

OCCUPIED

written by

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INT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

MONTAGE: The hustle and bustle of the first morning of THE BIG SALE. Cosmetics, perfume, lingerie, shape-wear, and shoes, womanhood is offered up as a construct and a commodity to covet, tailor, buy, discard, and repeat. This effulgence of femininity features the whimsical and the gratuitous, the gorgeous and the grotesque, the lovely and the lurid.

The main doors open into Cosmetics. Enter FRAN (42, white, trans, east coast, a casual frock, big sunglasses, bangles, and a shawl) with an impish grin and a bounce in her step. Fran loves all the shiny things and looks ready to shop.

A moment later, enter ALTHEA (32, black, trans, west coast, nice jeans, vintage concert tee and a woolly thrift store cardigan) who finds all this indulgent, capitalist frippery somewhat distasteful. Althea is a serious woman.

They make eye contact and share a look that says, "Are we really doing this? Yep, we're doing this." Fran heads off.

Althea enters maternity wear. A glowing pregnant woman beams while trying on a cute dress. Althea feels a PANG of loss, and unconsciously touches her own belly that will never be with child. She feels it, shrugs it off, and heads upstairs.

INT. WOMEN'S WEAR - DAY

Fran rifles through racks of dresses looking for something. She's about to give up when a CLERK approaches from behind.

CLERK

Can I help you find something?

Startled, Fran's voice resonates deeper than she would like.

FRAN

Huhm? No.

Fran clears a frog in her throat and draws her posture up.

FRAN (CONT'D)

(her usual femme voice)

Pardon me. No. Thank you.

CLERK

Oh. Well it seems as though you're looking for something particular.

FRAN

(sardonic)

Aren't we all, honey?

The miffed clerk leaves her be. Fran gives up the search.

INT. UPSTAIRS LAVATORY - DAY

Althea enters a stall, takes a wrench from her bag, crouches down, disconnects the toilet's water supply, then uses the wrench to crush the threads so it can't be reconnected.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Fran considers two similar shades of lipstick. Althea enters.

ALTHEA

What are you doing? Where is the dress?

FRAN

Don't know, I looked everywhere.
(twists one tube up)
What do you think of this color?

ALTHEA

Ugh. I bet you could wear lipstick every day for the rest of your life and you wouldn't use up the stuff you already own.

FRAN

You suck the fun out of everything, don't ya? A fun vampire, you are.

ALTHEA

We're not here for fun, girl.
(checks the time)
Think anyone recognized you?

FRAN

Nah. This dye job is working for me, right? That's why I need new lipstick. My whole palette is-
(something catches her eye)
Oohwp! -- here we go.

Across the floor, the UPS GUY AKA GARY (36, muscly and cute) wheels a dolly with several big cartons. Althea gives him terse nod. Fran gives a comical wink. They trail him-

ALTHEA

I wish you'd found that damn dress.

-through women's wear, past the changing rooms to a corridor.

FRAN

You wish I found it? I'm the one's
supposed to get married in it.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

The UPS GUY stacks four cartons outside the ladies room.
Althea and Fran arrive right on time to sign for them.

UPS GUY

Are you guys sure about this?

FRAN

(with humorous faux angst)
Can anybody really be sure about
anything in this madhouse world?

ALTHEA

(ignoring Fran's schtick)
We'll be fine, Gary.

UPS GUY AKA GARY really wants hugs but resists the urge. He
squeezes Fran's hand, and locks eyes with her.

UPS GUY

Good luck. And be careful, please!

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

The main downstairs ladies room is spacious and plush. They
check the stalls, all clear. There's a gilt framed vanity,
fresh flowers, old gas-light sconces, damask wall paper.

ALTHEA

Let's get to work.

They bring in the cartons and crack them open.

FRAN

Work? This is *fun*!

Althea, vampire-like, raises an imaginary cowl to her face.

ALTHEA

(Dracula-style)
Gwah - ah ah ah!

Fran's face says Althea's 'The Count' schtick isn't all that.

FRAN

Nuh-uh.

Fran uses a drill to install a deadbolt on the inside of the door. Althea lays out neatly bundled, color-coded cords, a laptop, a video camera, some spot lamps.

Someone tries to enter. Fran pushes back and locks the door.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, occupied.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - DAY

MADISON (25, basic, white) is bored by her friend testing highlighters. The BIG SALE is going well; the place is busy.

MADISON
I'm gonna go to the lav, OK?

Her friend doesn't bother to acknowledge her, *whatever*.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea inspects two handguns, and handles them like a pro. She slides in a clip, CLACK. Fran looks over at the guns, and is clearly apprehensive about their presence.

ALTHEA
You knew that the plan meant-

FRAN
(cuts her off)
Well... I don't frikkin' like it,
OK? Dr King never used a .38.

ALTHEA
This is Portland, Oregon in 2020,
not Selma in '65. Open carry is
legal, and we've got permits. And
they're .45s, by the way, not .38s.

Fran gives her the Marge Simpson, "hrrm".

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
It's a prop, OK? Just don't put
your finger on the trigger. *Ever*.
(calm, focused)
No one is getting shot, I swear.

Fran plugs in an electric kettle, boils water, and sets out mugs for tea. Althea sets out four fancy camping chairs.

INT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

Madison, completely engrossed in her phone, somehow gets through women's wear and down the corridor to the restroom without bumping into anything or anyone.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

The trap is set. Supplies are laid out and organized; rations, water bottles. A video camera is on a tripod which, as seen on the laptop monitor, captures the large mirror and everything happening in the room.

Fran is seated in the center of the room. Althea is by the door. Someone JOSTLES the knob to enter, but finds it locked.

ALTHEA
 (to the knocker)
Just a minute, please!
 (to Fran)
 Are you ready?

Fran checks her face and hair on the monitor.

FRAN
 (maudlin, in jest)
 Is anyone really ever ready for anything?

ALTHEA
 (almost rises to 'curt')
 Enough of that. It's not funny.

Fran gives her a great vampire HISS of revulsion.

Althea half unlocks the door, sees that Fran left her gun on the counter, grabs it and hands it to her. MORE KNOCKING.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
 (intense, combat ready)
Franny, this shit is real. Don't you play now.

FRAN
 Blech. Fine, Althea. Wait, eww, you got somethin' -- in your teeth.

Althea opens the door. Madison enters, and Althea picks at her gum-line. Madison, rapt in her phone, is oblivious to the presence of firearms. Fran points to an incisor.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 Nope.

Madison just keeps on texting, head down. Althea picks at her teeth. Althea shows her teeth to Fran, "Did I get it?" Fran points to her other incisor. Althea gets the tooth debris.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 (to Althea, thumb up)
 You got it.
 (then addressing Madison)
 Ah-HEM.

Madison finally looks up from her phone, and sees guns.

MADISON
 (mildly perturbed)
 Ugh. Is this like, an active shooter thing? I can't even.

ALTHEA
 (soothing, pleasant)
 This is an inactive shooter thing. Be chill. Do what we ask, which is just sit there for a while, and it'll stay inactive. Easy enough?

Madison has no visible reaction, blank-faced blinking.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
 OK?

MADISON
 Sure. I guess.
 (beat)
 Can I pee?

ALTHEA
 Of course, just hand over your phone. Please.

Turning over the phone upsets her far more than the guns did.

INT. WOMEN'S WEAR - DAY

CANDACE (42, white, country-bougie, a default sneer on her face) rifles through socks and then gets mad not finding exactly what she wants. Uh-oh. Her hand goes to her belly and a sudden abdominal disturbance sends her toward the restroom.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

CANDACE enters and is greeted by guns. Fran sits. Althea is at the door. Candace jumps, goes white, and clutches her bag.

CANDACE
 (frightened)
 Are you all for real? What is this?

FRAN
 Hi! Oh my goodness, sorry. You OK,
 honey? We're not going to hurt ya.

Althea locks the door. Candace looks ill. With a hand on her belly, she blows past Fran, and goes straight in to a stall.

CANDACE
 I just got my damned... You mind?

INT. A STALL - DAY

Candace settles in on the potty; she's got nasty cramps.

ALTHEA (O.S.)
 (stern)
 Ma'am, you need to pass me your bag
 and your phone, right now.

Candace fumbles her phone from her purse and it hits the floor. She kicks it along the ground, and Althea grabs it.

CANDACE
 (nervous, thinking)
 OK, OK, I'm sorry, I just need...
 (rooting in her bag)
 Christ Almighty, I... I need a pad.

She carefully removes a loaded .38 and a pad from her purse.

ALTHEA
 OK. We're not going to hurt you.

Candace pushes her bag out under the stall door with a foot.

CANDACE
 I just need a minute.

She puts a finger on the trigger and contemplates going out there, guns-a-blazing. She comes to her senses, but then sees she has a gun in her hand and nowhere to put it.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea shows Candace's phone and social media feed to Fran who snickers. Fran then shows Althea a meme from Madison's feed. Althea shrugs, "I don't get it".

INT. A STALL - DAY

Candace buttons up and flushes, then uses the sound as cover to wedge the gun between the toilet tank and the wall.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Candace exits the stall. Fran gestures with her gun, inviting Candace to sit in the open chair, next to Madison.

CANDACE

What is this shit? You can't hold me here against my will. I've got-

Althea holds the barrel of her gun to her lips, "shhhh."

FRAN

I'm sure you got lives to get back to, families, jobs and all that. We're sorry for the disruption. We don't wanna hurt... anybody.
(pause, then to Althea)
I had this whole thing, like memorized. Now my mind's all blank.

ALTHEA

Hey. We've got plenty of time.

Fran points to the camera and monitor.

FRAN

Look. Everything's being recorded. When this is all over, there isn't going to be your version of events and our version. Just this tape.

MADISON

Yah, but like what is happening? I mean, why are we here?

CANDACE

(seething, indignant)
I'm ready to scream my head off. You can't do this.

Fran and Althea resume scrolling on their guests' phones.

MADISON

You can't. That's private property.

FRAN

You shoulda locked your screen.

ALTHEA

We just need to get a sense of who's who. It's totally rude; we're sorry. One of you is leaving in a few minutes, the other is going to be our guest a little while.

CANDACE

Hmpf. Guest? More like a hostage.

ALTHEA

We'll call it hostage, if you like. My name is Althea. This is Fran.

FRAN

(to Candace)

When was the last time you cried?

CANDACE

(irritated, suspicious)

What?

A KNOCK upon the door

FRAN

(hollers)

Occupied!

(sincere)

When was the last time you cried?

The question hangs there for a beat. Candace yields.

CANDACE

My Mother passed. 'bout a year ago. Cancer. It was long, and painful.

FRAN

(earnest)

I'm very sorry for your loss.

(to Madison)

You? Have you cried recently?

MADISON

I cry all the time. Like a lot. Last night, my friend posted this-

FRAN

(hand up to stop her)

OK OK. If you could go to another planet on a luxury spaceship but never return to Earth, would you?

MADISON

(blank stare)

I dunno. Like, luxury is good, but a spaceship? Maybe, I guess; as long as I can bring my dog.

They all look to Candace for her answer to the same question.

CANDACE

Why do I need to go space? You two might as well be aliens. I know what you are! You don't fool me.

ALTHEA

(amused, indifferent)

And what's that? That we are, according to you? Hmm?

Candace's lips contort, holding back invective.

CANDACE

I'll answer your first question.
(relents, deflects)
Why would I go to another planet when I never seen Paris, or New York even? Stupid questions.

Fran and Althea share a look and know what the other is thinking. KNOCK KNOCK goes the door.

FRAN

Occupied.

The door knob JIGGLES, more KNOCKING.

FRAN (CONT'D)

If you could go back in time and kill Hitler, would you?

Candace knows exactly who she would kill right now. KNOCKING.

FRAN (CONT'D)

(to the knocker)

Sorry. Just a minute.

(to Althea)

I think we got enough. Right?

Althea eyes Candace, and holds her spiteful gaze for a sec.

ALTHEA

OK, Franny. I think we're good.

(to Madison)

You go tell the manager; something happened in the restroom.

(MORE)

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

When he asks you what happened, you just tell him he that needs to come see for himself. Then you can go.

MADISON

Really? Then I can go, like, free?

FRAN

As a bird.

A child WHINES at the door. Candace is unhappy to find she's the one staying put. Fran returns Madison's phone and bag.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Althea unlocks the door. ANGRY DAD pushes against it and Althea uses her body to block him.

ANGRY DAD (O.S.)

My girl is going to wet her pants.

Let

(PUSH)

her

(PUSH)

in.

Althea subtly flashes her gun. He backs off. Madison exits.

ALTHEA

Sir, you need to take a step back.

(kindly, to the child)

I'm really sorry sweetie, but you can't come in right now.

Fran bolts the door.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

A rack of suits, a musty old couch, and teetering stacks of document storage boxes surround a messy desk. In the midst of this, frets Mike (52, white, fussy, frazzled, well dressed but already rumpled) who pores over sales figures.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Mike?

SUSAN (58, hair up, elegant, sensible, tidy and together) KNOCKS, and enters without waiting for a reply. She knows this should be her office and her job, but she rolls her eyes and plays the part of assistant manager.

MIKE
 (doesn't look up)
 Susan, did we get those mannequins
 done last night?

SUSAN
 Yes. They look great. Mike--

MIKE
 This sale needs to be huge, Susan.
 This quarter's been awful. There's
 talk of more store closings, and
 we're not going to be one.

He polishes off his umpteenth coffee, dribbling on his chin.

SUSAN
 Mike, this young lady needs a word.

Madison waves meekly from the door. Mike's irritated,
 confused, and then welcoming in a matter of seconds.

INT. NORDSTROM'S-STOREROOM AREA - DAY

Mike walks briskly past racks of clothes, dusty cartons, and
 partially limbed mannequins. Madison and Susan keep up.

MIKE
 Can't you just tell me what it is?

MADISON
 She said, you'll just have to see.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Mike stops the procession at a fixture, and rotates each
 bottle so they all face label out, in the same direction.

MIKE
 Ugh. Come on, Euphrazia.

Employee EUSTACIA BELLOWS (26, tattooed, with her punk-chic
 style buttoned up and tidy for this bougie-bullshit job) is
 hungover or maybe presently under the influence. She looks up
 from her phone, and dispassionately watches Mike fuss.

EUSTACIA
 It's 'u-stay-zya'.

MIKE

I know you don't give a fuck, *but!*
if you can make it look like you
give a fuck, then I don't give a
fuck that you don't give a fuck.
See? How much easier could this be?

He continues his march toward the restroom, Madison follows.
Susan hangs on a moment. Eustacia watches him go.

SUSAN

Eustacia, I'm sorry, there's no
need for that language.

Eustacia gets her coat and bag. She looks a little nauseous.

EUSTACIA

(blase and detached)
Whatever. I don't need this shit.
Fuck that guy and fuck this place.
Susan, you're a peach, but I quit.

Eustacia walks off. Susan watches her, moves to speak but
doesn't. She disappoints herself, then follows after Mike.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Several women are waiting and irritable. Mike is confused, he
pushes, but the door won't swing for him.

MIKE

(alarmed, to Susan)
There's no lock on this door?

SUSAN

There wasn't one an hour ago.

Two patrons drop armfuls of stuff and walk off.

PATRON

I really gotta go. The coffee shop
next door is always clean. Come on.

Mike is traumatized to see sales walk away, but is more
stumped by a door he can't push open.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Fran has an ear to the door.

MADISON (O.S.)
 (gently RAPPING the door)
 Hi guys. Here's Mike, he's the
 manager, OK? I'm sorry.
 (unsure why she is sorry)
 Good luck?

FRAN
 Thank you.

Fran unlocks the door, Althea's chair is positioned so that she faces the crack. Her weapon leveled at Mike, who calls out to the departing patrons to save the sale.

MIKE
 Ladies, there is another restroom
 upstairs. Please...

FRAN
 Hey, Mikey! Get yer buns in here.

He pauses, sees the gun, but does not accept it as real.

MIKE
 Whatever this-
 (looks around the room)
 - this little, camp out or whatever
 is, it's over. Take your pop guns
 and go home, or I call the cops.

He heads after the patrons. Althea cocks her gun. He freezes.

ALTHEA
 Do you remember us?

MIKE
 (studying the girls)
 Yes, I remember you two.

Althea waves him in. Fran locks the door, leaving Susan out.

FRAN
 Then you can imagine why we might
 go to all this trouble?

Mike knows why they're mad, but keeps his mouth shut.

He notices Candace for the first time. She is seated comfortably, drinking a cup of tea in the corner.

MIKE
 Wait, who are you?

CANDACE

Me? I'm the hostage, dummy. Now ask these nice-
 (finding the nomenclature,
 then patronizing)
 -girls what they want, give it to 'em, and get me outta here.

Mike struggles to wrap his head around all this.

MIKE

OK I'll bite. Let's pretend those guns are real. What do you want?

ALTHEA

First, you apologize, to us.

MIKE

(phony obsequious)
 I am very sorry. You were treated-
 (searches)
 -poorly by this establishment, but the awkward circumstances--

FRAN

Wow. You apologize poorly too.

ALTHEA

We would like a written apology, 500 word minimum.

MIKE

Are you crazy?

Fran and Althea just look at him, and he just looks back.

CANDACE

(had enough of the silence)
 Look around. They got tea, snacks, and moisturizer enough to last a month in here. Yeah, they're crazy.

Mike looks around the room for answers, finds none.

MIKE

(turns to leave)
 Very well.

FRAN

Ah, ah, ah. I want my dress, too.

MIKE

What?

FRAN

I was trying on a dress. Cream colored, with a lace brocade. Ruched in the hips, size 10.

Mike looks to Althea, "seriously?". She nods, affirmative.

MIKE

How am I to find this one dress?

FRAN

We'll give you plenty of time, Candace here may not like it though. Also, remember that mean ol' biddy, who made a big stink?

MIKE

That "biddy" was Helen Beaumont.

He waits for a reaction to her name that he does not get.

MIKE (CONT'D)

She owns half of this town.

ALTHEA

We don't care what she owns, she needs to come down here and talk.

MIKE

You want *me* to *call* Helen Beaumont? And tell her to come *here*? To the *bathroom*? And talk to *you*?

ALTHEA

You've got your work cut out.

MIKE

When the cops come in here, you're going to be in big trouble. You, you and your little fake cap guns.

CANDACE

Mister. I seen my share of guns, they're real alright.

MIKE

And how do I know you're not in on this whole thing too?

Fran unlocks the door. Susan almost falls in, having had her ear to it. Fran graciously reaches to break Susan's fall with her unarmed hand. Susan gets her balance-

SUSAN

Thanks.

-and then the tense dynamic reasserts itself.

ALTHEA

(all business, gun level)

All three requests. Got it?

Mike backs out of the room. The door is locked behind him.

CANDACE

Y'all don't really not know who
Helen Beaumont is, do you?

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS LAVATORY - DAY

Mike is crammed in on the floor studying Althea's handiwork.
The HANDYMAN chews gum and looks on.

MIKE

This is vandalism.

HANDYMAN

It's an easy enough fix; it'll just
take a while to go get parts.

MIKE

Why are you here then? Go. GO!

The handyman heads off. Susan looks at Mike expectantly, as
he stands and brushes toilet floor cooties off his suit.

He catches a whiff of an un-flushed mess in the toilet.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Why is there no lid on this?

SUSAN

Can we just call the cops now?

MIKE

Those guns aren't real. They're
bluffing.

SUSAN

Mike, have you lost your mind?

MIKE

Susan, if we call the cops, the
store will be cleared out.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

We need these sales numbers or
corporate's gonna close this store.

SUSAN

And what if someone gets shot?
That's pretty bad for business, no?

MIKE

(pooh poohs her)
Don't be ridiculous. No one's
getting shot.

SUSAN

I just think we should-

MIKE

(cut's her off)
They made *me* the manager, which
means I'm making the decisions, ok?
You want to be shift-lead working
the swing at Big Box?
(no reply)
Me neither. Follow my lead, and
this'll be over before you know it.

Susan holds her tongue.

MIKE (CONT'D)

We're gonna need this toilet fixed
for the sale, or to flush our jobs.
Now, run and get me some of those
out of order and wet floor signs.

INT. LADIES ROOM -DAY

Althea fixes herself another tea. KNOCK KNOCK

FRAN

Occupied. Sorry.

MIKE (O.S.)

It's me.

They ready weapons; Althea takes the chair. Fran unlocks the
door. Mike enters, humble now. Fran locks up behind him.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I do not appreciate what you did to
my restroom upstairs - but I am
willing to forget this whole thing.

ALTHEA

You do not seem to appreciate the gravity of this situation.

FRAN

Yeah. You're hopping around like it's the moon but it's more like Jupiter up in here.

Mike looks about confused, "what is she talking about?"

CANDACE

(rolls eyes)

There ain't no gravity on the moon, but on Jupiter it'd crush you.

Mike still doesn't get it, scratches his head.

FRAN

Forget it. You find my dress yet?

MIKE

Look, you hand over the toys, I'll get you a 500 dollar gift card.

ALTHEA

Sir, you don't seem to get it-

Mike brandishes his phone like it's a weapon.

MIKE

No, you're the ones who're gonna get it, when I call the cops.

FRAN

Oh, dear. Please, just call the damned cops already. Maybe they can help you write your apology.

He obviously doesn't want the police involved. KNOCK KNOCK.

MIKE

(snarls)

It's fucking occupied alright!

SUSAN (O.S.)

Mike, it's me.

MIKE

(takes a breath)

Did you find that dress yet?

SUSAN (O.S.)

No. If it's what I think it is, the computer says we have one in stock but I can't find it anywhere.

Althea looks to Fran. They're stumped too.

FRAN

There was this sassy, sort of snarky kid with neck tattoos helping me. Maybe she knows?

MIKE

Ugh, of course. Susan, would you run and get Eustacia down here?

SUSAN (O.S.)

(a beat, then)

Mike, she just walked off. Quit.

Mike's dismay creates an awkward silence.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Mike?

(no reply)

Mike, I'm calling the police.

Mike turns a hateful gaze on Fran.

MIKE

You don't need to do that Susan because these bitches are-

FRAN

Bitches? Well, you're finally gendering us correctly. Shoulda tried that the first time.

Mike steps toward Fran with his fists clenched at his side.

MIKE

--these bitches are going to give up their silly, little game, hand over their toys, take a gift card and get the hell out of my store.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Mike, come out, please. Just let the police handle this.

FRAN

You are thick. Listen to the woman.

He extends a hand, expecting Fran to hand him her weapon.

FRAN (CONT'D)
That is not how this goes.

Candace tries to get small, and skootches away from them.

MIKE
(in Fran's face now)
Oh yeah? Let's see your little toy.

CLICK, Althea draws the hammer back with Mike in her sights. He closes his eyes, and crosses his arms to say 'go ahead'.

Fran doesn't like this. Althea looks from Fran to Mike, then moves her weapon slightly, and before Fran can say anything-

BAM! Althea doesn't bat an eye, and shoots a toilet from her seat, legs crossed, still sipping tea with her other hand.

Candace falls from her chair, blood running down her face.

CANDACE
You... You shot me! God Almighty!

Fran screams. Althea is horrified, and looks at her gun.

Mike hits the ground and curls up in a fetal position.

MIKE
(loudly whimpering)
Holy shit. Holy shit. Holy shit.

Candace clutches her face, blood oozes from between her fingers. Fran rushes to help her, but gets swatted away.

CANDACE
Get the fuck off of me!

The noise still reverberates in the small room, ears ring.

SUSAN (O.S.)
Mike?! Oh my God! What happened? Is everyone OK?

Althea grabs the first aid kit, and kneels by Candace.

CANDACE
(her resistance fading)
I said fuck off, bitch.

ALTHEA
Don't be a fool. You need medical attention. Let me see.

Althea inspects Candace's wound, and places gauze on it. She picks up a bloody shard of porcelain, and figures it out.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

It was just this chunk of the toilet. I am sorry, I didn't think it would...

Fran is livid, fingering her ringing ears.

FRAN

(loudly)

You're an asshole. And a liar.

ALTHEA

(gently helps Candace sit)

Here, hold this, and apply a little pressure. We'll get you fixed up, in a moment, OK? I am so, so sorry.

Althea walks over to Mike, still on the floor.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Hey.

(no response)

Hey, you.

(nudges him with a foot)

I killed eleven people on tour in Iraq. This is serious. You feel me?

Mike's eyes blink open. He un-clenches from the fetal pose.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Use your words.

MIKE

Yes. Yes. Mother Mary and...

ALTHEA

Don't you blaspheme, now. Stand up.

Mike gets up, humiliated, and trying to cover up that he peed a little. He composes himself, fixing his tie and hair.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

You remember your to-do list, now? Apologize, find that dress and get the Beaumont woman down here.

The door opens, Susan sees a bloodied Candace and gasps.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
 It's just a bad scratch.
 Ma'am, did you get all that?

SUSAN
 (slightly dazed, but
 alert)
 Apology, dress, Beaumont, yes. The
 police are on their way.

ALTHEA
 Thank goodness. It's about time.

SUSAN
 (sincerely)
 I - I'm sorry.

ALTHEA
 Me too. Me too.

Mike exits, tail between his leg, and the door is locked.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

A squad car pulls up and parks in the red zone. OFFICER
 MELODY VASQUEZ (32, latinx, uniformed, fit) emerges.

She casually looks all around the building; everything seems
 normal. She heads up the stairs to the main entrance.

INT. COSMETICS - DAY

Vasquez waits, all this girlie-girl stuff amuses her.

Susan and Mike approach. Mike has gathered himself, but is
 still a bit frazzled. Susan is composed.

VASQUEZ
 Hello, I'm Officer Vasquez.

Vasquez addresses Susan, till Mike throws himself in between.

MIKE
 Mike Strauss. Store manager.

SUSAN
 Susan Lowell. Assistant manager.

VASQUEZ

So, what exactly is the nature of your disturbance? Someone won't leave the toilet?

Vasquez sees signs pointing to the ladies room and is set to head that way. Mike looks nervous, and heads to his office.

MIKE

We don't want to disturb all these nice people, do we?

Vasquez, skeptical, looks to Susan, who grits her teeth and abides. They follow Mike to the storage area, and the office.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea finishing the final stitch on Candace's brow.

ALTHEA

I can't tell you how sorry I am.

Candace winces watching Althea work in the mirror.

CANDACE

I'm gonna be disfigured.

FRAN

C'mon. I got bit by a dog once, right here, huge gash --
(indicates arm)
no stitches.

CANDACE

I don't see nothing.

FRAN

Exactly! Neosporin, works miracles.

Candace is unimpressed. Althea stops and pulls up her pant leg, to reveal a very long scar that is almost invisible.

ALTHEA

See that?

(Candace nods)

I sewed that up myself in Iraq. 64 stitches. Shrapnel ripped it right open. You can barely see it. This? Tis but a scratch. It'll give you a great story to tell one day.

Candace grimaces, and clenches her teeth.

CANDACE

The time two drag queens kidnapped me in the john. Great story.

Althea patiently gives her a "now, now", finger wag.

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

Mike at his desk, Susan stands aside, and Vasquez is seated.

MIKE

And now they won't leave.

VASQUEZ

And what triggered all this?

MIKE

A few weeks ago, there was a... incident.

VASQUEZ

What did they do?

MIKE

What did they do? Nothing.

VASQUEZ

Nothing? Really?

Mike hems and haws. Vasquez gestures, "and?"

SUSAN

(has had enough)

They're trans, and Mike threw them out when someone complained about their presence in the women's room.

Vasquez looks at Mike with disgust; Mike is squirrely.

MIKE

Susan, that's not exactly-

SUSAN

Well that's the gist of it. And now they've shot one of our toilets. It was like a warning shot.

VASQUEZ

Sir, when were you going to share this important detail?

MIKE

We are having a very important sale. The store is very crowded, if people were to panic...

Vasquez looks to Susan, "is this guy for real?". Susan almost curtsies in apology for having abided Mike's way till now.

VASQUEZ

(to Susan)

When did this happen?

Vasquez walks out -

INT. NORDTROM'S-STOREROOM AREA - DAY

- Susan and Mike follow. Vasquez moves quickly.

SUSAN

15, 20 minutes ago?

MIKE

Um, this is not, uh, I don't think-

Vasquez, stops, pivots, glares at Mike, thumbs her radio.

VASQUEZ

This is unit 372.

No reply, just the hum of STATIC.

SUSAN

(interjects)

I'm sorry. If I may.

(Vasquez is listening)

These women, they seem very reasonable. I know how that sounds, but maybe you could talk to them and end this before it turns into an episode of SWAT.

DISPATCHER (O.S.)

Unit 372, go ahead.

Vasquez hesitates, then against her better judgement-

VASQUEZ

Stand by, dispatch.

She starts walking again, not sure if this is a good idea.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

An OUT OF ORDER sign and WET FLOOR pylon stand guard. Vasquez is dismayed by that as she enters with Susan and Mike.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Fran looks at her phone. Candace thumbs through magazines, and Althea writes on her laptop. KNOCK KNOCK.

VASQUEZ (O.S.)
Officer Melody Vasquez, Portland
PD. Can we talk a minute?

Everybody freezes.

ALTHEA	FRAN
We hear you.	We're listening.

VASQUEZ (O.S.)
It's just me here. I'll leave my
weapon outside. I heard some one
got a boo boo, and I just want to
check on you all.

Fran and Althea silently hem and haw.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
I promise, nothing stupid, OK?

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

A beat, Vasquez shrugs "I tried", and thumbs the radio. CHONK goes the deadbolt and the door is and opened.

Vasquez slowly sets her gun down before entering, hands up.

ALTHEA
And the taser. And the body cam.

Vasquez obliges.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Vasquez takes in the whole set up, and is impressed.

VASQUEZ
Ma'am. Are you OK?

CANDACE

Have to give credit where it's due.
That...

(indicates Althea)

...one fixed me up good.

VASQUEZ

(to Althea and Fran)

The manager isn't denying that you
were done wrong here, and it sounds
like they have some amends to make.

(indicates toilet)

But you all discharged a firearm.
That's a big deal, and it means
that I could get in some trouble
for having not called that in.

ALTHEA

So then, why exactly are you here?

VASQUEZ

I thought, maybe, you would like a
chance to rethink this thing.

Vasquez looks for enthusiasm for this idea. She finds none.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

We can walk out of here now and
avoid some serious charges, but if
you're going to persist...

ALTHEA

That's kind of you, but we made
three demands, and none's been met.

VASQUEZ

See, it's language like that,
demands. Brings to mind some
serious charges. Federal charges.

FRAN

Our civil rights were violated. It
was this or a lawsuit, and who's
got the money or time for that?

Vasquez looks at how deep they're dug in, literally.

VASQUEZ

Look. I've been a cop for ten
years, and I am as gay as the day
is long. You know what that's like?
It ain't as bad as it used to be,
but still, it ain't good.

ALTHEA

We appreciate you trying, we do.
But if you've gotta get the SWAT
and shut this store down, to make
that guy put a pen to paper, and
write an apology, so be it.

VASQUEZ

(to Fran)

That's how you feel too?

Fran nods, even though she's queasy at the thought of SWAT.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

(resigned)

Well, how about you let her go and
keep me? She's already got a wound
on her head. Whaddaya say?

Candace's hopes rise until Althea shakes her head, "no".

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)

OK. But the next cops aren't going
to be queer and sweet like me.

Candace's face says, "ewww".

FRAN

(ushering her out)

Well thanks for popping in, and let
us know when you've got that dress,
OK? I'm getting married next week,
and I'm going to need it.

Vasquez looks at Fran like she's nuts. Fran gives her kooky
eyes to play it up, and conceal her own unease.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

The door is locked behind Vasquez, who's about to call in on
the radio, but pauses, sizing up Mike.

VASQUEZ

You really pissed those girls off.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Susan graciously ushers shoppers toward the exit.

SUSAN

I am sorry, but we need to close
the store. It's an emergency.

A customer hands her a large armful of clothes.

CUSTOMER

Can't I just pay for this and go?

SUSAN

There is no reason to worry, but we do need to clear the building now.

CUSTOMER

Can I get a raincheck on the price?

Mike and Vasquez stand to the side watching.

MIKE

I don't know why we just can't ring them up on their way out.

VASQUEZ

(incredulous)

There are *guns* in your store.

MIKE

Pfft, this is America, there's guns everywhere.

VASQUEZ

(even more incredulous)

Guns that have been *fi-red*.

More uniformed cops arrive. People exit much quicker. Merchandise is dropped and trampled. Mike's heart breaks.

SERGEANT ACRES (M, 52, crew cut, square jaw, all business) enters and strides up to Vasquez and Mike. Mike adjusts his belt and his posture in the presence of this alpha.

ACRES

Sergeant Daniel Acres.

VASQUEZ

Officer Vasquez.

ACRES

I know that.

Beat.

MIKE

But you've both got name tags. So it's not tricky, is it?

Acres is not amused, or even aware that was a joke.

MIKE (CONT'D)
(humbled, now serious)
Mike Strauss, store manager.

Mike extends a hand. Acres looks at it, and doesn't shake it.

ACRES
(to Vasquez)
What exactly is the nature of the
situation here, officer?

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Candace stares, dead eyed, at Althea, who's on her laptop.
Fran is doing yoga, mountain pose, breath, and forward fold.

ALTHEA
(to no one in particular)
Tonya keeps messaging me.

Fran pops up out of her fold.

FRAN
Are you going to tell her you shot
a fucking toilet, and now we're
officially fucking felons?

Candace perks right up, and tunes in for some bickering.

ALTHEA
(measured)
I'm sorry, but --

FRAN
"I'm sorry, but" -- is never the
start to a real apology.

ALTHEA
You let that jerk get you riled up.
He was pushing your buttons.

FRAN
(rising, upset)
That's what sad little men do, wave
guns around and terrorize people. I
didn't want the stupid guns, we're
supposed to be pranksters.

ALTHEA
(closes laptop, relaxed)
Yes, and we were a joke. He wasn't
even going to call the cops.

FRAN

We want people to hear our voices,
not exploding porcelain.

(fingers a ringing ear)

Just because you never want to see
your family again, doesn't mean I
don't want to see mine.

Althea's face drops. That was a deep dig. A NOISE interrupts.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Vasquez, Susan and Mike are at the door as Acres BANGS on it.

ACRES

(imperious)

Sergeant Acres, Portland PD. You
need to exit that room right now.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea walks up to the door.

ALTHEA

Hello Sergeant Acres.

ACRES (O.S.)

Ma'am. If you release the hostage,
and exit right now, you have my
word, as a law officer and a
veteran of the United States Marine
Corps, I will do everything in my
power to see you're shown leniency.

She takes a moment to formulate a reply, but before she can-

ACRES (CONT'D)

If you do not exit right now, I can
assure you, you will be prosecuted
to the full ext--

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

ALTHEA (O.S.)

(cuts Acres off)

Sir. We haven't had one of our
rather reasonable demands met yet.

ACRES
 (trying to stay cool)
 Let's get everybody safe and then
 we can talk about--

Vasquez and Susan find his futile approach amusing.

FRAN (O.S.)
 Look, we're not asking for a
 million in unmarked bills, and
 we're not asking for a bus to Cuba.

Acres is confused by the bus to Cuba comment.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 The dress retails for 299.99. It
 was already in clearance marked
 down 25%. With the sale today it
 should be marked another 30% off.
 That's what? 170, or something?
 Know what though? I got three one
 hundred dollar bills and I'm glad
 to pay full price. Just don't tell
 my mom I paid retail, OK?

ACRES
 (baffled, losing patience)
 That sounds like a, uh, good deal
 but I'm not sure that, uh...

FRAN (O.S.)
 But see, we are sure. And that's
 all that matters, right? We have
 this woman, and we have patience.

ACRES
 (impatient)
 Sir, I understand but --

Realizes he misgendered her, and silently cusses, 'dammit'.

FRAN (O.S.)
 (polite as possible)
 No, you most assuredly do not
 understand. So please, f-
 (doesn't use the f-bomb)
 - buzz off until you're ready to
 check a box for us. OK, sir?

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea is impressed. Fran raises her index finger, "shh".

ACRES (O.S.)
 Ma'am. If you would just come out
 here we can discuss all this.

Fran's phone connects to a bluetooth speaker and "Keep A
 Knockin'" by Little Richard cranks. She does the hand jive.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM -DAY

Acres is stumped by this silliness, shakes it off, then uses
 tactical hand signals to tell COP 1 and Vasquez to stand
 watch by the door, and Mike to follow him.

MIKE
 (like a real army guy!)
 Yes, sir.

Susan received no direction one way or another, she hems and
 haws, stay or go? Then follows Acres and Mike.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Fran eases off the silly dance and turns down the music.

ALTHEA
 Feeling better?

FRAN
 See? Using my words, not guns. Like
 a big girl. I'm sorry, before, that
 crack about your family. Not cool.

ALTHEA
 'salright. We just need to keep our
 heads.
 (changing the subject)
 That guy is not the HNT.

FRAN
 HNT? Home nugget tenders? Hippie
 nerd tacos? Hetero normative task-
 force?

ALTHEA
 (only slightly amused)
 Hostage negotiating team. We're
 still getting the pussyfoot.

FRAN
 Ew. That's a verb, not a noun.

Candace looks at them, thinking, "What in God's name?"

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

Mike, at his desk, stares at a blank word document. Acres is texting. Susan is waiting for Mike to start typing.

SUSAN

Do you regret how you handled things that day?

MIKE

(sullen)

I was just doing my job.

SUSAN

No. Your job was to tell that busy body to take a chill pill, and let those poor women use the bathroom in peace.

MIKE

(aggrieved)

That's not fair. Helen Beaumont is a philanthropist and she has given... Do you know how much she spent on Christmas gifts for her staff here last year?

SUSAN

There are things more important than sales and a commission, Mike.

MIKE

Without sales, there's no store, Susan. She's bought a-lot more than one measly dress here.

SUSAN

(gobsmacked, gives up)

You know what? I gotta pee.

MIKE

Where you gonna go?

SUSAN

That's a great question!

Susan exits, Acres sees her go and looks up from his phone.

ACRES

(to Mike)

You finish writing that apology?

Mike looks from Acres to the blank screen, to his hands that won't come up with words, and back at Acres.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Vasquez is impatient, irritable. Cop 1 plays Candy Crush.

VASQUEZ
Hey. I gotta go.

COP 1
Where?

VASQUEZ
Like, I gotta go, to the bathroom.

Cop 1 looks at the door, like, you're already here.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
I need to actually use a toilet.

COP 1
Oh. Where are you gonna go?

She shrugs, "I dunno", and walks off.

COP 1 (CONT'D)
What do I tell Acres?

VASQUEZ
Tell him I had to go.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea knits. Fran does a crossword. Candace studies them, repelled yet curious, then decides to pray.

CANDACE
(murmuring)
Lord, forgive these... *people* and
grant us safe passage through this-

They notice her praying and watch respectfully.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
- and please give these here first
responders your guidance in this
harrowing ordeal.

Her mumbling goes low, she crosses herself, looks to the sky.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

Amen

She sees that Fran and Althea had been looking at her.

CANDACE (CONT'D)

(defensive)

You think I'm a rube, for praying.

ALTHEA

I watched friends bleed out in Iraq, prayer doesn't make you a rube. You don't need to pray for me. I keep council with my own God.

Candace is clearly skeptical of Althea's god.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Your misinterpretation of the bible doesn't mean I'm going to hell.

CANDACE

The Lord'll decide who's goin' to hell, but he's there for you even. If you're ready to repent. I pray for all sinners, myself included.

Candace is a little uncomfortable, physically.

ALTHEA

If I'm going to hell, it's for sins I did in 'service' to this country. Not this -- thing, or this.

Althea gestures around the room indicating the "situation", and at her own body, implying her transness.

CANDACE

(sort of patronizing)

I thank you for your service.

ALTHEA

(snorts in derision)

You'd have given up your seat on a plane for me if you'd seen me in uniform ten years ago.

Candace has a full on hot flash. She's sweaty and red.

CANDACE

(fanning herself)

Oof. I need some air.

Fran looks at the vent up in the ceiling.

FRAN

Can't help you there, but feel free
to splash some water on your face.

She goes to the sink and runs cold water to cool herself.

CANDACE

Goddamn menopause.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

Some cops relax and mill about by their vehicles. Vasquez exits and heads to the coffee shop next door.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Vasquez finds Susan in line for the toilet, on her phone.

SUSAN

It's just bonkers. I can't believe
the news isn't here.

(she sees Vasquez)

Oh, I gotta go. It's fine, I'm
gonna stick around for a while.

(beat)

OK. Love you too.

(to Vasquez)

Hi, I just wanted to say thank you
for your patience back there.

VASQUEZ

Of course, this is a pretty unusual
situation.

The door opens, and it's Susan's turn.

SUSAN

Sure. Let me buy you a coffee. OK?

Vasquez nods affirmative, and Susan enters the restroom.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Vasquez and Susan exit, drinks in hand. They stop to talk.

SUSAN

Again, I'm so sorry, I should have
just ignored him, and just told you
there was a shot fired.

VASQUEZ

You're fine.

SUSAN

Well, I'm mad at myself, I guess.

They start to walk slowly toward the store.

VASQUEZ

Can you tell me about this girl with the tattoos? Is it possible she knows where this dress is?

SUSAN

Hmm? Oh, Eustacia Bellows. She was here about eight months. Hard to put a finger on what made her tick. Sweet, but she had an edge alright.

VASQUEZ

And she quit? Just this morning?

SUSAN

Yeah, well Mike rubbed her the wrong way.

VASQUEZ

Sounds like he rubs a lot of people the wrong way.

SUSAN

Ugh. You don't know the half of it.

Vasquez raises an eyebrow. They stop for a moment -

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Wait, he does not literally rub people. He's just -- off-putting.

-then carry on.

VASQUEZ

Do you know how to find Eustacia?

SUSAN

I didn't know her that well, but I imagine that she is probably not fond of the police.

Susan starts scrolling through her phone.

VASQUEZ

Yeah? What makes you say that?

SUSAN

I dunno. Call it a hunch.

VASQUEZ

Noted.

SUSAN

I know I shouldn't, and if anyone asks, I didn't.

(scroll, stop, backscroll)

Here. 3719 SE 47th Ave. At least that was the address she used when she applied for the job.

They stop at the steps in front of the store.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Maybe I should come. Maybe she'll react better to a friendly face?

VASQUEZ

You should stay close to your boss. This scene will need a need a voice of reason.

Susan's face, "Oh? You mean me? Voice of reason? Aw-shucks."

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Candace is back in her chair, a little haggard without makeup. Althea hands her a water bottle, and she chugs.

FLUSSHHH, Fran exits the handicapped stall.

FRAN

Jeez, that stall is huge. I bet I could park my Prius in there.

CANDACE

(thinks she's quite clever)

How'd I know at least one of y'all drove a Prius?

FRAN

(faux-country drawl)

She-oot. That there handicapped stall is what y'all'd call a double-wide, and it's prolly big enough to park yr Daddy's F-150 in.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Mike has a crumpled paper in hand. Acres is about to knock.

ACRES
You ready?

MIKE
(parched and scratchy)
Yes, I think so.
(clears throat)
Yeah. Let's do this.

For a moment, it feels like they are about to jump out of a helicopter in Korengal. He KNOCKS.

FRAN (O.S.)
(exasperated and loud)
Are you serious? *It's occupied!*

ACRES
Ladies. It's me, Sergeant Acres. I have someone here who has something he would like to say.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea waves Fran over to the door. Candace swallows her retort to Fran and shuffles her chair closer so she can hear.

FRAN
(hushed)
This oughta be good.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Mike steps up. Acres waves him on, as they've rehearsed.

ACRES
Mike. Please.

MIKE
Hi, you know, I'm a little embarrassed to say, I don't know your names. I'm not sure who this apology should be addressed to.

ALTHEA (O.S.)
How about "Ladies"? That would constitute progress.

Acres is peeved.

MIKE
 (grasping, nervous)
 I think it would be better if --

ALTHEA (O.S.)
 It would be better if you just said
 what you came to say. Please.

Mike looks to Acres, "well I tried". Acres waves him on.

ACRES
 (hushed)
 It's OK. Read it. Read it.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea and Fran each put an ear to the door.

MIKE (O.S.)
 Dear Ladies. I have a learned a
 great deal since you called my
 attention to the awful treatment
 you received as a customer in my
 store.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

He stops and looks for Acres' approval. Acres waves Mike on.

MIKE
 Customers are the very life blood
 of any business. My failure to
 respect you as customers, and more
 importantly as women, was like
 poisoning the very blood of this
 business.

He is awfully proud of his analogy here.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Fran and Althea look at each other in amusement.

FRAN
 (stifling a giggle)
 Oh my god. This fucking guy.

ALTHEA
 Shhh, shh.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Susan enters from off screen, sipping her coffee. Mike hesitates, now sort of embarrassed to read in front of her.

ACRES

Go on. Go!

MIKE

A human being's right to relieve oneself in peace is a fundamental part of the right to shop and partake in the fruits of the free market. Irregardless of one's genitalia. We apologize with the utmost sincerity.

FRAN (O.S.)

(stifling a chuckle)

Let's see it posted on the Twitter, and we can get talking.

Mike is shattered. He'd written the letter and extricated himself from the equation; dazed, he holds a one man meeting.

MIKE

(to himself)

The twitter? That's marketing?

(no, no, no)

Who can authorize this?

(chews a nail)

The CEO is going want to weigh in.

FRAN (O.S.)

That's why you get the big bucks, kid. Make a few calls.

ACRES

Can I have a phone number? We're going to set up some comms, and it'll be easier than yelling through the door. No?

Althea picks a phone and reads the number off the blue tape.

ALTHEA (O.S.)

Five oh three oh one eight seven seven two nine.

ACRES

(with concealed glee)

That's super, we appreciate your trust, sir. Sharing your number.

ALTHEA

It's a burner, *SIR*. Sorry, I could hear you getting all excited there.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Acres is foiled and frustrated. Mike is bummed to see that.

MIKE

(hushed but angsty)
This isn't going well!

Acres looks angry for the first time, he gnashes his teeth.

ALTHEA (O.S.)

Sergeant, I need you to do me a favor, OK? It wasn't on the list of demands, but it is now.

Acres goes into his Taekwando ready stance to find calm.

ACRES

What?

ALTHEA (O.S.)

Go get whoever is the most in charge, someone whose name starts with captain, OK?

Acres red faced, flails his hands in a minor tantrum.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Althea gives the cue and "Would I Lie to You", by the Eurythmics, comes on the speaker. Fran does a little dance.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

CAPTAIN LYDIA LINDEN (37, no-nonsense, glasses, plain-clothed, pant suit) strolls toward the storefront, sips tea, and heads up the steps. BAD COP (white, smug) heads her off.

BAD COP

Sorry, store's closed.

LINDEN

(playing along)
Oh yeah? What's going on?

BAD COP
 (sorta rude)
 Police business, alright?

A shopper high steps it toward the door with her head down.

BAD COP (CONT'D)
 (quite rude now)
 Where do you think you're going?

SHOPPER
 (is this a trick
 question?)
 Shopping?

BAD COP
 Nah. Beat it. Store's closed.

LINDEN
 You should mind your tone.

BAD COP
 (incredulous, tough guy)
 'Scuse me? You say something?

Linden pulls her jacket back just enough to flash the badge clipped on her belt. He is humbled and bumbling.

LINDEN
 Mind your tone. Dealing with the public. This job is hard enough without you giving us a bad rap.

BAD COP
 Yes sir. I mean ma'am. Jesus.
 (looks about)
 Where did you even come from?

LINDEN
 I live two blocks away, and I've got a rewards card.

She walks away.

BAD COP
 Where are you going? Did you want to come in? I'm sorry, I didn't...

LINDEN
 See you around.

She walks past the store front and heads down a side alley.

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

TECH COP (32, vanilla bro) sets up a phone for a secure conference call. A DIAL TONE SQUAWKS, everybody winces.

TECH COP
My bad. My bad.

Acres enters a phone number BEEP BEEP BOPR BOOP...

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

One of the phones marked with blue tape and sharpie rings. All ears perk up. Fran quickly answers the ringing one.

ALTHEA
(aghast)
No!

FRAN
(unsure why Althea's
upset)
Hello?

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
Hi? Althea? Is that you?

Fran answered Althea's personal cell, and it's Althea's ex.

FRAN
No, sorry she's right here.

Fran holds the phone out to Althea, and shrugs, "oops."

ALTHEA
What!? No!

Althea takes a deep breath, then finally the phone.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
(hushed, covering
receiver)
Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck.
(mortified)
Hi Tonya. How's it going?

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
Did you get the papers I sent you?
You gotta sign em. Henry starts--

ALTHEA
Yes. I've got it. I signed 'em.
Just need to drop it in a mailbox.

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
You saw that I put postage on it?

ALTHEA
Yes, thanks. Honey, it's not a good time. I'm really in the middle of--

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
Henry wants to to talk to you.

ALTHEA
(tentatively joyful)
He does?

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
(yelling, calling out)
HENRY? Dad is on the phone, honey.
You want to talk to Daddy?

Althea cringes a bit, the D word. Candace can hear all this, and meets Althea's eyes. Respect? Pity? Both?

TONYA (CONT'D)
Henry, honey, Daddy's on the phone.
(indistinct kid speak)
Now he doesn't want to talk.

ALTHEA
(somber, chokes up)
It's okay. Look, tell him I love him, please. And you too, OK, baby?

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
(deep concern)
What is it? What's the matter, Al?
Althea, sorry. What's wrong?

Althea looks to Fran, who is feeling the big empathy feels.

ALTHEA
Look. I'm in a bit of trouble. I don't know when we'll talk again. You have a key to my place, those papers are signed. You may have to just go get them, okay?

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
(kinda freaking out)
What is it? Are you in trouble?

ALTHEA
(has to laugh)
I literally just said the words, "I'm-in-trouble".
(MORE)

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
 (holding back tears)
 I never meant to hurt you. Sorry.

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
 You don't have to apologize, baby.
 (sniffle)
 We're OK now, right? We're still
 some kind of family.

Althea is about to really lose it with the tears, when another phone BUZZES on the counter. Fran picks it up.

ALTHEA
 (bottles up the feels)
 I'll talk to you as soon as I can.

TONYA (O.S. PHONE)
 (worried, tender)
 Be careful, with whatever this is.

Fran reads something on her phone and her face lights up.

FRAN
 Ho! Shit!

Fran really wants Althea's attention. Candace studies Althea.

ALTHEA
 I will. Bye.

Click. Althea blinks away the tears.

FRAN
 They just tweeted out his apology.
 They spelled "fundamental" wrong.

Althea gets a tissue. Fran types on her own phone.

ALTHEA
 (sniffle, blowing nose)
 Yeah?

FRAN
 (clicking send, WHOOSH)
 Well, there we go.

Fran gives Althea a high five and a hug, vibes are up.

CANDACE
 I don't get it. What just happened?

FRAN
 I retweeted their apology.

CANDACE

So what?

FRAN

Well, not to brag, but I'm pretty hot shit on the insta-webs.

EXT. NORDSTROMS BACK DOOR - DAY

Linden is poking around. The Handyman returns with new valves, and struggles at the door with his bag and fast food.

LINDEN

Allow me.

HANDYMAN

(chewing some burger)
Sure thing.

She holds the door open for him, and enters behind him.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

ACRES (O.S.)

You should know that the CEO gave his personal authorization to post that statement, verbatim.

FRAN

(pseudo southern accent)
Well, that's mighty white of him.

That stumps Acres for a moment.

ACRES (O.S.)

I want you to know that a lot of people are aware of this situation now. We're all very concerned about nothing foolish happening.

FRAN

Funny, that's exactly how we feel.

ACRES (O.S.)

Good. Now, we did this thing. It's time for you to give us something and let that woman go. OK?

ALTHEA

Nice try, now get your boss, OK?

ACRES (O.S.)
That is unfortunate.

Long awkward pause.

CANDACE
I have a small request.

She looks humble and sincere, all eyes on her.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
I'd appreciate if y'all would let me make a phone call. My husband's expecting me by now. Can I just tell him I'm gonna be a while?

ALTHEA
(mildly suspicious)
Sure. If you had asked for that ten minutes ago, we would have let you.
(appraises her)
In a minute.

EXT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Acres is about to speak, but freezes as Linden enters.

ACRES
Shit!

LINDEN
Sergeant Acres. We have two armed individuals in there? And a third person is being held in there against their will?
(doesn't get a reply)
Those statements are correct?

ACRES
Yeah but they're just a couple of-

LINDEN
And the two armed *persons* have some requests to be met before they will let this third individual leave?

She gives Acres a chance to rebut. He's got nothing.

LINDEN (CONT'D)
This is the definition of a hostage crisis. Your failure to refer this matter to my division is curious.
(MORE)

LINDEN (CONT'D)
Is there some place more secure
where you can debrief me?

ACRES
(hangdog, deferential)
Yeah.

LINDEN
By the way, the guy you've got on
the front door? He's a piece of
work. Tell him to play nice with
civilians. And you might want to
put a body on the back door too.

Mike does not like to see Acres kowtow to this tiny woman.

LINDEN (CONT'D)
(to Mike)
Who are you?

MIKE
Mike Strauss, store manager.

They all head to the office leaving, Cop 1 at the door.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

Fran's friends from the local LGBTQ center assemble to
demonstrate near the steps. The cops don't make much of it.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP: THE CELL PHONES, MARKED WITH NAMES, SHARPIE ON BLUE
PAINTERS TAPE. FRAN SELECTS ONE MARKED "CANDACE".

ALTHEA
(caustic)
You sure that's the right phone?

Fran double checks, hands it to Candace.

FRAN
(with a scowl for Althea)
Are you serious right now?

CANDACE
I'm just going to send a text to my
husband and my daughter, OK?

FRAN

Sure, make it quick.

Candace notes their attention is off her as things get testy.

ALTHEA

Just pay attention, OK? This, this is real right now, it's happening.

FRAN

You've got gall. You raised the stakes in this thing like a billion percent, shooting the god damned commode, all I did was --

CLOSE UP: on Candace's phone screen and her typing thumbs, while we HEAR Fran bawling out Althea. Candace is not texting her family, she is on a fringe right wing message board - www.prayerfulpatriots.com

FRAN (CONT'D)

-- answer the wrong phone and now you are dealing with some family stuff that needed dealing with anyway because we're going to jail for twenty years because you shot the shitter! I am sorry, but let's have some perspective.

CLOSE UP, THE PHONE

Fellow patriots I am being held at gunpoint by two transgenderd men in the womens room at nordstrom in downtown pdx holding me hostage. Please some make real american voices heard against this LGBTerrorists!

Althea, hardly moved by Fran's wrath, stands and walks round to see just exactly what Candace is doing with her phone.

ALTHEA

(sings, poorly)

I I I, I shot the shitter, but I didn't shoot no deputy.

Fran really doesn't want to, but laughs at the joke.

Candace clicks send as Althea comes up behind her, then offers her the phone back with a smile.

CANDACE

Thanks. I feel so much better now that my people know they've got nothing to worry about.

Althea still proud of having made a funny, smells something fishy, but just takes the phone and puts it with the others.

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

Acres and Mike all look to Linden, who dials the phone.

LINDEN

The mayor would like a word.

ACRES

Christ. The Mayor?

LINDEN

You two pinged the CEO of a multinational corporation.

(dialing)

He probably has the Governor and a few Senators on speed dial too.

INT. THE MAYOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Baseball is on TV. THE MAYOR (63, black, dad-bod, salt and pepper, pajamas) is in a recliner, a bowl of chips in his lap, a beer in one hand, phone in the other.

His assistant, CHUCK (37, M, preppy, fastidious) speaks to one phone, and texts on another. The mayor's phone rings to "Fight the Power", by The Isley Brothers. He shushes Chuck.

MAYOR

Captain?

LINDEN

Yes sir, Mr. Mayor. You're on speaker here, with Sgt Acres, and store management.

MAYOR

Firstly, I don't want anyone misgendering or verbally disrespecting these women. They may be criminals, trespassers and kidnappers, but that has got nothing to do with their identity or how anyone in my administration or associated with my administration will speak of them.

LINDEN

Yes, sir. Now I --

MAYOR

(cuts her off)

Look. This story is dynamite, and that cuts both ways.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

If we jack this up, and someone gets hurt, or worse, then we all going up with it, BOOM! Alternately, we keep this under control, and get those women out of there peaceably, and into custody, well, that'll be di-no-mite? Are we clear?

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

Linden casts a long eye at Acres.

LINDEN

Yes sir. Now--

MAYOR (O.S.)

(cutting her off)

I would like everybody in that room to say, "Yes sir, Mister Mayor, I understand."

They all look at each other, "Is he serious?" A long pause says that he is serious. Linden conducts them--

ALL IN UNISON

(slow, stilted, awkward)

Yes sir Mr. mayor I/we understand.

MAYOR (O.S.)

Now go on. Get them out of there.

LINDEN

Yes sir, about that. Have you had any luck getting a hold of Helen Beaumont?

INT. THE MAYOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The mayor cranks his recliner forward and, oopsie, the bowl of chips hits the floor. He puts her on speaker.

MAYOR

Helen Beaumont? What's that reactionary harpy got to do with this?

LINDEN (O.S.)

Oh, I'm sorry. Thought you were in the loop. They want to interview Helen Beaumont, on camera.

He glares at Chuck, who shrugs, "I dunno".

LINDEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ms Beaumont was involved in the
initial altercation a while back.

The mayor is up and pacing the room now.

MIKE (O.S.)
(interjects)
It was just a misunderstanding,
there was no *altercation*.

MAYOR
(irritated)
Who the hell is that?

MIKE (O.S.)
A-hem. Mike Strauss, store manager.

The mayor steps on spilled chips, CRUNCH CRUNCH, then looks to Chuck, "Who's gonna clean this up?", and resumes pacing.

MAYOR
So you were the one who threw these
women out of the store?

MIKE (O.S.)
They weren't *thrown*, per se.

MAYOR
(cuts him off)
So you're responsible for this
whole thing then? Please, shut up
and stay shut up, and stay out my
people's way. Hear me?

The mayor stumbles over Chuck, who is picking up the chips.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
(irritated with Chuck)
Shiiiiit!!!

MIKE (O.S.)
(terrified now)
Yes. Sir. Yes, sir.

MAYOR
How in hell are we supposed to get
Beaumont's brittle butt down there?

LINDEN (O.S.)
I would be glad to speak to her if-

MAYOR
 (a tinge of sad, vexed)
 Do you know how much cash she
 dumped into the last election?

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

The pause indicates, this question is not rhetorical.

LINDEN
 A lot, sir?

MAYOR (O.S.)
 Yes, and all to my opponent.
 What else do these girls want?

LINDEN
 A dress, sir.

MAYOR
 A what?

INT. EUSTACIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Eustacia's house is an anarcho-anti-capitalist collective.
 She hits a joint while in pigeon pose on her yoga mat.

BARNEY (27, pale, gaunt) drinks rose from a jar. He wears
 Fran's dress, and plays chess with ALLISON, (33, homeless
 fortune-teller-chic), who is more into her phone right now.

A rack in the living room brims with designer clothes, all
 with the tags from Nordstrom still on them. There is a table
 with a small pack and ship operation, and a laptop nearby.

EUSTACIA
 Barney, don't get any wine on that
 dress, we're not getting more merch
 any time soon.

BARNEY
 Fine.

Barney takes Allison's rook, she doesn't notice. He starts
 changing out of the dress. Eustacia gets into crow pose.

BARNEY (CONT'D)
 Hey. You playing?

ALLISON
 (stoned, a bit slow)
 Check this out. Stazia? Don't you
 work at the Nordstrom's downtown?

BARNEY
 Not anymore. She quit this morning.

ALLISON
 Oh.

Allison keeps reading, oblivious to the others waiting for
 her to speak. Barney carefully places the dress on the rack.

BARNEY
 Well? What is it?

ALLISON
 Hmmmm? Oh, yeah.
 (another weird pause)
 It says two trans women hijacked
 the bathroom there.

EUSTACIA
 (falling off her mat)
 What!?

Barney dons a tattered, old kimono, and returns to the chess.

BARNEY
 Wait, how do you hijack a bathroom?

ALLISON
 It's all over queer Twitter, an
 apology from Nordstrom for not
 letting them use the women's
 restroom.

EUSTACIA
 (now on her own phone)
 Jesus. I was there when that
 happened. Mike, you turd.

ALLISON
 There is like a protest down there.

EUSTACIA
 I'm going down there.

Allison remembers the chess game, and quickly make her move.

ALLISON
 Got your queen.

BARNEY

What? Awwww, man. Fudge!

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Candace has a cat-that-ate-the-canary look on her face. Fran and Althea try to give each other space in a 10' x 10' room.

Althea feels Candace's eyes on her.

ALTHEA

(almost snippy)

What?

CANDACE

It's weird. If you ask me.

FRAN

No one asked, so --

ALTHEA

No. It's fine, what's weird?

CANDACE

That you was married to a girl and she had no idea you're gay, then you turn out to be a transgender on top of that.

Fran wants to speak but leaves it to Althea, who doesn't even know where to start.

ALTHEA

Oh dear. You don't get out much do you? I wasn't really gay until I transitioned.

CANDACE

Wait, what?

ALTHEA

I always liked women, and I still like women. So now that I am a woman, I'm a lesbian, because I am a woman who likes women. See?

CANDACE

So you did the thing just so you could, like.. and now you like, can't even...

ALTHEA

What's the thing I did?

CANDACE
 (making finger scissors)
 You chopped off your, you know...

Ugh, so crude, really? Althea looks to Fran for some help.

FRAN
 You asked for it. It's 2020 out
 here, but in there-
 (points to Candace's head)
 -it's I dunno, the 80s?

Althea gathers herself and studies a defiant Candace.

ALTHEA
 OK Candy, let's start at the start.

CANDACE
 (suddenly seething)
 Don't call me Candy.

ALTHEA
 OK. Don't ask other humans about
 their genitals. Deal?

EXT. EUSTACIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The house lists to one side beneath a mossy, sagging roof. The lawn is decorated with rusted bikes, a mannequin, a derelict school bus that may be an apartment, or a grow op.

Vasquez walks up the path and sees signs for leftist causes, BLM, and ACAB, just visible through an overgrown garden.

VASQUEZ
 Oh, boy.

At the front door, she looks down at her uniform, crosses herself, and then raises a hand to knock.

INT. EUSTACIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Colored Christmas lights illuminate the living room. Barney and Allison try to use a Ouija board and eat some molly at the same time. KNOCK KNOCK. Allison's back is to the door.

Goosebumps! They are convinced that it is a spirit!

ALLISON
 (spooked, but into it)
 Whoa!

BARNEY
 (terrified, not into it)
 What the fuck?! Go away, go away!

KNOCK KNOCK. Allison passes the molly to Barney, then closes her eyes, which stay closed as she gets deep into the ouija.

VASQUEZ (O.S.)
 Hi. I'm Officer Melody Vasquez with the Portland poli--

BARNEY
 We summoned the spirit of a cop?!

ALLISON
 What do you want, Melody?

Vasquez RAPS on the door and it just CREAKS open.

VASQUEZ (O.S.)
 I need to speak to Eustacia Bellows. It's very important.

ALLISON
 What do you want from her, spirit?

Barney finally sees her, with a pinky full of dope on his tongue. Vasquez doesn't enter, just waves non-threateningly.

VASQUEZ
 Hi, yes, so sorry to bother you.

Barney puts his hands up. Vasquez puts her hands up. Barney quickly licks a last bit of drugs off his finger, and smiles.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 Hi! I love your whole thing here, it's...
 (taking in the decor)
 cool. I just need a word with Eustacia. I'm not looking to bust anyone for possession or anything.

He stashes the stash.

ALLISON
 (gasps, eye open, bug out)
 Possession! Oh God!

BARNEY
 Ally, turn around, it's a real cop. She means narcotics possession.

ALLISON
 (turns around finally)
 Oooohhhhhh!

Allison gets up, walks to Vasquez and locks eyes. Allison's pupils are blown out. She touches Vasquez' heart chakra.

ALLISON (CONT'D)
 (lovingly)
 You have a beautiful name.
 (testing Vasquez)
 Can I have hug, Melody?

VASQUEZ
 (somewhat hesitant, then)
 Yeah. Why not?

They have a nice long hug.

ALLISON
 (to Barney)
 99.9% of cops are bastards, but she's alright. I trust her.

BARNEY
 Stazy went down to the the protest.

VASQUEZ
 Protest?

BARNEY
 Some trans chicks took over the ladies room at Nordstroms and have like a dozen hostages. She went down there in solidarity. Check it, it's a whole thing.

CLOSE UP: BARNEY'S LAPTOP - HIS FEED HAS IMAGES OF THE GROWING PROTEST ON THE STEPS OF NORDSTROMS.

ALLISON
 We totally would have gone, but we're pretty high, and that scene could be a um...
 (trails off)

VASQUEZ
 Bummer?

ALLISON
 No. Just like, intense, you know? Protest can take many forms, you know.

VASQUEZ

Do you have a phone number for her?

BARNEY

I do, but it won't help. She left it here, so they can't place her there.

VASQUEZ

"They"?

BARNEY

C'mon. You know how they do. Facial recognition, "*location services*" they're watching you, man.

VASQUEZ

Hey, I'm just a beat cop, not the NSA. Intense it may be at that protest, but I gotta go find her.

BARNEY

(amused)

Didn't you see those pictures? You're not gonna get close to her, in that uniform.

Vasquez looks down at her blues. He's got a point.

BARNEY (CONT'D)

(full of his own nobility)

Tell you what. If you're really gonna try an' help those women, I'll help you get dressed for some undercover protest action. OK?

Vasquez is not real keen on this idea, but nods, "OK".

ALLISON

This is good. I feel good about this.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DAY

The protest has grown. Cops erect barricades. There are signs being made. SWAT is there. Phones record everything.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

They eat PB&J sandwiches that Fran made.

CANDACE
 (mouth full)
 So you think you're this
 (points at her own groin)
 but you're still walking around
 with that?
 (turns her index finger
 into a penis)
 Uh-uh. Wash off the make up and get
 naked. Then what are you?

KNOCK KNOCK

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

Linden is at the door. Acres and Mike lean in to listen.

LINDEN
 Hello, Captain Lydia Linden, here.
 I have the Mayor here on the phone.
 He would like a word.

ALTHEA (O.S.)
 So we can get the mayor to talk to
 us but not the scion of the city's
 storied uber-WASP clan?

FRAN (O.S.)
 (with peanut butter mouth)
 Wait, can a woman even be a scion?
 Grand Dame, maybe?

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

ALTHEA
 (with peanut butter mouth)
 I don't believe the word scion is
 gendered inherently, etymologically
 speaking, but historically, in
 terms of usage?
 (shrugs, "I dunno")

A pause to wash down the peanut butter with some tea.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

LINDEN
 (trying to create urgency)
 Um, the *mayor* is holding for you.

FRAN (O.S.)
OK, fine put him through--

Linden slides her phone onto speaker, then under the door.

FRAN (CONT'D)
-- whatever - he's a fucking hack
like the rest of 'em.

Linden stifles a laugh, and cringes.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

The Mayor performs some exaggerated THROAT CLEARING. Fran looks down and sees the phone on speaker.

THE MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
Now, Ms, maybe I am just a hack
like the rest of them, but my
administration's support for LGBTQ
folk is staunch.

Fran chagrined, snickers, and looks to Althea.

ALTHEA
Mr Mayor, to be honest, my friend
is right, you are a bit of a hack,
but I voted for you, twice, if that
is any consolation.

THE MAYOR
Hnh, I truly do appreciate your
support. We justly want to make
sure that there is a peaceful
solution and resolution to this
pickle we're all in. There's a lot
of ways this can end, let's find an
ending that works for everybody.

FRAN
There's only one ending, really.

INT. THE MAYOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

More aides and some cops are on the scene now. The ballgame is on in the background. The mayor, fixing himself a big, Dagwood sandwich, licks some mustard off a knife.

THE MAYOR
Ms Beaumont is seventy two.

FRAN (O.S.)
 We don't really care how old,
 senile, busy, or rich she is. Tell
 her... tell her there is a nice fat
 tax cut down here for her.

The mayor laughs heartily, sawing his sandwich in half. Chuck the aide is taking notes, and eyes the sandwich with envy.

THE MAYOR
 Tax cut. That's a good one!

FRAN (O.S.)
 Someone needs to coax, cajole,
 carry or just drag her ass here.

The mayor is pleased with his sandwich. Chuck takes a pickle from the jar. The mayor gives him the eye, but allows it.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

They're playing it cool on the phone but Althea and Fran are all like, "holy shit! We're talking with the freaking mayor!"

MAYOR (O.S.)
 Ladies, it's just not that simple.

FRAN
 (super cool)
 Oh, but it is just-that-simple.
 Goodbye.

Fran slides the phone back out under the door. Althea gives her a thumbs up. Fran shakes off the tension.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - DAY

THE MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
 Linden, you get all that?

LINDEN
 Yes sir.

INT. THE MAYOR'S KITCHEN - DAY

The mayor has suddenly lost his appetite, and pushes the sandwich over to Chuck.

THE MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
 Who do we know is going to have
 Helen Beaumont's phone number?

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - LATE IN THE DAY

At the protest: music's bumping and the vibe is delightful. SWAT and the police are not sweating it.

Signs include, "FREEDOM ISN'T PEE", "OH LAWDY LAWDY, WE LIKE TO POTTY", "UNRESTROOMS? NO! RESTROOMS? YES!". A triptych reads "MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, WHEN DOING YOUR BUSINESS, IN A PLACE OF BUSINESS".

It's all rather chill, until:

Three huge pick ups roll up on the sidewalk, they fly a huge American flag, a "Don't Tread On Me", and a Confederate flag. A diesel deliberately belches copious, thick exhaust.

Men in body armor and helmets, exercising their open carry rights, with long guns and sidearms, hop out of the trucks.

PAUL BUMPLOT (38, white, neat beard, hipster lumberjack look) leads the goon squad up the steps to the cops. SIDEKICK (42, just a lesser version of Bumpplot) plays the wing man.

BUMPLOT

We heard a friend of our is been
held against her will by some men
in the ladies room of this place.

BAD COP discreetly flashes the white power "OK" hand sign, Bumpplot winks back. COP 2, (black) puts a hand to his sidearm, the other hand says, "STOP" to Bumpplot.

COP 2

You all need to take a big step
back. Sorry about your friend, but
the situation is being dealt with
by professionals.

BUMPLOT

(stroking his firearm)
Well, we don't uh.. cotton to our
friends being held at gunpoint.

Cop 2 looks from the AR-15, to Bumpplot, back to the gun, and back to Bumpplot, who doesn't seem to appreciate the irony.

COP 2

Well, that makes two of us. So if
you all don't take that big step,
we're not going to be "cottonin'"
to one another quite a bit.

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - DAY

Linden is at Mike's desk. Acres and Mike look over her shoulder. Mike is put out, someone else is in his big chair.

CLOSE UP: THE MONITOR SHOWS FOOTAGE OF THE GIRLS ENTERING THE STORE EARLY THAT MORNING. FREEZE FRAME > PIXELATED ZOOM

LINDEN

There they are. Although not a lot of good without names.

She gets up to leave.

MIKE

Oh! The first girl that came out of there, she said their names.

LINDEN

What first girl?

MIKE

Yeah. She came out of the bathroom and knew both their names.

Everyone looks at him, like "well, what are the names?".

MIKE (CONT'D)

I don't remember. Alma? Pam?

LINDEN

Do you have contact information for the woman who they let go?

MIKE

(embarrassed)

No.

LINDEN

You have been very helpful.

Linden moves to exit, as she touches the knob, the door moves and bonks her hand. Susan enters, carrying an open laptop.

SUSAN

Oh! Sorry, sorry.

Linden smiles, 'no big deal', and continues to leave.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

(excitedly!)

Wait! I found the dress.

Linden stops. Susan has everyone's attention.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Not *the* dress. But on-line. Same label, same size, color. Worn once. The seller'll take 300. It's only an hour from here.

Susan looks at Mike expectantly, as do Linden and Acres.

MIKE

Don't look at me. There are procedures to requisition funds.

SUSAN

Are you serious right now? Tell you what. I'll split it with you, out of pocket, deal?

MIKE

It's just, I don't think that...

SUSAN

(has had enough)
OK, I'm done.

She tosses the laptop down, just hard enough to indicate her disgust, but carefully enough to make sure it doesn't break.

MIKE

Where are you going?

SUSAN

I hear they're hiring swing shift supers at Big Box.

Susan's hand on the knob and CHONK, it turns as Cop 2 enters.

COP 2

Sorry to interrupt, but the situation outside? It just got fu-
(he trails off)

ACRES

Got what?

COP 2

-- complicated.

INT. LADIES ROOM - DAY

Fran finishes up her makeup and hair just so. The vanity looks like a back stage dressing room, product everywhere.

Althea is focused, writing on her laptop and drinking more tea. Candace watches Fran primp with amusement and contempt.

ALTHEA

(reads from her screen)

Does this sound right? "This action is taken in the name of no one other than ourselves, and while we hope to call attention to the unfounded fears, irrational anger, and ignorant treatment of queer and trans people everywhere --

FRAN

Too preachy, college girl. We gotta talk like a couple o' regular joes.

CANDACE

(fake deep voice)

You talk like regular Joes alright.

Fran shoots her a look, "not funny, just offensive".

ALTHEA

We don't want to be misunderstood.

FRAN

And that's why you keep it simple.

(indicates Candace)

For the simple folk.

Candace snickers. Althea looks at her suspiciously. BZZZ BZZZ, Fran's phone is vibrating. She checks it.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

ALTHEA

What is it?

FRAN

Look, the goon squad is here.

CLOSE UP: FRAN'S PHONE, AN IMAGE OF THE GOON SQUAD OUT FRONT.

Candace has a good chuckle.

CANDACE

You're not the only ones with

(does air-quotes)

"allies".

Althea realizes what happened, but Fran is a moment behind.

ALTHEA

She didn't text her family. She called in the conservative cavalry.

FRAN

What the hell?! How did you let her get away with that?

ALTHEA

Me? This room is tiny? You were right there.

Fran scrolls through her own feed looking for more info.

FRAN

You're the brains of this operation, I'm the beauty.

CANDACE

Hah!

FRAN

Look, sure. We took you
(with air quotes)
"hostage" but we've treated you pretty decently on the balance, that's two strikes. One for calling in the bigot brigade, and another for being a snarky bitch.

CANDACE

(let's the venom show now)
Bitch? Me? You tranny freaks come in here and-

ZZZZZZZZZZTTTTTTTTT - RRRIPPP, Althea peels six inches of duct tape off a roll and goes to put it over Candace's mouth.

ALTHEA

We tried being nice.

CANDACE

(suddenly penitent)
-- I'm sorry. I shouldn't have --

ALTHEA

No, you shouldn't have.

CANDACE

(remorseful)
Please? I'm sorry. I mean, she called me a bitch first.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - DUSK

IN THE QUEER PROTEST - Eustacia sits, legs akimbo, in a circle with other protesters, having an intense discussion.

PULLING BACK - The police erect more barricades to separate the two groups of protesters, and to keep a path between the store and the street clear.

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS - Linden, Acres, Mike and Susan appear at the main entrance and survey the scene. Mike half hides behind Acres. The sun is getting low.

MIKE

Oh my -- My store.

ACRES

(to Linden)

Should I call in for more men.

Linden nods yes, then grabs Acres' arm as he heads off.

LINDEN

Remember what the mayor said. Di-
no-mite.

Acres nods and hustles off toward the barricades with Cop 2. With Acres gone, Mike shades behind Linden. Susan heads off.

MIKE

Wait! Where are you going?

SUSAN

To get that dress, clown.

Mike looks at Linden, who shrugs.

LINDEN

It'll take her away from all this
and that's got to be safer.

Mike sees that is true and eyes going after Susan.

LINDEN (CONT'D)

(heads back in)

Uh uh, you're with me, Mr Manager.

Mike looks at the chaos, shudders, and scurries after Linden.

AT THE CURB - A local news truck arrives, and cops converge on it. Susan finds her path cut off; she must exit to one side or the other. It's angry men with guns, or the queer dance party. She's not thrilled with either choice.

SUSAN

This whole stupid day, ugh.

THE GUNS CROWD - a lot of camo, stars and stripes, stars and bars. A PASTOR (57, white, collared frock et al) joins hands in a prayer circle. Bumplot looks on, and refuses a hand when offered.

PASTOR

Lord, we are not here out of spite.
We bear no hate for these lost,
deviant, souls. We pray for their
salvation as we pray for our own.

Bumplot finds the prayer funny, he pops a pill. Sidekick nips at a flask. Bumplot gives him a pill for a nip at the flask.

NEWS CHANNEL NINE'S CREW - is tickled pink to find they're first on the scene. The tech guy hustles to set up lights and the camera. SAM SIMEON (ageless, race-less, handsome, creepy yet benign) touches up his own makeup.

SAM SIMEON

(looking around, cocky)
We're gonna lead tonight.

IN THE CROWD - Remember Madison from way back? Her eyes track Simeon from the crowd of neutral gawkers who've assembled behind the police presence, safely between the factions.

BANG!!! and a SHRIEK!!!

All eyes go the QUEER RIGHTS SIDE OF THINGS - someone inflating balloons popped one, but the tension is revealed.

Vasquez, now suitably bedraggled in drab cargo pants and an over-sized, threadbare, moth-eaten sweater, wades into the crowd of queer activists and Antifa, with Barney in tow.

Susan struggles to move through said crowd. BOINK, she physically collides with Vasquez.

VASQUEZ

Hey!

Susan is a little frightened, and doesn't recognize her.

SUSAN

I'm so sorry, I'm just trying to-

VASQUEZ

Hello, ma'am.

SUSAN
Oh! Hi offic-

VASQUEZ
(cutting her off)
Ixnay on the officer thing, OK?
Call me Mel.

SUSAN
OK, Mel. Did you find Eustacia?

VASQUEZ
No. But my new pal, Barney here,
says she is somewhere in... here.

They look around at the crowd, it's huge and daunting.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
Give us a hand? Maybe help those
girls get out of there?

SUSAN
(hems, haws, then)
Why not?

EXT. BUCOLIC ROAD - DUSK

Two cyclists crest a hill. CAROL STRONG (32, black, fit) slows down, so that HELENA BEAUMONT (73, white, metallic hair, great bone structure) can keep up. Manicured shrubs and trees line the road. This is a wealthy neighborhood.

They pause, share a smile, then descend with abandon. Zooming in a crouch, they swoop through curves, neck and neck.

EXT. THE BEAUMONT ESTATE - NIGHT

The cyclists race right up through the grand stiles and open gate, then stop at the palatial entrance to the home.

Helmets come off, they sip water, panting and sweating.

CAROL
Ms Beaumont. You're a demon. You
have no fear.

HELEN
Fear? To live in fear is to believe
that the worst is inevitable.
(searches pockets)
Although, I am afraid that I left
my glasses back on that bench.
(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)
 (puts her helmet back on)
 Are you up for a few more miles?

CAROL
 That was five miles back!
 (looks around at the
 obvious wealth)
 You can afford another pair.

HELEN
 Yes, but you don't get rich, and
 certainly won't stay rich, if you-

The maid, SARAH (white, 47) emerges from the grand doors,
 harried, and interrupts.

SARAH
 (short of breath)
 Ms B, the Mayor called for you.

HELEN
 (mildly astonished)
 The mayor? I can't imagine.

SARAH
 Twice. It's very urgent, he says.

HELEN
 Well the mayor can wait.
 I need to fetch my sunglasses.

Helen puts her helmet back on. Carol follows suit.

SARAH
 Ma'am, it's a matter of life and
 death. He said.

HELEN
 So dramatic, just like a lib.
 (to Carol)
 Drats. I suppose I will have to buy
 myself another pair of glasses.

INT. BEAUMONT ESTATE - THE GUEST KITCHEN - EVENING

Helen and Carol sit at a counter. Helen listens on the
 handset of the wall mounted rotary phone, Carol eavesdrops.

HELEN
 Well, why don't you just go in with
 tear gas and roust these cretins
 out of there?

THE MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
Ma'am. This is a hostage situation,
and we need to be sensitive to-

HELEN
Sensitive? To what? Violent
criminals?

THE MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
(cringes audibly)
Our hope is that you can help us
avoid any violence. Ms. Beaumont,
speaking directly to you, on
camera, is their primary demand.
(no reply)
I personally guarantee your safety.

Helen laughs heartily at this.

HELEN
(skeptical)
I have no faith in a guarantee from
your government, or any other.
(she mulls)
But I will consider this with my
attorney. We'll be in touch.

She hangs up, and purses her lips in thought.

HELEN (CONT'D)
So attorney? Might we have a bit of
fun with the this, hmmm?

CAROL
Your idea of fun is... curious.

HELEN
Someone one needs to stand up these
leftist bullies.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran is poised in her chair, with perfect lighting; legs
crossed, hands at rest on her knee.

Althea looks at Fran on the monitor and fiddles with the
camera. Candace looks on, the duct tape holds up a lamp.

ALTHEA
You look amazing by the way. Ready?

Fran does some vocal warm up exercises.

FRAN
 (call back to her earlier
 existential schtick)
 Is anyone ever ready for anything?

Althea just shakes her head, "it's still not funny".

CANDACE
 What is all this? What are you on
 about? Making some kind of TV show?

FRAN
 Why, you want to be in it?

CANDACE
 Me? No.

FRAN
 You sure you don't have anything
 you want to say to us? You've been
 speaking your mind plenty, so far.

Candace clams up.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 Can I ask you a question?

CANDACE
 Like what?

FRAN
 Like, where do you think I should
 go, you know, when I have to go?

CANDACE
 You mean like, "go" "go"?

FRAN
 "Pee pee poo poo", as the kids say.

Candace doesn't want to answer.

CANDACE
 (points to Althea)
 She just said she's still got a-
 Look, women make babies and neither
 of you-

FRAN
 You're not making any babies
 either, my menopausal friend.

CANDACE

(doesn't like that)

Look, I don't hate nobody. I just wanna walk down the street and be free to...

She trails off into a long pause.

ALTHEA

-- and what? Be *free from* my existence? Free from worrying about what I use to pee, and where?

Candace won't say it but that is the answer.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Your kind is always freedom this and freedom that, but Lord forbid anyone use that freedom different than you.

Candace sits up tall, with resolve and pride in her opinions.

BZZZT, a phones starts vibrating. Then another phone vibes itself right off the counter.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S -EVENING

QUEERSIDE: Antifa types at the barricade, bandannas, bike helmets, gas masks, black denim and hoodies. Among them are sparkly disco protesters, blowing kisses to the patriots.

GUNSIDE: Bumplot and his boys at the barricades, armed and armored; they would look more at home in Basra. They stare intently across, un-amused by the kisses.

Some Westboro-Baptist-Church-types hoist signs imploring, "GAY? HELL AWAITS, NO PEARLY GATES". Sam Simeon is well lit, in the foreground. The camera is rolling.

CLOSE UP: A TELEVISION SCREEN- "LIVE AT NORDSTROM'S DOWNTOWN PDX" ON THE BANNER. WE'LL PERIODICALLY CUT AWAY TO SHOTS OF VARIOUS CHARACTERS WATCHING THIS BROADCAST ON THEIR DEVICES.

SAM SIMEON

We do know that these women are armed, and that at least one shot has been fired. With us here we have Madison Freiberg. She was in the ladies room with the current hostage and the two hijackers.

(MORE)

SAM SIMEON (CONT'D)

Madison, what can you tell us about the situation?

MADISON

Well. The women, I mean they had guns and I guess it was sorta scary, but they were sorta sweet, considering, you know? I was never, like, really worried.

THE MAYOR HOPS ABOUT, PUTTING HIS PANTS ON TWO LEGS AT ONCE AS THE TV PLAYS. CHUCK IS STILL WORKING TWO PHONES.

SAM SIMEON

And what can you tell us about your fellow hostage?

MADISON

I don't know. She was like, angry. I guess maybe I woulda been too, if I was the one they kept there.

FRAN AND ALTHEA WATCH, THEY ARE KIND ENOUGH TO ANGLE THE SCREEN SO THAT A GRUMPY CANDACE CAN SEE.

SAM SIMEON

And do you know what their demands are? Did they say anything else?

LINDEN AND MIKE WATCH ON HER PHONE AT THE LADIES ROOM DOOR.

MADISON

They wanted a to talk to the manager. He was like, kind of a di-
(self censors)
jerk, and was totally mean to a girl for like, just working there.

MIKE IS ALL, "OH MAN. ARE YOU SERIOUS WITH THIS?"

HELEN BEAUMONT, WRAPPED IN TOWELS, FRESH FROM THE SHOWER, STOPS TO WATCH AS CAROL SHOWS HER THE BROADCAST ON A TABLET.

MADISON (CONT'D)

They wanted a dress or something, and I don't know. Oh yeah. They wanted to talk to some rich lady, she's the one that got them kicked out of the store in the first place. I mean, I would be pissed too, if that happened to me.

BACK TO A FULL SCREEN SHOT OF THE LIVE FEED.

SAM SIMEON

So you think what they're doing is reasonable?

MADISON

No, but... I don't know. I mean, it's 2020, people can like just pee wherever. Just wash your hands, and keep the seat clean. I can't believe this is even a thing.

SAM SIMEON

Thank you very much. Also now we have been informed that one of the kidnappers is a Francine Carter. Formerly Franklin Carter. The identity of the other woman is as of yet unknown.

THE DREADED BEFORE AND AFTER. FRAN'S OLD ROUGH FACE, ALONGSIDE A RECENT CUTE, SELFIE FROM HER SOCIAL MEDIA.

INT. LADIES ROOM - EVENING

Fran is dumbstruck; her face, past and present, on TV.

SAM SIMEON (O.S.)

It looks like a long night out here with the protesting factions growing, as is the tension.

Althea wants to reach out to hug Fran but holds back. Candace feels revulsion, curiosity and pity all at once.

Fran is about to say something pithy and brush it off, but doesn't. She goes and quietly locks herself in a stall.

INT. THE MAYOR'S KITCHEN - EVENING

The mayor is stress eating some ice cream out of the container in front of the open freezer. He mumbles to himself. Chuck keeps working the phones.

CHUCK

(astonished, whispering)
It's Homeland Security. For you.

The mayor does not want to deal with that, and is saved when he gets an incoming call on his own phone. He poo-poops Chuck.

MAYOR
 (into his phone)
 Ms Beaumont? How may I help you?

HELEN (O.S.)
 Hello, Mr Mayor. I have had a
 change of... mind. I will meet with
 these... people.

MAYOR
 (thrilled, but stays pro)
 Well, we are in your debt. You have
 my assurance that you will be safe.

INT. BEAUMONT ESTATE - EVENING

Helen, robed, sits at her vanity, mid-blowout. Sarah holds a
 hair dryer and brush - on standby.

HELEN
 Hmph. I'll be at the employee
 entrance at 7:45. Until then.

Her eyes fall on a framed photo of her and her departed
 husband on their yacht in the 80's, looking WASPY as can be.

MAYOR (O.S.)
 Ma'am. May I ask why you changed
 your mind? What swayed you?

HELEN
 I am not the villain here, and I
 refuse to be portrayed as such by
 the media. 7:45.

The phone goes back in it's cradle. Her blowout resumes. The
 VVVRRR of the dryer is as loud in the ears of the audience as
 it is to Helen, who idly peruses a fortune in jewelry.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Vasquez, still in incognito mode, wades through the crowd
 with Barney and Susan. They're trying to cover a wide area.

BARNEY
 (half yelling)
 Stazy? Where you at?
 (no reply)
 STAAA-ZEEE?

Something catches Susan's eye, she moves off. Vasquez sees
 her and follows. Barney, oblivious, goes the other way.

Susan finds Eustacia in a circle of women, an altar of flowers, wine, and lit candles are in the center.

SUSAN

Hi! Eustacia, it's me don't freak out, OK? I have a police officer--

The crowd peels back at the words "police" and officer". Mean and distrustful eyes fall on Vasquez, who half way puts her hands up. Eustacia gathers her things, ready to bolt.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh! Honey, it's ok. She's nice -

The crowd's murmur turns ugly. Vasquez is now more concerned for her and Susan's safety than Eustacia or the dress.

RANDOM ASSHOLE

Get the fuck out of here narc.

ANOTHER ASSHOLE

We don't need your cointelpro bullshit here, you fucking pig.

Eustacia is about to disappear into the crowd but pauses, suddenly more curious about what Susan is doing out here with a cop, than afraid of a cop. Vasquez is tense, head on a swivel. Susan is on the edge of panic.

Someone throws a fistful of glitter at Vasquez, it settles on her face and hair rather fashionably.

Barney shows up and enters the circle that has opened up around Vasquez, and stands by her side.

BARNEY

(even keeled)

Hey. What's going on here?

RANDOM ASSHOLE

What? Is this pig a friend of yours?

BARNEY

As a matter of fact she is. And she's a cool motherfucker.

ANOTHER ASSHOLE

Yeah?

BARNEY

Yeah. All cops are bastards, we know that.

(MORE)

BARNEY (CONT'D)

I bet she knows that, but she's here to help the women in there.

Random Asshole doesn't buy it. Vasquez rolls up her sleeve and shows off a faded pink triangle tattoo from way back when. This 'cred' seems to work, and they ease off.

VASQUEZ

I'll be on my way shortly, OK?

Meanwhile --

SUSAN

Stazy, there was a dress, cream, size 10, with a floral brocade. Do you remember?

Eustacia is absorbed in the goings on with Vasquez. Out of patience, Susan snaps her fingers for Eustacia's attention.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Hey! We're trying to find that dress. One of the women tried it on the day she got kicked out. Do you know where it is?

The kerfuffle has subsided, and Barney and Vasquez come near.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

They won't leave that bathroom till they get that dress.

(now Eustacia listens)

We tore the store apart. Do you know where it is?

Eustacia looks at Vasquez, sizing her up.

EUSTACIA

(to Vasquez)

I know the dress. I should've quit that day, on principle. You going to give me immunity or something?

VASQUEZ

I just want to get these girls out of there and safe. All this, going on out here? Not my deal.

EUSTACIA

(unapologetic)

I stole it.

Susan's hands go to her knees like a tired ballplayer.

EUSTACIA (CONT'D)
 But you gotta ask him, he was
 wearing it the last time I saw it.

Vasquez looks at Barney and slaps her forehead.

VASQUEZ
 Seriously?

BARNEY
 (blushing)
 You didn't ask me about any dress!

INT. VINTAGE MERCEDES SEDAN - NIGHT

A pristine, S-class diesel, Helen driving, pushes in the dash lighter. Steely Dan is on the radio. Carol works her phone.

CAROL
 The Founders Family Heritage Caucus
 is asking for two hundred 75K for
 the monument preservation campaign.

HELEN
 Done.

CAROL
 And last one, Women's Life Choices
 want 50 for a new adoption center.

HELEN
 Hmmph. They never thanked me for
 the last 50, but we must save the
 little babies, mustn't we?

CAROL
 Got it. You know, live on the
 internet, there's no edits. No
 backsies. If you mess up, it'll be
 out there forever. As your lawyer--

HELEN
 (cuts her off)
 I know what the internet is, dear.
 And I look forward to making my
 position plain and clear.

Helen cracks her window, the lighter pops and she lights a Virginia Slim. Carol doesn't question her decision further.

CAROL
 (in fun)
 As your lawyer, it is my duty to
 remind you, smoking kills.

HELEN
 (icy)
 Shht. Or I'll send you back to that
 godforsaken public school in the
 hood where I found you.

That barb gives Carol a wince of humiliation.

EXT. THE MAYOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The mayor's house is a cozy craftsman with a very tidy yard.
 He walks down the garden path to a waiting squad car, aides
 in tow. He hops in, they drive off with a two car escort.

INT. A RESTROOM STALL - NIGHT

Fran sits on the toilet, seat down, and is on the phone.

FRAN
 (has been crying)
 Gary, where are you? They doxxed
 me, before and after pictures, they
 fucking dead-named me on TV. I knew
 it might happen but...
 (she wipes snot with TP)
 Look, it won't be long before the
 press or the police find you.
 Will you call me? Please?

INT. LADIES ROOM -NIGHT

Fran exits the stall, her make up run through with tears.

CANDACE
 You know what? I still hope they
 throw your ass in jail when this is
 over, but that's gotta suck.

FRAN
 (whatever)
 Thanks.

CANDACE
 May I use the - um - restroom?

Althea nods, and rises to give Fran a big hug. Fran accepts it half-heartedly. Candace locks herself in a stall.

FRAN

What're we even doing here?

ALTHEA

(fixing Fran's hair)

I'm sorry, babe. You look pretty hot in that "after" pic they used. Small consolation, I know.

FRAN

It's true. That is a great picture.

ALTHEA

This also might feel like small consolation now, but take a look.

Althea turns the laptop so Fran can see it--

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

We have a lot of friends! Look, we're pre-empting Wheel of Fortune.

Sam Simeon is on screen, at the protest. Althea un-mutes it.

SAM SIMEON (O.S. SCREEN)

--and as you can see the competing factions here seem to be --

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Some right wing folks at the front of the barricade chant, and mark the perimeter of their turf with tiki torches.

RIGHT WING CHANT

- there's only two genders- not your rainbow agenda -

The other side has glow-sticks twisted and connected into rainbows and hearts that festoon the barricades.

SAM SIMEON

Earlier, I spoke with one of the protesters.

FULL SCREEN TV CAST, FOOTAGE OF SAM INTERVIEWING BUMPLOT.

SAM SIMEON (CONT'D)

What brings you out here tonight?

Bumplot sees his AR-15 is not in frame, and hikes it up.

BUMPLOT

People worry about guns like this in real American hands, but who's waving one around in there? A lib.

SAM SIMEON

What would you say to these women?

BUMPLOT

(disgusted)

Women? They're some fellas in need of serious psychological help.

SAM SIMEON

How does you bringing your gun here help this situation?

BUMPLOT

(affronted snort)

You know who does gun murders? Thugs. And libtards, like these fellas in the store.

Sam Simeon is suddenly quite uncomfortable next to this guy.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

The newscast, live again, camera on Sam Simeon, on the laptop. In the foreground, Althea turns to Fran, with a smile that says "we made quite a ruckus."

ALTHEA

It looks like a Trump rally got double booked with a Burning Man thing out there.

FRAN

(quite wary of all this)

That moron with the gun scares the living shit out of me.

SAM SIMEON (O.S. SCREEN)

(mild gravitas)

Although it's quiet at the moment, here on the scene, one spark could cause a wildfire the likes of which we've never seen.

The shot pans from Sam to the store front, tiki torches and glow-sticks in frame, then up and zooming out to show the store's whole facade with Sam back in the frame.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Sam is looking up at the building along with the camera.

SAM SIMEON
 (maximum gravitas)
 And this is only half the story, as
 we have no idea what is happening
 at the epicenter of this crisis.

-- and *CUT*. Sam is quite pleased with himself.

SAM SIMEON (CONT'D)
 That was really good. Right? I
 mean, we just killed that.

The camera man gives him a high five, chest-bumping bro hug.

INT. OFFICE OF THE STORE MANAGER - NIGHT

Linden's phone cuts from the broadcast to an incoming call.

LINDEN
 Mr Mayor?

MAYOR (O.S. PHONE)
 Captain, Beaumont is on her way.

LINDEN
 (lively now)
 Beaumont's coming? When?

Mike hears the name and like Pavlov's dog, pops up, and grooms himself in a mirror, smoothing wrinkles in his shirt.

MAYOR (O.S.)
 She's coming in the employee
 entrance at 7:45. Get down there
 but don't start anything till I get
 there, you hear?

Mike pops a piece of gum in his mouth, inspects his teeth, and finger combs his hair.

LINDEN
 Very good, sir. We're on it.

Linden hangs up and turns to find Mike standing at attention.

MIKE
 (with newfound vigor)
 Let's go.

INT. SUSAN'S MINIVAN - NIGHT

Susan is at the wheel. Vasquez rides shotgun, Eustacia and Barney are in the back.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

The minivan is in a logjam of news trucks, police vehicles, and protesters all fighting to get close to the action.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Farts.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

WHOOOSSSHHH the sounds of running water.

Fran has washed her face at the sink. The faucet stops. She looks in the mirror, studying every detail of her wet face, jaw line, hair line, brow line, the bags under her eyes.

FRAN

Ugh.

Althea plays AV, untangling some cords while she pretends not to watch her friend with concern. It gets very quiet.

FLUSSHHH.

INT. A STALL - NIGHT

Under cover of the flush, Candace draws the gun from where she had wedged it, tucks it in her Spanx, and exits.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran sees Candace behind her in the mirror.

CANDACE

(chipper)

So, what's the plan?

Awkward silence. Althea's eyes lead Candace to her chair.

ALTHEA

That's your plan, right there.

CANDACE

(in good humor)

Alright, alright.

(MORE)

CANDACE (CONT'D)
 Going to wash my hands first
 though. Is that OK?
 (start washing up)
 Can I have a cup of that tea?

Althea smells something amiss, but tea does sound good.

ALTHEA
 Yeah, why not. Franny? Tea?

FRAN
 Yeah. An herbal. I got nerves
 enough, I don't need any caffeine.

Althea's phone rings. It's her son, Henry, on a Facetime. Her heart exploding at the sight of his face, and she bobbles it.

ALTHEA
 Hi Baby! So good to see you!!!

HENRY
 Daddo? Why are you upside down?

She turns it right side up.

ALTHEA
 How are you? Where's Mom?

Henry's eyes dance, looking at everything except the phone.

HENRY
 OK. Mom's crying. You're on TV.

ALTHEA
 (carefully)
 I am on TV.

HENRY
 Mom says you're going to get
 yourself kilt.

ALTHEA
 No. I survived a war, remember?

Henry's eyes finally return to the phone and he sees Althea.

HENRY
 OK. You look weird.

ALTHEA
 Do I? We haven't seen each other in
 a while. You look big.

HENRY

I am big. I can get cookies off the fridge now.

ALTHEA

Wow. That is big! Look, buddy, when this silliness is over, I want to hang out and goof off with you. Like the old days.

HENRY

It's not like that anymore.

ALTHEA

No. Some things are different. I bet we can still have fun though.

HENRY

I don't know.

Henry hangs up suddenly. Althea is speechless.

EXT. NORDSTROMS BACK DOOR - NIGHT

Several SWAT officers in full regalia are bored, looking at phones, or half asleep. TIK TOK TIK TOK.

They startle to life and level their weapons at the noise.

SWAT #1

Put your hands above your head and stop right there.

TIK TOK TIK TOK They can't see what's headed their way as it's back lit by bright lights. TIK TOK TIK TOK.

HELEN

Relax. It's just a little old lady.

It's Helen Beaumont's heels, TIK TOK, she and Carol approach.

The back door SQUEAKS and SLAMS open. The SWAT guys startle and swing their guns around at Linden, who doesn't flinch.

LINDEN

Ms. Beaumont. Thank you for coming.

HELEN

Well. I find myself here hardly at my pleasure, so you're welcome.

She breezes past Linden, nose in the air. Mike holds the door, head bowed. She is nobility to him. Carol follows.

Linden claps for the attention of the SWAT crew and using two fingers points to her own, and then everyone else's eyes:

LINDEN

Things are hot out there. No one enters without my permission. OK?

She leaves, SWAT #1 slyly mouths, "fucking dyke", another cop catches it, is disgusted, but says nothing.

INT. EUSTACIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The van squad enters. Allison shuffles tarot cards. Barney pulls back a tapestry, and reveals the stolen merchandise resale operation.

Vasquez and Susan are shocked.

SUSAN

Holy shrinkage, Eustacia!

EUSTACIA

(seething, to Barney)
Fucking idiot! We didn't have to cop to the whole thing.
(defiant, to Vasquez)
I was granted immunity.

SUSAN

(upset)
From her, not me. This is crazy.
The store is struggling and you-

EUSTACIA

(cuts her off)
The store is struggling? Have you seen my paychecks? Fuck that place, and fuck the stockholders, and fuck the sweatshops that make this shit.

SUSAN

So fuck me, is what you're saying?

EUSTACIA

They fucked you, whenever they made that asshole Mike the manager.

SUSAN

(that hurt)
Fine. Fuck 'em. Fuck 'em in the earhole, but that doesn't justify -
(gestures, "all this")

EUSTACIA

It doesn't? How much do you put up with before you do more than say fuck 'em, and actually start fucking 'em.

Susan has no answer and sees a truth in her words.

VASQUEZ

Do you have any idea what the penalty is for this?

EUSTACIA

(deadly serious)
You said immunity, pig.

Barney pops out from the rack.

BARNEY

(psyched!)
I found the dress! It's a little wrinkled but...

EUSTACIA

(salty and done with this)
Great. Take the dress and get the fuck out.

Barney is sad now and so is Susan, who takes the dress from him. Vasquez and Stazy lock eyes. Stazy doesn't back down.

VASQUEZ

OK then.
(to Barney)
Thank you.

Susan inspects the dress. It looks OK, considering.

SUSAN

Don't ask me for a reference.

Vasquez and Susan leave.

BARNEY

Dude, you didn't need to do that. That might be the only cool cop in the city.

EUSTACIA

Whatever. There are no cool cops.

BARNEY
 (hangdog, he was smitten)
 They were a ride back to the
 protest too.

Eustacia looks at the rack. Maybe she feels guilt? Maybe not.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran has just fixed her makeup, and is feeling good about it.

FRAN
 (to the mirror)
 I'm about as ready for my close up
 as I'll ever be.

Althea brushes her teeth, Candace is jealous and shmecks her own fuzzy teeth. Althea digs in her ditty bag and pulls out a brand new toothbrush, and offers it to Candace.

ALTHEA
 Hmm?

She tosses the toothbrush in Candace's lap and offers up toothpaste, as if to say, "c'mon, time to clean up".

Candace gulps, billows her shirt, ensuring her weapon is concealed, and goes to the sink. She opens the brush.

CANDACE
 (magnanimous)
 Look at us. Just sharing a
 restroom. Like...

Althea is mid-spit-and-rinse, and pauses, thinking; "rinse-and-spit, then give her the what for, or pontificate on the irony of her words immediately while foaming at the mouth".

CANDACE (CONT'D)
 ...it's ironic. Ain't it?

Before Althea can enumerate said ironies, a phone vibrates on the counter. Althea looks to see which phone it is.

ALTHEA
 (foamy mouthed)
 It's Gary.

Fran grabs the phone and enters the stall for privacy.

FRAN (O.S.)
 Gary? Baby, where are you?

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Gary struggles to move through the lefty side of the protest. The high emotions have waned. It's all on edge now, a few yawns, some agitation.

GARY

Franny! This is bonkers. There are like, hundreds of people out here.

FRAN (O.S. PHONE)

It's pretty damned crazy in here.

GARY

You guys stirred up some serious shit.

POW! Is it another balloon popping, wonders the crowd? No, one more. POW. The crowd panics, people dive and scatter.

AT THE STEPS: Acres and COP #2 look toward their left.

PATRIOT RALLY: SIDEKICK has a bullet in his foot, he's splayed on the ground; flask and rifle on the floor with him.

BUMPLOT

What the fuck?

SIDEKICK

I don't know!
(howls and clutches foot)
It just went off.

Bumplot goes to one knee, SIDEKICK offers his foot to Bumplot for aid, but Bumplot only picks up the gun and flask.

BUMPLOT

Went off? You dumb ass.

GARY: crouches and waddles through the crowd to the shop, his phone held up round his head as if it offers some protection.

FRAN (O.S. PHONE)

Jesus, what's happening?

Protesters shriek, the police bark commands. Gary can't hear.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Gary? Gary?
(BANG BANG over the phone)

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

BANG BANG on the door. All three women freeze.

LINDEN (O.S.)
She's here.

ALTHEA
Who?

LINDEN (O.S.)
Beaumont.

Fran and Althea are shocked; it takes a second to process.

FRAN
(mildly distraught)
Gary, I gotta go, babe.

Althea draws her gun and waves Candace into her chair, mindful not to actually point it at her.

GARY (O.S. PHONE)
What! Franny!? I can't--

FRAN
I gotta go. I'll see you soon.

She smooches his image on the phone, and swipes the call off.

ALTHEA
(to Linden)
Question?

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Linden's at the door, Helen and Carol are in tow.

LINDEN
Yes.

ALTHEA (O.S.)
Can I have your email, please?

LINDEN
Why?

ALTHEA (O.S.)
You guys make Ms Beaumont comfy, offer her water, tea, whatever. And in a little while, we'll have a nice little telechat.

Linden looks to a hesitant Beaumont.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)
It will be more civilized than
yelling through the door, no?

Beaumont looks to Carol, who gives her assent; Beaumont nods.

LINDEN
Is there anything else you want?

FRAN (O.S.)
If you focus on what ya got in life
you'll always have plenty. If you
focus on what you don't got in
life, you'll never have enough.

LINDEN
(fishing for a clue)
What is that? The Tao or something?

FRAN (O.S.)
Oprah. Now, how 'bout that email?

Beaumont rolls her eyes, and Carol chuckles.

LINDEN
OK. It's "L dot L-I-N..."

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

The mayor's convoy rolls up; Acres and SWAT approach.

ACRES
Sir, we have a situation here.

The mayor's face says, "no shit".

ACRES (CONT'D)
We've got some major unknowns now.

MAYOR
How about you give me the known
knowns first? Then the unknowns.

An aisle is formed by the barricades, leading from the closed
off street, up to the steps of the store. They make their way
up that aisle.

ACRES
As you can see we have a great deal
of, um, civic engagement here.

MAYOR
 (sensing the ugliness)
 I see that. I see that.

ACRES
 We had two shots fired just before
 you got here.

The mayor stops on a dime. SWAT forms up around he and Acres.

MAYOR
 (alarmed but level headed)
 Injuries? Who was it?

ACRES
 We don't know that. We think it
 came from the Patriots.

MAYOR
 You *don't know* who fired a gun?
 Wait, are you implying that the
 other side here are not patriots?

ACRES
 No, sir. That's the group's name,
 Prayerful Patriots.

The mayor sees armed men at the barricades, and finally gets
 the scale of this shit show.

The mayor's phone rings. It's Beaumont.

MAYOR
 (to Acres)
 I have to get in there. You keep
 this under control till I get back,
 you hear?

The Mayor and Chuck head to the store, with a SWAT escort.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 (answering the phone)
 Ms. Beaumont. How are we?

Acres left alone in between the factions, heads to safety.

ACRES
 Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Mike applies a sample of some night cream on the back of
 Helen's free hand, as she speaks on her phone.

HELEN
(imperious)
We're all waiting for you now.

MAYOR (O.S.)
(hurrying up the steps)
Things are rather unsettled here.

HELEN
Well. That's all to be settled in
here, no? Please, come along.

PULLING BACK: at another counter, a chair is set up for her.
As is a tripod and a camera, wired into a laptop monitor.

LINDEN
Ma'am, we're ready for a test.

Helen hangs up. She touches her moisturized hand, approves,
drops the sample into her purse, and goes to the chair.

MIKE
Oh, please let me just--

He picks a piece of lint off Helen's shoulder. TECH COP turns
on a hot light. Her hand shields her face and eyes.

HELEN
No.

TECH COP
We can't see you without it.

Mike comes up with a shaded fixture from behind the counter.

TECH COP (CONT'D)
Sure. Whatever.

Tech Cop plugs in the light and it casts a flattering glow.

HELEN
(lifting her chin)
Raise that camera about a foot, and
move it a few inches to the left.

TECH COP
Lady, this isn't the Today Show.

Helen is not used to insolence. He looks to Linden, "is this
lady for real?" and Linden nods for him do as he's been told.

HELEN
And turn that monitor around. So
that I can see.

Linden nods again, the Tech Cop turns around the monitor/laptop, and Helen looks sidelong at her own profile.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran is seated and the lighting just so. Althea has her framed nicely on the monitor. It's all very professional.

FRAN

(looking at her phone)

I can't believe she came. Did you know she owns a company that makes electric bicycles, and a strip mine on contested, sacred native lands?

ALTHEA

I did.

Candace, off to the side now, is an audience of one.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

Almost there, I want to wait for a few more retweets of the feed.

FRAN

How many now?

ALTHEA

119,724. 5,674 of who are sharing.

FRAN

(belly rolls with nerves)

Oh my goodness.

ALTHEA

Ain't no thang.

FRAN

What?

ALTHEA

My auntie used to say it, "ain't no thang". She had this vibe, she could just put you at ease.

FRAN

You don't have that vibe.

ALTHEA

Fine. What am I supposed to say?

FRAN

I don't know.

(she rehearses her lines)

Hi. I'm Fran. I'm here with my pal Althea, and we don't represent any political group or organization. Before we begin, we'd like to acknowledge the land we occupy as the traditional home of the Chinook, the Multnomah, the Wasco-

EXT. NORDSTROMS -NIGHT

Gary is at the police barricade near the doors, pleading his case to a dismissive and disinterested Bad Cop.

GARY

Please, let me speak to whoever is in charge. The woman in there, *the one with the gun*, she's my fiance.

BAD COP

(walking away)

Just let the pros handle it, buddy.

Gary ducks under the barricade to approach the cop and finds himself in a brutal choke hold. The patriots cheer, and the other side roils at the sight of police brutality.

GARY

(barely able to breathe)

Please, Jesus...

Acres enters. Bad Cop looks up at him and eases off a bit.

BAD COP

This man jumped the barricade, sir.

ACRES

C'mon. Media is here, ok? Ease up.

Gary is released and he sees Sergeant Acres name tag.

GARY

(rubbing neck, in pain)

Sergeant! My fiance is in that bathroom. I gotta get in there. Please?

ACRES

Is that right?

GARY
 (rubbing his neck)
 Her name's Fran Carter, 3722 SE
 Haven. God, I know the last four
 digits of her social. Please.

Acres gestures for Bad Cop to keep his eyes on the crowd.

ACRES
 (to Gary)
 Stay with me.

Gary follows Acres to the store, and flashes a stink eye at
 Bad Cop who is left facing a very angry crowd.

EXT. NORDSTROM - EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Susan and Vasquez approach the alley. The SWAT guys aim guns
 at them right away. Vasquez holds up her badge and hands -

VASQUEZ
 I'm a cop.

SWAT #1
 (laughing)
 What are you, undercover homeless?

Vasquez tries the locked door.

SWAT #1 (CONT'D)
 The PIC says no one in or out
 without her permission.

VASQUEZ
 See this dress?

Susan holds up the dress.

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 Those girls get this dress, and we
 all go home. Now, you gonna let us
 in there, or what?

SWAT #1
 (amused with himself)
 I'm gonna go with the "or what".

VASQUEZ
 Call Linden on the radio and tell
 her I have *the* dress.

He laughs, shaking his head "no".

VASQUEZ (CONT'D)
 (looks to the other cops)
 Are you guys kidding me with this?

Susan, uses her middle-aged female powers of invisibility, quietly unlocks the door with her own keys, slips in and holds the door for Vasquez, who darts in. The door is almost closed, when Susan's head pops back out.

SUSAN
 I sure hope you enjoy being a jerk,
 because *no one* else enjoys you
 being a jerk.

She slams the door. One of the guys laughs at SWAT 1.

SWAT #1
 Fuck you.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

We're rolling! Monitor, lighting etc. are working fine.

FRAN
 (poised, having some fun)
 ...we have Ms Helen Beaumont,
 steward of her family's fortune and
 a generous philanthropist in her
 own right. Thank you for coming.

CLOSE UP: ALTHEA'S LAPTOP, THEIR WEBCAST LOOKS LIKE A CABLE ACCESS TALK SHOW, FRAN AND HELEN AS THE TALKING HEADS.

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)
 You're hardly welcome. I am here
 out of civic duty. I look forward
 to seeing you get what you deserve.

INT. COSMETICS - NIGHT

Despite her words, Helen seems to enjoy all the attention.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)
 Sure. Why do you think we were so
 insistent you come down here today?

HELEN
 Because you're angry, most likely.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

FRAN

(coy)

Why on Earth would we be angry?

ALTHEA

(shocked, hushed)

We are trending number one.

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)

Your kind are always angry about something. So bitter, you are.

FRAN

(hushed to Althea)

Don't tell me that shit!

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)

Ex-cuse me?

FRAN

Sorry, not you, it's- Wait, *my kind*? And what do you mean by that?

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Helen is distracted by the arrival of Vasquez and Susan.

LINDEN

(hushed, but all smiles)

Holy cow! Is that the dress?

Susan nods 'yes', thrilled but mostly relieved and exhausted. Mike goes to hug her, and she gives him the "stop" hand.

SUSAN

I will tell you what I used to tell my son when he was bad. I hope you really enjoy being a jerk, because *no one else...*

Linden shakes Vasquez' hand heartily, and notices the glitter on her from earlier. She almost asks, but decides against it.

LINDEN

(extra hushed)

That's great, thank you, thank you, thank you, but we're in the-uh-middle of something.

Vasquez realizes this is *the* Helen Beaumont and offers Linden a fist bump. Linden hesitates, then accepts, 'why not?'

Helen summons her most graceful, pedantic posture and form.

HELEN

Your kind? Liberals, always howling when the alternate reality you have on campus meets the real world.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Candace watches and fidgets her gun, no one notices.

FRAN

As I recall, I was minding my own business when you came upon me. Instead of minding your beeswax, you howled to the manager. I guess, I'm a reality you disagree with?

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

HELEN

The manager of the store should have said so, if your presence in the women's lavatory was allowed.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

Now who's in an alternate reality? You've probably spent more on a coat here than I earn in a month. In what world does he take my side?

HELEN

That is hardly my fault.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

It's not your fault you were born into so much wealth that people tend to just do what you ask?

HELEN

(deflecting)

I've several gay friends, you know.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

(finds that quite amusing)

Wow. Did you tell your three gay, and no doubt wealthy friends what you did here?

HELEN

This is class war nonsense. You're making me out to be some villain. I'm not a reactionary caricature.

They both realize they're fired up and sort of enjoying this.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

Am I a villain? For getting emotional while trying on wedding dresses and taking my tears to the ladies room? Feeling pretty but ugly, happy but sad? Only to get harassed by some looky-loo scrutinizing my entire body?

They hold each other's gaze for a long beat, Helen flinches.

The store's front doors break open. CHAOS from outside WHOOSHES in. A TROMPING phalanx of federal troops led by AGENT CARRUTHERS (30s, white, suit). Acres and Gary follow in their wake.

The Mayor intercepts Carruthers and his men before they can reach a distracted Beaumont and the camera, *shhhhhh!*

MAYOR

Hello, Mayor Ralph Evans, who do I have the pleasure of addressing?

CARRUTHERS

Try answering your phone, asshole. Charles Carruthers, Homeland Security. This-
(waves at camera et al.)
-this is over.

MAYOR

We're just about wrapping up here, then we can brief you.

CARRUTHERS

(patronizing)
Uh huh. That ship has sailed, pal.

Back to Helen, who notices Fran snapping her fingers on the monitor trying to bring her attention back to the screen.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Althea listens closely for clues as to what is going on out there. She gestures for Fran to get on with it.

FRAN

"A grotesque crazy man", you said.

CLOSE UP: THE WEBCAST, HELEN'S DEFIANT MUG SAYS, 'YES'.

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)

I was frightened.

FRAN

Really? What of? Me?

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)

Yes. Any man who *identifies* as a woman can just waltz into the ladies room? The changing room? I have a right to safety.

FRAN

And yet, I am the one who was harassed and thrown out. Don't I have that same right to safety?

Helen's refusal to answer this question is her answer.

FRAN (CONT'D)

I must have seemed terrifying, washing my face and all.

HELEN (O.S. SCREEN)

You might have been some predator.

FRAN

Me? A predator?

HELEN

You can never really know, can you?

The callback to Fran's own earlier, jokes, makes her chuckle.

FRAN

You're aware there's no lock on that door, right? Any man can just walk right in anytime, without going through the trouble of pretending to *identify* as anything.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Helen's lost her footing for a moment, but doesn't slip-

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

Maybe one of your foundations could research what turns men into rapists instead of fussing over who pees where.

-and returns to her talking points.

HELEN

Men are men. Women are women. *Real* women can make babies. The city council may say otherwise, but a fact is a fact.

FRAN

Fact is, I'm a woman.

HELEN

Don't be fatuous. You may *feel* like something other than a man inside, but I've a uterus inside. You libs are always crying, science this, science that. Well, science *that!*

Fran let's her run with it.

HELEN (CONT'D)

(with a dash of animus)

Mutilating yourself with surgery, and the crackpot theories of your PHDs on LSD won't change a natural, *scientific* fact, that also happens to be God's honest truth.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

(amused by this line)

So, you're the enforcer of scientific law, *and* God's truth?

Helen's posture and face indicate this is indeed her stance.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran opens her arms in a Christ-like, beatific pose.

FRAN

And yet, here I am, one of God's miracles. Who are you to deny Him?

Helen is a little shaky, maybe having second thoughts.

FRAN (CONT'D)

I think you took some sadistic glee, seeing us humiliated in front of all those people.

(suggestive, contemptuous)

Watching flying monkeys like the manager doing your nasty bidding, it's just a cheap thrill for you.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

HELEN

(rising frustration)

I speak for the silent majority of *real* women, and we're entitled to-

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

To more rights than a trans woman?

HELEN

You are the ones entering *our* space. You are the *transgressors*.

Helen had been saving that one, and relishes it.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

Ha. I see what you did there. And yet, trans women are women too.

HELEN

(bitter)

You are assuredly *not* like me.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

No, and thank goodness for that.

(zing!)

I am keenly aware of the reality of my body versus yours. I mean, that's sort of what being trans is. And yet, I am a woman.

HELEN

(irate)

A dress doesn't make you female. Womanhood is not some costume.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)

(cool as a cucumber)

No. It isn't, so then why are you wearing those tacky earrings?

Helen, not used to be spoken to like this, is indignant.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN) (CONT'D)
 Is your womanhood those awful
 eyebrows you've had tattooed on
 your head?

HELEN
 (nasty)
 Where do you get off?

Helen sees her angry face on the monitor and eases off.

FRAN (O.S. SCREEN)
 (still cool as can be)
 Where do *I* get off? Certainly not
 in the ladies room.

A beat. Helen is embarrassed, and out of talking points.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 My womanhood doesn't get hung up in
 the closet, or washed off my face
 at the end of the day.

HELEN
 (controlled but bitchy)
 Well, if you're a woman, then what
 am I?

Fran takes a beat before replying.

FRAN
 I don't know, but if your idea of
 womanhood is just making babies,
 and looking pretty, I pity you.

Helen is flummoxed. She goes to speak but no words come out.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 (kindly but patronizing)
 If you're interested in exploring
 your gender identity, I can
 recommend a wonderful therapist.

Helen won't look at Fran or the camera. She sits up straight
 retreating to her posh-ness, avoiding the eyes of everyone.

INT. NORDTROM'S-STOREROOM AREA - NIGHT

SWAT #1 watches two DHS folk throw the main circuit breaker.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

The lights go out.

FRAN

Oh dear.

The camera and a monitor stay on, the only light in this windowless room. The feed from Beaumont goes black.

ALTHEA

Just a minute.

Candace sees her chance, as Althea futzes with the tech. Candace rises, draws the gun, and holds it at Fran's head.

CANDACE

Show's over, ladies. Time to turn yourselves in.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Everyone is using their phone screens as a flashlights.

LINDEN

(to Carruthers)

That was not smart.

A backup generator kicks in, providing some low light.

CARRUTHERS

Drats!

As light returns to the bathroom and the streaming image is clear again on phones, everybody sees Fran held at gunpoint.

LINDEN

(astonished)

What the hell?

CARRUTHERS

(doesn't get it)

What?

LINDEN

Now the hostage has a gun on one of our girls.

CARRUTHERS

Our girls? You mean the terrorists?

LINDEN
 (are you serious?)
 Sure, the terrorist.

A rock SHATTERS a glass door, and the sounds of CHAOS pour in. Carruthers sends his men outside to protect the store.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Sam Simeon is taking shelter along the news van, as a near riot simmers nearby. The factions are lobbing trash and what not at one another. Many are glued to their phones watching the chaotic images on the stream of what's going inside.

SAM SIMEON
 (losing a bit of nerve)
 It's madness here, and from what we
 can see it's madness in there.

CUT TO: Full screen of TV broadcast Fran held at gunpoint.

INT. COSMETICS DEPARTMENT - DAY

Linden, Carol and Mike watch the feed from the bathroom on a laptop. Vasquez grabs the dress and steals off. Linden sees and discreetly nods in approval. Gary follows Vasquez.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran calmly does deep breathing exercise, with a gun to her head.

ALTHEA
 Are you sure this is the way you
 want to end this, Candace?

Althea moves the camera to get Candace's figure in frame.

CANDACE
 I could shoot you both and nobody
 would blame me.

ALTHEA
 You don't want that. Trust me.

FRAN
 I thought you were just starting to
 take a shine to us.

CANDACE
 (all the emotions now)
 You bring guns in here, trann--

FRAN
 (keeps eyes closed)
 Ah ah ah, that is not a nice word
 and there are about a million
 people watching you right now.

KNOCK KNOCK on the door.

CANDACE
 (laughing)
 So? Now I need to be politically
 correct? You all gonna *cancel* me?

FRAN
 I was going to say be mindful and
 kind. Can we continue our chat?

KNOCK KNOCK louder now.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Vasquez KNOCKS. Cop 1, hanging in there, watching the door.

COP 1
 Linden said, no one in, no one out.

VASQUEZ
 Don't you worry about that.
 (to the door)
 Hi. It's me! Officer Vasquez from
 way, way back this morning.
 Remember?
 (no reply)
 Well, we found your dress. And
 somebody you'll be glad to see.

GARY
 Franny? It's me, honey.

INT. LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Fran hears Gary's voice, and pushes right past Candace and
 her gun. The camera is knocked to the floor and breaks.

CANDACE
 Hey! What the-?

Fran puts an ear and her body against the door.

FRAN

Gary, baby, are you okay?

GARY (O.S.)

I'm fine, but you gotta come out now. People are going nuts out there. Homeland Security is here. You gotta come out before someone gets hurt. You won.

Candace looks at the gun she was never really going to use.

ALTHEA

I was never going to use mine either, don't feel bad.

Althea grabs Candace's handbag and offers it back to her. Candace takes it, puts her gun away and zips it up. Althea unloads her own weapon and makes sure the chamber is clear.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

That bullet that went in the toilet? It was the only live one we brought. The rest were dummies.

Candace is salty to find she'd been had all this time.

ALTHEA (CONT'D)

What did you think? We were going to jump down the toilet in a Cadillac, holding hands? Or go out there guns a' blazing like Butch and Sundance? This all ends on a freeze frame?

Candace touches the wound on her head, and maybe she really sees Althea for the first time.

VASQUEZ

Unlock this, we'll let Gary in. Quick, before my boss hears. OK?

Fran unlocks the door. Gary slips in with the dress. She locks the door behind him, and they have quite a hug.

FRAN

(to Althea)

I think we won.

ALTHEA

I guess.

(to Vasquez)

Alright, we're coming out.

FRAN

Wait! I wanna put this on. I wanna get married before I go to jail.

GARY

Are you serious?

FRAN

I am. Do you still want to marry me? I mean, I'm about to be incarcerated for a while.

GARY

Of course but --

FRAN

Ah ah ah! Shh!

(to Vasquez)

Tell the mayor I need one last favor.

ALTHEA

Demand. One last demand.

INT. NORDSTROM'S - NIGHT

Acres, Linden and Carruthers all look out through the glass doors, trying to assess the situation, which is sort of calm for the moment. They talk into phones and give orders.

Fran and Gary stand before the mayor, who can't believe he is going along with this. Fran and Althea are already in cuffs. Fran has to turn around so they can put rings on one another.

MAYOR

And with these rings I now pronounce you man and wife.

They smooch. Vasquez snaps pictures. The feds grab Fran and Althea by the arms and drag them toward the front door.

EXT. NORDSTROM'S - SUNRISE

Dawn breaks. The crowd is still there. Half cheer, the others boo. Some transphobic and homophobic invective is hurled.

Althea and Fran are exhausted but proud. From atop the steps, they survey the scene their actions generated. Below them, the barricaded aisle they head down splits the two factions.

FRAN
Shouldn't they be on the right and
them on the left?

ALTHEA
(mulls, then)
Not from their point of view.

BAM! A gunshot echoes. Everyone hits the deck, or stampedes. The angriest elements on each side, overwhelm and discard the barriers, charging at each other. Glass breaks, haymakers are thrown, heads are cracked; it's civil war.

Althea's eyes bug out, hyper alert and in war zone mode, tinged with PTSD. She picks herself up, assesses, surveys and finds Fran clutching her belly. She's hit right dead center in the abdomen, blood is pooling from just below her navel.

FRAN
Ach, my dress.

Althea begins triage with tears in her eyes. Gary runs to her side. Fran's eyes roll back in her head. Vasquez takes a knee, providing cover. Even Mike shows a lot of concern.

SCREAMS and SHOUTS are heard from the MELEE, more GUNSHOTS. Tear gas drifts with the dirty naptha smoke of a Molotov

FADE TO BLACK.

EIGHTEEN MONTHS OF INCARCERATION LATER

FADE IN:

INT. OLD SCHOOL VIDEO ARCADE - DAY

Tonya, Gary and others clear the table of pizza remains and plates, while setting up for cake. A "HAPPY BIRTHDAY HENRY" sign is hung with some balloons.

A beat. Fran rolls up in a wheelchair, and nudges Gary.

FRAN
I'm getting pretty good at this.

She shows him an almost wheelie, wobbles, gives herself a little scare and settles back down. It makes Gary anxious.

FRAN (CONT'D)
Ugh, that bathroom made me miss the
one at Nordtrom's.

(MORE)

FRAN (CONT'D)
 (she points back in the
 direction she came from)
 If that's what we're calling
 "accessible" in 2020, someone ought
 to do *something*...

Gary's face says, "Oh dear. Please, not again". Fran winks.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 Relax, I don't have anything too
 drastic in mind.

She looks longingly over at the vintage 80's arcade games.

FRAN (CONT'D)
 And how am I ever going to beat my
 high score at Galaga with the
 joystick way up there now?

A STRANGER (20s, non-binary, dorky) approaches, timidly.

STRANGER
 Hi. I am so sorry to bother you,
 but you're Fran Carter, right?

Fran nods, not thrilled to be hassled, but she likes the cut
 of this kid's jib.

STRANGER (CONT'D)
 You are the one of baddest bitches,
 ever. I just had to say thank you.

Fran feels awkward, and unsure just what to make of that.

FRAN
 You're welcome? I guess.
 (pats the arm of her
 chair)
 Don't play with guns though, ok?

STRANGER
 Yes. Of course. Thank you.
 (beat)
 Can I get a picture with you?

FRAN
 Sure, but only if you take ten and
 let me choose which one you share.

The stranger enthusiastically nods, and they huddle up for
 some selfies.

Elsewhere, Althea and Henry play Skee-Ball, sharing a bag of
 popcorn. They are clearly enjoying themselves.

HENRY

Mom's boyfriend smells weird, but he's really good at video games and he let's me play a lot.

ALTHEA

Oh yeah? He seems like a nice guy. I'm happy your Mom has a friend. It's good to have friends.

Henry looks for the courage to say something.

HENRY

If you're a Mom too now, it's confusing, because then... then you both have the same name, "Mom".

Althea can see that he is very concerned by this, and reflects that gravity to show Henry that she gets it.

ALTHEA

(lining up her last shot)
Did you know that in Japan, some kids call their mothers Haha.

BONK BONK BONK, the shot bounces out for a measly 15 points.

HENRY

Haha? That's so funny.

ALTHEA

Ain't it though?

HENRY

HA-HA-HA, Haha.

They enjoy this laugh. The game is over. Henry excitedly gathers the tickets the game spits out.

ALTHEA

We should probably go, I think it's almost cake time. Can't have cake without the birthday boy, right?

HENRY

OK, Haha

They head toward the others. Henry's hand reaches up for Althea's hand with the popcorn. Althea tips the bag toward him, offering the corn.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Uh-uh.

Henry takes the bag of popcorn from her, but only so he can put his little hand Althea's hand and hold it. Althea looks at the hand in her hand, and her eyes smile with a radiance that we haven't seen till this moment.

They are welcomed to the party zone with big smiles from Tonya and the new boyfriend, Fran's new friend, the stranger, Gary, and a few kids who just drool over the cake.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS