

The Parlor
Written by,
Dr. Kristin Cornelius Way

ACT I: THE WITNESS

FADE IN:

INT. MASSAGE PARLOR LOBBY, OAK CREEK SALON - DAY

KATY MITRAGAIA, a 23-year-old girl with leggings and a loose sweater that hangs off one shoulder, is sitting in the lobby of a massage parlor. She sits on a faux leather seat, one of several placed around the waiting room, with a lavender round base and a little square back that goes up uselessly about halfway. A small, plastic rock-looking waterfall is plugged in on a table next to her. She does not really notice it, but the sound of the little trickle of water nonetheless calming. New age meditation music on loop plays in the background. The flute is most prominent.

CLOSE UP on KATY's face as she looks down at her phone. Her gaze is nearly involuntarily fixated on the light emanating from the little rectangular device. Another woman, a RECEPTIONIST in her 20s, is staring at her computer and doing secretary things in the background.

KATY's phone lets out a ding that reverberates louder than usual against the flute.

KATY (TO RECEPTIONIST)

Sorry.

KATY turns her phone to silent. She begins typing.

INSERT:

Animation of text messages

CORA (TEXT)

How's it going

KATY (TEXT)

I think I'm going to reschedule. I can't do this.

CORA (TEXT)

You can do it! You only have a week left to use it, right? I gave it to you a year ago. Whats so bad about it?

KATY (TEXT)

The girl at the front is like one of those girls that can post pics in a bathing suit. *Before the filter*

CORA (TEXT)

Lol. Do you think they only massage people like that?

KATY (TEXT)

I wanted a girl too. They gave me a guy. His name is literally Harry. I can't handle it.

KATY stands up, pauses for a moment, then walks out. Through the glass, she is seen bending down, but still looking at her phone.

CORA (TEXT)

Go back in. You can do this. It's now or never.

KATY (TEXT)

I shouldn't have eaten that huge lunch. I can't breathe.

CORA (TEXT)

Your body is totally fine!!!

KATY (TEXT)

You've only seen me in person once, so I only trust your judgement a little.
;)

After a moment where KATY looks like she might escape, she stands back up straight with determination.

KATY (TEXT)

Ok, I'm going in.

CORA (TEXT)

Good.

KATY (TEXT)

I appreciate the gift btw.

CORA (TEXT)

Lololollll

KATY walks back in looking brave and the RECEPTIONIST'S near trance is interrupted by a loud telephone ring.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello, Oak Creek Salon, who do I have the pleasure of speaking with?

(pause)

(whispering and turning away from desk, crouching) Oh hi mom. Can you call or text my cell please? I've asked you a hundred times. It's not professional.

(pause)

I wasn't answering because I was working.

(pause)

Oh. Really!? It came?? LMU???

(pause)

Oh. (voice breaking). Please don't sound so pleased mom. We can talk more when I get home. Yes, this is the one I wanted...yes, I'm kind of upset, obviously. It has nothing to do with leaving you. I can't get into this right now, I have to go. Talk later. Love you bye.

The RECEPTIONIST hangs up the phone and looks up, slightly teary eyed. She excuses herself to the bathroom.

While the RECEPTIONIST is in the bathroom, CAROL, a 54-year-old woman with reddish hair, short and purposefully uncombed, walks in. She puts out a frantic, sweaty energy that wildly contrasts with the very carefully designed environment that she barges into.

CAROL

Hello? (to KATY) Is there someone here?

KATY

She just left.

The RECEPTIONIST comes back, sees CAROL, and, unmoved by her energy, sits back down in her chair. She hardly looks up from her computer.

CAROL

There you are. You really should never leave the desk unattended.

(no response from the RECEPTIONIST)

But anyway, never mind. Can you tell me, who is my appointment with this morning?

RECEPTIONIST

Let me check.

While the RECEPTIONIST is typing, CAROL looks at KATY. A woman, one of the masseuses, walks in with glass suction cups on her shoulders that show the gathered flesh in strange alien-looking shoulder pads. She waves at the RECEPTIONIST before heading in the back.

CAROL (TO KATY)

Who are you booked with?

KATY, surprised for a second at being addressed, searches for an answer.

KATY

I'm not sure.

RECEPTIONIST

(directed at KATY, but not looking up)
You're with Harry.

CAROL

Oh. *Harry*. (unconvincingly) He's ok— a bit on the deep tissue side of things if you know what I mean.

KATY

(disturbed) Sounds ominous. Should I be worried?

CAROL

No! I would never...

RECEPTIONIST

(interrupting) Yes, Carol, your appointment is with Jason today.

(pause while she looks at her screen)

According to our notes, you spoke with Angie on Friday and received two text messages confirming your appointment.

CAROL throws her head back in an exaggerated scoff.

CAROL

Well I just can't do Jason. I need Cynthia. She is the *only* one who can get me to relax.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry but we can't accommodate that today. Cynthia is not available until next Saturday, the 15th.

The RECEPTIONIST has now squared her posture showing that she's preparing for a standoff, a duel, one that she's trained to handle.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

It says in our notes here that Angie told you...

CAROL

I don't care about your notes. I am a regular here, probably one of the *most* regular...this doesn't make sense. I will have to cancel and go somewhere else.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry to hear that. However, there will be a \$50 cancellation fee because you were notified several times and it isn't fair to the masseuse.

CAROL gives the RECEPTIONIST a look as though she can be shocked enough that the RECEPTIONIST will give in. When she doesn't, CAROL goes back to making her case.

CAROL

For heaven's sake, I will NOT pay that fee. I am a regular here and I give you tons of business. I will NOT pay extra.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry but when you made the appointment, you actually agreed that you authorized this fee if your appointment is cancelled within 24 hours.

CAROL

I would rather cancel my membership than pay that fee! I CANNOT believe this.

CAROL dramatically throws her hands in the air and turns away from the RECEPTIONIST.

CAROL (CONT'D)

(looking at KATY) Can you believe this? I have been coming here for three years! I am a loyal customer. They don't deserve my business.

RECEPTIONIST

(emotionless, to CAROL'S back) I'm sorry but in order to maintain good standing with us here, you will have to pay that fee. We have waived several of your fees in the past. I cannot do it this time.

CAROL

Everything is so overpriced here anyway!

RECEPTIONIST

Would you like to reschedule and pay the fee? Or just cancel and pay the fee and reschedule another time?

CAROL

I will not pay that fee!!!!

CAROL leaves hastily. About ten seconds later, she comes back in.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I will NOT pay that fee. *Do you even give it to the masseuse??* Tell me that!

CAROL stares straight at the RECEPTIONIST waiting for an answer.

RECEPTIONIST

(apathetically) I don't know.

CAROL

How do I cancel my membership?

RECEPTIONIST

I'll email you the form and then you make an appointment to drop it off with us.

CAROL, still irate, leaves again. Thirty seconds later, she comes back again.

CAROL

Ok, fine. I'll pay it *this* time. But I will not pay it again, and if you ask me to, I will cancel.

RECEPTIONIST

Ok.

The RECEPTIONIST processes CAROL's payment in silence. CAROL waits for a minute, looking at the RECEPTIONIST intensely prior to leaving.

CAROL

(pettily) You know, you should really smile more and try to keep your customers. I'm just being honest.

The RECEPTIONIST looks straight at her but does not respond, definitely does not smile.

RECEPTIONIST

You know, you should really be a better person and you'd get more respect. I'm just being honest.

CAROL, shocked at the personal attack, leaves expeditiously.

Once CAROL is gone, KATY looks up from her phone at the RECEPTIONIST to acknowledge the situation, but she doesn't look away from her computer. KATY looks back at her phone.

By this time, KATY is wondering when her appointment will be, almost forgetting her anxiety from the drama. She gets up to ask the RECEPTIONIST.

INSERT:

A shot of the receptionist's screen as RECEPTIONIST clearly marks CAROL as banned from the salon in red.

KATY

Hi.

RECEPTIONIST looks up at KATY a tiny bit surprised. KATY makes a face at what she feels is a harsh consequence for Carol.

KATY (CONT'D)

Sorry. How much longer?

RECEPTIONIST

Oh. Like 5 more minutes. I think the room is almost ready.

KATY sits back down reluctantly.

INSERT:

Animation of text message.

KATY (TEXT)

I don't think I can do this. For
reals. They are making me wait...

CORA (TEXT)

You got this.

A few minutes later, HARRY walks out of the hallway and calls her in.

HARRY

Katy?

KATY knows this is it and she looks up, stands up, and courageously follows HARRY to the back room.

CUT TO:

INT. MASSAGE PARLOR LOBBY, OAK CREEK SALON - AFTERNOON

LOBBY

KATY emerges from the hallway looking much more relaxed. HARRY was deep tissue, and it turned out that KATY liked it. Her relief from the massage and, more profoundly, having it over with puts her in an unusually good mood. She walks to the front to check out.

MANAGER

What was the name?

KATY

Katy.

MANAGER

Oh Katy Mitragaia? I need your help with something, actually. I'm the manager here. Can you follow me to the back office please?

KATY

Ok, sure. (amused) Am I in trouble?

MANAGER

No! Of course not. I just have a couple of questions regarding a situation that happened earlier.

CUT TO:

INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE

KATY and the MANAGER sit across a desk from each other in a small, but neatly organized office. There are posters of people getting massaged hung amongst random flower paintings. There are also a few products for sale on a multi-tiered shelf in the corner. And another little fake rock water fountain.

MANAGER

Thank you for your time, Katy.

KATY

No problem. What is this about?

MANAGER

Well, we had a little situation while you were in the room with Harry. One of our other customers was upset with an interaction that happened earlier. I believe you witnessed this interaction?

KATY

Yeah, I was there.

MANAGER

Ok. So, Carol has accused our receptionist of harassment. If you could answer a few questions for me and put them on record, that would be great.

KATY

Ok, I guess.

KATY looks around the room and suddenly feels on trial. She remembers what happened, but has since had to conquer her fear of massage, so it is now in the back of her mind. MANAGER continues.

MANAGER

Thank you so much. Ok, so first question. How long have you been a member with us?

KATY

I'm not. This is my first time here. First time getting a massage, actually. I got a gift card for my birthday last year.

MANAGER

Oh. Well how did you like it? Hopefully you will become one!

KATY

Not on my paycheck! I'm a nanny.

MANAGER

(a bit judgmental) Of course. Ok, so next question. Did you see Carol arrive for an appointment today? Can you describe what happened from your perspective?

KATY

Sure.

KATY feels uncomfortable suddenly and wishes she could leave. She tries to give her best summary quickly.

KATY (CONT'D)

Carol seemed upset that she didn't book with her regular masseuse. Then she was super mad that she was charged a cancellation fee. She was being a handful, for sure.

(pause)

But...I think the receptionist did harass her. They were rude to each other, but the receptionist got personal and banned her. It was unnecessary and just because of a bad mood. (remembering) I heard her get a call beforehand.

MANAGER

I see. Is there anything else you would like to add?

KATY

No. Just that Carol obviously wasn't great, but no one deserves a direct attack like that.

MANAGER

Ok, thank you so much. I appreciate your help with this.

KATY

Sure.

ACT II: THE SUBJECT

FADE IN:

INT. KATY'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

KATY sits at her desk playing a first person shooter video game. She has all the gaming gear--headphones with a mic, a tricked out mouse, and a rainbow PC set up, including lit up mousepad.

KATY's bedroom is decorated by someone who is in their 20s. A mix of band posters and an eclectic mix of clothing are scattered around on the walls and on shelves. Her room is a little messy, but not as a kid's room would be. There is still the vibe of someone who is becoming an adult.

KATY (INTO MIC)
(playfully) Wow. Just wow. Devin, you really know how to help out a teammate.

DEVIN (V.O.)
I'm not sure that was my fault! Check your lover boy over there. He had a clear shot right behind you.

KATY (INTO MIC)
Jamie! Really babe???

A man, JAMIE, also in his 20s, walks into her bedroom. He also has a headset on, but the mic is pushed away from his mouth and his hand is covering it.

KATY looks at JAMIE when he walks in. JAMIE gestures that it wasn't him and KATY shoos him away. JAMIE leaves.

A girl's voice, CORA, who we haven't heard yet, chimes in.

CORA (V.O.)
Bam! Dude just got my ultimate. I had been saving it. Fuck that guy. He had been stalking me the whole game!

DEVIN (V.O.)
He doesn't know you're a girl, dude.

CORA (V.O.)
Doesn't matter! Don't stalk one
player. Like focus on the point of the
game?

DEVIN (V.O.)
Ok, ok. Fair.

They continue to play for a minute and then the talking
begins again.

CORA (V.O.)
Oh hey, Katy, how was your massage?

KATY (INTO MIC)
I did it dude! I saw other lazy people
there with worse bodies than mine, but
I made the decision to do it even
before that. It was epic.

CORA (V.O.)
I'm glad you liked it.

KATY (INTO MIC)
And Harry was pretty good! Didn't live
up to his name though. (laughs) Thank
you again.

CORA (V.O.)
It was good for you!

JAMIE (V.O.)
I was hoping she would get a girl. I
would have liked to hear about that
more.

DEVIN agrees and laughs, and the girls give him flack while
still joining in on the joke.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Oh yeah. This might be a good time to
bring this up...

KATY (INTO MIC)
Oh shit! Did you see that?!!!!

DEVIN (V.O.)
Hey, Kate!! Awesome!! (pauses) You
know how you are coming to visit this
summer?

KATY (INTO MIC)

Yeah.

DEVIN (V.O.)

I was thinking about it, and I wanted to let you know something. I hope it doesn't offend you.

KATY (INTO MIC)

Ooookkk...shoot him! Bastard!!!

DEVIN (V.O.)

Well, I know how you are concerned with your body and how open you are talking about it. And I only feel ok sharing this with you because of that...

KATY (INTO MIC)

Get to the point Devin and focus on the game. Ah dude!!! Plant it! Plant it!

DEVIN (V.O.)

Ok, it's planted. Back to what I was saying. People here, in my country, don't eat like Americans. And when Americans come to visit, they get noticed.

KATY (INTO MIC)

Like how? Because we're fat?

DEVIN (V.O.)

Well, yeah, kinda. There aren't a lot of people like that here.

KATY (INTO MIC)

What happens to them?

DEVIN (V.O.)

They just get pointed out.

KATY stands up as a reaction, abandoning the game for a second, and walks around her room with her wireless headphones still on.

KATY (INTO MIC)

So? Like how?

JAMIE (V.O.)
Don't get defensive, Kate. He's not trying to offend you.

KATY (INTO MIC)
I'm not being defensive--I just want to know what he means.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Like, ok. People will want to take pictures with you. They will laugh and react, maybe even point, when you walk into a room. They don't have a lot of tact.

KATY is still walking around the room and her movements are getting more emotional.

KATY (INTO MIC)
Laugh? Jesus, what the fuck. What's wrong with them?

DEVIN (V.O.)
They just don't have the same culture.

KATY (INTO MIC)
It's not culture. It's ignorance. They have the internet, right?

DEVIN (V.O.)
Yeah, but...not everyone...

KATY (INTO MIC)
(interrupting) There's no excuse. Cora are you there? Back me up here.

JAMIE opens the door to the room again and, with his hand over his mic, leans toward KATY.

JAMIE
(whispering) Ok, now you're definitely being defensive.

KATY gestures for him to leave again, giving him a scowl, and he shuts the door.

KATY (INTO MIC)
I'm not even that fat. I'm barely chubby. The doctor said I only need to

lose 30 pounds to be in the healthy range. And by the trip, maybe I'll have lost it.

JAMIE (V.O.)
(to himself but still audible) I thought he said like 50...

CORA (V.O.)
Kate, I think you're fine. But if they do that in Devin's country , then maybe he is just giving you the choice?

KATY (INTO MIC)
Whatever. I need to get off. I have a busy day tomorrow and this conversation took a weird turn.

DEVIN (V.O.)
Ok. I'm really sorry if I offended you, Katy. Are you still playing? Your character hasn't moved.

CORA (V.O.)
Katy, don't...

KATY (INTO MIC)
All good.

KATY takes off her headphones, sets them on her desk, and closes her laptop.

CUT TO

INT. LIVING ROOM - 1 HOUR LATER

JAMIE and KATY are sitting on the couch. KATY is looking at her phone. Her hair is tied back and she is in sweats. She looks more disheveled than earlier at the massage parlor. Her couch is a small loveseat in a small apartment. Around the room are a mix of cheap filler items from the front of a department store and things collected from road trips.

JAMIE is sitting next to her waiting for her to acknowledge him. She finally looks up at him.

KATY
What?

JAMIE

Don't you think you were a little over sensitive? He thought he was doing you a favor.

KATY turns toward him.

KATY

No. I don't think I was too sensitive. And he was doing me a favor? I feel like a freak. Always wanted to feel that way, thanks.

JAMIE

That's not what he was trying to do, c'mon. You were probably heavier the last time we saw them.

KATY

And what the fuck about you correcting my weight loss goals?

JAMIE

You always talk about your weight. And these are our *closest* friends.

KATY

Anybody in the world could see that was an asshole move. And it also seemed like Devin was defending these people!!

JAMIE

He wasn't defending them. He was on your side!

KATY

No he wasn't.

KATY stands up, getting increasingly more angry as the conversation continues.

And neither were you.

JAMIE

C'mon Kate. I'm always on your side. You know I love your body. I even disagreed with that doctor!

KATY

Yeah, well, it didn't feel that way
this time.

KATY leaves and goes into their bedroom.

(loudly from bedroom) Can you stay out
there tonight?

JAMIE

(kind of to himself) Yeah, sure,
whatever. I am going to keep playing.

KATY shuts the door and JAMIE puts his headphones back on and
sits at his computer. Not long after, KATY comes back out of
the room to get some water. JAMIE doesn't notice her.

JAMIE (V.O.) (CON'D)

Yeah, I know. I tried to talk to her
about it, but she's being defensive
and irrational. Honestly, you were
actually trying to protect her.

KATY's face shows she is hurt, but she doesn't make her
presence known. Instead walks back into the bedroom and shuts
the door.

ACT III: THE ADMITTANCE

FADE IN:

INT. CLOTHING DEPARTMENT STORE - 2 MONTHS LATER

KATY is in a shopping center, following two small children. It is large, double-layered, with escalators. It smells like a thousand perfumes and the lights reflect everywhere off the shiny tiles.

One of the children is holding a melting ice cream cone and begins to climb into a rack of clothes with it.

KATY

AMANDA! Please don't touch...get out
of there please! Don't...touch!!

The ice cream child smears melted vanilla on a blouse hanging on the rack, and KATY must somehow get her and the blouse while also chasing the other kid who took off in the direction of the food court.

She finally gets them cleaned up and contained, and walks them over to the shoe department. She stops when she sees the RECEPTIONIST from OAKCREEK SALON now working as a shoe salesperson.

KATY's phone dings.

She settles the kids in with another salesperson to help them start trying on shoes and then checks her phone.

INSERT:

Animation of text messages.

MOM (TEXT)

Did Jamie text

KATY (TEXT)

I haven't heard from him today.

MOM (TEXT)

Is this the first day

KATY (TEXT)

Yeah. First day in 2 months.

MOM (TEXT)
How are you feeling

KATY (TEXT)
I don't know. It's just weird not
having him around. And I also lost my
friend group at the same time. It
sucks.

MOM (TEXT)
Are you sure this is what you want

KATY (TEXT)
Yeah I guess. He said I was
'irrational' mom.

MOM (TEXT)
I know. That's hurtful. But have you
asked yourself if maybe he was just
being honest?

CLOSE UP:

KATY looks up for a minute, a disgruntled look on her face.

She then studies the RECEPTIONIST, who is on the ground to
her left, putting shoes on another customer. The customer
can't make his mind and there are several shoes and shoe
boxes scattered around. She looks exhausted. She does not
recognize or acknowledge KATY.

CLOSE UP:

KATY's face relaxes into a slight sadness.

KATY then picks up her phone, pauses for a beat like she is
about to make a decision, and calls someone.

LAWYER (V.O.)
Hello?

KATY
Hi, is this the lawyer that called me
last week regarding Oak Creek Salon
and the wrongful termination suit?

LAWYER (V.O.)
Yes, hi Katy. So have you decided what
you would like to do?

KATY

Yes, I have.

LAWYER (V.O.)

That's great. We are submitting the evidence next week and you were the only witness. Your statement will really help.

KATY

I've actually decided to withdraw my statement.

LAWYER (V.O.)

Oh...ok. I'm sorry to hear that. Why did you change your mind?

KATY

The receptionist didn't harass Carol. Sometimes people need to hear the truth.

KATY ends the phone call.

Then, she looks up from the phone, stretches, and takes a deep breath.

She checks to see the kids making the same mess of shoes and shoeboxes as the other customer and she looks back down at her phone.

INSERT

Animation of text messages

MOM (PREVIOUS TEXT)

I know. That's hurtful. But have you asked yourself if maybe he was just being honest?

KATY (TEXT)

Yeah, mom. I'm trying to.

END