

Real Time Love
A Play by John Fisher

Cast of Characters
(In Order of Appearance)

<u>Irvin:</u>	Comparative Literature PhD candidate. 24. A quirky, young, budding academic.
<u>Jenny:</u>	Art student. 23. Korean-American. Gorgeous but shy.
<u>Carolyn:</u>	Art lecturer, Yale School of Art. 32. Long blond hair. Patient, generous, kind, sensitive.
<u>Dale:</u>	Janitor/handyman in the Yale School of Art gallery. 24. Handsome, fit, confident, a local.
<u>Mielle:</u>	Also a local. 28, very attractive, practical.

Scene

New York City, New Haven

Time

The Present

[] Brackets with expressions in them are meant to clarify words in the text, they are not
meant to be spoken.

The action describes “shifts.” These indicate a quick shift to another place onstage,
probably achieved with lights.

(The stage is open, the action is fluid with minimal furniture and set pieces. “Shift” indicates change of location that can be achieved in any manner, so long as it is not so complicated that the flow of action is broken. The gallery spaces will be important, and there are beds, desks and chairs as needed. A designer might choose to have different rooms in different parts of the stage to allow easy access, or a revolving stage that can carry us from space to space.)

(The time is now. New York City. JENNY and IRVIN, both twenty-four, are in bed. JENNY is Korean-American.)

JENNY

I want to create things, plasticize them. Objects, collage, large and fiery. I want to say things about my body, about you, about the planet.

IRVIN

You think art can still do that?

JENNY

I do. It can be adventurous. In a way film, TV, theatre... all those cannot. Because it can take greater risks, dive deeper. That’s the very virtue of reaching a tiny audience, fewer people to worry about, worry about offending. The audience has to seek us out, really find us, so the creator can go to the danger zone.

IRVIN

You’re so ambitious.

JENNY

You mean pretentious.

IRVIN

Same thing.

JENNY

And you’re not? Mr. Literature. Mr. Rewrite *Notre-Dame de Paris*.

IRVIN

Not re-write it just reinterpret it. I live in a great city. I want to use it as a mirror to hold up to *Notre-Dame de Paris*, use Hugo as a way to read the contemporary city. I think that’s what he was doing, using the medieval Paris to understand the new Paris. I want to use the old New York to understand the new.

JENNY

And you’re so... articulate on your subject.

IRVIN

(Reassuring her)

Art isn't articulate. It's primal. It's logical rather than eschatological. That's you, sensory, whereas I am intellectual. Well, you're intellectual too. And cute.

JENNY

Maybe we should stay in the city, together, that way I can start doing it rather than studying it.

IRVIN

You need guidance, control.

JENNY

You think I get crazy.

IRVIN

We've discussed this. You have a little Van Gogh thing going, when you get conceptual, committed.

JENNY

And you think professors will protect me, from me.

IRVIN

You need an apparatus, a place with structure. New Haven will give you that.

JENNY

Don't say New Haven when you mean Yale. It's pretentious.

IRVIN

You're the only person who gets to call me that, you Eli.

(They fade into darkness as CAROLYN, with long blond hair, steps forward and talks to us. She is thirty-two, in dress painter-chic. This is her moment.)

CAROLYN

I dream of my smile in the Whitney Museum. Uptown, like a dentist who's found a new breed of cavity, I zoom in my Beemer, like a Waugh character. "Well, well, well," they'd greet me at the door. "Ups! She's going ups!" "Shhung!" like an arrow into the sky. "Give me the keys to the kingdom! The clicker for my next lecture at the 92nd Street Y." The art fans would arrive in buses, parked five deep, the patrons dressed in Autumn Grey, like Rhinos waddling up to my gallery. "Elizabeth, but you may call me Betsy." My brain is doing a wheely! "But you're the Queen! Betsy?" Levitation! That's what I call it. "Beep-beep." Someone wants to pass me. Then, in utter clarity, it all disappears. I didn't discover a new cavity, but I still have white teeth, my smile, so I have a career. I settle into sobriety instead of notoriety. But I'm always working. I can lurch on early success

CAROLYN (Cont.)

forever. That's what I dream of. "Well, well, well." Shhung! The Whitney. Beep-beep. A bump here and there. But Golden Locks will see me through. (She tosses her hair.)

(The lights change. Suddenly CAROLYN is standing in the gallery space at Yale, partitions, natural lighting, nothing yet on display. She has been joined by JENNY.)

CAROLYN

This space is yours. I always reserve it for the incomings, three weeks. It's great because when people ask me about you I can say, "Go to the show. You'll see her submission project, see why I accepted her." Don't be nervous, people get it that these projects were portable, had to be sent in, that they may never have been actually given a show before. But it's your chance, in the first month, to give them an actual taste. Of you. Don't change it, just think of how you would zhuzh it for exhibition. And the facilities are at your disposal. There are people here to help you, their job is to help you, so when they come around, put them to work. That's the exciting thing about this program, the help you get while you're here.

(Now we have IRVIN in a special. He talks to us. This is his moment.)

IRVIN

The city is a dance of images, a haven of superior and inferior beings. I am liberated because I race through wonder in a city. Topless bars, bottomless sex clubs, the lovely carol of holiday spirit every driven day of the week. Year round. But what wonder, what dam prevents complete happiness fulfilled? It is both the wonder of the city and the nightwing of frustration, the lovely insouciance and the wisp of melancholy that prevents even the most staunch race of optimist to proclaim "hi-di-ho" at every turn of the city's constant interrogations. Lobotomy, a reference to cutting off a part of the brain to achieve peace. For what price peace in the city? For men maybe castration, for women perhaps labiatomy The charisma of the city will not be denied, the challenge of its day to day, never ignored. But rise to it and you will tumble, quaver under it and you will be flattened. There is not middle ground but there cannot be a static. "Hi-di-ho" we declare - the "hi" is scary, the "hole" is dark. And the "di" neither here nor thither. So "Hi-di-ho" we declare, for we must habituate all three.

(Out on him, back to the gallery. JENNY stands with DALE, showing him how she wants the gallery space arranged. DALE is her age, a local.)

JENNY

This is a partition and that's another. Cream colored. No, that's boring. Honeynut? Does that make sense?

DALE

Like the cereal?

JENNY

I'll give you a paint swatch.

DALE

You won't get sun light on this wall here.

JENNY

I know. But I need some darkness here, which is why I did it this way.

DALE

This woman last year, she needed that here too, and we put up a hood, you know like a canopy, to cast a shadow on the display surface but she still had sunlight mostly.

JENNY

Is it subtle? I mean, do you feel like this huge hood is looming over everything?

DALE

No one ever said that.

JENNY

Ok. Thanks. That's good. Do that.

DALE

Where are you from?

JENNY

California. Northern California.

DALE

San Francisco?

JENNY

No. Near the Sierras.

DALE

Tahoe.

JENNY

Farther North but that general area. How about you?

DALE

Here. Well, Medford. Nearby.

JENNY

How long have you worked here?

DALE

Two years. I've worked on campus since I was eighteen.

JENNY

Is it a good place to work?

DALE

Yeah. Ok. My father works on Science Hill. He got me my first job here.

JENNY

What does he do?

DALE

Janitor.

JENNY

Are you like a contractor? Is that what you want to do?

DALE

No. No. I just do this. I can build things so they gave me this. I'm mostly still a janitor.

JENNY

Oh. I liked your suggestion about the light. That was helpful.

DALE

Good.

(Some music. JENNY will hang her exhibit as DALE moves to another space, his space, flops in an easy chair, and talks to us in his moment.)

DALE

In grammar school they taught us to love our country and respect authority. And when Florianna asked me if she could go down on me, behind the church, against the sidewall of the chapel, I took full responsibility and said, "Yeah." I knew I couldn't screw her, she was Davey's girl. But with my new haircut and bright shiny tenny shoes, I was irresistible. And what's a little love on that path, the path of mouths and cocks? It's hardly even sex. Rats in their cages can't do it. Well, they don't. So we have to, right? So we'll be different from rats. There was a tree we climbed afterwards to see the town, beyond the school, where my father said I would work, beyond the interstate, which I would drive someday, every day. And I, a tailor of adventure, told her, "One day, I'll take you to New York." She laughed. She kissed me. She pointed at the harbor and said,

DALE (Cont.)

“Let’s swim.” So only then, after the blowjob, did we have a date. Life can work in the reverse, ya know.

(Glow of TV snaps on his face. MIELLE enters his space. She is just home from work. His age, attractive.)

MIELLE

Hey.

DALE

Hey.

(They kiss.)

How’s work?

MIELLE

Ok. Boring. A lot of shit.

DALE

Yeah.

MIELLE

How ‘bout you?

DALE

Ok. I helped a new student with her project, helped her a lot.

MIELLE

Yeah?

DALE

Yeah. She had some dumb idea for displaying it and I told her a better one. She was really grateful. Asian. Korean, I think.

MIELLE

I’m thinking of taking a class.

DALE

Yeah?

MIELLE

Yeah. I’ve decided on accounting. It’s free.

DALE

What about finishing high school?

MIELLE

Doesn't matter. So long as I can keep up I can stay in. That's what the professor said.

DALE

You talked to a professor?

MIELLE

Yeah. Out at West Conn. Nice guy. Said I can start right away. No big whoop.

DALE

This professor hot?

MIELLE

Yeah, he's a babe. I want to do him.

DALE

Yeah, well don't.

MIELLE

I won't.

(This isn't a serious moment, just playful. She looks at him.)

Comfy?

DALE

What's it to you?

MIELLE

Din-din? With your parents? An hour?

DALE

(Groaning elaborately)

Ohhhh... Screw it.

MIELLE

I can't go alone.

DALE

Don't go.

MIELLE

I didn't buy anything for dinner and there's nothing here. If we don't eat at your parents, we starve.

DALE

We can have cereal.

MIELLE

I'm not eating cereal. Fuck it, Dale. Let's go.

DALE

Forget it. I'm tired.

MIELLE

What am I supposed to do?

DALE

I don't know. Get some shit at 7-11.

(MIELLE turns off TV.)

MIELLE

Get up.

DALE

No.

MIELLE

Get up. Change your pants, your shirt's fine. Come on, let's go.

DALE

No.

MIELLE

Dave, up! Stop acting like a baby. I'm sick of this.

DALE

Do I have to?

MIELLE

No. You can be single. Not have a girl friend. Otherwise, up!

DALE

Why my fuckin' parents every week?

MIELLE

Duh, saves money, something we don't have a lot of. Vamanos!

DALE

Shit, man.

MIELLE

And stop swearing.

DALE

Why? My father swears all the time.

MIELLE

Yeah, and it's disgusting. You can swear twice, in an evening.

DALE

Fuck that.

MIELLE

Twice, Dave. Make it a goal.

(Cross to IRVIN and JENNY in bed, post, afterwards, spent. They look at one another.)

IRVIN

Cunt.

JENNY

Cocksucker.

(They laugh. She grabs him and they start again. Shift to MIELLE, in her space, having her moment, with us.)

MIELLE

Beyond my job, beyond public spaces and recreation and the honking of car horns, I am tired. In activity, like a puma, I am a girl, alive. My leggings are bright, my roar is loud, I strut my nation, yes, MY nation, through the purgatory of limited opportunity and make my way. I have always had a job, like a cop, there has always been need of me. Dale is an orchid, I trim him but he always grows back, except when he doesn't. Maybe then he's more of an artistic stone, like a bird I chirp and chip away at him, he always retaining the same basic substance but always growing smaller. No, that's not it. I'm his boss, he likes that. Like those characters in *Mad Men*, he wants to play, roam about the kitchen like a suped up Mazda looking for trouble, but always, always seeking his nation, his boss, my hair, and my firm smile.

(Shift to DALE looking at JENNY'S art, now hung on the panels: a series of rag like pieces of canvas with red stains in the middle of them. One of them has a face superimposed on it. He is fascinated. Some music: Bach. In time, JENNY enters holding an overnight bag.)

JENNY

What do you think?

DALE

Good. Good lighting.

JENNY

You're right. It is good lighting.

DALE

They're very pretty.

JENNY

Thank you.

DALE

Reminds me of these things I saw on the Discovery Channel. They show them to mental patients, as tests, ask them what they see in them and the answer tells them what people think.

JENNY

Rorschach.

DALE

Yeah, that's it. You see that show?

(He is putting her on. They laugh.)

JENNY

What do you see in these?

DALE

Well, these are red. The ones on TV I saw were all black.

JENNY

So?

DALE

Well, these aren't as... these couldn't be "anything," like the ones on TV, because they're not black.

JENNY

So black to you expresses neutrality. It's not a loaded color.

DALE

Something like that.

(They stare at the art.)

This weird spider web I once saw in my grandmother's barn, first time I got high.

JENNY

That's what you see?

DALE

I guess.

(Pause.)

That's a stain from this kid whose head got smashed during a basketball game in fourth grade.

JENNY

You're seeing violent, dangerous things.

DALE

Well they're all red.

JENNY

Red can mean love, passion.

DALE

Blood. They're all the color of blood. A broken window in my father's car.

JENNY

They are blood.

(DALE looks at her.)

JENNY

It's my blood. From my period. The canvas is a micro-absorbent surface I ordered from an art supply store on the Upper West Side. I went in and described what I wanted to do, asked what would make my menstrual blood look most like a Rorschach test on a surface. The salesman was very helpful. He got kind of turned on talking about it. So did I. That's him there. I silk-screened his face onto the same canvas, from a picture I took of him. I used the finished product for my final menstrual cycle. Then I went back on the pill. It's an old project, over a year ago.

DALE

Wow. Did you get an "A?"

JENNY

It's not like that. I completed the project.

(He sniffs the blood.)

DALE

Huh.

JENNY
What?

DALE
It smells like...

JENNY
What?

DALE
Your menstrual... you know.

JENNY
My skank?

DALE
Yeah, your skank.

JENNY
Well, it would, wouldn't it?

DALE
I guess. Too bad you can't make the smell stronger, like when you're standing here you're surrounded by your smell. That would be kind of hot. Looking at your blood and smelling your skank.

(She looks at him. She laughs.)

DALE
What?

JENNY
I think that's pretty fucked up.

DALE
(He laughs.)
Yeah, I guess it is.

(The Bach grows louder. Shift to CAROLYN's office, which is a mess. She is closing up her computer, ending her day. JENNY enters. She barely gets in the door and CAROLYN's cell phone starts beeping, an ugly insistent sound.)

JENNY
Hey.

CAROLYN

Hey. Sorry.

(Grabs the phone, looks at it.)

Ok.

(She has silenced it.)

Did I tell you how much I've heard about your show, your little exhibit?

JENNY

People know what it is?

CAROLYN

Well they read and figured it out, yeah. And they weren't grossed out. It worked. It was bold. It *is* bold.

JENNY

I'm glad to hear that.

CAROLYN

Sit down a sec.

(She holds up a folder.)

Uh, this... this is safe.

JENNY

I thought you might say that.

CAROLYN

You'll be spending a year on this project. One year. It's a process. Like your... well I don't know how to describe it.

JENNY

My period piece.

CAROLYN

Yes. Your period piece.

(They laugh.)

CAROLYN

That took time. It charted a progress through time, a change of being. This is, well it's clever, but it's thin.

JENNY

Yeah.

CAROLYN

You're in New York a lot?

JENNY

My boyfriend.

CAROLYN

Oh-huh. Do you mind me speaking frankly?

JENNY

Please do. It's why I'm here.

CAROLYN

You should be focused on here, what you're doing here. Weekends are yours, but otherwise, treat this like a job. I know I'm casual, I know that about me, but I'm not really. Not really casual. You shouldn't be either. You're living here, in town, right?

JENNY

Yes.

CAROLYN

Then be here. Be here now. Focus.

(Referring to folder)

I need something more than this. Your period piece, as you call it, is bold. You've set the bar high. Leap over it. Ok, Jenny?

JENNY

I'm afraid of getting lonely.

CAROLYN

Loneliness isn't bad. And, as I say, the weekend's yours but it's going to get damn busy. Don't you sense that?

JENNY

Yes.

CAROLYN

Art is tough. We have to work as hard as bankers, investment people. My husband's an attorney. I try to work as hard as he does to piece it together, make it happen. He has cases, I have projects. They're the same. In my mind. Same importance. Push yourself. This... well, I know you worked hard as an undergrad. You need to get yourself in gear.

JENNY

I guess I've been afraid to start.

CAROLYN

Why?

JENNY

I didn't... that piece came from a place of obsession. I made a lot of mistakes, personally, when I made it. It cost a lot. It... it really wore me down.

CAROLYN

I'm not asking you to kill yourself. But... well, this program's about meeting challenges. In yourself. I have a daughter - some things *do* come first, but not many. I feel like I've got half your focus.

JENNY

Ok.

CAROLYN

I really admire your commitment. I do.

JENNY

Yes.

(CAROLYN smiles. JENNY crosses away. MIELLE and JENNY meet center, MIELLE dressed in Walgreen's Pharmacy smock. JENNY hands her two boxes to ring up.)

MIELLE

Hi.

JENNY

Hey.

MIELLE

(Holding up one of the boxes)

Uh, we're supposed to tell you something when you buy this.

JENNY

What's that?

MIELLE

Well, just in case you don't read the fine print.

JENNY

I would.

MIELLE

Well. This is only good for very early term. So, if this (referring to the other box) is positive but it's mid-term, you can't use this (referring to the first box.)

JENNY
(Defensive)
I knew that.

MIELLE
Ok. Sorry...

JENNY
(Apologetic)
It's ok. I'll just take the pregnancy test.

MIELLE
Do you...

JENNY
Yes. I have access to health care. Thank you for your concern.

MIELLE
It's not... I'm just doing my job.

JENNY
I'm sorry. Thank you. I'm... well, you know.

MIELLE
Yeah. I'm sorry too. It's... It's \$20.53 with tax.

(JENNY walks away from MIELLE and makes a call on her cell.
IRVIN on the other end.)

JENNY
Hi.

IRVIN
Hi, how's it going?

JENNY
Pretty good. Listen, do you have a minute?

IRVIN
A few. I have a lecture I want to go to. Tom Wolfe is talking at Town Hall about the City. He's kind of a schmuck and I reread *Bonfire* and it wasn't everything I thought it was, but he is in a way my inspiration for writing on the city and I love the way he makes connections, so a few of us are going.

JENNY
Sounds great.

IRVIN

Yeah, the tickets were thirty bucks, which is a rip off, but Fyla in the office called over and managed to get us in on a pass. Well a discount, but she says she thinks she can get us a voucher for the balance, which is cool. I love being in graduate school, ya know?

JENNY

Yeah.

(Pause.)

IRVIN

What's up?

(They stay talking but we can't hear them. DALE in his chair, TV on. MIELLE enters taking off Walgreen's coat and hurriedly changing. DALE turns off TV when he sees her.)

DALE

Hey.

MIELLE

I have five minutes. Five.

DALE

Five's enough.

MIELLE

Oh, no, Dale. I need to be focused. It's a lecture.

DALE

Hmmm. Lectures make me horny.

MIELLE

Yeah, everything makes you horny.

DALE

That's not true. I'm libinally normative.

(She laughs.)

MIELLE

Ok, I have ten minutes.

DALE

Oh, baby. "I like the rush hour 'cause I like the rush."

MIELLE

Not *too* fast.

(They embrace. Back to IRVIN and JENNY on phones.)

IRVIN

Well... What do you want to do?

JENNY

I guess I'll go see a doctor. The campus is full of them and we have this health plan.

IRVIN

Ok.

JENNY

I mean, this is twice.

IRVIN

I'm sorry, Jenny.

JENNY

I know.

IRVIN

We... Jesus, we just have to be more careful.

JENNY

I know... It happens.

IRVIN

Are you worried?

JENNY

About what?

IRVIN

Another abortion.

JENNY

What do you mean?

IRVIN

Well I don't know, is there some kind of health issue?

JENNY

It's not a good thing to do to your body if that's what you mean.

IRVIN

No, I just meant... how are you feelin'?

JENNY

No, what did you mean?

IRVIN

I just meant, does it affect your ability to have... to get pregnant again?

JENNY

I don't know.

IRVIN

Do you want me to come up there?

JENNY

No. Yes. I don't know. Reeka had a second abortion, they told her she couldn't have a third, not without doing permanent damage to her uterus.

IRVIN

Yes, I remember that story.

JENNY

So you want me to have it?

IRVIN

No. Jesus, Jenny. I feel bad. I'm sorry. I want you... I don't know what to say.

JENNY

I'm sorry.

IRVIN

Don't be sorry. I know.... I'm sure it's stressful.

JENNY

Yeah.

IRVIN

Can I come up?

JENNY

Yes. Come up Friday night.

(Music: discordant, Schoenberg. She hangs up, puts her phone away and wanders left into the Yale University Art Gallery – a space created with projections. She enters museum space: Art Gallery entrance projected. She walks into antiquities: Antiquities room projected, the frieze from the Palace of Assurnasirpal II. She stares at it. Sits on floor. Takes out note pad. She starts sketching it. A detail of the frieze projected. She sketches. A tighter detail projected. She sketches. She stops. She thinks. IRVIN projected. She puts down her pad. She is staring at screen now as if it is her thoughts. Baby projected. She leans on her arm. Fetus projected. She lays down. Smaller fetus projected. She lays on her back. A screen of red projected. She puts her hands behind her head. She closes her eyes. Screen is red. The screen goes blank.)

(IRVIN on phone. Waiting. JENNY, in her room, answers.)

Hey. JENNY

Hi. IRVIN

How are you? JENNY

Good. How you? IRVIN

JENNY
Good. Busy. Made an appointment for Monday morning, it's the soonest they could do it. I know you won't be here then but it will be great to see you this weekend.

IRVIN
Yeah, listen, can you come down here?

JENNY
Why?

IRVIN
I have a massive thing this weekend. A conference, well sort of a colloquium. Anyway it might be a good opportunity for me to meet some faculty from other campuses. I'd love you to come. I just feel that if I rush back and forth to be at the dinner on Saturday...

JENNY
No, I get it. Yeah.

IRVIN

So...

JENNY

(Near tears)

Vin, I don't really want to come down there. It's too far and I'm really tired from school and... Let's just forget it, ok?

IRVIN

Jenny...

JENNY

No, look, I'm not upset. I'm just really tired, and stressed myself. I'm sorry I... I didn't mean to snap, if it sounded that way. We'll... We'll hook up next weekend, ok?

IRVIN

Jenny...

JENNY

No, it's fine. I'll call you on Saturday.

IRVIN

Look...

JENNY

Vinny, please. I really have to go. Ok? I'll call you tonight. Ok? Yeah?

IRVIN

Yeah.

JENNY

I love you.

IRVIN

Love you.

(They hang up. She is crying. She takes out laptop. Stares blankly at screen. She reaches into her purse and takes out Tylenol PM. She pops some tablets and washes them down with water. She puts back Tylenol PM. She sees something else in purse. She takes it out. It is the pregnancy test box. She opens the box and examines it. She sets the box down and goes on-line and searches the Internet. She finds what she wants. She sits back, thinking.)

(Music: The same Schoenberg. CAROLYN in office packing up bag, frantic, phone, papers, laptop, almost out the door. JENNY appears with proposal in hand, cheerful.)

CAROLYN

Hey.

JENNY

(Handing CAROLYN proposal)

Hi, I'm sorry this is so late.

CAROLYN

Yes, oh, yes. That's ok. Thanks for getting it to me.

JENNY

I wanted you to be able to look it over on the train.

CAROLYN

Oh, ok.

JENNY

It's just... I wanted to get started on it this weekend so I wanted... Well, I wanted your approval ASAP. Sorry.

CAROLYN

No, no, it's fine. Uhh... You see my husband is picking me up so...

JENNY

Oh, yeah, guess you won't be reading things...

CAROLYN

No, no, look... We have to pick up my daughter and take her to a birthday party but I have ten minutes. Do you mind if I skim it, just now, then look at it in depth on Sunday-

JENNY

I don't want you to have to...

CAROLYN

No, no, Sunday's fine. I just want to give it a quick once over so you're not waiting for me.

JENNY

Yeah, well, I don't know... I'd rather not be here when you...

CAROLYN

Oh, well, look, I'll read it in the car...

JENNY
No, no, go ahead, it's...

CAROLYN
Is it ok?

JENNY
Yes, please. Sorry.

CAROLYN
Oh, please, this will be fine. Get you started.

JENNY
Well it's a nine-month process so...

CAROLYN
(As she skims)
Uh-huh...

JENNY
I just thought I could spend the weekend doing research.

CAROLYN
Uh-huh.

JENNY
But... It's good you can...

CAROLYN
Um...

(CAROLYN sits at her desk skimming, turning pages. JENNY waits. She looks nervous. CAROLYN continues to read. JENNY's confidence grows as she watches CAROLYN read. She sits. She watches CAROLYN. CAROLYN reaches the final page and sets the proposal down. She removes her glasses and sits back in her chair.)

CAROLYN
Wow.

JENNY
Yeah.

CAROLYN
It's um... It's quite a proposal.

JENNY

I was thinking of what you said and... You know.

CAROLYN

Clearly. Umm...

(Pause.)

I umm...

(Pause.)

JENNY

I still have to flesh out the safety issues. Health safety.

CAROLYN

Umm... A couple questions. I don't want you to get offended. Umm... Who's providing the sperm?

JENNY

My boy friend.

CAROLYN

Ok.

JENNY

You wanna know how?

CAROLYN

Well, um... Yes.

JENNY

Through intercourse.

CAROLYN

Ok. Will he know about this?

JENNY

Do you think he should?

CAROLYN

Is it part of the exercise that he doesn't?

JENNY

There's this movie *The Shape of Things*.

CAROLYN

Yes, I know that movie, it was also a play.

JENNY

So I thought, maybe...

CAROLYN

Uh... Look, I don't want something I say to come back and...

JENNY

Bite you in the ass?

CAROLYN

Well, we're all adults. The premise of any graduate program is that just by being here you are already, essentially, a professional... This is a master's program.

JENNY

I don't want to put you in a difficult position.

CAROLYN

That's not my concern.

JENNY

I mean, as a professor.

CAROLYN

That's what I meant. I think... I think, I think, I think... I think you should do it. It's exciting. I wish, I wish I knew you better...

JENNY

I'll be safe, Carolyn. I promise. That's what I want to spend the weekend doing, researching the safety of it.

CAROLYN

Ok... Good... Great. I'll read it over closely and give you some written feedback on Sunday.

JENNY

Great. Thank you.

CAROLYN

Uh... Do I have your cell?

JENNY

Yes.

That's the only number for you?
CAROLYN

Yes.
JENNY

Good. I might call you.
CAROLYN

It's going to be fine.
JENNY

Ok, I know it is. But... You know...
CAROLYN

Keep an eye on my cell?
JENNY

Yeah.
CAROLYN

(CAROLYN smiles and then hurries out. JENNY stands and crosses to center where she is surprised to run into IRVIN.)

Hi.
IRVIN

Hey.
JENNY

Surprised?
IRVIN

Irvin.
JENNY

What?
IRVIN

You didn't;... You shouldn't have done this.
JENNY

I wanted to. I felt like a shmuck. It's ok.
IRVIN

JENNY

Irvin.

IRVIN

No, it's fine, I'm an adult. Adults commute. I'll commute this weekend.

JENNY

It's an hour and a half each way.

IRVIN

It's an hour and fifty minutes. But look, I've got a shit load to read and reading on public transportation's what got me through undergrad.

JENNY

Vinny...

IRVIN

Stop. Let's get pizza. I'm starving.

JENNY

Pizza?

IRVIN

Yeah, that place across the street.

JENNY

That place is totally skanky.

(Making a call)

I'll order some.

IRVIN

Isn't that expensive?

JENNY

No, costs the same. Ugh...

IRVIN

What?

JENNY

Professor, calling on the weekend. Forget it. It's Friday after 500. I'll call her on Monday. Hello, Chunky Chunky? Yes, I'll hold.

(She smiles at IRVIN. Blackout. Sound of train departure announcements. Lights up on IRVIN and JENNY standing next to his luggage. They kiss.)

IRVIN
Good luck tomorrow.

JENNY
Oh, yeah. That.

IRVIN
Oh, yeah, that.

JENNY
I'm thinking of doing it myself.

IRVIN
You've never done that before.

JENNY
It was later before. This is less than... well it's not as late.

IRVIN
Oh. Well, you know best.

JENNY
I'll make sure I'm safe.

IRVIN
Um...

JENNY
Don't worry.

(They kiss. He leaves. She listens to her phone. We hear CAROLYN's message.)

CAROLYN
(Voice over)
Hi, um, Jenny, it's Carolyn. I've had some thoughts actually. I did read your proposal in the car, right after you left me as a matter of fact, and I'd really like you to call me. Ok? So give me a tingle when you get a chance. Thanks.

(JENNY erases the message and listens to the next. As she does the lights go black.)

CAROLYN

(v. o.)

Hi, Jenny, Cary again. Call me please. I don't think... well, we should discuss it but I think this project is actually a little ambitious for your first year. That's my thinking. So why don't you relax this weekend and we'll focus on... we'll think... We should think of something else. Call me please.

(Lights up on JENNY at her computer. She grabs her tummy. She bends over, head between legs. She groans. She starts to leave and then remembers to return to her desk and remove a large clear zip lock bag from the top drawer. Then she exits. Lights out. We hear groaning, then it stops. Lights up. JENNY literally crawls out on stage, covered in sweat. She looks desperate. She is stabbed by another cramp, much stronger than the earlier one. She gasps with pain, almost passing out. She crawls, slowly and painfully towards her phone, looking panicked. She has reached the phone when she suddenly contracts her entire body into a fetal position, whining pitifully. The lights fade on her, she is weak, clutching her abdomen and whining in the middle of the stage. Lights up on JENNY in CAROLYN's office. JENNY wears same clothes as previous scene. She looks disheveled, hair not combed, dirty. She holds her backpack, clutched in her lap.)

JENNY

I started this weekend. It was tough. I was sloppy about it, not anticipating that it would actually happen. I don't know why I didn't think it would work, I mean it's guaranteed to, you know. It's just I've never done it before. I took the misoprostol tablet, 24 hours after the first tablets. Then eight hours later... I felt like someone had kicked me, in the womb, much harder than my usual cramping. Like an attack. But it was fine in the end. I was bathed in sweat when it was all over, from head to toe. Like a waterfall the sweat came out of me. My hair was drenched. So I got dressed and went out for a walk.

CAROLYN

In this weather?

JENNY

It was delicious. Refreshing. The best part of the experience. I felt, I don't know, reborn, like a baby myself, wet and doused and suddenly birthed myself in a hostile atmosphere after a nice warm womb. I found the world bracing, invigorating, electric.

CAROLYN

It hurt?

JENNY

Yes, exquisitely, a warm comfortable, stabbing pain. This is horrible... it made me realize my sadomasochism. I wrote it up in my journal, with a crayon because that was at hand. Here.

(She hands torn out journal entry to CAROLYN.)

JENNY (Cont.)

I'm using it with the bag, part of the collateral. Thank you for letting me do this project. It's... I don't know, it's cleansing. The first time I've felt like I belonged here.

CAROLYN

There's something I wanted to warn you about.

JENNY

What's that?

CAROLYN

Just... well, I was going to tell you later but I think you should know now, just so you don't... you don't expect...

JENNY

What? You're always so equivocal.

CAROLYN

I can't invite gallery owners, critics... I can't invite people, the people who matter... I can't invite them to your show.

JENNY

You can't?

CAROLYN

I won't.

JENNY

That doesn't matter.

CAROLYN

It should.

JENNY

I'm doing this for myself. I know that now. It's for me.

CAROLYN

It should matter.

JENNY

It's like a child. You should relate to that. It's conceived for me.

CAROLYN

Part of this program is that it should matter.

JENNY

Can you relate to that... this as birth?

CAROLYN

It's not like a child, it's nothing like that.

JENNY

Ok, it's not.

(She pulls the baggie out of her backpack. It is full of red matter, liquid, with substance.)

CAROLYN

I'll get... whatever his name is... that needs to be sealed, other than just zip locked. It's disgusting.

JENNY

I've never seen this shade of red, not from me.

(She hands it to CAROLYN. CAROLYN crosses to DALE with bag, meeting him in another place.)

DALE

I need to know what's in it, to store it.

CAROLYN

It's confidential.

DALE

I can't store it properly if I don't know. Like the time you stored shit in those refrigerators and...

CAROLYN

That was a mistake and I apologized for that. We now have special incubators where you shouldn't need to ask

DALE

That was dangerous, to the health of-

CAROLYN

I told you I'm tired of these conversations with you.

(DALE is silent.)

CAROLYN

Please just store it. It's organic matter. There will be more of it. Regular deliveries... I mean, special baggies every month. Thank you.

(Music: Something Dale likes. CAROLYN exits. DALE takes baggie off stage, then re-enters and meets MIELLE in their space. He sits in his chair, MIELLE stands.)

MIELLE

It's all in your head.

DALE

You don't get it.

MIELLE

Sure, when I'm in my smock. Be happy you don't have to wear a uniform.

DALE

I hate that bitch.

MIELLE

That's enough.

DALE

Why? I didn't call her a cunt.

MIELLE

Stop it! I said I don't want to hear this anymore. This town and gown stuff. I don't... I don't subscribe to it.

DALE

"Subscribe?" You don't "subscribe" to it? You think they don't look down on your community college?

MIELLE

It's not a community college.

DALE

Can you imagine what they make of a pharmacist's assistant studying accounting at the local college?

MIELLE

Stop it! Just stop! You said you liked it there. You said you were happy with this job. You said that.

DALE
I changed my mind.

MIELLE
You're going to quit that job.

DALE
I might.

MIELLE
We need... your income is important.

DALE
My benefits are important.

MIELLE
This isn't just your decision.

DALE
It is. It is my decision. If I had my way I wouldn't even have insurance. Who gives a fuck?

MIELLE
That's just stupid.

DALE
(A toss off)
When is universal health care going to kick in anyway?

MIELLE
I am exhausted. In an hour I have to start getting ready for class and then I'm at school all night. Is this my dinner break? Is it?

DALE
Never mind.

MIELLE
Never mind what?

DALE
I'm sorry... forget it.

MIELLE
Forget dinner?

DALE

I said forget it. Never mind. I'm done. I'll leave you alone.

MIELLE

That's very sweet of you. But tonight is your night to make dinner.

DALE

Oh, for fuck's sake.

MIELLE

Dale, we agreed one night, one night a week you would make an effort.

DALE

Forget it. I'm out of here.

MIELLE

Where are you going?

DALE

To work. Bitches down there are predictable.

(JENNY in gallery, removing her period project from walls. DALE appears in distance. JENNY suddenly realizes he is there.)

JENNY

Hi. You sacred me.

DALE

Door was propped.

JENNY

Yeah. Sorry-

DALE

I scare you? You know what can come in from the street?

JENNY

Yeah, it was-

DALE

Housing project right down the street. This is a high risk area.

JENNY

I said I'm sorry. I am.

DALE

Most dangerous city in America out there.

(Pause.)

Sorry.

JENNY

It's ok. I was thoughtless.

(They look at her Period Piece.)

DALE

This doesn't have to come down tonight.

JENNY

I want it down. I've moved on. Boy, that sounded pretentious. I just wanted to take it down. It embarrasses me.

DALE

Can I help you?

JENNY

Yeah. Just, here, put these in those containers.

(She shows him how to remove and store the pieces.)

DALE

You should refrigerate these.

JENNY

I know.

DALE

Sorry.

(They laugh.)

JENNY

You're working late.

DALE

Nah, I'm off. Was walking around the campus and saw... I saw that some stupid person left the gallery door open.

(This is playful.)

JENNY

I was being very artistic.

DALE

Wrapped up in your own shit?

JENNY

My creative space.

DALE

Me too. I wanted to be in my own space tonight.

JENNY

Not me. I get sick of my space. I feel like it's messing with me.

DALE

Well, you have some crazy ass shit in your space.

(He holds up one of her pieces. She laughs.)

JENNY

I wish my boy friend had a sense of humor about it. He's very serious on the subject of my art. "Wow, Jenny, that's really interesting, Jenny. I see what you're trying to say about society's inscriptive presence in the ontology of the female body and discursive landscapes like procreation, and Asian immigration."

DALE

Sense of humor. Bitches need a sense of humor.

(She looks at him.)

I'm using "bitches" meaning like "all people," not just girls. I was using it to describe your boy friend.

(She laughs at this.)

DALE

And my girl friend.

JENNY

Girl trouble, huh?

DALE

No trouble. Just needed space.

JENNY

Why do we do it?

DALE

Have partners?

(She nods.)

DALE (Cont.)

I know why I do it. Beats reaching down and pulling my pud.

(This really cracks her up.)

While I dream of Beyonce's apple bottom planted on my face.

(She has the giggles.)

Which I do sometimes anyway when I'm boning Mielle.

(This really gives her the giggles.)

DALE

Happy to amuse.

JENNY

I actually can't believe you said that. That's abuse you know? Work place abuse.

(They laugh.)

DALE

Don't joke. I want my union rep here.

(They are really cut up by all this.)

JENNY

Mielle is such a beautiful name.

DALE

Mielle is beautiful.

JENNY

How long you been together?

DALE

Two years. Living together like eighteen months. She's great. I know that. That's why when we get into it I just go out. She's not a good one for shouting. I mean she is, but I don't like it because I know eventually she'll take off, leave me. That would really bum my high.

JENNY

Irvin and I never really argue, not so someone would walk out. We're too alike. I've known him since high school if you can believe it.

DALE

I've known Mielle since high school. But then I thought she was unobtainable, like way too good for me. That's why I had to have her. I mean...

JENNY

That's all right. I know what you mean. Vinny and I weren't an item at all. Then we were at this dumb party and everyone was drunk and acting like assholes and we snuck off and talked about *Frankenstein*.

DALE

The movie?

JENNY

The book. We talked for hours, what it meant, how exciting it was, why it was written. Loved the style of it, we really grooved on that: the sense of doom, of foreboding, of something that never was going to work. I guess we've always been attracted to books like that because we're so normal, we never felt like we would fail, as a couple. Which is weird. We're so compatible yet we're attracted to discord, danger. In literature.

DALE

I sucked at English. We read *Hamlet* I couldn't figure out what the hell was going on.

JENNY

Not everyone can. It's challenging material. Favorite subject in high school?

DALE

Me?

JENNY

Yeah.

DALE

(Looking at her)

Asian studies.

(She laughs. He smiles, glad she's not offended. She crosses to another place, IRVIN enters. JENNY and DALE are talking on their phones.)

JENNY

I'm just... I don't know. I just don't like my project. It's embarrassing. I feel like I've put myself out there and exposed myself and it all just seems really... pompous and self-absorbed.

IRVIN

Like art?

JENNY

Yeah. Maybe I'm in the wrong field. It's all so... embarrassing. I can't imagine being famous for this... achieving fame for this. It all feels incredibly phony. That's what I'd think if I weren't me. That's what I do think. And I am me.

IRVIN

I don't know how Jeff Koons faces himself in the morning.

JENNY

Ok.

IRVIN

How does Louise Bourgeois look in the mirror?

JENNY

All right, smart ass.

IRVIN

You want to bail?

JENNY

On school?

IRVIN

No, on your project.

JENNY

I can't really.

IRVIN

Will you tell me about it?

JENNY

No. I can't. It's too... I just can't go into it.

IRVIN

Tell me one thing.

JENNY

It hurts. It's painful.

IRVIN

Jenny.

JENNY

Well... No, it's not.

IRVIN

Jenny.

JENNY

Forget it. Forget I said that.

IRVIN

What do you mean it's painful?

JENNY

(Covering)

I meant emotionally... It's draining. I'm exhausted from the... emotions it excites in me.

IRVIN

Do you want me to come up this weekend?

JENNY

No, I'm fine. Really.

IRVIN

Please.

JENNY

No, I'm tired. Next weekend.

IRVIN

Next weekend is kind of rough.

JENNY

Well... Please. I need you next weekend.

IRVIN

You need me next weekend?

JENNY

I mean, I need you now, next weekend I can fit you in.

(He laughs.)

IRVIN

Ok, next weekend.

(She hangs up and then talks to us, in her own space. This is her moment.)

JENNY

Vincent Scully has declared the crevice of modernness deep. Should we fear its landscape, the lust and rumble of its movement, a huge slug leaving a hollandaise like track in its wake? Or, like a Jim of the prairies, should we hop on board, happy for the conveyance.

JENNY (Cont.)

“My nose hair needs trimming:” non sequitur or likeable spontaneity? What would Aquinas say of our age of crevice? Who cares? Or would he humbly embrace not only its negativity, but its Yakitori like recipe of wholesome rice and fatty chicken. A girder can hold up a building but can a post hold up a modern? Or does the wheel of fashion grind as irrevocably as the wheel of justice. Sushi bars skulked on the scene and now are everywhere, every Tom knows its architecture. But does every Jim lust for it or does he skirt its bleak troubled plainness. We desire a change, so we make it. The rice remains the same, so let’s alter the fish. We are insatiate (meaning tired,) but invigorate (meaning strong.) There is no monolith anymore, so we are parsed. Live as separate or die in nostalgia, the age of Aquarius has passed, welcome to the new age of Aquinas. Fuck him if he wouldn’t understand.

(Cross to MIELLE standing over DALE, who sits in his chair.)

MIELLE

What the hell’s your problem?

DALE

Leave me alone.

MIELLE

You been moping around here for a week. Now you’ve stopped talking.

(He is silent.)

Well, I think that’s bullshit.

DALE

I’m trying to watch TV.

MIELLE

Yeah, well tough. Are you going to eat with me tonight?

DALE

No.

MIELLE

What are you going to do tonight?

DALE

Not go out drinking. I don’t have enough money.

MIELLE

Wow. Is that what this is all about, you don’t have enough money to drink?

(She takes a twenty from her wallet and throws it at him.)

Here. Take this. Go out and get loaded. I don’t give a shit.

DALE

I don't want your money.

(She picks it up, looks at him.)

MIELLE

Dale, look...

DALE

Changed my mind. Don't wait up for me.

(He springs up and makes to leave.)

MIELLE

Dale, I have to take on more hours. I have to start working a full day Saturday, ok? It's the only way I can pay for school.

DALE

I thought school was free.

MIELLE

Well the course is five dollars a unit but with the books and the software and... Jesus, I don't know, it's just added way up.

(He makes an impatient gesture: what's your point?)

Listen, I can't afford to move out but I was thinking, maybe I can move in here, into the living room. I know it's not convenient, your having to schlep through a bedroom or using the backdoor but I just... I get so upset having to get into bed with you every night.

(He is actually stunned by this. He sits again.)

I don't know what's wrong. Actually I do.

(Pause.)

Dale, this isn't the end of things. We can leave here. We can go wherever we want if we plan. New York even. Wouldn't that be exciting? I got so fucking bummed when I started working at Walgreen's. I never told you. Depressed about all kinds of things, just the hours to begin with. But also the people. They seemed so slovenly, so depressed all the time, like they'd just given up. It almost killed me.

(He stands up and hugs her. He gives her a kiss.)

DALE

I gotta go. I won't be late.

(He leaves.)

(Shift to JENNY and IRVIN in bed, having just done it. He reaches out and touches her.)

Hey. IRVIN

Hey. JENNY

You want to go out? See a movie? IRVIN

No. Thanks. JENNY

You just want to stay here. IRVIN

Yeah. JENNY

We've been here all day. IRVIN

I'm out all week. I like to spend the weekends in my space. JENNY

You like this space? IRVIN

Yes, it's mine. I feel safe here. Most of the time. JENNY

I hate my apartment. IRVIN

You've got a great place. JENNY

It's ok, but I always want to go out, see things, do shit. IRVIN

That's you. You're into cities. JENNY

We could go biking tomorrow. IRVIN

JENNY
You don't have a bike.

IRVIN
I could borrow one.

JENNY
From who?

IRVIN
That guy downstairs.

JENNY
I don't even know him.

IRVIN
I'll ask him. It'll be cool. It's New Haven, it's the country, people trust each other.
(He smiles.)

JENNY
No, I want to stay in tomorrow. I got stuff to do.

IRVIN
You're like Dr. Frankenstein in here. Are you creating a monster? Is that what you're up to, why you can't talk about it?

JENNY
No.

IRVIN
No what?
(Pause.)

No what?

JENNY
Vin, I get kinda... after we do it. All this talking... ok?

IRVIN
Yeah, fine.

JENNY
Don't be that way.

IRVIN
You're the one that stopped talking. You want me to come up next weekend?

JENNY

Only if you want to.

IRVIN

Are you free?

JENNY

Yes. But don't make a special trip.

IRVIN

It's always a special trip, Jenny. Well, I think I will. I won't be able to come up for a few weeks after that.

JENNY

Meaning what?

IRVIN

Meaning the next three weekends I have seminars and I can't commute. It's exhausting.

JENNY

What about the weekend of the twelfth?

IRVIN

Last Saturday seminar. Can't do it.

JENNY

Well you've got to.

IRVIN

I don't have to do anything, I'm in school too. You come down.

JENNY

No. You've got to come here.

IRVIN

Why?

JENNY

I'll come down the weekend before but you have to come here that weekend, the weekend of the twelfth.

IRVIN

Forget it. It's a pain, all that time on the train. And all you do is mope around, like a stick in the mud. I hate seeing you here.

JENNY

That's childish.

IRVIN

Childish. This is childish. You call me up here, you make a big deal about me coming this weekend and then you're like a shut in the whole time I'm here. You don't talk, you avoid conversation, you won't go out. Forget it. I'm busy. Come to New York, you want to hang, I don't need to travel two hours each way to sit in a smelly apartment.

(Silence.)

JENNY

(Lightening the mood)

It's not smelly.

IRVIN

It is.

JENNY

Only because you fart it up.

IRVIN

What's that supposed to mean?

JENNY

You're a farter, Irvin. You fart.

IRVIN

You fart.

JENNY

I haven't farted once, not since I got to Yale.

IRVIN

You were a big farter before you came and you still are. Very discreet little farts, barely detectable to the human ear, but many of them and lethal. Like this.

(He makes many tiny farting sounds.)

JENNY

That is such a lie. You fart like a guy.

(She makes a loud raucous, farting sound. They laugh and begin communicating in farting sounds. Soon they are tickling each other, playing.)

(Shift to MIELLE entering, leaving for work. She sees DALE passed out in his chair, dressed from the night before. She bends down and kisses him. He stirs.)

MIELLE

Come on, Daley. Honey. Get up and get into bed. Come on.

(He rises and walks off, stripping as he goes, leaving a trail of clothing. She gathers it up and takes it off in his direction. Soon she re-merges and crosses the stage leaving for work.)

(Shift to JENNY sitting with CAROLYN in her office. CAROLYN is looking at some documentation of JENNY's project.)

JENNY

That's the ritual component of it: once a month, my place, shut in all weekend, no solids. Which ties in nicely with fertility rituals and the rhythm method, all of it reinforcing the anxieties that surround pregnancy.

CAROLYN

What does Irvin – is that your boyfriend's name? – what does Irvin think?

JENNY

He doesn't know. He just knows I want to do it on specific days in one place, my apartment, and I don't like to go out afterwards or over the entire fertility weekend.

CAROLYN

That would drive me crazy, especially if I didn't know the reason why.

JENNY

Exactly.

(She smiles, mischievously.)

CAROLYN

You're deliberately trying to drive him crazy?

JENNY

No, it's exposing him to the praxis of confinement that women have historically endured in the fertilization and pregnancy periods.

CAROLYN

But they knew why.

JENNY

Not always. And even if they did they didn't always subscribe to the program of maternity, they were just unwilling victims of it.

CAROLYN

So Irvin is a victim in all this?

JENNY

Just as I am.

CAROLYN

You're not a victim, Jenny. You elected to do it.

JENNY

Did I? I elected to be an artist but I feel this project elected me, it chose me. The narrative of the artist is that the work created itself, the artist was just the medium. That's the hysteric transcendence of plasticity or generation. In other words, I am the Shaman. I am Mary and this is the immaculate conception. Aren't those the ur-tropes of all artistic creation as passed down to us through time?

CAROLYN

Are you eating?

JENNY

Yes. Jesus, Carolyn.

CAROLYN

This all just sounds kind of... extreme to me.

JENNY

I thought you of all people would get it.

CAROLYN

I do get it, but you express it with such... fervor. Referring to yourself as Mary and a Shaman-

JENNY

Those are inspirations, Carolyn. Joseph Bueys locked himself in a gallery with a wolf, for Christ's sake. That was dangerous. Haven't you ever done anything dangerous? To create? Come on.

CAROLYN

Ok.

JENNY

What? Tell me. What did you do?

CAROLYN

Look...

JENNY

No, now, you gotta tell me. What?

CAROLYN

Well...

JENNY

Yeah, you want to, I can tell you do.

CAROLYN

Well this was very stupid and I know you won't take this wrong. God, I cannot even believe... Ok, when I was at Pratt, you know it's in the this very rough part of Brooklyn, well, it used to be, now it's kind of grand, but back then Fort Greene was a jungle. Wrong word. It was very dangerous.

JENNY

Yeah?

CAROLYN

So I had my friend, my guy friend, not Richard, before him, Hector, he was my boyfriend at the time... Anyway, I had him film me. He would tail me, you know be hidden, and film me. I would dress up, very sexy, leather pants, halter top, different outfits... One time, this is really sad, a bikini with a wrap around scarf, around my waist like I was so demure, and then huge fuck me pumps.

(They laugh.)

All junk I picked up at the Goodwill, cheap. And so I would go into Fort Greene at night. And Hector would film my encounters.

JENNY

Encounters? You mean you had sex?

CAROLYN

Well, it never got that far. But I would... men would approach me. It took very little, I didn't even have to look at them, just move in a certain way, have a certain, you know, purposelessness to my stride – I really got into it. I used a pedometer to gauge my speed and I developed a whole graph on how much quicker I would get results just by moving slower. We wanted to figure out a way of gauging hip action but there is no such device, a hipometer?. Also arm swinging versus still arm, size of heel, level of thigh exposure, we really got into it.

JENNY

So?

CAROLYN

That was it. A lot of video and a lot of data.

But... JENNY

But what? CAROLYN

Did you ever do it? JENNY

No, Jenny. With some guy in Fort Greene? Come on. CAROLYN

How did you get rid of them? JENNY

Blew 'em off in different ways. It was tough because they could get mean. I got grabbed twice, the second time really hard and Richard almost had to intervene but... well that was the last time. The best way I could find is to suddenly see someone else, pretend to see someone else, and run away. They got nervous, they thought it was a cop or my pimp. CAROLYN

But you did it. At least once. Just to find out. JENNY

Find out what? CAROLYN

What the encounter was like, when carried through. JENNY

(Pause.)

No. Jenny, you're missing my point. This exercise in solicitation was a representation of life, it wasn't life. Art is representation, not life. CAROLYN

Seems cowardly. JENNY

Ok, Jenny. CAROLYN

Sorry, but it does. JENNY

CAROLYN

Well, it wasn't. And I'll tell you something, it didn't do my relationship any good. Hector brought a halt to it as much as anything.

JENNY

So the man controlled the piece.

CAROLYN

It was as much for my personal safety as anything.

JENNY

Weren't you obsessive? Didn't you want to go through with it? Once?

CAROLYN

No, Jenny.

JENNY

Come on...

CAROLYN

Jenny.

JENNY

Carolyn. I'm interested.

CAROLYN

Jenny, yes, of course, we're all drawn to our subjects. That's the lure of all depictees: sympathy.

JENNY

Lust. In your case.

CAROLYN

Maybe it was just mercantile. I wanted to make a buck.

(They both laugh.)

CAROLYN

Jenny, I would talk to Irvin about this.

JENNY

No, no.

CAROLYN

Jenny, he should-

JENNY

No, Carolyn. I'm sorry, but you... I'm not going to blame you, no I refuse to do that... But I am mindful that you encouraged me.

CAROLYN

Blame me? Is something wrong with all this?

(Pause.)

JENNY

No. But if you're concerned... I'm just saying that you encouraged me to do this as opposed to my first proposal.

CAROLYN

Yes, I did. But all art resides in proximity to the abyss. The trick, Jenny, is not to fall in.

JENNY

Very well put, professor.

CAROLYN

That might sound pretentious, Jenny, but you do need to be careful.

JENNY

Ok, Carolyn. I get it. I do.

(Shift. MIELLE talks to us.)

MIELLE

What they're saying about Dale – all the Dale Cranbrook the Third crap, that's crap, who thought that one up, some attorney? - but what they're saying about Dale, I know, in my heart, it's true. But what does that have to do with anything? Dale and I lived together for almost two years. He came home every night, I mean every night. And yes he didn't speak to me for a while, and yes he could be a dick and yes, near the end, well for like six months, he did... well, he didn't sleep with me. Except for that last day, which was more of a desperate... fuck, he didn't sleep with me. I know that. But he loved me. He did. Else why would he do all that, be so loyal in his way? People are hard things to add up, they're not equations, it's not like accounting. And maybe I just didn't know how to express myself, ya know? But he came home to me. Even on the night when he did what he did. He came home. That means something, To me, it does. And now, I know, it's me that counts. I love you, Dale. Even if I never see you again.

(JENNY and IRVIN are under the covers of her bed. She is very forceful. He breaks away from her.)

IRVIN

Listen, um...

JENNY
(Not wanting to stop)
What?

IRVIN
This is weird.

JENNY
Come on.

IRVIN
No, just hang on, ok. Stop.
(Pause.)
I... I don't know how to say this but... But we have barely talked all day. The one conversation we had turned into an argument, about nothing. Now you're crawling all over me, it's just...

JENNY
I need your sperm.

IRVIN
Is that like a joke?

JENNY
I was just trying to be funny.

IRVIN
(Starting to get dressed)
Well it's not funny.

JENNY
Where're you going?

IRVIN
Out, I don't know. Back to New York.

JENNY
It's too late.

IRVIN
They're trains till midnight.

(She cuddles him some more, starts to remove his shirt. He resists.)

IRVIN

Look... Just... Forget it. I have too much to worry about. You're so... quiet all the time now. What is this, the mantle of art? Is this the alienation you're trying to cultivate? Look at this place, there's no food, there's no toilet paper, you look half starved. What are you doing?

JENNY

I think I'm going crazy.

IRVIN

No duh.

JENNY

No, I mean, seriously crazy.

(Pause.)

IRVIN

What does that mean?

JENNY

It means I think I need help.

IRVIN

Have you tried eating?

JENNY

It's not that simple.

IRVIN

It's a good place to start. Eat your meals, sleep at night, exercise-

JENNY

Are you fucking someone else?

IRVIN

What?

JENNY

It's not why I'm depressed, that's not why I ask. But I just had a feeling, tonight... now I think about it.

IRVIN

What, now you're trying to change the subject?

JENNY
I just... had a feeling.

(Pause.)

IRVIN
Yes.

JENNY
Yeah.

IRVIN
Sorry. You're so... strange now...

JENNY
So it's my fault?

IRVIN
No.

JENNY
I want you to stay. I don't care. I do care but I don't... I really don't know what to say.

IRVIN
Will you... can we get married?

JENNY
I do know what to say. No.

IRVIN
It's just... I don't feel connected. I feel connected to the past. To being an undergraduate, being in high school and having a girl friend. Now, with you here, there's no connection.

JENNY
Are you going, are you staying?

IRVIN
I'll ask you again-

JENNY
We can get engaged, not married.

IRVIN
Ok.

JENNY

Does that mean you'll stay.

IRVIN

I... I was drunk. It was meaningless. Well, forgettable certainly. Maybe not for you but I can't remember any of it. Except waking up and feeling like shit and saying shitty things and then apologizing. She said not to worry about it. It happens.

(JENNY has started looking around for something, her sketchpad.)

IRVIN

Am I disturbing you?

JENNY

No. I just thought I'd get something done. This is my best time to work actually.

(He stands and continues to dress.)

JENNY

I said we could be engaged.

IRVIN

You don't get it, do you?

JENNY

Your confession? I get it. It makes you feel better. Like a real confession, to a priest. It absolved you.

(Pause.)

JENNY

I just like to get things done. I'm paying \$30,000.00 a year to be here. I'd like to make my time here as productive as possible. When I get out there's a seven percent chance I'll make it as a self-sustaining artist, an artist who lives off my work, a thirty percent chance I'll make a living as a teacher of art, and a sixty-three percent chance I'll end up doing something completely unrelated and doing my art on the side. This might be my last chance to do it full time, all the time. I want to enjoy it.

IRVIN

I'm going.

JENNY

Do I feel bad you had sex with another woman? Girl. Woman? Yes. It's humiliating. It makes me feel like a wife. Like someone who can be betrayed, therefore someone with a moral superiority over you. And that makes me feel old. I don't like feeling old. Do I feel bad that another person's body turned you on and mine no longer does? Yes. That's humiliating also. Do I feel bad you just asked me to marry you and already, everything we do – the arguing, the cheating, the confessing - makes me feel like we've been

JENNY (Cont.)

married for twenty years? Yes. That too makes me feel old. Why am I sketching? Because I can't deal with any of this. It has all, too quickly, become way too complicated. If I don't sketch, I'd probably cry... oh, fuck it.

(She throws down the sketchpad and cries. He puts down his bag and crosses to her. He sits down beside her and holds her.)

IRVIN

Can I take you out for something, please? Some greasy food? Some of that shit pizza?

(She holds him.)

IRVIN

Some fresh air, some pizza, and a midnight walk. Come on.

JENNY

It's the most dangerous city in America out there.

IRVIN

It's pretty dangerous in here.

JENNY

(Teasing him)

Oooooo.

(She kisses him. He gently pushes her away and sighs. She holds his face. They look at one another. She kisses him again, tenderly. He responds. She begins to make out. She draws him back towards the bed.)

(The lights flash, scorching light, time has passed. JENNY and IRVIN on phones, still on the bed, but clearly in different places.)

IRVIN

I can't this weekend.

JENNY

You must.

IRVIN

I must? I can't.

JENNY

Then I'm coming down.

IRVIN

No, this isn't the right weekend.

JENNY

Are you with that whore?

IRVIN

Jenny.

JENNY

Tell me.

IRVIN

No, I'm busy, with school. Getting something ready. I cannot make it. I think... I think we need some time apart, ok?

JENNY

You're seeing someone else.

IRVIN

Actually I'm not. I just... I feel used. I don't know why. It's like all you need is this... ritual fuck every few weeks and it has to be me and that's the extent of your interest.

JENNY

I'll come down.

IRVIN

If you do I won't be here. I'm serious. I made up that shit about the other woman. I just did it to provoke you. You didn't even care. You ignored it. You don't care. Not about me.

JENNY

Ok, I don't. I care about my art.

IRVIN

Well, that's great. I wish I was as consumed with my studies, but I'm not.

JENNY

It's not a study, Irv. It's a discipline.

IRVIN

Well congrats, you're very disciplined.

JENNY

So you're not coming up and I'm not allowed to come down. I just want to get this clear.

IRVIN

Maybe next weekend. Or mid next week. Some time off your schedule. Show I'm at least as important to you as your discipline.

JENNY

You're a part of my discipline, asshole. Get a clue.

(She hangs up.)

(IRVIN is alone. Music: Something he likes. He talks to us:)

IRVIN

Victor Hugo hated the new city, the city of overbuilding, of mish mash, of confusion. He sought the city of antiquity, of uniformity, of pre-industrialization and pre-alienation. What would he make of us? Now the city is everywhere, even the small cities are overbuilt, disunified, shot through with crime, congestion, smog and tension. Jenny's womb was her sanctuary, a place where she could express herself, harbor her secrets and make a statement. Somehow she instigated the crime against her by being so adventurous. Sure, I feel bad for sleeping with another woman, which I did. That's the truth. And sure I feel bad... very bad for what happened to Jenny. But the two only conflate in my mind. And that's vanity. It's hubris on my part to think that my actions, like a butterfly effect, engender the actions of people in another city, another conflation, another edge of the urban cosmos. But Jenny's gone and I can't help feeling responsible.

(JENNY and DALE sitting on the floor, her exhibit is behind them, almost completely hung. It consists of separate baggies, eight of them, hung as weird globular things. There are also video monitors, which are currently turned off.)

JENNY

I once saw a show of a friend of mine, big show, at the Castelli Gallery. Couldn't believe it, my friend at the Castelli Gallery. And her stuff was all these bloated canvases, big fleshy circles mounted on strange shaped frames, huge. And all of it the most beautifully painted - I mean that she had beautiful pigments, the color - but it was all the most beautifully rendered huge circles of flesh. Like an Estes, hyper real and flat and utterly beautiful. And she was obese, like a truck my friend. Like a dumpster. Fat. And I asked her, "What's it about?" As if I didn't know. And she said, "It's about fatness, confronting you with flatness, so much flesh, so much canvas." And I said, "But it's so beautiful." And she said, "Yeah, isn't it? Fat is beautiful." But that's not her perspective. She hated being fat, she hated being ostracized because of it, she hated not having a man because she thought she was fat. In fact, she didn't have a man because the men she wanted would never go for someone like her. She hated herself and felt hated by all. So it was a fraud. She was trying to make something beautiful that she thought was gross. And it was all technique. It was just gorgeously pigmented canvas. It was art in service of a lie.

DALE

I knew this kid, little weakling, couldn't play baseball. Slow, because he was weak. But he always played, always signed up for the team. And a bunch of kids, well, I was one of them, we beat him up, beat the shit out of him so he wouldn't play, so he couldn't fuck up our play-off game, he was on our team. And instead of staying away, he came to the game the next day and rooted the team. And about half way through the third inning I went over to him and told him to go home or I'd bitch slap him out of the bleachers, in front of everybody. He had no... he had too much, what?

JENNY

Dignity.

DALE

Ok, yeah. I hate dignity in stupid people.

JENNY

It's all... it's all they've got.

DALE

I'm not stupid.

JENNY

But you're dignified. That's what I like about you.

DALE

You think I shouldn't be dignified.

JENNY

People with... people who do what you do around here, some of them never talk to me.

DALE

They talk about you though, all of you students. You're talked about.

JENNY

I figured.

DALE

Your subjects, these baggies.

JENNY

Yeah, my babies. I've decided to call them babies. I'm giving them names. That's Roger, named after my father. And that's Jeremy, named after... well, someone I knew.

DALE

Can I make one?

(Pause.)

JENNY

Is that a proposal?

DALE

Not here. I mean, how about like a Diet Coke, at your place.

(She laughs.)

DALE

I had this thing about another guy's girl friend once. But she said it was all right. "The beautiful thing about the world is things don't matter any more." And she was Catholic. Or maybe that's why it didn't matter, she could wipe it all away with confession. Do you find me attractive?

JENNY

Uh-huh.

DALE

I think you're hot. I love to look at you. First time I saw you, I thought, "Now there's someone I could take care of."

JENNY

Like if I got sick?

DALE

Or if you just wanted to be taken care of. Like if you wanted to stay at home.

JENNY

How would you do that?

DALE

I'm waiting for inspiration. Someone like me, I'm all potential. Someone like you could motivate that potential. Make it kinetic.

(She laughs.)

DALE

Coal is nothing till you fire it, then it smolders hotter and hotter.

(She moves away.)

DALE

That's ok. You know how I feel. That's what's important. The dog can't know there's dinner till you put the food out. You know the smell. When you want to eat, follow your nose.

JENNY

You calling me a dog?

DALE

Bad metaphor. Or is that a simile?

JENNY

No, it's a bad metaphor.

DALE

I'll leave you to your... meditations. Oh, uh, remember to lock up.

(Shift. CAROLYN steps out. Her music. She talks to us.)

CAROLYN

I look at Deborah, my little girl, and I see the next best hope for me. I wanted to be an artist, I settled for being a teacher. And now even that has been taken away. As artist I will always be that teacher. And as a teacher I will never be a teacher at Yale. Destroying children is a sin, a sin unto thyself, because it eliminates a parachute. A refuge of hope when all else has failed you. I have Deborah. I look at her and I know she can have a better life and avoid something like this and live simply and elegantly. I know she can. If I'd aborted her, now I would have nothing.

(JENNY and DALE in her room. He is dressing, she is in her underwear on the bed. He sits down with her. Touches her.)

DALE

(Tenderly)

Thanks for the Diet Coke.

JENNY

This was wrong.

DALE

How?

JENNY

We shouldn't have done this.

DALE

Ok, we shouldn't have. Things happen.

JENNY

What are you talking about?

DALE

Shit happens. Not shit, but... you know what I mean. Stuff happens, between people.

JENNY

This isn't an abstraction, this isn't vague.

DALE

An abstraction?

JENNY

You don't understand.

DALE

I guess...

JENNY

And I can't tell you.

(Pause.)

DALE

Hey, the first girl I made love to, she was someone else's girl friend. I knew that, but we did it anyway. And it was good. Next day she went back to her boyfriend. And eventually they got married. Things happen. They do.

JENNY

How did you feel afterwards?

DALE

Fine. I was worried she'd tell him and he'd come get me. Maybe she did, I don't know. But nothing ever happened.

(Pause. She just stares at him.)

DALE

What?

JENNY

Nothing. I'm fine. Really.

DALE

Ok.

(Pause.)

DALE

I guess I'll take off. Unless...

JENNY

What?

DALE

I don't know. I feel funny. Do you want me to take you out, have something to eat? I feel... well...

JENNY

What?

DALE

I... It just feels weird to leave. Unless you want me to.

JENNY

I... I don't know what I want you to do.

(He touches her.)

DALE

Maybe it wasn't such a good idea.

JENNY

Don't say that.

DALE

That's not what I meant, I only...

JENNY

What?

DALE

It's not a big deal. It's not.

(Beat.)

I'm not going to tell anyone.

(She looks at him. She is about to speak but she shakes it off. Then...)

JENNY

That's not what I meant. I feel bad.

DALE

You shouldn't.

(He rubs her shoulders, which she doesn't resist.)

We're so different. I feel... I feel like you're making a big deal out of it.

JENNY

I'm not. It just freaked me out. It was so... animal.

DALE

I liked it. You were so delicate, on top of me. Like something breakable, something made of glass, very thin and fragile glass. It was very... tender, soft, magical kinda. Like nothing I'd ever... well, it just didn't feel animal to me, it felt affectionate.

JENNY

You were so big, so sharp, like you really knew what you wanted, aggressive but, yes, you were respectful.

DALE

Respectful. You make it sound like I was doing it with my boss.

(She smiles.)

DALE

You have the most wispy hair, almost like a plant, one of those things you blow on and it goes whoosh...

JENNY

A dandelion?

DALE

Yeah, dandelion hair.

(He blows on her. He whispers in her ear. She giggles.)

DALE

I think you're very special. I feel like I'm the only one who's noticed you, in this way, my special way.

(He begins to kiss her neck.)

(Shift to CAROLYN looking at JENNY's exhibit. She feels one of the bags, the weight of it. She feels another, weighing it. DALE enters dressed for work, pushing mop in pail.)

DALE

Please don't touch the art.

(She smiles.)

CAROLYN
Sorry. I feel busted.

DALE
I'm serious. You shouldn't touch the art.

CAROLYN
She's my student, Dale.

(He ignores her.)

CAROLYN
Can I talk to you about something?

DALE
I only have a minute. It's not my break

CAROLYN
About this e-mail you sent out.

DALE
People don't lock doors, it's my job to tell them.

CAROLYN
No, it's your job to tell your supervisor and his job to tell me.

DALE
And you're not supposed to talk to me, you're supposed to talk to my supervisor.

CAROLYN
Dale, I didn't want to get you in trouble.

DALE
You can't get me in trouble. What made you think that?

CAROLYN
Ok, I didn't want to get into a big thing...

DALE
Neither did I.

CAROLYN
Dale.

(He looks at her.)

CAROLYN

Listen, um... When I came here two years ago, everyone was very nice to me. They were. The faculty, the staff. But they were also remote. They were very helpful and encouraging, but frosty, doing their own thing. You were actually jokey and kind and fun. I appreciated that, Dale. I really did.

DALE

So you're welcome.

CAROLYN

My point, Dale, is I don't want to be... I don't see why we can't work together on these things.

DALE

Great. Tell me the content of things you want stored and remind your students what I tell them in person and in e-mails – to secure the building.

CAROLYN

Ok, Dale. I'm sorry we had yet another unsatisfactory conversation.

DALE

I'll tell my supervisor we talked. I don't want you holding that over my head.

CAROLYN

I wouldn't-

DALE

And I'm sorry I haven't been as friendly as I was when you got here. I get pissed off, the sense of entitlement. I know that's like a cliché but it's the only thing to describe some of your students.

CAROLYN

I know that, Dale. They're young, they're very young.

DALE

They're the same age as me, some of them older. They're spoiled. You spoil them.

(She shrugs.)

DALE

Is this your final term here?

CAROLYN

Why do you say that?

DALE

You don't seem very happy.

CAROLYN

Frankly, I wasn't my first year, I was last year, then this year... It's been rough. I'm suddenly wondering if I have the energy these students need. I seem to encourage problems rather than solve them.

DALE

I'll send my e-mails to you only. Please pass the word along.

CAROLYN

Thank you.

DALE

I'm no expert, obviously. But the work, the artwork is a lot better than before you came. It's much more complex. This school is all I know about art, but things seem to have gotten much more intense around here. That must be good for artists. It certainly makes the art more interesting.

CAROLYN

Thank you.

(Shift – a blast of light. The gallery space. The installation is finished. The bags are all hung, nine of them. There is video playing. We can see JENNY in the video, with no sound, using an abortifacient to abort. It is not gross. We do not see her naked. We see her take the pills, time lapse; we see her taking the second set of pills, time lapse; then we see her sitting on a toilet, such that we see no nudity; then we see her capturing the aborted material in a bag, then sealing the bag. This action is repeated over a series of months, always this same ritual of progression. There is no sound to this video. There is a soundscape though which consists of conversations about and around the project – we hear snippets of many conversations that we've heard before. DALE enters and, unseen by JENNY, watches her put the finishing touches on the exhibit. He smiles, almost like he's proud of what he sees. Then we hear his and JENNY's voices in the soundscape, from an earlier conversation.)

DALE

That's us.

(JENNY jumps, startled.)

JENNY
Jesus. What...

DALE
That's my voice.

JENNY
Yeah.

DALE
Why?

JENNY
I record myself. My room. It's wired.

DALE
What?

JENNY
I'm... my project is about me, the significance of me.

DALE
That's my voice.

JENNY
Everything that happens in my room is recorded.

DALE
You're going to play it?

JENNY
I...

DALE
You're going to play my voice?

JENNY
I don't know. I might, I have to... I have to see what I've got. I might.

DALE
You can't do that.

JENNY
Don't be...

DALE

You can't...

JENNY

No one will know that it's you...

DALE

That's not the point. It's mine. You did this... Did you plan this?

JENNY

No. Not the recording. It's just on, always. I wanted it to happen, for us.

DALE

You cannot play this. Not even now.

(He crosses to her laptop and begins fiddling with it. She grabs his arm and yanks it away.)

JENNY

Hey. Get your hands off of that.

DALE

No. I want it deleted.

JENNY

Take your hands off of it or I'll scream. Come on.

(She yanks his hand away. He stares at her. He leaves suddenly, straight out the door. She stands for a moment, shaking.)

(CAROLYN enters in another space. DALE confronts her.)

DALE

I did you a favor.

CAROLYN

You agreed to-

DALE

I did you a fucking favor, now you do me one. I want that whole exhibit that Jenny did... I want all the sound cut out of it. There's personal stuff on there. Conversations we had.

CAROLYN

What... I don't...

DALE

I had conversations with her. They were recorded. She's playing them. That's personal. It's my shit.

CAROLYN

I'll ask her about-

DALE

No, no, don't ask her, do it. Take it away from her. And I don't know what the hell she filmed, I haven't seen the films.

CAROLYN

She filmed her abortions, that's all.

DALE

How do you know?

CAROLYN

She told me.

DALE

She told you? She told you? She could be lying.

CAROLYN

I will talk to her.

DALE

Do that. Otherwise I'll take care of it.

CAROLYN

Dale, you can't threaten me and you can't do anything to any one of the exhibits.

DALE

This is bullshit. I don't want to be a part of any sick art project. That's not my job. She's sick. She's disgusting, what she's done. And you encouraged it.

CAROLYN

Dale, calm down.

DALE

Fuck that. What are you going to do, Carolyn?

CAROLYN

I will talk to her.

DALE

Don't talk to her, tell her. Tell her to get rid of it.

(CAROLYN exits as MIELLE enters, holding her books, her laptop.
DALE turns to her.)

MIELLE

Hey, whoah, what are you doing here? Are you all right?

DALE

Can I talk to you?

MIELLE

I have like two minutes.

DALE

What's that?

MIELLE

This? My laptop.

DALE

Where did that come from?

MIELLE

I've had it for a week. I got it for school.

DALE

How did you pay for it?

MIELLE

My mom, Dale. She bought it for me. What's up?

DALE

I have to tell you something.

MIELLE

Here?

DALE

Where are you headed?

MIELLE

I have another class.

DALE

I thought you only took one class.

MIELLE

I take two. I have to go, Dale. I hate being late. What's wrong?

DALE

It's not something I can tell you in two minutes.

MIELLE

Well, I'm not missing class for it.

DALE

I'll tell you when you get home.

MIELLE

Dale, I get home at eleven. I have to... I have to get into bed and go to sleep. I'm exhausted and I have to be up at six.

DALE

Well, when can we talk?

MIELLE

We haven't talked in months, Dale. Months. I don't have time now.

(Pause.)

This weekend. We can talk this weekend. Day after tomorrow. Shit, I have to... Sunday, Sunday afternoon.

DALE

Jesus.

(He walks away. She watches him and then leaves herself. Shift to the gallery. DALE and JENNY stand facing one another.)

JENNY

Are you ashamed of having sex with me? Is that it?

DALE

I'm not ashamed. I just don't want anybody to know.

JENNY

Well it's not going to happen again, so you don't have to worry about that.

DALE

What's that supposed to mean?

JENNY

If that's your concern, don't worry about it. Project's finished.

DALE

That's not what I'm talking about. What are you even saying? I don't want to be a part of your project.

JENNY

Too bad. You became part of it when you drank my Diet Coke.

DALE

What? Are you trying to fuck up my life?

JENNY

Your life is fucked up. The assumptions are all fucked.

DALE

What assumptions?

JENNY

That you're safe, neutral, headed nowhere, static. Your life will be fucked up no matter what you do with it. This is its course, this is its new pattern.

DALE

So you're going to play those recordings?

JENNY

I might, I might not. I might tell people we did it, I might not. I'm not going to predict. What's the point? The important thing is I tried to make it a ritual and it blew up in my face. I alienated Vinny, I almost starved to death, I collapsed from dehydration two days ago. So I've thrown all that out and am flying by the seat of my pants. I'm discovering my voice, and it's not the constrained superstitious voice of a fussy spot. It's the liberated squally voice of a spontaneous being.

DALE

Yeah, but that's not my voice. I have a girl friend and a job.

JENNY

You said nobody could fire you. You said screwing around was all right. I have it on in iTunes. You wanna hear it?

DALE

I was talking tough. I was trying to impress you. I was trying to get into your pants. Don't you get it? I wanted to fuck you and I knew I could impress you.

JENNY

Well, I wanted to be fucked so you should have saved your breath. I needed your sperm.

DALE

That's great. You needed my sperm?

JENNY

Yeah, you gave it to me, thanks.

DALE

You don't mean that.

JENNY

I do. I acted innocent, I acted distraught, I acted scared of you, depressed by what happened, it was all an act. I wanted to get into your pants, I needed your seaman.

DALE

Bullshit.

JENNY

What? It's ok for you to act macho to get me in the sack but it's not all right for me to act demure to get your spunk?

DALE

I was just trying to get laid!

JENNY

I was just trying to get jizz!

DALE

Look, I don't have a problem with women, no one's ever said that.

JENNY

No, you have a problem with not having control. You don't get your way, you cry. Like a baby. Like one of these blood bags on the wall. You're an aborted baby.

DALE

I don't think those things are real. I don't think any of them have a true abortion in them.

JENNY

So?

DALE

Did you do pregnancy tests? How could you possibly be pregnant every month for nine months?

JENNY

That's the point. I never knew. But the act of aborting creates a baby for many people so the very act insured the veracity of the deed. Baby's are created not by humans but by discourse. And abortion happened, so a baby didn't happen. But you can fire a gun even if no one's there. Like shooting in the dark. Just because a gun goes off doesn't mean someone died. You and I had sex during my fertile period, two weeks later I took an abortifacient. Those are the facts. Period. But everyone will assume each of these holds a embryonic fetus.

DALE

What the hell is the point of everything you're saying?

JENNY

Nothing, there is no point, that's the point of art. It's meaningless. Something has to be done, art doesn't. The doing is politics. It's inscription. We inscribe things. It's assumptive. We assume things. It's pro-life because nothing was actually killed that we know of. It's pro-choice because even the potential pregnancy was destroyed. It's neither because each assumes something or nothing happened. How could it not? There's blood, in baggies, I can see it. But it's all meaningless. Just like aborting a five-month old fetus is. Just like bringing a fetus to term is, having a baby and raising it to go to college. It is all meaningless and power mongering. We want control so we make situations; we make them, so we can claim credit for achieving something. Pro-life has value because it promotes creation. Pro-choice because it connotes determination. This is neither pro nor con. It's not procreative because it denies not only life but even the knowledge of life. It is anti-procreative in all its guises.

DALE

I can almost follow you. But... I still would rather my seamen had nothing to do with it. It makes me feel like a dupe, like I was used, was a victim of a trick.

JENNY

You treated me like a trick, by your own admission. So you're one too, who cares?

DALE

I do.

JENNY

I won't use your voice. I won't use our conversations. These baggies can all belong to Irvin, ok?

(He relaxes, shocked that she gave in.)

DALE

Ok. Good.

JENNY

Relieved?

DALE

I just... yes, I am.

JENNY

You weren't a core narrative of my discourse. I can make my point without you. You were a tangential consideration, not central.

DALE

What you'd stoop to because you were lonely.

JENNY

Sort of. But not "to what I'd stoop to" as you put it. Just how lonely artistic creation is as opposed to procreation.

DALE

Do you think of me as a townie?

JENNY

Townie?

DALE

You don't even think of me. That's how people think of townies.

JENNY

Oh, as in town and gown. Hmm... You're right, I don't think of you, or I haven't till now. Does that bother you, that you're a townie?

DALE

I guess it does.

JENNY

I can honestly say it doesn't bother me. I've never thought about it.

(DALE leaves, times passes, CAROLYN enters.)

CAROLYN

The soundscape, the recordings.

JENNY

I haven't finished editing them.

CAROLYN

I have to negotiate a tough road here, Jenny. Staff, students, other faculty-

JENNY

Carolyn, you are so equivocal. Tell me what you think. You're my teacher. One thing I've never felt from you is guidance. You're so afraid. What do you want to say?

CAROLYN

Dale's tapes.

(Pause.)

JENNY

When did he talk to you?

CAROLYN

Yesterday.

JENNY

We talked this morning. I'm not removing them, I just decided that. And I'm sorry I can't be sympathetic to your issues surrounding their use. It's my project. If you want to censure something on aesthetic grounds I will respect that. If it's political-administrative, I'm afraid I don't care. I feel abandoned in this project and resentful that you've acted only as a gentle break on it, having yourself inspired it. It's finished, I'm only fine tuning it. And Dale's words, because of the drama of his interventions during this final display, will be part of the final display. That is decided.

(JENNY goes back to work. CAROLYN leaves. Time passes.)

DALE

(Off)

Close the fucking door!

JENNY

(Confused)

Sorry. Hello.

DALE

(Entering)

Why is this fucking door open?

JENNY

I'm sorry... I was warm. I always get overheated during my period.

DALE

Don't tell me shit like that.

JENNY

You're right. That was rude.

DALE

And don't prop the fucking door. What are you stupid?

JENNY

Yeah. I'm stupid. I'm an MFA at Yale and I'm stupid.

DALE

You act like you're stupid.

JENNY

Do you hear yourself? You're a janitor, a fucking janitor.

DALE

How many times have I told you-

JENNY

Don't yell at me-

DALE

How many times have I fucking said-

JENNY

Don't you yell at me, prick.

DALE

Do you know what's out there? Do you?

JENNY

I said don't-

DALE

Answer my fucking question-

JENNY

Stop yelling at me.

DALE

You fucking cunt, don't' you-

JENNY

(Holding up her hand with phone in it)

I will call security, I will call the police.

DALE

(Grabbing her other wrist)

Give me that.

JENNY

It is dialed. Take your hands off me. It is ringing. Leave me alone!

(She listens.)

It's connected. Now who will they believe? Who will they side with when I tell them you are raping me? Think about it.

(He walks away to the other side of the room. She speaks into the phone.)

JENNY

Sorry, mistake. No, it was a mistake. I'm hanging up now. I don't give a shit what you heard. Go ahead, call back, I won't answer.

(She hangs up. Turns off phone.)

DALE

They'll come anyway. They're supposed to.

JENNY

They won't know where I am.

DALE

They'll know to check here. They have data on you.

JENNY

Is the door closed?

DALE

Yes.

(They stare at one another. Sound of siren.)

JENNY

Here they are. I'll go talk to them, get rid of them.

(She leaves. He walks to laptop, hits "play." We hear his voice, a longish speech. She comes on and watches him.)

JENNY

Why did you both talk to Carolyn *and* come see me?

DALE

I wanted to make sure it happened.

JENNY

And now she knows we slept together.

DALE

I don't know what she knows. Is this the only copy?

(He begins to delete files.)

JENNY

(Crossing to him)

Hey. Take your hands off of that.

DALE

(Pushing her back)

No.

JENNY

Take your hands off of it or I'll scream. Come on.

(She yanks his hand away. He stares at her. He leaves suddenly, straight out the door. She stands for a moment, almost shaking. He strides back into the room, headed right for the laptop. She gets in front of him. He shoves her down, hard. He gets to the laptop, slams it shut, and starts to walk out with it. She stands, blood coming from her nose, and stops him.)

JENNY

Give it to me... give me that.

DALE

Is there another one?

JENNY

I want...

(He grabs her and forces her down. He is holding her by the neck. He sets the laptop on the floor with his other hand and then, with both hands, presses her down onto the floor and strangles her. It is not a simple death, she flails about wildly, kicking and hitting him. He is relentless though. Her energy subsides and then she is still. He continues to press her neck for a while after she's stopped moving. Then he removes his hands, looks at her, and then picks up the laptop and her external hard drive and leaves. Pause. He returns to the room with a towel and begins wiping off her neck, her clothes, everything he has touched in this scene. He does a thorough job of it. He covers

his hand with the towel and closes the laptop. He looks at her. He can't look at her. He walks away and sits on the ground, he pulls out his cell phone, dials three digits quickly and then turns his cell phone off and puts it away. He sits for a minute. Cell phone rings. He takes it out and silences it. He sits. Looks at her. He stands, crosses to her and lifts her up, cradled in his arms. He is headed for the exit when he stops. He can't go that way. He looks around the room. He crosses with her to the upstage wall where there is a fire extinguisher. He sets her down, opens the extinguisher case and removes the extinguisher. There is a panel behind it. He feels the panel. It is held in with screws. He removes his Leatherman and begins removing the screws, of which there are four. He sets each down on the floor. Finally, with some effort, he's able to remove the panel. There is now an opening. He manages to put his head into the panel, barely, and look around. It is an opening no bigger than one foot by one foot. He looks down at her. He bends down, sits her up, and then braces himself for a move that will bend her in two, folding her over. The lights black out. It should be clear to us, from this final movement that he intends to break her bones in such a way that she will fit into the one by one foot opening. In the darkness we hear Bach.)

(Shift. MIELLE on bed, in pajamas. DALE stands before her.)

DALE
Hi.

MIELLE
You're speaking to me?

DALE
Yes.

MIELLE
Dale, I love you. I just do. I feel like... I feel like we've been playing a game for seven months now. A game of you stopped speaking to me so I stopped speaking to you. I've never, ever done this before, not with you, not with anyone. Not when I was a little kid. I think of myself doing this... this not talking... and I immediately think of myself as a little kid. Because it's so childish. But I know it's not. We're adults. This isn't something that happened twenty years ago when we were little, it's something that's happening right now. This is my life... with you. I love you, Dale. I adore you. In October you took me to see that Rickie Gervais movie and I adored you for it. I was in love with you watching it. I sat there thinking, all these women, with their men, their old men or their fat men or their short men, I have Dale. He's handsome and smart and works and we didn't just go see this movie, we went to dinner first and we've spent the day together – we went to the Yale-Harvard game and we, we spent money. Because we both have jobs and we both work hard. We're like people, like people fifteen, twenty years older than us. We're

MIELLE (Cont.)

responsible and dedicated to one another. We are. We're a couple. And now we don't hang out, we don't go out, you've stopped... you've stopped fucking me. We don't even speak.

DALE

Like people fifteen, twenty years older than us. A real couple.

MIELLE

I don't need to speak, I don't need to go out, I don't need any of that stuff. I just want to have sex. That's all I want. I don't care how long this goes on, I don't. I just want to have sex. I want to crawl on top of you, whenever one of us gets the urge, and have sex. Ok? Can we do that and call it a relationship?

(MILLE is staring at him, just staring. He shrugs. She starts to cry, soon she is weeping. Her weeping turns into sobs, almost cathartic. He reaches out and touches her, rubs her back. She recovers a bit but then is hit by another spasm of sobbing. It is almost keening now, loud. He folds her into him. She buries her face in his shoulder. She weeps some more. She slowly gets control of herself. She looks up at him. She kisses him, gently, on the lips. He tries to pull away, gently. She holds his chin. She kisses him again.)

MIELLE

I love you, Dale. Ok?

(She kisses him some more. He slides his hand up her shirt.)

(JENNY, in her own space, speaks to us.)

JENNY

Art is a challenge. It stands like a minotaur with its ugly horns and throws down a challenge, to us the artist. The gauntlet. How far will we go? I went the farthest. I confronted myself and I stated my being, I confronted my mentors and stated by mastery. I confronted my loved ones and I proclaimed my self-love. And I stood before, what... A man? A boy? A culture. I stood before an entire culture – me and Dale – America in a nutshell. I stood before him and I reached out – in love? Maybe. In need? Perhaps. In contempt? Definitely. In collusion? Yes. I reached out and touched art's space, its realm. It took me in and, like a cubist subject, reconfigured me. In death, definitely. In shape, infinite. I am reshaped. The modern body reshaped by society. I am my instrument, my medium, my canvas. Those who draw on me are merely puppets. Art. The ultimate arrogance.

(The bed. MIELLE is dressing, still tearful but in control. DALE lies under a sheet. Once she is dressed she looks at him.)

I don't know what to do. MIELLE

Maybe they won't find out. DALE

Dale... MIELLE

What? I should turn myself in? DALE

(She pulls out her cell phone and dials.)

(We hear the Pet Shop Boys' "Casanova in Love." Blackout. End of play.)