

*The Star Killers*

a play  
by Aaron Ricciardi

AGENT CONTACT:  
Ben Izzo at A3 Artists Agency  
350 5th Ave, 38th Floor  
New York, NY 10118  
(646) 461-9383  
[ben.izzo@a3artistsagency.com](mailto:ben.izzo@a3artistsagency.com)

AUTHOR CONTACT:  
[aaron.ricciardi@gmail.com](mailto:aaron.ricciardi@gmail.com)

## Starring:

JACQUI DAWN SMITH: 30s, female. A perennially unemployed actor who lives in Los Angeles, California, and has multiple incongruous day jobs. Her given name was something else, but she changed it (not legally) to “have more star quality.” Her looks are remarkably unremarkable. She’s lived in L.A. since she graduated from a private, conservative Christian college in her home state of Indiana, with a B.A. in Theater Arts. At college, there were only around twenty other Theater Arts majors, and nearly all of them were hobbyists. Jacqui stuck out because of how seriously she took her craft. Her talent as a performer is painfully mediocre, and she has no business pursuing acting as a career, but she has ambition in spades. Plays Woman and Journalist in the scenes from the movie The Star Killers.

DONNY CAINE: 60s, male. A B-list—actually, now more like C-list—film actor. He is married to S.E. His goofy looks pigeon-holed him as a “character actor,” but he possesses a bona fide virtuosic talent. Donny was once clean-shaven and rather adorable, but, today, he is slovenly and off-putting, with baggy, dirty clothes and a baggy, dirty beard. Donny’s career began at nineteen years old, when, during his sophomore year of college at a state university in Texas, he was discovered by a respected independent film director. Donny’s deepest desire has always been to be taken more seriously as an actor. Plays The Star in the scenes from the movie The Star Killers.

S.E. CAINE: 50s, female. A perennially unemployed former model and actor, who never truly pursued either career. She is married to Donny. Her name is pronounced “Essie,” short for the first and middle names given to her by her parents, whom she abhors. Her beauty could stop traffic, but this is hard to tell these days, since she dresses like she’s in some kind of punk rock militia and since she somewhere along the road became bug-eyed. Though she has never actually made a film, she fancies herself, as she would say, “an auteur.” She is extremely untalented and has poor taste.

THE STAR KILLERS: One person, any age or gender. “Very L.A.” Plays all other characters:

ACTING TEACHER  
DEVELOPMENT EXEC  
ACTOR  
INVESTOR  
PUBLICIST  
PERSONAL TRAINER  
DIRECTOR  
TALK SHOW HOST  
PRODUCER  
MANAGER  
BARISTA  
PERSONAL ASSISTANT

**Setting:**

Los Angeles, California.  
Obama's second term.

**Production Design:**

Perhaps the play takes place in a low-budget, bare acting studio, with basic furniture and blocks, the kind of space where Jacqui attends acting class.

**Visual Effects:**

When we move from reality to movie or reality to fantasy and back again, there should be a distinct tonal shift.

**Editing:**

Most every scene change should feel like a jump cut.

**Music:**

Perhaps a composer might underscore this entire play with a bona fide film score.

**Script Supervisor:**

Scenes in reality and fantasy are in this font.

Scenes from the movie are in this font.

*Italics* denote *emphasis*.

CAPS denote EMPHASIS and VOLUME.

There are few pauses/silences indicated in the script. Actors and directors can (and should!) put more in where they feel right, especially during phone calls.

**Casting:**

These characters should be played actors of any race or gender.

Keep in mind that Jacqui, S.E., and Donny are not so much conservative as they are libertarian, not so much ignorant as they are selfish. They feel they've been maligned, so they distrust everything. This kind of right-wing victimhood is of course often linked with whiteness, but recent history has shown that this ideology is tempting to all.

“It’s a very tough period of time. There’s never been a time like this where such a thing happened where they could take it away from all of us. From me, from you, from our country. This was a fraudulent election, but we can’t play into the hands of these people. We have to have peace. So, go home. We love you. You’re very special.”

—President Donald John Trump, 1/6/2021

\*

“RADIO REPORTER (V.O.):

Reports are unclear as to the extent of the devastation, but from all accounts Los Angeles, Washington, and New York have been left in ruins.

RUSSELL CASSE:

Good God! I've been sayin' it. I've been sayin' it for ten damn years. Ain't I been sayin' it, Miguel? Yeah, I've been sayin' it.”

—*Independence Day*, dir. R. Emmerich

EXT. PARK – DAY

*We're transported to a movie.  
Woman is talking to someone unseen.  
The acting is not very good.*

**Woman**

It feels like one of those end-of-the-world movies. Turns out they're exactly what the end of the world is actually like. Even this conversation feels like a movie. What if this was a movie? Or should it be were a movie? I never know the right word there: were or was. In a movie I'd know the right word. In a movie I'd know the right everything. Do you...? Do you...? Sorry, I'm being all awkward. Do you have a place to stay tonight? I don't have much, but I have a small cot. Times like these, we've got to stick together.

**Acting Teacher**

Curtain.

*The Star Killer appears, as Acting Teacher.  
S.E. appears.  
We're transported to reality.*

\*

INT. ACTING STUDIO – NIGHT

*Jacqui is on stage.  
Acting Teacher and S.E. are in the audience.*

**Acting Teacher**

Alright. There's a lot going on in this monologue. There's layers. You're up to your usual tricks.

**Jacqui**

Okay.

**Acting Teacher**

I want you to knock it off, Jacqui.

**Jacqui**

Okay.

**Acting Teacher, terrifying**

**KNOCK IT OFF!**

*Silence.*

**Acting Teacher**

Let's go to that day at the train station with your ex-boyfriend, when he broke up with you. What did you do before you got on the train?

**Jacqui**

We had lunch at this pizza place we loved. It was like a last supper. Except it was lunch.

**Acting Teacher**

How was the pizza?

**Jacqui**

They have really good pizza there.

**Acting Teacher**

But that day?

**Jacqui**

I mean, it was good, but the whole time I knew I was about to say goodbye to him forever.

**Acting Teacher**

And when you finally got on that train without him—what did that feel like?

**Jacqui**

I was devastated. I thought I was gonna marry him but he turned out to be gay. I felt like my life was over.

**Acting Teacher**

It felt like the end of the world?

**Jacqui**

Kinda.

**Acting Teacher**

Let's go.

**Jacqui**, *playing Woman*

“It feels like one of those end-of-the-world movies. Turns out they're exactly what the end of the world is actually like. Even this conversation feels like a movie. What if this *was* a movie? Or should it be *were* a movie—?”

**Acting Teacher**

Curtain. Stop smiling. It's the end of the world.

**Jacqui**

But I thought I was flirting with him.

**Acting Teacher**

You are.

**Jacqui**

But that's, like, flirting.

**Acting Teacher**

That's cutesy, not flirting. You want him to cum on your face, not buy you a lollipop.  
When did you move to L.A.?

**Jacqui**

As soon as I graduated.

**Acting Teacher**

Long time ago.

**Jacqui**

Not that long.

**Acting Teacher**

And what do you have to show for it?

**Jacqui**

Um. I did a national commercial.

**Acting Teacher**

It must've felt good, to get a job like that.

**Jacqui**

It felt amazing.

**Acting Teacher**

It must've felt like a sign of good things to come.

**Jacqui**

Exactly.

**Acting Teacher**

When was that?

**Jacqui**

Right when I moved here.

**Acting Teacher**

Long time ago.

**Jacqui**

I made a lot of money from that commercial.

**Acting Teacher**

How'd you spend it?

**Jacqui**

I bought a car.

**Acting Teacher**

You still have that car?

**Jacqui**

It broke down recently.

**Acting Teacher**

Have you gotten it fixed?

**Jacqui**

Not yet. It's really expensive.

**Acting Teacher**

How are you getting around?

**Jacqui**

I've been taking the bus.

**Acting Teacher**

What are you feeling right now?

**Jacqui**

Sad.

**Acting Teacher**

Sad is a kindergarten word. You don't feel sad. What do you feel?

**Jacqui**

I don't know!

**Acting Teacher**

You feel empty. Repeat after me: I am nothing.

**Jacqui**

I am nothing.

**Acting Teacher**

Say it again.



**Jacqui**

I am nothing.

**Acting Teacher**

I don't believe you.

**Jacqui**

I am nothing!

**Acting Teacher**

LOUDER!

**Jacqui**

I AM NOTHING!

**Acting Teacher**

Look at you! No car! No jobs!

**Jacqui**

I AM NOTHING!!!

**Acting Teacher**

Put that in the scene. How you feel now, how you felt that day on the train—that's how she feels. Let's go.

**Jacqui, *playing Woman***

"It feels like one of those end-of-the-world movies. Turns out they're exactly what the end of the world is actually like. Even this conversation feels like a movie—"

**Acting Teacher**

Curtain. You just became a MILF in a porno.

**Jacqui**

I think I'm confused.

**Acting Teacher**

S.E., do you have any thoughts?

*S.E. gets up and goes to Jacqui.*

**S.E.**

You're a gorilla.

*Jacqui doesn't know what to do.*

**S.E.**

You. Are a gorilla. Go.

*Jacqui gets down on her haunches and grunts. She does whatever S.E. tells her to.*

**S.E.**

Now move. Move around the space. Go to some bushes and pick off some berries. Oh, Mama Gorilla! This is your baby. Come to your baby. Protect your baby, Mama Gorilla. There are lions coming. You have to stand guard. Frighten them away. Beat your chest and roar. That's it. Bigger! BIGGER! MORE!!! Good. Now take all that, put it inside you, and zip it up. Feel that rage. Feel that pain. But don't express it. You're not a gorilla anymore. You're a woman. But you're also a gorilla. Start the monologue.

**Jacqui**, *playing Woman*

"It feels like one of those end-of-the-world movies. Turns out they're exactly what the end of the world is actually like. Even this conversation feels like a movie. What if this *was* a movie? Or should it be *were* a movie? I never know the right word there: were or was. In a movie I'd know the right word. In a movie I'd know the right everything. Do you...? Do you...? Sorry, I'm being all awkward. Do you have a place to stay tonight? I don't have much, but I have a small cot. Times like these, we've got to stick together."

**S.E.**

Cut. That was better.

*It actually was better.*

**Acting Teacher**

That's time. Nice work tonight, everyone. Thank you so much to S.E. Caine for joining us tonight. It's always a gift for our actors to have industry guests join our class, but it's especially fruitful when they're able to work with a writer on a new script. So thank you, S.E.

\*

EXT. PARKING LOT – NIGHT

*S.E. grips her car keys.*

*Jacqui runs after her.*

**Jacqui**

S.E.! S.E.! Hey! I just wanted to say thank you so much.

**S.E.**

No sweat.

**Jacqui**

That was amazing back there. I felt on fire. I love animal work. Like, we are animals.

**S.E.**

Exactly. We are savage, vicious, wounded animals, all of us. Stick in this business long enough, and that's what you'll see: the viciousness. The savagery. But also the wounds, the pain.

**Jacqui**

That makes so much sense. I'm a gorilla, you know? I am a gorilla.

**S.E.**

You should loosen up. Be more impulsive. Not just when you're acting, but in life. Don't be afraid. Don't worry about being everybody's friend. You'll never be everybody's friend, so just say what you mean and mean what you say and don't apologize for yourself. That's how you get by in this business.

**Jacqui**

Thank you so much. What an honor to inhabit your words. Those scenes are amazing.

**S.E.**

I've written a great screenplay.

**Jacqui**

I'd love to read the whole thing, if you'd be willing.

**S.E.**

I don't allow my work to float around.

**Jacqui**

I totally get it. Well here's my card. Let's keep this conversation going! I'd love to collab sometime!

**S.E.**

Hey, come here: She used to pull that shit with me when I was in her class, trying to make me cry. Sometimes the gays get like that. They've been so mistreated for so long that they end up getting all bitchy and they think they have to tear people down to build them up. It's a useful teaching technique for some; never did it for me though.

**Jacqui**

Totally.

**S.E.**

Don't get me wrong: I love the gays—I lost a lot of friends to AIDS!

**Jacqui**

I'm so sorry.

**S.E.**

But that was not cool. 'Cause that was really good work. Not everybody can do what you just did. That took talent. And guts.

**Jacqui**

Thank you so much. And you too. Great script!

*The Star Killer appears, as Development Exec.*

\*

EXT. PACIFIC PALISADES MANSION – NIGHT

*Development Exec is talking to someone we can't see.*

**Development Exec**

I hear Whitney's taking another pass at the script. But between you and me I've never seen a draft. They sell the pitch, and then they don't write a word—happens all the time. She's very talented! But she's nuts. And the pills don't do shit. She's nuts with the pills, she's nuts without the pills. She's just nuts. But listen, every good actor needs a healthy dose of crazy.

*Jacqui appears holding a tray:  
shrimp summer rolls, a bowl of sauce, napkins.*

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

**Development Exec**

No.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Actor.*

**Actor**

Oh, no thanks. I'm vegan. Do you work a lot of these parties?

**Jacqui**

I guess so.

**Actor**

Do you have any tips?

**Jacqui**

Nobody ever tips at these.

**Actor**

No, advice. I just got here.

**Jacqui**

To the party?

**Actor**

To L.A. My agent told me to network, but I don't know what that means.

**Jacqui**

It means, like, talk to everyone and see what they can do for you.

**Actor**

My agent told me to find the host. He's a producer.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Investor.*

**Investor**

No thank you, sweetheart. I'm kosher.

**Jacqui**

I think this is kosher!

**Investor**

Aren't you cute. Shrimp is very much not kosher.

**Jacqui**

I never met a Jewish person until I moved to L.A.

**Investor**

Let me let you in on a little secret: not only does my hairdresser cut, blow, and dye my hair, but he also shaves my horns at no extra cost.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Publicist.*

**Publicist**

Shrimpsummerrollshrimpsummerrollshrimpsummerroll?

*Jacqui chuckles uncomfortably.*

**Publicist**

I'm just joshin' you. I wasn't making fun of you. You know I wasn't making fun of you, right?

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Personal Trainer.*

**Personal Trainer**

You should absolutely be seeing a nutritionist.

**Jacqui**

Okay.

**Personal Trainer**

Every single actor in L.A. should be seeing a nutritionist. I mean, these cows come to L.A.—no offense, but let's be honest: cows, elephants—they want to make it big, and it's like, Babe, you already are.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Actor.*

**Actor**

Do you think it's a bad idea that I'm dating my agent?

**Jacqui**

Not necessarily.

**Actor**

Okay, thank you!

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Director.*

**Director**

We've met.

**Jacqui**

We have?

**Director**

I know you.

**Jacqui**

I know *you*.

**Director**

We've *definitely* met. I'm positive. Where could it have been?

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Personal Trainer.*

**Personal Trainer**

I guarantee you, you could absolutely have a flourishing acting career if you lose somewhere between ten and forty pounds.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Publicist.*

**Publicist**

I *really* wasn't making fun of you, I promise!

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Actor.*

**Actor**

Whitney used to date him, too, and he's totally still hung up on her. I feel like I'm in a relationship with the two of them. But he's not even her agent anymore! He's my agent! The biggest problem, though, is that he's married.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

*The Star Killer transforms into Investor.*

**Investor**

Imagine: my father flees the Nazis, and seven decades later his child is investing his fortune in the first movie written and directed by a visionary like Whitney.

**Jacqui**  
Shrimp summer r—

*The Star Killer transforms into Publicist.*

**Publicist**  
I'm really sorry for that before. I was not making fun of you, you have to believe me.

**Jacqui**  
Shrimp s—

*The Star Killer transforms into Director.*

**Director**  
I take it back. We haven't met. I was thinking of someone entirely different.

**Jacqui**  
Shr—

*The Star Killer transforms into Investor.*

**Investor**  
Let that be a lesson to you: that if you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything in this country. But, if you don't succeed, then you didn't work hard enough and it's your own damn fault.

*S.E. and Donny arrive at the party.  
The Star Killer transforms into Talk Show Host.  
We're transported to Jacqui's fantasy.*

\*

INT. TALK SHOW - FANTASY

**Talk Show Host**  
Please welcome back, the hardest working actor in this business we call show, Jacqui Dawn Smith!

**Jacqui**  
Thank you so much. What an honor. This is my favorite talk show.

**Talk Show Host**  
Now Jacqui, you've been in the business a long time, so we all know what an incredible actress you are, all the impressive roles you've played, and how many



**Talk Show Host**

important awards you've won. But there was a time before Jacqui Dawn Smith was Jacqui Dawn Smith. Was there a moment when you'd say your career *began*?

**Jacqui**

It all started the night I was cater waitering this party, and all of a sudden I notice S.E. Caine. I'd just met her when she was a guest in my acting class, and now here she is with her husband, the great actor Donny Caine. I love his movies.

**Talk Show Host**

Who doesn't!

**Jacqui**

Right?! He has the kind of career I want: he's famous but not so famous he can't, like, go to the grocery store. So I figure, no risk no reward, and I go to them with my tray, and I say:

*The Star Killer vanishes, leaving Jacqui alone with the Caines.  
We're transported to reality.*

\*

EXT. PACIFIC PALISADES MANSION – NIGHT

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?—Oh my gosh! S.E., hey!

**S.E.**

Hello?

**Jacqui**

It's me, Jacqui! You came to my acting class!

**S.E.**

What do ya know. How are ya?

**Jacqui**

Better now that I'm running into you! I'm Jacqui.

**Donny**

Donny. Pleasure.

**Jacqui**

"Donny. Pleasure." You don't have to introduce yourself! I know who you are. I am *such* a fan.

**Donny**

Thank you so much.

**S.E.**

See? I told you.

**Jacqui**

Told him what?

**S.E.**

Before we left he said nobody knows who he is anymore and I told him that was bullshit.

**Jacqui**

Exhibit A!

**Donny**

Are they treating you alright here tonight?

**Jacqui**

Yeah!

**S.E.**

You can be honest. We've known these people forever. They're pretentious, self-righteous star-fuckers. They're vermin.

**Donny**

They're vultures. Of all the people you've brought that tray, who's been the biggest asshole?

**Jacqui**

Everybody's been really nice!

**Donny**

Come on. You and I both know that's not true. Look at 'em. If you knew you could murder one of these lickspittles and get away with it, who would it be?

**S.E., *loving this***

Oh my god, Donny—you're so bad.

**Donny**

I'm not leaving you alone until you pick. Any one of 'em. Dead. For retribution.

**Jacqui**

Well, there are a lot of contenders, but I'd probably have to say that woman and also that woman over there, 'cause when I brought them my tray they were having a whole conversation about how their cleaning ladies don't look poor, because in America we have all these clothing stores that are cheap but look expensive, and

**Jacqui**

then that woman said to the other one, “We dress our poor very well in this country.” And the whole time both of them were stuffing their faces with the food I brought them, and neither one of them thanked me.

**S.E.**

Fine choice.

**Donny**

A most excellent decision.

**Jacqui**

Shrimp summer roll?

**Donny**

I’m starving.

**S.E.**

He’s allergic.

**Donny**

No I’m not.

**Jacqui**

They’re gluten-free.

**S.E.**

It doesn’t sit well with him.

**Donny**

Woman will you let me eat what I please?

**S.E.**

Are you out of your mind, just eating whatever food some idiot throws at you.

**Donny**

Will you be nice to this girl—

**S.E.**

She’s not a girl, caveman. She is clearly over the age of eighteen. That would make her a woman.

**Donny**

Whatever. She didn’t mean to call you an idiot, darlin’.

**S.E.**

Now you’re calling her *darlin*! Did you come here in a time machine? He’s sorry.

**Donny**

I'm sorry. And I'm having some shrimp.

*Donny goes to take a roll from Jacqui's tray.*

*S.E. pushes Jacqui away, which causes Jacqui to drop the tray and everything on it.*

\*

EXT. CHAIN RESTAURANT PATIO – NIGHT

*Jacqui and the Caines sit at a table.*

*The Caines stuff their faces.*

**Jacqui**

I thought you're allergic to shrimp.

**Donny**

Oh no. She just says that.

**S.E.**

We're careful about what we eat, but we don't want people looking at us like we're nuts.

**Donny**

We hardly even eat out anymore. I can't remember the last time we came to a restaurant.

**S.E.**

And if we do we always go to a place like this. The thing about chain restaurants is all the food comes pre-packaged so it's highly unlikely anyone can mess with your food. Unlike that catering company.

**Donny**

She doesn't mean she suspects you of foul play.

**S.E.**

Not at all! You're just scraping for a buck! Working for The Man! But anyone can lace anything with anything. Obviously.

**Donny**

And we always eat outside.

**S.E.**

Yes, we prefer al fresco.

**Donny**

That way you don't have to worry about being overheard or bugged.

**S.E.**

You don't have to worry *as much*. You always have to worry. Aren't you hungry?

**Jacqui**

I'm full.

**Donny**

Come on. We told you: it's our treat after everything that happened. We're really sorry.

**S.E.**

I can't believe that fascist from the catering company fired you.

**Jacqui**

He's always been a jerk. He's this uptight, snooty gay guy.

**S.E.**

Gag me with a spoon. I know the type. They essentially have a mafia.

**Donny**

Speaking of which, let's flag down the waiter. What do you want?

**Jacqui**

You're so sweet. I actually don't eat anything after eight p.m. It's a special diet.

**S.E.**

See? This is why I gave it up. The unrealistic beauty standards they place on actresses in this business is frankly criminal. And I mean that literally. They call themselves liberals, progressives, feminists, they fight for their right to breastfeed in the town square, the casting couch is tantamount to Vietnam, but all they actually care about is perky tits and a waist the size of a tic tac, because they think that's what sells tickets, and, like everything, it's all about money, so go see any movie and none of the women look like normal human beings. They can eat my shit.

**Donny**

Not to mention, she's beautiful.

**S.E.**

I expound upon Hollywood's unrealistic beauty standards and your response is to focus on her looks?

**Donny**

It was a compliment!

**S.E.**

Pig!

**Donny**

I'm saying she's beautiful just the way she is.

**S.E.**

Correct. Pure, simple beauty.

**Donny**

Where you from?

**Jacqui**

Indiana.

**Donny**

See? What do I always say, S.E.?

**S.E.**

He always says it.

**Donny**

I always say, these places everyone forgets about, in the middle of nowhere—Indiana, Texas—I'm from Texas—the places none of these jackoffs ever go, unless they're shooting something there—that's where the true beauty is in this country.

**S.E.**

It's not to be found in L.A.! It's not to be found in those ostentatious scumbags you served at that party!

**Jacqui**

Totally. Those people all seem, like, so conceited.

**S.E.**

Totally! Self-involved.

**Jacqui**

And just, like, not nice. I'm a Christian, and I—

**S.E.**

We're Christians too but we also incorporate other beliefs.

**Jacqui**

Yeah, I'm a Christian, and I believe very strongly in the importance of—

**S.E.**

Holy war.

**Jacqui**

I was going to say service and, like, caring about other people, but holy war too, totally.

**S.E.**

Totally, right. But you get it. This is what my script is all about—the toxicity of Hollywood culture and how if it keeps going the way it's going, it's all gonna be over.

**Jacqui**

You are really speaking my language. So where are things with your film right now?

**S.E.**

We're shopping around for a producer.

**Jacqui**

I'll produce it. I have a ton of producorial experience. Is that crazy?!

**S.E.**

It is. We're looking for someone with clout.

**Donny**

She means someone at a studio.

**S.E.**

Or production company. No offense.

**Jacqui**

Totally! None taken!

**Donny**

That's kind of why we were at that party.

**S.E.**

Yeah, Donny knows—

**Jacqui**

Goooooot it.

**Donny**

We go way back.

**Jacqui**

He's a big-deal producer! He has Oscars! I mean, if you can get him to produce it, that would be amazing. Did anything happen?

**S.E.**

*This* guy chickened out.

**Donny**

I didn't chicken out. You have to finesse these things.

**Jacqui**

Have you sent him the script?

**S.E.**

Yeah, *that'll* happen!

**Donny**

S.E. thinks he won't read it.

**S.E.**

S.E. *knows* he won't read it.

**Jacqui**

Why? It's such an amazing script!

**S.E.**

Thank god *someone* has taste!

**Donny**

He and S.E. don't get along. It's a long story.

**S.E.**

I'm not afraid to tell it! The story isn't even long. When we were all much younger, he wanted to fuck me and I wasn't having it, but he's never gotten over that, so now he has no respect for my work. It's an open secret the guy's a pig. His office is essentially a rape factory. I'm just lucky he didn't violate me.

**Jacqui**

Still, it would be great to get him on board.

**S.E.**

I agree!

**Donny**

I'll figure something out.

**Jacqui**

What about doing a reading? Like read through the whole script just for him.

**Donny**

I don't know about that.

**Jacqui**

I did a reading recently of my friend's script, and it was super fun! We did it at her apartment and she had champagne. It was great.



**Donny**

I don't think he'd ever come to that.

**S.E.**

You're missing the point. He's a misogynist and he doesn't respect my work.

**Jacqui**

You don't have to tell him he's coming to a reading. Just arrange a meeting with him—at your office, not his—

**Donny**

We don't have an office.

**Jacqui**

Then at your house. Just tell him you want to get together to catch up and while he's there we just read the script.

**Donny**

Like we trap him there?

**Jacqui**

Not at all—it's guerrilla theatre.

**S.E.**

That's rad.

**Donny**

I don't think he'll sit through a whole script if we spring it on him.

**Jacqui**

Listen, I've only read a few scenes from this script, but I know it's so good that once he hears the first few pages, there's no way he won't be glued to his chair until the end.

**S.E.**

She's got a point.

**Jacqui**

And, like I said, I have tons of producorial experience. I can handle copying the scripts and getting the champagne—and I'll read in it, too, if you need another actor.

**S.E.**

Well there's only one other actor in the script besides Donny. He plays the role called *The Star*, and the way I see it is that every other role in the film would be played by one actress.

**Jacqui**

This is fate then! I'll do it.

**S.E., to Donny**

Great actress, by the way.

**Jacqui**

Oh my gosh, thank you so much.

**Donny**

What kind of work have you done?

**Jacqui**

Oh, lots of stuff. A bunch of student films, some TV, some commercial work. You know, the grind.

**S.E.**

She was in a national commercial.

**Jacqui**

I was, can't deny it!

**Donny**

Soul-crushing work, commercials.

**S.E.**

Donny was the face of Budweiser.

**Donny**

That was a long time ago.

**S.E.**

What, so it doesn't count?!

**Jacqui**

I guess you could say I was the face of an antidepressant.

**S.E.**

What'd you say?

**Jacqui**

That I was the face of an antidepressant. That was the product I did the national commercial for. I played this young woman who was really struggling with her depression. It was a great role. And it really touched people. I got a few emails from fans through my website. That's what it's all about, I think.

**Donny**

Pharmaceuticals.

**S.E.**

*The pharmaceutical industry—*

**Donny**

It's okay, sweetheart.

**Jacqui**

Did I say something wrong?

**Donny**

No no no. She just—

**S.E.**

So you worked for the pharmaceutical industry.

**Jacqui**

Not exactly.

**S.E.**

They paid your bills! They bought you a car!

**Donny**

Calm down, babe.

**S.E.**

Working for the pharmaceutical industry is basically ritualized murder.

**Donny**

She's right.

**S.E.**

I mean, you essentially made a deal with the devil, so who knows if we can even trust you now? I don't know if I'd feel comfortable working with you.

**Jacqui**

No, please, it was a long time ago! I just moved to L.A. and I just needed the job! I was working for The Man! Would I take that job now? Absolutely not! I'm much much much more careful about the work I'm saying yes to. I want to do work that makes a positive impact on the world! Like your movie!

**Donny**

She's sorry.

**Jacqui**

I'm so sorry.

**S.E.**

I just needed to make that clear.

**Jacqui**

I totally get it! Everybody has their things they're passionate about. Mine is littering.

**Donny**

You didn't know.

**S.E.**

Of course she didn't know. I know that. I'm not an idiot. These things just affect me. Jacqui, we have come to learn about a menace in this town that is working bit by bit to eat the powerful from the inside out. We call that menace The Star Killers.

**Donny**

The *Hollywood* Star Killers.

**S.E.**

Can you stop interrupting me and let me talk? The Hollywood Star Killers. More commonly referred to as The Star Killers. They kill stars. We started getting suspicious when Jackson Michaels died. Remember all those drugs? And that doctor?

**Donny**

Shady shit.

**S.E.**

Shay. Dee. Shit. If you look deep into it, the doctor was getting paid off by the pharmaceutical companies—and you don't have to look that deep into it, by the way—it's all right there for you to see, clear as day—it's so obvious it's stupid. You're alone in a room with one other person and you hear a toot and it starts to smell like turds and you know you didn't do it so lemme guess who farted? Hmm hmm hmm who would it be? It's not rocket science.

**Donny**

So the doctor was getting paid by the pharma people.

**S.E.**

Right. They're paying him to give these drugs to Jackson, and the doctor doesn't take insurance or anything—don't get me started on medical insurance in this country—so the doctor's charging Jackson a couple thousand dollars a pop and he visits every day, so it *behooves* him to make Jackson sick. It *behooves* him to get Jackson addicted. That's why we don't take any medicine. We don't take any medicine for anything.

**Donny**

We take supplements. Lots of supplements.

**S.E.**

All natural. From the earth. But no medicine. And no doctors.

**Donny**

We haven't taken any medicine in probably six years.

**S.E.**

At least. There's no way of knowing who's behind what. Could be poison. And it's not just the doctors. It's the doctors but it's also the masseuses, it's the agents, it's the publicists, the cleaning people, okay, because they need the stars to need them—sometimes it's their own family! Don't you think for a second Jackson's family isn't rolling it now.

**Donny**

He had a lot of money in a lot of places. And they got all of it.

**S.E.**

He put the doctor in the will.

**Donny**

Jackson Michaels was the greatest entertainer in the history of time. The talent?

**S.E.**

The Star Killers are jealous people, because they themselves have no talent, so they leech off the talented, suck them dry, and toss them out when there's nothing left.

**Donny**

Have you ever seen anyone who could do what that man could do? I have not. Not before or since.

**S.E.**

That's because there wasn't anybody, isn't anybody, will never be anybody who could do what that man could do. Same as you, Donny.

**Donny**

Babe.

*The Caines kiss with tongue.*

**Jacqui**

I agree.

**S.E.**

And don't you for a second believe all that garbage about Jackson diddling those boys. That's just the Star Killers trying to distract you from their crimes, which are *murder*. So Jackson dies, and that sets me on this path of doing all this research. So I know how they make these drugs, okay?

**Jacqui**

Okay.

**S.E.**

I could essentially cook them up myself and be in on all this with them, but I have better things to do with my time. I have my career. I have a very rigorous, almost monk-like artistic practice at this point. But on the side I've become a kind of savant about the Star Killers. I can back it all up. Because of course it didn't stop with Jackson. *Of course not!* Then there was Keith Ledger, Philip Seymour Kaufman.

**Donny**

I knew them all. There are times we're sitting at home and, out of nowhere, I weep. It's too much. These are my friends we're talking about here. All lost to—let me put this in quotes—“overdoses.”

**S.E.**

Right, you're gonna read they “overdosed.”

**Donny**

Air quotes.

**S.E.**

‘Cause *that's what they want you to believe*. And the media's in on it too. Don't think the media isn't paying off the Star Killers. They need juicy stories and they manufacture those stories by paying off the Star Killers who in turn take the stars they work for and murder them. They murder them until they are dead. And what the media pays the Star Killers, it's chump change compared to what they're raking in from all the advertising they get when the braindead sheeple in the great American, prototypical herd of lemmings all tune in to watch the next great celebrity death. And who's buying all that ad space? That's right: the pharma companies. So it's all connected. Capitalism! It's so obvious it's stupid. Stars are worth more dead than alive, but the sheeple can't smell the rancid, putrid, lethal coffee that's infecting our society. We, as a society, are asleep. Meanwhile, the Star Killers have crept past our sleeping bodies and turned the world we once knew into a dystopian hellscape, and pretty soon we won't recognize it anymore.

**Donny**

That's what's coming.

**S.E.**

Cue our movie. It's so obvious who the Star Killers have on their radar. They look for artists who've been disrespected by the industry, turned into a joke, who've been shoved up on a shelf someplace, who can't get arrested in this town. Stars the sheeple won't be surprised to hear are dead 'cause the sheeple view them as a joke. All that to say: Academy Award-nominee Donny Caine is on their list.

**Donny**

I'm next.

**S.E.**

He's next.

*The Caines nod, proud.*

*Jacqui is rapt.*

*Suddenly, a flying object crashes into their table,  
accompanied by the screeching caw of a crow.*

*CAW! CAW!*

**Jacqui**

SWEET MARY MOTHER OF GOD!

**S.E.**

STAND BACK! I'LL RIP YOUR NUTS OFF!

**Jacqui**

SWEET MARY MOTHER OF GOD!

**Donny**

Alright, take it easy, you two.

**Jacqui**

MARY MOTHER OF GOD!

**S.E.**

THIS IS NOT HOW THIS IS GONNA GO!

**Donny**

S.E. take it easy!

*S.E. pulls out and aims a pistol.*

**S.E.**

YOU WILL ANSWER TO ME!

**Donny**

*PUT THAT AWAY!*

*S.E. puts the pistol away.*

**Donny**

Come look, sweetheart. It's a crow.

**S.E.**

It could be an explosive, Donny! Or a listening device!

**Donny**

It's not. It's a crow. Come look. It's still breathing. It's a sign. It's a God-given sign.

**S.E.**

Oh my god. It is. It is a crow. It's my bird. It's our bird.

**Donny**

Its wings're moving, but barely. It's dying. There's a crow in our screenplay.

**Jacqui**

Wow. That's so beautiful.

*Jacqui takes out her phone and records a video.  
She points the camera at Donny.*

**Jacqui**

Say something.

**Donny**

My daddy taught me about crows. When I was a tyke, my daddy'd take us hunting and he'd show off by shooting birds, because they were the smallest, and hardest to hit. He hit a lot of crows. And he'd tell us tales about 'em—folklore, legends. He'd say, it's not a coincidence that in Welsh and Cornish mythology, crows signify death. The Danish see the crow as a symbol of exorcism. To the Chinese, crows are a harbinger of barren crops. The Hindus and the Swedes tell us that crows are a vessel for ghosts. In Aboriginal legends, the crow is a murderer. Maybe that's why we say a murder of crows. My daddy taught me there's no coincidences. What is this crow telling us? Look at his little lungs moving. In and out. In and out. How'd you find us, little fella? Are you my daddy reincarnated? Did you come here to tell us something? Is death around the corner? Destruction? End times? It takes a fool to not see we're ass backward in this country. That we need an exorcism. Like this crow, we are at our last gasp.

**S.E.**

And, cut. That was brilliant. That was fucking brilliant.

**Jacqui**

I agree. It was fucking brilliant, and I never curse.

*The Star Killer appears, as Bongo Player.*

\*

INT. KIDDIE CITY BREAKROOM – DAY

*Jacqui is talking to Bongo Player.*

**Jacqui**

I feel like I'm cursed. I told you about that casting director workshop I did? Well I'd say it went well because she called me in today for this role in an indie. So I go in and I'm like, "O-M-G, hey! How are you?! It's so good to see you!" you know. And she's like, so cold, super unexcited to see me. And I'm, like, Okay, weird, noted. And then