



Excerpt from the script of

Yuchewahkénh (Bitter)

By VICKIE RAMIREZ

After her sister Ellie disappears while helping a woman escape her abuser, Myra Henhawk's search takes her through a nightmarish dream of police stations, hospitals, and the endless bureaucratic hoops that arise when Native women go missing. Guiding the journey is Bad Mind, the Creator's brother, the other brother from the Haudenosaunee creation stories. Yuchewahkénh (Bitter) is a play about the erasure of Indigenous women, and what it takes to claim your voice and your culture.

ACT ONE

BAD MIND (Tawiskaron) takes centerstage. He is in the magical realm, the reality in between worlds, a place where he and his brother create the rules.

He rules the night and is supposed to stay out of daytime. That was the agreement. Or so they say...

BAD MIND

(To the audience.)

Chwe'n! Sagö! Sgë:nö! And Hello! to the rest of you.

You look surprised to see me. I get it, it's daytime. And my realm is the night.

THE GREAT CONTEST. *Good Mind* versus *Bad Mind*.

And it's true, my brother did win. Daytime belongs to him and his creations.

They all shine in the light of day.

You.

The Three Sisters.

The deer, the salmon, medicines growing wild, if you know where to look.

Rivers full of fish, forests full of game, and soil rich enough to support everything that any being will ever need to survive.

All my brother's realm. But I'm still everywhere. I helped create you all.

Did you forget my gifts?

I'm there when the tornados devastate your homes. When the river swells over its banks and sweeps away your family, that's just me, swimming.

I enjoy snow.

That pristine clean that wipes away everything. Including your cars.

I put the thorn on the rose.

The snake in grass.

The broken subway seat that catches your brand-new designer outfit and tears it. Me.

See, my brother, *Good Mind*, he gave you abundance. But he also gave you work. He made you earn it.

You had to hunt. You had to plant. You had to harvest. You had to maintain relationships with the land, with the animals, with each other.

So exhausting, really. When you think of it. And I know you get

tired.

And that's where I come in.

I am here to make your life easier. Simple answers to complex questions.

If your favorite shirt goes missing, well, clearly the laundry attendant *stole* it.

Not that it fell out or got mixed up in somebody else's laundry, no.

I gave you supermarkets. Drive-throughs, corporate food. Food that's already clean and packaged, no blood on your hands, no dirt under your nails. Everything within reach. And the only cost you know is money.

A little knowledge and power too, but so what? Autonomy, community, connections...small price.

I'm convenience. I'm comfort. I'm the path of least resistance.

In my brother's world, every being, every element blends to hold things together, like a basket. In my world, you're more like pebbles in the river. Some of you will get stepped on, and others, swept away. Especially if you're Indigenous.

Hey you, in the back, is that a scawn you're snacking on? Frybread? You're welcome. That's one of my best tricks.

My brother gave you venison jerky and salmon belly—so MUCH work! Hunting, drying, foraging! What if you run into a bear who has the same idea?

Corn, Beans, and Squash...all foods you had to work for.

I gave you starch and bacon fat. Delicious, deep-fried dough that clogs your arteries like a pipeline.

So good, you call it *traditional*. As if your ancestors were frying flour in Crisco.

Convenience. Comfort. And the slow, sweet poison that comes with giving up your power.

And diabetes is just part of being Native, isn't it?

Come on, don't make that face. It's hilarious!

I can be less funny if you prefer. I can make whole Nations disappear.

I can make sure that when Indigenous people go missing, the assumption is that *they probably just ran away or got into drugs or made bad choices*.

Because in my world, the world of corporations and systems and convenience, Indigenous people need to disappear. Blend in or be erased, because you're all reminders of duties. Responsibilities. Of what is owed to the world.

Fit in, assimilate, become convenient.

Don't look at me like that. I didn't force you. I just...offered alternatives. Easy answers. Convenient targets. And you take it. Every time.

Even when you know better.

Bad things happen when you forget about me.

(Bad Mind claps his hands.)

