

# BALCONIES

## by Scotto Moore

### CHARACTERS (with suggested doubling)

Annalise  
Cameron  
Gabby  
Sophie  
Monica / Jordon  
Violet  
Brick / Mayor  
Whisper  
Gridstation  
Lonso  
DJ Luscious / Chief  
Morning Bell / Tad  
Cordelia / Cynthia  
Cody

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE ONE: 3pm

*Lights up on two balconies, side by side on a high rise. We can see into the kitchens of each condo through the sliding doors of the balconies. The stage right balcony is stylishly furnished: a small steel picnic table with chairs, a tiny hibachi maybe, a practical "porch light" and below it an in-wall outdoor speaker for piping sound out onto the balcony, perhaps a standing hipster lamp in one corner. The stage left balcony is completely empty.*

*As the lights rise, CAMERON KELLY is at the table on the stage right balcony; he is casually dressed in a vaguely hipster style, probably wears glasses. Across from him at the table is GABBY GREEN, with a bit of a Burner look to her.*

GABBY: You are ruining my life. Please just give me the cheat codes.

CAMERON: I am not giving you the cheat codes.

GABBY: Then I'm skipping your party.

CAMERON: *Our* party.

GABBY: I'm skipping *our* party, and that means you don't get my help figuring out your hot new neighbor's name.

CAMERON: Oh please.

GABBY: I'm serious - have you even said hi to her yet?

CAMERON: No.

GABBY: Maybe I *will* come, and I'll introduce myself to her, and tell her all about your crippling impotence.

CAMERON: Which I do not have-

GABBY: And how the sight of a naked woman makes you break out in icky sores all over your body.

CAMERON: Where do you even-

GABBY: Which doesn't bug you since you haven't seen a naked woman in years.

*On the other balcony, ANNALISE PARKER enters carrying a small decorative end table. She's dressed casually, but still seems very crisp and professionally composed. Cameron falls silent as he sees her; Gabby sees Cameron's reaction and turns to look at Annalise as well. Annalise sets the table down, notices them both. Gabby smiles.*

ANNALISE: Hello.

GABBY: Hello there!

*After an awkward beat, Annalise goes back into her condo. Gabby spins back to face Cameron.*

GABBY: Remember last week when you said your hot new neighbor seemed like she was exactly your type? And then I said that what you *really* meant was that your idealized and objectified *fantasy* version of her is exactly your type, which I found gross, remember that?

*Annalise enters with a small vase of flowers to put on the table. Gabby doesn't notice her but Cameron does; he smiles awkwardly.*

GABBY: Anyway, you didn't notice this at the time, but I recorded our entire conversation on my phone. Give me what I want, or I'll blast that conversation over the speakers tonight loud enough that she hears it through the wall.

*Gabby realizes that Cameron is staring at Annalise; she turns to face Annalise. They smile at each other.*

GABBY: Hello again!

ANNALISE: I don't mean to intrude, but - I couldn't help overhearing - well, I just wanted to make sure you understood that it's a crime to audio record someone without their permission.

GABBY: What are you, a lawyer?

ANNALISE: Specifically it's a gross misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in prison.

GABBY: So - yes?

*A beat, and then Annalise exits back into her condo.*

GABBY: Give me those cheat codes, or I will have my revenge on you one way or another, I swear it.

CAMERON: I choose revenge.

GABBY: What?

CAMERON: I do. I just need you to stay and help me host the party. Deal with the caterer - keep strangers away from me - make sure the party goes off like we planned. And you can have your revenge any time you want.

GABBY: On one condition - you can't stop me from trying to get the cheat codes out of someone else on your team.

CAMERON: Deal. They'll never give you the cheat codes.

*Annalise sticks her head back out onto the balcony in time to overhear:*

GABBY: Oh, but you don't know the leverage I've got - you're not the only one I'm willing to blackmail to get what I want.

*And slowly, Gabby turns to Annalise.*

ANNALISE: You know, it's funny, I was just thinking, I better make sure she knows that blackmail is *also* a crime. That one's a felony.

GABBY: Duly noted.

*Gabby gets a text.*

GABBY: It's the caterer. Gotta meet her on the loading dock.

ANNALISE: You have a caterer coming here *tonight*?

GABBY: In like ten minutes. *She rises.* Just remember... my revenge will come when you least expect it. *She starts to exit, turns back to Annalise:* And by that, I mean my completely harmless and perfectly legal revenge.

*Gabby exits, leaving Annalise staring sternly at Cameron.*

ANNALISE: Looks like we both have caterers coming - what a coincidence. What's the occasion?

CAMERON: Oh, uh - it's a - sort of a theme party - celebratory mixer - sort of occasion. How about you?

ANNALISE: I'm hosting a fundraiser for my mother's campaign. Violet Parker - does that name ring a bell by chance?

CAMERON: Yeah, I mean, maybe a little-

ANNALISE: She's only been a state senator from your district for almost two full terms now, nothing you'd notice apparently. Anyway now I'm helping run her campaign for the United States Senate. I'm positive you know about *that*, because I saw the notes from the door to door interviews.

CAMERON: Ohhhhh - is this - the people who came by a couple weeks ago...?

ANNALISE: Yeah, you remember meeting those people? My mother's staff?

CAMERON: I think so. They wanted me-

ANNALISE: They wanted to clear the entire floor. You were the only one who declined our generous offer of a nice hotel stay. Apparently because you're hosting a theme party. On the same night as my fundraiser, which you couldn't be bothered to mention when we offered you a hotel room?

CAMERON: I wasn't planning a party at the time.

ANNALISE: What inspired you?

CAMERON: Well - my new game came out - I create mobile games - ever heard of "Sparkle Dungeon"?

ANNALISE: "Sparkle... Dungeon"? That's a thing people know about, "Sparkle Dungeon"?

CAMERON: The first one came out a few years ago and was huge, and all the sequels have been super popular, not to brag, although, too late, right, but anyway, we just released "Sparkle Dungeon 5: Assassins of Glitter" and it hit a million downloads faster than any of the others. So a few friends are coming by to celebrate.

ANNALISE: How many?

CAMERON: Maybe... a hundred?

ANNALISE: *Are you kidding me?*

CAMERON: Um - I don't think so?

ANNALISE: Any other big surprises?

CAMERON: Uhh... well, it's kind of - a costume party. People are - everyone's dressing up as - well, as their favorite "Sparkle Dungeon" characters.

ANNALISE: I see.

CAMERON: And there's a DJ.

ANNALISE: Perfect. Well, let me fill you in on what'll be happening over *here* tonight. A metal detector is being installed as we speak in the hallway outside my condo. A couple members of Mom's security detail will be stationed in the hallway all night, running every guest through the metal detector and then just watching for anything suspicious, like, oh, a hundred people in costumes they won't recognize going into a

party they didn't know was happening tonight. With me so far?

CAMERON: I'm starting to see how this could play out, yes-

ANNALISE: "Play out"? This isn't a game. Tonight a massive, well-oiled political machine is grinding to a halt right here in downtown Albany with the sole purpose of extracting large donations from the rich and powerful. I mean, Tad Garrison is coming-

CAMERON: Tad Garrison, really?

ANNALISE: Cynthia Carson is coming. The Mayor is coming. The Chief of Police. Lonso Drake from that weird Hollywood church is coming, and he wanted to impress Mom, so he called in a favor - see, the Daily Grind is in town on their big reunion tour, apparently their singer Jordon Connelly knows Lonso because she has family in the church, so after their sold out concert tonight, the hottest rock band in the country is coming *here*, to perform a few hit songs for Mom and her guests. But the cherry on top... Cody Charles is flying in from LA. TV star - the guy from "The Quicksand Adventures"? I didn't watch it but people told me it was huge. And by people, I mean Cody. Lonso Drake convinced him to join that weird Hollywood church and now his schedule is so insane that I literally get fifteen minutes to have dinner with him tonight on my balcony, then Mom gets to show him off to her guests for fifteen minutes, then he takes off back to LA so he can be on set first thing tomorrow morning. *Mumbles sarcastically*: "And there's a DJ."

CAMERON: Why do you get to have dinner with him first?

ANNALISE: He's my boyfriend.

*Annalise's phone buzzes with a text message.*

ANNALISE: That would be *my* caterer. So look. I'm going to let Mom's security team know about your party and try to keep them calm about it. Maybe you could just - try to keep things mellow on your balcony tonight.

*She starts to go inside.*

CAMERON: I - if you need anything tonight, just - ask for Cameron. I'm Cameron, if that wasn't clear.

ANNALISE: I'm Annalise.

CAMERON: Annalise, good luck with your fundraiser tonight.

ANNALISE: Thanks. Congrats on your... sparkle thingie.

*Annalise exits. Cameron grins despite himself, takes out his phone, starts typing a text message.*

CAMERON: Her name... is... Annalise.

*Lights fade.*

## SCENE TWO: 4pm

*Lights up on two women relaxing on Cameron's balcony: SOPHIE CARTER, bit of a librarian look, and MONICA KING, upscale Burner fashionable. A bottle of champagne is open and they are each sipping from flutes. Monica is showing Sophie. Gabby enters in a rush. Monica hurriedly pulls her phone back.*

GABBY: Hey guys, sorry - I've been so busy with the caterers I didn't hear you buzz.

SOPHIE: No worries, I still have a key. Where's Cam?

GABBY: Ran to pick up a bottle of scotch. I see you're booze enabled already, that's good. What's happening?

MONICA: We're reading reviews. Google Alerts just sent me this one, see if you can guess who wrote it. "Cameron Kelly's 'Sparkle Dungeon' series, about medieval rave warriors fighting off an alien invasion, has always been tough to classify: is it the epic adventure story that Kelly has always claimed, or an extremely thorough parody of the fantasy genre itself? If it's truly intended for kids, why are so many otherwise rational adults sucked into this increasingly ludicrous saga? Regardless, his latest sequel is already shaping up to be more popular than the previous two installments combined, if we're to trust Kelly's latest press release."

GABBY: Why wouldn't they trust Cameron's press release?

MONICA: It's the one guy still blogging for Fantasy Radar.

GABBY: So?

MONICA: You haven't heard this story? Oh this is priceless. So this guy schedules an interview with Cam a couple years ago at Pax, when we had just shipped "Sparkle Dungeon 3." And Cam brought Sophie along because, duh.

SOPHIE: The guy spent twenty minutes asking Cam all these questions about game design, brushing me off any time I tried to get a word in, literally looking right past me half the time, and the only thing he bothered to ask me personally was - "Did you land your first and only real job in the gaming industry by dating Cameron Kelly?"

GABBY: What did you say?

SOPHIE: Nothing - Cam and I just walked out on him. The interview came out and he didn't even mention that I co-designed the whole series.

MONICA: We got him back though. The review copy of "Sparkle Dungeon 4" we sent him was a special build where you could only play female avatars. Drove him batshit crazy and his review was this ludicrous rant about reverse sexism that went so viral it knocked Fantasy Radar offline for a day and a half. I think maybe four people still read his sad little blog now.

SOPHIE: Gabby, I have a favor to ask you. The electronics in my costume are shorting out. Would you mind helping me troubleshoot?

GABBY: Who are you gonna be?

SOPHIE: The Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands.

MONICA: Without the electronics, it's more like the Opaque and Barely Reflective Lands.

GABBY: I would be happy to help you troubleshoot your Dauphine costume, in exchange for one small favor. I want the cheat codes to "Sparkle Dungeon 5."

MONICA: C'mon Gabby, you know Cam would kill us if we gave out the cheat codes to anyone, even you.

GABBY: He wouldn't kill Sophie.

SOPHIE: I'm not unlocking the game for you. The costume will look beautiful even if it doesn't light up.

GABBY: Eh, it was worth testing your defenses, but I have a better plan in the works anyway. A devious and diabolical plan. *An epic plan of diabolical deviousness. A plan so sinister that-*

*Gabby's phone rings.*

GABBY: Go for Gabby. *Pause.* Bring the truck around to the loading dock. I'll come down in the freight elevator. *Pause.* If you think your subwoofer might not fit in a god damn freight elevator, it's too big for this party. *She hangs up.* What was I saying before?

MONICA: Something something devious, something something.

SOPHIE *overlapping Monica*: Nothing important obviously. Who called?

GABBY: Sound and lights are here. I'll be inside helping set up the rig if you need me.

*Gabby exits cheerfully.*

SOPHIE: Let me see the flight prototype again.

*Monica hands Sophie her phone. Sophie interacts with it as though the phone is a steering wheel.*

MONICA: Lean into it.

*Sophie leans forward and then shouts in delight.*

SOPHIE: Whoa!

MONICA: I finally got the gyroscope controlling the throttle.

SOPHIE: That's awesome. So much more intuitive.

MONICA: Okay now switch to the battle map. The little floating Christmas tree is the Dauphine.

SOPHIE: She's not a Christmas tree.

MONICA: When her dress lights up, she reminds me of a Christmas tree.

SOPHIE: I will send you a new icon. The Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands should not remind anyone of a freaking Christmas tree.

MONICA: Okay now switch back to first person. So that's the armada that's been hunting her.

*Sophie starts waving the phone around.*

SOPHIE: Wait, are they firing nets already?

MONICA: You were moving so slow they spotted you.

SOPHIE: The nets came out too soon, you gotta give her a chance to escape up the middle there.

MONICA: Yeah zero gee is clunky right now. I still don't have the thrust mechanics worked out. Which, arguably, was also true of my last boyfriend.

*SENATOR VIOLET PARKER enters, crisp and composed, a very powerful woman. Behind her is BRICK, the Senator's loyal head of security, in a suit. They each survey the balcony carefully, and Brick surveys the balcony next door as well.*

SOPHIE: Oh oh oh! Monochrome wave attack, already? Dammit! Aaaahhhh!

MONICA: They're targeting your sparkle reactors. You gotta dodge, Sophie-

SOPHIE: Aaaah shit goddamn they killed me already! Fucking shit!

*Violet clears her throat. Sophie and Monica freeze, noticing Violet and Brick. Then Sophie turns to Monica, very professional:*

SOPHIE: Monica, I'd like you to prioritize fixing the zero gee mechanics.

MONICA: That's great feedback, Sophie, I'll move that to the top of my backlog. *They fall silent.*

VIOLET *to Brick*: Let's put drink service in the corner there after dinner. Tell the caterer we don't want a bartender out here - let's keep things intimate.

BRICK: We do have the matter of the costume party next door to consider.

*Violet turns back to Sophie and Monica; they smile, raise their glasses to toast.*

SOPHIE: You must be Cameron's new neighbor. Howdy!

*Violet turns to Brick, says quietly:*

VIOLET: They do look very weird.

BRICK: I don't believe they're in costume yet, Senator.

MONICA: I wore this to the grocery store.

BRICK: And they can hear us very clearly, Senator.

*Violet turns, smiles at Sophie and Monica.*

VIOLET: No, my daughter is the new neighbor. I'm Violet Parker. *Pause.* Your state senator?

MONICA: Sorry, don't know much about state politics. I mean, I know they happen in the same state as me.

*Annalise enters in a rush. Violet immediately turns to her.*

VIOLET: There you are!

ANNALISE: Mom, what are you doing here? You're early.

VIOLET: That's no way to greet your mother.

ANNALISE: Hi, Brick, long time no see.

BRICK: Good to see you, Annalise. I like what you've done with your new condo.

ANNALISE: I barely did anything.

BRICK: I know, and I like how you did that.

ANNALISE: Seriously, Mom - you're not supposed to be here for another hour and a half. Did you not get the schedule I sent?

VIOLET: I have it memorized. A few high rollers show up at 7:30 for private time with me inside. Your dinner with Cody on the balcony is promptly at 8, nice and romantic. Emily's arriving ten minutes *before* Cody to make sure dinner is perfect - because I need some glorified 25-year-old secretary to show *me* how to entertain the rich and powerful. Cody shakes a few hands and signs a few autographs before he flies home. Formal dinner inside at 8:30 with all the guests. Cocktails on the balcony after that, and the Daily Grind arrives at midnight, for a quick performance. Then I head straight to the airport to catch a red eye, while you stay and kick everyone out.

ANNALISE: Yeah, so, you're early. I don't appreciate a surprise inspection.

VIOLET: I'm not inspecting anything. Although - is that what you're wearing tonight? I'm kidding, of course it isn't. No, I know how hard you've been working and I'm very much looking forward to tonight.

*She pulls Annalise in close and tries again to speak quietly.*

VIOLET: But aren't you a little concerned about... the costume party?

ANNALISE: No, I spoke to Cameron earlier, it'll be fine, he says he'll keep things under control...

*As Annalise tries to reassure her mother, WHISPER blows in on Cam's balcony, t-shirt/jeans/designer hoodie look.*

SOPHIE: Whisper - it's about time!

WHISPER: Sorry I'm so late you guys! I overslept because I was up all night running a social experiment. Turns out if you answer the door naked enough times, eventually one of the pizza delivery guys will cancel the rest of his deliveries and stay the night.

MONICA: And how many times have you done this?

WHISPER: One so far, so the data's still just anecdotal. Oh but we could try it again right now - you guys want pizza?

*He starts to take off his hoodie - then stops, realizing Violet, Brick and Annalise are staring at him.*

ANNALISE: While I'm sure the science behind your social experiment is noble, if the delivery guy had reported you to the police, you'd be facing a misdemeanor charge of public lewdness. So you might avoid openly bragging about sexually harassing a complete stranger.

WHISPER: What are you - a lawyer?

ANNALISE: What gave it away for you?

WHISPER: I see. Thank you for the advice. *Pause.* Now if you'll excuse me, I have to edit a few blog posts. *He pulls out his phone and starts working.*

*Violet glares at Annalise, then heads into the condo. Cameron enters with a tray holding four rocks glasses and a nice bottle of scotch, sets it down on the table.*

CAMERON: Thanks for coming early. I wanted to enjoy the calm before the storm with you guys.

ANNALISE: Cameron - would you mind - could I interrupt for just a minute?

CAMERON: Oh - hey Annalise! Did you do introductions already-

ANNALISE: Actually the only introduction I wanted to be sure to squeeze in - this is Brick. He's the head of security for the Senator. Brick, this is the neighbor I was telling you about - Cameron.

CAMERON: Pleasure to meet you. *They shake hands.*

ANNALISE: How big is your team here tonight, Brick?

BRICK: I can't disclose operational details. Or do you mean how big are they physically? Because they're not small people, I can disclose that.

ANNALISE *to Cameron*: I wanted you to meet Brick before your party starts. If anything unusual happens tonight, Brick will sort it out. Unless the Chief of Police happens to take an interest.

BRICK: Which he won't. Because, bourbon.

ANNALISE: Enjoy your party!

*She goes inside, and Brick follows. Cameron sighs, starts pouring scotch into the glasses.*

MONICA: So Gabby asked Sophie and me for the cheat codes to "Sparkle Dungeon 5."

CAMERON: Yes, and she's planning some kind of elaborate revenge on me, because I refused to give them to her. I gave her permission to spring it on me any time tonight.

MONICA: Why would you encourage borderline sociopathic behavior at your own party?

CAMERON: I know how Gabby's mind works, and I know she's got some kind of intricate endgame in the works. I gotta know what she's planning.

SOPHIE: So it's role-playing, except the characters are just irrational versions of yourselves?

WHISPER: It's role-playing, but it's also a duel and neither of you shares the same rule set. I mean, if she gets her revenge does she win? Or do you win no matter what because you protected the cheat codes?

MONICA: God, I forget sometimes that we are all adults.

*Cameron is finished pouring & they all have glasses. He remains standing, and raises a toast.*

CAMERON: So we invited a hundred people tonight to celebrate the game. But for me, what I want to celebrate tonight is this team of collaborators and friends. Tonight is dedicated to us and everything we've done.

*As they raise their glasses:*

SOPHIE: May the realm always sparkle, may the road to the future always glow.

*Glasses clink.*

CAMERON: Sophie - you're without question the best character designer, UI designer, all around visual artist I ever expect to meet. Sophie has been with me since the very rough days when everyone hated my first game, "Elite Beat Holocaust." Which was not Sophie's fault, the scenario was just... ahead of its time.

SOPHIE: The whole game was just, your character winds up stranded in the middle of famous historical genocides...

CAMERON: ...and to survive, your beat-matching has to be *perfect!* Just, ahead of its time. Anyway, Sophie, you've been my true partner on this adventure, and I'm so proud of what we've accomplished together.

SOPHIE: Thanks, Cam. Me too.

CAMERON: Monica, you've been with us a long time yourself. After the first game, we were so exhausted that we knew we couldn't pull off "Sparkle Dungeon 2: Disco Ball and Chain" without another developer.

SOPHIE: That was a very scary moment... risking our chemistry to bring someone new to the table. But when we found you, we just... clicked. And we still do click.

MONICA: Aw, you guys.

CAMERON: And now huge chunks of the code base are the direct result of your skill and your cleverness and your passion for the game.

MONICA: I'm just doing my part to make the world a safer place to sparkle.

CAMERON: Last but not least, we come to Whisper, high school dropout, veteran Burner of eleven years, the finest software test engineer who ever spent time breaking my code. The entire kingdom salutes you.

*Whisper leaps up and raises his own glass in a toast to Cameron.*

WHISPER: And we owe it all to our fearless leader - the storyteller who invented an amazing realm where glorious siege weapons shine and gleam, especially when you bounce powerful lasers off them - the genius who single-handedly wrote the entire original game engine for "Sparkle Dungeon." It's a pleasure watching you work - Mister Cameron Kelly!

*And so, they all toast. Gabby emerges onto the porch and takes in the sight of the toast.*

SOPHIE: Now - really? Is picking the worst possible time to interrupt part of your revenge?

GABBY: You will know my revenge when it comes. Which sounded more evil than I expected. Anyway, no. Cameron, will you excuse us please?

*Cameron exits. In the silence, Gabby occupies Cameron's empty chair, adopts a businesslike tone.*

WHISPER: So, your diabolical plan is unfolding according to - plan, apparently.

GABBY: I'm here to get the cheat codes.

MONICA: You're wasting your time.

GABBY: Maybe. I mean, you and Sophie don't seem to have any weaknesses that my people could dig up-

SOPHIE: Which "people"?

MONICA: Digging up what exactly?

GABBY: But Whisper is a different story.

WHISPER: Wait, I thought Snapchats deleted themselves! Are your “people” digging up pictures of my business?

GABBY: I don’t have pictures of your business, Whisper.

WHISPER: That’s cool. I mean, I’m proud of my business. I mean - well, are you on Snapchat?

GABBY: What I *do* have is a pristine action figure from the very first wave of collectibles manufactured by HappyFunCo Limited back in 2004, from your favorite television series.

WHISPER: I’m sorry - did you say HappyFunCo?

GABBY: I did, the same HappyFunCo that went under in 2006. Before another toy company could acquire the license, the series went off the air and those figures promptly became impossible to find.

MONICA: What series are we talking about?

GABBY: Oh, just the show that made Cody Charles famous. “The Quicksand Adventures.”

WHISPER: I’m literally the original president of the Cody Charles fan club. This is trouble, you guys.

GABBY: I saw the pics of your action figure collection on Flickr, and I noticed - you’re missing one, aren’t you.

WHISPER: Of course, you can’t get it, it’s a priceless artifact. I had it once, eight years ago. I unboxed it myself because my toys gotta *breathe*, and I had it *on my shelf* - once. Now I wake up every day weeping at the memory of seeing the broken pieces of that figure lying smashed on the floor.

SOPHIE: My God, what happened?

WHISPER: My cat jumped onto that shelf. *Pause*. I no longer have that cat.

MONICA: Whisper!

WHISPER: She got feline leukemia! Anyway, why are we talking about the most painful memory of my life?

GABBY: My people traced the last five times one of these figures traded hands - at comic book conventions a few times, Ebay a few times. Turns out, one of those guys was willing to sell, for the right price. Which, lucky for me, was just a few thousand bucks and a “Sparkle Dungeon” poster signed by Cameron, which was easy to forge. Now the figure is mine.

*She shows him a picture on her phone. He flinches noticeably.*

MONICA: You just felt like blowing a few thousand bucks?

GABBY: Yep. Got a signing bonus when I hired on at Google. Which, by the way, whenever I say “my people,” it’s Google. *To Whisper:* “Leetle Cody” is yours, the minute I get those cheat codes.

SOPHIE: Gabby, the solution to the game was posted on YouTube less than 24 hours after we released. You can watch people win, study their moves-

GABBY: I’ve studied their moves until my eyes fell out - but when the game is on the line, I fail *every single time*. I can’t concentrate, I panic in the heat of it, now I’m failing on earlier levels than I used to - I need the experience just *once* of actually beating the game myself.

SOPHIE: Beating the game that way is not the experience we wanted you to have. You’re insulting our storytelling.

GABBY: It’s only because your storytelling is so amazing that I got this obsessed in the first place.

SOPHIE: You won’t be satisfied.

GABBY: Maybe I won’t. But even if beating “Sparkle Dungeon 5” is a big fat mountain of anticlimax... at least I’ll be done chasing.

SOPHIE: For a while.

GABBY: Well, you could try making “Sparkle Dungeon 6” *a little fucking easier, Sophie!*

MONICA: I think we’re done here.

GABBY: I think you forgot who the players are. I wasn’t negotiating with *you*.

*They turn to Whisper, who is obviously conflicted.*

MONICA: Whisper?

SOPHIE: Whisper, seriously?

GABBY: What’ll it be, Whisper?

WHISPER: You said it was a negotiation. I have a counteroffer.

GABBY: I’m listening.

WHISPER: I could put an unlocked test build on my phone, and we could find a quiet room to play, and I could walk you through the whole game. You could finally beat “Sparkle Dungeon 5.” You’ll never see a test build again after that, but for the rest of your life, you’ll always remember how to fight like the Glittering Monks of Weaponized Psytrance, and you will ascend among the masters.

GABBY: I accept your counteroffer. I’m ready to ascend among the masters.

WHISPER: Cool. I mean, they're mostly children, it's a kid's game really, but still.

MONICA: I can't believe you would sell out for a Cody Charles doll!

*Whisper turns to Monica, deadly serious.*

WHISPER: I would trade all of humanity into slavery under cruel and merciless aliens if it meant my collection of - what I'm sure you fully realize are called "action figures" but in fact a bullet point from my OKCupid profile proves that "dolls" has never bothered me in this context - could be complete on my shelves once more!

*Whisper turns to Gabby.*

WHISPER: However, although the picture you showed me was sufficient to begin our negotiation, I will install no test build until you bring me that unique and precious Cody Charles five inch collectible action figure-

MONICA: You mean doll?

WHISPER: YES, IT'S ALSO A DOLL, I JUST FUCKING TOLD YOU I'M A DOLL COLLECTOR!

MONICA: Awesome, I'll have Mom send you my old Strawberry Shortcake dolls.

WHISPER: If they're not first edition, send 'em to the fucking dump.

GABBY: Then I'm off to fetch "leettle Cody."

WHISPER: Hey quick question - how are you planning to transport it back here safely?

GABBY: In a reinforced steel gun case with combination locks, which will be chained and handcuffed to my person.

WHISPER: Perfect.

GABBY: Or I'll throw it in my fucking purse.

WHISPER: I'm coming with you.

*Whisper and Gabby make to leave. Cameron appears in the doorway, and everyone is silent for a beat.*

CAMERON: So... what's happening?

MONICA: We're waiting for Whisper to kiss you on the cheeks, then the Roman soldiers come for you.

CAMERON *to Whisper*: How did she break you?

WHISPER: It wasn't easy, boss. Have you ever heard of Cody Charles?

CAMERON: What does Cody Charles have to do with this?

GABBY: I'm giving Whisper a collectible Cody Charles action figure. And he's giving me heavily supervised game time with an unlocked test build.

CAMERON: Whisper, you had no choice. Her endgame was too masterful. Gabby, nicely done.

GABBY: Oh we're not done, not with my revenge on the horizon.

MONICA: You're getting what you wanted and you're still plotting some stupid revenge?

GABBY: Yes, because first of all this is not your story where you get to push all the NPCs around, this is between me and Cam, and second, I was very clear with Cam when we started fighting about the codes that this would be a battle with consequences. I mean, you're all so mad at Whisper's little betrayal, meanwhile Cam completely abandoned me to - some purgatory for characters you can't bear to load up and play anymore - until I got creative and found my *own* way to finish the game. And Cam knows - my revenge is part of this story now.

*Gabby exits, tugging Whisper along behind her, who appeals to Sophie and Monica.*

WHISPER: I wasn't always wicked... remember the good I did for the children...

*And he is gone. We see that Annalise has been listening through a door that is slightly cracked open.*

SOPHIE: I'll admit that Gabby won me over a little bit just now.

MONICA: Yeah, but you sure let Whisper off the hook, Cam.

CAMERON: The exquisite irony here is that while he is off fetching a Cody Charles action figure from Gabby's place across town... in a short while the real, live, actual TV star Cody Charles will be next door on that balcony, having dinner with my neighbor, because they're dating.

MONICA: Are you serious? How did you find that out?

*Annalise opens the door and steps out onto the balcony. Monica turns to face her.*

MONICA: Quick - dating Cody Charles, yes or no?

ANNALISE: Yes.

MONICA: Cam, you really raised the bar on revenge, Gabby's gonna have to step it up.

ANNALISE: Was that Gabby I heard shouting? Is she gone now?

SOPHIE: Yes, and yes.

ANNALISE: So that entire condo is going to be full of - I mean, is she just one of the gang and there's like a hundred more social deviants heading over tonight?

MONICA: No, she's definitely a unique flower. The rest of us are all incredibly normal human beings.

ANNALISE: Who are going to dress up as characters from "Sparkle Dungeon."

MONICA: Yep. I'm going to be the Mighty Mirrored Paladin. I'll have squires to keep me under my own personal DJ lights.

CAMERON: You should try playing it sometime.

ANNALISE: I don't really go for kid games. Or video games. Or any form of entertainment with "Sparkle" in the title.

MONICA: Who are you going to be, Cameron?

CAMERON: The Sparkle King.

SOPHIE: I see. Publicly appearing as the Sparkle King, perpetuating the myth that the whole series was entirely your creation...

CAMERON: Oh, come on, it's just an excuse to wear my shiny gold jacket, it doesn't mean anything. Anyway, who are you gonna be?

SOPHIE: The Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands. Patron of all who follow mirages. And all who get concussions, I think.

MONICA: I see. Perpetuating the myth that the Dauphine is your personal avatar in the game...

SOPHIE: Oh hush.

CAMERON *to Annalise*: The Shimmer Lands are a mirage trap in the first game.

ANNALISE: Are they now.

CAMERON: You see some pretty thing in the distance, and if you let yourself get distracted from the main quest, you wind up chasing it for hours before you realize you're lost forever.

ANNALISE: Oh goodness.

SOPHIE: But if you spend enough hours on an epic quest of pure hopelessness, you might get rescued by the Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands. If she finds you, she pierces the veil between mirage and reality, and she sets you free.

ANNALISE: Hurray!

MONICA: And then you get locked out of the Shimmer Lands permanently. But you do get a nice XP bonus.

ANNALISE: Well I should hope so.

SOPHIE: I'm bringing her back for "Sparkle Dungeon 6."

CAMERON: What?

MONICA: She flies around in this one. We already have a prototype for an aerial combat engine, wanna see it?

CAMERON: Um, no, I don't want to talk about "Sparkle Dungeon 6" tonight. I'm still on vacation.

SOPHIE: Is that why you haven't reviewed any of the designs I sent you? When are you coming back?

CAMERON: I don't know, it might turn into an actual... hiatus.

SOPHIE: A hiatus? When were you going to tell me?

CAMERON: I was going to tell you today. Just now.

SOPHIE: Well don't stay gone too long. The story is turning out to be more adult than I expected and I want your feedback.

CAMERON: But "Sparkle Dungeon" is all ages - how are you making it more adult? I don't see how that would even work.

SOPHIE: You think I haven't thought about how it would work? *Pause.* If you're actually curious, book some time on my calendar when your "hiatus" is over.

*Awkward silence.*

MONICA: Sophie... let's try one more time to repair the electronics in your costume.

SOPHIE: Yeah, god forbid we try any actual game design here tonight.

*Sophie and Monica exit. Cameron avoids looking at Annalise, embarrassed, eyes down in his scotch. She hesitates and can't quite come up with anything to say. Inspiration - she pulls out her phone, starts navigating.*

ANNALISE: I guess I can spare a few minutes to see why everyone's so worked up about this game. *Pause.* A dollar, are you kidding me?

CAMERON: It's totally worth it.

ANNALISE *reading from her phone*: "For eons, the Sparkle Realm has enjoyed peace, thanks to the Elite Adventurers of the Diamond Brigade. But now..."

*Cameron takes over reading the game description, overlapping briefly with Annalise, who turns to watch him perform dramatically.*

CAMERON: "...their champion and commander, the Mighty Mirrored Paladin, has been kidnapped, and an abrasive menace threatens to tarnish the gleam of the Realm. Take the oath - become a Sworn Protector of the Sparkle Realm - strap on your sparkle-powered, neon-trimmed roller skates - and quest into the Sparkle Dungeon itself. Can you rescue the Mighty Mirrored Paladin in time to defeat the Invaders from Planet Sandpaper?" *To Annalise:* "Appropriate for all ages."

ANNALISE: Really? This does not seem appropriate for pretty much anyone who is not high on cough syrup.

*The game starts with music and she squints at the screen.*

ANNALISE: Jesus, I need sunglasses to play this.

CAMERON: You can adjust ambient sparkle brightness in your settings.

ANNALISE: So - how do I choose a character?

CAMERON: Let the game pick one for you, you're just going to be training for a level.

ANNALISE: Apparently I am playing a Kaleidoscope Keeper. What's that?

CAMERON: It's like a Prism Keeper, but harder to spell.

ANNALISE: This says I'm made of glass. So my natural enemy is basically anything that can pick up a rock?

CAMERON: You do need to find diamond armor soon. But your kaleidoscope is a great weapon.

ANNALISE: Can I try it out?

CAMERON: Sure, but it's not like a toy kaleido-

ANNALISE: This says I just blew my own head off!

CAMERON: Yeah see it's a beam weapon, it's not a toy.

ANNALISE: How was I supposed to know that?

CAMERON: There's a warning label right on the side.

GRIDSTATION: Psst!

*Cameron turns to see his stylish, slightly cyberpunk-if-it-were-still-the-90s looking friend GRIDSTATION standing in the doorway.*

CAMERON: Gridstation! I wasn't expecting you tonight!

GRIDSTATION: Good to see you, Mister Kelly.

CAMERON: Did you come to town for the party?

GRIDSTATION: Actually I'm here for a little social engineering.

ANNALISE: Ohh! Oh, it's a little baby rainbow! It's adorable! Gah, Cameron, why is it biting me? Gah! How do I get it off my throat?

*Gridstation makes a show of lowering his voice so that Annalise cannot hear.*

GRIDSTATION: I see you and Ms. Parker are acquainted?

CAMERON: A little bit yeah.

GRIDSTATION: Then you probably know Cody Charles will be here tonight. And wherever he goes, an evil bastard named Lonso Drake is not far behind. He's the high priest of a weird Hollywood church. We've been watching them for quite some time now.

CAMERON: I see - you're here on one of your "missions," is that it?

GRIDSTATION: Yes, I've been sent here by my friends from the Hacker Underground.

CAMERON: That diner on 22nd?

GRIDSTATION: Yeah, it changed owners but everyone still goes there. Anyway, I'm here to get close to Lonso Drake. But there's no way I could get on the actual guest list for that fundraiser.

CAMERON: How convenient that I live right next door.

GRIDSTATION: It's almost as though someone hacked the rental listings to make sure Ms. Parker found that condo the minute it was listed.

CAMERON: Why does the Hacker Underground care about a weird church for famous people?

GRIDSTATION: The public image is enticing - Lonso and Cody Charles at the Golden Globes, Lonso and Jordan Connolly backstage at a Daily Grind concert... that's the illusion of fame and easy success that sucks people in. But behind closed doors, the church's brainwashing techniques are so powerful that people like Cody pledge most of their fortunes before they even question what's happening. I know, the plight of rich people is not my typical cause. But they don't stop there... they'll brainwash anyone with the slightest hint of money, and if you don't have PR value in front of a camera, they'll enslave your body as well. You see, Cam - *my sister*...

CAMERON: Oh god, I'm sorry, man. Do you wanna... do you wanna say the thing?

GRIDSTATION: *This time... it's personal.*

CAMERON: What did they do with your sister?

GRIDSTATION: Oh she just signed up for their newsletter. They sent a guy to get money out of her, and Grandma shot him in the leg.

CAMERON: So, not enslaved.

GRIDSTATION: No, but kids her age are getting sent to "rehabilitation centers" - hard labor camps - for the slightest infractions. I saw jpegs with my own eyes. It still feels personal.

CAMERON: So what's your mission?

GRIDSTATION: We're gonna destroy Lonso Drake and his entire weirdass church.

CAMERON: Nice, start small, give yourself room to grow.

GRIDSTATION: I mean, not tonight obviously, that's just kind of the big picture. Tonight we have a much more specific plan. And it will work best if Ms. Parker is on our side.

ANNALISE: Hey why does this sign say "don't stick your head in the glitterfalls" - what is the point of something that pretty if you can't stick your head in it? I'm just gonna - fuck, the sign could have also said "or it will get cut off", that would have been helpful.

CAMERON: I think it's the first time she's ever played a video game.

GRIDSTATION: Is it the first time she's encountered a sign with clear instructions?

CAMERON: Hey Annalise, can you pause for a second? I'd like to introduce you to a friend of mine.

*She stops and comes over to the railing.*

CAMERON: This is Gridstation. He's a hacker. From the Hacker Underground.

ANNALISE: That place has great blintzes.

GRIDSTATION: Yeah it sure does. I wanted to ask you how you felt about a man named Lonso Drake.

ANNALISE: He's a major donor to my mother's campaign, and he's my boyfriend's high priest.

GRIDSTATION: I know who he is. I asked how you felt about him.

ANNALISE *hesitates, then*: I suspect that as much I would love to know why you're asking, it's probably safest if I don't. *She goes back to the far corner and resumes playing.*

CAMERON: Sorry, man.

GRIDSTATION *smiling*: Patience, my friend - the seed has been planted.

ANNALISE: Gah, Cameron, the baby rainbows are chasing me again! What should I do?

CAMERON: You have to kill the baby rainbows.

ANNALISE: But they're so cute-

CAMERON: They're vicious predators and you're in their nest.

ANNALISE: How am I supposed to-

CAMERON: Use your kaleidoscope!

ANNALISE: Oh hey, *SUCK ON THAT YOU LITTLE SHITBOWS! IT'S A BEAM WEAPON, IT'S NOT A TOY!* That's *RIGHT!*

GRIDSTATION *quietly to Cameron:* Maybe we don't need her help.

*Lights fade.*

### **SCENE THREE: 6PM**

*Lights up - on Cameron's balcony: DJ LUSCIOUS, an impressively elegant figure, and his partner, the androgynous producer MORNING BELL, both of whom have flutes of champagne. Luscious takes in the city view. Morning Bell sits at the table, an absolute study in nonchalance; while Luscious radiates the warmth of an understated showman. On the other balcony, Annalise is intent on her game of "Sparkle Dungeon." Cameron enters and warmly embraces LUSCIOUS.*

CAMERON: DJ Luscious is in the house!

LUSCIOUS: When the Sparkle King calls, his loyal subjects obey.

CAMERON *nods a nonchalant greeting:* Morning Bell.

MORNING BELL *responding in kind:* Cameron.

LUSCIOUS: We couldn't stop the tour bus to look for costumes, but hopefully our own glamour will suffice.

MORNING BELL: I was known for my natural sparkle long before the rise of Cameron's sparkle empire.

LUSCIOUS: True my love, you define the word sparkle more clearly than any dictionary.

MORNING BELL: Baby, I love it when you read Hallmark cards at the store and remember them later.

LUSCIOUS: Cameron, we should sound check before your unruly guests arrive, demanding to hear a set of my infamous sexy jams.

CAMERON: We gotta keep things down a bit tonight - there's an event happening next door. I'm sorry - did you say "infamous sexy jams"?

LUSCIOUS: Yes, the jams in my set tonight are the dirtiest, nastiest, sexiest jams that will ever sex your ears up.

CAMERON: I don't actually think of my ears in a sexual context.

MORNING BELL: Luscious even composed a brand new jam, which I just finished mixing.

LUSCIOUS: A sexy tribute to the wonder of "Sparkle Dungeon."

CAMERON: You mean, the *childlike* wonder of "Sparkle Dungeon," which is played by adults but is primarily a game for *children*.

LUSCIOUS: We also made a kid friendly version, which replaces all the dirty sex samples with ice cream truck samples.

CAMERON: Seriously - can you be specific about the "sexy jams" you're playing tonight?

LUSCIOUS: Oh, I might start with a little "Shake My Sexy Martini".

MORNING BELL: I never lose my appetite for a little "Shake My Sexy Martini".

*Annalise looks up from the game briefly, tries to ignore them.*

LUSCIOUS: Then I'll probably slide right into one of my favorites, "Getting A PhD In Getting Off".

MORNING BELL: Fun trivia about the guy who wrote that jam, he wound up getting a PhD in geology, because there's no such thing as a PhD in getting off. Anyway, I thought that was fun trivia.

*Annalise almost says something, but bites down.*

CAMERON: I see, so no jams like "Let's Go On A Chaperoned Picnic To The Meadow."

LUSCIOUS: These sexy jams will just keep building until finally we reach the majesty of the jam called "I Wanna Sex You In The Face"!

*Annalise finally stops her game and storms over to the railing.*

ANNALISE: I know you're Cameron's friends, but you're making it very hard for me to be polite here.

LUSCIOUS: I've seen this reaction before. Even the titles of my jams are just too raw and fresh, like sexy sashimi.

ANNALISE: Raw and fresh - are you joking? You obviously haven't heard a new sexy jam since 2008. Do you realize they didn't stop making sexy jams after "I Wanna Sex You In The Face"? Like, sure, groundbreaking at the time, I get it, but fucking shit, guys, have you heard of a fucking record store? Do you know they put music on the internet now and you can just go listen to it? Seriously, the first time I heard "I Wanna Sex You In The Face" was at my grandmother's house, she had to play it on a phonograph, and

even *she* stayed current, god bless her, the last sexy jam she heard was “Sex Me Where The Tube Goes In,” which she thought was hilarious until they disconnected the breathing machine. Anyway, let me give you some advice: Google “Sexy Jams 2014” and rinse your ancient ears out with the gyrating sleazy nastiness of jams like “Smear That Sexy Goodness on the Cookie Sheet” and “Hey Baby, I Have a Great Idea - Let’s Fuck.” Until then, stop flaunting your so-called knowledge of the sexy jams we sang around the fire before we had electricity.

*She goes back to her game.*

LUSCIOUS *quietly*: What did she mean by that word “Google”?

MORNING BELL: Who’s your saucy neighbor?

CAMERON: She’s hosting a fundraiser tonight for a state senator.

MORNING BELL: Remind me, state senate is when the kids pretend to be all the countries of the world?

CAMERON: Let’s get a sound check in and figure out a nice safe volume for the party.

*Luscious and Morning Bell head inside - Annalise catches Cameron before he goes:*

ANNALISE: Psst!

CAMERON: Hey!

ANNALISE: I made it past training. I think I’m actually playing the real game now.

CAMERON: What do you think so far?

ANNALISE: I like it so far.

CAMERON: Cool.

ANNALISE: I mean - I don’t *love* it or anything.

CAMERON: Whatever - I already got your dollar.

*Violet and Brick enter - stop quietly when they see Annalise talking to Cameron.*

ANNALISE: When do I get to meet the Sparkle King?

CAMERON: You have to prove yourself worthy first.

ANNALISE: I’m totally worthy.

VIOLET: Annalise.

*Annalise turns, surprised. Cameron exits.*

ANNALISE: I was just... being neighborly.

VIOLET: We may need to consider one small change to the schedule. Lonso Drake requested a "pre-interview" with you before Cody gets here.

ANNALISE: Emily didn't mention anything about that.

VIOLET: No - probably because if they'd given you advance warning, you'd have said no.

ANNALISE: So you said yes on my behalf?

VIOLET: Of course not. I said I would ask you myself. I thought after everything Lonso's done for the campaign and for this event, you might consider chatting with him.

ANNALISE: "Pre-interview" sounds like weird Hollywood church lingo to me.

VIOLET: He's made this a condition of Cody's appearance here tonight.

ANNALISE: That smug little prick. Cody's the only person coming tonight I *do* want to see.

VIOLET: I know you hate to hear this, but the only reason we have a shot at winning this campaign is because Lonso keeps finding new donors for us, from all over the country. He's lined up a steady stream of corporate contributions-

ANNALISE: Half of which are probably from shell companies for the church-

VIOLET: Oh please.

ANNALISE: Anyway he's only doing all that because he wants his hooks in you when you get to DC.

VIOLET: It works both ways - if I hadn't supported Lonso when the church's tax exempt status in New York came under fire, he wouldn't be supporting me now.

ANNALISE: I know...

VIOLET: We need Lonso in our corner to pull this off.

ANNALISE: I know, I know. *Pause*. Let me guess - Lonso's already here.

BRICK: He's probably through security by now.

VIOLET: I'll stay with you while you talk to him.

ANNALISE: Yes, I'm sure we'll need adult supervision. Brick - show the smug little prick to the balcony.

*Brick exits.*

ANNALISE: You talk to Lonso a lot these days.

VIOLET: He gets more of my attention than our other supporters, yes.

ANNALISE: Cody changed when he started talking to Lonso a lot.

VIOLET: Am I changing too?

ANNALISE: Maybe. My boyfriend's high priest just used you to get to me. How's that feel?

VIOLET: Feels like politics. Another day at the office.

ANNALISE: God - I never thought I'd say this, but I can't wait to stop running your campaign so I can go back to honest work as a lawyer.

*LONSO DRAKE enters - a snake charmer of a man in a suit, Hollywood stylish instead of evangelist. Brick enters behind him.*

LONSO: Violet. *Takes her hand warmly.*

VIOLET: Lonso. I'm glad you could be with us tonight.

LONSO: Thank you for letting me drop by so early.

*Lonso crosses to Annalise and kisses her on both cheeks.*

LONSO: Annalise, it's so good to see you. You look radiant as always.

ANNALISE: "Radiant"?

LONSO: You know, healthy. I'm just trying to see you through Cody's eyes, see all the things he adores about you.

ANNALISE: I think you should stop doing that.

LONSO: I was actually hoping to ask you a few personal questions, if you would humor me. On Cody's behalf. *Smiles.* It's not a cross-examination, Annalise, no need to have an attorney present.

ANNALISE: You're right, because this isn't a courtroom, I'm not under oath, and if I don't like your personal questions, I won't answer them.

LONSO: Annalise - the church is very protective of Cody. We want him to be happy while he enjoys this incarnation. And according to Cody, nothing would make him happier than being with you. So I must ask - what are your intentions toward him? Is his deep affection for you a mutual one?

ANNALISE: Why isn't Cody asking me this?

LONSO: His heart shies away from asking you directly. He's afraid you don't see the true Cody.

ANNALISE: I've seen the true Cody once in the last six months. It's almost like he's dating you now instead of me. My intentions are to have dinner with him tonight, *alone*, no entourage, no acolytes from your church, and very specifically, no *you*.

LONSO: That won't be possible. Cody is too fragile to be left alone at this stage of his spiritual development.

ANNALISE: He won't be left alone, because I will be *sitting right there at the table*.

LONSO: Out of the question. You may not realize this, because his public persona is full of charisma and confidence. But in his deepest soul chambers... he is incredibly sensitive and fragile.

VIOLET: Lonso, my daughter has worked very hard for weeks to pull this event together. She was very much looking forward to spending some time alone with her boyfriend. Fifteen minutes is hardly too much to ask.

*Lonso regards Violet carefully, then smiles.*

LONSO: Very well - it's only fifteen minutes. Annalise... Cody is going to ask you to consider... an agreement. His public life is constrained in so many ways, and the only way he'll be able to open himself up to you, in every way... is for you both to agree on the direction forward.

ANNALISE: I'm not joining your church.

LONSO: I don't expect you to. Cody doesn't expect that either - he knows our path is not for everyone, he knows that when his current incarnation advances to the higher waveforms, it will do so alone, without you by his side. But while he's here, on this material plane, he needs a companion who is...

ANNALISE: ...not you. Got it.

*Lonso hesitates, then smiles warmly at her.*

LONSO: I hope you enjoy your time alone with Cody. It's a rare privilege. Just -

ANNALISE: Just don't damage his soul chambers, sure thing.

LONSO: Violet, would you mind if I tucked myself away inside until the event begins?

VIOLET: May I join you?

LONSO: Yes, in fact I was hoping we'd get a chance to discuss the revisions to the bill that our tax attorneys proposed.

VIOLET: Brick, show Lonso to the den and make him a drink. I'll be right in.

BRICK: Do you drink alcohol in your church, Mr. Drake?

LONSO: We're not currently *in* my church, Brick.

*Lonso laughs at his own joke; Brick stares blankly.*

LONSO: I'll have a Manhattan.

BRICK: Good choice, Mr. Drake.

*Lonso and Brick exit. Violet and Annalise regard each other carefully.*

ANNALISE: I was really starting to like Cody before he met Lonso. Now they make him sound so fragile, it's like he's a dog that got, like, mistreated, or kicked a lot with steel toed boots, or dumped by the side of the road and then smacked by a car, but not so it kills him, just makes him weaker and more scared, and he's gotta sleep in a ditch and fight off raccoons with a broken paw and a little doggie concussion-

VIOLET: Thank you for talking to Lonso.

ANNALISE: Just please, dear god, get re-elected so we can pretend it was all worth it.

VIOLET: Pretend? You do realize I'm already a fantastic senator, don't you?

ANNALISE: Really? I mean, you're letting Lonso Drake propose revisions to your bills.

VIOLET: Any concerned citizen can propose legislative changes to their elected representatives. Lonso just happens to have an extensive legal team helping him submit his proposed changes.

ANNALISE: Making sure he doesn't submit them in crayon...

VIOLET: Oh stop.

*They go inside.*

*Sophie emerges onto Cam's balcony with CORDELIA MILLICENT, performance artist, stylish but whimsical attire; Cordelia is more self-aware and dry than she might seem on the page, she's very very smart and not a caricature or a ditz at all.*

SOPHIE: I'm so glad you made it down, Cordelia. Did you bring a costume?

CORDELIA: Of course, I can't perform without a costume.

SOPHIE: You're performing?

CORDELIA: Yes, Cameron commissioned a surprise performance from me. He didn't want to know the details in advance. I'm presenting the complete mythological history of the "Sparkle Dungeon" universe, performed entirely through the magic of tango dancing.

SOPHIE: Nice, I love tango music.

CORDELIA: Oh, I don't use music. Rhythm is a cage. And I still haven't played your game, so I hardly think keeping the beat is top priority. I've created my masterpiece using nothing but blog comments and game site reviews about each game in the series. Piecing the story together without ever learning to play. Because if I played your games, then I would be limited by the same bias that limits all of you. You're all so immersed and you have so much at stake that you can't see how insipid it all is. It's beautiful and gorgeous, too, of course, I don't mean to insult your work.

SOPHIE: Sure, why not wait and insult my work through the magic of tango dancing.

CORDELIA: Exactly, and if that goes over your heads, I've prepared a printed program with my critique of each level in every game.

*Monica appears in the doorway dressed in her mirrored paladin regalia. Her suit of armor consists of blocky mirrored panels that cover her in plates - a mirrored chest plate with LEDs woven throughout is a key highlight, and she wears a helmet of pure mirror ball.*

*Her squires - two men in stage manager blacks - appear behind with tiny portable DJ lights at the end of poles which they struggle to keep focused on her as she makes her way onto the balcony. She staggers around the table and makes her way to Sophie. The squires are wedged uncomfortably in a corner.*

MONICA: Do you recognize my costume, Cordelia?

CORDELIA: It's on the tip of my tongue.

MONICA: Wait - this'll help.

*She signals her squires. They turn on a set of hidden lights and EL wires that run throughout all of their costumes and blink and flash and are largely a little pathetic; then Monica and her squires all dance and sing a little tune from the game in 3 part harmony (imagine a Katamari Damacy type tune).*

MONICA & SQUIRES:

**Reflecting evil upon itself  
I'm the Mighty Mirrored Paladin  
I take my sword down off the shelf  
I'm the Mighty Mirrored Paladin**

**And if the sun is shining high  
My armor always leads the way  
And when the moon is in the sky  
It's time to use a flashlight**

**I'm the Mighty Mirrored Paladin!**

CORDELIA: It's so close, it's right there...

MONICA: You were probably just distracted because my squires were out of tune.

CORDELIA: Hardly. Melody is a cage.

MONICA: They were singing harmony.

CORDELIA: *Music* is a cage. Sophie, what will your costume be tonight?

SOPHIE: I'm going to be the Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands.

CORDELIA: My my, how provocative.

SOPHIE: I'm sorry?

CORDELIA: Everyone on the forums believes the Dauphine was your personal avatar in the game.

MONICA: See, that's what I told you.

CORDELIA: They say the Dauphine and the Sparkle King are a romantic metaphor for you and Cameron.

SOPHIE: That doesn't make sense. She wasn't even in the first version of the game. Originally the Shimmer Lands were a total dead end. But some people refused to give up, they'd keep wandering for days and days, telling people on the forums they were getting closer to the pretty thing they were chasing in the distance... Cam found that inspiring somehow, so he invented the Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands. Sent by the Sparkle King himself to rescue at least a few of those poor wandering souls.

CORDELIA: So the Dauphine is Cameron's creation?

SOPHIE: Originally, yeah, although we both immediately felt connected with the story of the Dauphine. When I started working on her visual design treatment, he said, "She should be beautiful the way deep sadness is beautiful."

MONICA: Why did she need to be so sad?

SOPHIE: Who knows - why do the dungeons need to sparkle?

CORDELIA: Don't be coy, Miss Famous Game Designer, you know *exactly* why the dungeons need to sparkle. And you know *exactly* why the Dauphine needed to be so sad.

SOPHIE: Well - making her sad was Cam's idea. Choosing her sadness - that was me.

CORDELIA: What was her sadness?

SOPHIE: She was chasing a mirage of her own - the hope that someone would love her enough to stay with her in the Shimmer Lands. And every time she pierced the veil to let someone escape... her heart was broken all over again.

CORDELIA: I swear, Sophie, you're maddening. You make these games seem - almost two dimensional, is that a compliment?

SOPHIE: Close enough. Anyway in “Sparkle Dungeon 2,” powerful alchemists sealed off the Shimmer Lands once and for all to protect the realm. Official canon says she’s still trapped there.

CORDELIA: You’ve inspired me. You might see the Shimmer Lands in my tango dance tonight.

SOPHIE: When is your performance scheduled?

CORDELIA: No one puts me on a schedule, Sophie. Time is a cage.

*Cameron enters.*

CAMERON: Cordelia, there you are!

*He embraces her warmly.*

CORDELIA: Look at you, congratulations!

CAMERON: Can’t wait to see what you came up with for your performance.

CORDELIA: I can’t wait either - I didn’t think to rehearse it with the amount of champagne I’m planning to drink tonight - who knows, might want to put down some plastic on the furniture. And the guests.

*A beat as Cameron takes in Monica in her costume.*

CAMERON: Interesting costume, Monica - it’s almost like I recognize it from somewhere.

MONICA: You’re hilarious. And wait til you see Sophie’s Dauphine costume. The Dauphine’s going to be the main character in “Sparkle Dungeon 6.” Which you don’t want to hear about but I thought I should mention it anyway, because awesome.

CAMERON: Yeah, look, would you guys excuse me so I can chat with Sophie for a sec?

*After a beat:*

MONICA: Squires, MARCH!

*She and the squires exit. Cordelia kisses Cameron on the cheek and then goes inside.*

CAMERON: I just wanted to apologize for - not wanting to talk earlier, I just - I’m just tired right now, and I just - anyway, I’m sorry. I do want to hear your idea.

SOPHIE: You don’t have to humor me, Cameron.

CAMERON: I’m not. When I said I couldn’t imagine how it would work, that was about my limited imagination, not about you at all. I just... whenever I close my eyes, I see endless “Sparkle Dungeon” levels pouring out on fractal autopilot, and they’re monotonous and dull but god knows the kids would play through every one, and I thought... I thought a hiatus would be good for me, that’s all. Anyway, tell me your new story idea.

SOPHIE: I will definitely tell you, when your hiatus is over and your brain is back to full capacity. Let's just celebrate tonight.

CAMERON: But you want to bring the Dauphine back for it?

SOPHIE: She's the star of the game.

CAMERON: That's cool. She deserves a happier ending than she got the first time.

SOPHIE: Cam... why did she need to be so sad?

CAMERON: I don't know. *After a pause.* Why does the Sparkle King have no queen?

SOPHIE *pause*: I don't know.

*He pours her a scotch. Lights fade as they share a drink together.*

#### **SCENE FOUR: 8PM**

*As lights come up, we see the party is ramping up in Cameron's kitchen. The door to his balcony opens, and he escapes outside to catch a breath of fresh air. On the other balcony, Annalise enters, dressed very sharply for dinner with Cody.*

ANNALISE: I finished the first level!

CAMERON: Congratulations.

ANNALISE: I never expected to kill so many baby rainbows.

CAMERON: The ones who survive to adulthood are much more chill.

ANNALISE *noticing him staring at her*: Do I have something on my dress already?

CAMERON: No, you look- I mean, you changed your, into something, else I noticed.

ANNALISE: Look okay?

CAMERON: Oh, I mean, obviously. Not that, earlier wasn't - that was okay too, this is just... *more* okay.

ANNALISE: Cool, Cody really goes for "more okay." God, I didn't expect to be so nervous.

CAMERON: I'm always nervous on dates. I mean, I don't really - have them anymore, so it's kind of a theoretical observation, but.

ANNALISE: Uh huh. You run your own sparkle empire, zillions of downloads-

CAMERON: Well, millions technically, but still. We were a very big overnight success. Which took us very much by surprise. People start treating you differently before you realize what's happening. Freaked me out a little I guess.

ANNALISE: Gotcha. That happened to Cody too.

CAMERON: How'd you meet Cody?

ANNALISE: I'm an entertainment lawyer. I mean - right now I'm strategic director for Mom's campaign - but lawyer's my normal job. So I meet a lot of famous people, and they're usually just vapid and self-absorbed and superficial. But then I met Cody, and he was... vapid and self-absorbed and superficial, but he was also sweet and generous and adventurous, and I just... hadn't really met any lawyers in LA who were sweet and generous and adventurous, so I thought, what the hell. And somehow we hit it off. Maybe he's just my first TV star crush. That's a thing, right? But I was too smitten with my little TV star crush to understand what was happening when he got involved in the church. He said it was going to be a networking thing - an inside track to powerful people, actors, agents, producers, real A listers too, and clearly they were all helping each other...

CAMERON: So he's not a true believer?

ANNALISE: I don't know, I really don't. It might be a lost cause now, me and him. But... if there's even the slightest chance of getting through to him, tonight's the night.

*Violet enters with EMILY MARCH, crisp and professional, as tightly wound and focused as they come. They're followed by Brick. Emily peers about both balconies.*

VIOLET: Annalise, this is Cody's assistant, Emily March.

EMILY: Please refer to him as Mr. Charles. Only Annalise may address him as Cody.

ANNALISE: Pretty sure the *Senator* can address him however she likes.

EMILY: The highest priority here is the comfort and safety of Mr. Charles. We'll station your bodyguard at the railing there to make sure your neighbors do not approach him.

VIOLET: Brick is not a "bodyguard" - he's my head of security.

EMILY: Unless someone approaches Mr. Charles, at which point he had better demote himself to bodyguard.

BRICK: I can handle the neighbors.

EMILY: Good, then let's review. Lonso approved clearing the balcony for Mr. Charles and Annalise to have a very brief dinner alone. You get fifteen minutes from the time you're both seated, which should be in... six minutes. Mr. Charles does not wear a watch, so I will be responsible for indicating that dinner is over. I'll then guide Mr. Charles inside where he will receive no more than a few minutes each with your most prominent guests. If we don't leave *promptly* at 8:30, he will miss the jet, and if he misses that, he will miss his call on set tomorrow at 6am, which will make the producers, the network, and Lonso very, very upset.

*Looking about the balcony.* We'll need a more romantic table. *Notices Cameron's stylish table.* That one will work.

*Dead silence as Cameron realizes they're all looking at him.*

CAMERON: You mean the table I am currently using as my... table?

EMILY: Yes, we'd like to borrow your table for half an hour. Hand it over the railing to Brick.

*Cameron rises, and both he and Brick examine the gap between the two balconies.*

CAMERON: So Brick - we are probably not going to drop that table and kill anybody.

BRICK: I don't think we will.

CAMERON: But just to be safe, I'm gonna get some help on my side.

BRICK: Sure, you don't look that strong.

CAMERON *goes and peeks his head through the door:* Hey find Gridstation for me, would you?

ANNALISE: Cameron, it's okay, I'm sure we can manage-

EMILY: What did you call him?

ANNALISE: I called him Cameron.

EMILY: Mr. Charles will be less than pleased to hear you're on a first name basis with your neighbor.

*Gridstation enters beside Cameron.*

GRIDSTATION: So what's going on here?

CAMERON: They want me to hand my table over the railing to Brick.

GRIDSTATION: Without dropping it?

BRICK: The request is to not drop it.

EMILY: Hurry, people, we're on a tight schedule here.

GRIDSTATION: Ma'am, I'm a methodical problem solver and something is bothering me about the circumstances here.

CAMERON: It's going to come to you, any second.

GRIDSTATION: It's starting to bug me actually. Oh, right - they already have a table.

EMILY: Does this table look *romantic* to you? I would kill myself before seating Mr. Charles at this table.

GRIDSTATION: Here's the part where I actually solve your problem. Has anyone considered covering that table... with a *tablecloth*?

BRICK: The caterers brought tablecloths. I'll grab one!

*He dashes out.*

EMILY: Brick, wait - you can't leave your post!

GRIDSTATION: What happens if Brick leaves his post?

CAMERON: I don't know, man, could be some crazy shit.

GRIDSTATION: I see what she means, though. You do have a very romantic table.

CAMERON: I don't even own a tablecloth, I mean, what for, right?

*Brick returns followed by caterers who rapidly prepare the settings for a two-top dinner on top of a splendid table cloth. Then:*

EMILY: WE'RE OUT OF TIME! CATERING STAFF, CLEAR THE BALCONY! SENATOR, CLEAR THE BALCONY! ANNALISE, TAKE YOUR SEAT! BRICK, COME WITH ME! THE REST OF YOU-

*She stops - stares at a bemused Cameron and Gridstation, who refuse to leave. She spits her line at them:*

EMILY: Enjoy your precious *table*.

*Emily exits with Violet and Brick. Gridstation and Cameron drift back to the table and sit, speaking quietly to each other. Annalise goes to the railing and summons Cameron.*

ANNALISE: I have a big favor to ask you. I need fifteen minutes of privacy out here with Cody, just to... see if he's actually still a person. A person that I recognize anyway. If you help me... maybe I can return the favor.

*Cameron turns back to Gridstation, who rises.*

GRIDSTATION: Is Lonso Drake over there yet?

*She nods. He offers his tablet computer over the railing.*

GRIDSTATION: Type in your network password. Don't worry - I'm just looking for dirt on Lonso.

ANNALISE: He's too smart to connect to our network on his phone.

GRIDSTATION: Of course he is. But Cody Charles... maybe someone will put *his* phone on your network.

*Annalise quickly types in her password, hands the tablet back to Gridstation who heads inside.*

CAMERON: I'll keep people inside for twenty minutes.

ANNALISE: Thank you, Cameron. Seriously.

*Cameron exits.*

*Emily reenters, a beaming smile on her face, escorting the magnetic TV star CODY CHARLES to the balcony. Brick enters behind them and heads for his post. Cody smoothly crosses to Annalise, then hesitates; they smile awkwardly at each other.*

CODY: Annalise, so good to see you.

*Emily discretely places a briefcase next to Cody's seat at the table.*

CODY: Thanks, Emily.

*Emily pivots and disappears into the house. Annalise goes to Brick.*

ANNALISE: I just made a deal to keep the neighbors inside for the next twenty minutes, so Cody and I could have some privacy during dinner.

BRICK: That sounds like a great deal, ma'am.

ANNALISE: Which means, you don't really need to protect us from the neighbors... Maybe you could stand inside, in the kitchen where you can see us, but we can talk privately?

BRICK: I don't think Emily would like that at all.

ANNALISE: Oh, I'm positive she won't.

BRICK: Sounds good, I'll be inside.

*Brick exits. Cody smiles and claps for her.*

CODY: Nicely done. Emily will have a heart attack, but I'm so glad we're able to have a few private moments together.

*They cross to each other and very tentatively try to share a kiss - awkward! They give up and both sit - as they do, Cody pulls his phone from his pocket and sets it on the table.*

CODY: So! I feel like it's been months since we've seen each other.

ANNALISE: It has in fact been months.

CODY: Keeping yourself busy?

ANNALISE: I'm running my mother's campaign. So yeah.

CODY: Just make sure to set aside some "you" time, it's just the only way to keep it all together. Well, that, and committing your soul chambers to Gorvod.

ANNALISE: I'll probably just... start with "you" time and see how that goes.

*They both laugh nervously. Cody reaches down into the briefcase, pulls out a pen and paper and writes a message as he signals for Annalise to keep talking.*

ANNALISE: So... how's your new show?

*During the following, he slides the message to her and she reads it, rapt, and her eyes meet his even as he keeps his patter going. She points at Cody's phone, glances inside - he nods.*

CODY: The storylines I keep getting are so compelling, because the writers *know* that when they hand Cody Charles a challenge, Cody Charles is going to deliver. I mean, what did you think of the latest episode?

ANNALISE: I'm sorry, I don't have time for television right now.

*She starts writing a return message.*

CODY: I understand. Someday, maybe you and I can spend a long weekend getting caught up on all my shows.

*He reaches into the briefcase and pulls out a very thick document, which he slides over to her - she slides her own message over to him. He pauses to read it, then swivels back around to look at Cameron's balcony, then back to her in disbelief - but she nods vigorously. As he speaks, he enters his phone password, then slides it to Annalise, who enters her network password.*

CODY: I have a very limited amount of time here tonight, and we still have one important matter to address: your holy matrimony to me under the watchful eyes of the High Priesthood of Gorvod.

ANNALISE: Matrimony?

CODY: Gorvod has made it clear to me that we're destined to be together in this lifetime, just as we've been together in so many soul incarnations throughout eternity. For thirty million years, Gorvod witnessed our repeated unions. This is just the next in a timeless series. The contract in front of you merely formalizes what Gorvod has already set in motion.

ANNALISE: I need to read this document cover to cover before I can agree to anything as profound as matrimony.

CODY: Take your time. And decide as quickly as you can.

*They fall silent. Cody drops his phone into a pitcher of water on the table. Then very carefully, they each rise from their chairs, careful not to scrape the floor. They tiptoe to the railing. Cody vaults over to Cameron's balcony. Annalise follows, ignoring his offer to help her over. They sneak quickly to Cameron's*

*door - it's not locked, and they quickly sneak in and disappear.*

*Tension mounts on an empty stage. Then Cameron and Gridstation appear and swiftly take seats, adopting a casual pose and chatting amiably, with Gridstation showing Cameron something on his tablet.*

*Moments later, we see Emily enter the kitchen and get into an explosive argument with Brick, who deliberately turned his back on Cody and Annalise's escape. The argument attracts Violet's attention, and then they all spill onto the balcony.*

EMILY: How is this *possible*?

VIOLET: They must've snuck inside for some reason.

EMILY: Right past where Brick decided to station himself despite my explicit instruction?

BRICK: It felt more like a suggestion.

EMILY: And did you notice them sneaking right past you, or were you just staring at the inside of your eyelids?

VIOLET: Emily, I don't appreciate you taking that tone of voice with my staff. Please show some respect.

EMILY: Or what - what are you gonna do to me that Lonso isn't gonna do a thousand times over when he finds out?

*Emily crosses to the table, discovers Cody's phone, and puts it in her purse. Suddenly Emily notices Cameron and Gridstation. She charges toward them.*

EMILY: You must have seen them! Where did they go?

CAMERON: I wasn't paying attention. My friend was showing me some funny videos.

GRIDSTATION: Wanna see? I mean, do you like cats?

EMILY: You actually expect me to believe that you were watching cat videos and not Cody Charles?

GRIDSTATION: A cat will stick its head under a faucet, will Cody Charles do that?

*Emily turns to Violet and Brick.*

EMILY: Hold all the elevators, and lock all the emergency doors on this floor! MOVE!

*Brick exits. Emily turns back to Cameron.*

EMILY: Is there even the slightest chance that Cody snuck past you into your party?

CAMERON: Sure, maybe.

GRIDSTATION: Especially when we started watching *kitten* videos.

CAMERON: I don't know what it is about kittens and Roombas.

GRIDSTATION: It's magic is what it is.

EMILY: I'm coming over there to look for him.

VIOLET: Oh now, that's absurd.

EMILY: Senator, may I remind you that your daughter is a potential accessory to a kidnapping?

*Annalise enters onto her balcony, to the dumbfounded stares of Emily and Violet.*

ANNALISE: What kidnapping?

EMILY: Where's Cody?

ANNALISE: I thought he was with you. I told him I wanted to break up with him, and he-

EMILY: *You never told him that!*

*Emily realizes her mistake. Annalise advances on her.*

ANNALISE: How would you know? You certainly wouldn't have installed an illegal wiretap on Cody's phone to eavesdrop on him constantly for the past six months, because, I mentioned illegal?

EMILY: Oh what are you - a lawyer?

ANNALISE: Yes, you brainwashed little ferret, I am a lawyer. And I want you *out of my face*. Which is separate from being a lawyer, those are just two things that are true right now.

EMILY: You think Gorvod cares if you're a lawyer? Gorvod will punish all of your incarnations in every last sphere if anything happens to Cody. You won't be a lawyer any more, you'll just be a cosmic painworm, and someday Cody and I will be reunited in the echelon of inverted magma and we'll be curled up together in an infinitely loving embrace for eons upon eons, because that's what Gorvod *planned for us!*

*She charges inside the house. Violet takes a moment with her daughter.*

VIOLET: Tell me you're all right. I was starting to panic.

ANNALISE: I'm fine.

VIOLET: What happened to Cody? No - I don't want to know, just tell me this much - is the campaign at risk?

ANNALISE; Why, because the church's pet TV star is missing? He's not the one running for office.

VIOLET: Lonso is not going to like this. And I'm not going to like being confronted by him in front of all our guests.

ANNALISE: That's politics, right? Another day at the office?

*Violet glares and goes into the condo. Brick sticks his head back out onto the balcony.*

BRICK: Any trouble getting back in through security?

ANNALISE: No, your team was very discrete. Thank you.

*He smiles and goes into the condo. Annalise goes to the railing to talk to Cameron and Gridstation quietly.*

CAMERON: No one noticed him before I got to him and took him upstairs. We found him a costume in my Burning Man closet. He can stay as long as it takes.

ANNALISE: Did you guys at least - his phone was on the network for at least a minute, was that helpful?

GRIDSTATION: I'll know very shortly. Nicely done, by the way.

ANNALISE: What did your friends say when I ran through your condo?

CAMERON: Only Sophie and Monica recognized you. I can handle them.

ANNALISE: Thank you. I can't even imagine - I mean, God, thank you, Cameron.

CAMERON: Cam. My friends all call me Cam.

ANNALISE: Thanks, Cam. I mean it.

*She exits. Cameron checks his watch.*

CAMERON: It's only 8:30. The party doesn't even start for another half an hour.

GRIDSTATION: This was just the prefunc? Cameron... what the fuck happens when you hit two million downloads?

*Lights fade to black. **End of Act One.***

## ACT TWO

### SCENE FIVE: 11pm

*Lights up. Annalise is alone, playing "Sparkle Dungeon" on her phone. On the other balcony, seated at the table are Gridstation and Cordelia, drinking whiskey and chit-chatting. Cordelia wears an elaborate Burner-informed Sparkle Costume with lots of blinky baubles. Gridstation has accepted a single blinking badge on the lapel of his jacket. Alone in a corner sits Cody in an outlandish disguise that does actually conceal his identity from the others: fake mustache, disco ball jacket, giant Viking helmet, quietly sipping a beer.*

*Monica enters, having changed into a subdued slinky Burning Man dress, ideally with some kind of slightly reflective fabric. She is carrying her portable DJ lights, which she drops onto the table.*

CORDELIA: Monica! You've changed your costume?

MONICA: I had creative differences with the squires. I was like, we gotta rehearse more, and they were like, fuck this, we gotta get drunk. I brought this dress along in case my paladin costume got too uncomfortable. It looks a little like the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism.

*Annalise perks up and blurts out:*

ANNALISE: Keeper of the Moonlight Prism?

*They turn and stare at her expectantly.*

ANNALISE: I just met her! I was stuck at the Black Light Gate, I didn't have enough glow sticks to pay the toll, but my Iridescent Hot Pants are so reflective that I bounced a kaleidoscope beam off my booty to signal for help, and the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism swept down from the sky with a whole camelbak full of glow sticks which she traded me for the hot pants, done deal, toll paid, and... anyway, yeah, you do look like a little like her. *She awkwardly goes back to the game.*

CORDELIA: Was the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism one of your creations, Sophie?

SOPHIE: No, the Prism Keepers were Cam's idea originally. I'd been very clear with him that the girls in the story couldn't all be glitter princesses and the boys couldn't all be knights in sparkling armor...

*Cody awkwardly attempts to enter the conversation.*

CODY: So does that mean... you made boy princesses?

*Sophie turns to him, bemused.*

SOPHIE: After five games set in the same Sparkle Realm, we pretty much hit every combination of gender, shiny and royalty you can think of.

CODY: Cool. I would totally play a boy princess.

*Whisper bursts onto Cameron's balcony, still in his original street clothes. Monica jumps up to hug him, Sophie next.*

WHISPER: Ah, here are my people!

MONICA: Oh my god, Whisper, you made it! I thought we would never see you again! Where's Gabby?

WHISPER: On my couch, glued to the game. I didn't want to miss the party, so I left her there.

MONICA: You left her playing a test build with all the cheat codes enabled?

WHISPER: Nope, she's on her own phone, playing the production build. It's funny, she didn't need the codes, so much as a really calm voice talking her through it. Keeping her heart rate down, helping her focus. Suddenly she figured out how to get into that zone without my help, and then she gave me back the test build. She wants to finish it herself.

SOPHIE: Good for her.

CORDELIA: Yes, clearly an important lesson was learned about a highly trivial subject.

*On Annalise's balcony, Violet enters.*

VIOLET: Got some bad news... one of the boys in the Daily Grind, the drummer I think, nearly got electrocuted at the concert tonight, some kind of freak cymbal accident. He's pretty shaken, sounds like we're only getting the other three. *Pause.* Why are you hiding out here alone?

ANNALISE: Everyone inside thinks I'm a criminal.

VIOLET: Not everyone.

ANNALISE: Maybe not you. I just don't get it. Cody's a grown man in full possession of his faculties. Who cares where he goes of his own volition?

VIOLET: So you *know* it was of his own volition?

ANNALISE: See, you *do* think I'm a criminal.

VIOLET: No, but sweetheart - Brick told me how his team snuck you back in through security when no one was paying attention.

ANNALISE: Who else knows?

VIOLET: No one else knows. *Pause.* Actually, it's possible everyone eavesdropping on that balcony over there knows now.

*The other balcony, which had indeed been almost frozen in its rapt attention to Violet and Annalise, suddenly bursts into rhubarb-rhubarb chatter with each other.*

VIOLET: Lonso is pressing Chief Hartwell to question you about Cody's disappearance. Hartwell says not until Cody's officially declared missing. Lonso brought the Mayor over to try to convince him.

ANNALISE: Lonso's plotting against your daughter at your own fundraiser? Classy.

VIOLET: Unless I'm missing something, you're not guilty of any crime. Maybe you should talk to them.

ANNALISE: Mom, no. Forget it. I mean, if the guy could grow a handlebar mustache, he'd be twirling it constantly.

VIOLET: You'll have to face him. We're having cocktails on the balcony soon.

ANNALISE: But you'll be there when it happens, right?

VIOLET: For all the good it will do - yes. And - I'm sorry Cody ran away from your dinner.

*She exits.*

*On the other balcony, Cameron finally enters in costume: he is wearing a shiny gold suit jacket like a Vegas entertainer and an elaborate king's crown with LEDs instead of jewels. His royal scepter glows from the handle to the shiny bauble at the end. A round of applause goes up. Cameron is a bit tipsy but in a good mood.*

CAMERON: Loyal citizens, thank you all for joining me here this fine evening!

CORDELIA: And who are you supposed to be?

CAMERON: I am the Once and Future Gleaming King of the Sparkle Realm and All Its Glamourous Provinces; Protector of Shine, Blink, and Glow; Guardian of Prism, Crystal and Diamond; and Master Commander...

*Everyone on his balcony joins him shouting this last bit in unison:*

ALL: ...of the Glittering Monks of Weaponized Psytrance!

*Another cheer goes up.*

CORDELIA: So we're teaching the children about modesty with this character.

GRIDMASTER: And monarchy by divine right.

CAMERON: I propose a toast! *All raise glasses.* Here's to us, the Elite Adventurers of the Diamond Brigade, Sworn Protectors of the Sparkle Realm. May the crystalline lattice that brings us together never shatter.

*A toast.*

CORDELIA: What's next for the Realm? Give us a preview of "Sparkle Dungeon 6"!

MONICA: Cam's not in the mood to talk shop tonight.

WHISPER: This whole party's *about* shop, isn't it?

CORDELIA: Cam, don't be ridiculous. Just a few hints.

SOPHIE: We can go inside if you want.

CAMERON: No... it's cool. I'm feeling pretty inspired seeing all the costumes tonight. It's like a little recharge. Let's hear a sneak preview.

*Monica gets her phone out of her purse as Sophie begins narrating dramatically.*

SOPHIE: In "Sparkle Dungeon 6," you play the Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands. She starts the game desperate, miserable, lost... but somehow she never gave up hope, and finally, she finds a weakness in the alchemy that trapped her there for so long.

WHISPER *looking at Monica's phone*: That's her? She's unrecognizable.

SOPHIE: She emerges into the world, and finds... she's been gone for five thousand years.

MONICA: The realm is way past medieval now. Rockets travel between stars. The kingdom is now an alliance of planets. And she realizes that something is terribly wrong.

WHISPER: Is it supposed to be gray scale like this?

MONICA: Yes it is, Whisper. Because there's no sparkle anywhere. It's completely missing from reality. We are approaching...

MONICA & SOPHIE: ...the sparkle death of the universe!

SOPHIE: Unless the Dauphine finds a way to bring the sparkle back.

MONICA: If she *can* bring it back, because of course they'll try to stop her.

CAMERON: Who will try to stop her? Who would want this? Wouldn't they immediately recognize that she's still actively sparkling the minute she steps out of the Shimmer Lands? Is she like a beacon of hope in this future world, or like a hopeless paladin on a doomed quest? Why didn't the royal family do something to save the realm from sparkleocalypse? How did this ever happen to the realm in the first place? *Pause*. What happened to all the sparkle, you guys?

SOPHIE: And that's the end of our preview.

CAMERON: Oh come on!

CORDELIA: Bravo, ladies! I'm sure your legions of adoring fans will understand everything you just said even if I had no clue whatsoever. Comrades - for tonight's featured entertainment, your Sparkle King did

commission an epic performance piece from me, with the strict instruction that I should surprise him with its form and content. Join me in the main hall to see what wonders are in store!

*A cheer, and folks rise to start slowly heading into the condo. Sophie waits behind as Cameron turns to Annalise.*

CAMERON: You're welcome to join us.

ANNALISE: If I disappear off this balcony again, the shitstorm will be epic. I mean, I want to, I really want to - you understand that, right? Because - I wasn't completely honest earlier. I do love your game. Like, I would have paid you a dollar *fifty* for that game.

CAMERON: Well, it's for the best. You don't want to get any spoilers from Cordelia.

ANNALISE: Maybe I do. I really wanna know how it ends. I almost looked it up on SparkleWiki.

CAMERON: We go into SparkleWiki a few times a week and make shit up so it's never really accurate. You should just finish playing it.

SOPHIE: Although if you ask nicely, he might give you the cheat codes.

*Cam turns to Sophie, and Annalise drifts off back to playing the game.*

SOPHIE: Looked like your brain was firing up there a little. Ironically - I'm getting used to the idea of developing this story on my own if I have to. The Dauphine is my avatar - guess it makes sense.

CAMERON: I always secretly wished the Dauphine was *my* avatar. And she was sad because - the Sparkle King sent her away.

SOPHIE: And I'm the Sparkle King?

CAMERON: Seems like you're in control of the realm to me.

*He exits. Sophie sits down at the table. When Cody speaks, she is startled - she forgot he was there.*

CODY: Man, you people are fucking amazing. It's like you have 100% of the emotions and you know exactly what to do with them. I have been acting *completely wrong*. I mean, in theory, if I did any acting.

SOPHIE: You're Cody Charles.

*Sophie scoots her chair closer to talk quietly with him.*

SOPHIE: Does Cameron know you're here?

CODY: I'm wearing his Viking helmet. I can't leave his condo until my high priest flies back to Los Angeles.

SOPHIE: Why don't you just quit your church?

CODY: Nobody quits. You can *run*... but the church runs after you. Emily sends my call sheets to Lonso and the two of them trade off making sure I don't run. But I think I have a plan - I need to make myself a complete embarrassment to the church so that they actually throw me out.

SOPHIE: Any ideas?

CODY: I think I need to make a super hot sex tape and put it on the Internet. You want to? I don't even have to show your face - they just need to see it's me, taking carnal pleasure without Gorvod's blessing, and they'll go ballistic.

SOPHIE: I'll pass. But if I think of a good candidate, I'll send them your way.

CODY: Tell 'em to look for the guy in the Viking helmet. And bring a video camera. And condoms. And I could use a snack actually, I didn't really finish dinner...

*On the other balcony, Annalise frantically waves at Sophie and Cody to shut up; Cody slumps in his seat with his sombrero pulled down over his face. Sophie pretends to be doing something on her phone. Violet enters.*

VIOLET: It's time for cocktails.

*Several people enter in high spirits: MAYOR JEFF WOODS, obsequious local politician; TAD GARRISON, young technology CEO in a bland Polo shirt and blue jeans; and CHIEF LEE HARTWELL, in police dress uniform. Violet leads the Mayor to her.*

VIOLET: This is Mayor Jeff Woods, he's been stumping for us locally. Jeff, this is my daughter Annalise.

MAYOR: I believe we spoke on the phone when you were looking for condos.

ANNALISE: That was my assistant, actually.

MAYOR: Oh, well it was probably my assistant, too.

VIOLET: The Mayor joined the church about a year ago.

ANNALISE: Whatever happened to the separation of Gorvod and state?

MAYOR: Is that a real thing? I didn't see it in the pamphlets.

*Tad Garrison slides up next, brushing past the Mayor, full of rich nerd confidence, shakes Annalise's hand.*

TAD: Annalise, I've been waiting all night to meet you. I'm Tad Garrison.

ANNALISE: Sorry to keep you waiting so long.

VIOLET: Tad's one of our biggest supporters from the technology sector. He was CEO of his own software company at 23.

TAD: So you're the woman who scared off a famous TV star.

ANNALISE: Yeah, that's me I guess.

TAD: You don't seem so scary.

ANNALISE: Thanks, that means a lot. What software does your company make?

TAD: Lifestyle apps mostly. Our big one is BlankChat. It's a productivity tool. Turns your phone into a brick for 24 hours at a time. You can't even turn it on. The premium version works for a week at a time. It keeps you from wasting your life on social networks, or playing silly games all the time. Senator, I haven't seen you using your phone tonight. Running the app?

VIOLET: My whole legislative staff is running it. I think we're setting a good example - when we introduce the bill next week, we should already have interest.

TAD *to Annalise*: The Senator is sponsoring a bill to get BlankChat distributed to the entire state government. Some of the devices the workers use are so old they can't run the app, so my company has agreed to donate tens of thousands of smartphones.

ANNALISE: So that you can shut them all off.

TAD: We have a desktop version too, of course. You may not realize this - people waste much more time on their computers than on their phones because the screens are so much bigger.

ANNALISE: What if it's an emergency?

TAD: Dialing 911 in short ten second bursts once every five minutes is included with the premium subscription. I'd be happy to set you up with a comp account if you're interested.

ANNALISE: Yeah, I'm super interested in not being able to communicate with you in the future.

TAD: Great, you'll receive a coupon code on a parchment scroll in the mail. Handwritten by our CTO.

*Tad fades back as Violet introduces the Chief, a stern man who does not smile at Annalise.*

VIOLET: Chief Hartwell, this is my daughter Annalise.

CHIEF: I've heard a lot about you tonight, Ms. Parker.

ANNALISE: Well, I'm - sorry about all the commotion.

CHIEF: Mostly from Lonso Drake. But the Senator knows I don't share her high opinion of that man.

VIOLET: I've made it clear how hard you've been working on this campaign.

CHIEF: Oh yes, I have no doubts about your skills as a campaign manager.

ANNALISE: What doubts *do* you have?

CHIEF: You were on a date with Lonso's latest poster boy. This raises certain doubts. But I'm well aware I've only heard Lonso's version of what happened here tonight. I'm in no rush to interrogate you based on that.

ANNALISE: Thank you, sir. As a lawyer, I appreciate your professional courtesy.

CHIEF: You're welcome. As a police officer, I'm mostly just avoiding paperwork.

*The Chief heads off to the bar.*

*A new figure emerges onto the balcony: CYNTHIA CARSON, eccentric CEO, wearing a strange helmet on her head that looks like a combination of Google Glass and a steampunk torture device, with several small pistons that randomly light up and chug up and down, and little implants that connect to her skin in weird places. She wears a sleek futuristic jump suit underneath a stylish skirt and sleeveless top. Her gloves are rubber-palmed and strapped to both arms are little computers with small screens. The Chief offers to help her navigate and she smacks his hand away as she slowly and gingerly steps toward Annalise and Violet.*

CYNTHIA: Finally - the senator and her daughter, a perfect opportunity for some candid photos. Both of you, stand up taller, smile at each other, freeze, don't say anything, ok now put your hand on her shoulder Violet, that's it, perfect.

VIOLET: Cynthia, this is my daughter Annalise. This is Cynthia Carson, CEO of Wearable Fashion Technologies.

CYNTHIA *as they shake hands*: The biometric data I just got from your handshake tells me that you're starting to lose your buzz, am I right?

TAD: I was about to help myself to a drink. Could I get you one?

ANNALISE: You could definitely do that.

CYNTHIA: You could get me one too, Mr. Garrison.

TAD: How would you even drink it? That helmet is like a chastity girdle for your face.

CYNTHIA: In your presence - I'm counting myself lucky.

*Tad smiles & drifts off to the bar.*

ANNALISE: It does seem a little - bulky?

CYNTHIA: The environmental sensors in my clothing are powered by the steam engine in this helmet.

ANNALISE: But - batteries?

CYNTHIA: Yesterday's fashion. Besides, no one wants their head tethered to a charging station several times a day.

ANNALISE: But - you could take the helmet off to charge it?

CYNTHIA: And how exactly would you live tweet with your eyeballs if the helmet is on the table?

VIOLET: Now Cynthia...

CYNTHIA: Oh all right - I'm just playing, Annalise, this is an art project from my college days. I use it in schools to get kids excited about wearable computing, but it's really just a silly old thing. Although I do use it for eyeball tweeting. That's my new passion.

VIOLET: Cynthia and I are working on equipping computer labs in the state with her company's technology.

CYNTHIA: Remember how we used to teach kids to type on typewriters? It's the same with any revolutionary input device. We need to start kids early so they can live tweet with their eyeballs just as well as the Japanese.

ANNALISE: I didn't realize the Japanese had a head start in this area.

CYNTHIA: That's the problem, everyone thinks the Japanese only care about building giant fighting robots, but Japanese babies are already eyeball tweeting from the crib. *Noticing something in her helmet:* Oh look - the pictures I took of the two of you are already circulating. That was fast, even for me. Who retweeted them - ohhhh, of course - it was Lonso Drake.

*And finally we notice Lonso standing in the door, bemused, watching the scene, looking both impeccable and sleazy.*

LONSO: Yes, I forwarded those pictures under the hashtag "WheresCody." It's been trending ever since we asked our followers to be on the lookout for Cody Charles.

*Lonso crosses to Annalise, pushing past Violet.*

LONSO: Good evening, Annalise, I hope you're well.

ANNALISE: I was until just now. What do you want?

VIOLET: Annalise, you need to listen to what Lonso has to say. It concerns the campaign.

ANNALISE: Mom, it can *wait*. Your guests-

LONSO: -are all supporters of the campaign, just like me. They deserve to know what's happening as a result of Cody's disappearance.

*Annalise looks around at the others - all of whom stare back, frozen. Cynthia takes her helmet off.*

CYNTHIA: Eyeball tweeting is temporarily on hold.

VIOLET: There are still people on the balcony next door.

SOPHIE *waves meekly*: It's just Sophie - getting some fresh air.

CODY *in a fake high pitched voice*: And I'm Carl!

ANNALISE: Hi Carl. I haven't run across your character in the game yet.

CODY: I'm not in costume! I just like wearing a sombrero!

CYNTHIA: That's quite a dress you're wearing, Sophie. Turn it on - I'm sure it does something clever.

SOPHIE: It doesn't work - the electronics shorted out.

CYNTHIA: If I fix it, will it do something clever?

SOPHIE: It will light up and look pretty.

CYNTHIA: That's clever enough for me. I bet I can help.

VIOLET: Ask your friends to step inside, Annalise.

CHIEF: They're on private property, Violet. You want this private, we go back inside your place.

ANNALISE: No, I don't want it private. I want it *over*. Hit me, Lonso. I can take it.

LONSO: I imagine you're feeling very smug knowing that we cannot find any avenue to bring you to a criminal trial. But the church has other weapons in its arsenal. Tomorrow, the High Priesthood of Gorvod will be filing civil claims against you in Los Angeles.

ANNALISE: For what?

LONSO: You conspired to separate Cody from his trusted advisors - then, you somehow convinced Cody to skip the flight that would get him to set on time. Production of Cody's show will grind to a halt tomorrow, costing the producers a series of financial penalties. Cody's contract penalizes him severely as a result.

ANNALISE: What does that have to do with the church?

LONSO: Cody signed a binding agreement to donate 75% of his income to the Los Angeles branch of the High Priesthood of Gorvod. Losing his income even for just a few days is materially detrimental to us, and we'll be seeking damages against you due to the scope of your involvement in this incident. Cody's producers are joining the High Priesthood of Gorvod on this claim. And that's not the end of it. Violet?

ANNALISE: Mom?

VIOLET: I got the campaign's attorney out of bed and talked him through the situation. There's... significant risk that if they can't recover damages from you personally, they could go after the campaign's funds. Cody

went missing at a campaign fundraiser after all. But that'll have to get hashed out in court, or in arbitration, which will cost the campaign time and money that could be better spent.

LONSO: Annalise, it pains me to set these claims in motion against you, but I really have no choice. The church is sworn to protect all those who bow to Gorvod in his tentacled majesty. But you have one very simple choice that could make all this go away. Tell me where Cody is.

ANNALISE: Have you ever considered growing a handlebar mustache?

LONSO: *WHERE'S CODY?*

*Cody abruptly leaps to his feet and throws the sombrero down to the ground.*

CODY: I'm right here, for fuck's sake.

LONSO: Thank Gorvod!

CODY: Buddy, you don't wanna hear the list of things Gorvod can suck right now. Sophie, get Cameron.

*Sophie runs into the condo.*

LONSO: Hurry, Cody, if we leave now, we can have you on set by noon!

CODY: I'm not leaving this balcony until two things happen. One. I want you to contact whoever you need to contact to make sure none of those claims are filed against Annalise. I'm solely responsible for every single thing everyone's pissed off about, and I will testify to that effect if necessary.

*Lonso fumbles with his phone.*

LONSO: I've sent a text. I'll let you know when I receive a response.

*Cameron and Gridstation appear on the balcony, carrying a large projector between them. They start setting it up on the table and connecting it to Gridstation's tablet while Cody continues talking.*

CODY: Two. It's my understanding that the Daily Grind will be appearing on that balcony at midnight, which is- *Glances at wrist.* I do not wear a watch! It does not matter! I am not leaving this balcony until I have seen the Daily Grind performing live here tonight.

LONSO: Violet, are they on schedule?

VIOLET: Brick says they're running an hour late. Oh, there's only two now, the guitar player was hospitalized after a stage diving accident.

CYNTHIA: How could anyone drop a member of the Daily Grind?

VIOLET: The concert was over when he dove off the stage.

CAMERON: Cody, the projector is warming up.

CODY: Thank you, Cameron. Now listen, Annalise, I know we'll never get to spend that weekend together catching you up on all of my achievements in television. But I do know that we've got an hour to spend before the Daily Grind gets here. And that's just enough time to watch the pilot episode of "The Quicksand Adventures." How does that sound?

ANNALISE: Horrible?

CODY: Perfect, just relax and get comfy. Lonso! Get the lady some cushions.

*Lonso dashes inside the condo. Tad delivers a drink to Annalise.*

TAD: Seems like you could use this?

*She nods, slams it, hands back the empty glass.*

TAD: I'm going to make sure you keep getting these for a while.

ANNALISE: I can tell we're gonna be friends when this is all over.

*Tad heads back to the bar.*

*Sophie appears in the doorway of Cam's condo and waves Cody over. Whisper sheepishly emerges from the kitchen.*

SOPHIE: I believe my friend meets your requirements, provided you can work with him?

CODY: Yeah, this is good. What's your name, kid?

WHISPER: Whisper. I have every one of your action figures.

CODY: So do I.

*Cody exits dragging Whisper behind him. Sophie steps onto the balcony. On the other balcony, Lonso hurriedly enters with multiple cushions for Annalise. She ignores him and remains standing, drifting toward Cameron's balcony.*

LONSO: Wait - *where is Cody?* Did he escape again?

SOPHIE: Cody's in the bathroom. Could be a while.

*The Mayor seems amazed at the projection system.*

MAYOR: So what exactly are you doing there?

CAMERON: We're going to project video onto the wall of that building, and pipe the audio via Bluetooth to my patio speaker.

CHIEF: I'm assuming you have a permit for this activity.

CAMERON: Totally.

LONSO: Let's see it.

CAMERON: You're not the boss of me.

LONSO: Chief Hartwell, don't you want to see his permit?

CHIEF: Until someone calls and complains, I don't need to see it.

LONSO: What if I'm the one who calls and complains?

CHIEF: You'd send uniformed officers to the Senator's fundraiser? Sir, please think of the tweets.

MAYOR: So what television program is this?

CAMERON: Some show about quicksand, right?

GRIDSTATION: Should be, I'll turn up the volume.

*The volume increases and we start to hear dialogue and music from the show.*

PROFESSOR: I don't understand - what's happened here?

CODY: They've taken Cassandra - her jewelry - her groceries - even her Pride And Prejudice DVD.

PROFESSOR: The BBC version?

CODY: *I HAVE NO IDEA!*

SHEILA: But where, Mac? Where have they taken her?

CODY: They've taken her into the quicksand. And the only person who can go in after her... is me. Unless someone else wants to go in there instead. Like with a rope? Anyone? It's not that hard. Fine, I'll go.

GRIDSTATION: On second thought, I'm turning the volume back down.

CAMERON: Annalise, he wanted you to see this, do you actually-

ANNALISE: No, it's killing me inside.

MAYOR: I could send someone to get my History Channel box sets. Who wants to learn about ancient Sumerian trade routes?

*The Chief grabs a bottle from the bar.*

CHIEF: Senator, I've seen all I need to see on this balcony tonight. If any of you'd care to join me, I'll be nursing this bottle inside until I'm sure my wife's asleep and then I'll call for my car.

CYNTHIA: I'll join you for a bit, I need to find my repair kit for Sophie's dress. Oh and I want to see what

happens if I use bourbon instead of water in my steam helmet.

*They go inside. Tad delivers another drink to Annalise.*

ANNALISE: What took you so long?

TAD: Just trying to pace things a little. I think your mother is upset that I'm getting you drunk.

ANNALISE: You're already trying to impress my mother? You move fast.

CAMERON: Hey Gridstation, did you hear about those videos that leaked onto YouTube yesterday about the High Priesthood of Gorvod?

LONSO: What?

ANNALISE: What? *She makes eye contact with Cameron, who smiles and plays dumb.*

GRIDSTATION: Why no, my good man, please enlighten me with tantalizing details!

CAMERON: Someone uploaded a completely dorky promotional video for the church starring our good friend Cody Charles!

ANNALISE: "Someone"?

LONSO: That video is *not* for the general public! It's strictly for internal church use!

ANNALISE: Send YouTube a takedown notice and then shut the fuck up.

*All eyes are on the screen across the street. Horrible new age music comes up, then narration:*

CODY: Greetings in the name of Gorvod. My name is Cody Charles. I'm here to tell you why I dedicated my life to the worship of Gorvod and his unknowable minions, who... must be sufficiently knowable that we can talk about them using words, but... not sufficiently knowable that we can differentiate individual minions from each other, so they're... I guess they're unknowable meaning un-countable... with... Earth... math...

LONSO: You're violating the church's copyright claim to this video by displaying it for the entire city to see!

ANNALISE: Does Cody's agent know you used him in a promotional video that you distributed across the country? Because unless you paid him Screen Actors' Guild minimum daily rates, Cody could get thrown out of the union for this, at which point, 75% of an out of work actor's wages is what now? *Pause.* C'mon, somebody ask me if I'm a lawyer. Do it, ask me.

MAYOR: Now this "Gorvod"... that name sounded familiar. Where have I heard that name before?

LONSO: At *church*. Where you *worship him!*

MAYOR: I guess it just sounded a little strange out of context. The word "elbow" is like that for me too

sometimes.

CAMERON: "Someone" also leaked a whole series of instructional videos starring the one and only Lonso Drake. Apparently they contain the innermost secrets of the church.

ANNALISE: "Someone" is pretty ambitious. I like that about "someone."

LONSO: Where did you get these?

CAMERON: I have a Google Alert for "things that embarrass Lonso Drake."

LONSO: Impossible - only fifteen people in the entire church can afford those videos!

GRIDSTATION: Is that before or after you take 75% of a person's income?

CAMERON: It's like when you get a tote bag with your magazine subscription.

LONSO: Don't you understand how dangerous those videos are? They're only meant for candidates who have aether-screened at ninety-nine pulsaric flash points while consuming the powdered tentacle of Gorvod's long lost lover Clarissa!

*We hear more new age music, and the dulcet tones of Lonso Drake.*

LONSO: Greetings in the name of Gorvod. If you're seeing this instructional video, you have reached a very distinctive and powerful level within the High Priesthood of Gorvod.

CAMERON: Or you're looking at a building.

LONSO: In this video, we'll show you how to use your newly attained mastery over your mind, body, and soul chambers to manifest exciting new powers in your life. You'll never lose an argument with a member of the animal kingdom again. You'll always find a good magazine to read while waiting at the doctor's office. Your remote control will always be right where you remember carefully placing it, as long as you do actually place it somewhere carefully so that you can remember it later. Sound too good to be true? It's actually too *Gorvod* to be true. *He laughs.*

*Cody emerges onto the balcony, eyes wide, hair wildly unkempt.*

CODY: Sophie, I owe you big.

SOPHIE: Maybe you could voice a character in my new game.

CODY: Acting without pants? I'm in.

*Whisper emerges; he high fives Sophie, then he chills in the background with her. Cody confers quietly with Cameron and Gridstation.*

CODY: Gentlemen, I have the nuclear option locked and loaded.

CAMERON: What's the nuclear option?

CODY: I made a sex tape with your friend Whisper so I could get kicked out of the church.

CAMERON: Oh, well. I - how was that?

CODY: The lighting was terrible and we didn't get all the close ups I wanted but I think the narrative is clear. Can we show it?

CAMERON: I'm pretty sure we shouldn't project a sex tape onto the side of a public building.

CODY: That's it, I'm out of ideas!

CAMERON: You could try showing it to him on a phone. Pretty sure the rest of us don't need to see it.

CODY: Brilliant. Wait - I destroyed my phone - dammit! Wait - then how did we film it - Whisper! Gimme your phone!

*Whisper hands Cody his smartphone. Cody swaggers toward Lonso at the railing.*

CODY: Lonso, I want out of the church, or I'm posting this video to the YouTube. It's called "The Passion of Gorvod."

*He hands the phone to Lonso, who watches the video almost too impassively. Finally, he hands the phone back.*

LONSO: You realize the church will be forced to banish you if this video is made public.

CODY: Yes!

LONSO: You must also realize that the church will still be entitled to 75% of your wages in perpetuity.

CODY: No!

LONSO: I believe the contract term specifies three billion years, actually. You'll only be harming yourself if you publish that video. You're already facing punishment if the church determines those leaked instructional videos came from your phone.

*Lonso's phone buzzes - he checks the text message.*

LONSO: Our attorney texted me back. The claims against Annalise will not be filed tomorrow. Would you like to see the message for yourself?

*He offers his phone to Cody. Cody takes it and reads it.*

GRIDSTATION: Cody, would you mind if I took a look too?

CODY: Sure.

LONSO: What?

*Cody hands Lonso's phone to Gridstation, who smoothly connects it to his tablet, punches a few keys.*

LONSO: Give me that back! Whatever you're doing, it's illegal!

ANNALISE: Oh, what are you, a lawyer? *To Cam:* See what I did there?

CAMERON: That was nice.

LONSO: I demand an explanation!

GRIDSTATION: The data on your phone was just transferred to one of my servers.

*Gridstation unplugs the phone, hands it over the railing to Lonso.*

GRIDSTATION: If I don't send my password to the server within the next 24 hours, it will forward that data to Wikileaks for publication, and to my friends in the Hacker Underground, who will tear it apart to find a way into the church's private network. I imagine you'll be facing punishment when the church learns all that leaked data came from *your* phone.

*Lonso realizes he's defeated.*

LONSO: What do you want?

GRIDSTATION: I want you to release Cody from his contract with the church. I want Annalise to confirm it. When she does, I'll send my password to the server.

LONSO: And what do you think happens after that? The church will bury you for this.

GRIDSTATION: Maybe. But that server expects my password once a day, *every* day. So the church better think twice before it tries to separate me from a keyboard for too long.

*Lonso turns and exits without a word, the Mayor following him closely behind.*

VIOLET: Young man, you took a hell of a risk committing a crime in front of a state senator.

CODY: But it was worth it. You got my life back!

VIOLET *to Annalise*: That's what this whole spectacle was about? Embarrassing Lonso so that your TV star boyfriend can live happily after?

ANNALISE: It was about showing you what Lonso is really like. I'm sorry - I didn't really plan any of this.

VIOLET: Obviously. But that's what I was counting on you for. Planning things down to the minute and keeping all of our supporters *happy*. Lonso did not look happy.

ANNALISE: I'm not happy either.

VIOLET: No one is happy tonight, there I said it! But *you* can always run back to Los Angeles when this is over. Meanwhile - I'll be *finished* if Lonso pulls the church's support.

ANNALISE: Then go talk to him. Hurry. *As Violet turns to go:* But I'm getting really god damn sick of pulling a paycheck from Gorvod.

*Violet storms off into the house. Gridstation turns to Cameron, shakes his hand.*

CODY: I think she was wrong actually. I'm pretty happy tonight!

GRIDSTATION: My work here is finished.

CAMERON: I watched you fumbling around, what were you trying to hide?

GRIDSTATION: I had the wrong data cable.

CAMERON: So you actually got nothing.

GRIDSTATION: I did swap out his SIM card.

ANNALISE: Felony.

GRIDSTATION: I did not swap out his SIM card.

*Gridstation exits. Cody jumps over to the other balcony. He smiles, crosses to Annalise, takes her hands, and they smile awkwardly at each other. After a long beat:*

CODY: Reunited at last.

ANNALISE: I'm breaking up with you, Cody. You were better off when I was just your lawyer.

CODY: Saw that coming. Is it because I ditched you for six months to be with Lonso?

ANNALISE: Yeah. I can't think of you now without thinking of Lonso, and that's, basically, horrible, so.

CODY: Is that the only reason?

ANNALISE: No, also - I can't be with someone who could get suckered into worshipping Gorvod in the first place. I mean, seriously, *Gorvod?*

CODY: Hate the church, Annalise, but don't hate the billion-tentacled 12-dimensional lord of all waveforms. He's touched me, you know. Or maybe it was one of the acolytes, I'm not sure. Anyway, anything else on your big list of reasons for dumping Cody?

ANNALISE: Pretty sure you slept with a guy you just met.

CODY: Yeah, you wanna see the video?

ANNALISE: Absolutely not.

CODY: Fair enough. *Long pause.* Anything else?

ANNALISE: Yeah - you're really terrible in that quicksand show.

WHISPER: You shut your mouth!

*Cody signals for Whisper to back off, takes a long look at Annalise.*

CODY: You're a hard woman to please, Annalise Parker. Which I guess is somebody else's problem now.

*Cody jumps back across, and sits down at the table with Whisper. Cynthia enters and catches Sophie's attention.*

CYNTHIA: All right, Sophie, let me see the battery pack.

*Sophie leans on the railing, far upstage, with her back to Cynthia, who leans across and finds a pack with a circuitboard & batteries inside.*

SOPHIE: Would it be easier to troubleshoot if I took the dress off?

CYNTHIA: I think that would be distracting, sweetheart, but thank you.

SOPHIE: I meant-

CYNTHIA: Now what exactly is the problem here?

SOPHIE: Um - it doesn't work?

CYNTHIA: Hmm, yes, a common problem in my field. Just hush and let me concentrate.

*Sophie suddenly jumps, startled by a light shock.*

CYNTHIA: And don't shimmy around while I'm taking the battery pack apart.

*Annalise crosses to the railing and catches Cameron's attention. He empties the bottle of scotch into a glass for her. She slugs it - she's serious.*

CAMERON: Did you beat the game yet?

ANNALISE: Sorry, I've been a little busy with things, and stuff.

CAMERON: How far'd you get?

ANNALISE: I met the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism.

CAMERON: Wow, you're getting close to the end.

ANNALISE: What happens at the end?

CAMERON: You get an upsell message for "Sparkle Dungeon 2."

ANNALISE: Genius. How did you come up with five whole games of this stuff?

CAMERON: I would say "mushrooms" but I hear you're a lawyer.

ANNALISE: Cameron, I wasn't born a lawyer.

CAMERON: Oh, well did you ever take mushrooms-

ANNALISE: No, I've never taken mushrooms!

CAMERON: Anyway - I started writing "Sparkle Dungeon" for my cousin, just so I'd have something to talk to him about. He lost his dad and we took him in for a while... I guess my antique Atari console wasn't cool enough for him. I just started prototyping the craziest stuff, and I'd go, "Marty, c'mere - what's this?" And he'd go, "It's a catapult, duh." And I'd go, "Nope - it's a *sparklepult*." And then it would launch a burst of sparkle into the air and his eyes would light up and he'd actually smile for a split second before he had to start moping again. The whole first few levels were just me trying to make Marty smile for a split second at a time, until we were stringing together whole minutes in a row where he had his groove back. Marty still playtests all our games. His notes are either: "That was awesome" or "that was bullshit." But he's in school and he wants to code and that's probably the best thing that ever came out of the Sparkle Realm. *Pause*. You're so close. You should try to finish.

ANNALISE: I'm stuck. There's supposedly one more quest but I can't figure out where it starts.

CAMERON: Do you want a hint?

ANNALISE: No. Yes. No - no spoilers. Yes - give me a hint. Do it right now.

CAMERON: Right now? Cuz I could give you a hint later, like tomorrow-

ANNALISE: Now, Cameron.

CAMERON: You traded your iridescent hot pants to the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism.

ANNALISE: I did, for glow sticks.

CAMERON: So you're just running around without pants now?

ANNALISE: Of course not, she gave me her Utilikilt to wear.

CAMERON: Which has pockets.

*Annalise's eyes grow wide.*

ANNALISE *whispers*: Is there a clue in my pockets?

CAMERON *whispers*: There's a clue in your pockets.

ANNALISE: Oh my god.

*She pulls her phone out, dashes off to the opposite corner to resume playing. Tad comes up behind her, sees her playing.*

TAD: Is that - are you actually playing "Sparkle Dungeon"?

ANNALISE: You should know, Tad. I'm addicted.

TAD: You can't be serious. Senator Parker's daughter is a "Sparkle Dungeon" addict?

ANNALISE: Have you ever tried it?

TAD: Of course not. BlankChat is running unlocked on all my devices - I haven't used a phone for the last four years.

ANNALISE: Then you haven't seen the effects of a Kaleidoscope Cannon? Check this out-

TAD: I don't need to "check that out." I didn't get to be the most productive CEO in Silicon Valley by wasting time on *phones* or *computers*. I guess the honeymoon is over.

ANNALISE: What honeymoon? I didn't even get a hundred page marriage proposal out of you.

TAD: I'll say good night to your mother on my way out.

*As he goes, Annalise shouts over her shoulder:*

ANNALISE: You should say good night to Cameron Kelly on your way out too. Cameron - meet Tad Garrison.

CAMERON: Oh hey! You're the BlankChat guy! *Offers to shake Tad's hand.* I'm the Sparkle Dungeon guy!

TAD: You should be ashamed of yourself.

CAMERON: I totally am, although I have no idea what you're referring to specifically-

TAD: Do you know how many productive hours have been wasted on your game?

CAMERON: I have a rough idea-

TAD: *Countless* productive hours-

CAMERON: No, they're countable, we log session times back to the server-

TAD: -*squandered* on playing a meaningless game instead of producing value. How do you do it?

CAMERON: You mean like - what programming language do I use?

TAD: We feature your game as a case study on our marketing site - the perils of "Sparkle Dungeon" addiction.

CAMERON: Probably not too many case studies on BlankChat addiction, though.

TAD: You can't be addicted to *productivity!*

CAMERON: You know what I'm addicted to? Real time dashboards showing me our download count.

TAD: I get annual reports via mimeograph.

ANNALISE: Tad, remember the part about you saying good night to my mother on your way out?

TAD: I can't believe you said we'd be friends when this was all over.

ANNALISE: An addict will say anything to kill another baby rainbow.

*Tad exits in a huff, passing Brick as he enters.*

BRICK: I'm sorry everyone - there's been a tragic accident - the tour bus carrying the bass player for the Daily Grind just drove off a cliff. I'm not sure where there's a cliff in the middle of Albany, I should have asked maybe. Anyway, he's been choppered upstate for medical treatment. But their lead singer Jordon Connolly is almost here! So that'll still be fun. Oh, and Cody - there's someone here to see you.

*A distraught Emily March enters from behind Brick.*

EMILY: Cody, I can't believe this - you're leaving the church? For real?

CODY: Emily, what are you doing here?

EMILY: I'm your fucking *assistant*, at least I was until you left the church - what do you think is going to happen to me now?

CODY: You'll assist someone else?

EMILY: No. The church will never trust me again. *I'm* the one who let you escape in the first place. They're sending me to a rehabilitation camp in Colorado. Minimum two year program - those camps are for losers and sociopaths, not someone who is *two levels away* from ascending to the thirtieth waveform!

CODY: Then just don't go.

EMILY: "Don't go", that's your advice? That's the same as saying, don't ascend to the thirtieth waveform!

CODY: I'm telling you, Emily - they don't watch you around the clock the way they watched me. You don't have to do what they tell you.

EMILY: You think I got to be your assistant because they picked my name out of a hat? Cody, I was *raised* in the church. My mother was a missionary in Europe, my father still leads a branch in Argentina. Unlike you, I actually *believe in Gorvod*.

*Suddenly the projector goes dark - and indeed, we realize that all of the power on Cameron's balcony has gone out, light from the kitchen goes dark, etc.*

CODY: Gorvod, was that *you*?

CYNTHIA: Cameron, I think you just blew a fuse.

EMILY: No. That's Lonso. He's been fuming for the last two hours because you wouldn't stop projecting those videos of him. He made the Mayor track down the building superintendent and get him to shut off the juice to your condo.

ANNALISE: Where was Chief Hartwell when this was happening?

BRICK: Passed out from too much bourbon. He's sound asleep. I tested this by kicking his leg a few times. I think, twenty-eight.

*Brick gets a text.*

BRICK: Jordon Connolly is arriving.

*Then from the street below, we hear a speeding car pull up from a distance and screech to a halt below them.*

BRICK: I'll bring her up. *He exits.*

CAMERON: This is just a temporary setback, people.

CYNTHIA: I could hook up your projector to my steam helmet. But then your projector would be coated in aerosolized bourbon.

SOPHIE: Wait, is my dress going to be covered in aerosolized bourbon?

CYNTHIA: Hard for me to say.

SOPHIE: You don't know?

CYNTHIA: No, it's hard for me to say, because I can't feel my lips or most of my face.

ANNALISE: We can run extension cords into my condo to get you going again over there. The caterers

might have some.

CAMERON *to Whisper*: I have a bin of extension cords in my Burning Man storage unit under the loft.

WHISPER: I do too! My storage unit's in Green Island though. Cheaper than Albany.

CAMERON: Clearly what I should have said was, would you mind fetching the bucket of extension cords-

WHISPER: I know what you meant. I'm happy to go - need to do a little more "location scouting."

*Whisper exits.*

CAMERON: Wait - what did that mean, "location scouting"?

CODY: Now Cameron, I know you're a genius in the software world, but please leave the highly specialized world of film and video production to the experts.

CAMERON: Whisper is an "expert"?

CODY: He's demonstrated raw talent.

*Lonso enters. The Mayor is right behind him, on his phone.*

CODY: This is dirty dealing, Lonso. These people have food under refrigeration!

MAYOR: Lonso, we might have a problem. I think the power's off in more than just the condo next door.

LONSO: You mean, *you* have a problem.

MAYOR *back into his phone*: Look - just turn everybody back on. Just reverse everything you already did. What do you mean you don't remember how it was? I have no idea how, why are you asking me?

*The lights go out now on Annalise's balcony as well.*

MAYOR: I'm sorry, is this your first night as super?

ANNALISE: I'm waking up the Chief.

MAYOR: You don't need to do that - unless, well, does he know his way around a condominium fusebox? Probably not, right? *Back into the phone*: Can you please just flip everything back how it was? What do you mean you can't see in the basement anymore? Can you find the fusebox some other way - do you have sonar? *He goes inside.*

*Whisper returns with a bin of extension cords.*

CAMERON *to Whisper*: When you were back in storage, did you see the cute little generator?

WHISPER: Sure did.

ANNALISE: You have a generator in your condo?

CAMERON: I do, I'll tell you the story some time. We'll have to go down to the parking garage and siphon some gas from the catering truck.

WHISPER: Gonna be dark down there.

*Cameron scoops up Monica's portable DJ lights, hands one to Whisper, they turn them on and head in.*

CYNTHIA: I'm going to need a little light myself.

*Cynthia puts on her helmet, turns it on - a flashlight beams out of the center.*

CYNTHIA: Perfect.

SOPHIE: How's it coming?

CYNTHIA: Almost there. Who built this dress for you? I mean the electronics.

SOPHIA: I did.

CYNTHIA: Not bad for off the shelf components. If you want, we could take this back to my lab and really hotwire the hell out of it. Add motion sensors that trigger functions, store more patterns on board with more sophisticated chips, use more advanced LED lighting arrays... and to power all that, you should see some of the batteries we work with, they're so thin they get woven directly into fabric and recharge via your body's movement.

SOPHIA: That sounds amazing. You know, for the next time we have a "Sparkle Dungeon" costume party, which will be never.

CYNTHIA: This dress is a costume?

SOPHIA: Wasn't that obvious?

CYNTHIA: I'm wearing a bourbon-powered helmet in public for fun. How should I know what you wear around the house?

ANNALISE *looking over the balcony railing*: I wonder why all those people are shouting down there.

CYNTHIA: According to local news, a bunch of fans from the Daily Grind concert followed Jordon Connolly all the way across town - oh goodness, look at that. She's in the building - somebody tweeted a picture of Brick letting her in - oh, and they conveniently tweeted the address of the building, too.

*Brick enters with JORDON CONNOLLY - a gorgeous rock singer, dressed to kill.*

BRICK: Folks, may I introduce Jordon Connolly.

JORDON: Almost didn't make it. My limo got t-boned by an ice cream truck and I hitchhiked the rest of the way. *She stops and goes to Lonso.* There you are. *She kisses him deeply.*

LONSO: Jordon. You look radiant as ever.

JORDON: "Radiant"?

ANNALISE: He means "healthy."

LONSO *ignoring Annalise*: Thank you for coming tonight.

JORDON: You know I'd do anything for you, lover... within certain limits as specified by Gorvod, of course.

LONSO: I've missed you terribly.

JORDON: Baby-sitting TV stars for the church keeps you busy.

LONSO: That's no longer my concern. I might be taking a sabbatical soon.

JORDON: Is that a fact.

LONSO: Maybe I could join you when your tour is over.

JORDON: Maybe *before* my tour is over. You kept me waiting too long, Lonso.

LONSO: I know. I hope you can find a way to forgive me.

JORDON: I can find a few ways, I imagine. *Noticing Emily*: Emily, how's my favorite cousin?

*Jordon crosses to Emily and hugs her - Emily's response is tentative.*

JORDON: What's the matter?

EMILY: I'm fine.

JORDON: Is Lonso taking good care of you?

*Emily glances fearfully at Lonso; Jordon notices the exchange.*

EMILY: You could say that.

JORDON: Uh huh. We'll catch up before I leave, don't you worry.

*Jordon looks out over the crowd that is developing on the street - waves to the people, we hear a shriek from below. We also hear one of the neighbors below shout "KEEP IT DOWN!"*

JORDON: They're gonna riot if I don't sing.

ANNALISE: Technically they're already rioting.

LONSO: We're working on getting power restored.

ANNALISE: After you so thoughtfully had it shut off, asshat.

LONSO: We'll have it soon, love, I promise.

JORDON: I got backing tracks on my phone. You got a sound system I could plug into?

SOPHIE: I know someone who does.

*As Sophie starts to rise:*

CYNTHIA: Hold please.

*And with a flourish, Cynthia turns on the Dauphine dress - it lights up beautifully in the darkness with multiple points of light. She quickly becomes the center of attention.*

SOPHIE: Thank you, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA: I just did the repair job, you're clearly the artist here.

ANNALISE: Sophie, you look amazing. Is that...?

SOPHIE: I am the Dauphine of the Shimmer Lands, patron of all who follow mirages, last hope of those who wander lost and alone, sent to rescue those the Sparkle King could not. And as you'll learn in "Sparkle Dungeon 6," I am also deadly with a jetpack and a shoulder-mounted sparkle cannon.

*Sophie goes inside. Cody leaps over to Annalise's balcony and sidles up to Jordon.*

CODY: You're Jordon Connolly. I'm Cody Charles.

JORDON: I heard about you.

CODY: I'm from TV.

JORDON: You're on that show.

CODY: I am.

JORDON: I don't watch it.

CODY: Well, I'm on a different one now.

JORDON: I don't watch that one either. But I heard you made a sex tape.

CODY: Funny you should mention that.

JORDON: No, it's not.

CODY: No, it's very serious.

JORDON: I have like ten.

LONSO: I'm sorry - what did you say?

CODY: Lonso didn't hear you.

JORDON: He heard me. On some we were way past the limits specified by Gorvod, right lover?

CODY: I haven't even posted my sex tape yet. How'd you hear about it?

BRICK: Oh, I like to make chit chat in the elevator.

*A lot of hustle and bustle commences on Cam's balcony: Whisper plops the generator down in a corner and starts cabling. Cameron follows behind to fill it up with gasoline. DJ Luscious and Morning Bell appear and begin setting up speakers and a mixer. Gridstation appears to catch video of the scene. Sophie begins handing actual DJ lights to Cynthia to figure out what to do with them. Violet enters. Sound of a helicopter going by.*

VIOLET: What's the situation?

CYNTHIA: Local news has video of the crowd down there in the street. The word is out that Jordon Connolly is here.

VIOLET: Jordon Connolly is here?

JORDON: I'm totally right here.

VIOLET: Oh! Thank you so much for coming. *Shaking her hand.* I'm Senator Violet Parker. I assume you've already met my daughter Annalise.

JORDON: Not yet. *As she shakes Annalise's hand:* Cody's girlfriend, right?

ANNALISE: Until recently.

JORDON: Until you watched one of his shows, right?

ANNALISE: Until he found Gorvod.

JORDON: Gorvod's a slippery master.

ANNALISE: You worship Gorvod?

JORDON: Well now, that's between me and my high priest.

ANNALISE: What else is between you and your high priest?

JORDON: Get me drunk, maybe I'll tell you.

ANNALISE: We have whiskey, and also whiskey.

JORDON: I'll have whiskey.

*Annalise goes to the bar to make drinks.*

VIOLET: I'm sorry, she's not usually like this.

JORDON: Really? That's too bad.

*Eventually the generator kicks in, and the crew on that balcony shouts a "Huzzah!" Moments later, one of the neighbors shouts "KEEP IT DOWN OR I'M CALLING THE POLICE!"*

BRICK: Joke's on him, the police are already here.

VIOLET: What's going on over there?

JORDON: They're setting up the sound system for me.

*Cameron and Morning Bell carry a small speaker to the railing and hand it to Brick, who snags it easily. She indicates where he should put it down.*

MORNING BELL: Special delivery, monitor for Ms. Connolly.

*Morning Bell pulls a wireless microphone out of his coat pocket and hands it to her.*

MORNING BELL: Your instrument. Sound check is imminent.

JORDON: You're a doll. But no one can see me from the street.

MORNING BELL: Although your natural beauty is blinding, we do have a stage lighting solution to enhance the effect.

*The generator hums to life - it's a tiny little thing that runs quieter than you'd expect, but louder than you'd want on your balcony. Still - one by one DJ lights and consoles come to life. We hear a few drum machine beats start and stop. The projector powers back up.*

LUSCIOUS: Ms. Connolly, would you mind speaking into your microphone?

JORDON *into the mic*: Testing.

*A loud shriek from the crowd below. Jordon waves and calls out.*

JORDON *into the mic*: Hang on, people, we're close!

*More crowd noise. Someone off stage shouts: "CLOSE TO WHAT?" "TURN THE FUCKING SOUND SYSTEM DOWN!" "ARE YOU PEOPLE RUNNING A FUCKING MADHOUSE UP THERE?" etc.*

LUSCIOUS: I'll need your backing track, Ms. Connolly.

*She hands her phone to Morning Bell.*

JORDON: It's queued up.

*Morning Bell plugs it into the system.*

CYNTHIA: Better get a move on, folks. I'm getting chatter that local law enforcement is en route, responding to noise complaints, and they know the Police Chief is here so they're bringing more uniforms than usual.

VIOLET: Ms. Connolly, what will you be singing for us this evening?

JORDON: Well - my fans downstairs, they came from the show tonight, where they already heard me sing my Daily Grind hits. So I'm gonna dig deep into musical history, and sing my all time favorite sexy jam.

*Cameron aims the projector at Jordon - who is now fully visible to the crowd below. They shriek.*

JORDON *into the mic*: Hey people, you know what I wanna do for you right now? I wanna **SEX YOU IN THE FACE!**

ANNALISE: Oh come on, really?

*Jordon cues Luscious, and a sexy jam comes out of the speakers. Sophie hands the squire lights over the railing to Emily and Brick, indicating they should hold the lights over Jordon's head. The song is undeniably groovy, the introduction is super long, and the music is sufficiently loud that when people speak to each other, we can't hear them. Whisper pulls Cody into a slow dance. At Cynthia's prodding, Sophie gets Cameron to dance. Jordon makes out with Lonso while waiting for her cue. Luscious and Morning Bell nod to the beat, deeply satisfied to be here at this moment. Emily drops her squire light and jumps over to Cameron's balcony, where she comes up behind Cody, joining in his slow dance with Whisper. Annalise pours herself a shot of whiskey, then pours one for Violet, and they slam shots together, taking in the scene. Eventually the steady sound of helicopters and police sirens joins the scene; spotlights from helicopters start to trace the balconies, and the muffled sounds of someone shouting at them over a loudspeaker are heard.*

*Finally a climactic moment arrives in the music, and Jordon sings her heart out:*

JORDON:

**Ohhhhh I wanna sex you in the face  
Cuz yoooooooouuu got a face for sexing!**

*And then the song is over.*

JORDON: Thank you, my babies! See you next time!

*Cameron pulls the plug on the projector, plunging Jordon into darkness as a huge cheer rises up from the crowd. As the helicopters and sirens begin to dominate the soundtrack, we fade to black.*

#### **SCENE SIX: 4AM**

*Lights up. The power is back - and the sky might be approaching sunrise, although it's still dark.*

*On Cameron's balcony, Cameron sits nursing a bottle of scotch - no glass required. Luscious and Morning Bell sit with him - each with their own bottle of champagne. Morning Bell is snooping on Jordon's phone.*

*On Annalise's balcony, Annalise sits in the corner nursing a bottle of whiskey - no glass required - and half-heartedly playing "Sparkle Dungeon." Brick sits at the table, exhausted.*

LUSCIOUS: You know what my favorite part of the night was, Morning Bell?

MORNING BELL: Do tell, Luscious, do tell.

LUSCIOUS: My favorite part was when Jordon Connelly sang "I Wanna Sex You In The Face".

MORNING BELL: What a coincidence! That was my favorite part as well.

LUSCIOUS: She just hung it all out there and put her heart muscle right into it.

MORNING BELL: It's why she's famous - she knows how to sex her fans in the face.

*They glance over at Annalise to see her reaction to this goading.*

ANNALISE: I will admit - I'm impressed she sang the long version.

*Jordon enters on Annalise's balcony, immediately spots Morning Bell, who leisurely crosses to the railing and hands her phone to her.*

MORNING BELL: Safe and sound. You got some serious playlists on that device.

LUSCIOUS: Wish we could've heard you sing a few more jams.

JORDON: You might get your chance. My balcony performance is going viral. The fans have spoken - I need to make an old school record of classic sexy jams.

MORNING BELL: Should you need producing services, DJ Luscious and Morning Bell are at your service.

LUSCIOUS: Our style is classic. Annalise will attest, we haven't heard a new sexy jam since 2008.

*Jordon glances at her phone.*

JORDON: You weren't just looking at my playlists, young man.

MORNING BELL: No ma'am. Does Lonso know you made all those sex tapes?

JORDON: He does now. Needed to make it clear that Emily is *not* going to rehabilitation.

ANNALISE: How can you possibly have sex with that man?

JORDON: I guess I just have a weakness for corrupting him. But he's a high priest - he can forgive himself. Until Gorvod consumes him for his transgressions, obviously. Anyway, until the boys in my band can walk again, I'm going out on a solo tour, and I'm taking Lonso with me. The important thing right now is - Lonso can play the saxophone.

ANNALISE: *That's* the important thing? After everything he put us through tonight, everything he put Cody through for six months, the important thing is that he can sell out his own belief system to make sex videos and go on tour with the woman who repopularized "I Wanna Sex You In The Face"?

JORDON: Gorvod works in mysterious ways.

*She exits.*

MORNING BELL: I like her liberal approach to worshipping Gorvod. It's fresh.

LUSCIOUS: I think it's time for Morning Bell and myself to find an open club and talk our way into spinning a sexy sunrise set. Thanks for the magic carpet ride tonight, Sparkle King.

CAMERON: I'm not the Sparkle King any more, hadn't you heard?

LUSCIOUS: You'll always be the Sparkle King in my heart, Cameron.

CAMERON: Nice. Hallmark card?

LUSCIOUS: Hallmark card.

*Morning Bell and Luscious exit. Violet enters, a bit sheepishly. Brick follows.*

ANNALISE: Did they arrest anyone?

VIOLET: The Mayor is in custody for talking the building super into the shutting the power off.

ANNALISE: But that was Lonso's idea!

VIOLET: Lonso never got his hands dirty. Chief Hartwell gave Jordan a small fine for waking the neighborhood up with her impromptu concert, and got everyone else off with a warning.

BRICK: I've packed your suitcases in the car, Senator. I found you a hotel since we missed your flight.

VIOLET: Thank you, Brick.

BRICK: Annalise - the metal detector is packed up. The spare keys my team was using are in the bowl on the kitchen counter. I sent everyone back to the hotel as soon as Chief Hartwell left the building. Your front door will lock behind me when I leave with your mother, and you'll be the only one here.

ANNALISE: Thanks for doing your job completely wrong for me tonight.

BRICK: You're welcome. For what it's worth... I thought you threw a hell of a party.

*Brick exits.*

ANNALISE: How much did we make tonight?

VIOLET: I think we actually *lost* money tonight. Lonso made it clear we've seen the last donation from anyone associated with him. Not surprising. Tad Garrison threatened to pull his company's support too, something about my daughter's loose morals... I told him I'm the only one who gets to accuse my daughter of loose morals and he stormed out. Then he stood outside for hours because he couldn't call a taxi.

ANNALISE: Sorry I made such a mess of this whole thing. What's the shortfall? How long before we can't make payroll?

VIOLET: HQ is running the numbers as we speak. That's how we learned Jordon's video was blowing up. We started blasting our base in email and ramping up a PR blitz - Annalise, there's a chance we could move the needle in youth voter turnout because Jordon sang for us. She even did a quick endorsement interview with me before she left, just to seal the deal. Lonso was absolutely fuming.

ANNALISE: Pretty clear who's got the tentacles in that relationship.

VIOLET: Anyway. We're going to have to change the whole roadmap for the next four months to pull off a credible appeal to this demo. It'll almost be like starting over from scratch. And we can't afford to alienate our existing supporters while we make this play. But we always wanted a younger skew, and now's our big shot.

ANNALISE: When do we get real poll numbers on this?

VIOLET: Couple hours. I know I'll still be awake - want me to call you?

ANNALISE: Don't bother, I'm hoping to be dangerously passed out by then.

*Violet crosses to her daughter, gives her a quick hug.*

VIOLET: I'm proud of what you did tonight. Trust me - we still have a chance to bounce back from this. We both do.

*Violet exits.*

*Cody enters on Cameron's balcony, with Whisper close behind him. Cody jumps over to Annalise's*

*balcony, while Whisper shakes Cameron's hand.*

WHISPER: Gonna miss you, boss. But Cody needs a new entourage and I'm signing up.

*Cody sits next to Annalise.*

CODY: Are we cool here?

ANNALISE: Sure we're cool. I'm glad to see you happy and free. I mean that.

CODY: I can't really ever repay you for everything you've done for me, I know that, but... I'm still gonna send you an autographed blu-ray set of "The Quicksand Adventures." I want you to give it a second chance.

ANNALISE: Don't bother - I can totally not give it a second chance on Netflix.

*He leaps up and back over to the other balcony. Sophie and Monica enter, in street clothes. Sophie has her sketch book. Cody gives her a big hug.*

CODY: Bye, Sophie. You were awesome tonight.

*Sophie and Monica hug Whisper. Cody and Whisper exit. Sophie and Monica sit.*

CAMERON: Sparkle death of the universe, huh. That is epic.

MONICA: We don't have to talk about the new game, Cam, we just came to say goodbye.

SOPHIE: Although I can tell by the look in your eye that you want all the spoilers.

CAMERON: Of course I do.

SOPHIE: Well you're shit out of luck, because I haven't figured it out yet.

MONICA: But I've got development under control. Aerial combat, zero gee combat... I've already got a working prototype.

CAMERON: Nice. Apparently I can stay on hiatus forever.

SOPHIE: I guess. Look - I didn't realize that reusing the Dauphine would be weird for you, Cam, I didn't know. I was thinking we could invent someone new, but she's kind of perfect for this. I think I should run with this one and let you have your hiatus.

MONICA: And when it comes out, those fucking blogs are gonna have to acknowledge you were the lead game designer.

SOPHIE: That's not the point.

CAMERON: Of course it's not, but...

SOPHIE: But it doesn't hurt.

*Monica and Sophie each hug Cam. Sophie smiles at him:*

SOPHIE: You can always come back for "Sparkle Dungeon 7."

CAMERON: How is there another game after the sparkle death of the universe?

SOPHIE: That'll be *your* problem.

MONICA: Oh and guess what - Cody Charles agreed to be the voice of the Dauphine!

*Sophie and Monica exit. Long silence. Finally:*

ANNALISE: You were gonna tell me. Why you have a generator in your condo.

CAMERON: I went to Burning Man for the first time, many years ago. Way before I knew Sophie. None of my friends at the time were going but I thought - maybe this will help me - get out of my shell, learn how to talk to people. I joined this theme camp and thought - they need a sugar daddy, I can maybe - spend money as a substitute for - actually dealing with people, I guess. One night this woman came up to me outside my tent, and she asked me something I couldn't quite understand, so I wanted to play it cool like "I'm sorry could you repeat yourself?" but I just panicked, and - started babbling about some neat stuff I'd seen that day, art stuff, whatever. After I shut up for long enough, the woman was like, "I said, could you move your tent further away from ours, because you're creeping us all out by never talking to anyone, except when you talked just now, which also creeped me out."

ANNALISE: She actually said that to you? Did you move your tent?

CAMERON: I took it down on the spot actually, and packed up my truck to leave. As I was pulling out, someone pounded on the side of the truck and stopped me. I rolled down my window, and I saw this woman from camp, I'd seen her around and she didn't seem to have many friends either. And she said-

*In the doorway behind Cameron, Gabby has entered.*

GABBY: I said, "You're forgetting something." And I got him to follow me, and we grabbed the generator he bought for the camp, and hauled it back to his truck in the darkness. Because people with portable refrigerators shouldn't oughta piss off their sugar daddies.

CAMERON: She asked me for a ride off playa and said she didn't care where I was headed.

GABBY: Couldn't stay after seeing that. I mean - you ever been? *Annalise shakes her head.* It can get no bullshit life-or-death out there. You can't just push someone out into the streets like that.

CAMERON: And that's how I met Gabby. I'm surprised you didn't recognize her avatar in the game.

GABBY: I'm the Keeper of the Moonlight Prism.

ANNALISE: I'm wearing *your* Utilikilt?

*Gabby sits down triumphantly at the table next to him.*

GABBY: I beat your game, Cam. It was pretty fucking awesome.

CAMERON: Our party which you missed was pretty fucking awesome too.

GABBY: I heard, you guys are totally on the news, even at four in the morning videos of Jordon Connolly on your balcony are all over the place. Your mom's campaign is cooler than shit now.

ANNALISE: Perfect. I think "cooler than shit" will fit on a campaign button.

*Gabby takes in the scene: Cam and Annalise, drinking alone despite proximity to each other.*

GABBY: Why the long faces, pardners? Didn't you just experience the hottest party in modern history? *No response.* Very well. Cameron, are you prepared for my revenge?

CAMERON: Yeah let's get it over with.

ANNALISE: Are you kidding me? Now?

GABBY: Better late than never.

CAMERON: How's this going to work?

GABBY: Annalise, you're gonna want to come over here and sit with Cam. C'mon, bring your whiskey.

*Reluctantly Annalise jumps onto Cameron's balcony and joins him at the table, as Gabby begins to plug a small MP3 player into the sound system.*

GABBY: I'm gonna play part of a conversation I recorded recently.

ANNALISE: The illegally recorded conversation?

CAMERON: I'm not going to press charges, just play it already.

*Gabby starts the recording and fades back from the table. We hear the following over the speakers:*

GABBY: Just ask her.

CAMERON: No.

GABBY: You can't keep calling her your "hot new neighbor" every time you bring her up.

*Annalise briefly looks surprised, then composes herself.*

GABBY: But she is in fact your neighbor, and that's a totally legitimate reason to introduce yourself.

CAMERON: I know, I just... can't do it.

GABBY: God, Cameron, you are pathological about this. You need treatment.

CAMERON: I do just fine with you and Monica and Sophie.

GABBY: Yes, and we are the only women in Albany you ever speak to and this bubble around you - it's self-inflicted bullshit. Look, we can do this one of two ways. I can move back in with you and put a sleeping bag on your balcony and just like camp until I get a chance to ask her myself what her name is.

CAMERON: No.

GABBY: Or you can take one little risk and introduce yourself and just call that a victory. And then go back to your bubble if you have to. And she'll probably, I mean, maybe she'll surprise you. Maybe she actually plays "Sparkle Dungeon."

*The recording ends.*

ANNALISE: You did introduce yourself. And I do play "Sparkle Dungeon." Gabby called it.

*They look around, realizing that Gabby is no longer behind them. In fact, while they were listening to the recording, Gabby snuck over to Annalise's balcony, snuck inside the kitchen, slid the door shut - and locked it. She's standing there now, waving at Annalise and Cameron with a smile on her face. Then she makes a valiant show of trying and failing to open the door - then she shrugs and vanishes into Annalise's condo.*

ANNALISE: I'm just going to take a wild guess here that I'm locked out of my condo. *Pause.* I guess I could try to finish "Sparkle Dungeon" before my battery dies.

CAMERON: I was going to drink heavily and watch the sun come up, if you'd like to do that instead.

ANNALISE: Yeah, I guess that sounds a little nicer.

*Cameron sips his scotch, while Annalise takes a deep pull from her whiskey. Then:*

ANNALISE: Oh, but there's one thing I've been meaning to ask you. I heard there were cheat codes I could get?

*They smile slowly at each other.*

**END OF PLAY**