

Your Molotov Kisses

by

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*“Hell is others.”
Sartre*

*“If Allah had wanted it,
he would have made you to live with others,
to live with the community.
But Allah made you different
and he made you as you are...”
Koran*

*“They love not poison that do poison need.”
Shakespeare*

Cast of Characters:

DANIEL – 40 years old
VICTORIA – 30 years old

Location:

Dining room, luxuriously and tastefully decorated.

US premiere February 2, 2008, Produced by GALA Hispanic Theatre at Tivoli Square, Washington DC, with director Abel López and General Producer Hugo Medrano.

The cast was as follows:

Mencho Esteban.....Victoria
Timothy Pavon.....Daniel

Set design Elizabeth Jenkins McFadden
Lighting Jason Cowperthwaite

1 / That night

We hear "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Lights come up slowly and we see a family room. A sofa with cushions, a telescope and a small bar to one side. Victoria, holding a hot water bottle, has a thermometer in her mouth. To the other side, Daniel.

DANIEL: There were three. A blue one and two red ones.

VICTORIA: So, what did you do?

DANIEL: First I stopped to make sure, because they stopped too. The highway was dark, so it wasn't hard to see them. There they were, two red lights and one blue one, suspended in midair. Then all of a sudden, they shot a beam of light toward the ground. *(Victoria takes the thermometer from her mouth)* Now?

VICTORIA: Not yet. What color light?

DANIEL: Red. It was like a flash. Toward the Earth.

VICTORIA: Like taking pictures?

DANIEL: Yeah. Like pictures. Flash. Flash. Three, maybe four times. Then, they started flying again.

VICTORIA: And you followed them? *(She gets comfortable)* Remember you have to stay inside for a while.

DANIEL: Why?

VICTORIA: To get it hot.

DANIEL: And that's good because...

VICTORIA: Because we want a boy. I've explained it to you two hundred times.

DANIEL: I forget.

VICTORIA: Daniel: that's why I'm taking my temperature. If you don't care, let's forget it and we'll take what we get.

DANIEL: No, a boy.

VICTORIA: Then we have to wait for the right temperature.

DANIEL: Where'd you learn about this whole procedure?

VICTORIA: Monica told me about it; she's an angel so don't argue.

DANIEL: *(Looking at himself)* I'm ready *(He points to his crotch)* as you can see.

VICTORIA: It's not quite there yet.

DANIEL: What do I do in the meantime?

VICTORIA: *(Presses the hot water bottle to herself)* Finish your story about the lights in the sky. *(Puts the thermometer back in her mouth)*

DANIEL: Well, I followed them as long as I could. Then, one flew toward the other and the third light stayed off to one side. In the end, the two red lights, that almost crashed, flew straight up together and then separated. They disappeared into the heavens.

VICTORIA: What about the blue light?

DANIEL: The blue light hung there for a second. And then it flew off into the heavens too.

VICTORIA: So how is it you could see those two red lights in the sky but not the red light at the intersection?

DANIEL: The blue one too.

VICTORIA: There are no blue stoplights.

DANIEL: It's something to do with the heavens.

VICTORIA: You fly planes?

DANIEL: It's the heavens...it was like an apparition, like...

VICTORIA: The Virgin Mary.

DANIEL: Don't be stupid.

VICTORIA: Because you're not a believer. You've said it so many times you sound like a French film.

DANIEL: You want me to tell you about it or not?

VICTORIA: Of course, any virgin is a miracle.

DANIEL: Let's just forget about it and I'll go over case files until-

VICTORIA: And you explained all this to the cop?

DANIEL: No, not all of it.

VICTORIA: What did you tell him?

DANIEL: That I was nervous.

VICTORIA: And he believed that?

DANIEL: What do you think?

VICTORIA: Because you're a lawyer. I bet you told him.

DANIEL: He recognized me.

VICTORIA: And just how did he recognize you when the only people in this city are lawyers and orange juice vendors? Which in this case are basically the same thing anyways.

DANIEL: He recognized me, he knew who I was. He'd seen me on TV. He even asked for my autograph.

VICTORIA: If they don't recognize me and I anchor the daily news, they're going to recognize you who's on once a year in a suit with a gray tie? You could've just told him the truth.

DANIEL: But I can't even explain it myself.

VICTORIA: You who can always explain everything.

DANIEL: Now you're fucking with me.

VICTORIA: You're the one who sees flying saucers and I'm fucking with you?

DANIEL: Really, I mean it. If you want, we'll just forget about it.

VICTORIA: Fine. The cop pulled you over for running the blue light. Go on.

DANIEL: Then the policeman asks me: *(In police voice)* "Counselor, what's wrong?"

VICTORIA: Ooh, you're sexy when you talk like a cop!

DANIEL: I say: "Nothing." He says: "Why were you speeding?"

VICTORIA: Ummmm! That voice!

DANIEL: Let me finish, Victoria. I'm serious.

VICTORIA: I'm serious too, baby.

DANIEL: I say: "I didn't realize." And I ask: "How fast was I going?" "A hundred," he says.

VICTORIA: You going 100?

DANIEL: Me, Daniel Ramirez, senior partner at Blitzner, Blitzner and Ramirez in a suit with a gray tie going 100 mph. Unbelievable, right?

VICTORIA: Totally. You're absentminded, but you're a coward.

DANIEL: So then I say to the policeman: "I can't go 100. I'm not someone who can go 100. I'm a nervous wreck at 50. Running a red light, ok. Going the wrong way, maybe. Hitting another car, it's happened. But, speeding? No. So there must be some mistake." Then he shows me the radar and right there in glowing red numbers it says "100." Then...

VICTORIA: Then

DANIEL: Then he asks me: "What were you doing while you were driving?"

VICTORIA: Yeah. What were you doing?

DANIEL: And I realized something: I was praying.

VICTORIA: *(Takes the thermometer out. She throws the hot water bottle at him. Daniel dodges it)* What?!

DANIEL: I was praying.

VICTORIA: (*More seriously*) Daniel: you don't believe in God!

DANIEL: Right. That's the worst part. I don't believe in God. And there I was, praying.

VICTORIA: You don't believe in God, Daniel. You've informed me of that fact 100 million times. You don't believe in God. When we got married you did everything you could to get out of a religious ceremony. If I hadn't put a gun to your head and my father hadn't threatened to hogtie you and throw you in the river, you would've left me at the altar. You said you'd act the part, but you didn't believe. And I remember my father told you that acting was good enough for him. It was the first time in your life you'd ever set foot in a church. You even asked if there was an intermission!

DANIEL: I was praying, Victoria.

VICTORIA: No, Jesus isn't God. All that stuff about God, the son and the little white birdie existing all at once is totally implausible. Virgins don't give birth, people don't rise from the dead, the Shroud of Turin is phonier than a politician's smile, and the Bible is copied from Homer. It's all just a story for suckers. You've explained it so many times that even I, who was taught by nuns and priests, whose father's a bigger believer than Saint Peter himself, who goes to Mass every Sunday without fail, even I have started having doubts.

DANIEL: But suddenly, I started praying.

VICTORIA: Fine. Whatever you say. You're the lawyer. So tell me something: are we baptizing our son or aren't we?

DANIEL: Don't make jokes, Victoria, this is real.

VICTORIA: I can see that. You just put on your famous "I'm-packing-heat" face.

DANIEL: I was driving along and then suddenly: I start praying...

VICTORIA: It's very important to me, Daniel. A baptism is a serious thing. I'd have to start planning now. Godfather Adam and godmother Monica, of course...

DANIEL: But you're not even-

VICTORIA: We're talking about the first sacrament, sweetheart. People dress to the nines.

DANIEL: The point is, I don't believe. Or I didn't realize I did. I was driving along and I started thinking how we're not alone, that there must be other life out there, and suddenly, I just started praying.

VICTORIA: So what did you do about the cop? Send him to jail for being nosy?

DANIEL: He shook my hand and let me go.

VICTORIA: He shook your hand? That's two handshakes from the police in one week. Four this month, sweetheart. They're going to take away your drivers license if you go on merrily shaking hands with any traffic cop who happens to commit the crime of asking for your autograph.

DANIEL: It's the heavens...something's going on with me and the heavens.

VICTORIA: For now, you'd better stop treating stoplights like street decorations. (*Checks the thermometer*) Almost. Because, I'm sorry, but your excuses sound like they came straight out of a children's book.

DANIEL: I'm not the one who wants to have sex with a thermometer and a hot water bottle.

VICTORIA: But I'm believable. This is science. And there's a clear objective: a Boy.

DANIEL: I saw objects in the heavens. Colors. You don't believe me.

VICTORIA: I believe it all, baby. Reading the news makes you a believer. You believe it all; you have to believe it all. Though I don't believe a word of what I hear and say, and of what I see, I believe only half. I mean, they even say anchorpeople are the best actors on TV. (*Referring to the hot water bottle*) Whew! This is burning. (*Getting ready*) So we'll baptize our son and give him an extraterrestrial name. Christian, but extraterrestrial. There must be some nice name. And from now on, you're coming to church with me every Sunday. The look on your mother's face! And the priest's. And the acolyte's. And the choir's. And all those old farts with beards in the stained glass windows. (*Looking at the thermometer*) This is just about ready. Just one more minute. So don't go telling me stories about aliens or God and then-

DANIEL: Yeah, maybe I should start going to church. Adam goes with his wife all the time...

VICTORIA: You're giving me goose bumps. And then I won't be able to get my temperature up or that either and then we'll have to wait another month.

DANIEL: I'm "up."

VICTORIA: After all that talk about God you're pointing to the heavens? Let me see... *(She checks him with her hand. Startled)* Oh, my God! You see what true believers we are in this house? *(Victoria takes off her underwear but leaves on her robe and the thermometer in her mouth)* Can we start with the prelude to Mass? *(Caressing Daniel)* Will you read me the catechism?

DANIEL: You think God has something to do with UFOs?

VICTORIA: God is galactic love, darling. Just try not to let on at the Firm, because they might say you're nuts. And you're the only sane one left. Or at least the only one who doesn't have Parkinson's.

DANIEL: And what about the idea of having a baby?

VICTORIA: I'll take care of that, with this earthly body, cause I'm a saint and I'm on fire.

(Decided, Daniel starts to push his pants down the rest of the way and pulls off his shirt. She kisses him with desire, passionately, taking the initiative. Just then the doorbell rings. They look at each other)

VICTORIA: Great timing!

DANIEL: Who can it be?

VICTORIA: Let them knock, let's go procreate.

DANIEL: The stereo's on.

VICTORIA: So?

DANIEL: They know we're here.

VICTORIA: I want a boy!

DANIEL: What about the door?

VICTORIA: It can stay there. After all, it is a door -that's where it goes and what it's for. *(She looks at him in defeat)* Does it have to be now, Daniel?

DANIEL: Temperature?

VICTORIA: Hot hot.

(Victoria throws herself at him again like a tigress, but the doorbell rings again, more insistently. Daniel stops, as if wanting to return to the subject of the door. She yells and lets him go)

VICTORIA: (*Furious*) Go on and open it. Mr. Lousy Timing isn't going to go away 'til I'm too old to have children!

(Daniel goes to the door. Victoria, upset, puts the thermometer back in her mouth)

DANIEL: Who is it?

VOICE: Federal Express.

DANIEL: A package? Must be for you, from the station?

VICTORIA: No one's sent a thing to this house since they switched the news to noon. Not even the cameramen watch us in that time slot.

(Daniel opens the door. He speaks to the delivery person, whom we don't see)

DANIEL: It's for you, Victoria.

VICTORIA: Who's it from?

DANIEL: It's huge, Victoria. An enormous box.

VICTORIA: Must be from the stork, because the way we're going...

DANIEL: When's your birthday?

VICTORIA: In two months. Don't remind me or you'll make it worse.

DANIEL: You have to sign.

VICTORIA: Daniel, tell Mr. Fed Ex that I'm naked and hot, waiting for a man to whip out his thermometer and take my temperature because I want a boy.

(Daniel takes the package and comes back to the living room. The package is medium weight, tied with cord)

VICTORIA: Look! I'm at 101 still. (*Without looking at the box*) Leave it there and we'll open it later. If I keep waiting I'm going to get a fever. Come here...come over here... Use your police voice and come write me a ticket.

DANIEL: Victoria, the box...

VICTORIA: I'm ready. Come on, we're going to make a baby!!

DANIEL: It's from the FBI.

VICTORIA: The F...what?

DANIEL: FBI. It says FBI.

VICTORIA: The police?

DANIEL: Apparently. FBI.

VICTORIA: It must be a mistake.

DANIEL: Your maiden name is on it.

VICTORIA: It must be some other Victoria De Blasis.

DANIEL: It's our address. What would the FBI be sending you?

VICTORIA: Well I don't know. Nothing. What do I know about the FBI? I've never had anything to do with them. *(She gets up and goes over to the package)* I don't even like those people. Maybe it's one of those gifts from the mall? Yesterday they asked for my address for one of those Internet things and I gave it to them thinking-

DANIEL: Federal Bureau of Investigation. J. Edgar Hoover Building, Washington D.C. And it's for you.

VICTORIA: Oh, I don't know...what should I do?

DANIEL: Open it.

VICTORIA: And if it's a mistake?

DANIEL: We'll return it and that's that. Open it.

VICTORIA: It can wait. Let's make our baby. I'm at 101.5. I don't want the FBI cooling me down. Come on, get over here. Let's do it and then we'll see what nice little gift the J. Edgar Hoover Building sent me. *(She pulls Daniel to the bed and they kiss. She is serious about it)* Yeah, baby... come on... give it to me... give it to me. *(Suddenly, they go still. Pause)*

VICTORIA: What's wrong?

DANIEL: It's the box.

VICTORIA: What'd it do to you?

DANIEL: It's watching us.

VICTORIA: It doesn't have eyes.

DANIEL: But it's there.

VICTORIA: Meaning until we find out what's inside there's no movement south of the border?

DANIEL: I can't concentrate, Victoria.

VICTORIA: It's a box!

DANIEL: From the FBI!

VICTORIA: And what am I doing getting packages from the FBI when I'm going to have sex with my husband!!!

(Victoria, almost completely undressed, stomps over to the box. Daniel pulls up his pants and follows. Both look at the box for a moment. Then, they glance at each other and he gestures for her to open it. Victoria tries to but can't. Daniel runs to a desk, takes out a letter opener and hands it to her. She tries to open the box, but is very slow. More desperate, Daniel stabs the box repeatedly to open it)

VICTORIA: If it was alive we'll bury it at midnight in the backyard.

(The top of the box is open. Daniel moves over so Victoria can look through the contents. She pulls out wrinkled newspapers. Suddenly, she finds something)

VICTORIA: What's this?

(There is a carry-on bag tied up with cord. It can be a well worn backpack. To one side, stuck to the bag, a letter)

DANIEL: What is it?

VICTORIA: A bag.

DANIEL: Does it look familiar?

VICTORIA: It looks like any bag. There's a letter.

(Opens the letter, serious) Federal Bureau... etc., etc.... Dear Mrs. De Blasis... It says... Miss De Blasis... your bag was recovered by the New York City Police Department... from... on... TEN YEARS AGO!

DANIEL: What?

VICTORIA: Ten years ago!

DANIEL: Ten years ago?

VICTORIA: *(Reading)* "...according to the theft report and was sent to us on such and such a date. In compliance with Regulation 2346-B we are sending you...

DANIEL: *(Daniel checks the bag)* Do you know what this is?

VICTORIA: I have no idea.

DANIEL: There's a tag. It's got your name, and a New York address.

VICTORIA: Me... New York? *(Remembering)* Of course. *(Laughs)* That was 10 years ago. In New York. Now I remember. When I finished high school, I moved to New York. I was taking the subway to the airport, Newark, and I got lost. When the subway stopped, I hopped out to get one of those station maps and I left my backpack on the train. When I went to get back on, the doors shut in my face and the train pulled away.

DANIEL: And you lost your bag.

VICTORIA: And I lost my bag. I called all over, but no one knew anything. They looked and looked. I stayed in New York two extra nights hoping it would turn up. They said if it was left on the train they'd send it to me at home. I was sure someone had stolen it.

DANIEL: Well it looks like they found it.

VICTORIA: TEN YEARS LATER!

DANIEL: *(Checks an ID in the bag)* Look at you in this picture!

VICTORIA: I was 18.

DANIEL: You look weird.

VICTORIA: Weird how?

DANIEL: Like a hippie.

VICTORIA: No, it hasn't been ten years, it's been twelve years. And look. Beautiful as ever. (*Puts down the ID*) Come on, let's go do our thing. We opened the box, we know what's inside, now it's time to get moving on the baby.

DANIEL: What were you doing in New York?

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: You never talk about that time. What were you doing there at 18?

VICTORIA: What's there to remember, Daniel? It was twelve years ago. I don't know. Someone invited me, friends. Now I remember! Some friends had a place near Columbia University. The student life. Parties, concerts, boyfriends, friends.

DANIEL: Boyfriends.

VICTORIA: New York is crazy. You know how it is.

DANIEL: No, I don't know how it is.

VICTORIA: Back then I loved to travel. (*Looking at the bag again*) Incredible. You think everything's there?

DANIEL: What was there?

VICTORIA: Twelve years ago! (*Laughs*) Oh, I don't know. Tapes, I guess. I always had tapes, music, pictures, I loved to take pictures.

DANIEL: Whenever you look at old stuff like this we seem different, and always better.

VICTORIA: With age, you lose your eye... Let me see... I remember I'd gotten a camera; that I remember perfectly. It was super expensive, a Cannon. But it took such good pictures and I wanted to be a photographer... That camera was what hurt the most because back then those things cost a fortune. I think it was like \$1,500. With lenses and all. It was a present from my dad.

DANIEL: You think the camera's in here?

VICTORIA: I'm sure they stole it. I had some journals, books. Presents for my family. Hey! One of those cheesy Statues of Liberty they sell dirt cheap in Times Square.

DANIEL: When I met you, you had a really professional photo album, with gorgeous pictures... Madrid

VICTORIA: Madrid, Paris, Greece.

DANIEL: You traveled a lot.

VICTORIA: Like a letter. I had amazing photos of Greece, Turkey, Morocco, London, Moscow.

DANIEL: So what happened?

VICTORIA: I was different... Come on, let's go get pregnant.

DANIEL: *(Pointing to the bag)* Should we open it?

VICTORIA: Now?

DANIEL: Something's in there.

VICTORIA: Let's leave it for...

(Daniel holds up the letter opener again and she gestures in disgust, trying to make him understand this isn't the time. Daniel insists, and somewhere between annoyed and scared, she nods. They cut off the cords)

VICTORIA: You tell it and who'd believe it? Twelve years that bag is lost and then out of the blue the FBI drops it on my doorstep.

DANIEL: It's tied up tight.

VICTORIA: Looks like a cord for each year.

DANIEL: To keep the memories from escaping.

VICTORIA: Or from getting stolen. They stole everything, you'll see.

DANIEL: *(Finishes opening the box)* Ok.

VICTORIA: Let me see, let me see.

DANIEL: It's all yours.

(Victoria opens the bag. Clearly it smells bad. The first thing she takes out is underwear, very wrinkled and apparently dirty. Daniel laughs)

DANIEL: You put your dirty underwear in your hand luggage!

VICTORIA: Don't ask me, I don't remember!

DANIEL: That's disgusting, Victoria!

VICTORIA: It was twelve years ago, you idiot!

DANIEL: It's a good thing I didn't meet you back then... What else is there?

(Victoria pulls out the Statue of Liberty)

DANIEL: And what taste you had, darling.

VICTORIA: No taste and no money; it's hard to find one without the other at that age.

(Then she pulls out some dirty jeans. She jumps up and down, happily)

VICTORIA: *(Shouts)* Oh! I loved these pants! I always wore them on the train, sleeping in train stations, lugging around this backpack I got from... a Russian guy!

DANIEL: A Russian lover?

VICTORIA: Lover? I was 18. At 18 you don't have lovers, you have friends, people who are good to you, people you laugh with about nothing. *(Looking at the jeans. Proudly)* Look how tiny. You don't know what I was like.

DANIEL: Scrawny, malnourished, and anorexic in kid's clothing. This is all a little sick, you know?

VICTORIA: Hey, these were mine.

DANIEL: No one fits into those, sweetheart.

VICTORIA: You have no idea what my ass looked like.

DANIEL: Put them on for tonight.

VICTORIA: You put them on.

DANIEL: I bet they'd look better on me.

VICTORIA: You have a nicer ass.

DANIEL: Yours has been stamped by the FBI.

VICTORIA: And you're missing out on it.

DANIEL: That ass is mine and I'm not missing out on it. I'm saving it.

VICTORIA: Like a cigar or a fine wine.

DANIEL: So, what else is there?

(Victoria feels around and cries out happily. She pulls out a very shabby stuffed animal)

VICTORIA: Georgia!

DANIEL: Georgia what?

VICTORIA: My puppy dog, Georgia!

DANIEL: It looks more like a rat that just climbed out of the sewer...

VICTORIA: My sweet Georgia. I thought I'd lost you...

DANIEL: A present from your first love?

(During the following lines, Daniel pulls things from the bag. More dirty clothes. Travel items, post cards, make up, tapes, etc.)

VICTORIA: *(Winds up Georgia, who plays a children's song, can be "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star")* She still plays!

DANIEL: A nasty, filthy mutt that plays music for retards.

VICTORIA: I slept with her in my cradle, I'll have you know. My dad gave her to me when I was little, I can't even remember when. But she was always with me. I couldn't sleep without hugging her. Georgia was so important to me that for a long time her name was another word for sleep. Daddy would say "Vicky, it's time to Georgia" and I'd jump right in bed, with a smile, to listen to *(Sings)* "twinkle twinkle little star..."

DANIEL: If all this means we have to sleep with her, let me tell you she's at least got to have a bath.

VICTORIA: You know she became my imaginary friend.

DANIEL: (*Shouts*) When you were 18! Wanted: one psychiatrist, must have own cage and make house calls. Patient desperate. Or should I call the pound? I have friends there.

VICTORIA: My sweet Georgia (*As if speaking to her imaginary friend*) Don't pay any attention to him. He's a lawyer; you know how they are. We've got so much catching up to do! It's a good thing I found you. I'll never lose you again.

DANIEL: If she answers, I'm calling the FBI, but straight to the office of the X Files. (*He finds something important*) Victoria: you're not going to believe it! (*Daniel pulls out the canon camera*)

VICTORIA: No way!

DANIEL: It looks fine.

VICTORIA: Impossible!

DANIEL: It's a little out of date, but it's a good lens. (*Looks it over*) These are still expensive. All the equipment is here. Nothing's broken; it's all fine.

VICTORIA: Let me see.

DANIEL: You took pictures.

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: There's a 24-exposure roll in here and you shot 13.

(*She checks. She pushes a button by accident and the camera begins to make noise*)

VICTORIA: Can the battery still be working?

DANIEL: You're ruining the film.

VICTORIA: You think?

DANIEL: I'm not stupid.

VICTORIA: I didn't do it on purpose. Stop being paranoid.

DANIEL: You know what you're doing with that, Victoria. You don't make mistakes with a camera in your hands. *(But he also knows how to use it. He stops it. Opens it. Takes out the roll of film)* I wonder what pictures you have in here.

VICTORIA: That's in the past.

DANIEL: I'll get them developed tomorrow.

VICTORIA: There's nothing...

DANIEL: If there's nothing, then what do you care?

VICTORIA: Do what you want!

(Daniel pulls a something wrapped as a present from the box)

DANIEL: What's this?

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: A present.

VICTORIA: It must be for...

(Daniel reads the tag. His tone and face change)

DANIEL: Victoria

VICTORIA: Yes?

DANIEL: *(Reads)* "For my wife Victoria, on her birthday. No hard feelings. I love you, Ramani Prianka." *(Victoria goes stock still)* What... what... what is this?

VICTORIA: I...

DANIEL: My wife Victoria? You?

VICTORIA: Daniel... that was... for-

DANIEL: What Victoria is this? You? Who is Ramani Prianka?

VICTORIA: This...well...I...there was another Victoria in...

DANIEL: You were married?

VICTORIA: ...It's ancient history.

DANIEL: It was twelve years ago. I know that. You were married?

VICTORIA: It was in...

DANIEL: You were married?

VICTORIA: I was just a girl of...

DANIEL: Excuse me?

VICTORIA: It was twelve years ago, Daniel, twelve years ago.

DANIEL: And what happened?

VICTORIA: It was a fling... it didn't work out, of course.

DANIEL: But you got married?

VICTORIA: More or less.

DANIEL: (*Blows up*) What do you mean more or less? Were you married or weren't you, Victoria?

VICTORIA: (*Frightened*) Yes, I was married.

(*Daniel looks like he'd seen a ghost*)

DANIEL: You never told me... Never... Never...

VICTORIA: Because it was a long time ago and it only lasted a few months, Daniel. I was a kid and I did crazy things... those things we do when we're young, but not anymore and... I lived in New York and Europe and I spent my time riding in trains, seeing the world, traveling the tracks, taking photos and I wanted to be a photographer and then one day... I hardly remember it now. Well, I got married.

DANIEL: You got married!

VICTORIA: Yes, but...

DANIEL: A religious ceremony? (*Pause. He understands the answer is yes*) I can't believe it!

VICTORIA: It doesn't matter. It was kid stuff...

DANIEL: And you got married in the church again, with me!

VICTORIA: I didn't even remember that I'd been married before!

DANIEL: Just a little lapse!

VICTORIA: I was...

DANIEL: A detail, a small thing, nothing important!

VICTORIA: It's just...

DANIEL: It just so happens that little things like, this... that I married some Ramani and I did it in the church, those things slip your mind, of course! It's like a train station where you don't get off, right? No big deal. The name? Who cares about the name? What a thing to forget! Honestly, Victoria. This I find hard to believe. You married in the church twice!!!

VICTORIA: You didn't believe.

DANIEL: And that made it all right!

VICTORIA: I figured that since you didn't believe it didn't hurt you.

DANIEL: Meaning, you did remember you were married before. It wasn't that it slipped your mind. You thought about it and decided not to tell me.

VICTORIA: It was a few seconds. I thought about it for a few seconds and everything was already over and done and that was all so long ago and, God, my God, God has nothing to do with you... right? That's what you've always said, that you don't...

DANIEL: You lied to everyone, the priest, your family, your FATHER, who will die all over again if he finds out, and me... I'm... I'm the biggest dope. Because... *(He looks at her in terror)* And the divorce?

(Pause)

VICTORIA: The what?

DANIEL: When did you get divorced? *(He looks at her. More terror)* You did get divorced, didn't you, Victoria? *(She drops her head)* You never got divorced, Victoria!

(Victoria, defeated, is about to cry)

DANIEL: For God's sake!!!

(Daniel goes straight to the bar and pours and drinks a glass full of whisky. He immediately pours another. And then another. And another and another until he physically tires of drinking. He puts the glass down and calms himself, but looks lost. Victoria gets up, decisively, and is about to speak but he interrupts her)

DANIEL: Tell me the truth.

VICTORIA: Ok, the truth.

DANIEL: To anything I ask.

VICTORIA: Fine.

DANIEL: What's inside the present?

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: The present. Didn't you ever open it?

VICTORIA: I didn't have time. But I'd guess it's wine. He liked to give people wine. He thought it was a classy present. We were all hand to mouth back then.

DANIEL: It says: "No hard feelings." Did you fight?

VICTORIA: We'd split up that day.

DANIEL: The day you lost the bag?

VICTORIA: I was moving. We were getting separated. I threw all my stuff in that bag and took off. He stopped me and gave me the present. I didn't open it. I went to catch the subway...

DANIEL: Where you lost the bag. And him? Who was he? What kind of name is that... Ramir?

VICTORIA: Ramani

DANIEL: What kind of name is it? Huh?

(Victoria goes and drinks what is left of Daniel's last whisky. Suddenly her hand trembles, visibly. She takes Georgia and squeezes her. She goes over to the bag. She sees the present, but Daniel's shout breaks her concentration)

DANIEL: Answer me!

VICTORIA: Ok. I'll tell you everything, at least what I can remember. *(She walks over and sits beside him)* Ramani was a guy I met in a bar. He was from Iran or Syria, I don't know. Saudi, I think.

DANIEL: You got married under Islam?

(She nods and he looks grim)

VICTORIA: We went out several times; we were a group of friends. After 6 months or so he said: "Let's get married" and like a dummy I said yes. It didn't seem like a big deal at the time. We stayed together until little by little we grew apart. That day, the day I lost my bag, was the last day I ever saw him.

DANIEL: You never discussed a divorce?

VICTORIA: You may not believe it, but no. I left New York, went to Europe, traveled all over the world. I made my life, started over. I became an anchorwoman and then I met you. I started over, my last life. My life with you. My home, what I am.

DANIEL: You've started a lot of lives.

VICTORIA: All I needed to meet you.

DANIEL: You sound like a cheap Valentine. Maybe that's what you are.

VICTORIA: Daniel, you never talked to me like that.

DANIEL: I don't know what to do, Victoria. I feel like I'm on a plane in a nosedive. Like a doll... What do we have to do? If you never got divorced our marriage is nullified. You committed a crime and...

VICTORIA: We'll do what we have to do. We'll do whatever you want. Whatever you think we should.

DANIEL: Is there anything else in that bag that could change my life?

VICTORIA: I don't think so.

DANIEL: How come you never told me any of this? Are you crazy? Are you crazy, Victoria? Are you crazy? Are you? Are you? Are you? Are you? Are you? Are you? Am I crazy? Hah? Am I crazy? Is it me? What am I? Hah? Hah? Are you crazy? Have you gone crazy? Who the fuck are you? Who the fuck am I? Hah? Who the fuck am I?

(Daniel goes to the window and looks up toward the sky. Victoria tries to go to him but doesn't dare. Daniel covers his face with his hands but after a short pause he rushes at the bag and kicks it several times desperately until he tires. He returns to his whisky and takes another drink. Victoria then goes to him)

VICTORIA: Daniel: it's very important for you to listen to me now, but calmly. First things first: I love you. I married you. We want to have a son. Your son, with you. Don't lose sight of those three points. What I'm trying to say is... is really... it's nothing. It's not like I have a lover or want one... or like we're bankrupt or some tragedy or like someone died. The truth is it's no big deal. It's nothing. Nothing at all.

DANIEL: Nothing...

VICTORIA: Nothing. I got married like an idiot when I was an idiot and like an idiot I thought those things weren't important. And like an idiot, worse than an idiot, I never told you, because, among other things, most of the time I forgot about it. Almost always. Like the idiot I am, I don't deny it. Idiot. And when I did remember it, well things were done or almost done and I didn't want to slow them down or make waves. Honestly, I thought it wasn't important and that you'd never, never find out, because it was such a little thing, such kid stuff, that it was forgettable. That's it. Forgettable. *(Short pause)* Maybe since it was a Muslim wedding, it didn't seem valid to me. Maybe since I signed with a man who I barely knew and who I spoke to in a different language that wasn't mine, it seemed like it wasn't legal, it wasn't important, that it was like a game. *(Victoria sets Georgia down. She faces Daniel, bravely)* If you're going to tell me our marriage isn't valid just because I got married when I was 18, in some faraway city that I never went to again, in some weird church that isn't even a church, to a man whose name I barely remember and who I never saw again, a marriage that lasted barely a few months, but, all right, I never ended with a divorce, then there are other things I think you should think about.

DANIEL: Victoria: do you know the damage this could do to me? At the firm, with my clients, my career, with all it's cost me.

VICTORIA: No one is going to find out. Besides, I want you to think about other things, like... like we're married, very married. Like I have no intention of letting today's news destroy my home or hurt you. If we have to get married again, we will. If we don't have to, then we forget this. If you want me to go to New York to get a divorce, I will. If you want me to go to Syria, Iran, Japan, or

Mars, I'll do it, if I have to. If I have to kill that guy to be a widow, I'll do it. That's it: maybe I am a widow. Maybe he doesn't exist anymore or the law divorced us or he filed for divorce or whatever. Maybe everything is legal right now and we're making a mountain out of a molehill of meaningless past.

(Daniel looks at the camera and the film. He makes a decision. He takes the film and the camera, gets out his keys, puts on a jacket and gets ready to go out)

VICTORIA: Where are you going? You've had a lot to drink; you shouldn't be driving. Where are you going?

DANIEL: I'm going to the while-you-wait photo shop.

VICTORIA: Daniel, you don't have to do that...

DANIEL: Today we're going to remember everything. Today we're going to talk the truth.

VICTORIA: Let it go until tomorrow.

DANIEL: What tomorrow! This will be over in ten minutes. *(Before leaving he looks at the present)* No hard feelings.

(Daniel slams out. Victoria stalks around, picks up georgia and throws her against the wall)

VICTORIA: I told you I never wanted to see you again, stupid bitch! *(The dog plays "Twinkle Twinkle" again)* And I always hated that stupid song, so you better shut up, fucking dog, or I'll stuff you in the blender!

(Georgia, for no apparent reason, stops playing. Victoria takes out a cigarette. Her hand trembles. She stills it. She remembers something. She picks Georgia back up and looks for something on her. She finds it. She opens a zipper and takes out a piece of paper. She reads "4634545678." Then she goes to the phone and dials)

VICTORIA: Hello? Operator? Can you give me the code for Teheran? What Teheran? Teheran, in Iran. What's Iran? A country! You idiot! *(She waits a few seconds. She writes something down shakily. Then she slams down the receiver. She sees the thermometer and is about to break it, but stops herself)* When he gets back I'm going to shove this up his ass. *(Picks up the receiver again. Dials several numbers)* I wonder what time it is in Teheran? Hello? *(In Farsi)* Operator...?

(Arab music)

2/Fifteen hours later

Same scene, in semi-darkness.

To one side, Daniel speaks to the audience, as though he were giving an interview or talking with someone very close to him.

DANIEL: So that's how I spent the next fifteen hours away from the house. My best friend, Adam, called me to find out where I was. If I was drinking, if I needed company. But I wasn't drinking. I developed the photos and I went to work out at the gym. Abs, biceps, jogging, all night long. I hadn't worked out since I was 25. You don't know what I used to do when I was 25? I'll tell you, you'll see, it's a story with a message. When I was 25 I did minor stuff, like City Social Services. Monitoring kids with problems, abuse cases. Every day I'd go and meet with those mothers and those fathers, drug addicts, dope heads, teenagers, white dropouts, black nobodies, worn out immigrants, everyone with a cross to bear. The pay was lousy. Then Adam made me an offer. I resigned at City Hall and I joined the law firm of Blitzer & Blitzer. The firm with the most prestige, the sharpest lawyers and the best clients. It paid millions and they had contacts high up, in the Court. City Hall and the kids? *(Shrugs)*

No, listen to this. There is a message, hear me out first... *(Laughs)* Really. *(Remembering the story)* So, about that time one of the kids I was monitoring died. Apparently he was crying and he started to pee. His mother was on the edge, his father too...well...those people've got it bad, in the projects, the way they live and all that, you know what I mean. So, the kid ran around peeing all over the room and his parents hit him. They hit him so much he died. Between the two of them they pounded his head sideways, they slapped his face in, they hit him so hard, so hard, he died on the spot. When they saw he was dead they weren't even scared. They took him, wrapped him up in some Winnie the Pooh sheets and tossed him into the underbrush off the highway. They found him two days later, wrapped up in his Winnie the Pooh sheets.

The message? *(Laughs)* That day, I was supposed to be there, checking on the boy and not in a meeting with Blitzer & Blitzer, deciding my future. Now, this is the part you have to understand, because here's where the Message comes, it

doesn't mean that if I had been there that day I would've saved him. No, that's not the point. There's no ethical dilemma in any of this. Because –listen carefully- because... *(Dogmatically)* that boy was doomed, by his parents, his way of life, by statistics. Just like that. So I looked for the report from the day before the kid died and... *(Reads)* “...shows no bruising or signs of abuse, the child is clean, well groomed and dressed. His parents are very affectionate. *(Short pause)* They are very affectionate and the child seems happy.” *(He tears it up, first slowly and then more quickly. He looks at the audience)* We die a thousand deaths and come back to life five thousand times and get on with our lives. That's the message. *(Leaving)* They say at 40 men start to go through a crisis. Maybe this is mine. And that's it and nothing else.

(Lights up on whole scene. We are in the same place as scene 1. Victoria on stage, dressed, ready to go out, holding the phone)

VICTORIA: ...he's confused; he's even saying he sees lights in the sky. He even said he believed in God. That he wants to go to church. Yeah, of course you go to church too, Adam, but you really believe...but, him? Haven't you noticed anything about him, Adam? You're still best friends, aren't you? *(Daniel enters, hurriedly. He has an envelope with the photos and a newspaper. Victoria is startled)* He's back. He's here, thank God. Right, I'll call you later. *(Hangs up. To Daniel)* I've been looking for you... I talked to Adam and... Where were you, you big son of a bitch?

DANIEL: I went for a walk.

VICTORIA: For fifteen hours? Where were you?

DANIEL: *(Shows her the envelope of photos)* They were still in good shape.

VICTORIA: Of course they were, it's just my luck. Did you look at them yet? *(Daniel nods. Each time she moves toward him, he moves away)* They're my photos, after all. You had no right to look at them.

DANIEL: In one you have a pretty dog and you're walking beside a lake. Where was that?

VICTORIA: I don't know, I don't remember. It's been twelve years; you have to... What else did you see?

DANIEL: What was the dog's name?

VICTORIA: Who?

DANIEL: The dog... what was its name?

VICTORIA: I don't... What the hell are you asking me? How do I know what the damn dog was called?

DANIEL: The stuffed animal's called Georgia and you remember that.

VICTORIA: Come on, cut to the chase. Ask me already. What did you see? Where are the real questions that made you keep me up all night? I'm ready to answer every last one. Come on... tell me... tell me...

DANIEL: What was the dog's name?

VICTORIA: The dog's name was son of a bitch. And my name was Miss Moron, which wasn't even a name I chose myself, it was given to me by all my friends and all the circumstances I got caught up in, with all my stupid choices, and my bright and shining idiot's face. And that's it. Weren't you ever like that? Not even when you were 15?

DANIEL: Never like you.

VICTORIA: You never had leprosy? AIDS? Terminal cancer when you were young? Didn't they ever declare your case hopeless? They never shot you in the head seven times? A truck never ran you over? Well, that's strange, because everyone else, the rest of us human beings, go through things. Things like that happen to us and then some. We die and come back to life five thousand times and we get on with our lives.

DANIEL: We get on with our lives... That's the message.

VICTORIA: That's the message. But not for his Highness the Trial Lawyer from the firm of Blitzner and Blitzner. No, of course not. When you're born with the gray suit, the tie, and Parkinson's.

DANIEL: Drop the speeches. It's not important anymore. Relevant, as we'd say in court.

VICTORIA: Listen... I checked online. Legally, you already know there are ways, a lot of ways, to annul that marriage. Being Arab and all, it practically shouldn't count. The church won't cause problems because I was supposed to have a priest's permission. And with the friends I have in the Parrish, I don't think anything will stand in our way. After all, fuck, I'm one of the ones who helps out the most. I even run the Foundation for Abandoned Children. I sing in the choir, damnit, so the church owes me, a lot! (*Loud*) God owes me!

DANIEL: Victoria. I looked at the pictures.

VICTORIA: So, what did you see? Was I naked or something like that?

DANIEL: Actually there are several where you are naked, with that man.

VICTORIA: He was my boyfriend!

DANIEL: Husband

VICTORIA: Whatever!

(Daniel hands some photos to Victoria but very carefully keeps about four separate)

DANIEL: In these pictures... there's something I need you to explain *(He shows them to Victoria and she goes stock still)*

VICTORIA: I... didn't... I didn't know.

DANIEL: What is the meaning of all this?

(As he hands her the pictures, it gets worse. Victoria has to sit down)

VICTORIA: Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God!

DANIEL: Yeah, right, God. God no less. Some three letters! Huh? If you were married and you didn't tell me that's grounds for divorce. But, this?

VICTORIA: This...I

DANIEL: I don't know if I should call a hotel to go sleep, a bodyguard to protect me in my own house, or the police to come and arrest you.

VICTORIA: *(Serious)* You would do that?

DANIEL: I have choices and besides, there's the law.

VICTORIA: The law, don't be stupid. To you, the law is an opinion.

DANIEL: You sound like a reporter.

VICTORIA I am a reporter!

DANIEL: Judging by those photos we don't know what you are anymore.

VICTORIA That was 12 years ago!

DANIEL: Victoria, who are you?

VICTORIA: I'm your wife.

DANIEL: Are you?

VICTORIA: Yes, you idiot! And I anchor the news on channel 9. And now I want to be a mother. That, that, that is all I am and all I want to be.

DANIEL: Who are you all together, from that photo to now?

VICTORIA: I'm the same woman.

DANIEL: Sleeping with Arabs, who now you can't stand.

VICTORIA: I was what I was.

DANIEL: And you're not anymore?

VICTORIA: No, not anymore.

DANIEL: *(With a picture in his hand)* Then? Do you mind explaining?

(Victoria goes over to his glass and downs the contents in one swallow)

VICTORIA: And to think I criticize women who drink before 4 in the afternoon. *(She picks up Georgia and hugs her. The song plays again. Daniel takes the dog from her and turns it off angrily. Victoria takes the bottle and pours herself another drink. She paces. Looks at the picture)* Fine. This, of course, is something nobody knows. Nobody. Not my best friend; there've been plenty of them over the years and none. Not my mother, who never knows anything about anything, not the priest I confessed to last week. The truth is I don't think even I knew it, because I had erased it from my mind. *(She looks at him. After a pause)* When I was young, I was involved with them.

DANIEL: *(Loud)* What them?

VICTORIA: Muslims.

DANIEL: Yeah, I could see that. But what kind of Muslims...?

VICTORIA: They were radicals...

DANIEL: Fundamentalists

VICTORIA: Yes.

DANIEL: (*Loud, furiously*) And this symbol. Huh? What group was that?

VICTORIA: You already know. It was Hamas.

DANIEL: (*Shouts and collapses*) Good God in heaven! Good God in heaven! For God's sake! You were in Hamas! But, what does all that mean? That's not you. You don't believe in all that. I've heard you trash the Palestinians thousands of times. You even hate Jews. You say horrible things about Arabs, about all foreigners, you, you don't even like blacks.

VICTORIA: I'm not racist!

DANIEL: Of course not, you're a terrorist!

VICTORIA: I'm not prejudiced; I don't look down on anyone.

DANIEL: (*Looking at the package*) Fuck. The FBI. That's why they had your bag. They were following you. Maybe they sent it to you to see if you'd contact them. If...if...if you were a sleeper cell. A-

VICTORIA: I'm not any kind of cell!

DANIEL: A terrorist. Unbelievable. Unbelievable.
(*Terrified*) So tell me. Are you still involved?

VICTORIA: Of course not, you son of a bitch.

DANIEL: How can I be sure?

VICTORIA: You know I'm not!

DANIEL: I don't know anything anymore, Victoria.

VICTORIA: You know the way I think, because it's what you think too. You love and hate Arabs as much as I do, and foreigners and especially blacks.

DANIEL: I'm not like you!

VICTORIA: Of course you're like me.

DANIEL: I'm a normal guy.

VICTORIA: And what? I'm an extraterrestrial, you idiot? I'm normal too. We're all exactly what we should be here. You better watch what you say; at the station they'll use anything against you.

DANIEL: You were, you look it, and you could be.

VICTORIA: How many times have you traveled outside the country?

DANIEL: What's that got to do with anything?

VICTORIA: You hate everything foreign.

DANIEL: I do not.

VICTORIA: Well, you certainly don't love it.

DANIEL: I don't have to love them.

VICTORIA: Well, neither do I.

DANIEL: You don't love anyone!

VICTORIA: We're the same!

DANIEL: No we're not!

VICTORIA: Yes we are!

DANIEL: I'm not, period!

VICTORIA: Well I know you are!

DANIEL: You're...you're... You're a stranger to me.

VICTORIA: No, I'm not a stranger. Just a few hours ago you were talking to me as your wife, just like always. I made your lunch, washed your clothes, heard you pee, and listened to your UFO stories!

DANIEL: I don't know who you are!

VICTORIA: You know perfectly well who I am and, most of all, who you are!

DANIEL: No, I don't know. I don't know, Victoria. *(The phone rings. They both look scared. Daniel answers and immediately hangs up)* By any chance did you... did you contact any of them?

VICTORIA: I called...

DANIEL: You called!

VICTORIA: I was scared and I decided to find out more.

DANIEL: About him?

VICTORIA: Maybe Ramani is dead. These terrorists die young. They like death, they love it. They feel close to God when they've got 80 pounds of dynamite strapped to their waist.

DANIEL: And what did they tell you?

VICTORIA: Nothing. Wrong number. In twelve years everyone's changed their numbers, their area codes, their digits. The whole planet has different numbering these days.

(The phone rings again. Daniel is scared. It rings again)

DANIEL: *(Picking up the photos again)* How involved were you?

VICTORIA: *(Takes another drink)* Back then Hamas was divided in two...

DANIEL: Listen...listen to you...

VICTORIA: Do you want me to tell you or don't you? *(Daniel sits)* There were two organizations. A humanitarian one that helped refugees and Palestinian families and the other one was the armed branch. *(Remembers with a smile)* "The Izzidane Al Qassam Brigade."

DANIEL: And you were with...

VICTORIA: The bad guys. *(Daniel about to scream)* Of course not, silly, what would I be doing with the bad guys? I was with the people who helped refugees.

DANIEL: Yeah, the future murderers!

VICTORIA: They weren't murderers; they were refugees!

DANIEL: They were in Hamas!

VICTORIA: Hamas fought the Intifada, in Gaza, Cisjordania, the West Bank. The people in New York were persecuted, poor.

DANIEL: Did they run missions...?

VICTORIA: They wanted to kill everyone, or that's what they'd say. Maybe just to sleep with silly girls like me who were impressed by their power. Killing someone. Wow! It was impressive and you fell for it. Went with the flow.

Somewhere between desire and fear, what do I know? I don't think they murdered anyone, even if they sometimes acted like common killers.

DANIEL: But you're not Arab, or Muslim, what were you doing with them?

VICTORIA: Eighteen, Daniel. At some point, a girl turns 18. Sometimes even 19. Some girls got into rock bands, others went with neo-Nazi or anti-Nazi groups, some became Hari Krishnas or soccer fans. Well, I joined Hamas.

DANIEL: How...how did you meet them? You said in a bar. What the fuck were Muslim fundamentalists doing in a bar? Huh? (*Raising his voice*) They're not supposed to drink! So, why were they there? An attack, were they planning an attack?

VICTORIA: They weren't doing anything. They were there and that's where we all met.

DANIEL: We all met? Who?

VICTORIA: Girls, friends. We went dancing, then back to a house. We were drinking... we went to bed, had sex, whatever. That's when we became friends.

DANIEL: Sex, alcohol... Real religious types!

VICTORIA: They're the same, sweetheart. They'd read you the Koran like it had the winning lottery numbers, but the truth is they were men like all men. They'd spend money hand over fist, get us out of trouble, drink like crazy and then ask for forgiveness. They'd get down on their knees, naked, begging like boys, praying like sinners, and then they'd get up, pour themselves a stiff drink and make love to you for five hours straight. While their filthy wives waited for them at home. While their horrid little children cried, choking on their own snot, and their daughters were covered from head to toe so they couldn't see what their father was doing with a skinny Western woman who slept with him because he was a very, but very good ride. And that's why I joined Hamas. For the ride. Because it was one hell of a ride, baby. And then, for a ride like that, for a guy that would make love to you like that, you'd join whatever they asked to. They asked me for terrorism and terrorism is what I gave them. Whatever. It's called Hamas? So what? While he was with me, it could have been ETA, Disney Land or the FBI. That's all, sweetheart. You wanted the ugly details. Well, I'll give you the ugly details. For the ride. That's all.

(Daniel's cell phone rings. He turns it off. Very excitedly, obsessively he shuffles through the pictures. He finds what he was looking for and shows it to her)

DANIEL: Who are they? What is this?

VICTORIA: (*Sighs*) This picture was taken when we were putting together the Hadramawt cell. He took it.

DANIEL: Your boyfriend.

VICTORIA: Stop calling him that.

DANIEL: Back to the story, go on with the story, don't get sidetracked... The picture. The picture.

VICTORIA: The picture's mine. I don't think anyone knows about it.

DANIEL: And who are the others?

VICTORIA: Farah, he was Lebanese, he wanted to be a priest or whatever they call them, but he was real sucker for blondes; Wadih was the most religious, but he took anything and everything, coke, heroine, amphetamines, bazooko, whatever the black brothers would sell him.

DANIEL: Blacks?

VICTORIA: They mixed... You know, Islam.

DANIEL: Drugs, alcohol, prostitutes?

VICTORIA: It's a real mixed bag, and I-

DANIEL: You slept with them?

VICTORIA: Huh?

DANIEL: ...With the black guys... Was there something...?

VICTORIA: Daniel, it's going on fifteen hours since I became a liar and you've been an idiot for just as long. Either we start having a civilized conversation or I'm not answering any more questions and I'm calling a lawyer. I'm not going to crawl. You might be a big man, but you'll go down with me.

DANIEL: It's just that now you're like... like a bomb to me, something that's going to explode. Do you know how to make bombs?

VICTORIA: (*Laughs*) Atomic bombs for parties and your everyday Molotov cocktail.

DANIEL: Don't joke about it. (*Showing her another photo*) Tell me... which one is he?

VICTORIA: *(To the photos)* This hottie, I don't remember his name. I think he was Saudi. And this was Ramani. Ramani Prianka. *(Victoria tosses him the photo. It falls on the ground. Daniel picks it up as though it were something of great value)*

DANIEL: What is this Hadramawt?

VICTORIA: The cell was coming from Yemen, they had funding from their government. And the girls were helping...

DANIEL: The girls?

VICTORIA: Me and my girlfriends.

DANIEL: *(As though wanting to ask for a long time)* Did you kill anyone?

VICTORIA: That question seems...

DANIEL: *(More firmly)* You killed someone.

VICTORIA: Of course not.

DANIEL: At least not directly.

VICTORIA: What do you mean directly?

DANIEL: Maybe you helped them kill people.

VICTORIA: Daniel: I didn't do anything.

DANIEL: Were you involved in any attacks?

VICTORIA: No, of course not.

DANIEL: What did you do? Exactly.

VICTORIA: Stuff. I asked for donations, found things out about people. We passed on information, with codes and made-up hieroglyphics. One time I followed someone. I saw him come out of his office, go to a fruit market, window shop, scratch his ass, eat. I wrote it all down.

DANIEL: You followed people. What people? Who? Victims?

VICTORIA: Jews, people, what do I know? What did I care? I don't know if they were victims, but it made us feel superior, like we were in another galaxy. Like we were controlling the world. Handing out sentences.

DANIEL: Death sentences!

VICTORIA: Like you.

DANIEL: I don't sentence anyone.

VICTORIA: You want to punish them.

DANIEL: But I don't kill anyone.

VICTORIA: That's what we think, but someone's always our victim. Someone pays the price for what we do. You're smart, you know it's true. Just because we don't see our victims, doesn't mean they don't exist. And they pay our debts.

DANIEL: Don't compare us. We're not the same. What we do we do with laws. With trials, lawyers, juries. Not like your friends the animals who train children to be human bombs.

VICTORIA: Trial or no trial, dead is dead.

DANIEL: They've bombed schools, Victoria!

VICTORIA: What the fuck do you care if they kill themselves!

DANIEL: I care because they want to kill me!

VICTORIA: They don't want to kill you. I never saw your name on any Hamas lists.

DANIEL: Don't treat me like an idiot, Victoria, don't.

VICTORIA: In fact if they knew you existed, they'd give themselves up.

DANIEL: Enough already.

VICTORIA: Although one time I did hear of a Daniel Ramirez Intifada.

DANIEL: (*Threateningly*) Enough Victoria!

VICTORIA: Or was it an al-Qaida cell they named after you?

DANIEL: (*Ready to hit her*) Drop it now!

(Victoria looks at him in terror. Daniel lowers his hand halfway to hitting her in the face. He walks away)

VICTORIA: Daniel, I'm sorry. Forgive me. I'm furious like you and I want to hurt someone too, though I've already hurt you enough. And you're not my enemy. You're not the enemy. The enemy is them, other people. *(After a short pause)* I got away from those people because it made me sick. They killed people from a safe distance, that's true. Bombs here, bombs there. And they did it because they were getting killed too. Who started it? I don't care. I didn't see it, though they all must have their reasons, even crazy as they are. Anyway, I'm sorry for everything I did. You see? I repented. That's what I like about believing: you repent and you're saved. We're Christians, and it's different. We're different from all of them.

DANIEL: "I planted a bomb in a school. Oh! Oops, I killed a thousand kids. But now I repent and I'm saved." Sorry.

VICTORIA: *(Tries to hug him)* Baby: I left them; I got out. I ran away. I left the city and never looked back. It wasn't my city, or my organization, or my fight. I didn't even care what they thought or said. I didn't even feel anything for the people who were displaced, or who were detained, or who disappeared. I just liked a guy, I slept with him, I was with him for a few months, and then, after a few drinks one day, we decided to get married. A big mistake. We split up. That day, when I was leaving the city, I packed that black bag; it was my hand luggage for important stuff. I left. I packed my camera, without thinking that the film inside would attack me 12 years later.

DANIEL: *(Taking the present)* What were you doing with a bottle of wine?

VICTORIA: He came to say goodbye. Very civilized...

DANIEL: He killed people!

VICTORIA: ...That day he was saying goodbye to me and not killing anyone. He was an ex-boyfriend, in an ex-area, an ex-conversation about exes, with ex-presents. We've all got an ex. We've all had something that isn't ours anymore. And now it belongs to him, or her, or them, I don't know. I feel like we're tied to each one. We owe each other somehow. Maybe it's the memory and not us that's tied. Anyway, he came that day to say goodbye. We hugged each other and he gave me the bottle of wine. I never saw him again and I never saw the bottle of wine again until today.

DANIEL: Does he know anything about you?

VICTORIA: He doesn't have my address or anything.

DANIEL: Have you heard anything about him?

VICTORIA: Not even on the news. I don't know how their struggle is going, what happened to the Palestinians, the Jews, whoever, the car bombs or suicide bombers. If they're all dead or living happily in their two-bit independence or if they all ended up dead, taken out by someone stronger. I don't care. *(She ends up facing him)* Daniel, can we stop talking about this for a second and think about what's really important?

DANIEL: What's really important? The baby? You think that's what's really important?

VICTORIA: What are you going to do? *(Shows him the picture)* What are we going to do with this?

(Daniel takes the picture and stares at it. He turns his back to her and begins to tear up the picture as he did with his case file in scene one. The audience can see this though Victoria doesn't. As he does this Victoria takes out a cigarette and tries to light it. When Daniel turns to look at her, she hides it, but he sees. Then, Victoria looks unsure, pleading, sorry. Daniel goes to her)

VICTORIA: Daniel, I...

(He puts his arm around her, takes the cigarette away and lights it. He teases her, pretending to give it to her, but always pulling away. She opens her mouth sensually. He lowers the hand with the cigarette toward her vagina. He inhales and then blows out the smoke. She is aroused. After a few seconds, he holds her from behind and kisses her again. They kiss more passionately. She tries to smoke but he takes away the cigarette)

DANIEL: Your stiletto past, your twelve-gauge talk, your hair-trigger glances, your ticking sex, your genocidal opinions, your cyanide caress, your explosive hands, your terrorist repentance, your firebomb forgiveness, your Molotov kisses...

VICTORIA: Don't say those things... Don't talk like that...

(Daniel puts his hand between her legs. Victoria is aroused but suddenly we notice that she is also faking a bit, that this course of events is what she wants. While Daniel caresses her, she looks for the thermometer and moans, a bit phonily)

VICTORIA: Yes... yes...

(She kisses him. He squeezes her with desire. He continues kissing her, kisses her breasts)

VICTORIA: It's going to be a boy. You'll see... A boy is the best thing these days. And he'll be an artist, a visionary, he'll be an athlete, a genius, a famous lawyer, a mountain climber, a scientist, he'll donate blood, love his fellow man, pay his taxes, help the vets, he'll be a patriot, a musician, a humanist, loved, desired, he'll be President, a teacher, a good husband, a good friend. That's him, the future, darling.

DANIEL: The future's a literary device, my love. *(When he has her completely undressed)* Between us, the past always triumphs.

(He spins her around violently and enters her. The phone rings but they don't answer. The answering machine picks up. Music, blackout. In the dark, we see the lit cigarette, smoke. We hear a voice)

WOMAN: *(off)* This is a message for Daniel Ramirez from the Program Free America with Monica Tse. Daniel, we want to interview you about your position on the death penalty and get a quote or a story from you about the gun control decision. Oh! And Victoria. I hope I'll see you in church this Sunday so we can organize the fundraiser for the children. And you have to finish telling me that story about smoking. Two stories with a message. Ok? *(Laughs)* I hope you're both fine. Call me later?

(A long beep sounds. Music)

3 / Two months later

Light only on Victoria. She speaks to the audience, but as though giving an interview or talking to someone very close to her. She holds a picture in her hand.

VICTORIA: Two months went by and I started getting nicotine cravings again. (*Tries to light a cigarette*) I smoke when I can't walk. You don't know it but if you saw how I need crutches you wouldn't ask me to run so much. (*She finally lights the cigarette. She inhales deeply but her hand begins to tremble*) Stop...stop...stop... (*She holds her hand to make it stop trembling. Silence. She smokes again*)

You want a story with a message? OK, I'll tell you one with an anti-smoking message. (*Smokes and winks*) I was eighteen, I was riding in a car, and I didn't see anything special about that morning when I was eighteen and I lit up my first and last cigarette. I was so caught up in my own conversation and my beautiful Iranian boyfriend, with those eyes that looked like they were wrapped in aluminum foil, that I didn't pay any attention to the crates of fruit he was loading into his Jeep.

My nineteen-year-old boyfriend was charming; you know the type. He's there in the photo you're holding, with his beard, his moves, his things. He was such, such a fanatic that he had deserted the deserters movement of the Deserter Forces, specializing in radical desertion. They'd broken off from the Deserters Front, then split again into a rebel splinter group that deserted itself hundreds of times and never could find itself again. (*Smokes contentedly*) Don't laugh, you're worse.

Because he was passionate and young and had eyes wrapped in aluminum foil, he always got second-class missions. Helping refugees, raising money for people in exile, assisting detainees. But whenever we got news about any little thing, what do I know, Syria's Minister of Culture resigned or his cousin being thrown in jail overnight for wandering around drunk on the streets of Hebron, well then my revolutionary boyfriend would stand up, give a war cry and with his hand over his heart he'd repeat those four dire and inevitable words (*Dramatically*) "The time has come." Generally speaking, those four words meant that some act of supreme vengeance must be taken, a decisive action, like setting the Mediterranean on fire, or exploding all the oil refineries in the Persian Gulf or assassinating as many presidents as possible in a single night.

(Laughs) So cute. He'd turn all red. He especially liked that bit about assassinating presidents; he thought it was so resolute and touching. Following these outbursts, my darling Ramani Prianka would raise his voice, take a deep breath, cry and threaten to desert the deserter movement. Then he'd sing religious hymns, recite the Koran, beg for forgiveness and ask me to take it out, measure it and put it in my mouth. To suck it to the end. And I, what did you want me to do? I was eighteen and we all thought he was very sensitive. *(Suddenly remembering, with laughter)* But one day when they asked him if he could hit a corrupt cop who had raped Palestinian children and was holed up in Brooklyn, the enemy of his whole people, my revolutionary hero, my desertermaniac, my Hamas lieutenant with eyes wrapped in aluminum foil hid his face in his hands and cried: *(Doing an arab crybaby)* "Not me, I couldn't hurt a fly. Not even half a fly, not even a fourth, I couldn't even step on a fly's toes! No, not me, don't involve me in any of that..." *(Pause, looks out at audience)* Don't laugh, you're worse.

(She smokes, but coughs. Coughs and then laughs. She tosses the cigarette aside, as if saying "I'll never smoke again." But then she looks back at it, picks up what is left and continues smoking)

The story with a message, that's where I was. The story. So, like I said, I was smoking and then I put out my cigarette on a crate of fruit he was loading and then it caught fire. I don't know how I did it, maybe the crate was pure wood, maybe the cherry got caught in the wind, whatever, but the crate caught on fire. Ramani Prianka, Hamas hero, took off down the street like a madman and, there I was, surprised by the fire, but not scared, so I picked up the burning crate and with these horrible boots, I stomped out the fire. *(Arab accent)* "Two hundred pounds!! Two hundred pounds!!!" – that lunatic was shouting at me, basically like a coward – "Two hundred pounds!!!!" "It doesn't weigh that much," I said. "You don't have to run away. I know you're a coward, but at least you're a chicken." Then I hear him shout, "It's two hundred pounds of dynamite, you idiot. It's a car bomb."

(She laughs, but suddenly grows serious. She tosses the cigarette away, in terror) Ever since that day when I was eighteen, living the terrorist life with my boyfriend Ramani Prianka, that beautiful boy with his aluminum foil eyes, I haven't smoked. I forget figures and three digit numbers and my revolutionary faith disappeared. I don't care anymore about the poor, or injustice, or imperialism, or people's right to freedom. I decided to quit, get out of Hamas and the Middle East and move on and get married and try to have a kid and be happy. Everyone else? Fuck 'em. So, that's the message. I left all that behind for the same reason I do what I do today. I mean I left it all behind for the same reason I quit smoking. Terror. You wanted a message, didn't you? *(Her hand shakes)* Stop...stop...stop...!

(She holds her hand to stop it from shaking. Lights up on scene. Same place, but now there are glasses and cups. Daniel says goodbye to someone at the door and comes back in happily)

DANIEL: Did you see Adam? He had a good time. It was a great party. (*Looks at her*) Happy Birthday! (*Notices the cigarette*) Cigarettes? I'm sorry, Victoria, but you don't celebrate an occasion like this with a simple cigarette. You celebrate with fireworks, a marching band, a 48-hour bash. We're celebrating your Big 3-0. If you want to smoke, smoke an expensive and illegal Cuban cigar. (*Hands her one*) So, should we do our thing?

VICTORIA: You want to do it here?

DANIEL: Why not? How about a little drink first?

VICTORIA: I don't plan on drinking today. Shouldn't we pick up first?

DANIEL: How many people came? Ten, twelve?

VICTORIA: It felt like fifty.

DANIEL: All yours, except Adam, sweetheart. Your news copy friends, your liposuction buddies, your colleagues hip deep in wrinkles, your detoxed fans, and your queer boss.

VICTORIA: Watch it with my boss there, thank you very much.

DANIEL: The queer?

VICTORIA: Exactly. I don't want you and Adam getting into any more arguments with him. You know how people are. They believe any thing or any story they hear. One funny comment, one little anecdote and they end up calling me intolerant, prejudiced, fascist or whatever label's in vogue.

DANIEL: Besides, we weren't arguing, sweetheart, we were informing him.

VICTORIA: Well, don't inform him so much, because he takes it out on me later.

DANIEL: We were just informing him that all the studies show that adoption by homosexual couples isn't good for the child. That's all; it's a question of academics, not politics.

VICTORIA: To him, everything's political. You know how they are and we women are the ones who pay for it, as everyone knows.

DANIEL: Gay Totalitarianism.

VICTORIA: And you don't have to insult them all.

DANIEL: We don't insult them. We just point out, happily and supportively, what they are, what they have, or what they've done. And we celebrate it. Besides, they all came and on time. Even Monica acted like a real friend.

VICTORIA: They came because they felt obligated, that's all. They left early and to be honest, I'm glad.

DANIEL: They came because they love you.

VICTORIA: They don't love anyone.

DANIEL: Well in the Firm we're different. There's more togetherness, affection, support.

VICTORIA: Yeah right, everybody loves a lawyer. They're like banks. So beautiful and supportive.

DANIEL: (*Offers her a drink*) Want one?

VICTORIA: This time I'm not drinking the day we conceive our child, Daniel. Or smoking (*Putting out the cigarette*) or eating junk. Or moving afterward. I'm going to just lie there, like my mother did.

DANIEL: Your mother drank vodka with rum when she made you with your father or whoever it was, sweetheart. That's why you turned out the way you did. (*Holding the thermometer*) Temperature?

VICTORIA: Come on, let's take what we get. The baby we make today will be perfect.

DANIEL: Like his father, I hope.

VICTORIA: With his father's integrity and his mother's commitment.

DANIEL: That phrase always confuses me. Am I the better half or the worse one?

VICTORIA: The worse one.

DANIEL: That's good.

(*They kiss, automatically. Victoria unbuttons her blouse*)

VICTORIA: Go ahead and pour me a drink. A little liquor won't hurt me. A margarita, a Mai Tai, or a Cosmo, something light and just one. The last one for the next nine months.

DANIEL: And to keep you company, I won't drink any more after this last one.

VICTORIA: Though afterwards, when I'm breastfeeding, I won't be able to drink either, maybe for another 4 months, maybe longer. They say longer. I better just not drink anything ever. Or should I? One drink. One drink won't hurt... Come on, baby, bring me a drink 'cause today's the day and there's an egg that's desperate to meet you!

DANIEL: (*Looking in the bar*) How about wine?

VICTORIA: Better.

(*Daniel opens the wine and comes back with the glasses, suddenly he stops*)

DANIEL: No, not wine.

VICTORIA: Why not?

DANIEL: We don't have any more.

VICTORIA: (*Pointing to the one he has*) What about that one?

DANIEL: It's...

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: That bottle... the one that...

VICTORIA: The one that?

DANIEL: It's the bottle from your Ramani Prianka. What a musical name. I can't get it out of my head.

VICTORIA: Wine is wine. And I'm sure it's good, because those people might be terrorists to the bone, but they like their luxuries.

DANIEL: It's only been two months since we got this little gift and I'm wondering if we should drink it.

VICTORIA: Two and a half months. Come on, Daniel, we talked about this and we decided that... that there was nothing wrong with it. I helped some refugees and immigrants and that's all. That doesn't make me a terrorist. I'm just like everyone else. Our life goes on, a life that's different now and we're different. We ask for forgiveness and we're saved. The important thing is what we believe now, not what we did before. Remember Sunday's sermon.

DANIEL: It was very good.

VICTORIA: Look at me. (*She stands*) You haven't said anything.

DANIEL: About what?

VICTORIA: These are the pants.

DANIEL: They're a little ratty for your thirtieth birthday party, if that's what you mean.

VICTORIA: Look how they fit.

DANIEL: They fit you fine, but they're a little casual, don't you think?

VICTORIA: They're the jeans.

DANIEL: (*Understanding*) The jeans.

VICTORIA: From New York. That came with the wine. I'm wearing them and they fit perfectly.

DANIEL: And you think you should?

VICTORIA: And I'll tell you what else: you think Adam's wife didn't notice? At my age, wearing jeans for a teenager. She was drooling with envy.

DANIEL: Ego

VICTORIA: We all have one and when it comes a woman and her clothes, practically two. They fit perfectly. Better than when I was 18. Pour.

DANIEL: (*Opens the bottle. Smells it. He likes it*) It smells good. Maybe it'll give my sperm a boost.

VICTORIA: They're supposed to taste better with age.

DANIEL: Sperm? Yeah, I've noticed how you savor them.

VICTORIA: Wine, you idiot. What kind of wine is it?

DANIEL: Spanish, a '77 Rioja. Not bad, the little fundamentalist.

(*They pour happily. They toast. Daniel quickly downs a glass and pours himself another*)

VICTORIA: Delicious, you have to admit it. This is life!

DANIEL: I think I'll go to church more often.

VICTORIA: That's good, because I'm very Catholic.

DANIEL: And Apostolic.

VICTORIA: And I'm from San Cristobal

DANIEL: Which is like twice as good.

VICTORIA: Or three times. So, what should we name him?

DANIEL: Jesus Daniel, for example.

VICTORIA: Isn't that too Hispanic?

DANIEL: We are Hispanic.

VICTORIA: But we don't have to go overboard.

DANIEL: And we don't seem Hispanic, really.

VICTORIA: I can pass as... as...

DANIEL: And if it's a girl?

VICTORIA: Something like María Magdalena. Or Mary Magdalene.

DANIEL: But wasn't she a whore?

VICTORIA: Shut up, she's a saint now.

DANIEL: How things change!

VICTORIA: Pressure groups and Political Correctness.

DANIEL: I don't like it.

VICTORIA: How about Esther?

DANIEL: Jewish.

VICTORIA: What do you think of Shalma?

DANIEL: Too black.

VICTORIA: And José?

DANIEL: Sounds minority.

VICTORIA: We are a minority.

DANIEL: Don't be stupid. Minorities are people who don't have money.

(He pours them both wine. They drink)

DANIEL: Did you know Adam and his wife are getting divorced?

VICTORIA: Divorced? But they're... they're...

DANIEL: Adam has something on the side... a fling. That's what they're saying.

VICTORIA: But they seemed fine a little while ago. She was telling me about a house they're going to buy and... Unbelievable.

DANIEL: They'll split the house.

VICTORIA: I can't believe it. They're the perfect couple.

DANIEL: You're telling me? I was at their wedding.

VICTORIA: That beautiful wedding.

DANIEL: I practically married them. They looked so good together, and it was such a lavish wedding.

VICTORIA: And now just look! I guess the divorce won't be so posh.

DANIEL: Nothing doing, divorces are always more expensive than weddings.

VICTORIA: And they have a little girl.

DANIEL: A pretty one

VICTORIA: She's ok, Daniel. But she's no beauty. Her mother takes her to the salon every week.

DANIEL: What for?

VICTORIA: To bleach her hair.

DANIEL: But she's only 5!

VICTORIA: She likes her hair blonde. Since Adam's so dark

DANIEL: Adam isn't dark

VICTORIA: She thinks he is; you know what a racist she is.

DANIEL: And she's gained weight, the fat slob.

VICTORIA: She's way way overweight; she looks like a baby whale.

DANIEL: Adam says she's got all kinds of complexes.

VICTORIA: The truth is she's horrid, the blimp.

DANIEL: He was headed for top partner; he's got a terrific case history, but he can't resist a pair of legs.

VICTORIA: You think it's true about him sexually harassing his secretary?

DANIEL: His secretary and a client.

VICTORIA: A victim?

DANIEL: She came on to him, that much is true.

VICTORIA: But that's no excuse.

DANIEL: Of course not. But it says something about the victim. Besides, women know how to get what they want.

VICTORIA: You wouldn't do that.

DANIEL: I'm not like Adam.

VICTORIA: He can't keep it in his pants.

DANIEL: Although a man is a man.

VICTORIA: And a wife is a wife. Did you see how pretentious she was? Did you see how she was comparing her house to mine?

DANIEL: And he talks too much. Did you hear him talking about the case I'm handling?

VICTORIA: And she's so stupid.

DANIEL: And he's such an idiot.

VICTORIA: And they're getting divorced.

DANIEL: By mutual accord. The only good thing is it'll hurt him at the Firm.

(He pours more wine. He looks at the bottle curiously)

DANIEL: Victoria...I think...there's something here in the bottle.

VICTORIA: What?

DANIEL: It looks like...It's a piece of paper...there's a piece of paper inside the bottle.

VICTORIA: I can't believe it!

(With an effort Daniel gets the paper out)

VICTORIA: What is it? A label?

DANIEL: There's something written here... it's smeared, but you can make it out...

VICTORIA: *(Serious)* What's it say?

DANIEL: *(Reads)* "If Allah had wanted it, he would have made you to live with others, to live with the community. But Allah made you different and he made you as you are," Koran. "May you leave the world smelling of wine and may Allah guide you," Ramani. *(To Victoria)* What does it mean?

VICTORIA: I have no idea... I have no...

DANIEL: What is this?

VICTORIA: I don't understand...

DANIEL: "May you leave" where? "May you leave the world..." May Allah guide you...?"

VICTORIA: I don't know what it means, Daniel.

DANIEL: “He made you as you are? How are you? What’s different about you?”

VICTORIA: I don’t know. I’m normal...

DANIEL: A note at the bottom of the bottle so you’d find it after drinking the wine.

VICTORIA: Once... once he said that that was the Hamas way of saying goodbye.

DANIEL: Wine

VICTORIA: With... with something.

DANIEL: Something?

VICTORIA: Poison.

DANIEL: You think that... that...

(They look at each other in terror)

VICTORIA: Poison for a last goodbye.

DANIEL: Poison so you wouldn’t talk.

VICTORIA: Poison to get rid of me.

DANIEL: To get rid of you Hamas style.

VICTORIA: They wanted to kill me... They wanted to get me out of the city.

DANIEL: You’d drink the wine...

VICTORIA: How many times did he tell me the organization didn’t allow retirement.

DANIEL: ...and have a heart attack.

VICTORIA: The perfect crime.

DANIEL: I knew those Arabs would kill us.

VICTORIA: He told me that’s how they settled their accounts.

DANIEL: And we drank it all... How do you feel?

VICTORIA: A little dizzy...

DANIEL: God... God... God...

VICTORIA: What about you?

DANIEL: Maybe, maybe the poison won't work anymore.

VICTORIA: Or he wrote it to scare me.

DANIEL: Maybe we aren't dying.

VICTORIA: What should we do, Daniel? What should we do?

DANIEL: Let's call an ambulance!

VICTORIA: OK, anything, call, call... I don't feel so good... Everything's spinning... Daniel, I feel something...

DANIEL: I feel strange too... let's call the...

(The phone rings and they get the scare of their lives. She would cry but the terror stops her. They look at each other and all we hear is the phone ringing. After the fifth rings, Daniel answers)

DANIEL: I need to make an emergency phone call, you can call back later!

VICTORIA: *(Pacing)* We can still pump our stomachs. We won't swallow our saliva. Hang up and let's go to the hospital. We'll explain it to the press later, we'll think of something. We don't have to tell the truth. Any truths. We never have to tell them. We can say something else, a white lie. All of them. We can always say something else. Huh? Huh? Huh?

DANIEL: It's for you.

VICTORIA: For... what? Who is it?

DANIEL: Ramani Prianka.

(Pause. Victoria goes still. Her terror grows)

VICTORIA: I...ah...I...

DANIEL: (*Talking softly, but excitedly*) How did he get our number?

VICTORIA: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know...

DANIEL: Who did you call that night?

VICTORIA: I don't know, I don't know, I don't know...

DANIEL: (*Loud*) Victoria: tell me!

VICTORIA: I... I... I wanted to find out something about them... I wanted to know what my situation was... and then... and then... I called Iran

DANIEL: Go on.

VICTORIA: They were all wrong numbers.

DANIEL: Did you give someone your number?

VICTORIA: The operator

DANIEL: What for?

VICTORIA: Because they wouldn't make the call without it.

DANIEL: Of course not, stupid. Maybe they have contacts in the government, the military supports them, they protect them, they have connections, we're talking about a Hamas leader! What do you think? They spend their days playing Go Fish?

VICTORIA: Don't say it...

DANIEL: They can blow us to bits!

VICTORIA: Please...

DANIEL: You shouldn't have called. You shouldn't have called!

VICTORIA: No, no, no, no, no, no

DANIEL: We have to fix this.

VICTORIA: What do I do?

DANIEL: Talk to him. See what he wants. Promise him our full support. Tell him we're on his side, that we've always hated those damn Jews. We won't do

anything. Find out how much he knows about us, who we are, what we do. Maybe it's extortion. Let him talk. *(Handing her the phone)* I'm putting it on speaker phone to hear, ok?

VICTORIA: Ok.

DANIEL: Don't get nervous.

VICTORIA: No.

(She takes the phone. She takes Georgia and hugs her like a shield. She prepares herself. She smiles as though facing TV cameras)

VICTORIA: Hello?...It's...

(We hear Ramani's voice over the speaker, a melodious, soft voice with an accent)

RAMANI: *(Off)* Hello? Hello?

VICTORIA: Who is it?

RAMANI: Victoria?

VICTORIA: Yes?

RAMANI: *(Happy)* Victoria! It's been so long since I heard your voice! It's been almost 15 years! Huh?

VICTORIA: Twelve

RAMANI: Twelve, right. How are you? What are you doing now?

VICTORIA: I'm fine.

RAMANI: Are you married?

VICTORIA: *(Looking at Daniel, who nods)* Yes, four years ago...

RAMANI: That's great. Wonderful. I bet you have kids already.

(She looks at Daniel, who shakes his head)

VICTORIA: Not yet. But soon.

RAMANI: It's so good to hear from you. I'm in Teheran, you know, but I travel all the time, you know, my professional activities.

VICTORIA: Yes, of course, I suppose.

RAMANI: So many lectures.

VICTORIA: Right, lectures...

RAMANI: I'm happy with my writing.

VICTORIA: ...It's in your blood.

RAMANI: And I like telling stories. Have you read any of my books?

VICTORIA: of... your... books?

RAMANI: Several have been translated into English and Spanish. You must've seen them.

VICTORIA: No, actually.

RAMANI: You haven't seen one called "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star?" It's based on an American children's song...

VICTORIA: I know perfectly well what song it is.

RAMANI: You've stopped reading, huh?

VICTORIA: Me?

RAMANI: Don't be ashamed. It happens all the time. I remember you used to like taking pictures, you wanted to be a photographer.

VICTORIA: You've published books?

RAMANI: Didn't you know? I'm a writer. Children's stories. I base them on a lot of our folklore, of course, but they like that in the West. They think I make them up. Well, I make some of it up, you play with it, but it's all in the people, in their stories, in their lies. Remember I always liked lies.

VICTORIA: Yes, I remember.

RAMANI: I don't know how many I told you back then, but these days I make a living from them. (*He laughs heartily and even naively*) ...I guess they were sweet lies. (*Laughs, this time very sweetly*) I work in a publishing house now. I

don't make much but I have time to read and write. Which is what I like. I have two kids. One of them is very active in...

VICTORIA: (*Terrified*) In what?

RAMANI: Sports, he likes sports. Soccer. My wife is a translator, very bright, cultured. You met her... Rasha. (*Laughs*) You remember...

VICTORIA: That you left me for her.

RAMANI: Yeah, ha! We were such kids!

VICTORIA: You asked me to leave because you were in love with her.

RAMANI: Well, in the end we got married and... Oh! I'm running out of time. I'm calling you from home and my wife is counting the minutes. She's not too thrilled about this call, you can imagine! She's really got me under her thumb, my little Syrian. You have no idea who they think they are...

VICTORIA: Yes, I know perfectly well who that little whore thinks she is!

RAMANI: I couldn't hear you. What did you say?

VICTORIA: Nothing.

RAMANI: (*Laughs again, boyishly. We hear woman's soft voice, in farsi, also laughing. In the background, children fighting and then one crying*) Well, I have to hang up... Say hello to your husband. It's a good thing we didn't stay together, huh?

VICTORIA: We didn't...

RAMANI: You'd be dead by now.

VICTORIA: I'd be dead?

RAMANI: Starved to death on a Teheran writer's salary. (*He laughs again amused and naive*) My wife heard that and she's laughing... Kisses Victoria. Now you've got my number, you can call whenever you want. When you want to visit Teheran.

VICTORIA: Yes, of course, I'll go to check Rasha's teeth.

RAMANI: What's that...?

VICTORIA: I said... How'd you get my phone number?

RAMANI: By chance the operator gave it to me...I get a lot of calls from abroad and she reads a lot of my stuff... There has to be some advantage to be a writer...! *(He laughs again, like a boy)* Well, kisses to all of you and get to work on those children, they're the only thing that means anything in this life. The rest is all useless. You'll see I'm right. It's been great to hear your voice. Goodbye Victoria... *(Ramani hangs up. Victoria holds the receiver in her hands, incredulous)*

VICTORIA: What do you think?

DANIEL: Maybe he's lying.

VICTORIA: Yes, he's lying.

DANIEL: It sounded like he was feeling everything out.

VICTORIA: Married and with children?

DANIEL: Doesn't sound like it

VICTORIA: That Rasha was horrid and she's probably worse now.

DANIEL: A writer? A terrorist is what he is!

VICTORIA: I'll bet she's fat and crawling with cellulite.

DANIEL: He writes for children, he said.

VICTORIA: Covered in varicose veins and chewing her food like a camel.

DANIEL: He eats children, that fucking Ramani.

VICTORIA: If he could see me.

DANIEL: He...he straps bombs around their waists.

VICTORIA: I still fit in the jeans I had when I was 18! Ha!

DANIEL: Because being a writer isn't that easy-

VICTORIA: Asking me if I stopped reading, if I wanted to be a photographer, what a nerve!

DANIEL: Who does he think he is?

VICTORIA: Who does he think he is?

DANIEL: I haven't done it, me with all my degrees

VICTORIA: With all my dedication

DANIEL: As many times as I tried

VICTORIA: I even had a camera and an expensive one

DANIEL: I even published some poems in college

VICTORIA: I wrote for a magazine

DANIEL: I see flying saucers in the heavens

VICTORIA: I'm so good with words

DANIEL: I'm so sensitive

VICTORIA: And methodical

DANIEL: I truly repented

VICTORIA: I asked for forgiveness

DANIEL: For all our sins

VICTORIA: We committed to this day

DANIEL: We have the language

VICTORIA: And the right culture

DANIEL: We live in freedom

VICTORIA: We don't hate anybody

DANIEL: What does he know about children?!

VICTORIA: I've prayed and even asked God

DANIEL: The true God

VICTORIA: The real one

DANIEL: And not that bullshit Allah

VICTORIA: Second-rate God

DANIEL: I'll stand on the evidence!

VICTORIA: Son of a bitch

DANIEL: Asshole

VICTORIA: Bastard

DANIEL: Prick

(In the end they hug. They finish off the bottle of wine. Daniel looks for more alcohol)

DANIEL: Those friends of yours ate all the nuts. They're all apes is what they are.

VICTORIA: Coyotes

DANIEL: Beggars

VICTORIA: I hope they get rid of all of them at the station

DANIEL: Give 'em all a heart attack

VICTORIA: Set off a bomb in the TV.

DANIEL: Gutter mouths

VICTORIA: With their stupid comments

DANIEL: And we invited them

VICTORIA: But they drank all the wine

DANIEL: They didn't like that I defended the man who killed that doctor

VICTORIA: What do they know about abortion?

DANIEL: They don't even have kids!

VICTORIA: But they ate everything in sight

DANIEL: And when it was all gone

VICTORIA: They left, those...

DANIEL: Fags, lesbians

VICTORIA: Blacks, Jews

DANIEL: Arabs and lumpenproletariats

(Suddenly, everything goes dark, except for two points of light on Victoria and Daniel)

VICTORIA: We've been together so long.

DANIEL: We complement each other so well.

VICTORIA: We think the same.

DANIEL: We talk the same.

VICTORIA: Same social class.

DANIEL: Same friends.

(The following text should be said to the audience, alternating between Daniel and Victoria. They can find their own rhythm, fast or slow, as the actors choose. There is a certain musicality, as though they were two instruments)

DANIEL/VICTORIA: schools, neighbors, clothes, TV shows, channels, cafes, drinks, birthdays, party games, cakes, toys, envies, thefts, tantrums, credit cards, cell phones, bank accounts, debit cards, ATMs, plastic surgery, liposuction, implants, nasal septum, appendix, optometrist, dentist, podiatrist, body shop, churches, God, blame, beauty, ugliness, prejudices, hates, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, disappointments, shadows, monsters, nightmares, pets, betrayals, elections, candidates, meetings, malls, votes, deceptions, assassinations, toilet paper, soccer team, baseball team, hockey team, tennis players, caricatures, rock bands, first kiss, second kiss, first love, first heartache, first glass of water in the face, first slap, first sobs, first memory lapse, first drinking spree, sleeping around, acting silly, copy, nonsense, crime, robbery, assault, flight, arrest, fear, repentance, grief, forgiveness, Arabs, Jews, Christians, and Palestinians. Garbage.

DANIEL: And one hasn't finished speaking

VICTORIA: Before the other

DANIEL: Is ending his sentence

DANIEL AND VICTORIA: Like he'd said it before.

VICTORIA: I remember it all like it was yesterday

DANIEL: It's a story with a message

VICTORIA: And one that's true

DANIEL: Nothing lasts forever

VICTORIA: But you can believe it

DANIEL: While it lasts

VICTORIA: That's how we are

DANIEL: We're the same.

VICTORIA: Maybe worse.

DANIEL: Although I used to be better

VICTORIA: And I was better than you

DANIEL: But you have to keep going

VICTORIA: Forward

DANIEL: I'm not afraid

VICTORIA: I'm not terrified

DANIEL: I wonder if we'll die the same death?

VICTORIA: Most likely, and that, is definitely, the limit

DANIEL: *(Hands the thermometer to Victoria)* Come on sweetheart. Let's go reproduce.

VICTORIA: Let's go multiply.

(We hear a downbeat version of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star." Decided, Daniel starts to push his pants down the rest of the way and pulls off his shirt.)

She kisses him with desire, passionately, taking the initiative. Just then the doorbell rings. They look at each other)

VICTORIA: Who can that be?

DANIEL: Maybe someone forgot something. Should I get it?

VICTORIA: No, I'll do it. *(Victoria goes to the door)* Who is it?

VOICE: Federal Express.

VICTORIA: A delivery? At this hour? *(Opens the door. She talks for a moment with the deliveryperson, whom we don't see)* Yes, that's here. *(to Daniel)* It's for you, Daniel.

DANIEL: Who's it from?

VICTORIA: *(Victoria comes in with a box. Begins to open it)* To Daniel Ramirez and it's from City Hall. It looks a bit odd. It's dated... Fifteen years ago!

DANIEL: Fifteen years! No way!

VICTORIA: Let's see, what is it?

DANIEL: Maybe we shouldn't open it! *(Victoria does anyway)* Victoria! You're not listening to me! I asked you not to open it! Victoria!

(Victoria opens the box. She looks at Daniel in terror)

DANIEL: What?

(Victoria pulls out a blood soaked Winnie the Pooh sheet and shows it to him. Daniel covers his face with his hands. Suddenly, a red light appears on stage, followed by a thunderous noise. Daniel notices it. The light then turns blue. They both look up towards the heavens. The children's song grows louder)

Blackout.