

No Ex'p Required...

BY:

CHRISTOPHER CARVER

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Christopher Carver

CHARACTERS

PETER MADDOX - Late 20's/Early 30's

EMILY WINTER - Late 20's/Early 30's

MRS. WRONSKI - Late 70's/Early 80's

BETH - Late 20's/Early 30's

TOM - Late 20's

FORD - Mid/Early 20's

DARIUS - Late/ Mid 20's

POLICE OFFICER - Late 30's/Early 40's

SARAH - Late 20's/Early 30's

MRS. DESTEFANO - Mid/Early 40's

NURSE - Late 30's/Early 40's

GIRL - Late/Mid Teen's

SETTING

Place: New York City.

Time: October 2000.

Technical Notes:

(There should be two walls set forty-five degrees off-center. Both walls should contain a downstage door and sit on independent revolves, so they can rotate open to conceal/reveal the set. The s. r. door should work as the entrance to the apartment, while the s. l. door the access to the bedroom. In scene 9, the s. r. door should denote the entrance to the clinic, while the s. l. door indicates access to the doctor's office. Players should perform the voices from the answering machine, both on and offstage, instead of an operational stage prop. The characters Beth & Nurse, Darius & Officer Mitchell, Sarah & Mrs. DeStefano, Ford & Radio Dispatcher, should be cast as dual roles.)

Scene 1**Audio:**

(As the house lights go dark, the sounds of general construction, sirens, traffic, and other clamors of a bustling metropolis build to a crescendo then fade until the only sound we hear is the soft, faint crying of an infant, followed by keys jostling at the door.)

(Lights up to half as PETER MADDOX enters his apartment, dressed in office attire.)

(The apartment consists of a conjoined living room and kitchen separated by a small counter with three high back stools. The kitchen contains all the basic amenities, while the living room has a small sofa and coffee table, plus an end table which holds a telephone and answering machine. Floating wooden shelves hang on the walls holding photographs and art prints. A classic 60's hi-fi stereo and record player sit in the corner with an extensive vinyl collection.)

(PETER crosses to the end table and checks the answering machine. As soon as it starts, he begins to disrobe.)

ANSWERING MACHINE *(click; beep)*. Maddox, it's Beth. Pick up the phone. I know you're just standing there listening to this - Pick up the phone! Dammit! Well, I don't know where you are, but because you haven't returned any of my pages today, I'm now hijacking your apartment for a party tonight. I'm telling people nine o'clock, so - Yup. And don't forget I have a key.

(PETER looks at his watch then quickly exits into the bedroom, then VARIOUS PLAYERS enter the stage and deliver their answering machine messages, while others place party paraphernalia on the kitchen counter and around the set.)

(Beep.)

Hey Pete, it's Tom. I just wanted to call and thank you again for helping me with tickets last weekend. The concert was great, and Jess was amazed! Hey, Lions/Giants in a few weeks - what do you say to a Sunday Funday? Give me a call. Later.

(PETER'S clothes should also go untouched during this process.)

(Beep.)

Pete! What's up, man? It's Darius. Big Beth just called said there's an impromptu gathering of great minds this evening. Sounds good. I'll bring Sarah. See you tonight.

(Beep.)

Hello, hello, hello - Is there anybody in there? Just pick up if you can hear me. Is there anyone at home? Hey dude, it's Ford - checking to see if you need any greenery for tonight? Alright, alright - Call me.

(Beep.)

Maddox, it's Beth - again! You better be dead. Anyway, I invited an old friend from high school who's new to the city - but she's cool, so don't freak out over having a stranger in your house. Also, I told Ford he needs to bring some weed, so if that stoner calls trying to sell you some - just ignore him. Party starts in an hour. Maddox, party!!

(Beep.)

Hello, Peter? Is Mrs. Wronski from next door. You know how thin is wall and your answering machine is - well, is loud, and it sounds like you will be having visitors. Please remember Mr. Wronski and I go to bed at eleven. Not that friends should feel unwelcome dear. We understand is weekend. Take care. Bye-bye.

(Beep.)

Hey Pete, it's Laurel. Thanks again for a great time, and here are the directions for my Halloween party tomorrow night. If you're coming from Briarwood, take the E or F to the seven, then hop on the Redline down to Chambers - Wait, you could take the E down to Chambers. It drops you off over by the Towers, but it may be quicker. Anyway, I'm on Reade between Hudson and Greenwich. Look for the house covered in spider webs and call if anything changes. Bye, Pete.

(Beep; click.)

(Lights up full, as the VARIOUS ACTORS are scattered about having conversations.)

Audio:

(Contemporary jazz is playing in the background; then there's a knock at the front door.)

(PETER returns from the bedroom now dressed in casual attire; waves to DARIUS in the kitchen.)

DARIUS. Hey, Pete! I think I heard someone at the front door. Also, there's only a sixer left in the fridge - You down for a beer run?

PETER. Um, sure.

(DARIUS looks at his half-empty bottle of beer.)

DARIUS. Sweet. I'll be ready in about five.

PETER. Sounds good, D.

(PETER begins toward the front door but is stopped, by BETH who breaks from her conversation with SARAH.)

BETH. Maddox, what was the name of that place again? The one you were arrested at for pissing on the bar.

PETER. MacGregor's.

BETH. That's it!

(BETH returns to her conversation.)

DARIUS *(waves)*. Yo, Pete, I'm gonna dig through your vinyl collection before we leave? I wanna throw on something thumpin'.

PETER. Fine, but maybe, not something -

(BETH breaks from her conversation again.)

BETH. Maddox!

PETER. Yeah.

SARAH. What was the reason you gave the officer?

PETER. The bathroom line was too long.

BETH. That's right!

(FORD walks up to PETER and holds up a joint.)

PETER. Whoa! Hey Ford, is this the stuff you were talking about?

(FORD nods.)

Smells strong.

(FORD nods.)

Is it gonna make me stupid?

(FORD nods again.)

Then - Yes, please.

Audio:

(A series of loud knocks at the front door.)

(PETER scrambles to answer the door instead of taking the joint. He looks through the peephole before opening, whereupon stands an attractive WOMAN bundled in a heavy winter coat.)

Hello?

WOMAN. Hello.

PETER. May I help you?

BETH *(yelling)*. Maddox!

PETER *(yells back)*. What!

BETH. Get the hell out of the way, and let my friend, Emily, in.

PETER. Oh, sorry.

(PETER moves to the side, as EMILY enters and waves to BETH.)

BETH. Miss Winter, you hot-ass mama! Grab a drink, then come sit your sexy ass down.

EMILY. Okay.

PETER *(closes the door)*. May I take your coat?

EMILY. Is it warm in here?

PETER. The thermostat's always set at seventy-two degrees. Does that help?

(PETER helps EMILY remove her coat, revealing the heavy sweater she's wearing underneath.)

EMILY. We'll find out. Thanks.

PETER. So, you get cold pretty easily, huh?

EMILY. I'm always cold.

PETER. Well, I'm always warm!

(EMILY doesn't respond to PETER's joke because she's too busy looking around.)

Yeah, well - So, there's wine, beer, and booze - pizza and stuff on the counter. I might have some hot chocolate or coffee in the cupboard.

EMILY. This is an okay place.

PETER. Oh - Thanks, I guess?

EMILY. No, I'm sorry. I didn't - It's just after hearing Beth, I thought this place would be some obnoxious bachelor pad. But it's not, it's nice.

PETER. Thanks.

EMILY. Is it a one-bedroom?

PETER. Yup. The bedroom's over there - bathroom's back there, as well.

EMILY. Cool. Hey, thanks for letting me come chill, by the way. I haven't hung out with fellow humans since I moved here. So, I really appreciate it.

PETER. No problem. Any friend of Beth's is - Well, that's not true, but you seem relatively normal, so make yourself at home. Mi casa es su casa.

EMILY. Thanks.

PETER. And if you need anything, don't be afraid to ask.

EMILY. Awesome! Thanks again - Maddox?

PETER. It's my last name. Call me, Pete. Peter, whatever. Nice to meet you.

(PETER reaches out to shake hands.)

EMILY. It's nice to meet you, Pete. I'm Emily.

PETER. Welcome to New York.

(As PETER and EMILY stand c. s. shaking hands, the music, and lights fade, then the VARIOUS PLAYERS clear the apartment of all party paraphernalia; then exeunt.)

Scene 2

Audio:

(The sounds of birds, children playing, church bells, and other ambient noise from a weekend morning should be heard. As well as the soft, faint crying of an infant; then the doorbell chimes.)

(EMILY takes the coat from PETER and then crosses into the bedroom. PETER then disrobes down to his briefs and scatters his clothes around the floor and sofa.)

Audio:

(The doorbell chimes again.)

(Lights up, as PETER crosses s. r. and looks through the front door's peephole before opening.)

PETER. Morning, Mrs. Wronski.

MRS. WRONSKI. Morning, Peter.

PETER. It wasn't too loud last night, was it?

MRS. WRONSKI. No, dear. Not too bad.

PETER. Oh, good. Is everything okay?

MRS. WRONSKI. Yes, everything is fine. I just want to give you morning paper and remind you Tuesday is Halloween, so -

PETER. Keep an eye out for hooligans!

MRS. WRONSKI. Yes! Little bastards always smash my pumpkins. You know, last year they left one on roof of my car.

PETER. I remember.

MRS. WRONSKI. Little punks!

PETER. This has been happening for a while, huh?

MRS. WRONSKI. Well, Mr. Wronski and I move here from Russia in nineteen seventy-nine, so almost twenty years -

PETER. Have you ever called the police?

MRS. WRONSKI. Many years ago but they say we should let children have fun. But explain how mashuganas can smash pumpkin and not be a crime?

PETER. I don't know, Mrs. Wronski. It's odd that the police would just say that.

MRS. WRONSKI. Is what we think, but they not bother us any other day.

PETER. Um, what kind of candy do you usually give out?

MRS. WRONSKI. Oh no, we not give out candy. We put out a sign every year, so children skip our door.

PETER. Why?

MRS. WRONSKI. So, they not knock on the door all night.

PETER. No. I mean, why don't you give out candy?

MRS. WRONSKI. Oh, because Mr. Wronski think it encourage children to beg - plus, tooth rot.

PETER. Well, you could always give out chewing gum.

MRS. WRONSKI. Why?

PETER. Because it's Halloween, Mrs. Wronski. Don't you think the kids are just keeping up with the spirit of the night?

MRS. WRONSKI. What do you mean?

PETER. You know, trick or treat?

MRS. WRONSKI. Oh - Oh! I will talk to Mr. Wronski. Thanks, Peter.

PETER. No problem.

(MRS. WRONSKI turns to leave but stops.)

MRS. WRONSKI. Oh, Peter, one other thing. Please, let new girlfriend know how thin is wall. She should know for future visit.

PETER. I will. Sorry, Mrs. Wronski. And thanks for grabbing my paper.

MRS. WRONSKI. You are welcome, dear. Bye-bye.

PETER. Bye.

(MRS. WRONSKI waves goodbye, then exits.)

And thanks for ringing my bell when you know I'm sleeping. You crazy, old bat.

(PETER crosses to the kitchen and drops the paper on the counter before opening the fridge. He pulls out a bottle of OJ and drinks straight from it until the juice is almost gone. EMILY then appears in the bedroom doorway, wearing just her sweater.)

EMILY. Morning.

PETER *(startled)*. Morning. Did I wake you up?

EMILY. Doorbell.

PETER. Sorry. How are you feeling?

EMILY. A little woozy. You wouldn't happen to have an extra toothbrush, by chance?

PETER. Try the cabinet under the sink - you hungry?

EMILY. Yes, please.

(EMILY exits back into the bedroom.)

Audio:

(The sound of a running faucet.)

(Once the faucet starts, PETER quickly gathers his clothes from around the room and tosses them into the bedroom. He then scours the kitchen for something to eat but can only find a lemon, a lime, an orange, and the now-near empty bottle of OJ. He then pours the remaining juice into the last clean cup before peeling the orange onto a small plate.)

Audio:

(The running faucet stops.)

(EMILY re-enters.)

PETER *(pathetically)*. Breakfast?

EMILY *(sits at counter)*. I just brushed my teeth. Anything other than citrus?

PETER. Vodka or instant coffee?

EMILY. No, thanks.

PETER. Unfortunately, my kitchen was raided last night. Want to go out for breakfast?

EMILY. No, it's alright. I should really get home. My cat's probably wondering why there's no food in her bowl.

PETER. You better be careful; she might call the ASPCA on you.

EMILY *(dryly)*. That's why I don't have a house phone.

PETER *(chuckles)*. My turn to brush some teeth. Promise not to leave until I get back?

(EMILY nods as PETER exits into the bedroom.)

Audio:

(The sound of a running faucet.)

(Once the faucet starts, EMILY immediately begins looking around the living room for something. Unable to find it, she looks under the sofa cushions before bending down and searching under the couch.)

(PETER then appears in the bedroom doorway unnoticed by EMILY, so he quietly sneaks up behind her.)

PETER (CONT'D) . Boo!

(EMILY screams, then turns around to see PETER holding out her underwear. So, she quickly snags them out of his hand and then slips them on.)

EMILY . Dammit!

PETER . Sorry. I couldn't help myself.

EMILY . Where were —

PETER . Under a towel on the bathroom floor.

EMILY . Of course, they were.

PETER . I figured you might want them back.

EMILY . Thank you.

PETER . You're welcome.

EMILY . God, you scared the crap out of me!

PETER . Sorry.

(PETER goes to kiss EMILY on the cheek, but before he can, she pushes him onto the couch and begins to kiss him passionately. After only a few seconds, she suddenly stops and crosses d. s.; PETER stays.)

EMILY . What am I doing? I never do this —

PETER . I —

EMILY . This isn't like me. You have to understand, I've never done this before. I mean, I've done this before; I did live with my ex for three years. I just never did it this quickly before, ever. And don't get me wrong, I'm not saying I didn't want to — I did. And it was hot and unexpected and not

me. Well, I mean it was me, but not really me, you know what I mean?

PETER. I -

EMILY. I just drank more than I should have. Not that that's any kind of excuse. Hell, I mean, you're also really cute -

PETER. I -

EMILY. And Christ, when you started talking about the same music I like - I mean, come on, nobody ever listens to the same music as me. And then later when you offered me your bed, so I could be closer to the bathroom. That was the sweetest thing ever. So, I'm sorry I came out in the middle of the night and molested you, but you had it coming. Just lying there on the sofa with the moonlight shining through the window, hitting your face. Although it could have been a street light, I was pretty drunk. But you also had that adorable little blanket thrown over you, barely covering anything. One leg hanging off the side. I mean, come on, what was I supposed to do?

(PETER shrugs.)

And God only knows what you must think. Here's some crazy girl who sleeps around, right? But I'm not - really - I'm not. This was just - I don't know, one of those moments you know you'll regret if you let it pass you by, and so I jumped on you. But then you kissed me back and it, well - it was just a one-night stand, wasn't it?

PETER. A one night, wait - I mean, what?

EMILY. Was this a one-night stand?

(EMILY crosses to the sofa and sits next to PETER.)

PETER. Um - Did you want it to be?

EMILY *(a beat)*. I don't know.

PETER. Oh.

(They are motionless for a second, absorbing the moment.)

EMILY. Did you turn off the water?

PETER. I'll be right back.

(PETER exits into the bedroom while EMILY sits on the sofa.)

Audio:
(The running faucet stops.)

(PETER reappears in the bedroom doorway.)

PETER (CONT'D). Hey, what are your plans today?

EMILY. Look through the classifieds and hang out with my cat.

PETER. Sounds fun - I don't have any plans either, except for this Halloween par - actually, that's - never mind. So you have a cat? You didn't mention that last night.

(PETER crosses to the sofa and sits on the arm.)

EMILY. Yeah, she's a fat, little, fluff-ball. I think she resembles a miniature, abominable snow-woman.

PETER. Abominable snow-woman?

EMILY. Yeah. How else do you think we get abominable snowmen?

PETER. Of course. So, did you meet the teeny She-Yeti on your last trek over the Himalayas?

EMILY. Actually, I met her on my last trek over your mom's giant butt.

PETER. Oh, really?!

EMILY. Yup.

PETER. Is that a fact?

EMILY. It is.

PETER. You don't say?

EMILY. I just did.

PETER. Really?

EMILY. Would you like me to call your mom to verify?

(PETER pounces on EMILY and begins to tickle her.)

EMILY (CONT'D). No! Please, don't! I'm going to throw up!!
Stop, please!

PETER *(stops tickling)*. That's what my mom's butt has to say about that.

EMILY *(laughing)*. Ah, thank you – such a gentleman.

(They continue to sit on the sofa flirtatiously smiling at each other while composing themselves.)

PETER. By the way, I don't have any plans today. So if you want – We could hang out?

EMILY. But I do need to feed my cat.

PETER. Right.

EMILY. That doesn't mean I have to – Well, I mean – I still need to feed her, but we can hang out for a little while.

PETER. Sweet! Okay, um – What should we do first?

(They stare at each other for a second, then lunge into a passionate embrace. The kiss carries them offstage into the bedroom as the lights dim.)

Scene 3

Audio:

(The sounds of crowd chatter, referee whistles, loudspeaker announcements, cheers, jeers, and other ruckus from a football game should be heard, as well as the soft, faint crying of an infant, then keys jostling at the door.)

(Lights up as PETER and TOM enter through the front door wearing blue and white football jerseys over their winter coats.)

PETER. I still can't believe they blew it.

TOM. I told you they were going to lose today!

PETER. And it wasn't even close. Man, if they don't get their act together, we won't make the playoffs.

TOM. They just need more fire. I'll be right back – I'm gonna hit the head.

(TOM exits into the bedroom.)

PETER. Yeah, but we're still only seven and four. If we finish strong, we're in.

(PETER tosses his jersey and winter coat on the sofa, then crosses to the kitchen and opens the fridge.)

Hey Tom, you want a beer?

TOM *(offstage)*. Can't. We're having dinner with your parents in about an hour.

PETER. So, you meant yes?

TOM *(offstage)*. If I don't stay somewhat sober, I won't hear the end of it.

PETER *(grabs a beer)*. Pussy!

TOM *(offstage)*. Blow me!

*Audio:
(The sound of a toilet flush.)*

PETER. Hey, did you remember to tell Jess I want to bring Emily on Thursday?

(TOM re-enters.)

TOM. I did - told her yesterday. So, who is this chick, anyway?

PETER. She's cool - just moved here from Seattle. Graduated from Gonzaga -

TOM *(sits at counter)*. So, she's catholic?

PETER *(sips beer)*. She was raised Catholic, but I got the vibe that she only went to school there because her parents wanted it.

TOM. Has she asked you to go to church?

PETER. Hell, no!

TOM. Hoping she's a heathen like you, huh?

PETER. One can only hope.

TOM. So, what's she doing in New York?

PETER. She wanted a change of scenery after breaking off her engagement to this guy she was with for like, five years.

TOM. Five years? Then into the sack with you? Dude - Dude! You're a rebound.

PETER. No, she's not like that - Plus, it's not that serious.

TOM. Are you bringing her over to my house for Thanksgiving?

PETER. Yeah.

TOM. How many women have you brought over my house before?

PETER. None.

TOM. Exactly! So, don't tell me you're not getting serious with this girl. And what happened with that chick at The Garden?

PETER. Laurel? After I blew off her Halloween party, she got all weird - Emily's more fun, anyway.

TOM. Whatever. Just watch yourself.

PETER. Thanks, Mom. So, does Jess need me to bring anything on Thursday?

TOM. No, there's nothing you could bring that she hasn't already bought two of - I swear she's trying to put me in the poor house.

PETER. So, just tell her to stop spending so much money.

TOM. Yeah, see, that's something only a single person says.

PETER. Well, if you never say anything, nothing's ever gonna change.

TOM. Just bring a bottle of wine, Dr. Phil. That way, she sees you contributed something.

PETER. Done.

TOM. So, is your non-serious friend hot?

PETER. Yeah.

TOM. Does she give good head?

PETER. Jesus!

TOM. What? These are essential things to know.

PETER. She's not bad.

TOM. I haven't had a good one in years. Jess doesn't like to do it.

PETER. What?

TOM. Only if I've just taken a shower.

PETER. Seriously?

TOM. Well, she'd do it all the time when we were in college. But once we got married, she started with the whole shower thing and - Well, it sucks.

PETER *(laughs)*. Sorry, dude.

TOM. Yup, that's married life. It's all about picking your battles, my friend, and a mandatory shower before a hummer wasn't one I wanted to fight.

(PETER laughs.)

Don't you tell her I said anything?

PETER. That won't be a problem.

TOM. You just wait - You've no idea the amount of pride marriage forces you to swallow. Hey, listen, I'm glad we got to see the boys play today, but I need to get going. Thanks for the few hours of freedom, though.

PETER. No problem, dude. Tell my sister I say hi and tell my parents they're assholes.

TOM. I'll tell 'em we had fun.

PETER. Yes, we did. See you next Thursday.

(PETER and TOM embrace in a man hug before crossing to the front door.)

TOM. Indeed - Later.

(TOM waves goodbye and exits, as PETER crosses to the end table and checks the answering machine.)

ANSWERING MACHINE *(clicks; beeps)*. Hey Pete, it's me. I wanted to see if I should bring an overnight bag - wasn't sure, so just call my cell. It's a weekend, so you don't have to wait until seven. You know what, don't worry about it. I'll just bring one, anyway. See you later.

(Beep; click.)

(PETER picks up the phone; dials.)

PETER. Hey - I know, I just listened to it - A few minutes ago - Yes, I remembered - Tomorrow by midnight - No, it's a two-day rental - Because I picked it up yesterday - Well, how far away are you?

Audio:
(The doorbell chimes.)

Hold on a second.

(PETER crosses to the door and looks through the peephole before opening.)

So, not very far, then?

(EMILY enters, crosses to the kitchen, and sets her bag on the counter. She then takes off her coat and drapes it over the back of a stool.)

EMILY. So, how was the football game?

PETER. We lost.

EMILY. Aw, I'm sorry. Where's your brother-in-law? Did he leave?

(PETER hangs up the phone, then crosses to the counter and sits.)

PETER. Yeah, my sister's forcing him to have dinner with my parents.

EMILY. Oh - Well, did you guys have fun?

PETER. Always. I also talked to him about Thanksgiving, and he said you're more than welcome.

EMILY. Yay! Please tell them I say thank you.

PETER. Tell them next Thursday.

EMILY. Are you nervous about me meeting your family?

PETER. I'm nervous for you, yeah.

EMILY. Oh, come on. They can't be that bad.

PETER. Well, my sister's okay, but my parents are another thing entirely.

EMILY. Should I be worried?

PETER. I'll make sure you avoid the line of fire. But if my mother starts to drink too much and my father starts moaning about how spoiled our generation is, don't stray too far away.

EMILY *(giggles)*. Okay.

(EMILY crosses to the sofa and sits.)

PETER. How was your day? Any luck on the job front?

EMILY. A couple of places seem promising, but the whole process is starting to feel like a Catch-22.

PETER. What do you mean?

(PETER crosses to the sofa and sits.)

EMILY. Well, how do you gain "on-the-job" experience if you can't get the job?

PETER. Um -

EMILY. And don't get me wrong, I understand the wanting prior experience, I do - Really, I do. I think everyone should prove themselves capable of handling whatever the job may be before they take it on, but every place I've been interested in wants prior experience. And what really sucks is that all the jobs that don't require experience aren't ones I like - It makes you wonder how anybody gets anywhere in life?

PETER. Nepotism.

EMILY. Right - Hey, you want to put on the movie? Beth said she got a little nauseous watching because it made her feel like she was on a boat. Does that ever happen to you?

PETER. What?

EMILY. Motion sickness.

PETER. Um, sometimes. If I'm out on a boat and the swell is rough.

EMILY. Huh. I've never had it, but I've also never been on a boat.

PETER. But didn't you grow up in Seattle?

EMILY. Yeah, so?

PETER. I thought Seattle was an island, like Manhattan.

EMILY. Seattle's not an island, Pete. It's an isthmus.

PETER. A what?

EMILY. A strip of land with water on two sides. You know, an isthmus.

(EMILY crosses to the counter and retrieves her cell phone from the pocket of her coat.)

PETER *(laughs)*. Okay. So, how come you've never been on a boat?

EMILY. No reason. Just haven't.

PETER. Would you like to?

EMILY. Why? Do you have a boat?

PETER. I've access to one.

(EMILY crosses back to the sofa and sits.)

EMILY. Really?

PETER. Yeah, my uncle owns a twenty-seven-foot Hunter. When I was a kid, we'd sail it up Long Island Sound every summer and watch some Cape League games.

EMILY. I'm not familiar.

PETER. It's an amateur baseball league in Cape Cod.

EMILY. Is that what you wanted to be when you were little, a baseball player?

PETER. What little boy growing up in this city, didn't?

EMILY. I was going to be a veterinarian.

PETER. I could see that. I bet you'd be a great vet. Ever think about going back to school?

EMILY. No. It took me almost six years to get my Bachelor's. I don't even want to think about getting a medical degree.

PETER. At least, you have one. I never finished. I left halfway through -

EMILY. Your sophomore year. I know, you mentioned it before but never told me why?

PETER. I don't know - it wasn't for me.

EMILY. Come on, what's the real reason? Was it something scandalous? Did you get kicked out?

PETER. No, I chose to leave.

EMILY. Why? What happened?

PETER. Um - I was taking a test one day and had trouble focusing, so I started looking around the room. Everyone had their heads hovering over their desks, including my professor, who was working on some newspaper crossword puzzle. And as I was watching him, he suddenly flipped the page to the answer key, then turned it back and filled in the clue. Now, I know it was a harmless act, but it pissed me off that he cheated on the puzzle. So, I started looking around again, hoping that someone else saw him too, and that's when it hit me: What's the point of amassing knowledge when in real life there's always an answer key? I mean, it was a true revelation. Why should I care about memorizing answers to useless crap? And when I realized I didn't - well, a college diploma became, at that moment, just another piece of paper. A certificate to prove I was another one of the sheep.

EMILY. One of the sheep? Are you joking?

PETER. Well, I think college has become a way for Big Brother to control a critical voting demographic. It's basically overpriced daycare for young adults.

EMILY. Are you being serious?

PETER. Absolutely. Look at yourself. Bogged down with student loans and no job to show for it.

(EMILY stands and crosses to the kitchen.)

EMILY. But that doesn't mean I didn't learn anything useful in college. Do you want a beer?

PETER. No, I'm good. But I bet one of them wasn't how to turn a Bachelor's into a paycheck, though?

(EMILY opens the fridge and retrieves a beer.)

EMILY. Well, getting my degree in the arts didn't help. I could have made a more financially viable career choice.

PETER. And yet you didn't because college was more about the experience than gaining career knowledge, wasn't it? Don't lie.

EMILY (*sips*). Well, yeah. Maybe, if you're not going to medical or law school, but you still hope to come out of it a little wiser.

PETER. If you say so.

(*EMILY crosses back to the sofa.*)

EMILY. So, how did you get your job without a degree?

PETER. I interview well.

EMILY. See, I'm horrible at it! I get all nervous that I'm going to say the wrong thing.

PETER. What do you mean? There's nothing to be scared of - it's not a test. A first interview is about getting a feel for competence and compatibility.

EMILY. But that's just it. I don't want to come off looking incompetent by answering incorrectly.

PETER. Okay, give me an example of a question that makes you nervous.

EMILY. Um, okay - What traits do you possess that will help improve this establishment?

PETER. My commitment to exceeding expectations and willingness to learn new skills.

EMILY. Wow, that sounded pretty good.

PETER. Give me another one.

EMILY. Okay. What's your schedule availability?

PETER (*laughs*). Are you kidding?

EMILY. No.

(*PETER stands and crosses to the kitchen to get a beer.*)

PETER. Emily, unless you have another job, you should always have open availability. Why would you ever say anything else?

EMILY. Because I want to be honest with them. I thought you didn't want a beer?

(*PETER crosses back to the sofa.*)

PETER. I changed my mind. The thing is, Em, honesty isn't always the best policy, especially during the first interview. That's when you want to instill a sense that you're capable of handling any challenge. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck -

EMILY. It must be a duck.

PETER. Throw in a bit of waddle. Who could resist?

EMILY. At least, it's reassuring to know all I have to do is shake my ass to get a job.

PETER. I'm sorry. You know that's not what I meant.

EMILY. I know. I'm just frustrated. Thank you, though.

(EMILY kisses him, then checks her phone.)

PETER. How much longer do you have until money becomes an issue?

EMILY. I don't know. Another couple of weeks, but I'd rather not think about it - it just depresses me.

PETER. Well, how much does that thing set you back, a month?

EMILY. The phone? Like two hundred.

PETER. Dollars! Are you kidding?

EMILY. I have everyone I know's phone number in here.

PETER. What about a phone book and answering machine?

EMILY. Answering machines are archaic, no offense. Plus, this works almost anywhere in the city, as long as the battery's charged.

PETER. But this is New York. There's a payphone on every corner.

EMILY. Which are how sanitary?

PETER. Well, I didn't say they wouldn't give you hepatitis, but they work. Most of them, anyway. Plus, they don't cost two hundred dollars a month.

EMILY. But this allows me to call people whenever, wherever. I never have to worry about carrying change. I never need to worry about an emergency, and I can screen every call.

PETER. Huh - but it's still not worth two hundred bucks.

EMILY. Yeah, but you're also not a girl.

PETER. What does that have to do with anything?

EMILY (a beat). It helps as a deterrent for deviants.

PETER. What?

EMILY. Think about it.

PETER (realizes). Oh - Oh! Wow, I sometimes forget how much crap you guys have to deal with.

EMILY. Sometimes?

PETER. Well, if you want, I can see if HR is hiring.

EMILY. No, thanks. I appreciate it, but I need to find a job on my own. Reclaiming my independence was a big reason I left Seattle.

PETER. Fair enough.

EMILY. Plus, Beth's been trying to help me, too. She keeps leaving me these ridiculous messages about potential leads.

PETER. Look, I'm not Beth. I have no intention of forcing you to do things you don't want. Just know that if anything changes, my offer stands.

EMILY. Thanks, Pete. Are you ready to watch the movie?

PETER. It's already in the VCR.

(EMILY grabs the remote control from the coffee table and points it at the audience.)

Audio:

(The VCR turns on and begins to play a tape.)

EMILY. How'd you and Beth end up meeting each other, anyway?

PETER. It was just before I dropped out of NYU. She was sitting in Washington Square smoking a blunt while I was there trying to score a dime bag. I walked over, introduced myself. And the rest, as they say, is history.

EMILY. Wow - You pothead!

PETER. Yup, pretty much.

EMILY. Okay, no more talking. It's time for "The Perfect Storm."

PETER. Okay.

(EMILY and PETER set their beers on the coffee table, then grab the blanket from the back of the sofa and toss it over themselves. As they snuggle up to each other, the lights dim, and the sound of the VCR, fades out.)

Scene 4

Audio:

(The ambient sounds from a city in the wee hours of the morning plus distant sirens, dogs barking, cats digging through a trashcan, and the soft, faint crying of an infant, should be heard.)

(A soft, blue light from the TV now illuminates the stage, as PETER and EMILY sleep on the sofa.)

(PETER then awakens and, in an attempt not to wake EMILY, slowly slides off the couch. He then gathers the beer bottles and quietly disposes of them in the kitchen before grabbing a glass from the cupboard and opening the fridge.)

EMILY. She never stops, does she?

PETER. Oh, hey.

EMILY. It's literally around the clock, isn't it?

PETER. You mean the baby in the building next door?

EMILY. Yeah.

(PETER retrieves a pitcher of water, fills his glass.)

PETER. I barely notice it anymore.

EMILY. Do you think there's something wrong?

PETER *(drinks)*. I've no idea, but there's definitely something wrong with the mother.

EMILY. Why do you say that?

PETER. Because there's something wrong with her.

EMILY *(grins)*. Do you know her?

PETER. No, but I've talked to her a few times.

EMILY. And that was enough, huh?

PETER. She makes you want to cause her bodily harm.

EMILY *(tittering)*. Why?

(PETER refills water glass and crosses to the sofa.)

PETER. Because she's utterly clueless about her incompetence. Plus, she's raising three kids in a studio apartment, who all have different fathers.

EMILY. Are you kidding?

(PETER hands the glass to Emily; she drinks.)

PETER. No.

EMILY. Well, that doesn't sound healthy.

PETER. Tell me about it. And I'm convinced she's on welfare because I pry info from her other two.

EMILY. How old are they?

PETER. Six and eight - Reggie and Malik. They run around the neighborhood like lunatics.

EMILY. Are their fathers in the picture?

PETER. I occasionally see Reggie's dad; he seems like a decent guy, but I never see the other two fathers.

EMILY. That's sad. How big is the studio?

PETER. Maybe, a little larger than this room.

EMILY. What?

(EMILY crosses to the kitchen and places the water glass on the counter.)

PETER. Yeah, and I'm pretty sure there's a law against it.

EMILY. Even if there isn't, an apartment that small isn't suitable for raising three kids - Have you ever thought about calling Social Services?

PETER. No, it's none of my business.

EMILY. But, Peter, what if there's something wrong?

PETER. Then there's something wrong, and that sucks.

EMILY *(rolls her eyes)*. Real mature.

PETER. Well, why should I get involved?

EMILY. Because inaction in the face of injustice makes you morally culpable. What if they were your kids?

PETER. But they're not.

EMILY. How can you say that?

PETER. Because I think people spend far too much time pointing fingers at others instead of getting their own houses in order - See, this is why I don't want kids. Because everybody thinks they've a right to poke around in your business if they feel your parenting isn't up to snuff.

EMILY. Don't you want kids?

PETER. No, maybe - I don't know. It's a lot of responsibility. Until I'm ready, financially, though, I'm not even gonna think about it.

EMILY. But, what if there's a loving, nurturing -?

PETER. No. Sorry, Em, that won't put food on the table.

EMILY. I know -

PETER. Or provide security. See, this is what I'm talking about. People think a kid will magically fix some problem or fill some void. Especially people abusing welfare. It's pathetic.

EMILY. See, I knew you cared about what was going on next door!

PETER. Well, of course, I do. I'm not an asshole.

PETER. I just hate it when people exploit the system. It's not the taxpayer's job to feed your kids.

EMILY. Are you a Republican?

PETER. No, but essentials are called essentials for a reason, and if you're unable to provide them, you shouldn't have children.

EMILY. But, Peter -

PETER. I know, what if their home's filled with love and rainbows and blah, blah, blah - How about you, though? You want kids?

EMILY. I'd love to someday, but the amount of time I have to decide is exponentially shorter, which is why health and happiness are more important to me than money.

PETER. Nurture over nature, huh?

EMILY. If you want to simplify it - we both know it's a bit more complicated than that.

PETER. Not really. I think it's apparent that the rich have happier, healthier lives.

EMILY. So, money's the most important thing to you about having a kid?

PETER. Absolutely. Especially living in New York. This is one of the most expensive cities in America.

EMILY. But you don't have to raise a family here. You can move. Live, wherever.

PETER. Why would I want to, though? New York is the center of the universe. This is a great place to grow up.

EMILY. You don't know that.

PETER. Yes, I do.

EMILY. No, you think because you had such a great childhood here, your kid will, too. And that just isn't the truth. This isn't the same New York you grew up in. I'm sorry to break it to you, sweets, but times change, people change, neighborhoods change; from one day to the next, and no amount of money will ever stop that -

PETER. So, you think Seattle would be a better place to raise a family?

EMILY. Possibly, I don't know. It's wherever the best place is now and in the future, but the parents should evaluate that. They need to decide what's best and hope the chaotic and ever-changing world doesn't make it too challenging to execute.

PETER. You're gonna make a great mother one day.

EMILY. Thanks. I like to think so.

PETER. So, how far into the movie did you make it before you fell asleep?

EMILY *(laughs)*. Not very. You?

PETER. Watched the whole thing - it wasn't bad, just depressing.

EMILY. What happened?

PETER. They all drowned.

EMILY. What? Jeez, I'm glad I fell asleep then.

(PETER glances at his watch, then stands.)

You ready for bed?

(EMILY nods, then PETER helps her stand.)

PETER. I have to be up early.

EMILY. Sorry, I wasn't more fun tonight.

PETER. What are you talking about? I had a great time.

EMILY. After I find a job, I promise I'll be able to do more things than just hang out and watch movies.

PETER. Don't worry about it. Plus, you'll find something soon.

EMILY. I hope so.

PETER. I know so.

(PETER grabs the remote and turns off the TV while EMILY exits into the bedroom. After the ambient blue glow from the TV shuts off, PETER crosses toward the bedroom.)

EMILY *(offstage)*. Did you remember to -?

PETER. Crap!

(PETER retrieves the remote control again and points it at the audience.)

Audio:
(The sound of a videotape rewinding.)

(PETER then tosses the remote control onto the sofa and exits into the bedroom, as the lights dim.)

Scene 5

Audio:
(The sounds of mirth and merriment, glasses clanging in cheer, silverware hitting plates, as well as the soft, faint crying of an infant, should be heard then keys jostling at the door.)

(Lights up, as PETER and EMILY enter, both dressed in nice, casual clothing.)

(PETER carries an open wine bottle, which he sets on the counter. He then retrieves a pair of

wine goblets from the kitchen and fills the glasses halfway.)

PETER. Did you have fun?

EMILY. I did. Your family is so sweet.

PETER. Sorry about my mother.

EMILY. What are you talking about? She was great.

(EMILY takes her glass.)

PETER. I thought she was being a pain in the ass.

EMILY. I didn't mind - she was just being a mom. She wanted to know where I was from, what I was doing in New York - Oh, she also said I'm only the second girl you've ever introduced to the family. Is that true?

PETER. Maybe, I'm not sure.

EMILY. She loves you, Peter.

PETER. She loves everyone when she's loaded. It's when she's sober you have to watch out.

EMILY. I think you're being too tough on her.

PETER. I'm not - believe me. The woman may have brought me into the world, but that's all the love I ever got.

EMILY. Peter!

PETER. What? Sorry if the truth hurts.

EMILY. But she's your mother, and it's Thanksgiving. Plus, I thought she was sweet.

PETER. That's what she wants you to think.

EMILY. And she didn't do anything out of line. You're just saying that because - Never mind.

PETER. What?

EMILY *(a beat)*. Nothing.

PETER. No, no, come on. What? It's because I'm drunk, isn't it?

EMILY. Let's just drop it. I wasn't trying to start a fight.

PETER. You think I'm only calling my mother a bitch because I'm drunk, right?

EMILY. Yes.

PETER. Well, that just shows what you know, because my mother would be a bitch even if I wasn't drunk.

EMILY. Peter!

PETER. Sorry, you're right. If I don't have anything nice to say, I should just - Whatever.

EMILY. Can't we just have a nice night? It's been so pleasant up 'til now. Look, I'm sorry I started talking about your family. I obviously should've kept my mouth shut.

PETER. They sucked you in with their bullshit, didn't they?

EMILY. I thought they were sweet, and I can see why you think your mother drinks too much, and yes, your dad is a bit of a bore, but I don't think they're as bad as you make them out.

PETER. Really? So, I didn't hear my mother bitching about not getting to move to Paris because my father convinced her to have me. And - I guess I only imagined it when she passed out drunk on my birthday cake before I got to blow out the candles. And -

EMILY. Okay, Pete. I get it. I'm sorry. I won't talk about your family. The family you just asked me to spend an entire Thanksgiving with - Jesus!

PETER. But I'm pissed!

EMILY. Obviously, but for someone who has so much to say about the way his mother acts when she drinks, you should take a look in the mirror.

PETER. You're right. I'm sorry. Let's just stop talking about them.

EMILY. Fine.

PETER. And thank you for coming with me tonight. I enjoyed having you there.

EMILY. You're welcome. I enjoyed being there.

PETER. What did you think about my sister and brother-in-law? They're a pair, huh?

EMILY. I thought you just said you didn't want to talk about them.

PETER. I meant my parents. We can talk about Tom and Jess.

EMILY. Well, I thought they were fun.

PETER. Yeah, those two are a riot. They've been together for almost ten years, too.

EMILY. I know, that's what your sister was saying. They met freshman year at college?

PETER. Yup, and then got married a week after they graduated. How crazy is that?

EMILY. But you look at them, and you know they love each other. It's extraordinary what they have; I'm a little envious. Their kids are adorable, too.

PETER. Yeah, those little rug rats are fun.

EMILY. They love you to death.

PETER. Only because I sneak them candy.

EMILY. Do you really?

PETER. Yeah, didn't you notice? That's why they kept pulling on my shirt. They wanted me to get them more candy out of the cupboard.

EMILY. That's too cute.

PETER. It drives my sister nuts, too. That's what makes it even more fun.

EMILY. You're really fortunate, Pete.

PETER. What do you mean?

EMILY. Well, I'm an only child. I would've loved to have had a sibling growing up. Someone to pal around with - To share secrets with - To confide in -

PETER. But my sister and I have never been close.

EMILY. That's because you're a boy.

PETER. No, it's because I didn't like her.

EMILY. Well, you guys seem to have a healthy relationship now.

PETER. Well, yeah, thanks to Tom. If it wasn't for him, I'm not sure we'd still be talking.

EMILY. Really?

PETER. Oh, yeah! We got into a massive fight over my parents a few years ago, and he played peacemaker.

EMILY. He seems like a pretty great guy. Is he an only child too?

PETER. Yeah.

EMILY. Then it makes sense you guys are so close. You're the brothers that neither of you had.

PETER. Yeah. I guess so - You want some more?

EMILY. Just a little.

(PETER pours a little for her then fills his glass.)

PETER. So, yup. That's my crazy family.

EMILY. They're not that bad, Pete. You should feel blessed. Many people don't have any family to speak of, so having even a slightly dysfunctional one is better than nothing.

PETER. If you say so.

EMILY. Have you ever thought about sitting down and talking with them?

PETER. What good would that accomplish?

EMILY. You never know. Maybe, a miracle.

PETER (*chuckles*). I doubt it. But I appreciate the optimism, all the same.

EMILY. Well, you know the adage. If at first, you don't succeed -

PETER. Give drugs a try.

EMILY (*not amused*). Never mind.

(EMILY grabs the empty wine glasses, returns them to the kitchen, then crosses back to the sofa.)

PETER. Hey, I'm only kidding. But what you're asking - No way! A snowball would have a better chance in hell.

EMILY. But don't give up on them, Pete. Family is too important. One day they'll be gone, and you'll regret never having made amends - I know.

PETER. How long ago did your mom pass away?

EMILY. Almost five years.

PETER. Breast cancer, right?

EMILY. Yeah.

PETER. She sounded like an interesting lady.

EMILY. She was a religious nut, but - She was my mom.

(EMILY begins to tear up, so PETER gives her a consoling hug.)

PETER. I'm sorry - I've been shitting on my family all day when all you want is to have yours here.

EMILY. It's okay.

PETER. No, it's not. It's inconsiderate and selfish of me. Did you call your father earlier?

EMILY. I left a message, but I'm pretty sure he's in Montana, somewhere. Ever since my mother died, he doesn't like to celebrate holidays, so he takes these little wilderness trips instead. He loves it, so I'm just happy he has something.

PETER. You know you have me, right? Because if you ever need someone to talk to about anything, I want to be there for you. I don't want you to feel alone, Em.

(EMILY and PETER embrace then softly kiss a couple of times before it quickly grows into something more passionate. As they begin to take each other's clothing off, they make their way into the bedroom then the lights dim.)

Scene 6

Audio:

(The sound of distant thunder is heard before a soft spattering of raindrops slowly builds into a torrential downpour, then a loud clasp of thunder and burst of lightning brings the scream of a wailing infant. Then everything starts to fade except a light but consistent rain along with the soft crying of an infant.)

(Lights up on EMILY, as she enters from the bedroom talking on her cell phone. She wears a white oxford shirt and black slacks while carrying a heavy winter raincoat, which she tosses onto the sofa, revealing a small, white stick in her free hand. She then places the stick on the coffee table and straightens up the apartment.)

EMILY *(into phone)*. Hey, Dorothea - Not too well that's why I'm calling - Yeah, at seven - No, because I was hoping I'd feel better, but - I know, I'm really sorry - Yes - No - I

promise - Thank you so much, Dorothea - I will - You're the best - Bye.

(EMILY ends the call, sits down on the sofa, and stares at the stick on the table. She then places another call.)

EMILY (CONT'D). Hey - What are you doing right now - Nothing, just wanted to see if maybe you wanted to grab a coffee - Anywhere, you want - No, I took the night off - Yeah - No, he's probably on his way home, though - Not tonight - I was going to head back to Brooklyn, but I can meet you in the city - Outside the library in an hour - Cool - Yup, bye.

(EMILY ends the call and starts to place another one but stops. She then picks up the white stick, stares at it for a moment, and then bursts into tears. After a few seconds, she composes herself, shoves the stick and phone in her pocket, puts on her coat, and then exits the apartment, as the lights dim.)

Scene 7

Audio:

(The sounds of instrumental Christmas music, Salvation Army bells, kids' laughter, and other yuletide glee are heard, as well as the soft, faint crying of an infant then keys jostling at the door.)

(Lights up on EMILY and BETH as they enter PETER's apartment while carrying multiple retail shopping bags. They cross to the kitchen and set the bags on the counter.)

(BETH then pulls out a small canister from her coat pocket, sits at one of the stools, and begins to roll a joint while EMILY crosses back to the front door.)

EMILY (shouts). You guys okay?

BETH. Can you even see them?

EMILY. Yeah, but barely. They probably can't hear me. They seem to be having difficulty with it.

BETH. Good.

EMILY (*shouts*). Do you want some help?

BETH. Are you trying to piss off the neighbors?

EMILY. It looks like he's shaking his head, no.

(EMILY returns to the kitchen counter and removes her hat, coat, and scarf.)

EMILY. Hey, thanks for coming with us today. There was no way we'd be able to carry everything ourselves.

BETH. You're welcome, but you guys owe me because that was as fun as getting teeth pulled.

EMILY. I still can't believe they let us take it on the train, can you?

BETH. I've seen people shit, cook, screw, and give birth on the train before.

EMILY. Really?

BETH. Yes, so the smell of a Christmas tree was a welcomed change, I'm sure. Plus, this is the Big Apple. We don't sweat that shit.

EMILY (*crosses to c. s.*). Oh my God, did you see the look on that Port Authority guard's face, though? I thought there was no way! No way, he's going to let us, but nope. He allowed us to stroll right on. You think it's because we're older now, and they assume we're not going to act like idiots.

BETH. If you're polite and white, the boys in blue, don't dick with you.

(BETH lights the joint.)

You wanna hit this, prego?

EMILY. Aren't you funny?

BETH. Have you told him yet?

EMILY. No, and will you shut up!

BETH (*puffs*). Chill out. He's not even here. Plus, I told you something like this would happen.

EMILY. Then I'm sure you're loving every second.

BETH. Look, I told you it was a bad idea when I found out you two were sleeping together. I've known Maddox for a helluva lot longer than you. And he's fun, don't get me wrong, but he's not the one you take home to Mom and Dad.

EMILY. What are you talking about? You used to talk endlessly about how incredible he is.

BETH. And he is. He's a great guy. One of the very few people I enjoy hanging out with, but he's lazy, complacent, and indifferent to the world around him. Not to mention, he smokes too much weed and can be a lousy drunk.

EMILY. Aren't you one to talk?

BETH. Hey, listen to me. He's never been in a relationship longer than five months. He has no college degree and no aspiration of getting one. And, last I heard, he has no desire to get married or have kids. So, yes, I am one to talk. But to be honest, I don't care what stupid choices you two make at the end of the day.

(BETH takes a long toke on the joint, exhales.)

Oh man, I needed this an hour ago. I still can't believe you made me wait until we got back here.

EMILY. God forbid you go longer than a few hours.

BETH. Damn, right! God forbid!

(BETH is interrupted by PETER and FORD, covered in pine needles as they enter.)

Well, it's about time you jack-asses got here. So what, did you leave it out front?

PETER. Yeah.

BETH. So, where are you going to set it up, Maddox?

(PETER and FORD shake off the needles.)

PETER. I'm not sure. I was thinking maybe over there in the corner.

(BETH holds up a joint, which sends FORD scurrying over.)

BETH. I don't know why you bought that damn thing in the first place.

EMILY. Because it's fun.

BETH. It's a pain in the ass, is what it is.

PETER. How is it a pain in the ass?

BETH. Because now you're going to have to try and keep a dead tree; alive.

PETER. So, what.

BETH. And when it inevitably becomes a dry, brittle piece of firewood, you'll have to take it down and lug it out to the dumpster. Which will leave a massive trail of pine needles you'll be cleaning up for months.

EMILY. Bah Humbug!

BETH. But in the meantime, congratu-freakin-lations! You get to gaze upon an ancient, pagan symbol hiding under the guise of Christianity. That increases not only your electric bill but also your chances of a house fire.

FORD *(impersonates Beavis)*. Fire! Fire! Heh, Heh — Fire!

BETH. Give me that, you burnout.

(BETH takes the joint from FORD and offers it to EMILY.)

EMILY. No! Thank you.

BETH. Relax. Where's your holiday cheer?

EMILY. You're ruining it!

FORD. Can't we all just get along!

BETH. Shut up, Ford. Maddox, you want any?

PETER. Sure.

(PETER crosses to BETH and takes the joint.)

BETH. I still want to know why you bought the damn thing - I thought you were an atheist?

PETER *(puffs)*. Agnostic.

BETH. Tomato/Tomatoe - Have you ever had one before?

PETER *(puffs)*. Not since I was a kid. But I've thought about it the last few years, just never got around to it.

EMILY. Why not?

(PETER passes the joint to FORD.)

PETER. I don't know. Some years it seemed too clichéd. Other years, anti-environmental. I came up with several reasons not to buy one, but no excuses this year.

FORD *(impersonates Jerry Cantrell from Alice in Chains; sings)*. No excuses, then I know!

(FORD takes a long drag on the joint; exhales.)

EMILY *(beat)*. Well, I'm glad you decided to get one. I think it's going to look nice in here.

BETH. Yeah, whatever. I still say it's more of a pain in the ass than it's worth.

PETER. You guys gonna stick around and help decorate.

(FORD passes the joint to BETH.)

BETH. Hell, no!

FORD. We're going to see a band in SoHo.

BETH. And we'd invite you to come along, but you obviously have other plans to play house.

EMILY. Eat me!

BETH. Just saying, you two are like happy homemakers since you started - Whatever it is, you have going on.

PETER. What are you talking about?

BETH. You sleep together, work in the same building together, spend holidays together - At this rate, I'm just waiting to hear about a due date.

(BETH extinguishes the joint.)

EMILY *(annoyed)*. You're just jealous.

BETH. Of you two dorks? Never! Come on, Ford, let's leave the old married couple to their yuletide glee.

FORD *(sings)*. Frosty the snowman was a jolly happy soul -

BETH. With a corn cob hash pipe, peyote button-nose, and two eyes made out of blow.

FORD. Now, that's my kind of snowman!

BETH. Of course, it is. Well, kiddies, you have fun with your dead tree. Call me tomorrow, bitch.

(BETH stands and crosses to the front door; FORD follows.)

EMILY. Fine.

BETH. Maddox?

PETER. Yeah?

BETH. You're gay.

PETER. Thank you, Beth, as always. Have a good one, Ford.

FORD. Later, dudes!

PETER and **EMILY.** Goodnight.

(BETH and FORD wave goodbye, then exit.)

EMILY. Thank God, that's over.

PETER. We should've asked someone else to help us.

EMILY. I never remember her being that wretched.

PETER. She seems to get worse around this time of year. I always assume it's because of her dad -

EMILY. Oh my God! That's right! He died on Christmas Eve, when she was like five. I completely forgot. Now, I feel like a crummy friend.

PETER. Don't beat yourself up. She was still being a brat. But, now that they're gone - What should we do first?

(PETER boyishly grins.)

EMILY. You think I'm just going to fall for that every time, don't you?

PETER. I do, yes.

(EMILY crosses to PETER, grabs him by the shirt, and slowly pulls him in for a kiss, but suddenly stops at the last second and pushes him away.)

EMILY. The only thing of yours I want to see go up right now - Is your tree.

PETER. No! Alright, fine. You might as well grab the bag of popcorn then and get started on the garland.

EMILY. Ooh, good idea!

(EMILY crosses to the counter and begins looking through the bags.)

Have you decided where you're going to put the tree?

PETER *(disheartened)*. No. I thought I wanted to put it in the corner. But now, I think it might look good over here silhouetted through the window.

EMILY. The window would be nice. Over there in the corner looks like a good place, too.

PETER. Well, choose one.

EMILY. Why do I have to choose?

PETER. Because you're the one who told me to get a tree.

EMILY. That's because you said you wanted a tree.

PETER. I also said I wanted a private jet, but -

EMILY. It's your house, Pete. You're the one who's going to have to look at it for the next few weeks. You decide!

PETER. I can't.

EMILY. You're being ridiculous. Just pick a spot and set it up.

PETER. But I want it to be perfect.

EMILY. Because every decision you make is perfect?

PETER. No, I never said that - I just don't like having to make snap decisions. I prefer to weigh my options.

EMILY. It's a Christmas tree, Peter!

PETER. Exactly! So, put it over there?

EMILY. Fine, yes. Put it over there.

PETER. There's no need to get snippy.

EMILY. Well, you're being absurd. You and your inability to make a decision drive me nuts!

PETER. I make decisions.

(EMILY stops working on the popcorn prep.)

EMILY. You stay on the fence any chance you get - restaurants, movies, Christmas trees! I'm beginning to think you're incapable of making a -

PETER. I decided you should go on the pill.

EMILY *(a long beat)*. You want to get into this now?

PETER. Well, we never did finish talking about it.

EMILY. That's because you don't seem to understand that the pill makes me crazy. Literally crazy!

PETER. Well, then how come thousands of women —

EMILY. Every woman is different, Pete. You're not that stupid.

PETER. I just don't understand how it makes you crazy.

EMILY. Because it screws with my hormones. Look, it doesn't have any side effects for some women, but it can cause severe problems for me.

PETER. I still think your last boyfriend had more to do with your mental well-being than birth control.

EMILY. The only reason you even care about this is that you don't like condoms.

PETER. You're right. They suck.

EMILY. But they work if you use them.

PETER. I never said they don't work.

EMILY. And what? Do you think they don't make it less enjoyable for me, too?

PETER. I know they don't. That's why we only use them half the time.

EMILY. Are you going to pay for it?

PETER. How much is it?

EMILY. I don't know. It's like thirty bucks a month.

PETER. A dollar a day to keep the baby away, huh?

EMILY. Don't be a dick — Look, we need to talk.

PETER. Isn't that what we're doing?

EMILY. No, I'm serious. I think we should be sitting down.

PETER. Jesus, Em, you're starting to make me nervous.

EMILY. Do you remember a few weeks ago, we talked about responsible parenting?

PETER. Yeah, of course. About the baby next door. I remember, but - Oh, no, what happened? Did you call Social Services? Dammit, Em, I asked you not to get involved.

EMILY. I'm pregnant.

PETER. What?

EMILY. I have an appointment at Planned Parenthood tomorrow. But I think I'm about three weeks pregnant.

PETER. But I thought -

EMILY. Like I said, pointless conversation.

PETER. Oh - Oh - Wow, okay. Um, whatever you want to do, I'll support your decision.

EMILY. What do you think we should do?

PETER. I don't know. I - Shit, Em! How did this happen?

EMILY. Well, that's pretty obvious, but I think it was Thanksgiving. Remember?

PETER. We didn't use any protection -

EMILY. Correct.

PETER. When did you find out?

EMILY. A couple of days ago.

PETER. What?

EMILY. I was feeling overwhelmed and needed some time.

PETER. Then you've already decided?

EMILY. No, that's why I wanted to talk to you.

PETER. Well - I don't know, Em. Let's think about this.

EMILY. That's all I've been doing.

PETER. Yeah, I would imagine.

EMILY. So, what're your thoughts?

PETER. I, um - I - I don't think I'm ready, Em. I mean, not right now. Jesus, especially not right now!

EMILY. Why?

PETER. Because I just got laid off.

EMILY. What? When?

PETER. Yesterday.

EMILY. What happened?

PETER. They fired my boss.

EMILY. No.

PETER. Yeah, and the new guy has someone else for my job.

EMILY. Oh, Peter. I'm sorry.

PETER. Yeah, I was going to tell you tomorrow. I just wanted one more day to not think about it.

EMILY. I understand. Sorry I didn't tell you earlier. I was really freaked out.

PETER. Sorry, I wasn't more careful.

EMILY. It's my fault, too.

PETER. So, what're you feeling?

EMILY. I feel like none of this is real - Like I'm living someone else's life and that, in any minute, I'll wake up, and everything will be back to normal.

PETER. Do you want to have it?

EMILY. I'm not sure. I don't want to make a brash decision either, you know? But I also keep hearing my mother talk about being responsible, and it's really messing with me, so - I don't know. I'm feeling pretty conflicted.

PETER. Okay. Do we need to decide tonight?

EMILY. No. I still haven't met with the doctor yet.

PETER. So, you think you might not be?

EMILY. No, Pete. I'm almost three weeks late with a positive home pregnancy test. But after I meet with the doctor, I'll have a better idea of our options.

PETER. And if you are?

EMILY. Then we need to decide soon.

PETER. Okay - Oh, man.

EMILY. What?

PETER. Nothing, my stomach just feels a little queasy.

EMILY. Welcome to my world.

PETER. Well, if we kept it - Would you want to get married?

EMILY. I hadn't really thought about it. I'm still dwelling on the here and now.

PETER. Fair enough. Well - the logical part of me says that neither of us is in a financial situation to raise a child responsibly.

EMILY. So, your gut's telling you, no?

PETER (a beat). It's telling me if I was ready, I should've felt excited or something when you told me. I shouldn't feel the fear and panic I do - How about you?

EMILY. My gut says to jump in a car and drive until I find a road that leads somewhere, anywhere other than here. But then I'd just be adding to an already depressing statistic.

PETER. What are you talking about?

EMILY. Over seventy percent of couples who terminate a pregnancy don't stay together.

PETER. What does that have to do with anything? I wouldn't feel any different about you.

EMILY. I'm not saying you would. But the facts are the facts, Pete. And I also know there's no guarantee I'll have another opportunity to have a child. And, look, I know neither one of us planned this, but the universe doesn't always care what your plans are - And maybe, that's what it's all about, you know. That you don't get to choose these moments; they choose you.

PETER. But we don't live in the Dark Ages anymore, Em. All we have to do now is tell the universe what we want and then go get it.

EMILY. That's a little arrogant.

PETER. Call it what you want, but I believe if you visualize your future, you can manifest your destiny.

EMILY. So, you're saying you asked the universe for this? To knock me up and get laid off from work?

PETER. No, of course I didn't. I'm just saying -

EMILY. Nonsense. You're talking nonsense.

PETER. What? Don't you believe me?

EMILY. No. I don't believe you can just magically manifest what you want. That's one of the stupidest things I've ever heard you say. You get what you want through hard work and - Oh God, why am I even having this conversation! Come on, let's just decorate the apartment. You're giving me a headache on top of my nausea.

PETER. Sorry.

EMILY. Do you want to set the tree up?

PETER. Do you?

EMILY (annoyed). Said like a true decision-maker.

PETER. What?

EMILY. Nothing, come on. Get the stand.

PETER. A stand?

EMILY. Are you serious?

PETER. Dammit!

(As the lights dim, EMILY and PETER gather all the bags and winter garb, except PETER'S coat, then exit into the bedroom.)

Scene 8

Audio:

(The sounds of children's laughter and playground antics are heard, then they fade into the struggling and muffled cries of an infant; then silence.)

(Lights up as PETER enters from the bedroom.)

Audio:

(The telephone rings.)

(PETER answers the phone.)

PETER. Hello - Oh, hi - I am - No - Is everything okay - Yes - Right now - Um, okay - Bye.

(PETER hangs up the phone, then grabs his coat off the back of the sofa and tosses it into the bedroom. He then gives a quick scan over the room, making sure it's presentable.)

Audio:

(The doorbell chimes.)

(PETER crosses to the door, then looks through the peephole before opening.)

Hi, Mrs. Wronski.

MRS. WRONSKI. Hello, Peter, dear. Sorry, I do not mean to trouble you, but I thought if I not come over and talk, I - I have to speak with you.

PETER. No problem. Come on in.

(MRS. WRONSKI enters; PETER closes the door then crosses to the coffee table.)

PETER. Is everything okay?

MRS. WRONSKI *(on the verge of tears)*. Everything is okay with me, dear, but I worry about you.

PETER. About me? Why?

MRS. WRONSKI. Peter, dear, you always seem to forget how thin is wall -

PETER. Oh shit! I'm sorry, Mrs. Wronski. Was I being loud again?

MRS. WRONSKI. Oh dear, you not understand. When you sit in room here and have conversation, I hear everything on other side of wall. Not so much when you in bedroom. But very clear when you in room here.

PETER. Oh, no - Mrs. Wronski, what did you hear?

MRS. WRONSKI. I try my best not to listen when you start talking about personal matter. I usually leave living room and go into kitchen because is more difficult to hear you -

PETER. Oh, Christ! Did you hear the conversation I had with my girlfriend last night?

(PETER sits on the sofa.)

MRS. WRONSKI *(sits on a stool)*. Dah.

PETER. Oh man, Mrs. Wronski, I don't know if this is -

MRS. WRONSKI. I once not have baby.

PETER. Excuse me.

MRS. WRONSKI. I was young. Mr. Wronski and I not marry and we worry our parents not approve. We have same talk as you and girlfriend. Is big problem though, because doctors not allowed to help, or they go to prison, or worse - but then war start, and we have to escape to Russia.

PETER. Mrs. Wronski -

MRS. WRONSKI. We travel at night to avoid capture, but one night a soldier see us and chase us into woods. But, Mr. Wronski, he have knife -

*(MRS. WRONSKI hesitates and then begins to weep.
PETER crosses to her and walks her over to the
sofa; they sit.)*

Soldier coat help keep me warm for rest of journey. Soon after, Mr. Wronski meet man we think can help, but he give Mr. Wronski to German soldiers. This blessing in disguise because Mr. Wronski meet doctor who hate war, and he help Mr. Wronski escape and then help me with baby - I never say thank you. I not know why? After war, Mr. Wronski and I marry and start family. They all very smart and make Mr. Wronski and me very proud. But last night, I think a lot about baby. And I know - is best choice we can make. World is crazy, and children - if they not safe, is not healthy. How can be good parent if children not healthy? If now not time - it is okay. What most important is love. Love for you and girlfriend. This not easy choice, but when you love each other - is everything.

PETER. Um -

MRS. WRONSKI. You are a good boy, Peter. Loud person, but good boy. Remember, we only human and make many different choice every day - good choice, bad choice, no choice.

PETER. Thank you, Mrs. Wronski. I was pretty mortified at first, but -

MRS. WRONSKI. You are welcome, Peter. Like I say, I need to talk to you. But Mr. Wronski - stara dupek! He think I am crazy.

PETER. I'm glad you came over.

MRS. WRONSKI. So, not crazy?

PETER. No way!

MRS. WRONSKI. Good. You ever need someone to talk with, Peter, you knock on door, okay? I will listen. I like to talk with you. You are good person. I should go back, yes? Tell Mr. Wronski he is crazy!

(PETER laughs again, as MRS. WRONSKI stands up and begins to cross to the front door; PETER follows.)

PETER. Mrs. Wronski -

(PETER is unable to express his thought, so MRS. WRONSKI throws out her arms and pulls him in for a hug.)

MRS. WRONSKI. You are welcome, dear.

(As PETER and MRS. WRONSKI stands there hugging, the front door suddenly opens, and EMILY enters.)

EMILY. Oh! Sorry.

(EMILY closes the door.)

PETER. Hey, Em, don't be sorry. I want you to meet my neighbor, Mrs. Wronski.

(Before EMILY can say anything, MRS. WRONSKI grabs her and pulls her in for a hug.)

MRS. WRONSKI. Lovely to meet you, dear!

EMILY. Thank you.

(EMILY glances over the shoulder of MRS. WRONSKI and looks at PETER, who smiles and shrugs.)

MRS. WRONSKI. Such beautiful woman. Peter is very lucky to have pretty girl like you.

EMILY *(blushing)*. Aww, thank you. It's so nice to meet you.

(MRS. WRONSKI then grabs PETER and EMILY by the hands and brings them together.)

MRS. WRONSKI. You two make beautiful couple. I hope you see this? You can bring much goodness into world - I have no doubt.

(MRS. WRONSKI leans in and kisses both EMILY and PETER on the cheek.)

Goodbye, Peter. Try and enjoy the season.

PETER. I'll try.

MRS. WRONSKI *(to Emily)*. Goodbye, dear. Let me know if you need anything.

EMILY. Thank you.

(MRS. WRONSKI crosses to the front door and waves goodbye before letting herself out.)

What the hell just happened?

PETER. You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

EMILY. Try me.

PETER. Let's just call it a moment of insane lucidity and leave it at that. How did it go?

(EMILY crosses to the counter while unbuttoning her coat, which she then drapes on the back of a stool.)

Audio:

(The distant sound of police and ambulance sirens.)

EMILY. Um - well, we're officially pregnant. The Doc thinks it's a little over three weeks, just like I said. And when I told her I was thinking of not keeping it, she laid out all the options - only after she tried to tell me there were better ones. She did it without ever really saying it, too. You know what I mean? It was inappropriate.

PETER. I'm sorry, sweetie.

EMILY. It's - whatever. Anyway, as I said, she gave me a couple of choices. One sounded relatively non-invasive - it's

something new, a pill apparently. The nice thing is, I can choose to take it at home if I want and then it's supposed to - Well, you know. The problem is that we can only use this method within a certain time frame. So, we have to decide in the next couple of days.

Audio:

(The police and ambulance sirens begin to grow louder.)

PETER. I understand. How much will it cost?

EMILY. She said around four hundred, so I figured we -

PETER. I'll pay for it.

EMILY. You sure? I'm willing to split it.

PETER. No. I want to pay.

EMILY. But you don't have a job.

PETER. Don't worry about that - I can take care of it.

EMILY. Okay. Thanks.

PETER. So, do we need to set up an appointment?

EMILY. Only if we use Planned Parenthood. At other places, you just show up - sort of like an emergency room visit.

PETER. How are you feeling?

EMILY. Anxious. I just want to get it over with if we're not going to keep it, you know?

PETER. Gotcha - Not to change the topic, but I have an interview tomorrow for a new job.

EMILY. That's nice - where?

PETER. Windows on the World.

EMILY. Which is?

PETER. A food and beverage complex at the top of the World Trade Center's North Tower. They're looking for an assistant manager. I'd end up making a little less than I was at The

Garden, but the position qualifies for health and dental after six months.

Audio:

(The police and ambulance sirens should sound as if they're just outside the apartment, then stop.)

(Flashing police and ambulance lights now shine through PETER's windows; PETER crosses to the window to investigate.)

PETER (CONT'D). What is going on outside? Whoa! Paramedics, police - What the - Oh man, they seem to be going into my neighbor's house.

EMILY. Which neighbor?

PETER. The idiot in the next building. I wonder what happened. Oh man, another cop car just showed up. Come on, let's get a closer look. Holy shit! They're putting up yellow police tape. Come on - we have to go check this out.

(PETER crosses into the bedroom and returns with his coat.)

EMILY. Peter - Don't.

PETER. Why?

EMILY. I don't think it's a good idea.

PETER. Come on, get your coat.

EMILY. But - fine.

(EMILY crosses to the stool and retrieves her coat while PETER waits by the door. After getting bundled up, PETER opens the door, and they walk outside.)

(Once they exit the apartment, the walls begin to pivot closed, revealing the exterior. Attached to the s.l. wall is a yellow, Do Not Cross, police tape. It unravels as the wall pivots closed, creating a barrier between the players and the audience.)

(Standing d. s. l. behind the tape is a POLICE OFFICER; he sees EMILY and PETER approach.)

POLICE OFFICER. Sorry for the disturbance, folks.

PETER. No problem, officer - what's going on?

POLICE OFFICER. We had an incident next door. I apologize for the inconvenience. We should be out of here shortly.

PETER. What happened?

POLICE OFFICER. Sorry sir, but any questions should be directed to DCPI.

EMILY. Is everyone okay?

POLICE OFFICER. Like I said, ma'am -

EMILY. I understand.

PETER. Officer, that's my neighbor's house. Can you tell us anything?

POLICE OFFICER. You lived here long, sir?

PETER. A couple of years.

POLICE OFFICER. Did you see or hear anything unusual today?

PETER. No, I've been here all day - Well, I went out earlier to get some stuff to put up my Christmas tree, but otherwise, I've been here all day. Why?

(The POLICE OFFICER's shoulder radio suddenly goes off, and a RADIO DISPATCHER appears in a shaft of light, u.s.r.)

RADIO DISPATCHER. Attention, 6542! Come back.

POLICE OFFICER. 6542. Go ahead.

RADIO DISPATCHER. We're trying to get an update on that 273-Adam.

POLICE OFFICER. NYFD is on the scene assisting. But it looks like a 187 involving minors.

RADIO DISPATCHER. Roger that, 273-Adam is a 187 involving minors. Do you require CPS assistance?

POLICE OFFICER. Affirmative.

RADIO DISPATCHER. How many children?

POLICE OFFICER. There are two. Repeat - two male minors. Ages six and eight.

RADIO DISPATCHER. Roger that - Two males. Six and eight.

(The light goes off on the RADIO DISPATCHER, exits.)

PETER. Two? Officer, there are three -

(PETER points into the audience.)

Emily, look! A firefighter's -

EMILY. Peter!

(EMILY throws her hands over her mouth and begins to tear up.)

PETER. The baby. Oh my God, he's carrying the baby - what the hell happened?

(The POLICE OFFICER looks at PETER and EMILY, who are visibly distraught, then looks around and decides to break protocol.)

POLICE OFFICER. Look, we think the mother suffocated the child.

PETER. Oh no -

POLICE OFFICER And it doesn't appear accidental from what the little boys are saying. Some people just - maybe you two should head back in, sir.

PETER. Yeah. Thanks, Officer.

Audio:

(Music from Antonín Dvorák's New World Symphony begins to play softly.)

(The police lights fade away as OFFICER MITCHELL exits. Then PETER and EMILY hold each other in a long embrace, as the stage lights dim.)

Scene 9

(PETER and EMILY release from their embrace, then reach for the doorbell instead of opening the door.)

Audio:

(A security door buzzer sounds, and the music begins to fade out.)

(After the buzzer sounds, the walls begin to pivot open, revealing the interior.)

(Lights up, as PETER and EMILY now stand in the waiting room of a medical clinic. A nurses' station exists where the kitchen stood, and a few rows of chairs and a magazine table inhabit the space that was the living room. The room is vacant except for a middle-aged WOMAN and teenage GIRL sitting next to each other. There's also a NURSE, who sits behind the protective glass of her station.)

(PETER and EMILY cross to the NURSE.)

PETER (to Nurse). Hello. I called earlier. You guys said just to come in.

NURSE. Do you both have a valid New York ID?

PETER and **EMILY**. Yes.

NURSE. Here. Take this form, fill it out and bring it back to me. Then we'll call you when the doctor is ready. You can grab a seat anywhere.

EMILY. Thank you.

(EMILY and PETER take the clipboard from the nurse then grab a seat d. s.)

(Once EMILY begins to fill out the form, the lights dim, and a spotlight shines on PETER.)

PETER *(to himself)*. I can't believe this is happening. I never would've thought I'd be sitting in a place like this - Surreal. Not exactly what I expected. Thought it would be more - I don't know, something, but it's not. It's just like every other waiting room. Typical magazines to choose from, TV hanging in the corner - Odd, that it's on mute and there's no closed-captioning, though. Oh, man, what am I doing here? This is absurd. And how am I going to pay for this? I can't even pay my rent, much less feed myself, right now. And I know I told her I would, but - yeah, some parent I'd make. Dammit! This is - the right thing to do. I mean, come on, I barely know her. Plus, I've no idea what her family's like. Well, I guess it's only her dad, but what if he's nuts? We can't both have crazy families. And Christ, after the other night - Why would anyone want to bring a kid into this madness? What's so great about it? There's a constant stream of depravity. People have no problem raining down hate and destruction on each other. Every day it's some new atrocity - like Mrs. Wronski! God, I can only imagine the stuff she had to endure. Oh man, pull yourself together! You're not ready for a kid, not even remotely. But if she wanted - Should I tell her?

(The spotlight on PETER fades, and the lights transition back to normal.)

EMILY. Here, Pete - Will you look this over.

PETER. Um, sure.

(As PETER takes the clipboard, the lights dim, and a spotlight shines on EMILY.)

EMILY *(to herself)*. This is crazy. Not in a million years did I think I'd be sitting in a place like this - So stupid! I can't believe I let this happen. Jesus, it's freezing in here, and why is the TV in a metal cage? Do they think someone's going to steal it? The same stupid magazines at the dentist - Oh God, I feel nauseous. I'm not sure I can do this. But he hasn't even said he loves me. Why would I have a kid with a guy who doesn't love me? And his parents are crazy. There's just - no way. Oh God, what am I doing? I'm not supposed to be here - I'm so sorry, Mom - Oh, this is so messed up! Why am I even fantasizing about the idea? This planet is unhinged. Every day it's something worse than the day before - rape, torture,

murder, genocide, and for what? Politics? Religion? Money? Why does it always have to come down to money? And that poor baby, my God! I can't believe what that woman did. How can anyone do that to their own flesh and blood? Stop it! That thought won't do anybody any good. You're a good person; you know that - And hell, maybe, he's not the one. Remember, there'll be other chances. Oh God, why haven't I told him I love him? Is there something wrong with me? Come on, get it together! You're not ready for a baby. But if he wanted - Should I tell him?

(The spotlight on EMILY fades, and the lights transition back to normal.)

PETER. Okay. Looks fine. Want me to take it back up to her?

(EMILY nods.)

PETER. Okay.

(PETER stands and begins to cross to the nurse's station, but EMILY stops him.)

EMILY. Peter?

PETER. Yeah.

EMILY. Nothing.

(EMILY turns away and starts to stare at the GIRL as PETER crosses to the nurse's station. After PETER hands the clipboard to the nurse, he crosses back to EMILY.)

PETER *(whispers)*. Are you trying to freak out that kid?

EMILY. Am I that obvious?

PETER. Yeah. Pretty much.

EMILY *(whispers)*. She's so young. She can't be more than fifteen. I keep trying to see if she's showing, but I can't tell.

(The NURSE stands and calls out from her booth.)

NURSE. Mrs. DeStefano?

(The WOMAN sitting with the GIRL stands.)

MRS. DESTEFANO. Yes.

NURSE. The doctor is ready to see you. Just go right through that door over there, and then it's the second door on your right.

MRS. DESTEFANO. Thank you.

(MRS. DESTEFANO and the GIRL cross s. l., as EMILY watches.)

GIRL *(yells at Emily)*. What the fuck are you looking at?

(EMILY turns away, as the GIRL and MRS. DESTEFANO exit through the Authorized Personnel Only door.)

EMILY *(mortified)*. Oh my God!

PETER. You okay?

EMILY. I can't believe that just happened.

PETER. Don't worry. She'll live.

EMILY. As if this wasn't already embarrassing enough?

PETER. It's okay, Em.

EMILY. Can you imagine coming to a place like this with your daughter?

PETER. I can't believe I'm at a place like this with you.

EMILY. I'm sorry.

PETER. Don't be. You okay?

EMILY. I'm scared.

PETER. It's okay, sweetie. I'm here.

EMILY. What if something goes wrong, Pete?

PETER. It won't.

EMILY. You don't know that. There's still a chance I could have a complication.

PETER. Positive thoughts.

EMILY. Is that even possible in this place?

PETER. Tomorrow this will all be behind us, and we can start looking forward to the future.

EMILY. Do you think of us in the future?

PETER. I do.

EMILY. Me too.

(The NURSE stands and calls out from her booth.)

NURSE. Ms. Winter?

(EMILY and PETER, stand.)

EMILY. Yes.

Audio:

(General construction, pedestrian and street traffic, church bells, police sirens, and other sounds of a bustling metropolis slowly begin to build.)

NURSE. The doctor is ready to see you. Just walk through that door over there, and then it's the first door on your right.

EMILY. Thank you -

(EMILY looks at PETER.)

Here we go!

(EMILY turns to head toward the Authorized Personnel Only door, but PETER grabs her by the hand, stopping her in her tracks.)

PETER. Emily -

EMILY. Yes.

PETER. I love you.

EMILY. I love you, too.

(As PETER and EMILY stand c.s. looking at each other, the audio clamor of the bustling metropolis reaches a crescendo, then goes silent; blackout.)

END OF PLAY