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Samuel French Acting Edition

Advice From a Caterpillar

A Comedy in Two Acts

by Douglas Carter Beane

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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*This play is dedicated to Mike Rosenberg,
for giving me the freedom to write it. And
Ed Lansbury, for giving me the courage
to rewrite it.*

The first draft of *Caterpillar* was written in two weeks on a dare by Mike Rosenburg to fill the fall slot of his college's "experimental theatre." In October '89, at James Madison University under the direction of Michael Rosenburg and stage management of Megan Dolan the play was performed with Paul Lord, Christian Holloway, Patrick McClelland and the magnificent Janice O'Rourke.

I did some rewrites. It was then optioned for production by Edgar Lansbury. I did some rewrites. A reading was done in New York in April '90 with Billy DeAquitis, Tony Cummings, Michael Ornstein and Jessica Tuck. I did some rewrites.

In August '90, *Caterpillar* made its professional debut when American Theatre Works (Jill Charles, artistic director, John Nassivera, producing director) presented the Dorset Theatre Festival production. Sets by Wm. John Aupperlee, costumes by Eric Hansen, lighting and sound by Jeffrey Bernstein, stage management by Carol Dawes, direction by Edgar Lansbury, with the following cast:

Missy	Jennie Moreau
Suit.....	Harley Venton
Spaz	Eric Swanson
Brat	Michael Ornstein
Voice of Linda Lee	Monica Tecca

Yeah. I did some rewrites. And with each of these rewrites many have helped me. In addition to everyone mentioned above, I give my gratitude to: Jonathan Bixby, Peter Buck, Carol Channing, John and Karen Clift, Steve Flaherty, Greg Gale, Frank Gallagher, Earl Graham, Ching Gonzales, Deb Hall, Martin Hynes, Don, Diane and C.J. Kendall, Gretchen Krich, Rose Lansbury, John Edward McGrath, Randolph Miles, David Robbins, David Semonin, Charlotte Sheedy, Keith Sherman, Bob White.

With the New York production, I did more rewrites with the help of everyone in that cast and crew (from the brilliant leading lady on down). After the New York production, I stopped. It's just time to write another play.

Advice From a Caterpillar was presented on April 4th, 1991 at the Lucille Lortel Theatre, New York City, by John Nassivera and Don Schneider by special arrangement with Lucille Lortel. The play was directed by Edgar Lansbury, scenery by Rick Dennis, costumes by Jonathan Bixby, lighting by Brian Nason, original music by David Abir, stage management by Robert Bennett. The cast was as follows :

Missy.....	Ally Sheedy
Suit	Harley Venton
Spaz.....	Dennis Christopher
Brat.....	David Lansbury
Voice of Linda Lee.....	Gretchen Krich

CHARACTERS

- Missy** She, like the others in the cast, is in her late twenties. An East Village artist, currently working in video. Attractive, with an exciting and exotic style of dress, her sarcastic sense of humor is undercut by her charm and good spirits.
- Spaz** An East Village performance artist. Gay. Handsome, intelligent and trendily stylish. Despite an almost surreal sense of humor, he is very "down to earth."
- Suit** An investment banker. A W.A.S.P. of the "old boy" network. His conservative speech and clothing is a contrast to the downtowners. Handsome.
- Brat** An East Village actor, specializing in Brecht and German Expressionists. An Italian-American "Jersey boy," well-built and good looking, his style is more "cool" than Spaz's "dandy."

TIME

The present

PLACE

Act I — Various locations, New York City's East Village
Act II — A country house, Old Chatham, New York

MUSIC

During the twelve scene changes of the first act, hip-hop music should blare and the actors should casually dance into place

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first act set changes in the New York production were filled with music and movement. In no way feel obliged to recreate moving platforms. A unit set can be used with visible stage hands carrying on minimalist bits of furniture. Projections can flash on names of locations. Just keep the movement, the dancing and the music. It emphasizes the last moment of each scene—important in building the events that change Missy's life. The score by David Abir is wonderful and can be obtained from Priceless Recordings (212) 254-5201. If not, a collection of hip-hop or house may be used. Dee-Lite's *World Clique* has the right feel.

Please note:

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ACT I

Scene 1

Missy's bedroom.

MISSY. Have you ever been in love?

SUIT. (*Pause.*) Oh Jesus.

MISSY. What?

SUIT. That question.

MISSY. What "that question"?

SUIT. That is quite the obvious post-coital question.

MISSY. Am I being cliché? I hate it when I'm cliché.

SUIT. Why do you ask?

MISSY. If I'm being cliché?

SUIT. No, if I've been in love.

MISSY. Curious.

SUIT. Are you falling in love with me?

MISSY. Please. (*Pause.*) Oh please.

SUIT. I don't know. Love? Maybe when I was in college once.

MISSY. You love your daughter?

SUIT. Lizbeth? Of course. But that's not in love.

MISSY. Right. Your wife?

SUIT. (*Thinks about it.*) God. Yes. Of course. At times.

MISSY. Me?

SUIT. Do you want me to be?

MISSY. Get a clue.

SUIT. Are you feeling guilt about us?

MISSY. Guilt. Dear. That's real—

SUIT. What?

MISSY. Quaint.

SUIT. Guilt is quaint, isn't it?

(THEY kiss.)

SUIT. I had fun.

MISSY. Likewise, I'm sure.

SUIT. I have to get dressed. The conference I bagged will be over in half an hour. They'll be expecting me.

MISSY. Shame. I like being naked with you. It's the only time we have things in common. Dressed, we do not look good together.

SUIT. Why not?

MISSY. I don't know. You're such the suit. I'm such the not. Sex is like what we have in common.

SUIT. *(Getting dressed.)* You mean our ... "affair."

MISSY. *(Laughing.)* The word.

SUIT. I know.

MISSY. Can you even?

SUIT. Our "affair." And I'm a ... "cheat." And you're my "mistress."

MISSY. Am not.

SUIT. Are too.

MISSY. Am not. If I was your "mistress," I would be kept. You don't keep me. I keep myself. At best I'm the "other woman."

SUIT. You know what you are Missy?

MISSY. What?

SUIT. You're "modern."

MISSY. Fuck you.

SUIT. You're a "modern gal."

MISSY. Right. I'm Ann Romano.

SUIT. Who?

MISSY "One Day at a Time."

SUIT. Sitcom?

MISSY. Right.

SUIT. Rich white guy adopts poor black kids?

MISSY. No. God. Suit, have you ever like not read a book? "One Day at a Time." Bonnie Franklin as Ann Romano. Divorced woman raising two daughters in a seventies sitcom. And they have a kooky super. And she's a modern gal.

SUIT. Right right.

MISSY. They show the reruns weekdays at four on eleven.

SUIT. Great.

MISSY. Patronizing. Anyway, I watched it last Thursday. Ann went away for the weekend with a married man.

SUIT. Oooh.

MISSY. She couldn't put out.

SUIT. Aaaaah.

MISSY. She saw the photos of the wife and kiddies and got but wigged. Ann is a modern gal but she has an inner sense of morality.

SUIT. And what did you think of Ann's inner sense of morality?

MISSY. It went very well with her cowl neck and gauchos.

SUIT. You're a serious madwoman.

(THEY kiss.)

MISSY. Do you love me?

SUIT. No.

MISSY. Good.

SUIT. See you Tuesday.

Scene 2

SPAZ's kitchen.

SPAZ. That video of yours is the highlight of the show. Next to the animated film of the Betty Ford story. The one told entirely with G.I. Joes.

MISSY. Thanks. I should take it in.

SPAZ. It's only the Whitney. You're only in it. Gee, you think?

MISSY. Whitney branch.

SPAZ. You're in it, you should see it. The entrance is to seriously die. You walk in, big sign, "Suburbia in Art." And on the first big wall. Huge oversized photos of Levittown. We all just stood there speechless, transfixed. We refugees of America's suburbs living in the like bowels of New York now. There must have been like twenty different styles of tract house on the wall.

MISSY. Wow.

SPAZ. Now I know how Jews feel looking at Chagall. You should go. Just for the aesthetics.

MISSY. Please.

SPAZ. The networking, then.

MISSY. I've got a new system. Anti-networking. I don't go places where my work is. It implies I'm too big for the show altogether.

SPAZ. This is why your career is soaring and I'm in the proverbial nowheresville.

MISSY. You're not in nowheresville. You're a performance artist. Of like note.

SPAZ. No, Missy, I'm worse than that. I'm an old performance artist. Who does other people's pieces. And I've been around so long that now the pressure could not be on me more. To create my own pieces. Or cater.

MISSY. Spaz. I'm going to smack you.

SPAZ. I am old, Father William.

MISSY. You are like late twenties.

SPAZ. For a career person and not a success, that is old.

MISSY. Stop.

SPAZ. I mean what should be like giving my life purpose? Love? I think not.

MISSY. So create a performance piece.

SPAZ. It's not in me.

MISSY. It's in you.

SPAZ. Missy, don't get queen of whatever with me. I'm like quite sure you're going to understand my dilemma. You who just but has it all. Career on the rise and boyfriend.

MISSY. I do not have a boyfriend.

SPAZ. What about the Suit?

MISSY. The Suit is a married man I have the sex with.

SPAZ. Is the sex good?

MISSY. Forget it.

SPAZ. I resent you.

MISSY. I mean like, excuse me, but did I just scream the wallpaper off the wall in ecstasy there or what?

SPAZ. I want your life. A career and an uncomplicated relationship.

MISSY. It's not—there are threats of complications all the time. Like I honestly worry that my married man will turn out to be the Big "L."

SPAZ. The big "L"?

MISSY. The big "L."

SPAZ. Wait a minute, I'm confused. You're worried because you think your married man might turn out to be Elvis?

MISSY. No.

SPAZ. Elvis is dead, Missy.

MISSY. Spaz.

SPAZ. I know, I know, you mean love.

MISSY. It's a legitimate fear.

SPAZ. Our work is supposed to be influenced by suburbia, not our lives. I mean, like love? I'm so sure.

MISSY. Thank you.

SPAZ. I mean like skipping in woods and singing Partridge Family songs? And then one day getting unrequited and suffering? I'm not.

MISSY. Excuse me. Thank you.

SPAZ. And making a big, beautiful fool of yourself.

MISSY. Now you're being like overly dramatic.

SPAZ. Excuse me? Wait. (*Exits, returns with a pottery vase.*) A big, beautiful fool.

MISSY. What is that?

SPAZ. What does it look like?

MISSY. Something from the lesbian pinchware collective?

SPAZ. No, Missy, this is like exhibit A in love makes a big, beautiful fool of you. This, dare I call it, "piece" is not a vase. Oh no, it is an actual signed piece of art. Created for me by some boy that I actually made the incredible fool mistake of loving. I ... inspired this piece.

MISSY. No.

SPAZ. It was the seventies, be kind.

MISSY. Sorry.

SPAZ. It's embarrassing. But what's even more embarrassing, I can't throw the butt-ugly thing out. It like makes its way to the trash can any number of times and I just remember like George the silly seventies pottery guy who made it and how we would be like seventeen like get naked and smoke pot and listen to Joni Mitchell and have wallpaper-tearing sex and ... whatever. So I have to keep it. Not out. It's hidden in a cabinet. But I keep it.

MISSY. Would you want to love again?

SPAZ. Excuse me, no.

MISSY. I mean, I wouldn't ... want to be in love.

SPAZ. I mean I'd like to have a boyfriend. Someone cute to go places with and who would help me with crosswords, but like—

MISSY. Love?

SPAZ. Love? I'm so not.

MISSY. Oh, Spaz. Are we cynical?

SPAZ. Are you kidding? I consider that my best trait.

Scene 3

A radio station.

MISSY. (*Wearing earphones, SHE tentatively speaks into the microphone.*) Uhm ... hello?

VOICE OF LINDA. (*Heard but not seen.*) Have you ever been on radio before?

MISSY. Uh ... no.

V.O.L. (VOICE OF LINDA.) No problem. Just talk amiably into your microphone and pretend we're old friends.

MISSY. Where are you?

V.O.L. Washington, D.C.

MISSY. Could we do this possibly in the same state?

V.O.L. We need a sound check. Just say two words into your microphone. Any two words.

MISSY. (*After some consideration.*) Farrah Fawcett-Majors.

V.O.L. That's three words.

MISSY. The last two are hyphenated.

V.O.L. (*Dripping with sarcasm.*) Great. We're going to have fun. I just love talking to artists.

MISSY. Could we do this interview looking at each —

(*Too late. The intro has started. Bach and a VOICE OVER.*)

VOICE OVER. And now National Public Radio presents "artspeak." And here's your host for "artspeak," Linda Lee.

(MISSY mouths the name "Linda Lee" incredulously.)

VOICE OVER. Linda?

V.O.L. Hi! I'm chatting this afternoon with hip downtown artist Missy. Missy?

MISSY. Here.

V. O.L. Please explain your work to our home listeners.

MISSY. Well ... uhm ... Linda Lee ... Uh, like there is nothing a creative person loves more than like explaining his or her self-explanatory work. The piece that's currently at the Whitney branch is entitled, "Birthdays—Birth to Present." It is a video of mine. It is a chronological study of my birthdays taken from home movies that were taken by my father. So I got the idea of showing my parties back to back in order and then filming my latest birthday. I transferred the film to video. And there was no sound, so I narrated it and uh, so, that was that piece.

V.O.L. Sounds hip. What does your mother think of your work?

MISSY. Subtle sexism there, Linda Lee. Don't think you'd dream of asking Julian Schnabel what his dad thought of his work. To answer the question—She likes it. Well, I mean, she lives in suburban Pennsylvania, so much is lost on her, but she like comes to my openings with Dad and has a good time. And she's supportive and like insightful. In the piece I just mentioned, "Birthdays," for example, she was actually the first person to notice the similarities between my Aunt Theresa at my second party and the drag queen at my latest party.

V.O.L. Sounds hip. Tell me, do you believe the hype?

MISSY. Constantly.

V. O. L. What other works do you have in the home movies series?

MISSY. Uh, in the the home movies series, there's "Wildwood '63 to '72," which is a look at my family's vacations in Wildwood, New Jersey. "Dates," which is the compilation of footage my dad had made of me leaving before each of my dates up to and including the Prom. Dad filmed everything. And then the latest in the series, "Christmas Trees—Aluminum to pine." Which is self-explanatory ... not that that means anything this afternoon.

V.O.L. I saw "Dates" on P.B.S. "Alive From Off Center." You say such mean things in your commentary in that film.

MISSY. Well ... mean? I don't know, how about ironic? Isn't everybody ironic anymore? I mean, can anyone still introduce their boyfriend as their boyfriend without putting quotes and an aware sneer around it? Aren't our favorite jokes the cruel ones? Aren't the rude talk show hosts the ones we think are funny?

V.O.L. Insightful. And hip. How do you like being labeled "Post-Modern"?

MISSY. I like it. I like it just fine. These questions are great. I can only imagine what you look like.

V.O.L. On a personal note, whatever happened to the boy from "Dates"? The prom date?

MISSY. God. Right. Mickey today is, as far as I know, married and living in Pennsylvania. I think he's a lawyer, I don't keep in touch. It's not like I—he wasn't a love or anything. I've been very lucky. (A pause. SHE thinks about what she's just said.)

Scene 4

Spaz's kitchen.

MISSY. Is that the last of the capons please say yes?

SPAZ. Maybe we should take a break.

MISSY. Maybe you shouldn't take catering jobs before you're ready and call best friends in tears and make them drop everything and come over and help you.

SPAZ. Please. Tear my head off, will you? But first let's have a coffee break. Wash your hands.

MISSY. I'm complaining to the shop steward. You're running a pesto scented sweat shop.

(SHE exits, HE gets out the coffee, SHE returns.)

SPAZ. Coffee's on the table.

MISSY. Before I take so much as a sip, please tell me, who is the nude boy in your bedroom?

SPAZ. God. Completely forgot. Potential new boyfriend. Cream and sugar are here.

MISSY. First time?

SPAZ. The only first time. Adam and Eve did not have this first a time. I have Sweet and Low.

MISSY. Great. Did you play safe?

SPAZ. Very.

MISSY. How safe?

SPAZ. Any safer and we wouldn't have been in the same room.

MISSY. Not prying, just concerned. Good coffee.

SPAZ. Thanks for the concern, thanks for the compliment. Croissant?

MISSY. Please. What's his name?

SPAZ. Tony.

MISSY. Tony. Let me guess. Italian?

SPAZ. Very Italian.

MISSY. My, my. Italian this time. You really are working your way through the United Colors of Benetton.

SPAZ. Bitch. Jelly? So what did you think of him?

MISSY. Spaz. I saw him nude asleep on a comforter.

SPAZ. What did you think?

MISSY. The only thing I could judge him on is physical appearance.

SPAZ. That's O.K. What's the first thing that popped into your head?

MISSY. The first thing was "Girl, get a look at that institution over there."

SPAZ. An institution?

MISSY. A major institution.

SPAZ. How major the institution?

MISSY. Sears will paint him.

SPAZ. But it's more than a physical thing.

MISSY. Who cares?

SPAZ. He's a nice guy.

MISSY. Is it love? (*Indicating croissant.*) Did you make these?

SPAZ. "Yes" to croissant, "no" to love. Not even a threat of it. Turns out he's ... Bi.

MISSY. A bisexual. God, how seventies.

SPAZ. I know.

MISSY. I didn't know they still made those.

SPAZ. I'm loaning my new boyfriend and my vase to the Smithsonian for their display on the Carter Administration.

MISSY. Lucky you. New career and loveless boyfriend. Lucky lucky you.

SPAZ. I tell you, the second my bi guy starts getting mushy, I'll just say, "wouldn't you rather be with a woman?" Do we know our safety nets? You with married man, me with bisexual. I have marmalade if you'd rather.

MISSY. I'm fine. Quick question.

SPAZ. Yeah?

MISSY. Why is not new boyfriend out here helping with catering deadline?

SPAZ. It's a new relationship, I don't want to put demands on him right away.

MISSY. What? And you can drag my ass over here to do it? Fuck you; no really. Bring him out here. Right now.

SPAZ. He's sleepi—

MISSY. Hey, Tony!!!

SPAZ. His nickname is Brat.

MISSY. Hey, Bra—Brat???

SPAZ. I know. Flawless.

MISSY. Hey, Brat!

SPAZ. Missy, you are dee-ranged.

MISSY. Spaz, you are dee-mented.

SPAZ. I thought I was Dee-gorgeous!

BRAT. (*Enters wearing a comforter.*) Hi. Coffee?

SPAZ. Brat, this is Missy. Missy, this is Brat.

BRAT. Hi.

MISSY. Hi.

(*THEY shake hands.*)

Scene 5

Missy's Bedroom.

MISSY. And he seems nice.

SUIT. Good for Spaz. What's his name?

MISSY. Brat.

SUIT. What's that about?

MISSY. Don't know. Couldn't be nicer. Maybe just that he's cute and knows it.

SUIT. Conceited?

MISSY. No, he knows he's cute like he doesn't worry about it, not like he knows he's cute and relishes it.

SUIT. What does he do?

MISSY. Sexually? I've no idea.

SUIT. No, I mean do. A career. Everyone has a career.

MISSY. He's an actor-type.

SUIT. An actor who isn't conceited?

MISSY. It happens. He's real—what's important is that I think he's real good for Spaz.

SUIT. What kind of an actor?

MISSY. Eccentric taste.

SUIT. How eccentric?

MISSY. He likes Brecht.

SUIT. What's Brecht?

MISSY. It would only upset you.

SUIT. So are he and Spaz "in love"?

MISSY. Nah. I mean, a struggling actor and a performance artist turning caterer? They're so busy. Who's going to have time for love?

SUIT. Right.

MISSY. They've got so much —

SUIT. Exactly.

MISSY. To concentrate on.

SUIT. Right. I think I have to orchestrate a departure right now.

MISSY. Oh.

SUIT. It's getting late.

MISSY. Stay a little bit—uhm—never mind. Right. It is late.

SUIT. I can stay longer.

MISSY. I mean if that's what you want.

SUIT. How's work?

MISSY. Tough ... satisfying ... whatever. Big, beautiful whatever.

SUIT. What are you working on?

MISSY. Another video. Sifting through home movies for shots of appliances. How do you feel about appliances?

SUIT. Good. I feel good about appliances.

MISSY. How long you going to be away?

SUIT. That again?

MISSY. Again? This is the first time I brought it up.

SUIT. Three weeks. It's an emergency.

MISSY. An emergency that requires a banker? Someone need singles?

SUIT. You're unhappy.

MISSY. Maybe. I'm ... not happy, Suit.

SUIT. There's not much I can do about that. I could divorce Jan and run off with you. But that's very drastic.

MISSY. God, you bring that up. All the time. Please.
For me. As a favor. Do not even consider that.

SUIT. Stranger things have happened.

MISSY. Aren't you happy as things are?

SUIT. Happy? What are—(*A moment.*) Who am I to complain? People have got it much worse than me.

MISSY. Do you ever worry about the big stuff?

SUIT. What, the G.N.P.?

MISSY. No, like feelings of emptiness?

SUIT. I try not to think about shit like that.

MISSY. Shit like that has been filling me with despair lately. I hate myself, I think.

SUIT. Why do you hate yourself? *The Times* loves your work.

MISSY. Suit, you are classic.

SUIT. I have to go. Is there anything I can do to make you happy?

MISSY. No.

SUIT. Sure you're not mad at me?

MISSY. Why?

SUIT. Because I'm going away for two weeks.

MISSY. Three. No.

SUIT. Good. I have to go.

MISSY. Bye.

SUIT. Bye.

MISSY. Suit?

SUIT. Yes?

MISSY. Do I give you happiness?

SUIT. No. But you do distract me from unhappiness.

Scene 6

A Soho gallery.

BRAT. (*Spotting MISSY, who is staring with disbelief at a huge photograph of her face emblazoned with the words "Missy: a retrospective."*) Missy! You're a hit.

MISSY. Hey, Brat.

BRAT. Your work is, Oh God, It is like—BLAM!

MISSY. Oh yeah?

BRAT. No really. I am just frothing here. It is SO amazing. I mean, I don't mean to be gushing all over you but—

MISSY. No, please gush.

BRAT. It's so powerful and meaningful and it says so much and—Now I don't know anything about art. Please. If I knew any less about art, I'd be a congressman, right?

MISSY. (*Charmed.*) Right.

BRAT. But, this stuff is so intense. I don't know why everybody is so glum and talking about dinner and stuff. I mean this is—I haven't felt this worked about stuff in a gallery since—I don't mean to compare you to another artist —

MISSY. Go ahead.

BRAT. But I haven't felt this excited since ... Well, I would put your work in the same league as ... The Helga paintings.

MISSY. (*A moment. WE see that this is an unintended slap in the face.*) Oh really. The Hel—all of them?

BRAT. Oh yeah.

MISSY. Thanks. Uhm—Where's Spaz?

BRAT. He's over by the white wine and cheese being bitter. He hates his life tonight. I mean it, Missy. The Helga paintings.

MISSY. I may cry.

BRAT. So What are you going to do next?

MISSY. I'm interested in maintaining my pursuit of an ironic view of the ideological goals of present day America.

BRAT. Wow. That's a real press conference kind of prepared answer there.

MISSY. It was kind of a press conference kind of question.

BRAT. Yeah. You're right.

(A long pause. THEY look out at the party)

BRAT. So, what are you going to do next?

MISSY. I don't know ... I've run out of my family's home movies. Maybe I could talk about other people's families home movies. Or get my family to recreate exciting moments from my childhood. Or get actors to play my family or. Something. I'll do something.

BRAT. Cool. *(Long pause.)* A retrospective, huh? This must make you real happy.

MISSY. Happiness? Please. I do what I do.

BRAT. Right.

MISSY. You know what I mean?

BRAT. Exactly.

MISSY. Yeah?

BRAT. It's kind of like me and theater.

MISSY. How so?

BRAT. I like theater that has some, you know, bite in it. Which is how come I like your Bertolt Brecht.

(Throughout the play, BRAT uses the German pronunciation—*Bear-tolt Bresht*—everyone else uses the American.)

MISSY. Yes, I heard that.

BRAT. Well after I did Brecht for the first time, I really felt that I found, you know, something to sink my teeth into. And I knew I eventually wanted to do every play the guy wrote. I mean I do other things, c'mon, I'm an actor, I'll do anything. But Brecht ... For Brecht ... I would do Brecht for cab fare. No lie.

MISSY. How long have you been doing *Breshhhhhht*?

BRAT. Since Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow.

MISSY. I don't know that play.

BRAT. It's a Catholic high school in New Jersey.

MISSY. Oh.

BRAT. It's where I went. I had one of those groovy nuns. With the short skirts, and the handcrafted crucifixes and the easy-care feminist hair.

MISSY. I loved them. I mean, I'm not Catholic or anything, but—

BRAT. Sister Marsha was her name, and she was real forward thinking and for junior class play, we did *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

MISSY. *Threepenny Opera* for those of us who aren't entirely pretentious.

BRAT. Very good. My first Brecht. I played Pirate Jenny.

MISSY. Isn't that a—

BRAT. It's a woman's role.

MISSY. Oh, you went to an all-boys school?

BRAT. No, Sister Marsha had a concept. Anyways, I had this one line in the *Second Threepenny Finale* where I would run to the front of the stage and shout, "Man will always thrive, because he will always step on the face of his own human kindness."

MISSY. See? Now, we did *Paint Your Wagon*.

BRAT. And I decided at that moment that that was the coolest feeling I ever felt. I was saying something socially relevant and I was being very intellectual on account of I was using what they call "Brechtian alienation." Not letting emotions interfere. Just pure thought. And, you know, I figured this is how I wanted to express myself artistically speaking. And so I really like doing Brecht and I audition for every Brecht play that comes down the pike.

MISSY. Oh yeah?

BRAT. I been very lucky.

MISSY. Great.

BRAT. Done about everything. Even *Die Lehrstuke*. And nobody does them.

MISSY. Oh. Well. Yeah.

BRAT. So, I've done just about everything. But I still feel ...

MISSY. (*Knowing what he means.*) Yes.

BRAT. Which is how come I said what you must feel about your work is what I feel about me and Brecht.

MISSY. Right.

BRAT. I done a lot.

MISSY. Right.

BRAT. Right. But I still feel—

MISSY. Exactly.

BRAT. But if I wanted more that would be—

MISSY. Greedy.

BRAT. Too aggressive or—

MISSY. Greed. Like Donald Trump greed. Or Erich—

BRAT & MISSY. Von Stroheim *Greed*.

MISSY. Yeah.

BRAT. Or something.

MISSY. Exactly.

BRAT. Right?

MISSY. Yeah.

BRAT. But there has to be more.

MISSY. Must be.

BRAT. But you know?

MISSY. Exactly.

BRAT. Yes.

MISSY. Well.

BRAT. Yes. Well. What can you do?

MISSY. What can you do?

(Long pause. THEY look out at the party.)

BRAT. This is a great thing this retrospective thing.

(Pause.) Hm.

MISSY. What?

BRAT. Nothing.

MISSY. No, what?

BRAT. Just. Stupid. There's this line. That keeps rolling over in my head.

MISSY. What?

BRAT. A lot anymore. Silly.

MISSY. Tell me.

BRAT. It's stupid. It goes—uhm, "Let me tell you something and don't you ever forget it. Success is nothing without someone you love to share it with."

MISSY. Jesus. What's that from?

BRAT. *Mahog*—

MISSY *Mahogany*. Of course Brecht. *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany*.

BRAT. No. *Mahogany*. The old Diana Ross movie.

MISSY Oh.

BRAT. Billy Dee Williams says it.

MISSY. Quite the line.

BRAT. Yeah. It's in the scene where she's the high fashion model in Rome and he's a failed politician visiting Rome and they come back from the party where she poured candle wax on herself and he got weirded out by Anthony Perkins and how come your eyes are wet?

MISSY. Nothing.

BRAT. And she says she's going to be a bigger success than he can ever see and are you allergic to something?

MISSY. No just uhm—How's that—"Success is nothing—"

BRAT. No. "Let me tell you something and don't you ever—"Are you O.K.?

MISSY. Yes.

BRAT. Hey. (*HE kisses her.*) You're too hard on yourself.

(*Kisses her again, lightly. HE realizes he likes it. THEY have a long passionate kiss. When it is over THEY just stare at one another.*)

MISSY. What was that about?

BRAT. I am very whoa here.

MISSY. Excuse me.

BRAT. That was—

MISSY. Young man, please remember your current preference. Spaz is —

BRAT. Right. I'll go talk to Spaz. Sorry.

MISSY. Don't. Let's just forget it.

BRAT. Sorry.

(HE runs off. MISSY stands alone for a moment. A look of deep consternation on HER face. Suddenly SHE laughs.)

MISSY. *Mahogany.*

(As SHE exits, SHE passes the photograph. Without looking, SHE flicks her glass and splashes the white wine on the oversized image of HER face.)

Scene 7

Telephones. Missy's bedroom. SUIT at an airport pay phone.

After the PHONE rings a number of times, MISSY runs in and grabs it. It is cordless.

MISSY. Hello?

SUIT. *(Into phone disguising his voice.)* Hello, ma'am, what do you use for your best sex?

MISSY. Is this Time-Life Books again?

SUIT. *(Regular voice.)* No, it's Suit.

MISSY. Oh, hi Suit. I thought it was someone trying to sell me those home repair and improvement books.

SUIT. You tramp.

MISSY. Talk dirty to me, why don't you?

SUIT. So listen, crazy lady, I'm in Los Angeles. At the airport. I'm at a pay phone. Let me give you my number in case we get disconnected. Area code 213. (*SHE jots it down.*) Number is 213-555-6020. Got it?

MISSY. Got it.

SUIT. O.K., Well, I've got my Filofax out here and I'm just trying to figure out when I can have my way with you.

MISSY. This week?

SUIT. Yes.

MISSY. Let me see.

SUIT. You got your Filofax out?

MISSY. Please. I've got a wall calendar.

SUIT. You put our appointments on a wall calendar?

MISSY. Nobody says anything, except when Spaz comes to visit he clutches it to his chest and sings, *Calendar Girl*, but —

SUIT. What a character. Ready?

MISSY. Sure.

SUIT. Tuesday?

MISSY. The 14th?

SUIT. Right. Afternoon?

MISSY. That's cool.

SUIT. And dinner?

MISSY. Great.

SUIT. And one week from Friday is dinner—

MISSY & SUIT. And the Joyce with Spaz and Brat.

SUIT. Now that Saturday—

MISSY. I can't. I have to give a lecture.

SUIT. Ahhhhhh. Because that Saturday I was going to leave my wife for you.

MISSY. Yeah right.

SUIT. You don't believe me?

MISSY. Suit, please, it's your ploy.

SUIT. Hey?

MISSY. What?

SUIT. You wanna marry me?

MISSY. Suit, what are you possibly thinking? If you marry me, can you even conceive of what your company would do? And what would your friends do with my friends? How are they going to deal with Spaz and—

SUIT. So we could have parties without—

MISSY. Without Spaz? I'm sorry, I don't work that way. You want me, you get me and like all of what I am.

SUIT. And Spaz is you?

MISSY. No, but I am Spaz's friend. Look. O.K. I'm impressed that you had the nerve to use this ploy. It's very dangerous. And I appreciate the effort. But ... it's not possible. So don't whatever—bring it up again.

SUIT. O.K.

MISSY. I'm interested enough.

SUIT. O.K.

MISSY. O.K.

SUIT. Tuesday?

MISSY. Tuesday. Bye.

SUIT. Bye. (*HE hangs up.*)

(*MISSY hangs up slowly. Thinks for a moment, then suddenly picks up the scrap paper with Suit's number on it. SHE picks up the phone and pushes three*

numbers. Then stops. SHE hangs up the phone. A moment, then—)

MISSY. (*Casually.*) I am not a well woman.

Scene 8

A restaurant.

SUIT. (*Making his way to a table with SPAZ, BRAT and MISSY.*) Sorry I'm late.

SPAZ. You're late!!

SUIT. Just got back. Missy, I've been trying to call you, there's something I have to tell you.

SPAZ. Sit down, Suit. No one has anything to tell anyone before me. I have news.

SUIT. It's about—

SPAZ. Suit, perch. And have some champagne.

SUIT. Champagne? Why are we having champagne?

MISSY. What is with the champagne?

SPAZ. I ... just got ... B.A.M.

MISSY. Excuse me, hello? Brooklyn Academy Of Music?

BRAT. Great, huh?

MISSY. The big, beautiful high point of performance art.

SUIT. Congratulations.

MISSY. Spaz, you're performing again. I'm fully proud of you.

SPAZ. Not performing, catering. I got the B.A.M. opening night party. I just got off the phone with ... Bianca Jag—

BRAT. Bianca Jagger!!

SPAZ. Bianca fucking Jagger. Could you possibly die?

SUIT. You're really taking off.

BRAT. Oh, yeah. He's getting orders left and right now.

SPAZ. And it's all because I was getting ready to give it all up.

MISSY. What?

SPAZ. I was in this bright indigo funk about choosing catering. And I was seriously contemplating just but chucking the whole thing. Considering getting back on all fours and grunting in the chorus for Meredith Monk. And I had to do this God forsaken dinner party for this tub o' lard trendy hostess. So I decided to just blow it off. She had requested fish. So I made her a tuna casserole and prayed to be blacklisted.

MISSY. A tuna casserole?

SPAZ. With a crust made of potato chips.

BRAT. Potato chips!

SPAZ. I thought for sure she would just freak. Have some more champagne. Well, she called after the party, turns out she just adored the casserole. They thought it was ironic. So far this week, I've made macaroni and cheese, meatloaf and ham spread for the richest and most influential people in America.

MISSY. Oh my God Spaz, you're a Post-Modern caterer.

SPAZ. So for B.A.M., do you think I should make creamed chipped beef?

MISSY. Nah, just stop off at a White Castle.

SPAZ. More champagne!!

SUIT. Well, I've got something else to celebrate with champagne.

BRAT. What?

SUIT. I have an announcement.

SPAZ. Suit, I love your suit.

BRAT. Shhhhh. Suit has an announcement.

SUIT. This is something that Missy and I have been talking about.

MISSY. Uh—oh.

SUIT. And we both thought that I would never have the nerve to do it.

SPAZ. You're going to loosen your tie?

SUIT. And now I've done it.

MISSY. Suit, you didn't.

SUIT. I did.

MISSY. Goddamn you.

SUIT. What?

MISSY. How like fucking dare you?

SUIT. What is your case?

MISSY. You just like—boom—make this decision without even so much as like a discussion with me.

SUIT. Miss, I—

MISSY. How could you—

SUIT. Missy, I didn't.

MISSY. What?

SUIT. I didn't.

MISSY. Oh.

SUIT. That's not my announcement.

MISSY. I just uhm—Oh God I'm like—You've just been talking about it lately and I—I guess I've become kind of nervous and—

SPAZ. This is the second most embarrassing situation I've ever been in, in my life.

BRAT. What was the first?

SPAZ. It involved a neighbor's dog.

BRAT. I've heard enough.

SUIT. Actually what I was announcing kind of concerns you guys. We, Missy and I, have been talking about some time when my wife and daughter are out of town that we would go utilize the summer house. Upstate. And invite you guys up too. So the four of us could have a weekend out of the city.

SPAZ. That would be great! When?

SUIT. One weekend from now.

SPAZ. A weekend in the country, pack my quiver and bow.

BRAT. Way cool.

SPAZ. Just us four.

SUIT. Four friends.

MISSY. Double dating. Sorry I like lost it earlier.

SUIT. It's O.K.

MISSY. Just made a big, beautiful embarrassment of myself.

SPAZ. Like that's never happened before. More champagne.

MISSY. I have too much champagne.

SPAZ. There's no such thing as too much champagne.

BRAT. You're so eighties.

SPAZ. I'll have you know, I'm timeless.

MISSY. So what are we eating?

BRAT. Appetizers!

SPAZ. Appetize or die.

SUIT. Actually, I won't be eating.

MISSY. What?

SUIT. I have to split. Leave.

MISSY. Oh. O.K. Well. This is real ...

SUIT. I'm sorry to just spring this on you. Well, it's just lousy timing night here. And I—I thought I would be free but Jan is still in town and—So, uhm—Spaz, Brat? See you in two weekends.

BRAT. Great.

SUIT. Bye.

SPAZ. Country living. I'm ordering things from Talbot's first thing tomorrow.

SUIT. I'm sorry about tonight.

MISSY. I wish you'd told me.

SUIT. I just got back into town an hour ago. I didn't know till I called in to play back my messages and she picked up. I was on the way here. I tried to call—

MISSY. Just a ticket goes to waste tonight.

SUIT. Do you want money?

MISSY. That's not the point.

SUIT. Well what the fuck is the point?!!

SPAZ. Suit, please. Lower your voice. The waiters are dishing.

SUIT. Right. O.K., I'll call you. Bye.

MISSY. Take care, Suit.

SUIT. Bye.

MISSY. Take some big, beautiful care.

SUIT. O.K.

MISSY. Take large care, will ya?

SUIT. You're mad at me.

MISSY. Just take some economy-sized care.

SUIT. Shit. (*HE exits.*)

SPAZ. Wow. All the wordplay. You must be pissed.

MISSY. I'm pissed.

SPAZ. Pissy Missy. How come?

MISSY. Because he doesn't want to marry me.

SPAZ. Do you want to marry him?

MISSY. No, but I'd like him to want to marry me.

SPAZ. Why?

MISSY. I don't know.

SPAZ. Missy, this is Spaz. You can lie to yourself but not me.

MISSY. Lust. I would like to have someone around all the time to make the sex with. Let's order an appetizer.

SPAZ. Well if that's the case—

BRAT. Spaz, no.

SPAZ. I think I have the answer.

BRAT. Spaz, this is not the opportunity.

SPAZ. This is a golden opportunity.

MISSY. What's going on?

SPAZ. Well if you need to just have the sex, and Suit is not available, you should just have the proverbial bounce.

MISSY. Yeah, but—

BRAT. Not now.

SPAZ. With Brat.

BRAT. Oh God.

MISSY. You're kidding. Are you offering—

SUIT. Well ... Brat's been having hetero-urges lately, and ... I would feel much better if he slept with someone with a sense of style. And he likes you and you said he was

an institution and well let's just kill two birds with one stone.

MISSY. This is an unbelievable offer.

SPAZ. Call before midnight tonight.

MISSY. I'll have to get back to you later.

SPAZ. Well, so far I've had a comeback, you're not getting married, your lover has stood you up, and we're arranging a sexual tryst. And we haven't even ordered appetizers yet.

Scene 9

Later.

MISSY. Yeah. Sure. Why not?

Scene 10

SUIT and MISSY in Missy's bedroom, BRAT and SPAZ in Spaz's kitchen.

SPAZ. *(To BRAT, who has just entered his kitchen.)*
Hey.

SUIT. *(In Missy's bed, to MISSY who has just entered.)* Hello.

BRAT. Hey, Spaz.

MISSY. Suit, what are you doing here?

SPAZ. How did things go?

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