

TAPS FOR PAPS

**a ten-minute play
by Tom Baum**

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ROMAN. 50ish.

MILO. 20-30.

CHLOE. 20s-early 30s.

The setting is Chloe's bedroom. The time is the present.

(Lights up on CHLOE's bedroom, represented by a dressing table with a land-line and a profusion of stuffed animals. CHLOE's on a cell, smoking a joint.)

CHLOE: *(into phone)* ...Yes, I fired Vinnie...What do you mean, I should have consulted you first. Momma, the dude was totally useless, some idiot stalker came in here, took a dump while Vinnie was playing foosball in the living room....That's the kind of people you hire, that's the kind of protection I get, I'm hounded everywhere by paparazzi, and do you care? The opposite! You phone up the stores where I go and you tell them I'm gonna be there so they can take their stupid pictures. Don't deny it, you know you do that...What do you mean, I need the exposure? ..That's ridiculous, Liam Neeson never did an ad for Viagra....Summers Eve, are you crazy, that's a middle-aged product!....Forget it, I'm not that desperate, I'm not talking to you anymore.

(Doorbell chimes.)

I hear my doorbell, I have to go....I'm not making that up, ohmigod, never mind, don't call me again, lose my number, goodbye.

(CHLOE puts away her cell, presses a button on the land-line phone.)

CHLOE: Who is it?

ROMAN: *(over)* LAPD, ma'am. Can we talk to you?

CHLOE: I'm sorry, who?

ROMAN: Los Angeles Police Department, ma'am.

CHLOE: *(yikes)* What's this about?

ROMAN: *(over)* I believe we've found your stalker, and we need you to identify him.

CHLOE: Which stalker? I know a lot of stalkers.

MILO: *(over)* The one who used your toilet?

CHLOE: Yeah, OK, great, you arrested him?

ROMAN: (*over*) Yes. But we need a positive I.D., or else we can't hold him.

CHLOE: I wasn't here when he broke in.

ROMAN: (*over*) Yeah, but you might have seen him around. If it's not the guy, save you a trip downtown. Seriously, we can put him away for 10 years. It's for your benefit, ma'am.

CHLOE: OK, but can we make this fast? I'm up the stairs, second door on your left.

(*CHLOE hits a button on the phone. Distant buzz sound. She preens for a moment, stubs out the joint, stashes it in a drawer, wipes the surface of the table clean, and sprays the air with deodorant. Knock on the door.*)

CHLOE: You found me. Come in.

(*ROMAN and MILO enter.*)

ROMAN: Hello, ma'am. We appreciate you giving us your time.

CHLOE: No, hey, this is really nice of you.

ROMAN: Well, you know, we like to avoid mob scenes at the station house.

CHLOE: I get it, sure. There's always somebody hanging around my gate. Practically 24/7.

MILO: Really? We didn't see anybody.

CHLOE: (*disappointed*) No? I guess tonight's an exception.

ROMAN: You want to take a look at the mug shot?

CHLOE: Sure sure, let's see the picture.

(*ROMAN hands CHLOE a picture.*)

CHLOE: (*looks*) Nope. I don't recognize this guy.

ROMAN: Good. Because he's not the guy.

CHLOE: Oh I see. We're doing this like a line-up.

ROMAN: Exactly. Save you a trip, like I said.

MILO: By the way, your last video was awesome.

CHLOE: Did you happen to see my movie?

MILO: Did we? I don't think so.

CHLOE: Yeah, they kinda dumped it. My mom made a bad deal with the distributor.

ROMAN: She's still managing you, huh.

MILO: We heard you were on the outs.

CHLOE: Yeah, we have our share of fights. That's public knowledge.

ROMAN: Still, you got your privacy here, don't you?

CHLOE: Yeah, this room is totally off-limits. Even to my mom.
Especially to my mom.

MILO: I know! When I was a kid? They took the locks off my door, I was avoiding my folks so much.

ROMAN: Milo, she thanks you for sharing. Let's stick to the subject, OK? Here you go.

(ROMAN hands her more pictures. He keeps turning his head this way and that, taking in all corners of the room.)

CHLOE: Nope...nope...wait. Didn't I see this guy on CSI?

ROMAN: No. I know who you mean, though.

CHLOE: Seriously. I think I dated this guy.

ROMAN : *(looks)* Yeah, now that you mention it. How'd this even get in here?

MILO: I dunno, Roman. You put 'em together.

CHLOE: (*warily*) So tell me, guys, how's Vinnie doing?

ROMAN: Vinnie?

CHLOE: Yeah, he was moonlighting as my bodyguard. I hear he's rising fast in the department.

MILO: Vinnie, yeah, he's doing great.

ROMAN: Hold on. I'm not sure we know this Vinnie.

CHLOE: He's a vice cop? Big hairy guy with a handlebar mustache?

MILO: Yeah yeah, he's a vice cop.

ROMAN: Like I say, we may not know him.

CHLOE: I'm glad he's doing great, 'cause the dude couldn't find his dick with a flashlight. (*to ROMAN*) How long does that hat hold a charge?

ROMAN: Say what? Ma'am, I don't know what you're talking about.

CHLOE: Milo, that's a cute name. Would you like to go clubbing sometime?

MILO: Me? With you? Sure. If you don't think I'm too young for you.

ROMAN: Milo, she's pulling your leg.

CHLOE: But you'd have to wear your uniform. And those shoes. I love cop shoes. What are those, Bates High Gloss?

MILO: Yeah, I don't know. They just give them to us.

CHLOE: Would you be faithful or would you cheat on me like Sandy's husband?

MILO: Oh I'd be faithful. No tattoos on me. Slogan-free body.

ROMAN: Let's get back to the mug shots, OK?

CHLOE: I think your partner's getting jealous. What would you say to a three-way?

MILO: *(to ROMAN)* What do you think?

ROMAN: What do you mean, what do I think?

CHLOE: Sounds like Roman isn't up for it. It's just you and me, Milo. But tell me...why haven't I seen you at any of my carpets?

MILO: Maybe 'cause I'm new?

ROMAN: Milo, that's enough. We're getting off-track here.

CHLOE: Holy gym shorts, guys. You can go to prison for impersonating a cop.

ROMAN: Ma'am, you're not making any sense.

CHLOE: Fine. Cuff me. Take me down to the station house. I'll get dressed.

(CHLOE starts looking through her dressing table drawers.)

ROMAN: That won't be necessary.

CHLOE: What's the matter? Oh right, you didn't come in a squad car. Let me guess. You came in a ratty old Ford Explorer. The one Britney bashed in with her umbrella when she was bald and crazy. Go Britney, 'cause you're driving us all berserko. We can't drive a car without some douchebag paparazzi running us into a tree. All for the sake of some stupid picture that'll never see the light of day.

ROMAN: Ma'am, have we been doing some drugs tonight?

CHLOE: The answer to that is yes. I've been doing some drugs. And as everybody knows, when I'm trashed I'm liable to do anything.

(CHLOE takes a service pistol out of her dresser drawer.)

ROMAN: Hey. Chloe. Put that away.

CHLOE: Come on. I just pulled a gun on a cop. Take me down. Go ahead.

MILO: That's not even a real gun. That's an Elvis tribute gun, I recognize it.

CHLOE: Elvis, that's exactly right. It's Elvis's actual Army gun, and it went for \$30,000 at auction. You wanna guess which one of my boyfriends bought it for me?

MILO: John Mayer?

ROMAN: Don't be ridiculous, she never dated John Mayer. Chloe, come on, you wouldn't keep a loaded gun around.

(CHLOE fires the gun in an offstage direction. Something shatters.)

ROMAN: *(to MILO)* I told you to let me do the talking.

MILO: Yeah, 'cause of the range of your conversation. "Julia, over here!" "Paris, one more!"

CHLOE: Guys, pay attention. Roman, take off the hat.

ROMAN: Come on, Chloe, be reasonable. This is our bread and butter.

CHLOE: *(points gun)* Take off the hat!

(ROMAN takes off his hat.)

CHLOE: Give it to me.

(ROMAN hands the hat to CHLOE.)

CHLOE: The lens is wide-angle, right? It's seeing you both?

ROMAN: Chloe, we just wanted a glimpse of the inner sanctum.

CHLOE: You got that already. Now the rest of your costumes. Both of you.

MILO: No way. Roman, tell her no.

ROMAN: Chloe, have a heart.

CHLOE: Come on, you know you want to, you guys are all perverts, right? Talk to the hat.

ROMAN: Now wait. That's like asking, are restaurants good places to eat? Some of us are pervs. No doubt about that.

MILO: We just wanted to meet you. I'm an idol of yours. Huge fan. I lied about not seeing your movie. I loved it. I didn't think you were too old for the part. The critics were all wrong about that.

CHLOE: What's your favorite song of mine?

ROMAN: Don't ask Milo for specifics. He doesn't know anybody's oover
[rhymes with Hoover]

MILO: Yeah, like you're the great expert. You thought Cyndi Lauper was the next big thing, instead of Madonna.

ROMAN: She's got a better voice.

MILO: Christina not Britney. Hillary not Lindsay.

ROMAN: OK. Sometimes my good taste gets in my way.

CHLOE: Guys? Over here! Shut up and disrobe.

(ROMAN and MILO undress. MILO starts to whimper.)

ROMAN: Man up, Milo. Chloe, we're sorry.

CHLOE: Not yet you're not. (to hat) Sean, hi, this is for you. I believe this is the guy who crashed your brother's funeral. And Chris, maybe you recognize him? I think he tried to take pictures of Gwyneth when she was coming out of the hospital.

ROMAN: That wasn't me, I swear to God.

CHLOE: Yeah it was. Roman, kiss Milo.

ROMAN: No way.

CHLOE: Come on, Milo's been waiting for you to make a pass.

MILO: Really? It's that obvious?

CHLOE: Totally. Let's go. A nice juicy one.

ROMAN: *(to the hat)* Everybody should know, I'm doing this under protest.

CHLOE: I can edit that out. Kiss him.

ROMAN: Listen, if you're thinking of blackmail, forget it. We're both flat broke.

MILO: That's why we're here. To get out of debt.

CHLOE: Then do what I tell you! Kiss!

(ROMAN and MILO kiss.)

CHLOE: Fine. Perfect. Print it. Now pick up your clothes and get out. Before I call the real police.

(ROMAN and MILO pick up their clothes.)

ROMAN: You wouldn't do that, would you? Chloe, we go way back. That picture in the *Enquirer*? That they keep using? I took that.

CHLOE: You mean the one of me about to puke? The one they use whenever I get dumped?

ROMAN: Not that one. The happy one.

(CHLOE has taken out her cell.)

ROMAN: What are you doing? Who are you calling? We're leaving!

MILO: Roman, we gotta get out of here—

ROMAN: I'm begging you, please don't call the cops. Come on, admit it, Chloe, sweetheart, you need us.

CHLOE: *(into phone)* Yeah, Momma, it's me. Hold on a second. *(to ROMAN and MILO)* Guys, you're free to go.

ROMAN: Without us you're nothing! Performers! Musicians! Entertainers! Who cares? Who gives a shit? Too many of you anyway! Here today, gone tomorrow! Mere clouds in the sky!

MILO: He gets this way when he doesn't get his way. (to ROMAN)
Come on, man, we'll go to the Formosa, get a drink.

(MILO drags ROMAN out. CHLOE relights the joint from her drawer.)

ROMAN: Ask your mom how important we are! We bring you down to earth! We anoint you! Who else is gonna do that, the *N.Y. Behind The Times*? We're the Papers of Record, not them! We were up for the Pulitzer Prize! Without us the terrorists win!

(ROMAN exits. MILO ducks back in.)

MILO: It was really nice to meet you.

(MILO exits. CHLOE gets back on the phone.)

CHLOE: Momma, forget vaginal deodorants, I'm gonna be a hero....Because I'm doing a web series.... Sure, what else, a reality show. Pilot's already set to go viral....Not a Denise Richards thing, two clueless paparazzi...I'm calling it *Dirtbags*....Yeah, you can produce it, if you'll stop alerting these assholes to my whereabouts....Momma, why are you crying, don't cry, we're back on the radar....

(*The lights are fading.*)

...Of course I love you, do you love me?...Say it, Chloe, I love you, you're the absolute best and you deserve the best...There, was that so hard?.....Momma, I'm hanging up now.... Fine, we'll hang up together....On the count of three....One...two....three.... Hello?....Momma?....Are you still there?.... Momma!?!

(*The lights have faded to black. END OF PLAY.*)