

# HYSTERIA

By

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**INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY**

COLETTE SANTOS, a 40s, straight shooter of a therapist sits facing a Patient.

COLETTE SANTOS

When last we spoke, I asked you to find some joy in your life. With your illness, it's good to seek out things that bring you happiness instead of wallowing in your physical pain and symptoms. What joy did you find this week?

Patient's Black hand twirls a silly floral pen.

**INT. EXAM ROOM 6 - DAY - CASSANDRA POV**

Different hands obsessively click an expensive, engraved pen. Camera POV on the hands of --

DR. ISHII, an arrogant infectious disease specialist sits in an exam room with a Black patient, CASSANDRA LEWIS. A cornucopia of Thanksgiving decorations adorn the walls.

CASSANDRA

So you're waiting until I'm on insulin before deciding that Cocksackie virus is a problem?

DR. ISHII

I know it's hard to understand without eight years of highly specialized training, but you don't belong in this office.

Every CLICK CLICK CLICK of that pen eats at Cassandra's sanity. Camera stares at the Ivy degrees on the wall.

Cassandra walks to the door, next to the sharps container. Her heart BEATS in her ears in rhythm with the clicks.

CASSANDRA

Then what the fuck are you doing here?

DR. ISHII

Wasting my time apparently.

Cassandra's hands pick up the sharps container and bashes Dr. Ishii's head with it. The lid flies off and needles explode into the doctor's face.

THAT stops the clicking. Her hand grabs the pen.

CASSANDRA  
I won't waste any more of your  
time.

DR. ISHII  
NURSE, nurse -

As Dr. Ishii tries to crawl away...

CASSANDRA  
Thanks for hearing me out, doc.

She jams the pen into Dr. Ishii's ear.

# HYSTERIA

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Reveal Cassandra, a mid-30s Black woman and Patient, smiles.

CASSANDRA  
Well, I'm exploring a new hobby. It  
gives me such a sense of release,  
of control. It's really restoring  
my joie de vivre.

COLETTE SANTOS  
Oh, Cassandra, that's wonderful!

Cassandra sets the floral pen back on the side table.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

*Supertitle: One year ago...*

Camera tracks across a shelf of dance trophies and ribbons with photos of young Cassandra in her dance outfits and on stage. A few books sit on the shelf, like a dog-eared and beat up copy of THE ANARCHIST COOKBOOK.

The framed pictures span chronologically with early photos featuring her smiling Mother and Father, then less happy parents with an optimistic Cassandra, and then just teen Cassandra and her Father or punk teen Cassandra and friends. Finally, a gravestone etching of her father's name and dates. There is nothing else of her mother.

Cassandra lies asleep in bed. Punk track like Death's "You're a Prisoner" blares from her phone - an alarm. Cassandra opens her eyelids slowly.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
You know the kind of people who say  
they wake up every day feeling  
fantastic - that they feel as good  
at 40 as they did at 20?

Head turns slightly, and a loud CRACK sounds from her spine. Eyes snap shut in pain.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
I fucking hate them.

Cassandra laboriously sits up, looking down at her stiff feet. More CRACKING as she rises.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
It's hard to pinpoint when things  
derailed. I didn't exactly feel  
great at 20, but I didn't expect to  
feel like I was dying at 30.

She twists her neck with loud CRACKING sounds before using her arms to push herself up off of the bed.

She grabs her phone, leaving the caustic rock playing. Wobbly, she trudges to the bedroom door.

A drop of water hits her face, trickling from the ceiling.

CASSANDRA  
Goddammit.

Cassandra's foot shoves a bucket under the drip and exits -

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra turns out of the bedroom, her hand on the door frame propping her up - unbalanced.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra steps into the bathroom. She drops her underwear and sits on the toilet. Background sounds fade away. Barely a drop comes out.

Cassandra shakes her head to break the daze and pulls up her underwear. Sound comes back. She steps on scale. 170.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
It didn't matter what I ate or  
didn't eat. The scale kept going  
up. I was going to hit 200 pounds  
while starving myself.

Cassandra's hand squeezes toothpaste onto a toothbrush and  
brushes her teeth. Her hand shakes.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
The pain seemed eternal. My brain  
was trapped in a thick fog.

Cassandra SPITS and looks in the mirror. She touches a lock  
of her hair, and a clump comes out in her hand.

CASSANDRA  
Is today Tuesday?

Cassandra looks in the mirror as if she has no idea.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Shit.

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - MORNING

A crowd swarms toward an open elevator. Cassandra looks at  
clock: 8:59am.

A Young Executive makes a run for it, pushing an OLD WOMAN  
out of his way and onto Cassandra. Cassandra catches Old  
Woman instead of catching the elevator.

Cassandra opens her mouth but closes it. Her eyes shoot  
daggers at the Young Executive as the shiny doors close. He  
doesn't notice her.

CASSANDRA  
(to Old Woman)  
Are you ok?

OLD WOMAN  
Yes, I don't think he saw me.

CASSANDRA  
No kidding.

Clock reads 9:01am. Cassandra frowns. A Maintenance Worker  
tapes up an "Out of Service" sign on the next elevator.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Oh, c'mon!

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Cassandra rushes into a packed room carrying a file, which she immediately drops. Papers fly. Clock reads 9:05am.

The room gawks. Cassandra bends over to pick up the papers but keeps dropping them. DON TAGGART, mid-50s, Draconian boss chasing the illusion of youth, folds his arms over his chest.

This turns into a slapstick routine punctuated by sounds of her back CRACKING and joints POPPING.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
 I had ambition and talent. I'd  
 nearly been a professional dancer  
 but I was past my prime.  
 (cackles)  
 I don't think you're supposed to be  
 past your prime this early in an  
 office.

She hits her head on the conference table. Taggart stares at her derriere as she bends over.

DON TAGGART  
 Cassandra, take a seat. Sit down!

WOMAN COLLEAGUE nearest Cassandra takes pity on her and scoops up the papers easily. She almost hands them back to Cassandra but instead puts them on the table in front of an empty seat. Cassandra sits.

DON TAGGART (CONT'D)  
 See me after the meeting. Back to  
 Step Up: Survival of the  
 Fittest....

Don Taggart eyes Cassandra, sweating in her seat.

INT. OFFICE BATHROOM - DAY

Cassandra enters the women's room to find Woman Colleague from conference room applying lip gloss.

WOMAN COLLEAGUE  
 Is everything alright?

CASSANDRA  
 No.  
 (beat)  
 I mean, it was a rough morning. I  
 didn't need extra attention from  
 Taggart on top of it.

Woman Colleague shivers.

WOMAN COLLEAGUE

Let me know if I can help? He's a  
real creep.

CASSANDRA

Thanks. I'll bring mace.

They laugh.

INT. DON TAGGART'S OFFICE - DAY

Don Taggart sits across his desk from Cassandra. Cassandra sits in a low chair with Taggart lording over her.

DON TAGGART

I don't know what's going on in  
your life, but tardiness is  
unacceptable. Do you think what we  
do here is a joke? You can't even  
take picking up a file seriously  
and had to wrench the whole meeting  
off track....

Don Taggart's voice drones on and fades into the background as Cassandra's mind wanders. The sound turns into a RINGING din, and her vision blurs. She blinks as if trying to clear the mist.

Don grabs a stack of files and pushes them toward Cassandra.

DON TAGGART (CONT'D)

These all need to be keyed into the  
database.

CASSANDRA

Yes, I'll get right on it.

DON TAGGART

They need to be finished today.

CASSANDRA

We've already discussed my typing  
limitations. I am doing my best to  
keep up, but I asked you to let me  
know as things need to be done -  
not all at once. My hands hurt and -

DON TAGGART

Today. Get to work.

Cassandra exits as calmly as she can.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING - MONTAGE

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Full disclosure: I still had too many drinks every once in a while and ate french fries, but I did a lot of things right.

- A) Cassandra struggles to balance in yoga.
- B) Cassandra takes a variety of supplements - liquid fish oil, cranberry pills, laxatives.
- C) Cassandra eats a healthy salad. She misses her mouth.
- D) Cassandra journals but struggles to form letters with her hand.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
I took it seriously enough to think the doctors could fix me.  
(scoffs)

- E) An alert goes off on her phone for an appointment.

EXT. TUSKO MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra walks to the front door of Tusko Medical Group.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM - DAY

Cassandra sits uncomfortably in a cookie cutter medical office, looking around at the uninspired Valentine's decorations.

DR. JONES - a white, middle aged, female doctor and stick in the mud - walks into the room. She holds out her limp hand. Cassandra shakes.

DR. JONES  
I'm Dr. Jones. Sandy, what can I do for you?

CASSANDRA  
Cassandra.

DR. JONES  
Sure. We're here for a basic check up?



CASSANDRA

Actually, I haven't been feeling well. I have trouble sleeping, and I've gained a lot of weight. I can't digest food. I think something might be wrong with my thyroid?

DR. JONES

You should just exercise more and eat better. I see you're 32 and unmarried. Any pregnancies?

CASSANDRA

No.

DR. JONES

What do you do for work?

CASSANDRA

I'm an assistant at a construction firm.

DR. JONES

Mm-hmm. Perhaps you're depressed that you're in your 30s, single, childless, and stuck at a dead end career?

CASSANDRA

Wh-what?

Record SCRATCH on Cassandra's reaction.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

The fuck, right?

She looks in horror at a "What Pregnancy Does to Your Body" poster. A metallic heart slides off the wall and into her lap. Cassandra picks it up as if it's radioactive and sets it on the table.

Dr. Jones flips her hair, turning back to the computer.

DR. JONES

A lot of my patients say they diet, but they tend to forget what they eat. You're forgetting about the fried food.

CASSANDRA  
Wait, I'm eating 1200 calories a day, and I gained another five pounds. It's easy to count because I hate cooking.

Cassandra pulls a protein shake out of her purse and shows it to the doctor. 400 calories.

Dr. Jones shakes her head at Cassandra. Foolish girl.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Cassandra struggles to get a dress over her head and wiggles back and forth as if in a Chinese finger trap. Cassandra gives up and goes back to her closet.

INT. ROCK CLUB - NIGHT

Cassandra enters a small music venue with young punks and old timers. She walks up to the bar. She sports a leather jacket with metal studs, ripped jeans, and old Vans.

DAVID, a 30-something square dressed in his office attire, steps up to the bar next to Cassandra and tries flirting.

DAVID  
Keeping the dream alive?

CASSANDRA  
Are you saying I'm too old to enjoy a punk show?

DAVID  
No, no! I'm jealous. I wish I'd at least changed shirts.

CASSANDRA  
You could still rip the sleeves off your strait jacket.

David looks at his button up sleeves and tugs as if he might. Cassandra LAUGHS.

DAVID  
I would but I just got this back from the cleaners.

CASSANDRA  
(teasing)  
A capitalist, too. Are you punk at all?

DAVID

I was always more of a death metal guy.

CASSANDRA

Oh no, this conversation is over.

DAVID

What? No love for death metal?!

David feigns getting stabbed in the heart and twisting the knife. Cassandra giggles.

DAVID (CONT'D)

My name is David.

David holds out his hand. Cassandra stretches hers as if to shake but -

ASHLEY, Cassandra's oldest friend from one of the teen photos, runs up to the bar and wraps Cassandra in a long hug, coming between David and Cassandra.

ASHLEY

Hey! How are you? I haven't seen you much lately.

David waves at her and walks away. Cassandra waves in return, but David is gone.

CASSANDRA

Ups and downs, but it's so good to see you.

Ashley beams at Cassandra's dirty checkered Vans signed with permanent marker.

ASHLEY

You still have those!

CASSANDRA

Yup. I can only wear flats these days.

Bartender looks at Cassandra. She points at a beer and signs for two.

ASHLEY

Gosh, it's been ages since we made it out to a show. It's nice to get out, huh?

CASSANDRA

Yeah, like getting run over.

ASHLEY

What?

Bartender sets down two beers. Cassandra drops a ten dollar bill.

CASSANDRA

I'm glad I could come over.

They CLINK their cheap beers.

A young, hip band takes the stage and plays a feisty political tune along the lines of Dead Kennedys' "Let's Lynch the Landlord."

A low key mosh pit forms in front of the stage. Ashley looks at Cassandra, who smiles and nods. Ashley takes her hand, and they wade to the front.

Ashley gets into the groove quickly. Cassandra holds back, gently bobbing her head. She loses her balance and stumbles backwards into a Wheelchair Punk wildly headbanging.

Cassandra mouths "Sorry." Wheelchair Punk throws horns at her and keeps headbanging.

Emboldened, Cassandra shakes her head. One, Two, Three... the sound drops, and the room blurs. Cassandra clutches her neck and limps off of the dance floor.

Ashley follows her friend.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

This wasn't such a good idea.

ASHLEY

I'm so sorry.

CASSANDRA

It's not your fault. I guess my headbanging days are done.

ASHLEY

When are they going to figure out what's wrong and fix you?

CASSANDRA

I hate to be a Negative Nancy but...

ASHLEY

There must be something else you can do, someone else you can see?

Ashley's voice fades, and sounds turn into a high pitched, ringing DIN. Cassandra desperately chugs her beer.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
There's always someone else you can  
see, but there's never any  
guarantee that you won't be out  
your co-pay, PTO, and some dignity.

The bar speeds up around Cassandra. David watches her from across the room, but she doesn't see him.

She remains slow, unable to interact. Fog blurs the camera lens, enveloping Cassandra.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra tosses and turns. She sits up, grimaces, and swallows a few painkillers with water.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

DR. BHATT, a young, idealistic Indian specialist, checks Cassandra's thyroid by hand. She wears a nose ring. This exam room has a spring theme with a dash of Easter bunnies.

DR. BHATT  
The results came back within normal  
range. Your BMI is high, though. Do  
you have excess hair growth, like  
on your chest?

CASSANDRA  
Yeah, they warned me about the rum.

Dr. Bhatt laughs with Cassandra.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
(seriously)  
I'm also growing a beard.

DR. BHATT  
You have indications of polycystic  
ovary syndrome, which is a hormonal  
imbalance. We can put you back on  
the pill?

CASSANDRA  
Or I can join a carnival?

DR. BHATT  
It's good to have a plan B!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra walks into the apartment with several bills from insurance and doctors and a prescription bag.

Insert: Past Due notices and Urgent Insurance letters.

Cassandra throws the bills, bag, and herself in a chair and dials an 800 number on her phone.

Timelapse: Cassandra hits buttons on her keypad waiting for a representative to come on the line.

CASSANDRA  
SPEAK TO A REPRESENTATIVE.

She sinks deeper in the chair.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

David from the punk show just happens to be a deflated insurance employee. He sits with his headset on. A pop up appears on his computer.

*Incoming call. Cassandra Lewis... 5.... 4....*

He looks at his mantras pinned to the corkboard:

- 1. There are a million people willing to do your job for less.*
- 2. The customer ~~is always~~ [handwritten: can't afford to be] right.*
- 3. The obstacles are the path.*

David takes a deep breath.

*1.... Call connected.*

DAVID  
Hello. I'm David and thanks for  
calling Iron Age Insurance. May I  
have your name and date of birth?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra sits up, surprised to hear a human's voice. She scribbles in a notebook with call center names and dates.

CASSANDRA  
Cassandra Lewis. October 22, 1982.

INTERCUT CASSANDRA AND DAVID:

DAVID

Ok, Cassandra, how can I help you today?

CASSANDRA

I paid my co-pay at the time of service. Why are you billing me?

One of these calls will break David.

DAVID

Could I get the date of service?

Cassandra rifles through her pile of bills.

CASSANDRA

February 8th.

DAVID

I am pulling up those files.

David opens a chewable antacid bottle and pops three in his mouth.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I see this appointment. It was at an urgent care clinic?

CASSANDRA

Yes, I called this number beforehand and was told that location was covered.

Cassandra tears open a bill. \$195.00 for bloodwork. She GROANS.

DAVID

Bless you. Your medical group handles the billing for this.

CASSANDRA

But I paid my co-pay at the time of service. You need to pay urgent care.

DAVID

Look, I'm going off script here, but we pay your medical group. They pay providers.

CASSANDRA

Or they don't.

DAVID  
Or they don't. I mean, you should  
take it up with them.

David pops another antacid.

CASSANDRA  
Thanks. For nothing.

She angrily hangs up and tosses her phone onto the sofa. She opens another envelope from insurance. REFERRAL REJECTED.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

David rips his headset off. His boss HEINEMANN, aiming to win the rat race at any cost, stomps toward him.

He passes a large Appeals Countdown Board on the wall of the Appeals bullpen, tracking the number of denied appeals.

Appeals Denied: 427. BELOW MONTHLY GOAL. A thumbs down sketched next to the total.

Heinemann shouts at the Appeals Team as he passes.

HEINEMANN  
Let's get these numbers up. We're  
at half of what we were last year  
during the pandemic. AI is still  
ahead in denials and cost savings.  
Deny everyone for the rest of the  
week!

Appeals Team redoubles their concentration with the CLACKING of keyboards.

David yanks the headset back on and tries deep breaths. Heinemann reaches him.

HEINEMANN (CONT'D)  
David, how many calls do we get at  
this location?

DAVID  
As many as we can handle -

HEINEMANN  
That's right, and it seems like you  
can't take the HEAT....

Insert: Can you take the H.E.A.T.? Customer Service poster. H = Hear Them Out. E = Empathy. A = Apologize. T = Take action.



INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cassandra enters the kitchen, opens the packet of birth control, and takes a pill. She washes it down with water, struggling to swallow.

Cassandra CRACKS her neck. The glass falls out of her hands and shatters on the floor.

INT. EXAM ROOM 4 - DAY

Cassandra sits in a table in an OB-GYN exam room wearing only a thin gown. She shivers and looks around at the cherubic decorations with storks and babies. KNOCK KNOCK.

CASSANDRA

Come in.

DR. TODD, a middle aged woman with heavy make up and hairspray, enters the room with a mask of a smile.

DR. TODD

Hello, I'm Dr. Todd.

CASSANDRA

What happened to my regular doctor?

DR. TODD

Dr. Wells retired, and now I'm covering her share of the practice in addition to mine.

Dr. Todd roughly pulls the stirrups out, and Cassandra slides down to the edge of the table, fully exposed to this stranger.

DR. TODD (CONT'D)

My nurse said you think you have Interstitial Cystitis? Did Dr. Google tell you that?

Dr. Todd SCOFFS and picks up a speculum.

Insert poster: Google is not a licenced Medical Doctor.

CASSANDRA

Um, I'm experiencing discomfort -

Dr. Todd pushes Cassandra's knees apart.

DR. TODD

Scoot closer.

Cassandra scoots further down.

CASSANDRA  
But my urine tests keep coming back  
negative or -

Dr. Todd inserts the speculum without warning. Cassandra  
freezes.

DR. TODD  
The pain can't be that bad. What  
method of birth control are you  
using?

Dr. Todd grabs a long q-tip.

CASSANDRA  
I'm not really sexually active  
right now. I don't feel we-

Dr. Todd scrapes Cassandra's uterus, secures the sample, and  
rips off her gloves.

DR. TODD  
"Not really" isn't a contraceptive.  
We have literature on prenatal  
Medicaid and SNAP benefits. We'll  
run your PAP smear and call you if  
anything is abnormal.

Dr. Todd dumps her gloves in the trash and opens the door.

DR. TODD (CONT'D)  
You can get dressed now.

Cassandra sits stunned. The door closes.

She can overhear:

DR. TODD (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Don't worry, Emily, I put her in  
her place. No need to embarrass  
you.

INT. EXAM ROOM 7 - DAY

DR. AMSEL, an older doctor in an American flag bowtie with  
gold rings on most fingers, stands in the exam room facing  
Cassandra.

The exam room celebrates Memorial Day with the glories of  
war. Cassandra cringes at the decor.

CASSANDRA

Dr. Bhatt, the endocrinologist, put me on birth control for PCOS.

DR. AMSEL

Did you get an ultrasound?

CASSANDRA

No.

DR. AMSEL

Hmmmm. That's jumping to conclusions.

Dr. Amsel turns to the computer and types. Cassandra rolls her eyes behind his back.

CASSANDRA

I'd prefer diagnoses and a plan of action instead of waiting to become permanently disabled, which is what I feel is happening.

Dr. Amsel waves away the absurd thought with his hand.

DR. AMSEL

Nonsense. You're too young. I'm going to refer you to an allergist.

Cassandra leans forward and sees the computer screen.

CASSANDRA

Are you looking at... RVs?

Busted.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A banner is displayed across the bull pen near Cassandra's desk: *IRON AGE INSURANCE PRESENTS STEP UP: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.*

Woman Colleague high steps between desks with a group of Colleagues following her, all gazing at their fitness trackers.

WOMAN COLLEAGUE

Can we break 12,000?

COLLEAGUES

Yes, we can!!!

An alert DINGS on Cassandra's phone, reminding her of her next doctor's appointment. She shakes out her wrists from typing.

Cassandra turns off her computer, picks up her bag, and heads for the door. Don Taggart stops her.

DON TAGGART  
Leaving already?

CASSANDRA  
Yes, doctor's appointment. I put it  
in the calen-

DON TAGGART  
Another one? I'm going to start  
docking sick days. Bring a note.

CASSANDRA  
Um, ok. I'll do that. I'm really at  
appointments.

DON TAGGART  
And get those steps up!

CASSANDRA  
You know that's just insurance  
increasing their profits while  
targeting expensive patients to  
under deliver care to, right?

CHEERS erupt from the high stepping group. Taggart frowns.

DON TAGGART  
Be a team player, Cassandra.

Cassandra exits.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 2 - DAY

DR. LEE, an allergist in a loud ensemble, sits in front of Cassandra. The office is decorated in a summer bar-b-q theme.

CASSANDRA  
I have trouble sleeping. My brain  
just won't shut up, and I feel like  
my hormones are all wrong. Could an  
allergy be triggering -

DR. LEE  
Sounds like bipolar disorder.

Cassandra's eyes widen.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Stay in your lane, buddy.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cassandra and Ashley eat dinner at a restaurant. Cassandra's meal looks bland and only half-eaten.

CASSANDRA  
He called me bipolar. Can you believe that? He'd never say that to a man.

ASHLEY  
Of course not, but... you have been moody lately.

CASSANDRA  
You mean because I'm afraid that I'm going to lose my job, I can hardly walk up the stairs to my own home anymore, and a pile of medical bills is devouring my savings?!

ASHLEY  
Look, I know it's stressful. How's therapy?

Ashley's optimism is relentless. Cassandra crumbles.

SERVER approaches table with the bill and looks at Cassandra.

SERVER  
Your card was declined.

Cassandra drops her head to the table.

ASHLEY  
I've got it. I've got it!

Ashley tosses her card at Server and pats Cassandra's shoulder.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra sits on the couch in Colette's office.

CASSANDRA  
I don't even think my best friend believes me. I mean, I know she cares, but none of the doctors can find anything!

COLETTE SANTOS

I believe you. And more than that, you're not bipolar. You struggle with anxiety, but honestly, I would be worried if you *didn't* have anxiety. It's a normal, adaptive reaction to a situation like yours - a situation with a lot of unknowns.

CASSANDRA

I feel so alone.

COLETTE SANTOS

And that is very scary and anxiety-inducing. I know that family is not an option for you, but maybe you could find a support group or community?

(beat)

Speaking of family, I think this relates to your mother and her illness. Can we talk about that?

CASSANDRA

My mother had a mental breakdown and has lived in an institution for twenty years. I am not crazy.

COLETTE SANTOS

No, I didn't mean it like that. You have a real, physical illness. However, there are some parallels between her situation and yours.

Cassandra braces herself.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - DAY

Cassandra struts into an empty dance studio in a leotard and bare feet.

She plugs her phone into the stereo system and turns up the volume. Something like Boy Harsher's "Pain" blasts from the speakers.

Cassandra begins a simple modern dance routine. She starts slow and keeps up for a few steps.

She soon falls out of rhythm and struggles to hit positions. She whips her head to the side as part of the choreography, and her expression explodes in pain.

At the chorus, she stumbles and crashes hard into the wooden floor. She lies defeated - the wind knocked out of her.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra reaches the door to her apartment, breathless. She pulls out her keys and immediately drops them.

She struggles to bend down to pick them up, swaying off balance and uncertain of her own body. Neck CRACKS.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra stumbles into the apartment, knocking over her MFA in Modern Dance diploma by the entrance with other dance accolades in a cork board.

Her hearing drops out - RINGING. Cassandra bursts into tears - an ugly cry. She crumples to the floor before unleashing a rage.

She grabs a dance trophy and hurls it. CRASH.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra holds an ice pack to her neck and searches a social network for chronic illness threads.

CASSANDRA (READING)

*"User1234: My spine feels like it's on fire, and I can't leave my house. I feel like a prisoner in my own body."*

*User987: Have you tried adrenaline? You can add painkillers and have almost a normal day. [website]*

*User424: Is that even legal? Do you have links to studies? I can't find anything.*

*User987: If you wait for the studies, you'll be dead or permanently disabled. Don't you want to feel good again?!*

*User1234: A normal day! How long  
has it been?"*

Cassandra clicks on the link and purchases Adrenaline pills from Asia.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Carpe diem.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra stares up at the ceiling.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
I fell into a deep depression,  
triggered by the hormones in birth  
control, because what I really  
needed was an actual mental health  
issue to prove those arrogant  
sadists right.

Cassandra weeps.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

Dr. Bhatt examines Cassandra. July Fourth decorations line the walls.

DR. BHATT  
Unfortunately, your labs came in  
normal, but I'm referring you to a  
Rheumatologist and an Infectious  
Disease specialist.

CASSANDRA  
What about my blood sugar?

Cassandra devours a candy bar as her hand shakes. Dr. Bhatt rapidly types into the computer.

DR. BHATT  
Your glucose test is borderline.

CASSANDRA  
I- I feel like my life is slipping  
away.

DR. BHATT  
I hear you. Let's try Metformin?  
This might even out your blood  
sugar issues.



Dr. Bhatt turns back to the computer. An error pops up.

DR. BHATT (CONT'D)  
Ugh, maybe in three months they'll  
patch some of this software.

Dr. Bhatt taps the computer. Cassandra's shaking hands drop  
the rest of her candy bar on the floor. Defeat.

DR. BHATT (CONT'D)  
Can you fill out a medical request  
form and list your other providers?  
I'll look them over and see if we  
can find something else.

INT. MEDICAL RECEPTION 1 - DAY

Cassandra enters past a PHARMACEUTICAL REP chatting up a  
RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST. Pharmaceutical Rep holds an  
expensive briefcase and passes off marketing materials and a  
check in an envelope.

PHARMACEUTICAL REP  
If you put these out in the exam  
rooms, we can get Dr. Sims started  
on our Rx partnership program. The  
bonus goes up after the first 50  
patients.

RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST  
Our patients will love that.

Cassandra makes a GAGGING sound waiting behind the Rep.

CASSANDRA  
(Faux apologetically)  
Excuse me.

She puts her hand in front of her mouth as if coughing. Off  
Pharmaceutical Rep.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 4 - DAY

DR. SIMS - a middle-aged, white, male Rheumatologist with a  
permanent scowl - touches Cassandra's back, and she jumps.

Festive fall leaves adorn the office.

CASSANDRA  
Ow! My spine is on fire, especially  
my neck.

DR. SIMS  
I'm ordering an MRI of your lower  
back -

CASSANDRA  
What about my *neck*?

DR. SIMS  
Your lower back should tell us  
whether or not your spine is fusing  
together.

CASSANDRA  
Wait - fusing together?!

DR. SIMS  
Let's see how these come back.

Dr. Sims texts on his phone - already checked out.

INT. MRI MACHINE - DAY

Close up: Cassandra's face, perfectly still.

The SCREAM of an MRI machine sounds.

TECH (O.S.)  
This next one will be 7 minutes.

CASSANDRA  
No. Please I need to stretch.

TECH (O.S.)  
If we take you out, it ruins the  
results. Please keep still.

A tear rolls down Cassandra's cheek.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 4 - DAY

Dr. Sims sits across from Cassandra, browsing his phone.

DR. SIMS  
You're HLA-B27 positive, so we  
looked for Ankylosing Spondylitis,  
an autoimmune arthritis. We found  
some slight inflammation and  
scoliosis but nothing to be  
concerned about.

CASSANDRA  
Inflammation is nothing to be  
concerned about?

DR. SIMS  
(*terse*)  
You say that you don't feel well,  
but there is no evidence for  
anything other than fibromyalgia.

CASSANDRA  
Why do you think it takes four  
years to be diagnosed with an  
autoimmune disease?

DR. SIMS  
Why don't you try some light  
exercise? Walk it off, and leave  
the medicine to your doctors.

Dr. Sims leaves. Cassandra sits stewing.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra stalks toward the exit as MALE RHEUMO PATIENT  
leaves a room with Dr. Sims.

MALE RHEUMO PATIENT  
Thanks for the imaging, doc. I'm  
sure it's nothing serious.

DR. SIMS  
Better safe than sorry.

Dr. Sims warmly shakes Male Rheumo Patient's hand and smiles.  
They walk away from Cassandra.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
What a sorry piece of shit.

She pulls Male Rheumo Patient's file from the cubby outside  
the exam room and tosses it in a trash can. She leans against  
the doorway to steady herself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lies down on the couch staring up at the ceiling, a  
heating pad under her. A pile of mail lies on the coffee  
table next to her.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Hello, Yes, I'm calling about the  
denied gastroenterology referral.

Insert: stack of bills, referral rejections, and coverage denials.

INT. PHLEBOTOMY LAB - DAY

Cassandra gets her blood drawn by a Phlebotomist.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
But I can't go to the bathroom.  
That's not normal.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

On the computer, Cassandra researches food to bring down inflammation and detox. Her hand shakily writes a grocery list with turmeric, dandelion greens, and more.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Yes, I'd like to file an appeal  
please!

INT. GROCERY STORE - EVENING

Cassandra walks into the grocery store during rush hour. Busy commuters vie to finish their shopping first. Carts fill the aisles like bumper cars.

She eyes a shopping basket but sees her long list. She chooses a cart. The first has a broken wheel. She might lose it before the shopping even starts.

Cassandra selects produce. Dandelion greens sit on the top shelf. Cassandra reaches, but her shoulder POPS.

An impatient SHOPPER grabs food from underneath Cassandra and bumps her. Cassandra trips into a tall OLD MAN.

CASSANDRA  
Sorry!

Shopper cruises away without a care. Cassandra curses Shopper under her breath.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Grocery hag.  
(to Old Man)  
(MORE)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Sir, could you reach the dandelion greens for me?

OLD MAN  
Just one bunch?

Cassandra nods. He grabs a bunch and places it in her cart.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)  
Grocery shopping is the worst part of my week.

CASSANDRA  
I think it's mine now too. Thank you.

Old Man smiles and continues shopping. Cassandra steels herself for the obstacle course between her and checkout.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A food processor is out, stained the bright gold of turmeric, with a pile of dirty dishes and plates.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Hello. I need to leave a message for Dr. Sims.  
(beat)  
Yes, my neck, it's getting worse. Isn't there something else we can try? Can we redo the tests?

Cassandra sways as she tries to wash her dishes.

Her hands shake, and she drops a plate, shattering in the sink. The SOUND drops out.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra sits on the couch with a pillow behind her head.

CASSANDRA  
I'm just so fucking angry! I can't seem to catch a break.

COLETTE SANTOS  
You feel helpless?

CASSANDRA

I *am* helpless! My body is broken.  
My boss thinks I'm skipping work to  
do something, I don't know, more  
fun than getting exsanguinated  
every other week. The doctors - MY  
GOD - I don't know if they think at  
all, but they're definitely not  
treating me!

COLETTE SANTOS

You're right to be angry, and anger  
is a powerful emotion. It can  
particularly appeal to the  
disenfranchised, the disempowered,  
but anger can be a destructive  
emotion.

Off Cassandra.

BEGIN DOCTOR MONTAGE:

- A) Cassandra sits down in another doctor's office.
- B) DOCTOR 1 sits down across from her, frowning.
- C) DOCTOR 2 mouths an emphatic NO.
- D) DOCTOR 3 listens to Cassandra's chest and shakes her head.
- E) Cassandra leaves doctor's office in tears.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

I need a fucking break.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 3 - DAY

Dr. Bhatt feels Cassandra's thyroid.

DR. BHATT

How is the metformin treating you?

CASSANDRA

I think it's helping, but I think  
the birth control is making me  
worse.

DR. BHATT

Ok, let's stop the birth control.  
You know your body best.

Dr. Bhatt presses a little harder on her neck. Cassandra winces.

DR. BHATT (CONT'D)  
Have you ever heard of non-classic congenital adrenal hyperplasia?

CASSANDRA  
Definitely not.

DR. BHATT  
It's a genetic mutation where you don't have enough 21-hydroxylase enzymes to regulate your cortisol and aldosterone. You said you feel dehydrated and crave salt, right?

CASSANDRA  
Yes, I'm so thirsty but I'm constantly drinking water.

DR. BHATT  
I'm ordering some additional tests. I'm also requesting a thyroid ultrasound.

CASSANDRA  
Thank you, Dr. Bhatt.

INT. MAIL AREA OF APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra trudges into her building and checks the mail. Her package of Adrenaline supplements arrived from Singapore. So did an MRI bill.

Insert: return addresses on both. MRI bill reads URGENT.

Cassandra shreds the MRI bill in a fit of rage.

INT. MEDICAL RECEPTION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Wearing a black hoodie, Cassandra walks into reception at Dr. Sims's office, decorated in a spooky Halloween theme.

RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST in costume looks at Cassandra, then at the sign in sheet, and then back at the computer.

CASSANDRA  
You won't call me back and give me an appointment.

RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST  
If you don't have an appointment,  
the doctor can't see you.

CASSANDRA  
WON'T see me. No one will call me  
back.

RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST  
Name.

CASSANDRA  
Cassandra Lewis.

Rheumatology Receptionist types. Her eyes widen.

RHEUMATOLOGY RECEPTIONIST  
Just a minute.

Rheumatology Receptionist stands up and walks further into  
the office. She speaks with the OFFICE MANAGER, who  
approaches the desk in a witch hat.

Ticking clock beats out the seconds. Waiting Room Patient  
COUGHS.

OFFICE MANAGER  
Yes, Ms. Lewis?

CASSANDRA  
I want my doctor to respond to my  
messages. I can hardly walk!

OFFICE MANAGER  
I need you to calm down. We sent  
out a certified letter to your  
address at -- Riverside Drive --  
last week. Dr. Sims thinks you  
would be best served elsewhere and  
has requested you stop contacting  
this office.

CASSANDRA  
Are you firing me - as a patient?!  
You can't do that!

OFFICE MANAGER  
We can, and if you don't leave  
quietly, we will call security and  
have you escorted out.

The Witch turns and walks away. The SOUND drops out.



Cassandra's adrenaline spikes as she shuffles out of the doctor's office in a daze. Her heart THUMPS in her ears.

She throws open the door and exits to --

INT. HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra's feet stomp toward the elevator next to the stairwell. The hallway is empty. She pulls up her hoodie.

A door opens, and Dr. Sims enters the hallway.

CASSANDRA

Dr. Sims!

Dr. Sims rushes toward stairwell. Cassandra follows.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Dr. Sims, you can't fire me.  
Something is wrong! I can hardly  
get dressed. I keep dropping  
things. My neck feels broken.

Dr. Sims reaches the stairwell and opens the door. Cassandra is on his heels.

DR. SIMS

As my office said, you are no  
longer my patient, but your primary  
care doctor can refer you to a  
neurologist.

(under his breath)

Or a psychiatrist.

Dr. Sims enters the stairwell. Cassandra's hands grab the door. She follows.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CASSANDRA

Stop referring me to other doctors.  
Everyone acts like I'm not their  
problem, but I feel like I'm dying.

Dr. Sims' feet stop near the top step.

DR. SIMS

If you don't leave, we'll invoke a  
restraining order.

Cassandra throws an arm out in frustration.

CASSANDRA  
A restraining order?!

Her arm slams into Dr. Sims's chest, and everything slows down.

Dr. Sims tumbles backward down the stairs.

His head crashes into the concrete steps, and his neck snaps. His feet fly over his head. He slides the rest of the way and lands in a crumpled pile - dead.

Cassandra pauses - stunned.

Her breath slowly returns to normal, and she rolls her neck, feeling a release of tension. A smile creeps across her face.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Try walking that off, doc.

Cassandra hears a door open above her. She exits the stairwell.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

Cassandra lies in a steaming bathtub. She dunks herself under the water.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
It was just an accident, I told  
myself. It wouldn't happen again.

The tub drains as Cassandra lies flat on her back in the tub. The water slowly uncovers her with a sly smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Hair still wet, Cassandra lies on the couch by her phone.

RING. RING. Ashley calls. Cassandra ignores it.

DRIP. DRIP. The living room ceiling begins to leak.

INT. TUSKO MEDICAL BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Cassandra enters her regular medical building. Two Security Guards stand whispering at the front desk, eyes on Cassandra.

Cassandra nervously tugs at her scarf, trying not to meet their eyes.

Walkie CRACKLES. Cassandra picks up the pace and turns a corner.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE EXAM ROOM 5 - DAY

DR. ADEBAYO, a somber, Black neurologist, runs Cassandra through some basic motor skills tests. A big eyed, cartoon spider creeps across a fake spider web on the wall.

Cassandra slowly walks a straight line, teetering.

Cassandra touches her nose with her right hand and then her left, very slowly.

DR. ADEBAYO

Neurologically, you are fine, but I understand that you are struggling and in pain. We can order a nerve study. It's a very uncomfortable test. Not for people with a low pain tolerance.

CASSANDRA

What? Why would you say that?

DR. ADEBAYO

I just want to make sure you understand the procedure.

CASSANDRA

Will it find anything?

DR. ADEBAYO

This is the gold standard for neuropathy.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra opens her mail, strewn across the kitchen table.

Insert: More DUE IMMEDIATELY bills, rejections, and denials.

MRI bill reads "Socks - \$65.00."

Cassandra dials insurance on speaker phone and walks to her Living Room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra looks at her cork board of dance awards and memories. She rips everything off of the board.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

David sits at his computer with his headset on.

*Incoming call. Cassandra Lewis.*

He picks up a stress ball and attempts to smash it between his hands. His computer pulls up her file.

DAVID

Hello. I'm David and thanks for calling Iron Age Insurance. May I get your name and date of birth?

INTERCUT CASSANDRA AND DAVID:

CASSANDRA

Cassandra Lewis. October 22, 1982.  
Did I talk to you before?

David drops the stress ball.

DAVID

No, no, I don't think so.  
Cassandra, how can I help you today?

Flipping pages in a journal with meticulous notes on customer service calls, Cassandra finds David's name.

CASSANDRA

I definitely talked to a David on -

DAVID

May I help you with something?

CASSANDRA

Yes, David, I'd like the health insurance for which I pay an exorbitant premium to cover their part of the bargain.

DAVID

Faustian bargain.

CASSANDRA

Excuse me?

David looks at his mantras. He mouths, "The obstacles are the path." He pops antacids and looks to heaven for help.

No help is coming, but Heinemann watches David from his tony, glass office.

DAVID  
Department of Managed Healthcare.

CASSANDRA  
What?

DAVID  
You've filed three appeals. File a complaint with them.

CASSANDRA  
Um, ok. Thank you, David!

She hangs up and searches Department of Managed Healthcare.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

Heinemann beelines straight for David, passing the Appeals Countdown Board.

*Appeals Denied: 653. Big improvement, Team! Ice cream sundae party for reaching 800.* An ice cream sundae drawing is on the board.

David takes another antacid and coolly types a false account of the phone call.

David types: *Patient requested correct killing info.*

HEINEMANN  
That was a quick call.

DAVID  
She meant to call her medical group.

David flashes a megawatt smile.

HEINEMANN  
I see. I wouldn't want to write you up again. You want to make it to the big office, don't you?

Heinemann gestures toward his corner lair.

DAVID  
Sir, I am 100% committed.

David moves the cursor back to the "k" in killing. He deletes the "k" and replaces it with a "b." Heinemann leaves.

David smirks and deletes the "b." The cursor blinks there.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cassandra picks up a piece of mail from Tusko Medical Group.  
She SIGHS but opens it.

Insert: Congratulatory letter about Dr. Jones with her photo.

*We are proud to announce that our own Dr. Carol Jones will be  
honored at the annual Medical Council's luncheon at the  
Westway Hotel for her fantastic work with patients and the  
high bar she holds for everyone at our practice.  
Congratulations, Dr. Jones!*

CASSANDRA

Goddammit.

RING. RING. Cassandra's phone lights up HEALTHCARE.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Hello?

DR. BHATT (PHONE)

Hello, is this Cassandra Lewis?

CASSANDRA

Yes.

DR. BHATT

Hi, it's Dr. Bhatt. Do you have a  
few minutes?

CASSANDRA

Did the results come back?

DR. BHATT

They did, but unfortunately, the  
results did not substantiate non-  
classic congenital adrenal  
hyperplasia.

CASSANDRA

Of course not. And was the  
ultrasound approved?

DR. BHATT

It wasn't. I will try to appeal,  
but you might have to appeal as  
well.

CASSANDRA

Great.

DR. BHATT

Look, I completely understand your frustration, and I promise I will keep brainstorming and do everything in my power. The truth is that there is so much medicine doesn't know, especially about women and about women of color. You deserve better, but we just don't have the research.

CASSANDRA

I know you're trying, but you're the only one. I do appreciate your help, though.

DR. BHATT

Call me anytime, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA

Thank you.

Cassandra hangs up and turns on the news. Two anchors banter back and forth.

ANCHOR 1

Johns Hopkins released a study saying that medical error should rank as the third leading cause of death in the US, killing over 250,000 Americans every year.

ANCHOR 2

Wow, that's a lot!

ANCHOR 1

Really makes you think twice about going to the doctor.

They chuckle. Anchor 2 CLEARS THROAT and changes tone to be more serious.

ANCHOR 2

But don't forget the heroic doctors who sacrificed during the pandemic.

ANCHOR 1

You're right. How could I forget?  
We honor those who -

Cassandra's index finger punches the off button on the TV.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
 You mean the heroes who closed  
 their offices and stayed home? Or  
 the hero ER and ICU staff and  
 janitors?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra sits at her computer and types into a search bar:  
*doctor murder.*

There are no results referencing Dr. Sims, but one headline  
 catches her attention.

Insert: News Article with headline - *Devastated Family Exacts  
 Revenge on Medical Care Team in Shanghai After Death of  
 Child.*

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
 I can do that.

Taggart walks toward Cassandra's desk, approaching from  
 behind her.

CASSANDRA  
 I can't do that!

TAGGART  
 I don't want to hear any more  
 can'ts from you.

Cassandra jumps, not realizing she spoke out loud. She  
 clumsily closes the browser window.

TAGGART (CONT'D)  
 I only want a can-do attitude on  
 this team.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
 Maybe I should kill my boss?  
 (beat)  
 No! I won't kill anyone... else.

A group of Colleagues suddenly jump up behind Cassandra's  
 shoulder. Woman Colleague holds stop watch.

WOMAN COLLEAGUE  
 New plank record! Seven minutes!

CHEERS and CLAPPING. Will they ever stop?



EXT. TUSKO MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra struggles up three short steps to the front door of the medical building for an appointment. She grips the handrail while an Elderly Patient passes her with ease.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Show off.

INT. NEUROLOGY TESTING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra sits in a hospital gown shivering. Complicated machinery and a monitor sit near a short exam table. The Halloween decor taunts her.

A tray with sterilized tools, alcohol, cotton swabs, long needles attached to wires, and more waits next to the table.

Dr. Adebayo enters the room.

DR. ADEBAYO  
Hi Cassandra. Are you ready?

Cassandra nods.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Nope.

Dr. Adebayo begins swabbing spots on Cassandra, ripping the paper backs off of electrodes and attaching them to nerve endings on Cassandra's hands, arms, and neck.

DR. ADEBAYO  
We are going to monitor how your nerves conduct electricity with these electrodes. I'm going to start on your left side, so please lie down on your right.

Cassandra carefully lies down and tucks her knees into her chest. Dr. Adebayo pulls out a double pronged device that looks similar to a taser.

DR. ADEBAYO (CONT'D)  
You're going to feel a slight sting. Just do your best to keep still.

Cassandra's face flashes with spikes of pain as Dr. Adebayo shocks her in various parts of her body. Her head rears back and twists with the torture.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
A *slight sting?!?!!*

DR. ADEBAYO  
Tuck your head in closer to your chest.

CASSANDRA  
My neck can't do that.

Dr. Adebayo shoves her head but only succeeds in pushing her whole body forward as Cassandra's neck will not tuck into her chest.

Dr. Adebayo continues to shock Cassandra.

DR. ADEBAYO  
Now we're moving onto the needles.  
We insert these into the muscles to  
test how signals are moving through  
your muscular tissue.

Dr. Adebayo pushes a large needle into Cassandra's forearm. Cassandra YELPS in pain. The jolly spider grins at her.

INT. CAR - DAY

Cassandra cries in her car covered in bandages from the nerve study. The letter announcing Dr. Jones's award sits next to her.

The Westway Hotel looms through her windshield with a Liposuction Clinic adjacent. A crowd pickets outside. Cassandra looks at the letter one more time and then crushes it in her hands.

She pulls the bottle of adrenaline pills out of her purse and takes two.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Cassandra crawls out of her car, wiggles into a long sleeve black hoodie, slams the door, and stalks across the street to the hotel.

Cassandra passes disabled and diverse activists protesting the luncheon. LAN, an Asian American protestor using a cane and wearing a face respirator, lifts a bullhorn.

LAN  
Healthcare is a human right!

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra walks up to the Ballroom doorway. A sign on an easel reads "Tusko Medical Group: Healthrise Patient Care Luncheon."

Cassandra looks both ways. No one is watching. She kicks the leg of the easel, and the sign topples over. Cassandra opens the door.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - DAY

Cassandra tip toes in a side door to a large ballroom. She leans against the wall and pops in a piece of gum.

Tables with white tablecloths fill the room. Drs. Amsel, Bhatt, Todd, and Adebayo sit at tables. No patients seem to be present.

A buffet lines the wall. Dr. Lee helps himself to seconds in a pastel suit. Dr. Jones stands at the podium giving a speech.

DR. JONES

In my twenty - ok, maybe thirty -  
year career -

The crowd LAUGHS.

DR. JONES (CONT'D)

I have had the honor of working  
with wonderful colleagues to put  
patients on track and keep them  
there. I'm proud to encourage  
patients to be their best selves,  
and, yes, shame and scold them if  
necessary. We've all had a few of  
those, right?

Most of the room laughs again, especially Dr. Amsel.

Dr. Bhatt does not.

DR. JONES (CONT'D)

I recently had a resident train  
with me, and I'm proud to say that  
we have another warrior among us to  
curb patients' lack of willpower  
and educate them on the basic  
cornerstones of good health - diet  
and exercise. No PMSSs, no HONDAs in  
my practice!

The crowd applauds. Off Cassandra.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

Translation: No poor, miserable souls, no hypertensive obese non-compliant diabetic adults. Can we tack a charm school course onto medical school?

Dr. Lee returns to his table with a heaping plate.

Cassandra blows a bubble. It POPS. Cassandra leaves the room, dropping her gum in one of the buffet trays.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Cassandra waits by an expensive car sloppily parked in a handicapped spot. She wears a wrinkled hospital gown over her clothes. Her black hoodie is over her hair.

A handicapped tag hangs from the mirror of the luxury vehicle, and the license plate reads "TOP DOC."

A pair of dumpsters are nearby. One displays a large "Medical Waste" warning.

Two plastic bags full of a gelatinous goo sit next to Cassandra - liposuctioned fat from the clinic next door.

A CLACK of heels approach the car. Cassandra stretches and POPS her neck, rotating her shoulders. She takes another adrenaline pill and shudders.

Dr. Jones stops when she sees Cassandra by her car.

DR. JONES

That's my car.

CASSANDRA

How did I know?

Dr. Jones looks her over and says nothing.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Don't you remember me?

DR. JONES

No. Are you one of my patients coming to congratulate me?

CASSANDRA

I would never. You're a rude, judgmental shrew.

(MORE)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

My spine can hardly hold my head  
up, but you dismissed me as  
depressed in a record five minutes.

Cassandra begins to shake with rage. Her heart BEATS in her ears. She picks up one of the bags by the knot on top and sets it on top of Dr. Jones's car.

Dr. Jones registers Cassandra's face.

DR. JONES

You're unwilling to take my advice.

CASSANDRA

You mean non-compliant? With  
pleasure.

Cassandra grins. She shakily unties the knot and dumps the bag of fat all over the car.

Dr. Jones rushes at Cassandra, but Cassandra smacks Dr. Jones's head into her car - now slippery with fat. Cassandra unties the second bag as Dr. Jones slides to the ground.

DR. JONES

You're not just depressed. You're  
insane!

CASSANDRA

Insanity is doing the same thing  
over and over again and expecting  
different results. Why see doctors  
at all?

Cassandra dumps the second bag on Dr. Jones and wraps the plastic around her throat.

Goo slides down Dr. Jones who tries to struggle against Cassandra, but she can't get a grip against the gelatin.

DR. JONES

(gasping)

Fat's - dangerous.

Cassandra's hands shake hard, so she leans on Dr. Jones's throat with her bandaged forearm. Dr. Jones kicks her feet but eventually ceases to struggle.

Cassandra steps back and admires her work.

CASSANDRA

You're right. Let me help you burn  
some fat.

Cassandra pulls a matchbook out of her pocket, lights it on the concrete wall, and drops it in Dr. Jones's lap. The fat ignites.

Cassandra slips off the hospital gown, using it to wipe up any stray goo, tosses it on the flames, and watches as the whole car lights up.

She stretches her arms with ease and grins. She's getting used to this.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Cassandra pulls up to a red light, still in her hoodie. She spots a glob of goo on her hoodie and reaches for the napkins in her glove box.

A police car pulls up next to her vehicle. The Cop on the passenger side looks out his window at her.

Cassandra leans back to the driver seat with a napkin but catches the Cop's eye. She freezes and sweats.

After moments of agony, the light turns green. The Cop turns away as they drive off. Cassandra slowly hits the gas.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra lies on her heating pad, wrecked from the energy expenditure. She turns on the TV to the local news.

EXT. PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

REPORTER stands in front of parking garage between the Westway Hotel and the Lipo Clinic.

Police tape crosses the area. Forensics case the scene.

REPORTER

Dr. Carol Jones was being celebrated for her valuable work to heal patients, but she was found dead in this parking garage after an awards luncheon. Foul play is suspected.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra slowly rolls her head toward the television. POPPING and CRACKING are heard.

CASSANDRA  
Good riddance.

REPORTER (O.S.)  
Security footage shows a Black male  
in a hoodie entering the garage.

Cassandra regrets this.

CASSANDRA  
Shit.

INT. EXAM ROOM 5 - DAY

Cassandra sits across from Dr. Adebayo.

DR. ADEBAYO  
Your results are nearly normal. You  
have mild carpal tunnel in your  
right hand, probably from typing.

Cassandra drops her phone, hands clumsy and shaking, and  
looks up to face Dr. Adebayo.

DR. ADEBAYO (CONT'D)  
I can refer you -

CASSANDRA  
What's the point?

Dr. Adebayo shrugs and types into Cassandra's chart.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cassandra takes test results from a table and begins pinning  
them on the corkboard. Inserts:

- A) Positive ANA Titer - BORDERLINE
- B) Positive C-Reactive Protein - OUT OF RANGE
- C) HLA-B27 - POSITIVE
- D) Series of Thyroid Panels moving out of normal range
- E) Series of Glucose Results - OUT OF RANGE
- F) Series of Urinalysis Results - OUT OF RANGE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cassandra flips through the channels and lands on local news.

REPORTER

Police now suspect that a patient might have planned this murderous attack on Dr. Carol Jones in retaliation.

Cassandra sits at attention.

CASSANDRA

Damn right I did.

REPORTER

And in a bizarre twist, ex-patients are coming out of the woodwork to accuse the once-celebrated doctor of dismissing symptoms and refusing to treat real medical conditions. We spoke with a former patient of Dr. Jones - William - one of a handful who called this station to complain.

WILLIAM sits in a wheelchair. He is obese and bald.

WILLIAM

Dr. Jones was my assigned primary care physician for two years. I complained of abdominal pain, but she would only look at my weight. She told me to exercise while my symptoms were ignored. She refused to submit referrals to specialists or even request an x-ray until I ended up in the Emergency Room because I couldn't stand up from the pain. I have Stage IV colon cancer. Dr. Jones sentenced me to die.

REPORTER

William is currently exploring malpractice options but regrets that it is probably too late.

ANCHOR 1

That's a tragic story. Our thoughts go out to William.

ANCHOR 2

Yes, we hope William recovers.



Off Reporter.

Cassandra GROANS and hits the off button.

She opens her laptop and heads to one of her chronic illness chat groups.

CASSANDRA (READING)

*"User1234: Did any of you see the story in California about a patient killing his doctor?"*

*User987: Sounds like the doctor deserved it. Not that I'd kill my doctors, but my doctors might be killing me. :/*

*User424: But our doctors are the only ones who can heal us!*

*User987: If yours is truly helping, please get me an appointment!*

*User1234: So nobody has recommendations for specialists in California?"*

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

I'm going to fucking kill them all.

She closes her laptop.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra sleeps soundly, a placid smile on her face.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra walks to her car and pulls out her phone. She searches for her insurance office and sets her phone to navigate.

EXT. INSURANCE OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra pulls into the parking lot of a boring, corporate insurance outpost.

She kills the engine and looks into the glass wall of the call center. She dials.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

David drains a cup of coffee and tosses it into the trash. His computer counts down the end of his break.

*Break ending in 10...9...*

INTERCUT BETWEEN CASSANDRA AND DAVID:

Cassandra watches the window and pulls a pair of binoculars out of the glove box.

David's computer pulls up Cassandra's file. He nearly falls out of his seat. The call connects. Silence.

CASSANDRA  
...hello?

DAVID  
Hi. Hello. I'm David and thanks for calling. May I---

Cassandra puts the binoculars up to her face and zooms in on the call center.

CASSANDRA  
Cassandra Lewis. October 22, 1982.  
You know, you're shorter than I expected.

David jumps out of his seat and looks wildly around him. He disconnects the call.

Too late. Cassandra has a great view of him.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
I'll be damned. It's that death metal guy.

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - NIGHT

David sits at his computer past dark. Heinemann looms.

HEINEMANN  
Costing us OT is not going to get you that promotion. Go home please.

David nervously puts on his coat. He walks past the Appeals Countdown Board.

*Appeals Denied: 814. New Goal: 1,000. Baseball Game on Iron Age! Let's beat our 2020 pandemic denial totals! A ball and bat are drawn next to the number.*

EXT. INSURANCE OFFICE - NIGHT

The parking lot is mostly empty. Cassandra stretches outside her car. Her neck CRACKS.

David walks out of the building and looks in both directions.

Cassandra starts in his direction. David's sneakers SLAP the pavement.

Cassandra tries to keep up but her feet stumble. David's hand pulls his keys out of his pocket, and he dives into his car, hitting the locks.

Cassandra calmly catches up and leans on his trunk, peering into the rearview window and blocking his escape.

CASSANDRA

Cassandra Lewis. October 22, 1982.  
I need your help, David. Also, nice  
strait jacket.

David slowly raises his head above the seat.

DAVID

What are you doing here?

CASSANDRA

Look, my back is basically broken.  
Let me buy you a coffee?

DAVID

Who's the capitalist now?

CASSANDRA

Don't push it. You work for a death  
panel.

David shrugs and hits the unlock button.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

David holds the door for Cassandra. They enter a crummy diner near the hospital.

Cassandra and David walk past a table of MEDICAL RESIDENTS toward a back booth. Cassandra glares at them. They don't notice her.

DINER RESIDENT  
So the patient says she's been  
taking turmeric.

Everyone laughs.

DINER RESIDENT (CONT'D)  
And I told her to go back and take  
some more because I don't treat  
drug-seeking patients.

Cassandra steams and collapses into the booth.

DAVID  
You take turmeric?

CASSANDRA  
Yeah. They won't give me anything  
else.

DAVID  
Are you drug-seeking?

CASSANDRA  
Because I'm Black?

DAVID  
No, because you've seen 13 doctors  
and been denied referrals to  
another 6. Something's wrong,  
right?

Cassandra feels understood for the first time in this  
hellscape.

CASSANDRA  
YES, I'd like to live my life  
without constant pain and  
disability. Why don't you go share  
that bit of information with those  
sadists?

David acts as if to get up. Cassandra puts her hand out.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
More importantly, I want to destroy  
your insurance company.

David leans in.

DAVID  
Just when I thought I couldn't like  
you more....

INT. EXAM ROOM 6 - DAY

Dr. Ishii, the arrogant infectious disease specialist from the opening, walks into an exam room where Cassandra waits in a repeat of the opening but not from her POV. A cornucopia of Thanksgiving decorations adorn the walls.

He does not introduce himself and instead pulls up her file, finally turning to her with a blank face. He pulls out a fancy, engraved pen and begins to click it.

DR. ISHII

What are you doing here? I see you have complaints about pain and fatigue. Your panels indicate to me that you had Epstein-Barr and Cocksackie viruses -

CASSANDRA

And still have both viruses -

Dr. Ishii motions for her to stop.

DR. ISHII

And that your immune system has built a response. Your complaints sound more autoimmune, which is not my specialty, and while there is some evidence that Cocksackie can trigger autoimmune heart disease or type 1 diabetes. You don't have either of those.

Cassandra eyes the sharps container on the wall. Dr. Ishii turns back to the monitor, clicking his pen.

Cassandra pops three adrenaline pills.

CASSANDRA

So you're waiting until I'm on insulin before deciding that Cocksackie virus is a problem?

DR. ISHII

I know it's hard to understand without eight years of highly specialized training, but you don't belong in this office.

Every CLICK CLICK CLICK of that pen eats at Cassandra's sanity as she scowls at the Ivy degrees on the wall.

Cassandra walks to the door, next to the sharps container.  
Her heart BEATS in her ears in rhythm with the clicks.

CASSANDRA  
Then what the fuck are you doing  
here?

DR. ISHII  
Wasting my time apparently.

Cassandra picks up the sharps container and bashes Dr. Ishii  
in the head with it. The lid flies off and needles explode  
into the doctor's face.

THAT stops the clicking. Cassandra grabs the pen.

CASSANDRA  
I won't waste any more of your  
time.

DR. ISHII  
NURSE, nurse -

As Dr. Ishii tries to crawl away...

CASSANDRA  
Thanks for hearing me out, doc.

She jams the pen into Dr. Ishii's ear. She stands up and  
coolly dons a pair of latex gloves.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra peeks out the door.

No one heard the scuffle - empty. Cassandra sees a bathroom  
across the hall. She ducks out and props open the door.

The hallway is still clear.

Cassandra takes a few deep breaths and opens the exam room  
door, dragging Dr. Ishii by his feet with all of her  
strength. The pen remains in the doctor's ear, and no blood  
drips.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Cassandra heaves Dr. Ishii into the bathroom and turns him on  
his side. She artfully arranges his arms with one hand around  
the pen, as if he fell and tried to catch himself. She  
admires her work.

She depresses the lock button on the door and shuts it behind her.

INT. EXAM ROOM 6 - DAY

Cassandra returns to the exam room and sits at the computer. The mouse hits save on Dr. Ishii's notes and hovers over the exit button.

Cassandra's eye catches a "Home Button."

She clicks and discovers she can access notes from any of her doctors. She clicks on "Dr. Lee - Allergy."

CASSANDRA (READING)  
*Patient appears to be suffering  
from manic episodes, as indicated  
by her sleeplessness.*

Cassandra goes back to home and hits "Dr. Adebayo - Neurology."

CASSANDRA (READING) (CONT'D)  
*Patient is resistant to clinical  
wisdom and difficult in person. She  
refuses to understand that her  
tests indicate no medical  
explanation, and she is likely  
having a mental episode with  
psychogenic symptoms.*

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
What the fuck.

Home. "Dr. Bhatt - Endocrinology"

CASSANDRA (READING) (CONT'D)  
*I have referred Patient to several  
specialists but no labs confirm her  
physical complaints. Patient is  
frustrated at lack of traction and  
feels ignored.*

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
THANK YOU.

Home. "Dr. Amsel - Primary Care"

CASSANDRA (READING) (CONT'D)  
*Patient has medically unexplained  
 symptoms and is a frequent flyer  
 requesting services far outside of  
 any symptomatic indications.  
 Refuses psychiatric referrals.*

Cassandra hits print, then escape, and logs the doctor out of the system. She pockets the doctors' notes.

She sweeps the sharps back into the container.

INT. MEDICAL RECEPTION - DAY

Cassandra smiles as she checks out of Dr. Ishii's office with an INFECTIOUS DISEASE NURSE.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE NURSE  
 Did the doctor request a follow up?

CASSANDRA  
 No, he did everything he can.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE NURSE  
 You're all set then.

CASSANDRA  
 Thank you so much!

Cassandra leaves, all smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra pins the doctors' notes to her corkboard.

She thumbs through a pile of billing notices and insurance referral rejections on the coffee table. She piles them in stacks.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra sits at her desk. Her hair has taken on a life of its own. Don Taggart steps out of his office.

DON TAGGART  
 Cassandra, come see me.

Cassandra gets up and walks to his office past Colleagues doing jumping jacks.



INT. DON TAGGART'S OFFICE - DAY

Don Taggart sits across from Cassandra. Cassandra sinks into a chair.

DON TAGGART  
Cassandra, I'm letting you go.  
Between the absences -

CASSANDRA  
You mean the excused absences?

DON TAGGART  
Between the absences and the  
decline in your performance, it's  
best that you find employment that  
caters to your... unique situation  
better.

A switch flips in Cassandra, and her heart BEATS in her ears.

CASSANDRA  
My unique situation - you mean my  
disability? Or I'm not hot enough  
for you to drool over anymore, you  
lech?

Cassandra rises and picks up a photo of Taggart with his family, including a smiling wife. She holds it in front of his face.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)  
Talk to me about my severance or I  
file an EEOC complaint.

Don Taggart quakes in his seat. Cassandra towers over him.

DON TAGGART  
Two months.

CASSANDRA  
Three.

DON TAGGART  
Anything. Just go.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Colleagues count down their jumping jacks.

COLLEAGUES  
5... 4... 3...

CASSANDRA  
Oh, fucking GIVE IT A REST.

Security enters the office.

EXT. OFFICE PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassandra carries a box out of the office building, escorted by two Security Guards.

She shakes them off and throws the box in her trunk.

Across the street, a pharmaceutical research convention is happening with a small protest.

A huge banner reads: Erectile Dysfunction - The Health Crisis of Our Time.

CASSANDRA  
Oh hell no.

She slams the trunk and walks toward the protest.

EXT. ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION CONVENTION - DAY

Cassandra wades into the crowd with Women's Health Advocates, Disabled Activists, LGBTQ+ Organizers, and more - many in masks. She looks around at the diverse protesters and their signs.

Insert Posters:

Medical error kills more women than men

PMS affects 90% of women but 19% of men experience erectile dysfunction

Black Women are 3 Times More Likely to Die in Childbirth

ED studies outnumber PMS studies by 5 to 1

The VA spends 10x more on Viagra than Transgender Care

A handful of young, white male counterprotestors stand opposite with signs like: All Afflictions Matter.

A limo pulls up to the convention center entrance, and a Research Team exits the vehicle. Dr. Amsel is one of them, laughing with the other middle-aged to old white men.

A deafening BOO roars from the crowd.

Cassandra pulls earplugs out of her purse and puts them in. The crowd becomes muffled.

Dr. Amsel gladhands a RESEARCH SCIENTIST in a white coat.

Lan, the disabled protestor with face mask leading the Healthrise demo, sees Cassandra and waves. Lan carries a bullhorn in her other hand and holds it up to speak.

LAN

Medical error is the third leading  
cause of death in the US. Limp dick  
is NOT a crisis.

Dr. Amsel and his cronies frown.

Crowd CHEERS. Cassandra smiles and approaches Lan.

CASSANDRA

Someone should teach them a lesson.

LAN

Did you hear about the doctor  
killer? They think a patient might  
be exacting revenge, and I am here  
for it.

Cassandra sticks out her hand, realizes Lan doesn't have a free hand, and awkwardly fist bumps her.

CASSANDRA

I'm Cassandra.

LAN

The prophet?

CASSANDRA

Well, none of my doctors believe  
me, so that much is true. One of  
them is right there.

Cassandra points at Dr. Amsel.

LAN

Ugh. He's giving a speech later  
called Heart Disease and Erectile  
Dysfunction: the Silent Alarm.

CASSANDRA

What about my hormone problems  
causing heart palpitations?!

LAN

I know. You're not a white man.

They laugh bitterly.

LAN (CONT'D)

Welcome. They have extra signs at that table over there. They have masks, too. Help conceal your identity AND protect you from airborne viruses, pollutants, allergies, and more.

CASSANDRA

Why weren't you leading the pandemic messaging?

LAN

They completely whiffed that, didn't they?

Lan jerks her head in the direction of a folding table.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cassandra fills out the red and white checkered state disability paperwork at her kitchen table.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)

Yes, I'm following up about having Dr. Amsel fill out my disability paperwork.

(beat)

But my rheumatologist fired me. I won't get another referral for at least two months.

(beat)

Well, what am I supposed to do?! He's my primary care doctor.

She researches cashing in her 401k, finding several warnings about the tax penalty. Cassandra looks at her bank account balance - less than \$1,000 - and the stack of bills.

The living room ceiling starts leaking again - more heavily. A black mold spreads from the epicenter of the leak.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Cassandra waits alone at the back booth. David enters and walks toward her.

DAVID

Apologies for being late. They treated us to a ballgame for knocking our appeals denials out of the park.

Cassandra's jaw drops. He slides into the booth.

DAVID (CONT'D)

It's fucked up. Hey... did you know your plan covers acupuncture? They don't want-

CASSANDRA

I got fired, so I lost my insurance.

DAVID

You have through the end of the month. Medicaid will be better for you anyway. Don't pay for COBRA.

CASSANDRA

And my new primary care doctor spoke at the Erectile Dysfunction convention. They call it a health crisis, but no one wants to research autoimmune disease.

David reaches for Cassandra's hand.

DAVID

They're wrong, and you know it.

Cassandra starts to cry.

DAVID (CONT'D)

How else can I help?

CASSANDRA

Can you patch my ceiling?

David looks stumped but shrugs as if he'll try.

EXT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

David holds a toolbox while Cassandra struggles with her keys. She beats the lock and opens the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She enters her apartment, and David follows. Every surface in the living room is covered in bills and referrals. David can't help but scan the corkboard.

CASSANDRA

A peek behind the curtain.

Cassandra catches her reflection in a mirror and tries to tame her hair with shaking fingers. She lifts her arms up to smooth her hair down and catches a whiff of her body odor, GAGGING.

David eyes her corkboard with medical info and a few photos of doctors. Cassandra self-consciously steps away from him.

DAVID

You should see my place, and I  
don't have an excuse.

David sees the black patch of mold on her ceiling.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Jesus. Should you even be here?

CASSANDRA

Where would I go?

DAVID

I don't know, but this can't be  
healthy. Do you have a step ladder?

Cassandra points at a closet.

CASSANDRA

Apparently, I need to take a shower  
if that's not too weird?

DAVID

I didn't no-

Cassandra glares at him, daring him to finish that sentence.

DAVID (CONT'D)

My threshold for weird is beyond  
showering.

He sets down the toolbox. Cassandra goes to the bathroom. The door CLOSES and LOCKS. Shower turns on.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What the hell do I know about  
patching a leaking ceiling?

David stands brainstorming and pulls out his phone.

LATER: Cassandra leaves the shower with her hair in a wrap, wearing a robe.

David spackled the ceiling and now washes her sinkful of dishes.

CASSANDRA  
And they say chivalry is dead.

DAVID  
Chivalry is long dead. I'm doing  
this to avoid my own dishes.

CASSANDRA  
Was it the crying? Should I burst  
into tears at doctors' offices?

DAVID  
Anarchy seems more your style, and  
the doctors are avoiding any  
blowback from my company. Pity is  
ground out of them in med school.

CASSANDRA  
Yeah...

Cassandra, suddenly lightheaded, staggers toward the kitchen. David rushes to her as she reaches out for anything to keep her from falling. He catches her.

DAVID  
Whoa. Easy. Should I take you to  
the ER?

CASSANDRA  
NO. No, I just got dizzy. It'll  
pass.

Cassandra's legs collapse underneath her. She clutches her abdomen.

DAVID  
We're going.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM LOBBY - NIGHT

David's hand scribbles on a clipboard at the front desk. Cassandra doubles over in pain, shaking with feverish chills. David pushes the clipboard toward Registration Nurse.

He puts his arm around Cassandra and walks her to a bank of chairs. Cassandra scrambles to lie down across two. Her head lies against David's thigh, and he holds her hand.

An older patient GOMER - a **Get Out of My ER** - who looks possibly homeless paces the waiting room while MUTTERING.

A Black woman begins SCREAMING in the waiting room and shaking. She is pregnant and showing. ER Staff descend on her.

ER STAFF  
Did anyone triage her? Have we  
looked for protein in the urine?  
Blood pressure?!

Blank faces. Staff rushes her back to a room.

Insert: Timelapse of clock ticking.

ER NURSE (O.S.)  
Cassandra Lewis?

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CURTAIN 6 - NIGHT

Cassandra lies curled up in a ball in a curtained off exam area. David paces by her bed.

A 30-ish, three coffees into the night shift ER RESIDENT breezes into the exam room.

ER RESIDENT  
What seems to be the problem?

Cassandra's suffering is so extreme she can barely whisper.

CASSANDRA  
Stabbing pain - here....

Her arm travels across her torso as if pushing against dead weight to point under her right rib.

ER RESIDENT  
Mm-hmm. We're going to run a few  
tests, and I'll be back in a couple  
of hours with the results.

DAVID  
Hours? She's at like a 10. Can't  
you give her something for the  
pain?

ER Resident eyes them suspiciously.



ER RESIDENT  
 Here for pain meds, huh? I'm sure  
 your girlfriend will be just fine.  
 The nurse will be here in a minute.

DAVID  
 She's not -

ER Resident leaves, passing ER Nurse.

ER RESIDENT  
 (whispers)  
 Drug-seeking.

ER Nurse nods and walks through the curtain with phlebotomy equipment.

ER NURSE  
 Busy night. We're going to draw  
 some blood --

The SOUND of a patient flatlining comes from a few rooms over. ER Nurse reacts.

ER NURSE (CONT'D)  
 And let me see if we should get a  
 urine test this time.

Timelapse montage:

- A) Cassandra breathes heavily in the fetal position.
- B) Monitors beep, displaying Cassandra's vitals.
- C) David paces.
- D) Ultrasound footage of Cassandra's abdomen.
- E) Saline flows via a tube into Cassandra's right elbow with a blood oxygen meter attached to her finger.
- F) A gurney rolls past Cassandra's room. A woman's Black hand flops out from under the sheet, pregnancy bump obvious.

ER Resident returns with another cup of coffee in hand.  
 Cassandra has managed to turn over. Pain subsiding to a 7.

ER RESIDENT  
 Good news! Your ultrasound is  
 clear. Your white blood cell count  
 is slightly elevated - could be  
 from vomiting.

Cassandra's voice has not returned to full volume.

CASSANDRA  
I didn't puke.

ER RESIDENT  
Or as elevated as if from vomiting.  
You probably just ate something  
bad.

CASSANDRA  
I had the same thing as him.

She weakly points at David.

ER RESIDENT  
So we're going to get you ready to  
go home.

GOMER [O.S.]  
(shouting)  
Where's the doctor? They poisoned  
me. Get me the doctor!

Doctor looks toward waiting room.

DAVID  
Did you hear what she said? We ate  
the same thing. She was fine for a  
couple of hours and then collapsed.

ER RESIDENT  
Could have affected her  
differently.  
(to Cassandra)  
I'm going to get you ready for  
discharge. I recommend plenty of  
fluids for at least the next 24  
hours.

Cassandra's hand shoots out and grabs ER Resident by the  
wrist. Her voice musters more strength.

CASSANDRA  
Were you working during the  
pandemic?

ER Resident's face falls.

ER RESIDENT  
Yes, I was here. You shouldn't  
bring that up.

CASSANDRA  
I'm gonna let this slide but....

ER Resident wrenches his arm away from her. ER Nurse peaks head into the room.

ER NURSE  
Doctor, the GOMER is ramping up.

ER RESIDENT  
On my way. Feel better, Ms. Lewis.  
(to David)  
It's nice of you to support your  
girlfriend, but sometimes they  
exaggerate.

ER Resident leaves with ER Nurse.

DAVID  
My god, is it always like this?

Cassandra weakly nods.

CASSANDRA  
Just wait till I get the bill.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

David opens the door to Cassandra's apartment, guides her to the sofa, and helps her lie down.

DAVID  
Maybe you should just focus on  
getting better. Revenge can wait?

CASSANDRA  
Maybe.

DAVID  
Should I stay?

CASSANDRA  
No, I just need to sleep.

DAVID  
Can I get you anything?

CASSANDRA  
Water. Thank you....

David walks to the kitchen, returning with a glass of water.

Cassandra already drifted off to sleep. David sets down her water on the coffee table, tucks her in, and leaves.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Timelapse of Cassandra tossing and turning on the couch.  
Cassandra falls into a feverdream.

EXT. STATE FAIR - DAY

YOUNG CASSANDRA walks behind her MOTHER and FATHER through carnival booths and food carts.

MOTHER  
My head - I think we should go.

FATHER  
We just got here. Cassandra begged to come.

MOTHER  
You're not listening to me! I feel sick.

FATHER  
You always feel sick.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra's phone RINGS. Cassandra wakes with a start. Colette Santos leaves a voicemail.

COLETTE SANTOS (O.S.)  
Hi Cassandra, I haven't heard from you, and I'm concerned about you. Please call me back. Let's schedule an appointment.

Cassandra drifts off again.

EXT. STATE FAIR - EVENING

TEEN CASSANDRA walks behind her Mother. Her Father waits ahead at a booth.

Booth sign reads: *Health Stop - I'll Guess Your Health in 5 minutes or less!*

Mother hesitates. Father pushes her toward the booth. MAN IN WHITE COAT stands behind the booth.

MOTHER  
I don't feel well. I-

MAN IN WHITE COAT  
It's all in your head! \$5 please!

Father pays the five dollars, grabs Cassandra's hand, and walks her away from her mother.

MOTHER  
BUT I'M SICK.

MAN IN WHITE COAT  
Yes, yes, you are sick.

Two Nurses appear with a strait jacket. Cassandra looks behind her to see Mother laced up by the Nurses, struggling. Her SCREAMS drift off into the night....

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Another RING. Cassandra stirs.

BILLING DEPARTMENT (O.S.)  
Ms. Lewis, we are calling regarding your overdue MRI bills. If you do not send payment within 30 days, we will be forced to send this bill to collections....

EXT. STATE FAIR - EVENING

Something unseen shoves present day Cassandra up to the *Health Stop* booth. She resists but is pulled closer and closer to the booth.

Man in White Coat sneers.

MAN IN WHITE COAT  
You know the answer.

CASSANDRA  
NO, you aren't looking at the whole picture!

MAN IN WHITE COAT  
Like mother, like daughter!

Cassandra runs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Another RING. Cassandra sweats on the couch.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT (V.O.)  
This is Dr. Amsel's office. Call us  
back regarding future referral  
requests and your patient status.

EXT. STATE FAIR - NIGHT

Cassandra runs. The Nurses follow her, holding a strait  
jacket.

Cassandra turns a corner and runs into a mirror, but it's not  
Cassandra's reflection. It's her Mother facing her.

The Nurses approach from behind, brandishing the strait  
jacket. Cassandra claws at her face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra WAILS and slowly opens her eyes.

She lies stunned. Cassandra shakes off her deep sleep and  
grabs her laptop.

She searches *Belle View State Hospital* and pulls up a dismal  
mental health institution. She closes the window with a tear  
in her eye.

Cassandra browses her chronic illness threads. A live stream  
video runs at the top of her feed.

EXT. PALATIAL MANSION - NIGHT - POV

ANGRY FEMALE PATIENT live streams from phone in shirt pocket  
outside a gated estate.

ANGRY FEMALE PATIENT  
The director of the hospital lives  
here, paid for by my bills even  
though they missed my heart attack  
over three separate ER visits. I  
was sent home with panic attacks,  
and my right side is paralyzed  
after the stroke. The review board  
found no evidence of error.

Headlights approach the estate. Angry Female Patient's left  
hand brings up a gun.

Three shots fire into the driver's seat. Car loses control.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra scrolls further.

CASSANDRA

Oh my god.

A news video pops up.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

REPORTER stands outside a large hospital.

REPORTER

The death of Dr. Carol Jones has spurred a series of copycat killings and attacks across the nation. Sick patients are pursuing vengeance against medical providers they feel have wronged them. Warning: these videos are graphic.

Montage:

A) Doctors exit a hospital with a Security Detail. Crowd hurls bottles and cans at Doctors. A bottle shatters in one Doctor's face, blood gushing.

B) The tires of a Tesla sit flat in an Insurance Company parking lot. Words painted across the car in red: *You try dying*

C) Outside the Erectile Dysfunction Convention, Lan and other protesters SHOUT at Dr. Amsel, the portly SENATOR KINSEY, and others.

EXT. ERECTILE DYSFUNCTION CONVENTION - NIGHT

Dr. Amsel stands with Anchor 1.

ANCHOR 1

Dr. Amsel, thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

Dr. Amsel looks at his watch.

ANCHOR 1 (CONT'D)

Are you taking extra precautions after the reception here at the convention?

DR. AMSEL

Yes, the hospital has offered its full support and security for any doctor who wants protection.

ANCHOR 1

Will you be changing how you practice medicine in the future considering the patient outcry?

Dr. Amsel puts on a wolfish grin.

DR. AMSEL

Patient outcry? No, we've studied and practiced for years to treat patients. I give patients the best care available. I do right by my patients, and we will not compromise patient care due to terrorism.

Lan rushes into the shot.

LAN

LIES. You ignore your patients. I heard -

Lan is dragged off screen. A Counterprotestor decks her as she's pulled away.

ANCHOR 1

You heard it here first. Doctors know best and will not compromise patient care.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

Senator Kinsey stands at a podium with an American flag pinned to his lapel and a wax smile baring his teeth.

The backdrop is dotted with National Medical Association and Iron Age Insurance logos.

SENATOR KINSEY

My fellow Americans, our healthcare industry is built around a world-renowned standard of care. Just a few years ago, our brave doctors and nurses on the frontlines battled a lethal virus that claimed many lives and saved hundreds of thousands of patients. Some paid the ultimate price.

(MORE)



SENATOR KINSEY (CONT'D)

As with any profession, there might be a few bad apples, but our medical professionals deliver top notch care by and large. We recognize the value of cutting edge technology and research and offer these breakthroughs directly to our citizens. Our healthcare system strives to bless every American with good health and a roadmap for achieving that.

Montage of B-roll for press conference:

A) Footage of nurses in garbage bags in an overwhelmed Emergency Room.

B) XCU on petri dish.

C) Conference with Doctors and Insurance Executives gladhanding.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra shuts her computer.

CASSANDRA

A few bad apples, huh?

INT. INSURANCE LOBBY - DAY

David walks into the insurance office to see people hanging up decorations, including an "Iron Age Insurance Welcomes the Erectile Dysfunction Convention" sign.

David stops dead in his tracks. Heinemann points at the clock on the wall. Clock reads 8:58 a.m.

HEINEMANN

Worry about your quotas.

David pulls out his phone, snaps a quick photo of the banner, and texts Cassandra while he walks.

*Hey! Are you feeling better? I have a surprise you might like....*

INT. BIG BOX STORE - DAY

Cassandra, wearing a face mask, grabs a shopping cart and rolls toward the cooking section of a big box store.

She pulls the two cheapest pressure cookers off of the shelf and puts them in her cart.

She grabs three glass bottles of vegetable oil and puts them in the cart. She adds a box of matches.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Dear Mom, It's been almost 20  
years, and I want to say - I'm  
sorry. I was wrong. Dad was wrong.  
The doctors were wrong.

Cassandra cruises by the bath aisles and picks up cheap bar soap and tampons.

Phone CHIMES. Ashley texts:

*Want to catch a show on Friday?*

Cassandra ignores it. She heads to hardware and grabs a box of ball bearings and Christmas lights from the holiday section.

Cassandra rolls into checkout and pulls out cash.

EXT. GAS STATION - EVENING

Cassandra gases up her car and two containers of gasoline.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
Everyone was wrong except for you.  
I know this letter is a small  
gesture that might be too late, but  
I want you to know....

EXT. AMMO STORE - NIGHT

Cassandra walks into a Guns & Ammo supply store. She is a little wobbly. Cassandra's biggest obstacle is her own body at this point.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
They will pay for the damage, and  
there will be change for sick  
people like you. Like us.

She walks out with a jug of gun powder and puts it in the trunk with the pressure cookers, oil, and gasoline.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Phone RINGS. Ashley. Cassandra picks up.

CASSANDRA

Hello?

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Hey! Can I buy you dinner? You kind of dropped off the map, and I'm worried about you....

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cassandra sits at a table with Ashley. Cassandra doesn't touch her food and shifts uncomfortably in her seat. Ashley's plate is clean.

ASHLEY

I don't want you to take this the wrong way, but you look terrible. You look really unwell.

CASSANDRA

I'm not well.

ASHLEY

I mean, I know that. Do you want to talk about it?

CASSANDRA

You remember how my mom left when I was a kid?

Server brings the bill. Ashley grabs it.

ASHLEY

Cassandra, you aren't doomed to repeat your mother's history.

CASSANDRA

No, I mean, I now understand what it was like for her, and I turned my back on her. I left her to die.

ASHLEY

You were just a child. Please talk to your therapist again soon? Promise me?

INT. BELLE VIEW HOSPITAL MENTAL HEALTH WARD - DAY

A Black Woman pushes away Cassandra's letter as a single tear rolls down her cheek. A Nurse comes to give Cassandra's Mother, now 20 years older, her pills.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cassandra pours gasoline into the vegetable oil bottles. She grates a bar of soap.

Phone RINGS - Colette Santos.

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassandra sits staring straight in front of her, wearing clothes from the first scene.

CASSANDRA

I can't continue therapy. I can't afford it.

COLETTE SANTOS

Cassandra, I offer a sliding scale and am happy to work with you. I want to help you get better. We've made so much progress, haven't we?

CASSANDRA

My credit card is maxed. I'm unemployed and disabled, having more trouble functioning every day. You have been an inspiration, and I thank you for that.

COLETTE SANTOS

I'm deeply concerned about you.

Cassandra smiles strangely.

CASSANDRA

I don't think you should worry about me.

INT. MEDICAL RECEPTION - DAY

Cassandra enters reception and checks in for an appointment with Dr. Amsel. FRONT DESK SECRETARY checks the log.

Tis the season for Christmas cheer. Cassandra wears her black hoodie and a face mask.

FRONT DESK SECRETARY

You don't have an appointment, Ms. Lewis. Is it that respiratory thing going around?

CASSANDRA

Yes... and I've been waiting months for a GI referral. I also need my disability paperwork filled out.

Cassandra waves the paperwork at Front Desk Secretary.

FRONT DESK SECRETARY

I'll see what I can do.

INT. EXAM ROOM 7 - DAY

Cassandra waits in Exam Room 7 for Dr. Amsel.

Cassandra sees branded pharmaceutical literature and marketing materials all over the room. A naive Rudolph grins at her.

She stretches an arm out and scoops an entire display into the trash beneath it. She smiles.

A PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT knocks.

CASSANDRA

Come in.

Physician's Assistant enters and smiles.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

They asked me to come speak with you.

CASSANDRA

I've called several times - no response. I'm waiting on a Gastroenterology referral.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Yes, as far as the GI referral, Dr. Amsel suggested you eat more fiber.

CASSANDRA

WHAT?! Why do I even come here?

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

I don't know. Maybe shop around a little?

CASSANDRA  
Excuse me? What am I paying for now?

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT  
I would recommend looking for a new PCP at the very least.

CASSANDRA  
I want to talk to the doctor.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT  
He's at the club today and not in the office.

Cassandra spots a golfing trophy from the Beaver Hills Country Club on a shelf in the exam room.

CASSANDRA  
He's golfing and I can't even work?  
I'll lose all of the specialists and referrals I have now!

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT  
Wouldn't a clean slate be nice?

CASSANDRA  
I'll clean the slate.

PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT  
Great - good luck to you! Don't forget to pay your co-pay on the way out.

Physician's Assistant leaves. Cassandra pops Adrenaline pills and texts David.

*Why would my doctor flat out refuse to write referrals?*

INT. INSURANCE CALL CENTER - DAY

David pulls up Cassandra's file.

Referral Limit: 15

Referrals Remaining: 0

David texts Cassandra back.

*You hit your referral limit. You won't get any new referrals until the next calendar year.*

INT. EXAM ROOM 7 - DAY

Cassandra makes as if to throw her phone but texts back instead.

W

T

F

She dumps every bit of marketing material in the trash. She struggles to rip posters off of the walls and shred brochures. Rudolph gets dismembered.

Breathing heavily, she storms out of the room.

INT. TUSKO MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra exits the exam room and walks down the hall. She pops more Adrenaline pills and pulls up her hoodie.

She sees a sign pointing to ALLERGY and follows it.

INT. EXAM ROOM 2 - DAY

Dr. Lee rolls up his neon sleeves as an ALLERGY PATIENT sits across from him on the exam table. Cassandra BURSTS into the room.

She grabs a reflex hammer off of the counter and bashes Dr. Lee's nose in, shoving the cartilage up into his brain.

Blood sprays across Allergy Patient's face, but Allergy Patient does nothing. Dr. Lee's eyes flood with a rush of blood, and he collapses.

CASSANDRA

Keep your nose out of my mental health.

ALLERGY PATIENT

Did he ask if you're schizophrenic too?

Cassandra GROWLS in exasperation.

She throws her fists up in the air. Allergy Patient casually swings feet from exam table.

Cassandra looks back at dead Dr. Lee and LAUGHS.

Cassandra walks out. Allergy Patient continues to sit in hospital gown, feet dangling.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Cassandra walks to her car and searches Beaver Hills Country Club on her phone.

EXT. BEAVER HILLS COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Cassandra drives her beater up to valet and pops Adrenaline. VALET does not open her door but motions with his hand for her to roll down the window.

VALET

Hi. Are you here to see a member?

CASSANDRA

Yes, I'm here to congratulate Dr. Amsel on his erectile dysfunction talk. Fascinating stuff!

Cassandra opens her own door and leaves the car running. The disability paperwork is tucked in her back pocket.

VALET

Excuse me, but I have to confirm-

A golf cart cruises up to the front of the Country Club, and a Club Member bails without taking the keys.

CASSANDRA

You don't want to make me call Dr. Amsel and tell him that you treated a friend of his like a common criminal, do you?

She hands Valet a \$5. Cassandra stumbles to the golf cart, throws it in reverse, and drives onto the course.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Cassandra drives through the luscious grounds, passing a few Wealthy Golfers practicing their master strokes.

She spots Dr. Amsel throwing practice swings at a hole next to a pond, and she stops.

Dr. Amsel entertains Research Scientist from the convention.

Cassandra dismounts the golf cart.



RESEARCH SCIENTIST

You're slick, you know? I'd say you  
oversold your handicap a bit.

They chuckle. Cassandra's hand lifts a sand wedge out of a  
golf bag. They don't notice her.

Dr. Amsel turns to line up his shot. Cassandra approaches  
from the side and nails him in the junk with the sand wedge.

CASSANDRA

Did someone say handicap?

Research Scientist freezes, and Cassandra clobbers his knee  
cap with the sand wedge. He collapses onto the green.

Her arms begin to shake, and she struggles to move the club.  
She gulps three more adrenaline pills.

Cassandra focuses on Dr. Amsel, doubled over.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

That's for the urinary tract  
infection that you never called me  
about. Remember me - the patient  
you've been avoiding?

DR. AMSEL

Heather?

CASSANDRA

No.

DR. AMSEL

Olivia?

CASSANDRA

Seriously? How many patients are  
you refusing to treat?

DR. AMSEL

It's all in their heads.

CASSANDRA

You're going to fill out my  
disability paperwork now.

DR. AMSEL

You're the one with a breakdown!

CASSANDRA

Yes! My body is breaking down, and  
no one will do anything about it.

(MORE)

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Don't you people like to say stress  
is a killer?

She pulls the paperwork and a pen out of her pocket and hands them to Dr. Amsel.

Dr. Amsel tries to refuse the paperwork. Cassandra can't lift the club, so she takes a low swipe at his legs, knocking him to the grass.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

I filled out my diagnosis. You just  
need to add your physician number  
and sign.

He inks in his number and signs, crawling onto all fours. Cassandra swings the sand wedge right at his jaw. Dr. Amsel falls instantly - KO.

Research Scientist has slithered a few feet closer to the pond. Cassandra walks over to him, nudging him over with the club.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

You should have chosen an actual  
health crisis to study, say,  
autoimmune disease. It affects at  
least 25 million Americans - mostly  
women.

RESEARCH SCIENTIST

But that doesn't affect me.

CASSANDRA

It does now!

Cassandra shoves the sand wedge into his gut. She continues to shove the wedge, using her body weight to propel them forward, and then rolls him into the pond.

She walks to the edge of the pond and dips the sand wedge in to hold him down, but the wedge doesn't find the bottom.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Huh, that's deeper than I thought.

She shrugs, drops the club into the pond, and limps past a NO SWIMMING sign. Research Scientist does not emerge.

Cassandra pulls the golf cart up next to Dr. Amsel. She struggles to roll him into the back of the golf cart and eventually succeeds. Cassandra drives off the course.

EXT. BEAVER HILLS COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Cassandra cruises past Valet with Dr. Amsel rolled up and an arm hanging off the back of the golf cart.

Valet admires an expensive car and fawns for tips. One Club Member gawks at Cassandra and her cargo.

CASSANDRA  
Sometimes I have to pick up the  
boss after too many blood marys.  
You have a nice afternoon, sir!

She waves and smiles, punching the gas as fast as it will go.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Cassandra cruises into the parking garage. She pauses at the unmanned desk and pulls her car key.

Cassandra drives around to her car and reverses the golf cart up to her trunk. She flops the unconscious Dr. Amsel into the trunk of her car after great effort and slams it shut.

Cassandra releases the break on the golf cart and watches it roll into a luxury car with a Staff of Hermes on the bumper.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Cassandra shuffles into the diner to find David.

DAVID  
My lunch break is almost over.

CASSANDRA  
I had to get my disability  
paperwork signed.

DAVID  
Oh, you convinced him. Nice work!

CASSANDRA  
Hole in one.

David slides a file folder over to her, brushing her hand and holding it briefly.

DAVID  
Here are the floor plans. The whole  
convention is invited, and I even  
heard Senator Kinsey, bankrolled by  
my 9 to 5, is giving a keynote.  
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

The cater waiters will be wearing black.

CASSANDRA

I have all the party favors prepped. I'll be there but... You could go to prison for helping me?

DAVID

My day job is a prison already. Are you sure you want to go to prison?

A snippet of TV news is overheard at their table.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Yet another medical murder has hit the city -

David just looks at Cassandra and smiles.

CASSANDRA

Probably a little late for me to ask that question....

EXT. CASSANDRA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra walks around to her trunk, limping slightly. A loud banging comes from her trunk. She hits back.

CASSANDRA

Do you know how long I have to wait for appointments at your office?!

Cassandra pops the trunk. Dr. Amsel lies curled up in the fetal position with duct tape over his mouth. She jabs a screw driver in his arm pit as his arm shoots toward her.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

It's time to see how the other half lives.

He retracts his arm, and Cassandra grabs some rope and binds his hands. She yanks at the rope, pulling him out of the trunk.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Out. I'm keeping you alive for my disability paperwork, but I don't have a problem with retiring you early. Understood?

Dr. Amsel nods.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cassandra ties Dr. Amsel to a chair. She flips on the news.

Dr. Amsel sweats. Cassandra checks his bindings and leaves the apartment.

The ceiling begins to DRIP. Dr. Amsel scans her corkboard and sees his own face alongside his colleagues. A couple have large X's scratched across their faces.

INT. CAR - DAY

Cassandra sits in her car and pulls out some adrenaline pills. She smashes them with a flashlight on her dash and then snorts a line.

She rolls her neck and exhales with relief.

EXT. TUSKO MEDICAL BUILDING - DAY

Cassandra stalks across the street, putting on a face mask. Something like The Selector's "Celebrate the Bullet" plays.

INT. EXAM ROOM 4 - DAY

Cassandra catches Dr. Todd on a personal phone call during work hours. A fresh tray of tools for exams is set up.

Cassandra grabs the forceps, spins Dr. Todd around, and throws her against the exam table. Phone smashes on the ground, call disconnected.

Dr. Todd squirms as Cassandra's hand angles the forceps towards her eye.

Eyeball flies onto the tray of tools. Cassandra's hand grabs the speculum and shoves it into Dr. Todd's mouth, expanding it completely. Her jaw wrenched apart.

The life leaves Dr. Todd's remaining eye.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Doctor 1 walks down a hallway. Cassandra rounds a corner in front of him, pulls out a knife, and guts him.

His intestines spill out onto the freshly waxed floor. Cassandra grins.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Doctor 2 types notes at a desk near filing cabinets.

Cassandra sneaks into the room. She wraps her arm around his neck and positions his head in the filing cabinet.

Cassandra places Doctor 2's head in the cabinet and shuts it on his head, using her body weight to slam the drawer and pulling herself off by grabbing a nearby shelf.

She steps back, and the cabinet sways and falls on dead Doctor 2. A pool of blood spreads.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra grooves down a hallway - happier than ever - but her moves are stilted and painful.

She swings open a janitor's closet, breathing heavily.

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - DAY

Cassandra scans the closet. She attempts to pull out an autoscrubber, but it's too heavy.

She settles for a rolling mop bucket and puts a bottle of Ammonia and a bottle of Bleach in the bucket.

Cassandra rolls the bucket out of the closet, twirling around it.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra pushes the bucket to Doctor 3's office, dumps the contents of both bottles into the bucket, opens the door, and shoves in the bucket.

She stuffs a towel under the door to seal it and throws all of her strength into holding the door knob closed.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE 2 - DAY

Doctor 3 turns around and desperately yanks at the door handle but cannot open the door.

Doctor 3's eyes water, her nose runs, and she slowly suffocates, sinking to the floor.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - DAY

Cassandra watches the doorknob cease to rattle and lets go.

INT. NURSE'S STATION - DAY

Cassandra peeks around a doorway and discovers a nurse's station with meds. She spies several syringes marked ADRENALINE. She grabs one and injects it in her thigh.

She exits but immediately reappears and grabs three more syringes.

INT. TUSKO MEDICAL HALLWAY - EVENING

Cassandra prances down a hallway with a smile and some blood on her blouse. "Celebrate the Bullet" fades out.

INT. MEDICAL HALLWAY - EVENING

Dr. Bhatt leaves her office. Cassandra appears over her shoulder as she turns the key.

Dr. Bhatt turns around and drops her keys, startled.

CASSANDRA  
Good evening, Dr. Bhatt.

DR. BHATT  
Hi-i, Cassandra. How are you  
feeling?

Cassandra has a wild look in her eye and a glint of sweat on her forehead.

CASSANDRA  
Fine. Amazing what some exercise  
will do for you.

DR. BHATT  
You look awful, Cassandra. Are you  
running a fever?

Cassandra at first looks sympathetic.

Dr. Bhatt reaches out her hand to touch Cassandra's forehead.

Cassandra grabs Dr. Bhatt by the wrist.

CASSANDRA  
I'm done being patient. You tried,  
but it's too late for me.

DR. BHATT  
Wait, you're --- Please don't hurt  
anyone else, Cassandra. I wanted  
better for you, I promise.

Cassandra holds out her hand. Dr. Bhatt bends down and slowly  
hands over her keys.

CASSANDRA  
I know. Give me your keys, card,  
and your cell phone.

Dr. Bhatt holds out her key card and cell phone to Cassandra.

DR. BHATT  
I understand. I'm sorry.

CASSANDRA  
Tell them why I did this.  
(beat)  
Now run.

Dr. Bhatt sprints for the stairwell and sets off the fire  
alarm on her way out.

LIGHTS begin to flash with a SIREN BLARING.

Cassandra does not follow her. She looks at the sign pointing  
to NEUROLOGY and heads in that direction, fingers plugging  
her ears.

INT. NEUROLOGY OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassandra swipes her way into the Neurology Office, looking  
for Dr. Adebayo. The fire alarm BLARES.

INT. NEUROLOGY OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Adebayo sits at her computer examining an accounting  
statement from Iron Age Insurance. She wears headphones.

*Nerve Study Testing will only be approved and covered under  
the following circumstances next quarter. Please be sure to  
properly document patient visits and submit requirements  
within 14 days.*

She GROANS. She hears a door SLAM and then the distant FIRE  
ALARM and pulls off her headset.



She stands up and walks to the door. She opens it and looks down the empty hallway.

INT. NEUROLOGY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dr. Adebayo hears FOOTSTEPS. She exits her office and slips into the closest Neurology Testing Room.

Cassandra appears at the end of the hallway as the door closes.

INT. NEUROLOGY TESTING ROOM - NIGHT

The inside knob does not lock. Dr. Adebayo searches the room.

The room has the exam table, nerve study equipment with a fresh tray of tools set up, and a counter with a sink. There is some space under the sink.

INT. NEUROLOGY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cassandra stalks down the hallway. Her footsteps and limp echo down the hall. The adrenaline fades fast.

She opens each door, flips on the lights, and exits, satisfied the rooms are empty.

She sees the light go off in the Testing Room.

INT. NEUROLOGY TESTING ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens onto a dark room. Dr. Adebayo tries to slow her breathing.

Cassandra flips on the light. She pretends to casually look around the room and see nothing.

Dr. Adebayo catches her own reflection in the dark window to the outside.

Cassandra looks Dr. Adebayo's reflection in the eye. Dr. Adebayo SCREAMS.

DR. ADEBAYO

No, please!

Cassandra enters the room and shuts the door behind her, sliding a chair under the handle with some difficulty.

Dr. Adebayo scrambles out from under the sink and rushes to the far side of the room from the door.

CASSANDRA  
Please help me?

DR. ADEBAYO  
Please help me! Don't do this!

Dr. Adebayo turns to the window and begins pounding on it, furiously trying to open the sealed window.

EXT. MEDICAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Dr. Bhatt jogs to a SECURITY PATROL OFFICER on the sidewalk outside.

DR. BHATT  
Call the police! She's here.

SECURITY PATROL OFFICER  
Who's here?

DR. BHATT  
The patient hurting doctors, one of mine.

They hear BANGING from above. They both turn to a fourth floor window where Dr. Adebayo pounds for help.

DR. BHATT (CONT'D)  
Holy shit.

INT. NEUROLOGY TESTING ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra approaches Dr. Adebayo.

CASSANDRA  
Don't let you suffer?

Dr. Adebayo stops beating the window and turns around slowly.

DR. ADEBAYO  
I ran the tests. Your results came back normal. I tried to explain that to you.

CASSANDRA  
I tried to explain to you that my symptoms were not normal. No matter what your fucking tests say.

DR. ADEBAYO  
I got into medicine to help. I  
wanted to help -

Dr. Adebayo cries.

CASSANDRA  
You made me suffer. You wrote that  
my symptoms are all in my head, and  
you sent that to other doctors.  
Because that would, what, help me  
get diagnosed?

DR. ADEBAYO  
That's how we're trained. If we  
can't explain your symptoms, we're  
supposed to send you to psychiatry.

Cassandra plays with the muscle testing and nerve study  
equipment. Dr. Adebayo watches. Cassandra pockets a scalpel.

Cassandra finds a dial and turns it all the way up.

CASSANDRA  
My therapist believes my symptoms  
are real. She is one of only two  
fucking medical professionals I've  
talked to who thought that.

Cassandra pauses. The adrenaline is gone, and she hurts.

DR. ADEBAYO  
I believe you now. I swear I  
believe you! Let's figure this out.  
(beat)  
Your case is different.

Wrong answer. Cassandra finds a reserve of strength and  
smiles. She looks at a stack of paper cups next to the sink.

CASSANDRA  
Want some water?

Dr. Adebayo nods her head.

Cassandra turns her back on Dr. Adebayo to pour a cup of  
water. Dr. Adebayo turns back to the window and bangs on it.

DR. ADEBAYO  
HELP ME!!!

Cassandra shakes her head. She grabs the electrical  
stimulator and crosses the room quickly.

CASSANDRA

My case is not an anomaly. My mother's been institutionalized for two decades thanks to doctors like you.

Cassandra douses Dr. Adebayo's head in water and flips the switch on the electrical stimulator, jamming it into Dr. Adebayo's neck. Dr. Adebayo writhes.

EXT. MEDICAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Security Patrol Officer speaks on his walkie talkie.

SECURITY PATROL OFFICER

We need the police stat -

Dr. Bhatt GASPS.

They both turn to see Dr. Adebayo grasp at the blinds before falling to the floor, lights flickering and smoke rising.

Cassandra looks down at them from the window.

SECURITY PATROL OFFICER (CONT'D)

And an ambulance.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Cassandra rushes down the stairs, sliding her body along the handrail. She makes the ground floor landing, stumbles, swipes with Dr. Bhatt's key card, and exits the stairwell.

EXT. DELIVERY BAY - NIGHT

Cassandra's car waits behind the delivery bay. She heads toward her car, putting most of her weight on one leg and dragging the other.

MEDICAL CENTER GUARD runs through the delivery bay. Cassandra removes her mask and stops in her tracks, sticking a hand in her pocket for the scalpel just in case. Medical Center Guard looks her over.

MEDICAL CENTER GUARD

Have you seen him?

CASSANDRA

Who?

MEDICAL CENTER GUARD  
The doctor killer?

Pause.

CASSANDRA  
YES, he was on the fourth floor. It  
was so scary! I ran, but I have  
this limp-

Cassandra demonstrates.

MEDICAL CENTER GUARD  
Thank you. Stay safe.

CASSANDRA  
Yes, sir. You too.

Cassandra limps away. A smile crosses her face as her back turns to Medical Center Guard. Medical Center Guard runs into the building.

Cassandra drops into the driver's seat of her car and cranks the engine. SIRENS are heard as she pulls out, obeying the speed limit.

EXT. INSURANCE OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassandra takes a side driveway, gazing at the well to do of medicine as they sashay toward the glitzy front entrance in their cocktail attire.

Cassandra sails around back to the loading bay and parks. She injects another dose of adrenaline and ponders a second dose. She decides to go for it.

She pops her trunk and circles to the back of her car. Her heart THUMPING in her ears.

Cassandra looks at the two pressure cookers inside a rolling suitcase. She struggles to lift one out of her car, letting it stay for the moment.

She picks up a bottle of vegetable oil, but it now contains napalm. She unscrews the top, pulls a tampon out of the box in her trunk, and jams the tampon into the bottle opening with the string hanging out. She pulls a lighter out of her pocket and flicks it.

David enters the loading bay wearing his own cocktail attire and pushing a cart with a white tablecloth over it.

DAVID  
Allow me. A bonus benefit for our  
customers.

David hides the explosives under the table cloth. The top  
tray displays champagne glasses and a bottle on ice.  
Cassandra closes her trunk by throwing herself on it.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Are you *able* to do this?

CASSANDRA  
I've gotta figure out how to live  
like this anyway. I'll be fine.  
You clean up nice.

DAVID  
Black - looks great on you?

Cassandra LAUGHS.

CASSANDRA  
Uh-huh. I'm thinking about starting  
a death metal band.

DAVID  
You're the most metal person I  
know.

They look in each other's eyes. David suddenly wraps his arms  
around her and kisses her. Cassandra returns his embrace.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Are you ready?

CASSANDRA  
To go to jail? I know this isn't  
your fight but thank you.

DAVID  
Wait.

David kisses her again.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Let's get rid of some bloodsuckers.

David gently touches Cassandra's lower back as she steps  
forward. She pushes the cart, but it's stuck.

They both push before David remembers he set the brake. He  
releases it, and they enter the party.

INT. INSURANCE OFFICE LOBBY - NIGHT

Cassandra rolls the cart into the party, half propping herself up with it, and looks around in wonder and disgust at the expensive Christmas decorations and the creme de la creme rubbing elbows.

Banners line the lobby with platitudes like:

Bridging the gap between patient and practitioner: Iron Age PPO

The latest in biomedical research available with one call

Welcome to Senator Kinsey: Our Fearless Leader & Friend

Gamify your Employees' Health with STEP UP: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Cater Waiters, mostly stunning model types, circle the room with trays of finger food and drinks. Cassandra checks herself nervously in a mirror and takes a deep breath.

David grabs two glasses of champagne off of Cassandra's cart and crosses the room to Heinemann.

Cassandra looks around the room for Senator Kinsey and spots him regaling a group of Research Scientists from the Erectile Dysfunction Convention.

SENATOR KINSEY

Dr. Amsel's talk on heart risk and Erectile Dysfunction was quite illuminating. I'm adding an annual men's health check up to my platform. We shouldn't be taking these risks.

RESEARCH SCIENTIST 2

Exactly right! Why should women get a doctor to themselves while we're dying?

Cassandra begins to roll her cart in their direction but then notices black tie Security flanking every wall of the lobby.

David elbows his way into the insurance inner circle and hands one glass to Heinemann. He pinches Heinemann's company badge in the process.

HEINEMANN

David! Meet one of our board members and university medical dean, John Arendt, coming to check on us little guys.

JOHN ARENDT, a 50-something who's never known the working class, LAUGHS and extends his hand as if to have David kiss the ring. David shakes.

DAVID

What an honor.

JOHN ARENDT

I'm impressed with this branch. Profits keep going up and calls keep going down.

DAVID

Yes, we like to kill our patients.

Off Heinemann and Arendt.

HEINEMANN

David -

DAVID

What - we do! As you say, bill bill bill....

Heinemann chuckles uncomfortably. David looks to Cassandra.

Cassandra rolls the cart behind the reception desk - out of the line of sight of security - and next to a towering Christmas tree.

INSURANCE COG sets up a microphone at the desk for a verbal circle jerk - speeches.

INSURANCE COG

Testing. 1, 2, 3...

Cassandra bends over to unload two of the Molotov cocktails. She plugs in a pressure cooker at the end of the desk next to the Emergency Exit and slides one under the Christmas tree.

Insurance Cog sets the mic down near Cassandra and walks away, satisfied.

David excuses himself and heads toward the front door and Security check in. He walks up to HEAD SECURITY.



DAVID

I just heard that the doctor killer  
hit another doctor. Has most of our  
list checked in?

HEAD SECURITY

Yes, sir, they have.

DAVID

Let's close the line. Lock the  
front door, and we'll just mingle  
amongst ourselves. You can take 5.

HEAD SECURITY

Do you have the authority for that?

David flashes a Cheshire smile and Heinemann's senior badge.

HEAD SECURITY (CONT'D)

You're the boss.

DAVID

Short-lived. Enjoy the party!

Senator Kinsey saunters over to the reception desk on a cell  
phone.

SENATOR KINSEY (ON PHONE)

Nancy, we're closing the deal  
tonight. That medicare for all  
legislation is dead, and we've got  
more for the re-election war chest.

He reaches over the desk and grabs a glass of champagne off  
of Cassandra's cart.

SENATOR KINSEY (CONT'D)

(to Cassandra)

Can I get one of those avocado  
toast canapes?

CASSANDRA

I'm sor- That's not covered.

Cassandra takes the microphone and turns it on again. A  
Molotov Cocktail sits on the desk next to a lighter.

Cassandra TAPS the mic. Senator Kinsey looks quizzical.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Could I have everyone's attention  
please?

Guests turn toward the front desk. Heinemann looks at his watch, puzzled. Some eagerly grab a fresh glass of champagne for toasts.

CASSANDRA (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm your patient and client.  
You've ignored me, refused to pay  
my bills, and defunded research  
that could have healed me.

John Arendt taps his glass.

JOHN ARENDT

Hear, hear!

CASSANDRA

And now you're going to pay. Every  
last one of you.

Crowd LAUGHS. Cater Waiters and Security nervously look around and shrink toward the back of the room.

Head Security looks to David. David points at a back exit.

Head Security decides whatever is about to happen isn't worth it. He ushers his team out the back, and Cater Waiters quickly follow.

SENATOR KINSEY

Everyone has to pay. That's how  
insurance works.

More LAUGHS. Senator Kinsey rests his hand on the desk. Cassandra slips the scalpel out of her pocket and stabs it straight through Senator Kinsey's hand and into the desk.

Cassandra lights the molotov cocktail and throws it at the Senator, stuck to the desk. She ducks.

The bottle EXPLODES raining fire and glass all over the party. A form on fire writhes and HOWLS - the Senator. He finally frees his hand.

Heinemann runs toward the form. Research Scientists stand frozen. Cassandra pushes her cart away from the front desk.

HEINEMANN

Senator! You're doctors, HELP ME!!!

Research Scientists just stare. Kinsey's phone lies on the floor, call still connected.

NANCY (O.S.)

George? Honey, what --

David turns to watch Heinemann try to put out the Senator as Heinemann and the Research Scientists converge. Cassandra runs from behind the desk.

The first pressure cooker BLASTS through the crowd, and the Christmas tree flares up.

John Arendt takes a ball bearing directly to his skull, brains shooting out the other side.

Shrapnel pierces Heinemann in the throat, and in his confusion, he reaches out to David.

David shoves him onto the flaming Senator, wildly flailing about the room. Heinemann ignites.

David smiles and looks for Cassandra. She lights the third Molotov cocktail and hurls it at the locked front door, ducking under a table.

The front door EXPLODES in a firestorm, raining glass and debris on the parking lot. The FIRE ALARM BLARES.

David takes Cassandra's hand, and they walk through the burning doorframe together.

EXT. INSURANCE OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassandra and David exit as a second explosion ROCKS the building.

Cassandra tumbles onto her shoulder and rolls over. David throws his hands up and somersaults in front of Cassandra, shielding her from a SWAT TEAM armed to the teeth.

The entire SWAT Team trains their semi-automatic weapons on Cassandra, who doesn't move.

David, his hands behind his head, watches in terror.

DAVID  
Don't shoot!

SWAT Team approach David and Cassandra and zip tie both of them. SWAT 1 roughly shoves David toward one police cruiser.

Cassandra comes to and looks at David as they drag her to another cruiser. She smiles at him. David raises his shoulder in acknowledgement.

EXT. BELLE VIEW HOSPITAL - NIGHT

An ambulance pulls up to Belle View Hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

ER DOCTOR 1 consults with ER DOCTOR 2 in front of a series of x-rays of Cassandra's neck and brain on a light panel.

ER DOCTOR 1  
Look at that - Ankylosing  
Spondylitis has nearly fused her  
cervical vertebrae together.

ER DOCTOR 2  
And I can't believe this thyroid  
tumor got overlooked. Not if we'd  
seen her, huh?

They LAUGH.

ER DOCTOR 1  
No wonder she snapped.

Camera tracks back behind a curtain. Cassandra lies chained to her hospital bed, listening to the doctors congratulate themselves on her diagnosis.

She pulls at one of the chains and sees the blood and gun powder under her nails. She grins.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
I knew I was going away for a  
little while. At least I wouldn't  
have to deal with insurance.

News plays on the TV. Footage of the insurance building explosion lights up the room.

INT. NEWS STUDIO - NIGHT

Cut to Anchor 2 at a desk.

ANCHOR 2  
Tonight, a deranged patient took  
matters into her own hands,  
igniting an insurance office,  
assassinating a senator, and ending  
a murder spree.  
(MORE)

ANCHOR 2 (CONT'D)

We have an endocrinologist from the targeted Tusko Medical Group here to discuss. Thank you for joining us, Dr. Bhatt.

Camera cuts to show Dr. Bhatt at the desk with Anchor 2.

ANCHOR 2 (CONT'D)

I understand the alleged doctor killer was a patient of yours.

DR. BHATT

I'm not allowed to comment on specifics due to HIPAA, but let's talk about systemic problems that could lead to a patient being so screwed by the system that she might take drastic measures.

ANCHOR 2

But America has great healthcare, right?

DR. BHATT

We have some of the best healthcare in the world - if you can afford it. If you can't, then good luck navigating the insurance process, specialty system, and lack of research on multi-system, chronic illnesses that mostly affect women.

ANCHOR 2

You sound like Liz. She sees sexism everywhere.  
(chuckles)

DR. BHATT

Hard to see why. But, yes, there is sexism and racism and transphobia and fatphobia in medicine, and it all affects patients' care.

ANCHOR 2

So you're for a reinvention of the healthcare industry?

DR. BHATT

Yes, let's put people before profits.

ANCHOR 2

Bold vision. Thank you, Dr. Bhatt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Amsel struggles with his bindings watching the same newscast.

Breaking down the door, SWAT Team bursts into Cassandra's apartment.

Cracks spiderweb across the ceiling, and dust falls. The SWAT team disperses throughout the apartment, leaving Dr. Amsel bound for now.

The ceiling caves in, and a cloud of dust and mold falls on Dr. Amsel. He CHOKES.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

A Police Officer pushes David down the hallway with his hands chained to a wheelchair.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Cassandra hears a wheelchair creaking along the hall and looks out of her open door.

INTERCUT DAVID AND CASSANDRA:

David looks into the open room and sees Cassandra. He gives her a subtle wave.

Cassandra smiles and gives him a weak thumbs up.

Montage:

A) Protestors, including Lan with a black eye, celebrate in front of TV screens replaying the footage.

B) Crowdfunding page and petition started by Ashley sweep the internet to FREE CASSANDRA.

C) Chronically Ill Patients watch the story from their beds, wheelchairs, and recliners with wry smiles.

CASSANDRA (V.O.)  
And that's how I torched the  
healthcare system.

D) Camera pushes in on Cassandra's Mother in an institutional cafeteria. She stands up and begins CLAPPING.

FADE TO BLACK.

Some Sick Facts about the US Healthcare System:

- The average onset from autoimmune symptoms to diagnosis is 4-5 years.
- In 2016, Johns Hopkins Medical School found that Medical Errors should be the third leading cause of death in the US, accounting for at least 250,000 deaths annually.
- Women constitute 70% of chronic pain patients, but 80% of pain research is conducted on men. Men are more often believed whereas women are dismissed and labeled emotional.
- Women experience diagnostic delays across a wide range of diseases. Black and Hispanic patients also wait longer for diagnoses. Both groups experience health consequences due to these delays.
- The National Institutes of Health passed the Revitalization Act of 1993, which was the first time women and members of minority racial groups were required to be included as subjects in clinical research. This is being dismantled by the Trump Administration under Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

THE END.