

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

(A full-length comedy.

That's dead serious.)

by

Michelle Tyrene Johnson

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

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CHASING BREADCRUMBS

“Chasing Breadcrumbs” is dedicated to women of the African diaspora who are never too much and always enough.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

"Chasing Breadcrumbs" was originally developed and produced at Local Theater Company in Boulder, Colorado (Nick Chase and Betty Hart, Co-Artistic Directors, Misha S. Zimmerman, Executive Director, with support from Pasha Rudnick, Founding Artistic Director and Kate Gipson, former Executive Director). Its World Premiere was February 22, 2025.

Production Team

Director.....Betty Hart
Stage Manager.....Connie Lane
Assistant Stage Manager.....Sam Webb
Scenic and Props Designer.....David J. Castellano
Costume Designer and Dramaturg.....Holly-Kai Hurd
Lighting Designer.....Sean Mallory
Sound Designer.....CeCe Smith
Technical Director.....Jeff Jesmer

Featuring the following cast:

Serena.....Kristina Fontaine
Gwen.....Michaela Murray
Kevin.....James Brunt/Lavour Addison
Rebecca.....Noelia Antweiler
Debbie/Jackie.....Heather Hughes
Peyton/Andrea.....Andrĕa Morales

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

Cast: 5 W, 1 M

SERENA: 30s, BW, NYC playwright
GWEN: 30s, BW, literary agent and Serena's bestie
KEVIN: 30s, BM, actor and SERENA's brother
REBECCA middle-aged WW, rich and controlling socialite
DEBBIE: middle-aged WW, ditzy socialite
PEYTON: middle-aged WW, observant socialite
ANDREA: stage manager (double cast with PEYTON)
JACKIE: director (double cast with DEBBIE)

PLACES: Park bench, apartment living room of SERENA and KEVIN, sunroom of REBECCA's house, rehearsal room, hospital rooms

TIME

After the 2024 Presidential Election

Running time: approximately 90 minutes

[PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES:

"The Sound of Music" that is done to needle the character of KEVIN should be distinctly handled when it comes up in whatever fun combo of music/dance/physical comedy the director and the actors choose.

This play doesn't aim to demonize white women, so it's important that the white women characters are not played as villainous or bigoted, controlling and/or clueless can do the heavy lifting.]

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SCENE ONE – CAT BRINGS IN DEAD MOUSE

SERENA sits on a park bench in a secluded area of New York City's Central Park. It's a sunny day and she throws breadcrumbs to unseen birds. GWEN enters in a rush and plops down beside SERENA on the bench.

GWEN. Should you be doing that?

SERENA. Doing what?

GWEN. Feeding the birds. Isn't that illegal or something?

SERENA. It might be. But a bird's gotta eat. And it's not like birds have agents to bring them food.

GWEN. I see what you did there. That's a crack about me not laying enough opportunities at your feet like stale pieces of bread.

SERENA. This bread is NOT stale.

GWEN. You're so clever. Maybe if you wrote more comedy, I could get you more productions.

SERENA. Damn. That was a low blow. Even for an agent.

GWEN. It's because I'm your agent - and your friend since creation - that you know I could go a lot lower. Also, be careful what you ask for.

SERENA. What's that supposed to mean? Did you bring me breadcrumbs?

GWEN. Actually, I brought you a whole loaf of bread.

SERENA. It's not like you to oversell something. So, what's up and what's the catch?

GWEN. That's not fair. When has there ever been a catch?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. I could start with the production in Utah. The one where I was expected to cut out all the curse words. Even the word damn.

Damn, who doesn't say damn? And that time you - - -

GWEN. I get the point. I'm a horrible person. Sue me. But I get 10 percent of whatever you collect in damages.

SERENA. You're a good person and a good agent and even a good friend. You just sometimes can't be all three at the same time.

GWEN. Damn. Getting all serious on me.

SERENA. Gwen.

GWEN. Serena.

SERENA. Gwen.

GWEN. Serena.

SERENA. Are we just going to say each other's names all day?

GWEN. We could.

SERENA. Why are we meeting for business here instead of at your office?

GWEN. This is your favorite spot in the city. I thought you would appreciate the fresh air.

SERENA. The real reason, please.

GWEN. Because I don't like my suitemates to hear my clients yelling at me.

SERENA. *(raising her voice)* I have never yelled at you.

GWEN. Excuse me?

SERENA. Correction: I have never yelled at you in the years we've both lived in the state of New York.

GWEN. We're closing in on seven years together of sharing this concrete jungle. There is a first time for everything. *(Gwen gives a big sigh.)*

SERENA. You're scaring me.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

GWEN. Actually, I'm the one who's scared. Remember, I'm just the messenger.

SERENA. As you like to remind me, a messenger who gets 10 percent of the action. So, what's up?

GWEN. Think loaf of bread. A huge loaf with lots and lots of chedda, baby.

SERENA. When you tune up the sista girl patois, I get real suspicious.

GWEN. We can take up my code-switching another time. An incredible opportunity has opened up for you.

SERENA. (*excited*) Some big theatre wants my play? Is it an Off-Broadway opportunity? Wait. A new TV show wants me in their writers' room, right?

GWEN. No. I would have asked you to come to my office for any of those things. I'd love to have the suitemates hear you break out into loud, spontaneous glee. Anyway, this is more of a commission opportunity.

SERENA. A commission? You know I like a good commission - getting the money before you start writing the play. Yes, ma'am, sign me up.

GWEN. As you know, not all commissions are created equal.

SERENA. So it's a small one. That's cool.

GWEN. No. It's a big one. A really big one. Hey, how's your brother doing?

SERENA. Why are you asking about Kevin? He's fine, no major changes. I would have told you. Tell me about the commission.

GWEN. It's a lot of money. A LOT of money. Six figures.

SERENA. What! Six figures? For a play commission? You must be including the decimal point. What theater has that kind of money?

GWEN. It's not a theater. Have you ever heard of the WWKD Society?

SERENA. Is this a joke?

GWEN. You've heard of them?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. The advantage of living with a news junkie is that I accidentally learn things or Kevin talks my ear off telling me things I don't really care about.

GWEN. That "Dateline" interview significantly upped their profile.

SERENA. Like the What Would Karen Do Society needs the attention. White women with money walking that delicate line of, we're not the lowest on the ladder but we're only adjacent to the top rung.

GWEN. It's a brilliant way to take back the narrative. And that's where you come in.

SERENA. If that's who wants to commission me for a play, then that's where I *don't* come in. I don't drive by. I don't even want their address on my GPS.

GWEN. They want you.

SERENA. Why me? It's not like I'm Lin-Manuel Miranda or Lynn Nottage.

GWEN. They researched you.

SERENA. And they found out what exactly? That I'm the most talented writer in the allergic-to-full-time-work temp pool of the Whitman Agency? Not that I'm complaining.

GWEN. That you are known for writing edgy, complex, thought-provoking plays about race. Work that could even verge on brilliance sometimes if you gave it another draft or two.

SERENA. That last thing doesn't sound like it came from the Karens.

GWEN. You are correct. But if there is any time I get to throw in an unsolicited note about your scripts, it's when I'm laying a six-foot-long baguette at your feet.

SERENA. A commission I haven't agreed to accept yet because you haven't told me what the topic is.

GWEN. I said it was about race.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Actually, you didn't. Besides, I write about *my* race. It's not like there's a shortage of white people writing about white people.

GWEN. They want you to write it. They saw one of your interviews about The My Mama Chronicles production.

SERENA. You mean my off, off, way off-Broadway production that was so off the beaten track, it was a short drive to Kentucky?

GWEN. Yes. And they were touched to hear that your biggest inspiration is your brother who needs a kidney transplant.

SERENA. I could kick myself for putting Kevin's business out in the streets like that.

GWEN. It was sweet. And personal. And memorable. The Karen Society wants to connect you and Kevin to a special network of organ transplant organizations. He would be at the top of the list to get his kidney in a matter of weeks instead of having to wait indefinitely. Hell, these folks are so rich and well-connected, it could be in a matter of hours.

SERENA. Since they don't know a damn thing about his medical status, that sounds like they're offering up a black-market kidney.

GWEN. No. It's more like it's a white-market kidney. It will probably come bedazzled, or gold encrusted.

SERENA. This makes no sense.

GWEN. I think it will make even less sense when I tell you what they want. Are you ready to hear the details?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SCENE TWO – SIBLING'S KEEPER

Serena and her brother KEVIN sit and talk in their cramped but homey Washington Heights apartment. It's later in the day of Serena's visit with Gwen.

KEVIN. You should have woken me up earlier to hear this.

SERENA. I'm still processing it myself.

KEVIN. And it's legit?

SERENA. I looked them up. They've been around for years, since the 60's. Besides, you saw that "Dateline" story. They keep renaming and rebranding themselves but it's the same bottom line. Although they have tilted more liberal in some of the causes they've supported.

KEVIN. Rich white women aren't exactly the marginalized and downtrodden. And tilting liberal isn't the same as being liberal.

SERENA. What matters is that they think they are.

KEVIN. Nope. It still doesn't matter. They're not.

SERENA. Kevin, you need the transplant. So, again, it matters.

KEVIN. And they happen to have a kidney just lying around like an extra futon or a set of old golf clubs?

SERENA. Gwen and the lawyer she consults with checked it out. It's a real offer.

KEVIN. Serena, you can't do this.

SERENA. It's not like they want me to rob a bank.

KEVIN. Better that than trying to rob you of your integrity.

SERENA. Saving my brother's life robs me of nothing.

KEVIN. Don't be so dramatic. I'm already on a transplant list.

SERENA. A transplant list that hasn't yielded you so much as a pawn shop kidney in almost two years of waiting while you're having to lug

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

yourself to dialysis three times a week. Besides, one hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money to write a play.

KEVIN. You can rationalize it all you want, but you're not for sale.

SERENA. It's not a purchase. It's just me making up to you what I said when Mama told me I was going to be a big sister.

KEVIN. Here we go. You're trotting that tired-ass story out again. Ahead of schedule. You said - - -

SERENA. I said "why did that big ball you were carrying around have to be a baby brother? I thought you were carrying around the chemistry set I wanted for Christmas." (*Kevin mimics his sister as she tells the tread-worn story.*)

KEVIN. And I still say I'm the best Christmas present you ever got. And you were never going to get that set. Mama and Daddy thought you would blow up the house.

SERENA. If they had just bought me that chemistry set, I would have stayed in North Carolina and had a nice safe job as a researcher or a pharmacist. Instead, I'm a poor writer living in a third-floor walk-up in New York City.

KEVIN. What's my excuse?

SERENA. You were born an actor. The baby is always a disappointment.

KEVIN. (*A beat.*) I wish I wasn't an actor. I wouldn't have followed you here five years ago to get my big break.

SERENA. Not this again. Lately, you bring this up more than I bring up the chemistry set story. Maybe you should take up playwriting.

KEVIN. I'm serious, sis. When I didn't make it within a couple of years, I should have gone back.

SERENA. You're right.

KEVIN. That I should have gone back home?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. That you were the best Christmas present ever. This is why Mama and Daddy would never forgive me if I had an opportunity to give you a fighting chance, and I didn't take it.

KEVIN. You don't owe me that. We both know I might have an easier chance to get a kidney if I went back home, but I'm not going home to die.

SERENA. Damn it. Could you please stop saying this? I hate it when you say shit like that. You're not going anywhere to die and you're not dying here. Stop making me even say the word.

KEVIN. I'm just saying that when this diabetes lost its mind and took over my body, I knew that no matter what happened, I wasn't going to crawl back to North Carolina to have my elderly parents take care of me when they had just retired. Nothing you say changes that.

SERENA. You are so damn stubborn. And you better not have them hear you call being in their 60s elderly. If you're not going back home and you're staying here, then I'm getting us a bigger apartment and getting you a gently used kidney.

KEVIN. Sis, Mama and Daddy don't even need to know about this. Just say no to the white flight ladies and this will stay between us. A kidney will turn up and they will be none the wiser.

SERENA. But what if it doesn't?

KEVIN. Since it's an organ for me on the bargaining table, shouldn't I have a say?

SERENA. I can't make you accept a kidney thrown at us by the Becky Brigade, but - - -

KEVIN. The Karen Cutoffs.

SERENA. The Pink Pussycat Barbie Dolls.

KEVIN. The Handmaiden Snails.

SERENA. The Hotep Haters.

KEVIN. The KKK Minus Two K's club.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Ok. Now that's not fair. There's absolutely no reason to think these folks are on the wrong side of history. At least I haven't found any signs of it. They're just trying to make the Keeping Karen Cool Club.

KEVIN. How can I talk you out of this? Isn't there anything more I can say to get you to change your mind? Getting one hundred K extra in New York City ain't exactly winning the lottery.

SERENA. You're right. But after taxes, it's more than enough to move, have a little cushion, and send Mama and Daddy a few bucks.

KEVIN. They won't take it.

SERENA. Yeah, they will. I'll just tell them I hit the numbers. Daddy will like that.

KEVIN. And Mama won't believe it.

SERENA. Kev, just work with me. It's not that big a deal.

KEVIN. It is.

SERENA. Not that I need your permission, but so that I don't have to keep hearing you run your mouth, how about I ask for a meeting with them and then I'll make a decision after that.

KEVIN. A decision that's a no.

SERENA. Are you going to agree to stop hounding me about this until after the meeting, or not? Because if I still have to hear the shit, I'm going to just get it over with and say yes. And if you keep flapping your gums about it, I don't want to have to go there, but *The Sound of Music* it will be.

KEVIN. Whatever. That tired shit doesn't work on me anymore.

SERENA. It's worked on you since you were eight years old and Mama used to drag us to the bingo parlor where they played that movie non-stop in the kiddie room. But, hey, since it doesn't bother you anymore, congrats on your growth. (singing) "Doe, a deer, a female deer —"

KEVIN. Damn! You play dirty.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Big sister privilege, boo boo. (*Kevin makes the gesture of locking his mouth shut.*)

SCENE THREE – THE DEVIL YOU DON'T KNOW

Serena and Gwen enter an enclosed sun porch of a family that has money to burn. An easily identifiable classic hip-hop song like “Gangsta’s Paradise” or “Mo Money Mo Problems” plays on room’s speaker system. They sit on the sofa.

SERENA. (*Clucking the music*) Really? (*Paying attention to the room.*) Why does this outdoor sofa look like it costs more than all my furniture put together?

GWEN. Technically, this isn’t outdoors. It’s a sunroom.

SERENA. Which is how rich folks avoid mosquitoes.

GWEN. All the women in this group have money like this. That’s why they can offer you enough to be a baller at your corner bodega to write this play.

SERENA. I haven’t agreed yet. I promised Kevin to not make a decision until after this meet and greet.

GWEN. You’re about to promise Kevin that’s he gonna meet a new kidney soon, so he needs to sit his ass down someplace.

SERENA. You better watch it, sis. Your North Carolina is slipping out.

GWEN. Shut up.

SERENA. And if I agree to this, are you going to ask the surgeon to slice off your 10 percent before the transplant?

GWEN. I’m hurt that you think so poorly of me. Obviously, I’ll calculate the cost of a pre-owned kidney and then deduct 10 percent of that on top of your commission.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. You ghou! Wait, you're kidding, right? (*REBECCA, PEYTON, and DEBBIE enter. Peyton wears an expensive exercise outfit or other expensive looking outfit. Debbie wears a casually expensive top and skirt. Rebecca wears a flowy house dress. Also expensive.*)

REBECCA. Serena, Gwen, welcome! I'm Rebecca. This is Peyton. And this is Debbie.

DEBBIE. It's so good to finally meet you in person, Serena!

GWEN. I'm Gwen, Serena's agent. This is Serena.

DEBBIE. I'm so sorry!

PEYTON. Don't mind her. She's blind as a bat. It's not that...

DEBBIE. Of course. I know that Gwen and Serena don't look remotely alike.

GWEN. Not in skin tone, body type, hair.

SERENA. Dressing style, the way we move, height - - -

GWEN. Our temperaments, our attitudes.

SERENA. How we project our rising signs, how we - - -

REBECCA. We get it. Not all theatre people look alike.

SERENA. Right. That's it.

GWEN. Rebecca, why don't you tell us about the project and how you would best want to use Serena's considerable talents?

SERENA. It's weird to have you talk about me like I'm not here.

GWEN. (*whispering this for only Serena to hear*) And my job would be so much easier if you weren't. (*To everyone*) Let's talk about the project.

PEYTON. Let me go get the snacks.

REBECCA. Gloria will bring them out in a few.

PEYTON. I think it would be best if I did it.

REBECCA. Really - - - (*Peyton abruptly leaves the sunporch.*) What bee flew into her bonnet?

DEBBIE. I think it's because Gloria is, well, you know . . . (*Trying to hide it from Gwen and Serena, Debbie tries to gesture.*)

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

REBECCA. Know what? What is it that I'm supposed to know?

SERENA. That Gloria is black.

REBECCA. Of course, Gloria is Black.

SERENA. Of course she's Black?

REBECCA. I didn't mean it like that. I merely meant that's neither new information nor a big deal. *(Peyton enters with a tray of cookies that she awkwardly sits down. She's used to being served, not doing the serving.)*

GWEN. Those look delicious. Reminds me of the kind that the aunt I was named after used to make.

SERENA. Lemon ice box cookies with frosting. My grandma used to make those too.

REBECCA. How did you know Gloria was African American?

SERENA. She was my mother's best friend from childhood where they grew up in the projects.

DEBBIE. Oh, what a lovely coincidence!

REBECCA. Serena is pulling our legs.

SERENA. Guilty.

DEBBIE. So, your mother didn't grow up with Gloria in the projects?

GWEN. Serena is quite the little jokester. She gets that way when she's not focused on the matter at hand. Let's get back to discussing the commission.

SERENA. My mother grew up on a small farm in North Carolina.

DEBBIE. A farm?

SERENA. Not the projects. More "Green Acres" than "Good Times."

DEBBIE. I loved that show. *(Singing badly)* "Green Acres is the place to be, wine living is the life for me!"

REBECCA. It's farm living, not wine living.

DEBBIE. Really? Wine living just made more sense. Well, I loved the "Good Times" theme song too. *(Singing)* "We're moving on up!"

PEYTON. That's the theme song to "The Jeffersons."

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

DEBBIE. Oh. Yeah. That's right.

REBECCA. Let's get back to the play.

GWEN. Yes, please.

REBECCA. Have you ever heard of Bridget McIntosh?

SERENA. I have not. Will she be joining us for the meeting today?

DEBBIE. She's famous!

GWEN. I've never heard of her. But not everyone has heard of everybody. Is she the subject of the commission?

DEBBIE. Yes. She was instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement.

PEYTON. More accurately the Tennessee arm of the Civil Rights Movement.

REBECCA. Nashville, more specifically.

SERENA. OK then.

DEBBIE. That's exactly why we want a play about her!

SERENA. Hmmm. And she was a . . . ?

DEBBIE. Well...well...she marched with King!

SERENA. Marched with King.

PEYTON. Martin Luther King.

DEBBIE. Junior. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior.

SERENA. I'm familiar with him.

REBECCA. *(with a slight edge to her voice)* Ladies, it might be more helpful if I explained the story.

PEYTON. Sure, Rebecca.

DEBBIE. Absolutely!

REBECCA. Bridget McIntosh was a housewife in Nashville, Tennessee. She was the mother of two and was married to a lawyer. She was a leader.

SERENA. What did she do?

DEBBIE. Do?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Yes. Do. In the movement. I assume she did more than march with Dr. King. Thousands of people did. *(Peyton, Debbie, and Rebecca look at each other as Gwen and Serena look at each other. Then all the women start looking at each and looking away. Except for Serena, who unflinchingly meets everyone's eyes.)*

SERENA. I mean did she take a dog bite meant for him? Let traveling Black protestors stay in her home for free? Write a fiery letter to the editor that shook up her community? I'm just trying to get an idea of what about her merits being the subject of a play.

PEYTON. Not exactly.

GWEN. Not exactly what?

REBECCA. What she did was take a stand for Civil Rights at a time when white women weren't known for being leaders in...in the movement.

SERENA. You don't say.

REBECCA. Here, this is a picture of her marching with King. *(pulling out a photo from a folder)*

GWEN. That's a small photo with even smaller faces. Which one is she?

REBECCA. There. *(Serena and Gwen lean into the photo like Mr. Magoo.)*

SERENA. I see a huge crowd with a lot of faces. Most of them Black.

DEBBIE. She's there. She talked about it for years to her family and then her family told other people. She's a legend in her city. We want more people to hear about her.

SERENA. I really mean no disrespect to the gift horse that I'm staring right in the mouth, but. . .

REBECCA. You're wondering why her, why this play now?

GWEN. We don't need to wonder or worry about your reasons. Ours is not to question why - - -

SERENA. Except I do question. Why?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

REBECCA. One of the things that most impressed me in the interview I saw of yours is how important it is for you to write stories that amplify your people.

SERENA. Yes, and - - -

REBECCA. And I respect that. But women are your people too. And while you are not a white woman, as one, I'm just tired of the bad rap we're getting. And it deeply upsets me that when there are some who act up, then all white women are painted with the same brush.

SERENA. Being judged by the biases of others? I wouldn't know anything about that.

DEBBIE. It really is awful. It makes me glad that I'm a good person who never judges others.

REBECCA. Serena is joking. Showing that same wry sense of humor she demonstrated earlier.

SERENA. I still say, why me though? There are plenty of white women playwrights who could do this.

GWEN. Reasons aren't really important. What I think Serena is trying to say is - - -

SERENA. Gwen, please don't speak for me when I'm right here and perfectly capable of speaking for myself.

REBECCA. We just want to take back the narrative. That's all.

PEYTON. No one likes stereotypes. Or to be lumped in with other bad people who just share your skin color. It's bad no matter who does it.

SERENA. *(leaning in on the sarcasm)* That bordered on sounding a little I'm *(she does the air quotes with her fingers)* "color blind" because all lives matter and one of my best friends is Black.

DEBBIE. We just want to show that plenty of white women are good people. We're not all a "Karen". But even if we are, that's not necessarily a bad thing.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. I don't quite get that point. Which probably means this story isn't mine to tell.

REBECCA. It is. If you decide it is.

GWEN. Rebecca, do you mind if we get back to you tomorrow about this? *(Serena's cell phone rings. It loudly plays the "[I'm Black Y'all](#)" ringtone, and she has trouble finding it in one of her pockets or her bag or backpack. Once she finds it, she looks worried as she looks at it.)*

SERENA. Sorry, hate to be rude but I have to take this. I'll be right back. *(speaking to the person on the other end as she exits)*. Just tell me straight.

REBECCA. This is going to be harder than we thought, won't it?

GWEN. Serena is smart and very conscious. And money doesn't move her as much as it does some of my other clients. If she can't connect with the subject, she can't write the script. I admire that about her.

REBECCA. And that's why we want her. Because that's exactly the reputation she has. Very committed to her culture, brilliant, incisive, well respected, talented, and not nearly as known as she should be.

GWEN. I'm sorry, but she's leaning on saying no to this.

REBECCA. Don't be too hasty. We've talked and decided that \$100,000 was way too low a price for the work we want. We're willing to go to \$150,000. *(Serena enters, appearing a little anxious.)*

SERENA. If you can get my brother a guaranteed spot on your kidney network list right away, I'll sign the contract right now.

GWEN. Can we talk about this?

REBECCA. It's a deal.

SERENA. Just like that? No board to run this past?

DEBBIE. She is the board.

PEYTON. And the executive director.

REBECCA. It's true. My husband invented a pet poo deodorizer that has provided, let's just say, an embarrassment of riches. So, this

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

organization is my little project that I've revitalized after it was dormant for several years. It has a very important mission. Several in fact.

SERENA. I'm all in.

GWEN. Everything ok?

SERENA. Rebecca, do you have a contract already drawn up?

REBECCA. As a matter of fact, I do.

GWEN. And I have a contract too. All we have to do is change the amount. Which I can do from my phone. I'm sure there's a printer here.

REBECCA. I don't feel comfortable entering into a contract my attorney hasn't reviewed.

SERENA. Then please find your attorney. Because tomorrow I may not have the same incentive. Gwen, you can take it from here. I have to run.
(SERENA exits quickly.)

SCENE FOUR - VISITING HOURS

A hospital room. This one is a little run down. The one Kevin is in at the end of the scene is more upscale because it's paid for with "Karen" money. Kevin lies in a hospital bed as Serena rushes in. His eyes are closed.

SERENA. Oh, Kevin! Are you ok? You look horrible. Can you hear me? *(Kevin remains still.)* No, of course you can't. *(Taking out her cell phone.)* Let me call Mama and Daddy. They can get you to open your eyes. *(Kevin opens his eyes and comfortably sits up in bed, maybe breaking into a little song.)*

KEVIN. It's a miracle. Just hearing you mention them made me feel instantly better.

SERENA. You bitch.

KEVIN. It really is no big deal.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. They admitted you to the hospital. It's a big deal.

KEVIN. It was a regular visit. Some of my numbers were wacky. So they admitted me for one night to take some tests.

SERENA. They don't do that casually. It must be something.

KEVIN. When you have a bum kidney, everything is something. And they shouldn't have called you. I said I would do it later.

SERENA. I'm glad they did and their timing was perfect. It was in the middle of that meeting with the Ladies Who Lunch But Need A Real Hobby Society.

KEVIN. Great. So you said no.

SERENA. No.

KEVIN. Right. You said no.

SERENA. No. I said yes.

KEVIN. No.

SERENA. Yes.

KEVIN. Damn it. It was supposed to be no.

SERENA. It was. But they have so much money, they threw in \$50,000 more, and on the way over Gwen texted me that she got them to throw in a \$25,000 signing bonus. On top of the money.

KEVIN. That's insane.

SERENA. Look, there's been something that I've been wanting to tell you.

KEVIN. That Mama and Daddy are on their way?

SERENA. Hell yeah. I called them on the way here. They'll be here on the first flight out in the morning. No, that's not it.

KEVIN. What's worse than squeezing them up in our apartment for an unnecessary visit? I'll be home before their plane lands.

SERENA. Actually, you won't be. Oh, and they're not staying with us.

KEVIN. What do you mean they're not staying with us. What's going on?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. I don't know how to tell you this.

KEVIN. Did you see the doctor coming in? Is it worse than what they told me? Oh my God, is that why Mama and Daddy are coming out here? Just tell me.

SERENA. In a few minutes a doctor is going to come in here and tell you - - -

KEVIN. Tell me what!

SERENA. That you're changing hospitals to be prepped for a kidney transplant tomorrow afternoon and that you have papers to sign and details to go over.

KEVIN. Is it through the list I've been on for years?

SERENA. It doesn't matter. A kidney is available. Now.

KEVIN. The day you go meet with the Karens and sign a contract, I suddenly have a new kidney. I'm not taking it.

SERENA. Whatever. Look, I wasn't a match to give you one or else you wouldn't be in this hospital now.

KEVIN. I'm serious. I can't let you sell yourself out like that.

SERENA. I didn't sell anything. They're just renting the use of my talents. And the contracts are signed. I still have to write them a play whether you accept the kidney or not.

KEVIN. You should have asked me first. You can't just buy me a kidney without my consent.

SERENA. I just did. And I expect you to thank me every day of your life. Until you win a Tony for best actor then you can stop thanking me. But that's only if you take me as your date to the Tony's. You take an actual date, the daily thanking shall continue.

KEVIN. This isn't right.

SERENA. Listen to me now. I've decided that I'm done with writing. I'm retiring.

KEVIN. You can't retire in your 30s.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. You can if it's from something that's not financially sustainable.

KEVIN. Someone just offered to pay you, what, \$175,000 of sweet, sweet cash money to write a play.

SERENA. You know good and damn well that 10 theatres put together haven't paid me that. And 100 put together never will.

KEVIN. You don't know that.

SERENA. Yeah, I do. Nothing I write is going to make the Pulitzer Prize committee for drama put a crown on it.

KEVIN. You don't know that either. Maybe in 30 years, you'll be right. But that will be you looking in your rearview mirror. Today, look to the future and at least HOPE for the maybes.

SERENA. The contract for the play is signed. So let me just embrace this.

KEVIN. I still think you should find a way to get out of this. And then you can - - -

SERENA. *(singing)* Doe. A deer. A female deer.

KEVIN. OK. I'll shut up. Shit. *(A few days later in a more upscale hospital room. Now there are flowers on his table, along with a bag of onions and a can of gravy. Serena is on her laptop in the visitor's chair. Kevin wakes up.)*

SERENA. Good evening, Mr. Hibernation.

KEVIN. Evening?

SERENA. I guess when you get major organs replaced you need a lot of sleep and shit. Mama and Daddy just left half an hour ago.

KEVIN. I can't believe you put them up in the Omni.

SERENA. I may never see this much money at one time ever again so it's fitting that the first thing I do is buy my baby brother a kidney and put my parents up in a nice hotel.

KEVIN. What's with the can of gravy and the onions?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Daddy. Trying to be funny. He got livers and kidneys mixed up.

KEVIN. I think that after this I may become a vegetarian. Anybody else stop by?

SERENA. Visitors? No.

KEVIN. Nobody?

SERENA. Nope. Oh, you mean that tall, handsome drink of Chocolate Thunder. You got good taste, baby brother. Awkward having this be the first time we meet.

KEVIN. We've only been out on a few dates.

SERENA. His taste clearly isn't as good as yours. He's smitten.

KEVIN. Smitten? Ok, Jane Eyre.

SERENA. Even Mama and Daddy liked him.

KEVIN. (*wincing in pain*) No!

SERENA. I'm just shitting ya. I made sure your twains didn't meet.

KEVIN. You are such a smart ass. You know what I'm going to do the second I'm out of here and healed?

SERENA. Put me in a headlock and beat me up?

KEVIN. Close. Very close. I'm going to wrap my arms around my big sister and give her the biggest hug of her life.

SERENA. Your big sister might not slap you.

KEVIN. I still don't like that you're writing this play. But I admit I liked seeing the look of relief on Mama's face that I was finally getting this transplant.

SERENA. Me too. And I need you to stay with that energy the next time you want to ride my ass about this commission. So, while you were getting your beauty sleep, I was doing some research on this Bridget McIntosh.

KEVIN. The white lady no one has ever heard of who was such a powerhouse in the Civil Rights Movement?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. Yep, her. Turns out, she was one of the founding mothers of the original incarnation of this little organization. There were several chapters of white women across the country who wanted to be taken more seriously but without having any Mayflower ancestors to trace back to.

KEVIN. And she supported Dr. King back in the day, yadda yadda yadda. Have you been able to prove that?

SERENA. I haven't found anything that contradicts it.

KEVIN. That sounds like some alternative facts mess.

SERENA. All I'm saying is that in doing my research, there's not that much on her. There does appear to be a granddaughter who owns a vegan restaurant in Nashville.

KEVIN. Please don't get caught up in making this lady sound better than she probably was.

SERENA. I would rather find very little on her and build a story. Because once I have real facts to work with, that creative license begins to turn to dust.

KEVIN. You gonna keep digging for information or write in blissful ignorance?

SERENA. You need to stop pondering life's big questions. Your new kidney needs to slowly get used to being part of a theatre family now.

SCENE FIVE - THE GREAT WHITE WAY

It's six months later. Two sets of rehearsal tables are set up facing the audience, with the audience being the stage they are looking at. Serena and Kevin take up one table. Several feet away but facing in the same direction are a table set up for ANDREA (who is double cast with Peyton) and JACKIE (who is double cast with Debbie). JACKIE sits behind a nameplate that says "Director." Andrea's nameplate says

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

“Stage Manager.” Serena sits behind a folded paper name plate that says Playwright. Kevin sits behind one that says, “Playwright Ass.”

KEVIN. You know this is karma, right?

SERENA. They could have left “playwright” off your nameplate to make the title more accurate.

KEVIN. This is your karma for thinking it was gonna end at writing the play.

SERENA. Shhhh.

KEVIN. After they paid you that amount of cash money for it.

SERENA. Shush.

KEVIN. And probably paid big bucks to slash up some poor homeless guy sitting on a park bench in Inwood or Harlem to get you a fresh new kidney to stuff in my Christmas stocking.

SERENA. If you don’t shut up right now, you’re going to find out how close to being an incision that a scar still is.

KEVIN. It’s your karma that, of course, Rebecca has the contacts and the resources to get this into an off-Broadway theatre. After coming back from COVID, Ambrose would have allowed a fully produced sock puppet show to go up in here.

SERENA. When you got sarcastically bitchy, even for you, after the transplant, I let it go. Recovery. When you stayed that way for a couple of more months, I let that go too. Transition. But it’s the first day of rehearsals and it ends today. And if you can’t do that, I will happily fire your ass and hire a Becky to work on this Karen play.

KEVIN. You would just to make a point.

SERENA. Try me, Negro. And you can put a tattoo of your new kidney on your wrist and see if Lotta Latte will hire you as a barista and let you off at the last minute for auditions.

KEVIN. Are you always like this on the first day of rehearsals?

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. When it's my last rehearsal ever and this is the play I end it on, yes, this is my resting cranky bitch face.

KEVIN. And mouth. Don't forget that cranky bitch mouth that never rests.

SERENA. Fine. Lotta Latte it is. I expect you to buy me one grande oat milk hazelnut macchiato on every shift that you work. And when I can't come in, I expect you to bring me those little cookies at the register that have that funny name - - -

KEVIN. Fine. I'll stay. (*A beat.*) And I'll be more supportive.

SERENA. I don't need you to be more supportive. I just need you to not ride my ass every fucking five minutes when we're here. Can you at least just wait until we're home?

KEVIN. That's fair. I still can't believe you got me on the crew.

SERENA. Another reason why I need you to just shut it while we're here is because you're the only person here I can trust. None of these folks seem to even be theater people.

KEVIN. I know. I'm sorry. Really. This is crazy. And if I can't ride your ass then can we at least laugh? Cuz you know this shit's about to be Showtime At The Apollo up in here.

SERENA. More like a taping of Hee Haw where there were like two Black people. But it's a deal. We'll laugh but not enough to get the both of us get kicked out.

KEVIN. They can't kick out the playwright.

SERENA. Please. That contract has more clauses and conditions than the one I signed with Big Thighs Fitness during the January special.

KEVIN. Send it to me.

SERENA. Send you what?

KEVIN. The contract.

SERENA. Baby brother, just because you played a lawyer on ONE episode of Law and Order: SVU doesn't mean you can read a contract.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

KEVIN. Just send it to me. *(Silent ping, or however the director wants to show this, of a cell phone message. Kevin looks at his cell phone and starts scrolling to read.)*

KEVIN. You've read this, right?

SERENA. I glanced through it. I mean I've been a little busy. *(Jackie stands up to address the unseen cast.)*

JACKIE. Welcome back from the first break of our first rehearsal. This is very exciting and I'm glad we've already made some headway.

VOICEOVER 1. Could we hear from the playwright?

JACKIE. Really? She's just here to observe. To quietly observe. To observe without input or comment. *(Jackie sighs.)* Let me ask her. *(To Serena)* Would you like to talk a little about the play? It's perfectly fine if the answer is no. *(PLAYWRIGHT NOTE: only Serena and Kevin can hear each other's interjections.)*

KEVIN. I wish I was like that brother in the gif who had some popcorn to munch on when the stuff was about to get good.

SERENA. *(In a hiss to Kevin.)* Lotta Latte, brother dearest. *(Speaking to the room as she reluctantly stands up.)* Hey, everyone. I didn't plan on saying anything, just hanging out to see you do your wonderful work. *(Tries to sit down but stands back up as she hears a question. The following voiceovers are a mix of 3-4 voices.)*

VOICEOVER 1. What inspired this play?

SERENA. That's such a good question.

KEVIN. Would you like me to show off my scar as an exhibit?

SERENA. *(Serena is not insecure in saying any of this. She's just heard this all before whenever white cast and crew work on her plays. She's straddling the line of being nice and being irritated.)*

I'm not sure if anyone is familiar with my work. . .ok, that would be nobody. . .if you were then you'd know I write about race in my plays, a lot.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

VOICEOVER 2. I heard you only write Black plays. What made you decide to write this one?

SERENA. It's true I usually tackle stories about my own race. But sometimes to write about one thing or one person or group of people, you have to write about something else.

VOICEOVER 2. I don't think I understand.

SERENA. Writing can be about contrast. For example, you write about dogs when what you are really doing is making a statement about cats.

VOICEOVER 3. Oh my God, I love Andrew Lloyd Webber!

KEVIN. Should I pull the fire alarm now?

SERENA. I'm not talking about the musical Cats.

VOICEOVER 1. So, are you saying in your scenario that Black people are dogs and white people are cats? And isn't race just a social construct anyway?

SERENA. That would be a hard no on the cats and dogs comparison. Yes, race is just a construct. But racISM - for people with power - is unfortunately very constructive. And productive too. And in some cases, very lucrative.

KEVIN. Damn it! I should be recording this.

VOICEOVER 4. This play is about a real person, right? I couldn't find much about her.

SERENA. If this production had a dramaturg, you would know that I did not have much source material to draw upon and that's why this is a mostly fictional play.

VOICEOVER 2. What's not fictional?

SERENA. The main character's name. That she's from Nashville. And that she was married with kids. Yep. That's it. As I said this is a fictional play. Not a documentary and we're not billing it as a true story, that would be impossible to write even under better circumstances.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

KEVIN. On second thought, maybe I do want to work at Lotta Latte. If I work there part-time, I get health benefits, they pay for subway passes, and the exposure to Karens is fleeting. (*Dramatically pretending to shout a barista order*) “Karen with a C! Here’s your three-shot, light foam, pumpkin spice cappuccino with a pump of simple sugar and a dash of cinnamon!”

VOICEOVER 3. I love your play. It’s so...meaty and gritty. But to really represent the era properly, shouldn’t there be more white people in it?

SERENA. (*Serena’s particularly irritated by this but trying to hide it.*)
[PLAYWRIGHT NOTE: THIS KIND OF THING DOES HAPPEN IN A LOT OF READINGS AND NON-PROFESSIONAL AND COLLEGE PRODUCTIONS WHERE THE TOPIC IS RACE AND UNCOMFORTABLE WHITE THEATRE PEOPLE ARE CAST IN OR ARE ON THE CREW OF THE PLAY.]

You think there should be more white characters during the period of the Civil Rights Movement. . . .a play where more than three-fourths of a fairly sizable cast are already played by white actors. Well, first of all, the play is already written. That’s why we are in the rehearsal process now and I generally don’t do major changes once that starts. But more importantly, there’s no need - - - (*Rebecca enters on stage from the audience as if she’s coming from the other side of the rehearsal room.*)

REBECCA. (*To Serena*) Thank you, Serena. And thank you for writing such excellent characters and giving an explanation on the thought process behind the story. I think it’s time to take another break.

ANDREA. But we just came back from a break.

REBECCA. Then let’s take another break.

ANDREA. That’s actually the director’s call.

REBECCA. I’m not speaking as an actress. I’m speaking as the producer. You know, the person financing this entire production.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

ANDREA. Still the call of director. *(Rebecca places her hand on Jackie's shoulder.)*

JACKIE. Make it 15.

ANDREA. Everyone, we're taking a 15-minute break!

A CHORUS OF OFF-SCREEN VOICES. Thank you, 15!

REBECCA. Serena, thank you for being so gracious in answering a few questions. We'll let you know later in the rehearsal process whether there are any more. We'll call, text, or send you an email.

SERENA. You won't need to do that. I'll be attending all the rehearsals.

REBECCA. That really won't be necessary.

JACKIE. There will be rehearsal reports sent to you every night. Right, Andrea?

ANDREA. Yes.

REBECCA. Well, that's that. Serena, you and your brother don't even have to stay for the rest of this rehearsal. Now would be a great time to leave before the break is over.

SERENA. We'll stay.

JACKIE. We really appreciate your play and the great...insight you gave the cast. If they have any more questions, I'll make sure Andrea passes them on to you in the rehearsal report. Or I'll text you.

SERENA. That's awfully considerate of you.

REBECCA. Thank you for understanding. I know I'm double duty as the producer and the play's lead but let me do triple duty and walk you two out.

KEVIN. My sister wants to stay. So, we're staying. *(Rebecca, Jackie and Andrea exchange a look.)*

REBECCA. Serena, honey, I didn't want to go there but the contract states that you are only to be at the opening read through and that you aren't to attend any more rehearsals. And we have a great opening night celebration planned for you and the play.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. You really have a restrictive contract compared to most production agreements.

REBECCA. And your agent negotiated it. Now Serena it really is---

KEVIN. (*Looking at his cell phone*) Actually, under Section 3, Paragraph 4(b) about rehearsals, it says quote: Playwright can be present at any rehearsal where there are substantive changes to the script's text required or proposed. End of quote.

JACKIE. There won't be any substantive changes to the script.

KEVIN. But you don't know that. Serena, you're the playwright, don't you want to be on hand for any proposed changes to YOUR script?

REBECCA. Kevin, you're presuming that any changes to the script would be what the contract is addressing.

KEVIN. Rebecca, you're presuming that any changes to the script won't be. (*Sound Cue of old Western square off as Kevin and Rebecca take a step toward one another.*)

REBECCA. What do you want to do, Serena?

KEVIN. Yeah, Serena, what do you want to do?

SERENA. I'm staying.

REBECCA. Fine. But the contract doesn't say that the playwright's assistant gets to stay.

SERENA. You were the one who put Kevin on the payroll.

REBECCA. It was part of the negotiations.

SERENA. Then I guess my agent earned her breadcrumbs.

REBECCA. I think the saying is birdseed.

SERENA. See? That's an example of an unanticipated substantive change made by the playwright. (*Rebecca angrily convenes a huddle off to the side with Jackie and Andrea.*)

KEVIN. Oh, she big mad.

SERENA. Baby brother, you are a real-life TV lawyer!

KEVIN. I just don't trust that Rebecca.

CHASING BREADCRUMBS

SERENA. She's the wallet. And she keeps tipping her hand. We're staying.

KEVIN. Hell yes we are. *(The huddle breaks up. Rebecca now has on her PTA, Girl Scout den mother, suburban housewife who doesn't take care of her own house smile on.)*

REBECCA. A contract is a contract and we have a rehearsal to get back to. We're lucky to have a living playwright here with us.

KEVIN. *(to Serena)* She kinda sounds like that living part is a problem for her.

SERENA. *(to Kevin)* She does indeed. *(to Rebecca)* I'm glad we're on the same page of the contract.

REBECCA. But I assume there won't be any unnecessary intrusions to the process.

SERENA. Since this is your FIRST foray into theatre, I have a feeling any "intrusion" I make you'll find unnecessary. But we're on the same team here, right?

ANDREA. We're back from break.

(IF THERE IS AN INTERMISSION, IT WOULD GO HERE.)

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