

# BLUE SKIES YONDER

by Peter Fenton



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*This play contains mature themes, some coarse language, and several murders. It is a dark comedy thriller following a morally gray ensemble. Appropriate for ages 14+*

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CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
HARRIS FOWLER	The Author	26	M
JASON YANG	The Fiancé	27	M
MARYBETH FOWLER	The Agent	58	F
PRESTON FOWLER	The Host	59	M
AMBER CRAWFORD	The Ingenue	22	F
COREY REYNOLDS	The Publisher	36	M
JILLIAN CHAU	The Marketer	29	F
REBECCA ADLER	The Editor	41	F

**PLACE**

A luxury cabin in the Adirondack Mountains, recently purchased by New York City real estate mogul Preston Fowler.

**TIME**

A Saturday afternoon in April 2025.

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This one is dedicated to Luke.  
We've seen so much Agatha Christie together,  
I thought I'd give it a shot.

我也学了一点中文。

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & STATEMENT FROM THE AUTHOR**

Thank you to my father, James Fenton, a brilliant writer and even better person. You are not Preston Fowler.

Thank you to lifelong mentor, Suzanne Fisher, for teaching me everything I know about writing theater.

Thank you also to Sennan Cen and Chen Yongbin for input on Chinese culture and Mandarin dialogue present in the script.

And thank you to my community of survivors: Regina, Kim, Lily, Jennifer, Jenna, Mary, Cheryl, Jamie, Kathy, Teri, Daniele, Kelly, Wendy, Nick, Jim, Jason, Adina, Leisa, Abram, Meghan, Scott, Kris, Lane, Elizabeth, Frances, Joy, Janet, the Philippines team, and every single creative whose dreams have ever been preyed upon.

This play is a work of fiction inspired by my experience in the entertainment industry. I wanted to write something that explores a messy lived experience of a combined personal/professional life and the transactional relationships that can take over when art is monetized. They do say "write what you know" for a reason, but I'm OK. I promise you, I am OK. I have a lot of love in my life.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1.**

*CHALET WATERSPOUT, Preston Fowler's luxury cabin in upstate New York. A Saturday afternoon in April 2025. A grand display of several copies of a novel titled BLUE SKIES YONDER written by Harrison Fowler features at center stage of an open-concept living space and kitchen. A balcony overlooks a pristine blue sky. Offstage is a bathroom and office space in one direction and a master suite and guest bedroom in another.*

*An ice sculpture in the shape of a bird of prey features on a drink table, surrounded by a bowl of ice and several liquor options. Finger food and charcuterie for what appears to be a large "upscale casual" event is spread on the kitchen counter.*

*The stage is dark. A phone rings a few times before a recorded voicemail greeting takes over:*

**"Hello, you've reached the office of Heidi McEwan. I'm rather sorry, I can't take your call right now. Kindly leave a message and I will get back to you."**

*A dial tone is heard.*

MARYBETH (VOICE)

Heidi, it's Mare.  
I'd hate to think you're ignoring me. I'll drop by soon.

*A phone is heard hanging up. A news report is heard:*

**"An apparent suicide in a Hudson Yards penthouse leaves some on Wall Street reeling and the NYPD leaving no stone unturned. More on this at 11."**

HARRIS (IN THE DARK)

I'm going to kill her.

*AT RISE: Debut author HARRIS FOWLER (26) flips through pages of his own novel. His tech bro fiancé, JASON YANG (27, Chinese) smirks.*

JASON

Don't say things you don't mean.

HARRIS

Have you even looked at this?

JASON

I love you with my whole heart, but my dude, you have reached your limit of free feedback on this one.

HARRIS

Five years with this book. How could she think it's her right to--How am I supposed to talk to her?

JASON

Hey. Hey.

*He pulls Harris into a hug.*

JASON

I know my opinion doesn't mean much, but. It's gotten better every step of the way. And so have you.

HARRIS

Thanks.

JASON

I choose you. Forever. Even if your book sucked.

HARRIS

Was wondering what this ring was for. I just wish I knew that this book was one of the good ones.

JASON

Once people are buying, does it matter what's inside? Reviews were pretty great!

HARRIS

I guess.

JASON

Kirkus said, "Harrison Fowler is someone to watch... a literary fiction genius."

HARRIS

Dude.

JASON

As long as the check clears, who cares?

HARRIS

I will appreciate when the check clears.

JASON  
Put our future on lock, baby boy.

*Harris continues paging through.*

HARRIS  
What are they paying this editor for?

JASON  
Editing.

HARRIS  
I hate you.

JASON  
Love you, too.

*Harris's mother and literary agent,  
MARYBETH FOWLER (58), enters.*

JASON  
Afternoon, Ms. Fowler.

MARYBETH  
Hello, Jason. What, no kiss for your mother?

HARRIS  
Yeah--hi.

MARYBETH  
All right, let me see the ring.

*She picks up Harris's left hand.*

MARYBETH  
It's quite tasteful. This "male engagement ring." Where'd you get it?

JASON  
I commissioned it from a jeweler in Chinatown. Yeah, I built an AI model that scraped his photos and "like" data and told it to design a ring that would be aesthetically pleasing and fit the di--dimension?--on his finger.

MARYBETH  
Real diamonds?

JASON  
Real love.

*Marybeth chuckles.*

HARRIS  
Good flight?

MARYBETH

Four-hour layover in Vegas! The hell am I supposed to do with a four-hour layover in Vegas?

JASON

Gamble?

MARYBETH

I parked myself in the Terminal 1 lounge. Had two martinis--bone dry--, a spring mix salad with goat cheese and truffle oil, and for dessert, a much younger Brazilian gentleman.

HARRIS

So you gambled.

MARYBETH

Enough about me. Today, you, my son, have written the great American novel. And lapped your father.

HARRIS

Honor of a lifetime.

MARYBETH

Honor of a lifetime to have referred you. When's Mama's cut coming?

HARRIS

Huh. Weren't you supposed to send me--?

MARYBETH

Worry about it later. I'll get it.

*She picks up a copy of the novel from the display.*

MARYBETH

I knew I'd find you just the right publisher. You have a very real gift. And fifty percent of my DNA.

HARRIS

Sure.

MARYBETH

Where is your father, anyway?

JASON

He's giving the Blackfeather team a tour of the property.

MARYBETH

Mm. Of course. Our son writes a book set in the Adirondacks, suddenly oh! Would you look at this? 3 million to spare on a little weekend pad right up in the mountains with shiplap and a gorgeous view and--

A pause.

MARYBETH

You see he named this place "Chalet Waterspout"?

HARRIS

Seemed pretty obvious. Waterspout.

MARYBETH

He's still on that?

JASON

What?

HARRIS

I'll tell you later.

MARYBETH

Is Becky here yet?

JASON

Oh, Rebecca? Yeah, seems great

(Gestures to Marybeth.)

Columbia grad.

MARYBETH

Some students you just don't forget.  
What about Heidi?

HARRIS

Who's Heidi?

JASON

Heidi McEwan. Big Wall Street lady. Back in 2020, Forbes did this tone-deaf article about the hobbies different finance gurus took up in quarantine--Heidi McEwan became an avid reader. And six months later, boom. She co-founds Blackfeather Press.

MARYBETH

She was also my roommate at Oxford.

JASON

No way! You know how to get in touch with her? I wanna try pitching her something.

MARYBETH

You and me both.

*She picks up the handle of vodka from the drink table.*

MARYBETH

Where are you keeping the good stuff, Press?

*She finds a cabinet with a keypad. She plugs in a PIN number and it unlocks.*

MARYBETH

Still know your father.  
Same password for everything.

*She takes a premium bottle of vodka out of the locked cabinet and exits to the master suite.*

*Nobody bothers to shut the cabinet.*

JASON

Would it be weird if I start calling her "Mom"?

HARRIS

Yes.

JASON

I think I'm gonna call her Mom.

HARRIS

Maybe after the wedding.

JASON

OK. Let's go. Let's get married.

HARRIS

Um--no?

JASON

I already bought the ring. We're ready. I'm ready.

HARRIS

The Loft and Garden famously was not.  
We've got fifteen more months--

JASON

Screw the venue. I just wanna marry you.

HARRIS

Oh yeah?

JASON

Imagine it. People magazine: "New York Times bestselling author Harrison Fowler enters cute interracial marriage to app developer Jason Yang."

HARRIS

They'd probably leave out the "cute interracial" part.



JASON

Still true.  
What's up? What's wrong?

HARRIS

Can't we just stick to the venue? And the date?

JASON

Well--I mean, that's what we said, but--

HARRIS

I don't want any more surprises.

JASON

If you said yes to marrying me, aren't we just... ready to get married?

HARRIS

Jason, I swear to god, if one more party is planned behind my back, I will lose my mind.

JASON

What if it's a really, really nice surprise?

*Harris turns back down to his book.*

HARRIS

You know, it might as well be her name on the cover.

JASON

I don't like seeing you like this.  
Wish I could just... wave a wand and make you happy. What can I do?

HARRIS

There is definitely something.

JASON

Anything.

HARRIS

I've got an editor out there.  
Not saying I wish her dead, but I might be inclined to dance on her grave.

JASON

What a coincidence, sir. Because from the moment I caught sight of those baby blue eyes, I knew that someday I just might kill for you.

HARRIS

Don't say things you don't mean.

JASON

How's my literary voice?

HARRIS

I think you need a good editor.

JASON

Aw, dang. We just killed her.

*They laugh.*

HARRIS

What are you trying to pitch to Heidi McEwan?

JASON

That AI model for your ring--I think there's money to be made there. Could match people with books. Or design covers. Still figuring out my angle.

HARRIS

You want to work for Blackfeather?

JASON

Why not? If you dangle AI in front of any startup, suddenly you're the sexiest man in the room.

HARRIS

Are you now?  
Making some plans with Heidi McEwan?

JASON

Hey, if I can talk that woman into giving me a job, she can do anything she wants.

HARRIS

Can she? Hmm. You're getting reckless, mister.  
I just might have to keep you in a cage.

JASON

Lock me up.

*The young editor, AMBER CRAWFORD (22), enters.*

AMBER

Hey! Thought I wasn't gonna see you! You hiding from me or something?

HARRIS

Yes.

AMBER

This guy. Oh! You must be Jason.

JASON

Amber. Nice to meet you.

AMBER

Did you know Harris has been working on this book since he was in undergrad?

JASON

Yeah, I was there.

AMBER

You didn't say he went to Yale with you. Were you in the frat with him? I love the idea of two frat boys discovering themselves--

JASON

He tells me so much about you.

AMBER

All good things, right?

HARRIS

Only true things.

AMBER

(To Jason.)

You are gonna have some stiff competition for who's his biggest fan. If someday, Harrison Fowler has no fans, then I must be dead.

*She laughs.*

JASON

I'm a pretty big fan of my fiancé.

AMBER

I've actually never been to a gay wedding before.

HARRIS

Our wedding's going to be pretty small.

AMBER

Oh--oh yeah, of course. My word, I didn't mean to--

HARRIS

It's OK.

JASON

You're very sweet.

AMBER

You're so sweet. Thank you.

HARRIS

For what?

AMBER

I'm just--just a girl fresh outta Tornado Alley. I have no clue what I'm doing. But you trusted me with your book.

HARRIS

Oh, I--mmm... didn't have much of a--

AMBER

And on Tuesday, the whole world gets to meet Allison Noelle.

HARRIS

Some version of her.

AMBER

I think when we talk about these "strong female characters" we always see emotionless girls. No shade to Katniss, 'cause I love *Hunger Games*, but in your book Allison--she finds the strength to figure out she's in a cult, kill the leader, and run home--and isn't afraid to have feelings.

HARRIS

Yeah, that's--basically the book.

AMBER

It's gonna touch so many people.

HARRIS

Well--I dunno about that.

AMBER

You brought this story into the world, Harris. Nobody can ever take that away from you.

JASON

She's right.

HARRIS

You've played a big part in what people will read. That's for sure.

AMBER

And your dad bought this whole cabin just for the party?! I'd kill to have your parents.

HARRIS

You want 'em?

AMBER

My folks are funny. When I said I was movin to New York, they were all like "Why you wanna leave Owasso? You can be a writer in Owasso. You can write anywhere."

HARRIS

They're not wrong.

AMBER

It's different in New York. I don't even know if my ideas are any good. But I want to help build stories that change lives.

HARRIS

You changed mine.

AMBER

Oh, you're too sweet!

*Harris raises an eyebrow.*

AMBER

Think everyone was right behind me, I just ran ahead 'cause I had to pee.

*She exits. Harris's real estate mogul father PRESTON FOWLER (59) enters with Blackfeather founder COREY REYNOLDS (36), marketer JILLIAN CHAU (29, Chinese), and editor REBECCA ADLER (41).*

PRESTON

And woulja look at that? Here we are, back at the bar.

REBECCA

You have a beautiful property. It's even prettier in person. How much did this end up running you?

PRESTON

2 mil, somewhere thereabout.

REBECCA

What'd it say on Zillow, Core?

COREY

Think it was closer to 3 mil.

PRESTON

Rounding error.

REBECCA

Corey would not stop poring over those pictures--

COREY

Hey, I said, "I need you to find the ultimate DILF house." And did Preston Fowler deliver.

REBECCA

Corey.

PRESTON

Eh, this DILF says it's happy hour time! Little day drinking ain't gonna kill ya. VIP, what are drinking?

JASON

We'll take a red if you're opening one.

PRESTON

I asked my son.

HARRIS

I'll have a red if you're opening one.

*Preston takes out a wine bottle.*

PRESTON

Bordeaux?

HARRIS

Vintage?

PRESTON

This one's a 2017.

HARRIS

OK.

*Preston shelves that and takes out another.*

PRESTON

Cabernet. Napa Valley. 1994.

HARRIS

Sure.

PRESTON

We'll crack out the cheap stuff after everyone's already drunk.

*He uncorks the Napa Cabernet.*

COREY

This has just been a great week, Preston. Lord knows I needed a well-care retreat after the month I've had. Thank you for opening your home.

PRESTON

It's the least I could do.

COREY

It's not my home yet, but I do know my way around. The sheets in the guest room are to die for.

PRESTON

The ones in the master are even nicer.  
Cabernet for you, Rebecca?

REBECCA

Oh, why not?  
Business is good at the Preston Fowler Group?

PRESTON

We survived '08 just fine. '25 is shaping up to be nothing  
but blue skies ahead.

COREY

I see what you did there and I am literally obsessed.

REBECCA

I don't know if editing books can make anyone successful like  
this. But I could sure get used to it.

PRESTON

Well, shake the right hands. Strike the right deals.

COREY

Take every delicious risk your little heart desires.

PRESTON

What can I do for ya, Corey?  
Glass of the '94 Cab? Or shall I open something else?

COREY

I'm gonna sound so gay right now--you have anything to make a  
Cosmo?

PRESTON

Check the table. Got Cointreau, lime. Cranberry's in the  
fridge. There's vodka--

*He sees the open cabinet.*

PRESTON

Someone been in my cabinet?

JASON

No, that was--uh.

HARRIS

Mom.

MARYBETH (OFF STAGE)

Coming.  
My--DEAR--Preston.

*She enters with a half-empty bottle of  
premium vodka and hands it to Preston.*

PRESTON

You look wonderful. Made yourself at home.

*He puts the vodka back in the cabinet and locks it.*

MARYBETH

All for you.

PRESTON

I thought you weren't coming.

MARYBETH

You bought me a ticket.

PRESTON

But you never wrote back--

MARYBETH

Harrison Fowler is my client.

*Preston pulls back.*

MARYBETH

Lighten up.

*She plants a kiss on his cheek. She notices her former student.*

MARYBETH

Becky.

REBECCA

Call me Rebecca

MARYBETH

Isn't that special?

*Preston pours some wine and hands them out to guests.*

PRESTON

So Corey? When's the rest of the gang getting here?

COREY

What are you talking about? The party's all here!

PRESTON

You're kidding.

COREY

We got the fun wine mom, the silver fox DILF, and I mean, you know I'm a walking Puerto Vallarta rave--



PRESTON  
Where is everyone?

JILLIAN  
Were we expecting more people?

COREY  
Were we?

PRESTON  
I bought a non-refundable block of fifty rooms at the Best Western. You said forty to fifty important publishing industry decision-makers were gathering today.

COREY  
Yes! And all the important people are here.

PRESTON  
My sculpture guy did a bird of prey on very short notice.

COREY  
Oh, it's gorgeous!

PRESTON  
You parked yourself in my guest room for the last week.

COREY  
The sheets are really nice.

PRESTON  
Is anybody else coming?

COREY  
We're 200 miles north of Manhattan, honey.

PRESTON  
Great.

MARYBETH  
Really, what's a couple thousand to Preston Fowler?

PRESTON  
Morse.

COREY  
Where can I get some ice?

PRESTON  
You're looking at it.

*He indicates the sculpture and hands Corey an ice pick.*

COREY

Oh--no. I couldn't.

PRESTON

Do the honors.

COREY

Just feel so bad cutting into such a pretty thing.

MARYBETH

It's gonna melt anyway.

PRESTON

Sculpture guy put hours into this.  
It's the least you could do.

COREY

I see there's ice I could grab in the dish here.

PRESTON

Do the honors.

*Corey stabs into the sculpture and  
carves off enough ice to start mixing  
himself a Cosmo.*

HARRIS

Jillian! Hey!

JILLIAN

You're shorter in person.

HARRIS

What's that supposed to mean?

JILLIAN

It's good to see you.

HARRIS

Jason, this is Jillian Chau.

JASON

Oh! You're Ryan Lin's girlfriend!

JILLIAN

Yeah.

JASON

We do the--volleyball. Twice a week.

JILLIAN

Nice to put a face to the name.

*They share a tentative look.*

HARRIS

Jillian does all the marketing for Blackfeather.

*Jillian picks up a copy of the novel from the display.*

JILLIAN

People say don't judge a book by its cover, but everyone knows that's a lie. You wander over to the new releases, your eye's going right to this one.

HARRIS

It is a nice cover.

JILLIAN

I was struggling on a direction for a book like this one, but with careful market research and a couple mockups, the focus group really went in on the "high class girl boss" vibes.

HARRIS

Yeah, I was outvoted.

JILLIAN

All my girls in book club said it was perfect. You should be proud of this one.

*Corey crosses to Harris, Jason, and Jillian.*

COREY

Jill is an aesthetic genius. I just look at all our reels and book covers--and I just wanna eat 'em all!

JILLIAN

Listen, I'm a marketing queen.

COREY

And I'm just a queen!  
Most important part of running a small business. Find people smarter than you. Look out for this one; she's five steps ahead of me at all times. Girl, slow down.

JILLIAN

Killing it.

*She and Corey clink glasses. Corey pulls Harris into a side conversation.*

COREY

Damn, Harris. I heard you had a boyfriend, but nobody told me he was Chinese Jonathan Bailey. The things I'd let that man do to me--

HARRIS

Fiancé.  
Jason is my fiancé.

COREY

Oh, congrats! How'd I miss that?

HARRIS

I don't know you.

COREY

That's so funny. I feel like I know you so well; your personality leapt off the pages--

HARRIS

He proposed. Couple weeks ago.

COREY

Huh. Your dad and I talked so much about you and--

HARRIS

My dad hates him.

COREY

Oh--I'm. Guess that would do it. Homophobe or racist?

HARRIS

Neither. Both. I don't know.

*Jillian turns to Jason.*

JILLIAN

认不认?

(Rèn bù rèn? / "Don' t I know you?" )

*A chill runs down Jason's spine.*

JASON

Excuse me?

JILLIAN

Don't I know you?

JASON

I play volleyball with your boyfriend.

JILLIAN

Yes. But I know you.

JASON

Uh... first of all, that's racist.

*Jillian laughs.*

JILLIAN

Fair enough.

JASON

I just got one of those faces?

JILLIAN

Hmm. 你会说中文吗?

(*Nǐ huì shuō zhōngwén ma / "Can you speak Chinese?"*)

JASON

I--I don't--um.

JILLIAN

Why would you lie to me, Yang Zekai?

*Jason hurries a sip of his wine.  
Marybeth turns to Rebecca.*

MARYBETH

So. "Rebecca."

REBECCA

Rebecca.

MARYBETH

Press, I'm sure you remember Becky Adler.

PRESTON

Oh--have we met?

REBECCA

Years ago; it was a department event.

PRESTON

Small world.

REBECCA

Could not be smaller.

MARYBETH

She's a tough one. You know what I always said.

REBECCA

"Only the biggest assholes survive in this biz."

MARYBETH

"Only the biggest assholes survive in this biz."

*They share a tense laugh.*

REBECCA

My MFA made me a cold-blooded killer.

MARYBETH

These books are gonna ruin your life.

PRESTON

Freshen your glass, Mare?

MARYBETH

Oh--probably had enough already.

*She hands her glass to Preston, who refills it and hands it back to her.*

MARYBETH

On my flight, I was looking back over Harrison's contract. You remember that 30 days clause?

REBECCA

Sure do.

MARYBETH

Think we're well past that by now, aren't we?

REBECCA

That's above my pay grade. Talk to Heidi about that.

MARYBETH

I've tried Heidi. She's not calling me back.

REBECCA

Guess I can't help you, then.

MARYBETH

You like your job, Becky?

REBECCA

Quite a bit.

MARYBETH

Good.  
Never forget how you got here.

REBECCA

How could I?

*She crosses to Corey and Harris.*

PRESTON

And her title is...?

MARYBETH

Acquisitions Editor.

PRESTON  
Hmm.

*Marybeth recognizes this "hmm". They were married for a while.*

MARYBETH  
Oh--no. No.

PRESTON  
What did I say?

MARYBETH  
Blackfeather isn't a place where you can just get the editor's email and dump any old manuscript--

PRESTON  
What about a great one?

MARYBETH  
You write something new?

PRESTON  
I know it's a good book.

MARYBETH  
Why don't you self-publish?  
Told you to do that with *Up the Waterspout*--

PRESTON  
Well, I--

MARYBETH  
You have the money. The process has never been easier.

PRESTON  
Self-publishing, it's a bit tacky.  
I'd never be a real author if--

MARYBETH  
If your book's that good, what are you afraid of?

*Amber enters. Rebecca pulls her into a conversation.*

REBECCA  
Amber.

AMBER  
Hey! Did you see the bathroom?! I started to wash my hands with the bright green stuff in the glass bottle next to the sink, and then I was like, "Why do my hands smell so minty?"

REBECCA

You found the mouthwash, didn't you?

AMBER

That's mouthwash. Huh.

REBECCA

We need to talk about this book.

AMBER

It is so good. I get this, like, feral empowerment high every time I finish reading it. Don't you?

A pause.

REBECCA

I need you to listen to me. I need to be the one to take credit.

AMBER

What?

REBECCA

Swear on your life. You did not edit *Blue Skies Yonder*.

AMBER

Can I ask why?

REBECCA

This isn't personal. It's all about keeping promises that were made before you were hired. Do you understand?

AMBER

Oh. OK.

REBECCA

We're playing a numbers game, and everyone has--

AMBER

Is this like the document I found on your desk the other day with--

REBECCA

No.  
No, this is different.

AMBER

So... I mean--I can lie. But--doesn't it say inside that I--?

*She picks up a copy of the novel and opens it to the copyright page.*

AMBER

"Edited by Rebecca Adler".



A beat.

REBECCA

We're a team. It takes a village to put a book on the shelf.

AMBER

Yeah. No, I like that.

*Rebecca crosses away. Amber puts the book back. Harris exits to the bathroom. Preston crosses to Jillian.*

PRESTON

So you are a woman of many talents, ah.

*Amber crosses to Jillian and Preston.*

JILLIAN

I wear many hats.

PRESTON

So do I, Miss Olivia.

AMBER

Her name's Jillian.

*Jason sees Jillian thrown by this mention of "Olivia". He crosses to make small talk with Rebecca.*

PRESTON

Slip of the tongue.

JILLIAN

I am quite good at what I do, Mr. Fowler. That is your name, right?

PRESTON

Anything I can get for you, Miss Amber?

AMBER

I'll have a red wine, if you have one? I'm not picky.

PRESTON

You'll love a Mourvèdre. I've got a great one, somewhere early 2000s. Hits like a Shiraz with notes of vanilla bean and leather.

AMBER

Sounds great.

*Preston searches for the wine.*

AMBER

Hey, I'm--I'm a big fan of *Ink and Vellum*.

PRESTON

Oh--thank you. I've never met a fan in person, actually.

AMBER

Yeah, I got hooked when you interviewed Corey! I went back and listened to all your episodes. When's your episode with Harris coming out?

PRESTON

My son will not be doing an episode with me.

AMBER

Oh. I thought he said he was--

PRESTON

Call me old-fashioned, but I believe actions have consequences. My son conducted himself in an unprofessional manner.

*Preston finds the bottle and opens it.*

PRESTON

Ah--it's 2001.

AMBER

That wine's older than I am!

*Preston pours Amber a glass.*

AMBER

Wait, have you ever written a book?

PRESTON

It's coming out soon.

AMBER

Who's publishing it?

PRESTON

Haven't decided.

AMBER

Well, we all have to start somewhere!  
And if you write anything like your son--wow!

*Harris enters. Amber takes the wine.*

AMBER

Thanks!

*Amber follows Harris to join a conversation with Corey.*

PRESTON  
Well. No substitute for enthusiasm.

JILLIAN  
What?

PRESTON  
This is just--the most wonderful surprise seeing you again. Did you receive my gift?

JILLIAN  
I did. It was very kind of you. It's right here in my bag.  
*She indicates her clutch purse.*

PRESTON  
Good. If you're going to keep that venture going, you need to look out for yourself.

JILLIAN  
Thank you, Preston.

PRESTON  
So this is the job?

JILLIAN  
It is.

PRESTON  
Good to know.

JILLIAN  
Mm-hmm.

PRESTON  
I'm not shocked. You do have a great head on your shoulders.

JILLIAN  
Gotta be. I'm a saleswoman.

PRESTON  
And a very good one at that.

JILLIAN  
So, you got a book?

PRESTON  
I do.

JILLIAN  
Genre? Demographic?

SAMPLE ONLY - DO NOT COPY

PRESTON

Crime thriller. Adult.

*Jillian cracks a smile.*

JILLIAN

I see why you've thrown the party.

PRESTON

I was promised there would be 40-50 important decision-makers in the room today.

JILLIAN

You don't need 40-50 if you can secure that one "Yes."

PRESTON

Your boss seems to be an idiot.

*Jillian nods.*

JILLIAN

Marketer's advice?  
Harris could do a lot for you.

PRESTON

Hmm.

JILLIAN

I'll put a bug in Corey's ear. Work on your son.

*Preston nods.*

JASON

*(to Rebecca; mid-conversation.)*

Hey, weird question. Does she ever go by Olivia?

*He indicates Jillian.*

REBECCA

No, but—I don't know her that well.

JASON

Yeah. I thought so.

REBECCA

Hmm.

JASON

Anyway, that's wild! Blackfeather books really get on the New York Times bestseller list.

REBECCA

Yes! We've put out 23 titles. Nearly all of them had at least a week in the Times.

JASON

Harris's is gonna be there at least a month.

REBECCA

That's the hope, right?

JASON

What else have you guys published?

REBECCA

Oh--last month, we published this child prodigy, Obadiah Jones. YA sci-fi kind of thing. I put that one on Amber; I'm more of a lit fic gal.

*Jason looks this up.*

JASON

Huh, look at that. *The Coefficient Empire* by Obadiah Jones. Two weeks on the YA Bestseller list. Wow, he's sixteen years old. Five stars on Amazon. Solid Kirkus review, too.

REBECCA

Kind of amazing.

JASON

Weird I didn't hear about it, I love sci-fi.

REBECCA

Corey told me he's talking to Netflix about movie rights.

JASON

Must be all that Heidi McEwan money.

REBECCA

We truly don't deserve her.

*Jason crosses to Harris and Corey. He hands Harris his glass of wine.*

JASON

Do you wanna finish for me?

HARRIS

Thank you, sir.

*He pours the remainder of Jason's glass into his own.*

JASON

Corey Reynolds. My man. Jason Yang.