

THE CANADIAN

(A National Farce)

By Jason Hall

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Characters:

NESSA – A young woman; a Canadian who runs The Canadian.

FORTUNE – A middle-aged man; an American trying to buy The Canadian.

KAROLE – An older woman; a Canadian who owns The Canadian.

SINCLAIR – An older man; a Canadian representing a Canadian.

CASSIE – A middle-aged woman; a Canadian living in America.

JARRED – A young man; an American looking for a Canadian.

DANIELLE – An auctioneer; a Canadian trying to sell The Canadian.

Notes: the parts of CASSIE and DANIELLE should be doubled.

The Time and Place:

The present day, Canada.

ACT ONE

(Lights up on the interior of a former barn which has been converted into a large cabin. The building is on the site of 'The Canadian', a holiday resort somewhere on the banks of the St. Lawrence River in Ontario, Canada. This is where KAROLE and her grand-daughter NESSA – the owners and custodians of The Canadian – live.)

(The cabin is split over two levels, with a large wooden staircase between them. Upstairs is a landing off of which are three doors. One of these leads to the upstairs bedroom; another to a walk-in linen cupboard; the final one to the outdoor balcony. A chair and perhaps a small table line the wall of the upstairs landing. On the ground floor there are doors off to the downstairs bedroom, the kitchen (a swing door), the front porch (the main entrance and exit to the cabin), a cupboard and a bathroom. A large sofa dominates the downstairs playing area, with an armchair nearby.)

(The space has a ramshackle charm, disorganised but cosy and clean. Little of the furniture matches and the décor consists mainly of old photos and vintage prints depicting typical Canadiana, such as animals, trees, hockey, and self-righteousness.)

(A pile of clean, unfolded bedding covers the sofa.)

(Enter NESSA carrying two enormous watermelons. She struggles through the front door and heads, awkwardly, towards the kitchen door. She struggles, unsuccessfully, to get through the swing door to the kitchen.)

(A loud knock at the front door.)

FORTUNE *(Off.)* Hello?

(The watermelons almost fall from NESSA'S hands.)

FORTUNE *(Off.)* Anyone home?

(The melons wobble again.)

NESSA Whoa!

FORTUNE *(Off.)* Hello?

(The melons wobble again.)

FORTUNE *(Off.)* Do you need some help there?

NESSA I'm fine!

FORTUNE *(Opening the door and sticking his head in.)* Ma'am, can I give you a hand?

NESSA Okay, but watch out for the thing on the floor.

(FORTUNE comes in holding an architect's model of a condo development and heads towards NESSA.)

FORTUNE Those look pretty tricky to – *whoa!*

(FORTUNE trips on 'the thing' on the floor and his model goes flying towards NESSA who manages to catch the model on top the watermelons; it is now balancing on top of them in her arms.)

FORTUNE There's a..a...

NESSA A thing.

FORTUNE Yes. A *thing* with your floor.

NESSA I'm sorry, who are you?

FORTUNE *(Re: the mess.)* No, *I'm* sorry! *(He goes to NESSA and removes the model.)* I just wanted to help. The name's, ah... *(He sets down the model.)* The name's Fortune. Fortune Wells.

(He extends his hand...and realises she's still holding the watermelons.)

FORTUNE Oh! Allow me. *(He takes one of the melons out of her hands.)*

NESSA Fortune Wells?

FORTUNE I know what you're thinking. Unusual name.

NESSA No. Yes? I wasn't thinking anything.

(She takes her watermelon into the kitchen.)

FORTUNE Would you like to hear how I got it?

NESSA *(Returning.)* Yes? *No.* No time!

(She takes the watermelon out of his hands and goes to the kitchen.)

FORTUNE I see that you're busy, so I'll get right to the point.

NESSA *(Returning.)* Can you fold?

FORTUNE I can but I'm really here to talk about –

NESSA *(Picks up some of the unfolded linen.)* Can you talk and fold?

FORTUNE Absolutely.

NESSA *(Shoves some linen into his hands.)* Then let's do that. There's a wedding today. *(She scoops up some more linen herself and starts folding.)*

FORTUNE A wedding!

NESSA It has a tropical theme.

FORTUNE *(Gestures outside.)* That explains all the fuss out there!

NESSA 'Fuss' is right.

FORTUNE *(Re: the watermelons.)* And the, ah....

NESSA Fruit? Yes.

FORTUNE I'm sorry but you are...?

NESSA Busy!

FORTUNE No, your name is...?

NESSA Vanessa. Elling. Fold!

FORTUNE *(He does.)* Ah ha! So Karole Elling is your Grandmother.

NESSA Right.

FORTUNE And where might she be?

NESSA *(Evasive.)* Oh, if it's Friday she's probably at the casino.

FORTUNE I've tried there.

NESSA You have?

FORTUNE No one's seen her today.

NESSA Oh. *(Remembering.)* Of course! She's at the hospital.

FORTUNE *(Politely.)* That's not what the woman outside said.

NESSA Well, I don't know who this woman is but –

FORTUNE She had huge coconuts?

NESSA That may be true but take it from me, my Grandma's at the hospital.

FORTUNE That coconut husker said she saw your Grandmother come in here and she hasn't come out.

NESSA She must be mistaken.

FORTUNE Not at the hospital, not at the casino. (*Fishing*) Likes the cards, does your Grandma?

NESSA Yes. *No*. Not like *that*.

FORTUNE (*Sympathetic.*) Gambling debts? Money trouble?

NESSA (*Stops folding; regards him as if for the first time.*) I'm sorry Mr. Wells but why exactly are you here?

FORTUNE (*Re: the model.*) I'm here because of *this*.

NESSA (*Looking at the model properly now.*) Oh!

FORTUNE Oh indeed!

NESSA (*Unenthusiastic.*) Another condo...

FORTUNE Not just *another* –

NESSA Another condo for senior citizens.

FORTUNE (*Fake curiosity.*) Senior citizens? What are those?

NESSA Most of the people in this town.

FORTUNE The senior citizen is an outdated concept, Ms. Elling.

NESSA They are?

FORTUNE Yes.

NESSA Has anybody told them?

FORTUNE No, I mean the term. The phrase. We should banish it!

NESSA And say what instead?

FORTUNE Chronolocially progressive.

NESSA (*Re: the model.*) But there are sandpits.

FORTUNE Sandpits?

NESSA In the model.

FORTUNE There are?

NESSA A little childish, aren't they?

FORTUNE Those aren't sand pits. (*Pronouncing the 's' on the final word of the next sentence.*) Those are for *boules*.

NESSA Pools?

FORTUNE Boules.

NESSA Pools?

FORTUNE Maybe I'm pronouncing it wrong. We Americans aren't as *bien* with the old *Francais* as you *Canadiennes*! Perhaps it's more like... (*Close to 'bowls.'*) *boules*?

NESSA (*Confused.*) Balls?

FORTUNE No, *boules*.

NESSA Are you trying to say balls?

FORTUNE I'm trying to say *boules*.

NESSA Because we call them balls up here too.

FORTUNE (*As in, 'look how I'm saying it.'*) *Boules*.

NESSA (*As in, 'look how I'm saying it.'*) Balls.

FORTUNE *Boules*.

NESSA Balls.

FORTUNE The name of the game is *boules*.

NESSA Oh it's a game!

FORTUNE Yes!

NESSA Called balls.

FORTUNE (*Ever-so-slightly frustrated.*) No...!

NESSA (*Genuinely perplexed.*) And it's played in a sand pit?

FORTUNE Yes! Maybe you've played?

NESSA Oh, gosh, I wish I had time for that! *(Heads towards the kitchen.)* No, I'm far too busy to sit around here just playing with senior citizen balls. Now, you get into these sheets while I get to grips with my melons.

(NESSA exits into the kitchen.)

(FORTUNE, slightly bemused by this last transaction, paces a bit. This isn't going to plan.)

(The armchair catches his eye. Something about it intrigues him. He goes over for a closer look. Tentatively, he runs his hand over it...and suddenly it's like he's being electricuted. He's jolted and vibrating. Then, with great effort he takes his hand away. He's confused. Unsure about what has happened, he reaches out with the tip of his finger towards the armchair...and, once again, he jumps around like a man being electrocuted. He releases. And is baffled once more.)

(NESSA re-enters with the watermelon now chopped and arranged beautifully.)

NESSA *(Re: the watermelon.)* Well, it's a bit of mess but it'll have to do. *(Noting FORTUNE, who is staring at the chair.)* Mr. Wells, are you okay?

FORTUNE Do you have any exposed electrical wires in here?

NESSA Probably! This whole place is chronologically progressive. *(Re: the bedding.)* Fold.

(NESSA sets down the watermelon tray.)

FORTUNE Always happy to fold! *(Trying to get back to business.)* Now –

NESSA Mr. Wells, I think I know why you're here. The model, the helpfulness, the friendlienss.

FORTUNE I *am* friendly!

NESSA I'm sure you are. But you're also a property developer. Right?

FORTUNE Is it that obvious?

NESSA You're not the first one we've seen.

FORTUNE I know.

NESSA Not even the tenth.

FORTUNE I know.

NESSA My grandmother won't sell.

FORTUNE *(Re: the model.)* She will when she sees this.

NESSA She's seen plenty of those.

FORTUNE But not this one.

NESSA And what's so special about this one?

FORTUNE What's special is *you*.

NESSA Me?

FORTUNE You.

NESSA I don't get it.

FORTUNE (*Re: the model.*) I want *you* to be totally, one hundred percent happy with what we're building here.

NESSA Yeah but it's my grandmother –

FORTUNE You hate the balls? The balls are gone.

NESSA I don't hate the balls –

FORTUNE You prefer yoga (*Continues.*)

NESSA No time for *yoga*.

FORTUNE then let's have a hot yoga studio instead.

NESSA Hot yoga?

FORTUNE Why not?

NESSA For seniors?

FORTUNE The fact of the matter is this: you tell us what would make it perfect and we'll make it happen.

NESSA And why would you...why would I...why would we do that?

FORTUNE To stop your Grandmother making the worst decision of her life.

NESSA Which is?

FORTUNE (*He produces an envelope.*) The decision to turn this down.

NESSA And what's that?

FORTUNE An offer. A generous, life-changing offer to buy this land. To buy The Canadian.

NESSA We don't need that money.

FORTUNE Well...

NESSA We don't need to sell.

FORTUNE That's not what the bank says.

NESSA The person you really need to speak to is my grandmother.

 (*FORTUNE sways.*)

FORTUNE Look what I'm doing, Ms. Elling. Do you see? What is this?

NESSA It's really weird?

FORTUNE It's sway. I've got sway. And you've got sway too.

NESSA (*Understanding.*) You think I have sway? With Karole – with a K – Elling? Not likely!

FORTUNE Oh but I think you *will* have sway when you hear how *I've* got sway...with the bank.

NESSA What bank?

FORTUNE Great Lakes Trust.

NESSA Oh. *Oh!*

FORTUNE Oh indeed.

NESSA What exactly do you mean by sway?

FORTUNE I mean that I've built a reputation across that river there. If you want a good, honest property developer in New York State, a conscientious realtor, you come to Fortune Wells. And now it seems my reputation has crossed international lines! Because all those other developers you talked about? All those people who've come out here carrying all those other models? Well, they have formed a consortium Ms. Elling.

NESSA A consortium?

FORTUNE Yes! They've grouped together, they've pooled their money and they've hired the best in the business to get this deal done.

NESSA The best in the business, eh?

FORTUNE (*Gestures to himself.*) It's because I care. I only take on projects where *everybody* wins.

NESSA And how do we win if we sell our home?

FORTUNE *(Correcting her.)* Your business.

NESSA It's both!

FORTUNE A *failing* business.

NESSA Well...!

FORTUNE Folks don't take vacations like this any more, Ms. Elling! Holiday camps in tired old cabins, other families right next door? People don't want that!

NESSA People don't want condos either.

FORTUNE But people *need* condos! *(Re: the model.)* Just think of all the big houses in town that could be freed up for younger families if the chronologically progressive people in them had somewhere else in their community to move to?

NESSA I never thought of it like that.

FORTUNE Sway, Ms. Elling. What you're experiencing is sway.

NESSA Wait a minute. *(A horrible thought dawns on her.)* You said you have sway with the bank.

FORTUNE I did.

NESSA So you know?!

FORTUNE Er...?

NESSA You know about our...situation?

FORTUNE I...er....?

NESSA And you're going to use your sway to...to....*what?*

FORTUNE *(Going with it.)* I think you know...?

NESSA *(Pleading.)* You have to understand The Canadian is much more than a business for us. It's...

FORTUNE History?

NESSA Yes.

FORTUNE Legacy?

NESSA Yes.

FORTUNE Family?

NESSA Exactly!

FORTUNE *Weeds*, Ms. Elling! All those things are just *weeds*.

NESSA They're *weeds*?

FORTUNE Yes, *weeds*! I see it all time. You and your Grandmother you're...you're like your forefathers, *farmers*, trying to grow a bountiful crop, a successful *business* but all theses weeds, these weeds are (*Makes a noise of weeds strangling*) strangling you. Unusually cold summer? (*He makes the noise of a weeds strangling*) Wrah! New septic system? Wrah! One star review on Trip Advisor? Wrah! And you know you should sell, (*Continues*.)

NESSA No...

FORTUNE But then there's history, legacy, family, strangling you even more! Should I got on?

NESSA I'm telling you / it's my Grandmother's call.

FORTUNE I'm standing at the fence, Ms. Elling. Do you see me? I'm your neighbour. Right? I'm a *good* neighbour. I have a *hoe*. I have a *plough*. Let's plough those weeds!

NESSA If you really wanted to be a good neighbour you'd use your *sway* at Great Lakes Trust to get our loan extended!

FORTUNE (*Intrigued*.) Your loan?

NESSA That is what you're talking about?

FORTUNE (*Smooth*.) Even if I did speak to the bank, what would be the point in putting off the inevitable? They'll call in that loan eventually.

NESSA Look at me, Mr. Wells. What is this?

(*NESSA sways*.)

FORTUNE That looks like sway.

NESSA You should use your sway with the bank, Mr. Wells, because... (*Unconvincingly*.) *I'm with you*. I don't want to be strangled! Who wants to be strangled? You think I want to fold laundry all day? To, to lug around melons and fit grass skirts on the catering staff? No! (*Slowly realising there's some truth to this*.) I want free time. I want to relax. I want...balls!

FORTUNE Then balls you shall have!

NESSA You use your sway and I'll use mine. Get us another extension on our loan. Maybe a couple of months? And with that time I'll convince my Grandmother to sell.

FORTUNE So you *do* have sway?

NESSA (*Gesturing to the model.*) Hot yoga! Grandma will *love* it.

FORTUNE (*Pleased with himself.*) Ms. Elling, you're doing the right thing. A clean sale on agreeable terms means that *everybody* wins! I get my bonus, your grandmother gets rich and you get all the balls you can handle!

 (*FORTUNE takes out his cell phone.*)

NESS (*Re: his cell phone.*) You're calling the bank now?

FORTUNE (*Nods.*) I have a good feeling about you. I have a good feeling about this *whole* place.

NESS (*Re: his cell phone.*) So you'll ask about the extension?

FORTUNE (*Re: his cell phone.*) I'll see what I can do.

NESSA You'll get reception on the balcony. Just up there.

 (*FORTUNE goes up the stairs and exits to the balcony.*)

 (*The moment he's gone, NESSA shows her worry. She looks towards the downstairs cupboard.*)

NESSA (*Speaking to the cupboard.*) Guys. That was too close. What are we gonna do?

 (*NESSA lifts up another sheet to reveal KAROLE who has been laying on the sofa the entire time.*)

 (*NESSA screams.*)

 (*KAROLE screams.*)

NESSA What are you *doing* there?

KAROLE *Asphyxiating*, thanks to you! Why're you dumping all this crap on me?

NESSA Why are you *lying* there?

KAROLE Can't a woman lie on her own couch?

NESSA Not when she's supposed to be at the hospital!

KAROLE I got plenty of time.

NESSA Where's Big Jill?

KAROLE I'm sure the boat's on its way.

NESSA You should be there by now.

KAROLE Don't rush me to my grave, Nessa.

NESSA It's cataract surgery, Grandma. Nothing's / going to happen.

KAROLE Nothing's gonna happen, says you. But the *cards*...

NESSA Oh, really!

KAROLE The cards say otherwise. The cards, Nessa, the cards are *dark*.

NESSA Are you seriously telling me you're not going to get your cataracts treated because of your tarot cards?

KAROLE I'm simply saying the cards are dark.

NESSA (*Mocking*) The cards are dark (*Continues.*)

KAROLE They are.

NESSA The cards show prosperity (*Continues.*)

KAROLE Sometimes, yes!

NESSA The cards say you're going to fall in love with a juggler!

KAROLE Not a juggler, *The Juggler*, (*Continues.*)

NESSA 'A', 'The', same thing.

KAROLE it's an important card in Tarot reading and it's *not* the 'same thing' thank you very much.

NESSA Where is this juggler then? This love of your life?

KAROLE The cards are mysterious.

NESSA Hospital appointments aren't.

KAROLE Bah!

NESSA You can't miss your surgery!

KAROLE The hospital called to push back the appointment. They got some new ultra-fast treatment or something.

NESSA *(Exasperated.)* So you thought you'd spend that extra time just lying there?

KAROLE I wanted to have one final look at the place I love most in the world. What's wrong with that?

NESSA There's work to do! There's laundry to fold!

KAROLE I know! I was under it!

NESSA Just help, will you?

(NESSA and KAROLE fold sheets and towels, which are covered with over-the-top Canadian imagery.)

KAROLE My final moments on earth, this is *exactly* what I want to be doing.

NESSA These are not your final moments on earth.

KAROLE Just in case you're wrong, don't forget there's the wedding today *(Continues.)*

NESSA How could I forget!

KAROLE and you have to sign the cheques for everyone helping out.

NESSA *(This has been bothering her.)* I can't believe you promised Sadhia Michaels a tropical wedding theme, *(Continues.)*

KAROLE *What?*

NESSA on the same day as your surgery!

KAROLE She was gonna elope to some Carribbean island, I had to say something!

NESSA You promised her St. Lucia on the St. Lawrence!

KAROLE It worked, didn't it?

NESSA There's too much to do!

KAROLE Ah, you'll be fine.

NESSA *(Softer voice.)* And now there's *him*!

KAROLE Who?

NESSA *(Indicates upstairs.)* Him! The guy on the balcony!

KAROLE Oh, so *that's* who you were talking to.

NESSA Didn't you hear?

KAROLE *(Re: the laundry.)* Under that?

NESSA He's a real estate agent.

KAROLE Jeez, they're like friggin' sharks to blood.

NESSA And we're bleeding.

KAROLE We'll be fine.

NESSA How?

KAROLE The cards once said *(Continues.)*

NESSA The cards, the cards.

KAROLE that we – yes the *cards*, Nessa, your scepticism is noted – the cards said we will always find good luck and be saved. Fortune favours The Canadian.

NESSA Death? Disaster? I would hardly call some of the things that saved us 'good luck!'

KAORLE Who is he, then? Up there?

NESSA Mr. Wells. He brought that model. And an offer. A *generous* offer.

(KAROLE picks up the letter and looks at it.)

KAROLE *(Disgusted.)* Have you seen the address?

NESSA Grandma...

KAROLE *(Disgusted.)* New York State?

NESSA He's representing a *group* of buyers!

KAROLE You want me to sell to an *American*?

NESSA We could end up with nothing / if we don't sell!

KAROLE You know where I stand on Americans generally *(Continues.)*

NESSA Grandma!

KAROLE with all that over-the-top flag-waving patriotic bull-crap. *(Note: this line should ideally coincide with the most over-the-top Canadian-decorated piece of folding being revealed to the audience.)* To say nothing of Bobby Erstwhile –

NESSA That was *one* bad American!

KAROLE He's just the tip of a star-spangled iceberg, *(Continues.)*

NESSA Grandma!

KAROLE and these are the people you want to sell up to to? *(Re: the model.)* For *that*? Never gonna happen. As sure as my name is Karole – with a K – Elling!

(KAROLE tears up the letter.)

NESSA Our loan is due at the end of the month!

KAROLE Yea, yea.

NESSA That's almost fifty thousands dollars!

KAROLE You think I don't know that?

NESSA You don't seem very concerned!

KAROLE Things are looking up! There's the tropical wedding.

NESSA That's eight grand, a drop in / the ocean.

KAROLE Fortune favours The Canadian, Nessa.

NESSA Not this Fortune.

(KAROLE begins gathering up her things.)

KAROLE Eh?

NESSA Never mind.

KAROLE Don't worry about money, Nessa, *(Continues.)*

NESSA Somebody has to!

KAROLE if the cards are right and I don't come back, *(Continues.)*

NESSA Don't joke about that!

KAROLE then think of all the money you'll get from suing the pants off that hospital!

NESSA Nothing's going to happen to you.

KAROLE Do you know how they treat cataracts, Ness?

NESSA Yes. No. *Maybe?*

KAROLE They cut open the lid of your eyeball and shoot lazer beams up in there.

NESSA That's not *quite* / how it works.

KAROLE I've seen James Bond, okay? I've seen Dr. No. If that lazer was strong enough to cut off his ding dong / then, hell, one in the eye might –

NESSA Grandma!

KAROLE What?

NESSA Just...you'll be fine.

KAROLE And you'll be fine too. (*Re: Fortune on the balcony.*) How'd you leave it with Mr. Agent up there?

NESSA I bought us some time, couple months I think. But –

KAROLE Perfect, just what I would've done! Chip off the old block, Ness, that's what you are.

NESSA Yes, but –

KAROLE I gotta say, I think you're ready to take the baton here, girl. To take the reins. You turf that one out on his butt, then we'll make so much money through the rest of wedding season you won't even remember what that loser looks like. You can solve any problem. You can save this place. And you can do it without me.

NESSA I can't. Can I?

KAROLE You have to Ness. One day, it's all gonna be down to you. So we better start now.

NESSA Ultra-fast surgery, eh?

KAROLE In and out, they say.

NESSA Then I'll see you soon.

 (*They embrace.*)

KAROLE Don't worry about money, Nessa. This is The Canadian. There's always a thing.

(KAROLE picks up the tray of watermelon slices and exits.)

NESSA *(To the cupboard again.)* ‘There’s always a thing.’ Until there’s nothing! Then what? Jeez, how did you guys *live* with her?

(Enter FORTUNE from the upstairs patio door.)

FORTUNE Good news!

NESSA *(Startled.)* Ah!

FORTUNE I’ve spoken to the bank!

NESSA Did you use your sway?

FORTUNE They’ve moved the re-payment date of your loan.

NESSA *(Hopeful.)* They’ve given us an extra month?

FORTUNE No.

NESSA So what’s the new deadline?

FORTUNE Today.

NESSA *What?*

FORTUNE Five o’clock.

NESSA But that’s in an hour!

FORTUNE It is!

NESSA But...but you said you’d see what you could do!

FORTUNE I said that. And I did that. Just not the way you expected me to.

NESSA I thought you were my neighbour!

FORTUNE I am. *(Explaining.)* The fact of the matter, Ms. Elling, is that I did not know about your loan before you mentioned it to me.

NESSA What?

FORTUNE But once you told me you had a loan I knew it would be easy to sway the bank into bringing the repayment date forward.

NESSA But it’s wedding season!

FORTUNE Yes, I saw the chapel made of...bananas?

NESSA It's a long story.

FORTUNE The fact of the matter is, this new deadline is better for everyone. It'll focus your grandmother's mind and get this sale done. So I have to thank you: this is all down to you.

NESSA *(Horried.)* All down to me?

FORTUNE It's quite simple, Ms. Elling. The consortium's offer is still on the table. *(He notices the ripped up letter. He picks up some pieces and lets them flutter down.)* Or not. *(He goes to his satchel.)* I thought that might happen; people sure *do* love to rip up an offer. It's so...dramatic. So here's another. *(He withdraws a leather portfolio from his satchel. This is Portfolio A and it says 'The Canadian' on the front.)* It's a little bit more...robust. We just need your Grandma to sign.

NESSA What if she can't?

FORTUNE Can't? Or won't?

NESSA She's not here.

FORTUNE Now, now Ms. Elling. Let's not resort to fibs.

NESSA Are you calling me a liar?

FORTUNE Remember the woman outside.

NESSA Who *is* this woman?

FORTUNE With the coconuts, *(Continue.)*

NESSA Listen to me. My grandmother can't sign that contract, I swear!

FORTUNE Well, if she *won't* sign then let me talk you through what happens. At five pm today the bank will find you have defaulted on your loan. Great Lakes Trust will take immediate possession of The Canadian and promptly hold an auction for the property. And since I will be the only person here, I will win that auction. You, on the other hand, will have lost The Canadian which means, I guess, that you'll have lost your business...and your home. So, at the risk of repeating myself, I strongly suggest your Grandmother signs. *(Checks his watch.)* And she better hurry up.

NESSA But she's / not here!

FORTUNE Now if you'll excuse me, I have some calls to make.

(FORTUNE exits back through the upstairs patio door.)

(NESSA is stunned.)

NESSA *(To cupboard, upset.)* It's all down to me. It's all my fault.

(Then the thought hits her.)

NESSA *(To herself.)* I have to stop her. *(Calling.)* Grandma! Grandma!

(She goes to the downstairs patio door but as she reaches it from the inside, SINCLAIR also arrives from the outside. He is wearing an overcoat and glasses.)

SINCLAIR Hello, you must be / Vanessa?

NESSA Move!

(SINCLAIR screams. He and NESSA tussle awkwardly as she tries to get past him. She becomes tangled in his overcoat; eventually they both become stuck wearing the same coat.)

NESSA Wait! Quiet!

(They listen. Faintly, we can hear the sound of an outboard motor disappearing in the distance.)

SINCLAIR *(Quietly.)* It's a boat.

NESSA No.

SINCLAIR What is it?

NESSA Disaster.

(NESSA resigns herself to her fate...and this act of relaxing causes her to slip out of the overcoat.)

SINCLAIR Oh! Well, it's not all bad! Thought we might be stuck like that!

NESSA Look, I'm sorry but whoever you are, this isn't a good time.

SINCLAIR But the woman with the pineapples said / I should talk to you?

NESSA *(Frustrated.)* No! Can't you real estate agents do your homework? *(Continues.)*

SINCLAIR Real estate?

NESSA The owner of the property is Karole – with a K – Elling. And it's been hers for a very long time so –

SINCLAIR I'm sorry but I think we might be a little tangled up here. Again. I'm not a real estate agent.

NESSA Oh?

SINCLAIR Although I *am* an agent. (*Offering a hand.*) Sinclair Chatham.

NESSA (*Shaking his hand cautiously.*) Vanessa Elling. What kind of agent?

SINCLAIR (*Produces a card.*) Novelists.

NESSA (*Taking it.*) Okay...?

SINCLAIR Screenwriters.

NESSA Right.

SINCLAIR Playwrights. Poets.

NESSA A literary / agent?

SINCLAIR Directors. Assistant directors. Set designers. Stage managers. Assistant stage managers. Lighting technicians. Lighting designers. Costume designers.

NESSA Well that's very / impressive.

SINCLAIR Musical directors. Choreographers. Vocal coaches. Musicians. Sound designers. Sound technicians. Fight directors. Painters. Carpenters.

NESSA Great.

SINCLAIR (*Remembering*) Puppeteers!

NESSA That's a lot.

SINCLAIR As an agent, I consider myself mixed-use. Diversified. It's the way of the future.

NESSA How can I help you?

SINCLAIR I need a cabin.

NESSA Well, your timing / isn't great.

SINCLAIR Correction - one of my clients needs a cabin.

NESSA Thing is, Mr. Chatham, is that we have a wedding tonight so everything is fully booked.

SINCLAIR I couldn't possibly divulge my client's name.

NESSA I didn't ask you too?

SINCLAIR But let me just say two words to you: “Explicit Content”.

NESSA Okay...?

SINCLAIR *Explicit Content?* The movie?

NESSA I don’t have time for movies.

SINCLAIR It was nominated for an Oscar!

(NESSA shrugs.)

SINCLAIR Does the name Cassandra Lawes ring a bell?

NESSA Afraid not.

SINCLAIR Not her real name, of course. Rosalie Schmidt? (NESSA shakes her head.) Schmidt’s farm? (NESSA shrugs.) She’s a local girl! Got her start at the Lyric, in town. And now she’s A-list Hollywood! Well, she’s a writer, so there’s a C-list ceiling but for *writers* she’s definitely A-list. B, minimum.

NESSA And she’s your client?

SINCLAIR I couldn’t possibly say. But yes. It’s her. Cassandra Lawes. And she needs a cabin. Tonight.

NESSA We’re fully booked, there’s a wedding.

SINCLAIR Yes, I saw the woman with the mangoes.

NESSA How about tomorrow?

SINCLAIR Oh no no no, she’s on her way.

NESSA (*Joking*) Well, unless she wants to sleep in here, then we don’t have anywhere to put her.

SINCLAIR Great!

NESSA What’s great?

SINCLAIR Here. She can sleep here tonight.

NESSA This cabin isn’t normally for guests.

SINCLAIR She’s not a normal guest.

NESSA Meaning?

SINCLAIR She wouldn't pay normal rates.

 (Beat.)

NESSA You're saying...?

SINCLAIR Hollywood A-list.

NESSA C-list.

SINCLAIR A for writers. B minimum. The point is that The Canadian has a special place in Cassie's heart. In one of these cabins she sat down and wrote her first play:
Delightful.

NESSA What is?

SINCLAIR The play.

NESSA Is it?

SINCLAIR No, it's called *Delightful*.

NESSA Ah.

SINCLAIR Although it is quite delightful too.

NESSA Okay...?

SINCLAIR I'm sure you've seen it?

NESSA I don't have time for plays.

SINCLAIR But it's about here!

NESSA Here?

SINCLAIR Here!

NESSA It's about The Canadian?

SINCLAIR *Yes.* It's about young love. Secret marriage. And death's cruel sting.

NESSA I don't have time for made up stories.

SINCLAIR Ah, it's based on true events!

NESSA *Delightful?*

SINCLAIR Isn't it?

NESSA No, the play, *Delightful*.

SINCLAIR What about it?

NESSA It's based on true events.

SINCLAIR Sure is! In fact, the poor young man worked right here.

NESSA What poor young man?

SINCLAIR The one in the play, the one who died.

NESSA *Delightful?*

SINCLAIR There's nothing delightful about drowning, what's wrong with you?

NESSA No the play!

SINCLAIR Oh, yes, right, in the play he drowns.

NESSA And in real life?

SINCLAIR He drowns.

NESSA Oh no.

SINCLAIR Canoeing accident. Three people, in fact. Our hero, his brother and brother's wife.

NESSA Oh!

SINCLAIR Tragic.

NESSA Very.

SINCLAIR No, *Tragic: The Movie*. It's a script I wrote, the story behind *Delightful*. Didn't get picked up, I'm not bitter, just the way these things go.

NESSA My parents and my uncle died in a canoe accident.

SINCLAIR Right. (*Realising*) Right! So they're your, that was your, which means you'd be...?

NESSA They're my family, yes.

SINCLAIR Yes. (*Genuine*.) I'm so sorry.

NESSA It's fine. (*Gesturing to the downstairs cupboard.*) They're still here.

SINCLAIR Okaaaaaaay?

NESSA That's where we keep their stuff. Grandma says it's too depressing to have it all over the place.

SINCLAIR I didn't think you'd still be working here, (*Continues.*)

NESSA Working here is all I do.

SINCLAIR what with those memories and all.

NESSA So, hang on. Are you saying...this woman...Cassandra Lawes...she and my uncle Tim were about to get married?

SINCLAIR It's Jim in the play. Great part for a young guy, 18-24. Tricky casting though. He has to have chops. *And* do the Soviet Splits.

NESSA The what?

SINCLAIR The Soviet Splits! You must be the only person in the country who doesn't know this play! They made it into a movie, starring what's-her-name –

NESSA *Delightful?*

SINCLAIR She was!

NESSA The movie.

SINCLAIR Also.

NESSA And the Soviet, er...?

SINCLAIR Splits, the Soviet Splits are this...they're this entire running *thing* between the two lovers, throughout the script.

NESSA Okay?

SINCLAIR She teases Tim – Jim that he *can't* do the Soviet Splits, (*Continues.*)

NESSA Right.

SINCLAIR and tells him when he *can*, she'll marry him.

NESSA Okay.

SINCLAIR And then, at the end, when Jim comes back as a ghost he's finally able to do the Soviet Splits and it's this wonderul magical moment.

NESSA This is *Delightful*?

SINCLAIR It really is!

NESSA Or real life?

SINCLAIR Both. Minus the ghost.

NESSA And Jim is Tim?

SINCLAIR So you *do* know it?

NESSA My *dead* uncle...

SINCLAIR 'Based on'.

NESSA ...is a Soviet-Splitting ghost.

SINCLAIR In the movie.

NESSA Which I don't have time for.

SINCLAIR (*Astonished.*) But – but – it's about your family! And it's a phenomenon! There are entire YouTube channels devoted to the Soviet Splits, people do them at their weddings now! It's –

NESSA (*A touch upset.*) Mr. Chatham, why are we talking about this?

SINCLAIR We're talking about this, Vanessa, because Cassandra Lawes just called me out of the blue. Asking for – nay, demanding – a cabin right here at The Canadian. Immediately. And that can only mean one thing. She's going to write a new play for the stage!

NESSA And you think she'll be happy in here?

SINCLAIR (*He looks around, unsure.*) There *will* be other cabins? Tomorrow?

NESSA She can have her pick.

SINCLAIR Well there you go. She stays in here tonight and tomorrow you move her somewhere a bit more...

NESSA A-list?

SINCLAIR Exactly.

NESSA (*Thinking*) I suppose...I suppose if I stayed with Grandma tonight, then Cassandra could have my room / upstairs.

SINCLAIR Oh, wait wait wait. You'd be here too?

NESSA Well where did you expect me to sleep?

SINCLAIR In your car?

NESSA *(Indicating her Grandmother's bedroom.)* That room locks. It's on the ground floor, so I can climb in and out of her window to look after the wedding. Cassandra – your 'client' – will never know I'm here.

SINCLAIR Sounds like we have a deal.

NESSA I'll need the money up front.

SINCLAIR I assume you'll take a cheque?

(They shake hands.)

SINCLAIR Oh, um, one more thing. *(Conspiratorial.)* Cassie often likes to work with an... assistant.

NESSA Okay?

SINCLAIR Someone to help with research, to proof-read drafts, and to help her... *relax* when she's not writing.

NESSA Okay?

SINCLAIR And she's quite particular with the, um, profile of her assistants. She's consistent with what she's looking for.

NESSA What is she looking for?

SINCLAIR A man. A young man. A young man with the kind of face and body that inspires the creation of art.

(Beat.)

NESSA Oh. *Oh!*

SINCLAIR Nothing untoward, *(Continuous.)*

NESSA No?

SINCLAIR nothing *saucy*, just...assistance.

NESSA Right.

SINCLAIR So if you can suggest anyone local? I don't know, maybe a farm hand or a kayaking instructor, anyone fresh faced and, you know, gorgeous.

NESSA As an assistant?

SINCLAIR More of a muse really.

NESSA I see.

(She thinks.)

SINCLAIR The pay, of course, would be...

NESSA A-list?

SINCLAIR A-list discretion warrants A-list rates, don't you think?.

(NESSA thinks for a moment: then, an idea.)

NESSA I know just the guy!

SINCLAIR Wonderful! Who?

NESSA Who?

SINCLAIR Yes, who is he?

NESSA You wouldn't know him.

SINCLAIR I realise that. But his name...?

NESSA His name? Is... Van.

SINCLAIR Van?

NESSA He's Dutch.

SINCLAIR But he speaks English?

NESSA Heritage. He has Dutch heritage *(Continues.)*

SINCLAIR I'm one-sixteenth myself!

NESSA but he's from here, he's Canadian, Canadian as can be!

SINCLAIR Great. So?

NESSA So?

SINCLAIR *(Gesturing to the phone.)* Are you going to see if Van's available?

NESSA Oh, I'm sure he is.

SINCLAIR Be good to find out. Right?

NESSA Right. Of course. Let me call.

(NESSA goes to the landline phone and dials a number. She waits.)

SINCLAIR Tell him she wrote *Delightful*.

NESSA *(Into the phone.)* Van? It's me. That's right. Nessa. How've you been? How's...the rock climbing game these days?

(SINCLAIR gives NESS a thumbs up.)

NESSA *(Into the phone.)* Let me cut to the chase, Van. Would you be interested in some work for the next few...?

(She looks to Sinclair.)

SINCLAIR Weeks.

(As NESSA is walking around during the call it becomes clear that the phone cable has been chewed through by some kind of rodent – this phone hasn't worked in years.)

NESSA *(Into the phone.)* Weeks. *(Beat.)* Oh, you'd be assisting a very important and very secretive and very wealthy individual who will be staying over here at The Canadian. *(Beat.)* How much? Well the pay will be very good, we're talking hunnnnnnnndrrrrrrr...?

(SINCLAIR indicates more.)

 Thousaaaaaaaaaan...?

(SINCLAIR indicates more.)

(Taken aback.) P-p-possibly as high as tens of thousands of dollars. *(Beat.)* Right! Well! Great news. I'll see you later! *(Hangs up.)*

(To SINCLAIR.) We're on!

SINCLAIR Wonderful! Let me give my client a call and find out the ETA. *(Waving his cell phone.)* Is there somewhere I can...?

NESSA Try the kitchen. Just through there.

(Pressing his phone to his ear, SINCLAIR goes through the swing door to the kitchen.)

NESSA *(To the cupboard.)* Tens of thousands of dollars. Plus the cabin rental. Plus the wedding. What do you think guys? *(Resolved.)* It's all down to me.

(FORTUNE re-enters from the balcony and comes downstairs.)

FORTUNE News!

NESSA Good news?

FORTUNE Yes!

NESSA For me?

FORTUNE For everyone! I've found an auctioneer. She'll be here at five.

NESSA How did you do that?

FORTUNE Do *you* have news? Has your Grandmother signed?

NESSA Not yet.

FORTUNE She's cutting it close.

NESSA Mr. Wells. –

FORTUNE Fortune, please.

NESSA Mr. Wells, a question for you. What if...what if we were able to pay back our loan today.

FORTUNE Today?

NESSA Today.

FORTUNE As in, within the hour?

NESSA Yes.

FORTUNE *(Thinks.)* Well. If you were able to pay back your loan to the bank then I'd lose my sway and I suppose you'd get to keep The Canadian.

NESSA Honestly?

FORTUNE Ms. Elling, I am a lot of things. Shrewd. Focussed. Handsome. But one thing I am not, is a liar.

NESSA Good to know.

FORTUNE It's not very neighbourly. And I can tell you, as your neighbour, I appreciate your determination. The fact of the matter is I appreciate it because it is a quality I take pride in myself. Would you like to know how I got my name, Ms. Elling?

NESSA No.

FORTUNE On the banks of the mighty Lake Algonquin just over the border in New York State is a small town called Wells. One morning, a kindly retired couple – former real estate agents, as it happens – were out walking their dog when they found a half-drowned, nearly dead teenage boy washed up on the shore. His face was destroyed. His memory erased. But they nursed him back to health and helped him start a new life. His survival and rehabilitation in *Wells* was the ultimate stroke of good *fortune*.

NESSA I see.

FORTUNE The fact of the matter, Ms. Elling, is that Edward and May-Lin Tang helped me re-start my life, and to them I am eternally grateful. But everything I did afterwards, all the success I've had, is a result of my own resourcefulness, my own determination.

NESSA And...?

FORTUNE And...*(He picks up Portfolio A and hands it to NESSA.)* I appreciate your moxy, Ms. Elling. Thinking that you'll somehow, at the last minute, raise the money you need to hold on to The Canadian. But the fact of the matter is this: you're not going to come into fifty thousand dollars in the next few minutes. So, your Grandmother *must* sign this contract. *(Gestures around.)* Otherwise, all of this will be lost.

(Not realising what he's doing, FORTUNE places both hands on the armchair. Instantly, he starts getting another jolt, as if being electrocuted.)

NESSA Oh!

(FORTUNE releases the chair; the jolting stops. He looks around: 'What just happened?')

NESSA Are you okay?

FORTUNE Fine! *(Gathering himself.)* If you'll excuse me, I'll just go somewhere...

NESSA That might be best.

FORTUNE ...somewhere else.

(FORTUNE shakily exits through the front door as SINCLAIR re-enters from the kitchen.)

SINCLAIR Reception. *(Pointing to the landline.)* Can I use that phone?

NESSA Upstairs! On the balcony! Reception's great!

SINCLAIR Fabulous.

(SINCLAIR goes up the stairs and out onto the balcony. When she's sure he's gone NESSA quickly gathers up the landline. NESSA takes it to the downstairs closet and hides it inside. There she looks for and finds a large, old cardboard box. On it is written the word 'Tim'.)

CASSIE *(Off.)* Hello?

(NESSA freezes – 'Who's that?')

CASSIE *(Off.)* Sinclair? Where are you? Sin, are you here?

(Slightly panicked, NESSA tries to get into her grandmother's room, but with the box it's too difficult.)

SINCLAIR *(Off.)* Cassie?

CASSIE *(Off.)* Sin?

(NESSA abandons the box – so the word 'Tim' is facing the audience - and dashes into the kitchen, just as SINCLAIR enters from above.)

SINCLAIR Cassandra?

CASSIE *(Off.)* Sinclair?

(SINCLAIR goes back onto the balcony as CASSIE enters from the front door. She is dressed like a woman attempting to keep a low profile, with a large hat, sunglasses, etc.)

SINCLAIR *(Off.)* Cassie?

CASSIE Sinclair, get in here.

(SINCLAIR enters from the balcony and comes downstairs.)

SINCLAIR Cassandra, darling!

CASSIE Sinclair, thank goodness!

(They air kiss.)

SINCLAIR How is my favorite client?

CASSIE Fraught.

SINCLAIR You've come to the right place.

CASSIE *(Gesturing around.)* Sin, what is this?

SINCLAIR The Canadian! As requested.

CASSIE I know this is The Canadian. What I mean is why are we specifically *here*, in this...in this...

SINCLAIR I believe it's a converted barn.

CASSIE God, so many memories. *(She sees the armchair and catches her breath.)* That's where Tim proposed!

SINCLAIR How lovely!

CASSIE I *hate* it!

SINCLAIR Me too! *(He grabs one of the folded sheets and drapes it over the arm chair.)* Problem solved.

CASSIE Why aren't I in a cabin?

SINCLAIR There's a wedding.

CASSIE Yes, I saw the women with their maracas.
SINCLAIR We'll move you tomorrow.

CASSIE *(Noticing the box, although she does not see the word 'Tim' on it.)* What's that?

SINCLAIR *(Seeing the box for the first time.)* A box?

CASSIE Of what?

SINCLAIR Clothes?

CASSIE Is someone else here?

SINCLAIR No...?

CASSIE Because I told you I need privacy, *(Continues.)*

SINCLAIR Of course.

CASSIE absolute privacy.

SINCLAIR *(Moving the box away.)* I think it's actually just garbage, I'll make sure it's thrown away...er...

(NESSA comes out from the kitchen door, gesturing to make it clear to SINCLAIR the box is not garbage. CASSIE does not notice.)

CASSIE Good.

SINCLAIR Or *put* it away, somewhere else.

 (*CASSIE turns to SINCLAIR and almost catches sight of NESSA, who jumps in front of the sofa in time.*)

CASSIE Put away?

SINCLAIR Yes.

CASSIE Why would you *put* away a box of garbage, Sin, that doesn't make sense.

SINCLAIR Well...

CASSIE Throw it away, (*Continues.*)

SINCLAIR Okay?

CASSIE that's what we do to garbage, isn't it?

 (*Unseen by CASSIE, NESSA catches sight of SINCLAIR – 'Don't throw it away!'*)

CASSIE Now please! I don't want to be smelling...you know...*smells*.

SINCLAIR There's no smells, it's fine. Forget the box. Let's give the box a stay of execution.

CASSIE What?

SINCLAIR Amnesty for boxes!

CASSIE (*Suspicious.*) You're being odd. Why are you being odd?

SINCLAIR Odd? I don't know what you mean.

CASSIE Sinclair you just said the words, "Amnesty for boxes."

SINCLAIR Well...

CASSIE (*Worried.*) You know, don't you? You've heard!

SINCLAIR Heard?

CASSIE (*Increasingly frantic.*) Is it on social media? Have you heard from the bloggers?

SINCLAIR No...?

CASSIE The vloggers?

SINCLAIR Cassie, please / calm down!

CASSIE Oh, Sin, what am I going to do?

SINCLAIR Nobody's contacted me except you. Now, listen, you're a nervous wreck.

CASSIE I am.

SINCLAIR You're shaking.

CASSIE Maybe I should lie down.

(SINCLAIR starts guiding CASSIE to the stairs, clearly relieved to be getting her away from NESSA. NESSA, meanwhile, looks concerned.)

SINCLAIR That's a great idea. Let's get you to the bedroom –

NESSA *(In a weird, bird-like way.)* Sheets!

CASSIE *(Stopping.)* What was that?

SINCLAIR Nothing! Now, up we go to the –

NESSA *(A little clearer this time.)* Sheets!

CASSIE Is someone in here?

SINCLAIR Just a bird, I think.

CASSIE That wasn't a / bird.

SINCLAIR *(Getting it.)* Oh, sheets!

CASSIE So you did hear it.

SINCLAIR No. I didn't. Cassie, I'm worried. You're hearing things. You could be dehydrated.

CASSIE Well...

SINCLAIR Let's get you some water, shall we?

CASSIE Okay...

(SINCLAIR takes CASSIE by the arm and moves her towards the kitchen.)

SINCLAIR And then you can tell me what's really going on.

(SINCLAIR holds open the door as CASSIE goes into the kitchen. As soon as she does, SINCLAIR lets the swing door come to a gentle rest behind him. Then, he furiously indicates to NESSA to get the sheets and go upstairs...which she does, at an astonishing speed.)

SINCLAIR *(To CASSIE through the door.)* I really don't like to see you like this, Cassie, I don't like what California's done to you. I've thought about it a lot these last few years and I *completely* understand why you felt you needed to escape. After what happened with Tim, how could I possibly be upset that you left the country?

(NESSA disappears into the upstairs bedroom.)

SINCLAIR *(Relieved, he takes off his glasses and rubs the space between his eyes.)* But now, after all these years, is it *healthy* for you? Out there? In America? I'm particularly thinking about the, um, number of...*liasons* you've had which, clearly, is all about replacing Tim. Which is fine, we all grieve in our own way. But *obviously* this lifestyle is having an effect and it's so quiet and inspirational here in Canada that –

(CASSIE slams the swing door into SINCLAIR'S back. His glasses go flying out of his hand.)

SINCLAIR Oh!

CASSIE Whoops!

(SINCLAIR steps aside and CASSIE enters with a glass of water.)

SINCLAIR My glasses.

CASSIE Don't stand in front of the door, Sin!

SINCLAIR Sorry!

CASSIE Doors open!

SINCLAIR Very true. Cassie, look out for my glasses will you?

CASSIE I nearly spilt my water and – *what?*

SINCLAIR My glasses.

(CASSIE steps on SINCLAIR'S glasses.)

CASSIE Whoops!

SINCLAIR Was that a...crunch?

CASSIE Your glasses are on the floor, Sin.

SINCLAIR Are they okay?

CASSIE *(Picking them up and handing them over.)* They are...not okay.

SINCLAIR *(Upset.)* Oh. *(Putting on a brave face.)* Oh well! Never mind!

CASSIE Aren't you basically blind without them?

SINCLAIR Not blind, no.

CASSIE Your depth perception / wasn't it?

SINCLAIR I'm fine, Cassie, just fine. Look! *(He begins striding around the room.)* I'm just fine!
Now –

(SINCLAIR trips on the 'thing' in the floor, flips over the sofa and lands in a seated position.)

CASSIE Oh!

SINCLAIR There's a *thing*. In the floor.

CASSIE I see that.

SINCLAIR But Cassie, enough about me, are *you* okay?

CASSIE Oh Sinclair, I...I don't know what to do!

SINCLAIR Tell me everything.

CASSIE I've been a little irresponsible. A little indiscreet.

SINCLAIR Okay...?

CASSIE You see, there's this young man.

SINCLAIR This is exactly what I'm talking about.

CASSIE His name is Jarred something or other.

SINCLAIR Jarred?

CASSIE He's a juicer.

SINCLAIR Jarred the juicer...

CASSIE Quite skilled, actually.

SINCLAIR As in, he makes juice?

CASSIE At this place right off Sunset.

SINCLAIR Of *course*.

CASSIE And I go there all the time, which is how we got to...know each other.

SINCLAIR Perfectly normal.

CASSIE He always wore this shirt, this blue, almost denim-y kind of shirt, always buttoned all the way up. Everyone else in t-shirts, everyone else in tank tops, tattoos out, piercings on display – it's LA – and there's Jarred dressed like he's some kind of 1950's mechanic. Of course, I'm intrigued. My interest, piqued. So one day I muster up the courage to ask him about it. Turns out, he's an Architecturist.

SINCLAIR An architect?

CASSIE An Architecturist. He follows Archituecturism.

SINCLAIR Which is...?

CASSIE Which is *not* a cult, thank you. Despite what you may have heard.

SINCLAIR I can honestly say I have not heard Architecurism is a cult.

CASSIE Good. Because it's not. Just because a belief system is *secret*, just because it has *fees* doesn't mean it's a cult. Right?

SINCLAIR Let's get back to Jarred.

CASSIE *Yes*. So needless to say I'm attracted to Jarred. His devotion, his beliefs. And I invite him over one night to tell me more about The Architecturists. And, hell, I'm a grown woman. Before he arrives I open a bottle of wine. A superb gewürztramer. It's German.

SINCLAIR You don't say?

CASSIE And I *may* have had a glass or two only to find, when Jarred arrived, the boy doesn't drink.

SINCLAIR Prefers juice?

CASSIE Probably. Anyway, the night had only really just begun when I find that the bottle of Gewürz, well, it's already empty. So without even thinking I uncork another and have a glass or two and then...that's when...things get a little bit...blurry.

SINCLAIR You're allowed to have a drink, Casandra, you're a grown woman.

CASSIE Yes but –

SINCLAIR And you're a writer, a degree of drunkenness actually has *cache*.

CASSIE Yes but then there's the camera.

SINCLAIR What camera?

CASSIE I distinctly remember...at one point...a video camera.

SINCLAIR Why?

CASSIE Don't you see, Sin! Don't you see?!

SINCLAIR No!

CASSIE A set-up! A *trap*!

SINCLAIR How?

CASSIE To catch me...just like Beatrice! In *Explicit Content*!

SINCLAIR The movie?

CASSIE Yes!

SINCLAIR No.

CASSIE Yes!

SINCLAIR But Beatrice was filmed, you know... (*He makes a sexual gesture.*)

CASSIE Yes!

SINCLAIR With a... (*He mimes an object.*)

CASSIE Yes!

SINCLAIR And a... (*He mimes another object.*)

CASSIE Exactly!

SINCLAIR But he didn't *film* you actually doing that, did he?

CASSIE I don't know!

SINCLAIR I'm sure there's another explanation.

CASSIE (*She produces a piece of paper.*) There's a note, Sinclair! A *note*! Yesterday morning, Jarred – if that is his real name – was nowhere to be seen but right there on the breakfast bar was his note and what did it say? “Thanks for last night. You were fantastic. I'll be back later to discuss terms before I send the tape up to my superiors!”

SINCLAIR Oh my.

CASSIE Oh my? *Oh my?! This warrants a damn sight more than 'oh my!'*

SINCLAIR But...but...why would he / do that?

CASSIE Blackmail? Extortion? Who knows? It could be humiliation, pure and simple. Hollywood – they've never accepted me. A vivacious, outgoing Canadian. A Canadian *woman*. A *sexual* Canadian woman. They can't stand it. Oh, Sinclair, I can just see the tabloids now. (*As if on the front cover*) "Cassandra Lawes in Sex Tape Shame!" (*She sobs.*)

SINCLAIR Now, now. They won't write that. They'll come up with something much better. "Explicit Scribe in Explicit Shame," for example.

CASSIE True.

SINCLAIR Or, "Explicit Content Scribe in Explicit Content Shame."

CASSIE Yes I suppose.

SINCLAIR Or they'd go with the punchy option: "Life Imitates Tart."

CASSIE Okay / yes.

SINCLAIR Or, if they want to be crude, "Canuck's Luck Sucks After she F..."

CASSIE Sinclair!

SINCLAIR *Finds Out She's Been Betrayed!*"

CASSIE They savage you with scandal out there, Sinclair. Here it's all 'Local Girl Done Good' but there it's, its'...

SINCLAIR 'Foreign Whore Done Poor?'

CASSIE Quite. And once you're tainted, tarnished with scandal – ha! – that's it. Game over. No, I have to get out in front of this thing. I have to manage the message.

SINCLAIR Right!

CASSIE But I also don't want to tip my hand. I mean, if my American agent found out I could be ruined.

SINCLAIR Sure.

CASSIE He knows everyone.

SINCLAIR I see.

CASSIE And I think he might leak.

SINCLAIR It happens.

CASSIE So I thought to myself, who is the most unconnected, inconsequential entertainment professional I could turn to?

SINCLAIR (*Touched.*) It was good to hear from you.

CASSIE I'll tell you one thing I've learned from all this: never, ever, trust a boy with his collar buttoned all the way up.

SINCLAIR Wise words, Cassie.

CASSIE Now I need wise words from you: what do I do?

SINCLAIR So, just to be clear: you're *not* here to write a new play?

CASSIE No!

SINCLAIR Because, I gotta say, I could really sell a new Cassandra Lawes play all over Canada.

CASSIE Oh Sinclair! I can't write at a time like this!

SINCLAIR But The Canadian, it inspires you!

CASSIE I haven't been inspired in years, Sin. Not for anything good.

SINCLAIR You've written movies.

CASSIE Exactly.

SINCLAIR *Explicit Content*, though! That movie was nominated for an Oscar!

CASSIE Yes it was nominated for an Oscar but what does *that* mean?

SINCLAIR It means it's good!

CASSIE It was just smut and sleaze.

SINCLAIR Didn't you say it was autobiographical?

CASSIE The point is the stage, the *theatre* that's where my good work lives.

SINCLAIR Then that's what you should write!

CASSIE No...

SINCLAIR You just need inspiration. You need a *muse*.

CASSIE No!

SINCLAIR No?

CASSIE Absolutely not.

SINCLAIR Not even a fresh-faced, young, rock-climber?

CASSIE That's the *last* thing I need!

SINCLAIR Oh!

CASSIE I'm here to strategise, Sinclair! I'm here to save my Hollywood career! It may be taudry but it's all I have!

SINCLAIR Right. Of course. Cement that first, *then* you write your new play.

CASSIE There's not going to be any... *(Sighs.)* Whatever. Now...what do we do!

(NESSA peeks out of the upstairs bedroom.)

SINCLAIR First things first! Let's bring your bags in.

CASSIE They're in the rental.

(SINCLAIR catches sight of NESSA, who slips back into the bedroom.)

SINCLAIR *(Pointed, for NESSA's benefit.)* Why don't you come with me!

CASSIE Why would I do that?

SINCLAIR *(Calling)* Or you could go up to the balcony to check out the view!

CASSIE Who cares about the view?

SINCLAIR Yes, but, up there's the only place you can get signal!

CASSIE Social media!

SINCLAIR The vloggers!

CASSIE Good idea!

(CASSIE gets out her phone and hurries up the stairs. SINCLAIR gets up to leave and walks into a wall.)

SINCLAIR Don't worry, I'm fine!

CASSIE *(Not paying attention.)* Get the bags!

(CASSIE exits.)

(SINCLAIR exits.)

(As soon as everyone is gone, NESSA bolts out of the upstairs bedroom with her arms full of dirty bedding. She runs downstairs, deftly avoiding the 'thing' in the floor and stops by the cardboard box. She sets the laundry on top of the box and starts dragging everything into her Grandmother's room, making the occasional loud knows as she does. Hearing one of these noises, CASSIE suddenly re-enters from the balcony. NESSA ducks behind the box for cover.)

CASSIE *(Suspicious.)* Hello? Is somebody there?

(CASSIE scans the cabin, finally noticing the additional bedding on top of the box. As she does, she hears...)

SINCLAIR *(Off.)* Cassie! Cassie is this all of them!

(Annoyed, CASSIE goes back out to the balcony.)

CASSIE *(As she goes.)* What, Sinclair?

(NESSA springs to action. She opens the door to the downstairs bedroom and pulls the box and sheets inside just in time for...SINCLAIR to enter with more luggage than he can manage. He struggles to get through the door.)

SINCLAIR *(Calling.)* Is this all of it?

(Re-enter CASSIE.)

CASSIE Yes, I had to pack in a hurry.

(Overburdened and half-blind SINCLAIR makes a total mess of getting the luggage into the cabin and up the stairs. CASSIE offers no help. As this is happening....)

CASSIE Where's the box?

SINCLAIR There's a box too?!

CASSIE No, the box that was there.

SINCLAIR What box?

CASSIE With the sheets.

SINCLAIR *(Re: the remaining clean folded sheets.)* The sheets are *there*.

CASSIE Not those sheets, *new* sheets.

SINCLAIR Those *are* new sheets.

CASSIE No, the sheets were dirty.

SINCLAIR Are the sheets new or are they dirty?

CASSIE Both!

SINCLAIR I'm worried about you Cassie.

CASSIE I'm worried about me too.

SINCLAIR You stay there and I'll check out your room.

(CASSIE sits.)

CASSIE But we talked about the box!

(SINCLAIR fumbles with the bedroom door before finally getting it open.)

SINCLAIR *(As if to a child.)* Of course we did.

(SINCLAIR checks inside the room. He's relieved; the coast is clear.)

CASSIE "Amnesty for boxes?"

SINCLAIR Let's focus on the big picture. We need to stop that juicer!

(SINCLAIR shoves the suitcases into the upstairs bedroom.)

CASSIE I'd kill for a juice right now.

SINCLAIR *(Re: The bedroom.)* Why don't you get yourself settled? Maybe a little rest?

CASSIE I am rather...weary.

(He helps her to the bedroom door.)

SINCLAIR You poor thing.

CASSIE Oh, Sin, you've always been so *kind* to me.

SINCLAIR What are agents for?

CASSIE *(At the door.)* Sinclair?

SINCLAIR Yes?

CASSIE I'm conscious that, with you, my Canadian agent, I haven't really been, you know...

SINCLAIR In touch?

CASSIE *(A gesture – 'correct'.)* ...much lately. And I haven't called or even emailed much in the last few, you know...

SINCLAIR Years?

CASSIE *(A gesture – 'correct'.)* ...but success, movies, *Hollywood* it's just this whirlwind, you get caught up in it, and so I guess I'm really trying to say, you know...

SINCLAIR You're welcome.

(At this point, SINCLAIR is holding open the door to the upstairs balcony while CASSIE is still at the bedroom door.)

SINCLAIR *(Re: his cell phone.)* Phone calls!

(CASSIE goes into her bedroom and slams the door at the same time that SINCLAIR shuts his – then immediately and sneakily he comes back in, closing the door quietly behind him.)

SINCLAIR *(Whispering, in the direction of the downstairs bedroom.)* Girl! Psst! Vanessa!

(SINCLAIR delicately negotiates the first step down; he is barely able to see it. It takes a painful amount of time. As he does this...)

SINCLAIR *(Whispering.)* Call off Van! Do you hear me? No Van! Call off –

(Enter NESSA through the front door, dressed as a man.)

NESSA *(Manly, loud voice.)* Hey what's up people?!

(SINCLAIR is startled and almost falls down the stairs, saving himself only by grabbing on to the railing)

NESSA Anybody here?

CASSIE *(Off.)* Sinclair?

NESSA Hello?

CASSIE *(Off.)* Was that you?

(Panicked now, SINCLAIR rushes to the upstairs bedroom door to stop it being opened. Just as he arrives, however, CASSIE flings it open, smashing the door right into his face. He is stunned.)

CASSIE Oh, Sin!

(SINCLAIR staggers around the landing in a daze.)

CASSIE What were you thinking?

SINCLAIR Fine! Totally fine.

(He almost collapses. CASSIE catches him and guides him towards the balcony door.)

CASSIE You're not fine. You need some fresh air...

(CASSIE and SINCLAIR exit to the upstairs balcony. NESSA comes in further, perplexed. CASSIE then re-enters and notices NESSA for the first time.)

(CASSIE screams.)

(NESSA screams – it is quite girly. Immediately, she corrects herself and screams in a more manly way.)

CASSIE Who are you?

NESSA Van!

CASSIE You're name's Van?

NESSA Totally!

CASSIE What are you, Dutch?

NESSA Canadian, ma'am!

CASSIE Those clothes...?

NESSA What about them?

CASSIE They belong – *belonged* – to someone else.

NESSA Oh. Really?

CASSIE *(Suspicious.)* Where did you get them?

NESSA Thrift store!

CASSIE Hmm. *(Decides to buy it.)* And you're here because...?

NESSA Mr. Chatham called me.

CASSIE Did he now?

NESSA Yes, ma'am. Said you were writing a script or something?

CASSIE Ah.

NESSA And that you could use some...assistance.

CASSIE I see.

NESSA So here I am.

CASSIE I'm afraid you've been mis-informed.

NESSA What?

CASSIE He was wrong. Sinclair. Mr. Chatham.

NESSA Oh.

CASSIE Yes.

NESSA It's just...

CASSIE What?

NESSA The money. I could really use the work.

CASSIE *(Softening a bit.)* Well...I'm not here to write so, I'm sorry, but I don't need...
assistance.

NESSA So, why *are* you here?

CASSIE Oh. Well. It's a holiday resort – sort of – so I guess I'm here to holiday.

NESSA Alone?

CASSIE Yes.

NESSA That sounds lonely.

CASSIE Well...

NESSA Nobody likes to be lonely.

CASSIE *(Her defences melting away.)* No, they don't.

NESSA I know this part of the world like the back of my hand. I could give you a hand to be less...lonely.

CASSIE Could you?

NESSA Let me assist you.

CASSIE Oh, Van.

NESSA If you want me?

CASSIE I have to confess something.

NESSA Okay?

CASSIE I *am* here for work.

NESSA Writing?

CASSIE It's more along the lines of public relations.

NESSA Okay!

CASSIE The work requires sensitivity.

NESSA I can be sensitive.

CASSIE The work requires discretion.

NESSA Discretion assured.

CASSIE The work requires loyalty.

NESSA I serve only you.

CASSIE Oh my.

NESSA Am I hired?

CASSIE Oh, screw it...why they hell not?

(They shake hands; CASSIE hangs on a little too long)

NESSA I don't wanna be too blunt but how do I get paid?

CASSIE That *is* too blunt, *(Continues.)*

NESSA Still.

CASSIE but that's just you, isn't it?

NESSA Sorry?

CASSIE Blunt.

NESSA I don't –

CASSIE Coarse.

NESSA Sure?

CASSIE Unvarnished. You speak your mind, don't you?

NESSA That's what guys do!

CASSIE That's what Tim did.

NESSA So...money?

CASSIE I don't carry money.

NESSA Just like the Queen.

CASSIE Exactly.

NESSA It's just I need to be paid now.

CASSIE Well unless you take credit card...?

NESSA A cheque will do!

CASSIE Talk to Sinclair.

(The sound of banging on the outside door.)

JARRED *(Off.)* Hello?

(CASSIE freezes in terror.)

NESSA Cassandra?

CASSIE *(Quiet.)* Who's that?

(More banging.)

JARRED *(Off.)* Hello?

NESSA Probably from the wedding.

JARRED *(Off.)* Is Cassandra Lawes here?

NESSA Or not.

JARRED *(Off.)* Hello?

CASSIE *(Quiet.)* It's him!

NESSA Who?

JARRED *(Off.)* Hello?

(SINCLAIR opens the balcony door; he's clearly still dazed.)

SINCLAIR Hello?

JARRED *(Off.)* May I come in?

SINCLAIR *(To JARRED.)* Yes!

NESSA *(Confused.)* Yes?

CASSIE *(To SINCLAIR.)* No!

NESSA *(Confused.)* No?

JARRED *(Off.)* Great!

SINCLAIR *(To CASSIE.)* No?

CASSIE *(To SINCLAIR.)* No!

(Enter JARRED. He wears a blue denim-y shirt with the collar buttoned up.)

SINCLAIR *(To JARRED.)* Stop!

(JARRED freezes by the door, so that he is unseen from the landing)

JARRED Oh!

CASSIE *(To SINCLAIR.)* Get rid of him!

SINCLAIR *(Pointing to NESSA.)* Him?

CASSIE *(Pointing downstairs.)* Him!

SINCLAIR *(Looks at NESSA. Squints.)* Come on, kid.

NESSA Oh!

SINCLAIR You heard the lady!

(SINCLAIR advances on NESSA. Panicked and trapped, NESSA opens the door to the linen cupboard and slips inside.)

SINCLAIR *(Rattling the linen cupboard door handle.)* That's not gonna help!

CASSIE *(Guiding him away.)* Sinclair! Sinclair, stop!

JARRED Cassandra?

CASSIE *(Quietly.)* Downstairs. Get rid of *him*.

JARRED Cassandra, it's me!

SINCLAIR *(Pointing down.)* Him?

CASSIE Yes.

JARRED Hello?

SINCLAIR *(Ready for the challenge.)* Got it.

(SINCLAIR straightens his back and sets off just as NESSA flings open the door to the linen cupboard. SINCLAIR smacks right into the door and knocks himself out.)

NESSA Oh!

CASSIE Sin!

NESSA Sorry!

JARRED *(Still frozen.)* Is everyone okay?

CASSIE *(Checking on SINCLAIR.)* He's out cold.

JARRED Cassandra?

(CASSIE starts dragging SINCLAIR towards her bedroom.)

CASSIE Van! *(Re: Jarred.)* He has a video. Get it.

NESSA Okay?

JARRED Cassandra, I'm coming in.

NESSA A video?

CASSIE If you get it, I'll double your pay! I'll *triple* it!

(NESSA jumps into action and heads to the front door.)

(CASSIE drags SINCLAIR into her bedroom and slams the door just as JARRED makes up his mind to advance further into the cabin.)

NESSA *(To JARRED as she comes downstairs.)* Excuse me, this is private property.

JARRED Oh, hey, sorry. Where's Cassie?

NESSA And you are...?

JARRED Jarred?

NESSA Well, Jarred, this is my home. Mine and my Grandmother's. You can't just walk in on two women uninvited.

JARRED So Cassie *is* here?

NESSA I never said that.

JARRED 'Two women.'

NESSA Yes, my Grandmother and... *(She remembers she is supposed to be a man.)* Oh!

JARRED Who?

NESSA My cousin.

JARRED I heard Cassie though?

NESSA And what do you want with her?

JARRED I want to save her.

NESSA You want to what?

JARRED Save her. She's lost, dude.

NESSA Lost how?

JARRED Have you heard of Architecureism?

NESSA Architecture?

JARRED - *ism*. No? Okay, so like, the first thing to say is it's not a cult. It's a system.

NESSA For what?

JARRED Building a better you.

NESSA So you're an architect?

JARRED Architecturist.

NESSA And that's going to save her?

JARRED It saved me. When I moved to LA I was so stressed, man. I was so hung up on the whole Hollywood thing. Running between auditions, working three separate jobs, parties and for what? I had no time to do the things I loved. No time for movies. No time for theatre. No time for –

NESSA Balls.

(All of this strikes a chord with NESSA who is now hanging on JARRED'S words.)

JARRED What?

NESSA Oh. Balls. That's what, we um, call sports up here in Canada. Anything that's not on the ice, it's balls, balls, balls.

JARRED Weird.

NESSA That's Canada!

JARRED Do *you* play with balls?

NESSA No time for that!

JARRED Listen man, if you really want balls, you have to a build your house around those balls. That's Architectureism.

NESSA I see.

JARRED I don't think you do, man. Seriously, it changed my life. Growing up, I thought I wanted this big mansion, with all these rooms filled with Oscars and crowds of adoring fans. But when I finally I saw my ground plan, my *true* ground plan? It wasn't a mansion. It was barely a shack. *(He gestures around.)* Simple, rustic. That's the house I was meant to live in.

NESSA *(Gestures around.)* Your ground plan sounds like this, right here.

JARRED This is kinda what I imagined.

NESSA *(She's smitten.)* So you could live here?

JARRED I'd love to! But that's never gonna happen. There's no way a Plumber gets re-located.

NESSA You're a plumber?

JARRED At the moment.

NESSA Great. We have this problem with our septic tank, maybe you –

JARRED Oh! Not an *actual* plumber. A Plumber. It's one of the rungs. Of Architecturesim.

NESSA Oh...?

JARRED The truth is I'm trying to become a Carpenter? And one day – who knows? – maybe I'll become –

NESSA An Architect?

JARRED There is only one Architect. But in time, with hard work, I hope I can become a Realtor.

NESSA Why would you want that?

JARRED Oh, when you're a Realtor you're standing at the top of Architecturism's ladder. You have the best job. You head up a Firm. Everybody loves a Realtor!

NESSA That's not been my experience.

JARRED But I'm getting ahead of myself. First, Carpenter. And for that, I need The Canadian.

NESSA The Canadian?

JARRED You know, Casssandra Lawes. That's what the Architectureists have been calling her. Since she's, you know...

NESSA Canadian.

JARRED They freaked when I told them. Because, you know, to become a Carpenter you only need a D-list celebrity. But Cassandra Lawes! She was nominated for an Oscar! She's A-list!

NESSA Well C-list, because –

JARRED There's a ceiling. But for a *writer* –

NESSA A-list.

NESSA & JARRED

B-list, minimum.

(NESSA sighs, enamoured.)

JARRED *(Oblivious.)* You get where I'm coming from, man.

NESSA So, wait, you need Cassandra Lawes because...?

JARRED I can't recruit people! That's why I've been stuck as a Plumber so long. I mean, Architecturism is awesome, I know it's awesome, but explaining its awesomeness is, like, hard or whatever?

NESSA Right?

JARRED But if I'm going to be a Carpenter, I need to do it. My Foreman will never elevate me unless I can recruit.

NESSA Your Foreman?

JARRED They're like the best part of Aritecturism? A Foreman is like...is like a friend, a family member. Like a really strict distant relative. He cares about you. Guides you. Asks you questions. Reads all your emails and tells you who to be friends with. Tells you what to say. Takes most of your paycheque. Makes you call regularly to check in –

NESSA But it's not a cult?

JARRED See, man, *you* get it! It's awesome. This is why I need to level-up.

NESSA Why you need to recruit.

JARRED As my Foreman says, I need to be firmer, tougher, harder. 'To lift planks of wood, you need to be strong.' And so, to be a Carpenter, you have to do what's difficult. You have to sign people up, even if they don't think they want to join. Then I met Cassandra and it all seemed so easy.

NESSA Because?

JARRED She was so into it.

NESSA Or into you.

JARRED *(He takes out a portfolio from his bag, almost identical to the one presented by Fortune earlier. This is Portfolio B. On the front it also says, 'The Canadian'.)* And she even did the video. But I guess she was just too sleepy to finish it.

NESSA Wait – the video?

JARRED Yea. The video? *(He opens the portfolio to show a memory stick above an official looking document.)* Every new recruit makes a video. A public declaration. It's called, 'Breaking Ground.' Goes on the website.

NESSA And that's Cassandra's?

JARRED This is gonna make me a Carpenter.

NESSA I see.

(NESSA casually moves to the glass of water left by CASSIE earlier.)

JARRED *(Removing the memory stick so he can look at it.)* Of course, this video is nothing without a signed declaration.

NESSA *(Not really paying attention.)* Uh huh.

JARRED Which Cassie couldn't manage.

NESSA Uh huh.

JARRED She was super sleepy.

NESSA Uh huh.

JARRED I think it was all the *gezundheid* she was drinking.

NESSA What's that?

JARRED It's German.

NESSA You don't say.

JARRED At one point she just fell asleep, right in her chair. So I thought, 'Awww, I'll come back tomorrow morning.' Which was yesterday.

NESSA Right?

JARRED But it turns out she had this trip to Canada planned and somehow forgot to tell me. Fortunately, my Foreman found out where she was going and –

(NESSA pours the glass of water all over JARRED.)

NESSA Whoops!

JARRED Whoa!

NESSA Your video!

(NESSA lifts the portfolio out of JARRED'S hands.)

JARRED Dude!

NESSA Just slipped out of my hands!

JARRED My shirt! *(Reminding himself.)* You know what? It's just like the Architecturists say:
"We cannot stop the rain, we can only clear the drains."

NESSA How...very...true. There's the bathroom.

JARRED Awesome.

(JARRED exits to the bathroom.)

(NESSA, clutching the portfolio, hurries upstairs to the bedroom. She knocks.)

CASSIE *(Off.)* Yes?

NESSA *(As herself.)* It's me.

CASSIE Van?

NESSA *(Remembering she's meant to be a man.)* Yes.

(CASSIE opens the bedroom door.)

CASSIE Well?

NESSA *(Holding up the portfolio.)* I got it!

CASSIE 'The Canadian?'

(CASSIE snatches the portfolio, opens it and looks inside.)

CASSIE This isn't a video.

NESSA It's on the memory stick. *(Sees it isn't there.)* Oh!

CASSIE Get the video!

NESSA He said the declaration is everything.

CASSIE GET. THE. VIDEO!

(CASSIE slams the door just as JARRED re-enters holding a towel emblazoned with the face of a famous Canadian, such as Celine Dion, Justin Trudeau or Margaret Atwood.)

JARRED Dude?

NESSA Yes?

JARRED *(Dabbing at his crotch.)* Where should I put this towel?

NESSA Anywhere but there.

JARRED Huh?

NESSA Just hang it up.

JARRED *(As he hangs up the towel.)* Hey, are you sure Cassandra's not here?

NESSA Maybe you should come back later.

JARRED Because I'm pretty sure that's her rental out there.

NESSA We have a wedding today.

JARRED Yea, I saw the pit with all those hot rocks!

NESSA That's for the pig roast.

JARRED Nice!

NESSA Not really. There's *so* much to do.

JARRED Looks that way.

NESSA How about you head into town and leave me to it, eh? There's a great café, very West Coast.

JARRED 'Fraid not. Foreman said I can't leave without that signature.

NESSA Of course he did.

JARRED I could help you out while I wait!

NESSA Help how?

JARRED We could bury the pork together?

NESSA Maybe another time?

JARRED I need to call my Foreman anyway. *(He gets out his phone.)*

NESSA The balcony, then! It has reception!

JARRED Awesome. *(Beat.)* And?

NESSA And?

JARRED *(Re: Portfolio B.)* Can I get that back?

(NESSA smiles and hands JARRED the portfolio. He takes the memory stick out of his pocket and puts it back in its resting place in the portfolio. JARRED then heads upstairs.)

JARRED Oh and dude? What's your name?

NESSA Vaness – Van.

JARRED *(Unsure.)* Vanessvan. *(Approvingly.)* Vanessvan. Namaste.

(JARRED exits to the balcony. As soon as the door slams CASSIE slips out of the upstairs bedroom and makes her way downstairs.)

NESSA No!

CASSIE I can't spend one more minute under the same roof as that fraud!

NESSA He's actually rather sweet – I mean, cool!

CASSIE You have no idea.

NESSA He said he can't do anything with 'The Canadian' unless you sign.

CASSIE *(Gesturing around her, confused.)* The Canadian?

NESSA No *you're* the Canadian. Your video, they call it The Canadian, *(Continues.)*

CASSIE "They?!"

NESSA but don't worry, they can't post it online or make it public, *(Continues.)*

CASSIE "Make it *public*?!"

NESSA until you sign some document.

CASSIE Who is 'they'? How many people are involved in this?

NESSA I actually don't know how big their network is *(Continues.)*

CASSIE Network?!?

NESSA but Jarred seems like an honest guy, so you don't have to worry!

CASSIE Oh my poor, Van. Do you really believe 'they' won't do anything with that video?

NESSA Why wouldn't I believe it?

CASSIE Because the world is *filth*. The world is filth, people are dirt and I should know because I'm dirt too.

NESSA No!

CASSIE But you...you're clean, aren't you?

NESSA Sure?

CASSIE Innocent.

NESSA Yes?

CASSIE Pure.

NESSA Um...?

(CASSIE starts advancing on NESSA but is stopped when she hears...)

JARRED *(Off.)* Dude?

NESSA *(Calling)* Yes?

(CASSIE panics and hides somewhere just as JARRED re-enters.)

JARRED Phone's dead. Anywhere I could grab some juice?

(CASSIE, off, sobs.)

NESSA Kitchen!

JARRED Awesome.

(JARRED comes downstairs and exits into the kitchen. CASSIE makes for the door but is blocked by NESSA.)

NESSA You can't go yet!

CASSIE He'll see me!

NESSA I need to be paid!

CASSIE You get paid when I get that video!

NESSA Done! *(Calling)* Jarred!

(CASSIE dives for cover.)

JARRED *(Re-entering.)* Vanessvan?

NESSA You know what? Phone signal here is *terrible*.

JARRED Oh?

NESSA But there's one spot you can be plugged in *and* get signal. Let me show you!

JARRED Thanks man!

NESSA And I'd love to hear more about Architecture...

JARRED ...ism.

NESSA Right.

(NESSA and JARRED exit into the kitchen. CASSIE, now alone, seems at a bit of a loss. Should she wait? No. She makes up her mind to just get out of there when...)

FORTUNE *(Off.)* Ms. Elling? Ms. Elling?

(CASSIE panics, abandons her plan and rushes for the stairs but she trips on 'the thing'. She flips over the sofa and lands in a seated position within reach of whatever clothing she was wearing earlier to make herself incognito.)

FORTUNE *(Appearing at the door.)* It really is a striking piece of land, Ms. Elling. May I come back in?

(CASSIE grabs her sunglasses, hat, etc. and covers herself up.)

FORTUNE *(Squinting through the screen.)* Ms. Elling?

CASSIE There's no Ms. Elling here!

FORTUNE Nice try! First there's no Karole – with a 'K', now there's no –

CASSIE Go away!

FORTUNE *(Entering the cabin.)* Unless...unless that's you? You're her? Your name's spelt with a 'K', right?

CASSIE *(Unable to stop herself.)* A 'C' actually.

FORTUNE A 'C'!

CASSIE I didn't say that.

FORTUNE I see!

CASSIE You see?

FORTUNE C.

CASSIE See what?

FORTUNE It's with a C.

CASSIE Okay?

FORTUNE *No* K?

CASSIE What?

FORTUNE (*Re: Nessa.*) She's clever, mis-spelling your name to throw me off.

CASSIE Who?

FORTUNE Ms. Elling.

CASSIE Mis-spelling?

FORTUNE Ms. *Elling*.

CASSIE I see.

FORTUNE (*Pointing to CASSIE.*) Not K!

CASSIE Okay?

FORTUNE Miss Elling's mis-spelling of C – not K – I now see, okay?

CASSIE *What?*

FORTUNE I know who you are!

CASSIE You do?

FORTUNE Oh yes!

CASSIE Who am I?

FORTUNE The person I need to talk to.

CASSIE And why's that?

FORTUNE Because you're the star of the show! You *are* The Canadian!

CASSIE And what do you know about that?

FORTUNE I know that you need to sell it.

CASSIE Sell it?!

FORTUNE Of course!

CASSIE I don't understand?

FORTUNE Isn't it obvious? You're sitting on a very hot asset here.

CASSIE *Excuse* me?!

FORTUNE My clients have been trying for years to get their hands on this.

CASSIE Oh, really!

FORTUNE But it looked like you were only ever going to give it to a younger generation.

CASSIE How dare you!

FORTUNE Which is why they hired me.

CASSIE So you're behind all this!

FORTUNE I am.

CASSIE You should be ashamed.

FORTUNE No need for that, ma'am.

CASSIE Pah!

FORTUNE I admit, I am putting you between a rock and a particularly hard place.

CASSIE You're disgusting!

FORTUNE Call me names if it makes you feel better, I don't mind. But time is running out.

CASSIE For what?

FORTUNE The auction.

CASSIE The *au*ction?!

FORTUNE Of The Canadian.

CASSIE The Canadian is *me*!

FORTUNE I'm sure it feels that way.

CASSIE My *body*.

FORTUNE And your heart and your soul and all those weeds! Listen to me. I'm your neighbour. I'm extending a hand and the fact of the matter is you have one choice: do you want to make a lot of money on the sale of 'your body' or do you want to end up with nothing? Because whatever you decide, things are getting erected.

(She slaps him.)

FORTUNE I'm saying I can give you a good plough!

(She slaps him.)

FORTUNE Sometimes we all need a hoe!

(She slaps him again.)

(NESSA slips out of the kitchen.)

NESSA What is all this noise? *(Seeing FORTUNE.)* Oh!

FORTUNE Hello, I'm...I'm...

(He sees NESSA properly, dressed up as a man. As soon as he does he starts shaking and vibrating, almost as if he is having some kind of seizure.)

FORTUNE Not again....?!

CASSIE Again?

FORTUNE I'm being jolted!

NESSA Jolted?

FORTUNE *(Pointing towards NESSA's clothes.)* I...I...I...

CASSIE Jolted?

FORTUNE You...those...they're...T-T-T-T-T!

(FORTUNE is completely overwhelmed and falls, unconscious, onto the sofa.)

NESSA Well that was...something.

CASSIE *(Discarding her disguise.)* Van, I could kiss you.

JARRED *(Off.)* Hey, what's going on?

(JARRED attempts to open the kitchen swing door but NESSA slams it back.)

JARRED *(Off.)* Ow!

NESSA *(To CASSIE.)* Hide!

(CASSIE hides. NESSA opens the kitchen door for JARRED.)

NESSA The door! It jams sometimes!

JARRED Did I hear Cassie?

NESSA *(Indicating FORTUNE.)* Maybe it was him?

JARRED Who's he?

(Over the following, NESSA navigates JARRED away from the kitchen door so CASSIE can crawl there from her hiding spot.)

NESSA He's...my...uncle!

JARRED Your cousin's dad?

NESSA What?

JARRED Your girl cousin? Who lives here with your Grandmother?

NESSA Sure! Why not?

JARRED What's wrong with him?

NESSA Exhausted. Work.

JARRED What's he do?

NESSA Labour. Manual. He works with...bricks...?

JARRED A bricklayer?

NESSA Yes?

JARRED *(Solemn.)* Bricklayer is an imporant rung in Architectureism.

NESSA You know who would *love* to hear about Architectureism? My cousin.

(By now, CASSIE has made it into the kitchen.)

JARRED Oh yea?

NESSA Definitely. I think she'd really like you.

JARRED Cool.

NESSA In fact, I'm pretty certain.

JARRED Sweet.

NESSA I think it's fair to say you're pretty much exactly what she's looking for.

JARRED Too bad she lives out here, huh?

NESSA And you probably have a girlfriend.

JARRED Nah, dude.

NESSA But you're so cute...is what my cousin would say.

JARRED Women in Los Angeles? They want ambitious men. So...

NESSA Want me to get her? Because I can go get her.

JARRED Your cousin?

NESSA I'll go get her.

JARRED Thanks for the hook up, man. *(He taps the portfolio.)* But I'm focussed. I'm so close to being a Carpenter I can taste the saw dust. And, hey, you got work to do so I'll just go back to the kitchen.

(He goes to the kitchen door.)

NESSA *(Loud.)* You're going to the kitchen?

JARRED Yea man.

(JARRED pushes the door but it is slammed back from the other side.)

NESSA The door. It jams sometimes.

JARRED Huh.

(JARRED lines himself up to slam into the door.)

NESSA Why don't we go up to the balcony?

JARRED Why would we do that?

NESSA So you can *see* my cousin.

JARRED Why?

NESSA To see if she's...attractive? To you?

JARRED I shouldn't get distracted.

(JARRED runs at the door and slams into it, but it doesn't budge.)

JARRED Oof.

CASSIE *(Off.)* Oof.

JARRED Who said that?

NESSA Me! Oof, I said, that must've hurt.

JARRED It's really jammed.

NESSA Well there we are, nothing we can do. Balcony?

JARRED Yea but I need my phone. My Foreman.

NESSA You head on up and I'll try the door. Sometimes these things need a woman's touch.

JARRED Huh?

NESSA A woman's touch...which I've learned how to do from...*living* with women.

JARRED And your uncle.

NESSA Who?

JARRED Right there.

NESSA Yes? *Yes!* He's quite feminine.

JARRED The bricklayer?

NESSA You go on outside, Jarred, and *I'll* get your phone and *then* if you keep your eyes peeled you might just see the love of your life!

JARRED Vanessvan, are you okay?

NESSA *(Manic.)* Totally!

JARRED Because you're acting –

NESSA *(Forceful.)* OUTSIDE!

(JARRED shrugs and goes out to the balcony.)

NESSA *(To CASSIE through the door.)* He's gone!

(CASSIE falls through the door.)

CASSIE Oof.

(CASSIE crawls to the sofa but seeing FORTUNE still on it unconscious, she simply props herself against the edge.)

NESSA Are you okay?

CASSIE Now that Jarred's off the premises.

NESSA He's not off the premises. He's on the balcony.

CASSIE Do you have the video?

NESSA He needs his phone.

CASSIE And...?

NESSA *(As she goes into the kitchen and comes back with JARRED'S phone.)* He has to call his Foreman.

CASSIE You're my assistant, not his!

(NESSA runs up to the balcony door.)

NESSA *(To CASSIE.)* Hide!

(CASSIE hides.)

NESSA *(To JARRED.)* Hey Jarred, dude...buddy...got your phone!

(NESSA opens the door and flings the phone to JARRED.)

JARRED *(Off.)* Careful!

(NESSA closes the door and props it closed with the chair in the hallway.)

NESSA *(To JARRED, calling.)* Now you stay out there! And watch out for my cousin!

JARRED *(Off.)* What's her name?

NESSA Nessa!

JARRED *(Off.)* Weird.

(NESSA runs downstairs.)

NESSA *(To CASSIE.)* I told you to hide!

CASSIE I am hiding!

NESSA You're in the middle of the room! Back to the kitchen!

CASSIE *(Whining.)* But I got hurt in there!

NESSA *(Shrugs.)* Where else then?

(CASSIE feebly looks at all the other options and mentally rules them out one by one. Defeated, she goes to the kitchen.)

NESSA Next time you see me, I'll have your video!

(Exit CASSIE.)

(NESSA quickly goes to the downstairs bedroom, exits and shuts the door...just as the door to the upstairs bedroom opens and SINCLAIR re-enters. He is groggy and still recovering from his injuries. He pauses for a moment, noticing the quiet in the cabin.)

SINCLAIR *(Quiet.)* Cassie?

(SINCLAIR suddenly becomes aware of the pain in his head. What's that? He goes to push the glasses up on his face. Where are they?)

SINCLAIR Cassie?

JARRED *(Off.)* Cassie?

(The balcony door rattles against the chair.)

JARRED *(Off.)* Hey! Open this door!

(SINCLAIR moves along to the balcony door towards the voice, eventually noticing the chair propping it closed. Why's that there? What's going on here?)

(As SINCLAIR is asking these questions to himself, FORTUNE stirs and begins to regain consciousness.)

(SINCLAIR removes the chair blocking the balcony door and puts it back where it was. Gingerly he makes his way to the top of the stairs.)

JARRED *(Flinging open the door and entering)* Did somebody say Cassie?

(SINCLAIR is startled and collapses in a mess of arms and legs down the stairs.)

JARRED Dude!

(JARRED goes to the stairs to help but he too trips and goes tumbling down. At the bottom SINCLAIR hits 'the thing' on the floor, flips and lands on the sofa in the space just vacated by the now upright FORTUNE. JARRED follows SINCLAIR and trips on 'the thing', flips and lands in the remaining sofa space. The three men are all now sitting in a neat row looking slightly stunned.)

JARRED, SINCLAIR & FORTUNE

(To each other.) There's a thing. In the floor.

(Meanwhile NESSA has re-entered, this time dressed as a girl. She sees the men on the sofa and screams. At the same time CASSIE has exited the kitchen but seeing who's on the sofa, she quickly goes back in, unseen by anyone.)

NESSA Hello...gentlemen.

FORTUNE Oh good!

SINCLAIR Oh no.

JARRED Oh...Nessa?

NESSA And you must be Jarred?

JARRED *(He's attracted to her.)* Yes!

SINCLAIR *(To NESSA.)* You're not supposed to be here. *(He gestures to the other two men.)* Nobody's supposed to be here.

FORTUNE No, it's perfect. *(He holds out Portfolio A.)* You can talk some sense into your Grandmother.

NESSA She's not here, Mr. Wells.

FORTUNE I just spoke to her.

NESSA She's been at the hospital all afternoon.

FORTUNE No she hasn't.

SINCLAIR Does anyone have a spare pair of glasses?

FORTUNE Her and I spoke in this room – what time is it? - ten minutes ago.

NESSA That wasn't her.

FORTUNE She slapped me.

NESSA Maybe it was!

FORTUNE A well-spoken woman.

NESSA Maybe not.

FORTUNE Hat, sunglasses.

SINCLAIR Sounds like Cassie.

JARRED Cassie?

SINCLAIR Cassandra Lawes, yes. She's a client of mine, you know.

JARRED So Cassie *is* here!

SINCLAIR Not her real name of course.

NESSA (*To JARRED.*) I'm here too!

SINCLAIR Her real name's Rosalie / Schmidt.

JARRED (*To NESSA.*) Yea but you're not The Canadian!

SINCLAIR (*Noticing JARRED properly.*) Is that a denim-y shirt....?

NESSA (*Hurt.*) I'm a Canadian...?

SINCLAIR (*To JARRED.*) A denim-y shirt buttoned up all the way?

FORTUNE (*Holds out his hand; it is shaking.*) More jolts!

JARRED (*To SINCLAIR, re his shirt.*) Each button represents a wrung.

FORTUNE Doesn't anyone else feel that? I'm being electrocuted!

(*FORTUNE gets up and goes upstairs.*)

SINCLAIR (*To NESSA.*) You, I know. But who are the rest of you? And where's Van?

JARRED Who's Van?

NESSA My cousin.

JARRED *Vanessvan?*

SINCLAIR *(To JARRED.)* And you are?

JARRED *(Holds out his hand.)* Jarred.

SINCLAIR *(Attacks JARRED.)* I thought so, you little twerp!

JARRED Whoa!

FORTUNE *(A hint of annoyance.)* Enough! Vanessvan, Van, Jarred, Nessa, Cassie, whoever – the fact of the matter is that none of those names matter. The only name I need on this contract is Karole – with a C – Elling.

NESSA It's actually with a K.

FORTUNE *Whatever!* The fact of the matter is if Karole, however it's spelt, if she doesn't sign, I *will* take this entire plot of land and you, young lady, will be destitute and homeless. *(He gets out his phone; someone's trying to call him.)* That's the auctioneer. *(To NESSA.)* Whatever happens next, is all down to you. And *that* is the fact of the matter.

(FORTUNE puts his phone to his ear and exits out to the balcony. As he goes:)

FORTUNE Danielle!

JARRED *(To SINCLAIR.)* Where's Cassie?

SINCLAIR I think she's out there too.

(JARRED hurries up the stairs, followed by SINCLAIR. JARRED stops by the door.)

JARRED Hold up. Last time I went out there somebody blocked that door.

SINCLAIR It wasn't me.

JARRED I'm not falling for that again. *(He goes to the upstairs bedroom.)* Cassie!

(JARRED exits to the upstairs bedroom. In one graceful motion SINCLAIR picks up the chair and jams it under the handle to the upstairs bedroom door, trapping it shut. Pleased with himself, SINCLAIR goes back along the landing only for FORTUNE to fling open the balcony door. It smacks SINCLAIR in the face and he falls on the ground in a crumpled heap, unconscious.)

FORTUNE *(Re: his cell phone.)* She's taking coffee orders. Anyone? *(He notices that only NESSA is still there or conscious.)* Ms. Elling?

NESSA *(Crestfallen; repeating JARRED'S words.)* I'm not The Canadian.

FORTUNE I'll take that as a no.

(FORTUNE exits back to the balcony...just as KAROLE enters from the front door. She wears dark sunglasses and walks with some uncertainty.)

KAROLE Guess who's not dead?

NESSA Grandma!

KAROLE Correct.

NESSA You're here!

KAROLE Also correct.

NESSA But you...you're blind?

KAROLE Three for three, Nessa, you're on a roll. Now, what did I miss?

(Blackout.)

(Interval.)