

A Talented Woman

A Full-Length Play

by

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Play website: <http://www.atalentedwoman.com>

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A Talented Woman

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Characters

Victoria – Tall, attractive, powerful professional woman in her late thirties, early forties.

Maxie – Victoria’s mother. She can be quite glamorous and looks ten years younger than her age – 70.

Harmony – Victoria’s 13-year-old daughter. She is a handful.

Greg – Victoria’s husband and Harmony’s father. He is rather withdrawn, until you bring up his favorite subjects – artificial intelligence and robotics.

Christopher – Typical New York recruiter/headhunter who specializes in executive-class recruiting.

Peter – Maxie’s boyfriend. Very handsome man in his mid 60s.

Setting

Place

Manhattan, New York, New York. Victoria and Greg’s loft, Christopher’s office and Maxie’s bedroom.

Time

Winter 2011 and Spring 2012

Synopsis

After her husband dies, Maxie discovers she’s spent most of her adult life living in a house of cards. Now she's destitute in a down economy.

Her practical daughter – who has her own set of problems with an unemployed husband and hellion daughter – insists that Maxie begin a new life of austerity and sacrifice. She shops at Daffys instead of Bergdorfs. She takes the bus instead of a car service. She’s given up the Met, MOMA, BAM, and even Botox. Nothing seems to help.

If only someone... anyone... would recognize all the talent she has to offer.

Act I

Scene 1

(Lights up.

Victoria and Greg's bedroom. Victoria is seen packing a suitcase – a full-sized suitcase with rollers. She takes a few clothes off their hangers, folds and packs them. She goes to a drawer and removes a beautiful silk nightgown. She stands in front of a full-length mirror and holds the nightgown up to her body. She likes what she sees.)

MAXIE'S VOICE

(From off-stage:) Honey...

VICTORIA

(Under her breath:) Shit. (Calling out:) Mother.

MAXIE'S VOICE

Where are you?

VICTORIA

In the bedroom. I'll be right down.

(Victoria quickly folds the nightgown and shoves it into the suitcase.)

MAXIE'S VOICE

Is Greg here?

VICTORIA

He's out with Harmony. I'll be right down.

(Maxie enters. She's wearing finely tailored, yet casual clothes and carries a Saks shopping bag.)

MAXIE

Hi.

VICTORIA

Mom.

MAXIE

What? (Seeing the suitcase:) Going somewhere?

VICTORIA

Business trip.

MAXIE

Someplace warm.

VICTORIA

Miami. One of those last minute things. I have to be there by tomorrow morning.

MAXIE

Oh... Nice suitcase. Big.

VICTORIA

Ah huh.

MAXIE

What happened to that carry-on I bought you?

VICTORIA

I might be playing tennis.

MAXIE

Is there room for me in there?

VICTORIA

Mom, can you do me a favor? My car is coming in 20 minutes...

MAXIE

You're not staying for dinner?

VICTORIA

Can you order something? I was thinking Thai.

(Maxie sits on the bed and sighs. Victoria tries to ignore it as she packs. Maxie sighs again.)

Okay. What's up?

MAXIE

Nothing. I'm fine. Go to Miami.

VICTORIA

Mom.

MAXIE

2 years.

VICTORIA

2years?

MAXIE

I have 2 years left.

VICTORIA

What?

MAXIE

That's what they said.

VICTORIA

Your doctor?

MAXIE

My accountant. Manny said I'm going to run out of money in two years. That's it. Two years.

VICTORIA

Mother, Manny and I came up with a plan...

MAXIE

Yes.

VICTORIA

A budget.

MAXIE

An allowance.

VICTORIA

Mother...

MAXIE

How could I live on that?

VICTORIA

...Don't get mad at me...

MAXIE

Do you know how much it costs...

VICTORIA

...I didn't create this situation...

MAXIE

I'm really, really trying. I buy my theater tickets at the booth. I've given up my car service. I take the subway to Bergdorfs.

(Victoria stops packing and stares at her mother.)

When I'm not shopping at Loehman's. I've given up the Met, MOMA, BAM, Botox... It's not enough!

VICTORIA

What have you done?

MAXIE

Nothing. I can't afford it!

VICTORIA

What's in the bag?

MAXIE

What bag?

VICTORIA

Sak's?

MAXIE

That?... Oh... It's not for me...

VICTORIA

What's in the bag?

MAXIE

A dress. For Harmony. She has to have a dress for The Nutcracker.

VICTORIA

You bought tickets?

MAXIE

It's what we do at Christmas. We go to The Nutcracker. Grand'Mere took you and I take Harmony.

VICTORIA

What we did is not what we do anymore.

MAXIE

I can't disappoint Harmony.

VICTORIA

She's 13.

MAXIE

So?

VICTORIA

She won't want to go. You need to take it back.

MAXIE

What?

VICTORIA

Mother.

(Maxie pulls the dress out of the bag. It's a nice midnight-blue, velvet dress with smocking.)

You're kidding. Have you seen her lately? What she wears?

MAXIE

I see her every week.

VICTORIA

You're not looking.

MAXIE

I am. That's why I bought the dress.

VICTORIA

Take it back and return the tickets.

MAXIE

You can't return tickets.

VICTORIA

Scalp them.

MAXIE

On the street? I'm going to stand on the street?

VICTORIA

What world are you living in, Mother?

MAXIE

I have no idea anymore.

(Maxie sighs. Victoria looks at her mother with concern. She gives in and examines the dress her mother purchased for Harmony. This brings back memories. She smiles.)

The Nutcracker dress.

VICTORIA

(She smiles:) Exactly like the one you and Grand'Mere made me wear for years. Our uniform. 14,000 little girls dancing into Lincoln Center wearing the same black velvet...

(Maxie takes a framed photo out of her purse and hands it to Victoria.)

... My dress. What was I? Ten? Where did you get this?

MAXIE

It was on the piano. Don't you remember?

VICTORIA

Look at Daddy...

MAXIE

...So handsome.

VICTORIA

And you...

MAXIE

My hair.

VICTORIA

Dyed red to match your mink.

MAXIE

(Singing:) "Those were the days my friend..."

VICTORIA

(Looking fondly at the framed photo:) The black velvet dress.

MAXIE

Remember how upset you got when it didn't fit?

(Maxie gestures to her breasts.)

VICTORIA

Oh, god. I wasn't ready for that.

MAXIE

None of us were. Least of all your father.

VICTORIA

I couldn't stay his little girl forever. Remember when he ran out of toothpaste and found my birth control pills?

MAXIE

Johnny Walker and I talked him off that ledge.

(They laugh at the memory.)

VICTORIA

Look at us.

MAXIE

How happy we were. Like it would be that way forever.

VICTORIA

I miss him so much...

MAXIE

He was the most brilliant man I ever met. You got that from him.

VICTORIA

His stories....

MAXIE

Guy gets a deal on a cruise to China. He boards the boat...

VICTORIA

... they hand him an oar and tell him to row...

MAXIE

He rows all the way to Shanghai....

VICTORIA

... He drops the oar and says to the guy sitting next to him....

MAXIE

"Excuse me, this is my first cruise..."

VICTORIA & MAXIE

...how much do you tip the whipper?"

(They laugh.)

MAXIE

I hear his voice in my head. It gets weaker every day.

(Pause.)

For the rest of my life... as long as I live... I'll never see him again.

(They embrace.)

VICTORIA

Has it really been two years?

MAXIE

What are we going to do?

VICTORIA

I'm here, Mom. We'll get through this. You just have to do exactly what I tell you. Okay?

MAXIE

I'm trying. I'm failing. I've never been good with directions. I don't know.

VICTORIA

I'll return the dress. Okay?

(Victoria puts the dress back in the bag and goes back to packing. Maxie puts the picture frame back into her bag.)

MAXIE

So... tell me more about your little business trip.

VICTORIA

A new company looking for funding.

MAXIE

What do they do?

VICTORIA

I can't tell you.

MAXIE

I'm not the SEC, honey.

VICTORIA

I signed a non-disclosure.

MAXIE

I'm your mother.

VICTORIA

Encryption.

MAXIE

Computers?

VICTORIA

A new way of doing security.

Sounds interesting. **MAXIE**

You tell anyone... **VICTORIA**

... And you'll have to kill me. **MAXIE**

(Victoria's phone buzzes. It's a text. She reads the text and giggles.)

What is it?

Work. **VICTORIA**

(Victoria texts with one hand and packs with the other.)

My internet's broken. **MAXIE**

I'll send Greg over. **VICTORIA**

I forgot my password. **MAXIE**

Again? **VICTORIA**

I never see you anymore. **MAXIE**

You come over for dinner every week. **VICTORIA**

(Victoria finishes the text, places the phone on the bed and continues packing.)

I miss our mother daughter time. **MAXIE**

Mom.... I work. 24-7. **VICTORIA**

Just a lunch... occasionally **MAXIE**

VICTORIA

No one takes lunch anymore. You eat at your desk. Go off the grid for a second and your latest start up stops.

MAXIE

Always worrying... Your company is lucky to have you.

VICTORIA

That luck is wearing thin. I had to take out a loan to cover....

MAXIE

...Greg will get back on his feet soon...

VICTORIA

If he doesn't and if I can't turn around one hell of a deal, we'll lose the loft.

MAXIE

Honey! New York Rule #1. Never give up the apartment.

VICTORIA

New rules, Mom.

MAXIE

There are some rules you can't change.

VICTORIA

Really? Like what?

MAXIE

Well... for instance... Rule #2 - Christmas. There are obligations. Expectations that must be met. An example... You can't *not* tip the doorman... The super... Then there's the night porter... The back elevator man changes my light bulbs – I've got to give them something.

VICTORIA

If you don't control your spending right now, you'll lose your apartment.

MAXIE

Nonsense. It's my home. It's where I live. And there are expenses you can't avoid.

VICTORIA

(Giving up:) How much do you have left for the month?

MAXIE

I have no idea. Probably nothing.

VICTORIA

I'll write a check.

MAXIE

Will it cover everything?

VICTORIA

How much do you need?

MAXIE

Twenty-nine hundred should do it.

VICTORIA

No.

MAXIE

What do you mean, *No*?

VICTORIA

Twelve-hundred.

MAXIE

Three thousand?

VICTORIA

You don't know how this works, do you? I'll write you a check for two thousand and you'll have to figure out how to stretch it to the end of the year. Okay?

MAXIE

(Sincerely:) Thank you.

(Pause.)

None of this is my fault.

VICTORIA

You can't keep blaming him.

MAXIE

I had no idea.

VICTORIA

Why didn't you?

MAXIE

What?

VICTORIA

Know what was going on?

MAXIE

Why would I?

VICTORIA

Because you were his wife.

MAXIE

Secrets. Secrets. Secrets.

VICTORIA

The townhouse on the Upper East Side... the houseman...

MAXIE

(Smiling:) Philippe...

VICTORIA

The beach house... Baldwin.

MAXIE

Are you complaining about the way we raised you?

VICTORIA

Where did you think the money was coming from?

MAXIE

Your father had his own imprint.

VICTORIA

And when Random House closed it down?

MAXIE

He went freelance. One of the best...

VICTORIA

Freelance... Editor... Publishing... That wasn't a big enough wake up call?

MAXIE

He refused to talk about money.

VICTORIA

You never asked. What is it about women your age?

MAXIE

Women my age made it possible for your generation...

VICTORIA

You all talked a good game. But as long as you could continue to enjoy the privileges of your sex and avoided all accountability...

MAXIE

We worked very hard to make sure...

VICTORIA

Please... All those Seminars with hand mirrors followed by a late lunch?

MAXIE

...She takes one gender studies course...

VICTORIA

...If any of your sisterhood had actually had to support their families...

MAXIE

I worked.

VICTORIA

Your hobby...

MAXIE

Don't you call that gallery a hobby. It was my life. Google me. Go ahead. Read the reviews. I made important contributions to the downtown art...

VICTORIA

If you were such a successful businesswoman, then why were you surprised when...?

MAXIE

I never said I was a businesswoman. I was an artist... with a gallery...

VICTORIA

Do you want to talk about what you did with my trust fund?

MAXIE

No.

VICTORIA

Why can't you accept your responsibility in all of this?

MAXIE

...It wasn't my fault...

VICTORIA

Then whose was it?

MAXIE

My back... You're giving me a spasm.

VICTORIA

Two years? What have you done?

MAXIE

I haven't a clue. It's a mess, honey.

VICTORIA

What are you going to do?

MAXIE

With any luck... after two years I'll be senile and won't know the difference.

VICTORIA

We can't bank on that.

MAXIE

What do people do when they run out of money? How do they live? In cardboard boxes? Is that what's going to happen to me?

(This brings Victoria up short.)

I don't know what to do. Okay? I need help.

VICTORIA

I'll make an appointment with Manny.

MAXIE

But you're going to Florida...

VICTORIA

I'll make it for when I get back. Okay?

MAXIE

I'm sorry. (About to tear up, but swallows it:) Now. How about a martini?

VICTORIA

I'm trying to pack, Mother.

MAXIE

Ahh... My back. Oh...

(Stand off.)

Spasm, Honey.

(Stand off continues.)

And I'm out of Percocet. I really need that Martini.

(Victoria gives in.)

Grey goose. On the rocks. Olives.

VICTORIA

I know, Mother.

(Victoria exits.)

MAXIE

The big ones. Make it a double and we'll split it.

VICTORIA (FROM OFF STAGE)

Ahhhhh.

(Victoria's phone buzzes again. Another text. Maxie looks at the phone. She glances at the door to make sure Victoria has not come back. She reaches for the phone. She almost touches it when Victoria re-enters. Maxie quickly changes her reach into a stretching exercise.)

MAXIE

And one... ahhh... and two and three... ahhh...

(Victoria grabs the phone and exits as she reads the text.)

Do you have any pretzels?

VICTORIA'S VOICE

Probably not.

(Maxie watches the door to make sure she is not coming back.)

MAXIE

Could you look? Pistachios? Cashews? You must have something...

(Maxie gently rifles through the suitcase and finds the nightgown. She lifts it up and examines it.)

I love Miami.

VICTORIA'S VOICE

You can't come.

MAXIE

Is this a large conference or a private meeting?

VICTORIA'S VOICE

Neither.

MAXIE

Traveling with someone in your office?

VICTORIA'S VOICE

(Voice coming closer:) I can't discuss my work.

MAXIE

You're just like your father.

(Maxie quickly folds the nightgown and tucks it back into the suitcase.)

VICTORIA'S VOICE

What's that supposed to mean?

MAXIE

Secrets. Always secrets.

(Victoria enters with a drink and a head of broccoli. Maxie takes the drink and looks at the broccoli.)

Is it washed?

(Victoria tosses the broccoli on the bed and goes back to packing. Maxie takes a big gulp of her drink.)

I'm thinking of getting married.

(Victoria stops everything.)

VICTORIA

Is there a groom?

MAXIE

There is someone.

VICTORIA

You're seeing someone?

MAXIE

There's someone I see.

VICTORIA

Who is he?

MAXIE

You don't know him.

VICTORIA

It's serious?

MAXIE

I could be.

VICTORIA

I hope you're using protection.

MAXIE

What? You think I'll get pregnant?

VICTORIA

Do you know how many people in nursing homes have sexually transmitted diseases?

MAXIE

Nursing homes?

VICTORIA

I read an article in the dentist office. Since Viagra, all these randy 80-year-olds are having unprotected sex and getting all kinds of diseases...

MAXIE

...Who's 80...?

VICTORIA

...Diseases which are precursors to cancer.

MAXIE

I said I was seeing a man, not going into a nursing home. Do you have something planned I'm not aware of?

VICTORIA

Okay. Who is he?

MAXIE

A man.

VICTORIA

You mentioned marriage?

MAXIE

Did I?

VICTORIA

You said, "I'm thinking of getting married."

MAXIE

It's just a figure of speech.

(Harmony enters the room. She's a thirteen-year-old who is trying very hard to look much older. She wears an unusual ensemble and a great deal of makeup. She texts as she speaks.)

HARMONY

You're getting married? At your age?

MAXIE

Harmony, darling! I love what you're wearing!

VICTORIA

How were the tubas?

(Harmony rolls her eyes and continues to text.)

MAXIE

At Rockefeller Center? I love the Tubas. (To Victoria:) Remember when I took you to see them and you didn't want to leave. I took you screaming and kicking all the way to Rumpelmayer's and had to buy you a huge stuffed animal to quiet you down. A purple pony.

VICTORIA

A pink puppy.

MAXIE

A big one.

VICTORIA

(To Harmony:) Where's Daddy?

MAXIE

(Examining Harmony's dress:) Let me look at this.

VICTORIA

Was the rink crowded?

MAXIE

You design this yourself?

HARMONY

(Surprised:) You like it?

MAXIE

Will you make one for me? Just a few little alterations.

VICTORIA

Why don't you take your Grandmother into the kitchen and order dinner.

HARMONY

I'm eating at Lisa's.

VICTORIA

You know Sundays we have dinner with the family.

HARMONY

Will *you* be here?

VICTORIA

Your grandmother and father will be.

MAXIE

I've waited all week to see you. After dinner you can show me the new designs in your portfolio....

HARMONY

I don't have a portfolio.

MAXIE

Every designer needs one. I'll help you...

HARMONY

I have a blog. (To Victoria:) What do you want me to tell Lisa?

VICTORIA

That Sunday is family day.

MAXIE

I got our tickets for the Nutcracker.

(Harmony rolls her eyes.)

VICTORIA

See?

(Maxie pulls the dress out of the Saks bag.)

MAXIE

This dress will be so adorable on you.

VICTORIA

We're taking it back.

HARMONY

So I can't go to Lisa's?

VICTORIA

I've already told you.

HARMONY

(Under her breath:) Bitch.

VICTORIA

What did you say?

HARMONY

Nothing.

(Harmony takes the dress.)

MAXIE

Honey. I really need that check before the car picks you up.

VICTORIA

Greg. Could you bring up the checkbook?

GREG'S VOICE

(From offstage:) Where is it?

VICTORIA

Desk. Top drawer.

(Harmony rips a sleeve off of the dress.)

MAXIE

Honey!

VICTORIA

Harmony!

HARMONY

The sleeves suck.

MAXIE

Guess we're keeping it.

(Victoria takes the dress from Harmony.)

HARMONY

Give it back.

VICTORIA

Enough.

HARMONY

I was designing, Mother.

VICTORIA

No. That's called ripping.

HARMONY

You know nothing about fashion.

VICTORIA

(Pointing to Harmony's clothing:)

And this is fashion?

(Harmony begins to rifle through the clothes Victoria has packed. She pulls them out of the suitcase one at a time...)

HARMONY

Black. Blue. Black. Blue. Dull. Drab. Dreary...

VICTORIA

Stop it.

HARMONY

This isn't a suit – it's an armored car.

VICTORIA

Knock it off.

HARMONY

...Just because it's a label doesn't make it stylish.

VICTORIA

Harmony!

(Harmony takes out a swimsuit.)

HARMONY

Nice burka, Mom.

MAXIE

Is that one of those new Miraclesuits?

VICTORIA

Why would I need a Miraclesuit?

MAXIE

I'm not saying anything.

VICTORIA

Fold them up and put them back!

(Greg enters with the checkbook in his hand. Harmony lifts the nightgown out of the suitcase and holds it up for all to see.)

HARMONY

What the hell?

(Pause.

Victoria looks at Greg. Greg looks at the nightgown.)

Victoria's Secret?

(Pause.)

MAXIE

Oh. You found my Christmas surprise. I can't stand that old bathrobe your mother always wears. Don't you just love it?

(The honk of a taxi is heard from off stage.

Lights out.)

Scene 2

(Lights up.

Executive Recruitment office.

Christopher is sitting behind his desk. Greg is sitting on the other side of the desk. He has just sat down and is a little nervous.)

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

GREG

Go?

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

GREG

(Gesturing to the door:) Go?

CHRISTOPHER

First impression. Two minutes you'll never have again.

GREG

Okay.

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

GREG

I make robots.

(Greg takes a small dinosaur robot out of a backpack and places it on the desk.)

Meet Dino-mite. On the surface he looks like a baby dinosaur. But underneath his plastic skin is a revolutionary new way to look at machines. He can recognize your voice, shake your hand and purr when you pet him. But he's not a pet... or a toy. He's much more than that. He's alive. And I created him.

CHRISTOPHER

You lost me after *I make robots*. Your pitch is yourself, if you can't nail it in four bullet points, you're shooting blanks.

GREG

I'll work on it.

CHRISTOPHER

So... (Looking through his folder.) Windsor-Hartley bankrolled your company while you tinkered for ten years. When you finally launched your line, it crashed with the impact of an asteroid and now your dinosaur is extinct. That about right?

GREG

Dino-mite was ahead of its...

CHRISTOPHER

...A \$400.00 toy you can't play with will always be ahead of its time. (Gesturing to the suit:) At least this is something I can work with. Tie's nice... suit is possible. Shoes need a polish and you pull up your socks one more time, you're out of here. Besides the robot gig, any other work experience?

GREG

Research assistant.

CHRISTOPHER

Where?

GREG

MIT.

CHRISTOPHER

In the real world?

GREG

The research behind Dino-mite was my dissertation...

CHRISTOPHER

...Grand Forks Central High School... North Dakota?

CHRISTOPHER & GREG (IN UNISON)

I've never met anyone from North Dakota.

GREG

You New Yorkers don't get out much.

CHRISTOPHER

Must have been your safety...

GREG

What?

CHRISTOPHER

University of North Dakota.

GREG

No.

CHRISTOPHER

Bet it was a hell of a shock. Going from a farm school to MIT.

GREG

It's not a farm school.

CHRISTOPHER

Let's change it to UND.

GREG

Why?

CHRISTOPHER

People will assume it's Notre Dame.

GREG

Look. It's a good school.

CHRISTOPHER

Look. Sure.... People come to New York from all over the world... even South Dakota...

GREG

North Dakota.

CHRISTOPHER

The guys who hire? For the kinds of jobs I have my finger on... They want someone who can fit in. This North Dakota stuff... Speed bump. You're what? Early 40s?

GREG

Yes.

CHRISTOPHER

You should be on your fourth or fifth position by now. What exactly are you looking for?

GREG

Computers. Software. Engineering. I want a company that's doing something groundbreaking. A place where I can make a meaningful contribution to the world. Find that and I'll be happy.

CHRISTOPHER

I'll do anything as long as it makes me happy is not a package anyone's going to buy.

GREG

Teaching? Columbia... NYU?

CHRISTOPHER

Publish anything lately?

GREG

Approaching Probabilistic Learning Models for Sensory Adaptive Robotics.

(Christopher checks Greg's resume.)

CHRISTOPHER

Your dissertation?

GREG

I ran a company for ten years. 25 employees. Two rounds of funding. A national product launch. That's got to count for something.

CHRISTOPHER

Was it a success?

(Greg doesn't answer.)

Doesn't count.

GREG

I've got this new idea. Something...

CHRISTOPHER

...How long have you lived in the City?

GREG

15 years.

CHRISTOPHER

Dreams in New York have a shelf life of five years tops. You had a good run. Time to get practical.

GREG

...Machines that can think and feel and...

CHRISTOPHER

... You're talking Silicon Valley. New York is business, finance, marketing. You got ideas? You want to change the world? Go west.

GREG

My family is here.

CHRISTOPHER

I have another appointment in five. Where do you want me to take this?

GREG

You tell me.

CHRISTOPHER

There are thousands of unemployed geniuses pounding the pavement right now. I'm willing to go out on a limb for you. And I'd do it because you're a friend of Vicky's.

GREG

Victoria is my wife.

CHRISTOPHER

Right. Your wife. I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I sent you out there right now. It'd be like throwing a baby on the West-side highway during rush hour. And I'd look like an ass.

(Greg finds his bag, opens it up and picks up Dino-mite.)

GREG

Thank you for your time...

CHRISTOPHER

I'll be honest. Two years into this recession, everything's still frozen solid. Bankers. Lawyers. Magicians. Doesn't matter. But it's not the end of the line. You want a job, you're going to have to go outside your comfort zone.

GREG

I'm good with engines. This little guy has...

CHRISTOPHER

Work the floor of a machine shop? Try the help wanted ads in Bayonne. My advice? Aim for a mid-level management position at a bank or insurance company that will be dazzled by your degree and overlook your lack of experience. Here's what I'm going to do for you... I'm going to squeeze you into my calendar. Stop by the receptionist on your way out.

GREG

What do you have in mind?

CHRISTOPHER

We run an executive out-placement service on the side. This first conversation is free.

GREG

(Laughing:) And then?

CHRISTOPHER

975 a session. But for a friend of Vicky's? 900 even.

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(Lights up.

Maxie's bedroom.

Maxie and Peter are in bed. They have just been having "fun" and are relaxing.)

What is this? **MAXIE**

What? **PETER**

This. What we have now? **MAXIE**

Does it have to have a name? **PETER**

I've been thinking... **MAXIE**

...It's good. That's what it is. **PETER**

Are you happy? **MAXIE**

Aren't you? **PETER**

I asked first. **MAXIE**

Why wouldn't I be? **PETER**

So you're happy. **MAXIE**

Where is this coming from? **PETER**

It's just a question. **MAXIE**

(Long pause. He sighs.)

PETER

Maxie...

MAXIE

Oh... So this is where you get out of bed, put your pants on and go back Downtown?

(Peter begins to get out of bed.)

Don't go.

PETER

I have an early morning.

MAXIE

What happens if I want to change the rules?

PETER

What rules?

MAXIE

You never spend the night with me.

PETER

I always leave you happy. Don't I?

MAXIE

Stop changing the subject.

PETER

I have an early morning, Maxie.

MAXIE

Every morning is early for you, Peter. How can you leave this warm bed and this willing woman?

PETER

Not tonight.

MAXIE

When?

PETER

Not tonight.

MAXIE

Ever?

PETER

Not tonight.

MAXIE

Haven't you always wanted to bring me breakfast in bed? I'd be ever so grateful.

(He doesn't reply.)

Don't you ever get randy in the morning?

PETER

Randy?

MAXIE

I'm just as much fun in the morning as I am in the evening.

PETER

Okay...

MAXIE

If you don't like to be touched when you sleep, I can stay on my side.

PETER

What are you talking about?

MAXIE

You. Staying the night.

PETER

I like spending time with you, Maxie. This is fun.

MAXIE

I'm more fun in the morning.

(He laughs.)

Do you have a morning woman I don't know about?

PETER

There is no morning woman.

MAXIE

You're behaving like a married man going home to his wife.

PETER

And that's the reason I've never been married.

MAXIE

It doesn't have to be tonight, but I want you to think about spending the night with me. Even if it's just one time. Would you do that for me? Think about it?

PETER

Okay.

MAXIE

Okay.

(Pause. She kisses him.)

So. What have you decided?

PETER

I've decided to think about it.

(He puts on his jacket.)

Dinner? Wednesday? You chose the restaurant this time.

MAXIE

Peter?

PETER

What?

MAXIE

Victoria's looking for someone to redo her kitchen.

PETER

How big is the project?

MAXIE

The bathrooms need work too.

PETER

Have her call me.

MAXIE

Why don't you stop by? She's having me over for dinner next Sunday. You could join us.

PETER

How would you introduce me?

MAXIE

Victoria, darling. Meet your new stepfather.

(He is shocked and doesn't know how to react. She laughs.)

PETER

I never know when you're joking.

MAXIE

You haven't a clue. How would you like to be introduced... my contractor? Lover? Fuck buddy?... or I know... *Victoria, I cheated on your father with. For ten years.*

(Lights out.)

Scene 4

(Lights up.

The following Sunday. Before dinner. Greg's studio in Greg and Victoria's loft. Harmony is using her smart phone to video herself. Greg is grading a test that she has just completed.)

HARMONY

Welcome to today's installment of *Truth, Beauty and Harmony*... Here I am, your host: Harmony I-can't-tell-you-my-last-name-or-my-parents-will-freak. Today's revolutionary costume is something I pulled together from my grandmother's closet, white go-go boots, vintage vinyl mini - Pierre Cardin - paired with a camisole of my own creation. I'm in my father's studio during one of our scintillating father/daughter home-tutoring sessions. Say *Hi, Daddy?*

GREG

Hi.

HARMONY

On today's post, we'll watch him grade my practice ShitSAT test...

GREG

...Language...

HARMONY

...which, as you all know, I could care less about.

GREG

I've been wasting my time for the past three months?

HARMONY

Delusional Daddy.

GREG

You're going to post this?

HARMONY

Today's lesson is futility. There's no way I can compete against all you over achievers out there...

GREG

...Sure you can....

HARMONY

...with tiger moms?

GREG

Your mother isn't ferocious enough?

HARMONY

My mother....

GREG

Okay put it down.

HARMONY

I'm not finished.

GREG

Yes, you are.

(Greg takes the phone from her and turns the video feature off.)

This isn't bad.

(He hands her the test.)

480?

GREG

486.

(She rolls her eyes.)

Progress.

HARMONY

She'll kill me.

GREG

No. She won't

HARMONY

It's not high enough for Stuyvesant or Bronx Science, is it?

GREG

Which of the other schools do you like?

HARMONY

The Woman is going to freak.

GREG

Don't call your mother that.

HARMONY

She's so perfect and every time I fuck up, it's like Afghanistan. Why doesn't she love me?

GREG

She does.

HARMONY

She doesn't ever say it.

GREG

But that doesn't mean she doesn't feel it.

HARMONY

What am I supposed to do? Read her mind?

GREG

You know she loves you by the things she does. When she picks you up at school? When she takes you to that costume museum. When she goes to one of your orchestra concerts. That's how you know she loves you.

HARMONY

Wouldn't it just be easier to say *I love you*? Then she wouldn't have to go through the torture of watching my viola recitals.

GREG

She loves your recitals.

HARMONY

Yeah. Right.

GREG

Why don't you and I start looking at other schools?

HARMONY

Public school only works for people who are smart.

GREG

Or motivated.

HARMONY

You don't have to be motivated at Baldwin.

GREG

(Under his breath:) You just need \$50,000.00 a year.

HARMONY

This sucks.

GREG

A huh.

HARMONY

It's not funny. You know how they treated me when they found out?

GREG

Who?

HARMONY

The kids at Baldwin.

GREG

Lisa?

HARMONY

She's the only one who will have anything to do with me.

GREG

You'll make friends at your new school.

HARMONY

PS Buttfuck?

GREG

Language, Harmony.

HARMONY

I won't fit in there.

GREG

Because you are an original.

HARMONY

Ahhhhh....

GREG

We broke the mold after you were born.

HARMONY

Fatuous, dad.

GREG

One of your vocab words.

HARMONY

I need a place like Baldwin where it doesn't matter if my grades suck. At Baldwin they know I could do it if I try. Yeah... okay... I've never tried, but they still believe in me.

GREG

So what are you going to do?

HARMONY

How am I supposed to know?

GREG

You have no idea?

HARMONY

It's not my fault.

GREG

I have an idea.

HARMONY

What?

GREG

Study harder?

HARMONY

I'm ADD. I need Ritalin.

GREG

No you aren't and no you don't.

HARMONY

Lisa's mother says it helps you remember things on tests. All the kids do it.

GREG

Not my kid.

HARMONY

Ritalin addicted kids with tiger moms. That's what I'm up against.

GREG

No one is going to give you your education.

HARMONY

What does that mean?

GREG

Since pre-school it's been handed to you on a silver platter.

HARMONY

So?

GREG

We can't afford that silver platter anymore.

HARMONY

Nonnie says I should apply to the High School of Art and Design or Fashion Industries....

GREG

You are not going to a vo-tech. You need a real education.

HARMONY

I'm not good enough.

GREG

I know my daughter. She can do anything she puts her mind to. She is going to do well on this test. And she's not going to do it for me or for her mother. She's going to do it for herself. To prove she can.

(We see Victoria enter the loft.)

HARMONY

And what if I don't get in anywhere good?

GREG

Doesn't matter. I went to a public school. If you put your mind...

HARMONY

In North Dakota. This is New York City. No one gets out of public school alive.

GREG

We'll move to Grand Forks. You can go to my old school.

HARMONY

Leave the City? I'd rather kill myself.

(Victoria enters the study.)

VICTORIA

Hey.

(Victoria kisses Greg. Then turns to Harmony and shows her the iPad she carries.)

VICTORIA

I've found something you're going to love. A summer camp for fashion designers – right here in New York.

HARMONY

The 92nd Street Y?

VICTORIA

Look at these courses.

HARMONY

It's a sleep-away camp.

VICTORIA

Is it?

HARMONY

Stop trying to control my life. Fashion is my thing. Stay out of it.

VICTORIA

I thought you'd love it.

HARMONY

It's still school and I suck at it. School is torture. Design is my life. Don't ruin that too.

VICTORIA

Just a suggestion...

HARMONY

(To Greg:) What's for dinner?

GREG

Roast chicken with garlic potatoes and Brussels sprouts.

HARMONY

I hate Brussels sprouts.

GREG

Ah hmmmmm...

VICTORIA

Don't start.

(Harmony begins to exit.)

GREG

Harm?

(She stops. He begins to hand her the phone, but stops and looks at it.)

HARMONY

Daddy...

(He presses a few buttons. A portion of their conversation plays.)

HARMONY'S VOICE

Leave the City? I'd rather kill myself.

(He stops the recording.)

GREG

That's not very nice.

VICTORIA

What have you done now?

HARMONY

It's for my blog.

VICTORIA

You were recording us?

HARMONY

I have 280 people who follow me every day.

GREG

You should have asked permission.

HARMONY

If you knew it was on, it wouldn't be real.

VICTORIA

That's it.

HARMONY

I'd only post the stuff you say about me.

GREG

When you don't inform people, you're stealing their privacy.

HARMONY

Everyone does it.

VICTORIA

Apologize.

(Harmony glares at her mother.)

GREG

She won't do it again...

VICTORIA

...I said, apologize.

GREG

Honey...

HARMONY

Sorry!

(She grabs the phone and exits.)

VICTORIA

When did she turn into such a little monster?

GREG

You don't have to win every battle.

VICTORIA

Yes, I do. I try, Greg. I really try.

GREG

I know, honey. The fashion camp was a really good idea.

VICTORIA

There is something completely wrong with her.

GREG

That little girl you used to take to the playground...? Who worshipped, adored and depended on you. She's gone away and for the next few years we're going to have to live with a girl gone wild. But that little girl is still there. Underneath all that eye makeup. We just have to be patient and she'll come back.

VICTORIA

What are we going to do with her while I'm being patient?

GREG

Love her?

(He kisses her on the forehead and holds her. She melts a little in his arms. He begins to rub her shoulders.)

Tough day?

VICTORIA

Another project went south. Sometimes I hate this job.

GREG

Will this help?

VICTORIA

Four in a row. If I weren't so risk adverse, I'd strike out on my own...
Ahhhhhhhh... ohhhhhhh... hmmmm....

GREG

All pins and needles.

VICTORIA

What?

GREG

Like a pin cushion, but with all the sharp ends pointing out.

VICTORIA

What are you talking about?

GREG

My little porcupine in pumps.

VICTORIA

That's flattering.

GREG

But under all those barbs, so sensitive.

VICTORIA

I am.

GREG

If you know how to get through.

(He begins to tickle her.)

VICTORIA
Stop... Stop! (She giggles.) Greg. Stop!

GREG
You are so tough...

VICTORIA
...You bet your ass I'm tough...

GREG
...I love difficult women...

VICTORIA
...Honey...

GREG
...Like 2 million lines of code...

VICTORIA
Stop... Stop! Stop! You're asking for it!

(They tumble into the papers. They fly everywhere. They both are laughing and tickling each other. Victoria straddles him, but he is still tickling her. She grabs his hands and holds him down.)

GREG
Now I've got you exactly where I want me.

(Harmony comes rushing in.... alarmed by the crash. She holds her phone camera up to record. She thinks it's a fight. But when she sees them playing, she turns the smartphone camera off.)

HARMONY
(Grossed out:) Gahhh.

(She rolls her eyes and leaves. They laugh. But the mood has been destroyed. Victoria tries to gather up the spilled papers.)

GREG
Don't worry. I got it.

(She continues to gather them up. She starts reading one.)

What are they? **VICTORIA**

Applications. **GREG**

For jobs? **VICTORIA**

Patents. In the last week I think I've really turned a corner with... **GREG**

How did it go with Christopher? **VICTORIA**

Christopher? **GREG**

The recruiter? **VICTORIA**

The arrogant son-of-a-bitch? **GREG**

He can be a prick, but he knows his stuff. **VICTORIA**

I don't work with assholes. **GREG**

Honey, we're down to the bone. We need to have a practical goal. And we need to commit to it. **VICTORIA**

I'm doing important work here, Victoria. If you give me a little more time, it will pay off. **GREG**

Okay. Okay. Can we talk about your work here? **VICTORIA**

Uh... Sure. **GREG**

What you're doing on your computer. In the afternoons. While I'm at work. **VICTORIA**

GREG

It's pretty advanced stuff, Victoria.

VICTORIA

Oh, yeah?

GREG

Yeah.

VICTORIA

X-tube. Pretty advanced.

GREG

You've been on my computer.

VICTORIA

You left it logged on last night.

GREG

You searched my browser history?

VICTORIA

I wanted to see how you spent your days.

GREG

You could have asked.

VICTORIA

And you would have told me.

GREG

Occasionally I watch a little erotica.

VICTORIA

Let's call it what it is...

GREG

I can't believe you searched my...

VICTORIA

While I'm working my ass off downtown, you're in here playing with your robots and surfing for porn.

GREG

Only when no one is around... big deal.

VICTORIA

It is a big deal.

GREG

It's entertainment. Something I enjoy during my alone time

VICTORIA

Instead of looking for a job, you sit in here, watch porn and call it entertainment.

GREG

You get your nails done. I look at porn.

VICTORIA

How can you...?

GREG

Your manny peddy takes 50 minutes and sets us back 40 bucks.

VICTORIA

That's basic hygienic maintenance.

GREG

Something you could easily do yourself.

VICTORIA

Only a man from North Dakota would...

GREG

...Only a woman with New York damage would need someone else to paint her nails...

VICTORIA

Don't you go there.

GREG

I log on and within ten minutes, I've taken care of business. By myself. Free of charge.

VICTORIA

Taken care of business?

GREG

I beat off, Victoria.

VICTORIA

Not in my house you don't.

GREG

You want me to do it on the street? Or the bookstore on the corner.

VICTORIA

I don't want you to do it at all.

GREG

Men masturbate, Victoria. Single. Married. It's doesn't matter. It's something we do.

VICTORIA

This is so fucking creepy. I can't believe we're....

GREG

We've always respected each other's privacy.

VICTORIA

We're married.

GREG

This has nothing to do with you.

VICTORIA

It doesn't?

GREG

It's a little extra-curricular entertainment. Harmless. No one gets hurt.

VICTORIA

You want sex, you come to me.

GREG

It's not sex. It's... basic hygienic maintenance.

VICTORIA

We have a 13-year-old child.

GREG

I lock up my computer.

VICTORIA

It wasn't locked last night.

GREG

The bottom drawer in your dresser?

VICTORIA

What about it?

GREG

When you're on one of your trips, what makes you think Harmony isn't going through your sex toys?

VICTORIA

I'm not the one who plays with robots.

GREG

That's sick.

(Maxie enters the loft. She carries a box of Panettone.
Peter follows.)

MAXIE'S VOICE

HeIIIIloooo! We're here.

VICTORIA

Shit.

GREG

God, I hate it when she lets herself in.

VICTORIA

(Louder:) We'll be right out. (To Greg:) We are not done talking about this.

GREG

I need to close out and log off. Is that okay with you, Victoria? How about I give you my password. It'll make spying on me so much easier.

VICTORIA

Robotman1971?

GREG

Oh, yeah. We're not done talking about this.

MAXIE

My idea is to knock out the kitchen wall and make it all one room. (She sees Victoria:) You know me... always knocking down walls. Victoria, this is Peter.

PETER

Love the casement windows. Original glazing?

VICTORIA

Ah... I have no idea.

PETER

I wouldn't change them...

MAXIE

...Drinks?...

PETER

...Unless the noise is a problem.

MAXIE

Peter, what would you like?

PETER

Manhattan. Makers Mark if you have it.

MAXIE

I'll have...

VICTORIA

...I know what you'll have, Mother.

MAXIE

Where's Greg?

VICTORIA

He'll be here in a minute.

MAXIE

(To Peter:)

Greg isn't really convinced about the wall idea yet. Let's keep it to ourselves.

(To Victoria:)

How was Miami?

VICTORIA

It fell through. I came home a day early.

MAXIE

Greg, darling!

GREG

Mega Maxie.

MAXIE

This is my son in law.

PETER

Peter Cavallo.

GREG

Nice to meet you. Panettone? My favorite.

MAXIE

I've removed the raisins for you. (They laugh.) Greg makes the most amazing machines. He's a robot genius.

...Robotics... **GREG**

... An absolute genius. **MAXIE**

Factory lines? **PETER**

More of the *Danger Will Robinson* kind. **GREG**

Huh. **PETER**

AI is my specialty. **GREG**

...*Artificial Intelligence*... You should show Peter your studio. **MAXIE**

Where do you work? **PETER**

Right now, in there. I was with a start up... until recently. **GREG**

There's something wrong out there when a man of your caliber can't find work. **MAXIE**

I'll bring this to the kitchen. **GREG**

I can do that. **MAXIE**

(She exits.)

And what do you do? **GREG**

(Confused a little:) I'm the contractor. **PETER**

The contractor? **GREG**

PETER

And if you want to keep that wall, I'm on your side, buddy.

(Maxie re-enters.)

MAXIE

He's so much more than a contractor. I won't name names, but a certain famous movie director's house in the Hamptons... Architectural Digest last July. Where's my Harmony?

VICTORIA

Harmony?!

HARMONY'S VOICE

I'm not ready yet.

(Victoria joins with the drinks.)

VICTORIA

(To Peter:) Have we met before?

MAXIE

Greg, you're not drinking?

GREG

I'm fine, Maxie. I'll check on dinner.

(Greg exits.)

MAXIE

Is he okay?

VICTORIA

He just wants dinner to be perfect.

MAXIE

We'll look at the kitchen after dinner.

VICTORIA

It's nothing special.

MAXIE

I've never liked that kitchen.

VICTORIA

I know, Mother.

(Harmony enters from the top of the stairs. She is wearing a wild ensemble that she has created out of the nutcracker

dress and her mother's nightgown. She is videoing herself with her phone.)

HARMONY

Hi everyone. I'm back....

MAXIE

...My Nutcracker dress...!

HARMONY

...*Where is she?* You may ask...

VICTORIA

...My nightgown...!

HARMONY

Taking her bows on the runway after one of her fabulous fashion shows? ... Or fighting off the paparazzi on the red carpet of a movie premiere? No! I'm wasting this new dress of my own design on Family Dinner! There's Nonnie, The *Woman* and some man I don't know. Probably the press. Wave to my public, everyone.

MAXIE

You took your mother's nightgown?

HARMONY

(Into the phone:) The fun begins.

VICTORIA

Turn it off!

MAXIE

I love it. Betsy Johnson. Vivian Westwood. And now our own Harmony Peterson.

HARMONY

At least someone in this room knows fashion.

VICTORIA

Could you cover your chest please?

HARMONY

These are my breasts, Mother. Deal with it.

(Greg enters with a plate of food.)

MAXIE

You look a little cold, honey. Do you still have the sleeves? We could make a beautiful shawl.

HARMONY

You said you loved it.

VICTORIA

Until you cover yourself, you will turn that thing off.

HARMONY

(To Greg:) See? I told you she hates me.

(Harmony, humiliated, turns and begins to run back up the steps.)

GREG

Harmony?

HARMONY

(Stopping:) What?

GREG

You look beautiful.

(Lights out.)

Scene 5

(Lights up.)

Everyone but Victoria is at the dinner table. She's a short distance away texting. Harmony's top has been covered up somehow. She's texting and sulking. Greg has been speaking about robotics for a while and hasn't noticed the glassy-eyed stares of the rest at the table.)

GREG

Scientists have spent the last 10 years creating a semantic web that has more than six million elements tagged across 14 different dimensions. But computers still can't make as many associations as quickly or as accurately as the human mind. Until that happens, don't expect to have a meaningful conversation with a machine. It would be kinda like.... Well... kinda like me at a dinner party.

MAXIE

Victoria?

(Victoria finishes her text and comes back to the table.)

PETER

Are you in the same field?

(Victoria is distracted and doesn't hear him.)

MAXIE

Honey?

VICTORIA

What?

MAXIE

They're from very different worlds. Greg is like a little Dutch Hans Brinker and Victoria...

VICTORIA

... is like the dike? Where are you taking this mother?

MAXIE

Victoria works for a... Can I tell him?

VICTORIA

Windsor-Hartley. Strategic Initiatives.

MAXIE

Sometimes opposites attract. Tell Peter how you met. It's the most adorable story.

VICTORIA

You tell it.

GREG

I've talked enough.

MAXIE

My daughter was at Harvard and Greg was getting his PhD at MIT. She had this test she had to take.

VICTORIA

A case study.

MAXIE

That's right. About robots.

VICTORIA

Emerging technologies... transitioning from concept to product.

MAXIE

Robots.

VICTORIA

Mother. No one's interested.

MAXIE

If you don't tell it, I will. She went to the Media Lab at MIT...

VICTORIA

...I needed to conduct some primary research...

MAXIE

...At 9:30 at night...

VICTORIA

Because MIT geeks don't wake up before 3.

GREG

That's not true.

MAXIE

She met a robot.

VICTORIA

I walked into the building and this little thing on wheels with big eyes came to greet me.

GREG

Bleep. Bleep. Shoop. Shoop. Shleep.

VICTORIA

It was the cutest thing.

GREG

I'd been up 48 hours working on my dissertation. I had to do something to get her attention.

VICTORIA

It spun around, rolled down the hall, stopped and looked over its shoulder. Like I was supposed to follow.

GREG

You were.

VICTORIA

The little man took me on a tour of the whole building. In and out of the labs, the machine shops, the server room and led me down a long hallway...

GREG

...The infinite corridor...

VICTORIA

...and stopped in front of an office.

GREG

Bleep! Bleep! Bleep!

VICTORIA

I knocked on the door.

GREG

You're prettier in person than on the video monitor.

VICTORIA

You're exactly what I am looking for.

GREG

Oh... Um...What are you looking for, exactly?

VICTORIA

Someone who's doing something extraordinary. For a case study. I'm at the B-school.

GREG

I'm not sure I qualify.

VICTORIA

You'll do.

GREG

So we talked...

VICTORIA

...till four in the morning. He offered me dinner.

GREG

Cheez-its, Mountain Dew...

VICTORIA

...And a half-eaten Panetoni with the raisons picked out.

GREG

A four-hour conversation that seemed like ten minutes.

VICTORIA

He started talking and I felt like... He talked about how he was on the cusp of something truly earth-shaking with the potential to change the future... The future. The way he talked... I had never experienced anything like that before.

GREG

I asked her if she wanted to go to a hockey game?

VICTORIA

(Laughing:) Ice hockey. Me.

GREG

But she showed up at the MIT Arena...

VICTORIA

....and there he was, on the ice.

GREG

You grow up in North Dakota, you play hockey.

VICTORIA

I had no idea what I was watching.

GREG

Some pretty uneven playing... it was a club team.

VICTORIA

All I knew was he was number 23 and looked great on skates.

GREG

(To Peter:) I was thrown out of the game for roughing.

VICTORIA

He came out of the locker room – all beat up. I helped him back to his apartment.

GREG

...and put a bag of frozen peas on my black eye. The next morning she made French toast out of panettone...

VICTORIA

...And watched as he pulled out the raisins.

GREG

Best breakfast I ever had. (To Victoria:) Shoop. Shoop!

VICTORIA

(Reluctantly:) Bleep! Bleep!

HARMONY

Blech.

PETER

Panettone. That brings back memories.

MAXIE

His mother had a bakery.

PETER

Now *she* made a panettone. We lived upstairs.

MAXIE

On Hester Street in Little Italy.

VICTORIA

Did you have a bathtub in your kitchen?

PETER

Bathtub? That was for rich people.

VICTORIA

Is it still there?

PETER

Long gone. Like just about everything else in Little Italy.

MAXIE

Toast! We forgot the toast! I have the floor. Everyone. Raise your glasses. Come on! These last two years have been difficult. Who knows what will happen tomorrow. I'm afraid to ask. But tonight at this table, I look around me and I know, no matter what, we are still a family. If we love each other, that will take care of tomorrow. To all of you... my family... my world... my everything. Cheers.

(They click glasses. They look at Harmony who is still texting. They all look at her.)

MAXIE

Harmony? Sweetheart?

HARMONY

Whatever.

(Without looking up, she raises her glass of soda. The rest drink. Harmony goes back to texting.)

GREG

Another one. To someone who... for the past year... has had to carry the world on her shoulders...

VICTORIA

Greg...

GREG

Who has been so patient, supportive and understanding... Even when I let her down.

VICTORIA

Greg, not here...

GREG

To my wife, Victoria. A woman who can create miracles out of spare parts. Without her I'm nothing but a dreamer.

MAXIE

To Greg and Victoria.

(They raise their glasses again and drink. Uncomfortable pause. Peter breaks the ice.)

PETER

Harvard, MIT. Which parent are you going to disappoint, Harmony?

HARMONY

Both.

GREG

She has plenty of time to decide what she wants to do about college.

HARMONY

First I have to survive high school without getting killed or knocked up.

MAXIE

How can she text and talk at the same time?

GREG

Put it down, Harmony.

VICTORIA

Do you have kids?

PETER

None that I know of.

Oh? VICTORIA

Never been married. PETER

How did you avoid that? GREG

Excuse me? VICTORIA

It can take years to meet the right woman. MAXIE

And Nonnie's it? HARMONY

Oh. She wants to design a wedding dress. MAXIE

So... you want to do the bathrooms, too? PETER

(Greg and Victoria are confused.)

They've never been happy with this apartment. MAXIE

Who said that? VICTORIA

You know it needs work. MAXIE

Does it? GREG

That galley kitchen is so 80s. What's the point of living in a loft if you can't... I mean, Peter could transform this whole apartment... MAXIE

Okay, Mother. I get it. We'll talk about this later. VICTORIA

Okay. MAXIE

So... how did you two meet? **VICTORIA**

Us? **MAXIE**

We've told *you*. **VICTORIA**

Maxie? **PETER**

I've known Peter forever. He was our contractor. Daddy's office, the house, my gallery. You must remember Peter, Victoria. **MAXIE**

I don't. **VICTORIA**

Well, a few months back... (To Peter:) You had just finished Judy Wishman's 5th Avenue apartment. (To the others:) There was this cocktail party. God, that living room was like a frothy peach lemon meringue. It wasn't that he... He didn't pick the colors. That was Judy. I mean, what could he do? She wanted to live in a peach sorbet cupcake. Judy Wishman. There he was... across the room... Exactly as I remembered him. Sure, his hair was a little gray... **MAXIE**

...and Receding. **PETER**

(Maxie hums *Some Enchanted Evening*.)

Dessert? Mom, help me clear the table. **VICTORIA**

I'll do it. **GREG**

No, Honey, you made dinner. Mom? **VICTORIA**

(Maxie, laden with plates, follows Victoria into the kitchen.)

Great dinner, Greg. **PETER**

Thanks. **GREG**

You do that all by yourself? **PETER**

Another drink? **GREG**

Oh, yeah. **PETER**

GREG
(To Harmony:) Honey, why don't you help your mother and take the rest of the plates into the kitchen.

(Harmony sulkily gathers the plates.

Transition to kitchen.)

What the hell is going on here? **VICTORIA**

So what do you think? **MAXIE**

What do I think? **VICTORIA**

Isn't he adorable? **MAXIE**

(Harmony enters with the plates.)

I'm going to Lisa's. **HARMONY**

No, you're not. **VICTORIA**

I told you... **HARMONY**

No, you didn't. **VICTORIA**

The movie starts... **HARMONY**

No, it doesn't. **VICTORIA**

Dad said.... **HARMONY**

It's a school night. **VICTORIA**

I've finished my homework. **HARMONY**

What movie? **MAXIE**

Stay out of this, Mother. **VICTORIA**

Fine. **MAXIE**

Neither of you are going anywhere. **VICTORIA** Mother, stay here. Harmony, take the cream and sugar to the table. Now.

(Harmony exits with the cream and sugar. She has left her smartphone in a nook of the kitchen.)

You're too hard on her. **MAXIE**

Why does he think we need a contractor? **VICTORIA**

Peter's much more than a... **MAXIE**

I spoke to Manny this morning. **VICTORIA**

So you knock down a wall... **MAXIE**

Give me the credit cards. **VICTORIA**

What credit cards? **MAXIE**

The five new cards you've managed to acquire. **VICTORIA**

MAXIE

If the banks think I'm credit worthy...

VICTORIA

What did you put on those cards, mother?

MAXIE

I refuse to talk about money at a dinner party.

VICTORIA

Dinner's over.

MAXIE

You're impossible.

VICTORIA

What's on the cards?

MAXIE

Those trips. After your father died.

VICTORIA

You told me you were using Dad's leftover frequent flyer miles.

MAXIE

An 18-hour trip and you expect me to travel coach?

VICTORIA

It still doesn't add up.

MAXIE

Who goes around the world without shopping?

VICTORIA

That money has now been taken off the principal. And because of that you'll be lucky if you have even three years left. Have you talked to Peter about your financial troubles?

MAXIE

Why would I do that?

VICTORIA

You mentioned marriage. You expect him to take on your debts?

MAXIE

I don't have debts. I have reduced assets.

VICTORIA

Does he know you're expecting him to finance your extravagant lifestyle?

MAXIE

That is so mean!

VICTORIA

I'm trying to look out for you. Do you want to lose your apartment?

MAXIE

I've been trying to reach you all week. You don't return my phone calls?

VICTORIA

Work, Mother?

MAXIE

24/7.

VICTORIA

You have no idea what it's like to be the sole support of...

MAXIE

The nightgown...

(Pause.)

You're making a big mistake.

(Transition to studio.

Greg shows Peter a robot head that has dozens of wires coming out of its neck. The robot head is obviously modeled after a woman.)

PETER

Huh. What do you know.

GREG

I made the skin from an epoxy I whipped up in the kitchen.

PETER

What are these?

GREG

32 micro engines for the facial muscles. They're connected to the epoxy with these hooks inside.

PETER

Okay.

GREG

I've created a new algorithm.

PETER

Right.

GREG

Software that can recognize facial expressions and vocal inflections and associate them with feelings. I'm trying to patent the whole set up. Get in close. Catch her eye. Now wink.

PETER

Wink?

GREG

Go ahead.

PETER

I gotta wink at a machine?

(Peter winks. The robot smiles. Peter laughs.)

GREG

She's optimized to respond with positive empathy.

PETER

I think she likes me. Finally. A woman I can relate to.

GREG

If I succeed, she'll be as difficult as the real thing.

PETER

Stop while you're ahead.

(The robot gets a hurt look on her face. Peter speaks to the robot head.)

What's wrong? I hurt your feelings? I didn't mean it. You are one beautiful woman. Yes, you are. Give me that smile again. There she is. Are you coming on to me?

GREG

She can't verbalize yet.

PETER

Perfect. I gotta warn you, babe. I might not be there in morning, but the night is ours.

GREG

(Laughs:) Is that how you talk to a woman?

PETER

You gotta let em know.

GREG

This isn't about that. Over the past 20 years we've willingly given away our privacy to an unbelievably complex, globally ubiquitous network of incredibly stupid machines.

PETER

Huh.

GREG

The machines know your habits, your preferences, your needs. It's not your little black book anymore... it's a database stored in a cloud. They listen to your phone conversations. Read your mail. They know where you are at any given moment.

PETER

No one knows where I am right now.

GREG

Do you have a mobile phone? Is it in your pocket? They know.

(Peter takes out his phone and turns it off.)

PETER

Shit.

GREG

And they use all that information to control... your life. When you Google "Fertilizer" and the FBI shows up at your door, it's a machine who's hunted you down.

PETER

And I thought it was God who knew everything.

GREG

If I create a machine that can recognize feelings and express them... They would understand us. Our insecurities and fears and failings. Even have feelings all on their own. I would restore the balance between man and machine. And if I could do that, then maybe we could be... free again.

(Peter pauses to take it all in.)

Can I ask you a personal question?

PETER

Uh... Yeah. What?

GREG

You beat off. Right?

(Transition back to the kitchen.)

VICTORIA

I bought a new nightgown to take with me on...

MAXIE

Don't. Please. You've worn flannel pajamas your entire life.

VICTORIA

You're barking up the wrong tree.

MAXIE

The second Harmony pulled it out of the suitcase I knew what was up. You should thank me for covering...

VICTORIA

I don't need your help, Mother.

MAXIE

Who do you think you're kidding? I see what's going on with this family. I'm watching it happen right now with you and Greg. That toast?

VICTORIA

We're perfectly happy.

MAXIE

You can lie to yourself, honey. But you can't fool your mother. Is he your boss?

(Greg enters the kitchen.)

GREG

Honey? The coffee?

VICTORIA

I'm coming now.

MAXIE

Greg, could you bring it out? I want to have a little mother daughter talk with Victoria.

GREG

Umm... sure.

MAXIE

How's Peter doing?

GREG

Tearing down walls as we speak.

(Greg exits with the coffee. Maxie steps in front of the door so Victoria can't escape.)

VICTORIA

There was no affair.

(Pause.)

Nothing happened.

(Pause.)

MAXIE

Why not?

VICTORIA

Why not?

MAXIE

You wanted it to.

(Pause.)

Who is he?

VICTORIA

A guy from work. A colleague. Okay, I'm his boss.

MAXIE

That makes it better.

VICTORIA

We've been on a project for six months... I tried to not let it get out of hand.

MAXIE

What happened in Miami?

VICTORIA

Nothing.

(Pause.)

He came to my room. But I didn't go through with it.

MAXIE

You let a man into your room and then you said no?

VICTORIA

I have a choice.

MAXIE

That's a decision you make outside the door.

VICTORIA

I have the right to say no any time I want.

MAXIE

And he left?

VICTORIA

I said *no*. He left my room.

MAXIE

And that's it?

VICTORIA

I can't stop thinking about him.

MAXIE

So have sex with him.

VICTORIA

Mother.

MAXIE

Yeah. Get it out of your system. Then come home and be with your family. Just don't screw up what you have right here now. Greg and Harmony don't deserve that.

(Pause.)

Okay?

(Pause.)

Victoria. Look at me.

VICTORIA

He's funny. Smart. Dynamic. When I'm with him all the shit at home disappears.

MAXIE

This is not a good time to have an affair.

VICTORIA

And a good time would be...?

MAXIE

You don't fuck around when your man is down. He needs your love and support.

VICTORIA

So if Greg were to get a job...?

MAXIE

I don't like it. I don't like any of it. Does Greg know?

VICTORIA

Are you kidding?

MAXIE

Well, you never know. Some marriages are open. Kitty and Bob have been together for 40 years and they both have various lovers and they're a great couple.

VICTORIA

Kitty and Bob?

MAXIE

And Roger and Pete... Well, gay men are a different story. "Don't ask, Don't tell." People have all kinds of arrangements. The important thing is to stay with family... any way you want to define it.

VICTORIA

I think I love him.

MAXIE

Love? Who's talking about love?

VICTORIA

I am.

MAXIE

Honey. What you're feeling for this... guy... is... well it's perfectly natural. Fifteen years of marriage, there's nothing wrong with an occasional... flirtation on the side. But love? That's what you feel when you come home after a hard day of work and your family is waiting for you. Love is when you hold your husband as you fall asleep in each other's arms.

VICTORIA

Did you and daddy?

MAXIE

We fell asleep in each other's arms every night.

VICTORIA

Does that mean...

MAXIE

Please, Victoria. Your father and I were completely committed to fidelity. This guy.... Transfer him to a new project. Forget about him.

VICTORIA

He's all I think about. I hate myself. I know it's insane. But I can't help it. It's like... when I am with him... this guy... I know this is what my life is supposed to be... Who I am... What I've always dreamed.

MAXIE

Don't throw your life away over some half-assed fantasy. You need to remember your future... the one you saw when you first met Greg. That's the dream worth fighting for. If Greg finds out, I don't think he'll get over it. And Harmony... she will never forgive you. You'll wake up and find yourself alone, with a high-powered job and no place to call home. That's not a dream, it's a nightmare.

(Pause.)

They're waiting for their cake.

(They leave with cake. After a moment Harmony re-enters. She grabs her phone from the hiding spot. She clicks a button and listens.)

MAXIE'S VOICE

And Harmony... she will never forgive you. You'll find yourself alone... with a high-powered job and no place to call home. That's not dream. It's a nightmare.

(Lights out.

End of Act I.)

Act 2

Scene 1

(Lights up.

Greg enters the loft from Harmony's room. He is on the phone and carries the dress. Victoria is breaking into Harmony's computer.)

GREG

(Into the phone:) Hello, Susan? This is Greg Peterson.... I'm fine. How are you? The reason I'm calling... I was just wondering... Is Harmony there...?

VICTORIA

Fuck.

GREG

(To Victoria:) Shhhh. (To the phone:) Are you sure?

VICTORIA

Greg, look at this.

GREG

Does Lisa know where she might be?

VICTORIA

Oh my god.

GREG

Could you ask her?

VICTORIA

Get Lisa on the phone.

GREG

I've got this, Victoria.

VICTORIA

I want to speak to Lisa.

GREG

You work the computer, I'll work the phone.

VICTORIA

What did she say?

GREG

She went to find Lisa. What have you got there?

VICTORIA

You're not going to like this.

GREG

I don't like any of this.

VICTORIA

She's taken pictures of herself and posted them on her blog.

GREG

A lot of kids do that.

VICTORIA

They usually wear clothes.

GREG

What?! (Phone:) Does Lisa have any idea where she may be?

VICTORIA

I want to speak with Lisa.

GREG

Well... Okay... She was here with us for family dinner. Then she just... Let me know if you hear anything, please. Thanks.

VICTORIA

I said I wanted to speak with Lisa.

GREG

Lisa doesn't know where she is.

VICTORIA

And you believed her?

GREG

Show me what you've found.

(Victoria hands the computer over.)

VICTORIA

Maybe she's at Mom's.

(Victoria Dials.)

GREG

Holy shit!

VICTORIA

She's not wearing a shirt, Greg.

GREG

You can't really see...

VICTORIA

...you can see enough.

GREG

I'll check Facebook.

VICTORIA

This is totally unacceptable. Pick up, Mother.

GREG

More photos.

VICTORIA

Oh my god. She's posted these. Now she's missing. She could be meeting some pervert right now.

GREG

I'll do an image search on Google.

VICTORIA

You can do that? (Into phone:) Mother. It's me. When you get this, please call.

(Victoria puts the phone down.)

GREG

32 re-posts on the first image I tried.

VICTORIA

Reposts to where?

GREG

Twitter... Pinterest... Lolitas.com.

VICTORIA

Call the police.

GREG

You've got the phone. I'll check her email.

VICTORIA

What about the photos?

GREG

Find her first. Figure out the rest later.

(Greg's phone rings. It's a text. He looks at it.)

It's Harmony.

VICTORIA

Where is she?

GREG

Starbucks.

VICTORIA

Which one?

GREG

Bank Street. She wants to meet me there.

VICTORIA

I'll get my coat.

GREG

Just me.

VICTORIA

What?

GREG

(Showing her his phone:) Read.

VICTORIA

I'm going.

GREG

Let me handle this.

VICTORIA

I'm coming with you.

GREG

Let me get her back in one piece. Then you can rip her to shreds.

VICTORIA

Ask her about the photos.

GREG

Do you want a scene at Starbucks or do you want me to bring her home?

VICTORIA

How can you stay so calm?

GREG

I don't skip over concern, fear and anguish and go directly to anger.

VICTORIA

Lolitas.com?

GREG

We'll deal with that later. She's not meeting a pervert, she's at Starbucks. I'll go get her. You breathe.

VICTORIA

You know how much I hate all that breathing bullshit.

GREG

Breathe.

VICTORIA

I'll breathe when I fucking want to.

(He puts his hands on her shoulders.)

GREG

Easy, honey. Easy.

VICTORIA

It doesn't help.

GREG

Tonight, after our discussion with Harmony, I'll create a program that will track every site that reposts the images. Okay? I'll be right back.

(He exits. Victoria closes her eyes and tries to breathe. She gives up. She tries again. It is starting to work when the phone rings and startles her. After she answers the phone, she tries to combine breathing with her talking.)

VICTORIA

Mother. Hi... I was, uh... Just checking to see if you got home all right.... Good.... Okay... Fine. We're fine.... Everything's fine... What...? No. I'm just breathing... I really like Peter. He seems like a great guy. Mom? How bad was I when I was 13? ... Really? Worse than Harmony? ... She gets that from you. Not me.

(She laughs. She stops as she listens.)

Mom? No, I don't want to talk about that anymore... Forget what I said in the kitchen, okay? Just forget that conversation ever happened. Please don't worry about me.... Okay? ... Okay. Good night.

(She hangs up her phone. She looks at the dress again. She holds the nightgown bodice up to her body for a moment. She can't help herself. She dials her phone. It rings once before changes her mind and quickly she hangs up. She puts the phone down and walks away. Within a few moments, her mobile phone rings. She stares at the phone. It rings four times before she finally answers it.)

Victoria Peterson. Tom, Hi. Everything okay? Um... Oh did I? I probably... I must have... my phone was in my purse... it must have.... Tom... Last week... I know... I know I was... I am so sorry... Please don't.... Because, it's a bad idea.... Tomorrow? I can't.... No. Not any other night..... No. We are not going to discuss that.... Or that either.

(She giggles.)

You are so bad... It's never just one drink... Oh, am I that obvious? Great... No... No the whole office doesn't...

(She laughs.)

I don't want to hear this.

(She laughs.)

Okay. Okay... One drink, but that's...

(Harmony walks in the door. Victoria sees her. She glares at her mother.)

Yes. Let's schedule some facetime tomorrow so we can iron out the details. How's your morning look? My office? I think I can do that. Gotta go. Yes. Me too.

HARMONY

Who was that?

VICTORIA

Where have you been?

(No response.)

Are you okay?

(No response.)

I thought you were at Starbucks.

HARMONY

I know.

VICTORIA

Your father just left to....

HARMONY

This is between you and me.

VICTORIA

What's that supposed to mean?

HARMONY

I need to talk to you. Alone.

(Victoria takes out her phone and dials.)

Keep Daddy away. I want to talk to you.

VICTORIA

Greg, she's home... I don't know.... She wants to speak to me alone... Yes. I'll be calm... I don't know.... She seems fine... Just give us twenty minutes, okay? ... Bye.

(Victoria hangs up.)

Where have you been?

HARMONY

What are you doing with my computer?

VICTORIA

Trying to find you.

HARMONY

Give it back.

VICTORIA

You want to explain these pictures?

HARMONY

My designs?

VICTORIA

Don't play stupid with me.

HARMONY

They're private.

VICTORIA

They're all over the internet.

HARMONY

That's MY computer, mother.

VICTORIA

Do you have any idea what message you're sending with these photos? Do you know who's been reposting them?

HARMONY

Perverts? I'm 13, like I would hook up with a 50-year old. Is that what you're worried about?

VICTORIA

These pictures will be there forever...

HARMONY

...I can delete them any time I want...

VICTORIA

...When you apply to college. Get married. Have children....

HARMONY

...They are my pictures. If I want to show them to my friends....

VICTORIA

...What do you think these say about you....

HARMONY

...That I'm not a huge fucking hypocritical prude like *The Woman*.

VICTORIA

We're taking away your computer privileges.

HARMONY

...Oh no you're not...

VICTORIA

...I'm going to go through this hard drive... every inch of it... your email accounts. Twitter. Facebook.

HARMONY

No.

VICTORIA

And you're grounded.

HARMONY

Right. Grounded.

(Harmony grabs the laptop from her mother.)

VICTORIA

We're not through here.

(Victoria chases after her and grabs it back. There is a tug of war.)

HARMONY

Private property, Mother!

VICTORIA

You are 13 years old. There is no such thing as private property.

HARMONY

It's my body. I'll do whatever I want with it.

VICTORIA

What does "do whatever I want with it," mean exactly?

HARMONY

Everyone does it.

VICTORIA

Does what, Harmony?

HARMONY

You should see Lisa's pictures. Her mom doesn't care.

VICTORIA

Does Lisa need to lose 20 pounds?

HARMONY

Fuck you, mother.

(Harmony wrests the computer away from her mother. Victoria slaps her.)

Harmony is stunned. So is Victoria. She can't believe she has let it get so out of hand. Harmony drops the computer on the couch. She takes her phone out of her pocket and

plays what she has recorded on her phone. We hear Victoria's voice.)

VICTORIA'S VOICE

I think I love him.

MAXIE'S VOICE

Love? Who's talking about love?

VICTORIA'S VOICE

I am.

VICTORIA

What?! ... Wha...

HARMONY

Do you want me to play the rest?

VICTORIA

Give it to me.

HARMONY

No fucking way.

VICTORIA

You have no idea....

HARMONY

...Oh, yes, I do.

VICTORIA

This is none of your business.

HARMONY

I'm part of this family too.

VICTORIA

That was a private conversation.

HARMONY

Oh... So now she wants to talk about privacy.

VICTORIA

Give it to me.

HARMONY

Do you want me to tell Daddy?

Tell him what? VICTORIA

Are you going to leave us? HARMONY

You're too young to understand. Give me the phone. VICTORIA

It's mine! HARMONY

Give it to me! VICTORIA

So you can erase it? HARMONY

I mean it, Harmony. VICTORIA

No. HARMONY

(There is a stand off.)

VICTORIA

Okay. Go ahead. Show your father. You want to break up this family. Is that what you want?

HARMONY

Daddy isn't good enough for you? It's me, isn't it? You hate me. Anything to get away from your stupid, fat, ugly daughter.

VICTORIA

You're not stupid, fat, or ugly.

HARMONY

But you hate me.

VICTORIA

I only want what's best for you.

HARMONY

If you don't tell Daddy, I will.

VICTORIA

You... you would do that?

HARMONY

It's the truth.

VICTORIA

I hope you understand that you'll be responsible for whatever happens. Are you prepared for that?

HARMONY

None of this is my fault. You know how it felt hearing you say those things?

VICTORIA

Nothing happened!

HARMONY

Don't you love us anymore?

VICTORIA

You have no idea what marriage is all about.

HARMONY

Two people who have secrets and lie to each other? Is that what it's all about?

(Harmony runs to her room, crying. Victoria stands there, stunned by the confrontation.)

VICTORIA

(Quietly to herself:) Sometimes.

(Lights out.)

Scene 2

(Lights up.)

Next morning. Maxie's bedroom. Maxie is awake and sitting up in bed. She is looking at Peter who sleeps next to her – snoring a little. She checks her breath. She gets out of bed and runs to the bathroom. She wears nice pink pajamas. We hear her gargle from the bathroom. Peter stops snoring. The gargling has woken him up. He looks around the room, disoriented. He gets up. He wears his underwear and a t-shirt. He grabs his clothes that he had thrown on the chair

next to the bed. He begins to put on his pants. Maxie re-enters – she has combed her hair and washed her face. She sees him trying to exit quickly.)

Where you going? **MAXIE**

Hey. Uh... **PETER**

Good morning. **MAXIE**

Good morning. **PETER**

Sleep well? **MAXIE**

Like a log. You? **PETER**

I took my pill. **MAXIE**

I gotta run. **PETER**

Why? **MAXIE**

Monday... I have work to do. **PETER**

Call in sick. **MAXIE**

I'm meeting a client. **PETER**

Breakfast? **MAXIE**

Um.... **PETER**

MAXIE
Eggs benedict? Waffles? Crepes? Sausage? Cinnamon toast on the side?

You'd do that for me? **PETER**

The Carlyle delivers. **MAXIE**

The Carlyle? **PETER**

Best breakfast in town. **MAXIE**

(She grabs her phone.)

What would you like?

(He laughs.)

I thought you said you'd make breakfast for me. That was the deal. **PETER**

I don't keep food in the house. **MAXIE**

I'll grab a bagel downstairs. **PETER**

(He begins to get dressed.)

What if we skip breakfast? **MAXIE**

(She tries to pose seductively on the bed.)

I'm hungry. **PETER**

Me too. **MAXIE**

Maxie... **PETER**

You finally spent the night. **MAXIE**

Yep. **PETER**

MAXIE

And you're still alive.

PETER

And late for my meeting.

(He stands and puts his shirt on.)

MAXIE

Peter....

PETER

What?

MAXIE

I loved hearing your stories last night. You never told me about your mother making panettone. Or living in Little Italy.

PETER

I've told you all about that, Maxie. Dozens of times.

MAXIE

How about coffee? I can make coffee.

PETER

I'll get it on the corner.

(She looks at him with expectations.)

Work.

MAXIE

You own your own company. Reschedule. For me?

(He keeps on dressing.)

What's going on here? For ten years the glue that held us together was that we couldn't be together. And now that we can...

(He texts something on his phone.)

PETER

Okay. I'm here.

MAXIE

Really?

PETER

You've got 45 minutes.

MAXIE

Does that include breakfast?

PETER

I stayed. Last night. That's what you wanted. Right?

MAXIE

Yes.

PETER

Well I did it. Okay?

MAXIE

What? I forced you.

PETER

You trick me into meeting your family. With some cockamamie remodeling routine. Okay. I get there... look like a fool, but I stay. And surprise. I have a damn good time. I like your family, Maxie. They're good people. Robot boy is a little odd, but he's a good kid. I enjoyed myself. And you got me here, Maxie. All night. Your little plan worked.

MAXIE

It wasn't a trick, Peter.

PETER

That's pretty disingenuous.

MAXIE

You are so remote. I was trying to reach you.

PETER

For what?

MAXIE

A loan. You have 500 grand?

PETER

What?

MAXIE

Joke. I like being with you.

PETER

I like being with you too.

MAXIE

No. Not just for dinner. A few hours in the evening. Do you know what happens when you get out of bed, put on your pants and go home? I sit in that chair and listen to the empty room. The sounds of the sirens on the street. The damn birds before the sun rises... the trash collectors banging their bins. And I sit in that chair and that's my whole world from midnight until 9:00 in the morning. It wasn't supposed to be like this. And I don't know... What's supposed to happen next?

PETER

So I'm your solution?

MAXIE

You've been a part of this for 10 years. On and off a few times, sure. But why do you keep coming back?

(He starts to say something.)

What? I was just an easy fuck?

PETER

You make me sound like a real...

MAXIE

No. It worked, Peter. For both of us. When you come here. When you make love to me. You make love *to me*. Why? Because I mean something to you. There has never been anyone in your life that you have committed to in a non-commitment way with such commitment.

PETER

What?

MAXIE

You love me, Peter.

(He laughs.)

What's so funny?

PETER

That's not what this is about. You know that.

MAXIE

Do I?

PETER

What do you really want, Maxie?

MAXIE

I told you.

Be honest. PETER

You. MAXIE

No you don't. PETER

I don't? MAXIE

PETER
You want me to stay because you said *I love you*? What about how much *you* love *me*? Why didn't you say that, Maxie? Why have you never said that to me?

(He waits. She doesn't answer.)

I think we both know why.

Where are you going? MAXIE

The bathroom. PETER

(Lights out.)

Scene 3

(Lights up.)

Back at the loft. Greg and Victoria.)

Why are you telling me this? GREG

Nothing happened. VICTORIA

GREG

This sounds like one of your B-School crisis management techniques. Get out ahead. Control the message. Limit collateral damage. And deny deny deny.

VICTORIA

Where's my denial? I just told you...

GREG

You didn't have an affair. Congratulations, Victoria. Why are you telling me something that never happened?

(Pause.)

VICTORIA

Harmony recorded a conversation I had with my mother.

GREG

Harmony knows? And your mother? Jesus! You wouldn't have told me, if... Some guy at work? Have I met him?

VICTORIA

It doesn't matter. The point is...

GREG

It does. Do you love him?

VICTORIA

Nothing happened.

GREG

Does he work with you?

VICTORIA

Could we talk about us instead of him.

GREG

He must. You don't have time to meet anyone else.

VICTORIA

It's no one and nothing.

GREG

Tom?

(Pause.)

Jesus, Victoria. Mr. Ambitious, charming, upper east side, born with a silver spoon in his mouth? Do you know what you're opening us up to? All he has to do

is get pissed off and call personnel. Are you nuts? Stupid, Victoria. Fucking stupid.

VICTORIA

Yes, for single-handedly supporting this family for the last 14 months.

GREG

If you don't want to be part of this family. There's the door.

VICTORIA

And you're going to pay the mortgage and maintenance?

GREG

You think Harmony will want to live with you?

VICTORIA

You don't feel even slightly responsible for this?

GREG

Is this about sex? If I worship at your altar two or three more times a week will this all go away? Okay. Let's take out our phones and start scheduling services right now.

(She crosses into his studio. She grabs the robot head.)

Where are you going? Don't touch, Victoria.

VICTORIA

This... this ... this... thing...this is what you're holding... not me. A plastic head with wires attached to a computer. You fill it up with emotions and expect it to empathize with everything you do.

GREG

She doesn't make me feel like a failure. She doesn't remind me every day of how I've done nothing but screw things up. Look in my eyes, Victoria. Now tell me. What am I feeling?

VICTORIA

Your feelings? What about mine? Why am I the only one waking up at 4 in the morning, wondering if we are going to have enough money to get through the month. When I see you sleeping so peacefully... like a baby... I could slit your throat.

GREG

Slit my throat? I'm a little quieter when I wake up in the middle of the night. Because I know you need your sleep. But you think I don't feel it?

VICTORIA

Then get out of that studio and find a job. There's so much you could do... if you would just look.

GREG

You could have saved it.

VICTORIA

What?

GREG

My company. The third round. Your firm...

VICTORIA

...We floated you for two...

GREG

...It's what you do for Christ's sake...

VICTORIA

...The numbers weren't there...!

GREG

Your own husband wasn't a good enough investment. So you stabbed me in the back.

VICTORIA

Your company was hemorrhaging cash like a stuck pig.

GREG

You could have saved it.

VICTORIA

It was arithmetic, Greg. A corporate decision.

GREG

So you're banking on Tommy boy instead?

VICTORIA

Leave him out of it.

GREG

Ever think that maybe he's sucking up to the boss to get a promotion? An ambitious stud like Tom knows how to piggyback right over the top of an easy hump.

VICTORIA

Stop.

GREG

I ever see that fucker again, I'll beat the shit out of him.

VICTORIA

Greg....

GREG

So where are you looking?

VICTORIA

For what?

GREG

Your new job.

VICTORIA

Are you nuts? I'm going to give up my job? It's my life.

GREG

I thought we were your life.

VICTORIA

That's a given.

GREG

You are not going back there with him.

VICTORIA

Don't tell me what to do, Greg. You never have and you never will.

GREG

You are a piece of work. It must have been fun to parade the MIT geek around your B-Schools pals. As long as it looked like I was going places and could fit in with your plans... which were exactly what you thought you deserved because that's the way you were raised... from day one of your ivy-league-track preschool. Well guess what... It was all a fantasy. Daddy built his empire on 27% interest... Mommy spent your trust fund. And your under-delivering fuck up of a husband went bust. Those kinds of things aren't supposed to happen to an only child raised on the Upper East Side.

(He pursues her and grabs her and turns her around.)

VICTORIA

Take your hands off me!

GREG

Why didn't you start off with an apology? This would have gone so much better.

VICTORIA

Because I didn't do anything wrong.

GREG

I know where this is going. You'll get everything you want. The loft. Harmony – even though she hates your guts. Why wouldn't she? You have the maternal instincts of a Waring blender.

(She frees herself and pushes him back.)

VICTORIA

Why are you taking this to the edge? We're having a discussion. Not a divorce!

(He rushes into his studio. Grabs the head, yanks the wires out of the computer.)

GREG

You're right. What I've been doing with my life for the past 20 years has all been a total fucking waste. Because I would have eventually come in here one day and looked into her eyes and I'd see it. Something new. And I'd know that I had finally succeeded. Because all she'd care about is herself and what she wants. And she'd start to lie and cheat and destroy everything I've ever tried to give her. She wouldn't give a shit about me anymore. She'd be just like you.

(He holds it up.)

Hail the Medusa!

VICTORIA

You are such a nerd!

(He slams the head down on the floor repeatedly. He stops and looks down at the robot head and realizes what he's done. He is in shock.)

GREG

Shit.... Shit... Is this it? All we have.... All those years... I love you. I always have. From the minute you knocked on my office door. Is he really what you want?

VICTORIA

Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened.

GREG

I know you, Victoria. You see something you want. You go for it.

VICTORIA

I didn't lie to you. I told you everything. Where am I now, Greg? Here with you.

GREG

Okay. Okay. You want to make this right... make this whole thing go away? All you have to do is one thing.

(He holds her head in his hands.)

Come here. Look me in the eyes. Come on. Now tell me you love me.

(Pause.)

Say it, Victoria.

(She can't say it.

He lets her go. He crosses to the closet, takes out his coat and heads for the door. He pauses at the door. She can't look at him. He leaves.

She picks up the doll head and stares into its eyes.

Lights out.)

Scene 4

(Lights up.

Three months later

The Loft. We hear Harmony playing the viola from her room. She is playing a simple tune quite well.

Maxie is sitting in her chair. She is surrounded by boxes. She stares into space. The dinosaur toy is wandering around, barking and whining and sniffing at her feet. She doesn't seem to notice it. If it does touch her, she recoils.

Victoria, dressed in a very nice feminine outfit - a little too romantic for work - is standing at the dinner table. She is removing boxes of Japanese food from a delivery bag.)

VICTORIA

Harmony, come to dinner

(Harmony plays the tune again. She doesn't play it as well, deliberately making a few notes flat or sharp.)

Dinner. Now.

(She plays it even worse, crushing the tones with her bow.)

Harmony! Stop it.

(Harmony enters.)

HARMONY

(Very innocently:) You don't want me to practice?

VICTORIA

That's not practice. It's torture.

(Harmony crosses down the stairs.)

HARMONY

What are you doing?

VICTORIA

Serving dinner. Come to the table.

HARMONY

I'm waiting for daddy.

VICTORIA

He's two hours late. Looks like you're eating with your grandmother tonight.

HARMONY

Two plates?

VICTORIA

Sashimi, Mother?

HARMONY

What the fuck?

VICTORIA

Come to dinner.

HARMONY

You're going out?

VICTORIA

Nori roll?

Again? HARMONY

Mother, come to the table. Please. VICTORIA

I said I'm waiting for Daddy. HARMONY

Help me with your grandmother? VICTORIA

How? She's been here three days and the only time she's moved from that chair is to take a dump. HARMONY

Mother... Shrimp tempora? Your favorite. VICTORIA

Another business dinner? HARMONY

(Victoria avoids her stare.)

This is bullshit!

I'll be home by 11. VICTORIA

Bullshit! HARMONY

This was supposed to be your father's night. VICTORIA

Every night was father's night. Till you fucked it up. HARMONY

I'm not going to discuss this with you. VICTORIA

Is it him? Mr. *No-one, nothing happened?* HARMONY

Mother. Spicy tuna? VICTORIA

HARMONY

And another new dress?

VICTORIA

I'll make you a martini?

HARMONY

Daddy's working in a machine shop and living in a one-room walkup in Jersey City and you're buying Jimmy Choo's?

VICTORIA

This was his choice.

HARMONY

You made him leave us....

VICTORIA

...I am working nonstop to support this family....

HARMONY

...You won't let me take the subway there....

VICTORIA

...I come home your grandmother doesn't speak...

HARMONY

...he can't stay here...

VICTORIA

...and you never shut up.

HARMONY

...So I get to see him only twice a week.

VICTORIA

...No one wanted it this way...

HARMONY

I know the truth. I have the recording.

VICTORIA

The truth is relative.

HARMONY

The truth is the truth.

VICTORIA

Why don't you go upstairs and write another blog. Go on. Attack me again to the whole world and explain how I ruined your life. Go ahead. Blame me for

everything. Your father leaving us... My fault. Your grandmother losing her apartment... my fault.... the fact that you didn't get into a single school you applied for. All my fault. Go ahead. Tell the world.

HARMONY

Your spyware won't let me.

VICTORIA

And you wonder why I did that.

HARMONY

Two can play at that game, Mother.

VICTORIA

And what's that supposed to mean?

HARMONY

Get rid of the controls and I'll put everything back.

VICTORIA

Everything what?

HARMONY

In your bottom drawer.

VICTORIA

You... You took...?

HARMONY

Maybe if you'd spent more time with Daddy and less time humping your sex toys...

VICTORIA

You... Put them back!

HARMONY

Give me what I want first.

VICTORIA

You... you little...

HARMONY

What?

VICTORIA

Oh... Like you've never called me a....

HARMONY

Slut! Whore! Adulterer!

(Victoria starts to rush Harmony. She grabs her wrists.
Maxie sees this and screams.)

MAXIE

Ahhhhh! Stop it. Both of you! Right now!

VICTORIA

Stay out of this, Mother.

HARMONY

It's your fault too, Nonnie.

MAXIE

Me?

HARMONY

Did Grampa know about Peter?

MAXIE

What?

HARMONY

I know what you said, "We fell asleep in each other's arms every night." And all that bullshit about fidelity.

VICTORIA

You and Peter?

MAXIE

Preposterous! Peter and I met...

HARMONY

"Peter... don't flush ten years down the drain."

VICTORIA

What?

MAXIE

Where's my phone?

HARMONY

Two dozen texts and not a single reply. Pathetic.

MAXIE

How dare you invade my privacy...

HARMONY

If I don't have privacy in this house, no one is going to have privacy.

VICTORIA

You and Peter...

MAXIE

You are way too young to understand.

VICTORIA

No. I'm not.

MAXIE

I'm speaking to Harmony.

VICTORIA

You said you had just met him.

HARMONY

Now I know where she gets it.

VICTORIA

You cheated on Daddy?

MAXIE

It wasn't cheating.

VICTORIA

Did Daddy know?

MAXIE

Unlike this household, we respected each other's privacy. We kept our own secrets.

VICTORIA

Not my father. Daddy would never...

MAXIE

Your father? Secrets? Please, Victoria.

VICTORIA

I'm not talking about money.

MAXIE

We kept our marriage together. Look where all your truth and honesty has gotten you.

VICTORIA

And look where your secrets got you.

MAXIE

There are secrets and then there are secrets. I totally understood his little affairs, but the financial secrets? Those I can never forgive.

VICTORIA

Did you ever in your entire life have even a remote grip on reality? Action – Consequence. Action – Consequence. An easy concept for anyone who is not a total narcissist. You are a black hole of selfishness.

MAXIE

I'm selfish? Look what you're doing to Harmony. You make Medea look like Mary Poppins.

(This is too much for Victoria.)

VICTORIA

Out. I want you out.

MAXIE

What?

VICTORIA

Out of here, right now.

MAXIE

You can't throw me out.

VICTORIA

Watch me.

HARMONY

What the fuck?

VICTORIA

Tape the boxes, Hamony. I'm calling the movers.

HARMONY

You can't throw Nonnie out!

MAXIE

Where am I supposed to go?

VICTORIA

Hell?

MAXIE

I'm your mother.

VICTORIA

If I have to lug these boxes to the curb myself...

(Victoria starts pushing the boxes in the direction of the door.)

MAXIE

Don't you touch my boxes!

HARMONY

Leave her alone!

(Harmony pushes the boxes back to where they were. They struggle to push the boxes back and forth over the dialogue.)

VICTORIA

Out of the way, Harmony.

MAXIE

Who'll take care of your daughter?

VICTORIA

That's none of your concern.

HARMONY

Like you give a shit.

MAXIE

Did I ever tell you you were adopted?

HARMONY

I wish.

MAXIE

I meant your mother.

VICTORIA

Out!

HARMONY

You're tearing them.

(Maxie gets up and starts to try to fix the boxes.)

VICTORIA

I don't give a shit.

Leave them alone **MAXIE**

I want you out of here. **VICTORIA**

After all I've done for you? **MAXIE**

To me... All you've done TO me! **VICTORIA**

I'm not going anywhere! **MAXIE**

(Maxie sits on the box Victoria and Harmony and pushing.
The box tears and she falls in.)

My hip! I broke my hip!

Get out of here or I'll break the other one. **VICTORIA**

And my back! My hip and my back! **MAXIE**

(Harmony grabs her mother.)

Stop it! Leave Nonnie alone! **HARMONY**

You're next. **VICTORIA**

Me? **HARMONY**

Both of you...! **VICTORIA**

...What the fuck...? **HARMONY**

(Victoria pushes Harmony away.)

...Both of you out of here. Right now! **VICTORIA**

HARMONY

You're crazy!

VICTORIA

Monsters. Ungrateful. Selfish. Irresponsible. Monsters. Sucking every bit of life out of me. I'm ending this curse. This house is falling. If I have to burn it down, I will. Give me the matches! Where are the matches?!

MAXIE

Hide the matches, Harmony!

(Harmony grabs a glass of water.)

VICTORIA

I want matches!

(Harmony throws the water into her mother's face. This shocks Victoria back into reality. There is a stunned silence as Victoria takes a towel and wipes her face. Harmony cries. Victoria crosses to Harmony.)

I didn't... mean it. I didn't.... Harmony. Honey. Please.

(Victoria she reaches out to Harmony.)

HARMONY

Don't touch me!

(Victoria holds Harmony.)

VICTORIA

I never wanted this to happen. I never wanted to hurt you. I did and I'm sorry. But you have to stop punishing me. Even if I deserve it... even if it's all my fault. And it is my fault. Every bit of it. I'm not perfect. I admit it. But we have to figure out a way to live together... under the same roof... without killing each other.

(Greg enters from the outside door.)

GREG

The PATH train was down. No reception.

HARMONY

Bitch! I hate you. I hate you. And I hate you.

(Harmony runs out the door.)

VICTORIA

Greg?

GREG

I got her.

VICTORIA

Her coat?

(Greg grabs Harmony's coat and exits. Maxie is stuck in the box, but does not want to ask for help. Victoria dials her phone.)

Hey. I'm not going to make it tonight. No. I can't be there. I can't. I can't... I just... can't. Sorry. We'll talk tomorrow.

(Victoria crosses to her mother who is still sitting in the box.)

MAXIE

You planning on leaving me here?

VICTORIA

Is it true?

MAXIE

What?

VICTORIA

What she said?

MAXIE

Oh, Honey... I don't think you're a bitch...

VICTORIA

No. What she said. About you and Peter. Did you cheat on Daddy?

MAXIE

Victoria... your father...

VICTORIA

I'm not asking about him. I'm asking about you. And Peter. You said you believed in fidelity.

MAXIE

I believe in Fidelity.

VICTORIA

Then what was Peter?

MAXIE

I said fidelity. Not monogamy.

(Maxie gets out of the box herself.)

Your father was not an easy man to live with. Neither was I. But I adored him.

VICTORIA

Six out of seven nights a week?

MAXIE

That's about all I could handle.

VICTORIA

Why didn't you just leave?

MAXIE

Leave my home, my family, my husband, you... And go where?

VICTORIA

Peter?

MAXIE

Peter.... Peter.... Peter...

(Maxie collects herself.)

You think I'm a monster; that I betrayed your father, spent all his money. That's how you see me. Look again, Victoria. Back as far as you can. Remember the three of us? Not just the big occasions... your birthday... the trips to Europe... Try to remember the little things that children are supposed to take for granted. The evenings when I'd come home from the gallery, your father from work... remember how you would talk about what happened at school or how you were excited about your clarinet recital or the trip to Yellowstone or summer camp. Remember how you felt back then. Safe. Loved. Warm. Happy. You think that's a simple thing for a parent to pull off?

VICTORIA

Oh, so all you have to do is lie and cheat and you have the perfect marriage?

MAXIE

The only perfect marriage I ever knew was in the mind of a young widower. You can be sure if you hear of a perfect couple... one of them is dead.

VICTORIA

One of them *is* dead, Mother – Daddy.

(Pause.)

MAXIE

A long time ago. It was the end of the summer. I was bringing you back from East Hampton. Your father stayed in the city during the week and came up weekends. Your father and I were in bed. The phone rang. I grabbed it: "Hello... hello?" Silence. I said, "You can forget about it. I'm home now." The color drained from his face. You were thirteen months old, just beginning to walk. I asked him if he wanted to leave us. He said, "I'm not going anywhere. I admit nothing." He had a routine. He always came home on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:10. So I started staying out to 12:25 and when I returned, I gave him a kiss and a "hi, darling" and seduced him with all kinds of surprises. One night he said to me after, "It's like you're the other woman." That's how we became the perfect couple.

VICTORIA

I don't want that.

MAXIE

Greg's the best thing that ever happened to you. Next time he walks through that door, grab his coat and don't give it back. Don't let him out that door.

(Victoria begins to close up one of the boxes. She sees the photography of her father, Maxie and herself wearing the black velvet dress. The frame is broken and the glass is cracked.)

VICTORIA

It's over. Broken. Everything we worked so hard for. It's gone to hell. Slipped between our fingers. Just because you're smart and you go to the B-school and you marry a brilliant man... you plan and you study and you work your ass off... it's not enough. Your life shatters. And suddenly you have nothing. I wish I never had it... any of it. I wish I had never been happy... not even for a single moment...

(She hands the broken picture frame to her mother.)

MAXIE

Honey, I'll fix it. I'll have it fixed. I promise you I'm going to fix it.

VICTORIA

How?

(Lights out.)

Scene 5

(Lights up.

Executive recruitment office.

Maxie walks in. Christopher is not there.

She sized up the room. She goes to the desk and quickly looks at Christopher's photos. She opens a manila folder resting on the desks and looks at someone else's resume. She realizes she shouldn't do that and crosses to the chair opposite the desk. She sits in a chair and waits. Fidgets a little with her legs. Crosses legs... uncrosses the legs. She checks her face in compact. Hears someone coming. Puts the compact back in her purse and composes herself.

Christopher walks in. He is texting and doesn't see her. He sits down, looks up and there she is smiling at him.

CHRISTOPHER

Excuse me?

MAXIE

(Stands. Extends hand:) Maxine Saddler. So nice to see you...

CHRISTOPHER

(Looking at his schedule:) Are you on my schedule?

MAXIE

I've been waiting on that Herman Miller knockoff in your reception area for two hours.

CHRISTOPHER

Did Jennifer let you in?

MAXIE

Two hours.

(He picks up his phone to dial the receptionist.)

Victoria Peterson suggested we meet.

CHRISTOPHER

Vicky?

MAXIE

She says you're the best.

CHRISTOPHER

She's right.

MAXIE

She said you could sneak me into your schedule.

CHRISTOPHER

Victoria said that?

MAXIE

Oh, yes.

(He's pauses to consider. Then decides to go with it.)

CHRISTOPHER

Okay... Go.

MAXIE

Go?

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

MAXIE

As in *On your mark... get set?*

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

MAXIE

You want me to start speaking?

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

MAXIE

Okay... This is fun. I... um... I've come here to... because I've decided to pursue new career goals.

CHRISTOPHER

You're looking for work.

MAXIE

Not work. Not a job job. A professional placement.

(He laughs.)

CHRISTOPHER

How old are you?

MAXIE

No. You're not allowed to ask that.

CHRISTOPHER

Yes. I am.

MAXIE

No. You're not.

CHRISTOPHER

I'm not the one hiring. I can ask you anything I want.

MAXIE

How old do I look?

CHRISTOPHER

Past retirement.

MAXIE

Who can afford to retire anymore? Maybe you should look at my portfolio. This might be a better place to start.

(She opens her vintage Vinton open-handed bag and removes art catalogs, and clippings and postcards. She spreads them out on the desk. Some spill on the floor.)

Oh, dear.

(She kneels on the floor to pick them up. She gets a back spasm.)

Oh! Uh... wha... all ohhh. My back....

CHRISTOPHER

What the hell...

MAXIE

I assume you've heard of the Saddler gallery?

CHRISTOPHER

No.

MAXIE

I founded and ran it for 15 years. These are of my shows.... books... catalogs... postcards... my clippings... stories... ow... New York Times... Flash Art. That's me on the cover of Art World. They called me "Mega Maxie."

CHRISTOPHER

Are you going to be down there for much longer...?

MAXIE

Until the spasms stop. Could you get me a Percocet? My bag. There in my bag.

(A little taken aback, he reaches for her bag.)

Mega Maxie.... My specialty was downtown, avant guard, conceptual ... ahhhh... and ahh ahhh ahhh and op art. They're probably in the bottom next to the tissues. I don't want to run a business at this stage in my life. I prefer working for someone. Let them deal with all the financial stuff and I'll do what I'm good at.

(He hands her a bottle.)

That's the Valium. Help yourself. I think you need it. The Percocet is in the silver pillbox. I'll take two. The water bottle please?

(She claws her way up the desk and tries to straighten out. He hands her the water bottle and the pills.)

Thanks.

(She takes the pills, drinks the water. She throws her head back and her back spasms again.)

Ah!

(She drops back into the chair.)

Don't worry. Once the Valium and Percocet kick in I'm golden.

CHRISTOPHER

Victoria sent you here?

MAXIE

Is there someone else I can meet with? Someone more familiar with the New York art scene?

CHRISTOPHER

No. There isn't.

MAXIE

Well. This has been a huge waste of my time.

CHRISTOPHER

How did you get in here?

MAXIE

Victoria...

CHRISTOPHER

Past the reception desk?

MAXIE

Well... I... I asked to use the bathroom and there was your office. I thought I'd save some time and let myself in.

CHRISTOPHER

The bathroom is on the other side of the floor.

MAXIE

Yes. I know. What's with that sign, "Wipe down the counter when you're done?" What? You don't have janitors in this building?

CHRISTOPHER

I don't have any connection to the downtown art scene. Nobody in this building has a connection to the downtown art scene. Victoria knows that. This place is for people who are trying to support themselves. Not for some Chanel-suited, Louis Vuitton-toting, Park Avenue....

MAXIE

Stop right there. *Ex* Park Avenue. Old Chanel. (Holding bag up:) Canal Street. Maybe you could look through your list and see if there's something...

CHRISTOPHER

List?

MAXIE

Yeah. You know... your list... with jobs on it.

CHRISTOPHER

List.

MAXIE

Give it to me and I'll find something I'm right for.

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

MAXIE

Again?

CHRISTOPHER

Go.

MAXIE

As I said before, I've decided to pursue new career goals.

CHRISTOPHER

Go as in get out of my office.

MAXIE

Seems to me Victoria's kept you busy in this economy. Think of all those leads that would dry up, if...

CHRISTOPHER

Victoria expects me to find a job for someone like you?

MAXIE

What exactly do you mean by someone like me. Is it my sex, my religion, my age or the color of my skin?

CHRISTOPHER

Don't pull that shit on me.

MAXIE

I know you have jobs there. Inside that computer... that I could do. I could still be the dynamic force in the New York art scene I once was. Mega-Maxie doesn't just vanish with age.

(He picks up his mobile phone.)

Are you calling security on me?

CHRISTOPHER

Victoria.

(He has found her number. He clicks and holds it to his ear.)

MAXIE

She's my daughter.

CHRISTOPHER

Oh.

MAXIE

She doesn't know I'm here. I found your card in her briefcase.

(He ends the call and stares at her.)

Okay. I know this is a little out of line...

CHRISTOPHER

You think?

(He reaches for his desk phone.)

MAXIE

Don't call security. Give me five minutes and then I'll go.

(He puts the phone down and sighs.)

I've lost my apartment, my husband, and my lover. It has to be someone else's fault. Right? But last night it occurred to me. Maybe I was a little... complicit... in getting myself into my present predicament. And if that were the case, if I were a little... complicit... then, maybe... maybe I should... do... something about it. I'm not a dinosaur. I can evolve. My family needs me. I'll do anything... I'll ... bus tables at La Cirque... slice salami at Zabars... take a class in accounting. I'm a talented woman, goddamn it. And I'm going to make this right, if it kills me. a talented woman, goddamn it. And I'm going to make this right, if it kills me.

CHRISTOPHER

Normally I'd try to sell you a package of career development courses. It's the only way we've been able to keep the doors open for the past three years.

MAXIE

No jobs?

(He exhales.)

CHRISTOPHER

I figure I have another two weeks before they hand me a cardboard box of my own. It's like a ghost town up here. I'll miss this gig. With a few clicks on my computer, I can destroy a life or make it whole. Where else can you get a commission for being such a condescending asshole? I'm really good at that.

(He sighs.)

You still have that valium?

MAXIE

Want a Percocet too?

(She goes for the bottle and begins to open it.)

CHRISTOPHER

Victoria's husband...

MAXIE

Greg?

CHRISTOPHER

Robot guy. Came in here a few months ago. Has he found anything?

MAXIE

Why do you ask?

CHRISTOPHER

A new company. I'm not sure if there's anything there. How committed is he to staying in New York?

MAXIE

We're New Yorkers.

(She reconsiders. She has an idea.)

What's the company's name?

(Lights out.)

Scene 6

(Lights up.

The loft.

Greg enters. He looks around. No one is there.)

MAXIE'S VOICE

(From the kitchen:) Who's there?

GREG

Hi Maxie.

MAXIE'S VOICE

I'll be right out.

(The sound of a blender. The dinosaur robot rolls up to Greg. He plays with it.)

GREG

Need help?

(Maxie enters from kitchen, carrying a tray with food and drinks.)

Cheese, grapes, blueberry slushy? **MAXIE**

(Greg takes a spit of the slushy and almost spits it out.)

What's in this? **GREG**

Vodka. You'll need it. **MAXIE**

You're sure this is a good idea? **GREG**

Why not? It tastes like a creamsicle. **MAXIE**

It's not going to work. **GREG**

We're gonna make it work. **MAXIE**

And if she doesn't go for it? **GREG**

There is no way... **MAXIE**

Wake up, Maxie. She doesn't want me. **GREG**

She doesn't know what she wants. We're going to tell her. **MAXIE**

And the other guy? **GREG**

That's over. **MAXIE**

How do you know? **GREG**

He's going to his senior prom without her. **MAXIE**

GREG

It's not funny.

MAXIE

It's over.

GREG

I don't know. I don't know.

MAXIE

Honey. Over the course of a marriage, these things occur. It could even happen to you. But the question is, can a relationship survive marriage?

GREG

What's the answer?

MAXIE

If you both really want it to work, it can survive anything.

GREG

A lot is riding on this, Maxie. If she doesn't go for it, I don't have a life.

MAXIE

Greg....

GREG

Without Victoria? Without Harmony?

MAXIE

If she doesn't go for it, none of us has a life.

(Greg takes a big gulp of the drink.)

GREG

I'm sorry about Peter

MAXIE

Don't be. He was right... I didn't love him. I can't be married now. I'm just beginning to take responsibility for myself. Now when I take a subway, I feel virtuous. If I were married, it would be "How could you let me take a subway?"

GREG

Women are a different species.

MAXIE

I'm done blaming everyone else. Okay... So, I thought I lost everything. It was stuff. Just stuff. Look at me now. Who knew I could feel so powerful?

GREG

(Toasting:) To the return of Mega Maxie...

Cheers. **MAXIE**

Cheers. **GREG**

Now... Step one: I cook dinner. You talk to Victoria. **MAXIE**

Harmony? **GREG**

She'll be my sous chef. **MAXIE**

What have you told Victoria? **GREG**

Nothing. **MAXIE**

Does she know I'm coming tonight? **GREG**

It's a surprise. **MAXIE**

Are you kidding? **GREG**

A big one. **MAXIE**

She doesn't like that. **GREG**

She'll hate it. **MAXIE**

She's going to feel like we bush-wacked her. **GREG**

We are. It's the only way with Victoria. Get her off her feet and pounce. Trust me **MAXIE**

GREG

I don't know...

MAXIE

Do we need another rehearsal? How about if I be you this time? Take notes. *Victoria, we have two options here...*

GREG

No one gives me options, Greg. I take what I want.

MAXIE

Shut up and listen, bitch!

GREG

I can't say that.

MAXIE

Can you say *cunt*?

GREG

This is not going to work.

MAXIE

It's a brilliant plan. A to Z. It's got everything.

GREG

Everything but Victoria.

MAXIE

Speak from the heart. Tell her exactly what you told me after your meeting with Christopher.

GREG

I love her.

MAXIE

She loves you too. But don't expect her to put it on a cake. She's a difficult woman. From a long line of very difficult women.

GREG

And Harmony?

MAXIE

The line continues.

GREG

No... Have you told Harmony?

MAXIE

That's your job.

GREG

Thermonuclear meltdown without the titanium rods.

(Victoria enters with bags of groceries. She stops at the entryway when she sees Greg.)

VICTORIA

Greg? Is something wrong? Harmony?

MAXIE

I've reinstated Sunday dinner. Blueberry smoothy slushy?

GREG

Maxie's new health drink.

(Greg grabs the grocery bags. Maxie takes them from him.)

MAXIE

Give me those. Victoria, take his coat.

VICTORIA

What?

MAXIE

I said, take his coat... (under breath:) ...and hide it.

(Victoria hangs it up in the closet.)

(Yelling up the stairs:) Harmony?!

(No answer.)

I'm trying out a new recipe... Coq au vin. Harmony?!!!

HARMONY'S VOICE

(From her room:) I'm tweeting...

GREG

What are you tweeting, honey?

HARMONY'S VOICE

Daddy?

(Harmony enters from her room.)

HARMONY

Okay. What have I done now?

MAXIE

God only knows. I need your help in the kitchen.

HARMONY

You told me to work on my portfolio.

MAXIE

Save it for after dinner. I'll help you. I have some ideas about sleeves and cuffs. No one pays attention to sleeves and cuffs anymore.

(Maxie holds a bag out for Harmony to carry. Harmony leaves her phone on a table in order to carry the bag.)

Let's not forget the phone. We'll be in the kitchen.

VICTORIA

The fire extinguisher is under the sink.

MAXIE

If you need titanium rods, whistle.

(Harmony and Maxie exit.)

VICTORIA

Titanium rods?

(Pause.)

This is a surprise.

(Greg doesn't know where to begin.)

You look good.

GREG

So do you.

VICTORIA

I miss you.

GREG

Victoria, we have two options here...

VICTORIA

You're giving me options, Greg?

GREG

The two options are...

Woah... What is this? **VICTORIA**

You have a choice... **GREG**

Greg, look at me. What are you talking about? **VICTORIA**

I've been offered a job. **GREG**

Okay. **VICTORIA**

And I've decided to take it. **GREG**

Great. Two options? **VICTORIA**

It's in California. **GREG**

(Pause.)

Silicon Valley.

(Pause.)

Victoria?

You're leaving? **VICTORIA**

GREG
A new venture. Airport security. They make video sensors calibrated to measure emotional response. They need my research and they're willing to pay for it...

Airport security...? **VICTORIA**

... Stock options. Relocation.... **GREG**

VICTORIA
Machines as cops? Doesn't sound like you, Greg.

GREG

It's a practical application of what I do. It will make air travel safe. It's for the common good. You were right. Time to grow up.

VICTORIA

You're leaving me?

GREG

It's one of the options.

VICTORIA

You are not taking Harmony.

GREG

She's going with me.

VICTORIA

There is no fucking way....

GREG

You think you're man will be thrilled with raising a 13-year old?

VICTORIA

What man is?

GREG

Me.

VICTORIA

That's over.

GREG

Not for me.

VICTORIA

You are not taking Harmony.

GREG

There's a nice neighborhood in Santa Clara....

VICTORIA

Wait. Wait. Wait.

GREG

A good school system...

VICTORIA

How long have you been planning this? We are a family. You want to make plans you include me.

GREG

Are we a family?

VICTORIA

What do you mean?

GREG

Are we a family?

VICTORIA

Stay here by myself or go to California with you and my daughter? That's my choice?

GREG

You need to decide now.

VICTORIA

Now? Why?

GREG

My life begins again now. We could do this together or I walk out that door.

VICTORIA

You can't make plans behind my back, throw it in my face and expect me to...

GREG

You have a choice.

VICTORIA

Don't corner me, Greg.

GREG

I want you to come with me.

VICTORIA

Leave New York, move to California and magically it's all back to the way it was before? Just like that, happily ever after?

GREG

We both have to want to make it work.

VICTORIA

What about me... my career... my life...?

GREG

Aren't you tired of working for someone else? Strike out on your own.

VICTORIA

Don't tell me what... My own company? Really?

GREG

California is a gold mine. You know how many start-ups are looking for funding and need people who know how to do it? I can go out there first and lay the groundwork. I've been talking to Christopher...

VICTORIA

Sell the loft... move to Santa Clara... start a new consultancy in this economy... You are asking me to rip my life apart... on the hope that we can put our marriage back together.

GREG

Yes. I want us to be together again. Don't you?

VICTORIA

How do we do that? Live in the same house? Sleep in the same bed?

GREG

Yes.

VICTORIA

It won't work. We can't just rewind this. It won't be the same.

GREG

I don't want it to be. I want a new deal. I want to wake up every morning and decide if I want to be with you. And I want you to do the same.

VICTORIA

Coffee, toast and commitment? *Greg, do you take me, Victoria, to be your...*

GREG

Yes. I do.

VICTORIA

Now pass the Splenda?

GREG

No secrets, lies or half-truths.

VICTORIA

We'll be married and divorced five times a day.

GREG

Maybe.

VICTORIA

You said you'll never get over Tom.

GREG

I see that prick again, I'll punch him in the face.

VICTORIA

How are we going to live with that?

GREG

I don't know.

(Pause.)

VICTORIA

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know...

GREG

What do you want, Victoria?

VICTORIA

I used to know. It was easy. You follow a little machine down an infinite corridor...

GREG

We aren't those people anymore.

VICTORIA

Then who are we?

GREG

Let's find out.

(He holds her.)

Tell me you love me. That's where we'll start.

VICTORIA

This again.

GREG

Yes.

VICTORIA

Three little words so overused they've become practically meaningless.

GREG

Not to me.

VICTORIA

How will you know I mean it?

GREG

I'll know.

VICTORIA

Everything... my whole life hangs on three little words

GREG

This is where it begins.

VICTORIA

Saying *I love you* will wash away all our problems?

GREG

It won't. But it's what I need to start over. If you can't tell me you love me, I'm out that door.

VICTORIA

Don't push me, Greg.

GREG

Look deep inside. Don't be afraid. Put down your armor. I will protect you. Trust me this time. Say it and I'll make everything better.

VICTORIA

How?

GREG

I'm an MIT grad. It's what we do. Bleep. Bleep.

VICTORIA

Shoop. Shoop.

GREG

Shleep?

VICTORIA

I love you.

(They embrace and kiss.)

It's not the same. As it was.

GREG

It can't be.

VICTORIA

It better not be.

(They kiss again. This time they give in to it. It's not passionate, but it is comfortable. It's like Victoria is sighing in relief. Harmony enters in a hurry. She is about to say something, when she sees her parents kissing. She stops dead in her tracks.)

HARMONY

What the...?

GREG

We have some news, honey.

HARMONY

There's a fire.

VICTORIA

Mother!

(Maxie enters holding a fire extinguisher.)

MAXIE

Relax... relax... I put it out. Who knew you couldn't flambé Coq au vin.

VICTORIA

The kitchen?

MAXIE

A little paint and you'll never know. It's fine, Greg. Stay where you are. Don't worry, I'll call the Carlton.

HARMONY

What do you mean *news*?

GREG

We're going to be a family again.

HARMONY

You forgive her? After all she's done?

GREG

We all have to figure out how to forgive each other.

HARMONY

What is this, bible school?

VICTORIA

Your father got a new job.

HARMONY

Does that mean I can stay at Baldwin?

GREG

The job's in California.

HARMONY

What?

MAXIE

Now... I've been looking at real estate in Mountain View. There are a few really nice places with pools and lovely detached mother-in-law cottages.

HARMONY

California?

MAXIE

We'll be like the Jodes in the Grapes of Wrath, but with better clothes.

HARMONY

Are you fucking kidding?

MAXIE

I'll open a gallery in Carmel. Of course, I'll need a new contractor...

VICTORIA

Maxie's coming too?

GREG

You want me to leave her in Manhattan unsupervised?

MAXIE

Maybe outsider art this time...

VICTORIA

Start my own company...?

GREG

Airport Security...?

MAXIE

Wait a minute... Is there a Bergdorfs in Santa Clara?

VICTORIA

California...

GREG

... Here we come...?

HARMONY

Leave New York? Over my dead body!!!

(Black out.

End of play.)