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## **Abort Mission: An Audio Drama**

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ABORT MISSION:  
AN AUDIO  
DRAMA

A Thesis  
by  
MARIBEL SALOMÈ SANCHEZ

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major Subject: Creative Writing

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2023



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AN AUDIO  
DRAMA  
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MARIBEL SALOMÈ SANCHEZ

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May 2023



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## ABSTRACT

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The culmination of the audio drama and its critical introduction focuses on the current political climate regarding abortion rights, media manipulation, and governmental control as well as Latinx representation in art and media. The script follows two sisters on their mission to create an undetected, underground abortion service in a quickly evolving American dystopia.

Inspired by multiple works of both screenplays, audio dramas, and novels, my work is meant to inspire radical change to minorities in a world where hope is quickly fading.





## DEDICATION

To Mrs. Bulhuis, who will be shocked to discover that a fourth-grade award for “Best Author of the Class” would inspire me to pursue a degree in writing. The world needs more teachers like you.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Words cannot express how grateful I am to my professor and chair of my committee, Dr. Haraway. Not only for his patience, support, and feedback during my Thesis, but for the knowledge I gained by taking his Fiction Workshop. It was through this workshop that I gained an understanding of how to develop the story that would later become my thesis. I am also very grateful to Dr. Carren, my committee member, who was eager and willing to delve into the art of writing scripts for audio dramas during my Scriptwriting Workshop. Without him, this thesis would not exist as it is. Last, but not least, I am grateful to Dr. McMahon, who's Gender and Literature course helped me rediscover my culture and heritage through the words of Gloria Anzaldua. Without this class, my characters would continue to exist in a white man's world instead of quickly challenging and breaking the glass ceiling as Anzaldua would want.

I am grateful to my parents, who have shown me nothing but love and support – from the day they saw a pink line on their pregnancy test to the day I saw my own, and the years that followed. Their patience has guided me, their kindness has shielded me, and their love has fed me.

And, finally, my son, Nicholas, who's entire existence gives me purpose and who's happiness gives me fulfilment. I hope to give you a world full of inspiration, whether by seeing me rise each time I fall or through the stories that I write. Everything that I do is for you.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*Abort Mission* is a fictional audio drama that is set in our present dystopia, a world without the protection of *Roe v. Wade*; a world that brazenly subjugates its women and people of color; a world that prays for life and in the same breath demands it be taken away. The story follows two sisters, Clara and Avery Mendez, as they launch a revolutionary underground abortion network, risking their lives for the greater good of humanity, while finding hope in unlikely allies.

When I first began writing the script for *Abort Mission* and would discuss the plot with friends, most were quick to tell me that the overturning of *Roe v Wade* was impossible. It was declared constitutional and therefore, no matter how much the Trump administration tried, it could not be undone. Yet, on June 24, 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. While we already lived in a nation that allowed states to implement their own abortion bans, after the decision more states joined in keeping women pregnant when they didn't want to be. Unlike the fictional *Abort Mission*, where the overturning of *Roe v Wade* immediately affected every state in the nation, in real-life America today there are still safe haven states that protect a woman's right to abortion. Given the alternative, I consider this lucky.

The idea of an underground abortion service is not new. In fact, the fictional underground abortion network of *Abort Mission* had a real-world counterpart, as documented in the nonfiction



book *The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service*. In the early 1970's, before the *Roe v. Wade* decision made abortion legal throughout the country, a brave group of women created "Jane", an Abortion Counseling Service of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union. Jane provided anonymity to women who required abortion counseling and services, referring them to carefully vetted doctors. Eventually, these women learned how to perform the abortion services themselves. One woman, by accident, became the head of the Jane operation. Heather Booth was a student and a civil rights activist that was living in Chicago when she helped an acquaintance find an abortionist. Aside from her knowledge of where to go and what to look for, Booth could not have planned out an underground abortion network on her own.

*Abort Mission* aims to demonstrate that with drive and determination one can become a multitude, an idea can become a revolution, and hope is not lost. The only thing the government has successfully done in the reversal of *Roe v Wade* is ban the practice of *safe* abortions, but abortions themselves will never disappear. *Abort Mission* is the manual for revolution in reproductive justice.

### **Abortion in the Wake of Trump**

"It didn't take much imagination to produce a dystopian America where women were treated unfairly because it was grabbing from a world that already exists" (xvii).

-Amalia Ortiz, *The Cancion Cannibal Cabaret*

Although the plot of *Abort Mission* existed in my mind for quite some time, I was terrified of putting it onto paper because it felt as if that would bring it to life, as if continuously writing and thinking about it would somehow manifest the plot into reality and I would be the

cause of its design. But as writers tend to do when there is an itch they can't scratch, a plot they can't write, my sleep suffered, my work suffered, and I suffered. When I began writing the script, it came easily. Yes, it involved laborious research that sent me down various rabbit holes, but when I came up for air, I felt revived.

My idea for a drama centered around an underground abortion clinic was conceived the day Trump was elected as the 45th President of the United States in 2016. Around the nation, people wept as some understood this to be a pivotal moment for progress to be pushed back. It took years for women to find their voice and when *Roe v Wade* was ruled to be constitutional in 1973, its symbol rang loud in the hearts of many. We knew, however, that the fight was not over as others would continue to challenge the decision for years to come.

In 2017, *The Handmaid's Tale* aired on television. Originally written as a novel in 1985 by Margaret Atwood, the television series is set in a fictional country called the Republic of Gilead, a patriarchal and totalitarian government that has overthrown the United States government. Gilead treats its women like livestock, using religion and a dying ecosystem to justify their actions, and subjects them to servitude- both sexual and nonsexual. Anyone caught rebelling, escaping, or refusing to conform, is either executed or exiled, to serve among a radioactive wasteland known as The Colonies where they will eventually die a painful death. Others are placed as Handmaid's- fertile women meant to supply Gilead with more children to the homes of husbands and wives deemed worthy to raise them. Gilead also persecutes doctors that had performed abortions, past and present, by hanging them and stringing them along a wall for everyone to see- a tactic used, not only to keep citizens of Gilead in line, but to satiate the citizens that justify it.

In 1998, a website called the ‘Nuremberg Files’ “carried the names, addresses and pictures of US physicians who perform abortions” and “carried documents speaking of the ‘justifiable homicide’ of doctors who performed abortions who had been murdered”. While the individuals “responsible for the website were found guilty of illegal threats of violence” and the website was removed, the fact of the matter is that there are individuals, then and now, that believe in “an eye for an eye” (*Opposition to Anti-Abortion Terrorism: USA*, p. 166) In 2009, Dr. George Tiller was murdered for performing abortions in Wichita, Kansas. “His murder adds to a 30-year history of violence” (Jacobson and Royer, p. 189) performed by anti-abortion activists who have committed over 300 attacks at abortion facilities and abortion providers in the United States. These groups terrorize lives while chanting that they want to save them. Hate motivated groups, extremist groups, “pro-life” groups, have only increased since the late 20th century and don’t seem to be stopping any time soon. *Abort Mission* explores these terrifying irrational, hypocritical, and extremist ideas that pose a real-life threat in our society.

Approximately one year after Trump stepped into office, people would dress in handmaid’s attire, fully cloaked in red with white bonnets to shield their faces, and sit quietly in the halls of the Texas State Capitol when Senate Bill 415 would “ban any safe and common operations for abortions in the second trimester” and Senate Bill 25, “would allow doctors to lie to pregnant women considering an abortion if they detect any anomalies” (Slate, 2017). The message was clear: *this, a world of Handmaids, is where we’re headed.*

In March of 2019, the Trump-Pence administration imposed a domestic “gag rule” that prohibited health centers from receiving Title X funding, which was a federal program that offered family planning services, so sexual and reproductive health care (but not abortions), for low-income patients. By restricting health care providers to *provide health care needs*, such as

referring patients to abortion care providers, this rule also had devastating effects on what organizations like Planned Parenthood could provide to patients, like birth control and mammograms. Title X was a program that was responsible for the decline in unintended pregnancies, what purpose would the government have in taking that away? *Abort Mission* explores the idea of a world free of contraceptives and the devastating effects that it can have on a community.

Throughout those four years, reactionary politicians would continue their crusade to reverse reproductive right cases, like *Roe v Wade* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, in attempts to display power and dominance, while twisting religion and morality to fit their narrative. People who once broke bread together would find themselves at war as a nation divided between two colors: white and everyone else, in an already divided nation between man and woman. Unfortunately, simply moving one chess piece in the game of government was enough and the United States would soon witness a drastic movement in conservative politics.

In March of 2023, Texas State Representative Steve Toth introduced House Bill (HB) 2690, which would not only aim to “prevent the sale and distribution of abortion pills like Mifepristone and misoprostol” but also “[restrict] access to certain information online” to “prevent people from learning about abortion drugs” (Pinsof, 2023). HB 2690 labels itself as “the Women and Child Safety Act” which is laughable given what follows it. According to HB 2690, “abortion is a murderous act of violence” but offers no perspective to the person enduring an unwanted pregnancy, who could potentially die on the birthing table themselves. Where’s the safety in that? The bill then mentions that “so-called abortion funds” have aided and abetted in the illegal activity of abortions, “exposing themselves and each of their donors to felony criminal prosecutions” and suggesting that these donors be prosecuted.

*Ex post facto* is Latin for “from a thing done afterward” and is “used to refer to a criminal statute that punishes actions retroactively, thereby criminalizing conduct that was legal when originally performed” (Cornell). The United States Constitution prohibits *ex post facto* laws under two different clauses; however, Toth’s Bill is a carefully constructed maneuver around it. Abortion fund donors would be hit with criminal liability for the brochures they’ve made, the information they’ve provided, and the funds they’ve given regarding abortion. The introduction of this bill could open the gates for bills further down the line that would criminalize past abortions, somehow negating the *ex post facto* laws that protect us. *Abort Mission* explores this very real possibility and the consequences of implementing bills that diminish our protection.

I’m terrified. I’m terrified of what my son and his friends, my friends and their daughters, and everyone that follows, will have to endure because of weak men beating down tired women of a tired society. Will my son pay for my crimes? Will the daughters of my friends pay for theirs?

Now, when I consider what this country is capable of, I don’t underestimate it. There are individuals out there that believe that a person that has committed abortion has committed murder and therefore deserves the death penalty (it’s only logical, of course). If writing this drama has taught me anything, it is that no voice is too small- and that can be for both sides of the equation. For every voice on one side, there is another one that will match it in pitch, tone, and promise. It may seem ridiculous to think that live and mandatory executions would one day become normal, but it also seemed ridiculous to think, at one point, that a man with no political experience could become president, or that something written as constitutional could be scratched out.

## Revolution(ary Media)

Like Amalia Ortiz's *Cancion Cannibal Cabaret*, I wanted something that was different, that was "loud, flashy, and obvious" (vii), something new in a modern medium. Audio dramas, in comparison to television or cinematography which are "the presentation of life solely for the eye", provide something more through the "[exclusive] audible art of acoustic drama, the presentation of life solely for the ear" (Balazs, pp. 47). And unlike audiobooks that merely *tell* a story, audio dramas provide the listener an opportunity to *experience* the story. They allow you to turn off one sense and heighten the other as you listen to the roars of the ocean, birds fluttering and chirping amongst each other, the sounds of reverberating footsteps off the walls of an empty church, and the trickle of water as it drops into the drain of a sink, giving you a full audible experience. And, you have the option of being productive while doing it. Without the distraction of television and reading, which requires visual attention, audio dramas allow your creative mind to thrive. "The listener's imagination completes the acoustic input to construct places and settings in the storyline," (Wissmann, pp. 803) because our brains automatically link the sounds we hear with associated schemas, giving us a subjective experience of the story.

In the wake of COVID-19, many media and entertainment businesses came to a screeching halt and a long-term hiatus. Herbert reports, that "office buildings emptied, universities sent students home, and virtually all spaces where groups of people congregate closed- including nearly all of the country's movie theaters" (p. 221). Unsure of their future employment, actors and actresses had to consider alternative methods of income. Now, if you listen to audio dramas, you'll recognize the voices of those that have starred on the big screen. A-listers such as Rami Malek (*Blackout*, 2019), Chloe Grace Moretz (*Gaslight*, 2019) Demi

Moore (*Dirty Diana*, 2020), and Oscar Isaac (*Case 63*, 2022), to name a few, have all found their way back to performing.

My first audio drama listening experience was *Homecoming*, a Gimlet production that aired in November of 2016. A year after its release, I sat at the dinner table in my 1100 square foot apartment, a bowl of coffee off to the side, and diligently worked on Valentine crafts for my son. Bored by the repetitive notes of my '00's Greatest Hits' playlist, I browsed through various podcasts to fill the silence and came across an ad for *Homecoming*. As soon as the main protagonist, Heidi, uttered her first words, I became transfixed. By the time I had completed my tasks for the day, with the podcast playing in the back pocket of my jeans as I migrated from one room to the other or in my ears as I perused the shelves of the grocery store, I had also completed the first season.

Every time I mention an audio drama in conversation, I refer to Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* as reference. This radio drama is remembered for two things: being the first of its time and its political statement. After the 1938 broadcast of an alien invasion in New Jersey, which led a mass panic as people "packed the roads, hid in cellars, loaded guns, and even wrapped their heads in wet towels as protection from Martian poison gas", commentators of the show pointed out that "the broadcast was meant to reveal the way politicians could use the power of mass communications to manipulate the public" (Vatulescu, pp. 52). In that same spirit, I would hope to use "the power of mass communications" to *inform* the public in a dystopia where the books, doctors, or revolutionaries we rely on are no longer available.

While *Abort Mission* is fictional, there are specific elements of the story that are factual. This is a politically motivated piece, and the works within needed some truth to them. Any books mentioned within the drama are real and can be found online (or, were at the time this piece was

written) and in some libraries. The abortion procedure written in episode 8 is medically accurate, taken step-by-step from *Handbook for a Post-Roe America*, a real-life “comprehensive and user-friendly manual for understanding and preparing for” a post-Roe America. By providing legitimacy to this aspect of the drama, I hope that it reaches the ears of those that can record the information and keep reproductive rights alive for women in America.

### **Characters**

The protagonist of *Abort Mission*, Clara Mendez, is a woman who witnesses injustice and immediately challenges it, even with little to no prior knowledge that can help handle the situation. Instead, she adapts and doesn't take 'no' for an answer. Avery, her younger sister, reacts in a more socially digestible way. She's sweet, docile, strives for perfection, and is a stickler for rules. Most importantly, while Clara is on the frontlines getting her hands dirty, Avery is behind the computer and the books getting the answers, too - and both types of people are *necessary* for a revolution.

David Mitchell, a rookie attorney for the Office of the Solicitor General in Texas, is Clara's ex-boyfriend and an example of how easily manipulated a person can be. I wanted David to be the epitome of someone so focused on the black and white narrative that they fail to see the gray. In a government that seeks to eclipse opinion and reasoning, a mentality like David's is easily influenced by political peer pressure. Instead of looking inwards and reflecting his own opinions, David succumbs to the inadequacy he feels by agreeing to a Bill that goes against his own beliefs. It isn't until Clara arrives on his doorstep that David uncovers this truth about himself and causes him to reevaluate his place in politics.

Nurse Rwanda was the maternal figure that I felt was necessary to the plot, or, at the very least, necessary to Clara's development as she and Avery lack a parental figure in *Abort Mission*.



She's Clara's voice of reason, the pause at the beginning of a sentence, but also a spark of hope that there is still good in the world and people worth fighting for.

Doctor Prewitt didn't take much convincing to aid in the underground abortion clinic because he had performed an abortion on a homeless woman a year prior to the overturn. Doctor Prewitt was heavily inspired by Dr. Kaufman from *The Story of Jane* (p. 74), who not only offered his abortion services knowing the risk, but willingly taught members of Jane how to perform a safe abortion (p. 126). At the time of publication in 1995, Laura Kaplan wrote "half of medical schools do not teach doctors abortion techniques" (*The Story of Jane*, xxiv) and in April of 2020, it was predicted that the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* would result in a 36% drop (92% to 56%) of obstetrics and gynecology residents having access to abortion training (University of California, 2022). It was imperative that I have a doctor that was willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the cause and medical education.

Pregnant and incarcerated, Isabel Lozano was an opportunity to demonstrate the "intersection of women's reproductive health and rights with the criminal justice system" (Sufrin, et al., p. 213) and its hypocrisy within the United States. Her story weaves one that we've heard repeatedly: the inability to meet the requirements for basic living conditions due to the disadvantages of a capitalistic society. "The majority of women in prison (56% in federal and 62% in state prisons) are mothers to minor children" (Sufrin, et al., p. 214), which is precisely Isabel's situation. In her case, whether she wants one or not, abortion is out of the question under the new law imposed in *Abort Mission*.

While not everybody's abortion decision is sentimental or difficult, it is obvious that decisions such as these during a time in history when a person could be publicly executed for doing so, would weigh heavily on an individual, especially a teenager. "In 2019, the Trump-

Pence administration cut funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs and continually promotes abstinence-only education” (Shah, p. 55), programs that had once caused a dramatic decrease in teen pregnancy. Charlotte is seventeen and comes from a religious family, is expected to follow rules, and is highly intelligent- yet is still susceptible to teenage pregnancy. I wanted to highlight that abstinence is not something that can be practiced with ease. You could be damn near perfect and still find yourself in a dire situation.

Sometimes we feel inadequate. We feel like we lack the materials necessary to incite change. The truth is, anyone is capable, and everyone is important. There is a job in the revolution for everyone, even if their hands seem tied like David, Clara’s ex-boyfriend, or their career and life is at stake like Nurse Rwanda or Doctor Prewitt, or they’ve fallen into systemic oppression like inmate Lozano, or they’re one of the leading examples in risking everything for a better life like Charlotte.

### **Latinx Representation in the Media**

Initially, I wanted characters that were representative of my culture. Clara and Avery were born in the Rio Grande Valley but migrated to Austin, as she discusses in Episode 5 with Nurse Rwanda. I used Clara’s conversation with Rwanda as an opportunity to touch on the unfortunate, but very real issue of the American education system cutting out “wild tongues”, as Gloria Anzaldua would address in her essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”.

Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley would have you believe that my Spanish is alive and fierce. Unfortunately, I am to blame just as much as the state for my tongue’s lack of wildness. My previous work lacked culture. It was comprised of a white man’s world, one with a language and culture that (I thought) was easily digestible for readers. Thanks to my Studies in Gender and Literature course, I discovered Anzaldua and rediscovered a world I already knew. It

was not until I began taking my Literary Translation course, however, that I revised some of the dialogue to include the Spanish language that we hear sprinkled throughout the story. But, as the Literary Translation course taught me, it isn't enough to simply translate. There are words in Chicano Spanish (Anzaldua, *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*) that won't show up in a Spanish dictionary. I needed this language to be prevalent, to fully represent the culture of the Rio Grande Valley, and the impact it has on a person's characterization- and that took effort. It required putting myself and my culture under a microscope and finally, after three decades, meshing them together. Like Clara, I found myself in territory that did not accept the language I had grown up with, so I adapted and got rid of it, only to later rediscover it and brush off the dust that it had collected in the corner I had abandoned.

It was also an opportunity to have Hispanic representation in this medium art form. So far, I've yet to experience an audio drama that offers code-switching between languages and given the variety of dialect in the Rio Grande Valley, believed this to be a perfect opportunity to highlight the *new mestiza* that Anzaldua constantly refers to in her work. It's through creative elements like these that help us "break alienating dichotomies of thought" (Henriquez-Betancor, pp. 40)- like continuing to write for the white man- while also encouraging listeners to break away from a white man's narrative. What better way to show that different languages aren't so scary than to unapologetically leave language untranslated? What better way to encourage other writers to do the same?

As of February 2023, there have been fifty (50) educational "gag orders" that would prohibit the teaching of race and racism in American history- "ranging from critical race theory to the theory that race is a social construct" (Friedman, *et al.*, 2023). Some bills, such as SB 280, would prevent schools from adopting curriculum that "makes 'any individual feel discomfort,

guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's race or sex" (Friedman, *et al.*, 2023), which is another way to loosely interpret the definition of "discomfort". In Texas, however, HB 1804, would require that teachers "present positive aspects of the United States and its heritage", including discussing and stressing "the positive contributions of *all* individuals and groups to the American way of life" (Freidman, *et al.*, 2023). In attempts to remove the teaching of *true* American History, history undeniably embedded with racism and bigotry, the American government removes all accountability and gaslights an entire generation of young Americans that racism doesn't exist because it never existed.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, people of color are absent from this new America. In creating a new and improved (a "great") America, the Republic of Gilead wanted to produce white babies only, and had all "Children of Ham" resettled in National Homeland One, where it was rumored they'd be put on the farms and fields. (*The Handmaid's Tale*, pp. 83).

In Atwood's novel, we're in media res. Instead, *Abort Mission* provides the experience of undergoing change from the moment it happens. The Children of Ham have not yet been taken from their homes and moved to unreachable lands, we have not yet become slaves, we have not yet become Handmaid's- but past and present administrations have laid down the framework to get us there. In Gloria Anzaldúa's "Letter to 3rd World Women Writers" she sheds light on the dangers we face as women, women of color, and women that write. These qualities are separated because it is a privilege to keep them united and privilege is something we still lack in the 21st century. We are still oppressed because we are feared. That fear is not an obstacle we have to overcome, but "transcend" through. We must be willing to revolt, to "revoke" and "erase" the "white male imprint" that has dimmed our light (Anzaldúa, p. 28). To do this, we must be willing to "make our own writing and that of Third World women the first priority" (Anzaldúa, p. 28).

Is this my own letter? Possibly. My hope is that *Abort Mission* wakes the dormant rebel in the hearts of those who need it, that it shifts the paradigm of what educational institutions consider digestible literature, and that it sets the precedent of creating and discussing uncomfortable topics in politics and culture. I don't want to rise above the fear, I want to become it, and I want my "*mujeres de color*, companions in writing" to do the same. *Abort Mission* is the story of not only how dystopic conditions like those of *The Handmaid's Tale* came to be but how to prevent them entirely.

### **Inspiration**

"Government by its very nature seeks to limit and to *control*; government accomplishes this by fostering a sense of, and value in, *stability*" (Barr, p. 848). In the novel, *A Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley explores the dynamics of a controlling government that "justifies its meddling in the economy in the same way it justifies its seizure of civil liberties- by stimulating a climate of fear to surround the debate, and then grabbing power through cleverly packaged legislation that purports to 'save the economy,' or one's 'safety'" (Barr, p. 856).

Abortion wasn't always a moral or religious issue. In fact, up until the mid-19th century, early-term abortions (before fetal movement could be felt by the woman) were legal and common. While most women found themselves performing at-home abortions through herbal remedies, most abortion services were conducted by women through various means, such as: the selling of abortifacient plants, catheters that would force miscarriage, and even dilation and curettage (D&C), which is a common practice today in removing fetal tissue after a miscarriage. Instead, "the crusade against abortion was led by physicians" in the start of the 1900's, when the medical field was predominantly male. While they claimed that the reason for stricter abortion laws was to provide safety for the mother, their motives included "[serving] male interests" by

replacing midwives with male physicians (Hayler, p. 312). As seen in HB 2690, the “Women and Child Safety Act”, it’s clear that the intended purposes of the bill are *not* for the safety of either, but for the mere sake of *control*. In *Abort Mission*, the government does the same by warning citizens of the dire situation the economy and the welfare of America is in through the declining population. They instill fear into their hearts and present, what seems to be, the only viable solution: a complete ban on abortion and contraception.

*Brave New World* also introduces the concept of classically conditioning an entire race of humans to create a dystopian society full of highly manipulated and conformed individuals. One of the scenes that stood out to me most was how children were “death-conditioned” by providing them treats, like chocolate, as they are guided down a ward of deathly-ill patients.

Desensitization “is a process involving changes in emotional responsiveness” and can be seen in the way we (don’t) respond to “arousal-eliciting” stimuli after “repeated exposure” (Krahe, et al., p. 2). “Research has found that the more time individuals spent watching violent media depictions, the less emotionally responsive they became to violent stimuli and the less sympathy they showed for victims of violence in the real world” (Krahe, et al., p. 3). *Abort Mission* explores this idea by exposing citizens to live executions like those in *A Handmaid’s Tale*. Intertwined with the groupthink phenomena and extremist ideas, citizens of *Abort Mission* find themselves quickly glazing over the (lack of) morality and the hypocrisy of a government that clearly has no regard for the people’s best interests.

The banning of books is not a modern concept but is something that continues to be an issue, especially when states have the right to provide their own definition for “obscene” and “inappropriate”. In states such as Tennessee and Oklahoma, books that were once considered educational can now be deemed otherwise if they meet the “flimsy and unclear definition”

they've appointed to "obscene" (Jensen, 2022). Texas, however, has been the most creative when it comes to defining and interpreting "obscenity" and "has been a leader in publishing for book bans" (Jensen, 2022). House Bill 3979 is a bill that bans anything that "an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's race or sex" (Ellis, 2021). Given that all emotions are subjective, anything could be considered worth banning, especially if the "individual" isn't specifically named.

*Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, is an example of an extremely radical government that prohibits its people from "intellectual" learning, using firemen to burn books that would ignite the spark of knowledge. By keeping its people free from learning, they keep their people from "[questioning] the status quo of happiness and freedom" (Sisario, p. 201). *Abort Mission* explores a similar restriction by removing books that are essential to intellectual growth, ranging from topics that explore sexuality, gender, racism, and abortion. In this audio drama, book burns are encouraged, not only to children, but adults as well, through incentives like a "book burn party" where everyone is invited to celebrate at the local amusement park and receive tickets for free ice cream. Like the children in *A Brave New World*, citizens of *Abort Mission* find themselves being classically conditioned to accept this new way of life.

In George Orwell's *1984*, our main protagonist Winston Smith works at "The Ministry of Truth", in the Records Department, where his job is to alter the historical records of Oceania to fit the needs of the Party. Similarly, Clara's boss asks that she alter the truth and reality of the executions in the articles that she'll be writing for the newspaper. Before this, in the pilot, when Avery questions Clara's mistrust in the media, Clara responds, "it's because I'm a journalist that I'm not pro-media", indicating the very real issue with media manipulation prevalent throughout history. It was evident in Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* political statement and evident in the

current attempt at removing the study of critical race theory, representation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and representation of gender identity and human sexuality in K-12 public schools. By removing CRT from the curriculum, the youth of America will lose the opportunity for “awareness of the ideology of race as a determining factor in how the law has been used against racialized minority groups (Parker, pp. 189).

Amalia Ortiz was a nice break in the “male-dominated space” of science fiction. Not only did *The Canción Cannibal Cabaret* offer a woman’s perspective in a dystopian America, a woman of color’s perspective in a dystopian America, but it displayed the benefits of producing uncomfortable literature in an alternative format. The songs that are depicted throughout *Canción* are revolutionary- both in the context and the form. I aspired to do the same by offering literature through radio, a setting that would allow my work to thrive in an era that wants to suffocate it. The apocalypse that Amalia created in *Canción* was a way for her to discuss revolution in a less threatening way. Unfortunately, the dystopia that I created in *Abort Mission* was quickly unraveling into reality, so writing threateningly was my only option.

The inspiration behind some of the stories told in *Abort Mission* were from those told in *You're the Only One I've Told: The Stories Behind Abortion* by Dr. Meera Shah. In this collection of personal accounts, Shah explores the complexities of abortion by taking a deeper dive into what brought us here in the first place and how humans manage in unimaginable circumstances. Every situation is different and should be treated as such. By blanketing our problems, we only create more.

### **You’re The Only One I’ve Told - Maribel**

“Either I picked up food poisoning from work or... I’m pregnant.”



These words reverberated off the kitchen walls of my parents' home, the two staring blankly at me as they began to process what I had just said. Every morning that week, I had called in sick to the restaurant I worked at, blaming their food for my sickness. Taking my accusations to heart, they must have thrown out three or four different bags of yogurt, fruit, and soup that week.

“I mean, I took a couple of tests but... I think I should take a blood test to be sure.”

Despite growing up Catholic from birth, despite being an only child, despite being an only female child, despite being only twenty years old on a momentary hiatus from college and living at home, I was lucky. My parents didn't react violently. In fact, they reacted sanely, rationally, and with empathy.

They drove me to an Urgent Care clinic, waited beside me as the doctor drew blood and took a urine sample, and even offered food options nearby if I was hungry. They reassured me that things were going to be alright, regardless of the outcome.

“If I am pregnant, I'm not getting rid of it. I don't believe in abortion. I just can't do that. It wouldn't be fair to the child, it's not its fault.”

These words were repeated, verbatim, to both my parents and my child's father, who I happened to be in a loving and committed relationship with at the time. While we weren't married, we had hopes to be one day, and figured this pregnancy was the start of unraveling those chapters. My wishes were met with agreement by everyone. We were ready for this baby.

Five years later, when my son would be four, I would get pregnant by the same man, except the circumstances had changed. The love and commitment that had existed during the discovery of our first child had vanished; we were hanging on by a thread. We had also experienced parenting and understood the sacrifices it took to be a good one. It meant laborious

days and sleepless nights. It meant losing a lot of yourself for the benefit of a child. It also required effort, and although I desperately wanted another baby, neither of us had the effort for one.

So, I ended my second pregnancy in the sole abortion clinic that stood in the downtown district of McAllen, Texas, Whole Woman's Health Clinic. Blues, greens, and vibrant oranges and reds covered the right side of the building as a mural displayed several Latina women working as a community beneath the words "Dignity, Empowerment, Compassion, Justice" - all the things I would experience during my time there.

Dignity in making the best decision for myself. Empowerment in knowing that I was in control of my own life. Compassion in the hands that held mine as I filled out paperwork and lay on the white, crinkling tissue of the exam table. And justice. Justice in choice.

With this newfound knowledge came new perspectives. It was with fresh eyes that I began to see a world full of choice- a word meant for one person and one person only. So, while my mother "marched for lives" behind an 8-foot wooden cross, praying loudly, singing hymns, and condemning those that believed in choice, I stood alongside them on the opposite side of her.

In five years, I went from one side of the fence to the other. It stopped being about what was fair to the fetus and, instead, became about what was fair to the pregnant person. It stopped being about "right" and started being about choice. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are; it doesn't matter that one person did it so another can too. People often get caught up in the details that they don't stop to think that sometimes it's not about whether a person can or can't, it's that they simply don't want to- and that is their *choice*.

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## APPENDIX

ABORT MISSION

"Pilot"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez



COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Sounds of PHONES RINGING, BUSY MURMURS, OCCASIONAL INCOHERENT YELLS, quickly EXTINGUISHED as a HEAVY DOOR SHUTS, indicating room is cut off from the rest of the building.

METAL SCRAPES AGAINST METAL as a chair is pulled out. CHAINS RATTLE.

CLARA MENDEZ, 28, cool, nonchalant and smug exterior, riddled with anxiety beneath the surface, RUBS her wrists that are red from the handcuffs that suffocate them. She is bruised with fresh, unwashed cuts and hair disheveled.

Clara SCOFFS as FOOTSTEPS RETREAT. Again, the SOUND OF BUSY ROOM is heard momentarily before SILENCE as DOOR THUDS indicating that she is left alone.

Clara looks around the room, eyes the two-way mirror, and shifts in her seat.

Again, SOUND OF BUSY ROOM quickly EXTINGUISHED as a DOOR SHUTS.

DAVID MITCHELL, 32, clean-cut, no wrinkle found on his freshly pressed suit, hair slicked back, expensive taste, and a rookie attorney for the Office of the Solicitor General who also happens to be Clara's ex-boyfriend.

DAVID

Jesus Christ, Clara, you look like  
shit.

CLARA

Da-

DAVID

Don't say a word.

David's briefcase THUDS onto table. He UNCLASPS it and withdraws papers, SHUFFLING through them.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've read your file...

(pause)

It doesn't look good, Clara.

Both remain quiet, the only sound is of SCRIBBLING and RUSTLING OF PAPERS.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Alright. So, you're set to be executed ten days from now and the only reason it's not immediate is because they plan on retrieving the information they need from you to find the others.

CLARA

Wow, what an incentive. Do these people even know how to properly torture the truth out of someone?

Clara turns to face the two-way mirror, her VOICE RAISING an octave.

CLARA (CONT'D)

You're supposed to make promises you don't intend to keep in order to give me false hope. Like 'my life for theirs' kind of thing.

David's hand SLAMS onto the table to get her attention and Clara turns back to face him.

DAVID

Clara! This isn't a joke.

CLARA

No, David, you're right- it's not. It stopped being a joke the second S.B. 1913 was passed - the bill you helped sign-off on.

DAVID

Clara-

CLARA

How does it feel, David? To sit behind your great big ivory desk, in your ivory tower, with your freshly-pressed suits and your polished shoes, watching the people below scrounge about wondering whether or not they'll live to see the next day - hell, the next hour.

DAVID

Oh, don't be so dramatic.

CLARA

Dramatic? There are women being torn from their families for decisions they made on their own bodies years ago. There are doctors being murdered in broad daylight—on a fucking stage, David, for having performed abortions years ago. Some of them hadn't even picked up a scalpel in decades.

DAVID

So you saw that and thought, 'sounds like a good time to aid and abet these criminals!'

CLARA

Women are being raped daily and forced into pregnancies they never wanted to begin with. And if they even so much as think about ending it, they'll be imprisoned and forced into labor only to be murdered atop the pile of bodies of other women that underwent the same. I couldn't just stand by and watch this unfold without trying to make a difference. I couldn't just stand aside like you.

DAVID

It's not like I wrote the damn bill. I had to sign. My hands were tied. I had no choice.

Clara SCOFFS.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Don't do that. Don't fucking do that. You and I both know what these jobs are like, what's expected from us. It's not like you're innocent from capitalizing on the hardships of others, huh, Miss Big Shot Journalist?

CLARA

(whisper)

That's different and you know it.

DAVID

Sure, sweetheart, sure. If that's what you have to tell yourself to help you sleep at night, then fine.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 But your closet is just as dark as mine.

There's a pause, each averting eye contact. Clara's VOICE is CALM, anger drained.

CLARA  
 How did we get here?

DAVID  
 (oblivious)  
 An unforgiving epidemic that wiped out half the globe's population. Our resources became limited, our economy began collapsing due to insane job shortages. People lost the incentive to try...

CLARA  
 I mean us. How did we get here?

David takes a deep BREATH.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 Remember that day we met? Back at the coffee shop in Verona?

DAVID  
 (amused)  
 You hated the cliché.

CLARA  
 (chuckles)  
 Oh, I still do. I still hate the way you looked on that plane ride back home, too. A 6 AM flight never looked so good on a person. I hate the way you were so kind, overlooking my disheveled hair and stale make-up and offering me your seat near the window. I hate that we spent an entire 14 hour flight talking about our passions. Remember that? Passion?

David REMAINS QUIET as Clara pauses.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 I found my passion. I found it in the faces of those women, those families that I helped. Did you find yours in the faces that helped find mine?

There's another long pause as David mulls this over.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Why are you here, David? Who sent you?

DAVID

(sigh)

I sent myself, Clara. Despite every attempt to sever our ties, there's always something linking the two of us. It's annoying. You've been an absolute thorn in my side since the resistance began but... well, if I'm being brutally honest, at the end of it all, I can't sit by and watch as they kill you. I have to do something, anything...

CLARA

You know there's no way out of this for me, David. You helped write the damn rules. There's no clauses, no loopholes.

DAVID

No, no. There's always something. These politicians-

CLARA

(laughs bitterly)

"*These politicians*". You say that like you aren't one of them.

DAVID

*They* love clauses - it's like caviar and Pinot Grigio to them or some shit. There's something. We just have to look harder.

CLARA

David..

DAVID

No. Stop with that tone.

CLARA

What tone?

DAVID

The tone you use when you're done with a discussion despite it not being over. We're going to figure this out. You can't leave..

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 You can't leave everyone. Those  
 women, those families, me... Avery.

Clara refrains from becoming emotional at the mention of her younger sister, but her VOICE CRACKS when she SPEAKS.

CLARA  
 Remember that mother hen we came  
 across during our backpacking  
 through Ireland? The one searching  
 for her lost chick?

DAVID  
 (confused)  
 I don't...

CLARA  
 We found her near the inn, an  
 entire day away from the coop where  
 the rest of her eggs remained  
 unhatched. And you... you were  
 adamant that we needed to return  
 her to the coop but the innkeeper  
 intervened and told us the  
 importance of the hen finding her  
 own way back.  
 (sad chuckle)  
 We were so concerned that the chick  
 wouldn't survive but the innkeeper  
 said it would just make it that  
 much stronger

DAVID  
 Hmm. I remember now. But I also  
 remember returning to the coop the  
 next day and finding the hen with  
 her chick. We were surprised to  
 discover that the eggs had hatched  
 and that chick had helped keep the  
 others alive - but they were on the  
 brink of death. The mother hen was  
 still very much needed, without  
 her, the rest wouldn't survive.

CLARA  
 David, I'm going to be executed and  
 we both know there isn't a single  
 way around that.

DAVID  
 They won't survive, Clara.

CLARA

Then you're going to help me make  
sure that they do.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "Company" presents "ABORT MISSION", starring  
"name of actress" and "name of actress", created by Maribel  
Sanchez. This is Episode 1.

ACT 1

SCENE ONE

EXT. CLARA'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - DOWNTOWN - EVENING

There's a HONK of a horn and a ROAR of an engine as a TAXI drives off, the sound of merging cars from an expressway start to fade.

The growing CLACKING of two pairs of heels against pavement and ECHOING against brick wall can be heard, indicating two individuals are stepping forward. Their LAUGHS grow as they get closer. Sound of KEYS JINGLING and then a door UNLOCKING and OPENING.

INT. CLARA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

CLARA

The look on his face when we left was pretty priceless, though, huh, Avery?

AVERY, 21, junior in college at University of Texas, is GIGGLING alongside her sister, CLARA, euphoric from the alcohol in her system and from spending time with her favorite person.

AVERY

I still cannot believe you told him to grow a pair of tits if he wanted my attention.

CLARA

Hey, I was polite about it.

AVERY

(laughs)  
Saying "well, if it's not too much to ask..." before telling someone to grow a pair does not constitute as 'polite', Clara.

CLARA

Ay, *por favor*. He was twice your age and had a ring on his finger. He's lucky that's all I said.



AVERY

True. You *could* have asked his wife to come over instead.

Both women LAUGH as they discard their heels, kicking them off to the side where they CLATTER against the wall and floorboards.

Their LAUGHTER continues as they each FLOP onto the couch, their INCOHERENT CHATTER dying down.

AVERY (CONT'D)

The remote's closer to you, Clare. Let's see what's on.

CLARA

I think Netflix has 'V for Vendetta' now.

AVERY

Ooh- yeah. Love that one.

CLARA shifts in her seat as she hands AVERY the remote. After a *CLICK* the PURR of a TV comes to life as a FEMALE REPORTER's voice FADES IN over the sounds of CHANTING.

FEMALE REPORTER

-was sure that the repeal of Roe v. Wade would not be approved but as we're witnessing at this very moment, the Supreme Court has, in fact, done just that. Again, we're still waiting to hear more on the verdict but, as it stands, abortion has been outlawed in the United States.

CLARA

Wait. What?

AVERY

Did they just...

FEMALE REPORTER 1

We have a few protestors standing just outside the perimeter of the White House with us, let's see what some of them have to say.

The female reporter turns to face a protester, CHANTING is still FAINT in the background.

PROTESTER 1

I just think this is unconstitutional. Our rights as women are being torn from us. They deny us healthy and safe access to abortions, healthy and safe access to contraceptives, easy access to medical insurance - I mean, what's next? When will this war on women end?

PROTESTER 2

I just worry for all the women out there whose lives this will affect. While I would never consider getting an abortion myself, I believe it's a woman's choice and the government shouldn't have any say at all.

PROTESTER 3

I, for one, am satisfied with the decision that our wonderful Supreme Court made today. Abortion. Is. Murder. And those who've committed it should be murdered themselves.

PROTESTOR 4

(beside Protestor 3)  
Amen. An eye for an eye.

The voice of the woman is CUT OFF as Clara switches the channel.

CLARA

(soft)  
What?

MALE REPORTER

-so, basically, what we've learned so far is that this bill is meant to restore America's failing infrastructure and economy through population control. I mean, there's no way this is real. This goes against everything the United States Constitution stands for and it's honestly surprising to me that this this idea has even made it out this fa-

SOUND of remote CLICKING, indicating a change of the channel.

FEMALE REPORTER 2 (V.O.)  
-allegedly. What we're learning is that S.B. 1913, or the American Restoration Act as Congress has so patriotically donned it, is a bill outlawing any form of abortion, regardless of the circumstances resulting in the pregnancy.

FEMALE REPORTER 3  
So, that means if a woman is raped -

FEMALE REPORTER 2  
That's right, Jill. If the pregnancy is a product of rape or incest, women will still be forced to carry out the pregnancy and be forced into labor. In fact, they've gone as far as to ban Plan B, the morning-after pill.

FEMALE REPORTER 3  
Across the board? Even for SANE exams?

FEMALE REPORTER 2  
Even for SANE exams.

FEMALE REPORTER 3  
Wasn't it just last year that they told women to seek medical help after experiencing a rape? Governor Jackson claimed that the five states of Texas would work together to expedite the investigation and prosecution of the rapist, but thousands upon thousands of kits were found to be sitting on shelves, unanalyzed, from cases as far back as 2018. And now, now they're saying they'll be outlawing the very drug that could prevent a pregnancy resulting from a rape.

FEMALE REPORTER 2  
It's upsetting, but that's not all, Jill. It, also - get this - outlaws any form of abortion, regardless of the mother's health. So, the woman can be on the brink of death - her pregnancy could KILL her - and the government would have that over the possibility of terminating the pregnancy.

FEMALE REPORTER 3  
Unbelievable.

FEMALE REPORTER 2  
It's absolutely mind-boggling. Oh, and if that wasn't enough, here's another one, Jill. All forms of contraceptives will be banned. No more condoms. Ladies, say goodbye to regular menstruations and hello to completely untreated endometriosis. There won't be a single shelf, in a single store in the United States as they'll be ceasing production and purchases of all birth control. This is just ridic-

CLICK of remote.

MALE REPORTER 2  
-caught attempting or having had an abortion will be persecuted to "the fullest extent of the law" - what the hell does that even mean? Will people be put to death if they attempt an abortion?

MALE REPORTER 3  
Everything seems to allude to that, Adam. Same goes for any medical professional suggesting the possibility of terminating a pregnancy or having ever even been in the profession of it, will also be punished. Jesus Chr-

CLICK of remote. Male Reporter 2 is CUT OFF, TV goes SILENT.

Beat.

AVERY  
Have you checked your phone at all, Clare? There's stuff all over Facebook about this.

CLARA  
No. Shit, I had my phone silenced all night. It's still in my purse.

CLARA rises from her seat and begins to RUMMAGE through her bag.

AVERY

There's posts about people rioting  
the streets-

In the distance, DOGS BEGIN TO BARK. An AMBULANCE SIREN goes off, shortly followed by ANOTHER, followed by FIRE TRUCK HORNS BLARING.

CLARA

What the fuck?

AVERY

I think they're headed this way. We might get a better view upstairs on the balcony.

CLARA

Think it's connected?

AVERY

Only one way to find out.

There's FAST FOOTSTEPS and FAINT THUDDING as the two sisters RUN up the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPSTAIRS BALCONY

Clara OPENS her balcony door, the FAINT SOUNDS of SIRENS immediately grows louder.

SFX: GLASS BREAKING, INCOHERENT YELLING, CRACKLING OF FIRE, GUNSHOT, RIOTING. SIRENS STOP. HUM OF LARGE VEHICLES. CAR DOORS OPENING, SHUTTING. FOOTSTEPS.

MALE OFFICER

(yelling)

Everyone on the ground now! Put your weapons down! We will shoot upon sight!

SFX: GUNSHOTS. YELLING. EXPLOSIONS OF PEPPER SPRAY GRENADES.

SOUNDS MUFFLE as Clara SHUTS the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARA'S BEDROOM

CLARA

Fuck. Avery, we need to hide. Now.

There's a LOUD KNOCK AND PERSISTENT POUNDING on the front door, downstairs.

AVERY  
(whisper)  
Clara. No. Don't answer it.

MALE OFFICER  
(loud but muffled)  
POLICE. OPEN UP.

CLARA  
Avery, get in the closet.

AVERY  
Clara-

CLARA  
Now.

Beat.

There's SMALL SHUFFLING, bifold closet doors SHUTTING, FOOTSTEPS RETREATING, we hear Avery's HEAVY breathing like we're locked in the closet with her. Front door OPENS in the distance.

CLARA manages to SHOVE AVERY into a closet, SHUTTING the bifold doors closed before walking downstairs, her footsteps RETREATING. AVERY'S breathing is HEAVY. We hear CLARA'S conversation below.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
Can I help you?

OFFICER:  
Ma'am, you need to leave the premises, this building is being evacuated.

Across the hall, her NEIGHBOR YELLS in agony as he is tasered. Further down the hall there are other officers POUNDING and YELLING orders to the residents of the building.

CLARA  
Can I at least have five minutes to grab a few things first?

OFFICER:  
Make it two - and leave the door open.

CLARA'S FOOTSTEPS begin to ADVANCE as they near the closet.

Clara SOFTLY CLOSES the bedroom door and begins WHISPERING for Avery who OPENS closet door and emerges.

CLARA

It's fucking chaos, Avery. We need to get out of here. Grab what you can, what you think you'll need, I'm not sure when we'll be back.

AVERY

Wait, we're just going to go with them? No, no - absolutely not. I'm not leaving.

CLARA

What choice do you think we have, Avery? In two minutes, that officer downstairs is going to come busting through this door and we don't know what or who's orders he's following. I just saw Mr. Albertson getting tasered.

SFX: SHUFFLING OF ITEMS being SHOVED into a backpack. CLINKS and POPS of various objects being gathered and TOSSED into the backpack. DRAWERS ROLLING AND SHUTTING.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Mr. Albertson, Ave. The same old man who bakes us a birthday cake every year despite us constantly forgetting his. Same old man who buys The Chronicle just for my column. You really think old Mr. Albertson is a threat big enough to use excessive force against?

Beat.

AVERY

(softly)

Oh my god.

(sighs)

Where are we going to go, then? I could get ahold of Cathy, see if her dorm can fit us...

CLARA

No, no. I might have someone willing to let us crash for a few days.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE TWO

EXT. CAR - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

SFX: CAR ON ROAD. CARS PASSING. HORNS HONKING. Outside, there is still chaos.

CLARA  
Look at them, they're all going crazy.

AVERY  
I mean, can you blame them?

CLARA  
Honestly, yeah, I can. I've told you before Avery -

AVERY  
Oh, here we go.

CLARA  
From day one, what have I told you?

AVERY  
(monotone)  
'Act, don't react.'

CLARA  
Exactly. Hearing something new for the first time? Actively research, find a source, wait for more news to develop, fact check, fact check, fact check. Be active, not reactive - this, all of this rioting, looting, insanity, it's just reaction and that never gets us anywhere.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
These streets are impossible to get through, I'll need to go around.

AVERY  
Well, just so that we're actively trying to remain informed, let's see if KXAN is reporting any detours.

Avery SHIFTS in her seat and CLICKS on the radio, turning the VOLUME UP gradually.



MALE HOST 1

-insane! There's people rioting the streets of downtown Austin, so anyone out on the road avoid that area at all costs. Not that you'd even be able to get through as there is heavy police and military presence. I guess it wouldn't surprise anyone that the government, when passing a bill that was never brought to the public's attention, would also declare Martial Law.

MALE HOST 2

No shit, Ziggy. They're all trigger happy right now, too, so this is just a formula for disaster.

MALE HOST 1

Can we just talk about how the President has been neglecting-

MALE HOST 2

-abstaining.

MALE HOST 1

Yes, right, abstaining. It's not like he's forgetting to do this or he doesn't have time for it. He is legitimately and actively avoiding commenting on this. All of them are.

Beat.

MALE HOST 1 (CONT'D)

So we have people rioting, looting, going absolutely bat shit - for which I personally feel is justified-

MALE HOST 2

-Oh, absolutely.

MALE HOST 1

-and we have police and military coming in at full force all while hearing absolutely nothing from the Commander in Chief. I mean, what did they expect people to do? Just lay on their backs while the government fucked them in the-

The radio SHUTS OFF with a CLICK.

CLARA  
We're almost there.

AVERY  
You know, for a journalist, you're  
not very pro-media.

CLARA  
It's *because* I'm a journalist that  
I'm *not* pro-media.

The only sound is of the car as it travels down the highway  
and the two remain SILENT for the rest of the drive.

FADE OUT.

ACT 2

## SCENE THREE

## EXT. DAVID'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The car gradually comes to a stop as the tires CRUNCH against the gravel. CLARA shifts the gear into park and unlatches her seatbelt.

CLARA  
Well, this is our stop.

AVERY  
(whistles)  
Is that a pool in the front yard?  
How rich is this guy?

SFX: CAR DOORS OPEN, SHIFTING, CAR DOORS SHUT. LIGHT FOOTSTEPS FROM GRAVEL TO CEMENT. KNOCK ON DOOR. SILENCE. ELECTRONIC DOOR UNLATCHES.

DAVID  
(confused)  
Clara?

CLARA  
(weakly)  
Hey, David.

AVERY  
(astonished)  
David? *David?* This was your plan?  
Your ex-boyfriend?

DAVID  
Um... what's- what's going on?

CLARA  
Sorry, I didn't call beforehand,  
there was just a lot going on. We,  
um, were basically evicted from our  
apartment.

DAVID  
Oh.

CLARA  
There was a riot downtown. Cops,  
military, ambulances, firefighters-  
the whole shebang.  
(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

People were setting fire to the buildings across from us and I guess the cops thought it best to clear the area. I'm.. not really sure for how long.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I didn't know where else to go. We won't stay, I just had to go somewhere familiar, sit down to gather my thoughts and find a nearby hotel to stay at until-

DAVID

No, no. Clara, no, of course it's no trouble to have you over. Don't be ridiculous.

David OPENS the door wider to allow them inside.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Come in. I was just making some dinner.

The door shuts behind them and the trio stand in the foyer. CLARA and DAVID shift on their heels and clear their throats. Finally, AVERY breaks the silence.

AVERY

Smells good.

DAVID

Yeah, yeah- uh, roasted lamb and sautéed vegetables.

AVERY

Ooh, fancy.

CLARA

I'm sorry. Were you expecting someone...?

DAVID

What? No. No, I just... felt like cooking tonight.

CLARA

Seems pretty extravagant for a one-person meal.

DAVID  
 (chuckles softly)  
 Ah, yes, well, not all of us have  
 perfected the recipe for stovetop  
 Ramen.

AVERY  
 (whispers to Clara)  
 Burn.

CLARA  
 (chuckles)  
 Alright, alright. Touché.

DAVID  
 Come on, kitchen's this way. Just  
 need to give the sauce a quick stir  
 and then I can show you two around.

CLARA and AVERY follow after DAVID.

AVERY  
 Sure. You can start by taking us on  
 a spin around the neighborhood in  
 that slick car outside.

DAVID  
 (laughs)  
 Why take the Benz when we can take  
 the McLaren that's hiding in the  
 garage?

AVERY  
 Whoa, seriously?

CLARA  
 (to Avery)  
 You know, I'm starting to get the  
 impression that you never cared  
 much for the Prius.

AVERY  
 What gave it away?

CUT TO:

SCENE FOUR - DAVID'S HOUSE

HEELS CLACK against marbled floors and doors swing OPEN and  
 SHUT as David shows the women around his house.

DAVID

So, there's five rooms, you're welcome to any of them. Each has it's own master bathroom, complete with a jacuzzi and a fully stocked linen closet - and I mean, fully stocked. You know, for... that time of the month.

CLARA

Was that specifically for *us* or do you run some kind of brothel we should know about?

David ignores Clara's quip.

DAVID

Maria, my cleaning lady -

AVERY

You have a *maid*?!

DAVID

I prefer 'cleaning lady'.

CLARA

(snorts)

Why? Because 'Maria, the maid' sounds too racist?

DAVID

What? No. I just- don't pull the race card, Clara. I'm not racist. I mean, I dated you, didn't I?

CLARA

Wow. Who's pulling what cards now?

AVERY

Is that a mini bar?!

Avery walks over to the bar, glass bottles CLINK as she looks at all the liquor options.

DAVID

I mean, there's really nothing 'mini' about it, hey- wait a minute, aren't you like 16 or something?

AVERY

Yeah, if we're still five years in the past.

Avery goes on about different cocktails, her voice FADING in the background as Clara and David TALK.

DAVID

Wow. Can't believe she's 21 already.

CLARA

Shocked to discover that time didn't stop when the two of us split?

DAVID

No, I just -

CLARA

Relax, David, I'm joking.  
(softer tone)  
She has grown a lot, though, hasn't she? Mom would have been proud.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

She was in the top ten percent of her class in High School and is on her last semester of her undergrad. She's been nonstop so she could finish early. Hasn't missed a single summer semester.

THUDS and CLINKS as Avery fumbles.

AVERY

Oh, shoot, sorry, so sorry.

Sounds FADE into background again.

CLARA

(snickers)  
The absolute smartest dumbass I know.

David and Clara GIGGLE.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

SCENE FIVE

INT. DAVID'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

SFX: CLINKING OF UTENSILS ON PLATES, SOFT THUDS OF CUPS ON TABLE, SOFT CHEWING.

CLARA  
These lamb chops are amazing,  
David.

AVERY  
(mouth full)  
So good.

DAVID  
It's all in the marinade.

CLARA  
Calm down. You know, we're made up  
of 1 percent water and 99 percent  
Stovetop Ramen, so we're easily  
impressed by anything else.

DAVID  
Well, I guess it'll be my  
responsibility to change that.

AVERY  
99 percent is a lot, so I hope  
you're ready for a challenge.

DAVID  
It's been a while since I've  
cooked, let alone had company to  
enjoy it with. So, you won't hear  
any complaints from me.

CLARA  
Speaking of which- we really don't  
plan on overstaying our welcome. We  
appreciate you putting us up for  
the night but-

DAVID  
Clara, enough. This house is way  
too big for just myself- having you  
both around to help fill it will  
keep me from beating myself up for  
buying it in the first place.

CLARA  
Why *did* you buy it then?



AVERY  
(hisses)  
Clara.

DAVID  
(chuckles)  
It's okay, Avery. I dated her for three years- I got used to these kinds of interrogations.

CLARA  
(laughs)  
You and me both, buddy.

AVERY  
Ah, the journalist and the lawyer. Star-crossed lovers.

CLARA  
(grit teeth)  
Don't.

DAVID  
(chuckles)  
I don't know. It just seemed like the right move at the time. It's what everyone else my age was doing so I came across it on the market and thought- fuck it. If not me than someone else, right?

CLARA  
I guess so.

DAVID  
Regardless, I messaged one of my colleagues when you arrived and asked them about these riots. Told them that you resided somewhere in the downtown area and asked how long the location would be off limits. For now, it's undetermined. Could be a few more days, a few weeks - hell, even a few months. So, just sit tight for a while until it's all cleared up.

CLARA  
(sighs)  
I guess you're right.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Well, thank you, David. Really.  
You're saving our asses by doing  
this.

DAVID

I can't imagine how terrifying it  
must have been to be in the middle  
of those riots. I was watching a  
bit of coverage a few minutes ago-  
it was wild.

AVERY

Yeah, people have been posting up  
stories of riots in their own  
cities on Snapchat.

CLARA

There's a lot of pissed off people  
in America right now.

DAVID

Yeah, but to resort to riots?  
Looting? Burning things?

CLARA

How else do you expect them to  
express their anger? Write letters  
to their Governors?

DAVID

(scoffs)

I just mean this won't accomplish  
anything. In fact, it'll probably  
get the exact opposite response  
they want.

CLARA

Any response is better than no  
response because it means we still  
have a chance to change things.

David SIGHS and the three continue to eat in silence.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE SIX

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - CLARA'S BEDROOM

The sound of CLARA's shower stops as she turns the faucet  
with a SQUEAK.

Drying and wrapping herself with a towel, she exits the bathroom towards her bedroom. Her footsteps are padded as she walks across the soft carpet. UNZIPPING her suitcase, she discards some clothing.

As Clara finishes getting dressed, she hears a SOFT KNOCK on her bedroom door. She assumes it's Avery wanting to sleep with her but when she OPENS the door, discovers David on the opposite side.

CLARA

David?

DAVID

Hey. Just checking in before bed. Was the water temperature okay? Towels clean? Have everything else you need? If the flavor of the toothpaste is too much, I can have a different kind delivered tomorrow.

CLARA

(chuckles)

Yeah, I mean, given that there were no mints on my pillows when I arrived, I'll have to give this place four stars instead of five.

DAVID

Damn. Maybe complementary breakfast in the morning can change that?

CLARA

Hmm, if it's anything like tonight's dinner, you might find yourself the owner of a five-star establishment.

David and Clara CHUCKLE.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Really though, David, dinner was delicious.

DAVID

I'm glad you enjoyed it. I'll store that recipe away for another time.

CLARA

Hmm. You'll need to give me a peek.

DAVID

Nope. A chef never reveals his secrets. Plus my grandmother would kill me if I gave it up to anyone outside of the family.

CLARA

Come on, just a little inside scoop? Off the record?

DAVID

Cute. Like I said, it's all in the marinade.

CLARA

Of which the meat soaked in for... what? A couple hours?

DAVID

Ha. Try twelve.

CLARA

Twelve? Wow. Could have sworn it only took one to get here from my place.

Beat.

David realizes he's been caught in a lie

DAVID

(under his breath)  
Fucking journalists.

CLARA

You knew we were coming, didn't you?

DAVID

Clara-

CLARA

Oh my god. You knew about this bill. You knew it was going to pass and you knew what was going to happen...

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Of course you did. Big fancy house, two fancy cars, a maid - you got the job at the Attorney General's office.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)  
(bewildered sigh)  
It's all clicking now.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
How long did you know?

DAVID  
Same as you.

CLARA  
Bullshit.

Beat.

Fucking lawyers.

DAVID  
Clara, I didn't know it was going  
to be *this*.

CLARA  
But you knew it was going to be  
*something, something like it*.

Beat.

DAVID  
Yes.

CLARA  
Fuck you, David.

The door SLAMS shut.

CUT TO:

ACT 3

## SCENE SEVEN

INT. AUSTIN CHRONICLE NEWS ROOM - MORNING

SFX: CROWD OF MURMURS, PHONES RINGING, OCCASIONAL YELLS, PRINTERS, SCRIBBLING, TYPING, TV NEWS LOW AND IN BACKGROUND.

Clara's heels CLACK against wooden floorboards as she makes her way towards her office. She smiles and offers warm GREETINGS towards passing colleagues.

One colleague interrupts her.

COLLEAGUE

Clara! Hey, Susan's been asking for you all morning. She wants you in her office, stat.

CLARA

Shit. Thanks.

Clara's footsteps INCREASE as she makes her way towards her boss's office. Her footsteps come to an abrupt HALT as she reaches the glass door of SUSAN's office. There's a faint, hollow KNOCK as her knuckles graze the glass.

SUSAN, 42, brunette hair always tied up in a loose knot, business suits and skirts, editor in chief of the Chronicle. She takes her work very seriously, hates fakes and frauds, took the Chronicle job because management was more lax with what journalists could write about.

SUSAN

Oh, Mendez, it's about damn time. Listen, it is a shitstorm - everywhere. I trust you've seen the news? Of course you have, that was a stupid question. I need you on this story, Mendez. You're my best journalist.

CLARA

I know just as much as the rest of the team, Susan. I can't guarantee-

SUSAN

Oh, nonsense. What you don't know, you'll find out - you always have.

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I need you getting to the bottom of this. Leave no stone unturned. I want a status report every hour.

CLARA

Yes ma'am.

SUSAN

Oh, another thing. Mendez, your ex is David Mitchell, correct? Cute, corporate fellow. Recently employed with the AG?

CLARA

Um... yes?

SUSAN

Perfect. Listen, I want you to take the rest of the afternoon off to find the perfect little black dress - maybe take Tiffany with you, she seems to know a thing or two about sleeping around - and see if you can hit him up.

CLARA

Oh. No, I-

SUSAN

What? Have a thing about exes?

CLARA

Well, yes, actually-

SUSAN

Nonsense. Sometimes the best lovers are your toxic exes. All that built up hatred makes for some *great sex*, let me tell you. Now, go on. Get him to spill every detail he knows about this bill, I don't care the cost just email me an invoice and I'll have it all covered by next week. And, remember Mendez - nothing is off the record.

They are interrupted by a KNOCK on the glass door, there's commotion further down the hall. A male worker stands at the door.

MALE COLLEAGUE

Susan, Clara, sorry to interrupt, but the police are here.

SUSAN

The police? What the hell?

MALE COLLEAGUE

They're asking everyone to gather  
in the main room. Something about  
warrants and a bounty...

SUSAN

Oh, dear god.

CLARA

They're rounding us up.

CUT TO:

Closing song, credits, and when to tune in for following  
episode.

**THE END**



ABORT MISSION

"Episode 2"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

Phone Number

COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

INT. BEAUMONT STATE PENITENTIARY HALLWAY - DAY

SFX: Rattling chains, scuffling feet, heavy footsteps, scraping chairs, busy murmurs, arguing fading in and out as CLARA passes each room, yelling of profanities.

OFFICER 1

(fades in)

Alright, alright! Break it up! You really want to spend the last fifteen minutes of your rec time in your cell?

The officer's voice FADES OUT.

CLARA walks beside the GUARD that's guiding her back to her cell. Her wrists and ankles are cuffed, the chains rattle as she walks. The GUARD'S FOOTSTEPS are HEAVY beside her. A TV plays loudly in the distance, FADING IN as they draw nearer.

JILL (NEWS ANCHOR 1)

-on the hunt for twenty-two-year-old Avery Mendez, sister of Clara Mendez, who was recently arrested for-

CLARA

(softly)

Avery.

GUARD

Keep walking, inmate.

JILL:

-are positive they've identified the individuals-

CLARA

No, wait. That's my sister. They're talking about-

GUARD

Hey, shut up and keep walking.

JILL:

-sure to keep you informed as we're updated-

CLARA  
If you would just let me-

The two begin to SCUFFLE as CLARA begins resisting the GUARD. In the rec room beside them, other inmates begin SHOUTING, egging CLARA on to FIGHT the GUARD. After a few seconds, there's a loud WHACK followed by SILENCE.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: MUSIC, "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING "LIST OF CAST", CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 2:

ACT 1

SCENE ONE

INT. AUSTIN CHRONICLE NEWSROOM - DAY

FADE IN:

SFX: MURMURS, PHONES RINGING, PRINTERS, WHISPERS OF CONFUSION, TV NEWS LOW IN BACKGROUND.

OFFICER CARLOS ROMERO, 46, dark hair, bushy mustache, lead officer, take-no-shit mentality. Cold and distant. Definitely victim-blames. Has been with the police force for 25 years.

SERGEANT JONATHAN (JOHNNY) TORRES, 40, tired, mostly. Speaks with little enthusiasm, has a more "help me help you" mentality and way of speaking during an interrogation. Has been with the police force for 20 years.

OFFICER DARIAN TAMEZ, 34, dark hair, muscular. Has been with the police force for 5 years. Was suspended, with pay, for two months during his second year with the department for misconduct with a suspect. Very 'trigger happy'.

OFFICER ANTHONY (TONY) CRANE, 28, rookie cop, still on his 1-year probation. Much leaner than the other three. Easily influenced, very pliable.

VIVIAN ALANIZ, 29, a clerk at the Austin Chronicle.

VIVIAN

(whispering)

Clara, what's going on?

OFFICER TAMEZ

Males on this side, females on this side. Come on, hurry up. Single file. Let's go! Move it.

CLARA

(whispering to Vivian)

I don't know. Just do what they say.

TAYLOR NICHOLSON, 25, journalist, born female but identifies as a male.

OFFICER ROMERO

Hey, you, are you blind? Females on one side and males on the other.

TAYLOR

I identify as male, officer.

OFFICER ROMERO

Jesus Christ. I don't give a shit what you *think* you are- get in the right line. If your birth certificate says 'female' then get in the female line. Don't be difficult or I'll have you arrested.

TAYLOR SCOFFS then shuffles over to the female line, downcast.

CLARA

(whispering)

Hey, Taylor, I'm sorry. He's a dickhead.

TAYLOR

It's okay, Clara. Thanks.

OFFICER ROMERO

Alright, everyone, listen up. I'm Officer Romero, this is my supervisor, Sergeant Torres. That muscular one is Officer Tamez and the scrawnier one is Officer Crane. I'm sure many of you are wondering what we're doing here, I'll get to that in a bit. For now, Officer Tamez will be going down the line with a box for you to place your electronics- that means: phones, headphones, smartwatches, walkie-talkies - whatever the hell it is you use to communicate to someone else in or outside of this room will be placed in this box.

(loudly)

NO. That does not mean that we are confiscating your property and will not be returning it to you.

(MORE)

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 What it does mean, is that you are  
 all currently, as of twenty-three  
 seconds ago, under a full  
 investigation and therefore  
 attempting to reach someone outside  
 of this room would be a breach in  
 that investigation and you will be  
 arrested.

VIVIAN  
 Investigation? For what?

OFFICER ROMERO  
 Ma'am, I'm going to ask you once,  
 and only once, not to interrupt me.  
 (loudly, to everyone)  
 That goes for all of you.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 (softer tone)  
 Darian, go ahead and begin your  
 round.  
 (loudly, to everyone)  
 If we catch any of you with  
 electronics on your person or in  
 your possession, we will not  
 hesitate to use necessary force to  
 make you comply, is that  
 understood? Good. Now, each of you  
 will stand where you are until you  
 are called into an office where  
 Sergeant Torres and I will be  
 conducting our investigations. It  
 is during that time that you will  
 discover why we've gathered you  
 here today.  
 (pause)  
 With that being said, under no  
 circumstances are any of you  
 allowed to speak amongst one  
 another. If Officer Crane or  
 Officer Tamez hear so much as a  
 whisper, they have been instructed  
 to use necessary force to make you  
 comply.

VIVIAN  
 That's illegal. You can't-

VIVIAN GASPS and then falls SILENT before her body hits the  
 floor with a loud THUD.

CLARA

Did you just TASE her?

OFFICER CRANE

Yes, and you're next if you don't shut up.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO

I know, I know. You all know your rights, know what's legal and illegal, have an argument for everything, right? You bitched about them enough and look where it landed all of you.

(mutters)

Fucking media.

(louder)

But the game has changed. You know nothing. Everything you know is *yesterday's news*.

OFFICER TAMEZ

Good one.

OFFICER ROMERO

(proudly)

Now we have a chance to make this nation great again and it starts with locking up people that disobey the law. Welcome to the 2022, folks, where there's consequences for your actions. The real patriots of this nation have decided which lives matter- and its those that ended prematurely because of sin, greed, and evil.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Now, you will follow instructions, without resistance, so that we can all get the fuck out of here in time for dinner.

(pause)

Everyone start putting your electronics in the box.

(to Officer Tamez)

Sarg?



Cell phones and other electronics THUD into the cardboard box being passed around by Officer Tamez, his work boots HEAVY against the floor as he walks around. Everyone else SHUFFLES to their designated lines. In the distance, a DOOR OPENS.

SERGEANT TORRES  
First up, we have Vivian Alaniz.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)  
Vivian Alaniz?

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)  
You, Goofy lookin' fellow- yes, you-  
where's Vivian Alaniz?

JULIAN BARRERA, 32, another journalist for the Austin Chronicle.

JULIAN  
She's, uh, well, that's her,  
Officer- on the floor.

SERGEANT TORRES  
Ah. Alright, we'll wait for her to  
come to, then. What's your name,  
son?

JULIAN  
Julian, sir. Julian Barrera.

SERGEANT TORRES  
(elongates name)  
Julian... Barrera. Alright, you're  
up. Let's go.

JULIAN SHUFFLES over to the office, his footsteps fading.

OFFICER TAMEZ  
Ma'am, your phone.

CLARA  
Huh? Oh, right. Sorry.

The cellphone THUDS against the cardboard box.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
Officer Tamez, was it? I, um, I  
need to use the ladies room.

OFFICER TAMEZ

Hold it.

CLARA

But I-

OFFICER TAMEZ

(loudly)

There will be no bathroom breaks,  
no water breaks, no sitting breaks,  
no crying breaks. You will stand  
until you are called and after your  
meeting with Officer Romero and  
Sergeant Torres, you can do  
whatever the hell you need to do.

(softly)

Any questions?

CLARA

Lots, actually.

OFFICER TAMEZ SCOFFS and then moves on, voice and footsteps  
FADING.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

The clock TICKS above, a name is called. As time passes, each  
name becomes less and less discernable. Soon there's a high  
pitched RINGING as CLARA becomes physically drained.

OFFICER ROMERO

(muffled)

Clara Mendez. Clara Mendez.

OFFICER CRANE

(muffled, closer)

Clara Mendez!

(gradually becoming clear,  
loud)

Yo! Mendez! Look alive! You're  
next!

CLARA inhales sharply.

CUT TO:

SCENE TWO

INT. AUSTIN CHRONICLE CONFERENCE ROOM

SERGEANT TORRES is sitting at the table, SHUFFLING through papers.

OFFICER ROMERO  
Took you long enough.

The door SHUTS behind her and OFFICER ROMERO walks around to stand behind Sergeant Torres.

CLARA  
What's going on? Some people-  
Rebekah, Kira, Jeremy - they never  
came back out. Where'd they go?

OFFICER ROMERO  
(ignoring her)  
Okay, Clara Mendez. 28. Journalist  
for the Austin Chronicle. You've  
been employed here how long?

CLARA  
(stiff)  
You have the file.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO  
Are we going to have a problem  
here, Mendez?

SERGEANT TORRES  
Miss Mendez, please take a seat.

There's a long pause before CLARA pulls out a chair to sit down.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)  
(calmer tone)  
Listen, we're here to do a job just  
as effectively as we possibly can.  
You've been standing out there for  
close to four hours now, surely you  
must be tired. Possibly need some  
water? Bathroom break?

CLARA  
And I would love to help you  
effectively do your job, but in  
order to do that, I need to know  
what the hell I'm being  
investigated for.

OFFICER ROMERO

Impressive attitude for someone who's only been employed as a journalist for five years.

CLARA

Ah, so you can read.

OFFICER ROMERO

You fuckin-

SERGEANT TORRES

(loudly)

Hey! We're all very tired here. It's been a long day. A lot of questions have gone unanswered and it can be very frustrating. Miss Mendez, I understand that you're upset- so are we. You see, we've been ordered by our Chief to conduct these interviews as part of an ongoing investigation regarding the violation of SB 1913, and we were told to do so without question - much like yourself. We were given a file, a checklist of questions, and have very little insight of the entire process. Our job, much like yours, is to ask questions, find the answers, and report it back to our supervisors.

CLARA

At least I know what the fuck I'm reporting, though. At least I conduct interviews in a more professional fashion than having an entire second floor of employees standing for four hours straight without food, water, or bathroom breaks. It's not even constitutional. At least when I interview people, I tell them what the topic is about.

SERGEANT TORRES

Miss Mendez, you and I both know that sometimes, in order to get the whole truth, the bigger picture of things, we need to remain cryptic.

CLARA

Wow. Such big words for such a big man. They teach you that at the academy?

OFFICER ROMERO

That's enough, Mendez. John, clearly she's going to be difficult.

(to Clara)

Probably because she has something to hide.

(to Sergeant Torres)

May as well throw her in with the others that refused to cooperate, Sarg.

CLARA

How would I know what information to hide if I don't even know what I'm being interrogated for? Listen, I don't know much about the law, so don't quote me here, but I do know that it is against our Miranda Rights to be questioned without an attorney present.

OFFICER ROMERO

Miranda Rights are waived for interviews directly ordered by the President of the United States when Senate Bill 2499 was passed.

CLARA

That's bullshit.

SERGEANT TORRES SIGHS and withdraws a paper, sliding it over for CLARA to read. CLARA takes a moment as she reads Section B of SB 2499 and then clicks her tongue against her teeth.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Well... I *still* want a lawyer present.

SERGEANT TORRES

Look, aren't you a bit curious *about* the questions? Would you like me to ask them? Then maybe you can start to get an idea.

Beat.

CLARA

Fine.

SERGEANT TORRES  
 Wonderful. Let's begin, then.  
 (to OFFICER ROMERO)  
 Officer Romero, do you mind  
 stepping out? I believe Clara and I  
 might have a better handle on the  
 conversation without a third  
 involved.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 Uh, but, Torres-

SERGEANT TORRES  
 It's Sergeant now, Romero. Now,  
 give us a few minutes.

OFFICER ROMERO GRUNTS and then begins to walk off, SLAMMING  
 the office door behind him.

SERGEANT TORRES begins SHUFFLING through papers again.  
 Beneath his weight, his chair SQUEAKS.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)  
 Alright, so, Miss Mendez. It states  
 here that you've been working with  
 the Austin Chronicle for five years  
 now. No criminal record on file  
 with the police department or with  
 the state, so that's good. Only one  
 speeding ticket in May of 2017 that  
 was paid online a week later- good,  
 good. So, we know you're  
 responsible and a law-abiding  
 citizen for the most part.

CLARA  
 (scoffs)  
 'For the most part'? Are you  
 kidding? It was *one* ticket in my  
 twelve years of driving. It was  
 also dismissed because of that. In  
 fact, I'm not sure how you even  
 have a record of it. Isn't the  
 court supposed to erase expunged  
 records?

SERGEANT TORRES  
 I think you're about to learn a lot  
 about what our court system *says*  
 they'll do and what they *actually*  
 do.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

Now, it also states here that you have a sister, Avery, who's 21. Both of your parents, Lydia and Rodolfo Mendez, are deceased. Drunk driver. That's unfortunate. My apologies.

CLARA

It was ten years ago. It's fine.

SERGEANT TORRES

So, you practically raised your little sister on your own, didn't you? That's very noble of you. I have four little brothers of my own, but I was fortunate enough not to have to worry about things you must have.

CLARA

Yeah, I did. But I know that you're not here to question everyone ten years later about the legality of my guardianship of her so, I'm still curious as to why you're here.

SERGEANT TORRES

And we'll get to that. Just asking a few questions first. I have my checklist, remember?

(pause)

So, back to your sister. You'd consider yourself to be this girl's mother? Or, like a mother?

CLARA

No. No, not at all. No one could replace our mother, especially not me. I'm her guardian, legally, but she's my sister and that's it. Again, I'm not really sure what this has to do with anything?

SERGEANT TORRES

I'm just making sure that I'm getting a clear picture of your character, Miss Mendez, that's all.

(MORE)

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)  
 You seem to have a natural maternal sense about you- responsible, dependable, nurturing, protective- which leads me to believe that you'd never consider murdering a child, or a baby...

CLARA  
 What? No. Absolutely not. What the hell?

SERGEANT TORRES  
 - or a fetus, for that matter. Right?

Beat.

CLARA  
 If you're asking if I've ever had an abortion then the answer is no. I haven't.

SERGEANT TORRES  
 You certainly came to that conclusion quickly. So... You'd agree then? That abortion is murder?

CLARA  
 Not at all. Also, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand your implication, *officer*. I came to it easily.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES  
 There's a gap in your medical file. Says here you went to Grace Hospital back in 2014 but most of the file is redacted. Do you recall what you went in for?

CLARA  
 (sighs)  
 I'm a journalist. I frequent hospitals all the time to talk with people- crime victims, patients, doctors and nurses- in case there's some kind of lead in a story. Must have been one of those times.



SERGEANT TORRES

I'd believe that, but you didn't start working with the Chronicle until the Fall of 2016.

CLARA

(scoffs)

How the fuck am I supposed to remember something that happened eight years ago?

SERGEANT TORRES

I mean, it's a hospital visit, Miss Mendez, not a trip to the grocery store. Surely you must remember *some* of your reason for being there and *why* they'd redact information.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

Were you there for an abortion? Maybe for yourself? For someone else... like your sister, perhaps?

CLARA

Hospitals in Texas were notorious for denying women an abortion. That became even stricter after Texas divided into five states three years ago. Not to mention it not being covered by insurance so cost would have been in the thousands. Do you really think a journalist makes enough to go the hospital only to be turned away and still sent a bill in the mail for stepping foot in their lobby?

SERGEANT TORRES

Hospitals may deny an abortion, but they do perform D&C's for miscarriages.

CLARA

(perplexed)

Are you seriously criminalizing a *miscarriage*?

SERGEANT TORRES

Not us. The United States government. The police don't make the laws, Miss Mendez, we just-

CLARA

-enforce them. Yeah, I know. We've all heard that one. Brainless robots, no sense of actually serving and protecting despite swearing to do so. A joke.

SERGEANT TORRES

(tone change)

Miss Mendez, what were you doing at Grace Hospital in the Fall of 2014?

Beat.

The clock's TICKING gradually increases in sound throughout the questioning.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

Clara... answer the question.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

Clara, I want to help you. But I can't do that if you don't work with me here.

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

Clara, you're going to leave us with no choice but to arrest you for murder. Is that what you want?

Beat.

SERGEANT TORRES (CONT'D)

(sighs)

Alright, then.

(calls for Officer Romero)

Romero, get in here.

OFFICER ROMERO opens the door and comes inside.

OFFICER ROMERO

What's happening, Sarg? Did she confess?

SERGEANT TORRES' chair SCRAPES against the floor as he rises.

SERGEANT TORRES

Clara Mendez, you're under arrest for-

CLARA

I was raped.

The TICKING abruptly stops. It's SILENT for a moment.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I was raped, okay. I went to the hospital to get a SANE exam done but when I got there, in that room, waiting for a doctor, I decided that I didn't want to put myself through another traumatic experience so... I left. It was two o'clock in the morning. Whatever nurse was there probably didn't want to add to their paperwork so they didn't file any. I'm surprised they even made a note of it at all.

OFFICER ROMERO

Oh, come on, Johnny. That's story's way too convenient-

CLARA

(scoffs)

Convenient? What part of being raped is convenient to you, Officer?

OFFICER ROMERO

Your story doesn't make sense. If a woman checks in to the hospital for a SANE exam, the doctors are bound by law to call and inform local police, and there is no record indicating that a call or report was made that day, that time, with your name.

CLARA

Bullshit. That was debunked in 2012. It's the rape survivor's choice whether they want to report it to law enforcement or not. Maybe learn the law you're supposed to enforce.

OFFICER ROMERO

The only reason someone wouldn't want to report it is because it didn't happen- there's nothing to report.

CLARA

No. A reason someone wouldn't want to report it is because the police have a really shitty history of criminalizing the victim- a lot like what you're doing right now, for example. For some people, the case is worse than the rape because at least the rape is over in 5 minutes, the case goes on and on for months- years, even- with little to no actual resolution. Rape is not convenient, Officer Romero. It isn't an excuse. It's very real.

(to Sergeant Torres)

Now, I've given you an answer, whether you're satisfied with it or not is your prerogative, but until there is legitimate evidence to hold me guilty, I am innocent and free to go.

SERGEANT TORRES

(deep sigh)

Well, Miss Mendez, we appreciate your cooperation-

OFFICER ROMERO

(sardonic laugh)

Is that what you'd call it?

SERGEANT TORRES

- and if we have any more questions, well- we know where to find you.

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT 2

## SCENE THREE

## EXT. PARKING LOT OF CHRONICLE - AFTERNOON

Outside, the birds are CHIRPING, completely oblivious to the destruction of mankind. Cars whiz by, occasionally HONKING as other cars try to merge onto the freeway.

CLARA'S heels CLACK against the pavement as she walks towards her car, keys JINGLING as she removes them from her purse. She withdraws her phone and turns it on, a small DING welcoming her back. After a few CLICKS, the line begins RINGING.

AVERY

(over the phone)

Clara? Clara? Where the hell have you been? I've called you like ten times and every single time I was sent straight to voicemail. Are you okay?

CLARA

No. We need to meet. The police were just at my work. It's too much to explain over the phone. Where are you?

AVERY

Oh my god. I'm- I'm at school I can meet you at the Café across the university. Or should I catch a bus and take it to David's-

CLARA

No, no. I'm too worked up to go back to his place. For now, anyway. I'll meet you at the Café in thirty minutes.

AVERY

Clare? Should I be worried?

Beat.

CLARA

Yes. But not about me. I'll see you soon.

CUT TO:

## SCENE FOUR

## INT. UNIVERSITY CAFÉ - AFTERNOON

The door to the cafe DINGS as CLARA enters and MUSIC plays softly overhead, drowned out by the sounds of the espresso and steam machines BEEPING and rolling out coffee. There's quite a few people there, the CHATTER is higher than the usual amount but not louder than the baristas frequently yelling out orders at the counter.

AVERY

Clara! Over here!

CLARA heads over to her sister, heels CLACKING against the hardwood floor. As she nears their table, AVERY pulls out a chair for CLARA, the wooden feet scraping against the wooden floor.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Ordered you an iced vanilla latte. Figured it'd be out before you got here, didn't want hot coffee getting stale. Anyway, what happened?

CLARA

This shit is out of my hand, Ave. The police came to my work and rounded up all of my colleagues, all of them. Categorized us by 'male' and 'female' and then had us stand for four hours without water, a bathroom break, took our phones, wouldn't let us sit or eat. Jessica is diabetic and she nearly passed out. They tased the fuck out of Vivian. I don't even know what they did with Rebekah, Kira, and Julian but they never came back.

AVERY

What?

CLARA

It was horrible but... something tells me that I only witnessed a fraction of their torment.

Both girls take sips from their drinks, pondering over what was just laid out.

AVERY

Okay, so, what now? Why are they doing this?

CLARA

I don't know. They had my entire record, Ave. Like... reports on when and how Mom and Dad died. They had my guardianship papers, medical records, police records... They're digging and they're digging deep. I think they're trying to find out who's had abortions or miscarriages—that's all their line of questioning really led to.

AVERY

They're criminalizing *miscarriages*?

Beside them, a woman overhears their conversation and scoots over to them, her chair scuffing against the floor.

Jasmine, 38, attorney.

JASMINE

Excuse me. I'm sorry, I couldn't help but overhear your conversation.

CLARA

Oh. Oh, um, well we were just talking about things we were overhearing today—

JASMINE

Don't worry, I'm against this backwards bill, and I don't give a crap who knows it. It's disgusting.

CLARA and AVERY both give a loud SIGH of relief.

CLARA

Sorry, it's just difficult to know who to trust in all of this. After having a painstaking morning with the Austin Police Department, the last thing I want to do is stir up trouble in a university cafe. Pretty sure they'd be happy to nail me to the wall for just about any little thing.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I'm a journalist with the Austin Chronicle. Media and the cops don't exactly have the best history. And, well,

(scoffs)

I'm a woman so. You know how that goes.

JASMINE

Oh, I totally get it. They hate me, too. My name is Jasmine. I work for a small law firm over on Congress Avenue. They swung by our office, smug faces and all, and took several of my coworkers after the investigation was over. When we asked where they were taking them, they refused to say. We know our rights- I mean, it's our job, you know? So, a lot of us argued about the legality of their methods and some of the cops just laughed at us. One even said that we should consider erasing everything we knew about the law as it was going to all get changed soon enough.

AVERY

Wow.

At the back of the café, a customer speaks up.

CAFÉ CUSTOMER

Hey! Can you turn that up?

The CHATTER DIES DOWN as everyone's attention is redirected to a TV whose volume increases drastically. Sporadic chairs SCRAPE against the tile as patrons twist their attention to the TV.

JILL ANDERSON, a very well known female reporter for Channel 10 News.

JILL

-been suspected of aiding or abetting in abortion acts. It's only been 24-hours since S.B. 1913, or what the white hats like to call The American Restoration Act, has been passed, but we're already witnessing devastating repercussions.



ROBERT GAMEZ, another reporter for Channel 10 News.

ROBERT

That's right, Jill. Only moments ago, we received word that a new section of the bill has been released, clearly stating that anyone with information on the individuals that have aided, abetted, or conducted abortions or have had miscarriages, can be awarded up to \$10,000 if they come forward with information. Since then, our phones have been ringing off the hook with reports of unconstitutional detainment and investigations. Citizens reported that they were told to stand for hours on end without food, water, or bathroom breaks, while officers interrogated each individual within the building. From what we've gathered, it seems the line of questioning has everything to do with this new section.

There's a few audible GASPS around the café. ROBERT'S voice FADES OUT.

JASMINE

Oh my god. Erin.

CLARA

What?

JASMINE

There's a woman at the office- my office, she's been there for about two years now. She was actually only supposed to be a temp- anyway, that doesn't matter. Her name was Erin. Really cute girl, sweet and easy to please but she was notorious for having a thing for married men. Well, one of our colleagues discovered that Erin was sleeping with her husband. Erin didn't deny it when I confronted her about it but she wasn't proud of it either. She started crying saying that she knew it was wrong but he treated her so right, even believed that they were in love.

(MORE)

JASMINE (CONT'D)

But everyone knew Margie- that's the wife's name- everyone knew her husband was a pig. She knew it too but they had kids and a house and I guess she figured that keeping the family together was more important. Anyway, Margie went to the office with the officers and when she came out she had this smirk on her face, I'd never seen it before. I'm not saying Margie can't be a bitch, she definitely can, but there was something different about this look of hers. I swear, when she passed Erin on her way back to her desk, she gave her the coldest glare. Then the officers called Erin's name and we never again after that.

AVERY

You don't think-

JASMINE

I think women are capable of so much more than what society deems us to be, especially when they're angry.

AVERY

(sighs)

If only we could channel that anger into something productive instead of lashing out at one another.

CLARA

Maybe we can.

AVERY

What do you mean?

JASMINE

Wait, what are they saying now?

JILL'S voice FADES IN.

JILL

Just this morning, 32-year-old Arkansas woman, Layla Harper, was arrested outside of Arkansas State Hospital where she had undergone a D&C just moments prior.

(MORE)

JILL (CONT'D)

For viewers unfamiliar with the term, a D&C is short for 'Dilation and Curettage', a surgical procedure that many women undergo post-pregnancy and for miscarriages. Layla was there for a miscarriage.

ROBERT

Unfortunately, Layla is just one of the many women being detained all over the United States, for miscarriages that are completely out of their control. On top of the devastating experience of miscarriage, these women are being criminalized for it.

JILL:

And then we have others, like Jane Moore, 54, single mother of three who had an abortion 25 years ago, being arrested outside of her home in East Florida. So, it seems there is no statute of limitations for these so-called 'crimes'.

There's a loud CRASH as the glass windows of the café break. Outside on the street are rioters. A brawl had broken out between two different sides and someone accidentally fell through. Patrons rush over to help the guy out.

CUSTOMER 1

Hey, man. You okay? You're bleeding. Can someone call 911?

CUSTOMER 2

What's going on?

PROTESTOR 1 shifts his weight, broken glass CRUNCHING beneath him.

PROTESTOR 1

We were marching over to the Capitol and these 40 Days for Life guys just started coming at us.

PROTESTOR 2, a woman, comes into the café.

PROTESTOR 2

We tried ignoring them but they kept getting in my face, so my boyfriend told them to back off.

PROTESTOR 1  
That's when they clocked me on the head.

PROTESTOR 2  
And then they pushed him against this window.

CUSTOMER 1  
Unbelievable.

CUSTOMER 2  
Well, maybe this wouldn't have happened if you were marching for the right cause.

CUSTOMER 1  
What the hell?

CUSTOMER 2  
I'm just saying!

CUSTOMER 3  
Well say it outside!

All of the customers begin arguing and soon another fight ensues. There's pushing and shoving, name calling, and tables and chairs being knocked over.

CLARA  
Avery. We need to go. Now. Jasmine, it was nice meeting you.

JASMINE  
Same to you. You both stay safe.

CUT TO:

SCENE FIVE

EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT - EVENING

More protestors have gathered. Their footsteps are thunderous but unable to drown out the even louder chants. Both sides: pro-life and pro-choice are marching towards the Capitol, each with their own chants, their voices overlapping one another. In the distance, a siren draws near.

CLARA'S vehicle BEEPS as she unlocks it, the car doors OPENING and SHUTTING as she and AVERY slide into their respective seats. The chants of the protestors are somewhat muffled as the car's engine springs to life.

The gravel beneath the tires CRUNCH as she backs out of her parking space and drives out to the street. The SIREN has come closer.

AVERY

That officer's going to start directing traffic.

CLARA

There's no way he can control a crowd of this size. Idiot.

AVERY

Just take a left here. He'll probably reroute you on some stupid detour they have set up.

CLARA does as AVERY says.

CLARA

Recognize anyone?

AVERY

A few, yeah. Classes were canceled today in lieu of the bill so I'm not surprised to see a lot of them out here. It's good to see that the majority are pro-choice.

CLARA

Yeah. They're our country's last hope.

Beat.

AVERY

I can't believe this is real.

CLARA

I can't.. but then I can.

AVERY

What do you mean?

CLARA

I mean, just look at the way our country was being run, Ave. A two-party democracy is not a democracy. They gave us two options, while burying the rest, and then called it a "choice" when we picked the lesser of two evils.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

They had solutions, scientists and doctors and geniuses, they had the answers and no one that could actually do anything listened. Because it meant getting rid of what kept us in line, it meant that the rich would stop getting rich and the poor would stop being so poor and they just couldn't fucking have that. Everything they did was leading up to this moment. I mean...

(scoffs)

The wall- what did the president say it was for? To keep the immigrants out but we all said it wasn't for that, it was to keep *us in*. They closed off the borders because they didn't want *us* going anywhere. No other country *wanted* to come here- our economy was- *is*- absolute crap, we had the highest numbers of people infected with COVID, and everyone was out of work so everything was closed. There was no reason for anyone to come here.

(pause)

And then, they divided Texas into five states because it was going to ease the electric grid- bull-fucking-shit. Republicans were scared, Texas was being represented by Democrats and they needed to get more seats in the Senate, so they divided us up in a way that would give them three with a swing state. I mean... fuckin' hell. Even if we won the swing state, we'd still be at a loss.

(pause)

And-

CLARA stops when she notices that AVERY is quiet.

CLARA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

I'm sorry, Ave. I don't mean to be pessimistic or to go on a rant-

AVERY

I know, Clare. It's okay. We're all angry and worried; I think a little bit of pessimism and rage is okay given the circumstances.

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

But if I've learned anything from being a History major, it's that there is light at the end of the tunnel. It's a long tunnel, sure, but there's an end to it. And there's always someone willing to rise up to the challenge of helping us get through it. I mean, there was Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Tom Hayden, Huey Newton, Malcom X, Heather Booth... The list goes on, and all accomplished great things.

CLARA

(softly)

Yeah. That's true... thanks.

Beat.

AVERY

(deep sigh)

Ready for more misery? Think the evening news should be on 108.3.

CLARA

(chuckles softly)

Bring it on.

AVERY CLICKS a button and the RADIO comes to life. AVERY shifts through different stations, each being cut off immediately until she lands on the right station.

FEMALE REPORTER (JOSIE)

-not sure what this means for United States citizens. This bill was passed overnight, *everything* changed overnight. There were no warnings, nothing hinting that this was even plausible. I mean, we knew there were people who *wanted* this to happen, obviously, but to make it a reality? Especially without making the opinion public-

FEMALE REPORTER 2 (TINA)

Yeah, because they knew the decision would be overturned. No one would take the opinion seriously enough to vote yes on it, especially not one that puts a *bounty* on the heads of people who have had a miscarriage.

JOSIE

Ah, there's been some speculation across social media platforms that this is just the beginning of what could potentially be a very "Handmaid's Tale" lifestyle. I mean, we have people out there that believe in an 'eye for an eye'.

TINA

Wait, wait- aren't these people *pro-life*?

JOSIE

Yeah, the hypocrisy is not lost on me either, Tina.

TINA

So, what exactly are they speculating?

JOSIE

Well, some are saying that incarceration isn't enough. Some want the full death penalty for them. Heck, just the other day I came across a viral video of a guy suggesting *execution by fire squad* or, or *hanging*, even, for people who have had abortions. His justification, aside from the whole 'eye for an eye' thing is that they don't want to pay more taxes just to keep these people incarcerated. So, essentially, they want to expedite the death penalty for individuals under this "crime".

JOSIE'S voice FADES as CLARA turns DOWN the radio as the car rolls to a stop.

CLARA

What the hell? What's going on? What's with all this traffic? Can you see anything on your side, Avery?

AVERY

No, just looks like lights and sirens up ahead. Maybe it was an accident? Or we're running into another part of the march?



CLARA

Hmm. Possibly. Check your phone,  
maybe there's something on Facebook  
or Twitter.

CLARA lowers her window cranes her neck to get a view of the  
traffic. There's sounds of distant honks both in front and  
behind her. Her phone RINGS and she answers it.

CLARA (CONT'D)

David?

DAVID

Clara, where are you?

CLARA

We're on 15th, heading east to get  
to the expressway. Sorry, it's been  
a day, I just haven't had a chance-

DAVID

15th?

CLARA

(annoyed)

Yeah, we took a detour because the  
cops would have made us go further-

DAVID

Clara, where on 15th?

CLARA

Um, well, getting closer to the  
Capitol-

AVERY

Oh my god. Clara-

DAVID (V.O.)

God damn it, turn around-

AVERY

Clara. Clara, look!

A loud EXPLOSION erupts, the phone is CUT, and the people are  
leaving their cars, running in the opposite direction. As  
they pass, CLARA hears someone YELLING.

STRANGER

BOMB! BOMB!

Another EXPLOSION erupts in the distance followed by others that gradually get closer. Then one final explosion can be heard, louder than the rest before the sound CUTS OFF.

CUT TO:

SFX: CLOSING SONG, CREDITS, AND WHEN TO TUNE IN FOR NEXT EPISODE.

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 3"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

Phone Number

COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

INT. PRISON INTERROGATION ROOM

A HEAVY METAL DOOR swings SHUT followed by three pairs of HEAVY FOOTSTEPS and JINGLING KEYS. An INMATE is CURSING and GROANING as he's being dragged from his cell to an interrogation room by two guards, being led by another.

INMATE

Let me fucking GO. I already told you, I don't know anything. This is unconstitutional-

The FOOTSTEPS stop and the shoes SQUEAK as they pivot to look back at the inmate. The GUARD hits the inmate with his baton with a loud WHACK. The inmate GROANS.

GUARD

(spits)

The constitution doesn't apply to you.

(to the other two guards)

Come on. Bring him this way.

Their FOOTSTEPS resume, FADING as they pass the interrogation room that CLARA is in. The sounds of her own torture OVERLAP the retreating footsteps.

A year later, OFFICER ROMERO has been promoted to SERGEANT and is conducting the interrogation.

OFFICER ROMERO

(feigning niceness)

Just tell us what you know, Mendez, and all of it- all of the pain, all of the suffering- it ends, just like that.

CLARA'S breathing is labored through her nostrils.

CLARA

No.

OFFICER ROMERO

(growls angrily)

A thorn in my side that day at the Chronicle and an even bigger thorn now.

(MORE)

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 I should have dealt with you when I had the chance. I knew something was wrong when Torres let you go— had a sick feeling in my gut when you walked out that door. Mhm. But, well, God is good, ain't he? He brought you right back to us, after all. Wanted you to pay for the crimes you committed.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO releases his grip on CLARA'S hair and THROWS her to the floor. She GROANS but remains limp. Where else can she go? OFFICER ROMERO'S HEAVY FOOTSTEPS circle the room, stopping as he reaches another officer displaying a set of tools on an aluminum tray. One by one, he picks them up and sets them back down, inspecting them each.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 Think of Avery.

CLARA  
 Keep my sister's name out of your fucking mouth.

OFFICER ROMERO pivots on his heel.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 Tsk, tsk. Language, Clara. Is that really any way for you to speak to an officer of the law? I don't need to remind you of what happens to idiot little girls that fail to comply, do I?

CLARA stays SILENT.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 (chuckles)  
 Didn't think so.

CLARA  
 What is that? Pliers? What- you- you can't use those-

OFFICER ROMERO  
 A lot has changed since we first met, Mendez. Criminals like yourself have a special place in the constitution that waives your rights as a citizen. You're at the mercy of the Law, now. *My* mercy.  
 (pause, sighs)  
 (MORE)

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

You know, it was shortly after your first escape that the department found Torres guilty of helping you. We tortured him for days, trying to get him to give up any kind of information that might lead us to you, but he wouldn't give. Makes me wonder if y'all were fuckin' on the side or something. Wouldn't peg him to be a killer-fucker, but... I guess we all have our vices.

(spits)

But Satan takes forms of all kinds, and he was a man easily tempted. It's why he was stripped of his rank as Sergeant and left to die in the very cell you'll be rotting in down in solitary.

(pause)

This is his badge, you know. I made sure to wear it every time we brought him up here for an interrogation. It was the last thing he saw before he died.

CLARA

I see they're still putting badges on pigs and calling them cops.

OFFICER ROMERO lets out a LOUD SIGH before walking from his spot over to CLARA, kicking her in the stomach with a GRUNT. CLARA'S GROAN is cut short as she COUGHS, trying to catch her breath. OFFICER ROMERO then SPITS on her as he straightens himself out, smoothing out the wrinkles of his uniform and straightening out the badge.

OFFICER ROMERO

You know, as Sergeant, they wanted me on the frontlines. Said I was one of the best out on the field and I could help catch you and your stupid sister. But when I heard they finally captured you- ooh, I couldn't pass up the opportunity to get down here and have a little one-on-one session with you.

OFFICER ROMERO grabs CLARA by the hair causing her to yelp, and then brings her up.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Get up.

(to the two guards)

(MORE)

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
 You two, strap her down in that  
 seat. Make sure the straps are good  
 and tight, we don't want her  
 squirming too much and getting  
 loose.

CLARA  
 No. No, fuck- get your fucking  
 hands off me.

The two guards strap CLARA down as she continues resisting.  
 One of the officers PUNCHES her across the jaw, causing her  
 to go SILENT as they strap her down. Her breathing becomes  
 heavy again and her mouth is wet with blood.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 (breathless)  
 Please. Please, don't do this.  
 Please.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 (to the guard)  
 Open the door. I want everyone out  
 there to hear this bitch scream.  
 We're about to get a whole lotta  
 information, boys.

Beat.

CLARA SCREAMS.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING  
 "CAST", CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 3.



ACT 1

SCENE ONE

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING

An EKG machine BEEPS STEADILY over the sound of two MUFFLED VOICES and the occasional distant MUFFLED sounds of the intercom above as doctors are paged from room to room. CLARA GROANS as she comes to. The muffled voices STOP and there's a faint sound of footsteps drawing nearer.

DAVID  
(muffled, gradually  
clears)  
Clara? Clara, can you hear me?

CLARA  
(soft, wincing)  
David?

NURSE RWANDA, 42, African-American, mother of three boys and one daughter and wife of a teacher, nurse at GRACE HOSPITAL for 15 years.

NURSE RWANDA  
Hey, good evening, Clara. My name is Nurse Rwanda. Do you know where you are?

CLARA  
I- I don't remember...

NURSE RWANDA  
That's okay, sweetheart just try to relax. No, no. Don't move. You're at Grace Hospital in Austin, Texas. Does that ring a bell?

CLARA  
Grace Hospital?

NURSE RWANDA  
Honey, do you remember anything? Of what it was that brought you here?

CLARA  
I-

There's a brief FLASHBACK of the moments leading up to her blackout: an explosion, Avery yelling out her name, and being hit on the head with falling debris.

CLARA (CONT'D)

(sharp inhale)

I was... near the Capitol. There was an explosion. And Avery... Avery...

(panic sets in)

Avery?

DAVID

Shh, shh. Avery's okay. She's right over there, to the side of you.

NURSE RWANDA

She woke up not too long ago but the side effects of the sedation still haven't completely worn off. I expect her to be waking up in another hour or two.

CLARA

Sedation? Is she hurt?

NURSE RWANDA

No, no. She just needed a couple of stitches, that's all. So did you.

CLARA reaches up to touch the part of her head that's been throbbing and WINCES.

DAVID

I'm sure it hurts way worse than it looks.

CLARA

I'd rather the opposite.

NURSE RWANDA

Ah, the doctor is here.

DOCTOR ANSARI, 40, working at GRACE HOSPITAL for 10 years as a general doctor.

DOCTOR ANSARI

Good evening, Miss Mendez. I'm Doctor Ansari. How's that injury treating you, hmm? And the stitches, they to your liking?

CLARA

I mean, I'd rather they not be there at all.

DOCTOR ANSARI

Oh, come on. My sewing skills aren't *that* bad. Hey, I practically saved you from being the next Harry Potter, huh?

CLARA SCOFFS with amusement.

DOCTOR ANSARI (CONT'D)

Alright, Miss Mendez, sit up for me please. I'm going to check your eyes for dilation...

(pause)

Good. Now I'm going to check your neck... just relax and allow me to move it.

CLARA WINCES.

DOCTOR ANSARI (CONT'D)

Hmm.

There's another loud page on the intercom.

DOCTOR ANSARI (CONT'D)

(sighs)

It's been like that since the explosion yesterday. Tie that in with the end wave of a pandemic—we're practically out of beds. Some of us are working on 18 hour shifts.

(to Clara)

Miss Mendez, how are you feeling? Any dizziness? Nausea?

CLARA

Um, a little nauseous. More groggy than dizzy. And there's this constant ringing.

DOCTOR ANSARI

The nausea and grogginess is from the medication, but the ringing of the ear and the neck pain have me concerned.

(to Nurse Rwanda)

Nurse, go ahead and give Miss Mendez 2000 MG of Tylenol.

(MORE)

DOCTOR ANSARI (CONT'D)  
 Schedule another CT scan so we can  
 get a better idea of what's going  
 on.

(to Clara)

Miss Mendez, I'll come back to  
 check on you once I receive the  
 results but I want you to stay over  
 an extra night just to be safe. If  
 there's anything you need, you're  
 in good hands with Nurse Rwanda.

(to Nurse Rwanda)

Nurse, make sure to page me when  
 her sister wakes up.

DOCTOR ANSARI retreats, his footsteps followed by another  
 loud page on the intercom.

CLARA

Well, he's different.

NURSE RWANDA

Only the best at Grace Hospital.

They both chuckle.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

Okay, Clara, we're going to get you  
 prepped for that scan but expect to  
 wait a while. Until then, you're  
 free to walk around. Dinner gets  
 served in two hours but the  
 cafeteria is open if you're hungry  
 now.

CLARA

Okay, thank you.

NURSE RWANDA

If you need anything, you can page  
 me using this remote and pressing  
 this button here. I'll come back in  
 a few seconds with some Tylenol and  
 water.

NURSE RWANDA retreats, her footsteps fading.

DAVID

Hey.

CLARA

Hey.

DAVID

I called you the second I heard-

CLARA

David, it's okay. It's not your fault.

DAVID SIGHS.

DAVID

You were right. I've had time to think on our last argument and you were right- I knew that the repercussions for this bill were going to be disastrous. I knew that it was going to go against everything that I stood for. And I let it all happen because I'm still scared that they don't take me seriously.

CLARA

I can't say that I understand. Honestly, I hope I'm never in a position where I can empathize with that. You...

(pause)

People are being plucked out of their offices, out of their homes... Our rights as women are being stripped from us. And you're going to stand there tell me and yourself that you had no other choice because you didn't know what would happen to you. You. One person. Over an entire female population.

DAVID

I'm sorry.

CLARA SNIFFLES.

CLARA

I don't want your fucking apologies, David. I want you to *do* something. Fix this. Or at least give me the tools I need to do it if you're too much of a coward to do it yourself.

(scoffs)

I mean, for fucks sake, you knew what I did for a living. *One* little anonymous tip and all of this could have been prevented.

DAVID

You really think that a tip to the media was going to stop this? It was going to happen, with or without a population approval.

CLARA

But people could have been prepared. I mean, most cities have their own groups and organizations that have been preparing for this but think of how much more could have been accomplished if we had just given them a little heads up.

Beat.

DAVID

Listen, it's late. You're probably hungry. Avery wakes up in an hour. I'm going to head home, get things ready for when you get back.

(pause)

You're... still coming back, right?

CLARA

(sighs)

I mean, where else are we going to go?

DAVID

(chuckle)

Well, when you put it like that it makes it sound like you're just using me for my house.

CLARA stays silent.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(clears throat)

O-kay. No jokes yet. I'll head home now.

His footsteps retreat as he walks off.

FADE OUT:

SCENE TWO

FADE IN:

INT. GRACE HOSPITAL - CLARA'S ROOM - EVENING

An EKG machine beeps near AVERY on the other side of the room that they share. She's still asleep as CLARA watches the evening news.

JILL

Good evening, thank you for joining us at 6, I'm Jill Anderson.

ROBERT

And I'm Robert Gamez. Tonight, updates of the historic and devastating explosion of the Texas Capitol yesterday are still underway as firefighters and rescue officials continue to search for individuals trapped under debris of the building and surrounding streets.

JILL

That's right, Robert. With the death toll climbing to 298 and over 6,000 being hospitalized for injuries, law enforcement is working diligently to find the culprits responsible for this heinous crime. Now, we don't exactly *know* what happened in the events leading up to the explosion, but we do have a video capturing the moment the blast happened. Let's take a look.

The TV cuts to a loud explosion with other people screaming and running away. Car and home alarms go off before another explosion erupts and cuts off the camera.

JILL (CONT'D)

This is a video from an individual traveling east on 11th who claims he heard the explosion and immediately began capturing footage of the blast. It shows debris from the explosion, last night. Thomas Nguyen is at the scene right now. Thomas, how's the situation over there?

THOMAS

This was the beating heart of Austin, Texas, where people would come from all over the United States to take a walk down Congress Avenue and explore the historic building through guided tours, and in just a few seconds- complete and total devastation. Now, as you can see behind me, the US military has sent four cargos full of medical supplies, food, and water since yesterday's explosion that was so powerful, it left a crater that stretched to seven-hundred feet and registered as a 3.3 magnitude earthquake. Of course, this caused a mass power outage, affecting Dell Seton Medical Center from accepting anymore patients. Instead, people are being transferred over to Grace Hospital and St. David's where they will be treated for their injuries.

JILL

Thank you, Thomas. Let's get with Jamie Corsi over at Grace Hospital for the latest on the victims. Jamie?

JAMIE

Good evening, Jill, Robert. As Thomas mentioned, Dell Seton was unable to accept any more patients at their facility, claiming that they were at max capacity and any more would put the generators at risk of shutting down. That's when Grace Hospital and St. David's stepped in to take on the rest of the load. Right now, doctors and nurses are working on overdrive, some even going on a 20 hour work shift, to make sure that the people of Austin are well taken care of. So far we have updates that of the 6,000 hospitalized, at least 4,000 are guaranteed to pull through. The rest? In critical condition.

A pan out of the Capitol before the explosion.



JAMIE (CONT'D)

Now, many of the people injured were state employees although most had retired for the night. Others were protestors, marching from the University and down Congress both for and against the recent overruling of Roe v Wade. While it's uncertain whether either party set off the blasts one thing is clear- no one was the winner here.

JILL

So sad.

ROBERT

Truly, truly a devastation. Our hearts go out to the families tonight, offering them a little more than thoughts and prayers. Anyone in need of shelter, food, and water, can reach out to these hotlines on the screen. They'll be accepting anyone at any time.

AVERY

C-clara?

CLARA shuts the TV OFF and rises from the bed.

CLARA

Hey, Ave. Don't get up too fast.

AVERY

(groans)  
Where are we?

CLARA

Grace Hospital. There was an explosion. I guess we both blacked out.

AVERY WINCES

CLARA (CONT'D)

Know what's cooler than matching tattoo's? Matching stitches.

AVERY

(chuckles)  
Yeah, but which one's cheaper and less fatal?

CLARA  
 (chuckles)  
 I'll page the nurse, just sit back.

CLARA pushes the button that pages the nurse.

FADE OUT.

SCENE THREE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

AVERY and CLARA are in their room, watching reruns of The Office, and eating their dinner. CLARA is hungrily devouring the food on her plate while AVERY watches in disgust.

AVERY  
 Jesus, Clare, you act like you  
 haven't eaten in weeks.

CLARA  
 (mouthful)  
 Since when did hospital food get so  
 good? Are you gonna eat your Jell-  
 O?

AVERY  
 Mmm, no. I've lost my appetite.

CLARA  
 Gimme.

The TV cuts to a broadcast giving more updates on the death toll that's now reached 302. And even more people being found in the rubble.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 That could have been us.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 I still can't believe that they  
 bombed the Capitol.

AVERY  
 I mean, so many people have little  
 respect for historic monuments, it  
 really shouldn't come as a shock.  
 You're a reporter, you should know  
 this.

CLARA

I know this is going to pain your  
little Historian heart-

AVERY

Don't you dare-

CLARA

-but keeping these buildings and  
statues up aren't monumental in the  
least. If they really want to pay  
respects to the history behind  
them, they'd stick them in museums.  
It's not about the history or the  
culture; I mean, come on. People  
want to respect history by  
repeating it instead of learning  
from it? More like they just want a  
reason to continue supporting  
fascist regimes and using outdated  
cement as a scapegoat-

AVERY

Remember the blissful silence of an  
18 hour sleep? I do.

Their CHUCKLES are cut short as DAVID knocks on the door and  
ENTERS.

DAVID

Hey, what's so funny?

AVERY

Clara's on one of her anti-fascist  
rants again.

DAVID

Ah, I missed a genuine Clara Mendez  
exclusive again, huh?

CLARA

Oh, don't worry, you've inspired  
more fuel for the fire.

Beat.

AVERY

O-kayyy... Anyway. David, please  
tell me you brought some  
Whataburger.

DAVID

Patty melt, onion rings, and a  
sprite, as requested.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Clara, got you some fries if you want them, with extra pepper for your ketchup.

CLARA

(mumbles)

Thanks.

DAVID

And a change of clothes for each of you. Figured you'd want to get changed out of clothes covered in dirt and ash.

CLARA

Well, I'd say that was very generous of you but I'm sure your motives were far from chivalrous.

DAVID

You're not suggesting that I would invade your privacy and sift through your wide collection of underwear, trying to pick between red or black lace?

CLARA

(somewhat amused)

No, I'd never accuse you of something like that. I know you prefer silk.

The CRINKLING of AVERY'S food wrapper stops abruptly.

AVERY

And just like that, I've lost my appetite again.

The trio CHUCKLE but there's palpable tension in the air.

DAVID

(clears throat)

Well, visiting hours are going to be over soon so I'm going to get going. Um... keep me updated, Ave, won't you?

AVERY

(confused)

Uh, yeah, sure. Of course. Thanks for coming and bringing all the goods.

DAVID

Of course. If you need anything just... well, you know.

(to Clara)

Not sure if you're going to want me to pick you up or if you'll call a Lyft?

CLARA

Oh, shit. My car.

DAVID

Yeah, it was completely totaled. I was still listed as an emergency contact so I had it delivered to my place. Wasn't too sure if you were fine having it sent to a scrapyard without your consent.

CLARA

Thank you.

(sighs)

Yeah, I guess one of us will call you if we need to.

DAVID

Okay. I'll, uh, see you then. Goodnight, ladies.

DAVID'S footsteps retreat and fade as he shuts his door behind him.

AVERY

Okay, *what* is that all about?

CLARA

What?

AVERY

You and David. You guys are so hot and cold, I don't get it.

CLARA

Yeah, neither did we- it's why we never worked out.

AVERY

Did he do something bad?

CLARA

Kind of.

(pauses, clicks her tongue)

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

You know how he works for the government?

AVERY

Vaguely. I know he's some fancy lawyer but that's the extent of my knowledge.

CLARA

Well, he works for the Solicitor of the Attorney General, here, in Texas. So, he knows people. Like he knows people, you know?

AVERY

Okay?

CLARA

So...

(sighs)

So he knew about the bill, basically.

AVERY

Wait, what?

CLARA

I mean, he claims he didn't know the extent of it, like the full details, but he knew what it was about and what it would do and who it would affect and he just... he let it happen.

AVERY

Clara...

CLARA

No, no. Don't give me that. You were always cutting him slack. Not this time, Avery.

AVERY

I know, but-

CLARA

He had a moral obligation to give out an anonymous tip.

AVERY

Are you mad that he didn't say something or that he didn't say something to you?

CLARA  
What do you mean?

AVERY  
I don't know, kind of sounds like you're pissed that he didn't give you a tip to go on for a big, famous news story or something.

CLARA  
What?  
(scoffs)  
No.

AVERY  
Okay, fine then. But think of it this way: he was new to his job. You and I and everyone knows how shitty these politicians can be.

CLARA  
Yeah, but-

AVERY  
And what would it have done? Honestly, think about it. Prepare us? You really think anything could have prepared us for *this*?

CLARA  
I don't know, Ave. Maybe it doesn't make sense but I can't forgive him for it. Not yet, anyway. Plus...  
(pause)  
I mean, he works at the Attorney General's office.

AVERY  
And?

CLARA  
And, it's *right* by the Capitol. I saw on the evening news that only a fraction of people injured were from the capitol and surrounding buildings.

Beat.

AVERY  
Clara, you're not seriously implying...

CLARA

He called me. Right before the explosion and we blacked out. He called me and asked me where I was and when I mentioned how close we were to the Capitol, he *freaked*, Avery. He *knew* what was going to happen. And I'm sure he wasn't the only one.

The two remain SILENT as the sound of the TV FADES.

FADE OUT.



ACT 2

SCENE FOUR

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM-

CLARA is being led back to her room on a wheelchair having just finished up the CT scan.

MALE NURSE

Feelin ok?

CLARA

Yeah, the scan was quick. I'm actually feeling better, it was probably unnecessary.

MALE NURSE

Nonsense. With everything that happened yesterday, it's important to double check everything.

CLARA

Yeah.

Another page goes off on the intercom.

CLARA (CONT'D)

God. It must be awful. How long have you been here for?

MALE NURSE

Today was my day off but they asked everyone to come in. Luckily I had gotten in about four hours of sleep so, I should be good for another 12 hour shift.

CLARA

Damn. Well, thank you. For everything.

MALE NURSE

Of course.

(pause)

And here's your room. Want me to take you in?

CLARA

No, no, my sister is probably asleep, I don't want to wake her.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

I can manage the few feet over.  
Like I said, I'm feeling a lot  
better.

MALE NURSE

Alright, well, if you need  
anything, just page us. My name is  
Caleb.

CLARA

Thanks, Caleb.

CALEB retreats.

Just as CLARA is about to enter her door, she hears some  
rough voices in the room beside her. The door is cracked so  
that the voices are clear.

Inside, a WOMAN CRIES, SOOTHED by her husband. An EKG machine  
BEEPS.

DOCTOR ANSARI

-her body, an eleven-year-old's  
body, isn't full developed, and is  
not a habitable environment for a  
developing fetus. I can't guarantee  
she'd even make it to the third  
trimester. Not to mention, if by  
some miracle she *does* survive this,  
she'll have to endure the trauma of  
carrying and birthing her rapist's  
baby-

OFFICER 1

That's not up for you to decide.  
It's for God and the father of this  
child to decide.

DOCTOR ANSARI

The *father*?

OFFICER 1

That's right. The *father*. How this  
child was conceived doesn't matter-

DOCTOR ANSARI

It absolutely matters-

OFFICER 1

It's not your place. Besides, God  
might grant her the grace to have a  
successful birth and a happy  
motherhood. Only time can tell.

DOCTOR ANSARI

No, *science* can tell. Years of statistics can-

OFFICER 1

Of your statistics, all pregnancies at her age have resulted in death for the mother and the child?

DOCTOR ANSARI

(stuttering)

Well, no, there's one or two-

OFFICER 1

Well, then. That's not a 100% death rate, is it? She has a 98% chance of survival.

DOCTOR ANSARI

(exasperated)

That- that's not how statistics work-

OFFICER 1

It doesn't matter, anyway. It's also not up for me to decide. The law is the law. Abortions cannot be performed- at all. No ands, if's, or but's.

MAN

Please, officer-

OFFICER 1

Again, the law is the law. And the two of you should be even more ashamed of yourselves. A doctor arguing over this, I can understand- I don't agree with it, but I get it. It'll take some getting used to for people in your profession, I guess.

(to the parents)

But the two of you? Her parents? It's disgusting. And I will make sure all of you are prosecuted to the highest extent of the law. Begging your daughter to have an unborn baby ripped out from her... why, it's just.. It's practically child abuse what you're requesting.

(pause)

In fact... you know what? I think child abuse defines it nicely.

(MORE)

OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)

(pause)

Both of you, place your hands behind your back. Under section five of S.B. 1913, you're both under arrest for aiding and abetting abortion as well as under Texas law for child abuse and endangerment of a minor.

The officer's police radio CACKLES as he requests back-up.

DOCTOR ANSARI

No, no! It wasn't them. They brought their daughter here under the assumption that she had contracted COVID. She's been vomiting for three days, nonstop. First trimester sort of things, but of course, they wouldn't have suspected that. It was during the blood withdrawal that we discovered she was pregnant.

OFFICER 1

So, you're the one that suggested the abortion, Doctor?

DOCTOR ANSARI

No. Well, I mean, yes. I suppose. I offered them a list of options, one of which being the termination of the pregnancy. She's only eight weeks, a surgical removal wouldn't be necessary-

OFFICER 1

I've heard enough. Doctor Asmid Asari, you're under arrest for violating section five of S.B. 1913. You have the right to remain silent-

DOCTOR ANSARI

(laughs in disbelief)

I have patients to attend to, I can't just leave them in the middle of it. I based my suggestion off of medical evidence, you have no right-

OFFICER 1

Sir, as of three days ago, The Supreme Court made abortions illegal- under section five of the Senate Bill 1913, any physician found advising or counseling a pregnant woman to commit the act of an abortion can be arrested and prosecuted for violating the American Restoration Act, this subchapter, or engaging in acts that aid or abet violations of this subchapter.

DOCTOR ANSARI

Bullshit.

OFFICER 1

Call it what you'd like but it is what it is. Turn around or end up like the guy before you- dead. Your choice, doc.

DOCTOR ANSARI

You'll be hearing from my lawyers. Let me at least page a nurse to come care for this child.

OFFICER 1

Alright, we'll swing by the nurses station.

Their footsteps are heavy against the tile.

NURSE CALEB

Doctor-

DOCTOR ANSARI

Caleb, it's okay. Page Nurse Rwanda. Let her know that I'll be gone for a few hours-

OFFICER 1 SCOFFS behind him.

DOCTOR ANSARI (CONT'D)

-and that my patients need an attending, preferably Doctor Guzman as she has covered for this ward before. Check every patient's vitals and keep one another posted, make sure all the information is easily accessible to her and help her in any way that you can.

NURSE CALEB

Yes, sir. We'll contact Doctor Guzman right away.

DOCTOR ANSARI

Thank you. And, in case I don't have a chance to say it later- It's been a pleasure working with each of you. Your work here is apprecia-

OFFICER 1

Alright, let's go.

DOCTOR ANSARI is cut short as he is ushered out of the hospital by the officer. CLARA, still watching outside of her door, remains frozen, as the nurses station picks back up to its familiar business- faxes are being sent out, paging nurses and doctors, answering phone calls, and shuffling papers.

NURSE RWANDA

Clara?

CLARA JUMPS, startled as she is awoken from her reverie.

CLARA

They... they just took him-

NURSE RWANDA

I know, sweetheart. That's the reality of this new world now. He's not the first nor the last. But never you mind that- it's time for you to get back to your room and rest while I attend to the other patients. Come on, now. I'll come back to check on the two of you soon.

NURSE RWANDA opens the door to CLARA'S room and waits for CLARA to shuffle in, closing the door behind her.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FIVE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM- NIGHT-

CLARA has just told AVERY what had happened.

AVERY

And no one *did* anything?

CLARA

I mean, what did you expect anyone to do, Ave? It's a cop. With a gun. And a license to kill now.

AVERY

And what about the rapist? Do they even care what happened to that poor little girl?

CLARA

These days, their only concern is increasing the population- whatever means necessary. Rapists got away with rape before this new law, now they'll get away with murder.

The door to their room OPENS and NURSE RWANDA walks in.

NURSE RWANDA

How are my girls doing?

CLARA

Been better.

NURSE RWANDA

(acting oblivious)

Well, the results to your CT scan came back clear. We can run some other tests-

CLARA

You *know* that's not what I mean, Rwanda.

There's a long pause as NURSE RWANDA looks between the two sisters.

CLARA (CONT'D)

So, we're just going to sit here and pretend like there isn't a pregnant eleven-year-old in the room beside me?

NURSE RWANDA

I'm not at liberty to discuss other patients-

CLARA

Eleven, Rwanda. *Eleven.*

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA SIGHS loudly and then walks over to sit down on the edge of CLARA'S bed, between the two girls.

NURSE RWANDA

Look, what you saw today- what I mean is-

There's a long PAUSE as NURSE RWANDA contemplates her next words.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

(defeated sigh)

She isn't the first one. When our current administration first cut funding for teen pregnancy prevention programs, this place lit up with girls who didn't even have their driver's licenses yet. One girl couldn't even name her vagina, kept calling it pet names like beaver. One of them didn't even know what a condom was. Another knew what one was but said her boyfriend claimed he was too big for one and she believed him.

(scoffs)

Before this law came into effect, we'd see girls of all ages come in here. I think the youngest I've ever seen was nine.

CLARA

(whispers)

I remember that one. My colleague covered that story in The Chronicle. It was gut-wrenching. She managed to live but her body was never the same.

NURSE RWANDA

Listen, I've nursed back some of the cruelest mother fuckers. Pedophiles, rapists, murderers... with no remorse for their actions. They're on the brink of death and the doctors have to save them and I have to wipe their asses and give them sponge baths and bring them food and when they're finally recovered enough to go to court, the judge slaps them on the wrist with a citation and calls it a day. Meanwhile, we have nine and eleven-year-old mothers.

(MORE)



NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

(sighs)

The thing is... very few people have seen the inside of a SANE exam room while a thirteen-year-old girl cries as parts of her are clipped and her favorite t-shirt is bagged and taken to evidence. They haven't seen a maternity ward full of babies born with their organs on the outside, living a maximum of three days outside of the womb. Haven't seen the mother's bleeding out or dying on the table from an ectopic pregnancy.

CLARA

They don't have to witness it to know that it's a reality. It's not about the children or the women, it's about gaining and keeping power.

AVERY

(hisses)

Clara.

CLARA

(louder)

I'm not scared to speak the truth, Ave. If it was about them, they'd look at the number of children left at fire stations and hospitals, the ones in foster care, the ones found dead in dumpsters. We'd be living in a society that praises women instead of trying to suppress them. They'd take time to listen to our thoughts and our anxieties and work towards a collective goal that reshapes the entire world and realize that the only way we can succeed is through unity.

Beat.

AVERY

I just hope that girl is okay.

CLARA

I heard Doctor Ansari tell the officer that he doesn't think she'll make it to her third trimester. Is that true?

NURSE RWANDA

All we can do is give this girl a fighting chance. With the proper medical care, diet, exercise.. We can do everything we can to make sure that she doesn't die on the table.

CLARA

But you can't even guarantee that the baby will survive-

AVERY

Oh my god, and miscarriages are being criminalized too, now-

CLARA

So, even if she survives and the baby dies-

AVERY

She'll just end up dead, anyway-

NURSE RWANDA

Shh, shh. Keep your voices down. The walls aren't as thick as you'd think. The two of you are getting upset and ahead of yourselves. Stop it. For all we know they could both survive. The two of you have already sentenced this poor girl to death. Give her a chance.

Both girls mumble their apologies.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

Now, I'm going to leave and I'll be back to check on the two of you in the morning. Do *not* leave this room, understand? Good. Now get to bed.

CUT TO:

SCENE SIX

INT. HOSPITAL - MIDNIGHT

The PAGING on the intercom gradually FADES IN as CLARA rouses from her sleep. Her EKG machine continues to BEEP beside her. INHALING DEEPLY, CLARA pulls at her face with both of her hands and GROANS.

CLARA  
 (whispering)  
 Avery? Avery.

AVERY is sound asleep. CLARA searches for the TV remote beneath her blankets, turning on the TV with a faint POP. The volume of the TV is low as CLARA flips through the channels— a cartoon, the news, more news, a movie— before another POP as she flicks the TV back off.

She clicks her tongue against her teeth rhythmically as she ponders over what to do, then reaches for an alarm clock beside her.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 (long sigh)  
 2 AM?

The bed CREAKS beneath her weight as she shifts and slides off, her socked feet padding against the tile as she walks over to the door, opening it gently. There's still a faint buzz of staff moving from room to room but most of the attendants were paged to the floor below. Curiously, she nears the room from before, the voices muffled and then clear as she presses her ear against the door.

WOMAN  
 -options?

NURSE RWANDA  
 I wish there were but this is all I  
 have for you.

Beat.

MAN  
 How do we give it to her?

NURSE RWANDA  
 There's 12 tablets. She'll need to  
 take four every three hours with  
 one large glass of water. Make sure  
 that the pills dissolve under her  
 tongue for thirty *minutes* before  
 swallowing. Continue every three  
 hours until you've finished the  
 pill. She can eat and drink foods  
 regularly in between those times.

WOMAN  
 What happens if she has a reaction?

NURSE RWANDA

Reactions to Misoprostol are rare. She will experience light to heavy cramping, it's just the miscarriage and her body attempting to discard any fetal tissue. There's no reason she should be back here. If you find yourself needing to take her to the doctor or a hospital, you are under no obligation to report the use of this medication or to even report the miscarriage. In fact, I highly recommend that you don't. I've heard that she can be criminalized for a miscarriage if she's found to have induced it.

Above them another loud PAGE on the intercom causes everyone to jump. The four hold their breaths for a moment before continuing.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

(hushed but rushed)

Another complication that could arise is infection, but that's even more rare. Because these pills move through the body so quickly, even if there was any urine or blood test done, there would be no traces of the drug in or around her. So there's still no pressure to inform the doctor that these pills had been ingested. As long as you follow the instructions I gave you, she shouldn't have any issues.

(pause)

My advice, if questioned, blame food poisoning. It's an infection that can spread and cause miscarriages, and given that she's currently in her first trimester and experiencing a lot of vomiting, it makes sense that she wouldn't think anything of it.

MAN

How- how do we know that... we can-

NURSE RWANDA

Trust me?

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 Because it's either that or let  
 your daughter die. She won't make  
 it to the third trimester.

Both the man and the woman begin to CRY but offer their  
 gratitude.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 I don't think I need to remind you  
 both that we're risking our lives  
 just talking about this. Repeat  
 this to no one- *no one*. It's not  
 just my ass on the line, but yours  
 and your daughters life, too.

The man and woman both whisper in agreement before RWANDA'S  
 footsteps near the door. She comes face to face with CLARA.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 Girl, you nearly gave me a heart  
 attack.

CLARA  
 What did you give them?

NURSE RWANDA  
 I'm not sure what you mean, hon.

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 I thought I told you not to leave  
 your room, Clara. Get back in  
 there. Go on.

The two shuffle in to CLARA'S room and NURSE RWANDA shuts the  
 door behind her.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 You can't just be going around-

CLARA  
 What's going to happen to her,  
 Rwanda?

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA  
 (sighs)  
 She's going to have a miscarriage.

**END**

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 4"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

Phone Number

COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

INT. BEAUMONT STATE PENITENTIARY - INTERROGATION ROOM - MID MORNING - PRESENT

The HEAVY DOOR to the room BURSTS open. The heels of DAVID'S loafers CLACK against the tile as he nears the table that CLARA sits at. Throwing his SUITCASE onto the table, he squats beside CLARA.

She GROANS.

DAVID  
(whispers)  
Oh my god. Clara, you look... God.  
What did they do to you? Your  
fingers...

Turning to look at the guard, he explodes.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
She's missing TWO fucking fingers!  
Are you shitting me?!

GUARD  
Sir, if you don't lower your voice  
and act appropriately, I'll have no  
choice but to place you under  
arrest for disorderly conduct-

DAVID  
(quieter, through grit  
teeth)  
Someone please explain to me why  
this woman's hair has been ripped  
out of her skull, why she's missing  
a tooth, and why the *hell* she's  
missing two fingers. Now.

Beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
This is completely... I...

He walks back over to CLARA and lowers himself to look at her.



CLARA  
 (hoarsely)  
 David?

DAVID  
 (whisper)  
 Clara. This is crazy-

CLARA  
 David, I didn't tell them anything.  
 Tell Avery that I didn't tell them  
 anything.

DAVID  
 Clara, you have to tell them  
*something- anything*. Give them an  
 incentive to keep you alive-  
 (sobs)  
 Clara, they're going to kill you.  
 You're not going to make it to your  
 execution date like this.

CLARA  
 Hmm. I die either way; I'd rather  
 die with my secrets than give them  
 the satisfaction that they won.

DAVID  
 They won't stop. It'll only get  
 worse from here.

CLARA  
 David, I saw Avery.. on the news..  
 what happened?

Beat.

DAVID SIGHS loudly before rising and turning to face the  
 GUARD.

DAVID  
 Officer, I need to speak with my  
 client privately.

GUARD  
 I'm sorry, sir. I've been  
 instructed to remain in the room  
 for your own protection.

DAVID

She's strapped to a chair, she's definitely fighting an infection from her wounds, and she hasn't eaten or had anything to drink in days- what could she *possibly* do to me?

Beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Think of it this way- if she harms me then I won't come back and you won't have to deal with me anymore. How about that?

Beat.

The GUARD'S radio CACKLES as he's ordered to leave the room.

GUARD

You have five minutes.

The HEAVY DOOR swings open and shut, the GUARD'S heavy footsteps immediately silenced. DAVID makes his way back to CLARA.

DAVID

(lower voice)

Avery's fine. They're still on the hunt for her but as far as I know she's gone. Everyone is.

CLARA

(inhales sharply)

She's safe?

DAVID

She's safe.

CLARA weeps silently, joyfully.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But Clara-

CLARA

I don't care. Let them hurt me. I don't care. They've taken everything else from me, they won't take this.

DAVID

Everyone is moved by this.  
*Everyone.*

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

We have people contacting us from Mexico and Canada, they want to help. Help you. To get you out of here.

CLARA

(softly)

No, no. Stop focusing on me and focus on the cause-

DAVID

Shut up. Listen to me. This story of yours... it's inspiring hope. I've been talking with a whole team of attorney's and we're working on taking this whole stupid bill apart, ripping it to shreds. We take our argument to court in 7 more days, Clare. That's one, ONE day past your execution date. And we're sure, dead sure, that our repeal is going to pass. But you have to hold out just one day longer. Just give them something- it doesn't even have to be true. Give them a fake lead that'll distract them for a day. And feign innocence. Say you're trying to comply but you've been out of the game that by now, everything's probably moved. Say you can't think straight because you're hungry and thirsty and your wounds are killing you.

(pause)

Fight, Clare. If not for me then for Avery.

CLARA

(cries)

I'm so tired. I'm tired of fighting.

DAVID

I know, I know, sweetheart, but you have so much of it left in you.

(pause)

Clara. I-

The HEAVY DOOR swings open.

GUARD

Five minutes are up.

DAVID  
Fuck. Fine. Alright.  
(to Clara)  
I'll be back tomorrow, okay? Think  
about what I said.

CLARA stays SILENT as DAVID retrieves his briefcase and heads  
for the door, his footsteps stopping.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Tell your boss that if I find one  
more scratch on her tomorrow, I'll  
fucking hang him myself.

The DOOR swings OPEN and then SHUT.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING  
[CAST], CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 4: [NAME]

ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

CLARA is getting ready for the day, the TV plays in the background as AVERY sits on the couch, staying home with a bad case of endometriosis.

JILL

-exactly one week since the explosion of the Capitol. The death toll has remained at 332, with more than 5,000 expected to make a full recovery.

ROBERT

That leaves about 1,000 still being hospitalized for injuries although now most are out of critical care and in a step-down unit, where they'll be closely monitored before returning home.

Beat.

ROBERT (V.O.)

If you've recently received a subpoena in the mail from the Austin Sheriff's department, well, you're not alone. Thousands of individuals are being summoned by the court, ordering their presence at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library tomorrow morning. The individuals that reside outside of the Austin city limits will be offered transportation and are expected to arrive Saturday morning at 8am.

JILL

However, there's still question as to what this is in regards to. Channel 10's Thomas Nguyen is currently outside of the Sheriff's department attempting to get any kind of information that can help us understand the need for these subpoenas. Thomas?

THOMAS

Yes, thank you, Jill. Behind me, hundreds of people are gathered on the steps of the Travis County Sheriff's department where Sheriff Gonzalez is being asked to speak to the public about the notices being sent to them. As of right now, we are being told that he is not at liberty to make any comments and that there will be answers coming from higher authorities soon. Still, people are desperate, hoping that the pressure of their presence might change that. Back to you, Jill.

JILL

Thank you, Thomas. In other news, local authorities-

The sound of the TV shuts off.

DAVID's footsteps pad over to CLARA as he offers her coffee and breakfast.

DAVID

Got some barbacoa tacos and Starbucks for you - Quad Caramel Macchiato. You sure the doctor cleared you for this type of diet?

CLARA

Check my prescription, it's all there: 2 Tylenol as needed and an abundance of greasy, sugary goodness.

DAVID

Ah, yes. Nothing like good ol' artery-clogging tacos to tell death to go fuck itself.

(to AVERY)

Ave, chorizo and egg for you with an extra side of Motrin. How are you feeling?

AVERY

I'll be fine. It's nothing I'm not already used to.

DAVID

Clara used to get really bad periods all the time-

CLARA

*David.*

DAVID

What? It's completely natural-

CLARA

I know it's natural. But... it's just weird coming from you now. Besides, Ave's periods are way worse than mine ever were. She was diagnosed with Endometriosis about four years ago.

DAVID

Endo... that sounds familiar.

AVERY

It's basically my insides turning against me. On my bad days, I get dizzy and feel like throwing up from the stabbing pain in my ovaries. On my good days... Well, it's still that except I'm not buckled over and immobilized.

DAVID

Jesus...

AVERY

You think that's bad? Motrin doesn't even cover half the pain. There's no cure for it either.

CLARA

We went to so many doctors-

AVERY

Twelve. Kept count at one point to report back on Reddit.

CLARA

And none of them were helpful. They kept thinking she was exaggerating the pain.

AVERY

Yup. Kept saying it was normal and I'd get used to it. Until we finally found one doctor that was willing to listen and schedule me for a... what was it called? Lapro something-

CLARA  
Laparoscopy.

AVERY  
Yeah, that. Confirmed what we already knew. They prescribed me birth control to manage the pain and sent me on my way.

DAVID  
Birth control?

CLARA  
That's right. The very same thing you and your BFF's at the AG and White House took away from her and millions of other people in the United States. AND, just to rub more salt in the wound, made it illegal for insurance to cover the cost of it or the cost of hysterectomies. Because all you fuckers think that we're merely incubators-

AVERY  
Clara, Clara... calm down. Breathe. It's too early for all of this and I'm already getting a headache.

CLARA  
Alright, well, I need to head to the office. Susan asked that I get there early. I think she wants to talk about the next project for the Chronicle. Some big news coverage or something.

DAVID  
Okay, well, just remember to take it easy. You just got out of the hospital.

CLARA  
It's been a week. Relax.  
(to AVERY)  
You gonna be alright, Ave?

AVERY  
Yes, yes, I'll be fine as soon as you and your ramblings leave. David's already promised to watch reruns of Schitt's Creek with me today, anyway.



CLARA

(huffs)

Well. It's the least he can do.

FADE OUT.

ACT 2

## SCENE TWO

INT. THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE NEWS ROOM - MORNING

SFX: INFREQUENT TYPING, OCCASIONAL PHONE RING, WHISPERS, PAPER SHUFFLING. Since the bounty, the newsroom has been quieter than usual. Half of the crew is gone, the other half are unmotivated and terrified from the recent events.

CLARA KNOCKS on SUSAN'S office door.

CLARA

Susan? You wanted to speak with me?

SUSAN

Clara! Oh, look at you. Not a scratch on you. How wonderful. How've you been? I haven't heard from you since... well, that crap that happened here. Everyone's still on about it. It's like ordering around a bunch of zombies.  
(forced laughter)

So you can see why I'm ecstatic to have you back, Clara. We've been short staffed ever since that damn police raid, then they came back and took a few more from us.

CLARA

Oh my god, that's horrible. Who else did they take?

SUSAN

Well, there was Gloria, Matt, Simone, Mireya, Jeremy... and a few others down on fourth.

CLARA

Oh my, God.

SUSAN

Yeah, and the hiring process to replace them isn't any better. You know how that is- wannabe journalists thinking they can handle media like this.

Beat.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Anyway, I was curious if you've heard of anything revolving around the subpoena's being sent to people's mailboxes these days?

CLARA

Only what I've heard on the news. Not much more than that.

SUSAN

Well, I know someone over at the LBJ library- Miguel - who mentioned a construction crew being there for about a week now. He said it looked like they were building what looked to be like a scaffold, resembling gallows.

CLARA

Gallows? Like...

SUSAN

Yes, exactly. Execution by hanging.

Beat.

CLARA

Well, I suppose if it's not me writing the story, it'll be someone else. And at least I can have more control of the narrative this way, right?

SUSAN

My thoughts exactly.

CLARA

What time do you need me there?

SUSAN

6am. I'll have Miguel send over the details.

FADE OUT.

ACT 3

## SCENE THREE

INT. AUSTIN CHRONICLE NEWS ROOM - CLARA'S DESK - MORNING

CLARA'S chair rolls beneath her weight as she sits down at her cubicle desk. Digging through her purse, she withdraws her phone and DIALS. It rings.

DAVID (V.O.)

Clara?

CLARA

Did... did you know anything about an execution on Saturday?

DAVID

Execution? Oh. No, that's just some rumor that the fake med-

CLARA

**Don't** finish that sentence.

DAVID

It's just a rumor-

CLARA

So, you did know.

DAVID

I mean, I heard about it, yeah. But again, it's just a rumo-

CLARA

You and I both know that rumors originate from some source of validity.

(scoffs)

You didn't think that I was privy to this kind of information? Especially with everything that happened with the Capitol?

DAVID

I wasn't about to give you information- *not even* information because it's a rumor based on *nothing*- and have you jeopardize *my* career.

CLARA

Everyone knows that a journalist's source is always kept anonymous. You could have come to me and told me about the possibility and it would have been my job to do the research and your name would have been left out. There'd have been no trace. I've never taken a conversation of ours and publicized it.

DAVID

You're a journalist, Clara. Is it so wrong to be guarded with very crucial, very confidential information like that? I'd be a suspect by association.

CLARA

So you admit it, then. There is crucial and confidential information regarding this.  
(breath of amusement)  
Huh. I don't think I've ever given you a reason not to trust me, David. Clearly that feeling isn't reciprocated.

DAVID

Things are just different now. Everything is monitored, there's no room to breathe anywhere. I mean, I'm pretty sure my office is bugged-

CLARA

You're stupid to think that it hadn't always been. You know...  
(pause)  
You've made a terrible, terrible habit of trusting the wrong people and mistrusting the right ones. I mean, what led us to this? Ever since you got this job you've been different. You'll do anything to win their approval, even if it means completely changing everything about yourself.

DAVID

Hey, I busted my ass to get to where I am.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

If I have to make nice, keep the dirt settled for a bit, so that I can accomplish what I want to in the future, then fine- I'll pretend to play by their rules.

CLARA

Oh, you're not pretending, David. You're playing- wait, no, *they're* playing you, like a fiddle. And at this rate, there's not going to be a future for these so-called plans you have. Do not call me back.

CLICK.

FADE TO:

ACT 3

## SCENE FOUR

EXT. LYNDON B. JOHNSON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY - SATURDAY MORNING

A large crowd has gathered in front of the LBJ Library, each of them MURMURING amongst themselves.

SPECTATOR 1

-gallows? With one, two, four, six, eight, ten- ten nooses?

SPECTATOR 2

I'll tell ya what, when I got the summon to be here at 7am sharp, this wasn't exactly what I was expecting to come to.

SPECTATOR 3

I wish they'd have a elaborated a bit more in that letter- would have brought a flask to make this morning bearable.

SPECTATOR 2

At least we get a day off from work, huh?

SPECTATOR 1

(chuckles)

If it lasts that long. They've got an entire lawn filled to the brim with working class citizens. Think they'll want to get this done as quickly as possible so everyone can get back to the grind?

SPECTATOR 2

Damn.

Their voices FADE into the rest of the murmurs as CLARA begins walking towards her designated area.

MIGUEL

Clara, hi. Miguel, we talked over the phone. I'm sorry I couldn't get you inside-

CLARA

Really, there's no need to apologize, Miguel. I understand. Um, is there anything else you've heard since we last spoke, though? Any kind of lead?

MIGUEL

All I know is rumors.

CLARA

Hey, something is better than nothing. I can do the research and dispel any rumors.

MIGUEL

Well, our boss told us to go home early yesterday. She seemed really upset so as I was packing up, I asked her if things were okay. She said she needed to get everything in order because the President was coming down.

CLARA

Of... the United States?

MIGUEL

Yes. She said he and a few other politicians would be here to scope out the library and secure the perimeter.

CLARA

Secure the perimeter?

There's a brief pause as CLARA searches high buildings.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Miguel, do you have any staff up on the roof?

MIGUEL

No ma'am, everyone is off today. They didn't want anyone working. Anyone who wasn't subpoenaed doesn't have to be here.

CLARA

Hmm. Well, I appreciate your help anyway, Miguel.

NURSE RWANDA

Clara?



CLARA turns around and comes face to face with NURSE RWANDA.

CLARA

Rwanda?

RWANDA

I see that wound is healing up nicely. How are you feeling?

CLARA

A lot better thanks. How... how are you doing?

RWANDA

(sighs)

Well, to be honest, I'm not having a really great feeling about being here.

CLARA

I take it you were subpoenaed?

RWANDA

Yeah. A lot of us back at the hospital got our letters but because our services are still needed for the whole Capitol thing, we managed to figure something out with the Sherriff. Half of us came out to this one and the other half will go out to the next one.

CLARA

(disgusted)

Next one?

There's a shrill FEEDBACK as the sound system comes to life.

SPECTATOR 1

Is that Governor Jackson?

SPECTATOR 3

Looks like it.

Crowd gradually dies down until all is SILENT.

GOVERNOR JACKSON

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Please place your hand over your heart as we honor the American and the Central Texas flag.

There's small sounds of SHUFFLING as the crowd does as they're instructed and the commentator recites both the Pledge of Allegiance and the Pledge to the Central Texas Flag.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

Thank you. It is both an honor and a pleasure to be here today to represent the citizens of the best city on earth- Austin, Texas. Today, however, will be led by someone far greater than me. Please help me welcome to the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, President J.R. Hudson.

Scattered and awkward applause.

PRESIDENT HUDSON

Governor Jackson, Chief Justice Strauss, Former President Castor, Former President Stokes, Members of Congress, and my fellow Americans, thank you.

(pause)

We've gathered each of you here today to formally discuss the new Senate House Bill 1913, otherwise referred to as the American Restoration Act. By now, I'm sure that each of you have heard conflicting stories due to fake media sources spinning fact and fiction, so today's event should help settle any questions.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)

The American Restoration Act is a bill created by your elected senators and representatives that understood the complexity and national effort required to restore our country and American values. In the last twenty years, we've seen a decline in birth rates, witnessed a significant drop in our nation's population, causing our economy to suffer at the hands of liberal doctrines.

(pause)

(MORE)

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)  
People aren't getting married anymore, they're refraining from having children- the most beautiful and angelic miracles of this earth- to the point of pumping their bodies with hormone-blocking agents that respectively make child-bearing even harder for their offspring. And thus the ugly cycle continues.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)  
Worse than that, however, women have taken to abortion as a form of contraception. In a time when fertility is in jeopardy, when women and families await the flutter of a heartbeat beneath their own, there are selfish and cowardly women barbarically ending *lives, murdering* children, lives which hold meaning and purpose and would be welcomed with open arms to families seeking that meaning and that purpose.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)  
Infertility is a man-made illness. Abortion... is a man-made cruelty.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)  
Too long have your country's leaders allowed this poison to slowly leak from generation to generation. But this American carnage ends here.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)  
S.B. 1913 was created on the principles that encourages strong, Christian values. It encourages a strong sense of family, a strong sense of purpose, and a strong sense of selflessness.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)

This bill introduces the idea of a better America, a stronger one, filled to the brim of children full of hope and wonder. Through these children, America will once again find its purpose, and its citizens will find loyalty to this country and to one another. Our country will thrive and prosper as it once did.

Beat.

PRESIDENT HUDSON (CONT'D)

In order to do this, however- in order to *restore* America back to its former self- certain exigencies must take place.

The crowd begins to MURMUR as a line of ten prisoners exits the building.

SPECTATOR 4

Are those prisoners?

SPECTATOR 5

Oh my god, are they going to hang them?

SPECTATOR 6

Is that... is that a child at the end?

Several loud gasps can be heard throughout the crowd.

PRESIDENT HUDSON

Silence, everyone, please, as we welcome Chief Justice Strauss to the stand.

The volume of the crowd dies down a little but there are still murmurs.

JUSTICE STRAUSS

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Please, quiet down.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)

I'm are of how unorthodox most of this seems but remember that everything takes some getting used to. Change is never comfortable.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
In the year 2018, America faced one of earth's greatest wraths- the SCANS Virus. Our lives as we knew it shifted to something that once thought as unimaginable. Some of us thought we'd never recover as a nation, that 'normal' would never return, and yet we stand on this same soil two years later with an understanding of a 'new normal'.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
So I'd like to remind you of your resilience. Of how it may not *seem* normal to you now but after a while, I promise you that it will also be your 'new normal'.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Senate House bill 1913: An act relating to abortion, including abortions after detection of an unborn child's heartbeat, including terminations as a result of spontaneous abortions; authorizing a private civil right of action.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Be it enacted by the legislature of the United States, this Act shall be known as the American Restoration Act.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Under Section 2, the legislature finds that Roe v. Wade is unconstitutional and revokes the bill in favor of abortion. Section 19.06 Of the Texas Penal Code, Title 5 Offenses against the person, Criminal Homicide, is amended to read as follows:

Beat

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 '(A) This chapter does apply to the death of an unborn child if the conduct charged is: 1) conduct committed by the mother of the unborn child; 2) a medical procedure performed by a physician or other (un)licensed health care provider, if the death of the unborn child was the intended result of the procedure; 3) a medical procedure performed by a physician or other (un)licensed health care provider as part of an assisted reproduction; and 4) the dispensation of a drug that can cause the death to the unborn child; and 5) the death of an unborn child in any circumstance.

The crowd beings MURMURING again.

SPECTATOR 1  
 Wait, what? Were we supposed to understand that?

SPECTATOR 2  
 I think they're saying that any death of an unborn child is murder.

SPECTATOR 4  
 Wait, what about miscarriages?

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
 When you first entered the stadium, you may have noticed the empty gallows near the entrance. Now, you'll see a total of ten individuals, ten *criminals*, standing beneath their respective noose. I want to remind you of the atrocious acts these criminals committed that brought them to this point.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Under section 5 of S.B. 1913, "any physician found advising or counseling a pregnant woman to commit the act of an abortion can be arrested and prosecuted for violating the American Restoration Act, this subchapter, or engaging in the acts that aid or abet violations of this subchapter.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Doctor Harvey Brown, forty-two, is an obstetrician in Austin's downtown district. He has been aiding and abetting women in medical and surgical abortions for the last ten years. He's done it so brazenly, as well, by taking to social media to promote his sinful endeavors.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Beside him are two clerks who worked at the same clinic: Bianca Sanchez and Brandy Jones. While they did not partake in the actual abortion act, they provided information and resources to aid in the process and by working for a business that condoned these practices, they are guilty by association.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Next is Rebekah Hanes, a journalist at the Austin Chronicle. According to medical records, Miss Hanes received an abortion in July of last year. She was twelve-weeks pregnant. That baby was the size of a plum. She murdered that child in cold blood.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 Kira Brown, another journalist for the Chronicle, wrote about a term she donned as 'reproductive justice'. Through her articles, Mrs. Brown advocated for abortions and circulated resources and misinformation in regards to them. A family friend informed us of Mrs. Brown's own abortion ten years ago after she attempted to falsify her pregnancy to her husband after having an affair with another man.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 Justine Fray, reporter for Channel 46 News, has also openly advocated for abortion rights by referring to her own abortions as example, broadcasted and televised where her careless remarks could have a detrimental effect on a woman's judgement in current times.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 Under Section 10b of S.B. 1913, "the marketing or promotion of an abortion, whether televised, broadcasted by radio or by social media, is punishable by law." Because Miss Fray and even Mrs. Brown, has not only televised this promotion, but has also confessed to committing abortion acts throughout her lifetime, she has violated both Section 10 and section 3 of S.B. 1913 and thus, according to section 10c, nullifies her right to the fifth amendment.

The crowd begins to MURMUR again.

CLARA  
 (whispers)  
 What?

Beat.



## JUSTICE STRAUSS

Settle down. Now, beside him is doctor Asmid Ansari, a general doctor at Grace Hospital, was recently arrested for aiding and abetting a young woman and her parents into committing an abortion act. His careless acts are also what brings these parents and that young woman beside him.

Beat.

## JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)

Maria Ruiz and Daniel Ruiz, parents of the accused, Elena Ruiz, were arrested under the suspicion of aiding and abetting their daughter in a self-induced abortion. "Self-induced abortion", according to Subsection 3A, is "the termination of a pregnancy performed by the pregnant woman herself, or with the help of other, non-medical assistance." Because this wife and husband, mother and father, went to the hospital with the notion that their daughter would walk in pregnant and walk out barren, they have committed the crimes under section 5 of S.B. 1913 in question today.

Beat.

## JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)

Elena Ruiz. Aborter. Under the influence of her parents and the medical malpractice of Doctor Ansari, committed the act of spontaneous abortion. Under subsection 4A, a "spontaneous abortion is a pregnancy loss before 20 weeks of gestational age. This type of abortion can happen prematurely due to a number of risks but is less likely to occur after eight weeks." This young woman was 8 weeks pregnant when she, her parents, and her doctor actively *willed* the termination of her pregnancy through spontaneous abortion.

The volume of the crowd increases immediately.

CLARA  
(to Rwanda)  
Rwanda? That's...

RWANDA  
I... I...

Protestors drown out RWANDA's response.

SPECTATOR 1  
That's a miscarriage! She  
miscarried!

SPECTATOR 6  
No! You heard the man, that's an  
abortion! She's a murderer.

SPECTATOR 2  
She's a CHILD, not a murderer!

SPECTATOR 4  
This is unaccep-

SPECTATOR 4 is cut short when he is tased by a nearby police officer, the electric sound of the taser gun loudly pulsing.

The crowd becomes even more upset by this and continue to protest.

SPECTATOR 5  
Hey! You can't do that-

SPECTATOR 6 is also cut short when he is tased by the same police officer.

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
If everyone would please settle  
down. Officers have been ordered to  
use whatever force necessary in  
order to regain control of the  
crowd and are ready to fire at the  
ready.

The murmurs from the crowd DWINDLE down until there is near silence once again.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Again, I'll remind you that all of  
these criminals are here today to  
be punished for their crimes. Under  
section 15 of S.B.

(MORE)

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 1913, "all individuals found guilty of these crimes will be punished to the highest extent of the law. The "highest extent of the law", according to Section 15a, "is punishment by death." Section 15b elaborates on the humane penalties by death involving: electrocution, lethal injection, lethal gas, hanging, and firing squad." Today, due to the nature of the crimes committed, death will be carried out by hanging.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 (loudly)  
 Now, before anyone objects, I'll remind you all that these individuals are being prosecuted for heinous crimes that involve murder. The murder of innocent lives, of babies. Murder has no age. But...

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 President Hudson has granted Miss Ruiz with a partial pardon... by leaving it in the hands of American democracy.

The crowd MURMURS.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 So, what say the people of America?

The crowd remains SILENT, unsure.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
 Those in favor may say 'yay', those not in favor may say 'nay'.

The GOVERNOR walks over to the stand.

GOVERNOR JACKSON  
 Justice Strauss, if I may?

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
 Governor Jackson. Of course, of course.

FEEDBACK as the GOVERNOR steps up to the podium.

GOVERNOR JACKSON

(sighs)

What has our country come to, hmm?  
I'm sure that's what many of you  
are thinking right now. How did we  
go from where we were... to where  
we are?

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

I would like to reiterate what  
Justice Strauss said when he first  
took to the stand.

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

'Change is never comfortable.'

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

Before I took over as Governor, I  
was an everyday kind of attorney. I  
had met my wife, had my first  
daughter, and thought that I had  
reached the top- that was it. And  
then, on one of my morning jogs, my  
heart gave out. By the grace of  
God, I survived. In the hospital, I  
was told that if I didn't make some  
serious life changes, I would not  
live past 40. I was only 26. Change  
was not easy, it was not  
*comfortable*. It involved a less  
strenuous lifestyle, a better diet,  
and routine exercise- something I  
was not used to. Through prayer, my  
name reached the top of the list  
for a heart transplant. I had to  
work even harder to maintain a  
lifestyle worthy of this precious,  
precious gift from God.

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

In my circumstance, this precious  
gift was a heart. In this young  
lady's, it was a baby.

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 But the gift that God has given  
 unto all of you is the gift of  
 voice- speaking up on behalf of the  
 voiceless, the children that would  
 never have a chance to do it  
 themselves.

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 I implore each of you to search  
 within yourselves and understand  
 the opportunity that's been given  
 to you. It is not a child that  
 stands before you, but a woman, who  
 buried a child before it could even  
 take its first breath.

Beat.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)  
 The woman that stands up before you  
 is not innocent. She engaged in  
 acts that allowed her to be here,  
 knowing the consequences and  
 believing that she could get away  
 with it. She violated the sixth  
 commandment, written by God, the  
 same God that stands before you  
 today asking you to bring forth  
 justice. How will you answer him?

The crowd is SILENT for a few seconds. GOVERNOR JACKSON  
 remains at the stage for a few seconds longer before someone  
 in the crowd CRIES OUT:

SPECTATOR 7  
 Hang her! Murderer!

SPECTATOR 8  
 Murderer!

Soon, the majority of the crowd is voting in favor of the  
 hanging. Those that oppose begin arguing with those in favor,  
 and police officers come around to tase them.

JUSTICE STRAUSS takes to the podium again.

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
 I know this may be upsetting to a  
 lot of you, but I need to remind  
 you all of the consequences of a  
 riot.

(MORE)

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
Remember to stay quiet and remain still for the duration of this execution, or you, too, will be detained. Law enforcement is on the scene and military has this area zoned off, and each have been ordered to do what is necessary to enforce peace.

Beat.

JUSTICE STRAUSS (CONT'D)  
I would also like to take this moment to read a subsection of the Senate House Bill 1912, passed two years ago under Former President Castor: "In order for there to be a secure and effective transition from one law to another, citizens are required to act appropriately. Any grievances can be directed to local and state representatives through their respective method of contact. Thus, any persons discovered to be carrying out lawless and tyrannical protest in response to new law will be recognized as a terrorist." Section 3 states, "anyone considered a terrorist by definition of S.B. 1912, forfeits their constitutional rights and will be held liable for their actions as the Senate sees fit. Because of the nature of the crime, the Senate has concluded that any individual recognized as a terrorist by the United States, can, with regards to the safety of the general public, be immediately removed with necessary and deadly force."

CLARA  
(muttering)  
So, basically, "if you disagree, we kill you." Gotta love America.

OFFICER 1  
Ma'am?

CLARA  
Nothing, sorry. Just making notes. I'm a reporter-

OFFICER 1  
Hm. Well, keep it down.

CLARA SCOFFS but stays quiet.

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
Doctor Harvey Brown, Doctor Asmid  
Ansari, Bianca Sanchez, Brandy  
Jones, Maria Ruiz, Elena Ruiz-

CLARA  
(whispers)  
No.

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
-Rebekah Hanes, Kira Brown, and  
Justine Fray. The ten of you have  
been convicted of the crime of  
first-degree murder under Chapter  
19 of Title 5 of the Texas Penal  
Code. You have been sentenced to  
death by hanging for this crime.  
This is the time and place for the  
execution of that sentence.

The CROWD that was MURMURING softly starts to quiet down until silent. Some of the prisoners begin to sob loudly, their screams muffled by the tape covering their mouths. A guard's heavy footsteps follow each as he secures a noose around each of their necks.

CLARA'S breathing is HEAVY.

CLARA  
(whispering)  
No, no, no...

JUSTICE STRAUSS gives the okay.

JUSTICE STRAUSS  
May God have mercy on your souls.

The floorboards SWING OPEN beneath the feet of the prisoners and the rope slips before there's a unanimous THUD.

FADE OUT.

ACT 3

## SCENE THREE

INT. OUTSIDE THE LBJ SHORTLY AFTER THE EXECUTION - MID MORNING

Everyone has already begun clearing out from the lawn. Buses are beginning to depart and politicians are making lunch plans.

CLARA's heading to her car when she spots RWANDA vomiting in a patch of grass near the parking lot. CLARA begins jogging over to her.

CLARA  
Whoa, Rwanda, are you okay?

NURSE RWANDA  
(breathless)  
I'll be fine.

CLARA  
I have some water in my car...

NURSE RWANDA  
Please.

RWANDA PANTS as she tries to catch her breath and CLARA jogs over to her car and back.

CLARA  
Here.

RWANDA twists open the bottle and begins to guzzle the water. Breathing in a sigh of relief when she is done.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
So... that was fucked up, huh?

NURSE RWANDA  
I killed her. Them. All of them.

CLARA  
What? No, Rwanda-

NURSE RWANDA  
I didn't load the gun but I gave them the ammo. I shouldn't have... I should have-



CLARA

Rwanda, listen to me.  
(edges closer, voice  
lower)

They came to you looking for help  
and you gave it to them. It's not  
your fault and it's not their fault  
either. You *know* this. I know you  
know this.

NURSE RWANDA

Clara. Sweetheart, I appreciate it.  
But as a nurse, it's my duty to  
protect my patients-

CLARA

No. No, it's your duty to *help*  
them, Rwanda. When people go to the  
hospital it's because they're weak,  
something terrible has happened to  
them and they don't have the  
answers or tools to make it better.  
You, the doctors and nurses like  
you, you give them those tools to  
get strong again. You did that for  
them- for Maria, Daniel, and Elena.  
You gave them hope.

NURSE RWANDA

A lot of good that hope did for  
them.

CLARA sighs sadly as RWANDA begins to sob.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)

I can't get her face out of my  
head.

CLARA

I think that was the point. I mean,  
this was barbaric- medieval. They  
wanted to make a point today and  
they wanted it to stick.

NURSE RWANDA

Do you think they know what I did?

CLARA

No. I think if they knew, you and I  
wouldn't be standing here talking.

Beat.

## NURSE RWANDA

(sighs)

I have a daughter. She's six. Every morning, when we fix her hair for school, I remind her that she is brown and beautiful. Her first day of kindergarten, she came home crying with some of her bantu knots undone. I asked her what happened and she said the school girls pulled at them and called them ugly and asked her if she ever showered, because her skin was so dark.

(sighs)

How do you tell a little black girl that not only do people hate her for the color of her skin but now they hate her because of her gender? Two things she has no control over but should be *proud of*?

Beat.

## CLARA

*Nací en el Valle del Río Grande, cerca de la frontera.* Every winter, we'd get a whole bunch of *güerros* coming over. We called them 'Winter Texans' because they'd come from the northern parts of the country or Canada to escape the cold and stay in our tropical climate. They would complain, though, when our neighbors, our *prójimos*, came over. Or when we'd take their money at the register. *Les enanta nuestra comida y nuestra cultura cuando no somos parte de ella.*

Beat.

## CLARA (CONT'D)

I was eight when I first witnessed it. After school, I'd walk over to the restaurant *donde mi mamá trabajaba*. She was waitressing that day and a family of *güerros*, were sitting there. When she repeated back their order, they began pestering her about the way she pronounced Sprite and sandwich.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

They kept saying "esprai, esprai", mimicking her accent and telling her to learn how to talk correctly or go back to her country. I didn't understand... we were in her country. But it was her Latin tongue and skin that they crucified.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

When I asked her about it on the ride home, she said, "*no te preocupes, hija linda.*" She said they were uneducated. 'Pobresitos', she called them.

(chuckles)

When we got home, I asked my father about it. I had never seen him so red. He didn't answer me but he went to my mother and hugged her as she fought back tears.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

In Spanish, my mother could outwrite and outspoke you. Her poems, her stories, her words were absolutely beautiful and captivating. In fact, she's the reason I became a journalist.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

When we relocated here, we all experienced it over and over again. I dropped my Spanish and refused to pick it back up. Most of my college courses were male-dominated. Most of the things I said weren't taken seriously and a lot of the big stories for our newspaper were given to the boys. Politics, sports, business- all topics for the guys. The women could write about college fashion or about a play the performing art theater would put together. A girl I was working with fought to get a column on the front page and she did it.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

She was Latinx, too. I thought, *if she can do it, so can I*. And I did.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

No matter where we go or what we do, we're always going to experience racism and sexism. My mom was 45 in that story. She experienced both until she died ten years later and given what we're currently battling, she'd still be enduring it.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

But we're strong. The burden has been carried from generation to generation, sometimes the load gets lighter and sometimes it gets heavier, but we still have to do our part to take some of that weight off.

NURSE RWANDA

Damn, girl. You sure you're in the right profession? Sound like a motivational speaker to me.

CLARA

(chuckles)

No. I just... You're not alone, Rwanda. I see her face, too. I see all of their faces and there's a horrible thought that replaces theirs with Avery's. It's going to haunt me for the rest of my life. So I'm going to do something about it.

NURSE RWANDA

What do you mean?

CLARA

(sighs)

I'm not sure yet.

**END**

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 5"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

Address  
Phone Number

COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

CLARA is back in the interrogation room, being tortured by OFFICER ROMERO. He sets down a pair of pliers as blood drips from CLARA's hands.

OFFICER ROMERO

How many more fingers do you have  
to lose before you get the picture,  
Mendez?

CLARA GROANS.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Look at you. *Me da asco*. When's the  
last time you showered, Mendez?  
Hell, when's the last time you ate?  
Hmm?

OFFICER ROMERO's FOOTSTEPS are heavy as he moves around the  
room.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Think about it. *Un buen baño  
caliente*, give you some ointment  
for your injuries, a delicious hot  
meal... What's your favorite thing  
to eat, Mendez? *Dígame*.

SILENCE.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Whataburger's one of mine. A nice,  
fat, patty melt. Or a number 5, con  
*tocino y queso, sin cebolla*. Extra  
large fries, lots of ketchup. Ooh,  
or Home Slice. Ever been? They have  
the *best* pizza. Nice pepperoni and  
mushroom-

CLARA

(weakly)  
Fine.

OFFICER ROMERO

What was that?

CLARA

I'll tell you something just...  
please... stop...

OFFICER ROMERO  
(chuckles)  
Crane, why don't you go get Miss  
Mendez that order I was just  
talking about?

OFFICER CRANE  
Sure, boss.

OFFICER CRANE walks off, his footsteps retreating out of the room before the door shuts behind him.

OFFICER ROMERO DRAGS a chair from the corner to sit in front of CLARA.

OFFICER ROMERO  
*Andalé, Mendez, dime.*

CLARA  
There's an abandoned warehouse just west of Franklin Park.

OFFICER ROMERO  
Don't bullshit me, Mendez, we've checked every empty warehouse since learning about you and your little gang.

CLARA  
No, no, I swear. We just used it when we were in between locations but someone's always there.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO  
Alright, well, I need an address.

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
*Dame la dirección, Mendez, or the deal is off.*

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO sighs loudly and clicks his WALKIE-TALKIE.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
Crane, cancel that order for Mendez-

CLARA  
4801 Freidrich Lane.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 (to Clara)  
 Which warehouse, Mendez?

Beat.

CLARA  
 (sobbing)  
 Two. Warehouse two.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 (chuckles)  
 Crane, 10-22.

OFFICER CRANE (V.O.)  
 10-4.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 We're gonna check that out. In the  
 mean time, enjoy your bath.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

Water sprays out of the rusty SHOWERHEAD and falls to the tile with loud *plat, plat, plat's*. As she nears the end of her shower, CLARA turns the faucet with a SQUEAK and the water slowly ceases. She grabs a towel beside her and wraps it around, walking off towards the benches to grab her items. As she begins to dry herself off and put on her jumpsuit, there's a voice directly outside of the bathroom.

ISABEL LOZANO, 32, an inmate at Beaumont Penitentiary, charged with methamphetamine trafficking and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. She is in her sixth year and well known among guards.

ISABEL  
 I'm *just* going to pop a squat,  
 Crane. Chill.

OFFICER CRANE  
 I already told you, Lozano, this  
 block is closed right now.

ISABEL  
 What? You got a big bad one in  
 here? I didn't think you cared  
 about me like that.



OFFICER CRANE

I don't. I care about my job. Now find another bathroom to do your business.

ISABEL

That hurts, Crane. After all we've been through?

OFFICER CRANE

Out, Lozano. I'm not going to repeat myself.

ISABEL

*Ay, por favor.* The nearest bathroom is a whole cell block away y con este bebé, pushing down on my bladder, I won't make it in time.

Beat.

ISABEL nears OFFICER CRANE and speaks softly as she brushes up against him.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I can make it up to you. Tonight, after lights out?

Beat.

OFFICER CRANE

You have *thirty seconds*, Lozano. Or I'm taking you to the hole and saying you denied my orders.

ISABEL

*Me encanta cuando me hablas así. Y te va a encantar cuando te voy una mamada.*

(giggles)

OFFICER CRANE

*Mamada?* Wait... you've said that before. What is that?

ISABEL GIGGLES and her footsteps retreat as she enters into the bathroom. She heads for a stall, opens and then closes the door, then comes back out to head over to CLARA.

ISABEL

Clara? Clara Mendez?

CLARA

Um, yes?

ISABEL  
*No mames. Parece mierda.*

CLARA  
 Hey, just because I don't speak it  
 much doesn't mean I don't  
 understand it.

ISABEL  
 Well it's true, güerra, but I don't  
 think another shower is going to  
 help.

CLARA  
 What do you want? Who are you?

ISABEL  
 Isabel Lozano, six-month resident  
 of Beaumont's finest penitentiary  
 and... a friend.

CLARA  
 Friend?

ISABEL reaches into her pocket to hand over a key card.

ISABEL  
 Perdón, I tried to sneak some pán  
 out of the cafeteria but I didn't  
 want to risk getting locked in my  
 cell for the rest of the night. I  
 did get this, though.

CLARA  
 A key card?

ISABEL  
 Pulled it off one of the rookies.  
 Tan pendejos, todos. Anyway, it  
 takes them a while to deactivate.  
 I'd say you have another couple of  
 hours before it's not good anymore.

CLARA  
 ...for what?

ISABEL  
*Ay dios. Para escapar, pendeja.*

CLARA  
 Escape? No-

ISABEL

No? Do you have any idea how many of us it took to get that?

Beat.

CLARA

Why are you doing this?

ISABEL

*Para mi hermanita. Para la bebé en mi estómago. You and your sister saved mine. Te debo mi vida.*

Beat.

CLARA

How far along are you?

ISABEL

Nine months. She's due any day now.

Beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

You remind me of my daughters.

CLARA

This isn't your first pregnancy?

ISABEL

(laughs)

*Ay, preciosa, I could kiss you. No, this is my fifth. Dos ninas y dos ninos.*

CLARA

You must miss them a lot.

ISABEL

Con todo mi vida.

CLARA

So, then, why risk it all?

ISABEL

I was only four months pregnant when they arrested me. My sons, Julio y Margarito, they're growing boys, you know? *Comen todo.* My husband, their father, he tried to make enough for all of us. The kids needed school uniforms, new shoes, food...

(MORE)

ISABEL (CONT'D)

our rent increased, the car broke down. It was one thing after the other. At work, someone told him how to make a bit of extra money and at first he said 'no'. But then he came to me one<sup>2</sup>day, gave me an envelope, and said to buy the kids whatever they needed. When I saw what was in that envelope, *mi corazon cayo*. I had never seen so much green in my life, Clara. So I didn't question it- why would I? My kids needed it, nothing else mattered. But it kept happening... until he was caught. Taken by the police in the middle of the night, *con mis hijos loorando por el*.

Beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Then *la policia* turned to me, asked me if I knew that he was selling meth. I said no, *no se nada*, I thought he had just picked up extra shifts at work. They didn't believe me, of course, accused me of selling and endangering my kids. *Puro pedo*. That shit was never even around them. They gave me fifteen years. Fifteen years away from my children.

Beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

So, I do it for them, so that one day they can live in a better America, the one my parents migrated here for. You take this and you remember that there are people counting on you for more than what you're fighting for.

Beat.

CLARA

Okay. How do I even know when it's safe to go?

ISABEL

The football game is tonight. The CO's will be in the lobby downstairs *viendo el juego*.

(MORE)

ISABEL (CONT'D)

That key opens your cell. I'm going to leave another gate open, no one uses it anymore because they're remodeling the east wing.

OFFICER CRANE bangs on the wall with his baton.

OFFICER CRANE

HEY! HURRY IT UP. LOZANO? TIMES UP.

ISABEL

*Coming!*

(to Clara, hushed)

One of the girls over in D-block has access to the church bell. She's going to ring it when it's safe. Then you'll follow the halls down the east wing, the one under construction. There's an opening. You'll come out and see the woods immediately-

OFFICER CRANE

LOZANO. NOW.

ISABEL

(faster, hushed)

-to your right. Someone will be in there waiting for you.

CLARA

Who?

ISABEL

No idea, but better than anyone in here, right?

OFFICER CRANE

ALRIGHT. I'm coming in. Mendez, you'd better be dressed.

CLARA

(whispers)

Thank you.

ISABEL

(whispers)

Long live Jane y Viva la Revolución.

DISSOLVE TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING  
"[CAST]". CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 5:  
[NAME].

ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

EXT. ROAD - SUNDAY MID-MORNING - PRESENT - ONE DAY AFTER  
EXECUTION

CLARA and AVERY are on their way home from the grocery store and passing the LBJ library. The highway remains the same-noisy and with high traffic.

CLARA

This feels so surreal. I mean, executions happened yesterday and everyone- including us- is at the grocery store deciding between two-percent or whole milk and whether or not it'll affect their calorie deficit.

AVERY

I just feel so bad for the families that have to see their loved one strung up like that. Knowing this generation, it'll be blasted all over social media without any regard to their feelings.

CLARA

They strung them up on every side of the building, too, so you can even see them from the highway.

AVERY

So many bodies...

CLARA

There was four executions yesterday. That's 40 people- dead.

AVERY

God.

CLARA

Can you just imagine the thousands of women that are terrified thinking that they'll be next?

The two take a moment of silence for the victims as they pass the building.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Hey, I've been thinking about those people you mentioned- the revolutionaries.

AVERY

Which ones? I tend to talk about all of them a lot. History major, y'know.

CLARA

Well, all of them, really. I mean, the fact that every generation has had their own anarchist is incredible. It got me thinking- who was the chosen one for a pre-Roe America?

There's silence as AVERY searches through her memory.

AVERY

Well... there was Heather Booth.

CLARA

Mmm, her name's not ringing a bell.

AVERY

Not surprised. The government does a great job of leaving people like her out of textbooks.

CLARA

Okay, so *you* enlighten me, then.

AVERY

Well... before Roe v. Wade was decided, Heather Booth pretty much created the very idea of an underground abortion clinic. She and countless other women banded together in this thing they called the Jane Collective and helped women of all ages and nationalities obtain abortions. In fact, I believe they even learned how to perform abortions themselves in the event that they couldn't get a doctor.

CLARA

How did they get away with that?



AVERY

Well, there was actually a time when the cops rounded up seven of them and charged them with abortion and the act of committing or conspiracy to commit... either way, the abortionists hired some *chingona* lawyer... um, I'll have to look up her name in a bit... and their charges were all dropped.

CLARA

Well... how'd they get outed? Did someone tell on them? How did they even get the word out for something like that?

AVERY

Clare, what I told you is basically all I know about the subject. We went over it briefly during one of my Political Science courses last year. It was loosely tied to *Roe v. Wade* which is why our professor even brought it up to begin with.

CLARA

Why didn't you mention this to me before?

AVERY

Honestly? I think it still hadn't registered just what kind of state America is in right now. But after yesterday's brutal and savage example of "justice"... well..

CLARA

No, I understand. It *still* feels like a nightmare to me. In fact, there's moments, like this morning, where I wake up after my alarm clock sounds off and I feel like I just had a really, really bad dream. And I'll get up from bed and head to work and everyone - Rebekah and Kira - will be at their desks typing away. And then it hits me, like a jolt of electricity.

AVERY reaches out to touch her sisters hand, taking it in hers.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Do you think they'd have anything about the Jane Collective at the library?

AVERY

I'm absolutely certain they do. Among other things. We can go to UT's library- it's better. Plus, I know the history and poly-sci sections like the back of my hand so we might be more productive there than at the public library.

CLARA

Mind if we drop off these groceries and then head that way?

AVERY

Sounds good. I need to pick up some books I borrowed from there and return them anyway.

## SCENE TWO

INT. UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS LIBRARY - LATER THAT MORNING

CLARA and AVERY's footsteps are in unison as they enter the University of Texas Library.

CLARA

Wow. I never thought I'd find myself back here. Nothing's even changed since I graduated.

AVERY

You used to come to the library when you were in college?

CLARA

Don't sound so surprised. I might not have had a perfect GPA like you, but I did the occasional research paper and whipped up some legitimate sources.

The sisters make their way over to the ELEVATOR and AVERY presses the button to go UP.

AVERY

You're just always so quick to take a trip to Barnes and Noble over visiting the library, I figured you didn't like them much.

The ELEVATOR dings and the DOORS SLIDE OPEN.

CLARA

No, I just prefer to own my books. There's a lot less guilt in losing something I bought over something I borrowed.

The two walk into the elevator.

AVERY

Ah, makes sense.

CLARA

Mhm. So, which floor are we headed to?

AVERY presses the buttons to go up and the elevator door SLIDES closed.

AVERY

I was thinking that we'll try the 3rd floor first and see if we can find any books about the Roe v Wade decision, maybe other revolutionaries to consider. I have a research paper on World War II that I need to get sources for, so I'll look around. Then maybe we can hop over to the 4th floor and browse through the U.S. document database.

CLARA

Sounds good.

When the DOOR to level 3 OPENS, there's a different kind of silence. There's small sounds of PAGES turning in the distance, some RUMMAGING as students search shelves, and occasional CLICKING from those using the computer. CLARA'S footsteps are light and padded against the carpeted floor as she peruses the shelves. In one corridor between shelves, she sees a librarian rummaging through a trash bin.

ROGER, 26, a reference librarian at UT.

ROGER  
 (rummaging)  
 Where *is it*? Ah. Here we are.

ROGER withdraws a book and begins dusting it off.

AVERY  
 You do know you're supposed to be  
*putting* the books away not *throwing*  
 them away, right?

ROGER looks up to see AVERY and CLARA.

ROGER  
 (small chuckle)  
 Hey, Avery.

AVERY  
 Hey. Clara, this is Roger, one of  
 the reference librarians here. He  
 practically saved my grades last  
 semester with all the sources he  
 helped provide me with. Roger, this  
 is my sister, Clara.

ROGER  
 Nice to meet you.

CLARA  
 Yeah, you too.  
 (hesitant)  
 Sorry, it's just not every day that  
 you see a *librarian* throwing away  
 books and documents. Isn't it,  
 like, sacrilegious or something?

ROGER  
 (chuckles softly)  
 It *does* go against the "Librarian  
 Code of Ethics".

CLARA  
 So, why are you doing it then?

Beat.

ROGER  
 Um, because of the new bill that  
 was passed.

CLARA  
 S.B. 1913? These *all* reference Roe  
 v. Wade?

ROGER

Oh, um...no.

ROGER continues sifting through books, SHUFFLING through a large stapled document beside him.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I guess they haven't announced it on the news yet. Hell, I'm not even sure they will. Wouldn't surprise me if the one article about it gets buried under viral videos of celebrity divorce courts and billionaires buying Twitter - we're already seeing it with the execution from yesterday.

AVERY

Exactly what I've been saying.

ROGER

Well, there's another clause in S.B. 1913 that's an addition to that massive book ban last year. You know, the one that had libraries all around the country pull books that contained topics on LGTBQA, sexuality, race...

CLARA

Oh yeah, banned practically anything that was relatable to the general public.

ROGER

Exactly. Well, now they're outlawing certain words and phrases that might inspire the general public to... question the government. Paraphrased, of course.

AVERY

(gasps)  
What?

CLARA

I... I can't even say I'm shocked, honestly.

ROGER

Mhm. So they gave all the schools, universities, libraries, bookstores - a 10,000 page list of "banned" books and documents.

AVERY

Documents?

CLARA

You mean like U.S. documents?

ROGER

Those are the ones. Well, only the copies that are accessible to the public. They'll have the originals stored in their own records, of course.

CLARA

Oh, well, of course. What else are they going to wipe their asses with?

AVERY

(whispers)

Clara.

ROGER

(chuckles)

No, no. It's fine. Kind of refreshing to hear my own thoughts said out loud.

CLARA

So... what exactly does that leave us with? Half of these shelves will be cleared out by the end of the day.

(picks up a book)

Oh, but the Bible stays, right?

ROGER

They need *something* to reference for their new laws, right?

AVERY

Ugh.

CLARA

So I guess all of this gets shredded then?

ROGER

Seems that way. Although, some of us have heard through the rumor mill that they're thinking of burning them in front of LBJ.

CLARA  
 (disgusted)  
 God. They're really milking that  
 symbolism.

AVERY  
 But the bodies haven't even fully  
 decayed yet.

ROGER  
 I think that's what they're hoping  
 for.

CLARA  
 Well, it's a little too 'Fahrenheit  
 451' for me.

ROGER  
 Meets 'Game of Thrones'.

Beat.

CLARA  
 So all this just gets put outside  
 by the dumpster for the city to  
 come by and collect?

ROGER  
 Not outside. Can't have these  
 falling in the "wrong hands", they  
 said.

Beat.

CLARA  
 So... where then?

ROGER  
 Um. I- I really can't say.

AVERY  
 (quietly; apologetically)  
 That's okay, Roger. You don't have  
 to-

CLARA  
 No, Avery. Shush.  
 (to ROGER)  
 Look, um... Roger... It's really  
 important that I get some kind of  
 information concerning... well, all  
 the things you've been ordered to  
 get rid of.

Beat.

ROGER

What's going on? Why do you need this stuff? Are you all with the feds? Was this some kind of undercover ruse-

CLARA

Whoa, whoa. Slow down. No. I'm just asking as a concerned citizen. That's all.

AVERY

Really, Roger. We're just concerned about everything happening.  
(to CLARA through grit teeth)  
Aren't we, Clara?

Beat.

CLARA

Truth be told... I'm a journalist with the Austin Chronicle.

AVERY

(whispers)  
No.

CLARA

I dabble in a lot of things, mostly local politics though. I didn't come here for a formal interview- I didn't even know about this, honestly.

ROGER

(panicking)  
Interview? Fuck. Fuck. I shouldn't have said shit.  
(huffs)  
Are you going to write about this?

CLARA

Our conversation? No. Not at all. That would be completely unethical. But... would it be *so bad* to cover this? I mean, you just said yourself that it's not even being publicized, and it'll probably get buried beneath America's social media toxic wasteland, right? We have an opportunity to change that.



Beat.

ROGER  
Maybe I should get my supervisor...

AVERY  
Roger. Clara, we should go...

CLARA  
(ignoring AVERY)  
I'm not asking to directly quote you. In fact, I *never* even name my sources.

ROGER  
I really think you should leave.

AVERY  
I think he's right, Clare. *Let's go.*  
(to ROGER)  
I'm so sorry, Rog...

CLARA  
(sighs)  
Alright. Thank you, anyway. Have a good day, Roger.

As CLARA turns to walk away, ROGER speaks up again.

ROGER  
Wait. Aren't you going to give me a card or something in case I change my mind?

CLARA  
Mmm... no? I'd rather not leave a paper trail behind.

As the two begin to leave, ROGER calls AVERY back.

AVERY  
Listen, I'm so sorry about Clara. She just gets really into it, I tell her all the time to leave her inner journalist at home but-

Beat.

ROGER  
Look, Avery... I want to help but..

AVERY

No, no, it's okay. I totally get it. With everything going on-

ROGER

(huffs)

We tossed everything into boxes and trash bags and had them sent down to the basement.

AVERY

(whispers)

What? What are you saying?

ROGER

(whispers)

The security lock has been broken for over half a year now so anyone can get in. People normally don't though because the sign indicates that they'll be fined.

(breath of amusement)

The library doesn't do anything, though. It's just for precaution.

Beat.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Anyway, everyone's going to lunch or on break soon, you should be good for an hour, tops. Let your sister know.

Beat.

AVERY

Thank you, Roger. Really.

ROGER

Just... please don't make me regret this, okay? More than my job is on the line here.

AVERY

I won't. I promise.

There's a small silence between them before ROGER's footsteps retreat.

FADE OUT.

ACT 2

FADE IN.

SCENE THREE

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

CLARA  
Well that's all of it.

Books and bags THUD onto the wooden kitchen table. AVERY and CLARA plop down onto the dining seats to catch their breath.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
We really lucked out that Roger changed his mind.

AVERY  
Speaking of... I promised him that none of this would get back to him. Please don't make me go back on that promise.

CLARA  
I know the dangers we all face now, Ave. I never gave up my sources before and I don't plan to do it now.

AVERY gives CLARA a worried look.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
I promise, Avery. I'll forget his name entirely.

The two look at their collection.

AVERY  
You grabbed a *lot*, Clare.

CLARA  
I just grabbed whatever was discarded in the same pile that had the word "abortion" on it or alluding to it. I didn't want to waste time skimming through them, so if it looked useful, it went in the box.

CLARA picks up a few books from her pile and hands them one by one to Avery.

CLARA (CONT'D)

And then, I found these.

AVERY looks over the books being handed to her.

AVERY

"The Story of Jane" - hey, you found it! "A Post-Roe America", "The Turnaway Study", "The Common Secret", Steal This Book"?

CLARA

Yeah, that last one just seemed like an omen.

AVERY

This is Abbie Hoffman. Do you remember when I told you about the different revolutionaries? I mentioned a Tom Hayden...

CLARA

Yeah...

AVERY

Okay, well he and Abbie were two of the seven charged with inciting the Chicago Riots of the 1960s.

(to herself)

I forgot all about this book.

CLARA

Well, then I guess it's a good thing I grabbed it- might come in handy after all.

AVERY

Funny.

(pause)

Anatomy textbooks?

CLARA

I hadn't planned on those but I figured it might be a good idea to have. I mean, you can never be too familiar with the human body, right?

AVERY

'Labor and Delivery Nursing, Second Edition'. 'Coder's Specialty Guide: Obstetrics and Gynecology'. Clara?

CLARA

They were getting rid of this, Ave. It must be for a reason. I mean these are *medical* textbooks, *college* textbooks. Given the short supply of doctors and nurses these days, seems weird to be throwing out the very thing they need to practice medicine. Especially surrounding the babies they're trying to force us to carry. I think it also means they're going to stop teaching medical students how to perform abortions... abortions can't be done if there isn't a doctor in America that knows how to do them, right?

AVERY

So your solution is to...

CLARA

I was thinking... about the possibility of some kind of underground network for women. Kind of like Planned Parenthood, with all of the knowledge and resources they provide.

AVERY

Okay...

CLARA

Well... what if we took it a step further?

AVERY

Oh no.

CLARA

What if we brought it back?

AVERY

Bring... bring *Jane back*?

CLARA

YES

AVERY

(scoffs)

Clara, we don't know anything about any of this-

CLARA

No, I know. I know. But honestly, when has not knowing something ever stopped us? We didn't know how to ski when we first visited Aspen- we'd never even seen snow before. Did that stop us from putting on a pair of skis and sliding down a 3,000ish foot mountain?

AVERY

Okay, but Clara, skiing isn't illegal. It won't have us killed- well, okay, I mean there's always a possibility of death but you know what I mean. It's not the same. We won't be *hung* for it.

CLARA

You're right. It's not the same. One is strictly for pleasure and the other isn't anywhere near that.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Look, I'll read this.

(snatches the book from Avery)

And let you know what I find. Given that this happened back in the 70's, there's a lot more to consider in terms of technology and such.

AVERY

You do that. In the meantime, I'll go over the documents I found. See if I can't find some kind of *legal* loophole in here.

CLARA

(tsks)

If we didn't look almost identical, I'd question our relation.

CUT TO:

ACT 3

SCENE FOUR

INT. THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE - NEXT DAY - MORNING - 2ND DAY  
AFTER EXECUTION

It's even quieter. There's the occasional CLICKING and PHONE RINGING and XEROX MACHINE making noises. CLARA is sitting at her desk, listening to the news:

JILL (V.O.)

-over 10,000 pages of books that are being banned across the nation. Libraries have begun purging their shelves of every title listed. After an unnamed source an Austin Chronicle article yesterday rumored the possibility of a massive 'book burn' in front of the LBJ Library, local politicians took to social media to confirm these allegations. Shortly after, the list was made public and can be found on our homepage or any government website.

ROBERT (V.O.)

And after attending an Austin ISD board meeting, Governor Jackson declared that every Friday for the rest of the month, children are encouraged to bring the banned books to be purged in the fire that is scheduled to burn every Saturday night. Drop off locations can also be found at every school in the district for any citizen wishing to participate as well.

SUSAN comes up behind CLARA.

SUSAN

Wishing?  
(scoffs)  
Like people have a choice?

CLARA

What do you think will happen to anyone that gets caught with these books if they don't turn them in?

SUSAN

Well, they kill us for abortion. Only a matter of time before they start cutting off the hands of thieves, cutting out the tongues of traitors... wonder what they would gouge out for reading contraband?

CLARA

*Dios.*

SUSAN

So, we received a call from corporate.

CLARA

Corporate? I didn't even know we *had* a corporate.

SUSAN

Neither did I.

CLARA

What did they want? Everything okay?

SUSAN

Well, no, not really. You know how you were asked to cover the execution?

CLARA

Right. Sorry, I'm working on the story, just trying to stomach it-

SUSAN

No, no, it's actually a good thing that you're taking so long with it... Odds are I'd have to ask you change everything.

CLARA

(puzzled)

What do you mean?

SUSAN

Corporate is asking that you... write something *positive* on the piece.

CLARA

Positive? How the fuck can anyone make an *execution* positive?



SUSAN

Oh, please. Just read papers on Bundy and Gacy's executions -

CLARA

Susan, that's... they were murderers. You're not even comparing apples to oranges here, come on.

SUSAN

Just remind the readers that the government has their best interest at heart and that, while their form of punishment might seem... out-dated-

CLARA

Out-dated? It's medieval- it's barbaric. It's complete and total savagery.

SUSAN

*Their words*, Mendez, not mine. Anyway, while it may seem like *that*, the government is having to take drastic measures in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of America.

CLARA

(whispers)  
What the fuck.

SUSAN

They've asked that I provide you with some statistics that need to be implemented in the article, to strengthen the purpose of these new laws and the consequences for not following-

CLARA

Conforming.

SUSAN

Them.  
(sighs)  
Here.

SUSAN passes CLARA a stack of papers. CLARA begins SHUFFLING through them, flabbergasted with each page as she reads some sentences out loud.

CLARA

"98 percent of abortions end in death?" What?

(pause)

"Fetal tissue has been used for vaccines", "emergency contraception is abortion".

(shuffles more)

"Abortion increases fertility" - Susan, I can't quote any of these. They're all debunked, fearmongering rumors. I can find good, decent, peer-reviewed articles that propose the opposite of these-

SUSAN

You'll see, unfortunately, during your research, what articles are still available and which ones have been pulled from literary journals all over the internet. Most are in the current process of being redacted.

CLARA

(whispers)

Redacted?

SUSAN

Look, I don't want this to happen-

CLARA

Then stop it. Tell corporate 'no' and let me run my own story.

SUSAN

If you do that then you put the entire newspaper at risk of being shut down.

Beat.

CLARA

And if I refuse? If I refuse to write?

SUSAN

Then you refuse. And you know that I would never fire you voluntarily.

CLARA

But you're saying someone else might?

SUSAN remains QUIET.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
Okay, then.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
I quit.

CUT TO:

SCENE FIVE

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - CLARA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLARA and AVERY are getting ready for bed. CLARA is brushing her teeth in the bathroom. The TV plays in her room while AVERY sits on the bed.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)  
-feeling about the current state of things?

FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
Honestly, it's a good thing. Children go to school to learn about math and science and reading, not about abortions or murder or sex or things like that.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)  
Couldn't it be argued that a child should have background information on those topics so that they can make more educated and informed decisions?

FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
They're children- what decisions do they have to make besides what to eat for breakfast?

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)  
And what do you think about the process of it all?

MALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
Well, it's not like they're coming to our houses and prying these books out of our hands. They're giving us a chance to comply.

FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
 Exactly. Everyone has an  
 opportunity to do right by the law.

MALE CITIZEN  
 I got my grandkids riled up about  
 it! Their school has made it a  
 little fun competition so that's a  
 nice incentive-

CLARA  
 Unbelievable. I mean, they're  
 acting like it's a fucking... I  
 don't know. Canned food drive.  
 (spits and shuts off  
 faucet)  
 'Bring in seven books and win a  
 pizza party for the class!  
 (flicks off light)  
 'The class with the most books gets  
 a field trip to the gallows!'

CLARA enters her ROOM.

AVERY  
 The fact that they're  
 indoctrinating this with children  
 is a tad bit terrifying.

CLARA  
 It's *fucking* terrifying.

CLARA is sifting through papers on her desk, sorting things  
 out for the purge.

AVERY  
 It's a good thing we checked out  
 the library yesterday. Everything's  
 happening so fast, libraries across  
 the nation are going to be wiped  
 out in just three more days.

CLARA  
 Yeah. I mean, what we collected is  
 just a *fraction* of what's out  
 there. It's a bit of a bummer that  
 we couldn't get our hands on more.  
 There's no way we'd get away with  
 this twice.

The TV continues to play in the background, with the evening  
 news THEME SONG coming into play.

AVERY

Oh, the 10 o'clock news is starting.

AVERY raises the volume to the TV.

JILL ANDERSON (V.O.)

Good evening, I'm Jill Anderson-

ROBERT GAMEZ

And I'm Robert Gamez.

JILL ANDERSON

-and thank you for joining us tonight at 10. We begin tonight with news in downtown Austin. Local soup kitchens have begun seeing a depletion in volunteers since the overturning of Roe v. Wade as bounties continue to roundup citizens. While most churches continue to remain open, nonprofit organizations, like Second Chance, urge locals to volunteer in areas that are more accessible to the homeless population that resides in the heart of the city. Channel 10's Jackie Schneider spoke to Second Chance coordinator, Mallory Zamora, this morning:

JACKIE SCHNEIDER (V.O.)

Second Chance wants to make sure that no stomach goes unfed and is asking the community for help.

MALLORY (V.O.)

Any help at all would be greatly appreciated. If you have no cooking experience, we'll place you at the food line. If you would prefer something in the back, we have dishwashers that would love the help. Basically, if you are capable, then we have room for you.

JACKIE SCHNEIDER (V.O.)

Second Chance is a nonprofit organization that originated in the 30's by founder Thomas Williams. From as early as 5am to as late as 8pm, volunteers have kept this kitchen going by instituting Thomas William's principle:

MALLORY (V.O.)

"Successful people are fed people." We don't turn anyone away. Food is something that we all have in common and something we need in order to succeed. You can't think about an interview if you're too focused on being hungry, and children can't focus on being kids if they're too worried about when their next meal is going to be. At Second Chance, we give people a chance to set aside that worry and focus only on the things that will benefit them. It's also why we're the only food bank in the city to offer food all day. People's stomachs don't close at 3pm.

(chuckles)

JACKIE SCHNEIDER (V.O.)

In downtown Austin, Jackie Schneider, Channel 10 News.

ROBERT (V.O)

Volunteer forms can be found on SecondChance.org. For any questions, contact them at the phone number or email provided.

JILL ANDERSON (V.O.)

And your services don't stop there. It was only this morning that the book purge was announced for this Saturday night and already local churches have announced 'book parties', encouraging individuals to drop off their banned books and enjoy food and dance each night until the purge. Steve Nguyen is at Hope and Praise Church tonight, where the first party of the series is underway. Thomas?

THOMAS NGUYEN (V.O.)

(party music in the background)

Thank you, Jill. As you can see- and hear- there is quite the rave going on inside the church walls behind me where attendees have traded in books for admission.

(MORE)

THOMAS NGUYEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Church volunteers are working diligently as they fill boxes of discarded books and secure them in vans, waiting to be taken to the city's recycling center where they will be transported to LBJ Saturday afternoon. I spoke with Father John earlier this evening for his two cents on the matter and what he hopes to accomplish with these parties.

There's a WHOOSH as the news plays a recorded tape between the Father and Thomas.

THOMAS NGUYEN (V.O.)

What would you say to the people who are wary of giving up these possessions of theirs?

FATHER JOHN (V.O.)

Well, first, I would remind them that there are more important things in life than materialistic objects and God would agree. It's exactly that kind of sin that has led us to this point in time. Secondly, I would like to point out that... I understand that change can be difficult, but it is something that needs to happen. It's never comfortable at first, but that doesn't mean it isn't right. Right now, God is asking each of you to participate in something that is out of your comfort level and he does this because he knows the strength of your courage. The courage to do what's right. These parties are a way to gently guide wary individuals to participate in a more comfortable but responsible way.

THOMAS NGUYEN (V.O.)

And can you tell us a little more about these parties?

FATHER JOHN (V.O.)

Of course! They'll be held every night starting from 6pm to 11pm, allowing anyone from anywhere to come and drop off their books.

(MORE)

FATHER JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We also want to give individuals who may not have an opportunity to drop off the books at other times, aren't stripped of possibilities-

CLARA MUTES the TV.

AVERY

Hey! I was-

CLARA

Holy shit. I have an idea.

AVERY

Does it involve unmuting the TV-

CLARA

No, shut up.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

What if we host one of these 'book parties'?

AVERY

Um... what?

CLARA

Think about it. We can make some cheap ass lemonade and cookies and people can come by and drop off their shit. Like a reverse yard sale. I can put out an ad in the newspaper and have it printed by the afternoon.

AVERY

Okay, but... *why* would we do that? I thought we didn't like the purge-

CLARA

We don't. But our home library will.

AVERY

Why do you do this. Why do you always speak in riddles, Clara-



CLARA

(sighs)

We can sift through everyone's banned books and set them aside for ourselves and then take the others that we don't need to the recycling center.

Beat.

AVERY

It'll look like we support this-

CLARA

*Exactly.* We can prevent having a target on our back by... well, essentially playing double agent. Faking it. We fake our advocacy.

AVERY

I don't know... I mean... you can't honestly think that the government is just going to take people's word for it when they say they got rid of every book that was on that list.

CLARA

You don't think the dead bodies they're hanging aren't getting their point across?

AVERY

I mean, clearly not if you're over here contemplating this.

Beat.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Listen, I think it's a great plan *in theory* but with the way everything is going these days, I'm just not sure we should risk it.

CLARA

Well, with that argument, we're already risking it with the books we are hoarding. What's a little more? Besides, take a look around you. We're not back home in the shitty part of town. We're with David, someone who works *with the government*. They'd search everyone else before they search here.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

And, *and*, we'd have the advantage of knowing beforehand if they even would come search here. You know David. He's a fuckin control-freak. He'll want the place spotless and be freaking out the second he finds out that people from his work, the people he's been brownnosing for ages now, are coming here.

Beat.

AVERY

(wary)

Clara...

CLARA

Look, let me bring it up to him over breakfast tomorrow morning and see where his mind is at and then we can take it from there?

Beat.

AVERY

Oh, I'm sorry, were you waiting for my approval? I figured you'd do it anyway so I didn't need to answer you.

CLARA

Funny.

CUT TO:

ACT 4

SCENE

INT. DAVID'S KITCHEN - MORNING

CLARA is stirring eggs and brewing coffee and AVERY sits at the counter, reading the paper.

CLARA  
I hate making breakfast

AVERY  
It's the easiest meal of the day.  
You just hate cooking.

CLARA GRUMBLES incoherently.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
Hey, you're the one that wanted to-

CLARA SHUSHES AVERY as they hear DAVID'S footsteps descend the stairs and walk into the kitchen. He steps stop abruptly as he watches CLARA.

CLARA  
Hey, David. Thought I heard you.  
Breakfast will be ready in a sec.

DAVID walks over to AVERY.

DAVID  
(low)  
Did I just walk into some Freaky  
Friday stuff?

AVERY  
(sips coffee)  
Nope. That's Clara, I'm Avery, and  
today is Thursday, so no freaky  
business here.

DAVID  
But... she's cooking. This can't be  
real. Unless she's poisoning me?

CLARA makes her way over to the counter with a plate full of food.

CLARA  
 You're not dreaming, David, but  
 feel free to pinch yourself anyway.

CLARA brings over a plate for AVERY and sets it down in front  
 of her.

AVERY  
 Hey, this actually doesn't smell  
 half bad.

CLARA  
 Well breakfast *is* the easiest meal  
 of the day, right?

AVERY  
 (sips coffee)  
 Important. The word you're looking  
 for is *important*.

DAVID takes a bite of food and HUMS pleasantly.

DAVID  
 Okay, okay, not bad, Mendez.  
 (takes another bite)  
 But what's the occasion?

CLARA  
 Why does there need to be an  
 occasion?

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 Okay, fine. Avery was wondering if  
 we could host one of those 'book  
 parties' for people in the  
 neighborhood and near here?

AVERY chokes on her coffee.

AVERY  
 (through grit teeth)  
 Clara.

DAVID  
 Book party? Ave?

DAVID'S utensil CLATTERS as he drops it onto his plate and  
 turns to AVERY.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 You... want to throw a party that's  
 in... *support*... of the purge?

CLARA

I know. I had the *same* reaction. We know our history buff hates the idea of destroying historical memorabilia, but I think it's her way of coping. Right, Ave?

AVERY

(tight-lipped)

Mhm.

DAVID

Avery. Is this true?

Beat.

AVERY SIGHS.

AVERY

I suppose.. Feeling like maybe being the one to help with this might... make the transition for me easier. You know?

CLARA

Kind of like grabbing this all by the reigns and being proactive about it- in a positive way, right?

AVERY

(grit teeth)

I guess so.

DAVID

Hmm. Well...

Beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Honestly, it might not be such a bad idea...

CLARA AND AVERY

What?

DAVID

I mean, if my name and address is attached to this it would look great for me at the office. I could tell people there to swing by and bring their stuff, too. And...

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 well, Clara, I had actually been  
 meaning to talk to you about  
 something now that we're kind of on  
 the subject.

CLARA  
 Okay...

DAVID  
 Avery-

AVERY  
 She's just going to tell me when  
 you're gone.

DAVID  
 That's not-

CLARA  
 David, talk. She's not going  
 anywhere.

DAVID  
 (sighs)  
 Well...

Beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Your recent articles have been  
 generating some concern at my  
 office.

CLARA  
 My articles?

DAVID  
 You recently voiced an opinion  
 referencing the relation between  
 Texas being split into five states  
 and the overturning of this  
 abortion bill-

CLARA  
 Roe v. Wade. God, I hate that you  
 and your little friends up at the  
 AG would quit referring to it as an  
 abortion bill- it's so much more  
 complex than that.

DAVID

Fine. Roe v. Wade, then.  
Regardless, you may not think that  
the Chronicle is big enough to  
reach the eyes of those at the  
Capitol-

AVERY GASPS.

CLARA

Not *once* have I thought that but  
it's good to know how little my job  
means to you.

DAVID

You know what I mean, Clara.

CLARA

Not really. Enlighten me.

Beat.

DAVID

(sighs)

You know that I know that your job  
is very important and very  
significant and *because of that*, it  
reaches the eyes of those in the  
Capitol. And I've gotta tell you,  
Clare, your writing is really  
starting to piss off some people-

CLARA

Oh, what a shame.

DAVID

I'm not fucking around, Clare. You  
wrote an entire article about how  
Texas being split into five states,  
three of which were heavily red and  
one a swing into red, basically set  
the foundation for these new laws.

CLARA

Was I wrong? I mean, it's plain as  
day that the Republicans of Texas  
were all too ready to gain more  
seats in the Senate. You're telling  
me this wasn't part of the plan-

DAVID

It doesn't matter. You're  
dangerously close to suggesting  
conspiracy for fact-

CLARA  
Are theories illegal now?

DAVID  
Don't play stupid, Clara You know just as well as I do that anything deemed "fake news" can shut down an entire newspaper, put you on trial, and sentence you to life in prison.

CLARA  
You mean anything considered inconvenient to the government is "fake news". The courts wouldn't be able to crucify me on opinion-

DAVID  
No, but they can make your life a living hell-

CLARA  
Well, lucky for you, I don't work at The Chronicle anymore.

	DAVID		AVERY
(shocked)		(gasps)	
What?		What?	

CLARA  
I quit.  
(sips coffee)

DAVID  
You *quit*?

CLARA  
Corporate was asking us to basically rebrand; to go from a liberal column to a conservative one. I couldn't, in good faith, write for them anymore.

AVERY  
(hurt; quiet)  
Why didn't you tell me?

CLARA  
(remorseful)  
Ave, I'm sorry. I didn't say anything because... Well, I guess because it still doesn't feel real to me, you know? Part of me still feels like I'll be back in my office Monday morning.



Beat.

DAVID

Well... I'm sorry to hear it, Clara, but... also, I'm a little relieved. I mean, not that the target on your back is any smaller at your refusal, but you're less of a threat to them now and I can't lie and tell you that I'm not relieved by it.

Beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Anyway, you have my approval for the book party. I'll have my secretary run up a quick flyer to send around to the office. When should it be fore?

CLARA

I was thinking tomorrow? That way we have enough time to gather everything and deliver it to the recycling center, you know?

DAVID

Yeah, okay. Send me a time and I'll have Maria grab some groceries on her errands.

DAVID'S footsteps retreat towards the front door where he grabs his car keys and exits the house, CLOSING the door behind him. AVERY turns to CLARA and they both let out a large sigh.

AVERY

I can't believe you told him it was *my* idea.

CLARA

I can't believe he bought it.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Now all that's left is to act.

**END**

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 6"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

COLD OPEN

SOUND UP:

INT. BEAUMONT PENITENTIARY - MIDNIGHT - PRESENT DAY

CLARA is in solitary, twiddling the door key between her fingers as she waits for the signal to escape. It's silent except for a small trickle of water coming in from a leaky roof. Then...

A BELL RINGS in the distant prison chapel. CLARA'S GASP echoes softly against the walls of her cell. Her BREATHING becomes HEAVY as she moves from the bed to the door. There's a BUZZER in the distance and the LATCH to her door is unlocked. After a moment, she pushes the old door open.

CLARA slowly walks out, her bare feet hitting the cold concrete with a soft *plat, plat, plat*, as she quickens her pace.

When she reaches another door, she withdraws her keycard and scans it. The receiver BEEPS and the door unlatches. She OPENS the door and slides through to another hallway.

Again, the only sounds are of the *plat, plat, plat* of her feet as she jogs down hallways towards the exit.

LAUGHTER erupts and stops her in her tracks. She's reached the office where the guards are watching a sports game.

GUARD 1 (MALE)

I told you Hernandez would botch it. He's been shitty ever since Fenix finished him last season.

GUARD 2 (MALE)

Whatever, man. He'll make his comeback tonight, just watch.

GUARD 3 (FEMALE)

Get ready to pay off my student loans, Walker.

GUARD 4 (MALE)

Hey, Morgan. I'll help you pay off those loans. Just meet me in the closet in five.

LAUGHTER.

GUARD 3 (FEMALE)  
Eat shit, Evans.

Their voices FADE as CLARA slips past them and continues down the hall. She comes to another door and repeats the process from before. The receiver BEEPS and lets her through.

After a few more seconds, she reaches the last door. This one, however, rapidly BEEPS three times, denying her access.

CLARA  
(muttering)  
Wait. What?

She tries again and is denied by three rapid BEEPS.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
No, no, no.

She attempts a third time and fails again.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
(loud whisper)  
Fuck.

She crouches and hugs her knees, sobbing quietly.

ISABEL  
*Oye, loca, ¿Qué mierda haces?*

CLARA GASPS and quickly rises to her feet.

CLARA  
Isabel?

ISABEL  
What are you doing crying on the floor like that?

CLARA  
The keycard isn't working. This was a stupid fucking plan. I shouldn't have done it- I fucking told you no. Why the fuck didn't you just leave me alone? I was fine-

ISABEL  
*¿Estabas bien? Ta pendeja.* You were on the brink of death when I came to you, mami.

CLARA  
They're going to fucking kill me  
for this.

ISABEL  
They were going to kill you anyway.  
Better to die with dignity, *no?*

CLARA  
(flabbergasted)  
No. No, better not to die *at all*. I  
have people to live for, a *purpose-*

ISABEL  
*Un espíritu de lucha.*

CLARA  
What? Yes. Yes, exactly.

ISABEL takes the keycard from CLARA and SWAPS it with  
another.

ISABEL  
Don't forget that. Don't forget  
your fighting spirit.

Beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)  
Here. I didn't realize you'd need a  
second key card to get out. It's  
not like any of us *han hecho esto*.  
I also meant to tell you that  
there's a break in the fence. We've  
been cutting at it slowly *desde que*  
*viniste*. Just head straight from  
this door. When you reach the  
fence, go *left- a la izquierda*.  
You'll find it after veinte pasos.

CLARA  
Left. Twenty paces. Okay.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Thank all of you. I... I  
don't know how to repay you-

ISABEL  
*No te preocupes, mija.*

Beat.

ISABEL (CONT'D)  
 Ahora, vete. *Sal de aquí y solo  
 regresa después de haber ganado la  
 guerra contra las mujeres.*

The receiver near the door BEEPS and grants CLARA access. She's greeted by loud rain as she pushes through the door and runs across the field, towards the hole in the fence. THUNDER ROLLS as her feet SLOSH in the mud. She CRASHES into the chain-link fence and uses it to guide her towards the hole. Slipping through, she continues running towards the woods.

As she runs through the thicket of trees, her body comes into contact with branches and leaves. TWIGS SNAP beneath her feet as she moves. GRUNTING and WINCING loudly as a lone branch scrapes her arm, CLARA continues running, her breathing labored. It's not long after that she hears the sounds of CARS passing as she reaches the end of the woods, near the highway.

GRUNTING, she ascends the small hill to reach the road. A CAR passes.

CLARA  
 (panting; whispering)  
 Wait. Wait.

She GRUNTS once more as she reaches the top and PANTS as she begins to wave her arms to oncoming cars. One HONKS as it SPEEDS by, swerving to avoid her.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 No. Please.

She continues to wave until finally a car honks and slows down to pick her up. She begins jogging over to it and slides inside.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 Thank you so much.

OFFICER ROMERO  
 Mendez? Isn't it past your curfew?

Beat.

CLARA  
 Romero? No. No, no.

Before she can attempt to escape, there's a loud WHACK as Romero knocks her unconscious.

CUT TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING  
"[CAST]". CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 6:  
[NAME].

ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

INT. GRACE HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - EARLY MONDAY MORNING

CLARA is sitting in her car, fingers DRUMMING idly on her steering wheel as she waits for RWANDA to arrive. Her car RADIO is playing.

JILL ANDERSON (V.O.)  
 - still talking about Saturday night's purge. Some say they enjoyed the festivities that the city put out, saying it was nice to spend some family time while also supporting a good cause.

FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
 We actually helped our church in the book party the night before and the kids loved it. We didn't have much to donate, of course, material that was being burned wasn't allowed in our home to begin with, but we really enjoyed being able to help the community you know, kind of *cleanse* themselves of these sinful books.

CHILD CITIZEN (V.O.)  
 We got free ice cream!

MALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
 (chuckles)  
 That's right, Matty.  
 (to reporter)  
 We all were given tickets for free ice cream for volunteering at the church, so we got to use them Saturday night while we watched the purge. It was really nice.

JILL ANDERSON (V.O.)  
 Others, however, were not so thrilled.

YOUNG FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.)  
 -and you know, it's a strip of our rights as citizens.

(MORE)



## YOUNG FEMALE CITIZEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We have a right to learn about the true history of America, about the very real experiences that BIPOC and LGTBQA+ members of the community face every day. We have a right to express ourselves through literature, whether we read it or write it.

## JILL ANDERSON

While most states began banning the topic of critical race theory at schools last year, plenty of school board presidents are denying claims of racism despite the majority of banned material being written by or about people of color, and instead, claiming that it's merely coincidence.--

The radio SHUTS OFF and the soft HUM of CLARA'S car engine dies and she slides out, closing her door behind her. Her heels CLACK quickly against the pavement as she runs after NURSE RWANDA.

## CLARA

(loudly whispering)  
Rwanda. Rw-Rwanda! Hey!

## NURSE RWANDA

Clara? What are you doing here?

## CLARA

I have to talk to you.

Beat.

## NURSE RWANDA

Mmm, I don't know. I don't like that crazy look in your eye.

## CLARA

Rwanda, please.

RWANDA looks around.

## NURSE RWANDA

You had to come to my work?

## CLARA

I actually was going to talk to you at Starbucks but your daughter was with you and...

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 well, I'm not sure if it's a  
 conversation you'd want her to  
 hear.

NURSE RWANDA  
 You followed me and my daughter to  
 Starbucks? Girl, what the hell is  
 wrong with you?

CLARA  
 I realize how creepy it is-

NURSE RWANDA  
 You're damn right it's creepy.

CLARA  
 Which is why I didn't follow you in-

NURSE RWANDA  
 Oh, okay. That makes it better.  
 Listen, I need to get to work. I'm  
 already late as it is because of  
 the stupid construction on I-35-

CLARA  
 I swear, it'll only take a couple  
 of minutes and then I'll be out of  
 your hair. For good, if you'd  
 prefer.

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA  
 Fine. Let's go over there near the  
 trees. Figure this isn't a  
 conversation you want people  
 passing by to hear.

The two WALK over to the side of the building.

NURSE RWANDA (CONT'D)  
 Okay. What is it?

CLARA  
 I'm here about Jane.

Beat.

NURSE RWANDA  
 Jane? I don't know a Jane. Was she  
 a patient of mine?

CLARA

Possibly. I think at some point every doctor, every nurse, every paramedic has treated Jane. Just like every teacher has taught her, every company has employed her, everyone has befriended and betrayed her.

NURSE RWANDA

I don't like riddles, Clara.

CLARA pauses before digging through her bag and withdrawing a book and handing it to RWANDA.

RWANDA

A book? Clara...

CLARA

Read it.

RWANDA

"The Story of Jane"... What?

CLARA

Keep going.

RWANDA

(sighs)

"The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist-

(whispers)

- Abortion Service?" Clara, are you *insane*? This is *contraband*. Shit like this was banned after Saturday's purge.

(hushed; angry)

If anyone sees us with this we could be *hanged*, Clara. Don't give me shit like this. Here, take it back. And burn it. Burn it if you know what's good for you.

RWANDA gives the book back to CLARA.

CLARA

I more like it at home. They can burn this one but it won't erase the knowledge we have, stored in our heads.

RWANDA

(mutters)

Give it time.

CLARA

I have medical textbooks, too. Specifically on obstetrics. With detailed information on labor and delivery... and what to do should a miscarriage take place... how to induce labor...

RWANDA

(hushed)

Shut up.

Beat.

RWANDA (CONT'D)

Do you hear yourself? Do you know what you're insinuating?

CLARA

Don't you see, that's exactly what they're trying to do? Scare you into submission. Don't let them do it, Rwanda. The women in this book-

RWANDA

The women in that book didn't live in the 21st century, Clara. There weren't microphones in their televisions and trackers in their phones.

CLARA

So we scrap technology. Find ways to network by word-of-mouth or, or-

RWANDA

Word-of-mouth? Tell me, does that book of yours mention anything about a \$10,000 incentive for telling on your neighbor?

Beat.

RWANDA (CONT'D)

Look, Clara, I know what you mean well, but this... this isn't it.

Beat.

RWANDA (CONT'D)

There were organizations, all around the nation, from South Texas to... to Washington and Maine.

(MORE)

RWANDA (CONT'D)

After the bill was passed, their phones *lit up*. Their email servers almost went down. People showed up on their doorstep, ready to fight. Ready to do exactly as you're suggesting.

Beat.

RWANDA (CONT'D)

Then the bounty happened. They all got rounded up. Those that managed to evade arrest stayed in hiding, kept the phones and websites running.

(sighs)

And then came the executions. Alabama and Florida had 10 executions in one day. That's 200 people, dead. After that, the web went dark. The phone lines were cut.

CLARA

Yeah, but-

RWANDA

I'm talking about people who *did this for a living*, Clara. Not some bright-eyed journalist hunting the high of a story.

(sighs)

I'm sorry, sweetheart, I know you didn't come here to hear this... but you need to drop it. This idea of yours, it's not going to end well.

Beat.

CLARA

I don't care.

RWANDA

Clara-

CLARA

No. I *don't* care. I can't sit here and watch all of this happen around me and not *do* something about it. I might die trying but... I'll be dead if I don't.

(voice cracks)

They won't stop here.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

They'll keep pushing to silence us,  
to make us incubators, to make us  
compliant. They'll strip us of  
everything that we are. We might  
not be bodies hanging from the  
gallows, but we'd be no more alive  
than them.

Beat.

A CAR passes and drives into an empty parking space. The parking lot is starting to fill.

RWANDA

(sigh)

It's obvious that you're going to  
do this no matter what I say.

CLARA

So, help me. Give me something,  
anything.

Beat.

RWANDA

Listen to me, and listen close,  
because I am not going to repeat  
myself.

(deep breath)

Larry Johnson. He was a General  
Surgeon at Grace before he was  
terminated and had his license  
revoked for stealing drugs and  
supplies to treat the people over  
on 7th street.

CLARA

Wait, that's the homeless area  
under the expressway.

RWANDA

Anything he was taking was stuff we  
were already throwing away. But...  
you know how things are.

CLARA

Gotta love Big Pharma.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Wait, so, where can I find this  
Larry Johnson?

RWANDA

No clue.

CLARA

Rwanda.

RWANDA

I'm serious, Clara. I'm telling you all that I know. It's not exactly like Dr. Johnson and I were best friends. He was my attending when I first started my residency, but then he left. I heard about his termination through the grapevine and then never gave him another thought since. He's the only doctor I know that understands that the benefit can outweigh the risk.

CLARA

Okay. Okay, I can work with that. It's better than nothing.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Rwanda. I really appreciate it.

RWANDA

Just do me a favor, Clara. Please.

CLARA

Yeah, of course. Anything.

Beat.

RWANDA

Forget my name.

CUT TO:

SCENE TWO

EXT. 7TH STREET - MONDAY NIGHT

CLARA sits in her car beneath the expressway overpass. Cars above SPEED by, small *plops* echo as tires hit the roughly connected pavement, a HORN HONKS, an AMBULANCE SIREN goes off.

CLARA is on the PHONE with AVERY.

CLARA

No, I'll be fine, Ave. The homeless are honestly really harmless. They mostly just want food and water and to be left alone.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Yes, yes. I have my knife but I'm telling you I won't need it-

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Because I've done this kind of thing before. During that second month of my internship with the Chronicle, remember? David stayed with you while I worked-

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Yes, Avery, I'm aware. Look, I just wanted to let you know that I got here and I'll call you back in about 30 minutes.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Okay, bye.

After shutting her phone off with a CLICK, CLARA slides out of her car, SHUTS her door and begins walking over to where a group of homeless individuals are sitting. CLARA addresses one of the homeless women, CHRISTINE.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Hello. Kind of cold tonight, huh?

No answer.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Sorry, I just... I was passing through and saw all of you and thought that some donuts might be nice on a night like tonight?

CHRISTINE

What's so special about tonight?



CLARA

Huh? Oh, nothing. Just that it's cold-

CHRISTINE

And donuts are supposed to warm us up?

Another woman, MAE, 56, overhears the conversation.

MAE

Don't be a bitch, Christine. She's just trying to be nice.

CHRISTINE

Don't be stupid, Mae. Since when are people nice for no reason, huh?  
(to CLARA)  
What do you want?

CLARA

No-nothing.

CHRISTINE

Nothing? So, you're giving us food with no strings attached?

CLARA

Well-

CHRISTINE

Yeah, that's what I thought. See, Mae. They always want something.

MAE

Don't listen to her, sweetheart. Here, I'll take those. You tell me what you need.

CLARA walks away from CHRISTINE and over to MAE.

CLARA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend-

MAE

Nah, no offense taken, hon. Christine hasn't had an easy life. I mean, none of us have, but... she's just don't know how to trust people, you know?

CLARA

Yeah.

MAE  
Now, what brings you down here?

Beat.

MAE (CONT'D)  
O-kay... well, honey, I can't help  
you if you don't tell me nothin'.

CLARA  
I need to find someone.

MAE  
You got a sibling around here or  
somethin'?

CLARA  
Something like that.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
He's an uncle of mine. My father  
died a while back- his brother- and  
we've been trying to contact him  
for a while now but can't seem to  
find him. Last I heard was that he  
helped out around here. Kind of  
like a doctor or something.

MAE  
(quickly)  
Oh, ain't nobody around here like  
that, honey, sorry to tell ya. No,  
ain't nobody.

CLARA  
You sure? I mean, I've been looking  
around and some of you have fresh  
bandages... a cast-

MAE  
You a cop or somethin'?

MAE's voice has risen slightly, enough for others in the  
vicinity to begin looking at CLARA and her talking.

CLARA  
What? No. Absolutely not. Look, I'm  
just trying-

CHRISTINE  
Why don't you get out of here, huh?  
Take your donuts with you.

MAE

Now, hold on a minute, Christine.  
Why do the donuts have to go?

CLARA

Look, I'm not trying to get anyone  
into trouble or anything, I'm just  
trying to find my uncle-

CHRISTINE

Everyone knows the Doc ain't got no  
family so you can take that sob  
story and stick it up your-

Another woman, ANA, comes by.

ANA

Hey, come on. It's time for you to  
go.

CLARA

But, I-

ANA

Now. Come on.

The two begin walking away.

CLARA

I'm sorry. I didn't-

ANA

You can't just go around asking  
weird ass questions to people who  
are constantly berated on a daily  
basis. You can't blame them for  
being on edge.

Beat.

ANA (CONT'D)

Now, I suggest you leave before  
they all start coming over here.  
They're good people but they're  
protective. Lots of good  
friendships have been formed here  
and you're not going to get what  
you're looking for. If one is  
against you, all of them are  
against you.

CLARA

What if one is with me?

Beat.

ANA  
Then one is with you.

CLARA sighs.

ANA (CONT'D)  
What do you need the doctor for  
anyway? Surely someone that drives  
a Prius can afford health  
insurance.

CLARA mulls over her thoughts.

ANA (CONT'D)  
And don't feed me some bullshit  
story. Tell me the truth and I  
might consider helping you.

Beat.

CLARA  
I want to help people. Under the  
table. And he can help me do that.

ANA  
What kind of help?

Beat.

ANA (CONT'D)  
Okay, fine, then. Get out of-

CLARA  
Look, I can't tell you why, but I  
promise it's nothing bad. Illegal,  
yes, but not bad.

ANA  
That makes absolutely no sense.

CLARA  
(softly)  
I know.

Beat.

ANA  
(sighs)  
He volunteers at Second Chance. You  
know, the soup kitchen over on  
10th?

CLARA

Yeah, I know it.

ANA

Okay, well, sometimes he goes in to help with the kitchen. If someone's hurt, he'll tell them to come back after hours, once everyone is gone, and clean them up, give them antibiotics, and send them on their way. He told us not to say shit or he'd get locked up and because he doesn't make us pay anything, well, we're all pretty much sworn to secrecy.

CLARA

No, yeah, I can understand that.

ANA

Don't make me regret telling you. It's not just about me, it's about everyone. It's not like we can just walk into a clinic and get the same treatment as you would. He's the only luxury we *can* afford.

CLARA

I promise you, you won't regret this. For all I know, he probably won't even help me. But I have to try.

CUT TO:

ACT 2

## SCENE THREE

INT. SECOND CHANCE SOUP KITCHEN - NEXT DAY - TUESDAY MORNING

FAINT MURMURING of a crowd dissipates as an OFFICE DOOR SHUTS. CLARA sits in the Second Chance coordinator's, MALLORY ZAMORA'S, office.

MALLORY

Hi, there. I'm Mallory, the coordinator here at Second Chance. You must be Clara Mendez?

CLARA

Yes, ma'am.

MALLORY

(chuckling)

Oh, no ma'am's here. Just call me, Mal.

CLARA

Yes, Mal.

MALLORY

Wonderful! Well, we could use all the hands we can get. Now, I just need your signatures on a couple of papers and then go over some of the basic rules of the kitchen, and we should be set to go. Here, you fill these out while I get the handbook out.

CLARA

Sure, of course.

MALLORY

Just some general information: name, number, contact info.

MALLORY begins shuffling through drawers, attempting to find the handbook.

MALLORY (CONT'D)

So, can I ask what brings you to this neck of the woods?

CLARA scribbles against the clipped papers as she fills them out.

CLARA

Oh, well, honestly, ever since I saw your interview on Channel 10, I haven't stopped thinking about how I could help all of you and just, really put myself in a good place. With everything going on, I need something *good*, you know?

MALLORY

Oh! You saw that interview? Gosh, I thought I completely goofed that up, but you know, ever since then, we've been getting a lot of calls. It's been such a blessing.

CLARA

Really? Well, I hope there's still some room left for me.

MALLORY

Oh, of course! Of course. We can never have too many hands on board. The more the merrier, we always say. Plus, it's always nice seeing a friendly face and yours is just so beautiful, darlin'. You remind me of my Sarah when she was your age.

CLARA

Aw, well thank you, Mal. I appreciate that. Is your daughter working here?

MALLORY

Oh, no, no. She's a second grade teacher over at Bryan Elementary. She has her hands full volunteering there with the kids, there's just no time for her to make it out here often. She does swing by occasionally, though.

CLARA

Ah, well, hopefully I will have a chance meet her some day soon.

MALLORY

Yes.

Beat.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
 Okay, everything looks good. Why  
 don't you follow me, dear, and  
 we'll get you set up.

The quiet room of the office is overtaken by loud MURMURS as  
 the two women leave the office and enter the cafeteria.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
 Excuse me. Oh, hello, Mae. Good to  
 see you. Huey, you're looking well.  
 James, Ana, Samantha, Christine.  
 Don't worry, there's plenty to go  
 around. We'll get started in a bit.

CLARA follow MALLORY towards the kitchen, greeting each  
 person as they pass.

MALLORY (CONT'D)  
 Here we are. Greta, good morning,  
 sweetheart.

GRETA  
 Oh! Hello, Mal. I brought some  
 coffee from Sam's place. Help  
 yourself.

MALLORY  
 Oh, you're an angel. I'll take you  
 up on that but first, Greta, I'd  
 like to introduce you to Clara.  
 Clara, this is Greta, our head  
 server. She's been working with  
 Second Chance for about 35 years  
 now.

GRETA  
 37, but who's counting  
 (chuckles)  
 Clara, nice to meet you, hun.

MALLORY  
 Well, I'll leave you two to it. If  
 there's anything you need, well-  
 I'll be around here, somewhere.

MALLORY chuckles and walks away.

GRETA  
 Alright, Clara. Aprons are over by  
 the door there.

(MORE)



GRETA (CONT'D)

Grab one and a spoon and you can help me with the sides. One heaping spoonful each. Ever done this before?

CLARA

Uh, no. My first time.

GRETA

That's okay! We all start somewhere. I'll guide you through it. It's really simple.

Beat.

GRETA (CONT'D)

(loudly, to everyone)

Alright, everyone. It's now five o'clock and breakfast is ready.

FEET SHUFFLE as the line begins to move. CLARA, GRETA, and other servers serve food, exchanging 'hello's' and 'thank you's'. RICHIE, a man with a cast, is requesting a meal.

GRETA (CONT'D)

Oh, hello, Richie. That's a fine looking cast. A lot better than those bandages I saw on you a week ago. How are you feeling today?

RICHIE

Oh, much better, ma'am, much better. Doc says it should be fully healed in no time.

GRETA

That's good. Take a little better care of yourself, huh, Richie?

RICHIE

(chuckles)

Right, right.

The MURMUR picks back up.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

The MURMURS of the crowd have dwindled down as few people are left. POTS, PANS, and UTENSILS CLATTER as everyone begins cleaning up.

GRETA  
 (loudly, to everyone)  
 Remember, everyone. Dinner will be served at six. Get the word out, we have plenty for everyone.

GRETA turns to CLARA.

GRETA (CONT'D)  
 Well what'd you think, hun?

CLARA  
 That was great! Tiring, but great.  
 (chuckles)  
 Think I got some hash brown in my eyes.

GRETA  
 (chuckles)  
 Oh, I thought I saw something in there.

Beat.

GRETA (CONT'D)  
 Why don't you take a break while we get cleaned up. There's some coffee and sweetbread over by the counter. Help yourself.

CLARA  
 (breathless)  
 Yeah, thank you. Think I'm just going to rest my feet for a bit.

GRETA  
 Sure thing, hun. If you need to use the bathroom, make sure to use the employee one.

CLARA makes her way towards a seat and spots RICHIE on a cot. She walks towards him.

CLARA  
 Hello. Richie, was it?

RICHIE  
 Hmm? Who are you?

CLARA  
 Hi, I'm Clara. I'm new, just started today. I was helping Greta-

RICHIE  
What do you want?

CLARA  
Oh, just thought I'd say hello. Ask  
how the food was?

RICHIE  
This isn't some bed and breakfast,  
girlie. The food is what it is,  
good or bad, doesn't matter so long  
as it's there.

CLARA  
Right. Of course.

Beat.

RICHIE  
But it was alright, I suppose.

CLARA  
Well, that's good. I'm not really  
sure if I'm supposed to ask if you  
need anything. I'm sure you know  
your way around here better than I  
do.

RICHIE  
Been homeless for 3 years now.

CLARA  
3? Wow. Can... I ask what happened?

RICHIE  
Lost my family, my job, my home...  
I'm six months sober, though.  
Longest I've been sober. Doc says  
that if I make it to the time I get  
this cast off, he'll fix me up to  
go look into some jobs.

CLARA  
Wow, that's really, great Richie.  
Congratulations. Six months is a  
big deal.

RICHIE  
Yeah, well. Figured it was time to  
quit sulking and do something with  
the time I got left, you know?

CLARA

Yeah, of course. And that cast comes off...what? In a week or two?

RICHIE

Get it off next month. Doc says it should heal quickly if I take good care of it. Gonna see him again tomorrow to check things out.

CLARA

Nice! A month is nothing compared to six. You'll be back on your feet in no time.

RICHIE

What did you say your name was again?

CLARA

Clara.

RICHIE

Well, Clara, it's been fun, but I like to get my rest in here before I go out and sleep on that concrete outside.

CLARA

Oh, yes, yes. By all means. I'll see you around dinner then.

CLARA turns to leave, FOOTSTEPS fading.

FADE OUT.

SCENE FOUR

INT. SECOND CHANCE SOUP KITCHEN - NEXT DAY - WEDNESDAY NIGHT

CLARA walks over to Second Chance. The street around her is silent, except for the occasional passerby on foot or car. As she nears the soup kitchen, she hears RICHIE and DOCTOR JEREMY PREWITT (formerly DOCTOR LARRY JOHNSON).

RICHIE

-okay, Doc.

DOCTOR PREWITT

And how's the pain?

RICHIE

Nothin' I can't handle. Leave those for Meredith. She needs 'em more than I do.

DOCTOR PREWITT

You sure, Rich?

RICHIE

Yeah. 'Sides, if I need 'em, I can always come back and ask, right?

DOCTOR PREWITT

(small chuckle)

Exactly. I'm not going anywhere.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Now, you remember what I said, right? About keeping that cast clean and dry?

RICHIE

Yessir. Mal got me a couple of plastic bags to use when I shower here. Keeps them under the bathroom sink. Just wrap it real tight and keep it out of the water stream.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Good, good. Well, Rich, aside from that- you're looking pretty solid. I'd give it another couple weeks before you have to see me again. But, of course, don't be a stranger. I love our chats as much as I love our checkups.

RICHIE

Sure thing, Doc. Thanks again.

RICHIE rises from his seat and begins walking towards the door where CLARA stands. They're face to face before CLARA has a chance to hide.

RICHIE (CONT'D)

Clara? What are you doing here?

CLARA

Richie, hi. I- I think I dropped my ID in the bathroom earlier. I was swinging by hoping someone might be here to let me in.

RICHIE  
Ain't you comin' tomorrow?

CLARA  
No. No I work tomorrow but I was  
going to come again on the weekend.

The DOCTOR comes towards the door.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Richie? Everything alright?

RICHIE  
Yeah, doc. All's good. Was just  
catchin' up with this girl. She's  
new.

CLARA  
Hi, I'm Clara. I'm... well, new. I  
left something in the bathroom-

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Sorry, hours are closed. You'll  
have to come back tomorrow.

CLARA  
But you're already here. Can't I  
just-

DOCTOR PREWITT  
No. Come back tomorrow.

CLARA  
And if I don't? Are you going to  
call the cops, Doctor Johnson?

RICHIE  
Doctor Johnson? No, no, this here  
is Doctor Prewitt-

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Hey, Rich. Go get some rest, huh?  
I'm going to help the new girl find  
this Doctor Johnson.

RICHIE  
Huh? Oh, right, right. Later, Doc.  
Later, Clara.

RICHIE walks off, his footsteps fading.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Who are you?

CLARA  
What do you know about Jane?

CUT TO:

ACT 3

## SCENE FIVE

INT. SECOND CHANCE OFFICE - SAME NIGHT

DOCTOR PREWITT, 48, has ordered CLARA to come in and LOCKS the door. His feet SCUFFLE as he moves about the office and secures the locks on both windows and doors.

When he speaks his voice is ROUGH and HUSHED.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Phone.

CLARA  
Huh?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Phone? Your phone. Do you have it?

CLARA  
Uh, yea-

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Turn it off and hand it to me.

Beat.

CLARA reaches into her pocket and withdraws her phone and shuts it off, a soft VIBRATION emitting from the device as it powers off, and then hands it over to DOCTOR PREWITT. He walks over behind a desk and pulls out the drawer, stuffing the phone in there before SHUTTING it.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
Follow me.

DOCTOR PREWITT leads CLARA over to the kitchen and begins running some water from the faucet.

CLARA  
What are you doing?

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
What's your knowledge on modern technology.



CLARA

Aside from requiring it for basic survival? Nothing.

DOCTOR PREWITT

I mean, do you read or watch the news or follow up on current trends?

CLARA

Uh, yes? I'm actually a journalist with the Chronicle.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Ah, good. Good. Then you've heard of articles suggesting the tracking of digital data. How almost all apps require that you allow access to cameras and microphones?

CLARA

Ah. Yes. I've heard of that.

DOCTOR PREWITT

They say it's for data mining, ways to improve your way of life through convenience. Talk to a friend about needing new headphones and bam, an ad on Facebook for twenty percent off Sony headphones. Add it to cart. Delivered in a day. Move on to the next necessity. What people fail to realize is that the microphones have other keywords they're filtering for. Every time you mention the government, there's a red flag. Every time you mention the bill, or an illegal activity, there's a red flag. Your location is always tracked. It knows you go to HEB on Tuesdays and the mall on Fridays. It knows you've never been down 7th street or, or, or Freidrich Lane, so now there's a red flag. Why are you out there? There's nothing in your recorded files that suggests you've found a job at a warehouse between certain hours.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 What are you doing? What are you  
 looking for?

CLARA  
 Your tin foil hat, I think you  
 dropped it.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 (sighs)  
 Laugh it up, but I've been taking  
 precautions for years now and I  
 have yet to get caught for what I  
 do.

CLARA  
 Have you ever thought that maybe  
 it's because the government doesn't  
 see you as a threat? They have  
 their sights set on bigger fish to  
 fry, Doctor Johnson. Or, Prewitt.  
 Or whoever the fuck.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 How'd you hear of that name?

CLARA  
 A journalist never reveals her  
 sources.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
 Look, you have your precautions and  
 I have mine.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 (sighs)  
 Fair. So...

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 You mentioned Jane. I figured this  
 day would come, I just didn't  
 expect it to happen so soon, and to  
 be found by a journalist instead of  
 a cop... well, I'll consider it a  
 silver lining.

DOCTOR PREWITT sighs.

CLARA  
 What are you talking about?

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Are... you not here... about the abortion I performed a year ago?

CLARA

You what? You've performed an abortion before?

DOCTOR PREWITT

Shit. Is that not why you're here?

CLARA

No, that's actually exactly why I'm here.

DOCTOR PREWITT

I'm confused.

CLARA

Tell me about this abortion. What do you know about them? Was that your first time performing them?

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT sighs loudly as he moves over to some chairs stacked up against a wall. Pulling a couple off and setting them out, he gestures for CLARA to sit with him.

DOCTOR PREWITT

My grandfather was an abortionist. Back in '67 when Roe v. Wade was being conceived, he was one of the doctors contacted by Jane.

CLARA

Jane. The same Jane from Illinois, the secret abortion network?

DOCTOR PREWITT

That's the one. My mother was around fifteen or sixteen when she began helping him with these abortions. Due to the circumstances of the procedure, he needed someone to be there with him. Not only would having a young female with him help gain the trust of his patients but he was less likely to be questioned on his outings if she was present.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
Killing two birds with one stone,  
he decided to teach her a little  
bit about different abortion  
methods, pregnancies and  
complications, most of it. My  
mother would grow up to become an  
obstetrician.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
I was twelve when she told me all  
of this. It was one of the times (a  
first in my life) that the  
overturning of Roe was being tossed  
up. She answered my questions and  
then opened up a book and described  
female and male anatomy, medical  
terms, most of it. In college, I  
was studying to be an obstetrician  
but somewhere along the lines, I  
found love for general practice.

Beat.

CLARA  
You mentioned performing one  
yourself, though. What about that?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
About a year ago, give or take, I  
was volunteering here. I was  
closing up for the night when a  
young girl, eighteen, came up to  
me. I had seen her come through the  
kitchen a few times, really sweet  
girl. I asked her what was wrong  
and she told me that she was  
pregnant and didn't want to be, but  
that the cost to have an abortion  
was well above her means. She  
didn't even have five dollars to  
her name let alone the five hundred  
to get an abortion at a clinic. I  
knew I was her last stop before  
she'd attempt a self-induced  
abortion. Homeless women almost  
never survive the coat hanger  
method. This girl was on the brink  
of death. I couldn't shut her down.  
So, I told her to come to me the  
following day.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 I'd need to get the materials to perform the abortion and we'd need time for her to recover after. I told her never to repeat it to anyone, never to tell my name to anyone, that if word got out, I could go to jail. Now, if word gets out, I'll be executed.

CLARA  
 Don't worry. I'm not here to publish anything.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 I'm... confused. You're a journalist...

CLARA  
 I am, but that's not why I'm here.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Okay, then why are you here.

CLARA  
 (deep breath)  
 I want to bring back Jane. I want to provide aid to individuals that are out of options, secretly and safely, whether through pill or surgery.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Okay who needs the tinfoil hat now?

CLARA  
 I'm serious.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Clara, that's suicide.

CLARA  
 No. Doing *nothing* is suicide. It's giving up without even trying.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 (sighs)  
 And how do you plan on doing this? Have you considered how to get the word out?

CLARA

I'm still working on that. Figured I'd need a doctor first.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT rises from his seat and begins pacing the room.

DOCTOR PREWITT

And have you considered the cost for something like this? Abortions aren't cheap. I can't use the same tools for every woman I see. Medicine is also required, antibiotics in case of infection, numbing agents, syringes, gauges... I mean, the list goes on. And what about a place, huh? Have you thought about that?

CLARA

Well, no. As I said, I figured I'd need a doctor-

DOCTOR PREWITT

We can't do it here. I'd choose the location and they'd have to change every so often to avoid detection. And these places require a deposit, electricity, utilities...

CLARA

The going rate for abortions now- or, well, before the Act- was roughly \$600. There were funds for these women to pay more than half the cost but they've been wiped off the map. Getting ahold of them could be impossible, even deadly. But I'm telling you now that I will not charge these women a fee like that. To ask them to provide even... \$500 for a modern day backyard abortion isn't just idiotic - *it's fucked up.*

DOCTOR PREWITT

Wait a minute-

CLARA

No. We'll negotiate prices after we've done the math on supplies.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

You'll be compensated for the risk and the labor, but you won't make a living off of it. I also have an income. Not much, but enough to help with the supplies.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I, also, might have someone who can help with recruitment. And I know plenty of individuals that are upset by this-

DOCTOR PREWITT

Clara, being upset by this and partaking in illegal activity are two very different things. You ask someone on the side of the street if they would fight, they'll say yes in a heartbeat. Put that to the test and most of them cave in less than that.

CLARA

I understand tha-

DOCTOR PREWITT

No, Clara, you don't understand it. And I'll tell you how I know. You discovered me, confronted me, not knowing if I'd agree. You make calls on your personal cell phone about this- I know that because you'd have a burner on you otherwise. You have no idea how to even begin doing something like this-

CLARA

(loudly)

Okay. I may not know every single detail; I'm sorry illegal activity doesn't come naturally to me. But everyone starts somewhere and I learn quickly.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Look, you don't have to say 'yes' right away. In fact, you don't have to say 'yes' at all.

(MORE)

CLARA (CONT'D)

I understand the danger and risk I've put you in by just contacting you. Your secrets are safe with me, regardless of your answer. Ultimately, you're doing a great thing for this community and it would be an absolute shame if something happened because of vindictiveness. If you're not willing to help, then maybe you know of someone that will. I'll just keep going down the list until someone agrees.

CLARA rises from her seat and begins heading towards the door.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I'll be coming back on Monday and every so often throughout the months to continue volunteering here. If you're here to volunteer and your answer is yes, just... I dunno... blink twice or something. In the meantime, I'll be taking up your advice on a burner phone and educating myself in the art of sleuthing.

DOCTOR PREWITT

(scoffs)

"Blink twice."

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Come early Monday morning. Mallory doesn't get here until 5, so come in around fifteen before that. If I agree to help you, you'll find a burner phone stashed in the office air vent. Wait for a call. It'll be from another unknown number. You will not talk when you answer, understand? Not my name, not your name, nothing.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

If I decide not to help you, I'll leave a piece of paper with a name of someone else that can help and a number to call.

(MORE)



DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 You can keep that burner phone to  
 make the call. After that, get rid  
 of the phone.

Beat.

CLARA  
 (sighs)  
 Thank you, Doctor.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Yes... well, you should get going.  
 Let's get your phone back.

The two walk out of the room and head back to the office  
 where DOCTOR PREWITT withdraws CLARA'S phone from its hiding  
 place.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Here. Don't turn it back on until  
 you've arrived home.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 And please, do not show up here  
 unannounced again. Meeting like  
 this could be dangerous.

CLARA  
 More dangerous than you medically  
 treating people with a revoked  
 license?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 (chuckles)  
 Touché.

CLARA  
 Doctor?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Yes?

Beat.

CLARA  
 Please say 'yes'.

CUT TO:

ACT 4

SCENE SIX

INT. CLARA'S BEDROOM - MONDAY NIGHT

AVERY and CLARA are getting ready for bed. CHANNEL 10 NEWS plays softly in the background.

JILL ANDERSON (V.O.)  
Good evening, I'm Jill Anderson.

ROBERT GAMEZ  
And I'm Robert Gamez.

JILL ANDERSON  
And thank you for joining us tonight, Monday, September 27th, at 10 o'clock.

ROBERT GAMEZ  
With prisons around the country beginning to overflow with criminals on death row, Austin will be joining other surrounding cities in expanding executions, adding an extra time block on Saturdays and on Sunday mornings.

JILL ANDERSON  
That's right, Robert. Austin correctional facilities hope to be able to help house criminals for neighboring communities

ROBERT GAMEZ  
Prisons have seen an influx of inmates since the passing of S.B. 1913-

CLARA comes out of the bathroom and sits beside AVERY on the bed.

CLARA  
I mean, what did they expect?

AVERY  
I can't believe they're talking so openly and freely about literal genocide.

CLARA

You know, the whole point of this stupid Act is to repopulate the United States. How do they intend on doing that if they're busy murdering half of the population?

AVERY

Because it was never about that.

The MUFFLED sound of the TV continues to play for a few seconds before CLARA shuts it off.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Hey, I was watching that.

CLARA

And you'll see the same thing tomorrow. Now...

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

Look what I found this morning.

AVERY

The burner phone? Wait... that means he's in? We have a doctor?

CLARA

We have a doctor.

AVERY

Oh my god. I can't... believe this is happening. Wait, so... when are you supposed to get the call from the unknown number?

CLARA

I don't know, he didn't tell me a specific time or date, just said to turn it on and keep it near and-

CLARA immediately stops talking as the PHONE lights up and begins VIBRATING.

AVERY

Oh my god.

It continues to BUZZ.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Clara? Clara, answer it.

CLARA  
Yeah. Right.

The VIBRATION stops as CLARA answers.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
Hello?

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE  
Augusta and 6th. Noon. Tomorrow.  
Come alone.

*CLICK.*

**END**

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 7"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez

COLD OPEN

INT. BEAUMONT PENITENTIARY - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Sounds of SPLASHING and the GURGLING of water, MUFFLED CRIES, and then the GASPING OF AIR as CLARA comes up to breathe. Her breathing is LABORED before the sound repeats, clearly indicating she's being drowned.

OFFICER ROMERO

My shift just started, Mendez; I can keep this up all night.

CLARA PANTS, regaining her breath, but remains SILENT. After a moment, OFFICER ROMERO repeats the torture.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Your execution is set for tomorrow, Mendez. Did you really think we weren't anticipating your escape? We've had extra patrol for over a week now. Bet your little friends didn't tell you that, did they?

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Come on, give up the names and you can return to your cell and live out your remaining twenty-four hours in peace. We'll even throw in a cookie, chocolate chip with sprinkled pecans.

CLARA

(spits)

You're wasting your time.

A door OPENS and a pair of FOOTSTEPS enters the room.

OFFICER ROMERO

What's the matter, Mendez? Don't like pecans?

Beat.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

Oh, that's right. Silly me, I completely forgot that your file specifically mentions your tree nut allergy.

OFFICER ROMERO takes an item from the guard that entered the room and begins CRINKLING a bag as he opens it.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
It's too bad. These are really, really delicious. You know, they're actually made in-house. Yeah, the director suggested it after they conducted a study of the therapeutic benefits of baking. The rehabilitation program coordinator was thrilled as well. Teaches them how to get around a kitchen, utilizes mathematic skills and chemistry. There's so much that baking can do, just like this cookie here.

CLARA  
(scoffs)  
Are you really threatening me with a cookie, Romero? You're pathetic.

OFFICER ROMERO  
Hmm.

OFFICER ROMERO nods to two guards who then SHIFT over to CLARA, grabbing her by the arms to hold her down. Another moves to pull her head back. She STRUGGLES.

CLARA  
Let go of me. Romero, call your fucking dogs off.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)  
What are you-

OFFICER ROMERO'S walks over to CLARA and proceeds to shove the cookie down her throat. There's MUFFLED CRIES and DRY SPITTING as she attempts to remove the food from her person. He places a hand over her mouth to restrain her. She soon begins CHOKING.

OFFICER ROMERO  
(softly in Clara's ear)  
Who's the fucking pathetic one now?

CUT TO:

SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING "NAME OF ACTRESS" AND "NAME OF ACTRESS". CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 7: [NAME OF EPISODE].



ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

EXT. PARKING LOT - NOON - PAST DAY

CLARA'S engine shuts off as she reaches a parking lot, pulling the keys out of the ignition her hands hit her thighs in disbelief. She SHIFTS in her seats as she scopes out the area.

CLARA  
 (reading a sign)  
 Holy Trinity Episcopal Church? What  
 the hell is happening?

Sliding out of her vehicle, she CLOSES her car door and begins WALKING towards the stone steps of the church. The doors of the chapel are large and heavy, SQUEAKING and GRINDING as they open.

## SCENE TWO

INT. HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - NOON

Immediately, she's welcomed by the sound of a WOMAN leading a group of parishioners in prayer, reading prayers SOFTLY into a microphone. They're towards the back, so the sound is FAINT but audible.

To her left, there's another person PRAYING softly.

REVEREND JAMES ARNOLD, 45, makes his way over to CLARA, his footsteps LIGHT but LOUD as they ECHO off the walls.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Ah, always a blessing to see a new  
 face in our parish. I'm Reverend  
 Arnold. You may call me that or  
 Reverend or James, whichever you're  
 more comfortable with. What shall I  
 call you?

CLARA  
 Um, my name is Cla-  
 (pause)  
 Jane. My name is Jane. Just Jane.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Well, it's a pleasure meeting you,  
*Just Jane*. How can I help you  
today?

CLARA

I'm not really sure. I feel like I  
may have gotten the wrong address.  
I was supposed to meet someone here  
but maybe I was supposed to wait in  
the car.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I see. God does work in mysterious  
ways, Jane. If you ended up here,  
it was probably no mistake but  
rather his doing.

CLARA

Listen, no offense or anything like  
that, you seem genuinely nice, but  
the church and I don't exactly have  
a good relationship. Or, well, at  
all, actually. So while I  
appreciate your saying that, I also  
think that it's as simple as being  
at the wrong place at the wrong  
time.

REVEREND ARNOLD

And that's your choice, while I  
choose to believe that you are just  
at the right place at the right  
time.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

If it's someone that you're waiting  
for then I humbly insist that you  
to wait in here. The sun is  
relentless today and I could never  
forgive myself if you spent hours  
waiting under it when there's  
perfectly good air conditioned  
shelter here.

CLARA seems hesitant.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Miss Jane, I promise  
that my parishioners don't bite and  
neither do I.

CLARA

(chuckles)

Okay, thank you. I would appreciate that. At least for a few minutes.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Splendid. In the meantime, can I offer you any refreshments? All I have is water and maybe some leftover crackers from last night's youth group.

CLARA

Oh, no, no, thank you. I'm fine.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Honestly, I insist. Come, follow me. We won't take too long.

CLARA begrudgingly proceeds to follow the priest out of the worship area and towards his office. The sound of the lady praying FADES. When they enter his office, he begins OPENING DRAWERS and RUMMAGING through them, withdrawing the waters and snacks he had promised.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Aha. Here we are. Water and crackers, as promised. Is that enough or?

CLARA

Oh, that's plenty. Thank you.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Of course. So, *Jane*, do you have a name of this individual that you were supposed to meet? Perhaps they're one of my parishioners and I might know of their whereabouts or how to contact them?

CLARA

You'd know where your parishioners are at any given time?

REVEREND ARNOLD

Ah, no, not every parishioner, but I do speak to each personally and know a thing or two about the people in my congregation, so I might know a thing or two.

CLARA

Hmm. Well, no. I actually don't have a name, and if I did, I wouldn't give it. I'm a journalist for The Chronicle and I never name my sources, especially if it's clear they wish to remain anonymous.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Well, that's mighty kind of you. Trust is not easily come by these days.

CLARA

No. It's not.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Jane, are you familiar with the Episcopal Church?

CLARA

No, I can't say that I am. I was raised as a Catholic, but I've severed my ties with the church when my parents died.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I see. I'm sorry to hear about the passing of your parents.

CLARA

It's fine. It was a long time ago. Listen, is it okay if we head back already? I'd hate to miss my meeting because I was over here making pleasantries with you.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Of course, of course. But first, if I may, enlighten you a little bit about my religion?

CLARA

I'd really rather you didn't.

REVEREND ARNOLD

It won't take long. Promise.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
 The only thing you need to know for  
 now is that, unlike Catholicism,  
 Episcopalians don't typically  
 partake in the act of  
 reconciliation - you know -

CLARA  
 Confessing sins to a priest, yes, I  
 still remember what it means.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Okay, good. Well, again, we don't  
 typically partake in that but, on  
 some, special occasions, we might.  
 Like today, in thirty minutes.

Beat.

CLARA  
 Are you -

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 I'll be in the confessional at that  
 time. Make sure to shut off your  
 phone before entering.

CUT TO:

### SCENE THREE

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH OF HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

It's deathly SILENT as CLARA enters the booth, CLOSING the  
 door behind her. The wooden pew CREAKS beneath her weight as  
 she sits down, and the fabric of her jeans RUFFLES softly as  
 she SHIFTS in her seat anxiously.

The SLIDING of a small paneled window causes her to jump and  
 GASP.

CLARA  
 Jesus Christ!

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 That'll be 10 Hail Mary's.

CLARA  
 Sorry.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 (chuckles)  
 I'm kidding.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
 So, you must be the Jane that our  
 beloved Doctor told me about.

CLARA  
 In the flesh. I'm sorry, how do you  
 know... *him*?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 I think that's his story to tell,  
 not mine. But trust me when I say  
 that he and I are friends, and any  
 friend of his is a friend of mine.

CLARA  
 I'm just... I'm really confused. I  
 thought the church would side with  
 the Court's decision?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 There are some churches that do,  
 and some that don't. The Episcopal  
 Church understands the importance  
 of and advocates for reproductive  
 rights and health care. We believe  
 it is up to the woman to decide  
 whether or not to carry, regardless  
 of nature or situation.

CLARA  
 Wow. I... honestly, wasn't  
 expecting that.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 We've had an influx of individuals  
 that have converted from their  
 religion to this one since the  
 overturn. While the congregation  
 isn't immune to the laws just  
 because of our beliefs, it helps  
 them to know that they are  
 surrounded by other like-minded  
 individuals. They've found comfort  
 with us, and us in them.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

We know that God's plan is good and great, but we also know that people are scared and suffering and that we have a duty to the people in our community.

CLARA

How humble of all of you.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I can understand the hesitancy when it comes to trusting the church. Religion has played the role of devil's advocacy throughout history and knowing when to spot the good from the bad can be difficult when they're all cloaked in similar attire. But rest assured, this church was founded on the same principles as those of the Rockefeller Chapel.

CLARA

Rockefeller... why does that sound familiar?

REVEREND ARNOLD

Harris Wilson was a Baptist Minister at Rockefeller Chapel in 1969, that same year that Jane was prevalent. Yes, I know about Jane. Fortunately, a lot of people do. Anyway, hee, along with another clergy, helped women obtain illegal abortions. It was because of him that many women of his clergy were able to continue living happily and safely.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

It's devastating that history is repeating itself. While this church takes pride in its roots, it's not something we wanted to take part in. Not only is our government taking steps backwards, but they're using the word of God to do it, twisting it to fit their narrative. We can't allow that. I can't allow that.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
 And while there's little that I can do in changing the law, there's a lot I can do by preaching to my clergy the importance of choice and open minds and open hearts. And I can act as counsel to the women that need it, and courier to those that can help.

Beat.

CLARA  
 I... I don't know what to say. This is all so unexpected.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 It is a lot to take in, especially given the background of your own religion.

There's SILENCE as CLARA mulls over the conversation and REVEREND ARNOLD allows her the time to do so.

CLARA  
 So, I suppose now that it's clear you're willing to help, we're supposed to discuss payment?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Payment?

CLARA  
 I mean, that's typically what people want. I can't promise that we can offer much. The abortions alone are going to cost these women \$500, for some that's way more than they can afford, bumping up that price to offer to you for your troubles might not -

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Whoa, whoa, Jane, slow down. Wait. There was no mention of payment and honestly, I don't want it. In fact, I'm willing to offer donations from my own salary. I've yet to come up with a covert strategy for donations from the parishioners. I'd like for them to donate to the cause if they feel like doing so but I don't want to risk exposing the clinic, either.

(MORE)



REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

When I manage to think of something, I'll let you know.

CLARA

You know, I keep wanting to ask 'why' someone would do this, but I know your answer. I've heard it before. You're either doing "God's work" or fulfilling your "purpose" or whatever. I just... I don't know. I guess I'll believe it when I see it.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Hmm, I've never heard that one before.

The two share a brief CHUCKLE.

CLARA

It's weird to be laughing right now. It's weird to be here, to be doing all of this, it's not even *surreal* because it's not dreamlike, it's more of a nightmare. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I'll find myself waking up and expecting it all to be over. Other times I expect myself to wake up in a prison cell. And other times, a lot of the times, I wake up in the morning and for the briefest of moments, it's like none of this is even happening. The sun shines through my window and I think about the errands I need to get done, and the people I need to see and the articles I need to write. Because I'm not directly affected right now. And then it all floods back. I remember that every moment that I'm alive, I'm in danger. Whether I continue on with the clinic or not, whether I thought it up that first day or not. Being a woman is a death sentence now. Being a woman operating an underground abortion clinic is suicide.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I'm sorry. On behalf of religion and men and history, I'm sorry that this is happening. And I'm sorry that the weight is on your shoulders. And I know that you won't believe what I'm about to say next, but I'm going to say it anyway: God does not make mistakes. Whether or not you believe in him, he believes in you.

CLARA

Well, I appreciate that. But could you do me a favor next time you talk to him?

REVEREND ARNOLD

Sure.

CLARA

Could you tell him not to believe in me next time? And to fucking help.

REVEREND ARNOLD

In a less abrasive way, I'll get the message across. You have my word.

CLARA

(sniffles)

Thanks.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Of course.

CLARA and the REVEREND are both silent for a moment.

CLARA

So, is that all?

REVEREND ARNOLD

Not even close.

CLARA

Huh?

REVEREND ARNOLD

I have a woman, a member of my clergy, that has come to me seeking advice and medical help for her pregnancy.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
She claims to be nine weeks as of Monday, only having just discovered it, and has yet to go to the doctors.

CLARA  
Are you kidding me? You let me ramble on while you had this information?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
You have to remember to pause and take time for yourself, too, Jane. The organization will be relying on your mental stability, and for that to remain unwavering you need to take breaks and destress. Besides, it's my job to listen first and talk later.

CLARA  
I guess.  
(sighs)  
Tell me more about this woman and what we can do to help.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
When she spoke to me, I informed her that I didn't know where she could procure an abortion but that I would find out if it was something she was interested in pursuing. She indicated that she did so, I did some digging and came up with nothing. And that's when our Doctor contacted me.  
(pause)  
I know you know what I'm thinking.

CLARA  
That it was pure coincidence? Glad we're on the same page.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
(sighs)  
Anyway, he tells me about the plans that the two of you have made. I need to get in contact with her and find out if she can gather the funds. If she doesn't manage to do so, I'll fund the abortion this time. She'll be sent with the money.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
Is... that alright? You seem  
hesitant, again.

CLARA  
Reverend, I know the Doctor and I  
will end up discussing anonymity  
for each of us, but you're putting  
yourself out in the open. These  
women and families are coming to  
you directly, they've seen your  
face, know your name, know where  
you work and live. You're okay with  
this?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
I believe in my congregation, Jane.  
I believe that the people in it  
will do right by one another.

CLARA  
Not completely, no.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
What makes you say that?

CLARA  
You said yourself that you haven't  
discovered a more covert method of  
requesting donations from them.  
Because you can't fully trust that  
they won't say something to  
someone, right?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
(pause)  
There's a common misconception  
amongst nonbelievers that religious  
individuals are completely absolved  
from sin. People believe that  
because I'm a reverend, I couldn't  
possibly have impure thoughts or  
surrender to temptation, which is  
just untrue. I'm only a messenger  
of God, a human like his disciples,  
and nothing more. The members of my  
clergy are the same. To expect them  
to be absolutely free from sin  
would be catastrophic for anyone.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

It's the actions of the clergy, put on a pedestal by the community, that resort in a deeper dividing line. If I whole-heartedly believed that the people of my congregation would behave godlike in a moment of true conviction, it would be my own fault when I'm disappointed by their possible decision.

(pause)

To put it simply: everyone is going to make mistakes, Jane. Setting unrealistic expectations on human beings is just not practical, it's illogical, and it's the reason we're here in the first place. If people were completely absolved from sin, what would the point of church be? Why are we here? So, it's not a matter of trust but a matter of faith. I have faith that the individuals of my congregation won't make the wrong decision.

CLARA

But you don't trust them not to. I'm sorry, Reverend, but I don't see the difference here. I could sit here for hours - in fact, I used to sit in the pew at church and try to understand it all- but at the end of the day, it doesn't make sense to me.

(sighs)

I just want to make sure that you're completely aware of what you're doing and how you're doing it. If there's a way to protect your identity, we'd be more than happy to help, but if that's not the direction you plan to take, then I'm not going to push you on it.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I'm sorry that we can't seem to see eye to eye, but thank you for hearing me out. I think that the situations these women are going to face are going to be traumatic enough as it is. They need a face they can rely on, one that isn't obscured by something to protect identity, and I can provide that.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
I trust in my God to keep me safe  
and if my time comes, it'll be part  
of his plan.

CLARA  
(sighs)  
Okay, then. We'll be in touch, I  
suppose. Thank you again for this,  
Reverend. A lot of women are going  
to be saved because of you.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
That's all I can hope for.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
Before you go, let's switch phones.  
When you leave, you'll need to call  
the only saved number. The Doctor  
will provide you with instructions  
on what to do next. For all of our  
safety, I wasn't given the details.

There's some rummaging as the two exchange burner phones.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
Until we meet again, Jane.

CUT TO:

ACT 2

## SCENE THREE

INT. DOCTOR PREWITT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLARA is KNOCKING on DOCTOR PREWITT'S apartment door. The flat is located deep in in the city, so sounds of SIRENS and CARS is distant. There's FOOTSTEPS behind the large door and then a few CLICKS and CLACKS as locks are unlocked. The doorknob twists open and the HINGES creak as the doctor answers.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
(whispers)  
Clara, come in. Hurry.

There's a couple of seconds before the door CLOSES, and DOCTOR PREWITT begins his door-locking ritual.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
I trust you've learned from our last encounter to have your phone off?

CLARA  
I shut it off the second you ended the call. I also made sure to take different routes from the church to here so, we shouldn't worry about anyone having seen me come here.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
I know it all seems silly to you, but regardless if anyone has gotten onto us or not, it's best to get in the habit of this type of lifestyle. It's easy to slip up sometimes, just because memory fails you or because of the inconvenience of it all. Things might seem peachy now, but I swear, they'll be turning sour soon. Just mark my words.

CLARA  
No, no, I believe you. In fact, I had a conversation with the Reverend about that. On his lack of anonymity in his position.

DOCTOR PREWITT

You and me both, kid. But I've known that guy since middle school and he hasn't changed one bit. Once he sets his mind on something, there's no persuading him. And when it comes to his so-called God, even less so. Believe me, I tried.

DOCTOR PREWITT begins rummaging through his desk. When he finds what he's looking for, he gestures for CLARA to follow him. Their FOOTSTEPS continue down a hall.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

So, I was doing some thinking. A lot of office-space landlords require proof of identity, proof of all kinds of bullshit, in order to even consider looking at an application that costs fifty dollars. Then you're showing your face too many times, there's just too many variables. A lot of these landlords are stuck up jackasses anyway, so they're looking at any reason to throw you out and keep your deposit.

Their FOOTSTEPS STOP as they reach a door in his hallway. He INSERTS the key in his hand and TURNS the lock, UNLOCKING the door.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Finding a landlord for a shitty apartment like this that couldn't care less about who you are or what you do, though, is different. Way different.

The HINGES of the door squeak as the door opens. DOCTOR PREWITT FLICKS the light switch on, and fluorescent lights BUZZ above. Their FOOTSTEPS start again as they begin descending some old, CREAKY stairs.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Luckily, I found this gem. A one bedroom flat with a makeshift basement. It's an old building, the landlord said that he had difficulty renting this space out because it's practically uninhabitable.

(MORE)



DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 A lot of tenants don't want to pay  
 for space they aren't going to use,  
 especially in this economy.

Their FOOTSTEPS STOP again as they reach the bottom of the  
 stairs and CLARA GASPS.

CLARA  
 Is this-?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 A medical room. Or, as good as it's  
 going to get, honestly. I took some  
 time visiting different department  
 stores for the supplies, got in  
 contact with one of my old medical  
 suppliers back in my hospital days,  
 and here we are. All the tools  
 needed to conduct an abortion.

Clara's FOOTSTEPS are soft as she walks around the small  
 room.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Again, not much. The bed was found  
 at a garage sale. The mattress is  
 newer. Wanted to eliminate any  
 risks of bed bugs and the like.  
 We'll, of course, be covering them  
 with plastic tarp. It's the best we  
 can do.

CLARA  
 Still, this must have cost at *least*  
 a small fortune.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 I didn't leave the medical field  
 because it made bad money, Clara.

CLARA  
 No, you were kicked out.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 Technicalities.

CLARA  
 I mean, it makes sense that you'd  
 have a nice cushion. How else would  
 you be able to jump from location  
 to location whenever you see fit.  
 And being able to supply the  
 homeless community with medicine  
 and other services.

DOCTOR PREWITT

A lot of the things that they need don't really require too much of an expense in medical terms. If they absolutely need dire medical attention, I always direct them to the actual hospital itself. I'm not barbaric. They, also, from time to time, provide me some compensation. A lot of what I make just goes right back to them. It's good because it doesn't dip too much in my personal savings.

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

But, unfortunately, it is a *depleting* savings. I've been out of the business for at least five years now and while I've had a job in that time, I don't make nearly as much as I'm used to. A person still needs to eat and sleep, preferably in places that aren't crawling in cockroaches and rats.

CLARA

Don't worry, Doctor. One way or another, everyone that comes to this office will pay you.

The two are silent for a moment as they continue to look around the room.

CLARA (CONT'D)

I was wondering, on my way over here, if there's a way for you to teach us - my sister and I - how to perform an abortion. In case... well...

DOCTOR PREWITT

In case things to sideways and my services are no longer required?

Beat.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Our capitalistic society would persistently urge me against doing so. My skillset makes me a hot commodity right now.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
But my mother would probably rise from her grave and beat me over the head with a baseball bat if I kept information like that to myself.

CLARA  
So, you're doing this out of the pure kindness of your heart? Got it.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
The procedure is relatively simple with the right tools. Teaching you and your sister, as well as anyone else that needs to know, would benefit a lot of women around the country if you can get your hands on the right tools.

(pause)  
I've heard of different teaching methods; I'll do my own research and get back to you on that.

CLARA  
Thank you.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Is there?

CLARA  
Is there what?

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Is there anyone else that I could teach this to? Aside from your sister.

CLARA  
Um, well, Avery is going to speak with some women at the University. They're part of a club, call themselves Reproductive Justice, but I'm not sure who would willingly recruit themselves.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Some people join these organizations with the idea that all they'll ever have to do is make signs and stand on the side of the road.

CLARA

To be fair, they shouldn't even  
have to do that. The fact that a  
club like that even exists is  
just.. well, unjust.

The room goes SILENT for a moment as the two mull over those  
last words.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Come on, let's go back upstairs.

CUT TO:

ACT 4

## SCENE FOUR

INT. PARISH HALL OF HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - WEEK  
LATER

(background: During the previous service, the Reverend had asked anyone with any concerns about the recent overruling of Roe V. Wade to meet at the parish hall for counsel. Everyone can sit in the room and discuss with one another their concerns, worries, fears, or whatever, without judgment. About twenty members of the clergy came.)

The gravel of the church parking lot CRUNCHES beneath CLARA'S FOOTSTEPS as she makes her way towards the parish hall, separated a few feet from the church. Birds CHIRP in the nearby trees, fallen, dry leaves FLUTTER along the pavement. Beside her, there are others walking towards the parish hall. Their footsteps waver in proximity to her.

As CLARA reaches the doors to the parish hall, she bumps shoulders with another member.

CLARA

Oh, I'm sorry. After you.

FEMALE STRANGER

(chuckles)

That's quite alright, dear. A lot of us are scrambling to get in and out of the hot sun.

The CHATTER of voices INCREASES as CLARA walks in. Chairs SCUFFLE against the linoleum as people form a circle, and desks SCUFFLE louder as they are moved out of the way.

REVEREND ARNOLD is at the front, shaking hands with everyone and greeting them as they walk in, asking for each of them to sit. He does the same to CLARA, not giving away any idea that they have met.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Ah, the new face from last week. I see you received my message and I'm glad you decided to come by. Please, sit wherever you'd like and we'll get started momentarily.

CLARA clears her throat and makes her way to a seat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, all of you, that made it out, especially after such short notice. You know, given the severity of this new law, I wasn't sure whether or not to subject any of you to possible risk or harm by coming to a meeting like this, but after much prayer and consultation with God, I felt that I'd be doing this congregation a disservice if I didn't offer you an opportunity to discuss your concerns. I think now, more than ever, is the time to unite and make sure to lend a helpful hand or ear to your neighbors. We're all struggling with this decision - men, women, and nonbinary folks. It's something that affects us all.

(pause)

Now, I do want to mention the elephant in the room. It's important to understand consequences. Something we could face by just sitting here, thinking of the very term: abortion. I need everyone that is here to make two solemn vows:

(pause)

One: That you're fully aware of what this meeting is about and the things that are being discussed here are, in fact, now outlawed. Talking about abortions could lead to an investigation and could lead to possible death. If you're here and wish to leave at any point, you may do so. That leads me to vow number two.

(pause)

We are trusting everyone in here with our own secrets. Some of us recognize one another from church, some of us know each other outside of it, but I need everyone to make a vow that the thoughts and conversations shared in here today will *not* leave this room. Doing so puts everyone in here in grave danger, including yourself.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

I'll give everyone a moment to consider their positions. No one will think any less of you if you leave, no one will judge you if you stay. Just please, carefully consider your positions.

(pause)

So, with that said, there's refreshments at the table to the far right and bathrooms are in the back. We'll regroup in five minutes.

Everyone rises from their chairs, some making a move towards the door while others make their way towards the refreshment table.

CLARA makes her way towards the line at the refreshment table.

MALE STRANGER

Pretty good turnout, don't you think? Even with some leaving, I'd say we have about twenty people left.

CLARA

Um, yeah. Looks to be good.

MALE STRANGER

I haven't seen you around. Which mass do you usually come to?

CLARA

Oh, um, Sunday's. Early morning.

MALE STRANGER

Ah, that must be it. My wife and I bring the kids on Saturday nights. So, I take it this is a mix of day and night people. Not bad, not bad.

CLARA

Yeah, I suppose it is.

MALE STRANGER

Oh, silly me, forgot to introduce myself. I'm Marcus. My wife, Janine, is over there in the yellow dress. The kids are with grandma and grandpa today. Thank the Lord. The two of us needed some time to relax.

CLARA

So you came to church?

MARCUS

Pardon?

CLARA

I mean, you guys came to church and then plan on getting something to eat after?

MARCUS

Oh, yes.

(chuckles)

I'm sorry, what was your name?

CLARA

Jane. My name is Jane.

MARCUS

Well, pleasure to meet you, Jane. I'll be taking these to my wife - she loves Chips Ahoy - and try to catch up to you after, see if I can introduce the two of you.

CLARA

Uh, yeah, for sure.

The CHATTER begins to die down as everyone moves back to their chairs.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Ah, I see we still have a good crowd, then. Good to have you all here. I trust the refreshments are good as they are entirely out.

(chuckles)

It's fine, we can always get more.

(pause)

So, those that have stayed behind, I understand that this new law has had some major effects on our mental health. A lot of us are left wondering what this means for us, for our loved ones, for the entire nation as a whole. It's a lot to consider. I recommend that we each take a moment right now to allow our minds a moment of relaxation from these overactive thoughts. Just, push them aside. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing.

(MORE)



REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

I encourage you each to close your mind and open your heart. Take a moment to reflect on the world around you. What moment of today or yesterday or a day this week brought you some peace?

(pause)

Let that moment ground you, revel in the emotions it gave you, be at one with yourself.

(pause)

And remember to thank God for that moment, that wonderful moment, where you can feel his presence in that happiness.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Good. Now, take a deep breath in.

(pause)

Now exhale.

(pause)

Good. Now, slowly open your eyes.

(pause)

Remember, friends, God is still present in our lives even when we feel like we've been abandoned. Remember to focus on those moments of clarity and of happiness when everything else feels scary.

(pause)

And these are scary times, aren't they? Does anyone have anything to add to that?

The room is silent for a brief moment before a woman raises her hand.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Yes, Ana?

ANA

Hello, everyone. Those of you that know me know that I work with Child Protective Services, or CPS, and  
(sighs, voice trembling)  
The things I see...

Beat.

ANA (CONT'D)

A few years ago we had to place these three siblings in foster care. One of them, a nine year old female, was being sexually assaulted. Her mother was practically pimping her out. And while she can't get pregnant, I think of the girls that are her age that can. Anyways, we checked up on her in foster care and after a thorough investigation, it turns out that her foster father was also sexually assaulting her. And I just...

(voice trembles)

I've lost a lot of faith in the system. CPS asks for grants from the government to get children out of homes like this and we're falling apart. So much could have been done to prevent this. More thorough backgrounds, better temporary living areas so that we're not circulating these children through as fast as possible. There was an influx of children back in the nineties being left on doorsteps, being found in dumpsters. And you'd think that the government would see this and think to themselves, "we need to stop this". Instead, they keep making people have children they don't want.

ANA begins SOBBING quietly, apologizing softly as she does.

MARCUS

(sighs)

I was in my first year of patrol with the police department when I got my first rape case. We got an anonymous tip that there was a dead girl in the park. When we got to her, she was covered in blood and bruises but we noticed she had a faint pulse. We rushed her to the hospital- I rode with her in the back. I didn't think she was going to make it.

(pause)

She was seven months pregnant.

(MORE)

## MARCUS (CONT'D)

When we got to the hospital, they spoke to her husband on the phone. He was on his way there. The doctor told him that she was hemorrhaging and he had to make a choice: save her or the baby. He chose her.

(pause)

When he got there, he had two little girls attached to his hip and another in a carrier. He told me he had no choice but to bring them because it was the middle of the night and his friends couldn't be reached.

(pause)

A few days later I went to go get a report from her. She was asleep but her husband was there. I asked him how she was doing, if she had said anything about the aggressor. He said no, she couldn't remember anything.

(pause)

I asked him how he was doing. If she was upset with his decision. He said no. He told me that he made the best decision he could for his family and while they're both upset at the loss of their child, they understood that their other children needed their mother. He told me he understood that a lot of people wouldn't understand, that it's always a matter of choosing the baby first, but I stopped him and said that every family is different and his choice didn't make him a bad guy.

(voice trembles)

I have never seen a grown man cry so much and so hard. He needed that validation. He was asked to make one of the most difficult decisions a person can make and in the end, he saved a life. How can you beat yourself up for that?

## REVEREND ARNOLD

It's not all black and white. I think you'd know that best, Marcus. Officers have to make these life and death decisions almost every day. As do surgeons and other first responders.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

You do what you can with the information you have and pray that it was the right decision. No one can be prepared for situations like that man.

CLARA

I was twenty when I had my abortion. My boyfriend and I were very much in love but having a child was going to thwart our plans of college and careers. I also had a little sister that I still needed to take care of. I mean, she was practically like my child. Our parents died about a year before that so I became her legal guardian.

(sighs)

And I remember it being so... *easy*. It was so easy of a decision to make. I was pregnant and I didn't want to be. So I called the nearest abortion clinic and scheduled my appointment. Seventy-two hours later, I wasn't pregnant anymore. It wasn't traumatic. It wasn't life changing. It wasn't anything. It was like getting rid of a mole on my arm.

Beat.

CLARA (CONT'D)

(voice starts rising)

An abortion story doesn't need to be emotional. It doesn't need to be justified by circumstance. If you want one, you should get one, without question, without reason other than that person doesn't want to be pregnant.

It's SILENT for a moment before people start agreeing, murmuring "that's right" and "yes".

FEMALE STRANGER (MIRIAM)

I was twenty-three when I had my first abortion. And twenty-eight when I had my second. It wasn't birth control for me, it was just a means to an end.

(MORE)

FEMALE STRANGER (MIRIAM) (CONT'D)

It wasn't cheap either, I don't know why people keep pretending that it's cheaper than condoms. Like everyone just goes out to get them.

FEMALE STRANGER (NAOMI) (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Definitely not cheap. Both of mine combined cost me about \$1200. I had to work extra shifts at the laundry shop that summer to get that money back. Lived off ramen and bread.

MALE STRANGER (JACOB)

I was sixteen when I had mine. I hadn't transitioned yet - hell, I didn't even know I *wanted* to transition. Everything I am today would not have happened if I had kept that fetus.

FEMALE STRANGER (JOANNA)

I already had two kids under four. We couldn't afford to have another, we were already crumbling in debt. So my husband and I made the decision to abort. \$500 versus the thousands it would take to raise another? There was no hesitancy.

FEMALE STRANGER (MARY ANN) (CONT'D)

Preach. These kids can be so expensive.

JOANNA

And the time. Who even has the time anymore?

MARCUS

I'm lucky if I get to see my kids before bedtime. Half the time I'm scrounging for security detail to get some extra money for bills.

JANINE (MARCUS' WIFE)

And that's for the daycare costs for our youngest because I had to get a job to pay for our son's college because we make too much for him to qualify for financial aid!

There's several MURMURS of agreement around the group.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Clearly, we each have very strong opinions about this topic, and rightly so. There's so much at stake here, not just the loss of life for the pregnant person, but for the lives of their loved ones.

(pause)

It's why I want to extend my services to anyone who may be in need of an abortion. If you know of anyone, if you yourself are currently struggling, please reach out. However,

(pause)

I greatly urge caution. These days the cunning snake is disguised as friend. You'll need to think quick, assume the worst. If someone shows interest in the topic, be thorough in your line of questioning. Trust that gut feeling- that is *God* speaking to you, telling you something is not right. And refer them to confession, discreetly.

Another slew of MURMURS of agreement can be heard.

MARCUS

So, what... exactly will be referring them to?

The MURMURS grow a little louder.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Settle down, settle down. I'm merely acting as adviser- nothing more, nothing less. They might just not be comfortable in a setting like this, so let them know that I am more than willing to talk with them privately, in a confessional to protect their identity. It might make things a little easier for them knowing that they can't be identified.

Another MURMUR of agreement from the party.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Now, with all of that said, I think now would be a great time to conclude the session.

(MORE)

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
For those of you wondering when we might meet again, I can't say when, but be on the lookout for the Church Bulletin each week, page one under the list of "Places Where You Can Belong", under [**Jane's Mission**]. The phone number that follows it will be the date we can meet here again.

There's a few more MURMURS.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)  
Now, then, we'll end the session the way we end our mass. With a small prayer asking God to grant us his mercy and to protect us. Everyone, please bow your heads as Ana leads us in prayer.

ANA's voice begins a prayer and slowly DISSOLVES.

END

ABORT MISSION

"Episode 8"

An Audio Drama

Written by

Maribel Sanchez



SFX: MUSIC. "COMPANY" PRESENTS "ABORT MISSION" STARRING "NAME OF ACTRESS" AND "NAME OF ACTRESS". CREATED BY MARIBEL SANCHEZ. THIS IS EPISODE 8: [NAME OF EPISODE].

ACT 1

## SCENE ONE

INT. HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - NOON

The church bells RING, indicating the time, ECHOING within the empty church. CHARLOTTE, 17, is sitting at the pew nearest the confessional.

REVEREND ARNOLD'S shoes CLACK against the marble tile as he makes his way from the alter to the confessional, PASSING her so that the sound of his footsteps FADE. The footsteps STOP as a DOORKNOB turns, the door SQUEAKING as it's opened and then SHUTTING closed.

A few seconds tick by before CHARLOTTE rises from her seat and shuffles out of the pew, her feet PADDING against the marble tile. A second DOORKNOB turns, the door SQUEAKING as it's opened and then SHUTTING closed.

The SILENCE in the confessional is even more loud. The fabric of her skirt SHIFTS as she sits at the small pew that CREAKS beneath her weight.

Beat.

CHARLOTTE

Bless me Father, for I have sinned.  
It's been two weeks since my last  
confession.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Two weeks already? That would make  
you...

CHARLOTTE

(sadly)  
Twelve weeks.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Well, I have good news. I've found  
help.

CHARLOTTE

(breathless)  
Really? Oh thank, God. H-how?  
Where?

REVEREND ARNOLD

Unfortunately, my child, those details can't be given. I hope you understand the complexity of the situation.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, yes, of course.

REVEREND ARNOLD

They'll be by tomorrow, around this time, to receive you. You'll enter the confessional as you did today but tomorrow there will be a blindfold tucked beneath the pew you're sitting on now. They'll help you exit the confessional through that back door behind you and walk you to the car. From that moment on you'll be placed in their hands. I know nothing of the location they'll be taking you to, the name of the doctor or even of the women.

The CHARLOTTE INHALES deeply, then EXHALES, obviously nervous.

REVEREND ARNOLD (CONT'D)

I understand that that's not exactly the type of situation anyone wants to be in, especially in your condition, but it's to protect the identity of all parties involved. I can assure you, though, that I have met and discussed things with all parties, I've properly vetted them and I have no reason to believe that their intentions are anything but pure. So, hopefully that can offer some consolation.

CHARLOTTE

(weakly)

A little, yes.

REVEREND ARNOLD

I'm sorry this is happening to you, dear. But under the circumstances, this is the best I could do.

CHARLOTTE

No, no. Don't apologize, Father. I completely understand.

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

And I really do appreciate all the lengths you're going to for me...  
I...

(sobs)

Thank you.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Of course.

CHARLOTTE

Um, we discussed payment last time.  
I- I don't have much. I have \$168  
from my paycheck at the pub.  
Service has been slow-

REVEREND ARNOLD

No need, child. It's all been taken care of.

CHARLOTTE

Bu-

REVEREND ARNOLD

It's okay.

The CHARLOTTE begins SOBBING again.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Now, make sure to be here tomorrow no later than noon. You'll need to leave your phone behind- the women will check to make sure that you do- and I'll make sure to store it safely in my office. They'll drop you back off here once the procedure is over and you've been given the proper aftercare. Once they've safely left, I'll relinquish your phone back to you and you may go on about your life. There's no need to thank me, bring this up, or mention it in any form. Remember that our lives are in danger already, any word about this could put us on the LBJ wall. Understood?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sir.

REVEREND ARNOLD

Good. Then it's settled. Tomorrow  
at noon.

CUT TO:

ACT 2

## SCENE TWO

## INT. CHARLOTTE'S HOME - NIGHT

CHARLOTTE arrives home, closing the door behind her. Immediately, the sound of cartoons blaring loudly on the TELEVISION can be heard. A couple of children run past her, their FOOTSTEPS loud against the hardwood. She KICKS OFF her shoes near the door, hangs up her purse, and places the keys on a DISH near the door. The keys CLANK against the glass.

In another room, a loud MAN and WOMAN are SHOUTING.

CHARLOTTE walks over to the couch and bends over to land a loud kiss on her little brother, 10, AUSTIN'S, head. He ignores it.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, buddy. Mind turning that down a bit? Have y'all eaten yet?

AUSTIN doesn't turn down the volume.

AUSTIN

Mom's making chicken and potatoes.

CHARLOTTE

Mm, is that what that smell is?

The children from before run past them, SQUEALING loudly.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Jen, Ashton, settle down!

JEN, 5, and ASHTON, 8, and the YOUNG WOMAN'S half-siblings.

JEN

Ashton won't leave me alone! He took Christmas Tree!

ASHTON

Nuh-uh!

JEN

Yes, he did! Yes, you did! He's right there in your shirt!

ASHTON  
That's not him! It's just my  
stomach!

CHARLOTTE  
Ashton, give her back her stuffed  
dog. Now.

ASHTON  
I don't have it!

CHARLOTTE  
I can see it down your shirt. Give  
it back to her and I'll get you  
something better.

ASHTON  
Like what?

CHARLOTTE  
Nope. Can't tell ya until you give  
it back to her.

Beat.

ASHTON  
Fine. Here.

The little boy THROWS the stuffed dog that was hidden under  
his shirt to JEN.

JEN  
HEY! Don't throw him around like  
that! You'll hurt him.

CHARLOTTE  
Apologize to Jen and to Christmas  
Tree, Ash.

ASHTON  
(mockingly)  
I'm sorry.

JEN  
Christmas Tree forgives you but I  
don't.

There's a pause and a loud SMACK.

ASHTON  
OW! You just punched me in the  
nose!

JEN  
Serves you right.

ASHTON  
I can't believe you.

As they talk, there's FOOTSTEPS descending a flight of carpeted stairs.

CAMERON, 21, the eldest brother, enters the room.

CHARLOTTE  
Calm down, Ash. She's five. It couldn't have hurt that bad.

CAMERON  
You were five when you deviated my septum. And we were only five years apart.

ASHTON  
(loudly panicking)  
Is my septum deviated?!

CHARLOTTE  
Oh, great. Now look what you've done, Cameron.

CAMERON  
How is this my fault?!

CHARLOTTE  
(to Ashton)  
Let me see. No, Ash, you're fine. There's not even any blood.

Out of nowhere there's a loud WAILING sound coming from JEN.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)  
Jen? What's wrong?

JEN  
He cut Christmas Tree!

CHARLOTTE  
What? Let me see. Oh, no, honey, it's just a little stitching that's loose. It'll take like two seconds to stitch Christmas Tree back up. He'll be fine.

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS trod into the room. It's the children's father, GREGORY, 48.



He's hot-headed, stubborn, and difficult to please. He does most of the disciplining which typically involves physical punishment.

His wife, their mother, JUDY, 42, is on his heels. She's timid, submissive, and easily impressed. Her form of discipline is redirection.

GREGORY

What the hell is going on over here?

JUDY makes her way over to Jen, crouching down to SOOTHE her.

JEN

(still crying)  
Ashton ripped up Christmas Tree.

GREGORY

Ashton? Is this true?

CHARLOTTE

It's not even that bad. It's a small rip, she probably did it in her sleep-

GREGORY

I don't remember asking you. I'm talking to your brother.

ASHTON'S confidence falls. He's become SILENT.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

(shouting)  
I asked you a question, boy.

JUDY

Gregory, please-

GREGORY

Shut up. If he's not going to answer me then I'm going to -

CAMERON

It was me. It was an accident. Ash took the toy so that Jen wouldn't see but it turned into this whole thing, but I'm the one that ripped it.

GREGORY'S breathing becomes hard as he stares down his 21-year-old son. The rest of the clan is SILENT. Slowly, GREGORY makes his way over to CAMERON so that they're a foot apart.

GREGORY

(voice low)

What the hell are you still doing here, Cameron?

Beat.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

You think I have time for your bullshit? You're twenty-one and have nothing to show for it.

(pause)

Your sister is graduating high school as valedictorian. She's already been accepted to several colleges and an Ivy League. So you can't sit there and tell me that your shitty life is a byproduct of my parenting.

CAMERON remains SILENT.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

I asked Mary at the department if your application has come in and she said it's still incomplete. I told you to fill it out weeks ago.

CAMERON

I told you I ain't becoming no police officer.

GREGORY

(shouting)

Speak. Correctly.

CAMERON

(voice lower)

I'm *not* becoming a police officer.

GREGORY

What other choice do you have, Cameron? Flipping burgers and shacking up with whores under our roof? Ha.

(pause)

I think it's funny that you, a burger-flipping nobody, thinks he's better than me. I'll tell you something, boy, I worked hard for what I got and for where I am and for this family. It's because of me that you even have the option of staying here.

(MORE)

GREGORY (CONT'D)

(pause)

But that's over.

JUDY

Greg-

GREGORY

(to Cameron)

I want you out. By tonight.

(to the rest)

Supper's in an hour. I want all of this mess cleaned up.

(to Cameron)

I want YOU out of this house before then.

GREGORY shifts out of the room, FOOTSTEPS thudding upstairs. A few seconds later there's a loud SLAM as he shuts his bedroom door.

JUDY

Cameron, he doesn't mean it-

CAMERON

Yes he does, ma.

JUDY

Cameron. Cameron, where are you going?

CAMERON begins walking up the stairs, towards his room.

CAMERON

You heard the man. I'm out.

CHARLOTTE

I'll go talk to Cam and watch the kids, you handle dinner, ma. Dad's already pissed off, let's not piss him off any more than that.

JUDY takes a deep breath.

JUDY

Okay, children. You heard your father. Clean all of this up and get washed up for supper.

CUT TO:

SCENE THREE

INT. CAMERON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CHARLOTTE KNOCKS SOFTLY on CAMERON'S door, pushing it open without invitation.

CAMERON is packing his bags, opening and shutting drawers as he withdraws clothes and electronics.

CAMERON

You can't talk me out of this, Char. He's right. I don't know what the hell I'm still doing here. I told myself at eighteen that I would be far from here, I'd never come back, and look at me.

CHARLOTTE

He's just pissed off. You know how he gets.

CAMERON

Exactly. I know how he gets and yet here I am.

CHARLOTTE

You came back to give yourself a chance. You were going to start classes at the community college-

CAMERON

Well, this may come as a shock but that was a lie. Truth is, I got fired from the diner and I ran out of pocket money to keep up my side of the rent.

CHARLOTTE

Well, maybe that was a sign to start looking into college-

CAMERON

You sound just like Mom, you know. Which is good, better than sounding like Dad. Why can't y'all just accept that I *don't* want to waste my time with college? That's *your* thing, Char. You've *always* been good at school. Me? Not so much. I'm good at other things.

CHARLOTTE

You know, there's classes for those other things. Vocational school?

(MORE)

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

You wouldn't have to do a four-year program.

CAMERON

Just stop. Stop. I'm not going. I don't want your life as a professional student, I don't want Dad's life as a cop, I want my own life. And I know what you're thinking.

(sighs)

You're thinking I'm better than that, right? That I could do so much more with my life. But I don't want to do more. I just want to live.

CAMERON walks over to CHARLOTTE and gives her a hug.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

I know you don't understand it, I don't need you to. I just need you to support me.

(pause)

For what it's worth, I'm really proud of you, Char. He's right about that, too. You've accomplished so much and have a lot going for you, so don't screw it up. You're the family prodigy, destined for greatness - and I say that completely unmockingly.

CHARLOTTE

That's not a word.

CAMERON

But I can't say I'm going to miss this.

CAMERON begins ZIPPING up his backpack and walks over to the door.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

See ya around, sis.

CUT TO:

SCENE FOUR

## INT. DINNER TABLE - NIGHT

The family is gathered at the dinner table, everyone is QUIETLY eating. There's sounds of utensils scraping against plates as chicken is being cut.

JUDY

How do y'all like tonight's dinner?  
I picked out the recipe from  
grandma's old recipe box.

GREGORY

Chicken's a little dry.

JUDY

Oh.

CHARLOTTE

(softly)

It's all wonderful, Ma. I  
personally like my chicken like  
this.

The rest of the children MURMUR their own agreement.

GREGORY

(sniffs loudly)

Charlotte, how are those exams of  
yours coming along?

CHARLOTTE

Fine. I have my Calculus exam  
tomorrow and Physics next week on  
Tuesday.

GREGORY

Extra credit?

CHARLOTTE

All done. Mrs. Foltz even says I  
don't have to take the exam if I  
don't want to because it won't make  
much of a difference if I pass it  
or not- I'd still get an A in the  
course with all the extra credit  
I've done.

GREGORY

But you're still going to take it,  
right?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, sir.

GREGORY

Good. Oh, and the Police Department's food drive is tomorrow. I've signed you up to help volunteer.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, okay.

Another few minutes pass by as the family continues eating in SILENCE.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Oh, wait. I can't go tomorrow.

GREGORY

What? Why not?

CHARLOTTE

I'm working on some extra credit with Mrs. Granados.

GREGORY

I thought you were done with extra credit?

CHARLOTTE

I am, this is just extra, extra credit. The theater department is putting on a play in December and they need all hands on deck, so Mrs. Chutney, my art teacher, she told us that anyone that volunteered would receive extra points on our midterm exams.

GREGORY

Hmm. I'll speak with her, see if we can arrange something if she knows you'll be with the police department tomorrow.

CHARLOTTE

(quickly)

But it's imperative that I attend the first meeting because it gives me a chance to pick what job I'll be doing for the rest of the semester. If I don't go, I'm left with the slim pickings that nobody wanted, and that usually involves janitorial duties or set design. Both of which involve a lot of time with a lot of boys.

GREGORY

(grunts)

Fine. I'll let the community specialists know you're already engaged with other stuff. I'll need a formal document from the teacher with the schedules when you'll be there.

CHARLOTTE

Already done. It's in my backpack, I can give it to you after supper.

GREGORY

Alright.

Another few minutes pass by as the family continues eating in SILENCE.

FADE OUT.



ACT 3

## SCENE FIVE

INT. HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - NOON

There's the sound of CHURCH BELLS to indicate the time and location. The CHARLOTTE has arrived and is headed towards the church, the sound of her FOOTSTEPS changing from GRAVEL to STONE STEPS to CLACKS against MARBLE floor. She OPENS the front door of the church and proceeds inside.

Just as it was the day before, the church is EMPTY and SILENT. She WALKS over to the confessional and turns the DOORKNOB. The familiar CREEK of the door as it opens is evident and she firmly SHUTS it.

CHARLOTTE  
Reverend Arnold?

REVEREND ARNOLD  
I'm here.

CHARLOTTE  
I wasn't sure.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
I thought about not coming but I needed you to know that you're not alone.

CHARLOTTE  
Thank you.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
But I need to ask, too. Do you still want to do this?

CHARLOTTE  
Yes. I do.

There's a deep SIGH behind the confessional.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
Then, I'll see you when you get back.

CUT TO:

## SCENE THREE

INT. CLARA AND AVERY'S CAR - MID-DAY

A CAR DOOR OPENS as AVERY helps CHARLOTTE into the car.

AVERY

There you go, just watch your head.

The CAR DOOR SHUTS and AVERY makes her way around the car.

CLARA

Just make sure she can't see anything, okay, Ave?

AVERY

I know, I know.

The other backdoor of the car OPENS and AVERY slides in beside CHARLOTTE.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Hey, I know this might sound weird, but I'm going to need you to lie down and keep your head on my lap. I just need to make sure that you can't see where we're going and that you don't try to lift your blindfold.

CHARLOTTE

No, no, it's okay. I understand.

The two SHIFT as they try to get comfortable.

CLARA

All settled?

AVERY

(weakly)

Yeah.

CLARA shuts the door and then OPENS her own. Her keys JINGLE as she turns the IGNITION and the ENGINE springs to life. Her SEATBELT CLICKS and she SHIFTS into GEAR.

The car begins ROLLING from GRAVEL to ASPHALT as they get to the road. There's an occasional STOP and GO, BLINKING as CLARA uses her TURN SIGNALS, and the SQUEALING of BAD BRAKES.

AVERY (CONT'D)

(to CHARLOTTE)

You doing okay?

CHARLOTTE

A little nauseous but nothing more  
than I'm used to.

(chuckles lightly)

AVERY

(chuckles)

Well, we'll be there soon and have  
some water ready for you. I'm Jane,  
by the way.

(to CLARA)

Hey, can you play some music or  
something?

CLARA

Oh, yeah, right. Of course.

MUSIC flips on. They all drive in silence, letting the music  
overtake them.

FADE OUT.

ACT 3

SCENE SIX

EXT. ARRIVING TO DR. PREWITT'S HOUSE - NOON

The car slowly comes to a STOP, engine dying as CLARA shuts it off.

AVERY  
Hey, hon, we're here.

CHARLOTTE shifts and sits up.

CLARA slips out of her seat and heads over to CHARLOTTE'S side, opening up the car door as AVERY makes her way over as well.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
Alright, easy does it. You feeling okay?

CHARLOTTE  
Yeah, I just need to catch my breath for a second. Feeling a little woozy.

CLARA  
We need to get out of eyesight.

AVERY  
Calm down. Give her a second.

CLARA  
(hissing)  
Tell me you don't think someone looking out their window is going to find it odd that there's two girls driving around another girl blindfolded?

CHARLOTTE  
She has a point. It's fine. I can continue on.

Beat.

AVERY  
Okay.

The three women make their way over to the front steps of DR. PREWITT'S home. CLARA steps forward to KNOCK and then steps back to help CHARLOTTE.

The door opens, allowing the three in.

CUT TO:

SCENE SEVEN

INT. DR. PREWITT'S HOME - NOON

They all shuffle inside, the door CLOSING behind them.

DR. PREWITT  
You made sure she kept the  
blindfold on?

AVERY  
Yes, she didn't touch it the entire  
time.

DR. PREWITT  
And nobody followed you?

CLARA  
Nope. If anyone was, I lost them  
way back. I don't know how many  
turns I took to get here, I doubt  
she'll know either.

DR. PREWITT  
Alright. Well, lets get to it then.  
Give her the medical gown and then  
head down to the basement.

CUT TO:

SCENE SEVEN

INT. DOCTOR PREWITT'S BASEMENT - DAY

Everyone is gathered in the basement.

DR. PREWITT  
(to Charlotte)  
Hello. I'm Doctor... um, well, you  
can just call me Doc.  
(MORE)

DR. PREWITT (CONT'D)

I hear you've decided to keep your name anonymous, which I completely agree with. For the sake of formalities, though, we'll be calling you Jane. Is that alright with you?

CHARLOTTE

Um... but that other girl's name is Jane, isn't it?

DOCTOR PREWITT

Ah, well, you'll come to find that name to be a common one.

CLARA

(weakly)

I'm also Jane.

DOCTOR PREWITT

It's strictly for anonymity. To make it less confusing, we'll call you Jane, and the other two will be A and C.

CHARLOTTE

Um, I guess?

DOCTOR PREWITT

Odd thing, I know. But believe me, the name will grow on you. Listen, I know this probably isn't very comfortable for you- it's not very comfortable for me.

(pause)

So, I'm going to go ahead and allow you to take off the blindfold so that you can take a peek of where you are.

CLARA

Wait, what?

AVERY

Huh?

CLARA

No, that wasn't part of the deal.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Hush. Hush, now. The two of you can head upstairs if you want to or stay behind me.

(pause)

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
Jane here is going to keep her head  
and eyes forward and on the room  
only. I'll count to five and the  
blindfold will be back on. How does  
that sound to you Jane?

CHARLOTTE  
That- that sounds great, actually.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Might make things a lot less scary,  
right?

CHARLOTTE  
Yes, yes exactly.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
(to CLARA and AVERY)  
What'll it be?

CLARA  
We'll stay here.

AVERY  
Yeah.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Alright.  
(to CHARLOTTE)  
I'm offering you 800 milligrams of  
ibuprofen to help manage any pain.  
Here you go. I'll give you a few  
extra seconds to examine the pills.  
(pause)  
Ready?

CHARLOTTE  
Ready.

DOCTOR PREWITT removes the blindfold from CHARLOTTE'S eyes  
and allows her to gaze at the room before her while counting  
to eight.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
Alright. Let's put this back on.  
(pause)  
Okay. Now take my hand and I'll  
walk you over to the exam bed.

The two WALK over and DOCTOR PREWITT helps CHARLOTTE up. The  
PLASTIC tarp CRINKLES under her weight.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 (to AVERY)  
 A, can you grab a bottle of water  
 from that mini fridge behind you  
 and bring it over?

AVERY  
 Yeah, sure.

AVERY walks over to the fridge, OPENS it, withdraws a water  
 bottle and CLOSES the door. She makes her way over to  
 CHARLOTTE and opens the bottle before handing it to her.

AVERY (CONT'D)  
 Careful, the lid is off.

CHARLOTTE  
 Thanks.

CHARLOTTE swallows both pills, drowning them with water, then  
 offers the bottle back to AVERY.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 I'm just going to take your vitals.  
 You were 12 weeks, correct?

CHARLOTTE  
 Yes.

DOCTOR PREWITT  
 I'm going to listen to your heart,  
 and then take your blood pressure  
 and temperature.

SFX: CHARLOTTE doing deep breaths, a manual blood pressure  
 machine, and a beep from the thermometer.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Okay, all seems good. Just rest  
 here for a bit while I get things  
 set up.

DOCTOR PREWITT begins SHUFFLING around, getting things  
 situated.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Alright, A, you'll be next to  
 Jane's side, help keep her legs  
 raised- C will help you with the  
 other one. Gauge her reactions,  
 keep her calm, and inform me of any  
 changes in her color or voice. C, I  
 need you to focus on everything I  
 say, understand?

(MORE)



DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

You'll also be holding this flashlight, point it right at where her cervix should be.

(pause)

This is all old school, there's no machines to monitor her and give us a warning. I need you both attentive and alert. If something seems off, let me know.

(to CHARLOTTE)

Jane, sweetheart, if there's anything at all- if you're uncomfortable, if you need more time, if you need anything at all- vocalize it. We're here for you. Okay?

CHARLOTTE

Okay.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Alright, I'll be walking you through the entire process.

Something beside them SHIFTS as DOCTOR PREWITT grabs a medical instrument.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

I'm applying some K-Y Jelly to the outside of the speculum for easier insertion.

(pause)

Okay, now I'm going to insert the speculum. This will allow me to open up the vaginal walls so that I can get a better look at your cervix. Just try to relax. There you go.

There's a couple of CLICKS as DOCTOR PREWITT opens the speculum.

AVERY

(to Charlotte, softly)

You're doing great.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Now, I'm just going to take a cotton ball and soak it in some Betadine- it's just an antiseptic to help sterilize and cleanse the cervix.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 You shouldn't feel any pain, it  
 might feel like a small tickle or  
 it might not feel like anything at  
 all.

DOCTOR PREWITT places the forceps on the small metal tray and  
 picks up another device.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Alright, now I'm going to insert  
 what's called a cannula. Similar to  
 a spray bottle tube. You might feel  
 some slight cramping as I reach the  
 uterus, but I promise it's normal.  
 Please stay as still as you  
 possibly can. Stay relaxed. Good.

(pause)

Now, I've reached the uterus, so  
 there's going to be a little bit of  
 resistance on my side as your body  
 tries to keep out a foreign object.  
 You're going to feel a little bit  
 of pressure as I push through...  
 there we go.

(pause)

Alright.

DOCTOR PREWITT SHIFTS in his seat and begins fumbling with  
 another device.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 Because there is very little  
 options left for us, I've taken the  
 liberty of creating what's known as  
 a Del Em. Essentially, there's a  
 long tube attached from the cannula  
 to a jar secured with a rubber  
 stopper. The jar is where the blood  
 and fetal tissue will collect.  
 There's another tube leading  
 outside of it that's attached to a  
 syringe. Like a one-way valve. I'll  
 be using it as a sort of vacuum.

(pause)

How are we doing over there Jane?  
 Everything okay?

CHARLOTTE  
 Yeah, I'm okay.

DOCTOR PREWITT resumes his position.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Don't worry, we're almost done. A, she lookin okay?

AVERY

Yeah, doc, she's looking good.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Okay, great. Now, I'm just going to attach the cannula to the tube.

(pause)

And you're going to feel me start to rotate the tube back and forth. I'm just waiting for the texture to go from soft and mushy to something a lot harder or ribbed-like. There we go. Feel that, Jane? Feels kind of like a vacuum?

CHARLOTTE

Mhm.

DOCTOR PREWITT

C, look at that. See that white goo in the blood? That's the fetal tissue. We do this until there's no more blood or tissue in the tube.

CLARA

That's amazing.

DOCTOR PREWITT

Mhm. Alright, all done. I'm just going to remove the cannula... and there we go.

CHARLOTTE

That's it? I'm not pregnant anymore?

DOCTOR PREWITT

Fetus-free.

CHARLOTTE chuckles in relief, head falling back onto the exam bed.

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)

Just gonna take the speculum out.

(click, click)

Wipe you down a bit. And there you go. I am going to ask that you stay here for a little while so we can monitor you. But overall, I don't see a cause for concern.

(MORE)

DOCTOR PREWITT (CONT'D)  
 (to Avery and Clara)  
 A, help Jane back into her clothes.  
 C, come with me, I'll teach you how  
 to properly dispose of everything.

Everyone gets to work, SHUFFLING around.

FADE OUT.

SCENE EIGHT

INT. HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING MASS

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 And now, please come forward to  
 receive the Body of Christ.

The church choir begins SINGING hymns as churchgoers rise pew  
 by pew to collect the Eucharist.

JUDY  
 Charlotte, Austin, Jen, Ashton,  
 come on, now. Up, up.

As they walk, the choir continues SINGING.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Judy, lovely to see you. The body  
 of Christ.

JUDY  
 Amen.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Ah, Jen and Ashton. God Bless you  
 both.  
 (pause)  
 Austin. Body of Christ.

AUSTIN  
 Amen.

Beat. The others have walked on.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
 Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE  
 Jane.

Beat.

REVEREND ARNOLD  
Jane. The Body of Christ.

CHARLOTTE  
Amen.

CUT TO:

FADE IN:

**ACT 4**

## SCENE NINE

INT. BEAUMONT PENITENTIARY - DAY - PRESENT DAY

'The Star-Spangled Banner' plays for its full duration. It ENDS and there's SILENCE for three seconds.

CLARA'S breathing is MUFFLED and LABORED. In the distance, a crowd's MURMURS are brought to SILENCE. Someone CLEARS their throat and the FEEDBACK from the microphone is piercing.

COMMENTATOR 1

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,  
please give a warm welcome to  
Governor Jackson.

There's a round of APPLAUSE from the crowd.

GOVERNOR JACKSON

Thank you, Jim.

(pause)

Good morning, everyone, and thank  
you for gathering here today on  
such short notice.

(pause)

On October 2nd of 2023,  
approximately twelve days ago,  
Austin Police Department received  
an anonymous tip of women operating  
an illegal abortion ring right in  
the heart of our beautiful city.  
Chief Rodriguez immediately  
deployed his tactical unit to  
investigate. After the squad did an  
initial search, they discovered the  
following evidence- I'll be reading  
straight from the police report:  
trash cans filled with aborted  
fetuses and internal organs such as  
uteruses and ovaries; bloody wire  
hangers in trash cans; Heroine,  
cocaine, and fentanyl were also  
discovered at the scene, no doubt  
the doctor's method for putting the  
women to sleep as he violated them;  
Several wads of money slipped into  
socks and drawers;

(MORE)

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)  
discarded medical supplies such as,  
but not limited to: speculums,  
gauze, syringes, tubes, medical  
gloves and medical gowns. In  
another drawer were several  
different methods of birth control,  
both female and male  
contraceptives.

(shuffles papers)  
Several documents were also found  
at the scene with a list of the  
names of several women that had  
undergone the medical and surgical  
abortions at this facility. After  
more thorough investigative work,  
the special forces unit was able to  
track down the name and whereabouts  
of the group's leader.

CLARA'S MUFFLED breathing becomes more LABORED. The voice of  
the guard beside her is louder, closer than that of the  
Governor speaking in the microphone.

OFFICER ROMERO  
You know, I'm the one that told  
them not to bother hiding your  
face. I want them all to see the  
life leave your eyes.

CLARA GRUNTS.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
Come on.

OFFICER ROMERO pushes CLARA forward and she STUMBLES and  
FALLS to the floor. OFFICER ROMERO picks her up aggressively.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)  
Get the fuck up, Mendez.

They both begin walking forward and the DOORS to the building  
open. The sound of the CROWD is more pronounced. There's a  
few MURMURS amongst them saying "that's her" and MUTTERING  
profanities. CLARA and OFFICER ROMERO'S footsteps are heavy  
against the wooden scaffold.

GOVERNOR JACKSON'S voice is more pronounced as he continues  
speaking.

GOVERNOR JACKSON  
Most of you have seen her mugshot  
and name displayed on your  
televisions and computer monitors.

(MORE)

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

Clara Mendez, 29, a journalist for the Austin Chronicle, abused the freedoms and privileges provided to her in order to cruelly manipulate and violate vulnerable women. Women that would come to her in search of guidance would be sent down a path of murder, treachery, and severe drug abuse, all while taking their money, their phones, and their dignity. This woman- no, this unwoman- did the most atrocious things a human being could do to another, for no other reason that there is hate in her heart and Lucifer in her soul.

(pause)

But, even devils must answer to God. We, alone, cannot condemn her to Hell. Our purpose is only to serve justice rightly on Earth.

(pause)

Justice. That seems impossible now. In what way would there be justice for the women, the victims, of her unholy crusade? Or for the lives lost, the unheard voices, the little angels that never uttered a cry? Surely, it seems as if there can be none.

(pause)

So, I ask each of you today, what's your verdict? What is justice? To allow her to live the rest of her life in prison, suffering at the hands of man? Or to death, to suffer at the hands of God?

We hear the crowd behind CLARA'S muffled sobs as they CHANT.

CROWD

Death! Death! Death!

GOVERNOR JACKSON

Then, the people have spoken.

The crowd beings to DIE DOWN.

GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

Clara Mendez, the evidence against you has been undisputed.

(MORE)



GOVERNOR JACKSON (CONT'D)

You are charged with first degree murder, which is the unlawful killing of a human being with malice and with premeditation and with deliberation. Although the department could not confirm the total number of murders, it has been approximated to over 50, and therefore I find the people's verdict to be appropriate and sentence you to death.

CLARA's sobs have quieted.

OFFICER ROMERO

Move your ass, Mendez.

The two walk over to the noose. OFFICER ROMERO throws the rope over her head and around her neck, securing it.

OFFICER ROMERO (CONT'D)

This has been a long time coming, Mendez, and I for one am so grateful to get front row seats to this.

OFFICER ROMERO backs up and walks over to the lever.

GOVERNOR JACKSON

May God have mercy on your soul.

The floorboard gives way beneath CLARA'S feet, the rope following after, before a THUD.

**END**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Maribel Salome Sanchez is an alumnus of South Texas College holding a Bachelors of Applied Science in Organizational Leadership and earned her MFA in Creative Writing in May 2023 from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Currently, she resides in Edinburg, Texas and has helped the UTRGV Creative Writing Department publish a podcast that interviews authors and poets of the Rio Grande Valley. She has roughly translated some literature works (incomplete), helped with Creative Writing Department events such as FESTIBA and workshops, and has assisted in teaching an Advanced Poetry course. She also has works featured in UTRGV's *Gallery 2022*, a forthcoming essay in *OyeDrum*, with other works to come. She can be reached at [mssanchez1992@outlook.com](mailto:mssanchez1992@outlook.com).