

SACRED DUTIES

by
Michael Flood

CHARACTERS:

JANICE SPRINGS (Nora)	35/F - Entrepreneur, married to Roger
ROGER SPRINGS (Torvald)	36/M - Contractor, married to Janice
MARIAN MILLER (Kristine)	35/F - Janice's partner and best friend
ALBERT HAMMOND (director)	45/M - Police Detective, local LDS bishop
LENNY KALINSKI (Krogstad)	45/M - Retail, high school friend of Albert
MITCH STENDAHL (Dr. Rank)	25/M - Construction, works for his friend, Roger

SETTING:

A theatre where a production of *A Doll's House* is being rehearsed. On the stage are no walls only a basic set of pulled furniture: a round table with four chairs, a buffet, and a small loveseat. Other than these pieces, the stage is bare with the exception of some set-building materials UPSTAGE. As the play progresses the building materials disappear and the set becomes more performance-like.

TIME:

The Present

/ = A point of overlap by the following line.

≠ = A pause in overlapping until the end of overlapped line or next '/' is reached

Lines written entirely in italics are character lines from *A Doll's House*.

LOGLINE:

While rehearsing a benefit performance of *A Doll's House*, Janice Springs finds herself fighting to protect everything she has built (her marriage, family, public image) from a secret that could destroy it all.

SYNOPSIS:

While rehearsing for a benefit performance of A DOLL'S HOUSE, Janice and Roger Springs see their perfect life implode when a new cast member arrives with a secret regarding the nature of Janice's business. The fact that her business is in direct opposition to her public personae, as well as her family's religious beliefs, shakes the very foundation of the couple's relationship. Now they must face issues of trust; faith; and personal, religious and community responsibility, as well as her place in the life she and Roger have built.

I

Saturday. At LIGHTS UP we find JANICE sitting in a chair, her feet up on the table.

JANICE

Perhaps some day – a long time from now when I'm no longer so pretty and attractive. No! Don't laugh! Some day when Torvald is no longer as much in love with me as he was before when... Crap!

(Picks her script off the table.)

... in love with me as he is now; when it no longer amuses him to see me dance and dress-up and act for him... I cannot get this.

(She silently mouths her line while reading the script, then, tossing the script on the table...)

Jeez! Grow a pair! Why doesn't she just tell him where to go and walk out the door?

(She throws her head back and closes her eyes. MITCH and MARIAN enter in discussion.)

MITCH

I don't see how this is gonna work. I can't play seventy. No one would believe it! I mean, look at me!

MARIAN

(Looking him up and down.)

Yes. Look at you. *(beat)* It does seem weird that he would cast you as an AARP member... or whatever they had back then.

MITCH

Yeah! Exactly!

MARIAN

I think you need to talk to Al about it.

MITCH

I have. He just keeps telling me the same thing. He says, "Mitch, it'll work. Trust me." Last time, he gave me a... um... Staslavski book.

JANICE

(Not looking at them.)

Stanislavski.

MITCH

Yeah. Him. That book didn't tell me how to do it. Nothing in that book told me how to act like an old man. I have to get another book to explain *that* book to me.

MARIAN

I haven't read that. Do you have it with you?

MITCH

I looked on the internet for some help and I found something that I can use to show him I'm right.

(Rummages in his backpack and pulls out An Actor Prepares and hands it to Marian. He then pulls out a notebook.)

There isn't any very-simil-eetood. It's a French... um... neo-classic word.

JANICE

(Under her breath.)

Holy cow.

MARIAN

(Thumbing through the book.)

I don't think I know what that is. Is that character development?

JANICE

Define it?

MARIAN

Huh?

JANICE

Mitch. You. Define verisimilitude.

MITCH

It's when things are right.

JANICE

In short it means truth. Actually, the *appearance* of truth.

MITCH

Okay.

JANICE

Who has to create that truth, Mitch?

(Silence.)

In this case, you do.

MITCH

But...

JANICE

No, Mitch. That's all there is to it. Really. You believe it, play it honestly, and the audience will believe.

MARIAN

But, what about the fact that he is not seventy?

JANICE

Is that how old Dr. Rank is? Where does it say that?

MARIAN

In the script.

JANICE

Where?

(Marian puts the book down and starts thumbing through her script.)

Save yourself the trouble. It doesn't. Torvald calls him "old man" as a sign of endearment.

MARIAN

Oh.

JANICE

Everyone has always played him that way. Al decided to take it in a different direction. He has a different reading of the character.

MITCH

Me.

JANICE

You. Think about it. How tragic is the death of a man who looks healthy, even younger than his years? That's what I see, anyway. You should talk to Al again if you are confused. It's why we have a director.

MITCH

(After a moment of silence.)

What about Bob? The show is in less than two weeks and I don't think he'll be ready.

JANICE

That's not really your business, Mitch. That's also for the director to decide.

MITCH

He's not off book yet.

Marian, prompted by this, pulls a chair away from the table, sits and starts to work on her lines.

JANICE

How many plays have you been in?

(He does not answer.)

This is your first, isn't it? Don't take this personally, alright?

(MORE)

JANICE (cont'd)

I'm trying to help you. In theatre we shouldn't worry about other actors and what they're doing or not doing. That's the director's job. It's yet another reason we have a director.

MITCH

Sorry.

JANICE

No need to be. We all had to start somewhere. Just understand that with a good director—a director as good as Al—nothing goes unnoticed.

MITCH

So, you're not worried about this line thing?

JANICE

Should I be?

MITCH

Shouldn't we all be? He forgets something big or jumps a big section and we'll look stupid up here.

MARIAN

(Reading her script.)

And much, much older, Nora.

JANICE

(Mitch and Janice double-take.)

Let me tell you something about Robert Smith. Here. Sit down.

(She speaks frankly, but kind.)

I have been in many shows with him over the past decade or so and there is one constant with him: He is letter perfect the second that curtain rises. Comedy. Drama. Musical. It doesn't matter. Once that curtain rises, he will be perfect until the final bow.

MITCH

That's impossible.

JANICE

Letter. Perfect. *(beat)* Will you be?

MITCH

I'll try.

JANICE

(Doing her best Yoda impression.)

"There is no try; there is only do."

(She laughs as he stares at her blankly.)

Oh, come on! Yoda! From *Star Wars*?

(MORE)

JANICE (cont'd)
(He nods, smiles slightly in recognition.)

Never mind.

MITCH
 No, no. Funny. *(beat)* Still, Jan, do you think...

JANICE
 It doesn't matter what I think. Like I told you, you...

MITCH
 ...have to talk to Al.

MARIAN
...it would be delightful to have what one needs.

JANICE
(Answering Marian.)
No, not only what one needs, but heaps and heaps of money.
(To Mitch.)

On more thing about Bob: Not only is he always letter perfect in performance no matter what show he's in, but he has played this role before. He already knows the lines. They are locked somewhere inside there and he will pull them out. It can be frustrating, believe me, but there is really nothing to worry about in the long run.

MITCH
 Okay.

JANICE
(beat)
 Be genuine. You'll be fine.

MITCH
 I'll try.

JANICE
 Do I have to do Yoda again?

MITCH
 Good God, no.

ALBERT
(Entering, obviously upset.)
 Is everyone here?

MITCH
 Al?

ALBERT
 Not now, Mitch. Is everyone here?
(Counting.)
 Who's not here? Roger?

JANICE
 And Bob. Bob's not here.

ALBERT
 Yes. I know.
(To Janice.)
 Where is Roger?

JANICE
 He should be on his way. I know he left work on time. What's wrong?

ALBERT
 In a minute.

MITCH
 Al? Will there be time before we start that I can talk to you?

ALBERT
 Mitch. Please. Not now.

MITCH
 But, this is important.

ALBERT
 I know it is.

MITCH
 Then can we...

ALBERT
(Blowing up.)
 No! Not right now!
(The group freezes in shock.)

MITCH
 Sorry. Okay. Yeah, sorry.

ALBERT
(beat)
 Mitch. I'm sorry. I just...

MITCH
 That's okay.

ALBERT

(beat)

Okay. Well. I guess we'll have to fill Roger in when he gets here. / We have something to discuss.

MARIAN

I thought I saw his truck outside.

JANICE

He should be here any minute.

ALBERT

(Stopping them.)

He'll get here when he gets here. *(beat)* I have bad news... horrible news. *(beat)* Bob's dead.

[Overlapping.]

JANICE

Oh, my... This is...

MITCH

Holy... Oh, how?

MARIAN

He was fine last night...

JANICE

How did... Al...?

ALBERT

I got the call this afternoon. Looks like murder. It's an ongoing investigation so I can't say much, but... yeah... it looks like murder.

MARIAN

Oh, my God. Is there anything we can do?

ALBERT

No. *(beat)* Not now. Tomorrow, I guess... I'll need to interview everyone. Standard procedure.

MITCH

I just saw him this morning at The Donut Bar. He seemed fine.

JANICE

Does his family know?

ALBERT

I called his daughter. She'll be here tomorrow night.
(They fall into silence, no one knowing what to do next. Finally:)

MARIAN

I know this is not the most sensitive thing, but someone has to ask: What are *we* gonna do?

JANICE

Mare.

MARIAN

I know it's heartless...

JANICE

The man just died.

ALBERT

Jan. It's okay. It does need to be... addressed.

MARIAN

I mean, are we gonna have to cancel the play?

ALBERT

He wouldn't want us to cancel. He was a trouper. He knew how important this performance is to the theatre. To him, the show must go on. No matter what. *(beat)* He loved this place! *(beat)* He loved all of you. *(beat)* This show... this benefit was his idea, you know? The last thing he would want is for us to cancel it. This show is happening if I have to play the role myself.

(No one moves. Silence. ROGER bounds in.)

ROGER

Hey, everyone! Sorry I'm late.
(He stops, inspects the room.)

Jeez! Who died?
(All eyes on him.)

BLACKOUT

II

Sunday. Lights up on Janice and Roger working a scene.

ROGER

When did my squirrel come home?

JANICE

Just now. Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

ROGER

Don't disturb me. Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

JANICE

Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economise.

ROGER

Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly. (beat) We've got this.

JANICE

Of course we do. I don't know when we will get back to these scenes, though. Dress is close and with no Krogstad...

ROGER

It'll be fine.

JANICE

Let's just finish this scene.

(Gets back into character.)

Well, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

ROGER

Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before the salary is due.

JANICE

Pooh! / we can borrow until then.

ROGER

Pooh. (Playfully.) Oh, pooh, Jeeves!

JANICE

Focus.

ROGER

Adults saying "pooh" to each other... still makes me chuckle.

(She stares at him.)

Fine...

(Back into character.)

Nora! The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty pounds today, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

JANICE

Oh! don't say such horrid things.

ROGER

Still, suppose that happened—what then?

JANICE

If that were to happen, I don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not.

ROGER

(beat)

What would you do?

JANICE

What? That's not...

ROGER

No. Have you ever thought what you would do if... You know?

JANICE

What brings this up?

ROGER

Nothing. Just popped into my head.

(Back into character.)

Yes, but what about the people who had lent it?

JANICE

They? Who would bother about them? I should not know who they were.

ROGER

That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle.

JANICE

(Eyeing him.)

Is there something you need to tell me?

ROGER
About?

JANICE
Anything. Why did you just ask me that?

ROGER
Like I said... just popped into my head.

JANICE
Mm hmm. *(beat)* Well, I think I'd be fine.

ROGER
Just like that?

JANICE
Sure. Just like that.

ROGER
Ah... so... you don't need me.
(Mocking depression.)
I understand.

JANICE
As you please, Torvald.
*(She crosses to him, sits on his lap and
cuddles up to him.)*

ROGER
*Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little
squirrel out of temper? Nora, what do you think I have got here?*

JANICE
Money!
(She kisses him.)
Money.
(They kiss again. Mitch and Marian enter.)

MITCH
Oh, man! Mare! Mom and dad are makin' out!

MARIAN
Exhibitionists!

MITCH
Where's my camera?

ROGER
Alright alright.

JANICE
How's it going, guys?

MITCH
Not bad.

MARIAN
(Rummaging in her bag.)
Jan, before I forget, here's the article for the paper so you can look it over.
(Handing Janice a piece of paper.)
See if anything needs to be changed. They also want to know when the new ad will be there.

JANICE
They'll have it tomorrow. I'll check it, then have Al look it over and get it back to you before we leave tonight.
(Reading.)
"The Main Theatre's Special Night of Stars..." Man, do I hate that title. Blahblahblah... "... for a special one night performance of Henry Gibson's..." Henry Gibson? Good job! Who gave him this information?

MARIAN
Uh...

JANICE
Jeez. Did Dave write this? *(beat)* Mare...
(Back to the press release.)
"... as Roger and Janice Springs re-enact their roles as Nora and Torvald, respectfully." *(beat)* I have a feeling your little brother is more than a day or two from his own byline.

MARIAN
(Pulling out her phone.)
We'll fix it! I swear!

JANICE
Give it to Al. He'll correct it and get it to the paper.

MARIAN
No! I'll take it back.

JANICE
Mare.

MARIAN
I don't want Dave getting in trouble.

JANICE
You can't protect him forever.

MARIAN

He doesn't listen. That's the problem. Men! They just don't listen!

MITCH

Hey!

ROGER

Hey!

JANICE

Yes, boys?

(Roger and Mitch look at each other.)

ROGER

Not *every* man.

JANICE

Okay...

ROGER

PC stereotypes hurt!

JANICE

(Mocking.)

Ah... sorry, honey.

(Al enters.)

ALBERT

Good evening, everybody. I have good news!

MITCH

Oh, Al!

ALBERT

(Stopping.)

Mitch.

MITCH

Al, we need to / talk...

ALBERT

... talk about you and Dr. Rank.

MITCH

Uh... yeah.

ALBERT

Later. Right now we need to attend to other business.

MITCH

But...

Later. ALBERT

How can I... MITCH

Later! ALBERT
(*Stopping him.*)

Okay. Yeah. MITCH

Good. ALBERT
(*To the cast.*)
I have some news. (*beat*) We have our Krogstad!

Good! Who is it? JANICE

Where... How on Earth did you find someone? ROGER

ALBERT
You will never believe this! I went back by Robert's house last night after rehearsal... It's on the way home. I saw this guy looking in his bedroom window...

What?! ROGER

What? ALBERT

ROGER
What do you mean "what?!" So you see some morbid guy trolling a crime scene and your first thought is, "I wonder if he can play Krogstad in my play?"

ALBERT
No. As it turns out, he's a friend of mine. We were in high school drama together with Bob. (*beat*) Anyway... We went to the IHOP and talked for a while, you know, about the old days. We discussed the show and he offered to reprise *his* Krogstad for us.

ROGER
This is too weird. And a bit convenient, if you ask me.

ALBERT

It's... unconventional... Definitely random to run into him like that. But, we don't really have much choice at this point, do we? I mean, if you have another option, please share. *(beat)* Okay, then, let's get started. Jan and Marian let's start from the top. We'll just barrel through and I'll read...

(LENNY enters.)

Lenny!

LENNY

Hi.

ALBERT

Everyone, this is Leonard Kalinski... Lenny.

(Lenny makes the rounds meeting each person as introduced.)

Lenny, this is Janice our Nora. Roger... Torvald. Marian is Kristine. And Mitch is our Dr. Rank.

LENNY

Uh... He's Dr. Rank? Interesting.

MITCH

See! See! I told you! I'm not crazy!

LENNY

I stepped in it, I guess.

MITCH

Al...

ALBERT

Mitch, we will talk later.

LENNY

Sorry.

ALBERT

It's not your fault. Trust me.

LENNY

I would like to thank you all for allowing me to join you in this endeavor. I know it would mean the world to Robert and it means as much to me to be able to do this for him.

JANICE

We are very saddened by the loss of such a sweet man.

(All agree with the following in their own way.)

(MORE)

JANICE (cont'd)

He meant a great deal to all of us and, I think I speak for everyone when I say this: We are very indebted to you for helping us out.

ALBERT

Thanks, Jan. I believe we all echo the sentiment. *(beat)* But, we must move ahead here if we are going to be ready. Here's what we are going to do tonight.

(Albert crosses to the buffet, plops his bag down, and pulls out a notebook.)

We are going to work Nora and Krogstad and get them up to speed. Everyone else is excused, but don't take this as an reason to get lazy. Work your lines and review your blocking.

MARIAN

Sure!

MITCH

Okay. Al, I...

ALBERT

Tomorrow, Mitch. I really don't have time for this tonight.

MITCH

I was just gonna say I'll see you tomorrow.

ALBERT

Oh. Good night.

Mitch exits.

MARIAN

(Running after him.)

Mitch! Hey! Care to join me for dinner?

ROGER

I'll see you at home?

JANICE

Yeah. Will you stop by the store and pick up some milk and bread?

ROGER

Sure.

(They kiss.)

See ya.

JANICE

K.

(Roger starts to exit but she stops him.)

Oh! And get some ice cream. I have been craving Chunky Monkey all day.

(MORE)

JANICE (cont'd)
*(He turns to leave but stops again—he knows
 what's coming.)*

And get the organic milk.

ROGER

I know. *(beat)* You sure that's it?

JANICE

Yeeeee. *(Joking.)* Thank you... *snookums!*

Roger doesn't turn around but waves over his
 shoulder.

ROGER

Yeah! See ya!

ALBERT

(He starts going through his bag.)

Okay. Now that the riff-raff is gone, we can get down to work.

LENNY

(To Janice.)

You and Al work together much?

JANICE

We've done... oh... twenty or so productions.

LENNY

Wow.

JANICE

We've had fun. Theatre is not high on most of the locals' lists. Luckily, we found
 each other. *(beat)* You grew up here? You and Al?

LENNY

M hm.

JANICE

How long have you been gone?

LENNY

Let's see. Fifteen years? God, has it been that long? *(beat)* It was time to come
 home.

JANICE

I understand that.

LENNY

Yeah?

JANICE

Oh, yes. There are times I miss my hometown. Everyone lives with some version of that I suppose.

LENNY

Where's home?

ALBERT

(He digs a script out of his bag and hands it to Lenny.)

Here ya go, Len. Let's just go from your entrance. Page... twelve.

(Working from his prompt script.)

The beginning is simple. Straightforward. Okay, so you enter upstage. That's where the front door is. *(beat)* I guess I should lay it out for you, huh. Okay, the front door is upstage—like I said—and upstage right is the door to the hallway, bedrooms, etc. Down stage right is the door to Torvald's study. Got it?

LENNY

(Making notes in his script.)

Sure.

ALBERT

So, you enter through the front door, exchange pleasantries, then exit to the study.

LENNY

Got it.

ALBERT

So, you're out. Now, your next entrance. Nora, you're alone as the children have just left. Krog, you enter from the hall, look around for her. Nora, you're under the table... hide 'n' seek with the kids. Instead of a line through, let's walk it. Is that alright for you two?

JANICE

I'm good if you are, Leonard.

LENNY

Lenny. Yeah, I'm good.

ALBERT

Okay. Let's see what we can get here.

Janice crawls under the table while Lenny heads upstage. He, then, enters looking for Nora. He finds her.

LENNY

Excuse me, Mrs Helmer.

JANICE

(She lets out a surprised cry.)

What do you want?

LENNY

Excuse me, the outer door was ajar; I suppose someone forgot to shut it.

JANICE

My husband is out, Mr. Krogstad.

LENNY

I know.

JANICE

What do you want here, then?

LENNY

A word with you.

JANICE

With me? You want to speak to me?

LENNY

Yes, I do. *(beat)* Al? Let me just ask... Where are the children?

ALBERT

I didn't cast any. I thought I'd try the idea that the children's physical presence is superfluous. I don't think it's necessary to see them to know that they exist. Plus, with this being a one-night benefit show, they would be an unnecessary headache.

LENNY

Just wondered. I seemed to recall her saying something about the kids or playing with the kids.

ALBERT

No problem. Any questions, feel free to ask. You good, Jan?

(She nods.)

Actually, I'm glad we stopped for a minute. Through this part, Nora, just keep the table between you.

JANICE

Right.

ALBERT

Then... Let's see... Especially here: "It's not the first of the month." Go and I'll stop you...

LENNY

Why don't you just tell me where you want me to approach her so we can keep the momentum. Is that alright, Janice?

JANICE

Jan. Sure.

ALBERT

Okay.

(Looking through the script.)

Well... um... Need to keep your position... Use your influence... Signature... Ah, here we go. Okay. Page twenty. Right here: "Your father died on the 29th of September..." You approach to show her papers and, maybe, for something a little more?

JANICE

Like...?

ALBERT

Well, there is more going on here—more motivation—than mere money. I have seen so many productions that have played this as solely a business transaction. I even fell into that the last time. We're going to get it right this time.

JANICE

Like what?

ALBERT

Maybe... jealousy, for lack of a better term. Krog is alone in life. Has no wife and maybe he has a little thing for Nora.

LENNY

I can see that. How far would he take that, though?

ALBERT

How far do *you* think he'd take it?

LENNY

I don't know.

JANICE

Would Nora initiate any of this?

ALBERT

No, I don't think so.

JANICE

So, she would be on the defensive?

ALBERT

Possibly. Let's try it and see where your impulse takes you.

(To Lenny.)

Len... I want it to build.

LENNY

Sure.

ALBERT

Good... good. Jan?

JANICE

Yes?

ALBERT

Sound good.

JANICE

Yep. Sure.

ALBERT

Alright. Let's just go and see what we get.

JANICE

No problem.

LENNY

Okay.

(To Janice.)

Is it alright if I touch you? Nothing intrusive. Shoulders. That sort of thing?

JANICE

Of course. That's fine. No problem.

LENNY

Okay, Al?

ALBERT

When you are.

LENNY

(To Janice.)

Ready?

JANICE

Yep.

LENNY

And died soon after that?

JANICE

Yes.

(beat)

What discrepancy? I don't know—

Through the following exchange, Lenny makes subtle moves indicating Krogstad's sexual intentions.

LENNY

(Approaching her.)

The discrepancy consists, Mrs Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

JANICE

What do you mean? I don't understand—

LENNY

Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? (beat) Can you explain it to me? (beat) It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

JANICE

(Breaking down.)

No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

LENNY

Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

JANICE

In what way? You shall have your money soon.

LENNY

It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

JANICE

No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

LENNY

But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

JANICE

I couldn't take that into account.

LENNY

Mrs Helmer, you evidently do not realize clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

JANICE

You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?

LENNY

(He is behind her now, his hands on her shoulders and his mouth next to her ear.)

The law cares nothing about motives.

JANICE

(She melts for a moment then breaks away, but not far.)

Then it must be a very foolish law.

LENNY

Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

JANICE

I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

LENNY

(He closes the distance between them until they are nearly nose-to-nose.)

Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours with me.

He brushes her cheek and exits. Janice leans against the chair, affected. Lenny re-enters after a moment.

ALBERT

Exactly! Yes! Great!

LENNY

It works?

ALBERT

Definitely! Jan? Did it work for you?

She doesn't answer. Lenny notices this and suggests.

LENNY

Shall we run it all?

ALBERT

Oh, most definitely. Jan? You ready to go again?

JANICE

I think I need a minute.

ALBERT

A little different approach, huh?

She looks at him, then at Lenny who is staring at her, a sly grin on his face. She smiles back nervously.

JANICE

I need some air.

ALBERT

Sure. Yeah. Take a few minutes.

She exits.

LENNY

She alright?

ALBERT

Yeah. She's a pro. A connection like that is a bit more than she's used to in our little community theatre here. When she works with Roger, everything clicks—like a machine—but she hasn't worked with many others. Most the people who have come through here exist square in the middle of mediocre. You are forcing her up a notch.

(Confidentially.)

When we run this again, see if you can up the stakes for her a bit more.

LENNY

You sure?

ALBERT

I want to see what she'll do with it. And if you go to far, I can always pull you back.

LENNY

Okay. *(beat)* Well, I'm going to get a drink.

He goes to his stuff and gets a water bottle from his bag. Janice enters.

ALBERT
You ready?

JANICE
Yes. *(beat)* Ready.

LENNY
From the top?

ALBERT
No. Actually, let's just take that last part again. Make sure we have it solid. The first half is easy.

LENNY
Are you sure you don't want to see the whole thing again, Al?

ALBERT
I don't thin it's necessary, unless it's a problem for you or Jan?

LENNY
Whatever you need.

JANICE
Huh? Uh... that's fine.

ALBERT
Alright, then, let's start with Krog's discrepancy line.

Lenny and Janice get into position. Janice stands with her head lowered.

LENNY
Jan?

JANICE
(Snapping out of it.)
Huh?

LENNY
You ready?

JANICE
Sure. Let's go.

Lenny waits a moment, takes a breath, then begins.

This time through the exchange, Lenny bumps up the sexual motive.

LENNY

(Approaching her.)

The discrepancy consists, Mrs Helmer, in the fact that your father signed this bond three days after his death.

JANICE

What do you mean? I don't understand—

LENNY

Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it?

(He is much closer to her than before.)

Can you explain it to me?

(They are now touching.)

It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

JANICE

(Breaking down.)

No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

LENNY

Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

JANICE

In what way? You shall have your money soon.

Seeing an opening he becomes a little more aggressive.

LENNY

It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

JANICE

No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I couldn't give that up.

LENNY

(She falls into his arms.)

But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

JANICE

I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in.

LENNY

Mrs Helmer, you evidently do not realize clearly what it is that you have been guilty of. But I can assure you that my one false step, which lost me all my reputation, was nothing more or nothing worse than what you have done.

JANICE

You? Do you ask me to believe that you were brave enough to run a risk to save your wife's life?

He pulls her as close to him as possible, his mouth next to her ear again.

LENNY

The law cares nothing about motives.

She breaks from him weakly, affected personally, using the chair to support herself.

JANICE

Then it must be a very foolish law.
(Under her breath.)

Oh, my gosh.

LENNY

Foolish or not, it is the law by which you will be judged, if I produce this paper in court.

JANICE

I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws—you who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

He closes the distance between them again, nearly kissing.

LENNY

Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time, you shall lose yours... with me.

They remain in position, eyes locked, nose to nose.

ALBERT

Perfect! *(beat)* Great!*(They do not break.)*Len? *(beat)* Jan?

She tries to slide out from between Lenny and the table.

JANICE

I...

*(He stops her for a moment, then lets her go.**Their eyes remain locked as she crosses.)*I think I need to call it a night. *(beat)* Is that okay, Al?

ALBERT

Well, we just started. We have a lot to do.

JANICE

I know. I just...

ALBERT

Lenny, can you give us a couple of minutes?

(Lenny exits.)

What's the matter?

JANICE

I don't know. This is a little weird.

ALBERT

What is?

JANICE

He... He makes me uncomfortable.

ALBERT

In what way?

JANICE

I...

ALBERT

I think it's just that he's playing the character differently.

JANICE

That's one thing—Bob would never have gotten so close.

ALBERT

I think it's working.

JANICE
It's a little creepy that it comes so easy to him.

ALBERT
He's a good actor.

JANICE
Still...

ALBERT
(beat)
Is there something else?

JANICE
No.
(Lenny re-enters, stares at Janice.)
I just remembered something that has to be done tonight.

ALBERT
Really, Jan?

JANICE
(Gathering her things.)
Yes.

ALBERT
I guess Lenny and I could go over written blocking and...

JANICE
Great. Thanks. Good night.

ALBERT
Alright. Well, call me if you need anything.

LENNY
(Still staring at her.)
Good. Night.

She stops in her tracks, looks at Al, then back at Lenny, turns and rushes out.

BLACKOUT

III

Monday. Albert and Mitch enter, Marian right behind.

ALBERT
You did read the book, then?

MITCH
Well...

ALBERT
Come on, Mitch! You're killing me!

MITCH
I read part of it...

MARIAN
So did I.

MITCH
... then I lent it to her.

ALBERT
Ah.

MITCH
I wanted to read the whole thing.

ALBERT
Did you bring it?

MITCH
(To Marian.)
Did you?

MARIAN
Uh oh.

Albert stares at them. Janice and Roger enter.

MITCH
Sorry?

JANICE
Hi, everyone!

ROGER
Evening.

MARIAN

(Crossing to Janice.)

Hey, Jan! I gave the press release corrections to Dave.

JANICE

Good. Let's hope he gives them to someone who knows what they're doing.

ALBERT

Alright. Look, what we need to do is get you out of here...

(Points at Mitch's head.)

... and into the here.

(Points to his heart.)

Be him.

MITCH

Okay. But he's an old man. Do you have any tricks to make me an old man?

ALBERT

For the last time, Mitch, he does not have to be old.

MITCH

But...

ALBERT

No.

MITCH

I...

ALBERT

No!

MITCH

It...

ALBERT

Stop! Mitch. My friend. Listen to what I am saying. *(beat)* Dr. Rank does not have to be an old man. We are doing something different here. He is not chronologically old, he is... *wise*. Wise well beyond his years. He's a younger man—not much older than you are—but he feels the weight of the world and it is wearing him out, driving him toward an untimely end. Does that make sense?

MITCH

Yeah. I guess so.

ALBERT

With someone like you in the role it will make it all the more poignant when Dr. Rank dies. When he commits / suicide...

MITCH
 What? I die? I kill myself?!

JANICE
(Laughing.)
 You have *got* to be kidding!

ROGER
 Rookies!

ALBERT
 You didn't put that together? The black mark you talk about in your last scene? Nora and Torvald discuss it when they get the card. *Your* card. With the black mark.

MITCH
 When do I make the mark on the card?

ALBERT
 They get the card in the mail right after you leave.

MITCH
 Oh, my God! I die.

ALBERT
 Mitch? Have you even read the play?

MITCH
 The scenes I am actually in, yes!

JANICE
 Oh, Mitch. It's a good thing you're pretty.

MARIAN
 Yes. It is.

ALBERT
 Mitch. *(pause)* We need to do a couple of exercises. Luckily, tonight we have time.

MARIAN
 We're not doing scenes tonight?

ALBERT
 We will, but without Krogstad.

JANICE
(This catches her off guard.)
 What?

ALBERT

He can't be here tonight. He had to finish some personal business.

JANICE

Oh.

ALBERT

We'll run non-Krog scenes and make sure they're solid.

JANICE

Oh. Yeah. Sure.

ALBERT

Something wrong?

JANICE

No! *(beat)* No.

ALBERT

Are you / sure you... Yes. Marian, stay.

MARIAN

So, I should stay?

JANICE

Everything's fine.

(She moves away from the group.)

I'm fine.

ROGER

(Crossing to her.)

Jan?

JANICE

Huh? What?

He touches her shoulder and she, startled, pulls away.

ROGER

What is the matter?

JANICE

Nothing. I'm fine.

(Beat, as he stares at her.)

Really.

MARIAN
 I'll just be over here reading my script.
(To Mitch.)
 All of it.

MITCH
 Hey!

ALBERT
 Mitch. Focus. I want to try something.

MITCH
 Okay. What?

ALBERT
 You say you read part of the book?

MITCH
 In the beginning.

ALBERT
 Did you get to the chair exercise?

MITCH
 That sounds familiar.

ALBERT
 Sounds familiar... Here's what I want you to do.
(He starts moving things to the edges of the stage and places a chair center.)
 I want you to sit in this chair. Everyone else, grab chairs and sit downstage.

They do. Janice sits next to Marian. Roger sits next to Janice. Albert watches the following exchange.

JANICE
(Whispering to Marian.)
 Switch with me.

MARIAN
 What?

JANICE
 Switch. With me.

MARIAN
 Why?

JANICE
(Getting up.)
 Just do it.

They switch as Roger watches, confused.

ALBERT
 We all set now?
(To Mitch)

Okay. Now, what you need to do, you need to sit in this chair and just “be” who you are. No preening or joking or any of that. Just sit here and “BE” Dr. Rank.

MITCH
 Oookaaaaaaay.

ALBERT
 Just sit down.

MITCH
 ... and “be.”

ALBERT
 Sit down.

Mitch sits in the chair and, almost instantly, becomes uncomfortable, plays to the other cast members.

MITCH
(To Roger.)
 What’s up, man?

ALBERT
 No.

MITCH
(To Janice.)
 How’re the kids?

ALBERT
 No!

MITCH
(To Marian.)
 Hey, baby...

ALBERT
 Alright, stop. *(beat)* Mitch. Sit still, put your hands on your legs, relax. Now, close your eyes and just listen to me.

(Mitch does so.)

(MORE)

ALBERT (cont'd)
*As Albert speaks Mitch relaxes more
 exhibiting the weight pressing down on
 him.)*

You are a doctor in a small town in Norway. You are very intelligent, aware, but imprisoned by this rather secluded place where you live. The Helmers, especially Nora, are your best, maybe your only real, friends. Otherwise, you are alone. The weight of the world is pressing down on you. You feel responsible, yet unable to change things. The futility of it all is becoming too much.

(Albert waits a moment or two.)

Okay. Now, when I tell you, open your eyes and I want you to be in the Helmers' home, visiting. When you feel it, talk to one of them. Start a conversation. Okay, open your eyes.

Mitch opens his eyes. He has transformed. He surveys the room.

MITCH
(His best attempt at an old man voice.)

So tired. So cold.

Roger, Janice and Marian start laughing as Albert just shakes his head.

ROGER
(Mocking.)
 Do you need a nap?

JANICE
 Mitchell.

ALBERT
 Mitch. *(pause)* Let's try something else.

MITCH
 K.

ALBERT
 I want you to go to each of the other cast members, as yourself, as if you felt the same as Dr. Rank about the world, and talk to them about what you are feeling.

Mitch stands still for a minute, then approaches Janice.

MITCH
 Hi.

JANICE
 Hello.

How are you? MITCH

I'm fine. You? JANICE

Okay... I guess. *(beat)* I don't know. I'm... MITCH

Yes? *(beat)* JANICE

I don't know anymore. I love you and Torvald. MITCH

Thank you. We love you, too, doctor. JANICE

Still, I feel alone. MITCH

I can help with that. MARIAN

Who are you? MITCH

Kristine. I just... uh... moved back here. MARIAN

Oh. Yes. Well... MITCH

What do you need, doctor? JANICE

I don't know. MITCH

(To Roger.)
You know what I'm dealing with, right Torvald?

I don't know. I have what I want. ROGER

Ah. You are satisfied, then? MITCH

ROGER

(Looking at Janice.)

Yes. I believe I am.

MITCH

And you, Nora. Do you have what you want?

JANICE

(She looks at Roger who is staring at her.)

I...

MITCH

(beat)

Nora?

JANICE

Yes?

MITCH

Are you happy?

JANICE

(Breaks her lock on Roger.)

I guess so.

ROGER

Guess?

MITCH

Guess. *(beat)* Well, I'm not. I need out of this.

JANICE

Out of what? This town?

MITCH

This world is so... ugly.

JANICE

It can be.

MARIAN

Doctor?

(Mitch looks at her.)

Can I help you? Let me help you. I know first-hand just how ugly the world can be.

JANICE

She does. *(beat)* So do I.

Mitch looks from person to person.

MITCH

Thank you. I don't think anyone can help.

Mitch returns to the chair. After a few moments
Albert walks up to him and whispers in his ear.

Thank you.

ALBERT

Okay. Great work! You see what I've been talking about?

(Mitch nods.)

Take a minute to relax again. Close your eyes. Remember what I said before.
When you're ready open your eyes and, now knowing what you know, just
"be."

*(Mitch, after a moment, opens his eyes. He
takes in the room, then sits, relaxed.)*

Good.

Mitch slowly reaches down and grabs the sides of
the chair, closes his eyes and falls over, dead. Albert
drops his head.

BLACKOUT

IV

Tuesday. Rehearsal has just ended and all, except Lenny and Janice gathering their belongings to leave.

ALBERT

Well, I have to get going. Jan? You can lock up?

JANICE

Sure.

ALBERT

Thanks! See everyone tomorrow night.

They offer their "good-nights" to Albert as he exits.

MARIAN

Hey, Mitch.

MITCH

Hey.

MARIAN

Where are you off to tonight?

MITCH

I don't know. Home, I guess.

MARIAN

Really? I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

JANICE

(To Marian in confidence.)

Too subtle.

MITCH

I dunno. Maybe.

MARIAN

(To Janice.)

Stop it.

(To Mitch.)

Well, I was thinking of stopping for something. Want to join me?

MITCH

Depends.

On... ?

MARIAN

JANICE
(*To Marian, again in confidence.*)
Whether he'll be wearing a shirt or not.

MITCH
Where are you going?

MARIAN
(*Playfully slapping Janice.*)
Chinese?

MITCH
Yeah. I could go for some orange chicken.

Marian flashes a smile at Janice.

MARIAN
Great! There's an excellent place on fifth and Main.

JANICE
(*To Marian in confidence.*)
Two blocks from your house. *Way* too subtle.

MARIAN
(*Elbowing her.*)
Want me to drive?

MITCH
How about I meet you there?

MARIAN
(*Deflated.*)
Oh. Sure. Okay.

Janice shoots her a joking "aaaahhh" look as Marian and Mitch exit.

LENNY
(*To Janice.*)
Have you got time work a little more.

JANICE
I... well, I...
(*She looks to Roger who shrugs.*)
I guess so.

LENNY

Roger?

ROGER

If it's okay with her. I'm not her keeper.

LENNY

Okay. I wasn't thinking it would be that long.

JANICE

Can it wait, then? I'm a little tired.

LENNY

I was hoping we could finish up the scene from the other night and show it to Al tomorrow.

JANICE

I thought it was done.

LENNY

We only got half of it done.

JANICE

(pause)

Fine.

ROGER

(Getting up to leave.)

Well, I'll see you at home, then. I have to go by the site on the way.

JANICE

Alright.

ROGER

*(Kissing her on the forehead.)*See ya. *(To Lenny)* 'Night.

LENNY

Yes. Good night.

Janice and Lenny are alone. They sit, staring at each other.

JANICE

Well, what did you want to work on?

LENNY

I want to make sure you're alright with what I'm doing. I know it is quite different from what you're used to.

JANICE
How do you mean?

LENNY
You seemed a bit... out of sorts last time.

JANICE
Oh. No. It was just... something new.

LENNY
(beat)
How do you see Nora?

JANICE
Excuse me?

LENNY
I think you see Nora as more of a...

JANICE
What?

He moves a seat closer to her.

LENNY
More of a... Not enough of a sexual being.

JANICE
What are you doing?

LENNY
What do you mean?

JANICE
(Getting up.)
I am a married woman.

LENNY
(Following her.)
So is Nora.

JANICE
Yes, I know.

LENNY
(beat)
Do you take your marriage for granted?

JANICE
(She pushes past him.)
 Excuse me! Who do you think you are to ask me that?

LENNY
 What are... No! I mean Nora.

JANICE
 Uh huh...

LENNY
 Really. I do.

JANICE
 Fine.

They fall into silence.

LENNY
 Well?

JANICE
 No.

LENNY
 No, you don't?

JANICE
 No. *Nora* does not.

LENNY
 Ah. *(beat)* Then, I'm confused.

JANICE
(A little exasperated.)
 About what?

LENNY
 Well, it doesn't seem to me that you / see the...

JANICE
 Nora.

LENNY
 Sorry?

JANICE
 That *Nora* sees.

LENNY

Ah, yes. Right. It doesn't seem that *Nora* really sees the danger of what I... of what *Krogstad*... brings into her house.

JANICE

Yes, she does.

LENNY

Then, why was the sexual aspect of it so... new to you?

JANICE

It wasn't.

LENNY

Sure seemed to be.

She stares at him. He remains locked on her.

JANICE

It's just that Bob did not play up that part of it. He played *Krogstad* as a business man. Pure business.

LENNY

What's more business than sex?

JANICE

Don't be crass.

LENNY

I'm serious. You don't think *Krogstad* wants *Nora*... *that way*?

JANICE

What does it matter?

LENNY

It matters because it completely changes his motivation for coming to the house.

JANICE

I think you may be reading too much into it.

LENNY

Am I? You don't think, especially in that time, that you... that *Nora*... wouldn't sleep with *Krogstad* to keep her livelihood?

JANICE

It's a moot point. It never comes up.

LENNY

That's why it's called subtext, Jan.

Good heavens! JANICE

Struck a nerve, have I? LENNY

No. JANICE

Really? (beat) LENNY

Look, I don't know what you think you are doing here, but Nora is well in hand and I'm good, also. JANICE

Oh? LENNY

You can just get your jollies somewhere else. JANICE

I'm just trying to get to the bottom of our relationship. LENNY

We don't have one. JANICE

Are you sure? LENNY

Yes. *Very*. JANICE

You don't think Krogstad and Nora have a relationship? LENNY

Of course. *They* do. A *business* relationship. JANICE

Yes. A business relationship. And, after all, business never crosses over into sex, does it? Sex has never been a business. LENNY

Why does that always have to be brought into everything? JANICE

LENNY

Because it *is* a part of everything.

JANICE

No, it's not.

LENNY

Tell me one part of your life where sex has absolutely no part.

JANICE

I'm not going to do this.

LENNY

Because you know I'm right. You know you... *Nora...* has a sexual side that she has kept repressed but is now ready to be unleashed.

JANICE

You are a nut job.

LENNY

Am I? Really?

JANICE

Yes.

LENNY

(Thinks for a minute.)

Let me ask you this. We'll bring some good ol' fashioned actor training into it.

JANICE

Jeez.

LENNY

No. Really. Your life is all stuff you can use for Nora. Things have not really changed all that much from when this play was written. We repress certain aspects of our character. Fundamental parts of who we are. Either through social pressure or... piety. Religious pressure on our bodies... the weight of eternity is... immeasurable.

(He lets this sit for a moment.)

Just use that to round her out and make her more real.

JANICE

What are you doing?

LENNY

Just a little sense memory.

JANICE

M hm... for it to be a memory doesn't it have to have happened in my past.

Of course. LENNY

Then I guess I'm outta luck. JANICE

Come on. You expect me to believe you don't consciously hide something? Suppress a part of your nature? LENNY

This is ridiculous. JANICE

So, you're saying you have nothing to hide? LENNY

No, I don't. JANICE

From *anyone*? (beat) You tell your husband everything? LENNY

Yes. JANICE

That was quick. LENNY

I don't have to debate the truth. JANICE

Okay. LENNY

(Pulling out his cell phone.)
Should we put that to the test? You say you have nothing to hide. (beat)
I have him on speed dial.

We all do. JANICE

Then, let's give him a ring. See, I believe I know something he doesn't. (beat)
Willing to risk it? LENNY

This is ridiculous. JANICE

You think so? I'm not so sure. LENNY

JANICE
(Under her breath.)
 Of course you're not.

LENNY
 Pardon?

JANICE
 You are trying to... Actually, I really don't know what you're trying to do.

LENNY
 I'm merely proving to you that there are certain immutable facts about human nature.

JANICE
 Are we going to work on something?

LENNY
 We're working right now.

JANICE
 No, you are being an overbearing, juvenile ass.

LENNY
 It's unfortunate you feel that way.

JANICE
 If this is about what happened the other night, let me clear that up for you right now: I merely... *momentarily*... lost control of the character. I wasn't quite prepared for how different it would be with you instead of Bob.

LENNY
(Casually.)
 Okay.

JANICE
 That is all it was.

LENNY
 If you say so.

JANICE
(Starting to leave.)
 That's it. I'm done.

LENNY
 You think this is really about the other night?

JANICE
I'm locking up.

LENNY
I think the first question should be about your career.

JANICE
Better get your crap and get out.

LENNY
This is / important... Cherry.

JANICE
Coming? ... What?

LENNY
See? You *can* draw upon your real life for the proper emotional response. We all have something to hide.

JANICE
What do you think you know?

LENNY
Enough.

JANICE
Who are you?

LENNY
You know who I am.

JANICE
How could I know that?

LENNY
Think back.

JANICE
I'm not playing this game anymore.

LENNY
(Exploding.)
EVERYTHING IS A GAME TO PEOPLE LIKE YOU!
(Janice turns, genuinely scared. Coming around the table toward her.)
Get. YOUR ASS! BACK HERE!

JANICE
(Breaking for the door.)

I...

Lenny runs after her, gets between her and the door.

LENNY
You are NOT leaving!
(He grabs her by the shoulders and pins her against the wall.)
YOU ARE GOING TO FINALLY ANSWER FOR WHAT...

She reaches into her bag, pulls out pepper spray and uses it on him. She shoves him out of the way and runs out, slamming the door behind her.

BLACKOUT

INTERMISSION

V

Wednesday. Marian is reading her script alone on stage. Janice enters in a panic.

JANICE

Marian! Thank heavens you're here!

MARIAN

Of course I am. You asked to meet you here. Kinda killed my plans to meet Mitch after he gets off work, but...

JANICE

Sorry to cut into your stalking but we have a huge problem!

MARIAN

With what?

JANICE

He knows.

MARIAN

Knows? Who? What?

JANICE

Lenny! He knows about the site!

MARIAN

How? And how did he find you?

JANICE

I don't have the faintest idea.

MARIAN

What does he want?

JANICE

I don't know. Money, I guess.

MARIAN

Just like that? *(beat)* I don't understand, Jan.

JANICE

I don't, either. I thought about this all night. You know, what options I really have. The only answer I could come to was none. I don't see any way out of this.

MARIAN

There is really only one thing you can do, Jan. You have to tell Albert.

JANICE

Albert? My bishop?!

MARIAN

No, Albert our director. Albert the cop.

JANICE

I can't, Mare. That would destroy everything.

MARIAN

(beat)

Jan. You know I love you, right? You're my favorite sister. I got to choose you. If there's one thing I know about you it is that you are a survivor, Jan. You do what you have to do and you do good with / it. You always do good...

JANICE

Well. I do well. I...

MARIAN

An English lesson? Now?

JANICE

Sorry. I don't always know but, thank you.

MARIAN

You saved *me*. Brought me back from the dead.

JANICE

You would have saved yourself eventually. You're a survivor.

MARIAN

You... *(beat)* Look, whatever you need I'll help. You know that, right?

JANICE

Yes.

Lenny enters from the hallway door where he has been hiding.

LENNY

(Mockingly.)

That. Was. Touching.

MARIAN

(Getting in front of him.)

Why don't you pick on someone your own size?

(Noticing his eyes.)

Wow! Your eyes are red!

LENNY

You're hardly my size, Goldie, regardless of how tough you look on that pole. Yeah, I've seen you work. You were my favorite... until I saw my little Cherry, who I have to thank for my eyes. Now, park it over there.

(She remains standing.)

Suit yourself.

(to Janice.)

You know, she's the only reason I found you at all. I was sitting there wallowing in my little life that was destroyed... taken, actually... *(beat)* Stolen would be more precise, I believe. By you, to be even more precise.

MARIAN

Come on...

LENNY

Sit over there.

She doesn't move. He steps closer. She moves to her original chair, never taking her eyes off of him.

JANICE

Okay, so you saw us on a website, so what?

LENNY

Is that what your husband will think? See, I know about you. You really should make your online profiles more private. Let's see... What I learned?

(He takes a pad of paper out of his bag.)

You are 30... time to update that, huh? You have two children. Kids are great, aren't they? I have children... well, used to have children. Now they live with their mother and grandparents. I haven't seen them in, what's it been... almost three years. You are a housewife. That seems a tad... humble? Why don't you have your real career listed here? Huh? Are you worried that, maybe, your husband would find out? Or, maybe that your...

(Searching on the pad.)

Where is that... Mormon friends would find out?

JANICE

Len...

LENNY

No! You listen to me now! The last time I listened to you I lost everything!

JANICE

What are you talking about?

LENNY

You don't remember?

JANICE
How could I? I didn't do anything.

LENNY
Why am I not surprised?

JANICE
This is crazy!

LENNY
No... Crazy is losing other people's life savings.

JANICE
What? I don't have a clue what you're talking about.

LENNY
Oh? *REALLY?*!

MARIAN
(Crossing to Janice.)
Jan, I think we need to really worry now.

LENNY
Oh, do you, Pumpkin?

MARIAN
I...

LENNY
This has nothing to do with you. Sit down and shut up!

JANICE
You don't have to be rude.

LENNY
Actually, I get to be anything I want right now. And I want to be someone you pay attention to.

(He pats his jacket pocket.)
Don't make me do anything we'll all regret. We all on the same page? (beat)
Good. Now. Let's go back to the past for a minute, shall we?

(Pacing, in "thought.")
How about we start at... January 4th, / 2006.

JANICE
January... 2006?

LENNY
I wouldn't expect you to remember the specifics. I'm sure this was just another meeting for you but, for me and my coworkers, it was kind of a big day.

(MORE)

LENNY (cont'd)

Let's see, it was a conference room at the Hilton. In those days you were a financial planner... investment manager... whatever. It was a magical evening filled with pipe dreams and shitty coffee.

MARIAN

How does he even know who you are?

JANICE

My name and picture was everywhere. *(To Lenny.)* Are you about done?

LENNY

(Rushing to her, in her face.)

I WILL BE DONE WHEN I WANT TO BE DONE!

(Remaining still.)

You will know. You won't have to ask. *(beat)* Now. Where was I? Ah, yes. You wanted us to move our accounts into your shiny new fund.

JANICE

Maybe.

LENNY

You did.

JANICE

Fine. Whatever.

LENNY

(Glaring.)

Not "fine, whatever!" You did!

JANICE

Alright.

(A wicked smile.)

Fine.

LENNY

(He rushes her again.)

You can sit there all smug and smart-assed as you please, but the fact remains that you lied to me. To all of us there that night.

JANICE

No, I didn't.

LENNY

Yes. You did. And it all led to... this.

(Indicating himself, the situation.)

Lovely, no? *(beat)* Let's see... I caught you at the end of the night. I had concerns and you told me there was nothing to worry about. You were so reassuring. So concerned. Hand on my shoulder... arm... look me in the eye. "We're a family.

(MORE)

LENNY (cont'd)

An investment family." Right? Isn't that what you said? We were an "investment family." There to support each other and help each other become successful. Doesn't that sound nice? Mare? An absolute Utopia?

MARIAN

Uh... I have to ask. I'm sorry, I just have to. What are you doing here? / What do you think you're...

LENNY

Nonono... I have the floor.

JANICE

Look...

LENNY

No! You look! We followed you and you proceeded to fuck us! Lost it all within two years. Everything!

(To Marian.)

Did you know that? She lost all of our money in two tiny years.

MARIAN

(Getting up.)

I don't think I really need to be here for this. I'll just go get...

LENNY

(He glares at her.)

Sit. Down.

Marian sits down, never taking her eyes off of him.

JANICE

We all lost money.

LENNY

You all lost *only* money. I lost more, *Janice*. A lot more. Job. House. Family.

(He starts to walk about the stage like a caged animal.)

You know, when it first happened I thought, "Well, that's how it goes." I tried to be optimistic and take it all in stride. Life has a way of creeping up on you, though. Kicking you in the balls. When that first sting hit, it was brutal and I had to find ways to keep from wrapping my car around a tree on the way home from work. That wasn't easy. I knew once I got home I was gonna have to hear it from the wife. Oh, man, did she shithammer me...

JANICE

(Digging through her bag.)

You think *she* did, just wait...

LENNY

(He holds up her phone.)

Looking for this?

(To Marian.)

Don't bother. I have yours, too.

JANICE

How did you do that?

LENNY

When you live like I've had to recently, you pick up a few skills.

JANICE

I bet.

LENNY

Don't you dare judge me.

JANICE

Heaven forbid. I'm just wondering how far you would really go.

LENNY

(Suggestively.)

You really want to find out? *(beat)* My family. The kids. *(beat)* That's the one that really did it. Just killed it. You know, money... jobs... they can come and go, but family is supposed to always be there. Isn't that your people's big selling point? Huh? "Families are forever?"

(To Marian)

I used to have Mormon neighbors and they had that needle-stitched on their wall. Does she? I bet she does.

JANICE

That's not my fault. None of this is my fault.

LENNY

Yesitis! Yes. It is. I decided that if it's that easy to ruin others' lives... I want my chance to see what it feels like. Take my opportunity to play destroyer. For once, I'm going to be in control. It's my turn to feel the rush.

JANICE

Control. That's it? That's what this is about?

LENNY

Not the only reason.

(Smiling.)

Well, okay, it's the only reason.

JANICE

You're pathetic.

LENNY

(Exploding, rushing her violently.)

FUCK YOU! YOU ARE THE ONE WHO'S PATHETIC! You sit here all smug and shit in your little community theatre show like you're a fucking queen? Big fucking fish in a little, tiny pond and I'm the one who's pathetic?!

JANICE

(Feeling she has control.)

You're just tiring. Do what you're going to do and get out.

LENNY

"Get out."

(He laughs.)

Get out? The fun hasn't really started yet?

JANICE

(Worried.)

What are you talking about?

LENNY

Well, the truth has barely hit the fan. / Or are you telling me you don't care about your life here? / Your marriage. Your church. Your Family.

JANICE

What... what... WHAT will it take?

LENNY

You really think it's that simple? *(beat)* It's not.

JANICE

(Attempting business tactic.)

I would be happy to talk to you about some sort of... compensation.

LENNY

Money? Extortion? You think I'm a common thief?

JANICE

Come on.

LENNY

All of your pious bullshit and you haven't learned what's really important yet?

JANICE

I can't get you your family back.

LENNY

I'm not asking you to.

JANICE

Then, what?

LENNY

Certainly nothing so fucking pedestrian as money.

JANICE

How pedestrian is it, really, when you bring it up constantly?

LENNY

You seem to have forgotten that you hold no cards here. Your life, at this moment, is in *my* hands. So before you think you can get away with any more of this snarky shit, you may want to think again. My patience is NOT what it used to be.

(Staring at each other. She is silent.)

That's what I thought.

MARIAN

Lenny.

LENNY

(Without moving.)

What?

MARIAN

Is there any way I can help?

LENNY

Me?

MARIAN

What can I do to help this... situation?

LENNY

Oh, honey, that's sweet, but you don't have enough...

JANICE

I knew this was about money.

LENNY

... to lose. She doesn't have nearly enough to lose.

JANICE

So, this is not about money.

LENNY

Good God, woman! Do I have to spell it out?

JANICE
Then, what?

LENNY
You?

JANICE
Excuse me?

LENNY
More precisely, your soul.

JANICE
You're a whackjob.

LENNY
Oh?

JANICE
My soul. You're going to take my soul.

LENNY
Don't be so... *voodoo*.

JANICE
What?

LENNY
(Walking about the table, lecturing.)
I am so glad you asked. This is a question I have mulled over since I came across your little "shop." Once I learned of your religious proclivities, it hit me. Your soul. I will claim your soul.

JANICE
Alright. I'll play along. How are you gonna take my soul?

LENNY
That's the beauty of it. See, you may have screwed me over here on earth, but I get to fuck you throughout eternity. Ah, eternity.

JANICE
Yeah, okay, I'm a little lost as to how, exactly, you are going to do this.

LENNY
Well, to put it in crass vernacular, you are going to fuck me.

JANICE
(Breaks out laughing.)
You have got to be kidding.

(MORE)

JANICE (cont'd)
(He doesn't crack a smile.)

Come on!

MARIAN

You...

JANICE

Let me handle this, Mare.

MARIAN

But...

JANICE

I got it.

(To Lenny.)

What makes you think I would even consider something like that?

LENNY

You have dirty little secrets. A closet full... or, should I say, a hard drive full, at least.

JANICE

And that is worth risking my marriage?

LENNY

You're risking it right now!

JANICE

Not really.

LENNY

(Pulling out her phone.)

Oh? So, we can call Roger, here, now, and divulge your chosen career path? Or can we call him and tell him what *we're* doing?

(Silence.)

Okay. So, when should I plan on it? I'm thinking opening night. You know, it's celebratory. Big night. I think we can make it even bigger.

JANICE

You know what? Fine. Whatever.

MARIAN

Jan!

JANICE

No. This is fine.

(To Lenny.)

So, that's all it would take? Your... what... thirty seconds of pleasure?

LENNY

(Playfully.)

Something tells me you're not really thinking this through.

JANICE

What?

LENNY

Would you like a day to think it over?

JANICE

Think what over? What do you mean?

LENNY

You're so cavalier about this. *(beat)* Tell me something: Does selling yourself online make it that much easier to just barter your body now?

JANICE

Pig.

LENNY

Oooooo... pig. You just, basically, agreed to go to bed with me without a whole lot of thought. No internal debate. No weighing of options.

JANICE

Options? My life comes down around my ears or you get your rocks off.

LENNY

What about your husband? Your church?

JANICE

I think we can survive a... sexual... dalliance. Roger's a good man and once he knows what happened...

(Janice stops herself. Lenny smiles wickedly.)

LENNY

(To Marian.)

I think she gets it now.

JANICE

Ooooh...

MARIAN

What, Jan?

LENNY

I'll take this.

(To Marian.)

(MORE)

LENNY (cont'd)

Wait for it... See, what she is realizing now is that she has no way to repent her sin—well, this particular sin—without confessing why it occurred in the first place. Basically, she can't tell the truth; otherwise, why do the act at all? She may as well come clean about her business. No one will believe she slipped morally with me. I can be honest about it. She can't accuse me of a crime... say, rape... because I would blow the whistle and game over. Basically, she's stuck...

(To Janice.)

... no pun intended.

MARIAN

Jan?

Janice does not answer her.

LENNY

Are you starting to see the beauty of this? Like me, you will have to suffer in silence for the rest of your life. The major difference, though, is that she gets to live the rest of her life "knowing" eternity awaits and that she will have to spend it alone. Ah, the sins we carry with us, eh, beautiful?

(She remains silent.)

Tell you what I'm gonna do. I'll let you have a day to mull it over, now that you have seen all sides. I'm hungry! I guess I'll get something to eat before I have rehearsal. Care to join me? (beat) Had to ask. I didn't want to be rude.

Lenny exits.

MARIAN

Jan?

JANICE

Shhhh... I can figure this out.

MARIAN

I don't think so.

JANICE

Mare. Please. There must be some way out.

(Voices are heard backstage.)

They're here. Not a word of this.

MARIAN

Who am I going to tell?

Albert and Mitch enter.

JANICE

Where's Roger?

ALBERT

Oh. He went with Lenny to get something to eat. They'll be back in a minute.

MARIAN

Shit!

ALBERT

What's the matter.

JANICE

(Running upstage.)

Nothing. I need to get something, too. I'll be right back.

ALBERT

Sure. No...

(He notices she is gone.)

... problem.

MARIAN

I gotta go, too. Be right back.

ALBERT

(Watching, dumbfounded.)

Five minutes!

MARIAN (OFF STAGE)

Alright! No problem!

ALBERT

I can clear a room, eh?

(Mitch Shrugs.)

BLACKOUT

VI

Thursday. After final dress. The stage is dark. We hear footsteps approaching.

LENNY

Where is the ghost light?

He finds it and turns it on. Janice is sitting at the table.

JANICE

It was off for a reason.

LENNY

Well... Evenin'.

JANICE

What do you want?

LENNY

I think you know.

JANICE

One track mind.

LENNY

I wanted to give you a chance to ask any last minute questions that may be weighing on your mind. Assuage any lingering fears or doubts.

JANICE

Puh-lease.

LENNY

Have it your way.

JANICE

I may have to do things I don't agree with to keep my family intact but I certainly don't have to listen to this drivel.

LENNY

If you say so. Let's be honest about this one thing: We all have something the other wants. That is, after all, why you're with Roger, right? He had something you wanted?

JANICE

Love? Support?

LENNY

Possibly. *Financial* support.

JANICE

My marriage is not some business transaction.

LENNY

All marriages are business transactions.

JANICE

There's no such thing as love?

LENNY

I didn't say that. It's no reason for marriage, though.

JANICE

Really? What's a reason, then?

LENNY

A joining of kingdoms. *(beat)* Combining of fortunes. *(beat)* Pregnancy.
(This gets her attention.)

Aaah... Hit a nerve, did I?

JANICE

No. *(beat)* What do you expect to gain from this?

LENNY

I thought I'd made that pretty clear.

JANICE

Well, let's get this over with, then.

LENNY

Why would I do that? Rush things. Do you realize what I went through to get here?

JANICE

Maybe if you expended that energy in getting and keeping a job...

LENNY

A lecture? *You* propose to lecture *me*?

JANICE

Would it do any good?

LENNY

(beat)

No.

JANICE

Figured.

LENNY

For it to matter I would have to respect you. Believe you're smarter than I am.

JANICE

From what I've seen that's not too difficult.

LENNY

(He grins at her.)

I'm starting to think you may not be joking.

JANICE

Just getting that?

LENNY

We're not so different, you know? My pain and loss is not confined solely to this earth. I don't believe the way you do... you know, all Mormon and shit, but I like to think there might be more to what we're doing here than just to fertilize for the next generation. Now, though, I don't even have the opportunity to pursue some sort of *eternal* happiness with my family.

JANICE

Maybe it's because you're an objectionable human being.

LENNY

That is truly the way to make friends and influence people.

JANICE

At some point you have to accept some responsibility for your actions... or, I guess, lack thereof.

LENNY

Watch it!

JANICE

Ooooooo, scary...

LENNY

If you knew...

(He trails off.)

JANICE

What? If I knew what?

LENNY

Just... if you knew.

JANICE

You are all talk.

LENNY

(Circling her.)

Not all. This didn't just happen, you know. A lot of planning has gone into us meeting. You sit there talking about me like you know me. Like you know what's really going on here. Better yet, that you would *admit* what's really going on. That you are not living up to your promises... your *covenants*.

(Looks at her.)

I looked it up. I know what goes on in your temples. Some of it freaks me out but I get it... the desire... the *need* to feel like you're a part of something bigger than yourself. Than this earth and time. *(beat)* Too bad you decided to chuck it all over something so pedestrian as money.

JANICE

It's pretty important in this world.

LENNY

I guess we know what's important to you, don't we?

JANICE

My family, of course.

LENNY

I guess pornography is a family business.

JANICE

Please! That is not important. None of that worldly stuff is important. Certainly not money.

LENNY

Easy to say when you have it.

JANICE

Why is it you think you were the only one to lose anything? / We lost... everything, too.

LENNY

Everything... Yeah, it looks like you're really hurting.

JANICE

A lot of very hard work went into digging out of that hole. See, we didn't just blame others and expect it to be handed back to us. We found a solution. We dealt with the same issues but we decided to get off our butts and fix it.

LENNY

We? Interesting choice of words.

JANICE

I didn't do this alone.

LENNY

Where, exactly do your businesses dovetail?

JANICE

Roger modified his business to make it more profitable.

LENNY

So, what, he builds houses naked?

JANICE

You're a idiot.

LENNY

You sell your body for money and I'm the one with a problem.

JANICE

Yes. You are. Think about it, if you spent half as much time fixing your mess as you do trying to destroy my life for something I didn't even...

LENNY

(Jumping up, cutting her off.)

NO! Don't you dare say it! Do NOT tell me that you had nothing to do with this! All this shit started with you! *You* started everything. *You* ran us all into the ground! And *you* just walked away!

JANICE

No, / I didn't.

LENNY

YES... you did!

JANICE

How could I?

LENNY

You tell me! It takes someone really special person to abandon all the people you fucked out of life savings!

JANICE

I didn't abandon anyone.

LENNY

Bullshit!

JANICE

I didn't. I...

LENNY
(Cutting her off.)

Yes, you did!

JANICE

I was fired... jerk!

LENNY
(He smiles.)

If that is true—and I'm not saying it is— then, good. It doesn't change this, though. And I'm done with this discussion. You deserve whatever you get.

JANICE

I'm not so sure how much I care anymore.

LENNY
Oh, you care. If for no other reason than you want to keep the yokels in their place: Looking up at you.

JANICE

It has nothing to do with that.

LENNY
Ok, then, how about I just let slip the truth to Roger. I have been known to have a *very* slippery tongue.

JANICE

Alright! ... Alright...

LENNY
Thought so. Looks like we're back on. Now that we've settled that, I'm going to go. Let me know where and when before the performance. *(beat)* I have a feeling we'll all have a little something to celebrate tomorrow night.

He turns to leave.

JANICE

Fine. I am going to need some assurances, though.

LENNY
(Stopping.)

Like what?

JANICE

Something... I don't know... Something in writing. Something saying that you will disappear after and not come back. That you will not contact anyone connected to my life. Ever.

LENNY

Okay. Fine. Should I save you some trouble and book a room somewhere out of town?

JANICE

I'll jump off that bridge when I get to it.

LENNY

Your choice. (*beat*) Well... I guess we'll talk tomorrow.

Lenny exits.

BLACKOUT

VII

The performance. Black. It is near the end of the play. Through the darkness we hear:

JANICE

Now you must read your letters, Torvald.

ROGER

No, no; not tonight. I want to be with you, my darling wife.

JANICE

With the thought of your friend's death--

Lights fade up slowly.

ROGER

You are right, it has affected us both. Something ugly has come between us—the thought of the horrors of death. We must try and rid our minds of that. Until then, we will each go to our own room.

JANICE

(Arms about his neck.)

Good-night, Torvald... Good-night!

ROGER

(Kissing her on the forehead.)

Good-night, my little singing-bird. Sleep sound, Nora. Now I will read my letters through.

(She exits as he opens a letter. As he reads, he rises, breaks character.)

What the hell is this?! (beat) Ja... NORA!

Janice enters slowly as he fights to regain his composure and gives a subtle, reassuring nod to the audience.

JANICE

Yes, Torvald?

ROGER

(Working to compose himself.)

What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

JANICE

Yes, I know. I am going.

He grabs her, stopping her from leaving, but it is clear that the line between stage and real life has been blurred.

ROGER

Where are you going?

JANICE

You shan't save me, Torvald!

ROGER

(Under his breath.)

You got that right!

(She is now truly frightened.)

True? Is this true, that I read here? Horrible! No, no--it is impossible that it can be true.

JANICE

It is true. I have loved you above everything else in the world.

ROGER

Oh, don't let us have any silly excuses.

JANICE

Torvald--!

ROGER

Miserable creature! What have you done?

JANICE

Let me go. You shall not suffer for my sake. You shall not take it upon yourself.

He thrusts the letter into her hand.

ROGER

That is *very* true!

(He walks downstage and standing on the apron.)

Albert! Can we stop this please! Can we...

JANICE

(Looking at the letter.)

What are you... *(beat)* Oh... NO... !

ROGER

Yes! Al...? *(beat)* Fine. Never mind!

(Turning on Janice.)

What the hell is that?

Torv... JANICE

Drop it! Is that true? ROGER

Roger... JANICE

Just answer the question! Is. That. True?
(She does not answer.)
 What the hell were you thinking?

JANICE
(Approaching him.)
 Roger, this is not...

ROGER
 What is, then?
(Snatching the papers out of her hand.)
 And who is this with you? Huh? Is that Marian?

JANICE
 Let's...
(To the Audience)
 I guess this is over. So sorry. We will try to get it back together...

ROGER
 What?! Are you kidding me?!
(To the Audience)
 Everyone stay where you are!
(Albert enters from the booth.)
 It's about damn time!

ALBERT
 Roger... What...

Marian and Mitch enter from the wings.

ROGER
(Throwing the papers at him.)
 What?! THIS!

ALBERT
(Picking up the papers.)
 Roger, you need to... Oh, my...
(To Janice)
 Jan?

JANICE

Do we have to do this here?

ROGER

Don't ask that again! Where the hell else are we gonna do this?!

ALBERT

You need to calm down, Roger.

ROGER

Calm down?! CALM down?! Look at this!

ALBERT

I see it. Screaming and stomping around like a child is not going to help the situation.

ROGER

It certainly can't hurt!

ALBERT

Calm down!

(To Marian.)

What do you know about this?

MARIAN

Well...

ALBERT

(Showing her one of the papers.)

Is that you?

(She nods.)

Jan? What is this?

JANICE

My job.

ALBERT

Jan...

JANICE

(To no one in particular.)

Well, he got his way.

ALBERT

Who?

JANICE

Huh?

Who got his way? ALBERT

Lenny. (beat) JANICE

This is from him? ALBERT

It's why he came here. JANICE

Really? ALBERT

That's what he said. JANICE

Has the world gone crazy?! ROGER

Roger... It's not that bad. MITCH

No, it's not... It's worse. ROGER

It's just a business. MITCH

What are you doing? Why are you supporting... (beat) What did you do? What do you have to do with this? ROGER

Who says I have anything to do... MITCH

You, too?! What did you do, Mitch? ROGER
(No answer.)

What the hell did you do, Mitch?! ROGER

Nothing... much. MITCH

He just set up my system. JANICE

Thanks, Jan. MITCH

You?! ROGER

Sorry, man. MITCH

Sorry?! So, none of this would have been possible without you?! ROGER

I... guess. MITCH

Thanks. TONS! *(beat)* You wouldn't have a life if not for me! ROGER

That's kind of harsh, doncha think? MITCH

Who gave you work when you couldn't find any? ROGER

Roger, I'm sorry, but a job's a job. MITCH

A job's a... Alright! Who wasn't involved in this? How about you, Al, my trusty friend and bishop! ROGER

You're overreacting. ALBERT

No! Really! What part do you play in this little production? This theatre of the absurd! ROGER

Roger, really just... ALBERT

What *was* your part, Al? Huh?! What were you, security? Break a couple of kneecaps, didja?! ROGER

That's enough! Now sit down and shut up or I'll haul your butt out of here! *(beat)* NOW! ALBERT

Roger sits.

ROGER
Betrayed at every turn!

ALBERT
Roger!

JANICE
Don't be so melodramatic.

ALBERT
(To Janice.)
That's not helping.

ROGER
You're going to tell me how I should act? YOU?

MARIAN
She just did what she had to do.

ROGER
Who are you to talk to me about this?

JANICE
There's no need to be a jerk, Roger.

ROGER
Wait a minute! Let me get this straight! You are doing...
(Flinging the papers.)
Doing... this! Everybody seems to be in on the joke and I'm wrong to be upset?!
Do I have this right?!

JANICE
You are such a drama queen!

ALBERT
Alright! Both of you stop it! I need you two to be adults and talk this thing through.

ROGER
I think we need you here.

ALBERT
Why?

ROGER
You're our bishop.

ALBERT
So.

ROGER
We need guidance... obviously.

ALBERT
This is not the time or place for that.

ROGER
I know I would feel better if you were here. Jan?

JANICE
I couldn't care less, either way.

ROGER
(To Albert.)
You don't think we need some guidance with this?

ALBERT
No. I don't. You need to figure this out on a personal level, between the two of you, before you bring anyone else into it.

ROGER
Fine.

ALBERT
Besides, I need to go check on something. *(beat)* Can I trust you two to get your act together? Treat each other like adults?

(They don't answer.)
Marian. Mitch. Let's go and leave them alone.

MARIAN
I need to be here for her.

JANICE
It's alright, Mare. I'll be fine.

MARIAN
You sure.

JANICE
I'm sure.

Albert and the others start to exit.

ALBERT
Do either of you know if Lenny left anything here?

MARIAN

Like what?

ALBERT

Anything he touched, preferably a bottle or glass.

MARIAN

I think he left a water bottle in the green room.

Albert and Marian exit.

MITCH

(Stopping.)

I'm really sorry. Roger.

ROGER

I'm sure you are.

Mitch exits Roger and Janice alone.

JANICE

(Without looking.)

Roger?

(No answer.)

I just want to say / that...

ROGER

No.

JANICE

Roger... Rog...

ROGER

Can you...

JANICE

Roger, I...

ROGER

Stop... for a minute.

(She defers. Pause.)

What did I do?

JANICE

(beat)

I'm not sure what you mean.

ROGER

I must have done something to make you do this.

JANICE
This is not about you.

ROGER
How?

JANICE
What?

ROGER
How is this not about me?

JANICE
I made the choice, not you.

ROGER
Everything you do, every choice you make is about me. About us. We're a family.

JANICE
Roger.

ROGER
(beat)
We've always trusted each other, right?

JANICE
Sure.

ROGER
Why not now? When did it change?

JANICE
Nothing has changed. I trust you. I've always trusted you.

ROGER
Then, why did this happen? Why did you feel you couldn't tell me you needed help?

JANICE
Because I didn't need help. I had it under control.

ROGER
Selling sex online is having it under control?

JANICE
I did what I had to do. And there is no sex.

ROGER

Selling the image of sex is the same thing. There had to be other options.

JANICE

(beat)

We were in trouble, Roger. *Deep* trouble.

ROGER

I know.

JANICE

No, you don't.

ROGER

Alright, then, enlighten me. How deep?

JANICE

(beat)

We almost lost the house.

ROGER

I figured as much.

JANICE

No, Roger, this wasn't an "oh, my, the payments went up and we might be a little late" kind of thing. We were inches from the street.

ROGER

Impossible.

JANICE

Remember when we refinanced?

ROGER

Yeah.

JANICE

I refinanced the house with a bank that was lumping all of their mortgages together in CDOs. The fund I was pushing. I figured we would be getting back the money we were spending on the mortgage. You know? Others were doing the same thing. I figured we were safe. *(beat)* Once the fund went under, they gave us sixty days before liquidating. They were going to sell it out from under us.

ROGER

You have *got* be kidding.

JANICE

I wish I were. Your business was down because of the market. No banks would even talk to me, let alone refinance this mess. The only way was for me to show income... fast.

ROGER

So pornography was the answer?

JANICE

It's not pornography. There was no sex!

ROGER

There was nudity?

JANICE

Yes.

ROGER

Pornography. *(beat)* You know, though, that's not the worst part of this whole disaster.

JANICE

Oh?

ROGER

No.

JANICE

I'll bite. What is the worst part?

ROGER

It's the fact that you lied to me.

JANICE

I didn't lie to you.

ROGER

You lied to me every day. You said you were doing medical billing.

JANICE

No, I didn't.

ROGER

Yes, you did. "What are you doing, Jan?" "I have some..."

JANICE

... "billing" to do. I said I had billing to do. You *assumed* it was medical billing.

ROGER

Semantics? You're going to argue semantics right now? *(beat)* Okay, try this for semantics: You never corrected me. I told friends, family... people at church, / that you were doing medical billing...

JANICE

Roger. Roger...

(Cutting him off.)

Roger!

ROGER

What?

JANICE

Calm down.

ROGER

You made me a liar, Jan!

JANICE

Quit freaking out.

ROGER

This isn't worth freaking out over?!

JANICE

Didn't you wonder how I was paying off the house so fast? Ever?

ROGER

(Turns on her.)

Don't you dare lay this off on me.

JANICE

Honestly. What did you think?

ROGER

I thought you were running a legitimate business.

JANICE

I am.

ROGER

You know what I mean.

JANICE

Roger, this is not the end of the world.

ROGER

It just might be.

JANICE
What do you mean by that?

ROGER
Did you give any thought to how this will affect us... the family...

JANICE
What?

ROGER
You've put us all in a difficult position.

JANICE
What you really mean is that I have put *you* in a difficult position.

ROGER
Not just me.

JANICE
But that's all you care about, isn't it?

ROGER
No, it's not.

JANICE
Yes, you're afraid it will hurt *your* precious little business.

ROGER
Which will hurt the entire family.

JANICE
Not as much as you might think.

ROGER
That is. Grand! And coming from the porn queen of the suburbs! The new family business! When do the kids start?

JANICE
Cheap shot, Roger.

ROGER
Am I wrong?

JANICE
Using the kids to bolster your ego is low.

ROGER
It's not ego, Jan. We have a certain image in the community that we need to maintain.

JANICE
What are you, the Chamber of Commerce?

ROGER
How do you not see this?

JANICE
Because it's bs, Roger!

ROGER
You really don't see how our actions—in this case, *your* actions—affect others?

JANICE
Of course I do. I see it. But I also see that you are more worried about how this... this... revelation / will affect you.

ROGER
Revelation? ... This isn't some mystery of the universe, Jan, it's a problem. A great big damn problem!

JANICE
No, it's not. It's a woman doing what she can to keep her family afloat.

ROGER
Doing something in direct opposition to everything we stand for.

JANICE
For which we stand.

ROGER
Not the time for a grammar lesson.

JANICE
This is not about anything other than the fact that I solved a problem and didn't need any help from you. It's an ego issue.

ROGER
It's more than that.

JANICE
How can it be more?

He examines her face.

ROGER
I don't know if I can live with you. (beat) How can I live with you? How can I trust you?

JANICE

Like you always have.

ROGER

It can never be like it was, Jan. Life has changed. Permanently. Now everything we have... *had*... can be questioned. Things change. Constantly. Whether you see it happening. It's how we handle those changes—what we do in the face of adversity—that decides what and who we are.

JANICE

We needed money / and I...

ROGER

You think that makes this all easier to swallow? Lots of people need money, Jan. *They* don't turn to prostitution!

JANICE

Some do. And I thought it was pornography.

ROGER

What's the difference?

JANICE

Big difference.

ROGER

You're still selling yourself. Regardless, we don't do it. (*beat*) Not us.

JANICE

Us? What's so special about us?

ROGER

Well, the kind of people we are.

JANICE

And what kind is that, exactly?

ROGER

What kind of question is that?

JANICE

What kind of people are we that we wouldn't do something like this?

ROGER

We believe in God. / We know that God will take care of us if we do what's right.

JANICE

Lots of people believe in God and do worse. ...

(beat)

Where was God when I needed a job?

ROGER

Don't.

JANICE

No, I'm serious. Where was God when I was destroyed by Nathan and the rest of the board? Huh? When they threw me under the bus to save their own butts? Where was God when I couldn't find a job outside flipping burgers at McDonald's?

ROGER

So, now you don't believe in God?

JANICE

I'm not saying that... per se. What I *am* saying is that God appears to be selective about who he helps.

ROGER

Jan...

JANICE

Either that, or he has no problem with what I am doing.

ROGER

God wants you to be a... prostitute?

JANICE

Why the hitch now, Roger?

(He turns away.)

Why, Roger? *(beat)* Second thoughts betray us, Rog? You were going to call me a whore, weren't you?

ROGER

No.

JANICE

Then, what?

ROGER

What I said.

JANICE

Roger...

ROGER

(pause)

Fine! What else would you call it? They're interchangeable anyway.

JANICE

No, they're not.

ROGER

They are basically the same thing.

JANICE

Maybe the literal definitions are, but the word itself carries so much more.

ROGER

I didn't say...

JANICE

So, now I'm a whore. I'm selling myself and that makes me a whore. *(beat)* Well, then, I guess I've always been one.

ROGER

Come on...

JANICE

No! Really! If I am a whore now, for selling myself, then I have always been a whore. What could be more whorish than what I was doing before? You think I didn't sell myself to do that? If I'm a whore now, *Roger*, then I always have been.

ROGER

Please stop saying that word.

JANICE

Why? You were going to say it.

ROGER

No, I wasn't.

JANICE

Don't pull that with me, Roger, I know you far too well.

ROGER

(beat)

I didn't mean it.

JANICE

Uh huh.

They fall into silence.

ROGER
Why didn't you tell me?

JANICE
Are you serious?

ROGER
Yes. Why didn't you tell me the truth about what had happened so I could find a way to fix it.

JANICE
Oh. That. (beat) You know, you were so beaten by your business. The market had just died and you were running around trying to find a way to keep your business afloat. / You were scrambling...

ROGER
Not just my business, the family. And I didn't want you to worry about it.

JANICE
(Dryly.)
Thanks for that.

ROGER
You know what I mean. The business is hot and cold. It dips and rises a few months later. There was really nothing you could have done to help. Other than helping with the books like you did. But, I was doing everything I could...

JANICE
I know. That's why I didn't want to pile more on top. You were so tired all the time. You were not happy and telling you would have only made it worse. I knew I had to do it myself. You need to believe that it's all I could do to save us at the time.

ROGER
(beat)
Be that as it may, you betrayed us... our vows.

JANICE
No, I didn't.

ROGER
You are bearing yourself to others. Right?
(She doesn't answer.)
What else do you do?

JANICE
Please let it go, Roger.

ROGER
No! Tell me! What else do you do? You chat? / You talk?

JANICE
Yes... Yes.

ROGER
Okay.

JANICE
I'm begging you.

ROGER
You tell them what you will do to them? Listen to what they want to do to you?
(*She turns away from him.*)
So, you share sexual thoughts. Fantasies.

JANICE
Fine. Whatever. Yes!

ROGER
You share your fantasies with them. A part of your soul. / Those are supposed to be for me. For us.

JANICE
That's not quite how it works. ... I don't...

ROGER
Don't what?

JANICE
I...

ROGER
No! Don't what?!

JANICE
I... facilitate *their* fantasies.

ROGER
None of you is in there?

JANICE
No. (*beat*) Not really.

ROGER
Not really?!

JANICE
 Alright. No.

ROGER
 No/ you just said not really... Which is true?

JANICE
 No. I don't.

ROGER
 How is that possible?

JANICE
 I, sort of... detach. It's not me. I am playing a part.

ROGER
 The first lady of the American stage, ladies and gentleman!

JANICE
 Are you insulting me or my talent?

ROGER
 Depends on which talent you mean.
(He turns away, muttering.)
 Sort of detach... jeez...
(To Janice)
 Isn't that what prostitutes say?

JANICE
 And we're back. I'm a prostitute. A whore. Would that make you my john?

ROGER
 What?

JANICE
 You have paid more for me than anyone. You have fed me, clothed me / given me a house to live in. You're either a john or, better yet, my pimp.

ROGER
 That is not... This is getting us nowhere.

JANICE
 You think?

Silence as they withdraw.

ROGER

Do you remember when we first met?

(She doesn't respond.)

Things seemed much easier.

JANICE

That's because they were. Everything is easier when you're in love.

ROGER

Yeah. *(beat)* We're not still in love?

(She shrugs.)

I am. At least, I think I am. You aren't?

JANICE

(beat)

I don't know.

ROGER

Do you still love me?

JANICE

(beat)

Yes. I think.

ROGER

You think...

JANICE

Yes.

ROGER

Okay, so, if you do, how can you love me and not know if we are still in love?

JANICE

It takes two to be in love. And as of right now... *(beat)* Well, you did say you can't live with me anymore.

ROGER

I... *(pause)* You know how you can love someone so much you see them everywhere? *(beat)* You know that person so well you can trace their face without them even being there. When you look at them, you see everything you want to be. Want them to be. It creates a whole picture of your life. You see them and they are complete... You are complete... whole. I used to see that in you. Tonight... now... I can only see... part of you. It's like a picture that has been ripped in half. I don't know if that's enough. *(beat)* It is amazing how quickly that can happen. I never would have thought it could be so fast.

JANICE
How can I fix this? Roger? *(pause)*

ROGER
I don't know if you can.

JANICE
Roger...

ROGER
I don't! *(beat)* I wish I did.

JANICE
Wish in one hand...

ROGER
Yeah.

JANICE
What do you want to do?

ROGER
I want to go back in time.

JANICE
Realistically, Roger.

ROGER
I don't know.

JANICE
We have to do *something*.

ROGER
I'm afraid whatever it is has already been done.

JANICE
What is that?

ROGER
Your little corner shop.

JANICE
It's time to let that go.

ROGER
Oh? You closed it down?

Roger... JANICE

So, I'm still your pimp. ROGER

This is not about you. JANICE
(*pause*)
Maybe it's time to let you go.

Now, what do you mean by that? ROGER

Maybe this is what I needed to make me see where I stand with you. JANICE

Where you stand? ROGER

Maybe the problem here is not my choice in career or how it affects you or your standing in the ward. Even the affect on the kids. It's more about the fact that I need to be... that I am something different than what I've been trying to be. Something that doesn't fit into any of that. JANICE

You can't be serious. ROGER

I can. I am. JANICE

Jan. I love you. ROGER

You just said you weren't sure. JANICE

I do... I do love you. ROGER

That may be true. That may not. I can't be sure. At this point, though... JANICE

What? ROGER

JANICE

There has got to be more. More than... than... fear.

(Rising anger.)

More than fitting into some pre-formed hole. Rules. Dealing with the disapproving and smug looks from others for the slightest misstep. Folding your arms and lowering your head and praising God. "Leave it to God! God LOVES you! He LOVES us all! Any problem... any worry... God will SAVE you! God will solve all, provide all, make all right!"

ROGER

It's a matter of faith, Jan.

JANICE

FAITH?!

ROGER

Yes. Faith.

JANICE

You know what... you know... Fuck faith!

ROGER

Jan!

JANICE

What?! Huh, Roger?! WHAT?! He has never come through for me! EVER!

ROGER

Jan, be careful.

JANICE

Why? What does it matter? Apparently I'm already going to hell.

ROGER

No one said you're going to hell.

JANICE

It doesn't need to be said, Roger. Ask anyone! They'll tell you, unequivocally –I. AM. GOING. TO HELL! Everybody will think it. *You* think it. You know what? I'm done with it. I have had it with wanting something that is NEVER going to come.

ROGER

You don't have what you want?

JANICE

(beat)

No... I don't know... How can I know if I don't know what else I could have been?

ROGER

I don't know what that means.

JANICE

This can't possibly be my only option.

ROGER

What? Marriage?

JANICE

Whatever! Whatever I have now! There has *got* to be something else!

ROGER

Okay, well, we can figure it out. What can we do to figure out / what you want?

JANICE

We can't. ... Roger! This is not something *we* can figure out.

ROGER

Yes, we can.

JANICE

NO! *(beat)* We can't. We haven't yet. It's been eleven years and we haven't. *(beat)* I need out.

ROGER

You can't mean that.

JANICE

I think I do. I've lost myself. *(beat)* Lost myself... That would imply I ever knew myself. Who am I... Really?

He sidles up to her.

ROGER

You're my wife.

JANICE

(Moving away from him.)

I know you're trying to be romantic, but that, right there, is the problem. I am *your* wife. *Their* mother. *Her* daughter. *His* girlfriend. I was always somebody else's... something. *Something*.

ROGER

Jan...

JANICE

No, Roger, you can't tell me who I am. You never really knew me.

ROGER

I know you.

JANICE

You know me through you. You know me as I exist with you. I had a life before you. A very different life that wasn't, in this respect different at all. *(beat)* Do you know that I have never been alone? Ever. I have always been with someone. Parents. Boyfriends. Husband.

ROGER

So.

JANICE

See. That right there. You are so... so... "blah" about me. My life. Everything about me. As long as I am home for you... do for you

ROGER

Am I not here for you? Do I not do for you?

JANICE

Because you think I can't! Not as support. And I don't want you to *do* for me! Can't you see that? *(beat)* I am finally seeing this all clearly.

ROGER

Seeing what?

JANICE

You have never said anything about me that did not include you. But you always separate us. *You* do for me. *You* give to me. I guess that's the difference between us. You see, I did for *us*. You do for me, I do for us. I do for us and I'm the one getting screwed.

Roger takes this in.

ROGER

(pause)

I'm sorry.

(She doesn't answer.)

Jan, I'm sorry.

JANICE

Sorry doesn't cut it here, Roger. We're talking about my life...

ROGER

Our life.

JANICE

My life! We are talking about *my* life.

(Pause as she looks him over.)

Have you ever ridden in a wheelchair?

ROGER

What?

JANICE

It's a simple question, really: Have you ever ridden in a wheelchair?

ROGER

Yeah. Sure. Why?

JANICE

I have to ask because I have never seen you in one. Even when you broke your ankle that time, you hopped, hobbled, used crutches. No wheelchair for you. *(beat)* I have ridden in a wheelchair a few times. When the kids were born, of course. Other times, too. It's weird, you know? Riding in a wheelchair. Someone else is pushing you. You have no control over where you go, how you get there. That's what my life has been. Especially my life with you. I have been riding in a wheelchair for the past eleven years. And the one time, the *one time* I... *(beat)* This is not about right or wrong anymore, Roger. It's not about what is acceptable by LDS standards. This is about the fact that I stood up out of that wheelchair, took control of something, and now you know that I don't have to rely on you for everything.

ROGER

That's not true.

JANICE

It is true. Think about it. Why did I become an investment manager?

ROGER

It interested you.

JANICE

Think again.

ROGER

It did.

JANICE

Okay. Fine. It interested me... out of the choices *you* gave me. You made the decision. Indirectly. Passive-aggressively. But you made it. Not me. *(beat)* I need to do this. I need this.

She starts to leave.

ROGER

(pause)

Then what?

JANICE

What?

ROGER

After you figure out who you are? What then? Will you come back?

JANICE

I wouldn't think so, but you never know. Stranger things have happened. *(beat)* Maybe this is where I should be. I need to learn that for myself, though. Not be here just because it's easy or comfortable or that I won't have to worry about being alone. If I return it will be because this is where I belong and life has led me back here. *(beat)* But I wouldn't hold my breath.

She walks out. He is alone.

BLACKOUT