

CC: Code Blue

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A play

by  
Jeffrey Hunter Jr.

## CHARACTERS

Xavier - M, 22, Black, A fresh out of college grad. Already jaded.

The Plant – Black, more than just an audience plant.

Otis – M, 40s, A trip.

Mom – F, 60s, means well.

DR – F, 50s, can be played by Mom.

Lorraine – F, 20s-30s, the heart.

Mac – M, 60s-70s, the soul.

Telemarketer – Who's on the other side of these?

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE ONE:**

At center stage, an office cubicle and a desktop, grey, spotless.  
A phone rings 3 times in the absence,  
Through the speakers, a VM:

**TELEMARKETER**

A new pathway program will allow you to significantly reduce or eliminate all together your student loan debt that is now offered to you by this special enrollment period--

XAVIER comes out on stage and sits down.  
He types, real nonchalant.  
He rolls in his chair to face the crowd.  
He says nothing for a beat.

**XAVIER**

When I was getting ready for med school, I thought I'd be going through rough times, sure. I seen things, even as a grunt in medicine. That college bubble made things seem real nice. Like I could learn enough to save a life and maybe fix mine by doing that enough times...I worked, and *I groveled* for experience...

XAVIER's phone rings.  
He ignores it.

**XAVIER**

Sorry. Scammers...where did I leave off?

**THE PLANT**

You were talking about getting ready for med school.

House lights go up.  
An AUDIENCE PLANT.

**XAVIER**

Right...200 volunteer hours, a 3.5 GPA, 200 hours shadowing a doctor, 1000 hours of direct patient care...and a personal statement...I wrote about my time working in the ER where we had a code blue. Do you know what that is?

XAVIER waits a beat in silence.  
We're going to assume you don't,  
Let's explain.

**XAVIER**

Ok, well for this hospital, code blue meant: cardiopulmonary arrest. I was working as a scribe at the time, writing medical notes and following the doctor when the alarm went off.

XAVIER points up.  
Lights dim to black. Blue emergency lights flash on stage.  
A sample of a Code Blue emergency blares.  
Sounds of crash carts rolling in. Just sounds.  
Hospital clamor.  
Silence. Only the blue lights flash.

XAVIER

Patient was a 2-month-old, and they'd brought him in with a crash team. The stretcher rolled in with a paramedic riding on top, doing CPR with their fingers.

(a beat)

The parents said she had just...stopped breathing in her sleep. They let the stretcher onto the bed, and this whole team of nurses, and the provider I was working with, got straight to resuscitating the baby. Chest compressions, breathes...paddles. The fervor to bring her back was the most inspiring thing I'd ever seen. The nurse checking O2 sat, another bringing in the O2 mask, pumping in air, the paramedic with the medical history, and the M.D. commanding it all.

Hospital clamor comes back, builds to more voices.  
Sounds of pulse monitors, carts being rolled in.  
It builds to deafening levels until it cuts to silence.

XAVIER

Of course...she'd stopped breathing long before she'd arrived at the ER.

Blue Lights stop spinning.

XAVIER

My provider took the parents aside to console them, and she gave me leave for the rest of the day. But as I was gathering my things, I noticed that every provider there, anyone who'd been in the room for that...they were all staying, moving on to the next patient. There were still kids who needed help. The system couldn't stop, so neither could they.

(A beat)

So I stayed too. Third day on the job.

XAVIER rolls his seat back to the desk.

XAVIER

The system couldn't stop and...neither could I...and that's what I told \*censored\* in my opening interview for the company.

The censorship was not an accident.

THE PLANT

What was that?

XAVIER

I said, that's what I told \*censored\* in my opening interview.

THE PLANT

\*censored\*? Hey, hold on... \*censored\*. I *said* \*censored\*!

XAVIER

I'm subject to a few NDA's, and I can't give away some of the company's practices...not...live like this, so, I'm covering my bases. There's just...some things I can't talk about.

THE PLANT

Could you just...elaborate...you're not working with patients now...

XAVIER

Nah.

THE PLANT

You work for \*censored\* now?

XAVIER

Yes.

THE PLANT

Why did you switch?

A phone rings 3 times in the absence,  
Through the speakers, a VM:

TELEMARKETER

Significantly reduce or eliminate all together your—

XAVIER presses off his phone again.

XAVIER

Sorry, scam call again. Look, in this type of profession, in this type of industry...you just...accumulate *a lot*.

THE PLANT

A lot...?...of what?

XAVIER

Uuuuh-lot of...you know you just want to help people, really, you do. But working in healthcare you just accumulate a lot of debt, a lot of it, really. You hear and see things...about bodies, gone and broken, and...that's just it, the system we use to heal them is broken...I thought I could fix it... when I was still in that bubble, I mean, but that's the thing—that's the thing you do, you take hope and just—mutate it into *reality*. You take what strength I have left and my ability to take in others' pain wilts up. So, you've got this emotional debt, building and building, and you want to save people...you want to help them, really, you do, but I think eventually, at least for me...I woke up, and I realized you have to save yourself first.

What the hell is he talking about?

THE PLANT

...Uh-huh.

XAVIER

Look, let's just stick with why we're here, ya know? Stay on topic: to give you the abridged version of our company, \*censored\*, in a way that's just like everything else you hear or read for "news" these days...which might as well be false since it's only half-true...let's just...focus on the bits that make the lizard brain tingle. Cool?

Regular stage lights return.

XAVIER picks up his desk phone.

He dials.

We hear the tone over the speakers:

Dial tone 1.

Dial tone 2..

Dial tone 3...

A firm micro-managierial voice plays over the auditorium, overbearing *just like* your first manager at your \$7.50/hour job, or that internship you did for "work experience".

OTIS

Remember that every client can hear your smile through the phone.

Lights go up opposite Xavier's cubicle.

There's a separate desk, roomier.

Sitting at the desk, LORRAINE.

She picks up her phone.

LORRAINE

Hello?

XAVIER

Hi, is this Lorraine?

LORRAINE

Who's this?

XAVIER

Good morning, ma'am! My name's Xavier. I'm calling from your new supplementary health insurance provider, \*censored\*. I was wondering if you had 5 minutes to—

The line disconnects as her lights cut off.

Lorraine's gone.

XAVIER hangs up.

OTIS

Remember! When selling yourself, keep things brief, words: S-I-M-P-L-E.

XAVIER dials again.

Dial 1.

Dial 2..

Dial 3...

No light.

LORRAINE

(As a VM BOX LADY)

If you would like to leave a voicemail message—

XAVIER marks on his sheet, mumbles something--

OTIS

Oooo, and just remember! Don't linger too long on a client. One interaction should take maybe...just a few minutes or so? Cool?

XAVIER gives a thumbs up to the voice existing in the ether as far as he's concerned.

He then looks to the audience.

XAVIER

I used to call them patients.

OTIS

Cool! Cool! Remember, advocates who get more clients to go through us for surgery have better chances for an end of year bonus!

XAVIER slaps himself and hypes himself with finger guns.

The emotions on his face instantly die after.

He dials.

Dial 1.

Dial 2..

Dial 3...

Hunter 8

No light.  
XAVIER jots down another note.

OTIS

Are you remembering to leave voicemail messages for the ones who don't pickup?

XAVIER dials.  
Dial 1.  
Dial 2..  
Dial 3...  
No response.

LORRAINE

(As a VM BOX LADY)

If you would like to leave a voicemail message—

Dial tone.  
XAVIER breathes in to summon his customer service voice.

XAVIER

Hi, this is Xavier with \*censored\*, your new supplementary health insurance provided by your employer \*also censored\* at no additional cost to you. You may refer to us whenever you're in need of surgery consultations or to find a surgery specialist with low cost of coverage. If you have any additional questions, please give us a call at \*censored\*. Thank you, and have a nice day.

XAVIER looks to the audience.

XAVIER

And then I'd hang up and want to vomit, but I was so out of body...*man*.

XAVIER hangs up.  
He leans back in his chair—

OTIS

Are you taking a break already?

XAVIER hunches back in.

OTIS

Unless you've already net one?

XAVIER dials again.  
Dial 1.  
Dial 2..  
Lights go up opposite Xavier's cubicle. He nearly jumps.



OTIS

Ooo! That's you buddy!

XAVIER picks up.

XAVIER

Hi, thanks for calling \*censored\*, this is Xavier, how can I help you?

Lights up on the opposite side.

A love seat, directly across from XAVIER's cubicle.

MAC takes a seat in the love seat.

He'll make eye contact with XAVIER from time to time.

MAC

Yea? Hello?

XAVIER

Hi—

MAC

Hello?

XAVIER

Can you hear me, sir?

MAC

Hello, yes?

XAVIER

Hi, sir, thank you for calling \*censored\*, how can I help you?

MAC

Who's this?

XAVIER

My name is Xavier.

MAC

Xavier?

XAVIER

Yes sir.

MAC

Well, hey, Xavier, I was calling cause, uh, cause, well I need an operation done on my, uh, hip, and my employer told me to call you guys, and I've got this card here...

MAC lifts the business card up into the light.

MAC

\*censored\*, and they said I should give you guys a call about how to get it covered?

XAVIER

Well, we're glad you called. We can definitely help you with that. How about I give you a rundown of the benefit and then we can get started?

MAC

Well, I just need to know if this'll be covered. Me and my doctor have been talking about getting this done for a while already.

XAVIER pauses for a beat.

This is a triggering phrase,  
one that evokes the robotic regurgitation of workplace orientations  
and repeated suppression of all individual values.

XAVIER

What's your Doctor's name?

MAC

Dr. Anderson. \*censored\* Anderson?

XAVIER starts typing.

MAC

We've been talking about getting this done at Metro General in about a month. It's an inpatient procedure so I'll probably be out for a few days of rest, but she says it's pretty standard. What all do you guys need?

XAVIER stays quiet on his line for a while.

OTIS

Ooooooh, not in the network? Triiiicky. What'd we go over in training?

XAVIER's thinking...the salesman pitch building.  
He's done this before. He's done this before--

MAC

Hello?

XAVIER

So, I ran a search on Dr. Anderson in our database to make sure she's one of our in-network providers and I wasn't able to find her.

MAC

Ok, what does that mean? That means you can't help, right?

OTIS

Never offer negatives. Always say *I can, I can, I can*—

XAVIER

Well, what I can do is find a doctor that's partnered with us to perform that procedure at a significantly lower cost.

MAC

...I don't know if I want to use another doctor. I've been going to see Dr. Anderson for the better part of 15 years and she's phenomenal.

XAVIER freezes up on the line.  
He's doubting if he should push this any further.

OTIS

Ok, Xavier? Shape up. I need you to be a killer. Be. A. Killer. Getting surgery is scary; they're going to be scared of a little change, but that's ok because they don't know how much we're going to help them, how much *you're* going to help them. Just. Sell. The. Insurance. That bonus is calling!

XAVIER shrinks behind his desk now. But then,  
A service bell rings off stage.  
Mac looks into his phone confused.

MAC

Hello? Is anyone there?

XAVIER

I understand, sir. The relationship you establish with your doctor is important and we don't want to come between that. Think about this as a special case for just this operation...

XAVIER snaps to the audience.

XAVIER

AND IT WAS! It...was.

He just had to stress that point...  
Or defend it...  
Or hide what was past it...

Until he leans back to the phone.

XAVIER

We'd help you set up an appointment with one of our doctors, they'd even consult with yours if needed, and you can rest easy knowing you got your procedure done at half the cost without sacrificing quality of care.

MAC

How much would I be saving exactly?

XAVIER

Arthroplasty of the hip, right?

MAC

Uh, yeah, something like that.

XAVIER pretends to type.

XAVIER

On your regular insurance, that operation can cost anywhere between 5k to 10k typically. And actually, to be honest with you, you won't really know the *real* cost until after you get the procedure, because Dr. Anderson probably can't guarantee that the facility and the anesthesia group for this operation will all be in your network. They'll trade around contracts, debate prices, and settle on an arbitrary payment that suits them, not necessarily you.

XAVIER pulls away from the phone and looks to the audience.

XAVIER  
(whispers)

This is true.

Back to the phone.

XAVIER

But what we do is bundle all of those into one price, so you know going in how much your surgery is going to cost exactly. Your surgery will run your \$1500 deductible and your 20% coinsurance after that.

MAC

And how can you...guarantee that? (and that's still a lot of money).

XAVIER

We have contracts.

MAC

But not with my doctor.

XAVIER

Well, how about this: How about we get your doctor's contact info, and we can talk about adding her to our network?

MAC

How long could that take?

OTIS

Don't say you don't know.

XAVIER

We have a very rigorous process to evaluate the doctors we partner with, so it may take some time.

OTIS

Good.

MAC

Well Dr. Anderson is one of the best doctors I know. You'd be at a loss without her.

XAVIER

Oh, I'm sure.

MAC establishes eye contact with XAVIER.  
They hold, and then XAVIER looks away.

MAC

Look, this surgery is supposed to be coming up soon. My hip's been...hurting and I've put this off long enough.

MAC rubs his side, waist down.  
His body is remembering:  
Pain, dull, but building.

MAC

My wife and I used to go on walks every morning, just to have some time for us, and now it hurts just to move in...any direction. Even standing hurts, and at my job I'm supposed to be on my feet all the time; I've been trying not to use my vacation days cause I still need some for this operation.

MAC tries shifting to a more comfortable position.  
MAC can't find it.  
It's impossible for him.

MAC

I just want this done and over with already.

XAVIER's eyes stay glued to his shoes.

XAVIER

I understand, sir.

MAC

So, if I went with you guys, could you guarantee that I could still get the surgery in a month? Getting in to see the doctor, rescheduling for a new place, and then the actual surgery?

OTIS

(whispering in chant)

*I can, I can, I can.*

With each, XAVIER sinks deeper and deeper under his seat,  
Gripping his skull  
like OTIS' voice is swarming the ear canals.

XAVIER

I can guarantee that your quality of care wouldn't be compromised. And *actually...* We can guarantee that you'd get that surgery before the date...

OTIS

(whispering)

*Good boy.*

MAC

You can?

XAVIER limps into his seat like a zombie.  
He plasters a smile.

XAVIER

Yes! Absolutely! I can prioritize your needs, that's my job as a healthcare advocate, aaaaand I can find some recommended doctors in your area. Part of what makes us so great is how we expedite past things like pre-authorization, and just let our doctors do their thing.

MAC thinks for a beat and sighs. He shakes his head.  
He looks directly at XAVIER.

MAC

I get what you're trying to sell here, I do. It sounds great, but...that's a lot of trust I'm putting in someone taking care of my body, you know? It's not just about the money.

XAVIER

Yes, of course. I understand. But...how about I just send you a couple doctors in our network, yeah? Don't *just* price compare, compare what you can get that works best for you.

OTIS chuckles.

MAC

I'm sorry, but...what else is there to compare? I'm comfortable with Dr. Anderson.

XAVIER

Totally! Totally understand...I'm just here to offer information. Look, my job is to get you to use us, but its also to help you make an informed decision. Do you know if Metro General is within your network? Can you know what the fees for staying in *that* specific facility will cost? What about PT? What about tests and imaging after the surgery? Or the anesthesia group's cut? What about needing any medical devices to help you? Look, Mac, everyone's trying to sell you something to get a cut.

MAC

I don't know if you can tell, but I'm past my heyday, so I know medical bills. This ain't my first rodeo.

XAVIER

Right, but what if you didn't have to? Half the time, half the price. Transparency.

MAC

...I appreciate the offer, and this has been very informative, but I think I'll go with my usual insurance and Dr. Anderson. I'm sorry if I used up any of your time.

XAVIER

It's fine.

MAC

You have a good day.

XAVIER

You too.

XAVIER hangs up.

MAC hangs up.

Lights fade to black on Mac's side.

XAVIER

Sorry.

OTIS

Don't take it too close to heart! That was great! Sometimes it's not about making the sell...it's about leaving an impression, a morsel to keep them coming back.

XAVIER

Right.

OTIS

Although...maybe we can still do something...Who's he work for?

XAVIER squints at his computer screen.

XAVIER

\*censored\*?

OTIS

I know some of those guys! We can make this work.

XAVIER says nothing here.

XAVIER's phone rings...

TELEMARKETER

Thanks to the \*censored\* administration, a new pathway program will allow you to significantly reduce or eliminate all together your student loan debt that is now offered to you by this special enrollment period.

XAVIER hangs up.

OTIS

Bagging clients like this is important to prove we can operate and expand. A *slight* nudge in our favor here could help. Can you notify his employer as an advocate? Here, I'll help you write it,

XAVIER leans back in his chair...*far* back.

Lights cut to black.

Then the stage is filled with blue flood-like emergency lights.

XAVIER looks to the audience.

XAVIER

After I left the E.R., after that code blue, I worked for a doctor, another scribing gig of mine to grind out direct patient care experience...he had this weird mumbling thing going on, where he refused to properly *a-nun-ci-ate* his words or speak at a reasonable volume at or above 60dB, but I know that man's vocal chords worked because he had plenty of voice to go around shit talking us "interns" under his breath. *Anytime* we asked him a question about a patient's chart, or we needed him to repeat a medication they needed so we could write it down, he'd do this:

XAVIER mimics dramatic face-palming,  
And blowing his lips like his head is combusting.

XAVIER

I mean, we were pre-med interns for Christ-sake. We were kids when it came to understanding how medicine worked in the *real world*. Truth is, he was probably so busy running the business



of his practice that he didn't really *have time* to teach interns. But we sure made a great cost-effective labor force, serving his patients...He didn't really have time for *them* either.

One time he spent just 2 minutes with a patient: Hi, meds/treatment, bye. And I mean, I'd seen a lot of doctors do that, but...the patient was so confused. They had questions, they wanted to know "why this medication?" "How much will it cost?" "what about this other problem I'm having?"

So, I decided to be their advocate. I ran to ask the patient's questions to the doc; he yelled in my face, went beet red in the cheeks and that...just tiny bit of grey spaghetti for hair on his head...man lost his shit then and there, told me I was wholly incompetent and then *mumbled* that I'd never make it into med-school, and then he just stumbled away. Next patient. 2 minutes. Gone.

I hated that man and everything he stood for. And just then, in that moment, I started to hate medicine, the industry, my degree...I was graduating that same month! And I started to think...if I have to answer to this man's power, then what about the power that *he* answered to? What if I could leave the front lines...and never. Burn out. Again.

Blue Lights stop spinning.  
Regular stage lights return.  
XAVIER straightens back up in his seat.  
His vibe swaps to stone-cold salesman.  
He forces a fake smile.

OTIS

Can you notify his employer as an advocate? Here, I'll help you write it,

XAVIER

Notify them about what?

OTIS

Oh, just, let them know we'll take over Mac's surgical costs to use us. Let's cover, say...80%?

XAVIER hesitates.

OTIS

Something wrong?

XAVIER

No...it's just...he seemed pretty set on who he wanted. He said the money wasn't important.

OTIS

Xavier. The money is *always* important.

XAVIER's phone rings.

OTIS

Go ahead. Pick that up.

He picks that up.

XAVIER

Hello?

TELEMARKETER

Hello! Please call us back at your earliest convenience to hear more about—

XAVIER promptly hangs up.

OTIS

(sighing)

Tell ya what, it's still your first couple months. I get it. I can take care of it myself.

XAVIER

I just...didn't know we could cover that much?

OTIS

(Chuckling)

Oh.

(and)

Just this once. I know a few of the guys, if we give them good savings, they'll nudge the client for us.

(a beat)

I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable...But...I think you've got the instincts and the right background for this. So, I wanted to give you the chance to step up. Put your name out there for the big wigs.

The phone rings again.

Dial tone 1.

Dial tone 2..

Dial tone 3...

Dial tone 4....

Dial tone 5.....

XAVIER takes a deep breath.

XAVIER

What do you want it to say?

OTIS

Are you sure? I don't want to put you on the spot during this.

XAVIER

It's fine.

OTIS

It's fine?

XAVIER

It's fine.

OTIS

Ok! Look, I'll help you, look, open up your email...

XAVIER starts typing.

OTIS

Hello, we recently received a call from one of your employers in regard to an arthroplasty of the hip procedure. We would like to offer him the opportunity to use our services at a great cost-savings to both him and your health fund...

XAVIER

What about HIPPAA?

OTIS

No, you're right. Good call.

(and)

Ok! We would like to offer one of your employees the opportunity to use our services at a great cost-savings to both him and your company health fund. \*censored\* will take on 80% of his surgical costs. This will come at no additional cost to the employee or you, the employer. Here is the list of doctors we are recommending...

XAVIER

*HIPPAAAAA...*

OTIS

Scratch that, I have been approved to send a list of doctors and offer this special discount to your employee.

XAVIER

We are?

OTIS

Yea, looks good! Send? I'll call one of his employers and let em know what's what.

XAVIER does.  
Just then his phone rings.  
Ring 1.

He just watches it go.  
Ring 2..

OTIS

You want to--?

XAVIER lifts the phone, and side-eyes into the ether.

XAVIER

Hello?

TELEMARKETER

We've been trying to reach you about the federal student loan forgiveness program—

XAVIER promptly hangs up.

OTIS

Who was that?

XAVIER

Scam call.

XAVIER starts getting up.

XAVIER

I'm uh, gonna get some air—

XAVIER's phone rings again.

Ring 1.

Ring 2..

Ring 3...

XAVIER sighs and picks up.

XAVIER

Hello?

Lights go up opposite Xavier's cubicle.

There's a separate desk, roomier.

Sitting at the desk, LORRAINE.

She picks up her phone.

LORRAINE

Hi, this is Lorraine. You, uh, called me earlier?

XAVIER

Hi Lorraine, how can I help you?

LORRAINE

Well, our HR just let us know about this extra insurance we can use for surgery.

This time XAVIER looks LORRAINE dead in the eyes.

XAVIER

Mhm.

LORRAINE

And, well, I was wondering...

XAVIER starts goading her with a wave of the hand like, c'mon now.

LORRAINE

I'm looking into getting a hysterectomy. Do you guys cover that?

XAVIER

Why yes, we do! I'm so glad you called. We can absolutely help you with that. Tell me a little more about your condition?

We hear a child begin wailing on LORRAINE's side.

LORRAINE

Sorry, could you just...give me a sec?

XAVIER

Sure thing.

LORRAINE goes off into the dark to sooth the baby sounds.

XAVIER waits on his line.

(a beat)

XAVIER checks his watch.

His phone dials.

Lights go up, diagonal to DIANE.

MAC again, tapping his leg, then stopping to rub his hip.

Dial 1.

XAVIER looks at MAC, but then back to LORRAINE's empty side.

Dial 2..

Baby's still crying.

Dial 3...

MAC's side goes dark. His call goes unanswered.

XAVIER sighs relief.

The Baby stops crying.  
LORRAINE comes back.

LORRAINE

I'm so so sorry about that. 3-month-old.

XAVIER

Don't worry about it! Now, about getting that surgery covered...

Baby starts crying again.

LORRAINE

Could you just...

XAVIER

(He's half-joking, half not.)

You can bring him up too if you'd like.

LORRAINE makes a face like "Nigga said what?"

XAVIER

My mom used to say I'd get upset when she was on the phone because I wanted her ear to hear me instead.

LORRAINE

I don't think you want to hear crying in your ear.

XAVIER

I already gotta hear one voice in my ear all the time. Trust me, it's no big deal.

LORRAINE

Huh?

XAVIER

My bad, my manager. I meant my manager.

LORRAINE

One sec.

LORRAINE goes up and brings baby in a wrap to sit on her lap.

LORRAINE

There, there, that's better.

XAVIER leans over his cubicle to take a peak.

XAVIER

Boy or girl?

LORRAINE

A little boy that's a real drama queen. He was so quiet until we got home and I had to get back to work. Maybe it's the babysitter, maybe it's me.

XAVIER

No Maternity leave?

LORRAINE

Nope! I'm back at it, gotta be back at it. I don't want my boss gettin mad at me for being out too long, and now I got this pain I'm tryna get fixed asap.

XAVIER

He's gotta get that attention, huh?

LORRAINE

Needs it.

LORRAINE bounces the baby on her lap.

She stops and shifts her pelvis.

Pain.

The baby begins crying softly now.

LORRAINE rubs his back.

XAVIER

Well, what I can do is send you a list of providers in your area that are guaranteed to be covered under us. You'd get a consultation with them, they'd schedule the surgery, and we'd make sure it's at a place covered under us so we can guarantee how much it'll cost for you. You'd at least know before surgery day.

LORRAINE

Really?

XAVIER

Yes ma'am!

LORRAINE

That's great, thank you so so much. So you'll send that over?

XAVIER

Yup, I'll get right on it after this call.

LORRAINE

Ok, sounds great. Thank you!

XAVIER

No problem. You two take care now, all right?

LORRAINE

You too. Have a nice day.

XAVIER

You too. Bye.

LORRAINE

Bye.

Line disconnect. LORRAINE's side goes dark.

XAVIER takes a deep breath.

He looks to the audience and lightly smiles, shrugs his shoulders.

He finally relaxes at his desk and...

His phone rings again.

Dial 1.

MAC and his desk light up again.

Dial 2..

XAVIER sighs.

MAC

I just got forwarded this email and had a talk over the phone with my boss.

XAVIER

...

MAC

What kind of a scam is this?

XAVIER

I'm sorry?

OTIS

Told you he'd call back. Don't worry, there will be a time when we can help him during this call.



MAC

*Basically*, they said I gotta go through you guys for surgery, asking me all these questions about why I hadn't been back to work, and concerns for my productivity and health. And. They said it'd be cheaper to work with y'all. It was all *highly* encouraged.

XAVIER

I can send a list of doctors your way to review?

MAC

You're telling me I've gotta put myself in the hands of a doctor I've never met before, go somewhere I've never gone—I—I don't even care about the price.

XAVIER looks to the audience.

This was inevitable.

He'll look there instead of making eye contact with MAC.

MAC

How do you do that? How *can* you do that? Who let you? How long have y'all been in business?

XAVIER

We've--

MAC

Who are you?

XAVIER's being slowly pulled back into the moment.

His eyes go to his cubicle  
Anywhere but MAC's eyes.

XAVIER

We're \*cen—

MAC

I'm not talking about the company; I'm talking about you. Where do you get the right? Where do you get off taking my choices like that? You're saying earlier that I can't use Dr. Anderson through you guys, so I say: "fine, we'll just go the way we've always gone. It's expensive, but when has it not been?" But now my *boss* is saying I *have* to use you guys and get this surgery asap.

OTIS

Oh, they're not *forcing* him to do anything.

XAVIER

They aren't—

XAVIER holds his tongue.  
He can't say it.

OTIS

It's ok. It's ok. You're not in the wrong here. Help us help them, remember? There'll be a time when we can use this, just...take it on the cheek for now.

MAC

**Hello?**

XAVIER

I'm very sorry, but if your employer is encouraging you to use us...the most we can do is offer you our services. Again, you have a fixed, reduced cost of surgery, and I'm sure we can find you a good doctor.

MAC scoffs.

MAC

*Reduced.*

(a beat)

What about my remaining vacation days? Huh? Would you guys reimburse me for those?

XAVIER says nothing.

A beat.

MAC's collecting his breath too.

MAC

You can't get me into a surgery room in less than 2 weeks, can you? So that means I've got to sit here with this pain for, how long?

XAVIER leans on his desk.

MAC

How much longer? Huh? 15 years. I been with Dr. Anderson for 15 years she been taking care of me, and I was ready to have this surgery.

XAVIER hides behind the cubicle wall that separates  
himself and MAC.

MAC leans over the cubicle wall and yanks XAVIER up by his tie.

MAC

MAN I KNOW YOU HEAR ME.

He forces XAVIER to look him in the eye.

MAC

This isn't business!

XAVIER

I understand--

MAC

This is my body, man!

XAVIER

Of course—

MAC

MY BODY!

XAVIER slowly looks MAC back in the eye.

OTIS

(whispering)

Take him now.

XAVIER

I understand, I really do. But I can assure you we will treat you and your pain with the utmost care.

MAC

How? How can you assure me of anything? I don't know you people. I don't know you.

XAVIER

I understand you're in pain, I understand people have doubts about our intentions because of the state of healthcare in this country, but I've been there. I've been a patient before. My mom too. I've also personally worked with some of these doctors when I was still working directly with patients. I can vouch for them.

MAC only *slightly* relaxes his grip on XAVIER.  
At least enough to breath.

MAC

Well, I don't really have much of a choice, vouched or not, do I?

XAVIER

No one's trying to take away your agency or belittle your pain; we're just trying to move through this system as best we can to help you get better. I know its frustrating, and confusing, and scary, but we always take care of our client's needs.

MAC starts rubbing his hip.

XAVIER

Mac, you've got to get back to those morning walks with your wife. We'll get you there.

MAC laughs and shakes his head.  
The bullshit this guy's on.

XAVIER

How about I send you a list of providers we have in network near you? Just to give you some time to look over your options?

MAC

You do that.

MAC hangs up.  
His side of the stage turns black.

OTIS

Aaaaallriiiiiight, second one of the daaaaay, great job. Wow. How's it feel?

XAVIER quickly picks up a waste bin next to his cubicle.  
He vomits.

OTIS

Whoaaaaa, yikes.

OTIS actually appears in person.  
He has a bottle of Voss Stillwater in hand.

XAVIER keeps vomiting.  
OTIS pats XAVIER on the back--  
but still at a distance.

OTIS

Well, if you *do* get sick, we have some great doctors in network!

OTIS viciously laughs at his own joke.  
XAVIER's too busy losing everything.

OTIS

Right, well then...

OTIS leaves XAVIER's side to address the audience.

XAVIER still vomiting.

OTIS

Whether it's an appendectomy for your chronic abdominal pain, a tonsillectomy for your newborn, or an arthroplasty of the hip, we'll cover you for half the price and double the quality. If you're an employer looking to relieve some cost burden on providing health insurance for employees, look no further than \*censored\*.

XAVIER still vomiting.

OTIS

(Clears throat)

*I said \*censored\*...*

Huh, that's weird. Why can't *I* say it?

PLANT

He said something about an NDA?

OTIS

Ah, right...

OTIS turns back and looks at XAVIER.

XAVIER's head's still in the can.

OTIS turns back to face the audience.

OTIS

What? Don't tell me you're getting a weak stomach too.

XAVIER starts viciously coughing.

OTIS

Gonna sit there and complain?

OTIS takes a swig of Voss Stillwater.

OTIS

"But. But. But. Bernie said it's the insurance companies' fault." Gimme a break.

Otis finishes the bottle.

He drops it in the wastebin XAVIER's still coughing in.

OTIS

You know there's hospitals out there holding you hostage right now?

OTIS returns to face the audience.

OTIS

Charging us all *exuberant* prices? You all must have Stockholm syndrome or something because you *should* be taking your judgmental ass to your closest “medical center” and raiding their fucking billing and coding department, and then you can hold it hostage in exchange for a meeting with their board of directors and do em like 18<sup>th</sup> century France.

OTIS pretends to chop his own head.

OTIS

I mean middle-man’s gotta have a fair share or insurance companies go bankrupt. We have to negotiate prices for our sake...The clients’ too.

And before you say “aw gee, Otis, maybe y’all should go bankrupt” Just remember this: when hospitals realize an insurer won’t agree to pay a big enough portion of the bill, who do you think they leverage the price against?

OTIS points to XAVIER without looking back.

OTIS

So the man can’t use his usual doctor? Is it inconvenient? Sure. And in a culture built on convenience, maybe I look like a leech or a lepper,  
(I don’t know I didn’t study zoology while I was at *Yale*),  
but we’re saving him, not just his money, but his body, the body they’re trying to profit from.

PLANT

Don’t...you get a profit off him if he uses you though? Actually...what *exactly* are you guys doing to make money, if you’re discounted so much?

OTIS squints and searches through the crowd.  
The house lights have not come up.

OTIS

Who said that?

No answer.

OTIS

(With house speakers, demented)

## Who Said That?

No answer.  
A beat.  
OTIS laughs to himself.

OTIS  
That's ok. That's ok, Otis. Breathe. Breathe.

OTIS takes a deep breath and recomposes.

OTIS  
You just can't save everyone.

XAVIER's coughing fit calms down.  
His phone rings.  
OTIS doesn't turn.

OTIS  
Can someone get that?

XAVIER, still in the can, reaches over his desk and picks up the phone.

XAVIER  
Hello?

TELEMARKETER  
Hello. This is an important state-wide notification update from the division of economic impact assistance. The purpose of my call is to inform those individuals on our state list with student loan debt about the new pathway program—

XAVIER  
Lose this number.

XAVIER promptly hangs up.  
The phone rings again.  
Ring 1.  
XAVIER disconnects the phone.  
OTIS smiles.  
He walks off stage.

OTIS  
Oh!

He walks back on stage.

OTIS

Almost forgot.

He reaches into his interior coat pocket and draws out a check.

OTIS

Your paycheck for training a few weeks ago. Congrats. Please don't forget to set up direct deposit soon so we don't have to kill more trees.

OTIS slides the check on XAVIER's desk.

OTIS leaves the stage this time. For real. For real.  
His voice begins playing through house speakers again.

OTIS

Carry on.

XAVIER pulls the check down and reads it.

He sets the wastebbin down.

Slowly cleans himself up,  
readjusts his tie,  
and takes a seat at his desk.

PLANT

How much money was that?

XAVIER stops.

House lights go up.

The Audience Plant has a pen and notepad.

Quiet for a beat.

XAVIER

Wu—wussup?

PLANT

You was having a whole episode...losing yo shit. You good?

XAVIER

Yea...Yea...I'm purrrity good.

PLANT

What's the next word on insurance?

XAVIER

Heard the man. Hospitals suck.



XAVIER starts typing.

Thassit?  
PLANT

XAVIER stops.

I beg your pardon?  
XAVIER

So you don't got a problem with any of this?  
PLANT

Excuse me?  
XAVIER

Man, c'mon, how much was that check just now?  
PLANT

I'm sorry, I just don't see how it's relevant?  
XAVIER

Really.  
PLANT

I'm sorry, I'm just not comfortable openly discussing my salary in the workplace.  
XAVIER

I know you ain't finna treat us like that man on the phone.  
PLANT

It wasn't all like that!  
XAVIER

XAVIER starts dialing.

Listen.  
XAVIER

Dial 1.  
MAC and his desk light up again.

Dial 2..  
XAVIER sighs.

XAVIER

Hello?

MAC

I just got your list of providers.

XAVIER

Ok.

MAC

Can I ask you something?

XAVIER

Sure.

MAC

Actually, first off, how old are you?

XAVIER

Why?

MAC

Just tryna figure out what generation you're coming from that lets you dissociate the way you do.

XAVIER shrugs like: "yeah, fair."

XAVIER

I'm a Millennial.

MAC

Well, you know back in my day, things didn't used to be this bad. Me or my parents would get sick and you didn't have to worry about paying out bills for the rest of your life, or pissin off your bosses for taking time off. You in school?

XAVIER

Just graduated.

MAC

And this is what you tryna do?

XAVIER

I wanted to be a doctor.

MAC

Wanted to?

XAVIER

I'm taking a gap year to figure some stuff out.

MAC

What stuff?

XAVIER

Huh?

MAC

What stuff?

XAVIER looks away, or he's looking for an excuse to make...

MAC

You space out this much regularly?

XAVIER makes eye contact.

MAC

I guess I'm just tryna figure out how someone tryna get into medicine and help people ends up where you're at. You don't feel any sort of shame? None at all?

XAVIER

I was hoping to make use of my skills from my degree and previous experience working with doctors and patients.

MAC

Well, I mean, you ain't working for a doctor or nun? I got a daughter working as a medical assistant, I get it.

XAVIER

I was. I was.

MAC

Well, what happened, man?

XAVIER

What happened with what?

MAC takes in this kid.

Mm, mm, mm.  
Shaking his head.

MAC  
(Disgusted)

My daughter talks to me about some of the things she sees from time to time, even at her level.  
What you seen to make you quit and do...this?

XAVIER

I didn't quit, sir. I'm just taking a break while still making use of the skills I got.

MAC

You know, until my daughter started working, I didn't really think much about the things doctors and healthcare workers see. Some of the stories I heard—enough to give anyone a break. Make em go from help to hurt.

XAVIER

...

MAC

How old are you?

XAVIER

21.

MAC

Christ...

XAVIER

...

MAC

You're a kid.

XAVIER

...

MAC takes a deep long breath on his end of the line.

XAVIER

You knew that.

MAC

I'm sorry?

XAVIER

You knew I was probably young. You know what kind of people you're talking to on these lines. Don't let that stop you from being angry. You *should* be.

(and)

Being nice isn't gonna let you see Dr. Anderson.

MAC

You must've seen something awful, huh?

XAVIER

It's ok to be frustrated with us, sir.

MAC

I ain't frustrated with *you*.

XAVIER

We deserve it. Really, we do.

MAC

Said you just graduated?

XAVIER

Uh-huh.

MAC

My daughter had a similar experience. Pediatric hospital. There was this 8-year-old kid who had liver failure—genetic she said. And the kid was jaundiced. You know what that means?

XAVIER

Yes sir.

MAC

Eyes, body, all over. So you know it's bad. So this kid's been bed-ridden for 4 months at least. 4 months.

Oh, I forgot to mention. At this point my daughter's a volunteer in high school. She's just being asked to keep the kid company when the doctors are away.

So she goes into his room, and apparently he doesn't say much, doesn't really smile—I mean, why would he? You remember where you were when you were 8?

XAVIER

Playgrounds.

MAC

Right? But then, he comes out of his blank stare and asks: “You got a boyfriend?” Now, I don’t know the rest of what she said cause I don’t know who she be dating, she never told me none of that, but they started playing cards and a little Nintendo, or one of them devices with each other on weekdays in the afternoon when he wasn’t having treatment, cause, I mean otherwise, that kid was by himself. When my daughter asked why, he said his parents were workin’. Always workin’.

I don’t know if he fully understood why; she didn’t really have the answers either, but I’d guess it’d have something to do with how long that kid been in the hospital. They’d probably ran up their out-of-pocket max and were planning on working the rest of their lives to pay it off for when he got better. *If* he did.

(a beat)

And after that experience—I don’t know. She came home different. Said she loved us more often. Offered to help out around the house more. Had people over the house more. Wasn’t until at least--a year, I think? Later, like after she graduated from high school, when she told me what became of that kid.

MAC takes a breather.

MAC

Anyways, you’re right. I am mad, but I’d just got off the phone with my daughter to vent, and...

XAVIER says nothing.  
He covers his eyes—is he crying?

MAC

I ain’t happy bout this. Really. I’m not. But I’ll, uh, go over the doctor’s options with Dr. Anderson.

XAVIER

She can also give me a call if she has any questions.

They’re both about to hang up.

XAVIER

When I was working in the pediatric ER, I helped with a code blue. You know what that is?

MAC

Yeah.

XAVIER

Sometimes...I can still hear that kid's parents, man.

MAC

I'm sorry to hear that.

XAVIER

But I don't know. I just spent 100k on this degree. I don't got many other options to use it...I don't know what to do.

MAC

Yes you do.

MAC hangs up.

**END SCENE ONE**

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE TWO:**

A living rooms setup. Couch and TV as the centerpiece.  
Kitchen counter behind it.  
MOM fixes the TV—wires everywhere  
XAVIER walks in.  
MOM turns when she hears XAVIER shut the door.

Hey! How'd your first week go?

MOM

Long.

XAVIER

Long?

MOM

Really long.

XAVIER

XAVIER walks over to the kitchen counter and combs through mail.  
MOM watches.

You—want to elaborate?

MOM

Yeah, sorry, just still—processing.

XAVIER

Something else came for you in the mail.

MOM

Loan servicer.

MOM waves a separate letter.  
XAVIER collects the letter. He rips it open and reads.

XAVIER

Are they charging already?

MOM

Has it been six months already?

(XAVIER doesn't answer; just reads).



XAVIER

That's what it says.

MOM

Do you have a plan?

XAVIER

I'm working on it.

(Xavier tosses the letter in the trash).

If the job pans out—

MOM

The long one?

XAVIER

Yeah.

MOM

You don't sound excited about it.

XAVIER shrugs.

MOM

Did something happen? You didn't elaborate.

XAVIER takes a breath.  
He looks over the other bills on the counter.

XAVIER

I think we're fucked.

MOM looks XAVIER  
in the eye.

MOM

I told you the bills ain't no problem. I got savings out of retirement.

XAVIER lifts another bill.

XAVIER

And you've got a request here from the lawyer to pay up for that.

MOM

They can't charge; it was pro-bono.

XAVIER

And you've got a bill from collections.

MOM

I'm contesting that. All they did is run some tests, and I told em I didn't want a test. Didn't even give a real physical. I tell ya, doctors don't even touch you anymore to see what's wrong.

MOM slaps the TV. Static.

MOM

Need to go check that spliced cable. Are the neighbors home?

XAVIER

Probably. It's late.

MOM plops back down on the couch.

MOM

Your job told you we're fucked?

XAVIER

My job showed me healthcare's fucked.

MOM

Funny way of showing it.

XAVIER

It's just all about business. Business. Business. Business. But it's also about people's bodies, ya know?

MOM does take a peek at that letter in the trash tho.

MOM

Business *is* where the money's at.

XAVIER

I know.

MOM

You said that's why you applied.

XAVIER

I did.

MOM  
And your loans are building interest now.

(a beat)  
How much is your job paying?

XAVIER  
About 60k—

MOM  
Starting?

XAVIER nods.

MOM  
Oh, Xavier. How much were you making at that scribing job, when you were working for...what's his name? The doctor with the mumble...

XAVIER  
Dr. \*censored\*.

MOM  
Yeah, him. How much were you making with him? After he'd raise his voice to yell at you for not hearing him the first time.

XAVIER  
Like...12 bucks an hour.

MOM  
What about after your raise?

XAVIER  
That was the raise.

MOM  
(Shaking her head)  
After everything you saw there...

XAVIER  
Yeah.

MOM  
And then you're scribing for that doctor who mumbles.

XAVIER  
It was more like a...passive aggressive...growl.

MOM

Like \*imitates roaring\*?

XAVIER

No, no, more like \*more like gargling toothpaste\*

MOM

You're worth more than that.

XAVIER

Thanks.

MOM

60k at least.

XAVIER

Thanks, Mom.

MOM

Maybe you could even pay off a few of my bills.

XAVIER

Shoot. Maybe.

MOM

And look, I know you're getting ready for med school...you're racking up experience, but you're racking up debt too. More still when you *do* get into school.

XAVIER

Uh-huh.

MOM

I know you say you're working on the loans, and I trust you. I just think you should keep your options open.

XAVIER

I am.

MOM

Good, ok, you can go now.

XAVIER

I'm going to get back to work on apps.

MOM

Love you. Good work!

XAVIER

Love you too.

XAVIER walks to stage left to a separate room.  
He takes a seat opens his desk drawer.  
There's a pre-rolled joint.  
His phone rings again. An unsaved number.

XAVIER

Hello?

A beat.

THE PLANT

I'm sorry, how is this relevant to the testimony?

XAVIER sighs and lights a pre-roll.  
The smell of weed should waft through (if legal).  
XAVIER takes a deep, long hit and slouches in his seat.

XAVIER

Dope. Perfect timing.

THE PLANT

This isn't...like...a character witness type of hearing, ya know?

XAVIER takes another longass hit.

XAVIER

Uh-huh.

THE PLANT

We're here to educate the American people about the system and what your employers did. We don't need to hear all this...meandering.

XAVIER takes a faster hit.

XAVIER

Trust me. This is better.

THE PLANT

Did you feel any shame? In what you did? Any at all? You *were* aware of what was going on at \*censored\*, weren't you?

XAVIER puts the pre-roll out on the desk ash tray.

THE PLANT

You gotta answer that question for us.

The code blue lights start again.  
Smoke lingers. XAVIER starts punishing it, really stabbing it into the tray.

THE PLANT

Xavier? Xavier? Focus.

Lights dim so the blue lights overpower the stage.  
Full black now.

TELEMARKETER

To get more information on the pathway program and how you can do away with your student loan debt, call \*censored\*. This message is marked delivered by the—

We hear the phone line disconnect.  
A beat.  
Silence.  
And black.

**END ACT ONE...**

**...RIGHT?**

But the weed is still wafting...  
We're in limbo right now.  
Haze.

We see the light of XAVIER flicking his lighter and having a smoke.

But suddenly.  
We see two more lighters glow, evenly spaced across the stage:

The light of MAC, centered and having a smoke,  
And LORRAINE, far side, lighting her stove top,  
And lighting her joint with it.  
3 lights, 3 smokers, little banks of light in the dark.  
Slowly...XAVIER's goes out.  
And he's gone.  
The same for MAC.  
We're with LORRAINE now.  
As she takes a loooooong drag...

And then her Baby *CriiiiiiiiiiiiiiiES*

LORRAINE takes one last shaky drag,  
One last moment of peace...  
And walks off stage.  
Dark.  
Her phone in this kitchen goes off.  
Ringing...ringing...unanswered.

LORRAINE (V.O.)

Sorry, I missed your call, but if you please leave a detailed name and number...Sorry--detailed message, I'll get right back to ya as soon as I can...

*Beep.*

**ACT TWO**  
**SCENE ONE:**

We hear phone dials.

LORRAINE

Thank you again so much for looking after him. I'll be back before 5.

A beat.

LORRAINE

Thank you *so* much. Ok, I've gotta' go. Uh-huh. Bye.

We hear the phone hang up.

LORRAINE comes back!

But this time, she's in work clothes.

She gets herself ready.

OTIS

Can you call her in? Tell her I'm ready?

That came from the *dark side* of the stage.

OTIS

Thanks. Come in!

LORRAINE hesitates but  
walks across stage as lights go up, and she takes a seat at...

A desk, her bosses office.

And sitting down waiting for her,

Is OTIS! (But it's not Otis fr—it's a metaphor,

For like—middle-men).

OTIS leans back in his chair, the kind of big shot tool kind of way.

OTIS

Lorraine. Glad you could make it in on time today.

LORRAINE

You wanted to see me, sir?

OTIS

Please, have a seat.



LORRAINE

Ok. It's just that I've got to get out to deliveries soon...

OTIS

It's ok. This won't take long. Go ahead, sit down.

OTIS gets up and closes "the door" behind them.

OTIS

I called you in before wheels out because your *time sheet* is reflecting a lot of missing hours. I wanted to give you an opportunity to explain why?

LORRAINE

My time sheet...

OTIS

Mhm.

LORRAINE

I've...had to leave early from work a few times this month. I've been having a lot of pain, and my child's caregivers have been going out of town for a bit...

OTIS says nothing. He's got a straight gaze; he's hearing her,  
Just not *feeling* her.  
He doesn't care.

LORRAINE

It won't happen again.

OTIS

It's been reflecting *a lot* of missed hours, Lorraine. What's going on? Replacement drivers aren't easy to cover your shifts.

LORRAINE

I made sure it was cool with Benjamin earlier last week. He took my spot and drove, delivered, no problem.

OTIS leans back in his seat. He holds silence,  
To sweat LORRAINE out.

LORRAINE

I'm trying. I'm sorry. There's just been a lot going on, but I'm managing.

No reaction from "Otis" still.  
Sales tactic.

LORRAINE

I am.

OTIS

Lorraine, do you think it's fair to the others that you skip work as often as you do?

LORRAINE

...Have there been complaints?

OTIS

It's about being punctual and and and reliable, you know...most jobs wouldn't give this many second chances. I see this time sheet, and I see a lot of *third and fourth* chances. 11/03: Late to work, early to leave. 11/06: Late to work, early to leave. 11/12. Look, you say you're in pain, you've got a lot going on, but we need you--anyone would need you--to be professional.

LORRAINE

I'm trying to set up an appointment for it.

OTIS

An appointment for what?

LORRAINE

My pain.

OTIS

That's good, ok, but do you think you can keep doing this job? Is it a good fit for your schedule?

LORRAINE

Yes, sir.

OTIS

Good. Good.

They wait for a beat.

OTIS

You can go now. Please start being punctual, and good luck with deliveries.

LORRAINE

Thank you.

Time to GTFO.  
LORRAINE speed-walks out.  
And "hops" into a truck driver's seat.  
She winces when she lands.  
And wiggles in the seat.

There's no comfortable place.  
Just work.  
We hear engine noises as she drives in silence for a while.  
She dials the phone.  
Dial tone 1.  
Dial tone 2..  
Dial tone 3...  
XAVIER's voice plays through the speakers:

XAVIER

Hi! Thank you for calling \*censored\* I'm sorry I missed your call, but if you leave your name, number, and a detailed message, I'll be sure to get back to you as soon as I'm available in the office. Our operating hours are between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. If you're not available to connect by phone, you can also reach me by email at \*censored\*. Thank you, and have a good day!

*Beeeeep.*  
LORRAINE sighs and starts speaking—

LORRAINE

*Shit!*

SWERVE!  
She almost hit something.  
We hear traffic horn as she blares it.

LORRAINE  
Kids walkin' through crosswalks on their phones and...

She realizes she's holding a phone while she drives.

LORRAINE  
Well...

*\*ahem\**

(While realizing that all of this is being recorded)  
Hi Xavier! Quick question. How soon do you think you could get me in to see a Dr.? I don't mean to rush you or nothin', but—

Another honk swerving through the speakers.  
LORRAINE tugs the steering wheel and puts on the breaks.  
She gives a glare out the window.

LORRAINE  
But I'm just eager to get this...process...started. Could you give me a call back when you have the chance? Thank you, bye.

LORRAINE hangs up.

She sighs and leans on the wheel  
The car is waiting at a red light  
(maybe red line shines on her too).  
A walkie-talkie garbles through the speakers.  
OTIS talks through the speakers.

OTIS

Cargo 2, what's your ETA? Got word from the hospital supervisor: the dock workers have been loitering around.

LORRAINE reaches near her feet and pulls one.  
It's attached to the truck.

LORRAINE

I'm almost there.

OTIS

How close?

LORRAINE checks her dash.

LORRAINE

*Dang it.* I forgot to get my gps running, but I'm almost there. Maybe like...5?

OTIS

Do you have a phone with maps?

LORRAINE

Well, I'm driving right now...

True, she is.  
Lights over her change to green.  
We hear the truck start again.

OTIS

Do you need directions with a fastest route?

LORRAINE

I'm almost there.

OTIS

Copy that.

Walkie talkie clips out.

LORRAINE

Makin' me late and then bustin' me, c'mon.

LORRAINE turns the wheel—  
--And suddenly her pain returns.  
It's subtle pain; she can ignore it...  
But then,  
It's *sharp*.  
She shifts/winces  
As she's completing the turn,  
And misses a hand on the wheel.  
And tire wheels screech.

LORRAINE

*SHIT!*

LORRAINE fights for control of the wheel back.  
More tire screeches—  
Side-to-Side,  
So hard that  
If the whole theater could tilt it would.  
The truck steadies.  
LORRAINE catches her breath for a beat.

LORRAINE

Thank you, God.

The pain comes back, harsher, sharper this time.

LORRAINE

C'mon now. C'mon. C'mon!

LORRAINE pushes on.  
The truck goes.  
She's catching her breath.

LORRAINE  
(Like a prayer)

C'mon.

LORRAINE looks on...  
She can see the dock approaching.  
She nods her head, and holds in her pain.  
The truck lurches on.  
And she reverses it to dock.  
We hear that Beep.  
Beep.

Beep.  
Beep.  
Beep.

And gas.  
She's docked.

LORRAINE rolls down the window and leans out.  
OTIS voice will play through speakers here.

LORRAINE

How's it look back there?

A beat.

OTIS

Can you, uh, head back here for a second?

LORRAINE shifts in her seat again. She's in pain.  
She shouldn't move around.

LORRAINE

Actually, I've gotta get moving soon.

OTIS

I really think you should come check.

LORRAINE

...Ok...

LORRAINE hops out with a wince.  
She comes around back to inspect the truck.  
We hear her heartbeat/pulse through the speakers.

OTIS

Half the stuff's cracked or spilled. O.R. can't use contaminated tools and sutures.

Her pulse picks up.

LORRAINE

I mean, it's still in the packaging, right?

OTIS

I mean, sure, but do you expect them to check every time they open a package to see whether or not its broken?

Her pulse is drumming now.  
LORRAINE feels her pain.

OTIS

What happened?

LORRAINE's pain grows sharper.  
Pulse climbing.

LORRAINE

I hit a hard turn but I'm sure it's still ok. Um, excuse me?

LORRAINE turns away and leans on the truck.  
Pulse deafening  
She's light-headed.

OTIS

Hey, *hey*.

LORRAINE doesn't respond.  
OTIS sighs.

OTIS

Know what...

He reaches in his pocket  
And dials his phone.  
Those dials play through the speakers, *LOUD*  
With each press, Lorraine feels more pain...  
Until she passes out.  
Black.

A long beat.

Monitors beeping.  
A heartbeat next.  
Lights rise/  
LORRAINE appears in a hospital bed.  
DR. approaches beside her bed,  
A DR. with a very distinct mumble.  
She's in a white coat.

DR.

Lorraine?

She's still coming to.

Lorraine.

DR.

She notices DR. in a white coat.

Hey, how are you feeling?

DR.

What H—Happened?

LORRAINE

Well, you passed out and had a fall. The supply chain people downstairs helped get you up here.  
How are you feeling?

DR.

No way.

THE PLANT

I'm sorry, what did you say?

LORRAINE

LORRAINE can barely hear her.

How are you feeling?

DR.

She looks out what's imagined to be a window.

It's dark now.

She pushes back the sheets—

But then has to stop

She's in AGONIZING pain.

DR. eases her to lie down.

Hey, hey, hey, hey now...*hold on*—

DR.

My baby's waiting for me—

LORRAINE

Ok, I understand that, but you shouldn't be moving.

DR.

LORRAINE



W—w—where's my phone?

DR. reaches by the bedside and hands LORRAINE  
Her phone!

DR.

You've had few missed calls. We didn't see any emergency contact info...

We hear the clicking sound of an unlock.  
All voices play through the speakers  
And steadily, Lorraine's heart rate monitor increases:

OTIS (HER BOSS)

Lorraine, where are you? You haven't checked in and I don't see that truck moving on GPS.

WOMAN

Hi, um, Lorraine? I've got Bubba here wondering where you are. It's no problem for me, but just wondering if everything's ok...

XAVIER

Hi Lorraine! I'm so sorry I missed your call. I'm on late shift tonight so I can give you a call back this evening if you have time. I'll be in the office from 6-11pm.

OTIS (HER BOSS)

Hi. I just received a call from the supervisor down there about what happened with the shipment. Don't worry about coming back in; we'll get the truck.

WOMAN

Hi Lorraine, please call me back when you can.

Phone click.  
LORRAINE takes all those messages in.  
Geeze.

DR.

I need help in here. Hey, Lorraine, listen, you're low on iron, and you were running at 90/60 when you passed out. We also ran an ultrasound and found—

LORRAINE pauses and acknowledges the IV and the coat now.

LORRAINE

Are you saying you ran tests? I didn't want any tests.

DR.

You were experiencing serious blood loss from abnormally heavy flow and low bp, we had to figure out what was going on...

LORRAINE

I'm trying to get a hysterectomy taken care of.

She notices she's connected to an IV. She notices the hospital bed.

LORRAINE

How much is this going to cost?

DR.

Billing will reach out after we've discharged you—

LORRAINE

Hold up. Now, hold up. I want an *itemized* bill, everything you charge me, and don't do any unnecessary ya hear?

DR.

Lorraine.

DR. sits beside Lorraine's bedside.

LORRAINE

Listen, I'm pretty sure I'm about to lose my job, I'm waiting to get another procedure so I can move on, and I just can't afford tests, and imaging, and things I didn't sign up for.

DR.

It was very important to bring you in and have a look at you.

LORRAINE

I know you're just trying to do your job, but, I can't afford treating symptoms. I know the disease, I know what's wrong, and I'm trying to get it taken care of.

DR.

You said you were getting a hysterectomy done. Do you have any family history of fibroids? Cancer?

LORRAINE

I've got fibroids, I've had this conversation with my doctor already...are you going to charge me for diagnostic services?

DR.

Lorraine, I'm just doing my job. I think we need to consider having an emergency surgery, if you have the medical records that recommend a hysterectomy.

LORRAINE

I need to—

She tries, but can't get up now.  
She can't *move* without pain.  
DR. holds LORRAINE's phone for her.

DR.

I'll give you a moment to make a few calls if you want someone to be here.

She takes a moment to look at DR.  
Is this really happening?  
And is she really having to make this call *now*?

LORRAINE

Emergency surgery?

DR.

I can't say for certain, but I believe It's very likely the pain is only going to worsen from here on out. We can give you something to manage, but based on what happened at the docks...

LORRAINE accepts DR's help with the phone.  
It dials.  
Someone picks up.

LORRAINE

Hey! Hey! I am so so sorry. Something really crazy just happened, I'm in the hospital, and I am so sorry. Is he ok?

(Listening)

Everything ok?

(Listening)

Ok. Ok. Thank you so much.

(Listening)

Yeah. I just had a fall on the job, I'll find out what I can. Can I call you back when I do?

(Listening...)

Let me find out and I can get all that info to you.

(Listening...)

Thank you. Bye.

She hangs up...

LORRAINE

Can I make one more call?

DR.

Sure.

...and dials another number.

Dial tone 1.

2..

3...

Lights go up, it's XAVIER at his desk.

He picks up.

XAVIER

Hello?

LORRAINE

Hi. Did you get my message?

XAVIER

Yes! I compiled a list of Dr.'s for you to look at—

LORRAINE *swiftly* pulls out her phone and scrolls—  
She's checking her emails—

XAVIER

But it needs to get approved by my supervisor before it gets sent out, I'm sorry.

LORRAINE stops and sighs.

LORRAINE

What do they need to check?

XAVIER

They organize the contracts and make sure the Dr.'s are willing to work with us on this for a discounted rate. It's sort of like—

LORRAINE *heavily* sighs.

LORRAINE

Pre-authorization?

LORRAINE stops and sinks in her bed.  
She seethes until she finds a comfortable position.

XAVIER

But it'll just take until the morning! That list should get to you after.

LORRAINE

No one's in the office that can make that contract right now?

XAVIER

No ma'am; it's just me.

(and)

How's the baby by the way?

LORRAINE

Are you *sure* it'll come through in the morning?

XAVIER

That's how long it usually takes. A day or less.

LORRAINE

Ok. It's just...Man, Xavier I've had a day.

XAVIER

Is everything ok?

LORRAINE

No, I'm in the hospital right now...I need to know if you can help me, forreal.

XAVIER thinks about how to play this.

XAVIER

I'm so sorry to hear that. Is this about the hysterectomy?

LORRAINE

Pretty sure it's about a lot of things, but...yes.

XAVIER

I'm sorry, Lorraine. I...will talk to my supervisor and see if we can move things up a little faster.

LORRAINE

Can you at least give me the names of the doctors you've got in mind? Maybe I can call them ahead of time and get things moving faster? I can call them in the morning.

XAVIER

Technically...

LORRAINE

Please.

XAVIER

...Let me see.

XAVIER starts typing.

LORRAINE

Thank you.

LORRAINE takes a moment to reflect on her situation.

LORRAINE

I just want to know I'll be 'Ight.

XAVIER

Of course.

LORRAINE

Because I've got a doctor here talking about making an emergency surgery for my hysterectomy asap.

XAVIER pauses.

XAVIER

That's... not typically emergent.

LORRAINE

Well, he says it is.

DR. passionately nods her head.

DR.

Is that insurance?

LORRAINE nods.

DR.

Can I talk to them?

LORRAINE hands off the phone.

DR.

Hello?

XAVIER

Hello?

DR.

Hi! I'm the attending physician—

XAVIER pauses for a brief moment.

XAVIER

I'm sorry, can you speak up, or closer to the phone, please? I'm having a hard time hearing you.

DR.

I'm the attending physician For Lorraine here. She's in serious need of a hysterectomy. Is that something you guys cover?

XAVIER pauses. Is it...?

XAVIER

Yes, it is.

DR.

And which company is this?

XAVIER

\*censored\*

DR.

Who?

XAVIER

We're a startup in the business of covering surgery.

DR.

And you'll cover this?

XAVIER

Speak up please.

DR.

You'll cover this?

XAVIER

What we *try* to do is have all of this pre-negotiated.

DR.

So you won't?

XAVIER

That's—well--

DR.

Look, can you people give me pre-auth. or not? Or do I need to speak with a grownup?

XAVIER

You know how this works.

DR.

Oh, you mean how we're trying to help Ms. \*censored\*, and then you weasel every feasible way to not pay your share of her surgery cost?

XAVIER

No, it's the way you try to charge for every little service from sheets to syringes.

DR.

Would you prefer she did?

XAVIER

She shouldn't have to.

DR.

I agree.

XAVIER hard sighs.

XAVIER

Wow.

DR.

So, we doing this or what?

XAVIER

Where? Who's your anesthesia group?

DR.

You can call our customer service number,

XAVIER

I'm ready for it when you have it.

DR.

I'll have a nurse call you with it. Are we good to proceed?

XAVIER

Do you have the CPT codes?

DR.

Look, will you let me go now and help her or not?

XAVIER

I'm trying to.

THE PLANT



Oh C'mon.

DR.

OH C'MON.

DR. catches her breath.  
XAVIER lets the silence mull for a beat.

XAVIER

You're the physician.

(and)

You should *know*.

DR.

What's it going to take for you to play ball?

XAVIER

Who am I speaking to?

DR.

Dr. \*censored\* at Metro General.

XAVIER takes a moment to collect himself.

THE PLANT

That can't be the same Doctor. You said you used to work with that one in private practice. *And* you referred to them as he.

XAVIER looks to the audience.  
He *did* say that.

XAVIER  
(Back to DR.)

And are you the one performing the surgery?

DR.

Yes, I will be.

XAVIER

Then you, me, my boss, and someone representing your hospital board should talk. Our financial team over here will fax a form for you to sign. Can you agree to that?

DR.

Can I *please* get my patient into surgery? She's in pain.

XAVIER

Say yes.

DR.

Yes.

XAVIER was waiting his whole life to hear that.

XAVIER

Then go ahead and get her prepped. We'll fax the forms right away. Thank you.

DR. scoffs.

DR.

Real pleasure.

DR. attempts to slam down LORRAINE's phone,  
And realizes it's a cell.  
She begrudgingly presses a button to end the call.  
And lights go out on LORRAINE.  
We're back with XAVIER now.  
He takes a deep breath.  
Acknowledges the audience for a moment, and then goes back to the phones.  
He dials listening for voicemails:

LORRAINE (V.O.)

Kids walkin' through crosswalks on their phones and—

We hear honking.

LORRAINE (V.O.)

Well...

\*ahem\*

Hi Xavier! Quick question. How soon do you think you could get me in to see a Dr.? I don't mean to rush you or nothin', but—

Another honk swerving through the speakers.

LORRAINE (V.O.)

But I'm just eager to get this...process...started. Could you give me a call back when you have the chance? Thank you, bye.

XAVIER dials, listening for more voicemails.  
Lights go down on XAVIER's side.  
And go up for: MAC, all focus on him now.

MAC

Hey, Xavier. I just got off the phone with someone else in the office and they said I just missed you. I was just trying to get back with an update. Dr. Anderson and I went with Dr. \*censored\*. We already called in, and I have my pre-operative appointment with them next week. We're hoping we can move things along quickly. Just, uh, letting you know in case there's something you've gotta work out on your end too. Call me if you've got time. All right, bye.

Lights go down on MAC.

Lights go back up on XAVIER.

XAVIER nods solemnly to the end of that message.

XAVIER

He's prolly sleep.

He eyes a phone on his desk.

Lights go back up. MAC's still sitting at his desk

close to the phone,

rubbing his hip.

XAVIER looks at MAC.

MAC returns his look.

XAVIER picks up the phone.

Dial—

Mac picks up.

XAVIER

Mr. Mac.

MAC

Please, just call me Mac. Had no problem with that when you were being all smooth sellin'.

XAVIER

'Ight, Mac, what's up?

MAC

You talkin' different today.

XAVIER

No doubt.

MAC

Boss out?

XAVIER kicks his feet up on his desk.

XAVIER

Yup!

MAC

Uh-huh. Whatchu doin callin' this late?

XAVIER

Had some extra work that needed takin care of, plus somebody gotta be here takin' calls overnight.

MAC

Ok, but...why? Who else calling y'all this late?

XAVIER

Laska. Still 6:40 over there.

MAC

(chuckling)

Y'all spread that far?

XAVIER

Well...beside makin us sound like a disease...yeah.

MAC

Not you, not you—

(a beat)

Man, you know what I mean.

XAVIER shifts in his seat,  
lowers his feet from the desk.

XAVIER

No doubt.

MAC

Did you, uh, get my message?

XAVIER

Yeah, I actually just finished listening to it. Just let me know the date and time so I can prep a card for you to give to Dr. \*censored\*'s billing when you're done.

MAC

A card?

XAVIER

Just something that has your Group Name and Number to bill us.

MAC

Oh. Gotcha. I could give you the number now?

XAVIER  
Sure thing, whenever you're ready.

XAVIER begins typing.

MAC  
\*censored\* that everything you need?

XAVIER  
Yessir!

MAC leans on his desk.  
A beat.

MAC  
So, uh, whatchu be doing during your late shift?

XAVIER yawns.

XAVIER  
Honestly?

MAC  
That's always preferred.

XAVIER  
I was hoping to get some rest after I finish setting things up for this business meeting this week.  
What are you doing up so late?

MAC  
Couldn't sleep. Nerves.

XAVIER  
Well, it's only...what? 10:40 where you're at. Night's young.

MAC chuckles while rubbing his hip.

MAC  
I'm not.

XAVIER  
What's got you nervous?

MAC  
Surgery. Waiting. Uncertainty.

XAVIER

I'm sorry.

MAC

You allowed to say that now?

XAVIER

Well, uh—

MAC

Red eye shift really do come with honesty, huh?

XAVIER

Maybe sum bout late nights. Turns filters off, I guess.

MAC

What's it like?

XAVIER

What's what like?

MAC

Late shift? I figure your boss is out, but anyone else there?

XAVIER looks up and around.

XAVIER

Nah man, it's quiet. No phones going off, and most of the lights are out, so you really end up focusing on the white noise from the few that're on. And let's see...

XAVIER looks off stage.  
Seemingly somewhere afar.

XAVIER

Traffic in the city's light, so there's not a lot of city sounds. Maybe just a...hollow sound behind the windows? Like a...empty wind?

MAC leans back, relaxing just a little bit.

MAC

Whispers on the wind.

XAVIER

Yea. Yea. Like that.

XAVIER reclines again.  
This time MAC does too.

MAC

We live out near a lake, so we also get small waves here and there that sound nice.

(Xavier listens for beat to the silence).

This, uh, Dr. \*censored\* is gonna take care of me, right? Like they don't have any suppressed reviews or anything negative, word of mouth?

XAVIER

Dr. \*censored\* is one of our best.

MAC

Ok, but what about like...are they a good person? Are they gonna take care of me?

XAVIER nods to the question.

He's thinking of the right thing to say.

Is there one?

It's his body, only he really has the answer.

MAC

Like, are they going to make me feel uncomfortable? Because I'm really putting time on the line here. My job...

XAVIER

Your wife, right. No, Dr. \*censored\* doesn't have any suppressed reviews or anything bad going around by word of mouth.

MAC

Not where you're at?

XAVIER

Not even a whisper.

MAC

I see what you did there.

XAVIER

You're gonna be all right, Mac. It's not the best, but...you're gonna be all right.

MAC

Thanks—

XAVIER's phone suddenly rings.

XAVIER

I'm sorry, uh, could you give me a second? I've actually got another call...

XAVIER lingers over the number on the phone for a beat.

MAC

Sure, sure, didn't mean to distract ya—

XAVIER

Nah, I'll call back. Just give me a sec.

MAC actually yawns.

MAC

Sure thing.

Dial tone.  
Lights go down on XAVIER.  
We're with Mac now.  
He lifts a joint into his lips.  
Flicks a light.  
And has a smoke.  
He settles his nerves.  
Has one more puff.  
And puts out the joint.  
Lights out.



**ACT TWO**  
**SCENE TWO:**

MAC in a hospital gown,  
sitting alone in a patient bed.  
He's nervous,  
Rubbing his hands,  
His head,  
His hip.  
He calmly lies down,  
As if someone is ushering him to get comfortable in his bed.  
He closes his eyes, as the first round of anesthesia loads in.  
We hear his heartbeat slowing down.  
We begin hearing the HR and BP monitors.  
He's under.  
Lights fall.  
And we hear the voices of surgeons working in the OR.

XAVIER (as a surgeon)

Vitals good?

OTIS (as assistant)

O2 at 99, BP 120/80, HR 77BPM.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Ok! Let's get started. I've got the posterior gluteus maximus marked, direction is towards the inferior. I'm going to start making the incision...

We hear this.  
The sound of tearing flesh.

XAVIER (surgeon)

A little tough through the, uh, through the muscle there...beefy gentleman we've got here.

For a beat  
We continue hearing the cutting,  
And the heart rate monitor.

XAVIER (surgeon)

How's vitals?

OTIS (assistant)

Still good.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Ok? How good? Give me numbers, read them for me because I'm a bit busy here...

OTIS (assistant)

Not too much change. O2 at 97, BP 126/88, HR 80BPM.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Ok...so far so good...I think I'm at the joint. Saw ready?

OTIS (assistant)

Bone saw ready.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Ok, I'm going in now to dislocate the joint, separating the femur head...Bone saw?

We hear the crack of bone.  
Next we hear the bone saw whirring up.  
And then, the bp monitor rises in pace.  
The saw stops.

XAVIER (surgeon)

What's vitals?

OTIS (assistant)

Uuuuh, 130...no, 137...over 90.

XAVIER (surgeon)

O2?

OTIS (assistant)

Dropping!

XAVIER (surgeon)

Dropping *how*?

OTIS (assistant)

84...80...

A beat of hearing the monitor rise.

OTIS (assistant)

Sir?

XAVIER (surgeon)

Does he have a history of heart attack or hypertension?

No response.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Anyone?? Who's got the fucking chart?! You, drop the bone saw.

OTIS (assistant)

Here, sir.

Mac stirs. We hear him groan/grumble.

XAVIER (surgeon)

It's gotta be a pulmonary embolism. Lets close up and get him on stronger anticoagulants when we're not stressing him, and--

The BP monitor reaches a fever pitch.

Mac screams; he's awake.

XAVIER (surgeon)

Put him back under! Christ!

OTIS (assistant)

O2 has dropped below 80!

XAVIER (surgeon)

Call it in: Code Blue! I need the chief surgeon for an emergency embolectomy. You, help me get more oxygen to him *right now*. I'm closing him up.

Blue lights start flashing.

The monitor whines.

And

Mac continues to scream in pain.

The sounds of the surgeons and the monitor fade out

But Mac's screams remain.

In the dark.

Until,

A whimper,

And silence.

Blue lights emergency lights encircle the theater.

Stage lights fall except for the blue lights.

A phone call dials through the house speakers,

A cacophony of voices play through them,

Some XAVIER, some OTIS, some THE PLANT,

All overlapping.

And diverging into white noise until—

We hear XAVIER through the speakers now.

XAVIER

Wonderful! Well, get some rest, don't front about the bill for now. You know you're covered—

Stage lights go up.

XAVIER's seated, head laid over his desk.

He's got on a 2-piece.

He's upgraded.

OTIS

We're disrupters, we're—

XAVIER

Here to help people--

OTIS

Remember, it's about soothing their concerns; our transparency--

XAVIER

Yes, of course we can look into getting your appendectomy—

THE PLANT

Focus, Xavier, fo—

XAVIER

A code blue. You know what that i—

OTIS

Now *that's* what I call—

XAVIER

Thank you, for choosing—

TELEMARKETER

The federal student loan forgiveness program—

TELEMARKETER

The student loan forgiveness—

TELEMARKETER

Student loan—

TELEMARKETER

Forgiveness—

OTIS

By the time you're done, you won't need it!

OTIS laughs through speakers.  
His laughter builds and builds until  
OTIS comes on stage and looms behind XAVIER.

You ready?  
OTIS

XAVIER adjusts his suit.  
He gets up.

Let's get it.  
XAVIER

XAVIER forces a smile.  
OTIS leads him to the meeting table.  
XAVIER follows.

OTIS  
Now, just remember: you'll tell Metro General about your experiences on the phones, how  
you're helping Lorraine and others, how it's what they need, and I'll handle the nitty-gritty bits  
like explaining Hard ROI...

By this point,  
OTIS is mouthing more words and explanations,  
But we only need to hear a few soooooo...

XAVIER  
(Off-handedly to the audience)  
Return on Investment.

OTIS  
Current utilization rates...

XAVIER  
How many patients we persuade to use us...

OTIS  
And of course, anything you'd like to add. You're the personal; I'm the numbers. Got it?

XAVIER  
Yep.

OTIS  
Remember: \*censored\* for you if we bag this, man. More still if we keep it up. That's easy  
money, Xavier. Easy. The bag's already here, we've just gotta convince the old money to  
withdraw it for us.

THE PLANT

You're censoring the payments now? Seriously?

XAVIER looks at the audience.

OTIS

You've done good. I mean I knew you had potential, but man, you remind me of me. You know I was in a similar state as you when I came on too?

XAVIER

Oh yea?

OTIS

Oh yea!

XAVIER's cell phone rings.

OTIS

Let me guess, telemarketing scam?

XAVIER

They won't stop.

OTIS

Do you answer them?

(He doesn't wait for an answer).

Don't. They'll know you're a working number. Just ignore it. Besides, you keep this work up and you'll make near *my salary* someday, and those loans will be a thing of the past. Debt-free in your late 20s, how's that sound?

XAVIER actually plays along.  
*He chuckles.*

XAVIER

Sounds nice.

OTIS

Owning your own space and living your own life, my man.

This time XAVIER lets OTIS nudge him.  
Then OTIS checks his watch.

XAVIER

I'd probably start with the bills at home my mom's getting.

OTIS

What?

XAVIER

Just...post-debt life.

OTIS

First thing I did was move out the fuck out, fuckers are keeping us waiting on purpose.

OTIS checks his watch again.

He tsks.

When suddenly,

We hear another OTIS speak through the speakers.

OTIS (Speaker)

I hope I didn't keep you two long; it's been one meeting after another today, I swear.

OTIS immediately switches up his tone.

He nudges for XAVIER to do the same.

OTIS

Oh! No problem at all! We're not here to take up too much of your time, just a quick pitch really to improve returns on your investments, and how we can help cover your patients. Where's the, uh, the Doctor? Doctor \*censored\*?

OTIS and XAVIER take a seat.

OTIS (Speaker)

She briefed me; I'm afraid she has a busy schedule with patients, but she told me he already signed your contract for Lorraine's surgery; How come I've never heard of you guys before?

OTIS

We're young blood on the scene, but that's also how we've been approaching the healthcare industry with a fresh perspective: think this—

OTIS (Speaker)

I get a few dozen emails and calls screened from young start-ups calling themselves “disrupters,” so you'll forgive me if the usual jargon puts me to sleep.

XAVIER almost snickers.

OTIS (Speaker)

You.

XAVIER

Yes?

OTIS (Speaker)

Why are we here today?

XAVIER looks at OTIS to speak.  
OTIS nods.

XAVIER

We have a client who went through surgery at your facility with your doctor. We'd like to cover it at a fair negotiating price between us.

OTIS (Speaker)

You're here for just one patient? Well, gentlemen, we could've saved each other time with an email...

OTIS and XAVIER are smiling...

OTIS (Speaker)

So I could tell you both to fuck off.

OTIS leans in to salvage this.

OTIS

Sir, let me clarify, we're not *just* here for one patient. Ok? We're here so *we* save money. *Us*. And not just for this case.

OTIS (Speaker)

And where do you benefit? How're you fucking me?

OTIS

Everything's consensual, we *all* benefit. Maybe in the future we even get to passionate love-making.

(and)

We've already got several doctors and *medical systems* partnered with us, and hopefully, you won't be left in the dust either. Our partnership wouldn't feel too different from any ordinary health insurance, maybe just a bit cheaper, but as you'd find out, we're cheap for a reason...

(and)

We start with a heavy discount on our first year of contracting, just to show you how we operate and see how you operate, a fling if you will, to...make sure no one's got daggers hiding underneath their pillows.

OTIS (Speaker)

How're you decreasing cost?

OTIS

By balancing out the cost of doctors you staff.

A beat.  
XAVIER looks to the audience again.



OTIS

We \* [REDACTED] \*  
\* [REDACTED] \*  
\* [REDACTED] \*  
\* [REDACTED] \*

Then:

\* [REDACTED] \*  
\* [REDACTED] \*  
\* [REDACTED] \*

OTIS (Speaker)

You want me to \* [REDACTED] \* admitting privileges to \* [REDACTED] \* ...and spread your low-priced plans by \* [REDACTED] \* ...like a *virus* in *our* hospitals?!

OTIS says nothing because OTIS (Speaker)'s right.  
XAVIER looks at OTIS now. He reads the silence.  
XAVIER's face switches from neutral,  
To curious,  
To shocked.

OTIS

We're post-obamacare; it's necessary to stay competitive.

OTIS (Speaker)

Funny. I just heard across the street that some surgery hospital fucked up a *hip arthroplasty* recently. You wouldn't happen to have a contract with them to stay competitive, right?

OTIS

If they fucked up, we don't know them.

XAVIER

We also contract with highly accomplished doctors! Like the one we've partnered with to cover Lorraine's surgery.

OTIS (Speaker)

Oh. Sure. And I bet she'll be signing right up when he sees how much of a paycheck she loses. A lot of these doctors know *fuck all* about billing, as long as they can pay back loans and keep admitting privileges, they're fine. Metro General is the number 1 medical *system* in the *region*. You'd have to travel almost 30 miles to find a competing facility, so gentlemen, it seems you didn't come here with your best leverage. So, here's mine: Your client's procedure was performed too little, too late. *But* you have me intrigued, so I'd like to run a trial of your offer, but discounted at \* [REDACTED] \* coverage for at least \* [REDACTED] \* percent of all charged costs.

OTIS

We can do that for a \* [REDACTED] \* reduction of the costs.

OTIS (Speaker)

Oh. Don't worry. You won't be getting bills from our more advanced or pristine hospitals... because you won't be touching them. You can cover *smaller* practices we've acquired that are having...trouble retaining patients. We can see if you're lower priced coverage can help pick them back up.

OTIS

Should I contact our finance people?

OTIS (Speaker)

Yes.

OTIS starts to get up.

XAVIER

Wait!

They stop. XAVIER looks taken aback at OTIS and up in the ether.

XAVIER

Your doctor also signed the forms already. Lorraine's surgery?

OTIS

*Xavier.*

OTIS (Speaker)

You may have entered into an agreement with Dr. \*censored\*, but she has no negotiating power in how much *we* demand, and neither I nor any other member of the board will lower the cost of her surgery performed here. But if *you* want to cover her retro-actively at 100% of what she'll owe us, be our guest. As long as the money turns up, we couldn't care less.

OTIS leans into XAVIER.

OTIS

Xavier, drop it. We can't eat that kind of costs. We did one of your other clients a solid already, right?

XAVIER

But...

OTIS (Speaker)

Son. You've made your play to get me in this room. Now I'm making mine to get you out. Take the deal, and fuck off.

We hear OTIS (Speaker) rises from his seat.  
OTIS shakes his own hand,

and then reaches for XAVIER's,  
XAVIER hesitates, but does.

OTIS (Speaker)

I'm sure my people will talk with your people and that'll be that.

OTIS

Pleasure doing business.

OTIS (Speaker) leaves.

XAVIER watches OTIS in disbelief as he prepares to do the same.

XAVIER

I brought this deal to the table for a reason, and now we're just...throwing that under the table?

OTIS

He's just dick swinging. Cost of doing business to stroke his ego. Watch, we'll be in his hospitals someday.

XAVIER grips OTIS' arm.

XAVIER

We came here to help Lorraine, now she's getting the short end of the deal.

OTIS

Not a bad deal.

OTIS shrugs XAVIER off.

OTIS

Take the win, kid...and the bonus.

XAVIER sighs, shaking his head,

But follows.

The two walk across stage,

And pass LORRAINE, relieved and resting in a wheelchair,

Being discharged.

Neither knows they've crossed paths.

OTIS

Keep your chin up. You're a war hero now.

OTIS reaches around XAVIER's neck.

LORRAINE reaches for her phone and dials

We hear a deep **BZZZZT**

You know, the kind where you leave your phone on vibrate.

XAVIER checks his phone,

OTIS

Those calls should stop *real* soon. Now, c'mon, lets get back to the office.

XAVIER pauses, and then denies the call.

He walks off stage.

LORRAINE waits alone.

Dial tone 1.

Dial tone 2..

Dial tone 3...

XAVIER

Hi! Thank you for calling \*censored\* I'm sorry I missed your call, but if you leave your name, number, and a detailed message, I'll be sure to get back to you as soon as I'm available in the office. Our operating hours are between 9am-5pm Monday-Friday. If you're not available to connect by phone, you can also reach me by email at \*censored\*. Thank you, and have a good day!

*Beeeeep.*

LORRAINE smiles as she thinks of what to say.

TELEMARKETER

Please call us back at your earliest convenience...

Lights go down.

**ACT THREE**  
**SCENE ONE:**

XAVIER's voice plays through house speakers:

Thank you for calling—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
Hello, how can I help you today?	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
I'd be happy to explain the benefit to you—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
Would you like to know about—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
Surgery is scary—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
I understand—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
Healthcare—	XAVIER	
		The phone rings again.
Low cost—	XAVIER	

**BZZT!**  
**BZZT!**  
**BZZT!**  
**BZZT!**

**BZZT!**

**BZZT!**

A phone vibrating on a table.

...Lights go up.

XAVIER smokes weed by himself.

He sits at a table.

Empty drink glasses and an ashtray in front of him.

In the distance,

OTIS seemingly laughs with the VP and President of the company.

He takes a puff,

And as he exhales,

his breath fills the house speakers.

It's shaky.

He coughs, lightly.

And blue lights start to churn.

He coughs more.

Blue lights grow brighter.

He rubs his temple.

Coughing becomes incessant.

He runs the burning end of the blunt on his hand,  
to put it out.

And when he does,

Just as he's about to cry,

OTIS walks over.

OTIS

Your eyes are red.

Lights instantly return to normal.

XAVIER hands the burnt out blunt to OTIS.

OTIS lights it.

He has a smoke.

He offers some to XAVIER.

XAVIER shakes his head,

But OTIS insists.

XAVIER takes a puff.

It's not enough.

OTIS

We also can't rule out that it wasn't the surgeon's fault, but we'll be sure to blacklist them from the benefit just to be safe.

XAVIER

We pushed him to--

OTIS

Xavier, we explained the benefit to his employers; that's all. Now, I know the call logs show you talking with Mr. \*censored\* longer than our usual clients, and you must have built up quite the repertoire with him, so my condolences.

XAVIER's stunned.

XAVIER

I should call his wife? Or... his daughter?

OTIS

We wouldn't advise that. For the same reason we're not encouraging discussion with journalists that may reach out...

XAVIER

Journalists?

OTIS

We *just* don't want you to end up in a situation where you might accidentally reveal confidential company information.

XAVIER glares at OTIS.  
Is that a threat?

OTIS

After all, you signed an NDA upon hiring.

XAVIER has no words.

OTIS

We're going to recommend you a counselor, if you need it. And uh, let us take care of this situation with Mr. \*censored\*'s wife. We'll remove the client from your list. And If the CEO asks, you tell him those red eyes are from the weed. Don't make shit awkward.

XAVIER looks at the audience.

OTIS

Listen, Xavier, what happened to your client, that was out of your hands. You didn't—look at me...

OTIS turns XAVIER's face to him.

OTIS

You *didn't* kill that man. *We didn't* kill that man.

OTIS lets go of XAVIER's cheeks.

OTIS

It's like I told you...we work with the tools that we have. We were transparent about Mackenzie's cost of surgery; we set him up with who we thought was a reputable doctor--

XAVIER

What about what you said in the meeting?

OTIS

...That?

*Yeah, that.*

OTIS

That was just...sales tactics! And I *never* made an official statement about our business practices.

XAVIER

So what are they?

OTIS says nothing. He asks for the joint.

XAVIER withholds it.

The same way OTIS withholds \*censored\*.

XAVIER

*What are they?*

OTIS

Why *did* you leave medicine to join our little venture?

OTIS circles XAVIER,  
Like the shark he is.

OTIS

We're past the interview stage. You can be honest now.

XAVIER has a smoke.

XAVIER

I didn't know—



OTIS

That's right, and you couldn't have known.

(and)

You know what I think? I think we'd all be a lot happier if we just *accepted* that it's not always our job to fix things. Savior complexes, they're toxic. I think you picked up on that very early on in your career, that's good, don't stop now.

OTIS has a seat in front of XAVIER.

OTIS

It's not your job to fix things. Neither is it mine. And it's not your fault to want a decent living...shamelessly...and free without the kind of exposure you were getting before.

XAVIER acknowledges the audience again.

XAVIER

I feel plenty exposed.

OTIS

Xavier? *Xavier*? Hey, you're on your way up. And you're going to do great things in your future. Don't let what a surgeon did or what the board rep did get in the way of that. Come on, let me introduce you to the President and VP.

OTIS ushers XAVIER up.  
XAVIER resists for a moment.

OTIS

C'mon. C'mon.

**ACT THREE**  
**SCENE TWO:**

Lights go dark...  
When they come back up,  
A bench should be facing the audience.  
LORRAINE is sitting there, dressed in business formal.

THE PLANT

The committee now calls back to the stand, Xavier \*censored\*, current board member of \*censored\*.

Clamor around.  
XAVIER approaches the bench,  
but pauses when he notices LORRAINE behind him.  
He's never seen her before, and she's never seen him.

THE PLANT

Mr. \*censored\*, will you please raise your right hand?

XAVIER does.

THE PLANT

Do you: Xavier \*censored\*, solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? So help you God?

XAVIER

I do.

THE PLANT

You may be seated.

XAVIER hesitantly takes a seat in front of LORRAINE.

THE PLANT

Would describe your \*censored\* policies as...transparent?

XAVIER

I would describe our company as transparent in our efforts to curb costs and make the process easier for the client.

THE PLANT

Interesting, cause we reached out to your company for records related to recent earnings, and anything else that could explain your meteoric rise to prominence in healthcare, despite complaints and lawsuits filed against your company. And I'd say we've been more than patient with giving you time to process and dish out public apologies and confessions of mismanagement and wrongdoing. We're weighing whether or not the request for company records on your cases should become a subpoena.

XAVIER

Well, I've told you everything I know.

THE PLANT

You've withheld. You've meandered and told us your personals, but still censored how your company operates and what became of your other client.

XAVIER

Well you've requested records that—frankly—to show Congress, and to show on live television would be a violation of HIPAA, my non-disclosure agreement, and in some cases the active investigations going on in civil suits.

THE PLANT

I see... Well, thankfully, we *were* able to receive some of the records from clients of yours, *voluntarily*.

XAVIER's brow scrunches.

THE PLANT lifts a piece of paper to showcase to the audience.

THE PLANT

I would like to present to the committee an itemized hospital bill for one: Lorraine \*censored\*, marked for a hysterectomy procedure on 12/01, with her associated medical records of the procedure. Additionally, within the records of note, is a contract between your company and the surgeon who rendered service. Who's name is that under the digital signature?

XAVIER

Otis \*censored\*, current CFO.

THE PLANT

And was he the one that drew up the agreement then? Or someone else?

XAVIER

I do not recall.

THE PLANT

You don't recall?

XAVIER

I do not.

THE PLANT

Then do you recall the name of Lorraine \*censored\*?

XAVIER

You just told me her name.

THE PLANT

Then do you recall that she was one of *your* clients? And that it was your job at the time to help her get this surgery performed, and do you *recall* having a conversation with Dr. \*censored\* about plans for costs to her care?

XAVIER sighs.

XAVIER

Senator, my job would've been to tell her everything we thought was pertinent. It's a lot of information, and we would've thought the terms were clear for the doctor, who's job is to relay the procedure properly to the patient. And no one will tell you otherwise.

LORRAINE huffs in the back.

THE PLANT

Well, Mr. \*censored\*, Ms. Lorraine has come forward and said otherwise, and she's—sitting just behind you.

XAVIER turns and looks LORRAINE up and down.  
He realizes who she is.

THE PLANT

May we proceed?

XAVIER

S—sure.

THE PLANT

Allow me to rephrase my question now: Did you purposefully keep the deal between this Dr. \*censored\* and yourself obscured from Lorraine \*censored\* to turn a profit?

XAVIER

N—no, we did not!

LORRAINE scoffs.

XAVIER

But...I can't specify the reasoning behind Ms.\*censored\*'s billing. I believe it is a matter that should be taken up between Dr. \*censored\* and Metro General.

THE PLANT

Did you say your company would provide her coverage?

XAVIER

We did.

THE PLANT

Then where is the coverage? What percentage of her bill have you paid?

XAVIER shakes his head.

XAVIER

I was confident we'd be able to work out a deal with Metro General. We *do* have coverage for Metro General for our patients now.

THE PLANT

So you based Lorraine's care off of a tentative agreement with no guarantees?

XAVIER

Like any other insurance network or agent pursuing growth? Yes! I believed we could get it done, but Metro General did not want to play ball, and they should be here explaining Lorraine's bill, not me!

XAVIER turns to LORRAINE on that note,  
But he gets no concessions from her glare.

THE PLANT

I want to stick to what you just said: pursuing growth opportunities...were there any other means you used to pursue these...growth opportunities within the advocacy branch of your company?

XAVIER turns back around.  
To face the audience.

XAVIER

Huh?

THE PLANT

Well, it's just...I have a printed email, submitted to us anonymously here...And it reads: "We would like to offer one of your employees, Mackenzie \*censored\*, the opportunity to use our services at a great cost-savings to both him and your company health fund. \*censored\* will take on 80% of his surgical costs. This will come at no additional cost to the employee or you, the employer. I have been approved to send a list of doctors and offer this special discount to your employee." This email is in regard to Mackenzie \*censored\*, a client of yours who unfortunately succumbed to complications during surgery, a surgery that, you, Mr. \*censored\* advocated Mr. \*censored\* use *your* surgeon for. What was the reasoning behind sending this email to Mackenzie \*censored\*'s employer?

XAVIER

...Um....

XAVIER's floored.

XAVIER

We...thought it might be in Mackenzie \*censored\*'s best interest to save on his surgery...

He readjusts his tie. Is it getting hot in here?

THE PLANT

But, and this is according to a jointly written statement from Mackenzie \*censored\*'s family and his physician Dr. \*censored\* Anderson, that Mackenzie fervently wished to have his surgery done under Dr. Anderson's care, at least that is, until he suddenly switched interest in pursuing surgery with one of your doctors. Did this email have anything to do with that decision?

XAVIER

I can't say...

THE PLANT

Then let me re-pose the question: did you attempt to circumvent Mackenzie \*censored\*'s decision and agency as a patient by reaching out to his employers, thus adding pressure to undergo surgery with *your* doctors and service?

XAVIER

I don't know...

THE PLANT

Oh, c'mon Mr. \*censored\*.

XAVIER

I don't know! It was my supervisor! He asked me to send it.

THE PLANT

Why would he do that?

XAVIER

Because...he said...he said he knew “people over there”, and could get Mac to use us by applying pressure.

THE PLANT

To be clear, for the record, are you stating that your supervisor, OTIS \*censored\*, current CFO of \*censored\*, colluded with Mackenzie \*censored\*'s employers to get him to undergo a surgery with an underqualified doctor at the cost of his life? You are accusing your supervisor at the time of potential manslaughter?

At this moment, OTIS comes in and sits behind LORRAINE.  
XAVIER somehow feels his presence.

XAVIER

I am!

THE PLANT

Very well. We'll place it under record, but note that the only name on this email, Mr. \*censored\*, is yours.

XAVIER looks flabbergasted.

THE PLANT

I yield my time.

XAVIER

Hold on! Are you...are you accusing me of killing Mac?

THE PLANT

This is not one of your civil cases, there are no accusations necessarily, just questions...and the truth.

XAVIER scoffs.

XAVIER

The truth? The *truth*?!

THE PLANT

Please calm down, Mr. \*censored\*. You're here to respond to questions only.

XAVIER

No, no, no, I'm trying to explain to you my truth, but you're not listening! You think I killed Mac?!

He spins around to LORRAINE.  
She doesn't react.

XAVIER

That *I* screwed over Lorraine?!

XAVIER spins back around to face The committee, the audience.

XAVIER

So you bring her here, and have these documents, this *email* from—what—4 years ago *anonymously* appearing?! And you put it out in public to have your pound of flesh? Me?!

XAVIER looks around aghast.  
He turns around to face LORRAINE again,  
And then focuses on OTIS,  
Neutral.

XAVIER gets it now, and he shakes his head in denial.  
XAVIER looks back among the committee.

XAVIER

Oh-ho-ho... You think you'll have it, you think you've caught your crook, but YOU LOT are bigger crooks than I could EVER be! You don't wanna *fix* it! You want a villain, and a face, and an *easy* fix, well look at what you made: you made me! You. Made. Me. I played your game. I played your game, and I won. I fucking win, you hear me? And none of you get to just end it here! You hear me you fucking cowards?! What do you know about debts?! What do you know about hard-earned work?! What do you know about any of it?! I mean, how much is Blue Cross Blue Shield lobbying you guys anyway, huh?! Aetna? Cigna? AMA?

THE PLANT

Ok, that's enough, can we please escort—

Security comes to collect XAVIER,  
pulling him from his seat and leading him off stage.

XAVIER

You took my future! You took my future! You took *everything*! Fuck you! *Fuck!* *You!*

XAVIER is carried off stage.  
His voice diminishes until it disappears.

THE PLANT

On behalf of this committee, I apologize to everyone here for that outburst. That'll be recess. We'll re-convene at noon. Thank you.

We hear, the clamor of people getting up and leaving.  
LORRAINE remains behind, seated,  
And contemplating,  
How she can still get justice.  
She stays there.



And behind her, sits OTIS,  
Fighting back a smile and a laugh,  
He settles for a chuckle.

**END OF PLAY**