

Cast of Characters

GENE, in his/her late 20s, early 30s

ELIOT, Gene's roommate, around the same age

MARISA, Gene's fiancée, around the same age

KAY, Marisa's mother, in her late 40s, early 50s

Setting

A loft in Detroit.

Time

The present.

Production Notes

The character of Gene can be played by either a male or female actor for the entire play, or if desired, can be played by a male in the first act and a female in the second act. Should this latter option be preferred, the male and female actors should be roughly the same size and build to lend credence to the transformation.

If desired, a different National Football League team can be substituted for the Detroit Lions, preferably a team not known for being particularly competent or successful.

Acknowledgments

Consider the Oyster premiered at The Purple Rose Theatre Company, Chelsea, Michigan on June 24, 2011, with the following cast and crew:

GENE	Michael Brian Ogden
ELIOT	Matthew David
MARISA	Stacie Hadgikosti
KAY	Sarab Kamoo
A WOMAN	Rhiannon Ragland
Director	Guy Sanville
Set Design	Dennis G. Crawley
Properties Design	Danna Segrest
Costume Design	Sally L. Converse-Doucette
Lighting Design	Reid G. Johnson
Sound Design	Tom Whalen
Stage Manager	Stephanie Buck

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Consider the Oyster received its world premiere at The Purple Rose Theatre Company (Guy Sanville, Artistic Director; Jeff Daniels, Executive Director; Alan Ribant, Managing Director).

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Consider the Oyster, Aurora Fox Theatre, Aurora, Colorado (2013). Photo courtesy of the Aurora Fox Theatre.

CONSIDER THE OYSTER

by David MacGregor

ACT I

(A loft in Detroit that has been retrofitted into an abandoned factory. It has two levels, connected by the ramp of an old loading dock. The appliances have a heavy, industrial feel and perhaps there is some graffiti spray-painted here and there. The loft is shared by two men, two men who at this moment sit frozen like ice sculptures on a February morning. GENE and ELIOT both wear the Honolulu blue jerseys of the Detroit Lions football team and GENE also has on a Detroit Lions cap. They both stare transfixed at the TV, as if they are witnessing the second coming of Jesus Christ.)

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover:)* Well, would you believe it? One second left in this year's Super Bowl and the Detroit Lions find themselves down by two points to the Pittsburgh Steelers! What a game!

TV COLOR ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover:)* Incredible! The single most incredible Super Bowl I have ever seen! The Lions have absolutely played their hearts out!

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. And here we go! The Lions have the ball on the fifty yard line, with time for one Hail Mary pass. Hold on...there seems to be some confusion...

TV COLOR ANNOUNCER. The Lions are sending out their field goal unit! The Lions are going for the field goal!

GENE. WHAT???

(GENE's entire body spasms in outrage as ELIOT shakes his head in disbelief.)

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. But nobody seems to have told their offense, who are still on the field! Folks, it is total chaos out there...and the Lions call time out! We'll be right back!

(GENE stabs at the mute button on the remote control as ELIOT screams into a pillow.)

GENE. We should breathe! We should remember to keep breathing.

(Both men rush to the refrigerator to get fresh beers.)

ELIOT. They're not really going for the field goal, are they? That's a sixty-seven yard field goal.

GENE. No. No way. They're drawing up a play. Some trick play. You know, double, triple lateral or something.

ELIOT. Yeah! Yeah, that has to be it.

(The door to the apartment opens and MARISA comes in with KAY.)

MARISA. Hi guys! Is the game still on?

(GENE comes over to MARISA and gives her a kiss.)

GENE. The Lions are down by two. One second to go.

(MARISA models her new coat.)

MARISA. Do you like it?

GENE. Like what?

MARISA. My new coat! It's a Dolce & Gabbana.

GENE. A who?

MARISA. Dolce & Gabbana. Don't you remember me telling you? I've been saving up all year for this coat.

GENE. It's nice. Is that vinyl?

MARISA. It's leather! It's a double-breasted re-interpretation of the classical military jacket.

GENE. Right. I think the game's about to come back on.

(KAY picks up the remote.)

KAY. Do you mind if I check the Weather Channel? I want to know if it's supposed to snow tomorrow.

GENE and ELIOT. Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

(GENE and ELIOT rush KAY and wrestle the remote away from her.)

KAY. I was joking!

(GENE punches the mute button and the sound comes back on. Completely uninterested in the game, KAY pulls out her phone to check messages.)

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. And I don't believe what I am seeing! It looks like the Lions are really going for the field goal. Jason Hanson is out on the field!

TV COLOR ANNOUNCER. Well, I don't know what to say. The Lions are going for a sixty-seven yard field goal attempt. Not only would that be the longest field goal in Super Bowl history, it would be the longest field goal in the history of the National Football League.

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. And the Steelers aren't buying it! They call their final time out! Don't go anywhere, folks! Back in sixty seconds!

(GENE hits the mute on the remote.)

GENE. Oh my God...just shoot me!

(ELIOT gets on his knees.)

GENE. What are you doing?

ELIOT. What does it look like I'm doing? I'm praying. That's what I'm doing. Now get down here and help me out.

(GENE gets on his knees.)

KAY. You're praying for a field goal?

ELIOT. No, we're praying for an end to over fifty years of losing. Fifty years of bad draft picks, stupid trades, horrible management, and idiotic coaches. We're praying that for just once, in our lifetimes, something good happens to the Detroit Lions.

KAY. Well then, you're making a mockery of prayer. People pray for guidance. For wisdom. For salvation. Not for some football team.

(GENE stands up.)

GENE. She's right. This is stupid. And it is pretty goofy when a receiver thanks God every time he catches a pass.

ELIOT. Can I make a point here? Can I make just one simple, clear point here? This is the Lions.

(GENE gets back on his knees.)

KAY. Well, you can pray all you want, but God doesn't give out freebies.

MARISA. Mom, you're an atheist.

KAY. Well, that's my understanding. You can't just ask for stuff. You're supposed to barter. God likes to barter. You know, the Lions win the Super Bowl, you become celibate for life.

GENE. Celibate for life? How about if I give up hummus instead?

ELIOT. I'll pick up trash at the park.

GENE. And I'll call people on their birthdays.

ELIOT. It's on! It's on!

(GENE punches the mute button on the remote and the sound comes back on.)

TV PLAY BY PLAY ANNOUNCER. And here we go! It all comes down to this. Hanson has a decent tailwind behind him...here's the snap, the kick, and...

GENE and ELIOT. IT'S GOOD!!! AAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!

(GENE throws his hat in the air as he and ELIOT run amok around the loft, high-fiving and chest bumping.)

GENE and ELIOT. Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God! The Lions won the Super Bowl! Oh my God! They won...they won...Sweet Jesus in heaven, the Lions won the Super Bowl!

ELIOT. I can't believe it! I just...I can't believe it! The Lions won the Super Bowl! My Dad died waiting for this day!

GENE. My poor brother, he became a Cowboy fan because he never thought this day would come!

ELIOT. This is the greatest day of my life! It is! The greatest day of my life. Come on. Admit it, Gene. This is the greatest day of your life.

(GENE turns the TV off with the remote.)

GENE. No.

ELIOT. What? Why not?

GENE. Not yet it isn't. There's one more thing that will make this the greatest day of my life.

(GENE gets down on one knee before MARISA.)

GENE. Marisa, will you marry me?

KAY. What? No way, José! Marisa, do not answer that! You don't ask a girl to marry you just because your team won a stupid football game!

GENE. Marisa? Will you?

KAY. This is ridiculous! Look at you! You don't know what you're saying or what you're doing! If there was an orangutan in the room you'd propose to it!

GENE. Marisa?

KAY. You don't even have a ring! You can't propose without a ring! That's a law! I'm almost positive! Marisa, you are not obliged to answer any proposal made without a ring!

(ELIOT grabs a bag of pretzel rings and tosses it to GENE.)

ELIOT. Coming at you, Romeo!

(GENE pulls out a pretzel ring and holds it towards MARISA.)

KAY. What? That's a pretzel! That's not a proper ring!

GENE. Marisa Lulubelle Carter. Will you marry me?

MARISA. YES!!!

KAY. NO!!!

(GENE slides the pretzel on MARISA's finger, then stands up to embrace and kiss her.)

MARISA. Look, Mom! Isn't it beautiful!

KAY. I think I'm going to be sick.

MARISA. We should celebrate!

GENE. You're damned right we should celebrate! The Lions don't win the Super Bowl every day!

MARISA. I'll run out and get some champagne!

GENE. And chips! We could use some more chips!

(MARISA rushes from the room. ELIOT extends his hand to GENE.)

ELIOT. Congratulations.

GENE. Thanks! I'm doing it, Eliot! I'm getting married! What do you say? Best man?

ELIOT. You know it!

GENE. Or you should get married too! Double ceremony!

ELIOT. Now that would be a double ceremony worth talking about. But it ain't gonna happen.

GENE. If the Lions can win the Super Bowl, anything can happen! Did you see that kick? Sixty-seven yards, baby! Come on, tee me up! Tee me up!

(ELIOT tees up an invisible football.)

ELIOT. Here you go! Put it through the uprights!

GENE. On two! Hut, hut!

(GENE winds up, kicks, loses his balance, but seems to recover...)

GENE. I'm good...

(...before falling awkwardly over a piece of furniture. There is the sickening sound of a femur cracking in two, then silence, aside from weak, animal-like sounds emanating from GENE, whose leg is twisted awkwardly beneath him.)

ELIOT. Gene? You okay?

KAY. What was that cracking sound?

GENE. My leg...I just broke my leg...oh my God...oh God...

(KAY walks over to GENE.)

KAY. This one?

(She prods his leg with her foot and GENE unleashes a primeval howl of pain.)

KAY. It's his right leg.

ELIOT. What is wrong with you?

KAY. I was just making a diagnosis.

(ELIOT looks more closely at GENE's twisted leg and he knows it's not good.)

ELIOT. Oh Jesus. Sorry buddy.

(ELIOT straightens out the leg, the bone crunching audibly as GENE screams again. ELIOT and KAY stare down at GENE.)

KAY. It's too bad he broke it in his own apartment and not out in the street. I could have sued somebody for you. Should I call an ambulance?

GENE. No ambulance...can't afford it...

ELIOT. Come on, buddy. I'll get you to the E.R.

(ELIOT heaves GENE over his shoulder, but then trips on his way to the door, sending them both sprawling. ELIOT gets up limping, opens the door and drags GENE towards it as KAY follows.)

KAY. I'll just wait, shall I? The champagne should be here any second. We won't start without you! Good luck! Go Lions!

(KAY slams the door before GENE is all the way through, and he screams once more.)

KAY. Morons. *(She pokes around the kitchen.)* I am in definite need of a pick-me-up. *(She finds the alcohol and begins making a White Russian as she talks to herself.)* Marisa Lulubelle, if you think I have any intention of calling your grandmother and telling her that you are marrying a football-watching, pretzel-giving, leg-breaking rodeo clown like

Gene Walsh, you have another think coming. *(She opens the fridge and pulls out a carton of cream, attempts to pour some into her drink, but it comes out in thick lumps.)* Oh my God!

(MARISA enters with the champagne.)

MARISA. I got the champagne!

KAY. Thank heavens!

MARISA. *(Looking around.)* Where's Gene? Where's Eliot?

KAY. Probably at the hospital by now.

MARISA. The hospital? What happened?

KAY. Stupidity happened.

MARISA. Mom, what—

KAY. Well, there's no way to break this to you gently, so you'll just have to brace yourself. Your boyfriend broke his leg kicking an invisible football.

MARISA. Oh my God! Is he all right?

KAY. He's fine. Let's see that champagne. *(She pulls out the bottle.)* Korbelt? God help us. They didn't have Duval-Leroy?

MARISA. I don't know! But what about Gene? We should go to the hospital!

KAY. Gene can wait. You and I need to talk.

MARISA. About what?

(KAY pops open the champagne.)

KAY. Here's to shattered femurs and broken hearts!

(KAY takes a long swig.)

MARISA. Broken...? Whose heart is broken?

KAY. Mine. If you seriously have any intention of marrying a nitwit like Gene.

MARISA. Whether or not Gene and I get married is none of your business!

KAY. None of my business? None of my business? I am your mother! I have been planning your wedding since you were in utero, young lady!

MARISA. I love Gene and he loves me!

KAY. No, you don't! You don't have enough experience to know whether or not you're in love. You went through four years of high

school and four years of college and how many serious boyfriends did you have? Zero. As in nada. As in zilch. And now you're in love?

MARISA. I don't need to date everyone in the city to know whether or not I'm in love! And do you know what I realized the other day? I just like being with Gene. I've never felt that way about anyone else. We don't have to be doing anything. We don't have to be talking or going somewhere. He can be doing his thing and I can be doing mine and I'm happy just to be with him.

KAY. Wonderful. You're capable of being bored witless together. It sounds like a match made in heaven.

MARISA. Give me one reason we shouldn't we get married!

KAY. Oh, I don't know. Maybe because he gave you a pretzel for an engagement ring?

MARISA. That was a beautiful, spontaneous gesture!

KAY. Gene's whole life is a spontaneous gesture! He doesn't think, he doesn't plan, he just makes it up as he goes along!

MARISA. That's an exaggeration.

KAY. Oh really? Both he and Eliot went to law school, am I right? Now, I'm a little bit foggy on the details, but when did they graduate exactly? What high-powered law firms did they join?

MARISA. They didn't. But just because you're a lawyer doesn't mean everyone has to be one.

KAY. That's not my point. My point is, they couldn't cut it. Neither one of them. They both quit and now Eliot is a cook and Gene teaches third-graders.

MARISA. Eliot is a very talented chef and Gene happens to be a wonderful teacher. He loves those kids.

KAY. And do you know why he loves the kids? Why he gets along so well with them? Because he's one of them! He's at the emotional level of an eight-year-old! And Eliot, he gets along better with vegetables than he does with other human beings!

MARISA. Mom, I know Gene is a little rough around the edges. That's part of his charm. And that will change once we get married.

KAY. Oh my God. I gave birth to a congenital idiot.

MARISA. What do you mean—

KAY. He's not going to change! What is wrong with you? Change? Let me tell you something. All the mindless, stupid, infantile things he does on a regular basis? That's just the tip of the iceberg! He's

holding the rest of the disgusting things he does in as best he can! He's trying to keep them a secret!

MARISA. That's ridiculous!

KAY. No, that's the way courtship works, my dear. Right now, Gene is desperately trying to give you the version of himself that he thinks you want. But that's not the real Gene. Not by a long shot. And the minute you get married, the mask will drop, trust me.

MARISA. That's not true!

KAY. Oh no? You really think you know him? You really think he knows you?

MARISA. Well, of course he knows me!

KAY. Does he? Does he know that you were born with two webbed toes? Does he know that when you were fourteen you changed your name to Roxy? Does he know that you still sleep with a stuffed guinea pig named Gingerbread?

MARISA. Mom, for God's sake!

KAY. Marisa—

MARISA. I'm not going to argue with you. I'm sorry Gene isn't the person you want him to be, but we're getting married and that's that!

(MARISA heads for the door, but KAY grabs her by the arm and swings her back into the room. They face each other down like sumo wrestlers.)

KAY. Sweetheart, I understand certain...urges. I do. I know you have needs. Every woman has needs. So you go right ahead and bang your brains out with Gene with my blessing. But for God's sake, do not marry him!

MARISA. I'm not listening to this.

KAY. Give me that ring, I mean, pretzel.

MARISA. No!

KAY. Marisa, give me the damned pretzel!

MARISA. I will not!

(KAY goes for MARISA and they struggle for the pretzel until it breaks.)

MARISA. Oh my God. You broke my engagement ring.

KAY. I'll do better than that.

(KAY stuffs the pieces of pretzel in her mouth and chews them.)

KAY. There! The engagement is off!

MARISA. You ate my ring! I can't believe it! You ate my engagement ring!

KAY. You'll thank me one day. And by this time tomorrow, your engagement ring will be exactly where it deserves to be.

MARISA. You're horrible! You're a horrible, horrible woman!

(MARISA runs from the apartment. KAY shrugs, grabs the bottle of champagne, and swigs from it as she exits. Lights shift as GENE enters on crutches, with a full leg cast that has been signed and scribbled on by third-graders. He goes to the sofa, sits down, grabs the remote and flips the TV on. ELIOT enters through the front door, carrying some groceries.)

ELIOT. Hey, I found the most amazing pomegranates at Eastern Market! You want a pomegranate smoothie?

GENE. Sure! Fire me up.

ELIOT. What you watching?

GENE. *The View*.

ELIOT. *The View*? Jesus. You're really starting to go stir crazy, aren't you?

GENE. What do you mean?

ELIOT. Isn't that a chick show?

GENE. It's not just for women. It's interesting. For your information, it's not all about makeovers and diets.

ELIOT. If you say so.

GENE. Yesterday's show was on flesh-eating bacteria, all right? And today there's a quiz to see whether or not you're rude.

ELIOT. Okay.

GENE. Maybe you need to take that quiz.

ELIOT. Maybe you need to get your life back and stop sitting around on your ass. That cast is coming off today, right?

GENE. Right.

ELIOT. Good.

GENE. Why good?

ELIOT. Because the past couple of weeks, you've been starting to act kind of squirrely.

GENE. What are you talking about?

ELIOT. Well, take yesterday, for example. I'm out here eating a Kit-Kat bar, I go into my room for a second, I come back and the candy bar is gone.

GENE. I put it in the fridge. I told you that!

ELIOT. I was going to finish it!

GENE. How am I supposed to know that? You want to live in a pigsty?

ELIOT. No, I wanted to eat my goddamned candy bar! And what about last night? When we ordered carry-out from Tony's? Normally, you get the rack of ribs. What did you order yesterday?

GENE. The Cobb Salad. What's wrong with that? I've been laid up for two months! I'm getting puffy and out of shape! I would kind of like my pants to fit when I get this damned thing off!

ELIOT. Whatever.

GENE. Hey, you know what? Forget the smoothie. I don't need the calories. Could you grab me a Diet Coke? And some almonds. Not the smoked ones. The other ones. I'm gonna need a coaster too. I don't want to get any water rings on the table.

(ELIOT gets the Diet Coke, almonds, and coaster. He tosses them at GENE.)

ELIOT. Anything else? You want me to stick a broom up my ass so I can sweep the place while I'm getting you snacks?

(GENE turns the TV off.)

GENE. What is wrong with you?

ELIOT. Gene, you're my best friend, and I'm sorry you broke your leg, but you've been milking this pretty good.

GENE. Milking? I broke my femur in two places! The doctor said it was one of the worst—did I ever show you the x-rays?

ELIOT. No.

GENE. Did I tell you what they had to do to fix it? Three screws, a titanium rod, and, I might add, oyster shells.

ELIOT. What? Oyster shells?

GENE. You heard me. It was such a bad break they had to patch me up with ground up oyster shells.

ELIOT. You're making that up.

GENE. No, it's this new technique they're using. It's cutting edge stuff. The oyster shell combines with the bone to help it heal faster.

ELIOT. You know, you might have something there. Because your ass has been welded to that sofa the same way oysters attach themselves to rocks.

GENE. Funny.

ELIOT. Who knows? Maybe you'll start crapping pearls.

GENE. That's hilarious. Really.

ELIOT. Maybe you'll taste good with a squirt of lemon.

GENE. I'm glad you find advances in medical science so amusing.

ELIOT. Listen, Oyster Boy, if you're all healed up, then go to the hospital and get the damned thing off. Then you can fetch me smoked almonds for a couple of months.

GENE. *(Checking his watch.)* I can't leave yet.

ELIOT. Why not?

GENE. Marisa and her Mom are stopping by.

ELIOT. For what?

GENE. To go over the wedding plans.

ELIOT. Well, that won't take long. Just agree with everything they say and you're done.

GENE. But they want my input. I've been looking at—*(Off ELIOT's laughter.)* What are you laughing at?

ELIOT. They don't want your input! What are you thinking?

GENE. They do!

ELIOT. No, they don't! Gene, you did your part. You courted the lovely lady and won her heart with the finest pretzel money could buy. Now, all you have to do is wear what they tell you to wear and show up on time.

GENE. Just remember, you need to show up on time too.

ELIOT. I'll be there! And if you change your mind at the last second, I'll help you make your getaway.

GENE. What?

ELIOT. That's what best men are for. They're not there for the wedding, they're there for the escape. If you get cold feet, I'm the guy who holds back angry family members while you make your run for freedom. It's a sacred duty among men.

GENE. You think I'm going to change my mind?

ELIOT. It's been known to happen.

GENE. Not with me, it won't. Marisa is...

ELIOT. What?

GENE. I don't know. I can't explain it. Well, I could, but it would sound pretty goofy.

ELIOT. I can handle goofy.

GENE. Well, I love the way she looks when she raises one eyebrow and the way she sneaks a glance at me to see if I'm laughing at the same part of a movie. And sometimes at night, if I can't sleep and I see the moon out my window, all I can think about is that maybe, at that very moment, Marisa is staring at the moon out of her window too. And I know it sounds crazy, but I love that feeling, that possibility, that even though we're miles apart, we're sharing that moment.

ELIOT. Okay, that was pretty goofy.

GENE. Shut up.

ELIOT. Hey, it's the nature of the beast. The kind of love you're describing? The moon and the eyebrows and whatnot? It's like a mental illness.

GENE. It is not!

ELIOT. Oh no? Then you tell me. What is the difference between stalking someone and true love?

GENE. The difference? Stalkers are nutjobs! Stalking is a crime!

ELIOT. No, stalking is when only one of you feels that way. True love is when you both feel that way.

GENE. Where do you come up with this stuff?

ELIOT. Chopping up vegetables, mostly. It gives you time to think about things. Say, how did Marisa finally get her mother to go along with the wedding?

GENE. She stopped talking to her for a month.

ELIOT. Nice.

GENE. Yeah, it took me a while to figure it out, but it's Marisa who really runs the show between her and her Mom. So everything's patched up and we're good to go.

ELIOT. You're sure about that?

GENE. Absolutely. From this point on, it's nothing but clear skies and smooth sailing.

(There is loud, angry consternation as KAY and MARISA come through the front door.)

KAY. You're being ridiculous! This isn't just about you, Marisa! If you would just listen to me! Are you saying I talk too much?

MARISA. Ridiculous? I'm the one getting married! No? Well, who is it about then? But you never stop talking! I'm saying I can't hear myself think!

(MARISA plops on the couch next to GENE, weighed down with wedding catalogs. She shoots her mom a glare, then turns a radiant smile on GENE.)

MARISA. We're here!

GENE. That's a lot of catalogs.

MARISA. Well, there's a lot to choose from. Lots of decisions to make. We were just talking about floral arrangements, weren't we, Mother?

(KAY manages a pained smile as GENE takes some of the catalogs from MARISA.)

GENE. You look nice, Kay. Is that a new necklace?

KAY. Why yes! I just picked it up in New York at... *(Her eyes narrow suspiciously.)* ...Tiffany's.

GENE. It's lovely! Well, it looks like we have a lot to get to. Eliot, could you get everyone some drinks?

ELIOT. I'd love to.

KAY. Well, we won't be here long because there really isn't that much to discuss—

MARISA. Yes, there is!

KAY. No, there isn't. Gene, would you prefer to wear black or gray socks?

MARISA. Mom! You promised to try and—I'm sorry, Gene.

GENE. No, it's a valid question. But the socks would depend on the suit I was wearing. Which, of course, would depend on the kind of gown Marisa was wearing. Now, I know you've both been giving this a lot of time and consideration, but I did have some thoughts on your dress.

KAY. You what?

GENE. Well, as you know, I've been laid up for the past eight weeks and I've had some time on my hands, so I've been doing a little wedding research online.

KAY. You what?

GENE. So what I'm thinking for Marisa, and I'm just throwing this out there, is a Galina Signature dress, with a taffeta high-collar, a side-draped trumpet with beading and, I wouldn't even mention this if I didn't think you could pull it off, a Chapel train.

MARISA. A taffeta high-collar? Really?

GENE. Absolutely! I'm telling you, throw in some white gloves and maybe some satin pleated peep toe sling-back sandals, and ooh baby! Just a suggestion. But listen, we can come back to that. If you two were discussing flowers, let's start there. What are you thinking?

MARISA. Well, we hadn't really decided on—

GENE. Can I just say one thing? Not that I'm not open to possibilities, but when it comes to weddings, I have seen enough roses and gardenias and peonies to last me a lifetime. I think we should up the ante. I do. I mean, how many times do you get married? So, I'm saying, and try to picture this...white orchids. Maybe accented with orange and yellow hyacinths.

MARISA. I love orchids!

GENE. Great! Me too! Then let's—

KAY. Stop right there! You just stop right there! I have heard about enough of this! Taffeta high-collars and white orchids. What are you up to?

GENE. You don't like orchids?

KAY. This isn't about the damned orchids! It's about you...you are up to something. I don't know what it is, but you can bet your ass I'm going to find out! This consultation is over!

(KAY sweeps up all the catalogs and heads for the door and exits.)

MARISA. Mom! Gene, I'm sorry! Don't worry about my Mom, I'll handle her. But I love your ideas, I really do! I'll call you!

(MARISA heads out after KAY. She blows ELIOT a kiss, which he catches, then she exits. ELIOT closes the door behind her, then starts clapping as he comes back to GENE.)

ELIOT. Oh my God. That was beautiful! I mean, just beautiful. God, I wish I had taped that.

GENE. What are you talking about?

ELIOT. That's a lovely necklace, Kay. I'm thinking a taffeta high-collar gown. And speaking for myself, I simply adore white orchids. Oh Jesus. You played her like a violin. She didn't know what the hell was going on.

GENE. You think I hurt her feelings?

ELIOT. Feelings? Kay? She doesn't have any feelings. She's like some kind of primordial beast. I think she probably registers heat and cold, but that's about it.

GENE. I don't know why she reacted that way.

ELIOT. Me neither. I can't imagine. Listen, I'm sorry if I was ripping on you earlier about getting you stuff. It was worth it just to see that performance. Now do us both a favor and go get that damned thing off.

GENE. Yeah, I'd better get going.

ELIOT. Then I'm gonna crash for a little bit. I was up till four last night with Dana and some of the guys. Wake me up when you get back and we'll grab some dinner. Hey, I know. How about Tom's Oyster Bar?

GENE. Will you give it a rest?

ELIOT. Actually, you probably shouldn't go there anymore. That would be cannibalism for you, right? Now that you're part oyster?

GENE. For Christ's sake.

ELIOT. You're right, you're right. Enough's enough. Not another word about shellfish. I'm going to clam up.

GENE. I'm going.

(GENE gathers up his wallet and keys as ELIOT heads for his bedroom.)

ELIOT. Oh hey, you want to hear something really cool about oysters? I learned about this in cooking school.

GENE. I thought you were clamming up.

ELIOT. I know, I know, but this really is amazing, and it's no joke. When they're born, all oysters start out as males, but then eventually, they all turn into females. Every one of them. It's something in their DNA. They kind of reprogram themselves and change gender. Wild, huh? Anyway, I'll catch you later, Rockefeller.

(ELIOT enters the bedroom and closes the door. GENE stands perfectly still, then pulls at the collar of his shirt and looks down at his chest. He shakes his head, then heads for the door. The day

wanes and lights shift. ELIOT comes out of the bedroom, waking up. He flips on the TV, surfs through a few channels, then checks his watch. He looks back at the front door, checks his watch again, turns the TV off and pulls out his phone. As he dials, GENE enters. The cast is gone, but he has a leg brace on for support, and walks with a limp. He holds a large manila envelope and has a dazed expression.)

ELIOT. Hey, I was just calling you! Where the hell you been? You're just getting back now?

(Off GENE's nod:)

ELIOT. It took them five hours to get a cast off? Gene? Is everything okay?

(Off GENE's shake of his head:)

ELIOT. What's going on? Is it your leg? Gene, talk to me!

GENE. There's been a...complication.

ELIOT. Hey, you don't look so good. You'd better sit down. You want a beer or something?

GENE. Forget it. Just forget it.

ELIOT. Gene, you're scaring me. What happened at the hospital? Did they find a tumor? Are you dying or something? *(Off GENE's shake of his head:)* No? Then what is it? What's going on?

GENE. You know your oyster joke? About boy oysters turning into girl oysters? Well, it's no joke.

ELIOT. What? What are you talking about?

GENE. It's no joke. It's real...it's...it's real.

ELIOT. Wait a second. You're not saying that...

GENE. That's exactly what I'm saying.

ELIOT. No.

GENE. Yes.

ELIOT. Come on.

GENE. I swear.

ELIOT. No way.

GENE. Way.

ELIOT. That's impossible.

GENE. Apparently not.

ELIOT. Okay, this is getting ridiculous. Are we even talking about the same thing here? You're saying that...

GENE. I AM TURNING INTO A WOMAN!!!! There! Are you happy? Is that clear enough for you? I am turning into a woman. I am transforming into a girl. I am becoming a female. A person of the feminine persuasion. A dame. A broad. A skirt. I am passing from manhood to womanhood, with all of the wonders and benefits that that entails. Certain things are appearing and certain other things are disappearing. I am turning into a woman.

ELIOT. Who told you that?

GENE. A bunch of people! All of them wearing lab coats and with lots of initials after their names.

ELIOT. But I've never heard of—

GENE. I just sat in a hospital room for five hours with an orthopedic surgeon, a neurologist, a geneticist, a gender specialist, two medical ethicists, and four hospital lawyers! They took measurements and scans and fluids and every other thing they could take and that was their conclusion. Minute by minute and day by day I am turning from male to female.

ELIOT. I don't believe it.

GENE. Are you even listening to me? Are you listening to a word I say?

ELIOT. Well, of course I'm—

GENE. Then why are you questioning me?

ELIOT. I'm not! I just don't—I can't...

GENE. Fine! Then don't believe me! See if I care!

(GENE storms off into his bedroom and slams the door. ELIOT knocks on the door, then talks through it.)

ELIOT. Gene? Gene, listen. I don't know what's going on and you're obviously upset, but what you're talking about, yeah, you see it in oysters and maybe some fish, but I swear to you, you never see it in mammals. And human beings are mammals! It just doesn't happen!

GENE. *(Offstage:)* Go away!

ELIOT. What I'm saying is, there has got to be some other explanation. Listen, why don't we go back to the hospital, all right? We'll just go back and—

(GENE opens the bedroom door, comes out and lifts up his shirt to reveal his breasts [possibly wearing a bra, but possibly not]. He lowers his shirt as a stunned ELIOT avoids his gaze.)

GENE. You were saying? Eliot? You were saying?

ELIOT. Those are some nice breasts.

GENE. Thank you.

ELIOT. Very...pert.

GENE. How kind of you to notice.

ELIOT. Gene, what the hell? I don't get this. You mean to tell me that you didn't notice that you were...blossoming?

GENE. I thought I was just putting on a few pounds here and there! That's all! You know, being sedentary for so long. What was I supposed to think? Oh no, I'm growing breasts!? What kind of sane person would think that?

ELIOT. Yeah, I guess. That makes sense. Wow. I mean...wow. How are things...down below?

GENE. Diminishing. I didn't want to believe it at first. I thought it was some kind of optical illusion or something. To tell you the truth, the last week or so, I kind of stopped looking.

ELIOT. Sure. Who wouldn't?

GENE. Exactly.

ELIOT. No point in...

GENE. You got it.

ELIOT. Well, what did the doctors tell you?

GENE. Not much. They were, you know, trying to be professional and everything. They brought out these 3-D genitalia models and tried to explain it...testes this, labia that. But they were a little freaked out, to be honest. They even had a guard outside the door, and everyone in the room had to sign all these confidentiality papers.

ELIOT. But did they tell you anything about the procedure they did...the stuff with the oyster shells?

GENE. Oh yeah. It's all in here. *(He pulls some papers from the manila envelope.)* Studies and data and all that. What they used is called nacre. It's the shiny stuff in oyster shells.

ELIOT. You mean mother of pearl?

GENE. Right. Same thing. Here's the original study some French biologists did.

(GENE hands the document to ELIOT.)

ELIOT. (Reading:) "Since human beings and oysters share the capacity for self-repair, seeding bones with oyster shells may help speed up the process of biomineralization, and we now believe that nacre obtained from the *Pinctada maxima* oyster can be used to stimulate bone growth. It can be grafted on to bone and accepted by the human body, where it releases active molecules that induce bone regeneration." (He looks up.) Jesus. And that's not the only thing it induces. Side effects may include dry mouth or gender change.

GENE. There aren't supposed to be any side effects! This has never happened before. Not to anyone. Ever. They said it was a miracle. A billion to one shot.

ELIOT. Kind of like the Lions winning the Super Bowl?

GENE. Something like that.

ELIOT. Unbelievable. So, did the doctors tell you anything else? I mean, is this a permanent deal or just a gender vacation?

GENE. They don't know. Nobody knows. It's never happened before!

ELIOT. Well, they're going to try and change you back, right?

GENE. No. That was the first thing I asked. But they said they wouldn't know what to do, because maybe things will change back on their own. Then again, maybe they won't. "Time will tell," they said. So, in the meantime...

ELIOT. In the meantime, try to look on the bright side.

GENE. The bright side? Did you just say, "look on the bright side?"

ELIOT. Why not? What else are you going to do?

GENE. Then maybe I'm missing something. I must be. My entire life has just been picked up and ripped into tiny little bits. So what is this bright side? Other people can look at me and feel better about themselves? They can say, "Well, I just totaled my car, but at least I'm not Gene! I just lost my job, but at least I'm not Gene!" Is that the bright side? My shredded existence becomes the confetti in other people's lives?

ELIOT. Okay, calm down for a second and let's try and look at this logically, all right? Let's see if we can put some positive spin on this.

GENE. You're kidding, right?

ELIOT. Just hear me out. Point number one. Women live longer than men.

GENE. Oh Jesus!

(GENE heads for the fridge and pulls out a beer.)

ELIOT. Point number two. They didn't have four lawyers at that meeting just for eye candy. That hospital is scared shitless you're going to sue them for big bucks. And you should! Hell, hire Marisa's mom. That's her field of expertise—personal injury lawsuits. You're sitting on a major malpractice payday. I mean, we're talking millions! Maybe tens of millions!

GENE. I don't want money! I want to be a man! A tough, testosterone-fueled, "that didn't hurt" man! What if this is permanent? What if I turn into a complete pussy?

ELIOT. Well, actually—

GENE. You know what I mean! I want to be the person I have always been! I want to stand up when I take a piss, eat beef jerky for breakfast, and watch a football game between two teams I've never heard of and enjoy it! I want to be me!

ELIOT. Well, you're still you. Same person. Just with different options. You want to hear point number three?

GENE. Do I have a choice?

ELIOT. Your name. Gene. Jean. No difference. You can change the spelling if you want, but you don't have to change what people call you. That's kind of a lucky break.

GENE. Great. Yeah. Wow. That does make it all better. I'll remember that when I'm in the shower and I look down and there's no there there!

ELIOT. Hey, don't get pissed at me! All I'm trying to do is provide a little perspective here, all right? Your...I don't know what you want to call it...condition? It is what it is. Maybe you don't like it, but it is what it is.

GENE. Oh, that's profound. Really. That's deep, man. You're just a goddamned guru, aren't you?

ELIOT. What I'm saying is that your situation...it's like that serenity prayer thing. Accept the things you can change and...accept the stuff you can't change too.

GENE. That's not the serenity prayer!

ELIOT. Close enough. You get the idea.

GENE. Yeah, well, I am not accepting anything. This whole thing... it's between us, got it? Not a word to anyone.

ELIOT. What are you talking about? You're going to try and hide it?

GENE. You're damned right I'm going to hide it! What do you think I'm going to do? Walk into a class full of third-graders and say, "Hi kids! From now on, Mr. Walsh would like to be called Miss Walsh?" Forget it! I'll keep my hair short, tape down anything that needs to be taped down, and there you go.

ELIOT. So you're going to be a closet woman?

GENE. Yes! That's exactly what I'm going to be! A closet woman. And this closet is staying shut!

ELIOT. Come on.

GENE. I can do it. I will do it.

ELIOT. Hiding it is not the way to go. You're going to spend the rest of your life that way?

GENE. Like you're one to talk.

ELIOT. I am one to talk.

GENE. Oh really? Just how many of your friends and relatives know that you're gay?

ELIOT. The ones who need to know.

GENE. Well, isn't that convenient?

ELIOT. What am I supposed to do? Wear a bright pink hat that says, "I am gay" on it?

GENE. Hey, when they put us together as roommates when we were freshmen in the dorm, I had no idea you were gay.

ELIOT. And I had no idea you liked Journey! But I figured it out!

GENE. All right, but my point is, you have the choice, don't you?

ELIOT. What choice?

GENE. Of people knowing or not knowing. Me, unless I hide it, I'll be walking down the street with bazombas out to here!

ELIOT. Gene, you can't hide what's happening to you.

GENE. Oh no? Give me one reason why not.

ELIOT. Marisa?

GENE. Oh Jesus...Marisa. That would make for an awkward honeymoon.

ELIOT. It would be memorable, that's for sure.

(GENE wanders to the fridge and pulls out a big container of ice cream. He gets a spoon and starts eating.)

GENE. What do I tell her?

ELIOT. There's not exactly a long list of possibilities there. Either you tell her to order two wedding gowns or...

GENE. I call the wedding off. I have to call it off. She doesn't want to marry a woman. We can't get married.

ELIOT. Yep. Not much choice there. Besides, gay marriage is illegal in Michigan.

GENE. I'm not gay!

ELIOT. You are now.

GENE. Holy shit...I'm a lesbian.

ELIOT. Well, are you sure? Obviously, you've got a lot of things going on inside of you physically. What about mentally? Are you still attracted to women?

GENE. I don't know. I haven't had any time to think about it.

ELIOT. Well, let's try something. Close your eyes.

GENE. Why?

ELIOT. I want you to think about being with Marisa. Come on. Close your eyes.

(GENE closes his eyes.)

ELIOT. Now imagine this. Imagine that Marisa texts you a little before midnight and says she wants to see you. Needs to see you. Has to see you. Five minutes later she's at the door, hair messed up, shirt a little undone, and her eyes, her eyes are just burning into you as she chews on her lower lip. She doesn't say a word, but she doesn't have to. You can feel her desire, she's almost shaking with it. And as you take her by the wrist and lead her to the bedroom, you can feel her pulse pounding like—

(GENE's eyes snap open.)

GENE. I'm definitely a lesbian.

ELIOT. Okay, then. Welcome to the gay club. You want to see the secret handshake?

GENE. There's a handshake?

ELIOT. I'm kidding.

GENE. But I don't know how to be a lesbian!

ELIOT. Listen. Let's just take this one day at a time, all right? We'll try to get some more information and see what's really happening

here. So, you're right. Let's keep it under wraps for the time being. No harm in that. Nobody needs to know.

GENE. And Marisa?

ELIOT. We'll come up with something. You and me. Something very smooth and plausible. Something that conveys your deep feelings of love and respect for her, but tactfully communicates your hesitancy about rushing into such a major decision and commitment out of respect for her.

GENE. That's good. Yeah. Write that down.

(MARISA bursts in holding a catalog.)

MARISA. Gene! You got your cast off! I totally forgot today was the day! You look great! I finally have my gorgeous man back!

(MARISA rushes to hug GENE, and he does his best to hug her without actually pressing his chest against hers.)

MARISA. How do you feel?

GENE. Like a new person.

MARISA. Well, I have the most amazing news! Look what I found!

(She shows him the catalog.)

MARISA. It's the perfect wedding cake! I was looking and I was looking and I found this tiny little shop in Windsor! Isn't it perfect? Isn't it the most amazing wedding cake you've ever seen?

GENE. I can't marry you.

MARISA. What?

(The catalog drops from MARISA's nerveless fingers.)

GENE. I can't marry you.

MARISA. What are you saying? You...I don't understand. What are you saying?

GENE. I can't. I'm sorry.

MARISA. Eliot? What's happening here?

ELIOT. What Gene's trying to say is that his deep hesitancy is because of his respect for, um...wait...

MARISA. You can't marry me?

GENE. No.

MARISA. Is it another woman?

GENE. No!

ELIOT. Yes.

MARISA. What?

GENE. No, it isn't!

ELIOT. Yes, it is.

MARISA. Oh my God! How could you?

GENE. I didn't!

MARISA. Eliot just said you did!

GENE. Marisa, it's not what you think.

MARISA. How could it not be what I think? It's another woman!

GENE. No! It's...Eliot, tell Marisa the truth. Did I meet another woman?

ELIOT. Mmm...no.

GENE. Am I in love with another woman?

ELIOT. No.

GENE. Am I having any kind of relationship with another woman?

ELIOT. No.

GENE. You see?

MARISA. Then what...oh my God! It's another man! Eliot, did you turn Gene gay?

ELIOT. What? No!

MARISA. I thought it wasn't like that between you two! I thought you were just good friends!

ELIOT. We are! Marisa, you can't...you don't...seriously?

MARISA. You're right. I'm sorry. But I just don't understand. If it's not someone else...is it me? Is it something I did?

GENE. No, of course not.

MARISA. Then what? Tell me something. Tell me anything. Don't I at least deserve that? Please.

GENE. You're right. You deserve an explanation. You deserve the complete and honest truth. So, I'm just going to say this straight out. I can't marry you because I'm...I'm a schmuck. A total, goofball, idiot loser. I am. I see that now. I mean, I gave you a pretzel as an engagement ring. I didn't put any time or thought into it. I didn't think about what kind of stone or setting or ring you might like. I didn't take you out to a romantic restaurant or a moonlit beach. I just

gave you a salty snack because I was excited about a football game. That's pathetic. Because I'm pathetic. The truth is, I don't deserve you. I don't deserve anyone until I grow up a little.

MARISA. But you will! You can change! I know you can! Eliot, don't you believe that people can change?

ELIOT. Oh yeah. Big time.

MARISA. Even in the last few weeks I've noticed a change. Your interest in the wedding, the way you comment on what I'm wearing and how I look. And the biggest thing? We talk more. About all kinds of things! Places to live, what our house will look like. Just yesterday we spent half an hour talking about French Country kitchens!

GENE. Marisa, I'm a fraud! A complete and total fraud! I'm a poser. A faker. I'm not the person you think I am.

MARISA. What do you mean?

GENE. You want to know the truth about me? Well, here it is. I don't like French Country kitchens. And I don't like Yorkshire terriers. And I don't like shopping for antiques. I'm sorry. I don't expect you to understand, but...

MARISA. You'd be surprised how well I understand.

GENE. What do you mean?

MARISA. You want to be honest? Then let's both be honest. I'm not the person you think I am either.

GENE. Marisa, don't—

MARISA. It's true! I'm exactly like you! A complete and total fraud! A poser! A faker!

GENE. Marisa—

MARISA. You want to know the truth about me? I never liked going to old car shows! And I never liked Mel Gibson movies. And softball has to be the lamest, stupidest sport ever invented by humanity!

GENE. But you came to every one of my softball games.

MARISA. Because you were there! Because I wanted to see you. Because I liked the way your butt looked in those baseball pants. But a game where they put a beer at every base? That's not a sport, that's a bar on dirt.

GENE. You're right. You're absolutely right. And that's my point. We never really had that much in common. Sooner or later, you'd have realized that. Marisa, you're the straight A student going out with the class loser. The purebred going out with the mutt. It might seem

like a good idea right now, but that wouldn't last, don't you see? It'd be that same old story you see again and again. The train leaves Love Station full of hope and desire, but then somehow, somewhere along the way, the train jumps the tracks and you end up in Hate City. And you look at the person you used to love with all your heart, the person you wanted to spend the rest of your life with, and you can't understand what you ever saw in them in the first place. And I don't want that to happen. I don't want you to wind up hating me.

MARISA. So, what you're saying is, we should break up while we still love one another?

GENE. Exactly!

MARISA. Because it's for our own good.

GENE. There you go.

MARISA. And you're saying all this because of how much you love me?

GENE. Absolutely! If I didn't love you as much as I do, I'd marry you tomorrow! I would! I'd figure what the hell, Marisa's a good starter wife, let's give it a shot. But I don't want that for us. I don't want that for you. More than anything, I want you to be happy. And you wouldn't be happy with me. I guarantee you the day would come when you would look at me and say to yourself, "This is not the Gene I fell in love with. This is not the Gene I want to be with." And I don't think I could stand knowing that was happening.

MARISA. I guess I understand where you're coming from...I think. But it just feels wrong. Why can't we—?

GENE. Because we can't! We just can't. Marisa, I know this is out of the blue and everything, but it's for the best. It really is. It may not seem like it right now, but we're really pretty lucky.

MARISA. Lucky?

GENE. That we found all this out before we got married, instead of after.

MARISA. I guess that is kind of lucky.

GENE. You couldn't get much luckier.

(They look at one another, utterly miserable. MARISA picks the catalog she brought off the floor and puts it on the kitchen counter. She glances at GENE, who avoids her gaze, then heads for the door and exits.)

GENE. And as she walks out of the door and out of my life, I realize, at this moment, that I love her more than I ever loved her before.

ELIOT. Gene, I know you're pretty upset, but try not to narrate your own life. It's a little pretentious.

GENE. It's been a rough day, all right?! I'm turning into a woman, I found out I'm gay, and I just lost my fiancée. I think I'm entitled to a little pretentiousness!

(ELIOT picks up the papers GENE brought from the hospital.)

ELIOT. Yeah, I guess so. Well, look at it this way. The hardest part is over. Right?

(ELIOT hands GENE the papers.)

GENE. No. The hardest part will be keeping this a secret for the rest of my life.

ELIOT. You're sure about that?

GENE. Absolutely. No way, no how, is this getting out to anyone, ever. Gene Walsh is a man. Gene Walsh has always been a man. And Gene Walsh will always be a man.

(GENE tears the papers in half as lights fade.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Lights up on ELIOT fiddling around with a video camera.)

ELIOT. Gene! Come on, man. Get out here! We're good to go.

(GENE emerges from her bedroom. She is now a woman [and will be described using feminine pronouns for this act]. Just as in the opening of the play, she has on her Detroit Lions jersey and cap. She comes into the room, carrying a shoebox in front of her chest.)

ELIOT. What are you doing? We talked about this. If you're going to try and transition, you've got to be on board. So, can we lose the cap? Please?

(GENE puts the shoebox down, removes her cap and shoulder-length hair cascades down.)

ELIOT. Excellent. And the jersey?

(GENE takes off the Lions jersey to reveal a shapely feminine form.)

ELIOT. Nice. Really nice. What do you think?

GENE. I think it's too bad my Mom passed away. I could be the daughter she always wanted.

ELIOT. Absolutely. That's a good look for you. Kind of makes me wish I was heterosexual.

GENE. Give me a break.

ELIOT. Now that's a makeover. I'm telling you, skin peels and Botox have nothing on chromosomes and hormones.

GENE. I'm just trying this out, okay? Like the psychologist at the hospital said, I should at least see what it feels like. But I don't know.

ELIOT. Don't know what?

GENE. If I can pass.

ELIOT. If you can pass? Trust me, I think you've filled out rather nicely.

GENE. There is more to being a woman than just a couple of thingees and a...another thingee.

ELIOT. Try not to get all technical on me here.

GENE. What I'm saying is there has to be different, you know, feelings...perspectives...emotions. Right?

ELIOT. I guess you're going to find out. But I think you'll be fine. You just need to get comfortable with it and work on a few things.

Trust me, you'll be ready to walk into school with your new look in a couple of weeks.

GENE. Right. If I walked into my classroom looking like this, they'd fire me on the spot.

ELIOT. No, they wouldn't. Are you kidding me? They'd be falling all over themselves to avoid a discrimination lawsuit.

GENE. What are you talking about?

ELIOT. Gene, you're a male, female, straight, gay, transgender mother lode of discrimination possibilities. You're every attorney's wet dream. But you still can't show up at your school and go stomping around like a Neanderthal. Now slip those heels on and let's see how you look.

(GENE opens the box and pulls out a pair of five-inch heels. She starts to put the heels on, but it's harder than she thinks.)

GENE. Jesus...really?...come on...son of a bitch!

(One shoe goes on, then the other one. GENE stands up unsteadily, rocking back and forth.)

GENE. I'm good...

(One tiny motion and GENE crumples to the ground. ELIOT rushes to help, but GENE waves him off and stands up, still wobbling.)

GENE. Well?

ELIOT. I don't know. I mean, if you ask me, those are "come fuck me" heels.

GENE. They are not!

ELIOT. Not that I'm an expert or anything, but—

GENE. I thought they looked good. You don't think they look good?

ELIOT. I think you could probably find something a little more tasteful. But don't worry about that right now. Let's see you walk. I'll tape you so you can see what you look like.

(ELIOT starts recording as GENE walks up and down, awkward as a newborn colt.)

ELIOT. Glide...glide...chin up, come on...get those shoulders back a little...steady...eyes on the horizon...remember, you're a fabulous babe, that means you don't make eye contact with anyone...come on, put some life into it...you're not gliding.

(GENE stops.)

GENE. You want to try?

ELIOT. What's the problem? Are those shoes comfortable?

GENE. Of course they're not comfortable! They're supposed to be fashionable! And anything fashionable has to be either painful or humiliating. These are both.

(GENE staggers to the sofa and sits down.)

ELIOT. Sometimes you have to suffer for your art. And you're never going to learn how to walk like a woman sitting on a sofa.

GENE. Like a woman?

ELIOT. Men and women walk differently, all right? Get that through your head. Walking is all about context...who you're with, what you're doing, and so on.

GENE. What are you talking about?

ELIOT. The situation you're in matters.

(He demonstrates.)

ELIOT. You've got your regular walk, right? But if you're a man, and you're on the prowl, out comes the chest, little bit of a strut, "Here I am, world! I'm big, I'm bad, and I take what I want! Now outta my way, or I'll mow you down!" But if you're a woman, it's a completely different walk.

(He gestures to GENE to stand up and follow his example.)

ELIOT. You get that hip twitch going, get your junk moving side to side like it's nobody's business. "That's right. I got it. You want it. You get hold of this caboose and I'll take you for the ride of your life." You see what I mean?

(GENE gives up on hip twitching in exasperation.)

GENE. I'm not on the prowl! I just want to walk down to the store to get a pop and a candy bar.

ELIOT. I know, but this is your first time out in public. Like you said, you want to be able to pass. That's why we need to take a little game film first.

GENE. No, this is goofy. I just have to do this. I'm going out and my junk is staying where it belongs.

(GENE grabs her wallet and keys, wobbles awkwardly to the door and exits. ELIOT goes to the window and looks down at the street below.)

ELIOT. Okay, thatta boy—girl. So far, so—

MAN'S VOICE. (*Voiceover:*) Hey, baby! Nice tits!

ELIOT. That's not good.

(*Seconds later, GENE rushes back in.*)

GENE. Did you hear that? Did you hear what that sexist pig said to me?

ELIOT. I heard, I heard.

GENE. Nice tits? What kind of low-life pulls up to a light, looks out his window and yells, "Nice tits?!"

ELIOT. I know, I know. But in all fairness, they are nice tits. I said the same thing myself.

GENE. I don't mind you saying it! I know you! But a complete stranger? That's just disgusting! What is wrong with people? Have you ever done that? Have you ever seen a woman walking down the street and yelled "Nice tits!"

ELIOT. Can't say that I have.

GENE. This is a mistake. This whole thing is a bad idea. Nice tits. Yeah buddy, and you'd look good with my fist down your throat!

ELIOT. Whoa. You're one of those feisty broads, aren't you?

(*GENE takes off the heels.*)

GENE. Eliot, I swear to God, I am in a bad enough mood as it is—

ELIOT. What, is that time of the month already?

(*GENE brandishes one of the high heels like a weapon.*)

GENE. Come here. Come here so I can give you a new piercing.

(*GENE chases ELIOT around the apartment.*)

ELIOT. Gene, put the "come fuck me" heel down. I was joking, all right?

GENE. You think I'm going to take that crap?

ELIOT. Women take that crap all the time! You're going to have to get used to it.

GENE. Why should I?

ELIOT. Because you're a woman! Now put the shoe down. Put the shoe down! Come on, Gene, step away from the shoe!

(*GENE tosses the shoes back in the box, shoves them under the coffee table and sits down on the sofa.*)

GENE. You know what? Just shoot me. I can't do this.

ELIOT. Gene...

GENE. "That time of the month?" I can't believe you said that.

ELIOT. I wasn't being serious, okay? But you're going to have to get used to it. Same with that idiot out in the street. This is part of the process.

GENE. What process?

ELIOT. Getting some insight into what it's like to be a woman. It's not all candy and flowers and free drinks. And it may not feel like it right now, but what you're going through is a good experience.

GENE. Bullshit. There is not one single good thing about it.

ELIOT. Yes, there is! I'm telling you, if everybody switched gender at least once in their life, the world would be a better place.

GENE. How so?

ELIOT. Men would know what it's like to have a period and women would know what it's like to get hit in the balls. It would give people a little more empathy for one another.

GENE. I don't need empathy! I just want to have a normal life. I mean, I was getting tired of trying to hide it and worrying about it every day, but if I can't walk out into the street like this, I sure as hell can't walk into my classroom.

ELIOT. Why not? Why couldn't you just walk in and tell your class?

GENE. That's a joke, right?

ELIOT. Why couldn't you?

GENE. Because the minute I walked into that room, Gavin Wilcox would stand up, point at me, and yell, "Boobies! Mr. Walsh grew boobies!"

ELIOT. He'd get over it!

GENE. No, he wouldn't.

ELIOT. You can't live your life based on what a nine-year-old will say!

GENE. Most adults are just nine-year-olds with mortgages and expanding waistlines.

ELIOT. Gene—

GENE. No. This was a bad idea ten minutes ago, and it's an even worse idea now.

(ELIOT walks to the window and points out.)

ELIOT. Gene, you can't be afraid. You've got to get back on that horse. You've got to go out there and—

(ELIOT sees something that raises the hair on the back of his neck.)

ELIOT. —hide!

GENE. What? But you just said—

ELIOT. I was wrong! You need to hide! Right now!

GENE. But—

ELIOT. No time! Hide, hide, hide, hide, hide!

GENE. What am I—?

ELIOT. Shh! Hide!

(GENE hides behind the sofa just as KAY walks in through the open door. She wears her sharpest attorney outfit and carries a briefcase.)

KAY. Hello, Eliot. You're looking well. Is Gene in?

ELIOT. Gene?

KAY. Yes, Gene. The person you live with. Is he in?

(KAY begins to look around the loft as GENE tries to avoid being seen and ELIOT tries to distract her attention.)

ELIOT. Um...no. He's out...for a few hours. Or days. I don't know. He's a hard guy to keep track of.

KAY. I need to speak with him.

ELIOT. Well, I'll certainly let him know you stopped by. I'll have him call you.

KAY. No. No calls. No e-mails. No texts. I need to speak with Gene face to face.

(KAY goes to the kitchen and pours two glasses of scotch.)

ELIOT. Why?

KAY. Do you know what I do for a living, Eliot?

ELIOT. You're a lawyer.

KAY. Yes. A personal injury lawyer. That means I sue people for a living. And I'm very, very good at suing people. I have to be. Because I get paid on a contingency basis. Do you know what that means?

(KAY hands ELIOT a glass of scotch.)

ELIOT. It means you get your cut. You sue someone and your client wins three million dollars, then you get...

(KAY clinks her glass against ELIOT's.)

KAY. One million dollars. Thirty-three percent. That's why I need to talk to Gene. In person. Just so there's no troublesome paper trail or phone records.

(KAY makes her way to the sofa and sits down. ELIOT shields her view of GENE.)

ELIOT. About what? His broken leg? You were here. You saw the whole thing. It was an accident.

KAY. Oh, I agree. But what happened after that wasn't an accident.

(ELIOT sits next to KAY.)

ELIOT. I don't know what you're talking about. He broke his leg. His leg got fixed. End of story.

KAY. Oh no. No, that's just the beginning of the story. And what an amazing story it is.

(KAY reaches into her briefcase and removes an oyster shell the size of a dinner plate. She holds it up for ELIOT to see, then places it on the table.)

ELIOT. What is that?

KAY. That is an oyster shell. Or to be more specific, the shell of the pearl-bearing *Pinctada maxima* oyster. Or to be even more specific, Exhibit A in the case of Gene Walsh v. Beaumont Hospitals for the physical, mental, and emotional suffering inflicted upon him. Or her.

ELIOT. Her? Did you say...?

KAY. Her. She. Mademoiselle. Senorita. The late Mr. Walsh and the reborn Miss Walsh. Is that clear enough for you?

ELIOT. How did you find out about this?

KAY. A person in my profession is reliant on information. Good information. Inside information. Particularly from hospitals. And so I cultivate, shall we say, certain individuals in certain positions; for example, medical records. And if I happen to profit from the information they provide me with, then of course, they profit as well.

(She removes a file from her briefcase.)

KAY. And so, what I have here is a copy of the complete medical record of one Gene Walsh.

(ELIOT leaps to his feet in outrage as KAY smiles.)

ELIOT. That's illegal! That has to be illegal. You can't just...you can't do that! Can you?

KAY. Eliot. Oh Eliot. I like you. I do. And because I like you, I'm going to tell you the secret to the universe. Would you like to hear it?

ELIOT. Yes, I would.

KAY. There is no such thing as right or wrong. No such thing as true or false. Those are meaningless concepts that only the herd, the little people, worry about and fret over. The elite, however, see things much more clearly. Much more simply. And the elite adhere to only one pure, crystal-clear rule...you do what you can get away with.

ELIOT. That sounds a little sociopathic to me.

KAY. Among the elite, sociopaths are a dime a dozen.

ELIOT. You know what I don't understand? How a kind, wonderful, and loving person like Marisa can possibly be your daughter.

KAY. She's been a great disappointment to me in many ways. But still, she is my daughter. I attribute her more disagreeable tendencies to her father.

ELIOT. Who's her father?

KAY. I have no idea. Although I suppose I could narrow it down. Most likely any one of a number of delightful young men I met while on vacation in Malta many years ago. (*Off ELIOT's reaction:*) What can I say? I was young, beautiful, and sexually insatiable.

ELIOT. How fortunate for the delightful young men of Malta.

KAY. I thought so. Well. I have enjoyed our chat. Do tell Gene that I called. I'll leave the oyster shell as a little memento. Tell him...or her, that we're going to make a lot of money together. A lot of money.

(KAY heads for the door and ELIOT follows her.)

ELIOT. How much money?

KAY. Well, let's see, young man, prime of life, newly engaged, brokenhearted fiancée...I think a lawsuit seeking sixty million dollars would be quite in order for the terrible ordeal he's been through. And it's a nice round number. Juries like round numbers.

ELIOT. I'm not too sure Gene will go along with this.

KAY. Really? He doesn't want to be a multi-millionaire?

ELIOT. You think a guy who quit law school to teach third-graders is going to do whatever you say just for the money?

KAY. Quit? That's your story? You and Gene quit law school? You're sure it's not because you were failing and they were going to kick you out anyway?

ELIOT. It doesn't matter. But I can pretty much guarantee you Gene won't be on board with your plan.

KAY. Oh, he'll be on board. One way or another. Maybe you two can keep a secret, but I'm almost positive that I can't. And I can think of a few magazines and TV shows that would damn near kill themselves for a story like this. "Sex Change Blunder Rocks Medical Community!" "Bizarre Man-Woman Flees Paparazzi!" "Tonight on CBS, Gender Freak Gene Walsh!" Kick that through your uprights.

(KAY exits. GENE emerges from behind the sofa.)

GENE. I'm screwed. Totally screwed.

ELIOT. Now don't panic—

GENE. Don't panic? Why should I not panic? She's got me by the balls...or the...goddammit! I don't even know what she's got me by!

ELIOT. Ovaries?

GENE. I don't need your help, okay? The short ones, all right? Is that good enough for you? She's got me by the short ones and I'm gonna end up on those magazines that people stare at while they're waiting in line to buy milk and lottery tickets.

ELIOT. Then give her what she wants. Sue the hospital.

GENE. That won't make any difference! The story will still get out and I'll be the person filling in the pages between stories on celebrity mating habits and miracle diets.

ELIOT. You know what you need to do?

GENE. Start writing down a list of suicide options?

ELIOT. You need to call Marisa.

GENE. Marisa? I can't call her.

ELIOT. She can help you! She's the only person Kay will listen to. Call her!

GENE. I can't.

ELIOT. Yes, you can. Just take out your phone and dial.

GENE. I can't call her.

ELIOT. Why not?

GENE. Because I can't. That's why not.

ELIOT. You're not making any sense—

GENE. Forget it! I can't do it!

ELIOT. Give me one good reason that you—

GENE. BECAUSE I STILL LOVE HER! Because I still love her. And I don't want her to see me like this. I want her to remember me the way I was...the way I was when she loved me. Can you understand that?

ELIOT. Yeah. Yeah, I can.

(GENE walks towards her bedroom, but stops at the sight of the oyster shell on the coffee table. She sits down, picks it up and looks at it with a bittersweet smile.)

GENE. It's an amazing thing, isn't it? Look at it. It's beautiful. It's an oyster shell, and it's beautiful. And why? Why should the inside of an oyster shell be so beautiful?

ELIOT. I don't know. It's a strange world.

GENE. You're telling me. *(Turning the shell in her hands and gazing at it like it's a crystal ball.)* What does it mean to love someone? When you say that, when you say, "I love you," what does that mean? What is it you love about another person? Do you love their gender? Their race? Religion? Age? Do you love the way they look? The way they talk? The way they think? And what if that changes? What if the person you love gets older? Or they get sick? What if the person you love gradually realizes they're gay or they change in some other way? Was it really the whole person that you loved, or just one part of that person?

(ELIOT comes over and sits next to GENE.)

ELIOT. You're not doing so good, are you?

GENE. I miss her. That's all. And I dream about her. It's always the same dream too. We're always in Paris. I'm sitting at this outdoor café, and I look up, and here, coming down the boulevard is Marisa. She has this black leather jacket on, flare leg pants, suede ankle boots, her hair is blowing back, and it's as if that street, the whole city, was created just so she could be there in that moment. And she sees me, and I think she's going to keep on walking, but she stops. She stops and she looks at me, but not just at me, she's looking through me, inside of me. And then you know what she does? She holds out her hand. To me. The most beautiful girl on the most beautiful street in the most beautiful city in the world is holding out her hand to me. And that's when I wake up. Every time. That's when I wake up. But one of these nights that's going to change. I'm going to have that dream and I'm going to take her hand. I'll take her hand and

never let her go. Because even if I can't be with Marisa in this life, I can be with her in that life. And we can walk down that tree-lined boulevard of dreams with one another for eternity.

ELIOT. Jesus, Gene. That's beautiful.

GENE. Is it? At this point, I don't know if it's me, or if it's these new hormones I've got going through me. Or maybe I am the new hormones. Christ. You spend your whole life thinking you know who you are. What you are. But maybe in the end you're nothing more than a bag of nerve endings and a few tablespoons of estrogen or testosterone.

ELIOT. You're a real romantic, aren't you?

GENE. I guess.

ELIOT. Ah, what the hell. It's a miracle we're even here in the first place. You want a beer?

GENE. Yeah.

ELIOT. Coaster?

GENE. Get the fuck out of here.

(As ELIOT moves to the kitchen, his phone rings. He answers it.)

ELIOT. Hello? Oh, hey Marisa! We were just...

(He pauses at frantic hand signals from GENE.)

ELIOT. ...sitting around. Yeah, he's here. Do you want to—oh, you are? Well, okay then. Great.

(ELIOT hangs up.)

GENE. What was that about? What is she doing?

ELIOT. She's coming over.

GENE. Coming over? She can't see me like this! When is she coming over?

ELIOT. I'd guess in about fifteen seconds. She was calling from the lobby.

GENE. Oh my God! Tell her I'm not here!

ELIOT. I just told her you were here.

GENE. Then tell her—

(There is a knock at the door. GENE scampers into the bedroom and closes the door. ELIOT walks to the front door and opens it to see MARISA.)

ELIOT. Hi Marisa.

MARISA. Hi Eliot.

ELIOT. Come on in.

MARISA. I thought Gene was here.

ELIOT. Yeah, he's...he'll be out in minute. What brings you over?

MARISA. I got this weird call from my Mom. And my Mom, she can be kind of...

ELIOT. Scary?

MARISA. Well, focused. You know? Some people get really focused on certain things. It's like the opposite of attention deficit disorder.

ELIOT. And what is she focused on, exactly?

MARISA. I'm not even sure. It had to do with Gene, and her, and I got worried that maybe she was, I don't know...she gets a little carried away at times. What's going on?

ELIOT. Um...well...I...uh...Gene! Gene, could you come out here? Marisa's here! Gene!

(The bedroom door opens and GENE emerges. She has her Lions cap on, with her hair up under it, as well as her Lions jersey, with a towel draped around her neck and hanging down over her chest.)

GENE. Hey Marisa.

MARISA. Hi.

GENE. It's good to see you.

MARISA. You too. What's with the towel?

GENE. Oh, I'm...I took up paddleball. Yeah. And this is part of the, um...it's towel isometrics. Works the neck and forearms.

MARISA. Oh, okay. Is everything all right?

GENE. Sure! Great! Life is...yeah.

MARISA. You seem...different.

ELIOT. Different? No, he's not different. Gene? No. He's...you know what it is? The protein shakes.

GENE. The what?

ELIOT. Protein shakes. The protein shakes you've been taking as part of your towel isometrics program.

GENE. Oh, those protein shakes.

ELIOT. Right. Read the label, my friend. Side effects may include certain physical changes. And I guess it even affects your voice a little sometimes, you know, the supplements and everything.

MARISA. I knew there was something different about you! Gene, you have to be more careful! You can't just put anything into your body. Who knows what kind of effect it might have?

GENE. Yeah, who knows? I should be more careful. And I will be. But what were you saying about your Mom? You were talking to her?

MARISA. She just said that she was going to be doing some business with you and that you were doing really good and...to tell you the truth, she wasn't real specific.

ELIOT. Well, sit down! Make yourself comfortable. Can I get you something? Maybe whip up a nice tapenade or salsa? We've got some fresh blue corn chips!

MARISA. I'm okay.

ELIOT. Well, let me see what I can find. You two talk.

(ELIOT goes into the kitchen as MARISA and GENE walk to the sofa.)

MARISA. I don't want to keep you guys, I know you're probably busy and everything. But I just wanted to make sure...do you need me to call my Mom off? Whatever she's doing? Just say the word and I'll make sure she leaves you alone.

GENE. So, your Mom never actually told you—

(MARISA sits down on the sofa. As she does, she sees the box beneath the coffee table and pulls out one of the high heel shoes.)

MARISA. I guess you are doing really good.

GENE. Marisa, that's not what it looks like.

MARISA. It looks like a "come fuck me" heel.

ELIOT. I told you!

GENE. Eliot! Jesus!

MARISA. Don't tell me, it's from one of Eliot's dates, right?

GENE. No! Marisa, listen, that's not...oh God.

MARISA. I'm sorry. I'll go. I'm an idiot.

(MARISA stands up and shoves the shoe into GENE's hands.)

GENE. No, you aren't!

MARISA. Okay, I'm a moron! Is that better?

GENE. Why are you saying that?

MARISA. Because it's true! Because I really thought that maybe you just needed some more time and that you'd call me. Because I haven't dated anyone since we broke up. Because I've been waiting for you. Because I still love you. Because I hoped...I hoped you still loved me. But I guess this is the big wake up call, isn't it?

GENE. Marisa—

MARISA. You don't have to say anything. You don't. You got on with your life. I guess I need to get on with mine.

(MARISA heads for the door.)

GENE. Marisa...Eliot, help! What do I do?

ELIOT. Tell her the truth!

GENE. But I—

ELIOT. SHE LOVES YOU! TELL HER THE TRUTH!

(Already at the door, MARISA pauses.)

GENE. Marisa, there's something that...all this...what's happening is...it's my shoe. It's mine. *(GENE puts the shoe on.)* God help me, it's mine.

MARISA. It's yours? Then...you're a transvestite? Is that what all this is about? You like to dress in women's clothing? Gene, there's nothing wrong with that! It's no big deal! Is that why you called the wedding off? Because you thought I wouldn't understand? Because you're embarrassed? Ashamed? Oh sweetheart, I love you! Don't you know that? You think a silly thing like cross-dressing would stop me from loving you?

GENE. Marisa, I'm not—

MARISA. You know what? This is great! It really is!

GENE. How is it—?

MARISA. We can go shopping together! Saks, Victoria's Secret, wherever you want! Prada has this amazing flagship store in New York! We could even—

GENE. I'm not a transvestite!

MARISA. You...? What do you mean? You just said that was your shoe.

GENE. It is. But I'm not a transvestite. I'm not a cross-dresser. I'm...

(She looks at ELIOT, who urges her on.)

GENE. I'm a woman.

MARISA. A woman? You're a woman? As in female woman?

GENE. Right.

MARISA. You're saying that...you're saying that you're a woman?

GENE. I'm saying that I'm a woman.

MARISA. You mean psychologically?

GENE. I mean physically.

MARISA. Physically. Okay. That would mean...you have female parts?

GENE. I have...yeah.

MARISA. I'm not exactly seeing any breasts.

GENE. They're C-cups, all right? That's why I put on this jersey and towel. To cover them up.

MARISA. C-cups. You're telling me you have C-cup breasts?

GENE. That's what I'm telling you.

MARISA. I don't remember those.

GENE. They're kind of new.

MARISA. I see. Would you mind if I verified that?

GENE. Knock yourself out.

(MARISA approaches GENE, thinks about squeezing her through the jersey, then reaches up underneath the jersey to get two handfuls.)

ELIOT. Hey, would you mind if I copped a feel too? I've never—

GENE. Yes, I would mind!

(MARISA steps back from GENE, stunned.)

MARISA. You have breasts!

GENE. I'm aware of that.

MARISA. You didn't used to have breasts.

GENE. I'm aware of that too.

ELIOT. I thought they looked good.

GENE. Eliot!

MARISA. No, Eliot's right. They're really nice, but does that mean...

GENE. That's what it means.

MARISA. So everything...?

GENE. Everything.

(GENE takes off her hat, revealing her shoulder-length hair. She drops the towel and takes the jersey off, wearing only a t-shirt underneath. MARISA stares open-mouthed at GENE.)

MARISA. I had no idea you wanted to be a woman.

GENE. I didn't want to be a woman! This isn't my choice! It's all a mistake! When I broke my leg, they used powdered oyster shell to fix it, oysters change from male to female, the oyster DNA got mixed up with my DNA, I changed from male to female, and now your Mom wants to sue the hospital for sixty million dollars.

ELIOT. Salsa's ready!

(ELIOT puts a bowl of salsa, some tortilla chips, and a bag of pretzels on the coffee table.)

ELIOT. Come on! Eat up! This is not the time to have low blood sugar.

MARISA. Do you have any scotch?

ELIOT. Absolutely we have scotch! Coming right up!

(ELIOT hurries to pour two glasses of scotch.)

MARISA. So, all this started happening after you broke your leg. That's why you didn't want to get married...and when Eliot said it was because of a woman...you were the woman.

GENE. Right.

(ELIOT arrives with the scotch, handing one glass to MARISA and the other one to GENE.)

ELIOT. Here we are! Have a drink. Have several drinks. Relax. Talk. Everything's going to be just fine.

(MARISA gulps her drink down.)

GENE. I've been going to the hospital every week for, you know, all kinds of stuff. Exams, counseling, you name it.

MARISA. Are they trying to change you back?

GENE. No. Not yet, anyway. They're still trying to figure out what happened. Either that or they just want to keep their study going. But in the meantime, I'm definitely...

MARISA. A woman.

GENE. Well, technically, I'm a sequential hermaphrodite.

(MARISA's face and body contort in complete bafflement.)

MARISA. What does that mean?

GENE. It means you change gender at least once in your life. You can be either a protandrous hermaphrodite, which means you're born male and turn female, or a protogynous hermaphrodite, which means you're born female and turn male.

ELIOT. It's amazing stuff! I've gone with Gene to the hospital a few times and this one day they brought in a zoologist and everything. You've got your oysters that change from male to female, and also clownfish. Then you've got some groupers and angelfish that change from female to male. You want me to tell her about the hamlets?

GENE. Eliot—

ELIOT. There's these little tropical fish called hamlets. And get this, they can change back and forth, male to female, every thirty seconds. Every thirty seconds! Can you imagine? Like at a singles bar or something? But Gene, he isn't like that. He's more like the oysters or clownfish, straight male to female.

GENE. How are you helping, exactly?

ELIOT. I'm just providing information, all right? I mean, everyone thinks gender is so clear cut, but it isn't. In fact, there's plenty of people out there who walk the line between genders. And you know alligators? If they lay their eggs in warm sand, the babies are male, but if they lay their eggs in cool sand, the babies are female. Then there's the Caribbean killifish, it actually fertilizes itself!

MARISA. How do you know all this?

ELIOT. I've been reading up on it, trying to help Gene out a little. This whole thing, it's been pretty rough.

MARISA. You're a really good friend, aren't you?

ELIOT. Well, I just—

GENE. Yes, he is. An incredibly irritating friend sometimes, but I don't know what I would have done if...

ELIOT. ...if I wasn't around to tell him to get rid of those ugly high heels.

(There is a knock at the door. All three look at the door, and GENE raises her finger to her lips. The knocks come again, louder this time.)

KAY. *(Offstage.)* Little piggies, little piggies! Let me in, let me in! Or I'll huff and I'll puff and file a lawsuit so fast it will make your head spin!

MARISA. It's my Mom! I'll handle this. Don't worry, Gene, I'll tell her to go away and to leave you alone.

(MARISA heads for the door.)

GENE. No.

MARISA. What? But Gene, my Mom...you don't know her. Please let me take care of this.

KAY. *(Offstage.)* Little piggies! I know you're in there!

GENE. I know you can take care of your Mom. But I need to take care of myself. *(To ELIOT.)* Let her in.

(ELIOT opens the door and KAY enters, briefcase in hand.)

KAY. Well, look at this! We're all here! How wonderful! One big happy family! Although without the family bit, thank God. And there's Gene! Gene, Gene, Gene. How nice to see you! We have so much to talk about! Good evening, Marisa. What a surprise seeing you here!

MARISA. Don't give me that. You're not surprised.

KAY. *Moi?*

MARISA. You planned this. You called me, and the only reason you called was because you knew I would come over here.

KAY. Oh, I may have had the slightest inkling that you would rush over to save your big, strong man from your horrible mother. But as you can see, Gene isn't exactly your big, strong man anymore.

MARISA. Is that what this is about?

KAY. Oh no. Convincing you to stop pining away for Gene and to get on with your life is just the icing on the cake.

MARISA. Then what's the cake?

KAY. It's a very rich cake. The kind of cake I specialize in. And we have all the raw ingredients we need right in this room. All we have to do is combine them in the right way, raise the temperature a little, and...*bon appétit!*

ELIOT. You'll make yourself sick eating all that cake on your own.

KAY. Oh, it isn't just for me, Eliot. Didn't I mention that? It's for all of us.

ELIOT. All of us?

KAY. A cake this rich should be shared with friends and family. Gene, of course, gets the biggest slice. However, out of my slice, I propose to give five percent each to both Eliot and Marisa.

ELIOT. Five percent of...

KAY. Sixty million dollars.

ELIOT. That's three million dollars.

KAY. Bravo, Eliot! And let's have a big round of applause for the public school system, shall we? Yes, three million dollars for both you and Marisa. Now, it's a simple matter of getting our paperwork in order, and happily enough, I just happen to have all of the appropriate documents with me. *(She snaps open her briefcase and pulls out some papers.)* And I must say, I've already had a fascinating time researching various famous transvestite, transgender, and hermaphroditic individuals. J. Edgar Hoover, Joan of Arc—

GENE. Can we stop this? Just stop all of this? Kay, you can put those papers back. And you can stop researching transvestites. I'm not interested in helping you make your cake.

KAY. Why on earth not?

GENE. Why should I sue the hospital?

KAY. Why? Because you can!

GENE. That's not a good enough reason. What happened was a mistake. It wasn't intentional, it wasn't malicious, it was a mistake. I went in there with a shattered femur and the doctors tried to fix my leg the best way they knew how. Did they know any of this was going to happen? No. Are they sorry it happened? Yes, they are. So why should I sue someone who was trying to help me?

KAY. Gene, now that you're a woman, I feel that I can talk to you in a sensible and reasonable fashion. So, I want you to do something for me. Look inside yourself. Look inside the new Gene. Not the old Gene. The new Gene. The new Gene is a woman. And every woman has a need to nurture, a sense of responsibility to the community, a desire to help other people.

GENE. Where are you going with this?

KAY. The old Gene thinks that by not suing the hospital, he's taking a principled stance. He thinks he's doing what's right. But that's a very male response. "Look at me everyone! I'm a man! I'll do what I want to do and the hell with everyone else." That's the old Gene's knee-jerk reaction because that's the classic male attitude. But what does the new Gene have to say? I think the new Gene would ask, when do you pass from a principled stance to pure selfishness? I think the new Gene would take other people into account, and the new Gene would never want to deprive her nearest and dearest friends of three million dollars, would she? So, I'm not asking you

to do anything wrong or unethical. All I'm asking you to do, as a nurturing woman, is to start thinking about someone other than yourself.

GENE. Kay, get it through your head. Male or female, gay or straight, I'm not interested. Why don't you run outside and find an ambulance to chase?

KAY. Oh, I recognize that sound. I do. And do you know what I'm hearing? I'm hearing the voice of the alpha male giving its last great mournful cry of despair as it clings to its last shred of masculinity. But you need to let it go, Gene. And please, don't mourn the loss of your maleness. Celebrate it!

ELIOT. Gene, maybe it would help Kay out if you told her why we quit law school.

KAY. What? I don't care one way or another why—

MARISA. Mom, will you please shut up?

KAY. But it's not important why—

MARISA. Just shut up! For once in your life try and listen to what someone else has to say!

KAY. All right. Fine. I would love to hear this.

(ELIOT gestures to GENE who shakes her head, so ELIOT begins.)

ELIOT. Believe it or not, we were on the fast track. Both of us. Going to classes, studying six or seven hours every day, and then one Sunday we took a break to have some lunch and—

GENE. —dinner. It was dinner. We flipped on the TV to watch the end of this golf tournament, and it seemed like all of the commercials were for these financial and investment companies, and they were full of happy retired people sipping cocktails on beaches at sunset.

KAY. Sounds lovely. What's your point?

GENE. Well, it just hit us. All of the people in those ads hated what they did for a living so much, that they wanted to quit doing it as soon as possible. And we didn't want to become one of those people. So we both dropped out the next day to start doing something we actually cared about.

KAY. How utterly noble and bourgeois of you. Well, you don't have to do anything you hate to become rich. All you have to do is sit next to me in a courtroom and keep your pretty little mouth shut.

GENE. Kay, no matter what you think of me, and no matter what gender I am, I still know what's right and what's wrong. More importantly, I know what's right for me. And what's right for me does not involve suing people who helped me when I was hurt. That's wrong! No matter what I can get out of it, it's wrong. So you can close up your briefcase. There is nothing to sign and no one to sue. Go peddle it somewhere else!

KAY. You haven't changed, have you? This, all this, the hair, the breasts, all of it, it's just so much window-dressing. I try to reason with you, try to point out your responsibility to other people, but it doesn't matter. You're still Gene.

MARISA. What did you say?

KAY. You heard me! Look at him! Or her! Nothing's changed! Nothing! No thinking, no planning, no looking at the bigger picture! It's still Gene!

MARISA. It is, isn't it?

(She moves closer to GENE.)

MARISA. You're still Gene.

GENE. I'm afraid so. Sorry.

MARISA. I'm not. I'm glad you're still you.

(MARISA holds out her hand to GENE.)

KAY. Marisa Lulubelle! What do you think you're doing?

MARISA. I'm looking at the person I love.

KAY. What? No, no, no! We're past that! That's done! That's over!

ELIOT. Who are you to say it's over?

(KAY and ELIOT go at it as MARISA and GENE move closer together.)

KAY. It's over! Over, over, over!

ELIOT. Maybe not.

KAY. Okay, fine! They can be friends! Platonic friends! But that's it!

ELIOT. Maybe they want to be more than friends.

KAY. No, they don't! They can go shopping.

ELIOT. Or not.

KAY. They can have lunch!

ELIOT. Or more than lunch.

KAY. Marisa isn't like that!

ELIOT. How do you know what she's like?

KAY. Lunch and shopping! Lunch and shopping! Nothing more than lunch and shopping! Do you hear me, Marisa?

ELIOT. I don't think she hears you.

GENE. Marisa...

KAY. Okay, time out! TIME OUT! Let's all take a breath, people. We're getting a little carried away and we're losing our focus. Let's keep our eyes on the prize here.

GENE. I am keeping my eyes on the prize. And she's right in front of me.

KAY. No, no, no!

ELIOT. Hey, can I play? Yes, yes, yes!

KAY. Eliot, this is none of your business! Marisa is my daughter!

ELIOT. And Gene is my best friend! And I want both of them to be happy! Don't you want them to be happy?

KAY. What are you talking about? They can't be happy! They won't be happy!

ELIOT. Oh really? Who died and made you the happy sheriff?

(GENE gets on one knee before MARISA.)

KAY. Oh my God! She's at it again!

GENE. Marisa, I love you. I don't know what I want us to be, but I love you. I love the way your voice softens when you're tired, the way you rest your head on my shoulder when we watch a movie, the way you reach for my hand in a crowd. When I'm happy I want to share it with you, and when I'm hurt I want to be with you. I don't care what we call what we have between us. And I don't care what anyone else thinks of us. Just so long as it's me and you. I want to be with you. More than anything I've ever wanted in my life, I want to be with you. Can I be yours, and will you be mine?

(MARISA takes a pretzel ring from the bag on the table and slides it on GENE's finger.)

MARISA. Yes.

ELIOT. I think I'm going to cry.

KAY. I know I am.

ELIOT. Well, Kay, you may have lost millions of dollars, but you've gained a...well, a sort of in-law. We won't worry about specifics.

KAY. Maybe...maybe Marisa can talk some sense into Gene. Marisa? You're a sensible girl. Talk to Gene. Sixty million dollars is...well, it's sixty million dollars!

ELIOT. Come on, Kay. Let me buy you an adult beverage. There's a bar down the street that has the best mixed drinks in the city.

KAY. I could use one. Or three. Do you like White Russians?

ELIOT. I love White Russians. And the drink isn't too bad either.

KAY. You made a joke, Eliot.

ELIOT. Bravo, Kay! Let's have a big round of applause for private schools, shall we?

(ELIOT and KAY move towards the door.)

KAY. There's something I've always wanted to ask you, Eliot.

ELIOT. What might that be?

KAY. Have you ever been injured in an accident or through someone else's negligence?

ELIOT. You know, come to think of it, I just might have.

KAY. Really? I'd love to hear more about it.

ELIOT. And I'd love to hear more about the delightful young men of Malta.

(ELIOT and KAY exit.)

GENE. We're really going to do this?

MARISA. We're really going to do this.

GENE. You're sure?

MARISA. I'm sure.

GENE. Why are you so sure?

MARISA. Because when I look in your eyes I see the same person I've always seen. And that's the person I want to be with.

GENE. But we don't know what might happen next.

MARISA. Nobody knows what might happen next. All I know is that I want it to happen with you.

(They kiss, melting into one another. Lights fade.)

End of Play