

## ACT ONE

The stage is dark at first - dark and silent... but not for long.

Tenderly, we hear MUSIC rise from some unknown corner of the stage. It's the song "ONCE UPON A TIME" from the musical "All American."\* The SONG dances around the stage romantically.

Suddenly, the darkness is interrupted by a brilliant, bright, orange flicker of light. It is a match - a match lit by a person, sitting in the darkness. A moment later this person is revealed to us. SHE is an elderly woman with white or gray hair - perhaps about 80 - who we will later learn is MRS. CHATWICK. We can tell that, while alert and put together, SHE is standing on a cliff of age, with one foot dangling dangerously over the side. In this regard, the smoking doesn't help. Still, SHE doesn't seem to care that much, drawing, as SHE does, on the cigarette with a great deal of satisfaction - almost ecstasy - before exhaling again. With that, MRS. CHATWICK just freezes - freezes in thought, perhaps - before turning to us, as if just noticing we entered. SHE is not surprised to see us, per se. In fact, we sense that SHE somehow knew we've been there the whole time, but just hasn't bothered to acknowledge us... until now.

By now, the SONG has drifted into the darkness and is silent.

MRS. CHATWICK

(Indicating the cigarette.)

They say it's bad for me.

MRS. CHATWICK smiles wryly and draws again on the cigarette.

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\* The playwright recommends the version by Frank Sinatra or Eric Comstock.

MRS. CHATWICK

I've been smoking now for, oh... seventy years?

SHE waits a moment and then draws yet again.

MRS. CHATWICK

My, my, I guess it has been seventy years - from start-to-end, that is. Mind you, I didn't smoke all those years. Before she dragged me here, my daughter told me I couldn't smoke anymore. It was bad for my health - apparently. My sister said the same thing... so did my cousin... so did my doctor... but what do they know? Those three never smoked in their whole damn life - not one bit - and they're all dead. Me, I'm still here, and I figure that has to count for something.

MRS. CHATWICK puts out the cigarette on the arm of HER wheelchair.

MRS. CHATWICK

Now, I told you that I've smoked for seventy years, "start to end." The start, that was when I was, oh, about twelve. It was a different world then and I was just fitting in. Everyone smoked - everyone - especially if they were in the movies. That was the start, but the end... I'm not quite sure when that is, but I wouldn't be surprised if it's right now... and, if it isn't "right now," then it's right around the corner, waiting to cross the street and shake my hand.

The LIGHTS rise generally on the atrium of the fourth floor of the Margo Asher Home for the Aged. The large portrait of Margo Asher dominates the stage. We notice MRS. CHATWICK seems to lean towards us in a similar way and looks quite like the woman in the portrait, albeit a much older version.

In terms of occupants, there are a choice few. MRS. CHATWICK is sitting off to the side, somehow apart from the scene before us and yet still deeply conscious of it. Around the stage we find a series of other people - or, perhaps, it's "people" - since, as we glance closer, we see that the people are actually life-size MANNEQUINS, huddled like choreographed Raggedy Anns and arrayed in wheelchairs around the room. They are facing away from us, slouched and limp - limp and lifeless - facing the windows like moths to a flame, as if mesmerized by the very

light of the sun and a world from which they are now quarantined.

After a moment, a VOICE sounds from a nearby room - followed by an entrance. It's ROGER MANAGEE, Executive Director of the Margo Asher Home - an antiseptic, anal-retentive man in HIS 30's-40's whose primary goal in life is to "do no harm" and make no waves. HE is a man for whom placidity is an achievement - the greatest one, in fact. One senses a single strand astray in HIS world would bring on an Apocalypse or at least a minor earthquake of the soul. Following this human android is a "normal"-looking, all-American, well-built lumberjack of a man - DAVID WIXOM. HE could have stepped out of a folk tale, if not for the fact that HE is a little too weathered for the role and a little too boring. Still, at 40 or so, all is not lost, as HE exudes a certain testosterone-packed vibrancy and a powerfully wry sense of humor.

MANAGEE

(Gesturing across the atrium.)  
This is our Josef Gebbels Wing.

DAVID

Goebbels?

MANAGEE

Gebbels. He was Margo Asher's husband.

DAVID

I thought the other wing was named after him.

MANAGEE

Ah, that one was named after her second husband.

DAVID

How many husbands did she have?

MANAGEE

Well... there are four wings.

DAVID focuses HIS eyes on the portrait of Margo Asher.

MANAGEE

That is Margo Asher, the photographer.

DAVID

I see - and this used to be her house.

MANAGEE

It was, yes - in her later years, at any rate. It was built by Richard Morris Hunt for one of the more forgettable Vanderbilts. Margo Asher purchased it in her 40's because it was far removed from the hurly-burly of modern life.

DAVID

Yeah - a little claustrophobic, if you ask me.

MANAGEE

In point of fact, Margo Asher hardly stayed here. She spent most of her life traveling, taking photographs around the world. In her late 60's, while in Chad, she had a stroke and by necessity returned here to recuperate. She never was able to travel again and died here a few years later. She didn't have any descendants so the house was put up for sale and bought by the Kleinman Company as a home for the elderly.

DAVID

(Looking around with avid interest.)  
It's real impressive - good, strong ceilings.

MANAGEE

Yes, I must say, this is my favorite of all the wings. Your father will be staying here on the fourth floor. In fact, we are renovating the third floor now in order to increase our ability to serve the elderly community. We have over two hundred residents now - two-hundred and fifty-nine, specifically - and have been in business for over fifty years.

DAVID

Well, I got to tell you, I like the place.

MANAGEE

Ah, I find that most gratifying, for in every form and fashion, we aim to make life here as comfortable as possible for our residents. One practical manifestation of that commitment is our policy of separating residents based on their mental state and physical abilities in order to ensure diversity and inclusivity in healthfulness. We make sure to reserve a certain portion of slots in each wing for those who, like your father, are slightly less discerning than the other residents. We find this provides greater dynamism and stimulation for their minds and, at the same time, provides opportunities for guidance and a comparative sense of good fortune for those with stronger constitutions. We desire for our residents only happiness - happiness and contentment with their current state, since that state is their reality - and so, whatever their condition, we enable them to rest in it as peacefully as possible.

MANAGEE manages a salesman's smile. HE turns and notices a middle-aged woman named MABEL has entered off to the side of the stage.

MANAGEE

Ah, Mabel.

MANAGEE gestures to MABEL with a patronizing finger: "come here." MABEL just stares back blandly.

MANAGEE

(To DAVID, "explaining.")

She's near-sighted.

(To MABEL, more of a command.)

Would you come here, please, Mabel?

MABEL smiles now - a fake smile - and approaches MANAGEE. SHE is a formidable-looking woman - probably about 60, although SHE appears a youthful 50. We sense, however, that SHE has seen a good deal more life than that - perhaps 80 years or more - which SHE somehow always carries with HER. At this point in HER life, SHE is done with games, done with "make believe" - no more plastic pleasantries - only directness and truth. "What you see is what you get" - and, frequently, that is enough. Still, HER honesty is refreshing - if sometimes edgy and curious - not unlike a black sunray piercing through a cloudy sky, with a tendency to defy physics and zigzag around wherever it chooses.

MANAGEE

(To DAVID.)

This is Mabel Valdés, Mr. Wixom - our head nurse on this floor. Mabel has been working for us for over twelve years.

MABEL

It just seems like it's been a lifetime.

MANAGEE

(Stiffly, to DAVID - "explaining" again.)

Mabel can't imagine herself anyplace else.

DAVID

Nice to meet you, Mabel.

MABEL

Thank you, sir.

DAVID

Please, call me "David."

MABEL

I will, sir.

MANAGEE

Mabel is from the old school.

MABEL

Literally - I didn't get my GED until I was thirty.

DAVID

Well, you seem to have done pretty well since.

MABEL

Truth be told, McDonald's gets old after a while.

DAVID

So this is like a second career, then?

MABEL

After McDonald's and motherhood... try third.

DAVID

(Amused by HER.)

Third time's the charm, right?

MABEL

I sure as hell hope so.

MANAGEE

(Quickly interrupting.)

Mabel is extremely attentive - wonderful with the patients.

MABEL

I've had lots of practice, so I'd better be. My son was ill for some time, so I nursed him, until the state came to help. After that, I moved in with a friend and I nursed her through Alzheimer's. Why, I was a nurse for ten years, before I became a nurse. I figured I might as well make it official and get paid for it, too, so... here I am.

DAVID

I like that.

MANAGEE

Mr. Wixom's father will start with us next Wednesday.

A pretty, put-together WOMAN rushes into DAVID.

SHIRLEY

Oh, I'm sorry!

DAVID

Don't be. It's my fault. I shouldn't be blocking traffic.

The young woman - about 40, professional, well-dressed - is SHIRLEY CHATWICK. SHE walks past MABEL cheerfully and goes to a FEMALE MANNEQUIN sitting in the corner. We shall soon learn this figure is a mannequin version of the woman we just met - MRS. CHATWICK. We shall refer to her as "Mrs. Chatwick."

MANAGEE

Well, Mr. Wixom, if you have any further questions, I'd be more than happy to answer them - but if not...

DAVID

I think I'm fine, thanks.

MANAGEE

Of course. We look forward to seeing your father.

DAVID

Nice to meet you, Mabel.

MABEL

Nice to meet you, too, sir.

DAVID

David.

MANAGEE

I'll show you out.

DAVID

It's all right. I'd like to look around a bit first.

DAVID smiles and begins to wander about like a health inspector. MANAGEE eyes HIM uncomfortably - and then, the spotlight off HIM, pivots to MABEL.

MANAGEE

You must learn discretion.

MABEL

(Fake surprise.)  
Discretion? Was I indiscrete?

MANAGEE

Terribly. Do you want us to gain new residents or don't you?

MABEL

No - I'd rather people stayed healthy forever.

MANAGEE

That's not funny.

MABEL

By the way, the water is getting rusty again.

MANAGEE

They're very old buildings with very old plumbing.

MABEL

So are the residents - which is why they need better water.

MANAGEE

I will speak to the board about it.

MABEL

Great, so we'll know by next August.

MANAGEE

As you know, Mabel, we have already had to halt the refurbishment of the third floor due to lack of funds. I must therefore be circumspect about what comes before the board. Before you prod into my areas of concern, you might perhaps concentrate on your own. I see, for one, that Mrs. Mattison is still winning at cards.

MABEL

She used to live in Vegas and she plays well.

MANAGEE

Well, as they say, what happens in Vegas should stay there - because we aren't... in Vegas. Besides, the sensibilities of other residents must be considered. It is damaging to their morale to lose at cards every day. It creates disenchantment and angst - and I won't have it. They're at the end of their lives and they yearn to be at peace.

MABEL

First, you're wrong, and, second, no one uses the word "angst."

MANAGEE

I do, and it is not a term I ever want applied to our residents.

MABEL

So what do you suggest, Obi-Wan?

MANAGEE

You should deal better cards to the other players.



Are you serious?  
MABEL

Do I not look serious?  
MANAGEE

Yes, you do not.  
MABEL

Aging and decrepitude are natural, but we don't encourage them -  
we try to prevent them.  
MANAGEE

All right.  
MABEL

If I receive any further complaints, the blackjack games will be  
terminated in their entirety.  
MANAGEE

Yes.  
MABEL

Good - so you understand.  
MANAGEE

No.  
MABEL

No?  
MANAGEE

No - I don't understand... but I hear you. Is there anything  
else?  
MABEL

No.  
MANAGEE

Good.  
MABEL

MABEL turns and walks away.

MANAGEE  
(Like a wise priest chastising a wayward soul.)  
Remember one thing, Mabel - old boats like calm waters.

With an indeterminate look, MANAGEE  
exits. MABEL considers HIM with a PG-13  
stare. Just then, a young woman appears  
- AAMIINA ABDI. SHE has a noted accent  
of a gentle, sing-songy nature, which  
we'll discover is Somali. SHE is young

- perhaps too young - about 25, maybe a little older - with a certain dedication, drive, and seriousness that surpasses HER years. We sense within AAMIINA a determined desire to defy HER accent and get ahead and leave some ambiguous horrors of childhood behind HER. How much of this is freedom-loving drive and how much is ambition is not quite clear, to HER or to us.

AAMIINA

(Indicating MANAGEE.)

What is wrong with him?

MABEL

Nothing - that's the trouble. He's behaving normally.

AAMIINA

He isn't even here much now. It's always some trip or another.

MABEL

I don't know about that. He's running low on fundraisers... emphasis on the "fun."

AAMIINA

(Trying to be helpful.)

Oh, well, at least he goes to them.

MABEL

I can suggest a few other places he can go.

AAMIINA frowns uncomfortably at this and looks at "Mrs. Chatwick".

AAMIINA

Mrs. Chatwick, she's very quiet now.

MABEL

That's what happens when you're depressed.

AAMIINA

Is she... depressed?

MABEL

Yes - and wouldn't you be, stuck here?

AAMIINA

Here is better than many places - especially back home.

MABEL

Well, we're not in anyone's home - yours, mine, or theirs. This place is nobody's home - that's the damn problem.

MABEL (CONT)

(Taking a small nip bottle out of HER pocket.)  
This will help her thirst... for life or otherwise.

AAMIINA

Oh! It is against the rules.

MABEL

(Imitating HER.)  
Oh! To hell with the rules.

AAMIINA

What about the American dream?

MABEL

What the hell about it?

AAMIINA

(Pronouncing it "a head," not "ahead.")  
You stick to the rules and then you get a head.

MABEL

You get a what?

AAMIINA

You go places.

MABEL

Yeah, six feet down - so, while you're here, do something.

AAMIINA

Well, I would not want to do what you want to do now.

MABEL

I'm not asking you to. I just expect you to keep your mouth shut about it.

AAMIINA

That sounds like something they would say back where I'm from.

MABEL

Then maybe the place isn't as bad as you make it out to be.

AAMIINA

My mother and father didn't flee Somalia to...

MABEL

(Exasperated, cutting HER off.)  
What is it exactly that you want, Aamiina?

AAMIINA

Is not what I want, but what I see - a future here - although you maybe look and see nothing. For me, I see something, and I want to be more than an assistant in it. Where I'm from, we

AAMIINA (CONT)

value our elders, and these people are our elders. I help take care of them here, so I do honor to my beliefs and I also get ahead in my life, too. I "win" - the people here "win" - and the others who don't understand, they lose.

MABEL

Look, Aamiina - you're a cute little thing, with your big, dream-filled eyes, but this is the U.S of A. You don't need to be kissing anybody's ass anymore - least of all Managee's. You don't know what I know about this place - but Managee does, and that's the only reason he doesn't fire me. Take my advice - work on the accent a bit and get the hell out of this dump before you start fading into the damn wallpaper.

AAMIINA

Where I am from...

MABEL

(Mocking HER.)

"Where you are from..."

AAMIINA

(Ignoring HER, continuing.)

...people would spend many times to get into this "dump." I appreciate it, and I know I do good - and I won't do bad, so...

(Indicating the nip bottle.)

I won't do that.

MABEL

(Shaking the bottle at HER.)

But will you tell that?

AAMIINA just stares, facing down the weight of MABEL's glare. Slowly, intimidated, AAMIINA shakes HER head "no."

MABEL

Good girl.

A LOUD RINGTONE sounds, piercing the moment. MABEL reaches into HER pocket with an odd, desperate suddenness and pulls out a cellphone.

MABEL

I have to take this.

MABEL exits with the phone with an uncharacteristic degree of angst. AAMIINA considers HER queerly and then exits.

Meanwhile, DAVID, who has been poking around the place, is just about to exit when - bam! SHIRLEY crashes into HIM again. SHE is bringing in some orange juice. The juice spills on DAVID. HE is startled at first - until HE looks at the person with whom HE collided.

As we take a moment to examine HER, we see that SHIRLEY is a tall, straight, professional-looking woman - a stick on legs - upright, proper, perhaps a little too put together for comfort. One senses SHE confines everything to a list and acts on the items in an unknown, but always consistent, order - a mark of both organization and independence. SHE is well-dressed and well-everything and burns intensely, if silently, with a feverish passion to right worldly wrongs and stand tall against the grime of the universe.

SHIRLEY

Oh, God.

DAVID

No, just me.

SHIRLEY

I'm sorry. It seems I keep running into you.

DAVID extends HIS hand.

DAVID

I'm David.

SHIRLEY

My name is Shirley.

DAVID

You seem to know your way around... except around me.

SHIRLEY

I should... know my way around, that is. My mother has been a resident for eight months.

DAVID

Oh, yeah? My father is coming here next week.

SHIRLEY

I'll have to tell my mom. She loves to make new friends.

DAVID

Do you like this place?

SHIRLEY

I must - I come here almost every day after work.

DAVID

Where is work exactly?

SHIRLEY

I'm a senior lawyer for Menzies, Menzer, and Smythe.

DAVID

Me, I own a little construction company in Fairfield.

SHIRLEY

Very nice.

DAVID

You know that new section of Route 136?

SHIRLEY

Yes, I do. Please tell me you're going to fix it.

DAVID

Actually, I paved it.

SHIRLEY

Oh, I'm sorry. I presume you're very proud of it.

DAVID

Not anymore, thanks - but it's okay. I like honesty.

SHIRLEY

So do I.

DAVID

Now that's a good thing to have in common. I'm just sorry you'll have to live with my handiwork for, oh, forty more years. Perhaps, to apologize, I could take you out for a drink.

SHIRLEY

I don't know about that.

DAVID

Do you have a boyfriend?

SHIRLEY

What if I did?

DAVID

Well, I'd be asking you more quietly, for a start.

SHIRLEY

(Showing a ring on HER ring finger.)  
It's no use.

DAVID

Oh, hell - I didn't see that sucker.

SHIRLEY

In all fairness, it's a long story.

DAVID

Right - and, anyway, it sounds like I won't be hearing it.

SHIRLEY

Well, I'm open. If you come here every day, I might just have time to tell you.

SHIRLEY smiles slightly and walks back over to "Mrs. Chatwick" in the corner. DAVID just watches HER, intrigued, mesmerized, clearly smitten.

The LIGHTS fall, with a SPOTLIGHT picking up MRS. CHATWICK in the corner, still holding HER cigarette. SHE nods in the direction of the Margo Asher portrait.

MRS. CHATWICK

I'm old enough to remember her - Margo Asher - although you may not be. She was a world-famous photographer. Photographed Gandhi. Photographed Hitler. Photographed Lennon - the Beatle, not the Russian. She wasn't that old. I think she won the Pulitzer Prize once - or twice - or something like that. She died quite a few years ago now and left her mansion in Litchfield, Connecticut to the Salvation Army, which then up and sold the whole place. Hell, I wouldn't have left any mansion of mine to a charity. I would have turned it over to a spa and had a waxing technique named after me... but that's just me.

KNOCK, KNOCK!

MRS. CHATWICK

Come in.

AAMIINA enters the SPOTLIGHT carrying a small glass of water and a few pills.

AAMIINA

Here you go, Mrs. Chatwick.

MRS. CHATWICK

Thank you, dear.

MRS. CHATWICK takes the pills, puts them in HER mouth, and takes a swig of the water. SHE smiles at AAMIINA, who exits. MRS. CHATWICK waits a moment and then takes the pills out of her mouth, not having swallowed them. SHE removes a small handkerchief out of a handbag hanging on HER wheelchair and puts the pills in it. SHE then turns back to us and picks up where SHE left off.

MRS. CHATWICK

I think it was June when he showed up - although, funny, I don't even remember his name. I just remember watching him - watching and watching - even though my eyesight wasn't all that good. You know, it's funny that, even when your eyesight isn't good, you can still see what you want to see - and I saw him. Maybe a good part of it was my imagination - or maybe even memories of other people, all crushed together - but I saw him. Good-looking man, yes - really good looking. A lot of living went into that face - not all good living, too - but then, my face isn't much the better for it... so it made me feel right at home.

The LIGHTS dim on MRS. CHATWICK and rise slightly on the other side of the stage - so slightly we can detect only silhouettes. An old man is tied - yes, that's the word - to a wheelchair. HE is MR. WIXOM, the father of DAVID WIXOM, although whether the old man's mind is present enough even to grasp this concept is easily disputable. We shall come to know HIM as a quiet, unassuming man, who spends more time staring than HE does speaking and whose words come hesitantly, as if they were feet stepping on broken glass. At first, MR. WIXOM is facing downward, perhaps asleep - but no, not quite. Slowly, as if it weighed a million pounds, HE lifts HIS head and peers out at us.

MR. WIXOM

Hello?... Hello?

MABEL

It's me, Mr. Wixom.

CLICK! A SPOTLIGHT illuminates MR. WIXOM. MABEL has just entered, having pressed an unseen light switch.



Who are you? MR. WIXOM

I'm Mabel. MABEL

Mabel? Mabel Thompson? MR. WIXOM

No, sir. MABEL

I didn't think so. She died thirty years ago. MR. WIXOM

I'm another Mabel. I'm head nurse on the floor. MABEL

(Looking around.) MR. WIXOM  
Where am I?

The Margo Asher Home. Your son brought you this morning. This is your room. MABEL

This isn't my room. MR. WIXOM

It is. It's just a new room, you see. I'm sure you'll get used to it. MABEL

MR. WIXOM looks around.

Where's my son? MR. WIXOM

He isn't here right now. MABEL

Where is he? MR. WIXOM

I suppose he's back at his house. MABEL

He doesn't have a house. MR. WIXOM

Perhaps his apartment, then. MABEL

MR. WIXOM

He doesn't have an apartment.

MABEL

Well, wherever he is, he'll be back soon.

MR. WIXOM

Where am I?

MABEL

Your new home. Your son brought you this morning.

MR. WIXOM

I want to go home.

MABEL

This is your home.

MR. WIXOM

No, it isn't.

MABEL

It will be, then - in time.

MR. WIXOM looks around the room again.

MR. WIXOM

Where is my son?

MABEL

He left a little while ago. He'll be back soon.

MR. WIXOM

He left?

MABEL

You may not remember. It's probably because you're tired.

MR. WIXOM thinks a moment.

MR. WIXOM

(Comprehending?)  
This... is my room?

MABEL

Yes - do you like it?

MR. WIXOM

I want to leave.

MABEL

I think you want some sleep.

I want to leave.

MR. WIXOM

Try to get some sleep.

MABEL

I want to...

MR. WIXOM

Tomorrow, I can take you outside and you can sit on the lawn. There's a beautiful lake just over the hills. Your son said you like the outdoors.

MABEL

MR. WIXOM seems to register this somewhere in HIS mind and then peers curiously at MABEL.

I don't know you.

MR. WIXOM

I'm Mabel.

MABEL

Mabel Thompson? She died thirty years ago.

MR. WIXOM

Goodnight, Mr. Wixom.

MABEL

MABEL smiles, reaches up, and flips an unseen light switch. The SPOTLIGHT on MR. WIXOM dies. The stage is bathed in darkness for a moment.

Slowly, we hear the SOUNDS of RAIN PATTERNING AGAINST GLASS. The LIGHTS rise again triumphantly in full. A few weeks have passed since the last scene. The sky outside is mildly overcast and it is pleasantly rainy outside.

The MANNEQUINS in the room have been rearranged like pieces on a chessboard - still lifeless as ever. "Mrs. Chatwick" is looking outside one of the windows. MABEL and AAMIINA are moving about, attending to the MANNEQUINS.

Come on, Pop.

DAVID

DAVID enters, pushing a MALE MANNEQUIN in a wheelchair. This figure follows

the logic of "Mrs. Chatwick", being a mannequin version of the old man we just met - MR. WIXOM. We shall refer to him as "Mr. Wixom."

MABEL

(To DAVID.)  
Good morning, Mr. Wixom.

DAVID

David.

DAVID continues and moves "Mr. Wixom" over to a table.

DAVID

There you go - your favorite spot.

DAVID bends forward.

DAVID

What was that?

Apparently, "Mr. Wixom" is talking to DAVID - but we can't hear anything.

DAVID

Just one second.

DAVID walks over to MABEL.

DAVID

Hey, Mabel - Pop is a bit hungry.

MABEL

Of course he is - he didn't eat at lunch.

DAVID

Yeah - Pop can be a bit unregulated. It's Henry Ford's fault.

MABEL

Henry Ford?

DAVID

For thirty years, Pop used to work the night shift at a Ford plant in Detroit. That's where I'm from, you see - born and bred. Pop would come in and come out and, swear to God, from the ages of two to ten, I thought he was having an affair with my mom. Ever since, he's never been able to eat regular hours. He had his breakfast at dinner, his dinner at breakfast, and his lunch... well, I guess lunch was still at lunch.

An overly cheerful MANAGEE enters.

MANAGEE

Good afternoon, Mr. Wixom! How are you finding your father?

DAVID

Hungry.

MANAGEE

(Glaring at MABEL.)  
Oh, dear. He wasn't fed.

MABEL

Oh, dear. He wasn't eating.

MANAGEE

(To MABEL, commandingly.)  
Go out, Mabel, and...

MABEL

I've already taken care of it. I'll sit with Mr. Wixom later.

MANAGEE

Of course you will.  
(To DAVID.)  
Things are going well so far?

DAVID

Yeah, Pop seems to be very relaxed.

MANAGEE

Ah, yes - "old boats like calm waters."

MANAGEE smiles and exits into the office on the other side of the room.

MABEL

(To DAVID.)  
Calm - not stagnant.

DAVID smiles and walks back to "Mr. Wixom". MABEL turns to exit, when SHIRLEY enters.

SHIRLEY

Hi, Mabel.

MABEL

Hello, Ms. Chatwick.

SHIRLEY

Hi, Aamiina.

AAMIINA

Hi, Ms. Chatwick.

DAVID

(Conspicuously, waving - "don't forget me.")  
Hi, Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Oh, yes - Mister, eh...

MABEL

David.

SHIRLEY

Wixom. I remember you - but, this time, you know my name.

DAVID

(Discretely glancing at MABEL.)  
A little bird told me.

SHIRLEY

I see.

DAVID

She also told me you aren't engaged... not really.

SHIRLEY

(Looking at MABEL.)  
I think little birds should mind their own business.

DAVID

Oh, well, this particular little bird isn't entirely to blame, 'cause she has an accomplice - named "Mr. Bing." I looked you up, Ms. Shirley Reina Chatwick! You told me you worked at Menzers and whatever-the-Hell-their-names-are. Well, I happen to know all about you guys from an acquaintance of mine who was sued by you and some other woman. Still, I looked beyond that - right at your company website, in fact - and under the "partners" section... there you were! It was easy to find you, since you're the only woman partner they have.

SHIRLEY

Yes, unfortunately.  
(A beat, curious.)  
You said you know someone who...

DAVID

Yep - Peter Holster himself.

SHIRLEY

You could keep better company.

DAVID

To be fair, I wasn't the best of friends with him or anything - just knew him from school. We spent some time smoking a joint or two at Clarkmont High - pun not intended - but that's about it. Next thing I know, I see him on CNN being sued for sexual

DAVID (CONT)

harassment. What was it again? Inappropriate emails? Inappropriate touching? Inappropriately touching emails? He lost his business over it, right?

SHIRLEY

That pales in comparison to what the victim lost.

DAVID

Well, you'd know the details, being the lead attorney.

SHIRLEY

How do you know...

DAVID

I have another friend - "Mr. Google." Sometimes Mr. Bing just doesn't satisfy. I'm the love 'em or leave 'em type... but only with technology, don't worry.

SHIRLEY

Oh, I don't.

DAVID

Anyway, I'm not here to talk about Peter Holster - or Mr. Bing and Mr. Google - but us. I've been waiting for you to show up. I was actually thinking quite a bit about you the other day. I came across a nice gift certificate to a restaurant along the Broad Brook Dam in Farmington. I got it on Restaurant.com three years ago and it expires in about a week. I think it's a shame to let it go to waste. It's a dam good restaurant - literally, even - and I figured, well, maybe you'd like to...

SHIRLEY

It would be more poignant if the certificate had already expired, but you just had to invite me anyway.

DAVID

Yeah well, it hadn't - I mean, hasn't - so there.

SHIRLEY

I'll take it under advisement and revert soonest.

SHIRLEY smiles and walks over to "Mrs. Chatwick".

DAVID

(To MABEL.)  
How did I do?

MABEL

You suck.

By now, SHIRLEY has stopped in HER tracks. SHE sees something in the near

distance that causes a smile to appear on HER face.

SHIRLEY

You have no shame, Mr. Wixom - using your father as bait.

DAVID looks over to the corner of the room. "Mrs. Chatwick" and "Mr. Wixom" are sitting next to each other, facing towards the windows.

DAVID

I plead "Not Guilty." I have nothing to do with this.

SHIRLEY

I see. I suppose your father just wheeled himself over.

DAVID

I don't know.

AAMIINA

I know.

SHIRLEY

I know, too - and the answer is "no."

MABEL

I wheeled him over.

SHIRLEY

You wheeled him over?

MABEL

Mr. Wixom asked me to.

SHIRLEY

(To DAVID.)  
Oh, I see. You have accomplices.

MABEL

No, not that Wixom. That one.

MABEL is pointing in the direction of "Mr. Wixom".

AAMIINA

(Suspicious.)  
He hasn't said a word to me yet.

MABEL

(Sharply.)  
Maybe you should try listening.



DAVID

I guess someone owes me an apology - and her name is Shirley.

SHIRLEY

Fair enough, then - "I apologize."

DAVID

To think, I could have lost my business because of you.

SHIRLEY

Well, if you'll excuse me, I'll go fetch my mother.

MABEL

She looks perfectly fine to me.

DAVID

I guess I don't see Pop suffering either.

MABEL

Just leave them be, Ms. Chatwick. It's good that they talk to each other. Your momma doesn't jive with most here anyway.

SHIRLEY

Yes, I... I suppose you're right. It's just odd, because it's my visiting time. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do.

DAVID

You can talk to me.

SHIRLEY

I'm already doing that.

DAVID

Great - so you've got skin in the game. Besides, you only live once... unless you're Buddhist.

(Looking at HER quizzically.)

You're not Buddhist, are you?

SHIRLEY

No.

DAVID

Well, there you go.

DAVID gestures off to the side of the stage - "walk with me?" SHIRLEY considers HIM for a moment, smiles, and walks - but sufficiently fast that SHE almost flees from the room. DAVID, a bit annoyed, follows HER out quickly. MABEL shakes HER head and notices AAMIINA looking at HER oddly.