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Final Notice. [Original writing]

Sarac, Debra, M.F.A.
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1993
FINAL NOTICE

by

Debra Sarac

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting

Department of Theatre Arts University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May, 1993
1991
by
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The Thesis of DEBRA SARAC for the degree of MASTER OF FINE ARTS in PLAYWRITING is approved.

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May, 1993
ABSTRACT

Final Notice is a full-length play produced as required for the Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting. It consists of four (4) characters and was performed by UNLV undergraduate acting students in the Black Box Theatre in June of 1992.
CHARACTERS

Marsha  
Jim  
Mr. Tenderhart  
Teresa

forties
her husband, forties
forty to fifty
the daughter, twenty-three

TIME:
The present.

LOCALE:
A condominium and Mr. Tenderhart's office.
We kiss goodnight
and we turn out the light
we lay side by side in the dark
and we're waiting for sleep or a spark
but the night's on the run
and the spark does not come
and we quietly worry and wonder
and the silence is louder than thunder
and it rings with the sound of goodbye

time is forever
but love is the fire
and one day it's one degree colder
and the clock's ticking over your shoulder
and it ticks and it ticks and it ticks and it ticks
and it ticks with the sound of goodbye

- Crystal Gayle
"The Sound of Goodbye"
[AT RISE is MARSHA and JIM's condominium. It is filled with many items of modern life. TENDERHART is at the door.]

MARSHA

Look, Mr. -

TENDERHART

Tenderhart.

MARSHA

Tenderhart. We're fine. I can handle our debts by myself.

TENDERHART

Ah, but Mrs. Jones, I also, shall we say, help to build families. Why with -

MARSHA

We're already built just fine. Now if you don't -

Take my card.

MARSHA

Look -

Here. You'll use it. A lovely woman such as yourself - and you are lovely.

[pause]

MARSHA

My husband will be here shortly.

TENDERHART

Pity. I would have loved a cup of tea. Perhaps another time.

MARSHA

We drink coffee.

TENDERHART

Yes. Well. Comes the time when we must do what's . . . necessary . . . to fix things.

MARSHA

It's necessary to close the door and say goodbye. Goodbye.

TENDERHART

Right. We wouldn't want your heating bill as large as your credit card bills.
MARSHA
How did you know about our credit cards?

TENDERHART
Simple. You have a home. So does your neighbor. A husband. As does your neighbor. A daughter. Um, hum. I see you just bought a swimming pool shortly after your neighbor did. Credit cards rather go with the American picture don't you think? See that number on my -

MARSHA
I doubt that I will be calling you. Now, really, Sir, I must be getting busy.

TENDERHART
- business card? Call me when you need me. And you will need me Mrs. Jones. They all do. I'll help you get rid of - everything - that is unnecessary.

MARSHA
I can assure you I won't be needing you. I'm perfectly capable as most Americans of taking care of my family's debts. Good day Mr. -

TENDERHART
Tenderhart. Good day, Mrs. Jones. Marsha. I look forward to your call. And I do like your hair that way.

[MARSHA closes the door.]

[JIM enters from garage, dragging a huge, half man, half beast sculpture.]

JIM
Well?

MARSHA
Good god, Jim. We already have a centerpiece.

JIM
Isn't this art!

MARSHA
Where will it fit?

JIM
Right here.

MARSHA
It covers all the family pictures.
JIM
Here?

MARSHA
How will we watch television?

JIM
Then where?

MARSHA
Do you still have the receipt?

JIM
You don't like it.

MARSHA
We don't need it.

JIM
Al has one.

MARSHA
So.

JIM
So I have to have one.

MARSHA
Honey, we can't afford it.

JIM
My wife should have nice things. My father bought things for my mother and she was very happy up until the divorce. Besides, I put it on the Visa.

MARSHA
It was already full! Well we might as well put everything in a big pile 'cause they're going to start repossessing! What do I have to do to keep this place from falling apart?

JIM
I fixed the sink yesterday. Aah. C'mon, tell me you like it.

MARSHA
Dinner will be ready pretty soon.

JIM
What's cooking?

MARSHA
I'm trying something new.
Sculpture is sort of new for us. Ah, here's the perfect place.

MARSHA [pause]

Want to play cards?

JIM

Oh, but my program's coming on.

MARSHA

We can do both.

JIM

But it's not a repeat this week!

MARSHA

After the program?

JIM

Won't dinner be ready? [switches on t.v.]

MARSHA

All right, how about an appetizer?

JIM

Great!

MARSHA [plays with his hair]

Do you want it now?

JIM

Honey - my show! We'll have plenty of time for that.

MARSHA

We can tape the show with the extra v.c.r.

JIM

Teresa will be home soon.

MARSHA

We have time. We also have a lock on our bedroom door. [unbuttons his shirt]

JIM [pause]

Maybe right there on top of the t.v. would be better.

MARSHA

Why Jim!
JIM
I meant the pictures on the wall so we can put the sculpture over there.

MARSHA
Oh. You should really take it back, honey. The room looked just fine without it.

JIM
It's from that new guy who's here in town for a while. Everybody on this street has one.

But only you have me.

JIM
I heard Teresa's car. Our daughter's coming in here.

[TERESA enters]

TERESA
You guys! At least close the curtains; what will the neighbors think?

JIM
They'll think we have artistic taste in sculptures.

MARSHA
[sits up]
How was your final?

TERESA
"A". My Psychotherapy one is tomorrow.

Your last one.

TERESA
And my favorite.

MARSHA
It seems like only yesterday when you wanted us to buy you a computer. And now you're graduating.

TERESA
Speaking of graduation, it's a pretty big moment in a young lady's life.

MARSHA
I'm bringing my camera.
TERESA
Bonnie's parents are buying her something.

MARSHA
Maybe we should have a party. Have your friends over. Would you like that?

TERESA
Bonnie's Dad got her tickets for graduation.

JIM
What kind of tickets?

TERESA
Carribean cruise.

MARSHA
Oh! Bonnie will have a wonderful time!

TERESA
Especially with her best friend.

MARSHA
Honey, we can't afford a ticket for you.

JIM
Sure we can.

TERESA
Thanks, Dad!

MARSHA
Wait a minute! We can't afford it!

JIM
So we'll take out another loan.

TERESA
There's an ad in today's paper with a discount if you order in advance.

JIM
Did Bonnie already get her ticket?

TERESA
[innocently]
Yes. Yes she got "a" ticket.

MARSHA
And I suppose we take out a loan to pay for the loan?
JIM
It's graduation.

MARSHA
I know. And that's why we should have a party.

JIM
How often does our little girl graduate?

MARSHA
How long will the Carribean be where it is?

TERESA
Bonnie's Dad -

MARSHA
Is not as in debt as we are.

JIM
Let me at least see that discount. [he finds the paper]

TERESA
It's somewhere in this section.

JIM
[looks at ad]
Here we go.
Not bad.

TERESA
See?

MARSHA
Yes. See how we can't afford it? Maybe when your car is paid off.

JIM
A small loan. I'm in good with the bank.

TERESA
Yeah! Bonnie will flip when she hears. Then maybe her parents . . . uh, her parents will be just as excited! I gotta call her!

[TERESA exits]

JIM
I'll stop by the bank tomorrow.

MARSHA
Maybe you should stop by Gus's and tell him his daughter wants to go on a cruise.
She already has a ticket.

She will.

This is such a special occasion!

But we can't afford it.

I don't want my daughter growing up thinking she can never have what she wants.

I don't want my daughter growing up thinking money grows on trees.

She knows better.

Sure. She knows Visa cards fit nicely in those little plastic wallet things.

She can practice her Psychotherapy on the passengers.

Our daughter can memorize a Visa number in fifteen seconds.

It'll be an adventure.

She can have an adventurous job in the summer and pay her own way. You can't just hand every little thing her way.

Speaking of lovely, what did you do to your hair? It's beautiful!

I used the new shampoo and bath line you bought.

Do you like the bubble bath?
MARSHA

Of course I do.

JIM

There! You see! A good buy.

MARSHA

A better one would have been something for the both of us to enjoy together. Or a nice video tape so all three of us can sit together and watch a good movie. This summer. While Bonnie is away on her cruise and Teresa stays home with us.

JIM

Know what would go great with that lovely hair of yours?

MARSHA

What, Jim.

JIM

This shiny gold chain. [pulls one from pocket]

MARSHA

[pause]

It's - tell me you didn't Visa this.

JIM

J.B.'s.

MARSHA

You don't have an account with J.B.'s.

JIM

Isn't it pretty? Look how it catches the light.

MARSHA

It's beautiful, Jim. But you have to take it back.

JIM

C'mon, Marsha, I picked it myself. Remember when we said soon we'll have all the wonderful things married couples should have?

MARSHA

I know I said that. I don't want "things" anymore. Jim, you used to sneak over to Gus's garden and pick me roses at night.

JIM

Gus's roses are already in?

MARSHA

Roses are so romantic.
JIM
You don't like the necklace?

MARSHA
I do. But you didn't have to buy me this. I have plenty.

JIM
I just wanted to show you how much I love you.

MARSHA
Taking a walk together would do it.

JIM
Whatever happened to the good old days of a man taking care of his wife?

MARSHA
James. You used to take care of me just fine before Teresa was born. And I took care of you. But now look. We are in debt- we owe money.

JIM
Everybody does.

MARSHA
Not as much as we do.

JIM
No, Larry owes more than we do. And Gus just got turned over to a collection agency again.

MARSHA
Which is what's gonna happen to us.

JIM
Nonsense. Let's have dinner. Want me to bring it in here for us?

MARSHA
Have you looked at the checkbook lately?

JIM
Saw it in the kitchen junk drawer.

MARSHA
That was two months ago.

JIM
Then it's time we used it!

MARSHA
What's our balance? I'll tell you: a big fat zero.
JIM
That's why we have a Visa.

MARSHA
How are we gonna pay for this stuff? Look at that - that
THING on the table. I don't even know what it is!

Gus has one.

MARSHA
Then he can have another! And who do we know that has
fourteen telephones in their house? Do we absolutely need
cable service from Pakistan? Do you know how silly Butch must
feel sleeping in a doghouse that looks like a yacht? Poor
Fluffy has to slink home 'cause he doesn't want anyone to know
his cathouse looks like a Mazda!

Not every dog has a yacht you know.

MARSHA
And Butch always wanted one since he was a puppy. Honey, you
got to take some of this stuff back.

[TERESA enters]

TERESA
Do you think I need a new bathing suit? Bonnie just bought
one of those new ones with the built-in radio. Which hat
looks best with this outfit?

Maybe this one?

The blue one is nice.

JIM

MARSHA
Teresa, your father has something to tell you.

She's graduating, Marsh.

JIM

Yes, Dad?

TERESA

MARSHA
He wants to tell you about the trip.

It's about the trip.
They take checks.

MARSHA

James.

TERESA

Dad?

JIM

The trip. Honey - about the trip - uh - [pause]
You have a wonderful time!

TERESA

Thanks, Dad!

MARSHA

NO! Jim - Teresa we just can't afford this trip for you. Maybe a nice summer job -

TERESA

Mom. Children about to embark upon their selected career choice need a moment of self-examination and introspective contemplation in order to best balance the forces of the super ego exerting pressure on the id thereby allowing the ego to fully -

JIM

For my graduation, my father bought me a new car - and back then that was something! It's just a tiny little cruise.

MARSHA

No. No cruise.

TERESA

Mommmmm . . . Dad?

JIM

You'll get a job as soon as you get back?

TERESA

My id and super ego should be balanced by then. [kisses JIM and MARSHA]
I'm going to have so much fun on this cruise! Whatever will you two do alone without me!

[TERESA exits]

JIM

She's really excited about the trip.
MARSHA
Jim. How many times do I have to remind you to not give Teresa every single little thing.

JIM
Did you see her face light up? We'll remember this day and be happy we did this for her. I still remember my father handing me a shiny set of keys! Unforgettable!

MARSHA
We already gave her a car.

JIM
And look how happy she is! [playfully tickles her]

MARSHA
Stop!

JIM
Just like my Marsha!

MARSHA
Jim!

[MR. TENDERHART'S business card falls out of MARSHA'S pocket]

JIM
What's this?

MARSHA
Nothing.

JIM
Seeing another man on the side? Marsha. Don't I pay enough attention to you? You should have told me. [pause]
I could have let you two use the boat!

MARSHA
Jim! No - it's just - an agency I suppose - that takes trade-ins for debts.

JIM
We don't have anything we want to trade.

MARSHA
I don't know . . . maybe this is a way to help us with our debts.
JIM
I don't need any help with debts, I'm doing fine myself.

MARSHA
Maybe just checking this out. We can -

JIM
-just reorganize our finances. We'll be fine. Coffee with dinner?

MARSHA
Yes.

JIM
There's dessert? [heads toward kitchen]

MARSHA
Of course.

JIM
Good. You just stay right there, hon. I'll bring in the goods.

[he exits]

MARSHA
As long as it's not something you charged.

[MARSHA crosses to MR. TENDERHART'S office]

MR. TENDERHART
[to MARSHA]

Please! Come on in!

MARSHA
Mr. Tenderhart?

MR. TENDERHART
I knew you'd come! They all do sooner or later! Do sit down. A bit rainy out, eh? Well you just make yourself comfortable. Let me pour you a hot cup of tea. Wait, you prefer coffee!

MARSHA
Thank you.

MR. TENDERHART
Sure hope it clears up soon! Oh - you can just put your umbrella right over there. That's fine. Chair okay? Would you like me to adjust that for you? Yes, I'm so glad you decided to see me - my agency. I'm sure it will be quite a pleasure doing business with you. Yes. Pleasure. I have a family picnic planned, my brother's idea and all. Have any brothers?
MARSHA

One-

MR. TENDERHART
-See to think we like that sort of thing. 'Course with the rain and all - well - you like picnics?

MARSHA

Yes I -

MR. TENDERHART
You do? Well then the family thing to do I always say. Did you want sugar with your coffee? Lots of good food and the kids all play together. I, myself, like to snooze in the sun. You like volleyball?

MARSHA

It's not my -

MR. TENDERHART
Well, there always seems to be a game going and after all that food - well - not the thing to do right away - you understand.

MARSHA

Yes, sir. I understand.

MR. TENDERHART
How's the coffee?

MARSHA

Just fine, thank you. Could we perhaps -

MR. TENDERHART
Of course! Of course! Let's get right down to business. Only one reason why you're here so why don't you read this agreement then sign on that line right -where did it go - there it is. Right there. Oh - there's a waiver under that you need to sign. Tell me, Mrs - may I call you Marsha?

MARSHA

That will be fine. Could we just discuss the matter first?

MR. TENDERHART
Then Marsha it is! Not much to discuss! You're in debt - I can get you out of it! Life is so simple sometimes I always say! I need you to fill out this contract. Minor detail. Do it for all our customers. 'Course you're one of the more lovely ones I dare say! You changed your hair!

MARSHA

Just a new style. I'm surprised you noticed.
MR. TENDERHART
Ah, who wouldn't notice the most minor of details on a sensual woman? Ah hem. This top part you can fill out yourself - need full name, address, that sort of thing.

MARSHA
What am I signing?

MR. TENDERHART
Oh, just a formality about equal trade-ins for equal debts, that sort of thing. Tell me, Marsha, which bank did you go through for your last loan?

MARSHA
Actually it was my husband. He went through Valley Federal.

MR. TENDERHART
Well no wonder. And the loan before that?

MARSHA
Same. Do you really think I'm sensual? I mean, my hair?

MR. TENDERHART
Indeed! Now, you said you have plenty of kitchen appliances?

MARSHA
All the latest.

MR. TENDERHART
Good. Good. Won't be all that bad. My grandmother had to make do with the old frying pan and cookie sheet. Bet you're some kind of cook, eh? I always did have a soft spot for a woman who can cook. Ah, homemade lasagna. Do you put romano cheese in your lasagna?

MARSHA
Of course. But - what exactly will I be, uh, trading? Will it cover our Visa?

MR. TENDERHART
Romano cheese just seems to give it more substance I always say. Let's see your list of credit cards. Here we go. Ah, Visa?

MARSHA
It's full. You want me to trade my kitchen things?

MR. TENDERHART
Discover?
MARSHA
Uh, full.

MR. TENDERHART
Sears?

MARSHA
Full.

MR. TENDERHART
MasterCard?

MARSHA
Full.

MR. TENDERHART
American Express.

MARSHA
Full.

MR. TENDERHART
Children?

MARSHA
Full. I mean, a daughter.

MR. TENDERHART
I'm sure she's a wonderful girl. My cousin - no- sister and her husband have the most beautiful little girl - and so smart! I just love visiting them! Pets?

MARSHA
Two. Dog and cat.

MR. TENDERHART
Never did care much for cats. Allergies you know. Relatives?

MARSHA
Quite a few. On both sides.

MR. TENDERHART
Good. Good. 'Course I have my share, too. Can't even remember where some of them live these days. Except for my Grandmother. No- my Aunt. She always remembers my birthday and sends me a card and money. Every year. Although I can't do much with two dollars these days. Now. How many cars do you have?

MARSHA
Three. But we bought those a while ago.
MR. TENDERHART
And the most recent acquisition?

MARSHA
A sculpture. No, a gold necklace. No, make that a cruise.

I see. Since?

MR. TENDERHART
Yesterday.

MARSHA
Yesterday? Yesterday. Not including of course a bathing suit my husband said Teresa could buy. That's my daughter. She's graduating from college.

MR. TENDERHART
Is that so! My brother- no- cousin just graduated! Engineering. We never thought he'd make it through. Quite a moment! Tell your daughter I said congratulations - no you better not. Contract specifies confidentiality. Well - I'm sure she's a lovely girl. If she looks anything like you!

Thank you!

MARSHA

MR. TENDERHART
Now - ah hem. Back to business. I'll take those if they're signed. Thank you. Now, Marsha, we don't want this to get complicated. How big is your car?

Big?

MR. TENDERHART
Will it carry a load of things.

Things?

MR. TENDERHART
Section One, Paragraph Two of the agreement you have there. You have to use your own transportation. Your car is big enough?

For what?
MR. TENDERHART
Section One. Let's start with some of those extra kitchen appliances you really don't need, now do you?

MARSHA
Oh. But I wanted to try a new recipe tomorrow.

MR. TENDERHART
Well then just don't dice, chop or liquify. [smiles]
Did you sign that waiver? Good. I'll take that. Now, would Saturday morning be convenient for you?

MARSHA
Saturday morning?

MR. TENDERHART
For the drop off. Read the list here of those appliances you'll be, uh, doing away with.

MARSHA
Oh! That simple? Just trade kitchen appliances? That's all?

MR. TENDERHART
Let's hope so. This should get you on the road to recovery so to speak - so you can concentrate on paying off those really hefty bills!

MARSHA
Well, actually, Monday morning would be better. My husband will be at work then and I don't work on Mondays.

MR. TENDERHART
Fine. Fine. Just bring your car around the back, say about ten o'clock, and one of our boys will unload.

MARSHA
Not everything, though, right?

MR. TENDERHART
Just those on this list. Here you go. I think we'll be okay for a while. And you tell that husband of yours to ease up there.

MARSHA
Of course.

MR. TENDERHART
Wouldn't want to get complicated, now, eh? Such a lovely lady as yourself.
MARSHA
Seems to have been rather easy. Thank you.

MR. TENDERHART
Not at all. Not at all. Besides, he probably won't notice what's missing. You have a lovely day now.

MARSHA
Have a nice picnic. If the weather clears, I mean.

MR. TENDERHART
Right. Lovely meeting you. Now don't forget your umbrella, there. Oh, I'll just take that coffee cup. Lovely meeting you. Lovely.

MARSHA
Goodbye, Mr. Tenderhart. [She extends her hand and MR. TENDERHART holds it for an extra moment.]

[MARSHA crosses to livingroom]

MR. TENDERHART
See you soon. [pauses then smiles] [lights fade on MR. TENDERHART and - rise on JIM entering the livingroom from kitchen.]

JIM
Seen the toaster?

MARSHA

JIM
Aw, I wanted to try these new jellies.

MARSHA
Use the toaster oven - no don't - wait. I'll make it for you.

JIM
It's okay. I'll have some for breakfast tomorrow. [goes back into kitchen]

MARSHA
[looking at newspaper]
See the new listing of movies?
JIM
[from kitchen]
Which one?

MARSHA
There's a new one out. That one where the woman falls in love with her co-worker.

JIM
We could see that Pinter play down the street. Guys from the club are going.

MARSHA
Why don't we go see the romantic one?

JIM
[peeking head into livingroom]
Gus already did. Said it was silly. Where's the coffee pot?

MARSHA
Coffee?
You don't really want coffee - you'll have trouble sleeping.

JIM
Always have coffee this time.

MARSHA
Milk has lots of calcium.

JIM
[enters livingroom carrying a glass of milk and sits on "his" chair]
Been cleaning in the kitchen?

MARSHA
A little.

JIM
Looks nice with everything put away like that.

MARSHA
Here's your half of the paper. [they read for a moment]
Seventy-One is closed off again.

JIM
All of it?

MARSHA
Just the two right lanes. People are complaining already.
JIM
Marigolds seem to be the lawn craze this Spring. We should plant some.

MARSHA
Really? Maybe we can put the radio on the porch and listen to some oldies.

JIM
Gus's kid wants a job. Was thinking of hiring him.

MARSHA
It's not difficult to plant flowers.

JIM
My father yelled at me for always pulling the stems and leaving the weeds.

MARSHA
Honey, it's not difficult to tell them apart.

JIM
Garden still looked good by Summer though.

MARSHA
You did a fine job with those tomatoes at the old place.

JIM
Teresa and I just threw the seeds down. 'Course I told her those were the magic beans! We used to spend so much time together. Sometimes I think she prefers the stereo, car, v.c.r., computer and clubhouse I bought for her. And now she's going on a cruise.

MARSHA
She did used to be the little gardner.

JIM
She's really excited about the cruise. She'll have a great time.

MARSHA
Two thousand four hundred dollars and seventh-three cents worth, I hope.

JIM
Hey! See this ad?

MARSHA
For what?
JIM

Home entertainment system.

MARSHA

Oh.

JIM

Juke box, speakers, shelves, bar stools. Even got a pool table.

MARSHA

Don't know how to play pool.

JIM

Shoot.

MARSHA

What's the matter?

JIM

Shoot. It's shoot pool not play pool.

MARSHA

So why do we need one?

JIM

I should have Gus and Larry over. Guy's night.

MARSHA

Don't need all that for guy's night.

JIM

You can have a ladies' night, too.

MARSHA

We play cards.

JIM

You can learn to play pool.

MARSHA

Shoot.

JIM

Huh? Oh. Besides, we should invite people over more often. Too quiet here.

MARSHA

And they can each have their own phone.
Gus likes to shoot pool.

MARSHA
Why don't we go out together and you can teach me?

JIM
Mahogany.

MARSHA
Mahogany?

JIM
The entertainment system. All done in mahogany. Got to be pretty.

MARSHA
And we can buy another house to go with it.

JIM
What's wrong with this house?

MARSHA
There's so much stuff in here we can't tell what's underneath.

JIM
'Cause it's just old stuff.

MARSHA
Maybe I like that better.

JIM
Why's this section cut out?

MARSHA

JIM
We don't use coupons. Larry's wife doesn't even use coupons.

MARSHA
We use them now.

JIM
For what?

MARSHA
For what? Dog food. Butch was out of food.
JIM

Teresa out?

MARSHA

Bonnie's. The place is to ourselves.

[pause]

For a while.

JIM

Umm, hmm.

MARSHA

Probably a long while. Come with me to see how the upstairs is doing.

JIM

I'm sure it's fine.

MARSHA

Want to see that new nightie you bought for me?

JIM

I hope you like it. Looked to be your color.

MARSHA

I'll put in on for you.

JIM

Aw, honey. Let's relax for a bit. I ran around all day at the office hollering at buyers and begging the managers to pay attention to their job. I'll be relaxed later and we'll look at that little nightie. Red is definitely your color! What's on t.v.? Anything good?

MARSHA

Do you like my hair this way?

[silence]

Here's the guide. [pulls it out from under a sofa cushion]

JIM

Thanks. [gets up to flip channels]

This one look okay to you, hon?

MARSHA

Look at me, Jim. [JIM watches t.v.]
JIM

What is it.

MARSHA

You don't really look at me anymore.

JIM

Huh? Sure I do. You handed me the guide, I looked at you and said thanks!

MARSHA

That's not the way you used to look at me.

JIM

Was younger then.

[JIM leans back on his easychair.]

MARSHA

Excuse me. I need to lift this.

[picks up papers from floor]

[JIM turns up the volume with a remote control.]

JIM

Could you move to the left - the screen -

MARSHA

Sorry.

[MARSHA shuffles the papers together.]

[JIM moves his feet out of the way then decides to take off his shoes, placing them next to his chair.]

[MARSHA carries his shoes over to the door, pauses, gets a deck of cards, and brings them to the coffee table.]

[MARSHA looks at JIM, pauses, then begins to play cards.]

[TERESA enters.]
Bonnie's parents say hi.  

TERESA

MARSHA  
[quickly crossing to TERESA]
Are you hungry? Would you like me to make a snack for you?

TERESA
No thanks, Mom. I ate at Bonnie's.  
[pointing to JIM]
Good program?

MARSHA
I guess.

TERESA
Bonnie was showing me her new stereo. I never saw so many buttons! What are you doing?

MARSHA
I was going to play cards.

TERESA
By yourself?

MARSHA
Of course.

TERESA
Did you ask Dad?

MARSHA
Of course.

TERESA
Maybe you should wear something slinky when you ask.

MARSHA
Teresa!

TERESA
Blow in his ear a little?

MARSHA
He wouldn't notice.

TERESA
Perhaps I should teach you neuro-linguistic programming.

MARSHA
If it has a remote, it may work.
TERESA
Maybe I'll unhook a wire again.

JIM [looks up from t.v.]
Hi, hon! Have a nice time?

TERESA
Yep.

JIM
What's that you were saying about Bonnie's stereo? Does it have a remote?

MARSHA
For a stereo?

JIM
Sure. Switches stations for you.

TERESA
Nope. She doesn't have one of those.

JIM
Maybe next time you invite her over and you can show her yours.

TERESA
I don't have one.

JIM
Maybe the one that comes with the entertainment system will work for your stereo.

MARSHA
Jim, I've gotten used to not using kitchen appliances. You don't need an entertainment system.

JIM
Everybody needs entertainment.

MARSHA
We don't need the whole store to have fun.

JIM
Only thing you need is lemon Pledge and clean as new.

TERESA
Are we getting an entertainment center?

MARSHA
No.
TERESA
Can I invite just a couple of friends over? We'll clean up, I promise!

JIM
It's Mahagony. And no putting cans of soda on it.

MARSHA
Jim.

TERESA
Where are we going to put it?

MARSHA
No entertainment system.

JIM
We'll have fun! You and me! We'll even dance.

Dance? Together?

MARSHA
Sure!

MARSHA
But we can't afford it, Jim.

JIM
We can invite Gus over and watch his jaw drop!

TERESA
You two haven't danced in years! It will be so romantic! Mom? Did you hear him? He said you two can dance together!

[TERESA places JIM's arms around MARSHA]

There.

[MR. TENDERHART enters and wedges himself in between JIM and MARSHA, clears off a table and sets a few office supplies on top.]

[lights fade on JIM and TERESA]
Did he put the entertainment center on a charge card?

MR. TENDERHART

He also got a loan.

MARSHA

For?

MR. TENDERHART

For the builders.

MARSHA [pause]

Builders?

MR. TENDERHART

For the extension.

MARSHA

I see. Could you sign here please?

MR. TENDERHART [rubs his chin]

I really didn't think I would need to do this again.

MARSHA [signing the paper]

They never do! This won't take long.

MARSHA

Just a few more things, right? How was the picnic?

MR. TENDERHART

It was better than I thought! Thank you for asking! I'm sure you would have loved it. Turned out it didn't rain after all. I'm sorry! I forgot to offer you coffee! Would you care for some?

MARSHA

No thank you. We're getting used to not drinking coffee.

MR. TENDERHART

Healthier ways to wake up in the morning, I always say.

MARSHA

Are there.

MR. TENDERHART

Say, you wouldn't - no. Never mind.
MARSHA
What?

MR. TENDERHART
Well, it's a holiday weekend coming up and all and I was wondering if you'd like to get together. My Aunt - uh- sister and her kids would just love you I'm sure! I always go over there - ain't got no reason to invite them to my place. We'll have a holiday barbeque!

MARSHA
You have my grill.

[pause]

MR. TENDERHART
Then we'll have it at my place! Should be real fun! You can bring some potato salad - my favorite - but there's not that much room for volleyball. We'll rent a movie! That's a family thing to do I say! We all want families, don't we! We'll let the younger folk jump around outside. Sound good?

MARSHA
It sounds lovely. I do appreciate your help with our problem.

JIM
I'm sure your daughter will just love my niece! I'll introduce you!

MARSHA
- how will I introduce you?

MR. TENDERHART
I already know my niece.

MARSHA
To my husband.

MR. TENDERHART
Oh. I suppose he can come, too. Although he's not needed at this time.

MARSHA
Actually, we were thinking of having our own Fourth picnic. Haven't seen much of the relatives lately. A few went to Teresa's graduation.

MR. TENDERHART
[grabbing a pen]
Relatives? During our initial meeting, you did say you had plenty?

MARSHA
Oh yes! Teresa received some fine graduation gifts.
MR. TENDERHART
[jotting this down]
And you don't see these relatives often?

MARSHA
Not as much as we should, of course.

MR. TENDERHART
Good, good. I mean - families should do those family things, you know.

MARSHA
I know.

MR. TENDERHART
According to this file, your Aunt Hildegard lives alone. Correct?

MARSHA
Right. Correct. Why?

MR. TENDERHART
And ... four others in this state - any overseas?

MARSHA
They don't have any appliances to trade for me. Besides, everyone is on the East coast.

MR. TENDERHART
Oh, good. It makes things so much easier that way.

MARSHA
For visiting? I suppose.

MR. TENDERHART
So how about that picnic?

MARSHA
Maybe not. But I do appreciate the offer.

MR. TENDERHART
You can bring your husband. 'Course if we do have a volleyball team, he can be on my brother-in-law's side. You'll be on mine.

MARSHA
My relatives don't really care for outdoor sports.

MR. TENDERHART
[trying to be polite]
I didn't invite them.
MARSHA
I don't know. Maybe one day soon. Not this time.

MR. TENDERHART
Well if just you would like to come over for dinner one of these days . . . maybe relax in the hot tub . . .

[MARSHA rises]

MARSHA
I forgot to mention that the defrost button on the microwave sometimes gets stuck and you just press it real fast about ten times should be fine then.

MR. TENDERHART
I'll note that. Please. Sit.

MARSHA
[pause]
Do you have a list of items?

MR. TENDERHART
I thought we covered that.

MARSHA
I have a washer and dryer left.

MR. TENDERHART
I was thinking of your Aunt Hildegard.

MARSHA
She goes to a laundromat.

MR. TENDERHART
No.

MARSHA
Then what do you mean?

MR. TENDERHART
My niece would love her.

MARSHA
She is a rather sweet lady.

MR. TENDERHART
You did say you were in over your head again in debt.

MARSHA
What is the trade?
MR. TENDERHART
I believe we discussed that. Would you please sign this?

MARSHA
What am I trading?

MR. TENDERHART
Make sure your Aunt doesn't leave a forwarding address.

MARSHA
Why not.

MR. TENDERHART
She won't be needing it. Ever.

MARSHA
You want my Aunt Hildegard!!

MR. TENDERHART
And one or two other items. Besides, you, yourself, said she was rather sweet.

MARSHA
You're trading a person?

MR. TENDERHART
No my dear. YOU are.

MARSHA
What will you do to her?

MR. TENDERHART
Now, Marsha. It's better you don't concern yourself with that and concentrate on your . . . financial recovery. Remember what she's going to be doing for you! Families help each other. Well . . . let her help you. It's what she wants! To help!

MARSHA
How, Mr. Tenderhart?

MR. TENDERHART
Round back. Usual.

MARSHA
I meant - how. How can you?

MR. TENDERHART
As easily as YOU can. You can't turn back, now.
MARSHA
Perhaps this would be a good time to end our business association.

MR. TENDERHART
Now, Marsha. Imagine if someone were to find out what you just signed. If someone you knew were to tell the police, or—well, you know how news travels in this town! Jails are so messy these days!

MARSHA
They would also find out about you.

[MR. TENDERHART stops.
Turns to MARSHA]

MR. TENDERHART
Heh. They already know about me. You're not my only customer. Others need me! Tsk, tsk, just like you need me, Marsha. Funny, isn't it?

MARSHA
I see.

MR. TENDERHART
Of course you do. And I'm sure you also see what it is that I need.

MARSHA
Oh I do. And you know, Mr. Tenderhart . . . I believe you'll not only get what you need, but more. Yes.

MR. TENDERHART
Yes! I knew you'd understand.

MARSHA
More than you think.

MR. TENDERHART
Now say it's for the good of your family.

MARSHA
It's for the good of my family.

MR. TENDERHART
Yes, yes! For the good. For the family! And the Visa! Say it! For the Visa!

MARSHA
And the Visa.
MR. TENDERHART
A big, fat zero. Right! Right! Say it! Say it.
[staring into her eyes]

MARSHA
A big fat zero.

MR. TENDERHART
Say about ten?

MARSHA
Ten o'clock. That's all there is to it? Ten o'clock and she's gone?

MR. TENDERHART
NO! She's not exactly "gone." Just where she's really needed. Think positive! Ten o'clock and you're free! Free of debts! It was nice seeing you again. Marsha.
[pause]
Aren't debts nasty things.

MARSHA
Goodness, Mr. Tenderhart, I just don't know what else to do.

MR. TENDERHART
Of course you don't. That's why I'm here.

MARSHA
And I'm so glad you are. I'm sure one day he'll understand why -

MR. TENDERHART
[stroking her cheek]
You just forget all about him. You deserve someone who will consider your needs. As a woman. And you are a woman. Aren't you, Marsha.

MARSHA
Well, yes. I mean -

MR. TENDERHART
An exciting woman. With needs.

MARSHA
[breaking from him]
And I need to get home. To my husband.

MR. TENDERHART
I'll see you soon. [he smooths her hair back]
Very soon. [MR. TENDERHART sits on JIM's chair.]

[JIM enters, takes off his shoes and takes them to the door. As he passes a painting, he notices a slight tilt and adjusts it. Just as he walks away, it falls. He does not bother to put it back.]

[MARSHA attempts to restart a clock. TERESA watches.]

TERESA
Mom, I'll get that. You two sit over there.

MARSHA
I need to fix this.

TERESA
There's a lot that needs fixing. Go on, sit down and be comfy.

JIM
[to MARSHA]

How's things?

MARSHA
Fine. Work?

JIM
Busy. Uh, Teresa - feel good to be out of school?

TERESA
Yes.

JIM
Ready for the trip?

TERESA
Very!

MARSHA
Hungry?

JIM
Sure.
She made lasagna.

MARSHA

I'll set the table! You two just stay there and engage in interpersonal communication.

TERESA [exits]

How was your day?

MARSHA

Paper?

JIM

Over there.

MARSHA

Ah, what a day.

JIM

Want to tell me about it?

MARSHA

Butch not been hungry lately?

JIM [sees the dog's dish]

Butch? I just put food in there. Yes. Right before you came in.

MARSHA

Where is that boy? Here, Butch! Here, boy!

JIM

He's not here!

MARSHA

Outside?

JIM

Outside? Yes... outside.

MARSHA

Oh, well then. Let's have that dinner.

JIM

Right. Teresa wanted to do this for us.

MARSHA

TERESA [entering with tray]

Guys want a snack first?
MARSHA
Thanks, sweetheart! What do you have there?

TERESA
Crackers - cheese. Nothing special.
[candle is placed in the center of a romantic, nicely fashioned, tray]

MARSHA
Jim, crackers?

JIM
Sure!
[As he takes a few, one drops onto the floor.]

Fluffy! Here, kitty, kitty.

MARSHA
What are you doing?

JIM
Calling the cat. He can have the dropped one.

MARSHA
No he can't.

JIM
It won't hurt him.

MARSHA
I don't think you should give it to Fluffy.

JIM
The carpet is clean.

MARSHA
Not this time.

JIM
Sure it is. I see vacuum marks.

MARSHA
Don't give it to the cat this time.

JIM
Why not? Is he sick? Where is that cat anyway?

MARSHA
Do you want me to get you a beer with those crackers?

TERESA
I'll get it for you, Dad. You two just sit there and chat.
MARSHA
That's okay, Teresa. I'll get it.

TERESA
C'mon, Mom. Relax. I'll get dinner ready then call you guys in. Okay? Dad, doesn't Larry's lawn look terrific?

JIM
Sure does!

[pause]

TERESA
And Mom, did you see all the flowers he put up?

MARSHA
They're beautiful.

JIM
Ours looks pretty good, too. Don't you think?

MARSHA
Good enough for Better Homes I'd say.

[TERESA shakes her head and slips into kitchen.]

JIM
Are we having a get-together for the Fourth?

MARSHA
Get-together?

JIM
Like last year. We should have it over here so everybody can see our yard.

MARSHA
Everybody?

JIM
Relatives.

MARSHA
Relatives?

JIM
Sure! What's the Fourth without relatives? All those cousins, aunts and uncles we hardly ever see.

MARSHA
Jim, since we hardly ever see them anyway, let's just not have a Fourth picnic.
JIM
Why not? I like to make fun of your Aunt Hildegard.

MARSHA [crunches a cracker]
I don't think you'll be seeing much of Aunt Hildegard.

JIM
Fine. Then I'll make fun of your Uncle Lloyd.

MARSHA [pause]
I doubt he'll show.

JIM
Oh well. There's plenty more.

MARSHA
We're not having a family picnic.

JIM
Not at all?

MARSHA [pause]
No one will be there.

JIM
Did you give them enough notice for their schedules?

MARSHA
I usually give plenty of notice, Jim.

JIM
Then we'll go out to dinner or something.

MARSHA
Us?

JIM
It's a holiday!

MARSHA
Just you and me?

JIM
Teresa will be on her cruise. Hey! See Gus's new speedboat?

MARSHA [a beat]
No, Jim.
You should. Beautiful.

MARSHA

No you're not going to buy one.

JIM

Sleek to look at.

MARSHA

And that's all you're gonna do.

JIM

Sailing around the bay. Imagine it. We could make it our second honeymoon. Wouldn't that make you happy?

MARSHA

Second honeymoon?

JIM

Sure! We'll have fun.

MARSHA

Just you and me? Together?

JIM

Actually, Gus and Janet would probably like to come along.

MARSHA

Oh.

JIM

Wouldn't it be a surprise if one were sitting right in the garage -right this very minute?

MARSHA

Jim.

JIM

What?

MARSHA

I'm opening this door and there had better not be something large out there.

JIM

I didn't buy one.

MARSHA

We're not going to have a second honeymoon, or a boat or anything! Have you added up our debts? Have you?
JIM
Yes I have! And I'd rather have the debts than nothing to put inside a home. You know what it's like to live in a big old room where you can't touch the endtables, where you can't walk on the carpet, where you can't bring food into, where you sit proper and straight and say "Yes, sir, no sir, yes ma'am, no ma'am?" Well we're gonna have debts. I want them.
[pause]
Besides, nobody's come after us.

MARSHA
And why do you suppose that is?

JIM
'Cause we're not that bad off. Not really.

'Cause I took care of it. Like I take care of everything around here!

I take care of things.

MARSHA
Like what?

JIM
You. I buy you nice things. My job doesn't pay much but-

MARSHA
Well my job doesn't pay much either! But you don't see me getting us further in debt to make up for spending time together!

JIM
Look at all the things we have to do in here!! Don't get all worked up!

MARSHA
I'M NOT ALL WORKED UP! [loudly] [pause]
We're over our heads, Jim. There's not that many ways out of this.

JIM
We've always made it before. I just like buying you nice things. Nothing wrong with that. And I want to make sure Teresa has the things every young girl should have. [getting snuggly]

And you deserve a lot of things.
MARSHA
I have a lot of things.

JIM
And I want to keep it that way. C'mon. We'll take a nice relaxing bath together after dinner. Huh?

MARSHA [considers]
I think this time I'm tired.

JIM
But we haven't had dinner yet. Okay, let's eat in front of the fireplace and look for funny faces in the paintings. [looks around the room]
Where are the paintings?

MARSHA [pause]
I moved them.

JIM
What?

MARSHA
I moved the paintings.

JIM
To where? Where did you put them?

MARSHA
Don't you think the place looks much tidier?

TERESA [enters]
Dinner's ready!

JIM
Great! We'll be right in!

TERESA
No, no. You two just relax and I'll bring it in on the new dinner trolley.

JIM
Marsh?

MARSHA
I don't know . . .

TERESA
C'mon, Mom. It'll be romantic. I'll eat in the rec room.
Now that's not a bad idea! We haven't -

TERESA
Huh? No, Dad, I want to watch a tape by myself. It's a - a musical. You wouldn't like it.
[clears off couch and fluffs pillows]

Now you two sit here and I'll bring out the dinner.

JIM
I like musicals!

MARSHA
We'll just eat in the kitchen.

TERESA
I spilled a couple of things. You're eating in here.

[MARSHA and TERESA stare at each other]

JIM
Well bring out the feast, young lady!

[TERESA breaks her gaze from MARSHA and exits to kitchen]

Sure smells good!

MARSHA
Our daughter is not quite the Galloping Gourmet, if you recall.

JIM
No need to be nowadays. All the contraptions they got for kitchens.

MARSHA
Even with all those extras, you still have to be able to cook.

JIM
Teresa does pretty well I think. Well. Let's have a seat. [they do]

Sure am hungry!

Marsha, look. I'm sorry if I upset you.

MARSHA
I wasn't that upset.

JIM
Yes you were.
No I wasn't.

MARSHA

You were upset, Marsha.

JIM

All right!! I was upset!!

MARSHA

[TERESA enters, rolling out a trolley with dinner and drinks]

TERESA

Here you go! Smells good doesn't it!

MARSHA

Wonderful!

JIM

Bring that right over here, young lady!

TERESA

[setting up a "spot"]

Here's a napkin for you, two. Careful, the Lasagne's hot! And I didn't blend the potatoes, I couldn't find the blender. It's just one or two lumps.

JIM

Sure you don't want to eat with us?

TERESA

[looks at the food]

Positive. I'll be in the rec room.

MARSHA

This is . . . delightful, Teresa. You've, uh, improved on the lasagna recipe.

TERESA

I'm going over Bonnie's after I'm done eating in case you want to do anything - domestic.

MARSHA

Domesticity is exhausting.

JIM

Then I'll take the dishes into the kitchen when we're done.

TERESA

I'll be downstairs listening to real loud music and probably won't hear a darn thing that goes on up here. Not a gosh darn thing. No sounds, no - nothing.
Is there dessert?

JIM

That's up to you two. See ya. [she exits]

TERESA

Well let's dig in. [JIM and MARSHA begin to eat their dinner.]

JIM

Um. Pretty good.

MARSHA

Yes it is.

JIM

Lots of flavor.

MARSHA

Umm, hmm. [pause]

JIM

How's yours?

MARSHA

My - uh - Teresa did a wonderful job.

JIM

Yes she did. [they resume eating]

MARSHA

Marsha?

JIM

Yes?

MARSHA

[chewing]

JIM

Um -

MARSHA

What is it, Jim? You want to talk?

JIM

Um- could you pass me another napkin, please?

MARSHA

Oh. Of course. Here. [pause]
This is a good sauce.

Delicious.

Not too tangy.

[puts food from his mouth into his napkin]

Or too bland.

Would go real good with fish.

You don't eat a lot of fish.

I'd eat a little bit. Fresh that is. Something about fresh fish.

You hate fish.

It would be good with this sauce.

Then go get some fish.

Where? From a ... boat maybe?

Nooooo.

Sure you don't want to come?

We don't need one. Gus has a boat.

Precisely.

Use his.
JIM

It's a speedboat. Only thing you catch is people skiing.

MARSHA

No, Jim. You're not buying one and that is final.

[a portrait falls from its hanging position]

[MR. TENDERHART enters wearing a robe and makes himself very comfortable on the sofa, propping his feet.]

MR. TENDERHART

Have you gone fishing in it yet?

MARSHA

No. Jim took the guys.

MR. TENDERHART

What color is it? Could you sign right there, please?

MARSHA

The way they name colors these days, I'm not sure what it's called. But it does match the new dock and fishing lodge.

MR. TENDERHART

[slides a contract across the desk to MARSHA]

Take a look at Section five point three. Did you say you were fond of fishing?

MARSHA

Not really. I'd rather stay inside and cook the fish.

MR. TENDERHART

You know — I'm quite the fisherman myself!

MARSHA

Oh?

MR. TENDERHART

Yes! Yes! Why in my day I could haul in quite a catch! And I'm sure you'd make it mighty tasty! If you were to cook it, that is.

MARSHA

I'd use very few seasonings, of course.
MR. TENDERHART
A much more natural flavor. Nothing fancy.

MARSHA
Can't be too fancy with only one frying pan.

MR. TENDERHART
Beer batter? Here - sign on that line.

MARSHA
[looks over contract]
Beer batter?

MR. TENDERHART
For the fish.

MARSHA
Of course! I've made it before. But Jim, my husband, doesn't care for fish. Do I keep this pink copy?

MR. TENDERHART
No, the canary. I would eat every morsel if you cooked it for me.

MARSHA
You would?

MR. TENDERHART
Sure! 'Course there'd have to be candles.

MARSHA
Candles?

MR. TENDERHART
And wine.

MARSHA
We don't have any.

MR. TENDERHART
No candles?

MARSHA
Or wine.

MR. TENDERHART
I'll buy some.

MARSHA
Wine?
And candles.

For?

Us.

It's awfully sweet, but I don't think so, Mr. Tenderhart.

Why so formal, Marsha?

We're conducting business.

Then you can call me Perry when we have dinner at your place.

Jim wouldn't think too highly of that.

I didn't invite him.

He still lives with me. And my daughter is coming back from her cruise. I don't think so, Mr. Tenderhart.

Perry.

Perry.

Your daughter can join us for dinner.

No she can't.

I'm quite anxious to meet her.
MARSHA

No.

MR. TENDERHART

Of course I am! If she's as lovely as you!

MARSHA

My daughter will not be joining us for dinner.

[pause]

MR. TENDERHART

Good.

MARSHA

Then you agree?

MR. TENDERHART

About dinner? I'll be there.

MARSHA

That's not what I - Mr. Tenderhart?

Perry.

MR. TENDERHART

Perry.

MARSHA

Yes?

MR. TENDERHART

I won't be introducing you to my daughter.

MR. TENDERHART

Well, I'm sure she'll have plans with her friend Bonnie that night. Youngsters always like to go out on weekends.

MARSHA

And Jim?

MR. TENDERHART

You need not introduce us.

MARSHA

What do you do to them?

MR. TENDERHART

Ah, section five point three. Dotted line.
MARSHA
What if they - someone - wants to come back? After they've learned - would you let them?

MR. TENDERHART
Ah, but that would be like all those nasty debts knocking on your door again, wouldn't it. But now your Visa is empty. A big fat zero. Light - no weight for your delicate shoulders. No Visa.

And Valley Federal?

MR. TENDERHART
Cleared.

MARSHA
Sears?

MR. TENDERHART

MARSHA
How - I mean - how do you do it?

MR. TENDERHART
Now, Marsha. You're the customer. I'm here to serve you.

I want to know how.

MR. TENDERHART
You're Aunt Hildegard adores my niece.

MARSHA
What are you going to do with Jim?

MR. TENDERHART
She has this lovely permanent smile on her face. So sweet! They all just smile all the time. What a happy family!

MARSHA
What are you going to do to him?

MR. TENDERHART
Now, Marsha - you don't really want to know.

MARSHA
Well perhaps I just don't really want to sign this then -
MR. TENDERHART
- You know, one of my, shall we say, past customers, had the most tragic accident. It was so sad. She drove her car right off the side of the road. Imagine. And no one could explain why. We all sent flowers of course. I do love flowers.

MARSHA
I think this has gone far enough. Jim is -

MR. TENDERHART
- I NEED HIM!! I - I need you to sign this, Marsha. I - never had a brother you know. Everybody else went outside to play and I watched from the window. They laughed so much. What were they doing ... that was so fun? Look at me!

Are you all -

MR. TENDERHART
- Ask me to come outside and play! I want somebody to play with!! I want to play, too! WHY DON'T YOU WANT TO PLAY WITH ME?

[shakes head]
Well! Where were we? Oh, yes. You were about to sign this.

MARSHA
[pauses, signs contract]
You're so right, Mr. Tend - Perry. This is the only way.

MR. TENDERHART
YES! I knew you'd agree!

MARSHA
Of course, Perry. Is Friday night okay? Seven-thirty?

MR. TENDERHART
We work nine to five.

MARSHA
I was talking about the dinner. For us. You and me.

MR. TENDERHART
YES! WONDERFUL! You can bring him around back tomorrow night. Then you'll have time to do some grocery shopping. Blush?

MARSHA
It IS warm -

The wine.
MARSHA
Oh. Blush will be fine.

MR. TENDERHART
Lovely!

MARSHA
Well, [gets up]
I'll see you tomorrow evening.

MR. TENDERHART
Just bring the car around back. There will be someone there in receiving.

MARSHA
Fine. And bring all paid receipts, please.

MR. TENDERHART
I'm looking forward to it. Goodbye, Marsha.

MARSHA
Goodbye . . . Perry. Please remember the receipts.

I miss Teresa.

MARSHA crosses to JIM

JIM
She's having a lot of fun. She'll be fine.

MARSHA
I hope she doesn't get lost on some island.

JIM
Most places take care of their customers.

[tries to change channels with the remote but it is broken]

[he gets up to change the channel then sits]

MR. TENDERHART
Look, I fixed it. Never had remote control in my day.

[MARSHA watches]

[horizontal lines race up the screen]

MARSHA
Horizontal.
JIM
What?

MR. TENDERHART
The television.

MARSHA
It's the horizontal.

[JIM gets up to fix the television then sits]

JIM
Is it warm in here?

MARSHA
Yes.

[they watch television for a moment]

JIM
Mind if I turn up the air?

MARSHA
No.

MR. TENDERHART
Not at all. Shall I? Oops! I think I broke it! I'm so sorry!

[JIM gets up to adjust the air conditioner but it is broken.]

JIM
It's broken.

MR. TENDERHART
I told you it was broken!

[JIM opens a window then sits on his chair.]

[As they watch television, the picture flickers from dark to light then dark.]

JIM
And I bet the warranty is out.

MARSHA
It is.
We'll just get another.

JIM

MR. TENDERHART

[pulls out a wallet of credit cards]

Need another credit card?

MARSHA

We do have a stereo.

JIM

You can't look at it.

MARSHA

You can't talk over it.

MARSHA

But you can talk over it.

JIM gets up to try to fix the television again.

You can't fix it, Jim.

JIM

Yes I can.

MARSHA

It's broken.

JIM

Marsha, I can fix it.

MR. TENDERHART

She said it was broken.

MARSHA

It's beyond fixing.

JIM

[slams remote onto table]

I CAN FIX IT DAMNIT!!

MARSHA

NO YOU CAN'T! WE TRIED AND TRIED AND TRIED! IT'S BROKEN AND IT'S GOING TO STAY THAT WAY!

MR. TENDERHART

So buy another!

MARSHA

It's too late!!
JIM
Is it? Marsha . . . is it really?

MARSHA
It can't go back to the way it was.

JIM
Why not?

MARSHA
I just - I don't know what else to do. This is the only way I know for things to work out.

JIM
[pause]
I'll have a repairman come tomorrow.

MARSHA
I'll take care of calling a repairman.

MR. TENDERHART
Is there anything I can do to help?

JIM
Isn't there anything left for me to do?

MARSHA
I can take care of it.

JIM
There's nothing, is there.

MARSHA
I can take care of it, Jim. [pause]

MR. TENDERHART
And I can help. Can't I, Marsha.

JIM
Marsha?

MARSHA
Yes?

MR. TENDERHART
I thought so.

JIM
I - I'm going to bed.
MARSHA
Wait! Why don't we go for a drive . . .

MR. TENDERHART
To drop him off? Why how kind of you to offer!

. . . to talk.

JIM
I'm tired.

MR. TENDERHART
Then he can rest in the back seat.

MARSHA
[pause]
We need to talk - to make sure -

MR. TENDERHART
Oh, I think you're sure.

JIM
About what? We read Teresa's postcard fourteen times, the television is broken, the stereo needs fixed, our dog and cat ran away, none of our relatives answer the phone . . . what else is there?

MARSHA
There's . . . us. At least - there was.

JIM
There - was. Where did it go?

MR. TENDERHART
I believe it went into the Visa.

MARSHA
At least Visa's have interest.

JIM
I'm tired. Goodnight. [exits]

MARSHA
I'm tired, too. Tired of it all.

More wine?

MR. TENDERHART

MARSHA
[holds out a glass]
Thank you. [takes a drink]
MARSHA [cont.,]
You know, I really missed the microwave.

MR. TENDERHART
It came in handy tonight. I sure didn't mean to be late.

MARSHA
That's what they're there for. To warm things up.

[they eat in silence for a moment]

MR. TENDERHART
This has to be the best potato salad I've ever had!

MARSHA
Thank you.

MR. TENDERHART
How did your daughter like the cruise?

MARSHA
She had a wonderful time.

MR. TENDERHART
Quite an opportunity for a young lady.

MARSHA
Yes.

[pause]

How is your niece.

MR. TENDERHART
Oh! Getting smarter by the day! Haven't seen a "B" in her grades this whole year!

MARSHA
Wonderful. And my husband? How is he?

MR. TENDERHART
No fun. Just not as fun as I thought he'd be.

MARSHA
Why is that.

MR. TENDERHART
Keeps whining and moping about.

[MARSHA looks up]

Did you want more wine?
MARSHA
No thank you. Does he . . . say anything about . . . anything?

MR. TENDERHART
I didn't even get any birthday cards this year!! I thought I would! I'm supposed to! "Sorry we couldn't stop by Perry-" "Sorry we couldn't make it to your birthday party-" "Sorry we forgot to invite you over for little Anna's school play-" And Jim! What's the matter with him? Marsha this, Marsha that. Doesn't he like fishing? We were supposed to go fishing!! HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE A FISHING POLE!! Just sits there. Mumbling. He's no fun!

MARSHA
What does he say?

MR. TENDERHART
Do you like the flowers I brought?

MARSHA
What does he say?

MR. TENDERHART
There's a little shop on the corner by my office. Specialize in that sort of thing.

MARSHA
James used to shop there.

MR. TENDERHART
I have an account with them. Very nice about deliveries. I do love sending flowers. Always seem to brighten a day! I sent some to Aunty Hildegard but she never thanked me. Never even noticed!

MARSHA
Can I see him?

MR. TENDERHART
HE'S MINE!! Not in the rules! You agreed! Yes, that's right - signed the contract and everything! You see?

[TERESA enters]

TERESA
Hi Mom. Dad can I -

MARSHA
Hon, Bonnie called a little while ago.
TERESA
No she didn't. I was just there.

MR. TENDERHART
I heard you had a wonderful time on your cruise!

MARSHA
But I think she called after you left. Why don't you run over there and see.

TERESA
Why isn't Dad home?

MR. TENDERHART
Your mother just made the most wonderful potato salad!

MARSHA
Why don't you and Bonnie call out for a pizza. Go on.

TERESA
Who are you?

MR. TENDERHART
Perry. Just call me Perry.

TERESA
Nice to meet you.

MARSHA
Mr. uh Perry is a friend from the office.

TERESA
Dad's?

MR. TENDERHART
Your Father and I are - acquainted.

TERESA
Nice flowers! So, Mr. Perry, Dad always sends my Mom flowers. He's so romantic. So's Mom. Together. The both of them. Remember your last anniversary, Mom, when Dad, you'll like this story Mr. Perry, when Dad got home late and forgot to go to the flower store - well, he snuck over to Gus's garden - cleaned him out! It was great! What's he getting you this year, Mom?

MR. TENDERHART
Will you be staying, Teresa?

TERESA
Probably not. When Dad gets home he and Mom will want to have a romantic, alone, married time together. Just the two of them. They're in love.
MARSHA
Honey, why don't I fix you a plate and you can -

MR. TENDERHART
- have dinner with us.

TERESA
Oh no thank you. I'll just wait until Dad gets home then we'll all eat together - one big happy family, Mr. Perry.

MR. TENDERHART
Would it be alright if Teresa joined us for wine?

TERESA
Ah, no thanks. I'm going to unpack.

MR. TENDERHART
Your mother tells me you have a birthday coming up. Are you planning on having a party?

TERESA
Probably. But you're not invited.

MARSHA
We'll talk later.

MR. TENDERHART
Pretty exciting to turn twenty-four! Why, I remember my twenty-fourth birthday! I bought the most beautiful car. I mean, my father bought me the most beautiful car! No, my Uncle bought me - it was bright red! Ah it sure was a beaut!

TERESA
I already have a car.

MARSHA
My husband and I were thinking of car wash coupons.

MR. TENDERHART
Oh I have a better idea than that, Marsha!

MARSHA
You do.

MR. TENDERHART
You'll just have to wait until the big day, young lady!

TERESA
I'm sorry, but my Dad will have a wonderful present for me.
MR. TENDERHART
Every young lady should have a special gift on her twenty-fourth birthday!

MARSHA
Really, you don't need to go to all that -

MR. TENDERHART
Nonsense! I'm in good with a certain place that makes - oh but that would be telling now wouldn't it?

TERESA
Then don't.

MR. TENDERHART
My Aunt, I mean my sister, bought one for her daughter a couple of weeks ago. Did I say cousin? I meant my sister! It's a special gift!

MARSHA
I'd rather you didn't.

MR. TENDERHART
Nonsense! No trouble at all! Always did want a daughter!

MARSHA
Teresa! - Why don't you run to the store and pick up a video. Now.

TERESA
Did the repairman bring back the V.C.R.?

MARSHA
He is going to. Sooner than he thinks.

MR. TENDERHART
Pardon me?

MARSHA
He will bring it back.

MR. TENDERHART
Now, Marsha. You know the rules! No returns!

MARSHA
I want my V.C.R. back. And a couple of other things.

MR. TENDERHART
No refunds! No refunds!

MARSHA
Make an exception.
TERESA
We'll just buy another one! So sorry you won't be here when I get back. I'll go get the video.

MR. TENDERHART
There's a grand idea young lady! You remind me of my sister's daughter! I'm sure you'd make a lovely daughter for anybody!

[TERESA exits]

MARSHA
I want what's mine.

MR. TENDERHART
Heh, heh. Always wanted children of my own! Teresa, I bet would like my niece!

MARSHA
No she wouldn't.

MR. TENDERHART
Sure she would!

MARSHA
She will not like your niece. She's not going to meet your niece. YOU CANNOT HAVE MY DAUGHTER!

MR. TENDERHART
Ah, it will be the perfect family! All that's missing is a wife. One that makes great potato salad! Know anyone, Marsha? For me?

MARSHA
YOU CAN'T HAVE HER! AND YOU CAN'T HAVE JIM! I want him back.

MR. TENDERHART
No. Afraid not.

MARSHA
He's not yours. None of them are. You don't have ANYONE!

MR. TENDERHART
Well well- Marsha - if I can't have them then I guess no one else gets to either.

MARSHA
What do you mean?

MR. TENDERHART
I'll just have to, shall we say, write them off? A bad debt . . . a charge off . . . a closed account . . .
Where is he?

MR. TENDERHART
Well I just don't know. Sorry.

MARSHA
Is he at your office?

MR. TENDERHART
No one goes in there after hours.

MARSHA
He's there.

MR. TENDERHART
I'm not saying! You can't find him! You can't find him!!

MARSHA
Give me the keys.

MR. TENDERHART
After hours! After hours!

MARSHA
Give me those keys!! And get Jim's tie off of your goddamn neck!

MR. TENDERHART
He gave it to me!!

MARSHA
Well I'm taking it back!! And his robe!!

MR. TENDERHART
My robe!

MARSHA
Get it off!!!

MR. TENDERHART
My robe! My robe!

MARSHA
These shoes don't even fit you! Give those to me!

MR. TENDERHART
I need them!

MARSHA
Where did you put the keys?
MR. TENDERHART
That's MY coat! My Uncle bought that for me!

MARSHA
Well MY Uncle has one just like this and I bet there are keys in here. IN THIS POCKET?

MR. TENDERHART
No refunds! No refunds!

MARSHA
AH HAH!

MR. TENDERHART
GIVE THOSE BACK TO ME!

MARSHA
Well, well. Looks like you're going to be left with a big fat zero on your family balance! No cousins, no brothers, no nothing!

MR. TENDERHART
Where are you going?

MARSHA
To get what's mine -

MR. TENDERHART
It's too late! You signed him away! We already went fishing! It was so beautiful! I made a picnic lunch and my Aunt Hildegard was there, my sister and my new brother Jim said I could wear his sweater. Didn't even mind when I took it off his neck. Just smiled. They all sat there so nicely and smiled. It was a perfect family. Almost. Seems to me there was something missing . . .

[TERESA enters]

TERESA
I forgot my card for the tapes.

MR. TENDERHART
What a lovely daughter you are.

TERESA
Thanks. I thought you'd be gone by now.

MARSHA
He's leaving. Right now.

MR. TENDERHART
What videos did you get?
TERESA
None. I left my Visa here.

MR. TENDERHART
Visa?

MARSHA
Have a wonderful evening. Goodbye.

MR. TENDERHART
Are you . . . over your limit?

TERESA
Probably.

MR. TENDERHART
Is that so? You know . . . no. Well . . . wait . . . yes. That would be just terrible if the bank calls you all hours of the day.

TERESA
We have a message machine.

MARSHA
Don't you have . . . family . . . waiting for you?

MR. TENDERHART
I can help you prevent those nasty collection agencies from getting a hold of you! They can be so persistent!

TERESA
Are you a bill collector?

MR. TENDERHART
I've collected a "Bill" or two. Your Father would be so proud of you for taking care of your financial obligations all by yourself, don't you think?

TERESA
I suppose.

MARSHA
We'll do fine now ourselves. Goodbye.

MR. TENDERHART
Why, with just a minor trade-in or two, you'll be on the road to financial recovery! Sit down for just a moment! We don't have much time!

TERESA
You won't be staying then?
MR. TENDERHART
Oh, let's not be hasty! Is the Visa the only card you have?

TERESA
Yes.

MR. TENDERHART
Good. Good. Now. Take a look at this contract, sign away, and - why, you'll never notice what's missing!

[TERESA reads contract]

TERESA
Do you think we can lower it before I start my new job?

MR. TENDERHART
Here. A brand new pen to sign that with.

MARSHA
I don't think so, Tenderhart.

TERESA
Mom!

MARSHA
Let her go.

TENDERHART
Pardon?

MARSHA
Let her go.

TENDERHART
No, Marsha. She's signing over a debt. And trading in something of equal value.

MARSHA
Trading? What could she possibly have left to trade?

TENDERHART
I'm sure you'll just love my new livingroom furniture.

MARSHA
What?

TENDERHART
The wallpaper has little rosebuds on it! Lovely, isn't it?

MARSHA
Give me that! [grabs contract and rips it]
TERESA
Mom! I was going to get out of debt!

MARSHA
Use your paycheck.

TENDERHART
NO! Here! Take these credit cards! Look how pretty they are!

MARSHA
[takes them and rips them in half]
They're sooo pretty. Yes!

TENDERHART
NO! You can have them back! Everybody! I don't need them - not all of them!

MARSHA
Oh dear Tenderhart, in-laws getting on your nerves so soon?

TENDERHART
Just you, Marsha. I want just you. I'll let everyone go. I promise!

TERESA
Who?

MARSHA
Seems our friend here has had enough of family picnics!

TENDERHART
We'll take walks together! I'll bring you a new necklace!

MARSHA
I don't need jewelry. And I don't need these!
[throws several items out of the window]

TERESA
Wow. We have pretty nice carpeting.

MARSHA
And that's where we'll start.

TENDERHART
You're making a big mistake!

MARSHA
Don't you have cousins or brothers or something to visit?
TENDERHART
I'll let Jim come back! Just the way he is! Take him back!
And you come with me!

MARSHA
I don't want him the way he is. I want him the way he was.
And how nice of you to take care of that for me!

TERESA
Why is Dad staying with him?

TENDERHART
He won't listen! None of them will! They don't listen to
anything I say! They're no fun anymore!

MARSHA
Aw, poor Tenderhart. [pause]
Get out.

TENDERHART
Come with me. You can come, too, Teresa.

MARSHA
We'll be just fine here. Just us. Now go.

TERESA
Yeah. Go.

MARSHA
Better hurry. I hear you have some relatives to deal with.

TENDERHART
You're not being fair!

MARSHA
I think I hear Aunty Hildegard calling you. She has such a
high squeaky voice! Yep, that's her.

TENDERHART
You'll need me again! They all do! You'll see!

TERESA
No we won't.

MARSHA [shoves him out door]
He's coming Aunty Hildegard! [leans against door]

TERESA
He never did give me my birthday present.
No - I think he did.  

TERESA

Will Dad come back?

MARSHA


TERESA

You mean conversation?

MARSHA

Yep. Why don't you clean off that table and I'll bring in some sandwiches.

TERESA

Okay, mom.  

[Teresa looks through the mail and opens a letter addressed to her.

I thought I paid this bill.  

[looks over to the ripped contract and picks it up]

You really miss Dad, don't you.  

[pieces together the contract]

If we just change this signature . . .

MARSHA

Teresa . . .

[lights fade]

- curtain -