

THE TRUMP CARD

By Mike Daisey

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mikedaisey.com

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Well, here we are again.

I released *The Agony and The Ecstasy of Steve Jobs* under an open license in February of 2012. It was downloaded over 100,000 times the first week it was available. Today it's had almost two hundred productions in dozens of countries around the world, and been translated into six languages.

I always thought I'd do this again, but I never knew when until I started working on this show. This release comes two months from a pivotal election, and I'm thrilled that millions of people will have access to *The Trump Card*, and that thousands of artists can choose to stage readings or whole productions as we speed toward November. Here are a few notes that may be useful for your productions:

ADAPTATION

This work is not mine now. It is yours. The transcript is a theatrical blueprint which you can amend or change as you see fit. You are encouraged to use whatever is useful in this transcript, from performing the entire piece verbatim, to editing it, to amending it in any way that furthers the needs of your particular production. Perhaps your production is not a monologue, but an ensemble of five actors? Perhaps you'd like to use this material as the framework for a musical? Perhaps a traditional play, built out of pieces of the show transformed into dialogue? Perhaps you will intercut sections of this text with short films of your own devising or use the text to score an opera? The possibilities are endless, and please explore them with *The Trump Card* if you feel inspired to do so.

STAGING

Those who have seen my monologues before will know they are staged in a particular manner, with me seated at a table, and the outline of the work in front of him. This work has no outline, as it is a transcript derived from those performances, and there's no need to feel beholden to that staging. Feel free to adhere as closely to, or as far away from, that staging as is useful to you in your work.

CONTEXT

The Trump Card is written very specifically to be addressed to audiences that are American, and are directly implicated in the election it is referencing. If you're staging it in other countries, be aware that this shift may diminish a lot of the power of the piece, and you may need to consider that in your decisions.

I sincerely hope that this transcript is useful to you. I am delighted to welcome you into this process, and I can't wait to see what you dream up.

Break a leg,

Mike Daisey

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TERMS:

This is a non-traditional license, written in simple English. As such it may not cover every contingency, but it outlines the parameters, and presumes good faith on the both the part of the person drafting it and the people reading it.

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Anyone is free to use and stage The Trump Card for live public performances and readings. There are no restrictions as to venue, location, or size of live performance. There is no permission needed from anyone at anytime to perform the work in any venue.

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There are no royalties or payments of any kind for staging The Trump Card—it is free to use for all theatrical purposes, from readings to full productions. No one may profit from the distribution of this transcript without express permission—in other words, agencies can't charge people to produce the show, and they have no right to negotiate such things. It is free.

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Permission is granted to translate the text into any other language for the purposes of staging the work. Any translations must be made free under the same terms of this license, and it is requested that artists making those translations send their translations to dilettante@mikedaisey.com so that they can be made available for others to use.

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TITLE:

It is asked that if artists are staging a work that is substantially similar to what is presented here, they call it The Trump Card. If the work has been wildly adapted by the artists they are still free to call it The Trump Card, or if they feel another title is now appropriate, they may call it that instead, though it should be prominently credited as being adapted from this original work.

CREDITING:

When advertising, crediting, writing the press release, billing, or making signage for your production, please always credit the performer directly following Mr. Daisey. It is requested that one of the following credits be used: “by Mike Daisey, Performed by [Performer's Name]” or “Adapted from the monologue by Mike Daisey, Performed by [Performer's Name]” or “Adapted from the monologue ‘The Trump Card’ by Mike Daisey, Performed by [Performer's Name]” as is deemed appropriate for your production. If you use multiple performers, the intention is simply to make it clear that your production does not have Mr. Daisey in it. Make good choices.

CONTACT:

It is requested that artists staging productions or readings of the work contact Mike Daisey with details of their productions, so that word can be spread about productions around the world. You can email dilettante@mikedaisey.com, or via twitter to [@mdaisey](https://twitter.com/mdaisey), or by Facebook to [@mike.daisey](https://www.facebook.com/mike.daisey).

RECORDING:

You are free to record and disseminate work that arises out of live performances of this work. If the artists wish to post publicly more than a two minute excerpt, they are asked to contact dilettante@mikedaisey.com.

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This license is expressly for the staging of theatrical productions and live events, and in the creation of work toward that end. Quoting from the text, attributed and referred to as a transcript, is permitted for commentary and analysis. If you want to do something else that isn't a live performance, you don't have those rights and we can talk.

CONTEXT:

This work is not Mike Daisey's monologue, because that is a living construct made of ideas in the moment it is executed. It does not represent the totality of The Trump Card, as each performance Mr. Daisey gives is an extemporaneous, live event, and this transcript should not be interpreted as the definitive version of what he says on stage. If people would make an effort to be mindful of this distinction between the dead words in your hands and the actual ephemereral thing that is living theater, Mr. Daisey would appreciate it.

THE TRUMP CARD

By Mike Daisey

“A short-fingered vulgarian.”

—*Graydon Carter on Donald Trump, 1986*

“Look at my hands. They’re fine. Nobody other than Graydon Carter years ago used to say that. My hands are normal hands. During a debate, he was losing, and he said, “Oh, he has small hands and therefore, you know what that means.” This was not me. This was Rubio, okay? So, he started it. So, what I said a couple of days later ... and what happened is I was on line shaking hands with supporters, and one would say, “You have great hands, Mr. Trump, I had no idea.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “I thought you were like deformed, and I thought you had small hands.” I had fifty people ... Is that a correct statement? I mean people were writing, “How are Mr. Trump’s hands?” My hands are fine. You know, my hands are normal. Slightly large, actually. In fact, I buy a slightly smaller than large glove, okay? No, but I did this because everybody was saying to me, “Oh, your hands are very nice. They are normal.” So Rubio, in a debate, one of the things he said was “He has small hands and therefore, you know what that means, he has small something else.” You can look it up. I didn’t say it.”

—*Donald Trump on Donald Trump, 2016*

“What we professional liars hope to serve is truth...I'm afraid the pompous word for that is art.”

—*Orson Welles on Mike Daisey, 1974*

TRUMP THE GAME

You, my friends, are fucked.

And it gives me no pleasure to be the one to tell you this.

Well...that's not entirely true.

It gives me *some* pleasure to tell you this because I am an artist—that is to say a professional liar—and it is my stock-in-trade to go to audiences like you and deliver terribly bad news about things you don't want to know. I've built an entire career out of it.

And I understood that you would understand what I'm talking about. That pleasure. That schadenfreude in a little bit of terrible news about someone you hate. The curled lip, the pleasure in the mouth. I know that you know what I'm talking about because after all...you're here. You are a self-selecting group.

You are the people who came to a show about Donald Trump.

How did that work exactly? Were you thinking, "You know...I just don't know very much about this person. I haven't heard enough coverage."

Bullshit.

I know why you came. You came for the pleasure of it. That's what you came for.

Don't be shy. Admit it.

You came for the red meat.

You came to see eighty six crisp, tight minutes in which he will be flayed for your pleasure, from his huge orange head to his sickening baboon ass.

And believe me, I would love to do that for you.

There are few things that would please me more than being your whore. I would love to give you just eighty six crisp, tight minutes exclusively about what a shit Donald Trump is. We would all go home so terribly, deliciously happy.

There is just one problem.

You fucked yourselves.

And you fucked yourselves from every direction.

You did it from the right. Oh, you fucked yourselves from the right because this is clearly is the sweet, sickly fruit of the Southern Strategy. Decade after decade after decade of riling up as many white people as you possible with coded words. Coded words for just straight-up, natural racism. You say the word thug. “Thug. You know what we’re talking about, right?” And you do that every election. The Republicans do this over and over and over again. But it makes sense that you would do that, because the Republicans are a racist party.

Now, some out there might bridle at this and say, “Oh, how can you say such a thing? Please, at least use the word allegedly.” But you see, it’s a funny thing. We judge people on their actions as opposed to their intentions, because we can see their actions. And it turns out if you just do super racist shit for decade after decade after decade, there’s a magical point where we just decide that you’re fucking racist. And there we are.

But that’s not even the worst part, of course, because not only were they just fucking racist, they also were stupid. Because every fucking election, there was somebody in the back of that room, some Junior Analyst #7, going,

“Gentlemen, I’m just a little concerned because I’m looking through this data, and the white people are really angry. Like, they get more... we’re making them so angry. And I’m just

concerned that they're going to froth up and freak out in some way, because they seem like a really angry group of people.”

And everyone else in the room was like “Jim, calm down. This happens every time, man. They get really really angry and then we don't give them anything they want. And that's what we fucking do. That's our deal.

I mean, how is this going to go wrong? Is someone going to show up who's like...actually racist? Who's actually more fucking racist than us? And they just pick everybody up and run away with them like an orange Pied Piper? I don't think so.”

And the left?

And by the left, I mean you.

Because you are sitting in the American theater.

Oh...the poor, blameless, innocent left.

“I just don't understand! People are so angry! It's amazing! I don't know why they're so angry! You know, I was reading a very interesting article in *Mother Jones*, and it just made me think—I just don't know. We want to do so much for these people! We want to do so much, and we already have done so much, like welfare reform. We have brought them all sorts of things, and I'm not sure why they're so upset about it. I mean, we helped bring them NAFTA. We changed the whole landscape for all those poor white people. I don't know what's wrong with them. We're the party of working people, and by working people, I mean banks and corporations. But there are people in there! There are tellers at the banks! I mean, they're not unionized, they're not really our people. We're more about the unions. I mean, the few that are left, but they're totally on our side. Any of the unions that are left. I don't know why they're so angry.”

And where does that leave me? And this would be an ideal place for me to divulge to you some of my personal political leanings, and maybe create a kind of sympathetic connection with you as we go through the show, but I'm not going to do that shit.

Because tonight, I'm your interlocutor. I'm your monologist. That's why I'm under the lights and you're there in the darkness.

And I am an artist, and that is to say a professional liar...

...so I think you have to know with whom my allegiances have to lie.

I may despise him...

...but he's very good at his job.

And I love competency. I do. I fucking love it.

It is so sexy when people can actually do their fucking jobs, isn't it?

And he is very good at his job. I tell you, all I have to do is turn off the parts of my brain that have ethics and morals, and I admire the fucking shit out of this guy.

Because I understand him because he and I are both performers, and we work with the same toolset. I understand him in a way that I'm not sure that many people other than me do. And so, that's the reason I started this.

That's why I took this on. I originally started working on this monologue before he had declared, but everybody was saying his name. Everyone said he was going to run. It was like they say, almost every election, the last couple of elections, "He's going to run," and I thought, "You know? He's going run, but it's not going to go anywhere, of course. I mean, duh. But he's a fascinating figure because he's been famous exclusively just for being rich the entire time that I have been alive. That's strange and remarkable." And I thought when his campaign had flamed out it would make a nice anecdote rounding out my story.

And so I began working on this monologue, and just a few weeks after I began, I received a fateful package in the mail.

And I knew it was fateful for how it was packaged. It was a large box completely covered in brown paper, as though someone had taken paper bags from the grocery store and cut them apart and then taped them with clear tape until they made packaging.

And I knew then it was a package from my father.

My father is the Magellan of yard sale-ing.

He roams the yard sales of far northern Maine, where the entire economy is yard sales and potatoes, and so as you might imagine my father is a very important person. And my father roams from these sales finding enormous, strange, perplexing things, which when he sees, he thinks, “Perfect! I must immediately buy this, and package it, and mail it to my adult children!”

And we, his adult children, have learned that the best thing to do is that, when you receive one of my father’s packages, you must just simply, immediately burn it. Do not open it. Just burn it right where it stands. I live in a New York apartment; space is really at a premium. But he’d included a note with this one, and he said, “I think this will be important and interesting for your investigations.”

And so it intrigued me, and so against my better wisdom, I opened it up, and inside, lo and behold, it was true!

The package contained a vintage copy of *Trump: The Game*.

A game born from the mind of Donald Trump.

A game that can be best described as *Monopoly*...for dogs.

And I’ve often been in a situation where I’ve thought, “I really just wish I could play *Monopoly* with this Shih-Tzu.” So instead of a lot of properties all over the board, there are just

seven. Seven properties. And they're all super classy. Like three of them are resorts, and three of them are casinos, and one of them is like a brothel or something. Just like how I imagine Donald Trump sees the world—a few super classy places surrounded by a great howling blankness.

And as soon as I opened the box and I looked at its contents, I knew what I had to do. I had to do it immediately. I thought, “Oh my god, I have to have a theme party! I have to invite over anyone who's anyone in this monologue and my friends and loved ones, I got to get them over here, and we have to play *Trump: The Game!* And not only that: I must have themed items!”

And so I made it a whole thing. I made a custom email and the whole shebang with the clip art, and I invited people over. Remember this is early on, before things with Trump got so Kristallnact-y. It all seemed so terribly funny then, didn't it?

And I did it up—I had banners, I had some balloons, I had *Trump: The Game* in the middle of the coffee table in a starring role. And I served Trump Steaks, which are Donald Trump-themed and –branded steaks, originally sold at The Sharper Image. Which is good, because I've always gone for my quality meats at The Sharper Image.

Now, The Sharper Image is out of business, so you can't get Trump Steaks, so when I say that I served Trump Steaks, perhaps what I mean is I made stickers that say “Trump Steaks” and I put them on some other steaks. But since that's actually how Donald Trump does it, I thought it was dramaturgically sound.

I also had Trump Ice, which is spring water themed for Donald Trump, which tastes almost exactly like Donald Trump's sweat. Delicious!

So I've got the Trump Ice, I've got mixed drinks, I've got beer and wine, I've got red and white, I've got the game, I've got the steaks—it's a whole to-do. We sit down, we get out the instructions, and we're going to play *Trump: The Game*.

And at this point, I need to make a sort of meta-theatrical aside to talk a little bit about an issue of storytelling that I've run into that is causing me some problem with this monologue. As a monologist, every once in a while, I run into this problem where you'll find out about something in the world that is so perfect. It is so perfect that it's actually too perfect. It's so on the nose that it actually breaks the armature of the story that you're trying to tell. Like, it's so perfect that it's actually too much and just like shatters it, and your story falls apart. And I normally wouldn't bring this up, because this is sort of inside baseball for storytellers, except that you know exactly what the fuck I'm talking about, because you have just spent an entire year with Donald Trump.

So you know what I'm talking about. This is that feeling when you get up in the morning and you feel this indigestion. And you think, "Did I eat Indian last night, or..." and then you remember why you feel that. It's because Donald Trump is still running for president.

And that indigestion, when you wake up every morning, is your hatred for Donald Trump. And it's burning inside of you and roiling, and you know that you can control it, because you've been living with it a long time. You have all your hate packed in there. You're like, "No matter what happens today, I've got to get through my day. I am not going to suddenly be consumed with hatred for Donald Trump. There's nothing Donald Trump could say that I have not already fucking heard that could cause me to lose my shit. My shit's been lost so many times, I don't even know where my shit is. It's gone, bitches."

You think that, and then, he SAYS SOMETHING. How does he do that? He says something out of his fucking mouth, and that free-floating aneurysm that is Donald Trump becomes lodged in your right frontal lobe and explodes.

You're like, "NNNNAUGH, how did he do that?! I knew he was—AAAAHHGNG, I've heard him say so many crazy things! How could he say something worse?! That took me by surprise? That was crazy! I just AAAAAAAAAANNNNNGGGGGG, so then it made me crazy again!"

This has happened to me multiple times. Even in the time since I've started performing this fucking story. And I have to tell you, I have not been performing it for very long.

Let's see, what has there been? Oh, there was the time that there was a terrible shooting in a nightclub and dozens of people were slaughtered, and then the next day, Donald Trump was like "I think the President works with Muslim extremists. I mean, by 'I think it,' I mean 'people are saying.' I mean, I don't want to think it, but it's just happening. You know how people say things. What are you going to do? It's terrible, let's not talk about it, but I said it, goodbyyyyye."

Or after the convention? This man is just like "I am an unorthodox Republican candidate. I'm going to take a huge shit on everything Republicans stand for.

Hey you! Yeah, you, the dead war hero? Fuck you, dead war hero!

And fuck you, father of the dead war hero! And fuck your pocket constitution!

Hey, are you his mother? You don't talk enough, you Muslim! Fuck you, too!"

And then, after multiple days of fucking over the family of the dead war hero, even the press is begging Donald to change what he talks about, but every morning he's like, "I still want to yell at the grieving family."

The only thing that changed his plan was when he started yelling at the baby.

“Yeah, you, baby! You over there! Fuck you baby! Fuck that baby! Fuck you, baby!”

I...just. Nnnnnngh. How can you even build a show out of that shit?

That is what I’m talking about.

So... what I’m trying to say is that there are a number of facts that I need to tell you about *Trump: The Game*. But I am not a good enough storyteller to tell them to you without destroying the monologue. And so I am just going to tell you the facts, alone, without commentary, and I’ll just let them sit there.

There are three things.

The first thing I need to tell you about *Trump: The Game* is that the money in *Trump: The Game* is stolen from *Monopoly*.

The money is exactly the same. It’s the same colors and the denominations of the bills. It’s exactly the same except that, in *Monopoly*, you have your ones, your fives, your tens, but in *Trump: The Game*, it’s actually the same exact denominations, except...

...they’ve added six zeroes to every number.

The second thing I need to tell you about *Trump: The Game* is that like in *Monopoly*, when you land on a property, you have to pay rent to the person who owns the property.

But it does not work that way in *Trump: The Game*.

In *Trump: The Game*, when someone lands on your property, you don’t take money from that person.

You just take money...directly from the bank.

And the third thing that I need to tell you about *Trump: The Game* is that, in *Trump: The Game*, there is only one die, unlike *Monopoly*, with its two dice. And that one die is called the TRUMP DIE, and it’s the TRUMP DIE because it’s numbered 1 through 5, but there’s no 6,

because the 6 is instead a T, for TRUMP, and if you roll a T, then you got TRUMPED. And when that happens, whatever player rolls a TRUMP, that player may immediately steal anything they want...

...from any other player.

So we're playing *Trump: The Game*, and I got to tell you, we're having a good time. Everyone's like, "TRUMP STEAKS," and we're drinking our Trump Water and they're like, "It's the sweat of Trump!" And then we're playing this game, and the game is so terrible. The game is so terrible, that's the joy of it. You ever done that before? You ever play a terrible game, watch a terrible movie? And you laugh and you're like, "This is terrible!" Or you're eating food, and you're like, "This food is so bad! This food tastes so bad, but I keep putting it in my mouth!" Or you're playing the game and you're like, "The game is so shitty! We laugh and laugh because it's so shitty and we tell each other it's so shitty!" And we play and play this game, and everyone is having the best time and we are playing this game, and I am telling you—

—that is where we still are. One year later.

We are all still playing that game, and I don't know when we're going to stop.

YOUNG TRUMPS RUN FREE TONIGHT

Donald Trump was born in 1946, which means demographically he is an absolutely perfect baby boomer. Sorry, baby boomers; he's your responsibility.

He was born to Fred Trump. Now, Fred Trump has a classic immigrant story. The Trumps came to this nation from Sweden, if by "Sweden," we mean "Germany." Trumps have a long tradition of lying about what country they came from, because of some issues in the early twentieth century having to do with Germany and despotism and taking over the world. And so they would pretend that they were from Sweden, and they did this actually for generations—they simply claimed they were Swedish.

And I find this fascinating because I kind of love the position of Sweden with regards to the left. Sweden's always that solution for softheaded people on the left who don't think very much—you know who I'm talking about. People you overhear at specialty coffee shops saying, "If only we were more like Sweden! They have health care for everyone, and everyone gets a free custard pie every morning! In Sweden the dogs have health care! We need to be more like Sweden!"

And I always think that's so interesting because it never gets called out for being unbelievably fucking racist.

Because of course, the reason Sweden is Sweden is that like 99% of their people are not just white, but they're the same socioeconomic group. They're not just the same background; they all came from the same house on the same block. Getting people in Sweden to agree to have universal health care—it was like, "Hey, guys, do you wanna have—oh, cool, that sounds good, okay, yeah, sure."

They debated it in like 40 minutes and it was all done, and then they had health care. Next day they passed the rider for the custard pies and pet coverage. Boom, done.

The interesting thing about living in America is that it's diverse, except we often feel conflicted about that diversity, we're sort of like,

“I like the *theory* of diversity, but what would work best for *me* is if everybody would sort of, like, be diverse, but maybe you could all just act exactly like white people.

That's what would be best for me.”

So like I said, Fred has this classic immigrant story. His father comes to these shores, Fred's born here, and he starts buying up property, and he becomes a landlord—if by “landlord,” I mean “slumlord.”

A notorious slumlord in fact, and eventually has a slumlord empire stretching all over Brooklyn and Queens. This is not a small thing. At his height, Fred Trump is worth 300 million dollars. He starts with almost nothing, and he builds his way up, and I mean, that's something to be proud of. A very American story, and if you were running something like Trump University, and you weren't under indictment, you might want to teach a chapter on, like, how did Fred Trump make this economic miracle happen?

It's a good question. It's built on simple foundations—like Fred Trump would have his men mix their own rat poison instead of buying expensive rat poison at the store. It is also true that his rat poison was made of talcum powder, and did not work at all. But it was very cheap.

It's also true that Fred Trump very famously would reuse nails, which is very thrifty, and you may wonder, like, “Well, why doesn't everyone reuse nails? That sounds like a great idea! So thrifty! So American!” Here's the thing: The reason we don't reuse nails is because after you

use them once, the nails are... what's the word for it? Shitty. They're shitty nails. They don't work well, that's why we don't do that.

So that's only good if you're building shitty buildings. But since Fred Trump was like, "That's my specialty!" and so he's building just shitty buildings and stuffing them with people, it works out for him, and if they fall down it's ok, because, hey, more debris full of shitty nails.

The other reason we don't always reuse nails is because it's actually labor-intensive. Like, someone has to go through all that debris when your building just fell down because you used shitty nails and get all the shitty nails out of it to build the next shitty building. That takes a lot of labor. People don't like to do that.

But in Fred Trump's case, he had a very valuable edge on the competition, which was his policy, a lifelong policy that made a real difference.

And that was that he simply didn't pay people.

And this is how it worked:

So you would work for Fred Trump, you're a contractor, and you do a job, you work in the hot sun, you build something. And then when it's done, you would say like, "Hey, can I have some money?" and they would say, "Fuck you."

And then you would say, "Oh, okay, what an interesting response," and then maybe you would make up an invoice, you know, and you would send it to them, and they would take the invoice and burn it.

And then maybe you would send another invoice, and a third, and eventually, you'd be like, "He doesn't seem like he's going to fucking pay me!" and then maybe you would go to his offices. And maybe you would start yelling at him and screaming at him and shit.

And this goes on for an excruciatingly long time, and at a certain point—and this is the genius of Fred Trump, he knew exactly when to do this—he would turn, he would actually respond. And then he would take you into his offices, he or an underling, and he would say,

“Hey, listen, here’s the deal. If you keep giving me trouble, I’m going to get you blacklisted. You won’t be able to work at any construction projects. Not mine, which is a lot of them, and not any of my partners. No one in this whole area. You’re done. You’re done. Here’s what I’m going to do for you, though. I’ll pay you your invoice, if by ‘pay you your invoice,’ I mean I will give you 30% less than what your invoice was that we negotiated.”

And that was the deal.

It’s surprising more people don’t use this technique. Most people have issues with it, because it relies on you being willing to be a subhuman asshole to everyone, forever. An *enormous* subhuman asshole.

The most famous resident who was lucky enough to have Fred Trump as a slumlord was Woody Guthrie. Woody Guthrie spoke of Fred Trump often, and about Fred’s way of stirring up racial hatred. He called it “the bloodsport of the human heart.” And he wrote a large number of songs about Fred Trump, kind of the way you might if you had a really terrible apartment with an insane, cheap-ass, racist landlord. You might, like, write some songs about him if you also happened to be a folk legend. And so there’s actually a whole bunch of Woody Guthrie songs that include “The Heartless Fred Trump,” “Trump Tells You All You Need to Know,” and “Fuck This Fucking Guy in his Eye Sockets, I Need More Water Pressure.”

Some of those may be paraphrased.

And I want to correct something I just said, because it’s very important not to say shit wildly on stage. I mean, what am I, a performer? I think it’s important to correct this. I said that

Fred Trump was racist, and obviously, you guys are right. I should say that he was “allegedly racist.” And it’s important to examine that. We wouldn’t want to say... that’s a terrible thing to say about anyone, like to say about anyone here, and I’m sure no one here is racist, right? Of course not. How could we, such nice people who come to the theater? No one here is obviously racist. And obviously, we can’t judge Fred Trump so blindly. We should say “allegedly racist,” and maybe we could take a moment to talk about, you know, where that came from, this perception, and just a perception that maybe Fred Trump was not as progressive in his racial views as we wish he would be.

And it a short list, really. Fred Trump had a policy in his company not to rent to any black people. And that policy existed for thirty or forty years. Decade to decades, over and over, documented by multiple investigations by the *Village Voice*, other papers. There are no black people, none at all, anywhere there. By maybe that’s just coincidence. After all, I’m not a black person, like I don’t know what was going on that year.

But it is also true, sort of another corroborating piece of data, it is documented that in their offices, that when people would apply for leases in any of the Trump properties, that they would use a special code that they would write down on the applications if the person applying was black. And that special code, which every time it was listed, that person never got a lease, that special code was: “They’re black.” But I mean, people have problems with paperwork all the time. It’s not necessarily a condemnation.

Fred Trump did go to KKK meetings. Oh, don’t make that noise. I’ve gone to Weight Watchers meetings. Which also happen in churches! And maybe I could even imagine a world where I might be going to a Weight Watchers meeting, and I might be like “Oh, I got confused in the hallway! Maybe I’m supposed to be in this room. These men all seem curiously slimmer, and

they're all so convivial and interested in talking about how much they fucking hate black people! I feel comfortable. I'll just stay here for a while." Maybe it was something like that. We don't know.

And finally, the last piece in the puzzle about Fred Trump's racism is that throughout his life, when asked about how he felt about black people, he would say that he fucking hated them.

So I feel like all these things together sort of create a webwork on which we might be able to rest the idea that we might be able to talk about him as possibly having issues with race of some kind.

So Donald was his son. He was the son of Fred Trump, and Donald was fourth-born in the progression and was clearly the one that was going to go into the family business. From when he was born, he was the one that was sort of slated to take over this real estate empire and walk in his father's footsteps.

And it must've really been difficult to grow up with someone who was that racist, and I say that because I'm familiar with that, because I grew up with a grandfather who was spectacularly racist. Not reconstructed in any way, not a subtle racism, not dog-whistling, not the Southern strategy—just straight-up racist.

And I was the first-born grandson of my generation, and so he loved me very, very much and he would talk to me a lot. He wanted to spend a lot of time—and I loved him. I loved him very much. And I remember, though, vividly, I'm just seven, eight, nine when these things are happening. I remember sitting with him and how he would talk about things, and then, if he was going to get into that mode, that zone, he would start talking about different subjects and then usually, he would eventually start talking about the government—usually the government—and would bridge from that into talking about different races.

And you know, people who haven't experienced hate speech don't understand. The reason we call it that is that you can really tell it's happening. There's an oily quality to the words. Like they taste in the mouth, like you can hear in your ear. And he would speak these things, and he would take such pleasure in them, in each syllable, almost like a liturgy. You know, he would talk about each group. He'd be like, "Niggers do their things. I'll tell you, oh I'll tell you about niggers."

And then he would explain at length about what group it was and the next group. And I would listen, and I would try to be very far from myself. I remember I would sit there, and I would kind of pull into myself, and I would think to myself, "I'm in this room with my grandfather, and he'll be back soon, and so will I," but I'm just pulled back. "Maybe I'm in the doorway of the room. Maybe I'm halfway down the hall, watching what's happening over here. I'm not here anymore." I did that a lot.

I can only remember two times that my mother and my father, each of them once, talked to me about my grandfather's racism.

I remember my mother, it was because I brought it up. We were in the car, I was sitting in the passenger's seat, and I said something. Somehow, I brought it up. I was like "Grandpa is kind of making me feel funny..."

I said something. And I remember her gripping the wheel. I remember her gripping the wheel and the knuckles turning bone-white on her hands, and I just remember her saying, "Michael! Leave it alone! Leave it alone, Michael! Leave it alone!"

But you have to understand that my mother's emotional range goes from extremely pissed off to incandescently furious.

She has the full emotional range that any of us have—it's just that it's all within those two poles.

So when she said that, what she really meant—what I heard—was “Michael, I can't deal with this. I barely got out of that house. I can't deal with this. Don't talk about this. Don't bring this up. Don't talk about this.”

My father... I believe it was after that, weeks or months later, and I have no idea if she talked about this to him. With my father, he was the one who brought it up.

We were in the car again, and we were going somewhere together. My father was driving. And apropos of nothing, out of nowhere, my father just said suddenly,

“Your grandfather is spectacularly racist.”

And I was so grateful that he said that. Because I'd been living in this world where I would keep hearing these things, and I would feel like I was in this bubble and I had no one to relate to or talk to about it. So just even having that one escape valve that some other adult felt this way was really validating.

It was probably wasn't a good as keeping me away from my incredibly racist grandfather, but this is family.

You work with what you're given.

THE ART OF THE DEAL

So, Donald Trump takes over. He takes over his father's companies, and he is president of the Trump companies at twenty-seven. *Twenty-seven!* Do you remember what were you doing at twenty-seven?

I remember what I was doing. At twenty-seven years, I was still embarrassingly often running out of money. I would just run out. I'd be on the street and I'd be like, "Oh, no! I shouldn't have bought that empanada! I'm overdrawn! Fuck!"

But he's running this entire gigantic company at twenty-seven, and Donald Trump has his own vision for the future. He is not going to do things the same way his father did. He is instead not going to be in Queens and Brooklyn. Oh, no. He's going to Manhattan, he's going to build in Manhattan, and it is going to be *super classy*.

And this raises the aesthetic question, of just what is '*super classy*'?

And it's kind of a hard thing to wrap one's mind around, but the best way of thinking about it perhaps, because we're here in D.C., is think about how... you know how you have many buildings here that are truly terrible? That are really bad? Just think of any like sort of officey building that's not well-built, and just think back. Think of them building the building, and there must have been a moment when they're like "We're building this boring office building, and it's going in D.C., so you know, awwww. So, we're building this shitty building, and we should put something in front of the building, like in the front part, that people are like 'This is an amazing building.' But I don't really give a shit, because I don't even care about designing. Does anyone care?" and everyone's like "I don't give a shit."

And they're like "Okay. Well, I'm just going to make something that goes there that tells people that it's really important, but it doesn't mean anything. So I'm just going to like maybe put some pillars, and then maybe some water, a pool of water, maybe some jets. And some jets coming out of the water, and maybe some lights as well. And lights and water and some more pillars, and then maybe an eagle, and it has some snake in its claws, and we'll write something in Latin on the front of it, and we'll cover the whole fucking thing in gold. Gold! Gold! Gold!"

That's super classy. You know, super classy is like some young kid over in Brooklyn in Queens who's been picking up coins for his dad and he dreams of going to Manhattan and making it big, and everyone that ever laughed at him, he'll be like "I laugh back at you! Fuck you!" Someone with really thin skin, and then one day, they get everything they ever wanted, and their ego just blows up to this enormous size. And if you took that and you squeezed it down and you distilled it into like a chunky paste that you were forced to drink and then you vomited it into a toilet, and as you looked in the toilet, you realized the toilet was made of solid gold, and now it's filled with your vomit and Donald Trump's face? That's super classy.

It doesn't change anything about how Donald Trump makes things, though. He's totally his father's son. He doesn't innovate at all—he's actually building the buildings the same way as his dad's slums. Like, they're skyscrapers and super classy, but it's made by the lowest bidder, and then the lowest bidder doesn't get paid. If they could have, they would be reusing nails.

I'm telling you right now, we would not be talking about Donald Trump if he had not met the next character in our story. Donald Trump would be known only as a vain shitty New York real estate developer, and let me tell you, we have a ton of those. Everything changes because of this next character.

Because if Donald Trump is Darth Vader, and I believe he might be, this man is his Emperor Palpatine.

And I am, of course, talking about Roy Cohn.

Now by the sound you just made, I can tell that some of you know who Roy Cohn is.

The rest of you are sitting there thinking, “Oh, shit, I’m supposed to know who Roy Cohn is!” Some of you have even tried to catch on to the end. You heard the noise and you’re like “‘MMMMM.’ Hold on, I’m Wikipediaing that. ‘MMMMM.’” Some of you are trying just pretending you know who this is.

Oh, the left! You never get old.

Don’t worry, this is a full-service monologue. I will give you a thumbnail sketch of Roy Cohn, which will be difficult to do, because Roy Cohn is the vilest, nastiest, worst son of a bitch that I can actually even imagine trying to give you a thumbnail sketch of.

To try to paint out Roy Cohn’s character, you need to use... *black*, with highlights in *black* and shadows in *black* with a big *black* heart in the middle.

Roy Cohn is *terrible*. Roy Cohn is the essence when we all think of the evil lawyer. Check the encyclopedia—there is Roy Cohn.

Roy Cohn was the man who sat next to McCarthy at the McCarthy hearings. He’s the one who whispered in Joseph McCarthy’s ear. He’s the one who came up with the idea! What he’s whispering is “We should destabilize the government by making everyone afraid of Communists.” That was his fucking idea.

Roy Cohn is the one who made sure that Ethel Rosenberg was killed. The Rosenbergs, let’s be clear, even if they were traitors to the country, the wife? There was very little evidence the wife had done anything. But he called the judge every day to make sure that she would fry.

He called every day. Maybe you're thinking to yourself, "Do lawyers normally call judges in the middle of trials? That seems unethical."

Exactly! Roy Cohn is a very bad man! He does not follow the rules of ethics and composure, and he was such a strange, horrible, conflicted person.

He was Jewish and intensely anti-Semitic. At the same time. So he was very Jewish *and* he would often think that other people were resenting him for his Jewishness and go on huge tirades about how people were against him, but then he would immediately accuse others of being shitty, filthy Jews and say the worst things about them. And you could never tell which way he was going until all of a sudden, he bit you.

Roy Cohn would also have sex with men, lots of men, but he hated homosexuals. And he was absolutely sure he was not a homosexual, and if you told him you thought he might be a homosexual, maybe because of all the sleeping with men, that would be the last thing you told anyone, because he would ruin your fucking life, and I'm serious. He would ruin it. He would call the governor, he would call the president, he would figure shit out, and you would be *done*. He would take your life apart in pieces.

Roy Cohn was a terrible person.

Many of the people who made that noise may be familiar with him because he is a pivotal figure in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*. And in that work, he serves as the Prince of Darkness. Like, that's his role in the thing, with a dash of John Milton served on top.

But like the Prince of Darkness in *Paradise Lost*, he has a bright core and he has complexities, and when I was doing research for this, I wondered how Kushner might have represented him, that maybe he intensified how bad Roy Cohn was for his work.

Oh, no. I was so wrong. It's the opposite.

He made Roy Cohn nicer. He made him much more human than I could find any sign of Roy Cohn ever being.

For all I can tell, Roy Cohn was just like an unrelenting asshole from the moment he came out of his mother's womb. He just came into the world and was like, "HELLO BOYS I'M THE ASSHOLE!" and like just continued to be awful until the moment he exited this earth.

I think Tony Kushner musta been like, "Jesus Christ, I wanna use this character, but no one will believe how evil he is. They just won't believe it. It'll break the reality of the play. I just have to add some grey in there somewhere."

I know what he's talking about, because *I'm* trying to do a fucking monologue about Donald Trump, and so much of it just breaks the form. It's all too on the nose, too much. It's the same fucking problem.

Roy Cohn becomes Trump's lawyer. He becomes Donald Trump's consigliere, and for thirteen years, a young Donald Trump is trained by Roy Cohn. Roy Cohn whispers in Donald's ear, and Donald is his apprentice.

The very first case that they work on together, Trump goes to him because Trump has a problem. The problem is, after years and years and years and years and years and years of being suuuuuper fucking racist, the federal government has called them, finally, and been like,

"Hey? So, yeah, we have to actually file suit against you? And I know we normally don't do that to rich people, and I'm sorry? But like, we have to, because it's just been going on for like twenty-five years, so it'll look bad if we just keep ignoring you. I know it's a drag, but we're filing suits, so if you could, like, settle, that would be awesome and we'll slap your wrist or whatever. See on the links!"

And they have to do something, and Trump says, “Well, I want to get advice from Roy Cohn,” but of course he’s going to settle because that’s a rational thing to do.

But Roy Cohn says, “BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA! No, no, no! We fight. We fight. We go to the mat with these people!” and Trump says, “I’m intrigued. Tell me more.”

And Roy Cohn just starts whispering in his ear, like with McCarthy. And the next thing you know, Roy Cohn is representing him, and they refuse to fold, and they make this crazy claim that they file in court talking about the federal government sending jackbooted thugs and they’re going through the Trump company files, and none of this is actually happening what if it was and this is all about freedom of speech and people are restricting their rights, and what will happen to other companies? USA! USA! USA!

And they write this crazy, crazy brief, and they fight it out in court, tooth and nail, and they lose. They absolutely lose. But they make so much noise doing it that that’s what the press follows, and that’s what all the other real estate people follow, and that becomes the story. The story becomes about how they fought and how they had so much guts to do it. And as a consequence, no one actually knows that they lost. They just see what looks like a winner. The image of a winner.

And Roy Cohn is like, “Stick with me, kid. I’ll show you miracles.”

Roy Cohn is the one who teaches Trump about the idea that the best way to tell a lie is to take something that is absolutely true, ideally so true that other people are afraid to say it—really, actually true—and then you take that and then you bundle it, you package it with lies all around it. So when they hear the true thing, it penetrates, because you hear something that no one’s saying, it sounds so true, and it penetrates right into you, but all the lies are carried with it. That’s Roy Cohn. That is absolutely the era of saying, “I have a list before me with names on it.

Actually, there are no fucking names, I am making this up as I go along, but you are terrified that your name *is* on this list, and I'm going to use that to exploit you." Cohn teaches Trump all of his tricks, and you can see all of Trump's business stylings shifting in response to learning from Roy Cohn. It changes everything about how Donald works.

And we can see it today. You know, that knack Trump has for saying that perfect thing. Part of what makes him work so well is that he is a great speaker. Now, *you* don't think he's a great speaker. You are very tired of him. I understand that. I understand better than you. I have listened to his speeches. I suspect you have not. I suspect you begin to hear one and it's like, "Blar blah blar, blah blar blar," and you turn it off, because why the fuck would you do that to yourself? You're like, "I already had one aneurysm this week. I need to get through the rest of the week; I can't blow out the other side of my head."

It's very sensible. You are bright, leftist, intellectual. You're bright people. You come to the theater. You look comfortable. You don't want to listen to this asshole.

I understand. You know, there are people like you throughout history. A couple years ago in Berlin, people were like, "I don't want to listen to this guy! He's an idiot. He's a moron. No one could think this guy is charismatic. He clearly can't speak, and that stupid mustache. I mean, I don't know, because I didn't go to any rallies, and so I don't know what the people are like and I have no idea how the speeches go because I don't listen to them. But people tell me that he's an idiot, so it's totally fine. I'm okay. La, la, la, la, everything's fine in here."

I'm sure that's not going to happen here. Let's not be histrionic.

I'm just saying it's exactly the same.

The thing about him is that he actually is very good at speaking. Not to you. And I know this is shocking, because you're wealthy white people, but he's not actually speaking to you at

all. This is part of the dissonance, where you're like "I don't understand! It's like, these aren't my concerns!"

He's very good at speaking like a normal human being, and it's especially dangerous in the political arena, because he can tell the truth just by opening his mouth because the rest of the politicians have to speak in a nuanced, contained, careful, structured way.

Watching politicians speak is very painful for those of us whose job it is to speak, because they talk like automatons that need extra oil. Like, they're having a hard time, because you can see the wheels being like, "Chk, chk, chk, chk, chk, chk, chk, CHK!" The best of them have large chunks pre-memorized, whether they fit or not, and just emit them, so there's no pause. But what they're saying isn't always applicable to what the fuck is going on.

This is not because they're bad people. It's because they know really well that everything they say will be vetted and gone over, forever, immediately. And so they have a very normal amount of rational concern that they'll abruptly say something that ends their whole fucking life just by opening their mouth.

Donald Trump does not give a shit.

That's his magic. He doesn't give a shit at all! He just opens his mouth and begins speaking! Donald Trump does things no politician can even dream of!

Donald Trump sometimes makes an accusation, retracts the accusation, makes it again, flips it sideways, says he has to get more data, and then runs away—in one paragraph. The one I'm talking about was about weapons in Syria. And in an interview, he's actually like, "They've got weapons there in Syria, and it's Crooked Hillary who wasn't enforcing them!" and the journalist is like, "I don't think that's true," and he's like, "Well, maybe it's not true! Or maybe it

is, I don't know, we don't know—people should look in to it, that's all I'm saying. Weapons in Syria, Crooked Hillary!”

And what people hear when they listen to that, what they actually hear is “He doesn't know what he's talking about, but neither do I. I don't know if there are weapons there either! It's amazing how he would just tell me he doesn't know anything! I feel kind of a connection with him, because I, too, am a fucking moron.”

Because let's be honest, even you in the audience here, knowing that you're wealthy intellectuals and such, you don't know if there are weapons in Syria either. So there are people who are like, “Well, I guess we all don't know!” And it's sort of reassuring to have someone just be like, “I don't fucking know! I'm just saying shit.”

It's like his wall with Mexico, right, that scared the shit out of everyone. “I'm going to build a wall!” And then he would talk about the wall endlessly. And then when people probed him about the wall later—this doesn't get much press, but they probed him about the wall—he'd say things like, “I don't know how tall it'll be! As tall as it needs to be! Whatever, y'know, we're just going to build it. Don't worry about it. No big deal. We'll figure it out later.”

Part of the art of being Donald Trump is that he doesn't take Donald Trump seriously.

And it's like, the people who listen to him a lot actually have inoculated themselves against what he says because they hear what they want to hear, and anytime they might not like it or it doesn't make sense, you just tell yourself, “That's Donald Trump! Sayin' crazy shit!” And they're right. It *is* Donald Trump, saying crazy shit, and there's a pleasure in hearing him say all the crazy shit.

One of the reasons he becomes this creature that we are encountering today is how much he went bankrupt in the nineties. He leverages everything. He basically takes the debt of one

building and puts it on another, he takes the debt from that building and puts it on another, and he also invests heavily into casinos. He just builds up huge casinos. And if you listen to his speeches, which I have—I've listened to many of his whole speeches. The things I do for you people! You have no fucking idea, the blood coming out of my fucking eyes!

One of his central parts of his stump speech you haven't listened to that he has performed all over the country is actually about how he, through his developments, was responsible for the economic miracle of Atlantic City.

Are you familiar with Atlantic City?

It's not a conventional economic miracle. It is blighted. Walking around in Atlantic City is like being inside a three dimensional representation of a Bruce Springsteen song. And not one of the good ones. One of the ones from Nebraska.

It is a severely blighted city, and there's something just terrifying about true urban decay. The hard thing when you're in a city where things have really rotted out from the inside is that you can see how things used to be great. You know? Like you look around and you see—and the people in that city know, “We used to have more, and now we have less,” and that's a keen ache.

It is, however, very different than rural poverty. Because in rural poverty, there exists the very serious chance that money *never* came here. Ever. So it's actually more of a Beckettian landscape. There's just a blank horizon, with a tree. Two hobos.

There's no money. You don't even know what the fuck money is. I grew up in a rural place. I didn't know what rich people even fucking looked like. I didn't understand what they were like 'cause there were no rich people there. If there were any rich people in northern Maine, they'd be like, “Oh, my god, I became rich! I should move to Cape Cod immediately,” and then they did. Sometimes they didn't even leave a forwarding address—they just fucking left as

quickly as they could. “I’ve become rich! Let’s get the fuck out of here!” and they ran. Some of them are probably here tonight.

There were no rich people, so in life, the whole idea of what is possible diminishes down to a point. You don’t even know what you could do because you’ve never seen that money, which means then, if someone is playing the role of a rich person, that might be the first rich person you have ever actually seen. And when you see them being so huge and grotesque and outsized, you might actually feel to yourself, “You know, it’s weird, you seem so huge and grotesque and outsized, but I always imagined that the rich would be huge and grotesque and outsized, so it seems oddly appropriate.”

And this is a case where it’s telling the truth, because the rich *are* huge and grotesque and outsized. And so it actually confirms what you believe. Like when you see Donald Trump and you come from a place that has never seen money, he makes a perverse kind of sense, you know? “These are the people who have the money. These are the people who are the winners. These are the people who are making things happen in all the places that aren’t here.”

All his skyscrapers collapsed, and he milks all the bankruptcies over and over and over again to make as much money as possible. It’s disgusting. That was his first real business disaster, which he has when he’s in his late 30s.

I had mine a little bit earlier. My first real business disaster came in the eighth grade. And it concerns, as so many business disasters do... it was based on Peanut M&Ms.

Oh, the dark lore of the Peanut M&M. So delicious, from the candy shell to the chocolate to the peanut inside. My eighth grade was raising money for a class trip, and so throughout the year, we were going to sell boxes of Peanut M&Ms, and in a freakish show of faith, they simply gave us each a case—a *full case!*—of Peanut M&Ms.

I felt like I was receiving the Ark of the Covenant. And much like those Nazis at the end of that fucking movie, I thought, “I’m probably going to be vaporized by this.”

And I brought it home, I brought this case home, and I remember I put it in the back of my closet. And I knew enough, I didn’t even open it. I didn’t even try to sell any. I knew like, if I just don’t even open it, then I can just return it at the end and be like “I didn’t sell any! I can’t go on the trip, but at least, I don’t know,” and I was very scared about it. I remember I just pushed it in the back of the closet.

But that didn’t last. Because one fateful night, I opened it. I remember I opened it from one corner, like as though I am a rat, like just “RHHHHGHHRH, it’s smaller if I only do it—” and at first, I was fiscally responsible. Every time I took one out, I put a dollar-fifty in, which was the extortionary rate we were selling these candies for. We were in central northern fucking Maine. No one wanted to buy these fucking candies, let’s be clear. No one did. I don’t even understand how any money was raised.

And I would put a dollar-fifty in and then I would take the candy and I would eat it, and I would eat it, and before long, I was out a dollar-fifty and I was just takin’ the candy. I was just takin’ the candy.

And before long, I would start to—I’d be coming home, and I would think, “Y’know, maybe I’ll have a couple before bedtime, maybe I’ll—BWAHAHAHAHA!” And I would wake up in the morning and the boxes would be all over my body!

And I would like to tell you that there was some degree of discretion. I would like to tell you that I came to my sense, but *that’s not true*. What happened instead was that I went to Mrs. Larkin, my eighth-grade teacher, and asked for a second case! When the first case ran out!

And so I know I'm in the hole now. I know I'm fucked, and I'm started to dread. People are like, "How are people doing with their sales?" and everybody's like, "I've got forty dollars!" and Mrs. Larkin's like, "Good job, kids!" and I'm like, "Oh, my god, I'm so fucked. I'm so fucked." I was totally overleveraged on these M&Ms.

And then I figure it out. All that's required is to completely remove all my ethical programming, because I realize all I need to do is go into Mrs. Larkin's classroom after school, during drama practice. I just need to go in there and open up other boxes of Peanut M&Ms and *steal* from those, and resupply *my* box of M&Ms. Which I do. I do it. I'd like to tell you I felt terrible doing it? I just felt relief. I was like "Thank god. Thank god I did this." And I stole and stole and stole.

I had the solution.

And then I ate the solution.

I just kept eating the M&Ms. Until finally, it all came out. It all came out, and because it was all year long—all year long—I had to confess to my father just a horrifyingly improbable number.

I had to be like, "I've eaten eighty-four boxes of M&Ms."

And then I had to go to Mrs. Larkin and say, "I have eaten eighty-four boxes of M&Ms."

And then I had to raise that money by mowing lawns, mowing all the lawns in all the world. If you had a lawn in the late eighties, I probably mowed yours, too. There's some part of me that is still mowing those lawns. And even as I'm mowing, even as I'm fucking mowing the lawn to pay for it, am I penitent? what I'm thinking, in my secret heart, is "Mmmmm...I'd really like some more Peanut M&Ms."

I think about that, and it makes me think about Trump, and it makes me think of this man who was raised by a very racist father. I was lucky enough have some distance. And raised to do this, raised to take this job from the earliest time, funneled right into this thing. And I really wonder sometimes, what chance did he really have to grow up to be something other than what he became? How much was he shaped by these things that funneled him toward this point, and how much hunger must he must have, to be so thin-skinned? To need so much affirmation? To feel that endless, endless hunger all the days of his life?

I don't envy him. I don't envy him at all.

SAY MY NAME

The very first time that Donald Trump appeared on a television program, it was on an episode of *The Jeffersons*.

And he would go on to appear on dozens of television programs, one after another, for decades. And if you look him up on IMDB, you'll see he is always playing one role—the role of himself.

The role of Donald Trump is Donald Trump. And he would appear on all these programs, portraying the role of the richest person you knew. The richest man in the world. The man in the world who's famous exclusively for being rich, because this is his sort of brilliant turn. This is where he really puts in effect those things that Roy Cohn taught him, because after his businesses collapse, he never comes back from it. He never starts building again, like he used to. There are no major Trump buildings that have been built after his bankruptcies. He retires right in plain sight.

Instead, he turns all his energy into branding. He's all about the image of Trump becomes the largest thing. He expands and builds on that, and that is his new empire. It's an incredible trick, a brilliant one, and one that reaches its apotheosis at the beginning of the twenty-first century when he is the star of *The Apprentice*.

And it gives me such joy to be able to talk to you about *The Apprentice*, because there is not much that Donald Trump does that has given me joy, but I really like *The Apprentice*. I love the *The Apprentice*. I would watch *The Apprentice* and I would just get a big bowl of Frosted Flakes, and I'd be watching, saying, "This is everything that's wrong with capitalism, and no one on it knows!" And I would laugh and laugh.

I just really liked *The Apprentice*.

If you don't know, *The Apprentice* came on in 2003 and was one of the very first reality TV shows. Right before it, there'd been another show by the same producer, Mark Burnett, that they called *Survivor*. The whole idea of *Survivor* was that we take a whole bunch of assholes, and we dump them on a fucking island somewhere, and they lose a lot of weight and they eat bugs and they hate one another. America loved it.

And so then people were like, "Mark Burnett, what do you want to do next?" Mark Burnett was like, "You know, I'm really tired. I just, I don't know what I want to do, but I don't want to be on an island with a bunch of assholes. I don't want to watch people eat bugs. I just, maybe I could be in Midtown Manhattan watching, like, an orange gremlin fire people."

And that is what they made!

And Donald Trump was *perfect*. It was the role built for him. It was absolutely built for him. In *The Apprentice*, the idea of *The Apprentice* is that Donald Trump, unnamed, is the Master. And he has fourteen extremely psychologically damaged individuals, and they are compressed together, they're forced together in that way that reality TV shows work.

You shove them all together, the most fucked-up people you can find, you just throw them in a pressure vessel. You're like, "Do you have daddy issues?" "I do!" "Okay, what's your problem?" "I miss my mom!" "You're in there too. What are you?" "I'm Omarosa." "Oh, you're super crazy!"

And you just put them all in there, and then you seal it up so they can't go anywhere, they can't talk to anyone. You give them lots of alcohol all the time, but you don't let them sleep, and you just shake it. You just shake it a lot and you make them do weird shit. You make them go to strange places, and arbitrary things happen, and you just shake it.

And then you open it, and you just see what the fuck the damaged pieces of human wreckage do when accelerated and observed.

That's reality TV.

That's why it's so compelling. I love reality TV. It's watching human misery in action right in front of you. How could that not be riveting? I didn't say it was good for me, but it's absolutely riveting. Kind of like this campaign.

And so Trump is the Master in this scenario, and it's kind of amazing. They build a set that looks like a boardroom in Trump Tower, which is where Trump's actual boardroom is, two floors above. So he has a real boardroom but I guess regularly heads down to the fake set boardroom, where he acts like the vision of himself. And in this fake set boardrooms, he meets with people who've just done some crazy bullshit—they've all been on unicycles, riding around the city, and whoever rode the farthest, blah blah blah, ridiculous challenges.

And the thing about Donald Trump is that he's not good at acting or emoting. He barely has facial expressions at all. He sits in the middle like an enormous dyspeptic toad.

He's sitting there like... barely moving.

What's *riveting* is that he'll suddenly start asking questions. He'll be like, "Why'd you do that? Where'd you get that?" He'll just yell at somebody, and then yell at somebody else, and just blurt out some thing. And sometimes he'll be blurting things out at one person and then, out of nowhere, he'll just say, "You're fired!" and he'll fire somebody else!

It's *riveting*. And the reason it's riveting is because you cannot predict, at all, what the fuck is going to happen. You really can't. You can't tell what is going to happen at all.

And you have to understand, in 2003 especially, we didn't understand reality TV yet. This is very riveting, to see people actually do things. We were watching scripted shows. We'd

be like, “And then the family comes together.” Watching this insane orange man lose his mind and fire people at random was like crack... it’s the same reason that I couldn’t compete if we put some babies onstage with me. You know, you never act with a baby or a dog, because they’re so un-self-conscious, like, you just cannot compete with them.

It’s the same thing. Donald Trump is the perfect baby-dog.

He just, like, does whatever he wants to do in the moment. As he does it, you can tell, he doesn’t know who he’s going fire. He’s just making it up as he goes.

We were so young and naïve. I remember, I and my friend, being like, “Well, of course, Mark Burnett knows who they’re going to fire. I’m sure they’ve scripted this out.” Like, looking back now, I’m like, “Why did we think that?” That’s not true! Who gives a shit? Mark Burnett was like “I don’t care who he fires, as long as the fucking orange goblin keeps firing people, because every time he does it, it’s super riveting.”

And that’s the show.

The show is him knocking people off, so presumably the last person can be his slave. Like, they’re all fighting to be Donald Trump’s slave, to learn from him about his business magic. It’s a crazy wish-fulfillment fantasy. And I would say that this was—y’know, in a different monologue done years earlier, this would be the ultimate. Like, that someone would convince network TV and hundreds of millions of people to fulfill your wish fantasy, that there could be a show just about how brilliant you are and that someone was begging to be your slave, except that decades later, you convince the most powerful country in the world to hold a whole convention to do the same fucking thing. So clearly, in this case, he is the apprentice training himself up.

He's so good at working an image. It's terrifying, and I know a little bit about that, because I've walked in his shoes. I mean, literally.

For a magazine shoot, I was dressed up in prosthetics as Donald Trump.

I get there for the magazine shoot, and they had everything. They had a suit jacket for me, the flag lapel pin, and all the parts, and then they started putting the prosthetics on my face, the orange makeup in very sharp lines like kabuki.

So I'm really looking terrifying in the mirror, and like, I'm looking as they start building the things. Then they put the wig on, and I remember the wig maker said, "I took two wigs to make this, and I put them together...and then I took away a *lot*."

And then she installs it on my head, and the whole thing—I do not look like Donald Trump. I look like a living fucking nightmare. I look like an orange kabuki psychotic dream vision. *But* I indicate Donald Trump very clearly.

And so I get out onto the street, and this is D.C., 'cause we're going to have the Capitol in the background. And so I'm standing on the street, and there's a photographer there, and in the fashion of photographers everywhere, he actually says—and I was kinda happy he did—he says, "Work it!" I'm like, "Yes!" because I watched a lot of *America's Next Top Model*, 'cause I like reality TV shows.

And so I'm working it. And I know all of Donald Trump's body vocabulary, like, immediately. I'm, like, duckmouthing, and I'm grabbing my lapels and I'm making hand motions without a lot of range. Like, I'm doing it all, just like Trump.

And as I'm doing this, really working my angles, this car rolls up beside me, because we're right in the street doing this, and so it's in the other lane. And it rolls by really slowly. And

as it rolls by, it doesn't even stop, it just goes really slowly. The guy inside rolls down his window, slowly, and as he rolls by, he says,

“I hope you have a fucking heart attack and you fucking die.”

And then he slowly rolls up his window and drives away.

And this is an interesting performative moment. Because let me break it down for you. First, he does not think I am Donald Trump. There's no universe where he was like, “Look. It's the Republican nominee! He's grown enormously fat and his features are totally grotesque! A chance for me to speak with him!” No, that is not what's going on. He knows that I am *indicating* Donald Trump, that this is a performance. He knows that.

What people often forget is that performance actually travels both ways. Like, I'm performing right now, and you are performing the role of an audience. That's why you're so nicely sitting there and not just, like, wandering around the space or hissing and eating sandwiches. Like, you are performing the role of an audience, and doing a very lovely job, if I do say so.

And so he, the person in the car, is actually—what happens is he rolled up and he saw me doing this, and he had an idea in his head, maybe even not logically, maybe the same way Donald Trump has ideas. Just, like, an idea. And what his brain thought was “I will perform the role of the person who is angry with Donald Trump. Like, I will indicate. I don't actually mean it, just like you don't actually mean it, but I *do* mean it, but I'm going to *say* it, but it's not real. But I *am* saying it. And maybe because it's not real, I could say something even shittier than I normally would. I'll just say it. I'll just let it come out of my mouth. It'll be kind of delicious.” And he rolls down the window, and he says the thing.

Now here's where it gets even more interesting. That insult—"I hope you have a heart attack and you fucking die."—that insult is very familiar to me.

I mean, not to you, because you aren't fat.

But it's actually something people say to me all the time. It's something you shout at fat people on the street. You just tell them when you don't like them, or they mildly upset you, or really, all the time.

Some of you are shocked, but it's just because you don't have any idea. Why would you?

So he's saying that, he's saying this thing, but he doesn't mean to insult *me*. He doesn't. He wanted to insult Donald Trump. It's just that he had this language that was so available, right?

Because the thing is, being fat is one of the last unconstructed forms of bigotry. There are limits on what we can say about race and sex in public most of the time. Things have changed. My grandfather wouldn't be so comfortable in America now—after all, that's why we have to make it great again.

But you can always say whatever shit you want about fat people. You can say whatever you want, always. That's, like, the rule. It's the way things are constructed. I really know. And so it's interesting, 'cause it does give you a possibility.

I hear a lot of hate speech that way, because it has the same oiliness... you can hear it when people do it. It's not that they take the words and coat them with *evil*. It's just that it's easy. It drops out of the mouth. And there's a pleasure in saying the easy thing that wounds.

I mean, *you* knew what I'm talking about. Oh, I'm sure *you* don't say it about fat people, and I'm sure you don't say it about racial groups, but I'm sure there's someone, an individual, a celebrity, someone that you're just willing to say like the shittiest thing about. It's the easiest

thing. You just let it drop out of your mouth. You just say it. You just let it go. You just say it. It's so easy.

The thing is, the interesting thing is that each time that happens, it wears away our sense of decency. The choice to do that act does actually do that. It's a choice to have less decency. Not that it really bothers us, but still, when we enjoy that pleasure, the pleasure of holding it in our mouth, those words, when we let them come out, at that moment, we sort of feel it. And I could feel him in the car doing it. He didn't know what he was saying, but he did know that it felt good in his mouth. It felt especially good, and that's because in part, he was saying it to me.

And you know what I'm talking about too. That pleasure. You've had it in your mouth, and we all know it. And

THE FINAL TRUMP

One of those things that people love to talk about is *where did things go wrong?*

That is such a popular topic that people have been talking about it for thousands of years. And so, I have no doubt that my version is not going to be authoritative in any way, but since I'm the one that's speaking, I thought I'd put forward my personal theory that, when I think about when things went wrong recently, I think back to the end of summer about eight years ago, on a Monday: the day we found out that Sarah Palin was a vice presidential candidate.

If you cast your mind back there, for a moment, just forget about all the crazy shit that followed. Just try to remember the moment of the announcement. And if you can remember right after the announcement, the first thing that happened is that all the liberals lost their shit. Everyone on the left was like, "Oh, no! Shit!" Then everyone started freaking out. They were like "Oh, my god, she like wears a bikini and she hangs off the edge of helicopters with an assault rifle and shoots wolves. We are so fucked." People were completely freaked out for like 24 hours.

And then the next 24 hours, that's when journalists started to go to the McCain campaign and say:

"Hey? Yeah, I just wanted to ask you guys. You know how you said that Palin was against the Bridge to Nowhere and hated wasting government money? Yeah, I read a speech in which she said she loved the Bridge to Nowhere and she loved wasting government money. So could you... square that circle for me?"

And the McCain campaign was like, "Where did you read these pathetic ravings?"

And the journalist is like, “Well, I used this thing called Google, and so I Googled local papers in Alaska, and then I read the transcripts of her speeches. ... You guys did vet her, right?”

Now THIS is an interesting question. Because you know, traditionally, you would vet someone who’s going to be a heartbeat away from the presidency. And you would do that because it’s in your own interest, because you want to know what’s happening. You want to be ahead of the story, as they say. Like you don’t want to have other people tell you “Your candidate, Jim, has a heroin problem.” You don’t want that to happen. You want to be able to confidently say, “Jim understands the drug culture in an intimate way.” You want to be able to say that. There’s no universe where you want to be able to say the other. So how would you get in a position where you just like... wouldn’t vet someone? Like how would that happen?

But you have to remember the moment we were in. Think back there, you know? You have to imagine the McCain are sitting around, and they’re like “Jesus Christ, what are we going to do?” You know, like this is a crazy moment. Basically, we’re sitting here and it’s Charismatic Black Guy who is like really hammering it home and doing it against Boring White Dude. It’s a hard moment. And the McCain campaign must have been like “I got an idea. What if we put a match-up between Boring White Dude and Wolf-Killing Woman? Huh? Huh? We put them together. Is that better than Charismatic Black Guy? I don’t know, but at least it’s a toss-up. I don’t know. I don’t know what will happen.”

And maybe they got excited. They were like “I don’t know what the fuck, we’re getting fucked, we have to do something. Maybe that works. Maybe that works.” That still doesn’t explain why you wouldn’t vet her. Because you’re still fucking yourself.

Unless! Unless... the people that sat in that room, consciously or unconsciously, made a decision. And the decision they made was: Fuck it.

Fuck it.

Just fuck it! I don't know what's going to fucking happen. Just push it through! Maybe it'll work out. I don't know! Fuck it!

I'm frustrated. This shit isn't working. The world's changing. Fuck it! Fuck it! Let's just do it. I don't fucking care. I don't know.

And this is actually a very central American impulse. It's like, we have a lot of *fuck it* energy in this country. You know? It's actually a wonderful thing about America. It's actually the anarchism that kind of motivates and animates us. It's kind of woven through our national character. We all, many of us, say, "Fuck it" all the time! Even you. You probably say, "Fuck it!" Once in a while, you indulge in it, you know? Like on the weekends, you're like "Fuck it! Fuck it! I'm going to put a lower grade of gasoline in my car. Ahhhhh."

And I'm an artist in America. I have an extremely broad anarchic streak. Mine's huge. It's like a fucking highway right through the middle of me. So I understand, because I have a hard time managing it. Because the same thing that makes me good at doin this job you're seeing, that same thing, it *rrrrrails* up inside of me. It makes me want to just fucking say things! And just do things! You know? Like it just agitates inside me. I'm like:

"Fuck it! Fuck it! I'll drink what I want! I'll drink as much as I want! Fuck it! Fuck it! I'll eat what I want! I'll eat whatever the fuck I want! Fuck it! Fuck it! I'll let them put my play on the radio."

It's very dangerous. It's a very dangerous impulse because this is the moment where decency unravels. This is the same process. This is the solvent that runs right through it, that moment that we say "Fuck it," is actually the moment we turn our backs on community and

common ideas. We turn our backs on that and we say, “Fuck it,” and we just let it all go to hell because we’re too frustrated, we can’t see it anymore. That’s the moment.

And four years later, four years later, there’s Trump. In 2012, Trump flirts with running for the presidency. He flirts with it, and it is so clear now, he was testing the waters. He was dipping a toe in and seeing the temperature. He was clocking us. And why do I say this with such certainty? Because he did it the same way that I do it.

When I started this show with you, I clocked you. In the first moments of the show, I evaluated how much you’d been drinking, how happy you were, how much energy you had, how hard you were laughing, and I calibrated what I was doing to where you’re at. Because my job is not to make the best show that ever happened. My job is to make the best experience for you that you are capable of. In that sense, I am totally like a whore.

And he clocked us. That’s what he was doing in 2012. He flirted with it. That’s why he spent so much time working on all that fucking Birtherism.

If you’re not familiar with Birtherism, Birtherism is a *wonderful* conspiracy theory that revolves around the idea that President Obama was born Kenya and therefore, blbrllrblbrblbrblbr, everything that’s happened is invalid because he was from Kenya. And it’s a conspiracy theory because no one actually—even the people who are into it—actually wants proof one way or the other. Because the *pleasure* of the theory, like all good conspiracy theories, is this fantasy, and the fantasy is that one day, Trump will go into the Oval Office and he’ll say, “Aha!” and rip off Obama’s suit.

And underneath, he’s wearing beads and a grass skirt and he’s carrying a spear and Trump’s like “KENYAN!”

And then we smash-cut to the Supreme Court, where they're all in session. They're like, "Bam, bam, bam. We find that Obama has lied about where he's from and that is really bad, and as a consequence, we are now using the special Supreme Court power to reverse time itself, like in the 1980 film *Superman: The Movie!* Wooholhohlohllhloo!" And then we get Boring White Guy and Wolf-Killing Woman. The way life should be. Make America great again.

That's the fantasy. That's the archetype. The first draft of what Trump's actually doing now, and in 2016, this year, he runs. And it's very popular to say, "No one could have seen this happening." And what that actually means is: No one chose to see this happening. Because, of course, it happened right the fuck in front of us. I mean, I know it happened in front of me. I was there, because I was working on this fucking show. I actually had the weird experience of working on the show and reading all the polls and being like, "These polls seem really high. I mean, they seem really high. I mean, like when I look at them, it really seems like if you win this state and this state, this state, this state, and this state, that state, and that state, then you just win. Right? That's how it works?"

And I actually so didn't understand what I wasn't understanding that I called political reporter friends of mine. I'd be like "Okay, I'm adding up the things from FiveThirtyEight, and I'm just like, 'If you win this state and this state, this state, this state, and this state, this state, this state, this state, okay, right?'" And they're all like so high. Like, he's ahead by—right, okay. So, why doesn't he become the candidate? Why doesn't he win again?"

And they were like "Because it's not possible to... it's not... because then... because MY WHOLE REALITY WOULD BE SHATTERED IF THAT HAPPENED," wkkkhhhhhhh.

And the other reason, and it should be said, not to be too hard on the pundits. I mean, the other reason was so hard to see that Trump was coming was that we had this incredible field of

the shittiest Republican candidates ever. There were fifteen of them, and it was like the worst version of the Marvel Shared Universe that ever has been. It's just like fifteen defective superheroes. You would have killed for Ant-Man. Like, no one has a good power. Everyone's like "I can levitate three or four inches." "I can make water cloudy or clear!" Like, no one can do shit.

I mean, you've all forgotten these people, mercifully, but I'm doing this fucking show. I am trapped here. So I still remember Ben Carson. Ben Carson, a neurosurgeon scientist who believed that the pyramids were full of grain. And then reporters went to him and said, "You keep saying that the pyramids being full of grain. Would you like to not say that anymore?" and he was like, "No! I'd like to say one more time that the *pyramids* are full of *grain*, hahahaha!"

And so in many ways, people were like "Well, Ben Carson's fucking insane, and he's doing okay in the polls." And Donald Trump just hid behind him. You know? So people were like "We don't know why Ben Carson is in this fucking thing," and then "Oh, so there's Donald Trump. I don't know why he's here either. Let's just put those crazy people together over here on the side."

And the thing that kept the Republican establishment very busy, of course, was Ted Cruz.
Fucking Ted Cruz.

Ted Cruz. That man. His hideous smile. His stump speech, which you also didn't hear... his stump speech, he would stand up in front of groups of people and be like "My fellow Americans, when I am president, my first act, I will dissolve the federal government. My second act, I will dissolve the Republican Party. And my third act, I will take this loaded revolver and shoot myself in the head." And all these people were like, "Yeah!"

Because Ted Cruz is a lizard person. He is. There was some poor motherfucker named Ted Cruz, and a lizard person pulled him into a ditch and ate him out from the inside and now is wearing his fucking skin.

And so the Republican establishment was like, “We really should stop the lizard person first.” And I mean, I don’t even know if I disagree with them. Like, maybe that was a good call. I don’t even fucking know.

And then, of course, there was Jeb. Ah, Jeb. Jeb’s important, though, because I watched Jeb be executed by Donald Trump. Let’s be clear. Donald Trump got where he is now in this race, he got where he is in this race, people were like “How did this all happen?” It happened because he performed some of the greatest fucking political jiu-jitsu I have ever fucking seen. I watched him kill Jeb. I watched him kill Jeb with a fucking sentence. I watched him stand onstage with Jeb and then look out right at the fucking cameras and say

“Hey, it is me, or is this guy is low-energy?” Ohhhhhhh.

And all of America was like, “That’s *it!* That’s exactly what it is! That’s perfect! That’s exactly what it is!” Even Jeb was like,

“Yeah, that’s what it is. It’s just, it’s been really hard, and I just, I didn’t want to do it, and now... I’m just reading a lot of Sartre, and it’s just really hard.”

That’s the thing about Donald Trump. He’s very fucking good at this shit. When he is on, he is on. He’s like a baby with a revolver. Sometimes, you get a dead baby; sometimes, it kills somebody else. We don’t know what’s going to happen!”

I remember another one of the Republican debates where Jeb was going on and on about some kind of shit, and he ends by saying, “Blah blah this, blah blah that, and my brother, who kept us safe.” And everyone applauds.

And then it's Donald Trump, it's Donald fucking Trump who's the only one who can speak truth to power, which is so fucked up. It's Donald Trump is the one who says, "Your brother didn't keep us safe! 9/11 happened when your brother was president!"

You could see the waves of cognitive dissonance. All the other candidates turned into ice and then shattered like an enormous hammer was hitting them. Nothing cuts deeper to Republican cognitive dissonance than the idea that George Bush was president when 9/11 happened. They've all sworn a fucking blood oath that he was not president when that happened. They don't even have another story. They just like decided to ignore it. They're like "We can't about it ever."

The Democrats are in on it too. Like nobody ever calls them on this. It's like a wall of silence. They're just like "I don't know. It was sort of like Clinton was still in, under an Extended Stay America plan. I don't know. I don't want to talk about it!"

It's so amazing. That's what this man is capable of, because he can say anything. And now, this shape-shifting mercurial fool in the classic sense is running against Hillary.

Oh, Hillary.

I believe Hillary would be a very competent president. What concerns me is that I know from having lived through it I feel like for about eight or ten years, I know she's not very good at running for president. And so I'm just slightly concerned, because if I'm thinking of like a historical analogue, a recent historical analogue to Hillary, it would be like another time when there have been two strong Democratic terms together, and then someone's running for president who's very, very strong on policy but maybe not quite charismatic enough, and that person is Al Gore. And that guy was beaten by a FUCKING RUTABAGA.

Also, there was that little moment, that little moment when a goddamn *socialist from Vermonty* almost took the nomination away from her. And the socialist had one hand tied behind his back and had actually sworn when he started running, his opening speech was like “I’m not really running. This is just a demonstration about important things. There’s some sandwiches in the back. This isn’t really a thing. I mean, it matters, but I’m not really running, don’t worry. I also support Hillary. It’s okay. Don’t worry about it too much.”

And that guy still almost shivved her. And yet somehow, people on the left are like “Those Republicans are in disarray, but our shit is totally together. We’re such a unified party, everyone loves Hillary and they love how we’re coming together.” That’s not fucking true. The water’s coming over the levee on both sides. Like what the fuck is wrong with you people? You can’t see that? You can’t see those things that are happening?

And I know. I know many of you wonder, you sit out there and you wonder, “Well, like, it doesn’t matter what Hillary’s positions are, really, because fucking Donald Trump is like fucking Donald Trump. Like, how could it matter what she’s... how could anyone not vote for Hillary?”

And I might be in your camp. I might feel that way if I didn’t know my mother.

Now, my mother lives far northern Maine. She lives in a trailer, which sits in the middle of the woods, kind of like a raisin, the way raisins are scattered through a loaf of bread. That’s how they’re distributed. And so you drive out to the trailer, and it’s in this little clearing. You sit there, inside her house, and she has a lot of cat posters, and she’ll make coffee for you and it’s Sanka, and you’ll drink it. And my mother’s been working at the Bangor Mall for many, many years. She has a good job and it’s a solid job. That’s the experience when I go there and I talk to her. And if you, say you got your beef up, you really wanted to make a difference, and you

thought maybe you'd go around from house to house to try to make sure something would change. Maybe you would be there, agitating for Hillary, in a kind and warm way.

And let's imagine a fantasy world where this actually works. Because it wouldn't work. Like you would go to her door and you would be like "I'm a—" and she'd be like "Fuck off." But let's just imagine that she let you in and then she's politely sat down with you and she had an open discussion with you. Let's just imagine that.

And in that discussion, you might say to her, "Kathy. It's so important. Think of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court, major decisions are going to be made, and they're going to have ramifications for decades and decades. It's so important to rally now, and I know you believed in women's rights, because we've talked about that in this conversation. It's very important to you. I really want to be able to count on your support. Hillary needs your support in this election. We all do. These are important issues."

My mother, in response to this, in this fantasy version where she wouldn't just smile and nod? If my mother spoke her mind, my mother would say:

"You know, I hear what you're saying. I hear what you're saying. But I think you have to understand that, for the last twelve or thirteen years, I've been making about twenty-six, twenty-seven thousand dollars a year and I haven't had a vacation in the last twelve or thirteen years or so, and I don't know when I'm going to get a real vacation. And so I have to tell you that when you talk to me about the Supreme Court and how important it is, I think that I know who I'd like to see on the Supreme Court, and who I'd like to see on the Supreme Court is FUCK YOU. That's who I'd like to see on the Supreme Court. How dare you? How dare you come into my house and drink my coffee? How dare you sit there in front of me and tell me how much you need me now?"

“Where were you fucking people? Where were you the whole time I have lived here, for decades? When things are good in the cities? They are bad here. And when they are bad in the cities, they are worse here. I have watched you people, all of you. You Republicans and you Democrats, there’s no fucking difference. You work together and you turned your fucking backs on us. There was welfare reform, there was NAFTA, and you fucked us. You fucked us, and you did it a long time ago, and you’re still doing it, and you have the audacity to walk in here? Go to hell.”

My mother is not going to vote for Donald Trump, because she thinks Donald Trump is an idiot. But I bet you can imagine someone who is just a little bit more pissed off. Someone who is just a little bit angrier. Maybe even her at the next election, or the next one. Just a little bit angrier. Someone who might be able to say, “Fuck it. Burn the motherfucker down. I don’t believe in anything you’re doing. I don’t believe what you’re doing, and I don’t have to believe in you. I don’t. I’d like to see you all fucking burn. Let’s just roll the dice and see what happens.”

That’s the truth. And the truth has been out there for decades. It’s out there every day. It’s written on so many people’s faces, and yet somehow, we do not want to see it.

THE END OF ALL PARTIES

I've often felt that all dinner parties end the same way. There's always that moment where the host sort of starts cleaning up, even though it's not over yet. You know, you just start—you can't even resist. You just start, and you're just putting things aside, and straightening up, and moving some dishes. You can't help yourself, even if you don't like cleaning up.

And I think that sends a signal to people. And people start trying to decide they're going to get their coats. And I always love how people communicate, wordlessly, perfectly. You see someone get their coats from the bed, and then couples will whisper to each other, partner to partner: "They're getting their coats now, so we'll get our coats next, and then they're going to get their coats."

And it's always so civilized. If only our government could be like that.

It's the end of the party, of my big Trump party. The Trump game pieces are all over, the fake *Monopoly* money with too many zeroes is all over the floor, everyone's had their fill of Trump Steak and Trump Ice.

And now people are all getting things together and they're leaving, and everyone who's anyone in this monologue is taking their leave, each in turn.

My father is first. And as he's going to the door, my father says, "Oh, I just remembered, I brought you something," and he takes out this box covered in brown paper with tape all around it.

He hands it to me, and I take it from him...and I set it on fire. I just take a lighter from my pocket, and I just set it on fire and just burn it as he heads out the door.

And then I say goodbye to my mother, and my mother—I don't know if she really had a good time, you know, because that's not really her thing. But she does tell me that she loves me as she leaves, in her way. Her way being that she says,

“Michael, I worry about you.”

And I tell her that I love her too.

And you know, how at any party, there's always two people who meet who like really hit it off. Like new people, it's like actually the purpose of dinner parties, is to bring people together. And that has happened here, and the two people who have made a serious love connection are my grandfather and Fred Trump.

These two like each other so much, it is unreal. And I don't know why if it's because they're both racist, or because they're both dead. But they just have really connected. And I say goodbye to Fred Trump at the door, and he takes my hand in both of his and he shakes it warmly, and he says, “Thank you for playing my son's game.” And then he goes.

And then my grandfather stands in the doorway for a moment, in the old way. He stands there and he looks at me, and he says:

“So. You're still fucking fat.”

And I want to say something. I can feel it in my mouth. I just want to say something.

But I don't say anything. I let it go, which is something I'm not very good at, but I'm working on it.

And I just say to him, very neutrally, I say, “Goodnight, Grandpa,”

And I shut the door.

And now there's just one guest left, and he's gone out the back door. My apartment has a back door that leads out onto a roof, a Brooklyn roof with, you know, tar paper; the whole deal. And out on that roof, there's a porch swing that I got at a yard sale. I'm my father's son.

And my last guest is sitting on that porch swing, and he's smoking these thin little white cigarettes, and I go out there and I sit down next to him.

And we're looking up at the Brooklyn skyline, all the brownstones all silhouetted against the fall of night. The sun has gone down, the light is just spilling up into the sky, the colors are gorgeous, and you can see the stars.

It's a funny thing in Brooklyn—you can see the stars at sunset, and only at sunset. Later, when the sunset's completely finished, the stars aren't visible. I don't know why. I think that maybe it's because the streetlights come on. But right then, you can totally see them.

And so we're sitting there, and I turn to Roy Cohn, and I ask him, "So, did you like the game?"

And he says, "Enh, it's a stupid fucking game. I mean, seriously, it's like... it's like fucking... *Monopoly* for dogs."

And I think, *I have to remember that.*

And Cohn says, "You know? You fucking people. You're the fucking same, all of you. You fucking playwrights. You and that faggot Kushner. You fucking write about me. You write about me. You *love* to write about me. You just *love* to talk about me, right? Just make me your little fucking puppet, your little fucking gay homo puppet to do the shit you want to say. You know why you do that? You know why you fucking do that?"

Because I say the things that you're afraid to say. That's what you fucking love about it.

It's bullshit. That boy is my son. I made that boy. I made that boy. Everything you see now? That's me. You people? You fucking people? You thought I was dead. You looked at me, you said I was a fucking homo, a fucking faggot, and you were happy when I died. Kushner? His fucking play? Had people singing fucking Jewish lullabies to me? Fuck you. I wasn't dead. I was alive. Everything that's important about me is in him.

I'm not fucking dead. You're the ones who are going to be fucking dead. I'm not dead, because he's out there. I have taught that kid everything I knew. I taught that kid everything I knew, and you fucking soft-headed fucking liberals, it's the same it always is. You don't understand how power works. You never understood.

He's out there, and he knows everything I knew, and he does it even better. He does it so fucking good. I am so proud of him. I'm not dead. I'm alive. I'm fucking alive."

And I sit there, uncomfortably, and then I say to him,

"Okay.

But...do you think he's going to win?"

And Cohn laughs this short, barking laugh.

He goes, "You fucking artsy fucking poof, I swear to fucking god. You don't understand anything.

He's won already.

It doesn't fucking matter. He's already done it. He's already fucking done it. Because you got to understand, there's somebody else right now watching him, watching everything he does and writing it down. Writing down everything he does, and that person's thinking to themselves, 'I'm going to do it like him, but I'm going to do it better. I'm going to do it sharper and more clever.'

He's laid the road, and now someone else can just walk down it.

That's what you people never understand. This isn't one person or another. We don't disappear. This is one to another to another. This is a chain. This is the chain that's wrapped around your neck.

You've lost already."

He vanishes, leaving behind just the smell of his stale cigarettes.

And I sit there. I sit there a long time, looking up at the skyline. The color's failing now. The sun has gone down completely, and the color is leaching out.

I'm watching as the stars go out, one by one.

The way that we're all watching them.

Thank you, and good night.