

LOFTY LARCENY

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Very special thanks to Martine Lacroix and Kate Greenberg for their precious help.

List of characters by order of appearance

Tom Flores:	Rich industrialist, Veronica's husband
Yves:	Tom's personal secretary
Veronica Flores:	Tom's wife
Shirley French:	Veronica's sister
Greg Hasbine:	Actor
Leyla Flores:	Tom and Veronica's daughter
Fred:	Doorman
Phil Phillips:	Insurance agent
Joel Christmas:	Leyla's boyfriend
Lester:	Repairman
Rob:	Thief

It is crucial for the actor playing Greg to have arms long enough for a demanding scene.

Fred and Phil's roles may be interpreted by the same actor.

Yves should be played with a French accent.

Yves is pronounced "Eve."

Hasbine is pronounced "haz-ben," as in a "has-been" actor.

This version of the play is set in New York City, but it can be easily adapted to be set in Boston or any other major city.

The set can be adapted if needed. The elevator may be replaced by an entrance with an arch. The elevator will then be virtually backstage.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The action is set in a penthouse in New York City's Upper East Side. A private elevator gives access to it. On the left side of the set there is the master bedroom door. In the left corner is the private elevator. Most of the back wall is a panoramic window from which we see a part of the East River and the city. There is a French door that gives access to a balcony that all will assume to cover most of the set. To the right, there are two doors. The one closest to the balcony is the guest room and the kitchen door is near the front of the stage. Between the elevator door and the master bedroom there is a small table. Between the guest bedroom and the kitchen door there is a chair. In the center of the stage there is a modular sofa without arms or back, so anyone can sit on it or lie down in different ways. A very large, luxurious throw is folded on the sofa. In the right corner there is a gigantic plant, just so that someone can hide behind it.

- 1 **YVES**, *handing a sheet of paper*
Here is the information that you've asked for, sir.
- 1 **TOM**, *taking it*
Ah, thank you so much, Yves. You've also prepared some croissants?
- 2 **YVES**
Yes, sir. They're almost done.
- 3 **TOM**
Hum! Yes, I can smell them. Just make sure we don't run out of coffee like the other day. There's nothing I hate more than running out of coffee in the morning. I'm asking you: is there anything more annoying than running out of coffee in the morning?
- 4 **YVES**
No, sir, you're right. I don't think there is. Well, maybe yes there could be, after all, but ...
- 5 **TOM**
Yes, but what?
- 6 **YVES**
Well, there might be some real tragedies in the world that would be more ... annoying, as you say.

- 7 **TOM**
Yes, probably. Seen that way. But, still, running out of coffee in the morning, remains to me a lèse-majesté crime. (*Looking at his sheet.*) These are all of my wife's activities just for today?
- 8 **YVES**
Yes, sir, only for today. Spa, hairdresser, shopping, tea room. Do you want me to review your activities for the day, sir?
- 9 **TOM**
No. It won't be necessary. Cancel all of my appointments for this morning. I've got an urgent matter to take care of. So, her first appointment is in half-an-hour, I see. She should hurry up.
- 10 **YVES**
Yes, I'm on it. Do you need me to help you with this urgent matter, sir?
- 11 **TOM**
No, I would like you to accompany Veronica. Make sure she is on time. I don't wish to be disturbed this morning.
- 12 **YVES**
Very well, sir. I'll get the croissants out of the oven, I'll cancel all of your appointments and then I will accompany madam. (*He goes to the kitchen.*)
- 13 **TOM, looking around**
I'm on the verge of ruin. I've got no other choice. I have to go ahead with my plan. It's time for me to act. This Greg Hasbine should do it. (*He dials a number on his cell phone.*) Hello, Mr. Hasbine? Yes, it's me, Tom Flores. We had a discussion yesterday. I'm calling you for the audition. No, my place is preferable. Yes, of course I have a contract offer for you. Oh, yes, it's a lead role. No, I haven't produced a movie or a play that you know of but I can promise you that you won't be disappointed. The fee will be up to your expectations if you fill all the criteria. Yes, it's a character part. So, I think you would be delighted. But I don't know you personally. That's why I picked you. Because you're an unknown. Exactly! I need a fresh ... face that people won't recognize. Oh yes, there's a chance people will know you after this. Who knows? You could end up on the front page with this role, but I prefer not. In some way, it's the kind of role you want to remain under the radar. We'll talk more about it when you get here. You've got my address, right? You're at the Cafe du Palais? It's right next to here. Once you're in the hall, Fred, the doorman will call me and then you'll proceed to the elevator to get to my loft on the last floor. See you in a few. That's it. Goodbye!

SCENE 2

Yves enter the room from the kitchen with a chariot containing a croissant and a cup of coffee. He places himself near the master bedroom. Veronica comes out of the master bedroom all dressed up. She is elegantly dressed and is wearing flashy, extravagant jewelry. She takes the croissant and the coffee on the chariot.

2 **VERONICA**

Ah! Yves, my dear, just the smell of your coffee makes me jump out of bed.

14 **TOM**

Good jumping, dear. I see that you're ready for today's activities.

15 **YVES**

Good morning, madam. Your newspapers are on the kitchen's table.

16 **VERONICA**

Good morning dear. I hope, they have chosen a better picture of me this time. What's the use of wearing haute-couture if they don't give a damn about the proper lighting in order to show my magnificent features? More so why particularly publish my picture if it doesn't show my value? Tell me, Tom, you are friends with this Derek something? Could you arrange for this low-level editor-in-chief that somehow always picks the wrong pictures of me, to be fired?

17 **TOM**

But you always look your best, darling, no matter what the lighting is. Stop worrying about all this nonsense. Didn't you have fun last night?

18 **VERONICA**

It was so boring I could have died. As you can well imagine, in fact. But I would not want to miss these opera nights for any reason. All of New York City was there. Everybody but you. You should come with me more often to these events. Shirley is good company but she isn't Tom Flores. People are starting to believe that I'm a widow. I wonder what people find interesting about opera though? The music is dull and there is nothing to understand about the story. I mean... What story? At least, we know it's over when the fat lady sings. Now, let's have a look at these pictures. *(She goes to the kitchen, followed by Yves. Tom's cell phone rings. He takes it out of his pocket and answers.)*

19 **TOM, on the phone**

Tom Flores. Hello, Leyla. Yes, how is it going? Good. Your mother is getting ready for the day, as usual. No, I haven't read the paper yet. Yes, I know, your mother is in the "On the Town" column.

Veronica enters the room with the newspaper. Her hair is disheveled. Yves follows her.

3 TOM, to Leyla

Ah! You finally received your letter?

20 VERONICA

What letter?

21 TOM, to Veronica

Leyla's admission letter to the MIME. *(Veronica looks at Tom with a puzzled expression.)*

22 TOM, to Leyla

Congratulations dear. *(To Veronica.)* Yes, the Mime International Master Education, the MIME.

23 VERONICA, taking the phone from Tom

Congratulations honey. Your father and I are delighted that you didn't pick opera for studies.

24 TOM

Veronica.

25 VERONICA

But it's true! It is so twentieth century. *(To Tom and placing her hand over the phone.)* You know there are excellent acting schools in the country. *(Continuing her conversation with Leyla.)* Leyla, come celebrate with us tonight. Come with your handsome Joel. Yes.

26 TOM

Veronica!

27 VERONICA

Your father and I are supporting you in your career choice. We'll talk more about it later. See you tonight, kiss, kiss, ciao! *(Veronica hangs up and hands the phone back to Tom.)* A mime school! It's ridiculous. It's your chance tonight to make her realize what a mistake she's making there. She's got to audition in a famous acting school. It isn't too late. No really, can someone name a famous mime?

28 YVES

Marcel Marceau.

29 TOM

Having to listen to all of this has made me terribly hungry. *(He goes to the kitchen.)*

SCENE 3

30 **YVES**

Mrs. Flores, we've got to hurry or we'll be late for your first appointment.

31 **VERONICA**

I'm always late. They'll deal with me when I show up.

32 **YVES**, *holding Veronica by the waist*

And when will you deal with me?

Veronica gives him a quick kiss on the cheek and pushes him away,

4 **VERONICA**

You're so eager this morning. You're taking unnecessary risks.

33 **YVES**

Your husband is blind with worries. What risks? There are no risks.

34 **VERONICA**

It's true he's getting over involved in his business lately. But it certainly doesn't give you the right to take his place. Especially not in his penthouse and under his nose.

35 **YVES**

I can't help it, Veronica. You make me crazy.

36 **VERONICA**

I advise you to get your self-control back. And because I am a faithful wife, I'm asking you to wait patiently until I make up my mind. For now, I have other priorities.

37 **YVES**

Like convincing your daughter to give up on her mimicking ambitions?

38 **VERONICA**

It doesn't concern you. Take my word and simply mind what you are paid for.

39 **YVES**, *looking at his watch*

Then, we should already be gone.

SCENE 4

40 **TOM**, *coming back from the kitchen with half a croissant*

They're so delicious, your croissants, Yves.

41 VERONICA

Tom, I will remain hopeful throughout my day that Leyla comes back to her senses and changes her mind. *(She goes to the master bedroom.)*

42 TOM, yelling

It's Leyla's choice, and we must respect that. And for your information, Marcel Marceau has had an international career. *(Speaking softly.)* Yves, call me if there is any change in her schedule. What do you have here? Looks like lipstick on your cheek.

43 YVES, wiping his cheek

Oh? No, no. It's only strawberry jam.

44 TOM

Tell me, do you like your job?

45 YVES

Of course, sir, why do you ask such a question?

46 TOM

You know I really appreciate your help. It's not everybody that can boast about having such a multi- talented secretary as you. I know Veronica isn't always easy to ... manage sometimes.

47 YVES

Don't worry for me sir. I know how to handle her, eh, I mean deal with her. One must not take her upfront but from behind. You know what I mean. Ah... Before I forget, sir, I must remind you that the intercom has not been repaired yet. And because you have decided not to have a landline phone here, your cell phone is the only way for Fred, the doorman, to reach you. The administration has promised to send us a repairman to fix this once and for all, but I have no idea when that will be.

Veronica comes back from the master bedroom and gives the newspaper to Tom. She goes to the elevator and pushes the button.

5 VERONICA

Finally, they've succeeded in printing a picture that does justice to my remarkable features. Yves, we've got to find a moment in my schedule to stop at Tiffany's. I was told that the jeweler just received a new collection of African jewelry. It's the new trend.

48 TOM

Darling, don't you think you have enough jewelry as it is? You have no idea how much it costs to insure those babies.

The elevator door opens. Veronica and Yves enter.

49 VERONICA

You must be able to renew yourself when you're Mrs. Flores, dear. You wouldn't want people to imagine that Flores Industries is on the brink of bankruptcy. *(She laughs and waves her hand.)* Tata.

The elevator door closes.

SCENE 5

Tom opens the French door and goes out on the balcony. He looks down. He comes back inside.

6 TOM

It's all going so fast.

50 SHIRLEY, *coming out of the guest room dressed in a bathrobe*

Hey, sexy, any coffee left?

51 TOM

Shirley? What are you doing here?

52 SHIRLEY

I'm happy to see you too, honey pot. But spare me your number. I need a double dose of caffeine before I can have an intelligent conversation. *(She goes to the kitchen.)*

53 TOM

Shoot! Shirley went with Veronica last night, to the opera. And it looks like my wife forgot to tell me that she invited her to sleep over. *(He looks at his watch. He shouts.)* Shirley! Shirley French!

Shirley comes back from the kitchen with a cup of coffee and a croissant.

7 SHIRLEY

Tom Flores, the last man who shouted at me is still in the intensive care unit eating his Jell-O with a straw.

54 TOM

Pardon me. But I was thinking to myself: Oh, what a lovely day for shopping. Your sister has already left to empty the stores.

55 SHIRLEY

My younger sister has always been of the morning type. By the way, thanks for asking, we spent a lovely evening yesterday at the opera.

- 56 TOM**
Shirley, you know I really like you and you're my favorite sister-in-law.
- 57 SHIRLEY**
I have no idea what you're plotting, but you can't manipulate me like you manipulate Veronica, my dear man. Flores Industries, the largest manufacturer of needles and knitting needles in the world...It never impressed me. I'm very surprised, in fact, that you haven't declared bankruptcy yet. Considering that the Chinese always could produce the same thing you do, for a fraction of what it costs you.
- 58 TOM, *sighing***
So, what's new pussycat?
- 59 SHIRLEY**
I'm still single if that's what you want to know? For the difference it can make in your life.
- 60 TOM**
I was just wondering, because I've met a charming lady recently. She works for me in the payroll department. She's been talking about her break up.
- 61 SHIRLEY**
Your employees are confiding in you?
- 62 TOM**
In fact, I overheard a conversation with her co-workers.
- 63 SHIRLEY**
You're spying on your employees? How despicable of you.
- 64 TOM**
Overhearing conversations by the water cooler isn't really spying on anyone my dear. So, I heard her say that she just got separated from her girlfriend. It looks like she's playing on your team.
- 65 SHIRLEY**
So?
- 66 TOM**
She's extremely attractive. She won't be single for long. Her name is Alice.

67 SHIRLEY

Isn't that an extremely old-fashioned name, Alice? She probably already has one foot in the grave.

68 TOM

It's not any older than Shirley. You brag about being abreast of the newest and latest fashions. You should know that old-fashioned names keep coming back every ten years or so. And in fact, I believe she's just about your age. *(He takes her by the arm and drags her to the guest room.)* I'd be delighted to introduce you. Hurry up! Get dressed and make yourself beautiful if that's possible.

69 SHIRLEY

I'm warning you Tom Flores, as far as I'm concerned, this is no laughing matter.

70 TOM

Hurry up! Time flies. Hearts aflutter! She's coming to see me this morning. *(He pushes her in the room and closes the door. His phone rings. He answers.)* Tom Flores. Sure, Fred, my friend, let him up. *(He hangs up and runs to the guest room door and places his ear on it.)* She'll take a few minutes to get dressed, prep herself for this golden opportunity, and make herself irresistible for Alice, so it gives me some time. *(He goes to the balcony and looks down. He comes back inside. The elevator door opens.)* Mr. Hasbine, what a joy to meet you, at last!

SCENE 6

71 GREG, *enters the room carrying a large suitcase*
Happy to meet you Mr. Flo-Flo-Flo Flores.

Time freezes.

72 TOM, *hesitant*

You're going on a trip?

73 GREG

No. These are my access... my access... my accessories for transform... for transform... for transformation. My co-co, my co-co, my costumes in fact.

74 TOM, *pointing at the sofa*

Make yourself at ease. Can I offer you some tea or coffee perhaps, Mr. Hasbine?

75 GREG

You can call me, me-me, no Greg. No, thank you. The ca-ca, the ca-ca, the ca-caffeine makes me stut-stut-, stutter.

76 TOM

Sounds like you started your day with a double espresso then. But I don't mind.

77 GREG

Not to worry Mr. Flo-Flo-Flores. When I'm acting I don't stut-stut-stutter. This is the reason why I brought my, my, my acces... my access... my costumes.

78 TOM

Okay. If you say so, I've no reason NOT to believe what you're saying. *(Pause.)* I'm expecting you to be brief and right to the point. It's a very simple mise-en-scène where you have to take me by surprise in front of witnesses, see, and run, run for your life with a bag. It's very simple, see. Staging this cannot be so difficult for someone with your vast... ah... talent. Surprise – and run! Do you think you can do it?

79 GREG

But-but-but Mr. Flo-Flo-Flores you're insulting my talent and pro-pro... pro-pro... pro-profession. This seems too easy. Har-har... har-har... har-hardly a cha-cha... a cha-cha... a character part. I'm a pro..., I'm a pro..., I'm a professional actor. And my fee-fee, my fee-fee, my fee is that of a unionized artist.

80 TOM

No p-p-p-problem, I will pay you in cash. But let's not count our chickens before they've hatched. For your audition you'll need your suitcase. You may use my room. *(Pointing to it.)* Choose a costume that you see fit. Dazzle me with your talent. I want to believe that you're someone else. I will give you a few minutes for your “transformation” as you say. Just wait for my signal to come out of the room.

81 GREG

Good id..., good id..., good idea. You won't be dis... dis... dis... ah, you'll be enchanted. *(He enters the master bedroom with his suitcase.)*

SCENE 7

82 SHIRLEY, *coming out of the guest room, fully dressed*

Well, I changed as fast as I could. I thought I heard voices. Who were you talking to?

83 TOM
The window cleaner. Today is the annual window cleaning of the building. He just came to warn me.

84 SHIRLEY
What for?

85 TOM
You'd be surprised to hear about everything those guys have seen through the windows when they're washing them. Let's just say that they're not only cleaning the main room windows but the bedrooms as well.

86 SHIRLEY
My little finger is telling me that they're not at risk of seeing much action in your bedroom these days.

87 TOM
I'll pretend I didn't hear that. *(He goes out on the balcony and looks down. He comes right back inside.)* He has already put all of his equipment in place and the scaffold is moving – I told you!

88 SHIRLEY
He'll need the whole day just to get here.

Tom tries to bring Shirley toward the elevator. He speaks loudly.

89 TOM
You must go, NOW!

90 SHIRLEY
I forgot my purse in the bedroom.

Shirley goes to the guest room. Greg comes out of the master bedroom, dressed as a charming lady.

8 GREG
You said now?

Tom jumps on Greg and tries to push him back to the bedroom. Shirley comes right back out with her purse.

91 SHIRLEY
Oh! I see that you've got company.

- 92 TOM**
Yes, miss... ah... has just arrived.
- 93 SHIRLEY**, *holding out her hand to Greg*
Let me introduce myself, I am Shirley. Shirley French. Despite the name, my father was Scottish. I'm Veronica's sister, you know her, don't you; she's also, quite to my dismay, Tom's wife.
- 94 GREG**
It's a delight. I am ...
- 95 TOM**
Alice. This is Alice. *(To Greg.)* Alice, my employee, who just came to help me prepare quite the surprise for Veronica here...
- 96 GREG**
Tom is quite a seducer, as you well know, don't you?
- 97 TOM**, *searching for words*
Ahem... I wish to offer my wife new jewelry for our next wedding anniversary. And I've asked Miss Alice to help me choose the one that would be the most appropriate for the occasion.
- 98 GREG**
Tom is such a generous man. If only every woman could have a man as refined and romantic as Mr. Flores.
- 99 TOM**
Looks like Tiffany's got some new African jewels, if I heard right.
- 100 SHIRLEY**
My, oh, my! Maybe you're not about to declare bankruptcy after all, eh?
- 9 GREG**
Mr. Flores is quite a man, Mrs. Shirley.
- 101 SHIRLEY**
It's Miss Shirley. Some women can do without a man. Love has no sex. One has to look inside, go deeper inside... back to basics. Don't you agree, Miss Alice?
- 10 GREG**
So true! Sometimes the basics are invisible to the eyes of men.

102 TOM

I wanted Alice to come here, so she could get a look at Veronica's jewelry. But this has to remain between us. It's a surprise. Not a word to your sister now! *(He takes Shirley by the arm.)* Why don't you come back tonight if you want to? We're going to celebrate your goddaughter's admission to the MIME. *(He drags her toward the elevator and pushes the button.)*

103 SHIRLEY

Well, that is great news, for once! Will you be part of tonight's celebrations, Miss Alice?

104 TOM

Of course she'll be here. In the flesh! *(The elevator door opens and Tom pushes Shirley inside.)* See you tonight.

105 SHIRLEY

See you tonight, Miss Alice.

106 GREG

It'll be my great pleasure to see you again Miss French. We'll get to know each other. I'm sure that we have many things in common.

107 SHIRLEY, suggestive

More than just one thing, I hope. *(To Tom.)* She's got a masculine "je ne sais quoi" that I like a lot.

The elevator's door closes.

SCENE 8

108 TOM

Congratulations, you got the part.

109 GREG

Good. I should bi-bi, I should bi-bi, I should bill you extra for this part you know.

110 TOM

No problem at all, my good man. Because you've succeeded in duping my sister in-law, you've passed your audition with flying colors. But the part I need you to play for me is quite different though.

111 GREG

It's unfortunate 'cause I wasn't doing too b-b-, too -b-b, too bad with Alice.

112 TOM

Forget that part, for now; here's what I'm expecting you to do. You'll dress yourself up as a window cleaner this time.

113 GREG

Ah, what a coincidence, I have some..., some..., something that would be perfect for that in my, in my, in my suitcase.

114 TOM

Great! Great coincidence! Come here. *(He drags Greg to the balcony.)* You see? The window cleaner's scaffold down there? It's a wondrous mechanical system that he uses to get up here. *(They come back inside.)* This system is activated with a handy remote control. It's quite simple. I've seen it all on the internet. Once the window cleaner reaches the last floor – this floor- I'll invite him inside for a refreshment. That's when you show up. You steal my wife's jewels and then you go out on that system the same way he came in. And then, you go to the hotel room I've booked for you nearby – and you wait for me.

11 GREG

You, you, you want me to steal you, you, you, your wife's jewels?

115 TOM

It's only the surprise we were talking about back there; come on! It's not a real robbery.

116 GREG

But why surprise your wi-wi... wi-wi...wife this way? It's not a very good surprise, if you a-a... a-a... if you a-ask me!

12 TOM

You know, Greg, it doesn't really matter why. All you have to know at this point, is the part that you have to play. I'll pay you whatever a unionized artist of your stature demands, not to worry. *(He pushes him toward the master bedroom.)* If you insist, I'll explain why I'm expecting this from you, while you change clothes. Let's go.

They go into the master bedroom.

SCENE 9

The elevator door opens. Yves enters the room. He talks on his cell phone.

13 YVES

I just got inside. The room is empty. But I can hear voices in your bedroom. *(He listens at the door.)* I can't hear very well. Your husband is with someone. Shirley? I'm not sure. I can hardly say. They're talking about jewelry. I'm not a detective, Veronica. I can't stay here for long. Quiet! I can't hear. Oh! They're coming this way. I'll call you back. *(He places his cell phone in his pants pocket. He looks for a place to hide. He goes behind the plant in the corner.)*

Tom and Greg come out of the bedroom. Greg wears a one piece suit with a zipper. He is holding his suitcase.

14 GREG

Very well Mr. Flo-Flores. Tell me if I got it right. I come in and I take everyone by, by, by surprise. Then I take the bag and run to the, to the, to the, to the balcony. Then I go down on that... thing. *(Sarcastic.)* No, no, no, nothing else, you're sure?

Tom ponders. He takes out his cell phone, a revolver and a key from his pockets. He places the phone on the sofa. Yves can't see these objects from his hiding place.

15 TOM

You have everything right. *(He shows the gun to Greg.)* It's a fake. Place it in your pocket. You have nothing to worry about. When the moment's right, you show up. You ask me for the bag. I give it to you and you leave through the balcony. Only a great actor can take up this challenge and succeed. I have faith in you. After what I've seen a moment ago. ... Wow! Your talent leaves no doubt: YOU can pull this off! *(He hands him the folded sheet of paper and the key).* All the instructions are on this piece of paper. Memorize them. This is the key to the hotel room. Keep it safe. Now, go to the guest room to learn your lines! *(He points to the room. Greg goes to the bedroom reading his lines while Tom goes to the elevator. He feels his pockets.)* My phone. *(He searches in his pockets looking for it.)* Where did I leave it? *(He goes to his room.)*

Yves comes out of his hiding place. He runs toward the elevator and frenetically pushes the button.

16 YVES

What are those two up to? I didn't understand a thing about their story. A bag and a hotel room? Maybe it's a surprise for the twentieth wedding anniversary that's coming soon? It sure will be a surprise for Veronica that he even remembers, for starters.

SCENE 10

Tom's cell phone rings on the sofa. One ring, two rings. Yves rushes to it to stop it and places it in his shirt pocket. The elevator door opens and Leyla appears. She mimes someone walking against strong winds. Obviously, she has no talent. Yves claps his hands.

17 YVES

Very good, Leyla. What a surprise! I was just about to leave. You know how your mother doesn't like waiting on anybody. *(Yves' phone rings in his pants pocket. He answers it.)* Hello, Veronica? No, I ...

117 LEYLA

Yves, may I? *(Leyla takes the phone. Yves rushes in the elevator and the door closes immediately. Tom comes out of the bedroom.)* Mother, you've got to stop using this poor man like a slave from morning 'til night!

118 TOM

Leyla, my dear, what are you doing here? This is my phone! May I? *(He takes the phone.)* Veronica, something wrong? Everything's fine here. Leyla just passed by to say hi to her daddy and she'll be on her way shortly. By the way, you forgot to tell me that Shirley spent the night here with us. No, she's gone already. But I invited her to come back tonight. Right. Bye, see you later. *(He hangs up and places the phone in his pants pocket. Leyla mimes her love to her father. Tom looks at her with disarray. Truly this girl has no mime talent.)* Baby girl, I love you too. Is something wrong?

119 LEYLA

Oh, daddy. *(She cries in his arms.)*

SCENE 11

Greg comes out of the guest bedroom still dressed as a window cleaner. He holds a rope on his shoulder.

120 GREG

I'm ready.

121 TOM

Hold on, please.

122 LEYLA

It's Joel.

123 TOM

Well, well, that little geek, what has he done now?

124 GREG

Oh! *(Hesitant.)* Sir, everything's fine with the bedroom windows.

- 125 TOM**
Okay then, mister window cleaner, you can do as we agreed. My daughter and I have things to discuss. I believe you left your cleaning kit in the kitchen.
- 126 GREG**
My kit?
- 127 TOM**
Yes. *(He makes gestures with his hands and points in the kitchen's direction.)*
- 128 GREG**
Ah, yes! My cleaning kit. What was I thinking? *(He laughs and goes to the kitchen.)*
- 129 LEYLA**
Daddy, Joel says I don't have any talent to be a mime.
- 130 TOM**
What does he know about mimes? He is a chemist. To each and everyone their field of expertise! He needs to let you choose your career, may that be anything, even a mime. You're just like your mother, loaded with talents. Even if sometimes we have to dig for a while in order to find them.
- 131 LEYLA**
Dad, do you believe I could be a good mime?
- 132 TOM**
I believe you can become the greatest mime on earth, baby girl. If the school has damn good teachers and if that is what you really want to do. *(We hear pots and pans falling on the floor, coming from the kitchen.)*
- Greg comes back from the kitchen with a bucket full of soapy water, a sponge and his rope.*
- 18 GREG**
I've found my kit, sir.
- 133 TOM**
Great. Happy to hear that the search bore some fruit.
- 19 LEYLA**
I can come back later if you want me to, daddy?

134 TOM

(To Leyla.) No need to. *(To Greg.)* You can start with these windows. *(Pointing at the balcony.)*

135 GREG

Certainly, sir.

Greg goes out to the balcony and clumsily starts washing the windows.

20 LEYLA

Did you give any thought to Joel's proposal? In regards to his research...

Greg looks down the balcony and waves his arms, making large gestures.

21 GREG

Hey! Ho!

136 TOM

Proposal? My, you almost gave me a heart attack there. Wait one second. *(Tom joins Greg on the balcony.)* What are you doing?

137 GREG

I'm saying hi to my colleague down there – small world, eh?

138 TOM, giving small punches to Greg

Are you dumb or what? Do you want him to notice you?

139 LEYLA

Everything's okay daddy?

140 GREG

Is everything alright, Mr. Flores?

141 TOM, to Greg

Be discreet and keep on cleaning the windows. *(He comes back inside. To Leyla.)* Yes, everything's ok, my dear. And don't you worry about Joel. Your mother and I will have a word with him tonight about your career choice.

He drags Leyla towards the kitchen.

142 LEYLA

Joel's waiting for your answer to invest in his research.

143 TOM

I'm still thinking about it. For now, I think a cup of coffee wouldn't do you any harm. I don't know what is wrong with Yves these days. He makes enough coffee for an army.

144 LEYLA

Yes. Good idea. I'll be right back.

Leyla goes to the kitchen. Tom goes to get Greg off the balcony. He takes him by the ear all the way inside.

145 GREG

Aaaahhh...

146 TOM

Mr. Hasbine.

147 GREG

Will you stop your shenanigans already, sir. I'm Louis Lawrence, the window cleaner. I'm the best window cleaner in all of New York. *(He whispers into Tom's ear.)* You're going to make it all fail Mr. Flo, Flo, Flores. *(Louder.)* You know, I must wait 'til my colleague comes and get me with this ... system. If you don't mind, I'll go on with my work. *(He goes back on the balcony and cleans the windows. Tom follows him.)*

22 TOM

It is in your interest not to make my plans fail. Be quiet and don't make yourself noticed.

Tom comes back inside. Leyla comes back from the kitchen.

148 LEYLA

You're right daddy. If I got accepted to the MIME, it must be because I have a minimum of talent. *(She awkwardly tries to mime someone surrounded by walls.)*

149 TOM

Listen, my dear, I'm so happy that you're getting your confidence back. Everything will be fine, you'll see. But I'm rather busy right now – we will talk later on tonight, okay?

SCENE 12

The elevator door opens and Fred, the doorman, appears. He has a large mustache and is wearing a coat and a hat.

23 FRED

Pardon me for not reaching you before getting here, Mr. Flores. The intercom has not been repaired. I've tried to reach you on your cell phone. But it's Yves, your secretary, who answers all the time.

150 TOM, *getting his phone out of his pocket*

You're right, this isn't my phone. It's Yves'. Why do we have to own the exact same phones? (*Sigh. He puts the phone back in his pants pocket and turns to Leyla.*) How come you had Yves' phone?

151 LEYLA, *opening her mouth*

.....

152 FRED, *interrupting*

Sir, I actually came up to tell you that there is someone downstairs who wants to meet you. Can he come up?

153 TOM

Today's truly full of little surprises, isn't it?

154 FRED

His name is Phil Phillips. He says he works for your insurance company.

155 TOM

What? Of all people to show up TODAY? All right. Never mind. Send him up. I'll take care of it. Thank you.

156 FRED

All right, sir. Have a good day. You too, Miss.

Fred pushes the elevator's button. Tom takes his wallet out of his pocket and hands a few bills to Fred.

157 TOM

Fred, I count on you to be discreet, as usual. Beside my family members, and my personal secretary, no one else came up here this morning, okay?

158 FRED

Of course, sir. I didn't let anyone else come in here this morning.

159 TOM, *to Leyla*

My dear, you should go with Fred.

160 LEYLA

Why all the mystery? Are you preparing such a big surprise for mom?

161 TOM

I can't hide anything from you. Fred, you can reach me on Yves' phone if you need to.

162 FRED

Very well, sir. Have a good day.

The elevator door opens. Fred and Leyla enter the elevator.

24 LEYLA

See you tonight, sweet daddy. *(She blows kisses to Tom. The elevator door closes.)*

SCENE 13

Tom goes to get Greg on the balcony. He looks down.

163 TOM

Bring all your things. You must hide right away in the guest bedroom.

164 GREG

Why?

165 TOM

The insurance estimator is coming up. He must not see you here. *(Greg picks up his kit and walks toward the guest bedroom.)* Don't make any noise. I'll answer his questions. I hope this will be short.

166 GREG

Are you sure I can't... I can't... I can't... I can't be of any help?

167 TOM

No. Go into the room and be quiet. *(He pushes Greg into the room and closes the door.)*

SCENE 14

The elevator door opens. Phil Phillips enters the room holding a briefcase. He is wearing a suit and a tie and looks very stern.

25 TOM

Good morning, sir?

- 168 PHIL**
Phil Phillips, insurance estimator.
- 169 TOM**
Nice to meet you, Mr. Phillips.
- 170 PHIL**
Call me Phil, please.
- 171 TOM**
Phil Phillips, what an amusing name? (*Actors may ad lib a joke about the 2012 American Idol winner. Something to the effect of: "Do you sing?"*) What brings you to the largest needle and knitting needle manufacturer in the world?
- 172 PHIL**
You've got quite a view from up here, Mr. Flores. A penthouse like this must be worth a fortune, is it not?
- 173 TOM**
You're showing interest in the real estate business?
- 174 PHIL**
There are rumors in town, saying that Flores Industries aren't what they used to be. Seems like your exportations have greatly diminished. China is probably the cause. They're copying anything that can be copied for a fraction of the salaries you pay here. Impossible to compete with them. If only I had your revenues though. The things I could do with them.
- 175 TOM**
You're coming to my home to gossip? These are the same stories I've heard since I started the business. They're made up by those who are jealous of my success.
- 176 PHIL**, *searching for a sheet of paper in his briefcase*
Good. I didn't come here to complain about my situation. Nor am I one to indulge in idle gossip, sir. I'm sure you've got enough of your own employee's recriminations. So, if you will allow me, I'd like to get right to the point, sir. A man of your stature must place great value in the manner in which he spends his time, I imagine. I've got here a series of questions that I need to ask before we can renew your insurance contract for personal goods and luxury items.

177 TOM

Go on and proceed with the question period then, please. The faster we're finished with these formalities, the faster I can take care of more urgent matters. Too bad, Yves, my personal secretary cannot handle this for me today.

SCENE 15

Greg comes out of the guest bedroom. He is casually dressed. He holds a calculator in his hands.

26 GREG

Hold on! Hold on! Excuse me for being late, gentlemen. I am Yves, Mr. Flores' personal assistant. *(He hands out a limp hand to Phil, looking at Tom.)*

178 PHIL

Yves?

179 TOM

Ah...yes... This is Yves... Asshead, Yves Asshead, my loyal secretary. An invaluable asset to Flores Industries indeed.

27 PHIL

Mr. Asshead, nice to meet you. Phil Phillips, insurance estimator.

180 GREG

I was busy doing important calculations about certain transformations that needed to be done, uh, back there. Can I get you something to drink, Phil?

181 PHIL

No, thank you. I am fine. May we proceed with the task at hand already?

182 GREG

I see that everything is number one for you. *(He continues his imaginary calculations on his machine.)* I suppose you have very specific questions to ask, then? If this can accelerate the process, I must tell you that everything is number one for us as well. And that is why F.I. is number one in its field! But you have to be brief, 'cause we're always working here, always thinking ahead! And THAT is why WE'RE NUMBER ONE!

183 TOM, somehow less than impressed

Yves, I don't think your presence is really requested at the moment.

184 GREG

Tut, tut, tut, Mr. Flores. This is part of the task for which you pay me very well thank you, sir.

Yves' phone rings in Tom's pocket. He answers.

28 TOM

Hello. Veronica? *(He places his hand on the phone.)* Will you excuse me for a moment? Start without me. I'll be back in a sec. *(He goes into the kitchen.)* Veronica, I'm busy right now with the insurance estimator making a SURPRISE visit.

29 PHIL

Mr. Asshead, I have a few questions, here, that I need to ask.

185 GREG

I prefer you call me Yves. Put yourself at ease and fire away!

186 PHIL, sitting down on the sofa and reading his paper

These are part of our brand-new evaluation methods. On a scale of one to ten, one being *don't agree at all*, and ten being, *extremely agree with*, you can use any number from one to ten to answer. First question: Would you say that Mr. Flores has taken all necessary actions to secure his personal and luxury items?

187 GREG, not really listening and making his imaginary calculations

Number one, number one.

188 PHIL, taking notes

Very well. Still using the same scale from one to ten. One being, *don't agree at all* and ten being, *extremely agree with*. You can use any number from one to ten to answer. Once again, feel free to go with anything else, really. Do you believe that, in case of a robbery, an accident, a breaking or any unfortunate loss of any of his luxury items, Mr. Flores would be admissible to a refund of the objects concerned, may they be robbed, broken or somehow lost?

189 GREG

Number one. I'm telling you. Number one!

190 PHIL

Really? Fascinating. And what are the probabilities, you think, that Mr. Flores WON'T make any claim at all for a robbery, an accident of any kind or a loss for the year coming? Still on a scale of one to ten, this time one being *very unlikely* and ten being *very likely*.

191 GREG

Number ONE!

Tom comes back from the kitchen.

192 PHIL

I've heard enough as it is. I'm leaving.

193 GREG

But you just got here.

194 TOM

Already? Weren't you supposed to ask me a whole lot of questions?

195 PHIL

I am done asking them. Your personal assistant has answered every crucial question I had. Therefore, I've collected all of the information I needed. I don't require more than that. You'll hear from us, Mr. Flores. *(Turns to leave, goes back towards Tom.)* A word of advice, though, before I leave you today: in your place, I would be extremely careful. You don't want to take any unnecessary risks. However, as we say often in our business, to each their own peace of mind – at whatever cost it shall be! *(He goes to the elevator and pushes the button.)*

196 GREG

I've reassured Phil, sir. You can concentrate on more urgent matters now. Number one, sir, NUMBER ONE!

30 TOM

Ah... yes...good. But aren't there any papers for me to sign before you leave?

The elevator's door opens and Phil walks in.

197 PHIL

It won't be necessary. You'll receive a letter from our part. Goodbye and good luck Mr. Flores.

The elevator's door closes.

SCENE 16

198 GREG

Good, one less thing to... to... to...to worry about.

199 TOM

What did I say to you?

200 GREG

While I'm here, I might as... I might as... I might as well help you the best I... the best I... the best I can.

Tom goes out on the balcony and looks down. He comes right back in. Greg sits down on the sofa.

31 TOM

He is still far away. What are you doing?

201 GREG

I'm taking my 10 o... my 10 o... my 10 o'clock break. Is this your wife who called you a minute, a minute, a minute ago?

202 TOM

Yes, looks like Shirley might have had a talk with her. She thinks I want to get her new jewelry for her bottomless collection. But you, you can't stay dressed like this. Put your window cleaner clothes back on.

203 GREG

Don't worry for my fee-fee, my fee-fee, my fee, sir. It's been a while, since I, since I, since I had fun like this.

SCENE 17

The elevator's door opens. Joel appears.

32 JOEL

Pardon me for this intrusion, Mr. Flores.

204 TOM

Joel! How did you get Fred's authorization to come up here?

205 JOEL

Don't be too harsh on him, please. I asked him not to call you. I told him it was a question of life or death.

206 TOM

This must be a really important matter, then. It's not your style, as a pragmatic, mild-mannered scientist to act this way and simply barge in on people, unannounced.

33 JOEL

I see you have company. I don't want to be of any inconvenience to you.

- 207 GREG**, *getting up*
But you are not, I assure you. May I present myself, I'm Phil Phillips, insurance estimator.
- 208 TOM**
Phil, now... don't you think, you're doing too much?
- 209 JOEL**
I can wait downstairs until you're finished, you know.
- 210 TOM**
No, it won't be necessary. Phil, was just about to go back in the kitchen where all of our working documents are. And all the caffeine we desperately need, too! I sense a headache coming on.
- 34 GREG**
I was? Oh, sure, I was. The working documents. Where I left them. Yes. Absolutely our NUMBER ONE priority today! I'm on it.
- 211 TOM**
That's right! I know damn well that you're on it, Phil. Start filling those forms without me. I'll be right with you. YOU are my NUMBER ONE priority today!
- 212 GREG**, *walking toward the kitchen*
Don't worry about me, sir! As you say it: I'm number one. Couldn't be any better! Take your time. I've got many, Lord, so many forms to fill! Caffeine! Now! (*He enters the kitchen.*)
- SCENE 18**
- 213 JOEL**
Mr. Flores, I'm sorry if I didn't call you before getting up here. I was simply wondering if you came to a conclusion about the proposition I made you to invest in my research? Time is pressing for me.
- 214 TOM**
Is it so urgent? Isn't it the government that finances your research?
- 215 JOEL**
Well, actually... The government, sir, has cut down on all of our research programs. And that bites because the timing is so terrible indeed: I'm getting so close to my goal.

- 216 TOM**
Joel, tell me now: where are you exactly, in your findings or whatever they are again?
- 217 JOEL**
Well, in short, the carbon monoxide increase these last few years has had disastrous effects on the environment and the earth's climate.
- 218 TOM**
Yeah, so?
- 219 JOEL**
Through new chemical components of my own, that only I know the exact recipe of, I came to be able to transform some of its gases into solid matter, and it is all 100% reusable!
- 220 TOM**
That's alchemy alright. And?
- 221 JOEL**
And? Are you kidding me? The applications are tremendous and immeasurable. Imagine I can duplicate almost any small object with these new molecules.
- 222 TOM**
Any small object? Now this is seriously interesting. Tell me more.
- 223 JOEL**
Certainly! I only encounter more difficulty with certain smaller particles, unstable matter like grains of sand or anything that is made of paste, such as paper. I don't know why, yet. One day, I'll have it figured out. I hope! Because... De facto, that makes the reproduction of money paper impossible.
- 224 TOM**
Now that's unfortunate. But the Central Bank will always have the monopoly on that one, anyways. And for the rest?
- 225 JOEL**
Oh, no problems there! One could say I can reproduce almost any desired small object. I came to build a prototype with success. But I do need more capital to pursue my research and my tests.
- 226 TOM**
I want to take you on your word, Joel. I really do! But can you do a test for me, first? Before I invest in your findings I need a minimum of... irrefutable, hardcore evidence.

- 227 JOEL**
Of course. I'd be only too happy to provide it!
- 35 TOM**
Wait for me, just a sec. *(Tom goes into his room. He comes right back with a small velvet bag.)* Joel, you are my future son-in-law. If I cannot trust you, I cannot trust anybody. Here is something I'd like you to have a look at. Here are Veronica's jewels.
- 228 JOEL**
All of her jewels?
- 229 TOM**
Yes. All of them. They're worth a fortune. My wife doesn't wear anything cheap you know, much to my dismay.
- 230 JOEL**
Mr. Flores, this is so unexpected. But I cannot accept your wife's jewels to finance my research!
- 231 TOM**
Ah, but this is not to finance your research, young man, but for duplication! Do your tests with these – test away! And come back when you've duplicated them all; as quickly as possible! And I promise you, Joel... son... if you can reproduce each and every single piece of jewelry in this bag, I'll finance 100% of your work.
- 36 JOEL**
Really? But... What will your wife say when she finds out her jewelry has disappeared?
- 232 TOM**
Oh... Nothing much, surely... They would have disappeared anyway.
- 233 JOEL**
What?
- 234 TOM**
How much time will the duplication process take? Tell me.
- 235 JOEL**
Fortunately, I've got plenty of raw material to work with. It depends on how many objects, their density and the desired degree of likeness.
- 236 TOM**
What desired degree of likeness?

237 JOEL

Well, it's possible to accelerate the duplication process by diminishing the quality of the duplicated object that will come out at the other end of said process.

238 TOM

It comes out the other way in various degrees of quality, eh? Joel... For me, to invest a single penny in your work, I need the utmost degree of likeness. If anyone can see the difference just by looking at it, it will quite simply not cut it.

239 JOEL

Okay, I got it, sir. *(He looks into the bag.)* Diamonds, emeralds, rubies, pearls. All high density. Give me a few hours.

240 TOM

Only a few hours? That's PERFECT! We're having a party tonight for Leyla. This has to be done by then. I've got to put this bag that you're holding in your hands right now back in place before Veronica finds out any of this. So hurry up then and don't disappoint me... son!

Joel goes to the elevator and pushes the button.

241 JOEL

I shall not! I promise! I should go back to my laboratory then. *(The elevator door opens and he goes inside.)* See you tonight, Mr. Flores... dad!

242 TOM

You're holding my family's jewels, there. Remember that. Be careful. Not a word to anyone, not even to Leyla.

243 JOEL, *enthusiastically, almost yelling from inside the elevator*

Nothing to worry about, sir. You can trust me. Mum's the word.

The elevator door closes.

SCENE 19

244 TOM

Good news, at last!

37 GREG, *coming out of the kitchen*

Are you all by yourself again, finally?

- 245 **TOM**
Yes. Come here. We're going to rehearse our scene. Did you learn your lines?
- 246 **GREG**
Yes.
- 247 **TOM**
Very well. Let's suppose I just invited the window cleaner inside, for some thirst-quenching refreshment.
- 248 **GREG**
What is his name?
- 249 **TOM**
I don't know. It's not important, really.
- 250 **GREG**
If his name could be Louis, just like... just like... just like me.
- 251 **TOM**
His name doesn't matter. I'm telling you. So, let's say he's in the kitchen.
- 252 **GREG**
Yes, but the name helps me establish my... my...my... my character's rapport... towards him!
- 38 **TOM**
Then call him Louis already! So, where was he? Ah yes, he's in the kitchen! And I'm right here. You'll be hiding in the guest bedroom. And when the window cleaner is in the kitchen...
- 253 **GREG**
How will I know that... that... that he's in the kit... the kit... the kitchen?
- 254 **TOM**
I'll knock three times on your door. How's that?
- 255 **GREG**
It's o-o-o-okay!
- 256 **TOM**, *gets the chair and places it in the middle of the room*
It's the signal for you to come out of the room and tie me on this chair.

257 GREG

With my utility rope.

258 TOM

Right. Just tie my hands behind the back of the chair. That should do it. *(Greg goes into the guest bedroom. Tom sits down on the chair facing the audience. Greg comes back with the rope.)* Let's rehearse that part, make sure we have it all figured out. Go ahead, tie me up.

259 GREG, ties Tom's hands behind the chair

Voilà. Is it, too-too, too-too, too tied?

260 TOM

No, not at all. It's fine, actually. Feel free to tie me up again just like this later on, when we are doing it for real, okay? So, let us recapitulate: while the window cleaner is in the kitchen having a nice refreshing lemonade, you come out of the room and tie me exactly this way, on this chair, on this very spot.

261 GREG

I see.

262 TOM

Then, he comes out, and you say your lines.

263 GREG

Yes.

264 TOM

With your gun. Don't forget your gun.

265 GREG, taking out his gun from his pocket and pointing it at Tom

Yes. Props are ess...ess...essssential! Like this? Hands, hands, hands, hands up!

266 TOM

How do you want me to raise my hands in this position, huh? You don't say that to me. And you don't point the gun at me. I'm already tied to the chair.

267 GREG

Oh! It's the... the wind... the wind... the wind... the window cleaner I'm talking to then.

- 268 TOM**
Exactly. Talk to the wind! Ah... I mean, the window cleaner! You take aim at him. And you say your lines. But wait a second. Aren't you supposed to not stutter when you're acting?
- 269 GREG**
Not when I r... not when I r... not when I r... not when I rehearse. So sorry.
- 270 TOM**
It's ok. Let's move on.
- 271 GREG**
Hands up! But, but, but I've got a question to ask. How will the wind... the wind... the wind... the window cleaner ... know the script?
- 272 TOM**
Nothing to worry about there. He doesn't need to know the script. With a gun pointed at him, he won't be talking much, believe me. Go on. Rehearse away!
- 273 GREG**
Don't move. Go place yourself there beside Mr. Flo... Mr. Flo... Mr. Flo... Mr. Flores.
- 274 TOM**
These are not your lines. If at first you tell him not to move, he won't come beside me at all.
- 275 GREG**
Oh. So-so... So-soooooooo... So-sorry! *(He takes out his folded sheet of paper, reads it and puts it back in his pocket.)* Don't make any sudden move. Ah, ha! Now, go place yogurt, go place you...your, go place YOURSELF, yes...right there... beside Mr. Flo... Mr. Flo... Mr. Flo... *(Sigh.)* Mr. Flores.
- 276 TOM**
Good, yes, finally... So now, let's say he is standing right here beside me already.
- 277 GREG**
Okay. Then, I take ana... ana... another rope, to-to... to-to... to tie him up too?
- Tom's cell phone rings.*
- 278 TOM**
Argh, the phone again. Hurry, take it out of my pocket.

279 GREG

Yes.

280 TOM

This could be my wife or... worse still! *(Greg tries to reach the phone in Tom's pants.)*
Ouch! Careful, dammit - does this seem like a phone to you?

281 GREG, taking out his hand

Oh, pardon me!

282 TOM

I didn't expect to become so intimate with you, so fast! My phone is in *the other pocket* – try and be gentle, this time!

283 GREG

Yes, yes. *(Greg, finally, gets Tom's phone out. He answers the call.)*

284 TOM

Place it on my ear.

285 GREG

The phone?

286 TOM

Yes the phone! *(Greg places the phone on Tom's ear.)* Tom Flores speaking. Fred! What? No, it's ok. Yes, thank you. You can hang up, Greg.

287 GREG, hangs up and puts the phone in Tom's shirt pocket

What is it?

288 TOM

Hurry up! Untie me! My sister in law, Shirley, is on her way up. *(Greg tries to untie Tom's hands. Both of them panic.)* Hurry up! She mustn't see me this way.

289 GREG

I can't... I can't... I can't... I can't do it. I just can't. I forgot how I did the knot-knot.

39 TOM

We won't have enough time. Cover my shoulders with the blanket on the sofa. Hurry!

Greg gets the blanket on the sofa. He covers Tom's shoulders. He bends down under the blanket behind the chair. The elevator door opens.

SCENE 2

Shirley comes out of the elevator. She is distraught.

290 SHIRLEY

Tom? TOM! *(She sees him and comes beside him.)*

291 TOM

Shirley. How delightful to see you again, so SOON!

292 SHIRLEY

Listen to me. I've got something troubling to tell you. But, what are you doing on this chair covered with a blanket? Are you feeling all right?

293 TOM

Shirley, I'm the one who has something, ah... extremely important to admit to you.

40 SHIRLEY, *sitting down on the sofa*

You sound so serious. Is it that bad?

294 TOM

I haven't been totally honest with you this morning.

295 SHIRLEY

How's that?

296 TOM

I'm having remorse since you left earlier. I needed to sit down to think about it. I've covered myself with this blanket because I'm getting goose bumps about it. I think I may be feverish.

297 SHIRLEY

You're scaring me. It's going to be all right. Let me bring you a nice hot cup of coffee. Unless you prefer something stronger?

41 TOM

No. Coffee is a great idea. Brrr, I'm so cold.

298 SHIRLEY

I'll be right back. Don't move from there.

299 TOM

I don't think I can, even if I wanted to, dear. *(Shirley goes into the kitchen. Greg's head comes out of the blanket.)* Can you untie the knot now?

300 GREG

But... but... but...I don't see a thing.

301 TOM

Good god, try once more. I can't stay here the whole day. I've asked you to tie my hands not to weld me to this chair.

302 GREG

I've learned to make knots with the scouts, Mr. Flo-Flo... Flo-Flo... Flores! Not to un-un... not to un-un... not to undo them!

303 TOM

Remind me to write a formal letter of complaint to Baden Powell's estate when this is over. Try again! *(Greg goes back under the blanket.)* Now I have to tell her that she doesn't stand a chance with Alice.

Shirley arrives with a dessert cart holding two cups of coffee in their saucers, a sugar bowl, a cream pot, two spoons and a basket of croissants. She places herself beside Tom.

42 SHIRLEY

Here we are. You'll see, you'll feel much better after a hot cup of coffee. I'm sure of it. *(Shirley hands a cup of coffee with a saucer to Tom.)* There you go.

Time freezes. Greg gets an arm out of the blanket and clumsily takes the cup. In the next scene, Tom's face worries about Greg's arms movements.

43 TOM

Thank ... you... so much... Shirley.

304 SHIRLEY, handing the sugar bowl to Tom

Sugar?

Time freezes again. Another arm comes from under the blanket. It tries to take the tongs from the sugar bowl. Tom yells.

44 TOM

Ah! Ah! Shoot! It's hot! It's so hot! *(Greg get a hold of the tongs and tries to take a sugar cube.)* To the right. To the left. There we go.

305 SHIRLEY

What?

306 TOM

I was just thinking... Life's like politics. Right or left, it's all the same.

Greg catches a sugar cube and tries to place it in the cup. Some coffee gets on Tom's pants.

45 TOM
Careful! Ah, it's hot!

307 SHIRLEY
Are you sure you're okay?

308 TOM
Yes, yes. I'm just a little bit disturbed... by... things...you know.

Shirley puts back the sugar bowl and hands out the cream pot to Tom.

46 SHIRLEY
Cream?

309 TOM
No, thank you. *(Greg gets a hold of the cream pot and tries to pour some in Tom's cup.)*
To think of it, just a cloud maybe. *(Greg clumsily pours a whole lot of cream in Tom's cup.)* Excuse me. I'm not totally myself today.

Shirley takes back the cream pot. Greg uses the spoon on the saucer to stir much too strongly. For a long moment. Tom yells.

47 TOM
Enough! Excuse me. I can't hide the truth anymore.

310 SHIRLEY
I know everything. You can confide in me. *(She holds out the basket of croissants to Tom.)* A croissant?

311 TOM
No, thank you.

Greg's hand reaches for a croissant. He dunks it in the coffee and brings it to Tom's mouth who refuses to open it. Tom shakes his head right and left. Greg hits Tom's head with the croissant. Tom finally agree to take a bite.

48 SHIRLEY
Are you sure you're okay? Do you want me to call a doctor?

312 TOM

No, please don't. Everything's fine. I just feel like my head can't control my arms anymore. It's a bit like there was a stranger within me. Oh, I need to wipe my face. Can you hand me a napkin, please?

313 SHIRLEY

Of course. There it is.

Shirley hands out a napkin to Tom. But Greg's hands are full with a cup and a croissant.

314 TOM

Thanks. *(Louder.)* I'm going to place my croissant in my coffee and take the napkin that you're handing me NOW! Thank you very much Shirley! *(Greg places the croissant in the cup. He takes the napkin and clumsily wipes Tom's face. He pinches Tom's nose that blows in the napkin).* Oh, that feels good. *(Greg places the napkin on Tom's knee. He wipes the back of his hand on Tom's forehead.)* It's hot!

315 SHIRLEY

Let me get rid of the blanket.

316 TOM

No! No! It's cold. *(Greg takes back the croissant. He gives another coffee-ducked croissant bite to Tom who, reluctantly, plays the game.)* Hum, so good. *(Greg brings the cup to Tom's mouth who drinks from it with a smirk on his face.)*

317 SHIRLEY

I know how you must feel, Tom. Despite our disagreements, I must say, I'm on your side this time.

318 TOM

It's good to hear that, Shirley.

319 SHIRLEY

I understand now, why you and Veronica...

320 TOM

What about me and Veronica?

321 SHIRLEY

I saw them.

322 TOM

Who?

323 SHIRLEY

Veronica and her lover.

324 TOM

But what are you talking about?

325 SHIRLEY

I caught them at the spa earlier. They were kissing.

326 TOM

What are you saying? Can you get rid of this for me? *(He points his cup and croissant with his head. Shirley tries to take the cup and croissant from Greg's hands but he resists. She insists and pulls harder.)* Let go! *(Shirley stops pulling.)* No, not you. I'm talking to my body. Go on, try again.

Shirley gets up, takes the cup and what's left of the croissant and places them on the dessert cart.

49 SHIRLEY

I understand that you're not... in your normal state. I was in a state of shock myself when the woman of my life dumped me. I know exactly how you feel. Tom – it was AWFUL! *(While she talks, Greg's hands move a lot. He scratches Tom's head, takes ridiculous poses etc.)* It was sheer despair, Tom – SHEER DESPAIR! I felt so rejected; I wept oceans. But, this isn't about me today. It's about YOU. And I will do everything in my power to help you overcome this ordeal – I swear this to you! *(She takes the dessert cart.)* Let me get rid of all of this. Don't move. I'll be right back.

327 TOM

Don't worry. Even If I wanted to, I can't move a finger. Despair has got me by the... oh, never mind.

Shirley goes to the kitchen.

SCENE 21

328 TOM

Get out of there, triple idiot! *(Greg's head comes out of the blanket.)* Hurry up and go to my room. You'll find a pocket knife in my night table drawer.

329 GREG, getting up

On which side of the be-bed, do-do-do you sleep on?

330 TOM

On the left side. Hurry! *(Greg runs to the bedroom.)* Ah, shoot! Please God, let him come back before she does. I'll go to church every Sunday from this day onward. I promise.

Shirley opens the kitchen door and gets her head out.

331 SHIRLEY

Are you okay?

332 TOM

Oh yes! In deep, deep despair but okay!

333 SHIRLEY

I'm filling up the dishwasher. I won't be long.

She goes back inside the kitchen. Greg comes back from the bedroom with a pocket knife.

50 GREG

I got it.

334 TOM

Great. Hurry up! Cut the rope. Perfect. *(Greg gets back under the blanket.)* Be careful not to hurt me if you can't see a thing underneath there. *(Yelling.)* Aaaah!

Tom gets his two arms out of the blanket. He is bleeding on one wrist.

51 GREG

I'm sorry. I didn't... I didn't... I didn't mean to.

Greg runs back to hide in the guest bedroom. The very next second, Shirley runs out of the kitchen.

52 SHIRLEY

What's going on? *(She runs toward Tom who holds his bleeding wrist with the other hand.)* For the love of God, Tom, what have you done?

335 TOM

It's nothing.

336 SHIRLEY

How could you? Even I didn't think of ending my life over... her! *(Greg comes out of the guest bedroom wearing a mustache, a jacket and a hat. Shirley doesn't notice him right away.)* What did you cut yourself with?

- 337 GREG**, *showing the knife*
With this pocket knife, madam.
- 338 TOM**
I'm telling you, this is nothing at all.
- 339 GREG**
Let me have a look. (*Greg examines Tom's wrist.*) He's right. It's just a scrape. Let me introduce myself, madam, I'm Doctor Welby, Marcos Welby.
- 340 SHIRLEY**
Doctor Welby, I didn't hear you come in. But your expertise sure is needed right now. I'm Shirley French, Tom's sister-in-law.
- 341 GREG**
Nothing to worry about, Mrs. French. Sir, we need to take care of your wrist now. Where do you keep your first aid kit?
- 342 SHIRLEY**, *to Tom*
I don't understand why you had to do this?
- 343 TOM**, *to Greg*
We've got one in every bathroom.
- 344 SHIRLEY**, *helping Tom get up; she brings his right arm over her shoulders*
Let me help you.
- 345 GREG**
It won't be necessary, madam. Thank you, but I'm taking care of him. We'll use the bathroom in this bedroom. (*Pointing to the guest bedroom.*) You'll have to excuse us for now. I'll put a bandage on him. He needs to rest.
- They both walk toward the guest bedroom.*
- 346 SHIRLEY**
I think, he needs a downer as well. He must not try this again.
- 347 GREG**
Don't worry. He's in good capable and extremely... ah... handy hands?
- 348 TOM**
Yes, I am. We both KNOW that! Thank you, doctor.

They both enter the guest bedroom.

SCENE 22

53 SHIRLEY

Poor man. Maybe, I shouldn't have told him about Veronica and her lover. I didn't think he was so fragile or that he loved her that much. *(She picks up the blanket, folds it and places it back on the sofa. She also puts the chair back in place.)* Learning that your wife, whom you cherish more than anything else in the whole wide world, has no qualms whatsoever about kissing your own secretary, in a public place, without a care for his reputation or his feelings... Poor man. He didn't deserve this! *(She cries a little bit.)*

The elevator's door opens and Lester enters the room.

54 LESTER

Good morning, madam. Is this Mr. and Mrs. Flores home?

349 SHIRLEY

Yes. Who are you?

350 LESTER

My name is Lester, madam. Fred asked me to come up. I came to repair the intercom.

351 SHIRLEY

Right! Mr. Flores is taking a nap for now and madam is out. I'm from the family.

352 LESTER

I can come back at a better moment if you wish?

353 SHIRLEY

No, no. I know the broken intercom is a major hassle. Repair it, but just be quiet. You will not be bother us in the least though, I'm sure.

55 LESTER

Alright. I'll see what I can do and I'll do it.

Lester sets himself up in front of the intercom. He takes a screwdriver from his toolbox and starts working. Shirley places her ear on the guest bedroom door. She looks back at Lester.

56 SHIRLEY

How much time will it take?

354 LESTER

I don't know. If it's just a bad connection, it won't be that long at all

355 SHIRLEY

Can I get you something to drink, Mr. Lester?

356 LESTER

I'm fine, thanks.

357 SHIRLEY

Let me know if you need anything. I'll be in the kitchen.

358 LESTER

No problemo.

Shirley goes straight to the kitchen. Figuratively speaking!

SCENE 23

Greg comes out of the room all dressed-up as Alice.

359 GREG

Hello.

360 LESTER

Good morning madam.

361 GREG

Miss. But you can call me Alice, please.

362 LESTER

You're not Mrs. Flores?

363 GREG

Oh no. I'm not the lucky one. I'm one of his employees.

364 LESTER

Okay. I'm Lester. Looks like your employer's a very demanding man.

365 GREG

Yes, he can be sometimes. Let's just say he's a bit stressed out with all of his plans.

366 LESTER

What would those plans be all about?

- 367 **GREG**, *realizing he may be talking too much*
His plans, his plans, well, yeah... his new plant's plans.
- 368 **LESTER**
I thought his business wasn't doing too good.
- 369 **GREG**
Who said so?
- 370 **LESTER**
Everybody. People talk.
- 371 **GREG**
And what else are they saying?
- 372 **LESTER**
Well, I don't know if I should tell you.
- 373 **GREG**, *flirting with Lester*
Why not? It'll stay between you and me. You can trust me.
- 374 **LESTER**
It seems he's never going out with his wife. People are asking questions.
- 375 **GREG**
Oh! Some people are just too much! And way too curious for their own good.
- 376 **LESTER**
They also say she's a (*spelling*) b-i-t-c-h.
- 377 **GREG**
What?
- 378 **LESTER**
She leads him by the nose.
- 379 **GREG**
People are exaggerating now. You mustn't believe everything you hear, you know. Excuse me. (*Greg goes into the master bedroom. He comes right back out with a small blue box.*)
- 380 **LESTER**
You're saying Mr. Flores is resting in one of those bedrooms?

381 GREG

Yes, he's with the doctor.

382 LESTER

He's sick?

383 GREG

Let's just say he's totally spent. He's got too much on his mind. But I'll take my leave now and let you finish your job.

57 LESTER

Very well, miss. As you wish.

SCENE 24

Shirley comes back from the kitchen.

384 SHIRLEY

Alice?

385 GREG

Shirley! So nice to see you again.

386 SHIRLEY

All the pleasure's mine. What a surprise! I thought you left.

387 GREG

Yes, yes. I left. But I just came back. Mr. Flores called me.

388 SHIRLEY

Before falling asleep?

389 GREG

Yes. I brought him the jewelry I bought for his wife.

390 SHIRLEY

Oh, that's too bad. I hope you can get a refund for that.

391 GREG

Why?

392 SHIRLEY, *taking Greg aside*

After what just happened, I don't think he'll need it.

393 GREG

What? What happened?

394 SHIRLEY

Tom tried to cut his wrists. He's got marital issues.

395 GREG

No. I can't believe it. Where is he?

396 SHIRLEY

He's taking a nap in the guestroom. *(Pointing to the guest bedroom.)* His doctor's with him. He gave him a sedative.

397 GREG

Could I leave the box on the night table? He'll decide what he wants to do with it when he wakes up.

398 SHIRLEY

Can I take a look? *(Reaching for the box.)*

399 GREG

Under the circumstances, I don't think it would be appropriate.

400 SHIRLEY

You're right. Go on.

401 LESTER

Aaaah! I've found what's wrong.

Shirley walks toward Lester. Greg goes into the guest bedroom.

SCENE 25

402 SHIRLEY

So, what is it?

403 LESTER

Simply a bad contact. The system wasn't properly installed. See these two wires?

404 SHIRLEY

Yes.

405 LESTER

They shouldn't touch. I wonder what idiot installed this system?

406 SHIRLEY

It doesn't matter who the idiot is. Just fix it.

407 LESTER

Oh but I'm done, madam. I just need to put the screws back on. *(He pushes a button.)*
One, two, one two, testing.

We hear Fred's voice on the intercom.

408 FRED

Yes?

409 LESTER

Do you hear me fine, Fred?

410 FRED

Very well.

411 LESTER

Ten four. My work is done. I'm on my way as soon as I'm finished with the screws, madam.

412 SHIRLEY

Good job. Thank you. You know the way out. Goodbye now!

Lester finishes his job. Shirley goes into the master bedroom. Lester pushes the intercom's button.

58 LESTER

Fred?

413 FRED

Yes, sir.

414 LESTER

There are four people inside the penthouse.

415 FRED

What?

416 LESTER

You told me there were only three.

417 FRED

There are Mr. Flores, Miss French and Mr. Hasbine. Count them: Three!

418 LESTER

What? There's a fifth person then? I've met Miss French but there's also a Miss Alice up here and I know Mr. Flores is with his doctor in the bedroom. But I haven't seen any Mr. Hasbine.

419 FRED

What are you talking about? I didn't let any doctor in, nor any 'Miss Alice'? Things are getting complicated here – and very weird!

Shirley comes back from the master bedroom.

420 SHIRLEY

You're still here?

421 LESTER

Oh, I'm done, madam. I'm leaving now.

SCENE 26

Tom gets out of the bedroom with a bandage on his wrist. Greg follows him, still dressed as the doctor. The intercom beeps. Shirley answers.

422 SHIRLEY

Yes?

We hear Fred's voice.

423 FRED

Miss French?

424 SHIRLEY

Yes.

425 FRED

Mr. Joel's here, he's asking permission to come up.

426 TOM

Let him up.

427 **SHIRLEY**

Tom. You're in no condition...

428 **TOM**

My doctor gave me the okay. I'm feeling much better.

429 **GREG**

That isn't what I said. *(Tom gives him an assassin look.)* Thinking about it, yes. It's a miracle. I used a super-fast and efficient antidepressant.

430 **TOM**

Thank you so much for your help and support Shirley. But, I'm fine now. I need to talk in private with Joel.

431 **SHIRLEY**

You think you're in a state to talk?

432 **TOM**

I don't have a choice. Joel needs me. I'll see you tonight. Thanks for everything.

SCENE 27

The elevator door opens and Joel enters the room.

433 **JOEL**

Hi, everyone.

434 **SHIRLEY**

Hi, Joel. Spare him. He's not in his normal state.

Shirley enters the elevator. She is followed by Lester.

435 **LESTER**

Goodbye.

The elevator's door closes.

436 **TOM**

Tell me, do you have any good news for me?

437 **JOEL**, *looking at Greg*

I don't think we've been introduced.

438 TOM

True. Meet my doctor, Marcos Welby. Here's my future son-in-law, Doc, his name is Joel Christmas.

Joel and Greg shake hands.

439 GREG

Nice to meet you, Mr. Christmas.

440 TOM

So do we have a reason to be merry, Christmas?

441 JOEL

You have no idea how many times I've heard that one. *(Joel feels his jacket's pockets.)*
Let's just say that Santa Claus has been very generous this year.

442 GREG

He must be treating you like family. *(Laughs.)*

443 TOM

Great. Come with me. *(To Greg.)* Will you excuse us for a moment, doctor? *(Smiling and taking Joel by the shoulders.)* There's something I need to check with my future son-in-law AND new associate. Have a seat. We'll be right back.

Tom and Joel enter the master bedroom. Greg sits down on the sofa. Someone appears on the balcony. First the head, then the rest of the body. He is using the mechanical system to get up. He jumps on the balcony. He is dressed as a window cleaner. He walks softly behind Greg. He gets close to his head and taking a gun from his pocket, he points it at Greg's head.

59 ROB

Not a move or I'll shoot. Where is the jewelry?

444 GREG

A thief! A thief!

Black. Intermission.

ACT II

SCENE 28

The action continues. Rob and Greg are in the same position.

445 GREG

A thief! A thief!

Tom and Joel come out of the master bedroom. The elevator door opens. Lester appears with a gun pointed at Tom and Joel. Lester walks closer to them.

60 LESTER

Hands up! Sit down on the sofa. Nothing bad will happen here if you don't act weird. Where are Alice and that Mr. Hasbine fella?

446 TOM

She just left.

447 LESTER

It's Miss French who just left. Where are the other two?

448 GREG

They're gone.

449 LESTER, to Rob

Watch them. *(He goes to the intercom and pushes the button.)*

450 FRED

Yes?

451 LESTER

Have you seen Alice and Mr. Hasbine get out?

452 FRED

Shirley French, yes, but no one else.

453 LESTER

Ten four. *(He gets closer to the sofa. Pointing his gun at Tom.)* I'll give you five seconds to tell me where they are.

454 GREG

Oh right! What was I thinking? Alice got a room with Mr. Hasbine. I mean, she is taking a nap and he is looking her over.

455 TOM

Doctor Welby, isn't that your job?

456 GREG

I can delegate! She's sleeping. She's sick. She won't be of any trouble; neither him nor her, I assure you! He's quite harmless and helpless in fact, if I may add!

457 LESTER, to Greg, still pointing his gun at Tom

And, just in case you wanna play any games, I'll shoot him on the spot – capisce?

458 TOM

You can grab all you want and leave.

459 ROB

Right, chief. We can just grab the jewelry and leave.

460 LESTER

Hey, Spiderman, who's the brain of the operation, here?

461 ROB

Ah...uh... It's you.

462 LESTER, to Greg

Get up! Bring back the girl and Hasbine right away. And no dirty tricks or he gets it.

463 GREG

Very well. But Alice has taken sleeping pills. I'll see what I can do.

Greg goes to the guest bedroom.