

Southern Mystique
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SCENE 1

NORMAN walks into a dingy, secluded southern bar wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase. He sets himself down at the counter and places his briefcase next to him. SAVANNAH is cleaning a glass cup behind the counter talking to a patron happily.

Country music plays softly in background while lights turn on

NORMAN: Excuse me? Miss?

SAVANNAH: *(to patron)* So then I said to him, I said, “But why'd ya go along with it in the first place?”

The patron and SAVANNAH laugh loudly.

NORMAN: *(slightly louder)* Excuse me? Are you Miss Savannah Hillenbury?

SAVANNAH: *(looks NORMAN up and down)* No ones eva called me that since I was a young girl. Please, sweetheart, call me Savvy. What can I get ya?

NORMAN: Oh—Savvy—Yes. No drinks for me, thank you. I am here on important business—

SAVANNAH: Business? No wonda you all dressed up in that get-up. Right, Bobby? *(she looks at the only other patron, but he is asleep on the counter)*

NORMAN: I'm here to talk with you about your current establishment. It seems you have some overdue taxes—

SAVANNAH: Taxes? A-who now? My daddy takes care of those things.

NORMAN: Is he around? Maybe I can speak with him about this issue then.

SAVANNAH: *(sadly)* No, he ain't.

NORMAN: Has he left? Is he coming back soon?

SAVANNAH: That'd be a little difficult seein' as he's dead.

NORMAN: Oh. I'm sorry; I was unaware.

SAVANNAH: It's quite alright, Mr . . . ?

NORMAN: Mr. Busche.

SAVANNAH: Well, Mista Butch, my daddy's been dead for ten months now, and the pain ain't gettin' any betta. He used to stand right here besides me, washin' up the cups and dealin' with the drunken crazies who come out with the moon.

NORMAN: I see.

SAVANNAH: I miss him dearly. I really do. (*she sniffles*) He always told me, his last words, ya see, were "There alotta snakes in this world, Savvy baby, so you gotta keep a keen eye." And I still take those words to heart. No one's walked ova me eva since.

NORMAN: (*starts to shift in seat uncomfortably*) What lovely advice.

SAVANNAH: Ain't it? He was a great man. The brightest bulb outta all of us.

NORMAN: A tragedy, really. But do you think, since he has passed on, we may talk in a more private setting about your financial records? It seems, according to your recent . . . trauma . . . that since your father's passing, you have been pushing off the state's taxes a little longer than normal.

SAVANNAH: Ain't you hearin' me? I said my daddy passed, he was the one who took care of that.

NORMAN: Yes, but once he is deceased, you must take over the position or else situations like this—me coming here—happens.

SAVANNAH: Mista Bubbles—

NORMAN: Busche—

SAVANNAH: Butcher—

NORMAN: Busche!

SAVANNAH: I'm misunderstandin' what it is you want from me, Mr. Buck.

NORMAN: (*takes big breath*) I need money for the state. You have not paid for your bar in ten months. Because you are a business, you need to pay just as all the others do in this quaint town.

SAVANNAH: Hmmm.

NORMAN: Do you understand?

SAVANNAH nods slowly, looking carefully around the bar then back to NORMAN.

NORMAN: May we speak in an office maybe?

SAVANNAH: Can't leave the bar unattended. Ain't good ownership.

NORMAN: Yes, well neither is not paying for it . . .

SAVANNAH: Excuse me? How much money you need?

NORMAN: Let me pull out the . . . (*pops open briefcase and shuffles papers*) Yes, yes . . . Here it is. About . . . About three grand.

SAVANNAH: A what now!

NORMAN: It seems that you took out multiple loans a few years back. In approximately 2000.

SAVANNAH: I had to! My daddy started becomin' sick, and I hatta pay for his hospital bills. We didn't have no money to pay for this place so we took some out. Look Mr. Bruise, I get this is ya job and all, but listen to me here. I ain't got no money right now. I ain't gettin' no rest either. I work all day and night. I can't even hiyah any employees to help!

NORMAN: I'm sorry to hear that, Miss. Savannah, but this is the law. I came to collect the money you've been owing the state for ten months. That's almost a year . . .

SAVANNAH: I know that! It's just, I am almost absolutely positive that I sent in some checks jus' the otha day . . .

NORMAN: Really? We didn't receive them . . . You may have been paying the federal taxes.

SAVANNAH: Taxes, money, and some more taxes! Can't a girl mourn in peace without some suit comin' in and barkin' up the tree for money?

NORMAN: You are entitled to your mourning period, certainly, but this is a separate matter. Things must get done, or a more extreme action will be taken.

SAVANNAH: Are you threaten' me?

NORMAN: No! I am merely trying to help you to avoid having other, more dramatic consequences ensue. We have sent you multiple warnings through mail, telephone, and we tried your email, but it was sent right back to us. Over the past ten months we have been trying to contact you, left several messages, all to no avail.

SAVANNAH: I ain't gettin' any of those.

NORMAN: I would not know how that's possible, seeing as we heard your voice over your telephone's answering machine.

SAVANNAH: Must've been my twin. Listen here, Mr. Bunny. I ain't payin' nothin' until you prove to me you sent me all those things you're talkin' about.

NORMAN pulls out papers and slides them over to SAVANNAH.

NORMAN: If you'll see here, it is the history of our calls and letters sent your way. We have proof of doing said actions.

SAVANNAH: Ain't that somethin'.

NORMAN: Now I understand this may be overwhelming, but we can work together to sort out your debt. I'm here to help.

SAVANNAH: Mr. Bungles, where do you hail from?

NORMAN: Hail from? Further north.

SAVANNAH: So that's why you so money hungry. People round here don't give a damn bout money as much as you northerns do. North in Louisiana?

NORMAN: North as in Maine. I came here for your specific case. My boss seems to think I am the most qualified for the job—And I'm not money hungry it's my—

SAVANNAH: So then you don't get it . . . Well, I grew up 'bout ten miles from this here bar and would ride my bike down eva since I could walk to help my daddy. My motha was a good for nothin'. She kept lazin' around the house, mopin' about who knows what and who knows who. She always cried at dinna. Daddy never told me why.

NORMAN: I see.

SAVANNAH: I don't think you do. This bar is all I got left. My mama ran away right afta my daddy died. I'm livin' alone down the road. All alone; by myself! I care for myself, and the bar. This place is my home. My sanctuary or somethin'. You eva have a place like that? Where you get away from it all?

NORMAN: Yes, I have.

SAVANNAH: And were would that be? Not in Maine, I hope.

NORMAN: Somewhere.

SAVANNAH: Can I get you a drink, Mr. Butter?

NORMAN: It's Busche.

SAVANNAH: Of course it is! Mr. Busche please let me do the honor of givin' you a drink. It mustta been a long drive from Maine.

NORMAN: Yes, actually, it was. But I can't drink.

SAVANNAH fixes a drink and puts it in front of NORMAN.

SAVANNAH: Not even my specialty?

NORMAN: I can't . . . I'm technically on the clock.

SAVANNAH: Don't be such a stick in the mud, Mr. Busche. *(she leans forward, bearing her chest)* It is on me, o' course.

NORMAN: Oh . . . well, I mean . . . That's . . . k-kind of you. *(takes big sip then coughs)* I'm not sure if you should be giving out free drinks, considering your debt.

SAVANNAH: I know we'll work it out somehow, Mr. Busche. Now tell me, how do you like good ol' Louisiana so fa?

Lights fade.

SCENE 2

It's only NORMAN and SAVANNAH in the bar. It's dark outside. NORMAN is bent over the counter, hair tussled and suitcase on the floor behind him. SAVANNAH is laughing as the lights turn on, petting NORMAN on the head playfully. NORMAN is slurring his speech.

SAVANNAH: In God name's, Normy! That neva happened!

NORMAN: I sullenly swear, Savvy, I really do. My brother was such an asshole!

SAVANNAH: Well ain't that just an awful feelin'. I think I'd go crazy.

NORMAN: I swear, I s-swear! He really made me climb up all those stairs in my house then just straight pushed me down when I got to the top. S-sent me tumbling and broke my pinky! *(allows SAVANNAH to laugh, then becomes serious)* Really though, Savvy, thank you very, very, very much for being so understanding. This is only my job, you know. I like you. I wouldn't w-want you to lose this magnificently quaint place. I can't believe you are so s-sweet, and kind, and beautiful to boot. You don't find women *(hiccups)* like you these days in Maine.

SAVANNAH: Normy, you're too kind, really. They ain't got beautiful women in Maine?

NORMAN: Not as much as you. You are like, like a piece of art or something beautiful. Like the trees in the fall time. Or a sunset on the beach. Or Mona Lisa.

SAVANNAH: Wasn't Mona Lisa ugly?

NORMAN: That's not the point!

SAVANNAH: Either way, you makin' me blush, Mr. Busche.

NORMAN: I love when you get my name correct. I love you, Savannah Hildenbarry.

SAVANNAH: It's Hillenbury, sweetheart.

NORMAN: Of course! Of course is it! You're face gets reeeeeeeally red when you're embarrassed huh?

SAVANNAH: My face? Well, I don't *really* blush . . .

NORMAN: You don't? What am I seeing then? (*wobbles in chair and almost falls off*) Whoa. Whoooooa.

SAVANNAH: You alright there, Normy?

NORMAN: I think so. I just . . . have this . . . feeling . . . in my head . . .

SAVANNAH: That? Oh right, that's jus' a side effect.

NORMAN: Of alcohawl? I've been drunk before, Savvy, but this feels . . . different.

SAVANNAH: I sure hope so.

NORMAN: Wha? Wha you say?

SAVANNAH: (*louder*) I said, I hope so or else I wasted my money on them damn pills.

NORMAN: You . . . Wait. What pills?

SAVANNAH: Ya know, pills. I put 'em in ya drinks, Mr. Whateva ya name is.

NORMAN: You—you whaa? My drink? Which— The shot? The bottle? The glass?

SAVANNAH: Mostly in the glass. It's hard to crush up a pill like that and make it all invisible in a shot glass.

NORMAN: Shot glass? Wha are you saying, Sav—?

SAVANNAH: Honey, only my closest friends call me that. I'm Miss Savannah to you. And what I done, in case you were wonderin' about that woozy feelin' you got goin' on, well, I drugged your drink right up.

NORMAN: You . . . drugged . . .

SAVANNAH: Ya drink! How hard is that to understand? I need this place more than I need the clothes on my back. It's my daddy's legacy, and I will not let you tax-suit-stick-up-ya-ass men collect it unda your belt and leave it for dead. We worked too damn hard on this lil place.

NORMAN: You're breaking laws. Laws! Right this instant give . . . my . . . not drinking anymore . . .

SAVANNAH: You sure aren't, Sweetheart. I don't let no one take this place from me. Not you, or Stew, or that cute Gregory boy.

NORMAN: They . . . Who?

SAVANNAH: Those other tax boys. You'll join the routine Norman: Once you wake up, you will be on the next train back to Maine. You won't rememba me, or this bar, or even where you came from. But that's the price you pay when you come in here tryin' to bully me into payin' you.

NORMAN: I thought we were getting along . . . I like . . . so pretty . . .

SAVANNAH: You're just like the rest of 'em, Normy. They all try and flatta me, but that ain't cuttin' it. I need ya'll out of my hair and back in Maine where you came from.

NORMAN: I'm not so . . . my job . . .

NORMAN wavers and struggles to remain upright in his seat.

SAVANNAH: And I'll be waitin' for the next one. Maybe I'll get the money to pay 'em back. Maybe I won't. I'll keep goin' until I die, Norman Busche, you betta believe me.

NORMAN: I . . . believe you.

NORMAN's head falls onto table and the lights shut off with the thud.