

KILGALLEN/JONES

A play about murder, kind of

By Allison Page

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Characters:

DOROTHY KILGALLEN - Forever 52 years old.

ALEXIS JONES - young community college student from a chaotic childhood

RAE - young chill community college student

GORDO - young charismatic community college student

Setting:

The stage is split in two. On one side is Dorothy's home office, 1960s. On the other side, a basement in Cleveland, Ohio, 2017.

*The events of the play are based on both fact and fiction. The following script should not be taken as a sincere attempt at telling the true story of every aspect of Dorothy Kilgallen's life, work, and death, but rather Dorothy's story is a lens through which to view the phenomenon of death as entertainment.

SCENE 1

RAE's basement. Not much furniture. It's implied that a TV is in the direction of the audience. RAE, ALEXIS, and GORDO sit on either a futon or some bean bags on the floor, which also function as ALEXIS' bed. There is one window into the basement, one of those short windows that shows only a foot or two of ground and sunlight outside the room, light tends to gleam in from there, and if someone were to walk by it during the day, a shadow would be visible in the room. There's a big stack of library books on the floor. They stare at the TV and are completely sucked into what they're watching. The three have been friends a long time, and thus they rarely give each other a chance to finish their sentences.

Whaaaat? Dude!

RAE

Sh!

ALEXIS & GORDO

They watch silently for a moment.

Oh my God, these cops are/

RAE

I know/

ALEXIS

They're like completely biased/

RAE

All cops are biased/

GORDO

That kid could never have killed that guy/

RAE

ALEXIS
All cops aren't biased/

GORDO
They kind of are though right/

RAE
He probably can't even tie his shoes without a second opinion/

ALEXIS
He totally could have killed that guy/

RAE
No way/

ALEXIS
Anyone can kill anyone/

RAE
Ok, no/

GORDO
I'm gonna kill that bag of Cheetos/

ALEXIS
'Fraid so/

RAE
*No, bitch. Pause it. *Pause it/**

GORDO
And here she goes again/

ALEXIS pauses the show.

ALEXIS
It's paused.

RAE
That kid is, like, what/

ALEXIS
15.

RAE

15! And the dead guy was/

GORDO

42.

RAE

42! 15 year olds are idiots. They don't have the capacity to do any planning. If you would have asked me what I was having for lunch when I was 15 I would have been like, 'I have *no* idea. I'm 15.'

ALEXIS

That's you, Rae. This kid is not you. He's just the same age as you were one time.

RAE

Look how huge that guy was! He was really tall and big. Like, look at his shoulders!

ALEXIS

So?

RAE

So he's *gigantic*. And he died from a *head wound*. How is *that* kid gonna give *that* guy a head wound?

GORDO

Ugh, these Cheetos are stale.

ALEXIS

Look at the crime scene.

(she rewinds and pauses)

Okay, that's where he died.

RAE

Yeah, in a parking garage. So what?

ALEXIS

So, there are a bunch of places Cody Truitt could have climbed up high enough to smash Greg Jackson over the head hard enough to kill him. Like, for instance, oh lookie here, a *Prius*. This Prius was parked less than a foot away from where Mr. Jackson died. Anyone can climb up on a Prius.

RAE

Ok, girl you know I have a Prius so don't even start.

GORDO

You know she's right, though. I've totally climbed up on your Prius just because I can.

ALEXIS

If you like your shitty Prius that's fine with me but Cody could absolutely have climbed up on it and killed Mr. Jackson really easily. One blow. Boom. Dead.

RAE

You call him Mr. Jackson like he's your psych professor or something.

GORDO

He wasn't a psych professor he was like an accountant.

ALEXIS

Paralegal.

GORDO

What's the difference?

ALEXIS

I have no idea. And if he were waiting on top of this dumb little Prius as Mr. Jackson was entering the parking garage-- Gordo, stand over here and be Mr. Jackson.

GORDO stands up and faces away from the women. ALEXIS is now the stand in for Cody. She approaches GORDO from behind.

ALEXIS

Mr. Jackson would never have seen Cody around the corner and before he knew it BLAM--

She mock-smashes GORDO over the head, he falls to the floor dramatically.

ALEXIS

--dead. Right there, on the ground. And all the blood would have gotten on the concrete floor and not on Cody Truitt's clothing because Mr. Jackson only started bleeding *after* he fell. I rest my case.

GORDO motions with his hand where the blood would be gushing from his head, complete with appropriate sound effects.

GORDO

GOOSH GOOSH GOOSH, AHHHH, the light is fading, my life...is...flashing before my eyes...my paralegal life...whatever that job...entails...I never...saw...Austria...in the spring.

He lets out a wheeze as he “dies”.

RAE

I am not clapping for that performance.

GORDO

Oh come on, I’m dead!

RAE

If only.

ALEXIS hits play and they go back to watching the show. They watch for a while, then talk without looking at each other because they’re still watching the show.

RAE

Are ya’ll going to the homecoming game?

ALEXIS

I don’t get why there’s a homecoming game at college, I thought that was a high school thing.

GORDO

Cuz it’s fun. And fun is *fun*.

ALEXIS

When is it?

RAE

Uh, tomorrow.

ALEXIS

Then no. I have a paper to work on. Which reminds me, I have to keep looking through these books.

Throughout the rest of the scene, ALEXIS continues to go through the stack of books, discarding them into a “no” pile one by one, unsatisfied with their subject matter.

RAE

Lex. It's community college. Nobody does the homework.

ALEXIS

I guess I'll be the first.

(discarding a book)

Serial stranglers are so boring. I'd go if it were a lame assignment.

RAE

Every assignment is a lame assignment.

They go back to watching the show. After a while:

GORDO

You're seriously not going? Like, seriously? Then who am I supposed to go with?

ALEXIS

Go with Rae, you both wanna go.

RAE

Yeah, what am I, chopped liver?

GORDO

I guess.

RAE

You guess I'm chopped liver or you guess you're going with me?

GORDO

Can't it be both?

ALEXIS

Children, please.

GORDO & RAE

Shut up.

ALEXIS

It's for my tv and radio class. The paper, I mean.

RAE

Radio? IS there even radio anymore?

ALEXIS

Yes, there is even radio. But there's also, like, other stuff. Other audio stuff.

RAE

At least it's not as boring as going to my computer class and pretending like I don't already know how to turn on a fucking desktop. If you're under 70 and you can't turn on a computer, you have bigger problems than this class can solve and I have a whole lot of questions for you. But also who even has a desktop? Just stack five iPads on top of each other and get it over with.

ALEXIS

You should test out of that class. It's such a waste of time.

RAE

So's everything else. It's an easy A. And it gives me a good excuse to not hang out with my mom and *Greg*.

RAE & ALEXIS

Ugh.

GORDO

What's the assignment?

ALEXIS

I have to write up a concept for a podcast, pitch it to the class, and create basically like an outline of what it would be about.

GORDO

Cool.

RAE

That sounds like actual work. Kind of.

ALEXIS

Yeah, sort of. But I figure I can just use like an old murder or something.

RAE & GORDO

Yeeees!

RAE

Girl, do a cold case!

ALEXIS

I want to find a really unique one. That's why I have this big 'ol stack of true crime books from the library. So far it's all pretty boring but I figure there has to be something in here somewhere. I want something I don't already know about.

Now all three of them are looking through the stack of books. They're discarding them left and right.

GORDO

(flipping through a book)

A man found alone on the beach in Australia with no identi-

ALEXIS

(not looking up)

The Somerton Man.

RAE

(flipping through a book)

Known as The Ice Cream Blonde, a starlet found dead in her car-

ALEXIS

Thelma Todd.

GORDO

Made famous by her leap from the H-

ALEXIS

Hollywood sign. Peg Entwistle. Actually at the time it was Hollywoodland but let's not split hairs. Anyway, that's a suicide not a murder so it doesn't really count anyway.

RAE

His house of horrors-

ALEXIS

Herman Mudgett.

RAE

No! H. H. Holmes.

ALEXIS

(nonchalant)

That was an alias. Real name was Herman Mudgett. Built a hotel in Chicago during the world's fair and just killed like everybody he could find basically.

Burned ‘em up in a furnace or packed ‘em up in trunks or possibly turned them into display skeletons like for medical schools.

RAE & GORDO

Ew.

ALEXIS

Totally ew.

RAE

Do one like that chick that’s always like “Wow. Um.” And she talks about that guy in prison and that dead girl from the 90s.

ALEXIS

Serial.

GORDO

What’s that chick’s name?

ALEXIS

Sarah Koenig.

GORDO

Oh, right.

RAE

Yeah just do that.

ALEXIS

Okay. But she already did it. Obviously I’m not using the same case. And there are at least 10 other podcasts just about that podcast.

They continue watching tv and flipping through books.

GORDO

Huh.

(beat)

Hm.

(beat)

Weird.

RAE

Care to share with the rest of the class?

GORDO

Well, you know, the JFK assassination-

ALEXIS

Ugh. No.

GORDO

Wait. Just-- here, gimme the remote.

GORDO grabs the remote and changes the channel.

RAE

Hey, grandma, why are we watching the game show network?

ALEXIS

I don't need a Life Alert just yet.

RAE

Those bathtubs with the door on the side are pretty dope, though.

GORDO

Wait...

(pointing)

This chick! Remember this chick?

ALEXIS

No...wait, yeah... Oh my god.

RAE

What?

ALEXIS

That's -- my mom and I used to watch this show together.

RAE

Ohh. Uhm.

RAE & GORDO look at each other. ALEXIS is fixed on the tv screen.

ALEXIS

That's uh...what's her name--

VO

We'll start the questioning with Dorothy Kilgallen.

ALEXIS

Dorothy! I knew that.

RAE

What does this have to do with anything?

ALEXIS

She doesn't look like she killed someone.

GORDO

She didn't. I mean, I don't know that, but that's not why we're watching this.

GORDO hands ALEXIS the book.

ALEXIS

Holy shit. Dorothy got murdered.

RAE

Let me see that.

RAE swipes the book and reads for a moment.

RAE

Um. This says her death was ruled accidental.

ALEXIS

Accidental is just another way of saying nobody has proven who killed her.

GORDO

Not yet, anyway.

ALEXIS

(smiling)

Not yet.

ALEXIS buries her face in the book. After a moment, RAE changes the channel back.

RAE

Oh shit, the kid did kill him! Damn.

Fuck.

GORDO

Told ya!

ALEXIS

I hate it when you're right.

RAE

Then you shouldn't hang out with me because it happens like so frequently, soooo...

ALEXIS

You were a know-it-all when we were 7 and you're a know-it-all now, with your Nancy Drewin' ass.

RAE

Please, I'm way more like Harriet the Spy. Or Mariska Hargitay from Law & Order SVU.

Or Ice T.

RAE

I'm totally cool with being Ice T.

ALEXIS

If anyone's Ice T, I'm Ice T. All right. I gotta go to work. I told Ricky I'd cover for him at the deli so he could get a neck tattoo.

GORDO

What a pal.

RAE

Bye.

ALEXIS

Yeah, see ya.

GORDO

GORDO exits. They go back to watching tv.

RAE

You heard anything from your mom?

No. ALEXIS

Cool. RAE

After a while.

Why? ALEXIS

Why what? RAE

Why are you asking if I heard from my mom? ALEXIS

Just wondering. RAE

Because if your mom and Greg want me to-- ALEXIS

No, shut up, it's cool. Stop being paranoid. They already told you it's cool like 6 months ago, so it's cool, so shut up. RAE

After a while.

You know I, like, appreciate staying here right? Because, like- ALEXIS

How many people get to say their best friend lives in the basement? Seriously. If everybody isn't jealous of us, they should be. And it's better than staying with your half brother mostly because I don't wanna go over there to see you. He's always creepin' on me and I'm like, "Um, no." I mean, that and he also never has food in the fridge. RAE

Yeah. ALEXIS
(smiling)

Thank God your mom is a psycho. RAE

ALEXIS

So we can spend all day watching true crime TV and eating popcorn?

RAE

Exactly.

Beat.

ALEXIS

I wonder if she thinks about me. Like, I wonder she if she thinks I'm hanging out in your basement eating popcorn or if she thinks I'm shooting up and riding a skateboard while pregnant and smoking two cigarettes at the same time.

RAE

You are so not cool enough to do that.

ALEXIS

Yeah but she doesn't know that.

RAE

You and your mom are so different. The apple fell super far from the tree and then rolled away into the next county.

ALEXIS

I don't know.

RAE

You don't think so?

ALEXIS

Maybe she was just like me when she was my age. And then, later...ya know, like maybe she was different when she was our age, is all I'm saying.

RAE

I guess. But maybe she was always just a psycho bitch. Remember on your birthday when she showed up to school on Percocet and brought raisin cookies for the class? Like you *know* she was messed up if she thought a bunch of 11 year olds would eat *raisins*.

ALEXIS

Yeah, maybe.

RAE

I'd say it's a 50/50 chance.

Very scientific.

ALEXIS

Thank you.

RAE

You're welcome.

ALEXIS

Ready?

RAE
(holding up a piece of popcorn)

Aim.

ALEXIS
(also holding up a piece of popcorn)

Fire!

RAE & ALEXIS

They each throw their popcorn at the other's
mouth and catch it.

That would be a horrible way to die -- choking to death on a piece of popcorn, I mean.
Anything even close to suffocation is just like, *no thank you*. That shit is not cute.

ALEXIS

You should go to homecoming though.

RAE

Ice T would never go to homecoming unless there was a dead body.

ALEXIS

It's 24 hours away, plenty of time for a corpse to show up in the gym.
(she holds the bag of Cheetos out to
ALEXIS)

Cheeto?

ACT I SCENE 2

ACT I SCENE 2

Dorothy Kilgallen's office at home. Dorothy enters, removes her coat, sets down her purse, and sits at her desk which is littered with papers, folders, pencils, letters, a blotter, a radio, and a typewriter circa the early 1960s. The radio is playing music of the time. DOROTHY types at the end of a page for a few moments, then finishes the page, takes it out of the typewriter, and adds it to a stack of other typed pages. She picks up a pen to make notes on the finished stack of papers.

RADIO VO

And now we bring you live to the Villa Venice club on the outskirts of Chicago, Illinois where Ol' Blue Eyes, that is, Mr. Frank Sinatra, is horsing around with two of his best pals, Dean and Sammy.

SINATRA VO

All right, Mr. Ken Lane, whenever you're ready, we're going to sing a few of these songs. We hope you enjoy them. What are you staring at? [SINGING] Brassieres. I dig a broad with no brassieres.[SINGING] When you're alone, who cares for starlit skies? Where does it hurt, baby? When you're alone. I've met many, many male finks. But I never met a female fink until I met Dorothy Kilgallen. How's that for an opener? [LAUGHTER] I wouldn't mind if she was a good-looking fink. The town where she came from, they had a beauty contest when she was 17 years old, and nobody won. There was a poor little Chinese kid. The boy was standing there. There was nobody else. They gave him the cup because he was better looking than the broads in the line.

DOROTHY scoffs and turns off the radio. She puts her reading glasses on and looks through a stack of papers on her desk.

DOROTHY

Sure, hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, but hell can also keep no grudge like a man who's been insulted by a woman. Honestly, it's so predictable I could start right in retching. But I won't. Because I'm a lady. So I'll have a drink instead. That short-tempered short-height-ed man sure does like to hear himself talk. Everybody gets defensive when their long-established unfortunate behavior over the course of years and years is pointed out in a public forum, and while he may have called me the, uh, Chin-less Wonder...

She places her hand on her chin, jaw, and neck, rubbing for a brief moment as she talks.

I can call him many more things as I have the advantage of a more extensive vocabulary and the truth in my favor and there is nothing more cutting than the truth, but I've always got such an awful lot of work to do. On the other hand, the truth is pressing and Frank's friends are all low-life gangsters. Who wouldn't want to read about that? His adoring public ought to know how cozy Ol' Blue Eyes is with Sam Giancana, Mickey Cohen and all of their rough-housing pals. Poor Frank. It's amazing how tough men think they are, when all it takes to tear them to pieces is one Ava Gardner walking out into the cool dark night, taking her sizeable bust with her, and then there they are, weeping in the corner, and lashing out at me for mentioning it. Most men love a nice round of Shoot The Messenger. Whether I've got a chin or not at least I've still got my pride. And honestly he is a bit too short to be throwing stones. He won't hit anything above my kneecaps, if I'm wearing decent heels, and when am I not? *

She mixes a drink as she looks at the papers.

DOROTHY

I probably sound like a man-hater. Truthfully, I'm anything but! I'll gladly stand behind a man I believe in. Poor Dr. Sheppard. God only knows if we can get him out, but if ever anybody didn't get a fair shake it was him. Of course, when a wife is bludgeoned to death and blood splattered all over the walls; the only objects stolen then found in the bushes behind the house, we all suspect the husband because at the very least we've read some compelling fiction in our lives. But that doesn't mean we're right. Murder can be awfully simple or awfully not. Messy business either way. Messy, messy business. Fortunately or unfortunately, I believe him. But no one ever wants to side with me right away. Thankfully I have the constitution to spend years at a time repeating myself until everyone sighs reluctantly and says "I suppose Dorothy's right again." And I say cheers to that. *

DOROTHY suddenly stands, facing the audience and shouts.

DOROTHY

YOU'RE ALL GOING TO DIE. YOUR BRAINS WILL SPILL OUT ON THE CARPET OF YOUR PITIFUL LIFE.

Lights come up on the other side of the stage.
Dorothy's side goes dark and she disappears.
ALEXIS has been asleep. She wakes up suddenly, startled, disoriented.

ALEXIS

WHA?

RAE

You just Rip Van Winkled like the entire afternoon. I had to resort to *reading*.

RAE holds up a trashy magazine or a romance novel or some other piece of non-literature.

ALEXIS

Oh. Sorry. I was...I just had a dream about... I was doing some research and I ate a bunch of Doritos and fell asleep so it got all fucked up in my head and--

RAE

Please do not explain your dreams to me.

ALEXIS

Yeah, no, I won't. Everybody hates that.

(she checks her face for drool)

I have to keep working on this thing.

RAE

So work, then. I'll just keep reading until I get a PHD or my eyeballs fall out, whichever happens first.

ALEXIS starts taping photos of people's faces on the wall: Dorothy Kilgallen, John F. Kennedy, Jack Ruby, Lee Harvey Oswald, Richard Kollmar, Jackie Kennedy, Arlene Francis, Bennett Cerf, John Daly, and one that's just a black outline of a man with a question mark drawn above it.

RAE

Okay so which ones are the suspects?

ALEXIS

Hm? Oh, I'm not totally sure yet.

RAE

(getting up and inspecting the photos)

JFK was kinda hot.

ALEXIS

Yeah, for a president.

RAE

I miss having a president who doesn't look like an angry ball sack. I'm glad you didn't do a Marilyn Monroe thing. It's like every blonde teenager girl's favorite murder and it's like...guys, c'mon, there are so many other ones.

ALEXIS

Totally. Okay, you're going to have to be quiet now, because I need to record.

RAE

Record what?

ALEXIS

My podcast.

RAE

But-

ALEXIS

SH!

RAE rolls her eyes. ALEXIS sets up her makeshift recording studio: headphones, a cheap mic, her laptop, a stack of notes, and her cell phone. She taps her phone several times, and suspenseful music plays for a few seconds.

RAE

What is--

ALEXIS puts a finger to her lips, then grabs a sign which reads "SILENCE! THE STUDIO IS IN USE! PLEASE TAKE YOUR CONVERSATIONS OUTSIDE!" And tapes it on the wall. RAE coughs loudly, once, on purpose.

ALEXIS

From my friend's basement in Cleveland, Ohio, I'm Alexis Jones and this is Sequential: one story told until it's over.

RAE

Wow.

ALEXIS

(putting her hand over the mic)

Oh my God, shut up!

(back to the mic)

Death. Intrigue. More death. More intrigue.

For an entire week, I have been researching the life and death of 1960s journalist Dorothy Kilgallen.

Lights come up on DOROTHY. She silently stands in a series of poses as ALEXIS talks about her. Maybe she types a couple of words, maybe she stares through a magnifying glass, maybe she jots notes down on a pad.

ALEXIS

While reading through a pile of true crime books, I stumbled upon the story of this tremendous woman, a woman as adept at crime reporting--

RAE mouths "ADEPT?"

ALEXIS

--as she was at writing about the varied adventures and misadventures of pop culture icons like Frank Sinatra and Elvis Prestley. A woman pre-occupied by the mysterious deaths of others, winds up dead herself; a cocktail of pills and booze in her stomach. But was it an accidental overdose,

DOROTHY quickly mimes accidentally overdosing and falls on the floor.

ALEXIS

-suicide,

DOROTHY quickly stands up, mimes slicing her wrists, and crumples to the floor.

ALEXIS

or something else?

DOROTHY mimes being murdered, or just shrugs.

ALEXIS

Join me, as I search for answers, and come up with new questions. There's only one way to solve the mystery of Dorothy's death, and that's to investigate it...like Dorothy would if it was...someone else.

She plays the song again, looking extremely satisfied. DOROTHY brushes her hands off and smiles as the lights fade out on her side of the stage. Once the song is finished, she takes off her headphones. She turns to RAE. RAE goes back to reading.

ALEXIS

And that's how you start a podcast.

RAE

That was ridiculous.

ALEXIS

I worked really hard on that.

RAE

On that? It's like 30 seconds long.

ALEXIS

I don't want to get all the good stuff out at once.

RAE

And it's basically exactly like Serial if Serial were made in a basement in Cleveland.

ALEXIS

Um that's what you told me to do.

RAE

Yeah that's before it was an *actual* thing.

ALEXIS

And when I get sponsors I will thank them at the end, ya know during the second music chunk. So that's what that's for.

RAE

Who is going to sponsor that?

ALEXIS

I don't know.

RAE

I thought you were just supposed to make an *outline* of a podcast.

ALEXIS

I was, and then once I got into it I was like, ya know, go big or go home type of deal. If I make it awesome enough, Mr. Fitzham may put me on as a DJ for the college station.

RAE

Girl no one listens to the radio and if they did it wouldn't be that station.

ALEXIS

And that wasn't an episode it was a *teaser*. Just something to get the people excited.

RAE

Ooohhhh, the people. Okay.

ALEXIS

I'm just saying, don't judge it by the teaser.

RAE

Let me know when you give this up.

ALEXIS

Um, all right, I'll get back to you when that never happens.

RAE

Please. This is just like tennis, building mini robots, cooking thai food, fighting for rain forests, painting, and putting all those little pictures on t-shirts.

ALEXIS

Screenprinting.

RAE

Maybe I'd remember what it's called if you didn't quit doing it pretty much immediately.

ALEXIS

Thanks for believing in me. And whatever, you still wear that t-shirt with Martin Van Buren on it.

RAE

I thought that shit was a lion.

ALEXIS

No, it's from when I was really into historical politics because of Hamilton.

RAE

Looks like a lion.

ALEXIS

I made it in a hurry. Look, none of this is the point.

RAE

Let's get Taco Bell.

ALEXIS

I have to keep working on this stuff.

RAE

What, you're not gonna eat? We've been talking about Taco Bell for like...days.

ALEXIS

I have one of your mom's Clif Bars in my bag.

RAE

That is not food, okay...All right. I'll just see you tomorrow then.

RAE grabs her stuff and leaves. ALEXIS waves at her without looking. She puts the headphones back on, holds her phone up and plays the song again.

ALEXIS

From my friend's basement in Cleveland, Ohio, I'm Alexis Jones and this is Sequential: one story told until it's over. Welcome to episode one: The Expert Game Player. Only super old people remember Dorothy Kilgallen as one of the best television game show players in the history of television game shows, but it is an essential part of her story - *before* all the really creepy stuff. In 1950 Dorothy became a panelist on What's My Line, guessing the occupations and identities of civilians and famous people alike, and proved herself a shrewd competitor. Her razor-sharp brain could cut glass. Note to self, keep hyperbole in check because you get too excited sometimes and it's kind of a lot. Leaving 3 seconds of silence to find this spot and edit out the note.

Three seconds pass. ALEXIS nods and proceeds with the recording. A spotlight comes up on the other side of the stage, with DOROTHY in it.

ALEXIS

A petite, somewhat mousy brunette, seemingly without a chin-

DOROTHY self consciously touches her chin.

ALEXIS

-she may have seemed an easy opponent from the look of her, but she pulled zero punches. Her questions as pointed as daggers -- ugh, note hyperbole again --

(She leaves three seconds of silence,
holding fingers up as she counts in her
head, and starts over)

Her questions were pointed and she always played to win. Imagine, if you will, a nondescript person enters, sits across from a row of panelists, and is introduced by the host, John Daly. The grilling starts, of course, with our pal Dorothy.

DOROTHY pauses very briefly after each question that she asks, as if she is being answered by someone each time.

DOROTHY

Do you perform your services for both men and women? Do you perform your services indoors? Do you use special tools in your work? Do you deal with animals? Do those animals have legs? Are they domesticated animals? Do you care for them as opposed to, perhaps, training them? Are you a veterinarian?

Applause sounds. DOROTHY smiles.

ALEXIS

And she was equally quick with special celebrity guests she wasn't allowed to look at.

DOROTHY is now wearing a blindfold.

DOROTHY

Are you primarily a motion picture star? Oh. Have you ever been a member of this panel? Oh. Hmm... Do you make records? Oh! Oh, maybe it's Satchmo!

She's correct. Applause sounds. She laughs and takes off her blindfold, pleased. She claps.

ALEXIS

Dorothy wasn't only a great game player, though. She was also a respected, revered, and sometimes reviled, journalist. And what kind of stories did she cover, you may ask?
Murder.

ALEXIS plays spooky music from her phone.

ALEXIS

Should that be plural? Uh...*MURDERS*. She covered some of the most high profile, brutal crimes of her day, and people ate it up like stacks of pancakes...or...damn it...

She stops recording and takes her headphones off. Lights fade out on DOROTHY.

ALEXIS

People ate it up like...uh, medium rare steaks, because they're still kinda bloody? Or, like, a McRib because you can eat like ten of those at once...or those red Starburst...ugh.

She rubs her temples, then catches a glimpse of her phone. She picks it up, then stands, dials a number, and paces like people do on the phone. It rings a few times, then goes to voicemail.

ALEXIS

Hey, mom. Or, mom's voicemail. I just thought I'd, uh...yeah I don't know. I'm working on a thing for school you'd probably think was cool. Like we used to watch this show together, you probably don't even remember, um this dumb game show. You watched it with grandma when she was alive, I think you said. I mean of course you watched it with her when she was alive you wouldn't have watched it with her when she was dead you're not *that* crazy, I don't think--

ACT I SCENE 3

ACT I SCENE 3

She hears a noise and immediately ends the call and tosses the phone on the desk.

ALEXIS

(shouting off)

I told you, I don't have time for a Chalupa!

She hears a second noise.

ALEXIS

...Rae?

GORDO enters, suddenly.

GORDO

BOO!

ALEXIS is slightly alarmed.

ALEXIS
Oh. Hey, Gordo.

GORDO
Yeah, hey.

GORDO proceeds to make himself comfortable.

ALEXIS
(impatient but not unfriendly)
What's up?

GORDO
I missed you too.

ALEXIS
Sorry, I'm just working on this assignment.

GORDO
So take a break!

ALEXIS
Fine. You have five minutes.

GORDO
Okay, boss.

Silence.

ALEXIS
Um, don't you want to say something? Or do you plan to mime it?

GORDO
I'm choosing key points. If I only have five minutes I'm gonna skip like the first four things I was gonna talk about. Okay, first of all, point number one is: you look great.

ALEXIS
Thanks. I'm pretty sure I look the same as I did the last time you saw me, but thanks.

GORDO
Point number two is: it sucks shit that you didn't go to homecoming with me.

ALEXIS
Gordo-

GORDO

Continuation on point number two: it should have been really fun, but because you didn't come I had at least 80% less fun than I would have if you had been there. Maybe it seems really lame for a guy to be excited about homecoming, but I totally was so...there you go, I'm shattering those pre-conceived gender norms.

ALEXIS

I had work to do.

GORDO

But like, also, that was a week ago, which brings me to point three, which is why haven't you responded to my texts?

ALEXIS

I did!

GORDO

No, you didn't.

ALEXIS

Yes, I did! Here-

(looking through her phone)

On Monday you said, "Hey" and I said "Hey" back within two minutes. And on Tuesday you said, "Sup?" and I said "Nothin'" so, yeah, I responded! It's all right here.

GORDO

You know very well those do not count as responses.

ALEXIS

And you know very well those don't count as conversation starters.

GORDO

Uh, excuse me, but some of my deepest and best conversations have started with "Sup" and you know it.

ALEXIS

Well, sorry. Is that it?

GORDO

Wow. Okay. Wow. "Is that it?" Wow, Lex. If you don't wanna hang out with your handsome friend of like seven years with whom you have shared not only occasional milkshakes but also parts of your, like, *self*, and who accepted you even in your really weird but thankfully short-lived goth phase, and attended poetry slams just so you could read *The Raven* out loud, you can just say that. Don't cold shoulder me, that's not cool. But also you *should* want to hang out with me. I'm really fun, everybody says so.

They're like, "Gordo you are literally the life of the party, otherwise it would be a corpse party," and I'm like, "yeah."

ALEXIS

I've just been busy. I need to focus on my school work. I have a big assignment. Don't make it into a whole thing.

GORDO

Uh huh. Sure. Biiiiiiig assignment. Come on. Let's go to the combination KFC/Taco Bell. You can get extra crispy chicken full of weird KFC hormones, I'll get a Chalupa, and everybody's happy.

ALEXIS

I really shouldn't. But I think Rae is already there. She said she wanted Taco Bell and that's the only one within walking distance so you'll probably run into her there anyway.

GORDO

Remember when we used to crawl up on Rae's roof while she was sleeping?

ALEXIS

(sighing)

Yes, I do.

GORDO

Remember when we found Rae's mom's white zin and made out on the roof?

ALEXIS

Okay, we did *not* make out.

GORDO

Pretty much.

ALEXIS

We kissed like twice. A kiss is not a make out.

GORDO

Agree to disagree.

ALEXIS

Gordoooooooo.

GORDO

Sorry to bother you, I guess.

ALEXIS

Don't be--ugh, we'll go to Taco Bell next week since I guess everyone's obsessed with Taco Bell now.

GORDO

It's fine. I'm gonna go get a Chalupa. Chalupas never let me down.

ALEXIS

You *are* actually really fun.

GORDO

Duh. Okay, how 'bout this: when we get back from Ye Olde Chalupa House, I'll search through Rae's mom's cabinet of wonders and see if she has any mini bottles of Sour Apple Pucker we can mix with some Sprite.

ALEXIS

Ew.

GORDO

We could take shots of bourbon and smoke cigars, except that's nasty. I am a proud man with a sweet tooth.

ALEXIS

Sure, sure, fine. I'll hold your hair back when you're throwing up pure liquified candy.

GORDO

That's the spirit.

ALEXIS

Oh, get outta here. I'll meet you guys over there in like 10 minutes. Get me some crunchy tacos.

GORDO does little shooty fingers at ALEXIS.
She does little shooty fingers back. GORDO
exits. ALEXIS immediately puts her headphones
back on and starts recording.

ALEXIS

Next time on Sequential: once a 20-something low ranking reporter willing to write about every murder and describe every corpse, Dorothy had seen more dead bodies than any other young, sophisticated, cocktail-dress-wearing lady in her time, and knew when a case didn't fit the mold.

In the case of John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination, there was no mold. Lee Harvey Oswald, Jack Ruby, Dorothy Kilgallen, and the CIA got all mixed up together, and by the end, two more people were dead.

She plays the theme song again. Talking over it:

ALEXIS

Sequential is brought to you by

(pause)

Insert future sponsor here, Alexis.

(pause)

Use promo code 'fill in the rest here' but hopefully it's something like SequentialDeal or IHeartSequential or something...note to self, reach out to Audible because apparently they'll sponsor basically anything. Also AdamAndEve.com sex stuff. Also SquareSpace. Maybe avoid Mail Chimp because it's expected. Be unexpected.

(yawning)

Notes for next episode--

(she yawns again)

Focus on Jack Ruby interview. Also maybe get some sleep.

ALEXIS throws on a jacket and exits.

ACT I SCENE 4

ACT I SCENE 4

In darkness, we hear a mixture of sounds: a large crowd chattering, "Hail to the Chief" plays softly, crowd sounds grow more excited, crowd applauds, some call out happily, then three gun shots, confusion, screaming. Lights up on ALEXIS' side of the stage. She gasps awake. She is sweating.

ALEXIS

No more tacos before bed.

Lights up on DOROTHY's side of the stage. She sits, facing the audience. The lighting is different. DOROTHY is different. She's focused, serious, even more so than usual. She holds a folder with some papers in her hand. She has glasses somewhere either on her person, or in a purse on the floor. Wherever they are, they are not on her face.

DOROTHY

I'm so glad we could talk. You're not an easy man to get to, of course. I get the feeling that even before you were in this predicament, you may have been a little hard to get to, so I'm awfully flattered you could make the time to see me.

She pauses, presumably to receive a compliment.

DOROTHY

You're not so bad yourself, Mr. Ruby. May I call you Jack?

ALEXIS has heard all this. She looks in the direction of the audience when she is looking at DOROTHY.

ALEXIS

What is this?

DOROTHY

(ignoring Alexis)

Good. Jack. I hope they've not been rough with you here. I know it can be a bit dreary.

They could do with a little decorating help, that's for certain, but it's not the worst one I've seen. Okay, Jack. I've read the Warren Commission report, I know it's not been released yet but women are often however industrious they need to be-- and I don't think this will come as much of a surprise -- it doesn't look so good for you. But I want to be sure I understand everything on your side, Jack. I just want to hear *your side*, you see? Because it seems there may be more than meets the eye, here. And if so, I want to hear about it, straight from the horse's mouth.

She pauses, he makes a joke about not being a horse.

DOROTHY

You're right, I should say you're not a horse, Jack.

DOROTHY laughs. ALEXIS lets out a single "ha".

DOROTHY

Let's get down to business. Think of me as a representative of The American People, Jack. Because that's how I think of it. That's how I think of myself. How do you think of *yourself*, Jack?

ALEXIS

...Dorothy?

DOROTHY

Shhh. Jack's talking.

ALEXIS

Oh my God, she can hear me.

DOROTHY

Pardon me, I can't read a thing without my cheaters.

DOROTHY retrieves her reading glasses, and puts them on. She opens her folder, looks through some papers, and takes out a piece of paper with some writing on it. She turns the paper so the writing is facing the audience, who is in Jack's place.

DOROTHY

What do you think of that, Jack?

(She pulls the paper away as if he were making a grab for it)

Ah, no. I'm so sorry. I can't let you have it. Tell me, what do you know, if anything, about the mafia?

ALEXIS pinches herself.

ALEXIS

Ow.

DOROTHY

It's fine you don't have to answer that. Is it true that Lee Harvey Oswald used to be a patron of your club?

(pause for Ruby's response)

And that club was a bit of a den for prostitution wasn't it? Oh, don't make that face, Mr. Ruby.

(to ALEXIS, snapping her fingers)

Journalists take notes, dear.

ALEXIS

Right, right.

ALEXIS scrambles around the room. She grabs a stack of post-its. She writes "Brothel" on a post-it and sticks it next to Jack Ruby.

DOROTHY

I've seen and heard more things than you could possibly imagine. A little run-of-the-mill operation for the romantically dubious won't shock me. Now, how many times had you spoken to Mr. Oswald?

DOROTHY nods at ALEXIS to make a note. ALEXIS moves Oswald's picture closer to Ruby's and puts up a post-it that says "Oswald/Ruby knew each other" and posts it between their photos.

DOROTHY

Oh, come now.

(pause for Ruby's response)

Who let you into Dallas Police Headquarters? Goodness knows you couldn't have just sauntered in while passing by. We're talking about the crime of the century, here. The most hated man in the country is being led through a basement of a law enforcement institution. A man who killed this great country's beloved leader, and there wasn't sufficient security? Well, excuse me, Mr. Ruby, but I just don't buy that.

ALEXIS, getting better at picking up on what to note, scrawls “How did Ruby enter basement?” And posts it. Writes “Connections in police dept?” and posts that.

DOROTHY

(pause)

Oh.

(pause)

I see. Go on.

ALEXIS

What? What’s he saying?

DOROTHY

I’m afraid I can’t tell you.

ALEXIS

What’s on that paper you showed him?

DOROTHY

(holding up the paper again)

You mean this?

ALEXIS

Yes! What is that? Is it about the CIA? Or the mafia?

DOROTHY daintily places the paper in her mouth and starts chewing it.

ALEXIS

No, I need to see that paper!

DOROTHY shrugs.

ALEXIS

Spit it out!

DOROTHY

(with a mouth full of paper)

If finding the truth were simple, everybody would do it, my dear. You’ll learn. Down the hatch.

(consuming more of the paper)

Time keeps secrets, Alexis. That's what it's here for. Otherwise what would we do? You're a newspaperman now. People will listen to you. But only if you've got a story. I can't do all the work for you.

ALEXIS

Now what?

DOROTHY

Now you keep digging. Thank goodness for non-toxic ink. I wouldn't want to be poisoned.

Sudden blackout on DOROTHY's side.

ALEXIS

...Dorothy? Okay. Okay. Find the story and tell it.

She turns to the wall of photos, post-its, and red string. She rearranges some of them. Thinks. Then runs over to the laptop, throws on her headphones, and starts recording.

ALEXIS

I'm Alexis Jones and this is Sequential. Welcome to episode 3: Find The Story. Time may keep secrets, but once you start digging, you're bound to uncover skeletons. Oooh, that was good. Okay, this episode is going to be a little different. I need you to help me put these pieces together. Maybe I could do it alone, but it'll be faster if you'll work with me. If you have any information about JFK or Dorothy Kilgallen, you can send it to me anonymously on my website -- made with SquareSpace! -- shout out to SquareSpace, you should sponsor this podcast -- at www.sequentialpodcast.com. You can also leave me a voicemail at the number on the contact page, and get out your pencils, because if you have something you want mailed directly to me--

Lights begin to fade out as she talks.

--you can send it right to my face at Alexis Jones, 1438 12th Ave, Cleveland, Ohio...

ACT I SCENE 5

ACT I SCENE 5

The next night. ALEXIS, RAE, and GORDO are watching a movie and eating popcorn. ALEXIS is on one end, RAE in the middle, and GORDO on the other end. It's a comedy. RAE and GORDO laugh. ALEXIS just stares with her arms crossed. RAE notices. GORDO grabs a handful of popcorn and hands the bowl to RAE, who grabs a handful and hands the bowl to ALEXIS, who takes it but grabs no popcorn, and sets the bowl on the floor next to her. She yawns.

RAE

(to GORDO)

Did you finish that assignment for Computer Basics?

GORDO

You mean "Make A Fucking Spreadsheet, You Idiot?" Yeah, I finished that.

ALEXIS takes her phone out and starts messing with it.

RAE

Maybe next they'll ask us to use the paint program to draw a smiley face.

GORDO

Or teach us how to click play on a YouTube video.

ALEXIS is still on her phone. RAE reaches her arm out limply for the popcorn bowl. ALEXIS ignores her. RAE slowly brings her arm up to rub it in ALEXIS' face.

ALEXIS

Knock it off.

RAE

(looking to the popcorn)

Little help?

ALEXIS absently grabs the bowl and drops it into RAE's lap. She's still on her phone.

GORDO grabs a handful of the popcorn as it sits in RAE's lap.

GORDO

Ugh, needs more salt.

GORDO exits to get more salt.

RAE

Hey. Shit head.

ALEXIS

Hm?

RAE

What is your deal? Put down your phone. You said we were going to watch a movie.

ALEXIS

There's a movie on, isn't there?

RAE

Yeah but you haven't watched any of it.

ALEXIS

I'm getting the gist.

RAE

What is sooooo interesting about your phone?

ALEXIS

The third episode of my podcast went up this morning so I'm checking my stats.

RAE

Your stats. Okay. Great, you checked 'em. Back to the movie, please. Be cool.

RAE grabs ALEXIS' phone and sets it out of her reach. GORDO enters with salt. He grabs the bowl and salts the popcorn, then takes a handful.

GORDO

Much better. Oh, Lex, I see you've decided to join us.

ALEXIS

Pass the popcorn.

ALEXIS reaches over and grabs the bowl. They all watch the movie. A funny thing happens and they all laugh. Then ALEXIS' phone dings. She looks at it, but RAE clearly isn't going to hand it to her. It dings again. And again. And again. More and more dinging sounds, closer and closer together, like popcorn popping.

RAE

Oh my God, fine. Here.

RAE grabs the phone and half hands, half throws the phone at ALEXIS.

ALEXIS

Thanks.

RAE

Just turn the sound off. Only sociopaths leave the sound on.

ALEXIS

Holy shit.

GORDO

Shh.

ALEXIS

Wow.

RAE rolls her eyes.

ALEXIS

Oh my God!

GORDO

WHAT? You clearly want us to ask, so what is it?

ALEXIS

My podcast! Sarah Koenig retweeted it! It's going viral! Look! Look at my retweets! She said "Fans of Serial, meet your new favorite podcast." Oh my god!

GORDO

Since when does she tweet?

ALEXIS

Since now, I guess!

RAE looks at her phone, grabs it, and immediately puts it back on the floor.

RAE

You have like 20 retweets and 30 favorites. I'd hardly call that going viral. One time I had a pretty good cookie, not amazing just pretty good, I took a picture of it and I got like 40 favorites.

She grabs a handful of popcorn and shoves it in her mouth. ALEXIS does the same.

GORDO

(watching the movie)

Ashton Kutcher does not get nearly enough credit.

ALEXIS

I think it's about the right amount.

RAE

Don't pout just because I took your phone.

ALEXIS

Excuse me for actually caring about something.

Long, uncomfortable silence.

GORDO

Is Punk'd still a show?

Silence.

RAE

I care about things.

GORDO

What was that show that wasn't Punk'd but was basically Punk'd?

RAE & ALEXIS

Candid Camera.

Nah, that's not it. GORDO

I'm s-- ALEXIS

Here, check your stats. RAE

She hands the phone to ALEXIS, who immediately checks the stats.

Twenty thousand retweets. ALEXIS
(in disbelief)

No way. RAE

This can't be right. ALEXIS

RAE checks Twitter on her own phone.

Twenty five thousand. RAE

26,000! ALEXIS
(she jumps to her feet)

You guys, what's happening?! RAE

27,000! RAE

RAE jumps up to join ALEXIS and they both dance around.

This is crazy! ALEXIS

27,500! RAE

Does this mean we're rich now? GORDO

RAE

Um, no, podcasts don't pay. But we might get famous!

GORDO

Yeeees!

They all dance around together.

ALEXIS

Yes!...Well...

RAE

What?

ALEXIS

I mean...technically...I...

RAE

Uh huh.

ALEXIS

Well, it's just...it's my podcast, you know.

GORDO

(can see this is not going to be pretty)

Oh boy.

RAE

Um. We have been watching true crime together for like our whole lives.

ALEXIS

Yeah.

RAE

And Gordo is the one who found this case, not you.

GORDO

Oh, I don't really want to be par--

RAE

You shouldn't let her take advantage of you like that.

ALEXIS

Um, I am not taking advantage of him. Gordo, I am not taking advantage of you.

RAE

So, you don't think we had anything to do with this?

ALEXIS

Not really. I mean, I did all the work. So...

RAE

You're saying if you get like super famous off of this, we're not even like...part of that?

ALEXIS

I mean...

RAE

Cool, Lex. Cool. All for one and one for one. Whatever.

ALEXIS

Dude. Come on. I'm busting my butt for this!

RAE

I was just fucking around, anyway. You're not famous, you know.

ALEXIS

I know.

RAE

Do you though?

Tense beat.

GORDO

(gesturing back to the tv)

Man, Punk'd was really ahead of its time.

ACT I SCENE 6

ACT I SCENE 6

ALEXIS is recording her podcast. She's a little better at it now. She's surrounded by empty cans of energy drinks. A pile of FedEx and USPS boxes is in the corner. A stack of mail lies in the desk.

ALEXIS

November 22nd, 1963. John F. Kennedy waves to his public from a car in Dallas, Texas. Moments later, he was dead. While the official word from the FBI and the Warren Commission was that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone, many disagree, and think something super devious was behind the death of one of history's fave presidents.

ALEXIS plays suspenseful music. Lights up on Dorothy's side of the stage.

DOROTHY

Some people say the most obvious explanation is often the correct one, and while that's a catchy sentiment I do not find it to be terribly accurate and I refuse to accept an easy answer with no back up. Research is what separates us from the animals. That and gin. I've seen women who poisoned their husbands -- though, who wouldn't want to, occasionally. I've seen men who hacked their mistresses to bits. I've seen corpses floating in stagnant water. I've described those corpses for money, because that's the business, you know. "Blue suit jacket, white buttons, intestines dangling like a tetherball in the crisp New York air." The public want the graphic details so they can say, "My god, what graphic details, how awful, I can't believe they published such graphic details!" And really it's all they can do to keep from salivating. Filthy, but human. Me? I wouldn't say I've got any such voyeuristic tendencies. I just want to know the truth. The truth shall set you free, and if the truth is your business, as it has been mine, a big enough truth can buy you an awfully nice living; nice enough that television cameras come into your home so you can describe the inspiration behind your drapery and paint choices, which are certainly impeccable. That's the American way. And no one is a bigger name or a more American name or a more fascinating name than Jack Kennedy. And trust me, if somebody as big as that is taken out, never accept the obvious. You have to ask yourself, "how many coincidences am I willing to accept?" Well, I'm not willing to accept many. RFK wanted to crack down on the mob's control of just about anything they wanted to control absolutely, and what better way to get to him than through his brother, the real keeper of the power.

There's a knock at ALEXIS' door. Dorothy's side of the stage goes dark. ALEXIS stops recording.

ALEXIS

What?

RAE enters.

RAE

Hey.

ALEXIS

Hey. Kind of in the middle of something. Did the sign fall off the door? I had a sign on the door.

RAE

No, it didn't. Did you not go to class today? Because it seems like you didn't go to class today.

ALEXIS

Didn't feel well.

RAE

You're sick?

ALEXIS

No, I'm not "sick" I just didn't feel well.

RAE

Okay.

ALEXIS

I can stay home for a day without having consumption.

RAE

Okay.

Beat.

ALEXIS

Did you need something?

RAE

Are you gonna go to class tomorrow?

ALEXIS
(annoyed)

Probably.

RAE

Cool.

Beat.

ALEXIS

I'm working on my podcast.

RAE

Yeah. Yeah, I figured that. How's it going?

ALEXIS

Rae, I think I'm getting close to something here! Okay, so JFK was assassinated, right? Obviously everybody knows that. And the guy who killed him -- I mean, supposedly, you know, like almost no one thinks he acted alone you'd just about have to be an idiot to think that-- anyway *he* gets shot by Jack Ruby, right? And then Jack Ruby like gets arrested immediately, and then Dorothy actually gets to *interview* him because he's kind of a fan of hers, I mean she was really famous back then. Okay, so she is like putting the pieces together and shit's getting real, okay? I mean if you've been listening to the podcast you might know all of this but I'm guessing you haven't, anyway -- so she starts telling people that she is figuring it out, that she's going to basically blow the lid off--

RAE

That sounds...crazy.

ALEXIS

Totally crazy, and--

RAE

My mom and Greg and I are going to the movies, you wanna come?

ALEXIS

Nah, not right now. Anyway, the thing is, she's got this folder just absolutely *full* of--

RAE

Lex, this is great, but they're waiting, I just wanted to see if you were coming with us. The string stuff looks cool. You can tell me about it later, okay?

ALEXIS

Yeah, cool! Cool. I'll have more to say later, anyway.

RAE

Mom's just been...I mean, if she finds out you're not going to class...I mean, that was kind of the deal, right? Like she's cool with you being here -- and Greg, too -- they're cool with you being here and everything but you have to go to class.

ALEXIS

I know what the deal is.

RAE

Okay. Just reminding you.

ALEXIS

Did you tell them? Like, that I haven't been going?

RAE

No.

ALEXIS

Hm. Okay.

RAE

What's that supposed to mean? "Hm?" What's that "hm" about?

ALEXIS

No, nothing. Just processing information.

RAE

Okay.

ALEXIS

Because if you don't tell them -- I mean, they won't know. They never come down here.

RAE

You're asking me to lie.

ALEXIS

I don't remember asking you to do anything.

RAE

Hm. Okay.

ALEXIS

Okay.

RAE

Congratulations on your Tweets.

ALEXIS

You haven't done your homework basically ever, so I don't know why you're acting like--

RAE

At least I show up.

ALEXIS

I'll get an amazing grade in this class when this project is done. He'll have no other option because I went above and beyond to earn it. I'm not worried about it. And this is bigger than that, anyway. I'm gonna solve an *actual* murder, Rae. Or maybe even two!

RAE

What about your other classes?

ALEXIS

(laughing)

Okay, let's remember that you're not actually my mom.

RAE

Someone's gotta be. See ya.

ALEXIS

(shouting after RAE as she starts to leave)

I'm a seeker of wisdom and truth!

RAE exits. ALEXIS grabs her phone, makes a call, and paces.

ALEXIS

Hey mom's voicemail. So I don't know if you've been like...checking these messages or if I'm just screaming into nothingness, but my podcast is doing really well! Like I'm really...proud of it, you know? That probably sounds so stupid. Ugh this is dumb, I don't even know why I'm leaving this message. It would just be...cool if you thought it was cool. I mean you don't have to think it's cool, really, but you know...it's like...public...so you could listen to it if you...wanted to. Or something. Or not. I just...what if I finally found something that I don't suck at, you know? Yeahhh, very on the fence about just deleting this. Blah.

She ends the call and tosses the phone down.

ALEXIS

That was fucking stupid.

ALEXIS sits back down and plops her headphones back on. She closes her eyes for a moment and breathes slowly. She rubs her temples in frustration. Lights come back up on Dorothy's side of the stage. She's holding a big folder, stuffed full of papers.

DOROTHY

It's all in here. Everything. Everything I need to show the public what's really happened. And it's my duty to do that. It's what my father would do, and I am my father's daughter. We've all got to come from somewhere, and I come from the truth. Sometimes you've got to get your hands dirty. Sometimes you've got to experiment. I had my husband stand in the window of our house, holding a broom, and I walked the same distance away as a supposed eyewitness who claimed he could see the rifle in the window of the book depository, and you know what -- I couldn't see the blasted thing. Perhaps not a perfect science, but surely a place to start. If you want to dig things up, you can't just read, you've got to act -- often alone. But we mustn't let that get us down, no. The best work is often done alone, I have found.

The phone on DOROTHY's desk rings. She answers.

DOROTHY

Hello? Oh right you are, look at the time. I'll be there in a flash.

DOROTHY closes the folder on her desk and grabs her purse.

DOROTHY

You've got to be like Nellie Bly. You've got to be brave like Nellie. She always put herself right in the soup. Of course, sometimes when you're in the soup they'll say you're a cracker, but that just means you're on to something. Or you have actually lost your mind. Fortunately, or unfortunately, you won't know until all is said and done and, possibly, dead.

DOROTHY grabs her coat. Her side of the stage goes dark.

ALEXIS

Dorothy had the case cracked wide open, but since she hadn't shared her information with anyone, it was really more like wide closed. Who had the most to lose if Dorothy solved the JFK assassination? Who was Dorothy meeting up with in the final days of her life, and is that person responsible for her death? Next time on Sequential: one story told until it's over.

A shortened version of the theme music plays.

ALEXIS

And now, some listener mail. Derek S. writes, "Hey Lex, I was just wondering, does anyone else work on the 'cast? You never list credits. Most others do, so I hope you're not forgetting to credit people, that would be fucked up." Hey Derek, the answer is no, I'm the only...staff member. Just me! Sometimes having a small, tight team makes things easier. So, yeah...nobody else.

(She grabs a piece of mail from the pile
and opens it)

This is from...Bridget K. Oh, it looks like a newspaper clipping. "Dear Alexis, love the show," aw, thanks, Bridge. I'm sure you're good at...ya know, whatever you do, too. "Here's a clipping of one of Dorothy's articles about JFK. My great aunt had it lying around in a stack of other stuff and I thought you might give it a home. Don't mind the stain in the corner, it's just coffee! Keep tellin' the story until it's over. Love, Bridget." Wow, thank you! That's so cool.

(she clicks around on her laptop)

And now, I'll play a voice message from the Sequential inbox, from MysteryMan22!

She clicks play on a voice message.

MAN'S VOICE

What are you doing for the rest of your life? Love your voice. I listen to it right before I go to sleep.

ALEXIS

Um, wow, thanks. What am I doing for this rest of my life? Uh, working on this podcast, I guess. Thanks for listening, and if you have a question you'd like to ask, just send it to questions4lex@sequentialpodcast.com or submit it anonymously on the site. And like any good newspaperwoman, I never reveal my sources, except the ones that sign their names at the end.

She takes off her headphones and closes her laptop. She stands and looks at the wall of photos, pins up the new clipping, then touches the black outline of the mysterious man, running her fingers around the shape. She hears a sound.

ALEXIS

Hello?

Beat. She pins up more photos, these are of JFK's funeral, Dorothy's house, a hotel, and some photos of possible mafia men. She hears another sound.

ALEXIS

Rae?...Greg?...Rae's mom? Horrible, bloody ghost? Okay, good, not horrible bloody ghost. Cool. Good.

She finishes putting up the photos, then grabs her copy of Murder One, and lies down to read it. She yawns. A shadow passes over the room. She puts the book down on her chest for a moment and looks around. Assuming she's imagined the shadow, she goes back to reading. An envelope is slipped under the door and into the room. She hears it and goes to the door. She picks up the envelope and unfolds a big piece of paper. On it, there is a drawing of a woman with her throat slit, and blood pouring out of the wound. She realizes it looks like her. She opens the door and looks out. She sees no one, closes the door, and hides the paper under the futon. She sits on the edge of the futon, thinking. Lights up on DOROTHY.

DOROTHY

If you're getting scared, you're getting closer. Good night, darling.

DOROTHY sips a vodka tonic and laughs.
Lights fade out on DOROTHY.

ALEXIS

Okay.

ALEXIS looks around the room, then grabs her chair, and shoves the back of it under the doorknob.

ALEXIS

That should do it, right?

She laughs a little to herself for comfort. She digs around and finds a flashlight. She turns off the light, climbs into bed wrapping the covers around everything but her face, turns on the flashlight, and keeps reading.

ACT II SCENE 1

Lights up on GORDO lying on his back on the floor. There is blood all over his face and head. Nearby, RAE is also lying on the floor. There is a book open, lying on the floor next to RAE. Neither of them move. A long moment passes.

ALEXIS

(shouting off stage)

Guys! Pumpkin Spice Lattes are back so I got three Venti ones because we need the caffeine.

(ALEXIS enters with coffees and a package, and sees GORDO)

Oh my god! Gordo! I told you to lie on your chest! JFK was shot in the *back of the head*. You're messing up the blood splatter!

GORDO

I'm sorry, okay, I felt like I was inhaling dust mites. I was going to flip back over when you got here. I guess I fell asleep.

GORDO takes his coffee.

ALEXIS

(to RAE)

And that book is supposed to be *on your chest*, not next to you. Honestly, I feel like I gave you really clear instructions.

RAE

You were gone for like 15 minutes.

GORDO

We got bored.

RAE

The paper was poking my arm.

ALEXIS

You're seriously the worst dead bodies.

RAE grumpily grabs her coffee.

RAE

Whatever.

ALEXIS

I bet they don't have to deal with this BS on SVU.

RAE

I bet they don't pay the dead bodies on SVU with lattes.

ALEXIS

Drink your coffee and then lie back down again -- the right way this time.

RAE

I don't get this.

ALEXIS

It's really easy, you just lie there.

RAE

No I mean I don't get why we're doing this.

ALEXIS

Because I want to compare the way JFK died with the way Dorothy was found. It's investigative journalism.

RAE

There are like no similarities. JFK got shot in the head--

ALEXIS

The *back* of the head.

ALEXIS gestures at GORDO. He sighs and flips over onto his chest.

RAE

And Dorothy died of an accidental drug overdose.

ALEXIS

"Accidental"

RAE

Sure.

ALEXIS

And I'm not talking about big similarities, right? Any old asshole can connect the dots when the dots are gigantic. I'm trying to connect small dots -- dots so tiny, only I can see them.

ALEXIS gestures to RAE, who lies back down, begrudgingly.

ALEXIS

(all of this is strung together and her ideas are running into each other)

Okay, so what do we know about their deaths? JFK died November 22nd, 1963. Dorothy died November 8th, 1965. So they both died in November. What else is in November? Elections. Powerful people vying for powerful jobs. Jobs. Steve Jobs. No, *inside* jobs. Was JFK's assassination an inside jobs? I mean, job. Yeah, probably, anyone can make that argument. Inside: Dorothy worked inside.

RAE

Okay but she also worked outside, when she was covering things that happened outside, so?

ALEXIS

SH! I know, God. I'm just doing my thing. Okay, Dorothy worked both inside *and* outside-

RAE

Thank you.

ALEXIS

-she died *inside*, in her bed. JFK died *outside*-

GORDO

Didn't he die at the hospital?

ALEXIS

He was pronounced dead at the hospital, but he was shot outside and I mean he was shot *in the head*, so I really doubt he was actually still alive when they got him to the hospital. I mean, it's his head!

GORDO

As the representative of JFK's lifeless body I am trying really hard to stick to the facts but you know, you do you.

ALEXIS

Lee Harvey Oswald supposedly shot JFK from *inside* the Texas School Book Depository.

RAE

Oh God, we're back on inside/outside again.

ALEXIS

(talking very quickly)

Please, we were never off of it! Ruby killed Oswald *inside* as he was being transported through the basement of Dallas Police Headquarters. As recently as 2004, 66% of Americans believed there had been a conspiracy to assassinate JFK, and 74% believed there had been a cover up. *Covers up*. Back to Dorothy who died inside her bedroom. Were the covers pulled up? Honestly I'm not sure. But she died inside. On her back, as opposed to JFK who was shot in the back of the head which should propel him forward meaning he probably died at the very least slumped forward, but opposite facing deaths are exactly what a pack of conspiring killers would want because they'd look different right away, as different as being shot is to an "accidental overdose". Kennedy and Kilgallen both start with K, so, put two and two together and, like, there you have it.

RAE

...There who has what?

ALEXIS

They were killed by the same, ya know, forces.

GORDO

I don't know.

RAE

You didn't prove anything you're just talking in circles like Sherlock Holmes with a traumatic brain injury.

ALEXIS

There's no shortcut to finding the truth, Rae. It's a long and winding path. You wouldn't understand.

RAE

...Sure.

ALEXIS

It takes, like, *work*.

RAE

Cool.

GORDO

Can I get up now?

RAE
(getting up, to GORDO)

I'm gonna go. You coming?

GORDO

Yeah, tacos?

RAE

Yeah.

GORDO

Go ahead, I'll be there in a minute. I gotta get the Kennedy off of me.

RAE

All right.

ALEXIS

I'm not hungry.

RAE

Didn't ask.

RAE exits. ALEXIS is scrawling a bunch of notes on a pad of paper. She's pretty manic. GORDO grabs some baby wipes and scrubs at the blood.

GORDO

Seems like the podcast is really coming along.

ALEXIS

Mm-hmm.

GORDO

How long has it been since you last slept?

ALEXIS
(not listening)

Yeah.

GORDO

I said when did you sleep last?

ALEXIS

Oh, uh, yeah, I dunno. Whenever people usually sleep.

GORDO

Like every night?

ALEXIS

Mmmm, no. I don't know. Why? What do you want?

ALEXIS tears out the piece of paper she was writing on and tears it up, throwing the bits of paper on the floor. She starts writing on a new piece of paper.

GORDO

You just seem like, really...yeah.

ALEXIS

I'm focused.

GORDO

How many coffees have you had today?

ALEXIS

Six mochas, venti, no whip, and one americano but that was really gross. Sometimes mixing it up is a bad idea. Isn't Rae waiting for you?

Lights start to slowly come up on the other side of the stage. DOROTHY is at her desk, also furiously scrawling notes.

GORDO

Can I have just, like, two minutes of your time? I mean I did fake my own death for you just now.

ALEXIS

You faked JFK's death not your own but sure, shoot.

GORDO

Just chill out for a sec, okay? I'm like...we're worried about you.

ALEXIS

Don't be! There. Problem solved.

GORDO

This woman has been dead for a long time.

ALEXIS

Almost 52 years.

GORDO

Right, that's a long ti-

ALEXIS

Oh my god, she was 52 when she died and she's been dead 52 years. Wow.

DOROTHY now seems as if she's listening to them. She takes out a compact and looks at herself in the mirror. She checks her face for lines and wrinkles, pulling at the skin around her eyes. She touches up her lipstick. She tries smiling at her reflection, but doesn't like it. She closes the compact, walks around to the front of her desk, and leans against it. She mixes a drink, pops a couple of pills, and listens.

GORDO

You haven't been going to class, you haven't been hanging out with your friends-

ALEXIS

Just because I haven't been hanging out with you doesn't mean I haven't been hanging out with other people.

GORDO

Oh...okay. Who have you been hanging out with?

ALEXIS

Nobody.

GORDO

That doesn't seem...healthy?

ALEXIS

Like going to Taco Bell every day is healthy?

GORDO

Different kind of health. I'm talking about, like--

GORDO gestures to his head and makes an accompanying sound.

ALEXIS

Um, how about you don't go there.

GORDO

Just with, like, god don't make me say it -- like your mom, you know, if you need...like...some kind of hel-

ALEXIS

Nope. Not at all. Everything's cool. Okay? I didn't try to get you committed when you chugged all that Four Loco and tried to talk to that dog for like three hours.

GORDO

No one's trying to have you committed. I don't even know how to do that. You're just so much more interested in death than life at the moment and that's like...and if Rae's not going to say anything then I have to, so I did. So I'm not a bad friend now, I said something, so that's all I can do. Right? I mean, like...you know what, I don't know. I should go.

ALEXIS

Yup.

She grabs the package from the floor, stabs through the packing tape with a letter opener and messily tears into the box. She looks into it, perplexed. She reaches in and grabs something. She pulls a piece of fabric out of the box. It's wrinkly and stained with blood.

GORDO

What, are you gonna be mad at me now?

ALEXIS

Oh my God.

GORDO

What?

ALEXIS

It's...it's part of JFK's suit.

GORDO

Is that...

ALEXIS

It's his blood. His, ya know, head blood. This is -

GORDO

- so fucked-

ALEXIS

-Amazing! I can't believe this. I knew it was out there, I'd heard about it but I can't believe it's like, right here!

GORDO

I don't like this.

ALEXIS

Do you realize what this is? How valuable this is? I mean, *nobody* has this. It's like Abe Lincoln's theater chair. It's like Adnan's cell phone. It's like Ed Gein's stupid-ass ear flap hat.

She holds the cloth up to her face and smells it.

GORDO

Don't put that thing next to your face!

ALEXIS

I want to know if it still smells like blood. I need to take a sample of this.

She rummages around the room and finds a pair of scissors.

GORDO

A sample?

She scratches some bits of blood off of the cloth and onto the desk. She picks up an empty Starbucks cup and brushes the blood flakes into the cup.

GORDO

What are you going to do with that?

ALEXIS

I don't know yet. Maybe send it to a lab.

GORDO

A lab? You don't have a lab. There's no lab. Listen, Lex, maybe we should talk to Rae's mom. I don't even think it's legal to have that, if it's real. And if it is real or if it's somebody else's blood then it's just like a total germ fest. That is some bubonic-plague-level stuff.

ALEXIS

What do you mean "if it's real"? Of course it's real. LOOK AT IT.

GORDO

Who sent that? Honestly the odds of it being fake are super high. Like 99%.

ALEXIS

What the fuck do you know?

GORDO

Whoa. Hey. Don't come at me like that.

ALEXIS

This is *my* thing. I didn't drag you into this. And for your information it came from a fan.

GORDO

You asked me to play dead and covered me in fake blood and now you're like basically licking a piece of cloth from -

(he looks at the package)

West Virginia, which may or may not be covered in *human blood* from a dead person.

ALEXIS

Just go already. The only help I need is from someone who can analyze this blood. That's all that matters. Not your opinion, not Rae's opinion. Don't act like you're my family and it's your job to do, you know, *whatever* you think you're doing.

GORDO takes a breath. Then takes a folded up piece of paper out of his pocket. It's the drawing of Alexis.

GORDO

Lex, what is this?

She grabs it from him.

ALEXIS

Give me that.

GORDO

Is this you? Who drew this?

ALEXIS

It doesn't matter.

GORDO

Did...you draw it?

ALEXIS

What? No, god, obviously not.

GORDO

Okay well I can't tell if it's better or worse if you drew it or if someone else drew it and sent it to you, LEX THAT IS INSANE. This is a threat. This better be the only one of these you have.

She takes a beat. Then reluctantly goes to the desk and grabs a whole pile of them. They're all drawings of her being mutilated. GORDO looks through them.

GORDO

Jesus Christ.

ALEXIS

It's just a joke.

GORDO

What's the punchline? This is beyond creepy. Maybe we should call the cops.

ALEXIS

No! No way. They'll try to make me quit and I can't do that. I shouldn't have showed them to you. I thought you'd be cool.

She grabs the papers back and stuffs them away in the desk.

GORDO

How about I call your mom then?

ALEXIS

Enjoy screaming into the black hole that is her voicemail inbox. While you're at it, say hello to all my messages rotting away in there from ages 14 to now. She sucks. She's a loser and she doesn't care about anyone, least of all me. Now get out of my way if you don't want flecks of President Kennedy's brain matter on your shirt.

GORDO

I just think we have to-

ALEXIS

We don't have to do shit. Okay? God, you're such a pain in the ass.

GORDO

Your mom's not a loser just because she's, ya know, a mess right now. You can't hold onto that forever. She, like...probably loves you.

ALEXIS

You're just pissed because you can't get a handjob.

GORDO

You know what? Do me a favor. If I ever get murdered, just let me be dead. Don't dig me up and drag me around with you forever like Weekend at fucking Bernie's.

ALEXIS

Okay.

GORDO exits. She puts on her headphones. She plays the opening music.

ACT II SCENE 2

ALEXIS

From my friend's basement in Cleveland, Ohio, I'm Alexis Jones--
 (she stops, takes off the headphones,
 tosses them on the desk, grabs her phone
 and makes a call. She paces angrily.)

Hey, mom's voicemail. Just calling to say that I don't need you, okay? Cool? I mean, thank God, right? Like how pathetic would that be? When I think about just everything, my whole life, you are hardly even in the snapshots of my memory and that is so fucking... Listen, because I don't want to say this another time, okay, but I have found what makes me happy or at least makes me feel something and yeah, so, that's murder, okay it's not being like...a heart surgeon or something but at least people listen to me. Someone listens to me. More than one someone, actually. Lots of someones. And I just want to say that--

(she's run out of time, the voicemail ends)

Damn it.

(she calls back and starts a second
 message)

This is message two of two. And I just want to say that you can go fuck yourself. There. That's it. It's me and murder and that's the whole...thing. Okay. So. That's it.

I said you can go fuck yourself already, right? If not, you can go fuck yourself. Just want to make sure that's noted.

(She ends the call, and bashes her phone on the desk repeatedly, then calmly puts her headphones back on and starts over)

From my friend's basement in Cleveland, Ohio, I'm Alexis Jones-- and this is Sequential: one story told, until it's over. Welcome to episode, uh...I'm not sure on the number. Welcome to this episode, entitled The Mystery Man. Dorothy and her husband had not been faithful to each other for quite a while. Her husband cheated first, because that's what husbands do I guess, because guys don't ever know what they're doing and lack basic understanding of pretty much everything. Dorothy started her own affairs when she figured out he wasn't going to stop any time soon. I don't think you can really hold that against her, I mean it was time she got some. In the final days before her death, Dorothy had been spotted out with a mysterious man at bars and hotels and was, in fact, seen with him after her final taping of What's My Line, the night before she was found dead in her house.

DOROTHY

The mafia isn't a fun figment of fiction. It's real. Plump, craggy-faced men throwing parties for themselves and hiring other people to do their dirty work. And when you cross them, let me tell you, they don't forget it and they don't let you forget it, either. It doesn't frighten me. Or at least it doesn't frighten me as much as they'd like it to. They hate me because I talk about them openly. They're just not my type. Criminals, I mean. When it comes to men, I prefer the gentler, artistic type. The type less likely to organize an assassination, for instance. But when it comes to the man I spoke with in the bar, I'm sorry to say I simply can't help you.

ALEXIS

If JFK's assassination was planned by the mafia, not only to take him out, but to pull the rug of power from beneath his brother Robert who was crusading against them, it would make sense for them to then go after the one person who could possibly expose the truth. The smartest, and best journalist in the world: Dorothy Kilgallen. So if they sent some gentler, artist-type to chat her up so should would let down her defenses and be susceptible to a more clever death than a simple shooting on a bright day in Dallas -- well, that sounds like a pretty solid plan to me.

DOROTHY

Interesting hypothesis.

ALEXIS

(she takes her headphones off)

Thank you.

DOROTHY

You know that old saying, ‘curiosity killed the cat’?

ALEXIS

Yeah. Sounds like something Rae’s mom would say.

DOROTHY

Sometimes it’s true.

ALEXIS

Like, in your case?

DOROTHY

Perhaps.

ALEXIS

I’m not sure I should be talking to you.

DOROTHY

Why not?

ALEXIS

Well, to start, you’ve been dead for 50 years.

DOROTHY

52. Accuracy, dear.

ALEXIS

I had no idea ghosts were so into numbers.

DOROTHY

Who says I’m a ghost? Of course, I do have a lovely alabaster complexion, but-

ALEXIS

If you’re not a ghost, what are you?

DOROTHY

I’m just what you need. Certainly you brought me here, I didn’t just pop over for a visit. I’m here to help you, I suppose. Though I can’t tell you anything you don’t know.

DOROTHY goes to the very edge of the split between her side of the stage and ALEXIS’ side of the stage. She sits on the floor, facing the other side of the stage.

ALEXIS cautiously goes to her side of the split,
and sits down to face DOROTHY.

ALEXIS

So you can't tell me if you were murdered?

DOROTHY

My goodness, you really jumped into that. Well, no, I can't. I'm just whatever you believe.

ALEXIS

I don't know what I believe.

DOROTHY

You sound very convincing when you talk about me.

ALEXIS

I'm just making, like, educated guesses.

DOROTHY

Oh, guesses! Let's play a game!

ALEXIS

Ooooookay.

DOROTHY

(handing ALEXIS a blindfold)

Tie this around your head so it covers your eyes.

ALEXIS ties the blindfold around her head.

DOROTHY

Now, I will tell you that I'm a salaried employee. Let's begin the general questioning with you, because you're the only one here.

ALEXIS

Uh.

DOROTHY

Hurry now, time is precious and so are you.

ALEXIS

But I already know who you are and what you do.

DOROTHY

Then I'll be someone else who does something else!

ALEXIS

Okay this isn't weird at all. Are you affiliated with any kind of product?

DOROTHY

No. One question down, nine to go. How thrilling!

*

ALEXIS

Do you perform some sort of service in your job?

DOROTHY

The panel will have to be more specific as service could mean any number of things and we do not mean to mislead the panel in an incorrect line of questioning.

ALEXIS

Do people pay you specifically for a particular, individual service that you provide for each person?

DOROTHY

No. Two questions down, eight to go. You'll have to do better than that!

*

The lights flicker.

ALEXIS

Uhhhhh.

DOROTHY

Journalists do not "um" and "ah", Alexis. Be assertive. Jesus Christ.

*

ALEXIS

Do you work at all with animals?

DOROTHY

(She makes a sound like a "wrong"
buzzer)

*

*

WRONG. Certainly not and I am offended by the notion. Three down, seven to go.

*

ALEXIS

Do you work primarily outdoors?

DOROTHY

No, how ghastly! Four down, six to go. You're going down in flames, dear, and what a mess you'll make!

*

*

ALEXIS

So you work indoors?

DOROTHY

Yes, obviously. Don't waste questions!

*

ALEXIS

Do you...work with your hands?

DOROTHY

Yes! Good for you.

ALEXIS

Do you touch people, in this job?

DOROTHY

Sometimes, yes. Whether or not they want me to is another question for another time.

*

ALEXIS

Do you...um...are you...ugh, this is hard...do you generally work with other people. Like as part of a team?

DOROTHY

No. Five down, five to go. Pull yourself together!

*

The lights flicker again, for longer.

ALEXIS

I...do you work for...for the government?

DOROTHY

No. Six down, four to go. Losers cannot be winners.

*

The lights flicker, accompanied by a sound.
Something like a circuit breaker.

ALEXIS

What was that?

ALEXIS grabs for her blindfold.

DOROTHY

It's the sound of you RUINING EVERYTHING. You have to keep going. Six down, five to go. NEXT QUESTION!

*

ALEXIS lowers her hands and leave the blindfold on.

ALEXIS

Do you...uh, do...uh...

DOROTHY

Too long. Seven down, three to go. The devil's looking over your shoulder, Ms. Jones! *

ALEXIS

I'm sorry, I'm having trouble thinking.

DOROTHY

Because you haven't been sleeping, right? That's fine. I didn't sleep plenty of times myself. You'll get used to it. Helps you focus. *

ALEXIS feels around for her coffee, finds it, and drinks it.

ALEXIS

Are you in charge as opposed to working under a boss?

DOROTHY

YES! *

ALEXIS

Do you perform some sort of service in your job?

DOROTHY

You just repeated a question, the answer to which was NO. Eight down, two to go. TWO TO GO. We don't need anyone, Alexis. We are journalists. We are smart, capable, independent, lonely, flawed, isolated, fast, occasionally cruel, lonely, flawed, lonely, good, isolated, great journalists and we will have our day! *

DOROTHY reaches across the divide and slaps ALEXIS in the face.

ALEXIS

I am not lonely!

DOROTHY

That is not a question. Nine down, one to go.

Lights go out. Just enough light is left on DOROTHY and ALEXIS that they can barely be made out from the audience. Creaking sounds start to come from the walls, which slowly get louder.

ALEXIS

It feels dark in here.

DOROTHY

Are you peeking?! Are you cheating, Alexis?

ALEXIS

No! I just-

DOROTHY

Good, good. Anything to pick up clues. Eat information for breakfast. You don't need anything else. And if people don't like it, you can tell them to go right to hell. NINE DOWN, ONE TO GO.

ALEXIS

...Have you ever-

The sound of footsteps getting closer and closer to the room.

ALEXIS

What was that?

DOROTHY

It's me.

ALEXIS

You as in Dorothy? ...Or you as in...the person you're pretending to be in this game?

DOROTHY

Ahhhh, you're getting warmer. Quickly, quickly, nine down, one to go. You're running out of time.

ALEXIS

Have you ever hurt someone?

DOROTHY

Yes! Good question!

DOROTHY applauds.

ALEXIS

Am I in danger?

DOROTHY

Hmmmm...that's not really a question about *me* so I'm not sure it counts.

ALEXIS

It wasn't part of the game, I'm just asking you.

DOROTHY

Oh! Then yes.

ALEXIS

Dorothy, what's happening?

DOROTHY

Keep playing, we're nearly done! Isn't this exciting? *

DOROTHY faces the audience with "Isn't this
thrilling?" And the sound of applause and
cheering play. *

DOROTHY *

Everybody loves it! *

ALEXIS

I'm scared.

DOROTHY

Grab my hands, dear, if you must! *

She does.

ALEXIS

Are you here to hurt me?

DOROTHY

Yes.

ALEXIS

Are you here to--

DOROTHY

Keep going!

ALEXIS

Have you been sending me messages?

DOROTHY

Yes! You're on a real winning streak, here!

The sound of someone just outside the door.

ALEXIS

Did you send that drawing of me...the one with my neck--

DOROTHY

(whispering)

Yes.

ALEXIS

Why are you whispering?

DOROTHY

He can hear us. Quickly now, guess who I am!

ALEXIS

You're the man who is here to kill me.

DOROTHY

YES! That's right, good girl!

*

More cheering and applause.

*

ALEXIS

I don't want to die.

DOROTHY

I know, dear.

ALEXIS takes off her blindfold. They stare at each other. DOROTHY holds ALEXIS' face in her hands.

ALEXIS

I don't know what to do.

DOROTHY

Yes, you do. Everything I know, you know.

ALEXIS

No, I don't, I...I'm scared.

DOROTHY

What do you have that's sharp, dear? Think.

ALEXIS

I have Rae's mom's letter opener.

DOROTHY

Get it, quick as you can.

ALEXIS grabs the letter opener off the desk. The sound of someone jiggling the doorknob.

DOROTHY

You're doing beautifully, darling. Here he comes. Be strong.

ALEXIS is in tears, holding the letter opener like a knife, ready to pounce. There's not much light. The doorknob turns, the door pushes open, and ALEXIS jumps, screaming, and plunges the letter opener into the unseen figure.

GORDO

Jesus fucking Christ!

ALEXIS screams and stabs him again.

GORDO

Stop fucking stabbing me, Lex, it's *me*! Oh my God!

RAE runs in.

RAE

What the hell is going on?

The lights snap back on. DOROTHY's side of the stage is pitch black and she's gone.

GORDO

She stabbed me! She fucking stabbed me!

RAE

Alexis, what the fuck?!

ALEXIS

Oh my god! Oh my god! I thought he was...She said...oh my god!

She realizes she's still holding the opener and
throws it on the floor.

RAE

My mom and Greg are not gonna let you stay here if you're gonna *stab Gordo!*

ALEXIS

I don't understand...I thought...

GORDO crumples to the floor.

RAE

Don't just stand there, call 911!

GORDO

Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

ALEXIS

Okay, okay!

ALEXIS grabs her phone, and calls 911.

GORDO

Aghh, this is so much worse than I would have thought.

RAE

Here, grab my hand.

GORDO grabs RAE's hand and squeezes it.

ALEXIS

Uh, hi, just stabbed my friend with a letter opener because I thought he was a murderer--oh my god, Gordo, don't die or I'll be a murderer and that is just...

GORDO

I'll do my best. Oh my God I'm supposed to cover for Ricky at the deli tomorrow because his neck tattoo got infected and I can't do that if I'm dead. Agh!

RAE

Stop talking!

ALEXIS

Yes, our address is 1438 12th Ave. Please hurry. I mean, more than usual.

RAE

What the fuck were you thinking?

ALEXIS

I'm sorry!

RAE

Who are you? Really, I don't even know you anymore.

ALEXIS

It was an honest mistake!

RAE

You have lost your goddamn mind if you think you can keep living here.

ALEXIS

Where am I gonna go?

RAE

I don't care! Go live with your mom. You're both nuts anyway. Just go.

ALEXIS

It was an accident, it could have happened to anybody!

RAE

But it didn't. Did it? It happened to you. Because you're in your own little world where you're the only person who exists and you don't give a shit about anyone or anything around you, and now you *stabbed Gordo*. You think you're so much smarter than me, so much better than me, so much more mature -- well, you know what? I don't care about any of that. I really don't. You know why? Because I know that deep down, I'm a good person and I take care of the people who love me and no matter how smart you think you are, you can never say that about yourself.

ALEXIS

Don't spin this into something else.

RAE

I'm not spinning anything. I have been there for you since we were kids. For everything. For all your stupid whims. I've watched you treat Gordo like an inconvenience when he obviously like worships the ground you walk on.

GORDO

I wouldn't go that fa-

RAE

And now you live in my mom's basement, and you can't even bother to see a movie with us? Have dinner with us? Look us in the eye?

ALEXIS

I'm sorry-

RAE

You know the difference between the two of us -- you and me? To me, you have always been family.

ALEXIS

Rae-

RAE

And to you...you just say you have no family. Like you can't even see us.

GORDO

(having a hard time getting the words out)

Ladies, please, don't fight over me.

RAE

Shut up, Gordo.

(to ALEXIS)

Help me get him upstairs. They'll never be able to do it with a stretcher, it's narrow as fuck.

ALEXIS

I-

RAE

Come on!

RAE throws one of his arms over GORDO's shoulder. ALEXIS throws the other one around her shoulder. They hobble out of the room.
Lights fade out.

ACT II SCENE 3

One week later. The wall which was previously covered in photos, is now blank. RAE and GORDO are sitting on the floor watching tv. They are passing around a bowl of popcorn. GORDO has one arm in a sling. He grabs a handful of popcorn using the hand coming out of the sling. He realizes he can't raise it to his face, so he just throws the popcorn from his hand to his mouth. Most of the popcorn misses his mouth. RAE glances at him and tries to figure out what to say. *

	RAE	*
...Need the TV turned up louder?		*
	GORDO	*
No.		*
	RAE	*
Okay...		*
	Beat.	*
	GORDO	*
What's this movie called again?		*
	RAE	*
The Hand That Rocks The Cradle.		*
	GORDO	*
It's kinda lame and weird at the same time.		*
	RAE	*
It's an early 90s classic. Don't hate on Rebecca De Mornay.		*
	GORDO	*
No offense, but I'm not into this.		*
	RAE	*
Fine. We'll just sit here then.		*
	RAE shuts the TV off. Long silence.	*

	GORDO	*
Heard anything from Lex?		*
	RAE	*
I haven't turned my phone on for a week so I don't know.		*
	Long silence.	*
	GORDO	*
At least she stopped making the podcast.		*
	Long silence.	*
	GORDO	*
I heard she's staying at her half brother's place. That guy is the worst.		*
	Long silence.	*
	GORDO	*
You know, I think she feels pretty bad.		*
	RAE	*
Gordo!		*
	GORDO	*
What? I'm just saying-		*
	RAE	*
You can't fix this for her.		*
	GORDO	*
Who said I was trying to?		*
	Long silence.	*
	GORDO	*
I just think that-		*
	RAE	*
Gordo!		*
	GORDO	*
Okay! Okay.		*
	Long silence.	*

	RAE	*
You know this was, like, a long time coming.		*
	GORDO	*
I know.		*
	RAE	*
Like I am always there for her.		*
	GORDO	*
I know!		*
	RAE	*
And she just assumes that's like a forever thing. Like unconditional.		*
	GORDO	*
You're right.		*
	RAE	*
I mean, she stabbed you!		*
	GORDO	*
She did.		*
	RAE	*
Am I just supposed to forget about that?		*
	GORDO	*
Well, easier for you than me...but also does that mean it's easier to forget about all the stuff before that?		*
	RAE	*
Other people cut people out of their lives all the time. And they're like "Yeah, she was a toxic person and now she's dead to me" and they seem, like, <i>so</i> empowered by that.		*
	GORDO	*
...Do <i>you</i> feel like that?		*
	RAE	*
I don't know. This is not something I want to talk to <i>you</i> about.		*
	GORDO	*
Well. Who would you normally talk to about it?		*
	RAE	*
Uuuuggghhh.		*

	GORDO	*
Oh, right.		*
	Long silence.	*
	RAE	*
You wanna, like...I don't know...play cards or something?		*
	GORDO	*
I guess.		*
	RAE	*
...I don't have any cards.		*
	GORDO	*
Okay.		*
	After a moment of the two of them attempting to say something to each other, but having nothing to say, GORDO grabs the remote and turns the TV back on, because anything is better than this. They eat some popcorn.	*
		*
		*
		*
		*
	GORDO	
Needs salt.		
	RAE	
Ugh, fine.		
	RAE exits to get salt.	
	GORDO	
	(calling after her)	
Thank you! You know if you ever get stabbed, I'll bring you salt!		
	RAE	
	(off)	
Yeah I bet.		
	ALEXIS enters.	
	ALEXIS	
Um, hey.		
	GORDO	
Hey.		

ALEXIS
How are you feeling?

GORDO
Ventilated.

ALEXIS
Yeah, I bet.

GORDO
Rae's getting salt.

ALEXIS
Cool. Mind if I...?

GORDO
Go ahead.

ALEXIS sits next to GORDO. She grabs the bowl of popcorn and eats some. GORDO itches around one of his wounds.

GORDO
It gets pretty itchy but it looks like I'm gonna have at least one gnarly scar so...worth it, really.

ALEXIS
Cool.

RAE enters with salt. She sees ALEXIS holding the bowl and pauses a moment, then walks over and dumps a ton of salt on the popcorn while holding eye contact with her. ALEXIS eats a piece. It's disgusting.

ALEXIS
Yum, thank you.

RAE
What are you doing here? I thought you were staying with your half brother.

ALEXIS
I was, but his girlfriend threw a TV at his head this morning so I thought that was a good time to leave. I just talked to your mom and Greg.

RAE

Oh yeah?

ALEXIS

I apologized for skipping class and tried to apologize for stabbing Gordo on their property but they seemed to be under the impression that he fell on a rake.

RAE

Huh, how 'bout that.

GORDO

A rake?! There is *nothing* cool about that.

ALEXIS

So I guess someone must have told them that.

RAE

Must have.

ALEXIS

Weird, huh?

RAE

I guess.

ALEXIS

They said I could come back and stay here.

RAE

Did they?

ALEXIS

Yeah. They said as long as I don't leave gardening tools on the floor and promise to go to class, I can have my old room back.

RAE

Interesting.

ALEXIS

And that I can't use the internet until they stop receiving creepy packages and letters. Which, like...I dunno, are drawings of decapitations really that much worse than dick pics? Because everyone with Snapchat is getting those, so it's like...same difference, ya know.

RAE

I burned a bunch of ‘em in a barrel. They’re already slowing down. The internet forgets about a new person every day. You’re no different.

ALEXIS

Yeah, totally.

GORDO

Pff. Gardening tools. Still telling everyone I got stabbed. By a big dude, too. Like six of ‘em.

RAE

Well, if they say you can stay, then I guess there you go.

ALEXIS

So...you don’t mind?

RAE

Why should I mind? You only abandoned us and stabbed Gordo.

GORDO

I can’t stress this enough, I was stabbed by six large men.

ALEXIS

I was an idiot. I *am* an idiot. I deserve every bite of this nasty saltcorn.

GORDO throws more popcorn at his face.

RAE

You’re making a mess.

ALEXIS

I’ll vacuum it up after the movie.

GORDO

Computer Basics is gonna be hard with just the one hand.

RAE

This will literally be the first time that class has ever been hard for anyone.

ALEXIS’ phone rings. She answers it. The phone is covered in duct tape now.

ALEXIS

Hello? Uh, hey, mom.

RAE and GORDO watch with interest.

ALEXIS

Yeah, um, what's...up? Yeah I'm around this weekend. Yeah. I could go to a movie, yeah. Hey, um, can Rae and Gordo come with? Cool. Oh, uh, can we *not* see Jason X2, yeah I just...I don't know, how about we go to the old timey movie place and see Singin' in the Rain or something? Okay. Cool. Yeah. All right. See you then. Bye.

She hangs up. Everyone silently goes back to watching the tv. After a while.

ALEXIS

She, um...she called my half brother and I guess...seems like she's doing better. They took her phone away for a while so that's why she didn't...yeah, anyway. Seems maybe ok.

RAE

Cool.

GORDO

Cool.

ALEXIS

Cool.

ALEXIS

Hey, Gordo?

GORDO

Yeah?

ALEXIS

I'm sorry I stabbed you-

GORDO

-Twice-

ALEXIS

I'm sorry I stabbed you twice.

GORDO

Thank you.

ALEXIS

Rae?

Yeah?
RAE

I'm just sorry in general.
ALEXIS

...Thanks.
RAE

Okay. Good talk, guys.
ALEXIS

Good talk.
RAE & GORDO

They silently watch the tv for a bit. A commercial comes on.

COMMERCIAL VO

Next on American Maniacs: he was your average small town priest, until he murdered the entire congregation. He wasn't caught until the entrails of his victims were found in the ceremonial wine. Stay tuned for the terrifying true tale of the Vicious Vicar of 3rd Street.

The three of them look back and forth at each other silently.

AWESOOOOOME!
RAE, GORDO, & ALEXIS

They throw popcorn at each other.

END OF PLAY.

