

EXCERPT FROM “WRUNG UP”

By
C. C. Cieri

Act 1, Scene 11

(Setting: Day 9 of filming the reality TV show “Lucky 7.” New York City, Manhattan, in an alley in Avenue A. A ROBBER is holding a WOMAN at gunpoint.)

ROBBER

C’mon ya dumb broad! Don’t tell me you don’t have any money!

WOMAN

Please, I’ve already shown you my wallet! It’s empty except for the cards!

ROBBER

You mean to tell me you’re waltzing down Avenue A, dead broke!?

(HAL and his PERSONAL TRAINER are walking down the street when they hear the commotion in the alley.)

ROBBER

(Notices the Woman’s necklace)

I knew you had some money! How about you give me those diamonds of yours and forget this ever happened?

WOMAN

But...but...that necklace was an anniversary present!

ROBBER

If you don’t give me the jewels, you’re husband will be celebrating your “getting blown through your fucking head anniversary!”

HAL

Not so fast!

(Steps into the alley)

ROBBER

And who the hell are you?

HAL

(Brandishes a gun)

Just a concerned citizen helping a woman in danger!

(Hal shoots Robber, who falls down and crushes blood capsules onto himself in a way that's completely obvious to the audience)

ROBBER

I am defeated! Evil can never triumph over good!

PERSONAL TRAINER

(To Hal)

Nice shot, little man.

HAL

(Shocked)

Wow, this gun has some kick!

(After Woman realizes that she is safe from harm, she runs over to Hal.)

WOMAN

How brave of you to shoot that awful robber like that, just to save little old me!

HAL

I just did what any Good Samaritan would do in that situation.

WOMAN

(Wraps her arms around Hal)

You're my hero!

HAL

Really, it was nothing—

(A ricochet resounds through the alley. Woman shrieks in pain and shoves Hal away from her. Personal Trainer goes over to help her.)

WOMAN

You asshole! Do you have any idea what you've done?!

HAL

Oh my God! I'm so sorry!

WOMAN

That went right into my stomach, retard! My fucking stomach!!!

HAL

Oh God! Oh God! Oh God! What do I do? What do I do?

PERSONAL TRAINER

(To Woman)

Take it easy now, just take it easy.

(To Hal)

Don't worry, I'll call the ambulance. You just make yourself scarce for now. We don't need one of the "Lucky Seven" contestants in prison!

HAL

Don't have to tell me twice!

(Hal throws the gun to the ground.)

WOMAN

(Right after Hal throws the gun)

Watch it, retard!

(Hal runs to the other side of the stage.)

WOMAN

What the fuck, Clyde?! I thought you were teaching that dipshit how to shoot!

PERSONAL TRAINER

I did! I am! But he must've had an itchy trigger finger!

WOMAN

(Looks down at stomach)

Oh my god, I think some of my breakfast came out! Wasn't that stupid gun filled with blanks?!

PERSONAL TRAINER

Look, even blanks can hurt you at a close enough range. Just calm down. I'll call the boss.

(Takes out his cell phone)

We'll make it like none of this ever even happened.

*(While Personal Trainer is making the call,
Hal is on the other side of the stage.)*

HAL

(Muttering nervously)

What do I do? What do I do?

(ESME anxiously stomps onto the stage.)

ESME

(Muttering angrily)

What do I do? What do I do?

HAL

I can't believe I shot that innocent woman!

ESME

I can't believe I can't even raise \$5,000!

(Then, Hal and Esme simultaneously say...)

HAL

This is the worst day of my life!

ESME

This is the worst day of my life!

(Hal and Esme suddenly realize they're not alone!)

HAL

Don't tell me you shot someone too.

ESME

You shot someone?! Those self-defense classes must be working, then.

HAL

You don't understand! I shot someone by accident!

ESME

Well, that's stupid! Even I wouldn't shoot someone by accident. It might look like an accident, but I probably wanted that person dead.

(Hal edges away from Esme)

What? There's a whole bunch of people at BryanCoCorp. that I'd love to just shoot in the face!

HAL

Why?

ESME

Because they're all against me! Everyone wanted to see me kicked off from the start! Why do you think my boss lied about her order? Or those employees keep snickering at me? Or I found a bug in the straw of my soda?

HAL

You know, getting kicked off doesn't sound half bad right now!

ESME

...Oh, no! You are not getting emo on me! I have more reason to be emo than you, but I'm not moping!

(Thrusts her wrists into Hal's face)

Look at my wrists! Look at them! Do you see any scars? Anywhere? No!

HAL

You don't understand! I never liked being around people!

ESME

Then why are you trying to become a tough guy?!

HAL

Because I forgot how much I hated being popular!

ESME

You were popular once? You really don't look it, but for some reason I don't want to laugh in your face and say "Dream on!"

HAL

Well, my full name is Hal Lee, if that helps.

ESME

Hal Lee? Like the comet?

HAL

No, like Lee-Electronics.

ESME

(Face brightens up)

Oh, yeah! That chain of electronics stores across the U.S. I love that jingle "If it's not Lee, it's not for me!"

(Realization)

I've heard you're name before! Your dad's like the CEO of Lee-Electronics Inc., isn't he?

HAL

Yeah, so you can imagine that the son of a wealthy businessman like him would have a lot of friends. Lots of lots of friends. I had so many that I couldn't have any time for myself without half my class following me, hoping to play my brand new Nintendo 64! Even teachers would try to get their slice of the rich-kid pie!

ESME

Whiner. You think I didn't have to deal with that every day of my life?

HAL

At least you liked the attention.

ESME

(Nostalgic sigh)

Yeah, you're right. I do like the attention. Truth be told, that's one of the reasons I came onto this show.

HAL

And one of the main reasons why I want to get off.

ESME

(Thinks for a moment)

You know...I think I have an idea that can solve both our problems.

HAL

What's the catch?

ESME

And what, my fine rich friend, would make you think I would want anything?

HAL

You said "both our problems."

ESME

(Pouts)

Five grand. It's part of a plan I have for getting back on the show.

HAL

A plan? What is it?

ESME

...It's a work in progress.

HAL

So what do you need the five thousand for? Funding? A bribe? Wait, aren't you rich enough to bribe someone yourself?

ESME

For the last time, my parents cut me off! God! Why do people never listen?!

HAL

Look, I'm not comfortable giving a large amount of money to someone who doesn't know what they're doing.

ESME

It's not for me. It's for James. He said he'd find a way to get me back on if I got him the five thousand.

HAL

...And exactly how many contestants have you been making deals with?

ESME

Just you and him.

(Beat. Just got inspired.)

Oh! Here's an idea. While you're still deciding, I can sabotage you! You know, like find a bunch of Girl Scouts to beat you into submission! With blunt objects even!

HAL

What!?

ESME

That's perfect! I'll find the most obnoxious Girl Scout Troop in New York City, and get them to pummel you!

HAL

Where did this come from!?

ESME

It makes perfect sense! If you lose against them, you're a wimp and you're kicked out for not defending yourself, and if you beat them up, you'll be so unpopular that they'll kick you off to keep viewership up! You can't lose!

HAL

...That actually makes sense. Okay, you have yourself a deal.

(Takes out a checkbook)

Now, what did you say your name was again?

(Esme and Hal chatter to each other, voicelessly, while Hal scribbles in his checkbook. Scene ends.)