

BLASPHEMOUS RUMOURS

A Play in One Act

by

Agustin D. Martinez

<http://offthewallplays.com>

Copyright June 2013 Agustin. D Martinez and Off The Wall Play Publishers

Cast of Characters

<u>OZZIE THOMAS:</u>	Southern California high school dropout; sixteen years old.
<u>TONY LUIGI:</u>	Renowned New York food critic; overweight; early forties.
<u>MRS. PRUDENCE STERN:</u>	Fifty-year old wife of an Evangelist from the deep south.
<u>LUCY RODRIGUEZ:</u>	New Yorican, middle-aged housewife hooker.
<u>GERALD MADISON:</u>	Twenty-five year old man with no direction in life.
<u>AVA RYESTEIN:</u>	Mid-thirties Long-Islander. Favorite hobby: shopping!
<u>IVY GREENE:</u>	Late-twenties, meek, plump, and does not care much for HER appearance.
<u>SHELBY:</u>	Satan's General Manager. HIS dress and manners are classic 1920s, his wit as sharp as Noel Coward's.

Scene

Hotel green room in Hell.

Time

The present.

SCENE 1

SETTING: There are no visible walls to the set. Two hanging window frames appear USR and USL. A black backdrop is all that is seen through and around the frames. The audience sees a comfortably furnished private room with the usual writing desk, chairs, but no bed. Silk plants decorate the room, giving the room dimension and a tropical, relaxed atmosphere as that of a cozy hotel room cheaply furnished.

AT RISE: SHELBY enters SL. HE wears a black butler's uniform and HIS hair is slicked back. SHELBY leads OZZIE THOMAS into the room. OZZIE wears a Green Day concert T-shirt and ripped jeans. TONY LUIGI follows THEM into the room. A small table with donuts is set SL.

SHELBY

Ah, here we are gentlemen. Please make yourselves comfortable. You may be here for a bit. I apologize for you having to share these quarters, but with all that's going on now, we simply cannot expand quickly enough to meet the influx of new exiles. Now, I trust you understand the T-8 appeal forms that were given to you at orientation?

TONY

Yes for God's sake.

(THUNDER)

SHELBY

Now, now, Mr. Luigi. We are pretty liberal here, but there is certain blasphemous language that just won't...

TONY

Don't you think three long days of orientation were enough? I mean the food was exquisite, but...

OZZIE

(Disoriented, showing the T-8 appeal form in HIS hand to SHELBY)

Well, bro, I'm not quite sure. What were we supposed to do with this form?

SHELBY

(Perturbed)

Okay, it's gonna be one of those days. These are T-8 appeal forms. Can you say T-8?

OZZIE

(Eager to please)

T-8!

SHELBY

(Sarcastically, grabbing hold of OZZIE'S cheek)

Ooh, very good! It was a rhetorical question, you fool! Now, you fill the gray and white areas leaving the green-shaded areas empty. Got it?

OZZIE

(Taking notes)

Gray and white - forget about the green. Got it, bro!

SHELBY

(Looking at OZZIE'S card)

Most of the questions are very simple. Name, etc., etc. Now, when you get to Section C, please be sure to think it through before writing out your brief constructed response. You do not get a second chance to explain your way into eternal bliss.

TONY

(Reading HIS T-8 form)

Please compose complete sentences...concluding sentence...watch out for spelling...What is this, a grammar test? This is my hell, isn't it? I must sit in a grammar class for all eternity!

SHELBY

You've got issues, don't you? Mr. Luigi, this is not some tired play by Sartre. Your hell has not begun. And trust me; your hell will not be satisfied by sitting in a Grammar class. It's pretty gruesome actually. It's completely avoidable, though. It might never begin if you answer the question truthfully. Just follow the guidelines.

(Reading from OZZIE'S card again)

Please compose...spelling...ah, here. Name the one reason you are not permitted exile into eternal peace. When you arrive at the answer, we will happily escort you up.

TONY

No way. There's gotta be a catch. You mean if we figure out why we're here, you will let us go? There must not be anybody in Hell then. If it's that easy...

SHELBY

(Amused)

Oh, Mr. Luigi. The reason we're doing this is because there are simply too many people here already. I even had to give up my penthouse for a duplex. Do I look like the duplex type? Don't answer that. Look, even with this T-8 appeal form, there are too many souls. We try to give you a chance for eternal bliss, no tricks, no illusions, but you complicate it so much you miss your opportunity. Remember the slides presented to you on the first day of orientation?

TONY

How can I possibly forget the slides?

SHELBY

You remember the ones of those wretched souls burning forever? I directed those, thank you very much.

(With the melodrama of a silent screen star)

I tried to convey – as much as any brilliant director could – that they were burning because they *chose* to burn. Don't you see? They rather have looked at anything but inside themselves. Brilliant, just brilliant!

(As if waiting for applause)

Your acknowledgment of who you are, Mr. Luigi, sets you free from all that. If you think it's simple, then I'll be sure you'll be checking out soon.

OZZIE

Actually, I kinda like it here. It's pretty cool. I mean, look at that view.

(Points out the black windows)

Look at the waves! Man, what a place!

(OZZIE plops on one of the comfortable chairs and looks out the window.)

TONY

What waves? I only see Restaurant Row. What beach are you talking about?

OZZIE

You're blind or something? Right there!

SHELBY

Not too close!

TONY

You're not supposed to like it here freak. This is Hell...

SHELBY

Now, now. Let's not get excited, Mr. Luigi. One thing at a time. This is not Hell. Oh, my, no. Hell is still, well, in a galaxy far, far away. This is merely – how do you say – Hell's lobby?

(SHELBY laughs at HIS own joke, but HE stops when OZZIE and TONY do not laugh.)

SHELBY (Continued)

Hmm, tough crowd. Now, please make yourselves at home.

(cell phone BEEPS)

Oops, I thought I had that on vibrate. Well, I'm being beckoned. There are plenty of refreshments and you will find plenty of pencils in the drawer. Good day.

(SHELBY exits SL)

OZZIE

Pretty cool guy, don't you think?

TONY

He's a demon for God's sake!

(THUNDER; TONY looks up)

OK! OK!

(Pause)

TONY (Continued)

Kid, do you realize where you are? You are on your way to Hell. Didn't you learn anything at that awful, three-day orientation? Wake up from that stoned cloud you're in, and start filling this thing out!

OZZIE

Chill out, man! You're gonna give yourself a heart attack.

TONY

That's what got me here in the first place, you idiot! I already had a heart attack. Trust me, I'm not gonna have another one. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm going to start writing my way out of here.

OZZIE

That sucks, dude! A heart attack?

TONY

(Mimicking OZZIE)

Yes, that does – *suck*. I saw it coming, but what was I supposed to do?

(As if HE heard this a thousand times during HIS lifetime)

Your triglyceride levels are simply too high, Mr. Luigi. You need to control what you eat, Antony. Bah, I'm a food critic. My whole life was spent around the table. What was I supposed to do, stop...

OZZIE

Know watcha mean, man. There are some things that just take over your life...

TONY

What the hell do you know? What are you fifteen, sixteen tops?

OZZIE

(Insulted)

Eighteen!

TONY

Eighteen! Oh, if I could be eighteen again. Start over. Fame, money, what did it get me? Kid, it gets you nothing. Don't let anybody fool you.

OZZIE

(Matter-of-factly)

OK.

TONY

My culinary wisdom - what did it get me? Nada. Zero. Zilch! In the end it just means absolutely nothing. Here I am trying to talk my way out of eternal damnation. Ain't that a hoot.

OZZIE

Well, maybe it's not that simple. Yeah! Maybe, this is just a waiting room for another life. And they're just waiting for a body to become available. You know, in India...

TONY

Yes, yes I know. In India they believe in something, too. Look, cow worship and veganism, trust me, they'll end up here anyway, filling out 3 x 5 postcards. Bullshitting one last time in their pathetic existences to try and get out of this predicament.

(Looks over card contemplating what the words really mean, and then reads aloud)

TONY (Continued)

Name the one reason why you are not permitted exile into eternal bliss. One reason? There's no way I could narrow it down. What about if it's just something I don't remember – like giving a certain restaurant a bad review? Oh, I bet that's it.

(Growing hysterical)

Chez Pierre! That's it! He probably made a deal with Satan himself and when I gave him that awful review...

OZZIE

Did you do it out of spite or something?

TONY

Of course not! I'm a professional! The crêpes poulet? Milky. The escargot? Like Gummy Bears! I had no choice but to...

OZZIE

Then that's not it, bro. You were being true to your karma.
(Pause)

While you're at it. Can you figure out why I'm stuck here? I hate thinking.

TONY

That's *your* job, kid. C'mon think. Does a body good! You're only eighteen...

OZZIE

Shit, why *am* I here? I don't do much. Don't get in anybody's way, really. Mostly sit around, go to concerts. That's how it happened, you know. I got trampled at a Green Day concert. What a way to go, huh! I'm probably a legend by now!

TONY

You're probably a statistic, kid. Wake up to reality.

OZZIE

I dropped out of high school. Nah, that didn't hurt anyone. I smoke pot. Yeah, maybe I burn too much. But who doesn't? Maybe I just watch too much reality TV and don't go to church enough.

TONY

Well, figure it out. I gotta think about what I've done. I just ate my life away. What else was there?

(Looks out the windows, dreaming)

TONY (Continued)

You know, there's nothing like a big plate of – aren't there any donuts over there?

OZZIE

(Pointing to the snack tray)

Yeah. There wouldn't be anything...smokeable would there? What I'd do for a nice green bud. You know, the kind with the little red hairs? Ah, I'm gonna miss being alive.

(TONY stands gorging by the snack table, not noticing what OZZIE is saying; oblivious to everything around HIM, TONY savagely eats the snacks provided. OZZIE is too busy searching through HIS pockets to find at least the remnants of a joint. To HIS surprise, OZZIE discovers a beautifully rolled marijuana cigarette.)

OZZIE (Continued)

(to HIMSELF)

Get the fuck outta here! How did this get in my pocket? Thank you, Shelby! I'm gonna sit right here, oh yeah, and just mellow out over this view...Hey, dude, leave some donuts for me. I get wicked munchies!

(OZZIE lights joint and takes a deep toke)

This is the life, man. So what if I don't get outta here? Hell can't be that bad, right? Satan looks like a pretty cool dude. Maybe I'll be one of those environmentalists I saw picketing at orientation. You know, save Hell and all. No more construction on the blazing wetlands? Pretty cool.

(takes toke)

Nah, it's probably too much work now that I think about it.

TONY

These are the best donuts I've ever had in my whole life. And trust me, I've eaten at the finest...

(Sniffing)

What the hell are you smoking, kid?

OZZIE

I think it's Krippy! Kind bud, man. I haven't gotten this high since – shit – since the Green Day concert.

(Laughing)

They got some pretty wicked shit down here.

TONY

Well, just blow the smoke over there. The last thing I need to do is get stoned and not figure out why I'm here.

OZZIE

Oh, no. You got it all wrong, dude. This lets you see deeper into yourself. It lets you see the real you.

(OZZIE takes a long toke)

OZZIE (Continued)

It's primo, man. Cosmic even. Sure you don't want a hit?

TONY

No, thank you, Shaggy. I have to figure out why I'm here. They don't even pin us with a scarlet letter to give us a hint as to what we've done! No, let the fat food critic burn!

OZZIE

Oh, brother. Look, take a hit. I promise you. You'll feel ten times better. And who's Shaggy?

(TONY pauses then X to OZZIE and takes toke.)

TONY

(Coughing)

This thing will kill you!

(Feeling euphoric)

But since I'm dead...

(THEY break out into uncontrollable laughter.)

OZZIE

(Trying to catch HIS breath)

That's the attitude. You're a most excellent party companion.

TONY

I don't think...

(Taking another toke)

I don't think we're gonna get out of here.

(THEY laugh)

OZZIE

So what if we *do* get outta here? Think about it. No more smoking...hell, no more jelly donuts.

TONY

(Alarmed)

What do you mean, no more jelly donuts?

OZZIE

No, man. We won't be able to...

(As if memorized at orientation)

"...indulge in things of the flesh" when we go up to Heaven, remember?

TONY

(Defeated)

Oh, but all I know how to do is indulge. I indulge in food. I indulge in my work...

OZZIE

Which is food too, right? Whoa! You're to food like I am to weed. Talk about an excellent analogy, don't you think?

TONY

Listen Confucius, you're not sitting for the SATs. Who gives a shit about analogies!

OZZIE

Well, then, maybe that's our problem. Maybe...

TONY

Maybe you oughta shut up and think of your concerts and your lazy life and leave me alone! You were not going to succeed in life. Anywhere you go is a step up.

OZZIE

Well, Pop'n'Fresh, *you* succeeded. And from here – I'm sorry to break it to you – reality check! It seems the only place *you* could go is up, too!

TONY

Oh, shut up.

OZZIE

You see, I've got life figured out. I mean, what's the point of trying to reach success? Really, what for? Look at my parents. My dad, the successful real estate lawyer. Ha! He's more screwed up now than he ever was. After the economy took a dive ... Shit, look at you. Nah, it is all totally messed up. Just...let life pass you by, man. Why not?

TONY

We all end up here anyway, right? Ah, hell, kid I can't argue with you on that one.
(Looking at T-8 appeal form)
What is the one thing that is keeping me from eternal freedom?

OZZIE

Cut - it - out! Jeez, you're a glutton for punishment!

TONY

(Frustrated, beginning to pace)
And you're an idle sloth not doing anything to get us out of here! I can't think! God, I can't think!

(THUNDER)

TONY (Continued)

OK! OK! I'm sorry! I even got Big Brother over here thundering my every word! I need something to get my brain juices going, that's all. Where's the real food? Damn it! I need some food! Do you think Shelby is going to bring us some real food?

(Frantic)

Shelby! Shelby! Where's a demon when you need one?

OZZIE

You got the munchies already?

TONY

It's more than just munchies. I'm never gonna eat again! Don't you know what that means? How am I supposed to come up with one reason for why I shouldn't go straight to Hell?

OZZIE

Look, Tony, maybe you should just let it come to you.

(TONY walks away from HIM.)

OZZIE (Continued)

Have you ever been to a Gangaji retreat?

TONY

A what?

OZZIE

Gangaji! You know, the guru on TV? Usually on some access channel on Sunday mornings. She studied with Papaji in India? Gangaji?

(No response)

OZZIE (Continued)

Well, I'm not sure I get everything she says, but she basically says that this is all a story, a story where we are just characters.

TONY

Real original.

OZZIE

She often tells people just to be still. That's it, be still. You just can't push things. The drama is going to play out whether you sit still, fight it and bring conflict into your life...

TONY

Would you just shut up? Would you just – be still – and shut the hell up!

OZZIE

(Feeling sorry for TONY)

Look, forget the pressure. Clear your mind of everything. Creativity is not something you can force. Like they say, you can lead a horse to water...

TONY

All right, already! Do I need to deal with your clichés, too?

OZZIE

I learned the most magnificent relaxation technique at a karma-cleansing course. It really works, trust me.

TONY

At Gangaji's retreat?

OZZIE

(Not realizing TONY is making fun of HIM)

No, bro. Gangaji isn't into all that.

TONY

Well why should I trust you? You said to smoke and I'd feel better. "Trust me," you said. "Trust me." Well, news flash! It hasn't relaxed me one bit. It only makes me paranoid and hungry.

OZZIE

(Crossing HIS legs in the typical yoga position)

OK, just sit like this. C'mon.

TONY

(Following instructions)

I haven't been able to cross my legs since...Oh, this is stupid. It's not even comfortable. Maybe I could climb out the window and hit one of those restaurants. I noticed one of the swankiest little bistros...

OZZIE

Look, I didn't want to tell you this before, but you give me no choice. Tony, there are no restaurants out there. You're having a mirage, dude. There's only a beach out there. Don't you hear the gulls? Can't you smell the fresh, salty air?

TONY

(Sniffing; growing excited with the possibility)

What I smell is – that's lobster bisque!

OZZIE

Lobster bisque? Oh, you're one sick cat. That's the ocean air, man.

(Sniffing)

Whew, low tide to be precise.

TONY

You are telling Antony Luigi, the most renowned food critic in New York, that he's mistaking low tide for lobster bisque? I should take you out right here.

OZZIE

Look, if this relaxation exercise doesn't work, then you could jump out the freakin' window and go to whatever restaurants you think you see down there. Deal?

TONY

Let's get on with it, then. It smells almost ready. Now, what do you want me to do?

OZZIE

Close your eyes and find your center.

TONY

Find my what?

OZZIE

Your center, man!

TONY

What the hell's my center?

OZZIE

Oh, shit. It's worse than I thought. You can't even find your center? No wonder you're so wound up. Look – just think middle.

TONY

Just think middle, huh?

(TONY gets up and goes to window, allowing OZZIE the escape HE needs.)

TONY (Continued)

You go right on and play with your center. I don't think this karma car wash thing is going to work for me.

OZZIE

Karma cleansing. Unless...you...You're fuckin' brilliant! Sagacious metaphor, bro! You're saying that your karma is like a car, then...I can't believe this. You're a natural guru.

TONY

Yeah, well, I've been called worse. Look, you go on ahead and do your mantra thing, I think I got an idea.

(OZZIE remains chanting on the floor as TONY paces furiously. OZZIE opens HIS eyes, obviously perturbed.)

OZZIE

Are you OK? You're starting to freak out my karma, man! How am I supposed to align my chakras when...

TONY

I'll tell you how you can align your chakras! You gotta trust *me* this time. I think you are thin enough to make it out of these windows. I'll hold you by your feet and you can grab that flagpole. It looks farther down than it really is.

OZZIE

Get the fuck outta here! I'm not flying down the side of this building. Splat! Right on the pavement.

TONY

(Desperate)

We're already dead, remember?

OZZIE

I was already trampled at a concert. Excellent concert I might add. But enough is enough. I think reaching martyrdom for my peers is enough. Have some compassion. Since I can't die again, that means I'll be hurtin' for a pretty long time. I don't do pain. Besides, I like it here. I see no reason...

TONY

(Frenzied)

They stuck me in here with a boy who can't reason! What kind of place is this? They throw us in here and tease us with a dozen donuts. And Shelby says we're not in Hell yet. Sure!

(TONY paces like a caged animal.)

TONY (Continued)

I need something to eat! Did you sneak any food in your pockets? Please tell me you...

OZZIE

No, dude. I only found that joint that Shelby must've...

TONY

(Delusional)

You're just like all of them, aren't you?

OZZIE

(Afraid of the hungry monster in front of HIM)

What? Look, I don't know...

TONY

(Smiling, sweating)

Yes. You are out to see me suffer. You're part of this whole test, aren't you?

(TONY grabs OZZIE by HIS T-shirt and tries to pull HIM to the window.)

TONY (Continued)

You owe me! If you wouldn't have given me that stuff to smoke, I'd be fine!

OZZIE

OK, chillax, Due! You're nuts! I gave you the kindest weed I've ever smoked in my life!
You're just paranoid, man!

TONY

You just want to see me suffer! And now there's no more food!

(OZZIE breaks free from TONY'S hold; TONY falls to HIS knees.)

TONY (Continued)

Help me! Go down and get me some lobster bisque. Please, just a little bit. That's all I ask. I'll be fine after you...

OZZIE

You're one messed up cat!

TONY

You've got connections. C'mon think. Maybe you know somebody at that bistro. Think.

OZZIE

What's with the lobster bisque? Don't freak out on me, OK? I can't handle this sort of shit. I already told you there's nothing out there but a bunch of seagulls.

TONY

You have to go see to make sure. Please! It's the least you could do after getting me so stoned!

OZZIE

Why are you asking me to take control, man? If you want it, get it yourself. Go, run down that beach and eat all the freakin' snails you can find. Lobster bisque? You've got the worst case of munchies I've ever seen.

TONY

(Crying on the floor)

I can't do this! Shelby! Shelby!

OZZIE

You're making me lose my high, dude!

TONY

Who cares about your high?

OZZIE

Jeez! You really get fucked up when you're stoned, huh?

TONY

Yes, yes, I'm a bit – fucked up!

OZZIE

No wonder you got that heart attack. Look at you. Would you get up? I'm sure Shelby'll bring in some more food...

TONY

(Getting up from HIS knees)

You and your maybes! Don't you see? There's no more food! If it wasn't for you, I'd be fine. You just don't understand. I should've snuck some food back from that orientation luncheon. When I think of all the food they served. And people just throwing the leftovers away.

(Holding HIS head)

Ah! I can't take it. I'm not going to make it! (Pause) You do have some food, don't you? Give it to me!

(TONY grabs OZZIE by the neck)

OZZIE

(Struggling)

Look, I swear. Let me go, Tony!

(Trying to get away but to no avail, THEY fall to the floor biting and clawing;
BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 1

Scene 2

AT RISE: Same relaxed atmosphere. Lights are a darker hue, but not necessarily dim. Liquor bottles are present SL. Along with the refreshments, several catalogues from Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue are set for the characters' reading entertainment. Two artist's canvases, with paints and easels, appear DSR and DSL.

IVY GREENE appears DSR, concentrating on the art project at hand. SHE keeps HERSELF amused, not thinking of anything except HER objè d'art. HER oily hair needs serious tending; the flimsy housedress SHE wears cries to be let out of its misery.

AVA RYESTEIN wears a tight, black mini-dress which accents HER beautifully fit, 35 year-old body. HER expensive jewelry complements the outfit, revealing HER wealth and good taste. SHE is trying to maintain HER high spirits as SHE plays with the art supplies DSL. Bored, SHE throws the paintbrush down, stretching HER back which misses the everyday massages.

AVA

God, how long do they plan to keep us in here? Why did they think we liked to paint? Picasso I am not.

IVY

(Enthralled in HER work)

Huh?

AVA

You're really into this thing aren't you?

(X and picks up a catalogue)

I wonder how long they'll take with our appeal forms? Shelby picked them up two days ago. With my luck, they got lost in the mail. God, look at these clothes. I had to die right before the winter collection came out. Someone up there doesn't like me.

(THUNDER)

IVY

(Working diligently on HER art)

What? Did you say something?

AVA

Would you put that brush down? We've been painting for God knows how long. You've hardly said a word to me.

IVY

I don't talk much.

AVA

I was commenting on the winter collection in this catalogue.

IVY

Oh.

AVA

You wanna take a peek? They've got some great things here in your size. Here, pick something. There are some fabulous dresses that fit your skin tone. You're an autumn, right?

IVY

Ms. Ryestein, we're dead.

AVA

Oh, darling, call me Ava.

IVY

Why are you drooling over clothes when we're spiritually, physically, and emotionally dead?

(IVY stretches and wipes HER eyes, trying to focus back to reality.)

AVA

I don't know why I'm looking at these clothes. Do I have to have a reason for looking at a catalogue? (Pause) Spiritually dead? I'm sure you've attracted a lot of men with lines like that.

IVY

(Feeling HER blood rise)

I've attracted plenty of men in my life, Ava. Besides, I don't need any man to make my life whole!

AVA

(laughing)

I agree. Just credit cards, right?

IVY

I don't need anything or anyone!

AVA

All right. I was just making conversation. *Gevalt!* Would you like some Midol? Or are you always this bitchy?

IVY

I just resent that comment - about men - OK?

AVA

Oh, honey, please. I didn't mean anything by that. It's just that I was brought up to attract a man. A lawyer or doctor, preferably. It's all right to make them suffer like hell later, but you do have to have one. It's like – not having an umbrella or something. What happens on those rainy days?

IVY

People like you make me ill. You put women back a hundred years.

AVA

Hey, Broomhilda, I think you've been inhaling too many paint fumes. Why don't you have a drink or something?

IVY

I don't want a drink. I don't want a man. Why can't you just go back to your catalogue or something and leave me alone?

(IVY turns and looks straight into AVA'S eyes.)

Don't make me kill you, too.

AVA

(Flustered)

What – what do you mean kill me, too? You mean they stuck me in here with a demented *Shiksa*? Shelby!

(AVA looks around as if speaking to the air.)

Shelby, I know very important people. You won't get away with this. Shelby! You simply cannot do this to me. I am not going to spend eternity with Murdering Monet.

IVY

I thought you knew. I murdered my sister, that's all. Slut deserved it.

AVA

I murdered my sister *that's all*? Is that all you can say? Good morning, nice weather, I murdered my sister!

IVY

Yeah, well don't worry. I don't like you enough to kill you. Besides, I already paid my debt to society. I got the damn electric chair. Can you believe they fried me like that?

AVA

Well, what happened? I mean, was it an accident or something?

IVY

No. I just shot her. Hey, she did it just one too many times. She took my lover, then the house my mother left us. Finally, the last straw. I was not going to let her take Coco.

AVA

Coco? Who the hell is Coco? Oh, let me guess. It was the first Chanel hat you bought and you named it Coco. How *a propos*! Well, it's understandable, sweetie. If someone tried to take my John Galliano hat from his Christian Dior spring collection, I wouldn't have a choice. I call mine Dr. Seuss because it looks like something right out of...

IVY

Not my hat, you loon. Coco was my chow chow. A hat, what kind of nut do you think I am?

AVA

You killed your sister over your dog?

IVY

Sure! You'd kill for a hat, but I'm nuts if I killed for my only companion?

AVA

I was right, honey. You *do* need a man. Quick! Maybe Shelby...

IVY

What's the point? Someone will come along and take him away. I'm a spectator, craving what I'll never have. Always burning inside with what I don't have. I'm used to it, I guess.

AVA

Are you sending out invitations for your pity party, or am I it?

(Pause)

Look, I was like you once. Most people don't know that. Any time I'd see a woman with a new Vivienne Westwood skirt or someone with the latest Beemer, I would simply die. But I discovered that about myself a long time ago back in Flushing. You know how I dealt with it? I married rich and moved to Great Neck! Mama was right. She always told me if I married rich, no matter how miserable I was...I mean, he really is a pretty good husband. He's fabulous, actually. He accepts the fact that I was a princess in another life and...Well, let's not bring that up.

(AVA gently plays with IVY'S hair)

AVA (Continued)

It's simple, doll. Just buy everything in sight. Go crazy. Treat yourself like the princess you deserve to be. Once, I saw this little Valentino black number. I bought the four identical smocks they had just so no one would have them. Just so everyone could crave and envy *me* for once. I burned the other three and kept the only one in all of New York. Oh, life was good.

(AVA X USL to bar. SHE decides it's best to have a drink. It helps pass the time.)

IVY

I'm not like that.

AVA

Well, it's never too late.

IVY

I'm not greedy, Ava. I don't care about taking things away or making people suffer with envy. I don't need a throne or find the need to pretend I was a princess in another life.

AVA

Who's pretending?

IVY

I just want my share of the pie. Is that so wrong? Why does everyone get to live a happy life except me? Am I the Second Coming?

(THUNDER)

IVY (Continued)

Am I just supposed to live this horrible life so everyone else on the planet could be happy?

AVA

It's a dog-eat-dog world, honey.

(Pause)

IVY
How did you die?

AVA
Well, that's not important, love.

IVY
I'm curious, what happened?

AVA
(Matter-of-factly)

I dropped my credit cards in the middle of 5th Avenue.

IVY
How could you die from...

AVA
I tried to say forget it and just keep going. I could call and cancel the credit cards, right? I mean, they'd send me new ones.

IVY
(Probing)

But?
AVA

I couldn't go through all that fuss. Wait around for days? I mean, really. And do what in the meantime? Stand there and watch everybody shop, shop, shop, while I sit around waiting? No. So I stood in the middle of 5th Avenue and...Wham! Hit by the M4. Can you believe that? A bus? Not a limo, not a cab, but a bus.

IVY
How appropriate. People like you. You just...

AVA

We just what, sweetheart?

IVY

You just don't understand how you make most of us feel. The burning in my gut when Lady Luck pours her soul on people like you and my sister, and then forgets I exist. I mean, what did you do? You killed yourself over credit cards. I just don't get it.

AVA

Honey, the time has come. I am going to teach you a very important lesson. You don't have to thank me. Just listen.

(As if telling IVY Santa Claus doesn't exist, AVA proceeds to explain softly yet truthfully.)

AVA (Continued)

Darling, there's no such thing as a share of the pie. It's a myth. It was made up by insecure rich people like me just to keep people like you going. They realized a long time ago that if they didn't provide an escape for you, you'd question their power. They made it seem heroic and admirable to work, work, work! Hell, the whole Protestant work ethic is based on this. Working for pennies a day to put a piece of bread on the table, while overseers are eating steak au poivre and beluga. It's monstrous.

IVY

Exactly. It's monstrous.

AVA

The fact remains that you either join these monsters and own the whole pie, pretending to let others have a piece, of course. Or you suffer like you are right now, attached to some fairy tale that "work makes you free." Look at the pain you are in. How do you sit there and endure it?

IVY

Just forget it. I should've known that...

AVA

What?

IVY

You want to turn me into you. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em, right! No thanks. Haven't you ever heard of standing up for what you believe in?

AVA

You've bought into the hero bullshit, haven't you?

IVY

It's no bullshit. If you work hard...

AVA

That's right. If you work hard, that gives more time for people like your sister to steal your lover, your house...and let's not forget Coco.

IVY

Just shut up!

AVA

Don't give me this victim routine. Please, *Mamala*, I'm trying to help you. If you're not happy about the meek life you seem to be leading, just change it. I certainly did.

IVY

You're not happy. You acquire things to make up for your empty life. To make up for the fact that you don't have a soul.

AVA

Oh, honey if I didn't have a soul we wouldn't be talking in this tacky room. I wouldn't be waiting for Shelby to come back with our appeal forms. Let me tell you something. You sit there pretending there's nothing you can do about your horrible existence. Look at me world! I'm poor and lonely and life doesn't give me a break! I've been there honey. So don't bullshit a bullshitter.

IVY

You make me ill.

AVA

(With a slithering walk, AVA has lost HER patience.)

Why, Ivy? Does this make you more sick? Does the truth make you nauseated? Do you hate yourself because you can't be me in my Jimmy Choo's? I bet that's why you killed your sister.

(Almost in a whisper)

She reminded you of what you could never be. You pathetic soul.

IVY

Can't I even rest when I'm dead?

(Almost in tears)

Will you please just leave me alone?

(Pause)

AVA

Look, I'm sorry.

IVY

I don't need your pity.

AVA

Oh, c'mon. If we're going to be here until Shelby returns – and God knows how long that will take – can't we be friends? Really, now. Let's see what you've painted.

IVY

Stop patronizing me.

AVA

I'm not patronizing you. I'm really interested. Let's see.

(Looking at IVY'S artwork)

This is good! Oh my. This is really beautiful work. I must have it!