

# **The Education of a Rake**

by

William Bivins

A Central Works Method Play developed in collaboration with  
Sally Dana, Gary Graves, Gabrielle Patacsil, Eric Reid, Gregory Scharpen and Jan Zvaifler

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2012

Players:

ROY ARMSTRONG. Man. 46. A U.S. Congressman.

DESIREE BANCROFT. Woman. 27. Style consultant.

JOYCE ARMSTRONG. Woman. 50. Professor of political science; Congressman Armstrong's wife.

GRETCHEN. Woman. 20's. Senator Clifton's intern.

SENATOR CLIFTON. Woman. 50's. US Senator.

Time:

The present.

Setting:

Washington, DC and Worcester, MA.

[Note: The play may be performed with three actors. The actor playing Desiree Bancroft can also play Gretchen; the actor playing Joyce Armstrong can also play Senator Clifton.]

The Education of a Rake

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PROLOGUE

Roy stands in spotlight. He adjusts an earphone.

ROY

Testing, testing. Me me me.... Do I need more powder?... In how many seconds?... Hey, what are you wearing?... I'm kidding.... Sorry, okay.... Standing by....

(Flashes his camera smile. Pause.)

My pleasure. It's good to be with you, Susan.... That's correct. In 1973, the Equal Rights Amendment was passed by congress but fell three states short of being ratified as a Constitutional Amendment. I won't bore you with procedural details; bottom line is my bill would remove all previous deadlines, clearing the way for just three state legislatures to vote on ratification. We passed in the House; debate begins in the Senate tomorrow afternoon. It's tight, but I'm confident we'll have the votes--... I've heard the arguments, Susan. Fact is, there is a war being waged against women--Paycheck Fairness Act, the Violence Against Women Act, contraception--that would all go away with the stroke of a pen if the ERA got ratified. We are the only industrialized nation not to have women's rights written into its Constitution. How is that not a national travesty?... Of course I'm a feminist. When you're raised by a single mother who worked her fingers to the bone in a bottling plant just to put food on the table, how can you not have the utmost respect for women?

LIGHTS UP ON:

SCENE ONE

2:20 PM. Tuesday. Desiree's apartment. There are items of clothing strewn on the floor leading up to the bedroom door.

(Roy walks across the room picking up the cloths. He takes a moment to smell the clothing.)

(Desiree enters from the bedroom door. She is wearing a sexy dressing gown.)

DESIREE

(groggy)

You're dressed. What are you doing out here?

ROY

Came out here to make a phone call. And to pick up after one very messy girl.

DESIREE

Excuse me, but I think you're responsible for this mess.

ROY

Is this blame the victim?

DESIREE

Oh, *you're* the victim?

ROY

Hey, I came over to talk; you cast some kind of evil spell on me, lured me into the bedroom, had your way with me.

DESIREE

It was awful, wasn't it?

ROY

Absolute torture.

DESIREE

How about another round of enhanced interrogation?

(She starts to remove his tie.)

ROY

Baby, please. We really need to talk. We were seen.

DESIREE

Some guy with a telescope and a box of Kleenex?

ROY

This is serious.

(His cell phone rings.)

Shit. I need to take this.

(Answers it.)

Doug. Thanks for calling back. Did you hear back from Clifton's office?... What do you mean it's not enough? It's a fucking Internet copyright bill! The kind of shit you get crucified on Facebook for. Does she understand that?... All right, listen: dangle immigration in front of her.... You heard me right. See if immigration gets a bite....

(MORE)

ROY (cont'd)

Okay, call me back.

(Roy hangs up.)

DESIREE

Is that the unequal delights amendment?

ROY

You can't bring yourself to say it properly, can you?

DESIREE

There's nothing less sexy than the word "equal." How about I give you a lesson in inequality?

ROY

Mmm. God, look at you. There ought to be a law.

DESIREE

Wanna read me my rights?

ROY

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you....

DESIREE

Aren't you forgetting to handcuff me, officer?

(She starts to lead him to the bedroom.)

ROY

(pulling away)

Seriously. I can't get sidetracked again.

DESIREE

Whatever. The guy who saw us.

ROY

Yesterday. Walking out of your building. Luckily, it was a buddy of mine on the Ethics Committee. Called with a friendly warning.

DESIREE

We got sloppy. We'll be more careful.

ROY

The situation is delicate right now. It all hangs on Clifton's vote in the Senate, but her funding sources are right-wing conservative. I'm the public face of the amendment right now; if it comes to light I've been, you know...

DESIREE

Fucking someone other than your wife?

ROY

Clifton will go down and pull down another half-dozen votes with her. Just like that. Could be another forty years before The ERA has its chance again.

DESIREE

What are you saying, Roy?

ROY

I'm saying we need to take a break. That's all. Until the whole thing is wrapped up.

DESIREE

When's the vote?

ROY

Debate starts in the Senate tomorrow. After the vote it goes into committee. We should have final passage in two weeks.

DESIREE

I think I can do without your attention for two weeks.

ROY

Then it goes out to be ratified by the remaining fifteen state legislatures. That process takes a bit longer. Months possibly.

DESIREE

How many months?

(No response.)

Roy.

ROY

Nine. Twelve. Maybe more. Look--

DESIREE

Oh, my God. You're throwing me under a bus!

ROY

Not frivolously. This is important legislation.

DESIREE

Not to me it's not.

ROY

You think this is easy for me?

DESIREE

Just a week ago you were talking about leaving your wife.

ROY

What?! I never said that!

DESIREE

You said your marriage was empty and passionless.

ROY

After fifteen years all marriages are empty and passionless. Look, Joyce is my friend, mentor, political partner-in-crime.

DESIREE

You said I fulfilled you in ways your wife never did. You said you wish you were married to me. You said that!

ROY

And you took that to mean I was going to leave my wife for you?

DESIREE

Well, yeah.

ROY

I meant everything I said, but that doesn't mean--

DESIREE

Is there another woman? Is that it?

ROY

Of course not! There's only you.

DESIREE

And Joyce.

ROY

You want me to divorce Joyce for you? Talk about a guaranteed ERA killer.

DESIREE

How about after the states do their ratifying?

ROY

I mean, you know... I'm not ruling anything out.

DESIREE

No no. I want it in writing. A letter of intent.

ROY

What, I hereby agree to divorce my wife and marry my lover after women gain their equal rights?

(She gets a paper and pen, holds them out to him.)

DESIREE

That'll work.

ROY

You know I can't make that commitment right now.

DESIREE

Then you're dumping me.

ROY

I'm not dumping you!

DESIREE

No contact for a year? If it quacks like a duck.

ROY

We can still text each other, but only on pre-paid phones.

(His phone rings.)

Christ!

(Answers phone.)

What's the word?... You're kidding? Just like that?... Yeah, but still!.. I'll be back in the office in half-an-hour.... Thank you so much, Doug.... Congratulations to us all!

(He hangs up.)

Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

DESIREE

Don't tell me.

ROY

We got Clifton's vote. We're gonna pass in the senate! I don't believe it. One of the great constitutional travesties of all time, and what turns it around?

(MORE)



ROY (cont'd)

Some silly shit-ass immigration bill! God, I love politics!

(He dials.)

Hi, darling, it's me. Call me back. I have some amazing news.

(hangs up.)

DESIREE

You never call me darling.

ROY

I call you baby.

DESIREE

Baby is entry-level. I want you out. Right now.

ROY

You're dumping me?!

DESIREE

You're dumping me!

ROY

Think of it as going to war. It can be romantic.

DESIREE

There's nothing romantic about texting on pre-paid phones.

ROY

Baby, please. I don't want to lose you.

DESIREE

You're asking me to play second fiddle to the amendment and to your wife.

ROY

To me you're in a different section of the orchestra.

DESIREE

The strumpet section?

ROY

What do you want me to do?

DESIREE

Leave your wife and let the bill die in the Senate.

ROY

That bill means everything to me!

DESIREE

Then fuck the bill. Literally. After all, it's your real mistress. I need to get dressed. Get your shampoo and toothbrush on your way out.

(She starts to exit.)

ROY

Look. Darling--

DESIREE

Now it's "darling" all of a sudden? Fuck you, Roy! Fuck you to hell! I want all traces of you out of here. That includes your scent, so open the windows before you leave. By the way, now that we're splitting up? I might as well tell you: I hate the way you eat. You chew with your mouth open. It's loud and disgusting. Oh, and guess what: you're not very good in bed.

ROY

You said I was amazing.

DESIREE

I was lying.

ROY

No, you weren't.

DESIREE

Whatever. You're also selfish and emotionally unavailable. It's a wonder you built your political career on the women's vote. You're supposedly all about equality and respect for women. What a joke! You have no respect for women.

ROY

How can you say that?!

DESIREE

You're just like every other guy. Say all kinds of shit just to get your pecker wet. Your stock speech? All about your single working-class mother, how she was your role model. What a crock!

ROY

Now you're crossing a line!

DESIREE

Ooh. Did I touch a nerve? Mister Women's Rights? You're nothing but a dog, Roy.

ROY

I'm warning you!

DESIREE

What are you gonna do? Break up with me? I'm quaking in my boots. You're a hypocrite. You're a shit-head. And you're a bad person.

ROY

I AM NOT A BAD PERSON!

(Roy's phone rings. He takes it out of his pocket, looks at it.)

DESIREE

It's your wife, isn't it. Aren't you gonna get it?

(Continues ringing.)

Go on, Roy. She's your friend, mentor and partner-in-crime. What is it you call her in your speeches? One of the two women who made you who you are.

(Continues ringing.)

Along with *your mother*.

(He moves toward Desiree.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

Roy? Roy!

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE TWO

10:35 PM. Tuesday. Joyce and Roy's house in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Roy in the living room. Joyce enters with two glasses of Champagne.

JOYCE

Return the conquering hero!

ROY

Champagne? Really?

JOYCE

You mean 'cause I have my colonoscopy tomorrow? I figured just a sip. After all, this is historic!

ROY

I mean it's a bit premature to be celebrating.

JOYCE

We haven't won the war, but we won a battle. Can't we celebrate that? I know it's not a done deal, but what could go wrong at this point? You've got Clifton on board.... You okay?

ROY

Just a little tired from the drive.

JOYCE

Was it too late to catch the train?

ROY

Just felt like driving. Listen, Joyce--

JOYCE

(She raises her glass.)

Here's to equal rights for women. At long last!

(They toast.)

God, I haven't been this excited in years. I've spent so long being cynical about government, sitting out here in my ivory tower. You know what I've been thinking, Roy? I've been thinking of taking a leave from the university. Moving into the DC apartment with you.... Are you sure you're okay? Should I get you something to eat?

ROY

Joyce. There's something I need to tell you.

JOYCE

Yes?

ROY

First of all, I want you to know I love you.

JOYCE

Oh, fuck.

(She downs her Champagne, staggers a bit. He reaches out to her; she pulls away.)

JOYCE (cont'd)

I'm okay. Just light-headed. Haven't had a thing to eat since yesterday. Except Jello, but that's not food; it's gelatinous sugar water with food coloring.

ROY

Darling--

JOYCE

Don't you fucking call me darling! You asshole. God, I'm such an idiot. I mean, not a complete idiot; I've had my suspicions, after last time; but I guess I've been in denial. Seven years and I don't know how many thousands of dollars worth of marriage counseling. Goddamn selfish prick!... No. No, I'm going to stay calm this time.... What's this one's name?

ROY

Desiree.

JOYCE

Desiree. You've got to be kidding. How old is she? Is she potty trained? How long have you been seeing her? Do you love her? Fucking cocksucker!... Uh-uh. No, I'm going to remain dispassionate. I don't want to hear details this time.

ROY

Joyce, I can't begin to tell you--

JOYCE

I don't give a mutherfucking shit how sorry you are.... I'm sorry, I need a moment here.

ROY

Of course--

JOYCE

Shut up.

(She takes a moment.)

Okay. There. We're not going to talk about counselling, our marriage, all that. So let's cut to the chase: you wouldn't be telling me if the shit wasn't about to hit the fan.

ROY

We can't contain this, Joyce. I'm going to call a press conference.

JOYCE

Whoa whoa whoa! Tell me you are *not* about to ask me to play press conference mannequin.

ROY

I wouldn't put it that way.

JOYCE

How would you put it? Long-suffering, humiliated chump of a wife?

ROY

Supportive, stalwart bolder of a wife who, even though she was hurt and betrayed, is big enough to stand by her no-good philandering husband.

JOYCE

Boulder?

ROY

As in rock.

JOYCE

A boulder is a fat rock.

ROY

Anchor, then. Foundation. You keep me grounded. I'm running out of metaphors here.

JOYCE

I told you I would never stand with you at a sex scandal press conference.

ROY

If I thought there was any other way.

JOYCE

Any other way to what? Salvage the amendment or your career?

ROY

They're inseparable.

JOYCE

Has she gone public?

ROY

She's about to.

JOYCE

Is she planning a press release? What's she waiting for?

ROY

ERA debate in the senate, tomorrow at three. Maximum PR damage.

JOYCE

You've got to be kidding. Is this a shake-down?

ROY

No.

JOYCE

How do you know?

ROY

I just know.

JOYCE

If she can't be bought she can be discredited. I can activate my contacts, see if we can find something on her.

ROY

Be my guest. I don't think it will work.

JOYCE

Because she's squeaky clean?

ROY

Because she has no political ambitions. Look, Joyce, I appreciate your trying to help me--

JOYCE

Oh, I wouldn't be doing it for *you*.

ROY

I understand--

JOYCE

Because, right now, I don't really give a rat's ass about you. You can lose your career, your hair, your cock, for all I care.

ROY

Fair enough--

JOYCE

In fact, you can rot in hell, you piece of--...

(Stops herself.)

(She grabs his champagne, downs it.)

ROY

I get it. But the only way to save the bill is to get in front of things. Diffuse the situation by holding a press conference before she releases the recording.

JOYCE

Jesus Christ, there's a *tape*?!

ROY

Digital audio file. Apparently she was recording our phone conversations.

JOYCE

By "conversations" you mean phone sex. How bad?

ROY

As bad as you can imagine.

JOYCE

How can you say this is not a shake-down?

ROY

She did it on the advice of a friend at the NSA--to protect herself.

JOYCE

Goddamned NSA weasels.... How is she doing it? How do you know the recording even exists?

ROY

She emailed me a sample. She's posting the whole thing on the C-SPAN Facebook page.... This is the plan, okay: I'm going to see Margaret Clifton first thing in the morning, come clean, explain how I'm getting in front of the story. Convince her not to pull her vote. Then I'll schedule the press conference. I'm thinking late-afternoon.

JOYCE

Clifton won't play ball. Not with her funding sources.

ROY

I think she will. I think I can convince her.

JOYCE

What if she doesn't?

ROY

I'll lose the ERA, but I might still be able to save my job. What other options do I have?



JOYCE

You can deny it's you on that tape.

ROY

Voice recognition; like a fingerprint.

JOYCE

Why is she doing this? Does she want to write a kiss-and-tell?

ROY

I told you she doesn't have those kinds of ambitions.

JOYCE

Then what, Roy? Did you break her heart?

ROY

Something like that.

JOYCE

This is high school stuff. Smooth things over. Give her some flowers and a bottle of scotch.

ROY

It's not that simple. Please--

JOYCE

You lost your temper. Did you hit her?

ROY

Of course not! Look, I don't want to talk about it!

JOYCE

Don't you raise your voice with me! All the years we put into this bill. All the strategizing. You go and throw it all away so you can stick your wiener in some skank named Desiree. Fuck you, Roy! You can kiss my middle-age, colonoscopy-prepped ass.

ROY

You're right. I am single-handedly responsible for jeopardizing the ERA and, yes, I am a jerk and an asshole; but I'm your jerk and your asshole. I deserve whatever I have coming to me. Scream at me. Sear my flesh over a hot stove. Even divorce me. But I am yours, Joyce. You've been my mentor, my lover, my champion, my best friend. There is no one I have ever loved the way I love you. You are my guiding light.

JOYCE

I thought I was your boulder.

ROY

A very thin, super attractive boulder.... Look, darling, as big as our problems seem right now, this bill is much bigger. Think of all the years of work we put into it. How monumental it is. We owe it to the women of this country to put aside our feelings.

JOYCE

God, I'm hungry as shit.

ROY

If you go to DC with me you'd have to reschedule your colonoscopy. I could make you a ham sandwich for the road.

JOYCE

Make yourself one. It's a long drive and it's almost midnight and you need to get going if you're seeing Clifton first thing in the morning.

ROY

Does that mean you're not coming?

JOYCE

I'll make you some coffee for the road. But first...

(She goes up to him, slaps him.)

### SCENE THREE

10:30 AM Wednesday. Conference room, Senator Clifton's office.

(Roy stands waiting. He looks at his watch. Gretchen enters. She's a little nervous.)

GRETCHEN

Senator Clifton asked me to tell you she'll be in in a few minutes. She apologizes for the wait. Can I get you anything while you're waiting? Tea? Coffee? Diet Coke?

ROY

Double bourbon, please.

GRETCHEN

Um... I'm not sure we have--

ROY

I'm kidding.

GRETCHEN

Ha! Right. It's nine-thirty in the morning. I should have figured out that was a joke. Seriously, though, would you like anything?

ROY

I'm fine thanks.

(She lingers awkwardly.)

ROY (cont'd)

Am I supposed to dismiss you, or something?

GRETCHEN

Wow. I can't believe I'm standing in the same room with you!

ROY

Ah.

GRETCHEN

I've been following you for years. I can't begin to tell you how much I admire the work you do. For women's rights. The ERA. I'm Gretchen, by the way.

ROY

Apparently, you know who I am.

GRETCHEN

I'm so glad you got the senator's vote. This is such an important step for women. It wouldn't have happened without you. You are so amazing.

ROY

I try.

GRETCHEN

You succeed! It gives me hope. You know? If there is one man--just one--who can understand women, we can someday achieve true gender equality.

ROY

Listen, maybe I'll have that coffee after all.

GRETCHEN

Oh, dear. Is it something I said?

ROY

No. It's--

GRETCHEN

You're embarrassed about getting praised.

ROY

Yes! That's it. My Methodist upbringing.

GRETCHEN

I'm so sorry. I have impulse issues.

ROY

Really?

(Pause.)

GRETCHEN

I'll just go get you that coffee.

(Senator Clifton enters.)

SENATOR CLIFTON

Gretchen taking good care of you?

GRETCHEN

Senator! I was just--

SENATOR CLIFTON

Roy, you old devil! How the hell are you?

(They shake hands.)

ROY

Hi, Margaret.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Gretchen, I think the congressman needs a bourbon today. Bottom right drawer of my desk.

ROY

What?

SENATOR CLIFTON

Yeah, no, you're right: you need to keep your wits about you. Thank you, Gretchen, that will be all.

(Gretchen exits.)

ROY

What do you mean I need to keep my wits about me?

SENATOR CLIFTON

I just got off the phone with Joyce.

ROY

She called you?!

SENATOR CLIFTON

I called her. I knew something was up when you said you needed to see me urgently. I figured either an ethics probe or a sex scandal.

ROY

You could have called me.

SENATOR CLIFTON

The wife is always the best source of information. So, you're planning a press conference. Honesty is the best policy, I always say.

ROY

I'm glad you see it that way.

SENATOR CLIFTON

I'm being sarcastic, Roy. We're politicians.

ROY

Are you saying I shouldn't get out in front of this?

SENATOR CLIFTON

I'm saying do whatever you need to do to save your career.

ROY

And the bill.

SENATOR CLIFTON

You know if this thing blows open I have to pull my vote. Especially since Joyce won't stand by you.

ROY

You know that would kill the bill.

SENATOR CLIFTON

What can I do?

ROY

Look, I know your base is very conservative--

SENATOR CLIFTON

I'm not worried about my base.

ROY

Funding sources.

SENATOR CLIFTON

America Re-awakening in particular.

ROY

The Harlan brothers are oil and gas; why would they care about a women's rights vote?

SENATOR CLIFTON

They'll care if it's a bill suddenly associated with a known philanderer. You know they're evangelical as hell.

ROY

Americans, even the most evangelical Americans, forgive politicians who confess their sins. Look at Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Clinton and Gingrich weren't dealing with the Harlan brothers.

ROY

There are tons of super PACs out there; I'm sure you can--

SENATOR CLIFTON

Come on! For a bill's that's mostly symbolic and not popular with my constituents?

ROY

It's popular with women.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Not in my state.

ROY

The ERA is more than just symbolic.

SENATOR CLIFTON

I'm not going to argue the merits.

ROY

Because you believe in it.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Why are we even having this conversation? Why aren't we talking about how you can contain this thing?

ROY

It can't be contained.

SENATOR CLIFTON

You'd sooner let an embarrassing tape go public than sit down with this woman? I want to vote for the bill; I really do. But you're not even taking the most basic steps.

ROY

What if I announced at the news conference that I found God? What denomination are the Harlan brothers?

SENATOR CLIFTON

Listen to yourself.

ROY

You could own my vote in the House for the next year.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Jesus Christ, Roy!

ROY

Will you at least talk to the Harlans? You can convince them.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Want my advice? Let the ERA go. Save your career. Have your press conference, wear your sack cloth; the voters will forgive you. You have a bright future ahead of you.

ROY

The ERA--women's rights in general--is why I went into politics.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Come on. We're two friends in a room. You can come clean.

ROY

I don't know what you're talking about. The ERA is my Holy Grail.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Really? Or is it your Corvette?

ROY

What?

SENATOR CLIFTON

Chevy Corvette. Ultimate male compensation-mobile.

ROY

You saying I have a small penis?

SENATOR CLIFTON

The opposite.... I mean, not literally; I'm not commenting on your anatomy.

ROY

You're saying I don't really respect women? No! This is something I believe in to the core.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Don't take this the wrong way, but there's something that's never smelled right about you. Die-hard women's rights advocate, supposedly, but look at you: you're like Warren Beatty, Jack Nicholson and Wilt Chamberlain rolled into one.

ROY

Normally I would take that as a complement.

SENATOR CLIFTON

Let's get serious. Men and women are in an eternal war with each other. If the tables were turned--if men were the oppressed sex--would I be fighting for men's rights? Probably not. I love men; but, for the most part, they can kiss my ass. Some days I want to murder them all.

ROY

If I were married to Carl I might feel the same way.

SENATOR CLIFTON

And then there's your mother. A lot of us have sentimental humble origin stories; but no one brings it up in speeches more than you do.

ROY

You think I talk about my mother too much?



SENATOR CLIFTON

The most important quality in a politician is self-knowledge. Admit what's really in your heart. Admit the ERA is just a political stepping stone. Let it go and move on.

ROY

What do you want from me?! Wanna hear that my mother wasn't a saint! Fine, she wasn't! But let me tell you something: every day she came home from work, she closed herself in her room and cried. Years later I found out she was harassed by the men at the plant. Every single day. The whole thing is messed up, Margaret! Men and women, how we treat each other! It's messed up and it needs to stop. The ERA is not a stepping stone and it's not a Corvette. Do you understand?!

SENATOR CLIFTON

I wish I could vote for this bill, but I can't.

ROY

Just talk to the Harlans. That's all I ask.

SENATOR CLIFTON

I have a meeting in five minutes. Good luck to you, Roy.

#### SCENE FOUR

11:15 AM. Wednesday. Desiree's apartment.

Joyce and Desiree face each other in the middle of the room.

DESIREE

Why did you come here?

(No response.)

Just so you know, I have no beef with you. Okay? This is strictly between me and Roy. He's a jerk, as I'm sure you are aware at this point. He deserves whatever he has coming to him.... To the extent that all this might affect you, what can I say? This is Roy's doing. He brought it on himself. He brought it on you. He brought it on me. So talk to Roy. I'm not the bad guy here. I'm a victim. Just like you.

(No response.)

You don't have, like, a gun in that purse, do you? Just so you know, the recording is set on auto-upload; by the time the first senator starts talking this afternoon, the file goes viral-- whether I'm around or not. So, there's no point in, you know... doing anything drastic. To me.

(No response.)

Say something.

JOYCE

You have a lot of parking violations.

DESIREE

I beg your pardon.

JOYCE

I was hoping to find something more compelling: prostitution, drugs, a porno or two. Hell, I'd take a drunk and disorderly. Turns out you're just a shitty parker.... So, Roy tells me you're a professional shopper.

DESIREE

Style consultant.

JOYCE

In other words, you shop for people.

DESIREE

What do you want?

JOYCE

You know, when I was your age.... You're, what? Twenty-seven?

DESIREE

How old are you?

JOYCE

I was supposed to have a colonoscopy today; that's how old. When I was your age--year or two older--I had an affair with a senator. Republican from a midwest state--I'm not going to say which one because he's still in office. I hated the hell out of his politics; but that was part of the excitement. He was older, experienced, powerful, rich. He'd take me to hotels; different one every time. Some seedy, some luxurious. This one place, The Hotel Congress, had a bidet. Here I am a farm girl from Illinois; never seen a bidet. Looks to me like a drinking fountain for dogs.

DESIREE

I'm not from Illinois; I know what a bidet is.

JOYCE

We were together the better part of a year, and what do I remember most vividly? A goddamn bathroom fixture.

DESIREE

Don't tell me: his wife visits you.

JOYCE

Looks me in the eye and says, "Stop seeing him and keep your mouth shut, or I will bury you."

DESIREE

Our affair is over, in case you didn't know.

JOYCE

But you're not keeping your mouth shut, are you? She was very well connected, his wife. Could have made my life miserable. Instead, I started to get job offers: State Department. NSA. My career really took off.

DESIREE

Is this a threat or a bribe, Joyce?

JOYCE

This is a threat, Desiree. If you release that tape hell will rain down on you. Old Testament style.

DESIREE

It's not a tape; it's a digital audio file.

JOYCE

You will never get work. You will be shunned from polite society.

DESIREE

I think you should leave.

JOYCE

Your name will be synonymous in this town with dog vomit.

DESIREE

Shall I call the police?

JOYCE

Go ahead. The MPD average response time is twelve minutes. I'll be gone by then. Roy tells me you want to open a high-end boutique. You can kiss that goodbye.

DESIREE

I can open a boutique anywhere.

JOYCE

You haven't built your client base anywhere; you've built it here. I probably know eighty percent of your clients.

DESIREE

I doubt it: you're a liberal Democrat.

JOYCE

Release the tape and see.

DESIREE

Digital audio file. Oh, I will.

JOYCE

Recording phone conversations is a crime, you know.

DESIREE

Not as long as one of the parties has knowledge of the recording.

JOYCE

Let's get down to brass tacks. What do you want?

DESIREE

Is this the bribe coming?

JOYCE

Roy thinks you're just pissed-off, but I don't believe it. Whose payroll are you on? Chamber of Commerce? American Merchants Association? How much are you getting paid to kill the amendment? I'll outbid whoever's paying you.

DESIREE

Roy is right: I am just pissed-off.

JOYCE

Or is this an ideological thing?

DESIREE

Did you hear what I just said?

JOYCE

If you're just pissed-off why are you sitting on the tape?

DESIREE

Digital audio file.

JOYCE

I'm fifty years old; I'll call it a fucking tape. Why are you sitting on it?

(pause)

Wait a minute. Are you in love with him? Is that it?

DESIREE

Yeah, I'm in love with him. So in love I have constant thoughts about stringing him upside down, slitting his throat and showering in his warm blood.... So now that you know the score, Joyce, it's been a slice of heaven.

JOYCE

Look, I know Roy's got a temper.

DESIREE

So get him anger management lessons for his birthday. Why are you making excuses for him? He's a dog.

JOYCE

It's not about him, believe me. I'm trying to save the ERA.

DESIREE

(mocking)

The Equal Rights Amendment.

JOYCE

Why are you against it?

DESIREE

I'm an anarchist.

JOYCE

In polite circles we say libertarian. You're also a woman.

DESIREE

Oh God. Are you gonna start talking about the sisterhood?

JOYCE

I'll bet you think you're not a feminist. Makes me want to scream. Everything you have you owe to women who came before you.

DESIREE

Were you beamed down from the nineteen-seventies? If civilization had been left in women's hands we'd all be living in grass huts.

JOYCE

Women didn't have a chance to find out because men have been subjugating us.

DESIREE

Some women find that exciting.

JOYCE

I don't.

DESIREE

How's that working out for you in your marriage?

JOYCE

Fuck you.

DESIREE

Did I touch a nerve, Joyce?

JOYCE

Are you for real? You're like some primitive throw-back to when women were dragged around by the hair.

DESIREE

I don't mind a little hair-pulling now and then.

JOYCE

Let me explain something to you--

DESIREE

No, let me explain something to you. You walk in here like you own the place. All high and mighty with the strength of your convictions. A regular Joan of Arc. Let me remind you of a few given facts here. Number One, you are not keeping your husband happy, therefore he fucks other women. Number two, he is a prick on parade, therefore he hurts women. Number three, I have an incriminating digital audio file, therefore I am holding all the cards. Number four, I don't believe in any sisterhood, therefore fuck you, Joyce. You got nothing. You can stand here and yadda yadda about women's rights, but you got nothing.

JOYCE

I've got Roy.

DESIREE

You can have him.

JOYCE

Okay, look. I came on a bit strong. I acknowledge that. I know you don't believe in--

DESIREE

Do not preach at my about the ERA; I had enough of that from Roy.

JOYCE

Do you even know what the ERA says?

DESIREE

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

JOYCE

Wow.

DESIREE

You see. I'm not some knuckle-dragging cavewoman. I used to be a feminist.

JOYCE

What happened?

DESIREE

I read Camille Paglia.

JOYCE

So now, what? You don't believe in anything?

DESIREE

I believe in Nature. Capital "N" Nature. No equal rights. No race, class or gender. Just sex and power. You feminists want to drive power out of sex. Conservatives want to get rid of sex. Nobody wants to face the truth, so we sugar-coat it with nice ideas like equality and democracy and family values. Sure. Whatever gets you through the night.

JOYCE

Christ. What did you and Roy ever see in each other?

DESIREE

I could ask you the same thing.

JOYCE

Do you even know Roy?

DESIREE

I know the real Roy. Sounds like maybe you don't.

JOYCE

Where do you get off? You come into my life, screw my husband, screw my marriage, threaten to screw his career and the ERA. And now you sit there and have the temerity to insult me. How dare you! With your sophomoric coffee house philosophies and your petty resentments. Capital "N" Nature, my ass. I have spent most of my life in this town. I know how this place works; and, no, it's not just sex and power. People in this town have beliefs. Right or left, they believe in something. That includes Roy. The *real* Roy.

DESIREE

Roy's beliefs are just on the surface. The man is an animal. Smells blood and begins scratching the dirt.

JOYCE

Just 'cause he's had a couple of affairs?

DESIREE

*A couple?* I hate to break it to you, honey, but there were at least three before me. I'm sure you've suspected. Have we been in denial, Joyce?

JOYCE

You little cunt.

DESIREE

Cunt. Is that a feminist term?

JOYCE

(breaking down)

Oh, Jesus! Oh, God! What is happening to me? This is a nightmare! A fucking nightmare!

DESIREE

Whatever. How about I make you some tea?

JOYCE

What do you want?

DESIREE

Or coffee?

JOYCE

What do you *want*, Desiree?!



DESIREE

*He hurt me, Joyce! I mean really hurt me. And then he walks out that door without a word. What do I want? How about HIS BALLS ON A TRAY?!*

(Pause.)

JOYCE

I'll have coffee.

DESIREE

Cream?

JOYCE

Please.

(Desiree exits. A moment later the sound of a key unlocking a door. Roy enters.)

JOYCE (cont'd)

What are you doing here?

ROY

What are *you* doing here?

JOYCE

You unmitigated piece of human waste!

ROY

What? What did she say to you?

JOYCE

You're not answering my question! What are you doing here?

ROY

Things didn't go well with Margaret; that's what I'm doing here. Believe me, it's a last resort.

JOYCE

You're here to apologize to her?

ROY

Apologize. Yes! That's what I'm here for. What did she say to you?

JOYCE

About what?

ROY

About whether the Nationals are gonna make the playoffs.

JOYCE

Don't get sarcastic with me! She said you hurt her feelings.

ROY

That's all she said?

JOYCE

She didn't go into detail, if that's what you mean. She seems fragile and immature.

ROY

That's it. She's fragile and immature. It explains everything.

(Desiree enters.)

DESIREE

All I could find was decaf--

(She sees Roy.)

(Silence.)

ROY

Hey.

DESIREE

(to Joyce)

What is he doing here?

JOYCE

I didn't expect him, I swear.

DESIREE

What the FUCK is he doing here?!

JOYCE

You want him to leave?

ROY

You're not going to say, "Hello"?

DESIREE

Tell him I'm not going to say, "Hello."

ROY

Listen, Desiree, I just wanted--

DESIREE

Tell him I'm barely tolerating his presence and I'm this close to going in the other room and uploading the audio file.

JOYCE

She says she's barely tolerating your--

ROY

I heard what she said.

DESIREE

Ask him what he wants.

ROY

(to Joyce)

Can I have some time alone with her?

DESIREE

No! Do not leave me alone with this man!

JOYCE

He came to apologize.

DESIREE

I don't want an apology.

ROY

Ask her what she does want.

DESIREE

His balls on a tray.

JOYCE

She doesn't mean it literally.

DESIREE

Yes, I do.

JOYCE

Don't you feel he owes you an apology?

DESIREE  
At a bare minimum.

JOYCE  
So let the man apologize.  
(to Roy)  
Say you're sorry.

ROY  
I need to do it alone with her.

DESIREE  
Why?

JOYCE  
(to Roy)  
Yeah, why?

ROY  
Because it's between the two of us. Anyway, why not?

DESIREE  
Because he's a hurtful, back-stabbing, hypocritical shit.

ROY  
Tell her she's being insulting!

JOYCE  
Just say you're sorry, will you?

ROY  
I need to know what I'm getting for it.

DESIREE  
What?! He's trying to negotiate an apology?!

ROY  
You refuse to talk to me alone, so, yeah: I want something out of it.

DESIREE  
Tell him he can go fuck himself.

ROY  
Tell her I didn't come to listen to her abuse.

JOYCE

Grow up, will you. You created all this.

ROY

Will she delete the recording if I apologize?

DESIREE

Get the hell out of my apartment. Right now!

JOYCE

No wait, please! Give him a chance.

DESIREE

Look at him!

JOYCE

*You* look at him. He is stupid, stubborn, immature, selfish, emotionally retarded--

ROY

Hey.

JOYCE

But he's a man.... You're not looking at him, Desiree. Look at him! He is a man and at one point he loved you.

DESIREE

He did not.

JOYCE

Tell her you loved her.

ROY

This is pointless.

JOYCE

Work with me here, both of you. Tell her you loved her.

ROY

Fine, I loved her.

JOYCE

Don't say it to me.

ROY

(perfunctory)

I loved you.

DESIREE

Wow. My heart is melting in my chest.

JOYCE

Now apologize. And don't try to negotiate anything for it; this is not the U.S. apologizing to China for sinking a ship.

ROY

I'm sorry.

JOYCE

That is the most insincere apology I've ever heard.

ROY

Whose side are you on?!

JOYCE

Try it again.

ROY

(sarcastic)

I'm sorry.

DESIREE

He's not sorry.

ROY

Am too!

JOYCE

Then say it like you mean it!

ROY

(angry)

I'm sorry! Okay!

(realizing...)

My blood pressure is up. How am I supposed to apologize when my blood pressure is up?

JOYCE

You wanna go in the other room and do some yoga?

DESIREE

Ask him why he thinks he has a right to be pissed-off.

ROY

Ask her if she's forgotten who's about to release a sex tape and destroy a man's life!

DESIREE

Tell him he should have thought about that before he dumped me the way he did.

ROY

She was taping our phone calls! Who does that?

DESIREE

Someone with a friend named Debbie at the NSA.

ROY

Debbie's a scheming bitch.

(Desiree takes out an iPod.)

DESIREE

Wanna hear it, Roy? I've got a copy right here.

ROY

I heard it.

DESIREE

You heard a few seconds; the tame bits. This is the super nasty stuff.

ROY

Put it away.

DESIREE

How about you, Joyce? Wanna hear how brutal and degrading your husband can be?

ROY

Put it the fuck away!

DESIREE

Don't you dare raise your voice at me!

JOYCE

Stop it! Both of you! Put that away.

(to Roy)

Do you think you can manage to formulate a sincere apology?

ROY

(to Desiree)

I'm sorry.

DESIREE

Get on your knees and say it.

ROY

What?!

JOYCE

I agree; that's a bit much.

ROY

You see what we're dealing with here? Next thing, she's gonna ask for my head on a pike!

JOYCE

Your balls on a tray.

DESIREE

Your balls on a tray.

JOYCE

Now, will you watch your goddamn temper!

(to Desiree)

And will you be reasonable? This man is a U.S. Congressman; he is not going to get on his knees.

ROY

(to Joyce)

Look at her: She just wants to humiliate me before she destroys my life.

DESIREE

(to Joyce)

You see? He has no feelings for me.

(to Roy)

Bastard!

ROY

Oh, I have feelings for you, all right.

JOYCE

Watch it, Roy.

ROY

Feelings of revulsion!

DESIREE

You made that very clear yesterday. Asshole!



(Desiree rushes out of the room.)

JOYCE

Nice work!

ROY

Did you hear her?

JOYCE

What in God's name did you do to her yesterday?

ROY

I told her she was fat.

JOYCE

Bullshit.

ROY

I don't want to talk about it!

JOYCE

How am I supposed to help you if I don't know what the hell is going on?

ROY

I didn't ask for your help.

JOYCE

'Cause you're doing so well on your own. She's probably in there uploading the recording as we speak.

ROY

Shit.

JOYCE

You didn't think of that, did you? Just open your mouth and say whatever.

ROY

Can you go in there and see what she's doing?

JOYCE

She's *your* girlfriend!

ROY

Ex-girlfriend. If I go in there she might do something rash. Time is ticking away, Joyce.

I hate you.

JOYCE

(Joyce exits.)

(Roy takes out his phone, dials.)

ROY

Yeah, Doug. Hey, listen, I just wanted to give you a heads-up I might need you to schedule a press conference, probably for this evening.... I'd rather not say just yet.... Obviously, you can't prepare a statement since you don't know what it's about; there's still a lot at play here and I'm not ready to--... We're not scheduling it yet; I'm just putting you on alert. So don't go home early, and don't let anybody else go; we'll need all hands on deck. Got it? Thanks.

(Hangs up, dials another number.)

Hi, this is Roy Armstrong. Is Senator Clifton--... Gretchen! Hey.... I see. Well can you have her call me as soon as--... Thanks.

(Looks around, lowers voice.)

Hey, listen, you wanna have a drink sometime?... How about tomorrow?... I can't talk right now. Yeah, this is my cell number. Shoot me a text and I'll call you.... Me too.

(Joyce enters.)

ROY (cont'd)

(Changes tone.)

Great! Have her call me as soon as possible. Thank you so much.

(Hangs up.)

JOYCE

Who was that?

ROY

Margaret's office. I need her to talk to the Harlans.

(gesturing to the other room)

How is Desiree?

JOYCE

Locked in the bathroom crying.

ROY

Good. We can make a clean getaway.

JOYCE

Are you kidding?

ROY

It was a mistake coming here.

JOYCE

You're just gonna leave her in there like that?

ROY

I'll send her flowers. I really need to get to the office.

(Joyce sits.)

ROY (cont'd)

What are you doing?

JOYCE

I'm going to give her a few minutes, then I'm going to make her some tea and try to talk to her.

ROY

She's just being a drama queen. Let's go.

JOYCE

You go. You have better things to do than attend to the feelings of women you've trampled emotionally.

ROY

That is not some whimpering innocent in there. It's a woman who recorded private phone conversations.

JOYCE

On the advice of a friend to protect herself. Are you really this uncaring, Roy? The congressman who built his career on empathizing with women.

ROY

I empathize with the plight of women.

JOYCE

The plight of women is not in the bathroom crying.

ROY

You're suddenly on her side?

JOYCE

I'm on the amendment's side; my best chance of saving it is here with her.

ROY

Look, Joyce. We need to be realistic about things.

JOYCE

What are you saying? Are you giving up on the bill?

ROY

I'm saying we're not going to salvage anything hanging around this apartment.

JOYCE

By "anything" you mean your career.

ROY

My career might be the only thing salvageable at this point, but not if I don't get in front of the story.

JOYCE

What if that were me in there? Would you high-tail it out of here?

ROY

You're my wife. Jesus Christ, Joyce, time is wasting! I have to meet with staff, prepare a statement, talk to Margaret.

JOYCE

No one's stopping you.

ROY

I need you with me.

JOYCE

You and Doug can handle everything.

ROY

I need your moral support.

JOYCE

I'll be along shortly.

ROY

If you come with me now I'll do the dishes for a whole year.

JOYCE

You don't want me to be alone with her. Is that it?

ROY

What? No.

JOYCE

You're afraid she might reveal something. That's why you were so curious to know what we talked about.

ROY

Why don't you let it go?! Why did you have to come here in the first place?!

JOYCE

Why do you care?

(pause)

Oh, my God! You came here to screw her!

ROY

Look, it didn't happen, okay? No harm no foul.

JOYCE

You are such a dog!

ROY

Yeah, but for a good cause this time. Anyway, we're onto Plan B, so can we go now?

JOYCE

I'm not going anywhere!

ROY

(sitting)

Then I'm not going anywhere either!

(They sit. Long silence.)

ROY (cont'd)

You think I talk about Mom too much in speeches?

JOYCE

You're kidding, right?

(pause)

I'm curious: is your priority here to save the amendment, or to save your political career?

ROY

Obviously, I'm trying to save them both.

JOYCE

But if you had to choose.

ROY

I'd choose the bill, of course.

JOYCE

Would you really? The man I fell in love with is Roy Armstrong the true believer. The tireless community organizer, activist blah blah blah for everything right and just.

ROY

What do you mean blah blah blah?

JOYCE

But you're also ambitious.

ROY

You can't de-couple that from what I believe in.

JOYCE

What *do* you believe in? Who is the real Roy? Do his ideals fuel his ambition, or is it the other way around?

ROY

Where is this coming from?

JOYCE

How many have there been?

ROY

How many what?

JOYCE

Don't play dumb! There is a woman in the other room crying. Do you care about her? Do you care about me? Do you care about any of us, or are we just receptacles along the path to the top of your mountain?

ROY

Of course I care about you. I love you.

JOYCE

How many have there been? Desiree said there were three before her.

ROY  
No.

JOYCE  
The truth, Roy!

ROY  
Three sounds about right.

JOYCE  
That would make four, including her.

ROY  
Okay, four.

JOYCE  
You're still not telling the whole truth, are you?

ROY  
Okay, look, there might have been a few others--

JOYCE  
Oh, my God, what is wrong with you?!

ROY  
Mostly one-night stands. They were meaningless.

JOYCE  
Get out! Schedule your press conference. Salvage your precious political career.

ROY  
It's not about my career.

JOYCE  
Oh, right, excuse me; it's all about equality for the half of the population you want to bend over a chair! Go! Now!

ROY  
Not without you.

(He grabs her arm. She slaps him.)

ROY (cont'd)  
That's just great! Thank you for that. The only kind of physical contact I have with you these days. After all, you don't touch me in any other way, do you?

JOYCE

Let's not get into this.

ROY

No. Instead let's focus on the legislation. Right, Joyce? Let's focus on the issues, the policies. Because we work *so well* together, don't we? We're such a great *legislative team*, aren't we? There's only one problem with this pretty picture; Roy has a dick and he likes to use it more than once every year!

JOYCE

I don't like things inside me when I don't know where they've been.

(Pause.)

ROY

Listen.

JOYCE

No, it's fine. We're down to brass tacks now, aren't we? Stripping away illusions. It's healthy. Makes us think more clearly about what needs to be done.

ROY

Are you saying you want a divorce?

JOYCE

We've got bigger fish to fry. You're the only one who can diffuse the situation. Whatever you have to do, I will support you.

ROY

What are you saying?

JOYCE

What do you think I'm saying? It's been ten minutes and she's still crying in there. What does that suggest to you?

ROY

She's emotionally unstable.

JOYCE

Don't be dense. She's still in love with you.

ROY

Yeah, right.



JOYCE

Think about it: why else didn't she just release the tape?

ROY

I explained--

JOYCE

Yeah, I don't buy that.

ROY

She hates me!

JOYCE

Only someone in love can hate that much. And you're still in love with her.

ROY

No.

JOYCE

We're telling the truth now, remember?

ROY

All right, fine. I am. But I also love you.

JOYCE

Blah blah blah. You know what do to, or do I need to draw a picture?

ROY

She won't have me back.

JOYCE

Tell her whatever you need to tell her. Do you understand?

ROY

I do love you.

JOYCE

I know you do.

ROY

I feel like you're pimping me out.

JOYCE

It's for a good cause.

(Desiree enters.)

DESIREE

You're still here.

JOYCE

I was gonna make you some tea.

DESIREE

That would be nice.

JOYCE

I'm going to make tea, Roy. Would you like some?

ROY

Yeah, sure.

JOYCE

In that case, I'll brew a pot.

(to Desiree)

I'll just be in the next room.

(Joyce exits.)

(Pause.)

ROY

Listen---

DESIREE

Stay over there. On that side.

(His phone buzzes.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

Don't you wanna check that?

(Silence.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

I've been thinking. I need a change of venue. I thought maybe Seattle. Or Portland. Go back to graduate school. There's still time. Study design or something, I don't know. Get a degree. I could become a vegetarian. Maybe even a vegan... but probably not 'cause I really like halibut. Portland or Seattle or San Francisco.

I'm sorry.

ROY

What did you say?

DESIREE

I said I'm sorry.

ROY

That sounded almost--

DESIREE

It was.

ROY

Too late: I uploaded the recording.

DESIREE

(Pause. She starts laughing.)

I'm kidding! God, you should have seen your face just now!

Then, you haven't--

ROY

It's on a timed auto upload, so don't try anything funny. You wanna hear the recording?

DESIREE

I'd rather not.

ROY

I want you to hear yourself.

DESIREE

Maybe later. Listen to me. Please. I am sorry, Desiree. I'm sorry and I want you back.

ROY

(Desiree laughs.)

Why is that funny?

ROY (cont'd)

You're so full of it! What does that even mean, "I want you back"? Does it mean you're leaving Joyce?

DESIREE

Yes.  
ROY

Bullshit.  
DESIREE

Ask her.  
ROY

Oh, you discussed it with her?... This just to save the bill, isn't it?  
DESIREE

I hate that piece of paper! I wanna rip it into little shreds, eat it and shit it out all over your head.  
DESIREE (cont'd)

This is not about the bill... I mean, it's partly about the bill; but it's mostly about you and me. I want you back.  
ROY

You dumped me for the bill!  
DESIREE

It was the biggest mistake of my life.  
ROY

Because it turned out I had a sex tape.  
DESIREE

Because I love you.  
ROY

You have a hell of a way of showing it.  
DESIREE

I'll never forgive myself for that.  
ROY

(Pause.)

I had a dream last night that I reached down your throat. My whole arm went in, down to my elbow. I grabbed your heart and pulled it out of your mouth. When it came out it wasn't a heart at all; it was a baby. A tiny bloody baby.  
DESIREE

(MORE)

DESIREE (cont'd)

Beautiful, like the baby Jesus in an old painting. I wiped the blood off its face and suddenly it turned into a rottweiler. Before I know what to do, it lunges at me and tears a hole in my neck.... I woke up gasping.

ROY

Forgive me!

DESIREE

You're a bad person.

ROY

I know.

DESIREE

Is this for real?

ROY

Yes.

DESIREE

Say it.

ROY

This is for real.

DESIREE

Call me baby.

ROY

Baby.

(He goes to her.)

Darling.

(They kiss.)

DESIREE

God help me.

(They have a moment. Roy's phone buzzes.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

Someone's really hot to reach you.

Probably Doug.  
ROY

(She takes the phone from his pocket.)

DESIREE  
(reading from phone)  
Who's Gretchen?

ROY  
Gretchen? Oh, uh, Clifton's new intern.

DESIREE  
You're meeting her for a drink?

ROY  
I can explain--

DESIREE  
You think I'm stupid?

ROY  
That was from earlier, when I thought you and I were, you know--

DESIREE  
You're a pig!

ROY  
I'll text her right now to tell her it's off.

DESIREE  
There is something wrong with you! How many were there? While we were together?

ROY  
Not again.

DESIREE  
I am so stupid!

ROY  
Darling.

DESIREE  
How many?!

ROY

What difference does it make?

(Roy's phone rings. Desiree looks at it.)

DESIREE

Hm. Margaret Clifton.

ROY

Give me that!

DESIREE

Sit down and shut up!

(Roy sits.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

(answering phone)

Hello?... Senator Clifton! I'm afraid Congressman Armstrong is indisposed at the moment because I'm sitting on his face. Hey, Roy, how's my kootchie taste? What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?... How rude. She hung up.

(She tosses him his phone.)

ROY

Jesus Christ! What the hell is wrong with you?!

DESIREE

Wonder what she had to say. Guess we'll never find out.

(Joyce enters.)

JOYCE

What's going on in here?

ROY

A shit storm.

(Joyce's phone rings. She goes to her purse, takes it out.)

JOYCE

Margaret!... I'm sorry about that, I'm not sure what--... I see.... Uh-huh.... Uh-huh.... Uh-huh.... Thank you so much. I'll let him know. Give my best to Carl.

(She hangs up.)

Oh, my God.

ROY

What?

JOYCE

She talked to her super PAC people. They'd be fine if you fell on your sword.

ROY

What, she can vote for the bill if I resign?

JOYCE

(scrolling through his phone)

She expects you to vote for her immigration bill first. But, yes. She just emailed a statement that would satisfy the Harlans.

(Roy checks his phone.)

ROY

(reading)

"Congressman Roy Armstrong is announcing his resignation from his congressional seat. The congressman does not want his private moral failings to become a distraction in passing the Equal Rights Amendment."

JOYCE

This is fantastic! She's throwing you a lifeline!

ROY

She's throwing the amendment a lifeline.

JOYCE

Exactly. Grab it.

ROY

At the expense of my career?

JOYCE

You can run again in few years.

ROY

I might not get elected. But if I come clean at a press conference the voters will forgive me. I can save my job.

JOYCE

That would kill the amendment.

DESIREE

Ah, here's the real Roy.



JOYCE

You keep out of this!

(to Roy)

You're going to do the right thing, aren't you? You're going to forward Margaret's email to Doug for immediate release.

DESIREE

She thinks you're a Boy Scout. Go on, Roy: call your office and schedule a career-saving press conference.

JOYCE

This is the woman who wants your balls on a tray. Forward the email!

DESIREE

Schedule the press conference!

JOYCE

Roy? Why are you hesitating?

DESIREE

'Cause he's gonna schedule a press conference.

JOYCE

Will you shut the hell up!

ROY

Will you both shut up! I'm thinking.

JOYCE

You can think on the way to the office. Let's go.

(They start to exit.)

DESIREE

You can't leave!

JOYCE

You can't keep us!

DESIREE

Joyce? Don't you want to know what happened yesterday?

(Joyce stops.)

DESIREE (cont'd)

Don't you want to know what he did that upset me so much?

(Joyce comes back in.)

ROY

Joyce. Let's go.

DESIREE

So we're fighting, right? He's getting pretty worked-up. The phone rings. It's you.

ROY

Haven't you done enough damage?

JOYCE

Go on.

DESIREE

He moves toward me threateningly.

ROY

Shut up! Godamn it!

DESIREE

Or what, Roy? Huh? You gonna get rough with me?

JOYCE

You said you didn't hit her.

ROY

I didn't!

DESIREE

He starts yelling at me.

ROY

She's leaving out details. She taunted me!

DESIREE

I called him a hypocrite. Told him he has no respect for women.

ROY

See?!

DESIREE

He forces me onto the floor.

JOYCE

Jesus Christ.

ROY

That's an exaggeration!

DESIREE

He's yelling at me so loud my ears hurt.

ROY

Stop it! Right now!

DESIREE

Or what? You gonna punish me?... Look at you! Goddamn animal.

ROY

Fuck you!

DESIREE

He says, "You bitch."

ROY

Shut the up!

DESIREE

"You slut."

ROY

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

DESIREE

"You diseased animal. You disgust me."

ROY

Shut the fuck up! You hear me! Shut the fuck--... What do you want from me? Huh? Treat me like this? Play all kinds of games--... You are nothing. You think you can just--... What do you want from me?! Want me to rip myself open, spill my guts all over the--... What the fuck do you want?! I hate you, I hate you, I hate you all!

(He goes to the door.)

ROY (cont'd)

God!

(Long silence.)

(Roy takes out his phone.)

ROY (cont'd)

(into phone)

Doug. I just forwarded an email. Statement for immediate release. Self-explanatory. I'm sorry about everything.

(He hangs up, looks at Desiree.)

ROY (cont'd)

Listen...

(Desiree turns and exits into the other room.)

(He looks at Joyce. She begins to leave.)

ROY (cont'd)

Joyce.

(She stops for a moment, exits.)

(Roy is left standing alone.)

LIGHTS DIM.

END OF PLAY