

Hellbent in a Northwoods Cabin

A Play

by Kim E. Ruyle

Kim E. Ruyle
W6842 Blue Heron Blvd #14
Fond du Lac, WI 54937
kim.ruyle@inventivetalent.com
616-308-3255



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Cast of Characters

<u>DANA</u>	Female. White. 40s.
<u>MARLENE</u>	Female. White. 40s.
<u>EUGENE</u>	Male. Black. 40s.
<u>ADAM</u>	Male. White. Mid-30s – 40s.

TIME: November 19, 2021, the day Kyle Rittenhouse was found not guilty of fatally shooting two people during the Kenosha unrest of 2020. Deer hunting season in Wisconsin begins tomorrow.

SETTING: Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, northcentral Wisconsin.

SET: A primitive hunting cabin. Two bunkbeds, table and chairs, pine sideboard, propane camp stove, and a basin with a deep well hand pump. A wall rack holds fishing rods. Lined canvas coats and orange hunting vests hang from pegs on the wall. Various hunting cabin accoutrements are on shelves, in the sideboard or hang from a wall, including a couple of kerosene lanterns, two cast iron skillet – one large and one small, a cutting board, an assortment of knives, a high-power flashlight, a fire extinguisher, and a full-size axe. Also clearly displayed, a hatchet with a distinctive, stylized metal handle that incorporates a pistol grip. Marlene's large family photo hangs prominently, everyone wearing camo and rifles slung over their shoulders.

SYNOPSIS: It all starts innocently enough when on the afternoon of November 19th, 2021, four coworkers are thrown together in a hunting cabin in the Wisconsin Northwoods on this, the very day that Kyle Rittenhouse has been found not guilty of fatally shooting two people during the Kenosha unrest of 2020. One of the four is an interloper, a fish out of water who has no business being there. As they discover unnerving truths about each other, including how they are each uniquely connected to the events in Kenosha, hostilities are sparked, alliances form and break, and everyone is put in jeopardy. How destructive can polarizing values become on a personal level? These four coworkers are about to find out.

RUNNING TIME: ~95 Minutes. There is an optional act break.

PRODUCTION NOTES

- Please respect and value all four characters. Each is uniquely flawed, but each is authentic and true to their deeply held values.
- Please avoid favoring any single viewpoint. None is wholly right. None is wholly wrong.
- Rather than a small plastic polar bear, the prop can be created by carving a bar of white soap to make a figure more easily split with the hatchet.
- Ellipses (...) at the end of a line indicate an unfinished thought, dialogue that trails off. Ellipses within a line of dialogue suggest a verbal pause.
- Brackets [] indicate sentiment expressed by unspoken words.
- This play runs in real time for a total of ~95 minutes. There is an optional act break for those producing companies that prefer to incorporate an intermission.

“It's easy to take a gun and annihilate your opposition, but what is really exciting to me is to see people with differing views come together and finally respect each other.”

~Fred Rogers

"The search for a scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions."

~Dwight D. Eisenhower

“Vegetarians are cool. All I eat are vegetarians – except for the occasional mountain lion steak.”

~Ted Nugent

“There was no threatening behavior [by Rittenhouse] that started this. Mr. Rosenbaum was *hellbent on causing trouble* that night, but Kyle Rittenhouse’s behavior was protected under the law of the state of Wisconsin.”

~Mark Richards, defense attorney for Kyle Rittenhouse

ACT 1

Friday evening, dusk. A rustic hunting cabin, dim and dank. Marlene enters with an ice chest on which balances a grocery bag. She's followed by Dana who is similarly laden. They're dressed for hunting: jeans, boots, denim or flannel shirts, and down vests. Dana wears a red cap with neither label nor logo. Both have rifles slung over their shoulders. They unload and light lanterns. They converse while wiping things down and fluffing mattresses. Dana is speaking as they enter.

DANA

A vaporizer! Wouldn't that be sweet? I want a hood-mounted ray gun. Vaporize those slow-driving assholes. You know the problem, don't you? They don't know how to read. The sign says *slower traffic keep right*. Slow – ER. It doesn't say *slow*, does it? ER! Slow – ER. Say the speed limit is 70 and you're going 75. And say I'm going 80. Who's slower? You are! Don't mean you're *slow*. Jes slow-ER. Nobody wants to be *slow*. *That's* the fuckin' problem. Everbody thinks they're speedin' by goin' five over, but some of us don't jes wanna dance around the speed limit. We wanna kick it in the ass.

MARLENE

(Pausing to look around, reflect)

God. Just remembering the last time...

DANA

So why can't those slow driving left lane fuckers move to the right lane? I'm asking.

MARLENE

Vaporized. I got it!

DANA

Last time what?

MARLENE

Oh. Two years ago. I got a four-point. Greg got a doe. Gave him lots of shit. The last time...

DANA

Oh. Sorry... No wonder all the dust.

MARLENE

For tomorrow, we got brats/ and –

DANA

/And lefthand turns.

MARLENE

Jesus, Dana. We're here. Let it go.

DANA

The left lane is for passing and making lefthand turns. Why in hell isn't that the first thing they teach you in driver's ed? ...Want a beer?

MARLENE

(Heavy sigh)

Sure.

They open beers and have a seat.

DANA

It's a relief, though, ain't it? The verdict? I mean, I knew no way he was getting' convicted. Twas self-defense. Pure and simple. Kyle had the law on his side... Fuckin' Kenosha.

MARLENE

Oh. I thought you meant the beer. When you said relief... And don't bring up Kenosha when Eugene's here. Still a touchy subject. Not everyone agrees with you. About the verdict. Lots of people calling Rittenhouse a murderer.

DANA

Murderer? No fuckin' way! Could use a million more kids like Kyle. And Eugene was there. He can't possibly think –

MARLENE

No! I'm warning you, Dana. Do not bring up Rittenhouse. Do not mention Kenosha.

DANA

Yer warnin' me? Jesus. Lighten' up. I ain't gonna say nuthin.

An uncomfortable pause. Marlene glares but finally clinks bottles to lighten the mood.

MARLENE

But the beer is good, isn't it?

DANA

Case and a half. Should be enough.

MARLENE

Damn, girl. How much beer –

DANA

Eugene might be a thirsty boy. I'm thinking –

MARLENE

Don't say *boy!*

DANA

What? I dint mean nuthin... Anyways, don't worry. I'll sit my ass in the deer stand and won't move, even I git my buck. Yer gonna need some privacy. *You know.* For –

MARLENE

Nothing's gonna happen. Not *here.* Not. In the cabin.

DANA

Yeah, right. Ya know ya want it.

MARLENE

Don't you think it's too soon? They say one year for every seven years of marriage.

DANA

That's crazy! Who says?

MARLENE

Book I read.

DANA

Like yer gonna be able to wait another, *what?* Another year? *Two?* You'll be all dried up. No, Gurl. Time to give it up.

MARLENE

Maybe... I don't know. He's working today so probably won't get here in time for supper.

DANA

Naw. He'll scootch that sweet butt up here in no time. And ya know, first thing he's gonna wanna crawl inta bed with ya.

MARLENE

What are you? In high school?

DANA

Jes sayin'. You've been datin' long enough –

MARLENE

No dates!

DANA

Breaks together. Gettin' all cozy in the breakroom. People notice. Tell me those ain't dates.

MARLENE

No! Not. Not really. Not. Dates.

DANA

Whatever. He ain't gonna be thinkin' 'bout no supper. Yer the one on the menu, Gurl.

MARLENE

Don't be gross. We've got brats for lunch, but I brought some steaks in case –

DANA

Yeah! Give that boy some protein. He's gonna need his strength. And don't tell me this weekend ain't a date. Anyways. Comin' up on two years since [Greg died]. It's time...

(A wicked, teasing smile)

Eugene gets here, Gurl, ya don't jump his bones, I might jes do it myself.

MARLENE

Will you *please*?

(Rummaging in coolers)

Oh, crap. I didn't bring any eggs... Okay, so, for breakfast, just skillet toast and bacon.

DANA

Long as ya got coffee.

MARLENE

You hungry? Now?

DANA

Bacon and coffee. That's perfect... Naw, I'm good.

Marlene tosses jerky. Dana shrugs. They munch jerky and sip beer. Dana notes fishing rods on wall.

DANA (CONT.)

How far's the lake?

MARLENE

There's a trail. Not far.

DANA

How deep? They got muskies?

MARLENE

You'd need a boat.

DANA

Thought Greg had a boat.

MARLENE

I sold it after [he passed]. Medical bills and... You know.

DANA

Oh, fuck. Sorry.

MARLENE

No, that's [okay]... Good thing about this time of year, no mosquitoes.

DANA

Gonna keep it? The cabin?

MARLENE

Love this place... I don't know. The farm. Don't know if I can keep both. Two kids in college.

DANA

When I split from my ex, all I got was a car payment. Fuckin' loser.

Marlene rises, pulls flannel sheets from the sideboard, tosses a set to Dana. They quickly fit three bunks as they continue the conversation.

MARLENE

Flannel sheets. Make me sad.

DANA

Yeah, I've always thought that about flannel. Gives off a sad vibe.

MARLENE

We got married, Greg said he wanted to give me everything. Whatever I dreamed. I told him only thing in life I wanted was him between flannel sheets to keep me warm on winter nights.

DANA

You guys. Should a had a Hallmark movie.

MARLENE

Sell the farm, I'd have to sell the John Deere. Can't bear the thought.

DANA

Sell it. Ya don't need the headache. Sell the farm. Keep the cabin.

MARLENE

He loved that tractor.

The sound of a car door slamming outside. Dana looks out the door, shuts it, and spins around.

DANA

Told ya he'd come early!

MARLENE

Eugene? Already?

DANA

Not his truck out there, but it's him. Comin' this way. Big as life.

Marlene opens the door to reveal Eugene wearing jeans, boots, flannel shirt, and a down vest.

EUGENE

Marley.

He steps in to kiss Marlene but is stopped by her hand to his chest. She nods toward Dana.

MARLENE

You're here. I thought you'd be later, but, uh. It's good to see you.

EUGENE

Oh! Hi, Dana. Didn't know you'd be, uh, [here]... So, so you're hunting, too?

MARLENE

Yes, she's –

DANA

Marley?

MARLENE

It's okay. Kind of like it.

DANA

Reminds me of a dog.

MARLENE

Make yourself comfortable. We've got –

EUGENE

Not a dog. Marley. As in *Bob Marley*.

Dana cracks up and flips Marlene's hair.

DANA

Need some dreadlocks, girl.

Dana! MARLENE

EUGENE
Not the guy, so much, but there's this song.

MARLENE
Don't give her any –

EUGENE
Is This Love. The lyrics –

DANA MARLENE
Yes! Oh, my god! No, don't!

EUGENE
(Singing)
Is this love, is this love, is this love that I'm feelin'?

Dana wears a wide grin, but Marlene is mortified.

EUGENE (CONT.)
What? It's a great song. Roof over our heads. Sharing shelter. Single bed.

DANA
Oh! It's perfect. And flannel sheets, right?

EUGENE
Uh, flannel sheets?

DANA
Marlene – *Marley* – was just telling me how she's itching to get back in the saddle.

EUGENE
Good to hear.

MARLENE
[Fuck you, Dana!] Don't listen to her. Have a seat.

EUGENE
Well. Here's the thing. On my way, I made a quick stop at Smitty's. You know, they've got the gas pumps outside next to the bar. And. You know Adam?

DANA
The new PC?

EUGENE

The one.

DANA

Kinda cute.

MARLENE

What about him?

EUGENE

I walked in to pay my bill, and Adam's at the bar. Not sure how long he'd been there, but I think he's past his limit. Crying in his beer. Then started getting mouthy. Getting a little crazy.

MARLENE

But he's a [manager]. Managers don't usually let themselves get –

DANA

What? Ya ain't never seen a manager get crazy? Never had a manager hit on ya?

MARLENE

They wouldn't dare.

DANA

Well, not when Greg was [alive]. Yeah. Okay. But I had more 'n a few grab my ass.

EUGENE

No. That's not what he was, uh [doing]. No. But the guy created a scene. Started ranting about this. *Day*. Something about this being. One. Fucked. Up. *Day*.

DANA

Pretty damn good day, ya ask me. Kyle got hisself, uh... Never mind.

EUGENE

No, don't go there.

(Pause)

But then. Then. There's a bunch of guys in the bar wearing Packer jerseys. And Adam. Oh, my God. He makes a wiseass comment about the Packers and the Bears.

DANA

Oh, shit! Don't tell me he's a fuckin' Bears fan.

MARLENE

Isn't he from Chicago? So, [yeah, probably].

EUGENE

How the Bears have more Hall of Famers. Then things went sideways.

DANA

Bears fans. Bunch a assholes. Guy's lucky he's still walkin'.

EUGENE

Out in the car, in fact.

MARLENE

He's. Here?

EUGENE

What I'm trying to tell you. Some guys followed him out to the parking lot. Started pushing. And. Well. When he took a punch, I, uh, I kind of went to his rescue, helped him into his car and split before they could do some serious damage.

MARLENE

But why'd you bring him here?

EUGENE

Okay. I know. But listen. Guy refused to get in my truck. I tried, but he wouldn't leave his car. You know? Fumbling with his keys. And. Well, I couldn't leave him. After he got popped in the eye, it turned into a mob outside the bar. And they were about to kick the shit out of him.

DANA

I can see that. Fuck the Chicago Bears.

EUGENE

He was. Adam, uh, he was in no shape to drive. A little tipsy maybe. Barely conscious and, with his eye, couldn't seem get his car door opened. And. I didn't know what to do. Even, uh, even if I knew where he lived, I'd have to figure out how to get back to the bar to get my truck.

MARLENE

So, he's here. Outside. Now.

EUGENE

I grabbed some gear from my truck, locked it up, and then... Well, I didn't know... I'm in his car, and the only place I could think of –

DANA

I get it. She was callin' yer name. You were thinkin' 'bout Marley!

An awkward pause. Marlene and Eugene, embarrassed. Dana, enjoying the hell out of it.

EUGENE

In a way. Yeah. I, uh... I didn't want to miss opening day... And... Well, yeah. Didn't want to miss spending the night [with you].

MARLENE

Okay... But now what?

EUGENE

Guy's curled up in the car. Seems to be hurting, and I think it's more than his eye.

MARLENE

You can't leave him out there.

DANA

Hell, yes! Bring the boy in.

EUGENE

If that's okay. But let's keep an eye on him. Way he was acting in the car, I don't know.

DANA

Long as he ain't spoutin' shit 'bout the Packers, it'll be fine.

EUGENE

All the way up here he seemed out of it. Only opened his mouth twice. First time he was just talking under his breath, you know? Like he was talking to himself. He mumbled something about being *hellbent*. Or *hellbent on trouble*. I wasn't sure.

MARLENE

What?

EUGENE

Weird, right? But just a minute ago, he sat up and said it clearly. *Hellbent on trouble, my ass.*

MARLENE

Okay. That's doesn't sound –

DANA

Fuckin' Bears. He wants trouble, I'll give it to him.

EUGENE

So now, uh, I don't know if I should, uh, [bring him in].

MARLENE

Well. You can't leave him out there.

EUGENE

Okay. If you're sure. I will keep him in line. So...

Marlene nods, and Eugene exits.

DANA

Your guy's kinda sweet. Goin' to the rescue of a manager. And a fuckin' Bears fan no less.

MARLENE

Don't call him that. Not. My guy.

DANA

Hell, he's not. I saw him 'bout to smooch on ya... How many steaks ya got?

MARLENE

This is just great. You know they can't stay the night. Not. Not with Adam here.

DANA

Don't do that! Think 'bout it. With Adam here, I can, ya know, keep him occupied while you and Eugene do your thing.

MARLENE

We don't even know Adam. Not really. I'm not comfortable. Him spending the night.

DANA

Oh, come on. Guy's not gonna make any trouble with Eugene in the cabin.

Eugene enters followed by Adam who's wearing business casual, no coat. He enters looking like a fish out of water next to others who wear denim or flannel shirts and down vests. Adam sports a purple shiner on one eye. Dana grabs beers from a cooler.

MARLENE

Hi, Adam. Come on in.

DANA

Got you a beer but. Holy shit! Looks like you need something for that eye.

EUGENE

No more beer.

ADAM

No. I'll... I'll take the beer.

Adam takes the beer, sinks into a chair, and holds the cold bottle against his eye. Eugene shrugs, accepts beer. Everyone sits. Awkward silence.

ADAM

Thanks for the beer.

DANA

Were the guys from the plant? That hit ya? They know yer one a the PCs?

ADAM

Hell, if I know.

DANA

Fuckin' with a manager. Must be outta their minds.

EUGENE

Different shift. Some of them had to know. Probably not the guy who took a swing.

DANA

Should know, ya can't be raggin' on the Packers.

MARLENE

Want me to make an ice pack? For the/ eye.

ADAM

/No. I'm fine.

EUGENE

Wasn't so much what he said about the Packers.

DANA

What?

EUGENE

He made a comment about the fans.

MARLENE

Packer fans?

DANA

Oh, shit! No wonder he gotta black eye.

EUGENE

Something about them. Eating cheese. And shitting creampuffs.

DANA

(A good laugh)

For a production controller, you're a crazy fuckin' dude. Wasn't no creampuff hit ya in the eye.

ADAM

Fuckin' sledgehammer, what it was.

MARLENE

So, what's the plan?

DANA

Stay the night! We got four beds.

MARLENE

That's probably not...

EUGENE

I'm not sure...

DANA

Whatcha say, Adam? Spend the night! Go get Eugene's truck tomorrow after the hunt.

ADAM

(Pause, looking around)

After this fuckin' day. What do I care? Yeah... Okay... Maybe. I guess.

Dana beams. Marlene and Eugene look at each other awkwardly until she nods unconvincingly.

EUGENE

Well, if you're sure, I'll go move the car and grab my gear.

DANA

Go on ahead. Me and Marley will get the other bed ready for ya.

ADAM

I can move it. Make sure it's locked up. But first...

Adam pulls a half-pint bottle of whiskey from a pocket and takes a swig.

EUGENE

What the hell. Where'd you get that?

DANA

Oh, hell, yeah. The boy got some good stuff.

ADAM

Sine qua non. For a fucked-up day like today.

Adam smiles and holds the bottle out to Dana. She accepts it with a flirtatious smile, takes a swig, and wipes her mouth with a sleeve. Eugene and Marlene look on with some concern, unsure what's going on between them. Adam pockets the bottle.

DANA

For a fuckin' Bears fan, maybe the boy ain't so bad.

ADAM

I am. Not. A Bears fan.

DANA

Okay, then. Give the boy another point.

Adam opens his beer and takes a long swig.

EUGENE

What's going on with you, man? You can't be –

ADAM

Need a chaser. That's what's going on.

Adam shakes his head as if clearing cobwebs then speaks in an ominous voice to no one in particular.

ADAM

The die has been cast. *Alea iacta es.* Hellbent my fucking ass.

He slowly stands, perhaps starting to feel the effect of the alcohol, and grabs the back of the chair to steady himself.

ADAM (CONT.)

Fucker really clocked me. Still kinda dizzy.

EUGENE

Sit back down. I'll take care of the car.

ADAM

Naw. I'll be all right.

Eugene exits and Adam follows a bit unsteadily.

DANA

Jesus. What was that?

Marlene gets another set of flannel sheets and quickly makes up the last bunk.

DANA (CONT.)

I seen him in the plant but never even talked to him 'fore now.

MARLENE

He needs to lay off the booze. And what's with the Latin?

DANA

Says he ain't a fuckin' Bears fan, but he starts raggin' on the Packers, better hold me back.

(A devilish smile)

Kinda cute, though. I'm gonna give it a shot. Save him from the dark side.

MARLENE

No! Don't get any ideas.

DANA

Why not? If you and Eugene are –

MARLENE

Stop!

(Thoughtful pause)

And you don't think he really wants to, you know? With you here? Adam here?

DANA

Eugene? You kiddin'? Singin' *this is love, this is love*. That boy got a boner size a the Milwaukee City Hall tower growing in his pants jes for you. Gurl. Ya need to sit yerself on top a that tower.

MARLENE

Yeah. But. I don't know. A coworker. That's just asking for trouble.

DANA

Don't mean ya can't screw his brains out. Besides, different department. Anyways, can't let an org chart dictate who ya gonna screw... What's takin' them boys so long?

Dana opens the door a crack to peek out, closes it and spins laughing.

DANA (CONT.)

Them boys are out there pissin' on a tree.

MARLENE

God, men are so/ [crude].

DANA

/Free, what they are. Ain't all embarrassed by their bodies. Tell me you don't wish you could whip it out and let loose a shower anytime mood strikes ya.

MARLENE

No. Dana. I really don't.

DANA

I had a dick, wouldn't let it go to waste.

Eugene and Adam enter. Eugene shoulders a backpack and carries a rifle case. Adam carries an aluminum case.

DANA

Looks like you boys are loaded for bear.

EUGENE

Just deer. Loaded for deer.

ADAM

Could have left this in the car, I guess. And just so you know, I'm not a fan [of guns].

EUGENE

You don't want to leave a gun case in the car. And your car's got no trunk space.

ADAM

Yeah, it does. The trunk's up front. And this isn't a –

DANA

Not a fan a what?

Adam just gives a look and then joins Eugene in setting their stuff aside.

MARLENE

Shall I start supper? Everybody hungry? Or we can just snack for now.

DANA

Not a fan a what? Huntin'? What's in yer case?

ADAM

Oh. You know. *Panem et circenses*... Just a box of tricks.

Adam gives a coy smile as Dana steps close and flirtatiously touches Adam's arm.

DANA

Ooh. A trickster.

They share a vibe while Eugene and Marlene look on: *What the hell's up with those two?*

MARLENE
Okaaay. Uh, everybody like steaks?

EUGENE
Sure.

ADAM
Have you got any veggies? Or fruit?

MARLENE
Oh, uh... [Not really.]

DANA
Veggies? Fruit?

EUGENE
Have a seat. You feeling any better?

Adam nods, sits, and guzzles beer. The alcohol begins to slowly have an effect.

MARLENE
Well, I've got bread and butter. Bacon. Steak. Brats and buns. Some cheese. And I've got beer and coffee. Oh. And some jerky and pretzels.

ADAM
Not really hungry, but maybe I'll eat some pretzels. Later. Thanks for the beer.

DANA
It's *venison* jerky, that makes any difference. Pretty damn good.

ADAM
Yeah. No. Not really hungry.

DANA
(This is so damn amusing)
Don't tell me. You don't eat meat. *And*. Ya don't like huntin'. *And*. You're a Bears fan. *And*. You're in a huntin' cabin in northern Wisconsin. Gotta say, you got some crazy big balls on ya.

ADAM
I told you. I'm not a Bears fan. It's all anybody talks about. But I've got no interest. Don't know anything about the Bears. Or the Bulls... Except maybe what they mean on Wall Street.

EUGENE
(To Marlene)
Have you got a permanent tree stand?

ADAM

I've been known to eat fish.

MARLENE

Two permanent stands. Through some woods, about fifty yards north. We've had good luck.

DANA

Lake's not far. We can catch somethin' for the fish eater. Where's yer tackle box?

MARLENE

It's dark. How are you going to fish in the dark?

ADAM

You've got a lake?

DANA

Okay. Maybe tomorrow then. But we could walk down to the lake now. Check it out.

EUGENE

Might be best to wait 'til morning. Rest up a bit.

ADAM

I'm fine.

MARLENE

What about some supper?

DANA

(Grabbing flashlight)

No hurry. Let me take the big-balled fish eater on a little walk. The night air'll do him good.

MARLENE

Better check the –

Dana hits Marlene squarely in the eyes with a bright beam and laughs.

DANA

How are the batteries, Marley?

Marlene shields her eyes. Dana laughs, turns the flashlight off, grabs a canvas coat from the rack.

MARLENE

Not that one.

DANA

What?

MARLENE

Take the other coat.

DANA

Ooh. Got it. This one was, uh, [Greg's]. Yeah. Okay. Come on, man. I'll even let ya hold my hand, ya want to.

ADAM

(Grins and throws on the coat)

Lead on, cheese eater.

Dana grins and takes Adam's hand, and they exit.

Eugene moves to Marlene, gets close.

MARLENE

Dana will chew him up and spit him out.

EUGENE

Will she? I didn't know she was going to, um...

(Awkward pause)

I've been looking forward to this weekend. And I guess. Well, I didn't know Dana'd be here.

MARLENE

(Turning away to rummage in a cooler)

I know. It's just. Here at the cabin. I didn't know about. I wasn't sure about. And then I thought, you know, Dana might, uh...

EUGENE

Relax, Marley. It's fine. If you feel you need Dana as a... A buffer, I guess. But you've got to know, I'd never push for anything if you're not ready.

Marlene approaches intently, gives a brief kiss, and steps back. Eugene pulls her back. They kiss passionately. After a moment, still in embrace....

MARLENE

Thank you. Just. Not this weekend.

EUGENE

No. Not with Dana here. And now with Adam.

Marlene breaks from the embrace and sits, troubled.

MARLENE

I mean. Not here. It's just, this cabin has too many [memories].

EUGENE

(Sits, takes her hand)

Too many ghosts?

MARLENE

I don't like that word.

EUGENE

Memories then. I get it. You've got memories.

A moment, both gazing at Marlene's family picture.

MARLENE

Really good memories... And a couple of kids.

EUGENE

What? They won't like me?

MARLENE

No. I didn't mean that.

(Off Eugene's puzzled expression)

No. No. They'll be happy for me. Happy that I found. You know. Finally.

EUGENE

Anything I can do? Make it easier.

MARLENE

Right now, you can just sit and watch me fix some supper.

EUGENE

Nothing I'd like better than watching you.

(Grinning)

Almost nothing.

Marlene studies their locked hands. They share a moment, then she rises to look in a cooler.

MARLENE

But nothing naughty this weekend... Shall I fry steaks or brats?

EUGENE

(Rises, wraps Marlene in a hug from behind)

Whatever's easiest. What did Dana mean about flannel sheets?

MARLENE

(Turning with a smile)

Flannel sheets. That's classified information. You don't have clearance. But maybe...

As they kiss passionately, the door bursts open and Dana and Adam enter. Adam's smiling, showing interest in Dana who's laughing. Marlene and Eugene quickly step back from their embrace.

DANA

Oh, my God! Whatchu guys doin'?

MARLENE

Nothing! Just getting ready for some supper.

DANA

Some supper.

MARLENE

[Shut it, Dana!] You can help out with –

DANA

Hey! You guys know Adam's been to jail?

ADAM

(Lightly, bit of a grin)

Hold on... I didn't tell you so you could blab to the world.

DANA

(To Marlene and Eugene)

Won't tell me what for.

(Having fun)

Come on, man. You were jes openin' up. Whatchu do?

Adam shakes his head, grabs another beer, opens it, and takes a big swig. Dana, teasing, hits him with flashlight beam. Adam recoils, nearly falls.

DANA (CONT.)

Get in lotsa bar fights, do ya?

MARLENE

Why don't you put the torch away and make yourself useful? Help me with some supper.

Dana is all giggles as she puts the flashlight away then turns and gives everyone a look.

DANA

What?

EUGENE

Marley's going to fix us some brats. That okay? Adam? Will you eat a brat?

ADAM

I'm good.

MARLENE

You want to get the table ready?

DANA

First, Adam's gotta show us somethin'.

ADAM

(Half-hearted grin)

Now, don't start –

DANA

What's in your case? Come on, man. Show us some magic tricks.

ADAM

That's okay. You don't want to see that.

DANA

Like hell we don't. This guy ain't jes a production controller. He's a fuckin' magician!

EUGENE

A magician, huh?

DANA

(Excitedly, taking a seat)

What he said. Come on, man. Open up that big ass case and give us a show.

Adam pulls out his bottle to take another pull on the whiskey. He winks at Dana who giggles.

EUGENE

Oh, come on, man. With the drinking.

ADAM

(Stiffening, getting serious and looking at Eugene)

All right. For all the gun nuts... *Acta, non verba*... Just one illusion.

DANA

An illusion! Hear that? This guy's the real deal. Come on. Have a seat.

Eugene gives Adam a hard stare and takes a seat.
Marlene sits beside him. Adam takes a swig of his
beer before turning to rummage in his case.

MARLENE

(To Dana, on the down-low)

What happened out there? You couldn't have made it to the lake. Not that fast.

DANA

Only got ten yards and guy had to stop to lean 'gainst a tree and take another leak. Whatcha think? Are bears attracted to smell of a man's piss?

EUGENE

Don't be joking about bears. Probably hibernating by now, but if not, they'll be fattening up for the winter. And they're active at night.

MARLENE

Bears won't be a problem. There are wolves around, but I'd be more concerned about a cougar.

DANA

Marley doesn't scare ya, does she, Eugene? She's a cougar.

EUGENE

She's not a [cougar]. No. She doesn't scare me.

MARLENE

What's he got in there? I thought it must be a gun case.

DANA

Hey, Adam. Thought ya dint believe in guns.

Adam stands and turns with a stony expression. A
pistol in his hand hangs at his side. The women
gasp. Eugene stands, ready to spring into action.

EUGENE

Hey, man. What's with the pistol?

ADAM

What? I thought you liked guns.

(Raising the pistol to his temple)

This is one fucked day. *Memento mori.*

Everyone freezes. *What the fuck is he doing?* A moment, then Dana attempts to break the tension.

DANA

No, it's not, Baby. It's a great day. Let me show you. A fantastic day!

ADAM

(Sporting a lascivious grin)

You want to show me, huh? Tell me. You like getting banged?

Adam points the pistol at Dana and a flag springs from the gun barrel. The flag reads, *Bang!*

ADAM (CONT.)

BANG!

After a beat, Dana, laughing, leaps up, and slugs Adam's arm.

DANA

Motherfucker! Dint know if ya was gonna shoot me or ya was jes undressin' me with yer eyes.

MARLENE

Oh, my God! That was your illusion?

ADAM

Thank you.

DANA

For what?

ADAM

Taking my mind off this fucked up day.

Eugene and Marlene express disgust with Adam's antics and with Dana who wraps her arms around Adam's neck, plants a kiss, and gives a coy smile.

EUGENE

This is not funny, man.

ADAM

What? I thought all you gun-packing woods people would like it?

EUGENE

Pack up your shit. I'm taking you back to Green Bay.

DANA

No! No, Eugene. It's okay. I could tell it wasn't no real pistol. Soon as he raised it. Anyone could see it was fake. And 'sides. I dint mind.

(Giggling)

I like gittin' banged.

ADAM

What I thought. And after the day I've had. I don't need anyone giving me orders. But you want me to leave, no problem. I'm out of here.

DANA

No! Wait a minute. Marley. Say somethin'!

MARLENE

Uh, yeah. No, Adam. You're in no shape to, uh [drive]. At least stay long enough to eat something and... Okay? Let me fix you something to eat.

DANA

Tell him, Eugene. He don't need to leave.

EUGENE

Marley's decision. But he's in no shape to drive.

DANA

Okay. It's settled. Adam's gonna show us some magic, then we're gonna eat. Then we can all have a nice time plannin' out the hunt for tomorrow.

Adam smiles at Dana and polishes off his whiskey.

EUGENE

Guess you're not planning to drive any time soon.

DANA

Everbody jes relax. It's okay if we party a little. Come on, Magic Man! Give us as show!

Adam, feeling the alcohol now, smiles and slowly approaches Dana. He somehow manages sleight of hand to pull a coin from Dana's ear.

DANA (CONT.)

Oh, my God. You really are a magician. Can I keep it?

ADAM

Sorry. Part of my kit.

Dana, highly animated, takes a seat for the show.

DANA

Okay. But I wanna see what else you do with those magic hands. What's your magician name? You know. Your stage name.

ADAM

Don't really have one. Adam the Magician, I guess.

DANA

Ah, we can do better than that. Marley. Eugene. Whatcha think? What should he call hisself?

EUGENE

Adam the Asshole. That would fit.

DANA

The Amazing! Adam! Abraaaa... Cadabra!

ADAM

Amaaazing... Adam... Abra... Abra Cadaver... I like it.

MARLENE

Oh, my God. I think we just skip the magic. Get to the supper.

DANA

No, no he'll be fine. Woncha? Marley's right 'bout supper. But first, we need to see an illusion.

ADAM

Okay, okay. Have a seat and prepare to be amazed.

Adam turns with a small plastic polar bear and a large handkerchief. He places the bear on the table and, with an awkward flourish, covers it with the handkerchief.

DANA

Uh oh. Eugene called it. The bears are out! And they're hungry. But ya need to git yerself a black one. There ain't no polar bears in Wisconsin.

ADAM

No. Aren't many polar bears anywhere anymore.

DANA

Oh, God. Don't tell me yer one a those.

EUGENE

Actually, polar bear numbers have been increasing since the seventies. Three times now what it was. More restrictions on hunting.

DANA

What the fuckin' environmentalists won't tell ya.

ADAM

Wait! Wait. Prepare to be amazed... But first, I need to go outside.

And with that, Adam staggers to exit.

MARLENE

He's drunk. I think he's going to be sick.

EUGENE

Better outside than in here. Or in the car. God, what was I thinking? I'm sorry. But listen. I'll run him back and come back with my truck. If I get going, I'll make it back in time to hunt.

MARLENE

Ooh. When will you sleep?

EUGENE

Won't be the first time I've gone without sleep.

DANA

That's nuts. Ya don't need to drive all that way. Jes chill out. Boy's gonna be fine... I'll go give him a hand. Make sure he's not eaten by a cougar.

(A devilish smile)

Not yet anyway.

Dana wiggles her ass and giggles as she exits.

EUGENE

She's a wild one, isn't she? Doesn't she already have a boyfriend?

MARLENE

Rodney. Nothing serious, I guess. Dana doesn't get serious about much of anything, but she's, uh... She's got a good heart. Will do anything for you.

EUGENE

Do anything for Adam, seems like.

MARLENE

If he'd eat something and lay off the beer, he might sober up before you get him back in the car. Maybe I should make some coffee.

EUGENE

What I can't figure, is this an isolated incident, or does the guy have a problem?

MARLENE

How'd he get the job anyway? Weren't there a bunch of guys in line for a promotion from the plant? He know somebody? Have a hook?

EUGENE

Nephew or cousin of somebody in the front office.

MARLENE

And what about the jail thing? What Dana said. You think it's true?

EUGENE

Guy drinks like this, probably a DWI. But I don't trust him.

MARLENE

Tonight. Not what I'd planned. But you looking out for him. Dana said it was sweet. I get that.

EUGENE

He's such an ass. Glad I get to see the cabin, though. And you. Couldn't wait to see you.

MARLENE

(A pause, smiling)

I, uh... I know... We started bringing the kids up here when Kevin turned twelve. Lisa was only ten, but she was even more excited than he was about getting her first deer.

EUGENE

Are they coming up for opening day?

MARLENE

Not this year. Their heads are in their books. Hanging out with their friends. I miss them.

Dana enters.

MARLENE (CONT.)

He getting sick out there?

DANA

Oh, yeah. Boy's gonna need some mouthwash. Ain't gonna wanna eat nuthin any time soon.

Adam enters, collapses on the nearest bunk, and, just like that, passes out.

MARLENE

I guess one of us is going to have to take a top bunk.

DANA

No problem. I like being on top.

MARLENE

Yeah. I got that.

EUGENE

Let him sleep it off. An hour or so, we'll give him some coffee, and then we'll hit the road.

DANA

You can't go. *It's a party!* He'll bounce back and least he's keepin' things intrestin'.

MARLENE

Oh. Are we boring you?

DANA

You two got your own thing goin'. With magic man here, least I'm not a third wheel.

MARLENE

You know it's not like that.

EUGENE

Earlier. You're outside with the guy less than five minutes and you get him talking. How's that work? Admitting to spending time in jail. Spilling his guts.

MARLENE

Literally.

DANA

(Plumping her breasts, a coy look)

What can I say? I know what men want. Me and a little alcohol.

MARLENE

Is he out? I mean, can he hear us?

DANA

Why? Ya got sumpin' juicy?

EUGENE

What else he tell you? Guy hardly said a word on the drive up here. Just some gibberish. Didn't even thank me for keeping him from getting beat all to hell. What about the jail thing?

DANA

Oh. I don't know. He's takin' a piss, and I asked him if he liked Chicago so much, why'd he move to Packerland. Jes jokin', ya know, I asked if he was runnin' from the law.

MARLENE

He's got a good job if he can keep it.

DANA

Said he wasn't runnin' from the law, but he knows what inside of a cell looks like.

EUGENE

You never know about people. I don't trust him, and we need to get him back to –

DANA

Hold on! Relax. Boy's gonna be fine.

MARLENE

So, why'd he leave Chicago? He doesn't seem to fit in with the. You know. At the plant.

DANA

Said he had more opportunities to do his magic shows in Chicago. Does 'em for school kids. But said he wanted to go somewhere his vote counts. I get that, the way they mess with the votes down there. Then, he jes shook his peter and turned back to the cabin.

EUGENE

There's more to it than that.

DANA

Well. *Yeah*. He zipped up.

MARLENE

What do you mean? More to it.

EUGENE

I don't know. Something's up with the guy.

DANA

How about you? You grow up around here?

MARLENE

Don't be so [intrusive]!

DANA

What? Fair question. Ya don't see too many guys this part of the state with his, you know.

EUGENE

Complexion?

MARLENE

Dana! Eugene, I'm sorry.

EUGENE

Why? She's not wrong.

DANA

Jes curious is all. Yer a good guy, and I dint mean nuthin’.

EUGENE

Grew up in Milwaukee and –

DANA

Aaah. Okay then.

A snort of disapproval by Marlene. Eugene smiles.

EUGENE

Yeah. After my deployment, tech school in Fox Valley. Green Bay for engineering. Lots of job offers. Just kept moving north.

DANA

Senior engineers get, what? Twice the pay of us lowly press operators? You on a salary?

MARLENE

That’s enough! You’re being rude.

DANA

Not rude. Greg made the big bucks, and if you’re gonna –

MARLENE

Stop!

EUGENE

It’s okay. I knew and liked Greg. The best of the execs. Always attended the design meetings and asked good questions. Smart questions. Not like some of the half-wits in the front office who don’t know the difference between a blow mold and an injection mold.

MARLENE

Thank you.

(Pause)

You don’t trust him. Adam. Because of the jail thing? You think he’s dangerous? I mean what he said in the car. About hellbent on trouble. Kind of scary.

EUGENE

No. He doesn’t scare me. It’s just. Probably nothing, but the guy’s got an agenda. Driving an electric car. Bumper stickers. Says he wants to be somewhere his vote counts.

DANA

What kind a bumper stickers?

MARLENE

Where you going to find a charging station?

EUGENE

First time I drove an electric. Long as there's something within a hundred miles, should be okay.

MARLENE

Will get you to Wausau. Probably something there.

DANA

Looks like a pussy ass car but too dark. I dint see no bumper stickers.

EUGENE

Political. Black lives. Environment. Stuff like that.

DANA

Oh, fuck.

Adam falls to the floor, sits up, and moans.

ADAM

What the fuck?

EUGENE

You okay, man?

DANA

Tell me somethin'. *Are you woke?*

ADAM

Yeah. I'm awake

MARLENE

Dana!

DANA

(Hesitates, puzzled by Marlene's glare)

Yeah?

MARLENE

(Grabbing flashlight and roll of toilet paper)

Come on. Let's go out to the... Come with me.

DANA

What? You afraid a bears? We gonna use the same tree as the boys?