

GOING SOLO

A stage play by

Drew Keil and Robert Gately

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CAST for: GOING SOLO

DEBBIE HAMMEL, 50-60's, owner of Triple H Realty, mother of Wendy.

PATRICIA O'NEIL, 50-60's, realty office manager, Debbie's best friend and a single-parent mother of Trevor.

KATHERINE DEVINE, 50-60's realty office worker, caretaker of 17 cats.

DAN TARENTINO, 50-60's, a florist and flower delivery, and Katherine's secret admirer.

WENDY HAMMEL, 20's, daughter of Debbie and ex-fiancé of Trevor. Wendy plays the cello.

TREVOR O'NEIL, 20's, son of Pat and ex-fiancé of Wendy. Trevor is a high school drama teacher.

JOEY, 50-60's, a long-ago lover of Patricia. Joey is a wounded veteran of the Grenada engagement.

GOING SOLO

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING:

REALTY OFFICE: a converted living room, which is now a realty office, of a home in Brooklyn. A SR exterior porch with wooden railings leads into a vestibule area which opens into the office. SL is an exterior swing set with wrap-around fencing. Downstage of the office is a dimly-lit forward area that curves into the audience. This locale is for all scenes that play beyond the Hammel residence.

The office has two large desks and a poster bearing the Triple-H logo with the realty name: "Hammel's Happy Homes" with "Buy One-Get One Free" underneath. An upstage door provides entry to an unseen kitchen and the outside, and a second upstage door leads to a bedroom. A closet door fits in one of the office walls and French doors lead to the swing area. Imaginary windows offer a view to the street and swing area.

AT RISE:

LIGHTS UP in the office. A SELF-HELP TAPE is playing--

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

The deep breathing exercises you learned in Part One help counteract the irrational thoughts that sometimes provoke feelings of panic and helplessness in our daily lives. Relaxation is a source of personal stability. The stress response is a manageable reaction if the interior difficulty is met with a positive concern for your own well-being...

DEBBIE HAMMEL, late-50s, dressed in sweats and a robe, enters the office from the upstage door and places an enormous mug of coffee on a desk. She sits, activates a computer, then stands and listens for a moment. Suddenly...

DEBBIE
NO FEARS, NO TEARS!

(With a fist pump, Debbie turns off the tape and promptly walks back into the kitchen.)

The phone rings and--)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)
Debbie, the two-family on Front Street went to contract. We gotta talk. Call me ASAP.

DEBBIE (O.S.)
You can't afford it, Jeremy. Don't waste my time.

(Debbie re-enters, munching on a bagel. She sits at the desk as DAN TARENTINO, 50s, in an ill-fitting uniform, enters SR carrying a large bouquet of roses. He climbs the steps to the porch, gently lowering the bouquet, and rings the doorbell.)

Debbie, startled, moves cautiously through the vestibule, peers furtively through the curtained window in the front door, and slips beneath the window to crouch and hide on the floor.

Dan rings again, and knocks. Debbie whimpers. Dan pulls out a cell phone. The office phone rings and Dan leaves a message.)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)
Dan's Flowers calling. We left an early morning delivery for Katherine Devine on the front porch. Enjoy the flowers.

(Debbie waits until Dan exits, then opens the door. She hauls in the flowers and puts them on Pat's desk. She turns the SELF-HELP TAPE back on and exits to the kitchen.)

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

With the warm morning sunrise, the night shadows take flight and the fresh dawn breezes usher in the promise of a stress-free workday made possible by your personal resolve to be the master of your mental environment. Accept whatever anxiety the outside world may seem to cause.

(She returns with a pitcher of water and vase and sets about arranging the flowers. The phone rings again and Debbie turns off the tape.)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)

Hi mom, it's me. Wendy.

(Debbie drops the vase she's holding. It smashes to the floor.)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)

It's been a while I know and I'm sorry. Look, I'll be home today. There should be a surprise in today's mail. A big surprise. If you're upset, well, we'll have something to talk about and that's better than not talking at all. See you soon.

(Debbie leans heavily on the desk and draws deep breaths. She crosses to an imaginary window and looks out. A light illuminates a free-standing mailbox with the lid slightly open. She moves to a wall mirror, and, bracing her hands firmly against the wall, stares resolutely at her reflection.)

DEBBIE

(to her reflection)

No nerves... No dizziness... No nausea. I am calm and in control. I came so close before. Oh, God, help me. I can't... NO! STOP! No panic. Fifty steps up... Fifty steps back. That's all. No one's watching. No one cares. You're the epitome of strength and courage. I'll tell Wendy I did it and she'll love me again. She will. She will, I know.

(Debbie moves into the vestibule and places a large rain hat on her head. She pulls the neck strap tight and the downturned edges of the hat narrow her vision. She moves out onto the porch, hugs a railing, lowers herself onto the porch stairs and freezes.)

DEBBIE

They shoot horses, don't they?

(She descends the steps,
freezes again, and does
therapeutic breathing.)

NO FEARS! NO TEARS!

(A SOUND of distant thunder is heard
just as PAT O'NEIL, 50's, business
attire, enters from the upstage door,
holding a briefcase and newspaper.)

PAT

Tenure in two years, Trevor. Two more freakin' years.

(Pat sees the bagel and takes a
bite. Yelling--)

Debbie! I'm here.

(TREVOR O'NEIL. 20's, T-shirt with a
bald eagle emblem, follows Pat in,
carrying a large file box, which he
deposits on a desk.)

PAT

You'd throw all that teaching time away on this half-assed
idea that one more man with a gun is going to make a
difference in this world? I know I raised you with more
smarts than that. Damn, look at the time. All this arguing
has made me late to work.

TREVOR

Hard to be late when you live next door, Mom. Chill! And it's
just an interview and I'm going. Have a good day.

(Trevor exits while Debbie advances
slowly to the mailbox.

Pat turns and stares at the roses.)

PAT

Get those smelly weeds off my desk.

(Pat grabs the flowers and tramples on
the broken glass.)

PAT

Oh, my God! Debbie, what the hell is this?

(Pat tosses the flowers inside a closet
and exits into the kitchen.

The phone RINGS. Another message plays as KATE DEVINE, 50-60's, loose fitting blouse and pants with sneakers enters from the upstage door. She checks the office clock and hurriedly sits at her desk, pulls a pair of heels from a bottom drawer and slips them on.)

TELEPHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)

Hello. I'm calling for Pat O'Neil. We met at the VFW cake sale last week. I'm selling my house so maybe we should talk. I need to know one thing right off: are you Republican? I only do business with conservatives. I'll call back later.

(Pat re-enters and--)

PAT

Nice of you to show up, Katherine.

KATE

Oh, what a morning. You wouldn't believe. Samantha was in labor and I had to...

PAT

I don't want to hear it, Kate. It's always something with you and those cats. Just get rid of them.

(Pat pushes the pan and broom into Kate's arms and points at the floor.

Kate starts to clean the broken glass.)

KATE

I most certainly will not. Every one of those cats stay with me for a reason. They're all soul mates from a previous life.

PAT

If you had a life, you wouldn't need those cats.

KATE

(to herself)

Dear Dorothy, give me patience.

(smelling the unseen roses)

Do you smell roses?

PAT

My new hand cream. When you're finished cleaning, the files in that box need updating. And play back the phone messages.

(Kate plays the tape recorder by mistake.)

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

(Soothing)

Ultimately, your thoughts give birth to the circumstances of your life. Care needs to be taken to purposely avoid self-deprecating images and negative projections. You can change how and what you think. Don't allow feelings of anxiety, hostility, rejection, or confusion to cripple...

PAT

Shut that crap off!

KATE

Sorry. Wrong machine. Didn't mean to intrude ...

PAT

Please! That's not mine.

KATE

Oh, Debbie's? Is she all right?

PAT

She's fine. DEBBIE? DEBBIE? I get a little nervous when she doesn't respond.

KATE

Maybe she went out?

PAT

(sharply)

Maybe you should start on those files.

KATE

If I could leave a little early today...? The new kittens need a warming pad, and I...

PAT

Aagh!

(full face to Kate)

Do not presume I share your maternal concern for those mewling, crawling, sightless, and helpless fur balls that have infested your already overrun animal house, Katherine. And do not involve me with their needs or your requests to care for them. This is a business, not a charity for cats.

KATE

(defensively)

Cats are people, too.

PAT

Unless they buy a house or pay rent, they are not an item of interest in this office. Now ... chop, chop.

KATE

Fine!

(pulling a file and reads--)

Oh, this one called just yesterday. Weirdest thing. Said Debbie owes him for a counseling session she skipped two years ago.

PAT

Forget that one!

KATE

Well, he won't. He said he'll keep calling till he's paid. What kind of counseling?

PAT

None of your business, Kate.

KATE

Then call him and tell him to stop harassing me. He called Debbie a chronic... something-or-other. Said she wouldn't leave her house if the place was on fire.

(Debbie slips to her knees and cries silently into her sleeve as she labors to the mailbox, which is in arm's reach. She extends her hand but falls again as a blast of thunder unnerves her. She cries aloud. Pat and Kate hear her cry and rush out onto the porch, but are unseen by Debbie.)

DEBBIE

This is so unfair! God help me. I don't deserve this. It's all your fault, Wendy. No, I don't mean that. Forgive me, Harry, I'm so sorry.

KATE

Who's Harry? Her dead husband?

PAT

Yes. Now you two have something in common. You both talk to dead people.

KATE

You know, you're getting on my nerves. I don't talk to the dead. I sense their presence.

(MORE)

KATE (cont'd)

(While Pat steers Kate back
into the office.)

What is Debbie doing out there?

PAT

Looks like she's getting the mail.

KATE

On her knees? She needs help.

(Kate moves back to the porch but Pat
blocks her exit.)

PAT

You want to play nurse, go coddle your cats. Let Debbie be.

(Pat grabs Kate's arm as she tries to
slip past.)

KATE

Ow! Oh, help me Dorothy. What is it with you?

PAT

Leave it alone, Kate. I'll take care of Debbie.

KATE

Then do something!

PAT

She's on her own right now.

KATE

What the hell is going on? Two weeks I've been here, I've
never once seen Debbie leave the house. Now she's outside
crawling around in the dirt. This is OK with you?

PAT

Debbie doesn't talk about her problem, so neither do I.

(Kate tries to maneuver past
her and falls against a desk.)

Why the hell I ever hired you...

KATE

Debbie gave me this job, not you. So get out of my way.

(Kate powers past Pat.)

PAT

Dammit, wait! The last thing Debbie wants is for you to see her this way. Don't embarrass her by going out there. You couldn't help anyway.

KATE

Why not?

PAT

I've tried for years. Still trying. She never leaves the house. She's agoraphobic. Home is the only place she feels safe. You absolutely cannot let on that I told you this. She'll be upset with me. She'll tell you in her own time.

KATE

All right.

PAT

Whatever made her step outside, let her handle it in her own way. It's important that she try.

(hands Kate the newspaper)

Now check the paper for new listings. Business as usual.

KATE

Don't forget, you have that go-see at eleven.

PAT

He cancelled. His dog died.

KATE

Oh, that's the worst. When Celine passed on ... Oh!

PAT

Enough with the cats, Kate! No one keeps 17 felines like you do. I cannot imagine the mess inside your house.

KATE

(reading)

Pat! Look at this! Wendy's playing at Carnegie Hall this weekend.

PAT

(rushes to her, looks over her shoulder and reads.)

She's coming to town with the Boston Philharmonic? I bet this is why Debbie...?

KATE

Carnegie Hall! Imagine! I've never been. Do you think I'll be invited? I'll need something formal to wear.

PAT

Just do a seance and summon Vera Wang to help you find a dress.

KATE

Psychics don't do seances. Why are you being so difficult?

PAT

Look, it's going to take a little time till I get used to someone else in the office. It's been just Debbie and me forever. And there's a lot you don't understand about her.

KATE

OK. I get that.

PAT

I've had to basically do all the appointments and appraisals. All the outside leg work. But I never considered a new hire till Debbie started getting skittish about opening the door or meeting new clients. Things have gotten ... difficult.

KATE

OK. Enough said. Thank you.

DEBBIE

PATRICIA!

PAT

Now I help her.

(Pat takes the paper and starts to cross to the porch. The phone rings, but Kate doesn't pick up.)

PAT

(trying to be polite)

Get the phone, Kate.

KATE

It's just a telemarketer.

PAT

DON'T ...

(composes herself)

Don't start with that psychic crap! Please.

(Pat crosses out to the porch.)

KATE

(to herself)

Yup, business as usual.

(picks up the phone and--)

Hammel's Happy Homes. Buy one, get one free...

(Pat runs to Debbie and helps her up.)

PAT

OK, breathe and release... Breathe and release... Good. Good.

DEBBIE

I thought I could do it. I can't. Take me back. Please.

PAT

Look how close you are. Reach over and grab the mail.

DEBBIE

No. Help me to the porch before someone sees me. Please. I need to sit.

(Pat grabs the bundle of mail with one hand and supports Debbie with the other. They reach the porch and Debbie collapses on the bottom step.)

PAT

Are you OK out here?

DEBBIE

With you, yes. Sit with me a minute.

PAT

Why is this so important?

(Debbie grabs the packet of mail, searches and finds Wendy's letter and hands it to Pat.)

DEBBIE

Here. Open it.

(Pat tears it open and pulls out a photo.)

PAT

A photo? That's it? Is that Wendy? She looks good. There's no writing. And who's the kid?

DEBBIE

Still baby sitting, I guess. She made a bundle in high school that way. She changed her hair, right?

PAT

Hard to tell. They're both wearing Yankee hats. Has she lost weight?

DEBBIE

Looks like it. Maybe. She doesn't tell me anything.

PAT

(handing her the newspaper)

She sure as hell didn't tell you about this, either.

DEBBIE

(reading)

I can't believe it. I have to find out my daughter's playing at Carnegie Hall tomorrow from a newspaper article. How sad is that? Do you know how many times I've seen her since she joined the Philharmonic? None! Zero! Goose egg!

PAT

There's no question she should have called.

DEBBIE

She did, actually. This morning. But I didn't pick up. I was afraid she might ... She just said to check the mail.

(They stare at the photo.)

PAT

What's with the baseball caps?

DEBBIE

Whenever I missed one of her softball games, which was all of them, she'd parade around the house in her uniform the whole next day with a Yankee cap on.

PAT

Subtle girl, isn't she? You plan on going to Carnegie Hall?

DEBBIE

Come on, Pat! I can't even make it to the mailbox without falling down. But if she asks me, what do I say?

PAT

She'll understand if you can't be there.

(A rumble of distant thunder gives Debbie the shivers. After a pause--)

DEBBIE

No, she won't! She's never forgiven me for all the MIA's at the PTA's and her recitals. She's angry I missed so much of her growing up. I'm scared I'm going to lose her for good.

PAT

I won't let that happen. I'll talk to her.

DEBBIE

What could you possibly say that would ...

PAT

That you love her, for starters.

DEBBIE

She thinks I blame her for my condition. Why else would she stay away so long?

(Kate enters with a cup of tea.)

KATE

Why don't you just move the mailbox to the porch?

PAT

Come right on in, Kate. I was bored with this conversation anyway.

DEBBIE

Oh, thank you, Kate. This is just what I need right now.

KATE

Wonderful news about your daughter. Quite a surprise. You must be proud.

DEBBIE

(holding the photo)

Yeah. She's always a surprise.

KATE

Ooo! Is that a photo of her? May I?

(takes the photo from Debbie)

Pretty lady. Like her mom. Can't wait to meet her.

DEBBIE

Me too. So, everything working out for you here, Kate? You like the work?

KATE

Yes. Yes, I do.

DEBBIE

I know the phones can get pretty busy around here.

(Pause. Kate nods.)

If you have any questions...

KATE

OK. How did you become agoraphobic?

PAT

Oh, for the love of Pete. Dammit, Kate. I told you...

KATE

Well, I don't understand all the secrecy about your condition. You have agoraphobia. I have claustrophobia, and Pat has cat-a-phobia.

PAT

And you're about to develop a nasty case of fist-a-phobia if you don't clam up.

DEBBIE

(to Pat)

You told her?

PAT

She saw you out here, struggling. What was I supposed to say? You're harvesting grubs for breakfast?

KATE

Don't be upset with Pat. It's Wendy you're angry with.

DEBBIE

My God! I don't want my personal history the topic of conversation in this office?

PAT

Debbie, I swear, I never mentioned Wendy, ever.

KATE

(to Pat)

She knows your son?

PAT

(To Kate)

You've been talking to Wendy, right? She called here?

DEBBIE

Why would Wendy talk to Kate and not to me?

KATE

She didn't.

(holding up the photo)

We just met.

DEBBIE

What!

PAT

Oh, Debbie! It's that psychic thing she has. I told you.

DEBBIE

What do you know about my daughter?

KATE

Only that she wants to reconnect. I look at this photo and feel Wendy's frustration. She's lost and ...

(to Pat)

... she misses your son.

PAT

You can't tell that from a picture!

KATE

That photo of you and Trevor that sits on your desk? I asked where he got those beautiful blue eyes. Remember?

PAT

Yes. OK. So what?

KATE

You said, from his father, who passed away. Why would you say that?

(Silence. Pat covers her face,)

DEBBIE

Pat?

PAT

(to Debbie)

We agreed. A long time ago, we agreed, right? Not to ask questions. Not to go places the other wanted off limits.

DEBBIE

Right.

PAT

So, Joey was off the radar, remember? That was for Trevor's sake. And you never wanted to talk about your "condition"... for Wendy's sake. Now, if all that's gonna change, because of her ...

(points to Kate)

...then this conversation takes place in private. It's none of her business.

KATE

OK. I'll leave, but you two have to talk.

(Kate starts back into the office.)

DEBBIE

Thanks for the tea, Katherine.

KATE

I couldn't find the sugar.

(looking at Pat)

We're short on anything sweet around here.

DEBBIE

How did you like the roses this morning?

PAT

Oh, good grief!

KATE

I knew I smelled flowers somewhere.

(Kate crosses into the office, closes her eyes, like a clairvoyant detective, then moves directly to the closet and finds the flowers, which she deposits on Pat's desk. The phone rings and Kate is back to work.)

DEBBIE

Why are you so tough on her?

PAT

Between the kitty litter smell on her clothes and the office filled with flowers, I feel like I'm working in a funeral home for cats.

DEBBIE

You never told her Wendy and Trevor were engaged?

PAT

Never. Why would I?

DEBBIE

Doesn't matter how she knows. If Trevor enlists, it's over between them.

PAT

Why? You think I want my son in uniform? He went crazy after Wendy split and dropped him. It's all her fault.

DEBBIE

You don't know that.

PAT

The hell I don't. She never returned any of his calls or e-mails. What happened, Debbie?

DEBBIE

I truly don't know. After I missed her graduation, we stopped talking.

PAT

You missed her life. Or most of it. Sorry, but that's the truth. I know it wasn't easy for you running the business after Harry died.

DEBBIE

Couldn't have done it without you. We got close, didn't we? Both single parents, no men around. What happened with Joey?

PAT

Oh, no. You first, Deb. From the top. It's time we both come clean.

DEBBIE

I get frightened just thinking about it. I'm still shaking from my trip down the driveway.

(Pat takes Debbie's hand and they stand.)

I have to get past this. If Wendy wants me to go see her...

PAT

So, let's take a little walk.

(They walk between the porch and mailbox. Debbie falters, but persists.)

DEBBIE

I was always a nervous-nelly. Even as a kid. Wendy's birth made everything worse.

(A rumble of thunder, then soft cello music.)

I don't do well with blood, and it was running down my leg when the labor pains started. The weather was crazy bad. I had never been in such a storm. Harry had to carry me to the car. He drove like a lunatic till we got trapped in traffic from all the fallen trees. Twice he rode the sidewalk to bypass accidents. I knew from the pain I hadn't much time.

(hunches over as she walks and breathes raggedly)

We couldn't get close to the emergency entrance; all the ambulances were lined up, so I walked a long way in the wind and rain. Inside was pandemonium. I was light-headed...

(A stab of lightning. LIGHTS DIM.)

...oh God!

PAT

You want to sit?

DEBBIE

No. No. I have to get help. My baby is bleeding.

PAT

You're OK. You're here with me.

DEBBIE

Where's a doctor? All these people, screaming. Someone... Help!

PAT

Debbie! Look, it's me, Pat. You're safe with me.

DEBBIE

Please... Someone. Anyone. The lights... Stop the flickering... They're stabbing my eyes. God help me, where's my baby... Where's my baby?

(Debbie falls to the ground, flailing her arms and thrashing about. Pat restrains her till Debbie relents.)

PAT

You're home. You're fine. No hospital. Open your eyes.

DEBBIE

Why is it dark?

PAT

Rain's coming. You OK? What happened?

DEBBIE

I thought I was in the hospital again. Crazy. I'm sorry, Pat. That flash of lightning... like when the power went out and the lights flickered... so crazy.

PAT

You delivered in the dark?

DEBBIE

(Slowly nods)

I was afraid someone would steal my baby. I struggled against the pain, then passed out. Never saw her. Help me up.

(Pat helps her stand.)

First time I held Wendy was the day I left the hospital. I was delusional for three days and the doctors wouldn't let me have her. The whole ride home, I wasn't sure she was mine.

PAT

Oh Sweetie!

DEBBIE

Since then, crowds, flashing lights, speeding cars... It all comes back. I lose my balance, get nauseous. I'm scared to leave the house, and lately I don't even open the door. I don't want anyone to see me. So much fear. Now you know.

PAT

How much does Wendy know?

DEBBIE

I don't want her thinking I blame her for my condition. So, no, we don't talk about it. Are you going to call me on that?

PAT

I don't have the right.

DEBBIE

What do you mean?

(Pat hears the phone ring.)

PAT

We need to get back inside. Kate's been alone too long.

DEBBIE

(grabs Pat's arm and--)

Tell me. What?

PAT

Trevor and I never talk about Joey. He isn't dead. Joey is out there somewhere, God knows where.

DEBBIE

Joey's alive!?

(Pat nods)

Why would you keep that from Trevor?

PAT

If you saw Joey, you'd understand.

KATE

(screaming into the phone)

NO, a house next to a sump cannot be listed as waterfront property. Would you swim in that filth?

PAT

We'll talk later.

(Pat and Debbie cross into the office.
Kate is unaware of their entrance.)

KATE

(Into the phone.)

Francine, save the placenta! It's nutrient-rich and great for my cactus. Keep the kittens together and put them in the empty diaper box that's on the porch-- Oh, got another call. Hold on. Hello! Hammel's Happy Homes. Buy one, get one free.

PAT

Kate!

KATE

(Into the phone.)

Come in and see what we have. Can you hold? I have another call. Hello, Hammel's Happy-- What did you say-- You better watch your tongue, young man. Leaky pipes are your problem, not ours.

(Pat sees the flowers on her desk and
picks them up and walks them to Kate.)

KATE

(Into the phone.)

That's disgusting. If I could do that to myself I'd have my own reality show. Good bye!

PAT

KATE!

KATE

(Hits another line.)

Hey, Fran, I'm sorry, I have to go. I'm being paged.

(Hangs up.)

PAT

(With restraint.)

I believe these are yours.

(Puts the flowers on the desk.)

KATE

You had a call from the VA. A guy named Marty wants to know if you'll be there tonight.

PAT

Marty? I don't know a Marty.

KATE

He said he enjoyed riding you around the rehab ward on his wheelchair last night and wants you back for tonight's basketball game in the gym.

PAT

Oh, that Marty.

KATE

And there was a sub-leaser who wanted to sublet her sublease. Can she do that?

PAT

No, she can't.

DEBBIE

I have to dress.

(She exits.)

KATE

She looks upset.

PAT

Your powers of observation are most extraordinary, my dear.

KATE

You feeling OK?

PAT

(With a strained smile.)

Peachy. And these flowers, my dear, they add such a fragrance in this office, don't you think?

KATE

I certainly do. What are you up to?

PAT

I simply want to emphasize that this is a work environment. I would prefer that your personal business be conducted during the four regularly scheduled 15 minute breaks.

KATE

Huh?

PAT

And I would strongly suggest any information regarding Samantha's breeding habits or birthing rituals, or Leroy's urination problems, be kept out of the office.

KATE

Oh, that reminds me. I have to be home by four to get Samantha neutered.

PAT

Goddamn it, Kate. Go ... go ... go see if there are any "for-sale" signs on Hoover Street.

KATE

My job is to answer phones, remember?

PAT

Then work the phones. Find some leads. And get rid of those--
(Points to the flowers.)

KATE

You're just jealous because I'm getting romantic attention from someone and you're not.

PAT

What ... Some nut job with a mania for flowers. No thank you.
(The doorbell rings.)
Why didn't you see that coming?

KATE

The doorbell? I don't know.

(Pat crosses to the front door, opens it and finds Dan who holds a bouquet of flowers.)

PAT

Come on in. She's inside. What's your name, again?

DAN

Dan. Dan Tarentino. Call me Danny.

PAT

Nice to see you, Danny-boy. We were just talking about you. Fourth time this week. You were here this morning, right?

DAN

This morning was roses. Now, it's mums.

(Pat leads Dan into the office.)

KATE

Dan. What a surprise!

PAT

Yes. Isn't this a surprise? Let me give you my oozing-with-joy look.

KATE

Shush, Patricia. What do you have now, Dan?

DAN

Chilean white and Peruvian yellow chrysanthemums in a reusable, lavender-scented, glass-lined holding bowl with matching white and yellow striped curling ribbon and baby's breath throughout. It's a big seller.

KATE

Heavenly. And the card?

DAN

Still signed, "A secret admirer."

KATE

This is driving me nuts, Dan. Who is he?

DAN

I don't know. The order was paid for in cash in an anonymous envelope delivered by FedEx.

PAT

You have no idea, Katherine?

KATE

No. I'm totally blocked.

DAN

It doesn't surprise me that you're getting flowers, Ms. Devine. You're an attractive woman, if I may say so.

KATE

You can say it all day long without interruption.

DAN

You're a very attractive woman--

PAT

That's enough, cowboy. She was being rhetorical when she said 'all day long'.

DAN

Sorry.

KATE

Don't listen to her. She's very crotchety this morning. (Beat). Can you investigate this for me? It's really important.

DAN

Sure. You certainly deserve to know, but maybe the sender isn't just being coy. Maybe he needs to stay anonymous.

PAT

Is there something you're not telling us, Danny-boy?

DAN

No, no. Nothing. Look, I gotta go. Enjoy the flowers. Bye!

(Dan exits. Pat inspects the flowers.)

PAT

Hey, listen, if I'm the teeniest bit jealous you have an anonymous admirer, it's not because I don't have my pick of men, you know.

KATE

You mean Marty and his friends at the VA? I've never quite understood that arrangement.

PAT

You can't find men more loyal--

KATE

And unavailable! It's not like you'll ever bring one of them home. Why did you start volunteering for the VA anyway? Were you hoping to find Joey?

PAT

That's none of your business.

(Pause.)

He's gone. It's done. Leave it alone.

KATE

I guess I keep my cats hoping to find a reincarnated lover, so who am I to talk. Truth is, I'm a frustrated spinster whose libido has been crushed because years ago some high school jerk called me thunder thighs.

PAT

(Pause.)

I'm sorry for being so bitchy. I had a hard morning with Trevor. So, tell me. Why can't you get a psychic reading on this mystery flower guy?

KATE

I don't know. It's rare I'm at a loss like this, but it's happened before. Like when I'm sexually aroused or when I have romantic inclinations, I lose my psychic introspection. It comes back to me after I'm in a relationship for a while, but in the beginning, I'm blocked somehow.

PAT

I think they call that being sexually challenged.

KATE

You know, you're a very hard person to like.

PAT

So I'm told.

(The phone rings. Debbie enters fiddling with her unfastened bracelet.)

KATE

That's your go-see guy.

PAT

Mr. Smolich?

(Answers the phone.)

Hello. Oh, Mr. Smolich, what a surprise.

DEBBIE

Be a dear and help me with this, Katherine. I'm a little shaky today.

(Kate helps Debbie.)

How do you know who's on the phone and things like that?

KATE

A gift from my grandmother. She had the same intuition. She thought it was a curse, actually. Oh, this is a beautiful piece. I've never seen it before. Where did you get it?

(WENDY HAMMEL, 20s, wearing a NY Yankee cap, crosses to the porch. Hesitates. She slowly climbs the stairs.)

DEBBIE

It was a gift from my Harry. He gave it to me on our twentieth. I rarely wear it.

KATE

Why not?

DEBBIE

A little too luxurious for the office, don't you think?

KATE

What you need is an occasion to show it off. Just like I need a reason to shop for a new outfit.

(Wendy enters. Pat hangs up the phone. She notices Wendy and runs to her for an embrace.)

PAT

So good to see you, Wendy.

(Brings her to Kate.)

This is Kate. A new member of the team. She's a cat-lover and a bit on the clairvoyant side, so watch what you think.

KATE

Nice to meet you, Wendy. I heard so much about you. A Yankee fan who lives in Boston! Isn't that dangerous?

WENDY

Sometimes. By and large Beantown has been good to me. People are nice, but it's a tough place to be a Yankee fan, especially since they beat the Red Sox last week for the pennant.

(Wendy faces Debbie - both reluctant to make the first move.)

DEBBIE

Dear, why didn't you tell me earlier you were coming? I have to read about your concert in the paper?

WENDY

Glad to see you too, Mom! Listen, I'm sorry for calling at the last minute.

DEBBIE

Are you, really?

WENDY

OK. Let's try this.

(Pulls tickets from her purse.)

Here. I have some great orchestra tickets for tomorrow night. We have a rehearsal and the taxi's waiting outside, so I don't have much time.

PAT

Oh, you can't visit?

WENDY

I'll be back later on. Early evening, perhaps. I just wanted to drop off the tickets now and ... Well, I have something important to tell everyone.

PAT

Trevor will be so happy you're home. You should call him and--

WENDY

Yes. Yes. I know. We haven't talked in a while. I'm looking forward to seeing him. I ...

PAT

Do you need his number?

WENDY

I have it, Pat. I'll call.

KATE

Imagine! Carnegie Hall! Isn't this exciting.

PAT

Yes. Exciting.

(A tense pause.)

WENDY

I came to tell you about the picture.

DEBBIE

Yes, yes. The picture. Who is that boy ...?

(Trevor, in a jogger's suit, bursts through the upstage door with a box in his hand.)

TREVOR
Mom, I brought over ...

(Trevor and Wendy lock on to each other.)

TREVOR
Wendy ...

WENDY
Trevor ...

TREVOR
How are you?

WENDY
Fine.

TREVOR
(Pause.)
Did you lose your cellphone?

WENDY
I'm sorry. I have to go. We'll do this later. I have some good news to share with everyone.

(She exits. Debbie collapses in a chair.)

PAT
What the hell was that, Trevor? "Did you lose your cellphone?" Really? That's the first thing you want to ask her after not hearing from her all this time?

TREVOR
I didn't know what to say. It just came out. Leave me alone.

DEBBIE
Did you see the way she looked at me?

KATE
I felt it too. Bad vibes.

PAT
Shut up. There was no vibe.

DEBBIE

Her eyes were judging me. Her voice. Didn't you hear it?

KATE

Most definitely. Her voice was so tense and--

PAT

SHUT UP, KATE!

DEBBIE

I need to think.

(Debbie crosses to the swing set.)

PAT

(To no one in particular)

I should go buy a lottery ticket. My luck has got to turn.

(To Trevor)

OK, I promise I won't push you about Wendy. I just need to know if you're OK?

TREVOR

I'm fine.

PAT

Well, this is a surprise. What's in the box?

TREVOR

I wanted to drop this off before I went out for a jog.

(Hands the box to Pat.)

A peace offering because of this morning. Some for you too, Kate. And Debbie if she wants it. Fresh homemade fudge.

KATE

Men bearing gifts. Cool. Oh, why aren't you at work?

TREVOR

I have an appointment with the Army recruiter, so I called in sick.

PAT

Kate, some tea would go well with this, if you please.

(Stares hard at Kate.)

The water is already hot on the stove.

KATE

Trevor, this is delicious.

(She exits but stands close to the door to eavesdrop.)

PAT

I know you're upset because of Wendy. But ... is it so hard to understand I don't want you in the military?

TREVOR

I told you it's just an interview. I'm not signing anything. What are you so afraid of, Mom?

PAT

I'm afraid of you lying dead in a ditch somewhere in Afghanistan or some other God-forsaken place.

TREVOR

I know there's risks, but why aren't you proud of me? Is patriotism an out-of-date ideal for you?

PAT

My God, if you don't sound just like your father.

TREVOR

Not such a bad thing. You said he signed up on principle. I think he'd appreciate I'm doing the same if he were alive.

(Kate steps in.)

PAT

God, this is deja vu all over again.

KATE

Did you want milk and sugar with that, Trevor?

TREVOR

I'm not staying, Kate. Maybe next time.
(He starts to exit. Turns.)
What did Wendy want?

PAT

She just came by to drop off these tickets for her concert at Carnegie Hall tomorrow.

TREVOR

Carnegie Hall!

(Pause.)

Is there a ticket in there for me?

(Awkward silence.)

No! Don't say anything. Just another reason to keep my appointment.

PAT

Trevor!

TREVOR

Gotta run. Later, Mom. Bye, Kate.

PAT

(She watches Trevor exit.)

That went well, don't you think?

(Before Kate can respond,)

Help me find the comparative listings for Smolich. I have to prepare for that go-see.

KATE

You said his dog died.

PAT

He just called before. He bought a goldfish and he's feeling much better.

KATE

Ooo! I don't trust animals without eyelids. Creepy.

(Pat massages her head.)

Are you OK?

PAT

I'm fine. I just wish you would stop with the stupid remarks. I'm sorry. I'm ... I'll need the plot assessment as well.

(Kate just stares at Pat.)

Come on. Let's go. Chop, chop. What's the matter?

KATE

Why not tell Trevor the truth?

PAT

About what?

KATE

I listened in to your conversation with Trevor.

PAT

I swear, Kate. Keep your nose out of this.

KATE

Trevor needs to know his father is alive.

PAT

What gives you the right to tell me what to do? Being a surrogate for a houseful of cats may make you an expert on fur balls, but you know nothing about how to raise a son.

KATE

I agree, but I feel how much you're aching inside to find Joey. I can help. I'm good at finding people. Talk to me.

PAT

The only man in your life is an anonymous flower freak, so get away from me with that crap.

KATE

Hey, I don't claim to know anything about relationships with men. I have cats for emotional support, but don't take that to mean I have never met a tall, dark and handsome.

PAT

You?

KATE

I was in love once. To a part-time dance instructor. We met on a conga-line at an Animal League benefit.

PAT

Joey was a wonderful dancer.

KATE

Really! Tell me more.

PAT

Oh, that was cute, Kate.

KATE

Come on. Loosen up. Talk to me.

PAT

Well ... It was a long time ago. I was 23. I met him at a church social. I saw how well he could move, so I went over to introduce myself. So few men can dance well, you know?

KATE

Oh, how true. Frank's specialty was the Lindy.

PAT

How long were you two together?

KATE

For one orgasm.

PAT

That was it? One orgasm!

KATE

Don't start with me. This conversation is going very nicely so far. Anyway, Frank was a shoe salesman and was transferred to a Florsheim outlet in Toledo shortly after we met.

PAT

A shoe salesman and a dance instructor. That makes sense.

KATE

We spent our only night together on a blanket on a beach in Red Hook. The night was perfect. He had the car radio on. "Bolero" was playing in the background. The tonal eruptions were inspiring. And just as the music reached its crescendo, so did I. I get tingly just thinking about it.

(Pause.)

Did you see any action your first night?

PAT

Right out of a Harlequin novel. That night led to one, long, hot passionate summer together and we screwed like gerbils. By the end of August, we both had marriage on our agendas. Then Granada happened.

KATE

Granada? That sounds like a vacation resort. What the hell happened in Granada?

PAT

It was no vacation. Joey was stationed there as a medic for a month-and-a-half of very intense combat. He helped rescue medical students who were held captive. Nineteen US combatants were killed and 116 were wounded. One of them was Joey. His convoy was caught in a fire fight. His face was mangled by a grenade.

KATE

Is that how you lost touch?

PAT

This is why I didn't want to start this conversation. Now I have to tell you everything.

KATE

Why is this so hard? You loved him, right?

PAT

I wanted to get married before he shipped out. We argued about that and he left without even saying goodbye. If he loved me, why wouldn't he give me a ring? Just give me some kind of hope.

KATE

You couldn't wait until after he got back?

PAT

No.

KATE

Why?

PAT

I just couldn't.

KATE

Why the hell not?

PAT

BECAUSE I WAS PREGNANT.

(Takes a single rose from the bouquet and snaps it in half.)

The last thing I told him was marry me or leave. God, Kate, if I could take those words back.

KATE

You didn't tell him you were pregnant?

PAT

He was gone before I could.

KATE

That was the last time you saw him?

PAT

A few months later he shows up at the Manhattan VA hospital.

(Unlocks a desk drawer. She takes out several photos and hands them to Kate.)

Here are some pictures of him before he deployed.

(While Kate reviews them--)

The doctor was hopeful he might be able to speak as he healed, but his condition, his mind-- the man I remembered wasn't there. I made a late-night visit to his ward. He was awake, so I leaned in and whispered, "Joey, this is Pat." He had this glazed look and he couldn't speak, so I left. The doctor explained Joey was so irrational and depressed it was pointless to pursue any relationship and I should wait for Joey to contact me when he was ready. But he never did.

KATE

Oh, I'm sorry you went through that.

PAT

Joey was so bad off I thought it best Trevor should think his father was dead. I just don't think he wants to be found.

(Kate returns the photos. Pat locks them in the drawer.)

Anyway, so there you have it. That's enough. No more. Now let me ask you something.

KATE

Ok. What?

PAT

Who's Dorothy?

(Kate bends down and picks up the broken rose. She tries unsuccessfully to piece it together.)

KATE

Some things can't be fixed.

(She forces herself past a painful memory, then reaches for the comparative listings and hands the papers to Pat.)

PAT

Thanks. By the way, I won't complain if you want to look for Joey, but this is just between you and me, okay?

(Starts to leave and stops.)

I appreciate your listening. This hasn't changed the fact that you're still a pain in my ass.

KATE

Naturally.

(LIGHTS UP on the swing set. Debbie sits on a swing. Pat crosses to her.)

PAT

Knock, knock.

DEBBIE

Go away.

PAT

(Sits on a swing next to her.)

Do you feel like talking?

DEBBIE

Was that two-minute, "Hi-mom-I'm-home-gotta go", visit appropriate for a daughter who has hardly spoken to her mother in two years?

PAT

She didn't want to confront Trevor. She would've talked to you if ...

DEBBIE

Talking to her is like talking to a robot. We're both programmed to say the same things.

PAT

Are you okay out here?

DEBBIE

Yeah. This is the only safe place I can go outside without freaking out. Do you know how much time I spent pushing Wendy on this swing? I remember her eighth birthday. We counted each swing. One. Two. Three. We must've counted to 500. I get so angry because no one remembers the good times.

(Both fall silent. Pat gets up;
pushes Debbie from behind.)

Pat. Don't.

PAT

Shhh. Let's just swing for a bit.

DEBBIE

I have to close my eyes, else I'll get sick.

PAT

I love you and Wendy both and it hurts so much to see you so distant from each other.

DEBBIE

There's a wall between us. She blames me for everything.

PAT

Wendy can't accept your limitations right now.

DEBBIE

She won't accept shit. She's ungrateful. Everything revolves around her.

PAT

By the way, Trevor apologized for this morning and we talked a bit. When you're feeling better, think about talking to Wendy. Something's troubling her.

DEBBIE

She won't tell me anything.

PAT

Talk to her anyway. She might surprise you.

DEBBIE

Don't push so fast. Slow down.

PAT

(Slows the swing.)

Why not come with me on the "go-see"?

DEBBIE

Cars and me don't get along very well. I'll get a panic attack. Did I ever tell you the first time that it happened to me?

PAT

Is this going to be painful?

DEBBIE

It was for me. I drove through a car wash with my mother. As soon as the machines began sweeping the car, I curled up in a fetal position and cried hysterically. I couldn't breathe because I felt like the car was being crushed. I thought I was dying. That's when I realized something was wrong with me. So, I developed a fail-safe routine anytime I was in a car.

PAT

And what is that?

DEBBIE

I'd distract myself by playing with the radio and windows. Slow down. You're pushing too fast.

(Pat gives one final push and walks around to stand in front of Debbie. As the swing slows--)

PAT

If you could only see that wonderful smile on your face.

DEBBIE

What you're looking at is unadulterated fear.

PAT

Well, that's what friends do. They push each other through their fear. It's how they show love. So, what do you say? Come with me on the "go-see".

DEBBIE

After what I just told you?

PAT

I'll be there to help you. We'll make it fun.

DEBBIE

Like the time I threw up in your car?

PAT

Oh, yeah. I forgot about that. Come anyway.

DEBBIE

I'll come if you talk to Trevor about Joey.

PAT

I'll think about it, but don't pressure me.

DEBBIE

Fair enough.

PAT

So, you're coming?

DEBBIE

If I go, I'll need a few things first, like a bottle of Pepto...

PAT

And a quart of tequila. I'll start the car. You get ready.

(LIGHTS UP as they cross into the office. Debbie exits the upstage door. Pat moves to Kate.)

PAT

Debbie's going with me on the go-see.

KATE

What? How did you...?

PAT

I can sell sand in the Sahara. Now you're in charge. No phone calls about your cats, understand?

KATE

Absolutely.

PAT

If Debbie makes this, she just might make it to the concert.
Who knows?

(Pat exits the upstage door. Kate grabs
the phone.)

KATE

Francine? You still there? Good. Good. Here's my list of
names for Samantha's litter. Lorenzo, Samson, Ferdie, and
Sweetness for the kitten with the different color eyes ...

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT I

Scene 2

(LIGHTS UP on two folding chairs which become Pat's car. Pat and Debbie are already seated. Debbie has a gym bag on her lap.)

DEBBIE

Pat, I'm not sure about this, so, easy on me, all right?

PAT

Look here! Right in my eyes. You feel dizzy or nauseous, you look right at me and you're safe. Understand?

DEBBIE

Yup.

PAT

You trust me?

DEBBIE

I trust you.

PAT

OK. Checklist: bottled water.

DEBBIE

(Opens her gym bag.)

Got it.

PAT

Cold compress?

DEBBIE

Check.

PAT

Tissues, towel, paper bag?

DEBBIE

Got it.

PAT

Blindfolds?

(Debbie pulls out a few from her purse. She puts one on her forehead.)

DEBBIE

Roger.

PAT

All right. Now, this guy we're meeting has been to two agencies before us. He's very particular. And very rich.

DEBBIE

Smolich. Why is the name so familiar?

PAT

Plumbing goods. The name's on your toilet bowl.

DEBBIE

That's not a good omen.

PAT

And his dog, Henry, just died.

DEBBIE

What's he looking for?

PAT

A fixer-upper. He'll do a total rehab and decorate outrageously for a shot at an article in "House and Gardens". Then he'll rent it out. Or flip it.

DEBBIE

We could snag a commission on both ends.

PAT

I like the way you think. By the way, don't mention the dead dog. Okay ... We're off to see the wizard.

(An audible hum indicates the car is in motion, and a softer purr when it idles.)

DEBBIE

Oh, God! Slow down.

PAT

I haven't even pulled out of the driveway yet.

(Debbie peeks over her blindfold.)

Calm down. Remember the swing. Put your blindfold back on.

DEBBIE

(Puts her blindfold back on.)

I don't think I can do this, Pat.

PAT

You can, and you will. If all goes well, maybe tomorrow...

DEBBIE

First things first. Now slow down for crying out loud.

PAT

Wait. Let me make this traffic light.

DEBBIE

(Yelps.)

This is so unfair! Why am I being punished like this?

(The car stops suddenly.)

PAT

Look at me, dammit! Look at me, Debbie.

(Pulls the blindfold up so
Debbie can see.)

Count to five. On five, I slap you.

DEBBIE

What? Why?

PAT

Do it. Do it now.

DEBBIE

One. Two. Three.

PAT

Finish!

DEBBIE

Four ... Five.

(Pat slaps Debbie in the face.)

PAT

A slap in the face is punishment for being a pain in my ass. Your phobia is not punishment. God has not given you this affliction. What the hell do you think you've done to deserve this? What?

DEBBIE

I can't breathe. Oh, sweet mother of God.

PAT

Look at me. Count to five.

DEBBIE

Not again.

PAT

Do it.

DEBBIE

(Quickly)

One-two-three-four-five.

(Debbie closes her eyes, waits.

Nothing. She opens her eyes.)

You didn't--

(Pat slaps her hard.)

Oww! That hurts.

PAT

Now you have someone to blame for being hurt. Not yourself, not Wendy, not God. Blame me. See if that helps. Now put your blindfold back on. We don't want to be late.

(She slips the blindfold back on as Pat continues driving. Debbie becomes anxious and sings Jingle Bells in a high pitch voice.)

PAT

Debbie, will you please ...

(Debbie gropes for the radio and turns it on. She changes the station repeatedly until Polka MUSIC plays. Debbie gyrates in her seat to the melody. Pat reaches over and turns the radio off.

After a beat, Debbie turns it back on and finds Country Western MUSIC. Debbie shrieks out the lyrics.

Pat quickly turns it off. As Debbie reaches for the radio again--)

PAT

I swear if you touch that radio one more time I'll count to five again and beat you silly.

(Now Debbie reaches for the window controls and flips the window up and down.)

PAT
Stop with the windows!

(As Debbie continues with the window,
Pat reaches over to smack her hand and
loses control of the car.

SCREECHING sounds.)

PAT
OH, MY GOD!

(IMPACT sounds. Metal, glass.)

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT I

Scene 3

(LIGHTS UP on the porch.)

Dan stands in front of Kate holding yet another bouquet of flowers.)

DAN

Notice the grouping of roses, how the red are shorter-stemmed than the white. The note was very specific about that. I think he - or whoever - is trying to say his feelings for you are nothing compared to the warmth of your smile.

KATE

How do you interpret that from just the grouping, Dan?

DAN

After dealing with this guy - or whoever - for the past few weeks, I'm getting to know him. We think alike. In flower arrangements, I mean.

KATE

Well, it's all very flattering, but--

DAN

I believe this person has deep feelings for you. Look at the careful pruning of the rose leaves. Five leaves to a stem - no more, no less.

KATE

What's that mean?

DAN

They represent his five senses, I'm sure, all of which take delight in the person for whom this bouquet is intended. You!

KATE

That poetic sentiment is in the card?

(Dan nods.)

Can I see it? The card.

DAN

Well, ah-- I'm afraid I lost it. None of my business, anyway.

KATE

Keep the next one for me to see, OK?

DAN

Sure. But this guy has lousy handwriting.

KATE

Sometimes I can get a reading from a person's handwriting.

DAN

OK. By the way--

(He takes one rose out of the bouquet and hands it to Kate.)

That's a very attractive dress you're wearing.

(The phone rings inside the office.)

LIGHTS OUT on the porch. After a few beats, giving Kate time to cross--

LIGHTS UP in the office. Wendy and Kate sit at a desk.)

KATE

(Into the phone.)

We close at five, usually. No, I just handle the phone and office work ... Well, thank you for that. Your phone voice is sort of Cary Grantish, if I may say so ... Yes, I'm always here ... maybe we will. Thanks for calling.

(Hangs up.)

WENDY

You're blushing. What did he say?

KATE

He said I had a bedroom voice.

WENDY

You did sound flirtatious.

KATE

Did I?

WENDY

I thought all salespeople did that to entice a customer.

KATE

I'm not selling anything. I don't have a license.

WENDY

Maybe you should get one. When's my mom due?

KATE

Any minute is my guess. Are you in a hurry to get back?

WENDY

I promised the harpsichordist I'd return her car by seven.

KATE

That's not much time. Your mother will be disappointed.

WENDY

Well, I do have some special news.

KATE

Yes. I sense you're happy but somewhat anxious. Confused might be a better word.

WENDY

I haven't told you what the news is yet.

KATE

No, you haven't. I'd say congratulations, but I don't think I should until your mother knows.

WENDY

That's scary. You are weird, you know that?

(LIGHTS OUT in the office and UP on the porch.)

Pat and Debbie walk to the porch.
Debbie has a bandage on her head.)

DEBBIE

It was your fault. You were driving.

PAT

Really? Yeah, I guess it was all my fault. I wasn't the least bit distracted by your imbecilic behavior.

DEBBIE

Oh, now I'm an imbecile.

PAT

It was the first word that came to mind. Look at my car. The bumper was knocked off.

DEBBIE

It's in the back seat.

PAT

It belongs on the front of the car.

DEBBIE

Oh, Trevor can put it back on in 5 minutes.

(Picking at the bandage.)

Ouch. It hurts.

PAT

All right. All right. Straighten yourself out.

(Adjusts Debbie's shirt. Smacks
her hand from the bandage.)

What are we going to do with you?

DEBBIE

There's nothing in my self-help tapes that prepares you for
this.

PAT

Why the hell don't you take your meds and fight back?

DEBBIE

No way. My cousin takes the same meds for vertigo and all it
did was give her black teeth and skin blotches.

PAT

OK. OK. Put your big girl panties on and get inside. Let's
just try to salvage this day.

(LIGHTS UP in the office as Pat assists
Debbie in.)

KATE

Oh, my God. Pat, what happened?

PAT

We had an accident. I sideswiped a huge walnut tree ...

(Looking at Debbie.)

... while I was trying to deal with this crazy lady who was
playing with the radio and windows. You nutcase.

KATE

What's with the bandage?

PAT

Debbie smacked her head on the dash. She's fine.

DEBBIE

Yes. Yes. It's just a little bruise.

KATE

So, you didn't give Smolich my condolences for his dead dog?

PAT

No Kate. We didn't make it to the go-see.

KATE

Well then, there's no reason for me to stay. Let me bid everyone a farewell. My furry friends need to be fed.

(Kate exits. Awkward silence.)

DEBBIE

Hello, Wendy. I'm glad you stopped back.

WENDY

Are you?

DEBBIE

What's that supposed to mean?

WENDY

Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Listen, if the accident becomes an excuse to miss my solo, you'll be pleased to know that PBS will be broadcasting the concert live.

DEBBIE

Why do you have to be so damn ...

WENDY

(Waits for Debbie to finish the sentence.)

Well ... are you going to make it to the city tomorrow?

(No Response.)

I didn't think so. So what do you want from me? I thought you might be pleasantly surprised that you can hunker down here and watch it on TV with a bowl of popcorn and a box of juicy fruits. Aren't you happy about that?

DEBBIE

(Trying not to yell.)

Why do you have to be so damn critical of me? Why can't you be a little more ...

WENDY

... Compassionate?

DEBBIE

No. Optimistic.

WENDY

Optimistic!?! Hmm. Let's rewind the clock and replay my softball championship where I was very optimistic you'd be there too.

DEBBIE

That's so cruel. You have no idea of the time I spent running this business so you could have a good education.

WENDY

Oh, God. Here we go again. Train to nowhere is leaving the station. Don't start Mother or...

DEBBIE

Or what? Going to leave for another two years? You have no gratitude. This is your senior class recital all over again.

WENDY

You've gotta be kidding me.

DEBBIE

You never told me about that performance either.

PAT

Oh, boy. I think I better go.

WENDY

No. Stay, Pat. My mother may need some emotional support after I'm finished.

PAT

My day just isn't getting any better.

WENDY

(To Debbie.)

Let me tell you what it was like in high school with everyone talking behind my back.

DEBBIE

Oh, really? You're gonna go there? You were a musical savant, for chrissakes. If they were talking behind your back it was because twenty colleges were tripping over each other to give you a scholarship. Five orchestras were offering you a full time position before you even graduated. 'Oh, poor me, people are talking about me because I'm so wonderful.'

WENDY

Really, Mother. How did you get so enlightened being a recluse? FYI, my cello playing didn't impress my classmates, not as much as your condition.

(MORE)

WENDY (cont'd)

You never came to a single Parent-Teachers meeting because of your condition. Not one recital in four years because of your condition. Not one softball game because of your condition. Not even graduation.

PAT

Wendy, all this is a bit unfair, don't you think?

WENDY

Is it fair my own mother blames me for her condition?

DEBBIE

I told you your birth was difficult. I didn't blame you--

WENDY

Even two years of therapy hasn't convinced me of that.

DEBBIE

Therapy? You've never told me you needed help! Why would my daughter need therapy?

WENDY

Oh, my shrink warned me I might not be ready for this.

DEBBIE

Ready for what? To tell your mother the truth. After all I've done, you spoiled brat.

WENDY

You want the truth, Mother? Let me tell you about one of those many performances you missed. Remember that night at the Centennial Concert when no one showed up to give me a ride home? I figured the walk home was only a mile because I knew which yard to cut through and which dark alleys to avoid. Maybe you remember that night, Mom? The night my blouse was torn and I had black and blues all over my legs.

DEBBIE

You said you hopped a fence and fell.

WENDY

But there were no fences. I was in a hurry to get home to finish my book report. I cut through Simpson Street, past the Silver Dollar Lounge, and a man from the bar began following me, and I started to run. But he caught up to me, and just as I started to scream, he yanked me to the ground. He had a knotted rope wrapped around his fist and punched me twice in the stomach to shut me up. Those knots were hard, Mom.

(Debbie deep breathes and waves her arms as if she doesn't want to hear anything more. She covers her ears.

Wendy crosses to Debbie and removes her hands so she can hear.)

WENDY

While he was choking the hell out of me with one hand, he undid his filthy jeans with his other. I knew if I yelled or struggled he'd kill me. So, I laid still while he pushed into me over and over again. His breath had a misty stink of cigarettes and beer. I gagged against the rope he jammed into my mouth. He finished with a sickly whimper, but lay on top of me for a minute, enjoying his conquest. Then he stood, buckled his pants, and walked away. Whistling. Like it was nothing. Lunch time was over and it was time to go back to work.

(Silence. As Wendy backs away-)

Nothing to say, Mom?

DEBBIE

I told you never to go on Simpson Street.

WENDY

Really, Mother. That's all you have to say?

DEBBIE

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY?

(Through her tears--)

Why didn't you tell me, Wendy? That's what I want to say. Why didn't you tell me?

WENDY

I was scared that if I breathed a word of it he might come back and do it again. Or something worse.

(No one speaks. Pat stands.)

PAT

Is this the good news you wanted to share with us, Wendy?

(Wendy reaches into her purse, retrieves a photo, and hands it to Pat who shows it to Debbie.)

DEBBIE

This is the same picture you mailed to me.

WENDY

Yes, Mother. The good news I have to share is the boy in the photo is my son. His name is Steven.

DEBBIE

(Whispers--)

Steven?

WENDY

I named him after the maestro. He and his family helped me through a lot.

DEBBIE

How can you ever forgive me? This is all my fault.

WENDY

Please, Mother. Steven is no one's fault. Steven is a joy.

(Debbie stands, turns her back and sobs.)

WENDY

What, Mother? Cat got your tongue?

DEBBIE

The boy. Steven. Who's the ... who's ... the ...

WENDY

The father?

(Debbie nods, reluctantly.)

Well, that's a good question. Could be Trevor's or--

(In Debbie's face.)

The rapist's.

PAT

(Clears her throat. Finally--)

Does Trevor know about this?

WENDY

He's always known about the rape, but not about Steven.

PAT

Wendy, I'm very sorry about what happened to you, but ... I want to know if I'm a grandmother.

(Wendy shrugs, then crosses to the window and peers out.)

WENDY

At night, when Steven's sleeping, I pick him up and bring him into bed with me and just watch him. For hours, sometimes. I know every nuance of his breathing. Every expression in his face. He consoles me in my loneliness. I ask him who his father is and he can't tell me of course. But I really don't want to know the answer. Why should that matter? My world shrinks to the size of his blanket when I hold him close to me. He is my world. I don't want anything to change that.

DEBBIE

When can I see him?

WENDY

I haven't worked that out yet, Mom. This was my first step. My doctor assures me one step at a time is the way to go.

(She starts to leave, turns.)

One thing hasn't changed, Mom. I can still leave the house knowing you won't follow me.

DEBBIE

I love you, Sweetheart. I want us to have a relationship. I want us to be close. I feel so lost without you.

WENDY

If I see you sitting in the audience tomorrow night, then I'll know we can have a relationship. Until then-

(Exits.)

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT I

ACT IISCENE 1

(THE FOLLOWING DAY: A rehearsal studio in the basement of Carnegie Hall.)

Wendy, wearing a Yankee baseball cap, and playing the cello, sits with her back to the audience. She starts and stops, having difficulty focusing.

Trevor enters, unnoticed, and quietly waits. Frustrated, Wendy moans and slaps the bow against her lap.)

TREVOR

Temper. Temper.

WENDY

Trevor, my God! What a surprise.

TREVOR

Hello, Wendy.

(They meet in an awkward embrace.)

WENDY

How did you find me?

TREVOR

A guy at the desk said you were rehearsing down here. I listened for the cello and saw the baseball cap. Had to be you. Having trouble with the piece?

WENDY

The maestro wants a tempo change and I'm trying to improvise a little. He's such a perfectionist.

TREVOR

Ah, yes. The maestro. I heard he's one hell of a great guy. You named your son after him, right? Imagine that.

WENDY

Don't make this any more difficult than it is.

TREVOR

Why would I do that? Except for our chance meeting yesterday, I haven't heard a word from you in two years. All my phone calls and letters were ignored. Birthdays and holidays?

(MORE)

TREVOR (cont'd)

Not a peep. No reason for me to be upset, right? Shit, Wendy, you couldn't let me know you had a kid?

WENDY

This isn't the time, Trevor.

TREVOR

You're right. Two years ago would've been better.

(Wendy looks away.)

Your son's old enough to need a father by now. And just who might that be, Wendy?

WENDY

Don't yell at me!

TREVOR

My mother shakes me awake this morning and asks me if I got you pregnant. I'm in the twilight zone wondering what universe I woke up in. So, excuse me if my tone isn't suitable enough for you.

WENDY

You'd better go!

TREVOR

Sorry I bothered you before your big performance. I just thought we had something important to discuss and I thought I would handle this better.

(He turns to leave.)

WENDY

Wait. Don't go. Not yet.

(Wendy sits and indicates for Trevor to sit beside her.)

Trevor, I don't know if you're Steven's father. Is that the only reason you came here? To find out?

TREVOR

(Sits. Pulls out a toy figure.)

No. I wanted to return this.

WENDY

Peter Pan! My prom gift to you?

TREVOR

Yes. That night we talked for hours about having a family with six kids and a pumpkin patch in the back yard. Remember?

WENDY

I don't want that back, Trevor.

TREVOR

Take it. Too many memories for me. You're lucky it's still in one piece. I almost ripped this thing apart more than once, but then I'd think: how childish. Peter Pan never grew up, but I had to. I had to let you go.

WENDY

Better to find someone else.

TREVOR

I gave it a try, actually.

WENDY

That's good. Keep trying.

TREVOR

But Heather wasn't a good kisser, you see. It was our third date. We had dinner and drinks. She's a fashion designer. Loves to shop. There was this evening dress in a store window that caught her eye as we passed by. She raved about the fabric and the cut. She was so vibrant and alive at that moment. I thought of you and how you look when you're playing on stage. I grabbed her and kissed her right there, and ... Well, I opened my eyes and saw it wasn't you. There was nothing in that kiss. No excitement. No thrill. We sort of rubbed lips and she smiled in the middle of it, like I was doing her a favor.

WENDY

So, when things end badly, you move on.

TREVOR

It didn't end badly for her. She bought the dress.

(Pause.)

If we didn't bump into each other yesterday, were you going to see me before you went back to Boston?

WENDY

I had to see my mother and then ... Maybe.

TREVOR

Maybe?

(beat)

Do you feel anything for me at all, Wendy? How did I go from the love of your life to a 'maybe' kind-of guy?

WENDY

No one in the world would have cared for me the way you did after what happened. I'll never forget that.

TREVOR

So, I'm just a fond memory?

WENDY

I'm not the same person, Trevor. You shouldn't expect me to have the same feelings.

TREVOR

All I expect are some answers.

WENDY

What will that change? Are you willing to be a dad to Steven regardless if you're his father? I doubt it.

TREVOR

What right do you have to make that decision for me?

WENDY

What about his rights? Or mine? What rights did I have when I was thrown on the ground, violated? You can't understand the darkness that hides in my soul, even now. Sometimes, when I'm in the subway or a crowded elevator, I smell his sweat and my stomach turns. I feel his weight pressing into me and I can't breathe. That horror won't leave. Until it does--

TREVOR

So, the lesson about moving on applies just to me?

WENDY

I deal with that horror by thinking about Steven, OK? His smile helps me through the rough spots.

TREVOR

I want to understand that, Wendy. But right now, I can't help feel Steven has replaced me as the man in your life.

WENDY

He has. After the rape, I didn't have a life again until he was born. And thank God the maestro took me in and told me he'd help in whatever I decided to do. No attachments. No strings. His only interest was in my music.

(Trevor nervously snaps a Zippo lighter open and closed. He stands, paces.)

TREVOR

I would've been there for you. Didn't I prove that before you left for college?

WENDY

Yes. You did. But would you have married me if I told you I was pregnant? Out of pity, perhaps? I was too broken, Trevor. I didn't have a direction until Steven was born. Now I do.

TREVOR

You've worked it all out. I'm happy for you. But I haven't had the time that you've spent with him to help me decide if I want to be a father.

WENDY

No one's asking you to decide. I thought you got that point.

(Static on the loudspeaker, then -)

VOICE (O.S.)

Five minute call. Musicians on stage in five minutes.

WENDY

Rehearsal's starting. I have to go. I'm sorry--

TREVOR

Wendy, don't leave me like this. What do I do?

WENDY

I can't tell you that. Two years of silence is unforgivable and I will apologize to you and my mother for that. But not right now. No apologies today!

(Collects music sheets, back pack, water bottle, jacket.)

I'm not asking for forgiveness, Trevor. I worked too hard to get here to start feeling sorry now. I concentrate on Steven and my music and I move forward. Suggestion: do what's best for yourself, same as I did.

TREVOR

This isn't fair.

WENDY

Fair? Ha. My rape isn't fair. My mother's agoraphobia isn't fair. My solo isn't fair to the flutist who wants one as well. So it goes.

TREVOR

So that's it? It's over between us? Well, don't you worry about me, Wendy. I'll get through this. Being alone is something I've gotten good at. But I hope you do what's right for your son, because at some point in his life he'll start to think it's his fault his father is gone.

WENDY

Why should you feel it's your fault your father is dead?

TREVOR

Oh, didn't I tell you. After my mom demanded to know if I was Steven's father this morning, she told me my father wasn't dead. Can you believe that? He got messed up in the military, but he's alive somewhere and obviously never wanted a son in his life. So, you run back to Boston after your solo and take good care of little Steven. But don't you tell him his dad is dead because sometime, somehow, he'll find out different and feel as screwed up as I do now.

(Trevor places the Peter-Pan figure on a music stand and leaves. Wendy's sobbing leaves her unaware of his exit.)

WENDY

I'm so sorry, Trevor. I don't mean to push you away. I'm just scared I'll lose you forever if Steven isn't yours. Oh, but once you see him and hold him, there's no way you won't ...

(Wendy turns to an empty room.)

... love him.

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT II

SCENE 2

(LIGHTS UP in the OFFICE.)

Pat sits at her desk. Kate enters with a cup of tea and hands it to Pat.)

KATE

I can't believe Wendy kept the rape a secret all this time. Then to tell Debbie she had a baby? My God, you both must be--

PAT

Forget about me. It's Debbie I'm worried about.

KATE

Where is she?

PAT

Upstairs. I gave her a sleeping pill. She should be up soon. When she comes down, no talk about Wendy. Or the baby. OK? Let's be upbeat today.

KATE

OK. Let's talk about that gorgeous hunk who came in here last week. Remember? The guy who was looking to rent by Yankee Stadium so he could watch the World Series from his window.

PAT

How could I forget? He was a younger Sean Connery with bushy red hair. You stammered like a school girl. Got all flushed and mumbly.

KATE

At least I wasn't drooling all over myself like a puppy-dog.

PAT

I was not. But did you notice his big hands? And you know what they say about men with big hands?

KATE

What?

PAT

(Scoffing.)

You never cease to amaze me.

KATE

What are you talking about?

PAT

Your sex life is like you owning a dachshund.

KATE

I don't own a dachshund.

PAT

Exactly.

(Picks up her tea cup, then
crosses to the swing set.)

This tea isn't doing it for me. Follow me.

(LIGHTS UP on the swing set.)

Kate grabs her purse and follows Pat
who heads for the fence post. Pat pulls
off the top, reaches down deep and
pulls out a bottle of booze.)

KATE

How long has that been there?

PAT

Since the Yankees won the pennant. Two years ago. Want some?

KATE

Probably not a good idea. Debbie might freak out.

PAT

Is that a "no"?

KATE

Not exactly.

(Pat pours the booze and Kate takes a
sip from the cup, then reaches into her
purse and takes out a joint.)

PAT

Well, look at you. Is that what I think it is?

KATE

My next door neighbor grows his own. I don't do this very
often.

(She lights the joint)

Can I ask you something without you getting upset?

PAT

Go for it.

KATE

How can you stay so attached to a man you've only seen once in thirty years?

PAT

I don't know.

(She takes a toke.)

The memories make me feel good, I guess.

(Moans.)

Oh, who am I kidding. I never came to closure with him emotionally. I just haven't allowed myself to feel for a man ever since Joey. I wanted us to marry, Kate. So much.

KATE

If you ask me, he loved you too much to get married. Probably didn't want to make you a widow if he never came back.

(She hands the joint to Kate who does the same. They continue to exchange the joint and cup as they converse.)

PAT

I would've taken that risk. I don't know why he couldn't.

KATE

I bet if you had told him you were pregnant, he would've married you to provide for Trevor, especially if something did happen to him in Granada.

PAT

You could be right, Kate. I messed up, didn't I? Screwed it all up. Let's not talk about him. Let's focus on your secret admirer. To Dan-the-Man.

(She raises the cup and takes a swig. Kate looks confused.)

Come on! You must know.

KATE

I suppose.

PAT

Why don't you just go for it?

KATE

I don't know how to just 'go for it'.

PAT

I think Danny-boy's ready to come out of his cocoon. With a bit of encouragement he might even be ready for the fourth move.

KATE

What the hell is the fourth move?

PAT

Well, let me see. First move is tongue in the mouth. Second move is take off your bra. Third move is Clinton sex. You know, Cunnilingus.

KATE

Oh! My cousin works for Aer Lingus.

(They both take a swig.)

I'm just not good with men, Pat. Every damn time I feel something, you know, the "twang", it never works out. I can't seem to survive the courtship. At first I lose my power, but when it eventually returns it just seems to get in the way. Like the time I was being courted by Tim, the lawyer. That could've amounted to something.

PAT

A lawyer. Impressive. What happened?

KATE

We dated for a while. Once my estrogen levels were normal again, my psychic abilities returned. He was overcharging a client and when I called him on it he freaked out and split.

PAT

I don't think you'll have to worry about that with Danny-boy.

KATE

What should I do, Pat?

PAT

Just relax. Be yourself. You're a good-looking woman, although you should dress better. Accent your assets.

KATE

Here it comes. The shit-sandwich.

PAT

What's that supposed to mean?

KATE

You compliment me a couple of times and stick shit in the middle.

PAT

Shit? I don't think I've ever heard you use that word. Shit, shit, shit. You're usually very lady-like.

KATE

See what I mean? 'Oh, Kate, you're so good-looking - you dress like crap - you're very lady-like.' Shit sandwich.

PAT

I didn't say you were 'sooo good-looking'. I said you were good looking. If you were 'sooo good-looking' men would be tripping over themselves to get to you.

(A noise inside the house.)

I hear Debbie coming. Get rid of this stuff.

(Pat rushes to jam the bottle back in the fence post. Kate tosses the roach. Fans the air. They run into the office.)

LIGHTS OUT on the swing set.

LIGHTS UP in the office.)

DEBBIE

Good morning, ladies.

PAT AND KATE

Good morning.

DEBBIE

I want you both to know that I've cried half the night, so I don't have any more tears left. I'm better this morning. I don't want either of you tip-toeing around me. Understood? I assume you told Kate everything.

PAT

Yes.

DEBBIE

OK. Good. Now I have something to say.

(Pause.)

I've decided to go to Carnegie Hall tonight.

PAT

Want to say that again?

DEBBIE

You heard me. I want to see Wendy's performance.

(Pat laughs in disbelief.)

KATE

Yes! You can do it.

DEBBIE

Pat, what do you think?

PAT

The only way I will drive you to Carnegie Hall in my car is if I tie your hands and feet to the arm rest, and put duct tape over your mouth.

DEBBIE

I promise I won't touch anything. I'll just sing and hum. And you can wear earplugs.

PAT

(Sighs.)

I can't do another day like yesterday.

DEBBIE

And neither can I.

(Pat flicks her fingers off her temple indicating a bomb is exploding.)

DEBBIE

Good. Nothing left to say then, so let's try and--
(Searching for the right word.)

KATE

Make merry.

PAT

"Make merry?" What are we, in 18th Century England?

DEBBIE

Let's keep things low on the Richter Scale today, OK? Yes, let's "make merry." What's that smell? Have you been drinking?

PAT

Maybe. A tiny bit. Just a tiny bit.

(Pointing to Kate--)

A lot. And she's been smoking pot.

KATE

(Pointing back)

So has she.

DEBBIE

I don't believe this. You're both imbibing at ten o'clock in the morning?

PAT

You should join us.

DEBBIE

I don't think so. Sober up, both of you, right now. This is a business office, not a Woodstock Concert.

KATE

I've decided I want to sell houses. I want to get my realty license.

PAT

You think people are going to buy homes from someone who smells like kitty-litter?

KATE

Don't start, Patricia. We had such a nice talk outside.

PAT

Then stick to what you do best. Answering phones.

DEBBIE

Ladies, please stop your bickering.

(Door bell rings. Pause.)

Well? Is someone going to get that?

(No one moves. The bell rings again.)

Pat and Kate just stare at each other.)

PAT

When you get your license we can discuss who gets the door. Right now, you're the office flunkie, so you answer it.

(With surprise.)

Oh! You don't know who it is? That can mean only one thing.

KATE

Shut up.

(The door bell rings again.)

DEBBIE

I'm counting to three. If somebody isn't hauling ass to the front door, you'll both lose a day's pay, I swear. One--

PAT

One-and-a-half--

KATE

I'm looking for a day off anyway.

DEBBIE

Two--

PAT

Better get it Kate or I'm crawling through your basement window and sterilizing six of your cats.

KATE

Do that and I'll tell your gynecologist that you're thinking of leaving her because her chin hairs are driving you crazy.

DEBBIE

Three--

KATE

Excuse me. I have to get the door.

(LIGHTS DIM on the office as Kate meets Dan at the front door. He carries a magnificent display of flowers.)

KATE

Dan. How nice to see you.

DAN

Glad I caught you. These will need water right away.

KATE

Oh, they're heavenly. The colors are dazzling. Is it your arrangement?

DAN

Yes, but the choice of flowers is per your admirer's instructions. He has a fine sense of floral compatibility.

KATE

Tell me who he is, Dan. You must know by now.

DAN

I'm pledged to secrecy.

KATE

Then you'll just have to return the bouquet. I can't keep accepting gifts not knowing who to thank. It's embarrassing.

DAN

No, don't feel that way.

KATE

Is there a card enclosed this time?

DAN

Oh, yes. In my pocket.

KATE

Let's put these down for a sec. There. Sit on the steps for a quick rest. You must be tired, doing deliveries all day long.

DAN

Actually, it's harder than most people think. Some of the cacti I deliver weigh over 20 pounds.

KATE

Cacti?

DAN

Cactus - in the plural.

KATE

Of course. You seem quite intelligent, Dan.

DAN

I do have my degree in botanical science. Ohio U.

KATE

Impressive. What else should I know about you?

DAN

I'm a freelancer to 'Mystery Writers of America' magazine.

KATE

Now, that is fascinating. Who's your favorite author?

DAN

Agatha Christie.

KATE

I should have known.

DAN

She's the best at combining intrigue and suspense in a story.

KATE

I agree. Oh, you said you had the card for the flowers?

DAN

Right here. It's a little crumpled.

KATE

Don't you usually attach the card to the wrapping?

DAN

Uh ... It came off when I loaded the van.

KATE

I see. Let me take a look. "Beauty begets beauty. Flowers will fade, but your beauty never could." Signed, "An Ardent Admirer." What a splendid compliment. And the hand writing, quite a flourish! Very unique.

DAN

Ms. Devine, tell me a little something about yourself.

KATE

There isn't much to tell. I work here in the realty office quite a lot. I have a stable of cats. Well, a few more as of yesterday. I like to read plays, dramas and comedies, and I collect autographs from famous literary figures. I have a Thornton Wilder, a John Steinbeck - quite a few.

DAN

What's your favorite play?

KATE

Cyrano de Bergerac! The romance and noble sentiment in that play always give me chills. Now, if I had the autograph of that playwright! Maybe you would oblige me with your signature, now that I know you're an author?

DAN

Me? Oh, I don't know.

KATE

And you could send me one of your stories. I would like that. Sign your name right on this card and I'll add it to my collection.

DAN

Well, all right.

(Signs the card.)

KATE

So, you think I should continue accepting the flowers?

DAN

Indeed, you should.

KATE

You know, I would so very much like to meet the man who fancies me as his Roxanne.

(MORE)

KATE (cont'd)

I would say to my secret Cyrano - should I ever meet him - that the poetry he bestows on me with his beautiful flowers are fragrant words that deserve to be spoken, face-to-face. How else can a romance blossom unless the lovers-to-be reveal themselves to each other?

DAN

The best mysteries are solved only after the suspense is savored.

KATE

Exactly. But at my age I have a habit of reading the last pages of a book first, so I don't waste time with an ending I don't like. May I have the card back?

(Dan returns the card.)

Thanks. Tell me, Dan. As a mystery writer, has handwriting analysis ever been a technique you've employed in any of your stories to solve a mystery?

DAN

Of course.

KATE

And if I turn this card over and compare the writing of the note and the signature, do you think I might finally solve the mystery of who my admirer might be?

DAN

That depends.

KATE

On what?

DAN

If you could ever imagine me as your Cyrano. Could you care for someone who hides himself in roses and daffodils to conceal his own unattractiveness?

KATE

No mystery there. Anyone who sends such loveliness could never be less than beautiful. Dan-the-Man, tell me what's on your mind?

(Dan leans in to kiss Kate.)

PAT (O.S.)

(Yelling.)

Kate, where the hell did you hide the quarterly reports?

(LIGHTS OUT on the porch steps.)

ACT II

SCENE 3

(OFFICE: Debbie is talking to Pat.)

DEBBIE

Today's the big day and I'm so nervous. Do I look OK?

PAT

You need to finish dressing and take the rollers out, then ask me.

(The doorbell rings.)

DEBBIE

Oh, I hope that's not business. We have to get going.

PAT

I'll take care of it. You finish up. I'm ready to go.

DEBBIE

Pat, I'm scared.

PAT

We'll do this together. I'll be quick with whoever this is.

DEBBIE

How do I even start to thank you?

PAT

I'll think of something. Now go.

(Debbie scampers upstairs just
as the doorbell rings again.)

(Yelling.)

The door's open. Come on in.

(JOEY enters. When Pat looks up she
doesn't recognize him because of the
scars on his face.)

JOEY

Hello?

PAT

Come in. I'm about done with this lease.

JOEY

May I sit?

PAT
Oh, please! I'm sorry. Have a seat.

(She stares hard at Joey.)

JOEY
Something the matter?

PAT
Have we met before?

JOEY
I haven't heard that pick-up line in 30 years.

PAT
It's just-- Well, never mind. What brings you by?

JOEY
I'm selling my family home. Over on Conklin.

PAT
Have you lived there long?

JOEY
I grew up there. The house is sixty-six years old. Here's a photo. My dad bought it new. I'm selling because my mom recently died.

PAT
Sorry to hear that. So, a single owner?

JOEY
That's right.

PAT
Any mortgage? Liens?

JOEY
None. Free-and-clear.

PAT
If you give me until tomorrow I can put together a comparative listing of homes in the neighborhood.

JOEY
There's an in-ground pool and over-sized back yard. It's a good property. You have to see it.

PAT
I will. But I'm in a bit of a rush. We're going to Carnegie Hall tonight. In fact, we were about to close when you rang.

JOEY

OK. Do you think you could give me-- you know, a ball-park figure so I could start to plan-- start to plan-- plan--

PAT

Plan what?

(Joey looks confused)

You said you wanted to plan something.

JOEY

Did I? Sorry. Sometimes I lose track of things. In my mind.

PAT

This must be a difficult move for you.

JOEY

I haven't lived there in ages. I live in a rooming house in Manhattan. I'm an outpatient at the VA facility in the city.

(pointing to his scars)

As you can see, I've had a hard time. Got the Purple Heart.

PAT

I volunteer at Manhattan VA sometimes. I never saw you there.

JOEY

I'm only in there an hour a week. Maybe two.

PAT

I think I know you, but not from the VA.

JOEY

What's your name?

PAT

Patricia O'Neil.

JOEY

(Slides his chair back and stands.)

I'm not ready for this. Forget the whole thing.

PAT

Please. I can help.

JOEY

I don't want any help. I'm fine. Don't need anyone in my life right now.

PAT

Dear God, you know me, don't you? This house. I know this house. I've been there. The address is 145 Conklin, right?

JOEY

I don't live there.

PAT

You said that. But it's your house. You grew up there. You took me there. It's 145 Conklin. 145!

JOEY

I-- I-- I gotta go.

PAT

Joey! You can't just drop into my life like this and then leave! I have to tell you something. You're a father, Joey.
(Joey hesitates on his exit.)

You have a son.

JOEY

No. That's impossible. I didn't hear that. I can't do this.

(He exits the office as Debbie enters, almost knocking her over.)

DEBBIE

Whatever did you say to that man? He's in a hell of a rush.

PAT

Debbie, that was Joey.

DEBBIE

As in "your" Joey? Trevor's father?

PAT

(The SOUND of the car engine sends Pat into a panic.)

I have to catch him. He can't just run away. Again.

DEBBIE

Go get him. Jump in your car and go after him.

PAT

But what about you? I'm supposed to take you to the concert.

DEBBIE

Don't worry about me. I'll take a cab.

PAT

This is unbelievable. Are you sure you'll be all right?

DEBBIE

Yes. Now go. Get out of here.

(Pat kisses Debbie and leaves. Debbie then runs into the office, picks up the phone and dials.)

DEBBIE (cont'd)

Hello, I need a taxi. Quick-- World Series, my ass. I can't wait an hour. Never mind.

(Hangs up, re-dials and waits.)

Come on Kate. Pick up. Be there--

(Strums the desk.)

Kate, this is Debbie. If you're there, pick up. Come on. Pick up. Pick up. Kate? Oh, thank God! Kate. Where are you?

(Pause.)

Listen, Pat had to leave suddenly and I can't get a cab. I'm all alone and I can't...I can't...

(Cries.)

I have to be there! There's no one else I can...

(Pause.)

I know you don't drive, but we'll work something out. Just hurry, will you, please. I can't do this alone.

(Hangs up.)

Dear God, not the bus.

(Debbie paces. She reaches over to turn on the tape recorder.)

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

Disease and illness are preventable afflictions when your primary response to a stressful situation is relaxation, both physically and mentally...

(LIGHTS DIM. Tape fades - pause - and then LIGHTS UP and tape continues. She stays at her desk with a wine bottle and a half-filled glass beside her.)

TAPE VOICE (V.O.)

... Productive workdays, healthy relationships, creative outlets, and strong faith-based beliefs are nurturing elements that provide support and sustenance in everyday life. If any of these components are missing, then steps need to be taken to restore physical health.

(She hears Kate coming in the offstage kitchen door and snaps off the tape. Kate plops a paper bag next to Debbie.)

DEBBIE

What's that?

KATE

(Takes a pint of whiskey from the bag.)

A little more of what you've already begun. Let me catch up.

(Drinks deeply from the pint.)

Hey, that's a drop-dead dress you got on. So, we're going, right?

DEBBIE

No. I decided I'm not.

KATE

(Takes another swig.)

Why did you call me, then? Go bother Pat.

DEBBIE

Excuse me?

KATE

I have a date with Dan. He's meeting me at the concert. If I don't go to the bus right now, I'll be late.

DEBBIE

If my daughter wasn't playing, you wouldn't be going at all.

KATE

Now, that's not exactly true, is it? I could go to Carnegie Hall any time I want to. You on the other hand are stuck in this house going nowhere. Same old, same old. Am I supposed to feel sorry for you?

DEBBIE

Spare me.

KATE

You and Terrence. Two of a kind.

DEBBIE

And who the hell is Terrence? One of your strays?

KATE

All day long, he'll stay by the screen door, watching and mewling. But open the door for him? He'll just sit there and look at me like I'm crazy.

DEBBIE

Open doors scare the shit out of me.

KATE

Me too.

(Crosses to the front door with the pint bottle and Debbie's wine glass. She opens the door.)

Let's face our fears together. Join me in a toast to our daughters.

DEBBIE

What?

(Crosses to Kate.)

You have a daughter?

KATE

And today's her birthday. To Wendy and Dorothy--

(They toast.)

DEBBIE

I'd like to meet her.

KATE

One reunion at a time. Wendy's waiting.

DEBBIE

What? You and Dorothy aren't close?

KATE

Very. She's with me all the time.

DEBBIE

I don't understand.

(They cross back to the desk and sit.)

KATE

(Takes a swig. Pause. Sighs.)

My little girl, Dorothy, she had a sparkle in her eyes that told you she was going to be someone special when she grew up: a writer, a doctor, a philosopher, someone worth knowing.

(MORE)

KATE (cont'd)

She was so inquisitive, a thousand questions about the simplest things. I saw her once gently pick up an ant between her fingers. She put it real close to her face and said in this gravelly voice--

(Using a gravelly voice.)

Wow!

(Back to her normal voice.)

And she stared at it for minutes on end. When she finally put it down, it scurried away, better off for its encounter. She was that intense sometimes. She'd look into my eyes and see straight into my heart and I'd be forced to go--

(In a gravelly voice.)

Wow.

(Back to her normal voice.)

I would feel worthy by the simple stare that caught me off-guard. I wondered who or what this child was who could see so far into my soul. A smile from her gave me the confidence that God lived. When she started talking, there was no end to her questions. Her adventure became my adventure. She'd look in wonderment at the birds in the tree branches and demand to know their names. "Wutsdat" ... "Wutsdat", she would always ask. About everything. Sticks, leaves, birds, cement, cars. The wind against her face. She'd wander off after anything that caught her eye. Those precious eyes that saw such a fascinating world we all take for granted. A butterfly. A floating feather.

(Slight pause.)

One day I was sitting on the couch, exhausted from trying to keep pace with her as she darted from room to room. She was wearing a pair of pink sneakers with pale blue laces. Those sneakers were so worn from all the miles she ran in them. Anyway, unless the laces were firmly tied, Dorothy would put up a fuss and sit on the floor saying, "Pleeeese, Pleeeese" until they were fastened. That day I found myself falling asleep just as she tugged on my sleeve to tie up the lace on her left sneaker that had become undone. The room was barricaded and I was so sleepy ... I tied the lace, watched her turn on the TV, and I fell asleep. But the child-gate was loose. And the kitchen door was unlocked. And the street was ... busy. And my child with her inquisitive mind and voice calling out 'Wutsdat ... Wutsdat' to a slumbering mother, found her way into the unknown. That's the day God died for me.

(Slight pause.)

For years, I thought about the shoelace I tied and the gate I left loose. Drove myself insane with grief and blame.

DEBBIE

Sweet Jesus!

KATE

We lose what we have because it's never ours to begin with. It's only on loan. But what's never taken away is the love we have for one another. Dorothy's gone now, but her love is here with me always. Her face. Her voice. Those eyes.

DEBBIE

That's quite a story, Kate. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.

KATE

Thanks.

(Pause.)

I'm okay now.

DEBBIE

I wish I could say the same. My Wendy, she can't forgive me.

KATE

Forgiveness? Ha! Hardest thing to do in life. Barking up the wrong tree on that one. I've spent years seeking it. You can't forgive, especially yourself, unless you change something inside.

(Pounds her chest.)

DEBBIE

Change what?

KATE

We better go. We'll be late.

DEBBIE

No. I want to know. What do I have to change?

KATE

After Dorothy was gone I couldn't move, went nowhere, saw no one. Dorothy's father was a one-night-stand who I never saw again. No help there. Then one morning an emaciated alley cat crept into my kitchen and wouldn't leave. Poor thing was starving and I had to do something. So I left the house to buy some milk and when I got back the cat had curled up asleep between Dorothy's pink sneakers. And I knew it was time to move on.

DEBBIE

Dorothy forgave you?

KATE

It's not about forgiveness, Debbie. It's about acceptance. Accept your daughter for who she is and you for who you are. Do that and then you'll have the heart to forgive.

(MORE)

KATE (cont'd)

(Taps Debbie on the hand. Looks
at her watch.)

It's six-fifty.

DEBBIE

(takes a deep breath)

Pat was the only one I trusted to do this with. Now you...

KATE

A half-glass more and you won't care who you're with.

(Kate pours. They drink again.)

DEBBIE

Wait, you're the psychic. Tell me if I make it in one piece.

KATE

(Chuckles)

Doesn't work that way. I'm going to tell you stories about
how Cleveland lost his tail, and how Samantha needs to be
neutered and how...

(They cross out to the porch and down
the steps. Debbie holds tight to Kate.)

KATE

...She only nurses on the yoga mat, and, you'll love this,
how once my precious Dandelion cornered a squirrel in the
laundry room and actually backed it into a bucket of bleach,
and all about...

DEBBIE

Oh God, I can't think!

KATE

And all about Missy and her trick of catching mice with her
back paws, and, speaking of the bus we're gonna catch, I once
found the cutest calico kitten under the driver's seat on the
M44 to Astoria in the middle of the first tornado to actually
come through Queens and do you know what I did...?

(Kate's voice fades as they are on
their way.)

LIGHTS OUT)

ACT II

SCENE 4

(Four chairs set 2 in front and 2 behind are the interior of a stopped BUS which has arrived at Carnegie Hall. Debbie sits in the back row. Wendy and Kate enter. Kate points in the bus.)

WENDY

Mom?

DEBBIE

I'm here, Wendy. Back here. I'm so sorry we're late.

WENDY

We haven't started yet. You OK?

DEBBIE

I'm so dizzy. I can't stand up.

WENDY

I'll help you, Mom.

(Debbie resists.)

The bus driver has to go. You have to get off the bus now.

DEBBIE

I can't. I threw up on myself. I'm so ashamed...

WENDY

That doesn't matter. We'll get you changed.

DEBBIE

I'll ride the bus back home. You and Kate go ahead and...

WENDY

You're here. You made it! Now come inside. Please!

DEBBIE

I'll just get sick again. I am not vomiting in Carnegie Hall.

WENDY

I don't have time for this. The orchestra is warming up...

DEBBIE

Go! Do what you have to do. I'll be all right.

WENDY

We'll clean you up quick.

(To Kate.)

Go to Wardrobe. Ask for Mrs. Mason. Tell her what happened. Mom's the same size as me. She'll find something for her. And please tell the stage manager not to hold for me.

(Kate exits.)

DEBBIE

Wendy, please understand. This is impossible for me. I'm so sorry for all this. I never should have tried.

WENDY

But you did. That means everything. And you're here. So, I'm staying with you 'till you're ready.

(Sits beside Debbie.)

Just close your eyes for a minute and let me hold your hand.

DEBBIE

Your solo... You came all this way.

WENDY

So did you. Further than I ever thought you could or would.

DEBBIE

But your solo ...

WENDY

That comes after intermission. Besides, there'll be other solos. Close your eyes. The world can wait.

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT IISCENE 5

CARNEGIE HALL (split scene: EXTERIOR/
INTERIOR): LIGHTS UP on Pat and Trevor
who are talking and sit in a row of
seats facing SL. This row of seats
represents the entire audience. A
single seat is set opposite them. This
single seat represents the entire on-
stage orchestra.

Kate enters with Debbie holding tightly
on her arm. They sit next to Pat.)

PAT

Oh, there you are. The concert's about to start.

TREVOR

I better get back to my seat.
(he leaves)

DEBBIE

Did you find Joey?

PAT

I went up and down every block in the neighborhood. He
vanished. How the hell did he end up coming to our office,
anyway?

KATE

(Raising her hand halfway--)
That would be me. Don't give me that look. You gave me
permission. I got Joey's number from the VA, and told him we
were offering veterans a discounted commission rate. He took
our address and number. Pretty smooth, right? I never
mentioned your name.

(Tapping sounds of the baton against
the music stand indicate an unseen
Maestro is bringing the orchestra to
attention.

The music plays, then FADES with the
LIGHTS to denote the passage of time.

LIGHTS UP on Trevor who stands alone
outside of Carnegie Hall. Joey enters.)

JOEY

Excuse me. How much have I missed?

TREVOR

Intermission just started.

(Joey twirls an unlit cigarette between his fingers.)

JOEY

Thanks. Got a light?

(Trevor offers the Zippo. Joey lights up and hands it back.)

Much obliged.

TREVOR

Bad habit you got there.

JOEY

I'm trying to quit. Doctor's orders. Haven't seen an old Zippo like that in a long time.

TREVOR

It's a keepsake. It belonged to my father.

JOEY

I had one ... I had one. I know I had ... I'm sorry I get lost ... Sometimes I can't ... My mind jumbles...

(Pause.)

How's the concert going?

TREVOR

Amazing. A good friend of mine has a solo performance in the second half that should be outstanding.

JOEY

I'll keep that in mind.

TREVOR

Where are you sitting?

JOEY

I don't actually have a ticket. I know it's a sold out house, but standing room is fine.

TREVOR

Gee, this must be your lucky day. The guy sitting next to me is a doctor and he got called out on an emergency.

JOEY

Well ... Thank you.

(Pause.)

I have a friend inside as well. We met today after a very long time apart. I didn't handle it very well. I'm here to change that, if I can. She's in the audience somewhere. I thought I'd surprise her by showing up.

TREVOR

It's that kind of a night. My soloist friend was very surprised her mother showed up. Long story. You from around here?

JOEY

Born and raised in Brooklyn. I'm looking to sell the family home, though. My mother recently passed and all I need is an apartment for myself.

TREVOR

My mom works in a realty office.

(Frisks himself.)

I'm sure I have her card on me somewhere.

JOEY

The soloist. She's a close friend?

TREVOR

We were engaged once. I've been trying to get our relationship back on track. I don't mean to be so personal...

JOEY

No, no. That's okay. It's interesting, actually. I came here to settle a piece of the past as well. I let a relationship die a long time ago because I felt ... unworthy, I guess.

TREVOR

Oh, here's the card.

JOEY

Thanks.

(He doesn't look at the card.)

So, what do you do?

TREVOR

I'm a teacher. High school drama.

JOEY

Bet you're good at it. You seem very personable. A friendly guy. Your folks raised you right.

TREVOR

My mom is a single parent. I never knew my dad.

JOEY

Yet you carry his lighter? Interesting! Let me see it again.

TREVOR

(Hands Joey the lighter)

What makes you feel 'unworthy', if you don't mind me asking?

JOEY

(Takes a cursory look at the lighter.)

Did you ever go somewhere and suddenly realize you don't know where the hell you are or how you got there? Happens a lot to me. Doctor says I get lost physically because feel lost emotionally. Hard to explain, but it makes me keep to myself.

TREVOR

(Thumbing the theater.)

So the person you know inside understands this?

JOEY

No, but it's my fault she doesn't. I don't stick around to talk things out.

TREVOR

Just the opposite with me. She's the one who leaves and gets lost. If I told you what I found out yesterday--

JOEY

Tell me. Why not? You got nothing to lose.

TREVOR

She had a child two years ago and never told me...

JOEY

This is way too weird. I just found out I have a kid. So, are you the father?

TREVOR

Not sure.

JOEY

I know it's none of my business, but something tells me you can see yourself as the child's father, or we wouldn't be having this conversation. This son I've suddenly got is a second chance at being part of something that truly matters - a family.

(MORE)

JOEY (cont'd)

Don't walk away just because he may not have your DNA. If she loves you, so will her kid and that's all the love you'll ever need.

TREVOR

Do you feel you're ready to be a father?

JOEY

(Inspects the lighter.)

That's why I came, to tell her just that. Hey, this lighter. The initials on the backside. Same as mine.

(Inspects the card just as the lights flash indicating intermission is over.)

And this card ... It says Pat O'Neil ...

(Pat enters.)

PAT

Trevor. Time to get inside before-- Joey?

TREVOR

You two know each other?

(LIGHTS OUT. LIGHTS UP inside Carnegie Hall. Wendy enters, sits on her chair and positions her cello. After a few seconds of solo play, a tight blue light strikes Wendy. She puts down her bow, stands, and while her solo music continues to play, she finds Debbie. The same blue light strikes Debbie.

Debbie extends her hand to her daughter. Wendy smiles and she extends her hand to her mother. They are locked in a musical, albeit surreal, embrace. The music fades.

LIGHTS OUT.)

ACT II

SCENE 6

(Office - evening - a large bouquet of flowers sits on a desk.

A radio plays the Bolero theme in the background. Kate crosses in and out of the upstage door distributing paper plates, napkins, cups, etc. She pauses and shivers as the Bolero theme plays out. She crosses back into the kitchen.

Dan enters through the front door carrying several pizza boxes which he deposits on one of the office desks.)

DAN

Kate? Where are you?

KATE (O.S.)

You have the pizza?

DAN

One plain, one mushrooms and bacon, one half sausage.

(Turns off the radio. Kate enters holding candles.)

One pineapple and one with anchovies.

KATE

Anchovies? Dan?

DAN

I made an executive decision. I hear they're an aphrodisiac. Don't look at me at that way. It was hard sitting six rows away from you for so long.

(They stare at each other. Kate drops the candles and runs to Dan. They join in a Rhett/Scarlett kind of kiss.

LIGHTS DOWN in the office.

LIGHTS UP on the porch. Debbie sits next to Wendy while she holds a cold compress to her mother's head.)

WENDY

Better?

DEBBIE

Headache's gone. Pat's a crazy driver, isn't she?

WENDY

Not half as crazy as one of the passengers.

(They both chuckle.)

Thanks for the party, especially on such short notice.

DEBBIE

You deserve a celebration. Who knew my little angel could play like one.

WENDY

The way I see it, you deserve the applause.

DEBBIE

(Sits up.)

Where's Steven?

WENDY

Mrs. Mason is dropping him by later.

DEBBIE

(Starts to get up.)

Good. I can give her back that dress. Is everyone here?

WENDY

Mom? Don't get up.

DEBBIE

Sweetie, I'm fine. I am.

WENDY

No, I want to talk a bit more before we go inside.

(Debbie sits.)

We may never know who Steven's father is, but I hope you can still love him ...

DEBBIE

(Touches Wendy's lips.)

Shhh. There's not a force on this planet that can stop me.

WENDY

Oh, Mom, I was so afraid you would want me to give him up.

DEBBIE

Your solo tonight? You wrote that didn't you?

WENDY

Yes. I did. I wrote it the night before Steven was born.

DEBBIE

So enchanting. Like a lullaby. Made me think of the times I'd sing to you each night at bedtime when you were little.

WENDY

I remember those nights, Mom. That's what inspired me to write my solo for Steven.

DEBBIE

I lost my inspiration when I shut myself up in this house.

(Pause.)

You've always thought I blamed your birth for my condition, didn't you?

WENDY

Dad told me often it wasn't anyone's fault. He was right.

(kisses Debbie's forehead.)

You were great, Mom.

DEBBIE

(pause)

Do you sing to Steven?

WENDY

All the time.

DEBBIE

Sing a little of your solo to me now.

(Wendy begins to hum softly as the LIGHTS DIM on the porch.)

LIGHTS UP in office to find Kate arranging glasses and Dan emptying wastebaskets into a garbage bag.

Pat enters with a large cake box and places it on the desk.)

PAT

Look what I got. The bakery stayed open just for me. Where's Debbie and Wendy?

KATE

Out on the porch. Everyone's here: the beauty, the boss, and the brains.

PAT

And which am I, pray tell?

KATE

Take your pick.

DAN

(Pointing to Joey who sits on
the swing set.)

Someone's waiting for you outside. He looks a little lost.

(LIGHTS OUT on the office.

LIGHTS UP on the swing set as Pat
crosses to Joey.)

PAT

If I say anything, you won't run away, will you?

JOEY

(Smiles. Shakes his head.)

Couldn't find you after the concert. Trevor said you were
having a little party. Hope it's okay. You live close by?

PAT

(Pointing.)

Next door.

JOEY

(Laughs.)

Never left the neighborhood.

PAT

Never got the chance. I was pregnant. Where was I going?

JOEY

He keeps my lighter. Why?

PAT

I told him you were dead. Killed in combat. You were his hero
for the longest time.

JOEY

Not any more, I bet. But in my defense, how could I know?

(Pause.)

You want me to go?

PAT

Leaving is your M-O, isn't it?

JOEY

Whatever anger you have, I deserve it. Fire away. But I'd
like to say goodbye to Trevor before I go.

PAT

Look. I give you credit for coming. Trevor's on his way, so just stick around.

(Pause.)

I saw you once. A long time ago.

JOEY

Where?

PAT

Manhattan VA hospital. You had just been shipped back.

JOEY

Yeah. But I don't remember seeing you.

PAT

You were unconscious for the most part. I barely recognized you.

JOEY

I had a long road ahead. I'm still on that journey.

PAT

You look pretty good for what you went through.

JOEY

You look terrific.

PAT

(Sits on the other swing.)

Trevor will want to know why I told him you were dead.

JOEY

I'd like to be there when you answer that question. Never mind. I take that back.

PAT

There were a lot of questions I didn't want to answer at the time.

JOEY

And now you'll have to.

PAT

You're trouble six ways from Sunday, you know that?

JOEY

I didn't plan this. I was just looking to sell the house, that's all. But now ... I'm having second thoughts.

PAT

Debbie will handle the sale, if that's what's bothering you.

JOEY

I'd like to get to know Trevor.

PAT

(Stands - faces him.)

Don't start anything you can't finish. I warn you...

JOEY

I'd like to get to know you, as well.

PAT

Why? So you can pack up and leave again. I couldn't handle another walk out and neither could Trevor.

JOEY

Any questions Trevor has, I'll answer them. And you get to listen, if you want. If he likes what he hears and you and I connect, then you decide how this all works out. Fair enough?

(Short pause.)

(She traces the outline of one of the scars on his face.)

LIGHTS OUT on the swing set.

LIGHTS UP on the office.

Wendy and Debbie enter the office. Kate is lighting the candles.)

DEBBIE

Excuse me. I have to change.

(She exits.)

KATE

Is your mom okay?

WENDY

She's doing great. I want to thank you for the help with the party.

KATE

It was all your Mom's idea.

(Trevor enters SR and climbs the porch steps.)

He carries a large box, a bag of groceries, and a bag of ice which require two trips up the steps.

Dan enters from the kitchen carrying a string of holiday lights.)

DAN

Look what I found in the broom closet.

KATE

Go decorate the bathroom. Oh, Wendy, this is Dan.

WENDY

This is your secret admirer, right?

DAN

Prettier than her mother, if that's possible. I loved your performance.

WENDY

Thank you.

DAN

(Pointing to the flowers.)

Those are for you. Hand picked in Peru and flown here express for your special night.

WENDY

They are beautiful. Kate told me absolutely nothing about you. How did you two meet?

DAN

I was shopping the fresh fish selection at Gristede's, picking through a pile of red salmon, and there, holding a fist-full of scrod, was this beauty dressed in a yellow taffeta dress, her shapely figure outlined by the display lights of the lobster counter. I tried to stammer a "hello", but floundered.

KATE

Don't mind him. Sweet phrases grace his mind and fresh flowers are his business.

WENDY

I think we're going to have to keep a close eye on him.

(Trevor enters from the porch with the bag of ice and grocery bag.)

TREVOR

Whoever heard of "7-11" running out of coke. Wendy! Hi! Hey, you were fantastic!

WENDY

Thank you. I'm glad you came.

TREVOR

I wasn't sure if you wanted me there.

(Awkward pause.)

This has been a long day.

KATE

(To Wendy.)

Why don't we put these flowers in the kitchen for you?

(Starts to leave but sees Dan
is not following.)

Dan? The ice is melting!

DAN

Oh, right. Later...

(Dan and Kate exit to the kitchen with
the groceries and ice.)

TREVOR

Your mom? You have to be proud of her.

WENDY

I am. And to top it off your dad is alive. My God!

TREVOR

Unbelievable, right? Quite a night all around, I'd say.

WENDY

I'd say.

TREVOR

So, where's Steven?

WENDY

A friend is dropping him off.

TREVOR

(Extending his hand)

Good. I have something for him. Come outside.

(Trevor and Wendy cross to the porch.
Trevor opens the big box; pulls out a
child's car seat with a Yankee logo.)

WENDY

A little ancient, isn't it?

TREVOR

It was my throne at one time. Mom throws nothing away, especially if it has a Yankee logo on it.

WENDY

(fingering the NY Yankee logo)

Some of the parents up there eat and sleep baseball. Strolling him in that crowd might raise some issues.

TREVOR

For him or for his mother...

WENDY

For me, of course.

(They both laugh.)

TREVOR

I was thinking. If you wanted ... I could drive you both back to Boston.

WENDY

Why?

TREVOR

I was out of line yesterday. So much has happened so fast, I'm not sure what I want. But if I could spend some time with you and Steven... I think I'd like to try that.

(Kate enters and begins to slice up the pizza. Dan sneaks up behind her and steals a kiss as Debbie enters with a new outfit on.)

WENDY

If you're having second thoughts about being a father to Steven...

TREVOR

I don't know about Steven. But I do know how I feel about you. I'll anchor what I do on that feeling. I see this as a package deal, so there's no way I can lose by signing up. We'll start slow. A road trip to feel things out.

(She reaches into her pocket and hands Trevor the toy Peter-Pan figure.)

Trevor pulls her in and kisses her.

Debbie sees Kate and Dan kissing and tiptoes past them to exit the French doors.

She sees Pat and Joey locked in an embrace outside, reverses course, and heads for the porch only to find Trevor and Wendy lip-locked together.

She turns back into the office, sits at a desk, rips out a slice of pizza and, as she chews, the phone rings.

Kate and Dan separate. Kate reaches for the phone but Debbie gets to it first.)

DEBBIE

I got it! Everyone else around here has a mouthful of someone else... Hello... Yes, all of Brooklyn... I don't think we have that listing. Let me check. Please hold.

(She hits the hold button,
stands, and yells--)

Pat! Could you come in here, please?

KATE

If that is business, tell them we're closed.

DEBBIE

I seem to have a little free time on my hands, Kate. Don't let me interrupt your, uh, "negotiations". PAT!!

(Pat enters and Joey follows.)

PAT

I'm here. I'm here. What's so damn important?

DEBBIE

Lady on the line saw a "For Sale" sign on a front yard with no agency number and no one home. She's calling around to find who's got the listing.

PAT

Did you tell her we're closed?

DEBBIE

If one more person tells me... She wants the house bad. Her chiropractor lives next door.

(Trevor and Wendy enter arm-in-arm.)

PAT

What's the address?

DEBBIE

145 Conklin. You know it?

(Pat looks at Joey who looks at the floor.)

PAT

I once swam naked in the backyard pool.

(To Joey.)

So what have you got to say? What are you doing with your house?

KATE

Conklin runs next to the cemetery, right?

PAT

So what?

KATE

Well, there a lot of strays in that graveyard. I couldn't shelter any more cats in my place, but if I could rent Joey's...

PAT

Forget about it, Kate.

KATE

Fine.

(She exits to the kitchen.)

JOEY

Actually, I thought Trevor might want ...

DEBBIE

I'm gonna lose this call, people, so let's wrap this.

(Pat grabs the phone from Debbie, but Joey steps up and takes the phone.)

JOEY

(Into the phone.)

Hello, Ma'am. The "for sale" sign was put up in error. The owner has changed his mind. The house is not for sale.

(Joey hangs up and faces Pat.)

A silence hangs heavy in the air.
Finally--)

DAN

Pizza's getting cold.

DEBBIE

I need a drink.

EVERYONE

Me too. Same here. Got that right. What have you got?

(Kate enters from the kitchen.)

KATE

Trevor! Diet root beer and a six pack of Bud does not a party make. What were you thinking?

TREVOR

I only had ten bucks.

KATE

Then it's time to uncover the secret stash.

DEBBIE

Where are you going?

KATE

Some things you don't want to know, Debbie.

(Kate crosses outside and pulls the
whiskey bottle from the fence post.)

WENDY

(To Debbie.)

I wonder where Mrs. Mason is?

DAN

Pizza anyone?

WENDY

Anyone know if the Yankees...

(Kate enters with the bottle.)

KATE

OK, grab a glass and gather round. That's right. I'm proposing a toast to... to... shit, so many intangibles here.

JOEY

We can toast to just being together.

DEBBIE

Wait, I want a picture. Everyone. Let's get together.

PAT

With the cake! Get one with the cake.

(Debbie takes a camera from a desk. Pat holds the cake box in front of Kate.)

PAT

Open it. Take a shot.

(Kate opens the box and laughs.)

KATE

It says "Happy birthday, Leah".

PAT

(Looks inside.)

Oh damn, I never looked inside. Some birthday girl has a 'congratulations' with a cello on her cake.

(Laughter all around.)

DEBBIE

OK. Chop, chop. Let's do this before Pat and Kate get drunk.

DAN

I always wondered... You can't really buy one and get one free, can you?

(Kate smacks him in the head.)

DEBBIE

Everyone smile...

(Dan nibbles on Kate's neck.)

KATE

Dan, stop it. He's so romantic, isn't he?

PAT

Romantic my ass. He's gnawing at your neck like it's a hot dog. A little advice, Kate: better practice safe sex with this guy.

KATE

We already discussed it. We're installing handrails around my bed.

(Laughter, then the doorbell rings.
Debbie squeals.)

DEBBIE

Don't say anything, Kate. I know who that is.
(crossing to the front door--)
Coming Steven...

LIGHTS OUT

CURTAIN