

## SYNOPSIS

### HAIRDRESSER TO THE DEAD

Casey Courtney, a Punk Glamour Queen, in her mid twenties, works as a hairdresser at an upscale salon. She appears at a funeral home applying for a job as a make up artist and hairdresser to deceased clients. Malcolm Macy, owner of the funeral home and Velma Gort, an aging long-time employee of the home are stunned by her appearance (skimpy cut-off jeans, pink hair and black, Gothic make-up). Malcolm quickly lets her know her services are not needed. She leaves her card and departs only to be reluctantly called when the two regular hairdressers suddenly have significant issues and can't work.

Casey is offered a trial run at performing her work on the departed and does remarkably well, While alone and working on the dead, she carries on a conversasion with them laced with revealing statements as to her past.

The male corpse, a homicide detective, has stipulated in his journal that he wants a wake and that he is to be placed in an overtuffed chair, in a suit, with dark glasses and a fedora.

At the wake, while Malcolm and Casey are prepping the living room for the service, Casey finds herself alone, again, with the corpse, and continues hier revelatory conversation with him. The deceased's partner has quietly entered the room and overhears much of what Casey says. He's aware that she has a secret and is on some kind of search that focusses on the funeral home.

Casey, it turns out, was an abandoned child during the mid-seventies and has been on a search for her missing family. (at ten years old in the hospital, she witnessed an encounter with a strange woman who attempted to enter her room but was stopped by nurses. A nurse later approached Casey and asked her if she knew anyone named Abigail. She didn't, but as the years passed, she assumed that woman was her mother.)

Casey soon develops an unusual friendship with the aloof Velma who knows the history of not only the funeral home but of its owner, Malcolm. When Casey shares with Velma the real reason for seeking work at the funeral home, she hits memory chords in Velma that reveal answers to questions Velma has had over the years. Together, they eventually realize that Malcolm Macy is, indeed, Casey's father.

During the mid-seventies, Malcolm and his then girlfriend, Abigail, had a child, but during that eclectic time the child was a burden to them. She was abandoned at a Catholic Rectory and subsequently placed in foster homes.

Casey however, does not reveal to Malcolm that she knows the truth. She has not reconciled herself to accept the man who gave her up.

When Velma, in an angry tirade, spills Casey's secret to Malcolm, it sets the stage for a serious confrontation. This occurs when Casey arrives and during Velma's volitile exchange with Malcolm, She asks a critical quesiton, the answer of which, determines her future. Where is Abigail?

HAIRDRESSER TO THE DEAD

by

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## CAST

MALCOLM MACY: Owner of Macy's Funeral Home, mid-forties. Pleasant, well-spoken, but somewhat of a phoney.

VELMA CORT: Mid-seventies. A leftover from the early days of the funeral home. Dependable, reticent, but approachable.

CASEY COURTNEY: Mid-twenties. Quite attractive, but a bit of a shocker. Pink hair with black stripes, and skimpy clothes belie the sensitive, intelligent person she really is.

RACHEL SOBERS: Mid thirties. Attendant at the funeral home. Perky, somewhat harsh.

MRS. BUELTON: Sixties. The wife of deceased Mr. William Buelton.

MASON BELL: Mid sixties. Partner of deceased detective Buelton. Friendly, inquisitive.

## PLACE

Two rooms in the Macy Funeral Home, San Francisco. One, an office, the other the lab or Prep Room. The office will have two desks at an angle from each other, flowers, etc. to set the scene. The Lab or Prep Room will have cabinets, two tables with nude articulated mannequins covered with sheets up to their chins. At Scene iv, the office will be made over into a living room with an overstuffed chair and typical accoutrements for that room. Mr. Beulton's wake will take place here..

## TIME

The mid-1990s. Summer

## AT RISE

VELMA GORT is seated at her desk working on papers. MALCOLM MACY is standing over Velma checking paperwork. He walks over to his desk (kitty-corner to hers) as a PLEASANT DOOR CHIME RINGS. Malcolm walks up to and opens the door.

*On opening the door, CASEY COURTNEY enters. She is wearing skimpy, cut-off jeans and a tie-dye tee that reads "Cow Girls*

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*Rule." Her hair is a brilliant pink with black stripes, her eyebrows, eyeshadow and liner a frightful ebony.*

*Velma, on seeing Casey, seems struck dumb, her mouth agape, her pen poised in mid-air. Malcolm folds his hands in front of his chest.*

MALCOLM

How may I help you?

CASEY

Hi. I'm Casey.

*She looks back and forth between the two.*

I'd like to be a hairdresser to the dead.

*Malcolm stares at her for a few moments.*

MALCOLM

The dead? No, no. People here are deceased. They have moved on, passed over, but "dead?" No.

*Malcolm looks at Velma who is slowly shaking her head.*

MALCOLM cont'd

And what tangent of your imagination led you to present yourself in a funeral home...dressed as...as...

*He waves it off.*

You show no respect for the departed.

CASEY

*jovial*

What do they care? They're dead!

MALCOLM

Stop using that word! Now what do you want?

CASEY

A job.

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MALCOLM

Absurd! Out of the question. Who sent you?

CASEY

No one. I decided I wanted to make the dea...the "departed" look good...for their trip...you know, to the...unknown.

MALCOLM

*Sarcastic.*

Really. Have you ever made up a deceased person?

CASEY

In my mind, yes.

MALCOLM

Be that as it may, we already employ a make-up person who also does hair.

CASEY

Yeah. I've seen some of her work.

MALCOLM

What do you mean?

CASEY

Jason? Jason Mulay? Saint Sebastians?...last week?

MALCOLM

Oh, well, yes. I attended to Mr. Mulay. What are you saying?

CASEY

What am I saying? Whoever did his hair, and his makeup, didn't know squat about Jason or how he looked before he turned up..."departed."

MALCOLM

Miss...Casey, is it? You know nothing about preparing the departed for their final visit with loved ones.

CASEY

Visit? Their final visit? They're fucking dead! They're not visiting anybody. You should fire whoever made Jason look like a

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Sunday School dork. He was a jock. You made him a jock with parted hair.

MALCOLM

Well, thank you for your interest.

*As he motions her to the door.*

We are quite happy with our current staff.

CASEY

Well, good luck with that. Here's my card in case the dead wake..

*Sarcastic.*

I'm sorry, the departed wake up and shout. "What the fuck have you done to me!"

*Casey undulates out of the room as Malcolm stares at the now closed door.*

VELMA

What was that all about?

MALCOLM

Someone must be putting me on.

*He smiles.*

Strange. I wasn't happy with a few of Rachel's recent renderings. Especially, Mr. Mulay.

*He examines Casey's card.*

Huh. She works for a reputable salon. Very strange.

VELMA

I'm amazed you spent so much time actually talking with her. I've seen whores who looked better than her.

MALCOLM

*With a hint of malice.*

Where, Velma? Where have you seen whores?

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VELMA

You know what I mean.

MALCOLM

I've never met anyone like that.

VELMA

Well, as the saying goes, "Shit happens."

MALCOLM

*Malcolm appears shocked.*

I've never heard you cuss before.

VELMA

*She's slightly embarrassed.*

Well, the nerve of someone...anyone showing up like that.

MALCOLM

*Slight laugh.*

I thought it was a gag.

*Ponders it.*

Maybe it was. Calvin, over at the Clark Parlor, was always playing games with me at the convention. Remember the Christmas card?

VELMA

The coffin made with used pallets. "Macy Funeral Home painted..

MALCOLM

Enough! Velma...enough. I'm going to call him.

*Dials a number.*

Hey Calvin, Malcolm. Who is she? Your mistress?

*Listens.*

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You know what I'm talking about...the pink-haired bimbo who...

*Listens.*

C'mon now, I'm talking about that Casey girl with the pink hair.

*Listens.*

I don't drink! You know that.

*Listens, now a slight anger.*

Yeah, well, I'm busy too! Too busy for pranks. You...

*Listens.*

You didn't send her? Serious?

*Listens.*

What are you laughing about. It's not funny!

*Listens.*

Never mind what she said.

*Pause.*

Yeah, well to you it's funny...to me it's a pain in the ass.

*Listens.*

You can stop your God damn laughing now...CALVIN! Have a fucked up day!

*Malcolm throws his phone onto his desk.*

VELMA

*Sarcastic.*

I've never heard you cuss before.

MALCOLM

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(stares at her)  
Stay tuned. I may cuss some more.

(the door chime rings)

MALCOLM

It better not be her.

(MALCOLM Opens the door for a  
MRS. BUELTON)

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Mrs. Buelton, come in.

(motions to a chair in front of his desk)  
We've set the service for Saturday at 2:00 p.m. Everything is  
set up.

(he hesitates)  
I'm sorry, but you seem upset.

MRS. BUELTON

I don't know how to put this.

(she fidgets)  
You do know that my husband was a detective...a homicide  
detective.

(he nods)  
He had a journal that he kept. I read it last night. He had a  
request...a personal request in the event of his death.

(Mrs. Buelton looks over at Velma who  
is immersed in her work. She leans forward)

MRS. BUELTON (cont'd)

He wants a wake. He wants to be propped up in his favorite  
overstuffed chair with his hat on and dark glasses...in the living  
room...in our home.

MALCOLM

*Incredulous.*

Sitting in a chair?

*She nods as he looks away in thought.*

MRS. BUELTON

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And all the detectives in his unit are to be invited.

MALCOLM

*Bewildered.*

Yes, of course...invited.

MRS. BUELTON

Will Saturday still be a good day for this?

MALCOLM

Yes, yes, of course. We will set it up for Saturday. Is there anything else?

MRS. BUELTON

No. I was worried you wouldn't be able to do this.

MALCOLM

We are very mindful of the departed's wishes.

*With this Mrs. Buelton rises, shakes hands with Malcolm and leaves. Malcolm stares at Velma.*

MALCOLM (cont'd)

I should have done what my mother wanted.

VELMA

(without looking up)

And that would be?

MALCOLM

Become an accountant. At least numbers are...well, they're just numbers.

VELMA

*Looks at Malcolm and smiles.*

I wouldn't mind attending that wake.

MALCOLM

Thank God it's private. How do you write that one? "Mr. Buelton, a former homicide detective, will sit in repose to greet his former colleagues."

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VELMA

*Laughs.*

What are they going to do, have a conversation with him? I can see it now. "Hey...

*Looks at Malcolm.*

What was his name?

MALCOLM

William.

VELMA

"Hey Bill, remember that auto-erotic in the basement...

MALCOLM

*Interrupts.*

Remember an auto...what?

VELMA

Auto-erotic. Way back, when I worked in the Coroner's office, they had a few of them. Guys deck themselves out in gas masks, leather this and that, a motorcycle belt...drawn real tight. They would stimulate...

MALCOLM

Velma, stop! That's not something I want to hear.

VELMA

*She goes back to her papers.*

You asked.

*Malcolm runs his fingers through his hair.*

MALCOLM

What a morning! I could use some good news.

*His phone RINGS.*

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Good morning. This is Malcolm at the Macy Funeral Home.

*Listens.*

Rachel. What's up? You have two preps waiting.

*Listens, then concern.*

Is it anything serious?

*Listens.*

A woman thing?

*Listens.*

Well, when can you make it in?

*Listens.*

Gaby? Why do I have to call her?

*Listens.*

Two months? What's wrong with you? Is it cancer? (slight pause)  
I'm not hysterical! Tell me what's wrong. Rachel? Rachel!

*Malcolm again slides his phone onto his desk.*

She hung up on me.

VELMA

*Without looking up.*

I noticed.

*Slight pause as she looks at him.*

Rachel giving you the heeby jeebies?

MALCOLM

She was talking strange. She wants to take two months off...like now!

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VELMA

Sounds like a woman thing.

MALCOLM

Does everyone talk in riddles? What's this "woman thing?"

VELMA

Maybe she just needs to get away.

MALCOLM

We all need to get away.

VELMA

Amen.

*Velma gets up with a handful of paperwork.*

VELMA (cont'd)

I'll drop these obits off at the Tribune.

*Velma leaves as MALCOLM sits at his desk slowing shaking his head. He stops and quickly flips through a black book. He makes a call.*

MALCOLM

Gaby. It's Malcolm. How are you?

*Listens.*

Busy, busy. That's why I'm calling. I could use some help in the next few months. We've just...

*Listens.*

Oh? Why not?

*Listens.*

Oh. Well...congratulations. Yes. Well, I'm happy for you. Come by before you leave.

*Malcolm very carefully places his phone on the desk. He then leans his head back and closes his eyes.*

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MALCOLM

What's next?

*He searches for something in his desk and retrieves a business card. He then makes a call.*

Casey? Is this Casey? (*slight pause*) It's Malcolm Macy at Macy's Funeral Home.

*Listens.*

Oh. I'm sorry. Should I call back?

*Listens.*

Well, I may be able to give you a chance to demonstrate your abilities. We are having an issue with our current assistant. Can you possibly come by today?

*Listens.*

Great. 3:30 would be fine. Could you...ah, could you dress as you would...that is... (*pause*) Oh. That's fine. Great. See you at 3:30. Goodbye.

*As Malcolm hangs up, Velma returns.*

MALCOLM

I thought you were going...

VELMA

*Reaches in her desk drawer and holds up keys.*

Car keys.

MALCOLM

You aren't going to believe what I just did.

VELMA

*As she walks to the door.*

The way this day is going nothing will surprise me.

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MALCOLM

I just got off the phone with that girl...Casey. I asked her to come in. I'm going to try her out.

VELMA

*Stares at him.*

I'd say, "You're joking", but you don't joke. Or do you?

MALCOLM

No joke.

VELMA

And why would you do that? No consulting with me? No discussion? You know nothing about her!

MALCOLM

We're tapped out. Rachel has whatever she has, and Gaby? Gaby is married.

VELMA

Oh boy.

*Laughs.*

So, now we may get the bimbo?

MALCOLM

Don't be so harsh. She has to be...well, hip, you know, for the salon crowd.

VELMA

Look at me! I'm a woman. I go to a salon for MY hair. There are no people who work in my salon who look like that.

MALCOLM

You probably don't go to a salon that's...hip.

VELMA

I go to a salon to make me look good, not to look "hip," or to see people who look "hip." And if what that girl looks like is "hip", God help us.

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MALCOLM

Well, start to get used to it. She'll be here later today.

VELMA

Dressed like a...?

MALCOLM

Don't say it!

VELMA

Whore! Dressed like a whore!

MALCOLM

*Covers his ears.*

If Dad could see this...

VELMA

He'd close you down. That's what he'd do.

*Shivers.*

Letting someone like her attend the deceased.

MALCOLM

I told her to dress appropriately.

VELMA

Can't wait to see what THAT is.

Suddenly the door opens and Rachel enters.

MALCOLM

Rachel. What's up. You sounded strange on the phone.

RACHEL

Jangled nerves...

*Looks around.*

This place. I've been here too long.

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*Walks up to Malcolm and close to his face.*

You'd better get ahold of Gaby, like now...

(points to prep room)

...unless you plan to stuff them.

MALCOLM

Something's happened. Tell me what's happened.

RACHEL

I'm going to Mexico City.

MALCOLM

You've got cancer!

RACHEL

Oh stop it! Get a grip. I'm frustrated, worn out, on the fringe of a nervous breakdown. What have I missed? Unhappy?

MALCOLM

Is it something I did?

RACHEL

No!

*looks sympathetically at Malcolm.*

I guess we can call it a cumulative thing. It's been building...in a sense.

*Rachel walks over to a cabinet and removes papers and a few personal items.*

MALCOLM

I did it. I overworked you.

RACHEL

*Frustrated.*

Oh, wrap yourself up in that if you have too.

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*Heads for the door.*

I'll see you...when I see you...

*Rachel exits. Malcolm sits as Velma folds her arms and smiles.*

VELMA

The plot thickens. Come to think of it, that's not the only thing I noticed that's thickened.

MALCOLM

What? Lay off, Velma, I don't need you rubbing salt in...

VELMA

*Interrupts.*

The womb?

*The word eludes Malcolm.*

MALCOLM

I'm not wounded. I can deal with this. This Casey girl is probably more of a match for Rachel than...

*Velma starts laughing, slowly at first, then into an almost uncontrolled fit of laughing)*

MALCOLM (cont'd)

(angry)

What are you laughing at?

VELMA

*slowly recovers as Malcolm waits.*

I didn't say "wound." A she may match Rachel's past, but not her future.

END OF SCENE

ACT I

SCENE ii

*Malcolm and Velma are busy with paperwork. The DOOR CHIMES RING and MALCOLM gets up to answer it. As he opens the door, Casey enters.*

CASEY

3:30 sharp! In the flesh!

*She is wearing a long, knit dress with pearls and a flapper style hat which sits on her head at an angle. Velma is struck dumb, but she recovers and smiles.*

MALCOLM

Nice to see you.

*Malcolm looks her over.*

You might be a bit over-dressed.

CASEY

*Doffs her hat and throws it on a chair, then cheerfully,*

I wouldn't want to offend the departed.

*Now, Velma is chuckling. On seeing Velma losing it, Malcolm can't control a building urge to laugh and starts coughing to control himself.*

MALCOLM

Yes, well, I see what you mean. Hmm, yes...

*Folds his hands in front of him as he regains the composure expected of a mortician.*

I asked you to come in due to an unexpected break in our normal routine.

CASEY

I know.

MALCOLM

You know? What do you know?

CASEY

Your main gal is checking out for awhile.

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MALCOLM

What in heaven's name are you talking aobut?

CASEY

Isn't your "stylist" beating a retreat to Mexico?

MALCOLM

Rachel? What do you know about that?

CASEY

Hey. I do work in a salon.

MALCOLM

So?

CASEY

In a salon, what gets said there, doesn't stay there, you know what I mean? We get all the dirt.

MALCOLM

And what specifically do you know about Rachel?

CASEY

*With an edge.*

Don't ask! You don't get that kind of shit from me. Are we gonna talk about me working here or not?

MALCOLM

*Looks at VELMA who smiles and twists her head as if waiting for his response.*

This is very strange. But, you're right. Let me show you the lab.

*Malcolm motions Casey to a door marked "Private." As they walk up to it, the office lights dim and the lab lights brighten. Malcolm turns.*

Answer me this. Is Rachel sick?

CASEY

Sick? No, she's not sick.

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*Hesitates.*

She's looking for an answer...to a problem That's all.

*Malcolm appears frustrated but leads Casey up to the tables.*

*There are two bodies/mannequins on two side-by-side prep tables, one made up to be a man in his sixties, the other of a woman in her forties. Both are covered with sheets up to their chins. Ideally, these mannequins should be articulated.*

MALCOLM

*Peering down at the man.*

Mr. Buelton should be quite easy. He's requested that we prop him up in a chair and..

CASEY

*Interrupts.*

Get outta here!

*She pushes him gently.*

Is that an undertaker joke?

MALCOLM

*Very serious.*

No! It's no joke. He was a homicide detective. He specified that he..

CASEY

*Interrupts.*

That is so fucking rad!

MALCOLM

Casey, can we please try to refrain from obscenities? It just isn't...

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CASEY

*Interrrrrupts, again.*

What?

*Points to bodies.*

They're offended?

MALCOLM

No! I'm offended! This is a place of respect. Learn that now or we are through talking.

CASEY

Okay, Okay. Geez. I didn't know you guys were strung so tight.

*Motions to the bodies.*

So, what's with them?

MALCOLM

What?

CASEY

When do I start on them?

MALCOLM

They are both scheduled for a Saturday viewing.

CASEY

Does that mean now?

MALCOLM

It does.

*Malcolm and Casey then stand looking back and forth at each other and at the bodies. Finally,*

CASEY

Go. I don't do my work for an audience.

MALCOLM

But your duties. You don't know your duties.

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CASEY

Make them look good, right?

*Looks at the bodies.*

I don't do anything else, do I?

*Malcolm hesitates, which unnerves Casey.*

I don't like...like clean them up, do I?

MALCOLM

Down the line, I will train you to help out.

CASEY

Oh.

MALCOLM

You don't seem too thrilled about that.

CASEY

Will they be naked?

MALCOLM

Of course they'll be naked.

*Smiles at her.*

Naked we enter the world and naked we depart.

CASEY

Maybe that's an undertaker joke?

MALCOLM

*Folds his hands in front of him.*

Undertakers do not joke.

CASEY

Huh. That's too bad.

MALCOLM

When you are through with Mr. Buelton, perhaps you can help me dress him?

CASEY

*Nervous giggle.*

I never dressed a dead person. I've taken clothes off a dead person...like... you know what I mean. Limpy dick...

MALCOLM

It's easier when both of us do it. Let me know when you're ready.

CASEY

*As Malcolm leaves.*

Okay, that's cool.

*Casey opens various cabinet doors, occasionally pulling out items. Finally, she walks up to Mr. Buelton.*

CASEY (cont'd)

Homicide Dick, Hunh! Who or what killed you? You don't look that old.

*She lifts his arm, then drops it.*

Is that how they tell you're dead?

*Smooths his hair back.*

Sitting in a chair! Hah!.You probably want your legs crossed. I would, but I don't do that. At least I don't think I do.

*She looks at his fingers.*

Didn't smoke. Good for you. I bet you drank, though.

*Looks him in the face.*

I smoked pot! (pause) A lot. (pause) Gonna bust me? Ha ha.

*Pats him on the head.*

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I'll bet we put you in a dark suit, black hat, dark glasses...  
(*slight pause*)...and crossed legs.

*Casey turns her attention to the woman, but turns back at Mr. Buelton.*

I'll see you at your wake.

*Casey looks at a clipboard at the head of the table.*

CASEY (cont'd)

Betti? B E T T I. Was your mother mad at you? Did they call you, "Bet-eye?"

*Runs her hand thorough Betti's hair.*

You have beautiful hair.

*Studies her face.*

Indian...our Indian. Shit! What happened to you? So young.

Malcolm re-enters the room.

MALCOLM

How are you managing?

CASEY

Just fine without you barging in every now and then. Ha ha, I'm kidding. But not really. I like to work alone...as much as possible.

MALCOLM

I wanted to tell you how Miss Gayton's hair should be made up. There's a photo of her graduating college and she...

CASEY

*Interrupts)*

Excuse Me! I can tell how she liked her hair, how she made herself up and cared for her body. How she...

MALCOLM

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(interrupts)  
Okay. Well, that's fine

*They stare at each other for a few tense moments.*

MALCOLM  
*Again clasps his hands in front of him.*

Very well.

*As he leaves, he turns back.*

If you need anything?

*She shakes her head as he exits.*

CASEY  
*Folds her hands, imitating Malcolm.*

What a dorky way to act. Like he's a high priest or something.

*Looks intently at Mr. Buelton.*

You're pale. What'd they do? (laughs) Suck all the blood out of you?

*Casey applies some make-up and applies some dressing to his hair, then combs it.*

CASEY (cont'd)  
You look like a tough guy.

*Studies her work.*

I guess you have to be tough.

*As she again combs his hair.*

I bet you ate crap.

*Stops and shakes her head.*

I never saw a cop car at a donut shop. That's bullshit. Hunh?

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(pause) I got a lot of tickets. The cops were nice though. Speeding mostly. Life in the fast lane. Blue hairs caused it. I was usually late for them. Giant pains in the ass. Older than the hills. I think most of them thought I was freaky. The pink hair...

*Stops, and flips her hair at him.*

I put some black streaks in it now...it's been pink for over a year. Punk Glamour.

*Thinks about it.*

Nah. Closer to Rock-a-Billy.

*Looks at his face.*

Shit! Too much now.

*She sponges off some makeup.*

They suck your blood out, hunh? Why do they do that? You look like a corpse. (*slight pause*) "Looks like a corpse." Christ, no wonder you didn't graduate high school.

*Now approves of her work.*

Better. Much better.

*Casey looks at the door and then back at Mr. Buelton.*

Are you naked?

*She slowly pulls the sheet down to his abdomen. She hesitates, then quickly pulls it up and, (laughs) as quickly, pulls it down.*

Speedo! Ha Ha. Maybe that's what killed you. Too much sex!

*Casey then walks to the door as the lights come up in the office, opens it and stands in the doorway. Malcolm and Velma are at their desks.*

CASEY

When do we dress the detective?

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MALCOLM

*Walks over to the door.*

I've decided we'll dress them in the morning.

*He walks past Casey to examine Mr. Buelton.*

Very nice, Casey, very nice.

*Malcolm then looks at Betti.*

CASEY

She's next.

MALCOLM

*As he leaves the lab.*

Just so they are ready in the morning.

*Lights dim in the office.*

CASEY

*Back in the lab.*

I guess he liked it. So far, so good.

*She turns her attention to the woman. She quickly pulls the sheet down to find a a naked Betti and, as quickly, replaces the sheet.*

Naked as a baby! Shit. I'm gonna die in the woods where no one can find me.

*To the woman.*

You don't know you're naked, do you? You had no say. That's sort of pathetic.

*Malcolm again enters the lab.*

MALCOLM

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Casey, perhaps we can...

CASEY

*Interrupts.*

How come Mr. Buelton has his "Speedo" on and "Bet-eye" is naked?

MALCOLM

I haven't completely prepped Mrs. O'Brien for dressing. Mr. Buelton is prepped. And it's always Mrs. O'Brien, always the surname.

CASEY

You have to prep them to have clothes on?

MALCOLM

Of course! All orifices need to be plugged

CASEY

You're grossing me out!

MALCOLM

You do not have to be present for that.

CASEY

I don't want to be present for that. (*pause*) What do you do?

MALCOLM

We plug her nose, rectum and vagina with...

CASEY

I don't want to hear!

MALCOLM

Very well. (*smiles*) You do very good work, Casey. The job is yours if you still want it.

CASEY

Same pay as Rachel?

MALCOLM

I'm guessing you know how much I pay her?

CASEY

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You guessed right.

MALCOLM

Same pay, same package.

CASEY

But without the bullshit!

MALCOLM

What?

CASEY

I have no room for any more bullshit in my life.

MALCOLM

I don't know what you are talking about.

CASEY

I won't be pulling a Rachel with you.

MALCOLM

*This stuns him.*

Rachel? I...what do you mean?

CASEY

With me, your dick will stay in your pants.

MALCOLM

Stop this nonsense! One more comment like that and you're gone!

CASEY

I'll be gone right now if you don't pick up on what I'm saying.

MALCOLM

*Confused.*

I don't know what you think you've found...you don't know...

CASEY

*Interrupts.*

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Rachel is going to Mexico to abort her kid...your kid...that kind of bullshit!

END OF SCENE

ACT 1

Scene iii

*Funeral home. Casey enters on Saturday and finds Velma at work, but no Malcolm. As Casey walks toward the Prep Room.*

VELMA

Good morning, Casey.

CASEY

*Hesitant.*

Morning. Good morning.

*Looks around.*

No Malcolm?

VELMA

He'll be late.

CASEY

We're supposed to dress the...

VELMA

*Interrupts.*

He said to hold off until he's here.

*Casey walks over and sits at Malcolm's desk. She smiles at Velma.*

CASEY

I think I pissed...I irritated him yesterday.

VELMA

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*Distant.*

It's about time someone did.

*On hearing this Casey becomes a bit cautious.*

CASEY

Really? Is he hard to work with?

VELMA

Depends, I guess, on your Weltenschaung.

CASEY

I don't know what that means.

VELMA

*Cold.*

No, I don't suppose you do. I heard the discussion you had with him yesterday.

CASEY

I didn't realize we were that loud.

VELMA

Some of it I was already aware of.

CASEY

It seems a shame.

VELMA

What seems a shame?

CASEY

Rachel, going to Mexico.

VELMA

Maybe she has no other options.

CASEY

I doubt that.

*Shakes her head.*

I really doubt that.

VELMA

You don't have the full picture.

CASEY

I guess I don't.

*Velma grabs some paperwork and pours over it.*

CASEY (cont'd)

Fill in the blanks.

VELMA

*With an edge.*

What?

CASEY

Paint the picture for me. Why is Rachel doing this?

VELMA

Be careful. You're messisng with something you know nothing about. You're messing with someone's life.

CASEY

*Mounting anger.*

Messing with someone's life? You don't have a fucking clue! (*now emotional*) You don't know shit about me or my life!

*Starts losing it.*

You don't know shit!

*Velma appears shocked at Casey's response.*

VELMA

Why did you come here?

CASEY

For answers!

*This confuses Velma.*

VELMA

Answers to what?

CASEY

Why someone would...

*Hard for her to continue.*

...why I should go on living when I don't...when I don't have a life.

VELMA

You come to a place like this for an answer to that? I get the impression you're searching for something.

CASEY

*Big smile.*

Searching? Oh, I've been searching...

*Smile fades.*

...most of my life.

VELMA

Searching for what?

CASEY

*Thinks about it.*

I can't answer you right now.

*Looks away.*

Can I ask you something about Malcolm?

VELMA

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Fire away.

CASEY

He appears to me to be a...he's sort of...

VLEMA

Sort of like a phoney?

CASEY

Yeah. Like he's ready to say "Amen" all the time.

*Velma chuckles and now seems to warm up to Casey.*

VELMA

I think I'm starting to like you. You're a pretty smart cookie. Malcolm is what I call a cardboard man.

CASEY

He's not as righteous as he appears?

VELMA

I think calling him righteous is stretching the word.

CASEY

He's got that "look."

VELMA

Look? What look?

CASEY

I call it the hungry male look.

VELMA

*Laughs.*

Interesting that you picked up on that.

CASEY

He's not married, right?

VELMA

No. And that's part of his problem.

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CASEY

Not being married?

VELMA

No. His failure to commit.

CASEY

With Rachel?

VELMA

*Thin smile.*

She's just the latest.

CASEY

That doesn't sound good.

VELMA

No. It sure doesn't. He's got a checkered history with...

*Hesitates.*

...well, with most things he does. Enough of him. Do you have a boyfriend?

*Casey laughs.*

CASEY

Boyfrind? No. No boyfriend in this girl's life.

VELMA

You're not from here, are you?

CASEY

No. I'm not...that is...

*Throws her hands up.*

...shit! I may be.

VELMA

*Incredulous)*

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You may be?

CASEY

I don't know where I'm from.

VELMA

*Stunned.*

I'm sorry. I had no idea.

CASEY

Don't get your shit up over it. I've lived with it all my life.

VELMA

Why do you cuss so much?

CASEY

*Smiles.*

I like to. I even cuss when I talk with myself.

VELMA

I cuss more than Malcolm knows. It's not a good thing in a Funeral Home.

CASEY

Funeral home. Why do you call it a home. Nobody lives here.

VELMA

*Laughs.*

I don't know. Back in my day it was called a parlor...way back when I worked for Malcolm's dad.

CASEY

How long have you worked here?

VELMA

Oh, thirty-five years, give or take.

CASEY

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You probably know more about the departed business than Malcolm.

VELMA

Probably. But it's my job to keep the lid on things. I promised his dad.

CASEY

Why?

VELMA

Malcolm, in his dad's eyes, wasn't suited for this work. He was actually going to sell the business.

CASEY

What changed his mind?

VELMA

Nothing changed his mind. His heart gave out before he could arrange anything. The big surprise was that Malcolm actually took to the business. I was surprised.

CASEY

Why was his dad so down on Malcolm?

VELMA

Simple. Playboy. It was the seventies. Wife swapping, nude hot tub parties...free sex. It gobbled him up.

CASEY

Yeah. I heard about the seventies.

VELMA

That's about when you were born, right?

CASEY

*Morose.*

I was...born in the seventies...plopped down in the seventies.

*On hearing this, Velma seems troubled.*

VELMA

Are your parents around?

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*Casey doesn't answer. She looks away, her right leg drumming a tattoo. Finally,*

CASEY

Maybe. I don't know.

VELMA

Excuse me for asking this. Do you know who your parents are?

*Casey looks down for a long moment.*

CASEY

I don't have a fucking clue.

*With this, Velma gets up and walks over to Casey, embracing her as Casey sits and breaks out sobbing.*

VELMA (Cont'd)

*I'm so sorry.*

CASEY

*With emotion.*

Do you know what it's like not knowing where the fuck you came from? Listening to old bags as I do their hair. "...Oh, my nephew is going to Harvard. (pause) Oh, here's a pic of my grandchild." I don't even have a photo of me as a kid!

VELMA

Where did you grow up?

CASEY

*Gaining control.*

Early on, some place in San Francisco, then Oklahoma. When I was in high school, somewhere near San Diego.

VELMA

Foster homes?

*Casey nods.*

CASEY

*Looks at Velma and smiles.*

When I turned seventeen, I split. Been on my own ever since.

VALMA

Do you have friends?

CASEY

People I work with. Some of them are in the same boat. Castoffs.

VELMA

And nothing, you know nothing at all about your parents?

CASEY

One clue. When I was about ten, I was in a hospital in San Francisco. I was half asleep and heard a commotion in the hallway outside my room. The nurses were keeping a woman from coming in my room.

VELMA

Had you ever seen her before?

*Casey shakes her head, then smiles.*

CASEY

She was a hippie.

*Laughs.*

Even though it was the early eighties, she was, plain and simple, a hippie.

VELMA

That's it?

CASEY

One of the nurses came in after she was gone. She asked me if I saw the woman. I told her yes. She asked me if I knew her. I said no. The nurse then asked me if I knew someone named Abigail.

*Casey becomes sullen, and Velma seems jolted by the name.*

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Of course, I didn't.

VELMA

Casey, are you sure about the name, Abigail?

CASEY

Of course, I wouldn't forget that. Why?

*Velma ponders it.*

VELMA

Nothing. At least it's something. Ever see her again?

CASEY

No. Soon after that the family I was with moved to San Diego.

*Velma now seems cautious.*

VELMA

Why here? What brings you into a funeral home. This funeral home?

*Casey hesitates for a moment, then reaches into her pocket and pulls out a cloth wallet. She removes a torn scrap of paper and hands it to Velma. As she reads it...*

VELMA (cont'd)

"Please take care of her." What is this?

CASEY

It was pinned to my bonnet, I was placed on the doorstep of a Catholic Rectory.

VELMA

It doesn't tell you much.

CASEY

Flip it over.

*Velma flips the scrap over and turns it sideways. She then throws it on the floor.*

VELMA

Oh my God! Oh Jesus...Mary!

*Velma points to the paper scrap on the floor.*

Do you know what that is?

CASEY

I know there's the word Macy...barely visible on..

VELMA

God no! It's more than that! This was our stationery in the seventies. I know it like the back of my hand.

*Velma picks up the scrap of paper.*

So, you put all this together and figured out that Malcolm was...

*Interrupts.*

CASEY

It wasn't that easy. First it was Macy's Furniture, then Macy's Auto-Body. Then Macy and Crowley Mills. All places around San Francisco...close to the church...where I was dumped.

VELMA

Do you realize how close you are?

CASEY

I'm closer, now that we've talked.

VELMA

You're very close. A girl named Abigail was a big part of Malcolm's life in the seventies.

CASEY

What happened with them?

VELMA

When Malcolm found out Abigail was pregnant, He broke off the relationship. I never heard about her after that.

CASEY

Valma, please don't mention any of this to Malcolm.

VELMA

Really? You don't want to confront him with this?

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CASEY

Not yet. I won't be burned a second time, and I'm not sure about him in my head.

VELMA

Well, what's the point of searching him out?

*Casey hesitates.*

CASEY

Now that I've found him, I'm not sure I want him as part of my life.

VELMA

I make no guarantees. I'm seeing red over this. When my fire is up...

*Starts to pace.*

Oh my. How appropriate! How utterly appropriate for this to come to pass.

*Suddenly, the door opens and Malcolm enters.*

MALCOLM

*Looks back and forth between the two.*

Oops. Have I interrupted something?

CASEY

*Stares at Velma.*

No, we were discussing life, love and the Jack of Hearts.

*At Malcolm.*

Are we ready to dress up Mr. Buelton for his charade?

*Malcolm and Casey walk into the Prep Room as Velma glares at them.*

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*Lights dim in office and rise in Prep Room. Malcolm places Mr. Buelton's black suit and white shirt on the table next to his body.*

CASEY

*(sullen)* I wonder if he's happy.

MALCOLM

Happy?

CASEY

Yeah. *(pause)* He's somewhere else. Where he can't be manipulated *(pause)* or abandoned.

MALCOLM

I don't think he was abandoned. He may have felt detached, that is, having the job he had.

CASEY

He had a good job. *(stares at him)* Putting nasty people where they belong.

MALCOLM

*Laughs.*

Sounds like you would have liked to work with him.

CASEY

*Thinks about it.*

Yeah. It would beat Blue hairs wanting a miracle. Young boppers with black hair wanting to go platinum in two hours.

MALCOLM

That can't happen?

CASEY

No, it can't.

*Casey looks down at Mr. Buelton.*

And Mr. Buelton can't cancel his appointment with me.

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MALCOLM

You got that a lot?

CASEY

Oh, yeah. But I never gave them a second chance to burn me.

*Looks at Malcolm.*

No one gets a second chance to burn me.

MALCOLM

How? How do you do that?

CASEY

I would never have a time open for them.

*Casey looks at Mr. Buelton's face.*

Huh. He looks pale.

MALCOLM

That sometimes happens. The light, time of day..

*Casey reapplies makeup.*

CASEY

How did he die?

MALCOLM

Massive heart attack.

CASEY

It isn't against the law to do what he wants?

MALCOLM

No, we try to do what they want.

CASEY

That's how I'm gonna go out.

MALCOLM

Sitting in a chair?



CASEY

No, but in style. Somehow. Maybe sitting under a tree. With a book.

MALCOLM

What will your family have to say about that?

*Casey's demeanor changes drastically. She is on the verge of an outburst.*

CASEY

Family? My family? We won't be discussing MY family!

END OF SCENE

## ACT 1

## Scene iv

*The living room of the Buelton residence one hour before the wake is to commence. Malcolm, Casey and Mrs. Buelton are putting finishing touches on the room and Mr. Buelton, who now is sitting in the chair, with his legs crossed. Malcolm looks at his watch.*

MALCOLM

*To Mrs. Buelton.*

We have about an hour. I think he looks good. What do you think?

MRS. BUELTON

He looks good. R--eally good. A little crazy, but good.

*To Malcolm.*

Could I ask you something about the register?

*Malcolm and Mrs. Buelton exit the room, leaving Casey with Mr. Buelton.*

CASEY

*To Mr. Buelton as she peers down on him.*

So, what are you guys gonna talk about?

*Tilts her head as though he's responding.*

A lot of sorrow, huh? Dead people all over the place.

*Casey looks away as though in thought, then turns back to him.*

Some are dead before they're born. You know what I mean?

*She lifts his glasses and looks into his eyes.*

Yeah. Your lights are out.

*Replaces the glasses.*

I bet you have some stories: All of them sad.

*Unknown to Casey, a detective friend, MASON BELL, 60s, has quietly entered the room. He stands near the doorway. Casey uses her pinky finger to smooth make up on Buelton's brow.*

CASEY

I could be a dick. I psych people out pretty good. That's what you gotta do, right?

*She makes a fist.*

I could make them talk.

*Thinks about it.*

I guess you can't do that.

*Then she loudly whispers.*

I'm working on a case. My own case. I'm a mystery. And I'm on a long, long search for someone. My name's Casey, but is it really Hairdresser to the Dead by Dick Rogers - 805 423 6790 [hollyhock@tcsn.net](mailto:hollyhock@tcsn.net)

Casey? I bet you could figure it out. I got it figured out. Little pieces I put together. It's hard when no one wants you to know. And just like the stuff you do...or did...it's sad.

MASON

Not all were sad.

*Casey starts and stands up.*

MASON (cont'd)

No, no. Sit. I'm here early. Bill was my partner.

CASEY

Oh. You must be sad. He looks too young to die. How long were you standing there?

MASON

Not long. (pause) Well, long enough to tell you're on a search of some kind. I'm getting the impression you found the person you're seeking. Am I right?

CASEY

Maybe. I guess that's why you're a detective, right?

MASON

You said enough for anyone to figure it out.

CASEY

Oh. But I'm seeking something more than just finding the person. I'm seeking something beyond that.

MASON

Do you need some help?

CASEY

No. Thanks anyway. I have it figured out. What comes next is the mystery. I don't want the person to know that I know.

MASON

I'm finding this more interesting than some of my cases.

CASEY

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Really?

*She saddens suddenly.*

It may be interesting, but it's more sad than interesting.

MASON

What's your connection to my partner?

*Casey motions to Buelton.*

CASEY

Him? I prepped him. I mean...I work for Mal...for Mr. Macy. We made him...

MASON

*interrupts*

You work at the funeral home?

CASEY

*Nods and smiles thinly.*

I prefer it.

MASON

Prefer it? To what?

CASEY

I prefer it to people that aren't...departed.

MASON

*Laughs.*

How long have you been doing this?

CASEY

A few days.

MASON

*Incredulous.*

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A few days?

*Shakes his head and points at Mr. Buelton.*

And you get this?

CASEY

I just got tired of dealing with the living.

MASON

Now, that's starting to sound sad.

CASEY

*Looks away.*

I lived with it for a long, long time.

MASON

It? What is "it?"

*Casey seems distracted.*

CASEY

Oh. My mind was wandering. I was...

*Shakes her head.*

What did you ask me?

MASON

You said that you lived with "it" for a long time.

CASEY

Oh. (pause) I don't know why I said that.

*Quickly changes the subject.*

Do you do that DNA stuff you see on TV?

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MASON  
All the time.

CASEY  
Can anybody do it?

MASON  
Do what?

CASEY  
Have DNA done.

MASON  
I guess. Never thought about it. You'd need some dough. It isn't cheap.

CASEY  
How much dough?

MASON  
I don't know. We don't have to pay for it. Why do you ask?

*Suddenly, Malcolm enters the room.*

MALCOLM  
Casey, a few of the guests are arriving. Can you go out and assist Mrs. Buelton?

*Casey leaves as Malcolm turns to Mason and motions to Buelton.*

MALCOLM  
Friend of yours?

MASON  
My partner.

MALCOLM  
It must have been a shock.

MASON  
It's hard to shock people like us.

*Looks at Buelton.*

You guys did a good job on Bill.

MALCOLM

Well, we'd have to credit my new assistant for most of it.

MASON

The girl I just met?

*Malcom nods.*

MALCOLM

Casey. Quite a sight when she came into our funeral home.

MASON

Strange thing for a young gal like that...dealing with corpses.

MALCOLM

To me, she's a riddle.

MASON

I can buy that. (pause) Any reason why she'd be interested in DNA processing?

MALCOLM

*Surprised.*

DNA? No reason I can think of. She asked you about that?

MASON

She did. Do you know anything about her background?

MALCOLM

I don't. She was hired because we had an unexpected turnover of critical personnel. Do you know something I should be aware of?

MASON

No. She just has my gears turning. That's all.

*Casey returns.*

CASEY

Mrs. Buelton's sister is helping greet guests.

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MALCOLM

Good.

*He points to Mr. Buelton.*

His glasses are crooked..

*Malcolm exits as Casey adjusts the glasses.*

MASON

I think you're dealing with a significant secret.

*Casey stares at him for a long moment.*

CASEY

Oh, there's a secret, but it's not mine.

*Casey mulls this over, then smiles.*

CASEY

But, you're right. But I'm also searching for something beyond that.

MASON

Do you need some help?

CASEY

I don't know. I have to be careful.

MASON

In what way?

CASEY

I don't want the person I'm seeking to know I'm seeking him.

MASON

Him? How do you know it isn't a her?

CASEY

It's a him. Take my word for it.

ACT 1

Scene v

AT RISE; Velma sits at her desk working on papers. The door opens and Malcolm enters.

MALCOLM

Morning.

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*Looks around.*

No Casey yet?

VLEMA

*With an edge.*

No, no Casey. (pause) Yet.

MALCOLM

Something wrong?

VELMA

Oh, no. Everything's just hunky dory.

MALCOLM

*As he sits at his desk.*

Someone get up on the wrong side...

VELMA

Shut up!

MALCOLM

What is going on here?

VLEMA

*Cynical smile.*

It seems your past is catching up with you. That's what's going on.

MALCOLM

What are you talking about?

VELMA

*Velma reaches into her drawer and retrieves the scrap of paper that was attached to Casey's bonnet. As she walks over to Malcolm and throws it on his desk she appears on the verge of a rage.*

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Recognize this?

*Malcolm's mouth drops open.*

MALCOLM

Oh, no! Where did you get this?

VELMA

*Screams it out.*

Your daughter gave it to me. Your DAUGHTER!

MALCOLM

*(Confused)* My daughter?

VELMA

The little bundle you left on a church doorstep has grown up.

*Suddenly, the door opens and Casey enters.*

VELMA

I'm sorry, Casey. I couldn't hold back.

MALCOLM

*Seems almost bewildered.*

Casey? Casey is my daughter?

*Malcolm gets up and slowly walks up to Casey and holds her in an embrace. She doesn't react. Finally, Malcolm stands back.*

MALCOLM

*My God! I don't know what to say.*

VELMA

*Spiteful.*

What can you say after doing something like that!

*During this, Casey looks at Malcolm without a hint of emotion.*

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MALCOLM

Casey, How can I...? What I did then was something I've always regretted. Abigail was trying...

*Casey interrupts and in a flat tone.*

CASEY

I saw her.

MALCOLM

You met your mother?

CASEY

Not met her...saw her. I saw her. I was in the hospital. I was ten.

*Directly at Malcolm.*

She tried to see me. They wouldn't let her. I never saw her again.

*Velma covers her face in her hands and slowly shakes her head. Malcolm slowly walks to Casey to again embrace her but she turns away.*

MALCOLM

Casey, I'm so sorry.

CASEY

Being sorry won't do a dman thing!

MALCOLM

I am sorry!

CASEY

I said fuck being sorry! It's too late for being sorry!

*Casey pulls down her dress to show a scar on her shoulder.*

CASEY

Do you know what this is? Of course not! You were too busy fooling and fucking! Guess what happened to me at age twelve? Don't know? I was kidnapped!

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*She shakes her head.*

Why don't you clasp your hands in front of your chest. Maybe that will make things better.

MALCOLM

I did think about you.

CASEY

What could you possibly think about me. I was a little baby!

VELMA

I'm sure you thought of her when you were bedding down with all your "tricks!" Your father was right. He said you were "lost." But now you're found. FOUND - OUT!

CASEY

I've found what I've been looking for. What I've found makes it seem so useless. I expected joy or something like that. There's no joy here. Death is here. DEAD people are here.

*Directly at Malcolm.*

So many times I imagined what this moment would be like. So much for imagination.

MALCOLM

Can't we just try to get along and see if we can't make things work out?

*A peaceful demeanor settles on Casey's face.*

CASEY

My mind is in spin right now. I have one question for you. The answer will be crucial for you...for us. Where is Abigail?

*Malcolm's body slumps as he realizes the importance of this question. After long moments...he shrugs and raises his hands.*

MALCOLM

I don't know. I never saw her again after we split.

CASEY

*Sad smile.*

Then that says it all.

*Casey smiles at Velma, then a hard look at Malcolm.*

CASEY

I thought I needed you. That's why I had to find you. My hope was that you had to do what you did because there was something critical going on in your life. (nods) Oh, there was something critical, right? Your next piece of ass!

*Casey stares at him for a long moment. She then slowly walks to the door. She turns.*

You wanted me out of your life. You got it! One search has ended...in FAILURE! The search goes on.

MALCOLM

Where are you going?

CASEY

Where I need to be.

*Casey exits.*

CURTAIN