LIBERATION

A Memory Play
About Things I Don't Remember

TAIBI MAGAR

Bess Wohl
010.24.25

Cast

Lizzie – Woman. Flexible age. White.

Margie – Woman. 50’s-60’s. White.

Susan — Woman. Early 20’s. White.

Celeste – Woman. Late 30’s. Black.

Isidora – Woman. Late 30’s-40. White.

Dora – Woman. Mid 20’s. White.

Joanne– Woman. Early 30’s. Black.

Bill – Man. Late 20’s- early 30’s. White.

TAIBI MAGAR

Scene

A stage.

And.

A basement basketball court at the a local rec center, somewhere in Ohio.

Time

Now.

And recently.

And the 1970's.

TAIBI MAGAR

ACT ONE

A woman.
She speaks to the audience.

LIZZIE

Hi.

Hi. Is everyone— is everyone good? Comfortable? Snacks unwrapped? Hello. Hi. Welcome.

They took your phones. Are we okay? Are we okay. I promise you'll get them out of that pouch at the end of this-- and— speaking of— how long is this going to take, right? I know that's all anyone really wants to know: the running time.

Honestly, it's not even your fault, it's like, this is the modern condition—- not to sound grandiose, "this is the modern condition," but honestly-- it's like, you decide to come, you get dressed up— (To particular audience.) Well alright *you* didn't get dressed up— but you put on clothes, thank you for that. You put on clothes. You make your way through whatever you went through-- the subway, the traffic, the hellscape that is Times Square-- you finally get here, and then you hope that the entire experience will be as short as humanly possible.

No, I get it, I have kids too. I spend my life trying to get away from them and then trying to get back to them so…

Fear not. Surely you've noticed all of those six hour, eight hour, ten hour plays are by men with no children? A woman with children would never. Could never. You know I'm right.

And speaking of children, I should have said. This is a play— a memory play, in a way— it's about my mother. For my mother. Who recently… Who's not here anymore. And so it's about her, and her friends, her beautiful friends— and a thing— this is important—a thing they tried very hard to do.

No, A thing that they did, that they unquestionably did— so why does it feel somehow like it's all slipping away? And how do we get it back--

She exhales.
Looks into the wings.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
In fact-- (Calls into the wings.) Could you all come out here?

Some of the other women come in,
in various states of getting ready.

Brushing hair, buttoning blouses etc.
The performance of being female.

They are:

Margie.
Susan.
Celeste.
Dora.

LIZZIE
Hi.

A few of them wave to her.

LIZZIE
So. These are the women. Some of them, anyway. These were my mother's friends, before she had me. And these are not the real people, obviously— I mean, these are real people, hi— and we are in— work with me here, we are in--

The basement of a rec center in Ohio—and the year was 1970. And my mom… My devoted, dutiful mom who sewed the costumes for every school play and cooked every family dinner and did all the dishes and took me to every piano lesson and sat through it even though I was definitely not a musician— she was actually… a radical?

(Surprised, surprising.) No really, she was the organizer. The instigator, the leader and I guess her basic idea was—

Is—

Shift. We are back in time.

And Lizzie is now her mother, with whom she shares a name.

LIZZIE
(Excited, optimistic.) A group, a revolution-- my idea is, well, no, it's not mine, obviously— but the general concept is— if we raise our consciousness, increase our understanding of the oppression and the sources of oppression in our own lives— personally— this is how we change the world, we raise our consciousness, we change the world--

TABI MAGAR

Lizzie turns back to the audience for a moment, transforms back into herself.

LIZZIE
I know, but it was the 70's. And yeah, I'm my mom. And, look, I love my mom, but for most of my life— for reasons I won't get into right now— becoming my mom was like my biggest nightmare, I think this is true for a lot of us actually-- anyway, the point is, here's my biggest nightmare, let's do it—

SUSAN
I'm sorry, who // are you?

LIZZIE
Oh, I'm Lizzie, Elizabeth, Liz, hi, I'm the one who, I put up the flyers.

CELESTE
And what is your… Why?

LIZZIE
Oh, I, didn't I, I think I just kind of said why.

MARGIE
I think I'm wondering what *qualifies* you, dear. Are you some kind of activist or organizer--

LIZZIE
Oh. Journalist. I'm— I'm a journalist, I have a degree in International Relations from University of Chicago? I'm from Chicago? So, I actually originally came here because of a guy// he got a job in the—

CELESTE/MARGIE/SUSAN
(Re the mention of a "guy.") Seriously?/Oh dear./ Okay.

LIZZIE
(Quickly, over them.) No, we broke up, we broke up. But by then I had my own job, which is that I write for the Daily. Obituaries and weddings-- which in a way are the same thing!

She tries lamely to laugh at her own joke.

SUSAN
Right.

LIZZIE
No, but seriously, what I'm trying to say is, it's just honestly— I mean I have a *degree in International Relations*--

CELESTE
You said.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
But you know, I come in for my job interview at the Daily, and I say to the editor, I say—

(A quick aside, to the audience.) By the way, this happened, this part is actually true—

(Now back to the group.) Give me politics. Give me civil rights. The war, give me something, anything, that actually matters. He looks me up and down, he goes, "You can have weddings." Weddings.

The women react.

LIZZIE
I had to fight to get obituaries. And every day, I'm just hoping that someone will die in an interesting way so I'll have something to write about.

Isidora bursts in, late.
She speaks with an Italian accent.

LIZZIE
Hi, hi— come // in-- are you here for the--

ISIDORA
Ahhh, sorry, I had a very hard time finding the room. A very hard time! The flyer's saying eight.

LIZZIE
Really? No, did I—

ISIDORA
It says the eight!

Susan looks her flyer.

SUSAN
That's a B.

ISIDORA
I know, I know this now, but really it's looking like eight.

MARGIE
// I think it looks like a B.

LIZZIE
No, it's a B, a B, for Basement.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
Well, I know that know. I know that now. But I went all the way up, up, up!

LIZZIE
There's only four // floors—

ISIDORA
I go up, I'm hoping that, what am I hoping? I don't know, that the more floors will appear? Like a magic trick? I don't fucking know.

So, then I think, okay, am I in the wrong building? Do I have the wrong day? No. Have I fallen through the space hole in the time?

They all stare at her, not sure what to say.

ISIDORA
So, then I travel all the way down, back outside. There is this old man, this old, old security guard, very old man. So, I say to him, "Hello, old man. Do you know where this women's group is?" He says, "Quilting club was yesterday. Knitting circle on the weekend." I say, "No! No, this is not knitting circle! This is Women's Liberation group!"

"Liberation from what?" he says. "I don't know," I tell him, "Maybe YOU?" He looks confused.

LIZZIE
Well, you made it—

ISIDORA
So, I show him the flyer. He's looking even more confused now, but *then* he says, like he just solved the mystery of the fucking universe, "Oh, this is B, that's basement on B." I say, "Doesn't that look like an eight, sir?" He says yes.

Isidora exhales triumphantly.

LIZZIE
Well, you're here now.

ISIDORA
I hope we are not to be playing the sports.

Margie laughs.

LIZZIE
It's the only place I could get.

SUSAN
It's very far down.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
It’s smelling like boys and feet.

MARGIE
She’s right. I had sons, have sons. I know the smell.

LIZZIE
I think they just had a game.

ISIDORA
I bring some spray for next time, I spray it up.

CELESTE
(To Isidora, re Lizzie.) She was just explaining— something.

ISIDORA
Ah yes, I interrupt, I apologize—

SUSAN
It’s a CR group.

MARGIE
// Consciousness raising.

ISIDORA
Yes, it says on the flyer. (To Margie.) I know what this is.

MARGIE
All right then.

LIZZIE
Okay great. And, you know, I have a feeling that others will trickle in too. And so. And so, yes. Let’s get started. Well, we already started—

ISIDORA
Sorry.

She sits.

ISIDORA
(In pain.) Ack, sorry my back, no, I’m fine, okay. I’m ready. Sorry.

LIZZIE
So. Let’s continue.

Pause.
Nobody knows what this would mean.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
I just said a little about myself, but maybe now others want to… We could each say a little bit about who we are, where we're coming from... Get to know each other… Maybe… A little…

Pause.
They all look around.

LIZZIE
And, just to be clear, I don't, I don't want to be, I'm not the leader or anything. Just because I put up the flyers. And it was my idea. Well, it's not even my idea, there are groups like this popping up all over the— anyway-- point is, in our group, I don't think anyone should be higher than anyone else. Hierarchy is patriarchy. We all know that.

Different levels of agreement all around.
Before anyone can disagree, however--

Another long pause.

SUSAN
I'll go. I can go.

LIZZIE
Great, yes. Go.

Susan looks at her.
Lizzie forces herself to cede the floor.

SUSAN
Okay. So. Okay… Um, my name is Susan, Susie, Susie Hurricane. And no, that's not my legal name, but it is my *real* name because, yeah, I don't think things are "real" just because our dads gave 'em to us. My dad actually sat shiva for me when I left home? It's a Jewish thing, it's what you do when somebody dies. So, yeah, we don't talk anymore. And honestly at first, you know, when I thought about coming tonight I was like, okay it's 1970, you know, and I'm pretty burnt out on Women's Liberation?

ISIDORA
Mmm.

SUSAN
Like, I don't even know what to say anymore. Women are human beings. If you don't believe that, at this point, I don't know how I can help you. It feels kind of like we're shitting into the wind--

MARGIE
I think you mean spitting. Spitting into the wind.

TAIBI MAGAR

SUSAN
No, I mean shitting, blowing around our shit, you know, and every so often some old bullshit it just, it smacks you in the face and-- I don't know-- so, yeah, I'm hopeful but I'm burnt the fuck out.

ISIDORA
Mmmm.

SUSAN
And, you know, I was in SNCC in Chicago—

ISIDORA
I was in SNCC San Francisco!

SUSAN
Oh yeah? Yeah, so yeah, some stuff went down there—

ISIDORA
Yes, you're // telling me—

CELESTE
Let her talk.

SUSAN
Thanks, yeah, so I didn't really fit in, I guess? So I went to New York, joined Radical Women-- then my roommate in New York kicked me out because she didn't like my bird— so I was like fuck off, my bird is my life-- then a friend in New York, she knew a guy who was opening a lefty bookstore out here // and needed some help—

LIZZIE
There's a lefty bookstore // out here?

ISIDORA
No.

MARGIE
I don't // think so.

SUSAN
No, the bookstore never happened, // of course—

ISIDORA
Of course.

SUSAN
But by the time I figured that out, I'd bought a car, total tin can, and drove out so now I'm like, maybe I just go the rest of the way, to California— I hear there's some cool shit happening out there--

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
Eh.

SUSAN
Right, so, yeah, now, I don't know. Really, I want to buy a bike, sell my car, but also what do I do with my bird on the bike? My bird can't go on the bike to California.

ISIDORA
// No.

SUSAN
And also I don't have a job so right now so my car is my home, so yeah, I guess I'd like to get a job and a bike and a place to live-- maybe not in that order-- and— maybe try to, like, write down some of the shit that's like swirling around in my head-- because I don't sleep much, it's hard in my car-- but also I've got a lot swirling around up there, so—

SUSAN
Yeah. So. I guess. I guess that's it.

LIZZIE
Thank you, Susie. Susan?

SUSAN
Susie's fine.
Pause.

ISIDORA
// Should I go--

MARGIE
I can go--

ISIDORA
Oh, go, go, go--

MARGIE
No, that's fine. You go.

ISIDORA
No no no, it's fine, go ahead, it's fine—

MARGIE
You should, really, I don't--

ISIDORA
No, go, go, go ahead--

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
(Ending this madness.) I'll go. I can go.

ISIDORA
Oh. Okay.

MARGIE
All right then.

LIZZIE
Go ahead.

CELESTE
My name is Celeste. And, um, I should say, I was just in a CR group back in New York— I live in New York mostly, I'm just here temporarily— and anyway, it was really more of a dinner party than a group, really, but the point is, one of our rules, bylaws, whatever you want to call it, was that everyone got to speak uninterrupted.

ISIDORA
// Oh--

CELESTE
(Before Isidora can interrupt again.) Because we believed that a woman speaking uninterrupted is a radical act.

She looks around, daring them all.
They are quiet.

CELESTE
So, let's see. The year I graduated Radcliffe, this was '63, it was actually the first year a woman could get a Harvard degree in addition to your Radcliffe degree, like a little bonus prize? So, that's what I did. That's what I got.

Now I'm an editor, a book editor— I'm also working on my own book about Women's Liberation and specifically Black women, whose resistance is, in my opinion, overdue but as of yet completely unorganized. So my book will be looking at why that is.

Pause.

CELESTE
And, so, yeah, I was in New York, now I'm back here because my mother is sick. Hopefully it's temporary. My little sojourn back to Ohio, I mean, I don't think my mom's getting better. I don't love being back in Ohio. I did a lot to get the hell out of here, but it turns out I seem to be the only responsible member of my family, so here I am. And so, yeah, I'm looking for my people, and I saw the flyer, your flyer I guess, at the grocery store-- I come out here to shop because you can't get a fresh vegetable back near my mom's and…

TAIBI MAGAR

And at first of course, of course, I thought, no, that's… I'm not getting into it. Not here. Just, no.

But then. I'm, I'm sitting there, by my mother's bedside-- she doesn't really get out of bed anymore-- and I bring her, her coke and her cheese, this is all she eats, coke and cheese, and I notice, she's, the woman can barely see, but she's still got her stack of books by her bed. Poetry. And philosophy. Novels you never heard of.

My mother was always the one, you know? She was the one lending books and putting books out on the lawn for people, kids in the neighborhood to take. If you had a book on your shelf that looked interesting to her watch out because when she left, you'd realize that book was gone, she'd put it right in her purse, she always had to have a purse big enough to hold a book.

And she sat up with me, taught me to read, drilled those multiplication tables, she was proud. But what did she do, what did she do for herself? Cleaned houses. Cleaned houses and snuck books in her purse and raised five kids on her own and never, never ever sat down 'til she was too sick to stand. And so you know, losing her, that's sad but that happens, that's what happens, parents die… But what *she* lost, what she lived without… That's the part that I can't…

Pause.

CELESTE
I'm finished. Somebody else can talk.

SUSAN
I like your glasses.

CELESTE
Thanks.

SUSAN
And I'm sorry about your mother.

CELESTE
Oh. Thanks. Thank you.

Pause.

Their eyes meet for a moment.
Then Celeste quickly looks away.

Lizzie clocks it.

MARGIE
I'm Margie.

TAIBI MAGAR

Margie gets out a cigarette, lights up.

MARGIE
So, on the one hand, being a housewife is what I wanted. You know, to the extent that wanting things was a thing that I knew I could do? What I mean is, I was good at it. “Keeping house.”

But, ah, now my kids are grown, and, ah, my husband is retired which means he's home all day. And so I’m really, I’m here because I need things to get me out of the house so I don't stab him to death.

Isidora laughs sharply.
Margie is dead serious.

MARGIE
I realize that sounds like a joke. It's not a joke.

LIZZIE
You could actually stab your husband.

MARGIE
It’s not complicated. You just stab

ISIDORA
With what?

MARGIE
A knife? A pen? Anything sharp.

CELESTE
I don't think you should do that.

SUSAN
You don't know her husband.

MARGIE
He's a difficult man.

Pause.

They all look to each other, not sure if she’s done.

ISIDORA
I’m Dora.

DORA
I’m Dora!

ISIDORA
No, you are?

TAIBI MAGAR

DORA
Sorry sorry sorry sorry—

ISIDORA
No, this is very strange.

DORA
I know!

ISIDORA
I'm Isidora, really.

DORA
Oh, no, I'm just Dora. Dorothy.

ISIDORA
Okay, so—

DORA
So, yeah, I guess // it's not so—

ISIDORA
So, not so strange.

DORA
Anyway. I interrupted you, // sorry. Dora. Go.

ISIDORA
No, it's all right, Dora, I'm Italian, that's what we do. Sicilian, yes, I am Isidora, Dora, whatever you want and, essentially, yes, I am a filmmaker. But for now, I work as a production assistant, really coffee girl, you know, at local news, channel five, and uh, I have the husband but really only for the green card, though, you know, he is fine, I don't mind, even though I would have preferred he get the work transferred to, I don't know, anywhere else but this is where we are, American heartland, yes so anyway. I need six months more of marriage, so, providing I don't fall pregnant in these next six months, I am fine. Fingers crossed. Everything crossed.

She crosses herself in the Catholic way.

ISIDORA
I was in LA, then New York, then San Francisco, I work my butt off for civil rights, for SNCC, I protest, I mimeograph the flyers, we were the "angels of the mimeograph machine," they called us— and so we just did this with the civil rights and now, maybe this is not the popular opinion, but I think women deserve a turn.

CELESTE
I don't really think we should— (Stops herself.) Never mind.

TABIMAGAR

ISIDORA

What?

CELESTE

No, nothing, continue.

ISIDORA

No, I'm only saying, this is our turn. Ours, together, not mine, yours, yes, and I don't know if the, what do you call this, the consciousness raising?

LIZZIE

Yes.

ISIDORA

Yes, is it changing everything? But I don't know. I think it can change something, maybe. Maybe not. (Emphatic, impassioned.) But we must try, we must do something because if we do nothing, the world keeps being shit and this, this I cannot abide.

She takes a deep breath.
Turns to Dora.

ISIDORA

(To Dora.) Go.

DORA

Me? Oh. So. I'm Dora, like I said, the second Dora. And. Hi. And I um, I um, I actually thought this *was* a knitting circle? I brought my knitting?

She shows them her knitting in progress.
They all stare.

DORA

Because it's just that my roommate likes to bring her fiancé over for, um, tea on Thursdays and if I don't find things to do, it's, anyway, so, I didn't read the flyer carefully enough I guess, but also this is really interesting so far and I would love to stick around if that's okay with everyone else.

Everyone nods agreement.

LIZZIE

All right, then. That's everyone. We can begin.

Shift.

Lizzie is now her present-day self again.
She turns to the audience.

TABI MAGAR

LIZZIE
So they started meeting. Weekly. I know this because after my mom passed, I tracked them down, the ones who are still alive anyway, because so many are gone or will be soon…

And I wanted to know-- I needed to know-- what went wrong? Because, I mean, look around, look at what's happening in the world right now, can someone please explain it to me and how do I explain it to my children and so I thought— if I could just talk to these women--

Isidora appears.

ISIDORA
What? What's the question.

LIZZIE
Well, it's just that, obviously you all accomplished so much, // when you think about how far we've come—

ISIDORA
Yes, blah blah blah, fine, so what. What is the question, you must have a question.

LIZZIE
I do, have a lot of questions actually— because, here we are, still. And recently it's been feeling like things might be going in the wrong direction-- so I guess my question is--

ISIDORA
Why are we still so fucked.

LIZZIE
I mean, sure, yes, but— I think I was going to start by asking… About my mom.

ISIDORA
She played it safe. We didn't go far enough. We were all so middle of the road, the middle of the road is the death of everything. It's the death of art. Don't ever let it stop you.

Pause.

ISIDORA
Have you seen *Oleanna*?

LIZZIE
The David Mamet play?

ISIDORA
It's very good. About women and power. You know Fellini?

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
I—

ISIDORA
City of Women?

LIZZIE
I don’t think I—

ISIDORA
Watch it. It will enrage you, it will set your teeth on edge, don’t get me wrong. But also?

LIZZIE
Yeah?

ISIDORA
It explains everything.

Shift.
Back in time, back to the group.
Lizzie is her mother again.

MARGIE
I brought a cheese ball.

Margie unwraps it proudly, puts it out.

SUSAN
Whoa, that’s big.

MARGIE
It’s a pretty standard-sized ball. Just cream cheese, cheddar cheese, onion powder, // garlic powder, Worcesterchire-

SUSAN
//Okay.

MARGIE
I figured, if this was a men’s group, the wives would make snacks. I cooked for Burt’s office parties for thirty-five years.

LIZZIE
So, honestly, shouldn’t he be making the cheeseballs?

MARGIE
Trust me, you don’t want to try Burt’s balls.

LIZZIE
Well, thanks, but you didn’t have to // do this--

SUSAN
Yeah you did, this is delicious, marry me, Margie.

MARGIE
Thanks, once was enough.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
(To Susan, concerned.) When's the last time you ate anything?

SUSAN
(To Margie.) Are these walnuts.

MARGIE
Pecans.

SUSAN
(Picking at the pecans.) Fucking fantastic.

MARGIE
(Means it.) Thank you.

CELESTE
(To Susan.) Wait. Here. Let me.

Celeste starts to make a snack for her.

LIZZIE
So, I guess, we can start?

MARGIE
Where's Dora?

LIZZIE
Which one?

Isidora bursts in, late again.

ISIDORA
Sorry I'm late, cat pooped again on the carpet—

LIZZIE
We're about to begin. Margie brought cheese.

Isidora starts to spray down the room.

ISIDORA
Where is other Dora?

SUSAN
Maybe we've scared her off.

LIZZIE
I hope not—

TAIBI MAGAR

Now Dora rushes in, very upset—

DORA
No no no, I'm here— I'm— I'm here—I'm sorry—I'm here-- //oh my God, oh my God— No no no. I'm fine.

LIZZIE
Are you-- all right?

ISIDORA
Dora?

DORA
No, hi Dora, yes, hi, I just, I just, I did something. Something. Maybe a little bit crazy that's all.

CELESTE
What did you do?

DORA
No nothing, oh god, I think I just, nothing.

MARGIE
(Wryly.) Did you stab somebody.

DORA
No,it's only that, I just came from there-- I just came from work is the thing—

LIZZIE
Sit down, take a breath—

SUSAN
Have some cheese.

ISIDORA
Sit here, sit here—

DORA
No, I'm okay, I'm fine, I feel good, actually! I feel really good!

MARGIE
Do you want a cigarette?

DORA
I think so, yes!

ISIDORA
(To Margie.) I just sprayed the air fresh.

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
It’s a cigarette, it doesn’t smell like anything.

ISIDORA
All right, fine, fine, give me one too.

Dora changes her mind and waves the offered cigarette away.

DORA
No, I don’t want it, I’m good, I’m all right.

SUSAN
So, you going to tell us what happened or what.

DORA
No, it’s nothing big it’s just—

She takes a deep breath.

DORA
I, you know, you all know that I work. I work at a, a, wine and spirits company. No, you don’t know that, how would you know that, I haven’t said much about my work, really, it’s been over a month, I’ve barely said a word-- And I work for next to nothing-- I mean, it’s minimum wage basically-- but sometimes I get to, you know, think about the fact that in the future, if I could rise through the ranks or something-- maybe I could travel and taste wines and spirits-- that’s what the big guys do, they go to vineyards and distilleries and they taste wines and spirits and they, they see the world. But today, at around, I don’t know, five p.m., my boss, a guy named Mitch Masterson-- he drops by my desk and he starts talking about tough times and the department’s being streamlined and lucky me, I get to keep my little secretary job, but no bonus this year— and Ray, the neanderthal at the desk next to me, is getting a promotion to be head of the department.

And all of a sudden, I felt this, this… I mean, Ray? Ray of all people. It never occurred to me that Ray could be promoted to anything— much_less head of the department-- but I just say to him, I say to Mr. Masterson, I say in a very nice voice, “Hmmm. I don’t really get it, I work a lot harder than Ray, Ray’s always over budget, I get him back on budget, half of Ray’s clients just come to me, ‘cause they don’t even want to deal with Ray—”

And he just kind of shrugs, “Sorry, Dolly.” And then, I just-- I don’t know, my mind went blank I guess-- and I said— I just said--

“The only thing that Ray has that I don’t is a penis.”

Pause.
The women stare at her.

TABI MAGAR

DORA
I know. I really said it, I did, the only thing Ray has that I don't is a penis. The only thing Ray has that I don't is a penis!

And I just, I just, ran out of there and I ran here and I could hear him yelling after me, "Hey Dolly, hey Dolly, don't get your tits in a wringer," that's how he talks, "Don't get your tits in a wringer," and I just, I just… I felt so… (Flagging slightly.) And I still feel…

LIZZIE
// Dora, you're okay, it's good, it's good—

ISIDORA
// Shhh, you're fine, Dora—

CELESTE
// Don't do that, don't do that, come on—

SUSAN
Hey. Hey hey hey hey, stop that--

DORA
What did I do? I'm going to—I'm going to lose—my job-- why did I why did I-- ohhhh no no no no…

Dora starts to cry.

MARGIE
It's all right, the job sounds terrible // anyway—

ISIDORA
You'll do something, whatever--

SUSAN
Fuck that job.

DORA
It's all I have--

LIZZIE
You did it, Dora, listen to me, you did something great. Maybe a little extreme // but—

ISIDORA
It's not extreme, she said the truth, // so what?

DORA
No I can't, // I can't--

SUSAN
Fuck that guy, fuck Ray.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
You said what you needed to, that's what matters.

DORA
The job is what matters! My parents barely tolerated me having this one— and now I'll have to marry Alan—

MARGIE
// Who is Alan?

DORA
Okay, no, hi, it was nice meeting you ladies, I have to, I have to go get my job back-- I have to go apologize and beg Mr. Masterson—

ISIDORA
Don't you fucking dare!

Dora runs to the door—

The women run to stop her, restraining her physically.

LIZZIE
// Do not go—

MARGIE
Dora, Dora, calm down, take a breath--

ISIDORA
Do not go back to // that place—

SUSAN
Dora, you have to stop—

CELESTE
Let's get her some water--

DORA
I can't stay here, it's ruining everything, you're ruining everything-- let me go, let me go let me go—

As they all scuffle at the door, the door actually OPENS—

The door opens.
It's Joanne.

LIZZIE
Hi. (Excited.) Are you— are you here for the group?

TAIBI MAGAR

JOANNE
No. I think my son left his backpack. Do you mind if I— do you mind if I look? I don't mean to interrupt or anything.

LIZZIE
Oh. Sure. No, come in, of course--

Joanne comes in.
Looks around.

Dora has crumpled to the floor, weeping.
Isidora is holding her.

Joanne looks around, taking it all in.

JOANNE
Is this a knitting circle or something?

SUSAN
It's a CR group.

JOANNE
Uh-huh.

LIZZIE
Women's liberation?

Joanne surveys the women skeptically.
Dora weeps more.

JOANNE
Okay.

Joanne starts looking for the backpack in the bleachers.

MARGIE
(Quietly.) Come on, let's get some, let's go splash some cold water // on your face.

DORA
(Mumbling to herself.) What did I do, // what did I do…

SUSAN
Dora? Dora, you're gonna be okay.

ISIDORA
Andiamo, *bellissima*, let's go--

A sudden shift:
Back to interview mode.

TAIBI MAGAR

DORA
The thing is, once it has occurred to you that you might be an equal human being, it's very hard to put that genie back in the bottle. It's very hard to forget.

LIZZIE
Right, I mean-- I don't know, I feel like my mom used to forget that all the time-- anyway, you were talking, I interrupted.

DORA
So, eventually we came up with protocols, a structure. Every meeting would begin with a prompt, something like: Do you feel like an adult? What do you think about money? Do you feel safe in the place where you live? And every story was another brick in the wall. Every brick was an experience. Pretty soon, people would start to say:

SUSAN
My uncle came into my room.

CELESTE
A teacher, at my school.

ISIDORA
My boss.

Suddenly—
Back in the meeting—

SUSAN
I wrote up a mission statement. A "womanifesto."

LIZZIE
(Still in the present.) Oh, by the way, they really did say this,"womanifesto." I'm not sure why they didn't say "humanifesto," but… Why didn't you actually?

Susan is looking at her.

LIZZIE
Never mind. Continue.

Now, really back to the meeting.

ISIDORA
A womanifesto.

SUSAN
It came to me in a dream. The Mission statement of the Women's Liberation Project.

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
That’s our name?

DORA
Did we agree on the name?

ISIDORA
I don’t think // that’s a good name. It’s sort of blah blah.

CELESTE
Who cares about the name?

LIZZIE
I don’t think we did agree on a name.

SUSAN
Who cares what the name is, the Bitches, // the Witches, who cares—

DORA
No no no.

MARGIE
I kind of like Bitches.

CELESTE
I don’t like that at all.

MARGIE
Let’s just hear her manifesto. I can’t say “womanifesto,” I’m too old. Go ahead.

SUSAN
So, like I said, came to me in a, a dream, a vision really, a vision. Of the apocalypse. I won’t go into it all. But basically the roof flew off of my bedroom— I don’t have a bedroom-- this was in the dream-- And I heard my mother’s voice booming out-- except it wasn’t my mother’s, it was Hashem— God— which is strange because she never really cared about God, she just followed whatever my father did— but anyway— she said--

She finds a crumpled, stained napkin with writing on it.

SUSAN
“We define the best interests of women as the best interest of the poorest, most insulted, most abused woman on earth. She is Everywoman. She is: ugly, dumb, dumb broad, dumb cunt, dumb bitch, nag, whore, fucking and breeding machine, mother of us all. Until Everywoman is free, no woman will be free. When her beauty and knowledge are revealed and seen, the new day will be at hand.”

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
(Quietly.) That’s fucking magnificent.

SUSAN
It is. No, wait, really.

CELESTE
(Genuinely moved.) Yeah.

A moment between Celeste and Susan.

LIZZIE
No, it is, it is // great.

ISIDORA
I like it, I don’t know how we *do* it, but--

LIZZIE
I don’t know that we need // it.

SUSAN
Well, it’s a beginning, it’s a mission statement— // I haven’t worked out the details.

LIZZIE
But the conversation is the mission--

ISIDORA
But what does it mean practically?

CELESTE
I think that’s probably // different for everyone.

ISIDORA
Sure, it’s nice, it’s nice words, it’s not practical, // that’s all.

LIZZIE
It’s not about practical, it’s already happening--

CELESTE
It’s a vision, it doesn’t have to be practical // right now.

ISIDORA
No, see, this is wrong, this is where you go wrong--

CELESTE
Excuse me?

SUSAN
Fine, forget it, tear it apart, write your own.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
Susie, don't do that--

ISIDORA
That's not what I'm saying!

MARGIE
This is a stupid argument about nothing.

CELESTE
Susie--

SUSAN
I should have known, I should have known, anytime anyone sticks their head above water, it gets chopped off.

ISIDORA
I'm not chopping anything. Do what you want, I can say what I feel.

DORA
I liked the statement. I'll vote for it.

LIZZIE
Oh, there's no vote, it's a consensus based model.

ISIDORA
Consensus! Ha!

CELESTE
(To Isidora.) Okay, take it // down a notch--

LIZZIE
(Stung.) What's your point.

ISIDORA
My point is—

SUSAN
I didn't even have a point.

ISIDORA
My point is, we argue, we talk about these things, we define blah blah, how are we going to do it? How are we going to make anything happen, you see?

MARGIE
(Over all of them.) I'll tell you how.

Everyone looks at her.

MARGIE
Can I speak?

TAIBI MAGAR

She looks to Lizzie.

LIZZIE
It’s not up to me.

MARGIE
Well, who is it up to, then?

LIZZIE
(A bit pouty.) I don’t know. I mean I brought a prompt for today, but, nobody cares, we’re clearly doing something else.

CELESTE
(To Susan.) You have a feather, right here.

SUSAN
// (Picking a feather out of her hair.) I do? Shit.

DORA
(To Lizzie.) // If you want to do the prompt let’s do the prompt—

CELESTE
(Still to Susan) I got it for you.

LIZZIE
(To Dora.) No, I don’t even want to, I don’t even care--

MARGIE
(Over them all.) Oh Christ. I’m speaking, I’m speaking. I did something this today, okay? Okay? If you want us to do things. I did something. This is what I’m talking about.

She lights a cigarette.

MARGIE
This does not leave this room.

They all nod agreement.

MARGIE
So. You know my husband.

DORA
(Quietly.) You stabbed him.

CELESTE
(To Dora.) Let Margie talk. Did you?

MARGIE
Well…

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
Holy shit.

MARGIE
You know, I've been coming here, and everybody's been very brave, and sharing, and having these dreams and these "breakthroughs."

LIZZIE
I haven't had a breakthrough, I pitch ten stories a week, I camp out at the politics desk—

ISIDORA
It's not only work--

DORA
Mine wasn't a breakthrough--

SUSAN
Don't minimize it.

DORA
It really wasn't. They're still deciding.

MARGIE
Deciding what?

DORA
They don't want me to quit, they don't want to promote me, and I refuse to report to Ray. It's a mess. (To Margie.) Sorry, go ahead.

MARGIE
That's all right. I asked.

DORA
You were saying.

MARGIE
Yes. I…

Pause.

MARGIE
Where was I?

So. A few weeks ago, I come home, I come home from this group actually, and I say to Burt, "Hello, Burt."

And, he doesn't know about us, he doesn't care where I go, but I decide to tell him, I say, "Burt, come to think of it, I was just at my CR group. Women's Lib."

TAIBI MAGAR

I then have to explain what that is.

So I explain the whole thing and then he says, he goes, "Well, all right dear, but don't go too far."

They all react to that.

MARGIE
Don't go too far. And it's just, I can just feel the bars, you know, the bars of my cage… Don't go too far.

And so that night, I can't sleep, so I, so I just stay up and I decide to write a list. Just a little list of the tasks that I do. That I have done. For the past forty-five years.

Buy the groceries, make the breakfasts make the lunches, make the dinners, do the dishes, sweep the floors, mop the floors, wipe down the counter, polish the furniture, dust the furniture, vacuum the carpets, clean the toilets, scrub the showers, do the laundry, iron the laundry, fold the laundry, make the bed, wash the windows, weed the window boxes, water the plants, feed the cat, clean the litterbox, take the cat to the vet, pick the cat hair off of the sofa, dig the cat hair out of the carpet, organize the house, put the winter clothes away in summer, put the summer clothes away in winter, remember the birthdays buy the presents wrap the presents replace the batteries replace the lightbulbs replace the worn out socks and underwear replace the sponges replace the air fresheners replace the toilet paper on the toilet paper holder. It's about a three page list. And my handwriting is small. Neat.

Pause.

MARGIE
And I leave this list— my little list—I leave it on the living room mantle with a little sign that says:

"Dear Burt. Read this, please." I'm very polite.

And I ask him to please check off anything from the list that *he* might be willing to do. Of course I can do it all myself, especially now that the boys are gone. But maybe I'd like to have a little free time to… Well, I don't know what I'd do.

So, a week goes by. Then another week. We all keep meeting here, and I'm waiting to come in and tell you all about this triumph, this victory, show you this checked off list with, you know, a more equal division of the tasks in our home—

But I can't. Because Burt, he still hasn't read it. He doesn't touch it. I know he sees it, because it's right next to his TV guide, and he likes to look through the TV guide and check off the programs he's

TAIBI MAGAR

watched every week. So he's checking off the shows in the TV guide list, but he won't even look at my list. My checklist.

The women all stare at her.
A bit terrified of what's next.

MARGIE
And so. This morning. I don't know what it was…

No, I do know. I do know. (She looks at them, realizing.) I think it was that I knew I was going to see all of you.

So I come down to the kitchen and I make the coffee just like always, and I start to make breakfast, but instead of plating the eggs, I just smash the plate on the floor. And then I, I just, I take every other plate and cup and glass down from the shelves and I smash them all on the floor.

And then Burt comes downstairs. He must have heard the noise, everyone in the neighborhood must have heard the noise, but he comes downstairs very calmly, not batting an eye. And he sees me standing there barefoot in my bathrobe in the middle of this huge pile of broken dishes, the stuff we'd eaten our dinner and lunch and breakfast on every single day of our lives. And he looks at me for a very, a long time.

And he pours himself coffee in a bowl.

DORA
You forgot the…

MARGIE
I forgot the fucking bowls.

SUSAN
I've revised my opinion, I think you should kill him.

LIZZIE
Just leave him.

MARGIE
On what grounds? He'd never agree to divorce. He'd be lost, he can't even turn the oven on. And anyway, even if he did-- where would I go?

CELESTE
Who cares, anywhere, you know, who cares--

MARGIE
I've never paid a bill. I don't have a bank account. I can't drive.

TAIBI MAGAR

Well, that's a big problem already, *carissima.*

SUSAN
You could come hang with me.

MARGIE
Live in your car?

SUSAN
There's a backseat.

MARGIE
That's very kind. But my point is, the point I'm trying to make is, as the only married one here—

DORA
(Re Isidora) She's married.

ISIDORA
For the green card, only.

MARGIE
What I'm trying to say is, take it from me, whatever you do, do not become a wife. Because no matter what they say, the expectations and the rules are not equal. They just are not equal. And they never will be.

SUSAN
Ugh, that word, "wife." It sounds like an insult. No, listen to the difference. (Smoothly.) "Husband." (Sharply.) "Wife." "Here's my wife."

MARGIE
And you think marriage is a trap? Try adding in children.

LIZZIE
(More and more agitated.) Right, but somebody has to have children so humanity can continue.

SUSAN
We can get around that.

LIZZIE
How?

SUSAN
(Obviously.) Artificial wombs

TABI MAGAR

LIZZIE
Seriously? Is that a serious suggestion?

SUSAN
Just ask yourself why. Why do we still need a human womb.

They all look at each other.

ISIDORA
For the fetus?

SUSAN
Bullshit. It's because throughout history women have been *intentionally* kept at the mercy of our biology. And if we posit, this is Marx now—

ISIDORA
Okay, not with the Marx—

SUSAN
If we posit that the elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the proletariat // and the seizure of the means of production, then it follows--

ISIDORA
No, no, no, not with the Marx // again--

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
Hear her out.

SUSAN
It follows that the elimination of *sexual* classes requires the seizure of the means of—

DORA
Reproduction.

SUSAN
Reproduction. If there were *artificial wombs*, readily available to all people, children could be born to all people equally, the unequal division of labor would be ended, the tyranny of our biology would be broken, and along with it the psychology of power and the aggressive chauvinism determined to destroy us.

LIZZIE
It seems hard.

SUSAN
Hard? Really? We can travel to the moon. We've made a bomb that obliterates— no, vaporizes a hundred thousand people in an instant. We can make an artificial womb. Why don't we. Here's the truth: They don't want us free. They don't want us free. They want us chained up like breed cows. If men could get pregnant, they'd have invented mechanical wombs to replace the real ones the same way the tractor replaced a plough and horses.

Lizzie turns to the audience.
Shift.

LIZZIE
Okay. Time out. Hi. Look, I just wanted to say, for me, me, hi, me again, I kind of liked being pregnant. It felt powerful. Giving birth.

SUSAN
Shitting a pumpkin.

LIZZIE
What I'm trying to say is, I'm not sure I would have wanted to outsource it to a machine. (To the audience.) I don't know if I mentioned earlier, I have two children, the little one's a boy, the older one is— they're still figuring it out--

CELESTE
And let me guess, you stayed home to raise them.

TABI MAGAR

LIZZIE
(To the audience.) No, I was, you know, I tried to keep working—but pretty soon it was like the cost of someone taking care of the kids was more than I could make doing freelance assignments.

And my husband wasn't going to stop working because he earns more than I do, you know? And so then I thought, okay, I'll just write a novel during their naps-- some women seem to do that just fine— but I, I'd just like curl up under my desk in fetal position-- and so then I just thought like, that's okay, I'll just die here—

Because I couldn't see another way out. And I couldn't talk about it, of course I couldn't talk about it. Because every time a woman "finds herself" in mid-life it always seems to involve her blowing everything up and running out on her life-- which I don't want to do.

MARGIE
Don't you, though?

LIZZIE
(A realization, honest.) I don't know. I… I think I'm a little bit… I don't know. Anyway, this isn't about me.

ISIDORA
// Ha.

CELESTE
Yeah, you keep telling yourself // that.

LIZZIE
// What I mean is, I don't want—

CELESTE
"It's not about me, but it is about me!"

SUSAN
Classic insecure narcissism—

LIZZIE
(Over them all.) Fine, you know what? Let's go back to the '70's—

SUSAN
Is it safer // there?

LIZZIE
Okay, ha ha, thank you, everyone, shut the fuck up.

Shift.

TAIBI MAGAR

Celeste sits alone, reading.
After a moment, Isidora comes in.

Lizzie sits on the bleachers to watch.

ISIDORA
Where's all the others? I'm thinking I'm late--

CELESTE
You're early. I just, I had to get out of my mother's house before she called for more cheese.

ISIDORA
How is your mother?

CELESTE
(Not looking up, not good news.) Hanging in.

ISIDORA
Ah, I see.

Isidora sprays the air.

ISIDORA
Are the boys getting more putrid or I am getting less tolerant? Who can say?

Celeste does not look up.

ISIDORA
What are you reading?

CELESTE
I was working on my book. And then, um, Susie actually gave me some of her writing to edit, so I'm taking a look at that too.

ISIDORA
How is it? Is it crazy bananas?

CELESTE
I mean it's a mess, it's all over the place— some of her ideas are— pretty far out // there—

ISIDORA
Yes, well, of course.

CELESTE
But also— it might be— no, it's definitely-- brilliant.

Celeste looks genuinely taken by the writing.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
Yes. Well. Brava, brava, good for her.

Celeste goes back to reading.
Isidora watches her with envy.

ISIDORA
You know, I think I saw you once.

CELESTE
What do you mean?

ISIDORA
Back in New York, when we were both doing the civil rights— at a march-- you were marching with the, with the Radicalesbians.

CELESTE
I don't think so.

ISIDORA
No, I think // it was you.

CELESTE
I think you're mixing up your Black people.

ISIDORA
No, I remember, the glasses. Anyway. When I saw you—*again*— I could tell right away.

CELESTE
What?

ISIDORA
That you and I— we're the only— true "radicals" in the group.

CELESTE
I'm not sure I'd call myself a "radical." In my experience, the radicals have just as many rules as anyone else.

ISIDORA
You're not clawing your way up some corporate patriarchy like Dora. You're not writing the little bourgeois weddings like, Lizzie being like, I'm not the leader! But I am the leader! They say they want equality, they really want power. It's all anyone ever wants, power, really, who can blame them?

CELESTE
Uh-huh.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
Then there's Susan, totally brainwashed by lefty dogma, or the bourgeois housewife Margie, with her cheese--

CELESTE
Aren't you married? Speaking of bourgeois.

ISIDORA
For the green card, you know that.

CELESTE
I bet you like the credit card too.

ISIDORA
I don't have credit card. Okay, fine, yes, he got me credit card--

CELESTE
So less bourgeois more prostitute?

ISIDORA
(Laughs.) I take prostitute over bourgeois any day.

CELESTE
Okay, okay—

ISIDORA
I'm for decriminalizing the sex work, aren't you?

CELESTE
I am generally opposed to the commodification of the female body. Or any body, for that matter—

ISIDORA
So you don't like the sex work?

CELESTE
What are we talking about right now?

ISIDORA
I'm trying to figure out where you stand.

CELESTE
(Exasperated.) I'm for the end of oppression— economic, class-based, sex-based, race-based— I reject pedestals, I reject walking ten paces behind, to be recognized as human, levelly human, that is what I want.

ISIDORA
Sounds good. You say all that, it sounds good, it sounds very good, but can you do something about it.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
As in?

ISIDORA
As in the Strike for Equality is coming next week, nobody's even talking about it.

CELESTE
Isn't that Betty Friedan's thing?

ISIDORA
Fuck Betty Friedan. It's fifty years since the right to vote— this date belongs to all of us.

CELESTE
Don't you hate Betty Friedan?

ISIDORA
This is not about Betty Friedan. She's doing something in New York, fine, we do something here, something more brave, more radical--

CELESTE
Like what?

ISIDORA
We walk out. Domestic labor too, no housework no nothing.

CELESTE
(Not entirely convinced.) Okay, but I don't know if you can just ask people to walk out on their jobs, their families--

ISIDORA
Where is your courage? "We have a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws."

CELESTE
Did you just quote Dr. King to me?

ISIDORA
I'm only saying, if we follow the rules— rules we had nothing to do with— if we stay small, if we sit on our butts and talk and talk and talk and do nothing? We are playing right into their fucking hands. Right into their fucking hands.

Celeste thinks, shakes her head.

ISIDORA
I know you understand what I'm saying here. You marched with the Radicalesbians. I know, I know you're a… You're a…

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
A what?

ISIDORA
Radical.

CELESTE
You know, if you saw me-- which you didn't— who were *you* marching with?

ISIDORA
I was just passing by.

CELESTE
Uh-huh. 'Cause I can't exactly tell if you're threatening me or hitting on me. Badly.

ISIDORA
You know, my family are immigrants.

CELESTE
Yeah, I figured that.

ISIDORA
Illegal. I come to Los Angeles when I'm twelve— my father winds up in jail— long story-- my mother, she is left alone with the seven kids. Seven kids. So yeah, she melts down, gives me away to the nuns.

CELESTE
I'm sorry.

ISIDORA
Don't be. Those nuns were monsters, but at least they were women in leadership positions.

CELESTE
Sure.

ISIDORA
My Dad was the Catholic. My mom was a Jew, though I didn't know it for years— I remember one time I ask her what our religion is, she says, "poor." We weren't even considered white, they called us Italians.

CELESTE
What's your point?

ISIDORA
My point. My point is we may be more the same than you think we are.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
(Slowly, carefully.) You don't know what I think.

Shift.
Interview mode.

LIZZIE
I wish I could ask her.

ISIDORA
Celeste? She died, maybe age sixty, sixty-five or something, terrible cancer, terrible.

LIZZIE
But she was there?

ISIDORA
She was there, yes, she came to the meetings. Most of the time.

LIZZIE
I wonder what she was thinking.

CELESTE
I'm right here.

LIZZIE
Right, but— okay— I guess I can ask-- what do you feel? About any of this? Do you even want to be here? Do you even want to stay?

CELESTE
What does it say, in the book? My book?

Lizzie finds the book, a slim, orange volume.

LIZZIE
Oh. Yeah. Your book, my mom kept it on her shelf, wait okay-- it says, um, you say, "Radical feminism is working for the eradication of domination and elitism in *all* human relationships. It would make self-determination the ultimate good and require the downfall of society as we know it today."

CELESTE
The downfall of society.

LIZZIE
Yeah.

CELESTE
I was young. Although, you know, if you look around, at where society is, it may be necessary. Urgent, actually. But after the downfall,

TAIBI MAGAR

you'd have to rebuild it, right? So that's the hard part. And I think if I could rebuild the world how I wanted it, create my "utopia, I wouldn't pick self-determination as the ultimate good. Self-determination has to be balanced with community. And conscience.

Lizzie and Isidora take that in.

CELESTE
And speaking of community, about that conversation we just had, I want to say, I don't really know that protesting changes anything— (To Isidora.) Don't mean to piss on your parade. Maybe we're all supposed to agree that it does, but--

ISIDORA
No, I know what you mean now, of course I know now— looking back—

CELESTE
It sort of feels like they just laugh at everyone marching around and waving their signs and, like, here we are, like, wringing our hands, and doing plays about feminism. (To Liz.) No disrespect.

LIZZIE
It's fine.

CELESTE
What I'm trying to say is, I'm not sure any of it does anything. I'm not sure what I'm even doing here, to be honest. Like, what is my presence doing here, in this story? I struggle with that, I do.

LIZZIE
But she was here. You were here. You stayed.

Pause.
A decision.

CELESTE
So if she stayed, I'll stay.

Abrupt shift.
Back to the group.

Everyone is there, gathered.
We've come in right in the middle—

MARGIE
So we just walk out? On everything?

ISIDORA
It's a strike, yes, this is what strike means // yes.

DORA
I can't walk out on work. Mitch Masterson--

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
(Faux horror.) Oh no, not Mitch // Masterson!

DORA
It’s my livelihood, Dora— you have a husband—

ISIDORA
It’s one day of a strike. It will be fine—

LIZZIE
You don’t // know that.

MARGIE
What are we striking for // exactly?

ISIDORA
The obvious things, have you been paying attention--

SUSAN
Isn’t this Betty Friedan’s thing?

ISIDORA
(Exasperated.) This is our thing! I talk to my boss, channel five, I try to get us on TV.

LIZZIE
My problem is, as a journalist, really, it’s my job to report the news, not make it.

ISIDORA
You do weddings // and obituaries.

LIZZIE
Right, but not forever, I am working my way up—

DORA
There’s nothing that says a reporter can’t strike for equality

LIZZIE
Right, sure, that’s not true, there is, actually, there are rules about what you can and cannot do as a journalist-- but on top of that, it’s just that my boss— he’s just, he’s like everyone, he doesn’t get it—

ISIDORA
This is how we make them get it!

LIZZIE
(Making her case.) We could get arrested, we could get shot—

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
You're not getting shot.

LIZZIE
Oh really? Because the Ohio National Guard doesn't exactly have the greatest track record of not shooting people.

CELESTE
She's right.

ISIDORA
We're not doing anything violent.

CELESTE
You think that matters?

LIZZIE
One of those girls at Kent State was just walking to class.

SUSAN
What *are* we doing?

ISIDORA
I have this all planned. First, we shut down the traffic with the banner.

SUSAN
(To Celeste.) Shut down // traffic.

ISIDORA
Then we go from car to car and we give them the flyers.

DORA
What flyers?

ISIDORA
On the back we put our names—

MARGIE
I can't put my married name— Burt would—

ISIDORA
Put whatever the hell name you want! And we put lists of telephone numbers for help for women— things women need, driving lessons, finance lessons, domestic violence hotlines, rape crisis, the one safe abortion referral service—

LIZZIE
How do you even know what that is?

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
How do you think I know?

A pause.

LIZZIE
My boss will never ever put me on politics if I'm out there on the streets shutting down traffic.

ISIDORA
He's never putting you on politics anyway, *bambina*, wake up—

LIZZIE
(Exploding.) You don't know that! You don't know that. You cannot just take over the group, the mission of the group—

ISIDORA
If we don't take action, we have no group. It's a pointless group, it's not a group.

LIZZIE
Don't say that.

ISIDORA
Celeste is in, we know this.

SUSAN
You are?

CELESTE
I mean, sure, why not. But that doesn't mean--

ISIDORA
That's two already, two out of six.

SUSAN
(To Celeste.) Well, if you're in, I'm in.

CELESTE
You don't have to—

SUSAN
Hey, if I get arrested, at least I get to spend a night outta my car.

ISIDORA
Very good. So. Even division now, who's breaking the tie?

DORA
(Diving in, suddenly.) Okay, I'll come. I'm going to come! Ray can get through a day without me, I mean, God, maybe they'll even see how much they need me. Give me a sign! Take me to the clink. Is that what they still call it— the clink-- I love you all, I do and I don't even

TAIBI MAGAR

care if I get arrested, this is— I'm sorry, I'm sorry to sound corny right now-- but honestly— this is sisterhood, this is what sisterhood is all about.

ISIDORA
Brava, Dora. Brava.

She looks to Margie and Lizzie.

ISIDORA
So?

CELESTE
You can come or not, it's fine— take your time--

ISIDORA
Don't take too long, strike is in less than a week. Strike for equality! Unless equality isn't really what you want.

Isidora starts to gather her things.

LIZZIE
Come on, don't do that— Dora—

ISIDORA
I see the rest of you at the strike—

LIZZIE
This is stupid. It's unfair.

ISIDORA
(To Celeste.) We go to start the flyers, yes? I have the mimeograph at my place--

CELESTE
Sure. I can help. Susie, are you…

SUSAN
I guess, okay.

ISIDORA
(Slightly disappointed, re Susie.) You do? Okay, why not, let's go--

LIZZIE
Wait, I don't want this to ruin the group, this is silly—

MARGIE
It's not going to ruin the group.

LIZZIE
But it feels like it. It feels like it won't be the same.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
That's up to you.

They go out.
Only Celeste lingers.

CELESTE
Just do what you want. That's the whole point.

LIZZIE
Is it?
Isidora comes back.

ISIDORA
You coming, Celeste?

Celeste goes.
Lizzie and Margie are left alone.

MARGIE
Nobody ate my cheeseball.

Margie starts to wrap it back up and put it in Tupperware.

MARGIE
Do you want it?

Lizzie shakes her head.

LIZZIE
What are you going to do?

MARGIE
I'm imagining the look on Burt's face if I just walk out. The man has no idea how to work the coffeemaker, I'm sure of it. I'll come home, I promise you, he will be standing in front of the coffee machine tears running down his cheeks just babbling to himself. I do like the idea of that.

LIZZIE
There really is a journalistic code. I didn't make that up. I'm not supposed to participate or advocate or agitate--

MARGIE
I know. But I think the point is. The old codes don't work anymore.

Lizzie takes that in.

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
Life goes by fast, Lizzie. And most of it is pretty unmemorable, that's the truth. I mean, I think back on the days I can remember, I can count them on my two hands. The day of my wedding. The birth of my kids. Their graduation days… And the truth is… Every memorable thing has a kid or a husband in it. But now… Well, I don't know, guess I think this Strike for Equality might be something I remember for me.

Pause.

MARGIE
You started the group. None of us would be here without you.

LIZZIE
Yeah, I started the group now I'm the biggest coward in it.

MARGIE
I wouldn't say coward…

LIZZIE
Then what?

MARGIE
You want a revolution, but you want it on your terms and you don't want to have to give up anything to get it.

LIZZIE
Okay. But also…

MARGIE
What?

LIZZIE
Why are women always the ones who have to give things up?

MARGIE
I don't know.

LIZZIE
And also, isn't there any room for nuance or difference— why does everyone have to do the same thing—

MARGIE
Okay, then don't come—

LIZZIE
I want to come, I do, but I have worked so hard for the little bit I have—

MARGIE
Weddings // and obits.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
No, I know, but it's something, it could be something someday--

MARGIE
Yes, and you could get ahead, and the world would still be exactly the same.

LIZZIE
Okay. Okay. I'm with you. I am with you. I'll come.

MARGIE
I knew you'd come around. You just like to be difficult. // You make things so complicated. You do.

LIZZIE
I do not. I do not. I do not.

MARGIE
Good.

LIZZIE
"Sisters Unite."

Margie picks up the cheeseball.

MARGIE
I'm going to go eat this on the bus.

Lizzie laughs.

LIZZIE
I'll see you at the strike.

MARGIE
I'll see you at the strike.

Margie kisses Lizzie and goes. Lizzie sits for a moment, feeling victorious.

The door opens.

LIZZIE
Margie?

It's Bill.
He's in athletic wear, holding a basketball.

BILL
Oh. Hi. Sorry, they said you were…

Pause.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
We are.

BILL
They said you were done.

LIZZIE
We are, we're just--

BILL
I don't mean to—

LIZZIE
Nope, you're not.

BILL
Interrupt—

LIZZIE
You're not, really— we're done.

She looks at him, then quickly starts to pack up her bag and go.

He takes off his jacket, grabs a ball.

BILL
I like to shoot around a little after work. // Blow off steam.

LIZZIE
Uh-huh, okay. Let me just--

She starts to clear the remaining chairs.

BILL
Here, let me.

LIZZIE
No, I got it.

BILL
Let me.

LIZZIE
Okay, thanks.

They clear the chairs together.
He starts to shoot around.

Lizzie looks out to the audience, back in the present now.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
I guess I should say— I guess I should probably say— I should-- we should probably take a break now.

She has a sudden flood of emotion.

LIZZIE
Because— I can't really-- it's so strange, it's so strange to see him like this, so young.

She watches Bill play.

LIZZIE
This is my dad.

Bill shoots—

The ball goes in.

Blackout.

End of Act One.

TAIBI MAGAR

ACT TWO

The same basketball court.

The door has been covered with a sheet and barricaded with a few chairs.

The women all sit awkwardly.

They are awkward because they are completely naked.

MARGIE
This may be taking things a step too far.

ISIDORA
My butt, the flesh of my buttock is sticky to the chair.

CELESTE
It doesn't seem sanitary.

SUSAN
(Worried.) You don't think so? One time I got crabs from a beach towel.

DORA
Will you all relax? This is what *Ms. Magazine* said // to do.

SUSAN
Ms. Magazine? That's where you saw this?

LIZZIE
This was not in *Ms. Magazine*.

DORA
All the groups are doing it— the radical groups too— especially the radicals--

SUSAN
(Still on her track.) *Ms.* showing up like they invented feminism, we've been meeting and doing shit for how many years?

LIZZIE
(Aside, to the audience.) It's *three years* later. And it's very weird to be talking to you naked-- so let me just say— it's insane to me that my mother ever did this-- I mean I never even saw her naked— and she did go to that Strike for Equality and in the years that followed she went to all kinds of protests and marches and the group even started a newsletter, yeah, you know what? This is too weird, never mind, we'll get back to it later--

TABI MAGAR

Lizzie turns back to the group.

DORA
Also, I think in New York, the Redstockings meet in the nude all the time.

CELESTE
(Re the Redstockings.) Not all the time, but they do-- not that I ever did.

ISIDORA
I love the naked, I feel great. I don't care, in Italy there's the nude beaches— I'll do every meeting naked, let's go, I don't give a shit.

MARGIE
All right, well, now that we've done it, can we put our clothes back on?

DORA
Wait, no, look, I too would rather we not be doing this here--

LIZZIE
Yes.

SUSAN
Gonna get athlete's foot in my crotch.

DORA
And we'd probably honestly be more comfortable in some soft mood lighting in somebody's home— but-- nobody seemed to have a home where they could have a bunch of naked ladies sitting around—

MARGIE
No.

DORA
And it's not like we can meet in your car.

SUSAN
I sold the car.

ISIDORA
// You did?

DORA
Where are you living?

SUSAN
(Casually.) With—

TAIBI MAGAR

She gestures to Celeste.

ISIDORA
(To Celeste, very thrown.) But you live with your mother.

CELESTE
It’s a big house.

SUSAN
I bought a bike with the car money. A Harley.

MARGIE
// God help us all.

LIZZIE
Good for you.

SUSAN
You want to talk real liberation? Pushing eighty on four hundred pounds of leather and chrome. I oughta ride naked, I’m gonna try it--

MARGIE
Can we please get on with this? It’s drafty.

DORA
Right, well, okay— honestly, so now— the idea is we all go around and say one thing we love and one thing we hate about our bodies.

MARGIE
I’ll start. I can start, let’s get this over with. What is it again? Something I love about my body? Can I come back to that?

DORA
Sure.

MARGIE
Something I hate about my body is this scar.

She points to her stomach.

MARGIE
It’s the scar from my, from my C section. Both of my C sections. And I know it shouldn’t bother me, but it’s ugly. It just is. And I hate the way my— my skin sort of pooches out over it and then makes this kind of disgusting fat shelf-- I hate it so much-- and it’s bumpy and long, and I hate that, that it feels unfair somehow? Like, my children, my sons, they got life, and my husband got the family he wanted, and I ended up this sad husk with this hideous scar. I mean I love my sons, don’t get me wrong, it’s all worth it blah blah, but you know. I’ll come back to the part of my body I love. Somebody else.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
I think you have to say something.

MARGIE
Well, I can’t think of anything.

DORA
But there has to be something.

MARGIE
Easy for you to say—

SUSAN
Drop it, Dora

DORA
No, it’s part of the work, self-love, it’s, it’s an act of liberation—

MARGIE
Well, it doesn’t feel very liberating // right now—

DORA
But that’s why you have to—

MARGIE
Please don’t tell me what I have // to do—

DORA
You have to do it—

MARGIE
You are a child. You are a child, I’m sorry, just please don’t tell me // what I have to do.

DORA
Okay. Okay.

MARGIE
Fine. I’ll say something. I’ll say something. And none of you will understand this because you’re all so young.

I like that my body still works. I like that my knees bend. I like that my heart beats. (Checks.) Yeah, it’s still going. When you get older, if you live long enough, you get to watch as your body slowly *descends*. No, really. It's like, it’s like watching something on the shore slowly get pulled out to sea. And I like, I love that I’m not lost in the ocean. Well, not yet anyway. That’s it.

Pause.
They all take that in.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
I'll tell you something I love. I love my tits. I love them in a tank top, or the sexy blouse, you know, just pop them up a little bit like this and you know, you know what you do when you lean forward a little and you see the eyes on the tits and you know you get anything you want. Okay, so yeah, fuck off, I'm a radical, sure, but this tits thing, it works. Fuck you all, you've all done it, everyone's done it, I've seen the nuns do it— I swear to fucking God-- you've all worked the tits, if you have tits. What don't I like? Let me think. My toe.

MARGIE
Your toe.

ISIDORA
It's crooked. I was eight, my father, he stomped on it in a boot when I'm in bare feet.

CELESTE
By accident?

Isidora shakes her head.

ISIDORA
It's okay. My mother, she had it worse. And, you know, of course, each time we had no money for the doctor, and now I have no money because I'm a stupid coffee girl, and my husband won't pay to fix a "stupid little toe" and I can't divorce him even though I'm a citizen now because Ohio won't pass the stupid no-fault divorce law-- so here I am, land of the free, I get stuck, what a joke, who's next.

They all look to one another.

ISIDORA
Go ahead. Go.

CELESTE
Well. Okay.

ISIDORA
Go.

CELESTE
Frankly, I don't exactly think we should be focusing on appearance at all. I think this is the exact trap they want us in, objectifying ourselves, talking about our bodies when we should be having a more— a more elevated intellectual kind of a discourse—

SUSAN
Agree.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
Also, I'm cold.

SUSAN
You want my jacket?

CELESTE
Well, I think that sort of defeats the—

SUSAN
Oh right, right, right.

CELESTE
So. That aside. I'm going to try to quickly think of how to— what to say that's honest— and constructive— and won't piss me off. And I'll just say. I can just say— my whole body— my entire body— is something the world has been at war with for a very long time. I can't really isolate out one part more than another. It's the fact of being in a body that is often unwelcome--

SUSAN
You shouldn't—

CELESTE
It's okay. It feels good to say it actually.

SUSAN
You're not unwelcome, that's all I'm saying.

CELESTE
Thanks. Thank you. But I'm telling you how it feels. And how it's been. And let's be honest, how it still is. And then… Something I love about my body is… My brain. And you can tell me that doesn't count, but I'm counting it because it's a body part. I do love my brain.

SUSAN
You have a great brain.

CELESTE
Thanks. You want to go?

SUSAN
Me? Oh. Ass good, tits feh.

DORA
Feh, like, as in…? Do you want to elaborate?

SUSAN
No.

TABI MAGAR

DORA
Okay. So then… Lizzie?

LIZZIE
I'll say something I like. My eyes. I get compliments on my eyes, or I have anyway. Sorry if that's a boring answer.

DORA
No apologies.

LIZZIE
Right. So. Hate? I hate a lot of parts. Like, depending on the day and how many French fries I've eaten— but most consistently, I'm going to say something that's a little bit weird maybe and I've never told anyone this before— but it's true— this is true. I hate my nostrils.

ISIDORA
What is wrong with your nostrils?

LIZZIE
They're too flared. My first boyfriend, in high school, he told me I looked like an angry horse.

MARGIE
I hope you broke up with him immediately.

LIZZIE
Not 'cause of that, but eventually, yeah. But ever since, I'm always terrified people are looking up my nose. I know it sounds crazy.

CELESTE
There's nothing wrong with your nostrils.

LIZZIE
So I have this thing that I do. Whenever I meet someone. I just put my head down. Like this. (She bows her head.) So, they don't notice my nostrils.

DORA
So you've spent your whole life with your head bowed because of something some little prick said about your nostrils.

LIZZIE
Well… Yeah.

SUSAN
That's bad, that's really bad.

LIZZIE
I know.

TAIBI MAGAR

Lizzie holds up her head in defiance.

LIZZIE
Someone else, who's left?

DORA
I'll tell you. I do love my hair, I've always had good hair, and--

ISIDORA
You could pick anything. Just pick everything and get it over with.

MARGIE
It's annoying.

DORA
(A flash of anger.) This is what *I* love about myself. I get to pick whatever I want.

ISIDORA
All right, all right, *calmati*. I'm sorry.

DORA
I'm— I don't mean to— it just gets a little bit exhausting. Go ahead. Roll your eyes. Nobody feels bad for me, I don't expect them to.

But it's not fun, okay? Dolly this, Dolly that, it gets old. And honestly, I think, I think this is why I've never had an orgasm.

A few of the women try not to smile.

DORA
Because— yes, go ahead, laugh-- it's funny, I know it's funny-- but it's also really— it's sort of really sad because the reason I can't have an orgasm is because I can't actually feel anything. Like a little doll doesn't suddenly have a big, fat mind-blowing-- and then this weird moment always happens, right? When Alan, after we, you know, he'll say to me, "How was that for you, babe?" And I'm like: "Huh. How *was* that for me?" And I consult the empty air inside my little doll head and I'm like… I don't actually know. I have no idea.

SUSAN
You need to break up with that guy.

DORA
That's not the point— you all date people. (re Lizzie) She dates people-

LIZZIE
Not really, not seriously, nobody--

ISIDORA
You're on the pill, yes?

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
You need to dump him.

DORA
I can't dump him. No, really I can't. My mother would never speak to me again. She keeps telling me, no matter how much I stay the course at work, keep toiling away, I'm still going to wind an old, lonely, spinster, an old childless lonely woman, a total disappointment, and what if I slip and fall in the bathroom or on the stairs on something? Without a husband, I'll just die. I'll die, I'll just die, childless and alone on my bathroom floor…

Dora starts to get emotional.

DORA
I can't, I don't want to cry naked— I can't— it's too much— you can be naked or you can cry but you can't do both--

Susan throws her a long jacket.
She puts it on, covering herself.

SUSAN
Here's the question. Do you want an unsatisfying love life forever, Dora? Is that what you really want?

DORA
I can't see an alternative.

SUSAN
We'll get to that— first you need to decide. Do you want to live like this forever?

DORA
I'd rather be dead.

SUSAN
Okay.

MARGIE
Okay. So. If you'd rather be dead, why don't you leave him and the worst that happens is you slip in the bathroom and then you'll be dead. So what? At least you will have done what you wanted.

DORA
You don't leave Burt.

MARGIE
Yeah. That's how I know.

Shift.

TAIBI MAGAR

Everyone goes, except for Lizzie and Dora. Lizzie turns to the audience, putting her clothes back on.

LIZZIE
Phew, that's better— that was, I mean-- wait wait wait wait wait I just have ask--

She turns to Dora. Interview mode.

LIZZIE
You really broke off your relationship because of the group?

DORA
(Nods.) They saved my life. Without them, I never would have dared to push for a decent life, for a decent sex life—

LIZZIE
You don't think you would have found a way?

DORA
I would never have had the career I had.

LIZZIE
Right, the career, you mean--

DORA
I traveled the world, I took so many tiny little brands and made them huge--

LIZZIE
So, but my question is, if you had the courage-- why couldn't my mom?

DORA
Why couldn't she what?

LIZZIE
She wound up in such a traditional marriage.

DORA
Maybe that was what she wanted.

LIZZIE
I don't think so. I really don't think so.

DORA
Your dad was handsome. I remember. They had a good time.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
Right, but come on, that's not— anyway, I don't want to make this about him. A man. He's really not the point at all--

DORA
Hold on— (Calls to the wings.) Come out here. What was his name again? Bill?

LIZZIE
No no no, wait— I will be very annoyed if this becomes all about--

Bill comes in, straightening his tie. He's dressed and pressed, in a sharp suit.

DORA
Whoa. You gotta admit, he looks good.

BILL
Oh. Thanks.

DORA
I might've hit that too.

LIZZIE
Can you not? That's my dad.

DORA
(Starting to go.) I'm kidding, Jesus, I like my choices.

Dora leaves.

BILL
Lizzie, are you ready?

And the world shifts back to the 1970's.

LIZZIE
I actually— hold on— (To the audience.) Sorry, you all are way ahead of me on this— but, yeah, I can't actually play this next scene with my dad because— much too creepy. Yeah. So… (Calls to the wings.) Can anyone— can anyone else— can someone else come be my mom for a minute? Anyone? Because, I want to see it. I do want to see what happened, what kind of a magic spell she was under— but-- can anyone, please?

Joanne appears from the wings.

JOANNE
I'll do it.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
Oh. Are you sure?

JOANNE
I mean, I haven't really done much so far, so, why not?

LIZZIE
Right--

JOANNE
Like, I just came in looking for a backpack for a hot second. I'm not even sure why I was there. I'm being under-utilized. Not the first time. I don't know if you had a plan for me or…

LIZZIE
(To the audience.) This is Joanne, by the way—

JOANNE
(Also to the audience.) Yeah, hi.

LIZZIE
And I do have a plan— well, kind of— but, yeah, actually if you don't mind being my mom for this part—

JOANNE
I mean, it's not ideal?

LIZZIE
Right. Maybe it's too weird.

JOANNE
But I wouldn't mind feeling how it feels to be in the center of the story.

LIZZIE
Oh, sure, right. Okay. (Then, hesitantly.) I know that the movement didn't do enough to include everyone--

JOANNE
Okay, here we go.

LIZZIE
And now maybe I haven't--

JOANNE
Not really, nope.

LIZZIE
And I'm sorry. I can't, like, tackle everything--I think I'm doing probably a very bad job of even telling my little—

TAIBI MAGAR

JOANNE
You're actually fine. You're fine.

LIZZIE
Okay. So. All you need to play this next part is--

Lizzie hands her some heels.

JOANNE
Got it.

Lizzie steps back, takes a seat in the bleachers to watch.

Joanne puts on the shoes. She nods to Bill, who re-starts the scene.

BILL
Are you ready?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I thought I said I'd meet you-- at the restaurant.

BILL
Guess I just couldn't wait, could I?

He comes over to her—
Kisses her, a bit handsy.

Lizzie (Joanne) pushes him away gently.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Right, but we had a plan, we were supposed to meet at the-—

BILL
So? I wanted to swing by and pick you up. It's nice, it's just a simple, nice thing to do.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Well, don't. // Don't do that, don't say that--

BILL
Fine. Fine fine fine fine fine.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
If we make a plan, if I say I want a thing, just listen // to the thing I want.

BILL
Whoa. Okay. Don't--

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
What?

BILL
No. (Boy scout pledge, teasing.) I will never pick you up from the group again. I thought I was being romantic. I will never be romantic again.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
That's not what I meant, that's not what // I want—

BILL
Maybe you can make me a list of the approved romantic gestures and the not-approved—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Shut up. Idiot.

She kisses him again, looks to the door.

BILL
Are you scared we'll get caught?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
No. They're all gone anyway.

BILL
They know about me, right?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Of course, they know about you.

BILL
They do.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Of course. I tell them about all my boyfriends—

BILL
(Amused.) Wait, how many are there?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
You're definitely in the top five.

BILL
Lizzie, listen to me, don't you think it's strange that we've been together two years and we still have to sneak around behind your girlfriends'—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Who's sneaking around? I'm not sneaking around. It's just that, well, we have a lot of things to talk about, our love lives don't always

TAIBI MAGAR

make it to the top of the list. I mean, I realize you just want us to sit around gabbing about our boyfriends all day. But we are changing the world, so, yeah, give us a minute.

She starts doing her make-up in a small hand mirror: under eyes, mascara, lipstick, continuing the transformation.

BILL
You don't have to worry about that, you look great.

She shoots him a look. Bill exhales, picks up a basketball, messes around with it.

BILL
Tom and his wife are very nice // you don't have to—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
His "wife?" Tell me her name again?

BILL
Sally?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Uh-huh.

BILL
Molly? Polly? Damn.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Unbelievable.

BILL
That's not my fault! I've barely met her.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I'm not even going to ask you what she does.

BILL
I've barely met her, I told you--

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
And he's a—

BILL
He's a senior partner, and the idea would be, I guess, that if we went to New York—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Bill--

TAIBI MAGAR

BILL
Just hear me out, if we moved to New York, I would be on his "team."

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
So, who's paying for dinner?

BILL
You're missing the point—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
What's the point?

BILL
"New York, New York. A helluva town."

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
(Laughs, confused.) Okay, now I'm lost.

BILL
Lizzie.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
What.

BILL
I— I have to go.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Go, you mean…

BILL
I mean, I want to move there. For good. You know this.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I didn't know that. You never said it like that. I thought it was a decision we'd make together.

BILL
We're not married, you've made it very clear that // you hate the institution—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I hate the institution.

TAIBI MAGAR

BILL
So then don’t ask me for a joint decision.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
So I have to be your “wife” to get a say?

BILL
No, I just, I don’t want to push you. That’s the point, I gain nothing by pushing you // I know that about you by now.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Well, thank you, thank you for not pushing me, but there’s a middle ground between pushing me and like abandoning me to go to New York.

BILL
I’m not abandoning you, and anyway, it’s New York, it’s not like I’m dragging you to some hick—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Oh, now you’re not pushing, you’re dragging—

BILL
What I’m saying is, there’s lots of great opportunity in New York for someone like you. There’s a million magazines, newspapers, you could work at *Ms.*

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Okay, sure.

BILL
Nothing’s going to change if you stay here, this whole place, this whole town is so fucking square, Lizzie and— I’m sorry— it makes me angry—

BILL
I think you’re worth more than weddings and obits.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
// Oh, thanks—

TAIBI MAGAR

BILL
I think you're brilliant— you are, you are brilliant— and you're wasting your talent here, and Kravitz I think made it very clear after the first protest you attended—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
That was just his bullshit excuse— he just hates me—

BILL
That he will never put an activist on the political beat.

Pause.

BILL
Unless, maybe you're afraid.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Afraid of what.

BILL
It's safer here. Don't have to test yourself. // Don't have to see what you're made of in the big city— keep your head bowed--

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
No, come on, stop, no, stop, that's not it.

BILL
So, how about it, then?

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
(Knowing full well.) How about what.

He gets down on one knee.
She stares at him.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
You know I will never, ever agree to a traditional version of marriage. "Man and wife?" I will never agree to that--

BILL
I know that—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I think marriage has to be totally rewritten, I think that has to be a fundamental part of this, our movement, for the health of our entire society— men and women-- it has to be rewritten or abolished. I'm never going to do the traditional thing, let you *purchase me* with a *piece of jewelry*, I mean the fact that it's the 1970's and women are still doing this-- giving up their lives this way, it's just, it sickens me.

TAIBI MAGAR

BILL
I know that.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
And please don’t get down on one knee. Ever.

BILL
(Stands.) Okay.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I mean, if you ever do that again, I mean just— fuck, no.

BILL
Okay, okay.

Bill looks down, as if about to speak. Then stops.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
What?

BILL
Nothing.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
No, what, what is it?

BILL
I mean. Is it just that… Is it just that… You don’t love me enough? Is that the truth? You can tell me. You just don’t love me enough.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
No, that’s not… Have you not been listening to anything I’ve been—

BILL
Yes, of course I’ve been—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Then how can you--

BILL
Because I love you. And to me, marriage is just, it’s a— it’s just a deeper kind of love. It’s a deeper expression of love. And that’s what I want with you. That’s what I feel about you. The deepest possible kind of love.

I know it all has to be rewritten, everything, but you don’t have to do that alone. It’s impossible, actually, for anyone to do it alone, we have to do it together… So, let’s… Let’s rewrite it together.

TAIBI MAGAR

Pause. She softens.
Then:

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
No. No fucking way. It's a barbaric // institution—

BILL
Jesus Christ.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
I've been saying // this all along—

BILL
You've also been saying that Women's Liberation has to partner with men or you don't have a chance.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Yes, just not me // personally—

BILL
Okay, you know what? Forget it--

He starts for the door.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Where are you going--

BILL
Just— forget it— I don't think-- this isn't going to work out—

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Wait— what— no, wait, the dinner--

BILL
Get there yourself.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
Bill--

BILL
Hey, it's fucking Women's Lib. Get there your fucking self!

And he's gone.

Shift.

LIZZIE
I'm sorry, I didn't know he would explode like that // at you—

JOANNE
Yeah. Well. What did you expect? He was hurt.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
You're taking his side?

JOANNE
Did you see? Did you hear what he said? Did you see the look in his eyes? That was no power play, no manipulation… That's the kind of love that… It shatters everything.

LIZZIE
So, you're saying, it's that simple, my mother threw over everything she believed in for— a feeling.

JOANNE
I'm saying they were in love.

LIZZIE
I don't know. They didn't seem so in love when I was growing up.

JOANNE
Nobody seems in love when they're raising children.

LIZZIE
(Touched a nerve.) Oh, so now the problem is me.

JOANNE
I mean, maybe.

LIZZIE
Right, no, that's actually what you're saying—

JOANNE
Look, I'm not saying you single-handedly ruined the Women's Liberation Movement.

LIZZIE
Thanks.

JOANNE
But if you want to talk about love. And freedom? Well, yeah, it's almost impossible to have both. I'm going to go back to looking for that backpack now.

Shift.
Joanne goes back to searching the bleachers.
Lizzie watches.

JOANNE
Goddamnit, Anthony. Goddamnit. Why why why.

She looks some more.
Then sits, defeated.

TAIBI MAGAR

After a moment, Celeste enters.

CELESTE
Oh. Hi.

JOANNE
I’m just—

CELESTE
No, it’s fine— are you here for the--

JOANNE
No no no, I’m just— I’ll get out of your way— I didn’t realize you were starting.

CELESTE
It’s all right. I tend to be early. I live with a bird.

JOANNE
Ah.

CELESTE
No, honestly, don’t let me— interrupt. Take your time.

JOANNE
Thanks, I just need a breath—

CELESTE
I get it.

JOANNE
Feels like I’m always on the run.

CELESTE
Oh, I know, no, I mean, I don’t know, but you-- you take your time.

JOANNE
Thanks.

CELESTE
I think I’ve seen you around here.

JOANNE
I have four boys. They all play basketball.

CELESTE
Ah.

JOANNE
Yeah, and it’s like every week— no, really— every week it seems like one of them forgets his goddamned backpack.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
Oh, right.

JOANNE
And then it's like, it's always— somehow, it's my fault? Know what I mean?

CELESTE
(Laughs.) Of course.

JOANNE
Like, "Mom, why'd you let me leave my backpack here?" And I'm like, "Anthony, I did not *let* you leave your backpack, you are ten years old, you are responsible for your own things." I should just smack him in the face, that's what I should do.

CELESTE
That works.

JOANNE
But instead here I am-- searching for a red and blue Superman backpack when I'm supposed to be home getting dinner ready for him and his brothers— at which point they'll all be yelling at me like, "Oh Mom, I'm hungry, no I don't want the chicken fingers again," meanwhile Anthony's over there like, "Nooo, I can't do my homework, I don't have my backpack," and their father's over there like, "Why can't somebody just get these kids to be quiet?"

CELESTE
I get it.

JOANNE
Do you have kids?

CELESTE
No.

JOANNE
You want mine?

CELESTE
(Laughs.) No.

JOANNE
I should just let it be lost. Teach him a lesson. That's what my mom would have done. I lost something, it was gone. She did not put up with my shit. She did not put up with anything from anyone. She ran her house. She really did.

CELESTE
Yeah, my mother was like that too.

TAIBI MAGAR

JOANNE
Had to be.

CELESTE
Had to be. (Sees something.) Is that— no, that's a jacket.

JOANNE
It's blue and red. Like Superman? The colors of Superman?

Celeste looks around some more.

CELESTE
(Finding something else.) Is this— nope, this is a lunchbox, I think. (Sniffs it.) Ewww, there's still a sandwich inside. How long has // this been here.

JOANNE
Any chips? Cookie?

CELESTE
Nah, this kid's no dummy.

JOANNE
Eh, forget it, sit, You want a cigarette?

Joanne pulls out a pack.

CELESTE
Sure.

JOANNE
Honestly, this? This is about to be the best part of my day.

CELESTE
(Taking the cigarette.) Thanks.

JOANNE
And I don't even know you.

Celeste laughs, lets Joanne light her up.

CELESTE
Sometimes it's easier that way.

JOANNE
You're here for that Women's Lib group thing, right? That's the meeting?

CELESTE
Oh. Yeah.

TAIBI MAGAR

JOANNE
I've seen your newsletter. You have a newsletter, right?

CELESTE
We've done a few things, yeah. Just information, resources—

JOANNE
Yeah, my sister showed it to me.

CELESTE
Is she into the movement?

JOANNE
She's into a lot of things. She's great at math, she makes quilts. I'm like, you could turn this into a business. Does she do it? No. She's a mess.

CELESTE
'Cause anyone can come.

JOANNE
I have children, remember?

CELESTE
(Laughs.) Oh, right.

JOANNE
I have four obnoxious forgetful children between the ages of fifteen and eight— anybody else in the group have that?

CELESTE
No, right, sure, no.

JOANNE
Because no normal woman with school-age children can join a group that meets consistently at six p.m. on a school night.

CELESTE
I guess not.

JOANNE
You make a women's group that women can't come to. See what I mean? And this is exactly— no disrespect— but this is exactly the kind of, the kind of liberal bullshit that drives me bananas.

CELESTE
Oh.

JOANNE
Y'all have no sense.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
Well, you could bring your children, you know.

JOANNE
They have to be eating their dinner, they have to be doing their homework—

CELESTE
They could do their homework here though.

JOANNE
Sure, and what, let them just sit on the bleachers and do math while we all look at our pussies in the mirror? I know what you do. I read *Ms*.

CELESTE
See, you read *Ms*.--

JOANNE
I read it, but I don't do it. I read *Cosmo* too, but I don't buy any sexy lingerie, see what I mean? Telling women what to do, how to live, just let us live our lives. I worked outside the home my whole life. I would welcome a chance to stay home with the kids— make me a rich housewife, lord, my god. Give me that struggle.

CELESTE
Well, I suppose we all have our burdens.

JOANNE
And I fought for civil rights, I did-- I was *there* when Stokely said what he said.

CELESTE
You mean // the only position—

JOANNE
"The only position for women in SNCC is prone?"

CELESTE
Yes, I—

JOANNE
I was there. And you know what? He was joking, he was making a joke--

CELESTE
I guess it's not funny to me.

JOANNE
This is the thing about you radical women // you get so serious about everything—

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
// Okay, okay, let's just not—

JOANNE
You get radical, you lose all sense of humor--

CELESTE
I have a sense of humor.

JOANNE
You don't. I can tell from those glasses you don't. (Looks at her.) I mean, who are you trying to be with those glasses?

CELESTE
I need these glasses to see—

JOANNE
Uh-huh.

CELESTE
I do—

JOANNE
You're sure you're not just trying to blend in? Look smart?

CELESTE
I am smart.

JOANNE
You think if you wear those glasses, those ladies will think you're one of them.

CELESTE
Okay. Good luck with the backpack // I don't know where it is--

JOANNE
They don't care about you— they don't care--

CELESTE
You are way out of line—

JOANNE
They'll go climb the ladder, go write their novels, while they make it big— who's going to be cleaning their houses?

CELESTE
Not me.

JOANNE
(Over her.) Who's going to be watching their children. Their rise depends on keeping us down—

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
That's why we're pushing for universal childcare, unionizing domestic workers, welfare reform—

JOANNE
Uh-huh. You call me when you get all of that.

CELESTE
We got Roe.

JOANNE
"We" didn't get anything. There's no "we." There's us and there's them. And if you can't see that… You need a new pair of glasses.

She gathers her things and goes.

Celeste stands very still.

She takes off her glasses. Considers them. Puts them on the floor. Stomps on them.

Realizes what she's done.

CELESTE
(Quietly, to herself.) Shit.

Celeste starts out. Lizzie stops her--

LIZZIE
Are you--

CELESTE
Can you please not—

LIZZIE
Sure.

CELESTE
Don't.

LIZZIE
Right, okay. I don't know how to--

CELESTE
Maybe just stick to your own story.

LIZZIE
Oh. Okay.

CELESTE
Stick to what you know.

TAIBI MAGAR

Celeste goes, leaving Liz alone.

LIZZIE
Okay. But… Okay. What do I know?

I know my mother. Or I thought I did anyway. No, I do. I do. I know. I know that she…

She flounders for a moment.

LIZZIE
She…

She thinks.

LIZZIE
She never went to that stupid dinner. The one with, um, Tom and Sharon or Fred and Shirley or whoever they were?

This part is actually family lore. She went home. She made herself a tuna sandwich. She watched Merv Griffin. Then she poured herself a glass of cheap wine and wrote some poetry and took a bath.

And she had a lovely night. Just on her own. A truly wonderful night.

And then at three in the morning, she wakes up drenched in sweat. Her heart was racing. She's having some kind of a, a— I don't know what it was but she-- she grabs her robe and her keys and she runs out the door and drives all the way…

To see my father. And she gets down on one knee in the driveway— in the driveway-- this is more of the family lore— my mom, *on one knee*, in her bathrobe in the driveway— and she says—

Bill comes in.
She looks to him.

LIZZIE (JOANNE)
"How about it?"

Lizzie looks back to us.

LIZZIE
How about it.

She stands, and goes.

Shift.

The rec room, 1970's again.

Bill is there alone. He looks around.

TABI MAGAR

After a moment, Margie comes in.

MARGIE
Hello.

BILL
Hi.

MARGIE
Hi, I'm not sure if anyone told you, we actually have this room// reserved for a--

BILL
No, I know, I know, I'm, no, um… I'm just waiting for Lizzie? Elizabeth?

MARGIE
Oh. (Pause) You're…

BILL
Bill.

MARGIE
Bill.

BILL
Bill?

MARGIE
(No idea.) Uh-huh.

BILL
Her fiancé— whoa, that still feels strange to say.

He chuckles.

MARGIE
Oh.

BILL
(A beat. Realizes.) She didn't tell you--

MARGIE
No.

BILL
She's never mentioned me at all.

MARGIE
How long have you been…

TAIBI MAGAR

BILL
Two years? But we just got engaged last week.

Pause.

MARGIE
Congratulations.

BILL
Anyway, she left a tote bag at my place the other night and I think it has all of her notes and everything for the group, and I know how important it is to her, how important it is to everyone, to, yeah, everyone, and, uh, so I just wanted to—

Lizzie is standing in the doorway.
He sees her.

BILL
Hi.

LIZZIE
You're here.

MARGIE
He's here.

BILL
You just, you left this at my house last night-- I tried you at work but—

LIZZIE
Oh, sure. Thanks.

BILL
I'll get going now.

LIZZIE
Thanks.

BILL
See you tonight?

LIZZIE
Yep. Uh-huh. Bye.

He moves towards her.
She flinches. He stops.

BILL
Nice meeting you—

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
Bye. Bill.

He goes.
Margie starts setting up the chairs.

LIZZIE
What?

MARGIE
Two years.

LIZZIE
Okay. Yes, I guess that’s what it’s been.

MARGIE
You’re marrying him.

LIZZIE
Is that what he said.

MARGIE
That’s what he said.

LIZZIE
Well, I might.

MARGIE
He seems to think you are.

Lizzie starts to help put out chairs for the group.

LIZZIE
Anyway, if I forgot to mention him, it’s only because I knew you would react like this.

MARGIE
I’m not saying anything.

LIZZIE
I can feel your thoughts.

MARGIE
Okay, fine what am I thinking.

LIZZIE
That marriage is a trap, it’s barbaric, it condemns women to a life of servitude-

TAIBI MAGAR

MARGIE
Well, that's obvious, that's just a fact.

LIZZIE
That it's about the money.

MARGIE
Is it about the money? Does he have money?

LIZZIE
No. I mean, he doesn't *come from* money— but-- I mean he makes more money than I do, but—

MARGIE
I wouldn't blame you. Hard to get freedom without money, I definitely understand that—

LIZZIE
I love him. I do.

MARGIE
Okay.

LIZZIE
And our marriage is just— it's just—it's a deeper expression of that love.

MARGIE
Sounds good.

LIZZIE
Bill knows I'm a feminist, he wants an equal marriage.

MARGIE
Uh-huh.

LIZZIE
And just because that didn't happen for you, doesn't mean it's not possible for me.

MARGIE
Sisters unite.

LIZZIE
That's not what I mean, I'm talking about progress. I'm talking about equality--

MARGIE
Are you?

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
You could leave Burt. You could, and you talk about it and you talk about it, but you never do. And it's not because you can't balance a checkbook.

MARGIE
You're right.

LIZZIE
You could learn that.

MARGIE
Do you want to know something? I finally got Burt to do the dishes.

LIZZIE
You did? That's—that's—

MARGIE
I know. It's a miracle. After dinner, twice a week, he does the dishes.

LIZZIE
Wow.

MARGIE
And when he first started doing 'em, I thought, "Okay, I'll have all this free time…I'll go upstairs, I'll read a book…" I haven't read a book in years, with the kids I never had time, and then I just lost the ability, it was magazines, Redbook, Women's Day, that kind of a thing. So every time Burt does the dishes…I go upstairs, open a book, and the words… They just swim around in front of my eyes. I can't follow the story, because I'm listening to the clanking of the dishes—our new dishes, well not that new anymore—and, you know, I can tell he's not doing it right. I'd rather just be doing it myself. At least I'd have something to do. Taking care of him has been my life's work, and now all I really know how to do is finish it. You still have time. Don't waste it.

Margie sits on a chair.
She lights a cigarette.

From far away, the sound of a 1970's PROTEST SONG sung by Dora, Isidora, Susan, and Celeste.

MARGIE
But whatever you do, I think you should tell your friends.

Lizzie stands perfectly still, listening.
Almost as if she's listening to ghosts.

TABI MAGAR

Margie smokes.

The song and voices get closer and the women all burst in.

They are carrying signs:

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK
WAGE EQUALITY NOW
ONE DOLLAR FOR A MAN = 61 CENTS FOR A WOMAN
CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP

ISIDORA
(Laughing, excited.) …I was sure, no, I was so sure he was coming for you--

SUSAN
Who?// That "boy?"

DORA
The little one, with the--

ISIDORA
He was coming // for you, Susie— I got the whole thing on camera--

SUSAN
Fuck those guys. PAY YOUR FEMALE WORKERS

CELESTE
Okay, okay

SUSAN
What do we want, Wage Equality! When do we want it? WHEN DO WE WANT IT--

They clock Margie.

SUSAN
Where were you guys?

MARGIE
Burt has a cold.

ISIDORA
A man has a cold. Time stops.

MARGIE
I gave him an Alka Seltzer and put him in front of the television. I brought some of his beer. He's not going to miss it.

Margie hands out a few beers.

TAIBI MAGAR

ISIDORA
(To Lizzie.) What about you? I thought you were // coming--

LIZZIE
I got caught up at work.

DORA
(Off Lizzie.) Are you all right?

LIZZIE
I am, yes. (Pause.) I'm great actually, yes, really great.

Something odd is in the air.
Everybody looks around.

CELESTE
What's wrong?

LIZZIE
Nothing. I just said I'm great.

DORA
Then why are you acting all // weird?

LIZZIE
Can't I be doing great? Are we not allowed to be doing great? Do we always have to be struggling and suffering and angry and miserable all the time? Is that the situation? Because I don't think that's sustainable. I really don't. In fact, I think that might be the entire problem, or at the very least, part of the problem--

SUSAN
Are you wearing makeup?

LIZZIE
I always wear makeup. A little, // not a— who cares—

DORA
I wear makeup, I have to, for work// it's not a big deal—

ISIDORA
Sixty cents on the dollar, then we pay it back to them with all this makeup and beauty shit. They got us good. They really do. (Opening her beer.) Here's to getting them back-- to the protest— to the group, *saluti*—

ALL
To us./ Here here./ Clink with me.

Lizzie does not move or drink.

TAIBMAGAR

LIZZIE
(Half to herself.) I don’t want to say it, I don’t want to say it.

DORA
What?

LIZZIE
Why can’t I say this? I’ve said everything else in this group.

MARGIE
Because—

LIZZIE
Don’t.

DORA
What is going on?

LIZZIE
I made these little boxes for myself.

ISIDORA
What is she talking about, does anyone know what she’s--

LIZZIE
And before every meeting, I mean, I would go into the bathroom and change out of my heels when obviously, it’s okay to wear heels—

SUSAN
It’s modern foot binding, but sure.

LIZZIE
It’s okay to fall in love, it’s okay to get married--

A pause.
They suddenly understand.

DORA
You’re getting married?

A beat.
Lizzie shrugs/nods.

ISIDORA
To a man?

SUSAN
I think I missed something.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
You're getting married, as in marrying a person? Or is this a metaphor.

LIZZIE
I don't know, it might be a metaphor.

MARGIE
The metaphor is named Bill.

ISIDORA
You knew about this?

MARGIE
No. I mean, as of today, yes, but no.

SUSAN
I really don't understand // what's going on.

LIZZIE
Look, I think I told you about him— I just assumed everyone knew—

CELESTE
How would we know?

LIZZIE
And even if I didn't, I'm sorry, but you know, so what, I have a boyfriend and I'm marrying him, it's not some big deal, people do it every day.

DORA
Is he a Republican?

LIZZIE
No, God, come on—

SUSAN
Don't be stupid—

DORA
I mean, I feel like I don't even know anything anymore, so—

LIZZIE
(Defensively.) Bill is very enlightened, he wants my success as much as I do. And he's not a Republican, but he is a lawyer, a very brilliant one, and in fact he just got a very big job with a very big firm in New York.

MARGIE
You're moving to New York?

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
He is. We are. I guess. I don't--

SUSAN
Shit.

DORA
You're leaving? Like, forever? Like, // not coming back--

LIZZIE
I don't know.

CELESTE
Do you want to do that?

SUSAN
Move to New York to be some // lawyer's wife?

LIZZIE
I don't know, I don't // know--

ISIDORA
Well, who else would know? Does somebody know? Have you been fucking lobotomized—

CELESTE
How could you not tell us any of this?

LIZZIE
'Cause I knew-- I knew you all would get on me about it and give me a hard time about it—

SUSAN
Yeah, and we'd be right.

LIZZIE
And it's like, shouldn't I be free? Shouldn't I be free to make my own choices— isn't that what we're fighting for? Isn't that what this whole thing is about?

SUSAN
It's not freedom if you're just following some fucking patriarchal, socially constructed // bullshit institution.

LIZZIE
It's not freedom if I just do what you all want me to either, is it? So, great, that's just great, I'm not free if I marry him, I'm not free if I don't, maybe freedom is just a big fat lie.

DORA
(Quietly.) You're the liar, Lizzie.

TAIBI MAGAR

LIZZIE
Me? Look at you.

DORA
What about me.

LIZZIE
Come on, you think nobody ever noticed the way you'd secretly button back up that top button on your blouse when you'd walk in here?

CELESTE
Let's not // do this.

LIZZIE
Because you'd unbuttoned it to get your way with Mitch Masterson?

SUSAN
// (Disgusted.) Really? You did that?

DORA
What does *that* have to do with anything?

ISIDORA
// Everybody does that.

MARGIE
Jesus Christ, she has to get through the day somehow.

DORA
(To Lizzie.) Look, I'm really sorry you couldn't get promoted.

ISIDORA
Ha. Here we go!

LIZZIE
You think that's what this is about?

DORA
Yeah, I think you've always been a little bit jealous of me—

LIZZIE
I'm not jealous, come on, I know the pretty ones get promoted.

MARGIE
Lizzie.

ISIDORA
It's true, and once they climb the ladder, they pull it right up behind them.

TAIBI MAGAR

DORA
Why is this about me right now? Yeah, I use my looks with Mitch Masterson, so what, I'm not throwing my life away to follow him to New York—

LIZZIE
That's not what I'm doing. That's not what's happening here.

SUSAN
See, this is the nasty shit // that sets us back—

DORA
(Repeating, for emphasis.) I would never follow some guy to New York.

LIZZIE
I'm not "following" anyone.

DORA
It's actually the definition of following— he goes, you go after.

MARGIE
Okay, can we not do this?

ISIDORA
Why not? I feel like we're finally getting somewhere. Getting to the fucking truth of the shit of it.

CELESTE
She's right, it's not constructive.

ISIDORA
Well, yeah, we all know, we all know why you don't want to go there.

CELESTE
I'm not sure what you mean.

SUSAN
(Quietly.) She's right. She's right, Celeste, it's the height— it's the height of hypocrisy.

CELESTE
Excuse me?

SUSAN
That you would— that you could— criticize her for not telling us about her boyfriend— when—

CELESTE
I didn't criticize her.

TAIBI MAGAR

SUSAN
You know what I mean.

CELESTE
I honestly don't.

ISIDORA
I'm just saying.

CELESTE
What are you saying--

SUSAN
She's saying I'm not your roommate, Celeste. And everyone knows it.

CELESTE
Great. Okay. Okay. We're doing this now.

SUSAN
I don't know why you're afraid // to--

CELESTE
No, okay, after I took you in— and your dumb bird— Do you know her bird is up squawking from five in the morning?

SUSAN
That is not—

CELESTE
Squawk, squawk, squawk. Thank God my mother's demented, she'd be like, "Get that bird outta my goddamned house—"

SUSAN
Okay fine, maybe I will.

LIZZIE
Please, both of you--

CELESTE
I come back to Ohio, I don't want to be here. It's supposed to be a few months, it's years— years and years-- I'm taking care of my mother, watching her go, I'm exhausted—

SUSAN
So? That's not // my fault--

CELESTE
Every sound in the night— was that a thump, did she fall out of bed, is that her voice, is that her calling me now? I hear it in my dreams— and all I want is for her to die but please God, I don't want her to die, see what I mean?

TAIBI MAGAR

And I’m so trapped and I’m so, so angry—

(To Susan, heartbroken.) And you— you were my— my one bit of freedom, okay? And now you’re— now you’re-- you’re ruining it, you’ve ruined it-- because now everyone knows.

Pause.

ISIDORA
I’m going to say something. And you’re not going to like it. But I’m going to say it. I voted for Nixon.

DORA
// What!?

SUSAN
// What the fuck, Dora.

LIZZIE
How could you do that?

ISIDORA
It was my first vote, as a citizen. And I’m sorry, but McGovern sold us out, and I was pissed. I was pissed and fed up with this, this, this groovy meaningless liberal bullshit- I mean McGovern wasn’t even pro-choice for so many years--for years and years we wasted our time begging for crumbs. We’ve been begging for these baby crumbs and so I— I don’t know, I just, I got into the— what do you say the— voting place, the little box-- and this feeling like came over me, like there are no good choices, there are no good choices and I just thought— I have to do something, I have to change something, this is my vote. My vote. My choice. Maybe we blow it up and people get angry enough for real change.

LIZZIE
So. Okay. So. This is-- this is— this was-- not what I— what I-- thought.

MARGIE
What.

LIZZIE
This, everything, the group--

DORA
Don’t say that.

LIZZIE
It all turned out to be nothing. And I think, I think what hurts the most, what just cuts me in half— we did it to ourselves— all of us. Nobody wants to talk about that, but it’s true. You want to know what the problem is? The real problem? They got so far under our skin,

TABI MAGAR

they burrowed in there so deep that we do their work for them now. And then they mock us-- and blame us, the cat-fighting, the pitting us against one another, that it's our fault, that we just can't get along— or get anything done-- and I can't--—I can't have it end this way.

MARGIE
You're the one leaving.

LIZZIE
No. I won't do it. I won't go.

Pause.
A moment of disruption, confusion.
A shift begins.

MARGIE
But she did.

LIZZIE
No. She's going to stay. She's going to stay in the group and push everything further and forward and, and, write her, her, her great, feminist novel. Or some book of wild poetry. I want her to get a dog. And walk the dog in the park and think up acts of resistance and community and let herself become the person she was meant to be. I want her to live her unlived life.

CELESTE
(Simply.) But that's not what she wanted.

LIZZIE
I don't think she just wanted the husband and kids--

ISIDORA
You don't know that.

MARGIE
You should ask her.

LIZZIE
How? She's gone. She's gone and we never talked about it. I couldn't ask her. I…

I never did.
I never did.

The shift is complete.
Suddenly everything looks softer.

MARGIE
I can… If you want… Just for a moment, I can… Sweetheart.

TAIBI MAGAR

Lizzie looks to Margie, who is now playing her mother.

LIZZIE
Mom.

MOM (MARGIE)
Yes.

At the sight of Margie as her mother, Lizzie starts to break.

LIZZIE
…I miss you.

MOM (MARGIE)
Oh love. I miss you too.

LIZZIE
I… I don't know what to say to you now. Now that you're here… I think maybe this whole thing was, I just wanted to see you again…

MOM (MARGIE)
That's okay.

LIZZIE
And now that you're here, I don't know what to…

MOM (MARGIE)
Shh. It's okay.

Lizzie tries to pull herself together.

LIZZIE
I guess I just, I've been thinking about your life. And I… I don't know… Was it what you wanted it to be?

MOM (MARGIE)
That's a big question.

LIZZIE
I know. But. I guess I've always had this feeling that— I don't know, maybe there was a different life you wanted to have. Something more free. That maybe you would have been happier without me, or dad, or…

MOM (MARGIE)
Are you having some kind of a mid-life crisis, sweetheart?

LIZZIE
I mean. Maybe.

TAIBI MAGAR

MOM (MARGIE)
Do you regret the choices you've made? Is that why you're asking?

LIZZIE
I—I don't know.

I get so angry. Sometimes I find myself slamming or kicking, or yelling. And I… I remember you that way too. Slamming pots, or kicking the cat across the room.

MOM (MARGIE)
Well, that was a very irritating cat.

LIZZIE
I never knew why, I never understood it. As a child, I never knew what were you so angry about—

But now I, I see myself, through the eyes of my children. I scare them the way you scared me sometimes. And sometimes I think the only way out is to just-- leave. But I can't—I don't want to-- walk away from the people I love. And I love them so much.

And so I've been trying to tell the story— your story—

MOM (MARGIE)
Yes, I know. You've got most of it wrong, of course. We weren't like that at all. We were much smarter, for one thing. Much more revolutionary.

LIZZIE
So what happened? What went wrong?

MOM (MARGIE)
I think it's so interesting that you're asking what *we* did wrong, instead of asking what's wrong with the world. With all due respect, I think you're asking the complete wrong question. I mean, I still love you and think you're doing a terrific job.

LIZZIE
Thanks, Mom.

MOM (MARGIE)
Even though it's not at all accurate, there are some funny lines.

LIZZIE
Mom, okay, thanks, I got it—

MOM (MARGIE)
And it's not entirely your fault, how could you get it right, really? There's so much of me that I didn't show you. I guess that's always

TAIBI MAGAR

true with mothers. Maybe I should have showed you more of my true self. I don't know.

You thought of me as "just" a wife and mother, you thought that was the most important thing, that you were the most important thing… And you were, in a way… But also, that's what I wanted you to think. That's what children are supposed to think. In a way it's true but…

It wasn't all of it. I didn't give up on the rest of it, on the rest of me. We made so much progress, women now can't even imagine what it was like. We couldn't get a loan at the bank, we couldn't buy a home, we couldn't have a credit card—

LIZZIE
I know // all of this.

MOM (MARGIE)
I know you know this—but did you know, at my high school girls used to play basketball on half the court because everyone thought we couldn't run the full way across?

LIZZIE
No.

MOM (MARGIE)
And of course, when you were little in New York and I worked at *Ms.*, before your brothers were born, we were going to fix it all. Remember how I brought you to that tot-lot—

LIZZIE
I remember the Ms. tot-lot— a giant playroom filled with non-gender specific toys— it was heaven.

MOM (MARGIE)
And the tot-lot was supposed to solve everything, right? Bringing your children to work. That was the solution. Except it wasn't.

LIZZIE
So what is the solution?

MOM (MARGIE)
I don't know.

LIZZIE
Right.

MOM (MARGIE)
It's a problem, a huge problem-- and I don't just mean you of course, I mean, your whole generation. It was a huge problem for us, the having you, the raising you, and the way you took so much for granted and let so much slide— not just the political progress but the

TAIBI MAGAR

community— the solidarity-- I don't know where that is now, maybe it's there. Maybe it's here. I really don't know.

She looks to the women.

MOM (MARGIE)
But also, looking at you. All of you.

And knowing that the things we said and did, the conversations we had, are still here? That they're not over. Well, I guess that's the solution. It's the problem. And the solution.

Something begins to shift now.
Margie, as Mom, starts to go.

LIZZIE
Mom, wait— that's not— enough— you didn't answer my question—

MOM (MARGIE)
What question?

LIZZIE
Do you regret it? Would you have been happier…

MOM (MARGIE)
Without you? How can I ever know? I do love you, though. Is that enough?

Lizzie tries to be okay with that.

MOM (MARGIE)
Just do me a favor. Don't get so caught up in the past, in not "becoming your mother," that you forget to become yourself. Now go ahead. You can take it from here.

And now the shift is complete.

Mom is gone. Margie is herself again.

Lizzie stands in the pain, the loss, the aftermath.

LIZZIE
I… I… I don't know what to do now. I don't know what the next thing is.

She turns to the other women.

LIZZIE
What did *you* do?

TAIBI MAGAR

DORA
Oh, we kept going.

CELESTE
We kept meeting, kept talking.

Joanne joins the group.

JOANNE
At six p.m. on a school night, I'm just saying. Hi.

ISIDORA
We made plenty of mistakes, is true. But also, we helped so many women.

LIZZIE
You did?

MARGIE
There were a lot of other women who came in and out. Someone named Laurie?

SUSAN
Someone // named Beverly.

DORA
A shrink— a, someone who wanted to write screenplays. Maybe she did.

ISIDORA
A woman who made dioramas out of felt.

CELESTE
I remember there was a French woman who came this one time, and she's like:

JOANNE
(French accent.) "But what ees ze problem? It ees so easy to manipulate men!"

SUSAN
(Hesitating.) Can I say, about me?

CELESTE
You can.

SUSAN
One day, I'm—I'm riding my bike, took a turn too fast, skidded out… (Pause.) That was it. Wouldn't trade it, though, not for a million more years. That was freedom to me.

TAIBI MAGAR

CELESTE
I dedicated my book to her.

ISIDORA
And speaking of love, this is very important to say, Ohio finally passes the no-fault divorce law. Thank you in large part to Governor Ronald Reagan of California.

MARGIE.
I remember the day Reagan was elected. Your mom called me and she said, "It'll never be over." And that was true. Here we are.

LIZZIE
Here we are. Here you are. And the rec center— it's still here, still standing, actually. There's girls' basketball too now, and yes, obviously, they take the full court. My kid actually plays on the girls' team at their school and I can tell you from experience, they smell just as bad. But they were undefeated this year. You should see them play.

As for me I… I think I ought to get back to them now. There's laundry to fold and lunches to make and dishes, I know there'll be dishes in the sink and so…

Quiet. She is making a decision.

LIZZIE
I'm going to go home. For now. And I'm going to have the conversation. This conversation. And we'll see, we'll see where it goes. Every story is a brick in the wall. Yours is one too.

She takes in the audience one final time.

LIZZIE
So go ahead. You can take it from here.

Blackout.

End of play.

TAIBI MAGAR