graveyard shift
a play by korde arrington tuttle

time
the present

place
naperville, illinois / waller county, texas

characters
janelle, 28, black, cis-woman
kane, 28, janelle’s boyfriend, nonprofit consultant, black, cis-man
brian, 30, waller county police officer, white or white-passing latino, cis-man
elise, 27, waller county administrative officer, white, cis-woman
trish, mid-to-late 30s, waller county administrative officer, white, cis-woman

playwright’s note

the play’s pace is swift. a slash (“/”) indicates a point of interruption; when the next character’s line begins. text attributed to characters’ eyes are not spoken aloud.
scene three

JANELLE’s bedroom in her Naperville apartment. moving boxes litter the room. KANE is shuffling boxes from the bedroom into the off-stage hallway. JANELLE is on her laptop. they’re both in comfy, athletic wear.

janelle
baby, baby, just listen to this benefits package—

*KANE continues moving boxes, responding without stopping to look at JANELLE.*

kane
can i in a minute?

janelle
sorry, i don’t think you—i said, baby, listen this benefits package.

kane
and i said can it wait ‘til i’m at a good stopping / point.

janelle
what is going on with you? you’re—

kane
go.

*beat.*
go ahead.

janelle
i mean, no, not if you’re / gonna—

kane
no, i wanna hear the benefits / package.

janelle
not if you—
kane

read me the benefits package.

JANELLE and KANE study one another.

janelle

it can wait.

kane

you sure?

JANELLE closes her laptop.

janelle

are you gonna tell me what’s wrong?

kane

are you gonna keep micromanaging this move?

KANE resumes box-moving. JANELLE watches from her perch.

janelle

comprehensive health plan...prescription drug plan... dental...vision...flexible spending account...life insurance...expanded long-term disability—hopefully, we ain’t gon’ need that one.

beat.

retirement savings plan—hey, even a group legal service plan!

beat.

ain’t that great, babe?

beat.

kane, isn’t that / great!?

kane

janelle! i already—what do you want from me??

janelle

what do i want from / you?
i’m busy!

beat.

i helped you pack, i’m moving your boxes—mostly by myself. / i—

janelle

and i’m uprooting my life to move halfway across the country to be with you! all weekend / you’ve—

kane

for your dream job!

janelle

“dream job,” you keep saying that like it’s the only reason / i’m—

kane

you know that’s not what i mean. yes, so we can be together—of course, so we can be together. but don’t act like—

janelle

don’t act like what?

kane

like you’re doing this all for me. like the success of this whole thing is riding entirely on my / shoulders.

janelle

i’m not! baby, it’s not. is it not about us? ‘cause that’s what i’m invested in. not—

kane

i just don’t wanna fuck it up.

janelle

you’re not gonna fuck it up.

beat.

do you think you’re gonna fuck it up?
kane

no—

janelle
do you have probable cause to believe you’re / gonna fuck it up? because if you—

kane

no. no no no no / —just—babe, stop!

janelle

then what?

JANELLE looks at the nightstand. considers reaching for her pack of cigarettes in the top drawer. KANE goes over sits on it.

kane

no.

janelle

am i...is this—?

kane

no—it isn’t..it’s—it is—

beat.

this is what we’ve been working towards.

janelle

then why do i feel—

KANE gets up and moves close to JANELLE, as if to say, “i’m right here.”

why do i feel like you—

kane

last night. this morning?

janelle

were—yes—but, don’t make me feel crazy. you know exactly / what—
it's an adjustment.

no shit it's an adjustment, everything's an / adjustment—

look, i don't wanna / feel like—

do you still want this?

*KANE, looking around at all the boxes*—

yes, i want this. i obviously—

then what? are you intimidated?

*no. no.*

*beat.*

i want the best for you, for *us*, you know / that.

anxious?

*little.*

overwhelmed?

it's overwhelming.

*is there someone else?*
baby.

we haven't lived in the same place since—

forever.

i’ve been fantasizing about this moment for what feels like—

forever.

is this still something worth fighting for?

pause.

forever.

baby, when i think about you, when i run this hand over this skin—when these lips defy alllll of newton’s laws with those lips—forever—with you—is the only thing on my mind.

yeah?

yeah.

beat.

then act like it!

how ‘bout you act like it.
janelle

me? i been actin' like i'm about it. how 'bout you quit actin' like a little bitch and start / acting like—

kane

oh really?

beat.

so, now i'm a little bitch.

janelle

you gotta prollem with that?

kane

i might.

janelle

well, too bad. i got a grown-folks benefits package now, so—

KANE tickles JANELLE, who’s incredibly ticklish.

NO. no, sir—

kane

i'm still a little bitch?

he continues tickling.

huh?

no, sir!

janelle

sorry, i can't hear / you—

kane

i said, no, / sir!

janelle

'cause a second ago—

kane
kane! okay, okay—

KANE relents. they kiss. it’s a hot lil’ moment. it’s just getting extra steamy when—

janelle

mmm mmm—nope—not until we’re done.

babe.

i’m serious.

babe.

KANE licks JANELLE’s ear.

nope, get up out my ear!

janelle.

kane.

janelle

kane.

janelle

intense eye contact:

KANE’s eyes: you know that i know that you know that i know how much i luh yo’ ass and wanna fuck the shit out of you right now.

JANELLE’s eyes: and you know that i know that you know that i know i luh yo’ black ass, too, even if you trill’in’ sometimes. and i want it just as bad as you do, but i ain’t playin’ — NOT until we’re done.”

KANE’s eyes: i know, i know. but, baby, i’m scared. like, i might be more scared than excited right now.

JANELLE’s eyes: i’m scared, too. really scared. i trust you, but why do i still feel so uneasy?

KANE’s eyes:
JANELLE’s eyes:

janelle

this what we’re gonna do.

JANELLE rolls over, gets off the bed, and rummages through a box marked ‘BEDROOM SHIT.’ It’s next to the ‘BATHROOM SHIT’ box, onto which KANE has drawn the iPhone poop emoji.

don’t do that to my box.

kane

what?

JANELLE throws him a look.

I’ve been thinkin’ about art school—

janelle

kane, shut up.

JANELLE laughs.

with your stupid ass.

KANE laughs. JANELLE removes a BOSE wireless speaker with real good bass and turns it on. It beeps a little jingle.

we’re gonna finish packing, find a little somethin’-somethin’ to bump to—

JANELLE starts scrolling through her phone.

kane

no more maroon 5.

janelle

that’s not even / what i—

kane

yes it was.
KANE takes JANELLE’s phone.

kane (cont’d)

it’s my turn.

JANELLE receives a text message.

who’s callen? callen cayten—from undergrad?

janelle

yeah, you remember cal.

kane

cal. i didn’t know y’all were still in-touch.

janelle
text here and there.

kane
cool...

janelle

it’s nothing, babe. ya know, like you and ivey be textin’.

kane

yeah, okay—

beat.

janelle

music?

kane

on it.

KANE scrolls for another second, decides upon bobby shmurda’s ‘hot nigga’, which JANELLE finds amusing. they share a cute lil’ moment. JANELLE is serious about her shmoney dance, but wait ‘til you see KANE’s.

end of scene.