“DETAINEE”

A PLAY BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 90 MINUTES

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SYNOPSIS – DETAINEE

*Detainee* is a play about a decision — whether or not to torture a US citizen.

Lindsey is a middle-aged college professor who drives a middle-aged van and lives in a middle-aged house. She’s a middle-aged Mom with a middle-aged husband. She also has middle-aged problems, mostly stemming from her wayward teenage daughter, with whom she has a strained relationship.

Outside of home, Lindsey has another problem. The United States is reeling from a string of domestic bomb threats which disrupt daily life. But when the threats turn real, and the first bomb explodes, Lindsey is asked to return to her former identity. And ultimately Lindsey must choose between allegiance to country and the sanctity of her home.

*Detainee* explores the point at which society accepts torture to assure civic safety. When the state devises a political instrument to disarm violent situations, what happens to the basis of authority?

At the core of *Detainee* is a story which delves into the psychology of one woman balancing devotion to family against devotion to society.

CHARACTERS (3F, 2M)

LINDSEY, 40s

WENDELL, 40s, her husband

PUMP, 16, their daughter

CASE, 40s

DETAINEE, early 20s, female

TIME

Tomorrow.

PLACE

Washington, D.C.
SCENES

Act I. The Bombing.

Act II. Interrogation.

THE STAGE

The stage serves the action as one unbroken, interconnected playing area, such that changes in literary scenes do not require aesthetic alteration to provide a shifting sense of location.

To support this continuity, the cast remains on stage during the entirety of the play. Stage lights should function in such a way that illumination operates as its own inner stage. Characters are revealed by light, brought to full view when performing their scenes, and shrouded somewhat when they are not. Tacit characters are never fully offstage.

The only permanent fixture is ‘the room’ at center stage. Within the room are two kitchen chairs. The players, with the exception of Lindsey and the Detainee, never enter or cross through the room. Lindsey enters and exits the room where the border is made permeable and passable.

Otherwise, all stage properties are fluid and moved by actors as warranted.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

*Detainee* was first produced and received its world premiere during Nov 2014 at The Phoenix Theater in Minneapolis, MN as produced by Mission Theatre Company and as directed by Anneliese Stuht with the following cast: LINDSEY, Andrea Tonsfeldt; WENDELL, Rhett Romsaas; PUMP, Tess Rada; CASE, Robert Krueger; DETAINEE, Rebecca Wilson.

*Detainee* received its NYC premiere during July 2016 at the Fourth Street Theater as produced by Between Us Productions and as directed by Samantha Manas with the following cast: LINDSEY, Francesca Ferrara; WENDELL, Niceto Darcey Festin; PUMP, Angie Tennant; CASE, Galway McCullough; DETAINEE, Roxy Reynolds.
To my friend Kevin Graham

and all those who protect.

Thank you for making the tough decisions.

I hope they are the right ones.
“She had two full-time jobs. 

One for her family and one for her country.”

—Angie Houtz, September 6, 1974-September 11, 2001
ACT ONE. THE BOMBING.

SCENE 1.

LINDSEY and DETAINEE.

The stage is almost darkness. We see the faint outline and contour of ‘the room’ at center stage.

DETAINEE enters.

DETAINEE wears a loose-fitting orange prisoner jumpsuit. A black burlap covers the head. The face and body are indeterminate. Hands are bound behind the back.

DETAINEE stumbles, feet as the only sensory organ, tripping and buckling under the influence of force.

DETAINEE kneels, forward until forehead touches the ground.

We hear DETAINEE breathing, short, stertorous.

LINDSEY appears.

LINDSEY

Truth is never truthful.

It disorients. It hides.

Truth is its own kind of secret spell.

And the world’s great trick is knowing how to break it.

Lights shift.
SCENE 2.

LINDSEY and WENDELL and PUMP.

WENDELL appears, carrying a grocery bag.

As the scene unfolds, WENDELL removes from the grocery bag a bottle of red wine and two glasses.

WENDELL
C’mon, that’s not fair, I’m telling you.

LINDSEY
Yes, and you’re being evasive.

WENDELL
How am I being evasive?

LINDSEY
You laugh when you lie.

WENDELL
How am I laughing?

LINDSEY
Your eyes chuckle inwardly.

WENDELL
Fine…[resets, then begrudgingly]…William Rehnquist.

LINDSEY big laughs.

WENDELL
See, this is embarrassing.

LINDSEY
Really, for this I love you more than the day we got married.

WENDELL
You tried to bail on our wedding day.
LINDSEY
Please, you were saying something very revealing about you and…

WENDELL
William Rehnquist.

LINDSEY
Yes!

WENDELL
And we’re sort of…wrestling.

_LINDSEY bigger laughs, spitting up wine._

WENDELL
In the middle of a federally-protected rainforest. Wearing nothing but the flowing black robes of justice. With a thousand lions encircling us.

LINDSEY
Wrestling.

WENDELL
Olympic-style. And I’m winning because he’s, you know…

LINDSEY
Dead.

WENDELL
Will you stop?

LINDSEY
Wait: how do you know you’ve won?

WENDELL
Because you’re there doing brain tricks to weaken him.

LINDSEY
Damn straight. But not wearing black, I look terrible in black.

WENDELL
And after I defeat the ghost of Rehnquist, I’d hoist him over my shoulders and carry him for miles and miles, past mountains and valleys, past K street, past the shadow of the Monument, to atop the steps of the Capitol, with the lions trailing.
LINDSEY
Hhmmm. And that’s what you’d do if nominated for the Supreme Court.

WENDELL
I guess. I haven’t really thought about it.

LINDSEY
[Mocking] Gee, I haven’t really thought about it.

WENDELL
Lies.

LINDSEY
You don’t know how to tell if someone’s lying. You have to sit there for weeks listening to all that legal stuff.

WENDELL
Well trust me eyes-chuckle-inwardly when I say this would be the moment I’d commute all that raw, legally-charged sexual energy into laying you across our kitchen table.

LINDSEY
Really.

WENDELL
Yes, because most Supreme Court justices make love like an adjective. I make love like a verb.

LINDSEY
So glad I didn’t bail on our wedding.

WENDELL
[Advancing] And I would verb you across and possibly under our kitchen table, but…

LINDSEY
Pump declared a new house ban.

WENDELL
Anything oak.

LINDSEY
I can’t keep up with her anymore.
WENDELL
Something about logging destroying the rainforests.

LINDSEY
There’s no oak in rainforests, I’ve been there.

WENDELL
Whatever, as long as it’s not a ban on shapely legs, can we focus here?

LINDSEY
Our daughter, the teenage music concert crusader.

Beat.

WENDELL
It’s healthy.

LINDSEY
So’s eating off our kitchen table.

Beat.

WENDELL
Not to destroy the mood, but we should encourage her.

LINDSEY
I’m all for encouraging, I’m encouragement central.

WENDELL
Uh-huh.

LINDSEY
Except when it gets in the way of her graduating high school.

WENDELL
How about this—

LINDSEY
The judge, he mediates.

WENDELL
—Pump gets good grades on her midterms, we reward her.
LINDSEY
Define reward.

WENDELL
Getting her a car.

LINDSEY
I was thinking we let her sleep in our house and eat our food.

WENDELL
Whatever, can we get back to verb ing here?

LINDSEY
I’m serious, Wendell.

Beat.

WENDELL
Oh, c’mon. She’s exercising her conscience. Peacefully.

LINDSEY
It’s more than that and you know it. During one of last week’s however-many bomb threat cancellations I sat in high school pickup line for over an hour, trying to get Pump to answer her phone, to come to the car so I could get back to work, and one of the other Moms, also waiting in line, she sees me and yells over: that concert organizer of yours sure is one activist.

WENDELL
Yeah?

LINDSEY
That doesn’t worry you.

WENDELL
That other Moms don’t have good taste in music?

LINDSEY
That civic action is fine and good but there comes a point.

WENDELL
The point being freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and other freedoms I’ve spent my career trying to uphold.
LINDSEY

It’s dangerous now to be loud.

WENDELL

Because of the bomb threats.

LINDSEY

Yes.

WENDELL

Do you really think it’s more than just threats?

LINDSEY

No.

WENDELL

And hasn’t Pump been upfront about who she’s with and what she’s doing?

LINDSEY

To you.

PUMP appears, wearing headphones.

PUMP

Hey, Dad!

WENDELL

I’m thinking a used Prius.

PUMP

Is Mom home?

WENDELL

Yes, Mom’s home!

PUMP

Is she there?

LINDSEY

Yes, I’m here!

PUMP

Oh. Dad, I need forty dollars.
For what?

Dad, I need forty dollars.

Why do you need forty dollars?

For Perkins.

For yourself?

Dad, please?

Pump, can you come in here so I can see you?

That’s okay, I just need forty dollars from Dad.

Are you buying Perkins?

Dad, you’re so funny.

We don’t have secrets in this house, Pump.

If it was a secret I wouldn’t be asking.

What’s the money for?

Meeting for the concert.

You just had a concert.
PUMP
We’re protesting English as the official school language.

LINDSEY
Okay, but while that’s happening college admissions might be protesting your GPA.

WENDELL
Lindsey.

LINDSEY
How about instead of Operation Perkins you meet here? You talk music and then do homework on the floor where our kitchen table used to be.

WENDELL
Here’s forty dollars, Pump, thanks again for being so upfront and truthful with us.

LINDSEY
Ohhh-kay.

WENDELL taps his cell phone to PUMP’s cell, money exchanged.

PUMP
Cool, thanks Dad. Later-ator.

PUMP returns headphones to her ears, retreats to off.

LINDSEY
Be home at a reasonable hour! And try answering your phone for a change!

LINDSEY and WENDELL stare at each other.

WENDELL
Say it. Say it.

LINDSEY
Being loud makes you a target of the regime.

WENDELL
[Careful] I think the bomb threats are getting to you.
LINDSEY drains her wine glass.

LINDSEY

They’re getting to everyone.

Lights shift.

SCENE 3.

LINDSEY and CASE.

We see DETAINEE slither on the floor, trying to move.

LINDSEY

I was a math major. Scholarship.

Never drank, never went out much, except on weekends I earned extra carrying round cards at the local boxing club.

I was that girl, advanced and limited.

I’m not sure when I realized I had the talent.

Probably during one of those three minute increments, engulfed with advanced equations, taking truth from a messy set of variables, while the men and their fight raged around me.

I figured a job with the government. Standards & Technology. A desk.

I never figured the CIA.

Have you considered a thrilling career in espionage?

Sometimes these things find you.

CASE appears.

CASE

As-salaamu ‘alaykum.

LINDSEY stops, turns, sees CASE.
LINDSEY
‘Alaykum salaam.

CASE
Delta…nejdey resturaanuna shta?

LINDSEY
Nothing you’d like.

CASE
Looking good, Lindsey. Still got your curves.

LINDSEY
I don’t have curves, I have corners. I also have another lecture in ten minutes.

CASE
Can’t spare the other nine for an old war buddy?

LINDSEY
What are you doing here?

CASE
Funny, was about to ask you the same thing. Spy The Lie 101?

LINDSEY
They wouldn’t let me call it Intro to Mind Control.

CASE
Teaching trade or craft?

LINDSEY
Don’t worry, we don’t even get that far. I got a bunch of kids taking this class just to sleep off whatever they did the night before. They have no idea.

CASE
I’m impressed, really, you of all people with the patience to deal with this kind of place. Lame excuses, boring meetings.

LINDSEY
Sounds like Agency work. At least here I get summer vacations.

CASE
Where former spooks go to die.
Beat.

LINDSEY

Why are you here?

CASE

Well, that’s not the loving welcome I expected to receive.

LINDSEY

Welcome, why are you here?

CASE

Very sharp corners.

LINDSEY

There must be some reason you’d degrade yourself to go outside the Beltway.

CASE

You’re a good reason.

LINDSEY

Please. This wouldn’t have to do with you getting promoted, would it?

CASE

Keeping tabs, I see.

LINDSEY

Still keeping happy hour with the girls from CounterIntel. The CIA can keep all the secrets except its own, Deputy Director.

CASE

Yeah, well, don’t get excited just yet. It’s only a nomination. They’ve been wavying it in my face for years. The dirty worm dangled over the cesspool so long that even the fisherman cut bait.

LINDSEY

Pretty much what the girls from CounterIntel say. Except your wife, when she’s there, she sticks up for you. Number three?

CASE

I think she’s number three. You get on a losing streak, you stop counting.

LINDSEY

Look, this is a nice surprise, but seriously.
CASE
The school bomb threats. I’m here because of the school bomb threats.

LINDSEY
And you came to talk to me? After all these years.

CASE
Yes.

LINDSEY
If I thought it was any of my matriculates, trust me, I’d be the first anonymous tip. You know how many times I’ve had to rush out of here in the middle of lecture to pick up my daughter at high school? It’s become the great national pain-in-the-ass prank.

CASE
We have reason to believe the bomb threats are authentic.

LINDSEY
All threats are authentic, you know that.

CASE
We have someone.

Beat.

LINDSEY
We, the CIA?

CASE
Sort of.

Beat.

LINDSEY
In custody?

CASE
Can’t say.

LINDSEY
In the country?
CASE
Can’t say.

LINDSEY
Wait. Authentic as in putting an actual bomb in a school?

CASE
More like someone connected. Attached to the operator cell.

LINDSEY
There’s a cell.

CASE
I can’t say.

LINDSEY
First time you’ve talked to me in years, alone I might add, to tell me all these school bomb threats might be real and you can’t say who, how or where.

CASE
Or why.

Beat.

LINDSEY
Is it because of over there? Retaliation?

CASE
Part of my dangling over the cesspool has been to serve as point man on the Joint Terrorism Task Force. The FBI’s had open and ongoing investigations. There’s lists. Lots of lists. We’ve all been watching. Now I’m in a position to see names.

CASE hands LINDSEY a file.

CASE
I’m sure they won’t notice one name missing.

LINDSEY
This is Yankee White clearance.
CASE
This someone we’ve been tracking, this someone we now have in custody...it’s going to get ugly. But before it gets ugly, I thought it prudent to remove certain individuals from the realm of investigative interest who I’m sure aren’t a true threat to national security.

*LINDSEY opens the file, reacts.*

CASE
I’m here for an old war buddy. I’m sure you’d do the same for me. If it was my kid on a list. Da khaqay pa amaan, hm?

*Lights shift.*

**SCENE 4.**

*LINDSEY and WENDELL and PUMP.*

*PUMP appears, wearing headphones, grooving to tunes.*

LINDSEY
Pump. Honey. This is going to sound weird but I’d like you to miss school tomorrow. I’ll write a note or whatever excusing your absence. Day off tomorrow, okay? Maybe we’ll have some nice you-me time, we can do Mother-daughter things. Things that Mothers and daughters do. With each other. Pump? Did you hear what I said?

*WENDELL appears, carrying the grocery bag.*

WENDELL
Hel-lo, wife and child!

PUMP
YO, DAD!
WENDELL
Apparently yours truly has become a bit predictable. Before I even make it to the wine rack our little behind-the-counter friend goes ‘we’re out of that red stuff you guys like.’ You believe that? Kid’s barely past puberty and tracking our drinking habits. So I grabbed a sixer of the nastiest beer imaginable and told him I’d have the constabulary at his house by nightfall. Teach him to go out of stock. Anyway, cheers to bad beers. What’s for dinner?

LINDSEY
Nothing. Nothing happened today.

WENDELL
Okay.

PUMP
DAD, YOU GOTTA HEAR THIS NEW JAM, TOTALLY ON.

WENDELL
I’m afraid to ask.

PUMP
THE BEATLES, DAD, THESE GUYS GET IT.

LINDSEY
Pump.

PUMP
ONE OF THEM’S A WALRUS, YOU WOULDN’T UNDERSTAND, hey!

LINDSEY
Can I get your focus here?

PUMP
You just turned off my music.

LINDSEY
I’d really like your attention.

PUMP
God, what. What?

LINDSEY
It’s important.
PUMP

So say it already.

LINDSEY

I’d like you not to go to school tomorrow.

Beat.

PUMP

Why not?

LINDSEY

I’m asking you to miss school tomorrow.

PUMP

Mom, tomorrow’s the concert.

WENDELL

Tomorrow’s her concert.

PUMP

The English protest. Remember?

LINDSEY

Right, that’s fine, it’s important to you, I respect that.

PUMP

Respect it’s happening tomorrow. Can I have those back?

LINDSEY

I guess what I’m saying to you is less a request and more a command.

PUMP

What is?

LINDSEY

That you can’t go to school tomorrow.

Beat.

PUMP

What, are you serious?
LINDSEY

Very.

PUMP

Mom, I’m the concert organizer. I organized the concert.

WENDELL

Lindsey, maybe we could talk about this?

LINDSEY

We are talking about this.

PUMP

Mom, I’ve been planning this for months. Everyone’s coming. I can’t just not show up.

LINDSEY

I’m sorry, but that’s exactly what’s happening.

PUMP

Just because you think non-natives are treated fairly doesn’t mean the rest of us do.

LINDSEY

This isn’t about your cause.

PUMP

Then what is it about?

WENDELL

[To LINDSEY] Can we talk here?

LINDSEY

Pump, I can’t explain, you just have to promise me. No going to school tomorrow.

WENDELL

Lindsey, what’s going on?

LINDSEY

Nothing’s going on. Just she’s not going anywhere near school tomorrow.

PUMP

Mom, this isn’t like my little school concert. I organized buses, a sound crew, stagehands, the whole gym’s going to be filled.
LINDSEY
You’ll have to reschedule.

PUMP
I booked The Middle Fingers, you know how big that is? I’m not canceling the show because my Mom’s torqued I missed a couple book reports!

WENDELL
Maybe we should pause here, okay? I realize we’re upset, we’re all upset by the stress from organizing a major event, and bomb threats, but Pump has been working hard on this.

PUMP
If I don’t show up everyone will hate me. You might as well change my name again.

LINDSEY
This is not about that.

PUMP
This is why I hate telling you anything.

WENDELL
[To LINDSEY] Maybe you’re being a bit hasty.

LINDSEY
Excuse me?

WENDELL
Can we talk first?

LINDSEY
[To PUMP] Promise me you won’t go to school tomorrow.

PUMP
Why are you being like this?

LINDSEY
Promise me.
PUMP
Mom, these people come into the country, from places we’ve invaded, from places you invaded, they aren’t given a fair chance, we have to make it fair for them.

LINDSEY
This isn’t about the concert.

PUMP
Then what is it about?

WENDELL sees the CASE file, opens.

LINDSEY
You can have your boyfriend or music-friend or whoever it is you’ve been meeting at Perkins be with you all day. You can hang out here.

WENDELL
What the hell is this?

LINDSEY
HEY.

LINDSEY grabs the file from WENDELL’s hands.

A moment.

LINDSEY
Pump, promise me. I’m looking at you now.

PUMP
Fine.

PUMP grabs the headphones from LINDSEY’s hands, moves to off.

WENDELL
Well.

Lights shift.
SCENE 5.

LINDSEY and WENDELL.

DETAINEE again tries to move.

LINDSEY
You think it’s possible to tell if someone’s lying?

Beyond that, what about controlling someone’s mind?

Bold concept, but what if you could?

Knowing how to pierce a fortress of lies and to take from messy variables an actionable truth.

How it is done.

Memory manipulation, shadow hypnosis, word slavery.

Assaulting someone’s fortress, reconnaissance of the mind, it’s a long, slow dig.

WENDELL
Hey!

LINDSEY
But when you’re over there, in the room, you don’t get time for a long, slow dig.

WENDELL
Hey!

LINDSEY
Which is why we had torture.

WENDELL appears, frantic.

WENDELL
Did you hear anything about a bomb?

LINDSEY
Bomb, what bomb?

WENDELL
On the TV, just now, they said something about a bomb.
Another threat?  

LINDSEY

No, an actual bomb.  

WENDELL

Where.  

LINDSEY

A school.  

WENDELL

Here?  

LINDSEY

Minnesota, but they’re telling parents everywhere to pull their kids.  

WENDELL

[Calling out] Pump? Pump! Where is she?  

LINDSEY

She’s not here.  

WENDELL

Perkins?  

LINDSEY

No.  

WENDELL

That rehearsal space?  

LINDSEY

She’s at school.  

WENDELL

What? I told her no!  

LINDSEY

I said it was fine to go for the concert.  

WENDELL

[Going to her cell] No-no-no-no-no-no.
I’m sorry.

C’mon-c’mon.

She never answers her phone!

Text her, message her! Get her out of there!

WENDELL moves towards opposite stage, as if watching a screen.

C’mon-c’mon-c’mon. Pump! Pump, where are you?

Honey!

I got her! [Into phone] Can you hear me?

Honey!

I know, I hear! You’re still inside the gym? Get out right now. I SAID GET OUT RIGHT NOW.

Lindsey!

Don’t worry about that, just get out of there, okay? I said forget everything, get to the nearest door that leads outside.

Lindsey!

Can you see a door that leads outside? Zero-in on that door, don’t take your eyes off that door.
WENDELL
Lindsey, get in here!

LINDSEY
Listen to me: I want you to run five steps and walk five steps. Can you do that? Look at the door...bring him along with you, just run five then walk five, okay? Are you outside? Alright, keep moving away from the school. Don’t chat, don’t get in anyone’s car, don’t let anyone stop you no matter who they are, just run five and walk five until you make it to Arby’s. Just keep five-and-five. The Arby’s is your clear zone.

WENDELL back towards LINDSEY.

WENDELL
They’re saying two schools, now. Another in Oregon.

LINDSEY
Can you see the Arby’s? This will be your extraction point.

WENDELL
[Grabbing the phone from LINDSEY] Pump, where are you?

LINDSEY
She’s heading to the Arby’s across //from school.

WENDELL
//Okay, honey? Don’t move! I’m coming to get you. I’ll be right there. Yes, whatever, get a shake, just stay there, I’m on my way.

WENDELL hangs up.

WENDELL
She’s fine, thank God.

LINDSEY
Gee Wendell, thanks for all your help.

WENDELL
She’s okay. It’s okay.

LINDSEY
It’s not okay, you sent her to school!
WENDELL
Well damnit, how was I to know?

LINDSEY
Because I told you!

Beat.

WENDELL
Did you...did you know about this?

LINDSEY
I cannot believe you.

WENDELL
Is that why you told Pump to miss school?

LINDSEY
You compromised the safety of our daughter.

WENDELL
You knew about this and didn’t do anything?

LINDSEY
I did do something, I made her promise not to go to school and you went and sent her to a threat sector!

WENDELL
What’s gotten into you?

LINDSEY
I’m going to get Pump.

WENDELL
Is that what I saw yesterday? What was in that file?

LINDSEY
You’re unbelievable.

WENDELL
Did you know it was more than one school?

LINDSEY
I didn’t know anything.
WENDELL

Are there more coming?

LINDSEY

I have no idea.

WENDELL

Lindsey, what is going on?

LINDSEY

What’s going on is you being okay to put Pump in mortal danger. You let her walk into a possible detonation sector.

WENDELL

At the time you seemed irrational.

LINDSEY

Mom’s nutty so go ahead?

WENDELL

I had no idea.

LINDSEY

I had an idea. I made her promise. You were standing right there!

WENDELL

That was a pretty spot-on sense of future events.

LINDSEY

We don’t have time for this.

WENDELL

What we don’t have are secrets in this house. How many more are there?

LINDSEY turns to go.

WENDELL

She won’t get in the car if you show up.

Long beat.

LINDSEY

Go get Pump.
WENDELL

I’ll get Pump.

CASE

[Overlapping] Hey, get in here!

LINDSEY

Great. You go get her.

WENDELL moves to off-scene.

Lights shift.

SCENE 6.

LINDSEY and WENDELL.

LINDSEY carries the file.

CASE

Get in here! Shut the door.

LINDSEY

Guess you’re a little busy.

CASE

You think? We’re recalling all agents to domestic.

LINDSEY

Look. I wanted to come by and say thank you.

CASE

Just when you think you’d never see something as bad as planes through towers. How’s your kid handling this? Yeah. Mine still won’t talk to me either.

LINDSEY

You know…[the file]…my daughter’s a good person. She might have her priorities screwed up and hang with the wrong crowd but she’s a good person.

CASE

Did I mention bombs going off and a full staff remobilization?
LINDSEY

Right.

CASE
Makes you feel so helpless. You’d love to grab the situation in your hands and *squeeze*. Instead, we had to sit around here and wait for six different lawyers in seven different departments to authorize legal. Forget Congressional subcommittees, I should take all these idiots down to the schools and make ‘em face the PTA. Wasn’t like this in the old days.

LINDSEY
Case, I know it’s not my place anymore, but who is it? Who’s doing this?

CASE
I don’t know.

LINDSEY
But you said—

CASE
That we had a person of extreme interest under surveillance.

LINDSEY
Where is he now?

CASE
Custody. Finally.

LINDSEY
Police custody.

*Beat.*

CASE
I told you, it’s joint terrorism now.

LINDSEY
Just Minnesota and Oregon.

CASE
Actually, we can’t confirm explosives at Oregon. It’s a sick house. We’re waiting on sniffers.
LINDSEY

Are there any more?

CASE

That’s what we’re going to find out.

LINDSEY

Well, you won’t be able to get it fast. Whoever you have is likely prepped enough to withstand pressure. I’d go isolation.

CASE

Mmm.

LINDSEY

Disorient sensory, break sleep, sound shocks.

CASE

Good.

Beat.

LINDSEY

Uh, look…I’ll…

CASE

[The file] Guess you owe me.

LINDSEY

Liquid lunch. When this is over.

CASE

What makes you think this will be over? Is it over for you?

LINDSEY

…

CASE

I never stopped admiring your commitment to the cause, Lindsey, even after you left. There’s too many people doing as little as possible for as long as possible. But not you. I know you still care. I may not be able to read minds like you but I can tell you still care.

LINDSEY

Of course I care.
Then help me deal with this.

LINDSEY
I have a job.

CASE
Me, too. How’d you like to get back in the room?

LINDSEY
I don’t do that anymore.

CASE
I don’t believe you’ve ever stopped.

LINDSEY
Case, we’re in the United States now.

CASE
The U.S. government is complying with all legal obligations as it fights the war on terror.

LINDSEY
Against a real terrorist or some pissed off loser?

CASE
Someone connected.

LINDSEY
Even if you do have a credible suspect, there’s a slew of people far up on me to work the room.

CASE
But no one could get to them like you.

LINDSEY
Yes, because we were over there. Over there we could wave the threat of…down the hall.

CASE
As I recall it wasn’t just a threat.

LINDSEY
…
CASE
Doesn’t matter how long you’ve been offline, talent like yours doesn’t go cold. The FBI doesn’t have our skill set, your skill set. They don’t do what you do. Interrogation is a calling. Plus you’re clean. And besides, who we have in custody…you’re uniquely qualified.

LINDSEY
There’s a slight difference between Asadabad and Minnesota.

CASE
I’m asking you to get what our detainee knows. Who’s involved, potential schools, target selection.

LINDSEY
Your suspect really knows something.

CASE
Which is why before the entire Joint Task I said let’s get the best in the room so that we don’t have to go down the hall. Which is why I went to the secret FISA court and got a secret ruling allowing this to happen.

LINDSEY
Case, I’m a middle-aged college professor who drives a middle-aged van. I drink bad coffee in a staff lounge. I have afternoon pickup. I’m the confederacy of dweebs now.

CASE
That’s not how I remember you. And in case you weren’t watching, the nation is the fresh victim of some horrific attacks. This is happening, here.

LINDSEY
I know that.

CASE
And I know I’m one of the few people who’s seen what you can do.

LINDSEY
Well, I don’t do it anymore. I quit.

CASE
Protecting our country?
LINDSEY
Doing what we did over there, here! It sounds like some secret judge on some secret court that only you know about said do whatever you have to so nothing like this //ever happens again.

CASE
[Overlapping] //ever happens again. And where have we heard that before? The twelfth of September? When we all felt helpless and sick because we failed our country? And we got some secret legal then to allow us to do our work over there.

LINDSEY
I made a promise. To Wendell. That I was done. I promised him I would never go back.

CASE
Ah.

LINDSEY
I owe you lunch.

CASE
Listen, how many would love to be in the room on this one. It’s front line. It’s big time. You and the first domestic detainee sequestered outside the justice system. And not from attacking a federal building or a symbol of government authority. Kids. With their backpacks on. Holding hands, walking into school. I have a family to go home to as well, Lindsey. I’m asking you to do this.

Lights shift.
SCENE 7.

LINDSEY and WENDELL.

DETAINEE on the floor again tries to move.

LINDSEY downstage center, as before.

LINDSEY

There’s a language to torture.

October 2001, I became a part of that language.

The men at the forward operating base knew me as the human polygraph, but their word for me was Piglet.

They said Piglet, this is the room, where you interrogate.

We’ll be down the hall if your questions bear no jelly.

I actually felt sorry for them, having to tap electricity to genitals, cutting, music...music, whipping the soles of feet, more painful than you can imagine.

They got pretty worked up if who they worked over wasn’t forthcoming.

Then on breaks, calling their loved ones: hey honey, how’s everything back home?

Then back for more enhanced techniques.

I don’t care how tough you are, or how big the secret you hold, after a week you’ll turn against everything you believe in to make it stop.

You’ll try to starve yourself, drown yourself, but the men bring you back and start again.

They call that rounding.

I never went down the hall to see it.

Sound doesn’t get out of the room, but it can get in, and the hallway isn’t very long.

Well whatever it’s called, I never tortured anyone.
WENDELL appears.

WENDELL

Honey?

LINDSEY

But that never stopped me from wondering: what if I did?

WENDELL

Honey? Where’ve you been?

LINDSEY

The store.

WENDELL

What took so long?

LINDSEY

Shelves are practically empty, had to grab whatever was left.

WENDELL

You’ve been at the store all this time.

LINDSEY

Peas, lettuce, and look at this, yams! Nobody makes yams anymore.

WENDELL

They’re live at Minnesota.

LINDSEY

And: the red! Last time that kid behind the counter lies about being out of stock. Saw right through him before he opened his mouth. Now: pots!

WENDELL

Have you been following this?

LINDSEY

We have pots, right?

WENDELL

Pictures. Videos.
LINDSEY
I just thought it might be nice to have a real family dinner. Something actually cooked for a change, eaten at our nice kitchen…

_There’s no table._

WENDELL
They have, um…I can’t even say it.

LINDSEY
A body count.

WENDELL
Twelve.

_Beat._

LINDSEY
Twelve’s a lot.

WENDELL
They actually interviewed one of the parents.

LINDSEY
You look like you could use a good yam.

WENDELL
Pump was here earlier. With her friend. One of the Middle Fingers. Kid didn’t do much, kind of lumbered. Then he said to me, the first thing he said: how’d Mrs. Bryant know the bomb was coming? Sorry, should I wait for you to burn dinner first? [LINDSEY, a look] He wondered if you could do that for pop quizzes. Pump was quite proud, actually, my Mom can tell the future. And then there was this perverse hunger on their part to know more, which I was totally unprepared for. Who did this? Do you think we’ll go back to school again? I hate coming across clueless.

LINDSEY
Can’t get nominated to the Supreme Court that way.

WENDELL
How did you know?
LINDSEY

Intuition.

WENDELL

Same intuition as the rainforest?

LINDSEY

I don’t think I’ll make you any yams.

WENDELL

Honey.

LINDSEY

Store was out of that, too. And will you please TURN THAT OFF. Thank you.

Beat.

WENDELL

It would have been helpful if you were here.

LINDSEY

Didn’t think you’d want me talking to the youth of America about life after terrorist attacks.

WENDELL

Where were you?

LINDSEY

Asadabad.

WENDELL

I meant tonight.

LINDSEY

So did I.

WENDELL

Look. I’m sorry about before. Okay? I shouldn’t have let her go to school. Alright?

Beat.

LINDSEY

We have someone. In custody.
I didn’t hear that.

I doubt more than a handful know.

Intuition?

Case.

[This sinks in] After all this time.

He paid me a visit.

Just like that.

And I paid him a visit back, tonight. He told me the CIA has someone.

They knew.

They didn’t. They don’t. All they have is someone connected.

What’s their suspect have to do with you?

Case wants me to come in. To come back.

For what?

To question.

You.
LINDSEY

Confused about that myself.

WENDELL

Is it because they have somebody from...?...they want to fly you back to...?

LINDSEY

It would be a short drive.

WENDELL

[Figuring it out] Would counsel for the defendant be present?

LINDSEY

They don’t have a defendant. They have a detainee.

WENDELL

Wait, are you telling a federal judge—

LINDSEY

I’m telling my husband—

WENDELL

—the CIA has detained, outside of arrest—

LINDSEY

—I’m telling my husband—

WENDELL

—just grabbed on home turf—

LINDSEY

—not just the CIA—

WENDELL

And they want you to question him?

LINDSEY

I’m telling my husband, I’m telling my husband, everything changes.

WENDELL

Apparently disregard for the law.

LINDSEY

The law’s already changed. It changed October 2001.
WENDELL
The law is what we have.

LINDSEY
What we have are bombs in schools. And a body count. And you’re worried about some lines on a piece of paper.

WENDELL
I am worried about a less perfect union, yes.

LINDSEY
Exactly.

WENDELL
I meant this house. How long did it take after you returned until we functioned anywhere close to normal? Pump wouldn’t talk to you. You wouldn’t talk to me. How long did it take? You can’t go back.

LINDSEY
I sure hope you’re speaking to me as a judge and not my husband.

WENDELL
This guy they have, he’s from over there?

LINDSEY
I don’t know.

WENDELL
What do you know?

LINDSEY
I know the last day I felt secure was the day before seeing Americans stumble out of the Pentagon, jumping from the Towers.

WENDELL
I don’t need a lecture.
LINDSEY
If you’re clueless you do. Remember how it felt? To defeat that enemy we needed intelligence. But we had none. The only way was from their mouths. The CIA planned the invasion of Afghanistan, I doubt more than a handful know that either. God, I was so on tilt, hopped the first ride out of Dulles, grabbed a seat across some up-and-coming who called himself Case, the guy who’d eventually become torturer-in-chief. Case said the mission was simple: detain for questioning any military-age male with a wrap around his head. The unspoken mission: bring the swinging fist of justice. And I faced the enemy, every day, the resistance, the screams. back down the hall and back in the room.

WENDELL
You never told me all that before.

LINDSEY
All you wanted was a promise. That that I’d never go back.

WENDELL
Yes, because while breaking the law you almost broke apart this family.

LINDSEY
I was preventing future attacks.

WENDELL
Did you?

LINDSEY
I felt each question kept Pump from becoming another name on a wall.

WENDELL
You always said torture doesn’t work. You go back in and you’d be doing just that again, here. We kill them, they kill us, we kill more, here, there, two groups from opposite ends of the world, mass-murderers and torturers, chasing after each other. When does it end?

LINDSEY
It was supposed to end by 2005.

WENDELL
Listen to yourself.

Beat.
LINDSEY

Yeah.

WENDELL

Case really came to see you.

LINDSEY

Still looks like an Olympic wrestler.

Beat.

WENDELL

But you said no.

LINDSEY

I didn’t say yes.

CASE

[Overlapping] We don’t have much time.

WENDELL

Lindsey, how many laws do we give up to feel safe?

Lights shift.
SCENE 8.

LINDSEY and CASE.

CASE appears.

CASE
I said we don’t have much time.

LINDSEY
I’m not here to work.

CASE
Then what the hell are you here for?

LINDSEY
To tell you that whoever does the room with your guy takes another step towards ending the Constitution.

Beat.

CASE
That…sounds like a federal judge talking.

LINDSEY
I made a promise.

CASE
[Handing her a picture] I trust you won’t go sharing with certain members of the judiciary. The school in Oregon? Took the dogs a while to find it, but they did.

LINDSEY
A football.

CASE
Lodged in the trophy case by the gym. Near a lot of kids, where it wouldn’t be messed with or suspected. Filled with iron shards.

LINDSEY
Remote trigger.

CASE
Probably cell phone.
LINDSEY
And it never blew.

CASE
Right.

LINDSEY
This doesn’t make sense. School attacks have been a parting gesture, for attention.

CASE
Obviously that’s not what we’re dealing with.

LINDSEY
What are we dealing with?

CASE
There is one person who knows.

LINDSEY
By moving the show to the room.

CASE
Otherwise, the regular way brings publicity, breaking news, a feeding tube of updates for the bad guys.

LINDSEY
And what if who you have isn’t a bad guy.

CASE
That’s why you’re here. Who can I trust? Who has the chops to bust someone open? Who can get them to say it so I don’t have to get them to scream it?

LINDSEY
Oh, Case. It’s like we’re not even spies anymore.
CASE
Ain’t that the truth. You know, the only way we were going to win over there was to fake the world into believing we’re not closet hypocrites. Do I care? Not really. Why? I’m not interested in retroactively fitting today’s America to the founding values at Lexington and Concord. I’m interested in stopping the next bomb. I’m interested in protecting our kids. Isn’t that right, too? Isn’t that honest on its own? If we took ten people off the street and said: torture one person to stop the next bomb...seven?, eight?, nine? Do ‘x’ and ‘y’ won’t happen. It’s a warped equation, misleading, but whatever, people don’t care, they just want protection. I’m not ashamed to come out of that closet. So I got an active offensive against our nation’s schools, now on temporary shutdown. I got a secret court order staying the prohibition on domestic ops. And what do I say? Let’s try to be as right about this as possible. Let’s get in the room first. And let’s get the best in the room.

Beat.

LINDSEY
Where’s the room?

CASE
Nearby.

LINDSEY
Where’s the room?

Beat.

CASE
The Afghan embassy.

Beat.

LINDSEY
And down the hall?

CASE
The kind that gets results if you don’t.

Beat.

LINDSEY
I can’t.
CASE
I understand. Your promise. Well go home, snuggle with the judge, wait for the evening news to tell you school’s open.

LINDSEY
That won’t work, Case.

PUMP
[Overlapping] Mom?

CASE
Lindsey, how many more footballs are there that we don’t know about?

Lights shift.

SCENE 9.

LINDSEY and PUMP.

PUMP appears, headphones around her neck, carrying a laptop.

PUMP
Mom?

LINDSEY
Pump. Hey.

PUMP
Hey.

LINDSEY
You’re home.

PUMP
Nowhere else to go really.

LINDSEY
I’m glad you’re here.

PUMP
Yeah.
LINDSEY
You doing okay?
PUMP
Sure.
LINDSEY
Mind if I sit?
PUMP
Your house.
LINDSEY
Dare I ask if that’s homework?
PUMP
You can ask.
LINDSEY
How about a dinner break?
PUMP
That’s okay.
LINDSEY
The not-homework will still be there when you get back.
PUMP
Not hungry.
LINDSEY
Dad said that your boyfriend’s nice.
PUMP
He’s not my boyfriend. He’s the drummer.
LINDSEY
Still, if he’s important to you, I wish I could have met him, too.
PUMP
No big deal.
LINDSEY
Look, I know how disturbing this whole thing can be.
PUMP
It’s not like he’s the first drummer I’ve met.

LINDSEY
That’s not what I meant. Dad said you were asking questions.

PUMP
Maybe.

LINDSEY
Anything particular?

PUMP
Not really.

LINDSEY
Pump, I realize I wasn’t here earlier.

PUMP
I got used to it.

LINDSEY
I meant earlier today.

PUMP
Oh.

LINDSEY
If you’d still like to talk, if you still have questions, I happen to have experience with these kinds of events.

PUMP
You do.

LINDSEY
I do.

PUMP
From when you were over there.

LINDSEY
I know they draw out all kinds of emotions. Some people feel anxiety. Others feel anger. Sadness.
PUMP
Confusion.

LINDSEY
Especially confusion. It’s normal. And the most normal of all is holding back. Which is the worst of all. Because shutting it out sort of signals to everyone else that what happened is too horrible to talk about. You know?

PUMP
I guess.

LINDSEY
You can ask me.

PUMP
Okay, well, if I did ask...there’s one question...it’s kind of stupid.

LINDSEY
Honey, you’re not stupid, I would never think that.

PUMP
I mean everyone’s asking about who and why, and making all these lame comments, and blaming it on whatever, but that’s not what I want to ask.

LINDSEY
Whatever you want to ask, it’s fine.

PUMP
Okay, so, what I’ve been trying to find, what I really want to know is...what’s it like to be hit by a bomb?

LINDSEY
...

PUMP
Dumb question.
LINDSEY
No…it’s…it’s a good question. It’s…why I was gone. You know, when we brought you home from the hospital, August 2001, I’d sing to you. You loved music. I sang. And then next month. And then I was torn. Because I wanted to be my best for my country. But I also knew what I’d be leaving behind. The United States doesn’t owe me anything. It’s not going to knock on my door, hand me a thank-you card. I owe. For everything we have. And there was only one way, one real way I could show it. Even though it meant leaving you.

PUMP
And that was like being hit by a bomb.

LINDSEY
We were considered active duty which meant we had a security attachment which meant we had a driver. Each time to the ops site our driver would take different routes, standard movement stuff. Different routes but always the same faces on the streets, the struggling, war-stung faces dealing daily with death. You keep your mind to simple things, to remind yourself why you’re there: Dad on our wedding day, you being born, the way you looked surrounded by blankets and stuffed animals, the parents who won’t ever get to see their kids sleep again, the parents who…the thought’s broken, my driver says cars are stopping ahead. A checkpoint? Here? Before he can answer, just that quick, it suddenly becomes bright and dark, and our car is crumbling back, and the driver’s legs are no longer a part of him, and I drag myself from the…I’m sorry…I shouldn’t…

PUMP
[Reading from the laptop] A football filled with explosives at the middle school playground in Minneapolis.

LINDSEY
Honey, don’t look at that.

PUMP
It’s just a screen, Mom, I’m not actually there. [Reading] Officials said the power of the blast ripped as far as the center for the disabled on the second floor. Outside, raincoats and swing sets were splattered with—

LINDSEY
Listen to me: that’s never going to happen to you.
PUMP

[Reading] One girl suffered wounds to her face. Her eyes wouldn’t open. Her lips were missing. She was sobbing, I want to see my mother.

*LINDSEY rises, moves from PUMP.*

PUMP

I guess that’s how it feels.

*Lights shift.*

**SCENE 10.**

*LINDSEY and CASE.*

LINDSEY
How’d you like to be on the committee?

CASE
What committee is that?

LINDSEY
The committee to uphold the U.S. constitution. It’s a small committee.

CASE
How small.

LINDSEY
Just you and me.

CASE
Best kind. How do you want to do it?

LINDSEY
Like Asadabad.

CASE
Babysitters?

LINDSEY
The only person your guy knows is me.
CASE

Just you.

LINDSEY

Unrecorded. I’m looking at you.

CASE

[Capitulating] Alright.

LINDSEY

Who’s he seen?

CASE

Since the sack went over the head and gag went in the mouth, no one.

LINDSEY

Where’s he from, Case? How’d you find him?

I can’t say.

CASE

Some committee member you turned out to be.

CASE

The secret court judge conceded our application on one condition: the interrogator can’t know anything beforehand about the detainee. Essentially, the left hand can’t know what the right hand holds.

LINDSEY

Well we’re just making it up as we go along, aren’t we?

CASE

Technically we could appeal but that’s a political football. Bad choice of words.

LINDSEY

I shouldn’t feel like I’m the one at a disadvantage. I’m basically playing intelligence bluff.

CASE

It’s what we got. How do you want the room?

LINDSEY

[Thinking] Get rid of the table.
CASE
No table?

LINDSEY
Just two chairs. And how much time do I have?

CASE
Seventy-two hours. By then the masters will want to know whether you have it or not. Want some protection? Make you feel safer.

LINDSEY
I haven’t felt safe since I first met you. Which is why we’re going to do this the right way and I will get us answers and we won’t have to send him down the hall. Does he speak English?

CASE
The detainee speaks perfect English.

WENDELL
Lindsey?

PUMP
Mom?

LINDSEY
Damn, I’m nervous.

WENDELL
Don’t do this.

PUMP
Are you leaving me again?

CASE
You are uniquely qualified.

LINDSEY
I feel so nervous.

PUMP
You’re leaving us again.

WENDELL
You made a promise.
CASE

Uniquely qualified.

PUMP

You’re leaving us again.

WENDELL

You made a promise.

CASE

Uniquely qualified.

The three voices continue, overlapping, growing in intensity.

As LINDSEY enters the room we hear the slam of a hard metal door, reverberating, cascading as if sound echoing down a hallway.

The voices stop, all quiet.

Lights shift.
SCENE 11.

LINDSEY and DETAINEE.

LINDSEY moves to DETAINEE, who senses another close, grunts, squirms.

LINDSEY reaches under the black burlap and pulls the mouth gag, causing sputtering and coughing.

LINDSEY removes the black burlap and we see for the first time DETAINEE is...a young woman, clearly female, clearly American, early 20s.

DETAINEE

Long beat.

LINDSEY
You’re going to tell me everything I want to know or I will have you destroyed.

LINDSEY moves to CASE, bracing himself.

LINDSEY
You’re right. Perfect English. We start tomorrow.

LINDSEY exits to true off, they all watch her go.

Blackout.

END ACT ONE.
ACT TWO. INTERROGATION.

SCENE 12.

LINDSEY and DETAINEE.

DETAINEE sits in a chair, her hands bound.

LINDSEY sits in the other chair, faces DETAINEE.

Near LINDSEY is the grocery bag.

This holds for a bit.

LINDSEY
So! I’m ready to begin.

DETAINEE
Can I call my parents? So they know where I’m at?

LINDSEY
I know you’re eager to learn where you are. Concerned about what’s going to happen. I know you’re distraught over confinement, not to mention lack of sleep. And you’re still troubled by the swiftness of your capture. So let me say the obvious: nobody’d go through all the trouble if it wasn’t important. Because of your involvement.

DETAINEE
Involvement in what? I ain’t involved in anything.

LINDSEY
I assure you we’re close to uncovering the rest of your group and stopping it. Before it goes any further.

DETAINEE
I don’t know what group, or whatever it is you’re talking about.

LINDSEY
You don’t.

DETAINEE
No.
LINDSEY
Low-grade but deadly explosives triggered to detonate by remote activator.

DETAINEE
What’s that? I don’t even know what you’re saying.

LINDSEY
That’s attempt to use a weapon of mass destruction. That’s the death penalty.

DETAINEE
I didn’t blow up anything.

LINDSEY
Except. If you haven’t already figured it out. We’re skipping the whole court appearance thing. No charges. No trial. This is straight to sentence.

DETAINEE
Are you gonna let me call my parents?

LINDSEY
Arsenals of explosives, by the way, which enables us under secret law to hold you indefinitely.

DETAINEE
I want a lawyer. I’m a US citizen.

You are.

DETAINEE
Yes.

LINDSEY
Prove it.

DETAINEE
I…I was born here.

LINDSEY
Here, where? This room?

DETAINEE
I’m a US citizen.
LINDSEY
Prove it. Yeah. All your protection is gone. Except me. I’m the last protection you get. Anyway, I’m ready to begin.

DETAINEE
Begin what?

LINDSEY
Questions.

DETAINEE
Great, ask whatever you want, there’s nothing for me to answer.

LINDSEY
There’s a lot I’d normally like to cover. Organizational structure, ideology, funding. But for now we’ll stick to the most important issue: telling me where the other bombs are located.

DETAINEE
You’re crazy. I don’t know what I’m doing here. I don’t have anything to do with any bombs.

LINDSEY
I’m not here to argue with you. I’m here to cooperate with you. So that you can tell me about the other bombs. So you can protect yourself.

DETAINEE
From what?

LINDSEY
From what happens if you don’t tell me. [Moving in] What went wrong at Oregon?

DETAINEE
Oregon? I’ve never been to Oregon. I swear to God, my whole life I’ve never been to Oregon.

LINDSEY
That’s not what I asked.

DETAINEE
I don’t know anything about Oregon.
LINDSEY
Certainly you’re familiar with Oregon. It’s a state. Capital’s, uh…

DETAINEE
Salem.

LINDSEY
Okay! You do know something about Oregon.

DETAINEE
I’m not a criminal. I haven’t done a crime. I wanna call my parents.

LINDSEY
Are they in Oregon?

DETAINEE
No.

LINDSEY
There, that’s two things you know about Oregon. I’m going to start a list, I mean if you rattle off the state flower, I’ll let you walk out of here.

DETAINEE
The rose.

Beat.

LINDSEY
You should know you’re never getting out of here.

DETAINEE
Why not?

LINDSEY
Because the fact you’re here means you’re never leaving.

DETAINEE
Where am I?

LINDSEY
Your new home.

DETAINEE
What is this? Is this like the Gulag?
LINDSEY
How do you know about the Gulag? Who told you about that?

DETAINEE
Nobody.

LINDSEY
Somebody must have told you. That’s not a term I expected to hear from someone your age.

DETAINEE
School I guess.

LINDSEY
What did school-I-guess tell you about the Gulag?

DETAINEE
A jail. In Russia.

LINDSEY
It wasn’t a jail, it was a concentration camp. School tell you female prisoners at the Gulag were regular victims of mass rape? Guards would turn their backs while inmates arranged chairs, ten to a girl. Those who lived long enough had deformed babies in special cells next to science labs. All under the government flag, all government collusion. But the Gulag doesn’t exist anymore. In Russia.

DETAINEE
We don’t have that here.

LINDSEY
Here, where? This room? I don’t know, when you got detained there it meant something. Think about what it would mean now, for the ones who didn’t believe enough to blow themselves in the process, if they knew beforehand it wasn’t the same old United States. If they knew this is where they’d end up.

DETAINEE
I wanna call my parents.

LINDSEY
You know you’re lucky you got me. No boiling coffee through your nose, no shock every time you try and sit.
DETAINEE

That the Gulag, too?

LINDSEY

Nope. CIA. Afghanistan.

DETAINEE

Thought it was Russians in Afghanistan.

LINDSEY

Imagine that. Listen, you’re overwhelmed with the realization of spending whatever’s left of your life here so let’s take your mind off it. How’d you like to learn something about secrets?

DETAINEE

If it lets me call my parents.

LINDSEY takes from the grocery bag a deck of cards, separates four cards from the deck.

LINDSEY

The two, three, four and five of hearts. I’m going to pick one of these four cards, like this. You ask me two, three, four, five, and to each I can only respond ‘no.’ Based on how I answer you try to figure out which card I’m holding.

DETAINEE

I don’t get it.

LINDSEY

C’mon, Salem, Gulag, you know what’s going on. See how good you are at secrets. Ask me: two, three, four, five.

DETAINEE

[Quick] Two-three-four-five.

LINDSEY

You want to call your parents? Ask me.

Beat.

DETAINEE

Two.
No.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Three.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

No.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Why am I here?

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Keep going.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Four.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

No.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Five.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

No. Now. Which card am I holding?

I have no idea.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE

Then you’re not very good at secrets. Tell you what, let’s switch. I’ll ask, you can only say ‘no.’ And I have to guess which card you’re holding.

DETAINEE

This is, like, not making any sense.

LINDSEY

DETAINEE picks one card and palms it, separate from the other cards.
LINDSEY

Is it the two?

DETAINEE

No.

LINDSEY

The three.

DETAINEE

No.

LINDSEY

It’s three. You’re holding the three of hearts. Do you understand who I am now? What went wrong in Oregon?

We hear a house alarm, blaring.

Lights shift.

SCENE 13.

LINDSEY, WENDELL and PUMP.

A house alarm is blaring.

LINDSEY crosses to WENDELL, who enters the scene startled, half-asleep.

LINDSEY

It’s me!

WENDELL

What?

LINDSEY

It’s me!

The alarm stops.

LINDSEY

It’s just me.
WENDELL

I see that.

LINDSEY

I didn’t think you’d set the alarm.

WENDELL

What time is it?

LINDSEY

Morning. Technically.

WENDELL

I don’t think I got it before...

WENDELL’s cell rings.

WENDELL


NeverAgain.

LINDSEY

NeverAgain. Yeah. [Hangs up]

WENDELL

Sorry.

LINDSEY

Where’ve you been.

Out.

Beat.

WENDELL

I tried calling.

LINDSEY

I wasn’t in a position to answer.
New job?

Yes.

First day?

*PUMP moves into the scene, groggy.*

What’s going on?

False alarm.

Mom?

Yes, Mom’s home.

Oh.

Hi.

Mom just got home.

From where?

Working.

You’re just getting home?

Sorry I woke you.
PUMP

What time is it?

LINDSEY / WENDELL

Late / Early.

WENDELL

Mom got a new job.

PUMP

You quit college?

LINDSEY

Dad’s being funny.

PUMP

Are you cheating on Dad?

LINDSEY

Of course not.

WENDELL

Well, in a sense.

LINDSEY

Wendell. [To PUMP] It’s a new assignment.

PUMP exits the scene.

WENDELL

Some leftover yams, if you’re hungry. Unless, you know, if they took you out, first day.

LINDSEY

We stayed in.

WENDELL

Your car was here.

LINDSEY

I get a driver.

WENDELL

What else the job come with?
LINDSEY

Expectations.

WENDELL

Hope you’re a fast learner.

LINDSEY

I learned the state capital of Oregon is Salem. I half-thought the press might be waiting.

WENDELL

Judge Bryant here, come quick, my wife’s torturing again. Couldn’t do that to Pump. Although, she doesn’t have school tomorrow.

LINDSEY

I should have told you.

WENDELL

We don’t have secrets in this house.

LINDSEY

We don’t. In this house.

WENDELL

Pity my strict constructionism. What don’t I know?

LINDSEY

A lot.

WENDELL

About him.

LINDSEY

I don’t question your former...

WENDELL

Yes, because mine don’t suddenly show up asking if I wouldn’t mind obliterating the fourth amendment. Mine also don’t make me renege on a promise.

LINDSEY

I’m feeling a little raw, so, what would you like.

WENDELL

How big the space between no secrets and this house.
LINDSEY
Depends.

WENDELL
On what.

LINDSEY
Whether you feel it’s better to be right or better to be safe?

WENDELL
Ah, the great American hymn.

LINDSEY
You knew what you were getting into with me.

WENDELL
I knew I loved you and never wanted out of it.

LINDSEY
Maybe that’s why I have secrets.

WENDELL
We torture the lawless, we become the lawless.

LINDSEY
That’s nice, I’ll put that on a condolence card to the parents of twelve children.

WENDELL
History won’t know about you or Case. Pumps of the future will know one thing: whether we did or didn’t torture.

LINDSEY
Too late.

WENDELL
You know what I mean. I’m starting to wonder if this is a little like getting back together with the band.

LINDSEY
You think it was fun for me over there?
WENDELL
I think when I found out you boarded that C-37 to come home I cleared my docket, twice, then cleaned the house twice, took two showers, shaved twice, all so that first embrace would be perfect. Little Pump and I at Dulles, waiting, and the woman who came off that plane from Afghanistan, she wasn’t the same woman I married.

LINDSEY
Says the spouse of every service member. Thanks for understanding.

WENDELL
This is why you quit!

LINDSEY
Look at what’s happening!

WENDELL
I am. And I don’t want to almost lose you again.

LINDSEY
I don’t want that either.

WENDELL
Then tell them you’re getting answers. Tell them torture won’t work.

LINDSEY
Sometimes it does.

WENDELL
I know you don’t mean that. It might be true but I know you don’t mean it. You can be married to someone and feel hopelessly lost, all the days and nights beside them and feel terribly removed, if not for the purity of the beginning. Don’t do this.

LINDSEY

...

WENDELL
Is he talking?

LINDSEY
Will it just be our secret?
PUMP back into the scene.

WENDELL

Guess you’ll be working nights, then.

PUMP

[To WENDELL] Can I have a ride?

LINDSEY

For what?

PUMP

Can I have a ride, Dad?

WENDELL

Where to, honey?

PUMP

Perkins.

LINDSEY

You need to go to Perkins now.

PUMP

I’m organizing a benefit for the twelve families.

WENDELL

She’s organizing a concert.

PUMP

It’s gonna be the biggest thing ever. Like all the kids out of school. I’m getting anyone and everyone involved. So I need a ride.

LINDSEY

Now.

PUMP

Yeah, now.

LINDSEY

She can’t.

WENDELL

Great.
PUMP
If I strolled in at this hour you’d go berserk. What, is there a bomb now at Perkins?

LINDSEY
That’s not funny.

PUMP
None of this is funny. That’s why I’m doing this. We can’t just sit at home and be intimidated. The world is crazy, we have to do something.

LINDSEY
Pump, listen to me, it’s dangerous to be loud.

PUMP
All music is loud.

LINDSEY
I can’t explain.

PUMP
I wish you were like normal Moms.

LINDSEY
Me being gone, like before, that’s not happening again.

PUMP
[To WENDELL] So can I have a ride?

LINDSEY
Pump.

PUMP
Don’t worry about it, Dad’s here.

LINDSEY
You can’t go.

PUMP
Don’t worry about it, Dad’s here.

PUMP moves to off.
WENDELL

Well.

*WENDELL goes to off.*

*Lights shift.*

**SCENE 14.**

*LINDSEY and CASE.*

LINDSEY

You wonder how we manage.

Absorbing the hours of dark dungeons, taking the shape of whatever horror of history we use to extract truth.

Then going home.

To hello hugs, embracing smiles, the reason you’re doing it in the first place.

And you can’t tell them.

CASE

Look at this.

LINDSEY

How do we keep the two apart?

CASE

Hey, look at this.

LINDSEY

Or worse: what happens when they destroy each other?

*CASE holds a sheet, a map.*

CASE

New threats coming in. Imminent detonations.

LINDSEY

All these schools.
They must know we have her.

They who? Meet me halfway, Case.

We don’t know.


Lindsey, the masters are pushing for down the hall.

That’s not an answer.

It’s what I’m authorized to give.

Based on some secret FISA court.

Correct.

Well, I don’t see any secret FISA court here.

Let’s assume there’s bombs in just a couple schools. Let’s assume they blow, even in empty buildings. You think parents would ever send their kids back? We’d have an entire education system on hold for who knows how long. Before the next bomb blows, we have to get something. The masters are pushing for down the hall.

They’re down the hall, aren’t they.

Ready and waiting.
LINDSEY
And you’re fine with it.

CASE
We should both be fine with it. You know what’s in that room? A narcotic. People like us? We’re addicted to it.

LINDSEY
Why I tried to bail on my wedding day. Wendell knew. He knew I’d start off appalled by it, then trained for it, then good at it, then needing it. Now look at us. Secret laws to allow for sudden disappearances, unexplained absences, missing family members. It’s Chile. It’s Jordan.

CASE
Actually, in Jordan once individual treatment doesn’t work the relatives are tortured as well. We’re not anything close to that.

LINDSEY
Unless it could stop the next bomb.

CASE
They are waiting down the hall.

PUMP
I got used to you being gone.

LINDSEY
I never got used to it.

PUMP
I got used to you not around.

CASE
They are waiting down the hall.

LINDSEY
[Taking the sheet from CASE] I think she knows why.

CASE
They are waiting down the hall.

LINDSEY
I think she knows why, which might get us where.
DETAINEE

[Overlapping] I wanna call my parents. Please.

LINDSEY

Tell the masters I know what it sounds like when a girl doesn’t like her mother. That’s why you brought me here, isn’t it?

Lights shift.

SCENE 15.

LINDSEY and DETAINEE.

DETAINEE


LINDSEY

Give me the number.

DETAINEE

What?

LINDSEY

I’ll call. It’s what, some phantom number, inbound only, leave a message if captured, sets off the next wave of attacks. Give me the number. I’ll tell your people I have you and you’re never leaving and we’re going to start cutting off fingers and toes until you talk.

DETAINEE

You are so not even close to right.

LINDSEY

[Singing] A wise old owl lived in an oak, the more he saw the less he spoke.

DETAINEE

Who the hell are you?

LINDSEY

The only one trying to protect you.
DETAINEE

When can I get out of here?

LINDSEY

[Singing] You’re never leaving this place. [Spoken] This is it.

DETAINEE

This ain’t it.

LINDSEY

It’s because you’re here that this is it.

DETAINEE

You can’t hold me here like this.

LINDSEY

Darkness, blasts of noise, no sleep, so disorienting.

DETAINEE

I want a lawyer.

LINDSEY

You’re lucky you got air conditioning. We have to take a different approach.

DETAINEE

Different than keeping me here.

LINDSEY

No time for the long, slow dig.

DETAINEE

You are not normal.

LINDSEY

Normal’s not going to get you to tell me where the other bombs are located.

DETAINEE

Nothing will get me to tell you, lady, because I don’t know.

LINDSEY

You do know. Which is why I’m taking another approach.

DETAINEE

I’m done playing cards. I’m done with your freak-show games.
LINDSEY
I’m trying to help you. You don’t have much time.

DETAINEE

Until what?

LINDSEY

Until I can’t help you anymore.

DETAINEE

Fine, bring in the next freak.

LINDSEY

The approach I propose is something I’ve never done before.

DETAINEE

Lady, how many times do I have to say it? I’m not involved with anything. It’s that simple.

LINDSEY

You’re reeling, you’re cracking, I can tell.

DETAINEE

You’re crazy, you’re brain is cracked!

LINDSEY

The approach is that we both ask questions.

DETAINEE

Great, when can I get out of here?

LINDSEY

With one rule: we each have to answer the other’s questions by telling only the truth.

DETAINEE

I can’t tell you something about what it is that I’m not--

LINDSEY

KNOCK IT OFF. You know what? Fine. I don’t care. The men down the hall, the ones ready to torture, they can have you.

DETAINEE

Yeah, whatever, torture.
LINDSEY
I have a daughter. I’m not taking any chances. They can have you.

DETAINEE
You’re lying. There’s no torture.

LINDSEY
We’ll get the answers that way. You’ll give the answers that way.

DETAINEE
What, you’re trying to scare me? You’re trying to intimidate me? Grab me, chain me, bag over my head, rods in my legs, all these people I can’t see shoving pills down my throat and slapping and kicking whenever I put my head down? Just to say whatever it is you want to hear?

LINDSEY
Actually, that’s taking it easy.

DETAINEE
This whole thing is sick.

LINDSEY
[Showing the map] No, this is sick. My guess is your people question whether your absence isn’t because you walked on your own. They figure you got identified somehow, you’ve been on a list, you called or communicated from an unsecure, trackable source, and you got apprehended. But because of the viciousness and atrocity of your attacks, it’s not normal arrest. Without seeing it on the news your people recognize with grim awareness they’re playing against a new set of rules. Ultimately they panic, play the only card they have.

DETAINEE
Who are you.

LINDSEY
We starting?

DETAINEE
Starting what.

LINDSEY
Truth.
Who are you.

Lindsey. Lindsey Bryant.

I mean what’s your thing.

Now? I’m a college professor.

College professor.

It’s not that bad. I mean some kids are real pain in the ass, but it beats consulting.

Why are you here.

I was asked.

By who.

The only man in the history of intelligence who overpromises and then over-delivers.

You were something else before.

Right.

Before college.

Yes.
DETAINEE

What.

This.

For college.

For the CIA.

In here.

Afghanistan.

I don’t get it.

They asked me back.

For me.

Yeah.

The girl thing.

Man think. You have no idea.

Okay, so like, where am I?

You’re in the room.

Thought you said truth.
LINDSEY
You’re in the room.

DETAINEE
There another room?

LINDSEY
Very good.

DETAINEE
This ain’t the only room.

LINDSEY
No.

DETAINEE
How many more are there?

LINDSEY
One. They’re ready to move you down the hall to that room.

DETAINEE
Who.

LINDSEY
The people your friends are waging a war against. The authority. The people who asked me to come back. They’re down the hall, right now, waiting for you. I’m the only one protecting you from going there. If you don’t tell me what I want to know, they will take you down the hall to that other room.

DETAINEE
You’re serious.

LINDSEY
Because of my daughter, I’m serious. My turn. I’m assuming you’re not a parent.

DETAINEE
So?

LINDSEY
I’m here to tell you life gets five times more complicated with kids, but six times better. Did you ever want to have kids?
DETAINEE

Doesn’t matter.

LINDSEY

Would you?

DETAINEE

Never thought about it.

LINDSEY

Doesn’t matter. You’ll never have kids since you’re never leaving.

DETAINEE

You keep saying that, why you do keep saying that?

LINDSEY

It’s a cauldron of emotions you never thought could be inside you. The way kids shape your life, your momentum, drag it to their being. You ever get dragged along by something that became bigger and wilder the more it grew, making you feel helpless?

DETAINEE

Maybe.

LINDSEY

Like an active bystander.

DETAINEE

Maybe.

LINDSEY

I lost friends at the Pentagon, 9/11. It wasn’t a couple months later two guys at Justice wrote a little letter providing the legal authorization to conduct torture. Two guys. They were asked. So it’s now legal, still, we even have a secret court, still. And that other guy, the overpromiser? Commanded our Afghan centers. We processed over ten thousand. I worked the room. And down the hall. Still. So let me ask you: ever be part of something, watch something you felt you maybe should have tried to stop?

DETAINEE

Say you’ve got a daughter.
LINDSEY
She’s why I’m here.

DETAINEE
She know that?

LINDSEY
No.

DETAINEE
How come?

LINDSEY
Same reason I bet your mother doesn’t know you’re here.

DETAINEE
What’s her name?

LINDSEY
My daughter?

DETAINEE
Yeah.

LINDSEY
Pump. It’s not her birth name. When I got back from Afghanistan I had it changed in case of retaliation. In case some of them came over for payback.

DETAINEE
She let you call her Pump.

LINDSEY
She didn’t have a choice.

DETAINEE
She didn’t care?

LINDSEY
The father cared.

DETAINEE
He still around?
LINDSEY
Thankfully. Say I did call home, wherever home is, and I spoke to your mother. How’d she describe you?

DETAINEE
Missing. Does your daughter like you?

LINDSEY
I was gone a long time and when I finally came home, she wasn’t interested.

DETAINEE
You regret it.

LINDSEY
Every day.

DETAINEE
Afghanistan.

LINDSEY
Wasn’t the first place I stationed.

DETAINEE
Where else.

LINDSEY
The rainforest. Honing my sense to detect when lies are told. It works on everyone, every single person, except two people.

DETAINEE
Your daughter.

LINDSEY
That’s one.

DETAINEE
Who’s the other?
LINDSEY
Myself. The detainees were vicious killers. All men. I never cared about them. I was protecting me and mine. Until one day, they brought me an Afghani girl, tied to one of the local tribes. I could tell she wasn’t a threat, she was just radicalized by fellowship. She wasn’t what we were there for. I pushed for her release. She can’t be released, the men said, at this point her people will think we’ve loaded her with some kind of beacon or listening device. But I got her released. The picture that was uploaded several days later to the jihadist website, somehow I could still hear her scream. They poured gasoline down her throat and lit a match. That’s when I quit. That’s when I said I’m not going to lie to myself anymore. We think we’re not like that. But here you are.

DETAINEE
So if I don’t tell you…but this is…

LINDSEY
A different country. And you’re never leaving. Unless it’s to go down the hall. Where it will be anything but taking it easy.

DETAINEE
I didn’t do any bombs.

LINDSEY
If I stopped lying to myself, you know what I’d discover? I wanted to send those men down the hall. But I don’t want to send you down the hall.

LINDSEY again shows the sheet.

DETAINEE
Alright. Wait.

LINDSEY
Where are the footballs?

DETAINEE
It’s not that simple.

LINDSEY
Where are they?

DETAINEE
Just...just...I need you to give me something first.
LINDSEY

I’m listening.

DETAINEE

I’d like to call my mother.

_Lights shift._

**SCENE 16.**

**ALL.**

**WENDELL enters the playing area.**

_During the following exchange, the DETAINEE stumbles from the room, as if being shoved, all the way to off._

WENDELL

Hey.

LINDSEY

Sorry. Didn’t mean to wake you.

WENDELL

No, I’ve been up. I’ve been thinking.

LINDSEY

I want to look in on Pump. She sleeping? She here?

WENDELL

You don’t have a man in custody, do you. It’s a woman.

_Stopping her._

LINDSEY

Look, it’s late, early.

WENDELL

That’s why they brought you in. Isn’t it. It has nothing to do with over there. It has to do with who they’ve got here.
LINDSEY

...

WENDELL
Which means maybe what you do now doesn’t matter. Maybe all they wanted was just to get you in the room. Because of who you are now, not where you’ve been then. A Mom from the suburbs, a college professor, educated, with a daughter in high school. If she’s in the room, if she’s involved, then maybe everyone will feel it’s okay to do what they’re going to do next.

This sets in.

LINDSEY
You ever deal with FISA? The secret court?

WENDELL
What did Case tell you? Did he say I was up for it? That I might get nominated?

LINDSEY
You never told me that.

WENDELL
It was just talk, I mean…what, Case bargained your involvement with that?

LINDSEY
[Realizing] It was about all of us.

LINDSEY crosses back to the room.

She sees it now empty.

CASE appears, holding the black burlap.

LINDSEY
My old war buddy.

CASE
I’m sorry, Lindsey. We had to make sure.

LINDSEY
You used me.
CASE

Did I.

LINDSEY

You used my family.

CASE

When my kid ever gets around to talking to me again at least she’ll be alive to do it.

LINDSEY

You even going to tell the masters I got it first?

CASE

You told her your name. And you made up that story. About the Afghan girl.

LINDSEY

Did I.

CASE goes to off.

LINDSEY

I left before I could hear anything.

It’s an ugly business.

And I made a promise.

WENDELL and PUMP now at a kitchen table. Still late, early. They’re playing cards.

WENDELL

Got any fours?

PUMP

You just asked that.

WENDELL

Right. Got any fives?

PUMP

Go fish.
WENDELL
C’mon, you gotta have some fives.

PUMP
Go fish, padre.

WENDELL
How can you not have any fives?

PUMP
The fish are sitting right there.

LINDSEY
Hey…[stopping the action]…I’m home.

Long beat.

WENDELL
What about the new job?

Beat.

LINDSEY
It’s over. You were…

Beat.

WENDELL
Yeah.

LINDSEY
Back to school. [To PUMP] You too, soon, I bet.

It hangs there.

WENDELL
Well…in the meantime…want us to deal you in? C’mon Pump, let’s make a little room for Mom at our brand new kitchen table. Tell her.

PUMP
We’re meeting here, tomorrow, for the concert. Everyone’s coming. Perkins was getting lame anyway.
WENDELL
She’s got some great bands lined up.

PUMP
It’s gonna be huge.

WENDELL
[Dealing] But until our kitchen is invaded by the youth of America prepare yourself for another scintillating family edition of Go Fish. [To PUMP] No wild and [To LINDSEY] no reading minds.

LINDSEY
[To PUMP] Cheryl?

This stops the table. Nobody breathes.

LINDSEY
I’d like to come. To your concert.

PUMP
Yeah. Sure.

Lights shift.
SCENE 17.

LINDSEY.

We see the faint outline of ‘the room’ at center stage.

LINDSEY
My name is Lindsey Bryant.
I used to work in revenge.
And I learned that truth is never truthful.
In fact, the truth is like torture.
It hurts.
Even long after you’ve told it.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.