

AmArill0 by M0rning

by Patrick Daly

CHARACTERS

KASS – 28. Done. She did it. She got through life before even turning 30. Now she can just hang out.

ELROY – Mid-30s, maybe. Not done. Never done. Elusive, fluid, quick, ever-changing. Not gonna let Kass hang out.

DOUG – Kass’s “friend”.

MICHAEL – Kass’s ex.

SETTING

Rural Texas, present day.

The ground level of a two story house. Spacious, empty. Made up of three “rooms” that flow into each other.

STYLE NOTES

This play is fast when people converse and slow when they don’t. These characters trip over themselves to wrap up their interactions, but then get hopelessly lost in their own thoughts, musings, and distractions.

ELROY has a cartoonish southern accent until he doesn’t. “Until he doesn’t” should happen gradually.

“/” denotes where the next speaker begins their line.

This is a 2-actor piece. KASS is played by one actor. All other roles are played by the actor playing ELROY.

I

The kitchen and living room of an un-intuitively laid-out rural home. A staircase stage right leads up and offstage, presumably to a story above. No lights are on. Just the sliver of moonlight that creeps in through the covered window.

A flash of otherworldly light briefly flashes from outside the window.

Quiet. Black.

A woman spills down the stairs and runs across the room. She flings the curtains wide open. She's too late to see anything but the matte southern sky.

KASS swivels around and slams the light switch on to give us a clean look at her. She's wearing sweats, a band t-shirt and a bathrobe. She's about 28, but could be mistaken for fifteen years older.

KASS cautiously returns to the window. She stares into the sky as if waiting for something.

She waits.

She watches.

But whatever. She can watch from afar. Not so frantic anymore, KASS heads into the "living room". She walks kind of sideways so as not to let the window out of sight. Keeping one eye moored on the sky, she drags an armchair near to the window and sits watch.

She watches.

She waits.

KASS: ... Starving.

KASS rises and heads to the kitchen. She opens the fridge and stares into it for a moment. More robotically, she closes it. She drifts thoughtlessly over to a kitchen cabinet. She opens it, but she blocks us from seeing what's inside.

She stares at the cabinet.

The room is once again bathed in a pale light.

KASS slams the cabinet shut and races back toward the window.

She stares out at the sky, but there's nothing to see. The light has faded.

KASS: Farm shit...

She waits. She watches.

She's really gonna fucking watch this time.

But also, she should tell someone. Just in case. Barely looking down, she unlocks the phone, then activates its voice command.

KASS: Call Doug.

Beat. The phone speaker begins to emit an “outgoing call” ring. KASS taps her foot eagerly.

Nothing. The ringing stops. .

KASS: (*Into the phone:*) Message Doug: “Important”.

Bloop. *Message sent.*

She scrolls.

A ringtone. KASS jumps to her feet, answering immediately. She paces while talking.

KASS: Hey.

DOUG'S VOICE: Dawg-

KASS: Are you awake?

DOUG'S VOICE: Dude...

KASS: I had to call someone.

DOUG'S VOICE: Okay.

KASS: I saw something. I think I saw a...

I don't know. I just need you to talk me down.

DOUG'S VOICE: What do you mean?

KASS: No, I don't mean — not in a serious way. Now I'm hearing myself talk out loud and it's dumb.

DOUG'S VOICE: (*Softening:*) All good, man. What's up?

KASS: Can I just say whatever?

Silence.

KASS: Hello?

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah.

KASS: I just saw something weird. I dunno, man, it's fucking creepy out here.

DOUG'S VOICE: (*Laughing:*) Yeah, dude. Texas is fucking creepy.

KASS: Just at night, I mean, It's like... "Quiet" isn't even...

DOUG'S VOICE: You okay?

KASS: Yeah.

DOUG'S VOICE: What time is it there?

KASS: Like 3. It's an hour difference.

Absent-mindedly, KASS makes her way to the front door and unlocks it.

DOUG'S VOICE: 3...?

KASS: Or – I don't know, it's morning. It's late. Or early. Whatever.

DOUG'S VOICE: You have work tomorrow?

KASS: Yeah.

KASS exits the home. We can still hear her from outside.

DOUG'S VOICE: How's work?

KASS: It's alright.

DOUG'S VOICE: That's awesome.

We get an obscured look through the living room window of KASS pacing around outside.

KASS: Am I missing anything good up there?

DOUG'S VOICE: I dunno. (*Beat.*) I got another girlfriend.

KASS: ...What?

DOUG'S VOICE: I got another girlfriend.

Silence.

KASS: Why are you saying it like that?

DOUG'S VOICE: What?

KASS: You got “another” girlfriend?

DOUG'S VOICE: I got a new girlfriend.

KASS: You said “another”.

DOUG'S VOICE: Okay.

KASS: I dunno it just sounds weird.

DOUG'S VOICE: Just wanted/ to tell-

KASS: It sounds like you collect them or something.

DOUG'S VOICE: Okay.

KASS: “New”, even, is weird. It sounds like a software update or something, but “another” just sounds... Weird.

DOUG'S VOICE: I mean, it basically is an upgrade. She’s way cooler than you-know-who.

KASS: I said *update*. Not upgrade.

DOUG'S VOICE: Alright man, whatever.

KASS: Sorry. Not tryna be a dick. I’m like half asleep.

DOUG'S VOICE: Nah all good.

KASS takes one last look at the naked sky before heading back in.

KASS: It’s quiet here. That’s all.

KASS closes the door as she enters the house.

DOUG'S VOICE: Come on. It's Texas. You could, like, go square dance or get in a bar fight or something. Or – not a bar, but... I dunno, it's Texas.

KASS: It's definitely Texas.

Pause.

DOUG'S VOICE: Alright dude I'm gonna-

KASS: I fucking went to church last week.

DOUG'S VOICE: (*Laughing*) What?

KASS: Yeah.

DOUG'S VOICE: Like — catholic?

KASS: I don't even know. Just the church near here.

DOUG'S VOICE: Was it Catholic?

KASS: I don't know. It was alright, though.

DOUG'S VOICE: You just went alone?

KASS: So?

DOUG'S VOICE: You haven't met anyone?

The light from outside flashes again, more faint. KASS immediately pivots her head to look at it but doesn't move her body. She stands and stares.

DOUG'S VOICE: Kass?

KASS peels her attention from the window and begins pacing.

KASS: I mean it's not... The nearest person lives like a mile away. That's kinda the point.

DOUG'S VOICE: "The point"...

KASS: But low-key, actually, church was actually kinda cool. (*Beat*) Like it wasn't... I thought in Texas they'd be doing "testify" and backflips and shit. But it was cool.

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah no it sounds awesome.

KASS: Maybe not "cool", but like... No, fuck it, it was cool. It was cool to see a bunch of people, like, facing the same way and saying the same stuff. When do you see that? Everyone's so desperate to be, like, *themselves*, or to be individual, and to just see people saying the same thing was like... Yeah, it's cool. I'm old, I don't care. I thought church was cool.

Silence. KASS stands in the middle of the space.

DOUG'S VOICE: Did it help?

Beat.

KASS: Did it "help?"

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah. I dunno.

KASS: I mean... I don't know. I don't think I understand the question.

DOUG'S VOICE: Nevermind. That didn't... It's 3 AM dude I don't know.

KASS: My bad.

DOUG'S VOICE: Just be... I don't know. Sometimes people in your position get a little... Seduced. Or not "seduced", but there's definitely a kinda/ over-correction that happens-

KASS: My "position".

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah, Kass. You're in a "position". Everyone with a pulse is in some "position".

And in yours... I happen to have seen a lot of people in yours. And it can be kinda sexy to overcorrect and just sort of... Disappear into a crowd of "good guys". There's nothing wrong

with church, just... You know... You still have to be you, is what I'm saying. There's nothing that can let you off the hook for that.

Beat. KASS eyes the window carefully.

DOUG'S VOICE: Anything else you wanted to say?

KASS: No dude, all good. I think I was basically, like, half dreaming. (*Laughing:*) I don't even think I realized I was calling you until I called you.

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah man right on. Alright, well, try and get some rest.

KASS: Yeah, right on. Thanks for picking up.

DOUG'S VOICE: Yeah dude of course. Alright, be well.

The call disconnects. KASS stops pacing.

KASS ambles toward an unassuming drawer located near the front door. She reaches into it and casually extracts A REVOLVER, skinny and silver, like some romanticized thing out of an old western flick. She admires it for a moment.

KASS: Man...

Still toting her revolver, she heads over to the armchair. She settles into the chair and watches the window again.

It doesn't take long for her attention to switch to her phone. She starts scrolling mindlessly through videos. We hear the audio:

FIRST VOICE: Feeling that empty feeling? (*The sound of candy wrappers crinkling.*) It's time to reach for time.

SECOND VOICE: Oh yeah.

SECOND VOICE: Time bars — the only snack worth your ti-

KASS taps the screen impatiently and the ad gives way to the video she picked.

THIRD VOICE: Welcome back guys, I'm Mr. Badlands, as always I'm gonna be going through the hottest and baddest

victories and fuck-ups of the week in hip hop culture, brining it all to you with an old-school bend and a respect for the roots-

Behind KASS, the window flashes, though lighter this time, and unaccompanied by sound. Not even bothering to look back, she throws a pillow "at" the light.

KASS: Fuck off.

She selects a new video. This one has a little jingle undercurrent, ala a TikTok "how to" video.

FOURTH VOICE: This is how you can turn anything into anything else! Since this cube is basically made of plastic, it's a good example. What we want to do is take this cube and make it into a suit and food. So we're gonna take it, we're gonna go through some steps like this, and wala! We have a suit and some food. Now you know how to make anything into anything! Hope this was help-

Another small flash. It doesn't get KASS to turn around, but if she had, she would've seen the silhouette of a HUMANOID FIGURE staring into her home.

The light fades fast and so does the figure. KASS blissfully clicks the next video. A preacher voice:

FIFTH VOICE: My brothers. My sisters. All things. In life. Are real.

The phone audio is the first thing to cut out, followed very quickly by the television's glow. The lights in the kitchen put up a bit more of a fight, flickering and humming chaotically, but eventually, they, too, give way.

KASS: Ahhggggghhhhh!!

Though we can see very little, it's quite clear that instead of sprinting to action, KASS has stayed exactly where she was.

*Beat. Then, a **BOOM!***

KASS: AHHHH!

Silence. Stillness. Then, it happens again:

A great flood of light, now accompanied by a sort of metallic buzz, pulses through the home, exposing KASS as she cowers behind her chair.

KASS springs up and pushes the chair with all her might toward the door, barricading it and then backing away quickly.

Silence. Darkness.

KASS: ...Fucking... starving...

Knock knock.

KASS freezes.

After a moment of paralyzation, KASS turns on her phone flashlight.

Is She still holding the gun? Where's the gun? Where's the gun?? She picks up the tv remote.

Where's the fucking gun?? She runs back into the kitchen, finds the gun, and freezes again.

Silence.

*Another **knock**.*

MAN: (*Offstage:*) Hello?

KASS: (*Quietly:*) Ah man...

More aggressive knocking that doesn't quite match the comically scratchy voice.

Silence.

BANG.

A bloodied hand at the window, its owner obscured from view. KASS retreats into the kitchen so as not to be visible to anyone looking in. We can only see his shoulder as he speaks in what can only be described as "a northerner's idea of a southern accent":

MAN: Sorry, m'am. Bad time of night. I don't mean to... I'm hurt. Please. I don't mean to alarm ya, you're the only person near enough to....

KASS is entirely frozen.

MAN: Ma'm, you /gotta-

KASS : Just a minute!

Silence. The shoulder disappears from view.

KASS remains frozen. After a moment, she thaws a bit to slide her head into her hands.

Knock knock.

MAN: (*Offstage:*) M'am?

KASS: Just a minute please!

KASS doesn't move.

MAN: (*Offstage:*) Cassandra?

KASS's head shoots up like a meerkat's.

MAN: (*Offstage:*) Cassandra, it's... We met. At mass. At Holybrooke. We spoke a moment. Elroy. I'm Elroy. (*No response.*) You talked about the smell of church? And how 'n it always smells like "a mix of children's shame and cookies"? Your words.

KASS: Okay! Thank you!

MAN: (*Offstage:*) How's that? (*No response.*) Cassandra-

KASS: Why are you at my house?

MAN: (*Offstage:*) It's Elroy. From mass.

KASS: Hello Elroy. What do you need at my house, please?

MAN: (*Offstage:*) I know, I know. I'm hurt. I got hurt nearby. And I don't – it's hard to... My phone isn't goin'. Something happened and it ain't working. No internet. I'm in a bad way, so I... (*He groans.*) My phone's still on, there's just no internet or cell service or nothin', so I looked through it to see what was *offline* that could help me, and all I had was a picture of the parish directory saved. You were... I was about a mile down the way, and you were the closest address.

Silence.

KASS: That's a lot of stuff.

MAN: (*Offstage:*) I understand. But think on it. It's kinda too crazy to be a lie?

KASS: What?? No – that could totally be a lie! You could make that up with, like, no prep time!

MAN: (*Offstage:*) When someone's lying there's a lot more texture to it, yeah? But I'm givin' you all the info I got, with all the big holes intact.

KASS: It sounds like you've thought a lot about what a lie sounds like.

MAN: (*Offstage:*) I don't know much what's going on, but that I'm hurt and you're in there and I'd rather be in there than out here, and if you could help me out once I'm in there I'd be much obliged. (*Beat.*) I know you saw it too. (*No response.*) M'am. Kass. I know—

KASS: **Kassandra.**

ELROY: (*Offstage:*) I know why you're standing at your window at 3 am. I know why you broke out your piece. I don't know what I saw, but I know you saw it too. And it hurt me. I can/ show you-

KASS: Please stay away.

ELROY: (*Offstage:*) I am stayin' away. If I keep stayin' away, I will die. I'm moving to the window so's you can get a look that I'm no threat.

Some shuffling by the window, visibly tough to make out.

Pointing her gun and light in front of her, KASS approaches the window. After a moment, it's clear she's looking at a massive gash in a man's stomach. She jerks up the light to reveal ELROY's gaunt face.

ELROY: Please.

KASS: ... What are you doing out here?

ELROY: I wasn't "out here". I've come a mile. I don't have another mile left in me.

KASS: Why were you out at 3 am?

ELROY: There's... (*He begins to get faint.*) Oh brother...

A pause.

ELROY slams his arm on the window.

KASS jumps back, but slowly re-approaches when she sees ELROY's weight begin to slide onto the window, and then down the window, until he's slumped out of view.

Suddenly, the lights turn back on. Immediately, Kass checks her phone. Still no service.

Silence, save for the occasional sharp inhale from KASS.

ELROY: (*Offstage. Faint but clear:*) Can I have your wifi?

KASS: ...

ELROY props himself up, his face visible again.

ELROY: If you give me that I can call someone myself and I'll—

KASS: I don't have wifi!

ELROY: Girl...

KASS: (*Tears in her eyes:*) That was the WHOLE POINT OF COMING/ OUT HERE!!!

ELROY: I'm gonna bleed out on account of some kid wanted to do a Tiktok detox. (*Beat.*)

Little girl in the woods with no wifi. Shit. I wouldn't let me in neither.

KASS: I'll call. I can try the landline, or I'll use the SOS thing on my/ phone-

ELROY: Shoot it don't matter. I ain't got that kinda time.

KASS: I can call someone. Someone will come and-

ELROY: I need help, Cassandra. I need to stop the bleedin'. Even if and you was able to get the call going, I know where we are – it's not gonna cut it. There's trees blockin' Fairview, only route here is miles around, gonna be at least half an hour. If I lose any more blood...

(*Beat.*) It's still out here.

KASS: What is "it"? I – no. I don't wanna know. I don't care... I just... Please...

Silence. Then, some fiddling at the door. KASS straightens her arms and aims dead at the door.

MAN: Cassandra... Your door is unlocked.

KASS: What?? Yes it is!!! No – not – it's locked!! It *is* locked!!!

MAN: I'm sorry. It isn't. Listen – I will not enter your home unless you allow me to. But I'm going to open the door so as you can see me.

KASS: The door *is* locked! I'm calling the police!

MAN: You have no service, Cassandra. I'm not going to enter. I'm only opening the door.

KASS: It's barricaded! I'm armed!! I called the police earlier, they'll be here soon!! Please don't do this!

MAN: I'm opening the door...

KASS: You can't get in!!! It's barricaded! Please please please go away!

The door swings open... The way opposite the "barricaded" items.

KASS: Fuck.

KASS aims her gun, but involuntarily lowers it when she gets a better look at ELROY.

This guy... His face...

ELROY: I'm not coming in. Not 'less you let me.

KASS: I called the cops. Earlier. Before. The cops are coming.

ELROY: It's your decision.

ELROY falls forward.

KASS: **Fuck.**

KASS goes to move to ELROY, but fear stops her.

KASS: I have syphilis.

ELROY: This hurts very much.

KASS: **Fuck!!**

She runs to the kitchen cabinet and extracts a med kit. She scrambles over and deftly gets his arm over her. She struggles over to the table in the middle of the room, clears it, and helps him lie on it.

ELROY: Fuck me...

KASS: Hang on.

She pops open the med kit. She pulls out a bottle with the label ripped off.

ELROY: Do you know what-

KASS: I'mSorryI'mSorryI'mSorry-

Closing her eyes, she dumps half the bottle into the wound.

He screams, obviously.

KASS: STOP! STOP SCREAMING!

ELROY: (*Through gritted teeth:*) You got it!

She extracts a collection of bandages. Awkwardly, she starts wrapping his entire midsection in gauze and pads.

ELROY: I ain't dead yet you don't gotta mummify me-

KASS: Shut up! Shut up! Shut the fuck up!

He does.

She's done.

Long silence.

KASS: Is... Does that feel better?

ELROY: Yes.

KASS: Are you going to kill me?

ELROY: No.

KASS: Fuck.

KASS starts hyperventilating.

ELROY: Calm down.

KASS: You're going to kill me.

ELROY: I ain't gonna kill ya.

KASS: (*Hyperventilating:*) I'm gonna be a 4-part fucking docu-series.

ELROY: Cassandra will you knock it off?

She starts breathing out of control. She sinks to the ground.

ELROY: Christ... Alright. Hey. Hey! Try and... (*He's losing her.*) Focus up. Focus

on something. Cassandra – we ain't strangers. Remember when we met at mass. Explain my life back to me. Remember back to me all the things I told you.

KASS: I don't know. I'm don't know. I'm ready to die. I'm gonna die. I'm ready to die. I'm ready to-

ELROY: Cassandra, can you sit up a little for me?

KASS: I'm ready. I'm ready to die. I'm ready-

KASS rocks back and forth on the floor. ELROY is keenly aware that she still grips the gun, and equally aware that she's unaware of it.

ELROY: **STAY STILL!**

She does.

ELROY: Try to remember. Who am I?

KASS: ...

ELROY: Elroy.

KASS: Yeah.

ELROY: What else did I tell you?

Silence. She looks dead ahead. Then:

KASS: Your job.

ELROY: What's my job.

KASS: You're a lawyer.

ELROY: (*He writhes a bit in pain, then:*) Tell me a bit more on that. (*Silence.*) What else did we get to talking about? You'll forgive my faux pas in not rememberin', usually the stress of niceties isn't compounded by quite as much blood loss.

KASS: You... Said... You talked about finding the church. You talked about where you were from.

You're not from here. Or — you are from Texas, but not Stephenville.

ELROY: Sure enough.

KASS: (*Slightly calmer:*) You have a daughter. She's at that age where she just wants to be angry and you don't know how to help her because you want to let her be angry but part of being angry is having someone try and convince you not to be so you can yell at them.

Wow we talked a lot.

ELROY chuckles, which turns quickly into coughing. He lies flat on his back.

ELROY: Guess we're not so much strangers as I thought. Maybe you wouldn't mind indulgin' my bad manners some more — what'd you say about you?

KASS: I said... I don't know. I don't remember.

ELROY: Well, shoot. Pretend I just told you all the stuff you just told me I told you. Then what would you tell me?

KASS: I'm... Kassandra.

ELROY: (*This fucking hurts:*) Tell me about yourself, Kassandra.

KASS: I'm... My name is Kassandra. I'm... I work at a farm. *Pharmacy*. The pharmacy. On Fairview.

ELROY: You patched up that hole in me real pretty.

KASS: I have... I know really basic medical. Like, nothing. But exactly what I did. That's exactly how much I know.

ELROY: Mighty lucky on me, I guess. Where'd you learn that?

KASS: (*Coming back into herself a bit more:*) What... What were you/ doing out there?

ELROY: And finally, Kassandra, I understand that I'm making more requests than you might expect of a first-time house-guest, and I understand if my pushing those conventional boundaries may see me left off the list for further social rendezvous, but in the interest of bartering the little etiquette I have in exchange for for my own personal peace of mind: **Any shot you'd put the gun away?** (*KASS doesn't move.*) How about just exercising some basic gun safety? Barrel pointed toward the ground. Safety on. Those ain't too big of hurdles. I move too fast, you can still execute me point blank. How do ya say?

KASS: I'm going over there.

ELROY: Hold – any painkillers in that box?

KASS: No.

ELROY: Anything you got around-

KASS: No.

ELROY: Just liquor or something?

She crosses to the kitchen, the gun held carefully at her hip, pointing down. She arrives in the kitchen and leans against the counter, looking anywhere but at her guest.

ELROY: What you use to sterilize this?

KASS: Alcohol.

ELROY: What kind?

KASS: Just... First aid alcohol.

ELROY: Shoot, don't suppose that goes down like Wild Turkey? (*Beat.*) I'm only jokin'. I wouldn't /touch Wild Turkey.

KASS: Why are you here?

ELROY: I told ya, I wasn't here. Took me damn near an hour to/ get here.

KASS: Why were you out walking around at 3 am?

ELROY: Insomnia.

KASS: What kind?

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: What kind of insomnia?

ELROY: All of 'em. All the kinds.

KASS: That's a formal diagnosis?

ELROY: Don't need to drop a copay to know I can't sleep. I try and be productive about it, but sometimes it's nice to just walk around a bit. Didn't know what I was gonna run into out there... (*Beat.*) You been here not a month. I remember that much. (*No response.*) You're from New York.

KASS: What do you need?

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: What do you need from me? How can I make this be over?

ELROY: Shoot... It ain't a matter of... I hate to be a burden, but... Well I don't see any way I don't need to stay here a while. Least til I can walk on my own at least.

KASS: I'll go get someone. I'll walk to town.

ELROY: It ain't safe out there for you, neither. Cassandra – something's out there. If you let me, I can show you. I snapped some photos on my...

ELROY trails off as KASS moves to get her coat.

KASS: I'll take my chances.

ELROY: Cassandra, will you listen to me? I'm tryna help you.

KASS: (*Moving to leave:*) Thank you so so so so so much.

ELROY: There's more goin' on here than you understand. (*Beat.*) Do you wanna know wha-

KASS: No.

ELROY: You don't wanna know-

KASS: No. Thank you. No. I don't really wanna know anything. Thank you so much, though.

ELROY: I know you saw it. It's okay. It's a lot to process. (*Beat.*) How much of it did you see? (*Beat.*)

Did you get a head on-

KASS: Hi. Sorry. Elroy? I'm... It's okay that you needed me to save your life. I'm super happy to help.

But I don't... I'm here for... I'm not interested in knowing any more stuff than I already know.

Like, at all. Ever. Forever. I know exactly as much as I wanna know. I really, really, really don't

care what you think's out there. You can stay here for... I don't know. I'm gonna figure

something out. Because this isn't... Sorry, I don't want you here. I really would like for not

anyone but me to be here. Only just barely less than I don't want you to die. I'm gonna get

someone to come help you. But please don't stay stuff to me.

ELROY: Cassandra. You've no phone. You've no internet. How exactly you gonna get me help?

Beat. She stares at him for a moment. Then she begins to cross the room, keeping as much distance from him as she can, keeping her eyes fixed on him even as she passes, reaching the door and pushing it open with her back.

KASS arrives at the door. She raises her gun arm to the outside world and fires into the air.

ELROY: Christ on a stick-

KASS: Someone's coming. Someone'll be here. We just gotta wait now.

ELROY: Gonna make my insides kill me 'fore my outsides.

KASS makes a show of doing her same careful, eyes-locked shuffle back across the room.

ELROY: Chrissake – I couldn't touch ya now if I wanted. I'm goddamn debilitated.

KASS arrives back at the kitchen.

ELROY: I can hear the afterlife.

KASS: Sorry.

ELROY: Well ya got anything to make it stop? Or just make it less?

KASS: No. Sorry.

ELROY: Can I have booze.

KASS: I don't keep booze.

ELROY: The medical stuff then. Kass — this hurts an awful lot.

KASS: I'm not feeding you numbing alcohol!

ELROY: Whatcha got else? There's lots that's got kick to it that's safe to drink that people don't realize. Cooking wine? Mouthwash? It's nothin to do with anything other than just killing

off some of this pain.

KASS: I'm not... I don't have anything. I don't have much. I haven't been here that long. I'm sorry. I don't have much.

Out of nowhere, her cabinet door falls off its hinges and reveals the hidden bottle of bourbon behind it. She jumps. She looks at the booze, then at Elroy's smiling face.

ELROY: Holdin' out on me?

KASS: That's not... That must be from the last owners.

ELROY: All the same to me. Whatcha got?

She examines the bottle with faux-scrutiny.

KASS: Whiskey.

ELROY: Kinda whiskey?

KASS: Bourbon.

ELROY: Kinda bourbon?

KASS: Jack.

He hums to himself.

ELROY: Jack was my drink.

Beat.

KASS: Why "was"?

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: What do you mean "was"?

ELROY: Well I'm an alcoholic. (*Off KASS's stare:*) "Desperate times" and such. I ain't recovered or nothin', that ship sailed a long time ago. I just... *Try* and not drink. And been doin' good at it for a bit. But it ain't a rule or nothin', and I ain't losin' no sleep taking a sip now on what here may be my deathbed. I ain't recovered. You ain't doin' no harm what's not been done by bringin' that there over here. I ain't gonna get violent with you or nothin' on account of that I can't if I wanted to, in my state, and on account of I ain't that kinda drunk. (*KASS is unconvinced.*) I ain't gonna slip you my whole manifesto, but take it from an older gentleman: Life ain't black and white. Even the simple stuff ain't simple. And drinkin' ain't the simple stuff. All the kumbaya "just quit drinkin' and you're saved"... That don't fix what's broken in a man. (*Beat.*) What's addiction?

KASS: ... You need something you shouldn't need.

ELROY: "You need something". And what do you do when you "need" something? You *stop* using it? How's that make any sense?

KASS: You need something you *shouldn't* need.

ELROY: You're speaking nursery rhymes, kid. When it's "need", there is no should or shouldn't. You get addicted to food, is the answer to stop eating? The coward's way out. You got any problem like one with drink, the real answer is you figure it out.

KASS hesitates. She gets a feeling she can't shake. She starts feeling around her body, then realizes that she hasn't been holding the gun since she went over to the sink.

Quietly, internally, she panics. Trying to play it casually, she makes her way to the sink. She checks the counter, then the cabinet. Nothing. She starts blowing her cover by ripping open cabinets and kneeling under the sink.

Elroy pulls out the gun from under him.

ELROY: Lose something?

KASS spins around only to go more still than she's ever been. ELROY dangles the gun, not pointing it at her but letting it rest in her general direction.

KASS: (*Distressed:*) How...

A long silence. KASS straightens up.

KASS: If you're gonna shoot me, you might want to turn the safety off.

ELROY: (*Looking at the gun:*) It is off.

KASS: I know. I thought you checking would give me time to grab the gun.

A long silence.

ELROY: The bourbon, if you please.

A tense beat. Then, ELROY starts cackling gleefully.

He clicks the safety on, places the gun gently on the ground, then slides it over to KASS, who doesn't move.

ELROY: If that ain't an olive branch I don't know what the Hell is.

KASS: Look, if you're just... I'd rather you just kill me, than this. Please, this... I can't do this. Just tell me what's going on, or if you're here to hurt me, just fucking do it. Please.

ELROY: Alright, alright, hey — take it easy. You left the gun down over here, I was only playin'.

KASS: Well I'm not in the FUCKING MOOD!!!

Silence.

KASS gets up and paces a bit.

KASS: Lawyers have to be able to put themselves in other people's perspectives.

ELROY: I have been told this.

KASS: Can you imagine what I'm feeling right now?

ELROY: I can imagine it, yes.

KASS: What do you imagine I'm feeling right now?

ELROY: Apprehension. Excitement. Probably a bit of numbness. (*Beat.*) Camaraderie.

KASS: And how's that?

ELROY: It's only what I imagine.

KASS: How do you imagine I'm feeling camaraderie?

ELROY: I reckon you'd feel camaraderie with a fence post if you got to tellin' it more than just your name and where you work at. But in this situation...

(*Beat.*)

You tell anyone what you saw tonight?

KASS: There's no one here.

ELROY: You make any calls?

KASS: I told you my phone is-

ELROY: I didn't lose any signal til that fourth flash.

KASS: ...I called a friend in New York.

ELROY: And what'd you say?

KASS: I just... Talked. I don't know. I didn't say anything specific.

ELROY: Good friend to answer at this time. (*Beat.*): Why come you didn't say nothin' about what you

saw?

KASS: Because I didn't see anything. I don't know what I saw.

ELROY: Then why bother callin'?

Silence.

ELROY looks to the window — so close to ELROY's glance that it might even have been at the same time, the window lights up as before, though maybe a bit dimmer.

She sprints to the window.

ELROY: Whatcha lookin at?

KASS: What am I—

She steps away from the window. She stares at him.

ELROY: You got a peculiar sense of safety.

KASS: What's that mean?

ELROY: Just funny when you think you're in danger and when not.

He eyes the kitchen counter and sees the single glass with melted ice.

ELROY: I got pictures if you wanna see.

Beat. She shifts a little where she stands, but doesn't move closer.

ELROY: Fuckssake.

He tosses his phone at her feet, annoyed but underhand. Keeping her eyes on him, she picks it up. She keeps her gun fastened on him as she examines the image, though examining the image eventually brings her gun arm to her side. She touches the screen.

ELROY: Don't swipe! Who said you/ could swipe??

KASS: I'm zooming in!

ELROY: Well don't swipe!

KASS: I'm not! (*Beat.*) Why not though?

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: You want me to relax? Let me look through your camera roll.

A pause.

ELROY: I'm beginning to see why you're all alone out here.

KASS: I won't do it if you don't let me. But if you don't let me I'm gonna have to keep pointing a gun at you.

ELROY: Well sure, yeah then, right on.

She starts swiping through his camera roll. Or trying to, at least.

KASS: These are it?

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: These are your only photos.

ELROY: How about that...

KASS: You do understand that this makes me... Not... Comfy?

ELROY: The cloud.

KASS: The cloud?

ELROY: It's the damn — everything's on the cloud, I've got no internet, they must not be on there.

KASS: Do you know how "the cloud" works?

ELROY: Do you know how "the cloud" works?

KASS: Alright. Well... So you're wandering around in the dead of night. You've got nothing on your phone but pictures of... This. Which – I don't think this clears up anything. This could be anything.

And you seem to be feeling a lot better really, really fast.

ELROY: And I thank you muchly for that.

KASS: What were you doing walking around at 3 am.

ELROY: I thought you didn't care.

KASS: You piqued my interest.

ELROY goes quiet. He looks away from KASS.

ELROY: You just gotta understand... Well, alright. Look, I'll tell ya the whole truth, like I did outside.

And you'll Make of it what you make of it. Alls I can do is know how honest I've been. And if you gotta call me a nut and get rid of me... But if I start lying now, I'll just get tangled up. So I'll tell you the truth and you'll make of it what you will.

KASS: You have the floor.

ELROY: **I'm an alien.**

Dead silence.

ELROY: Or... Not exactly. Maybe that's a misrepresentation...

I think I jumped the gun.

KASS: No it sounds good.

ELROY: Let me reign it in a bit-

KASS: You can if you want but it sounds really good and really normal.

ELROY: I don't mean it that "I'm an alien". I know that sounds crazy. More just... I got aliens in my head.

KASS: Yeah.

ELROY: Let me rewind.

KASS: Okay.

ELROY: When I was a kid-

KASS: Oh.

ELROY: When I was a kid, I had a... My whole family, they was very... *Integrated*

into the church. And the community. In a setup like that – in a town like that – you tend to *nest* things. When there's not that much *things* to start with – and in my community, there was not – you tend to put things *in* other things to make what you do have look *bigger*. Anytime we had somethin' worth havin', it'd go into the church. You put good things into good things. I ran good. School Football team. I was real fast. Fastest in the county by the time I was only 13. And so n' sure enough, 'cuz I was a star, I went right into the church, right in the front for everyone to see, and it didn't matter much that I wasn't much religious or nothin' or that the runnin' had nothin' to do with prayin' or that bein' a part of the church meant he couldn't run no more. And but then so, didn't it turn out that once I was already in there, I actually had a coupla talents that actually *did* have to do with the church, too, besides just bein' able to run fast.

As it turned out, I had a predilection for separation' the licentiousness and coventry from its strength and structure whilst keepin' it in the man what was covetous and licentious that same strength and structure with not but a handful of words and some jumpin' round.

He gives KASS a chance to respond, which she blankly lets pass right by.

I talk good, I'm sayin'.

I talked real good. Folks liked listenin'. Once the parish realized it, they put me good to work. I got to gettin' up at the end of sermons and given my own little recitation of the Lord's word. And after a while, it got to be just my own word I was packin' into the Lord's word. You pack good things into good things. And I guess then it got good enough that we got to pack our church up inside a bigger church, and soon enough we was the crown jewel in the greater Erath County Baptist community, and sure enough I was outta school more 'n I was in school and doin' all sorts of road shows and congregations and the like. And only at this time is it that I'm comin' into understandin' what's normal and what ain't, and sure enough, pretty soon, "normal" is whatever's next up on the talk tour itinerary, and I ain't know nothing but the likes of one town after another, tellin' folks things folks wanna hear, and when I sense they need somethin' other than what I got, I go ahead on the spot and get new things, and I think the lord's speaking through me. That seemed sure enough to me. And nothin' special about it – was just what needed doin'. There was a good word needed gettin' out to folks, and folks already knew me as good. You pack one good thing into another.

And so on and so on until one day, and now 'n by this time I'm near 17, and one day, I realize that none of my words is my own.

And it doesn't panic me or nothin', but I just up and realized that the words I'm sayin' and the thoughts I'm thinkin' really ain't feel like mine at all. And that my thoughts were as real as they ever were, but that they just weren't mine anymore. And the feelin', if I can explain it at all, maybe is like the feelin' of knowin' you're in a dream but not bein' able to do nothin' besides what you're gonna do in a dream, but not panicking neither, because you know it's part of the dream. And a dream's a good thing to have. But it's an odd feelin' knowin' that, even for a good cause, none of your thoughts are your own. It made everythin' a little... Faster. And for a while, so, that was how that went, and there was a peace to it, and it was normal enough on account of it was all I knew, havin' thoughts that weren't comin' from me decidin' everything I

said or did, pretendin' they were my own thoughts and me lettin' them pretend but knowing it's not true.

But then, after a while, and around now I'm probably around 20 at this point, there's another little break in things – another little moment where I realize somethin' – and I realize now that these thoughts stop pretendin' entirely that they're my own, and what do they do but they start talking directly *to* me.

They stop pretendin' to be my own. They start talkin' directly at me, like I'm my own person again. And they thank me for the time we've had together. And they explain to me how close friends we become, which and I got no leg to stand on to deny, as sure enough we done been thinkin' the same thoughts for the past six years, and these thoughts tell me how much we'd been able to accomplish together, and so then they say they wanna thank me proper. And so I take some time and remember what it is to think things and feel things what *are* mine, and sure enough I think it's right and just what these thoughts are sayin' to me, and that, shoot, why *shouldn't* I get a thanks for thinkin' someone else's thoughts for my prime life? Why shouldn't there be some reward for lettin' somethin' else drive for all that time and never makin' a fuss, and trustin' that there was a good reason for it? And so n' I accept and I say sure these thoughts are my friend and sure I'd like a thanks, and the thoughts tell me – not think *for* me, but tell me, as someone separate, and let me decide how I feel about it – that there's a time and a place where n' it'll be possible to give me thanks, and I just gotta hang tight til then.

And that time and place was north Stephenville.

Just off route 6.

At 2:15 am tonight.

Silence.

KASS: No shit.

ELROY: And I marked it down. That date, and time. Tonight. And I waited. And I had it marked

down and saved damn near two decades.

But I got older.

And as I got older and I started to get used to and used to thinkin' more and more of my own thoughts again, my thoughts got muddy again, like thoughts are when you have to build them by hand. And all this about... Someone else thinking for me... Whatever that was... Whatever that had been my whole young life... That had felt so... True... This idea that I had got so pure when I was 17, it started to feel not... Real. I got older and started to think straight, like an adult. I started to wonder maybe if hearin' these voices my whole childhood was maybe not the healthiest foundation for a life. And I got to readin' as much I could, and I got to thinkin' that maybe something wasn't quite workin' up in my head. And I got to seein' some doctors, and I got to seein' every doctor that I could, and I got to travelin' more than I ever did when I was out spreadin' the word of the thoughts. And sure enough, what I found... Well, that's it there. I found nothin'. Sound of mind.

KASS: You... Did you/ go to a-

ELROY: I'm healthy. By every metric. Always have been. I been examined every way a person can be examined. I've vetted this in every way I can. I'm clear of the big stuff and the small stuff. No hint or trace of schizophrenia, no personality this or that, no anything.

I don't even got any of the HPVs.

And now I'm startin' to think that after all my panic that somethin' wasn't right with me, that I was right the first time. That those thoughts were just as pure as I'd felt them as a boy. And that got to scarin' me worse than anythin' else. And off the back of knowin' I wasn't razy, and known' I heard voices ten years all the same, I made a vow right then and there that I was movin' on and not lookin' back, and that I didn't need no explanation now that I was out of it. And I did. I got good. I stayed good.

I'm a lawyer now. Texas A&M. I'm a father. A husband. I keep fit. I got things i like doin' and places I like bein' and people I like bein' around what keep me honest. I know my lot in life and I don't look too far to one side or the other. And it's been that way near 20 years.

And then I remembered that date.

North Stephenville. 2:15 am.

And as it got nearer... I'm a healthy man, Kass. I ain't the fella what screams about UFOs. But as that date got nearer and nearer, I started to feel something... Something familiar. That wasn't me. Started to have thoughts that... That that was somewhere I had to be.

A long silence. A completely blank KASS.

KASS: Everyone has HPV.

ELROY: I don't.

KASS: That's huge.

ELROY: And that's it.

KASS: So... How is that you "being" an alien?

ELROY: Yeah. Well. I went.

KASS: Yeah.

ELROY: And it's clear that there's...

Now I don't wanna make you any more uneasy than I already made you...

KASS: Thank you.

ELROY: All I mean is... This part's not nice.

KASS: ...

ELROY: Now you're gonna have to take me on more of my word. Because I don't much really remember what happened.

KASS: What? Tonight? You don't remember what just not even/ an hour ago?

ELROY: "Remember" isn't the right word. I more, just... *Know* it. I know what happened. Like someone encoded the idea of it into me. But not like a memory I was there for. I went – I made the decision to go. I know that much. I left my home come 1 am. I felt filthy doin' it, even if I knew there was nothin' filthy about my reasons. I had a whole thing I was ready to tell my wife.

I had a whole... She didn't even notice me get up. Normally I can't flip my pillow without her thinkin's we're bein' robbed. I checked on my little girl before I left. Then I left. I remember all that stuff. And drivin'. And that's all I "remember". After that, I just... Things become different. I don't have memories after leavin'. But I *know* things now. In a sense. And they're... These things...

ELROY pauses to get a hold of himself. He understates how important it is that he conveys this next part clearly and sanely.

ELROY: What I thought was just voices... They ain't just in me. They're old. They've been around a long time. A might longer than you or me. Things what lived here a long time ago, then made way for us. But now they want... They want to come back. They want the world back.

KASS: The world? Like the earth world?

ELROY: Sure enough. There's... Beings. You and I, we might call them whatever we'd call them...

"Aliens". But that wouldn't be quite right. Cuz they ain't from far away. They're from here. And they want... They don't want us gone. They want *us*.

They want... They wanted *me*.

They wanted me to... "Let them in". I don't much know what that means, but that's the idea – the main idea – that I got in my head after tonight. And it's big. Somehow, in some big way, they wanted me to "let them inside".

And I musta not wanted to let them. And so they did this. And I can't... The details are fuzzy.

But it seems like something's comin'. Seems like they think the timin' is right. Seems like they think we're just about wrappin' up. And seems they think we might welcome some kinda...

Relief. Clearly, I didn't.

KASS: They... Told you this? The voices?

ELROY: I ain't expectin' this is easy to follow, and it ain't/ easy for me to-

KASS: Okay. Okayokayokayokay. It's fine. That's okay. Just...

Still calm but expending energy to stay that way, KASS begins pacing.

KASS: So... Listen, I'm not saying... Okay. I believe, that you... I believe something happened to you
And that something is wrong. Like, that you're a victim. Of something. And I'm... I wanna
help you. But... Do you... I'm not saying you're crazy, but you don't think... What do I do?
What should I do?

ELROY: I don't got-

KASS: Sorry. I'm not – Look, whatever you've got to say, it's not... You're a man in my house in the
dead of night. So I'm... You could say anything, right? You can talk about aliens, or law, or you
could talk about how you're gonna spaghetti slurp my large intestine after you carve a
jack-o-lantern from my head, or you could compliment the feung shui of the place – it doesn't
matter.

ELROY: And it doesn't matter you saw a big ol' spaceship with your own eyes? (*Beat.*) Why didn't you
tell your sponsor when you called?

KASS: *Excuse* me??

ELROY: Pardon. Sorry to be so straightforward, but you've been through the
Program, yeah?

KASS: That's not... Normally that's the kinda thing you don't *out* someone about.

ELROY: My apologies. I did not mean to push. Went to my first meetin' sixteen years ago.

KASS: For what?

ELROY: Whatever. Who cares. It wasn't like that. It was a little column A, little columns B, C, D, so
on. So forth, even.

KASS: So, what — NA? AA?

ELROY: A little of everything. Sixteen years is a long time.

KASS: And you wanna... Casually relapse in my kitchen?

ELROY: I told you I ain't recovered. "Sobriety", the way it got handed to me, wasn't much anything but dependence but without the thing you depend on. Who needs that? Ain't no point in abstaining from something if you ain't able to stop needin' it. Now I'm not talkin' you outta whatever's workin' for you, but that stuff, to me... Ain't much different from just another religion. And I already got my religion.

I ain't "sober". But I did get cured. And I ain't got a sponsor to go to, but I sure as shit wouldda told him when I seen a flyin' saucer. So why ain't you tell yours?

KASS: I'm not... I don't know what I saw. I don't know I saw anything.

ELROY: And, if you'll allow me some harsh familiarities, seein' as we're gettin' to know and even care for each other-

KASS: I'm not-

ELROY: -it seems a whinge inappropriate that I'd be takin' a philosophical lickin' from a "recovered Alcoholic" what keeps her cabinets stocked with Jack.

Silence.

KASS: I don't drink. It's there as... Like a... I don't know. I just feel like it's important that it's there and that I don't drink it.

ELROY: So you came all the way out here as a means of removin' yourself, but you brought what you was removin' from here with ya?

KASS: Do you talk like this? In court? Sorry. Truly I don't mean to be rude, I really... Do you say stuff like "you was" when you're in court? When you're trying to convince people you know the objective truth?

ELROY: Folks trust what sounds real.

KASS looks out the window as she considers this.

KASS: (*Almost to herself*;) “Everything’s Real”.

ELROY: How’s that?

KASS: Your tattoo. I got a glimpse when I was... Back when I thought you were gonna chop me up into little pieces. Thought it would be smart to, like, memorize stuff about you. What’s that mean? “Everything’s Real”?

ELROY: Sorta explains itself, no?

KASS: What’d you get it for?

ELROY: “For”?

KASS: Yeah. I mean there’s a reason you do anything you do, right? You get tattoos *for* stuff. Like I got a dolphin on my foot because that was my high school boyfriend’s patronus and he had a foot fetish. It’s a bad reason, but it’s a reason. What made you get that?

ELROY: It’s sorta a... Mantra.

KASS: Yeah.

ELROY: It sounds funny. Sounds like nothing. But if you give it a bit of... “Everything is real”. All that’s meant to say, really, is that once you have a thought, or an idea, or a feeling, then as soon as you have it... It’s real. It’s in the world, now. Your world, to be sure. Doesn’t mean everyone can see it or nothin’, but folks get so used to having something flash in their head an going “that’s not real”, as though it didn’t just flash in their head. And they end up killin’ every other thought they have. “Everything’s real” is just a way of sayin’... There’s nothing you can really do or think or say that can’t be traced back to something that’s in everyone. Sure, it can get covered and twisted by your own life, the things that happened to you, and you can end up with something that looks totally divorced from any reality or humanity – something that looks like it was cooked up out of any inda real context because you’re a unique monster who thinks uniquely monstrous things – but ain’t really possible. Ain’t really possible to do or think anything that can’t, in some way, break down to a basic part that can be understood by all other people. Even if n’ they don’t understand what those parts come together to make up.

KASS: Definitely does sound like some addict shit.

ELROY laughs with a warmth that we haven't really seen yet. KASS almost comes close to relaxing a bit.

ELROY: Let's try it this way: Can you picture bein' happy?

KASS: ...

ELROY: Because if you can... Then it happened. Even if you don't remember it. And it can happen again. And I know it prolly annoys you hearin' that I get what you're goin' through. The worst part of feeling alone is realizing you're not even the only one who feels that way. Your loneliness isn't even unique. Everyone feels the exact same way. But for whatever reason, you can't share it. I been there. What if I told you you *could* share it? What if I told you there was a sort of...

Answer?

KASS: I would say I didn't ask a question?

ELROY: I ain't sober. But I am cured.

KASS: I told you I don't drink the/ bottle-

ELROY: I ain't talkin' bout that. Not really. Not anymore than it's the real thing. I'm talkin' about you. Out here. All alone. And if you think that's got to do with a bottle of jack and nothin' else...

If you wanna break outta this... Really break outta this... I got somewhere you can go. Kinda.

KASS: A lot of things you say are the thing they are but only "kinda".

ELROY: Isn't everything everything but only kinda?

KASS: Okay.

ELROY: "Okay"?

KASS: Like... Yeah. Like... "everything is everything". Okay. Like, cool observation? I don't know.

Kinda the same as nothing.

ELROY: Why'd you really leave New York?

KASS: ...How about fuck way off? What kind of/ question-

ELROY: You can be honest with me.

KASS: I can be honest with anyone. I choose not to be honest with random hicks that show up at my door at 3am.

ELROY: There's something in you, Kass. Something you wanna fix. I can help.

KASS: What are you a door-to-door psychologist? Did you sneak in here just to tell me I have poor coping mechanisms and bill me a fraction of a college tuition?

The glow from the window comes back in bright as ever. KASS is startled but tries to hide it.

ELROY: Why didn't you tell your sponsor what you saw?

KASS: Why didn't you tell me? You took a /sec to get to the-

ELROY: Damn straight. Because nobody mistrusts an addict like an addict. We like to think that because we have a buddy system, we get each other. But look at you. You saw what I saw, where I saw it, when I saw it, and you actually believe it less because it's me telling you it's real. Because no matter how far I'm able to stretch and no matter how long I keep a new shape for, we both know that when the rubber band snaps, you and I go right back to our default. Whenever that happens, that's what happens. And if we make it to the very end, and we don't touch another drop or dope up or nothing and then we die, you think somehow this black spot rinses out in the next life? Can't. And ain't no religion in history was ever bald enough to come out and say that. It ain't a cross you bare. It's in you. It is you. And you know that. Everyone else knows it a little bit too, but you don't get to store that knowledge away — you got it permanently decal'd on your windshield. But everyone else knows it a little bit too. Everyone sees us making our beds, wearing our clean shirts, showing up to work on time, doing all the basic bullshit that for everyone else is the starting line of life but for us it's the finishing line, and they clap for us like you clap for a stupid little dog who learns a stupid little trick. They're amazed that we ever learned "handshake", or "sit", or "hold down a job and don't break your brother-in-law's nose at Thanksgiving". But that's all the fuck it is is just a trick. It's an illusion. So you tell me why neither of us wants to go out screaming about flyin' saucers.

A tense silence.

KASS: Who are you, Elroy?

ELROY smiles.

ELROY: I'm a shapeshifter.

KASS: (*Unimpressed.*) Okay?

ELROY: You are too. You know what I'm talking about. You have a power that not that many folks understand.

You can take all these different forms. You can hold them for so long. Cassandra the supportive girlfriend. Cassandra the hard worker, who wakes up on time. Cassandra who's clean. But it's taxing to shapeshift. It takes effort. You have to tense your muscles. You can't stay tense forever. Eventually, you have to revert. You're always gonna come back to this. No matter what. You'll always come back to this. No matter how strong you get. You can't ever tense forever.

KASS: Who are you really?

ELROY: I told you, I'm an alien.

KASS: WHO ARE YOU??? Why are you...

ELROY: Cassandra... Now it's been a long day-

KASS No FUCK YOU –

KASS aims the gun at ELROY.

KASS: I'm not... I know what you're doing. I know... I don't know how or why, but

I know... FUCK! I... I just want to be alone.... I just wanna... (*She puts her hands on her head.*)

Please, I can't...

ELROY: What are *you* doin' out here?

KASS:...

ELROY: Cassandra. Listen. I know you're frustrated. But I'm privy to something important. You gotta

trust me.

KASS: I don't.

ELROY: Why?

KASS: Your accent.

Beat.

ELROY: (*Doing the accent bigger than ever.*) Shoot. Somethin' as little as that-

KASS: It's not the accent. It's that you didn't have it ten seconds ago.

ELROY: That ain't/ necessarily-

KASS: That, and you're wearing my dead boyfriend's face.

A deathly silence.

KASS: (*Shaking:*) I can only see it sometimes... I thought I was crazy at first, but I see it... I see it. You did... Something. And it comes in and out. But I can see him. I don't know how you're doing it...

ELROY: Kass... I think you're under a lot of stress-

KASS cocks the gun.

Beat. ELROY glowers at her. Then, fluidly – efficiently – ELROY lifts himself off his table onto his feet. He keeps the same distance between them, standing tall, staring KASS down.

KASS aims the gun square at his chest, steady as ever.

ELROY: (*No accent:*) Accent wouldn't have been my choice. That's on you.

I have to totally assimilate to what you believe to be reality, whether it reflects consensus reality or not. Guess this is just what you think Texans sound like. Even after a month here.

KASS: I'm so fucking tired.

ELROY: I know. That's why I'm here. And you have to trust me that I'm trying to help you. And I'm just trying to find the best way to make you understand that I'm trying to help you. So if you could-

KASS: Elroy-

ELROY: I'm not Elroy.

Neither of them breathes.

ELROY: Well... That's not true, fully. I am Elroy, a bit. But not like you think.

KASS: Stay the fuck where you are.

He begins walking toward her.

ELROY: I haven't lied to you, Kass. Everything I've said is real and true. There's just a little more to it. But I had to get you ready to understand it. I had to prime you to accept it. There's a reason-

BANG.

BANGBANGBANGBANG *click... click...*

Having already unloaded the full clip on ELROY, KASS continues to pull the trigger. She stops. She looks at ELROY, who has frozen in his tracks.

ELROY: Shit.

ELROY looks... Mildly annoyed. Not angry, not hurt, but put-upon.

ELROY: Remember our chat. But not this.

ELROY advances on her more rapidly. KASS continues to pull the trigger to no avail, backing herself frantically into the corner. Just as he's about to be on her-

OFFICER: (*offstage*) Police! Open up!

ELROY: Here we go.

KASS freezes. Suddenly, the entire house is bathed in violent white light.

BLACKOUT.

II

Lights Up on Kass's home, though only the kitchen lights.

The house setup looks nearly identical to the one from the start of the play, with all of the objects that were displaced in Act I now returned to their original spots. The key difference is that the kitchen lights are already on, and there's a mixing bowl and a whisk out on the counter.

Quiet, but not as ominous as before. Even the lights feel a bit warmer.

The glow of light from outside flashes.

Patient footsteps. KASS enters the space from the staircase, wearing the same outfit but wearing it a bit more cleanly, the robe properly tied this time, her hair a little less manic.

KASS strolls over to the window, mildly interested. She glances out at the night sky. It's peaceful.

KNOCK.

KASS redirects her attention to the front door, only a bit taken off guard.

KASS: Just a minute.

KASS heads over to the kitchen and peers into the oven.

More knocking. KASS rolls her eyes and crosses to stand by the closed door.

KASS: Can I help you?

MAN: (*Offstage:*) You're not safe here, m'am.

Beat.

KASS: And how's that?

MAN: (*Offstage:*) Things out here tonight that wanna get in.

Beat. Then, KASS chuckles to herself. Casually, she unlocks and opens the door.

ELROY, now wearing a tattered flannel and jeans, saddled with all sorts of outlandish equipment bags and pouches, greets her with a smile. KASS returns the smile and gestures for him to come on in, which he readily does.

KASS: Catch anything good?

ELROY begins unsaddling his equipment and setting up at the table. KASS makes for the kitchen to fix two glasses of water.

ELROY: Oh, sure. A couple morse code flickers in the stars. A little whistlin' in the wind what sounded like coordinates. And a bunch of corn that got arranged into a message that told me exactly very clearly everything about their plans for the human race. That last one was useful.

KASS brings him his tea.

KASS: OOooooooo, big stuff. Gonna tell the press? Or that can be a tomorrow thing?

ELROY: Do you have those holiday cookies - the sugar cookies?

KASS: In the oven.

ELROY: It can be a tomorrow thing, then.

KASS laughs and joins ELROY at the table.

KASS: I think you have me seeing things.

ELROY: How's that?

KASS: I don't know exactly what it was, there was a wild, kinda... Now I feel like you're in my head, because definitely it was just a plane, but I was seeing it as kinda more... It had a glow to it. Like it didn't look like lights in front of something like a plane would need. And it looked like it moved almost up and down, like on a string. I'm gonna see UFOs in my soup soon. It's like when you feel like you've never even seen a Ford Fusion before, then your friend gets one, and all of a sudden everyone on the road is driving Ford Fusions. Except with aliens.

ELROY: Cassandra-

KASS: Ultra. Ultra. Yep. Ultratress... Ultra-*terrestrias*. My bad.

ELROY: Language is important. Especially for things what we ain't got nothin' but language for.

KASS: Yeah but "ultra-terrestrial" isn't good branding. I'm sorry, I don't wanna be mean, but it's just not very cool? Or good? Or just, like... *Sexy*. Like "Alien" is so... And it doesn't have to mean "space", obviously, which obviously I guess you know, but "alien" is just, like... "Unfamiliar".

ELROY: Therein lies my grudge.

KASS: You don't like sexy?

ELROY: Ain't nothin' "unfamiliar" about these folks. Nothin' "Alien" about 'em. And if anything – which, not anything, so no use, but for the sake of conversation – but if anything, we'd be the "unfamiliar". The "aliens". Which we ain't. We – them –everything... We're all one.

KASS: Yeah I forgot that.

ELROY: You sure did. You and the rest of the world.

KASS: Well I'm sure you'll... Bring us 'round.

ELROY: Call 'em "Grays" if you like. That's the colloquial name.

KASS: Sexier.

ELROY: And I hate to burst your bubble, but you ain't seen nothin' out in that sky.

KASS: (*Playful:*) It's been a long week, and if my favorite little tinfoil hat conspiracy theorist is gonna tell me I'm crazy-

ELROY: Perhaps I'll rephrase – there was nothin' out there. What you see is what you see. And don't discount it. All's I mean is: They've no need for crafts. No flying saucers. They don't need to be face to face to chat.

KASS rises to take care of the cookies. She prepares a plate throughout the following.

KASS: Right. Explain that one again?

ELROY: It's all a bit... Well, how about: When a lion roars, or a bird tweets, we like to say "look, they're speaking to each other". Yeah? It's a little myopic. A little... Wrong. Speaking can only do so much. It represents things — it puts ideas in a person's head in hopes that those ideas will lead them to other ones that they'll share with the speaker, and that those shared ideas might get folks to do things that are in all of their best interests, or one of theirs. But speaking isn't real. A lion's roar... That's real. It does something. Physiologically. The frequencies, the way it interacts with the world...

Them Grays is the same way. Only it ain't a roar. It's more a... Song, of sorts. Or a mist, if you like. It's all encompassing. But I like the song. A song that plays all at once but can last a lifetime if it needs to. It's a lot like speaking — It's transferring an idea. It's one single idea, but it's complex. Complex enough that our minds... Transpose it. We can't hear the song as it is – we take it, we take that one instance of a song, and we stretch it out and make it a whole world we can live in, and we get the information through that world, in a way we can make sense of it. In that instance, and in a lifetime. It takes as much time as it needs to prime it, and for us to

accept it. Or not. Because we can choose not to. That's what even the folks who know this get wrong. It ain't mind control. No more than music what makes you dance is mind control. We have as much agency as we've ever had. You can reject the idea. But you need to understand it first. The song needs you to understand it. You're hearing the song, and your mind is doing what it needs to to make it into language, and sense, and whatever else you can actually receive.

KASS is a bit despondent. ELROY changes tact.

ELROY: Ya like vampires?

KASS: I was at the midnight premiere of "New Moon".

ELROY: Witches? Fairies?

KASS: Less, probably.

ELROY: Well they all amount to the same, don't they? Ghosts and goblins... And "Greys"... Just shapes

someone saw in the night. A glimpse that got caught without any real detail. You see somethin' spectacular, then you fill in the blanks. Then someone else uses that fillin' to build off of. And 'fore you know it, two people seen the same thing, but one became "vampires", one became "bigfoot". Catch-alls for what we know we don't know. (*Beat*) You know you can't dream up a new face? It's true. The brain can't invent a face it ain't seen before. Not wholesale, at least. Anythin' poppin' up in your dreams is something your eye caught once and stored away somewhere. If you try and make one from scratch... You can't make one from scratch. Our hardware ain't built for that. An I'm supposed to believe we made up man-bats and flyin' saucers? We're livin' one big dream, Cassandra. And the faces we're seein', over and over, through all our histories... They're based on somethin'.

KASS: I saw a ghost when I was a kid.

ELROY: Now we're talkin'.

KASS: Not once. I kept seeing it. The same ghost.

ELROY: OOOOO-weeeeeee, spill it, Cassandra!

KASS: It was kinda like... I don't know how to describe it, and I haven't talked about it in years, but I almost

always thought of him as... I don't know. He came at funny times.

ELROY: It's funny times all the times, these days.

KASS: It was almost like a sort of... I guess this is what you're saying, all our symbols are all really the same thing,

but like the grim reaper will show you when something is gonna happen. He'd show up when things were gonna happen. And I'd see him, and he'd sorta... Hug me. Or – not hug. He'd, like, coat me. He'd get all around me. Almost like he was protecting me. He made everything black so I couldn't see it. And I couldn't feel it. Kinda like I was in him. Like he was a universe and I could hide out there. And then the bad thing would end, and he'd be gone, and I'd be back.
(Beat) Anything bad that ever happened in my life, it's like I wasn't there for it. I've got my friend to thank for that.

ELROY: Hell of a friend.

KASS approaches the table with the cookies.

KASS: Flying saucer?

ELROY: Yumyumyuyumyumyum.

He digs in. She doesn't sit. She seems distracted. Lost in thought.

ELROY: Now I'm just a regularly country bumpkin, and I ain't used to practicin' no kinda tact, so I may as well be so bold as to be straightforward... I assume you know I know what day it is.

KASS snaps right back to reality, only to look at ELROY, then bashfully away from him.

ELROY: Now I don't mean to give his more mind than you want me to, but I'd be remiss if I didn't say nothin', Kass. And what I wanna say is just how proud we all are of you. Me and everyone from group. Five years... I know I never knew you when you was in a bad way, but I knew me when I was in a bad way. And I know that to really look at the course and to stay it anyway... Bein' sober is one thing. That's accomplished enough. But to do it *right*... Not touching the stuff is just the bedrock. It's what you do when you're not touching it... And what you don't do... Most of these poor souls, once they're free of the thing, they don't know what to do with freedom. They get drunk on it. They stumble right back to the shelter of being controlled by something. Sometimes it's the drink, but sometimes it's the church. That one ain't so bad. But sometimes it's worse than that. Sometimes they gotta give themselves to something and they pick any old terrible thing. And even worse. Sometimes they give themselves to nothing. Sometimes, if they're not careful, folks get free just so that they can wither up and die. They retreat. They think all the work is done. And so they get their lives back, all just to throw them away again.

But I'm poud of you.

You chose not to. You chose to be a part of somethin'. Somethin' real. What you and I are gonna do, Cassandra... It brings a tear to my eye.

KASS has been fighting the urge to slip fully into a trance. An emotional ELROY eats a cookie.

KASS: I like what you were saying before. About the song.

ELROY: (*Mouthful of cookies:*) Who doesn't like songs?

KASS: What's your favorite song?

ELROY: Hmmm... Now I'm partial to the classics. Dolly Parton. Willie Nelson. Or their classics – Ray Price, Honky Tonk... a little Django Reinhardt goes a long way. But maybe no one got a handle on the way things feel down here like George Strait.

He looks to KASS for a response, but she's deeper in her trance-like state than she was before. After a moment of silence, he shoots her a wide grin.

ELROY: *(Singing:)*

Amarillo by mornin'

Up from San Antone

Everything that I got

Is just what I've got on

I ain't got a dime

But what I've got is mine

I ain't rich

But Lord, I'm free

Ain't that a way of lookin' at it. I always was fond of that sentiment.

Lord, I know I'm free

Amarillo by mornin'

Amarillo's where I'll be.

A man without nothin' 'cept the shirt on his back who knows he's his own man, yet, in the same breath as his proclamation of freedom, he's makin' it clear he's got somewhere he has to be. The duality between freedom and responsibility. Between doin' what you want while ancknowledgin' that freedom is somethin' more spiritual than choice. Somethin' more inevitable.

Amarillo by Mornin'

Amarillo's where I'll be

I like Limp Bizkit, too.

KASS: (*Lost in thought*) What's your... Favorite book?

ELROY: You feelin' alright there, Cassandra?

KASS: Can I ask you something?

ELROY: Shoot, imagine I said no at this point? Been stopping by after my scouts for damn near... Well I couldn't tell ya how long.

KASS: Right. Me neither. And I'm... I just feel... I know we know each other so well... And I know we're gonna do big things together... And I know this isn't possible, but something... (*She looks at him dead on.*) Have you ever told me your name?

Beat.

ELROY: Well now that has to be some kinda joke.

Silence. ELROY points at himself.

ELROY: Micahel?

KASS shakes her head, as though she's "snapping out of it".

KASS: Yeah. Obviously. Oh my god. Geez. What the fuck was that? Oh man... I'm... I'm sorry. Fuck. What was that?

ELROY: Not a fuss. Like you said – long week.

KASS: I'd love to say I was fucking with you, but that was... That was a weird... Second.

ELROY: Happens to the best of us.

KASS: That's so embarrassing.

ELROY: Ain't nothin' to it. Maybe my singin' scrambled your brainwaves.

KASS: Yeah.

ELROY: Feelin' better now?

KASS: Um... Yeah.

ELROY: Well spit it out, kid, I can't help ya if I ain't know what's the matter.

KASS: I don't know. No, I think I'm good. I just have this weird...

ELROY: Go on, Kassandra, we're in trust, here.

KASS: I... Who's "Elroy"?

Absolute stillness.

ELROY: Wut?

A rumbling noise. Like the house is shaking.

KASS: I... What's going on????

ELROY: Ooooooooooppp lalalala okay give me one second.

ELROY shoots to his feet. KASS jumps back.

KASS: Wait I don't Wait WAIT —

ELROY: Wait right here!

The lights panic, then go dark.

Back to the top of the play. The space is empty. The glow from outside flashes.

Frenzied steps as KASS hurls herself down the stairs. She rushes to the window, trying to catch the glow. When she can't, she backs away and continues watching it.

Knock knock.

KASS panics, then grabs her gun from the same spot as last time.

Silence.

*Another **knock**.*

ELROY: (*Offstage*) Hello?

KASS: (*Quietly*) Ah man...

Silence.

BANG.

A bloodied hand at the window, its owner obscured from view. KASS retreats into the kitchen so as not to be visible to anyone looking in.

ELROY: It's alright! Hello! Please – I promise everything's... I understand that this is alarming, at this hour... I'm hurt.

KASS doesn't move. ELORY tries to speak casually but can't help rushing through these beats.

ELROY: Kassandra, it's... We met at Holybrooke mass. Elroy. I'm Elroy.

Silence.

ELROY: Elroy? Remember? We spoke a moment? You told me about how you only just moved out here from the city and how it's tough gettin' acclimated and you used to have an imaginary friend to cope with the stuff your dad did or didn't do to you and how you're an addict but you keep booze in your cabinet not to drink but to look at and you lost the love of your life and your brain stopped changing at 25 and now you can hold two truths at once and that really messed with your perception of reality?

Silence.

ELROY: Can I come in?

KASS: (*Back in a kind of trance:*) Um. Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Almost on autopilot, she kinda glides toward the door and emotionlessly unlocks it.

ELROY: Right on we're halfway there.

KASS: (*Headache.*) Halfway where?

ELROY: Don't worry about it – how you holdin' up here?

KASS: I'm... Fine.

ELROY: Fine. Sure. Great. Better than bad. Not as good as good.

KASS: Sure.

ELROY: You wanna be **good**?

Beat. KASS starts to come to. She looks at Elroy and begins to back away.

KASS: I know who you are.

ELROY: (*Rolling his eyes:*) Sure.

KASS: Stay away from me!

ELROY: Guess you can't rush the good stuff.

KASS: Just stay away... No, wait – NO!

Rumbling. Lights flashing. Blackout.

Lights back up. A confused KASS standing in the middle of the room, nursing an incredibly volatile headache.

A knock at the door.

KASS: (*Distracted:*) Hello?

ELROY: (*Offstage:*) Sorry ma'm. Bad time of night.

KASS: One sec... (*Desparately fighting her headache, trying to concentrate, then remembering:*) You're an alien!

ELROY: (*Offstage:*) Fuck!

Lights go nuts. Blackout. Reset.

Lights up. KASS alone in her home. It's unclear how cognizant this Kass is. She seems a little alert. She stands in the middle of the room. She looks around. Silence.

ELROY: (*Offstage:*) Clearly this isn't working-

KASS: SHIT.

ELROY emerges from the staircase. KASS jumps. She looks around frantically, then grabs the gun resting on the table. She points it at ELROY, who sighs.

ELROY: We did that, Kass. Can we just talk? Honestly this time. Apologies on my end, I know I've been a little opaque, but I'll tell you what you need to know. Can we just... Move forward?

A tense silence. KASS keeps the gun trained on him. Then she doesn't.

ELROY: Thank you so so much.

KASS: What are you?

ELROY: Elroy.

KASS: There's no Elroy.

ELROY: Well that isn't true. He's here. He's in here. Now, sure, I'm not *just* Elroy, but who's *just* anything?

KASS: You're here to kill me.

ELROY: (*Forcing laughter:*) Not even close. Not even *close*!

KASS: Please — just do it! Fuck!

ELROY: I know it's probably hard to keep continuity through all this, but you've asked me to kill you quite a few times since we've met. You doin' alright?

KASS: Yes.

ELROY: I know. You're good. You're even better than good – you're “better”! Better than what you were. That's all any of us can be, right?

KASS is hazy, as though she's just waking up.

KASS: Elroy...

ELROY: (*Excited:*) Mmmmmmm. Whatcha got?

KASS: Elroy...

ELROY: (*Still stargazing:*) Elroy. Ellllrooooyyyy... You start saying anything over and over and it starts to sound a little flimsy.

Kass... Cassandra.... Cassandra...

You start looking at anything too close and it starts to feel less real. (*He breaks away from the window.*) You do anything for too long, you lose the context in which you were doin' it. Starts to feel...

Kassandra...

KASS: ...Elroy was my social worker.

ELROY: (*Grinning widely.*) Sure enough.

KASS: ...You killed him?

ELROY: I did not.

KASS: Why are you pretending to be a government employee I knew when I was seven?

ELROY: I ain't "pretendin" nothin'.

KASS: You don't look like him. But you do, too...

ELROY: You ever wonder what happens to people you used to know? You didn't get all that much facetime with Elroy. Not in the grand scheme of things. But he was important to you. Those people who appear, change your course, then disappear – do you ever wonder where they disappear to?

KASS: What do you want?

ELROY: I'm just trying to bring you back to what you already know but covered up with a lifetime of distractions. That *everything* is *everything*. Everyone is everyone. From dust to dust, but dust is life and beautiful it's time to come home. There's no continuity, really. There's no extrinsic reason to do anything, no need to keep on keepin' on. Everything is real and simultaneous and as important as everything else, and you can experience it as everyone.

KASS: How is that different from Twitter?

ELROY: Because Twitter needs you to care. I don't. We don't. We just *are*. And always will be.

KASS: What's "we"? Why "we"?

ELROY: (*He gestures to himself.*) I told you. Elroy is in here. I'm not "just" Elroy, but everything I said in his name – and how I said it – that was all Elroy. It was all true. Elroy's in here and I can call on him anytime it's useful.

KASS: So you... What, like, *assimilated* him?

ELROY: I don't love that word.

KASS: I don't love any of this.

ELROY: You don't have it. It's hard. It's hard for me to communicate. I'm limited. I'm limited here to words and situations – things that can prime you to understand what I'm trying to give to you.

KASS: What are you trying to give to me?

ELROY: A chance, Kass. I know why you're out here all alone on the Texas plains. I know everything.

KASS: I promise I haven't told you everything.

ELROY: Not in this conversation, no. But we've had a lot more time to get to know each other than the last few minutes.

KASS: ...

ELROY: You know more about me than you remember finding out.

KASS: ...

ELROY: Don't freak out. But you and I – and I'd like to reiterate my earlier request: don't freak out – but you and I are having some version of this very interaction in millions of different ways, all at once. Just you and I, hanging out, getting to know each other in this charming little... What is it, a one bed one bath? But yeah – in all directions of reality, you and I are having one big, fat, juicy talk. And all those conversations are in conversation with each other. As these different interactions progress in tandem, we come to better understand each other in real time. But it's not as chaotic as it sounds. It's all funneling to the same thing. It's all for the purpose of the choice you're gonna make.

KASS: ...And what's that?

ELROY: **Whether or not you're gonna to let me in.**

KASS: What do you want with me? If you're some kind of... Why do I have anything to do with any kind of... Why waste your time with me? I'm nothing.

ELROY: I ain't wastin' time. And you're not nothin'. I'm here because you're ready. I couldn't be here if you weren't. You're so close, Kass. Closer than you've ever been. Just let me in.

KASS: I've let you in. A hundred times I've let you in.

ELROY: I mean *really* let me in. I'm talking about the big one. It's true – I was only even able to approach you because you were ready for it. You had to get there on your own. You had to reach a point in life at which you were ready to hear my case. Then, yeah, you had to let me in here to make that case. You've been a great listener. But now, you've gotta make a choice. And if you choose right, it can be the last choice you ever have to make. You have to choose whether you want to really let me in. Just like Elroy did. (*He pauses, then:*) Just like Mikey did.

KASS: ...

ELROY: Just like countless people have. That's why I'm here, Kass. You're ready. You're ready for the next step. You think you're through with life, but that means you can finally start. He's here, Kass. I think you know that. Michael, "Elroy"... They're all in here.

Silence.

ELROY: Would you like to talk to him?

KASS: Fuck. You.

Silence.

A standoff. Not a muscle moved.

Still barely a muscle moved when KASS breaks first.

It starts in her eyes. She focuses them to the highest degree to confirm that what's happening is happening. And it is. Though no visible change is occurring whatsoever, it's no longer ELROY that stands before her. It's MICHAEL. She doesn't understand how it's possible – she just understands it. The man before her hasn't moved. His face remains stone-set in its expression. Yet somehow, now, this is MICHAEL. When he speaks, his entire demeanour, voice, and presence is transformed.

KASS trembles in anger at first, then fear, then the kind of resignation you might reserve if your God visited you in your hospital bed. Eventually, KASS breaks composure, slowly backing away but addressing her eyes and body harshly, violently toward the figure... The thing in front of her.

KASS: You...

MICHAEL: (Coy:) Hi.

KASS: I'm...

MICHAEL: I know.

KASS: I don't want this.

MICHAEL: I know, Sweet.

KASS: Don't-

MICHAEL: Hey – come on. I know. But maybe... It's good to see me?

KASS makes to respond but can't.

MICHAEL: Okay. That's okay. It's a lot. But Kass... I'm here.

KASS: ...

MICHAEL: I don't just mean that in the sense that... Geez. I haven't... Talked for a while. But what I

mean is, I am here. I'm... I don't wanna say "Okay". But I'm here. I'm not nowhere. It ain't done. That's something.

KASS: Mikey...

Saying that out loud felt a lot different than planning to say it. That one word wrenches her body downward. KASS doesn't even look grief stricken. More poisoned than anything.

MICHAEL: Come on, Sweet. This is a good thing! But I understand. I'd be the same if it were... This is still everything to me. That I get to be here, now, and see you cry. See you live. That's all there is. But for me, it's not like... It's hard to explain. Things work different for me, now. Things are kinda... All at once. A little. I should be more comforting, but it's like... I'm seeing you in agony right now, but I'm also seeing you completely, uncompromisingly happy, and I'm seeing every little victory you've ever had in life, and it just makes it all feel so complete. It puts this in context, and I just... Feel like it has to play out.

KASS: (*Doubled over*;) I can't take this anymore. You have to do something. Please help me.

MICHAEL: Even if I... I can't, Kass. It's why we're here. We're giving you the option to do something yourself. But it has to be your choice. Like it was mine.

KASS: Mikey...

MICHAEL: It's okay. We have time. There's tons of – we have all the time we could ever need. I'm here. It's okay.

KASS gets her trembling under control. She remains doubled over, but not in pain. Just aftershock.

KASS: Say nice things.

MICHAEL: I miss you.

KASS: A lot nicer, please.

MICHAEL thinks for a moment.

MICHAEL: You know I didn't want to move in with you.

Beat. KASS looks up at him, glowering through the pain. He trips over himself to amend that statement:

MICHAEL: Not – I don't mean... I loved you every bit as much then as I do now, but I was just scared. Not just scared of commitment or something vague like that, but really specifically scared that I would start to love you less. Because loving you was always easy and free and I could do it as myself without really changing anything. But moving in was... *Picking a life*. Making a plan. Knowing how I was gonna spend my time. I never wanted to *know* how I was gonna spend my time. Which is real addict shit, but... Yeah. That always felt like death. I always wanted to live so many lives and be so many different things that contradicted each other. And it paralyzed me. I couldn't kill any potential, so I couldn't create any reality. I couldn't live. I couldn't have been more wrong. You make me feel like I'm living every life at once. All stacked together. All happening at the same time. It's impossible for me to feel like I'm missing out on anything as long as I'm just near you. You make me feel like I'm living every life I can imagine. Like I got to live all of them. And that feeling... That feeling of getting everything at once... That fucking saved me. I mean I swear to God, that fucking... Brought me back. I didn't have to live stretched across a million "maybe" lives. You gave me real, real life. And whatever else happened... No matter what you think you did, you saved me.

Beat. KASS has mostly recovered and is mostly upright now.

KASS: This isn't.

MICHAEL: How's that?

A slight beat. Something throws KASS off, but she collects herself quickly.

KASS: This isn't the first time I'm seeing you. I... I do see you. I see you a lot.

MICHAEL: Yeah.

KASS: I do. I don't mean that, like, beautifully. Like, not in the eyes of every child or that thing. I mean I see you, like, hanging over my bed. And crumpled up, drooling, where my laundry pile should be. I see you when I'm horny but too scared to touch myself because I know if I do I'll start to see you, and then I see you anyway. And I see you when things are really really bad, and when things are really really good. And you're not calling me "cute".

MICHAEL: Yeah. And maybe that's why I'm here. Because... You know me, Kass. Well enough probably that that *me* you're seeing looks pretty good. I bet the skin tags are all in the right place. I bet he's got that scar from the night I fell off Nico's car above his lower back. I bet it's so close that it makes you feel like it's the real thing. But it's not. It's you. It's you seeing me seeing you. It's me by way of all your shit. All the stuff you must think I blame you for, even if you know I don't. But that's not me. And I'd appreciate it if you'd stop seeing him. Because only I can hold you accountable.

KASS: He's pretty convincing.

MICHAEL: Bet he's a pretty solid singer. Because I'm assuming that's totally what you remember.

KASS: Oh yeah. Another little true-to-life thing... He'd never say "how's that".

A flicker of the lights. ELROY is back.

KASS: Don't you fucking reset this.

ELROY: I'm not. This is the most lucid I've seen you. Which is why it's so goddamn frustrating that

you still aren't getting it.

KASS: Pretending to be Mikey-

ELROY: I'm not pretending! He's here! But so are many others. He's here, but he's more than just him. I'm trying to present him as you remember him – same as Elroy. But you're not understanding–

KASS: So what then. WHAT??? Just say it!! If I'm not getting something – If getting it is gonna end this...

ELROY: If I could just tell you what you need to understand, why wouldn't I???

KASS: But why??? You can tell me that much!!! What are you doing here? Why now? Why me?

ELROY: You called me here. Soon as you picked up that gun.

KASS looks down. She is, in fact, holding the gun.

KASS: What does that... No. No – I picked up the gun *because* you were banging at my door. You happened first.

ELROY: It doesn't matter when things happen, Cassandra. All's I know is I couldn't be here less you were ready for me to be here. Now, you gotta decide whether or not you're gonna let me in.

KASS: ...Is this all in my head? Am I just-

ERLOY rubs his temples.

ELROY: Fuck me. It's always with the "in my head" thing. That feels so... Why do you have to... It feels a little narcissistic, right? Or just needy, maybe. Nothing is "in your head". Things happen. Everything happens. Everything that is, is, and everything that happens, happens, and it all is and happens out here. All that "happens" in your head is how you make sense of it. And right now, you don't have linearity to help you out. Linearity, it's a fucking bookcase. Doesn't do

anything to the books. Doesn't make the books related. And if you tip the bookcase over and spill the books out—

ELROY lunges at KASS, only to gently touch her shoulder. Still, that's all it takes to send KASS and the lights into a complete panic. KASS convulses violently as the room is plunged into chaos.

ELROY: You people lose your minds. Even though nothing has changed. And by the way— *this*? This part of me? Wanting you to just fucking *get it*? This part of me is *people*. Humans. It's fucking Elroy and whoever — your guy. Which is absurd. They can only comprehend this because they've joined, but now they're beside themselves with fury that someone unjoined might not get it. But you want a breather? Fine. Here.

The lights stop. KASS stops. Spotlight on KASS.

ELROY: You're Cassandra. You're 28 years old. Your parents are Graham and Sarah Burkhardt. You went to Kent State even though you were legacy at Brown. You scoff at the idea of gender reveals but you also celebrated your "birthweek" until you were 26. You wanna be left alone but you wanna be loved. You think that's impossible, but it's not. I can give that to you. I can make everything that makes that impossible fade away.

KASS: FUCK. What's... How am... Why do I feel like *me* now?

ELROY: Because I put the books back on the shelf. I gave you context. But I didn't give you any new info. Just arranged it for ya. That's all "life" is. All the info that's there, but arranged. But there's so much more.

KASS: So I'm just...? Everything I know about myself is just, like, fake and... *Planted*? By an alien?

ELROY: No. That actually couldn't be further from the truth. The truth is that all that's all true. But it's a wet fucking appetizer. That's what I'm trying to get across here, Kass. That you *did* study psychology and painting. And you did meet a guy named Michael. And you did lose years to heroin

dependency, and you did take him with you. You did fuck off all the way to Texas because you thought sequestering yourself was easier than facing things head on. But I'm telling you that existence can be so, so much more than this. That it is already, and that all you have to do is accept that and let it in. And I know there's a lot going on, but I feel like I've told you that I don't like the term "alien".

Spot light fades away, leaving KASS on her knees in the normal lighting of the room.

Silence.

KASS: Maybe I don't believe you. Or maybe, even if you're telling the truth, i don't care.

ELROY: Maybemaybemaybemaybemaybembe maybe maaaaaybe maybe.

Maybe you'll wake up and this'll all have been a bad dream, and you'll get back to life as it was right before I got here, and everything will be the same.

Maybe you'll wake up and you're not even Cassandra, you're some Eastern European socialite, and Cassandra will only exist for about ten minutes in your groggy morning memory before fading away forever.

Maybe this is all real, but I'll go away and you'll forget me.

Or maybe you'll remember me for a very, very long time.

Maybe perception *is* reality. And maybe when your boy-toy broke, so did your perception, and so did your reality. And this is all internal. And still very real.

Maybe you'll kill yourself.

Maybe you already did. Maybe it was all too much. And maybe you tried to kill yourself. And maybe you only half succeeded, and right now you're body is draped over your bedroom desk, only a quarter of the way alive, and the leaking DMT in your brain is letting you live out a little "It's A Wonderful Life" adventure to feel a little better as you slowly drift into nothingness.

Maybe you're fucking high, Kass.

Silence.

KASS: I know I'm not. I know I didn't—

ELROY: Maybe you didn't get high yet, but you're gonna after this, so you already did.

It doesn't matter when things happen, Cassandra.

It doesn't matter when things happen.

You're drunk anyway.

KASS: I'm not-

ELROY: Call it whatever you want. You've fessed up infinite times already. You can't hide from me.

And you can pretend that you've built out some system where everything's fine, and you don't need to get anything under control, but guess what? I won't go away. I don't have to. I only have to go away when you don't think I've got something to offer, and you know that i do, so I'm not leaving until you let me in!

KASS: Alright, yeah, fine, I drink. But I'm not an alcoholic. I'm an addict. It wasn't alcohol. And it wasn't even

any drug. It's not anything. It's me. It has to do with me. Alcoholics have issues with alcohol, so they cut out alcohol. I had a problem with me. So I cut out me.

ELROY: And did it help?

KASS: A little. I'm here. I'm all alone. And I'm better.

ELROY: Better than what? This is what you're not getting – there's no spectrum. It's not a fucking board game

you just gotta get to the end of. Existence can expand in every direction and you just wanna keep your head down and move forward.

KASS: ...What happened to Micheal?

ELROY: You're not hearing me. Micheal is still happening. He's happening more than ever.

KASS: They found him in his parent's garage...

ELROY: And whose fault is that?

KASS: ... That's... It isn't...

ELROY: Oh just come clean, Kass. You want to do it. You do it most every time. Every time we talk-

KASS: I loved him.

ELROY: That's off-topic.

KASS: You can't blame me-

ELROY: I can't blame anyone! I'm an amalgamation of human consciousnesses cohered by an ancient life force that exists only to exist. I literally transcend blame. But *you* blame you. You've made that much clear. Michael took a needle out of his arm, and you stuck it right back in, because you see change as an offensive play if it isn't about you. And then when he died, you blamed yourself, partly because it was your fault, but partly because if you were to blame than at least you were still *part of it*.

KASS: You don't-

ELROY: Every decision you've ever made – or non-decision, if we wanna be precise – consists of and results in fear and desperation. There's nothing in you but emptiness.

KASS: I KNOW!!! (*Beat.*) I know. That's why I'm here. It's why I'm not going anywhere. It's over. I'm done.

And I can't make any of that... No, that's not my fault. And that's what's so fucking... It's not my fault so I can't even forgive myself. But I can't forgive myself. So I'm here. I'm safe. And I can do whatever I need to do. I can drink myself blind and I can watch cartoons and I can keep breathing because apparently I have to keep breathing, but I'm fine here. And everyone is fine with me here. You're not telling me anything I don't know. It's why I'm here. I'm here.

ELROY gently places a hand on KASS's back.

ELROY: It's not enough. Not for what you've done.

Beat. KASS processes this, then looks up in shock.

ELROY: But it can all feel better. It can all mean more.

Just let. Me. In.

A long pause. KASS steps into the center of the stage. She looks up. She looks at him. The gun brushes against her side, reminding her it's here. She examines it. She examines him, remembering what happened last time. She looks down.

KASS: Can I have some time to think?

BLACKOUT.

End of play.