

AURORA. Oh nonsense. Of course you will. Besides, you didn't let me have the last word. You know how much I enjoy having the last word. I'm not saying I'm perfect, Emma. I may have made mistakes in my life, especially with your father, but at least I've kept a healthy attitude, and a sunny disposition. You have responsibilities, now. No child wants a mother who's resigned.

EMMA. I'm not resigned.

AURORA. Yes, you are. You're resigned and you make do with half measures.

EMMA. Was Daddy a half measure? You never tell me anything important, Mother. What did you love about him? I need to know.

AURORA. He was tall.

EMMA. He was tall.

AURORA. Yes. Though it wasn't always helpful in light of the fact that he spent such an inordinate amount of his life sitting down. But on those rare occasions when I could manage to get him on his feet, it was an asset. He could reach things.

EMMA. That's all?! You were married to him. You had a child with him. And that's all you can say?!

AURORA. Emma, you are far too romantic. And if you're not careful, it will bring you to rack at the very least, and quite possibly to ruin. Oh, and by the way . . . you're going to have a girl.

EMMA. I am?

AURORA. Yes. It's a tradition on our side of the family. Oh, I have to go, André's on. I can't imagine what he sees in Mia.

(Lights go down in EMMA's set. Just then we hear the sound of GARRETT BREEDLOVE running, whooping, and then diving into his pool with a tremendous splash.)

GARRETT. *(Offstage:)* Whoa shit, that's cold!

(AURORA crosses over to Garrett's playing area. Again, we hear GARRETT splash in the pool.)

GARRETT. *(Offstage:)* Ah shit, freeze your nuts off!

(AURORA can take no more.)

AURORA. Would you hold it down over there?!

GARRETT. *(Offstage:)* Sorry, I can't hear you.

AURORA. I said, hold it down. Have some respect for other people's feelings.

GARRETT. *(Offstage:)* Hey, come a little closer. Hey, you. I can't hear ya.

(GARRETT approaches, toweling himself off. He is in his bathing suit, and his gut pours over the strained elastic.)

GARRETT. Sorry, I couldn't help yelling. You know, when you hit the water and it's cold like that, especially with a hangover, I mean Jesus, you know.

(AURORA just stares at him and says nothing.)

GARRETT. You're not just gonna ignore me when I speak directly to ya, are you?

AURORA. I'm not ignoring you, I'm speechless. That's all. I mean, what am I supposed to say . . . that it's hard not to yell when you hit that cold water, especially when you have a hangover?

(GARRETT just grins. His grin is both annoying and ingratiating at the same time.)

GARRETT. Hey . . . uhh . . . Come here.

AURORA. Hey, come here?!

GARRETT. Yeah, what's your name? Aurora?

AURORA. Greenway.

GARRETT. Yeah. You want a shock?

AURORA. Not particularly.

(GARRETT breezes past that.)

GARRETT. They were gonna have this NASA dinner at the White House? Some cosmonauts and all of us, and I didn't know who I could take. Because everybody I flew with, their wives would have given me bitch bites up and down my ass if I showed up with one of my regular girls. And I didn't know anybody old enough, so I thought what the hell, I'll ask my next-door neighbor.

(AURORA looks at him in astonishment.)

GARRETT. Yeah anyway, they canceled the dinner. But I was really thinking about asking you out. Isn't that a shocker?

AURORA. Yes. Imagine you having a date with someone where it wasn't necessarily a felony.

GARRETT. Yeah, what would you have said if I had asked you? Seriously.

(AURORA is a bit unnerved, thinks for a beat, and then:)

AURORA. I would have said I'd like to see the White House.

GARRETT. So you would have come. Well, what the hell. You wanna have dinner out, sometime?

AURORA. *(Almost automatically:)* No, no thank you.

GARRETT. What about lunch? You ladies . . . you like to have lunch a lot, don't you?

AURORA. You know, your manner . . . it's like you . . . you're trying to toy with me.

GARRETT. That's right Aurora. I'm playing with you. You want to play, Aurora? You wanna go to lunch?

AURORA. Now, this is just the element I mean. This is exactly . . .

(AURORA stops, takes a deep breath, and then continues.)

AURORA. If you want to have lunch at some pleasant restaurant, in order to improve the atmosphere in the neighborhood, I suppose I wouldn't exactly say no.

(GARRETT motions for her to come closer.)

GARRETT. Come here, we're too far apart.

(She moves closer to GARRETT. GARRETT now is at his smarmiest and most on-the-make self.)

GARRETT. Now Aurora, since you've agreed, why don't we just skip the rest of it?

AURORA. I beg your pardon.

GARRETT. I know how you feel. There were countdowns when I had my doubts, but then I just said to myself, look, you agreed to do it, you're strapped in and you're in the hands of something bigger and more powerful than yourself, so why not just lay back and enjoy the ride?

(AURORA is horrified to the point of speechlessness.)

AURORA. I'm not going. There's something . . . very wrong with you.

(Blackout.)

(In black, we hear a baby crying. Then we hear:)

~~EMMA. It's a boy, Mama. I had a boy.~~

~~*(Lights come up on EMMA's playing area. She lies in her hospital bed as AURORA enters.)*~~

~~AURORA. So much for the family tradition.~~

(They stand there awkwardly a beat.)

AURORA. I was curious as to whether you still wanted to take me to lunch.

GARRETT. Uh . . . Lunch . . . I wasn't aware that we . . . I don't know . . . did we . . . I don't remember . . .

AURORA. About five years ago.

GARRETT. *(Incredulous:)* Five years ago!

AURORA. . . . Lunch. And I wondered if the invitation still exists. Would you like to . . . lunch . . . not dinner . . . Remember, it was lunch.

(GARRETT pauses. AURORA stares daggers at him.)

GARRETT. Why not. No, yeah . . . why not.

AURORA. Good. When?

GARRETT. Uhh . . . tomorrow?

AURORA. All right . . . all right.

GARRETT. Good.

AURORA. Twelve thirty?

GARRETT. One o'clock.

AURORA. One o'clock.

(AURORA slowly walks back. In the background an instrumental version of "Anything Goes" plays as lights go down on AURORA's playing area and come up on EMMA's. She is in her home. Her frumpy clothes contrast sharply with Patsy's very stylish attire. The two of them are catching up on old times and of course sharing a joint. They are in mid-conversation.)

EMMA. Three kids, Patsy, it never goddamn ends.

PATSY. Well at least let's take a break while you can.

EMMA. So I call my mother to tell her I think I might be pregnant and an hour later . . . bam! I start my period, and *she's* got a date with an astronaut.

PATSY. Because you started your period . . .

EMMA. It's a long story.

PATSY. And now here we are two married ladies with children . . . talkin' trash and smokin' dope.

EMMA. . . . To be sure.

PATSY. And at least one of us committing adultery.

EMMA. I haven't committed anything.

PATSY. I wasn't talking about you.

EMMA. Oh, well that's *old* news.

PATSY. So where did you meet him? At a bar? At some faculty cocktail party? Where does one meet the men with whom one is contemplating adultery in Iowa?

EMMA. At the Piggly Wiggly.

PATSY. Why did I ask?

EMMA. I was at the checkout counter and it came to something like forty-four dollars . . . I don't know, and I had something like thirty-three dollars. So there I am, and I'm giving back candy bars and deodorant and then Tommy says that's his candy so I take back the candy and give her back a bunch of bananas and she says, "Look, if you can't decide what to buy, why don't you just take it all back and start over and this time stick to what you can afford?"

PATSY. What a bitch.

EMMA. It was just so god-awful humiliating, and for what? Five dollars? Six dollars? And I said to her, "Would you stop being so goddamn nasty? That's not going to make this any easier. We're both people, y'know?" And just then I hear this man say . . . "Mrs. Horton, can I help?"

PATSY. Oh my God, Prince Charming to the rescue.

EMMA. Well, he's not exactly a prince and he's not really all that charming.

PATSY. What's he look like?

EMMA. He's sort of fifty-ish, sort of bald-ish . . . short-ish . . . His name is Sam and he knew me because he's the assistant manager from the bank.

PATSY. Does Flap know him too?

EMMA. Yeah, he turned us down for the mortgage when we tried to refi. Anyway, he says, "Can I help make up the difference?" And before I can even answer he hands the checker a ten . . . Just like that. And then he turns to the checker and he says, "I think you're a very rude woman. I know your manager from the rotary club and I can't believe he'd want you treating customers so badly."

PATSY. The rotary club!

EMMA. And *she* says, "I don't think I was treating her badly at all," and he said, "Then *you* must be from New York."

(The two of them laugh and share the joint.)

PATSY. So have you seen him again?

EMMA. He wants to. I haven't said yes. I haven't said no, but I haven't said yes.

PATSY. Is he single?

EMMA. He's married . . . Unhappily.

PATSY. Please . . . but you're going to see him again?

EMMA. I don't know. I just know I'm tired of waiting up for Flap and him telling me that he fell asleep in the library again and I know he's with one of his freshman English students. I mean, I know it. He's screwing one of his students. By God, Mama was right. My life is a cliché.

(In the background is Frank Sinatra singing "Come Fly with Me" as the lights go down on EMMA's playing area and come up stage right at what was Garrett's playing area. GARRETT is seated at a table for two. He wears a sports jacket and tie. AURORA enters, checking herself out one last time in her compact mirror.)

AURORA. I just wanted to freshen up a bit. I didn't realize you'd have the top on your car down today.

GARRETT. I already ordered some hors d'oeuvres.

AURORA. Good, I'm starving . . . there's no hidden meaning in that remark.

(GARRETT forks one of the oysters he has ordered and holds it up, drooping off the end of his fork towards AURORA.)

GARRETT. Care for an oyster?

AURORA. No . . . thank you.

(Just then GARRETT slowly turns his head a full 180 degrees obviously looking at some hot-looking woman who has just crossed through the restaurant.)

AURORA. I think that's very rude.

GARRETT. What?

AURORA. Well, the obvious way that you just looked at that other woman. It's very rude, noticing other women when you're with me.

(GARRETT looks at her a beat.)

(They hug each other a beat, and GARRETT grabs her ass with a resounding slap. She looks at him and grabs his ass with an equally resounding slap. As opposed to romance, it almost has the effect of two soldiers saluting each other.)

GARRETT. I'll see ya.

(He starts to exit. AURORA calls after him.)

AURORA. Garrett . . .

(GARRETT stops and turns to her. She takes a step to him.)

AURORA. I was just curious. Do you have any reaction to my telling you that I love you, at all?

GARRETT. I was just inches from a clean getaway.

AURORA. Well now, you're stuck. So, face it.

GARRETT. I don't know what to say, except for my stock answer.

AURORA. Which is?

GARRETT. *(With style:)* I love you too, kid.

(AURORA shakes her head as he exits.)

(Blackout.)

Scene 5

(Lights come up on EMMA's hospital room. She is there with DR. MAISE. She lies in bed while he looks at her chart.)

DR. MAISE. Emma, you know the response you've had to the drugs you're taking on the new protocol simply isn't what we'd hoped for. I've already talked to your husband and your mother.

EMMA. I see.

DR. MAISE. And of course I phoned Colonel Breedlove and told him that I'm more than willing to put you on any other protocol that we have. However, if you become incapacitated, or it becomes unreasonable for you to handle your affairs, it might be wise to make some decisions, now.

(He looks up at her for half a beat.)

DR. MAISE. Any questions?

EMMA. No.

(FLAP enters and crosses into Emma's room, as the DOCTOR exits.)

DR. MAISE. Hello, Mr. Horton.

FLAP. Hello, Doctor.

DR. MAISE. Well, I'll just let the two of you be alone then.

(The DOCTOR exits.)

FLAP. Hi.

(He kisses her lightly, but tenderly, on the cheek.)

EMMA. Hi.

FLAP. How you doing?

EMMA. How do you think?

(She catches herself. What she doesn't want right now is bitterness.)

EMMA. I'm sorry.

FLAP. No, no, it's . . .

EMMA. From what the doctor says, I think we have to have "the talk."

(FLAP is suddenly fighting back tears. His wife's illness has suddenly reawakened all of his old feelings towards her.)

FLAP. Do you know how much I hate the idea of losing you?

EMMA. Yes.

FLAP. Well, nobody seems to know that but you. It's just that . . .

EMMA. What?

FLAP. Nothing. I was just thinking about my identity and not having one anymore. I mean, who am I, if I'm not the man who's failing Emma?

EMMA. You didn't fail me.

FLAP. I'm sorry, I feel like I'm sucking up after forgiveness . . . and I probably am.

EMMA. You weren't any more terrible than me.

FLAP. Except for the cheating. I'm the one who cheated, not you.

(EMMA is in no mood to make a confession of her own.)

EMMA. Oh Flap, we had our problems, but it wasn't over whether we loved each other.

(For the first time, she notices his tie.)

EMMA. Come here, let me see that.

(She fingers the tie.)

EMMA. That's the tie I gave you just before we got married. That's the first present ever I gave you. Where did you find it?

(FLAP grins. There is a strange but uncommonly easy intimacy between them. They are two old friends reminiscing who no longer have anything to hide from each other.)

FLAP. The house still isn't in one piece. It was in the last box I looked in.

EMMA. I'll bet.

(FLAP looks at her in awe.)

FLAP. You're so easy to please, I don't know why I didn't do it more often.

(Lights go down on the two of them and come up in the hallway outside Emma's room. AURORA enters carrying flowers and runs into the DOCTOR.)

DR. MAISE. Hello, Mrs. Greenway.

AURORA. Doctor.

DR. MAISE. Mrs. Greenway, Mr. Horton is in with your daughter right now. I think that you should let them be alone. I'll be in my office if you need me.

(AURORA stands there fuming. Then FLAP comes out of Emma's room.)

(DOCTOR exits.)

AURORA. Hello, Thomas.

FLAP. Aurora.

AURORA. How are the children?

FLAP. I'm not sure they realize that she's not going to get better. But I think maybe they sense that.

AURORA. When the time comes . . . I think they should be with me.

FLAP. You have no right nor any invitation to discuss where or how my children live. Goodbye Aurora.

(He exits. AURORA screws up her courage and enters Emma's room and crosses to EMMA and kisses her forehead and sees how bad she looks.)

AURORA. How are you?