

RENOVATIONS FOR SIX

by Norm Foster

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Characters

Shayna Perkins -- Early thirties

Grant Perkins -- Early to mid-thirties

Billie Falterman – Mid fifties to early sixties

Wing Falterman – Mid fifties to early sixties

Veronica Dunn-Dudet -- Mid forties

Maurice Dudet – Mid forties

**Dudet is pronounced Do-Day.*

ACT ONE SCENE 1

Time: The present.

Place: The homes of Shayna and Grant Perkins, Billie and Wing Falterman, and Veronica and Maurice Dudet.

One set represents the living area of all three homes. When a scene between one couple is concluding, the scene between the next couple begins in the same space, sometimes with four or six actors on stage at once. The living space consists of a couch, chairs, bar and stools. It is an open concept home that is in the midst of renovations.

Lights up. Shayna and Grant Perkins enter. They are getting ready for their jobs. Grant wears a business suit. Shayna wears workout clothes. It is a few days before the cocktail party.

Grant: How many classes do you have today?

Shayna: Three. Two Pilates this morning and then a yoga in the afternoon.

Grant: Wow. You're getting busy, huh? That's good.

Shayna: Well, I'm starting to get known now and I guess the response has been good so they're using me more.

Grant: You're in demand. You see? I told you the move wouldn't slow you down. Before you know it, you'll be as busy as you were before.

Shayna: I've still got my eye on my own studio though. Let's not forget about that.

Grant: I know. It'll happen, Shayna. Don't worry.

Shayna: Starting off in a new town is a bit of a setback. I've lost all the old connections.

Grant: I'm sorry about that.

Shayna: No, I'm not blaming you, Grant. This was a good move for us, as a couple. It's a big promotion for you. Managing your own store. I'm happy about that. It's just going to take me some time to make new connections, that's all.

Grant: It'll take you no time at all. People love you.

Shayna: I'm loveable, aren't I?

Grant: Very loveable.

Shayna: You love me.

Grant: I have to. I'm your husband.

Shayna: You're bad.

Grant: But I promise you there are people out there who love you who don't have that obligation.

Shayna: I love those people.

Grant: You know, maybe we shouldn't have a bathroom on the main floor.

Shayna: What? No. We've got to have a bathroom on the main floor. We don't want to be rushing upstairs every time we need to use the bathroom.

Grant: But a bathroom is an unsanitary station. I don't know if we want to have that so close to our main living area.

Shayna: We're having a bathroom down here, Grant.

Grant: I don't know.

Shayna: It's not negotiable.

Grant: Fine. We'll discuss it later.

Shayna: You are impossible, you know that?

Grant: That's what makes me a good manager.

Shayna: What, being impossible?

Grant: No. Being decisive. Dinner in or out tonight?

Shayna: Oh, let's go out.

Grant: Done.

Shayna: Chinese maybe. Or Thai.

Grant: Either one.

Shayna: I miss dining out with our friends.

Grant: Me too.

Shayna: Larry and Michelle.

Grant: Peggy and Monica.

Shayna: Alejandro and Miroslav.

Grant: Babatunde and Chung-Ho.

Shayna: They were so diverse.

Grant: Don't worry. We'll make new diverse friends here and we'll dine out with them.

Shayna: Oh!

Grant: What?

Shayna: I just had an idea.

Grant: About what?

Shayna: Let's have a dinner party.

Grant: Tonight?

Shayna: No, no, no. This Friday night.

Grant: A dinner party for who? We don't know anybody here yet.

Shayna: And that's why we need to have a party. To introduce ourselves. Help me make some new contacts.

Grant: Shayna, we can't just have a party and invite a bunch of people we don't know. We'll be strangers at our own party. It would make us seem desperate. Needy.

Shayna: Really?

Grant: Without a doubt.

Shayna: Well, we don't want to appear needy.

Grant: Needy is a condition without power. Needy is bad.

Shayna: All right then, we'll have a small cocktail party. Not dinner.

Grant: Shayna.

Shayna: No, really. Just two other couples. It will be very informal. Drinks, appetizers and conversation.

Grant: Two couples?

Shayna: Yes. You invite one couple and I'll invite one. That way we'll both know somebody.

Grant: And who would you invite?

Shayna: I don't know.

Grant: What about the Jamiesons across the street?

Shayna: No. He tucks his shirt into his shorts. I can't be friends with someone who does that. What about you? Who would you invite?

Grant: Oh, that's a tough one. We've only been here for six weeks and the only people I know here are the staff at the store.

Shayna: All right, so invite one of them.

Grant: No, wait. We can't have a party.

Shayna: Why not?

Grant: With the house in this shape? We're in the middle of renovations.

Shayna: That's all right. It'll be a topic of conversation. Everybody likes to talk about home renovations.

Grant: You think so?

Shayna: Everybody! What kind of tile is that? Did you grout that yourself or did you hire a grouter? People love that.

Grant: They do love that, don't they?

Shayna: They love it!

Grant: All right. I guess we're having a party.

Shayna: So, who will you invite?

Grant: Well, I suppose I could invite Wing Falterman and his wife. He's the senior salesman at the store. Been there eighteen years. Probably peaked about ten years ago and yet he's still there. Still hanging on. Sad really.

Shayna: His name is Wing?

Grant: Yeah.

Shayna: That's an odd name. Why is he called Wing?

Grant: I don't know.

Shayna: Well, there you go. There's another topic of conversation. What time do you have?

Grant: (*Looks at his watch.*) Eight-seventeen. What time's your first class?

Shayna: Nine.

Grant: You're going to be early.

Shayna: So are you.

Grant: I am.

Shayna: Sex?

Grant: Okay, but I've got to be out of here by eight-thirty.

Shayna: That's thirteen minutes.

Grant: That's plenty of time.

Shayna: Really?

Grant: Maybe Chinese food tonight. No. Cantonese food.

Shayna: What's the difference between Chinese and Cantonese?

Grant: Cantonese food is from the Guangdong province.

Shayna: I should have known that. Wo hen cankui.

Grant: What was that?

Shayna: Wo hen cankui. It means 'I'm ashamed' in Chinese.

Grant: Of course. Good for you.

Shayna: I miss Chung Ho.

Grant: Me too.

Shayna: So, thirteen minutes is plenty of time?

Grant: Absolutely. *(Looking at the walls.)* What's this colour called?

Shayna: Smokey Salmon.

Grant: I'm not sure I like it.

(Billie Falterman enters. She sings to herself and dances a little.)

Shayna: You don't like it? But we chose it together. You okayed it.

Grant: We might have to change it.

Shayna: I just finished painting it. And it's beautiful.

Grant: We'll talk about it.

Shayna: But I love it.

Grant: Let's stick a pin in it.

Shayna: Stick a pin in it?

Grant: We'll table it for now and discuss it at a later date. Now, let's go. We're down to twelve minutes.

Shayna: Is that still plenty of time? Twelve minutes? Because I'm going to need one of those minutes to get out of this outfit.

Grant: It is rather tight.

Shayna: Tight? It came with a lubricant.

Grant: Let's go.

(Grant exits.)

Shayna: And twelve minutes is plenty of time? Really?

(Shayna exits. Wing Falterman enters through the front foyer.)

Billie: Hi Wing.

Wing: Hi Billie.

(They give each other a little kiss.)

Billie: How was work today, baby?

Wing: Work was...strange.

Billie: Strange? Why?

Wing: I need a drink. *(Wing moves to the bar to pour drinks for himself and Billie.)*

Billie: A drink? Before supper? What's wrong? I'll have one too.

Wing: It's the new boss. Perkins?

Billie: Is he giving you a hard time? No wonder you're upset.

Wing: I'm not upset. Listen. He invited us to a party at his house this Friday night.

Billie: He did?

Wing: Yes.

Billie: But. I've got nothing to wear. What will I wear? How could he do that? Now I'm upset too.

Wing: I said I'm not upset. And the party invitation isn't the strange part.

Billie: It's not?

Wing: No. The strange part is, he didn't invite any of the other staff.

Billie: He didn't?

Wing: No.

Billie: Not Jimmy?

Wing: No.

Billie: Barbara?

Wing: No.

Billie: Frances?

Wing: No.

Billie: Kenneth?

Wing: Are you going to go through the entire staff list? No, he didn't invite anybody.

Billie: Zoe?

Wing: No!

Billie: That is strange. Why would he single you out like that?

Wing: Exactly what I was wondering.

Billie: Well, I don't like it. I don't like it one bit.

Wing: Why?

Billie: He's settin' you up for a fall, mister.

Wing: You think so?

Billie: Big fall, I tell ya'.

Wing: No, no. Maybe this is a good thing. You just said it. He singled me out. Maybe he's telling me that I'm doing a good job.

Billie: Oh, you poor darling.

Wing: What do you mean?

Billie: Wing, please.

Wing: You don't think I'm doing a good job?

Billie: Sweetheart.

Wing: What?

Billie: Precious man.

Wing: What?! What are you saying?

Billie: I'm sure you're doing a very passable job, Wing, but you're not a furniture salesman.

Wing: I am so. In fact, I'm the senior salesperson.

Billie: Only because you've been there the longest. No, baby, you're a hooper.

Wing: Billie, come on. I haven't danced professionally in twenty-three years.

Billie: Once a hooper, always a hooper. We'll never get it out of our blood.

No, this party invitation is about something else.

Wing: Like what?

Billie: Maybe it's a show of strength.

Wing: A show of strength?

Billie: Sure. The new fella wants to flex his muscles. Show you who's boss.

Wing: I already know who's boss. He's the boss. He sits in the boss's office.

Billie: No, no, no. You're the senior salesperson there, right?

Wing: Eighteen years.

Billie: Exactly. So, head office sends Perkins down here to trim the fat. Get rid of the dead weight. The excess baggage. And by deep sixing you, the veteran, he shows the rest of the staff that no one's job is safe and they'd better shape up before they're shipped out.

Wing: Dead weight? I'm dead weight?

Billie: The deadest.

Wing: I thought I was just hitting my stride. I'm just starting to peak.

Billie: Oh Wing.

Wing: What?

Billie: Honey bunch.

Wing: What?

Billie: Baby doll.

Wing: Stop that. You mean he's going to fire me?

Billie: Indubitably!

Wing: At a party? He's going to fire me at a party?

Billie: A public show of strength. Even better.

Wing: What a jerk.

Billie: Or maybe it's nothing.

Wing: What?

Billie: Maybe it's just a party invitation.

Wing: Why did you do that?

Billie: Do what?

Wing: Get me all worked up like that. You had me believing I was going to be fired. And then you say I'm not.

Billie: I said maybe you're not. It's fifty-fifty. Listen, I was over at the rec centre playing Bridge this afternoon and Farley Kimble asked me if you and I could do a number at the Spring Fling next month.

Wing: Farley Kimble?

Billie: Short little drip. Lots of ear hair. Always popping his bridge out. So, I thought we could dust off the I Love Paris routine we did in the Beggar's Banquet Cabaret. We put some spit and polish to that and hot diggity, it'll be as good as new. *(Billie does a couple of dance steps.)*

Wing: Billie, we didn't do I Love Paris together. That was you and Harry Todd.

Billie: Harry Todd?

Wing: I was on the road with Showboat that summer. Remember? I got a last minute call to replace Arthur Glenn who got a concussion when he bumped his head on Mitzi Palmer's ass.

Billie: You could bounce a quarter off that ass.

Wing: You did the Beggar's Banquet Cabaret with Harry Todd.

Billie: Oh. That's right. What do you know about that? Well, I could show you the steps. You'd pick it up in no time.

Wing: Billie, no.

Billie: Why not? It'd be a cinch. And if it goes over well, it could lead to invitations from some other rec centres. Maybe some seniors' homes. Did you know they have a whole circuit? The seniors'

homes? It's called the Ambulatory Tour. Yeah. We do a show up here, word gets out, next thing you know we're opening in Florida.

Wing: Billie, I don't want to tour seniors' homes in Florida.

Billie: Oh, that would just be to get our name out there. To get our foot in the door.

Wing: Our foot in what door?

Billie: The door to getting back on the road again. Doing what we do best. Entertaining. So, what do you say? I Love Paris? We could kill with that number.

Wing: Let's stick a pin in it.

Billie: Stick a pin in it?

Wing: The new boss says that all the time. What are we having for supper?

Billie: Supper? I haven't thought about it.

Wing: Let's go out then. My treat.

Billie: Your treat. Where are you going to get the money for dinner, mister big shot? I control the purse strings in this family.

Wing: All right then you buy me dinner.

Billie: All right. But only because I love you.

Wing: What's not to love? You know, I always thought you had a thing for Harry Todd.

Billie: A thing? For Harry Todd?

Wing: Sure. Good looking guy. Talented. You're doing a show together. I'm on the road.

Billie: Oh Wing, stop it. That was thirty years ago.

Wing: That's not a denial, Billie. Telling me how long ago it was is not denying that it happened.

Billie: That what happened?

Wing: That you had a fling with Harry Todd.

Billie: Don't be ridiculous. Harry Todd was married.

Wing: Again, not a denial.

Billie: Oh, that reminds me. Charisse called today. She's leaving Buddy.

Wing: What?

Billie: Charisse is leaving Buddy.

Wing: Wait a minute. Our daughter is leaving her husband and you don't tell me as soon as I get in the door?

Billie: You were busy talking about getting fired.

Wing: No, you were talking about me getting fired. I didn't know I was getting fired.

Billie: And I had to break it to you.

Wing: Why is she leaving him?

Billie: She's bored.

Wing: What?

Billie: She's bored. He bores her.

Wing: Of course he does. Buddy's a boring man, but that's no reason to leave him.

Billie: It's a very good reason to leave him. A mate is supposed to excite you. Make life interesting for you.

Wing: Well, she must have known he was boring when she married him. We knew he was boring. His own parents knew he was boring. They fell asleep during his university valedictorian speech. He called 911 last year and the operator dozed off.

Billie: Snappy patter. You've still got it, Wing.

Wing: So, why didn't Charisse know he was boring?

Billie: She was blinded by love I guess.

Wing: And she doesn't want to try to work it out? Go to couple's therapy

or something?

Billie: I'm afraid her mind is made up.

Wing: God. So, when is she leaving?

Billie: As soon as she gets her ducks in a row.

Wing: What ducks in a row? What ducks does she have to get in a row? She packs a suitcase. That's her duck. She's got one duck.

Billie: Well, she has to find a place to go.

Wing: She can come here. We've got room.

Billie: She doesn't want to come here.

Wing: Doesn't want to co..what's wrong with here? She grew up in this house.

Billie: Well, it's messy.

Wing: Messy? We're renovating. Of course it's messy.

Billie: Charisse likes a tidy house. You know that.

Wing: She's leaving her husband, Billie. I don't think she can be particular.

Billie: No, she hasn't told him she's leaving yet so there's no urgency.

Wing: She hasn't told him?

Billie: No.

Wing: But she told us?

Billie: Yes.

Wing: But, that's horrible. So, we know that his life is about to come unraveled before he knows? That's terribly sad. That's horrifically sad.

Billie: She'll tell him in a week or two.

Wing: A week or two? So, we'll be hanging on to this secret for a week or two? I can't do that.

- Billie: Of course you can.
- Wing: No, I can't. I'll be at work and I'll be thinking about my poor bastard son-in-law who's going through his day without a care in the world—probably sharing a laugh with his co-workers in the lunchroom--meanwhile my daughter is getting her duck in a row so she can crush his heart like an empty can of Shasta.
- Billie: You know, I've been thinking. I would rather have this room painted Sweet Innocence than Smokey Salmon.
- Wing: What?
- Billie: The paint colour. I would rather go with Sweet Innocence.
- Wing: Paint colour? We were talking about a man's life. Our son-in-law's life which is being dashed on the rocks like a tourist who gets too close to the edge of the Grand Canyon while taking a photograph and slips on some loose gravel and tumbles headlong into the abyss.
- Billie: Listen to you with that theatrical flair. Don't tell me you want to leave the theatre behind.
- Wing: We left it behind twenty-three years ago. To raise our daughter. To give her a settled life instead of a show business life.
- Billie: And we did that. And now it's our turn.
- Wing: Billie, we didn't do that.
- Billie: Didn't do what?
- Wing: Give her a settled life. She's leaving her husband because she's bored. She's a gypsy.
- Billie: Because she's from a show business family. We couldn't hide that part of our lives no matter how hard we tried. It's in our DNA. It's in hers.
- Wing: And when did you ever try and hide it? Huh? When?
- Billie: Always. I tried because you wanted me to.
- Wing: You didn't try.

- Billie: I did too.
- Wing: What did you dress her up as on Halloween?
- Billie: Lots of things.
- Wing: One year she went as Velma Kelly from the musical Chicago. While the other kids were yelling 'trick or treat' she was yelling (*He sings.*) 'He had it comin'!'
- Billie: That was cute.
- Wing: Then there was Mrs. Lovette from Sweeney Todd, Fanny Brice from Funny Girl. Oh, and Joel Grey in Cabaret.
- Billie: To rave reviews all over the neighbourhood I might add.
- Wing: Don't tell me you tried. No, this is our fault entirely, Billie.
- Billie: Oh Wing, don't get so worked up. We've raised a wonderful young woman.
- Wing: Who's leaving her husband.
- Billie: Because she wants to be happy. If nothing else, we've taught her to seek out happiness. I think that's a big check mark in the plus column. You know what? Let's not go out for supper. Let's cook. I feel like cooking together. You like cooking together, right?
- Wing: I love cooking together. It calms my nerves.
- Billie: Then let's cook together. A stir fry. How does that sound, my lovely?
- Wing: Sounds wonderful. But we're not done with this Charisse discussion.
- Billie: We'll stick a pin in it. For now, we'll drink, we'll cook and then after we eat, maybe a little fun.
- Wing: You mean?
- Billie: You betcha. I'll teach you the I Love Paris number.
- (Wing and Billie exit L. Shayna and Grant enter R.)*

Grant: *(Looking at his watch.)* How about that? We did it with two minutes to spare.

Shayna: Yay.

Grant: I think there's something very satisfying about efficient sex.

Shayna: And you are a very efficient lover.

Grant: Thank you.

Shayna: Uncommonly efficient.

Grant: Well, I think being good in the short sexual encounter is just as important as being as good in the longer drawn out sex. They're two different talents. The drawn-out sex requires more attention to your partner's desires. Exploration. Foreplay. And of course the prolonged erection.

Shayna: Very important.

Grant: Essential. But the short sex calls for instant readiness. I have to be prepared right out of the chute. That's an entirely different skill set. I mean, there's a time for romance and a time for productivity.

Shayna: Productivity?

Grant: Yes. Getting it done. I have to be at work in twenty-five minutes. If we added romance to the mix I'd be running behind.

Shayna: We do manage our time like nobody's business.

Grant: We do indeed. Besides, sometimes the quick hitters can be very exciting. I like the animal aspect of the quick one. I mean, I like the romance too, don't get me wrong. The candles, the sweet talk, the kissing. All very nice. But sometimes just tearing the clothes off and satisfying an urge can be equally as good.

Shayna: Sometimes it can be.

Grant: You're welcome. So, we decided on Cantonese food tonight?

Shayna: Right. The Panda Hut. Six-thirty?

Grant: I'll meet you there.

Shayna: Good. And I have my book club at eight tonight.

Grant: Okay. I'm probably going to have to go back to the store later anyway.

Shayna: More work?

Grant: I'm afraid so. The last guy left the place in a bit of a shambles. Very unorganized.

Shayna: Oh!

Grant: What?

Shayna: I know who I can invite on Friday.

Grant: Who?

Shayna: This woman named Veronica. I met her at book club last week.

Grant: And why her?

Shayna: Well, she seems smart. I'm sure she could add a lot to a conversation. She mentioned her husband so I know she's married. And she seems well off too. The kind who might have wealthy friends.

Grant: Why does that matter?

Shayna: Networking, Grant. Remember? I need those kinds of people in my corner if I'm going to start my own business. That's why I joined book club in the first place. Because women in book clubs are always smart, adventurous, and forward thinking.

Grant: Really?

Shayna: Oh without a doubt.

Grant: All right. Good. So we have our guest list.

Shayna: Done!

Grant: We are so good.

Shayna: We're the perfect couple.

Grant: Efficient.

Shayna: Productive.

Grant: Who wouldn't want to be us?

Shayna: Nobody, that's who.

(Grant and Shayna kiss.)

Shayna: Now, don't forget to invite your salesperson. Wing, is it?

Grant: Right.

Shayna: Don't forget to invite Wing. Is he Chinese?

Grant: No.

Shayna: Oh well.

Grant: Wing is a girl's name in China.

Shayna: What girl in China?

Grant: Lots of girls in China. Millions.

Shayna: Ohhh.

Grant: That's why Wing couldn't be Chinese.

Shayna: Got it.

Grant: Is this racist, what we're doing now?

Shayna: What, mistaking Wing for an Asian?

Grant: Yes.

Shayna: Well, it wasn't racist until you said it was racist. Questioning whether or not it's racist makes it racist even if it isn't racist.

Grant: Really?

Shayna: It's a very fine line, racism.

Grant: Hmm.

(Veronica enters. She has her coat on and a book in her hand.)

Shayna: Boy, won't Wing be surprised? An invitation to the boss's house?

Grant: He'll be thrilled. It could be the high point of his lackluster year. And you'll invite your book club woman?

Shayna: Veronica. I'll do it tonight.

Grant: I'm suddenly looking forward to this.

Shayna: Our very first social event in our new home. It's got to be perfect.

Grant: It'll be smashing.

(Shayna and Grant exit. Veronica takes off her coat. Maurice enters.)

Maurice: Veronica, you're home. How was book club?

Veronica: Same as usual. A bunch of vacant women who have absolutely no clue about what they're reading. We could be reading Horton Hears a Who and they would say it was powerful and moving.

Maurice: Horton Hears a Who is powerful and moving.

Veronica: We're living in a world of superlatives, Maurice, and I don't like it. Everything has to be the best ever, the greatest, genius, brilliant. Believe me, if everything is brilliant then nothing is brilliant.

Maurice: Would you like a drink?

Veronica: I have an early patient tomorrow.

Maurice: Oh.

Veronica: So make it a double.

(Maurice moves to fix them each a drink.)

No, these women are adrift on a sea of banality. They think they're raising themselves up by actually reading a book. It's pathetic.

Maurice: Well, if you feel this way, why do you go?

Veronica: Because if I don't go there will be no one there to guide them. They're counting on me, Veronica Dunn, to lead them from their dimly lit corners of triteness into the illumination of comprehension.

Maurice: Well, that's quite the mission you've been saddled with, Veronica Dunn.

Veronica: Don't make fun, Maurice. Comedy is not your forte. And yes, it is quite the mission. It's very taxing. And how was your evening?

Maurice: Oh, I had a very good evening.

Veronica: Did you?

Maurice: I was extremely productive, Veronica. I made a real breakthrough. Tremendous progress.

Veronica: What page are you on now?

Maurice: Page ninety-five.

Veronica: When I left you were on page ninety-four. You call that progress?

Maurice: No, it's not the physical writing that was the breakthrough. It was the discovery. I made a wonderful character discovery that will make it so much easier to write going forward. It was exhilarating.

Veronica: Wonderful. How many pages in the average novel, Maurice?

Maurice: Well, that varies from novel to novel.

Veronica: Ballpark it for me.

Maurice: Oh, I'd say around four hundred pages on average.

Veronica: Four hundred. And you're on page ninety-five.

Maurice: Almost a quarter of the way there.

Veronica: After nine months.

Maurice: It's clipping along.

Veronica: Jesus Christ was born after only nine months. Is your book going to be more significant than the Christ?

Maurice: Now that's an illogical argument, Veronica, and you know it.

Veronica: Illogical is it? You want to know what's illogical? Giving up a high paying job as an engineer to become a novelist specializing in commercial fiction. That's illogical.

(Maurice delivers the drink to Veronica.)

Maurice: I had to try it, Veronica. This story has been crying to get out of me. It was like a siren's call I could no longer ignore.

Veronica: And it's leading the both of us onto the rocks of ruin.

Maurice: Thank you for having such faith in me, my pet.

Veronica: Well, really, Maurice. We've just built this new home, which isn't even finished yet, and which is going to go over budget as sure as Lizzie Borden had a quick temper, and you decide to leave your job and cut our earning power in half.

Maurice: Ah, but in the long run, my itch will be scratched, and the good lord willing, I'll be reaping the profits of a bestseller.

Veronica: Maurice, do you have any idea how difficult it is to be a success as a novelist? Very few make it. Doesn't that frighten you?

Maurice: Only when we are no longer afraid do we begin to live. Dorothy Thompson.

Veronica: Fuck Dorothy Thompson. Veronica Dunn.

Maurice: There you go again.

Veronica: What's wrong?

Maurice: Using your maiden name. Dunn. You're using it more and more these days.

Veronica: So? I like my maiden name.

Maurice: Is that why you've started using it after all these years? Because you're partial to it all of a sudden?

Veronica: I've always been partial to it.

Maurice: Well, I like Veronica Dunn-Dudet. It connects us.

Veronica: Veronica Dunn-Dudet is fine too. I use it professionally. It's on my business cards. But Veronica Dunn sounds strong. I like that. And why shouldn't I use my own name? If your book gets published, what name will be on the cover? Maurice Dudet, right?

Maurice: If it gets published? You don't think it will get published?

Veronica: I'm preparing you for the worst. I don't want to see you hurt by the rejection, that's all.

Maurice: You'd rather hurt me in advance of that rejection.

Veronica: Prepare. Hurt. Whatever.

Maurice: Thank you for your concern, love, but I'm a big boy. I can handle rejection.

Veronica: No one can handle rejection. Even the strongest among us collapse under the weight of it. And you, my darling, are not the strongest among us.

Maurice: And once again, I thank you.

Veronica: I didn't mean it as an insult, Maurice. You're delicate. That's what I meant. And there is nothing wrong with being delicate.

Maurice: Really? I wonder how many men would relish the thought of being called delicate. I wonder how many gentlemen would take pride in that description.

Veronica: Those who don't see it as a threat to their precious manhood, that's how many. Oh, we've been invited to a party on Friday night.

Maurice: By who?

Veronica: One of the dunderheads from book club. Her name is Shayna something. What kind of a name is Shayna? Is she the progeny of Tarzan and Jane? Ridiculous.

Maurice: So, I take it we're not going.

Veronica: Of course we're going.

Maurice: We are?

Veronica: Yes.

Maurice: Why?

Veronica: Well, she practically begged me to come. She seems very needy. She and her husband are new in town and they don't know many people. Plus she teaches Pilates.

Maurice: And why does that sweeten the pot?

Veronica: I might want to take classes from her one day and if we become friends she might offer me a discount.

Maurice: You're worried about getting a discount? On what you make as a psychiatrist?

Veronica: We have to tighten the purse strings, Maurice, now that you're committed to chasing your dream. This is my way of supporting you. By cutting back on luxuries. Before you know it, I'll be clipping coupons. And by the way, when that happens, please take me out back and shoot me.

(Maurice pauses and sits.)

Maurice: Graham called this evening.

Veronica: Did he? And how is Graham doing?

Maurice: He sounded in reasonable spirits.

Veronica: Good.

Maurice: He wanted to talk to you.

Veronica: Well, I wasn't home now was I? I can't be home every time Graham needs to talk. Graham always needs to talk. Why couldn't he talk to you? You're his father.

Maurice: He did talk to me.

Veronica: Good. Problem solved.

Maurice: But he wanted to talk to you. He doesn't have issues with me. He has issues with you.

Veronica: He has issues with life in general. And when one issue is resolved, another arises, as if by magic. I can't keep pace with all of our son's issues, Maurice. That would be a fulltime job.

Maurice: Being a mother *is* a fulltime job.

Veronica: And so is being a father.

Maurice: I am well aware of that.

Veronica: I'll call him tomorrow. Will that be good enough?

Maurice: Thank you. I know he'll appreciate it. As will I.

Veronica: You're a good father, Maurice. I'll say that much.

Maurice: I don't know how you do it, Veronica.

Veronica: Do what?

Maurice: Even when you pay me a compliment, you make it sound like an insult.

Veronica: How was that an insult?

Maurice: 'I'll say that much'? That makes it sound as if I'm not good at anything else.

Veronica: Oh, Maurice, you just interpret it that way because you're insecure.

Maurice: I am not insecure. I know. Proclaiming that I am not insecure makes it sound as if I *am* insecure. But I am truly not insecure. And saying 'truly' makes it sound as if I'm even more insecure, I know that.

Veronica: Good lord, you're screwing yourself into the ground like some cartoon coyote. You should have stopped when you were ahead.

Maurice: When was I ahead?

Veronica: When I said you were a good father. Honestly, you're as exhausting as those book club women. And you've put too much ice in this drink. You've turned a fine Scotch into a chlorinated slushie.

Maurice: Here. I'll fix it.

Veronica: No, that's all right.

Maurice: No, I insist. You've had a long day and you deserve the proper nightcap.

(Maurice takes her glass and moves to the bar and fixes Veronica a new drink.)

Veronica: Thank you. *(Looking at the walls.)* Are we sure about this colour?

Maurice: Pardon me?

Veronica: The colour of the walls. What colour is that?

Maurice: I don't know. Some kind of fish. Yellow trout or something.

Veronica: That can't be right. That's not yellow at all.

Maurice: Then orange trout. I don't know.

Veronica: Well, I'm not sure that I like it. We might have to change it.

Maurice: We both okayed it before they painted it.

Veronica: Well, we made a mistake, didn't we? It happens.

Maurice: I still say I should have painted it. We would have saved hundreds of dollars.

Veronica: No. Having it done by professionals was worth the money, believe me.

Maurice: Even though we might have to change it now?

Veronica: Well, we didn't know that when it was being painted, did we? My God.

Maurice: Are you happy, Veronica?

Veronica: Happy with what?

Maurice: With your life. With your lot in life.

Veronica: That was a sudden change in the tone of the conversation.

Maurice: Not really. So? Are you?

Veronica: Those are two very different things, Maurice. Your lot in life refers to what you are given. The hand you are dealt. And it is usually a negative. A burden. It is used as an excuse by those who are too lazy to try. Your life, on the other hand, is what you've made of your time on earth. What you have carved out for yourself. Two very different commodities.

Maurice: Your life then. Are you happy in your life?

Veronica: You tell me, Maurice. That's why you asked, isn't it? So that you could answer the question for me?

Maurice: I think you were happy once. When we were first married. And when Graham was young. I think you were very happy then. Now? I'm not so sure.

(He hands the drink to Veronica.)

Veronica: Thank you.

Maurice: Well?

Veronica: I had lunch today at the little café across the street from my office.

Maurice: Grossman's.

Veronica: Grossman's yes.

Maurice: What does this have to do with my question?

Veronica: Let me finish.

Maurice: I'm sorry.

Veronica: As I sat down at my table, my attention turned to a couple at the table next to me. A younger couple, maybe in their mid-thirties. And they were both leaning in during their conversation, getting as close as they could to each other from across the small café table. And not because they couldn't hear each other over the din of the lunch crowd. I don't think it was that. No, I think it was because they just wanted to be as close to each other as possible. They wanted to narrow that distance between them as much as they could. And every once in a while she would touch his hand and her fingers would sneak up to his wrist and she would play with his watch. An IWC Schaffhausen. A beautiful timepiece. And once he reached up and touched her cheek gently and I thought he might kiss her. It was a very public display of affection. An unblushing display that can only be triggered by the onset of love. And the air around this couple was filled with desire. So much so that I thought it might overflow and spill onto my table, and I wondered, what would I do with it? With all that desire. What would I do? It was quite the moment.

Maurice: And?

Veronica: Yes. I was very happy when we were first married.

Maurice: And now you're not so sure.

Veronica: You're a smart man, Maurice. Far too smart to be wasting your talents as a commercial fiction writer. Oh, I'm sorry. Did that sound like an insult too?

Maurice: Yes.

Veronica: I guess I'm just no good at giving compliments. Strange. I'm so good at everything else.

Maurice: I like your sense of humour, Veronica. That was one of the first things I liked about you.

Veronica: I remember you telling me that when we first started seeing each other.

Maurice: That was twenty-six years ago.

Veronica: A lifetime ago.

Maurice: We were good together, weren't we? Back then? We were the perfect couple.

Veronica: We were a very good couple. I don't know if we were ever perfect.

Maurice: Well, if we weren't we were damned close.

Veronica: We were.

Maurice: And now you don't know what you would do with desire if it spilled onto your table. I'm so sorry about that, Veronica.

Veronica: Don't be. I have already drenched myself in the sorrow of it. Enough for both of us. Now, before this conversation gets bogged down in a sea of self-pity, I think I'll go and soak in the tub. Let the healing disposition of essential oils melt away the trials of this arduous day. *(She takes her drink and moves towards the hallway.)*

Maurice: Would you like some company?

(Veronica stops and looks back. She says nothing. Long pause)

Veronica: In the tub?

Maurice: Yes.

(Veronica stares at Maurice for a very long time as she thinks about his proposition. She finally answers.)

Veronica: All right.

Maurice: Are you sure you don't want more time to think about it?

Veronica: Oh, Maurice, stop it. I said all right, didn't I?

Maurice: After an interminable silence.

Veronica: Well, I was picturing the event in my head. Debating the pros and cons of it. And I finally decided that we could both use a good tilling of the soil. Now come, quickly, before the mood is spoiled.

(Veronica exits. Shayna and Grant enter. They each carry a tray of food. It is the evening of the party.)

Maurice: *(To himself.)* Well, we wouldn't want to spoil the mood, would we?

(Maurice exits.)

Shayna: Do you know anything about the wife?

Grant: Her name is Billie, that's about it. That's probably something I should have done right off the bat. Gotten to know more about the personal lives of the employees. Shown an interest.

Shayna: Well, tonight's party will be a good step in that direction.

Grant: Wing's been acting strange this week though.

Shayna: Strange how?

Grant: Well, it's almost as if he's been avoiding me.

Shayna: Why would he do that?

Grant: I don't know. But ever since I invited him to this party, that's what it seems like.

(Wing enters. He is putting on a tie. Billie follows.)

Wing: I've been avoiding him all week. I can barely look at the guy. I mean, what kind of man invites another man to a party so he can fire him? And even worse, what kind of man accepts that invitation knowing he's going to be fired?

Billie: We don't know that he's going to fire you, sweetie. That was just an educated guess. In fact, you know what? I don't think he is going to fire you.

Wing: You don't?

Billie: No. You're too valuable.

Wing: You think so?

Billie: You're a crackerjack salesman!

Wing: You're just saying that to make me feel better.

Billie: Of course I am, dear. That's what wives do.

Grant: Is that going to be enough food?

Wing: So, you think he is going to fire me.

Shayna: I think so.

Billie: I think so.

Wing: Then why are we going? And why am I wearing a tie?

Shayna: Oh. The flowers!

(Shayna exits.)

Billie: You're wearing a tie because we've been invited out. And when one is invited out, one dresses. Would Fred Astaire go out without a tie? No.

Grant: Shayna?

Billie: What's his wife's name?

Wing: Sheena I think. Or Gina.

Billie: You don't know?

Grant: Shayna?

Wing: Gina.

Billie: Gina?

Wing: Definitely Gina.

Billie: Because it's important that we know the spouse's name. Otherwise we'll appear thoughtless.

(Shayna enters carrying flowers.)

Shayna: Yes?

Grant: What if someone's allergic?

Shayna: To what?

Grant: To blue cheese. A lot of people are allergic to blue cheese.

Shayna: Then they won't eat it.

Billie: Are they going to have food?

Wing: Snacks.

Billie: You mean cheese. Boy, if I'm going to fire someone I give him a nice meal first.

Grant: Maybe we should be offering something more substantial.

Shayna: Like what?

Grant: I don't know. Chicken wings. Sandwiches.

Shayna: Don't worry. I've got spring rolls and meatballs out there too.

(Maurice enters. He is carrying his shoes and has an undone tie around his neck. He sets the shoes down and begins doing up his tie)

Maurice: Are they going to have food?!

Grant: If someone can't eat blue cheese then that limits the food choices for them.

Shayna: There are plenty of other cheeses there. Camembert, Gouda, Manchego, Cambazola, Stilton, Mimolette, Cheddar. *(She sets the flowers down.)*

Wing: I hope they don't have too much cheese.

Billie: You're lactose intolerant. The amount of cheese isn't the issue.

(Veronica enters. She has a dress on now.)

Veronica: Did you say something?

Maurice: Are they going to have food at this party?

Veronica: Hors d'oeuvres.

Maurice: You mean cheese.

Veronica: Probably.

Maurice: I don't like cheese.

Veronica: I know you don't.

Maurice: Cheese is a binding agent.

Veronica: I know it is.

Grant: I don't think the flowers should go there.

Shayna: Why not?

Grant: They'll be in the way. They'll dominate the room there. They should be on the periphery.

(Grant picks up the flowers and moves them.)

Veronica: Why are you wearing a tie?

Maurice: Because we've been invited out. When one is invited out, one dresses.

Veronica: It's not the Governor General's ball. Knowing this Shayna woman, it will be more akin to a hoedown.

Wing: How does that look? *(Pointing to his tie.)*

Billie: Very dashing. You look like Errol Flynn.

Maurice: What's the husband's name?

Veronica: Don't know. Don't care.

Grant: What time is it?

Shayna: Six-thirty.

Billie: Those little quiches are a good snack. Maybe they'll have those.

Wing: Fingers crossed.

Maurice: It would be nice if we knew the fellow's first name.

Veronica: Well, her name is Shayna so his name is probably Simba.

Grant: If it's only six-thirty we've got a half an hour. We're ahead of schedule.

Maurice: What's his line of work?

Shayna: Sex?

Veronica: I don't recall.

Grant: Now?

Shayna: Yes. We have half an hour so we can even add some romance.

Grant: Romance?

Shayna: Yes. Romance is so sexy.

Grant: But are we ready for our guests? Is everything in place? Are we sure about the blue cheese?

Shayna: Everything is fine. We're all set. Now let's go.

Grant: Really?

Shayna: Yes.

Grant: All righty.

Shayna: All righty?

Grant: What's wrong?

Shayna: I've never heard you say that before. It sounded strange.

Grant: It's a very common expression.

Shayna: I know. But I've never heard you say it.

Grant: It just popped into my head. What can I say? Now, are we going or not?

Shayna: You mean for sex?

Grant: Yes. Sex. Romance. The whole nine yards. Let's hop to it.

Shayna: All righty.

(Shayna and Grant exit.)

Veronica:

Billie: tog. What time is it?

Maurice:

Wing: tog. Six-thirty.

Veronica: We've got a half an hour yet. How are we going to kill a half an hour?

Billie: We're right on schedule.

Veronica: Why did we get ready so soon?

Maurice: Because I don't like being late.

Veronica: Fashionably late. That's all we're going to be.

Billie: We'll be right on time.

Wing: Good. Don't want to be late for my execution.

Maurice: I just think it's inconsiderate to be late.

Billie: Promptness is a virtue, Wing.

Veronica: Fifteen minutes late isn't late.

Wing: Even when one is getting fired he should be prompt?

Maurice: The hosts have gone to great lengths to prepare for the evening and then we wander in as if it's nothing to us.

Billie: In our entire career, did we ever miss the half hour call? No.

Veronica: The hosts expect people to arrive late. It is part and parcel of being a host. And it's our duty as guests not to arrive on time. If we arrived on time they might not be ready for us.

Maurice: Well, I think it's thoughtless.

Wing: All set?

Billie: All set.

Wing: I have to hit the bathroom.

Billie: Me too.

Wing: I hate getting old.

Billie: Me too. You go first.

Wing: Are you sure.

Billie: Believe me, you won't want to go after me.

(Wing exits. Billie sits.)

Veronica: I'll have a drink. That will kill some time.

Maurice: A drink will make us even later.

Veronica: I told the cab to pick us up at seven and it's a fifteen-minute cab ride. *(Veronica makes herself a drink.)* Do you want one?

Maurice: Well, I might as well, mightn't I? *(Maurice sits beside Billie.)*

Veronica: Is mightn't a word?

Maurice: It's a contraction of might not.

Veronica: So, you just said 'I might as well might not I'.

Maurice: Apparently I did.

Veronica: Does that make sense?

Maurice: The function of the English language is not to make sense. It is to convey thought in any way possible. Did you understand what I meant when I said mightn't I?

Veronica: I did.

Maurice: Then the English language triumphs again.

Billie: *(Yelling.)* I hope they have more than snacks at this thing! I'm getting hungry!

Veronica: We should discuss the ground rules for tonight.

Maurice: Why do we need ground rules?

Veronica: We're going to be at a party with strangers. Certain subject matter should be off limits.

Maurice: You don't want me to discuss my book, is that it?

Veronica: You can discuss your book to your heart's content. In fact, the hostess is in book club. I'm sure she would love to hear about your attempt at writing a book.

Billie: They could serve Stromboli! That's got some heft to it!

(Veronica hands Maurice a drink.)

Maurice: My attempt?

Veronica: Yes.

Maurice: But I am writing a book. It's not an attempt.

Veronica: Is it finished yet?

Maurice: No.

Veronica: And until one completes a task, it is merely being attempted. Now, they'll probably ask if we have any children. For some reason that seems to be a 'need to know' fact at social gatherings. So, how do we answer?

Maurice: We have a son.

Veronica: But do we confess to having a son?

Maurice: Why wouldn't we?

Veronica: Well, then they'll want to know his age. What's he doing for a living? Is he married? On and on and on. I suggest we just say we have a son, state his age and change the subject.

Billie: Sandwiches would be good! I could go for a sandwich!

Maurice: Personally, I enjoy talking about our son. I'm proud of our son.

Veronica: I know you are.

Billie: Those little sandwiches with the crusts cut off and the egg salad always squirts out the side! Maybe they'll have those!

Maurice: I don't know why we shouldn't talk about him.

Veronica: It's a can of worms.

Maurice: Graham is a can of worms? Is that how you see him?

Veronica: It's not light conversation. Is that better?

Billie: Warm rolls and butter! That's easy enough. They can't give us that for god's sake?

Veronica: Oh, and about my work. Please don't discuss that in detail either.

Maurice: Why not?

Veronica: Because people are abnormal around psychiatrists. They think I'm analyzing them.

Maurice: And you usually are.

Veronica: Of course I am. It's automatic. Back when you were a civil engineer, do you remember those days?

Maurice: It was nine months ago.

Veronica: Well, in those halcyon days of yours, whenever you happened upon, oh let's say a bridge, you would analyze its construction, correct? It was automatic.

Maurice: Of course it was.

Veronica: Exactly. Besides, when people find out I'm a psychiatrist their interest is piqued and the conversation tends to focus on that and nothing else. I don't want to be the centre of attention at another party.

Maurice: Fine. We'll avoid that topic as well.

Veronica: Thank you.

Billie: Mac and cheese! Would that be too much to ask!? I don't think so. The sons of bitches.

Maurice: We're narrowing down our options for verbal interaction though. We can't talk about our hobbies because we have none. We can't talk about movies because you don't like the cinema.

Veronica: They haven't made a good film since Double Indemnity.

Maurice: Oh, I think they've made a few, darling.

Veronica: There's plenty we can talk about Maurice. We are well-versed on any number of topics.

Maurice: Name one.

Veronica: Gestalt.

Maurice: Gestalt?

Veronica: I'm an expert on gestalt.

Maurice: Oh my God, Veronica, we are the dullest couple on earth. (*Maurice gets up from the couch.*)

Veronica: No we're not.

Maurice: We are drop dead dull. And everyone at the party tonight is going to know that. My God. Gestalt? Do you have any idea how dull that is?

Veronica: It's fascinating.

Maurice: It's pompous drive! It is devoid of a use. It's the Dewey Decimal System of Psychology. Gestalt. Sweet Mother of Jesus, we are so dull. I don't know why we even go out of the house, Veronica. I honestly don't.

Veronica: Maurice, you're starting to hurt my feelings.

Maurice: ...Really?

Veronica: Yes.

Maurice: I'm hurting your feelings?

Veronica: Yes. I have feelings and they can be hurt. Does that surprise you?

Maurice: More than anything that has surprised me in decades.

Veronica: Seriously? Do you find me that devoid of sensitivity?

Maurice: I do.

Veronica: You find me insensitive?

Maurice: I do.

Veronica: You find me impervious to hurt?

Maurice: Veronica, you can word the question any way you want. The answer will always be the same.

Veronica: I'm shocked.

Maurice: I'm sorry.

Veronica: I need to freshen up.

Maurice: Freshen up. You just got ready. You haven't had a chance to spoil yet.

(Veronica moves to the bar and pours herself another drink. Wing enters.)

Wing: Your turn.

Billie: *(Gets up and heads toward the bathroom.)* I'm very annoyed at this man for firing you without offering you a decent meal.

Wing: Are you sure he's going to fire me?

Billie: He must be. That's why he doesn't want to waste a meal on you.

Wing: And call a cab while you're in there.

Billie: Call a cab from the bathroom?

Wing: Why not? They won't know you're in the bathroom.

Billie: Oh, they might.

(Billie exits. Wing sits. Shayna and Grant enter. Shayna moves to the bar to make herself a drink. Grant inspects the cheese tray.)

Maurice: You're upset because I said you were insensitive. Is that what this is?

Veronica: I'm not upset.

Maurice: You're not?

Veronica: No.

Maurice: Because you seem upset.

Veronica: Well, I'm not.

Maurice: Oh.

Grant: You're upset.

Shayna: I'm not upset.

Grant: You seem upset.

Shayna: I'm not upset.

Grant: All right. Good.

Maurice: It's just that I would think that someone who was truly sensitive would be upset about being called insensitive.

Veronica: Have you been drinking?

Maurice: Yes.

Veronica: I knew it. Alcohol always emboldens you. It places a spine where there previously was none.

(Veronica exits carrying her drink.)

Maurice: Ain't love grand. *(Maurice sits beside Wing.)*

Grant: *(To Shayna.)* You're drinking?

Shayna: I'm drinking.

Grant: Before the guests arrive?

Shayna: It appears so.

Grant: You know you can't handle liquor, Shayna. We don't want you drunk when the guests arrive.

Shayna: I'm fine. And stop studying the cheeses. The cheeses are fine too.

Grant: I think you are upset.

Shayna: Should I be upset?

Grant: You just said you weren't.

Shayna: I think I might have reason to be.

Grant: So you ARE upset.

Shayna: I didn't say that.

Grant: Shayna, just tell me. Are you upset or aren't you?

Shayna: I'm a little upset.

Grant: Thank you. Good lord.

Shayna: Don't you want to know why?

Grant: I'm going to have to know why now, aren't I? I have no choice.

Shayna: You didn't spend much time on me.

Grant: Just now? When we made love?

Shayna: That wasn't making love, Grant. That was sex.

Grant: Okay wait. Wait. Didn't spend much time on you. You mean actually on you, or attending to you?

Shayna: Attending to me. And on me! Both. God! You said we were going to add some romance because we had thirty minutes.

Grant: No, you suggested we add some romance.

Shayna: And you said 'all righty'.

Grant: And I thought I did add some romance.

Shayna: Really?

Grant: I lit a candle.

Wing: (*Yelling*) Don't forget to light a candle in there!

Shayna: That's it? That's romance to you?

Grant: In the middle of the day. While it's still light out? Yes. That stinks of romance. You didn't get the sense of romance from that?

Shayna: The sense of romance?

Grant: Yes.

Shayna: What is the sense of romance? It's either romantic or it isn't. That wasn't.

Grant: Oh. Well, I apologize.

Shayna: So, what happened?

Grant: You want me to explain?

Shayna: Yes.

Grant: You want me to explain why the sexual encounter we just had was less than satisfying for you?

Shayna: No, I already know that. I want to know why you didn't pitch in to make it satisfying.

Grant: Pitch in? You mean like a barn raising? Like moving a sofa for a friend?

Shayna: No. Like taking our sexual experience to a level that we can both be satisfied with.

Grant: So, you weren't satisfied?

Shayna: Not entirely.

Grant: Because you needed more tending to.

Shayna: Yes.

Grant: A more thorough going over.

Shayna: That's right.

Grant: I see. So instead of the simple spray car wash, you wanted the high-powered brushes and hoses where you're on the conveyor system and you get blown dry at the end.

Shayna: Blown dry would have been good.

Grant: Well, Shayna, let me explain something about men and how things work down there.

Shayna: Oh God.

Maurice: Oh God. Veronica, let's go! What are you doing in there?

Grant: There is a mechanism at work you see, and that mechanism receives signals from the brain. So today, moments ago, the brain signaled that the excitement was such that I wouldn't be able to sustain a prolonged encounter. And once that happens, there is really nothing I can do about it. The raw passion takes over and well, the result is what you just experienced.

Shayna: A quickie.

Grant: A quickie to some. Instant ecstasy to others.

Shayna: A quickie.

Grant: If you insist.

Shayna: Grant, how long have we been married?

Grant: Eight years. Eight heaven sent years.

Shayna: And in all that time have you ever sat me down and explained this 'mechanism' theory to me?

Grant: I don't believe I have.

Shayna: No. Because there has never been a need to. Because our sex life to this point has been almost perfect. But lately, more and more, it has been what I just experienced. A toss.

Grant: A toss?

Shayna: A toss. Isn't that what they call a quickie over there? *(She points.)*

Grant: *(Looking to where Shayna has pointed.)* Over where? At the Jamieson's house?

Shayna: Across the ocean. Great Britain or the United Kingdom or one of those places.

Grant: They're the same place.

Shayna: What?

Grant: Great Britain and The United Kingdom are the same place. Like Holland and The Netherlands. Same place.

Shayna: I don't care about Holland!

Grant: Nobody does.

Shayna: So why has our sex life changed?

Grant: You know, I thought our relationship was above this, Shayna. I thought it was dependant on more than sex.

Shayna: It's dependant on many things. Sex being one of them.

Grant: Fine. Consider me corrected. I will try harder in that department from now on.

Shayna: You shouldn't have to try. It should happen naturally. You should want to satisfy me simply because you want to. The way I want to satisfy you. Because we love each other. We shouldn't have to 'try'. It should just happen.

Grant: Shayna, you're starting to hurt my feelings.

Shayna: How?

Grant: By criticizing my sexual performance, that's how. And I am not going to take a chance on the blue cheese. We'll go with baby dills instead.

(Grant picks up the blue cheese plate.)

Shayna: Grant?

Grant: What?

Shayna: Are we finished with our discussion about our sex life?

Grant: Oh no. By all means, come into the kitchen and fire a few more shots across my bow. Let's see if we can completely destroy my ability to get hard again in this lifetime and the next one.

(Shayna and Grant exit. Billie enters.)

Billie: All set. The cab will be here any minute. And I think they knew.

Wing: Billie, can I ask you a favour please?

Billie: Anything, my delight.

Wing: Please don't be too 'Billie' tonight.

Billie: What's that supposed to mean?

Wing: Use your internal censor. Don't be inappropriate.

Billie: Don't worry. I'll be on my best behaviour for your soon-to-be ex-boss.

Wing: Maybe I could talk to Buddy.

Billie: About what?

Wing: About Charisse leaving him.

Billie: You mean break it to him?

Wing: Yeah. Over dinner maybe. In a public place so he won't make a scene.

Billie: So, you want to tell our daughter's husband that she's leaving him?

Wing: Well, someone's got to do it.

Billie: What about Charisse?

Wing: No. She's all wrong for the part.

Billie: She's his wife. She's perfect for the part. She is the part.

Wing: No. Charisse has no tact. She'll break the poor bugger's heart. I could let him down gently.

Billie: You're a real pip, you know that? You're about to be fired and you're worrying about Buddy.

Wing: Well, he's a sensitive man. I've got it. I'll take him to a sports bar. Nobody cries in a sports bar. Yes. We'll watch the game and I'll break it to him then.

Billie: No.

Wing: But I like Buddy. I don't want to see him get hurt.

Billie: He'll get over it. Is this a housewarming party?

Wing: I don't know.

Billie: Because if it's a housewarming party we should bring a gift.

Wing: He didn't say it was a housewarming party.

Billie: He didn't say you were going to get fired either.

Wing: He wouldn't fire me at a housewarming party, would he?

Billie: Who knows? Who knows what kind of heartless man he is. He could have no redeeming qualities at all like Bill Sikes in *Oliver*. Or he could be like Javert in *Les Miz*. A flawed automaton who is

merely following orders. Maybe we should bring something anyway.
A bottle of wine.

Wing: Even if he's going to fire me?

Billie: An Australian wine then. We'll pick up a bottle on the way.

Wing: Maybe I could get together with Buddy tomorrow. It's the weekend.
He'll have the day off. We'll barbecue. I always liked barbecuing
with Buddy. I'm going to miss that.

Maurice: Veronica please!! I'm begging you!

(Off we hear a car horn.)

Wing: The cab's here.

Maurice: Wonderful! The cab's here! Veronica?

(Maurice exits.)

Billie: Why do they have to honk? It's so impersonal. I'd like the driver to
come to the door and ring the bell. Make us feel special.

Wing: Like a date?

Billie: Yes, like he's our date and he's as excited about the evening as we
are.

Wing: Should he bring flowers too?

Billie: Flowers would be a very nice touch. How do I look?

Wing: You've never looked bad a day in your life, Billie.

Billie: Oh Wing.

Wing: It's true.

Billie: You know why I love you so much?

Wing: Why?

Billie: Because you're the best doggone liar in the world.

Wing: I'm not lying, Billie. You're the prettiest girl at the dance. The belle
of the ball. And I'm the luckiest son of a gun there ever was.

(They kiss. We hear the horn honk again.)

Billie: Boy, I'll tell you, if our date wasn't out there honking his horn right now, I'd take you upstairs and give you the best ten minutes I've got.

(Billie and Wing exit. Maurice enters and rushes to the door.)

Maurice: We'll be right out dammit!

(Veronica enters.)

Veronica: Don't yell at the cab driver, Maurice. He'll hit every pothole from here to the party. It'll be like a cab ride through the streets of Marrakesh.

Maurice: How do you know our cab driver is Moroccan?

Veronica: I didn't say he was Moroccan.

Maurice: You implied it by saying Marrakesh. I think that's racist.

Veronica: Well, it wasn't racist until you said it was. And I think the husband, Simba, is in retail. A salesman of some kind.

Maurice: What does he sell?

Veronica: I forget. Something bulky. Cars maybe.

Maurice: So, he's a down to earth fellow.

Veronica: I suppose.

Maurice: My kind of people.

Veronica: Could be. Although he does have a job.

Maurice: For the record, Veronica, that was mean. It was dickish.

Veronica: Dickish?

Maurice: Yes, you were being a dick. So, let's not be mean to each other tonight. Let's be loving. Let's be normal. I won't call you insensitive and you won't call me frivolous.

Veronica: When did I call you frivolous?

Maurice: You implied that I was foolish to give up a good job to attempt to become a writer. That is the very definition of frivolous.

Veronica: You're right. I'm sorry.

Maurice: Apology accepted.

Veronica: Tonight I will be loving. I promise.

Maurice: You used to be loving without my requesting it.

Veronica: I used to be a lot of things. Carefree. Hopeful. Brave.

Maurice: Did I chase those qualities away?

Veronica: No, Maurice. We are each one of us responsible for who we've become. That blame is non-transferrable.

Maurice: Blame. Another negative.

Veronica: And how would you phrase it?

Maurice: Credit. We can all take credit for who we've become.

Veronica: Hmm. That's very good. That puts a positive spin on it.

Maurice: Well, I am a writer after all.

(OFF we hear a car horn honk.)

Maurice: I said we'll be right out!!!

Veronica: He's awfully impatient.

Maurice: He's been waiting for five minutes. Are we taking anything?

Veronica: We'll stop and get a bottle of something on the way. How do I look?

Maurice: You're a real humdinger.

Veronica: Oh, Maurice.

Maurice: You don't believe me?

Veronica: No, I believe you. I just think a writer would have put it more eloquently.

Maurice: You said you wouldn't be a dick tonight.

Veronica: Last time. I promise.

(Veronica and Maurice exit out the front door. Shayna and Grant enter. Grant is carrying a large bowl of pickles.)

Shayna: That's an awful lot of pickles, Grant.

Grant: I think it's the perfect amount of pickles. Why are you criticizing the pickles now? Why can't you just go along with me for once? You're always trying to buck the trend.

Shayna: I didn't know pickles were a trend.

Grant: I mean me. The pickles are a metaphor for me. I wish you would just go along with me for once.

Shayna: Fine. I'll go along with the pickles.

Grant: Thank you.

Shayna: And Grant, I'm sorry.

Grant: About what?

Shayna: About criticizing your sexual performance.

Grant: Why are you saying that now? Is it the pickles?

Shayna: What?

Grant: Did seeing the baby dills make you think about my sexual performance?

Shayna: No. Wait a minute. *(She looks at the pickles.)* No. I just thought I should apologize for saying your lovemaking was unsatisfying. For saying your technique is boring and predictable instead of arousing. Well, I didn't actually say that last part. I just thought it. And I'm sorry. I know you've got a lot on your mind because of the party tonight. You know, entertaining people who you aren't that familiar with. I'm sure that affected your performance.

Grant: It did affect my performance. It's a distraction.

Shayna: I know, honey. I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?

Grant: Of course. You know I can't stay mad at my Shayna.

Shayna: So, we're all good?

Grant: All good.

(They kiss.)

Shayna: That's better.

Grant: You think my technique is boring?

Shayna: And predictable but what are we going to do with these flowers? I think I like them where they were in the first place.

(Shayna moves the flowers back to their original position.)

Yes. Yes. Much better.

Grant: It's funny because I've never had any complaints before now.

Shayna: No you haven't. I've never complained once.

Grant: No, I mean ever before now.

Shayna: Oh, you mean from the one girl you dated before I came along. Becky, wasn't it? Yes, I've seen pictures, and I'm sure Becky was quite thrilled to have someone pleasure her. So, should we leave the flowers there?

Grant: No, I still think they're too prominent there. And I know that your sexual experience graph is based on a much larger sample size than most, but some of us were a little more discriminatory in our youth. *(He picks up the flowers and moves them back to where they were.)* Yes, this is definitely where they belong.

Shayna: Okay. If you think so.

Grant: So, we're all set?

Shayna: All set.

Grant: It's seven twelve. They should be arriving any minute.

Shayna: No thanks.

Grant: No thanks what?

Shayna: Well, you said they would be here any minute. I thought you were going to offer to make love to me again.

Grant: That was uncalled for, Shayna.

Shayna: You're right. I'm sorry.

Grant: Very unnecessary.

Shayna: I'm sorry. And it was only five.

Grant: Five what?

Shayna: Five men before you.

Grant: Oh. I thought it was more than five.

Shayna: Nope. Just five.

Grant: Does that include Ricky Jalbani?

Shayna: Damn. No. I forgot about Ricky. Six then. How did you know about Ricky?

Grant: He told me.

Shayna: He told you? When?

Grant: Last year. I bumped into him in the liquor store.

Shayna: And he told you there? In the liquor store?

Grant: He had a Cape Grace Chardonnay in his hand. From Australia. And I told him that was your favourite wine. And he said he knew that. He said you were the one who turned him on to it when you spent a night together in Turtle Ridge when you got snowed in. You were there taking a Pilates course and he was skiing with his brother. His brother got sick and stayed in his room. You had a bottle of Cape Grace with you and I guess you split it with Ricky. You both got a little tipsy and one thing led to another.

Shayna: In the liquor store he told you this?

Grant: It was a long line-up.

Shayna: He told while you were in line at the check-out?

Grant: Yes.

Shayna: Wow. Well, it only happened once and it was way before we started dating.

Grant: I know.

Shayna: Boy, I can't believe he told you that. Why would he tell you that?

Grant: Just bragging I guess. You know how guys are.

Shayna: Wow.

Grant: What about Alexi Vasiliev?

Shayna: Alexi Vasiliev? Was he in the line-up too?

Grant: No. Ricky told me about him.

Shayna: Ricky's a bit of a jerk, isn't he?

Grant: He sure is.

Shayna: Well, I included Alexi in the original five.

Grant: Is that what you call them? The original five? Like the Group of Seven. The Dirty Dozen.

Shayna: I can't believe he told you that in the liquor store line-up. Do men talk about sex everywhere?

Grant: Yes. Men talk about sex so that we don't have to talk about uncomfortable subjects like feelings.

(The doorbell rings.)

Grant: What was that?

Shayna: The doorbell.

Grant: I've never heard that before now.

Shayna: Because we've never had any guests before now.

Grant: It's a good doorbell. Strong.

Shayna: We should answer it.

Grant: Yes.

Shayna: How do I look?

Grant: Pretty as a picture.

Shayna: Oh, Grant.

Grant: I mean it.

Shayna: Thank you, sweetheart.

Grant: I really don't like that paint colour.

Shayna: And tender moment over.

(The doorbell rings again.)

Grant: There it is again!

Shayna: Well, they're still waiting.

Grant: But two rings so close together sounds rude. It shows impatience on their part.

Shayna: Then let's let them in.

Grant: All righty. Oh, I'm sorry. Did that bring to mind our unsatisfying sexual encounter again? When I said 'all righty'?

Shayna: Grant. Let's just answer the door and embark on our new path together.

Grant: What path is that?

Shayna: Hosting our first party as a power couple.

Grant: Power couple?

Shayna: Well, you are a boss now.

Grant: Hmm. That's right. And soon you will have your own workout empire. So, I guess we are a power couple.

Shayna: I love you, sweetheart.

Grant: I love you too.

(Grant and Shayna move in to kiss. The doorbell rings again.)

Grant: Dammit, those people are rude!

Shayna: Well, Grant, we did invite them. We should have known that they would want to be let in eventually.

Grant: Well, they won't be invited back if they keep that up.

Shayna: Never mind. This is going to be the perfect party. And we are going to be the perfect hosts.

Grant: How could we not be?

(Shayna and Grant exit.)

Shayna: *(Off.)* Hi!!!

Grant: *(Off.)* Welcome to our home!!!

(Lights down. End Act One.)

ACT TWO SCENE 1

Time: Seconds later.

Place: The same.

As the lights come up, Shayna enters followed by Billie, Wing, Veronica, Maurice and Grant.

Shayna: Now please, promise me you'll excuse the awful mess.

Billie: Oh, what mess? What are you talking about? *(She sees the room.)*
Oh boy this is a mess. It looks like our place.

Shayna: We're in the middle of renovations.

Billie: So are we.

Maurice: So are we.

Shayna: Really? Well, what a coincidence. Did you hear that, Grant?
We're all under renovation. Things are being fixed all over.

Grant: The doorbell works though. Works real good.

Shayna: So, did you four come together?

Billie: No, we just happened to arrive at the same time. Wing and I got stuck in a lineup at the liquor store.

Shayna: Oh? Did anyone discuss promiscuity while you were waiting?

Billie: Not that I remember.

Shayna: Well, that's odd.

Billie: So anyway, we thought we'd be the last ones here. We hate being late. Then Maurice and Ronnie pulled up in a cab right behind us.

Shayna: Oh. I wondered if maybe you knew each other already.

Wing: No. Never met before.

Veronica: But we had lots of time to chat outside waiting for you to answer the door.

Billie: What was the hold up? You two weren't having sex, were you?

Wing: Billie, please.

Billie: Oh, I'm just kidding. I'm breakin' the ice.

Shayna: No, we weren't having sex. If we were you wouldn't have had to wait so long at the door.

Billie: Hah!! That's a good one, kid. Here. This is for you.

(Billie hands Shayna the wine.)

Shayna: Why thank you. Ooh, Australian. My favourite.

Grant: Well, someone's getting lucky tonight. I wonder who.

Maurice: Veronica?

Veronica: What?

Maurice: Didn't we bring something too?

Veronica: Oh, yes. Here you go.

(Veronica hands Shayna a gift bag.)

Shayna: Thank you. That's so nice of you. *(She opens the bag.)* Oh my. Twelve year-old scotch.

Billie: That's good hooch.

Veronica: Yes, it is good...hooch.

Shayna: Well, come in. Come in. Please.

Maurice: What colour is that?

Grant: Hmm?

Maurice: On the wall? What colour?

Shayna: That's Smokey Salmon.

Maurice: I think that's what our colour is.

Veronica: You said it was yellow trout.

Maurice: It's a fish. Close enough.

Wing: Ours is Smokey Salmon too.

Billie: But we might change it to Sweet Innocence.

Grant: What's that?

Billie: It's like Debbie Reynolds before Eddie Fisher dumped her.

Wing: Wow. That's a helluva lot of pickles. It's like a pickle convention. Like a pickle nest. Like Picklepalooza.

Billie: Atta boy.

Grant: You don't like pickles?

Wing: I love pickles. Not that many pickles but I love them. And so many cheeses.

Billie: You stay away from the cheeses. He's lactose intolerant. It was caused by an inflammatory bowel disease.

Wing: Thanks, Billie. You saved me the trouble of announcing it myself.

Shayna: Introductions. We haven't properly introduced everyone. We should do that.

Billie: I'm Billie Falterman. And you're Gina?

Shayna: Shayna.

Billie: Oh. Are you sure? Because Wing said it was Gina.

Shayna: It's Shayna.

Billie: Charmed.

(Billie and Shayna shake hands.)

Shayna: And that would make you Wing, correct?

Wing: Correct.

(Shayna and Wing shake hands.)

Shayna: How do you do? Wing. That's an unusual name. I'll bet there's a good story there. We'll have to ask you about that later.

Wing: It's my given name. No story.

Shayna: ...Oh. I see.

Maurice: I'm Maurice. I'm Veronica's husband.

Shayna: Hello Maurice.

(Shayna and Maurice shake hands.)

This is my husband Grant.

Maurice: How do you do?

Grant: Hi.

(Grant and Maurice shake hands.)

Shayna: And Grant, this is Veronica. Veronica is the woman from my book club.

Grant: Yes, I've heard all about you. You're the psychiatrist, right?

Veronica: That's right.

Billie: Ooh, a psychiatrist. So, I guess you know everything about us.

Veronica: No, that would be a psychic.

Shayna: Can you tell us what's in store for us?

Veronica: No, that would be a fortune teller.

Wing: Do you do marriage counselling?

Veronica: No, that would be a marriage counsellor.

Grant: Are you in the market for a marriage counsellor, Wing?

Shayna: Grant?

Grant: What?

Shayna: That's personal. That's between Wing and Billie.

Grant: Just trying to learn more about my employees.

Wing: It's not for us.

Veronica: Of course it's not.

Wing: It's for our daughter.

Veronica: Uh-huh.

Wing: No, really. It is.

Billie: Our daughter is fine. Ignore him.

Maurice: Did you grout this tile yourself or did you hire a grouter?

Shayna: The contractor is doing everything. Except the painting. I'm doing the painting.

Wing: Our daughter is not fine but that's a tale for another day.

Billie: Then why do you keep bringing it up on this day?

Maurice: Doing the painting yourself huh? Think of the money you'll save.

Shayna: I know! Oh! Drinks. We should have drinks. Grant, will you look after that?

Grant: Of course. What can I get everyone?

Billie: Well, if Ronnie doesn't mind, I wouldn't say no to a hit of that Scotch. Ronnie?

Veronica: Not at all. That's what it's here for. In fact, I'll have one too.

Grant: Anybody else?

Wing: I'll have one. I need to stiffen my resolve.

Grant: For what?

Wing: Pardon me?

Grant: Stiffen your resolve for what?

Wing: Oh, I don't know. Whatever the evening will bring.

Grant: Well, let's hope it doesn't bring anything you have to stiffen your resolve for. And Maurice?

Maurice: Scotch please.

Grant: Good. Shayna?

Shayna: Well, I don't want to buck the trend so yes, I'll have a scotch too.

(Grant pours the drinks and hands them to everyone.)

Maurice: I love house painting.

Shayna: I find it therapeutic.

Maurice: Oh, so do I. But we hired someone to do ours. Someone didn't think I could do a good enough job.

Shayna: Who?

Maurice: Pardon me?

Shayna: Who didn't think you could do a good enough job?

Maurice: I'm sorry. I'll try not to be so vague from now on.

Wing: So, you don't do marriage counselling?

Veronica: No. But I could put you in touch with a good counsellor. One of the best in fact.

Billie: That won't be necessary.

Wing: I think it's worth a try, Billie.

Billie: She doesn't need a counsellor.

Wing: Well she needs something. She's been messed up for years.

Billie: Wing, Charisse is hardly 'messed up'.

Wing: She's leaving her husband, isn't she?

Veronica: Many women leave their husbands.

Wing: Not because they're boring.

Veronica: It's as good a reason as any. In fact, better than most.

Billie: That's what I said.

Veronica: *(Takes out a business card and hands it to Billie.)* Here. If you two decide you need a counsellor, call me. I'll put you in touch with her.

Wing: It's not for us.

Veronica: I can see that. But call me if you need one.

Billie: *(Looks at the card and reads aloud.)* Veronica Dunn Doodit.

Veronica: Dudet. Veronica Dunn-Dudet.

Billie: Oh. I thought maybe that was your motto. "Who cured your neurosis? Veronica done doodit."

(There is a pause.)

Shayna: Spring rolls! I have spring rolls for everyone.

Billie: Now you're talkin'.

Shayna: I'd better pop those into the oven right now.

(Shayna exits.)

Billie: You know, I worked with a triple threat named Ronnie years ago. Remember her, Wing? Ronnie Potts?

Grant: What's a triple threat?

Billie: She could sing, dance and act. And she was darned good at all three. Yeah, Ronnie Potts. She changed her name from Potter to Potts because she thought Potts was more glamorous. Everyone called her 'Shit or get off the Potts' after that. It was a mouthful but it was worth it.

Veronica: Well, actually, I prefer Veronica.

Billie: Oh. Okay. Veronica it is. Myself, I prefer Billie.

Veronica: What's your full name?

Billie: Billie. Yeah, my father wanted a son.

Wing: And he got one.

Billie: Hah! That's a little joke between Wing and me. Wing says I've got the balls in the family.

Maurice: And what have you got Wing?

Wing: A wife who can pee standing up.

Billie: Hah! I love this guy.

(Grant brings a drink to Billie and Veronica.)

Billie: Oh. Thanks, pal.

Veronica: Thank you. Oh, that's a lovely watch.

Grant: You like it?

Veronica: Yes. An IWC Schaffhausen, right?

Grant: You know your watches.

Veronica: My father was a watchmaker. The last of a dying breed. Most watches today are made in factories but my father had his own little shop where he made the watches by hand, including all of the parts. I used to love going into that shop and watching my father work. He put me through university from that little shop. He was quite a man. Proud. Hard-working. Faithful.

Grant: Admirable traits.

Veronica: They certainly are.

Grant: And Maurice, what do you do?

Veronica: Maurice is writing a book.

Grant: Oh? A novel? Fiction? Non-fiction?

Maurice: Well, it's a little bit of both actually. It's based on our son.

Grant: Really?

Veronica: What?

Maurice: My book is based on our son. Graham?

Veronica: I know what our son's name is. You didn't tell me the book was about Graham.

Maurice: It's not about Graham. It's inspired by Graham. It's about a character based on Graham.

Veronica: You didn't tell me that.

Maurice: You didn't ask.

Veronica: I must have asked.

Maurice: I'm afraid not. Not once since I started writing it have you inquired about the subject matter.

Grant: And what's so special about your son? I mean, so special that he inspires a book.

Maurice: Oh, there's a lot that's special about Graham.

Veronica: Maurice, we don't need to discuss Graham. There's nothing more boring than people who talk about their children.

Maurice: Oh, I'm sure there are plenty of topics that are more boring than Graham. Is anyone familiar with gestalt?

(Shayna enters.)

Shayna: And they're in the oven. Should only be a few minutes.

Maurice: Gestalt? Would anyone like to talk about gestalt?

(Nobody responds.)

Ah. I guess nobody knows what gestalt is.

Shayna: It's an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

Billie: Are you a scientist or something?

Veronica: Gestalt has got nothing to do with science.

Shayna: Actually, it can be applied to science. And no, I'm not a scientist. I majored in philosophy in college. But when I graduated and realized how far my degree in philosophy would get me, I became a fitness instructor.

Maurice: That would explain your great shape.

Veronica: Pardon me?

Maurice: The great shape she's in. That would explain it. Marvellous shape.

Shayna: I'm hoping to open my own studio one day.

Billie: All by yourself? That's a tough row to hoe.

Shayna: I know. But I'm hopeful. Maybe the ladies in book club could help me get it off the ground.

Grant: Well, that was subtle.

Shayna: I mean, as customers. Not as backers or anything like that.

Billie: I'll be a customer.

Shayna: Well, that's one. Thank you, Billie.

Wing: Not if I'm out of work you won't be. We'll be pinching pennies.

Grant: Why would you be out of work?

Wing: What?

Grant: Are you quitting?

Wing: No, I..

Grant: Because I'm going to need some notice if you're quitting. We're short staffed as it is.

Wing: No. I'm not quitting.

Grant: Good.

Wing: I'll stay as long as you want me.

Grant: All righty.

Wing: All righty? You must have picked that up from Zoe.

Grant: Picked what up from Zoe?

Wing: All righty. She says that all the time. Drives me crazy.

Grant: Really? I hadn't noticed that she says that.

Wing: All the time.

Veronica: Who's Zoe?

Wing: She works at the store. The furniture store where Mister Perkins and I work.

Veronica: I see.

Maurice: You call him Mister Perkins?

Wing: Pardon me?

Maurice: Grant. You call him Mister Perkins? He's got to be twenty years your junior.

Grant: Well, that's just..you know. Head office has this policy where the manager gets called mister. Or missus as the case may be.

Veronica: Does Zoe call you Mister Perkins too?

Grant: Of course she does. The whole staff does. I mean, it doesn't matter to me. They can me Grant if they like.

Wing: Really?

Grant: Absolutely.

Wing: Good.

Grant: If it were up to me. It's just that head office likes to keep it more formal.

Shayna: Anyway, I'll be looking for clients so spread the word for me everyone. Tell your friends.

Maurice: I'm sure Veronica will be a client? Won't you, love?

Veronica: Yes. Definitely.

Billie: I smell something burning.

Shayna: Oh! The fucking spring rolls! (*Shayna starts to exit then stops.*) I mean, the spring rolls. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to swear. I was hoping to impress you all tonight and that kind of language won't help, will it? I'm so sorry. I hope you'll forgive me.

Billie: Shayna?

Shayna: Yes?

Billie: The fucking spring rolls?

Shayna: Oh, right!!

(*Shayna exits.*)

Maurice: So, you're in show business, is that correct?

Billie: We are.

Wing: We were.

Grant: Wing is my senior salesperson. My top gun.

Wing: I am?

Grant: Absolutely.

Wing: Really? I didn't know that.

Grant: Well, I know I don't say it enough, Wing, but you are.

Wing: You don't say it all.

Grant: And I apologize for that.

Wing: Not once have you said it.

Grant: Well, sometimes I have trouble expressing how I feel.

Wing: A simple 'well done' goes a long way. No one has ever been bruised by a pat on the back.

Grant: I'll remember that.

Billie: Is there a washroom down here?

Grant: Yes, there is, but we're thinking of taking it out. I personally don't care for a washroom so close to our main living area.

Billie: You don't say.

Grant: It's a hygiene thing.

Billie: Right. Well, can I use it before you take it out?

Grant: Oh, of course. Yes. It's right through there.

Billie: Thank you.

(Billie exits.)

Maurice: So, do you have children, Grant? I don't see any family photos around.

Grant: No, Shayna and I have chosen not to have children.

Veronica: You've chosen not to?

Grant: Yes. It might sound selfish but we've decided to put our careers on the front burner.

Veronica: Your furniture salesman and fitness instructor careers.

Grant: Right.

Maurice: And you have just the one child, Wing?

Wing: Charisse, yes.

Maurice: That's a lovely name.

Wing: We named her after Cyd Charisse. She was a dancer back in the fifties.

Maurice: You were a dancer too?

Wing: I was.

Maurice: But not anymore?

Wing: No.

Grant: As I said, he's my senior salesperson. *(To Veronica.)* And I'm not a furniture salesman.

Veronica: Pardon me?

Grant: I'm a store manager and I'm very proud of my job. I just wanted to say that.

Veronica: Oh. All righty.

(Shayna enters with a plate of spring rolls and some napkins.)

Shayna: I saved them. They're not burned too badly.

Maurice: So, you two only moved here recently, is that right?

Grant: Yes. Six weeks ago.

Maurice: And have you made many friends yet?

Shayna: Well, not really. Just the gals in the book club. Right, Veronica?

Veronica: Yes indeed. Just us gals. And what about you, Grant? Have you made any friends?

Grant: Well, I've been pretty busy getting the store back up to its fighting weight, so I haven't had much time to socialize.

Wing: He's been cracking the whip, that's for sure.

Grant: I haven't been too tough on you, I hope. You and the staff?

Wing: Not at all. I think we all needed a good kick in the pants. We were becoming complacent.

Maurice: Well, I'm sure you won't have trouble making new friends.

Shayna: I hope not. We left a lot of good friends behind in our old neighbourhood. I really miss them.

Maurice: And where was that? Where did you come from?

Shayna: Vancouver.

Maurice: Ah. The left coast.

Shayna: Hah! That's funny.

Veronica: He's a writer.

Shayna: Yes, we had quite a diverse group of friends there.

Veronica: Diverse in what way?

Shayna: Well, you know...culturally.

Veronica: Culturally?

Shayna: From different backgrounds. Poland, China, gay.

Veronica: Is gay a country now?

Shayna: Well, I mean, from that culture.

Veronica: Oh. I see.

Maurice: Veronica, be nice.

Veronica: How wasn't I being nice?

Maurice: Well, you were being just a wee bit condescending.

Veronica: I was?

Maurice: Ever so slightly, dear.

Veronica: Well, I apologize, Shayna.

Shayna: No problem.

Veronica: In fact, I think it's good to have a diverse group of friends. Diversity in itself is an education. We can learn a lot from people with different backgrounds. What about you, Wing? Do you have a diverse group of friends?

Wing: Are you analysing me?

Veronica: No. Just asking an honest question.

Wing: Well, I have a friend who has a multiple personality disorder and one of his personalities is from Spain. Alejandro. He's diverse.

Veronica: Well, that's not exactly what I meant.

Wing: I know it wasn't.

(Billie enters.)

Billie: Okay, what'd I miss?

Wing: Shayna was saying she has minorities for friends and Maurice called Veronica condescending.

Billie: Minorities huh? I worked with a one-legged dancer once. Everybody felt sorry for him. But, hey, come on. He only had to learn half the steps.

Grant: I don't think having only one leg makes him a minority.

Billie: Really? How many one-legged dancers do you know? Ooh spring rolls.

(Billie takes a spring roll.)

Shayna: I was talking about minorities who are sometimes put upon because of their ethnicity or their sexual leanings. I guess I feel kind of an affinity for them because my great grandfather was African.

Grant: Your great grandfather was a white South African named Glen. He probably supported apartheid.

Shayna: My great grandfather did not support apartheid.

Grant: You don't know that.

Maurice: Our son is a minority.

Veronica: Maurice don't.

Maurice: What's wrong? He is.

Billie: How is he a minority?

Veronica: Please, don't encourage him. He had a couple of drinks before we left the house. So, how are you two enjoying our city so far?

Shayna: Oh, we love it. But sometimes I feel that we may have bitten off more than we can chew.

Veronica: And why is that?

Shayna: Well, we're both starting new jobs in a new city and we bought this house which is a fixer upper. Sometimes it's a little overwhelming.

Maurice: I should think that would be overwhelming.

Shayna: And Grant has to work late some nights so I find myself doing a lot of the work on the house myself.

Grant: Now, sweetheart, we knew there was a chance that I would be putting in some overtime at first to get the store to where it should be.

Shayna: I know. I'm not complaining. It's just that sometimes it gets a little lonely.

Grant: But you do the painting when I'm not here. You said that's therapeutic.

Shayna: And it looks like I might be doing more painting. He doesn't like the Smokey Salmon colour.

Grant: I said we should discuss it. I didn't say we were going to change it for sure.

Wing: You work overtime?

Grant: Pardon me?

Wing: You said you work overtime. I didn't know that.

Grant: Yes, I do some nights.

Wing: I thought we all usually leave at the same time.

Grant: Well, I have dinner and then I go back.

Wing: Oh.

Shayna: Sometimes he doesn't get home until after midnight.

Wing: Really? What do you work on?

Grant: What do I work on?

Wing: Yeah.

Grant: Managerial duties, Wing. Paperwork and the like. Things you don't have to concern yourself with because you're not the manager.

Billie: He should have been.

Grant: What's that?

Wing: Billie, don't.

Billie: Wing should have been the manager when they relocated the last guy. But they brought you in instead.

Grant: They didn't relocate the last guy. They fired him. And I think they brought me in because they wanted a new set of eyes. A different approach. Apparently, things were beginning to stagnate.

Wing: They fired Jeffrey?

Grant: Pardon me?

Wing: Jeffrey. The last manager. They fired him?

Grant: Was that his name? Jeffrey?

Wing: Yes.

Grant: Well, they fired him.

Wing: They told us he was relocated.

Grant: Nope. Fired.

Billie: And then they bring in someone who is unfamiliar with the territory. Does that make sense? I'm not saying we're upset about it. I've been trying to get Wing to go back on the road again. You know, start up the old act, so it would suit me just fine if he wasn't working there at all.

Grant: Really?

Wing: But I'm happy right where I am. Senior sales representative. That's got me written all over it. Yes sir.

Grant: I'm glad to hear that.

Shayna: Meatballs! Who wants meatballs?

Grant: You don't ask if they want it, Shayna. You just serve it.

Billie: I'd like some meatballs.

Shayna: Then you shall have them!

(Shayna exits.)

Veronica: So, you two were dancers?

Billie: Are dancers. Yes, we were in demand all over when we were in our prime.

Wing: Well, I wouldn't say that, Billie. We carved out a nice patch for ourselves but we weren't in demand all over.

Billie: We were too. We worked constantly. We were always booked.

Wing: We were lucky.

Billie: We were good. Let's show them the Tea for Two number.

Wing: No.

Billie: Come on. We usually do this with a piano filler, folks, but it works just as well acapella.

Wing: Billie, don't.

(Billie starts to sing Tea for Two and dances a little soft shoe. She implores Wing to join her.)

Billie: *Picture me upon your knee, just tea for two and two for tea, just me for you and you for me alone.*

Come on, Wing.

Wing: No.

Billie: Oh come on. He's shy. Always has been. *(Billie grabs Wing by the hand.)* Come on, sweetheart. Don't make me do this on my own because you know I will.

(Wing joins in reluctantly and they dance together.)

Nobody near us, to see us or hear us. No friends or relations on weekend vacations. We won't have it known dear that we own a telephone dear.

(They stop.)

Wing: All right. That's enough. I'm winded. Whew!

Billie: It's usually a lot better than that. We haven't done it in a while.

Maurice: No, it was wonderful. Bravo.

Grant: You're a man of many talents, Wing.

Wing: Well, I don't know about that.

Billie: You missed a couple of steps though. He missed a couple of steps.

Wing: Well, I haven't done it in a while, Billie. That's all it was.

Billie: No, I think it's that bunion correction you had done last year. That's the problem. It's made you lopsided.

Wing: Again, thank you for opening up on my behalf.

Billie: Anyway, you'd better brush up if we're going to take it on the road.

Wing: I didn't know we were going to take it on the road.

Billie: I thought we were.

Wing: Billie, I've got work commitments.

Billie: And I've got nothing. I sit around the house all day.

Wing: I don't think this is the place to discuss it, Billie. We'll talk about it later.

Billie: Maybe I should go out on the road with someone else.

Wing: Like Harry Todd?

Billie: Harry Todd is dead.

Wing: He wasn't dead thirty years ago.

Billie: Wing, he wasn't my type.

Wing: Still not a denial.

Veronica: You don't have anything to occupy your time, Billie? During the day?

Billie: No.

Wing: That's not true. You play Bridge at the rec centre.

Maurice: Oh, I love Bridge. Wonderful game.

Billie: Not if it's the only thing you do it's not.

Veronica: That's the only thing you do? Is there nothing else that interests you? Hobbies? Books? Volunteering?

Billie: Are you analysing me?

Veronica: Oh, good heavens no. You couldn't afford me.

Wing: You didn't know his name?

Grant: What's that?

Wing: The manager you replaced. Jeffrey. You didn't know his name?

Grant: Why would I need to know his name? He doesn't work for the company anymore.

Wing: I don't know. I just think that a man who has put in time with the company--many years in fact—I just think he should at least have his name remembered.

Grant: Well, I didn't work with him---with Jeffrey—so I shouldn't be expected to know his name. Besides, he was incompetent and

that's why he was fired. The company is not about to immortalize his name.

Billie: How do you know what I can and cannot afford?

Veronica: Oh, I'm sorry. That was presumptuous of me, you're right. I should never assume.

Billie: You assumed I couldn't afford you? Why would you assume that?

Veronica: Well...

Maurice: Let me field this one, love of my life. You see, Billie, Veronica comes from morbid academia. Her parents had their noses in the air for most of their adult lives, as if proboscis rigor mortis had set in. And I'm afraid a bit of that has rubbed off on her.

Veronica: I'm sorry, Maurice. Was I being a dick?

Maurice: Just the tiniest bit, love.

Grant: Can a woman be a dick? I don't think she can be.

Maurice: Well, what would she be?

Billie: Bitch?

Maurice: No. I don't like that word.

Billie: Wanker?

Grant: No, that's a male.

Billie: Cow?

Maurice: Cow. Yes. She can be a cow. Excellent.

Grant: But I don't think a man can call a woman a cow.

Veronica: In today's climate a man cannot call a woman any derogatory name. It's unacceptable.

Grant: You're right. I think only a woman can call another woman a name.

Billie: You cow.

Veronica: I beg your pardon.

Billie: I was just testing out the theory. Yeah, I think it works.

Maurice: What about a husband and wife in the privacy of their own home?
Can they call each other names of any description?

Veronica: Well, of course they can, but it's very counterproductive. Name-calling never ends well.

Billie: You cow. Yep. It works a treat.

(Shayna enters with a bowl of meatballs.)

Shayna: Here we go.

Billie: That was fast.

Shayna: Microwave.

(Billie helps herself to a meatball.)

So, what did I miss?

Grant: Billie and Wing did a dance number and Billie called Veronica a cow.

Shayna: A dance number? Awww. And I missed it.

Maurice: Shayna, how many coats did you put on this wall?

Shayna: Two.

Maurice: I think it's going to need a third. Maybe even a fourth.

Shayna: Really?

Maurice: I think so. The old colour must have been dark was it?

Shayna: Yes. Lorne Green.

Maurice: I beg your pardon?

Shayna: The colour. It was Lorne Green.

Maurice: You mean the actor?

Shayna: What actor? That was the name of the colour.

Maurice: Anyway, it's barely noticeable but the Lorne Green is bleeding through. See?

Shayna: You're right. Why didn't I see that?

Maurice: Well, you can only see it in a certain light.

Shayna: Maybe I should just change the light bulb.

Maurice: *(He laughs.)* That's very good. Change the light bulb. You are adorable.

Veronica: Maurice?

Maurice: Yes, my love?

Veronica: I wonder if you could pour me another drink.

Maurice: Certainly. I'd be happy to. *(Maurice gets Veronica's glass and pours her a drink.)* So, Billie, you said you're in the middle of renovations as well?

Billie: You betcha, bub.

Maurice: And what are you having done?

Billie: We're tearing up the carpeting and tiling the place.

Maurice: Really?

Billie: Every inch of it. Top to bottom. Heated tiles.

Maurice: Oh, that'll cost a pretty penny.

Billie: Yes, but it's better for a dancer's feet. That's something we have to be aware of all the time. Right, Wing?

Wing: Oh yes. Warm feet at any cost. Money is no object.

Billie: We had a friend once, a tap dancer named Spats Finnegan. His feet got cold and he never danced again.

Wing: His plane went down in the Rockies and he froze to death.

Billie: Well, that's getting cold, isn't it? Anyway, I'm not taking any chances.

Grant: Is anybody going to eat the pickles? I should probably put them in the fridge if nobody is going to eat them.

Billie: Leave them. I'll get around to them.

Grant: All righty.

Veronica: And there it is again.

Grant: There what is?

Veronica: All righty.

Grant: Oh. I don't even realize I'm saying it.

Shayna: I would love to hear more about your book, Maurice. What's it called?

Maurice: A Lack of Grace.

Shayna: A Lack of Grace? Well, I'm hooked already. And it's about your son?

Maurice: It's based on our son.

Shayna: Maybe we'll read it in book club one day, Veronica.

Veronica: Maybe. Maurice, is that drink forthcoming anytime soon?

Maurice: It is teetering on the very precipice of delivery, my darling.

Billie: And what about your renovations? What are you two doing?

Maurice: It's actually not a renovation. Our house is newly built. It's not quite finished yet.

Billie: And you moved in anyway?

Veronica: We had no choice. Our old house closed and our new house was behind schedule. And overbudget.

Maurice: What does overbudget have to do with it, Sweetheart?

Veronica: Nothing. Just putting it out there.

Maurice: Just putting it out there. (*Announcing to the others.*) I'm not a wage earner anymore you see. And the burden of supporting us in the short term has fallen upon my wife's broad shoulders. And I thank you for carrying that burden, my dear.

Shayna: I'm in the same situation as you, Maurice. I'm starting over in a new city while my husband is the major bread winner. It's a little

embarrassing. But that will change. And I'm sure it will change for you too. I'm sure your book is going to be a huge best seller.

Maurice: Thank you, Shayna. You are a beacon of encouragement in a world populated by demoralizing detractors. Here you go, love.

(Maurice gives the drink to Veronica.)

Grant: Couldn't you just wear socks to keep your feet warm?

Billie: Come again?

Grant: For your cold feet. Wouldn't nice warm socks do the trick instead of paying all that money for heated tiles?

Shayna: I love warm and cozy socks.

Billie: What do you mean, all that money?

Grant: Well, it's a lot of money for heated tiles, isn't it?

Wing: It sure is.

Grant: You see? That's what I'm saying.

Billie: There seems to be an assumption here that just because we're in show business we can't afford luxuries.

Wing: We're not in show business, Billie.

Billie: Yes, we are.

Wing: We're not. I'm in the furniture business and you play Bridge. We were in show business once and it was a wonderful life while it lasted, but it's over.

Billie: I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Wing. With an attitude like that we'll never get back on the road.

Wing: We're not going back on the...I'm sorry. You know what? I think I'll have one of those damned pickles.

(Wing eats a pickle.)

Shayna: You know, I'm hoping that this will be the beginning of a regular gathering of the six of us.

Veronica: (*She almost chokes on her drink.*) Really?

Shayna: Yes. We're such different people, the six of us. I like that.

Veronica: Ahh, diversity.

Shayna: Yes. Diversity.

Veronica: Would you want to spend time with people even if you didn't like those people? Just because they're different from you?

Shayna: Well, of course not, but that's not the case here. We all like each other, right?

Maurice: Of course we do. Veronica? Don't we?

Veronica: Yes. Of course.

Grant: But it's a little early to start planning for our next get together, Shayna. Let's get through this one first.

Billie: Get through it? You make it sound like we're sitting through a third act.

Shayna: I guess I'm just anxious to make new friends here, that's all.

Veronica: That's understandable, dear. You're young. You're probably used to being on the go. Meeting friends for coffee and such during the day. And now you're here in a new city where you don't know anybody and your husband is putting everything he has into...the store. Just give it time. Your situation will improve.

Maurice: That was very nice of you, Veronica.

Veronica: Thank you, Maurice, but you really don't need to comment on the texture of everything I say.

Maurice: Sorry.

Wing: Is it getting edgy in here? I detect an edge.

Shayna: Do you ever go out for coffee during the day, Veronica? I could meet you some time if you're free.

Veronica: Me? Well...uh...my daily schedule is usually jam-packed with patients.

Shayna: Oh, of course.

Veronica: It's hard to find time to get out and socialize during the day.

Shayna: I understand.

Maurice: But...I'm sure there might come a time during the week—
sometime, Veronica—when a patient cancels unexpectedly and
you could slip away. Couldn't that happen?

Veronica: Well, it's rare.

Maurice: But it could happen.

Veronica: I suppose it could.

Maurice: In which case you could join Shayna for coffee.

Shayna: Really?

Veronica: Yes. Perhaps.

Shayna: I'd like that.

Veronica: You would?

Shayna: Yes. Very much.

Veronica: Oh. Why?

Shayna: Why what?

Veronica: Why would you like to join me for a coffee?

Shayna: Because I like you, Veronica.

Veronica: ...Oh.

Maurice: Do you need a moment, dear? To let that sink in?

Billie: I'll join you for coffee, kid. God knows I've got the time.

Wing: There you go. You've got a regular coffee klatch going.

Shayna: Oh, this makes me very happy.

Maurice: So, you and Grant have chosen not to have children?

Shayna: Pardon me?

Maurice: Grant told us that you've chosen not to have children.

Grant: At this time.

Maurice: Oh. I didn't hear you say 'at this time'. It sounded like you meant never.

Shayna: Oh, I'm sure he didn't mean never. No, we're looking forward to starting a family. I'd love to have a daughter. I think a mother daughter relationship is something very special.

Billie: You can say that again.

Shayna: And I know I'll be a good mother. I'll teach her to be strong. To be her own person. I want her find her way in this world on her own terms and not on terms dictated by men who don't consider her an equal. And of course, before she has to face all of that, while she still has the innocence that only a child can have, I want to enjoy her. I want her to know how loved she is. I'll read to her. I'll sing to her. And I'll hug her as often as possible. I'll hug her so hard that those hugs will comfort her long after I've left this earth.

Billie: That's beautiful, kid.

Grant: But just to play devil's advocate, it's an uncertain future, Shayna. Do we want to bring children into an uncertain future?

Shayna: You bring children into whatever is now, because you know they will be loved. That's what you bring children into. That loving world that you create for them. That's what parents do for their children. They provide a safe harbour.

Veronica: Excuse me.

(Veronica exits to the washroom.)

Wing: Is Veronica all right?

Maurice: Oh, she's fine. It's been a long day for her, that's all. Work has been hard on her. So, you do want children?

Shayna: Oh yes.

Maurice: Oh. Then I must've misheard what Grant said earlier.

Billie: No, I don't think you did. I think that's what I heard too.

Shayna: What? What did you hear?

Maurice: He said you've chosen not to have children.

Shayna: Really? You said we didn't want children?

Grant: It's something we'll discuss, Shayna. At a later date.

Billie: You didn't discuss it before you got married?

Wing: Billie? I think this is a personal issue between Shayna and Mister Perkins.

Maurice: You call him Mister Perkins away from the store too?

Wing: Well...I don't know. *(To Grant.)* Do I?

Grant: Well, it would be odd to call me one thing at work and something else in a social setting.

Wing: Oh.

Grant: And quite frankly, being the boss, I think I've earned the right to be called mister.

Maurice: But, isn't that odd? Everybody at this party is allowed to call you Grant except for old Wing here.

Grant: I didn't say he wasn't allowed.

Billie: So, he is allowed?

Grant: Well, here's the thing. He calls me mister at work, and Grant here, and then we go back to work and he calls me mister again? That would seem odd to me.

Shayna: Can we stick a pin in this whole mister thing for a minute? I want children, Grant.

Grant: Shayna, it's not as cut and dried as that.

Shayna: Yes, it is.

Grant: No. It takes planning. It takes commitment.

Shayna: It takes sex. And we're having enough sex to impregnate a bull moose.

- Wing: Okay. You know what? I don't think I want to be privy to this conversation.
- Billie: I do.
- Maurice: It beats the hell out of gestalt.
- Shayna: How can you say we're not having children? How can you make that decision for me?
- Grant: And how can you decide that we are having children? How can you make that decision for me?
- Shayna: Well...I don't know...I thought it was a given.
- Grant: Ah-hah! So, you presumed for me. Did you think to ask? No.
- Shayna: Did you think to volunteer your thoughts on the matter? Instead of keeping them to yourself and letting me think we were going to have a family? You know how much I want children. I've made that clear, and you never said anything that would make me think you felt differently.
- Grant: Was that my responsibility?
(Billie, Maurice, and Shayna answer simultaneously.)
- Tog: Yes!
- Wing: They've got you there, Grant. Mister Perkins. Oh, come on! What in the hell should I call you?!
- Shayna: This is a problem, Grant. A big problem.
- Grant: And one that should not be discussed openly at a cocktail party with virtual strangers.
- Wing: I don't think I could be considered a stranger. We've worked together for a month.
- Grant: Really? Wing, you're probably the person I know least at this gathering. And the more I interact with you, the less I feel I know about you. Are you a salesman or a dancer? I don't know. What do you want to do with your life? I have no idea. It can't be selling furniture. Nobody wants that to be their life's work.

Wing: You do it.

Grant: I manage the store. I run the ship. I'm working my way up to the top of the corporate ladder. I don't want to sell furniture. Do I look like a furniture salesman to you? Huh? My God. If I thought that was my future I'd go out to the warehouse tomorrow and impale myself on a forklift. And that's what I can't figure out about you. That's why I don't think I know you. Because I wonder why you don't do that.

Billie: Hey!

Wing: Actually, Mister Perkins, I do enjoy being a furniture salesman. I enjoy it very much. And do you know why? Because I make people happy. That's right. People who are in the market for that perfect dining room set for their new house. Something to make that new house feel like a home. People who need a major appliance but don't know the pros and cons of each make and are counting on me for my expert advice. People who just want a single chair to make a room complete. Young couples who are starting a new family, and are looking to turn that spare room into a nursery. You know where that puts me, sir? That puts me on the ground floor of their future. And that's exactly where I want to be. So, you can mock my modest ambitions all you want, young man. But this is where I belong. And this is where I'm staying. Unless of course you fire me. In which case you can go straight to hell! Come on, Billie. We're leaving.

Shayna: No please, don't go. I want us all to be friends.

Billie: Sorry, kid. But there's no reason for us to stay.

(Veronica enters.)

Veronica: Our son used to be our daughter.

Billie: Wing, sit the hell down.

(Wing and Billie sit.)

Okay, we're all set, Ronnie. Spill.

Maurice: Veronica, are you all right?

Veronica: Of course I'm not all right. I just revealed our deepest family secret to a roomful of...

Shayna: Oh please don't call us strangers. Please? I really want us to be friends. I want us to be close. Maybe that makes me needy, I don't know. If it does, then okay. I'm needy. So what? Why shouldn't I express a desire to be friends with someone?

Billie: Shayna?

Shayna: Yes, Billie?

Billie: We've just had a bombshell drop over here.

Shayna: Oh. Right. I'm sorry. Go ahead, Veronica. Your son used to be your daughter. Continue.

Maurice: You don't have to do this, Veronica. Why are you doing this?

Veronica: I need to say it out loud, in front of more than just you. I think discussing it with only you has been of no help to me at all.

Maurice: I'm sorry.

Veronica: No, it's not your fault. That's not what I meant. Discussing it with someone close is just like keeping it inside. It needs to be confessed in a group setting, to people who don't feel the need to spare your feelings, but are instead honest and unbiased. Our son Graham was born Grace. She was a beautiful little girl. And she changed my life. And like you Shayna, I had intended to do all the right things as a mother.

Maurice: You did do all the right things.

Veronica: I didn't. When Grace came to us with her news, I didn't accept it. I wouldn't hear of it. How could a child of mine—Me. Someone who has spent a lifetime studying the mind—how could a child of mine have this problem?

Maurice: It's not a problem.

Veronica: It is a problem. For Grace it was monumental problem. Knowing there was a young man trapped inside this beautiful girl's body? It was overwhelming for her. And she came to me for comfort and guidance, and I turned away. I just couldn't come to grips with it

because I thought it was a reflection of myself. It made me feel that I wasn't as good at my job as perhaps I should I have been. I should be able to change her mind, right? I could snap her out of it. When, of all people, I should have known that wasn't possible. Thank God she...he...had a father who was understanding, dedicated, and had nothing but love in his heart for this fragile child. I'm sorry, Maurice. I'm ashamed for how I acted. I should have been more like you.

Maurice: No, that's not true.

Veronica: It is true. You were Graham's stabilizing force. His compass. Whereas I left him twisting in an uncertain wind. I hope you'll forgive me. I hope he will forgive me.

Maurice: Of course he will.

Veronica: I want to rush home and call him right now. I feel as if I don't have a moment to waste.

Maurice: Graham's performing tonight. *(To the others.)* Our son is with the symphony. Second clarinet. *(To Veronica.)* We'll call him later. That'll be soon enough.

Veronica: I love you, Maurice.

Maurice: I love you too, Veronica. Now more than ever.

Shayna: This is good. The fact that you shared this? I feel that we are really and truly friends now.

Veronica: And my son is transgender. You can't get more diverse than that.

Shayna: I can't wait to meet him.

(Shayna and Veronica hug.)

Veronica: Now. What did I miss while I was in the washroom?

Maurice: Well, Wing doesn't know what to call Grant, and Shayna and Grant are having a boatload of sex.

Veronica: Why don't you know what to call him?

Maurice: Hmm. I would have gone right to the boatload of sex revelation.

Billie: Because Grant is being a dick. That's why.

Wing: Billie, stop. He's still my boss. Are you still my boss?

Grant: I'm not going to fire you, Wing.

Wing: You're not?

Grant: No, I like your spirit. And I like that fact that you like what you're doing. That it has meaning for you. Your stock has gone way up in my estimation.

Wing: Oh. Well, good.

Grant: And as long as you are satisfied where you are and have no intention of moving beyond that, then you have no reason to worry. Your job is safe.

Wing: Moving beyond it how?

Grant: Well, you've risen to your zenith, right? Senior salesperson. What's beyond that? Manager?

Wing: You're the manager.

Grant: That's right.

Wing: Oh, so you're worried that I would go after your job.

Grant: No. I'm hardly worried. I just want to make it clear to you that you have peaked.

Wing: Oh.

Grant: And that there is nowhere else to go. No other goal to be achieved within this company.

Wing: I see.

Grant: But that's okay with you, isn't it? As long as you're helping people find the right appliance. Getting in on the ground floor of their future? That's what you want, right?

Shayna: Well, Grant, I think everyone has to have a goal to be achieved. We can't stop setting our sights beyond what we have now. That's what causes complacency. Recession.

Grant: And you thought your philosophy degree would never come in handy.

Maurice: No, she's right. And quite frankly it's cruel of you to try and belittle her with that tone of voice. You're right, Shayna. Ambition is the life-blood that leads to fulfillment. To be fulfilled is something we all crave.

Veronica: I can't wait to read your book, Maurice.

Maurice: Thank you, Veronica.

Billie: I agree with the brainiac here. Everyone needs to have a goal.

Grant: All right. All right. I can feel the tide in the room turning against me so maybe we should just move on to another subject.

Wing: Maybe my ambition is to become the manager.

Grant: Then bring it on, Wing. Give it your best shot.

Wing: Why not? A little healthy competition within the company? It might be a good thing.

Grant: It might indeed. But, you still wouldn't reach your goal. Because if I see you nipping too closely at my heels, I'll just terminate your employment. So, you're outgunned.

Shayna: That's not very nice, Grant.

Billie: No, it's not.

Grant: Shayna, please stay out of this. And Billie, what do you care? I thought you wanted Wing to leave this job. You want him to go out and perform in some half-assed vaudeville show with you. Tea for Two? Come on.

Wing: Please don't talk to my wife like that.

Grant: I don't know where you plan to do an act like that these days. Haven't they torn all of those old halls down? What was it called? Vaudeville? Where would you do something like that? Where's the demand for something as hackneyed?

Wing: That's enough! You can talk to me any way you want but I will not allow you to speak in that manner to this good woman. I won't have it.

Grant: I'm sorry. You're right. Billie, I apologize. Forgive me. And listen, do you really want to go out on the road as you said earlier? Fine. Wing, you're fired. There. Now you can go out on the road.

Shayna: Grant!

Grant: Shayna, this is none of your concern. It's business.

Wing: Come on, Billie. Let's go.

Shayna: I'm sorry, Billie. Wing, I'm so sorry.

Wing: Don't worry about it.

Shayna: Grant, how could you be such an ass?

Grant: Shouldn't you be taking my side, Shayna? Shouldn't you be defending your husband?

Shayna: Not if he's in the wrong? No.

Grant: Oh, you think I'm in the wrong? You're taking their side?

Shayna: Yes.

Grant: Oh. Well, then maybe you should go with them.

Shayna: What?

Grant: I'm your husband, Shayna. It would be nice if I could expect some loyalty from you.

Shayna: Loyalty? I have been nothing but loyal to you. I gave up a good list of clients to move here with you. I'm starting over here because you wanted this job.

Grant: And I'm the major bread winner at this point, and as so, it should be my job that takes priority. That's why we can't have any children right now. Or anytime soon. Or ever.

Shayna: Ever?

Grant: This safe harbour you speak of. This loving world? It's idealistic. It's rose-coloured glasses.

Maurice: Maybe we should go too, Veronica.

Veronica: No. Not yet. I want to hear Grant talk more about loyalty.

Grant: Pardon me?

Veronica: Loyalty, Grant. Please enlighten me on the subject.

Grant: I don't know what you mean.

Veronica: Well, let's start with Grossman's.

Grant: Grossman's. What's Grossman's?

Veronica: It's a restaurant near my office. I go there often for lunch.

Grant: Never heard of it.

Veronica: No?

Grant: No.

Veronica: Are you sure?

Grant: I just said I never heard of it. Yes.

Veronica: Okay. Wing, this Zoe woman. Reddish hair, about five six, glasses?

Wing: Supple lips?

Veronica: Very much so.

Wing: That's her.

Veronica: Still never heard of Grossman's, Grant?

Shayna: What do you mean? What does she mean, Grant?

Veronica: All right, Maurice. Now we can go. Shayna, I'll call you about that coffee.

Maurice: Good night, all. Thank you for an evening that I'm sure none of us will soon forget.

Shayna: What did she mean, Grant?

(Veronica and Maurice exit.)

Wing: Billie? Shall we?

Billie: I want to hear more about Zoe.

Shayna: So do I.

Wing: Billie please. Let's let them work this out. There nothing for us here now. I mean, I've been fired.

Billie: Yeah, well, I hate to say I told you so.

Wing: Goodnight, Shayna.

Billie: Call me if you need anything, Kid. Okay? I mean it.

(Billie and Wing exit.)

Shayna: Is it true, Grant? Have you been seeing somebody else? This Zoe person?

Grant: Shayna, look. It's been a long night.

Shayna: Long night? They were here for forty-five minutes! They didn't touch one piece of cheese! Now is it true or not?

Grant: I'm not going to discuss this when you're in this frame of mind.

Shayna: No? Well, this frame of mind is not going to change until we DO discuss it.

Grant: Shayna, you're acting like a child.

Shayna: No, Grant. I'm acting like a woman whose husband has been cheating on her. And she's just found out. And her world is falling apart.

(Grant exits. Shayna stays, not knowing what to do. Veronica and Maurice enter. They are at their home now.)

Veronica: Should I call him now?

Maurice: No. His concert won't be over for another hour yet. Call him in a couple of hours. Give him time to get back to his apartment.

Veronica: All right.

(Shayna exits.)

Maurice: Would you like a nightcap?

Veronica: No thank you.

Maurice: So, when did you realize it was Grant that you saw in Grossman's?

Veronica: The second I saw him.

Maurice: And would you have said something if he hadn't been such an ass?

Veronica: Probably not.

Maurice: Well, I hope Shayna is all right. She was completely blindsided.

Veronica: We should fly out to visit him.

Maurice: Who? Graham?

Veronica: Yes. Right away. Tomorrow. It's the weekend. We'll surprise him.

Maurice: Veronica.

Veronica: Please, Maurice. Please. I need to do this. I feel as though I've lost so much time with Graham already. We can fly out tomorrow morning and we'll be there by noon. Please?

Maurice: You really want to?

Veronica: It's imperative.

Maurice: ...All right. Yes. I'd like to see the boy myself.

Veronica: Good!

Maurice: I'll call and book the flight right now.

Veronica: Thank you. Now, I'm going to go and soak in the tub. It has been quite the arduous evening.

Maurice: Would you like some com..

Veronica: Yes.

Maurice: ...All right. I'll book the flight and be right in.

Veronica: You can book the flight from the tub.

Maurice: Call them from the bathtub?

Veronica: Why not? They won't know you're calling from the tub.

Maurice: Oh, they might.

(Veronica exits. Maurice exits. Billie and Wing enter. They are now in their house.)

Billie: Grant was right, wasn't he? We're never going to go out on the road again, are we? Who wants to see our tired old act?

Wing: I agree. I mean, you're fine, but me? You saw how I was tonight with Tea For Two. It was like I had never danced a day in my life.

Billie: Oh, you weren't that bad.

Wing: I was, Billie. It was embarrassing.

Billie: You missed a step or two. Don't worry about it.

Wing: I missed more than a step or two. So, I'm going to need to do some brushing up.

Billie: You sure are. Brushing up for what?

Wing: If we're going to try and get on that senior's tour in Florida. I'm going to need a lot of practice.

Billie: You mean you want to go out on the road?

Wing: I'm out of a job, Billie. We've got to do something to get some money coming in.

Billie: Hot diggity! You see? Once a hooper, always a hooper. We'll start rehearsing tomorrow with the I Love Paris number.

Wing: Well, wait now. I'm not so sure I want to do that number.

Billie: Why not?

Wing: Because that's the number you did with Harry Todd.

Billie: Are you still on about that?

Wing: Yes. I am. More and more I suspect that something untoward happened between you and Harry Todd back then.

Billie: Oh, Wing.

Wing: Well?

Billie: Sweetheart.

Wing: Am I right?

Billie: Heart of my heart.

Wing: Billie?

Billie: Harry was ten years older than me.

(Billie exits.)

Wing: Once again, not a denial!

(Wing exits. Music begins to play. Suitable music to underscore the next section that has no dialogue. Grant enters. He is carrying a suitcase. He looks around the room for a moment, then exits out the front door. Shayna enters in work clothes. She is carrying a paint can and a brush. She sets the can down and looks around the room. She finds the section she wants to paint and moves to it. Veronica and Maurice enter. They are wearing work clothes as well. Maurice carries a paint tray. They each carry a roller. They move to Shayna. They each give Shayna a hug. They move off to find a section to paint. Billie and Wing enter in work clothes. Billie carries a tray of coffees. Wing carries a drop cloth. They move to Shayna and give her a hug. They acknowledge Veronica and Maurice. Then they put the drop cloth over the sofa. Lights fade as this happens. Lights down. End.)