

# BLUE SKIES YONDER

by Peter Fenton

Sample Only - Do Not Copy



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Dramatists Guild of America

*This play contains coarse language, mature themes, and several murders. It is a dark comedy thriller following a morally gray ensemble. Appropriate for ages 14+*

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
HARRIS FOWLER	The Author	26	M
JASON YANG	The Fiancé	27	M
MARYBETH FOWLER	The Agent	58	F
PRESTON FOWLER	The Host	59	M
AMBER CRAWFORD	The Ingenue	22	F
COREY REYNOLDS	The Publisher	36	M
JILLIAN CHAU	The Marketer	29	F
REBECCA ADLER	The Editor	41	F

#### PLACE

A luxury cabin in the Adirondack Mountains, recently purchased by New York City real estate mogul Preston Fowler.

#### TIME

A Saturday afternoon in April 2025.

\*\*\*\*\*

This one is dedicated to Luke.  
We've seen so much Agatha Christie together,  
I thought I'd give it a shot.

我也学了一点中文。

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & STATEMENT FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you to my father, James Fenton, a brilliant writer and even better person. You are not Preston Fowler.

Thank you to lifelong mentor, Suzanne Fisher, for teaching me everything I know about writing theater.

Thank you also to Sennan Cen and Chen Yongbin for input on Chinese culture and Mandarin dialogue present in the script.

And thank you to my community of survivors: Regina, Kim, Lily, Jennifer, Jenna, Mary, Cheryl, Jamie, Kathy, Teri, Daniele, Kelly, Wendy, Nick, Jim, Jason, Adina, Leisa, Abram, Meghan, Scott, Kris, Lane, Elizabeth, Frances, Joy, Janet, the Philippines team, and every single creative whose dreams have ever been preyed upon.

This play is a work of fiction inspired by my experience in the entertainment industry. I wanted to write something that explores a messy lived experience of a combined personal/professional life and the transactional relationships that can take over when art is monetized. They do say "write what you know" for a reason, but I'm OK. I promise you, I am OK. I have a lot of love in my life.

## CASTING NOTES, FAQ's, & PRE-APPROVED CHANGES

-JASON and JILLIAN are ethnically Chinese and thus must be played by performers of East Asian descent. Their lines in Mandarin are to be delivered with the confidence of a native speaker.

-PRESTON, MARYBETH, COREY, and REBECCA may be played as any ethnicity or nationality. Diversity in casting is encouraged and expected.

-HARRIS must be played as a US Citizen and should appear believably related to PRESTON and MARYBETH, as he is their son.

-AMBER grew up in Owasso, Oklahoma. She may be played as any ethnicity.

-You may change the reference to HARRIS and JASON's "cute interracial marriage" to a "cute gay marriage".

-You may cut JASON's half-joke line, "First of all, that's racist" and if you do, cut JILLIAN's response, "Fair enough"

-If PRESTON is played by a non-white performer, omit PRESTON's reference to his skin color as a "straight white man". In any production of this play, you are free also to change COREY's question to HARRIS, of PRESTON, "homophobe or racist?" to "homophobe or just an asshole?"

-In an educational or community theater production\* ONLY, if absolutely no suitable performers of East Asian descent are available to play the roles of JASON and JILLIAN as written, please contact an authorized agent of Mr. Fenton and explain your specific casting situation to explore the possibility of suitable script adjustments for your production company. The immutable aspect of their dynamic is that they are both non-white people who come from the same culture outside the US and exchange dialogue in their shared foreign language. JASON must also be played as a person navigating the immigration system whose first language isn't English and has reason to avoid deportation. (\*"Educational or community theater production" is defined here that the producing company does not operate under any contracts with Actors' Equity Association and their performers are unpaid)

-Due to the gender and social politics present in this play, all roles must be played as the genders they are written. Presentation and portrayal of these roles, however, is open to the collective interpretation of each individual production's director, designers, and performers.

**ACT ONE.**

*CHALET WATERSPOUT, Preston Fowler's luxury cabin in the Adirondack Mountains. A Saturday afternoon in April 2025. A display of several copies of a novel titled BLUE SKIES YONDER written by Harrison Fowler features at center stage of an open-concept living space and kitchen. A pair of sliding glass doors leads to a balcony overlooking a pristine blue sky. A hallway leads to a bathroom and office space offstage. A master suite and guest bedroom are in another direction.*

*An ice sculpture in the shape of a bird of prey features on a prominent drink table, surrounded by a bowl of ice and fully stocked bar equipment. Finger food and charcuterie for what appears to be a large "upscale casual" event is spread on the kitchen counter.*

*AT RISE: The stage is dark and eerily quiet as the play begins.*

*A middle-age woman with an Irish accent is heard saying, "Hello, you've reached the office of Heidi McEwan. I'm rather sorry, I can't take your call right now. Kindly leave a message and I will get back to you." A dial tone is heard.*

MARYBETH (IN THE DARK)

Heidi, it's Mary.  
I'd hate to think you're ignoring me. I'll drop by soon.

*A phone is heard hanging up.*

*A local news broadcast is heard saying, "An apparent suicide in a Hudson Yards penthouse leaves some on Wall Street reeling and the NYPD leaving no stone unturned. More on this at 11."*

HARRIS (IN THE DARK)

I'm going to kill her.

LIGHTS UP ON:

*Debut author HARRIS (26) flips through pages of his own novel. His tech bro fiancé, JASON (27, Chinese) smirks.*

JASON

Don't say things you don't mean.

HARRIS

Exactly. I'm going to kill that girl.

JASON

Hell of a way to start your career.

HARRIS

Have you looked at this?

JASON

I love you with my whole heart, but my dude, you have reached your limit of free feedback on this one.

HARRIS

Five years with this book. How could she think it's her right to--and she's gonna be here! How am I supposed to talk to her?

JASON

You could start with something like, "Hi."

HARRIS

Not helpful.

JASON

Hey. Hey.

*He pulls Harris into a hug.*

JASON

Not that my opinion means much, but. It's gotten better every step of the way. So have you.

HARRIS

Thanks.

JASON

I mean it.

HARRIS

Even if you didn't. You are stuck with me.

JASON

Even if your book sucked, I choose you. Forever.

HARRIS

Oh, thanks. Was wondering what this ring was for. Wait, did you say my book sucks?

JASON

No. But.

Once people are buying, does it really matter what's inside?  
Reviews were pretty great!

HARRIS

They were fine.

JASON

Kirkus said, "Harrison Fowler is someone to watch...  
literary fiction genius."

HARRIS

Babe.

JASON

As long as the check clears, who cares.

HARRIS

I will appreciate when the check clears.

JASON

Put our future on lock, baby boy.

*Harris doesn't respond. He continues  
flipping through pages of his book.*

HARRIS

What are they paying this editor for?

JASON

Editing.

HARRIS

I hate you.

JASON

Love you, too.

*Harris's mother and literary agent,  
MARYBETH (58), enters.*

JASON

Afternoon, Ms. Fowler.

MARYBETH

Hello, Jason. What, no kiss for your mother?

HARRIS

Yeah--hi.

MARYBETH

All right, let me see the ring.

*She picks up Harris's left hand.*

MARYBETH

I was skeptical when I heard you gave him a "male engagement ring", but I see it's quite tasteful. Where'd you get it?

JASON

I commissioned it from a jeweler in Chinatown. Yeah, I built a custom AI model that scraped all his photos and "like" data and I told it to design a ring that would be aesthetically pleasing and fit the, uh, di--dimension? On his finger.

MARYBETH

Real diamonds?

JASON

Real love.

*Marybeth chuckles.*

HARRIS

Good flight?

MARYBETH

I'm gonna kill your father. The man hates me.

HARRIS

The divorce didn't tip you off?

MARYBETH

Business class. And a four-hour layover in Vegas! The hell am I supposed to do with a four-hour layover in Vegas?

JASON

Gamble?

MARYBETH

I had two martinis--bone dry--, a spring mix salad with goat cheese and truffle oil, and a much younger Colombian gentleman in the Terminal 1 lounge.

HARRIS

So you gambled.

MARYBETH

Enough about me. Today is all about you, my published novelist.

HARRIS

Honor of a lifetime.

MARYBETH

Honor of a lifetime to have referred you. When's Mama's cut coming?

HARRIS

I'm supposed to send you...?

MARYBETH

Oh--worry about it later. I'll get it.

*She picks up a copy of the novel from the display.*

MARYBETH

I knew I'd find you just the right publisher. You have a very real gift. And fifty percent of my DNA.

HARRIS

Sure.

MARYBETH

Now. Where is your father?

JASON

He's giving the Blackfeather team a tour of the property. Killing time before everyone else gets here.

MARYBETH

Mm. Of course. Our son writes a book set in the Adirondacks, suddenly oh! Would you look at this? 3 million to spare on a little weekend pad right up in the mountains with shiplap and a gorgeous view and--

*A pause.*

MARYBETH

Did you see he named this place "Chalet Waterspout"? What a pretentious--

HARRIS

Seemed pretty obvious. Waterspout.

MARYBETH

Oh, he's still on that?

JASON

What?

HARRIS

I'll tell you later.

MARYBETH

Is Becky here already?



JASON

Oh, Rebecca? Yeah, seems great.

(Gestures to Marybeth.)

Columbia grad.

MARYBETH

Yep. Some students you just don't forget.  
What about Heidi?

HARRIS

Who's Heidi?

JASON

Heidi McEwan.

HARRIS

Who's Heidi McEwan?

JASON

Big Wall Street lady. Back in 2020, Forbes did this tone-deaf article about the hobbies different finance gurus took up in quarantine--Heidi McEwan became an avid reader. Six months later, boom. She co-founds Blackfeather Press.

MARYBETH

She was also my roommate at Oxford.

JASON

No shit! You know how to get in touch with her? I wanna try pitching her something.

MARYBETH

You and me both.

*She picks up the handle of vodka from the drink table.*

MARYBETH

Oh, Preston. Where are you keeping the good stuff?

*She turns to the cabinets and finds one with a keypad. She plugs in a PIN number and it unlocks.*

MARYBETH

Still know your father.  
Same password for everything.

*She takes a premium bottle of vodka out of the locked cabinet and exits to the master suite.*

*Nobody bothers to shut the cabinet.*

JASON

Your mom is fabulous.

HARRIS

It's weird calling her Mom. Ever since I signed with her.

JASON

I get to call her "Mom" soon.

HARRIS

Do you really want that?

JASON

I do. Let's make it sooner.

HARRIS

No?

JASON

I already bought the ring. We're ready. I'm ready.

HARRIS

The Loft and Garden famously was not.  
We've got fifteen more months. No...

JASON

Screw the venue. I just wanna marry you.

HARRIS

You're sweet.

JASON

Imagine it. "New York Times bestselling author Harrison Fowler enters cute interracial marriage to app developer Jason Yang."

HARRIS

They'd probably leave out the "cute interracial" part.

JASON

Still true.

HARRIS

If we really are *that* couple... then we need to have *that* venue on *that* day. Because if one more party is planned behind my back to celebrate a life milestone that's not even mine anymore, I'm going to lose my mind.

JASON

Not yours anymore?

HARRIS

It might as well be her name on the cover.

JASON

I don't like seeing you like this.  
Wish I could just... wave a wand and make you happy.

HARRIS

Well... there is something, Mr. Yang.

JASON

Already? Now?

HARRIS

No. Not yet.

JASON

Anything.

HARRIS

There is an editor out there. Not saying I want her to die--  
But I might dance on her grave.

JASON

Don't say things you don't mean.  
But I'd kill for you any day of the week.

HARRIS

Don't say things you don't mean.

*A pause.*

HARRIS

What are you trying to pitch to Heidi McEwan?

JASON

That AI model I made to build your ring--I think there's  
money to be made there. Could match people with books. Or  
maybe design covers. Still figuring out my angle.

HARRIS

You want to work for Blackfeather?

JASON

Why not? You dangle AI in front of any startup founder,  
suddenly you're the sexiest man in the room.

HARRIS

Are you now?  
Making some plans with Heidi McEwan?

JASON

If by some miracle I can talk that Irish billionaire into  
giving me a job, I say she can do anything she wants.

HARRIS

Can she? Hmm. You're getting reckless, mister.  
I just might have to keep you in a cage.

JASON

Lock me up.

*The young editor, AMBER (22) enters.*

AMBER

Hey! Thought I wasn't gonna see you!

*She gives Harris a hug, whether he asked for it or not.*

AMBER

You hiding from me or something?

HARRIS

Yes.

AMBER

This guy.  
Oh! You're Jason, right? I've seen so much of your Instagram!

JASON

Amber. Nice to meet you.

AMBER

Did you know Harrison has been working on this book since he was in undergrad?

JASON

I was there. We met at Yale.

AMBER

Oh my word! You didn't say he went to Yale with you. Were you in the frat with him?

JASON

Harris tells me so much about you.

AMBER

All good things, right?

HARRIS

Only true things.

AMBER

(To Jason.)

You are gonna have some stiff competition for who's his biggest fan.

If Harrison Fowler has a million fans, I'm one of them. If he has a thousand fans, I'm still one of them. If someday, Harrison Fowler has no fans, then I must be dead.

*She laughs.*

HARRIS

That's... sweet.

AMBER

You know, they don't teach you how to lie in Oklahoma.

JASON

I'm a pretty big fan of my fiancé, too.

AMBER

I've never been to a gay wedding before, actually!

HARRIS

The wedding's going to be pretty small.

AMBER

Oh--oh yeah, of course. My word, I didn't mean to--

HARRIS

It's OK.

JASON

You're very sweet.

AMBER

I'm just--just a girl fresh outta Tornado Alley. I'm--I don't know what I'm doing. You're so sweet. Thank you.

HARRIS

For what?

AMBER

I mean you're born and raised in New York and got that big fancy Yale degree and you trusted me with your book.

HARRIS

Oh, I--mmm... Amber, you--

AMBER

On Tuesday, the whole world gets to meet Allison Noelle.

HARRIS

Some version of her.

AMBER

I think when we talk about these "strong female characters" we always see emotionless girls. No shade to Katniss, but in your book, Allison--she isn't afraid to have feelings.

And yet, she finds the strength inside to figure out she's working for a cult, kill the leader, and run home--while still being a bubbly, whole person.

HARRIS

Yeah, that's--basically the book.

AMBER

You brought this story into the world. Nobody can ever take that away from you. I got to play a small part in shaping a masterpiece.

HARRIS

You've played a big part in what people will read. That's for sure.

AMBER

I walked out of OSU with my diploma, moved to New York, and I said I'm gonna find out what I'm made of. And here I am, I've edited a novel that Kirkus said was "sublime". And--your dad bought this whole cabin just for this party?! I'd kill to have your parents.

HARRIS

You want 'em?

AMBER

My parents are funny. When I said I was gonna move to New York, they were all like "Why you wanna leave Owasso? You can be a writer in Owasso. You can write anywhere."

HARRIS

They're not wrong.

AMBER

It's different in New York. I don't even know if my ideas are any good. But I love hearing other people's dreams. And I want to help them build a story that changes lives.

HARRIS

You changed mine.

AMBER

Oh, you're too sweet!

*Harris raises an eyebrow.*

AMBER

Think everyone was right behind me, I just ran ahead 'cause I had to pee.

*She laughs and exits. She finds a light switch on her way to the bathroom.*

*The stage goes pitch black, with just the eerily perfect blue sky visible.*

AMBER (OFF STAGE)

Oh! Look at that. That's really dark, huh?

*She turns the lights back on. Right on cue, Harris's real estate mogul father PRESTON (59) enters with Blackfeather founder COREY (36), marketer WILLIAN (29, Chinese), and editor REBECCA (41).*

PRESTON

And! Well, I suppose that does it.

REBECCA

You have a beautiful property. It's even prettier in person. How much did this end up running you?

PRESTON

2 mil, somewhere thereabout.

REBECCA

What did it say on Zillow, Corey?

COREY

Think it was 3 mil, actually.

PRESTON

A rounding error.

REBECCA

Corey would not stop poring over those pictures--

COREY

Hey, I said, "I need you to find the ultimate DILF house." And did that silver fox of a man deliver.

REBECCA

Corey.

PRESTON

Well, this DILF says it's happy hour time! Five o'clock somewhere, yeah? Little day drinking ain't gonna kill ya. VIP. Can I get you anything?

*Harris hesitates.*

JASON

We'll take a red if you're opening one.

PRESTON

I asked my son.

HARRIS

I'll have a red if you're opening one.

*Preston takes out a wine bottle.*

PRESTON

Bordeaux?

HARRIS

Vintage?

PRESTON

This one's a 2017.

HARRIS

OK.

*Preston shelves that and takes out another.*

PRESTON

Cabernet. Napa Valley. 1994.

HARRIS

Sure.

PRESTON

We'll crack out the cheap stuff after everyone's already drunk.

*He uncorks the Napa Cabernet.*

PRESTON

Cabernet for you, Rebecca?

REBECCA

Oh, why not?  
Business is good at the Preston Fowler Group?

PRESTON

We survived '08 just fine. '25 is shaping up to be nothing but blue skies ahead.

COREY

I see what you did there and I am literally obsessed.

REBECCA

I don't know if editing books can make anyone rich like this. But I could sure get used to it.

PRESTON

Well, shake the right hands. Strike the right deals.



COREY

Take every delicious risk your little heart desires.

PRESTON

What can I do for ya, Corey?  
Glass of the '94 Cab? Or shall I open something else?

COREY

I'm gonna sound so gay right now--you have anything to make a  
Cosmo?

PRESTON

Check the table. Got Cointreau, lime. Cranberry's in the  
fridge. There's vodka--

*He sees the open "premium" cabinet and zeroes his eyes on Jason.*

PRESTON

Someone been in my cabinet?

JASON

No, that was--uh.

HARRIS

Mom.

MARYBETH (OFF STAGE)

Coming.  
My--DEAR--Preston.

*She enters with a half-empty bottle of premium vodka and hands it to Preston.*

PRESTON

You look wonderful. Made yourself at home.

*He puts the vodka back in the cabinet and locks it.*

MARYBETH

All for you.

*She notices her former student.*

MARYBETH

Becky.

REBECCA

It's Rebecca now.

MARYBETH

Isn't that special?

PRESTON  
I thought you weren't coming.

MARYBETH  
You bought me a ticket.

PRESTON  
But you never wrote back--

MARYBETH  
Harrison Fowler is my client.

*Preston pulls back.*

MARYBETH  
Lighten up. Of course I was coming.

*She plants a kiss on his cheek. Preston pours some wine and hands them out to guests.*

PRESTON  
So, Corey? When's the rest of the gang getting here?

COREY  
What are you talking about? The party's all here!

PRESTON  
You're kidding.

COREY  
We got the fun wine mom, the silver fox DILF, and I mean, you know I'm a walking Puerto Vallarta rave--

PRESTON  
Where is everyone?

JILLIAN  
We're expecting more people?

COREY  
Were we?

PRESTON  
You told me to get booze, charcuterie, and finger food for forty to fifty people. I bought a non-refundable block of fifty rooms at the Best Western two miles up the road. You said important publishing industry decision-makers were gathering today.

COREY  
All the important people are here.

PRESTON

Is anybody else coming? My sculpture guy had to make a bird of prey on very short notice.

COREY

Oh, it's gorgeous!

PRESTON

Is anybody else coming?!

COREY

We're 200 miles north of Manhattan.

PRESTON

Great. Just great.

MARYBETH

Oh, what's several thousand dollars to Preston Fowler?

PRESTON

Mare.

COREY

So where can I get some ice?

*Preston gestures to the ice sculpture.*

PRESTON

You're looking at it, buddy.

*He hands Corey an ice pick.*

COREY

Oh--no. I couldn't.

PRESTON

Do the honors.

COREY

Just would feel so bad cutting into such a pretty thing.

MARYBETH

It's gonna melt anyway.

PRESTON

Sculpture guy put hours into this. It's the least you could do.

COREY

I see there's ice I could grab in the dish here.

PRESTON

Do the honors.

*Corey stabs into the sculpture and carves off enough ice to start mixing himself a Cosmo.*

HARRIS

Jillian! Hey!

JILLIAN

Oh, Harris. You're shorter in person.

HARRIS

What's that supposed to mean?

JILLIAN

It's good to see you.

HARRIS

Jason, this is Jillian Chau.

JASON

Oh! Ryan Lin's girlfriend!

JILLIAN

Yeah.

*Jason and Jillian shake hands.*

JASON

We do the--volleyball. Twice a week.

JILLIAN

Nice to put a face to the name.

*They share a tentative look.*

HARRIS

Jillian does all the marketing for Blackfeather.

*Jillian picks up a copy of the novel from the display.*

JILLIAN

People say don't judge a book by its cover--but everyone knows that's a lie. You wander over to the new releases, your eyes going right to this one.

HARRIS

It is a pretty cover. You'd never know what was inside.

JILLIAN

I was struggling on a direction for a book like this one, but with careful market research and a couple mockups, the focus group really went in on the "high class girl boss" vibes.

HARRIS

Yeah, I was outvoted.

JILLIAN

Amber told me it was perfect--so did my girls in book club. You should be proud of this one.

*Corey crosses to Harris, Jason, and Jillian.*

COREY

Jill is an Instagrammable genius. I just look at all our reels and book covers--and I just wanna eat 'em all!

JILLIAN

Listen, I'm a marketing queen.

COREY

And I'm just a queen!  
Most important part of running a small business. Find people smarter than you. Look out for this one; she's five steps ahead of me at all times. Girl blow down.

JILLIAN

Killing it.

*She and Corey clink glasses. Corey pulls Harris into a side conversation.*

COREY

Damn, Harris. I heard you had a boyfriend, but nobody told me he was Chinese Jonathan Bailey. The things I'd let that man do to me--

HARRIS

Fiancé. Jason is my fiancé.

COREY

Oh, congrats. How'd I miss that?

HARRIS

Uh--I don't really know you.

COREY

That's right. God, your personality just leapt off the pages in your book and I've learned so much about you from the podcast, and doing the contract with your mom, planning the party with your dad--when'd you propose?

HARRIS

He proposed. Couple weeks ago.

COREY

Huh. Your dad and I talked so much about you and--

HARRIS

My dad hates him.

COREY

Oh--I'm. Guess that would do it.  
Homophobe or racist?

HARRIS

Neither. Both. I don't know.

*Jillian turns to Jason*

JILLIAN

不认识你吗?

(Bù rènshí nǐ ma? / "Don't I know you?")

*A chill runs down Jason's spine.*

JASON

Excuse me?

JILLIAN

Don't I know you?

JASON

I play volleyball with your boyfriend.

JILLIAN

Yes. But I know you.

JASON

Uh... first of all, that's racist.

*Jillian laughs.*

JILLIAN

Fair enough.

JASON

I just get one of those faces?

JILLIAN

Hmm. 你会说中文吗?

(Nǐ huì shuō zhōngwén ma / "Can you speak Chinese?")

JASON

I--I don't--um.

JILLIAN

Why would you lie to me, Yang Zekai?

*Jason hurries a sip of his wine.  
Marybeth turns to Rebecca.*

MARYBETH

So. "Rebecca."

REBECCA

Rebecca.

MARYBETH

Press, I'm sure you remember Becky Adler.

PRESTON

Oh--no?

REBECCA

We met at a department event. It was years ago.

PRESTON

You did look familiar.

MARYBETH

She's a tough one. You know what I always said.

REBECCA

"Only the biggest assholes  
survive in this biz."

MARYBETH

"Only the biggest assholes  
survive in this biz."

*They share a tense laugh.*

MARYBETH

Ruined your life in the best way.

REBECCA

My MFA taught me to be a cold-blooded killer.

MARYBETH

How long's it even been?

REBECCA

Suppose we're coming up on ten years since--Columbia.

MARYBETH

And look at you now. Paying off quite well, isn't it?

REBECCA

Let's drink to that.

PRESTON

Freshen your glass, Mare?

MARYBETH

Oh--probably had enough already.

*She hands her glass to Preston, who refills it and hands it back to her.*

PRESTON

(to Rebecca.)

Small world.

REBECCA

Could not be smaller.

MARYBETH

On my flight, I was looking back over Harrison's contract. You remember that 30 days clause?

REBECCA

Sure do.

MARYBETH

Think we're well past that by now, aren't we?

REBECCA

You need to talk to Heidi about that. That's above my pay grade.

MARYBETH

Oh, I've tried Heidi. She's not calling me back.

REBECCA

Guess I can't help you, then.

MARYBETH

You like your job, Becky?

REBECCA

Quite a bit.

MARYBETH

Never forget how you got here.

REBECCA

How could I?

*She crosses to Corey and Harris.*

PRESTON

And her title is...?

MARYBETH

Acquisitions Editor.

*Preston raises his eyebrow; intrigued.*



PRESTON  
Hmm.

*Marybeth recognizes this "hmm". They were married for a while.*

MARYBETH  
Oh--no. No.

PRESTON  
What did I say?

MARYBETH  
Blackfeather isn't a place where you can just get the editor's email and dump a shitty manuscript.

PRESTON  
What about a great one?

MARYBETH  
You write something new?

PRESTON  
I wrote something great.

MARYBETH  
OK. Why don't you self-publish?  
Told you to do that with *Up the Waterspout*--

PRESTON  
Well, I--

MARYBETH  
You have the money. Self-publishing's never been easier.

PRESTON  
It's a bit tacky. No one's a real writer unless--

MARYBETH  
If it's that good, what are you afraid of?

*Amber enters. Rebecca pulls her into a conversation.*

REBECCA  
Amber.

AMBER  
Hey! Did you see the bathroom?! I started to wash my hands with the bright green stuff in the glass bottle next to the sink, and then I was like, "Why do my hands smell so minty?"

REBECCA  
You found the mouthwash, didn't you?

AMBER

Oh! Duh.

REBECCA

Hey. Amber, we need to talk about this book.

AMBER

It is so good. I get this, like, feral empowerment high every time I finish reading it. Don't you?

REBECCA

Yeah, it was great.

*She clears her throat.*

REBECCA

I need you to listen to me. You cannot let anyone know you edited that book. You understand? I need to be the one to take credit.

AMBER

What?

REBECCA

Swear on your life. You did not edit Harris's book.

AMBER

Oh--K. Can I ask why?

REBECCA

We're playing a numbers game right now. It's all about the bottom line. Do you understand?

AMBER

Oh, is this like the stack of documents I found on your desk with--?

REBECCA

No.  
This is different.

AMBER

So... I--I can lie. But I'm confused, you assigned me to edit the book--and--doesn't it say that I--?

*She picks up a copy of the novel off the display and opens it to the copyright page.*

AMBER

"Edited by Rebecca Adler".

*She looks at her supervisor.*

REBECCA

You know what? We're a team.  
It takes a village to put a book on the shelf.

AMBER

Yeah. No, I like that.

REBECCA

OK.

*She crosses away, nervous. Amber puts the book back on the display. Harris exits to the bathroom. Preston crosses to Jillian.*

PRESTON

So you are a woman of many talents, ah.

*Amber crosses to Jillian and Preston.*

JILLIAN

I wear many hats.

PRESTON

So do I, Miss Olivia.

AMBER

Her name's Jillian.

*Jason sees Jillian thrown by this mention of "Olivia". He crosses to make small talk with Rebecca.*

PRESTON

Slip of the tongue.

JILLIAN

I am quite good at what I do, Mr. Fowler.  
That is your name, right?

PRESTON

In the flesh.  
Anything I can get for you, Miss Amber?

AMBER

I'll have a red wine, if you have one? I'm not picky.

PRESTON

You'll love a Mourvèdre. I've got a great one from France,  
somewhere early 2000s. Hits like a Shiraz with notes of  
vanilla bean and leather.

AMBER

Sounds great.

*Preston searches for the red wine he had in mind.*

AMBER

Hey, I'm--I'm a big fan of *Ink and Vellum*.

PRESTON

Oh--thank you. I've never met a fan in person, actually.

AMBER

Yeah, I got hooked when you interviewed Corey! I went back and listened to all your episodes. You're an incredible host! When's your episode with Harris coming out?

PRESTON

My son will not be doing an episode with me

AMBER

Oh. I thought he said he was recording one--

PRESTON

He conducted himself in an unprofessional manner. Call me old-fashioned, but I believe actions have consequences.

AMBER

Well if you need somebody to talk about *Blue Skies Yonder*, I'm Team Fowler all the way!

*Preston finds the bottle and opens it.*

PRESTON

Ah--it's 2001.

AMBER

That wine's older than I am!

*Preston pours Amber a glass.*

AMBER

Wait, you've written a book too, right?

PRESTON

It'll come out soon.

AMBER

Who's publishing it?

PRESTON

Haven't decided.

AMBER

Well, we all have to start somewhere!  
And if you write anything like your son--wow!

*Harris enters. Amber takes the wine.*

AMBER

Thanks!

*Preston watches Amber as she follows Harris to join a conversation with Corey.*

PRESTON

Well. No substitute for enthusiasm.

*He turns to Jillian.*

JILLIAN

What?

PRESTON

This is just--the most wonderful surprise seeing you again. So this is the job?

JILLIAN

Yes.

PRESTON

Good to know.

*Jillian nods.*

PRESTON

I'm not shocked. You do have a great head on your shoulders.

JILLIAN

Gotta be. I'm a saleswoman.

PRESTON

Yes, you are.

JILLIAN

So you got a book?

PRESTON

I do.

JILLIAN

Genre? Demographic?

PRESTON

Crime thriller. Adult.

*Jillian cracks a sly smile.*

JILLIAN

I see why you've thrown the party.

PRESTON

I was promised there would be 40-50 important decision-makers in the room today.

JILLIAN

You don't need 40-50 if you can secure that one Yes

PRESTON

Your boss seems to be an idiot.

*Jillian nods.*

JILLIAN

Marketer's advice?  
Harris could do a lot for you.

PRESTON

Hmm.

JILLIAN

I'll put a bug in Corey's ear. Work on your son.

*Preston nods.*

JASON

(to Rebecca; mid-conversation.)

Hey, weird question. Does she ever go by Olivia?

*He indicates Jillian.*

REBECCA

No.

JASON

Yeah. Thought so.

REBECCA

Hmm.

JASON

Oh--you might know. Do Blackfeather books really get on the New York Times bestseller lists?

REBECCA

Yes!

Yeah, something like 18 out of the 23 titles in our catalogue held at least a week in the New York Times.

JASON

Hope Harris's can do the same.  
What other books did Blackfeather publish?

REBECCA

Oh--uh. There was Erika's book. Oh, last month, we published this child prodigy, Obadiah Jones. He wrote *The Coefficient Empire*. A YA sci-fi genre romp kind of thing. Amber edited that one.

*Jason looks this up.*

JASON

Huh, look at that. *The Coefficient Empire*. Obadiah Jones. Two weeks on the YA Bestseller list. Wow, he's sixteen years old. Five stars on Amazon. Solid Kirkus review, too.

REBECCA

Kind of amazing.

JASON

Yeah. Weird I didn't hear about that, I love sci-fi.

REBECCA

Corey told me he's talking to Netflix about movie rights.

JASON

That's wild! Must be all that Heidi McEwan money.

REBECCA

We truly don't deserve her.

*Jason crosses to Harris and Corey. He hands Harris his glass of wine.*

JASON

You wanna finish for me?

HARRIS

Thank you, sir.

*He pours the remainder of Jason's glass into his own.*

JASON

Corey Reynolds. My man. Jason Yang.

COREY

Pleasure's all mine. I hear the man of the hour has you locked down. When's the date?

JASON

(Mock southern accent.)  
Fourth of July!

(Regular voice.)  
It's a Saturday. All-American couple, all American day

REBECCA  
Thought it fell on a Friday this year.

JASON  
2026.

REBECCA  
Mm. Nice, long engagement.

JASON  
Way too long, if you ask me.

*He turns to Harris--"kidding, not kidding".*

HARRIS  
But the Loft and Garden on Fifth was next available that day.

REBECCA  
The one in Midtown?

HARRIS  
It was perfect.

REBECCA  
I've been to a wedding there--that must've cost a fortune.

HARRIS  
They asked for twenty-five percent upfront. Once my advance comes in--

COREY  
(Interjecting.)  
What are you waiting for?! This man--*this man*--looks like this and says he wants to marry you!

JASON  
I've been saying the same thing!

HARRIS  
But--debut novel and wedding back to back? I mean... what is there even left after that?

JASON  
Our love?



REBECCA

Write a sequel? Everyone's saying this book is gonna basically print us money.

HARRIS

Well, you read it.  
The ending's kinda--it's pretty definitive.

*A pause.*

REBECCA

Sure.

COREY

Well, you're a smart kid. You got a few more stories in you. Kinda banking on that. We all are.

HARRIS

So am I.  
Jason, actually, develops apps. He's been working on something--pretty cool.

JASON

Sure. One of my classmates and I--

HARRIS

From Yale.

*William, Amber, Marybeth, and Preston trickle in to listen to Jason's impromptu presentation.*

JASON

Yes. From Yale. We built this app, Birdsong AI--it syncs up with the mic in your phone and listens to your friends and family; so basically you can type or copy and paste whatever text in and pick a voice you wanna hear it in. It's helpful for like when you don't feel like reading the text or if you wanna hear something in someone's voice.

REBECCA

How'd you get the idea?

JASON

(Indicating Harris.)

I love this man, but he's very wordy over text.

*Everyone laughs politely.*

COREY

Can it talk dirty?

JASON

Well, duh.

COREY

(To Harris.)

Marry that man or I will.

*Corey and Jason laugh. Harris clears his throat.*

AMBER

Sounds fun! Where can we get it?

JASON

It's not live on app stores yet, but just for kicks--

*He opens his phone and pushes a button. A "file sent" noise is heard on everyone else's phones.*

JASON

There--just AirDropped the prototype to you all!

(To Corey.)

So I am really curious about Blackfeather. I obviously specialize in AI and B2B communications optimization. I was looking around on the Blackfeather website. Have you th--?

COREY

You're gonna have to slow way down. It's hard for me to focus on the techy talk when I am literally swimming in your eyes.

REBECCA

Knock it off.

(To Jason.)

Is he bothering you?

JASON

Nah, it's chill.

*Rebecca finishes her drink. She crosses to Jillian and Amber.*

COREY

OK. Finish your thought.

JASON

Yeah, I poked around on your website. I have a few ideas.

COREY

I wanna hear 'em.

*Jason brushes Harris's shoulder as he steps away. Harris looks over his shoulder as Jason and Corey exit to the balcony. He crosses to pick a copy of his book off the display and fixates on a page. Preston crosses to Harris.*

PRESTON

Big day, huh.

HARRIS

Something like that.

*Preston picks up a copy of the novel.*

PRESTON

"Harrison Fowler"--just dripping with success.

HARRIS

(Abrupt.)

Is my book any good?

*Preston chuckles.*

PRESTON

You're published.  
I threw this whole party for you.

HARRIS

Yeah. Thanks.

*Preston takes a sip of his wine.*

PRESTON

You've always had such an imagination.  
Now reading your book...

*He doesn't finish his thought.*

HARRIS

Sure.

PRESTON

You remember *Up the Waterspout*?

HARRIS

Your manuscript?

PRESTON

My book.

HARRIS

It's been years.

PRESTON

I pulled it out again--  
People just don't write stories like that anymore.

HARRIS

I'll take your word for it.

PRESTON

What'd they give you for the advance?

HARRIS

\$200k.

*Preston whistles.*

PRESTON

That'll put you on your feet.

HARRIS

Should, yeah.

PRESTON

How much is your mother getting?

HARRIS

She's my agent.

PRESTON

Hmm.

*He stares at Harris.*

HARRIS

What?

PRESTON

I'd hate to see you caught unprepared for the consequences of  
your actions.

HARRIS

I do just fine, Dad. Thanks.

PRESTON

People lie to you when you have money to burn.  
Especially when they say they love you.

HARRIS

Well. Jason's never lied to me. And I've never lied to him.

PRESTON

Have you ever told him who's paying your half of the rent?

HARRIS

Does it matter?