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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

The Argument

by Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros

SAMUEL FRENCH

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THE ARGUMENT was originally produced by The Vineyard Theatre in New York City in May, 2005. The Artistic Director was Douglas Aibel. The performance was directed by Maria Mileaf, with sound and music by Obadiah Eaves and lighting by David Lander. The cast was as follows:

SOPHIE . . . . . Melissa Leo
PHILLIP . . . . . Jay O. Sanders
HERB . . . . . John Othman

THE ARGUMENT was produced by Theatre J in Washington DC on October 23, 2013. The performance was directed by Shirley Serotsky, with scenic design by Robbie Hayes, lighting by Martha Mountain, sound by Eric Shimelonis, and costumes by Erin Nugent. The cast was as follows:

SOPHIE . . . . . Susan Rome
PHILLIP . . . . . James Whalen
HERB . . . . . Jefferson A. Russell

CHARACTERS

SOPHIE – EARLY FORTIES; A SUBSTANTIAL WOMAN AND ARTIST.

Charming. Her warmth, humor and sensuality are the first thing one notices about her, though her beauty could hardly be overlooked. Grounded by her commitment to her life's work, she is complex but not neurotic. Whatever challenges and obstacles she's faced have given her a strong and generous sense of herself, all of which are immediately appealing, especially to Phillip, who is a wise judge of character. They are a good match for one another. Their attraction is palpable, real and they offer one another the kind of relationship each still quietly hoped for, but never expected.

PHILLIP – LATE FORTIES; A SUBSTANTIAL AND APPEALING MAN AND BUSINESSMAN.

Phillip is a man's man, in that he has a modest, non- abrasive confidence which inspires trust and friendship in most people that he meets. He is utterly reliable and loyal and expects that of others. He says what he means and means what he says. He has a knack for business which was his driving passion for years, although, at this stage of his life he is spending more time in reflection than he once did. He is at a turning point of sorts and meeting Sophie compliments his desire to experience life more potently and purely. Her vibrance reinvigorates him and with Sophie he feels more present and hopeful than ever before.

HERB – FORTIES OR FIFTIES; A BENIGN AND WELL-INTENTIONED COUPLES THERAPIST.

Herb has made good communication his life's work. He really believes that the world would be better, safer and more humane if people practiced good communication skills. His methodology is based on Harville Hendricks' Amago technique, which is often described to couples as "compassion in action". He's ever hopeful that teaching couples this therapeutic paradigm will win the day. When couples do not benefit from working with him he feels that he has personally failed.

TIME

Now.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The / or slash mark indicates where overlapping dialogue begins.

For B with love

Scene One

(It is dark. A door opens onstage. A man and a woman enter through the open door into **PHILLIP***'s studio apartment. They are kissing. They walk-kiss through the room towards the bed. It is passionate, but it is not overwrought made-for-the-movies passion. This is truer and perhaps more awkward, interrupted by an unexpected piece of furniture or an unwieldy piece of clothing. They end up in an oversized easy chair. Lights fade – end of scene.)*

Scene Two

(A few hours later. **SOPHIE** *stirs. She slips on something nearby before emerging from the bed.* **PHILLIP** *rolls over and turns on bedside lamp.)*

SOPHIE. *(Self-conscious, exposed, not sure what to say)* This isn't a common occurrence for me.

PHILLIP. Me either.

SOPHIE. Really?

PHILLIP. Yes. Seriously.

SOPHIE. I don't really know you well enough to believe you. Oh god.

(This moment can't help but feel awkward.)

Excuse me. I'm a little thirsty.

(She ventures timidly towards the open kitchen.)

PHILLIP. Check the fridge.

SOPHIE. *(She has trouble opening the refrigerator door.)* I can't seem to open it.

PHILLIP. *(as he heads offstage to the bathroom)* Give it a yank. Apologies in advance. Not sure you'll find much in there.

SOPHIE. *(She pulls opens the refrigerator door, examining contents.)* Wow. You were right.

PHILLIP. *(offstage)* I warned you.

SOPHIE. You keep Cheerios in the fridge? Interesting.

PHILLIP. *(offstage)* I keep *everything* in the fridge. That way nothing goes bad.

SOPHIE. There are five kinds of cereal in here.

PHILLIP. The American Way. Five choices of virtually the same thing. It's my go-to-meal.

Now *I'm* embarrassed.

SOPHIE. *(examining contents)* Let's see. One head of lettuce. One stick of butter. Eggs. Milk.

PHILLIP. Check the date. *(***PHILLIP** *emerges from the bathroom.)*

SOPHIE. And really cold bananas.

PHILLIP. A man and his fridge.

SOPHIE. *(picking up a bottle)* And what's this? A single bottle of curry powder?

PHILLIP. That's been there a while.

SOPHIE. Something tells me there's a story attached to this little bottle of spice.

PHILLIP. Well. Let's see, someone tried to cook for me.

SOPHIE. Bowls?

PHILLIP. Cabinet on the left.

SOPHIE. *(as he approaches her, sort of staring)* What are you doing?

PHILLIP. Watching you.

SOPHIE. Oh. Is that good? I suddenly feel enormous pressure to move about in a charming way.
Don't look too closely.

PHILLIP. I already have.

SOPHIE. Oh, yeah, right. God. I'm nervous. And, you're very – what?

PHILLIP. What?

SOPHIE. Relaxed.

PHILLIP. You have a lot to do with it.

(He approaches her, hoping to make her more comfortable. He kisses her tenderly.)

You know, I like you in my kitchen.

SOPHIE. *(She slips away, sheepish.)* Oh, I don't want you to get the wrong impression.

PHILLIP. About what?

SOPHIE. About me and kitchens.

PHILLIP. *(He laughs, enjoying her.)* I see. You don't like to cook?

SOPHIE. Well, I like to *eat*, but I don't exactly think of myself as a "preparer" of food.

PHILLIP. *(He heads back to the bed.)* Come back.

SOPHIE. I'm looking for silverware.

(finding it)

I prefer eating out.

PHILLIP. I see.

SOPHIE. *(preparing two bowls of cereal and milk)* Milk or plain?

PHILLIP. Milk.

SOPHIE. But I am, you know, what's the word?

PHILLIP. Particular?

SOPHIE. I like simple food prepared well. And I have favorites. Salads. Pasta. In fact, I'm a pasta… what's the word?

PHILLIP. Enthusiast?

SOPHIE. No. It's more utilitarian than that.

PHILLIP. Oh.

SOPHIE. I used to eat a plate of pasta every day.

PHILLIP. Every single day!

SOPHIE. I developed a taste for it in grad school, when I was poor. Well, I'm not *not* poor, especially by some standards. What was I saying?

PHILLIP. You're a Pasta…Proletariat.

SOPHIE. I love it, unless of course, it's overcooked. Over boiled.

PHILLIP. *Par-boiled.* Don't they do that in restaurants?

SOPHIE. Par-boiled. That's an undefendable sin!

PHILLIP. A "pasta" sin.

SOPHIE. *(She heads back to bed, cereal bowls in hand.)* See, I don't care if you call it macaroni or noodles or eat it cold or cut it with a knife even –

PHILLIP. *(He follows her to the bed.)* Oh, you *are* forgiving.

SOPHIE. But if you don't cook it *al dente* –

PHILLIP. Forget it. Toss it. It's history.

SOPHIE. Exactly. Cheers.

(They clink bowls or spoons before eating. They chew in silence for a minute.)

PHILLIP. The curry powder belonged to my ex-wife, Pamela.

SOPHIE. Pamela.

PHILLIP. I mean, it was ours until she…let me have it.

SOPHIE. I see.

PHILLIP. We were separating. I moved in here and she came over to make us a meal. Indian food. A feast to put things right.

SOPHIE. Was she draped in purple silk and wearing little whaddyacallems on her fingers?

PHILLIP. Cymbals?

SOPHIE. Cymbalettes? A fun little belly dance or something?

PHILLIP. No. We fought while everything burned.

SOPHIE. I see. One wife?

PHILLIP. Yes. *Yes!*

SOPHIE. Everyone has a past, right?

PHILLIP. Hopefully.

SOPHIE. Right.

(They eat, after a moment.)

So, um, why'd you marry her in the first place?

PHILLIP. Why did I marry her? I loved her.

SOPHIE. Well, that's a good answer. How long were you married?

PHILLIP. Almost six years. Together for eight.

SOPHIE. And, then what happened?

PHILLIP. What happened?

SOPHIE. I mean was it a sudden sort of thing – do you mind my asking, I'm just –

PHILLIP. Looking for clues?

SOPHIE. Too many questions? Sorry.

PHILLIP. Not at all.

SOPHIE. I guess I'm checking if it's safe.

PHILLIP. *(He finds this amusing)* If it's safe? If *I'm* safe?

SOPHIE. Well, no offence. It's just that I've just broken *all* the dating safety tips I have posted on my refrigerator.

PHILLIP. I see. Rules of the road.

SOPHIE. Rule #1: No alcohol on the first three dates.

Rule #2: No sex on the first three dates –

PHILLIP. Oops.

SOPHIE. – And Rule #3,

(He kisses her.)

I can't remember.

PHILLIP. *(She kisses him – it's tender.)* It's good to have rules, isn't it?

SOPHIE. I remember. Rule #3: Listen and learn. My grandmother used to tell me: "Sophie, don't be Johnny Carson *and* the guest. Mouth closed, ears open."

PHILLIP. Johnny Carson. There's a throwback.

(He laughs.)

SOPHIE. Do you have children?

PHILLIP. No. We were too busy *working* on our relationship. You?

(She shakes her head.)

What about your work, your profession? You said you were a painter.

SOPHIE. Yes. You? What do you do, finance, wasn't it?

PHILLIP. Trader. Commodities.

SOPHIE. A gambler, right.

PHILLIP. Well, actually, that's, that's the part that started to wear me out. All day, all week, all those years, I was either winning or losing, and it got so that everything in between started to seem pointless.

SOPHIE. Scary.

PHILLIP. Yeah. Then, about 18 months ago my father died. Rough. I could feel my edge, my adrenaline for trading waned. And then…they let me go.

SOPHIE. I'm so sorry.

PHILLIP. Don't be. Turned out to be the best thing really. I'd saved some money. Made some good investments over the years. So I left the city for a little island in Maine. Monhegan Island, where I joined a…middle-aged rowing club. Sat under a tree, books, naps.

SOPHIE. Sounds pretty good.

PHILLIP. Simple pleasure. I'd forgotten simple pleasure was even an option.

SOPHIE. Pleasure. Oh God. I think I'm too worried about the world to feel pleasure. Maybe it's also, you know, living in New York City. That particular brand of striving and loud opinion.

So, where's your dog?

PHILLIP. My dog? Oh. Well, we sort of share her. I take her when Pamela goes away.

SOPHIE. But you said you had to leave the party to walk her.

PHILLIP. *(apologetically)* Oh yeah, well, it was kind of a line.

SOPHIE. *(horrified)* A line? A pick-up line?

PHILLIP. It was so loud at the party. I just wanted to get us out of there.

SOPHIE. I fell for a pick up line.

I can't believe it! I'm so ashamed.

PHILLIP. Don't be ashamed.

SOPHIE. *(playfully)* Ashamed of you!

(She kisses him. Their chemistry is apparent.)

You're not a beast in disguise are you?

PHILLIP. You've had experience with beasts?

SOPHIE. Maybe beast is too strong a word – Well, we wouldn't really qualify for true adulthood if we hadn't been driven slightly mad by the "wrong" man…or the "wrong" woman, would we?

PHILLIP. No, we certainly wouldn't.

SOPHIE. Mine was only half beast anyway. Quarter beast, really, to be fair.

PHILLIP. Three quarters man.

SOPHIE. Nearly. Let's just say he was high strung.

PHILLIP. I see. No good qualities?

SOPHIE. Great painter. That was his whole life.

PHILLIP. Husband?

SOPHIE. *(affirmative)* Hmm hmm.

*(***PHILLIP** *holding her hand, noticing paint in the lines of her palm and nails:)*

PHILLIP. Wow. Look at your hands!

SOPHIE. I ran out of turpentine.

PHILLIP. When were you painting?

SOPHIE. Everyday, nearly. Sometimes for 14, 15 hours at a time.

PHILLIP. Hmm, I'm impressed.

SOPHIE. The whole process of making a painting *happen* takes time. It's got its highs and lows, but I guess I like that. Any painting, any *good* painting is evidence of a struggle, and well, when I'm caught, when I'm in the thick of it –

*(***PHILLIP** *holding her hand, enchanted)*

I feel a kind of relief. I dunno. It's hard to explain.

PHILLIP. What color is that?

SOPHIE. That is, let's see, Prussian Blue.

PHILLIP. That?

SOPHIE. Cinnabar Red.

PHILLIP. Cinnabar.

SOPHIE. Oxidia Brown. I guess you could say I collect color.

PHILLIP. I've known women who collect scarves, shoes, *men.*

SOPHIE. Don't get me wrong. I collect shoes too!

PHILLIP. You're refreshing.

SOPHIE. *(blushingly)* Oh God. Am I? Aren't I – too old to be refreshing?

PHILLIP. You're kidding.

SOPHIE. No.

(She can't mask her vulnerability.)

PHILLIP. I was watching you at the party. Staring at you for at least an hour.

SOPHIE. *(nearly giddy)* No! Staring, really? What was I doing?

PHILLIP. Not staring back.

SOPHIE. Oh. Sorry, I'm not that much of a party person. If it hadn't been her birthday –

PHILLIP. Then, all of a sudden, you got up and I, I lost sight of you and panicked.

SOPHIE. *(bemused)* Yeah. Sure.

PHILLIP. I thought you'd left. But then, you came back with cake. A *huge* slice of chocolate cake!

SOPHIE. Oh God.

PHILLIP. A hunk, really.

SOPHIE. You saw that?

PHILLIP. And you ate it with such excitement, such appetite!

SOPHIE. Oh god – I'm so embarrassed.

PHILLIP. Spaghetti and cake. A woman after my own heart.

SOPHIE. I noticed you too.

PHILLIP. You did?

SOPHIE. Earlier. Before the cake.

PHILLIP. Why didn't you, you know, smile or wave or say something?

SOPHIE. I figured you must be taken.

(beat – simply)

I'm forty-two.

PHILLIP. I'm forty-nine.

(Lights fade – end of Scene 2.)

Scene Three

(Nearly one year later. Early evening. They are in his apartment which they now share. Subtle more "bohemian" changes are visible. A few accomplished paintings of hers decorate the walls.)

(The light is dim. We hear keys turning in the door. **PHILLIP** *enters with a small suitcase.)*

(He is well-dressed in a suit, tie, and trench coat.)

PHILLIP. SOPH!!!

SOPHIE. *(offstage)* Phillip!

PHILLIP. I'm home.

SOPHIE. Is that you??

PHILLIP. I think so, yes.

SOPHIE. You're not supposed to be here!

PHILLIP. I…I live here.

SOPHIE. Don't move.

PHILLIP. Don't move? Can I put my keys down?

SOPHIE. Close your eyes. I thought you were coming back tomorrow. I have a surprise.

PHILLIP. A surprise? How exciting.

SOPHIE. Close your eyes. Are they closed?

PHILLIP. They're closed.

SOPHIE. You promise they're closed.

PHILLIP. Promise and swear.

*(***SOPHIE** *enters wearing her "painting" clothes. She puts her hands over his eyes and kisses him.)*

PHILLIP. Hmmm. How nice.

SOPHIE. Hello there. No peeking.

PHILLIP. Hello.

SOPHIE. I have a surprise. An anniversary surprise.

PHILLIP. Did I forget something?

SOPHIE. It's 10 months tomorrow.

(With her hands gently over his eyes, she leads him towards the kitchen area)

SOPHIE. Did you find my card?

PHILLIP. I did. It was beautiful. Made me feel very lucky.

SOPHIE. I meant every word. This way. Don't open your eyes until I say.

(Stands back and gestures.)

You can open them.

(Seeing their new refrigerator – a vision – they are both a lit. Like two newlyweds.)

PHILLIP. Wow.

SOPHIE. I know.

PHILLIP. Wowee!

SOPHIE. I sold a painting. Bought us a fridge.

PHILLIP. Congratulations!

SOPHIE. Isn't it wild?

PHILLIP. It's great. It's big.

SOPHIE. I know.

PHILLIP. It's impressive.

SOPHIE. I know. Is it too much stainless steel for the room?

PHILLIP. No, no, not at all.

SOPHIE. It's handsome, isn't it?

PHILLIP. It's a…"VIKING".

SOPHIE. I feel like we should salute it or something.

PHILLIP. It's a big day, Soph.

SOPHIE. I know. A big fridge!

PHILLIP. *Our* fridge. I'm very happy for us.

SOPHIE. Me too.

(They kiss.)

Look inside.

(He opens it. It is pristine and almost totally empty.)

PHILLIP. It's cold. That's good.

SOPHIE. And look how bright it is. You could read a book in there it's so bright. And look at all these shelves and little compartments and look at all this storage.

Oh and this. Look at this. This is fantastic.

(opening one of the drawers)

See this. They call this a "crisper."

PHILLIP. What's it for?

SOPHIE. It's for crisping. Oh, don't touch that. It's raw pigment. I meant to bring it to the studio. It does better when it's cold.

PHILLIP. This really is an occasion! Our first big purchase.

SOPHIE. Now it's serious.

PHILLIP. Yup. It sure is. Wait. Something's missing.

SOPHIE. I know. Don't tell me.

(They look at each other-enjoying this rather obvious discovery)

PHILLIP. Food.

SOPHIE. Food!

PHILLIP. Food to eat.

SOPHIE. You are so right. Food for our fridge. Let's make a, you know…

PHILLIP. A list?

SOPHIE. Yeah. A list.

PHILLIP. A list of items.

SOPHIE. Food items, to commemorate the occasion of our new fridge.

PHILLIP. Now we are really committed to each other.

SOPHIE. Where's my pencil?

PHILLIP. Here.

(hands her a pencil)

SOPHIE. *(giddy, getting a pad too)* This is so scary.

(He sits. She may sit in his lap at anytime.)

PHILLIP. OK. Ready?

SOPHIE. Okey dokey, I'm ready –

(writes)

"Food List". Alright. You open the fridge and you see which happy, hearty, foody things?

Mouth watering what? First thing that comes to mind.

PHILLIP. Um. Cheese.

SOPHIE. Alright

(She writes.)

"Cheese".

PHILLIP. A selection of cheeses.

SOPHIE. Feta cheese, I love feta, and, and –

PHILLIP. And goat cheese –

SOPHIE. Feta *is* goat cheese.

PHILLIP. And that other one, the creamy one –

SOPHIE. Camembert. Brie de Meaux. Pot cheese. I love pot cheese.

PHILLIP. And the other cheese, from Vermont, you know, you know, the famous one – The one you eat with apples –

SOPHIE. Cheddar.

PHILLIP. *Sharp* cheddar.

SOPHIE. *(writes)* "Cheddar." Oh, and that other one from from Spain…it's blue, you eat it with pears and beer –

PHILLIP. Beer. Write down beer.

SOPHIE. Oh, it's so good. It's not Stilton, it's softer.

PHILLIP. Brie?

SOPHIE. Cabrales! Wait 'til you try that.

PHILLIP. Ok, that's enough cheese.

SOPHIE. What goes with cheese?

PHILLIP. Fruit.

SOPHIE. Melon. Plums. Grapes. Red.

(writes)

"Red grapes"

PHILLIP. Cold grapes in the middle of the night.

SOPHIE. I'll just write fruit.

(writes)

"Fruit".

PHILLIP. And juice.

SOPHIE. Mango and, and cranberry and –

PHILLIP. Orange juice for breakfast –

SOPHIE. *(writing)* "Orange juice". And grape juice! I love grape juice.

PHILLIP. And sliced whatsthatcalled…very thin.

SOPHIE. Welch's. Remember that?

PHILLIP. Prosciutto. And melon.

SOPHIE. *(writes)* "Welch's". This is so exciting.

PHILLIP. And Roast Beef.

SOPHIE. *(writing)* "Roast Beef". Got it. And, and smoked salmon, the really oily kind, not the Scottish, with a little lemon and what are those things, they come in bottles –

PHILLIP. Yoo-hoo.

SOPHIE. Capers!

PHILLIP. I love Yoo-hoo. Put down Yoo-hoo.

SOPHIE. And we'll get some of that black bread to go with the salmon – that thick, you know which one I mean –

PHILLIP. And butter.

SOPHIE. I love butter.

PHILLIP. Bread and butter.

SOPHIE. Oh God. Bread and butter.

PHILLIP. This is making me hungry!

SOPHIE. Me too. Let's have sex.

PHILLIP. Just like that. Wow.

(He winces as she climbs out of his lap.)

Ooh.

SOPHIE. What's wrong??

(As he's getting up, an ache.)

PHILLIP. Ooh. Ooch. Cramp.

(She tears the blankets off the bed as he approaches. Waits for him there, all charm.)

SOPHIE. Nice to be home, isn't it?

PHILLIP. I'll say.

SOPHIE. I forgot. How was the interview?

PHILLIP. Fifty-fifty. Not sure I want it.

SOPHIE. I don't think I've ever seen you in that suit.

PHILLIP. This one? Sure you have. It's my interview suit.

SOPHIE. Phillip, you look so *alluring* in that suit.

*(***PHILLIP** *starts to remove the jacket.)*

No, leave it on.

(A cell phone begins to ring and ring.)

SOPHIE. *(He takes off his shoes.)* Is it yours or mine? Can you tell?

PHILLIP. It sounds like yours.

(He starts to take off his suit jacket.)

SOPHIE. Shoot, sorry. Wait. Don't get undressed!

PHILLIP. *(putting it back on; game)* Okay.

SOPHIE. Oh Phillip, I don't want to get it, I swear I don't, but if it's whatshername. Blowhard.

Let me just see.

(She looks at the phone for the caller's number.)

Oh shoot. It's blowhard. I've just gotta –

PHILLIP. Who?

SOPHIE. Brigit Harding. The curator from the gallery. Don't move!

PHILLIP. Don't move?

(She answers her phone, overenthusiastic.)

SOPHIE. Hi, Brigit. Thanks for getting back.

(Motioning to him that she won't be long.)

SOPHIE. Uh huh. Yeah. I did.

*(***PHILLIP** *starts to remove his tie.)*

(to **PHILLIP***)*

Leave it on. Leave it on.

(into the phone)

Uh huh. Uh huh.

(holding the phone against her hand, to **PHILLIP***)*

I want to make love to you in that suit.

(into phone)

Uh huh. Uh huh. I saw that too.

(He starts to whistle in anticipation.)

And I had one thought.

(She motions for him to keep his "whistling" down.)

I guess I miss the the color we'd originally discussed, because now, the impression I'm getting is well, I dunno, kind of grim, you know, which I'm, I'm sure you don't intend at all.

(He might return to the refrigerator again, while she becomes thoroughly drawn into the demands of the phone call, pacing the floor as she talks quickly.)

Well, yes, one can see them, *dimly*, but who wants to see anything that way? The wall color, in my opinion, should, should just be white. Plain old, you know, white!

(Makes a disagreeable and exhausted face re: Brigit to **PHILLIP** *who is still anticipating the end of the phone call.)*

I hear you but I, I just don't understand the choice for for grey…because, how are they going to be able to interpret any of what you just said in the Goddamn dark, you see what I mean? …I'm not criticizing your decision, I mean, I just want to see if we can revisit – Brigit – Can you hear me? Brigit??? Hello? Shit.

PHILLIP. What happened?

SOPHIE. Either she's just gone inside the Midtown Tunnel or she hung up on me. I think she may actually have hung up on me! Can you believe it? What did I say? Did I overfawn or underfawn?

PHILLIP. A little of both.

SOPHIE. "What do I mean by grim?!" That's what she just asked me!! What do I mean? I mean, *bad*, Brigit!! Grey and dark and hideous and bad! I don't care who she is, I can't not be honest about it! It's my work!

PHILLIP. You said Goddamn.

SOPHIE. I did?

PHILLIP. "Goddamn dark." That's what you said.

SOPHIE. Well, I wanted to say "fucking dark" but I resisted.

PHILLIP. In some circles "Goddamn" is worse.

SOPHIE. Really?

PHILLIP. You sounded angry.

SOPHIE. I did? I mean, I *was* angry, but I shouldn't *sound* angry.

PHILLIP. Right.

SOPHIE. That'll just –

PHILLIP. Yeah –

SOPHIE. What should I do? Should I call her back?

(looking for the phone)

Where's my phone?

PHILLIP. Call her later.

SOPHIE. She tells me she's, she's "culling a mood'. Creating a "hook". You know what that means, don't you?

PHILLIP. What?

SOPHIE. It means I'm at the mercy of a lot of crap, Phillip!

PHILLIP. Maybe it'll be lucky crap.

SOPHIE. I've seen lucky crap.

PHILLIP. And?

SOPHIE. This looks like *un*lucky crap. Christ! A hook!

(dialing)

A bloody meat hook is what!

PHILLIP. C'mere.

SOPHIE. And I'll be hanging from it. I'm the painter and she's offended. I hate that. Christ!

Straight to voicemail!

PHILLIP. Does this mean you're not going to undress me?

SOPHIE. *(worried)* This isn't what I'm good at. Handling people like her. The "It-Girl" Curator in Louboutin and Prada.

(He exits into the bathroom – she talks after him.)

And you know what's worse?! The guy showing with me- the Romanian guy, really good artist, these large encaustic panels, so he comes by takes one look at his part of the exhibit, and lets her have it! Tells her "THE LIGHT IS SHIT! I WILL SUFFER FROM THIS FUCKINK AMERICAN SHIT!"

And then she says to him, in this out-of-the-clear-blue-kitty-cat voice.

(We hear water – he's taking a shower.)

"You're right, Davron. It's too dark. You need more light! Of course you do!" And guess what? He'll get light and I won't.

(calling Brigit's number again)

Because he can say "fuck" and I can't say "Goddamn." And I didn't even mention the problem of thematic flow painting to painting - Which, of course, she hasn't given one thought to. Or maybe she has, which is worse.

(continuing into phone – her "pleasant" voice)

"Hi there Brigit, I think we just got cut off. I'm home. Bye."

(Dives under the pillow, temporarily overwhelmed, then, emerging and calling out:)

Phillip? Sweetie? Where are you? Come back. Is your suit still on?

*(***PHILLIP** *enters eagerly. Almost excited. He is dripping wet with a towel around his waist, and holding a pregnancy test in his hand.)*

PHILLIP. Soph?

SOPHIE. What?

PHILLIP. Sophie. Honey. This.

SOPHIE. *(remembering)* Oh. God. I forgot.

PHILLIP. Why didn't you tell me?

SOPHIE. Oh God, Phillip. I was going to tell you. Of course. I was so surprised to see you and then the call…

PHILLIP. *(happy)* This is…

SOPHIE. Yes, but but those things can be wrong, you know. I thought I'd do it again to be sure.

PHILLIP. Amazing.

SOPHIE. I'll go to the Doctor tomorrow.

PHILLIP. How many weeks?

SOPHIE. I'm not sure. Four.

(beat, unsure)

Five.

(beat)

Six.

(Her cell phone begins to ring. Lights fade – end of scene 3.)

Scene Four

(A few days later.)

*(***SOPHIE** *is preparing pasta and salad for dinner.* **PHILLIP** *mid-story, speaking at a clip.)*

PHILLIP. So, when I showed up Howie said he needed a fourth for this tournament thing. He's the oil cracks guy.

SOPHIE. Who lost all his money during the crash and made it back ten times over?

PHILLIP. Brilliant guy. And Jeff Touey is with us-

SOPHIE. The "bonds" guy who keeps asking you to work with him.

PHILLIP. Cut up. Prankster. Known him for years. So, it's me and Howie Weinstein –

SOPHIE. And Jeff Touey –

PHILLIP. Right, and Ricky Rasher, S&P guy, compulsive, neat freak, and as Willow Ridge Greens Committee Chairman, it's his job to to be overseer for the condition of the course, which he takes *very* seriously.

SOPHIE. All this is the setup, right?

PHILLIP. Right, ok, so, Jeff Touey – You know, you met him at that Halloween party last year –

SOPHIE. The guy wearing diapers with the bow and arrow?

PHILLIP. Cupid, right. Irish from the Bronx, great wife, kids –

SOPHIE. I remember.

PHILLIP. Lost untold brain cells in the nineties, coke, straightened out, and all he wants out of life is a good laugh.

SOPHIE. Got it. Howie, Ricky, Jeff.

PHILLIP. Right, so, we're at this gorgeous course in Palm Beach, and Touey buys this stuff from the airport shop – a little item called "Smelly Can of Shit".

SOPHIE. *(good naturedly)* Lovely. Lovely.

PHILLIP. Which, apparently, dispenses a substance in a shaving cream like manner, but has the appearance and smell of an actual human turd.

SOPHIE. Maybe you should save this story for after dinner?

PHILLIP. So we get to the club and on the first tee Touey shows me and Weinstein the little can of smelly stuff and outlines his plot to drive Rasher nuts.

(She is multitasking between the pasta, sala. He brings the salad to the table, helping her as he tells the story.)

SOPHIE. I haven't tossed that yet.

PHILLIP. So, we're playing, it's the third hole, and Rasher hits his ball off to the right in the rough.

SOPHIE. Uh huh.

PHILLIP. Meanwhile, the other guys drive up ahead in their golf cart, allegedly to find Rasher's ball and of course, when they find it, Touey sprays out a little pile of, you know, "Shit in a Can", about three inches in front of the ball and then they, quick, drive off to hit their own shots about twenty yards away. So, a coupla minutes go by until Rasher sees the stuff and shouts out, "Hey, what the hell is this?" And Touey, all innocent, says "Oh my god, it looks like someone took a shit out here!"

You know, it's like one of the most prestigious clubs around there, so Rasher says "It must have been a dog from the neighborhood," Then Weinstein, being an an outdoorsman and *noted Jewish hunter*, walks over to inspect the pile and says, "Hey, that doesn't look like animal shit to me, that's *human* excrement!" And Rasher's, like, "Who the hell would take a dump in the middle of my course? Who the hell would do that???" And we're telling him relax, hit his shot and just forget it, you know –

SOPHIE. Uh huh. Uh huh.

PHILLIP. But the poor guy can't let it go, and when he goes to hit, naturally, he *flubs* his shot straight into the bunker in front of the green – takes *two* shots to get

out of the bunker and, swear to God, *three* putts for a, for a triple bogey.

SOPHIE. *(missing the agony of this entirely)* Sorry, a putt is what again?

PHILLIP. So, after the eighth hole, I'm with Rasher while Touey and Weinstein drive ahead to the next tee and spray *another* pile on the ninth tee box.

*(***SOPHIE** *hands the wine bottle and bottle opener to* **PHILLIP** *to open.)*

Okay, so now we're all at the tee and Rasher walks up to hit and sees the the out-of-context addition on his perfectly manicured tee box, and he's like "What the fuck?"

SOPHIE. Could you open that sweetie?

PHILLIP. So, this time, we all, you know, confirm that it is, indeed, a repeat offence and definitely "man-made" to boot, and Ricky is, you know, he's going nuts, cursing, muttering, and when he goes to move the pile out of the way with his golf club, the Caddie screams out, "Hey, don't touch that with your club, man, I got to clean that sucker"

*(***PHILLIP** *finds this incredibly funny.)*

And Ricky is beside himself, sweating, swearing –

SOPHIE. Yeah, you said.

PHILLIP. – and of course, needless to say, he tops his next shot, which dribbles thirty yards off the tee box and he's like, "fuck it!!", and hurls his club, which, which hits a tree and comes to rest with the the shaft at a sickening, but like perfectly bent ninety-degree angle!!

(more laughter, beat)

SOPHIE. Sounds like you guys had fun!

PHILLIP. Jeff literally bit his forearm to keep from cracking up. So, finally on the eighteenth hole –

SOPHIE. There's more?

PHILLIP. – while Rasher's putting out, Touey empties the last of the stuff right, right next to the accelerator of Weinstein's golf cart. And when Rasher sees it there, he, he finally puts it all together, turns back to us, you know, and we are –

(laughter)

– we are literally on our backs rolling on the green, hysterical.

SOPHIE. Dinner.

(They both sit at the table.)

PHILLIP. *(nearly out of breath)* Oh my God.

(suddenly remembering)

And the caddie was in on it, too, only I didn't know that! Jeff slipped him a twenty.

SOPHIE. I don't get it.

PHILLIP. You don't get what?

SOPHIE. *(Tossing the pasta – quiet, a beat. Something is irking her – what is it? She may not even know herself.)* I mean, I don't get what the whole golf craze is about? And the "club" thing.

PHILLIP. The club thing?

SOPHIE. I mean, "the joining" thing. It's just not in my frame of reference, I guess.

PHILLIP. Whaddya mean?

SOPHIE. Joining these over-the-top clubs where, where immigrant caddie slaves seem doomed to watch while mostly white men swipe madly at little bumpy balls –

PHILLIP. I was just telling a story, Soph.

SOPHIE. – hoping they'll bat them across great man-made expanses of chemical-soaked lawn – trekking from bitty hole to bitty hole.

(imitating, a bad Texas accent)

"Can I get the ball in the little hole…I hope I can!!"

PHILLIP. It's Florida, Soph, not Texas.

SOPHIE. Everyone, everywhere pining for the, the advantages that the "haves" have.

PHILLIP. *(concerned)* I think this is about something else.

SOPHIE. And I'm just wondering, is one of those advantages really GOLF?!? Cuz if it is…

(She begins to grate parmesan cheese over his plate of pasta.)

PHILLIP. I'm just trying to keep things a little light, you know.

SOPHIE. I mean, the rigorous and demanding process –

PHILLIP. *(RE: the cheese)* Thank you, that's enough.

SOPHIE. *(feeling defensive)* – of of making art is, personally, more –

PHILLIP. That's enough cheese.

SOPHIE. – more life-enhancing than, well, golf and fake shit in a can, that's all.

PHILLIP. NO MORE CHEESE!

(He places his napkin in his lap.)

Mind if I begin?

(He begins to eat. She tastes hers.)

SOPHIE. *(She pushes away her plate.)* It's overcooked.

(She leaves the room and slams the bathroom door. He pours himself a tall glass of wine, and patiently, drinks and eats. After a while she quietly re-enters, softened.)

PHILLIP. It's very good.

SOPHIE. I'm sorry. I'm very sorry.

PHILLIP. Sophie, honey, sit. I understand. We have a lot on our minds.

(She joins him at the table – vulnerable – she pours herself a glass of wine. Drinks some. He watches.)

SOPHIE. Yesterday, I went uptown to your sister's apt, to drop off your nephew's "belated" birthday present, and when I got there Petie started having a great big screaming meltdown, you know. They were headed

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