



## THE ASSIGNMENT

By J.A. Brown

GENRE: Action, Drama

### LOGLINE:

This powerful and haunting story from writer J.A Brown follows the story of an award-winning investigative reporter Dana Conners. While writing an assignment on Atlanta's Black Spring Break (Freaknik), she uncovers the rape of a 15-year-old that hits home personally.

### SYNOPSIS:

Black Spring Break, aka Freaknik, Atlanta, In 1996, three fraternity brothers hold a party in the penthouse of a sleek Atlanta hotel. 18-year-old Donna Lewis and 15-year-old Samantha Jones attend the party. During the celebration, Samantha Jones is found drugged and raped.

Fast forward to 2022, Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Dana Conners is asked by her editor to do a new assignment, an article on the 30th anniversary of Black Spring Break. When a VHS tape mysteriously surfaces of the 1996 rape of Samantha Jones, Dana Conners's story becomes personal.

THE ASSIGNMENT

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SUPER: Black Spring Break aka Freaknik. An unusual Spring Break festival in Atlanta. It is primarily attended by students from historically black colleges and universities.

FADE IN:

INT. PRIME MEAT PACKING PLANT - LATE NIGHT

A cavernous, decaying slaughterhouse. The drip, drip of water echoes from rusted overhead pipes. A sign on the wall faded and peeling: "Jimmy Rogers Pork Sausages - Celebrating 50 Years of Goodness."

A single hanging lightbulb swings, casting long, jagged shadows across the blood-stained concrete floor.

At the center. A woman, MELISSA RIDDICK (27) Caucasian. Tied to a chair, a black canvas bag suffocating her moans.

Her name tag is barely visible: "MELISSA - Slappy White Pancake House, Anniston, Alabama." Her breath quivers beneath the hood. Her fingers twitch against the restraints.

A Sound. Footsteps. Slow. Deliberate. Then... Thud. A zipper unfastens.

One by one, metal tools clatter onto a steel table. Blades. Saws. Melissa flinches, her breath coming in shallow gasps.

MELISSA

Who's there?! What do you want with me?!

Nothing... Then... Movement. From the shadows steps TANNER (35) Caucasian, clean-shaven. No eyebrows. He wears a shoulder holster, a .45 automatic tucked inside.

Tanner moves methodically toward Melissa, his steps measured, and controlled. With a calm, practiced grip, he rips off the hood.

Melissa gasps, her tear-streaked face exposed. Mascara smears. Her lips tremble. Tears streaming. She takes in her surroundings the blood, the rusted hooks overhead.

MELISSA

Mmmm...ister, I'll give you anything! Why are you doing this?!

Tanner crouches and leans in.

TANNER

(recalling)

My father worked here for thirty-five years... You never get that smell out of your head... He came home reeking of sage and covered in ground pig meat.

Melissa uncontrollably sobs, and squirms in the chair.

MELISSA

Please...! I have two kids...! A husband...! Please let me go!

Tanner ignores her. He paces, thoughtful.

TANNER

I visited your little establishment last night. Ordered the sausage links... Horrible. Not enough sage. The flavor was... not to be desired.

Melissa thrashes against the restraints. Screams. Her voice ricochets off the empty walls, swallowed by the vastness of the factory.

Tanner strolls to an industrial meat grinder. He flips the switch. WHIRRRRR... The machine clanks to life, sending raw sausage meat slithering from the nozzle. Melissa sees it.

She hyperventilates. Tanner picks up a carving knife from the table. Testing the blade. Melissa screams.

MELISSA

Please no! Please...!

Tanner smiles. He steps forward blade in hand. Her eyes close.

INT. WASHINGTON DC - SUBURBS - GARAGE - AFTERNOON

A dimly lit garage. Dust particles float in the streaks of sunlight slipping through a half-open door.

MARK JACOBS (47), Caucasian, ruggedly handsome, wipes sweat from his brow as he sorts through old boxes. A stack leans precariously.

Thud... A small cardboard box tumbles to the ground, its contents spilling out.

Mark kneels, sifting through faded memorabilia: an old Harvey College shirt, a Harvey College Alumni book... Then. His hand freezes over a VHS tape.

LABEL: "Freaknik 1996." A flicker of recognition in his eyes. He exhales, unsure why his hands tremble as he picks it up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mark digs out a dusty VHS player, wires tangled. He slots in the tape, presses PLAY.

ON THE TV SCREEN:

Grainy Footage, a moonlit room, the sounds of low music playing. Mark smirks, amused. Nostalgic. Then his expression shifts. His breath catches. His pupils widen.

The reflection of the screen flickers in his glasses. A tear rolls down his cheek. Then, in disgust he EJECTS the tape.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING - DAYS LATER

An after ceremony gathering. A handful of ATLANTA OBSERVER guests and FAMILY MEMBERS gather. DANA CONNORS (29), African American, Journalist, poised, and brilliant stands in front of the room. A PULITZER PRIZE in her hands.

Beside her. TAMMY CONNORS (30), Dana's wife, dressed in military uniform, braided hair, SAMANTHA DONALD (46), Dana's mother, resilient, and KIMBERLY JONES (64) Dana's grandmother, exquisite appearance, proud, clap in unison. The moment is perfect. Until.

BAM! The CONFERENCE ROOM doors fly open.

CATHY ATKINSON (49), full-figured, breathless, the Observer's Editor in Chief. She's gripping a torn open package. Storms inside. Eyes locked on Dana. She walks close to her and whispers in her ear.

CATHY  
(out of breath)  
Connors..., I need you upstairs.  
Now!

Dana barely turns.

DANA  
Cathy..., I'm celebrating my  
Pulitzer Prize.

CATHY  
(shaking package)  
Sorry I'm late..., Congratulations  
by the way... but I was just  
reviewing a video. So..., this  
can't wait! That feeler I put out  
asking for vintage video for an  
article I was considering... just  
came in... It contains a girl being  
raped...! Let's go!

Dana hesitates. A glance at Tammy and Samantha.

DANA  
I'm sorry, yall... This is  
important. I'll see you at home,  
baby.

She kisses Tammy. Samantha and Kimberly. Then. She leaves.  
The Pulitzer Prize still in her hands.

SUPER: ATLANTA - SATURDAY JULY 6, 1996

INT. JONES APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

KIMBERLY JONES (35) stands in front of a streaked mirror. She  
hurriedly dabs concealer under her tired eyes. Her lipstick  
slips from her fingers, clattering to the floor.

She exhales, muttering under her breath.

INT. JONES APARTMENT - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

SAMANTHA JONES (17) slim, striking, taps her pencil to the  
beat of a WALKMAN track, eyes skimming a schoolbook.

Kimberly rushes in, pours herself a full cup of COFFEE.

KIMBERLY  
Sam, I'm running late... Clean this  
kitchen and finish that book  
report.

Samantha, still lost in the music. Kimberly snaps, swats and  
hits Sam's shoulder. Samantha yanks off her headphones,  
glaring.

KIMBERLY  
 Don't give me that look, Sam...  
 I'm working a double tonight, don't  
 let me come home to this mess.

She juggles her purse and keys.

KIMBERLY  
 And take summer school seriously if  
 you wanna graduate with your  
 friends.

SAMANTHA  
 Yes, ma'am.

A beeper buzzes. Samantha glances down, sees the number on  
 the screen and smiles. Kimberly's eyes narrow.

KIMBERLY  
 That better not be Donna.

SAMANTHA  
 She keeps me company, momma...!  
 Plus, you hired her as my math  
 tutor, remember.

Kimberly slams her coffee down.

KIMBERLY  
 Yes, but I never knew she was  
 hanging out with you. I paid her to  
 teach you... not be your friend.  
 And... She's way older than you...

Samantha's smile fades.

KIMBERLY  
 I better not find out she was in my  
 house... You hear me...!?

SAMANTHA  
 (mumbling)  
 Okay, Momma.

Kimberly's jaw tightens. She checks her watch, grabbing her  
 coat.

KIMBERLY  
 I gotta go... Leftovers are in the  
 fridge. Remember what I said,  
 Sam...

She pulls Samantha into a quick hug.

KIMBERLY  
Love you, honey..., see you in the  
morning!

SAMANTHA  
Bye, Momma.

The door slams shut. Samantha drops her head onto her  
textbook, groaning.

Then... She grins, striding to the wall phone. Dials.

SAMANTHA  
(into phone)  
What's up, girl...? Got your page.  
Wait till you see my bad ass  
outfit. Come get me...

She laughs, twirling the phone cord around her finger.

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

Airplanes roar down the runway some lifting off, others  
touching down against the morning haze.

INT. CONCORDIA AIRLINES - CABIN - CONTINUOUS

A chime dings, the seatbelt sign flicks off. PASSENGERS  
stretch, shuffle, grabbing their carry-ons.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT (20s) lifts the intercom mic.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Welcome to Atlanta. It's a warm 85  
degrees stay hydrated out there.  
And as always, thank you for flying  
Concordia Airlines.

At row 18, three YOUNG MEN laughing, shoving, oozing  
confidence.

BRADLEY WINTERS (18) Biracial, charismatic, cocky.

BRADLEY  
(talking to Nigel)  
Get my bag...

NIGEL WILLIAMSON (18) African American, arrogant, privileged  
reaches above his head and hands the bag to Bradley.



NIGEL  
(talking to Timothy)  
Hey, don't forget my camera... My  
dad'll kill me if I lose it.

TIMOTHY GREEN (18) African American, quiet, but sharp.

TIMOTHY  
(talking to Nigel)  
Yeah, yeah, I got it.

All three are wearing "Harvey College Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity" shirts. Timothy yanks the camera from the overhead bin.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM - LATER

BLACK COLLEGE STUDENTS take over the baggage claim area.

Guys watch girls pass in barely-there outfits. Bradley, Nigel, and Timothy scan the area, grinning.

They pass a group of COLLEGE GIRLS. One of them bites her lip at Bradley.

EXT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - EVENING

A taxi pulls up to the grand entrance. The doors fling open the three emerge, blinking against the setting sun. The luxurious INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL towers above them.

Bradley peels off bills, hands them over without looking.

BRADLEY  
(to the driver)  
Keep it all.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The lobby buzzes with college students some dressed to impress, others wearing barely anything.

BRADLEY  
I'll check us in.

INT. PENTHOUSE - FRONT MAIN ROOM - LATER

The LARGE PENTHOUSE DOORS swing open.

BRADLEY

This place is insane. Look at that view!

They drop their bags. Rushing to see the view of Atlanta from the floor-to-ceiling windows.

NIGEL

Your dad really hooked us up.

BRADLEY

And after we win the election, he's taking us to New York and to the Ritz Carlton.

NIGEL

Clinton doesn't stand a chance if he can't get crime under control.

They dash off toward the BEDROOMS.

INT. PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

From inside Bedroom one.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

A King bed... A jacuzzi tub...  
Damn, I may never leave here!

Nigel looks around.

NIGEL

(talking to Bradley)

Nice..., this is some rich white people shit...! I can see why your family's Republican?

Bradley steps out, annoyed, flipping his hands up.

BRADLEY

We're Republicans not because of the money, but because we stand for Tradition, fairness, guns, and God... And all you bleeding heart Democrats stand for is wasting money on the poor, especially poor Black people.

Nigel leans against the door-frame, arms crossed.

NIGEL

You might wanna fact-check that,  
because most poor people in this  
country... Are white.

TIMOTHY

Neither of you know shit about  
being poor.

Bradley smirks.

BRADLEY

My dad's a congressman and soon a  
state senator.

TIMOTHY

Even worse.

NIGEL

And your dad's a self-made  
millionaire, Tim, so spare us the  
lecture.

Timothy stands taller, proud.

TIMOTHY

Exactly. And he actually takes care  
of his workers something neither of  
your dads know a damn thing about.

Nigel smirks, claps Bradley on the shoulder.

NIGEL

Damn. He got you there, Bradley.

Bradley waves them off, rolling his shoulders.

BRADLEY

Enough of this bullshit...! I'm  
going to the lobby to order food...

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - LOBBY BAR - NIGHT

DONNA LEWIS (21), African American, pretty and Samantha are  
sitting at the LOBBY BAR wearing tight dresses. Samantha's  
dress is sheer with revealing LINGERIE and PANTIES and  
Donna's outfit highlights her BREASTS.

Bradley is at the CONCIERGE DESK. He pivots and sees Donna  
and Samantha.

BRADLEY

Damn...!

The CONCIERGE (mid-30) turns to see what Bradley is looking at and continues to write.

BRADLEY

And order us more drinks and snacks too.

CONCIERGE

Yes, sir and I'll have them delivered to your suite at once.

Bradley talks to the crowd.

BRADLEY

(pointing)

You, you and all of you. There is a party in the penthouse. You're all invited.

He looks at Donna and Samantha.

BRADLEY

You coming?!

Donna and Samantha smile, nod, and walk towards the penthouse elevator. The doors close.

INT. PENTHOUSE - FRONT MAIN ROOM - NIGHT

The penthouse doors open. Donna and Samantha step inside, eyes widening. The suite pulses with late '90s hip-hop.

MARIJUANA SMOKE curls through the air. A crowd moves to the music, drinks in hand. Nigel zeros in on Donna and Samantha. Bradley stops Nigel in stride.

BRADLEY

You see those two?

NIGEL

Damn... That one's practically naked... Tim should see this...

BRADLEY

Where is he...?

NIGEL

Last I saw him, he was outside on the phone.

Bradley shrugs, then straightens his collar.

BRADLEY  
Oh well..., his loss.

Bradley eyes Samantha, lingering. Nigel takes Donna's hand.

NIGEL  
Whatcha two drinking?

DONNA  
Rum and Coke for me.

BRADLEY  
(to Samantha)  
And you?

Samantha glances at Donna who shakes her head, no.

DONNA  
She'll have a plain Coke.

Samantha yanks Donna aside.

SAMANTHA  
Why you babying me...!? We came to  
have fun.

DONNA  
Your mom already has it out for me.  
She'll kill me if you came home  
drunk.

SAMANTHA  
Why you trippin...?

DONNA  
Just drink the Coke, Sam or we're  
leaving!

Nigel slides in.

NIGEL  
Everything okay?

DONNA  
Everything's cool.

Nigel treads for the bar.

BRADLEY  
(to Donna)  
You wanna dance?

Bradley takes Donna to the dance floor. Nigel returns with drinks. He sets the drinks down. He pulls Samantha into the dancing crowd.

EXT. PENTHOUSE - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Timothy leans over the railing, CORDLESS phone to his ear.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, babe... Yes, I know it's loud... we're throwing a party.

He sips his drink, eyes tracing the city skyline.

TIMOTHY

Mark..., we're flying back tomorrow night; I got midterms to study for. Don't be so overprotective... You know I love it when you care.

Behind him, the balcony fills with more partygoers, their screams and laughter rising. Timothy moves to the side, lowering his voice.

TIMOTHY

Bradley's got a huge stick up his ass, and Nigel's been acting like a jerk all day... I think Bradley knows about me... Look..., I gotta go..., someone's coming over... I love you, bye.

A BEAUTIFUL GIRL (22), green eyes, slim build slides up beside him, smiling.

GIRL

You wanna dance?

TIMOTHY

No, I'm good...

Timothy barely acknowledges her, tossing back his drink before heading inside.

INT. PENTHOUSE - FRONT MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samantha and Nigel collapse onto the couch. Samantha grabs a drink, taking a long gulp.

DONNA

That one was mine, Sam!

Samantha smirks, licking her lips.

SAMANTHA

Chill out, Donna...! One drink  
won't kill me. I earned it.

Samantha grabs Bradley's hand, pulling him onto the dance floor.

NIGEL

Your girl is something else.

DONNA

Yeah... she's something, alright.

INT. PENTHOUSE - FRONT MAIN ROOM - LATER

Samantha's movements turn erratic. She stumbles then collapses against the couch, rolling over it.

Donna jots over.

DONNA

Samantha! Are you Ok...?!

Samantha words slurs.

SAMANTHA

I don't... feel so...

She vomits. Nigel and Bradley dash over.

BRADLEY

What's wrong with her?

DONNA

She had too much to drink.

Nigel and Bradley exchange a look.

BRADLEY

(to Donna)

Take her to one of the back rooms.  
Let her sleep it off.

DONNA

You sure...?

BRADLEY

Of course... We got you.

Nigel winks at Bradley. He leads them to the back.

INT. PENTHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Moonlight filters into the bedroom. Donna and Nigel lay Samantha face down on the bed. She mumbles incoherently before falling silent.

DONNA

(to Samantha)

That's why I didn't want you to drink... When you come to your senses, I'm taking you home.

NIGEL

Lie her on her stomach and she'll be fine.

EXT. PENTHOUSE - BALCONY - LATER

Donna leans against the railing. She closes her eyes, swaying slightly to the music.

Then... A sudden gasp... Then a scream... Donna's eyes snap open. The music cuts.

She rushes inside.

INT. INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL - PENTHOUSE SUITE - SAME

Several people are yelling for help. Donna's eyes widen. On the dance floor, sprawled out and naked, lies Samantha.

Her body trembles, bruises and swelling form along her face, arms and thighs. Blood smears her inner thighs.

The music has stopped, but the murmurs of drunken guests linger. Donna's breath catches. She rushes forward, yanking a jacket off a chair, throwing it over Samantha's shaking body.

DONNA

Sam? Sam, can you hear me?! Wake up!

Samantha mumbles, but her words are slurred, incoherent. Then footsteps thunder toward them. Bradley, Timothy, and Nigel rush over.

BRADLEY

What happened?!

Donna's head snaps up, fury burning in her eyes.



DONNA  
What the fuck is this?! What the  
fuck happened to her?!

Bradley and Timothy exchange a look. Samantha tries to speak,  
but it's garbled, weak.

DONNA  
Where the hell are her clothes?!

NIGEL  
They must still be in the back  
room. I'll go get them.

Nigel bolts toward the back of the suite. Donna glares at  
Bradley and Timothy.

DONNA  
What kind of fucking party is  
this!?  
(gesturing to Samantha)  
Look at her!

BRADLEY  
What are you talking about...!?

DONNA  
You know what the fuck I'm talking  
about...! Look at her, she's been  
raped.

Bradley's jaw tightens. He takes a step forward, lowering his  
voice.

BRADLEY  
Wait a minute...! You don't know  
that...! Collect all of your shit  
and get the fuck out of...!

The words barely leave his mouth before, SLAP! Donna's hand  
collides with Bradley's face, a sharp crack echoing through  
the suite.

A collective gasps from the remaining guests.

Bradley's face twists with rage, his hand clenching into a  
fist, but before he can react, Nigel rushes back in,  
Samantha's crumpled stained clothes in his hands.

DONNA

Fuck you..., asshole! I guess her split lip and cum coming out of her is a figment of my fucking imagination...! I'm calling the police.

Bradley smirks coldly.

TIMOTHY

Wait...!

BRADLEY

No... You can call them from the lobby.

Donna lunges at him again, but Nigel grabs her arms, restraining her.

DONNA

Let me go motherfucker!

Nigel pulls her back, but Donna manages to snatch Samantha's clothes from his grip. With the help of a few sober male guests, Donna dresses Samantha, pulling her half-conscious body upright.

They carry Samantha toward the elevator, Donna never breaking her glare at Bradley. As the elevator doors close, Bradley turns back to the remaining guests.

BRADLEY

Sorry..., Sorry everyone... the party's over... Collect everything you came here with and get out!

The crowd hesitates then scatters, gathering their things.

NIGEL

Not a smart move, dude... The cops will be here soon.

Bradley shrugs, taking the last drag of his cigar before snuffing it out in an empty champagne flute.

BRADLEY

The fewer people they have to interview, the better. They don't scare me.

Timothy suddenly steps up, his face flushed with anger.

TIMOTHY

Why the fuck did you treat them like that, Bradley...!? That girl was raped, and you know it...! What did you two do...!?

Bradley chuckles, shaking his head.

BRADLEY

Stop acting like a little bitch, Tim. Those bitches got what they came here for..., and no one is going to believe them... Look at the way they're dressed.

Timothy's nostrils flare, his voice low, furious.

TIMOTHY

She's right, Bradley... You're an asshole...! You have a lot to learn about women.

Bradley's smirk remains, unfazed. He turns and walks toward the penthouse bedrooms, his arrogance unwavering.

Nigel exhales, glancing at the emptying suite.

NIGEL

Let's clean this place up before the police get here.

SUPER: 29 YEARS LATER

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Through the large office windows, heavy rain pounds against the glass, streaking down in uneven rivers.

Inside, the newsroom hums with controlled chaos. Fingers clack against laptops and desktops, their rhythmic typing blending with the low murmur of REPORTERS on the phone.

Several weave through the aisles, clutching coffee cups and notebooks. On multiple TV monitors, various news channels flicker, each broadcasting the news.

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER - DANA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

At her corner cubicle, Dana places her award on her desk. She looks around. Old newspaper clippings each headlined with her byline.

A slightly crooked picture frame holds a photo of her parents, Samantha and Reginald Donald. Another frame captures a moment with Tammy, standing proudly in her Army uniform. A loud voice in the background yells out.

Dana, arms crossed, waiting. She checks her watch, eyes darting toward Cathy's office door, still closed. Tension simmers beneath her calm exterior.

Then... A nervous energy approaches.

ASTRID DUNHAM (22), African American, striking, eager steps up, clutching a notebook against her chest.

She clears her throat. Dana glances over. Astrid freezes. Face to face with THE Dana Connors. The woman she admires. Studies. Wants to BE. Astrid inhales, steadying herself.

ASTRID  
Ms. Connors...?

Dana raises an eyebrow.

DANA  
Dana works... You are...?

Astrid extends a hand, confident but eager.

ASTRID  
Astrid Dunham. Reporter... Clark  
Atlanta grad. Just started working  
here a month ago.

Dana shakes her hand, intrigued.

DANA  
Welcome to the trenches.

Astrid laughs, exhales. The ice breaks. She shifts, gripping her notebook tighter.

ASTRID  
I know you're busy, and I don't  
want to take up too much of your  
time, but... I'm working on a story  
Georgia preschool funding... It's  
my first real investigative piece,  
and I want to get it right.

Her eyes search Dana's face, hopeful.

ASTRID  
Could you maybe point me in the  
right direction?

Dana studies her. She sees something in her hunger, drive, potential. She tilts her head, considering.

DANA  
Preschool funding, huh...? That's a big story.

Astrid nods eagerly.

ASTRID  
It needs to be told.

Dana smirks. She likes this kid. She leans in slightly, voice lowering.

DANA  
Alright. First rule of investigative reporting... Follow the money.

Astrid's eyes widen. She flips open her notebook, scribbling fast.

DANA  
Find out who's cutting checks and who's cashing them... And if those numbers don't match up...?

Astrid grins.

ASTRID  
There's a story.

Dana points at her.

DANA  
Now you're thinking like a reporter.

Astrid beams. The tension waiting for Cathy fades. Dana takes a genuine interest.

DANA  
Who's your source?

Astrid flips to another page, showing Dana some notes. Dana nods, impressed. Astrid watches her closely. Her idol. Right here, coaching her. She barely believes it.

Dana leans back, arms crossed.

DANA  
This isn't just a "funding" story, Astrid. It's a corruption story...  
(MORE)

DANA (CONT'D)  
 People are lining their pockets  
 while kids are missing out.

Astrid nods, absorbing every word. Dana tilts her head, assessing.

DANA  
 Alright... Come find me when you  
 have something solid.

Astrid grins, nodding. She departs. Cathy pops out of her office door.

CATHY  
 Connors..., sorry for keeping you  
 waiting, come on in...

INT. ATLANTA OBSERVER - CATHY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Cathy sits behind a grand OAK DESK. TORTOISE FRAMED DESIGNER GLASSES perched on her nose. Her walls flaunt Peabody Awards, photos of her with racehorses, and a slew of other accolades.

Her computer screen flashes a sports betting site until she quickly kills the monitor. Across from her, Dana closes the door and takes a seat.

CATHY  
 I didn't see your dad at the  
 ceremony... They told me he had  
 some kind of illness. How is he?

Dana shifts uncomfortably.

DANA  
 He had gallstones, but he's back at  
 school. The Dean is limiting his  
 class time until he's 100%, but  
 he's doing okay for now.

CATHY  
 That's good... Sorry, I took you  
 away from celebrating your award  
 with your family... But...

Cathy holds up the package and removes the tape.

CATHY  
 (showing the tape)  
 Before I get to this... I just hung  
 up with finance.  
 (MORE)