

# **Hackers and Lovers**

v. 6.0

A drama in 19 scenes

By David Datz

© David Datz 2018  
david.datz@gmail.com  
626-840-4590

### Synopsis

Six friends, five of them professional hackers, find their relationships endangered when minor quarrels lead them to start hacking each other and revealing their pasts. The group includes one straight couple, one gay couple, one single man, and one single woman, all of them aged 25-40.

### Cast

All characters are in age range 25-40.

- Sylvia: Female, African-American. Milo's girl friend. Level-headed businesswoman.
- Milo: Male, Caucasian. Sylvia's boy friend. Physically strong, at least slightly buff. College-educated plumber.
- Katherine: Female, any race but African-American. Emotionally very tough on the outside, but vulnerable beneath.
- Aristide: Male, any race but African-American. Nerdy, but not a weakling.
- Adolphus: Male, any race but African-American. Diogo's live-in lover. Sharp dresser, likes wearing ties.
- Diogo: Male, any race but African-American. Adolphus's live-in lover. Sloppy dresser, wears anything he can get away with.

### Time

The present.

### Place

The scene settings are below. Sets should be minimal, indicative only. The only necessities are noted below. There is no need for painted walls, wall art, carpets, or any other decorations, although they could be used. Changes should be as simple as possible. For example, to shift from the living room to a café should require only movement of a table and chairs, with lighting to isolate areas. Use of placards to label a scene's location would be perfectly acceptable, e.g., "Sylvia's and Milo's Apartment".

### Scenes:

1. Sylvia's and Milo's apartment, living room. Sofa, coffee table, three chairs of any type. Three doors, upstage, sides and center: entry door, swinging door to kitchen, door to bedroom
2. Adolphus's and Diogo's apartment, kitchen table.
3. Katherine's apartment, kitchen table.
4. Sylvia and Milo's apartment, living room.
5. Sylvia and Milo's apartment, living room.
6. Sylvia and Milo's apartment, living room.
7. Bar. Could be at a high bar, facing out, or a table.

8. Café, at a table.
9. Katherine's apartment, kitchen table.
10. Sylvia and Milo's living room.
11. Coffee shop, table.
12. Sylvia and Milo's living room.
13. Sylvia and Milo's living room.
14. Park bench.
15. Bar, at a table.
16. Sylvia and Milo's living room.
17. Sylvia and Milo's living room.
18. Bar.
19. Sylvia and Milo's living room.

#### Costumes

Casual or business casual clothing for all. Exceptions would be Adolphus, who likes to dress sharply, favoring suits and ties, and Diogo, who is at the opposite extreme, wearing just enough to avoid offending anyone. Sylvia works at home, so when she's at home with only Milo she could wear anything. Milo does NOT need plumber's outfit; he changes at his workplace. Between-scene costume changes should be just enough to indicate passage of time.

#### Props

Director should feel free to depart from this list as appropriate.

##### Scene 1:

- Laptop computer for Sylvia
- Yellow pad of paper, pen, for Sylvia
- Lunch box or bag for Milo
- Gym bag or similar for clothing for Milo
- Coffee cup for Sylvia

##### Scene 2:

- Dirty dishes
- Flatware
- Napkins
- Coffee cups
- Wine glasses
- Wine bottle.

##### Scene 3:

- Coffee cups, two
- Spoons, two
- Napkins
- Cream container

Sugar container

Coffee pot

Scene 4:

Coffee cup, two

Spoons, two

Napkins

Cream container

Sugar container

Pink pastry box

Cannoli and zeppole

Scene 5:

Dirty dishes, six

Flatware, six

Napkins

Beer bottles

Wine glasses

Scene 6:

Laptop, Sylvia

Cell phone, Sylvia

Beer bottles, two

Scene 7:

Drink glass, Diogo

Drink glass, Katherine

Scene 8:

Dishes with food, two

Flatware

Water glasses, two

Coffee cups or other drink glasses, two

Cell phone, Sylvia

Scene 9:

Laptop, Katherine

Coffee cups, two

Scene 10:

Beer bottles, two

Grocery bags, two

Scene 11:

Coffee cups, two

Spoons, two

Napkins

Cream container

Sugar container

Scene 12:

Drink glass

Scene 13:

Dirty dishes

Flatware

Napkins  
Glasses  
Beer bottles  
Scene 14:  
Cell phone, Sylvia  
Scene 15:  
Drink glasses, two  
Scene 16:  
None  
Scene 17:  
None  
Scene 18:  
Drink glasses, two  
Scene 19:  
Large casserole dish with something that looks like moussaka  
Large salad bowl  
Stack of clean dishes  
Flatware, serving spoons  
Napkins  
Beer bottles  
Gym bag, for Milo, as in scene #1  
Cell phone for each character

#### Sound Effects

Doorbell for the apartment, possibly with manual button to be used by the actor who is about to enter. **However, having the actors knock instead of using a doorbell is perfectly acceptable; in which case, replace stage direction *Doorbell* with *Knock at door*.**

*Blank page.*

Scene 1

*Living room of SYLVIA and MILO's apartment. MILO is getting ready to go to work, making sure of his lunch and his bag of extra clothing, checking his pockets, etc., while SYLVIA is getting ready to work from home—specifically, from her spot on the sofa—powering on her laptop, preparing pad and paper, putting her coffee on the coffee table, etc..*

SYLVIA

If you'll be on that side of town, that would be lovely.

MILO

I'll be there, I might as well.

SYLVIA

And it'll keep?

MILO

I'll put it in the ice chest on the truck. It'll be fine, and it should be good in our fridge for a week.

SYLVIA

Salmon would be a nice change, and theirs is the best.

MILO

Whatever you cook is always fine.

SYLVIA

I just feel like my pasta's getting boring.

MILO

How could anything once a month be boring? Besides, I'd just love to hear one of them complain about your food.

SYLVIA

Always so quick to defend me.

MILO

Is that bad?

SYLVIA

No, sweet, it's one of the reasons I love you.

MILO

And one of the reasons I love you is that I know you don't need defending. It's just. *(He completes the thought by shaking his head.)*

SYLVIA

Are they really that bad?

MILO

*(Meaning they are that bad.)* They're fine. Especially since you guys dropped the formal agendas.

SYLVIA

You didn't like the agendas? *(Sarcastic.)* Secrets of the DMZ? How to crack into Unix modules? *(She moves to him and puts her arms around his neck, and says what follows in ever more seductive tones.)* How to spoof program objects? Trackless wireless hacking? How to keep the target computer from entering sleep mode?

*They kiss, long.*

MILO

*(Pulling away.)* I don't know about sleep mode, but I've got to go.

SYLVIA

You should learn Unix. You could stay home and we could work together.

MILO

Then who would go to the fish market?

SYLVIA

*(Pushing him away.)* You got me there.

MILO

*(On his way out the door.)* Maybe I should make the agenda. *(Seductively.)* Snake operation. Leak detection. What to do when the shut-off valve fails.

SYLVIA

Get out.

*He goes.*

*Blackout.*

Scene 2

*Kitchen table in the apartment of ADOLPHUS and DIOGO. They have just finished a meal and are lingering over the wine. ADOLPHUS has just told DIOGO he's planned a pleasant surprise.*

DIOGO

For what?

ADOLPHUS

For the one you've wanted, of course.

DIOGO

That one? You got those?

ADOLPHUS

Are there others you have in mind?

DIOGO

Dolph, you are the best. The absolute best.

ADOLPHUS

Nothing is too good for you, my love.

DIOGO

Thank you, Dolph. This is really special. *(He fills their wine glasses.)* And we might as well tack dinner on before the show, huh?

ADOLPHUS

I've already made reservations.

DIOGO

Of course you have. Pardon me for not assuming.

ADOLPHUS

Consider yourself pardoned.

DIOGO

Next week'll be busy, with Sylvia and Milo's on Thursday.

ADOLPHUS

Oh, lord, I'd forgotten.

DIOGO

Oh, come on, you always enjoy those dinners.

ADOLPHUS

I suppose I do.

DIOGO

You suppose, huh. You'll be the center of attention, as always, sounding off about your latest exploits.

ADOLPHUS

Do I always do that?

DIOGO

As a rule. Almost. Yes, you do.

ADOLPHUS

That's terrible. Why didn't you tell me?

DIOGO

Because you hate it when I criticize you. And because you're almost always entertaining. And because you're always the center of my attention anyway.

ADOLPHUS

I don't deserve you.

DIOGO

No, you don't.

ADOLPHUS

Will the whole gang be there?

DIOGO

Afraid so.

ADOLPHUS

Including our beloved Steed?

DIOGO

I believe so, yes.

ADOLPHUS

Lord preserve us.

DIOGO

Oh, come on. He's weird, but he's fun to listen to.

ADOLPHUS

He is that. But you know, we all love getting paid to have fun, but Steed? For him it's a wet dream, and a waking one at that.

DIOGO

Okay, but you really shouldn't say things like that to his face.

ADOLPHUS

Please. He loves it.

DIOGO

You embarrass him.

ADOLPHUS

I think he likes being embarrassed, it gets him going. And he really does get comical, all that theorizing, my god.

DIOGO

And of course, you'll have your regular duel of wits with Kit.

ADOLPHUS

Yes, of course. Kit. Whatever would we do without Kit.

*DIOGO rises and starts to clear the table. During the rest of the scene he is stacking dishes, using a napkin to wipe the table, etc. ADOLPHUS makes no move to help.*

DIOGO

You talk like you don't like her but if she was a man I'd worry.

ADOLPHUS

Worry? About me?

DIOGO

Well, you know. When you're out late.

ADOLPHUS

*(Heard this before.)* We're not discussing my evening habits, are we?

DIOGO

*(Wanting to discuss his evening habits.)* No. Of course not.

ADOLPHUS

You going over early next Thursday to help Sylvia cook?

DIOGO

No. I've got work. And she doesn't need my help anyway.

ADOLPHUS

Nobody would ever turn down your help cooking, as you well know.

DIOGO

Thank you. You know, she's helping me. On work.

ADOLPHUS

Hacking your employer?

DIOGO

That's it.

ADOLPHUS

I love it.

DIOGO

And it's our turn to bring wine.

ADOLPHUS

*(Sarcastic)* And don't forget flowers for Milo.

DIOGO

You're just a riot, you know?

ADOLPHUS

You're not jealous of Milo.

DIOGO

He's a hunk.

ADOLPHUS

But, alas, he's Sylvia's hunk.

DIOGO

Don't forget it.

*Blackout*

Scene 3

*Kitchen table of KATHERINE's apartment. KATHERINE and SYLVIA are sitting at the kitchen table talking over coffee.*

SYLVIA

Actually, Diogo offered.

KATHERINE

He's so sweet.

SYLVIA

And a great cook, too. But then work called.

KATHERINE

I'd help, but unlike Diogo, I'm a lousy cook.

SYLVIA

I've got it all covered.

KATHERINE

Of course. You've always got it all covered.

SYLVIA

*(Takes that in.)* Am I that bad?

KATHERINE

No. That's just me talking. My compliments always come out like insults.

SYLVIA

You don't pull punches, Kit.

KATHERINE

I know. Cost me a couple of relationships.

SYLVIA

You're honest. We all appreciate that.

KATHERINE

Do we? Do you?

SYLVIA

What on earth are you talking about?

KATHERINE

Maybe I'm too honest. I make people uncomfortable.

SYLVIA

Sometimes, maybe.

KATHERINE

Maybe.

SYLVIA

We all know you're basically good natured.

KATHERINE

I guess. I hope. (*Glad to change the subject.*) But my original point, you're the one who makes our group happen.

SYLVIA

I just like to have dinner parties. It's not like the group wouldn't exist without me.

KATHERINE

I don't know about that. You're not just the hostess. When somebody goes too far, like me, for instance, or Dolph, or Steed, you're the one who makes sure no feelings are hurt.

SYLVIA

(*Surprised.*) Am I really?

KATHERINE

Yup. (*A pronouncement*) You're our soccer mom.

SYLVIA

(*Takes a moment to take that in.*) Well, shit.

KATHERINE

See? There I go again, making people feel bad.

SYLVIA

I don't feel bad. I just don't picture myself that way.

KATHERINE

That's my role, to reveal everyone's true nature.

SYLVIA

Well, it beats shop talk. Remember when we just talked hacking?

KATHERINE

I know. It got boring even for me. I swear I wanted to set Dolph's shoes on fire just to get him to change the subject.

SYLVIA

Oh my god, those arguments about firewalls and operating systems? And then after you brought Steed, with him and Dolph, I swear they were debating in code. Even I couldn't understand it.

KATHERINE

And it got so intense.

SYLVIA

But then you'd steer the conversation into the personal.

KATHERINE

And make sure of hurt feelings. But then you'd make everyone see everyone else's point of view.

SYLVIA

Right. Soccer mom.

KATHERINE

Exactly. And then Dolph would crack an unfunny joke at someone else's expense, and Milo would top him with a funny one.

SYLVIA

That's Milo, alright.

KATHERINE

Now, don't get jealous, but if you ask me, we all should thank god for Milo.

SYLVIA

He sure keeps me grounded.

KATHERINE

I'm happy for you. And, I have to go. *(She starts to gather the cups, etc., from the table.)* But I insist on cleaning up.

SYLVIA

Okay. I'll let you. Next Thursday, then.

KATHERINE

In our next episode, Dolph continues to boast of his quest for the perfect hack.

SYLVIA

Steed rationalizes random destruction, while Diogo refuses to take credit for his obviously great work.

KATHERINE

And Milo shuts them all down with a joke.

*Blackout.*

Scene 4

*The living room of Sylvia and Milo's apartment. SYLVIA and MILO are on the sofa, ARISTIDE on a chair drawn close to the coffee table. On the table is a large pink pastry box.*

SYLVIA

Steed, you didn't have to do this.

MILO

Right. You're not the only one we feed.

SYLVIA

Milo.

MILO

What? I'm just pointing out that Steed's the same as everyone else.

SYLVIA

Right.

MILO

They all come here to eat.

SYLVIA

Steed, pay no attention to him.

ARISTIDE

No, actually, he's right. And it's really not fair. Why should you bear all the burden?

MILO

Steed, I rarely agree with you, but this time—

SYLVIA

It's not a burden. We like dinner parties.

MILO

*(Not liking dinner parties.)* You know, I'll bet the coffee's ready.

*MILO exits to kitchen.*

ARISTIDE

I think the whole group should bear the burden, but at the same time I think each individual should take responsibility. Since nobody else is, I'm doing it on my own.

SYLVIA

It's still very kind of you, Steed.

ARISTIDE

Kindness has nothing to do with it.

*MILO enters with coffee, cups, cream, sugar, etc. During the next several lines he sets them down on the coffee table.*

ARISTIDE

*(Continued)* It's just the right thing.

MILO

If you mean bringing cannoli and, what's the other one?

ARISTIDE

Zeppole.

MILO

Right, zeppole. Bringing them is definitely the right thing.

*Sylvia pours and distributes coffee.*

ARISTIDE

I thought bringing a dessert would be better than barging in on your dinner.

*MILO opens the pink box.*

MILO

So, which is which?

SYLVIA

It wouldn't be barging in, Steed, but this is still very nice of you.

ARISTIDE

The tube-shaped ones are cannoli.

MILO

Right, and the ones that look like super donuts are Zoppeli.

ARISTIDE

Zeppole.

MILO

Then I'll have a zeppole.

ARISTIDE

Zeppola.

MILO

What?

ARISTIDE

Zeppole is plural. One zeppola, two zeppole.

MILO

*(Taking a moment to let Steed's correction sink in.)* Whatever, they look wonderful. I'll take one of those. *(He does.)*

SYLVIA

*(Seductively.)* Of course you would. And I'll have one of the tube-shaped ones, please.

MILO

*(Topping her seductiveness.)* Of course you would.

SYLVIA

Milo.

MILO

You started it. Here's your cannoli.

ARISTIDE

Cannolo.

MILO

*(Takes a moment.)* Ah, yes. Singular. And what would you like Aristide?

ARISTIDE

*(He takes a moment to register the use of his full name.)* I'll start with a zeppola, please.

*Milo passes him a zeppola. They all start to eat.*

SYLVIA

My god, this is beyond wonderful.

MILO

Yeah, I've never had a, um, one of these before. It's fantastic. Enough to make me switch from donuts.

SYLVIA

Tastes like another. Thank you, Steed.

*MILO passes her another cannolo.*

ARISTIDE

I'm just wondering. I do add something to the group, right?

SYLVIA

What a question. Absolutely you do, Steed.

ARISTIDE

I mean, I know how to hack.

SYLVIA

Boy, do you. Sometimes when you get rolling on a topic, I can't keep up with you.

MILO

Actually, wasn't it Kit who brought you in?

ARISTIDE

It was.

SYLVIA

You two met at a client meeting, right?

ARISTIDE

Right.

SYLVIA

About a year ago, when we were still calling ourselves a hackers' interest group.

MILO

Before it evolved into a twelve-steps-to-becoming-a-human-being interest group.

SYLVIA

Milo.

ARISTIDE

Actually, that's right.

MILO

Well, I hope you brought her some pastries.

ARISTIDE

Last night. For her, it was baklavas.

MILO

One baklava? Two baklavi?

ARISTIDE

Several baklavas. It's Greek.

SYLVIA

*(Jumping in to change the conversation.)* I'll bet she loved it.

ARISTIDE

She did. I guess. You know how Kit is.

SYLVIA

Right. Was she in a mood?

MILO

Does the Pope wear a yarmulke?

SYLVIA

Milo.

*ARISTIDE stands.*

ARISTIDE

Well. I don't want to keep you from the rest of your evening. I'll just clean up before I go.

MILO

No, Steed. Even I think that would be wrong. I'll do it.

*SYLVIA stands.*

SYLVIA

Sure you don't want more coffee?

ARISTIDE

No, I'm good, thanks.

SYLVIA

Thank you, Steed. You're coming Thursday night?

ARISTIDE

Sure. The whole gang?

SYLVIA

Far as I know.

MILO

You can engage in witty repartee with Dolph.

ARISTIDE

Dolph. Right. Good old Dolph.

*Silence.*

ARISTIDE

*(Continued)* Well. I'll see you Thursday night then? Shall I bring anything?

SYLVIA

No, we've got it all, thanks. Bye, Steed.

ARISTIDE

Okay. Bye.

*MILO opens apartment door and ARISTIDE exits. During the following sequence, MILO and SYLVIA clear the coffee table.*

SYLVIA

That was nice.

MILO

It was.

SYLVIA

Surprising.

MILO

Yeah.

SYLVIA

Kind of, anyway. Steed wants to look good.

MILO

You think he did this to look good.

SYLVIA

Maybe. But in his mind looking good and being good are kind of the same.

MILO

Huh?

SYLVIA

Racists aren't known for their logic.

MILO

Which is why—

SYLVIA

You're wondering why I even tolerate him.

MILO

Yeah.

SYLVIA

I don't see much choice, really.

MILO

I see choice. I'd make sure I never saw him again.

SYLVIA

You're white. It's easier for you.

MILO

I know.

SYLVIA

Look, if he came right out and used the n-word on me or called me a black bitch, it would be different.

MILO

I'd punch his lights out.

SYLVIA

I know you would, honey. But the reason you can't do that is the same reason I can't banish him from our lives. He doesn't say those things. He's more subtle than that.

MILO

So if you accuse him of being racist he'd deny it and make all kinds of arguments about why he's not.

SYLVIA

And he'd tell the group and I'd end up looking like the bad guy.

MILO

They'd come around.

SYLVIA

They would, I think. But it wouldn't be easy.

MILO

No, it wouldn't.

SYLVIA

Which is why.

MILO

Why you put up with racists like Steed.

SYLVIA

And why this shit tires me out. And hurts. But it gets worse.

MILO

Tell me.

SYLVIA

Steed wants to have lunch with me.

MILO

For real?

SYLVIA

I don't get it either. But how can I refuse after this (*gesturing to the indicate the pastries*)? Part of being black in America.

MILO

(*Takes a moment to see how tired out and hurt SYLVIA is.*) Does BLM help?

SYLVIA

It does.

MILO

I hope I do.

SYLVIA

Baby, you do. Believe me.

MILO

That's good. (*Lightening the mood.*) And the group? The rest of your computer nerd buddies. Do they help?

SYLVIA

Sure. Underneath, we're all just perfectly normal people.

MILO

I don't know if perfectly normal is how I'd describe them.

SYLVIA

Takes one to know one.

*Blackout.*

Scene 5

*The living room of Sylvia and Milo's apartment. All characters present. Aftermath of their dinner. Used plates on the coffee table, on chair arms, and on the floor. Everyone is drinking, beer, wine, or other.*

SYLVIA

He wanted dirt on his employees?

ADOLPHUS

Yep.

ARISTIDE

Totally out of bounds.

KATHERINE

Bounds? What bounds? Who says there are bounds?

ARISTIDE

Depends. Was it just from work?

ADOLPHUS

I started there.

SYLVIA

Company emails about sizzling rendezvous in conference rooms.

DIOGO

I've been seriously tempted to write those, from time to time.

KATHERINE

Tempted?

DIOGO

Okay, I've actually done it, but everyone knew they were a joke.

ADOLPHUS

Precisely.

KATHERINE

And boring.

ADOLPHUS

Precisely. So . . .

KATHERINE

So you had to take it outside.

ADOLPHUS

So to speak, yeah.

KATHERINE

Also boring. Social media. Yawn.

ADOLPHUS

Well, yeah. I'd rather watch Milo work. No offense, Milo.

MILO

None taken.

SYLVIA

I'm offended. Well, sort of.

ADOLPHUS

How sweet.

KATHERINE

And their documents, of course.

ADOLPHUS

Of course. More productive than social media but not less boring. I mean, what's duller than finances.

DIOGO

So, my darling Adolphus revealed that the client's employees date, drink, date, have sex, drink, party, date, drink, have sex, et cetera.

KATHERINE

And that was only the married ones, right?

ADOLPHUS

Precisely. Boring. Big fucking deal. So the client wanted me to go further.

DIOGO

At least find something not boring.

ADOLPHUS

So, into the rabbit hole, or holes—pun definitely intended—where the rabbits live.

DIOGO

Or where their sweet spots are.

ADOLPHUS

Ha ha.

SYLVIA

Of course, the ones with secure browsers.

ADOLPHUS

Of course. Them first. They take the most risks.

MILO

What risks?

SYLVIA

Are you that naïve, baby?

MILO

I know what you're talking about. Sort of. But maybe there's nothing wrong, maybe they're not cheating or stealing or anything bad, but they just use secure browsers so that nobody else can see. Like Adolphus, for instance.

SYLVIA

My sweet Milo. Dolph has nothing to hide, do you, Dolph?

MILO

It's not about sainthood.

ARISTIDE

Wait. I want to hear the rest of Dolph's story.

ADOLPHUS

So, yeah, people want security exactly because they have things to hide—

ARISTIDE

But you don't know that.

ADOLPHUS

Steed, why are you always so tiresome?

ARISTIDE

It's about principle, Dolph, which you don't understand.

ADOLPHUS

Oh, please, Steed.

KATHERINE

Just get on with the damn story, Dolph.

ADOLPHUS

I would, if a certain person—

ARISTIDE

Okay, I'll shut up.

DIOGO

Someone write down the date and time.

ADOLPHUS

You too, dear. Anyway, as I was saying, the people with security cravings did seem to have other cravings they wanted to hide. An affection for certain kinds of porn. Drugs. Prostitution. Shall we say, ritual sex. A lot of totally natural but not necessarily socially acceptable proclivities.

DIOGO

But my boy didn't stop with the low-hanging fruit, did you?

ADOLPHUS

There's another joke there. A bad one.

DIOGO

True, and true. Excuse me.

ADOLPHUS

Of course, my love. There was also windfall fruit from people without Milo's sense of risk-aversion. And from there, I just kept hopping from one rabbit hole to another—

DIOGO

Like the true rabbit that you are—

ADOLPHUS

Stop it, Diogo, you're embarrassing Steed. Anyway, one hop to the next to the next.

KATHERINE

Fascinating.

ADOLPHUS

You would know.

KATHERINE

Yes, I would.

SYLVIA

So, the client. Was he happy?

ADOLPHUS

Delirious.

MILO

You mean you gave it all to him?

ADOLPHUS

No. I wasn't sure what to do, so I told him I had cached it, so to speak.

SYLVIA

Hoping that he would leave it at that.

ADOLPHUS

Yes.

KATHERINE

But he didn't.

ADOLPHUS

Of course not. Not exactly, anyway. It's his piggy bank.

KATHERINE

To break open when he needs to get to someone.

ADOLPHUS

Well. To fire someone.

KATHERINE

I'm shocked. You mean this company's not at-will?

ADOLPHUS

Sure it is, but even at-will employers need an excuse sometimes.

MILO

But what if he pushes back? The employee, I mean. He finds out that his employer's been snooping. Couldn't he sue or lodge a complaint or something?

DIOGO

Probably. But then he'd have to spend time and money and all his secrets would come out anyway.

MILO

Do you ever feel guilty about what you're doing?

ADOLPHUS

Me? Why should I?

MILO

Outing people the way you do.

ADOLPHUS

Guilty, no. I will say that with some of the shit I see, even I do a double-take sometimes.

SYLVIA

Milo says that's why he'd rather deal with real shit.

MILO

Any day.

SYLVIA

And he gets paid pretty well too.

KATHERINE

What's up, Steed? You look like you got caught in a do-loop.

ARISTIDE

Nothing. Just thinking.

DIOGO

That's why we love you, Steed. An anarchist who thinks.

ARISTIDE

I am not an anarchist.

DIOGO

Some day, my friend, you have to explain the difference.

ARISTIDE

I would if I thought you'd understand.

MILO

*(Rising.)* Well, if you night-hawks will excuse me, I have early business tomorrow.

ADOLPHUS

Why, Sylvia. You don't make him wash the dishes?

KATHERINE

Yeah. How unliberated of you.

SYLVIA

If you'd seen the shit his hands were in today, you wouldn't want him washing dishes either.

*Blackout.*

Scene 6

*SYLVIA and MILO's living room, an evening soon after. Sylvia sits at one end of the couch working on her laptop.*

*MILO enters.*

MILO

Hey. *(He goes directly to the sofa and sits next to her.)*

SYLVIA

*(Still intent on her laptop.)* It's late. Tough day?

MILO

You know, the usual. Late calls have to get finished. People need their faucets to work. Not to mention their drains.

*Sylvia looks up from her screen, reaches for him and they kiss.*

SYLVIA

You smell good. I mean, better than usual.

MILO

New showers at work. Different soap.

SYLVIA

But all for me.

MILO

Everything's for you, all day slaving over that laptop.

SYLVIA

I'm destroying 'em. They call these defenses?

MILO

You've always been good at tearing down mine.

SYLVIA

Yours are way easier than these. But this I-T guy. What a dick. Smirked at me, told me I'd never get through. *(To computer screen)* Sorry, bud, after my report, you'll be lucky if you have a job next week.

MILO

You are heartless. Except with me, of course. Want a beer?

SYLVIA

Sure

*MILO goes for beers.*

SYLVIA

*(Shouting.)* How many already?

*MILO returns, puts beers on coffee table, sits down on sofa.*

MILO

How many what?

SYLVIA

Come on, darling, I tasted it.

MILO

What? Oh, just one. With Tony.

SYLVIA

Just Tony, huh?

MILO

Yeah, just Tony. One game of eight ball. Well, two. Games, I mean. Well, maybe beers also. What are you thinking?

SYLVIA

Nothing. Why didn't you call?

MILO

What makes you think I didn't?

*SYLVIA picks up her phone from the coffee table, looks at it.*

SYLVIA

You're right. I'm sorry. I'm a terrible girlfriend.

MILO

No, you're not. *(Leans to her and kisses her.)* Dinner?

SYLVIA

Sorry again. I didn't know when you'd be here, obviously with my phone on silent. So I ate. Left-over pizza.

MILO

Any left?

SYLVIA

A slice or two.

MILO

Ever get tired of that?

SYLVIA

What? This?

MILO

Seems like you'd want to do something more creative.

SYLVIA

This is creative.

MILO

Sliding through little holes in defenses? *(He puts a hand on her leg and starts stroking.)* Gauging reactions. Finding the open areas.

SYLVIA

Something like that, yeah. *(She puts the laptop down and reaches for him.)* Just Tony, huh?

MILO

*(Freezes.)* What do you mean?

SYLVIA

I mean it was just Tony. Right?

MILO

*(Suddenly irritated)* What I said. Just now—and before that in a V-M and a text. You want an email too?

SYLVIA

I'm sorry. But, you know, I'm here all day, lonely woman, wifey laboring over her laptop, and I need reassurance.

MILO

*(Irritation soothed.)* Why don't you go labor in a coffee shop like other people?

SYLVIA

With the half-assed security they always have? Baby, you should limit your online buying.

MILO

I do my twice-a-year buying only in the security you've put around this place.

SYLVIA

How can you be so dull and so attractive?

*They resume their embrace.*

MILO

Come follow me around at work one day. Never a dull moment.  
Leaks and squirts and hard-to-break blockages of muck.

SYLVIA

I just love it when you talk mucky.

*Blackout.*

Scene 7

*DIOGO and KIT in a bar after work.*

DIOGO

So, you could help me.

KATHERINE

By fucking your company?

DIOGO

When I do it, it's masturbation, which is good but has its  
limitations.

KATHERINE

*(Taking DIOGO'S last comment personally.)* It can be very good.

DIOGO

Kit.

KATHERINE

I know, I know. I'm too sensitive. I should be less picky about  
partners.

DIOGO

Kit, please, I didn't mean . . .

KATHERINE

I know. I've had Mr. right and Ms. right and both times I got left.

DIOGO

Maybe I should take off so you could sit at the bar alone. Who  
knows what might happen.

KATHERINE

You're just trying to launch me on a new career. I start by whoring  
for your company and go on to smaller jobs.

DIOGO

Kit, all I'm asking—

KATHERINE

I know. I'm sorry. I'm a bitch.

DIOGO

You're not—

KATHERINE

No, I'm not. But anyway, I will help you.

DIOGO

Thank you.

KATHERINE

So the deal is?

DIOGO

I need you to get through our firewall, through our D-M-Z, and into both payroll and production areas. A bonus for development and test areas.

KATHERINE

Fun.

DIOGO

You worried about getting caught?

KATHERINE

Me? They'll never catch me. You couldn't catch me. But they'll blame you.

DIOGO

They'll want to blame me, even though I've been warning them for months that my budget's too small.

KATHERINE

They'll still blame you, darling.

DIOGO

I'll tell them it was an outsider. And I'll tell them I have an idea who it was.

KATHERINE

Thank you so much.

DIOGO

But they'll be totally embarrassed. They'll want to hide it. From the customers, from the press, and mostly from the board.

KATHERINE

So they'll never know.

DIOGO

Not unless you're sloppy.

KATHERINE

Now I'm insulted.

DIOGO

Hundred an hour, in cash, directly from me, you count the hours.

KATHERINE

Now I really am insulted.

DIOGO

Kit, I insist.

KATHERINE

If you push cash on me I'll really feel like a whore and besides, I do it for my friends for free.

DIOGO

If you were a man—

KATHERINE

Then with you I might be a whore.

DIOGO

Okay, okay, enough. What would you like?

KATHERINE

Hmm. How about dinner at La Plume?

DIOGO

Ouch. Way more expensive than cash.

KATHERINE

Exactly. And I'll make you wear a suit.

DIOGO

I'll bring Dolph. He'll wear the suit.

KATHERINE

What if I want you to wear it?

DIOGO

For this favor I would do a lot, but a suit?

KATHERINE

All right. Wear a bikini with a tank top.

DIOGO

You really are the best.

KATHERINE

How's everything else?

DIOGO

Me? Great, I guess.

KATHERINE

You guess.

DIOGO

You know. Relationships.

KATHERINE

Right. Since I've had so many, people think I'm an expert.

DIOGO

You're too hard on yourself, Kit.

KATHERINE

Just unlucky, I suppose.

DIOGO

Luck has a lot to do with everything.

KATHERINE

So when you guess that your relationship is good, that's the luck part.

DIOGO

Jesus, Kit, you're too sharp for your own good.

KATHERINE

That's what my exes say.

DIOGO

I don't know. He's out a lot. Shit, we both work late. And it's not like he comes home totally disheveled, like he's been doing it in a men's room. But it's that white shirt and suit. It seems like they shouldn't look quite so crisp when he gets home at ten. You know? He looks too good. Smells too good. His breath's too good. His smile's too good.

KATHERINE

Maybe he's doing it for you.

DIOGO

We've been partners for three years.

KATHERINE

But maybe he's worried about you, huh? Jealous? Trying to look sexy for you.

DIOGO

He knows me way too well. He knows I'm too chicken to cheat even if I wanted to.

KATHERINE

Do you?

DIOGO

No. Shit, you should have been a lawyer.

KATHERINE

Well, I do have forensic skills. Want me to put 'em to work for you?

DIOGO

*(Thinks for a moment about what she means.)* No. Yes. No. I suppose I could do it myself.

KATHERINE

Easier for someone else. Someone not so emotionally involved.

DIOGO

True.

KATHERINE

Up to you.

DIOGO

Look at me. I'm the one who's out late drinking.

KATHERINE

This? This is business, right? (*Back to the business problem.*)  
When?

DIOGO

In a week. Take five days to reconnoiter and then tell me before  
you do it. Just don't surprise me.

KATHERINE

This does seem like great lengths to win an argument, even if it  
does make you look good.

DIOGO

My sacred duty to protect our customer privacy.

KATHERINE

Your company doesn't give a shit. Ever think you're too loyal?

DIOGO

Maybe I want to look good for my next job. (*Shifting topic.*) What  
about you? How're you doing?

KATHERINE

Oh, you know. I don't have to worry about anyone's fidelity. I get  
off fucking my clients—and they love it.

DIOGO

They don't pay you enough.

KATHERINE

Word.

*Blackout.*

Scene 8

*A café. SYLVIA and ARISTIDE are having lunch.*

ARISTIDE

A hospital, an insurance company, a nursing home chain, some  
kind of medical management company.

SYLVIA

God, Steed, if nobody got sick you'd starve.

ARISTIDE

Everybody gets sick and I make money off it.

SYLVIA

Mercenary.

ARISTIDE

Like you're not.

SYLVIA

I suppose.

ARISTIDE

Oh, and the government. Can't forget them.

SYLVIA

The government? Which one?

ARISTIDE

Feds. State.

SYLVIA

What, exactly?

ARISTIDE

Medicare and Medicaid, exactly. Well, not really exactly, I mean, not directly. Working with the government directly is a nightmare.

SYLVIA

So, how?

ARISTIDE

They all accept government money, so naturally government data gets exposed.

SYLVIA

So you're helping the detested government.

ARISTIDE

Yeah, that's the downside. The fun part is exposing how utterly incompetent they are.

SYLVIA

I suppose your motivations don't matter.

ARISTIDE

Any more than yours. Isn't that why you love financials? I mean, hate financials?

SYLVIA

They're assholes.

ARISTIDE

I guess we all have our villains, huh?

SYLVIA

I guess. I feel like I'm protecting the public from their carelessness.

ARISTIDE

So is there anyone you wouldn't work for?

SYLVIA

Probably not.

ARISTIDE

Tobacco?

SYLVIA

I'd defend their customers and their employees. Their dirty little secrets? I don't know.

ARISTIDE

Is that in your contract?

SYLVIA

No, of course not.

ARISTIDE

So, what do you do? Just sort of direct your eyes where you want them to go?

SYLVIA

The contract does limit what I'm supposed to look at.

ARISTIDE

But it doesn't stop you from looking.

SYLVIA

Actually, it stops me from revealing.

ARISTIDE

So if you're supposed to be unlocking payroll, and along the way you just happen to open the wrong door, the wrong filing cabinet, so to speak, and right there is a memo—

SYLVIA

All right, Steed, I get your point, but I'm not going to rat out a client.

ARISTIDE

Even if it's really bad?

SYLVIA

So what do you do, Mr. Libertarian?

ARISTIDE

Slam the cabinet drawer shut, and warn them.

SYLVIA

That they have a bad lock or that they shouldn't write incriminating memos? Or that they shouldn't do bad stuff?

ARISTIDE

The first two.

SYLVIA

And they listen to you? And don't fire you?

ARISTIDE

Both.

SYLVIA

What if it's really bad?

ARISTIDE

Well, none of us is doing drug cartels—are we?

SYLVIA

How can we know?

ARISTIDE

Just not our job, huh?

SYLVIA

Something like that.

ARISTIDE

I think you would.

SYLVIA

What?

ARISTIDE

Rat out a client.

SYLVIA

If I did, who would hire me?

ARISTIDE

High principles, huh?

SYLVIA

I'm trying to remember why I agreed to have lunch with you.

ARISTIDE

Because you wanted me to pick at you so you could convince yourself of your righteousness.

SYLVIA

Why do libertarians always preach at other people?

ARISTIDE

You know the difference between you and me?

SYLVIA

God, Steed, don't get me started.

ARISTIDE

I follow strict principles, which include never ratting out a client to the government because whatever the client is doing, the government does worse. You, on the other hand, have squirrely principles that you follow when you feel like it, and you rely on the authorities to protect you from yourself. I think the world would be better without authorities, whoever they might be, because then people would have to follow principles.

SYLVIA

Now I remember.

ARISTIDE

What?

SYLVIA

Why I like seeing you. You're so goddamned entertaining.

*SYLVIA's phone chimes for a text.*

SYLVIA

*(Talking to her phone screen.)* Hmm.

ARISTIDE

Worked, huh?

SYLVIA

My bot got in.

ARISTIDE

Great. But something else.

SYLVIA

They'll pay me the rest of the fee.

ARISTIDE

But?

SYLVIA

That open file drawer you talked about? They're red-lining.

ARISTIDE

So?

SYLVIA

It's illegal, Steed. Also immoral.

ARISTIDE

But you won't rat them out.

SYLVIA

That's a principle, right?

ARISTIDE

Also a good business practice. But you feel shitty about it when you don't have to.

SYLVIA

Don't have to what? What the hell do you mean?

ARISTIDE

There's no reason you should feel bad about not ratting them out.

SYLVIA

They're discriminating against people who look like me. Wouldn't you feel shitty?

ARISTIDE

Eventually, they'll do what the market says.

SYLVIA

I'm supposed to believe they'd do that, and also that the result would be good.

ARISTIDE

You'd feel better if you believed that, and it wouldn't change what you do at all.

SYLVIA

You and your high fucking principles. Are you the same guy who brought us pastries?

ARISTIDE

I'm still grateful, Sylvia. But that doesn't change what's right.

*Blackout*

Scene 9

*Kitchen table of KATHERINE's apartment. ADOLPHUS and KATHERINE are having coffee, hunched over her laptop.*

ADOLPHUS

*(Points at screen.)* It's there. That module, the third one.

KATHERINE

Of course. How stupid of me. Yep. That's the door, isn't it.

ADOLPHUS

You knew that already.

KATHERINE

Knew it? Why would I bother you if I already knew it?

ADOLPHUS

My question exactly.

KATHERINE

More coffee?

ADOLPHUS

Sure.

*KATHERINE goes, returns with a pot and refills cups.*

KATHERINE

Okay. I did know. It was a ruse to get you into my clutches.

ADOLPHUS

I always enjoy seeing you, Kit.

KATHERINE

Sure you do.

ADOLPHUS

I mean, for a woman, you are extremely attractive, I must say.

KATHERINE

Thanks.

ADOLPHUS

No, I mean it. You're like Lola in the song. Look like a woman and act like a man? Is that it?

KATHERINE

Sort of.

ADOLPHUS

We'll have to listen to it together some time.

KATHERINE

Right.

ADOLPHUS

Delicious coffee.

KATHERINE

It is kind of creepy how you read people, Dolph.

ADOLPHUS

Not like you to beat around the bush, Kitty.

KATHERINE

What did you call me?

ADOLPHUS

Oh, I forgot, you don't like that. You like Kit. Just plain Kit.

KATHERINE

Like you didn't know. *(Beat)* Plain Kit is worried about Diogo.

ADOLPHUS

Well, that makes three of us.

KATHERINE

Should we be?

ADOLPHUS

If you mean about the fact that he's a drama queen who drives himself and me crazy, maybe so. If you mean something else, what would that be?

KATHERINE

You are one shitty piece of work, Adolphus.

ADOLPHUS

What did you call me?

SYLVIA

Sorry. Dolph.

ADOLPHUS

Like you didn't know. But in any case, it's the nature of our relationship. He needs fidelity. I need him, but I also need an occasional brief adventure. He knows that, but at the same time he doesn't, because he doesn't want to. I suppose you could say he's in denial.

KATHERINE

You like him that way, don't you?

ADOLPHUS

His anxiety is very sexy, I must say.

KATHERINE

God, Adolphus, do you hear yourself?

ADOLPHUS

Katherine, what would you have me do?

KATHERINE

Well, for one thing—

ADOLPHUS

I know. Kit.

KATHERINE

And for another, don't ask me to cover for you again.

ADOLPHUS

*(Thinks for a moment.)* Agreed. That was very nice of you.

KATHERINE

I didn't do it for you.

ADOLPHUS

I know that. I don't want to hurt him either, you know?

KATHERINE

Yeah. I'll give you that. You want it all.

ADOLPHUS

We all do our best.

KATHERINE

Don't fuck with me, Adolphus.

ADOLPHUS

Might be fun, Katherine.

KATHERINE

You know what I mean. If you hurt him, I will get you.

ADOLPHUS

You mean by hurting him more? By showing him my most private emails and texts and whatnot? You think he'd feel helped by that?

KATHERINE

Be warned, Dolph.

ADOLPHUS

Okay, Kit. I'm warned.

*Blackout.*