ANNIE IN FLIGHT

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

ENGLISH

MAY 2008

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ACT I

SCENE ONE

A modern day kitchen. There is a rosewood table that seats six in the center of the stage. A sink and a counter stage right. The mats, towels, and curtains are all a matching sunflower pattern. A variety of pots and pans sit on the stove. ANNIE, age 51, is preparing dinner. She wears a plain house dress with a sunflower apron that matches the décor of the rest of the kitchen. Her hair is graying slightly. The kitchen is incredibly organized—everything has its place.

ANNIE

(Examining the flowers on top the dining room table.)

Daisies. Definitely daisies next time.

(Pause.)

Does Fred like daisies? Well, I like daisies.

(She empties the contents of the vase into the trash. Checks the pots on the stove top.)

FRED

Annie! Annie!

(ANNIE is now back to washing dishes. ENTER, FRED, age 50, ANNIE’s husband, wearing tight blue running shorts, a red and white headband, and a tight fitting tank top. His stomach, basketball shaped, sticks out of his shorts, worn high on his waist. He has a slightly shogun-esque air to him. His walk, however, is more like a plod—as he is slightly overweight and top heavy.)

FRED

ANNIE! ANNIE!!

Yes, sweetheart?

FRED

You’re never around when I need you.

ANNIE

I’m sorry, Fred! What is it?

FRED

Nothing. I wanted—never mind—it’s nothing.
ANNIE

Nonsense!

(ANNIE wipes her hands on a sunflower dishtowel and goes to the refrigerator.)

What's on your mind?

(FRED sits at the table, clearly exhausted. ANNIE quickly pours FRED a cup of coffee. She opens the fridge and pulls out some leftovers.)

Oh, Fred! Are your alright? Did something happen with work?

FRED
(Waves her off dismissively.)

Nothing I can't handle. No, no. It's all good.

ANNIE

You didn't come to bed last night.

FRED

I had a lot to get done. I tried to wake you—.

(ANNIE places the food and coffee in front of FRED and rubs his shoulders.)

ANNIE

Drink your coffee, dear. It'll make you feel much better.

(FRED is drinking his coffee.)(ANNIE lays a napkin on FRED's lap.)

FRED

When's dinner?

ANNIE

In an hour or so. Why don't you go back to work? I'll let you know when it's ready.

(FRED isn't listening, takes a few bites, and then picks up his plate and coffee cup.)

FRED

I'm going to get some work done. Let me know when dinner's ready.

(EXIT FRED. ANNIE picks up FRED's napkin. ENTER ROBBIE, ANNIE and FRED's son. He is a handsome, clean cut young man of 22. He is wearing a collared, patterned shirt that is unbuttoned, revealing most of his chest, and fitted trousers with cowboy boots. He is holding a painting.)
ROBBIE
(Place the painting carefully on the table. ROBBIE then sneaks up on ANNIE.)

Boo!

(ANNIE screams. Then turns and hugs ROBBIE.)

ANNIE
Robbie! I wasn’t expecting you.

ROBBIE
I’ve got good news, Ma.

Oh?

ROBBIE
(He hands the painting to ANNIE, who examines it without revealing it to the audience.)

I’ve sold my first piece! Can you believe it?

ANNIE
That’s great! To who?

ROBBIE
One of those small, contemporary art galleries down town. I got a call this morning. They want to see more.

ANNIE
Oh, I’m so proud of you!

FRED
(Off-stage.)

Annie? Can you bring me some sugar? This coffee doesn’t have any taste!

ROBBIE
(To ANNIE.)

Dad?

ANNIE
Buttons up ROBBIE’s shirt.

Oh, well, yes.
Annie? Did you hear me?

I can’t even talk to him anymore.

Your father’s just going through a phase, dear. That’s all. Just a phase.

Yeah, it’s called a midlife crisis.

Robbie, sweetie, I need something from my car. Can you go get me, uh, my cell phone? It’s somewhere in there.

Sure, Ma.

(Exit Robbie. Annie hurries to the cupboard and removes the sugar. She picks up Robbie’s painting and hides it. Enter Fred.)

Oh, Fred, here you go. Just two now.

(Fred holds up his coffee cup and Annie stirs in the sugar cubes.)

What suit should I wear for the dinner tomorrow night?

The black one. I had that one dry cleaned for you.

Black. You think so?

Oh, yes. You look so much younger in that one.

(Fred nods in agreement. Exit Fred. Annie replaces the sugar in the cupboard and pulls out the painting. Enter Robbie.)
ROBBIE
I couldn’t find it.

ANNIE
Oh, that’s alright. It’ll turn up. So, what have you been up to, love?

ROBBIE
Have you heard of House Bill 45?

ANNIE
(Lowers her voice.)
The Gay Rights Bill? Your father’s been going on and on about it. The Republicans are fighting it. You father says it’ll determine whether or not the Republicans will stay in the House.

ROBBIE
I’ve organized some local gay rights groups and we’re going down to support it. I’m heading up the march on the capitol building.

ANNIE
You can’t!

ROBBIE
Why not, Ma? This important to me.

ANNIE
But your father, he’ll be there when they vote on it.

ROBBIE
What? Why?

FRED
(Off-stage.)
Annie. Annie! I just remembered—I think I lost the belt that goes with that suit at the gym.

ANNIE
(To ROBBIE.)
Maybe my cell phone is in my room?
ROBBIE

What?

FRED
(Off-stage. Louder.)

Do I have any more belts that match that suit?

ANNIE
(To FRED.)

Hold on, Fred.

ANNIE

Robbie, go check in my purse for my phone. I need it.

ROBBIE

But—, okay.

(EXIT ROBBIE. ENTER FRED.)

FRED
(With a belt.)

Will this one match?

ANNIE
(Hands FRED a belt.)

No, honey. I bought you a new belt. Last week. After you said you left the other one at the gym. Remember?

FRED

Oh, that’s right.

(EXIT FRED. ENTER ROBBIE.)

ROBBIE

It wasn’t in your purse, Ma.

ANNIE

Never mind it. But about that Bill. Your father’s trying to make some connections within the Party. He thinks it’ll help his business. You know, he’s practically a shoe in for a bunch of government contracts and whatnot.
ROBBIE
Dad’s been schmoozing politicians?! Those ultra-conservative, gay-fearing, patriarchal, close-minded, good-for-nothing—

ANNIE
(Laughs.)

Your father and I are both Republicans, dear.

ROBBIE
You can’t tell me you buy the grand old party line of B.S. And that’s why I’m here. I want you to march with us as a proud LGBTQ parent.

ANNIE
(Shocked.)

What? No. I couldn’t. Your father would lose it completely. He doesn’t even know you’re gay! And if he saw me there with you—what would he think? And what would people say?

ROBBIE
Who gives a damn what he thinks? Just come with me.

(ANNIE looks unconvinced.)

Look, if you’re worried about what people will think, don’t. They’ll see you as a mother supporting her son and his lifestyle. Come on, Ma, make up your own mind for once.

ANNIE
Robbie, I just can’t. I’m sorry. I love you. I support you. But your father—.

FRED
(From off-stage.)

Annie, have you seen my sweat bands? The red, white, and blue ones?

(ANNIE reaches for the painting to hide it. ROBBIE picks it up.)

ANNIE
(Reaching for the painting.)

Hide it.
No.

ANNIE
(Pleading.)

Robbie, please.

(ENTER FRED. ROBBIE picks up his painting and puts it on the floor, leaning against a chair. Beat.)

FRED
(Nods.)

Robbie.

ROBBIE
(Nods.)

Dad.

ANNIE
(To both.)

Dinner?

FRED
(To ROBBIE.)

What’s that?

ROBBIE
It’s a painting, Dad. A gallery downtown is going to buy a couple from this collection. I thought I’d give this one to you and Mom.

How much did they offer?

ROBBIE
It’s not really about the money, Dad.

Then what’s the point?

FRED
ROBBIE

It’s art.

FRED

So what’s the point?

ANNIE

(Looking through the refrigerator.)

Some meatloaf?

ROBBIE

It’s art.

(FRED grunts.)

FRED

(Sees the painting and picks it up.)

What’s it supposed to be?

ROBBIE

It’s a painting, Dad.

FRED

I can see that. But what is it of?

(ROBBIE hesitates as FRED examines it. Audience now can see the painting as well.)

Is that a man? A naked man?

ROBBIE

It’s a treatment of negative space, Dad. An abstract, I think.

ANNIE

(Quickly.)

Ooh, how about a nice rump roast?

FRED

Looks like a naked man to me. What the hell would you paint that for?

ROBBIE

How’s business?
FRED

Making money. That’s a good thing.

ROBBIE

Got it, Dad. Money, good. Painting, bad.

ANNIE

(Pleading to both.)

Please, don’t start.

FRED

Start what? I just think I have some say in the boy’s future. I mean, I am still paying for him. And how old is he now? 23? 24?

ROBBIE

22.

FRED

Painting, ha! Who’d want to paint something—someone—like that?

(ANNIE and ROBBIE don’t say anything. FRED shifts uncomfortably.)

ROBBIE

Who would? Huh? Me. I’m a painter! And I’m a—.

FRED

A liberal! A flaming liberal!

(FRED shoves the painting back to ROBBIE. EXIT FRED.)

ROBBIE

(To FRED off-stage.)

Better than a damn close-minded…

ANNIE

Robbie!
ROBBIE

He's so... provincial!

(Beat.)

Will you come to the rally?

(ANNIE shrugs.)

I need you there. Please think about it.

(ROBBIE hands his painting to ANNIE, kisses ANNIE and EXITS. A beat. ANNIE goes to the sink and begins washing dishes. She stops suddenly.)

ANNIE

(To the audience, painting in hand.)

I have cancer. It was just a lump—a tiny stain really. So I'm trying to scour it clean.

(Beat.)

I've known for quite a while what Robbie was. And what he wasn't. Fred didn't notice. He pushed him. Pushed him so hard, Robbie got up one day and left. Left us behind. But now he's back. So different. He used to sit on my counter top, watching me cook. He thought it was so fascinating! Almost magical, how dinner can be prepared. And Fred. When did he become that man? When did change become everything for him? I'm still me. Just Annie. Annie with the lump. Three weeks since it was removed. Fred was off and gone on some less than lucrative business trip. I wish he would've been there. It still hurts some. And what if it's still there?

(Pause.)

This is supposed to be the top of the hill, right? The glory days, the perfect place between youth and age. When life is supposed to be simple. But out of the oven, on to the stove it seems. Love. I used to think that's what marriage would be about. Forever and ever. But I think these days that love is not like a wine that gets better with age. And it's not my clean kitchen. And it's not five loads of laundry, folded and pressed. Maybe love should be independent. You've got to want it. I know the problem with our love now, I think, is that Fred changed. And that I never did. I'm a housewife. Just a housewife. And here I am. That's what I knew when I said, "I do."

(Pause.)

My mother used to tell me that marriage should be a flower.
(Pause. ANNIE grabs a sunflower dishtowel and examines it.)

I have no idea what that means. And I don’t know what marriage is supposed to be like with a lump.

(Lights fade. ANNIE exits.)

(END SCENE ONE.)
ACT I

SCENE TWO

Kitchen. Evening. The following day. The pots and pans have been washed and returned to their rightful places. ENTER ANNIE dressed in a fancy, but unflattering dress. She looks tired. She puts on her sunflower apron over her dress. ENTER FRED, wearing a suit and tie. He is talking on his cell phone that is clipped to his belt. He’s wearing an earpiece and gestures emphatically. He goes straight to the refrigerator. During the scene, he drinks two cocktails heartily. FRED’s earpiece and phone are turned upstage, away from the audience.

FRED
(On his phone.)

Oh, what a riot! That was unbelievable. Unbelievable! The way those Dems just jumped ship on that bill. Too controversial, they say! Wait till Republicans take over the legislature! Then we’ll see. What a bunch of fucking flakes! Damn pussies! The whole lot of them!

ANNIE

Language, Fred! Language.

FRED
(Shakes his head at ANNIE, but continues talking.)

So what if most of the Democrats still back Bill 45. It won’t pass. I don’t care if that damn Governor wants it bad. And a rally for gay marriage! Yeah, right, an oxymoron.

(Whispers to ANNIE. FRED now turns so the audience can see his earpiece.)

What’s an oxymoron?

ANNIE
(Softly.)

A Republican with a gay son.

FRED
(To ANNIE.)

What?

(ANNIE shrugs. FRED laughs loudly.)

Yeah, homos—
Fred! Don’t say words like that!

ANNIE

FRED
(Ignores her.)

— are confused in general. I don’t care how many of them show up. It won’t pass!

(Pause.)

Yeah, sure. See you at the gym tomorrow morning? And I’ve got these red, white, and blue custom wrist bands for you. I’m hoping to bench at least 225. Been working out a lot lately. Losing a lot of weight, you know? Yes, I noticed you lost some weight too. Took ten years off your face. Ah, yes, tomorrow. Alright, bye now.

(Turns on ANNIE.)

Don’t shush me. When I’m talking on the phone, I’m talking business. I’m not a child.

I was only—

(Quickly.)

Do we still have to go to that dinner Friday night?

FRED

Did I tell you it was cancelled?

ANNIE

I was just thinking that I’m a little tired. I mean, we had people over for dinner three times last week, and then the dinner tonight, and well, I just thought it’d be nice to have a break. You’d have more fun if you went to that senator’s dinner by yourself.

FRED
(Laughs.)

Tired? You’re a housewife, Annie. Not Xena, the warrior princess.

ANNIE

I—
FRED
Besides, how could I show up at that dinner by myself? You know how hard I’ve been trying to get in good with these people. And they want a family man, Annie.

ANNIE
But you just go off anyway. I mean, you left me at the table for two hours tonight.

FRED
And what? It’s my fault you can’t socialize?

ANNIE
What’s wrong, Fred? Every time we talk, every time we’re together, everything falls apart.

FRED
I’m busy. I want more. That takes work.

ANNIE
I was just wondering. You know, you’ve worked hard for 25 years, provided for us with your business, why do we need more when what we have is enough?

FRED
(Ignoring her.)

Do you have any idea how hard I work? I barely sleep! Politics is complicated, and you need to be on board, or else this shit is just not going to work.

(Pause.)

This is my life. My business needs this. I need this.

ANNIE
Our life. Don’t you mean “our life”?

FRED
(Stands.)

There’s dirty laundry from the gym in my car. Make sure you wash my head band and arm bands before tomorrow. I’m meeting up with some of the boys from the governor’s office to work out in the morning. Gotta look good.

ANNIE
Okay, I’ll get it.
(Pauses. Speaks quietly, but insistently.)

You know, you never used hurtful words like that before. You never even cared about whether or not people were gay.

FRED

What? Like homo? Fag? Pussy? Get a grip, Annie. This bill is one of the most important issues—ever. We can’t lose this one. Not another damn Bill lost to the Democrats. Look, Republicans need public support. We need voters at the polls. Right now, the Dems are the “party for the people.” And, god knows how, they’ve planned a huge rally to get the bill passed in the House. Whoever is organizing that damn thing is tough. He’s been pulling legislators over to their side of the fence every single day. And they’re counting on thousands of homos and homo sympathizers to show up. But we’re committed to opposing that bill. If it passes, we’ll lose what little credibility we have left with our voters. But that won’t happen. We’re organizing our own rally. Against the god damn homos. God made Adam and Eve, Annie. Not Adam and Steve.

(ANNIE laughs, long and loud.)

What the hell are you laughing at?

ANNIE

It’s just—well, never mind. It’s nothing.

FRED

This is an important issue that could decide which way this state goes.

ANNIE

But who’s to say what’s right and wrong, sweetie? And does it really matter if they want to get married?

FRED

(Moves close to ANNIE.)

Men holding hands. Prancing about like fairies through the streets. Spreading their ideas about acceptance and love. Homos marrying each other. What then? They’ll want children and equal rights and access to healthcare and happiness.

ANNIE

Some of them do have children. And why can’t they be happy? Oh, Fred, remember when we got married? Do you remember your toast? “To the future. To happiness.”

FRED

Since when did you become an expert on homos?
ANNIE
(Frowns deeply.)

I just don't understand why this is so important to you. So what if your business doesn't take off? We have our savings. We have our health... we'll be okay.

FRED

This isn't about money.

ANNIE

It isn't? But I thought...

FRED

This is about me. I need to do this.

(Pause.)

I remember when you'd support me, instead of questioning everything.

ANNIE

Oh, Fred. After 25 years, this is just about you?

(EXIT FRED.)

ANNIE
(To herself, trying out the words.)

Ass! You're an ass!

(ANNIE seems proud of herself for saying it out loud. Then replaces the food and water containers. ENTER FRED. ANNIE doesn't notice. She sits very tiredly at the table and removes her shoes. Shifting uncomfortably in her clothes. She rubs her breast, unconsciously checking for a lump.)

ANNIE
( softly.)

Nothing seems to fit anymore.

FRED
(Pulling out two beer bottles from the fridge.)

Getting fat too, eh?
I thought you’d left.

FRED

I wanted a beer.

ANNIE

Oh.

FRED

(Shrugs.)

Mine are too.

ANNIE

Huh?

FRED

My feet. They’re fatter than I remember them.

ANNIE

(Chuckles.)

You should try my shoes sometime.

(Pause.)

You know I was speaking with Sally Longfellow tonight.

FRED

Longfellow, huh? Yes, that’ll be Senator Davy Longfellow’s wife. Skinny thing. And Davy, boy, that Davy. Used to be very big in the Party. Too bad he’s sick now, could really use a man like him.

ANNIE

She thanked us for our generous contributions to his campaign. Or, she thanked you. I didn’t know you were working together.

FRED

I told you. Very powerful—Sally’s husband, that is. Running his re-election campaign from his sick bed!

ANNIE

It’s just—I didn’t realize we’ve been making contributions. I thought we were having
financial problems.

(Beat.)

Why her?

FRED

What?

ANNIE

(Slowly.)

Why her? You said her husband’s sick. Why not give our money to someone else?

FRED

You just don’t see politics the way I do, Annie. You can’t possibly understand the subtleties. Backing these people now will guarantee that my business is successful in the future.

ANNIE

Fred, honey, you used to tell me about decisions like this one. Why are you keeping me in the dark?

FRED

(Frustrated.)

This wasn’t a big decision! It’s business, Annie.

ANNIE

You used to tell me about everything . . . and everyone.

FRED

I don’t need to consult you every time I want to spend my money.

ANNIE

Your money?

(Pause.)

Sweetie, I’m just trying to help. Sally didn’t tell me how much, but—.

FRED

50 grand.
ANNIE
(Shocked.)

What? 50 thousand dollars? But where did you get that kind of money?

(Pause.)

You didn’t use our savings, did you?

(FRED doesn’t answer.)

But Fred, that’s most of what we have! What about retirement?

FRED
Oh, so now you’re concerned? Maybe if you’d had a job, it wouldn’t have gotten this bad.

ANNIE
You wanted me to stay home, to support you. And if her husband is sick, why is he trying to get re-elected?

(FRED says nothing.)

What will we do?

FRED
(Softly.)

We won’t do anything. I’ve made a decision. I think it’ll be best for both of us in the long run.

(He starts to exit.)

ANNIE
Fred, don’t leave. I want to talk about this now.

FRED
I want a divorce, Annie.

(ANNIE begins to cry.)

I need to be out on my own. We’re not the same people, Annie. We’re different, you and me.
ANNIE
We need time. We need time. And you need to be honest with me.

FRED
Don’t be ridiculous.

ANNIE
That Sally woman—she said she had something to tell me tonight. Something important. So I invited her over for coffee. Are you—

FRED
(Slowly.)

She’s coming here? Tonight?

(EXIT FRED. ANNIE looks after him. She stands and pulls out a rag and some polish. She begins polishing the dinner table.)

(ENTER SALLY LONGFELLOW. She is a confident, younger woman. Mid-thirties. She’s dressed like a businesswoman with perfect makeup. She walks and talks as if she owns everything and everyone. SALLY watches ANNIE for a moment.)

SALLY
Hello? Annie? May I come in?

ANNIE
(Startled.)

What are you doing out there?

SALLY
I knocked at the front door and nobody answered. I heard your voice, so I came around here. We spoke earlier, at the Republican dinner?

ANNIE
Yes, we’ve been expecting you.

SALLY
Sally Longfellow.

ANNIE
(Pause.)

I remember.
FRED
(Off-stage.)

Annie, where’s my—

(ENTER FRED in a new suit. His tie is knotted and mistied. ANNIE opens a drawer and removes his extra pair of red, white, and blue wristbands. She hands them to FRED.)

Beat.)

ANNIE
(To SALLY as she fixes FRED’s tie.)

Of course you remember my husband, Fred.

FRED
(Straightens.)

Of course she does! Mrs. Longfellow—it’s a pleasure to see you again.

ANNIE
(Softly to FRED.)

It is.

SALLY
(Quickly.)

Yes, Frank, isn’t it? Pleasure.

(To ANNIE.)

Do you suppose I could come in and chat?

FRED

Of course! Come in.

(ANNOTATIONS: FRED pulls out a chair at the dinner table for SALLY, who sits in another chair. ANNIE and SALLY both watch FRED, who stands there looking at SALLY.)

SALLY
(To FRED.)

With Annie.
FRED
Oh, uh, of course.

(EXIT FRED.)

ANNIE
Now’s not a good time. It’s late, I have to clean up, and I’m a little—

I won’t be long.

ANNIE
Alright.

(Beat.)

You’ll have to excuse the mess. My husband and I were . . . talking.

(SALLY looks around the neat kitchen. She sets a small toiletries bag she has brought with her on the kitchen table.)

SALLY
As I said earlier, I am very eager to talk to you.

ANNIE
(Resigned.)

Yes. And I know. I know all about it.

SALLY
You do?

ANNIE
I do.

SALLY
Then you’re OK with this proposal?

ANNIE
Proposal? Well, I agreed to his—and look where that got me. But I supposed he’s already made his own proposal.
Him? I don’t understand.

(Pause.)

Has someone else already asked you then? Mrs. Cremsfield—

ANNIE

Annie. It’s just Annie, Mrs. Longfellow.

SALLY

But I see you’re not yet sold. Look, think of this as an opportunity to really make a difference in your own life. You need change, Annie. You’re what, 50? It’s time to rethink your priorities.

ANNIE

(Rising.)

And how convenient for you. Are you going to be my agent of change? Here to kick me out of my own kitchen?

SALLY

Well, yes.

ANNIE

(Angrily.)

You are a bold woman, Mrs. Longfellow.

SALLY

Too bold, sometimes, I’ve been told. But this is not about me. It’s about you.

ANNIE

Do you tell that to all the wives of the men you sleep with?

SALLY

What?

ANNIE

(Angrily.)

Never really thought about the wives, then? Us lowly homemakers?
SALLY
Annie, I depend on you "lowly homemakers."

ANNIE
So you confess?

(Beat.)

SALLY
Confess?

ANNIE
Yes.

SALLY
No.

ANNIE
Huh?

SALLY
(Clears throat.)
Mrs. Cremsfield, are you currently employed?

ANNIE
What? I work with my *husband*, my Fred. He has an engineering company. You know that. I help him manage—

SALLY
So, no then. Good.

ANNIE
(Stuttering.)
No, I'm employed. I work with my—

SALLY
Annie, sit.

(ANNIE looks at SALLY unsure, clutching her tissue.)

Sit, Annie.

(ANNIE sits.)
Now, since you don’t seem to be listening, let me show you.

(SALLY begins taking out a series of small containers—various types of makeup, lipstick, eye shadow, foundation.)

ANNIE
(Looking at SALLY’s makeup.)

What are you doing?

SALLY
Helping women. Specifically, women like you.

ANNIE
(Slowly. Laughing a little. Removes her sunflower apron and puts it on the table.)

So, you want me to buy makeup? You’re not hear to—

(Beat.)

Oooh. My mistake.

(SALLY begins checking the colors and labels of the products, trying to match ANNIE’s skin tone.)

I’m not very big on makeup.

SALLY
I don’t sell makeup, Annie. I sell independence. To women like you. You understand maybe better than anyone else, that we’re living in a man’s world. Tell me. Why do women wear makeup?

ANNIE
I—. Uh, I don’t really know why.

SALLY
How’s your marriage?

ANNIE
Well, it’s . . . I don’t think I feel comfortable discussing that with—

SALLY
Never mind. I am an Independent Associate and Regional Representative for the Cary Fay Cosmetics company. The largest Cosmetics supplier in the world. We have over 2 million women working for themselves, earning their own money, and I’m here to ask
you to join us. You don’t have to decide right away. This is a way for you to meet new

ANNIE
(Slowly understanding.)

Lesbians?

SALLY
No. You’ll find that many of us were just like you. Living in the our husbands’
shadows.

ANNIE
How is your husband? I heard he was sick.

SALLY
(Laughs.)

He’s on the road to happiness, so to speak.

ANNIE
I’m glad. Fred said—

SALLY
The hospice is taking good care of him. He’s fine. Just fine.

ANNIE
Hospice?

SALLY
(Takes ANNIE’s hand.)

Now, do you prefer a dark crimson? Or a lighter shade perhaps?

(Applies both lipsticks to ANNIE’s hand and both examine it closely.)

ANNIE
I don’t usually wear lipstick on my hand.

SALLY
Crimson it is.

(SALLY puckers her lips and ANNIE follows suit. SALLY applies the lipstick to
ANNIE’s lips.)

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To be taken seriously as a woman, you must exude confidence. Independence. After many years of marriage, men like your husband think they know their wives. Change—this must be foremost in your mind. Change keeps a marriage alive. Change keeps you alive.

ANNIE

And darker lipstick will change me?

SALLY

(Laughs.)

That and so much more. It is a man’s world. But Cary Fay is not about “fitting in.” It’s about standing out. In the end, it’s all about power. Who has it and who doesn’t. Do you have power?

ANNIE

Well, I don’t know. I’d like to—

SALLY

Images and people surround us. Telling us what to be, how to act. I believe women should define themselves. Don’t you agree?

ANNIE

I can’t say I’ve given that much thought.

SALLY

Now, let’s see those eyes.

(SALLY examines ANNIE’s eyes closely. She opens another container.)

Tell me about Annie. What is she all about? What does she want?

ANNIE

(ANNIE pauses, unsure if SALLY is talking about her.)

Who?

SALLY

You.

ANNIE

What do I want?
I’m talking to you, aren’t I?

Oh, sorry.

(ANNIE pauses, deep in thought as SALLY applies her mascara and eyeliner.)

I don’t know. What do you mean?

Such a simple question, and you don’t know. But it’s not your fault.

It isn’t?

No. It’s because of the men in your life. Like so many of us, you have been dominated. Cary Fay reconnects us with our inner selves. Your husband, your kids—this is not a decision you make with them in mind. You make it on your own, for your own benefit.

Ok.

There, all done.

(SALLY produces a mirror and holds it up in front of ANNIE.)

I can’t believe it! I look ten years younger

Our makeup and business philosophy is that makeup doesn’t cover you up, but reveals you to yourself. This is the woman you see in your mind’s eye. This is Annie . . . Annie Cremsfield.

Just Annie.
SALLY

Excellent! Just Annie. This is you.

ANNIE

Fred would die if he saw me like this!

SALLY

Of course he would. What man wouldn't "die" after seeing such a beautiful woman?

ANNIE

What would I have to do if I joined?

SALLY

Ask not what you can do for Cary Fay Cosmetics, but rather, what we can do for you. A woman in your condition needs support.

ANNIE

(Surprised.)

What? Condition?

SALLY

What is it? Cancer? Lupus?

ANNIE

Um, it's cancer. I have breast cancer. How did you know?

SALLY

Annie, it's my job to know. Besides, that hairpiece you've been wearing to all the dinners, it's from one of Cary Fay's biggest competitors. I'll bring some samples next time for you to try out.

(Pauses.)

Have you told your husband?

ANNIE

No.

Your son?

SALLY

Not yet.

ANNIE

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You should.

(Beat.)

You’re a survivor, Annie. You’ll make a great Independent Associate.

ANNIE
(Distractedly.)

Ok.

SALLY
There’s a meeting tomorrow night. 6pm. Here’s a map and directions to my home. You’ll like our little group. We are all very much like you, Annie. Homemakers. Women. Who have devoted our lives to our families, to our husbands. But this, we do for ourselves.

(Hands ANNIE a piece of paper and a business card.)

ANNIE
I’ll have to check with Fred.

SALLY
Just be there, Annie. I guarantee it’ll change your life.

(Hands SALLY packs up her makeup items and stands.)

ANNIE
What should I bring?

SALLY
Just yourself. Cocktails at 5:45. Don’t be late!

(Hands SALLY turns to leave, then stops.)

ANNIE
And Annie?

Hmm?
Frank stays home.

Fred.

That's what I said. Ta-ta!

(SALLY exits. ANNIE examines her reflection in the door of the microwave oven. She rubs her hand over her reflection.)

(To the audience.)

Inner self.

(ANNIE's hand moves to her breast. Sighs and heads to clean up. She stops suddenly and removes her apron. Fade lights. END SCENE TWO.)
ACT I

SCENE THREE

Kitchen. Morning. Two days later. ANNIE is listening to a self-help tape from Cary Fay Cosmetics. She wipes down the table and then begins removing the samples from the boxes. She places them on the table as the tape plays.

WOMAN’S VOICE
(Sweet and understanding.)

Cary Fay Cosmetics knows you are second to none. But are you tired? Underappreciated?

(ANNIE nods in agreement.)

Well, listen up. You, yes you, have the power to change this. And so much more about your life. Stop what you’re doing. Whatever it is. Stop.

(She notices a spot on the table and picks up the rag.)

Relax! It seems simple enough. But it isn’t. You are being pulled in a thousand different directions, and none of them is leading you down the right path. At Cary Fay, you’re the boss. We provide all the training you need.

(She begins applying makeup, checking her reflection in the microwave over as she listens.)

Cary Fay products are made from the highest quality ingredients. We sell everything—from makeup to skin care products to fragrances. And together, we can help improve women’s lives around the world.

ANNIE
Hmm. “Improve women’s lives around the world.” I could do this!

WOMAN’S VOICE
We have faith in your own God-given talents as a woman. You can network, build strong relationships with other women within the company. You’ll meet new friends and make money in the process. Sound like a good idea? Then let’s get started! The next part of this tutorial will focus on you. We will teach you how to get in touch with the woman within, and to minimize distractions in your life, so that you can be happy!

(ENTER ROBBIE with some bags filled with supplies and banners. ANNIE doesn’t notice him at first. ROBBIE presses “stop” on the boom box.)
ROBBIE

Hey, Ma.

ANNIE
(Startled, but recovers.)

Hi, sweetie. I nearly forgot you were coming over.

(ROBBIE looks around.)

Dad?

ROBBIE

ANNIE
(Shrugs.)

Haven’t seen him.

ROBBIE

Oh.

(Pause.)

Business trip?

ANNIE

He left.

ROBBIE

Left?

(Pause.)

He left you? Good. It’ll be good for him to live a little without you. And vice versa.

(ANNIE shrugs.)

Trying out some new lipstick?

ANNIE

Yes, actually.

(ROBBIE examines all the samples on the table, eventually picking up SALLY’s business card.)

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Cary Fay Cosmetics?

ROBBIE

ANNIE
(Quickly.)

I’m not going to just sit around, waiting for your father to decide to come back here. Somebody has to make some money.

ROBBIE

It’s just weird. You’ve never had a job before.

ANNIE

Yes, I did. I wasn’t always your mother. Maybe it’s time I used that college education.

ROBBIE

I didn’t know you went to college.

(ANNIE shrugs.)

Ma, I’m really backed up, and everybody is so busy getting ready for the march. I could use your help.

(Pulls a large rolled banner out of his bag and some paint.)

Now, I want all of us to have positive signs. Like, “Closets are for clothes,” or “I’m out therefore I am.”

(ANNIE goes through the bag and pulls out a tiara.)

Oh, that’s mine.

ANNIE

Are you going to be a princess, Robbie?

ROBBIE

Not exactly.

(Grabs it from her quickly, embarrassed and puts it on the table. ANNIE takes the tiara back and puts it on.)

ANNIE

Then I hope you bought it for me.
ROBBIE
You want one?

ANNIE
This March is about being yourself right? I always wanted to be a princess.

(ANNIE laughs.)

ROBBIE
It’s yours then.

ANNIE
Your father’s going to have a coronary when he sees us. I’m not sure I really want to go yet.

ROBBIE
You said you’d help. And you’ve got to come. The truth shall set Dad free! Just come, Ma. He can’t hide anymore. This has been a long time coming. And besides, I need you there. I need you to give a speech.

(ANNIE opens her mouth to respond.)

Before you say “no,” it’s just a small one. Short. A few minutes. Please!

(Long pause. ANNIE thinks.)

This is about strength, Ma. The strength to be who you are. And the freedom. Life is easy for you—you’re “normal.” But I’m not. And every day—

ANNIE
I have cancer, Robbie.

ROBBIE
—people like me . . . what?

ANNIE
I had a lump removed. Few weeks ago. Started chemotherapy too.

(Pause.)

So the answer is “yes.” I’ll deliver a speech.

ROBBIE
I don’t know what to say, Mom. I’m sorry. I . . . Does Dad know?
ANNIE
Don’t apologize. This is my fight. And no, your father doesn’t know.

(Hands ROBBIE some markers.)

So, you were saying—banners?

(ENTER FRED. He is dressed in a wrinkled suit and tie. He is unshaven and harried.
He stops and looks at ANNIE’s tiara.)

FRED
Uh, hi. Annie. Robbie.

ANNIE
(Looks straight at FRED.)

Hi, Fred.

FRED
(Quickly.)

I forgot a couple of things.

(FRED crosses the stage and EXITS. ROBBIE and ANNIE exchange glances. ANNIE
stands and waits for FRED to return to ask where all his things are. FRED returns
quickly holding a small plastic bag.)

Do you know where my electric razor is, Annie?

ANNIE
Robbie, go into our bedroom. In the closet on the shelf—right side—there’s a black
traveling bag. Bring it for me?

(ROBBIE nods and EXITS. ANNIE takes FRED’s bag and pours the contents onto the
table.)

FRED
I know, it’s a mess. I just grabbed some things.

ANNIE
(To ROBBIE, off-stage.)

Robbie, dad’s chest of drawers, third drawer from the top. Three pairs of socks: blue,
black, and brown. Match them with three belts, hanging on the back of the door. Oh, and a pair of black shoes. And get the polish in the back right of his closet.

FRED

I've never been good at matching.

(ANNIE folds the clothes that she dumped on the table and straightens the items out. Moves to the refrigerator, pulls out some leftovers, puts food in a Ziploc bag.)

ANNIE

Or packing.

(ANNIE grabs a comb from one of the kitchen drawers and makes FRED sit. She combs his hair quickly.)

FRED

You have everything you need for the house? You okay?

(ANNIE nods. ENTER ROBBIE who pauses at the sight of his mother combing his father’s hair.)

ROBBIE

Here’s the stuff.

ANNIE

Thank you, love. Now, go up to the attic and get the suitcase—the one with the extra bag in it for suits and pants.

(ROBBIE EXITS.)

FRED

You’re good to me.

ANNIE

(Realizes the truth in his statement.)

I am. You’re a mess.

(ANNIE finishes combing FRED’s hair. She packs the comb.)

ANNIE

I’ll get the suits.

(EXIT ANNIE. Beat. ENTER ROBBIE with suit bag in hand. ROBBIE and FRED exchange awkward glances.)
Hi, son.

ROBBIE
(Nods.)

Dad.

FRED
How's the, er, painting?

ROBBIE
Haven't had much time to work. Been busy with other things.

FRED
Oh.

(Beat.)

You helping your mom out?

ROBBIE
Actually, she's helping me with something.

(ENTER ANNIE, suits in hand.)

ANNIE
There. You're all set.

FRED
(Uh, thanks, Annie. I appreciate it.

(FRED looks as if he wants to say more. ANNIE and ROBBIE don't speak.)

FRED (cont.)

Well, I'm off then.

ANNIE

Okay.
Okay, then.

(FRED takes a step or two towards ANNIE, then looks at ROBBIE.)

Good bye.

FRED (cont.)

ANNIE

Good bye, Fred.

(EXIT FRED.)

ROBBIE

He’s got some nerve, Ma.

ANNIE

Did you see how sad he looked?

ROBBIE

This isn’t about him. Who cares? He left you, remember?

ANNIE

(Ignoring him. Worried.)

And his pants. Your father doesn’t know how to work an iron.

ROBBIE

Hello? You’re not feeling sorry for him, are you?

ANNIE

(Still ignoring him.)

He’s a mess. His shoelaces weren’t even tied.

ROBBIE

(Sarcastically.)

Do you shave him too?

ANNIE

(Seriously.)

Oh! He forgot his deodorant!
ROBBIE
(Sarcastically.)

Maybe we should take it to him.

ANNIE
Maybe.

ROBBIE
Maybe we could let him borrow your tiara too.

(ANNIE snaps out of it, noticing the tiara is still on her head, and pinches ROBBIE.)

ROBBIE
Ow!

(ROBBIE rubs his arm.)

ANNIE
Sorry.

(ENTER SALLY LONGFELLOW. She is wearing a different outfit, but still immaculately dressed in a business suit with a skirt. She wears stylish reading glasses and perfect makeup.)

SALLY
Annie?

ANNIE
Sally, hi. You’re early.

SALLY
I saw your husband outside. He told me I could come in.

ANNIE
This is my son, Robbie. Robbie, Mrs. Sally Longfellow.

ROBBIE
(Warily.)

From Cary Fay, right? Nice to meet you.

(ROBBIE extends his hand. SALLY looks at it for a moment, also warily, then holds her hand out. They shake hands.)
SALLY
(Unconvincingly.)

Pleasure, I'm sure. Look, I've got boxes in the trunk of my car for your mother. Would you be kind enough to bring them in for me? Thank you.

(ROBBIE raises an eyebrow at ANNIE, who smiles and nods.)

ROBBIE
Sure, Sally. Not a problem.

(SALLY watches ROBBIE exit and waits till she is sure he is gone to begin speaking.)

SALLY
Just like the father, I'm sure.

ANNIE
(Pouring a cup of coffee for SALLY. She says the next line as if she is realizing it for the first time.)

In some ways. But in some ways, he's a lot like me.

Perhaps there's hope for him, then.

SALLY
He's really a sweet young man.

ANNIE
"Man" being the operative word, Annie. For a woman to get ahead, we must be careful of how we deal with these men. They expect too much, and it is partly our fault for constantly fulfilling their expectations.

ANNIE
Oh, not to worry. He's gay.

SALLY
(Interested.)

Oh?! There are many gay men in the Cary Fay family.

ANNIE
Oh, I don't think he'd be interested. He's an artist. He painted this for me.
(ANNIE holds up ROBBIE’s painting. SALLY eyes it, unimpressed.)

SALLY

How are you feeling, Annie?

ANNIE

Okay, I guess.

SALLY

I’ve brought some hair pieces for you to try. You get the company discount, of course.

ANNIE

Thanks. Perfect timing too. It’s getting a little thin.

(Removes her hair piece, revealing graying, thinning hair pinned back, and tries one of SALLY’s.)

SALLY

You’re a brave woman, Annie. Going through chemotherapy alone. Dealing with cancer all by yourself! I must say, I can’t believe Frank isn’t here to help you through this trying time.

ANNIE

Fred. But he doesn’t know. And I have my Robbie. He’s all I need. But it has been rough. My hair is falling out. I’ve always loved my hair.

SALLY

Of course. We’ve got products that you will love in the meantime.

(Pulls out some papers.)

So, I’ve brought your Independent Associate’s kit. It includes free samples to give out, product lists, inventory, prices, and also the names of all the Associates in our area. The DVD will show you how to give your first skin care and makeup application class. I’ve also brought some products for you to take a look at. You can decide what you’re comfortable selling. Now, as you know, there’s quite a variety—makeup, moisturizers, oh, and let’s not forget Skin—the Intimate line of products.

ANNIE

Intimate line?

SALLY

Products for the bedroom.
ANNIE
Oooh! Do you have something for heavy snorers?

SALLY
It’s not that kind of line, Annie. It’s products for between the sheets.

ANNIE
Oh? Oh. I see.

SALLY
Maybe we should start with products that you yourself buy. Lotions, fragrances, skin care, nail polish, et cetera, et cetera. Will that work for you?

ANNIE
I’ve never been much of a connoisseur of feminine aids.

SALLY
Well, you will be. You’ll have a few days to familiarize yourself with the products, the inventory lists, and the website. Sell from the heart, Annie, and you can’t go wrong. The other ladies were very impressed with you. Given the circumstances, you made quite an impression the other night. Oh, and—

(Hands ANNIE a list of names.)

—this is a list of pre-screened clients who have already expressed interest in Cary Fay products. You can use this list, then add people. This is the schedule for our upcoming meetings. If you have questions, you have my number as well as the other ladies’. Oh, and check the website daily. You’ll have to register, of course. And we’ll need your $2400 deposit as soon as possible.

ANNIE
(Nodding.)

I just call anybody on the client list?

SALLY
For your first time, I suggest you invite a few friends over instead. It’s always easier when you are already familiar with your clients.

ANNIE
Friends.

SALLY
Yes, friends, Annie. You do have those, don’t you?
(ANNIE looks at SALLY.)

I see. Too busy with the “Mr.” to have friends, huh?

ANNIE

Actually, I—

SALLY

No need to explain, dear. I understand. It’s inconsequential now. I will select a few names from the list for you. As an Associate, use your experience as a homemaker to sell the products. You are the perfect homemaker. And that’s what you need to sell to your clients—your perfection.

ANNIE

Oh, okay.

SALLY

Your husband’s looking a little rundown these days. Did you kick him out?

ANNIE

Not exactly. He’s just tired.

SALLY

(Ignoring her.)

The audacity of the male ego, eh? You’re better off without him, Annie.

ANNIE

I doubt that.

SALLY

Love is fickle, Annie. Just like men. It’s obvious to all of us, that’s you’re suffering. And it’s Frank who is causing this. Let him go. You deserve better.

ANNIE

We both need some time to . . . regroup. That’s all.

SALLY

Regroup?

(Beat.)

I’ll email you those clients. Call them as soon as you can. Don’t forget, I’ll need that check from you too. Oh, and do let me know when you are going to hold your first
meeting. I should like to attend.

ANNIE

I will.

SALLY

But before I go, I’d at least like to show you a few products from our newest line: Sweet Dreams.

ANNIE

I’ve read through the manuals. I saw the new line too, but I’m not sure if I, uh, would want to sell, er, those types of products.

SALLY

Let’s just walk through then.

(SALLY and ANNIE sit. SALLY moves some samples, so that the Skin products are the only products on the table. There are a number of odd shaped intimate products, lubricants, toys, and lingerie. SALLY picks up a green penis-shaped mold.)

Now, these products are all designed to enhance each partner’s intimate experience. This, for example—

(She hands it to ANNIE, who looks at it carefully from all angles.)

—is designed to go over the shaft of your husband’s penis. It’s called the “Ring of Eden.”

(ANNIE coughs in surprise and drops the product onto the floor. She rushes to pick it up, as it rolls across the kitchen.)

Is there a problem?

ANNIE

I can’t sell that! I don’t think I’ve even used the “P” word. Ever!

SALLY

Annie, let me be clear. Cary Fay does not sell sex products. We have experts working on this new line who are professionals on intimacy. We cater to married women. After all, why should men have all the fun? Every woman needs the “Big O” in her life! Yes, Annie, even you. Surely, even you and . . .

ANNIE

Fred.
SALLY
Yes, surely even you and Fred still have intimate relations?

(ANNIE finally picks up the product and places it on the table.)

But Annie, you are a woman. What happens in the bedroom is just as important in a marriage as what happens in the kitchen.

ANNIE
I doubt that.

(Beat.)

SALLY
Let’s move on. Ah, personal flavored lubricants from Sweet Dreams. Taste this.

(SALLY takes the tube and squirts a little into ANNIE’s hand. She smells it first and then, slowly, tastes it.)

Good, huh?

ANNIE
I take it this isn’t for cooking?

SALLY
Not the kind of cooking you do. That one is “Body Butterscotch.” You apply this to your—

ANNIE
Personal area. Your personal area.

Yes.

SALLY
I don’t think I can sell this.

ANNIE
You don’t have to sell this line. You need to sell things you’d buy yourself. Obviously, this isn’t it. But let’s try just one more product before you make your decision.

(SALLY pulls out a red silk nightgown and hands it to ANNIE.)
Try it on. Let’s see what it looks like.

ANNIE
But I couldn’t—I can’t. No. No way.

SALLY
Now. It’s just me, Annie. No one else is going to see you, and you can’t sell what you haven’t tried.

(ANNIE looks as if she might argue, but then grabs the night gown and EXITS. SALLY organizes the samples on the table and picks up the inventory list. ENTER ROBBIE.)

ROBBIE
(Picks up the penis mold.)
Can I get one of these?

SALLY
How about two, one for you and one for your partner?

Sure.

SALLY
This is Skin, Cary Fay’s newest line of intimate products.

ROBBIE
I like it. I mean, I’ve tried all sorts of personal products, but they don’t last or don’t work. You got a catalogue or website or something?

SALLY
Both. Actually.

(Hands ROBBIE a catalogue. ENTER ANNIE who rushes in and grabs the catalogue away from ROBBIE. She is wearing the tasteful red night gown, but has her sunflower apron over it.)

ANNIE
What would your grandmother say?

ROBBIE
I think she’d be happy her grandson is getting . . .
ANNIE

Getting what?

(ROBBIE shifts uncomfortably, then realizes what ANNIE is wearing.)

ROBBIE

What are you wearing!?

(ANNIE suddenly realizes what she’s wearing and rushes to leave.)

SALLY

Annie, wait. Let’s have a look.

(ANNIE stops.)

ROBBIE

Wow, Mom. You look great.

Really?

ANNIE

Really.

SALLY

I don’t recall the sunflower apron being in the Skin line.

ANNIE

It isn’t. I just couldn’t come out without it. I’d be—

Sexy?

SALLY

Smokin’?

ROBBIE

Half naked!

ANNIE

ROBBIE

It isn’t that revealing, Mom. It’s tasteful. Elegant. It’s you.

SALLY

And that’s exactly the type of product you need to sell to women like you.

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Take off the apron.

ROBBIE

No.

ANNIE

Take off the apron, please?

ROBBIE

No.

ANNIE

SALLY

(Stands and pulls the apron off.)

Don’t be so obstinate.

(The apron falls and ANNIE yelps, and begins to run off-stage. ROBBIE grabs her arm.)

ROBBIE

Oh, Ma. You look good! Let’s see!

(Looks at ANNIE, who crosses her arms self-conciously.)

ANNIE

I feel ridiculous.

ROBBIE

But you look—

ANNIE

Like a mother?

ROBBIE

Like a woman! Look at those curves!

SALLY

Yes, Annie, that’s a size 8. It suits you.

ANNIE

May I have my apron back?
(SALLY keeps it from her. ANNIE’s arms move to cover her breasts, and SALLY hands her the apron. EXIT ANNIE.)

SALLY
(Nicely to ROBBIE.)

Thank you for unloading those boxes.

ROBBIE
You’re welcome. You really think my mom can do this?

Of course.

(Beat.)

ROBBIE
Don’t take advantage of her.

SALLY
Your mother can think for herself.

ROBBIE
But she’s not herself.

SALLY
Annie, just Annie. That’s all we need.

ROBBIE
I’ve never seen her like this.

SALLY
She’s looking for something that you’ve already found.

ROBBIE
And what’s that?

SALLY
Cary Fay has shown her the person within.

ROBBIE
But what if the “person within” isn’t a Cary Fay Associate.

SALLY
Touche.
It must be hard. A young man like yourself. To be seen as different. Labeled gay.

I don't let that define me.

I see. How would you define Annie, then?

She's, well, she's my mom.

Ah, and there we are. *You* have a voice. *You* have a cause. But your mother? She's just "mom." Nothing more. What did you say about letting labels define you?

I don't label my mom. That's who she is. All she's ever been to me.

And a gay man is all you will ever be.

No. I—

You want to be more?

Yes.

That's what Cary Fay is here for. Freedom is fleeting for women like your mother. If *you* can't see her for what she is, then how can anyone else?

(ROBBIE shifts uncomfortably. ENTER ANNIE, changed into her original outfit.)
SALLY
(Stands.)

I'll be going, Annie. Think about the products I've shown you. And I'll need that check right away.

ANNIE

Ok.

(SALLY EXITS.)

I'll email you!

ROBBIE

Nice friend you got, Ma. I'm not so sure I like what she's trying to get you into.

ANNIE

She's just really focused. I imagine most lesbians are. You would have to be, I suppose. To compete with men. And Cary Fay is just a distraction. Keeps me busy. And I'll be making some money too.

ROBBIE

(Turns to go after SALLY.)

Your friend is a lesbian? She should come to the rally.

ANNIE

I don't think she'd be interested. She doesn't care much for—well, for people, in general. I mean, her poor husband is in a hospice and she doesn't even care!

ROBBIE

(Rolling out the banner and setting up the paint.)

Wait, husband? Then she's not a lesbian.

ANNIE

But she hates men. She's all about power. She's always talking about how it's a man's world and how we women need to take it back from them.

ROBBIE

Being a strong, independent woman doesn’t make you a lesbian, Ma.

ANNIE

It's very exciting though. You know, “go girl!” “Woman power!”
ROBBIE
Ma, lesbians are women who are or want to be in intimate relationships with other women. They don’t hate men.

(Pause.)

Well, some of them do.

ANNIE
Oh.

ROBBIE
I thought you knew that.

ANNIE
How could I know that? I don’t know any lesbians. Except you, of course.

(ROBBIE laughs heartily.)

What’s so funny?

ROBBIE
Nothing, Ma. We’re just going to have to educate you a little bit about LGBTQ before the march.

ANNIE
What?

ROBBIE
Yup, it’s time, Ma. Time for you to come out of the kitchen and into the great wide world! We’ll have our coming out parties together!

ANNIE
(She removes the tiara and puts it on ROBBIE as he pulls out his materials.)

Whatever you say.

(ANNIE and ROBBIE open the paint and begin working on the banner. Fade lights.
END SCENE THREE.)
ACT II

SCENE ONE

Kitchen. Night. A few weeks later. ENTER FRED, disheveled, but has shaved—he has some cuts on his face. He stumbles about the kitchen, searching for a glass and some alcohol.

FRED
(Slight slur.)

Annie! Where are you? I go away for a few weeks, and she disappears. Out partying, are we? When the dog's away. Or is it the cat? Maybe. I'll show her. I can party too! I don't need her to have fun! I'm Fred Cremsfield. I have—

(Stops to think about what he has.)

I had a wife. And a son. Now, nothing! Just an empty house that's delinquent on six—okay, seven, mortgage payments. And my boy! He's a . . . a . . . a painter!

(Sniffles. Wanders over to the kitchen sink. He finds a bottle of brandy, pours a glass for himself, spilling some on the ground. He looks at it briefly before rubbing it around with his foot.)

Ehck, what the hell is this stuff? Brandy? Brandy and sunflowers and makeup, god dammit! Where's the beer! The whiskey! What the—?

(He notices ROBBIE's painting. He stares at it for a few moments. A brief smile crosses his face, then he seemingly comes to his senses.)

(He grabs the painting off the wall, as if to wreck it. ENTER ANNIE, dressed casually in jeans and a nice blouse. She looks positively radiant. Her makeup is toned down from the last scene, but she looks years younger. She is wearing a brown hair piece.)

ANNIE

That's mine.

FRED
(Sarcastically.)

Huh? Oh, yeah, I was just admiring it. Very pretty.

(FRED puts it down. ANNIE picks it up carefully and moves it away from FRED.)

So, how was your party?
ANNIE
I wasn’t at a party, Fred. I was at a meeting.

FRED
Oh.

ANNIE
(Nonchalantly, but obviously interested.)

How’ve you been?

FRED
Great. Perfect.

(FRED refills his drink and sips it through the dialogue.)

ANNIE
I’m good too. Real good. Happy.

FRED
Better off without me then?

ANNIE
Oh, Fred. Don’t be defensive.

FRED
(Slurring.)

Who’s defensive? I’m just asking.

ANNIE
Let me make you some coffee.

FRED
Coffee is for morning people with jobs and kids and places to go.

ANNIE
Has something happened,?

FRED
Nothing’s happened. That’s the problem. I’m dead in the water. You work and you work and you work some more, and in the end, it don’t mean a damn thing. Nothing! No thanks to your little friend, Sally.
ANNIE
Sally? What’s she got to do with this?

FRED
You women don’t think we know what you’re up to. But we do! I do!

ANNIE
Who’s we? And what do you think we’re doing, Fred?

FRED
(Laughing)

Women are supposed to care about makeup, and facials, and dinner, and babies. They’re not supposed to care about politics!

ANNIE
What are you talking about?

FRED
You ever ask Sally what happened to her husband?

ANNIE
No.

FRED
(Stands)

She’s done something to him. Come to think of it, almost all of her associates’ husbands have fallen ill . . . or disappeared . . . or retired, just like that. Mrs. Swanson’s husband, Tim, he was the Deputy Mayor. And look at him now! Making paper swans at the old folks’ home downtown. Or how about Mrs. McGregor, Gary’s wife. Gary’s dead, Annie! Pushing up daisies! The jig, Mrs. Cremsfield is up! I’m on to you all. You’re trying to take over. Well, not on my watch. Not while Fred is still breathing!

ANNIE
You’re being ridiculous.

FRED
This isn’t about me! This is about you! My wife has joined up with a bunch of feminists, and is plotting to take me out!

ANNIE
Take you out? Where?
FRED
(Grabs ANNIE.)

Don’t you see?! This is what they do. They invite the wives of brilliant and powerful men into their inner circle under the guise of selling them makeup. Then they help you get rid of your husband, so you can take his place. You’re taking over.

(Pauses. Releases ANNIE.)

ANNIE
Fred, I don’t—

FRED
(Sincerely.)

I need you to come with me to the Capital Saturday. I don’t have anyone—anything—left. You’re it, Annie. Come with me. If House Bill 45 passes, maybe, just maybe, the Republicans will retain enough of the seats come re-election. It’s do or die, Annie girl. If we lose this, we’ll really have nothing left. No state contracts. We’ll go under.

ANNIE
I’m sorry, but I can’t.

FRED
(Softly.)

I still need you.

ANNIE
Oh, that’s sweet, but I have a prior commitment.

(Pause.)

Why don’t you come with me to the Capitol instead?

FRED
(Dawns on him.)

Why? Your friend Sally is pushing for the Bill to pass? Did she convince you that gays are people too? Well, they’re not! That’s it!

(Calms down a bit.)

Your friends are in on this. I know it. And they’re taking you into the fold, aren’t they? Aren’t they?
ANNIE
You never had a problem before with LGBTQ’s. And besides, why would they pick me? Of all the women in the party?

FRED
(Deliberate, but paranoid.)

LTBR? What?? It’s all because you’re my wife. They saw I was on the way up, on the verge of getting a bunch of government contracts. Then, bam, just like that, Longfellow is out of the office and into the hospital. The old ball and chain takes over, and suddenly, miraculously, the contracts start to go to Mrs. Longfellow’s friends instead. My contracts! Gone! To some redhead who thinks she can run an Engineering company. And a democrat! It’s just this simple. Your friend’s got women all over the place, swinging votes with their feminine wiles. Seducing their own husbands. Maybe even killing them, to get their way.

ANNIE
(Laughs.)

Fred, I know these women. They know makeup. They can give you an awesome European facial. But they certainly aren’t influencing politicians. And seducing their husbands? What?

FRED
So you’re not going to come with me?

ANNIE
I’m sorry. I’m going with someone else.

FRED
(Bitterly.)

You’re so naïve. You can’t think for yourself. Ever.

ANNIE
(Stops. Hurt.)

“Do not go gentle...”

FRED
What?

ANNIE
It’s from a poem. Robbie told me about it. It’s about raging against the dying light.
What does that mean?

ANNIE

There's something I've been meaning to tell you. I've known about it for a while.

FRED

(Angrily.)

More secrets, huh?

FRED

(Finishes his second glass and refills it.)

You're cheating on me, aren't you? "Someone else." I knew it! I thought, "the second I leave this house, she's so desperate and helpless she'll to run into the arms of any man." And I was right.

ANNIE

I'm not cheating on you. Be sensible.

FRED

Then where the hell were you tonight?

ANNIE

(Proudly.)

At a Cary Fay meeting.

FRED

Plotting with those women?! Planning my death, were you?

ANNIE

You're impossible. I haven't had my own friends since before we got married. But now I need them. I want friends!

FRED

They don't want you. I know you.

ANNIE

I have breast cancer.
FRED
(Surprised.)

What?

ANNIE
I had the lump removed a while back when you were on that business trip. I’ve been doing chemotherapy for the past three weeks to make sure it’s gone.

FRED
(Shocked.)

I . . . what?

Cancer.

Cancer?

Yes.

How? When?

(Beat.)

I’m sorry. But why didn’t you tell me? Three weeks?

(Pauses.)

Oh, I see. Because I don’t have breasts, you didn’t think I would understand. Did your friends with breasts say I wouldn’t understand because I’m a man?

ANNIE
You can be so stupid. So stupid!

FRED
(Surprised at first by ANNIE’s anger, then he recovers.)

You’re stupid. You’re just trying to drag me into a false sense of security. You’ve been lying about everything! And you know what? Your son’s a liar too.
(FRED stands, drink in hand, and throws the contents of the drink onto ROBBIE’s painting. There is a long pause.)

FRED

I’m not sorry.

(EXIT FRED.)

ANNIE

(Looking at the painting.)

Oh, Fred! What have you done?!

(ANNIE begins to tear. Grabs a sponge to wipe off ROBBIE’s painting, but the colors run together. Then realizes FRED has spilled alcohol on the floor, cleans it up. She notices her reflection in the microwave and wipes off her makeup with a dishtowel. EXIT ANNIE. ENTER FRED.)

FRED

(Returns, looks at ROBBIE’s painting. Tries to fix it.)

You work and you work, and all it costs is 30 years and your happiness. My Annie. That’s what I used to call her. And now she’s out there. And I’m in here. In a kitchen filled with sunflowers! Sunflowers! Damn it to hell. I don’t need her. I don’t need Robbie. All I need—all I’ve ever needed—is Fred. And Fred doesn’t like paintings. Fred doesn’t like sunflowers. Fred believes in money. Money talks, Fred, my boy. That’s what dad always said. Shit walks. I’ll do it on my own then. That’s right, Annie, you hear that? On my own!

(FRED drops ROBBIE’s painting on the table, then walks out. END SCENE ONE.)
ACT II

SCENE TWO

Kitchen. Evening. A week later. The kitchen is rather messy. There is a stack of unwashed dishes on the counter and the table is filled with makeup and skincare products. There are trays of appetizers, half eaten, on the counter tops, along with an assortment of glasses. ROBBIE is cleaning up, while ANNIE and SALLY sort through the product inventory on the table. There is a banner hanging over the cupboards that reads: “Welcome to Annie’s Kitchen. It’s Perfectly Yours.”

SALLY

(Making some notes and calculations.)

Annie, you were amazing. You sold almost $1000 tonight. And the “Annie’s Kitchen” concept is amazing. It is so perfectly you. You’ve taken these Cary Fay products, and showed women how to make them a part of their everyday lives.

(ANNIE smiles thoughtfully.)

You’re going to be one of our top Associates!

ANNIE

(Taking the banner down.)

I don’t know if I’ll use this next time.

SALLY

The girls really like you. You’re open, friendly, unassuming, yet clever. You’re an icon of true womanhood. All excellent qualities in any Cary Fay Associate.

(SALLY continues to make notes, while ANNIE puts the products in a bag. A few moments of silence.)

ANNIE

Sally, what happened to your husband?

SALLY

(Keeps smiling.)

He’s in a hospice. You know that.

ANNIE

But what put him there?
SALLY

I did.

(SALLY delivers the next lines without any inflection or emotion. As if she was making statements of fact.)

He got sick last year, almost died. The doctors said he wasn't going to get better, so I moved him to a hospice.

ANNIE

He got sick? Just like that?

SALLY

Just like that.

(Pause.)

And not a moment too soon. My husband, the senator was not a great man. Not a decent man. After 14 years of marriage, he woke me up to tell me he was cheating on me. Had been for years. Said it was my fault. I wasn't giving him what he needed. See, he'd learned how to manipulate people, bend them, so they would do what he wanted them to. He used his money and position. Buying votes, selling contracts. And a senator! But I kept quiet. Tolerated his bullying, ignored his cheating. But what he really told me that day was that he didn't care any more if I knew the truth. Then I knew what he was. He was cold, calculated. And then I knew I was just wasting my time.

ANNIE

So, what did you do?

SALLY

I realized that this wasn't marriage. Love had bled out from our relationship years before, and I didn't even notice. I had lost myself.

(Beat.)

So I found a remedy.

ANNIE

But you didn't—

SALLY

Men thrive on pushing people down. Your husband just isn't very good at it. But either way, they need to be kept in check.
ANNIE
So, it’s true then? Cary Fay Cosmetics is just a cover up? All the Associates have gotten rid of their husbands somehow, haven’t they?

ROBBIE
Cover up? Wait a second.

SALLY
I said I didn’t do anything. My husband got sick on his own. The doctors said there was little or no chance he’d ever wake up. I followed their advice and put him in a hospice, the best money can buy. He’ll live out his days there.

ANNIE
And the other Cary Fay associates?

SALLY
(Shrugs.)
You’ll have to ask them. I’m afraid we don’t talk much about our significant others.

ROBBIE
No blood, no foul, huh?

(SALLY shrugs.)

SALLY
I never cheated on my husband. I certainly didn’t try to kill him.

(Beat.)
Robbie, be a dear and pack up my car.

ROBBIE
I don’t—

ANNIE
It’s alright, sweetie.

SALLY
Thank you.

(ROBBIE nods. EXIT ROBBIE.)

SALLY
Annie, Cary Fay stands for women like you. How many corporations do that?
ANNIE
I’m not questioning the policy. It’s just, sometimes, I wonder what we’re selling.

SALLY
I know it’s strange for you. But you’re a woman held down by two men, and I’m going to help you.

ANNIE
Those two men you brush off are my husband and son. And I—Robbie has helped me out so much these past few weeks. He’s driving me to my chemotherapy appointments. He’s cooked, cleaned. He even goes to these skin care events with me.

And him?

ANNIE
Him? Ah, well, Fred is Fred.

SALLY
Then you admit it. He’s to blame.

ANNIE
No. That’s only part of the problem. I’m still the same. Stuck here, in this kitchen, part of the house. A good mop.

SALLY
Men can be manipulative without thinking, Annie. He wants you to think this is your fault. He’s got you blaming yourself.

ANNIE
You know, sometimes men can surprise you. Fred can be kind. It’s like he’s two men. Well, one man . . . and Fred. I can see them both. Every now and then, I get glimpses of my Fred, not the man.

SALLY
Then perhaps he needs some help? To make him . . . more Fred?

ANNIE
He used to be a good man. He built his business from the ground up. Provided for us. But the Fred I know has to die. I can’t live with that man anymore. And I think I know how to save him.
SALLY
We’ll support whatever you decide. After all, at Cary Fay we only care about your happiness. I’ll bring a number of Cary Fay executives to the rally. I’d like them to meet you. I hear Robbie asked you to give a speech. Will Fred be there?

ANNIE
To oppose Bill 45.

SALLY
(Stands.)
An interesting day. Son on one side, husband on the other. Which side will you take?

ANNIE
My side. I think.

SALLY
And Cary Fay will be behind you.

(虻nrs to leave, then stops. Picks up the banner and puts it under her arm.)
You are perfect, Annie.

(ENTER ROBBIE. SALLY nods and EXITS. ROBBIE looks at ANNIE.)

ANNIE
I like her. She’s decisive. She knows what she wants and she gets it.

ROBBIE
Were you guys talking business?

ANNIE
You could say that.

ROBBIE
Can I help you with anything?

ANNIE
Not really.

ROBBIE
You took down my painting. Did Sally not like it? Did it clash with Cary Fay décor?

(ANNIE takes the painting from behind the refrigerator.)
ROBBIE

What the hell happened to it?

ANNIE

Your father. I tried to fix it.

(ROBBIE grabs the painting. He is speechless.)

He didn’t mean it. He’s lost.

ROBBIE

(Bitterly.)

I’m sick of this! He’s always doing things like this! And we give in. But not anymore. I’m glad he’s going to see me tomorrow. I can’t wait. Selfish, self-centered, stupid, stupid...

(ROBBIE breaks the painting over his knee.)

ANNIE

I’m sorry, Robbie.

ROBBIE

Don’t be.

ANNIE

I’ll take care of your father, sweetie. Okay? Leave him be.

ROBBIE

(Wary, confused.)

How?

What?

ANNIE

ROBBIE

(Pause.)

Pick you up tomorrow?

I’ll make my own way.

ANNIE

(Pause.)
ROBBIE

Are you all right?

ANNIE

Fine, just fine.

ROBBIE

Yeah, see you tomorrow, Ma. Don’t forget to practice your speech. I’m sure you’ll knock ‘em dead. Good night.

(EXIT ROBBIE. ANNIE sits alone in her messy kitchen. She gets up to wash the dishes, lingers over the plates, then turns and pulls open a drawer. A pad of paper with writing all over it. She reads it briefly, stops, tears out the page, and begins again. Lights dim. ANNIE stands up, changes her top and her hair piece, then moves to a podium that is placed center stage.)
ACT II

SCENE THREE

Day of the March. Annie moves behind a podium in the middle of the stage. A spot light focuses on Annie. Annie looks graceful. FRED stands stage right with a sign that reads “Homos Destroy Happy Homes.” ROBBIE stands stage left with a sign that reads “Live and Let Love.”

ANNIE
(Nervously at first, then more confident.)

Hello, everyone. Thank you for listening to me. Because you don’t have to.

(Awkward pause.)

I realize how important House Bill 45 is to you all. If the Bill passes, and it will pass, you will have the right to marry the one you wish, the one you love.

(Pause.)

A few years ago, if someone had told me I’d be giving a speech in favor of gay marriage, I wouldn’t have known what that meant. And if you had explained it to me, I’d have laughed, I think. But now, I think I get it. Robbie, my son, is gay. And I thought, at first, I was coming here for him. Not because I understood, but because that’s what a mother does. She supports her son. And my husband, Fred, is here too, but he’s against the Bill. But I won’t support him.

(Pause.)

And I’m not supporting Robbie either. I love him. I love Fred. And I can, because Fred’s my husband, and Robbie’s my son. But you all can’t love some people, and . . .

(Pause. ANNIE removes her hairpiece.)

Let me try again. This isn’t a lesbian haircut. And that’s why I’m here. For me. Annie. And this is why, I think, you’re all here. For you. Our entire lives, we’re told how we’re supposed to be. Supposed to act. What to believe in. And in my 51 years, I don’t think I ever questioned that.

(Pause.)

This Bill doesn’t threaten Christians. It doesn’t question God’s will. It doesn’t force society to go somewhere. This bill supports me. Because in the end, this doesn’t have to be about Gay Rights. It is not about your significant other. Your children. Your god or
your government. It's about free will. And freedom. Sometimes, you give that up to someone—maybe because of love, maybe because you don't know any better. Everyone does sometimes. I gave mine up a long time ago. I thought I was supposed to be a good wife, and that meant living in the kitchen, with only the dishes for company. And I got cancer. And I realized it threatened the freedom I'd already lost. And if not even cancer can make you try to change, you're not free.

(Pause.)

Bill 45 gives back a freedom my son has never had to lose—the freedom to marry the person of his choosing. Bill 45 reminded me that there is a world outside my kitchen window, outside my husband, outside my son. And I stand here now in front of all you brave young men and women who have taken the step out of the closet and into this world. I feel welcome. Because I came here out of the kitchen and I couldn't be happier.

(FRED's sign droops and he lets it fall to the ground. Fade lights. END SCENE THREE.)
ACT II

SCENE FOUR

Kitchen. Night. Same day. The kitchen has been cleaned up and everything returned to its rightful place. ENTER FRED, a half empty bottle of brandy in hand. His suit is clean and ironed. As he enters, FRED loosens his tie and opens the bottle.

FRED

Annie! Where are you?

(He pulls his cell phone off his belt and dials. There is a long pause, FRED gets increasingly annoyed. Angrily, he puts the phone away.)

Too busy to answer my phone calls, huh? After humiliating me. As if I’m a damn fool! I must be. I should’ve seen this coming. And Robbie. He’s not my son. No, sir. Not my son. Must’ve been Annie somehow. Something she did made him that way when I wasn’t watching. And now look!

(FRED begins searching for a glass.)

Can’t find anything around here. So neat and tidy—she knows it’s driving me mad, and she’s doing this purposefully! Sally and Robbie and Annie are in cahoots, driving me insane, so they can take over the company. That’s it!

(FRED finally finds a glass. He pours his brandy into the glass, then takes out more glasses and smashes them. Once out of glasses, FRED begins tossing plates, bowls, and anything he can find in the cupboard onto the stage. Becoming more and more enraged.)

Fags! Homos! Sons! Wives!

(FRED opens the microwave, looks into his reflection in the door, then slams it closed. He overturns the table, tossing chairs into the cabinets. He moves to the refrigerator and opens it. He looks around.)

Anyone want some dinner? A taste of prime rib? Maybe some salad to keep your cholesterol down?

(FRED begins pulling out items one by one. He tosses them randomly around the kitchen. He pitches them out the window and to other parts of the house, off-stage. After he has finished, he takes a swig of brandy and looks around.)

Everything has to match, Fred. Oh, Fred, don’t these sunflowers look lovely?

(He grabs the sunflower dishtowels. Picks up the sunflower mats. Pulls off the
sunflower curtains. He piles them all on top the overturned dinner table.)

No flowers in my house. No stupid flowers! No bright and happy and gay . . . Gay. Aarrrrggghh!

(FRED pours some brandy on the pile then lights a match. He watches it burn for a while, and then puts it out. FRED pauses for a few seconds as if he is really thinking about what he is about to do. FRED kicks the pile, sending the towels, curtains, and mats everywhere. He picks up the Skin products and begins eating the “Body Butter” and other flavored lubricants and lotions. He notices a boom box on the counter, and hits “play.” ANNIE’s Cary Fay self-help tape begins.)

WOMAN’S VOICE
In this section of the tutorial, we want you to recognize your own innate talents, your inner woman, because at Cary Fay, we’re not selling beauty, we’re promoting your pursuit of happiness.

(FRED scoffs.)

Now, repeat after me. “I am beautiful.” Don’t be shy now.

FRED
(Mockingly.)

I am beautiful.

(As the tape continues to play, FRED grabs a bunch of paper towels off the floor and stuffs them into his shirt like breasts. He also shoves a wad into the back of his pants to make his butt look bigger.)

WOMAN’S VOICE
Good. Very good. For years, you’ve been told what “beauty” is supposed to be, by magazines, TV shows, celebrities. But you, you’re smarter than that. And that’s why you’re going to be a big part of our Cary Fay team. Now, complete this sentence. I want...

FRED
Bigger boobs.

(FRED laughs as he grabs more paper towels.)

WOMAN’S VOICE
No. Really think about it. What do you want? Youth? Your husband to notice you? A chance to start over? A career instead of marriage this time?
(FRED sobers for a moment, then shakes it off.)

FRED
No wonder she can’t think straight. She’s been brainwashed.

WOMAN’S VOICE
Good. Realizing what you really want will help you get back in touch with yourself.
Now, take out your makeup samples.

(FRED digs through the mess and produces ANNIE’s sample bag. He dumps out the makeup on the counter.)

Let’s start with the foundation. As you apply it, think back to when you were in your 20s. Put those dreams in your head. They’re your foundation too.

FRED
(Applying foundation to his face.)

Well, you see Cary Fay, I wanted to marry this handsome, dashing, intelligent guy named Fred. He had biceps of steel and a butt any woman would love.

WOMAN’S VOICE
Now, the blush.

(FRED reads the labels on the makeup containers until he ends up with four or five kinds of blush.)

Before you pick one, I want you to forget everything you’ve learned about picking colors for your blush. Now, think about your passion. What drives you? Why do you wake up in the morning? And now pick your color.

FRED
(Putting on two or three different colors, roughly.)

Why, I live for my husband, of course. He’s so smart and successful.

WOMAN’S VOICE
Did you think of another person? Your husband maybe? Or your children? If you did, try again.

FRED
Holy crap, I was right!

WOMAN’S VOICE
Think about you. Only you. What drives you? What are you all about?
(FRED shakes his head and laughs.)

Now, for the lipstick. It’s one of the features most people look at during conversations. Eyes and lips. But lips represent your sensuality. Your power. They communicate to the world who you are and everything about you as a woman. Pick a shade that resembles your passion.

(FRED pulls out a number of lipsticks. He gets some on his teeth and in his mouth. Clown sized. Spitting, he wipes it off his teeth. It’s all over his face.)

FRED

I bet that’s sensual.

WOMAN’S VOICE

There. Now, look at yourself.

(FRED looks around for a mirror. He sees the microwave, heads toward it, stares at himself in the door.)

See, you are beaut—

(FRED lashes out at the boom box. The tape stops playing. FRED stumbles in the process. He falls, can’t get up, then passes out. Lights fade. END SCENE FOUR.)
ACT II

SCENE FIVE

Kitchen. Night of the same day ENTER ANNIE, SALLY, and ROBBIE. They are all in very good spirits. ANNIE and ROBBIE's clothes both boast gay pride slogans. ROBBIE is flamboyantly dressed, however, sporting tight jeans, boots, and makeup. FRED is passed out in the middle of the kitchen. The kitchen is still trashed from the previous scene.

ROBBIE
(To ANNIE.)

You were great, Ma!

You were great!

ANNIE

(As she delivers the next line, she sees the mess. It is drawn out.)

I'm exhausted.

ROBBIE
(Explodes. To ANNIE.)

You really did kill him! I can't believe you did this! You killed him! Dad had told me—he warned me about you!

ANNIE
(Steps over FRED and starts to clean up. SALLY picks up a chair and sits.)

Language, Robbie.

ROBBIE
(To SALLY.)

You turned my mother into a murderer! You convinced her she was dying from her cancer, and had nothing to lose! Pushing thoughts of revenge and power into her head! You and your stupid company were behind it all along. Dad was right! And now he's dead!

SALLY
(Stands, pokes FRED with her foot. FRED groans. To ROBBIE.)

You. Sit.
(ROBBIE sits in her chair.)

As much as I'd like to take credit for your mother's transformation, I can't. She did it on her own.

(FRED begins coming to.)

FRED
(Sarcastically.)

Honey, I'm home.

ANNIE
(To ROBBIE.)

Check your father's head for wounds, Robbie.

ROBBIE
(ROBBIE lifts him up. Sees the makeup, breasts, etc.)

What have you done?

(Beat.)

Your blush is running into your lipstick. Hold still a sec, I can fix that.

FRED
(Pushes ROBBIE away.)

Stop it! I haven't done anything. It is what you and your mother have done to me!

ANNIE
Destroying the house doesn't change anything, Fred.

FRED
No, it doesn't. But I sure feel better.

(Turns to ROBBIE.)

Did you enjoy your little coming out party, in front of everyone I know? Hmm?
ANNIE
(To FRED.)

Sit.

(Pause.)

Let’s talk.

(SALLY EXITS.)

FRED
(Angrily.)

No more talking. I’ve been right all along. I’m ruined. I can’t believe this! The humiliation! I’m a laughing stock of the Republican Party. No one will ever do business with me again. They won’t even associate with me. But you got what you wanted. All because of you two! Three!

(To ANNIE.)

But you, Annie! That’s why you wouldn’t come with me, isn’t it? Because you had already promised him that you’d go?! You betrayed me!

ROBBIE

FRED
What about you? I’ve spoiled you. Given you every advantage. And you decided to be a homo.

ANNIE
This isn’t about Robbie being gay, Fred.

FRED
You’re right! He’s a symptom of the bigger disease. You! Thanks to you I’ve lost everything! The Bill is going to pass and the Republicans are going to lose. Am I the only one who gets how huge this is?

(Sits in the mess and drinks heartily.)

And my son decides to be a homo!
A homo!

(To ANNIE.)

Do you know what a homo is, Annie? That means our son wants to kiss men.

ANNIE

I love him. He’s our son.

ROBBIE

Mom has cancer, and all you can think about is yourself!

FRED

(Angry.)

So what? She’s got cancer, and everything in the world is supposed to stop so we can cry about it? That’s just not me, son. It’s a man’s world, son. Fruit cake or no.

ANNIE

(Calmly.)

I’m sorry you feel that way, Fred. But life is not about money. It isn’t about business. It isn’t about hating homos. Hating me. So you, my dear husband, have left us with no choice.

(ENTER SALLY dressed in judge’s robes and holding a gavel. She stands on the table as if she owns the place. ROBBIE and ANNIE place FRED center stage on a chair. ANNIE ties her sunflower apron around FRED, the defendant.)

FRED

(Pointing at SALLY.)

You! I should’ve known! You’ve ruined me! What have you done to my Annie?

SALLY

(Authoritatively.)

Frank Cremsfield. Too smart for your own good.

(To ANNIE.)

I told you. I said he wouldn’t change. Too stubborn. I call this court into session. Does the accused have anything to say?
FRED
My name is Fred, devil woman! And accused of what? What's going on? I demand to know what's going on! Annie, did you hear me? I DEMAND TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!

ANNIE
(Overly sweet. She finds an unbroken glass and pours herself a glass of brandy.)

Oh, I'm sorry, honey. But it seems the women—

(ANNIE motions to SALLY and ROBBIE.)

--are in control. Are you scared?

ROBBIE
How much would you pay to save your own life, Dad? A hundred bucks? A thousand? A million?

FRED
(Scared.)

I—. What? Robbie, surely you wouldn't—. You couldn't—. I'm your dad. Remember?

(Desperately.)

Son!

SALLY
Money is everything. Money is power. And right now, we have all the power. You have been accused of recklessness, insensitivity, and general hysteria. How do you plead?

(Pause.)

No answer? That's guilty.

(ANNIE has pulled out a white doctor's coat and a stethoscope from a cabinet. She helps ROBBIE put it on.)

Doctor, if you could please give us your diagnosis.

ROBBIE
Of course. The patient is undeniably suffering from all these symptoms, but they are
brought on by a far more sinister disease with a 100% mortality rate.

SALLY
(Sarcastically.)

That’s terrible news, Frank.

FRED

My name is Fred.

ANNIE
(Tiredly.)

Whatever.

FRED
(To SALLY.)

He’s not a doctor, you idiot! He’s an artist! He paints pictures of naked men for a living!

ANNIE

And you make fun because what? Because you’ve made millions in your life? How has your business fared? Are you anything like the man you dreamed of being when we got married? Is your life so full that you, Fred Cremsfield, can look down on other people and question their lives?

ROBBIE
(Pauses thoughtfully.)

Maybe I’ll paint you a little something when you’re gone. Something in place of an epitaph. ‘Cause you know what your tombstone will read?

(FRED doesn’t reply.)

“Here lies Fred Cremsfield...”

(Long pause as ROBBIE thinks.)

Uh, I guess that’s it.

FRED
What do you know? You’ve never worked a day in your life!

81
ANNIE
(To ROBBIE.)

Honey, I’ve a great idea for the painting. Something symbolic, I think. Maybe a dollar sign dancing on a coffin. What do you think?

ROBBIE
An excellent idea, Ma. I’ll get right on it after we’ve taken care of business.

FRED
(To ANNIE.)

I’m dying here, Annie. Won’t you help me?

ROBBIE
(Coldly.)

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

ANNIE
Rage, rage, Fred. It’s what you do best, and it’s more fun if you put up a fight.

SALLY
What’s he dying of, Doctor?

ROBBIE
(Exaggeratedly.)

I’m afraid it’s terminal stupidity. It started in the genitals, now it’s in his breasts, and it’s spreading. Just a sec.

(Examines FRED’s brain by looking in his eyes.)

Too late. It’s in his brain.

ANNIE
(She moves to pat FRED on the head.)

I’m sorry. I can’t sympathize. I didn’t even know you had breasts—or a brain.
FRED
But Annie! Annie, sweetie, we’ve been married for twenty-nine years. You can’t just kill me. I still love you!

ANNIE
(Laughs. To SALLY.)

Should we put him out of his misery? Kill him before the stupidity spreads any further?

SALLY
It’s actually a pity. We could’ve used him. Brainwashed him somehow. We could always use another man at Cary Fay to file the paperwork or scrub the women’s toilets. Ah well.

FRED
(To ANNIE.)

So I was right! You were behind this all along, weren’t you? But why didn’t you wait until I really started making money to take it over? I didn’t think you were capable of murder, but I guess I underestimated you.

(To ROBBIE.)

And you! Your mom controls you too, by helping you live your gay life. She turned you against me. “And God said unto Adam, fear the queer!”

ANNIE
(To ROBBIE.)

It’d be laughable, if it weren’t so pathetic. Are you sure you’re ready for this, son? Getting your father’s business out of the red is going to take a miracle.

He can’t run a business!

ROBBIE

Dad, that’s where you’re wrong.

SALLY
Cary Fay gives your widow all the security she needs. Her business is successful. No thanks to you.

FRED
You can’t do this! The whole lot of you should be burned at the stake for the witches you
are!

ROBBIE  
(As the Doctor.)

You see, Judge? Classic case of stupidity. Do you see how he attempts to twist reality and create scenarios revolving around him? The effects of this disease are quite insidious, and always disturbing to see in person.

FRED

I’m not a lab rat!

ROBBIE

Perhaps not. But you are displaying characteristics similar to the rattus novigecus species. Truly remarkable.

SALLY  
(To ROBBIE.)

Bring him before me!

(ROBBIE grabs FRED and forces him to kneel in front of SALLY. ANNIE watches impassively, sipping her brandy.)

Justice is merciful, so I’ll ask you again. How do you plead?

(FRED refuses to answer.)

If the accused is incapable of entering a plea, the nearest of kin may enter that plea in his stead. Annie? How do you plead for your husband?

ANNIE  
(Shrugs.)

I won’t plead for him. Makes no difference to me.

(SALLY taps her gavel impatiently.)

Oh, well, if I must plead for the man, I supposed it’s guilty. Of all charges.

SALLY

Robert, as an expert witness, you may also enter a plea for the defendant.

ROBBIE

It is my professional medical and artistic opinion that this man is guilty. I agree with
Mom.

FRED
(Shocked.)

Wait! I want to enter in my plea for myself!

SALLY
Too late.

FRED
(Pleading to ANNIE.)

Annie! Don’t you remember anything good from our marriage? Like that time I rubbed your feet when you were pregnant? Or when we went to those corny clubs to dance? Or how you’d listen when I’d tell you how I was going to make it big one day?

(To ROBBIE.)

And Robbie when I used to take you to play basketball at that park by the house? And how we used to build boats to sail on the lake?

ANNIE
(To ROBBIE.)

Pathetic, isn’t it?

ROBBIE
Extremely. I hated basketball. There’s no tiara’s in basketball. No princesses either. But doomed people go through stages, and this one’s bargaining. Somehow though, I don’t think Dad’s going to make it to dying with dignity. Oh well.

SALLY
It is the judgment of this court of law that Fred Cremsfield is guilty of all charges.

(FRED tries to stand, but ROBBIE pushes him back down.)

The sentence: all remaining assets and financial holdings will be seized immediately, and transferred to Cary Fay Cosmetics Corporation Associate Annie Cremsfield, widow.

FRED
You can’t do that!
ROBBIE

Think she just did, Pop.

FRED

Son, please, help me! Get me out of here. These women have gone crazy! Help me!

ROBBIE

I’m gay, Dad, remember? That doesn’t count for a man. But look, Dad, I’m a doctor. A gay doctor, but still, a doctor. That’s better than an artist, right?

(As ROBBIE speaks, ANNIE begins to gather all the curtains, towels, and mats that FRED had piled up before. She makes a great pile in the middle of the stage. She sticks a broom stick into this pile.)

You taught me what it means to be a real man, Dad. Real men don’t need women except to do the dishes and cook dinner. So when you die, and you go to Hell, you’ll find there are only men. Straight men like you. All doomed to spend eternity giving birth to children, washing dishes, cooking dinner, and being totally under the power of Satan, who, you’ll be interested to learn, is actually a woman. Well, actually, she’s just made up of women’s scorn from over the centuries. But you’ll finally be in a world that you can totally understand, Pop. All men. For eternity!

(ROBBIE laughs, FRED turns to ANNIE)

FRED

(To ANNIE.)

Annie, I’m sorry. I’ve been stupid and lazy and awful for the past few months—years. I’m sorry! Stop this nonsense, and I promise things’ll be different.

SALLY

(To FRED.)

She doesn’t need you any longer. We’ve showed her how to be happy without you. Your apologies are too little, way too late. But as Robbie said, you’ll be in good company soon. The husbands of thousands of Cary Fay Associates have preceded you. You’ll find them kindred spirits.

(SALLY laughs.)

FRED

But, but, you sell makeup! You’re a cosmetics company!
SALLY  
(Scoffs. Stands.)

Thanks to men like you who have constantly underestimated us over the years, we have become one of the top Fortune 500 companies. We are taking over the world, and you men haven’t even realized it because you’re all too busy staring at our chests, if you look at all. This trend won’t continue much longer. We have Cary Fay representatives in every major city, with direct influence now in the politics and major businesses. As we speak, Associates just like me are making sure that Cary Fay is taking over Houses and Senates. We’re the majority now. It’s your turn to leave the limelight. Minority needs or requests will have to undergo rigid procedures to even be presented to the government. Men like you will be forced to protest and march to get your cause heard. But no one will care. Because you will be a minority seeking power, money, and influence. Why should we give it to you?

FRED  
(Angrily.)

How are you different? Training your minions to usurp power from their husbands? You’re just the same. Only you’re out of your mind!

SALLY
And you are out of time. Frank, er, Fred Cremsfield, it is the decree of this court that you shall be burnt at the stake and remitted to hell hence forth.

(SALLY bangs the gavel twice on the table. FRED cringes.)

ANNIE
Do you have any last words?

(ROBBIE drags FRED to the pile. He quickly ties FRED’s hands behind his back and to the broomstick.)

FRED
Last words? What? This was funny, but now it’s just—.

(FRED stops as ROBBIE lights a match. ANNIE pours some more brandy onto the pile.)

Wait, wait, wait!! Come to think of it, I do have some last words.

(To ANNIE.)

I’m sorry I was an ass. A horse’s ass to put a point on it. Big time. I’m sorry I said I hated your sunflowers and your neatness.
(To ROBBIE. Unsure.)

Robbie, I’m sorry that you’re gay.

(ROBBIE rushes to light the pile.)

Wait!! That didn’t come out right. I’m sorry that I don’t understand why you’re gay. I wish I was more, uh, there for you when you were growing up. I’d go back and do it differently if I could.

ROBBIE
(Somewhat surprised.)

Thanks, Dad, that means a lot.

(SALLY coughs to hurry ROBBIE along. ROBBIE moves to light the pile again.)

FRED
And Sally! Sally, you’re a demon woman.

(To ANNIE.)

Think for yourself, Annie. That’s the only way you’ll ever be happy. Cary Fay is like me. It’s just nicer about running your life.

ANNIE
My mom used to tell me that marriage was a flower. Can you understand that, Fred? Do you get it?

(FRED shakes his head.)

I didn’t either, but I’ve finally come to understand what it means. Like flowers, love and marriage have their time in the sun, but then wilt and die. Mom knew that. Dad divorced her years before. So while I didn’t know it then, Mom was passing on some very valuable knowledge.

SALLY
Nicely put, Annie.

ANNIE
I’ve learned from the best, Sally.
FRED
(Desperately.)

But couldn’t she have meant that love and marriage needs care and attention to bloom and to survive? I still love you!!

SALLY
Are you finished yet?

FRED
I—. Wait—. This isn’t real. This can’t be. Don’t let them kill me, Annie! Please, I’ll change. I promise. I’ll cook. I don’t want to divorce you anymore!

(SALLY nods to ROBBIE who leans forward to light the fire.)

I’ll wash clothes. Yours too! I’ll iron! Annie!!

ANNIE
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight. Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay.

SALLY
Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight. And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way. Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

FRED
Nooooooo!

(The lights go down. The fire is lit. SALLY, ROBBIE, and ANNIE replace things to pre-SCENE FIVE and EXIT. END SCENE FIVE.)
ACT II

SCENE SIX

Kitchen. Night. Same day. There is no evidence that anything in the previous scene after FRED passed out ever happened. FRED is lying center stage, still unconscious. ENTER ANNIE, SALLY, and ROBBIE. ANNIE and ROBBIE are both wearing gay pride shirts, carrying banners from the march. SALLY is wearing her usual outfit, a conservative business suit.

(ROBBIE rushes over and checks FRED’s pulse.)

ANNIE

Is he—?

ROBBIE

Wait. He’s breathing.

(Holds up FRED’s brandy bottle.)

Probably just passed out from drinking too much.

(Lifts FRED into a sitting position.)

SALLY

I see he’s done some redecorating. And I think he’s wearing makeup. And . . . are those breasts?

(SALLY and ROBBIE both bend over examining FRED.)

ANNIE

(Looks around for a moment and it seems as if ANNIE might cry.)

Did your father leave any brandy for us in the bottle?

ROBBIE

It’s empty.

SALLY

I could use a drink. I think a celebration is in order.

ANNIE

Robbie, sweetie, move your father over to the side and pick up the table so we can sit down.
(ANNIE rummages through the mess and finds a couple of unbroken shot glasses. She opens the drawers beneath the sink and removes a small flask. SALLY and ROBBIE both look surprised.)

For emergencies and celebrations only.

(ANNIE laughs as she pours a shot for the three of them.)

ANNIE

To House Bill 45!

ROBBIE

To freedom!

SALLY

Hear, hear.

(They all clink glasses and drink. FRED moans, he mumbles something unintelligible.)

SALLY

Your husband is coming to.

ANNIE

(Impassively.)

Another?

SALLY

Please.

(ANNIE pours them all another round of shots. They drink.)

ANNIE

(To ROBBIE.)

An impressive turnout, Robbie. And to see you up there, speaking the way you did. I'm so proud.

SALLY

Over 3,000 supporters. Quite a feat, young man. Not everyone is capable of organizing people like that.

ROBBIE

But your speech, Ma! I—. Well, I don't know what to say.
ANNIE
There’s nothing to say, Robbie. Really. I’ve just never felt anything like that before. It’s like I just had to say something. As if my whole life was building up to that point. To take a stand for something, I had to take a stand for myself.

SALLY
It’s called “freedom.” You should get used to it.

(FRED turns over.)

ROBBIE
Hi, Dad.

(FRED sees SALLY first. He recoils.)

FRED
Ahhhh, stay away from me, devil-woman!

SALLY
Your husband seems to be hallucinating.

ANNIE
After drinking three quarters of a bottle of brandy, I can’t say I’m surprised.

(FRED looks around as if he can’t believe he’s not dead. Gets up and dusts himself off. ANNIE completely ignores FRED.)

I can’t thank you enough, Sally, for bringing the rest of the Cary Fay executives. Without their help, I doubt we would’ve had so many people. Not to mention the donations.

ROBBIE
And don’t forget all those news cameras!

SALLY
It was nothing, really. Just glad we could help. And you were truly amazing. I must say, I think you’ve given us all something to think about.

ANNIE
I hope so.

FRED
(Scared.)

Are they here? In the house?
ROBBIE

Who?

FRED

The Cary Fay people! The ones from the rally!

SALLY

No, Fred, I’ve sent them back to hell with the rest of the she-demons.

(FRED doesn’t speak. To ANNIE.)

It was our pleasure. Women are a minority too. That’s why we should stick together.

ROBBIE

Do you really think it’ll pass?

ANNIE

With that turnout today? They’ll have no choice but to pass it.

FRED

You’ve won. All of you.

ANNIE

This isn’t about winning or losing.

(FRED doesn’t seem to understand.)

ROBBIE

Save your breath, Ma. He’ll never get it. If it’s not about making money, then it’s just like talking to a monkey. A stupid, homophobic monkey.

FRED

(Swiftly, carefully.)

I’m sorry you felt you couldn’t tell me you were gay, son. I won’t claim to understand it, but I just wanted you to know that. I wanted to be the kind of a father you could talk to and count on. I guess it didn’t work out that way.

ROBBIE

I thought you’d be . . . more upset.
FRED
(Shrugs.)

I’m over it. And I’m sorry for ruining your painting.

ROBBIE
(Still unsure of FRED.)

Uh, right. Okay.

(Suddenly.)

That reminds me. Hey, Ma, I’ve got something for you.

(ROBBIE EXITS. SALLY sensing the tension between ANNIE and FRED, stands.)

SALLY
I better go see if he needs help.

(SALLY EXITS. ANNIE pours herself another shot and drinks. FRED sits at the table.)

FRED
I’ve been so——.

ANNIE
Stupid? Selfish? Inconsiderate? Asinine?

FRED
You can pick one. They all apply.

I agree.

FRED
Your cancer... Does it hurt?

ANNIE
(Shocked, but pleasantly surprised.)

It’s not the cancer, so much as the cure. And less and less, thank you.

(Pause.)
FRED
Your hair is different. You’re different.

ANNIE
[Intently.]

I’m not cleaning up after you any more.

FRED
You think I could bribe Robbie into helping me with this mess?

ANNIE
I think he’s too smart for that.

FRED
Maybe. But maybe not. He is my son too.

[ANNIE laughs again. FRED pauses thoughtfully.]

You know, I lost you for a while.

ANNIE
I knew you’d come back eventually.

[FRED reaches across the table and takes ANNIE’s hand. She smiles, and slaps him suddenly with the other hand, but he doesn’t let go of her hand.]

I think you know what that was for.

[ANNIE laughs again. FRED pauses thoughtfully.]

(FRED keeps looking. ENTER ROBBIE and SALLY with ROBBIE’s painting. It is covered with a piece of cloth.)

ROBBIE
Ta-da!

[ROBBIE removes the piece of cloth.]

I call it, “Annie in Flight.” You like it?

[ANNIE opens the gift and stares, turning it around, unsure what to make of it.]

ANNIE
Thanks, sweetie! It’s so pretty.

[ANNIE examines it closely. ROBBIE flips it over, right side up. He reads from the
back of the painting.)

ROBBIE

Do not go gentle into that good night.
Old age should burn and rave at the close of day.
Rage, rage against the dying light.

ANNIE

I love that poem, dear.

ROBBIE

(To FRED.)

This poet, Dylan Thomas, he knew his father was dying, and he wrote this for him. To fight death.

(To ANNIE.)

I put it on the back for you.

ANNIE

But I’m not dying, Robbie.

ROBBIE

I know, Ma. I just thought . . . it’s cancer. You know? People die from it all the time.

ANNIE

True. But you missed the point. This has never been about dying. It’s about living. My life. Annie’s way.

ROBBIE

It’s just, to me, this painting represents you. You’re the sun, Mom. In flight.

ANNIE

In that case, I love it.

ROBBIE

(Smiles. Watching ANNIE closely.)

And it’s pretty too, Ma.
ANNIE  
(Smiling broadly.)

It sure is. I’m going to put it here.

(She indicates a spot above the kitchen sink.)

Then I can look at it every day.

(ROBBIE hugs her. FRED examines it closely.)

FRED

I like it too. It’s—I’d buy it.

ROBBIE  
(Still unsure.)

High praise coming from you, Dad.

SALLY

Your son is very talented.

(FRED sees her, and cringes.)

Come now, Fred. You don’t actually believe all that nonsense about us you told Annie, do you?

FRED

(Surprised.)

I—

SALLY

The women of Cary Fay Cosmetics do not hold secret meetings to plot the deaths of their husbands. We do attract a lot of widows and homemakers, people who suddenly find themselves with a lot of time on their hands due to loss or just drifting apart. We help these women find independence, financial and otherwise. It’s merely a coincidence that the majority of women selling for Cary Fay are wives of influential men. Truly. This is why Annie was selected as a potential Associate. She’s a homemaker whose husband didn’t seem to notice her, and whose child is all grown up.
FRED  
(Still not convinced.)

Sure, Sally. Whatever you say. I have no problems with you.

ROBBIE

What will you do now, Dad?

(FRED looks to ANNIE. He shrugs. Beat.)

We have a proposal for you.

FRED  
(Surprised.)

We? What?

ANNIE

All this time, I’ve been trying to save you. And your business.

FRED

I . . . I didn’t realize.

ANNIE

Sally thought you might benefit from a good scare.

(FRED eyes SALLY, who smiles.)

I came up with this instead.

SALLY

We’d like you to work for us.

(SALLY smiles slightly at ANNIE.)

So, Fred Cremsfield, are you interested in joining the Cary Fay Family?

FRED

What?

SALLY

Our salary is very generous.
I don't—  

He's interested, Sally. Aren't you, Fred?

Well, I suppose I have nothing to lose.

And so much to gain.

Will I be working for you?

Not for me, exactly. But you'll be working with other women... and men... within the company.

There are men in your company? Where? I didn't know that.

Of course we have men in our employ. We are an equal opportunity employer.

Your son works for Cary Fay now.

Specifically, the Skin line. You're looking at the new Regional Marketing Manager.

Oh.

( Pauses.)

Your son must take after your wife. He knows this new line like no one else. And he can sell. There's a whole gay community out there yet to be tapped.
(Pause.)

Cary Fay can help you as well.

FRED
You can help me get my business running again?

SALLY
Of course. Haven't you looked into what your wife has been doing these past few weeks? This was what she spent our meetings plotting. It took hours to figure out how to save your business.

(FRED is still confused. SALLY sighs.)

Cary Fay encourages networking and collaboration between minority-owned businesses.

FRED
But my company isn't minority owned.

ANNIE
It will be. I want 50%, and the CEO position. With me, you'll have minority status, and can claim priority for private and public contracts and grants.

SALLY
She's right. Sounds like you're out of a job. I'm offering you a new start . . . as Regional Operations Manager. Annie has told me you are a skilled contractor, and home life aside, you're good at managing people. You'll be working behind the scenes.

(Beat.)

Oh, and there is one condition.

FRED
I knew it. What's the catch?

SALLY
Never, under any circumstance, attempt to wear our makeup products in public. You'll scare away the clientele.

(ANNIE offers FRED a dishtowel, he wipes the makeup off.)

Oh, and breasts don't look like that.

(FRED looks down and quickly pulls out his "breasts."
Are we in agreement then? 

SALLY

I’d like to think—

FRED

Good.

SALLY

But—

FRED

I’m sorry, Fred. Apparently you misunderstood. There is no need for you to “think” about this. I was merely going through a formality, as Annie has already agreed on behalf of the company.

SALLY

Oh.

FRED

(Beat.)

ANNIE

What are we going to do about this mess?

FRED

We’ll have to redecorate, I suppose ... maybe we could try pansies?

(ANNIE and ROBBIE laugh. SALLY smiles.)

FRED

Not pansies! I mean, not that there’s anything wrong with pansies—the word or the flower or the, uh—it’s just, I, uh . . .

ANNIE

To tell you the truth, honey, I was getting a little tired of seeing these sunflowers all the time. How about daisies?

FRED

(A little disgustedly.)

Daisies?

ANNIE

What’s the matter with daisies, Fred?
SALLY
I'm particularly fond of them myself.

FRED
Uh, nothing. Nothing at all. Daisies it is, Annie. Whatever you'd like.

ANNIE
I like flowers. To me, they can symbolize our love. Our marriage. Besides, I think it'll go nicely with my painting.

(ANNIE then takes the painting, places it above the sink, and stares at it.)

FRED
What is it?

SALLY
I think it's about strength. About people standing up and speaking out. It's about the individual taking responsibility, taking action.

ROBBIE
I think it's about freedom. Mom's freedom. From us.

FRED
(Unsure.)

Well, I guess I think it's about, uh, happiness?

ROBBIE
That's the cool thing about art, Dad. It's open to interpretation. Each of us sees what we need to see in it.

ANNIE
I think I'd rather take it literally. As a painting of me—Annie, in flight.

(Fade lights. THE END.)