yes, I am coming. I don't want to leave you here alone with this problem.

KUMBARE

Felix is coming. Don't worry. Just stay ten minutes. I hope he comes. Soon. The SIC is not sending anyone. If I know them, they won't. They won't do it. Why I always have it in my head that everyone sits back and waiting for the Internationals to take care of all problems?

ESI

Because it's true. That's why it in your head. I hate it here.

KUMBARE

PTSD.

ESI

Yes!

KUMBARE

Be brave, Esi. We are stronger than our struggle.

ESI

(Tears.) I'm not. Not right now.

KUMBARE

Not right now. You will be soon. A good sleep.

ESI

That's what I need. Lord, I am tired!

KUMBARE

Not everyone. Kayla's strong. Felix too. They're good people. A few others.

ESI

But so many...not.

KUMBARE

So many just want to sit in nice offices and...

ESI

Let us do it! That's what they want! They want us to do it.

(They've arrive at the med station. KUMBARE has CHIJA's meds ready to go.)

KUMBARE

Here Chija. Take your meds. Take them now. Take them!

(CHIJA takes the cup, looking at KUMBARE straight in the eyes and he drops the med cup on the floor. Then, he lets loose a roar of such raw ferocity that both KUMBARE and ESI jump backwards. He grabs KUMBARE's shirt at her collar bones and suddenly drops to the floor, with all his weight. Her shirt tears off. She screams. In a flash, CHIJA jumps up and begins to chase ESI, who runs outside. CHIJA catches her and with a backhand swipe, knocking her to the ground. He keeps on running. KUMBARE calls 9-1-1.)

OPERATOR

Emergency operator. What is your location?

KUMBARE

Six-Nine-One Carra-Willow Way. Wedekind Advanced Human Behavior.

OPERATOR

Okay. And what's happening?

KUMBARE

One of the clients here, refusing to take his meds. He assaulted three people in one hour. My colleague, she needs medical attention.

OPERATOR

Okay. And where is the client now?

(KUMBARE exits the building. Walks outside, finds ESI crumpled up, crying.)

KUMBARE

He ran outside. In Wedekind campus. Past the university. I don't know where he is exactly. He is a danger to himself and to anyone else he encounters. We don't have enough staff to control him.

OPERATOR

Okay. And what about your colleague? Did she suffer injuries?

KUMBARE

Yes, a head injury. She's here. Hold on. Esi, are you okay?

OPERATOR

Is she conscious?

KUMBARE

Yes, she appears to be conscious. Can you hear me, Esi?

ESI

Yes. He knocked me down.

KUMBARE

I know. I have emergency on the line. We're getting medical attention for you. How do you feel right now?

ESI

I want to sleep.

KUMBARE

Yes, she says she wants to sleep.

OPERATOR

Can someone drive her to the emergency room? Or does she need an ambulance?

KUMBARE

She doesn't have a car. And I don't have a car. We are International staff and do not have these things. She need medical attention. But I do not know who can take her to the hospital.

OPERATOR

Is she at the same location? Six-Nine-One Carra-Willow Way?

KUMBARE

Yes, that's right.

OPERATOR

Okay. Stay with her, we'll send a response team.

KUMBARE

Thank you. Thank you! (She hangs up. Siren in the distance.) Come on, Esi, let's get you inside. Then, if I can find a shirt, I'll go find Chija.

ESI

I don't want to wait inside. I'm afraid he'll come back.

KUMBARE

You could wait in front of Salinger. Let them take you to the hospital.

ESI

What if they charge me for the ride? It could bankrupt me. I read about that. If you want medical care, they take all my money ten times.

Scene 8. Investigation.

(In the Administration Conference Room.)

HERA

Thank you for joining us. (ZARAYA looks at her, barely nods.) Well. No sense beating around the bush. Do you know why you're here?

ZARAYA

No.

HERA

Oswald tells me that you are the one who called Immigration. Is that true?

ZARAYA

I don't know what you mean that "I'm the one."

HERA

Are you denying that you called Immigration?

ZARAYA

I'm not denying anything.

HERA

Did you or did you not call the United States Office of Immigration?

ZARAYA

(Long pause.) Yes, I call them.

HERA

(Looks at Vicki Bromberg.) There! You see? We found the one who is the cause of all this! You have no idea how much trouble you have caused this organization!

ZARAYA

(Beginning to break.) I don't know what you mean.

HERA

You see this lady here? (Points to Vicki.) Do you know who she is?

ZARAYA

No.

HERA

She is the Chief Financial Officer of Wedekind Healthcare, Inc. She flew out here from the corporate office in Maryland just because you got it into your head to call the United States Department of Immigration and say whatever you had in your head to say to them. Are you starting to get the idea?

ZARAYA

No. I don't know what you're talking about. What is the problem?

HERA

The problem? The problem is that your little phone call has prompted an investigation! And this investigation not only jeopardizes your job here at Wedekind, it jeopardizes our entire organization!

ZARAYA

I don't know about any investigation.

HERA

You and I are going to get to the bottom of this. If we have to stay here all day. So don't think that by denying everything I'm just going to let you walk out of the door here. And if you do walk out, you will not have a job when you come back!

(ZARAYA stares at her hands.)

HERA

What did you tell Immigration?

ZARAYA

Nothing.

HERA

What do you mean, "nothing"?

ZARAYA

(Scarcely audible.) I didn't tell them anything.

HERA

Then why did you call them if you didn't have anything to say?

ZARAYA

Because...

HERA

Because what!?

ZARAYA

They asked me to.

HERA

Liar! She's lying. They don't even know who you are. You're just a number to them. They don't randomly ask people to call them to report on their employers! The whole idea is preposterous!

(After this speech of HERA's, ZARAYA transforms from near tears in cowed silence, to indignation, then to rage. Very slowly she stands, her whole body trembling, and reaches into her purse and walks toward HERA. Everyone in the room sits in stunned silence, trying to imagine what she is about to do. When she arrives at HERA's chair at the end of the conference table, she takes a letter out of her purse and slams it on the table.)

ZARAYA

There. There's the letter. On that paper, they say there was a problem with my work visa and would I please call to them. So, I call to them at their eight-hundred number. They ask me to confirm my employer and to ask for my job title and ask me to confirm my date of birth and ask me my home country and the address of my house. Then, we hang up the phone. (To Vicki.) If that cause you all this trouble to fly out here, then I'm afraid you have wasted your time.

It wasn't my idea to come to this meeting. And I did not intend to say anything other than to answer your questions. Now that is done. But since you called, and treat me with disrespect and call me a liar, then I have a few things to say to you.

(Beat.)

You are the liars! In your advertisement for this great job in America, you said this was a professional job. I bring all my professional work clothes to work in an office. And do you know I have never once worn these clothes since I arrive? Why? Why never once wear them? Because the first day working, I see I cannot wear them, or I am going to get people shit on them. And I don't like having shit on my professional clothing.

Now I do not enjoy to talk like this. But I feel rage inside me, enough rage to tell you the truth—even the ugly truth you don't want to hear because it smell like a toilet.

Tell me. Why have I never seen any of you in Salinger Center? Never once. I ask the staff from three, four years. They never see you either! You work in this building fifty feet away—yet in a whole year of working six days a week, I have never once seen you set foot in Salinger or in Rosco or Hanley. Why is that? How do you think you can manage care of the client if you never see what care they receive? You sit over here giving out awards for Servant Leadership to lazy tyrants; and you punish people who stand up against their

tyranny. You make rules based on rumors you hear. You run this institution by rumors. And rumors are control by gossip. What you don't seem to understand is that gossip is just lies told to protect people who tell them from everything they fear.

Do you know that no one—not one International person, I mean those of us from Africa and Jamaica—not one of us has told our family what we do here? Do you know why we do not tell our family and friends about our great professional job here in America? That we are supposed to be so proud and happy to have? That you were so kind to give us? Because we are ashamed of what we do. *Ashamed*. This work is the lowest and meanest job, a job none of us would ever consent to do in our own country. You never told us what the work would be. Not in your ad, not in the three weeks of training. Never. One. Word. Not till we come to the floor to work. When it is too late. Contract already sign—three years given over. Then we see, all our professional degrees and bachelors and master's degrees was for wiping ass. That's what you think. That because we are black people that you can lie to us, trick us into coming here to wipe ass of the clients. Because you cannot find white people or Mexicans to do it for you. You come to Africa and the West Indies, just like before in the slave trade.

And then, to be screamed at to be called a nigger. Yes, that just happened today, not two hours ago. Don't look so shocked. Connor Jett said it and maybe he can't help himself. But he is not the only one. Oh no. I see this "N" word every day I work here. I see it in the eyes of hate I get from the racist people on your staff. The same people who assign the Internationals all the worst jobs while they sit and do nothing. Or the night staff person who steals our belongings and throw all the food away that we are hungry to eat. She even steal our keys to the building and throw them away. So that she will have the only key on the night shift. She know that no one will defend us or help us protect our belongings. This is the situation you have deceived us into agreeing to. To live like this. It's time someone told you—because it is clear from the look on your face that you do not know.

Why do I take Uber? Why do I give away more than hour of work every day to take Uber? Because I am afraid. A black woman cannot walk down the street at night here. I cannot ride a bike. Because I am afraid! Not only criminals I am afraid—of police too! I more afraid of police, because what they can do to me is worse. And who will protect me?

(Beat.)

You? No. You leave at 5PM so you can eat dinner at home. I cannot leave until 11PM! Or 7AM if I work overnight.

Why do I work here? I ask myself a hundred times a day. Why did I leave my son, only three years old, with my mother to come here? Why should I continue to come to work at a place that has tricked me out of three years of my son's life... and for what? I do not save any money. Every dollar I earn goes to rent and food and to take the Uber. Even

though I work six days a week. And two overnight shifts with double-shifts. No money saved. Yes, your currency is strong. But it doesn't matter because the costs are just as high, or higher. Do you know the value of a Jamaican dollar? One Jamaican dollar equals half of a penny US. This is your big trick on the world, the big lie that you enforce with your weapons. Yes. The money is fake, but the guns will kill you. This you must prove, over and over.

So why do I come to work? If no pride is in it. And no money is in it. Why? Is it because I accept to be tricked by you? Is it because I am afraid of your rules? Is it because I am afraid of your guns?

No. It is because I am a Christian woman. Christ serve the people. In the same way. He minister to the poor, the sick, the lame, to the lowest of the low. He is my role model. I do not say this to stimulate positive regard from you. I do not care for your regard. Only God's judgment carries weight for me. As a necessity, I keep up friendly relations. But in this moment, I do not *care* what *you* think of me. That is all I have to say.

(A long uncomfortable silence. HERA still stares at the paper.)

VICKI

(Slowly stands up.) On behalf of Wedekind Advanced Human Behavior, Inc. I thank you, Zaraya. You have answered all the questions I came here to ask and you have confirmed all of my doubts and fears about the California branch of this organization and the brilliant idea to bring International workers here. The only thing you said with which I take issue: I do not think my trip out here is a waste. Indeed, I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears what is going on. For that I—

(Just outside the door, the signature scream of CHIJA is heard, galvanizing the room in fear. The door bursts open. CHIJA enters and walks straight towards Vicki Bromberg. She turns around to face him to try to protect herself. He raises his fists and brings them down on her collar bones. There is a loud "snap." Vicki screams and falls on the floor. CHIJA jumps on top of her and buries his face in her neck, then yanks up a bloody hunk of Vicki's flesh clenched between his teeth. Vicki faints from shock. The next second, the police and medics come in, responding to KUMBARE's earlier call. During the assault, the police grab CHIJA and cuff him.)

HERA

(Shouting to the police.) What are you doing? Take off those handcuffs! He's a client here! What are you doing? This young man is a Wedekind client! He has autism!

OFFICER

Ma'am, calm down please. We're just trying to protect everyone here until this all gets sorted. We have a report of assault, and we have just witnessed another. Are you the one in charge here?

HERA

Yes, I'm the Executive Director.

OFFICER

May I ask you a few questions?

HERA

Yes. Of course. (They speak in low tones while VICKI is placed on the stretcher. As they begin to wheel her out, VICKI struggles against the restraining straps and yells with all her remaining strength. Her voice is raspy, her breathing an audible wheeze.)

VICKI

Hera Gay, mark my words! I am going to shut you down! I will not stop until Wedekind, California is closed. Permanently! Do you hear me? (The medics try to get her to lie down as they wheel her out.) Do you hear me?

HERA

I hear you just fine, Vicki Bromberg! You shut us down, and I swear, I will send every Wedekind client to the doorstep of your fine Maryland home! And I will expect you to give them all a place to live!

(They exit. Police take CHIJA, in handcuffs, outside too.)

Scene 9. Parting.

(ZARAYA sits in front of Salinger Center with AKUA and VELIANE. KENDRICK is eating a sandwich and drinking juice.)

AKUA

We wanted to have a party for you!

ZARAYA

I'm not supposed to be here.

VELIANE

We heard you were banned from campus. Is that true?

ZARAYA

Yes, it is true. That's why I waited till the admin go home.

VELIANE

What reason did they give?

ZARAYA

They said I was disrespectful to the Executive staff. It is the same reason they never come inside Salinger or Rosco.

VELIANE

Why? What reason?

ZARAYA

They are allergic to the truth. (They laugh.) It's worse than Covid. And there's no vaccination against it. Just quarantine.

AKUA

That's why they're sending you home?

ZARAYA

A quarantine against the truth. They don't want me to start a pandemic. (They laugh.)

AKUA

What are you going to do?

ZARAYA

I'm going home! To see my son! And all my family and friends. And, I'm going to get my Master's degree. You don't have to worry about me.

VELIANE

You're so lucky!

ZARAYA

You can do it too! Just tell them that making you take your break on site was ruled illegal by the California Supreme Court! Or tell them you know they are paying the Staff In Charge not \$1 per hour more, but only fifteen cents an hour more and stealing the other eighty-five. You will get a free pass back home too!

AKUA

I heard that Wedekind, California was going to shut down.

ZARAYA

Maybe. They have financial problems. And now, some enemies. Don't look at me! I'm not their enemy! No, it's the lady from corporate, Vicki! She is their enemy!

VELIANE

Did you hear Charles Ransem got transferred? To a facility for violent people. Lockdown.

ZARAYA

Thank God for that. Whatever happened to Esi?

AKUA

She's on disability leave to recover from a concussion.

VELIANE

I heard they are closing Rosco house.

ZARAYA

Really?

VELIANE

Yes. Grayson is moving off campus, to get him away from that Charles person. And the others are going to Hanley.

ZARAYA

It will be boarded up like all the other buildings here. My Uber is here. Goodbye sisters! May your path cover with rose petals.

VELIANE

Not client diapers!

(They laugh.)

AKUA

Kendrick's finished lunch. We better go! Before the Beatriz yells.

VELIANE

She will yell anyway. Wait, Zaraya! Mosi's here. She want to say goodbye!

MOSI

I hardly know you, but I miss you already. (She sings.)

Safari eh, howa safari ya bamba ni machero

Oh safari ya bamba ni machero.

Hokambe, homze,

Hokambe, homze.

(They hug.)

ZARAYA

Thank you, Mosi. Goodbye beautiful women! Stay strong!

AKUA

Put me in your bag, Zaraya! I want to go home!

ZARAYA

You won't be home in Ghana, but Jamaica!

AKUA

I love Jamaica! I have never been there! Put me in your bag, and I'll live with you! (They laugh.)

(The End.)