

Sin

A Play in Two Acts

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Synopsis of Sin

Sin is about boundaries. The kind of boundaries that, when breached, cause damage to the human psyche. When I lived in Chicago, I had the opportunity to work for five years as a volunteer, a liner as we were called, for an organization called the National Runaway Switchboard. During my tenure as a liner, I was allowed to spend time on the phone with children who were victims of breaches of human boundaries. They had run away, were thinking of running away, and, in some cases, thinking of suicide. Most of these children were girls. Sometimes we could help and other times not. As a result of my work at the National Runaway Switchboard, I began thinking of these young girls and their stories, which led me to write *Sin*.

Sin, then, is the story of a young woman's attempt to deal with a destructive past filled with sexual abuse and a bid by her father, the perpetrator, to reconcile with his daughter. Victoria, the main character, attempts to deal with her tortured past through the use many devices: alcohol, seclusion, and the abuse of hotlines, all of which prove to be anything but successful. Her father, a very important man in a local political scene, has spent two years away from his daughter and in therapy before his attempt at reconciliation. The young woman's mother, knowledgeable of the relationship between her husband and daughter, kept silent out of fear and ignorance. Her best friend, Susan, is her sole source of support and comfort.

The play uses shifts in time and space to develop the environment for Victoria to finally discover the strength to confront her father and, maybe, move beyond the self destructive behavior that has caused her much pain.

History

In 2004, *Sin* was selected to participate in the inaugural Playwrights Showcase of the Western Region and received a staged reading. It was also selected by Paragon Theatre in Denver to participate in their play development program called the Trench and received a full staged reading. *Sin* received a short production in March of 2007 as part of the National Children's Advocacy Center's 23rd National Symposium on Child Abuse in Huntsville, Alabama. In 2007 *Sin* was selected as a quarter-finalist in the 14th Annual Writer's Network Screenplay & Fiction Competition. *Sin* was a participant in the Provincetown Theatre's Winter Play Reading Series, March 17, 2010, in Provincetown, MA. In 2012, *Sin* was selected to be part of Denver's Edge Theatre – On Your Feet development program.

Cast of Characters

Victoria	A woman in her early to mid twenties.
Susan	A woman in her early to mid twenties and Victoria's best friend.
Mother	A woman in her mid fifties and Victoria's mother.
Gordon	A man in his late fifties and Victoria's father. He is dressed in a pair of slacks, a sportcoat, and a dark cotton tee shirt.
Nadine	A black woman about forty years old and a liner at a hotline. A liner is a person who answers crisis calls at a hotline.
Rod	A man in his late thirties and a liner at a hotline. Rod is an ex-marine but has a soft spot for people in trouble.
Darla	A young woman, early 20s and a liner at a hotline.

Author's Note:

The rhymes that appear on pages I-1, I-6, II-1,II-29, II-49 are traditional children's rhymes. The rhyme on page I-6 was created by the author.

Setting: There are three areas where action takes place during the play: 1) Upstage, and spread out from left to right, is the Liners area. The set should suggest that each liner is in a different location. We don't want the audience to see these people as being in the same room. Each Liner sits at a table with a phone, pads of paper, and pens and pencils, maybe a laptop. 2) Downstage is Victoria's apartment, which is the area where most of the action takes place and is a mess. Her apartment consists of a couch, a coat rack, a counter that can be used as a bar, and a coffee table in front of the couch. The coffee table is littered with "things", one of which is a knife. 3) Center is an area of action between the Liner's area and Victoria's apartment. This area allows the characters to move from the present to the past and back again, it allows the characters to enter the stage without entering the action or to enter the stage and slowly move into the action. Because the play is about boundaries, or the lack thereof, the set should be very open, designed without walls to allow the actors to move freely from one area to the other. Lightening changes will be used to indicate time changes and shifts in location. However, there should be a door to the apartment, but it is only used at the end of the play.

At Rise: A spot is on Nadine. She is on a call for the hotline.

NADINE

Listen, honey, I know you've got problems, but you're not interested in getting any help. You just want to waste our time and keep us from helping people who really need it. We keep a log of all calls and you've called us thirty-five times this week alone with so many different stories it's hard to keep track. So, we've been nice up to this point. But no more. You're put on notice, call again and we get mad. Real mad. That's the word from the higher ups. And you don't want to see me get nasty. And one last thing, keep calling and we'll make a call of our own, to the police. What you're doing is illegal and hurting other people. So call again and the wraith of Nadine will come down on you, baby. You hear? Now you take care, get yourself some help, and don't ever call here again. Understand? (pause) No, no, don't start going there. I'm not listening anymore. I'm hanging up. Don't call.

(The lights come down on Nadine and come up dimly as Susan enters skipping rope and singing as if she were 10 or 11 years old. She can use the entire stage.)

SUSAN

(singing)

Ask your mother for fifty cents
To see the elephant jump the fence:
He jumped so high he touched the sky
And never came down till the Fourth of July.

(Susan stops jumping rope and singing.)

Victoria! (pause) Victoria are you home? (pause)
Victoria, come on, let's play. Victoria?

SUSAN (cont'd)
(Susan waits for a reply, then
starts jumping rope and
singing again as she exits.)

Dickery, Dickery, dare;
The pig flew in the air:
The man in brown
Soon brought him down;
Dickery, Dickery, dare.

VICTORIA (off)
(as young girl)

No, daddy. Please? No.

(The lights come up on three
liners. As each of the
liners begins to speak, they
rise and move around the
stage. Their lines should be
performed quickly. They
should not be concerned with
staying in their "space".)

DARLA

Yes, we can help you get a place to live. (pause) No, no,
don't tell your husband. If you tell your husband where you
are, he can come after you.

ROD

I want you to put the gun away. (pause) No, I will not
talk to you if you continue to hold the gun. Put it away.
(pause) Yeah, I'll wait.

NADINE

Do you remember what I told you the last time you called?
(pause) Do you want us to call the police? Because we
can't be wasting our precious time talking to someone who is
only interested in making us look like fools.

DARLA

Sandy, we don't want that. He can hurt you. (pause) I know you're afraid. It's a scary thing you're doing, but also very brave.

ROD

Did you put the gun away? (pause) Where? (pause) Good. Now let's see if we can figure out what the hell is going on.

NADINE

Oh, you've never called here before? Really? (pause) What about three hours ago when you were dying from a drug overdose and hung up on us? And yesterday, at eight-thirty in the morning, when you were a homeless girl with no place to go? And nine-thirty-five, when you said that your father was abusing you? Or at ten-fifteen, when you claimed that you were... hello? Hello? Right, you hung up again. Just like always. Damn I hope she doesn't keep calling. Waste of time, that's what she is. Waste of time.

(Nadine crosses to her desk and sits.)

DARLA

Sandy, go to a neighbor's, or a fire station, somewhere he won't find you. (pause) It's okay to cry, you're scared. (pause) Hello? Hello? She hung up. No, no. I hate that. Damn it.

(Darla crosses to her desk. Victoria enters carrying a handful of mail and crosses into her apartment.)

ROD

Okay, before we can go any further, I want you to know that I don't want you to hurt yourself. You understand? (pause) Good.

(Rod silently continues his call and crosses to his desk. Mother, Gordon, and Susan enter and stay on the periphery of the apartment. Victoria crosses to the couch and sits. Victoria takes her cell phone out of her purse. She presses a few buttons to get her messages. Mother moves closer to the apartment area but doesn't enter. She is speaking as the voice on the message.)

MOTHER

Hi, dear, it's mother. Haven't heard from you in a few days, hope everything is okay. Your father is going out of town this weekend, so call and let me know if you want to come over for dinner. He won't be back until Monday night. Love you. 'Bye.

VICTORIA

Oh, shit.

(Mother exits. Gordon crosses close to the apartment. He also is talking as the voice on the message.)

GORDON

Victoria, this is your father calling. Mother thinks that I have gone out of town for the weekend, but I'm staying at the Regency, downtown. I want us to get together and talk. You have no idea how hard this has been for me. I'll be here until Monday afternoon. Please, give me a call.

VICTORIA

I will not call you, ever.

(Susan enters the apartment and speaks as the voice on the message.)

SUSAN

Hi Victoria. Look, I've been trying to get a hold of you for days. Where are you hiding? I'm worried about you. I'm just going to jump in the shower, so I will be up to your place in a little while. I hope you're okay and don't forget about tonight.

VICTORIA

Tonight? What the hell's tonight?

(Susan exits. Gordon enters the apartment and circles around Victoria. Again, he is the voice on the message.)

GORDON

Victoria, this is your father again. I've been sitting here waiting for your call and I'm not sure how much longer I can wait. You can at least call me, can't you? I do have your address and I must see you. I know I agreed not to, but if I don't hear from you soon, I'll just come over.

VICTORIA

Damn!

(Victoria punches in a number on the phone. Gordon exits as Darla's phone rings.)

DARLA

City Hot-Line, can I help you?

VICTORIA

I don't know.

DARLA

What seems to be the problem?

VICTORIA

Oh, shit, look, I'm sorry to bother you.

DARLA

You're not bothering me.

VICTORIA

No, no, I can't. Oh, hell, I'm sorry. I shouldn't call here. Thank you.

(Victoria hangs up.)

DARLA

Well, it's just going to be one of those nights. Damn. I can always tell.

(Darla sits back down at her desk. Victoria crosses to a counter and takes out a bottle of liquor and a glass. She crosses to the couch and sits. She places the bottle and glass down on the table.)

VICTORIA

Don't tempt me tonight. Tomorrow, all right, or Sunday, or Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...but not tonight.

(Lighting shift as Susan enters as the ten year old. She is jumping rope and singing.)

SUSAN

Cinderella, dressed in yella
Went upstairs to kiss a 'fella
Made a mistake
And kissed a snake
How many doctors
Did it take?
One, two, three, four,
Five, six, seven, eight.
Victoria? Victoria?

(Susan exits as lights return to normal. Victoria starts to open the bottle but puts it down and picks up her phone and dials. Rod stands and crosses to Victoria's apartment area.)

ROD

Open Forum.

(Victoria says nothing.)

Can I help you?

(Victoria continues to remain silent.)

Hello? (pause) You there?

(Rod begins to cross back to his desk.)

VICTORIA

Hello.

(Rod stops and turns back to Victoria.)

ROD

What can we do to help?

VICTORIA

I can't drink tonight. If I do, I'm not sure what will happen.

ROD

Hey, didn't I talk to you a couple days ago?

VICTORIA

Yes, you did.

ROD

That's it, I'm hanging up, damn it.

VICTORIA

Wait, please.

ROD

I'm not supposed to talk to you. Got that?

VICTORIA

Please, just tonight.

ROD

No, I can't. How many AA meetings have we recommended, how many treatment centers? Have you ever taken any of our advice?

VICTORIA

No, no, I haven't.

ROD

There's nothing we can do, understand?

VICTORIA

Yes there is.

ROD

Like what?

(pause)

Well?

VICTORIA

I don't know. Just knowing you're there if I need you, I guess.

ROD

Oh, great, and listen to more of your outrageous stories?

VICTORIA

No, no...

ROD

Yeah, yeah. How long did you keep me on the phone last time, two maybe three hours?

VICTORIA

I know, I'm sorry. Look...

ROD

You call all the time and we can't do it anymore. I hear your voice, I hang up. That's that.

VICTORIA

I'm sorry. I just want to know that if I feel like I'm going to drink tonight, I can call. Just tonight, please, and then I promise I won't bother you again. No more stories, I promise.

ROD

Yeah, right.

VICTORIA

Please.

(Rod hangs up and crosses back to his desk.)

ROD

I hate that. Calling here all the damn time. What the hell is her problem?

(Rod sits. Victoria picks up the bottle.)

VICTORIA

Maybe you are my only friend. I should open you up and let your soothing, numbing fingers hide me from myself. (pause) The whore, the slut, the pervert... (pause) Stop it, stop it, goddamn it, stop it. I will not lose tonight, not to him again.

(Victoria puts the bottle down as Susan enters.)

SUSAN

Victoria, where the hell have you been? I've been calling for days. The least you could do is call me back and let me know you're okay.

(Susan crosses into Victoria's apartment.)

VICTORIA

Oh, Susan, don't start with me right now. I've got enough on my mind without you adding to it. Why is it that everyone thinks I'm about to fall over the edge all the time?

SUSAN

I'm not starting with you. If I'm not mistaken, I'm your best and maybe only friend. And I'm not trying to add any more shit to your life. I just want to know you're okay, is that so fucking bad?

VICTORIA

I'm okay. There, are you happy. My life could not be better.

(Susan sits down on a chair.)

SUSAN

Oh, shit.

VICTORIA

You're not my keeper, you know. I don't have to update you on every little thing that happens in my life.

SUSAN

I know. I'm just worried about you. When you don't call me back, I'm always afraid you're in one of your...

VICTORIA

I'm not in anything, okay? Let's not fight, not tonight, please. I'm fine.

SUSAN

You're sure?

VICTORIA

Yeah, fine. (pause) And what's with you? All dressed up to kill?

SUSAN

You don't remember, do you?

VICTORIA

Remember what?

SUSAN

I'm seeing Phil tonight.

VICTORIA

Phil? Are you crazy? Not that prick again. Maybe I should start worrying about you.

SUSAN

Maybe you should.

VICTORIA

I can't believe you're going out with him again. All you did was complain for the six months you guys were together. He didn't treat you very well, if you remember?

SUSAN

Yes, I do remember, but I thought I'd give it another shot. Who knows, maybe this time it will work.

VICTORIA

Dream on.

SUSAN

And you, my wonderful, long time friend, are supposed to be coming with me tonight.

VICTORIA

What?

SUSAN

You have a date also, remember?

VICTORIA

Are you nuts? I'm not going anywhere, especially on a date.. I'm gonna watch some British monarchy show and pass out early. Anyway, I'm not in the mood.

SUSAN

Victoria, you agreed to this last week. We're meeting Phil and his friend Blake.

VICTORIA

Blake who?

SUSAN

Blake MacDonald from the lake last summer? Victoria, don't pull one of your weird stunts on me at this late date He and Phil are meeting us over at Fusions Grill at eight. You can't back out now.

VICTORIA

Yes, I can. I don't think I could face meeting anyone tonight. You'll have to do this without me.

SUSAN

You haven't had a date in months. All you do is hang out in your apartment. It's time to get the hell out of here and have a little fun.

VICTORIA

If I want to have fun, I'll make my own.

SUSAN

So it's fun hiding out in your apartment?

VICTORIA

Maybe.

SUSAN

Maybe, huh? The last three weekends you've holed up in here, doing who knows what. Last Sunday I found you sprawled out on the floor passed out with a bottle of booze as your sleeping companion. That doesn't seem like fun to me.

VICTORIA

Well, I didn't ask you, did I?

SUSAN

What is going on here?

VICTORIA

Nothing.

SUSAN

You always say that when something is going on. I know you too well.

VICTORIA

I said nothing is wrong.

SUSAN

Okay, look, fuck you. I'm sorry to bother you. I'll talk to you in a week or two.

(Susan starts to exit.)

VICTORIA

Susan...

(Susan stops and turns back toward Victoria.)

SUSAN

Yes.

(Victoria is silent.)

Well?

VICTORIA

Gordon's been calling me, leaving messages.

(Susan crosses back to
Victoria.)

SUSAN

What?

VICTORIA

He wants to see me.

SUSAN

Oh, Christ. How long has this been going on?

VICTORIA

The last five, six weeks.

SUSAN

Five, six weeks? And you didn't tell me?

VICTORIA

I can handle this myself.

SUSAN

(sarcastically)

Oh, right.

VICTORIA

And somehow he got my address. He said he was going to come over tonight if I didn't call him.

SUSAN

Well, then, call him, goddamn it.

VICTORIA

No, I can't.

SUSAN

Well, then I'll call him. That son-of-a-bitch has no right coming over here.

(Susan takes her cell phone out her pocket.)

What's the number? (pause) Well?

VICTORIA

I'm not giving you the number, so forget it.

(Mother enters but does not cross into Victoria's apartment.)

SUSAN

Oh, Jesus Christ. How did he find you?

VICTORIA

Maybe my mother told him, you know how she is.

(Lighting shift.)

MOTHER

You look very troubled, dear.

(Victoria crosses to her mother outside of the apartment.)

VICTORIA

I am.

MOTHER

Your father came up to see you again, didn't he?

VICTORIA

Yes, last night. Walked right into my dorm room and locked the door.

MOTHER

He said he was going out to meet some friends. I tried to stop him, but he wouldn't listen. He pushed me aside and left.

VICTORIA

Oh, yeah, sure, you tried to stop him.

MOTHER

I'm not taking the blame anymore.

VICTORIA

Who should I blame? Myself? Is that who I should blame, mother?

MOTHER

Maybe that's exactly who you should blame.

VICTORIA

And where were you, mother? Why weren't you there to help me?

MOTHER

We have been over this a million times, Victoria. I don't want to talk about it.

VICTORIA

We haven't been over this a million times, because you never want to talk about it.

(Gordon enters but keeps his distance from Victoria and Mother.)

MOTHER

You allowed him into your room last night, you allowed him to do things to you. Victoria, you are a grown woman in college, yet you let him do as he pleases with you. Who's to blame for that?

VICTORIA

I can't stop him, mother. Inside of me I'm thinking how wrong this all is, how bad I am, but I can't stop. It's been going on for so long that I think the only way it will ever stop is if he dies or I kill myself. I've tried to say no. Daddy, no, this isn't right.

(Lighting shift. Gordon crosses close to Victoria. Mother looks at Gordon for a moment and exits.)

GORDON

Shhh, my little girl. We love each other and when two people love each other, nothing is ever wrong. You have to trust that; trust your heart not your head. I look at you and see nothing but beauty and you know I'd never do anything to destroy that. We have something special, something that others wouldn't understand. So, hush now, and let me hold my little girl.

(Gordon puts his arms around Victoria.)

SUSAN

You can't stay here.

(The lighting shifts back to normal. Victoria breaks away from Gordon, stares at him for a moment, and crosses back to Susan. Gordon looks at Victoria as he exits.)

VICTORIA

And I can't leave, either.

SUSAN

Come out with us tonight. You'll be safe that way.

VICTORIA

I can't, Susan. I've been trying so hard to put him out of my mind, but I can't. I wish he were dead.

SUSAN

That wouldn't help. It's like a disease that's inside of you. The more you try and ignore it, the worse it gets. You can't go on living like this: coming home from work and hiding in your apartment, not talking to your friends, spending most of your time alone. It hurts you and it hurts me. You're my best friend and you're letting this bastard destroy your life. Please, come with us.

VICTORIA

You go ahead. I'll be fine.

SUSAN

No, goddamn it. I'm calling Phil and telling him the dinner is off. I'm gonna stay with you tonight.

(Susan takes out her cell phone.)

VICTORIA

Please, Susan, put the phone away. You don't have to do that.

SUSAN

What if he does come here?

VICTORIA

And what if he doesn't? Maybe was just a bluff. To see if I'd call him.

SUSAN

And if you're wrong and he does show up. Then what will you do?

VICTORIA

I don't know. Since he started calling, I've been thinking that maybe it's time for me to stand up to him.

SUSAN

You've never been able to stand up to him before, what makes you think you can do it now?

VICTORIA

It's been two years and things are different now. I'll be okay. You don't have to worry.

SUSAN

Oh, yeah, right.

VICTORIA

You don't. It's not your fight.

SUSAN

Well, maybe I want to make it my fight. Remember in sixth grade, there was that older kid who lived down the block from me? Used to pick on us all of the time?

VICTORIA

Jerry Downing.

SUSAN

Yeah, Jerry the asshole. The two of us teamed up and waited for him, pushed him off his bike and beat the shit out him. Broke his nose.

VICTORIA

The girls kicked the shit out of the big, bad boy.

SUSAN

Remember that rhyme we made up? (pause) How did it go? (thinking) Jerry, Jerry the asshole...

VICTORIA and SUSAN
(together)

Came by bike
We came running
From out of sight
One punch, two kicks
Four smacks more
Jerry the asshole
Was no more!

VICTORIA

Yeah. What a look he had on his face; blood running down his chin.

SUSAN

He was so embarrassed, he never told anyone what happened. He never bothered us again. Maybe it's time for another team effort. How about this, if Gordon shows up, I'll hide in your bedroom in case something happens, you know, Gordon is looking to return to the old days. The moment he tries anything, I'll come running out and we both kick his ugly ass. What'd you think?

VICTORIA

It sounds great. Another asshole bites the dust.

SUSAN

Then it's settled. I'm staying and we fight him together.

VICTORIA

No. I know it might sound stupid, but I have to do this myself.

(Gordon enters and crosses
upstage of the apartment,
stops and stares at the two
women for a moment and then
exits.)

SUSAN

Oh, God, I don't like this, Victoria. Plus, think what you're doing to me.

VICTORIA

What?

SUSAN

Now, I have to be with Phil and Blake, alone. I wanted you along so I wouldn't feel so stupid.

VICTORIA

Feeling stupid is not something you do, Susan.

SUSAN

Oh, yes it is, I do it just fine.

VICTORIA

You'll be okay. Two handsome men fawning all over you, what could be better than that?

SUSAN

Fawning, right. (pause) Oh, God. Look, we're going to grab something quick to eat and then I'll come right back.

VICTORIA

Sure.

SUSAN

Now, call me if anything happens, okay?

VICTORIA

Yes, go.

(The two women hug.)

SUSAN

Okay, okay, 'bye.

(Susan exits. Darla stands
and crosses down stage.)

DARLA

Could you speak up, please? (pause) Where are you calling
from? (pause) There's seems to be a lot of noise on your
end and it's difficult to understand you. (pause) Hello?
Can you go to another phone? (pause) Hello? Hello?

(Darla hangs up.)

DARLA

What on earth is going on tonight?

(Darla crosses back to her
desk and sits. Victoria's
phone rings and she crosses
to answer it as Mother enters
and crosses into the
apartment. Even though
Victoria and her mother are
in the same room, they are
not physically together.)

VICTORIA

Hello.

MOTHER

Hello, dear. Did you get my message?

VICTORIA

Yes.

MOTHER

You didn't call.

VICTORIA

Don't start, mother, please. I've had a rough week. It's
not like we're close friends or something.

MOTHER

I know. (pause) It's just that I haven't heard from you for a while. Are you all right?

VICTORIA

I'm fine. I've been busy at work, working late. You have to make an impression when you're just starting out. (pause) Is there a reason you called?

MOTHER

I don't like being alone. It gets so lonely with your father gone. I do hope you can come over for dinner tomorrow. It's been weeks since I've seen you.

VICTORIA

We'll see. (pause) So, Gordon is out of town?

MOTHER

Yes. One of his trips to Washington for who knows what. Some stupid political thing, I suppose.

VICTORIA

Mother, you know damn well Gordon isn't on some business trip.

(Nadine stands and crosses down stage.)

NADINE

Oh, good. So you're finally getting up off your butt and gonna get some help. Hallelujah, girl. It is about time. Now, maybe, we won't have to be listening to your continuing saga of woe. (pause) Oh, honey, you are the saga queen. Now listen to me good. Get that help and don't call us anymore. (pause) Good. You take care now.

(Nadine hangs up and crosses back to the desk and sits.)

Bet my ass she calls back tomorrow. Damn.

MOTHER

What do you mean?

VICTORIA

You know damn well he's still in town. And he's been calling me for weeks.

MOTHER

I'm sorry, I didn't know.

VICTORIA

He left a message saying he knows my address. How did that happen mother? How is it that he found out where I live?

MOTHER

I can't keep track of everything your father does. He's very resourceful, you know.

VICTORIA

Yes, I know. And usually you are his resource. Did you tell him?

MOTHER

No.

VICTORIA

Mother, did you tell him?

(Gordon enters, stops, and looks at the two women.)

MOTHER

I don't know how he got your number, dear. Your father is a very important man and he has his ways of getting things, you know that. I wish you'd start taking better care of yourself. I told you two years ago to move far away, but you refused. Now your father has found you again. But I promise, I didn't tell him anything this time.

VICTORIA

The two of you make a perfect pair.

(Lighting shift.)

GORDON

Tell me where she is.

(Mother crosses to Gordon and out of Victoria's apartment.)

MOTHER

I promised not to, you know that.

GORDON

I don't care about your stupid promises.

MOTHER

Well I do and it is time for you to leave her alone.

GORDON

I can't. Don't you understand how much I miss her, how much she means to me. I can't go on like this. I know what I did was wrong, but that doesn't mean things can never change. Life hasn't been the same.

MOTHER

It will never be the same.

GORDON

I know that, but we can, if we try, be a family again, whatever that may be.

MOTHER

No, that will never happen again, not if I have anything to say about it.

GORDON

I want to see her again, we both want to see her again.

MOTHER

But I do see her.

GORDON

What?

MOTHER

Yes. I sneak away to see her a couple of times a month when you're off on one of your political missions.

GORDON

So, she's still in town, I see. (pause) Well, at least you get to see Victoria every few weeks, but I haven't seen her for almost two years. So, maybe it's my turn to patch things up with her.

MOTHER

That's not possible, Gordon.

GORDON

But I won't know unless I try.

MOTHER

But I don't want you to try. Leave her alone.

GORDON

No, I can't live like this. I thought I could but I miss her too much. What happened in the past is over, it's behind us now. Tell me where she is so I can talk to her.

MOTHER

No.

GORDON

Look, we can see her together. We can work as a family again.

MOTHER

No. I will not break my promise again. I've done that much too often.

GORDON

I will find her, you know that.

MOTHER

Do what you must, but I will not help you anymore. I am sick inside from what I have done. I don't know why I continue to stay with you. I must be insane.

(Lights return to normal as Mother crosses back to Victoria's apartment. Gordon stands and watches the two women for a moment, then exits.)

MOTHER

I'm as lost as you are, Victoria. Maybe we can work together, find some help. We can't go on like this any longer.

VICTORIA

Help? All of a sudden you're talking about getting help for us? I don't think so. I can take care of myself.

MOTHER

Oh, yes, you've been doing a fine job of that, haven't you?

VICTORIA

I've got to go now, mother. I'll call you next week.

MOTHER

If your father shows up, I want you to call me, understand?

VICTORIA

You want to come over and watch?

MOTHER

Goddamn you, Victoria.

(Mother crosses out of
Victoria's apartment and
exits.)

VICTORIA

Hello? Mother, are you there? Oh, shit.

(Victoria dials the phone.)

VICTORIA

Mother, answer the damn phone. Please, I'm sorry, I didn't
mean what I said. (pause) Mother?

(Victoria hangs up the phone.
She picks up the bottle of
liquor.)

VICTORIA

Oh, I want you so bad right now.

(Victoria puts the bottle back
down. Lighting shift as all
three liners get up from
their desks and begin to move
around the stage with their
phones.)

DARLA

How long ago did you take the drugs?

ROD

No, I'm not going to turn you over to the police. Hey, I'm
an ex-marine. When I give my word, I give my word, got it?

NADINE

Yes, yes we have an ambulance on the way right now. Is she bleeding badly? (pause) Okay, look, put the phone down, get a towel, and put pressure on the wound. I'll stay on the line until the ambulance gets there. (pause) Oh, lord, how do I get into these things? Person bleeding all over the damn place.

DARLA

Damn it. She hung up. Another caller hung up on me. I can't believe this. I should quit doing this. Maybe I'm giving off some strange aura tonight.

(Darla returns to her desk.)

NADINE

Good, the ambulance is there. I'm glad I could help. Take care, now.

(Nadine hangs up. Lighting back to normal.)

NADINE

Maybe I need to take a break. That's it, I'll go down the street and get me a pop, a Dr. Pepper would taste really good right now.

(Nadine starts to exit.
Victoria picks up her phone
and dials and it rings at
Nadine's desk.)

NADINE

Damn. Girl can't get a break when she needs one.

(Nadine crosses back to her
desk and sits.)

NADINE

Help-line. Can I help you? (pause) Hello? (pause) Can I help you? (pause) You call back when you're ready, understand?

(Nadine hangs up.)

VICTORIA

Hello? Hello?

(Victoria dials another number and it rings. Darla stands crosses into Victoria's apartment and sits.)

DARLA

Incest line. Can I help you?

VICTORIA

Yes, I really need to talk to someone.

DARLA

It's you again. I can always tell.

VICTORIA

I think you have me mixed up with someone else.

DARLA

No, I've got an ear for voices and your voice is unmistakable. I don't care what you do to change it, I'd know you in a second. I'm going to have to hang up now and don't call back and waste our time.

VICTORIA

No, please, I need to talk to you. Yes, I have called before, but you always help me. Please don't hang up.

DARLA

(sarcastically)

Oh, I am so sorry to have to disappoint you.

(Darla hangs up and crosses to her desk. Victoria dials another number, it rings, and Rod stands up.)

ROD

Depression Hotline.

VICTORIA

Hi, I'd like to talk to someone.

ROD

Is this tricky Vicky?

(Victoria collects herself for a moment.)

VICTORIA

Yes.

ROD

Oh, jeez, you need to get some help.

(Rod hangs up and sits down. Victoria dials another button and it rings. Nadine stands.)

NADINE

City Help-line, can I help you?

VICTORIA

Look, I need to talk about something.

NADINE

Oh, good. I can't wait to hear what interesting stories you've cooked up this time. Let's see, are you a runaway, lost in a big city, drunk, overdosing? I'm on pins and needles waiting to here about it.

(Nadine hangs up. Lighting shift as Victoria sits on the couch. The Liners stand and cross into Victoria's apartment. They are all on calls and their conversations should overlap. They walk quickly around Victoria's apartment as they talk.)

DARLA

When are they coming home?

ROD

I'm trying to understand.

NADINE

That's okay.

DARLA

Where are you?

ROD

How long?

NADINE

Go ahead and cry.

DARLA

I'm trying to help.

ROD

I can't help.

NADINE

You won't help.

DARLA

I said, stop.

ROD

Bus fare, yes, I said bus fare.

NADINE

Where did you get the pills?

DARLA

You sound angry.

ROD

You sound sad.

NADINE

Going home.

DARLA

Leaving home.

ROD

Staying home.

NADINE

Fear.

DARLA

Anger.

ROD

Sadness.

NADINE

Don't.

DARLA

Won't.

ROD

Can't.

NADINE

Leave.

DARLA

Trying.

ROD

Lying.

NADINE

We're here...

DARLA

For you...

ROD

If you need...

NADINE

Us.

(The Liners cross back to their desks and sit. Lighting back to normal as Victoria dials another number. Darla answers.)

DARLA

Hello.

VICTORIA

I need...

DARLA

Sorry.

(Victoria dials again and Rod answers.)

ROD

Can I help you?

VICTORIA

Look...

ROD

Don't call here again.

(Victoria dials again. Nadine answers.)

NADINE

How can I help?

VICTORIA

Okay, okay, just hear me out, this one last time.

NADINE

You again?

(Nadine hangs up. She dials again and Darla answers.)

DARLA

We're here to help.

VICTORIA

This is Victoria calling and...

DARLA

We're very busy with important calls, Victoria. 'bye.

(Darla hangs up. Victoria puts the phone down and picks up the bottle of liquor. Nadine rises.)

NADINE

That crazy woman calling here all the time drives me nuts. But, she must be in some deep hurt. Something in her voice. Sad, very sad.

(Nadine crosses into Victoria's apartment as Victoria pours herself a drink.)

Oh, put that shit down and pick up the damn phone and try me one more time. What the hell.

(Victoria looks at the glass for a beat.

Go ahead, one more try, girl. What you got to lose.

(Victoria puts the drink down. She picks up the phone and dials. Nadine's phone rings.)

NADINE

Transitions hotline. Can I help you?

(Victoria and Nadine stare at each other for a moment.)

VICTORIA

My name's Victoria. I call hotlines and make up stories.

NADINE

Victoria. That's you're real name?

VICTORIA

Yes.

NADINE

You're not messing with me now, are you? Because I'm tired of talking to Vicky, Victor, Jill, and... I can't even remember them all.

VICTORIA

No, you've got the real Victoria in all her crazy, neurotic, stupid...

NADINE

Stop right there, girl. Don't need to go to that place, not now, not ever.

VICTORIA

But...

NADINE

No, don't even start to go there. Whatever your pain, it don't ever help to go to that dark place. Never helps, girl.

VICTORIA

I guess you're right.

NADINE

Yes, I am. (pause) Well, here we are, the real you and the real me.

VICTORIA

The real me. Wow! What a joke that is. Who the hell is that?

NADINE

Maybe we can try and find out.

VICTORIA

Yeah, sure. We're going to find out who the real Victoria is. What a laugh.

NADINE

Okay, Victoria. Maybe I should just hang up. Is that what you want?

VICTORIA

You know what I'm thinking?

NADINE

What?

VICTORIA

That I should do hang up.

NADINE

Really?

VICTORIA

Yes. Because I don't have a clue who I am or what I am, and to start trying to figure all of that out now, seems impossible. It's almost laughable. Somehow I thought calling and talking to someone I don't even know was going to help. Now I've been given the chance and it all seems so stupid.

NADINE

Look, Victoria, you want to hang up, that's your business. I can't stop you. But I do know this, you probably went to a hell of a lot of trouble to find someone to talk to you tonight, so why not give it a shot. Beside, you've not only wasted a lot of other people's time, you've wasted a lot of your own time. So quit your whining.

VICTORIA

I don't know, it seems like such a waste.

NADINE

Quit feeling like some helpless victim. You're not helpless, understand? That kind of talk gets me sick. Now either get your shit together and talk to me straight or hang up the damn phone so I can get back to helping people with real problems.

VICTORIA

Sure. Okay. Whatever you say.

NADINE

But, I'll tell you this, if I'm going to talk to you, there are going to be some rules, understand?

VICTORIA

Rules?

NADINE

Yes, rules. I want you to talk to me truthfully. I am very good at picking up lies, so if I get the sense you're bullshitting me, honey, making up some stupid story, I hang. No good-byes. Got it?

VICTORIA

Sure. No bullshit.

NADINE

And when you think it's time to hang up, you say goodbye like most folks do. None of this sudden, she's gone crap. Got that?

VICTORIA

Yes, I'll say goodbye.

NADINE

Good, that'll be very good, Victoria. At least it's a start.

VICTORIA

Yes, a start. (pause) Look, I'm sorry for...

NADINE

Let me stop you there, honey. That's another rule. No apologies. I'm not interested in trying to make you feel bad or guilty about what you've done. My guess is, you do enough of that already.

VICTORIA

Yes, I do. I'm very good at that.

NADINE

Then it's time for you to stop.

VICTORIA

If you say so.

NADINE

Yes, I say so. (pause) Okay, Victoria, here I am. You got me.

VICTORIA

Yes, there you are. But, where to start. (pause) When I call you, I'm usually drunk and really don't know what I'm saying, just making up stories as I go along. I guess it's easier to talk about things that aren't real. But tonight I haven't been drinking, I do know what I'm saying, and I'm not making up stories. But I'm afraid, do you understand what it is to be afraid?

NADINE

Honey, you bet I do.

VICTORIA

That's why I hate to go to sleep, I feel afraid all the time. So, I stay up late, drinking, and then things start spinning around in my mind and I get frightened. I don't know what else to do, so I call hotlines. But when they ask me what the problem is, I can't talk about it, so I make things up.

NADINE

But not tonight.

VICTORIA

No, not tonight.

NADINE

Then what's the problem? You wanted help, I'm here, let's talk.

(There is a long pause.)

VICTORIA

You see, I freeze up. Damn it, it is so much easier making things up. But to talk about the truth means you have to trust someone. And I don't' trust anyone.

NADINE

No one?

VICTORIA

My friend Susan, I can trust her.

NADINE

That's good. You're very lucky.

VICTORIA

Yeah, right.

NADINE

Victoria, some people have no one in their lives. I talk to them all the time: women who are being beaten; children who are being abused; old people living alone, their children ignoring them; people who want to die.

VICTORIA

Sounds like an awful job, listening to all these people, like me, complain.

NADINE

You're not complaining, you're just searching for an answer.

VICTORIA

Are there ever any answers?

NADINE

Yes, many times there are, not always, but many.

VICTORIA

It feels so hopeless.

NADINE

Yes it does. No one can get away from that. But, you're not the only one who feels that way.

VICTORIA

I know I'm not the only one, but that doesn't make it any easier. Sometimes I think it's better not talking about things. Just keep it a damn secret.

NADINE

So you think keeping it a secret will make it go away?

VICTORIA

No, it isn't going to make it go away.

NADINE

You won't get better until you can talk about it. You'll continue to call hotlines, make up stories, as your way to deal with whatever it is. But you won't get better, only worse and continue to bother the shit out of us.

VICTORIA

Maybe I should hang up.

NADINE

Stop it. I'm not buying into your victim shit. You got that?

VICTORIA

It's too hard.

NADINE

Tough. You want to talk about hard, how's this: a woman having to deal the fact that her husband killed their little baby because he wanted to get revenge for her getting a divorce, or a young girl sleeping in alleys because she's afraid to go back home where her father is waiting to beat the crap out of her, or a gay, teenage boy roaming the streets because his parents threw him out of the house. That's hard, real hard. I've talked to you so many times, with your phony stories, but I've thought about you a lot, and you know what?

VICTORIA

What?

NADINE

None of your stories are lies. They're all true.

VICTORIA

What do you mean?

NADINE

All the stories about abuse, being beating, ignored, sex with your father, brother, whoever, the liquor and drugs. You put a twist on the stories, make them not your own, but deep down they're yours. So let's quit playing all the games. What the hell's going on in your life that's so damn awful?

VICTORIA

My father fucks me... or at least he did until two years ago.

(silence from Nadine)

Does that shock you?

NADINE

No. I knew.

VICTORIA

You knew?

NADINE

Yes. My father did the same to me.

VICTORIA

What?

NADINE

My father fucked me too.

VICTORIA

I...

NADINE

You are not alone. There are many of us dealing with this.

VICTORIA

Maybe you, but not me. I've never started dealing with it.

(Gordon enters and stays on
the periphery of Victoria's
apartment.)

NADINE

Until tonight. You started dealing with it tonight. For the first time, you didn't put on one of your stupid masks. So, I'm the first person not interested in keeping your secret, who doesn't see you as some helpless victim. The first person you've told who's been there, like you. Don't you see? What you've done tonight is very special.

VICTORIA

It doesn't feel special.

NADINE

It will. Just give it time.

VICTORIA

Yes, time. Except that I don't have much time.

NADINE

And why is that?

VICTORIA

Over the last few weeks my father has been calling me. He left a message tonight and said he was coming over and I'm scared. I don't know if I can deal with him if he shows up.

NADINE

You're not that little girl anymore, Victoria. You can do this.

VICTORIA

I don't know. I'm afraid I won't...

(Gordon enters Victoria's apartment and stands looking at his daughter. Victoria turns and stares back at Gordon. Rod and Darla cross to the periphery of the apartment.)

NADINE

Hello?

VICTORIA

(to Nadine)

He's here. I have to go now, goodbye.

(Victoria hangs up the phone. Nadine looks at Victoria and Gordon for a moment.)

NADINE

Be strong, girl, be strong.

(Nadine exits. Darla crosses into the apartment, looks at Gordon and Victoria and exits. Rod crosses and does the same.)

GORDON

Hello, Victoria.

(Victoria and Gordon freeze. Blackout.)

End of Act I

Act II

Setting: The same as at the end of Act I.

At Rise: The lights come up. Victoria sits on the couch as Gordon looks at her. Susan and Mother enter. Mother stays on the periphery of the apartment as Susan crosses into the apartment area as the 10 year old, holding a jump rope.

SUSAN

When you were five you learned to jive,
When you were six you picked up sticks,
When you were seven you went to heaven,
When you were eight you learned to skate,
When you were nine you climbed a vine,
When you were ten...

(Susan crosses close of
Victoria.)

Be careful, Victoria.

(Susan exits and Mother
crosses into the apartment.)

MOTHER

Gordon, I warned you, I warned you.

(Mother looks at Gordon then
Victoria and exits.)

GORDON

You haven't changed much, Victoria. I suppose I've aged over the past two years. (pause) When you disappeared two years ago without a word, I thought it would be like your other absences, short lived. But, I guess, I was wrong. Your mother refused to discuss the matter, so, I assumed of course, that she was behind it all. I still haven't been able to find out how that all came about. Water under the bridge, as they say.

(Gordon freezes. Lights shift
as Susan enters.)

SUSAN

I thought I'd see you at my party last weekend. Not even a call saying you were sorry.

(Victoria crosses out of the
apartment area and moves
toward Susan.)

VICTORIA

I guess I got busy or something.

SUSAN

Oh, cut the crap.

VICTORIA

What do you mean?

SUSAN

I heard that you went up to the lake with your father.

VICTORIA

Maybe you heard wrong.

SUSAN

No, I didn't. Your mother told me.

VICTORIA

So?

SUSAN

So? Are you crazy? This has to stop, Victoria.

VICTORIA

It will stop, soon, I promise.

SUSAN

No, not soon. Now, today. You are leaving this house and never coming back. There is a one-bedroom apartment in my building and I put a deposit on it for you. Start packing.

VICTORIA

I'll have to think about it.

SUSAN

No, you can't think about it. We're either walking out of this house together, now, or you are on your own.

VICTORIA

What difference will it make. He'll find me anyway.

SUSAN

It makes all the difference in the world. We are talking about your life, your freedom, your sanity. Please, let's get out of here.

(Mother enters carrying two suitcases.)

MOTHER

Susan's right, Victoria. Get out of here, now. But I'm not sure moving across town is the best answer. Maybe you should leave the state, the country, I don't know. I'll give you as much money as you need, just leave today, before your father returns from his trip.

(Susan crosses to Mother and takes the two suitcases.)

SUSAN

Well, are you in or out?

(Victoria looks at Susan and Mother for a beat.)

VICTORIA

In.

(Susan and Mother exit as Victoria crosses back to her apartment. The lights return to normal as Gordon crosses to the table and picks up the bottle of liquor.)

GORDON

Mother tells me that you've been drinking too much again. I guess that is my fault. Taking you to those fancy clubs and restaurants when you were a teenager, allowing you to have a drink before dinner.

(Gordon puts the bottle down
and walks around looking at
Victoria's apartment.)

Yes, yes, yes. You have a nice little apartment here. I must say, you've done quite a good job of fixing it up.

(Gordon sits down on the couch
next to Victoria.)

You haven't said hello, Victoria.

(Victoria rises and crosses
away from Gordon.)

This isn't going to be easy for us, is it? I can't blame you for wanting to stay away from me, but there comes a time when we all have to move beyond that. (pause) Maybe it isn't such a good idea to be here in your apartment. (pause) I know, we could go out for dinner. I noticed a few nice little restaurants nearby. That way, we could be on neutral territory. (pause) If you think ignoring me is going to make me go away, you're wrong. I've spent too many months in therapy, too many months working up the nerve to get in touch with you. I'm not just going to walk out the door because you want to pretend that I'm not here. Well, I am here and you are going to have to deal with me, one way or another.

(cont'd)

(Victoria crosses to the chair
and sits.)

GORDON (cont'd)

I remember when you were a little girl, you'd hide in your room for days on end, refusing to talk to anyone, trying to punish me and your mother. But the only one you were punishing was yourself. You were the one who lost out and that is what you are doing now, losing out. (pause) Oh, what the hell am I talking about? You didn't lose out on anything. You were protecting yourself. Shit, I'm not doing a very good job here, am I? (pause) Look, I'm trying to come to grips with who I am, what I did, and it isn't easy. I get up in the morning and have to look at myself in the goddamn mirror and what I see gets me sick. And the only way I can think of to start healing that sickness is to try and make things up to you. I know it's stupid, but I've come over here to see if I can patch things up with you, start over, so to speak. I crossed over the line with you in the past, I admit that. But it doesn't mean we can't move on. It doesn't mean we can't ever see each other again.

(Susan enters but stays on the edge of the apartment area. She looks at both Victoria and Gordon, then exits.)

GORDON

Well, are you going to say anything? (pause) Do you have any idea what it took for me to come over here? I've stood in front of mayors and governors giving a speech and haven't felt this nervous. All I'm asking is that you find it in your heart to forgive me, forgive me just a little. (pause) I know what you must be thinking: what an asshole he is, coming over here uninvited, and trying to convince me that he's sincere. Bullshit, that's what your thinking, bullshit, and I can't blame you.

(Lighting shift. Gordon freezes as Victoria rises and moves about her apartment.)

VICTORIA

You have no idea what I'm thinking. In fact, I'm not sure I know what I'm thinking right now. I used to see you as this monster who would come into my room and use me as his little pet. Now look at you. This sad man who is trying so hard to get back to a life that died the day I walked out the door. It's funny, you look so small to me now, Gordon. You're not the big daddy that used to come into my room and turn my dreams into nightmares. But, damn it, you still scare the hell out of me. And, if I open my mouth and say anything to you, I'm not sure where it will lead.

(Nadine enters and crosses to Victoria.)

NADINE

You can do this, girl. Look at that sack of shit sitting there. He can't hurt you, understand?

VICTORIA

No, I don't understand.

NADINE

Victoria, like I said before, you are not that little girl anymore. You are a grown woman who can take care of herself. Now you just suck it up and don't ever let that sad, sorry ass father of yours get the upper hand. You got that?

VICTORIA

I don't know, I think so.

NADINE

You have to do this, for yourself. I'm with you, girl. Now, give him hell.

VICTORIA

Yes, you're right.

(Nadine exits.)

VICTORIA

Well, daddy, let's see where this all plays out.

(Victoria crosses back to the couch and sits. Lights shift back to normal.)

GORDON

I guess it was too much to expect that I could walk in here after two years and, in just a few minutes, you'd come around and find a way to forgive me. It will take time, Victoria, I understand that. But give me the time to make up to you what I did in the past. We can try and heal this thing together. Please?

VICTORIA

No.

GORDON

Your first word to me in over two years and it's no. I guess I deserve that, don't I? (pause) Oh, this seems hopeless. I don't know what you are trying to accomplish by ignoring me. You know, there's a part of me that wants to walk out and say the hell with it. There's another part of me that wants to strike back, and that wouldn't do much good, now would it? And there's another part of me that is so ashamed of what I did in the past, that I wonder how I got up the nerve to come over here. You know what's really funny? Even if you welcomed me with open arms, I'm not sure I could deal with it, could I respect you? I don't know. (pause) Say something, anything. Swear at me, hit me, spit on me, I don't care. But just don't sit there as if I don't exist. (cont'd)

(Gordon and Victoria sit for a moment, staring at each other.)

GORDON (cont'd)

I guess there is no way to win, is there? I suppose if you treated me cordially, I'd wonder what you were up to. Would you be planning some counter attack for the things that happened in the past. And if you did decide to fight me, oh, say by filing some silly lawsuit, you'd leave me no choice but to fight back. (pause) Shit. (pause) Victoria I don't know what I'm saying. I want to try and reconcile with you, that's all I know. Whatever your response toward me, I'll try my best not to react in any negative way. At least I can offer you that.

VICTORIA
(sarcastically)

Oh, thank you, that's very kind, very kind of you, indeed. You've always had that warm, compassionate heart.

GORDON

Well, at least you have finally acknowledged my presence. So, where do we go from here?

VICTORIA
(sarcastically)

To bed? Should we go to bed, Gordon?

GORDON

That's not funny, goddamn it.

VICTORIA
(sarcastically)

No? You don't think it's funny?

GORDON

Victoria, sarcasm is not your strong suit. I think you should try something that suits your personality, like humor.

VICTORIA

I guess I just don't have any humor left, Gordon. You ripped it all out of me.

GORDON

I see. Another thing you can attribute to me. No sense taking responsibility for anything when you have a scapegoat around like me.

VICTORIA

Scapegoat? You are not a scapegoat. A scapegoat is someone who is faultless; someone who is made to bear the sins of the sinner. Now that hardly fits you, now does it, Gordon?

GORDON

No.

VICTORIA

Maybe I'm the sinner. Is that how you see me?

GORDON

I...no.

VICTORIA

Well, I do. I see myself that way. We both have to get up in the morning and look at ourselves in the mirror. And when I do, that is exactly what I see, a sinner, someone who is ugly, and dirty. Someone who is so loathsome that no one can like me or love me. It's a fight for me everyday and today is the biggest fight of all.

GORDON

I hate hearing you talk like that.

VICTORIA

Should I stop, then? (pause) Then listen to this, Gordon. I find myself so disgusting that I don't want any real friends. I go to work, come home, and get drunk. On the weekends, I keep the shades closed so I don't have to see if it's a nice day. I listen to music, watch TV, and make phone calls. I'm alone most of the time with my booze and my friends. I use the phone to talk to them. Do you want to meet my friends, Gordon?

GORDON

Victoria, please.

(Each of the Liners enter and cross into the apartment area.)

VICTORIA

Here, come on, let me show you the people I spend most of my time with. They're quite nice and they listen to all of my stories. None of my stories are true, of course, because I can't stand the truth. The truth of who I am and what I've become.

GORDON

Victoria.

VICTORIA

This one's my favorite.

(Victoria picks up her cell phone and dials.)

DARLA

Depression hotline. How can I help you? (pause) Hello?

(Victoria hangs up.)

VICTORIA

And how about this one.

(Victoria dials another
number.)

ROD

Suicide line.

VICTORIA

Or this one.

(Victoria dials another
number.)

NADINE

Runaway line, how can I help you?

VICTORIA

And how about these?

ROD

Sex abuse line.

DARLA

Domestic abuse line.

NADINE

County help line.

ROD

Metro Help line.

DARLA

Willow Emergency.

(Each of the Liners exit.)

GORDON

Stop it! Put the phone down.

VICTORIA

There's more, many more, Gordon. Come on, let me introduce you to all of my friends. Remember when I was young, you were never interested. Well, now is your chance to make up for it.

(Mother enters but does not go into the apartment. She looks at Gordon and Victoria. She pauses then exits.)

GORDON

Please, Victoria. I don't know what to do. I'm sorry.

VICTORIA

And am I supposed to say all is forgiven, just because you say you're sorry?

GORDON

I don't know. I'm lost here and I'm not used to feeling that way. I'm used to feeling in control; I'm always in control.

VICTORIA

Really? Is that how you saw yourself all those years, as someone in control? I think being in control means not abusing your daughter. I'm happy that other fathers don't see themselves as you do. What a mess we would all be in.

GORDON

Yes, I've made a mess of everything. I thought that I could come over here and use my charm and everything would be fall into place just as I had imagined. I rehearsed it over and over in my head for two years. But, I keep jumping from wanting to fight with you to wishing I could do something to smooth things over. But nothing is working. Everything is out of control and you're not helping me very much.

VICTORIA

Did you really think I'd try and help you? Just because you know all of these important people and have been able to do whatever you wanted all your life, doesn't mean I'm going to jump into your lap and give daddy a big kiss.

GORDON

I didn't expect that, nor would I want that. We had a life in the past that was wrong and most of what happened was my fault.

VICTORIA

Most? You've been in therapy for two years and you insist on putting blame on me?

GORDON

I'm not talking about you. I'm talking about your mother. She has her measure of blame, if you recall.

VICTORIA

Oh, yes, bring her into this. So if it's not me that your trying to blame, it's her. But no matter how you try and slice it, it is because of you we are all suffering. You destroyed our family, so I will not let you use her as a scapegoat. (pause) You know what I wish sometimes? That I was like you. That I could point my finger and put the blame on someone else. But my finger always points to me. Somehow I need to find a way to turn that around, but you'd never understand how hard that is.

GORDON

Oh, I know full well how hard that is.

VICTORIA

Really? Do you really think you understand what it's like to be me?

(Mother enters and stays on the periphery of the apartment. She is holding a phone.)

GORDON

No, of course not. But I do know what pain is about. Do you want to take a look inside of me? Do you think that someone could do what I've done and not be tortured inside? Even when I tried to convince myself that what I was doing was alright, that everything was fine, that I was just trying to show you how much I loved you, I knew how sick I was. There were times when I wanted to rip my heart out.

(Mother dials and Victoria's cell phone rings. Victoria and Gordon stare at the phone.)

GORDON

Are you going to answer it?

VICTORIA

No.

(The phone stops ringing. Mother looks at Victoria and Gordon for a moment and then exits.)

VICTORIA

I don't feel sorry for you, Gordon, if that's what you're after.

GORDON

I'm not interested in having you feel sorry for me. I just want you to know that I understand what pain is about. I've tried to be strong, did what I thought was best, saw my therapist, never missing an appointment. And all the while never knowing if things would ever get back to normal.

VICTORIA

That will never happen, Gordon, because normal for us was sick. I don't want normal again.

GORDON

I didn't mean it that way, you know that. I've come here today to try and see if something can be worked out, or, at least, try and get us on the path of being a family again. Is that so wrong?

VICTORIA

A path with you, Gordon, is so wrong. It's a path to pain, to suffering, to despair.

GORDON

Look, Victoria...

VICTORIA

The path you talk about was the path that destroyed my childhood. Made me into a prostitute for my father. I can't walk down any path with you again, ever.

GORDON

I'm just looking for a little hope here.

VICTORIA

There is no hope for you. For me, maybe. If I can start to find the courage to take better care of myself. (pause) You know, I think I needed you to come over here. Confront the evil face to face, then, maybe, I can move on.

GORDON

You can't do that alone.

VICTORIA

And I'm certainly not going to be doing it with you.

GORDON

Should I stop trying? Should I quit now?

VICTORIA

Sounds good to me. Quit, get out of here and don't bother me again.

GORDON

No, I'm not going to walk out of here without putting up a good fight. I hope you understand that.

VICTORIA

To be honest, I don't understand anything.

GORDON

Please, Victoria, try and remember the good times. The summers at the lake, our Christmases up in the mountains. It wasn't all bad for you. If you could just start focusing in on those things, maybe you could get past all of the hurt inside.

VICTORIA

There were some good times, but that's what made the bad times so much worse.

(Lighting shift. Victoria is now a young girl. She stands as if fishing.)

VICTORIA

Daddy, I hooked a fish. Daddy, look.

GORDON

Yes, honey, reel him in slowly. Not too fast.

VICTORIA

Like this?

GORDON

Yes, that's good, honey. Good, you've got him.

VICTORIA

It feels like a big fish.

GORDON

Yes, I think it is.

VICTORIA

He's coming closer, daddy.

GORDON

Just a bit more and we can net him.

VICTORIA

Will he die, daddy?

GORDON

Yes, dear.

VICTORIA

I don't want him to die.

GORDON

But, that's what happens, honey.

VICTORIA

I don't want him to die.

GORDON

We can take him off the hook and let him go, if you want.

VICTORIA

Yes, I want. Will you help, daddy?

GORDON

Yes, dear. Just a bit more and we'll let him go.

(Lighting shifts back to
normal.)

VICTORIA

You were like this chameleon that could change colors at will. I never knew which color would show up. The fear that the ugly gray colors would emerge clouded whatever joy was present in our family, if you can call it that. Even now, I can feel my fear of you. Are you still the chameleon?

GORDON

I know that's how you saw me and you've never experienced me in any other way. We have to go slowly so you can learn to trust. I don't expect you to let go of all of your past and look at me as if nothing had ever happened. All I'm asking for is a chance for us to be together again as a family.

(Mother enters but does not go into the apartment area.)

MOTHER

Victoria, please open this door. You've been closed up in there for two days now. I promise, things will be better. I'll do my best to keep your father away from you. Dear, you can't stay in there forever.

(Victoria crosses to her mother.)

VICTORIA

We were never a family. A family is something you can count on, something that helps you, supports you. All I ever got was pain. I'd hide in my room to try and stop the pain from happening.

(Victoria stares at her mother for a moment and then crosses back to Gordon.)

But it did no good; the pain always came back, you always came back. Just like now. Are you here to give me more pain?

(Mother looks at Gordon and Victoria and exits.)

GORDON

No. I came here with all of the good memories and you just want to bring up the pain. I remember so many of the little things. The things you liked, didn't like. This may seem silly, but I've brought you something. It isn't a big deal, just something I remembered you liked.

(Gordon reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small bag.)

VICTORIA

What is it?

GORDON

Well, here, take a look.

(Victoria takes the bag as if an ugly snake were hidden inside.)

It won't bite you.

(Victoria cautiously opens the bag and looks inside.)

VICTORIA

(slowly)

Godiva chocolate truffles. (pause) You asshole.

(Victoria throws the bag at Gordon.)

GORDON

What? They're still your favorites, aren't they?

VICTORIA

You don't remember, do you?

GORDON

Remember?

VICTORIA

Is this part of some sick joke of yours? Bringing me Godiva chocolates? Are you going to try and take my clothes off next, like you did when I was little?

GORDON

All I could remember was that Godiva chocolates were your favorite.

VICTORIA

They were your favorite, Gordon, not mine. "Here, Victoria, don't cry, come on, look what daddy bought you."

GORDON

I forgot.

VICTORIA

You forgot, sure. I'm surprised you didn't bring over a bottle of liquor. Should we have a drink for old time sake, Gordon?

(Victoria picks up the bottle of liquor.)

GORDON

No.

VICTORIA

Just like the old days, remember?

GORDON

Goddamn it.

(Gordon takes the bottle from Victoria's hand and puts it down.)

VICTORIA

Oh, you're being such a good father, I'm so proud of you.

GORDON

Do you think drowning yourself in booze is going to help you get better?

VICTORIA

Oh, no, Gordon, I'm not that stupid. But, you see, since I don't have many friends and don't have any lovers, I've decided that booze will have to do. I've taken booze on as lover now.

GORDON

Now you're talking crazy, Victoria.

VICTORIA

I wake up with him, spend breakfast, lunch, and dinner with him, watch TV and eventually go to bed with him. A constant companion that makes me look at the world in a way that is much less frightening, a little fuzzy perhaps, but certainly better than reality.

GORDON

Stop this, Victoria.

VICTORIA

Stop spending time with my lover who has saved me for almost as long as I can remember? He means too much to me now. Do you know when I was first introduced to him, Gordon?

GORDON

When I started taking you to the clubs.

VICTORIA

No! You started taking me to the clubs when I was sixteen, but you started fucking me when I was ten. That's when I met him, Gordon.

GORDON

Stop talking like that. It's over and done with.

VICTORIA

Maybe for you, Gordon, but not for me. Come take a look at my lover.

(Victoria crosses to a cabinet and opens it. The cabinet is filled with liquor bottles.)

GORDON

I'm not interested.

VICTORIA

When I was little, I'd come home from school and sneak into your liquor cabinet and pull out a nice bottle of vodka, like this one.

(She grabs a bottle and holds it up.)

You had so many, I knew you'd never miss just one. I'd hide it in my room and it would last two or three weeks. I don't have to hide it anymore, but I do have to keep numbing myself. And I want a drink so bad, I can taste it. But I promised myself, not tonight, not while you're here. Because if I take one drink, then I'll have two, three, four, five, and then who knows what I'd do. Kill you, kill myself, both? So tonight, I have to stay as clear headed as I can.

GORDON

I'm sorry, I didn't know.

VICTORIA

Of course you didn't know, Gordon. The only things you were interested in were your work and screwing your daughter. What happened to the rest of her life was totally uninteresting to you.

(Lighting change. Mother enters but does not go into Victoria's apartment.)

MOTHER

Gordon, I'm frantic. I found this note from Victoria, she's run away.

(Gordon crosses to Mother.)

GORDON

Shit.

MOTHER

Gordon, I can't do this anymore. This isn't what a family is supposed to be like. What's the matter with us that we'd do these sick things? Sometimes I just want to die. I thought you were going to leave her alone. I thought this was going to stop.

GORDON

I haven't touched her.

MOTHER

Look at me, Gordon.

(Gordon does not look at his wife.)

Goddamn it, look at me. (pause) You're lying, just like you've lied all of these years. What you're doing is sick, do you understand, it is sick.

GORDON

And what about you? You've turned your back all these years, turned your back on your own daughter.

MOTHER

I don't care what I've done, this has to stop. You are destroying her life and now she has run away and who knows what kind of trouble she'll find out there.

GORDON

She probably went to some friend's house and will be back in a few days. It's nothing to worry about.

MOTHER

For you maybe; you've never worried about anything when it comes to your family. I've turned my back on her, you're right. But I can't turn my back any longer. She is sixteen, Gordon, please, leave her alone.

GORDON

I'll make some calls, she has to be around here somewhere.

MOTHER

Last night, when you and Victoria were gone, I sat here trying to convince myself that nothing was going on. Then, about eight, you got a call from the mayor and I had to make up some excuse as to where you were. A meeting that was running late, I think I said. Maybe I should call him back and tell him one of his closest advisors has been screwing his own daughter for six years. It's hard to believe that out there people think of you as some kind of god. You have all of the answers for questions that seem so irrelevant. But what about us in here, in your own house? What about us? Do you have any answers for us? Your daughter has run away from home because she doesn't feel safe here. Gordon, it has to stop, or I will pick up that phone and call the press, and anyone else who will listen to me. You will be disgraced; we will all be disgraced, but I can endure that knowing the damage you are inflicting on Victoria will be over. I've made mistakes, I've acted foolishly, but it doesn't mean I have to continue acting that way. I will not turn my back on this any longer.

GORDON

Yes you will; you always do.

MOTHER

Not this time.

GORDON

And how will this time be any different than the last time, or the time before that, or the time before that? I've heard your speech so often, dear, that I wonder if even you believe it. Remember when you caught us? For some reason you came home from church early. You walked into Victoria's bedroom and there we were on the floor, our clothes almost off. And what did you do?

(Mother says nothing.)

I'm asking you, what did you do?

MOTHER

To my great shame, I pretended it never happened. (pause) I walked out of the bedroom and into the kitchen and baked a cake, a big, chocolate cake. And I made this wonderful dinner for us and we sat around the dinner table, as if nothing had happened, and talked about our trip to the mountains for Christmas.

GORDON

Yes, you did nothing. And you never said another word, just like you won't say another word now. Isn't that right, dear?

MOTHER

I don't know.

GORDON

Isn't that right, my dear?

MOTHER

Gordon...

GORDON

You won't say anything to anyone, isn't that correct?

(Mother exits and Gordon freezes as the lighting changes to suggest an outdoor setting. Susan enters skipping rope and singing once again as if she were 10 or 11. Victoria is on the ground playing jacks.)

SUSAN

Charley Barley, Puddin' and Pie,
Kissed the girls and made them cry;
When the girls came out to play,
Charley Barley ran away.

(Susan falls down next to Victoria.)

SUSAN

I was looking everywhere for you. Your mom doesn't even know where you are.

VICTORIA

My mom doesn't care where I am.

(Susan lies on her back looking up.)

SUSAN

Look at the sky, Victoria. The sun is so warm and beautiful. It makes me feel good inside. (pause) Look at that cloud. There's a dog, a cat, a sailboat...

VICTORIA

That's not a sailboat.

SUSAN

It is too.

VICTORIA

Is not, it's the devil.

SUSAN

You're crazy.

VICTORIA

Look. Two long pointy ears, the horns sticking up into the blue sky, and his hand holding a long pitchfork so he can hold you down when you try and run away.

SUSAN

Well, I see a sailboat. With two tall sails soaring into the blue sky, and the waves crashing over the side, but the captain is in control and won't let the boat go down. The sailboat is going to Hawaii and I'm standing on the front with the wind blowing through my hair.

VICTORIA

Maybe the captain is the devil and he's kidnapping you and taking you to a place where no one will ever find you.

SUSAN

Sometimes I think you're the devil.

(Victoria buries her head in her hands and begins to cry. Susan reaches over and touches Victoria.)

SUSAN

I'm sorry, Victoria, I didn't mean that.

GORDON

Victoria! (pause) Victoria!

(Victoria looks up at Susan.)

VICTORIA

You'd better go.

SUSAN

No, I won't leave you.

GORDON

Victoria, get in this house immediately.

VICTORIA

Go!

SUSAN

Let's run away to the woods and climb trees and pretend we're in an enchanted forest.

VICTORIA

No, I can't, please go.

(Susan hugs Victoria and begins to exit. As she exits, she is now an adult.)

SUSAN

(softly)

I'll always be your friend, Victoria. Be brave, be brave.

(Gordon crosses to Victoria.)

GORDON

Victoria, what's the matter, why are you crying?

(Gordon sits down next to Victoria.)

VICTORIA

I don't know; I just feel sad.

(Gordon reaches out and puts his arms around Victoria and draws her near.)

GORDON

It's alright, I'm here and I'll take care of you.

(The lights change back to normal. Victoria jumps up and away from Gordon.)

VICTORIA

Don't touch me.

GORDON

I'm sorry.

VICTORIA

Did it feel good? Did it give you pleasure putting your arms around me?

GORDON

I was only trying to comfort you, something any father would do when he saw his daughter crying.

VICTORIA

But you're not any father are you, Gordon? From most fathers that would be comforting, but coming from you it could be most anything but definitely not comfort.

GORDON

You don't really know me now, Victoria. I've changed. You're trying to put me into the mold you've created in your head from all of the things that happened in the past. I'm not the same man, not the same father you knew.

VICTORIA

Really? You mean you didn't get a little bit excited holding me close?

GORDON

No.

(Victoria starts to move close to Gordon and he begins to back away.)

VICTORIA

Maybe we should test it out; let's see how much you have changed. Come on, Gordon, let's get close, put our arms around each other, hug, and then we'll see what a new man you are, what a new father you've become.

GORDON

Victoria.

(Gordon continues to back away.)

VICTORIA

Doesn't my body tempt you just a little bit?

GORDON

No.

(Victoria keeps pursuing.)

VICTORIA

Give me your hand.

GORDON

No, stay away from me.

VICTORIA

Come on, Gordon, take my hand.

GORDON

Stay away, just stay away.

VICTORIA

Oh, so when you would come into my room at night that was all right. When you'd take me for weekend trips to the lake, that was okay. But now, when I try to get close to you, you push me away.

(Victoria gets closer to Gordon.)

GORDON

What are you trying to do?

(Victoria gets very close to
Gordon.)

VICTORIA

Come on, daddy, give me a kiss.

GORDON

No!

(He pulls back and slaps
Victoria, pushing her away.
She looks at him for a moment
then slaps him back.)

GORDON

Did that make you feel better?

(Victoria crosses to the couch
and sits.)

VICTORIA

Yes. Maybe that's what I should have done to you long ago,
slapped you in the face. But I was too small and fragile,
so all I could do is dream. I'd lie in bed dreaming and
hoping you'd die; I'd come up with plans to kill you.

(Victoria picks up the knife
from the table.)

One night I even tried. I got up in the middle of the
night, went down to the kitchen, and took out the knife you
used to carve the turkey at Thanksgiving. It was big and
long and sharp.

(Victoria gets up holding the
knife.)

Kind of like this one.

GORDON

Victoria.

VICTORIA

I held it in my small hand and tried to imagine it going into your body.

(Victoria moves toward Gordon, threateningly.)

GORDON

Put it down, Victoria. Don't do anything stupid.

(Victoria moves away from Gordon and sits in the chair.)

VICTORIA

I walked halfway up the stairs, my hands shaking, when I realized I couldn't kill you. So I sat down and held the knife to my own chest.

(Victoria turns the knife on herself, pointing it at her chest.)

GORDON

Victoria, what are you doing?

VICTORIA

I sat there for over an hour thinking of how nice it would be for you, when you came down for breakfast in the morning, finding me sprawled on the stairs in a pool of blood. A slight smile on my face.

(She looks at the knife for a moment, then throws it across the apartment.)

Then I realized I couldn't kill myself, either. I felt trapped, like I was sentenced to some awful prison with no way to get out. A sentence without end; a sentence that I knew was never going to get pardoned. A sentence that would stay with me for life. Christ, I was only twelve. What wonderful memories I have of my childhood.

GORDON

Do you really think I came over here to have sex with you?

VICTORIA

Yes, isn't that why you're here?

GORDON

No, goddamn it.

VICTORIA

Yes, it is. I know you all too well. You'll give me some old song and dance about how you've been in therapy, that you're over this thing with me, try and win me over. And maybe not now, but next week, or next month, or next year, you'll make your move. My guard will be down; maybe we'll all be at the lake, and then it will happen just like so many times before.

(Mother enters but stands on the periphery of the apartment.)

GORDON

I knew that's what you thought. But that's not how I am anymore.

VICTORIA

And how am I supposed to know that? Trust you? Say, sure let's be a family again so you and mother can feel good about yourselves. The past is the past and we can move on from here. Well, that's a lot of crap. The past isn't the past and I don't need to forgive you, ever. What I really need to do is forgive me, because that's who I blame the most. So I will never forgive you because you stole my life from me. And I've been wallowing in my misery for so long that I don't know how to do it any differently. But, goddamn it, I am going to try. And I don't need your help or mother's help.

GORDON

Can I do nothing?

VICTORIA

No.

GORDON

Well, here we are. I guess, once the damage is done, that's it, something ends. Sometimes the things we go through damage us so much that there is no going back. I guess that's where we are now; no going back.

VICTORIA

Yes, that's right.

GORDON

For the last two years I've been thinking about what I could do to make up for all the pain I've put you through and, maybe, the best thing to do is just leave you alone.

VICTORIA

Yes, that would be best.

(Mother enters the apartment.)

MOTHER

When the trust is broken, Gordon, it's very difficult to get it back. I don't know if we can ever be a family again, not after what you have done; what I've done.

VICTORIA

What are you doing here, mother?

MOTHER

I couldn't stay at home any longer. I remember a long time ago saying that I wasn't going to turn my back on this, but I did. I made that promise to myself so many times and each time I broke it. Tonight, I was sitting at home thinking, worrying about what was happening over here. I called and no one answered, so I decided it was time to get involved. I wanted to make sure you were all right. Is it too late to be involved?

VICTORIA

Much too late.

MOTHER

Yes, maybe it is.

(Mother turns to Gordon.)

Gordon, you go on home. I'll meet you there.

GORDON

Dear, look...

MOTHER

Just go, Gordon. I need to talk to Victoria.

GORDON

No, goddamn it. We will work this out as a family, together.

(Mother crosses close to
Gordon.)

MOTHER

Gordon, I am so sick of your lying and your cheating, that if you don't walk out of here right now, I will take my phone out and make your life a living hell. Now, get the fuck out. I need to be alone with my daughter.

(Gordon begins to exit but
stops and turns back to
Victoria.)

GORDON

I just...

MOTHER

Gordon!

(Gordon exits and Victoria crosses to the couch and sits.)

VICTORIA

You should have gone with him.

MOTHER

No, I'm sorry, Victoria, but I'm not turning my back on you anymore.

VICTORIA

(sarcastically)

Oh, how wonderful of you. Would you like some tea? Maybe I can make some of those nice little finger sandwiches they used to serve at the country club. Wouldn't that be nice? Just mother and daughter having a nice little chat over their tea.

MOTHER

Well, I see this is not the time to start our rebuilding session.

VICTORIA

Maybe never.

MOTHER

Sorry, Victoria, but you are not going to get your way on this. We are going to solve this problem together. I need as much help as you do, so we might as well work together.

VICTORIA

I don't think so. A bit late for the mother-daughter thing. Just go and leave me alone.

MOTHER

No, not anymore. Sunday, we start. I will be over here in the morning, we will go out for breakfast and discuss our plan. You are my only daughter, my only child, and I will not let my failures stop me from helping you now.

VICTORIA

I think I have plans for Sunday.

MOTHER

Well, break them.

VICTORIA

And just what are you going to do? Wave your magic wand over my head and make my past disappear?

(Mother crosses to Victoria
and sits down next to her.)

MOTHER

No. There are no magic wands, I'm afraid, just hard work ahead for both of us.

(Mother takes Victoria's
hand.)

VICTORIA

Mother, please.

MOTHER

I love you. I know it is difficult for you to believe, but I do.

(Victoria pulls her hand
away.)

VICTORIA

It's just too hard. I don't think there is any hope for either one of us. We're lost, I'm lost.

MOTHER

Yes, we are. But we will find our way, I promise you that.

VICTORIA

You really think so?

MOTHER

Yes, yes I do. And I will see you on Sunday.

VICTORIA

All right, Sunday, if you want.

MOTHER

I want. (pause) You've suffered enough, dear.

VICTORIA

Yes, yes, I have.

(Mother rises, begins to exit
but stops and looks back at
Victoria.)

MOTHER

I'm sorry for all the pain I caused you.

VICTORIA

I know.

MOTHER

Goodbye, dear.

(Mother starts to exit.)

VICTORIA

Mother.

MOTHER

Yes.

VICTORIA

This isn't going to work, you know.

MOTHER

No, I don't know. All we can do is try. I will see you Sunday.

(Mother exits. Victoria picks up her cell phone and then dials. Nadine enters.)

NADINE

Depression Hotline. Can I help you?

VICTORIA

This is Victoria calling; I talked to you earlier this evening.

NADINE

Yes, Victoria, I've been thinking about you. Is your father still there?

VICTORIA

No.

NADINE

And you're all right?

VICTORIA

Yes, I'm fine.

NADINE

That's good, very good.

VICTORIA

I wanted you to know something.

NADINE

What's that?

VICTORIA

I'm going to try not to call you anymore. I know I waste a lot of your time, everyone's time. My time.

NADINE

Good, that's good, Victoria.

VICTORIA

I'm going to try and get some help.

NADINE

I'm very glad to hear that.

VICTORIA

'bye, now. And thanks.

NADINE

'bye. And good luck.

VICTORIA

Yes, I think I'll need that.

(Victoria hangs up as Nadine exits. Susan enters and crosses to the door to the apartment. She stands for a moment and knocks.)

SUSAN

Victoria.

VICTORIA

It's open.

(Susan enters the apartment.)

VICTORIA

Well, how was the big date?

SUSAN

Shitty.

VICTORIA

Really?

SUSAN

I left them there. A couple of total jerks; all they wanted to do was watch replays of some stupid three year old football game, smoke cigars, and drink scotch. You're lucky you didn't go. I told them I was going to the john and just left.

VICTORIA

You did break up with him for a reason, you know.

SUSAN

Yeah, I guess I did. (pause) Hey, I forgot to show you this earlier, look.

(Susan opens her purse and takes out her cell phone.)

VICTORIA

What is it?

SUSAN

It's a photo. I took it last weekend up at the lake. You know how I love my clouds. Look at that. What does it look like to you?

VICTORIA

I don't know.

SUSAN

Doesn't it look like Santa with his long beard?

VICTORIA

No. A boat, maybe, its sails sticking up in the blue sky. And it's going to Hawaii and I'm in the front with the wind blowing through my hair.

SUSAN

That's silly, Victoria. I don't see that at all.

VICTORIA

You just have to look.

SUSAN

I guess.

(Susan gets up, nervously.)

Oh, shit, I'm afraid to ask.

VICTORIA

What?

SUSAN

What? Well, did Gordon show up?

VICTORIA

Yes.

SUSAN

And you're okay?

VICTORIA

I'm fine. He left a little while ago. Believe it or not, but my mother showed up and threw him out of here. For the first time in my life she stood up to him. The strange thing was, he listened to her and left. Just like that.

SUSAN

Your mother was here and she bossed Gordon around?

VICTORIA

Yeah, a big family reunion. It's funny, it was the first time in my life that I kind of felt like I belonged to a family. Very strange.

SUSAN

He didn't...

VICTORIA

No, he didn't try anything weird. I didn't give him a chance. I guess I stood up to him, too.

SUSAN

You stood up to Gordon?

VICTORIA

Yeah. He came in and started talking. And the more he talked, the more I no longer saw him as this monster who had so much control over me. I saw him as this sick, small, frightened man who was making one last attempt to regain whatever it was he lost. And then something happened inside of me, something clicked and my fear of him seemed to vanish and, all of a sudden, I felt not afraid. I knew he couldn't hurt me anymore.

SUSAN

I kind of wish I had stayed around to see that. (pause)
Maybe we should go out and celebrate. Come on, let me buy you a big chocolate sundae at the ice cream place down the street.

VICTORIA

I'd rather be alone right now.

SUSAN

You're sure? A little ice cream never hurt, you know.

VICTORIA

You go on home, I'll be okay.

SUSAN

Well, if you need anything...

VICTORIA

I know, thanks.

(Susan starts to exit.)

VICTORIA

Susan.

SUSAN

Yeah?

VICTORIA

Maybe tomorrow we can see a movie, get some dinner together.

SUSAN

That would be nice. I'd like that. Girls night out. I'll stop by in the morning and we'll make a plan.

VICTORIA

Yeah. See ya.

SUSAN

'bye.

(Susan exits and Victoria freezes. Lighten shift. The Liners enter and cross into Victoria's apartment. When each Liner finishes his or her line, they exit.)

DARLA

Yes, if you want to call back and let us know how things are going, that's fine. I'm glad we could help. 'bye.

NADINE

Oh, honey, let me tell you, what you've done isn't easy. You should be damn proud because it takes courage to make that kind of change. I'll be thinking of you. Good-bye.

ROD

And your daughter is going to be all right? (pause) That's good, that's very good.

(Susan enters as the ten year old, skipping rope. The lights come down with specials on Victoria and Susan.)

SUSAN

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground,
Teddy bear, teddy bear tie your shoe,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, read the news.
Teddy bear, teddy bear, go upstairs,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say your prayers,
Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn out the light,
 (Susan stops skipping rope and
 says the last line very
 slowly and as an adult.)
Teddy bear, teddy bear, say good night.

(Susan slowly crosses to
Victoria and places a hand on
her shoulder. The lights
slowly fade to blackout.)

The End