

ACT ONE

The stage is dark and silent - and, based on the pause that follows the rise of the curtain, appears like it will remain so. This doubt is only broken by a slow, mysterious, eerie WHISPERING that rises from some unknown and perhaps ungodly corner of the stage. The exact origin or purpose of the WHISPERING is unknown to us at first. We can't even tell if it's actually WHISPERING or just a loud breeze blowing from some none-too-distant location. Only an increase in volume effectively resolves the riddle for us - because WHISPERING it is - and not only that, but manic in its content. There are words of praise... words of censure... words that perhaps are a little too harsh for the human ear: "saint"... "bitch"... "savior"... "whore"... "entrepreneur"... "manipulator"... "asshole"... "lover"... "friend"... "skank"... "caregiver"... and on and on and on. The WHISPERING grows louder, louder, louder, ever more pronounced in exuberance - and, with it, a SPOTLIGHT rises center stage.

In the SPOTLIGHT we find the statuesque, chiseled, stony frame of an impressive-looking woman. We shall soon know HER as CAITLYN MINOR - and, indeed, this is all we will know about HER for quite some time. All we can tell now is that SHE has an Athena-like bearing about HER, as if SHE were some marble sculpture in an Ancient Greek temple. SHE wears a sparkling white outfit (symbolic of purity, perhaps?) with a small sparkling purse clutched desperately in HER hands.

For a moment, this woman - we shall call HER simply "MINOR" - stares straight ahead, unheeding the WHISPERING that is now suffocating the stage with its intensity. Does SHE even hear the WHISPERING or is it that SHE

simply doesn't care? Fortunately, SHE addresses this question for us - and speaks:

MINOR

(As if reciting something to herself.)
Everyone has an opinion about me - and, if you don't, then you're a fool. I hear all the whispers and I know you hear them, too. The difference between you and me is that I know what to believe. I have the ringside seat. I'm the only one who does. Of course, yes, there used to be someone else - but he's gone now. He's gone and I'm the only one in the front row. I know more there any of you do - but what does that matter? We gobble up whispers - don't we? We gobble them up, smack our lips, and shit them out - and then we gobble up some more.

(A pause and a smile.)

Tonight, I'm ending the whole damn buffet.

HEATH

Caitlyn?

MINOR freezes in mid-thought and turns slowly - ever so slowly - like a weather vane in a quiet sky until SHE faces this new voice. A man in his 40's has entered off to the side of the stage. HE is a well-dressed, well-groomed, overly-manicured fellow wearing a commercially pressed suit and tie. It may be a stretch to call HIM "handsome," but not to call HIM "pleasant," because HE is instantly gentlemanly and gentle. In fact, HE is someone you'd instantly feel comfortable inviting out to dinner even if you hadn't previously asked for a background check. MINOR, however, seems less than entranced - a certain tension, it seems - and just stares at HIM dully - until:

MINOR

Glad you remembered me.

HEATH

I had some things to wrap up with Darnell.

MINOR

Oh, I'm all for wrapping things up.

HEATH

The show is starting in two minutes.

MINOR

Good.

A dull pause ingloriously plops itself down upon the stage.

HEATH

Thank you for coming on the show.

MINOR

Thank you for having me on the show.

HEATH

Of course. I know you haven't really had a chance for your story to be told. You've been put through a trying test over this past year or so and I know that...

MINOR

I'll survive.

HEATH

I have no doubt about that. I don't think God Himself could stop you from doing what you wanted.

MINOR

It's hard to tell, because He's never tried. Only mere fucking mortals have had the nerve.

HEATH

Either way, good luck.

HEATH extends a hand in HER direction. MINOR looks at it as if it were some foreign object. HEATH understands HE's not getting HIS handshake and withdraws the invitation. A LOUD JINGLE sounds from seemingly everywhere all at once. It resembles the music best suited for introducing a nighttime talk show - which is just what this is.

ANNOUNCER

Live from Hollywood, California, it's the Late Show with Heath Bandrews!

APPLAUSE pours onto the stage. It seems to emanate from the scrim at the back of the stage.

ANNOUNCER

Now, ladies and gentlemen, please give a hand to Heath!

HEATH wants to say something further to MINOR, but HE can't find the words. HE

instead turns and walks through the scrim. We see HIS shadow projecting upon the scrim as if HE were some gargantuan Goliath. The APPLAUSE has grown louder. HEATH beckons politely for silence.

HEATH

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen! I appreciate your warm welcome this evening. You join me tonight for a very different evening of interviews - because, tonight, there is only one interview. In a moment you will have a chance to hear Caitlyn Minor speak - live, unfiltered, in her own words. I want to state plainly that I know Caitlyn and have known her for quite some time - but I've known Radley Chappin longer. My purpose is not to "advocate," but, as always, to give a voice to people who are voiceless. In that spirit, my guest asked if she could begin by addressing the audience freely and frankly. I have agreed to this and, with that, will turn the stage over to her.

HEATH steps aside and gestures.

HEATH

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Caitlyn Minor.

MINOR smirks tightly at us and exits through the scrim. SCATTERED APPLAUSE sound - but not just applause - because some HISSES have started to sound with ever greater vigilance. The huge SHADOW of MINOR broadcasts its presence unshakingly on the scrim with an ominous, raincloud-like foreboding. The VOCAL CACOPHONY - the APPLAUSE and the HISSES - continues for a moment and then eventually fades in light of its subject's steely refusal to move even a muscle.

MINOR

Thank you, everyone - but especially to Heath for allowing me to be on his show. He is wrong, though, when he says I am "voiceless." I never once lost my voice - not once - not goddamn ever. The one without a voice is Radley Chappin - and, if he had one, he would solve all this for you people. Instead, I'm all you have - whether you like it or not - which is mostly "or not" - but, shit, isn't that the way of things? It's your problem, not mine - because I like being the narrator.

MINOR then begins to recite what SHE was reciting previously - now with more emotion:

MINOR

Everyone has an opinion about me - and, if you don't, then you're a fool. I hear all the whispers and I know you hear them, too. The difference between you and me is that I know what to believe. I have the ringside seat. I'm the only one who does. Of course, yes, there used to be someone else - but he's gone now. He's gone and I'm the only one in the front row. I know more than any of you do - but what does that matter? We gobble up whispers - don't we? We gobble them up, smack our lips, shit them out - and then gobble up some more.

MINOR puts HER hand in HER purse, as:

MINOR

Tonight, I'm ending the whole damn buffet. I'll give you something so goddamn crystal-clear that no one can see it for anything other than what it truly is. There will be no backroom rumors, no unsaid fancies, no back-hand whispers - just screams - screams of unblemished and horrified agreement at what I'm about to do next - which is this...

MINOR flings HER hand out of the purse. There is a protruding object emerging from HER grasp - a handgun. SHE hurriedly puts the gun to HER head, pulls the trigger, and, in a FLASH of LIGHT, blows HER head off.

BANG!

Instant BLACKOUT descends. We are left only with the darkness and the HORRIFIED SCREAMS sounding from the unseen audience. A minute or two passes and the commotion has faded into silence. The LIGHTS have risen oh so gingerly on HEATH BANDREWS, standing off to the side of the stage. HEATH turns to speak to us as if we were sitting comfortably together in a darkened lounge with HIM:

HEATH

I never thought it would end like that. I never believed Caitlyn Minor could be anything but alive - very, very much alive. The sudden reality of confronting her death - even the possibility of her death - shattered what seemed to be some universal law of physics in my universe. I could have sworn she was more permanent than the planets - almost. She seemed that way from the very first moment I met her. It's almost impossible to believe it was only seven years ago.

The LIGHTS rise suddenly center stage. A GAMESHOW JINGLE crashes into our

brains with unwelcome aplomb. The scrim parts like a gaudy curtain at some live circus event. HUGE FLASHING LIGHTS - blaring "WORDPLAY" at us - project nauseatingly upon the scrim. A gaunt, dapper, elegantly graying man steps between the curtain - RADLEY CHAPPIN - with a sprightly step for someone of his age. The gentleman in question is probably about 70 and yet HE wears the age well despite its evident erosion of what was undoubtedly a sizable presence. CHAPPIN is nothing less than an entertainment dinosaur - a TV show star whose day has gone by - yet HE can't stay away from the stage. The man himself (whose name is pronounced "chape-in") appears almost deliriously delighted to be a part of this commercial spectacle of lights and plastic - and so HE gushes forth at us, the audience:

CHAPPIN

Hello, everybody! I'd call you "ladies and gentleman," but you know what you are. It's eight o'clock and I'm still conscious, so it must be time for "Wordplay." It's the game show for people who'd rather be watching Shakespeare - and he's dead. The same can't be said for me, however, according to my cardiologist. I went to see him for a checkup the other day and he gave me a clean bill of health - which would have been great, if I didn't have to pay the damn thing.

From somewhere - where, we don't know yet - a STACY VOICE sounds from an offstage DIRECTOR who appears to be afflicted by a permanent case of supreme agitation.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Come on, Chappin! You're running long!

CHAPPIN self-consciously moves HIS hand up to HIS ear to adjust an earpiece that has been strategically placed so the DIRECTOR can lecture HIM throughout the show.

CHAPPIN

Tonight, I'm happy to announce the first day of our special celebrity edition. We have ten famous people over the next two weeks who will be forced to stand next to me and make me look older than I already am - which isn't too mean of a feat. You're looking now at the reason they invented carbon dating - and,

CHAPPIN (CONT)

believe me, it hurts. The only good news is that my cardiologist said my heart was still healthy enough for sex - provided, that is, that I don't join in.

The DIRECTOR speaks - even more annoyed than before:

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Move it, Chappin! We don't have time!

CHAPPIN

On that note, I want to welcome our first celebrity guest and a personal friend of mine. You know him as one of the most famous talk show hosts in America. I know him as an all-around cad who consistently refuses to invite me on his show. We all know him as Heath Bandrews.

(Calling offstage.)

Come on out, Heath!

APPLAUSE sound from the audience. A brighter, less troubled version of HEATH BANDREWS walks onto the stage. HE gives a slight wave at the CROWD not unlike that you might find gracing the wrist of a member of the royal family - but devoid of the arrogance.

CHAPPIN

Nice to see you, Heath!

HEATH

Nice to see you, too, RC.

CHAPPIN

It's been too long - too long since you invited me on your show. I knew you when you were a scruffy little office boy at CBS. You couldn't staple two pieces of paper together, but I always said you'd go places. And now? Now you're a big shot and I can't even say "hello" anymore without an appointment. You're interviewing everyone but me these days.

HEATH

I just know that your plate is full.

CHAPPIN

Well, I'd rather be eating from your plate. Besides, there's a hell of a lot of stuff you need to get caught up on. You know my wife left me again? I blame myself. She ran off with the new chef I hired from France. He was six-foot-two with eyes like truffles, muscles like bonbons, and a voice like butter. I didn't think she'd fancy him.

Why not?
HEATH

She's on a diet.
CHAPPIN

The DIRECTOR speaks again - this time more annoyed than ever:

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Chappin! We're running out of time!

CHAPPIN
(Annoyed a bit by the prodding - and running with it.)
Oh, wow. Oh, wow. I'm hearing voices again. They're getting stronger and stronger.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Jesus Christ!

CHAPPIN
(To Heaven.)
Is that you, God?

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Cut it out, Chappin!

CHAPPIN
(To Heaven.)
Is it my time, Lord?

HEATH
You're Jewish, RC.

CHAPPIN
Not anymore! They kicked me out. I stopped paying the dues.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Shut up, Chappin!

CHAPPIN
(To Heaven.)
That's no way to talk to a convert.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE
(To someone beside HIM in the unseen booth.)
Get that girl out there. We need to speed this along.

CHAPPIN
(To HEATH.)
Wow, Heath, I feel like a man scorned over here! I tell you, no one listens to me anymore. I called the suicide hotline the other day and they put me on hold. Even in the confessional a voice told me to wait for the beep.

HEATH

(Gently prodding HIM.)
Perhaps we should move along.

CHAPPIN

That's right. That's right. We'll move along. You know how all of this stuff works, after all. That's why they pay you the big bucks.

A GIRL in a stereotypical presenter's uniform enters and wheels out a large board with covered boxes on it. Each box has a dollar value covering it in a Jeopardy-like fashion. It takes us a moment, but we soon realize we've seen the GIRL before... it's CAITLYN MINOR.

CHAPPIN

All right, Heath - you know how this works, don't you? You can select one of the words. The more money, the harder the word. I will ask you for a synonym and an antonym. You will say "What the hell is an antonym?" and I'll say "who cares?" At that point, you'll choose "synonym" and we'll move on. You'll get four choices of possible synonyms developed by our esteemed panel of experts from the most renowned community colleges in the country. Pick the right option and you get the filthy lucre advertised on the card.

(A beat.)

By the way - what charity are you playing for today?

HEATH

The Single Mother's of America.

CHAPPIN

I've contributed to their group myself.

CHAPPIN turns to the board.

CHAPPIN

All right, Heath, my lovely assistant Jill here will... will...

CHAPPIN stares at MINOR for a moment.

CHAPPIN

You're not Jill.

MINOR, a little startled, just shakes HER head.

CHAPPIN

(To HEATH.)

Where is Jill?

(To Heaven again.)

What have you done with her?

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Jill quit. It's a new girl. Keep going, you asshole.

CHAPPIN

(A little taken aback.)

All right. Sure. I'll... keep going.

(To MINOR.)

Okay, then, Not Jill. It's nice to meet you.

(To us.)

Come on, folks. Let's give her a hand. God knows, on this show, she needs all the help she can get.

CHAPPIN leads the audience in some half-hearted APPLAUSE. MINOR smiles tepidly.

CHAPPIN

(To HEATH.)

Okay, Heath - choose a value. Quick, the dollar is falling.

HEATH

I choose \$200.

MINOR removes the \$200 tag and reveals the word "peripatetic."

CHAPPIN

Synonym or antonym?

HEATH

Antonym.

CHAPPIN

(Reading from a card.)

Okay, the options are... A - pugnacious, B - dissociative, C - vociferous, or D - itinerant

HEATH

I know this one. It's D - itinerant.

CHAPPIN

You are correct! Time to claim your prize.

APPLAUSE sounds from the unseen AUDIENCE. MINOR is holding the \$200 card. HEATH starts walking towards HER to claim HIS card - but then trips and lunges forward. The next thing we know HIS hand lands squarely on MINOR's breasts. SHE reacts instinctively and gives HIM a huge slap across the face. Instant silence descends upon the set as if Jesus Christ Himself had been slapped. A tense pause follows - then suddenly:

CHAPPIN

I didn't mean that prize.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Go to commercial!

The OBNOXIOUS JINGLE sounds again.

CHAPPIN

(To us.)

On that note, folks, we're going to a brief commercial break - which may or may not last until the close of the show. The good news is that Pay-Per-View just called and wants to add us as a special channel. I tell you, I haven't seen such sex and violence since I was back in the home.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Get him off!!

The LIGHTS start to lower rather pushily. CHAPPIN peers at the darkness surrounding HIM.

CHAPPIN

My God, I think I'm going blind.

The LIGHTS have fallen in full. We see some shadowy figure pull CHAPPIN back through the scrim. The LIGHTS rise slightly again. HEATH and MINOR emerge from the other side of the scrim and enter the stage. THEY are babbling together in incomprehensible cacophony. CHAPPIN emerges from behind the scrim soon after. We have been transported "backstage" on the set.

MINOR

I can't believe this!

HEATH

I'm very sorry - truly.

MINOR

You goddamn should be!

HEATH

I can't apologize enough.

MINOR

You can, but, believe me, it'll take a bit. I've never been so embarrassed in my life.

HEATH

I know how you feel.

CHAPPIN

In more ways than one.

MINOR

Do you think this is a joke?

CHAPPIN

Of course it is! Life itself is nothing but one big joke. We're just a rotten audience. Besides, your anger is completely misplaced. I can bet my remaining shreds of dignity on this fine man here. He is a perfect gentleman. I've known him for twenty years and he's never laid a finger on me.

MINOR stares at CHAPPIN for a moment and then sharply turns to HEATH.

MINOR

Apology accepted.

HEATH

Thank you.

MINOR

You're welcome - and besides... I'm sorry, too.

CHAPPIN

In that case, Sorry Two, meet Sorry One! I figure I might as well introduce you two lovebirds. I've always felt that apologies between strangers are unseemly.

(To MINOR, indicating HEATH.)

Madame, this is Heath Bandrews, the greatest talk show host in the country - and I mean "the country."

(To HEATH, indicating MINOR.)

Heath, this is Not Jill.

MINOR

Excuse me - I have a name.

CHAPPIN

For God's sake, don't brag about it.

MINOR

Like hell it matters now anyway. They're going to fire me after all this bullshit.

CHAPPIN

You're a lucky girl. I've been trying to get off this Titanic for months.

The DIRECTOR'S voice sounds again - but, this time, the static is gone. HE is calling out now from some booth above our heads.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Chappin - you damn idiot!

CHAPPIN

(Up and out - waving cheerfully.)
Nice to see you, too, Don!

MINOR

Who the hell is that?

CHAPPIN

That's the man upstairs.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

What the hell do you think you were doing out there? I wish we had never hired you! You're nothing but a fucking dinosaur! I can't work with this crap!

CHAPPIN

I love you, too, Don.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE

I'm going right to Moonves tomorrow. You've got to get your act together or get your ass out. I can't stand it anymore. It's like a fucking daycare with you.

MINOR

How can you let him talk to you like that?

CHAPPIN

Very easily, in fact. I just sit back and listen.

HEATH

It's vintage Don. He's known for these outbursts.

CHAPPIN

Did you know that "Don" is "God" spelled backwards?

HEATH

He'll calm down in a minute.

MINOR

(To CHAPPIN.)
I can't believe you two are okay with this! Why aren't you pissed off?

CHAPPIN

"Why?" Why is the sky blue?

MINOR

Because of how molecules in the air scatter the sunlight.

CHAPPIN

Wow, you're a real wisecracker.

MINOR

Better than being a dumb cracker.

CHAPPIN

Touché.

MINOR

If they don't like you, why don't they just fire you?

CHAPPIN

I could answer that when I figure out why they hired me.

MINOR

They keep you on because you're the only reason anyone watches this goddamn show - that's why! It's nothing but a lame ass piece of shit - like that director! That goddamn asshole up there couldn't direct traffic!

(Up and out.)

Do you hear that!?

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Someone please take that thing off the set!

MINOR

Oh, no - no you didn't!

CHAPPIN

(To Heaven.)

Bad move, God.

MINOR

I'm not some doll to be tossed around by you smug, self-centered, son of a bitch! You come down here and you have the guts to drag me out! I dare you. I dare you. I'll kick your balls into your brains! I got kicked out of my apartment four hours ago - then I got shoved by a teenage punk - then I got slapped with a speeding ticket - so I sure as hell won't be taking any bullshit from you!

(To CHAPPIN suddenly.)

Hey! I have a question.

CHAPPIN

Sure! Do I need a bodyguard?

MINOR

No - but I need cigarette.

CHAPPIN
You smoke?

MINOR
You don't?

CHAPPIN
No one smokes anymore.

MINOR
I do and I'm damn well someone.

CHAPPIN
Well, then, that makes two of us.

CHAPPIN pulls some cigarettes out of HIS pocket and extends THEM towards HER. SHE smiles broadly and takes a cigarette. CHAPPIN produces a lighter. HE lights HER cigarette and then lights his own.

CHAPPIN
This isn't healthy, you know.

MINOR
Neither is sex on the beach.

CHAPPIN
Good point. Think of all those shells.

DIRECTOR'S VOICE
Excuse me! No. Smoking. Allowed.

CHAPPIN
(Up and out.)
We'll be very quiet.
(to MINOR.)
Do you have anyplace else to be right now?

MINOR
Not anymore.

CHAPPIN
Same here, so I'd like to take you out for a drink. I don't want to go back home just yet. My TV is broken and you're the best damn thing not on television.

MINOR
Don't you have a wife?

CHAPPIN
You mean one of my own?

MINOR

I mean one, period. You said she left you.

HEATH

That's just part of RC's routine. His wife always leaves him.

CHAPPIN

In short - yes, I'm on the market.

MINOR

Yeah, well, I don't play the market.

CHAPPIN

Neither do I. It's a matter of principal. I just don't have the interest.

(Abruptly, curiously.)

By the way - what's your name?

MINOR

Caitlyn.

CHAPPIN

Just Caitlyn?

MINOR

Caitlyn Minor.

CHAPPIN

Aha - so you're a C Minor.

MINOR

Yeah - and you're a D major.

CHAPPIN

Touché part deux! Let's schnell the hell out of here.

THE DIRECTOR'S VOICE

Where are you going, Chappin? You have a show to finish.

CHAPPIN

(Indicating MINOR.)

I don't know, Don. I'll have to discuss it with my new agent.

(To MINOR.)

What'd you think, C Minor?

MINOR thinks a moment. HER cigarette is lodged between HER ring finger and HER middle finger. SHE smirks broadly, clenches HER fist, and extends the cigarette towards the Director in the booth - with the cigarette, center stage, serving as an improvised middle finger. CHAPPIN laughs and offers HIS arm to MINOR.

CHAPPIN
You coming, Heath?

HEATH
Well, I...

CHAPPIN
Say "no."

HEATH
I guess not. Looks like I have an impromptu game show to host.

CHAPPIN
Well done - and you should be!

CHAPPIN smiles at MINOR and THEY saunter offstage together. HEATH looks after THEM for a moment. HE then turns up to face the Director in the booth:

HEATH
Tel me, Don - what just happened?

VOICE
I'll tell you what happened.

The LIGHTS shift and fall on HEATH. Three different people have emerged onto the stage. The LIGHT first picks up a professional-looking woman who looks a little too pristine to be real - PENNY SCHECHTER. SHE is the daughter of Radley Chappin and SHE is put together like a Faberge egg, with the demeanor to match. One gets the sense that the pristine shell of the woman is hiding a cracked, insecure, even desperate interior. For now, though, SHE radiates an exterior so rigid and sturdy it looks rather taut and painful to maintain:

PENNY
I lost my father - that's what happened. I lost him before being able to get him back - and for the second time, too. She met him on that game show and the rest was doomed to happen - and I was doomed to sit there and watch. I was the chief spectator of a loud, obnoxious parade heading straight for a nearby cliff. And the woman at the head of it? She smiled as she led him over the edge. I hate her. I hate her more than anyone I have ever known. I even hate her more than I hated my father.

The LIGHTS shift and pick up a well-built, handsome, if slightly chubby,

man - MITCHELL MAYNARD ("Mitch" to his friends). HE looks like a wrestler - a typical "tough guy" who loves beer and boxing - but HE has the heart of someone much softer. There is a certain vulnerability behind the bravado that manages to creep out in subtle, but telling, ways. At this juncture in particular, MITCH looks defeated and dejected and speaks not unlike a general giving a surrender address:

MITCH

It was different for me. I loved her - Caitlyn Minor - with or without Radley Chappin. I loved her before him. I loved her after him. I still do. I can't help it and I never could. That didn't mean there weren't ups and downs between us - because, Jesus, there were. She put me on one hell of a roller coaster ride. The sad thing is, by the end of it all, I got off right where I got on. I guess that's just the way of roller coasters. I would have given anything to make it different.

The LIGHTS shift again and pick up a small Hispanic man of about 25 - JESÚS ALVAREZ. HE wears a waiter's uniform and has a timid, subdued, frightened nature about HIM. HE reminds us of what a mouse would look like as it runs back and forth across an open field with a hawk in sharp and determined pursuit. Despite this life-or-death struggle, JESÚS is very matter-of-fact and appears calm, even bland - although we need to squeeze our ears to hear through his thick Spanish accent:

JESÚS

Different? I guess it could have been, yes, for all the peoples she knew. Yo no se. There is much I no understand. There is more I just can no understand. I just know I had a feeling - very bad, very good - when first I saw her.

The LIGHTS rise generally. A dinner table has been wheeled onto center stage. We see SHADOWS projecting on the scrim along with a lit sign for a debatably nice restaurant - "El Camacho." Some MEXICAN MUSIC tiptoes onto the stage from a radio nearby. The scrim parts and in walks CHAPPIN and MINOR. THEY are both dressed in nice evening attire. MINOR looks especially upgraded since our last encounter with HER. CHAPPIN pulls back a chair at the

table and lets MINOR sit. HE then sits in the other chair. JESÚS circles around and approaches the table with two menus in HIS hand. HE immediately hands them to CHAPPIN and MINOR.

JESÚS

Hola, Señor Chappin.

CHAPPIN

(Pronouncing it "Jesus" - the English way.)
Hola to you, Jesus!

JESÚS

Como esta?

CHAPPIN

Moo been, grassy-ass.

JESÚS only now seems to notice that MINOR has accompanied CHAPPIN. CHAPPIN notices this surprise and smiles.

CHAPPIN

Dos menus tonight, por favor.

JESÚS smiles and exits.

CHAPPIN

(To MINOR.)
I've been coming here for years.

MINOR

I'm not sure I'd brag about that.

CHAPPIN

Yet I do - and I have - and I always have Jesus as my waiter.

MINOR

It's not pronounced "Jesus."

CHAPPIN

I know, but I like my version better. I figure it's the closest I'll ever get to salvation.

JESÚS has returned with a new menu, which HE hands to MINOR.

CHAPPIN

Hey, Jesus! Quote me.

JESÚS

(Reciting automatically.)

Aunque ande en valle de sombra de muerte, No temeré mal alguno; porque tú estarás conmigo: Tu vara y tu cayado me infundirán aliento.¹

CHAPPIN

(To MINOR.)

That's from the Bible - the Hispanic one.

MINOR

I didn't know you were a religious man.

CHAPPIN

I like presents at Christmas, if that's what you mean.

JESÚS

Would you like your usual, Señor C?

CHAPPIN

Ah, yes! In fact, I...

MINOR

What's Señor's usual?

JESÚS

Scotch on the rocks.

MINOR

He'll have cranberry juice and tonic water.

JESÚS looks queerly at CHAPPIN.

CHAPPIN

Well, Jesus, I guess this is as good a time as any to introduce you to my new secretary - Caitlyn Mack-the-Knife Minor. She's put me on one of these newfangled diets. I'm supposed to cut all the fun out of my life.

MINOR

Fun is fattening.

CHAPPIN

At my age, it doesn't matter.

MINOR

At your age, your doctor says...

¹ Psalm 23:4 - "Yes, though I go through the valley of deep shade, I will have no fear of evil; for you are with me, your rod and your support are my comfort."

CHAPPIN

My doctor? Hell, I pay him. I should get what I want.

MINOR

Which, at this point, if you keep at it, will be a terminal case of kidney disease. You heard what the doctor said when you went in for your checkup. I tell you, if you die on me, I'm going to be so goddamn pissed off at you. I swear to God, I'll hunt you down and kick your ass - Heaven or Hell.

CHAPPIN looks at HER for a moment and then calmly turns to JESÚS :

CHAPPIN

Make that cranberry and tonic water.

JESÚS

(Trying to make light of it.)
You need to be fit for all the viewers.

CHAPPIN

Ah, well, I don't need to worry about them anymore - praise Jesus... the other one. I quit from "Wordplay," so now I'm just beginning my golden years of retirement. From here on in, it's all shuffling and shuffleboards. The only thing I have to worry about is who I'll insult in my will.

JESÚS

You will do a little traveling, I hope.

CHAPPIN

(Not sounding too thrilled.)
Yes - mostly between the bar and the pool.

JESÚS

(Keeping up a happy front.)
I'm sure Señor is very excited.

CHAPPIN

Oh, sure - and, besides, I'm a senior Señor, so my options are running thin. I'm only good for receiving awards these days - but, damn it, they won't give me any. I only got one call for a job last week and it was as a male model.

JESÚS

A male model is good.

CHAPPIN

For a funeral parlor?

JESÚS smiles and begins to walk away.

MINOR

Excuse me. I haven't ordered yet.

JESÚS turns around in embarrassment.

JESÚS

I'm sorry, Señorita.

MINOR

You sure as hell are.

JESÚS

I'm not used to Señor Chappin having a guest.

MINOR

Well, then, get used to it.

JESÚS

Yes, Señorita. What would you like?

MINOR thinks for a moment.

MINOR

(Glowering at CHAPPIN.)

Scotch on the rocks.

(Turning to JESÚS - mockingly?)

Por favor.

JESÚS

(Glancing over at CHAPPIN.)

Sí, Señorita.

JESÚS turns and walks to the side of the stage. HE hands the note from his notepad to someone and then turns back to the table. HE watches as:

CHAPPIN

I didn't know you like Scotch on the rocks.

MINOR

I do now.

CHAPPIN

You're an evil woman.

MINOR

You will learn restraint.

CHAPPIN

My God, you're determined that I outlive you, aren't you?

MINOR

You heard the doctor, even with those hearing aids that don't work. B12. Folic Acid. Calcium. More magnesium. More fiber. Less carbs. You eat like a goddamn garbage disposal. All the trash in

MINOR (CONT)

the world goes into that bottomless pit of yours. Before I'm done, you'll be running in a marathon.

CHAPPIN

What are you going to do - dangle a martini on a string in front of me?

MINOR

Don't you be surprised if I do.

CHAPPIN

(Removing a cigarette from HIS pocket.)
No wonder "health" starts with "hell."

MINOR snatches the cigarette away from HIM.

MINOR

No more smoking.

CHAPPIN

You are a witch.

MINOR

Smoking is bad.

CHAPPIN

You smoke - and drink, too, apparently.

MINOR

I'm twenty-eight, you're not.

CHAPPIN

This is age discrimination.

MINOR takes the cigarette, lights it, and takes a long drag on it. SHE then turns to CHAPPIN and slowly blows the smoke in HIS face. HE looks at HER for a moment.

CHAPPIN

I've read about the dangers of second-hand smoke.

MINOR

I'm trying to wean you off... gradually.

MINOR smiles, takes another drag on the cigarette, and exhales again in HIS face. CHAPPIN continues to look at HER.

CHAPPIN

You know, if I weren't so goddamn old, this would be kinky.

MITCH

That's when I saw her.

MITCH has entered off to the side of the stage. HE looks over at CHAPPIN and MINOR, who begin talking in pantomime. JESÚS enters and goes to their table with two pairs of drinks. HE lays out the drinks before THEM while MITCH speaks to us:

MITCH

It had been many years, so I hardly recognized her. I recognized the voice more than anything. I remember hearing it at school, echoing through the hallways. I never paid much attention to what she looked like - which was odd. That's what a guy always does with a girl. With her, I just remembered the voice. I guess that's why she stuck with me all those years.

MINOR rises from the table and proceeds to cross the stage. (During the below, while MINOR and MITCH are talking, CHAPPIN beckons to JESÚS and has a secret conversation with HIM. JESÚS exits and quickly returns with what is clearly another Scotch-on-the-rocks. CHAPPIN drinks it quickly and is done with the drink by the time MINOR returns to the table.)

Meanwhile, MITCH, glancing at MINOR, continues to think:

MITCH

I couldn't tell if she had changed much - because, again, I didn't remember her face. I only knew, when I saw her, she couldn't have been more beautiful.

MINOR almost runs into MITCH during the final leg of HER stage-crossing. MITCH jumps back in surprise.

MINOR

Hey, why don't you watch where you're...

MINOR and MITCH stare at EACH OTHER for a moment. A huge, mischievous grin sprouts on MINOR's face.

MINOR

I remember you - Mitch Maynard.

MITCH

I think I remember you, too.

MINOR

You think? Then it must be someone else. Everyone always remembers me.

MITCH

Caitlyn something... Caitlyn Major?

MINOR

Minor.

MITCH

Close.

MINOR

Not quite. A whole octave difference.

MITCH

Octave? Is that music?

MINOR

Yes. I don't expect you to know it. You were the guy in the football team, weren't you? You never made it to captain, so that made you a loser. What a pity. That's basically how life works, too. Women don't get as far as men because they never understand that bit. You either lose or you win. Most people lose and they don't even know it.

MITCH

I remember you even more now.

MINOR

I bet you do.

MITCH

Do you still swear as much?

MINOR

Fuck, no.

MITCH

That's real good, then.

MINOR

"Real" good?

MITCH

(A joking correction.)
Real "well?"

MINOR

You goddamn barbarian.

MITCH

So what brings you to California?

MINOR

What brings anyone to California?

MITCH

I don't know. I just know we're both a long way from Idaho.

MINOR

It's a long story, which you won't be hearing. I'm saving the rights for HBO. I'll give you a hint, though. It involves two bikinis - five flings - a sore thumb - about ten wrong turns - and a huge, steaming truckload of crap.

MITCH

Sounds like a winner.

MINOR

I am, yes - and you?

MITCH

I'd like to think I'm a winner, too.

MINOR

We've already established you're a loser.

MITCH

A man can't make up for the football team?

MINOR

No - although there's still room to impress me.

MITCH

Well, I own my own landscaping company. I've had it for about five years now. I employ twelve people - a few under the table - and my clients are some of the biggest B-listers in Hollywood. I've done pretty well for myself, for a loser. Oh, yeah - and the guy who was captain of the football team? He works at Macy's now - in the home furnishings section.

(A beat - a big, contented smile.)

Got to love Facebook.

MINOR smiles back wryly. MITCH glances over at CHAPPIN. The old man appears lost and jittery without HER.

MITCH

Is that Grandpa?

MINOR

No - he's my date.

MITCH

What? Did he make captain... in 1902?

MINOR

(Sharply, defensively.)

Don't laugh. He damn well would have.

MITCH

(Sensing a nerve has been hit.)

Okaaaaaaay, then.

(Peering over at CHAPPIN again.)

Is he someone famous? I kind of remember the guy.

MINOR

You'll recognize him soon enough.

MITCH

That sounds like a threat.

MINOR

No - just a promise.

MITCH just stares at this interesting woman for a second. HE is evidently starstruck by HER. MINOR plays it for all it's worth - then abruptly:

MINOR

Well, if you'll excuse me, I have to piss.

MINOR dives into HER purse, produces a business card, and hands it to MITCH.

MINOR

Call me. We need a landscaper.

MINOR smiles intriguingly and walks offstage. MITCH looks after HER for a minute. HE then looks down at the business card. We see a tidal wave of recognition flood over HIS face.

MITCH

(Reading.)

"Radley Chappin."

(Looking up and out at CHAPPIN.)

Jesus fucking Christ.

(To us.)

I remember watching Radley Chappin on TV when I was about twelve years old. I watched him with my grandma. I didn't even know the guy was still alive. I thought he had died a long time ago, but I sure was wrong about that. Then again, I never thought I'd meet Caitlyn Minor again after that senior prom in Boise. I guess life is just full of surprises.

MITCH smiles and tucks the business card in HIS pants pocket and exits.

MINOR re-enters the stage and zooms over to CHAPPIN. HE has finished his secret drink, which JESÚS has recently taken away. The old man is all smiles when MINOR returns to the table.

CHAPPIN

Oh, look, she's back.

MINOR

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

CHAPPIN

It does, yes - usually for someone else.

JESÚS enters with his pad again.

JESÚS

Are you and the Señorita ready to order?

CHAPPIN

Are we!

MINOR

Are we?

CHAPPIN

I'll have the steak special.

JESÚS

Muy bueno - and you, Señorita?

MINOR

I'll have the check.

JESÚS

I'm sorry, Señorita?

MINOR

That makes two of us. I'm leaving.

CHAPPIN

You're leaving?

MINOR

You're deaf?

CHAPPIN

Not as often as I'd like to be.

MINOR

Well, start listening, or I'm gone.

CHAPPIN

My God, Methuselah - what's wrong?

MINOR

You are. You were wrong to take that drink he gave you. Another scotch on the rocks, was it? Shit. It doesn't matter anyway. I'm not a fool. Don't treat me like one. You can't put anything by me, so don't even try. I actually give a damn whether you live or die, even though you, apparently, don't. All the more reason for someone to take care of you - and that someone is me - and I won't be sabotaged by anyone!

(Glaring at JESÚS - pronouncing it the English way.)

Not - even - Jesus!

CHAPPIN looks at HER with a mixture of amusement and awe.

CHAPPIN

Do you have eyes in the back of your head?

MINOR

I have eyes in everything, including my ass.

CHAPPIN

Talk about a rear view.

CHAPPIN pauses for a moment and then shrugs.

CHAPPIN

All right, warden - I'm guilty. Take me away and throw away the key. I've been drinking on the job. I can resist everything but temptation.

MINOR

Fine then. We'll have temptation resist you. We won't be coming back to this dump again. The bathrooms look like shit - and no, that's not a pun.

CHAPPIN

(To JESÚS .)

Sorry, Jesus. Looks like we're going. You can put it on my tab - and here, take this...

CHAPPIN has reached into his pocket and extends some bills in JESÚS 's direction. MINOR immediately grabs HIS wrist.

MINOR

What is that?

CHAPPIN

That's his tip.

MINOR

A tip or a scholarship?

MINOR takes the bills, rummages through them, takes out a few, and hands them to JESÚS.

MINOR

Here. This should go far in Mexico. Next time, if you don't try to kill my boss, you'll get more.

JESÚS

Gracias, Señorita.

MINOR

(Again - using the English pronunciation.)
De nada, Jesus.

CHAPPIN

Wow, you're a tough woman.

MINOR

What did you want - a jelly?

CHAPPIN

Might as well. At this point, my manhood is toast.
(To JESÚS .)
Adios, Jesus!

CHAPPIN holds out HIS arm and MINOR takes it. THEY stroll out together. JESÚS watches THEM with a face filled with perplexity. HE thinks a moment and turns to us:

JESÚS

That was all before I got the phone call.

The LIGHTS shift and pick up HEATH off to the other side of the stage. JESÚS is now gone and the LIGHTS have dimmed to near-black.

HEATH

The phone call. It didn't take too long before I received the first one - and then the second - and then the third. By then, I was scared to have my phone on. They came at all hours of the day and the night - including that little period of time when you can't tell one from the other. I can remember the first one as vividly as if my phone were ringing right now.