

Yard Sale Signs

a dark retail comedy about mothers and daughters
and other things that imply some sort of responsibility

by Jennie Webb

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CHARACTERS:

The Focused Woman - She concentrates on the task at hand and when she looks up, often gets angry because not everyone else does and she sees it's all on her shoulders. Somewhere in her thirties.

The Scattered Woman - She manages to keep it together by living in the largest, most haphazard way possible, and not recognizing walls or boundaries and sometimes herself. In her forties or beyond.

The Selfless Woman - She is trying very hard to fill the role she finds herself in, without ever admitting it might not be a good fit and she might get lost in it. Solidly in her forties.

The Awkward Girl - She is kind of a large lump of clay, and maybe only starting to look at who's molding her. Or maybe not. Twelve, but already in teen territory.

The Only Man - He has pretty much learned to be comfortable in his own skin, but part of that is advertising the fact, maybe. Hard to tell, but wouldn't admit to being past forty.

The Woman With Children - She refuses to limit herself or allow herself to project less than the ideal image of herself, and succeeds to an almost fabulous degree. If you had to guess, barely forty, in good lighting.

SETTING:

A clothing store's communal women's dressing room, which could be something more or quite different.

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We see two women. They are in what appears to be a communal women's dressing room in a discount clothing store—think Loehmans, or Filene's Basement. The orderly room is lined with full-length mirrors, and contains a small dressing area with a curtain which appears to be an afterthought; perhaps it's used for storage. There is a door or passageway which apparently leads to the store itself marked by an EXIT sign, and clothing racks positioned around the room, some empty, some holding clothes. One of the women has on a business suit and is purposefully checking it and herself out in the mirror(s); she appears to be rather intensely focused. The other woman is sitting on the floor near the woman trying on clothes. She unabashedly takes up a lot of space because she is so scattered—surrounding her, coming out of her opened bag at various spots, are papers and bills, her wallet, checkbook, cell phone... and maybe much more.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(referring to the suit) I don't know...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(looking at a bill in her hand) This is crazy.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I look like my mother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Insane.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Or like my mother's mother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Did I tell you how much I hate these people?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Who would be my grandmother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Did I tell you how many times I've talked to them?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Except somehow it's not as bad to look like your grandmother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Twice. At least. The last time they made me cry.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Unless it's your grandmother in a business suit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I should really just close this account, never talk to them again.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What is really going on here?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's not like I need it. It's a gas card. I can buy gas with a regular card.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

It's like I'm dressed for Halloween, this suit. It's absolutely ridiculous.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

But I'd still have to talk to them. Even if I cancel it. Even if I cut up the stupid gas card and send it back to them and tell them exactly where to put the pieces, I still have to talk to them because there's no way in hell I'm paying all of this interest.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Wait a minute. You're paying interest on a gas card?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No, I said I'm *not*.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You shouldn't even have a gas card. It's like, twenty-something percent interest.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I know.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

And you can use a regular card to buy gas.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's what I said.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You should cut it up and send it back to them. Those—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting) I already said that! I already know! I'll cut up my card when I'm good and ready!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Okay!

She observes the scattered woman still eyeing the bill.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You won't, though.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I know. I hate them but I love this card.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

How can you love a credit card?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I just like having it. It makes me feel safe or something.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oil companies make you feel safe?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No. I told you. I hate them. They're charging me interest and they're not supposed to.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

The only way they don't charge you is if you pay your balance.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I pay my balance!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Then why are they charging you interest?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

They're not! I told you I'm not paying it!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Not paying is not the same as not getting charged.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(shoving the bill back into her bag) Let's just forget about it. I'm taking a break now, is that okay? A bill-paying break.

She looks at the focused woman in the mirror.

That skirt's bad.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I know. How much of that's these mirrors, though?

SCATTERED WOMAN:.

Trust me, it's bad.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You know... the only reason I'm after you is you gotta' start dealing with stuff.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I know, I know, but I need a break. My stomach hurts.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Take a break. (*short pause*) Is it just the skirt? What about the jacket—I like the jacket.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

The jacket's good.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I think there were slacks. Did we pick up the slacks?

The scattered woman rifles through clothes on a rack, or hanging on hooks.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Why are you saying "slacks?" No one says slacks.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh, I don't know. And I thought I wanted a skirt. But why?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Why?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah, why? Why am I worried about "slacks" and why do I want a skirt?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You've got great legs. Why are you acting like you're being tortured?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Why am I standing here in a business suit looking like my mother?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's not what your mother looks like.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

She would if she wore business suits.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

And if she had hair.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Her hair's growing back.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She should leave it short. It looks cute.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Adorable. Everyone says so.

Pause.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Well, I can't imagine anyone ever calling *my* mother adorable. She was a woman who lived in business suits and spent every busy hour of every busy day completely oblivious to anyone around her. (*short pause*) Especially her husband and children, which is probably why I'm such a mess.

The focused woman takes off her jacket. She is wearing only a bra underneath.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Can you hand me that grey one?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(*going through the clothes*) You're supposed to say "No, you're not!"

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

"...why I'm such a mess!" "No, you're not!"

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh. Sorry. It's why you need things, though.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Why I need things. You think I need things?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You think you don't?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Well, I... I like things. Having them. But do I need them?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Yes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Somehow I think she'll be pleased.

She holds up a jacket.

This one? There's no skirt.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
(handing her the jacket) The last one was better.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
But not the skirt, and I can't just get the jacket.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Why can't you just get the jacket?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Because it's a suit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You can buy one piece of a suit.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
It wouldn't be right. *(considering the jacket)* Can I wear this with jeans?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Not for job interviews.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Yuck. What else is here? I hate it all. I hate everything. These are like, someone else's clothes. These are not my clothes. These are not what I wear.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's the point! Get you out of caretaking mode and back out into the real world!
It's about new clothes for a new you. A new hireable you.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

There's gotta be a different new me. One who will also get hired.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Hell, I'll hire you! Come work at the shop.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You'd have to pay me.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Oh, yeah.

A somewhat put-upon woman comes into the dressing room, with a girl who embodies pre-teen awkwardness. Both are holding piles of clothes which appear to be for the girl.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey, it just doesn't make sense to get a lot of dressy things this year. I mean, one or two dressy things. But you're not going to wear dressy things to school, and I know you—you won't wear them on the weekends, either!

AWKWARD GIRL:

How do you know?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

What do you do on the weekends that you need dressy things?

AWKWARD GIRL:

My mom takes me places.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Then your mom can buy them.

AWKWARD GIRL:

My mom doesn't have any money.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

So how can she take you places?

AWKWARD GIRL:

The places aren't what cost money.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
But you need dressy things to go?

AWKWARD GIRL:
I like to dress up. What's wrong with that?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
You and your mom can play dress up all you want, but today we're here for school clothes. Normal clothes. For school. Can we do that?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Fine.

She looks around the room, and at the other two women

(lowering her voice) Where are the dressing rooms?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
This is the dressing room.

AWKWARD GIRL:
(sotto voce) One dressing room?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Uh huh...

The awkward girl looks again at the women.

AWKWARD GIRL:
(sotto voce) There's no doors.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
No. There aren't.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Where am I supposed to...?! *(short pause)* Can we go?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
You haven't tried anything on!

AWKWARD GIRL:
I don't even like anything. Let's go.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

There's some great things here! Maybe *I'll* just try them on!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Go ahead. I'll wait in the car.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh. Come on. Please?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Buuuuuuuuuuuuut...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) It's kind of funny at first, but you get used to it.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(caught off guard by the overture) Huh?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the focused woman) Thanks.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(to the selfless woman) What?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I was talking to—

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting, to the awkward girl) We're lucky 'cause it's not very crowded today. Usually it's crazy in here, full of old women. It's like a ritual—female bonding. Hey. What do you think of this jacket?

AWKWARD GIRL:

That jacket?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah. This jacket. What do you think?

She tries it on and the awkward girl check her reflection in the mirror.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Uh... It's okay.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

The color's good.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I think it would go with jeans.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Thanks! It's good to get the right kind of validation. Don't you think?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Sure. And... you're not an old woman.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

And you are my new best friend.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It's a lovely jacket. I love the color.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No you don't. *(to the focused woman)* Put on the other one.

She picks up the original jacket.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh! That's *really* lovely!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

And it looks great on her.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'll bet it does. The cut's nice.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Isn't it?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

For her. I couldn't wear it. I'm too short-waisted.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No you're not.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I am.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(offering the jacket) No. Try it on.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'm not here for me.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You could definitely wear it.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Why don't *you* try it on.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Not a chance, but someone needs to take it. It's a beautiful jacket.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(taking the jacket) It really is.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(to the focused woman) It goes with your skirt.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah. That's kind of the point. Or the non-point.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

The skirt's bad.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) I'm not crazy about the skirt. And I feel funny getting the jacket without the skirt.

AWKWARD GIRL:

They're like a set?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Well, no. I mean they are, but...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) There's a little area over there if you wanna use it. To change, I mean.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Thanks!

AWKWARD GIRL:

(looking around) Yeah...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(pointing) Over there.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah.

The awkward girl heads into the area and closes the curtain; the selfless woman follows her, holding the jacket in question.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey? This would look darling on you. You wanna try this on? *(standing outside the curtain)* I'm going to come in there with you. Can we do that?

AWKWARD GIRL:

(from behind the curtain) What?

With a look of hopeful camaraderie back at the women, the selfless woman disappears.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(under her breath) Oh, god. She's going to buy her teenage daughter a business suit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She won't.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You wanna b—?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
(interrupting, coming back out with the jacket) I don't know what I was thinking.
Well, we can always try, can't we?

She gives the jacket to the focused woman and goes back into the curtained area. The scattered woman produces some pants.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Here. Put these on.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Did I pick those?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
No, I did. You don't like them?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I like them, they just seem very...

SCATTERED WOMAN:
They're for business! Casual business. You can dress them up, or dress them down. And look!

She holds them up next to the admired jacket—it's a snappy combination.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
It's just I'm used to wearing jeans.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You're used to wearing jeans wandering around a hospital or following your adorable mother to rehab! These are not for cooking bland meals in, they're not for doctor's visits, they're not for waiting room sitting! *Try them on!!*

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Okay!

The selfless woman comes out of the curtained area as the focused woman changes.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
I don't know what's worse, being a kid and having to go school clothes shopping, or having to take a kid school clothes shopping.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I don't know. I try to block it out, myself. Being the kid, I mean.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Well, thanks for your help. Both of you.

She notices the focused woman checking out her new outfit in the mirror.

Ohhhhh! Nice!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

It's not me.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It's not?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It could be you.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I think it's great.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No. It's... wrong.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It looks right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Of course not! It's flattering, professional, eye catching and has—to paraphrase my dearly demented mom—"classic styling that will last for generations, at a bargain price!"

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Ha ha! That sounds just like *my* mother!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Lord help us both.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the scattered woman) I can't stand this. Any of it. Wanna go to lunch?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You're kidding, right?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt...

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Wait. It's not you. I'm having a bad day.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
No, I barged in on you two. It's just that...

She looks back at the curtained area and as if on cue the awkward girl pokes her head out, as well as a simple, plain blouse.

AWKWARD GIRL:
(to the selfless woman) Why did you get this? This is so boring!

SELFLESS WOMAN:
But everything you wear is so— You don't have to try it on.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Don't worry, I won't!

She ducks back behind the curtains.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Ha ha. Will I ever learn?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You have my sympathies.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
How old is your daughter?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
She's not my daughter. I'm the evil stepmother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You *really* have my sympathies!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
She seems very... 13?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Twelve. But yes. She's very 13.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I meant she seems... okay.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
She is, actually. Shopping's not her thing, though.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Mine, neither.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
My mom used to take me here when I was a "young lady," so I thought... But I guess I was wrong. Again.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I'm sure she'll find something. A bunch of things.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
(to the focused woman) That really is a fantastic outfit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Thank you very much.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Yeah? Okay. Fine.

She starts to change, and the scattered woman hands her a new blouse.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Wait. Try this.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(indicating pants) With these?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
(appreciatively) Ohhhh!

SCATTERED WOMAN:
See? There's a reason I dragged you here, baby. Keep going. One outfit does not a professional wardrobe make.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. A closet full of coordinating patterns is the answer to everything.

She starts to try on the new blouse.

But you don't get to stop with one bill, you know. Did you even pay it?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Arrrrrrgh. I didn't and I'm not.

She goes back to her papers and offers an explanation to the selfless woman.

I find I can only pay bills in a retail environment.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh.

The awkward girl comes out of the curtained area wearing "the latest" outfit which is not at all flattering and stands, silently.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(holding the previous bill) But *this* one I'm filing under correspondence.

She opens an overflowing pocket in her bag.

And on top of an egg salad sandwich. *(taking it out, to the focused woman)* Did you say you were hungry?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(sizing up the choices in the mirror, then maybe looking for another jacket) I'm talking *lunch*. Where I'm served.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Yes, and people bring us wine. As soon as our work here is done.

The awkward girl decides she is tired of being invisible.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Hello?!

Short pause, as the selfless woman takes in her outfit.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh!

AWKWARD GIRL:

(going back behind the curtains) I knew you'd hate it.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It's not that I *hate* it...

She follows the awkward girl into the curtained dressing area.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(under her breath) Do the rest of us get to vote?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

It's hard being a teenager.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's hard being *around* a teenager.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Give her a break. She reminds me of me.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Thank god I didn't know you when.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You would've hated me. Hell, I hated me.

We hear voices.

THE ONLY MAN:

(offstage) Sweetheart, I do this all the time. No one is going to mind.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(offstage) But I would mind!

THE ONLY MAN:

(offstage) I don't buy that for a second. I've been watching you change clothes since the third grade.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(offstage) I mean if I wasn't me. If I didn't know you I would mind.

THE ONLY MAN:

(offstage) But you do, so no problem!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(offstage) What I— We don't even know who's in there! There could be— They could be naked!

THE ONLY MAN:

(offstage) Well, reconnoiter, for lord's sake! Get permission from any fuzzy fuchsias and tell 'em you're bringing me in—and that I have absolutely no interest in tits etcetera beyond the aesthetic.

The woman with children, presently childless, is seemingly pushed into the room and sees both the scattered woman and the focused woman, presently pantless.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh! Hi. Um. I'm really sorry about this. You see, I've got this friend who thinks I'm, well, severely style-challenged, and, well, that's probably right, but he's, well, a man, and—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting) We get it. It's okay with us. *(to the focused woman)* Right?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Um...

THE ONLY MAN:

(offstage, shouting to the women onstage) Believe me, you do not want to see what she comes up with without me by her side! I speak from deep personal knowledge—our fragile world will not be able to handle it.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I... guess...

She quickly puts back on her pants.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN

I don't want you to be uncomfortable.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She was already uncomfortable.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Let's get lunch.

The only man has entered the dressing room and admires the focused woman's outfit.

THE ONLY MAN:

Good look! On the job hunt?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Yes, as a matter of fact, she is. Isn't that outfit great?

THE ONLY MAN:

With her legs she should go for a skirt.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's what I told her!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What do you know about my legs?

THE ONLY MAN:

I can tell.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You're handy to have around.

THE ONLY MAN:

You don't know the half of it!

He wheels in a new rack of clothes for the woman with children.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(to the scattered and focused women) So it's okay?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Fine with me!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You're not trying anything on.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Maybe now I will.

The only man hands a dress to the woman with children.

THE ONLY MAN:

Start with this. Cocktail attire.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Because as a mother of three I have so many cocktail occasions.

THE ONLY MAN:

If you wear it, they will come. In more ways than one.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You are terrible.

THE ONLY MAN:

(sizing up her outfit) And you are fabulous. Vintage?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Thanks! Yeah.

THE ONLY MAN:

Look at that stitching. It makes you want to take up needlepoint. You don't put this through the washing machine, do you?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

On gentle. I can't be held hostage to detailing.

THE ONLY MAN:

Darling. What would your poor grandmother say?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I come from a long line of domestic misfits.

THE ONLY MAN:

Dear, dear, dear. Thank god there's me to wear the apron en mi familia.

The focused woman is trying on a new skirt with the top.

(to the focused woman) Good good—love the gams. Try this.

He hands her a blouse from the rack intended for the woman with children.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Ooooh. That's gorgeous! Where did you find that?

THE ONLY MAN:

In the back of the designer stuff they've got a whole bunch of one-of-a-kind craziness.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Wait. Wasn't that mine?

THE ONLY MAN:

Better on her. Sweetie! What have you been doing there? Will you try on that dress already?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

If you really think a married mother needs cocktail attire—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting, overlapping) My god, more than anyone.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

She said cocktail *attire*.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That too.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

It's just that I don't get out very much, and today the kids are at home with my mother-in-law so I'm taking advantage of my old friend—

THE ONLY MAN:

(interrupting) Watch it. School chum.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

We've known each other since—

THE ONLY MAN:

(interrupting) Jesus would-be christ! Will you put on that damn outfit?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

It's not an outfit, it's—

He hands her a scarf or other accessory.

THE ONLY MAN:

(interrupting) Now it's an outfit! My god, girl!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I was only—

THE ONLY MAN:

(interrupting) Go!

The woman with children disappears behind the racks of clothes.

And she wonders why no one takes her out anymore...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(admiring the new blouse in the mirror) You know, this is really beautiful.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You look great.

THE ONLY MAN:

Did I tell you?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(to the only man, pointing to the new rack) What about that jacket?

THE ONLY MAN:

(selecting the jacket) It's a risk... *(handing it to the focused woman)* But one worth taking. *(to the scattered woman)* Good eye!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I have a shop.

THE ONLY MAN:

I thought so. Where?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Across town—on 18th before the rail road tracks? Second-hand, some really fun stuff, mostly for women...

THE ONLY MAN:

Story of my life.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I've got some great resort wear, though.

THE ONLY MAN:

And who doesn't need togs for the cabana boy? I've been there. It is fun.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I thought you looked familiar.

The focused woman's new selections catch her eye.

Hey! I love it! *(handing her a skirt)* Did you already try this one?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
No...

THE ONLY MAN:
With this!

He pulls another blouse from the new rack and tosses it to the focused woman.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I can't take all her clothes...

SCATTERED WOMAN:
She won't mind. *(to the only man)* Will she?

THE ONLY MAN:
It's fine. *(to the woman with children who's still out of sight)* How you doing there, princess?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:
Fine!

THE ONLY MAN:
See?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(excited about the possibilities of her new outfit) Ohhhhh... I don't know.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I do.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You think I can?

THE ONLY MAN:
You can! You must!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

But it's so...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Which is precisely the point!

THE ONLY MAN:

Surrender. It's always easier that way.

The focused woman tries on the clothes.

(to the scattered woman) You're also here in an advisory capacity?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Uh huh.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(talking while dressing) But that's not all you're here for!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Right. Did you say it was time for lunch?

THE ONLY MAN:

(looking toward the scattered woman's purse) Is that an egg salad sandwich?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Indeed! Would you care for one?

THE ONLY MAN:

I can't tell you how long it's been since— Wait. Sweet pickles?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

God no.

She hands him an impressive sandwich.

THE ONLY MAN:

No one makes egg salad right anymore.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Heavy on the mayo, light on the mustard.

THE ONLY MAN:

Ambrosia.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I do that too. Fresh out today, though. *(reaching into her purse again)* Chips?

THE ONLY MAN:

Fabulous. Got anything to drink?

The scattered woman produces chips and an icy beverage. The focused woman considers an entirely new outfit in the mirror.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the only man) Okay. Would you hire me wearing this?

THE ONLY MAN:

Hire you? I'd marry you!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Hah!

THE ONLY MAN:

That's not the goal?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

A job first. Then who knows. *(to the scattered woman)* You think?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Definitely.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I feel really good.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You look fantastic. You're comin' back, baby.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh, yeah?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You'll be great.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Okay, okay. But *you!* You get to work. You said you wanted to get them all paid.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I'll do it later.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
That wasn't our deal.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Pleeeeeeease?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Not fair. I always have to be the bad guy!

SCATTERED WOMAN:
And that's what I'm counting on.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Really not fair.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
What is?

She sits back down with her bag, joining the only man who's eating his lunch.

THE ONLY MAN:
Dare I ask?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Bills. It helps to pay 'em while shopping.

THE ONLY MAN:
Of course.

The scattered woman pulls a piece of cardboard out of her bag.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
(to the focused woman) Oh! Look what I've got!

The cardboard has "Yard Sale" written on it, along with a location and date or day(s).

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Arrrrrgh. Why do people do that?

THE ONLY MAN:
Have yard sales?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
No, thank *jesus* for the sales. They keep me in business.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I mean the signs.

THE ONLY MAN:
(to the scattered woman) The signs...

SCATTERED WOMAN:
The people who leave up the signs. After the sale's over.

THE ONLY MAN:
What about them?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
They're irresponsible assholes who are spreading like a plague on this poor, beleaguered planet.

THE ONLY MAN:
Because of their signs?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Because they have no sense of where they end and the rest of the world begins, which leaves them with absolutely no compulsion to *consider* much less *do* the right thing.

THE ONLY MAN:
A sign tells you that?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
And then some!

She takes the sign.

These are people who feel entitled to plaster the neighborhood with notices about the bits and pieces of their sad little lives—which is mostly junk, not good enough for them anymore, but it must still be valuable because it was, after all, *theirs*—and then they don't even bother to take down the signs, like they're this irrevokable public license: it *is* all about me because you're all buying it!

THE ONLY MAN:
I... never looked at it that way.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
No one ever does.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(to the only man) Incredible, isn't it?

The woman with children comes out, looking attractive—and she knows it—in the cocktail dress. She can't find the only man and she needs more mirrors.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(to the focused woman) Excuse me! Did you see where—

THE ONLY MAN:

(interrupting) Here, darling! *(looking at her outfit)* Hey! That's yummy!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I feel ridiculous.

THE ONLY MAN:

Well, just get over it. You're irresistible.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Ha ha. Right. *(to the women)* I normally just wear work-out clothes. I spend as much time as I can at the gym. That is, whenever I can manage to get rid of all my kids at the same time!

THE ONLY MAN:

Don't advertise that goal, baby. They'll throw you out of the PTA.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh, no they won't. I'm head of the healthy lunch committee.

THE ONLY MAN:

I was joking.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(to the woman with children) You don't look like a mother of three.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Thanks! I try. Do you have kids?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

God, no. I mean, no.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

It's a lot of work getting your figure back. And just when you do, you're pregnant again.

THE ONLY MAN:

(to the scattered woman) Don't you just hate that?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

"Oh god, after I had the kids..."

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

But I thought you said—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting) I was joking. With me, it's "Oh god, after I turned 40..."

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Ha ha ha!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I'm serious.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Wait. You do or don't have kids?

THE ONLY MAN:

She doesn't.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

How do you know that?

THE ONLY MAN:

Please.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Hah!

THE ONLY MAN:

(to the focused woman) You, though...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Me?

THE ONLY MAN:

The kid thing. It's hard to tell. I'm thinking no, but then there is something... maternal. And you're out job hunting, but I'm thinking it's been awhile...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You're good.

THE ONLY MAN:

Haven't we already established that?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No kids, only a mom. I mean my mom—I've been taking care of *her*. But I think she's okay now.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She's definitely okay now.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

So I'm, well, "reclaiming my life."

THE ONLY MAN:

That means a job?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

And you're having a yard sale?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(gesturing toward the sign the focused woman is holding) I used to love yard sales. Before the kids, I mean.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh, this is just a sign.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's not her sale.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

So why do you have the sign?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I gave it to her. It was from this huge estate where they had a ton of old drapery fabric.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
It's a long story.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Anyway, it's part of a collection.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Wait. Part of what collection?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
A collection of signs.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Whose?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Yours. Ours. Because you're always talking about them.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
That doesn't mean I want to collect them.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
But I thought we could do something with them. Something outrageous. I live for 'em, they make you angry, so let's make a statement. An artistic statement.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You're the artist.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
A political statement!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
How would I make a statement with yard sale signs?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
You just did! Our country's full of people who can't see beyond their own yard sales! You need to speak up and be counted, darling!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:
(to the focused woman) Is that my blouse you're wearing?

Pause.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh! I'm sorry...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's not like it was *yours*, really...

THE ONLY MAN:

My fault! But there's enough to share...

He gives a new dress to the woman with children.

Try this.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(to the focused woman) It looks wonderful on you!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm sorry—I forget who handed it to me...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

It's fine.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I think I did.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(to the scattered woman) And isn't it "*stand up and be counted?*"

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What?

THE ONLY MAN:

Okay. I'm going out. *(to the woman with children)* I'll bring something new, smashing, and totally unique—just for you darling.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

If it makes you happy...

The only man hands the uneaten portion of his lunch back to the scattered woman.

THE ONLY MAN:

(to the scattered woman) Hang onto this for me, will you? *(to all)* Back in a flash!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No problem.

She takes a surprisingly large cooler out of her bag and stashes the lunch items as the only man leaves the room.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(to the focused woman) What a great color on you! It's my husband's favorite. That's why I chose it.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(starting to take off the blouse) Look, I feel terrible about this...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

No! It's not your fault. And besides, it wouldn't look right on me. Not with my arm.

Pause.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Your arm?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Yes. My left arm.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What's wrong with your left arm?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the scattered woman) You shouldn't ask her—!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting) It's okay! Lots of people don't notice. I lost my left arm. I've learned to compensate.

Pause.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I didn't—

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting) I know. It was right after my first child was born. Rather a heavy load. Ha ha. No pun intended.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I guess.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

What I mean is that I *really* didn't intend to make a pun. I know people say that. But this was accidental. And not actually a pun.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

The pun was accidental. The arm was more... consequential.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Well... you're right; I never would have noticed. You just carry yourself so... so...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Thanks.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Huh.

The selfless woman comes out of the curtained dressing area with a pile of clothing, revealing the awkward girl in a garish and ill-fitting outfit.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) No, sweetie. You stay in there. I'll bring you some more stuff and it'll be faster that way.

AWKWARD GIRL:

But get the right size! My mom says—

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(interrupting) Okay! But remember that sizes are sometimes different. I mean, designer sizes are... So you have to try them on and we'll see what fits, can we do that?

AWKWARD GIRL:

But get the right colors. I don't want to look like a boy.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

How does—? Okay.

Her arms full, she manages to close the curtain and turns to the women.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(greeting the woman with children) Hello, there. *(to the other women)* Well, here I go on another fruitless mission!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

How old is your daughter?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

She's not my daughter.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

No?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'm the stepmother. But she's 12.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

My oldest is 10.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

This is what you've got to look forward to!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Ha ha ha.

The scattered woman moves toward the selfless woman, still struggling with the clothes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Can I help you with those?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

They're rejects. I'm taking them back out.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(taking some clothes from her) We can just put 'em on a rack in here.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oooh, I don't feel right about that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Really, it's fine!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Girls at that age. They have no concept of their own bodies.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Can be a frightening concept, at any age.

The scattered woman finds a rack—or pulls a small rack out of her bag—and they hang the clothes on it. The woman with children considers the new dress she’s been given.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(holding it up for the focused woman’s opinion) Was he serious?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I’m not the one to ask. Listen, are you sure about this blouse? I mean, if it’s your husband’s fav—

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting) Absolutely.

Short pause, while the focused woman weighs absolutely.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Thanks. *(turning to admire herself in the mirror)* I really love it. And that’s not, like, typical for me. But I’m kind of excited. About a piece of clothing, of all things, and I don’t even hate how I look in it! I think it’s a good sign that I’m—

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting, holding the dress up in the mirror) So should I try this on? One thing’s for sure: my mother certainly wouldn’t approve!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

That’s maybe *why* you should try it on!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

She’s dead, you know.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh! No. I didn’t.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Well, you couldn’t have.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I’m sorry.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I am, too. For so many reasons.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I... My mother had a... brain thing.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Liver disease.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I mean, she didn't die. She's actually fine. Now.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

But you said she's fine.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yes! I mean, I'm not sorry about *that*. It was, well, very scary, and then took a long while, but I was able to take some time off and be with her and she's... I'm sorry. Was it very...?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Very?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Oh, I don't know. Your mother. Painful. Difficult. This is terrible. I'm sorry.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Thank you. What I think about most is that my children won't have their grandmother.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yes...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Well, that and I gave her my liver for nothing.

The awkward girl toddles out of the curtained area. In her search for the selfless woman, she trips on her extremely high heels.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Ahhhhh!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(moving to catch her) Ooooooh! You okay?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Uh, yeah...

She is set aright and the full horror of her new get up—she looks like a child prostitute—is revealed.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Boy! That's one hot dress!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:
I'll say...

The dress the awkward girl's wearing is the same one she's holding.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Uh, thanks.

The woman with children abandons her dress, and goes to search for another.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Do you have someplace special you're going?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Well, not really. But maybe the opera.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
The opera? Wow.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Yeah. My mother's an opera singer.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Really!

AWKWARD GIRL:
Uh, yeah.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Like, that's her job?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Uh huh. But she's a sheep farmer, too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

A singing sheep farmer?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Ha ha. Yeah.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Wow.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah. Now they're just lambs. Most of 'em. We have six and one is grown up and two are black, so when they all get to be sheep we're going to sell their wool at swap meets and art fairs and I'm going to make things out of the wool, too. Maybe sell them on e-bay.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Goodness. You sound busy.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah. I sing, too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Opera?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Well, yeah. I've been in operas. But today's music, too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Of course.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

She actually does have a lovely voice.

The selfless woman has joined them, carrying new clothing.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(not without suspicion) What?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I said you have a lovely voice!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Oh. I thought you were talking about my mother.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No. I was talking about you.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Oh.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

You should tell her about your concert. About your solo.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

A solo—that's great!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

And about how your mother was late and had to miss it, but when she arrived she was holding a bleating, baby lamb.

AWKWARD GIRL:

It was just born.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Quite the sight. Captivated the entire audience.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'll bet.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey, that dress may not be the most appropriate thing for you to wear to school. Why don't you try these on.

She hands some clothes to the awkward girl, and watches her retreat behind the curtains. She then turns to the focused woman.

Her relationship with her mother is very...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah, it all sounds very...

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Yes.

The scattered woman joins them.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She sings to sheep? I've completely missed my calling.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Right, well... *(lowering her voice and moving away from the curtained area)* It's mind-boggling. The kid spends weekends with her—when it's convenient—in a filthy trailer with no electricity and no running water...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

But plenty of sheep?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh, yes. Sheep. And other barely-alive-stock. Because this woman—who does not even have basic 4-H training—decided to buy land in the middle of nowhere so she could be closer to, I don't know, photo-ops and pot-luck dinners. Certainly not to things like homework or school clothes shopping or anything else in the interests of her own child and...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Her daughter adores her.

The selfless woman tries valiantly but unsuccessfully to hold back her tears.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Of course!

The scattered woman goes to comfort her, perhaps pulling a folding chair and a box of Kleenex out of her bag.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Come here.

THE ONLY MAN:

Some women should not be allowed to have children.

The selfless woman catches her first glimpse of the only man, who has re-entered the room with an armful of clothes and some hat boxes which he places on or by the racks.

THE SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh! Hi...

THE ONLY MAN:

Don't worry about me—I'm just here as a consultant. But I know whereof I speak. My own mother, for instance. Should not have passed go under any circumstances.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Amen to that.

The only man passes a somewhat wild sweater to the selfless woman.

THE ONLY MAN:

Here. It couldn't be more you.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

But... I'm not *here* for me....

THE ONLY MAN:

Try it on, it'll be fun.

The selfless woman dutifully begins strip.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Except I'm not allowed to have fun. I'm the one who has to do things like make sure she's keeping up her grades and eating right.

She pulls the sweater over her tear-streaked face. Throughout the play the clothing choices have become more bold, and by now the dressing room is far from orderly.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She's lucky to have you.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I wish someone would tell her that!

THE ONLY MAN:

It wouldn't make a bit of difference.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

What?

THE ONLY MAN:

You're up against a diva and you don't stand a chance in hell. Believe me: I am the son of the greatest diva that ever lived. Whom I worship. Of course.

He throws a skirt or pants at the scattered woman, then searches for more options. The scattered woman hands the selection to the selfless woman who tries it on.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Okay, so here's the deal: that's different and this is not forever. She may be under the spell of wacko mamma now, but one day that girl will figure it out.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I don't know.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I do. It may take awhile, but it will happen. Because it's the inalienable—(to the only man) perhaps exclusive?—right of women: to hate our mothers.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You don't mean that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Of course I mean that.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I mean, you don't hate your mother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I most certainly do.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You don't!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Oh, yeah! I do. Completely!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

But you also love her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Says who?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

She's your mother!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Exactly. She's an awful, unhappy woman and it took my entire childhood to realize it was impossible to please her. So if she thinks that now, after all these years, I'm gonna open up my—

Pause.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What?

The scattered woman shifts the attention to the focused woman's outfit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's not quite working for me, honey...

THE ONLY MAN:

Try this.

He has reemerged and hands the focused woman a somewhat bizarre piece of clothing. The selfless woman begins to look through the racks and make selections for herself.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I've never met anyone who hates their mother.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

They just don't admit it. It's more common than you think.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

That is absolutely not true.

THE ONLY MAN:

You know, she's right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Who's right?

THE ONLY MAN:

I don't think men really *can* hate their mothers. It's not allowed; not in the same way. Women seem to have this very proprietary hate that springs from the womb and refuses to let go.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

That's terrible; how can you say that?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Come on. Be honest. Don't you hate yours, just a little bit?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You gave up, what, over a year of your life to nurse her back to health and you're not even a little pissed at her?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Of course not! She almost died, how could I be pissed at her?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I don't mean rationally, I mean in some emotionally dysfunctional Greek tragedy way: why the fuck did this have to happen and why the fuck is it me, me, me having to take care of her.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

That's not fair.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Exactly! Doesn't that piss you off?!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Not at my *mother*!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

And being pissed off at someone is not the same as hating them.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Sometimes things need to be taken care of.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

And someone's got to do it.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Stop that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You are what pisses me off!

SCATTERED WOMAN:
All right!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
And you know, you can say what you want about your mother. You can hate her, you can love her. But what I see is that in direct opposition to all of your very studied efforts to take a contrary path, you've become just like her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Fuck you.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I mean that in a good way! Sure, you're this sort of aimless free spirit, but whatever you do, however you sabotage yourself, you always manage to come out on top. You're an incredibly successful business woman!

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Then... fuck you in a good way. Maybe.

Short pause, then the focused woman considers the piece of clothing she is holding.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(to the only man) Which part goes over my head?

THE ONLY MAN:
(moving to help her) Oh, baby, lemme do it...

The scattered woman admires some of the only man's wardrobe selections.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I shoulda' had some goddamn gay man give birth to me, fuck the business.

THE ONLY MAN:

I'll take that as a compliment.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Definitely—wanna' adopt an aimless free spirt?

THE ONLY MAN:

Will you put me in your incredibly successful will?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Yeah, there's that. Depends on if you take care of my old dying mother.

THE ONLY MAN:

Now it's getting complicated.

He moves toward a clothing rack at the back of the room.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the scattered woman) What are you talking about, your old dying mother?
Your mother's not dying.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Of course not. And she's younger than me, for chrissake!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Maybe that's why you hate her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Hah!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I mean, if you've become like her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Is this a conspiracy?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

We look in the mirror, we see our mothers—

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) It's not our *mothers* we hate!

Short pause, as she catches something in her reflection.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What am I saying? I love my mother. I wish I was *more* like her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Of course you do.

THE ONLY MAN:

What a fascinating space you all occupy.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Well, I'm sorry my stepdaughter never met mine. Her whole life my mom was after me to have kids.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

My mother's perfectly happy being the only child in the family.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Your mother was an only child? Mine was, too!

The woman with children has reappeared in a particularly outlandish outfit.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Oh. That's not really what I—

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting) You know, I never thought of it until now, but that might just be part of the reason we didn't stop at two. Had an extra one for her. And she never even appreciated it.

THE ONLY MAN:

Wow.

He has rejoined the ladies, and is struck by what the woman with children is wearing.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(turning around) Well? What do you think?

THE ONLY MAN:

I... think you're amazing. That's a given. The question is, what were *you* thinking?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Ha ha! *(to the group)* That's why I bring him with me!

As the only man drags the woman with children back behind the clothing racks, the selfless woman moves toward the dressing area and begins to open the curtain.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey? You're pretty quiet, are you okay in there...?

For a brief moment, the opened curtain reveals the awkward girl posing in the mirror, wearing a very revealing outfit.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(closing the curtain) What are you doing leave me alone are you crazy I'm fine leave me alone leave me alone!!

Pause.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

So. How long has she...?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I think it's genetic.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Undoubtedly. I mean, how long have you...?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Four years. I married her father four years ago. But she didn't live with us. At first. And then it just sort of... Well, I could do it. And in a lot of ways it's easier now, that she's living with us. This past year. Except for weekends. Some weekends.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Uh huh. Seems way easy.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Well, it wasn't like we had a choice. Because of her beloved mother's... condition, and everything.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Condition?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Her... medical condition.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Something she got from the singing sheep?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(to the selfless woman) I'm sorry. Is it serious?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
I guess that depends on who you ask.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
What do the doctors say?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
I have no idea. To the best of my knowledge it's self-diagnosed. A severe case of cataplexy.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Cataplexy. What the fuck is Cataplexy?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
A *condition* which allows her to have these vaguely narcoleptic seizures, where she suddenly becomes unconscious and drops to the ground.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
That *sounds* serious.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Except it only happens at the most opportune, attention-grabbing moments, and then she's immediately revived. By Paco.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Paco?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Paco. Her Teacup Chihuahua.

Short pause, as the women try to put together the pieces.

Whenever she has a cata-seizure, Paco leaps out of her handbag and licks her face to wake her up.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Are you kidding me?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Oh, no. He's a designated service animal. (*short pause*) Like a seeing eye dog.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Yes. She can legally carry him anywhere and everywhere, because he's a medical necessity.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That is genius!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the scattered woman) What are you talking about?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Think of the possibilities! Preferred parking, no lines in the restroom...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You shouldn't even joke about that!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's hysterical!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

It's criminal! *(to the selfless woman)* Do you realize how hard it is to get anything when you really need it, medically, in this country? I was trying forever to get help for my mom and then this... hypochondriacal maniac gets official dispensation for a purse dog?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I—!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) I'm sorry. It's not your fault. It's just that I spent like a year fighting my way through hospital hell and... I'm sorry.

THE ONLY MAN:

I guess *I've* been away from the frontlines too long. What did I miss?

The only man and the woman with children have joined the others.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the focused woman) No! *I'm* sorry! I didn't mean to upset you.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No...

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I mean, I agree with you!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

It's not your fault. None of it. I just need to...

She moves quickly away.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(after the focused woman) I'm so sorry!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's okay.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It's not. I wasn't thinking...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It's not you. Really...

She leaves them to check on the focused woman.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I should have...

THE ONLY MAN:

Honey, relax. It's really *not* you, that's obvious.

Short pause, as the selfless woman takes in the obvious.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No, it's not me. It's never me. It's always anyone but me, and I should just get used to it.

THE ONLY MAN:

Hold on. That's not what I was—

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(interrupting, to the selfless woman) I know just how you feel. When you have children, suddenly it's all about *them*, right?! "Oh, what beautiful children you have! They look just like you! How lucky you are!"

Pause.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

That's a nice dress.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Thanks! *(to the only man)* Remind me I must never doubt you.

THE ONLY MAN:

Okay. I'll find something to go with. *(to the selfless woman)* And I think I saw something back there that would... I will return.

He goes behind the racks of clothes.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Don't be too long! *(to the selfless woman)* I don't know what I'd do without him.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Yes. You *are* lucky.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh, blessed. I mean, honestly, I'd be lost. Because I tell you, my girlfriends have some crazy ideas about what a busy mom should look like.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I don't have much time for girlfriends anymore.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh, of course not! I don't either! I can hardly even find time for myself! But when it comes to shopping, well, that's another story, isn't it?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'd kill to shop alone.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Sure! But in my case— Well, *me*, by myself, it's almost impossible for me to get the right perspective. With only one eye.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

What?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

This one's glass. It happened the night my husband proposed.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Oh! I never would have...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

No! I doubt you would have! They did a marvelous job. And my marriage is in good shape.

Short pause, while the selfless woman considers the alternative.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Good.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

That wasn't entirely clear, was it? I didn't mean that my marriage is in good shape because they did a good job. That would be awful, wouldn't it?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'm... not sure.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

What I meant was my marriage is in good shape in spite of losing an eye. Maybe even because of it, although I never thought of it that way.

The only man returns with a few pieces of clothing.

THE ONLY MAN:

Well, I managed to dig up some ad hoc possibilities, but I'll have to head out for the heavy artillery. For you (*handing the woman with children an item or items*), and you (*handing the selfless woman even more clothes*), whether you deserve it or not.

Having transferred the clothing into the women's arms, he leaves the room.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Truthfully, though? I guess I can't blame it all on the eye. With three children at home, you just lose focus on the real world sometimes. You know how being a mother can really take it out of you if you don't keep watch every minute of every— Wait! That's right! She's not really your...

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No. She's not.

The women move behind the racks to try on clothes. The focused woman has returned to her original spot and struggles to organize the mess around her. The scattered woman is dutifully handling her paperwork.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Damn it!

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Look! I paid the electric company.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Congratulations.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Once more, with feeling.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Fine. Hooray. Lunchtime.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Except I just opened my cable bill.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Arrgh.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Exactly. But I shall persevere for you, my friend.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Fuck it. *(throwing down some clothing choices)* Do I really want any of this stuff?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Are you an idiot? Of course you do!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Why why why? Why do I even try? Why am I even here? I should just go and...

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Sweetie, stop it. I know what this is about. The whole thing with your mom was hard on you. I mean, a nightmare.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
A long fucking nightmare.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Yeah. I know. But it's over.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
So they tell me.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

And now you have to get past it and back—

FOCUSED disappear:

(interrupting) To my own life?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Yes!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I was working as a personal assistant. A thirty-something personal assistant and part-time au-pair. Occasional tutor. “How wonderful you were able to be there for your mother. How wonderful you were able to take so much time off!” From what? From camping in this and that person's life because I never fucking *had* one of my own?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Please. You were wonderful. You are wonderful.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Of course I am. Whatever I do it's wonderful, and where has it gotten me?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You'll figure it out, and you know, in a way it was good you had that kind of time with your mom; you have that kind of mom. Even if she'd died you'd have that.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah, it's easy to forget sometimes how lucky I am. I mean, thank god I don't have your disaster of a life, huh?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You create this chaos, surround yourself with wreckage wherever you go but the truth is, you can get away with anything. It doesn't matter what you do—or don't do—you're golden!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Really.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Absolutely. But me? Things don't just happen for me, they happen *to* me. It's like I'm stuck, waiting for the next emergency room call so I can say, “Oh! This is what I'm supposed to be doing! Of course! I'll just put my *real* life on hold.”

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No, that's not what—

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) That's exactly what. You don't understand; you couldn't. Unless you've been in that space where *none* of it seems real and *no one* is allowed to have a life. Where time stops and day after day it's unfuckingbelievable that other people can just go on when the world should be standing still, holding its breath.

Short pause.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Right. Only everything does move forward. And somehow suspends you as you disappear into one hospital room after another which are all the same and days become weeks become months and you prepare yourself for the worst and then suddenly, wait! My mom gets better and everyone's thrilled and then, look! She's okay! She's good as new! And then they tell me—she tells me: How wonderful! You're wonderful! It's over!

But here's the thing: it's not over. It'll never be over. Taking care of your mom... Something shifts and nothing'll ever be okay again. I tried so, so hard to keep it all together but in a way I did lose her, and then it hits me: I'm all alone now! I don't even have a fucking daughter! Who the fuck's gonna take care of me?

Long pause.

Oh, god.

She looks hard in the mirror again.

Look at me. I'm being a big baby.

Pause.

(directly to the scattered woman) You're supposed to say, "no you're not."

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Huh?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

"I'm a big baby." "No, you're not."

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Oh.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I mean, you're right, I will figure it out. It's not like I have to live with her anymore.

Pause.

(directly to the scattered woman) What's the matter?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Hmm.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What is it?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Nothing.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Absolutely nothing.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No, what?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Are you hungry? I'm starving.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Really!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Never mind.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I told you— I'm sorry. I was being dramatic. What did I say?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Nothing.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Stop.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Time to go?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I didn't mean to imply that— I know you're there for me!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I don't see how I could be. I'm incapable of understanding.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I didn't—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting) Did it ever occur to you that there are things *you* might not understand? That despite all outward appearances some of us might actually be dealing with—

She moves to pick up her bag and many yard sale signs fall out.

Shit!

AWKWARD GIRL:

What are those?

The awkward girl has joined them, unnoticed by the others who have disappeared behind the clothing racks. She is wearing an attractive and distinctive ensemble—perhaps a piece of it is the blouse she rejected earlier.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Hi.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Hi.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Hi. I... *(indicating the awkward girl's clothing)* I like you in that. *(to the scattered woman)* Don't you think?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Sure.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Uh, thanks.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
It looks terrific.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Thanks.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Very grown up.

The awkward girl considers this in the mirror. She then picks up a couple of the signs.

AWKWARD GIRL:
So whose are they?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
They're other people's, but my friend... *(short pause)* We're collecting them.
They're from yard sales.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Collecting them for what?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I'm... not sure yet.

AWKWARD GIRL:
You got a lot. They're all from yard sales?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I think so...

AWKWARD GIRL:
It's cool how they're all different.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Yeah. That is cool.

AWKWARD GIRL:
You could put them on the walls in your room.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I could.

AWKWARD GIRL:
It could be like they were all talking to you. Telling you where to go to find cool stuff, at all these cool yard sales.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Ha ha.

AWKWARD GIRL:

And whose they were. You know? Who was selling the stuff and what kind of stuff it was and what it told you about things they did. Like their jobs and everything else that wasn't a job. I mean, that's sometimes better, like more of who a person really is. The stuff they just want to do even though they don't have to.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I... okay.

AWKWARD GIRL:

And if they were on your walls you could imagine going everywhere and buying different things, and each place could be like a different sort of place, with different people. And even though the things are probably not there anymore because the sales are like, over, it would be like they were still a part of everything and they still matter, and so do the people who are selling them. It'd be like everyone's lives are connected and everyone counts, because of the stuff they want to get rid of.

Short pause, filled with a new appreciation of signs.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Why don't we?

AWKWARD GIRL:

What?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Why don't we put 'em on the walls.

AWKWARD GIRL:

But it's not your room.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No.

AWKWARD GIRL:

So can we do that?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I don't see why not. *(to the scattered woman)* It'd be like a statement, right?

Short pause.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Sure.

AWKWARD GIRL:

You got tape or something?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Help yourself.

The scattered woman gestures toward her bag and the awkward girl reaches in, pulls out rolls of tape and more signs. Maybe there's a ladder in there, too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) See what a good friend I have? You can always count on her when you want to do something totally insane!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Where should we start?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Where do you think? We're in this together!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Right here?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Good answer!

The focused woman and the awkward girl begin to cover the mirrors with the signs. The selfless woman, wearing an unexpected piece of clothing, emerges from behind the racks of clothes.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) Honey! What are you doing? I don't know if you—

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) She's fine! We're fine! Don't worry!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

They're fine.

The selfless woman and the scattered woman watch the beginnings of a transformation.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
She's kind of an interesting kid.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
She kind of is.

Re-entering the room with a new rack of clothes, the only man takes note of the project.

THE ONLY MAN:
Well! And what do we have here? *(to the selfless woman, gesturing toward the awkward girl)* That's your...?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
Oh, you haven't met? *(to the awkward girl)* Sweetheart!?

THE ONLY MAN:
No no no no! Please, don't interrupt. It's positively visionary.

AWKWARD GIRL:
(to the focused woman) Over here. Hand me that one.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(reading the sign) "Hug Yard Sale?" Are you sure?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Yeah!

THE ONLY MAN:
(to the selfless woman) And I guess we know whose vision!

SELFLESS WOMAN:
She wouldn't have it any other way.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Do you like her?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
What?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Your stepdaughter. Do you like her?

SELFLESS WOMAN:
I... She's my stepdaughter. I love her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

But do you like her? My mother certainly never liked me.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'm not her mother.

THE ONLY MAN:

So you don't have to like her?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

That sounds terrible, doesn't it. Yes, I like her...

THE ONLY MAN:

When you see yourself in her. That's when you like her.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No, I...!

Short pause, as she observes the awkward girl.

You know, you're right.

THE ONLY MAN:

I do know. And when it's her mother...

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I can't stand her. That's awful.

THE ONLY MAN:

Sounds reasonable to me.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No, it's terrible. And then there are the times she's simply unbearable all on her own. So I don't have any excuse.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

My mother never needed one.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Stepmothers don't really have the same rights when it comes to spurning children. But now, look at her: Up there, jumping around like a little monkey.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Uuuuugghhhh...

The awkward girl is not particularly agile or graceful in her attempts to reach dressing room heights.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Ha ha. What can I say?

There is a loud crash from in back of the clothes, as a rack falls down. All heads turn and from on top of a clothes rack or ladder, the focused woman and awkward girl seem to have a good vantage point.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Wow.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Are you okay?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Fine! I seem to have had a little...

THE ONLY MAN:

To the rescue, madam.

Watching the rescue, the awkward girl is balanced rather precipitously.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) Are you okay?

AWKWARD GIRL:

What?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I asked if you were okay, there?

AWKWARD GIRL:

(re-arranging herself) What do you mean?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey, be careful!

AWKWARD GIRL:

I'm fine! I'm fine! Why are you always so—!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) We're fine.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Okay.

The only man emerges with the woman with children. He is carrying two legs and pushing what looks to be her torso on top of a clothing rack.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I tell you, I have gotten so clumsy lately! I don't know whether to blame it on hormones, or just the fact that I have to be so many places at once and there's simply not enough of me to go around!

THE ONLY MAN:

(holding her legs) Where do you want me to put these?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh, *those*. They've seen better days, that's for sure. Honestly, I've been thinking of replacing them for the longest time—the wear and tear keeping up with my last two really took its toll.

The women contemplate the limbs in the only man's arms.

Kids! My last two kids! That was a bit confusing, wasn't it! Let me qualify that those two *(pointing to the legs)* have been my *only* two.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I'm... so sorry, I really had no idea.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Well, why should you have?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

So... you were... born with— I mean, without...?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh! No, no, no. I just keep putting my foot in it, don't I? What I was trying to say is that since I lost my own legs, those and *only* those hard working limbs have been my *modus operandi*. So although I look at them with disdain sometimes, I suppose I have a loyalty to them. In a way they're part of me.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

As I said, I would've never— You seem very... comfortable...

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Another reason I haven't traded them in. Change is difficult, isn't it? And I spend so much time running around, trying to keep up with those growing children, that I can just never seem to grab a moment to concentrate on what I need, the improvements I need to make for *myself*.

THE ONLY MAN:

But thank the gods of fashion that we've just the thing to hide a few so-called figure flaws, huh?

He drapes a long blouse or jacket around her.

Wha la.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Perfect! Is he a genius?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

It'll definitely add some... length.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Ha ha. And at this point, I'll try anything! I swear, after some days I feel like there's almost nothing left of me!

She struggles to wheel herself back behind the racks as the focused woman and awkward girl get back to work. The selfless woman moves to help the woman with children.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Why don't I...

The room is now madly disheveled, with yard sale signs covering many of the mirrors completely and clothes strewn all over the tops of racks and the floor.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Huh. What do you know—chaos, but not completely of my own making.

THE ONLY MAN:

Hah!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Or maybe it is. Teach me to come in with a game plan.

THE ONLY MAN:

Which was?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Oh, let's just say I did not manage to create the opportunity I had hoped for. So I'm on my own now.

THE ONLY MAN:

Covering the world, one imperfect form at a time?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Something like that.

Almost ritualistically, they begin to handle the pieces of clothing around them.

THE ONLY MAN:

Here's to better living through garments! Garments and the lives they've led, the places they'll take us...

SCATTERED WOMAN:

The things they'll protect us from.

THE ONLY MAN:

Amen.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Everything's so much easier to deal with when it's disguised as a sweater, don't you think?

THE ONLY MAN:

Unless it's argyle.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Granted.

The scattered woman holds up a dress for the selfless woman.

Hey! Can you handle this one?

THE ONLY MAN:

Dear sweet Jesus, you must!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(moving toward them) I must?

THE ONLY MAN:

You must.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

If you put it that way.

She takes the dress and begins to change.

THE ONLY MAN:

(to the scattered woman) Can I just stay here with you all forever? You'll keep me safe and warm, swaddled in discount couture?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Seems strange to think of it like that. Cut-rate fashion was my mother's life-blood. I was around it my entire life and I hated it.

THE ONLY MAN:

And yet here you are.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Funny how that works.

THE ONLY MAN:

Isn't it.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

But I assure you I was completely miserable as a child. Me, the only thing my mother could never make look right, could never quite force to be what she wanted. Which was—need I even say it?

THE ONLY MAN:

A perfect reflection of herself!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

So you have walked in my shoes.

THE ONLY MAN:

And looked damn good in them.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You remind me a bit of my brother.

THE ONLY MAN:

And we love our brother, not just his footwear?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Absolutely. Even my mom never treated him with quite the same sort of contempt she reserved just for me. There's a little irony for ya'. *(short pause)* A daughter's lot in life, I guess.

THE ONLY MAN:

What is?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Everything. No one ever told you that?

THE ONLY MAN:

I should consider myself lucky, then.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Definitely.

Without a nearby mirror as a reference, the selfless woman steps forward in the dress.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Well?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Hah! *(to the only man)* Was I right or was I right?

THE ONLY MAN:

Spectacularly right.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Please...

She quickly moves away from the attention, and the only man goes back behind the racks..

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(to the scattered woman) Got any more?

The mirrors are covered except for one remaining spot.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Any more what?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Signs. We're almost done.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(to the scattered woman) Can I check?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Sure.

The awkward girl moves to the scattered woman's purse.

(to the focused woman) You know, I read in the paper about someone who sold their mother at a yard sale.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Or she sold the urn. With her mother in it. Her mother's ashes.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Seriously?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No, it was her mother-in-law. But a girl can dream, can't she?

The awkward girl approaches with a few more signs.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Found some!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Fantastic! *(to scattered woman)* You know what? It's crazy, but I feel like a whole new person!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

And how fantastic is that?

As they return to their project, the selfless woman stops the awkward girl.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) It looks really great.

AWKWARD GIRL:

What?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

The walls, the room. It looks really great.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Yeah?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

I like the way your mind works. The way you can put things together.

Short pause, while the awkward girl ponders a different perspective.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Thanks.

She quickly re-joins the focused woman, The only man has re-emerged from behind the racks with more clothing and large hat box.

THE ONLY MAN:

(to the selfless woman) Too bad you can't see yourself. Because that truly is an amazing dress.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Is it?

THE ONLY MAN:

On you, it is.

Short pause, as it sinks in.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Thanks.

The focused woman takes note of a sign before they attach it to the mirrors.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Wow. Get a load of this. "Giving up professional life: selling clothes, jewelry, power tools and wigs." Power tools and wigs?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Maybe she's starting a sheep farm.

THE ONLY MAN:

How do you know it's a she?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Come on, wigs?

THE ONLY MAN:
Oh! Right!

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(to the awkward girl) So what was her professional life, do you think? The one she's giving up.

AWKWARD GIRL:
A teacher. She was a teacher and she really, really liked kids. She liked kids more than their parents liked them, even. She didn't have any of her own, so maybe that was why. Because kids can be a real pain sometimes.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Really?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Uh huh. I mean little kids. Big kids can be too but she taught little kids.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Wearing lots of jewelry.

AWKWARD GIRL:
What?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
(pointing to the sign) Jewelry. She had tons of holiday pins, I'll bet. What kind of clothes, do you think?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Hers were pretty boring, mostly. She cared more about the kids' clothes. And the only kind of jewelry she wore was the kind that was like, macaroni or something.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Macaroni?

AWKWARD GIRL:
Like necklaces. That the kids made. But she had a box of secret jewelry that she never, ever wore. It was really beautiful and old and special and she would never sell that. Maybe she was saving it to give it her daughter or something. *(short pause)* You know, the kids really liked her, and they liked that she did stuff for them but they weren't very nice to her. That's why she's leaving. To go somewhere people are nice to her.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

How did the kids feel about that? About her leaving?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Bad. They didn't want her to leave but, well, they're kids. So there's not really anything they could do about it. They're just kids.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah.

AWKWARD GIRL:

(pointing to the sign) That may be the last one. I'll go see.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'll put it up.

They each start to move toward their tasks.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(to the focused woman) I think I'll head home. I've got things to— Well, you know me and my *things!*

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Wait. What about lunch?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Another day, maybe.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No. Stay right there, we're almost done.

She moves away with the sign, then turns back.

Thank you.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

For what?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

For... Everything. Thanks.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I didn't do anything.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What are you talking about? Of course you did.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No, you said it yourself. I don't *do*; everything just miraculously happens.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I didn't say that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Or I didn't mean that; I meant it in a good way. That you always land on your feet.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Good thing a fuck-up like me has those cat-like abilities, huh?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(lowering her voice for the awkward girl) You're not a... That's not what I said.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Okay, then. I've got to get back to my disaster of a life now.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I was upset.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I mean, I wish that was me!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Stop that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All—

FOCUSED WOMAN:

(interrupting) Stop. What's wrong?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Nothing. I've got to go.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What about the bills?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I'll take care of 'em myself.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I said I was sorry!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What for? It's all good! *Golden!* I'll see you later.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Hey, what's this?

The awkward girl is pulling out a very large box from the scattered woman's bag.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Honey! That's not yours!

AWKWARD GIRL:

She told me I could look in her purse! We were out of signs!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

But that doesn't mean you can just take something, sweetie—

SCATTERED WOMAN:

(interrupting) It's okay.

They all reflect upon the imposing box and where it came from.

Why don't you stick it over there?

She gestures toward the only remaining mirrored spot.

AWKWARD GIRL:
Okay.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
What is that?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
That is a box.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I know it's a box.

THE ONLY MAN:
It's a very large box.

SELFLESS WOMAN:
(to the awkward girl) Let me help you.

She moves to help the awkward girl push it toward the uncovered spot of mirrors.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
But what's in it?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I'm not really sure. Probably a bunch of stuff. It's a big box.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
What kind of stuff?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I didn't tell you? It's... my mom's stuff.

AWKWARD GIRL:
This one, too?

She has pulled another sizeable box out of the bag.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Yeah, that one, too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Why do you have your mom's stuff?

THE ONLY MAN:

(moving to the bag) And how much of it are you carrying around with you?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I'm going to pretend you didn't even ask that.

THE ONLY MAN:

Good.

He takes another box out of her bag, and places it with the others. As more emerge, they all devote themselves to the task of transferring boxes.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

So they're all your mother's boxes?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Yeah.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What are you doing with them?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I didn't tell you? She sent them.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

To you? She sent them to you?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

To my apartment. Yes.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Why?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I didn't I tell you? She's coming to live with me.

Loaded pause.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

She's what?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

My mother's coming to live with me.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

She... asked to come live with you? Your mother? Asked you that?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Not exactly.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

How not exactly?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I guess I asked her.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

You guess.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

An educated guess.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

But how could—? You never even talk to her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No, I don't. I mean, I do. I mean, I talk to her every... you know. Every time I need a reminder of what a wreck my life is.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Stop that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

All right.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

So what happened?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Before or after I picked up the phone?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm serious!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Well, here's the thing. I *hadn't* talked to her. Not in long while and I was feeling pretty good about myself—not remotely a coincidence. So I'm thinking, do I really need to keep up this charade anymore? I mean, my mom is not your mom, right? My mom is... awful! And I hate her!

THE ONLY MAN:
Only then...?

He has left the selfless woman and the awkward girl to handle the last of the boxes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Only then, my sweetly estranged mother dials *my* number. Maybe the first time, ever. And starts talking about getting *older*—a word she’s never used before—and being—get this—*alone*. Which, lo and behold, leads into a conversation about my failure of a life here across the country and out of my mouth comes what I assumed would be interpreted—and was certainly intended—as a throw-it-out-there-to-be-mocked: “Well, mommy. You can always come live with me!”
(*short pause*) And she says yes.

THE ONLY MAN:
She said yes?

FOCUSED WOMAN:
Your awful mother said yes?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
My awful mother. Yes.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
I didn’t mean that.

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I did.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
You did. Oh. Okay. Right. So when’s she coming?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
I don’t really know. She never gave me a specific date.

FOCUSED WOMAN:
But her stuff’s already here?

SCATTERED WOMAN:
Indeed. It started arriving last month.

THE ONLY MAN:
But not her.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Not her.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Then where is she?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I have no idea.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What about your brother?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

She never even mentioned her little scheme to him.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

But he'll help you?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Help me what?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Help you find her!

THE ONLY MAN:

Why would she want that to happen?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Bingo.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I... don't understand.

THE ONLY MAN:

Well, one thing's crystal clear. Your mother can't possibly live with you.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Of course not!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Then why did you ask her?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Gee, I don't know! I guess a wave of wonderfulness came over me and I forgot, for a brief moment, that I wasn't the sort of daughter who could swoop in and make it all better!

Pause.

THE ONLY MAN:

Those rhetorical questions always get us into trouble, don't they?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'm sorry.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I am too.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

So what do we do now?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

We?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah, we. We need to make sure it doesn't happen.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

It being...?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Even if she said yes, the answer is no.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

No as in she can't move in? You're with me on this?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Really? Okay. So here's where I need you: the no part.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What does that mean?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I can't say no to my mom!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Why not?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I don't think it's ever been done. I don't think she's ever heard the word!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(muffled) And what's wrong with that? As far as I'm concerned, saying "no" does nothing but leave you completely in the dark!

Extended pause, as all—including the selfless woman and the awkward girl—attempt to locate where the voice is coming from.

THE ONLY MAN:

Princess?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

(muffled) Yes! In here!

THE ONLY MAN:

Where's here?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Here!

The only man starts in one direction

No. I mean . . .

He switches directions and heads toward the hat box.

Yes!

THE ONLY MAN:

(picking up the box) Lordy, lordy, lordy. She never ceases to amaze me.

He places the box on top of the stack of boxes then takes off the lid.

Mi reina, speak: Just what are you up to now?

The woman with children's head pops out, wearing a large hat and dangling earrings.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I ask you this: Did I, as a young professional with everything in the world ahead of me, ever expect I'd become a woman with children? But if I *had* said "no" then, where would I be now? Not here. Not like this. That's for certain!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Huh.

THE ONLY MAN:

Well, I don't care how or why, but you do get bonus points for accessorizing!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Thank you for that! I was really sticking my neck out, trying to do more with less, as it were. And for so long I've had to say "no" to earrings—those little fingers could have ripped them right out of my ears. So while I thought it was time I made a statement, I wasn't really sure it was a statement I should be making. We can't very well forget that I'm the mother of three, can we?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

No. We can't.

THE ONLY MAN:

And baby, who knew? You and hats!

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Yes? Good. Because face it: I seem to be trusting myself less and less these days. Not that it's a bad thing, to be aware of one's own limitations. But it is difficult, isn't it? To take a good, hard look at oneself, head on and say: "Hey! This is all there is! Just what do you expect from me? I'm not superwoman! I can't move mountains!"

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Of course not.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I'm sorry. That didn't come out exactly how it should have. By "What do you expect from me?" I meant "What do I expect from me?" the you being me, myself. The expectations we put on ourselves. No one's ever asked me to move a mountain, and if they did, I'd say, "Move it your damn self!" Only not in front of the children.

AWKWARD GIRL:

It's okay.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Oh, apologies, dear! You're such a young lady I completely forgot you were there.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Thanks. I think.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

You can thank me. However, point taken. So often we're not as clear as we could be. Or more specifically, I'm not. I truly believe that being around young children day in and day out as had an adverse affect on my language skills, and I apologize. I just don't know where my head is half the time.

AWKWARD GIRL:

You seem okay.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

No, the truth is that my Turkish is significantly slipping. A shame, really. I so wanted to raise a family of polyglots.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Sure.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What a pity.

THE ONLY MAN:

Well, my darling, can we call it a day?

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

I suppose, but it's been delightful meeting you all! A real treat. You know, you are so lucky to have each other. The way you make do, finding such fascinating substitutes for what's missing in your lives. I don't know how I would get by without my children. I suppose if they weren't so all-consuming, I might actually spend time worrying about it!

The only man goes to pick up the box that holds the woman with children's head.

Oh! I nearly forgot, I found this—does it belong to someone?

The woman with children retrieves a piece of paper with her mouth.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Right. That's mine. It's a bill, I must have dropped it. (*taking the bill, referring to the focused woman*) She forces me to pay 'em while I shop.

Very short pause, while the woman with children briefly considers this tactic.

THE WOMAN WITH CHILDREN:

Well *that* is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. *(to the only man)* Shall we?

THE ONLY MAN:

We shall.

The only man pushes her head back into the box and closes the lid, then picks up the box in preparation to leave.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

We should probably be getting home, too. *(to the scattered woman)* Did I hear you say that your mother's coming to live with you?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Maybe to visit, that's all.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

But then again, she may prefer life on the road!

THE ONLY MAN:

Of course there is another option.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What?

THE ONLY MAN:

These are some really big boxes. *(to the scattered woman)* You're telling me you've never once peeked inside?

They all turn to look at the pile of boxes. The only man moves into the curtained area carrying the diminished woman with children, then notices the awkward girl and selfless woman, both sporting excellent new ensembles.

And don't you ladies look great? What a pair, huh?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Thanks!

AWKWARD GIRL:

Thanks!

THE ONLY MAN:

Hang onto what you've got, my friends. Until next time!

With a grand gesture he closes the curtain behind him. The scattered woman moves toward the boxes as the selfless woman prepares for departure.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

(to the awkward girl) Sweetie, can you check around, make sure you didn't leave anything?

AWKWARD GIRL:

Okay. *(to the scattered woman)* Want me to help you open them?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

I... don't think so. I haven't heard sounds, or anything...

As she knocks on or tentatively nudges the largest of the boxes, the awkward girl pulls open the curtain of the dressing area. It is empty.

SELFLESS WOMAN:

All right, then! *(to the scattered woman)* You know, in a way, I envy you. It'll be hard but good. Going through your mom's stuff.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What?

SELFLESS WOMAN:

For me, it was the first time I really saw who she was. And it was after she was gone. For you, it's different. You can do it together.

AWKWARD GIRL:

And then you can have a really great yard sale!

SELFLESS WOMAN:

Goodbye, and thank you for everything. Both of you.

AWKWARD GIRL:

Bye!

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Later!

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Bye...

The selfless woman and awkward girl leave the room, and the scattered woman and focused woman turn again to the boxes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

There's no way that...

FOCUSED WOMAN:

No, you would've... How long have you been carrying them around?

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Too long. *(short pause.)* Should we open... maybe one?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I don't know, it's *your* mom.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Let's hope not. I mean... you know.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Yeah.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Although... If we move fast, we could probably make a bundle. Put everything out on the sidewalk; maybe my mom will even show up, see what she's worth in Liz Claiborne and Lalique.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Maybe.

Short pause, as they size up the contents of the boxes.

SCATTERED WOMAN

You think I should wait, huh. Lucky me, being able to unpack with my mommy?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I don't know. But it is true: it's different for us. I mean, no children, we can't pass something on and hope someone else will make sense of it, make it right. For us, it's kind of now or never.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

That's sounds worse than paying bills.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

But a better interest rate.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Then I'm putting you in charge. (*short pause*) Hey. We've never really... No kids? You? That's decided?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I think so. (*short pause*) Some doors shut themselves.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

You can always boss me around, you know.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

I'll keep that in mind.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

'Cause once she's found a place to live, I'm not taking it from my mother.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

Personally, I'm liking "no" more and more.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Okay, then! (*short pause*) But I suppose I could... try to find her.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

All right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Make sure she's not... terrorizing a farmer somewhere.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

All right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

And figure out what to do with her... stuff.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

All right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Stop that.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

All right.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

Seriously: Stop.

FOCUSED WOMAN:

If you say so.

The focused woman has retrieved the scattered woman's cellphone from the purse and handed it to her. The scattered woman steels herself and dials her mother's number. After a moment we hear a cellphone ringing. The women look around the stage, then to the boxes.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

What if she answers?

FOCUSED WOMAN:

What if she doesn't?

The cellphone rings again.

SCATTERED WOMAN:

We go to lunch.

The cellphone continues as the lights fade on the two women, together, in a surreal setting unrecognizable from the beginning of the play. Once there is complete darkness the ringing stops.

End of Play