

JURY SELECTION

A short play

By Karissa Murrell Myers

CAST LIST

JESSE - 30'S, HE/HIM. PUBLIC DEFENDER.

RAINA - 30'S, SHE/HER. CORPORATE ATTORNEY.

BARTENDER - ANY AGE, ANY GENDER.

LOCATION

A bar in Fort Lauderdale.

TIME

April 2022

SCENE

An almost empty bar in Fort Lauderdale. Rap music is playing in the background. It's raining hard outside. JESSE, 30's, is drinking a mai tai and scribbling in a notepad. BARTENDER stands at the bar, watching the game on the tv.

JESSE'S phone dings. He looks at it, staring at it in shock.

He starts to text something back, thinks better of it, and puts his phone down. He takes another sip of his drink.

Another text. He looks around.

RAINA, 30's, enters in the sexiest skirt suit on the planet and shaking out an umbrella.

Oh my god.

JESSE

Hey hon.

RAINA

Raina, what are you doing here?

JESSE

RAINA throws her bag and umbrella onto the bar, picks up his drink.

Mai tai, seriously? Is it just perpetually spring break around here?

RAINA

How did you find me?

JESSE

RAINA drains his drink.

Are you fucking serious?

JESSE

RAINA

Relax.

(to BARTENDER)

Two gin and tonics.

JESSE

No, she's not / staying.

RAINA

(to BARTENDER)

Extra lime on both. His tab. Thanks, hon.

(to JESSE)

You're a hard man to track down, you know.

JESSE

Well, that might've given you the hint I didn't want to be found.

RAINA snorts.

RAINA

God, it's hot as balls, even with that rain. How do you live down here?

JESSE

...

RAINA

Silent treatment? Okay.

JESSE

...

RAINA

You know, you look like shit.

JESSE

Is that supposed to make me wanna talk? You got something to say, just spit it out.

RAINA

Saw the news.

JESSE

Huh.

RAINA

“Wave of Belligerence Flows Through Parkland School Shooting Jury Pool.”

JESSE

Good to know you can still read.

RAINA

This is a fucking circus, Jesse.

JESSE

You think I don't know that?

RAINA

All your work, down the drain. I have no idea what that judge is thinking. Does she really want to start that entire juror selection process over again?

JESSE

It's getting appealed.

RAINA

And then to dismiss all 70 prospective jurors just because one idiot was an emotional wreck? What a fucking cry baby.

JESSE

It wasn't just him. The entire group got mouthy after he freaked out.

RAINA

Is it true that he tried to lunge at Cruz?

JESSE

No, he didn't do that.

RAINA

Too bad, the dick would've deserved it.
This case is never gonna happen if that bitch doesn't get control of her courtroom.

JESSE

It's her first big case.

RAINA

It's sloppy, is what it is. We can't afford for any female judges to be this weak. It makes all of us look bad.

JESSE

You're not a judge, Raina.

RAINA

Yet.

“Fight the Power” by Public Enemy comes on over the bar's speakers.

RAINA

Come on, hon. What are you doing here?

JESSE

You know what I'm doing.

RAINA

Still think the guilty need protecting?

JESSE

It's the law, every citizen has the right to defend themselves. It's the bedrock of our justice system.

RAINA

Oh shut up. No one cares about that shit. Cruz is guilty. Probably one of the most hated men in the country. Let him swing. Or not. He's not my problem. But you, on the other hand -

Your talents are wasted in this godforsaken swamp. You know it, I know it.

JESSE

Sssh...

RAINA

What?

JESSE

I like this song.

RAINA

You really want defending this asshole on your resume?

JESSE

I mean it, shush...

They listen to the song for a moment.

RAINA

Look, I'm just gonna say it. We need you back. The firm just got rid of McCallan, and Ford is set to retire.

I'm on a path to make partner within the next six months, and since you left, there's no one in Chicago who is as good as you are at jury selection.

JESSE

Do you know what the state fish is around here?

RAINA

We can triple your salary.

JESSE

Well, do you?

RAINA

Do you?

JESSE

It's the Florida largemouth bass.

RAINA

Great.

JESSE

You know why people really like fishing them?

RAINA

No.

JESSE

They like how vigorously hard the fish fights against the line to not get reeled in. Sometimes the bass will become airborne in order to try to shake the hook.

People get addicted to it, the excitement of that fight.
Sound familiar?

Ha!
RAINA

I'm not your largemouth bass, Raina.
JESSE

And yet, the family resemblance is uncanny.
RAINA

BARTENDER brings them their gin and tonics.

To you.
RAINA
(raising her glass)

To justice.
JESSE

Fuck you.
RAINA

Still the charmer.
JESSE

They drink in silence.

You still with fuckface?
JESSE

Is that his name?
RAINA

Can you be serious for once?
JESSE

No, no, I'm not. Okay?
RAINA

JESSE

Huh.

RAINA

We actually, uh...well, we split not long after you left. H couldn't take the pressure.

JESSE

Of what?

RAINA

Trying to be you.

JESSE

Is that why you're here?

RAINA

Don't flatter yourself. No, I'm trying to save your ass from yourself. This case is poison and you're wasting your time.

JESSE

Despite what you think, I'm doing fine.

RAINA

Bullshit.

JESSE

Believe what you want, but I'm doing the work I was born to do.

RAINA

Defending the scum of the earth?

JESSE

Like your corporate clients are saints?

RAINA

At least I get paid well to do it. What are they paying you with as a public defender here in Florida? Hand me down alligator shoes?

JESSE

See, that's the problem with you. It's not about the money for me and it never has been. I left Chicago because I was so tired of all the money grubbing, and the ass kissing, and the blatant disregard for human life. So long as you make a buck, who cares who gets railroaded, right? And yeah, maybe I don't get my choice of what clients I get to defend, I have had to defend some real pieces of shit, but my work is important. I can make sure that the jury is the most impartial version of itself so the trial is fair. Fair trials used to matter to you, so I expect you at least remember what I'm talking about.

RAINA

Wow.

JESSE

Bottom line? What I'm doing is important, at least to me, and I don't care if I can't afford the high rise apartment, or the trips to St. Moritz, or that ridiculous California king you bought.

RAINA

Can't sleep well on your own self-righteousness.

JESSE

At least I can sleep. You still having those nightmares?

RAINA

You know why I can't sleep.

JESSE

Sorry. I know you miss your sister.

RAINA

Just another school shooting everyone forgot.

JESSE

What happened was a tragedy.

RAINA

Oh shut up. If you actually thought that, you wouldn't be on this case.

JESSE

I'm not defending the guy who did it.

RAINA

No?

JESSE

Different case, you know that.

RAINA

It's all the same case! That's what you don't get. We're all desensitized to it now because how can we keep being outraged by the same thing happening over and over and over again? We cry, put up memorials, and just move on. Different school, different victims, but the killers' faces all blend together. I don't care why he did it, I don't care why any of them did it, so what if they were bullied or their mommies didn't give them enough love or if they're sick in the head. All I know is they had a gun when they shouldn't have and they killed some kids they shouldn't have. End of story.

JESSE

They still need to be defended.

RAINA

Make them defend themselves, like their victims had to.

JESSE

I know you feel strongly about this -

RAINA

You don't have to defend Cruz. Let someone else do it.
Don't be the reason he gets off easy.

RAINA grabs a plane ticket out of her bag
plops it down on the bar.

JESSE

What is this?

RAINA

It's a first class ticket, you've got two days to pack.
I'll see you in Chicago Monday morning.

JESSE

Raina -

RAINA

Don't disappoint me, Jesse. Not this time.

RAINA grabs her bag and umbrella, then strides out into the rain.

JESSE picks up the plane ticket, plays with it, trying to decide what to do with it.

END OF PLAY