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GARMENTS & THREADS

by

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Setting - Teresa's penthouse in Manhattan overlooking Central Park.
And a private Manhattan hospital room.

Time – Before, during, and after Sheldon's coma.
May 2013 and also several months back in January 2013.

Characters

Teresa Hofsteder-Geller mid-forties, attractive, alpha female executive
Susan Berkofmid-forties, attractive, old friend & journalist
Barry Gellerlate forties, attractive, neo-narcissist husband
Sheldon Hofsteder late sixties, charismatic, billionaire capitalist
Sofia Balducci mid twenties, attractive nanny from Italy

SCENE ONE

(Late Thursday afternoon in early May 2013 in Teresa's
Lavish Manhattan penthouse)

TERESA

Of course I had several months of physical therapy with a seven foot tall Swede chef who could have starred as the next Bond film villain. He said he had titanium in his hand due to a cooking accident at the Four Seasons.

(Pouring more wine into two glasses)

We must have another glass.

(Smiles)

My personal assistant's ski injury was just the start of a run of horrible luck. Barry broke his foot leaving an elevator. I had shingles and with a night light on you could see Latin words spelled out correctly - *a mensa et thoro* - from table to bed . Then I tore my knee playing tennis. You can see a pattern of misery.

SUSAN

That Latin expression - *a mensa et thoro* - means a marriage separation prior to divorce.

TERESA

Yes, I know.

SUSAN

I don't always get your humor.

TERESA

I can say the same about you.

SUSAN

You don't look ill.

TERESA

I don't?

SUSAN

Not at all.

TERESA

You haven't seen me walk today. From behind I look like Chewbacca running away from Hans Solo. You don't like STAR WARS?

SUSAN

You look in need of sleep.

TERESA
I get by on 4 hours a night. But darling, you look great.

SUSAN
I had a tummy tuck.

TERESA
Dear Jesus, and it worked!

SUSAN
Absolutely painless.

TERESA
Susan, nothing is painless.

SUSAN
Where is your husband?

TERESA
Lost in space.

SUSAN
Didn't he lose his pilot's license due to drinking?

TERESA
Not exactly. It was instrument failure as he crashed his Cessna into a Jack in the Box near Teterboro airport.

SUSAN
And survived?

TERESA
There was a long empty parking strip just before the restaurant. Lucky guy. He broke his leg. Barry's like Road Runner. Do you still have a crush on him?

SUSAN
No.

TERESA
Liar, liar. Pants on fire.

SUSAN
Barry's too chivalrous for my tastes.
(Teresa laughs)
I love making you laugh.

TERESA

Do you?

SUSAN

Well, it relaxes the room, Teresa, if not you.

TERESA

Is that even possible? Why would you want to relax the room? There's nobody here but us?

(Pause)

Barry's finishing a new business course at Wharton.

SUSAN

But he has his MBA.

TERESA

He loves to further himself in subprime lending and hedge fund algorithms.

SUSAN

At Wharton?

TERESA

Yes.

SUSAN

That's so strange.

TERESA

Barry has amazing fondness for Pennsylvania. And that's the way things are. On weekends he wears nothing but college sweatshirts and cut offs. He stopped wearing gold chains and open neck print shirts, by the way. His was giving the Jersey shore a bad name having grown up in Spring Lake. Do you really need to interview us today?

SUSAN

I've missed two deadlines.

TERESA

Don't blame me.

SUSAN

You promised so many months ago. Pinky promise.

TERESA

I'm a terrible person.

SUSAN

Sometimes you are.

(She holds up her pinky)

TERESA

Commitments paralyze me. It's a hormonal issues. Christ, put down your finger please.

SUSAN

Load up on estrogen.

TERESA

Is that what you do?

SUSAN

My levels are perfectly perfect.

TERESA

No provocative questions.

SUSAN

Okay.

TERESA

Sometimes you look like the cat who swallowed the canary.

SUSAN

And you look like the cat with nine lives.

TERESA

I'm just glad you're in remission.

SUSAN

Thank you.

(Pause)

Do you like your nanny?

TERESA

Yes, we only accept international candidates, but that's not part of the interview.

SUSAN

Your nanny's not business.

TERESA

Actually our nanny is great with spread sheets.

SUSAN

She's Italian?

TERESA

Yes, a graduate student who takes night classes. We gave her a spare bedroom with the killer view.

SUSAN

I wish we could turn back the clock, Teresa, and go back to college days.

TERESA

Why? We made too many mistakes then.

SUSAN

That's not true. I've bright memories.

TERESA

You remember only good things. I remember bad things. We were in the same boat.

SUSAN

Well, living together felt like a showboat about to capsize.

TERESA

Uterine cancer makes everything look insubstantial.

SUSAN

Are you speaking for me or millions of women in America?

TERESA

I can't speak for millions of women.

SUSAN

You can't speak for me either.

TERESA

I apologize.

SUSAN

Thank you.

TERESA

I watch my nanny a lot and I envy her. She takes the role of being a student to a completely higher level. I don't know if this is about being from another country or something special to her generation. Then again, she's working days here and doing well in classes at night,

and that is a whole other universe. She's extremely focused, Susan, and yes I read somewhere that you can ruin your marriage overnight with a European nanny with a beautiful fanny. She's smart and beautiful and clairvoyant.

SUSAN

Clairvoyant? You're insane. Totally nuts.

TERESA

Nuts for hiring Sofia?

SUSAN

Yes. And nuts for having children late in life, when you're a careerist.

TERESA

At college you knew that's all I ever wanted. Two adorable kids that will prevail past middle school.

SUSAN

Come on.

TERESA

What?

SUSAN

You're modeling yourself after Marissa Mayer.

TERESA

Nonsense. I've no admiration for Yahoo nor that bitch's fashion choices. Besides Mayer stopped getting good press after six months despite all the expensive photo shoots. Her "no work from home" edict is such a slap in the face to her work force. She can afford her own domestic help. I love to dish about Marissa Mayer. She's the evil twin of Chelsea Handler.

SUSAN

I think you have it the other way around.

TERESSA

I like that tattoo on your ankle. How new is it?

SUSAN

48 hours.

TERESA

I hate needles, darling. Why poison your skin? Come on, pick up your calf. Let me see what Michelangelo did.

(Susan picks up her leg and Teresa touches the tattoo)

In celebration of being in remission?

SUSAN

I don't know.

TERESA

Do you like writing for Vanity Fair?

SUSAN

I do. But this piece is for Salon.

TERESA

On me and Sheldon Hofsteder? Or just my Sheldon?

(Pause)

Please include in this interview that I take my nanny shopping once a month *at any store* and let her get anything which flatters her figure.

SUSAN

Some compare you to Christie Hefner.

TERESA

Oh? Why? Who?

SUSAN

Hugh Hefner's daughter.

TERESA

That's absurd.

SUSAN

Well, the corporation fell into your lap.

TERESA

I worked for everything I've earned, darling. She promotes smut. Besides the Playboy empire is sinking into insolvency.

SUSAN

Why isn't your brother allowed into the inner circle?

TERESA

Adam holds a prestigious position, he's far from banished. You know that he has to stop posing for the tabloids.

SUSAN

Partying is a dangerous habit.

TERESA

He's maturing now. Yes. It just takes time.

SUSAN

He's older than you but you are the heir apparent.

TERESA

Susan. Please don't use that idiotic term. What do you really want to know?

SUSAN

The Bangladesh collapse must keep you up at night.

(Teresa's husband Barry enters unnoticed with newspaper under his arm)

TERESA

Only two of our suppliers have any ties to the factory.

SUSAN

The Children's Place brand . . .

TERESA

Okay, maybe three. Let's just say that we have set stricter guidelines for our textile and apparel. Sincerely, Susan.

(Barry's presence is evident)

Barry, are you lurking in the shadows.

BARRY

I never lurk. Bad for my posture. But I react to premonition, Terry. I just broke a mirror.

TERESA

Susan, he's very superstitious.

BARRY

Then I had to miss my flight. Whenever they hold a plane for equipment check, I run for the hills. Or to Amtrak. I'm not supposed to fly anymore. Hi, Susan. Haven't seen you in a year.

SUSAN

Hi Barry.

(Susan and Barry exchange a kiss)

Who flies to Philadelphia from New York?

TERESA

The governor.

SUSAN

You've lost weight.

BARRY

Quit drinking and casinos.

SUSAN

Good for you.

BARRY

Gave up Hooters. And unfiltered cigarettes. Teresa gave me an ultimatum . . . on Twitter. She spoke to my lawyers. Do you have a Twitter, Susan?

TERESA

Did they bill you, darling?

BARRY

No. They never bill me, all invoices go to your Dad's personal assistant. Isn't that efficient?

TERESA

He's joking.

BARRY

I'm not.

SUSAN

You've lost weight.

BARRY

You've noticed. I like being trim again. I dropped 30 pounds after trying Penn Jillette's diet. Back to Armani suits, stupid magic tricks and junkets to Vegas. People still applaud when I enter a room.

(Pause)

I see that you're talking about the Bangladesh tragedy. It's heartbreaking. Do you remember when George Harrison played benefits for Bangladesh? I think I was 9 years old. Do you remember the Beatles? I relate to Pete Best. And Ringo will outlast Paul.

(Pause. Opening the newspaper)

Nearly 800 dead. Beyond criminal. Everyone's on bribes. Their government. Our government. Why do we pretend there is no better way? Every corporation should pay double and introduce real benefits, improve safety 300%, bring in international inspectors and watch groups. Terry's father knows this so well.

TERESA

We all know this, Barry. Our moral compass is functioning quite well. And Susan is in

need of an interview.

BARRY

With you or with Sheldon when he awakes?

TERESA

Why don't you check on the kids?

BARRY

I didn't know they were home.

TERESA

Yes, they're in their rooms. Jennifer's on her computer. Billy's with his Lego set

BARRY

Where's Sofia?

TERESA

She left for her Thursday class.

BARRY

Susan, of course you'll interview me?

TERESA

No.

BARRY

I didn't ask you.

(Stepping towards Susan)
Are you moving back to the city?

SUSAN

Yes.

BARRY

Good for you. Westchester is so staid. It must have been hard taking care of your mother.

SUSAN

Seems you like Philadelphia?

BARRY

It's America's gentle city.

SUSAN

There's a lot to like about Philadelphia.

TERESA

Name one thing.

SUSAN

The cheese steak sandwich with a pound of grilled onions.

BARRY

There's a great jazz scene downtown.

TERESA

Are you frequently the jazz clubs?

BARRY

I adore the scene, Susan.

(Ignoring Teresa)

The University of Pennsylvania has done fascinating studies of coma cases. Particularly from auto collision and spousal abuse.

TERESA

Susan, maybe another day would be better.

BARRY

No, no, no. I'll go. I know I'm a nuisance.

SUSAN

Do you remember when you asked me out to dinner?

BARRY

I never asked you out, Susan. I asked you to go to Motel 6.

(He exits)

TERESA

(Dryly)

He was endowed with an avalanche of charm. And when charm fails, I honor his sense of community service. Believe or not, Barry was one of the first volunteers for *Teach for America*. He went to Newark when everyone went to the Ozarks. Remember at Princeton our noble, snotty, precocious Wendy Kopp? How did she build that little kingdom with assets over \$450 million?

SUSAN

How about we talk about Sheldon?

TERESA

Yes. Immediately. You know so much, Susan. He's the father you never had. Do you think Sarah Silverman is funnier than Chelsea Handler?

SUSAN

I really don't like either one.

TERESA

Why did you choose to become a business journalist?

SUSAN

My mother was a journalist.

(They share a sustained look due to Teresa's thoughtlessness as the mood shifts)

TERESA

You think I love money.

SUSAN

I don't know what you love.

TERESA

You know, Susan. You're such a nasty yet loveable friend. Are you related to the British actor Steven Berkoff?

SUSAN

No. And he spells his name with two "f's".

TERESA

Yes, that's right. Wasn't he a Bond villain in *Octopussy*?

(pretending to be confused for a moment)

My father missed out on having a talented Alpha son. So I became was chosen and Adam – as you know - invested his creative time travelling with cocaine and underwriting a punk band. In our family, cash never had value or importance in all the years I watched Sheldon do business. He had no interest in the artificial movement of money. He hated the Federal Reserve. My father went on record saying the Federal Reserve is essentially illegal if not immoral – we have no obligation to submit to the Fed. He wrote many essays stating that money is simply an idea of the mind. It is his great disappointment that we now live in the world of commodities first, and then communities. And when money was untethered from gold, money lost reality.

SUSAN

Not many of his stature believed in the gold standard. And he did phenomenally well with bank loans.

TERESA

Yes, he did.

SUSAN

For years he forgot he was making money.

TERESA

That's right. Dad motivated people to work for the pleasure of it. A gifted magician or the Rain Man. Not stung by any inside trade scandal.

SUSAN

But his key staff made out like bandits.

TERESA

Let them be accountable, Susan, with the state prosecutor.

SUSAN

Your father coddled them.

TERESA

Before his coma, he fired two VPs. That was more than Gates did at Microsoft. Buffett did at Berkshire. Lowell and Covington. High flyers, Susan.

SUSAN

Many in the industry say your father came to New York with a large suitcase of cash. Like Trump.

TERESA

He had a modest inheritance, Teresa. Like Trump.

SUSAN

I know. A little bump up never hurts the entrepreneur.

(Pause)

It's whatever you want the world to know at this point. I admire your father.

TERESA

I know.

SUSAN

If only I had a father growing up, Teresa. Your father took us out for dinner every weekend. He bought me winter clothes and treated me to vacations with you.

TERESA

He had nothing but love for you.

SUSAN

Sheldon's very generous. You know that but I have to say it.

(Pause)

He has had several romances.

TERESA

Yes. No. Are numbers important?

SUSAN

There are interesting parallels between Sheldon and Hugh Hefner.

TERESA

(Amused and annoyed)

Oh God . . .

SUSAN

Your dad and Hefner married their college sweetheart and had two children. The daughter of each marriage took over the company. Hefner was told by his wife just before their wedding that she was unfaithful while he served in the army. It's reported that your mother did the same to Sheldon.

TERESA

My father never took a prescription in his entire life but Hefner takes Arecept to remember where the hell he left his Viagra.

(Pause)

Why not talk to Sheldon directly? You can wake him up with a kiss like sleeping beauty? The doctors acknowledge that he seems to hear conversation now and registers some communication by parting his lips to a direct question.

SUSAN

You have medical proxy.

TERESA

Of course.

SUSAN

The board's solidly behind you.

TERESA

One never knows.

SUSAN

Had the accident not happened, would he have spun off several companies and give the profits to charity?

TERESA

Who knows?

SUSAN

Some think so.

(Pause)

And Caroline Kennedy. You have a close friendship with her.

TERESA

We attend the same philanthropic functions and have the same gym trainer.

SUSAN

Now you're lying to me.

TERESA

His name is Ernesto. He specializes in Pilates and Zumba.

SUSAN

Tell me something I don't know.

TERESA

My first marriage was annulled. My ex was diagnosed with HIV. Barry doesn't know.

(Susan seems genuinely surprised by this)

You never married. You don't know the sting of it.

SUSAN

What do you mean?

TERESA

Slipping out of a bad marriage.

SUSAN

Did your ex die?

TERESA

My father's in a 17 day coma. Doctors say there is a 50-50 chance he'll never come to. And with each passing day the odds go down. That's where my mind is these days and it makes me want to be religious. I don't love business anymore. Apple may have been irresponsible with factory workers in the Henan Province of China. Union Carbide was responsible for the disaster in India. Cheap labor drives the market. I'm very accountable. Ethical. Moral.

(Pause)

I'm a blood relation to Max Blanck. Through my father's conglomerate, I oversee several clothing manufacturers and their outsourcing . . .

SUSAN

Everyone outsources.

TERESA

Yes. Nearly everyone. We don't manage labor. Sheldon gave that up twenty years ago. Some of the deaths in 1911 caused by Max Blanck were immediate cousins. The family felt the tragedy. In Bangladesh, the owners have connections to the dead.

SUSAN

Has anything really changed in a hundred years?

TERESA

Start with child labor laws.

SUSAN

Not overseas. Workers safety? Building dangers?

TERESA

In the U.S., we have impeccable standards of safety. Yes, ten years ago Walmart locked the emergency doors so employees wouldn't pilfer during the graveyard shift.

SUSAN

Sheldon's the maternal great grandson of Max Blanck?

TERESA

(She nods in agreement)

Blanck and Harris were products of their times. They got off the boat just like the other refugees.

(Pause)

Until Sheldon awakes from his coma, you might as well write about our inglorious past. Two hundred seventy five girls collected their belongings as they were leaving work at 4:45 PM on Saturday March 25, 1911. Within twenty minutes some of girls' charred bodies piled up along the East Side of Greene Street. Those girls flung themselves from the ninth floor. The owners - Isaac Harris and Max Blanck - two Jews from Russia. They were able to escape from the top floor and onto nearby roofs.

SUSAN

I guess what's hardest to understand is . . . is there genuine social actions to make amends. You raise money for great organizations, but is the investment coming from your heart?

TERESA

And you can ask that because you see into the soul of another?

SUSAN

Something has changed you in the course of 20 years.

TERESA

When we were at Princeton we felt the world could tilt a little bit off its axis.

(Silence)

Look Susan, my father's Mercedes was driven by an elderly man with a green card and he had an extensive background check. Sheldon had great fondness for him. Nathan Johnson from Jamaica. The driver was a grandfather of sixteen children and a church goer. Nathan died upon impact. Our family provided for Nathan's family. The car jumped the meridian and we know it was alcohol related accident. So Nathan drank during the day. We didn't know. It was the week when WSJ did a hatchet job feature on my father. It was a week when the Standard and Poor Index dropped 15% and when the Federal Reserve issued a abrupt change in the prime. It was a time in the history of business when optimists took Xanax. Believe me, all pills can do is fool you into thinking the universe shrinks and expands at the very same time. My family went to Nathan's funeral while Sheldon lay motionless in a coma. We harbor no grudges.

(Pause)

When Barry and I married, we both knew the certainty of death. And yet we had children.

SUSAN

I think you changed Barry more than Barry changed you.

TERESA

Isn't that a good thing?

SUSAN

You once said you would turn your father's business into Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream.

TERESA

It was half a joke.

SUSAN

Ben or Jerry?

TERESA

Does it matter?

SUSAN

No.

(Pause)

Do you pray?

TERESA

Not much.

SUSAN

It might help.

TERESA

I'll try this weekend. Look at the clock. I'm late.
(She kisses Susan on both cheeks)

SUSAN

Dick Chaney and Barack Obama are distant relations.

TERESA

More distant, Susan, than Blanck to Hofsteder.

End of Scene

SCENE TWO

(The next day, evening May 2013, a private hospital room.
Sheldon Hofsteder came out of his coma earlier that day)

SHELDON

Where is the nurse?

TERESA

She'll be here in a moment.

SHELDON

It's warm.

TERESA

I know.

SHELDON

Aren't you warm?

TERESA

No. Just you. I'm fine.

I know you. SHELDON

Yes. TERESA

What is your name? SHELDON

Teresa. TERESA

Why? SHELDON

Why? TERESA

You know why. SHELDON

No. TERESA

You told me before. SHELDON

I did. You were in a coma for 17 days. TERESA

I nearly died. SHELDON

That's right. Your name is Sheldon. You're my father. TERESA

You're mistaken, young lady. SHELDON

What do you think your name is? TERESA

Max. SHELDON

TERESA
That's not your name.

SHELDON
I know my name.

TERESA
You need rest.

SHELDON
I don't need rest. I want to get out of here.

TERESA
Your name is Sheldon.

SHELDON
Max.

TERESA
Sheldon Hofsteder.

SHELDON
I'm from Russian. But I'm American.

TERESA
You're 100% American. You're not from Russia.

SHELDON
What, you don't like Russia?

TERESA
Your memory is playing tricks.

SHELDON
You can't make money in Moscow. But you can in New York.

TERESA
I'm not allowed to talk to you if you think you're someone else. Dad, that's what the doctor said.

SHELDON
I'm Max Blanck. I'll show you my wallet.

TERESA

Hofsteder. Doesn't that sound right?

SHELDON

No.

TERESA

Why do you think you're Max Blanck?

SHELDON

I've horrible gas pains. Where is my business partner?

TERESA

I am your partner.

SHELDON

Isaac.

TERESA

There is no Isaac.

SHELDON

Fort aykh avek aleyn ("Leave me alone" in Yiddish).

TERESA

Say it in English.

SHELDON

Eyn loshn iz keynmol nisht genug ("One language is not enough").

TERESA

I'm your daughter.

SHELDON

Then why don't you speak Yiddish?

TERESA

Isaac Harris is not your partner. Harris and Blanck are history. You're Max Blanck's great grandson.

(Stroking his cheek gently)

You're Sheldon Hofsteder. I'm Teresa. Isaac and Max died many years ago along. You don't own the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. You were in a coma for over two weeks. You've been awake for 3 hours.

SHELDON

I fought a murder trial.

TERESA

No,

SHELDON

I lost in civil trials.

TERESA

When the doctor allows me to, I will show you our family photos. Dad, I love you. Please be patient with all of this.

SHELDON

My lawyer was Maxie Steuer. Do you have his photo?

TERESA

He's not your lawyer. You're not your grandfather. And Maxie Steuer is dead.

SHELDON

We didn't know the factory doors were locked.

TERESA

I'll come back, Dad. You need to rest.

SHELDON

No. No. Don't go. Steuer was smart. He hit back like a champ.

TERESA

I can't stay if you go on like this.

SHELDON

(He reaches for her wrist and holds her)

We were acquitted, but got smashed in civil court. We had to pay out \$75 for each death. A lot of money. Isaac was furious that there was any penalty.

TERESA

Dad, I'll be right back. I'm going to get Barry outside.

SHELDON

(He still holds her wrist gently)

But I reminded Isaac that the insurance company overpaid us \$400 for each death. We made out like bandits.

TERESA

Do you hear me, Dad? I have to go.

SHELDON

And I got nailed again in 1913 for locking factory doors during work time. This time I was fined \$20.

(He lets go of her wrist)

Of course I hear you. I have two elephant ears. Look how large they are.

End of Scene

SCENE THREE

(May 2013, Teresa and Barry enter Sheldon's hospital room.
Sheldon stirs)

SHELDON

My tongue is round. Dry. Feels like sandpaper. A cat's tongue curled tight.
We don't know how we got here. How we are tied. We are tied because we would die
without each other.

TERESA

The doctor gave you a sedative. It should help. Dad?

SHELDON

We have guts. We built things. A business out of nothing in the Lower East Side.
(Pause)
What?

TERESA

You're awake. Out of a coma. Do you know your name?

BARRY

Incredible.

SHELDON

Shut up.

TERESA

Let me help you.

SHELDON

I don't want your help.

TERESA

You mustn't exert yourself.

BARRY

You nearly died, Sheldon.

SHELDON

Everyone tells me about my death. Let me tell you something.
(Pause)

I met Isaac in 1898 and we liked each other right away.

TERESA

I'm going to get the doctor.
(She exits)

SHELDON

We made each other laugh. We are Russians and knew we could do well in the garment business. We hired smart. We hired our cousins. Everyone was Jewish.

BARRY

Sheldon. It's me. Barry.

SHELDON

We became big partners.

(He throws a harsh look at Barry – essentially telling him to shut up again)
Soon we got the name – New York's Shirtwaist Kings. Isaac was a working tailor.

BARRY

I know the story, Sheldon.

SHELDON

No you don't. Shut up.

(Pause. Not really addressing Barry now. Looking at the audience)
He knew sweatshops. A million sweatshops in Manhattan. I married a beautiful woman whose cousin was had married to Isaac. I had the business smarts. Isaac knew fashion and how to make a fast stitch. We built the Triangle Waist Company. Opened our first shop on Wooster Street. No one gave us a dime.

(Barry takes out his cell, sits in a chair by the bed and begins texting)
In 1900 the shirtwaist was a new. Styled like a man's top, but looser than Victorian bodices. Very popular our shop girls. Isaac knew the machinery in making these shirts cost affordable. I was The Salesman. Nobody's better. We used the new sewing machines, which were five times faster than the foot pedal. We priced our shirtwaists dirt cheap, about \$3 each.

(Barry stands and exits the room)
We moved the company in 1902 to the ninth floor of the new Asch building - corner of Washington Square. Isaac set up the sewing floor, putting tables in a way that would keep talk down. Four years later we expanded to the eighth floor and tripled the workforce.

(Sheldon sits straight up and moves his legs off the hospital bed.)
We moved from the Lower East Side to large brownstones on the Upper West Side overlooking the Hudson. Hired house servants and went to work in chauffeured limousines. Opened shirt factories in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

(Sheldon stands on his feet, making certain his hospital robe is tied)
By 1908, Triangle Factory hit the \$1 million mark. We bought the 10th floor of for our offices. We produced 1,000 shirtwaists a day, and become the largest maker of blouses in New York. Honest to God. We pushed it. Long hours and inventory control. We inspected each girl's bag and looked under coats and dresses as they left the factory. To reduce workers' theft, we locked the rear exit door day and night.

(Barry reenters the room, quietly stunned to see Sheldon on his feet talking)

On March 25, 1911, 13 months after the workers' strike, a fire broke out on the eighth floor. Isaac and I were on the 10th floor, and we heard about the fire by phone. We climbed to next rooftop. Girls on the 8th floor made it down the stairs. But on the 9th floor, they didn't know until smoke filled the rooms. The exits were blocked by flames. Out of the 200 girls on the floor, 146 didn't make it. We were indicted on seven counts of manslaughter in the first and second degree.

(Pause)

The trial in December 1911 went three weeks, and focused on the locked door. The court heard from 100 witnesses, but we were acquitted of all charges. The prosecutor failed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Isaac and I were aware of the locked door the day of the fire. All our money went into legal fees. We were also sued for missing a \$206 water bill. Unbelievable. We slaved to rebuild the company now on West 23rd Street. We settled with the victims' families - agreeing to pay out a week's worth of wages for each girl.

Later that year, I got busted after locking a factory exit during working hours. I had to pay a \$20 fine.

(Pause)

In December, I was slapped with another violation after an inspector found unsafe conditions just like the Triangle space. Isaac and I were fined a third time when we were caught sewing counterfeit Consumer's League labels into our garments. The labels certify our garments were made under proper factory conditions.

(Pause)

In 1918, we had no choice but to close the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. Our reputation was beyond repair. We were broke. Isaac went back to being a tailor for hire. I didn't know how to stitch or sew. I was a dyed in the wool capitalist. We went our separate ways.

End of Scene

SCENE FOUR
(May 2013. Penthouse living room)

BARRY

I'm a Democrat. Always was. But you change every four years, Teresa. Why is that?
(Pause)

Do you think Michelle Obama calls her husband Barry in bed?

TERESA

Only Maureen Dowd calls him Barry.

BARRY

I don't read her anymore.

TERESA

Dowd's lazy, takes cheap shots, and thinks she's hotter than Renée Zellweger.

BARRY

That's not why I don't like Dowd.

TERESA

Because you only like my sarcasm?

BARRY

Correct, darling. I only like *your* sarcasm.

TERESA

Is that the end of our conversation today?

BARRY

No.

(Smiles)

I attended a dinner party when you were in San Francisco. There were philanthropists, city planners, politicians. Rabbi Landsmann was there and he told me that his new novel just came into print. He thought I'd be eager to read it. He had a copy in his shoulder bag. How many men do you know walk around with a shoulder bag, Terry? How many rabbis are writing novels?

TERESA

What's his book about?

BARRY

Adultery within a synagogue and a rabbi is blackmailed.

TERESA

Does blackmail work these days?

BARRY

The fear of blackmail, darling. Not the reality of blackmail. That seems to make miscreants think twice.

TERESA

Did Landsmann sign the book for you?

BARRY

I forgot to check. He thinks he is reviving the Kemelman's *Friday the Rabbi Slept Late*.

TERESA

Do you have a friendship this guy?

BARRY

Yes. And he never sleeps. I do feel spiritual when we bump into each other. He asked about your father and said he always thinks of him during Saturday services.

TERESA

I had a dream last night that Dad awoke from his coma. If Sheldon stays in this condition for several more weeks, the stock holdings will plummet.

BARRY

Yes.

TERESA

It's best to spin off some of the companies and get the board behind that decision.

BARRY

I thought you would have done that a week ago. I'd call an emergency meeting tomorrow.

TERESA

And we should send funds to Bangladesh immediately to aid the disaster relief. Gap promised \$22 million in loans for factory improvements. We can do better than that.

BARRY

\$50 million?

TERESA

It's vital to show compassion. And yet there'll be a rush of companies going to Cambodia and Vietnam as they abandon Bangladesh.

BARRY

You're not including the company's president.

TERESA

No, Gallagher's against these ideas. I can't convince the prick that he is.

BARRY

You hired him.

TERESA

I made a few mistakes over ten years.

BARRY

Am I a mistake?

TERESA

(Kissing Barry on the neck or the cheek)
No. Not a mistake.

BARRY

(Returning the kiss and embracing one another)
You thought he's loyal to Sheldon.

TERESA

He was for a year.

BARRY

Did you have an affair with Susan?

TERESA

(Still embracing)
What?

BARRY

She's calling all the time.

TERESA

Barry, please don't piss me off today.

BARRY

This is the first time we kissed since the car accident.

TERESA

So?

BARRY

I want you to know that I love you, Teresa.

TERESA

Thanks.

BARRY

With all my heart and soul.

TERESA

I believe you.

BARRY

I would die for you. And for our children.

TERESA

Yes.

BARRY

Yes, what?

TERESA

Yes, I know that. You say it in your sleep.

End of Scene

SCENE FIVE

(Penthouse living room. January 2013. Barry walks with a crutch due to a ski injury. Sheldon's on his cell phone)

SHELDON

I can't argue with you. I'm in love with you. I tell you that every day. Every night. I tell you the truth. I know we just met 6 weeks ago. But I buy your gifts. I'll never forget your birthday. I can't argue with you, darling.

(Looks up to see Barry)

I have to go, Stella. I'll pick you up at six.

\ (Puts phone down and smiles)

BARRY

Who's Stella?

SHELDON

She's new.

(Pause)

You would like her if you met her.

BARRY

Am I intruding?

SHELDON

No.

BARRY

You're too busy, sir.

SHELDON

Not for you.

BARRY

I always wonder what it means when you speak to me with your shoes off.

SHELDON

It means that I'm done with work for the day.

BARRY

Oh.

SHELDON

I'm comfortable here, Barry.

BARRY

I know you're here for other reasons.

SHELDON

Good. Keep it to yourself. I had a strange dream last night. Can I tell you?

BARRY

Sure.

SHELDON

I dreamt I had sex with the Michelin man. You know, *Bibendum*, all that weird white latex tires bulging from his head to toe.

BARRY

Wow. Latex dreams.

SHELDON

It was pleasant, Barry. Don't know if this should be interpreted as homoerotic of my subconscious or something Francophile or a benign view of road rage?

BARRY

It's just how you see commercialism.

SHELDON

Yes, I think you're right.

BARRY

Do you like me, Sheldon?

SHELDON

I must certainly do like you.

BARRY

I need reassurances.

SHELDON

Don't we all? How's your leg?

BARRY

Not bad. Crutches build upper body strength.

SHELDON

You must be a terrible skier. Or terribly unlucky.

BARRY

I am. Both.

(Pause)

You've fired several family members.

SHELDON

I had no choice. They got us in trouble with the New York Stock Exchange.

BARRY

It looks like you're anti-family.

SHELDON

I love family. I'm anti-corruption.

BARRY

Teresa told me that you are a distant cousin to filmmaker Luis Buñuel.

SHELDON

My uncle married an immediate relation of Buñuel's – my uncle was living in Madrid working with the State Department. No one seems to know Buñuel today. Do you like Buñuel?

BARRY

What's not to like?

SHELDON

You sound so Jewish, Barry.

(Pause)

I don't know all the films of Luis Buñuel. He had a Mexican period. Some years ago I read his autobiography and he had recipes for foods and cocktails. Every biography should be that practical. Buñuel's deadpan face was on the book jacket. His eyes weren't aligned properly, Barry. He had that Peter Falk look, you know, that floating glass eye thing. Creepy. I prefer to be related to Peter Falk.

BARRY

Both men are dead.

SHELDON

Peter Falk is dead? Very tragic. What about Ben Gazzara?

BARRY

He's dead. Six months after Peter Falk.

SHELDON

Oh, shit. Who's next? Are you working from home today?

BARRY

Yes.

SHELDON

How convenient.

BARRY

For the children - pass along - from Sofia to me.

SHELDON

The nanny?

BARRY

She's new.

SHELDON

What happened to the last nanny?

BARRY

Deported. San Paolo.

SHELDON

Is the new one as gorgeous?

BARRY

Yes.

SHELDON

Brazilian?

BARRY

Italian.

SHELDON

You hired her?

BARRY

Your daughter did.

SHELDON

Teresa's testing you.

BARRY

Great.

SHELDON

You joined a family where we loved to test you until you're dead.

BARRY

No one told me until after the wedding.

SHELDON

Oh, I told you months prior to the wedding. You just can't hold your liquor.

BARRY

And you can?

SHELDON

Yes. I can hold my liquor.

BARRY

I heard rumors that you plan to divest our clothing holdings.

SHELDON

On the internet?

BARRY

Everywhere.

SHELDON

What do you think, Barry?

BARRY

Do I think the rumors are true?

SHELDON

No. Do you think I wouldn't tell you and Teresa?

BARRY

Of course not.

SHELDON

Do you think I would tell Teresa but not you?

BARRY

Sheldon, I'm not insinuating anything.

SHELDON

I never stood in Teresa's way when she decided to marry you. That should mean something.

BARRY

Yes, sir.

SHELDON

Do you feel you can do better by working for Berkshire Hathaway or Google?

BARRY

No.

SHELDON

Liar, liar. Pants on fire.

BARRY

Teresa says that all the time.

SHELDON

I know you have ambitions.

BARRY

Yes. Should I not?

SHELDON

How rich do you wish to be in your life?

BARRY

Actually, I just want health and happiness for my family.

SHELDON

Liar, liar . . .

BARRY

Are you spinning off textiles?

SHELDON

Why should I, Barry? Because we outsource to Asia? Global trade is the only business to believe in. And Apparel is an essential commodity. In a service driven economy, these holdings are priceless.

BARRY

So you've found your solution with the unions.

SHELDON

I was once a union man.

BARRY

The Board is getting angry.

SHELDON

The Board is comprised of a bunch of pricks. The Board should be glad we don't do stunts like Colors of Benneton photo-shopping Obama kissing the Venezuela President under the banner "Unhate".

BARRY

Their lips were partly open.

SHELDON

How else do you describe a true kiss? Tightly closed?

(Pause)

I told Teresa that you would be patient. She predicted you'd be an asshole.

BARRY

My wife didn't say that.

SHELDON

Oh, yes she did. It's on the home security tapes.

BARRY

What vow of fidelity do you need from me, Sheldon?

SHELDON

I stopped asking key people to take vows. Oaths never work. Saying all this makes me feel like a fucking hypocrite and that's the last thing I want in my life. I am very sensitive about the criticism aimed at our factories overseas. Certainly labor exploitation can be improved upon, if not incrementally at least with an open heart. I've always held that philosophy but I cannot get Teresa to adopt it. With age, comes progressive beliefs. With grey hair, comes a forgiving heart.

(Sofia enters looking for Barry)

BARRY

Sofia?

SOFIA

Hello. I can stay longer if you like. Usually, Teresa lets me leave early on Thursdays. For class. But tonight there is no class.

BARRY

Please stay another hour or two while Mr. Hofsteder is here.

SOFIA

Okay.

SHELDON

Have we met?

SOFIA

Yes, Mr. Hofsteder. Two weeks ago in the kitchen.

SHELDON

You can call me Sheldon. That's what he calls me.

(She smiles)

Do you enjoy my grandchildren?

SOFIA

Very much.

SHELDON

I love your accent. Could you teach me Italian?

SOFIA

No.

SHELDON

Why not?

SOFIA

Italian cannot be taught. Not by me. Besides, I go to college at night.

SHELDON

Are you on a student visa?

SOFIA

Yes.

SHELDON

Teresa's last nanny was Brazilian. She overstayed her visa.

BARRY

Sofia's an excellent student, Sheldon.

SHELDON

I could tell. The way she walks. What is your chosen field of study?

SOFIA

Education. K-12.

SHELDON
You hope to be a teacher?

SOFIA
Yes, Mr. Hofsteder.

SHELDON
You just don't want to teach me Italian . . .

BARRY
She's from Rome. Doesn't that explain some unwillingness?

SHELDON
I could tell. Do you hope to work in the U.S.?

SOFIA
It depends.

BARRY
Sofia ran the marathon last weekend.

SHELDON
How did you do?

SOFIA
Under three hours.

SHELDON
Congratulations.

SOFIA
Thank you.

SHELDON
If you have trouble with extending your visa, let me know.

BARRY
He means it, Sofia.

SOFIA
Yes.

SHELDON
If I can't pull the right strings, I'll help you get a green card by marrying you.

BARRY
He's joking, Sofia.

SHELDON
I'm single, healthy, active, and do hatha yoga.

BARRY
Sofia reads Tarot Cards.

SHELDON
Fortunes told?

BARRY
Fortunes sold.

SHELDON
Do you read the cards, Sofia?

SOFIA
Yes.

SHELDON
Would you read the cards for me?

SOFIA
I'm very embarrassed.

SHELDON
Did my son-in-law embarrass you?

SOFIA
Yes.

SHELDON
Can we not forgive him? If I can, you can.

SOFIA
Yes, Mr. Hofsteder.

SHELDON
Please call me Sheldon. Where are your cards?

SOFIA
In my purse.

SHELDON

Good.

SOFIA

Yes. They are special cards.

SHELDON

Not from Starbucks or Barnes and Noble?

SOFIA

They're from northern Italy. The Marseille deck. Traditional. Gritty feel on the backside.

SHELDON

How delightful.

SOFIA

I wrap the cards in silk. Best way to protect the deck. Reduces the grittiness

BARRY

She's read for Teresa. Sofia's very good at this.

SHELDON

Teresa's such as rationalist.

BARRY

She's predicted a few critical business mergers which came true.

SHELDON

Really?

SOFIA

(Assumes not to hear this drift about her prophesies)
The coffee table or somewhere else?

SHELDON

The coffee table is fine.
(They sit at the couch. Sofia shuffles the deck)

BARRY

She gave Teresa personal counseling too. Isn't that so, Sofia?

SOFIA

No. You're teasing.
(Smiles like Mona Lisa and continues her focus on the cards)

We can do this with the cards facing down, or you can pick the cards facing you. What would you like?

BARRY

Say something . . .

SHELDON

Facing down.

SOFIA

All right. Shuffle the cards then.

(He does and gives them back to Sofia. She lays out the cards in a long row)

BARRY

You shuffle very well Sheldon.

SHELDON

After college at Berkeley, I was a blackjack dealer in Reno.

SOFIA

Close your eyes for a moment.

(He does. She places her palm over his eyes)

What do you want?

SHELDON

What do I want?

SOFIA

How do you feel? What do you fear? What is in your way? Can you make a decision?

(She removes her hand from his face)

Open your eyes.

(He does)

Pick six cards at random.

(He points and she pulls out each of the six cards)

Fine.

(Teresa enters)

TERESA

Dad?

SHELDON

Shhh . . .

(His finger to his lips. Teresa walks over)

SOFIA

(Turns over the first card Sheldon chose)

You picked The Tower. Disruption and change you're going through, or fear you'll go through, will be catastrophic.

BARRY

Fasten your seatbelt.

SHELDON

The Tower says that?

SOFIA

Such upheaval forces new directions that you never dreamed possible. Inside you want change, but the solution isn't pretty. There are problems tied to your property or business.

TERESA

Dad. This isn't your thing.

SHELDON

But she read for you. She helped you with the Kingsdale merger . . .

(Teresa looks at Barry who looks away)

I don't like secrets, Teresa.

SOFIA

(Pause)

The Hierophant is your second card - "what you most want at this moment."

SHELDON

The Hierophant?

SOFIA

He's like the Pope or a person very powerful in the state. He's the true "pontiff" and the builder of the bridge between God and people. A world can't exist without the Hierophant even if the Hierophant makes the world miserable.

(Pause)

The cards say that what you most want is to have someone around you can trust, knowing that this person won't let you down. Knowing right from wrong, that is the thing, you need a teacher, a priest, someone to help you make a good choice.

BARRY

Like me.

SOFIA

Yes, just like you.

(Pause)

This is your third card. The Star. “What you fear.” You’re afraid. Don't be, this is your wish card. Good health, possibly after a short illness, will give you zest of life. A love affair may also be the ultimate a gift.

BARRY

That’s sweet.

SOFIA

Your fourth card – The Sun - tells that God is shining on you, it's your time for success and happiness. You will feel confident and vitality. It's a time to celebrate.

(Pause)

The Moon is your fifth card. There are deceitful people around who may charm but are dangerous. And your secret may be exposed.

(Pause)

Your last card, the sixth card, The Lovers, is your outcome with all that you must face. Love is coming into your life even if you really can't see and don't feel deserving. You need love or you will fall into a great slumber like Snow White or Sleeping Beauty.

(She touches his open palm and taps with her finger three times)

End of Scene

SCENE SIX (May 2013. Penthouse living room)

BARRY

I can open a bottle wine, Susan . . .

(Susan checks her phone for texts and essentially ignores Barry)

I know you like merlot. Did you know that Sheldon told me he's related to the filmmaker Luis Buñuel?

SUSAN

News to me.

BARRY

I researched this. Had to. Buñuel and Salvador Dalí made films together early in their careers. The film with the razor blade over the eye? The key complication between them was Dalí's wife Gala. Are you listening Susan? Between two creative men, there is always a Gala.

(She nods in the affirmative. He takes a bottle from the wine rack)

She and Buñuel fought so much that one day during a picnic, Buñuel threw Gala to the ground and had his hands around her throat. Buñuel nearly murdered her while Dalí watched with amusement.

(Sofia enters for a brief moment to collect some of the children's things scattered along the living room floor and couch. She leaves just as quickly. He finds two wine glasses)

Years after that, Dalí and Gala went to a masquerade party in New York, hosted for them by heiress Caresse Crosby. They dressed as Charles Lindbergh and his child's kidnapper. The press blasted Dalí so he apologized. When he returned to Paris, the Surrealists praised Dalí about his humiliating contrition as brilliant surrealism.

SUSAN

Who is Sheldon dating? There's a rumor he's wild for a nightclub singer.

BARRY

Sheldon has several lady friends and we can't keep track.

SUSAN

Do you meet any?

BARRY

Only the redheads. He rotates hair color.

SUSAN

(Watching Barry open a bottle of wine, her attention back)

How frequently do you see Teresa's brother?

BARRY

Once a month?

SUSAN

Teresa says Adam is working hard.

BARRY

That's true. All year in fact.

SUSAN

Why doesn't Teresa support him more?

BARRY

Please don't put me on the spot.

SUSAN

We can stop.

BARRY

Does Teresa know you have these questions about Adam?

SUSAN

Yes. There's no scandal there.

BARRY

That depends on . . .

(Pours wine in two glasses)

Did you have an intimate relationship with her at college?

SUSAN

You know.

BARRY

And how should I feel about that?

SUSAN

No worries Barry.

BARRY

Because you live in the present.

SUSAN

Yes, I live in the present. Don't you?

BARRY

I try. Particularly after Sheldon's car accident.
(Hands her a glass)

SUSAN

It's aged Teresa overnight. So much stress in her face.

BARRY

I know.

SUSAN

If this becomes Teresa's corporation exclusively, she'll be the loneliness person in the world. It may be something she always wanted, but the business will kill her.

BARRY

(Drinking)
You're not wrong, Susan. She'll be even more estranged from our kids.

SUSAN

I have this intuition that Sheldon will wake up, stronger than ever.

BARRY

Yes. He's got too much ego to disappear like a living corpse.

SUSAN

(Drinking)
You don't pray?

BARRY

No.

SUSAN

You should.

BARRY

I'll start tomorrow.
(Drinking)
You never encouraged Teresa and me to go forward in breaking up.

SUSAN

What?

BARRY

You know . . . an act of generosity . . .

SUSAN

Thank you for the compliment.

BARRY

It is a compliment. Even when you make eyes at me.

SUSAN

Never in a million years did I make eyes at you.

BARRY

I don't think you'd admit it.

SUSAN

Barry, are you on medication?

BARRY

I'm a good husband and father. I willingly cover for our nanny. Put that into your feature.

SUSAN

I will.

BARRY

I even coached the boys' soccer team to victory.

SUSAN

Yes, Teresa's very proud of you.

BARRY

Susan, why do you have this attitude about us?

SUSAN

There's no attitude.

BARRY

You're affluent. I give you a pass. Please know that.

SUSAN

I believe you love Teresa.

BARRY

Thank you.

SUSAN

Maybe you should stop going to Philadelphia?

BARRY

I'll think about it.

(Pause)

What do you really want from this family?

SUSAN

Respect?

BARRY

You have that, Susan. From Teresa, from Sheldon, so come up with a better answer.

SUSAN

What I really want is a guarantee that I can live another healthy ten years. Nothing that your family can help me with . . .

End of Scene

SCENE SEVEN
(A Saturday morning, May 2013)

BARRY

You have no color in your face, Teresa.

TERESA

Do you blame me?

BARRY

I'm scared for you.

TERESA

Despite the Attorney General's actions, I believe Sheldon told me the truth.

BARRY

I hope you're right.

TERESA

I more concerned about the damage from coming from the Governor and Albany.

BARRY

I agree.

TERESA

So we have to be very coordinated. The lawyers are confident about a fair settlement. That means the extended family can't be told what we heard today.

BARRY

I think it's too late to orchestrate this, Teresa.

TERESA

It's not too late.

BARRY

What about Susan?

TERESA

She's not family. I told her to kill the story.

BARRY

You've the right to your privacy.

TERESA

I know that.

BARRY

Why does she have a hold on you?

TERESA

I don't know.

BARRY

I have a right to privacy too.

TERESA

I'll call her today.

BARRY

Better to see her in person.

TERESA

Yes.

BARRY

Look at me, Teresa.

(She does)

Better to chance it. We don't need this fortune. We only need a roof over our head.

End of Scene

SCENE EIGHT
(Later that day, May 2013.)

SUSAN

Teresa, I'm really sorry about the indictment. I mean that. Why don't you look at me?

TERESA

Thanks.

SUSAN

I know you've got a great team of lawyers but . . .

TERESA

I'm going through fucking menopause, Susan. The timing is just too much. And I'm losing my hair. It's scaring the hell out me. I never had beautiful hair. Not like your hair. I can't remember my passwords. I'm a basket case.

SUSAN

Stay home. Avoid the office.

TERESA

It can't be helped. Adam was caught red-handed. This stains our family name but that's how it goes. Adam takes us all down.

SUSAN

What drove him?

TERESA

Selfishness. He doesn't care how this hits the family.

SUSAN

They can't charge you or your father.

TERESA

We'll see.

SUSAN

You weren't involved.

TERESA

It can be proved that I knew things, Susan. That's all that it takes.

SUSAN

If I could, I would trade places with you.

TERESA

Why would you even think that?

SUSAN

That's how I feel.

TERESA

Is that why you're taking months to finish the interview?

SUSAN

I don't know. Sheldon was very kind to me for the first session. And then he was impossible to schedule. He knew I was getting an exclusive.

TERESA

And what did he say in your first session?

SUSAN

He went on about his mysticism and the garments of Christ.

TERESA

He loved finding Christ like a lost friend on Facebook.

SUSAN

I believed his obsession. He couldn't stop himself.

TERESA

Something was happening to his thinking before the collision.

SUSAN

At first I thought he was pulling my leg.

(In Sheldon's voice)

"Garments have touched Christ and therefore no greater mystery can exist."

TERESA

An old Jew in reverie about Jesus . . .

SUSAN

Explain it to me, Teresa.

TERESA

Sheldon thought he would die by the end of the year.

SUSAN

Why?

TERESA

Sexual morbidity . . .

SUSAN

Is that a medical condition?

TERESA

Who the hell knows? I wonder if his inner life is contagious.

SUSAN

One way to handle this, sell everything.

TERESA

Right. Put the whole thing on Craigslist.

(Silence. Teresa caresses Susan's hand)

I've been distant, Susan.

SUSAN

I know.

TERESA

I've used you more than you have me.

SUSAN

Who's to say?

TERESA

Everything has hit me so damn hard.

SUSAN

There's more, Teresa.

(Silence)

I have to tell you something.

TERESA

What?

SUSAN

I was walking by the playground at the edge of Central Park, where you often go with Kyle and Lilia.

TERESA

And?

SUSAN

Sofia was there watching the kids on the jungle gym. This was last week. Barry was with Sofia. This was Tuesday last week.

TERESA

And?

SUSAN

It looked like he planned to meet her.

TERESA

So?

SUSAN

When the kids were out of sight, Barry kissed her.

TERESA

Oh fuck.

SUSAN

I took a photo with my phone.

TERESA

I believe you.

SUSAN

You knew this would happen.

TERESA

Sofia said she was engaged to a designer in Milan.

SUSAN

I am just as gullible.

TERESA

So do I ask him?

SUSAN

No.

TERESA

Kick him out?

SUSAN

What do you really need?

End of Scene

SCENE NINE (January 2013. Sheldon and Susan in the penthouse living room)

SHELDON

There is no such thing as a billionaire's club. The media created the conceit. The only club that really matters is the redemption club.

(Drinking scotch and looking out the penthouse window)

I was dozing on the plane, in between a deep sleep and that restful place where you leave the earth. Flying over the Pacific. I was coming out of a dream or perhaps just entering a dream. There was a burning bush. The one from the bible. I was alone. I'm never alone. No Moses. The wind was wild, like a storm about to kill. In the distance just beyond vast hills of an arid wasteland, columns of light hitting the desert floor. Sand got into my eyes. I was in tears and used my shirt to cover my face. That's when the fire from the bush turned violet. I could feel the searing heat on my skin. My shoes began to char and I kicked them off. Scariest dream of my life. And I heard words. Words in English. In Aramaic. In Hindi. In German. Words in Hebrew. I don't know how I could tell the difference. I fell to my knees as the wind knocked me down. I began to cry. I peered through my cotton shirt and the flames took over the desert.

(Pause)

I awoke. The plane was going through very heavy turbulence. I looked out of the jet window and thought I saw something in mid-air on fire.

(Pause)

It was another plane in trouble.

SUSAN

Oh God . . .

SHELDON

I was in a cold sweat. I lost my breath. I wanted to reach for the oxygen mask which drops down in the event of an emergency landing. I thought I was with Teresa.

SUSAN

May I write about this?

SHELDON

No. Absolutely not.

SUSAN

It's unsettling.

SHELDON

The other plane had a crash landing. Everything random.

(Pause)

So this comes down to ontology. A spiritual reckoning. The modern view for some who are looking for religion is that God may be all powerful but not all knowing. Or perhaps all knowing but not all powerful.

(Finishing scotch)

What I don't wish to believe is that God is neither all knowing nor all powerful. What do you think?

SUSAN

I've stage two uterine cancer.

SHELDON

I'm sorry.

SUSAN

I don't want to die, Sheldon. So I hope God occupies a loving universe.

SHELDON

I hope so. Still, God can't stop the crimes of Bernie Madoff or Joseph Stalin or Osama Bin Laden or Adolph Hitler.

SUSAN

You were once very religious.

SHELDON

As a boy, yes. When I had children, yes. But things changed. My troubles with Adam. I became despondent a couple of years ago. Then I learned over time that there is a single thread in each garment which attains stature however invisible the thread. This is the meaning of significance. Awareness of how threads work. Do you know what I'm saying? The garment has what it needs.

SUSAN

Is that why you became a philanthropist?

SHELDON

The same reason why George Soros is a philanthropist.

SUSAN

And if there is a Heaven?

SHELDON

Must be people die to be nominated to enter? Shareholders cannot vote.
Why are you doing this interview?

SUSAN

It was assigned to me.

SHELDON

I'm not Bernie Madoff.

SUSAN

(Smiling)
Hardly.

SHELDON

I've brought reforms in the global market. My actions sparked corporations to improve worker conditions. The Times covered this in a positive light.

SUSAN

Let's talk about what The Times left out.

SHELDON

No, not today Susan. I'm not in the mood to debate.

(Pause)

I want to show you the newest painting in my collection. You see that on the far wall?
A major find.

(She approaches the painting)

A lesser known Rembrandt. Akin to the Getty Museum purchase of *Rembrandt Laughing*.
Thought to be Rembrandt's student. Look at the garment and the rolls of the sleeve. Isn't
that superb? The soft masculine face. The precision and deep emotion. To understand
Rembrandt fully, one must examine the garments of his models.

(Susan strays from the painting and turns to face Sheldon)

Susan, you know our family most of your adult life. Sometimes it feels like you are my
second daughter. With Teresa's advocacy, we made improvements in China, India and
elsewhere in the subcontinent.

SUSAN

No child labor?

SHELDON

Nothing under 14 years of age.

SUSAN

The industry is morally stagnant, Sheldon.

SHELDON

It's the scale of things. The UN can't change working conditions and it probably is up to Congress and the White House. We'll never see real manufacturing come back to New York and that should be your story.

SUSAN

You're a pessimist.

SHELDON

I collect Rembrandts. I am not an optimist. I have a mood disorder, Susan.

SUSAN

What?

SHELDON

I manage it. I proud to declare it.

(Pause)

Over the last two decades who has changed more? You or Teresa?

SUSAN

Teresa, of course.

SHELDON

And have you changed at all?

SUSAN

It is hard to answer.

SHELDON

Do you regret not having kids?

SUSAN

Not really.

SHELDON

Children don't guarantee immortality.

SUSAN

Who's to say, really?

SHELDON

Teresa will soon run the whole show. The shareholders know it. Ten years ago we paid attention to Banana Republic, The Gap, and other retailers. All different now. I can't keep up. Volume is not everything. I keep my mind's eye on the burning oracle in the desert.

SUSAN

All of this is off the record?

SHELDON

I told you that our first session would be the intimate one and not for public consumption.

SUSAN

Can you give me another half hour before ending?

SHELDON

(Checking his watch)

I need you to leave, but we can reschedule next week. And I need to hold on to your notes.

SUSAN

Why?

SHELDON

That's my protocol.

End of Scene

SCENE TEN

(January 2013, penthouse living room)

SHELDON

The other day, when you read those playing cards in the living room, well, I had a bad dream about the Hierophant.

SOFIA

I'm so sorry, Mr. Hofsteder.

SHELDON

And some images stayed with me for a long time.

SOFIA

In my town outside of Rome, there is a tradition that you can write down the bad dream on a piece of paper. You light a match, burn the paper, drop it in the toilet.

SHELDON

Flush the toilet?

SOFIA

Of course.

SHELDON

Does this work?

SOFIA

Oh, yes.

SHELDON

Must you do this right after you have the dream?

SOFIA

You can do it weeks later.

SHELDON

I'll try it now.

SOFIA

No. Not now. When I'm gone.

SHELDON

I'll try it tonight.

SOFIA

Good. In privacy. It's best. The cards can do that to a person.

SHELDON

That's the magic.

SOFIA

No, no. There is no magic.

SHELDON

What do you call it?

SOFIA

What the cards do? The cards look at a person. That's vision. If a person lies, the cards know. The cards determine what is true. Because you touch the cards. And I touch the cards. But the cards don't turn a rabbit out of a hat.

SHELDON

I feel like a rabbit.

SOFIA

That's very funny, Mr. Hofsteder.

SHELDON

I want to make you laugh. I love Italy. Of all the countries in Europe. The food and the atmosphere and the emotional vitality. Do you know what I mean?

SOFIA

I do.

SHELDON

Little Italy in this city is not Italy.
 You've been there, yes? No?
 There once was a very jovial
 Italian Jewish mayor.
 About seventy years ago.
 He was so popular
 The city named an airport
 In his honor.
 And I wish I could have dinner with him.

SOFIA

La Guardia?

SHELDON

Fiorello La Guardia. He read the comic strips over the radio.

SOFIA

You mustn't fly in a plane.

SHELDON

Why do you say that?

SOFIA

I read your cards. Look what happened to your son-in-law.

SHELDON

You said nothing about planes before.

SOFIA

I didn't want to scare you.

SHELDON

And now you do?

SOFIA

We're alone. Teresa and Barry are not here.

SHELDON

Be plain and direct as you can be.

SOFIA

Please don't go in a fast vehicle.

SHELDON

That's so hard for my work, Sofia. I have to travel.

SOFIA

Avoid transportation.

SHELDON

To Europe and Asia?

SOFIA

Even cross town Manhattan. I don't know what to say. You think I am crazy.

SHELDON

No. I think you know something that I should know.

SOFIA

I do.

SHELDON

Things are angular, Sofia. Do you know that feeling? A cramp in the stomach? You open a door but sense that the air is tight, the floor is tilted, the ceiling hangs low. Best to shut the door.

SOFIA

Oh, I do know that feeling.
(She sees Teresa enter the room)

TERESA

Another Tarot card reading?

SOFIA

No. One is all.

TERESA

Good.
(To Sofia)
This is not for my father's well being.

SHELDON

What makes you say that?

TERESA

It's a gut feeling, Dad. And the cards are frivolities for women.

SHELDON

Barry was impressed by Sofia's talent.

TERESA

Was he?

SHELDON

Am I exaggerating?

TERESA

Am I incredulous?

SHELDON

Wouldn't you say that, Sofia?

SOFIA

I keep the cards wrapped in silk.

TERESA

That's Barry.

SHELDON

I was led to believe that romance was just around the corner. From the cards. Am I a sap, Teresa?

TERESA

There's an endless supply of ladies for you, Dad. But why bother at your age?

SHELDON

Maybe my Achilles' Heel.

TERESA

I wish you had an Achilles' Heel.

SHELDON

When I see genuine poverty, I lose myself. Or I lose myself to one woman.

TERESA

And then you flash your checkbook.

TERESA

(To Sofia)

Is that what you told my father?

SOFIA

I didn't say that. Your father has options and possibilities and a big adventure. Please excuse me, I'm late for class.

(She exits)

TERESA

With a new woman? A new wife?

SOFIA

I don't think so, Teresa.

SHELDON

Wives are like knives.

TERESA

Brilliant.

SOFIA

Tarot is only for amusement – the cards give you nothing more.

SHELDON

My soul has no lining.

TERESA

Really? Maybe you need to wear a vest under your suit? Maybe you ought to think about

protecting me from the vultures?

SHELDON

Are you saying I'm a terrible father?

TERESA

No. I'm saying that I've acquire more business enemies than you.

SHELDON

Why are you so angry with me, Teresa?

TERESA

Because I'm scared.

SHELDON

Scared about what?

TERESA

Scared about my kids growing up. Scared about your health. Scared about Adam's behavior. Scared about my marriage.

SHELDON

Your marriage is fine.

TERESA

Barry is seeing someone.

SHELDON

Right now?

TERESA

Yes.

SHELDON

He's deeply in love with you.

TERESA

You're lying for him.

SHELDON

Maybe he did something stupid but he will continue to come back to you.

TERESA

Stop rationalizing this.

SHELDON

For years I never liked him and now I do. Isn't that funny?

TERESA

Don't you want to know which woman it is?

SHELDON

No.

TERESA

It's Sofia.

SHELDON

I don't care. Look. I'll talk to him. I'll kick his ass. The problem is solved.

TERESA

It's not solved.

SHELDON

You're angry at me for something else, Teresa.

TERESA

You're right.

SHELDON

About the business.

TERESA

About one of our holdings.

SHELDON

Then slap me.

TERESA

I just want the goddamn truth.

SHELDON

Okay.

TERESA

Did you make a deal with United Colors of Benneton?

SHELDON

Without telling you?

TERESA
Yes or no?

SHELDON
What do you think?

TERESA
I think you did.

SHELDON
Well . . .

TERESA
How dare you!

SHELDON
Do you really want to carry on in front of your nanny?

TERESA
She's left.

SHELDON
\$200 million is not a half billion.

TERESA
\$200 million? Is that what transpired?

SHELDON
I had to cough up the cash and improve a very human situation. That is the only way to buy a first class ticket into Heaven.

End of Scene

SCENE ELEVEN
(Later that night, January 2013)

TERESA

Sofia, what's happening?

SOFIA

Nothing.

TERESA

Do you want me to press the issue?

SOFIA

I won't read cards any more in your home.

TERESA

Why did you involve yourself with my father?

SOFIA

I didn't think this was going to upset you. I

TERESA

I asked you never to take out your cards with anyone here but me.

SOFIA

I'm so sorry, Teresa. It will not happen again.

TERESA

I need to be able to trust you.

SOFIA

I know.

TERESA

You're wonderful with the kids. But I am asking for something more.

(She sees Sofia beginning to cry)

I'm sorry. I have other things to bring up.

SOFIA

I need this job.

TERESA

You have a great rapport with Jennifer and Billy. I won't fire you, Sofia.

SOFIA

You will. I feel you will. I need this job.

TERESA

I just want the truth.

SOFIA

Yes, yes. I don't lie.

TERESA

Why are you carrying on with Barry?

SOFIA

I'm not.

TERESA

You were seen in the park together.

SOFIA

He got affectionate for a moment. I pushed him away.

TERESA

I want to believe you.

SOFIA

Believe me. Please.

TERESA

What is wrong with my husband?

SOFIA

I don't know. Maybe nothing is wrong with him.

(Pause)

He's a boy. Boys act this way.

TERESA

I want the truth, Sofia.

SOFIA

Nothing is happening.

TERESA

My friend saw you together.

SOFIA

It was one kiss. On the cheek. And I turned away.

TERESA

Why the hell is he kissing you?

SOFIA

Ask him. I am not kissing him, Teresa.

TERESA

Tell me.

SOFIA

I've told you everything. I have a boyfriend. This is not fair.

TERESA

Then don't try to tempt him.

SOFIA

Let me keep my job. I promise you . . .

TERESA

When you see Barry, what will you tell him?

SOFIA

What do you want me to tell him?

TERESA

That you hate the way he looks and acts. Say you hate his cologne.

SOFIA

If that will make you happy.

TERESA

I will never be happy, Sofia.

SOFIA

I did not sleep with your husband.

TERESA

He will pay for his mistakes no matter what you say.

(She touches Sofia softly on the arm)

There's a box of Kleenexes on the coffee table.

End of Scene

SCENE TWELVE
(May 2013, Penthouse living room)

SOFIA
Your wife.

BARRY
Five months ago?

SOFIA
Yes.

BARRY
I am so sorry.

SOFIA
For days she was keeping this to herself.

BARRY
Maybe. Maybe not.

SOFIA
I thought I would lose my job.

BARRY
You didn't.

SOFIA
She still trusts me.

BARRY
I kissed you on the cheek. That was all.

SOFIA
It's the Tarot cards. Not what anyone saw in the playground.

BARRY
Nothing happened. Yes, I find you very attractive but I'm not going to ruin a good marriage.

SOFIA
I know.

BARRY

Let me talk to Teresa.

SOFIA

You don't have to now. She let the matter go.

BARRY

When you read the cards for Mr. Hofsteder, you withheld a premonition.

SOFIA

Did I?

BARRY

You told him to avoid planes and travel. But you sensed he was destined for a car accident.

SOFIA

No, I didn't know.

BARRY

You knew something.

SOFIA

I didn't cause his coma.

BARRY

That's not what I'm saying.

SOFIA

I couldn't prevent his car accident.

BARRY

I know.

SOFIA

Why are you talking about the Tarot?

BARRY

You like silk.

SOFIA

What?

BARRY

You wrap the cards in silk.

SCENE THIRTEEN (January 2013)

SHELDON

I think we have a few minutes left before I need to run to my next appointment. A crisis is unfolding . . .

SUSAN

But . . .

SHELDON

My apologies.

SUSAN

I thought we had a solid hour . . .

SUSAN

Just thirty minutes then . . .

SHELDON

I'm sorry.

SUSAN

Next week then?

SHELDON

No. I'm out of town until February.

SUSAN

Do you admire Warren Buffett?

SHELDON

Sure. Why not? He's still alive. When Warren steps down, Berkshire Hathaway will lose its aura.

SUSAN

And its divinity? His business divinity?

SHELDON

Let me tell you about divinity. It's not a cheap word. Business has no divinity. Money, by its very nature, is dirty. Touching money is dirty. You have to wash your hands if you come into contact with a one dollar bill. A twenty dollar bill has traces of cocaine. Gold is different. Gold is a commodity. Clothes are commodities. That is what I represent, Susan. The shirt on your back. I devoted my life to garments. Garments change civilization. Garments define civilization as much as architecture and societal laws.

(Pause)

Garments can be religious. Prayer shawls. Head coverings. Such relics take on eternal life. Two years ago I went to view the Shroud of Turin. That visit was transformative.

(walks away from Susan)

You see the face on the cloth and the face sees you. I've seen it up close.

(silence)

The shroud is rectangular, 14 ft. × 4 ft. Longer than a bed sheet. The cloth has a three-to-one herringbone twill weave composed of flax. The most distinctive feature is the faint image of a front and back view of a nude man - his hands folded over his groin. The front and back views of the head seem to meet at the middle of the cloth. The red and brown stains that allegedly are Christ's blood correlate with the Biblical description of the crucifixion

(Pause)

I am not a Christian.

(Pause)

Sub-atomic testing could show if radiation happened from a dead body in transformation, and could denote when in history it had happened. Regarding Carbon 14, Chloride 36 and Calcium 41 isotopes, they "rarely" exist in nature. Science has not had the knowledge nor ability to manufacture these isotopes until the advent of Nuclear technology.

(Collecting his suit jacket draped over the sofa and his leather brief)

The shroud is authentic. I believe Christ lived and died, Susan. And I was born a Jew. My great-grandfather failed as a tailor. He created ten thousand shirtwaists. My great-grandfather killed hundreds of people in his abject negligence. There are red and brown stains on my hands.

(Walking to the door to make his exit)

I am scared to die. Scared to go without a plan. What garment will I wear when it is my time?

End of Scene

SCENE FOURTEEN
(May 2013)

TERESA

I passed on Ambien. I took Valium. You know I never take pills.

BARRY

It's important to stay calm. You look calm.

TERESA

I'm numb.

BARRY

Your speech is slower. Quieter.

TERESA

I lost all desire. First time ever.

BARRY

I'm sorry, darling.

TERESA

Tell me you love me.

BARRY

I love you, Teresa. We'll get through this. You must feel the same about me.

TERESA

What?

BARRY

I love you with all my heart.

TERESA

Word is racing everywhere that Sheldon came out of his coma, but is no better than a talking vegetable.

BARRY

A vegetable cannot talk, Teresa.

TERESA

They're saying that he's either senile or a lunatic. The diagnosis on the Huffington Post and Slate and The Drudge Report.

BARRY

We'll come up with a plan by Saturday.

TERESA

Dissociative Identity Disorder. That was in the Washington Post.

BARRY

This was leaked by the hospital staff.

TERESA

Maybe. Maybe not. Nothing phases you?

BARRY

It's all phasing me. Your father's alive. That's a blessing. Regarding the press, there is no way we can repair the defamation.

TERESA

I've talked to the lawyers. Sydney said we can stonewall.

BARRY

He's wrong. It's best to disclose everything, Teresa.

TERESA

And say what?

BARRY

That Sheldon Hofsteder has a recovering memory. That's a start.

TERESA

The spin's very negative.

(Pause)

Timing couldn't be worse. Goldman Sachs isn't finished with our deal with the Dutch group.

BARRY

Best to assuage the Board Members.

TERESA

I can't face them under these circumstances. Half of the Board resents what Sheldon did in elevating me three years ago.

BARRY

Send them a letter. Don't send them a letter.

TERESA

(Sitting down, sensing some dizziness)
These pills are awful, Barry.

BARRY

Don't go to the Board. You don't look well.
(Pause)

Stay away from the office. Don't answer the phone. I wish we could just walk away from everything. How much money do we really need to feel good about our lives? How much to provide for our children?

TERESA

It's not about the money. It's my family legacy.

BARRY

That legacy is not this corporation, Teresa. Why fight to protect Board members you hate? The partnerships overseas are compromised. We don't need to fend off litigation if we divest.

TERESA

Sheldon's business is like another child in my life.

BARRY

It's not my child.

TERESA

You're wrong.

BARRY

Am I? Look how this is aging you.

TERESA

I don't care.

BARRY

You don't spend time with Jennifer and Billy.

TERESA

I do.

BARRY

Don't you feel fraudulent? Jennifer is hating every private school we tried?

TERESA

Homeschooling is a joke.

BARRY

We tried Montessori.

TERESA

Then the Waldorf School. And she liked it.

BARRY

But you hated the teachers.

TERESA

It was deceptive and looking like a fucking cult.

BARRY

Still you let Jennifer last a year there.

TERESA

I can't do that sort of thing anymore, Barry.

BARRY

Each morning in the mirror. What do you see?

TERESA

I see my father's face.

BARRY

And that makes everything all right?

TERESA

I don't know anymore.

BARRY

You're my wife, Teresa.

TERESA

Why don't you pick a fight?

BARRY

With you?

(Pause)

You shouldn't rely on friends like Susan to keep a fragile band-aid

TERESA

What do you want, Barry?

BARRY

The Teresa I met twenty years ago.

TERESA

We don't sleep together.

BARRY

We do sleep together. What are you talking about?

(Pause)

Let's leave New York and find a quiet town. One hundred miles away. One thousand miles. Let's go to the West Coast – Seattle might be wonderful.

TERESA

You're serious?

BARRY

I have never been more serious.

TERESA

And Sheldon?

BARRY

We take Sheldon with us. He'll always be with us.

TERESA

And if Sheldon were back to good health and a sound mind?

BARRY

One day at a time. Let's leave New York.

TERESA

I have to think this over.

BARRY

No you don't.

TERESA

Please Barry.

BARRY

You're going to ask others for advice.

(Sofia escorts Sheldon who is in a wheelchair as he looks at his cell phone)

TERESA

Sofia?

SOFIA

Mr. Hofsteder wants to see you.

SHELDON

I'm having a little tickle in my abdomen. Teresa, did you hear me?

TERESA

Yes.

SHELDON

What do you think it is?

TERESA

I don't know.

SHELDON

Should I go to the doctor?

TERESA

No. It's just the medication you're on.

SHELDON

You're looking at me like I'm a ghost.

TERESA

I'm sorry, Dad.

SHELDON

Barry?

BARRY

Hello Sheldon.

SHELDON

Why are you staring at me?

BARRY

I'm not staring.

SHELDON

Fuck the coma. That's what I say. Fuck it.

BARRY

I'm with you.

SHELDON

Why is my daughter so upset?

TERESA

I'm not upset.

SHELDON

I can read your emotions.

TERESA

I don't know what to say.

SHELDON

I am of sound mind. Tell me that you love me, Teresa.

TERESA

I love you, Dad.

SHELDON

How many children do I have?

TERESA

Two.

SHELDON

And?

TERESA

Adam loves you too.

SHELDON

Do you mean it?

TERESA

Yes. He's in a rehab facility.

SHELDON

I understand. He has struggles.

BARRY

How are you feeling?

SHELDON

Other than the tickle, I feel good. I feel better. I honestly feel better.

(Pause)

I'm looking at the Bloomberg News. Wow. Our stock's really taken a hit. Let's figure this out. Sweden's H & M signaled it would sign a legally binding plan forcing retailers to pony up on fire safety. Hell, that's a baby step. Let's shame all the retailing giants. Do you hear me, Teresa? Yes? I just called a few newspapers to give them the news.

TERESA

What news?

SHELDON

Our dissolution. Our philanthropy. Our redemption.

(Pause)

We'll give \$250 million to Bangladesh by the end of the month. \$100 million in no-interest loan and \$150 million as a direct grant. It will come from every liquid asset. I don't care who or what this hurts within our organization. If we can scrape together \$500 million from all our holdings, we will double the grant. And to add to this, I want to give 75% of my personal wealth. That puts us over a billion dollars in aid. This is a spiritual gesture, my children.

(Silence. Teresa, completely beside herself, sinks into the sofa)

Is there something wrong?

TERESA

Dad, you're on heavy medication.

SHELDON

No I'm not. Just aspirin.

BARRY

You'd wipe out the corporation as we know it.

SHELDON

Men my age often rethink their life's plan. They rethink their will. They can find a new mark. Teresa, you and Barry don't need more money to feel richer. You certainly don't need my money. You should start to feel less rich and maybe you'll feel your flesh. I say this for Adam too.

(Pause)

What is time to us? The sun will burn out and our little planet will turn to ice. That is a scientific fact. Let's see the face of Christ and bid farewell to the moneychangers.

(Pause)

My life has new purpose.

(Pause)

Sofia. Thank you.

(Pause)

Teresa, come over and just a little peck on the cheek. One kiss. I'm determined to pay

reparations for four generations. This brings us finally to accountability. To healing. And I've never been more satisfied in my entire life.

End of Play

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/>

<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/62296/lost-in-the-fire>