

CHOICES

by

Ann Snead

© Revised 2019
Ann Snead
32 Highland Ave.
St. Catharines
Ontario L2R 4H7
Canada
Tel. 905.682.1271
annsnead@fastmail.com

CHOICES

CAST, in order of appearance

Five women, three men. (If necessary, Ruth and Sylvia can be doubled.) The characters are multiracial, and since any combination is possible, the appearance of some may be a little surprising—perhaps even disquieting. All are tall, handsome, healthy and young-looking. Their exact ages are never spelled out, but except for Tiffany, they are all older than they appear. Ruth and Tiffany should look superior to the others, in the same way a luxury car looks superior to an economy model. Adam and Emily wear high fashion outfits. Henry and Heather are not as high class as their clientele.

HENRY:	the sales manager
HEATHER:	his colleague, an award-winning saleswoman
FRANK:	a hard-headed businessman
RUTH:	the campaign manager and new love of a cabinet minister
TIFFANY ROSE:	a twelve-year-old Nordic blond. Intellectually precocious.
ADAM:	a redundant kindergarten teacher who wants his own child to nurture
EMILY:	his partner, a fashion designer with her own boutique
SYLVIA:	Adam's mother. Also a blue-eyed blond, but not in Tiffany's league.
SYNTHETIC/SMOOTH VOICE:	for greetings and advertisements
WOMAN:	voice-over

SETTING

The play is set in an office with four sections: a service counter, Heather's desk, a computer cubicle and a waiting area with a sofa and magazine table. There are also double sliding doors, a door to the Pregnarium and upstairs, and a one-way window/mirror/video screen.

TIME

A morning in the near future.

SCENE 1

(Mozart, played in the style of Muzak. Sliding doors glow in the dark. As they open...)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Welcome to Choices!

(HENRY disarms the alarm system and flicks on the lights above the service counter.)

HENRY

Check the inventory, will you?

(HEATHER opens the fridge.)

HEATHER

Looks kinda low.

HENRY

Do we have enough eggs?

HEATHER

Yes. Wait a moment—

(She reaches right to the back and brings out a glass container.)

HEATHER

Remember those Grade A ones we got from down south?

HENRY

The ones we special-ordered?

HEATHER

I guess they weren't accustomed to the cold. They've grown themselves fur coats.

(She holds the container up for his inspection. He takes a quick look and backs off.)

HENRY

Toss'em out!

(As she opens the garbage can and tosses the container in, blackout and CRESCENDO of shattering glass.)

SCENE 2

(Spot on FRANK, as he looks down on the shop floor through a one-way window.)

FRANK

That's it! Time to get rid of those guys!

(He grabs his phone.)

FRANK

Accounting.

(Beat)

They've gotta go. That's the third lot this week!...Don't tell me no. It looks like a Greek wedding down there!...I need fifty. I can't handle rush orders with fewer...What about the line of credit?...Eighty thou's more than enough...Trust me. I know just where to go to get a deal.

(As he shoves the phone back in his pocket, blackout and again the SOUND of shattering glass.)

SCENE 3

(Spot on RUTH and TIFFANY, in front of the mirror in the hall of their apartment. They're looking down at the floor.)

TIFFANY

You did that on purpose!

RUTH

Don't be ridiculous! It was an accident. We'll get another bottle on the way home.

TIFFANY

You know we can't—they don't make it anymore.

RUTH

Then we'll get something else! There was next to no perfume in it, anyway.

(Beat)

Stop looking at me like that. Let's go.

(She grabs TIFFANY'S hand, but the girl pulls away.)

TIFFANY

I have to comb my hair.

RUTH

Well, hurry up.

(TIFFANY stands facing the mirror. On the other side of the glass is someone who looks just like her, only older. The two comb their hair in sync, then put on the identical hair band in the identical way. When they've finished, the woman fades away. TIFFANY starts to leave, but RUTH stops her.)

TIFFANY

I need to get my school things.

RUTH

You're not going to school today. We've something more important to attend to.

TIFFANY

But we have a special speaker coming in!

RUTH

When?

TIFFANY

This afternoon.

RUTH

We'll be finished by then. Come with me. If you don't, you'll really be missing something. It's an interesting place. A special place. You can only go there with an adult.

(Beat)

Aren't you curious?

(RUTH holds out TIFFANY'S coat. The girl hesitates, then takes it.)

RUTH

Put it on. And find something to amuse yourself with. It takes awhile to get there.

(TIFFANY finds herself an expensive-looking (phone, tablet...))

TIFFANY

Do I need money?

RUTH

It's my treat.

(TIFFANY slips the phone into its case.)

RUTH

O.K., we're ready. Wait! I need that envelope.

(Blackout as she turns back.)

SCENE 4

(Spot on ADAM and EMILY, sitting on the living room sofa. He's stuffing papers into an envelope.)

ADAM

Tax return, letter from your bank, background report from the police, and, most important, cheque from the Ministry of Human Resources.

EMILY

The "Pass" from the Municipal Home Inspection Unit?

ADAM

Here.

EMILY

The coupon?

ADAM

Whoops!

(He grabs "Baby" magazine from a pile on the side table and tears a coupon out. The door bell rings.)

EMILY

Don't answer it.

ADAM

Why not?

EMILY

It's her.

ADAM
It can't be. She's out of town.

EMILY
I don't believe it.
(pulling him up)
Quick! Out the back!

(Too late. Sound of a four-digit code, and SYLVIA'S in the room.)

ADAM
Mother!

EMILY
I told you!

ADAM
I thought you were at the Design Show!

SYLVIA
I was, and look what I picked up for free.

(She unrolls a poster of a blue-eyed, blond child.)

SYLVIA
I thought it'd look nice in your—

EMILY
(grabbing ADAM by the hand and yanking him towards the door)
C'mon, Adam.

SYLVIA
Where're you going?

EMILY
None of your business.

SYLVIA
I'm coming, too. You know how important this is to me—I want to help you choose.

EMILY
Nothing doing, Sylvia!

SYLVIA

Promise me—

(EMILY pushes past her and before SYLVIA can stop them, they're gone. She rushes back to the table, grabs "Baby" magazine and flips through it. She finds the torn page. Blackout.)

SCENE 5

(Lights up on the whole office. HEATHER flicks on the New Age Mozart, which is interrupted by...)

SMOOTH VOICE

(Over P.A. system)

Welcome to the world of Choices! Our mission: every child a planned child. Innovative technology for today's demanding consumer. Custom design and enhancement. Looking for spring savings? Check out the great selection and new, lower prices. Shopping's fun again!

HENRY

Monday morning.

(HEATHER sprawls in a chair in the waiting area and yawns.)

HENRY

That kind of weekend, was it? Where'd you go?

HEATHER

Moon City. We rented a low-grav suite.

HENRY

And you didn't invite me?

HEATHER

We've been colleagues for a long time, Henry. We work well together. Let's not spoil it.

HENRY

Fun in Moon City's an expensive proposition. Boyfriend pay?

HEATHER

No, I did. Which is why I need a sale today. A big one.

HENRY

Don't we all.

(He sighs, then goes behind the counter and starts to search for something on the computer.)

HEATHER

What're you looking for?

HENRY

A place I can afford. At the moment, it looks like a condomonium. On the dark side.

HEATHER

Anything on special this week?

HENRY

Pandaman. Turns out they're real duds. Slo-o-w.

HEATHER

I hear they smell so bad—

HENRY

Even the flies won't land on them. Exactly.

HEATHER

Gonna be culled?

HENRY

Can't be. They're the new H-cross 50's.

HEATHER

What a nuisance!

HENRY

Head office's stopped production, but there are a hundred left.

HEATHER

Incentive?

HENRY

Twenty per cent of sale.

HEATHER

Not bad.

HENRY

With the personal market down...

HEATHER

It's depressing. People these days just don't want to have children.

HENRY

They're too self-centred.

HEATHER

All they think about are condos and careers.

HENRY

Cars and cruises.

HEATHER

Maybe we should try phone soliciting.

(The doors begin to slide open.)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Welcome to Choices!

HEATHER

A couple!

(They both start up.)

HENRY

Out of the way—they're mine.

HEATHER

I saw them first, Henry!

HENRY

I need the money!

HEATHER

Not as much as I do. You're gonna spend it—I already have.

HENRY

Alright, alright!

(He steps back as HEATHER approaches ADAM and EMILY, standing hand in hand at the entrance.)

HEATHER

Aren't you two stylish! I love your outfits.

EMILY

Thank you.

HEATHER

This is your first time here, isn't it? May I ask how you heard about us?

EMILY

We were looking through "Baby" magazine.

ADAM

And saw your ad.

HEATHER

Excellent. Now let me guess why you're here: you've got your car, you've got your condo, now you want to complete the picture. You're ready for—

ADAM

A child!

HEATHER

Got your documentation?

EMILY

Adam?

(ADAM hands over an envelope. HEATHER takes out the papers and checks them.)

HEATHER

I see you're very well organized... Adam and Emily, is it?

EMILY

Yes.

HEATHER

Have a seat.

(She ushers them over to her desk and readies herself at the computer.)

HEATHER

Lemme open a file for you. We'll start with an ID check, so I can access your personal information. Look this way, please, Adam.

(She does a retinal scan.)

HEATHER

National Identity Number—8018-722?

ADAM

That's it.

HEATHER

And Emily... 4563-210?

EMILY

Right.

HEATHER

You're a...

(Quick glance at the screen)

...fashion designer. Of course.

ADAM

She has her own company.

EMILY

"Madam and Adam."

ADAM

She's won awards.

EMILY

So have you, Adam! When you were a chef.

HEATHER

He cooks?

EMILY

Cleans, too.

HEATHER

Do you rent him out?

(ADAM and EMILY roll their eyes.)

HEATHER:

(eyeing the screen)

It says here you're currently unemployed.

ADAM

Yes. My last job was teaching kindergarten but I got laid off. I'm hoping child-rearing becomes popular again, so there'll be work for me.

EMILY

In the meantime, while his career's on hold, we thought we might get a child.

HEATHER

I take it he'll be staying home with the baby?

EMILY

Well, I can't. Anyway, he's the one who really loves children.

ADAM

For twenty years I was surrounded by them. I can't tell you how much I miss them.

HEATHER

Order today, and in nine months you'll have one of your very own.

(Beat)

Lemme open our site for you. The first section's for physical traits. Think what you want your child to look like—

ADAM

We've already done that.

(The doors slide open.)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Welcome to Choices!

(FRANK enters and goes to the counter.)

HEATHER

(calling out)

Henry! Someone at the Commercial Desk!

HENRY (O.S.)

I'll be right there.

HEATHER

Sorry. If you already know what you want, then just tick the list. When you finish, we'll go over it together.

(She escorts them to a computer cubicle. Lights down on them and up on the counter, under the sign, "Business Customers Only.")

HENRY

Frank! Long time no see.

FRANK

Morning, Henry. You must be pleased—heard company stocks are up. You guys've made some kind of breakthrough.

HENRY

AGH—the Accelerated Growth Hormone. Workers from birth to maturity in five years instead of ten.

FRANK

Even quicker would suit me.

HENRY

We're working on it... What can I help you with today?

FRANK

I need some labourers for my packaging department.

HENRY

They're packaging what?

FRANK

China. You have to be careful with it, even when you're bored because the work's monotonous.

HENRY

Something with flexible fingers, but not too bright.

FRANK

Not too dumb, either. I'm not going to take care of them.

HENRY

What about PandaMan?

FRANK

I thought I'd get Humán-utans again.

HENRY

We don't make'em any more. Too many complaints. If you've ever had one bare his teeth at you...

FRANK

Never had any problems.

HENRY

Enough people did that we had to discontinue the line. Try PandaMan.

FRANK

What about Gorilla Girls?

HENRY

Haven't been bred for years!

FRANK

They were good workers.

HENRY

Some people thought the hybridizing went too far. Thought they ended up looking a little too much like us.

FRANK

Didn't bother me.

HENRY

Maybe not, but they made a lot of folks feel uneasy.

FRANK

(Beat)

If you've got any Humán-utans left, they're discounted, I suppose.

HENRY

Yeah.

FRANK

Check, will you?

HENRY

It'll take a few minutes.

FRANK

I'll wait.

(Lights down on them and up on ADAM and EMILY, at HEATHER'S desk.)

HEATHER

Finished?

ADAM

We think so.

(The door slides open.)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Welcome to Choices!

(Lights shift to RUTH, who enters with TIFFANY in tow.)

TIFFANY

Is this the place? It doesn't look very interesting to me.

RUTH

Looks can be deceiving. It's a catalogue store. You order here, then, when your item comes in, they call you.

TIFFANY

Are you going to order something?

RUTH

I need to return some merchandise.

TIFFANY

What?

RUTH

You'll see. Now sit over there and amuse yourself while I find a salesperson.

(Lights down on them and back to ADAM and EMILY.)

EMILY

It wasn't set out the way we expected.

HEATHER
 Let's have a look. Physique?

ADAM
 Adonis. He's—

RUTH
 (cutting in front of ADAM and EMILY)
 Excuse me...

HEATHER
 Sorry, madam, I'm busy.

RUTH
 Is there someone else who could help me, then?

HEATHER
 I'm afraid my colleague's busy, too.

EMILY
 You're going to have to wait.

RUTH
 Pardon?

EMILY
 We were here first.

HEATHER
 If you wouldn't mind—I'll be with you shortly.

(RUTH reluctantly joins TIFFANY in the waiting area.)

HEATHER
 Now I've forgotten what you said you wanted.

ADAM
 Adonis.

EMILY
 He's magnificent!

ADAM
 Like a Greek god.

HEATHER

I applaud your taste. That offering's our top of the line. But it is a little more expensive than the others.

EMILY

What do you mean?

HEATHER

I suppose I should've warned you. Physical perfection doesn't come cheap.

EMILY

How much is it?

HEATHER

A hundred thou.

EMILY

What?!

HEATHER

We have, as you saw, nine basic models.

ADAM:

Alex, Adonis, Thor.

EMILY

Malik, Ravi, Lee.

ADAM

James, Jelani, Carlos.

EMILY

We spent so much time looking at them—

ADAM

We memorized the list.

HEATHER

Our prices on off-the-rack models range from twenty to one hundred thousand..

EMILY

(Beat)

Which one is twenty?

HEATHER

Alex. Because it's our best seller, we're able to keep the price low on it.

ADAM

But it's not what we want!

HEATHER

If nothing appeals, we can always customize. Whatever you can think of, we can provide. Elvis. Marilyn. Dracula, if you insist.

EMILY

We can't afford— Perhaps we're in the wrong place, Adam.

ADAM

(starting to rise)

BabyLand's just around the—

HEATHER

Hold on, folks. Lemme see what I can do for you. Would you consider second-hand?

ADAM

I don't know.

EMILY

It never crossed our minds that—

HEATHER

We do have some returns at our Children's Village. Most are older, of course, but very good value for the money.

EMILY

Where do they come from?

HEATHER

Sometimes people order, but don't pick up.

EMILY

Isn't there a penalty?

HEATHER

Of course. But couples split. They change their partners. Or their minds. Sometimes clients decide children are too much work—especially if they're single and have a demanding job.

EMILY

When they come home, they just want to relax. That's what I told Adam.

ADAM

(giving her hand a squeeze)

I'll take care of everything, I promise. You won't have to lift a finger.

HEATHER

If money really is a consideration, we have some seconds.

EMILY

What's wrong with them?

HEATHER

Accidents happen. Sometimes the child's not quite the right shade. Or height. Or intelligence. If it's our mistake, we take'em back.

ADAM

The poor kids!

HEATHER

As your partner can tell you, there's always wastage—

EMILY

Things that don't seem to sell, for one reason or another—

HEATHER

In every business.

EMILY

They're not necessarily flawed.

HEATHER

They just haven't found the right buyer.

ADAM

So you put them on the bargain rack!

EMILY:

Exactly.

HEATHER

Lemme click on Adopt-A-Child. I'm sure you'll find something there.

(She turns the screen around. The picture also appears on the screen at the back of the stage.)

ADAM

Alex Agostino. Male. Age 7. Bright, out-going, athletic. Likely to be...under six feet at maturity.
(Beat)

A steal at four thousand.

(HEATHER clicks again.)

EMILY

Alex Ethan. Male. Age 5. Adorable blond. Slight chance of...baldness in later life. Sure to be snapped up at five thou.

(Beat)

Is there something wrong with all of them?

HEATHER

That's why they're such a good price.

EMILY

(Beat)

I think we'd rather buy new. Excuse us a moment. We'll have another look at your models.

HEATHER:

Take your time.

(The moment she sees them on their way to the cubicle, RUTH leaps up.)

RUTH

If you're free now...

HEATHER

How may I help you, madam?

RUTH

I want to return a child.

(nodding at the waiting area)

The girl over there.

HEATHER

You sure she was bought from here? I don't recognize—

RUTH

She was a special order. Here's the invoice.

HEATHER

Oh—she's a Tiffany.

(Catching her name, TIFFANY takes out her earbuds. Incredulity as she overhears them talking.)

HEATHER

We don't sell more than two or three of those a year.
(looking down the list)
And she's very enhanced. Wow. No wonder I couldn't place her.

RUTH

There's only been one other like her.

HEATHER

Aren't you lucky! So what's she doing here? Surely she's not defective!

RUTH

She's in perfect condition.

HEATHER:

Then?

RUTH

The truth is...she's not performing up to scratch. Look at this report card—only seven A's.

HEATHER

In English, math, physics, chemistry... And she's only...twelve years old?

RUTH

If you keep going, you'll see the problem.

HEATHER

What problem? She's obviously brilliant.

RUTH

She has a B.

HEATHER

In beadwork.

(Beat; handing her back the report)

It doesn't matter what her marks are. We have a time limit for returns—two years from date of birth.

RUTH

(pulling it out)

She came with an extended warranty.

HEATHER

That's beside the point, I'm afraid.

RUTH

How can it be? A warranty's a legal document.

HEATHER

You could sue us—

RUTH

I should warn you—my partner's a lawyer.

HEATHER

—but first you'd have to prove she's defective, and then, that it's our fault.

RUTH

Perhaps I didn't make myself clear. She's not performing to the standard we expect. The standard you promised us.

HEATHER

Is that because of genetics, or because of environment? How much stimulation did you provide?

RUTH

You think it's our fault?

HEATHER

Just telling you—it takes both. We provide the potential—you have to activate it.

RUTH:

She isn't what we expected!

HEATHER

Children seldom are.

RUTH

(Beat)

Surely there's a way we could make this work?

HEATHER

Unfortunately, our return policy clearly states—

RUTH

There must be exceptions. There always are.

(with her most ingratiating smile)

I'd really appreciate it if you'd help me.

(EMILY and ADAM plop themselves down in front of HEATHER'S desk.)

EMILY

We've decided.

HEATHER

Good day, madam.

(Lights on RUTH as she reluctantly returns to the waiting area.)

TIFFANY:

It's me you want to return!

RUTH

You came from here—they have to take you back.

TIFFANY

She told you—they won't.

RUTH

We'll see about that.

TIFFANY

People aren't pets, you know. You can't just get rid of them when you don't want them any more.

RUTH

You can give them up for adoption.

TIFFANY

Peter won't let you. It's me he loves, not you. You're just for now—I'm for always.

RUTH

Is that what he told you? Well, he's changed his mind.

TIFFANY

I don't believe it!

(RUTH shrugs. TIFFANY jumps up.)

TIFFANY

I'm going to school.

RUTH

No, you're not.

TIFFANY

If you won't take me, I'll call a cab.

RUTH

At your age, and alone? I wouldn't, if I were you.

(Beat)

Sit down. I need to finish reading this.

(RUTH settles herself for a close read of the warranty. TIFFANY reluctantly sits down.)

TIFFANY

You're just like a step-mother!

(TIFFANY sulks, then defiantly starts a video game. Lights down on them and up on HEATHER, ADAM and EMILY.)

ADAM

Poor kid.

HEATHER

It's terrible the way some people treat their children.

EMILY

As if they were commodities.

(They turn to the computer.)

We'll take Alex.

EMILY

I think you'll be happy with him... Height?

HEATHER

I like a tall man.

EMILY

We thought seven feet would be nice.

ADAM

If I were you, I'd leave him at average—which these days is six-six. Otherwise you might have to re-do your doorways.

HEATHER

(ADAM and EMILY look at each other.)

Alright.

EMILY

(HEATHER types it in.)

Eyes?

HEATHER

Brown.

EMILY

We have twenty different shades. Have a look at the screen.

HEATHER

Espresso.

ADAM

Caffe latte.

EMILY
(Simultaneous.)

I let you choose the hair!

ADAM

O.K., O.K.

EMILY

(HEATHER clicks on Espresso.)

HEATHER

Hair?

EMILY

Black. And curly, like mine.

(Click, click on the computer.)

HEATHER

Complexion?

ADAM

We couldn't decide.

HEATHER

The four basics are yellow, brown, pink or black.

EMILY

None of them really appeal.

HEATHER

Watch the screen...Porcelain Geisha...Celtic Cream...Pink Peppercorn...Whoops, sorry. That's discontinued or out-of-stock... Beachcomber...Kilimanjaro Chocolate...Black Midnight...

ADAM

Can we see that one again?

HEATHER

Black Midnight?

ADAM:

Dark brown eyes, curly black hair and black skin.

EMILY

Banal. Trite. Obvious. Let me see Celtic Cream.

HEATHER

That combination's becoming quite popular.

EMILY

It's stunning.

I don't like it. ADAM

That's just because you're not used to it yet. EMILY

Skin that pale freckles. ADAM

I think freckles are cute. EMILY

He won't, when he grows up. ADAM

That's why I hate shopping with you! You're always so negative! EMILY

Am not! ADAM

Are! EMILY

Am not! ADAM

Calm down, folks! HEATHER
(using the mouse till she finds what she wants)

This is Maui Tan. You're safe here. Neither too dark nor too light. And one of our cheaper tints.

How much more is it? EMILY

One-twenty-five. HEATHER

What do you think? ADAM

Done. (Beat) EMILY:

HEATHER

(using the mouse)

Here's what he'll look like. At six months, a year, five, ten, fifteen, full grown.

ADAM

He's perfect!

HEATHER

The usual sexual orientation?

EMILY

Yes.

(Click.)

HEATHER

Well, that's the physical part taken care of, then. Let me show you the next section. Personality Traits. You have nine basic types. Choose one, then come back to me.

ADAM

Can we mix and match?

HEATHER

For a price.

(They move to the computer cubicle. Lights down on them and up on HENRY and FRANK.)

HENRY

Sorry to take so long, Frank. Couldn't find any for you anywhere. Not here, not in our other stores either.

FRANK

What about the hatchery?

HENRY

None left. If I'd known you'd be wanting some, I'd have kept my guys back. Take my advice: try PandaMan.

FRANK

Never used'em. What do they look like?

HENRY

Short and stout. Black ears, black eyes. White skin. Slow, but very methodical.

FRANK

Um. Don't you have anything else?

HENRY

Well, ChimPet, of course, but I think they're a bit high-strung for what you want.

FRANK

If I get a rush order, I need packing done fast.

HENRY

Speed versus care. It's a trade-off. Try PandaMan. I can guarantee they'll never break anything. And they're not that slow. I'll show you some at work—watch the screen... There—see?

(Pandas appear on the screen at the back, as well.)

FRANK

What're they doing?

HENRY

Picking raspberries.

FRANK

Why aren't they eating them?

HENRY

Aversion therapy the week before.

FRANK

They're not exactly burning the bushes.

HENRY

It was a hot day.

FRANK

Reminds me. Do they need clothes?

HENRY

Only if it gets really cold. Some people prefer them to wear something, but it's up to you.

FRANK

I'm not spending any more than I have to... They're vegetarians?

Naturally.

HENRY

Smell?

FRANK

A bit musky at close quarters. Nothing too overwhelming.

HENRY

Perfect... I suppose they're not too bright. Can they be taught?

FRANK

Within limits. Don't expect them to think for themselves.

HENRY

As long as they do what they're told.

FRANK

I should warn you of their disadvantages. They'll take everything you say literally and if there's ever an emergency... If, for example, there should be a fire and you yell, "Get your asses outta here!"—instead of running for the exits, they'll be looking around for donkeys.

HENRY

I'm insured.

FRANK

No problem, then.

HENRY

(A PANDA looks straight at the audience. The eyes are human.
HENRY turns the video off.)

So what do you think?

HENRY

They can take care of themselves?

FRANK

Dress and feed themselves, you mean? Yes.

HENRY

Speech capability?

FRANK

HENRY
Optimum. They're HC 50's.

FRANK
Something new?

HENRY
Fifty percent human.

FRANK
Thought that was illegal.

HENRY
It was, but we lobbied. Government gave in.

FRANK
Government should mind its own business—whatever that is.

HENRY
And leave it to the market to decide. Exactly.

FRANK
How much do they cost?

HENRY
Well, they're patented life forms, of course, which means relatively expensive. Let's see what we can do for you. Gimme a few minutes.

(He starts to hunt around on the computer. RUTH, in the waiting area, shoves the warranty back in its envelope and heads over to the counter.)

RUTH
If you're free—

FRANK
'Fraid he's not.

RUTH
I want to return a child.

HENRY
This is the commercial section. Domestic sales are on the other side.

RUTH

I was there. The problem wasn't resolved to my satisfaction.

HENRY

Well, as you see, I'm in the middle of processing an order. Just hold on and I'll be with you.

RUTH

Is this something I should discuss with the manager?

FRANK

You're looking at him and he's busy.

HENRY

There are some magazines over there. Help yourself.

(Lights follow RUTH as she grudgingly returns to TIFFANY).

RUTH

Turn that thing down!

(Before TIFFANY can, she does it herself. TIFFANY jumps up and drapes herself over HENRY'S counter. FRANK takes her place on the sofa.)

TIFFANY

Excuse me...

HENRY

Um?

TIFFANY

That woman over there—Ruth—she wants to leave me here.

(HENRY nods without looking up from his computer search.)

TIFFANY

She has a warranty.

HENRY

Won't help.

TIFFANY

She'll have to take me back home, then. I thought so!

(Beat)

Peter told me he needed someone until I grew up—but why did it have to be her?!

HENRY

(Finally looking up)

I dunno, honey.

TIFFANY

At first she acted as if she liked me. She took me places, she bought me things. She hugged and kissed me and told Peter what a sweet little girl I was. And I was happy, because at last I had a mother. But after she moved in...

HENRY

It's hard, when you've had somebody all to yourself, to have to share him... 'Scuse me, I gotta make some calls.

(Lights down on them and up on the waiting area. RUTH leans back on the sofa. She turns and smiles at FRANK.)

RUTH

I gather you're a long-term customer.

FRANK

You might say that.

RUTH

You know the manager well?

FRANK

Henry? Yeah, why?

RUTH

I'm having a bit of a problem.

FRANK

And you think maybe I can help you out?

RUTH

Can you?

(FRANK puts a hand on her knee.)

FRANK

Maybe.

(RUTH looks him up and down, then re-crosses her knees, forcing his hand off.)

FRANK

And then again, maybe not.

(They sit facing forward, ignoring each other. TIFFANY returns and plonks herself down between them. Lights down on the waiting area and up on ADAM and EMILY at the computer.)

ADAM

Who is that woman?

EMILY

She looks familiar, but I can't quite place her.

(ADAM'S phone rings.)

EMILY

Don't answer it!

(He turns it off in mid-ring.)

EMILY

She never gives up, does she?

ADAM

Thank God she doesn't know where we are!

EMILY

Let's hope she's not still at our place. Remember when we went away—and when we came back, she'd redecorated the house?

ADAM

It looked fabulous.

EMILY

Adam. It was her way of telling me I have no taste!

ADAM

But did you have to throw everything out? She was really hurt. She means well, you know, even if it doesn't always seem that way.

EMILY

And she's your mother and we have to live with her. You don't have to tell me.

(Beat)

O.K., here are our choices.

ADAM

The Idealist. The Guardian. The Thinker.

EMILY

No, no and no.

ADAM

The Perfectionist?

EMILY

Your mother.

ADAM

The Leader. The Peacemaker. The Adventurer.

EMILY

Keep going.

ADAM

This is why I hate shopping with you! Never satisfied!

EMILY

I know what I want and none of those are it! What else is there?

ADAM

The Helper. "Warm, generous and giving." Yes!

EMILY

No.

ADAM

Why not?

EMILY

I want the next one. The Achiever. "Energetic, ambitious and self-assured."

ADAM

Competitive, calculating and self-centered, you mean. No thanks.

EMILY

Adam!

ADAM

Let me have what I want this time, and next time you can have what you want.

EMILY

Who said there was gonna be a next time?

ADAM

You did, remember? A boy for me now, a girl for you later. Brother and sister. We talked it over and you agreed.

EMILY

Yes, well...

(CHIMES sound. ADAM sits as if transfixed.)

SMOOTH VOICE:

(Over P.A. system)

Shoppers' alert! Every child deserves an extended family. A network of caring others. Assemble yours today through KithandKin.com. The world's biggest list of genetic siblings, updated hourly. One hundred plus tax for the first one hundred names, broken down according to sex, age and place of residence. Buy your child that sense of belonging, now! Limited time offer.

EMILY

Let's try for a mixture of traits. Ambitious and generous.

ADAM

Warm and self-assured. Alright!

(They get up and go to HEATHER'S desk.)

HEATHER

Finished?

EMILY

We think so.

ADAM

We'd like to mix and match.

HEATHER

You want it enough, we can do it for you. But I have to warn you it's quite a bit extra. Five thou for two categories. Ten thou for three.

(EMILY and ADAM exchange glances.)

EMILY

Never mind, we'll take the Achiev—

ADAM

Helper!

EMILY

Adam!

ADAM

We agreed—the Achiever next time!

EMILY

O.K., O.K.

(HEATHER clicks the box.)

HEATHER

Now for the part people like the most. Special abilities. Take this inventory and choose what you want.

(As the lights dim, ADAM and EMILY start for the cubicle.)

ADAM

I'm so excited! I feel like the fairy godfather.

(Lights down on them and up on HENRY and FRANK.)

HENRY

The unit price's fifteen hundred; but since you're taking so many—fifty, didn't you say?—I'll give you 20% off. That brings it down to twelve hundred apiece.

FRANK

Thought I was a valued customer.

HENRY

That's why you're getting 20% as opposed to 10.

FRANK
 One thousand.

HENRY
 That's a one-third reduction!

FRANK
 Only another 13%. It's still fifty thousand for you.

HENRY
 I dunno—

FRANK
 I've given you a lot of business.

HENRY
 I appreciate that. And I'm not saying we can't make a deal.

FRANK
 You know I'll be back. I've automated my factory as much as I can, but some things still need to be done by hand. No point advertising—people today won't touch that kind of work.

HENRY
 (Beat)
 O.K. One thousand apiece.

FRANK
 Thanks, pal.

HENRY
 Bring us more contacts, and we'll see if we can't do even better next time.

(FRANK nods.)

HENRY
 I'll make out the invoice.

(FRANK hands over his card, which HENRY swipes, before handing FRANK a little microphone.)

FRANK
 "Jelani Frank, Nairobi, 25-45."

(He hands it back to HENRY, who puts it away and starts typing out the invoice.)

FRANK

Fifty thousand. Including tax.

(HENRY stops his typing and looks up.)

HENRY

Now how am I gonna explain that to the government?

FRANK

No tax on second-hand goods. Which is what they are, right?

HENRY

You drive a hard bargain.

FRANK

If I don't keep my costs down, I'm out of business. I learnt that the hard way—in court.

HENRY

Bankruptcy's never easy.

FRANK

Cost me my marriage.

HENRY

I heard. I'm sorry.

FRANK

(Beat)

Ever see him?

HENRY

Occasionally. He's looking good.

FRANK

Considering what he got out of me, he should.

(Beat)

So—what do you say?

HENRY

Alright. For old times' sake.

FRANK

Thanks, Henry. How soon can I get 'em?

HENRY

We have a cohort of five-year-olds at our Children's Village. After a few weeks of training, they'll be ready to go.

FRANK

Perfect... They're sterile?

HENRY

Of course.

FRANK

Had a batch once where a couple weren't. Nothing but trouble. Spent their time chasing each other around the factory.

HENRY

You didn't buy'em here, did you?

FRANK

No. Got'em from a place that was going out of business.

HENRY

If a mistake like that happens, we fix it for free.

FRANK

I had to have'em put down. I wasn't happy.

HENRY

I can understand that.

FRANK

Which reminds me. I've got fifty Humán-utans past their prime. Can you do something about it for me?

HENRY

Bring'em over when you're ready. We'll dispose of them for you.

FRANK

How much?

HENRY

Five hundred.

FRANK

I could do it cheaper myself!

HENRY

By the time you factor in the cost of the pellets, the disposal, the clean-up... I don't think so.

FRANK

I'd get something back on the meat.

HENRY

Ever tried it?

FRANK

No.

HENRY

Can't give it away.

FRANK

(Beat)

Alright. Five hundred. Add it to the bill.

HENRY

Have a seat while I make it up.

(Lights down on them. The SOUND of chimes.)

SMOOTH VOICE

(Over P.A. system)

Shoppers' alert! Are you tired? Short of breath? When it's time for a transplant, make Choices your choice. Your new lungs come with fifty thousand breaths. Additional breaths are four ninety-nine per ten thousand and can be reserved by calling 1-800-BREATH-OF-LIFE.

(Lights up on HEATHER at her desk. HENRY passes by.)

HENRY

How's it going?

HEATHER

He wants, she doesn't.

HENRY

Problem?

Under control. HEATHER

Did you do a credit check? HENRY

Of course. We're not at their limit yet. What about your guy? HEATHER

Frank? He's gonna take fifty off my hands. HENRY

Congratulations. HEATHER

Our high-class friend still here? HENRY
(nodding towards RUTH)

Can't we do something for her? HEATHER

Absolutely not! Remember what happened last year? HENRY

We got away with it. HEATHER

It didn't come to trial, that's true, but that was only because— HENRY

(RUTH approaches. HENRY rushes off before she can get hold of him.)

Is there something else I can help you with, madam? HEATHER

I...didn't tell you the whole truth last time. RUTH

Oh? HEATHER

RUTH

My partner's wife died in an accident. A drowning. It was months before Peter accepted it, and then, he took it so badly his friends thought he might...

HEATHER

Kill himself?

RUTH

They suggested he buy a replacement.

HEATHER

Ahh. So his last partner was the other Tiffany. That kind of thing happens more often than you think.

RUTH

When he decided to go into politics, he hired me as his campaign manager. One thing led to another... We've been living together ever since.

HEATHER

And three's a crowd?

RUTH

We had a long talk last night. I told him he had to choose.

HEATHER

And he chose you.

RUTH

He's an ambitious man. Likely to be prime minister one day.

HEATHER

With the right handler.

(RUTH nods.)

HEATHER

But why now?

RUTH

What do you mean?

HEATHER

You've been living together—all three of you— for...how many years?

RUTH

Almost five.

HEATHER

So why do you want to get rid of her now?

RUTH

I ran out of patience, that's all. Anyway, this Tiffany thing wasn't working out. We're the sum of our past experiences. And hers, of course, were different.

HEATHER

Even if she'd been a clone, she would've been similar, but not identical. Individuality's more than just genes.

RUTH

He didn't realize that.

HEATHER

Till you pointed it out?

RUTH

Poor Tiff. I tried my best to be a good mother to her, though I must admit I hadn't much time to spare. Peter's career comes first, of course.

HEATHER

Must've been hard, feeling you were training up your replacement.

RUTH

Somehow I never saw myself as temporary.

HEATHER

I bet you didn't, but did he?

RUTH

Like most men, I imagine he thought he'd keep us both around.

HEATHER

Greedy boy.

RUTH

I don't think it's healthy to let past relationships poison present ones. Poor Peter—

HEATHER

Just can't let go. He needs help. He needs someone to make the decision for him.

RUTH

I knew, if I explained things to you woman to woman, you'd understand... Here's his authorization.

(She holds it out to HEATHER, who doesn't take it.)

HEATHER

I'm sorry, but we still can't take her back.

RUTH

Why not?

HEATHER

I told you. There has to be something wrong with her and it has to be our fault.

RUTH

I suppose you know who I am?

HEATHER

Yes. I've seen you and your "friend" on the news. Just after he and his colleagues voted to give themselves a 35% raise.

RUTH

(opening her purse)

I understand that sometimes these things are difficult to arrange. There may be some extra fees involved—for the paperwork.

HEATHER

If I thought I could find a buyer for her, I might be tempted, but the market's flooded with kids right now.

RUTH

Not of this quality!

HEATHER

Send her off to boarding school. You'll accomplish the same thing.

(ADAM and EMILY approach.)

EMILY

We've finished.

HEATHER

Excuse me. I have to close a deal with my previous customers.

RUTH

But—

(RUTH hovers for a while, then, seeing it's useless, goes back to the waiting area.)

TIFFANY

Wait till we get home and I tell Peter. He'll be so angry with you!

RUTH

I don't think so.

TIFFANY

I'm the love of his life. The reincarnation of his happiness. He told me so. When he hears—

RUTH

I don't think you understand. He doesn't want you anymore.

TIFFANY

We were so happy together, the two of us. Till you came along. I'm going to tell him it's you who has to go!

RUTH

(reading from a letter)

"I, Adonis Peter, authorize my companion, Sophia Ruth to return the child Tiffany—"

(TIFFANY snatches the paper from her.)

TIFFANY

That's not his signature.

RUTH

You know it is.

(TIFFANY grabs her phone and punches in the numbers, while RUTH watches complacently.)

RUTH

He's at an important meeting. You won't be able to get him. Not that it matters. He'll tell you the same thing.

(After failing to get through, TIFFANY throws the phone aside in disgust and glares at RUTH.)

TIFFANY

Just you wait!

(Lights down on them and up on HEATHER, ADAM and EMILY.)

HEATHER

Have you decided?

ADAM

We want a loving—

HEATHER

There's no gene for love. That has to be taught.

EMILY

Out-going—

HEATHER

Extroverted. No problem.

ADAM

Intelligent child.

HEATHER

The government standard's 100. Anything over that you pay for yourself.

ADAM

We'd like him to be a scientist.

EMILY

They make good money.

HEATHER

We can provide one, of course, but I'm afraid you'll have to change your mind on the extroversion. That's a cluster.

EMILY

What do you mean?

HEATHER

Can't be had without introversion. A scientist has to spend a lot of time alone, just thinking. And short-sightedness. Ever seen a genius without glasses?

ADAM

I think it's more important to get along with people.

HEATHER

How much brain power do you really need? At one hundred, he won't ever be a rocket scientist, but he'll always have a job.

EMILY

What kind?

HEATHER

Anything in the service industries. For example, barber. Or personal chef.

ADAM

Let's go for it, Emily.

EMILY

(Beat)

If we wanted a higher I.Q, how much would it be?

HEATHER

One thousand for each percentage above one hundred.

EMILY

We'll take the minimum.

(HEATHER clicks the box.)

HEATHER

I see you've left the Arts' section blank.

ADAM

We weren't sure how it worked.

HEATHER

First choose your field...

Visual arts, I guess.

EMILY

Then your ability level—average, up to Baby Leonardo.

HEATHER

I'd like above average.

EMILY

Ten thou? That's the highest we offer.

HEATHER

Five.

(Beat)

(Click.)

EMILY

Now for sports ability. Interested?

HEATHER

Definitely!

ADAM

Which sport?

HEATHER

Football.

ADAM

We'd like him to be world-class.

EMILY

That I can't guarantee—practice and luck have a lot to do with it—but we'll give him the coordination of a born athlete.

HEATHER

(Types.)

ADAM

Wish my mother had.

EMILY

She was too cheap.

HEATHER

I suggest, if sports really interest you, you raise your son 's aggressiveness' quotient. I see it's only a three.

EMILY

How high can we go?

HEATHER

Private individuals can go up to five.

ADAM

On?

HEATHER

A scale of ten. After that, you need a special permit. The Military and the Police get them—generally for their clones.

ADAM

Young thugs.

EMILY

We'll take a five, if that's as high as we can go.

(Click.)

HEATHER

Is there anything else you want in this section? Musical ability, perhaps?

EMILY

(forestalling ADAM)

We can't afford anything more.

ADAM

People in the past were lucky. They had their children for free.

HEATHER

But they never knew what they were getting.

EMILY

And sometimes it was damaged goods, which—

HEATHER

Because there was no return policy—

EMILY

They were stuck with for the rest of their lives. We're the lucky ones, Adam! We can have whatever we want.

ADAM

Whatever we can pay for, you mean.

HEATHER

Lemme put it in perspective—even our cheapest model is better than anything people had naturally.

(HEATHER shuts down the computer and turns to face them.)

HEATHER

Which brings me to the next big question: genetic material.

EMILY

We thought we'd use our own DNA.

HEATHER

You can if you want, of course. I don't recommend it.

ADAM

Why not?

HEATHER

Why go with yesterday's technology? We have one of the largest research labs in the world—with a first-class experimental breeding program. We've improved our product so much since your day.

EMILY

In what way?

HEATHER

Disease resistance, for example. Because you were born a good hundred years ago, you're not protected, the way he will be.

EMILY

Neither of us has been sick a day in our lives!

HEATHER

His life expectancy will be three hundred years. What's yours?

ADAM

(Beat)

Two-twenty-five.

EMILY

But he'll still die!

HEATHER

True. We haven't conquered death yet. But we're close.

ADAM

I'm not sure I'd like to live forever.

HEATHER

People in the past would've said they didn't want to live to be a hundred.

EMILY

When you think of the things they suffered from, no wonder.

HEATHER

The environment's the wild card. People can still undermine their health through diet or lifestyle. But generally speaking, we're good until we wear out. And even that, we can do something about.

ADAM

What?

HEATHER

Make a clone as a back-up. Just as a precaution. A kind of insurance policy, you might say.

EMILY:

Neither of us has one.

HEATHER

They've just become affordable. In fact, we have a special on them this week.

EMILY

How much?

HEATHER

Ten thousand.

EMILY, ADAM

What?!

HEATHER

If your son should ever need a transplant...

EMILY

Stem cells.

HEATHER

They take time to grow. Time he may not have.

ADAM

If there's an accident, you mean.

EMILY

He wouldn't have to be on a waiting list.

HEATHER

Whatever your son needs—cornea, heart, liver, lungs—the clone will provide. It'll be like having his very own organ bank.

ADAM

I'd hate to think the poor clone knew what he was intended for.

HEATHER

We slip in a gene for retardation. Even when we've taken something from them, they don't realize. They're quite happy.

ADAM

So I can buy one in good conscience?

HEATHER

It could save your son's life one day. Or extend it.

ADAM

What do you think, Emily?

EMILY

Of course I'd like one. But we don't have that kind of money.

HEATHER

It's not that expensive, when you consider the peace of mind it offers. You might even come out ahead. After the heart's gone, of course, they're of no use. We usually sell off the other bits and pieces as fast as we can, and credit the money to your account—minus our commission, naturally.

ADAM

Would he live with us?

HEATHER

We keep'em here. When they're fully grown, we put'em in cold storage against the day they're needed.

ADAM

(Beat)

Ten thousand, you said?

EMILY

Absolutely not, Adam! When he grows up, if he wants to, he can clone himself.

HEATHER

Your choice, folks. Whatever you think is best for your child. I just hope, later on, you don't regret you didn't spend a little more.

ADAM

I'd like—

EMILY

Remember we have to live on just one salary! We can't—

(CHIMES sound.)

ADAM

Shhh!

SMOOTH VOICE

(Over P.A. system)

Parents and parents-to-be! With every passing year, it becomes increasingly likely that you'll have a fatal or life-altering accident. Even if you survive, how long will your finances? Protect your little ones from the trauma of loss. For their security as well as your own, buy a Critical Accident Insurance policy. To learn more, call toll free 1-800-PEACE OF MIND, or visit our web site. Today only—25% off.

EMILY

We already have insurance.

ADAM

We've saved there—so let's get the most up-to-date DNA.

O.K., O.K.

(getting up)

EMILY

We're not finished.

HEATHER

EMILY
(sinking back into the chair)

More? I need to get back to the store!

ADAM

We haven't decided on the actual process.

HEATHER

You can, of course, opt for an in vitro gestation. Hydroponic humans. It's cheaper, but we prefer the old-fashioned way.

EMILY

What are the advantages?

HEATHER

We find it produces healthier babies—babies that grow faster and are better adjusted.

ADAM

What do you think, Emily?

EMILY

How much is it?

HEATHER

Five thousand.

EMILY

Compared to?

HEATHER

One thousand.

EMILY

That's a big difference.

HEATHER

If you want your child to have the best start in life...

ADAM

Let's go for it, hon.

EMILY

We can't afford to!

ADAM

I'll pay for it.

EMILY

With what?

ADAM

With my...severance pay.

EMILY

You didn't tell me—

ADAM

Well...I...

EMILY

Do you by any chance have a bank account I don't know about?...Do you, Adam?

ADAM

All I have is a cheque!

EMILY

For how much?

ADAM

Five thousand. I was going to surprise you with a romantic weekend in Moon City—off-season weekday, of course—but this is more important.

HEATHER

It couldn't be better spent than on upgrades for your child.

EMILY

(Beat)

O.K. You want it—you spend it.

Natural childbirth, please. ADAM

What birth date would you folks like? HEATHER

We were thinking Dec. 25th. EMILY

He's our Christmas present. ADAM

We're going to call him Noel. EMILY

No problem... Ready to sign the contract? HEATHER

I guess so. EMILY

Lemme just type it up for you. HEATHER

(Lights down on HEATHER, ADAM and EMILY and up on HENRY and FRANK.)

HENRY
Sorry to take so long, Frank. I had some creative paperwork to do to make those Pandas of yours look second-hand.

(giving him the invoice)
Show this when you pick'em up.

FRANK
Forgot to ask you earlier—if there's a recession?

HENRY
The usual. We'll take your guys back and see if we can sell'em for you.

FRANK
And if you can't?

HENRY
After 60 days we dispose of them.

FRANK

How long do these ones last?

HENRY

Thirty years at least. Then you'll find they'll all go, one after the other.

FRANK

And I come back here.

HENRY

Exactly.

FRANK

At this rate, maybe I should think about investing in the company.

HENRY

If you want to come with me, I can get you a prospectus.

FRANK

Financial reports?

HENRY

Accountants' office, upstairs.

(Lights down on FRANK and HENRY and up on HEATHER'S desk.)

HEATHER

I've got the invoice made out. How do you want to pay?

EMILY

Could you debit our account?

HEATHER

Certainly. Will you be using your government grant as a down payment?

ADAM

We have to.

HEATHER

Let me go over it with you. "Alex"—that's an economy model, as I said—twenty thousand, plus one-twenty-five extra for the tan—

ADAM

He'll look good summer and winter.

HEATHER

Plus a thousand extra for outstanding sports ability—

EMILY

I thought that was included!

HEATHER:

Free enterprise, Emily, free enterprise... Plus five hundred for upping the aggression—

EMILY

You didn't mention—

HEATHER

Plus five thou for artistic ability and five thou for natural childbirth... That's thirty-one thousand, six-hundred-and-twenty-five. Plus tax.

EMILY

Over thirty-six thou! Adam! You said—

ADAM

I didn't know things would mount up so fast!

EMILY

It's out of the question.

ADAM

Please, Emily. I've never wanted anything so much in all my life. Please.

EMILY

I could use that money to expand the business. You could come back and help me.

ADAM

No! I want to stay home and raise our child.

HEATHER

Let him have his way. If pappy ain't happy, ain't nobody happy.

EMILY

Don't I know it.

(looking at ADAM)

You're sure this is what you want? You're positive?

(Beat)

O.K., then.

(ADAM gives her a hug.)

HEATHER

Would you prefer to pay it in a lump sum, or by installments?

EMILY

It'll have to be by installments.

HEATHER

As a special gift to you, we'll throw in a year's subscription to "Parenting Today."

ADAM

Great!

HEATHER

Can I interest you in any of our other products? Our extended warranty program, for example? Only three thou.

EMILY

(before ADAM can open his mouth)

I think not.

(CHIMES sound.)

SMOOTH VOICE

(Over the P.A. system)

Shoppers' Alert! Parents. Nervous about your first child? Of course you are. But there's a solution. For two hundred a year, you can access our experts 24/7.

HEATHER

That's our Perfect Parent Program. I was just about to mention it to you.

SMOOTH VOICE (Cont'd)

Get regular updates on the most recent child rearing breakthroughs, plus invitations to cutting edge seminars and workshops, led by authorities in their field. A mistake could ruin your child for life. Why take chances? Hurry! Sign up now!

EMILY

We can't afford it, Adam!

ADAM

The coupon. It's 50% off childcare items.

EMILY

This doesn't qualify.

HEATHER

Yes, it does. And there's a way you can save even more. I see you haven't investigated the scratch and save part yet.

(ADAM scratches the coupon, looks at it and hands it to HEATHER with a smile.)

HEATHER

Congratulations, Emily and Adam! That's an extra 10% off, bringing the price down to only ninety. Ninety instead of two hundred! Think of what you're saving!

ADAM

Yes!

EMILY

Wait!

HEATHER

You can save even more if you subscribe for three years up front.

EMILY

Absolutely not!

HEATHER

I'll add it to the contract, shall I? Just sign here, please.

(ADAM jumps to it; EMILY is more reluctant.)

HEATHER

If, by any chance, you change your mind about the child, we can abort right up to the due date.

EMILY

Is there a financial penalty?

HEATHER

Of course, and you'll lose your deposit, so think carefully before you decide.

EMILY

What about defects?

HEATHER

We guarantee all our products for two years from date of birth. Any flaws discovered before then will be repaired at our expense, or the child may be returned and your money reimbursed. Keep in mind—if it isn't a genetic problem, it isn't our responsibility.

EMILY

We understand.

HEATHER

There. I think we're finished now. Thank you for choosing Choices!

(They get up and shake hands.)

ADAM

Oh—before we go—could we visit the pregnarium?

HEATHER

Of course.

(RUTH intercepts them before they can leave.)

RUTH

I'd like to see the manager. Would you call him for me, please?

HEATHER

(calling out)

Henry, if you don't mind, would you take care of this woman?

HENRY

(appearing from the back)

How may I help you, madam?

RUTH

You know perfectly well! I want to return that child over there.

HEATHER

I've already told her, twice, no.

HENRY
Is she defective?

RUTH
Of course not!

HEATHER
(leaving with ADAM and EMILY)
She's a rival—the first wife, come back to life.

RUTH
You've simply got to take her. It's not fair to me to have her around. It's not fair to her, either—
poor girl, she deserves her own identity.

HENRY
Put her up for adoption privately. That's the way it's usually handled.

RUTH
We don't want a scandal!

HENRY
Adoption can be done discreetly. Have a look at our web site—a picture and a description. The
price you want.

RUTH
We can't have buyers coming to our house!

HENRY
Then meet them somewhere else. Putting a child up for adoption isn't a crime, you know.

RUTH
Maybe not, but it doesn't reflect well on the child's guardian.

HENRY
Election coming up?

RUTH
I see you know who my partner is.

HENRY
It's on the invoice.

RUTH
He could make life very difficult for you.

HENRY

Because he's in the government? I don't think so.

RUTH

When I tell him—

HENRY

When I tell the media—

RUTH

Perhaps I'll just leave her on the street, then.

HENRY

I wouldn't, if I were you. She knows her address, doesn't she?

RUTH

She came from here. You have a responsibility!

HENRY

Even if I admitted liability—which I don't—our Children's Village is full.

RUTH

Surely you can take just one more. I'd make it worth your while.

HENRY

I told you—we haven't got room. And even if we had, she wouldn't fit in. They're all defectives there. Returns. Recalls. She'd stand out. There'd be questions.

RUTH

I can compete against a live woman. But when a memory's brought to life—how do you compete against that? How do you deal with a man who won't admit his wife's dead?!

(No response from HENRY.)

RUTH

I'm not a monster, you know. Getting her away from Peter is the best thing for all three of us.

HENRY

Take my advice—arrange things privat— Hey! Where're you going?!

(RUTH strides towards the door, ignoring him. As she goes by, TIFFANY gets up.)

Sit down!
RUTH

Take her with you! You can't—
HENRY

(The doors open.)

Thank you for shopping at Choices.
SYNTHETIC VOICE

(The doors close in HENRY'S face. He claws them open.)

Don't just stand there, young lady—run after her!
HENRY

(TIFFANY doesn't move. HENRY lets the doors shut.)

I don't care if she's gone—I hate her!
TIFFANY

She's not the nicest person.
HENRY

She wants Peter all to herself—but Peter's mine. When I grow up, we're going to be partners.
TIFFANY

Is that what he said?
HENRY

He said I was his Beloved, come back to him, alive and beautiful again. He named me after her—Tiffany Rose.
TIFFANY

Tiffany Rose the Second.
HENRY

He told me what I had to do—practise until I was ready to take her place. He showed me pictures and videos so I'd know how.
TIFFANY

Ahh.
HENRY

(She looks at him.)

HENRY

I thought you looked more...grown-up than you should. You're only twelve, aren't you?

TIFFANY

I'm twelve, but I'm a Tiffany. We're very precocious.

HENRY

Old-fashioned, too?

(Beat)

Your clothes.

TIFFANY

They're her clothes. Peter had them altered for me. And sometimes, when he looked at me, his face...

HENRY

You reminded him of her.

TIFFANY

When I wore her perfume—the rose one—he'd cry. She—Ruth—spilt it. It was an accident, she said, but I knew it wasn't.

HENRY

She was jealous.

TIFFANY

Yes.

(looking at the time)

It's close to lunch time. Maybe he's out of his meeting now.

(She redials.)

TIFFANY

Peter! Peter, at last—I'm at a place called Choices. I need you to come and pick me up...What do you mean, you can't?...Meeting? But you have to. You have to come and get me... Gone. She tried to return me to this place...They said no, of course...What do you mean, why?... Because there's nothing wrong with me...Home! But she left me behind, that's why I need you to come...Why not?...What?...I am listening...Not working out...Better if...Peter!...Of course I know what you're saying! You're saying you don't want me anymore!

(She cuts him off, then sinks into a chair.)

I don't understand. Why?!

TIFFANY

I dunno, honey.

HENRY

I did everything he wanted.

TIFFANY

HENRY

Maybe what he wanted was something he couldn't ever have. You're your own person inside, Tiffany Rose, even if outside you look like someone else.

TIFFANY

(Beat)

Now what should I do?

HENRY

You know what? You'll look back on this as the best thing that ever happened to you. You're free. You don't have to be what other people want anymore. You don't have to pretend.

TIFFANY

I'm not pretending! I am Tiffany Rose!

HENRY

Today's Tiffany Rose. Not yesterday's.

TIFFANY

Don't you understand? We're the same!

HENRY

Re-inventing yourself isn't easy—but it's exciting. You'll see.

TIFFANY

(pushing him away)

I don't want to see! I want everything to be the way it was before!

(Lights down on them and up on a sign board, "The Pregnarium," which comes down from the flies and stops above the heads of HEATHER, ADAM, and EMILY.)

ADAM

(looking around)

It's government licenced and inspected?

HEATHER

Of course.

(They go to the one-way mirror.)

HEATHER

We ask all our visitors to be as quiet as possible. They can't see us, but they can hear us if we're too loud.

(She flicks a switch and they hear Mozart, played with a beat. They press their noses against the glass.)

WOMAN (O.S.)

Let's go, girls! Breathe in and tighten...Breathe out and release...In and tighten...Out and release.

ADAM

(whispering)

What are they doing?

HEATHER

Kegel exercises.

EMILY

How many are expecting?

HEATHER

Out of the twenty there, eleven.

ADAM

They all look happy.

HEATHER

They are. We treat'em well here. A delivery every eighteen months. Six months breastfeeding—if requested by the client—then a three-month holiday.

EMILY

They must spend their entire lives pregnant.

HEATHER

It's what they're bred for.

ADAM

So they don't mind.

HEATHER

It's their pleasure to give happiness to others.

EMILY

That's refreshing.

ADAM

Are they supervised? I wouldn't want them doing anything that might negatively impact our baby.

HEATHER

We monitor them very closely.

ADAM

I've read that the best results come with control of the environment: what they eat and drink, what they hear and see—even what they think.

HEATHER

We organize every detail.

ADAM

No bad news, no shocks?

HEATHER

You saw the lock on the door. We have total control over what comes in here.

ADAM

And there's a full program of activities?

HEATHER

Have a look.

(HEATHER flicks the sound off. She clicks on the screen, which presents a menu. (9:30, Pet Visits; 10:30, Movement to Mozart; 1:00, Crafts; 2:00, Board Games or Bean Bag Toss; 3:00, Trivia Time; 7:15, Sing-Along.)

HEATHER

They're in the middle of Movement to Mozart.

(CHIMES. New Age Mozart under...)

SMOOTH VOICE

(Over the P.A. system)

Shoppers' Alert! On sale now—the complete symphonies of Mozart. Mystical music for the modern age. An album crafted with one objective in mind—to boost your baby's brainpower.

ADAM

Yes!

SMOOTH VOICE

Subliminally-enhanced members' only download. Just four seventy-five before taxes. No payment, no interest for six months. Offer valid from now through Mother's Day. Get in fast—they won't last!

HEATHER

Would you be interested in a second-hand set?

EMILY

No.

ADAM

(simultaneous)

Yes.

HEATHER

When you decide, let me know... Any more questions?

EMILY

I notice all the girls are barefoot. Don't they ever go out?

HEATHER

Fresh air is essential. We have a garden for them.

EMILY

I mean, out, out. Like do they ever go shopping?

HEATHER

Heavens, no! Who knows what they might encounter that could upset them?

EMILY

Don't they resent being kept in here?

HEATHER

Why should they? They've never known anything else.

EMILY

They must be paid exceptionally well.

HEATHER

What would these girls do with money? They don't need it. As I said, they never go out. They have everything they want right here.

ADAM

What about later?

HEATHER

After their twentieth child, we retire'em.

EMILY

Twenty births?! That's outrageous!

HEATHER

Don't forget—they're bred for it. It's as easy as laying eggs for them.

EMILY

They can't have much of a figure left at the end of it.

ADAM

But think of the joy they experience, feeling new life growing inside of them.

HEATHER

Anyway, after they retire, they can do what they want for the time they have left.

EMILY

How long do they live?

HEATHER

Their lifespan's fifty.

ADAM

That's all?

HEATHER

It's not economical to make it longer. Most choose to stay on here as staff. They're totally unfitted for the outside world, of course. And they've become quite attached to each other. They're like family.

ADAM

(moving to the window)

Speaking of which—can you point out our girl?

HEATHER

Of course. The one on the far right.

ADAM

She's like a movie star! What's her skin colour?

HEATHER

Bollywood Beauty.

ADAM

I think I prefer—

EMILY

No, Adam! We've chosen!

HEATHER

If you change your mind—it's four hundred.

ADAM

How old is she?

HEATHER

Twelve. This'll be her first pregnancy. She's really looking forward to it.

EMILY

Better her than me.

HEATHER

The first time's always very special. By the way, will you be watching the birth, or do you want us to video it for you?

EMILY

Video will be fine.

ADAM

Emily!

HEATHER

Three copies? Yourselfs and the grandparents?

ADAM

Just two. We'll send one to her mother and mine can watch it at our house.

EMILY

Your mother deserves her own copy.

ADAM

It'll be more money.

EMILY

I don't care.

HEATHER

I'll put down three, then, shall I? Pay at the time.

EMILY

Now can we leave? I need to get back to the store.

ADAM

Before we go—may I see a baby?

HEATHER

Certainly.

(She clicks a button and a baby in a basket descends from above.)

ADAM

Ohh... May I hold it?

HEATHER

Of course.

ADAM

It's beautiful. Here, Emily.

EMILY

No! Thank you. Later. When we get our own.

HEATHER

It's normal to be nervous at first.

ADAM

She'll be fine once she—

HENRY (INTERCOM)

Heather to front. Heather to front, please.

HEATHER

Excuse me, folks.

(leaving)

Come to the office when you're ready.

EMILY

We're ready now.

ADAM

(continuing to cuddle the baby)

Not yet.

EMILY

Let's go, Adam.

ADAM

You go ahead. I'll follow in a bit.

(EMILY starts off. As she opens the door...)

SYLVIA

There you are!

EMILY

Sylvia! How did you—

SYLVIA

(rushing up to ADAM)

Ohh...a baby! Is it ours?

ADAM

Not this one.

SYLVIA

(taking it)

I can hardly wait to hold my grandchild in my arms. To take his little hand in mine. To kiss him. To sing to him, to rock him to sleep.

ADAM

Nine months from today.

SYLVIA

Are you going to carry him yourself, Emily?

EMILY

And ruin my figure? Don't be ridiculous! What century do you think this is?

SYLVIA

Childbirth's a mystical moment. Every woman should have the experience.

ADAM

You didn't.

SYLVIA

And I've always regretted it.

EMILY

Fortunately our surrogate agrees with you.

SYLVIA

I want to be there when you get him from her. My beautiful, blue-eyed, blond-haired grandson!

(ADAM and EMILY exchange glances.)

SYLVIA

That is what you ordered, isn't it?

EMILY

You'll see.

SYLVIA

Adam. What did you get?

EMILY

Tell her it's none of her business.

SYLVIA

Don't talk nonsense! I've waited fifty years for this!

EMILY

Brown eyes, black hair.

SYLVIA

(To ADAM)

How could you do this to me? You know how I feel. A grandchild who looks like me is the closest I'm going to get to immortality.

EMILY

You had your chance.

SYLVIA

With Adam. But I was young. It didn't matter then.

EMILY

Now it does?

SYLVIA

We want children because we die. I've got just long enough to see him grow up.

EMILY

Why're you suddenly so obsessed with time?

SYLVIA

Wait till your expiry date's just around the corner. You'll find out.

(Beat; to ADAM)

You know how important this child is to me. I want to feel I'm leaving something of myself behind. Through him.

ADAM

You're leaving me.

SYLVIA

I want someone to take over my decorating business. You won't.

ADAM

I don't have your eye for style.

SYLVIA

I wanted to give you artistic ability. I couldn't afford to.

EMILY

If our child takes over any business, it'll be mine!

SYLVIA

Maybe at some point. But you're talking ninety years and I'm talking twenty.

ADAM

You're not dead yet, mother.

SYLVIA

I want things settled before I go. I want someone to leave my money to—

EMILY

(under her breath)

Anytime!

SYLVIA

My poetry books. My paintings. My music collection.

ADAM

You can leave them to me.

SYLVIA

For Emily to throw out?

EMILY

I wouldn't throw them out. I'd sell them.

ADAM

Why does the child have to look like you, to inherit?

SYLVIA

I want to leave behind an intelligent, artistic child. A poet. A musician. A painter. Someone who appreciates the finer things of life. And I want people who look at him, to see me. To remember me.

EMILY

So get your own!

ADAM

We've chosen.

EMILY

And we're not changing our minds.

SYLVIA

(Beat)

When you ordered... Did you get everything you wanted?

Yes. EMILY

I'm asking Adam. SYLVIA

ADAM
(Beat)
We couldn't afford anything but the basics.

SYLVIA
I have forty thousand. It's yours. If you get a blue-eyed blond.

EMILY
I thought you didn't have any money!

SYLVIA
This is family. This is what I've been saving for since Adam's first partner.

EMILY
No.

ADAM
Emily...

EMILY
What?

ADAM
(writing it down)
Artistic ability, genius level. Ten thou. Clone. Ten. 110 I.Q. Ten. Five thou for mix and match personality traits. Three for an extended warranty. One for a five-year subscription to the Perfect Parent Programme. Mozart set, five hundred. More attractive skin colour, four hundred....

SYLVIA
It's all yours. If.

ADAM
Em. When I taught kindergarten, I saw—the higher the price, the better the child. You get what you pay for.

EMILY
Still no!

(EMILY snatches the baby up and places it back in its basket. She presses the button and the child rises into the air. She grabs ADAM and starts off. SYLVIA follows.)

SYLVIA

Talk to her, Adam!

(EMILY gives her a nasty look. The Pregnarium sign returns to the flies as the lights go down and come up on HENRY, HEATHER and TIFFANY, sitting in the waiting area of the office.)

HENRY

We have her home address.

TIFFANY

I don't want to go home. I don't want to see those two ever again!

HENRY

You thought about what I said?

TIFFANY:

You said that I've been living someone else's life. That I've been pretending to be someone I'm not. At first I didn't believe you...

HENRY

But now you do.

TIFFANY

When I came here, I knew who I was! Now I wonder what's her, and what's me. If I put aside everything Peter taught me—who am I?

HENRY

Re-inventing yourself isn't easy.

TIFFANY:

You said it'd be exciting.

(She flings off the headband, tosses her head, rearranges her clothes in a more modern way—and looks at him expectantly.)

HENRY

There's a little problem before we get to that point.

HEATHER

If not home, where would you like to go?

TIFFANY

(Beat)

I don't know.

HEATHER

You're too young to live by yourself.

TIFFANY

I'll find a new family. One that wants me!

HENRY

(To HEATHER)

We could phone the Children's Aid Society.

HEATHER:

Or a private adoption agency? Some've started to offer finders' fees for the right—

TIFFANY

Why doesn't he want me?!

HENRY

(hugging her)

I don't know, honey. But if he doesn't, other people do.

TIFFANY

Who?

(FRANK enters with an armful of statements.)

FRANK

I got the financial—

(He stops short when he sees TIFFANY.)

FRANK

You took her back?

HEATHER

Yes.

HENRY

It was a special case.

HEATHER

She's a Tiffany. That's our top-of-the-line female model.

FRANK

(appraising)

Um. Nice.

HEATHER

We're trying to find a home for her.

HENRY

Think you could use her at the factory? Not for the shop floor—she's far too intelligent for that. For Customer Relations?

FRANK

Handle that myself.

HENRY

Have a look at her anyway. Take your coat off, honey, and let the gentleman see what a gorgeous girl you are.

(TIFFANY hesitates.)

HEATHER

I bet you're one of the prettiest girls he's ever seen.

(TIFFANY throws open her coat with the confidence of a princess.)

HENRY

Isn't she a stunner?

FRANK

Orientation?

HEATHER

The usual—bi.

FRANK

She's...what?

Twelve. HENRY

Sexual maturity? FRANK

Twelve and a half. HENRY
(looking at the invoice)

So that's why— HEATHER

I might be able to use her—somewhere. Depending on how much you're asking. FRANK

I am not for sale! TIFFANY

Of course not. But you are so special— HEATHER

A Tiffany— HENRY

That he has to pay for the privilege of having you around. HEATHER

Fifty thousand. HENRY

You gotta be kidding. Ten. FRANK

Ten! HEATHER

Otherwise what're you gonna do with her? Give her away to Social Services? FRANK

We will, if that's the best you can offer. HEATHER

FRANK
 Alright—fifteen.

HEATHER
 Keep going.

HENRY
 She's special.

FRANK
 Can't be, or what's-her-face wouldn't have left her here.

HENRY
 If social media got hold of the story—

HEATHER
 She and her partner would be in big trouble.

HENRY
 But who's gonna tell?

FRANK
 (Beat)
 Twenty.

HEATHER
 Better, but not good enough.

HENRY
 You'll never get a bargain like this again.

SYLVIA
 (appearing with ADAM and EMILY)
 Bargain? Did I hear bargain? Where?

HENRY
 This little girl.

HEATHER
 Tiffany Rose.

HENRY:
 She needs a new home, poor thing.

HEATHER

Interested?

FRANK

Wait a minute, Henry. I thought we were making a deal.

HENRY

Nothing's final till the money's on the table. You know that as well as I do, Frank.

SYLVIA

She's a cutie. Reminds me of myself when I was young.

HEATHER

You do resemble each other.

HENRY

You could be mother and—

HEATHER

Granddaughter!

HENRY

Why don't you—

HEATHER

Think about her for yourself?

EMILY

Yes, Sylvia!

SYLVIA

I want to be a grandmother, not a mother. I want to enjoy a child, not look after one.

HENRY

Then why don't you—

HEATHER

Buy her for your son!

ADAM

Perfect!

(To EMILY)

A boy for me and a girl for you, just like we planned, right from the beginning.

EMILY

Can't I get used to one child first?

HEATHER

She's an extremely talented girl. Tell'em, Henry.

HENRY

Lemme look at the invoice... She's musical.

HEATHER

(looking at it herself)

Perfect pitch.

HENRY

A ravishing voice... Show'em, Tiffany Rose.

(TIFFANY shakes her head.)

HENRY

Young lady—I'm doing my best for you.

HEATHER

Both these people are interested in giving you a home, so you can start a new life.

HENRY

Otherwise you'll be in a government orphanage.

HEATHER

Is that what you want? I can tell you they're not very nice places.

(TIFFANY hesitates, then sings Mozart. She hits a high note; EMILY puts her fingers in her ears.)

SYLVIA

Wow. This is class!

FRANK

Bet she could earn real money with someone like me as her manager.

HENRY

You better believe it.

HEATHER

She's also artistic.

HENRY

Has a wonderful sense of colour and style.

FRANK

She could design china patterns for the factory.

SYLVIA

Or take over my interior design business.

TIFFANY

If I wanted to, but I don't. I'm going into politics. One day I'll run against Peter. And win.

HENRY

Think of that—a politician in the family!

HEATHER

Trips at taxpayers' expense.

HENRY

Insider information.

HEATHER

Cash in large brown envelopes.

FRANK

First she has to get elected. That costs money.

HENRY

She can make it for you—she's a gifted athlete.

ADAM:

Football?

TIFFANY

Competitive swimming.

SYLVIA

The Olympics?

TIFFANY

Possibly.

HEATHER

Think if she wins—all those endorsements!

HENRY

(looking at FRANK)

With a cut for her coach.

SYLVIA

Coaches cost money.

HEATHER

She can give lessons on the side.

TIFFANY

I don't give lessons.

HENRY

But she could. She's bright enough to do just about anything.

HEATHER

I bet you always have the best grades in the class, don't you, honey?

(TIFFANY nods.)

HENRY

And she has a special talent for language.

HEATHER

For example—

TIFFANY

"Mist floats on the spring meadow. My heart is lonely. A nightingale sings in the dark."

SYLVIA

That's beautiful! Did you make it up?

TIFFANY

No. I write haiku myself, but that one's by an 8th century Japanese poet called Yakamochi. Its quality of *karumi*, lightness, particularly appeals to the discriminating listener.

FRANK

She could write copy.

HENRY

She could write anything.

She talks like a little professor. SYLVIA

That's because she has an IQ of 200. HENRY

How much did that cost? FRANK

A bundle. HENRY

You'd recognize the name on the invoice. HEATHER

He's a cabinet minister. HENRY

Brains— HEATHER

And beauty. HENRY

This is quality. You'd be getting something special. HEATHER

Something none of your neighbours have. HENRY

We're built of components. HEATHER

Tiffanys are built from the ground up. HENRY

Which makes each one absolutely unique. HEATHER

How much? (Beat) SYLVIA

Depends.
HENRY

Frank here's willing to give twenty thou.
HEATHER

You guys don't want her.
FRANK
(looking directly at SYLVIA)

Why not?
SYLVIA

She's used to private schools. One-on-one lessons. Designer clothes. If she doesn't get them, she won't be happy.
FRANK

She'll adjust.
HENRY

We can't take her if she's going to be a burden!
EMILY

Don't worry. She's old enough to help at home.
HEATHER

Or in the shop.
ADAM

She could babysit.
SYLVIA
(EMILY'S unconvinced.)

She's gorgeous.
HEATHER

Like a model.
SYLVIA

You could—
HENRY

HEATHER
Bring out a line of designer clothes—

SYLVIA
And use her to sell them!

EMILY
(Beat)
“Tiffany Rose Clothes.”

ADAM
Yes!

TIFFANY
(Simultaneous)
No!

EMILY
(Beat)
Alright.

(ADAM gives EMILY a hug.)

HENRY
Frank’s offered twenty thou.

SYLVIA
Twenty-two five hundred.

FRANK
Twenty-five.

(During the next exchange HENRY’S head goes from side to side as SYLVIA and FRANK nod.)

HENRY
Twenty-five? I have twenty-five...do I hear twenty-seven and a half? Twenty-seven and a half, twenty-seven and a half...Yes! I have twenty-seven and a half. Thirty. Do I hear thirty? Thirty, anyone?...Thirty, yes, I have thirty, do I hear thirty-two and a half? Thirty-two and a half, thirty-two and a half...Yes! Thirty-five? Thirty-five? Do I hear thirty-five? Yes? Now we’re rolling! Thirty-seven and a half? Thirty-seven and a half?... Yes! Thank you, madam. Forty, do I hear forty?...Forty, anyone?

(All eyes on FRANK.)

HENRY

This is a top-of-the-line model, ladies and gents. Customized. Worth the extra!

(Beat)

C'mon, Frank! She'll pay for herself within a year or two.

(FRANK says nothing.)

SYLVIA

He's hit his limit.

HENRY

I guess she's yours, then.

TIFFANY

Why're you all talking about me as if I were a thing, and not a person? I'm not "hers," I'm not anybody's!

(They all swing around to look at her.)

TIFFANY

(To HENRY)

You told me that I was free. That I didn't have to be what other people wanted anymore. That I could be myself.

HENRY

You can't expect folks to take you in for nothing, honey.

HEATHER

If you want the nice things you're used to having—

HENRY

Then you've gotta pull your weight.

TIFFANY

Tiffanys don't do housework. Or sales. Or modeling. That's not what they're for.

SYLVIA

Who does she think she is?

EMILY

A little princess.

I told you.

FRANK

Please, Tiffany, it's not asking much.

ADAM

You can't tell me what to do. I'm not your slave.

TIFFANY

This isn't going to work, Adam.

EMILY

She's upset right now—she'll come round.

ADAM

Oh, no, I won't.

TIFFANY

If she's not going to pay her own way, we can't afford to take her.

EMILY

(TIFFANY turns her back on them.)

Tiffany—

ADAM

Leave me alone.

TIFFANY

(He goes over to her.)

Go away!

TIFFANY
(pushing him)

Tiffany. Think about it. We're offering you a home.

ADAM

On condition I do what you say. Be what you want.

TIFFANY

Is that so bad?

ADAM

TIFFANY

Yes! I didn't think so before, but now I know, because
(looking at HENRY)

he showed me.

HENRY

If you're not willing to go with them—

HEATHER

We won't force you.

HENRY

It's your choice.

HEATHER

But think carefully.

HENRY

You don't have many options.

(TIFFANY stands stubbornly apart.)

ADAM

Are you sure?

(She turns her back on him.)

FRANK

She's made up her mind. Let her be.

ADAM

(Beat; turning to his mother)

You mentioned upgrades.

EMILY

Adam!

ADAM

Does the offer still stand?

SYLVIA

Yes.

ADAM

Mother's willing to buy our child upgrades—if he looks like her.

HEATHER

A blue-eyed blond?

ADAM

Instead of black hair and brown eyes.

HENRY

How much is she willing to spend?

ADAM

She has forty thou.

HENRY

Well. That changes things.

HEATHER

It's probably for the best.

HENRY

(To SYLVIA)

You're both blue-eyed blonds, but other than that, the girl doesn't really look like you at all.

HEATHER

A custom-made child will.

EMILY

I don't want a copy of your mother in my house, Adam! If you go through with this, you'll have to choose between us!

ADAM

Em, this is family!

EMILY

I'm family!

SYLVIA

Legally—maybe.

EMILY

Don't pretend you two are biologically related.

SYLVIA

If I hadn't paid, he wouldn't be here. I wanted him so much—you have no idea how I scrimped and saved to be able to afford him.

EMILY

And now you want a grandchild.

SYLVIA

Who looks like me.

EMILY

I'd rather have no child, than one that looks like her.

ADAM

But a family isn't complete without a child!

EMILY

Since when? We've had twenty good years, Adam—without a child. You're the one who wants one. I only went along to please you.

ADAM

I know that. I mean, you've made it obvious.

(Beat)

I've given in to you all through our life together, Emily. But I won't on this. I was meant to be a father.

EMILY

Fine by me. You want a child, you get one and you take care of it. But it has to be the one we chose. And you'd better be prepared to tell your mother to stop interfering, because I am not having her over at our place all the time, telling us how to raise our son.

SYLVIA

Wait till you find out how hard it is to get child care—you'll be begging me to come over.

EMILY

(To ADAM)

No child—or the child we chose. And keep in mind—it's my money that's buying.

ADAM

Em, hon, be reasonable. We can get another child, later, that looks like you.

EMILY:

One child in the house is bad enough. I'm not interested in another, not even if she looks like me.

ADAM

If there's only going to be one child, we've got to go for the upgrades!

EMILY

Only if you want to be a single parent on welfare.

ADAM

(going to hug her)

Emily!

EMILY

(pushing him away)

I mean it. Choose between us.

(ADAM looks from one to the other.)

SYLVIA

Choose me. Partners come and go. The family that you grew up in is always there for you.

EMILY

Family are the people you choose to live with, Adam—not the ones circumstances force on you. Choose me.

(A pause. HEATHER steps forward.)

HEATHER

Calm down, folks! Surely you can compromise. Blond hair—but curly, not straight.

(Pointing to SYLVIA)

Her blue eyes.

(To EMILY)

But your chin.

(To ADAM)

His nose. That way all of you will be a part of the child.

ADAM

Yes!

HEATHER

Agreed, you two?

ADAM

Say yes, mother!

SYLVIA

Why should I?

HEATHER

Because you can have part of what you want or none of what you want. Your choice.

SYLVIA

(Beat)

Yes.

ADAM

Emily? Please!

EMILY

No.

HEATHER

What kind of life do you think you're gonna have together if you say that?

EMILY

The same as before. Right, Adam?

ADAM

I want a child, Emily! More than anything in the world!

SYLVIA

Let him have his way. He's always loved children. He'll be the perfect father.

HEATHER

Look at it this way: If he asked you to give up your shop, would you?

EMILY

Of course not! That shop is my passion—

(Beat)

I guess I didn't realize...I mean, Adam, I thought I knew, but... Alright. Yes.

(ADAM hugs EMILY. Then he turns to his mother, hugs her, and watches as the two women hug—with less enthusiasm, but they do.)

HEATHER

I'm glad that's settled. Now what were those upgrades you wanted?

ADAM

Here's the list.

(As they continue to speak, the light slowly shifts to TIFFANY.)

FRANK is in the shadows behind her.)

SYLVIA

Forty thou, in total.

HEATHER

Actually, forty-six, six hundred.

ADAM

What?

EMILY

The sales tax!

HENRY

How do you intend to settle your bill, madam?

HEATHER

We prefer cash, if you have it.

SYLVIA

Bargain hunters always carry cash. But they don't give it out unless they get a discount.

HENRY

I'm afraid that's not possible.

HEATHER

Surely there's something we can do for these people, Henry. If they don't need a receipt...

(An expectant pause.)

SYLVIA

What do you think?

EMILY

If anything goes wrong—

ADAM

Nothing will. Let's go for it!

SYLVIA

Alright.

(Counting out the bills and giving them to HENRY.)

Ten, twenty, thirty, forty.

Thank you. HENRY

Well, Em, I think we're finally done. ADAM

At last! EMILY

(ADAM gives her a big kiss. Escorted by HEATHER, SYLVIA, ADAM and EMILY start for the door. Out of the corner of her eye, TIFFANY sees FRANK moving closer.)

Wait! I've changed my mind. TIFFANY

Oh, honey—it's too late. ADAM

Everything's settled. EMILY

I've spent all my money. SYLVIA

Don't worry. HENRY
(To TIFFANY)

Things will work out. HEATHER
(To ADAM and EMILY)
Frank will be happy to take her.

We've known him for years. HENRY

He's a prominent businessman— HEATHER

He'll teach her to fend for herself. HENRY

SYLVIA

I would've liked to have helped her, but I guess family comes first.

HEATHER

It usually does.

ADAM

I still feel badly.

HENRY

You don't need to.

HEATHER

We'll make sure she's well looked-after.

EMILY

We're leaving her in good hands, Adam. C'mon, let's celebrate!

ADAM

Lunch out?

SYLVIA

Why waste money eating out? Come to my place.

(The three link arms. The doors slide open as they leave.)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Thank you for shopping at Choices.

FRANK

Let's go, kid.

(FRANK reaches for her. TIFFANY draws back.)

HENRY

Listen, Tiffany, don't be silly.

HEATHER

He'll take care of you.

HENRY

You'll be better off with him than as a ward of the state, believe me.

HEATHER:

Give him your hand.

FRANK

C'mon...

(FRANK goes to take TIFFANY'S hand again; again she draws back.)

FRANK

Don't be afraid—I'm not going to hurt you.

TIFFANY

I'm not afraid.

FRANK

Then come with me.

(She puts her hands behind her back.)

FRANK

Like holographic games?

TIFFANY

Yes.

FRANK

I've got a lot. And a big house. And a pool, so you can practise for that Olympic medal.

TIFFANY

Can I invite my school friends over?

FRANK

Of course. Though I'm afraid you wouldn't be going to the same school. It's too far away.

TIFFANY

Where would I be going, then?

FRANK

We'll find you something close by. After classes you can walk to the factory. It has a studio—I'll let you have a corner of it. Maybe you can do some stuff for me there.

TIFFANY

What kind of stuff?

FRANK
Designs. Copy.

TIFFANY
Will you pay me?

FRANK
It'll be like a co-op placement. A way for you to get work experience.

TIFFANY
(Beat)
You said you had a big house. Do you have any children?

FRANK
No children.

TIFFANY
What about a partner?

FRANK
Not any more. It'll be just you and me.

TIFFANY
Will I have my own room?

FRANK
Of course. Right next to mine.

TIFFANY
(Beat)
If I come with you, can I...be myself?

FRANK
You can be anyone you choose. I'll help you.

TIFFANY
I don't want to wear these clothes any more!

FRANK
We'll get you some new ones. Then we'll have your hair cut.
(holding out his hand)
C'mon. We can discuss it over lunch. While we get to know each other.

(TIFFANY hesitates, then goes to him. FRANK puts a proprietary arm around her and steers her towards the door.)

HENRY

Wait a minute.

(FRANK stops.)

HEATHER

The money?

FRANK

I'll get it to you in a few days.

HENRY

A few days? I don't think so.

HEATHER

We need this wrapped up right now.

FRANK

Why?

HEATHER

Someone might have a change of heart.

HENRY

And come looking.

HEATHER

Which is likely.

HENRY

Given the quality of the merchandise.

FRANK

But we made a deal!

HENRY

I told you before, Frank—nothing's final till the money's on the table.

FRANK

Henry! I thought I was a valued customer.

HENRY

You are, but I've already done you one favour today.

FRANK

So do me another.

HEATHER

He can't afford to.

(A pause. FRANK shrugs.)

FRANK

Sorry, kid. Looks like it's not going to work out.

(He turns to go.)

HENRY

You're not angry, are you, Frank?

FRANK

You stopped me from spending money I didn't have, so I guess I shouldn't be.

(Leaving)

Call me when my Pandas are ready.

(The doors slide closed behind him.)

SYNTHETIC VOICE

Thank you for shopping at Choices.

HENRY

Well.

HEATHER

Looks like we're back at square one.

HENRY

Tell you what—you can stay here with us.

HEATHER

For a while, at least.

HENRY

Until we can find you something more appropriate.

HEATHER

If you like, we could be your mom and dad.

HENRY

For now.

HEATHER

After all, this is where you came from.

HENRY

Your original home.

TIFFANY

But I don't want to stay here!

HENRY

I don't think you have a choice, honey.

HEATHER

You can't go home again—and take it from me, it wouldn't be a good idea for a pretty girl like you to sleep on a park bench.

TIFFANY

I can stay overnight with friends. Usha or Jenny or Mai.

HENRY

That's an idea.

HEATHER

Do you have their codes?

TIFFANY

(looking around)

In my phone.

(HEATHER sees it first and scoops it up.)

HEATHER

You shouldn't leave something so valuable lying around.

(TIFFANY goes to take the phone, but HEATHER ignores her and puts it in a drawer, which she locks.)

HEATHER

(handing her the key)

Your friends will be in school right now. The teachers won't like it if you try to contact them.

HENRY

You should wait till classes end.

HEATHER

Meanwhile, why don't you go for an early lunch in the pregnarium?

HENRY

Yes!

TIFFANY

What's the pregnarium?

HEATHER

It's where babies are made.

HENRY

Do you like babies?

TIFFANY

I don't know. We don't have any in our neighbourhood.

HEATHER

Then it'll be a new experience for you. Something interesting.

HENRY

Something special. C'mon. I'll take you over.

(TIFFANY hangs back.)

HENRY

You'll like the pregnarium.

HEATHER

The girls are very nice.

HENRY

Some are even your age.

HEATHER

Aren't you curious? It's something you've never seen before.

TIFFANY

How much money do I need for lunch?

HEATHER

You don't need any. It's on us.

TIFFANY

Peter might phone.

HENRY

If he does, he'll leave a message.

TIFFANY

I know—I can call the school office!

(She starts for her phone. Movement behind the glass attracts HENRY'S attention.)

HENRY

Look—they're bringing in the babies.

(He beckons TIFFANY over.)

TIFFANY

Ohh...they're so cute!

HENRY

Wanna see one? C'mon...

(HENRY holds out his hand. TIFFANY hesitates, then allows him to usher her into the pignarium. HEATHER looks something up on the computer till HENRY re-appears.)

HENRY

That was a good idea of yours.

HEATHER

It's the best place for her, for the time being.

HENRY

Might get upset when she finds the door's locked.

HEATHER

She'll adjust. With some pharmacological help.

(HEATHER goes back to the computer.)

HENRY

What're you looking up?

HEATHER

The price of eggs. We need some more, remember? And I think I've found a way of offsetting the cost.

HENRY

How?

HEATHER:

Tiffany eggs are the best you can get.

HENRY

Yeah, so?

HEATHER

We're giving her a home. Maybe she could do something for us—when she's ready.

HENRY

(Beat)

I dunno...

HEATHER

Do you remember what she said?

HENRY

When?

HEATHER

Just after the auction. "Tiffanys don't do sales. That's not what they're for!" What are they for, Henry?

HENRY

The professions.

HEATHER

The plum jobs. The interesting ones. The well-paid ones. And who sells?

HENRY

People like us.

HEATHER

Inferior people.

HENRY

Just because we have shorter lifespans—

HEATHER

And less intelligence.

HENRY

Doesn't mean we're inferior!

HEATHER

Doesn't it, Henry? Have you seen the way they look at us? Like they don't see us. Unless, of course, they want something.

HENRY

(Beat)

I still dunno... She's only a child!

HEATHER

She already has that sense of entitlement they all do. Our overlords. The one-percenters.

HENRY

Besides, how're we gonna manage it?

HEATHER

We have total control over who goes in and out.

HENRY

True, but...

HEATHER

(turning off the computer)

Don't you think she and her kind owe us?

(leading the way to the waiting area.)

We're not talking forever, Henry. Sooner or later someone will come in who's a perfect fit for her. Meanwhile, she'll be safe.

HENRY

Taken care of.

HEATHER

And paying her own way.

(They sit down.)

HEATHER

Quite a morning.

HENRY

Very satisfactory.

HEATHER

An Alex, that's 10% of thirty-seven thou.

HENRY

The Pandas, that's 20% of fifty.

HEATHER

And then there's our windfall profit.

HENRY

Twenty thou each.

(He takes the bills out of his pocket and hands her two.)

HENRY

I think I've made a down payment on something nice.

HEATHER

I've got enough to pay off my bills. And some left over.

(TIFFANY knocks on the window, at first politely, then more and more frantically. They ignore her.)

HENRY

If we go ahead... How much do you think she'll bring in?

HEATHER

Enough to make us both happy.

HENRY

You're sure it'll work?

HEATHER

(standing up)

C'mon, let's celebrate!

HENRY

Lunch out?

HEATHER

We deserve it. Just let me order in some more eggs first...

(Lights down as she picks up her phone. Behind her back, TIFFANY'S face, like the face of someone drowning, fades away. Blackout.)

THE END.

