

## Season 5 Episode 6: Weedsgiving with Zakiya Gibbons

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Kelsey: Hi, and welcome to Normal Gossip. I'm Kelsey McKinney. In each episode of this podcast, we're going to bring you an anonymous morsel of gossip from the real world. I am so excited to have with me today Zakiya Gibbons. Zakiya is an award-winning story editor, podcast host, and writer based in Brooklyn. She's the host of a brand new super fun and juicy reality dating competition podcast called Hang Up. The best way I can describe it for the listeners who have not listened, which you absolutely should, is that it's like, what if *Love is Blind* and *The Bachelor* had a baby, and then that baby grew up to be like, queer as hell.

Zakiya: yessss

Kelsey: Zakiya, welcome to the show! Thank you for being here!

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, hi Kelsey. My heart literally fluttered when you were doing that intro because I cannot believe this moment has come where I can be a guest on Normal Gossip. I love the show. I love the vibes. It's very much my vibe.

Kelsey: Thank you!

Zakiya: Just the space, the fact that at the top of our call, you gave me permission to be messy. I'm like, say less. Please. Say less. I am here for exactly that. So thank you for having me.

Kelsey: I'm so happy you're here. I think the two of us may be trouble today because we recently went to like a conference and people were asking both of us how we are on mic and we were like, I don't know, you just like flirt with the guest.

Zakiya: Yeah, I'm just like, just, just be a vibe. Just, just flirt. And people were like, um, anyone else in the room have tips for how to sound like yourself on mic? I'm like, okay.

Kelsey: Oh, whoopsie. Um, how are you? How's it going?

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Um, I'm one of those people where if you ask me how I am, I'm going to give you the honest tea.

Kelsey: Great

Zakiya: So how I'm doing right now, very excited and grateful to be here with you. But also—

Kelsey: Huge but

Zakiya: So a huge butt, [British accent] literally.

Kelsey: [shrieks]

Zakiya: That's neither here nor there, um, but yeah, okay. I'm feeling a bit flustered and I was going to say disgusted. I don't think that's too strong of a word—

Kelsey: okay

Zakiya: —like, but not, I mean, maybe a little morally disgusted, but I'm just like, I literally have no words to tell you how I'm feeling right now. So I'm in LA right now. I'm based in Brooklyn. I was like, let me go out to LA, have a cute two weeks, get a cute Airbnb, see what that life is like, like really cosplay as a bicoastal baddie.

Kelsey: Yeah. Get some juices, see the sun, drive with your windows down.

Zakiya: Exactly. That was the plan. Got an Airbnb with two of my homies right around the corner from our other friend.

Kelsey: Cute.

Zakiya: Um, yeah. So cute. So, I get to Airbnb and I've been talking about taking a shower. That the whole time being like, Ooh, y'all, I cannot wait to get home, take a shower, you know, smoke some weed, settle into bed all moisturized and clean. And so I go into the bathroom and I start to disrobe. I pull open the shower curtain and literally right as I'm about to put my delicate little foot into the bathtub—

Kelsey: Mm hmm.

Zakiya: —I recoil

Kelsey: Nooo. What's in there?

Zakiya: Not just like one stray hair where they miss something, you know or like caught in the drain. It was a dry tub, full bush worth of pubes, full bush worth, full ball sack worth of pubes sprinkled on the bathtub floor, on the edges, as if I could picture someone lifting their leg and taking a razor. It was like—

Kelsey: You should not be able to picture that. That's, and that's too much

Zakiya: And I literally had to take a picture of it because I was like, Oh, I'm, I'ma channel my Karen. I am filing a complaint. I feel righteous in this. I literally almost vomit And like, I stupidly... went to, um, wash my hands. I was like, okay, well at least the towels must be clean. There's a

fucking washer, washing machine and dryer right there. And I honestly, I feel really stupid for this. I brushed my teeth as well. And so I like wanted to dry my face. I dabbed the corners of my mouth.

Kelsey: No!

Zakiya: Pubes!

Kelsey: NOOOO!

Zakiya: Pubes! On my hands and mouth!

Kelsey: No! No, no, no, no, no.

Zakiya: I mean, I knew they were pubes. Which like, no judgment, but why choose to be like, you know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna shave my ball sack right before I have guests come over like and not clean up. Yeah, and so I'm sleeping in bed, I was like trying to levitate off the bed so I wouldn't have to touch the linen. I usually I like to sleep on my side, but I was like, I don't want these pillowcases touching my face. I used my own hand as a barrier so that my face skin wouldn't touch the pillow, but I'm like now I'm gonna break out. I need to buy more stridex. Are they gonna reimburse me for the stridex?

Kelsey: No, of course they're not.

Zakiya: They're not. They're not.

Kelsey: Nightmare.

Zakiya: I had to, me and my friends had to fight, uh, Airbnb support now and the, the, the host had the audacity to try to make this our fault. It's like, sir, those weren't my pubes. These were your pubes.

Kelsey: Also you have photos that are time stamped. So, like. Mmm.

Zakiya: Yes. Also based off the ethnicity of me and all my friends, these pubes, you cannot connect these pubes back to us. That is not our curl pattern, it's not our pubes. So I—so how I'm doing, I'm feeling grateful for being here, grateful for our friend for housing us while we find, we find a new Airbnb. But I am also feeling thoroughly disgusted and I'm choosing to be a delulu girlie and just lie to myself and be like, none of that ever happened. There were not stranger pubes in my mouth and on my hands. It just didn't happen.

Kelsey: I salute you. Braver than the troops. Incredible. You're brave.

Zakiya: Thank you. It was honestly so harrowing, Kelsey

Kelsey: It sounds harrowing. I, kind of like, not to give away, um, the whole podcast today, but I, I am sorry, but we are going to kind of like get into that kind of trauma

Zakiya: Oh my god

Kelsey: So I just need you to like emotionally and physically prepare yourself

[music/ad break]

Kelsey: Okay, let's get into it.

Zakiya: Ooh, let me get like settled. Let me get my water.

Kelsey: Yeah, settle down.

Zakiya: Let me, it's story time.

Kelsey: My first question for you is like, which holiday do you think has the best, like, setting standards for like a horror movie?

Zakiya: I mean, I feel like the basic answer is Halloween, because that is when drama and like this, the real world is an acid trip.

Kelsey: Okay. So my argument is that I think the like spookiest, most horror primed holiday is Thanksgiving.

Zakiya: Ooh, say why.

Kelsey: Okay, it's like actually fall, winter is coming, so you're like, death is all around me. It's a like, deeply racist and scary holiday that has like, a ton of bad vibes. It's the worst travel days of the year, and like, family can be hard.

Zakiya: Yes, I agree. I feel like Thanksgiving has, when you're speaking of it in terms of horror, what's coming to mind is kind of like *Midsommar*, where it's like visually it's gorgeous and it's spring and it's like, but there's like this like eerie undertone that quickly switches to an overtone of like, Oh my God, I must get the fuck out of here. I feel like Thanksgiving has the same vibe where it's like, Oh, things smell like cinnamon and the fall, the leaves are on the ground and we're all wearing sweaters, but there's this impending doom that no one really wants to name until it's too late.

Kelsey: Okay. So this is the vibe. Like, Thanksgiving doom and dread.

Zakiya: Okay. Oh, goodness. Okay.

Kelsey: Is there, like, anything more terrifying to you than meeting, like, a significant other's family for the first time?

Zakiya: Oh my goodness. So, I've done that once in my life, but I did meet my college boyfriend's parents and let me make it clear, they're so lovely. I really like them.

Kelsey: Oh, this doesn't have to do with the parents. Yeah.

Zakiya: Yeah. But it was still like that doom of like, what are they gonna think of me? We're we're, they're like wasps from Vermont. I am me from Atlanta.

Kelsey: Yep.

Zakiya: It's like always feeling like, you know, I'm in, staying in their house. And, like, I'm just, I'm looking over my shoulder and, like, they're, they're just so waspy and that I'm, different energy. I felt like I was always, not because of them, but I felt like I put the pressure on myself. I was always on edge of, like, oh my gosh, does the, does the fork go to the right or to the left? Am I doing this right? It's just that internal tension. But with having the face of, like, oh my gosh. Hi!

Kelsey: I'm so happy.

Zakiya: Hi Mrs. Johnson, thank you for having me! While I am screaming on the inside.

Kelsey: Yes. Okay, so that, we have now set up the story for today. That's it. Dread, screaming on the inside, feelings of terror

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Okay, got it. Very relatable. Been there.

Kelsey: Our friend of a friend today, his name is Noah. Noah has like been in a lot of relationships that got to the one year mark and then died.

Zakiya: Okay.

Kelsey: And he was like, he can't figure out why, right? Like he's like, I don't understand why I keep like getting these girlfriends that I like, like serial monogamy land. And then we get to the one year mark, and it like doesn't continue. They break up with me. So good for Noah. He gets a therapist. He spends a lot of money. And what he and the therapist come to the conclusion of is that these girls that he's dating can't imagine their future with him. Like he's creating a situation in which they can't see it going further. And he's like, but I do want a future with someone. Like, I want to get married. I want to have kids. I want these kind of like traditional things to happen to me in my future. But you know, the apps are a nightmare.

Zakiya: Okay, I get it.

Kelsey: So he hits the mark where he's like, I'm done, but he's like, I still want a date. So what Noah decides is that he is going to start saying yes to everything his friends invite him to. He's like Shonda Rhimes Year of Yes shit

Zakiya: Yes! We love a yes and, being open, yes, okay.

Kelsey: Yeah! But this kind of like, yes and behavior is how he ends up at like a one man, three hour show with one intermission.

Zakiya: Okay, wow.

Kelsey: The vibes of this show are like... that scene in Girls where Marnie sings "Stronger."

Zakiya: Oh my—I was just actually re watching Girls. So this is very like salient for me. Oh my gosh. Okay.

Kelsey: Yes, like you could not cringe harder. So at the intermission, Noah is like, you know what?

Maybe my year of yes needs to end, right? Like, he's like, maybe this is it. Maybe no more yes. So he goes outside and he's like, you know, I'm going to hit my vape a little. I'm going to have a little weed, feel a little better. And who does he meet but Sydney

Zakiya: Okay, Sydney, alright.

Kelsey: Sydney. And Sydney is like, what do you think about the show? And Noah's like, you never know when you're talking to a performer. You never know when you're talking to someone who knows a performer. So he's like, uh, you know, I've, I've never seen anything like it.

Zakiya: Very diplomatic

Kelsey: And Sydney meets him. Right. And is like, I hate it. I think it's bad. Right?

Zakiya: Yes, Sydney!

Kelsey: And then she's like, Hey, I have these gummies. Would you like to have one? And Noah is like, You know what? Maybe one more yes. He's like, yes, I will have a gummy. Then they stand out there, you know, chatting, gabbing, hitting it off for like five minutes. And Sydney is like, Do you want to not go back in there? Just like play hooky from this whole thing. And Noah's like, Yeah. Yes. Yes.

Zakiya: Ooh. This sounds cute. Like, this sounds like—

Kelsey: Very cute.

Zakiya: If this were me, if I were Noah in the midst of this, I'm like, is this my love story happening right now? It just feels, it's just, this is such a cute meet cute.

Kelsey: I know!

Zakiya: You want to get out of here? Yeah. Like, when that happens, like, you have to say yes. You have to see where it goes.

Kelsey: Yeah. So Noah does, and then we're going to zoom forward because they date for like a year and a half ever since.

Zakiya: Oh, cuuuute! Oh I love that

Kelsey: So that is the setup of this little relationship. Um, I would like to ask you now about a different kind of relationship, which is what is your relationship with weed?

Zakiya: Oh, I am a big time stoner. I smoke every day. Um, not all day, every day. So I feel like I can't call myself a stoner, but I partaketh heavily. I always travel with my, for me it's phone, keys, wallet, vape. I love being high. I, uh, yeah, I, I'm a weed girly.

Kelsey: Okay, so you and Noah are like soul sisters here, right? Noah is like, I don't think that I can consider myself a stoner. That's not my culture, but I love weed. And he has like, you know, one of those fancy cigarette cases to keep his pre rolls. And he has like a heavy grinder. This is like the kind of guy he is.

Zakiya: Yes! All the accouterments. Yeah, no, he has all the accessories. Okay, I love that. An artisanal stoner.

Kelsey: And Sydney's vibe is like, smoking hurts my throat, I only eat edibles.

Zakiya: Okay, okay. I had a moment where I... So I've, I've smoked weed for like years and then the pandemic hit and then you know how people are, I mean, this is like a very privileged thing to say, but like some people were like my pandemic purchase, like something that they bought just to be like, I'm just going to buy an adult, adult toy. Okay. But I was going to say, I'm going to buy a treat for myself to make me feel better. So like my, um, pandemic purchase was this huge, iridescent bong that I named Princess Mononoke.

Kelsey: Oh my god! [laughing]

Zakiya: And I smoked it every day. And naturally, I have a raspy voice. But I was, it was a fucking pandemic. I'm like, I deserve to be high all day, every day. So I was hitting this huge bong for two years.

Kelsey: That was your best friend.

Zakiya: Every day, straight. Literally my best friend. We would literally—we!

Kelsey: You and the princess.

Zakiya: We snuggled with her on my chest, like a little puppy, like asleep on my chest, while we're watching, like gurgle gurgle gurgle. And like that was my best friend but then I realized like oh this is like really impacting my voice.

Kelsey: My ability to breathe?

Zakiya: Yeah, and I'm like, it's literally my job to be on mic. I need to have a voice so I switch to gummies. Cause I'm just like, I, I'm a professional. Like, my voice is my instrument. I need to be careful with this God-given instrument. So then I did become... a gummy girly, but, so I go between both.

Kelsey: Okay, so you're both. I love that.

Zakiya: I'm both. I am versed. I am versed in all the ways and I'm versed with this, you know, I, I like, I like both.

Kelsey: Okay, so as a couple, they are like, don't usually smoke or like have weed together, right? Like it's kind of like an independent time activity unless something stressful is happening.

Zakiya: Okay.

Kelsey: And then they are like, okay, it is time for us to like calm down and debrief and like we will have these edibles together. So they are having these edibles today because Sydney's mom has called and she wants them to come home for Thanksgiving. So it is like, dun dun dun, time to meet the family.

Zakiya: Okay. So as soon as like they got the call, they're like, where are the edibles? We got to decompress from this. Okay.

Kelsey: Yes. This is Noah's like first time meeting the family, right? So he's like, I need the edibles. And her family lives in a kind of big house in a medium-sized southern city, so they're like, we don't wanna sleep there, that's too small. So for Thanksgiving, they need to find a house that's big enough that like everyone can fit in it. Because Sydney and Noah will be there, Sydney's mom and stepdad will be there, Sydney's little sister will be there, and her stepbrother is bringing his new girlfriend. So they've got all of these people coming, and they're gonna search for a house on a service where you can find houses that you might rent. Um, do you have an idea of what we can call this service that they're using to look the house up on?



Zakiya: Okay. Okay. Okay. Um, I was going to say Home4You, but that's not good

Kelsey: Honestly, I love that. Okay.

Zakiya: They went on Home4You dot com

Kelsey: They go on Home4You dot com to try and find a like couple day rental that they can have Thanksgiving at. Okay. Do you trust parents to find a good home on Home4You?

Zakiya: No! I say that with ex—I, and I feel like such a bratt for saying this—

Kelsey: Yeah, you know you're looking for, you're looking for any signs that there might be, you know, pubes in the bathroom.

Zakiya: Right, exactly. Yeah, exactly. But I guess I didn't do a good enough job of that this time around, you know?

Kelsey: So, Sydney is the oldest daughter, and so she has a bossy streak. And she is like, Mom, you have done, you do so much for us as a family. What if I looked for the listings? And the mom is like, you know what, okay, like here's our budget. Noah and Sydney are thrilled about this because now, for Noah, he's like, I get to meet these people on like neutral ground. But they start looking, and there is like nothing, like everything they find has like not enough bedrooms, or it has a small kitchen, or it only has three bathrooms, or it's like ugly and the mom doesn't like it. But one night the mom sends over a beautiful Home4You listing. Like Home4You listing to end all Home4You listings.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh.

Kelsey: It's in a fancy neighborhood, in the like Appalachian foothills.

Zakiya: Okay, so gorgeous, nature, trees, mountains, yard

Kelsey: Wrap around porch. Photogenic.

Zakiya: Oh, fuck yeah.

Kelsey: It has a huge kitchen with, like, a giant island, like Nancy Meyers who?

Zakiya: Yes. Okay, this sounds very lovely.

Kelsey: Five bathrooms. Plenty of bedrooms. Like, light better than the Vatican. It is like, in the price range.

Zakiya: Oh, hell yes.

Kelsey: The mom is like, do you think we should book this? And Sydney and Noah are like, book it right now.

Zakiya: Yes, immediately. It's no question. If I were Noah, I would feel on top of the world. I would feel, I would be like, oh my gosh, my prayers have been answered tenfold. I'd be excited by all the space. It sounds like, it's big enough that you can kind of slink away and get some solo decompression time and no one would really notice that you're gone. It's kind of acceptable to be like I'm gonna like check out the porch or like walk around the foothills of the Appalachia, you know what I mean? Like it seems like they're not going to be on top of each other. It's a beautiful comfortable space! When you're in a beautiful comfortable space, you can be your best self, you know? So I'm very relieved on behalf of Noah.

Kelsey: Okay, mom books the house. We skip ahead in time. Everybody in this family has like a pretty crowded schedule. So the way they're planning for this to work is that everyone will arrive in the early afternoon on Thanksgiving. They will cook Thanksgiving dinner.

Zakiya: Wait, everyone is arriving on Thanksgiving day?

Kelsey: Listen, that's when the house was available.

Zakiya: Uh-ohhh. Okay, anyways, go on, go on.

Kelsey: Okay. Everyone else in the family—Mason and his girlfriend and the parents and the daughter—can drive to this house. Because it is like within a, you know, reasonable driving distance. Sydney and Noah have to fly. They decide to fly very early Thanksgiving morning. So, because their flight's so early, they have to pack the night before. Which puts us at a little bit of a question mark as Noah. Which is, do you bring weed on this family trip?

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, okay

Kelsey: And like, do you bring like a whole kit of weed? Do you bring tinctures? Do you bring pre rolls? Like, what do you do here?

Zakiya: This is—I have a lot of experience with this. Like I said, I'm a phone keys wallet vape type of girl and especially with—I love my family I'm gonna make it clear and we always have a great time—but like sometimes, you know, you do need your solo decompression time, you need just like a little tokes to just be like—

Kelsey: A minute

Zakiya: I've never felt comfortable traveling with like actual flower, you know? I don't do that, but I have friends who do that, more power to them, but just my own comfort levels, I'm gummies and vape when traveling.

Kelsey: Okay, so here's how Noah sees this situation. He's like, pros of bringing weed are my vape pen is small. So it's easy. Gummies are small. It'll calm me down. Thanksgiving is an eating holiday. So this is helpful. Also, we're going to be in this beautiful place and I want to frolic in the field. And, you know, Sydney's younger Gen Z sister may think that this is cool. It could earn me points with Charlotte, right?

Zakiya: Yes, some clout, yeah

Kelsey: Cons, the state they're going to, it's illegal at this time. And he wants to make a good impression.

Zakiya: See, this is where I'm chaotic.

Kelsey: you're still bringing it

Zakiya: I was gonna say, I'm still bringing it. At the end of the day, I'm gonna do me. You know what I mean?

Kelsey: Okay, so does it change your mind though to know that the stepbrother Mason is like uptight, kinda right wing, will declare you an enemy if he finds out you have weed on you?

Zakiya: Oh gosh. [pause] I'm still bringing it. I'm gonna do me like I want to do is, I'm gonna do, but I would be like extra care, but that's like another reason to bring the cards or the vape and the gummies because the flower, there's no hiding that, you take one hit, they're going to smell it.

Kelsey: This is your first disagreement with Noah in that Noah is like invest in my future, deny myself my my like dreams and happiness for what I want long term. I choose not to bring it

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, Noah

Kelsey: But on the way out the door to the airport Sydney's like you have your pen, right? Like did you pack my gummies? And Noah's like, no, I'm trying to make a good impression on your family. And Sydney's like, but what if I need it?

Zakiya: I would be so pissed if I were Sydney. I'd be like, how the fuck dare you deprive me of my medicine?!

Kelsey: So this is how Noah ends up en route to family Thanksgiving with a vape pen and a tin of gummies.

[music/ad break]

Kelsey: Their travel goes fine. A miracle. They take off bright and early. They get to the house in their rental car around noon. There is only one car in the driveway when they get there, and it is a big pickup truck. So they're like, Mason. The stepbrother.

Zakiya: Yeah, I was gonna say pickup truck is giving Mason. Yeah.

Kelsey: Before they're even like fully parked in the driveway, Mason and his girlfriend are like coming out of the house to meet them.

Zakiya: Wow. Okay.

Kelsey: Hypervigilant older sister Sydney is like, do they look upset to you, Noah? Do they seem upset? And Noah is like, I have literally never met these people. How am I supposed to know? He's like, they look normal to me.

Zakiya: They are just walking towards us. I cannot detect their energy yet.

Kelsey: But you know, like when you're in a car with someone and they're stressed, you're like, Oh, the vibes in here are suddenly bad, right? Like I'm concerned. So now he's nervous. He like parks the car. He's like, these people look normal. I don't know what she's talking about. He's like trying to hype himself up. He gets out. He like hugs Mason's girlfriend, Anny May, because she hugs him. But Mason goes in for that like weird handshake that straight men do where they like pat you on the back of the shoulder

Zakiya: Yes. And it's so weird to see them do that. They'll do like the, put it there. Pat pat pat. The next person they hug is like a woman. And they're like, it's so soft. And then it's just like, yo, y'all are doing too much. Relax.

Kelsey: Exactly. This gender performance. It's, it's out of control.

Zakiya: It's out of control.

Kelsey: Mason does this little, like, handshake, shoulder pat situation with Noah. He steps back and he goes, deadpan, it smells like marijuana.

Zakiya: [gasps] What? How? They just got off the plane. They weren't smoking.

Kelsey: No. Noah starts freaking out. He's like, did my vape pen get smashed or something? Like, does the smell live inside my pores and hair? Like, he's like trying to smell himself, right? Like, while he's like trying to manage the situation. And he's like, he's like, I don't, I don't know what you're talking about. Like, I don't think, I don't think that I smell like weed. Like, do you

think that I smell like, uh, marijuana, to Sydney? And Sydney smells him and is like, no, you smell normal. And Mason's like, not you, dude, INSIDE

Zakiya: Oh, phew. Okay. If I were Noah, I'd be like, Oh, thank God.

Kelsey: yes

Zakiya: I'd be so relieved that the target is not on me. Oh my gosh. Because like, what a way to start the trip. They're not even inside the house. They literally just closed the car door. And to be already accused? Okay. Wow. But that's also good because, but already, like, it's throwing off the scent, Mason's scent.

He's already directing it elsewhere, not Noah and Sydney. So I'd be like, okay, this is actually working in my favor. They won't suspect me. Because it was already there.

Kelsey: Yes, Noah's like so relaxed by the fact that it's not him that he like forgets who he's talking to and he's like, how do you know what weed smells like?

Zakiya: oh my goodness

Kelsey: And he doesn't mean it like in a mean way, like he really wants to know because Sydney has like briefed him that Mason is like the kind of person who's always sending articles that's like, weed is laced with fentanyl and is a gateway drug and you know, da da da da da.

Zakiya: One of those, yep.

Kelsey: And Mason's like, I have self control, it doesn't mean I live under a rock. So now it's like, yikes o'clock. Right? Like, everyone is stressed.

Zakiya: Okay defensive. Ay, ay, ay. Why, Mason?

Kelsey: They go inside, and sure enough, it like, reeks of reefer, like it is so pungent walking through the door that Noah's like, this is crazy. The house is like the same as the photos, right? Like it's clearly the same house, but it's like slightly off. Right? Like the whole place is kind of dark. There's like, some weird things that have been added to the walls, right? Like a taxidermy thing, and like a kendo blade, and like, it smells like a frat house

Zakiya: Ohhh, okay, then that's not cute.

Kelsey: Can you describe the smell of a frat house to me?

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Oh my goodness. Just shitty cheap watery beer like I'm imagining a dive bar, but at least the smell's kind of part of the experience. Yeah, I mean so you kind of like allow for it. Um, I'm also like imagining, you know, like that smell, like when you go into PetSmart or Petco and it's just like that general like animal smell, you know, of just like, like their like, like

kitty litter, like all the dried up stuff that is used that they all like frolic in, like ferrets. I don't know, I'm just like channeling when I was a little kid where my favorite thing to do was to go to PetSmart, um, and play with the ferrets. That's how I spent my childhood.

Kelsey: So gross.

Zakiya: Um, I don't know why the fuck I did that. But I'm like, I'm imagining it to smell like PetSmart. Like where the ferrets are.

Kelsey: Yes, that's like, exactly right. And it's like all of that plus like the vague scent of like Clorox wipes. Right? Like someone like kind of tried.

Zakiya: I'm imagining, like, like, Hawaiian Ocean Spray. Like when someone takes a giant shit and they think like two sprays of Febreze will help? And it's like, no! Like that actually made it worse because now it smells like pure shit and like someone just like dropped a flower petal in here, like that's not doing anything and now it's just sweet and savory.

Kelsey: Yes. Febreze smell. Okay, so that's the situation. Mason's like, you guys go to that room. And Noah's like, okay, great. So he's like, I'll take the bags to the room. And Sydney's like, I'm going to look around. He's like, great. So he takes his, he takes their bags to the little room that they're going to stay in. The whole walk there, he's like filling with dread. He knows it's irrational, but he's like, what if the mom thinks that this is me somehow?

Zakiya: Oh, that's the anxiety speaking. Oh, Noah.

Kelsey: And he's like, he's like, I've already had this little tiff with Mason, like he could very easily throw me under the bus. He's like, paranoia 101, right? He's like, I think we need to call Sydney's mom and just like, preemptively tell her that the house smells like a frat house so that she like, knows what she's walking into.

Zakiya: Yes, I, that is relatable as someone with anxiety. It's like, what can I do? Try to control everyone's reaction by controlling the situation, which is like, we know that's not how life works. But I, that resonates. Like, let me preempt all of this and over explain.

Kelsey: Okay, so you think this is a good idea? A little bit.

Zakiya: I'm not necessarily saying it's a good idea. It's what I would do.

Kelsey: Okay. [laughing]

Zakiya: You know what I mean?

Kelsey: Great clarification.

Zakiya: You know what I mean? Like, I too would be like, let me make it abundantly clear and over communicate that I too detect this problem and it was not me.

Kelsey: Yes. So Noah is like, that's what I'm going to do. He drops the bags, he's like, time to find Sydney, but he cannot find her. And this house is big, right, like he checks the bathroom near their room, she's not there. He checks the other bedrooms, she's not there. He checks like the big primary room and that big tub and she's not in there. He's like checking the big dining room, no Sydney. He's walking around the kitchen island looking for her when from outside he hears a scream.

[scream]

Zakiya: Oh my god. And now I'm just remembering that you said this is a horror story. Oh my god, this is like the moment in *Midsommar* when it turns. It's like, oh my god, they're in the cute fields on shrooms. And this is like when it turns. Oh my god. A literal scream. Okay.

Kelsey: A scream. [building suspenseful music] Noah sprints across the biggest living room in the world. He like vaults over a coffee table. He's like throwing open the doors out of this wraparound porch, running around the corner.

Zakiya: That's sexy.

[record scratch]

Kelsey: Where he finds—

Zakiya: Like, if you hear me scream, you better run. To my rescue. Yes, Noah. Yes.

Kelsey: He runs. [music returns] He comes around the corner. He finds Sydney and another woman. So he like scans Sydney quickly and is like, she appears to be fine. Like not hurt, even though she screamed. And then like his, his quick brain is like, this woman cannot be Charlotte, right? Like she cannot be the younger sister. She has no fine line tattoos. She is not dressed like Billie Eilish. She like is not young enough. She's also not old enough to be Sydney's mom. So, like, he's like, this is a stranger, right? Like, Noah's lizard brain is like, stranger, stranger, stranger. So he steps, like, in front of Sydney, weirdly, to like, put himself between her and the stranger. And then he does what, like, everyone interacting with a stranger and feeling a little uncomfortable does and, like, sticks out his hand and is like, Hi, I'm Noah!

Zakiya: Yeah, yes, okay.

Kelsey: And the stranger does not tell him her name. She's like, I'll be done in a second.

Zakiya: Interesting. I'll be done in a second?

Kelsey: And that's when he sees it. All around the woman on the porch, it is red,

Zakiya: [gasps]

Kelsey: Like deep burgundy red.

Zakiya: What?

Kelsey: And Noah is like, blood, murder, murder house. Noah is like, how am I gonna introduce myself to Sydney's parents being like 'hi my name is Noah and your daughter has died on account of this Home4You being cursed as hell. There's blood everywhere. Help!'

Zakiya: Wait! So I have a question. This blood, is it in like an intentional circle, like witchy circle where it's like intention or is it like blood splatter like someone got hurt, like freshly spilled?

Kelsey: It's a ton of liquid.

Zakiya: It's just blood all over the ground?

Kelsey: And when Noah steps back, oh my God, he like inhales and he's like, oh, it's not blood, it's wine.

[music ends]

Zakiya: Oh my God. I literally was holding my breath.

Kelsey: But it's like so much wine that it's like still very concerning, right? He's like, why is there so much wine here? Why is this stranger here?

Zakiya: And why does she say, I'll be done? Yes. Not like, oh, I'll clean this up in a second, or, like, what, I'll be, so that, that implies intention. Anyways, oh my gosh.

Kelsey: Okay. The woman gets a hose and is like, I'm gonna clean this off. Okay. Like, give me a minute and it'll be done. Okay. And so Noah and Sydney like back up a little, but they're like still kind of there. And Sydney's like, why are you out of breath? And Noah's like, I'm out of breath because I ran across the house to be, to rescue you from danger. Why did you scream? And Sydney's like, she scared me.

Zakiya: So did this woman just like materialized?

Kelsey: Yes. And Noah's like, you scared me screaming. And then Sydney's like, Oh my god, you ran for me.



Zakiya: Oh my god, why are Sydney and I the same?

Kelsey: She's like, oh my god, that's like so nice.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, that is so funny because when you said that Sydney was like, why are you out of breath? I'm like... Girl, be grateful that he ran for you. Like, not to be one of those people, but I would be like, Oh my god, you ran for me? Like, I am like...

Kelsey: Noah's like, yeah baby, of course I ran for you.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh.

Kelsey: And the woman on the porch is like, Can the two of you do this inside?

Zakiya: Stop being so corny and cringy in my vicinity.

Kelsey: Yes. So Noah and Sydney go back inside. Noah's like taking those kind of like in through the nose, out through the mouth breaths that you take to try and calm your heart rate back to a normal level.

Zakiya: Literally me all morning trying to unremember the pubes on my face. So yes, I'm very familiar with the box breathing method. Yes. I get it. Breath work.

Kelsey: Once his breath gets, like, back to a reasonable level, he remembers that he was trying to find Sydney to ask her a question. Can you remember what the question was?

Zakiya: Oh my god. I was so distracted by the blood fakeout that I genuinely don't remember the question.

Kelsey: So he wants to call Sydney's mom and tell her that it smells badly at the house.

Zakiya: Oh, right. Right, right, right. Okay.

Kelsey: So he offers his question up to Sydney and Sydney is like, I think, yes, we should do that. She's like, I think that's a good idea because, like, it's beautiful, it's totally gonna work, but, like, we want to manage her expectations.

Zakiya: Good. Okay, good. And that's good to get the cosign from Sydney. Like, she knows her mom best. If this is a good move, it's a good move.

Kelsey: So Sydney calls her mom and is like, Hey, how far out are y'all? And her mom's like, Oh, we're like 25 minutes out. We can't wait to get there. Da da da da da. And Sydney's like, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's great. Um, here's the deal. The house is so beautiful and like, we really

love it. And also just wanted to give you a heads up that it really smells like pot. She could hear her younger sister in the background going sick. Hell yeah. Love this.

Zakiya: Yes. Oh wait, wait, wait, with the mom, is the mom like Mason where she's like very anti and judgmental or... what's her relationship to weed?

Kelsey: The mom is like, we don't know, right? Like Sydney and Noah have not tested this. It is untested territory.

zakiya: Okay, okay.

Kelsey: But the mom's response to this isn't like, oh my god, the house is occupied by heathens. Her response to this is like, is there anything you can do to fix it so that it doesn't smell bad? Which is like, a fair question. The mom's like, can you air it out? And they're like, totally, we'll air it out before you get here. So they like, open all the windows and doors. This is a great idea in theory, except that now the wine smell from the porch is wafting inside.

Zakiya: Oh my god, how long does it take to hose it off?

Kelsey: Great question.

Zakiya: Like, okay, okay.

Kelsey: Anny May tries to find some candles, in the hopes that this would help. Um, but she can't find any. All she can find is incense and she lights these. And so now it, like, it smells crazy in there.

Zakiya: that was not the move. That was not the move. That would make it even worse.

Kelsey: Yes. So, smells crazy in there. Anny May and Noah are both freaking out because they're about to meet their, like, significant other's parents, but they're freaking out in, like, different ways. Noah can't stop, like, picking things up and putting them back down.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Like, relatable. Yeah, let me feel like I'm being helpful, Evan, but you're so anxious that you're not thinking straight. So you're literally just doing nothing, but you feel, you're performing as if you're doing.

Kelsey: Anny May is just talking. Like, to no one, right? Like, she is just, like, verbally talking, talking, talking for this whole 20 minutes.

Zakiya: Oh, gosh.

Kelsey: When they hear the car, like, start to come up this little, like, dead street, Noah suddenly realizes exactly why Anny May and Mason, like, ran out to meet them in the driveway, and it's because he's like, I don't want to meet anyone in here. Like, it smells weird.

Zakiya: Oh, I see. Right. Okay, that makes sense. And then it's kind of like a shared communal thing where it's like, hey, heads up, let me escort you in. It's like, pre-trauma bonding, you know—

Kelsey: Yes, versus like welcome to my home. It smells like weed.

Zakiya: I get it. I get it. Okay. Okay.

Kelsey: Yes. Noah, like, grabs Sydney. They go outside to meet the parents. Parents get out of the car, right? They're hugging. Everyone's hugging. Charlotte's like looking at her phone. Noah's like super aware of his like posture, right? He's like trying to stand up straight. And the mom is like to the young, to the younger sister like Charlotte stop looking at your phone, like I need you to take the pies that I bought at the store and put them in the fridge. Like do it right now before they melt and Charlotte's like, ugh, okay. So she like goes inside with the pies. And the mom turns to Noah and is like, Can you help me carry things? I have so much to carry. And Noah's like, I would literally love nothing more than a task. Thank you.

Zakiya: Exactly. Exactly. There's nothing more grounding than a task when you feel frenetic and all you want to do is feel helpful but you're too anxious to think, like, what can I do

Kelsey: Yes, so he has like big turkey, right, like giant, giant turkey, two heavy bags of groceries on the other shoulder. He's like walking toward the front door when he hears a shrill, high pitched yelp.

[yelp]

Kelsey: He scans and he is like, Sydney is out here with me. Everyone is out here with me except for Charlotte.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Uh oh.

Kelsey: And then he's like, oh my god, the strange woman. Right? He's like, I should have checked on that woman. I should have made sure she left this house. He's like, we let Charlotte, a like little 18 year old girl, go running into this house by herself with a stranger in there. Noah is running again. He is running with the turkey. It's like bouncing against his arm. He's like, I'm going to be bruised for weeks.

Zakiya: He's like, Noah is really channeling his Superman, running as he's like tearing his shirt open. Wow. Okay. Gallant.

Kelsey: He's blazing around the corner. He comes like into the kitchen at full speed where Charlotte is fine. She is laughing, like bent over laughing. The doors of the fridge are open. Because she has gone to put the pies in there. And inside the fridge...

Zakiya: I'm scared.

Kelsey: It's just like a wall of beer, like hundreds of cans of beer, just like stacked perfectly to fill up every single inch of fridge

Zakiya: Wow. Okay. Wow. Wait, she screamed at that?

Kelsey: Because she was excited. She's 18.

Zakiya: Oh, okay. Okay, okay. I'm very, do you happen to know what kind of beer it was?

Kelsey: It's like Natty Light. It is not good beer. Right?

Zakiya: It like she, I'm not screaming at beer. Okay. If it was some delirium, like a nice belgian ale, I'd be like, ahhh!

Kelsey: you're yelling.

Zakiya: I'm yelling. Natty Light. I'm like, please, this is taking up space.

Kelsey: Charlotte is like, this is the best day of my life. Right. She's 18 years old. She's like, this house smells like pot, which is funny. The fridge is full of beer, which is funny. Yes. She's like taking photos on Snapchat. Right. She's like, Noah, get in my photo

Zakiya: it's great content.

Kelsey: Yeah, so Noah's like in the photo with the turkey in front of the fridge full of beer when, like, everyone else arrives and is like, Charlotte, are you okay? And she's like, yeah, of course I'm okay, why? And they're like, because you screamed, like, Noah came running in here to help you. And Charlotte, like, rolls her eyes. They're like, why are you yelling? Like, this is so silly. Meanwhile, the stepdad is like, it smells like college in here, right? Like, he's like, it's crazy in here. And Charlotte's like, I hope my college is just like this.

Zakiya: Okay, yeah, she's getting that, that pre college experience. She's loving it. I'm glad to hear that the stepdad seems chill about it. He's acknowledging it, but not like, oh, he's just like, it is what it is. That's good. To balance out the anxiety of the others. They were all bringing very anxious energy.

Kelsey: Yes, so they have to, like, unload a lot of the beers out of the fridge, which is fine. Beers don't, like, go bad, you know? So they have to, like, make room for the pies and the turkey and

all these, like, premade casseroles and shit, right? So they do this, they get together, they unload a lot of the beers. The stepdad opens one for himself and offers one to Noah. Do you accept this beer?

Zakiya: Yes, I do accept it because it feels like a nice gesture, you know? Like, let's bond. Uh, you know, I'm attending to your needs. Do you want to? I mean, even if I didn't want the beer, I would still accept it. I would even maybe, because I'm a people pleaser.

Kelsey: Even if you're allergic to beer, you'd be like, thank you so much.

Zakiya: I'd still take a sip, to be like, oh my god, thanks. And then like, I, we're now friends. Yeah, I, I'm accepting the beer.

Kelsey: Noah is like, I, he's like, I feel that two tests are happening. The first test is like, I have been offered a beer. He's like, but the second test is like, am I going to take that beer and go sit on the couch and not be helpful?

Zakiya: Oh yeah. No, that is not the right thing to do. I feel like Noah would never, he is sprinting and vaulting across coffee tables to attend to these people. He's not going to then just sit and drink the beer while everyone else tries to air out the house and shit.

Kelsey: Yeah, he would never. So he's like, thank you so much for the beer. I will drink this while I help prep. He's like, boys can have it all, right? Yes. He's chopping. He's slicing. He and Sydney cook a lot, so they have like a good banter, a good system. He's like on his best behavior.

Zakiya: That's the other test. It's like how pro social you are in the kitchen and also, like, what level of adult are you? Do you know how to peel a carrot? Do you know your basic knife skills? You know what I mean? I bet they were also looking out for that, too. So that's good that Noah already had that in the bag. And enough where he can chit chat. Like, that's, that's points in my book

Kelsey: While they're doing this, Mason and Anna May come up from their room, which is downstairs. And they do not look happy. They're like, this house is a nightmare. I don't like it here. Like, they, these people clearly are heathens. They have no morals. They're like, it smells even worse in the basement.

Zakiya: I would imagine so. If it feels, if it smells that disgusting on the main floor, you can only imagine what the basement smells like.

Kelsey: And Anny May is like, I had a boyfriend that smoked weed in high school and he moved to California and went to UC Santa Cruz and changed his major to environmental law and then he campaigned for Bernie Sanders.

Zakiya: Life ruined! Evil!

Kelsey: Yes. And so Noah and Sydney are like. Oh! Mm hmm.

Zakiya: That sounds terrible. Wowwww.

Kelsey: That's crazy for real

Zakiya: Oh my god, gotta beware

Kelsey: But everyone is like, mm hmm, be careful out there, in response to this, except for Charlotte because teens are ruthless, who immediately turns to the stepdad and is like, weren't you a huge pothead in college?

Zakiya: Yes, Charlotte, bringing the chaos. I appreciate Charlotte's presence in this story.

Kelsey: And the stepdad is like, no, nuh-uh, no. And so everyone's eyes are just like big eye emoji, right? Like staring at him like, um, we think maybe you were. And so the stepdad to get out of this is like, what can I do to help? Let me help.

Zakiya: Deflect. Yeah.

Kelsey: Deflect. And so they're like, well, can you grate cheese? Like put a bunch of it in a bowl. He's like, of course I could do that. But then they start looking and there's like no cheese grater to be found. So he's like looking in the hall closet by the front door when he hears a knock at the door.

Zakiya: Uh oh, okay.

Kelsey: Do you answer this?

Zakiya: Yes, I do. I do. But I hold my breath, because I'm like, what other motherfucking shenanigan—is it the lady? Like, yeah, I'm answering the door.

Kelsey: Noah opens it. There is a man standing there. The man is like, hey, is Thad here?

Zakiya: Is, wait, Thad, T H A D, not dad? Thad.

Kelsey: Thad.

Zakiya: Okay, Thad. I know that that is a name, but I've never encountered a Thad, and I've never encountered someone saying that name in my presence. Which is why I was like, wait, say that again. Okay, there's, is Thad here. Wow.

Kelsey: And Noah's like, No, no, he's like in his brain, like, what's the stepdad's name? Right? Like he's like, he's like, Oh, and this guy's like, Oh, I mean, I usually just like swing by. Do you like need an appointment now or something?

Zakiya: Whattttttt

Kelsey: And Noah's like, I don't know, man. Like we're just staying in this Home4You. Like I can't help you. And this guy's like, Oh, okay. Yeah. Like, no problem, man. Sorry to bother you. And then he leaves, and Noah's like, What?

Zakiya: And I feel like at this point, everyone just got, I feel like they're only like an hour in.

Kelsey: Yes!

Zakiya: And this whole Thanksgiving weekend hang, and so much has happened, oh my god, there's too much to process.

Kelsey: Okay. Noah is like, my brain is so tired, I don't have time for this. He's like, I can't look for this grater anymore. Like, I'm done. He like makes his way back to the kitchen, he positions himself to chop when he hears another blood curdling scream.

[scream]

Zakiya: What is going on?

Kelsey: This time, it is coming from one of the bedrooms. At this point, you are Noah. You are here with your hopefully future in laws. You have run twice for screams about nothing. Do you run?

Zakiya: Honestly, yes I do, because I've already now had the reputation of running to people's rescue. And if I don't run this third time, this person will take it personally, like, why didn't you run for me? You know what I mean? Like, you have to keep up the appearance of man who runs to save the day. You know what I mean?

Kelsey: Yes. This is your brand now.

Zakiya: This is your brand now. Like, he put himself in this position. You know, he could have calmly walked, he could have hollered, everything alright, but like, you gotta run the third time. And you said that this scream is blood curdling. This isn't a yelp like before.

Kelsey: No. Big scream.

Zakiya: This isn't like a, just like, blood curdling... You gotta, you gotta, you gotta, you gotta sprint. You gotta sprint.

Kelsey: Noah sprints. He goes down the hallway. He is the first one there to encounter Anny May sitting on the bed facing an open wardrobe, both hands over her mouth. And Noah's like, what is it? Are you okay? And Anny May says nothing. Her hands are shaking.

Zakiya: Oh!

Kelsey: And she like lifts one arm and points towards the wardrobe

[unsettling music begins]

Zakiya: Just like in the movies, literally like in the movies

Kelsey: Noah is sweating so much. Like, he's like, my senses have never been higher. He's so scared.

Zakiya: I'm scared

Kelsey: He pivots as slowly as possible. Right? Like he's like preparing himself. He's like, prepare myself for the worst. Right? Like pivot toward the wardrobe. Slowly. Eyes low. Be ready to run. Right? He's so scared. At the bottom of the wardrobe is a huge Ziploc bag. And it is stuffed with weed.

[music ends]

Zakiya: Oh, fuck yeah. I'm so relieved. Okay, my thought of what was in the closet I'm like, oh, it's an animal carcass being like blood letted or whatever, like blood draining into like a basin of blood. It's just a carcass hanging, but oh my god. Bags of weed?

Kelsey: Mm-hmm.

Zakiya: I should have fucking, duh. obviously it's the weed delivery guy. Of course. Okay. Oh, hell yeah.

Kelsey: Okay. I am going to share my screen with you. Do not describe the person in this photo, but can you describe what they are holding?

Zakiya: Okay. Oh, my gosh. Okay. [gasps] Oh my gosh, okay. This is the mother load. If, it is someone holding a huge, it looks bigger than gallon. What's the size bigger than gallon size?

Kelsey: I have no idea.

Zakiya: But it's bigger than a gallon size typical Ziploc. It's like maybe a few gallons worth of, looks some green fresh weed. A huge baggie. And it looks kind of professional in a way that like



it looks like they also squeezed all the air out of it. So it's like nice and flat. It looks professional. It doesn't look like someone just haphazardly dumped some spare weed in a bag. Like, this looks like a weed dealer's bounty. Oh, it looks delicious. Charlotte was probably so excited.

Kelsey: Yes. So, because of the scream, everyone is now standing in this doorway, except for Mason who is, like, comforting Anny May. And Noah is, like, having impure thoughts, right? Like, he's looking at this bag of weed and he's like, this is the most excited I've ever been in my life.

Zakiya: I feel like the universe keeps answering his prayers. Like in this moment, I'd be thinking am I one of god's favorite children?

Kelsey: Okay, this is exactly what Noah's thinking. Noah is like, how did I end up holding this bag? I don't even remember picking it up, right? He's like, holy grail Most exciting day of my life. Also, somewhere deep in the back of his mind, he's like, felony?

Zakiya: Yeah. That's what I'm saying. It's like the amount of—oh yeah, because I forgot. Because y'all said You said that we're in a state where this is illegal.

Kelsey: Uh huh.

Zakiya: And so this isn't just like, oh, like someone's stash that they left behind. This is like a dealer's worth.

Kelsey: Yes.

Zakiya: Amount of weed.

Kelsey: Okay, so you're Noah. You're so happy, but you're trying to seem neutral. The whole family is standing in the doorway. You need to show them this bag of weed, but like, how? Do you, like, present it like Simba? Like, how do you, how?

Zakiya: Me, as someone who always does the most, like, to overcome, like, I, if I were Noah, I'd be like, okay, I need to perform as someone who is also morally opposed to this, if not neutral. And just because I am just so expressive, me thinking I'm doing a neutral face. I feel like there'd be a glimmer in my eye. So I feel like I would overcompensate by performing shock And so I feel like I'd be like, oh my god Like I would like eyebrows furrowed, looking back and forth between the bag and the people be like, can you believe someone would leave this in a Home4You where we are coming and they don't know our relationship to this substance?! This is offensive! Like I wouldn't do too much but I would try to show in my body language and face that I am not here for this.

Kelsey: Noah thinking very rapidly is like I'm gonna hold it really flat with both hands, like a pizza delivery man, and maybe that will look neutral. Right? Like, this doesn't indicate anything.

Zakiya: I buy that. I feel like I would do the most and hold it, like, with my fingertips. Like you're holding, like, a dirty napkin far away from your body.

Kelsey: Like you're holding a towel covered in pubes.

Zakiya: Exactly, exactly. Like the towel covered in pubes that I fucking wiped my face with. I would just be like, how dare the Home4You people put us in this dire situation.

Kelsey: Everyone gasps at this, obviously, because it is an obscene amount of weed

Zakiya: It is an obscene amount.

Kelsey: Sydney, forgetting where she is, is like, Oh my god, that is more weed than I have ever seen in my life. The stepdad, also forgetting where he is, is like, I've seen more weed than that.

Zakiya: I like the stepdad. I like him.

Kelsey: Charlotte is like, I told you. And then she takes the weed back to the kitchen, carrying it like the way she would have carried, like, her Samantha American Girl doll, right? Like, she's like, this is my baby.

Zakiya: The way that I would carry Princess Mononoke the bong. Which is literally how I would carry it. This is my child.

Kelsey: Like a baby. This is my beautiful daughter.

Zakiya: Okay, get it. Yes.

Kelsey: The only people truly unhappy here are Anny May and Mason.

Zakiya: Yes. The fact that she's, like, shuddering and crying and—

Kelsey: Grow up.

Zakiya: Yeah, exactly. Grow the fuck up, dude. Grow up.

Kelsey: They're like, I don't want to be in a house with this much weed in it. Like, I'm scared.

Zakiya: Oh my god.

Kelsey: They're like, we're leaving. And Noah's like, Bye! Bye, Anny May! Bye, Mason!

Zakiya: Bye! See you at dinner!

Kelsey: Bye! See you never!

Zakiya: Yeah, good riddance.

Kelsey: Okay, we have made it through this enterprise. We go back to the kitchen to chop things, but everyone's like, emotions are heightened.

Zakiya: But wait, where did they put that big bag?

Kelsey: Charlotte carried it like a baby into the kitchen, where she set it on the counter.

Zakiya: Okay, so it's just in the kitchen, in public view.

Kelsey: It's just in the kitchen, in public view, on the counter.

Zakiya: Got it.

Kelsey: They go back in there, they're chopping, everyone's trying to, like, calm down. The mom is, like, apologizing to Noah. And she's like, I'm so sorry that you've had this experience. Like, I never want you to feel uncomfortable around our family. Like, I don't want this to be hard. And Noah's like, oh, I'm not, I'm not uncomfortable. Like, I think this is funny. And the mom's like, you do?

Zakiya: uh-oh

Kelsey: And Noah's like, yeah, I mean, like, obscene quantities of anything is funny, right?

Zakiya: Yeah, exactly.

Kelsey: Like, having a lot of stuff, that's inherently comedic. And the mom, like, trying to be casual is like, Oh, yeah, like, do you smoke pot?

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, I am lying to her face.

Kelsey: You are?

Zakiya: Oh my god, yes. I'd be like, I mean, I don't judge it for others. It's not for me, but you know, I don't judge other people for doing it. You know, I'm not even used to being around weed like that, so seeing that amount just really shook me, you know, but yeah, no, I'm lying, I'm lying, and I guess if I end up getting married to Sydney, I'm like, we're, I'm gonna continue this lie that I am straight edge.

Kelsey: Yes. Noah is like panicking. He's like vibrating. He's like, if I could be that Homer Simpson meme like straight through the hedges, I would be, right? He's like trying to figure out

how to quote Bill Clinton and be like, Oh, well, I mean, I didn't inhale, in some way that like won't incriminate him.

Zakiya: [laughing]

Kelsey: But really, he's just standing there open mouth saying nothing. When Sydney is like, Mom. Of course he smokes pot. Everyone smokes pot now. It's totally normal. Like, we live in a place where it's legal. Pot is not this, like, scary thing anymore. And the mom is like, Oh! Well, how'd you get into that?

Zakiya: Well, if I'm Noah, I'm turning towards Sydney being like, you take the lead on this. Like, I'm like, yeah, I'm like, now this is a... A and B conversation between mother and daughter, and this, I'm segueing the hell out of here.

Kelsey: Noah's like, uh, I mean, I, I guess high school? I guess I, I know it from high school? And the mom is like, I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to my daughter.

Zakiya: Ooh. See that was the subtext that I detected. It's like, she, she pivoted to the daughter. That's when I was like, I'm gonna go, uh.

Kelsey: I'm gonna leave, goodbye.

Zakiya: Try to grate this cheese without a grater, brb

Kelsey: Sydney is like, Mom, I do an edible once in a while. There's no reason to freak out. It's legal. It's fine. And the mom to her credit is like, well. Then I guess this is like an extremely hospitable Home4You.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, that like passive aggressive mom response. I mean, to be clear, my mom isn't like that. She is a black woman from the South. She is direct. But that is so funny. Well, I guess that's lovely for you, dear

Kelsey: that's great for you, sweetie. Yeah. But at least she's not being an asshole about it. Right? Like that could be worse. And the mom is like, so hospitable for you, she picks up the bag, she's like, look at all this pot, right? Cause it's like, just right there, and it's huge. And no one is like, sure exactly how this happens, but as she picks it up, it intersects with the knife in her right hand.

Zakiya: Are you kidding me?

Kelsey: And opens the vacuum seal.

Zakiya: Are you, wait, are you kidding?

Kelsey: The flower goes everywhere. Like, thousands of buds rolling. All the food is seasoned.

Zakiya: It is flooding with weed.

Kelsey: Like, it is flooded with weed.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Are you kidding? I, honestly, I feel like the universe is like, Oh, I'm gonna have fun with Noah today. Make sure all the wildest shit happens.

Kelsey: Yes. There is like, a four second pause where everyone is silent. And then suddenly everyone is like laughing so hard they're crying, right? Like everyone is like, this is the funniest thing that's ever happened to us. Like, freed from Anny May and Mason, we are like, having fun

Zakiya: It is like, yeah, symbolism. That is like the moment in the short story when I'd be raising my hand in class and being like, this is a metaphor for leaning into the love of—you know what's funny though? I, out of all the times that all these people are screaming, that's when I would scream and be like, Oh, shit! Like, that's when I'm screaming. When it's raining nugs. And like, the fact that they are silent for this magical, cosmic moment. Like, y'all, this is your cue to scream. And then that's my cue to like, kick a nug to the side and scoop it up for later.

Kelsey: Put it in your little pocket.

Zakiya: And put it in my pocket.

Kelsey: I'm cleaning it off this counter to throw it away.

Zakiya: Exactly. Let me help you clean this up.

Kelsey: Everybody's having fun now, right? Like we're opening wine. Things are like almost ready to go in the oven. Even mom is like joking. She's like oh my god, it's Weedsgiving because there is just like bud on everything

Zakiya: Okay Mom! Oh, I love the switch in energy. We just needed to get rid of Mason and Anny May, they were being such Debbie Downers.

Kelsey: I know. Everyone laughs at this. Charlotte has this like little smirk. And she's like, Have you been outside?

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. [gasps] Oh, I know what's gonna happen.

Kelsey: What do you think is gonna happen?

Zakiya: It's a fucking weed farm! It's a fucking weed farm. They're growing weed.

Kelsey: Everyone is looking at each other nervously. Everyone is like, okay, we should go see what's outside. There's like a palpable nervous excitement in the air. And the stepdad is like, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. We can't all go outside. Someone needs to like find a broom and we need to harvest what has been thrown.

Zakiya: Yes.

Kelsey: And he's like, I need help with this. I can't do it myself. And Noah is like, our poor sweet Noah, he's like, I will help you.

Zakiya: Yes. They already had that moment where they bonded when they handed off the beer, like, let's continue it.

Kelsey: Exactly. So Charlotte leads, like, Mom and Sydney outside, and Noah, our, like, sweet boy, goes downstairs to try and find a broom.

Zakiya: Okay. Downstairs where Mason and Anny May were like, it is unacceptable downstairs. Okay.

Kelsey: Mm hmm. He is, like, heading downstairs and it is, like, every step is creaking.

[creaky stair sounds]

Zakiya: It's giving horror

Kelsey: It is dark. It is spooky. It is, like, truly, with every step of descent, more rank down there

Zakiya: Oh my gosh.

Kelsey: He's like, truly worst moment of my life: Did Mason and Anny May have a point?

Zakiya: Uh oh.

Kelsey: He gets down there and, like, It's so weird. He's like, this is a smart boy, he turns on the light, but it's like, the decorations are like, things are thumbtacked to the wall, right? There's like a sword on the dresser. He's like, why does this look like an 18 year old boy's bedroom? Like, why?

Zakiya: This is a room where a Thad would live.

Kelsey: Yes.

Zakiya: You know?

Kelsey: And he's like, what is happening in here? He's like, opening the little closets down there, you know, like the one with the water heater, the one with the air conditioner or whatever, trying to find a broom. To his left is a room, and under the door at the bottom, he can see that it is, like, glowing purple.

Zakiya: [whispering] oh my god

Kelsey: And he opens this door, and the room is filled with plants.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, what are they called? Grow rooms?

Kelsey: Yes.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh.

Kelsey: The only sound down here is, like, the buzz from the lights.

Zakiya: This is honestly... The audacity for these people to list this home on Home4You with a, on a literal, like, weed farm business space, like, or whatever. In a place where this is illegal.

Kelsey: Yes! Yes, you're looking to get robbed.

Zakiya: What the hell? Okay, honestly, I never thought I would say this. Anny May and Mason, like, they, they had a point. This is too far.

Kelsey: Our boy Noah is like reading the little names of the plants, right? He's like, she's dope kinks, moonlight, outdoor passion, Caribbean supernova. Right? Like he's like, he's touching all the plants. He has like just read one that says the greenest beans when he hears another really loud scream from outside.

[scream]

Zakiya: Are you motherfucking kidding me? All of these screams.

Kelsey: You are Noah. You have now run toward three screaming women

Zakiya: You know what? If I'm Noah, and also I have to run up those creaky basement stairs like uphill running now.

Kelsey: Yeah, and all the way outside. Like they're far away.

Zakiya: I am not running. I feel like I've proved my worth and my commitment to this family that I'm trying to impress. I've now run three times to people's rescue. I am stealing a nug, and

Kelsey: You and Noah, you are now in sync, and that's beautiful. You've been kind of in sync this whole time.

Zakiya: We have!

Kelsey: Because Noah, Noah is like—

Zakiya: Should I meet Noah?

Kelsey: Maybe.

Zakiya: Are we destined to be together?

Kelsey: Noah's like, it's time for me to not run. Yes. He's like, touching a plant. He's like, this is a soft plant. He's communing with the plants. This is like, the last temptation of Noah, right? Like, he's like, this is, I am in heaven or hell, it is unclear which. When he hears another scream.

[scream]

Zakiya: Wait, like, wait, like another one on top of the one he just heard?

Kelsey: Another one, and then Sydney screaming his name.

[Sydney: Noah, help!]

Kelsey: So now you've got to go, right? Like you gotta go. So he is sprinting. He sprints up this creaky ass stairs. He's like taking them two at a time. He sprints outside. The stepdad is like also running and has had to go a much shorter distance, but Noah like immediately overtakes him, right? Like he's like, he's gone. He gets outside, he runs across the now clean porch, he goes like down the stairs around the corner of the house where in front of him are rows and rows and rows of sunflowers.

Zakiya: Oh, gorgeous.

Kelsey: And he's like, beautiful. He can see Sydney like deep in there waving her arms like this over her head

Zakiya: This is why I'm saying it's giving *Midsommar* because it's like gorgeous greenery, like yes, let's do shrooms—I mean, if we weren't with these same people, like it's like gorgeous juxtaposed with terror bubbling at the surface.

Kelsey: He's running so fast. He turns down the aisle that she's on and as he turns, he realizes that amongst the sunflowers are weed plants. So it's like sunflower, weed plant, sunflower, weed



plant, sunflower, weed plant. He's zipping down this aisle. Mom is down. She is on the ground. She is gripping her ankle.

Zakiya: Oh no! Oh no, Mom!

Kelsey: Noah is like, what happened? And Sydney's like, Something bit her.

Zakiya: Bit her? I was thinking maybe she twist, fell, something bit her?

Kelsey: Bit her! The stepdad is like, Let's get you inside, let's look at it, let's get it cleaned off, right? He's like helping the mom up. Noah's like, what kind of something bit her?

Zakiya: Enough for her to, like, be on the ground, gripping her ankle, two screams. Oh no.

Kelsey: Yes. Everyone's like, I don't know. Charlotte, Sydney, the mom are like, we don't know. And Noah is like, it's pretty important what bit you. Like, it's pretty important to like, how this will be treated.

Zakiya: Yeah. What bit you? And we're like in the Appalachian mountains in the south, like growing up, like snakes are like low key everywhere.

Kelsey: Yes!

Zakiya: And snakes are dangerous. So we need to know what bit her.

Kelsey: Noah, he's getting his workout in. He's running back and forth down these rows trying to find something.

Zakiya: Oh goodness. Wow.

Kelsey: He's like a snake, a dog, what?

Zakiya: Oh goodness. And then what is he gonna do when he encounters the animal? Is it up to him to fight off the animal because now he's made himself hero of the day?

Kelsey: Yeah.

Zakiya: I'm stressed.

Kelsey: The stepdad takes mom inside. Sydney is like, Noah, stop running. She's like, she's like, my mom says that we need to go. Like, we need to leave this, like, house. We cannot stay here. It is cursed.

Zakiya: Yeah, it is.

Kelsey: And Noah, like, Noah's like, okay, like, I understand that. Sydney's like, okay, I'm gonna go pack our bag. Um, do you want to come with me? And Noah's like, no, I can't let it go. I need to sit out here and find out what this bite was.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Well, now my mind, I love his priorities, which makes sense. Like, we need to find out what the, what the bite was. My thought was like, but shit. Is there food in the oven? Like, y'all were already preparing Thanksgiving dinner, what about the food that's cooking and all of that? That's where my mind went, but I appreciate that he's caring about the mom, his potentially future mother in law, who knows, but what about the food?

Kelsey: Noah stays outside. He's out there for a while because it takes them a long time to, like, get everything packed up, get, like, the stuff that's in the oven out of the oven, get everything out of the fridge, get the beers back in there, like, this whole situation. He hears Sydney calling him after a little bit, it's like the car's packed, we're ready to go, when he hears like a little rustle.

[wind and rustling]

Zakiya: That is always the scariest sound, when you can't see what's making the sound, but you can hear just like a rustle, just some nearby movement, uh oh.

Kelsey: He hears it again. He like lies down on the ground. And through the stalks he can see like a little twitching nose.

Zakiya: [gasps]

Kelsey: And eyes that are like rimmed red.

Zakiya: WHAT THE FUCK

Kelsey: And like teeth chomping a little leaf, and two very tall, long ears pointing straight up. It's a bunny. She was bit by a bunny. [laughs]

Zakiya: A bunny. Oh, no. Yeah. No, she got bit but like, that's kind of cute. It's like, how bad could that hurt? It's probably just like a little, like, mow. You know like when a dog play bites you and you're like, Aw, bless your heart. Yeah, like you tried. That's what I'm imagining. Okay, and bunnies aren't poisonous, so mom's fine.

Kelsey: Yeah. And they're like, not like bats or dogs where it's like your odds of rabies are high.

Zakiya: Exactly. Like, this is cute. It's a story.

Kelsey: So like, yeah, so they take mom to like, not even the hospital, to like the little urgent care and the doctor's like, she's fine, right, like don't worry about it. So like the final updates of

this story are, they went out for dinner instead of cooking. They were like, fuck it, we're going to a restaurant. Everyone was so hungry, so this was great. And like, Noah was like, everybody got along. Like, I'm having a good time. This is great. I've made a good impression. I've been the hero of the day. I get to have all this nice food.

Zakiya: Honestly, amazing first impression.

Zakiya: And they found, like, the parents found a hotel nearby that they could all have their own rooms. And so Noah like goes into his room at night and he's like pulling out the little like buds that he has harvested from the like counter.

Zakiya: Okay, so he did pocket some! Yes, Noah!

Kelsey: And he's like, finally, I can smoke.

Zakiya: Yes, Noah! See, I'm glad he chose himself in the end. Like, he struck a really good balance of really, showing up for this family, kind of going above and beyond, but also being like, I'm gonna look out for me at the end of the day, though. I'm grabbing these nugs.

Kelsey: How, how do you feel?

Zakiya: Wow, I am gripping my mic so hard, so I feel a cramp in my hand. Literally, okay, oh my gosh, how do I feel? I feel honestly so happy and relieved for Noah, like, like you said. It sounds like he made, honestly, the best first impression because all of these wild ass things that happened to this family allowed him to really step up and show up. And there's nothing worse than a dude that is just taking up space and is not being helpful at all. And so he is showing his value and worth to, like, you know, showing the mom of his girl would be like, Hey, I can take care of your daughter. I can show up. I am a helpful man.

Kelsey: I'm the hero this family needs

Zakiya: Yes, like, I am proactive. If I'm Noah, I'm feeling on top of the world and I'm stepping out from the hotel and rolling a J and lighting one up. Like I think he did a good job of staying true to himself while also being like, part of meeting the parents is a performance. And you know, and—

Kelsey: And razzle dazzle, baby! He gave them one.

Zakiya: Yeah, exactly. Better, a better performance than the one man show he went to where he met Sydney, for sure. So, I think he came out on top.

Kelsey: Would you like to hear the final updates I have about this story?

Zakiya: Please. Obviously, yes. Please tell me they're still together!

Kelsey: Okay, we'll get there. So the family filed a complaint with Home4You about the house because they were like, this is a nightmare. We couldn't even stay there. Like, we want our money back.

Zakiya: And they were put in a situation where, like, they were in an illegal—

Kelsey: They could have all been arrested. Yes.

Zakiya: It is un—I mean, I am not a stick in the mud. I'm a stoner. But, like, please give me a heads up if I'm on like an illegal compound.

Kelsey: Waltzing in. Yes. Okay. So, Home4You, like, opened an investigation, which is how we got a lot of these answers. And, like, through that investigation, they found that the actual owners of the house had rented it out to tenants and the tenants had turned it into this like grow house operation

Zakiya: Oh my gosh.

Kelsey: And the tenants had listed it on Home4You to try and get a little extra money.

Zakiya: Oh.

Kelsey: And had the family stayed a little bit longer, they would have learned that like, the woman on the porch was one of those tenants and the tenants were still on the property staying like in an apartment above the separate garage

Zakiya: What?! Okay, so it's also giving Parasite.

Kelsey: Yes.

Zakiya: Where people are like living on the grounds and you don't even know it?

Kelsey: Yes.

Zakiya: Literally, what are they thinking?

Kelsey: It took months to resolve this issue with Home4You because all of the evidence that the family had—because this whole story takes place over like three and a half hours, right? Like, it's like a very fast time period that they were in this house. The only evidence they have are Charlotte's Snapchats. And in all of them, everyone looks absolutely thrilled. So it was like very hard to convince Home4You that they had a bad time when it's like this photo of people holding a weed bag like a baby with like the biggest grins on their face available.

Zakiya: Oh my gosh, they needed to get like a voice note of Anny May, her voice still shaking, being like uhhhh. And have Mason being like my wife had to endure being in the presence of marijuana, how dare you, my wife, my wife, my wife. I needed that, that's when you need Anna May and Mason's energy

Kelsey: Is to get your money back

Zakiya: To get your money back from Home4You.

Kelsey: We did learn that in the end Home4You did give them their money back, which good for them. And the next year, this family did not learn their lesson and they got another Home4You to stay in for Thanksgiving, but it went fine. \\\

Zakiya: [big sigh] Okay good.

Kelsey: The people who sent in this story told us that just everyone in the family now lives with dread. In every Home4You and that every time someone opens like a door or a cabinet. They're like scared

Zakiya: Oh my gosh. Yeah, they're traumatized

Kelsey: They're worried that like behind any door, inside any drawer could be something lurking. But it also could be like the biggest bag of weed you've ever seen.

Zakiya: Oh my gos,h I would love for the ending of the story to be like, this was their gateway experience meet cute with weed and then it was rainy weed and they're like, you know what?

Kelsey: You know what? Yeah.

Zakiya: Let's try it out. And then now every Thanksgiving they go to a Home4You and share a J.

Kelsey: The one nice like bow I have for you—it's not like a perfect wrap up bow. It's like one of those sticky ones that you just like [click sound] on top of the present—is that Noah and Sydney did get married.

Zakiya: Oh! Noah and Sydney!

Kelsey: Love is real! Zakiya, thank you so much for coming on the show. It was a delight to have you.

Zakiya: Wow, I was riveted. My hand is literally sweating and cramping. I laughed, I cried. I'm craving weed. I also feel validated in my own Home4You experience.

Kelsey: Yeah, that was a convenient thing.

Zakiya: It really was. Oh my gosh, this was so fun.

Kelsey: It's a delight.

Alex Sujong Laughlin: Thank you to the following people, who lent their voices as expert scream voice actors: Bene Cordaro, Clara Lengacher, Renuka Ramanathan, Elizabeth Gordon

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