

LOVING LUENELL

PILOT DRAFT

by

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LOVING LUENELL: "PILOT"

COLD OPEN

EST. RUNWAY TARMAC - DAY

A 747 THUNDERS OVER HEAD AS ITS LANDING GEAR TOUCHES DOWN.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY
(LUENELL, FLIGHT ATTENDANT)

LUENELL, ROLLING HER BEDAZZLED CARRY-ON BAG WITH ONE HAND,
HAS CELL PHONE TO HER EAR IN THE OTHER. SHE'S MID-MESSAGE...

LUENELL
(HEATED)

And I'm tired of getting this stupid
voicemail --

A COUPLE ADORING FANS APPROACH, SHE DOES A 180, COVERS THE
PHONE AND GIVES A LITTLE FACE TIME.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

I'll take the pic with you.

LUENELL STOPS TO POSE. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT PASSES...

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(WHISPERS) Oh, I loved you in that one
movie. What was it? You were
hilarious.

LUENELL
(SUPER SWEET)

Thank you...

(BAM, BACK TO PHONE, HEATED)

...and both of my bank cards were
declined last night. So now, just add
identity theft to the list of things
that went wrong this trip, MARVIN!

A LIMO DRIVER STANDS HOLDING A PLACARD THAT READS "LUENELL
ATKINS." SEVERAL PAPARAZZI POP UP AND BEGIN SNAPPING AND
SHOUTING AT HER. LUENELL JUST CONTINUES ON THE PHONE.

THE LIMO DRIVER LOOKS AT HER AS IF HE WANTS TO SAY SOMETHING.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

And then--
(LOOKS AT DRIVER)

And then--
(LOOKS AT DRIVER, FINALLY)

What? I'm on the phone! (INTO PHONE)
Now the damn limo driver is acting a
fool. Hit me back, Marvin, this is
like the third time I've called you!

LUENELL HANGS UP. TURNS HER ATTENTION TO THE LIMO DRIVER.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Now...what is your problem?

CUT TO:

INT. LIMO - A FEW MINUTES LATER
(LUENELL, LIMO DRIVER, BRI'ANDRE)

LUENELL IS IN THE BACK OF THE LIMO, PISSED OFF.

LUENELL
(HOT)

If I knew what was wrong with the card
we wouldn't be having this
conversation. I said you'll get your
money when we get to the condo! Dang!
You've picked me up before. Acting
all brand new...

LIMO DRIVER

Well, what's my name then?

LUENELL'S MOUTH IS AGAPE. DAMNED IF SHE EVER KNEW IT.

LUENELL

Um...

LIMO DRIVER

Never mind...

LUENELL

You know you can keep that tone.
(PISSSED) Oh, wait I know what your
name is. It's Driver! So drive,
Driver!

LUENELL'S CELL RINGS. SHE ANSWERS IT.

LUENELL (CONT'D)
(ATTITUDE)

What?

INTERCUT WITH:

BRI'ANDRE, LUENELL'S ASSISTANT/MANNY, THE OPPOSITE OF
COMPOSURE.

BRI'ANDRE

Lu, it's Bri! I've got some bad news,
girl. Are you sitting down?

LUENELL

I'm in the damn limo, Bri'Andre! (HIS
SOBS ERUPT FROM THE PHONE) Please have
your hissy fit when you're off the
clock. Just spit it out!

LUENELL LISTENS, HER FACE DROPS REACTING TO THE NEWS.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONDO BUILDING - LATER

(LUENELL, DANIELLE, BRI'ANDRE, CHARLIE, OPERATOR)

THE LIMO PULLS TO THE CURB. THE DOOR OPENS, LUENELL STAGGERS
OUT, LEANING ON THE CAR FOR SUPPORT.

LUENELL

Omigod...omigod...omigod!

ANGLE ON - THE FRONT OF A CONDO COMPLEX, WHERE ALL OF LU'S
BELONGINGS ARE STACKED UP. IN THE BUILDING DOORWAY STANDS

BRI'ANDRE WITH DANIELLE, LU'S 11 YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER. DANIELLE LOOKS, FRANKLY, MORE COMPOSED THAN ONE WOULD EXPECT.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Danielle!

SHE HUGS HER DAUGHTER TIGHTLY.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Are you okay, baby?

DANIELLE

Yes, Mom. I think someone needs a hug more than me.

LUENELL LOOKS AT BRI'ANDRE HYPERVENTILATING INTO A PAPER BAG, ROLLS HER EYES AND GIVES HIM A HUG INSTEAD.

BRI'ANDRE

See? I told you it was bad! I don't think I can take another hit today!

LUENELL

Bri'... I need you to break the driver off a "c-note", plus tip.

SHE POPS HIS PAPER BAG. BRI'ANDRE DISSOLVES INTO TEARS AS HE GOES. LU AND DANIELLE STAND SURROUNDED BY THEIR THINGS.

HER CELL RINGS AGAIN. LUENELL ANSWERS IT.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

What?!

INTERCUT WITH:

CHARLIE, LUENELL'S FATHER, DRIVING, TALKING VIA BLUETOOTH.

CHARLIE

Luenell? It's Charlie. Your father.

LUENELL

(SURPRISED) Charlie?! What do YOU want?

CHARLIE

Well, another million would be nice,
but a penny don't mean a thing without
your health--

LUENELL

Charlie! What. Do. You. Want?

CHARLIE

Well, I know it's been a while since I
seen you last.

LUENELL

How about a year.

CHARLIE

I know, I know. It just so happens
that I have your belated birthday
present in the car with me, so...

LUENELL

My birthday was seven months ago,
fool. That's not belated, that's
forgotten. (BEAT) Look I can't deal
with you right now. I'm in the middle
of something.

CHARLIE

You need some help?

LUENELL

From you?! (DEFIANT) HA! Look, I
told you I'm right in the middl--

BEEP-BEEP TONE.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

"We're sorry...your phone service has
been disconnected due to non-payment.
Please contact our billing department
at..."

LUENELL GROWLS AT THE PHONE AND YELLS AT IT JUST AS A LATE
MODEL ESCALADE ARRIVES. THE DOOR OPENS, OUT POPS CHARLIE,
MID TO LATE 60S, SPRY AND FIT. HE WEARS A GOLD FLECKED TRACK
SUIT. HE SEES THE MESS OF HER BELONGINGS.

CHARLIE

You sure are in the middle of
something.

LUENELL'S ANGER MORPHS INTO EMBARRASSMENT. WE PULL OUT WIDE
ON LUENELL IN THE CENTER OF THIS CHAOTIC MESS.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE, SCENE 1EXT. - CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

(DANIELLE, LUENELL, CHARLIE, BARBARA)

DANIELLE AND LUENELL ARE STANDING BENEATH THE ARCHED ENTRANCE TO CHARLIE'S OPULENT MEDITERRANEAN STYLED HANCOCK PARK MANSION. DANIELLE'S EYES ARE BUGGING OUT OF HER HEAD. LUENELL RINGS THE DOORBELL.

DANIELLE

Whoa... Your dad lives here?

LUENELL

(HO-HUM)

Um-hmmm.

DANIELLE

Here here?

LUENELL

Yup.

DANIELLE

WHOA!

LUENELL SHOOTS DANIELLE AN ANNOYED LOOK.

LUENELL

Slow that roll, Dani. You ain't Orphan Annie and grandpa Charlie damn sure ain't Daddy Warbucks.

JUST THEN, THE DOOR OPENS. IT'S CHARLIE, NOW DRESSED IN A SILK ROBE AND PAJAMAS. LU LOOKS HIM UP AND DOWN.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

The Black Hugh Hefner - now that's another story.

CHARLIE'S ALL SMILES.

CHARLIE

Welcome, ladies.

HE GIVES DANIELLE A WARM HUG, THEN USHERS HER INTO THE HOUSE. HE AND LUENELL THEN STAND OFF, UNSURE OF HOW TO GREET EACH

OTHER. HE FINALLY STICKS OUT HIS HAND. LUENELL SHAKES IT TENTATIVELY. THE TWO ENTER THE HOUSE. LUENELL IS STILL TRIPPING OFF CHARLIE'S ATTIRE.

LUENELL

Are we taking you away from the grotto, Hef?

CHARLIE

Oh, that's funny.

DANIELLE STEPS INSIDE.

DANIELLE

Your house is beautiful, uh... uh...

CHARLIE

"Granddad."

DANIELLE

(TO LUENELL) How come you've never let me come over before now? This is awesome!

LUENELL

Don't get used to this, sweetie. We'll be back up and running in a few days!

JUST THEN...

BARBARA (O.S.)

You're here!

LUENELL AND DANIELLE REACT TO THE VOICE. JUST THEN, BARBARA ENTERS FRAME IN A TIGHT DRESS, A WHITE, 40 SOMETHING "MILF" CLINGING DESPERATELY TO HER 30S.

LUENELL

(ROLLS HER EYES) Uup, here we go...

BARBARA TARGETS DANIELLE FIRST, GIVING HER A BIG HUG.

BARBARA

You must be Danielle. I'm Barbara.

DANIELLE AND LUENELL SHARE A LOOK.

DANIELLE

Oh. Hi... Grandma Barbara!

SUDDENLY, ALL THE COLOR DRAINS FROM BARBARA'S FACE. SHE PULLS OUT OF THE HUG, HER FACE CONTORTING LIKE CRAZY.

BARBARA
("COMPOSED")

Sweetie...those two words NEVER go together. EVER. You can call me "Bee."

DANIELLE

Sorry... Bee?

SHE GIVES DANIELLE ANOTHER HUG. THEN SHE REGARDS LUENELL. THEY FACE OFF WARILY.

BARBARA

Luenell.

LUENELL

Barbara.

BARBARA

Welcome. Our house is your house.

LUENELL

Don't you mean...(INDICATING CHARLIE)
his house is my house?

BARBARA AND LUENELL EXCHANGE TENSE LOOKS, THEN LUENELL SUDDENLY BREAKS INTO A FAUX SMILE. BARBARA LAUGHS NERVOUSLY.

BARBARA

Hoo...you ARE funny! (QUICKLY TO CHARLIE) Don't you, um, two have something to discuss.

LUENELL LOOKS QUIZZICALLY AT BARBARA, THEN CHARLIE. A SLIGHT

BEAD OF SWEAT FORMS ON HIS HEAD.

CHARLIE

Yes, um...Luenell, I...I...I'm very,
very, VERY happy that you and Danielle
are staying here, with family.

HE ABRUPTLY TURNS TO LEAVE. BARBARA GRABS HIS ARM.

BARBARA

And...?

CHARLIE

Oh yeah...as a matter of fact, there
is something else...

JUST THEN, A LOUD "BING" IS HEARD.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

My Yak Milk Smoothie is ready!

CHARLIE TURNS TO LEAVE.

LUENELL

Hold up...your what-what smoothie is
ready?

CHARLIE

Tibetan Yak. I'm on a...cleanse, and
it's helping my constitution. Excuse
me, ladies.

CHARLIE FINALLY EXITS. LUENELL SNIFFS THE AIR.

LUENELL

Yak? So that's what I've been
smelling up in here?

BARBARA

Oh honey THAT smell is nothing. Wait
'til AFTER he drinks it.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(BEAT) Why don't you follow me
upstairs and settle in?

BARBARA WIGGLES OUT OF FRAME. LUENELL AND DANIELLE GRAB
THEIR BAGS.

DANIELLE

Mom...Grandma Barbara's dress...how
does she fit into it?

LUENELL

I'm thinking Crisco.

THEY ROLL THEIR BAGS OUT OF FRAME, AS WE...

CUT TO:

ACT ONE, SCENE 2INT. LUENELL'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

(BARBARA, LUENELL, DANIELLE, KAT)

BARBARA LEADS LUENELL INTO LU'S ROOM WHICH IS DECKED OUT AND GORGEOUS. EVEN LU HAS TO PAUSE.

BARBARA

And this is your room.

LUENELL

Damn, this is almost as big as my whole condo-- (CATCHES HERSELF) guest bedroom. (THEN) Is that a 52 inch Sony LCD 3D? (SOTTO) Don't get used to this, Lu.

BARBARA COMES OVER AND TAKES LUENELL'S BAGS.

BARBARA

Here, let me help you with those.

AS SHE DOES, SHE GIVES LUENELL A GOOD LOOKING OVER. LUENELL FEELS BARBARA'S STARES AND TRIES TO IGNORE THEM, BUT THEN...

LUENELL

Can I help you?

BARBARA

Oh, no. (SMILES, SHOWS THE OTHER DOOR)
This is your bathroom. Careful, the jets in the spa tub can be a little... intense. If you know what I mean.

LUENELL PEEKS IN. IT'S THE BOMB. LU REMAINS COMPOSED.

LUENELL

Spa Master 3000 with oscillating jet heads? (AGAIN TO HERSELF) Ooo girl, don't get used to this.

BARBARA STANDS BEHIND LUENELL ONCE AGAIN LOOKING HER OVER. BARBARA IS SO INVOLVED IN HER "INSPECTION" SHE DOESN'T

REALIZE LUENELL IS NOW LOOKING BACK AT HER LIKE SHE'S CRAZY. JUST THEN, BARBARA REACHES OUT AND SQUEEZES LUENELL'S ARM AS IF SHE'S ABOUT TO PURCHASE A NEW SOFA. LUENELL SNATCHES AWAY.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Alright, cool it Ellen! Don't let the short haircut fool ya. I don't roll like that.

BARBARA

So Luenell, how much green would you say is in your daily diet?

LUENELL

Say what?!

BARBARA

You know vegetables. Any history of high blood pressure or diabetes?

LUENELL

Are you smokin' someth--

JUST THEN, DANIELLE BURSTS INTO THE ROOM.

DANIELLE

Mom, you should see my room. It's bigger than our whole--

LUENELL

Guest bedroom. I was just telling Barbara. Don't worry. We'll be back home as soon as I talk to Marvin and straighten this out. (PULLS OUT PHONE)
This is ridiculous. (DIALS)

DANIELLE

But mom, your phone is turned--

LUENELL SHOOTS UP A HUSH FINGER. EYES BARBARA AND MAKES A SHOW OF DIALING. SHE LOOKS AT THE PHONE AND HOLDS IT AT

DIFFERENT ANGLES PRETENDING TO SEARCH FOR RECEPTION.

LUENELL

Big ass mansion like this and a sister
can't get her five bars. I need a
landline.

KAT, BARBARA AND CHARLIE'S 13 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER -- SPUNKY,
PRIVILEGED BI-RACIAL PRINCESS AND FULL OF PEP -- POPS IN
YAKING IN HER IPHONE EARBUDS WHILE TEXTING AT THE SAME TIME.

KAT

(IN THE PHONE) No she was the one that
tweeted my boots my were so hot. ... I
just texted you that ... duh.

BARBARA PULLS OFF KAT'S EARBUDS.

BARBARA

Kat. We have house guests. This is
Luenell, you're sis-- Charlie's older
daughter. And this is her daughter
Danielle. They're staying for a
little while.

LUENELL

"Little" being the key word.

BARBARA

(TO KAT) Can you say hello, please?

KAT

("WHATEVER") Hello. (TO BARBARA) Mom,
I gotta go to the M, M and M. (OFF HER
CONFUSED LOOK) Midnight Moon Madness.
(MORE CONFUSION) It's this crazy cool
Rave party that--

BARBARA

No.

KAT

Out near Joshua Tree--

BARBARA

No.

KAT

Amber Mulkowitz's older sister can
drive us.

BARBARA

Oh, in that case...Hell to the no!

LUENELL

Uhh, Gilmore Girls. Can I please have
a moment to get myself situated?

BARBARA

Oh, no worries. There's a phone in
the kitchen. Situate away!

THEY ALL LEAVE. LU PLOPS ON THE BED IN EXHAUSTION AND
CONFUSION. SHE NOTICES THE PLUSH FEELING OF THE LINEN. SHE
TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT THE PILLOW.

LUENELL

I didn't even know Dolce and Gabbana
made sheets. (OFF THE TAG) Twelve
hundred thread count Egyptian cotton?
Ooo, call me Cleopatra! (SHE JUMPS UP)
Lu, don't get used to this. (BEAT,
SLINKS BACK FOR ANOTHER FEEL) Dang,
I'm already used to this!

CUT TO:

ACT ONE, SCENE 3INT. KITCHEN - DAY

(LUENELL, BRI'ANDRE, CHARLIE, BARBARA, BARBIE)

LUENELL IS TALKING ON A LANDLINE CORDLESS PHONE. HOLDING HER CELL IN HER OTHER HAND.

LUENELL

I've never even played any of those clubs. How can they be suing me?

INTERCUT WITH:

BRI'ANDRE SCRAMBLES AROUND A SMALL OFFICE.

BRI'ANDRE

All I know is you getting served left and right... and not in a good way.

LUENELL

What's the latest on my accounts?

(SILENCE) Bri'Andre? I asked you a question.

BRI'ANDRE

My momma taught me if that you don't have anything good to say...

LUENELL

(HORRIFIED) My Bank of America?

BRI'ANDRE

Nuh-uhn.

LUENELL

Wells Fargo?

BRI'ANDRE

Wells No-Go.

LUENELL

What about my little secret kitty
account at City National?

BRI'ANDRE

That cat's out the bag, Lu.

LUENELL

How the hell you let this happen,
Bri'Andre?!

BRI'ANDRE

Me?! Surely you trip.

LUENELL

Look, the deal was Marvin books the
gigs, pays the bills and I tell the
jokes. What was you doing?!

BRI'ANDRE

Taking care of you! Making sure
Danielle got to school on time.
Making your hair and nail
appointments. Trying to track down
Double X Christmas print, peppermint
drawers. No easy feat, mind you.

LUENELL

What you trying to say?!

BRI'ANDRE

I'm saying I love ya Lu, but this is
on you, mama! Bottom line, you gave
Marvin too much control!

LUENELL

Well, I still have control of one
thing!

CLICK. SHE HANGS UP ON HIM. SHE LOOKS UP TO FIND BOTH
BARBARA AND CHARLIE STANDING THERE.

CHARLIE

You seem... stressed.

LUENELL

You think?

CHARLIE GOES TO THE FRIDGE GRABS A LARGE BOTTLE OF GREY
LIQUID.

CHARLIE

Stress is terrible for the body's
immune system. (OFFERS THE BOTTLE AND
GLASS) Here, try my imported Tibetan
Yak milk.

LUENELL

Only "yak" I need right now is some
"cognac." No thank you.

CHARLIE

Rejuvenates the body--

LUENELL

Really, no.

CHARLIE

Refreshes the mind and--

PUTS IT IN HER FACE. LUENELL IS ALMOST OVERCOME BY THE
STENCH AND SNATCHES IT FROM HIM.

LUENELL

And pukes your guts! Eewww.

SHE POURS THE BOTTLE DOWN THE SINK.

CHARLIE

No!! LU?! (VERGE OF TEARS) I get that shipped here privately... through Canada... with my hook up in customs. I won't get my next order for at least two weeks.

BARBARA

Charlie, you're really gonna cry over spilt milk? Seriously? Isn't there something you need to talk to Luenell about?

CHARLIE

(SAD, RE: MILK) I need a moment.

LUENELL

You need therapy. And some air freshener.

LUENELL EXITS, LEAVING HER CELL PHONE ON THE COUNTER.

BARBARA

When are you going to talk to her? The doctors are saying you're going to need a kidney. Luenell is your best and possibly only shot at a match.

CHARLIE

Bee, I've seen the woman maybe 3 times in the last 5 years. You can't just spring that on somebody. (BEAT) It HAS been nice having her and Danielle around, though. Don't you think?

LUENELL STARTS BACK IN LOOKING FOR HER PHONE, BUT THEIR NEXT WORDS CAUSE HER TO HALT AND EAVESDROP.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I can see Danielle being a good influence on Kat. I love my Kat, but the way she acts sometimes I swear I see a pole in her future. Danielle staying here could be a good thing don't you think?

BARBARA

Charlie, focus. We need to make Luenell an offer. Pay her if we have to.

LUENELL LEANS BACK HIDING OUT OF EARSHOT.

LUENELL

Them, they, ... Pay me for Danielle?

LUENELL POPS HER HEAD BACK INSIDE TO LISTEN.

CHARLIE

You don't think she'll see it as asking for too much?

BARBARA

You see her life style. (CHUCKLES) In a lot ways you are providing a healthier environment.

LUENELL BURSTS IN THE DOOR.

LUENELL

I KNEW you were up to something! Don't hear from you for ages, then boom!

CHARLIE

Lu, I didn't want you to see it that way. I know it's a lot to consider. (SINCERE) I just figured at the end of the day we're family.

LUENELL
(CALMING DOWN)

We're family, but...

BARBIE

You'll consider it then?

LUENELL

I might consider something temporary.

CHARLIE & BARBARA

Temporary?

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Yeah, like for a month in the summer or something.

CHARLIE

A month?!--

BARBARA

In the summer?!--

CHARLIE

Lu, that won't work. There is no giving back. This is forever.

LUENELL

You must be out your damn mind!

BARBIE

Luenell, we're willing to pay good money. Make it worth your while.

LUENELL

You people are depraved.

CHARLIE

I'd provide the utmost of care.

LUENELL

You trying to say I'm unfit?

CHARLIE

I wouldn't say unfit. (THEN) Just maybe not the healthiest--

LUENELL

Nu-uhn! (LOSING IT) Hell naw. Take my career! Take my money, my house, my car, my phone, my everything, but there is no way! You're talking about my heart!

BARBIE

So much drama. Nobody's asking for your heart. Just a kidney.

LUENELL

A KIDNEY?! Wait, you mean you're not trying to take Danielle?

CHARLIE & BARBARA

Danielle?!

CHARLIE

Hell no. (BEAT) I'm waiting on some final tests, but it looks like I need a kidney, Lu.

LUENELL STANDS THERE, STUNNED, CONFUSED, CRAZED AND DAZED.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOACT TWO, SCENE 1

EXT. "JOKES-N-JAVA" COFFEEHOUSE - DAY
(Luenell, Willie)

LUENELL IS OUTSIDE THE "JOKES-N-JAVA" COFFEEHOUSE. SHE'S BANGING ON THE FRONT DOOR.

LUENELL
(LOUD)

Willie, open up. It's Lu! (BANGS SOME MORE) Willie Latrell Armitage, come to this door, or it's gonna get real ugly out here!

WILLIE (O.S.)

The ship already sailed on that one!

LU GIVES THE DOOR ANOTHER COUPLE OF BANGS. JUST THEN, THE DOOR OPENS. WILLIE, A SLIGHTLY OVERWEIGHT BROTHER, APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

Ease up on the door, Lu! You know you can't afford to fix the damn thing if it breaks!

WILLIE GRABS LU'S ARM AND QUICKLY PULLS HER INSIDE, AS IF HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE SEEN WITH HER OUTSIDE. HE QUICKLY SLAMS THE DOOR CLOSED. INSIDE, THE J-N-J IS SET UP LIKE A NORMAL COFFEEHOUSE, BUT WITH POSTERS OF COMEDIANS LINING THE WALLS.

LUENELL

Willie have you seen, Marvin? I've been trying to--

WILLIE LOOKS SIDE TO SIDE, PARANOID.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

What's with you? Why you all jumpy?

WILLIE

I told you not to come down here, Lu!
You coulda been...followed!

LUENELL

Followed? By who?

WILLIE

Who do you think? By them!

LUENELL

Guess that explains that. (BEAT) What
the hell are you talking about?

WILLIE

The Club Bosses. They're straight up
worse than the Mob, Lu! And you're on
their hit list for real!

LUENELL

I'mma hit you upside your head if you
don't tell me what the hell you
talking about. Where is Marvin?

WILLIE

Lu, Marvin is in the wind.

OFF HER CONFUSION WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE 2INT. KITCHEN - DAY

(Charlie, Barbara)

CHARLIE'S IN THE KITCHEN, PACING AROUND FRANTICALLY SEARCHING THROUGH THE CABINETS.

CHARLIE

There's got to be some in here.

JUST THEN, CHARLIE QUICKLY CROSSES OVER TO THE REFRIGERATOR.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Wait a minute... (OPENS THE DOOR) I
might have an old batch of yak in the
BACK of the fridge... Ah! What's this?

CHARLIE PULLS OUT A CLEAR PLASTIC BOWL WITH A CONGEALED,
JELLIED SUBSTANCE INSIDE OF IT. HE SMELLS IT, MAKES A FACE.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Ugh! Smells like meat-flavored jello.

This must be it!

CHARLIE PLACES THE BOWL ON THE TABLE GINGERLY, THEN CROSSES
OVER TO THE DRAWER TO GET A FORK. JUST THEN, BARBARA ENTERS
THE KITCHEN, WORRY ETCHED ON HER FACE.

BARBARA

Seen Luenell today? Have you talked
to her?

CHARLIE

She's out again and her phone is still
disconnected.

BARBARA

She's been ducking us for three
days...I was hoping she would have
come with us to the doctor's this
morning.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

(NOTICES CHARLIE WITH THE FORK) What
are you doing?

CHARLIE

Good news, Bee...I think I found an
old batch of yak milk!

BARBARA CROSSES OVER, PICKS UP THE BOWL, SMELLS IT. FROWNS.

BARBARA

Charlie, this is leftover gravy from
the roast beef I made a month ago!

SHE PUTS THE BOWL DOWN. HE DROPS THE FORK.

CHARLIE

I haven't had my cleanse in 3 days!
I'm e-mailing my import guy again.
You keep looking in the fridge...I saw
something moving in another bowl! That
could be it!

CUT TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE 3INT. JOKES-N-JAVA
(WILLIE, LUENELL)

LUENELL STANDS THERE STUNNED.

WILLIE

You really don't know just how bad
Marvin messed up your program, do you?
He was double-booking you and getting
cash advances all across the country.
Remember two weeks ago, you were at
Rib Ticklers in Memphis?

LUENELL

Hell yeah! I killed it that night.
Still sucking that barbecue sauce off
my nails.

WILLIE

Well, at the same time you were
killing there, you no-showed at the
Laff Warehouse in Hotlanta!

LUENELL

What? I didn't even know I was booked
there!

WILLIE

That's the point, Lu! Marvin did you
dirty like that all over the country.
And now you're black listed!

LUENELL

What?

WILLIE

I can't headline you, Lu. None of us
can.

LU STANDS THERE STUNNED ALMOST SPEECHLESS AS THE TRUTH OF
SITUATION REALLY SINKS IN. SLOWLY...

LUENELL

I can't believe, Marvin would do me
like-- (EXPLODES) Damn, damn, damn!

WILLIE

Calm down, Florida. I see you're in a
spot, Lu. Let me make some calls,
check some traps. Where you gonna be
later on?

LUENELL

I gotta do something, but then it's
back to the beach house with Black Hef
and Malibu Barbie.

WILLIE

Huh?

LU WAVES A "NEVERMIND."

WILLIE (CONT'D)

(SOFTENS) Seriously, Lu... Give me
until tomorrow. I'll come up with
something.

LUENELL GIVES HIM A NOD, LOOKS AROUND THE SHOP AND STARTS
TAKING BAGS OF COFFEE AND DANISHES AND STUFFING THEM INTO HER
OWN TOTE BAG.

WILLIE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

LUENELL

This is my down payment on
"something"!

WILLIE STANDS HELPLESS TO STOP LU FROM GETTING HER GOODIES
ON. AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE 4INT. CHARLIE'S HOUSE - DAY

(CHARLIE, BARBARA, DR. MERK, LUENELL)

BARBARA HAS HER PURSE AND HOLDS THE DOOR FOR CHARLIE WHO SLUMPS TOWARD THE DOOR.

CHARLIE

Re-test? They've poked me, pricked me, peed me all out. What's next, leeches? (BEAT, SERIOUS) What if this is it for me, Bee? I've had more luck in the music business than any one man should have. Look at all this. Maybe my luck is used up.

BARBARA

This family needs you. I need you. Whether Lu decides to help or not, we're gonna get you what you need and you're gonna make it.

HE COMES AND GIVES A GENTLE KISS.

CHARLIE

Bee, I love you. You been the vanilla icing on my wonderful chocolate cake of life. (THEN, STRONG) You know what, if this is it for me, I'm cool with that. If I get the call and it's my time, well, it's been a helluva run. There's nothing to fear but--

PHONE RINGS.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Oh Lord, I didn't mean it.

BARBARA CHECKS THE CALLER ID.

BARBARA

It's Dr. Merk.

CHARLIE

Sweet Jesus, don't take me now. I'm
not ready!

SHE ANSWERS.

BARBARA

Dr. Merk?

SPLIT SCREEN WITH DR. MERK, ASIAN 50S, AT HIS OFFICE DESK.

DR. MERK

Yes, Mrs. Atkins. I'm calling about
your husband's test results.

BARBARA

Yes, Doctor. We're on our way for the
retest now.

DR. MERK

Well this is a shot in the dark but it
might save you a trip. Your husband's
elevated C-1 and VH-5 enzyme levels
are indications of imminent kidney
failure. But an assistant in our
pathology lab had an interesting
theory. VH-5 enzymes are sometimes
found in rare alimentary products
or nutriments. Usually in Capra
hircus in high altitude, low oxygen
environments.

BARBARA

Uhhh, in English, maybe?

DR. MERK

(CHUCKLES) Sorry. Your husband hasn't been consuming milk or cheese from Himalayan goats or anything?

BARBARA SHOOTS CHARLIE A LOOK, WHO IS DISTRAUGHT, PACING, MUMBLING IN HIS OWN WORLD.

BARBARA

No. (PISSSED) He's drinking yak milk from Tibet.

DR. MERK

Ding. Ding. We have a winner.

DR. MERK'S SPLIT SCREEN ENDS. BARBARA WRAPS UP THE CALL.

BARBARA

Yes. Ok. I'll be sure to tell him.

SHE HANGS UP THE PHONE.

CHARLIE

Give it to me straight, Bee. How much time do I have left?

BARBARA

Enough time for me to kick your ass, and the idiot that sold you that stupid Yak milk.

CHARLIE

Huh?

BARBARA

That milk had some enzyme that was giving all your test results false positives. Ever since Lu threw it away and you stopped drinking it, your

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

body's been going back to normal.

Charlie, you're fine. (THEN) At least
until you next boneheaded health kick.

CHARLIE LETS OUT A WHOOP AND THEY EMBRACE, JUMPING WITH JOY.
AS THE TWO BOUNCE AROUND, LUENELL ENTERS.

LUENELL

Give me a barf bag already...

CHARLIE

(ECSTATIC) LU!! Guess what?!!

LUENELL

Before you start, I just want you both
to know Danielle and I are leaving.
My friend Willie has hooked us up with
an apartment. It's just off M.L.K.--

CHARLIE

Lu...

LUENELL

And it may not be all plush with D&G
sheets and jet spa tubs, in fact it
only has one bathroom, that Danielle
and I will share...with the rest of
the apartments on the floor. And the
strippers from the "Hump-N-Thump" club
downstairs are really sweet. Now, we
might have to sneak in the back way on
Wednesdays and Fridays, but damn it,
it's ours! (BEAT) So thank you for
your hospitality, but we out!

SHE BEGINS TO STORM OFF. THEN SHE TURNS TO FACE CHARLIE.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Maybe you'll check in on me again in
another year or so.

SHE LEAVES FOR HER ROOM. CHARLIE IS UNSURE WHAT TO DO WITH
HIS FEELINGS.

BARBARA

Wow. That was different.

CHARLIE LEAVES FOR HIS ROOM. PHONE RINGS. BARBARA ANSWERS,
ANOTHER SPLIT SCREEN WITH DR, MERK.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Dr. Merk?

DR. MERK

Yes, I forgot. You can tell Ms.
Atkins for future reference she is a
match.

BARBARA

What?

DR. MERK

Charlie's daughter. Ms. Luenell
Atkins. She came down yesterday to be
tested and left this contact number.

BARBARA

Oh, well, uh... I'll be certain to
tell her. Thank you for calling.

SHE HANGS UP AND PAUSES A MOMENT TRYING TO TAKE IT ALL IN.

ACT TWO, SCENE 5
(LUENELL, DANIELLE)

LUENELL IS PACKING UP HER THINGS. DANIELLE COMES TO THE DOOR GLUM, WATCHING HER MOM A MOMENT. LU SPOTS HER.

LUENELL

Hey baby. You packed already? That was quick.

DANIELLE

I've had practice.

LU TAKES THAT IN. SHE TURNS TO HER.

LUENELL

Baby, it's just a rough patch. We been through it before. Something always comes through.

DANIELLE

(NODS, LOOKS AROUND) I thought something kinda did.

LUENELL

Danielle, we got to do our thing. Be in a place that's all ours. (BEAT) Except that bathroom situation. Come on, baby. We'll get back to us, you and me, as a family.

DANIELLE

What about Charlie and Kat and Barbara? Aren't they family?

LUENELL

Yeah, the kind you disown. (BEAT) Why don't you go have one last looksee in your room.

(MORE)

LUENELL (CONT'D)

I'll be finished here in a minute.

LU STROKES DANIELLE'S HAIR. DANIELLE NODS AND LEAVES. LU FLOPS BACK ON THE BED CONFLICTED. AFTER A MOMENT, SHE SLOWLY RUNS HER HANDS ALONG THE COVERS.

LUENELL (CONT'D)

Oh, D&G. We had some good times
together, didn't we?

ON THIS, WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWO, SCENE 6INT. KITCHEN - DAY
(BARBARA, CHARLIE)

BARBARA ENTERS TO FIND CHARLIE AT THE COUNTER ABOUT TO DRINK
A GLASS OF MILK.

BARBARA

You going for heart failure now?

CHARLIE

Easy. It's just regular skim.

BARBARA

Charlie, they're leaving. You really
need to talk to her.

CHARLIE

And say what to her? That me and her
momma barely had a "thing"? I never
denied I was her father, but I know...
I know I was nowhere close to being a
daddy. Where do you start with
something like that?

BARBARA

You start by thanking her for saving
your life. Twice.

HE LOOKS CONFUSED.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The first time pouring out that damn
yak juice that almost cost you a major
organ. And the second time, going
down to get tested.

CHARLIE

Tested?

BARBARA

She matched. She was willing to give
you a kidney.

CHARLIE TAKES A BEAT AND HEADS INTO...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS
(CHARLIE, LUENELL, BARBARA)

CHARLIE ENTERS. LUENELL HEADS TO THE DOOR WITH HER BAGS.

CHARLIE

Luenell, wait. You can't do this.

LUENELL

Save it, Charlie. We're out. (THEN)
And if you're sweating your kidney--

CHARLIE

I know what you did, Lu. (STRUGGLES) I
don't know what to say...

URNS TO BARBARA FOR HELP.

BARBARA

How about starting with you don't need
the kidney. (TO LUENELL) Charlie's
actually gonna be fine.

CHARLIE

But what I do need is for you and
Danielle to stay here.

BEAT.

LUENELL

Congrats on the kidney. But us
staying here? No such luck, Chuck.

DANIELLE AND KAT EMERGE WITH HER BAGS AND WATCH THE OTHERS.

CHARLIE

Lu, you're grown and you can do what you want. But Danielle ain't moving to some rack-n-shack flop house next to the "Thump-n-Hump". She's staying with family.

LUENELL

I'm not going anywhere without my daughter!

CHARLIE

Then that settles that. You stay too.

CHARLIE REACHES DOWN AND GRABS LU'S BAG. IT FLOPS OPEN REVEALING IT IS COMPLETELY EMPTY. EVERYONE STOPS A MOMENT. DANIELLE TURNS TO KAT AND BEAMS WITH EXCITEMENT AND RELIEF AT THE DEVELOPMENTS. LU REACHES DOWN, GRABS HER EMPTY BAG WITH DIGNITY.

LUENELL

(ATTITUDE) I'll give it a month.

(THEN) Anyone needs me, I'll be in my room. Come on, Dani.

LU STRUTS OUT, DANIELLE FOLLOWS. DANIELLE MAKES A QUICK REVERSE TO HUG CHARLIE AND BARBARA AND FOLLOWS HER MOM OUT. CHARLIE AND BARBARA SHARE A SMILE. AFTER A MOMENT, FROM THE FAR ROOM WE HEAR...

LUENELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Where the 3D glasses for the TV?!!

END OF SHOW