

THE PHOTO

by

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*Look up here, man,
I'm in danger
I've got nothing left to lose
I'm so high it makes my brain whirl
Dropped my cell phone down below
Ain't that just like me*

David Bowie/ Lazarus

THE PHOTO opened on February 2, 2018, at in the Tivoli Theatre in Washington, D.C. It was presented by Gala Hispanic Theatre— Hugo Medrano, Artistic Director, and Rebecca Medrano, Managing Director. Direction was by Abel López, with the following cast:

LUZ NICOLAS..... Laura
CARLOS CASTILLO..... Dennis
MARÍA PEYRAMAURE.....Thais
JOSÉ ANTONIO CASTILLO...Frank
SAMANTHA RÍOS.....Kelly
KAREN MORALES.....Lexi

Set Design.....Jessica Cancino
Wardrobe Design.....Moyenda Kulemeka
Lighting Design.....Chris Annas-Lee
Sound Design.....David Crandall
Production.....Lena Salins
Stage Manager.....Nelly Díaz Rodríguez
Props Manager.....Tony Koehler
Scenic Change.....Alex Keen

CHARACTERS:

LAURA, 49
DENNIS, 50
THAIS, 42
FRANK, 17
KELLY, 17
LEXI, 48

What the characters see on their devices: cell phones, lap tops, or iPads, should be seen by the audience as well.

ACT ONE

1/ LAURA'S HOME & GROCERY STORE

I, HER ROOM.

*LAURA, nearly naked, stands at the mirror.
She is loosely draped in a towel.*

She fixes her hair. She touches her breasts, examining herself. She raises her arms, sighs.

Suddenly, she stops and just studies herself a moment. It's clear she likes what she sees.

She finds herself attractive, then is surprised and in the end smiles.

She grabs her cell phone and takes a quick selfie, without prepping.

She looks at the photo. She laughs more.

II, LIVING ROOM.

(LAURA and her daughter KELLY are sitting together, neither paying attention to the other. LAURA's on the couch with her phone, KELLY in an armchair, on her iPad.)

LAURA: Kelly honey, how do you edit a photo?

KELLY: You want to crop it?

LAURA: Touch it up.

KELLY: A selfie?

LAURA: Yeah.

KELLY: There's lots of apps. Your cell has one.

LAURA: Show me.

KELLY: Mom, it's easy.

LAURA: Yeah, but I want to learn fast.

KELLY: Send me the photo. I'll do it.

LAURA: No, no, show me how. I want to do it.

(KELLY goes to her mother.)

KELLY: Let's see... *(Looking at Laura's phone.)* This photo? For real, Mom?

LAURA: What's wrong with it?

KELLY: This is like the oldest, lamest photo we have!

LAURA: You think?

KELLY: Let's take a new one to practice on.

(LAURA agrees. KELLY takes her picture. A real pro, she starts editing it on the cell phone.)

KELLY: Brighten the skin, lift the boobs, shave off a few pounds. We'll make your eyes bigger, there. Longer legs. Fuller lips. Blur the wrinkles. Eye color; big sexy hair.

LAURA: Make it lighter.

KELLY: Blonde?

LAURA: Don't go overboard.

KELLY: Lighter... *(Does it)* You like this hairstyle?

LAURA: Beautiful.

KELLY: So you use it. See? That's how. With this app.

LAURA: On any photo I want?

KELLY: *(Nods)* You look like a model.

LAURA: I do! You don't think it's too much editing?

KELLY: No one notices. Even people who know you are like, OMG, you look fabulous in that photo...

(They laugh.)

LAURA: Now, your turn.

KELLY: No. You do it. Try with this photo. I'll talk you through it.

LAURA: Ok. *(Starts editing)* So breasts? Where is it you make them bigger? Here. Like this..

KELLY: Mom!

LAURA: *(Very surprised)* Wow!

KELLY: Yeah: Wow.

LAURA: Too much?

KELLY: Don't go wild. *(Takes her mother's phone and tones down the excess)* That's better; there but not in your face.

(KELLY goes back to her armchair.)

LAURA: Thanks, honey.

KELLY: What are you gonna do with that, Mom?

LAURA: Nothing, sweetie, just playing. I'm bored out of my gourd.

(KELLY goes back to her iPad. LAURA checks to make sure KELLY's not watching, obviously editing the nude.)

LAURA: *(To herself)* Damn, I look hot.

KELLY: What?

LAURA: Nothing. Talking to myself.

(LAURA laughs without KELLY noticing. Both keep playing on their devices.)

III, LAURA'S ROOM.

(LAURA at the mirror, dressed sexy. She flaunts her breasts, crosses her legs. When she's happy, she takes a mirror selfie. She checks, but isn't satisfied. She takes another, a sexier pose. Again, she's not happy. She takes a third, more provocative. This one she likes.)

LAURA: *(Editing the photo)* Legs... eyes... breasts... There. Woow!
(Laughs)
I'm beautiful. I'm beautiful.
I'm spectacular.
Now, Dennis, let's see if you ignore me this time.
(Types)
"See what you're missing..."

(She laughs. Presses SEND. She laughs like a teenage girl.)

IV, GROCERY STORE.

(LAURA and LEXI, with their carts, in the check out line. LAURA shows LEXI her phone.)

LEXI: And that's the photo you sent him?

LAURA: He wasn't answering my texts, or my calls! He blows me off for days! I didn't hear from him for a whole week.

LEXI: And this? Does what?

LAURA: Well, this way he knows what there is.

LEXI: Didn't he already?

LAURA: Didn't seem like it.

LEXI: But, didn't you two...

LAURA: No, of course not.

LEXI: Never?

LAURA: Fuck, Lex, not never. Never's a long time. We did before, when we were kids. In high school. We went out for two years. Then, well...

LEXI: What happened?

LAURA: I don't actually remember why we broke up. Kid stuff. Maybe nothing. I went to college. He started working for his dad. I moved a couple times. He did too. We grew apart. Both living in the same city, the same neighborhood, but we lost touch. Like we were living in two different countries. We met other people, the end. Then I had Kelly.

LEXI: And he...

LAURA: Had his wife.

LEXI: She was really pretty.

LAURA: Was.

LEXI: She still is. They're still married. What's her name?

LAURA: Who?

LEXI: Dennis's wife.

LAURA: Thais, I think.

LEXI: Do you remember her?

LAURA: I think I saw her on Facebook once.

LEXI: Did you know he's one of my friends?

LAURA: Dennis is super popular. He has 5000 friends!

LEXI: He's on all the time.

LAURA: His wife not so much.

LEXI: But she looks fantastic.

LAURA: For her age.

LEXI: The same age as us, Laura.

LAURA: I mean she's got a kid, Lexi. I'm not a bitch... *(Looking at her cart and trying to change the subject)* Do you really like that yogurt? To me it's kind of got no flavor...

LEXI: It's for Louey.

LAURA: That kid of yours has weird taste. No salt, no sugar. You'd think he was on a diet... How old is he? Twelve?

LEXI: Twelve.

LAURA: Have you checked to see if he has a problem with his taste buds?

LEXI: The only one with taste problems here is you, Laura.

LAURA: That's true too.

LEXI: So, why's he looking you up?

LAURA: Who?

LEXI: Mr. bland yogurt, Dennis; why do you think he's looking you up?

LAURA: Because he wants to.

LEXI: Of course he does. They all do.

LAURA: Because he's into me...

LEXI: But he has a wife and kid, why?

LAURA: He says they don't get along. They've been together a long time. And he never forgot me.

LEXI: What about you?

LAURA: I'm single, stupid.

LEXI: Right, but I meant did you never forget him?

LAURA: Of course I forgot him. But then boom he wrote me on Facebook and I answered. All innocent, but with a little zing.

LEXI: A little zing?

LAURA: For flavor.

LEXI: Oh!

LAURA: Then he stopped posting on my wall and started messaging me and we got talking about deeper stuff.

LEXI: Talking?

LAURA: Writing. More open. Intimate. Then we moved on to phone numbers and next thing you know we're texting as much as 80 times a day. Now I'm walking, now I'm eating, now I'm looking at the sky, now I'm thinking about you.

LEXI: But you haven't seen each other.

LAURA: No, not again.

LEXI: Not at all?

LAURA: In photos. He sends them and I do too.

LEXI: Has he said he wants to be with you?

LAURA: Yeah, that's the idea. Go out, see each other, spend a night. We text about it. We've done everything, just in words. I'm ready, but Dennis can't make up his mind.

LEXI: It's not as easy for him.

LAURA: Let's see if the photo helps him decide.

LEXI: I think it will. *(Looking at the photo)* Wow, Laura, I never noticed how big your boobs are. And your eyes... You look fabulous in this photo.

LAURA: I'm photogenic.

LEXI: I'm so jealous! When'd you send it?

LAURA: Two days ago.

LEXI: And he hasn't answered?

LAURA: *(Losing hope)* Silent as the grave.

LEXI: Don't get like that. I bet he calls today.

LAURA: I don't know. Maybe even after that he still doesn't want to be with me. *(Suddenly, as though hitting on the obvious reason)* You know I'm almost fifty and I've never been married?

LEXI: Laura... You think about that? About never getting married?

LAURA: It's something I've never done and everyone else seems to like it's nothing. Get married, divorced, remarried. Like you. But me, never.

LEXI: Laura, it's no big deal.

LAURA: It feels like one.

(We hear specials announced over the PA system. LAURA steps up to pay at the register. LEXI waits her turn, looking at her cell phone.)

LEXI: *(Without LAURA hearing)* Poor Laura. *(LEXI types a message on her cell phone)* All right, Dennis, let's see if this gets you to answer my friend already.

(We hear about another item on sale. But, suddenly, the power goes out. Shouts. The power comes right back on: music, noise, laughter.)

LAURA: *(Looking at LEXI)* That was weird! You think there's a storm?

(Music)

2/ DENNIS'S HOUSE

I, DENNIS AND THAIS'S BEDROOM.

(DENNIS, half-dressed, at the mirror, cell phone in hand. He gets a text notification. He takes a good look at the photo and can't believe it. He laughs, making sure no one hears.)

DENNIS: Wild woman!

(He tries to get a better look at the photo but clearly his cell phone screen is too small. He gets his iPad. He works the two devices, sending the photo from one to the other. He's happy. The photo is bigger on the iPad.)

DENNIS: Wow!

(He touches his penis, checking that no one can see, and strokes. He hears a noise and stops. He jumps in bed and pretends he was web surfing.)

II, FAMILY ROOM IN DENNIS'S HOUSE.

(Sitting on the couch, DENNIS, watching TV and checking texts on his phone. To one side, THAIS, sitting in an armchair, on her laptop. We can see she's on Facebook. She scrolls through posts and laughs. On some she leaves comments, amusing herself. Enter FRANK. He goes straight to DENNIS.)

FRANK: So Dad?

DENNIS: So what?

FRANK: When you gonna let me drive the Camaro?

DENNIS: The Camaro?

FRANK: The Camaro.

DENNIS: My new Camaro?

FRANK: Ours, Dad, ours.

DENNIS: Ours sounds like a lot of people. That car is mine.

FRANK: So what, you're not gonna lend it to your only son?

DENNIS: First off, my only son is underage.

FRANK: Barely. And I can...

DENNIS: Second, he has to get his driver's license.

(THAIS mumbles about something on Facebook, not paying attention to them.)

FRANK: I'm taking the test this week, Dad. You know that. This week.

DENNIS: Third, you have to show me you can drive.

(To one side, THAIS has found something on her laptop. She reads, frozen.)

FRANK: To get my license I have to prove I know how to drive, Dad.

DENNIS: It's not the same thing, kid.

FRANK: Why not?

DENNIS: Because you have to prove it to me.

FRANK: The authorities aren't enough for you?

(THAIS mumbles.)

DENNIS: Too. But when it comes to my new Camaro, the only authority is me.

FRANK: Fine. I'll prove it to you.

DENNIS: And you'll take the test in Mom's Toyota.

FRANK: No Dad! I want to do it in your new Camaro!

DENNIS: When you're learning you do it in a heap like the Toyota.

(Suddenly THAIS is no longer amused. She scrolls quickly. It's clear she's jumping very nervously from page to page.)

FRANK: Dad; 21st century. Camaro. Me!

DENNIS: What'd your friends say yesterday?

FRANK: So lit. They applauded when you pulled up to school. Did you hear them clapping?

DENNIS: They saw me?

FRANK: With all that honking, Dad. You made sure everyone saw.

(THAIS has found something. She takes out a notebook, writes. She goes back to scanning pages, very tense.)

DENNIS: What'd they like most?

FRANK: The color. The red racing stripes. The detailing...

DENNIS: The flames, the rock logo...?

FRANK: Coool.

DENNIS: Nice wheels, huh?

FRANK: Sweet. So? Can I borrow it?

DENNIS: New car, new life. Go on, grab your bike and get to school.

FRANK: Ok. But next week I get my license. And it's inevitable. Accept it now so it's easier on you when the time comes.

(FRANK leaves. DENNIS laughs, picks up the TV remote and changes something, the volume maybe.)

DENNIS: He's nuts if he thinks I'm letting him take my Camaro. Even I try not to touch that car so it won't get run down!

THAIS: Dennis...

DENNIS: Yeah?

THAIS: You have a Facebook message from...

DENNIS: From who?

(THAIS gets up, goes to DENNIS and takes his phone.)

DENNIS: What? *(THAIS checks his phone)* Fuck, Thais, leave my stuff alone. What are you doing? My calls? My texts? You know I erase them every day so they don't fill up my memory. So it's just the important ones...

THAIS: It's not your calls or your texts.

DENNIS: What then?

THAIS: Your photos

DENNIS: *(Nervous)* Give me my phone, Thais. Thais: my phone! Give it to me!!!

(DENNIS starts to stand to take the phone from her but right then she shoves it in his face.)

THAIS: Here it is.

DENNIS: What?

THAIS: This naked woman, who is she?

(Deafening noise.)

III, MINUTES LATER.

(To one side, FRANK appears, iPad in hand. Neither THAIS nor DENNIS realizes he's there.)

DENNIS: I don't know who she is!

THAIS: And she sends you naked pictures of herself?

DENNIS: They send all sorts of stuff...

THAIS: You never said anything about her.

DENNIS: Because I don't know who she is!

THAIS: From when?

DENNIS: From when what? Fuck, some chick that's it.

THAIS: So why do you have a photo of her naked on your phone?

DENNIS: Why? Because she sent it to me.

THAIS: Why didn't you erase it?

DENNIS: Because I forgot. I barely glanced at it.

THAIS: You've got THREE naked photos of her.

DENNIS: Nothing. It's nothing. I think she's an actress promoting some men's site so she sends those photos out to all her contacts. Pete got the same text. You can call him.

THAIS: And texts? Did you get texts too?

DENNIS: From who? Pete?

THAIS: The naked actress you don't know. Did she text you?

DENNIS: No, I just got the photos. Me, other guys, lots of guys. That's a thing now; they do it to get noticed, to drum up clients, sales.

THAIS: She's some kind of whore. Is that what you're trying to say?

DENNIS: No, I don't think she's a whore.

THAIS: She sends out naked photos of herself to...

DENNIS: To get us to go to her website and pay. It's a business. It's nothing unusual, really.

THAIS: Give me the address for her website.

DENNIS: I don't have it.

THAIS: It didn't come with the photo?

DENNIS: It might've, but I erased it. You know I...

THAIS: Erase your texts every day.

DENNIS: Is the third degree over, Thais? Can I go back to watching my game?

THAIS: Yes, of course. Your explanation is perfectly normal. Should I erase the photos?

DENNIS: If you want.

THAIS: Yes, I do want.

DENNIS: Then, go ahead.

THAIS: *(Erases them)* I know you save copies on your iPad.

(FRANK suddenly looks at the iPad in his hand. He starts searching.)

DENNIS: I don't save anything. I don't want to take up space. My thing is the baseball game. Leave me alone, Thais. How often do we get texts from women or men, or Nigerians or whatever, saying they know you when what they want is to take your money?

THAIS: Every day.

DENNIS: So you see?

(THAIS hands him the phone. DENNIS takes it like no big deal. He doesn't check it.)

THAIS: So, tell me something Dennis...

DENNIS: What?

THAIS: Why are you lying to me?

DENNIS: I'm not lying to you...

THAIS: What reason do you have to lie to me? What's your goal? Why do you have to tell these idiotic lies you're telling me?

DENNIS: I'm not lying to you! I told you that!

THAIS: Then why do you have a Facebook message from some Lexi, a friend from high school, asking you to answer her friend Laura, who's very anxious to hear from you?

DENNIS: I don't know!

THAIS: She hasn't heard from you. *(Pause. DENNIS doesn't respond)* Are you ok? Did something happen to you?

DENNIS: Who's this? Lexi? A friend named Lexi?

THAIS: Exactly.

DENNIS: What's she got to do with it?

THAIS: Well, Lexi, this old friend of yours, has pictures on her Facebook page, of her with a Laura, who, by the way, is your friend too. There are even photos from the high school you all went to when you were 17. There's a really nice one, of the two of you back then, on a basketball court. And that woman, this Laura, is the same woman who sent you the photo. The nude. So, tell me: why do you have to lie to me? What's your reason for not owning up to it all and coming clean?

DENNIS: Thais, I...

THAIS: Yes?

(FRANK has found something. It's obvious he's looking at the photo.)

DENNIS: I have no idea what you're talking about. I don't know that woman. I've got nothing to do with it.

(FRANK doesn't know whether to laugh or run away. He stares at it, spellbound. Suddenly, the power goes out.)

DENNIS: What happened? Thais?

(The power comes back on. But now DENNIS and THAIS seem a little more distant, physically. DENNIS and THAIS look at each other, surprised, realizing what happened and as though meeting for the first time. And they don't like each other. We hear David Bowie's "Under Pressure.")

3 / A M A L L

(KELLY has several shopping bags, too many to carry easily. She stops to rearrange them. Then LAURA comes with more bags.)

LAURA: *(Giving another one to KELLY)* Take this for me.

KELLY: More?

LAURA: I need to revamp my wardrobe, I'm overdue.

KELLY: But, all this?

LAURA: How long's it been since I got anything new?

KELLY: I don't know, Mom.

LAURA: Because we always shop for you, not me.

KELLY: Always? Always sounds like a long time, Mom.

LAURA: It's my stuff and I need it. Or do you want me to look like an old bag? *(Pointing to someone)* Look at her over there; I bet she's a bigger artifact than me, but in that outfit...she looks good.

KELLY: You feel old? Is that it?

LAURA: I don't feel old, but I have to take care of myself, don't I?

KELLY: You look good.

LAURA: Well I'm going to look better, like photoshopped.

KELLY: What? Like that photo?

LAURA: Why does it bother you, sweetie?

KELLY: It's just this is the first time we've spent so much, Mom.

LAURA: On me, you mean, because on you...

KELLY: Seriously, Mom. On me too. This is the first time we've gone to the mall and blown this much on clothes in one day.

LAURA: Are you worried about the money?

KELLY: Always. And other stuff.

LAURA: What other stuff?

KELLY: Men.

LAURA: Stop this now. They've been working me like a slave at the preschool. I hold the overtime record. And we still have granny's money, so quit worrying. The money's there. And the only men in my life are four-year-olds. The thing is, if I dress better they might give me a permanent position, that's what they said. And they might even give me older guys, those great big, ravishing vulgarians who are all of seven. Beautiful and dangerous.

KELLY: Mom!

LAURA: It's a fucking joke, fuck Kelly, it's a joke. Is it clear it's a fucking joke or should we call the cops?

KELLY: So the clothes are for a promotion...

LAURA: For whatever, sweetheart. Whatever. I can buy myself a couple of nice things, can't I? It's not like I'm asking you for money or permission.

KELLY: *(Shows her the bags)* A couple? *(Holds up a Victoria's Secret bag)* What about this?

LAURA: What?

KELLY: Victoria's Secret!

LAURA: They have nice clothes.

KELLY: For the seven-year-old boys?

LAURA: Seven is the new eighteen. You should hear them talk.

KELLY: But, sexy lingerie?

LAURA: Am I not allowed?

KELLY: But you're single, Mom.

LAURA: So?

KELLY: Who's going to see you in it?

LAURA: I'll see me.

KELLY: Yeah, but...

LAURA: But nothing. That should be enough. Besides, it's ridiculous I have to justify the underwear I choose to my teenage daughter.

KELLY: Are you seeing someone?

LAURA: What?

KELLY: Are you seeing someone?

LAURA: Seeing who?

KELLY: A dog, Mom. A man, obviously!

LAURA: No. But I can...can't I?

KELLY: You'd tell me, right?

LAURA: Dog, cat, man, woman...whatever pops up first, if I start seeing someone, I'll tell you. But right now I'm only seeing me and my girlfriends.

KELLY: You don't have to be with someone, you know? You don't need a man by your side.

LAURA: Well, don't be so sure...

KELLY: Of course I'm sure! You're the one who repeated it to me over and over like an SOS! In red, with alarms, whistles and shouting! (*Mimicking her mother*) School is what's important. Making something of yourself. Boyfriends can come later. And if they don't, you don't need them anyway. You're you; all on your own, the rest is just icing. (*As herself*) Right? Women's lib? Feminism and all?

(But suddenly KELLY gets nervous. She's seen someone. LAURA goes on talking.)

LAURA: Well, if I said it, it must be true. For you maybe. The thing is for a woman, being with someone answers a lot of questions. Just like that, everyone sees you as normal. I don't like it, but that's the way they make you feel and you do; your age, your body, the attention, sex... I don't know. Of course I'm for women's lib. A feminist okay. But living is fucking hard.

(To one side FRANK walks by. KELLY sees him and they wave, with a kind of forced indifference. He looks like he's going to stop and talk to her, but notices LAURA and doesn't. He gestures: let's talk later. KELLY giggles, a bit ditsy, touches her hair and nods. LAURA doesn't get a good look at FRANK, but watches him as he walks away.)

LAURA: And who was that?

KELLY: A guy.

LAURA: Yeah, but, who is he?

KELLY: From school.

LAURA: You like him?

KELLY: God no.

LAURA: And that little smile?

KELLY: What smile?

LAURA: That sappy smile you gave him.

KELLY: I didn't give him any sappy smile!

LAURA: And the hair touching?

KELLY: What? I didn't touch my hair!

LAURA: What's his name?

KELLY: Frank.

LAURA: And?

KELLY: And nothing. A few days ago his dad dropped him off at school in a new Camaro, a red one, with flames on it and all. When I saw him at break I said: nice flaming set of wheels. And it made him laugh. It was the first time we ever talked.

LAURA: Kelly...

KELLY: That's it. I'm not lying.

(LAURA hands her the Victoria's Secret bag.)

LAURA: Looks like you should take this.

KELLY: But...

LAURA: I didn't see his face, but he looks interesting from the back.

KELLY: Mom!

(Voices in the mall blend with music.)

4/ CLASSROOM

(Onstage, KELLY, alone, organizing her books. A piece of clothing she bought with her mom is in her backpack. She laughs. But she's interrupted by FRANK. She shoves the clothes away, embarrassed.)

FRANK: Hi... are you?

KELLY: Hi.

FRANK: You're...

KELLY: Kelly.

FRANK: Yeah Kelly. Carlos told me that.

KELLY: Who's Carlos?

FRANK: A friend. Nobody. He's not important.

KELLY: An unimportant friend who knows my name.

FRANK: I wanted to ask you something. *(Remembers something)* Were you just at the mall?

KELLY: Yeah, I saw you there...

FRANK: Right, you were with someone

KELLY: My mom.

FRANK: I didn't really see her.

KELLY: We were shopping. What'd you want to ask?

FRANK: What?

KELLY: A question. Your friend Carlos told you my name and you want to ask...

FRANK: It's about a photo.

KELLY: A photo.

FRANK: There's a photo that...

KELLY: What?

FRANK: A photo where...

KELLY: A photo?

FRANK: Ok, here goes. You know the yearbook?

KELLY: (*Confused*) The photo...of my...
The yearbook? (*He nods*) I hate the yearbook. I always look stupid...

FRANK: Thing is, this year they picked me to do a profile...

KELLY: On?

FRANK: On me.

KELLY: Yeah? Lucky you!

FRANK: Are you serious?

KELLY: Of course not.

FRANK: I figured. I'm not all that pumped myself, but they're doing it to promo sports and all. Since I've been going here my whole life, they're gonna do a bio with photos and...

KELLY: I'd be freaking out.

FRANK: I am! (*Searches through his notebooks. He clearly has lots of photos*)
But they asked me the names of people in some photos I'm in from other yearbooks.

KELLY: You're in all these photos?

FRANK: They're always taking my picture. For the sports pages, for chess, math club. Since I was a kid...

KELLY: A well-documented life.

FRANK: (*Looks at a photo*) This one. (*Hands it to her*) I've got almost all the names but this one I'm not sure on. It's a picture of the track team from five years ago.

KELLY: Five years! That's ancient history.

FRANK: The Calcium Age.

KELLY: Calcium?

FRANK: You know, for teeth.

KELLY: You all look like kids.

FRANK: We were kids.

KELLY: Right. So how can I help?

FRANK: My friend Carlos...

KELLY: Who knows my name...

FRANK: Said you could help with the names of the people in this one. You went here five years ago, right?

KELLY: Yeah, of course...

FRANK: And Carlos said you were on the track team

KELLY: I was.

FRANK: Maybe you remember better than me.

KELLY: Let's see.

FRANK: Like...who's this guy?

KELLY: That guy, I think his name was Amil, he was Indian or Muslim. He stopped going here the next year. Amil Mohammed or something like that. (*FRANK writes it down*) This girl was Olivia, she stopped going here that year too, I think they moved. The two guys in the back are David and Lennon, they wrote poems. I haven't seen them since then. That's Carlos and this is you, of course.

FRANK: And the girl?

KELLY: What do you want to know?

FRANK: Her name. I think she quit going here that year. I can totally picture her, the way she talked, the stuff she said, her mannerisms, but I can't remember her name.

KELLY: Did you like her?

FRANK: I didn't say...

KELLY: Her name, her mannerisms...

FRANK: We were just kids but... Now you say it, maybe I did. Maybe I liked her. Do you know her name?

KELLY: Kelly. Kelly Lucian

FRANK: Kelly Lucian? You're sure?

KELLY: Of course I am. That's me.

FRANK: That was you in the photo?

KELLY: Doesn't it look like me?

FRANK: No. Yes. No, I don't know. You've changed!

KELLY: Look at you. In the photo and now. You've changed too!

FRANK: Sorry, I didn't realize it was you. *(Thinks about it)* Kelly Lucian?

KELLY: Yeah. Hope it helped. *(Leaving)* Let me know when the yearbook comes out, ok?

FRANK: Hold up, Kelly, you...

KELLY: What?

FRANK: You...

KELLY: What is it?

FRANK: It's...My dad had some photos of women, nudes, on his cell phone. And I...

KELLY: What? You mean porn?

FRANK: No, from a real woman. Some chick.

KELLY: How do you know that?

FRANK: Mom busted him.

KELLY: So what's that got to do with me?

FRANK: My friend Carlos says you know who that woman is.

KELLY: I know?

FRANK: That's what he says.

KELLY: Like the girl in the yearbook photo. Do you have it?

(FRANK shows her his phone.)

FRANK: Do you know who it is? It's all over school.

KELLY: I...uh...She...Did you forward that?

FRANK: Carlos did. I sent it to him and he made it viral.

KELLY: *(Looking at the photo)* It looks fake...

FRANK: Yeah, it does. So, do you know who she is?

KELLY: Why?

FRANK: Just curious.

KELLY: No, of course I don't know who she is.

FRANK: So one last question.

KELLY: More photos to ID?

FRANK: No. Just curious again.

KELLY: Yeah?

FRANK: Would you go to the movies this weekend?

KELLY: Would I go?

FRANK: With me.

KELLY: *(Hands him his cell)* Of course I would. *(Leaving)* But it probably won't happen.

(A phone rings in the distance and an answering machine picks up. We hear tense music.)

5 / LAURA'S HOUSE

(We hear the phone ring. Onstage, LAURA, nervous. KELLY, furious. Neither answers the phone. We hear the answering machine come on with an adorable message the two of them made together.)

LAURA/KELLY *(Off)* “Hi. And hi. It’s me. And me. Mother. And daughter. Or the other way around: daughter and mother. Laura and Kelly Lucian. Leave a message and she’ll call you back. No, she will. No, she will.” *(Laughter. The beep plays. We hear someone leaving a garbled message. It’s obviously boys laughing. They cut off.)*

LAURA: That’s been going on all day. Ignore it.

KELLY: A photo? A photo, Mom?

LAURA: He hadn’t answered in a week...

KELLY: You’re that desperate?

LAURA: It seemed rude. For him to ditch me. Not answering my texts, my calls...

KELLY: He’s a married man!!!!

LAURA: But he doesn’t love her.

KELLY: Of course he doesn’t love her!

LAURA: That’s what I’m saying. He doesn’t love her. He told me he was getting divorced.

KELLY: Then, wait. You wait!

LAURA: I am; I’m waiting.

KELLY: What about the photo?

LAURA: I lost my patience.

KELLY: Losing your patience is not waiting!

LAURA: That day, I mean that day, the photo day, that day I lost my patience. If he'd texted me back—an emoji, anything—I would've relaxed. I would've got my patience back. But nothing. So...

KELLY: You sent him a sexy photo!

LAURA: To get him to make a decision.

KELLY: A nude!

LAURA: Who?

KELLY: The photo!

LAURA: The photo's not...

KELLY: It's a nude, Mom!

LAURA: It was a mirror selfie...after a bath. I was looking at myself and I thought: maybe what he needs is a push, to get things moving. He feels tied to his family, to his kids...

KELLY: Kid! A teenager like me!

LAURA: Yeah, like you.

KELLY: We go to the same school!

LAURA: I didn't know. If I had...

KELLY: He's going to hate me!

LAURA: You didn't do anything.

KELLY: I'm your daughter.

LAURA: But it's not your fault.

KELLY: Of course he'll hate me. He'll despise me. In the yearbook I'll be stuck on the total losers page...How could you? What was going on in your head?

LAURA: I don't know. I don't know. Like that night; I didn't know anything. Only I'd just gotten out of the tub. A real relaxing soak. I felt good. And I got the idea to get a more modern haircut, like yours. Not like a teenager, I'm not pathetic, just a cut that shows off my energy, a more take-charge attitude, that I'm up for anything. Then I went over to the bedroom mirror to comb my hair. And I started to look at myself.

I took off my towel, I was naked and I liked it. I liked what I saw. I'm a beautiful woman, Kelly. I'm not telling myself that, I am. If I saw myself around, I'd say: that woman's probably 35. Then I picked up my phone and

took the photo. I thought only the top half would come out. Not all, not all, not all of it, the way it did...

KELLY: So you sent it to him just like that?

LAURA: That's why...

KELLY: That's why!

LAURA: It was two ideas at once: maybe reassurance is what he needs? And on top of that idea, the one I saw in the mirror: a woman, maybe moving into the last stage of her life, but still beautiful, glowing after a hot bath, a woman who doesn't want the day to slip by without making any progress. So boom, without a second thought, I sent it. Send. When I was young you couldn't just do these things. But now, I don't know, it happens.

KELLY: And you never thought about the consequences?

LAURA: That the photo would go public?

KELLY: The consequences for me!!!!

LAURA: No, Kelly. That day the only consequences were for me. I'm me too. In some corner of the universe, it's just me, without you.

(The phone rings again. LAURA and KELLY are both unfazed. They listen to the message again, but this time the callers leave a message.)

BOYS: *(Off, laughing)* Tits. Big tits. I stuck the photo to my chest... *(Laughter)* Nice tits, mommy. MILF! MILF! MILF! MILF! *(Stupid laughter. They hang up.)*

KELLY: I'm totally humiliated.

LAURA: You weren't supposed to find out.

KELLY: Everyone found out, Mom! It's viral. It's on my friends' phones. On the walls at school. In a thousand gifs and memes, and they send them all to me. All a joke, but all insults. It's on my sites, online, on everything. My places... None of that was yours and now you're all over it.

LAURA: I don't know how it could've happened, Kelly. I sent it to him and only him. It was a private photo.

KELLY: But the whole world knows. They're fucking with me about it at school. You're a joke; and I'm worse: everyone's favorite victim!!!

LAURA: Well, it's too late now. So...what can we do?

KELLY: You're asking me? I'm the one with no clue what to do!

LAURA: Then I'll decide: we do nothing. We let it go.

KELLY: You're not the one getting teased at school.

LAURA: Laugh with them. Joke about me. They'll settle down. If they see it doesn't get to you, they'll move on.

KELLY: And then?

LAURA: Then, nothing.

KELLY: Nothing? Then nothing? The situation hasn't changed, Mom: there's a married guy with a seriously pissed off wife because you're out there sending him a nude.

LAURA: One or two, whatever...

KELLY: One or two?

LAURA: What I'm saying is that's not important and as soon as something else comes along online the whole world will forget about me.

KELLY: There's another photo?

LAURA: I took three.

KELLY: Three!

LAURA: They're different. Artistic.

KELLY: Nudes?

LAURA: Poses.

KELLY: Oh my god. My god. God. God. God. You're a narcissist, Mom. A mortifying narcissist. A piece of shit of a mother. A selfish, stupid child. Stupid. That's what you are, Mom. An idiot. An irresponsible idiot.

(The phone rings. Neither answers. The answering machine comes on.)

LAURA/KELLY *(Off)* "Hi. And hi. It's me. And me. Mother. And daughter. Or the other way around: daughter and mother. Laura and Kelly Lucian. Leave a message and she'll call you back. No, she will. No, she will." *(Laughter. The beep plays.)*

MESSAGE: Mrs. Lucian. This is Dr. Ramirez, the principal at Washington School. I'd like to meet with you to discuss a very serious situation that's arisen. I repeat; the matter is very serious and will have repercussions if you don't meet with me as soon as possible. Call me back, please. This is urgent, Mrs. Lucian. Thank you. *(We hear the call end.)*

LAURA: The principal?

KELLY: I think I should transfer to a new school.

(The phone rings. We hear the message. LAURA and KELLY don't answer: they talk over the answering machine.)

LAURA: I'll call the principal tomorrow. I know kids can be cruel but the school has to protect you. You're a victim: the truth is we both are because no one's stopped to think about my reasons for sending that photo...

LAURA/KELLY *(Off)*
 "Hi. And hi. It's me. And me. Mother. And daughter. Or the other way around: daughter and mother. Laura and Kelly Lucian. Leave a message and she'll call you back. She will. She will." *(Laughter. The beep plays.)*

KELLY: Of course it's not my fault. But this is all too much. The jokes, the sarcasm, even my best friends ditched me. Like being around me puts them in the photo that you sent. Like all of us were naked in that photo and...

(They both stop talking when they hear THAIS, who appears on one side of the stage.)

THAIS: Hi; This is Thais Nelson, Dennis's wife. I wanted to talk to Laura Lucian. Please, call me back. I have something important to say to you. My number is 490-7614. It's urgent.

(THAIS hangs up. LAURA and KELLY stare at the phone, silent. We hear David Bowie's "Lazarus" at full blast.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

1 / DENNIS'S HOME

I, LIVING ROOM.

(We see scenes from the video to David Bowie's "Lazarus." DENNIS talks to PETE on the phone. During the conversation, he fiddles with his iPad.)

DENNIS: My first girlfriend, that's what I'm saying, Pete. Believe me. *(Listens)* She was my first girlfriend. You know. *(Listens)* I never told you that? *(Listens)* No?

(Listens) Aren't you my best friend? *(Listens)* What I mean is, hasn't that happened to you? *(Listens)* You think about her, your first. The one you never forget.

(Listens) I'd look for her every now and then, maybe twice a year. I started once I hit 42 or so. I'd Google her name but she never came up. I'd sift through all the women with her name. Think about all the Lauras online who lived in this city. I checked their photos, their age, till I found her on Facebook. I wrote to her, she wrote back and less than two days later we were talking about life like it was a grocery list. I saw her photos and she was beautiful, gorgeous, always smiling, like everything was happiness and going out, good times, guy friends and girlfriends and trips and success and good vibes and unforgettable days, and man I wanted to be with her in that life.

(Listens) Yeah, Facebook's a hell full of happy people.

(Listens) Laura was alone, she said. She'd had boyfriends, but nothing serious. After us she had just three real relationships.

Who buys that? In this day and age, pushing 50, it's hard to believe you've only had that many lovers...

(Listens) No, Pete, of course not: it's hard to believe.

(Listens) Yeah, pushing 50, but beautiful. Gorgeous, man. I told her straight off I was married. Had a kid. And she said she was happy for me, but then she asks, are you happy?

(Listens) Exactly: a hell full of happy people.

And that was the question. That was the question.

How do you answer that? In a way that's believable, that you believe. And more important; you want to answer honestly, cause if you hide it, then, you know, Pete? There's so many possibilities! It seems like just a polite question but I felt like she really wanted to know. I wanted to believe that and that's when I realized: when an old flame asks you that, your answer is automatic, imaginary, arousing, dangerous, passionate, young and hopeful, meaning the answer is "no."

No, I'm not happy. *(Listens)* She thinks it's because of my wife. *(Listens, laughs)* No, of course not. The truth is something else, Pete. The truth is I'm

not happy cause I'm getting old. And I'm terrified all the time. Like the Bowie video. Have you seen it? The one he made before he died? It's called Lazarus. When I saw it I felt like him; alien, androgynous, my hair went orange, I felt resurrected but dead, with coins on my eyes and the spectral hand beneath my bed.

And I was filled with terror.

When they ask you that: are you happy? It's like they're asking: are you terrified? Are you dying?

(We hear PETE talking, but DENNIS is watching Bowie's "Lazarus" video on his iPad while it's shown to the audience. Then DENNIS notices his phone. He looks into the screen and poses for a selfie a la Bowie, very punk. He takes the picture.)

II, DAYS LATER.

(Onstage, THAIS and DENNIS.)

DENNIS: It's nothing, meaningless. The woman's crazy.

THAIS: That's not the point.

DENNIS: That she's crazy? That has nothing to do with it?

THAIS: She's not my problem, Dennis. You are.

DENNIS: She got excited about me. We haven't even seen each other in person since high school. It was only texting. No physical contact. I haven't had sex with that woman.

THAIS: And the photo?

DENNIS: The photo's about her. I didn't respond.

THAIS: Why'd she send it to you?

DENNIS: Because she wants something from me.

THAIS: She already got something from you!

DENNIS: I mean something more serious.

THAIS: Sex. That's what the photo's about. She's trying to say she wants to have sex with you.

DENNIS: And that's not going to happen.

THAIS: No, because I busted you.

DENNIS: You didn't bust me. You found out because of someone else, because of a Facebook post. You didn't do anything.

THAIS: You told me that day it was a photo she sent to everyone, some kind of business she ran. A porn site, you insinuated. You knew you were misleading me. Why didn't you tell me the truth?

DENNIS: What truth?! I got sent a nude, that's it!

THAIS: The truth; that you knew her, that she was your high school sweetheart, that the photo was just for you.

DENNIS: I fudged, a little white lie.

THAIS: A white lie so I wouldn't burst into tears like an idiot?

DENNIS: I didn't tell you the whole truth.

THAIS: You lied. That's clear. But...why?

DENNIS: I don't know!

THAIS: Don't you think the reason is important?

DENNIS: The reason isn't always important.

THAIS: Maybe you lied because you feel something for her.

DENNIS: Nothing! I feel nothing! It's a memory!

THAIS: Of being young. She reminded you of when you were young and had lots of sex.

DENNIS: Everyone goes through it. Haven't you?

THAIS: And you decided it was better to let things run their course. Maybe you should sleep with her, revive your boyhood romance and drop me and everything you are now for something fresh, new, exciting.

DENNIS: You're pulling all this out of thin air, Thais.

THAIS: So? Why don't you tell me why you lied then? Why deny it?

DENNIS: Because it's the first thing we do!

THAIS: What is?

DENNIS: Deny it!

THAIS: Deny it for what?

DENNIS: To buy time.

THAIS: And?

DENNIS: To think!

THAIS: To hide your affair.

DENNIS: There is no affair!

THAIS: Your intentions.

DENNIS: I have no intentions.

THAIS: To have a fling.

DENNIS: No, it's not like that. You don't know a thing about what happened. Thais. I'll explain. I'll explain. I'll explain.

Men, over time, lose their strength. In my case it was sudden. One day I got up, and I had no energy! Weeks go by and it's no big deal till it dawns on you that you're in awe of the way other people do their daily grind, with emotion and excitement, with their lovers and wives and girlfriends, and then it hit me if I was going to do what they do I had to lie. Especially, to myself. How? With memories. Remembering when I wanted what I wanted most, when I was strong enough for that, when night fell and I didn't notice, when I wasn't sick. Because you wonder, how could this happen? How did I get like this? How did this happen to me? Could that be it? Am I sick? Is this what it means to be sick?

(Beat)

THAIS: Well, the thing is I want a divorce.

DENNIS: No, that's not...

THAIS: I've thought it through.

DENNIS: No, not that.

THAIS: I'm sure.

DENNIS: No, you're not.

THAIS: How do you know?

DENNIS: That you're not sure? Because that's not the conclusion you come to after an episode like this, Thais. That can't be the decision you made. It's not my fault. I didn't do anything. If some guy sends a nude to your phone...does that mean you did something? Is that grounds for divorce? How can I blame you? Is it that easy for someone to wreck a home? Just take a nude, send it and boom: a marriage wrecked. We're not responsible for what other people do, Thais. This can't be my fault. It's not like that.

THAIS: No, you don't understand. Without the photo...

DENNIS: Without the photo...

THAIS: I wouldn't have realized.

DENNIS: That you want a divorce?

THAIS: Two days ago, when I saw the photo, my first thought was to call that woman. Ask her to work it out between the two of us. If he told you he's going to leave me, then he's lying, Laura. And if you got that impression, I think you made it all up, I told her.

DENNIS: You told her?

THAIS: That's what I told her.

DENNIS: This isn't hypothetical?

THAIS: That's what I told her.

DENNIS: You..? You talked to her?

THAIS: That's what I'm telling you.

DENNIS: But...How...How...Where'd you get her information...?

THAIS: Laura Lucian, friends with Alexandra Fuller, who posted a message on your wall. She lives near here. I looked up her number and I called her.

DENNIS: What did she do?

THAIS: She didn't answer. I got her machine. Their message is cute. Her and her daughter. I left a message. Seven messages. Or maybe more. One after the other, so I guess she listened to them like a story, like chapters. Then I sent a bunch of texts to her cell phone. I know she read what I sent. Eighteen texts.

DENNIS: Eighteen!

THAIS: It says "received" so I know they're on her phone. And that she read them. She's no dummy. Of course she read them.

DENNIS: Why would you send her anything? She has nothing to do with us. That woman is no one.

THAIS: Yes, she's someone.

DENNIS: No one, no one...

THAIS: You lied because of her.

DENNIS: I just...

THAIS: And her photo's all over the school.

DENNIS: What school?

THAIS: Frank's school.

DENNIS: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Does he know?

THAIS: How the fuck do you think the photo got off your phone and plastered onto every wall in school and every webpage on the planet?

DENNIS: But it's not my fault!!! I didn't do anything!!!

THAIS: So, yesterday, after 72 hours mulling over all our life together and all that's left for us to live, which maybe won't be much... How much? Maybe 20 more years? Good years, of course, no old age, no sickness, no pity and all. That's when I realized: we should get divorced.

DENNIS: That's why?

THAIS: No. That's the context.

DENNIS: The context for what?

THAIS: For the truth

DENNIS: The context for the truth. And what truth is that? That you don't love me anymore?

THAIS: The truth that everyone's seen that photo now and that from now on, in some way, whether they say it or not, I'm a victim.

DENNIS: But...

THAIS: And they're laughing. They mock the victim.

DENNIS: No one's laughing at you!

THAIS: They pity me.

DENNIS: You're making an excuse. That's not a reason for us to get divorced, Thais.

THAIS: What I'm saying is as long as we're together, no one will respect me. So divorcing you is my only option.

DENNIS: No, it isn't, not for me!

THAIS: So yesterday I went to Pete's house...

DENNIS: Pete? My best friend Pete?

THAIS: And I slept with him.

(Pause)

DENNIS: *(Crumbling)* With..? With Pete?

THAIS: I always thought he was cute. And he's in shape.

DENNIS: *(Thrown)* What are you saying?

THAIS: *(Clarifying, breezily)* But not for sex, of course...

DENIS: What are you saying?

THAIS: For respect.

DENNIS: But I never even slept with that woman!

THAIS: Pete was surprised, but he didn't say no. He even said I was his first love, the one you never forget, the one you search for your whole life. That he has my Facebook photos, he collects them; he showed me. That I've always been the woman of his dreams and fantasies and all that. That he liked me more than any other woman and certainly much more than you. Seems like we're all someone's fantasy, huh? Perverse little world we live in, wouldn't you say?

DENNIS: *(Suddenly furious)* It was you! You ruined everything!

THAIS: Me?

DENNIS: With sex!

THAIS: It's not sex, it's honor.

DENNIS: You didn't need to...

THAIS: Now you understand about the divorce? *(Hands him a card)* This is the lawyer who'll be calling you tomorrow.

DENNIS: I'm not talking to any shitty lawyers!

THAIS: *(Leaving)* You should. Because I already did and I was honest. I told the truth and you know what they say: The truth will set you free.

DENNIS: I don't feel free at all!

THAIS: I do!

(Suddenly, the power goes out. It comes right back on. But now we see THAIS and DENNIS distanced from each other, as if they'd never been arguing from close up. Treating the blackout as normal, THAIS turns around and leaves him. Music.)

2 / M A L L

(LAURA juggles several shopping bags. She stops to rearrange them. She hears boys laughing and makes a face at them. Then LEXI comes with more bags.)

LEXI: *(Handing LAURA a bag)* Take this one for me. *(Realizing)* What?

LAURA: The usual.

LEXI: Boys?

LAURA: The next one who laughs in my face, I'm gonna pull up my top, flash him my tits and chase him around the mall.

LEXI: Don't be stupid or I'll have to bail you out of jail. *(Going back)* So, you were saying... Helicopters!

LAURA: *(Remembers)* Helicopters, Lexi, helicopters!

LEXI: What'd you say his name was?

LAURA: Adam, like Eve's guy.

LEXI: I don't remember him.

LAURA: Hairy. He didn't do sports. He recited poetry, played music, the whole cliché.

LEXI: A neighbor of ours?

LAURA: He'd crank his music. Played drums. A godawful racket.

LEXI: Now I remember him! He always smelled. *(Taken aback)* That's Adam?

LAURA: That's him, Helicopter Adam.

LEXI: And you're telling me he owns a helicopter service now?

LAURA: Exactly.

LEXI: The poet?

LAURA: Tourists, CEOs, for the press. He rents them out and makes a fortune.

LEXI: And the music, the drums, the hair, the BO and the poetry?

LAURA: Actually I asked.

LEXI: And what'd he say?

LAURA: He doesn't remember. He even denied it. *(In Adam's voice)* "No, baby, I never did any of that..."

(They both laugh.)

LEXI: Maybe he doesn't want to remember.

LAURA: Whatever. When I said it, he changed the subject.

LEXI: So?

LAURA: So nothing. We're texting.

LEXI: Laura, you're crazy.

LAURA: Why?

LEXI: What about Dennis?

LAURA: Dennis? What about him?

LEXI: The photo, the scandal...

LAURA: There's no scandal, Lexi.

LEXI: What about the kids laughing at you?

LAURA: They'll forget it soon.

LEXI: Fine. So...tell me...What are you planning to do with Helicopter man?

LAURA: Nothing, Lexi. Nothing. We're talking. That's all. *(She gets a text notification, takes out her phone, reads with a twinkle in her eye.)*

LEXI: What about Kelly? Have you told her? Cause that girl is not going to understand how in the middle of all this mess now you've got some bizarre flirt on with a neighbor you haven't seen in 25 years. What if he's married too?

LAURA: Divorced.

LEXI: Right. Divorced, but kids? This is the age of lies. You don't know what a divorce is like. I do. With my ex it was all lies. I think you're being really

naïve. You should...Laura...Are you listening to me or paying attention to your phone?

(LAURA finishes sending a text.)

LAURA: Let's see if he likes that.

LEXI: What?

LAURA: Nothing.

LEXI: *(Realizing)* Did you send him the photo?

LAURA: What photo?

LEXI: The photo! To helicopter guy!

LAURA: *(Laughing)* Can you imagine if Adam was flying one of his helicopters right now and he opened my text and Boom! He sees my photo! And crashes from the shock!

(LAURA giggles like a girl, but LEXI is visibly annoyed.)

LEXI: You don't care, do you?

LAURA: What?

LEXI: It doesn't bother you?

LAURA: What's going to bother me?

LEXI: *(Suddenly loud)* YOUR DAUGHTER! Other people! Me!

LAURA: What about you?

LEXI: Fuck, Laura, I have a son.

LAURA: What that got to do with it?

LEXI: Because it not easy. It's not easy. It's not like laughing at the people who laugh at you or chasing them around the mall with your tits hanging out. He's my son. And I had to explain to him. Tell him why my best friend's nude was on all his friends' phones and all over school.

LAURA: You didn't have to explain to him...

LEXI: Your recklessness, your lack of consideration; your photo constrains and excludes all of us.

LAURA: My photo isn't about you.

LEXI: Yes, yes it is.

LAURA: How?

LEXI: Because I need to know if I can count on you.

LAURA: Of course you can count on me!

LEXI: No, I can't.

LAURA: Like when?

LEXI: Like, now. Like now that I need a character reference from you to give the judge.

LAURA: I'll give it to you. What judge?

LEXI: The judge hearing the child support case against my ex. So he pays what he owes us, to Lou and me.

LAURA: I'll get it to you. You can count on my reference...

LEXI: That's not it...

LAURA: Well what is?

LEXI: Nothing. Nothing. Only now your reference won't be from an upstanding pre-school teacher but a...

LAURA: I'm still a teacher...

LEXI: But a woman who goes around taking nudes and sending them to any and every guy out there!

LAURA: To any and every guy out there?

LEXI: Or whatever. It's not serious, you're not serious. You can't be a reference for a judge. And I can't count on you anymore. See? (*Angry, she moves closer, looking sure of herself*) It's my job as your best friend to tell you you're out of control, wrecking lives. Dennis, your daughter, now this Helicopter guy, me... And what for? For nothing.

LAURA: (*Pushes her back with one arm*) Nothing I do is about other people, Lexi. My photo, my photos, are about me only. Not other people. Me.

(*We hear boys laughing in the distance. They yell: "Boobies, boobies, MILF, MILF." They laugh.*)

LEXI: (*Ready to explode*) You're an egotist...! A fucking egotist!

LAURA: *(Noble)* Not friendship, or love, or family, or your ex, or your son, or teenagers, or helicopters, or the shoppers in this mall, Alexandra. The photo, you enormous idiot, is about me, that's it. The one in the photo is me!

(LEXI drops her bags. She's about to respond. Voices in the mall mix with Bowie's music.)

3 / DENNIS'S HOUSE

*(Onstage, DENNIS and with him, FRANK.
FRANK stares at him, as though hypnotized by what his father is saying.)*

DENNIS: A friend of mine got into body building and that got me interested. Getting strong. Beefing up. So they see you coming and cross the street. So I decided to do body building too. Weird thing was we were just two guys in our group, the rest, all women.

Still, we all killed ourselves, working out till we about dropped.

And I realized: how horrendous will it be when my strength is going and I wimp out in front of all these women? I'll fail on the weight machines, keel over in cardio, get eaten alive by the elliptical, I'll drop my free weights. Maybe one of them, the most stubborn, difficult and violent of them all, will crash down on my throat when I'm lying on the floor. And then I'll suffocate there and maybe, the next day, the women will find me and pity me.

Me, the pitiful guy.

Me, destroyed by my own strength.

The very strength I need.

But time went by and I didn't see muscles. Nothing. Instead what I saw was breasts. Yeah, breasts like a woman, that's what I got, little ones, like boobies, don't laugh.

(FRANK goes on looking at him, unfazed.)

This is serious.

Maybe that's what this is about.

About me getting breasts even if I know they're not like women's, of course. The problem is they're like his, like my dad's. Old man boobs.

Then, I was thinking about the boobs I'm getting from working out, these saggy boobs that make me look just like my old man, and my eyes caught on the black screen of my iPhone. And in that black screen I saw my face. And with the distortion I looked old and sick, like Bowie in that video he made before he died. Knowing you're going to die. That's how I saw myself; wearing a bodybuilder's cadaverous look.

And that's when I did it.

I answered a friend request from my old high school girlfriend from back when I was 17 and looked like you.

(FRANK is about to interrupt, but DENNIS stops him, asks to continue.)

I answered Laura, she, she's the woman in the photo.

That's why, son.

That's the reason, because of what I saw in that iPhone's black screen, why I felt the need to wink, to flirt, hoping she'd tell me no, no I don't look like my dad, or like Bowie, or like a dancing corpse, that I don't have a woman's breasts, and instead I look fantastic. Fantastic, what am I saying?! That I haven't changed one bit and I vividly remind her of the guy I was at 17, when I acted like the best first boyfriend any girl ever had!

(Beat)

So I'm telling you, son.

One: Your mom and I are getting separated. Divorced, actually, with all the legalities.

Two: We've decided to sell the house. Our family will have two houses now. You'll be fine; back and forth, but fine. We'll be together and separate, both at once. The three of us will be more independent, you could say. That's all.

FRANK: We're losing the house? Our beautiful house? Where I was born?

DENNIS: Yes, but we'll have other houses...

FRANK: This is the only home I've ever known! We're losing the house over a goddamn photo, Dad. You're an animal. An asshole.

DENNIS: Frank! (*FRANK lowers his head. Beat*) You'll get used to it. It's not a big deal. How many of your classmates live with divorced parents? A few days with one, some with the other, vacation here, holidays there. We're still a family. You understand, Frank?

FRANK: Huh?

DENNIS: Do you understand? (*He looks at him, taken aback*) You okay?

FRANK: Okay.

DENNIS: Okay? That's it?

FRANK: (*Putting in his earphones*) Whatever.

(*DENNIS gets up, looking at him in a kind of horror. He moves away. Suddenly, FRANK takes out his earphones.*)

FRANK: Dad.

DENNIS: Yeah?

FRANK: Just one thing.

DENNIS: Whatever you want, ask whatever you want.

FRANK: Do you have them?

DENNIS: Have what?

FRANK: Breasts like a woman. Old lady boobs. Do you?

DENNIS: I...

FRANK: Can I see them?

(*David Bowie's "Let's Dance" plays. Lights.*)

4/ HOTEL & SCHOOL

I, THAIS'S HOTEL ROOM.

(THAIS comes out of the bathroom. She dries her hair. She sits down at her laptop open to a dating site. She's clearly recording a video.)

THAIS: So it hit me...What I was trying to say in my last video. I was talking about when you get someone's hopes up just to make them feel good. You give them a chance but out of pity. Sometimes, on these dating sites, you make that mistake. Right? I mean you get their hopes up to feel good, to feel wanted, to remind yourself, if you decide to, you have a chance.

(She looks at her laptop camera as she gets ready.)

Little by little you home in on the reason you can't have a relationship, even a superficial relationship that's not even an affair, a relationship where you're not, technically, cheating on anyone. There's no flesh, or kisses, or even furtive encounters. It's all limited to this site and the messages we send each other, messages that always leave a door open. And it's the door that brings us pleasure. The open door is the message that promises if something happens, if something comes up, an anomaly, a disaster, a catastrophe, then, then, then, that door is open. That's the hope.

(The hotel phone rings. She answers.)

THAIS: Hi honey. *(Listens)* Nothing. I just got out of the shower. You're downstairs? *(Listens)* Why didn't you come up? *(Listens)* Of course I don't mind. Do you have clothes to wear? *(Listens)* So come up.

(She hangs up. Closes the laptop. THAIS looks at herself in the mirror, first casually, then intently, as if she saw something strange, something not normal. She shakes out her hair and studies herself again. Then she looks at her breasts. Beat. She picks up her cell phone and points it at the mirror to take a selfie. But she doesn't like what she sees and tosses her iPhone in a drawer. Just then there's a knock at the door. THAIS covers up and opens the door. FRANK enters.)

FRANK: I swear it's just for tonight.

THAIS: That makes five nights and four swearings it's just for tonight.

FRANK: Last one. I double swear and we're even. For this month.

THAIS: The month ends tomorrow! *(FRANK laughs)* How'd you get here?

FRANK: The bus. You know Dad sold the Camaro?

THAIS: Good.

FRANK: Good? You think that's good?

THAIS: He looked a bit ridiculous.

FRANK: Is that what you thought?

THAIS: A boy's car for a full-grown man. Yes, men have their mid-life crises, but that doesn't mean they don't look ridiculous.

FRANK: What I mean is he should've given it to me.

THAIS: Frank, honey, you know I don't mind, but you have to learn to be with your dad.

FRANK: I like it here better.

THAIS: But he's living in a hotel room too!

FRANK: Yeah, but it's different...

THAIS: We'll have our own place soon. The house is about to sell. Okay? Help me with this, hon? Half with him and the other half with me?

FRANK: Am I a pain?

THAIS: Of course not. But Dennis wants you with him and I don't want to hear his complaining. Not anymore. Okay?

FRANK: Later, later...

THAIS: Later, later. But soon. Huh?

FRANK: Yeah, sure. I'm going to the bathroom.

THAIS: You know I have work early tomorrow.

(FRANK nods. He goes into the bathroom and closes the door. THAIS, alone, gazes at the closed bathroom door, feeling regretful. She goes back to the dresser and looks in the mirror again. She touches her hair and when it looks like she's going to touch her breasts instead she covers up. She wakes her laptop, still on a dating site. She writes.)

THAIS: My name is Thais. I'm 42. Newly divorced. Separated. In progress... *(She laughs)* I'm looking for someone who enjoys going out, traveling, seeing things he's never seen before...and who keeps the door open.

(Suddenly the power goes out. It comes right back. But now we see THAIS distanced from her laptop. Music.)

II, SCHOOL.

(Principal's Office. Onstage, Kelly, sitting in front of a desk that says: "Principal, Washington School." We don't see the principal.)

KELLY: Mom says she was just following instructions, Principal Ramirez. Whose instructions? The CIA's? The government's? Who the hell gave my mother instructions to fuck everything up with that shitty fucking photo?

(Someone we don't see shouts: Kelly!)

Sorry, the words just slipped out.

No, I won't use that language again.

(Beat)

I was saying, Mom saw him on Facebook and yeah, she sent a friend request. And he accepted. They talked. The usual. She was upfront; I'm single, I have a kid. I have an unsteady job at a preschool and I'm 48, going on 49.

But he didn't tell the truth.

He said he was married but he didn't love his wife; that they had problems, they were thinking about divorce. He said he had a kid but that he was grown up and they hardly talked. *(Before they can interrupt her)*

No, of course it wasn't true, but that's what he said. Why would he say something like that? *(Waits for an answer)* I think he did it so Mom would see him as a possibility.

Yeah: a possibility is irresistible, it's powerful, it's a force we can't fight.

That's when they started saying stuff to each other, writing stuff. That they missed each other; that being together back when they were 17 was the best thing that ever happened to them.

And that they'd never stopped thinking about each other.

All by text, Dr. Ramirez, all in writing.

And that's the conversation where my mom asked:

(To one side, LAURA and DENNIS appear.)

LAURA: Do you want to see me?

DENNIS: Yes. And touch you.

LAURA: And relive everything?

DENNIS: The bed in your room, hiding in the kitchen, under the basketball bleachers at our old school or that time in the back of your family's car...

LAURA: While my mom was in the store...

DENNIS: Quick, clothes on, looking out like we weren't talking, so people would think we were brother and sister waiting in the car...

LAURA: Up above: two siblings who hate each other...

DENNIS: But...

LAURA: But down below...

DENNIS: Passion, crazy positions, desire, pure life

LAURA: Come, I want to see you.

DENNIS: I want to see you too.

LAURA: Today, I want it today.

DENNIS: I can't today.

LAURA: When?

DENNIS: Soon. Soon I can.

(We return to KELLY and the principal.)

KELLY: But he couldn't make up his mind to see her. So she sent the photo.
Just like her instructions said.

No, I'm not defending her, but...Do I blame her? Really?

(Listens to something they say)

Yes, ma'am. The decision's made.

We're taking your advice and I'm transferring.

(Stands)

Yeah: it's best for everyone.

(Shakes her hand)

Nice talking to you too.

(Suddenly, the power goes out. It comes right back on.

But now we see KELLY distanced from the principal's desk. We hear ambient music, like the kind played in hotels. Voices in the distance.)

III, THAIS'S HOTEL ROOM.

(THAIS, dressed, ready for work. She looks elegant, beautiful. FRANK comes out of the bathroom, ready for school. She fixes him up a bit. FRANK gets his backpack.)

THAIS: Who's picking you up today?

FRANK: You are.

THAIS: What about your dad?

FRANK: Tomorrow.

THAIS: Ok, but be ready by 5. Sharp, ok?

FRANK: Give me an extra half hour to hang with Marina a little.

THAIS: And who's Marina?

FRANK: The blonde.

THAIS: What was the other girl's name?

FRANK: Rachel.

THAIS: Is that the black girl?

FRANK: No, that's Jazmin. You finished?

THAIS: You're a real Don Juan.

FRANK: Can I drive?

THAIS: What?

FRANK: To school?

THAIS: Fine. But don't get used to it.

(THAIS hands him the key. FRANK takes it, happy)

FRANK: I'll wait for you downstairs, Mom.

(FRANK leaves.)

THAIS is nearly ready too. She picks up her purse, but stops at the mirror. She studies herself again, this time with more assurance, like someone who's just made a decision that will guide her for the next ten years. She looks serious, noble, upright.

Then she decides to take a selfie. She does. She likes it. She's proud. And she clearly hits "send.")

THAIS: To make an impression.

*(Suddenly, the power goes out and comes right back on.
But now THAIS is not onstage, though we can see her reflection in the mirror.
Then we hear noise and the echo of someone playing on an empty basketball
court: moans, a ball rebounding off the backboard, dribbling. A school bell
rings.)*

5/ BASKETBALL COURT, OLD HIGH SCHOOL

(Onstage, DENNIS, trying to sink some shots. He's clearly overexerting. It hurts, but he laughs. LAURA comes in and sees him. She watches for a while. DENNIS gets tired again and laughs.)

LAURA: Once there was a time you'd run up and down and leave everyone else behind.

DENNIS: No, I never had that much energy.

LAURA: Seriously, the memory's crystal clear. You were the best.

DENNIS: No way, Laura. I always ran with the pack, but I was never really good at this stuff. I'd get tired. Really tired.

LAURA: *(Coming in, looking around)* I still can't get over how much our old school has changed.

DENNIS: I thought I was in the wrong place.

LAURA: Why? Why's everything so different?

DENNIS: Time.

LAURA: But it didn't have to go overboard. Time's going wild. Was the basketball court this color back in our day?

DENNIS: No, of course not. *(Pause. Looks at her)* You look really good.

LAURA: You too, though you look like you're about to have a heart attack. You need to take a breather?

DENNIS: No, no, of course not.

LAURA: Dennis, why meet here?

DENNIS: It seemed safest. At least here no one knows us.

LAURA: No one knows us at our old school. What a thing to say. I don't know if that's good or bad.

DENNIS: I didn't want them to see us sitting in a restaurant or a car.

LAURA: Why? You have nothing to be ashamed of.

DENNIS: It's the...

LAURA: The photo? You're talking about the photo?

DENNIS: Of course, the photo.

LAURA: Honestly, all this over...a photo that...

DENNIS: It's...it's different when...

LAURA: Do you have it?

DENNIS: *(Nods, takes his phone from his shirt pocket)* I had erased it, but then I put it back on my phone. For some reason I feel like I need to keep it close. *(Goes to hand her the phone, then doesn't)* I like to keep my important photos on me.

LAURA: And those photos? What do they tell you?

DENNIS: That I'm not alone, that I've never been alone. And that all those memories are with me, all the time.

LAURA: Do you look at them every day?

DENNIS: No. But I need to know I have them, like those photos were oxygen tanks. Without them, I think I'd drown.

LAURA: And my photo?

DENNIS: It's here. Hidden so no one...

LAURA: You don't have to hide it.

DENNIS: It's because of the police.

LAURA: What the hell do the police have to do with all this?

DENNIS: It's because...

LAURA: Where's the crime?

DENNIS: *(Puts away his phone)* Apparently someone found it on their kid's phone. They showed the photo to other parents and saw it was going around school. And even though students were responsible, they still want to know how it happened. So, the police...well there's been a complaint and they have to corroborate the facts.

LAURA: (*Explodes*) Jesus! What the fuck is wrong with people! It was a direct message from a woman who's very very much of age to a man who by the way is older than she is! Two old farts to be exact! Can't two full-grown, tried and tested adults send each other texts and photos with a little spunk anymore?

DENNIS: It's because of the students, Laura. The teenagers.

LAURA: Always them! We have to worry about them. We have to sacrifice for them. We have to watch over them. For what? I don't know, because they just turn into the worst kind of men and women anyhow. And when do they do anything for us? When do teenagers ever understand you, help you, offer you a hand? I don't know, all this worrying about kids hasn't worked out like we planned, has it? They're the ones who should go to jail!

DENNIS: No one's going to jail, Laura.

LAURA: Of course not. I'm not! (*Beat. LAURA moves away but then returns*) So, what do I tell them?

DENNIS: Tell who?

LAURA: The police.

DENNIS: The truth.

LAURA: Fine. Because the truth is this: a woman tried to recover a contact she'd forgotten. And now I realize it should have stayed there, forgotten. The only thing that's pornographic in all this was thinking that reconnecting with someone, someone you haven't seen in over 20 years, would give your life a little, a smidgen, of what it was before, when you had it all.

DENNIS: Laura, I want you to know...

LAURA: (*About to crumble*) What?

DENNIS: I don't blame you.

LAURA: Of course not you idiot, because it's not my fault at all!!!

DENNIS: No, it's not. I was responsible. I shouldn't have put you through this.

LAURA: (*Resolved*) In any case, Dennis, I'm not sorry.

DENNIS: For...?

LAURA: For what I did.

DENNIS: The photo?

LAURA: Yes. I'm not sorry about the photo. (*DENNIS moves away. Beat. Music by Bowie*) I only regret one thing. (*DENNIS turns to look at her*) Making you think I was interested in you.

DENNIS: You... You... You weren't? (*She gestures, like saying no*) You really didn't want to get together?

LAURA: No. I really didn't. (*Suddenly, she gets an idea. She goes to him. He thinks she's going to kiss him or something. Instead LAURA takes DENNIS's phone from his shirt pocket.*) May I?

DENNIS: What for?

LAURA: I want to be how the photo looked on your phone...

DENNIS: You want to be?

LAURA: I mean, I want to see how the photo looked on your phone...

DENNIS: Those are two different things.

LAURA: Being and seeing?

DENNIS: So what do you want to see?

LAURA: What you saw.

DENNIS: What for, Laura?

LAURA: To see how it looked.

DENNIS: I have lots of photos there...

LAURA: You had erased it, right?

DENNIS: But there it is.

LAURA: Your important photos go with you.

DENNIS: To tell me I'm not alone,

LAURA: That I've never been alone.

DENNIS: Like they were...

LAURA: Oxygen tanks.

DENNIS: Without them, I'd drown.

(*LAURA starts to look at his photos. Music.*)

*The audience sees the photos on his phone, projected.
 There are old scanned photos and other newer ones.
 The first is of him with friends in high school, young and happy.
 The second is a forest full of beetles, a beautiful photo.
 The third is a bike leaning against a rock and behind it a mountainous landscape.
 The fourth is of the two of them, sitting on the same bleachers where they are now. Very young, holding hands, with goofy smiles and poses.
 Laura looks at him. He smiles, but it's clearly a bit painful and he looks away.
 Laura goes on looking at the photos:
 The fifth is him in Paris, young, with a ridiculous mustache and long hair.
 The sixth is of him playing basketball in school. He's fumbling a pass.
 The seventh is him, young, in a museum, looking at a painting with interest.)*

LAURA: I took that one of you.

*(The eighth one is blurry, with a shadow, but we can make out his red Camaro.
 The ninth is of David Bowie, in his last video before he died.
 The tenth is of a boy running toward a pool. But the photo is in black and white, taken from behind, with a certain poetry.
 The eleventh is of him, imitating Bowie, the one he took at the start of Act Two.
 The twelfth, finally, is Laura's controversial photo, semi-nude, the one she sent at the start of the play. But it doesn't look so terrible. Actually it's a beautiful photo, quite artistic, not at all pornographic. It's the photo that shows how we'd like others to see us.)*

DENNIS: Don't erase it.

*(LAURA does.
 She hands him back the phone. She stands, leaving. But just then the power goes out and comes right back on. LAURA is a little more distant from DENNIS. The power goes out. It comes right back on. LAURA is even farther away.)*

LAURA: Looks like we're going to end up in the dark.

DENNIS: Aren't you afraid?

LAURA: No, of course not.

DENNIS: I am.

LAURA: Of course. *(Looks at him)* It was good seeing you again.

DENNIS: You too.

(A third blackout. When the power comes back on LAURA is no longer onstage. DENNIS is alone. Blackout. Bowie's music continues to play.)

The End.