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THE FIRST AND LAST ANNUAL HOMELESS FASHION SHOW

by

Colette Mazunik

Cast of Characters

NOTE: ALL CHARACTERS MAY BE PLAYED BY AS FEW AS EIGHT ACTORS. FOR A BREAK-DOWN OF ROLES, SEE NEXT PAGE.

Sarah: 25, a full time volunteer at the Crisis Center. She's been here a year and a day too long. A blend of Julia Stiles and Frances McDormand. An avid composter and recycler, she makes the yearly trip down to the School of the America's Protest. Her idea of the devil is a rich white male manager in corporate America.

Mary: A homeless woman, paranoid, talks to people who may or may not exist

Gussie: A homeless woman who knows how to play the system.

Kathey: A homeless woman

Almeida: A homeless woman

Donna-Mae: A homeless woman who suffers from schizophrenia.

Linda: Another volunteer at the Center.

Carla: A social worker

Robin: A social worker

Judith: The head of the Center

Mr. Henderson: A representative from the foundation

Ms Merton: A representative from the foundation

Jeremy: The shelter security guard

Loudspeaker: Various female voices. May be played by offstage characters.

Clinton, Dr. Larry: Various male voices from the loudspeaker. May be played by offstage characters.

Models: Homeless women and children modeling clothes.

NOTE TO READER: Whenever three columns appear in the text, the action in the columns is happening simultaneously. When one character has lines in more than one column, the character name is printed in bold-type to indicate a shift of columns.

To reduce cast size, actors can play multiple roles. The following is one possible breakdown of roles:

ACTOR 1:

Sarah: 25, a full time volunteer at the Crisis Center. She's been here a year and a day too long. A blend of Julia Stiles and Frances McDormand. An avid composter and recycler, she makes the yearly trip down to the School of the America's Protest. Her idea of the devil is a rich white male manager in corporate America.

ACTOR 2:

Mary: A homeless woman, paranoid, talks to people who may or may not exist

ACTOR 3:

Kathey: A homeless woman

ACTOR 4:

Carla: A social worker

Gussie: A homeless woman who knows how to play the system.

ACTOR 5:

Linda: Another volunteer at the Center.

Almeida: A homeless woman

ACTOR 6:

Judith: The head of the Center

Donna-Mae: A homeless woman who suffers from schizophrenia.

ACTOR 7:

Ms Merton: A representative from the foundation

Robin: A social worker

ACTOR 8:

Mr. Henderson: A representative from the foundation

Jeremy: The shelter security guard

Clinton, Dr. Larry: Various male voices from the loudspeaker.

ALL ACTORS EXCEPT ACTOR 1 and 2 SHARE THESE ROLES:

Loudspeaker: Various female voices.

Models: Homeless women and children modeling clothes

The First and Last Annual Homeless Fashion Show

DAY I

(SARAH's office. A wooden desk that was donated from Grady hospital—one leg is broken and propped up with a telephone book, an eight-line telephone with a long, hopelessly tangled cord (the message light is flashing), and a donated Apple computer, circa 1996. Several hospital waiting-room chairs with stained seats. Paper forms galore in files on every free surface. On the wall is a large monthly calendar, completely filled in with handwritten appointments, and some inspirational posters with sayings like: "You can't change the past, but you can change the future." Posters for free GED programs and free computer classes.

There is a window in SARAH's office to the outside. Vertical Venetian blinds, that are open, but not pulled back from the window. We can see women outside, looking in. They speak from behind the window, we can hear them, but they are somewhat muted. They are waiting for the Crisis Center to open for the day.)

MARY

I didn't do anything—I didn't do anything.
Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes.

GUSSIE

Shut up, Mary. No one's looking at you.

MARY

Oh, don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about.
Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by. Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—that got your attention. You're trying to ignore me, but that got your attention all right.

GUSSIE

Shut up, Mary. You're talking to nobody.

MARY

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Think you can just write me off—stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo—is that what I am to you—just an animal to stare at? Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That's all I'm good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.

GUSSIE

(from outside, banging on the window)
Hey. Does one of you in there want to unlock the doors and let us in? It's cold out here!

(The women's voices overlap.)

MARY (from outside)	ALMEIDA (from outside)
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<p>Good morning, Miss Sarah!</p> <p>SARAH (from outside) Good morning, Mary.</p> <p>MARY (from outside) I gotta talk to you, Miss Sarah.</p> <p>SARAH (from outside) Aren't any of the other worker's here?</p> <p>SARAH (from outside) Uh-huh.</p> <p>(SARAH is unlocking the front door— the women scramble into the lobby, outside the office and offstage.)</p> <p>ROBIN'S VOICE Women, Women! Line up. You can't just all come crowding in here.</p>	<p>Miss Sarah—Miss Sarah—You gonna unlock the building?</p> <p>GUSSIE (from outside) Girl—you are late. I've been freezing my ass off out here—excuse my language.</p> <p>ALMEIDA (from outside) You serving breakfast today?</p> <p>GUSSIE (from outside) Yeah—they're here, but they won't open it up.</p> <p>GUSSIE Now, that's what I'm talkin about.</p> <p>ALMEIDA'S VOICE You gonna be serving breakfast today, Miss Robin?</p> <p>GUSSIE'S VOICE Why didn't you open up?</p>
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ROBIN'S VOICE
(from the lobby outside the office)
Join hands women—join hands. Now let's all pray.

GUSSIE'S VOICE
I ain't praying.

(DURING the prayer, SARAH unlocks the door to the office and enters, closing door behind her. She has a ring loaded with keys that she wears around her neck. As she speaks, she locks her purse in a filing cabinet drawer. At times SARAH speaks directly to the audience. This is indicated with bold type-face. During the following SARAH turns on her computer, and gets ready for the work day. While the prayer is still happening, SARAH speaks:)

<p>SARAH</p>	<p>ALL OF THE WOMEN Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,</p>
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<p>Hi. This is where I work. (Telephone starts RINGING.) Excuse me. Atlanta Crisis Center, please hold. The volunteers aren't answering phones because . . . every morning—before we serve breakfast—everyone says the Lord's prayer. Of course it's not required.</p>	<p>on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts/trespasses as we forgive our debtors/those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.</p>
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SARAH (continued)

(Pause.)

I'm a Christian. That's sort of why I'm here. Notice the sign.

(SARAH indicates a plaque setting on her desk with Matthew 25: 34-40 printed on it)¹

To feed the hungry, cloth the naked, shelter the homeless.

To see the face of Christ in the marginalized.

But I don't join in the prayer.

(Pause.)

Two days from now one of my clients will be dead. Beaten to death with a brick in a sock. And we'll be having a fashion show.

(Pause.)

I'm just trying to do my job.

(The telephone has started RINGING.)

I'm sorry—but I need to take this.

(SHE answers the telephone. GUSSIE can be seen outside the window, banging on it, trying to get SARAH's attention. SARAH waves her away.)

Yeah. I just got in. She's sick again? Great. Hope's not here either—has she called in?

Twenty tops—if I'm the only one in. Well, stop signing them up. Tell them to come back tomorrow. I'll start calling ASAP. No. Tell them to stop signing people up. Okay. Bye.

(Immediately there is a KNOCK at the door. SARAH tries to ignore it, but the knocking does not stop.)

<p style="text-align: center;">SARAH</p> <p>I'm sorry—apparently I've already got more people to see today than I'll be able to see today. Our Father, who art in heaven—give me sanity. I'm sorry, just let me deal with . . .</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GUSSIE</p> <p>(through the door) Miss Sarah—I've got to talk to you. It's important. I've got to talk to you right now. Are you in there Miss Sarah? Come on. It will only take a second. I'm not asking for anything. I've just got to talk to you for a second.</p>
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(SARAH goes to open it and is bombarded by three women talking at once:)

<p>KATHEY I'm Kathey. I was first on the list to see you.</p> <p>SARAH Kathey—okay—come on in, take a seat.</p> <p>(The TELEPHONE begins ringing.)</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER (no one ever stops to listen to the loudspeaker.) Ladies, we need a bathroom monitor. We can't open the bathroom without a bathroom monitor. Would someone please volunteer to be a bathroom monitor?</p> <p>SARAH Stop—stop—stop—stop—stop!!!</p>	<p>GUSSIE Miss Sarah—I've got to talk to you.</p> <p>SARAH Gussie, I haven't called you yet.</p> <p>GUSSIE I know, but it will just take a minute.</p> <p>SARAH You're gonna have to wait until I call you, Gussie.</p> <p>GUSSIE But I've got to meet my parole officer at nine o'clock and I don't have a token.</p> <p>SARAH No. Ask at the front desk. This is job counseling.</p> <p>GUSSIE Wait, Miss Sarah—I asked at the front desk already and they won't give me any—they said I had to come to see you before they'd give me any more.</p>	<p>ALMEIDA Miss Sarah, Miss Sarah—I'm signing up to see you—</p> <p>SARAH Almeida, I'm sorry. I'm already full for the day.</p> <p>ALMEIDA But I got a job and I need my MARTA card—</p> <p>SARAH You have your verification?</p> <p>ALMEIDA Yes ma'am.</p> <p>SARAH You've got your verification.</p> <p>ALMEIDA Yes.</p>
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(Everything stops. There is a lengthy pause. Silence. Then, SARAH speaks to the audience.)

SARAH
(slower, catching her breath)
I'm sorry. I couldn't hear myself think. Sometimes things get—chaotic here. Everyone who comes here has problems—big problems. And we're understaffed and overworked. So I just want you to remember—that it's not my fault. It's the fault of "the system". It's the politicians' fault. I'm the good guy. I'm trying to do something about it. I care.

(The TELEPHONE begins ringing.)

<p>GUSSIE Miss Sarah! I've got to meet my parole officer at nine o'clock and I don't have a token.</p>	
<p>SARAH Ask at the front desk. This is job counseling.</p>	
<p>GUSSIE Wait, Miss Sarah—I asked at the front desk already and they won't give me any—they said I had to come to see you before they'd give me any more.</p>	
<p>SARAH Okay, then sign up to see me, and when I call your name, we'll talk about it.</p>	
<p>GUSSIE But I've got to be at my parole officers at nine o'clock.</p>	
<p>SARAH I'll see you later, Gussie.</p>	
<p>GUSSIE No!</p>	
	<p>ALMEIDA Miss Sarah, I got a job and I need my MARTA card—</p>
	<p>SARAH You have your verification?</p>
	<p>ALMEIDA Yes ma'am. And I need to get my MARTA card or otherwise I'm gonna be late for work.</p>
	<p>ALMEIDA (continued) Miss Sarah.</p>
	<p>SARAH You've got your verification.</p>
	<p>ALMEIDA Yes.</p>
	<p>SARAH Then tell them to sign you up.</p>
	<p>ALMEIDA Call, me. Don't forget.</p>

(SARAH pushes shut the door. Makes sure it is locked.)

SARAH
Sorry about that. Kathey?

KATHEY
Yes.

(MARY has positioned herself outside SARAH's window. SHE will proceed to rant to passer-bys". These passer-bys are in MARY'S head. But they are very very real to her. Her rant underscores much of the play. It rises and falls in volume, sometimes quite loud, sometimes barely audible. It may be advisable to have MARY stationed on the street, outside the theatre, or in the lobby, harassing the audience before they enter.

Sometimes she speaks to audience members—other times to people only she can see.)

<p>SARAH My name's Sarah. How can I help you today?</p> <p>KATHEY Well, I need a job. That's what you do here, right? They told me to sign up to see you. (beat) I'm running away from my husband and so I came here to Atlanta—but I'm out of money and I'm afraid he's gonna find me.</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Let me just pull up your record here. What's your last name, Kathey?</p> <p>KATHEY Thompson.</p> <p>SARAH Thompson. Is your husband violent?</p> <p>KATHEY He's trying to kill me.</p> <p>SARAH I see. Okay—I'm not seeing any records here. Have you had intake?</p> <p>KATHEY What's intake?</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER (no one ever stops to listen to the loudspeaker.) Ladies, we need a bathroom monitor. We can't open the bathroom without a bathroom monitor. Would someone please volunteer to be a bathroom monitor?</p> <p>SARAH (stopping time) We have policies. For the good of everyone. To make things run more efficiently. And the policy is—I can't</p>	<p>MARY I didn't do anything—I didn't do anything.</p> <p>Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes.</p>
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<p>SARAH They didn't tell you when you signed in that you needed to have intake?</p> <p>KATHEY I don't know.</p> <p>SARAH It's when you talk with one of the social workers? Robin or Carla?</p> <p>KATHEY Yeah, I did that.</p> <p>SARAH You did that? Do you know which one you talked with?</p> <p>KATHEY I don't remember her name.</p> <p>SARAH Was she white or black? Excuse me. (SHE answers the phone.)</p> <p>KATHEY Black.</p> <p>SARAH Okay—that's Carla. (into loudspeaker)</p>	<p>see clients until they've gone through intake. It's a screening process—so clients can be funneled—guided—in the right direction—to the proper services. So that we can better serve their needs.</p> <p>SARAH Lesson number one. Verify everything. Don't ever just take a client's word.</p> <p>(The telephone starts RINGING.)</p> <p>SARAH Atlanta Crisis Center, please hold.</p> <p>SARAH Would someone please take a</p>	<p>Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by. Just walk on by.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">SARAH</p> <p>Um, you talked to her . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KATHEY</p> <p>Two days ago. But she didn't do anything. She wouldn't listen to me—about my husband. The ladies said I should try to see you, so I've been trying to get in to see you for two days.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SARAH</p> <p>I'm sorry about that. There have just been too many people to see . . . Listen, I don't see your information in here—so let me just give Carla a call.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KATHEY</p> <p>Okay.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SARAH (on telephone)</p> <p>Carla? Well where is she? Okay. Do you know when she'll be available? Okay. It's just . . . Listen, just tell her I need to get her intake information on Kathey Thompson. Kathey Thompson. Yes. Okay. Bye. (to KATHEY)</p> <p>Umm . . . Carla's not in—and apparently she didn't get your information transferred to the computer—and I'm not really allowed to do anything before I can get that information.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KATHEY</p> <p>I've been waiting for two days.</p>	<p>call on line three. Call on line three.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LOUDSPEAKER</p> <p>Ladies, listen up. You must sign up for a chore when you sign in. Otherwise you won't get a breakfast ticket. There are no exceptions. We are not unlocking the cafeteria until you start volunteering for chores. This is the only home you've got, ladies, take care of it.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(TELEPHONE is ringing.)</p>	<p>Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo. Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That's all I'm good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.</p> <p>You're trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn't hear me. Uh-huh.</p>
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<p>SARAH I'm sorry.</p> <p>KATHEY You can't do anything?</p> <p>SARAH Not until I have a record that you've gone through intake. I'm sorry.</p> <p>KATHEY But I'm sleeping on the streets.</p> <p>SARAH You're not at a shelter?</p> <p>KATHEY They won't take me without an ID.</p> <p>SARAH You don't have an ID?</p> <p>KATHEY No—I just got to Georgia a week ago.</p> <p>SARAH But do you have an ID from—where you were before?</p> <p>KATHEY No. I had a Tennessee Driver's license, but my purse got stolen.</p> <p>SARAH You're from Tennessee?</p> <p>KATHEY Yeah.</p>	<p>SARAH (answering phone) Atlanta Crisis Center, please hold.</p> <p>SARAH (in loudspeaker) Call on line seven. Volunteers—please monitor the phones. Call on line seven.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, we still need a bathroom monitor. We can't unlock the bathroom until we get a bathroom monitor.</p>	<p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of? Think I might hit you? Think I might bite you on the arm? Think I'm some kind of wild animal?</p>
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<p>SARAH I've got a good friend from there. What part are you—</p> <p>KATHEY Lebanon. It's by Nashville. Where's your friend?</p> <p>SARAH Oh, no, well he doesn't live there anymore, but he grew up in Chattanooga. Okay—well, the first thing you need to do is get a new ID. Do you have a copy of your birth certificate?</p> <p>KATHEY No. I had to leave fast.</p> <p>SARAH Because of your husband.</p> <p>KATHEY Yeah. He had found me again.</p> <p>SARAH Can I ask what the situation with your husband was?</p> <p>KATHEY He's been trying to find me. After he killed our two kids. I ran away—this was two years ago. He's on America's most wanted. But they can't catch him, and he keeps tracking me down.</p> <p>SARAH He killed your kids?!</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Would the members of the computer class please assemble in the front lobby. Those of you signed up for the computer class, please come to the front lobby.</p> <p>SARAH I wasn't even supposed to be helping her. Not until I had proof she'd had intake. I was doing her a favor.</p>	
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<p>SARAH Kathey—I am so sorry. I totally forgot. But I have a meeting in a few minutes that is really really important.</p> <p>KATHEY But I've been . . .</p> <p>SARAH As SOON as I am done with the meeting I will be with you. I promise. I will call you again as soon as I am done.</p> <p>KATHEY Okay.</p>	<p>JUDITH (on the intercom) Sarah? Sarah?</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>JUDITH This is Judith. I've got the people from the foundation here. So I just wanted to let you know that I'll be bringing them over in a few minutes.</p> <p>SARAH The foundation. Oh. Okay. Great.</p> <p>(SARAH looks in panic to her calendar. Sure enough. There it is in big letters.)</p> <p>JUDITH You're ready, right?</p> <p>SARAH Um—sure. Yeah.</p> <p>(Telephone RINGING.)</p> <p>SARAH (into loudspeaker) Volunteers, please answer the phones.</p>	<p>Yeah—you better be scared. That's right. You better be shaking in your boots. Cause see these teeth? These teeth are sharp, and who knows what kind of diseases I might have.</p> <p>No. I'm just playing with you. What—you think I was serious?</p>
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<p>SARAH Listen, I know it's crazy around here . . . (to KATHEY) Have you had breakfast?</p> <p>KATHEY No.</p> <p>SARAH Go and get some breakfast— and I will call you again okay.</p> <p>KATHEY You'll call me back?</p> <p>SARAH Yes. You go on and get some breakfast now.</p> <p>(SARAH is frantically printing some information from the computer for the upcoming meeting— statistics, etc.)</p> <p>KATHEY Thank you, Miss Sarah.</p> <p>SARAH Just Sarah.</p> <p>KATHEY You're the first nice person in this place. Those black women just want to boss me around.</p> <p>SARAH Well . . .</p> <p>KATHEY That one who did my intake is a B-I-T-C-H if you know what I mean.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Breakfast will be closing in fifteen minutes—if you haven't had breakfast—you'd better hurry.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Women, the van from Able Body Temp Services is here. If you signed up to work with Able Body Temp Services, the van is here.</p>	<p>No, I'm not stupid. I'm not dumb enough to not know you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.</p>
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<p>SARAH Maybe she was just having a bad day.</p> <p>KATHEY Something.</p> <p>SARAH Be sure to shut the door behind you.</p> <p>KATHEY Okay, thanks.</p> <p>(KATHEY hears her name, but SARAH waves her out and SHE leaves. SARAH is scrambling for the meeting with the foundation representatives while she talks with CARLA.)</p>	<p>CARLA (on intercom) Sarah. Sarah, pick up it's Carla.</p> <p>SARAH Carla, hi.</p> <p>CARLA Listen, Kathey Thompson.</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>CARLA You should not be seeing her.</p> <p>SARAH She's been waiting for two days to be seen.</p> <p>CARLA Well, all I know is, there is no way she is getting a job. Paranoid schizophrenic if I ever saw one. She needs meds, something.</p> <p>SARAH What's that old joke? Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not after you. Has she been diagnosed?</p> <p>CARLA Listen, I don't remember. It should be there in the intake. (to client) NO, NO, YOU DO NOT NEED ANOTHER . . .</p>	<p>Even a dog knows you don't bite the hand that feeds you. And I am not a dog. I am a person.</p>
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<p>(JUDITH opens the door to the job counseling office and enters with the two representatives.)</p>	<p>(to SARAH) I've got to go.</p> <p>SARAH Wait, Carla? She said her husband's on America's Most Wanted.</p> <p>CARLA Don't believe her. I checked. It's all in her head.</p> <p>SARAH You checked.</p> <p>CARLA Yes. I checked. Read the intake. It's all there. (to client) NO. DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID? (she hangs up)</p> <p>SARAH But . . . Carla? But you didn't put the intake in the computer.</p> <p>SARAH We get clients with all kinds of mental conditions— and schizophrenia often has symptoms that include paranoia and delusions of grandeur. So we hear all kinds of stories. A Husband on America's Most Wanted was a new one, but, in some ways not so unusual.</p> <p>Oh, they're here.</p>	<p>Yeah. You can't just kick me when I'm down. I'm a person. I've got rights. I've got a soul. But you don't like to hear that, do you? You'd rather just pretend I didn't exist—or say I brought it on myself. Yeah—that's right, say it. You want to say it—say it.</p>
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<p>JUDITH This is our job counseling office. And this is Sarah.</p> <p>SARAH Hi.</p> <p>JUDITH Sarah, this is Mr. Henderson and Ms. Merton from the foundation. We're very proud of Sarah and this department. Sarah is here with us as a full-time volunteer—giving back to the community.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON That's nice.</p> <p>SARAH Thanks.</p> <p>JUDITH So I'll let Sarah tell you all about this department—and when you're done—if you could direct them back to my office?</p> <p>SARAH Sure.</p> <p>JUDITH Oh, and be sure to tell them about the Fashion Show we have coming up.</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>(JUDITH leaves.)</p> <p>SARAH (cont.) Okay. Well. I'm so glad you</p>		<p>I brought it on myself—say it. I'm just a no good dirty drug addicted whore and I brought</p>
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<p>could come to see our facility.</p> <p>MS. MERTON We're happy to be here.</p> <p>SARAH Good. Well. This is our job counseling department, as Judith said. And our function is to assist our clients in obtaining and keeping employment.</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. Just a second.</p> <p>MS. MERTON Is this a bad time? We could come back later.</p> <p>SARAH No. This is fine.</p> <p>MS. MERTON Does that lady need to get to her parole meeting?</p>	<p>VOLUNTEER (on the intercom) Sarah. Sarah. Sarah.</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>VOLUNTEER Gussie's at the front desk— she said that you said we should give her a token so she can go to a meeting with her parole officer.</p> <p>SARAH No. No. I did not say that. She needs to see me before she can get a token.</p> <p>VOLUNTEER Should I send her in?</p> <p>SARAH No, I'm in a meeting.</p>	<p>it on myself. You can't help someone like me cause who knows what I might do.</p> <p>Can't give me money cause who knows what I might do with it? I don't ask you what you do with your money. What do you do with your money, huh? Yeah, you better write me a list and don't leave a penny out otherwise I'm gonna think you're using it for drugs. But I'm not being fair. I can't compare you to me. We're nothing alike, right? I brought this on myself. I asked for this. I asked to lose my job. I asked to lose my house. I asked to live on the streets.</p>
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<p>SARAH Yes. It's okay. Where were we?</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Job counseling.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON Yes.</p> <p>SARAH Let's see. We are here to help women find and keep employment. Yes. Now, for a homeless woman, there are many obstacles to employment, as you can imagine.</p> <p>MS. MERTON I'm worried about that lady and her parole meeting. If you</p>	<p>VOLUNTEER (on intercom) Sarah—sorry to bother you—Gussie says she has to leave now.</p> <p>SARAH Does she have an appointment slip?</p> <p>VOLUNTEER Um . . . I don't know.</p> <p>SARAH If she has an appointment slip, call to verify and give her a token. If not—she has to see me first.</p> <p>VOLUNTEER Okay.</p> <p>SARAH And I'm in a meeting. So don't call me back, and please hold all my calls. Thanks.</p>	
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<p>need to see her . . .</p> <p>SARAH No. It's okay. You don't understand. Umm. Where was I . . . ?</p> <p>MR. HENERSON Obstacles to employment?</p> <p>SARAH Right. You can't go on an interview in dirty sweatpants, for example. So we provide a professional clothing closet, where women can receive an interview outfit. And once they have obtained employment, if they need professional work clothes they can get up to two more complete outfits. We also have nurses uniforms.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON Good.</p> <p>MS. MERTON I don't want to be the cause of that lady missing her parole meeting.</p> <p>SARAH Yes. And that's very kind of you. But you don't know Gussie. She has a history of abusing . . . the system. If she was really worried about getting to a parole meeting—she should have used the bus token she used to come here this morning to go there instead.</p> <p>MS. MERTON Oh. I see.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, the bathroom is now open. Ladies, the bathroom is now open.</p>	
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<p>SARAH Which reminds me. Some of our clients have spent time in jail—and that makes it <i>very</i> hard to get a job. But we refer them to a program that works specifically with training and finding jobs for ex-offenders.</p> <p>MS. MERTON So these women have been in jail?</p> <p>SARAH Well—some of them. Yes. Let's see. We provide telephones where women can call in response to want ads. We help women create resumes.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON So how successful is your program?</p> <p>SARAH Yes. Um, well. Within the past month we've helped over thirty-five women find full time work. And we've had probably twice that number get temporary or part-time jobs.</p> <p>SARAH (continued) We also assist women in getting their ID, birth certificates, social-security cards. We have a computer class to teach clients basic computer skills, we offer one-on-one job counseling and help with job searches and</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies. We need a bathroom monitor. Our last monitor had to leave and we're gonna have to lock the bathroom if we don't get another bathroom monitor.</p>	<p>Uh-huh. I brought this on myself. I asked to not be able to get a job because I have no place to shower and I smell bad and I look bad. Who's gonna hire me, huh?</p> <p>You want to hire me? You want to give me a job? Well then don't look at me like that. You got a job to give me? I'll take it. I'll gladly take it. Otherwise you just shut the fuck up and stop judging me—start judging yourself.</p>
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<p>resume preparation.</p> <p>MS. MERTON I'm curious . . .</p> <p>SARAH Yes?</p> <p>MS. MERTON What is a bathroom monitor?</p> <p>SARAH Oh. Well—</p> <p>SARAH Well—you have to understand that we have a large number of clients that struggle with mental illness or drug addiction—and they don't necessarily—they aren't always able to function in an . . . appropriate . . . Basically menstrual blood and feces were being smeared on the walls, and toilets were getting plugged with things like pairs of pants. So we needed to keep track of who goes in and when so that if something like that happens, the correct person can be—held accountable.</p> <p>MS. MERTON Oh. Oh my.</p>	<p>SARAH I didn't know what to say. I mean, when I first came here, I thought it was ridiculous too. A bathroom monitor? These are adults. But it really is necessary. I've come to see that. So. I decided to tell the truth. I didn't think it would hurt.</p>	<p>Believe me—you've got plenty to judge.</p> <p>Oh, excuse my language back there. Did I offend you? Are your precious virgin ears offended? Did I use a word</p>
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<p>SARAH Here. I have prepared for you a summary of the jobs our ladies have obtained over the past six months. Also a distribution list—how many tokens, MARTA cards we have given out—how many referrals to programs, etc. Payless shoe certificates, checks for birth certificates. It's all there. (SHE gives them the papers.)</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON Good.</p> <p>SARAH What kinds of questions do you have?</p> <p>MS. MERTON Um, no, I um—think this is very thorough.</p> <p>SARAH Would you like to meet some of our clients?</p> <p>MS. MERTON That's okay.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON I don't think that will be necessary.</p> <p>SARAH Okay? How about sitting in on some meetings with clients—just watching.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies—we still don't have a bathroom monitor. The bathroom will be locked if you don't volunteer.</p> <p>(The TELEPHONE begins ringing.)</p>	<p>that made you uncomfortable? Well, please accept my humblest apologies. It's just that it's fucking hard living like this. It's fucking worse than your worst fucking nightmare.</p> <p>But I'm sorry. I'm supposed to be polite, aren't I? I'm supposed to say please and thank you and excuse me for living.</p>
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<p>MS. MERTON No. No.</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON We don't want to trouble you.</p> <p>MS. MERTON You look very busy.</p> <p>SARAH It's no problem.</p> <p>MS. MERTON I think we've seen what we need, honey.</p> <p>SARAH (after a pause) Okay. Then I'll take you back to Judith's office.</p> <p>MS. MERTON Now, Judith had said something about a Fashion Show?</p> <p>SARAH Oh. Right.</p> <p>SARAH That's right. I'll tell you about that as we walk. Is that okay?</p> <p>MR. HENDERSON Good.</p> <p>(THEY exit. From the hall we hear multiple voices immediately calling:)</p> <p>GUSSIE:</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE stops.)</p> <p>SARAH The Fashion Show. My favorite subject.</p> <p>ALMEIDA Am I next on your list Miss</p>	<p>Yeah, I'm talking to you. Don't pretend I'm not talking to you.</p> <p>Just walk on by. Do nothing. Do nothing. Just walk on by. Let it continue.</p>
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<p>Miss Sarah, you said you were going to call me.</p> <p>(The office is empty and for a moment, all is silent. Then the TELEPHONE begins ringing. ROBIN comes on the Intercom:)</p> <p>(The TELEPHONE is answered. Jeremy unlocks the office door and comes in.)</p> <p>JEREMY</p> <p>Sarah?</p> <p>(HE paws through papers on Sarah's desk. He picks up a framed picture on the desk and looks at it. Opens drawer and takes some tokens out, which he puts in his pocket. HE goes back to the door and opens it. Calls out:)</p> <p>JEREMY (continued)</p> <p>Hey, Gussie. (whispered)</p> <p>I got something for you. (He hands her some tokens. Then, louder:)</p> <p>What are you doing hanging around here all day? I swear, you women are the laziest I ever met.</p> <p>(JEREMY closes the door, remaining in SARAH's office. After a moment SARAH returns.)</p> <p>SARAH</p>	<p>Sarah?</p> <p>ROBIN</p> <p>Sarah? Sarah?</p>	<p>What was that? You say you're sorry? Uh-huh? What are you sorry for? What are you sorry for? Everybody says they're sorry. All day long everybody says they're sorry. But that's okay—just walk on by.</p> <p>Why are you telling me you're sorry? You want me to forgive you? You want me to tell you you're absolved?</p>
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<p>(from out side the office) Hey, Gussie.</p> <p>GUSSIE You gonna give me that token yet?</p> <p>SARAH Wait your turn. (SHE opens the door and sees:) Jeremy.</p> <p>JEREMY Hey. I was looking for you. You weren't in your office.</p> <p>SARAH What?</p> <p>JEREMY You got a minute?</p> <p>SARAH No. What do you want?</p> <p>(Jeremy sits on the chair, making himself at home.)</p> <p>JEREMY What do I want? You're looking good today.</p> <p>SARAH (exasperated) Jeremy.</p> <p>JEREMY What! I was just giving you a compliment. You need to learn how to say, "Thank you."</p> <p>SARAH Thanks. Jeremy. What do you want.</p>		<p>Oh, I forgive you. I forgive you. Oh—so you don't like that either, huh? You don't want me to forgive you. You think you're too good to be forgiven by me, don't you? Don't you? Fine then, rot in hell. See if I care. I didn't do anything—</p>
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<p>(JEREMY picks up the picture.)</p> <p>JEREMY This is a nice picture. That your boyfriend?</p> <p>JEREMY That your boyfriend?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah.</p> <p>JEREMY So. You like a little coffee with your cream, I see.</p> <p>SARAH Jeremy. Put the picture down.</p> <p>JEREMY No, no—that's good—that's good. I like some milk with my chocolate too, if you know what I mean.²</p> <p>SARAH Put the . . .</p> <p>JEREMY Relax. I'm not doing anything.</p> <p>SARAH I know.</p> <p>JEREMY But you just keep what I said</p>	<p>SARAH (stopping time, referring to the picture) It's not. Not really. He's not technically my boyfriend. I wish he was. It's—complicated. But <i>he</i> (Jeremy) does not need to know this.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Is this the one, just like—I'm what? No, I'm not hearing any . . . Oh.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER</p>	
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<p>in mind, in case you ever . . .</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Listen. Jeremy—as nice as this all is—I’m in the middle of work—and, you know, come to think of it—you should be doing your job too—so if you could get back out there and guard the building—then I can do my work too.</p> <p>JEREMY I don’t hear you talk about him much. (pause) I’m just saying. The girl that was here before you—her boyfriend was always coming and taking her to lunch. They’d be gone for two hours, easy. But I never seen him around.</p> <p>SARAH No.</p> <p>JEREMY Well, why’s that?</p> <p>SARAH Jeremy!</p> <p>JEREMY What! It’s a simple question.</p> <p>SARAH He lives in Chicago.</p> <p>JEREMY Northern boy.</p> <p>SARAH Um—well, he grew up in Tennessee, actually.</p>	<p>Please disregard that last message ladies. Sorry about that.</p> <p>I didn’t do anything—I didn’t do anything.</p> <p>Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes.</p> <p>Oh, don’t look at me like you don’t know what I’m talking about.</p>	
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<p>JEREMY What's he doing up in Chicago.</p> <p>SARAH He's in . . . school.</p> <p>JEREMY Yeah? You know I'm in school too.</p> <p>SARAH What?</p> <p>JEREMY Yeah—you know, I been taking one of those night classes.</p> <p>SARAH In what?</p> <p>JEREMY Art. Painting. Yeah—I figure I do something nice, get something to hang on my wall.</p> <p>SARAH Really? What, do they have nude models or . . .</p> <p>JEREMY What?</p> <p>SARAH Nothing.</p> <p>(Pause.)</p> <p>JEREMY (referring to the picture) You know, if you miss him too much and need someone to . . . um, fill in.</p>		
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<p>SARAH Do you even try to be subtle?</p> <p>JEREMY What! I mean, if you need some things repaired around the house or something.</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Okay. Goodbye, Jeremy. I need to work.</p> <p>JEREMY Hey, don't be getting snippy on me. I just come in here cause Judith said you were having trouble with mice and she wanted me to check it out.</p> <p>SARAH Oh. Yeah. In the wall. I can hear them running back and forth.</p> <p>JEREMY Okay. See. I'm doing my job. You hear them over here?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. In this wall—running like from over there to over here.</p> <p>JEREMY Well, I'll get some traps set up in here then.</p> <p>SARAH Thank you.</p> <p>JEREMY Yeah. <i>Now</i> I get a thank you. Come on. Give me a smile.</p> <p>SARAH Goodbye, Jeremy.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER (CARLA's voice) Ladies—listen up—This is Carla. Stop fighting over the</p>	<p>Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by. Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—that got your attention. You're trying to ignore me, but that got your attention all right.</p> <p>Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Think you can just write me off—stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo—is that what I am to you—just an animal to stare at? Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That's all I'm good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.</p>
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<p>JEREMY But you think about what I said now.</p> <p>SARAH Hope springs eternal.</p> <p>JEREMY What?</p> <p>SARAH Nothing. Thank you. Goodbye.</p> <p>(SARAH walks him to the door and HE leaves. SARAH sees KATHEY in the hall and calls to her.)</p> <p>SARAH Kathey. I just got done. Come on in. (KATHEY enters)</p> <p>SARAH (continued) Did you get some breakfast?</p> <p>KATHEY No. They closed up right before I got there.</p> <p>SARAH They didn't give you breakfast?</p> <p>KATHEY No. They said I should have been there on time.</p> <p>SARAH Did you tell them you were with me?</p> <p>KATHEY I didn't know I was supposed</p>	<p>client phones or they will be disconnected.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER (CARLA'S voice) Okay, ladies. We can see you over by those phones. So that's it. The phones are gone.</p>	<p>You're trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn't hear me. Uh-huh.</p> <p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of? Think I might hit you? Think I might bite you on the arm? Think I'm some kind of wild animal?</p>
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<p>to.</p> <p>SARAH No. Of course not. Why would you? When was the last time you ate?</p> <p>KATHEY I had lunch on the lunch van yesterday.</p> <p>SARAH Okay—well, I’m gonna get you some breakfast. As soon as we’re done here I’ll unlock the kitchen and get you some breakfast.</p> <p>KATHEY Thanks.</p> <p>SARAH No. That’s okay. That’s my job. Now, Kathey, you said you’re running away from your husband.</p> <p>KATHEY That’s right. But he’s already managed to track me down in two states.</p> <p>SARAH And he, hurt your kids?</p> <p>KATHEY He killed them. I told you. He’s on America’s Most Wanted. Maybe you saw him on there. You can look it up.</p> <p>SARAH Uh-huh. Have you called the police?</p>	<p>And don’t you come to the front desk complaining. If you want them back you’ve got to start behaving like you deserve it.</p>	<p>Yeah—you better be scared. That’s right. You better be shaking in your boots. Cause see these teeth? These teeth are sharp, and who knows what kind of diseases I might have.</p> <p>No. I’m just playing with you. What—you think I was serious?</p>
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<p>KATHEY Of course I called the police. But I'm scared to do that any more because I think that's how he found me once. Cause he's got friends in the police force. He used to be police, you know.</p> <p>SARAH Sorry.</p> <p>KATHEY A fashion show?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Okay. Listen, Kathey. I want</p>	<p>ROBIN (on intercom) Sarah? Sarah?</p> <p>SARAH (on intercom) Yeah.</p> <p>ROBIN Listen, I just heard from Judith. She wants us to have a meeting to plan the fashion show ASAP.</p> <p>SARAH Okay.</p> <p>ROBIN So, we're thinking tomorrow morning. In your office if that's okay.</p> <p>SARAH Sure, it's—</p> <p>ROBIN Great. Good. And be prepared with ideas.</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Thanks.</p>	<p>No, I'm not stupid. I'm not dumb enough to not know you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.</p>
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<p>to help you and I'm going to help you. But I've got to ask you a few questions first, okay? Just some standard questions that we ask everybody.</p> <p>KATHEY What do you want to know.</p> <p>SARAH Have you ever been diagnosed with any—conditions?</p> <p>KATHEY I don't understand.</p> <p>SARAH Have you been hospitalized?</p> <p>KATHEY Yeah—when I had my tonsils out in the fourth grade. I don't see what this has to do with . . .</p> <p>SARAH Great. Have you ever been diagnosed with any—mental or emotional illnesses?</p> <p>(Pause.)</p> <p>KATHEY You're trying to say I'm crazy, aren't you?</p> <p>SARAH No! No. I'm on medication for depression myself. If you've been diagnosed—there's no shame in that. We just need to know so that we can help you.</p> <p>KATHEY</p>		<p>Even a dog knows you don't bite the hand that feeds you. And I am not a dog. I am a person.</p>
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<p>I'm not crazy.</p> <p>(Pause.)</p> <p>SARAH I'm gonna give you a list of shelters that you can stay at. (SARAH hands KATHEY a piece of paper.) Use the client phones and call the numbers on this list until you find a place with an opening. Now, they're all going to require that you have ID—but if you can find a shelter with an opening, I think I can pull a few strings and make sure you have a place to stay until we can get you an ID.</p> <p>KATHEY He's gonna find me. He's gonna call all the shelters and check if I'm there. He's gonna find me.</p> <p>SARAH Well, you're safe here. Look, I've got a whole list of clients that I need to see—so why don't I take you back and get you some food—and then you can start calling the shelters.</p> <p>KATHEY But you'll help me? I mean</p>	<p>SARAH The universal truth. People who are “crazy”—although I don't like that word—never think they are. The surest sign of sanity is to think you're going insane. So—it's no wonder I didn't believe her.</p>	<p>Yeah. You can't just kick me when I'm down. I'm a person. I've got rights. I've got a soul. But you don't like to hear that, do you? You'd rather just pretend I didn't exist—or say I brought it on myself. Yeah—that's right, say it. You want to say it—say it.</p> <p>I brought it on myself—say it. I'm just a no good dirty drug addicted whore and I brought it on myself. You can't help someone like me cause who</p>
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<p>with the ID and . . .</p> <p>SARAH You find a shelter that has an opening—and I'll help you get your ID.</p> <p>KATHEY Okay.</p> <p>SARAH Maybe we can find you a job too.</p> <p>KATHEY Okay.</p> <p>SARAH I figure, if we can get her on some meds, she could do well. Okay. Go ahead and head back to the kitchen—and I'll meet you there in a minute.</p> <p>KATHEY You'll be there?</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>(KATHEY leaves.)</p>		<p>knows what I might do.</p>
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SARAH

I liked her. I don't know why, but I liked her. Probably for all the wrong reasons, probably because she seemed pseudo middle-class, white—she was more like me. But when you don't like your job and you don't like the people you work with and, quite frankly you don't like most of your clients—it feels good to find someone you like. It felt like I was making progress.

I remember my first brush with homelessness.

I was in elementary school. There was a homeless man. Staying at the Open Door Mission. He had recently replaced an addiction to drugs with an addiction to Jesus and needed somebody to take him to church. My parents volunteered.

We'd pick him up Sunday mornings—he'd get in our car, reeking of cologne and cigarette smoke, hair greased back. What I remember most clearly is the way he'd lean his head against the car window, while he talked and talked, leaving a greasy spot on the glass. I was proud of my parents for helping him out. But at the same time, I felt contaminated by his presence in the car. I felt guilty for my loathing. Wasn't he one of the "one of the least of these" I was supposed to love? But I didn't love him. And I was happy when he reverted back to drugs and life on the streets.

That's the way it's been most of the time—I know I'm supposed to love these people. Listen to me—"these people"! That I am supposed to love them as if they were Jesus—treat them as if they were Jesus. But the thing is—Jesus wouldn't use my money to buy drugs. Jesus wouldn't lie to me. I thought that if I came here I could—see the way I'm supposed to be seeing. But nothing has changed, I still . . . But Kathey—I liked her. Maybe I couldn't see her as Jesus yet, but at least I liked her.

And I need to go get her something to eat. Excuse me.

(SARAH exits. We hear the sound of a ROOSTER CROWING. LIGHTS out.
TELEPHONE ringing.)

The First and Last Annual Homeless Fashion Show

DAY II

(SARAH's office. JEREMY is sitting, waiting for SARAH. There is a large vase of flowers on the desk. We can see women outside, looking in. They are waiting for the Crisis Center to open for the day.)

(from outside)

MARY

I didn't do anything—I didn't do anything.
Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes.

GUSSIE

Shut up, Mary. You're talking to nobody.

(and from the inside)

JEREMY

Crazy women. Give 'em lobotomies—that's what they should do.

(from outside)

MARY

Oh, don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about.
Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by.
Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—that got your attention. You're trying to ignore me, but that got your attention all right.

GUSSIE

(from outside, banging on the window)

Hey. Does one of you in there want to unlock the doors and let us in? It's cold out here!

MARY

Good morning, Miss Sarah!

SARAH

Good morning, Mary.

(When JEREMY hears SARAH's voice, HE hides behind her desk.)

MARY

I gotta talk to you, Miss Sarah.

ALMEIDA

Miss Sarah—Miss Sarah—You gonna unlock the building?

SARAH

(from outside)
Aren't any of the other worker's here?

GUSSIE

Yeah—they're here, but they won't open it up.

(SARAH is unlocking the front door—the women scramble into the lobby, outside the office and offstage.)

ROBIN'S VOICE

(from the lobby outside the office)
Women, Women! Line up. You can't just all come crowding in here.
Join hands women—join hands. Now let's all pray.

GUSSIE'S VOICE

I ain't praying.

(DURING the prayer, SARAH unlocks the door to the office and enters, closing door behind her.)

	<p>ALL OF THE WOMEN</p>
<p>SARAH (seeing the flowers) What in the . . .</p>	<p>Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.</p>
<p>(JEREMY jumps up from behind the desk.)</p>	<p>Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts/trespases as we forgive our debtors/those who trespass against us.</p>
<p>JEREMY Surprise!</p>	<p>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.</p>
<p>SARAH Oh my . . .! Jeremy.</p>	<p>For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.</p>
<p>JEREMY Do you like 'em?</p>	<p>Amen.</p>
<p>SARAH Jeremy, please, please tell me you didn't buy me flowers.</p>	
<p>JEREMY I didn't buy you flowers.</p>	
<p>(SARAH waits for an explanation)</p>	

<p>SARAH Then how did these get here? (sudden hope—searching for a card) Surely they couldn't be from . ..</p> <p>JEREMY Nope. Funeral parlor brought 'em over. Donation. Some rich person died—and had too many flowers for the grave. I picked out the best boo-kay for you. (he emphasizes the first syllable of bouquet)</p> <p>SARAH Bouquet.</p> <p>JEREMY What?</p> <p>SARAH Nothing.</p> <p>JEREMY So, you like 'em?</p> <p>(Frustration. Pause.)</p> <p>SARAH Jeremy, why do you like me?</p> <p>JEREMY What? You know. 'Cause you're—you know—you're hot.</p> <p>(SARAH looks at him.)</p> <p>JEREMY (continued) What! You are. That's a compliment. That's showing you respect. Any guy say other things—like "you're so</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, you must sign up for a chore. Otherwise you won't get a breakfast ticket. We are not unlocking the cafeteria until you start volunteering for chores. This is the only home you've got, ladies, take care of it.</p> <p>(TELEPHONE ringing. It is eventually answered.)</p>	<p>MARY Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Think you can just write me off— stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo—is that what I am to you—just an animal to stare at?</p>
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<p>intelligent” and all that crap— he’s just trying to get laid.</p> <p>SARAH Wow. Thanks, Jeremy. Thanks. I’ll keep that in mind.</p> <p>JEREMY No. Don’t be like that. You know what I mean. I’m mean, I’m sure you are intelligent and all that—I’m just saying, that’s not what a guy cares about.</p> <p>SARAH Even better.</p> <p>JEREMY What—is that what your guy in Chicago tells you or something? That he “loves you because of your mind.”</p> <p>(At the mention of the guy from Chicago, SARAH becomes introspective.)</p> <p>JEREMY (continued) Anyways, I just thought you could use something to brighten up your office.</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Yeah. Thanks. Thanks for looking out for me. Getting me some funeral flowers.</p> <p>JEREMY So, I been thinking. There’s this place I wanna take you to for lunch.</p> <p>SARAH Jeremy . . .</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, we need a bathroom monitor. We can’t open the bathroom without a bathroom monitor. Would someone please volunteer to be a bathroom monitor?</p>	<p>Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That’s all I’m good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.</p> <p>You’re trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn’t hear me. Uh-huh.</p>
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<p>JEREMY Uh-uh-uh. Let me finish. You're not a Southern girl and you need to get a taste of some good Southern cookin'.</p> <p>SARAH No. Jeremy, no. Thank you for the flowers.</p> <p>JEREMY Well, maybe another day then.</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Maybe.</p> <p>JEREMY See ya' later.</p> <p>SARAH Yeah.</p> <p>(JEREMY leaves the office.)</p>		<p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of? Think I might hit you? Think I might bite you on the arm? Think I'm some kind of wild animal?</p>
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SARAH (continued)

I called him last night. Not Jeremy. Him. David. Says seminary's going well. That he misses me—but he feels that he is following the "call of God".

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Right. We used to have a name for that—"Indian giver" we called it—which I know is horribly offensive to Native Americans and I'm sorry. But I don't understand. Why God would bring him into my life—let me fall in love with him—and then—it's like a bad joke—call him to the *priesthood*? But I'm supposed to say, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Right.

(There is incessant knocking on the door.)

(to herself)

Go away.

<p>CARLA (on the intercom) Sarah? You there?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah.</p>		<p>Yeah—you better be scared. That's right. You better be shaking in your boots. Cause see these teeth? These teeth are sharp, and who knows what kind of diseases I might</p>
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<p>(on intercom) Yeah—what do you want?</p> <p>CARLA Guess who lost us the grant?</p> <p>SARAH What?</p> <p>CARLA Yeah. Judith got the message last night. Apparently they were not favorably impressed. So I'm just saying you better have some damn good ideas in the meeting today if you don't want to get this place shut down.</p> <p>SARAH What happened?</p> <p>CARLA I don't know. Maybe you can explain that to us. Hey, how many are you seeing today?</p> <p>SARAH Twenty tops. No—we've got the meeting—better make it fifteen.</p> <p>CARLA Girl, you should of said something before now. We already got you signed up for more.</p> <p>SARAH Well, stop signing them up. I'll do the best I can.</p> <p>CARLA Okay. (to workers)</p>		<p>have.</p> <p>No. I'm just playing with you. What—you think I was serious?</p> <p>No, I'm not stupid. I'm not dumb enough to not know you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.</p> <p>Even a dog knows you don't bite the hand that feeds you. And I am not a dog. I am a</p>
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<p>NO MORE FOR SARAH (and she hangs up)</p> <p>SARAH Wait, Carla . . . (to herself) You say, “goodbye” before you hang up.</p> <p>(SARAH goes to the door reaches outside to pick up the forms indicating which clients she is supposed to see for the day. On her way back to her desk, she looks at the flowers and shakes her head.)</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, we still need a bathroom monitor. We can’t unlock the bathroom until we get a bathroom monitor.</p>	<p>person. Yeah. You can’t just kick me when I’m down. I’m a person. I’ve got rights. I’ve got a soul. But you don’t like to hear that, do you? You’d rather just pretend I didn’t exist—or say I brought it on myself. Yeah—that’s right, say it. You want to say it— say it.</p>
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<p>SARAH (on loudspeaker) Chandra Daniels, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>(KNOCKING. SARAH opens the door and is greeted by an eager GUSSIE.)</p> <p>GUSSIE Hey, Miss Sarah. You finally started calling. I been waiting.</p> <p>SARAH I didn’t call you Gussie.</p> <p>GUSSIE I just need a token. To get to my parole officer.</p> <p>SARAH That was yesterday, Gussie.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Would the members of the computer class please assemble in the front lobby. Those of you signed up for the computer class, please come to the front lobby.</p>	
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<p>GUSSIE No, see, cause I didn't get to go, cause you wouldn't give me a token, so I have to go today instead.</p> <p>SARAH Okay, well, then you wait until I call you and we'll talk about it.</p> <p>GUSSIE But, see, I don't have a lot of time.</p> <p>SARAH No, Gussie.</p> <p>(SARAH closes the door on her as:)</p> <p>GUSSIE Wait, it will just take a second.</p> <p>SARAH (on loudspeaker) Chandra Daniels, please come to job counseling. This is the last call for Chandra Daniels. Chandra Daniels, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>(KNOCKING)</p> <p>(SARAH opens door. It's GUSSIE.)</p> <p>GUSSIE I don't think she's coming, so maybe you could just see me now real quick in her place, cause I think she left.</p> <p>SARAH I don't want to see you again until I call you Gussie.</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE ringing.)</p> <p>SARAH (answering phone) Atlanta Crisis Center, please hold.)</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Breakfast will be closing in fifteen minutes—if you</p>	<p>I brought it on myself—say it. I'm just a no good dirty drug addicted whore and I brought it on myself. You can't help someone like me cause who knows what I might do.</p> <p>Can't give me money cause who knows what I might do with it? I don't ask you what you do with your money.</p> <p>What do you do with your money, huh? Yeah, you better write me a list and don't leave a penny out otherwise I'm gonna think you're using it for drugs. But I'm not being fair. I can't compare you to me.</p>
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<p>(SHE shuts the door. Moves on to the next person in line.)</p>	<p>haven't had breakfast—you'd better hurry.</p>	<p>We're nothing alike, right? I brought this on myself.</p>
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<p>SARAH Kathey Thompson, please come to job counseling. Kathey Thompson, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>SARAH Hi, Kathey, come on in.</p> <p>KATHEY Thanks.</p> <p>SARAH</p>	<p>CARLA (on intercom) Sarah? Sarah?</p> <p>SARAH (on intercom) Yeah.</p> <p>CARLA Did you just call Kathey Thompson.</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Don't worry about it. I just need to order her birth certificate.</p> <p>(KNOCKING at door.)</p> <p>SARAH She's here, I've got to go.</p> <p>CARLA Well . . .</p> <p>(CARLA hangs up. SARAH answers the door. It's KATHEY.)</p>	<p>Uh-huh. I brought this on myself. I asked to not be able to get a job because I have no place to shower and I smell bad and I look bad. Who's gonna hire me, huh?</p> <p>You want to hire me? You want to give me a job? Well then don't look at me like that.</p>
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<p>How are you today?</p> <p>KATHEY Okay. You're gonna get me my birth certificate today, right?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Well, we'll order it today. It'll take a few weeks to come in.</p> <p>KATHEY A few weeks?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Did Blood and Fire work out last night?</p> <p>KATHEY I don't know. Their security isn't very good. I don't think I'm gonna go back there, because of my husband and all. Besides, they've got men there too and so I think it would be too easy for him to get in and get me.</p> <p>(Pause. SARAH is wondering if her story might be true.)</p> <p>SARAH Okay, well, what state were you born in?</p> <p>KATHEY California.</p> <p>SARAH Alright let me just get the forms.</p> <p>KATHEY</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Women, the van from Able Body Temp Services is here. If you signed up to work with Able Body Temp Services, the van is here.</p> <p>(TELEPHONE ringing. It is eventually answered.)</p>	<p>You got a job to give me? I'll take it. I'll gladly take it. Otherwise you just shut the fuck up and stop judging me—start judging yourself. Believe me—you've got plenty to judge.</p>
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<p>You know, I'm thinking maybe I should just move on to someplace else. Cause, you know, he stopped my credit card, but I didn't know that, and I tried to use it here, and so he probably knows I'm in the city. And he's probably looking for me.</p> <p>SARAH He stopped your credit card?</p>		
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<p>SARAH Oh. No they can't. Just a second, Kathey. (on intercom) Robin? Carla? Is someone there?</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Staff members—please report to the job counseling office for a meeting. Staff members—please report to job counseling for a meeting. Ladies—the front desk will be closed for the next half hour.</p> <p>VOLUNTEER (on intercom) Hello?</p> <p>SARAH Hi. Is Robin there?</p> <p>VOLUNTEER (on intercom) No. She just left.</p> <p>SARAH Okay. This is Sarah. Tell Robin or Carla that we need to push the meeting back because I'm with a client.</p> <p>CARLA (on intercom) Sarah, it's Carla. Tell your client you'll see her later.</p>	
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<p>SARAH Kathey, I'm sorry. I've got to have this meeting here. As soon as the meeting's over—</p> <p>KATHEY You'll call me?</p> <p>SARAH As soon as the meeting's over.</p> <p>KATHEY Okay. (indicating the picture) That your boyfriend?</p> <p>SARAH What? Oh. No. A good friend. That's all.</p> <p>KATHEY He never hits you, right?</p> <p>SARAH No. No.</p> <p>KATHEY Good. 'Cause you don't</p>	<p>SARAH But this is important.</p> <p>CARLA (on intercom) Yeah, and so is everything else. Get her out—you can see her later.</p> <p>SARAH I—</p> <p>CARLA (on intercom) You know I don't have time to argue with you. (and CARLA has hung up)</p>	<p>Oh, excuse my language back there. Did I offend you? Are your precious virgin ears offended? Did I use a word that made you uncomfortable? Well, please accept my humblest apologies. It's just that it's fucking hard living like this. It's fucking worse than your worst fucking nightmare.</p>
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<p>deserve that.</p> <p>SARAH Thanks, Kathey. Be sure to shut the door behind you.</p> <p>(KATHEY leaves, but she doesn't get the door all the way shut before GUSSIE worms her way in.)</p> <p>GUSSIE Excuse me. It'll just take a minute. I've just come to get that token you were gonna give me.</p> <p>SARAH Gussie, I told you not to—</p> <p>GUSSIE I know, but I've got to be there by ten.</p> <p>SARAH Gussie, you need to come up with a different lie. This one is getting old.</p> <p>GUSSIE No. No. It's the truth. You can call and see. It's the truth. And I gotta be there, cause that's what the judge said. And I gotta be there at ten cause that's when my appointment is.</p> <p>SARAH You got an appointment slip.</p> <p>GUSSIE Yeah.</p> <p>(GUSSIE hands SARAH</p>		<p>But I'm sorry. I'm supposed to be polite, aren't I? I'm supposed to say please and thank you and excuse me for living.</p> <p>Yeah, I'm talking to you. Don't pretend I'm not talking to you.</p> <p>Just walk on by. Do nothing. Do nothing. Just walk on by. Let it continue.</p>
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<p>an old, worn slip of paper.)</p> <p>SARAH Gussie, this is not today's date.</p> <p>GUSSIE Yeah, cause I couldn't go yesterday.</p> <p>SARAH But this is your parole officer's phone number?</p> <p>GUSSIE Yeah that is.</p> <p>SARAH Okay, I'll just call . . . (reaching for the phone)</p> <p>GUSSIE But she doesn't get in until ten, so if you call you aren't gonna get anybody.</p> <p>SARAH (hanging up the phone) Gussie, you listen to me. I am not as gullible as you think I am. What you need to be doing is getting yourself a job—not hanging around here seeing what you can get from us every day.</p> <p>GUSSIE Yeah, I know, and I've been trying, Miss Sarah. I've been trying. But it's hard to get a job when you've got a record. You know that's true, Miss Sarah. But I've been trying.</p> <p>SARAH Yeah, okay, Gussie.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies—the front desk will be closed for the next half hour. Staff members—please report to job counseling for a meeting.</p> <p>(Telephone ringing. This time a volunteer does eventually answer it.)</p>	<p>What was that? You say you're sorry? Uh-huh? What are you sorry for? What are you sorry for? Everybody says they're sorry. All day long everybody says they're sorry. But that's okay—just walk on by.</p>
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<p>GUSSIE If I don't get there by ten they're gonna put me in jail again.</p> <p>SARAH Alright—(Besides, I want her out of here) Fine. Okay. Here's a token. (SHE hands over a token, and writes herself a note.)</p> <p>GUSSIE Thanks.</p> <p>SARAH But this is the last time.</p> <p>GUSSIE Okay. Bye.</p> <p>SARAH This is Robin. Shut the door behind you. And Carla—</p> <p>CARLA What were you doing talking to Gussie?</p> <p>SARAH (referring to CARLA) --the B-I-T-C-H.</p> <p>ROBIN What's she even doing in here? I thought she was</p>	<p>SARAH She's right, you know. It is hard to get a job once you've been to jail.</p> <p>SARAH And although she's probably lying to me—it's possible that she's telling the truth. And if I'm supposed to look at her bloodshot eyes and see Jesus . . .</p> <p>(ROBIN enters the office for the meeting.)</p> <p>(GUSSIE leaves as CARLA enters.)</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, the front desk is closed.</p>	<p>Why are you telling me you're sorry? You want me to forgive you? You want me to tell you you're absolved?</p>
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<p>banned.</p> <p>CARLA I hope you didn't give her anything—did you?</p> <p>SARAH She said she had to get to a meeting with her parole officer.</p> <p>CARLA Uh-huh.</p> <p>ROBIN Did she show you an appointment slip?</p> <p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>CARLA Did you call to verify?</p> <p>SARAH No. I—</p> <p>ROBIN Probably forged.</p> <p>CARLA Listen, honey, I know you're trying hard—but you can't be soft with these women. And since you're new they are going to try to get stuff over on you. And—don't take this the wrong way, but—</p> <p>ROBIN —you're white.</p> <p>CARLA Exactly. And so they are going to try to play the race card.</p>		<p>Oh, I forgive you. I forgive you. Oh—so you don't like that either, huh? You don't want me to forgive you. You think you're too good to be forgiven by me, don't you? Don't you? Fine then, rot in hell. See if I care.</p> <p>I didn't do anything—I didn't do anything.</p>
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<p>SARAH Yeah.</p> <p>LINDA Hello, ladies.</p> <p>SARAH Hi, Linda.</p> <p>ROBIN Hey. Pull up a chair. (to SARAH) Couldn't you tell she was high?</p> <p>LINDA Pardon me, ladies.</p> <p>CARLA I could have told you that from a mile away.</p> <p>SARAH Her record says she's on meds for—</p> <p>CARLA Mm-hmm. Honey—I know you don't know—maybe you think that is some kind of black hair style. That ain't no hair style. That's just one nappy-headed, dirty addict you just gave a token to.</p> <p>ROBIN But we know you're trying.</p> <p>CARLA Just now you know so it won't happen again.</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. (Pause.)</p>	<p>(LINDA enters.)</p> <p>(LINDA does pull up a chair, she takes a cell phone out of her purse and checks her messages.)</p>	<p>Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes. Oh, don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about.</p>
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<p>CARLA And what was it that was so important that you wanted to cancel the meeting?</p> <p>SARAH Um. This lady. Kathey Thompson. You did her intake.</p> <p>CARLA Kathey? Yeah, I did her intake. That is one messed up lady.</p> <p>ROBIN Is she the one who . . . ?</p> <p>CARLA Uh-huh. That's her. You read what I wrote about her, didn't you.</p> <p>SARAH Actually, it's still not in the computer—yet.</p> <p>CARLA Then what are you doing seeing her? You know the rules. Plus, I told you you shouldn't be . . . There are rules for a reason. And I don't see what you think you're gonna do cause, there's no way she's getting a job anyway. Paranoid schizophrenic. She needs to</p>	<p>SARAH Many of the woman who come here are on meds—and they can have similar side effects to—other drugs. Or, simply lack of sleep can look like . . . I refuse to make assumptions based on . . .</p> <p>SARAH There are rules for a reason. Yes. I know.</p>	
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<p>see Sharon before she does anything else. What did she want with you anyway?</p> <p>SARAH Nothing. Never mind. We should start the meeting.</p> <p>LINDA Isn't Judith coming?</p> <p>ROBIN No.</p> <p>CARLA She's back there trying to figure out what to do now that the foundation people won't give us the grant.</p> <p>ROBIN Like there's anything she can do.</p> <p>SARAH What happened?</p> <p>CARLA What happened?! Were you <i>prepared</i> to talk with the foundation people?</p> <p>SARAH Yes. I had all the data from the year.</p> <p>ROBIN I know you're still new here—</p> <p>CARLA Apparently the foundation people were trying to figure out why we couldn't help a woman get to her parole meeting.</p>		<p>Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by. Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—that got your attention. You're trying to ignore me, but that got your attention all right.</p>
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<p>SARAH That was Gussie.</p> <p>CARLA I don't care who it was. When people are here from a foundation—you let them see us <i>helping</i> people. You <i>give</i> her the token.</p> <p>SARAH But you just told me that I shouldn't have given her—</p> <p>CARLA Mmm-hmm. And do you see any foundation people here now?</p> <p>ROBIN Listen, without their money, we can't help anybody. And when they come here we show them what their money can do. Did you introduce them to a client?</p> <p>SARAH They said they didn't want to . ..</p> <p>ROBIN You've got to have a client ready.</p> <p>CARLA Mmm-hmm. Somebody clean. Somebody . . . Listen, you find a nice presentable white woman who's husband beat her, and then she came here and we got her back on her feet. Either that or a former crack whore who got converted. Show them that.</p>		<p>Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Think you can just write me off—stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo—is that what I am to you—just an animal to stare at?</p>
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<p>That's what they want to see. They sure as hell don't want to be introduced to Gussie or Kathey or any of these people you waste your time on.</p> <p>LINDA There's that nice lady who's house burned down and her insurance had lapsed.</p> <p>ROBIN Exactly. She would have been perfect to show to them.</p> <p>SARAH I asked them if they wanted to meet somebody. They said no.</p> <p>CARLA You don't <i>ask</i> them.</p> <p>LINDA She was trying to do her best.</p> <p>ROBIN Well, anyway. We've got one more group—they're coming for the fashion show—and ladies, we cannot lose this one.</p> <p>LINDA Which foundation is this?</p> <p>CARLA It's the Brave's wives.</p> <p>LINDA That's right. That's right. They donated our Thanksgiving meal last year.</p> <p>ROBIN Exactly—and they sponsored</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE ringing. It's eventually answered.)</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Kathey Thompson—there is a call for you at the front desk. Kathey Thompson, a telephone call for you at the front desk.</p>	<p>Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That's all I'm good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.</p> <p>You're trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn't hear me. Uh-huh.</p>
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<p>the kids going to baseball camp. So Judith thinks we have a good chance with this one.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CARLA</p> <p>And these women have more money than God—so we do not want to lose them.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ROBIN</p> <p>We want to show them a good time when they come. Highlight all our programs here.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LINDA</p> <p>Maybe we could start the fashion show with one of our computer class graduations.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ROBIN</p> <p>That's a good idea.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CARLA</p> <p>How many people are in the class right now?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SARAH</p> <p>Seven.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CARLA</p> <p>You got the list?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SARAH</p> <p>(Retrieving the list.) Yeah, just a . . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ROBIN</p> <p>And maybe we could have some of the women tell their stories.</p> <p>(SARAH gives the list to CARLA.)</p>	<p>(We hear some commotion from the hallway outside the office.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KATHEY'S VOICE</p> <p>Don't tell him I'm here. You can't tell him I'm here. You can't tell anyone I'm here.</p> <p>(KNOCKING at the door.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">KATHEY</p> <p>(from outside the door) Sarah? Sarah?</p> <p>(SARAH hears, but does</p>	<p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of?</p> <p>Think I might hit you? Think I might bite you on the arm? Think I'm some kind of wild animal?</p>
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<p>CARLA Oh, no. This won't do. Why did you let Mrs. Donna-Mae sign up for the computer class?</p> <p>ROBIN Mrs. Donna-Mae is in computer class!</p> <p>LINDA Oh, my!</p> <p>ROBIN What is she going to learn?</p> <p>SARAH She might . . . She's not stupid.</p> <p>CARLA We need to organize this thing so that it shows off our facility. Linda—weren't you going to get one of your friends to come in and do manicures for the ladies?</p> <p>(The TELEPHONE is ringing.)</p> <p>LINDA That's right. I thought it would be good for the women's self esteem.</p> <p>ROBIN That's a great idea.</p> <p>SARAH Manicures?</p> <p>CARLA Uh-huh. That's the kind of thing people want to see. Something nice.</p>	<p>not respond.)</p> <p>(KNOCKING.)</p>	<p>Yeah—you better be scared. That's right. You better be shaking in your boots.</p> <p>See these teeth? These teeth are sharp, and who knows what kind of diseases I might have.</p> <p>No. I'm just playing with you.</p>
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<p>(into loudspeaker) Volunteers, get the phones. (back to the meeting) We can schedule that right before the fashion show. They can see it during their tour.</p> <p>LINDA I just know that when I need to feel good about myself, there's nothing like getting a manicure. And if these women could just feel good about themselves . . .</p> <p>ROBIN Exactly. If you have low self esteem how are you gonna be able to do anything?</p> <p>SARAH We're giving our clients manicures?</p> <p>CARLA Do you have a problem with that?</p> <p>SARAH No. No. I don't. I'm sorry. I've just got over twenty women waiting to talk to me, and I'm wondering how long this meeting is going to take.</p> <p>(Pause.)</p> <p>CARLA I don't know if you noticed this—but we are talking about the future of this center. If we don't get the Braves' wives as our sponsor you won't have any clients to see. Because we won't exist anymore.</p>		<p>What—you think I was serious?</p>
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<p>(pause)</p> <p>ROBIN Okay. We all agree the manicures is an excellent idea. Now for the clothes—are we sure we have enough nice clothes in the clothes closet to dress them up in? We don't want them looking like they do when they come in here.</p> <p>SARAH (to herself) Dress them up?</p> <p>CARLA Uh-huh. We're good. We got that donation of left-over prom dresses from Von Maur's.</p> <p>ROBIN I hope they sent over their hefty sizes.</p> <p>(TELEPHONE ringing.)</p> <p>LINDA Sarah, what are your thoughts?</p>		<p>No, I'm not stupid. I'm not dumb enough to not know you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.</p>
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SARAH

What are my thoughts? My thoughts are: that a fashion show for homeless women would be irrelevant at best, and more likely, not only irrelevant, but demeaning.

<p>LINDA Sarah?</p> <p>SARAH It's fine. It all sounds good.</p> <p>CARLA We can use it as a reward—</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE ringing.)</p> <p>SARAH (on telephone) Hello, Atlanta Crisis Center, please hold.</p>	<p>Even a dog knows you don't bite the hand that feeds you. And I am not a dog. I am a</p>
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<p>show? And you could, you could introduce each lady—say some things about the Center.</p> <p>ROBIN You could write a little something . . .</p> <p>CARLA Yeah. Why not?</p> <p>(THEY all look to SARAH.)</p> <p>SARAH Okay.</p> <p>CARLA Okay, then.</p> <p>(EVERYONE stands.)</p> <p>ROBIN I'll go.</p> <p>CARLA That's great. Just announce there are police in the building. That's gonna cause these women to panic.</p> <p>LINDA What happened? I've got to go check my . . .</p> <p>(ALL but SARAH exit.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Um . . . Hello. We have an incident, and need, um . . . if a staff member could come to the front desk—we have some officers here who need to talk to someone. So . . . I . . . um, if a staff member could come to the front desk. Please. Thank you.</p>	<p>I brought it on myself—say it.</p> <p>I brought it on myself—say it.</p>
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<p>SARAH sits in a sort of daze for a moment of silence, then rouses herself.)</p> <p>SARAH I guess the meeting's over.</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Attention ladies. No, I'm gonna announce it. If you could. What? I'm on? (pause) Sorry about that. Attention ladies. We have a picture of a woman who was found dead under the overpass on Ponce. The police need help in identifying who she was. Please if any of the ladies who live under that overpass could come and see if they can identify the body. Ladies, please, we will post the picture at the front desk. The police need assistance in identifying the body. Please come to the front desk.</p>	
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<p>(SARAH is moving in a kind of trance. SHE doesn't know what else to do but keep seeing clients. SHE looks at the slip of paper with KATHEY's name on it.)</p> <p>SARAH I don't care. They can . . .</p> <p>SARAH (on intercom) Kathey Thompson, please come to job counseling.</p>		<p>I'm just a no good dirty drug addicted whore and I brought it on myself. You can't help someone like me cause who knows what I might do.</p>
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<p>Kathey Thompson, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>(There is no response. SARAH waits for a moment and then begins inputting forms into the computer. SHE continues to work this way for some time. Then:)</p> <p>SARAH (continued) Kathey Thompson, please come to job counseling. Kathey Thompson.</p> <p>(There is a knock on the door. SARAH goes to open it. It's ALMEIDA.)</p> <p>ALMEIDA Miss Sarah--Kathey left.</p> <p>SARAH What?</p> <p>ALMEIDA Kathey--you just called her. She left. There was a phone call from some guy looking for her and she got real nervous like and left.</p> <p>SARAH Some guy was looking for her?</p> <p>ALMEIDA On the phone, yeah. Some man. And so she left real quick like.</p> <p>SARAH Thank you, Almeida.</p> <p>ALMEIDA</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE ringing.)</p> <p>(TELEPHONE stops.)</p>	<p>Can't give me money cause who knows what I might do with it? I don't ask you what you do with your money. What do you do with your money, huh? Yeah, you better write me a list and don't leave a penny out otherwise I'm gonna think you're using it for drugs.</p>
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<p>You ready to see me yet, Miss Sarah?</p> <p>SARAH What number are you?</p> <p>ALMEIDA Twenty-three.</p> <p>SARAH No. No. Not yet, Almeida.</p> <p>(SARAH closes the door. SHE is alone in her office with “What have I done?” all over her face. But what is there to do but keep seeing clients?)</p> <p>SARAH (over the loudspeaker) Mrs. Donna-Mae Conger, please come to the job counseling office. Mrs. Donna-Mae Conger, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>(Almost immediately we hear a frantic KNOCKING at the door that doesn’t stop until SARAH opens the door. DONNA-MAE is there.</p> <p>SARAH Come on in.</p> <p>(DONNA-MAE enters and locks the door behind her immediately. SHE may also set up some sort of barricade.)</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Honey, listen to me—you</p>		<p>But I’m not being fair. I can’t compare you to me. We’re nothing alike, right? I brought this on myself. I asked for this. I asked to lose my job. I asked to lose my house. I asked to live on the streets.</p> <p>Uh-huh. I brought this on myself. I asked to not be able to get a job because I have no place to shower and I smell bad and I look bad. Who’s gonna hire me, huh?</p>
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<p>can't call my name like that over a public address system. You've got to just come out and find me, okay? Okay. Because I am in a sensitive situation. I can't have a lot of people knowing where I am.</p> <p>SARAH Why's that, Donna?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Well—you have to understand that if this information got into the wrong hands my son could be in danger. As I have told you, my son is being held as a political prisoner by the Clinton administration.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE They took him away from me, and they're trying to claim that he had a black father—which is a lie. My ex-husband was black, but he is not my son's father. And he has no right to say he is. He is just trying to sabotage me, because I'm white. But I had my son by my father's sperm bank, and my father was a PhD, same as I am, so that of course was an advantage to my son—but they're trying to tell him I'm crazy—and that's a lie. My SSI / SSA disability is physical therapy disability that is massage therapy for circulation.</p> <p>SARAH Donna, listen to me. I'm a job counselor. Are you planning</p>	<p>(On the LOUDSPEAKER we hear CLINTON'S VOICE, as always, DONNA keeps talking on top of the LOUDSPEAKER.)</p> <p>CLINTON'S VOICE Fellow, Americans, I just want to say that I categorically deny these allegations. Look at this woman. She's insane.</p> <p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, we need a bathroom monitor right away. Would someone please volunteer to be a bathroom monitor.</p>	<p>You want to hire me? You want to give me a job? Well then don't look at me like that. You got a job to give me? I'll take it. I'll gladly take it. Otherwise you just shut the fuck up and stop judging me—start judging yourself. Believe me—you've got plenty to judge.</p>
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<p>on getting a job?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Yeah—I would like to get a job, I certainly would.</p> <p>SARAH You think you could handle a job, with your disability?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE I think I’m gonna have to—because I’m gonna need to hire a lawyer to try to get my son back.</p> <p>SARAH Okay Donna—you know that if you want to get a job you’re gonna have to get an ID.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You don’t have anything that would be under the table?</p> <p>SARAH No. Donna—nothing’s gonna get better for you until you get an ID.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE I cannot do that. It’s the mark of the beast. I don’t mean to speak against you—but this was all clearly prophesied and I cannot take upon myself the mark of the beast.</p> <p>SARAH You know, Donna, there’s a counselor here who could help you a lot better than I can.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You’re talking about Sharon Norris, aren’t you.</p>	<p>(TELEPHONE is ringing.)</p> <p>(TELEPHONE stops.)</p>	<p>Oh, excuse my language back there. Did I offend you? Are your precious virgin ears offended? Did I use a word that made you uncomfortable? Well, please accept my humblest apologies. It’s just that it’s fucking hard living like this. It’s fucking worse than your worst fucking nightmare.</p>
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<p>SARAH Yes.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE No. No. No. I'm not going to her. She sees crazy people.</p> <p>SARAH She does work with mentally ill clients, but she also has many contacts that are helpful for people with any kind of disability. Many of the women she works with are on SSI, so she knows the resources that are available to SSI recipients. You really ought to see her. I think she could help you.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE No. I cannot afford people thinking I could be crazy. Because I am not. I have a PhD.</p> <p>SARAH From where?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Emory University.</p> <p>SARAH In what?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Educational administration. I worked for the board of education in Atlanta for fifteen years.</p> <p>SARAH Okay—no, Donna. Listen, I cannot keep playing this game with you. The reason you</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKERS Ladies. Please. We need a bathroom monitor. Would someone please . . . never mind. We have one.</p>	<p>But I'm sorry. I'm supposed to be polite, aren't I? I'm supposed to say please and thank you and excuse me for living.</p> <p>Yeah, I'm talking to you. Don't pretend I'm not talking to you.</p>
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<p>have been homeless for over twenty years, the reason your son was taken away from you is because you are mentally ill.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE That's a lie. I get SSI for a physical disability. You can call my doctor. I go to Northside Hospital. My doctor is Doctor Larry Kotov-Eppelbaum. He's been my doctor for the past five years. You can call him. Larry is for Lawrence. Call up and ask for Larry or Lawrence. Dr. Lawrence Edward Kotov-Eppelbaum.</p> <p>SARAH I don't need to call, Donna.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Somebody has been lying to you. Now I don't blame you, because you don't know any better. But you can't listen to what other people tell you about me.</p> <p>SARAH I don't need to listen to anyone. I can tell you're mentally ill just by talking with you. You have major profound mental illness and you need to realize that.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE I do not.</p> <p>(DONNA gets in SARAH's face.)</p> <p>SARAH Get out of my face.</p>	<p>(DR. LARRY'S VOICE comes on over the loudspeaker, SARAH and DONNA speak over him.)</p> <p>DR. LARRY Yes. Yes, she is my patient. She has been my patient for the past five years—and during that time she has attempted to seduce me on a number of different occasions.</p>	<p>Just walk on by. Do nothing. Do nothing. Just walk on by. Let it continue.</p> <p>What was that? You say you're sorry? Uh-huh? What are you sorry for? What are you sorry for? Everybody says they're sorry. All day long everybody says they're sorry. But that's okay—just walk on by.</p> <p>Why are you telling me you're sorry? You want me to forgive you? You want me to tell you you're absolved? Oh, I forgive you. I forgive you. Oh—so you don't like that either, huh? You don't want me to forgive you. You think you're too good to be forgiven by me, don't you? Don't you? Fine then, rot in</p>
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<p>(DONNA takes SARAH by the throat and pushes her back.)</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You're on their side aren't you. I thought that because you were white, you could see through their lies.</p> <p>(SARAH is trying to reach for the telephone to get help.)</p> <p>SARAH Get off of me!!</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You know where they've got my son—don't you. You're keeping him away from me.</p> <p>SARAH No! No! (SARAH gets ahold of the phone.) SECURITY! (DONNA-MAE knocks the phone out of her hand.)</p> <p>(There is no response to SARAH'S cry for help. DONNA-MAE slowly removes her hand from SARAH'S neck. The two women stare at one another in silence. A long beat. Then, finally:)</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. You're gonna have to leave now.</p> <p>(Silence. The women</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, if you haven't done your chores yet, you better start getting them done. This is your home ladies. Let's keep it clean.</p>	<p>hell. See if I care. I didn't do anything— I didn't do anything. Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes. Oh, don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about.</p>
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<p>keep staring at one another. CARLA unlocks the door and comes bustling in, carrying forms.)</p> <p>CARLA Sarah—do you have . . . Donna. What are you doing here? I told you if you refused to sign in you would be banned.</p> <p>SARAH (is this to the audience or to CARLA? We shouldn't be sure.) She can't sign in. She's paranoid. That's part of her illness.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE (to CARLA) Don't talk to me. You're not my case worker.</p> <p>CARLA Don't you tell me who I can talk to! What do you think you're doing back here? You think you're gonna get a job, Donna?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE If you don't mind—I'm trying to talk to my case worker.</p> <p>CARLA She's not your case worker. Sarah, you've got to be firm with these women.</p> <p>SARAH I'm fine.</p> <p>CARLA</p>		<p>Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by.</p> <p>Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—that got your attention. You're trying to ignore me, but that got your attention all right.</p> <p>Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you can forget about me? Think you can just write me off—stare at me like I was an animal in the zoo—is that what I am to you—just an animal to stare at?</p>
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<p>Now you get your stuff and get out of here.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE I know you. You just want to help your own kind.</p> <p>CARLA What do you mean by that?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE All you black women stick together.</p> <p>CARLA Now don't you tell me you're disrespecting me.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE All you "gals" hang together.</p> <p>CARLA That's it—that's it. Get out of here now.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE See—see—I told you. I'm discriminated against because I'm white. (to CARLA) Black bitch.</p> <p>CARLA No—no—that is enough. You cannot talk to me that way. Take it back. I want you to apologize and I want you to apologize right now or else I'm banning your sorry ass for life.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You can't do that. My caseworker won't let you. She understands me.</p>		<p>Oooh, should I make a funny face for you? That's all I'm good for, huh, an animal in a zoo.</p> <p>You're trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn't hear me. Uh-huh.</p>
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<p>SARAH It's okay, Carla. I'll deal with her. Just let me deal with her.</p> <p>CARLA It's okay! Didn't you just hear her dirty racist ass?</p> <p>SARAH Carla. I said I've got it.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Nigger cunt.</p> <p>CARLA Listen to that!</p> <p>SARAH Carla. Leave.</p> <p>CARLA Leave!</p> <p>SARAH Just get out of my office and let me talk with my client.</p> <p>CARLA Fine. I'm gone. Fine.</p> <p>(SHE leaves.)</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Call each other sister. Black mafia, that's what it is.</p> <p>SARAH Donna?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You see what I mean, don't you. They're all against me. That's why they kicked me out of the shelter.</p> <p>SARAH</p>		<p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of? Think I might hit you? Think I might bite you on the arm? Think I'm some kind of wild animal?</p> <p>Yeah—you better be scared. That's right. You better be shaking in your boots. Cause see these teeth? These teeth are sharp, and who knows what kind of diseases I might have.</p> <p>No. I'm just playing with you. What—you think I was serious?</p>
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<p>Okay, Donna. Listen to me. (SARAH is keeping one hand on the telephone, just in case DONNA-MAE gets violent.) I want to help you. I don't know why I want to help you, but I do. But if you EVER threaten me again—I will make sure that you are banned from this Center for life. Do you understand?</p> <p>DONNA-MAE I knew you'd help me—because you're white, like me. We understand each other.</p> <p>SARAH I am not helping you because I'm white! I'm helping you because . . . Listen, I can't get you into a shelter unless you have an ID. I'm gonna get you another blanket, but if it gets too cold—go to Grady hospital.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE No. Last time I was there, they tried to put me on the thirteenth floor. That's where they put the crazy people. On the thirteenth floor. Somebody's been telling lies about me there.</p> <p>SARAH Okay. Okay. Listen, I'm gonna make some phone calls, and I'll see what I can do for you.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE You're gonna help me get my son back.</p>		<p>No, I'm not stupid. I'm not dumb enough to not know you don't bite the hand that feeds you. You don't bite the hand that feeds you.</p> <p>Even a dog knows you don't bite the hand that feeds you. And I am not a dog. I am a</p>
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<p>SARAH Sure. I'm gonna help you get your son back.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Can you write that down for me—can you write down that you're my case worker, and you're helping me get my son back?</p> <p>(SARAH looks at DONNA-MAE—trying to figure out how to get her out of the office. Finally she takes one of her business cards and writes something on the back of it.)</p> <p>SARAH (giving it to DONNA) Here. If anyone has questions they can call me.</p> <p>DONNA-MAE Thank you.</p> <p>(DONNA-MAE gathers up her things and leaves abruptly. SARAH is alone in her office. SHE is clearly shaken by her encounter with DONNA-MAE. SHE rubs her neck. SARAH is near tears, but tries to compose herself. After a moment, JEREMY enters with a couple of rat traps.)</p> <p>JEREMY Hey beautiful, did you miss me?</p>		<p>person. Yeah. You can't just kick me when I'm down. I'm a person. I've got rights. I've got a soul. But you don't like to hear that, do you? You'd rather just pretend I didn't exist—or say I brought it on myself. Yeah—that's right, say it. You want to say it—say it.</p> <p>I brought it on myself—say it. I'm just a no good dirty drug addicted whore and I brought it on myself. You can't help someone like me cause who knows what I might do.</p>
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<p>(SARAH looks at him, breaks. Begins crying.)</p> <p>JEREMY (continued) Wow. Wow. You okay? Here--give me a hug. Come here. Come here.</p> <p>(SARAH hugs him, crying. After several beats, she pulls away.)</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. I'm just . . . I'm sorry. Please don't get any-- ideas.</p> <p>JEREMY Hey--no. Come on.</p> <p>(HE brushes her hair out of her face. This starts her on a fresh wave of tears.)</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. I don't know why . . .</p> <p>JEREMY It's okay. Shh . . . It's okay.</p> <p>(HE kisses the top of her head, then her forehead, her cheek, making his move. SARAH finally pulls herself out of her misery enough to realize what's going on--and SHE tries to pull away.)</p> <p>SARAH No. No. Jeremy. Jeremy!</p> <p>(HE keeps a hold of her.)</p> <p>JEREMY</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Attention, Ladies. Mercy Mobile is here for all ladies needing gynecological exams. Ladies if you need a pap test, please come to the cafeteria where Mercy Mobile will be giving gynecological exams.</p>	<p>Can't give me money cause who knows what I might do with it? I don't ask you what you do with your money.</p>
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<p>(innocently) What? Baby . . .</p> <p>SARAH Don't . . . Do you even . . . Just--no.</p> <p>JEREMY Come on. Relax.</p> <p>SARAH Relax.</p> <p>JEREMY Baby, it's okay. Jeremy's here.</p> <p>SARAH Just—let go of me!</p> <p>(HE is trying to kiss her. SHE is getting frightened, panicked.)</p> <p>JEREMY No. It's okay. What's wrong? What's wrong?</p> <p>SARAH Nothing. I just . . . Let me go!</p> <p>(He releases her.)</p> <p>JEREMY Alright. Alright. Are you okay?</p> <p>SARAH I'm fine. Could you just— Go.</p> <p>JEREMY (reaching out and touching her face) If this is fine, I hate to see</p>		<p>What do you do with your money, huh? Yeah, you better write me a list and don't leave a penny out otherwise I'm gonna think you're using it for drugs.</p> <p>But I'm not being fair. I can't compare you to me. We're nothing alike, right?</p>
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<p>what bad looks like.</p> <p>(SARAH smiles in spite of herself.)</p> <p>JEREMY (continued) There you go. There she is.</p> <p>SARAH I'm not gonna sleep with you, Jeremy.</p> <p>JEREMY And that's what you're crying about?</p> <p>SARAH No! I . . . I just—wanna be left alone. It's been a hard day is all.</p> <p>JEREMY You wanna talk about it?</p> <p>SARAH No. They're calling you. You should go.</p> <p>JEREMY Let 'em wait.</p> <p>SARAH I'm fine. Go. Go.</p> <p>JEREMY Okay. Okay, then. Give me a hug before I go. (he embraces her) That's the girl I know. Take care.</p> <p>SARAH I will.</p> <p>(JEREMY leaves.)</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER We need a security guard at the loading dock. Could the security guard please come to the loading dock?</p>	<p>I brought this on myself. I asked for this. I asked to lose my job. I asked to lose my house. I asked to live on the streets.</p> <p>Uh-huh. I brought this on myself. I asked to not be able to get a job because I have no place to shower and I smell</p>
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<p>(SARAH lets out a huge sigh. SHE finds a tissue and blows her nose. Wipes her face with her hands. She gets a pocket mirror out of her desk and looks at her face. Gets out a make-up bag and applies some powder. Then turns back to her list of names to call for the day. There is incessant knocking at the door. SARAH open the door. It's ALMEIDA.)</p> <p>SARAH Yeah? Almeida, I told you, I've still got a bunch of people to see before I see you.</p> <p>ALMEIDA No. I know. I thought you should see this.</p> <p>SARAH What is it?</p> <p>ALMEIDA It's a picture the police brought over. For identification.</p> <p>SARAH Oh my God.</p> <p>ALMEIDA It's Kathey.</p> <p>SARAH Oh my God. Thank you Almeida.</p>		<p>bad and I look bad. Who's gonna hire me, huh?</p> <p>You want to hire me? You want to give me a job? Well then don't look at me like that. You got a job to give me? I'll take it. I'll gladly take it. Otherwise you just shut the fuck up and stop judging me—start judging yourself. Believe me—you've got plenty to judge.</p>
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<p>ALMEIDA</p> <p>Sure.</p> <p>(SARAH shuts the door behind ALMEIDA. SHE holds the picture, can't believe what she's seeing.)</p> <p>(LIGHTS fade on SARAH as they rise on MARY.)</p>	<p>LINDA (on intercom) Sarah? Sarah?</p> <p>LINDA (on intercom) Sarah, it's Linda. Listen, can we get the key to the clothing closet? We're gonna start pulling clothes for the fashion show.</p>	
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MARY

Oh, excuse my language back there. Did I offend you? Are your precious virgin ears offended? Well, please accept my humblest apologies. It's just that it's fucking hard living like this. But I'm sorry. I'm supposed to be polite, aren't I? I'm supposed to say please and thank you and excuse me for living. Yeah, I'm talking to you. Don't pretend I'm not talking to you. Just walk on by. Do nothing. Let it continue. What was that? You say you're sorry? Uh-huh? What are you sorry for? Everybody says they're sorry. All day long everybody says they're sorry. But that's okay—just walk on by. Why are you telling me you're sorry? You want me to forgive you? You want me to tell you you're absolved? Oh, I forgive you. I forgive you. Oh—so you don't like that either, huh? You don't want me to forgive you. You think you're too good to be forgiven by me, don't you? Don't you? Fine then, rot in hell. See if I care.

The First and Last Annual Homeless Fashion Show

DAY III

(A homeless fashion show, held in the main room of the Atlanta Women’s Crisis Center. The actual audience serves as the fashion show audience. This audience is composed of wives of the Atlanta Braves baseball team, and other prestigious (i.e. “rich”) women from the community. SARAH speaks into a microphone, referring, at first, to a script. A stage area has been fashioned with what’s available—perhaps there is a curtain the models can make their entrance from, a few plastic plants rearranged.)

(SARAH comes to the stage area, picks up the microphone. We hear piercing feedback, that other workers quickly fix.)

SARAH

Sorry about that.

Welcome, ladies, to the first annual Homeless Fashion Show here at the Atlanta Women’s Crisis Center. Thank you so much for making time in your busy schedules to come out here and be with us this afternoon. And I’d like us all to give a special welcome to the wives of the Atlanta Braves who have made this event possible. Thank you Braves wives for your generous support of our Crisis Center.

We are just so proud of all the accomplishments our women have made over the past year.

(Are the kids ready? Okay. How much longer? Okay, hurry.)

First up, today we have a special treat. Some of our children will be modeling our children’s fashions. I just want to remind those of you in the audience that children’s clothes are an ideal donation to the Center.

(Ready?)

Our children’s department here at the Center is run by Robin. She’s the one trying to get the kids lined up. Everyone say hello to Robin.

All right. It looks like we’re ready. And here, modeling the children’s fashions are, in alphabetical order: Lakisha, Larissa, Lashonda, Latasha, Latisha, Latonya, Latoya, Lawanda,

Nakia, Natasha, Sabrina, Selena, Serena, Shanika, Tamara, Tameka, Tanisha, Tawana, Teresa, Vanessa, and Yolanda.

(That's right come on out. No, no, don't hit each other. Okay. Turn around. Okay.) Don't they look lovely, folks. All right now, go back to Miss Robin. A hand for our children.

And now for our adult fashions. All of the clothes shown today have been pulled from our clothes closet here at the Center. Selections were made by members of the Atlanta Women's Club, and make-up was provided by students at Emory University's fashion program. Each of the models is a client here at the Crisis Center.

First up, we have Almeida, wearing a causal summer sun dress, perfect for picnics or lounging at the beach. And congratulations to Almeida who has just successfully completed our beginning computer class offered here at the Center. Our Center offers both beginning and intermediate computer classes taught by Linda—Linda, would you wave your hand. Yes. With the skills our clients learn in Linda's classes they are able to obtain higher paying jobs.

This opulent evening dress, modeled by Janelle, is reminiscent of the 80's, featuring puffed sleeves and an audacious décolletage. Janelle has lost 30 pounds in just three months since beginning our Nutrition and You program here at the shelter. Way to go Janelle.

Stephanie's newly acquired Muslim faith is reflected in her ensemble. In absence of an available burka, the ladies of the Atlanta Women's club have been very resourceful, using an altered t-shirt as a head covering, and a donated sheet worn over a turtleneck sweater.

Next we have Gussie, wearing a off the shoulder burgundy evening gown. Notice the

long, elegant line of the gown. And congratulations to Gussie who has just reached the month long mark in our Alcoholics Anonymous program, which meets here at the Center every Tuesday and Thursday morning. Within the next few months we're hoping to establish a chapter of Narcotics Anonymous as well. Hopefully Gussie will have as much success there as she has had in Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you Gussie.

Chandra's ensemble is all about the essentials. A no-nonsense, sleek, black, mid-calf skirt, combined with a utilitarian grey turtleneck sweater. A turtleneck is effective for covering cut marks, rope marks, or bruises on the throat area. And I'd like you to pay special attention to the lovely makeup job which beautifully conceals not only one, but two black eyes. Here at the Center, we provide concealer makeup to all our abused clients.

Maria is modeling a retro number, complete with veil. This pulls attention upward, away from the bruises on her leg and her broken teeth. Since Maria has come to the center we have helped her get on a waiting list for cosmetic dental work. With any luck Maria will have a new set of teeth in just five short years. And we all know how important it is to have teeth when one goes on an interview.

Next is Pamela, in a lovely maternity cocktail dress. This will be Pamela's fifth child that is born already addicted to crack. But thanks to intervention programs here at the Center, we have managed to persuade her not to have an abortion.

Natonya is wearing our next selection. A sexy, little number, which should be effective in helping her attract clients. Thanks to our condom distribution program here at the Center, Natonya has a significantly lower chance of passing on her HIV infection to her clients.

(LINDA clears her throat, a warning, to SARAH.)

LINDA
(whispering and motioning to follow the script.)
Sarah!

CARLA
What does she think she's doing?

ROBIN
Shhh. It's okay.

CARLA
Mmm-Hmm.
(LINDA laughs, nervously.)

ROBIN
Should I . . . ?

CARLA
She is not going to make us lose these donations.

(ROBIN claps, stops.)

CARLA
No. This is not okay.

Oh. Did I just violate a confidentiality rule?
I'm sorry. Natonya, I'm sorry. We'll be happy to match you up with a pro-bono attorney if you would like to sue me, but unfortunately the waiting line for free legal representation is long, and you'll probably be dead first. Pro-bono legal services—just another service we provide here at the Atlanta Women's Crisis Center.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'll stick to the script. I'm sorry, Natonya, that was really out of line on my part. I don't know why I—I'll stick to the script.

Okay. Next up is Donna-Mae. Donna-Mae is one of my favorite clients because nobody pretends that her life is going to get any better. Donna-Mae has been homeless for over twenty years. She fried her brain on crack cocaine, is psychotic, and a raging racist. Donna-Mae has been kicked out of every shelter in town. We fully expect to hear some day that she has frozen to death. In the meantime, she looks ravishing in the subtle tones of this versatile combo. With the jacket, it's a perfect business outfit, remove the jacket, and it becomes an elegant evening outfit.

SARAH

Oh, look at this. Ladies, this is Linda. She volunteers here at the shelter too. Notice the expensive yet carefully unpretentious ensemble she wears. Let me assure you this is not what she wears when she and her husband are on a cruise or vacationing in Greece. Ladies, Linda is a rich white women who spends one day each week at the Center to try to rid herself of some of the guilt she has from the gluttonous, self-centered lives she leads. It makes her feel good to help the less-fortunate. Less-fortunate, my foot—if her husband's company didn't practice racist hiring practices and refuse to pay his workers a living wage, maybe "these women" would be a little less less-fortunate.

(LINDA laughs, nervously.)

(LINDA, CARLA, and ROBIN, cough, gesture, try to get SARAH's attention.)

(LINDA comes up to SARAH and tries to get her to give up the microphone. Her lines are hushed, trying to be diplomatic.)

LINDA

Sarah, why don't I continue from here?

Come on, you're tired. Just give me the microphone.

Sarah.

Sarah, that's enough.

Give me the microphone.

Come on, you don't want to cause a scene. Now just give me the microphone. Sarah, please. Be reasonable.

<p>What was that, I'm not sure I heard you. Did you say to give you the microphone? Why would you want that. I thought I was assigned to do this part of the fashion show.</p> <p>It's not funny. She says it's not funny. Well, ladies the intention was not to be funny. It was to show you all some high fashion. To boost self esteem. Right, Linda?</p> <p>Oh—so now you're going to threaten me. Is that the idea? How are you going to threaten me? Huh? Huh? Are you going to fire me? I don't think so. I'm the only one on staff who knows how to operate the computers—no, no, wait—I'm the only one who knows how to type using all ten fingers. And without me, good luck trying to remember that the Social Security office has moved or, or how to work the fax machine—or how to make, oohh, double-sided copies on the copy machine. So what are you going to do? Cut my salary? Whoops. I don't have a salary. I'm a full time volunteer. You can't take anything away from me. So maybe you should just let me talk. Uh-huh.</p> <p>All of you came here, ready to empty your coordinating pocketbooks to help the less fortunate. That's good. I applaud you. It is good for your soul to give. But let's stop pretending that more than maybe two percent of the women that come through our doors are truly "helped" in any lasting way by the services we provide.</p> <p>You know, quite frankly, I question if we help anyone at all. Maybe what we're really doing is fucking up their lives even more—and feeling good about it in the process.</p> <p>You came out here today to see some homeless women and feel "socially concerned". Okay, then. Let me introduce you to the people you think you're helping.</p> <p>These, my friends, are the un-deserving poor. Give them money, and they'll use it to buy drugs. Get them into a drug treatment</p>	<p>(The next model who is scheduled to come out is peeking through the curtain, trying to figure out what is going on.)</p> <p>LINDA This isn't funny. I don't know what you think you're trying to do.</p> <p>Sarah, I'm warning you.</p> <p>Sarah.</p> <p>(Several of the models come out to watch the show.)</p> <p>ALMEIDA You tell 'em, Miss Sarah.</p> <p>LINDA Sarah.</p> <p>(One of the models starts applauding, they are laughing, enjoying the fun.)</p> <p>LINDA Sarah, you're not thinking rationally. You're stressed. Come on.</p> <p>CARLA I don't know who she thinks she's talking to.</p> <p>ROBIN Sarah, please. They don't want to hear this.</p> <p>ROBIN I can't believe this.</p> <p>GUSSIE</p>
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program, and they'll become dealers for all the other addicts in the program. Give them a house, and they'll be homeless again within six months.

THESE WOMEN ARE HUMAN BEINGS, AND AS SUCH THEY HAVE VALUE. BUT ALL THE VALUE THEY HAVE IS INTRINSIC. NONE OF IT IS EARNED.

Oh, but I'm being much too general, aren't I. Some of the women that come to us aren't like that. Some of them really could be benefited by our "help." And do you know what we do for these women? Do you? This is what we do. We spend our time and your money having a fashion show so we can ignore their needs and make them wait and wait and wait until they give up or are killed. That's what we do.

(SARAH pulls out the picture of KATHEY.)

This is Kathey Thompson. You probably can't see this picture—so let me pass it around.

Kathey was a beautiful woman when she came to our center earlier this week, asking for help—of course you probably can't tell that from the picture, can you? That's because that picture was taken after Kathey's husband found her and beat her to death in the parking lot outside—just where all your cars are parked today. He found her in that parking lot and killed her by beating her to death with a brick in a sock. That's why her face is all bloody. Then he dragged her body under the overpass out there.

Now Kathey came here asking for help because she was afraid this very thing would happen. And what did we do? We told her she was a paranoid schizophrenic. And when her husband called here looking for her, we told him she was here. Come and get her. And I refuse to be a part of this charade any longer.

(SARAH leaves the stage.)

Nuh-uh. That is not true. She's saying lies.

(CARLA, or another worker, unplugs the microphone. SARAH just talks louder.)

LINDA

Sarah . . .

(to the audience)

Ladies, I'm sorry about this. I apologize.

ALMEIDA

Ooo. Girl, she is gonna be in trouble.

(LINDA goes down and confers with ROBIN and CARLA.)

LINDA

(to audience)

I don't know why she's doing this. I apologize.

GUSSIE

What's wrong with her?

(The final ROOSTER CROW.)

	<p>(LINDA comes to the microphone.)</p> <p>LINDA</p> <p>I'm sorry about that ladies. I'm sorry. (Go ahead and get back in line.) I'm sorry you had to see that. Of course all of us here at the center are devastated about Kathey's death. This can be a stressful job, and sometimes people can't handle the stress. I'm terribly sorry you had to sit through that. But . . . where were we? (Who's up next? Virginia? You ready to go?) Okay, ladies. We're here today at the Atlanta Women's Crisis Center to enjoy a fashion show, right? We're here to see some beautiful women show us just how beautiful they are. So let's go on with the show. All right. Next up we have Virginia, modeling a sumptuous taffeta outfit, accented with feathers . . .</p>
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<p>(SARAH is in her office. She is agitated, breathing heavily. There is KNOCKING at her door. SHE freezes and holds her breath. KNOCKING again. SHE remains frozen. Silence. SHE goes to the phone and dials a number.)</p> <p>SARAH (on telephone) Dave—hey. No, I'm okay—well . . . Can you call me back? I'm at work. I'm not really supposed to . . . Okay. Yeah—no—call me back, I'll . . . Okay. Bye. (SHE hangs up, her hand on the telephone. It RINGS. SHE answers</p>		<p>MARY</p> <p>I didn't do anything—I didn't do anything.</p>
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<p>it.) Hello? (It's not David.) Oh. Yes. Yes we do. HIV testing is on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. No, you can just walk in. No, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. No, in the mornings. No, not on Tuesday. On Monday morning or Wednesday morning or Friday morning. Okay. You too. Bye. (SHE hangs up the phone. It RINGS. SHE answers it.) Hi. Thank you. No—I'm really not. I think I might have just gotten myself fired. I—said some things—it's stupid—I really don't want to talk about it. But I'm pretty sure they're not gonna want me here anymore—and Americorp's not gonna keep me if I don't have a placement. Yeah . . . (CARLA unlocks the office door and storms in.) CARLA Okay—I don't know what that was, or who you think you are . . . SARAH (in the phone) Just a . . . (to CARLA) I'm on the phone. CARLA . . . but guess who just came into my office and said, not</p>		<p>Stop looking at me. Who do you think you are looking at me with those eyes.</p> <p>Oh, don't look at me like you don't know what I'm talking about.</p> <p>Sure, walk away. Walk away. Pretend I don't exist. Pretend you can't see me, just walk on by.</p>
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only did we lose the grant, but she's sorry, but she's afraid she's gonna have to let me go.

SARAH
I'm on the phone.

CARLA
Okay, you're on the phone—
get off.

SARAH
I will.

CARLA
I'll wait.
(SHE stands
expectantly.)

SARAH
It's a private call.

CARLA
Oh! Well pardon me.

(CARLA reaches over and
hangs up the phone.
SARAH is open-mouthed,
outraged.)

CARLA (continued)
Oh, yes I did. Now you get
your sorry ass out there and
start mopping up the mess you
made. I don't care what you
have to do—but I am not
loosing my job over you.

SARAH
That was a long-distance call.

CARLA
I'm sure it was.

SARAH
I'm not going back out there.

Just walk on by. Oh, yeah—
that got your attention.
You're trying to ignore me,
but that got your attention all
right.

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Think you
can forget about me? Think
you can just write me off—

I don't care if I get fired.
Because I quit. Okay. I quit.

CARLA

Listen, Miss High-and-Mighty. This is not about you losing your job. You threw your job away. This is about me losing my job. And I don't care what you have to do—you are getting us that money back. I don't care if you have call some of your rich white friends, or go out and sell your white ass on the street, but this Center is not gonna close. Okay. Let me say this in words you might understand--if this Center closes that means that these women have no place to go. We may not do everything perfect—and for the record I have never said anything different. But at least we do something. And if you cause this Center to close just because you don't "approve" of everything we do you are condemning all these women to . . .

(TELEPHONE RINGS.)

If you can live with that you're . . .

(RINGS.)

Okay, I'm not saying anything else. You wanna be that way—be that way.

(CARLA leaves. The phone continues to RING. Finally SARAH answers it.)

SARAH

Hello? Hi, Dave. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. No. I don't know.

You're trying to look away. Trying to pretend you didn't hear me. Uh-huh.

<p>Maybe I'll come back to Chicago. Surprise! (SHE listens) Yeah. No. Of course. Yeah, I was just joking. (SHE wasn't. SHE listens.) Oh. I'll, um. Yeah. That's great. I'm happy for you. Yeah. No. No, no. I'm fine. It's—nothing. I'm fine. Okay. I will. You too. Bye. (SHE hangs up the phone. Fights tears.)</p> <p>SARAH Yeah.</p> <p>JUDITH (entering) Hi, Sarah. Well, everything's pretty much wrapped up with the fashion show. (Pause.) So—do you want to talk about what happened in there today?</p> <p>SARAH I'm sorry. You can fire me.</p> <p>JUDITH I don't want to fire you, Sarah.</p> <p>SARAH No. It's okay. I know you have to. Is the Center gonna shut down?</p> <p>JUDITH</p>	<p>(There is KNOCKING at the door.)</p> <p>JUDITH (from outside) Sarah?</p>	<p>What're you scared of, huh? What are you scared of?</p> <p>You'd rather just pretend I didn't exist—or say I brought it on myself. Yeah—that's right, say it. You want to say</p>
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<p>I hope not. It's not as desperate as Carla makes it seem. We've run on a deficit before. (pause) I'm not gonna fire you, Sarah. I want you to stay. I mean, I know how stressful this can be, and well, we really do value what you bring to our organization.</p> <p>SARAH What?</p> <p>JUDITH Actually, I was hoping I could promote you. I've, uh—well, I'd appreciate if you didn't spread this around, but I've let Carla go. Without this grant—we just can't afford a full-salary employee. No. It's not your fault. I'd been thinking about it anyway. Carla can be—abrasive at times. But with Carla gone, we'll need someone to fill the social worker position. And I'd like it if you would be that person.</p> <p>SARAH But, I'm not a social worker.</p> <p>JUDITH</p>	<p>LOUDSPEAKER Ladies, the Bloodmobile is here. Any ladies who would like to donate blood, please come to the front desk.</p> <p>(JEREMY unlocks the door and comes in, talking on his way in.)</p> <p>JEREMY Whoo-wee, did you see their faces? (seeing JUDITH) Sorry I—sorry. I'll let you—finish your conversation then.</p> <p>(HE leaves.)</p>	<p>it—say it.</p> <p>I brought it on myself—say it.</p> <p>But I'm not being fair. I can't compare you to me. We're nothing alike, right? I brought this on myself. I asked for this. Uh-huh. I brought this on myself.</p>
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I know. I know. But I feel you really have a talent for this.

(Pause.)

Sarah, we can't afford a social worker.

If you don't do it, nobody will.

(Pause.)

Well, you think about it.

I'll let you get back to seeing clients then.

SARAH

Okay.

JUDITH

And remember, if you've got concerns, bring them to me.

SARAH

Okay.

(JUDITH leaves.

SARAH looks over her list of names to call for the day.)

(JEREMY knocks and sticks his head in the door.)

JEREMY

Hey, Sarah. Listen, I was just gonna see if I can take you out for dinner after we finish up here for the day. Get some Southern food in you.

(Pause.)

SARAH

Okay.

JEREMY

Yeah? Okay. Okay. Cool, then. This is gonna be good.

<p>(SARAH waits for a moment, then:)</p> <p>SARAH (on loudspeaker) Mary Collins, please come to job counseling. Mary Collins, please come to job counseling.</p> <p>(There is a KNOCK at the door. SARAH answers it. It's MARY.)</p> <p>MARY You called me?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. Come on in, Mary.</p> <p>MARY I didn't do anything. I didn't do anything.</p> <p>SARAH I know. You signed up to see me, though.</p> <p>MARY Yeah, I did that. I did that.</p> <p>SARAH Okay, then. Come on in. Have a seat.</p> <p>(MARY suddenly hugs SARAH. SARAH is startled, and a little scared.)</p> <p>SARAH (continued) Okay. Okay. Thank you, Mary. Thank you. Have a seat.</p>	<p>Okay, then.</p> <p>(HE leaves.)</p>	
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<p>MARY I can sit here?</p> <p>SARAH Yeah. How can I help you today, Mary?</p>	<p>(LIGHTS FADE on MARY and SARAH as the PHONE begins to ring.)</p>	
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THE END.

¹ “34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'”

² The part of Jeremy may be played by an actor of any nationality. If the actor is white, this line should read, “I can like some chocolate with my milk too, if you know what I mean.