


a Knowledge Workings Production

GRUDGES

BY T.J. ELLIOTT & JOE QUEENAN



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By

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“Reasons for anger are not eternal.
People who store away grievances for
years only to ‘reactivate’ them when it
is convenient to do so are not rational.
They are displaying a vice: that of
holding a grudge.”

Agnes Callard, *The Reason to Be Angry
Forever*

“Anger may be defined as a desire
accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous
revenge for a conspicuous slight at the
hands of men who have no call to slight
oneself or one’s friends.... It must
always be attended by a certain
pleasure — that which arises from the
expectation of revenge. ... Again, we are
angrier with our friends than with other
people, since we feel that our friends
ought to treat us well and not badly.”

Aristotle, *Rhetoric Part II*, Translated by
W. Rhys Roberts

CHARACTERS

Matthew McCarthy, a college professor, and proprietor of a small publishing house, in his late fifties

Faith Vergaretti McCarthy, his wife, retired high school teacher, slightly younger, manages the publishing house

Paul McCarthy, his older brother, an extremely successful “financial guru,” in his sixties

Candelaria “Candy” Cruz, Paul’s “inamorata,” a political operative in her thirties

Jerry Marcus, Matt & Faith’s next-door neighbor, an African-American Adonis, in his fifties

(A note on singing: songs are in the public domain, or lines are fair use. Paul offers nonsense scat or fragments of conversational trifles, such as “missed you”)

(The ‘//’ sign at the end of a line indicates that the character speaking next talks over the end of that line.)

Grudges was first produced on Zoom live streamed for an international audience by Knowledge Workings Theater LLC (Executive Producer — Marjorie Phillips Elliott) in July of 2019. Dora Endre directed assisted by Emma Denson with Gifford Elliott as technical director and Ed Altman as Narrator

The cast was as follows:

MATTHEW John Blaylock
FAITH Lynne Otis
PAUL James Lawson
CANDELARIA (CANDY) ..Jasmine Dorothy Haefner
JERRYAndre Montgomery

(It is November 2018. Lights rise on the charming, well-appointed Montclair, New Jersey, cottage of Matthew McCarthy and Faith Vergaretti, his wife of many years. We see a backdrop of a wall with the front door to the house, and two rooms separated by a wall with a swinging door. The rooms are rarely illuminated at the same time. Stage right is a living/dining room with two wooden stacking chairs, a small sofa, a "secretary" piled high with books, and a folding table against the wall, which will be opened during the evening. There is also a door that leads to a powder room. On the other wall is a sound system with some LPs displayed, including the Beatles' White Album. Stage left, behind the other wall, is a kitchen with counter and stove to the back. Matthew, late-fifties and slightly academic in his looks, enters from the kitchen in a rush with Faith, in her early fifties and quite, quite pretty, close behind.)

MATTHEW

(progressively louder) No.
No. No. Sorry, let me
rephrase that. No.

FAITH

Don't be irrational.

MATTHEW

Irrational? Self-preservation
is the quintessence of
rational behavior. Ask
Freud. No, better still, ask
Custer.

FAITH

Self-preservation? A rat
escaping a sinking ship,
leaving me to face...//

MATTHEW

*(taking her arm and steering
her toward the door)* Fine, so
here's an alternative to your
surprise dinner plans: We
flee the premises, repair to
the local bistro, and put this
unfortunate incident behind
us.

FAITH

Don't be ridiculous. We can't
leave now. Paul will be here
any minute.

MATTHEW

(He escapes to the kitchen, where she follows him as he grabs a seltzer can from the refrigerator.) And if we're not here when he arrives, he'll go away, and later we'll just say that we wrote down the wrong date. An honest mistake. Like Saint Peter missing Christ's crucifixion: "Oh, I thought it was *next* Friday!" *(He tries to get by her, but she blocks him.)*

FAITH

You're going to stay and you're going to gut it out. Because you're not a coward.//

MATTHEW

(interrupting and assuming an actorly voice) "I tell you this, my friend: all men are cowards."

FAITH

(interrupting) Save your fancy quotations for your hapless, drowning-in-debt students. They should see their hero now. Also drowning in debt.

MATTHEW

(making imaginary note)
Add Paul's visit to my
lecture on fight-or-flight
syndrome.

FAITH

Matthew, *tesoro*. *(takes his hand)* You — we — haven't
seen Paul in ages.

MATTHEW

So what? I follow him on
Instagram. I even tap in the
occasional "like" after
sneaking a peek at one of his
spectacular Seminole
sunsets. *(fingering some of
the volumes on the
secretary)* And I skim his
hideous books. *How to Make
Money Off the Coming
Apocalypse. Navigating the
Armageddon Yield Curve.
Frack and Ruin.*

FAITH

Stop it. Those are not Paul's
book titles. Check that:
They're not Paul's *best-
selling* book titles. *(beat)*
Come on, Matthew, we are
talking about your *brother!*

MATTHEW

(pause) Abel was Cain's
brother...

FAITH

You and Paul were close.

MATTHEW

Romulus and Remus were close. Like that. *(crosses fingers to indicate closeness)*
Then Mrs. Remus scheduled a convivial dinner, and...

FAITH

Mary, Mother of God, stop joking. Back in New York, when things looked *really* bad, who visited you in the hospital every day? Not your other so-called friends...//

MATTHEW

(grudgingly) Yes, yes, yes. We were close. Once. And true, Paul does have certain fine qualities. But so did Pol Pot. Great around kids. *(FAITH shoves him playfully.)*

FAITH

Oh, cut it out, Matthew.

MATTHEW

(suddenly serious) You cut it out, Faith. Why did you invite him without asking me? Remember that *last* Thanksgiving dinner? Disaster. It was like the Bataan Death March. Without the fragrant basmati rice.

FAITH

I didn't invite him. I answered my phone and he told me that he was passing through New York and wanted to see us. Look, it's only dinner. And he'll be on his best behavior. No arguments. He promised.

MATTHEW

Impossible. Paul is an argument addict.

FAITH

And you're not?//

MATTHEW

(shaking his head) Yes, okay, I argue with others. But Paul gets into arguments when there's nobody else in the room.

FAITH

Matthew, he's your brother.
(embracing him) And *our* old
singing partner. And I never
get to sing anymore. It'll be
fun. He won't talk about...
their guy. Those are my
ground rules: Under this
roof, between these four
walls...

MATTHEW

Isn't it "*among*" these four
walls?

FAITH

(staring him down)
Whatever. Here, in this
house, he does not say *that*
name out loud. Ever. And in
return, we don't say the
other name. The good name.
The progressive name. *Our*
guy's name. You know.

MATTHEW

You mean the one he calls
the Magic Kenyan? And he
agreed to this? Impossible.
Not being able to repeat the
name of that pestilential
pustule down on
Pennsylvania Avenue every
thirty seconds will eliminate
ninety percent of his
conversation. What will that
leave us to talk about?

FAITH

Family. Baseball. The human condition. Or (*beat*) – how about this? -- our publishing business. He's an author; you're an author.

MATTHEW

He's an author in the same way Deepak Chopra is an author. He diligently assembles rectangular objects bearing a startling resemblance to actual books.

FAITH

Come on. Think of how much fun it'll be when we start to sing. Because we *are* going to sing. We'll drink, and we'll eat, and then we'll sing. Come on. You always talk about trying to be your best self.

MATTHEW

That's aspirational. Like taking up the hammered dulcimer.

FAITH

*(She laughs despite herself
and embracing him again
forces him to look into her
eyes.)* At Thanksgiving, every
year, in front of the kids and
the cousins and the forty
other people you always
make me invite, we all bow
our heads and start to cry
when you recite that prayer
by Robert Louis Stevenson?
How does it go...?

MATTHEW

*(assuming actorly voice
again, returning her
embrace)* "Purge out of
every heart the lurking
grudge... Offenders, give us
the grace to accept and to
forgive offenders."

FAITH

(interrupting him) E
miracolo, your prayers are
answered. Today is the Day
of the Great Purgation. *\(She
kisses him.)* Look, I sang with
you two for years. I know
Paul, darling. I know the
wonderful Paul, the not-so-
wonderful Paul, and the
massively annoying, first-
class jerk Paul. But he
misses you. And I'm sure
that at some level you miss
him. You're a matched set.
The magnificent McCarthy
Brothers

MATTHEW

Wow. Makes us sound
iconic.

FAITH

You were. You are. To me.
(Doorbell rings.)

MATTHEW

Uh-oh, I have to go get
something. I'll try to be back
by next Easter.

FAITH

No. (*MATTHEW exits, retreating backwards into the kitchen.*) No! Mother of God. (*She gathers herself and opens the door. Paul, early sixties and dressed very stylishly, is standing there. He holds a bottle of wine, but nonetheless throws open his arms and twirls Faith around.*)

PAUL

Faith! (*singing in doo-wop style*) I missed you. Missed you, missed you, missed you. (*He sets her down with a flourish.*) Oh, how I missed you!

FAITH

(*giving him a peck on the cheek*) I am so glad you came, Paul. I can't tell you.

PAUL

Me too, sister. (*haltingly*) *Yo también, hermana.* (FAITH looks puzzled, while Paul retreats to the front door and speaks to someone outside.) Come in. (*singing*) Come in, darling! *Entra en la casa de mi hermano, querida.* CANDY CRUZ, thirties, Latina, and stunning, enters. They all stand for a moment in complete silence, then PAUL speaks in grand fashion.) Faith, this is my beautiful friend, Candy Cruz. Candy, this is my wonderful, wonderful sister-in-law Faith Vergaretti McCarthy.

FAITH

Candy. (*shaking hands*)
Welcome.

PAUL

We were in the city together
and...//

CANDY

(*speaking over him*) I hope
it's okay. So nice to meet
you. *Encantada.* Vergaretti?
Italiana! Chic.

PAUL

We figured a surprise would
be fun.

FAITH

Oh, you were always about
fun, Paul. (*beckoning*) Fun,
fun, fun.

PAUL

Well, till Daddy took the T-
bird away!

FAITH

But come in. Please.

PAUL

*(singing again and swinging
FAITH in a sort of clumsy
waltz)* If you're Irish, come
into the parlor, there's a
welcome there for you;
(improvising) and a welcome
for the Italians and the
sweet Latinas too! *(FAITH
pushes him off laughingly.)*
Where is my baby brother?
Did he make a break for the
Canadian border?

FAITH

He'll be right out.

PAUL

What's he doing? Putting the finishing touches on another one of those books that nobody reads? (*FAITH good-naturedly smacks PAUL on the arm as MATTHEW enters with a bottle of wine.*) Matty! Matty! Hey, hey, hey!

MATTHEW

What's this about books? Are you planning to read one this year? (*FAITH pinches MATTHEW'S arm from behind as PAUL and MATTHEW hug. CANDY inspects the room. PAUL gives him a bear hug. MATTHEW goes limp, disembracing quickly.*)

PAUL

I cannot believe I'm actually back in the "sanctuary." What an honor. Should we take off our shoes? Our socks? Is there a hazmat suit available, so that we don't contaminate anything?

CANDY

Oh, Paul, you are wild. You are just so wild. Isn't he wild?

MATTHEW

Wild as the wind. Maybe
wilder.

CANDY

(to FAITH) I love all the
white. *(FAITH nods)* *Un
paradiso blanco.*

FAITH

It was that way when we
moved in. Someday *we'll* get
around to painting the place.

*(MATTHEW
crosses over to
CANDY. PAUL
walks over to the
record collection
and picks up the
White Album.)*

PAUL

(loudly) Was this *my* copy of
the *White Album*? Sure looks
like it. My baby brother —
always *appropriating* other
people's property! Just like
the government! *(winks at
FAITH)* Sorry. My little joke.

MATTHEW

*(looks at FAITH balefully,
then turns to shake hands
with CANDY)* Hi. I'm
Matthew.

CANDY

I'm Candy. Cruz. With a "z."
Actually, Candelaria. My
grandmother's name.

MATTHEW

Candelaria. That's beautiful.
Wait, wasn't there a baseball
player by that name? Played
for the White Sox?

PAUL

Pirates.

CANDY

My name comes from the
Latin word "candela,"
meaning "candle." My
Mother's idea. In fact, I was
born on the feast of the
Purification of the Virgin,
the day they bless the
candles.

MATTHEW

The Purification of the
Virgin! But, hold on, isn't
purifying a virgin
redundant? (*now relenting,*
worried that CANDY will
take offense) That is, given
her family background. And
connections.

FAITH

(to MATTHEW) Idiota! The priest blesses the candles and the family keeps them lit so the Blessed Mother will protect us.

CANDY

(grabbing FAITH'S hand)
¡Naturalmente! Look! Already we have something in common! The One True Church!

PAUL

Dios mio, sí! And just like a candle, this one lights up the room. (taking CANDY'S hand) Oh, yeah! Got the right girl at the right time with the right frame of mind!

CANDY

They say right-wing women are sexier. (showing off a bit, hand on hip)

(MATTHEW looks at FAITH, who avoids his gaze.)

MATTHEW

Sexier than right-wing men? Absolutely.

PAUL

I think of you as more right-leaning than right-wing, *querida*. Labels limit people, *no es verdad?* (*turning to FAITH and MATTHEW*) This one? Very complex. Libertarian, free market, conservative — that is, true conservative. (*kissing CANDY on the forehead*) Lots going on in there.

CANDY

(*taps her chest*) Small government. Big heart.

PAUL

Corazon. Mucho corazon. (*overemphasizing the “z”*) Or is it *muy*?

FAITH

(*to PAUL*) Paul, politics? You agreed.

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey. (*singing*)
Don't you worry 'bout a
thing. (*talking*) Lots of other
stuff we can talk about. (*to*
MATTHEW) I explained
today's ground rules to
Candy, the *covenant*, if you
will, and how I made this
promise to Faith that
neither of us is going to
mention certain names. As
our President says, there's
nothing more important
than keeping promises. (*to*
FAITH) See? I didn't say his
name.

MATTHEW

*Our president? What you
mean "our," Kimo Sabe?
(CANDY winces at the joke,
which she is too young to
understand.)*

FAITH

Isn't referring to the
President like that a divisive
political statement, Paul?
(*He spreads his hands.*) No
names. You promised.

PAUL

No names. But you do accept
that *he* is our President? And
that *he* rules from sea to
shining sea?

CANDY

*Viva el Presidente! Viva
(catches herself) el...
Presidente!*

MATTHEW

Or as Faith likes to call him:
*Il Duce. (FAITH smacks him
on the back and shakes her
head "No" vigorously.)*

PAUL

(Laughs) You're not
Electoral College deniers,
are you?

FAITH

We are not. Oh, my, I see
that you've brought us some
fancy *Italian* vino. Let's give
it a try. *(MATTHEW holds up
his bottle in protest, but to
no avail.)*

CANDY

Do you have any bourbon? I
like it neat and well-aged.

MATTHEW

Neat and well-aged? Just like Paul. *(shows his bottle again)*

PAUL

I'm going to go full-bore liberal here and have red wine. Matty. You need to taste *this one. (looks at MATTHEWS'S label, places it on a sideboard)* I have to admit, blue states do have some awfully good wines. California. *(leaving)* Oregon. New Jersey. *(enters kitchen laughing at his own joke)* Corkscrew? *(FAITH follows. Lights dim in the living room and rise in kitchen where Paul takes the corkscrew and starts to open his bottle as FAITH gets glasses.)* Did you tell him what we talked about?

FAITH

(whispering and motioning for him to do the same) No! It has to come from you, Paul. Just find a way to work it into the conversation. Say that he'd be doing you a favor. Otherwise, it's no-go.

PAUL

(dubious) Come on, Faith.
Matty is liberal. He's not
stupid.

FAITH

Just try it my way, Paul. Stick
with the plan. And with your
promise. Please.

PAUL

Faith, I always said Matty
was a very lucky man to
have you as his wife. *(pours
wine into her glass)*

FAITH

And part of that luck is
having you as his brother.
*(He toasts her with the open
bottle as lights dim on them
and come up again on the
living room.)*

CANDY

Such a lovely neighborhood.
Paul said that you have lived
here for some time.

MATTHEW

Not that long. We downsized
when we became empty-
nesters.

CANDY

Empty-nesters! Such a sad
word! Such a sad concept!
Que tristeza!

MATTHEW

Oh, we keep ourselves
amused.

CANDY

Aha! And how do you amuse
yourselves in the empty
nest? *(pokes him)* Hmm?
Hmm?

MATTHEW

(a little embarrassed) You'll
have to ask Faith about that
one. *(silence)* Now, where is
that bourbon? *(Starts to
move toward the kitchen but
CANDY puts a hand on his
arm and slides past him.)*

CANDY

I'll get it. *(Just as she is about to go through the swinging door, PAUL re-enters, holding a tray with a bottle and two glasses of red wine. They share a kiss while gliding by each other. The lights switch again to reveal the kitchen and leave the living room in the dark. As CANDY enters, FAITH is holding a glass of bourbon, which she presents to her.)*
Perfect. I hope this isn't an imposition.

FAITH

Not at all. *(She continues packing a tray with hors d'oeuvres.)* In the house I grew up in, unexpected guests were always expected. *(waves her hands)*

CANDY

I'd offer to help, but *la cocina* is not my *native* habitat.

FAITH

That's fine. Everything's under control. *(sips her glass of wine)* Well, so far. *(The lights dim there and switch to the living room, where PAUL and MATTHEW simultaneously, pretentiously swirl, sniff, and sip their glasses of wine.)*

MATTHEW

What is this? It's good.

PAUL

(pronouncing the name richly) Amarone. Amarone della Valpolicella, Classico. Best wine in the world.

MATTHEW

Says who? *(FAITH and CANDY enter with drinks and hors d'oeuvres.)*

PAUL

The *cognoscenti*, Matty.

MATTHEW

Oh, right. The *cognoscenti*. Those guys.

CANDY

He calls you Matty. That's so sweet.

FAITH

Not *that* sweet. He does it because it annoys him.

CANDY

And what do you call him in return?

MATTHEW

Daddy's Big Regret? The Bringer of Darkness? Droopy Drawers? That was our mother's childhood nickname for Paul.

FAITH

Matthew!

PAUL

Still sharp, my little brother. Could've been a contender.

MATTHEW

Contending for what?

FAITH

Moving right along, how did *you two* meet?

CANDY

We both worked on
(hesitation) the President's...
campaign.

MATTHEW

Oh, right. The *President*.

PAUL

The President? So, you *do*
acknowledge that he won.
Hey, hey, hey! Progress.
Because the last time we
communicated there was a
bizarre stigmatization
process floating around.
(mournfully) And it's still out
there. Why, just the other
day, the President...

MATTHEW

The aforementioned *Il Duce-*
bag...

FAITH

Second warning! I'm gonna
get you to start singing
instead of bickering. Singing,
understand? No politics.
*(She heads back into the
kitchen trilling scales, and
the lights stay on in both
stage sections.)*

PAUL

She's worried that you're
going to explode.

MATTHEW

She's worried that *you're*
going to explode.

PAUL

Faith knows better. She
knows self-control comes
naturally to me. (*CANDY
pours him another glass of
wine and PAUL smiles.*)

MATTHEW

Seriously? Gee, Paul, I think
we're going to have to cut
you off from the *Amarone
della Valpolicella – Classico*.
Because, reviewing the
greatest hits in your
personal history of self-
control, we'll have to include
your kicking me out of your
house on Christmas day
because I questioned the
efficacy of mixing Echinacea
with vodka. Vodka! (*pours
his own glass of wine*)

PAUL

(to CANDY) At the time, people were worried about mucus deposits spontaneously turning into the flu. So, people on the left started taking Echinacea straight up, which never worked, while conservatives took Echinacea with a chaser, which worked wonders. But Matty insisted that Echinacea should never be mixed with alcohol — because that's what the CDC said. Clowns.

MATTHEW

Refresh my memory: Your medical degree is from what school?

PAUL

A report in *The North American Journal of Enlightened Homeopathy* proved that untreated mucus deposits routinely claimed twenty thousand lives a year. Perhaps more.
(CANDY gasps)

FAITH

(from the kitchen, where she is chopping vegetables) Are we already on the Echinacea? Congratulations, boys: Seven minutes and thirteen seconds before you broke down and mentioned those deadly mucus deposits. A new personal record. Now why don't you turn those competitive juices into something positive, like finding some sheet music?

(FAITH re-enters.)

CANDY

You two are wild! *(turning to Faith)* Aren't they wild?

FAITH

(deadpan) Yes. Born to be wild.

PAUL

(more agitated) Oh, you should have seen him standing up on the dining room table at our parents' house thirty years ago, waving his library card and lecturing us on the true meaning of the word "liberal" being connected to the Latin "*liber*" for "book." Which is wrong, by the way.

MATTHEW

I was joking.

PAUL

All in defense of... *(suddenly clasps his chest and starts to gasp)*

MATTHEW

It's okay to say *that* name, although even I don't like hearing it very much. *(actorly voice to CANDY)* Dukakis.

CANDY

Who was Dukaka?

MATTHEW

Famous Bay State tank commander...

FAITH

(While they converse, PAUL appears to be having a heart attack.) Paul? Are you okay?

PAUL

Aargh!!!! Aargggh! *(He wobbles over to a chair.)* This is what happens when...

MATTHEW

(They all react.) Christ. Are you okay?

PAUL

Oh, Jesus...

CANDY

Paul, baby, breathe. Focus on your breath. *Pranayama*. Left nostril. Left nostril. *(CANDY tries to help him close one nostril, but he shakes himself away and rises from the chair, only to stagger to the kitchen door like Frankenstein's monster, where he supports himself against the doorframe, tenses his body, and then relaxes and turns back to them.)*

PAUL

Gas. *(waving his hand like a fan)* Acid reflux. My herbal supplement is supposed to handle it. Sorry. Happens without warning. And I always think it's a heart attack. One day it will be.

MATTHEW

Maybe gas *and* a heart attack? Get your money's worth, bro. I'd buy a ticket to see you go up in flames. Like Brunhilde in *Gotterdammerung*.

PAUL

Hopefully, you'll be right
there at my side, locked in
one final fraternal embrace.
Excuse me, the bathroom is
where...? (*PAUL exits
through the bathroom door
stage right.*)

CANDY

Oh, *mi corazon!* (*pats her
chest and sits*) So you teach
college?

MATTHEW

Part-time. Mostly, I write.
We run a small publishing
house.

FAITH

Very *small*. You can barely
see it.

CANDY

(*to FAITH*) And you do...?

MATTHEW

Faith manages the
publishing operations.

FAITH

I manage like it's going out
of style.

MATTHEW

We're a team.

FAITH

Go, team!

CANDY

That must be great. To be a team. But how does that work on a day-to-day basis?

FAITH

He pitches, and I catch.

(A loud flush is heard, and then PAUL emerges from the powder room. He closes the door with great ceremony.)

PAUL

That was fantastic. The best. Ohhhh. *(singing)* I feel good. *(continues to moan happily)* I knew that I would.

MATTHEW

Please accept our congratulations, but could we skip the proctology report?

PAUL

(taking a seat) Why? If we feel good, what's wrong with spreading the news?

MATTHEW

Spreading the news about
your latest bowel
movement? (*CANDY pats
PAUL'S back.*)

PAUL

Why not? No need to stick to
the uptight liberal narrative.
We're in a new age now,
where you can talk about
anything, Matty. Well,
maybe not here in the
politically correct
demilitarized zone.

FAITH

Watch it!

PAUL

Harmless joshing.

FAITH

I better check on the food.
(*to PAUL*) We're having your
favorite dishes. Farro salad
with fried cauliflower and
prosciutto. (*As PAUL
applauds, FAITH turns to
CANDY.*) Okay with you?

CANDY

I eat everything. None of
that vegetarian, low-fat,
gluten-free crap for me.

PAUL

She's omnivorous.
Insatiable.

*(Seeing that
MATTHEW is
about to
challenge
CANDY, FAITH
grabs his arm.)*

FAITH

There is something I need
you to do.

PAUL

I can help.

FAITH & MATTHEW

No! *(They laugh.)*

FAITH

You're the guest. Relax.

*(FAITH and MATTHEW enter
the kitchen, where the lights
come up dimly. MATTHEW
mimes his distress and
frustration, as FAITH seeks
to calm him. Meanwhile,
CANDY and PAUL stay in the
living room.)*

CANDY

Why didn't you tell them I
was coming?

PAUL

I thought I did. (*She pours and hands him another glass of wine.*) Maybe not. An innocent mistake.

CANDY

I don't think so. (*grabs his shirt*) I think you wanted to fuck with their minds.

PAUL

(*shaking his head and laughing*) Not everyone is as diabolical as you, *mi alma*.

CANDY

But you are. You're always fucking with people's minds. Fucking and fucking and fucking some more. *No es verdad?*

PAUL

Stop it! I'd never do that. Not with my family. We just like to mix it up a bit.

CANDY

Triggering liberals. Fucking with them. Fucking and re-fucking. That's what you do. You are a mind-fucker. A total fucking mind-fucker.

PAUL

No, I'm not. At least not here.
Matty and Faith are family.
(She laughs.) Seriously. My
purpose is to persuade, not
degrade. *(She shakes her
head.)* I love my brother.
*(They kiss and a beat later,
as the light goes down in the
kitchen, MATTHEW enters
with more hors d'oeuvres.)*

CANDY

I'm going to get a refill.
That's very good bourbon.
(She exits to the kitchen.)

PAUL

*(PAUL takes some food and
motions for MATTHEW to sit
next to him, but MATTHEW
remains standing.)* How's
that small but well-
respected publishing house
of yours?

MATTHEW

Great. Fabulous. A few new
books coming out.
Promising titles. How about
you?

PAUL

Fantastic. Best year ever.
Almost done with my new
book delineating a foolproof
investment strategy in an
economy where things just
keep getting better and
better.

MATTHEW

Better and better than what?

PAUL

Than before. *(He stands.)*

MATTHEW

Paul, the economy's been
booming for years.

PAUL

Define "booming." *(They are
nose to nose.)*

FAITH

(from kitchen) What's going
on in there?

MATTHEW

Paul is teaching me the
principles of behavioral
finance.

FAITH

(leading CANDY, who is holding her refilled glass of bourbon) We should sing. Before we eat. (singing in a joking way) Do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do.

PAUL

And if we can't tell the truth about the economy, I think we'll also be singing after we eat.

MATTHEW

But not *while* we eat, please. *(to CANDY)* Does he still keep running his mouth, with the food spilling out all over the place? Like Jabba the Hut at Bob's Big Boy?

CANDY

You two are really alike. You're so wild. Aren't they... *wild?*

FAITH

Ask me again after you've spent an evening with them. Or, in my case, a half-century.

PAUL

But if I might finish my thought on the economy – because the one indisputable fact in all this is that (pauses) *somebody* I know is getting the job done...

MATTHEW

And what exactly is *the job*?

PAUL

Managing the economy. Job Number One.

MATTHEW

Please. President -- the last guy -- deserves all the credit for that. He saved us from a second Great Depression. He did. The only job your guy ever managed was a hand job. And he had to pay for that.

FAITH

Stop it, Matthew! (*She pushes him, then goes to the drawer to fetch some sheet music.*)

MATTHEW

(feigning innocence) But
Faith, don't you remember?
We're living in a brave new
world! A world where we
can talk about anything.
Literally anything. Bowel
movements. Hand jobs. Gas.
That's what Paul says.

FAITH

Just drop it, Matthew. You
too, Paul. Let's sing. *(FAITH
gives the brothers a few
pieces of sheet music.)*

MATTHEW

He started it.

PAUL

Did not.

FAITH

Oh, boy...

PAUL

I simply asked how your
boutique publishing house
was getting along. And
then...

FAITH

You know something? I quit
proctoring homeroom years
ago, boys. (*smacks them
both with the sheet music*)

CANDY

I couldn't teach children. No
way. Can't even be in the
same room with them for
more than five minutes.
Their needs are
inexhaustible.

MATTHEW

And yet you're with Paul?

FAITH

Are you two going to pick
fights with each other all
evening? C'mon, what's a
good harmony we all
remember?

CANDY

(*ignoring her*) Human beings
are hard-wired to fight, to
compete. Scientifically, it's in
our nature, and we shouldn't
deny our nature. Our
ancestors understood. They
were *hyper*-aware of
potential dangers lurking
out there.

MATTHEW

Like having their long-lost
brothers unexpectedly drop
by?

FAITH

(ignoring him) But the
human race has evolved.

CANDY

Isn't that just another
"progressive" myth? The
reality is, exactly like our
ancestors, we see threats
everywhere; *Es la realidad*.
We smell them; we taste
them. And when that
happens, our lizard brain
wants to rear up and strike.
(*mimes striking*)

FAITH

Our lizard brain?

CANDY

Biology rules. *Es la realidad*.

MATTHEW

Biology? Faith taught that
once upon a time. You two
could discuss — oh, I don't
know — whether dinosaurs
are more than six thousand
years old. Or climate change.

FAITH

No. Climate change is off the table tonight. So is Medicare. And taxes.

MATTHEW

What do you do, Candy?
Besides making sure Paul takes his serotonin. *(FAITH swats him with the sheet music.)*

CANDY

(to FAITH) I like the way you handle him. *(She pats PAUL on the arm.)* I could learn a few things. *(to MATTHEW)* I'm a social media consultant.

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey! Too modest. University of Miami Doctorate. International Relations. And now she is a platinum-level dissent exterminator.

CANDY

Oooh, that sounds positively evil. *(pause)* I like it. *(laughs)* I'm going to add that to my LinkedIn profile.

FAITH

Dissent exterminator?
Meaning...

PAUL

Meaning that if someone is concerned about what people are saying about them online, or if they are spreading quote, unquote “fake news,” she steps in and obliterates them.

FAITH

How does she... *(to CANDY)*
you... do that?

CANDY

Trade secret. *(laughs)* No, it's simple. And I don't need any of those mysterious bots you're always hearing about. I work the trends and the threads. Influence the influencers. I merely supply words as ammunition and then watch the troops mow down the enemy.

MATTHEW

Do you work for both sides?

CANDY

I work for the side that pays
the most for punishing the
treasonous. (*MATTHEW*
starts to respond, but FAITH
jumps in.)

FAITH

We should sing. Do you sing,
Candy?

CANDY

No, but I'm a terrific listener.
So, I'll just sit back and be
the impartial judge.

PAUL

(laughing and hugging her)
Hey, hey. It's not a
competition, babe. That's
not how music works. We
sing harmony. *Armonia!*

CANDY

Por supuesto. But really
everything is a competition,
even when you pretend that
it's not. That's basic biology.
Es la realidad.

MATTHEW

Fine. So, let's get right into it
with "All You Need Is Love."

CANDY

I adore that song. Katy
Perry, right?

FAITH

No, let's start with one of the
old Irish favorites your
mother loved. (*singing*) "I've
been a wild rover for many a
year..."

PAUL

(*taking up his line*) "And I
spent all my money on
whiskey and beer."

MATTHEW

"But now I'm returning with
gold in great store, and I
never will play the wild
rover no more."

FAITH, PAUL, MATTHEW

"And it's no, nay, never,
No, nay never no more;
Will I play the wild rover,
No never no more."

MATTHEW

No, no, no, no, no, wait a
minute! (*waving his hands to
stop them*) What part were
you singing, Paul?

PAUL

Wasn't I supposed to handle
the melody?

CANDY

You actually used to sing
songs like that? In public?
Madre de Dios. Why?

FAITH

We were folksingers. It's a
very famous folk song.

CANDY

Famous where?

PAUL

I've got an idea: Let's do
something *quintessentially*
American. (*blows on*
pitchpipe and then sings) "I
looked over Jordan and
what did I see, coming for to
carry me home?" (*The*
others hesitate.)

CANDY

A Negro spiritual! Yes! (*She*
hesitates.) *Perdonme*. I did
not mean to say "Negro."

FAITH

(*FAITH picks it up.*) "A band
of angels coming after me,
coming for to carry me
home."

MATTHEW

Swing low, sweet chariot,
coming for to carry me
home." *(They look at each
other and nod, the signal to
start harmonizing.)*

FAITH, PAUL, MATTHEW.

"Swing low, sweet chariot,
coming for to carry me
home."

PAUL

Are we flat?

FAITH

Not to my ears.

CANDY

Ask about mine.

MATTHEW

Maybe we should warm up a
bit more. *(chugs a glass of
wine)*

FAITH

Oh, gosh, I've got to check on
the food. *(She runs out into
the kitchen.)*

CANDY

I'm going to go and pretend
to help. *(She kisses PAUL
lingeringly and leaves.)*

PAUL

Isn't she great? *No es la verdad?* Having a girlfriend like her makes me want to live forever.

MATTHEW

Girlfriend? What, are you still in high school??

PAUL

Okay, lady friend. Significant other. No, I got it: *Mi cielito*.

MATTHEW

One to a customer, pal. Which is it?

PAUL

Inamorata. (beat) And get this: We're moving in together.

MATTHEW

Ah, the classic Methuselah Finesse! Well, good luck with that, old timer! Especially with that bum ticker of yours.

(Lights switch to kitchen, where FAITH maneuvers ingredients in and out of the saucepan. CANDY leans in to watch.)

FAITH

I have to find the other saucepan, the big one. And the oil. Which has to get up to three-hundred-and-fifty degrees. And then I come in here every five minutes and switch out the batches.

CANDY

Do you miss your career — teaching?

FAITH

High school biology? That wasn't a career. And being a mother wasn't really a career either. More like a sentence: Hard labor with no chance of parole. But I do love my kids!

CANDY

So, you were a stay-at-home mom?

FAITH

Back then, we just called it
“mom.”

CANDY

That must’ve been so nice.
Traditional. Like on *Mad
Men*. Did your progressive
friends make you feel guilty
about that?

FAITH

Progressive friends? What
does that...//

CANDY

*(CANDY barrels straight
ahead.)* I read this study that
said that stay-at-home
moms are much more likely
to experience sadness or
anger or listlessness or
suicidal impulses during the
day than moms who work
outside the home making
lots of money and building
important careers. Was that
true for you?

FAITH

Depended upon the day. But
I’m generally a happy
person.

CANDY

What would get you angry?
Or make you feel intensely
suicidal?

FAITH

(moving some ingredients)
Excuse me, I have to slice
the *prosciutto*. *(She flashes a*
very deliberate smile.)

(The lights shift,
and we see that
Paul and
Matthew, both
seated, are
drinking wine.)

PAUL

The new book is going to be
big. Everyone needs a more
sophisticated investment
approach now that the new
tax cut turned out to be so
good.

MATTHEW

Good in what sense?

PAUL

In dollars and cents.

MATTHEW

I think there are times when
paying taxes is the proper
thing to do.

PAUL

Why? So, some fat, lazy
bureaucrat can piss away
your hard-earned money?

MATTHEW

Paul. Remember the rules of
engagement Faith set down?

PAUL

Faith isn't here. And this
isn't politics. It's...//

FAITH

*(from the other room) I can
hear you. Start warming up.
Let me hear some lip trills
and flutters. (She does some
trills, which elicits laughter
from them.)*

MATTHEW

I know a song that's perfect
for tonight. *(starts singing)*
"Once I built a railroad, I
made it run, made it race
against time. Once I built a
railroad, now it's done.
Brother, can you spare a
dime?"

PAUL

Oh, and *that's* keeping
politics out of the
conversation? Why not just
go ahead and sing the
Internationale?

CANDY

(re-entering) Oh, I know
that song. *(in a sing-song
fashion)* "Stand up, all
victims of oppression / For
the tyrants fear your
might! / Don't cling so hard
to your possessions. For you
have nothing if you have no
rights!" *(She cracks up
laughing.)*

MATTHEW

How do *you* know the words
to *the* socialist anthem?

CANDY

I learned it doing
undercover work in college.

PAUL

Isn't she amazing? She infiltrated these leftist groups filled with all of these googly-eyed, privileged trust-fund kids. You know? Like the ones you lecture.

MATTHEW

Privileged? You mean like white privilege? Wouldn't that term also describe the avaricious swine who turn up at your personal-finance seminars? (*FAITH reenters.*) Another thing: Nobody uses expressions like "googly-eyed" anymore. You sound like Spiro Agnew.

FAITH

What are you talking about now?

PAUL

Cognitive therapy.

MATTHEW

Animal husbandry. (*They both laugh.*)

PAUL

Let's talk about your wonderful kids. How are they doing?

FAITH

Well, Beth is in her third year of teaching.

CANDY

Smart girl! Retire at forty and live off the rest of us for the next fifty years.

PAUL

That said, a noble profession.

FAITH

And Liz finished nursing school in May.

PAUL

Healthcare isn't going to go away even if... (*stops himself*) Same boyfriend?

FAITH

Yes, and still *just* a boyfriend.

PAUL

This generation is slower to commit.

FAITH

Sad but true. And Edward?

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey. Good news there. He just joined the think tank that picked the last three Supreme Court justices, and now...//

MATTHEW

(changing the subject) Guys, we're being rude. Talking about family like this. Leaving our guest on the sidelines.

CANDY

It's fine. Families fascinate me. *La familia es muy importante. Muy.*

FAITH

Tell us about yours.

CANDY

I come from a strong Latino family; lots of *familismo*. A little too much right now. So, we're taking some time off from each other, to learn to have more respect for each other's life choices.

FAITH

I'm sorry to hear that.

CANDY

No, it's all good. *Familismo* is too intense. You're not allowed to have your own beliefs. But I love the *idea* of families. Especially other people's families. (*FAITH nods, noncommittally.*)

PAUL

I always thought of our friends as our extended family. They certainly showed up for Sunday dinner often enough. (*to MATTHEW*) Don't you miss that?

MATTHEW

Sunday dinner? Jesus, Paul, Mom died eighteen years ago. That's about a thousand Sundays. Sure, I still miss *her*, but her cooking? Are you nuts?

PAUL

What I meant was don't you miss those feelings of connection to our people?

MATTHEW

I'm still connected.

PAUL

Kind of the odd man out
now when it comes to the
people we grew up with.

MATTHEW

The *odd* man out?

PAUL

I'm just saying that within
our constellation of friends,
you're now an outlier
because of your views about
(*pause*) our current
President.

MATTHEW

What friends are you talking
about? *Your* friends? *Your*
friends? That would be the
first five people you meet in
hell. And the next five, too.

PAUL

At least I still have five
friends.

FAITH

(*taking a drink*) Let's try
another song.
"Shenandoah?" Your big
number, Paul.

CANDY

(*pointing to watch*) It's five
minutes.

FAITH

Oh, thank you.

CANDY

They say I'm a born
manager.

*(FAITH hustles to
kitchen, switches
the cauliflower
for the next
batch.)*

PAUL

Donnie Dryer was saying the
same thing last week...//

MATTHEW

Donnie was *your* friend. And
an enormous asshole.

CANDY

Wow! You really do speak
your mind. Not like some
progressives. *Bravo!*

PAUL

Donnie is my best friend,
Matthew.

MATTHEW

Goebbels was Hitler's best
friend. No, maybe it was
Goering. Hard to keep those
guys straight.

CANDY

I thought *I* was your best friend.

PAUL

Of course, you are the best of my best friends. *Lo mejor de los mejores amigos.*

CANDY

Amigas. Feminine.

PAUL

(singing) *Amigas. Amiga. Amante.* Whatever. *Que sera, sera, non?*

FAITH

(returning) That's Italian, Paul. But this conversation is silly. We have no way of knowing who our friends voted for.

MATTHEW

Whom.

PAUL

I do. I make it my business to find out where people stand. And whether they've changed. Ran into Pete Schroeder down in Boca and went right up and asked him.

FAITH

And what did he say?

PAUL

He was for *him*. He was *all*
in.

MATTHEW

Pete? That's ridiculous.

PAUL

I only know what he told
me.

MATTHEW

What did he tell you? Let me
hear it. Verbatim.

PAUL

I'll try to be precise,
Professor. He said: "Paul,
when I got into that polling
booth, I just couldn't bring
myself to vote for *her*. Not in
good conscience."

MATTHEW

But he didn't actually say
that he voted for the Foul
Fiend, did he? Maybe he
penciled in Voldemort as a
write-in candidate. Or
maybe he was just humoring
you, the way he pretended
to enjoy Mom's Baked
Alaska. Which everybody
hated.

PAUL

Why would he humor me?

MATTHEW

Because he knows how bat-
shit you'd get if he dared to
disagree with you.

PAUL

Bat-shit? Hey, hey, hey!
Who's the one raising his
voice here? (*calming down*)
Seeing you so changed and
estranged from your own
people, it breaks my heart,
Matty. It really does.

MATTHEW

What heart? And who says
I'm estranged?

PAUL

Estranged from the people
we grew up with, people
who all understand what
needs to happen to put our
country back on track.
Tommy Farrell. Billy Snyder.
Mike Malloy.

FAITH

Hang on! Didn't Billy Snyder
die from pancreatic cancer?
In excruciating pain? *Before*
the last election?

PAUL

(sheepishly) Did he? Sorry to
hear that. But if he was still
alive, knowing Billy, you
know he'd vote for...

MATTHEW

(fake shock) You are
shameless. (to CANDY in a
spooky voice)
Gerrymandering the dead.

FAITH

What about Ed Mulligan? He
was one of your closest
friends. Mulligan voted for....

PAUL

Sad but true. I've had to put
that friendship on hold.

FAITH

You're not friends with Ed
anymore?

PAUL

No. We're through.

FAITH

Mikey McAuliffe?

PAUL

On hold. But there I still
have hopes.

CANDY

*Mientras haya vida, existe la
esperanza. (Hearing this, all
three turn to face her.)*
Where there is life, there is
hope.

FAITH

What about your old
girlfriend, that Polish girl?
What was her name?
Monica?

MATTHEW

Monica Petrowski.

CANDY

You had a girlfriend named
Monica Petrowski? Wild!
Sexy blonde?

PAUL

(shaking his head) Monica is beyond being on hold.

CANDY

What I love about Paul is that he sticks to his principles.

MATTHEW

So did Jack the Ripper.

FAITH

(cuffs MATTHEW on the shoulder) But seriously, Paul: Ed and Monica? Those are dear old friends.

PAUL

Faith, how can I have a real conversation with them today? There's just too much hate. And not just for *(pause)* our President, but for everyone who supported him, all those good, hard-working Americans supporting The Fifth American Revolution. The title of my last book, by the way.

MATTHEW

Second choice, though. *Mein Kampf* was already taken.

PAUL

Oh, right, the classic, knee-jerk, holier-than-thou, East Coast liberal go-to move: Everyone who disagrees with you is a Nazi.

FAITH

Paul! He's joking. Don't make it sound like we're fighting the Civil War all over again.

CANDY

In a way, we are. Except that this time we're not fighting about states' rights.

MATTHEW

We weren't fighting about states' rights last time. We were fighting about slavery. You can look it up.

CANDY

Matthew, *por favor*, that's just one narrow-band version of American history. (*FAITH pinches MATTHEW.*) People like us are fighting for individual rights today. Individual freedom.

PAUL

(singing) Freedom!
Freedom! *(speaking)* *El*
precio de la libertad es la
eternal vigilancia.

CANDY

(corrects his mistake, but
sweetly) *Vigilancia.* And it's
eternale.

PAUL

Claro. We were all raised to
be prepared to fight for
freedom. But somehow
we've forgotten what the
word "freedom" means.
Concord and Lexington.
Bunker Hill. Molly Pitcher!
Why, I remember your
father, Faith...//

FAITH

So do I. Proceed with
caution.

PAUL

(to CANDY) Vinny was one of
those tough Italian guys
from Arthur Avenue. A
Marine. Fought on
Guadalcanal. *And Iwo Jima.*
(to Faith) You know he
would have voted for our
guy.

FAITH

(interrupting) No, I don't know that! And in any case, they're *my* people, not yours. Leave the dead out of this. *(upset)* Paul, you're breaking your promise.

PAUL

(after a pause, singing with a smile) Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. So, so, so sorry. (FAITH smiles reluctantly.)

FAITH

I need to turn over the cauliflower.

PAUL

(singing, tap-dancing) Don't turn over the cauliflower, with anyone else but me...

CANDY

Only one minute late. No, two. But I'm sure it will be fine. (FAITH, exiting, stares at CANDY.)

PAUL

(to the others, in a stage whisper) But her father would have!

MATTHEW

Stop being such an...

CANDY

Asshole? He can't help himself. *(She tousles his hair.)* He's just a big boy out to have some fun. But he's harmless. And such a good person. You know that.

PAUL

Yo estoy un hombre sincero...

CANDY

(laughing a little and correcting him) *Yo soy.* The verb "ser" is used to describe a personality trait. Not "estar."

MATTHEW

So, Candy, Paul now has his own personal Spanish tutor in you? *Caramba.*

PAUL

Actually, I keep up my Spanish through my business contacts: Latin-American investors love a little Spanglish. And now I have a very good reason to practice. By the way, how's your French these days?

MATTHEW

(cartoonish accent) Me no know; ask Pepe.

CANDY

(recoiling) That's quite the racist stereotype, Matthew. You surprise me.

MATTHEW

(flustered) I'm sorry. It's a joke thing we used to say to each other as kids.

CANDY

Is that supposed to make it less offensive to Latinos?

MATTHEW

No. I meant that ... I apologize...//

CANDY

(laughing) I'm playing you. I don't care. It *is* funny. Trust me, I'm not a PC girl.

PAUL

Candy, stop triggering my helpless, hapless liberal sibling. It's like teasing the animals at the zoo.

CANDY

Yes. Particularly, the okapis.
So soft. So sensitive.

MATTHEW

I should go help Faith.

*(He exits to
kitchen; PAUL
follows him.
Lights come up.)*

PAUL

Actually, at some point I
wanted to get a couple
minutes alone with you to
discuss something personal,
Matty.

MATTHEW

Your funeral arrangements?
Mahogany or burnished
marble?

PAUL

(exasperated) Matty! There's
something I need to discuss
with you here...

MATTHEW

Okay, but let's wait until
after dessert. I think it's
Baked Alaska. *(silence, as
FAITH keeps working on the
food)*

PAUL

What's wrong? You seem so uptight.

MATTHEW

This (*gestures around the room*) whole thing makes me uncomfortable.

PAUL

Well, it doesn't make me uncomfortable. Not at all.

MATTHEW

That's why it *does* make me uncomfortable. Because it *should* make you uncomfortable.

FAITH

Matthew. Not now. Not in the kitchen. Too many sharp objects.

PAUL

We're just having a conversation. Like we used to talk late at night as kids. You remember those nocturnal *tête-à-têtes*.

MATTHEW

Paul, we haven't had a conversation in years. We go directly from third-degree interrogation to insults to brainwashing.

PAUL

Because I support our President? Hey, hey, hey! I didn't stop talking to you when *your* guy was in the White House.

MATTHEW

You *didn't* talk to me; you talked *at* me — endlessly and apoplectically. And I wasn't part of a hate-filled movement led by (*pause*) your... *your*...//

FAITH

Cut it out, both of you.

PAUL

Hate? My side is filled with hate? I'm the hater? Hey, hey, hey, I think we need a little fact-check here.

(PAUL rushes first to the living room, and then exits the house completely.)

FAITH

He was just trying to talk, Matthew! You don't have one ounce of self-control...//

MATTHEW

He started it.

FAITH

Mary, Mother of God! What are you, eight? *(She goes into the other room where CANDY sits by herself.)* Where did he go?

CANDY

Outside. Not being able to express himself is very difficult for my Pablito Bonito.

FAITH

A McCarthy brother not being able to express himself? *Madonn*! These two lollapaloozas do nothing but express themselves. And *your* personal lollapalooza promised not to talk about politics, period. He promised.

CANDY

That was a ridiculous promise. No one could expect him to honor that.

FAITH

If he knew he couldn't honor it, then it wasn't a promise.

CANDY

Aren't promises made to be broken?

(FAITH stares at her. MATTHEW enters from the kitchen. PAUL storms through the front door, waving a lawn sign.)

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey! What have we here? *(He adopts an actorly voice, positioning sign in front of him.)* "Hate has no home here." *"El odio no tiene hogar aquí."* *(Looks to CANDY for pronunciation approval and points to the characters on the sign, written in Arabic, Hebrew, and Korean.)* Blah, blah, blah: Hate has no home here. *(holds sign closer)* What? No Yoruba? No Swahili? How will the Senegalese know that this is a safe house? Not to mention the Namibians. As usual, the poor Namibians get left out in the cold. And that's just not fair.

CANDY

Such bullshit. Where is this so-called racism and oppression you complain about? Fake problems. Manufactured.

PAUL

Hate has no home here? You
and your socialist comrades
hate our current president,
hate our vice president, *hate*
the Senate Majority
Leader...//

MATTHEW

You left out the Secretary of
Commerce. And the House
whip.

PAUL

We know you despise half
the country.

MATTHEW

(speaking over PAUL)
Technically, it's more like
forty-two-point-four
percent. And no, we are not
haters. We just don't like
you.

PAUL

*(roaring back and waving
the sign)* Cut the crap. Hate
doesn't just have a home
here, little brother. It's the
state religion of your
precious little People's
Republic of Montclair.

FAITH

Paul, that's our neighbor's lawn sign. Put it back.

PAUL

Hold on a sec; why don't *you* have one, Matty? Are you tacitly admitting that hate *does* have a home here? That *el odio* does *tiene un hogar alli*?

CANDY

(correcting him) *Aqui, Paul.* Not *alli*. It's true, though. You must be the only ones in the neighborhood without a sign.

MATTHEW

(sheepishly) The supplier ran out; it's on back-order.

PAUL

What the signs are really saying is: *I'm* not welcome here. And *Candy's* not welcome here. *(shaking the sign some more)* Between the lines, the message is that anyone who disagrees with you elitist, leftist, gender-fluid, LGBTQ, emotionally fragile love-bunnies is a subhuman criminal.

MATTHEW

We're fragile? We're fragile?
How emotionally "fragile" is
someone if a flimsy piece of
cardboard delivers a death
blow to his ego? Someone
puts up a sign in a couple of
mildly exotic foreign
languages and all of a
sudden the alt-right is alt-
wronged?

PAUL

*(moving forward, still
carrying the sign waist-high)*
Alt-right? You're calling
me...

FAITH

(at a high volume, singing)
"There is a house in New
Orleans..." *(motioning to
them to pick up the tune, but
they do not join in)* "...they
call the Rising Sun." *(gives
up)* Oh, come on. I'm going
to make you shut up and
sing or I'm going to die
trying. And speaking of
dying, Paul, if you don't put
that sign back, the guy next
door is going to murder us.
You're twisting it and
smearing it and our
neighbor is going to be very
upset if that sign is
damaged. Whether you like
it or not, it's his property.

CANDY

(taking the sign) Let me have it, *mi amor*. I'll take care of it. (She exits.)

FAITH

Paul, what did we talk about on the phone?

PAUL

You mean the... *(gestures at MATTHEW)*

FAITH

No. That too, but I mean your promise that this would be an evening of singing and eating and drinking and then more singing. Fat chance! Now, I feel trapped, like a passenger in a car with two drunk drivers.

PAUL

It doesn't feel good for me either, Faith.

MATTHEW

Finally, common ground: We all feel like shit. Well, *(holds out his hand)* thanks for stopping by, Paul.

FAITH

No. There's something else.
(beat) Paul, tell him how you
were going to offer one of
your investment books to
our publishing house, and
let us have a best-seller for a
change.

MATTHEW

What? *His* book published
by *us*?

PAUL

Yes, *The Paul McCarthy Boot
Camp: Thirty Days to a
Richer, Richer, Richer, Richer
You*. I'm literally gifting you
a bestseller, Matty.

FAITH

The food! *(She rushes to the
kitchen.)*

MATTHEW

Giftng? Faith, what did you
two...? *(PAUL'S phone erupts
with a jubilant salsa ring.)*

PAUL

That's Candy. *(into phone)*
*Que pasa, querida? (His face
contorts.)* Hey, hey, hey!
Calm down. Where are you?
Candy? Candy? *(PAUL rushes
to the door.)*

MATTHEW

(grabbing him) What happened?

PAUL

What kind of a neighborhood is this? She's being arrested. *(FAITH enters from the kitchen, holding a pan. First PAUL and then MATTHEW head out the door.)*

FAITH

Arrested? *(deciding which way to go, looks up to heaven, arms outstretched)* Madonn'! A little help, please? *(She heads out the door, still clutching the frying pan.)*

(END OF ACT I)

