

Armchair Confidential

ACT I, Scene 1

NEWSCASTER is lit by a spotlight.

NEWSCASTER

The following program contains scenes of graphic violence.
Viewer discretion is advised.

(Spotlight dims to black. A beat, then...<BLAM!> - a jarring musical shot sounds as two figures appear, lit by a flashbulb *FLASH* of light. The figures are frozen in a macabre tableau: one figure slicing the throat of the other. Darkness, a beat, then, <BLAM!/*FLASH*> two figures appear in a second tableau: an attacker swinging an axe at a screaming victim. Darkness, a beat, then, <BLAM!/*FLASH*> a figure appears carrying a garbage can with human limbs poking out from under the lid. Darkness, a beat, then, <BLAM!> all three tableaus are illuminated. This time, the figures break character and look directly into the audience with puzzlement. **1.a. Prologue.**)

CHORUS

WHY THE HELL ARE YOU ALL STILL HERE?
DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T WARN YOU
WHEN THE STORY MAKES YOU SICK

FIGURE 1

THE FELLA CLEARLY SAID

FIGURE 2

THERE'D BE GRIZZLY SCENES AHEAD

CHORUS

YOU FIGGER THAT A TRIGGER WARNING
OUGHT TO DO THE TRICK

WHO CAN TELL WHY YOU'RE ALL STILL HERE?

FIGURE 3

NEED SOME DRAMA TO DISTRACT YOU FROM THE
BLEAK AND BLACK ABYSS?

FIGURE 1

D' JA COME TO RECONNOITER?

FIGURE 2

GET ROPEDED IN BY A FRIEND?

CHORUS

COMPELLED BY SCHADENFREUDE?

LORDY, HELP ME COMPREHEND

WHO'D DELIBERATELY SUBJECT THEMSELV TO THIS?

(As if in answer, <BLAM!>, LUCY appears in a fourth pool of light revealing...)

SETTING:

Lucy's Living Room.

(LUCY is planted in front of the TV. She wears flannel pajamas and outdated glasses. She's using a tablecloth for a blanket. NEWSCASTER stands behind her.)

NEWSCASTER

The killing spree continues in the bedroom community of Barnabus Bay. A third body was discovered this morning - dismembered and reconstructed into a set of grotesque novelty lamps: two fishnet stocking leg lamps, a pair of less conventional fishnet arm lamps, and a fifth creation which, based on crime scene photos, is an affront to both human decency and home decor. Police are at the scene.

SETTING:

The scene of the crime.

(Chief of Police, Mae SHEPHERD strides past the police tape. Seeing the carnage, she unconsciously kisses the pendant hanging from her neck. Officer CAL Sutter tails mousily behind. One look at the gory scene and he immediately turns to leave.)

CAL

Nope!

SHEPHERD

Let's see a little backbone, Sutter.

CAL

I think I see one by the radiator.

SHEPHERD

You were trained for this!

CAL

I got my certificate through correspondence. I work at the pet store three days a week.

(SHEPHERD examines the leg lamp)

SHEPHERD

Hold up--

CAL

(having a panic attack)

I've given out four speeding tickets.

SHEPHERD

Get over here.

CAL

Last winter, I reupholstered the chairs at the station.

SHEPHERD

There's something on the inside of the shade.

CAL

Why do you think I signed up to be a cop? A dental plan, and plenty of time to read!

SHEPHERD

Looks like another cipher. Gimme some more light in here.

(CAL pulls the cord on the leg lamp. It lights up. SHEPHERD stares at CAL. CAL realizes the impropriety of what he's done and slowly, without breaking SHEPHERD's withering gaze, yanks the cord again.)

NEWSCASTER

With no solid leads, the police are completely in the dark.

(The light is extinguished. CAL and SHEPHERD vanish in sync with "...in the dark". The CHORUS appear wearing police hats, their faces eerily lit by their flashlights. **1b. Prologue**)

CHORUS

STAY CALM AS YOU CAN, AND YET
 THINK OF EVERY LIVIN' STRANGER
 AS A LIKELY MORTAL THREAT
 BUT MOST OF ALL BE VERY
 EXCEPTIONALLY WARY
 WHEN ANSWERING THE DOOR!

(There is a loud knock at the door. LUCY starts violently.)

ALDO

Lucy Treyer!

LUCY

Aah!

ALDO

This is the police! Come out with your hands up!

(LUCY unlocks the front door - an elaborate process involving two deadbolts, a barrel bolt, and a chain lock. LUCY opens the door, revealing Aldo. SHE peers down the hall and ushers Aldo in before any nosy neighbour emerges.)

LUCY

I'm gonna kill you!

ALDO

Oh. My. God. Look at you! Those glasses!

LUCY

Whatever. I stepped on my --

ALDO

You had those back in Miss B's class! Is that a tablecloth?

LUCY

I was cold. My blankets were far away.

(LUCY has returned to her seat and turns on the TV.
CHORUS reappear - this time as on-air witnesses.

1c Prologue.)

CHORUS

SHE WAS SUCH A QUIET THING

(ALDO begins tidying the apartment, discarding
take-out containers, wiping off surfaces, etc.)

ALDO

You been out lately?

(ALDO picks a bowl off the counter and tries to
identify the stinking contents.)

LUCY

They found a third body.

ALDO

Canned salmon and...ketchup?

CHORUS

TV FLICKERIN' THROUGH THE BLINDS

LUCY

(caught up with the television)

A 36 year old elementary school teacher. Geez! *(Registering Aldo)*. What? It's breakfast.

ALDO

It's one pm.

LUCY

Who asked you?

CHORUS

EVERY DAY LIKE DEJA VU

ALDO

When's the last time you changed the litter?

LUCY

Bigolio died two months ago.

ALDO

Geez, I'm sorry. *(beat)* So why is the litter box full?

LUCY

It takes me a while to move on, okay?!?

CHORUS

A LITTLE BIT ODD,
BUT IT TAKES ALL KINDS...

ALDO

You're adjusting well to the whole work-from-home thing.
What's it been? A month now?

LUCY

Three. It's great. No commute. No dress code. No "Treat Tuesdays" - everyone with their dead eyes pretending to give a rat's ass about Carol's Nanaimo Bar recipe, telling the same mind-numbing stories about their boring, mediocre kids.
(beat) How's yours by the way?

ALDO

Izzy slept five hours straight last night! And this morning she smiled at me!

LUCY

Oh my god!

ALDO

I know, right? Hella said it's probably gas but --

(LUCY's "Oh my god" was in response to the TV, not ALDO)

LUCY

It's amazing how much blood they can show on daytime television.

ALDO

Ah. *(beat)* Look. I know we left things in a crap place --

LUCY

You figure the killer's local?

ALDO

I'm worried about you, Luce.

LUCY

Something about it's bothering me.

ALDO

A schoolteacher was made into a set of lamps.

LUCY

I keep going over the numbers.

ALDO

We haven't talked since March, and you're going on about a murder.

(LUCY flips through a notebook, ignoring Aldo completely)

LUCY

The first body was found on...June 21st...sixth month, twenty-first day...

(Spotlight on Lucy. The CHORUS stand behind her, representing her complex "Beautiful Mind" thought process and superhuman computational powers. ALDO slowly vanishes into the darkness. **1d Prologue.**)

CHORUS

SIX...TWENTY-ONE...SIX...TWENTY-ONE

ALDO

(Fading into the periphery)

This isn't healthy.

LUCY

...the second victim was July 5th... (*mumbling*)
5th of the 7th...then on the twentieth...

ALDO

You need to get out of the house.

LUCY

6...21...7...5...7...20.

CHORUS

(*overlapping in an ethereal/minimalist soundscape*)

SIX...TWENTY-ONE...SEVEN...FIVE...SEVEN...TWENTY...
SIX...TWENTY-ONE...SEVEN...FIVE...SEVEN...TWENTY...
SIX...TWENTY-ONE...SEVEN...FIVE!!!

(Lights back up. The CHORUS disappears.)

ALDO

Did you hear a word I just said?

LUCY

I'm so close. I can feel it!

ALDO

Wake up and smell the ketchup and canned salmon! You gotta shake off the cobwebs. Take a class. Get a haircut. Go speed dating.

LUCY

Oh My GOD! Enough already! How'ja like if I barged into *your* house? Put *your* shit under the microscope? "Aldo! The inspirational prints in your office make me wanna barf. Aldo! When you smile in pictures you look like a mannequin! Aldo! Your weird baby looks like a possum."

(A long beat as ALDO digests the insult.)

LUCY

I went too far. Just zip that tape riiiiight back --

ALDO

A lot of babies take time to --

LUCY

Rewind. Bzzzzzzzzz. Re-record. Click. "Hi Aldo. Guess what? I still mean it about the creepy mannequin smile. Boom! Sorry, not sorry!"

(They both stew, then)

ALDO

There are those...who would find your frankness charming.

(launches in)

Not to sound like a broken record but my cousin Harmony is *still* single and I can tell you she's --

(Lucy retreats under the table cloth.)

LUCY

Uggggggghhh!

(2. What are the Chances?)

ALDO

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES YOU'LL SPARK A FLAME

WITH NO FLINT IN THE GAME?

IT GETS OLD RUBBING A STICK IN THE COLD

AND WISHIN'

(YOU NEED SOME TINDER)

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES YOU'LL LAND A BITE?

LUCY

I just--

ALDO
SWIPING LEFT

LUCY
Can I--

ALDO
OUT OF SIGHT?

LUCY
Listen, if ya -

ALDO
IT TAKES CHARM AND ALLURE
TO ASSURE A GOOD FISHIN' TRIP
BUT IF YOU'RE SCARED OF TAKING CHANCES
THE ODDS YOU'LL FIND ROMANCE IS ZIP!

(LUCY snaps. SHE snatches the garbage bag out of
Aldo's hands and dumps the contents on the floor.)

LUCY
AAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!!!

YOU'RE REALLY DRY-HUMPIN' MY LAST NERVE
WITH YOUR BULLCRAP HALLMARK PATRONIZING
CHICKEN FRIGGIN SOUP FOR THE SOOOOOUL PLATITUDES!

FUNNY - I NEVER THOUGHT TO
"JERSEY UP AND JOIN THE GAME"
SO THOUGHTFUL!
SO NICE!
THIS UNSOLICITED ADVICE
FROM THE POMPOUS ASS WHO THINKS MY ATTITUDE'S TO BLAME!

YOU GOT SOME BALLS, ALDO, TO WALTZ IN SPOUTING
"EVERY DAY'S AN EMPTY PAGE"
I WROTE THE BOOK ON EMPTINESS BUT WHAT DO I KNOW?
SO, HUSH UP,
CUT THE CHATTER,
THE MARRIED MAN'S GOT THOUGHTS ON THE MATTER!
TEACH ME HOW TO QUIT THE STATUS QUO!

DON'T YOU KNOW EVERY DAY YOU LEAVE YOUR HOME
 YOU THROW OPEN THE DOOR TO DANGERS?
 FROM RECKLESS DRIVERS, RADIATION,
 E.COLI, AND SKETCHY STRANGERS
 THE BODY SHAME AND ASPARTAME
 THAT WEAR A PERSON THIN
 YOU BRAVE AN EFFIN' TIDAL WAVE
 WHEN YOU LET THE OUTSIDE IN

DON'T YOU KNOW EVERY TIME YOU OPEN YOUR HEART
 YOU DELIBERATELY DROP YOUR DEFENCES?
 A DAILY DOSE OF FAIRY TALES CAN DISTRACT YOU
 FROM LOVE'S EXPENSES
 AND WHO CAN BANK ON COMMON SENSE
 WHEN LONELY HEARTS COMMINGLE?

READ THE STATISTICS, ALDO
 YOU'LL BE SHOCKED TO DISCOVER
 THE CHANCES ARE 3 OUT OF 5 IF I'M KILLED,
 I'LL BE DONE IN BY A LOVER
 SO THE ONLY SENSIBLE CHOICE
 TO KEEP MY POTENTIAL ASSAILANTS AT BAY
 IS TO STAY PERPETUALLY SINGLE!

(Spent, LUCY collapses in front of the TV.)

ALDO

Don't you think that's a bit...dramatic?

LUCY

Shush. They're bringing out the body!

ALDO

I don't want --

LUCY

Shhhh!

(LUCY finds the remote and unmutes the news.)

NEWSCASTER

...neighbours watch from behind the tape as paramedics exit
 1276 Ralston Boulevard.

1276... LUCY

Lucy- ALDO

CHORUS 1 (*as before*)
TWELVE SEVENTY-SIX

LUCY
The first murder was at 801 Erikson!

CHORUS 2
EIGHT OH ONE

ALDO
This doesn't matter!

(LUCY is lost in her thoughts, consulting her notes.)

LUCY
Then...1824 McKercher.

CHORUS 3
EIGHTEEN TWENTY-FOUR

ALDO
I'm your pal. Listen to me!

LUCY
1276...801...1824...

CHORUS
TWELVE SEVENTY-SIX...EIGHT OH ONE...EIGHTEEN TWENTY-FOUR
TWELVE SEVENTY-SIX...EIGHT OH ONE...EIGHTEEN TWENTY-FOUR
TWELVE SEVENTY-SIX...EIGHT OH ONE...EIGHTEEN TWENTY-FOUR

(Lights out on the CHORUS. LUCY starts as though struck by lightning.)

LUCY

Aldo, I've got it! The pattern - I - I'm a genius!

ALDO

Lucy --

LUCY

Pack your bags!

ALDO

What?

LUCY

You said Hella's gone to a conference for a couple days?

ALDO

Yeah, she's been pumping milk so much her nipples are like -

LUCY

Ergh!!! No! Okay! You wanna get me out of the house? Let's do this! Let's go to Barnabus Bay! You and me! And fine, the baby can tag along.

ALDO

Whoawhoawhoa that is NOT what I --

LUCY

I can't believe we're gonna solve a murder!

ALDO

I refuse to --

LUCY

You want me to take a chance? Flip a coin. Heads: I sign up for some stupid ...whatever...speed dating thing. Tails: you drive me to Barnabus Bay and I get two days to solve an honest to god mystery. It would be so much FUN! When's the last time you had fun?

ALDO

I have fun! My life is fun!

LUCY

Right. These days you get your kicks tracking baby bowel movements. Comparing car seat brands.

ALDO

That's not fair, I--

LUCY

Come on! What's the worst thing that could happen?

(LUCY accidentally turns on the TV again.)

NEWSCASTER

- grotesque, dismembered victims, discovered with severed --

LUCY

Heads?...

(LUCY quickly turns the TV off.)

...or Tails?

LUCY

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES WE'LL CRACK THE CASE?

ALDO

YOU'RE REALLY DRY HUMPIN' MY LAST NERVE, LUCY!

LUCY

LIVIN' LARGE!

GIVIN' CHASE!

ALDO

I CAN'T

UP AND LEAVE LIKE THAT

LUCY

THANKS FRIEND, FOR THE ENDLESS INSPIRATION

ALDO

I NEVER SAID "LET'S PLAN A VIGILANTE VACATION!"

LUCY

SO HERE'S TO TAKIN' CHANCES

ALDO
WHEN I SAID "RISK" I WAS THINKING MAYBE
SENSUAL ADVANCES

LUCY
JUST PACK ENOUGH DIAPERS FOR YOU AND THE BABY

ALDO
LUCY,

LUCY
ALDO, BUCKLE UP!

ALDO
YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE!

LUCY
Call it!

(LUCY flips the coin. Lights out on the musical button.)