

# **WITHOUT CONSENT**

by  
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## WITHOUT CONSENT

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*Without Consent* was developed at Delaware Theatre Company, Penguin Rep Theatre, and Theatre Exile.

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## **CHARACTERS**

LISA—*Caucasian woman in her 50s*

CARMEN—*African American woman in her 70s*

## **PLACE AND TIME**

The action takes place in the elegant study of a large home in the Villanova section of the Main Line, near present-day Philadelphia.

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*Lights rise on a sunny study. Left is a doorway to the rest of the house; right are French doors leading to an outdoor patio and garden. The room is tastefully decorated with books, a couch, a Louis XV-style desk (Bureau du Roi), and two chairs, one placed to the side of the desk. A bottle of hand sanitizer is prominent on the desk. LISA, her satchel nearby, sits in the side chair, waiting. She checks her watch, eventually rises, and looks around the room. She is particularly interested in the framed photographs that line one wall. While she's looking at them, CARMEN enters.*

**CARMEN.** See anybody you know?

**LISA.** I think I have most of them figured out.

**CARMEN.** Do you?

**LISA.** Some of them are easy: Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan...

**CARMEN.** Yes, the Michaels.

**LISA.** Nelson Mandela...

**CARMEN.** What a face!

**LISA.** Spielberg, Paul Simon...

**CARMEN.** That's right.

**LISA.** Uh...Don't know *him*. (*She points.*)

**CARMEN.** Thurgood Marshall.

**LISA.** Supreme Court.

**CARMEN.** Yes. First Black man.

**LISA.** Then I *do* know him.

**CARMEN.** There are some family photos mixed in there too.

**LISA.** It's quite a wall.

**CARMEN.** It's a great conversation starter.

**LISA.** Worked on me! It's an honor meeting you, Mrs. Westbrook.

**CARMEN.** It's a pleasure meeting *you*, Lisa. (*Lisa extends her hand; Carmen does not reciprocate.*) I've gotten out of the habit of shaking hands: too many germs, and the last thing I can afford to be is sick. You understand.

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**LISA.** I carry a bottle of sanitizer with me everywhere.

**CARMEN.** Then you know. Please, have a seat.

**LISA.** Thank you. (*Lisa sits.*)

**CARMEN.** Any trouble finding us?

**LISA.** I know the area well, so no.

**CARMEN.** Philly girl, right?

**LISA.** Through and through.

**CARMEN.** You grew up where again?

**LISA.** East Falls.

**CARMEN.** Right on the river.

**LISA.** I still walk there when I get the chance.

**CARMEN.** I must get out more myself. Can I offer you anything—coffee, tea, water?

**LISA.** No, thank you.

**CARMEN.** We have a friend in common, I see.

**LISA.** Elaine, yes. She's a longtime mentor of mine.

**CARMEN.** Elaine and I go way back.

**LISA.** That's what I hear.

**CARMEN.** I'm just terrible at keeping up with people. How is she doing?

**LISA.** She's very well.

**CARMEN.** And still at it, I see!

**LISA.** She'll never retire.

**CARMEN.** That's Elaine—so much energy. Back in the '60s she used to run me ragged.

**LISA.** I bet.

**CARMEN.** Every weekend she'd be dragging me somewhere: New York, Baltimore, Atlantic City. We loved the jazz clubs, especially. You know, we saw Nina Simone before she was anybody. When I saw Elaine's name on your CV, well, I knew you and I needed to meet.

**LISA.** She encouraged me to apply.

**CARMEN.** She was looking out for you.

**LISA.** She always does.

**CARMEN.** And Vicky sent you the confidentiality agreement...?

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**LISA.** It's right here in my bag—all ready to go. (*Lisa takes an envelope from her handbag and hands it to Carmen. Carmen opens the envelope, removes the paperwork from inside, and gives it the once-over.*)

**CARMEN.** Signed, sealed, and delivered. Very good. You read the detailed description of the position I assume.

**LISA.** Yes.

**CARMEN.** Do you have any questions about it?

**LISA.** I suppose I *would* like a better sense of the day-to-day of the work.

**CARMEN.** Oh, we'll come to all that, but let's get to know each other a little bit.

**LISA.** Okay.

**CARMEN.** Now, I've studied your resume closely. Your qualifications tell me that you may be just what we're looking for.

**LISA.** That's good to hear.

**CARMEN.** Honestly, though, I'm still rather skeptical.

**LISA.** Oh?

**CARMEN.** Don't take it personally. I live a life that requires a greater than usual level of suspicion. But this is the last interview. You've successfully jumped through the other hoops—the two previous interviews with Vicky, the financial records check. Let's have a look at your file, shall we? (*Carmen opens a drawer in the desk and takes out a folder.*)

Before we begin, is there anything you want to tell me?

**LISA.** Like?

**CARMEN.** Oh, I don't know, your secret identity, the proverbial axes you have to grind, things that a CV can't tell me. It's best to have these things on the table so there are no surprises for either of us.

**LISA.** My life's a pretty open book.

**CARMEN.** Come now, we all have a few jigaboos in the closet, don't we?

**LISA.** Excuse me?

**CARMEN.** I'm asking about your past.

**LISA.** I've just never heard that expression before.

**CARMEN.** All I'm saying is that we can't end our interview today until we've discovered everything we can about you.

**LISA.** Is that what the polygraph was about?

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**CARMEN.** The polygraph is but one of many tools my husband and I use to vet the people we employ. Was that your first time taking one?

**LISA.** Yes. How did I do?

**CARMEN.** Wouldn't you like to know? I'm kidding. I thought we might go over the results together.

**LISA.** That's fine.

**CARMEN.** Now, I have a few questions that are of a rather personal nature. It's not the norm, I know. But we are not normal people; we are extraordinary people, my husband and me.

**LISA.** I understand.

**CARMEN.** Oh, you couldn't possibly. Let's see here. I think I need my reading glasses. *(Carmen finds her glasses in the desk, puts them on.)* That's better. Alright: According to the official record, you were a rather late bloomer.

**LISA.** Was I?

**CARMEN.** You returned to college at the age of 31.

**LISA.** I started college at 31.

**CARMEN.** What?

**LISA.** "Returned" makes it sound like I went earlier, but I didn't. I started then—later than usual. If we're being accurate.

**CARMEN.** What took you off course?

**LISA.** I never really thought of it that way.

**CARMEN.** Answer the question, please.

**LISA.** We moved around a lot when I was a kid—our family. By the time I was of typical college age, I wasn't ready for it. I felt a little behind, maybe—I don't know—not as smart as my classmates.

**CARMEN.** Was this because of a learning disability or because of personal insecurities?

**LISA.** I've never been diagnosed with any kind of learning problem, but the confidence in my abilities just wasn't there in my teens.

**CARMEN.** But your confidence improved.

**LISA.** Oh, yes.

**CARMEN.** When do you think?

**LISA.** It was gradual, but by the time I matriculated I thought to myself, I can do this.



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**CARMEN.** And you did. Top of your class.

**LISA.** Number three, actually...

**CARMEN.** Very good. What about after college?

**LISA.** I started at Hahnemann—cut my teeth, as it were, earned my stripes. After a few years, I went back for my master's in—

**CARMEN.** Palliative—

**LISA.** Palliative care, right. Then I applied for work at Jefferson. Turns out they were looking for a specialist.

**CARMEN.** Why that field?

**LISA.** When I started, I worked in pediatrics, but at Hahnemann they needed end-of-life nurses.

**CARMEN.** Quite a change.

**LISA.** It was, but I liked it.

**CARMEN.** What about it?

**LISA.** They're not all that different, kids and terminal patients. In my mind, they're connected somehow—those at the beginning, those at the end.

**CARMEN.** Similar needs, you mean.

**LISA.** Feeding and changing, that's right. Other than that, they mostly just want to be made as comfortable as possible.

**CARMEN.** I know what you mean. My mother was a midwife.

**LISA.** Is that right?

**CARMEN.** In those days, very few hospitals took African Americans, and the ones that did were segregated—the care wasn't always as up-to-snuff.

**LISA.** I'm sure.

**CARMEN.** Black women went to mother because there was no red tape, no discrimination, and no questions. She simply did the work. Then again, so many things were done “off-the-books” back then.

**LISA.** A different time.

**CARMEN.** It was. Do you have children?

**LISA.** One child.

**CARMEN.** Boy or girl?

**LISA.** Girl.

**CARMEN.** What's her name?

**LISA.** Petra.

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**CARMEN.** That's a name you don't hear very often.

**LISA.** She's named after her great-grandmother on my mother's side.

**CARMEN.** Where's your family from originally?

**LISA.** That side is mostly from Germany—Bavaria. Petra means “rock.”

**CARMEN.** It sounds Greek.

**LISA.** In Greek, it's “Petroura;” in German, it's “Petrina.” “Petra” is a bit simpler.

**CARMEN.** I like less-common names.

**LISA.** Me too.

**CARMEN.** How old is Petra?

**LISA.** She's thirty-three—four!

**CARMEN.** You were a young mother.

**LISA.** I was.

**CARMEN.** And Petra's father?

**LISA.** We're divorced.

**CARMEN.** What happened there?

**LISA.** We wanted different things.

**CARMEN.** It was mutual.

**LISA.** He was cheating; I didn't approve, so we ended it fifteen years ago.

**CARMEN.** *You* ended it.

**LISA.** Yes.

**CARMEN.** You don't believe in “for better or for worse,” then.

**LISA.** It has its limits.

**CARMEN.** What did you do before you went to nursing school?

**LISA.** I worked—raised my child.

**CARMEN.** I mean specifically.

**LISA.** I had a bunch of different jobs: waitress, cashier, baker—

**CARMEN.** What did you bake?

**LISA.** I didn't really mean baker.

**CARMEN.** You said baker.

**LISA.** I worked as a cashier in a small family bakery in South Philadelphia.

**CARMEN.** Then why did you say—?

**LISA.** I don't know; a person that works in a bakery—

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**CARMEN.** Is not necessarily a baker! Do you still have family in the area?

**LISA.** My mother, yes.

**CARMEN.** And she's well?

**LISA.** She's had some thyroid problems, but she's doing fine for 82.

**CARMEN.** You see her often?

**LISA.** Once or twice a week. We're very close.

**CARMEN.** What about your father?

**LISA.** He's dead, although my parents divorced when I was an infant.

**CARMEN.** He wasn't in your life.

**LISA.** Not really.

**CARMEN.** I'd like to switch gears.

**LISA.** Okay.

**CARMEN.** Are you aware of my husband's career?

**LISA.** Bob Westbrook is the first African American director nominated for an Oscar, so as much as anyone.

**CARMEN.** He *won* the Oscar that year.

**LISA.** Oh. I, I didn't know if he was just nominated, or—1981, was it...?

**CARMEN.** '79. Bob winning was a very big deal.

**LISA.** It must have been.

**CARMEN.** Up to that point, only a handful of people of color had even been nominated, so for a Black man to win... You're not a movie buff, I take it.

**LISA.** I like movies, but I wouldn't say—

**CARMEN.** But you've seen it.

**LISA.** His...?

**CARMEN.** *Bury the Chains*, yes.

**LISA.** I've seen bits and pieces.

**CARMEN.** Not your cup of tea?

**LISA.** Is that terrible to say?

**CARMEN.** Not at all. How about the ones he starred in before his directing career?

**LISA.** They were a little before my time.

**CARMEN.** Biggest box-office-draw five years straight, '68 to '73.

**LISA.** Honestly, I just don't see a lot of movies—never have.

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**CARMEN.** Did you follow his trial?

**LISA.** Not, not really.

**CARMEN.** But you know the basics.

**LISA.** As much as anyone, I guess.

**CARMEN.** Meaning?

**LISA.** This is awkward.

**CARMEN.** I've heard it all before, so no worries.

**LISA.** All I know is there were a lot of women claiming that he—

**CARMEN.** “Claiming” being the operative word.

**LISA.** Right, saying that he, he drugged and assaulted them over many decades. He was convicted and spent time in prison.

**CARMEN.** Would any of those things be a problem for you?

**LISA.** The accusations, you mean...?

**CARMEN.** That's what I mean.

**LISA.** I don't think so. I did some volunteer work at Graterford Prison years back. Not that it's the same thing, of course, but I've met all sorts of—treated thousands of people over the years. Who they are—what they did or didn't do—it's really none of my concern. My only mission is to provide comfort and care when and where it's needed.

**CARMEN.** I must say, you have the talking points down pat.

**LISA.** They're not really talking points.

**CARMEN.** It's not a bad thing. You're a professional. I respect that. Anyway, for what it's worth, Bob and I have led separate lives in many ways since the children were young: His directing schedule, and my work—

**LISA.** You champion literacy mostly, yes?

**CARMEN.** It's my life's great cause: education, literacy, making the most of oneself. I've led a blessed life; giving back is but a small price to pay.

**LISA.** You make it sound like an obligation.

**CARMEN.** Oh, yes, that's how Bob and I view it. “With great fortune comes great responsibility,” he likes to say.

**LISA.** May I ask a question related to the work I would be doing?

**CARMEN.** Go right ahead.

**LISA.** What is your husband's current condition? The newspapers don't really say much.

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**CARMEN.** That is by design.

**LISA.** Of course.

**CARMEN.** His current condition has been carefully guarded up to this point, but since you signed on the dotted line and promised to keep all our secrets, well, between you and I, he has Alzheimer's. You look surprised. What were you expecting?

**LISA.** I wasn't expecting anything, really. It just makes the job more...

**CARMEN.** More...?

**LISA.** Complicated.

**CARMEN.** You've worked with Alzheimer's patients though. Says so right here on—

**LISA.** How are his cognitive functions, you know, on a daily basis?

**CARMEN.** Very poor. We have him on the patch—the transdermal...uh...

**LISA.** The transdermal rivastigmine.

**CARMEN.** That's it.

**LISA.** Is it helping?

**CARMEN.** It's stabilized the disease somewhat—prevented a complete collapse.

**LISA.** Does he still recognize you?

**CARMEN.** Depends on the day: One moment he's nearly lucid, the next he's in another world.

**LISA.** That's very common.

**CARMEN.** That's what we're told.

**LISA.** What about his motor skills and bodily functions?

**CARMEN.** He gets around well enough with a walker, but we can't let him go very far or he might hurt himself.

**LISA.** And hygiene?

**CARMEN.** I don't get much involved in those kinds of things, but he's kept clean.

**LISA.** You don't like germs.

**CARMEN.** Does anyone like germs?

**LISA.** Did you notice a big difference between his condition before and after his, his time away?

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**CARMEN.** Oh, yes. I'm convinced the decline—if it had happened at all—would have been much slower if Bob had been acquitted.

**LISA.** Do you have a nursing staff?

**CARMEN.** Currently we have four people coming to clean him and feed him, but as he's continued declining, the children and I have discussed finding expert care—someone who can provide a value-added service.

**LISA.** That's where I would come in.

**CARMEN.** Exactly.

**LISA.** The job description says I would be supervising others.

**CARMEN.** Managing their schedules, writing performance reviews, those kinds of things, yes. You would also be expected to handle primary care duties a few hours a week.

**LISA.** The supervisory portion would take some getting used to, but I don't think it would be a problem. And I'm used to long hours.

**CARMEN.** You'll be well-compensated, although it's impossible to say how long we'll need you.

**LISA.** This disease is very unpredictable.

**CARMEN.** That's what I keep telling my children when they ask me when they should come to see their father. So, I just say, "Come anytime you can." But it's hard for them. They have their own lives, their own kids, and they're in different corners of the country.

**LISA.** You have three daughters.

**CARMEN.** Yes. The eldest is probably about your age. What about Petra? Do you see her often? What does she do?

**LISA.** She works for a medical publisher—editing, copywriting.

**CARMEN.** In the city?

**LISA.** That's right.

**CARMEN.** Mother and daughter in the same field!

**LISA.** Two sides of the same coin, I guess.

**CARMEN.** Lovely! She has of family of her own, I take it.

**LISA.** No.

**CARMEN.** She has time.

**LISA.** She doesn't want children.

**CARMEN.** Why not?

**LISA.** You'd have to ask her.

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**CARMEN.** But children bring such joy.

**LISA.** She's her own woman.

**CARMEN.** Well, you've raised her right then.

**LISA.** I like to think so.

**CARMEN.** What do you do for recreation?

**LISA.** For—?

**CARMEN.** For fun.

**LISA.** I'm a hiker.

**CARMEN.** Oh, lovely. And Petra—What are her interests?

**LISA.** She used to be into Manga.

**CARMEN.** I don't know what that is.

**LISA.** Japanese comic books. But she enjoys hiking too.

**CARMEN.** You go together.

**LISA.** We have.

**CARMEN.** Any favorite places?

**LISA.** Oh brother, so many. We've done parts of the Appalachian Trail; been down in the Shenandoah; hiked Zion twice.

**CARMEN.** Where's that?

**LISA.** Utah.

**CARMEN.** Yosemite?

**LISA.** Yes.

**CARMEN.** Recently?

**LISA.** A couple of months ago.

**CARMEN.** Did you do a day hike?

**LISA.** No, we, we camped for a few days.

**CARMEN.** Which trail did you choose?

**LISA.** We, uh, planned on doing the entire John Muir Trail, which takes about a month, but...

**CARMEN.** Bit off more than you could chew.

**LISA.** Something like that.

**CARMEN.** All very challenging, I'm sure.

**LISA.** Looks like you know from experience.

**CARMEN.** Do I?

**LISA.** *(Rising, pointing to a photo on the wall.)* El Capitan.

**CARMEN.** Oh, yes, indeed.

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**LISA.** Majestic.

**CARMEN.** Splendid.

**LISA.** (*Looking at another photo.*) Ah, but there's my dream trip.

**CARMEN.** Where's that?

**LISA.** The Great Wall.

**CARMEN.** That was marvelous. I simply love China.

**LISA.** There's just something so romantic about it—so long, so old.

**CARMEN.** Parts of it are missing, you know. People think it's one unbroken wall, but there are many gaps. Maybe you and Petra can give it a try one of these days.

**LISA.** When was this one? (*Lisa points to another photo.*)

**CARMEN.** 1987, I believe—on the occasion of Bob receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

**LISA.** Nice.

**CARMEN.** He and President Reagan spent most of the evening breaking each other up. Reagan was a very funny man, and Nancy—what a delight! We spent a week at their ranch that year.

**LISA.** Any psychic readings?

**CARMEN.** What?

**LISA.** Wasn't the first lady into astrology for a while?

**CARMEN.** I wouldn't know. Perhaps we should get to the test.

**LISA.** Test?

**CARMEN.** The polygraph.

**LISA.** Oh, right.

**CARMEN.** It's the last hurdle. Please... (*Carmen gestures to the chair. Lisa returns and sits.*) I recognize that polygraphs are not considered foolproof, but for our purposes they do the job. (*Carmen opens the envelope and takes out the test results.*) Let's see: You were asked your name as a way of calibrating the machine.

**LISA.** Guess I passed that one.

**CARMEN.** You were asked where you live, the names of your parents, your alma mater, your address, your favorite color, your best friend's name—all good. All right, number eight: "At what age did you first have sexual intercourse?"

**LISA.** It's a strange question to be asked for a job.



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**CARMEN.** It depends on the job, doesn't it?

**LISA.** I don't think so. I'm pretty sure it's not even completely legal.

**CARMEN.** Under the circumstances, complete legality must take a back seat to full disclosure and our privacy.

**LISA.** I answered the question, didn't I?

**CARMEN.** You answered 17. The test says you were not truthful. Care to comment?

**LISA.** I was 16.

**CARMEN.** Then why did you say—?

**LISA.** I was almost 17 and I thought 17 sounded better. It was a reflex.

**CARMEN.** These things are what they are.

**LISA.** I realize—

**CARMEN.** Then why lie?

**LISA.** I considered myself seventeen.

**CARMEN.** But you weren't.

**LISA.** Technically, no, but—

**CARMEN.** There's no reason to be defensive.

**LISA.** I'm explaining myself.

**CARMEN.** Let's go on, shall we? Number nine: "Have you ever had an abortion?" You said yes, and the test says that you answered truthfully. How old were you?

**LISA.** I was 22.

**CARMEN.** What were the circumstances?

**LISA.** I dated someone briefly. This was before I met my husband.

**CARMEN.** Who was he?

**LISA.** He was a designer.

**CARMEN.** What kind of—?

**LISA.** A lighting designer.

**CARMEN.** In the theater, you mean.

**LISA.** Yes.

**CARMEN.** Where?

**LISA.** Florida.

**CARMEN.** You were living there.

**LISA.** I was.

**CARMEN.** How long did you know him?

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**LISA.** When I got—?

**CARMEN.** Yes.

**LISA.** I don't—three weeks, maybe.

**CARMEN.** Have you always been promiscuous?

**LISA.** I don't know how you're defining the word. It was the late '70s, very early '80s.

**CARMEN.** What's your point?

**LISA.** Pre-AIDS, pre—

**CARMEN.** Standards of morality?

**LISA.** You could call it that.

**CARMEN.** Why did you terminate the pregnancy?

**LISA.** It was a mistake.

**CARMEN.** The relationship or the pregnancy?

**LISA.** Both.

**CARMEN.** It's a difficult decision.

**LISA.** This wasn't.

**CARMEN.** No?

**LISA.** It was early. That makes a difference.

**CARMEN.** Does it?

**LISA.** It did to me.

**CARMEN.** Number 10: "How many abortions have you had?" You said one, and the polygraph determined that you were truthful.

**LISA.** I answered the question, but under normal circumstances—

**CARMEN.** These are not normal circumstances.

**LISA.** But as a woman you must understand that my sexual history isn't any of your business—

**CARMEN.** I am not a woman.

**LISA.** What?

**CARMEN.** This isn't a coffee klatch, and we're not commiserating over estrogen supplements.

**LISA.** No, but—

**CARMEN.** Understand?

**LISA.** I—

**CARMEN.** Do you understand?

**LISA.** I understand.

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**CARMEN.** Next question—

**LISA.** Wait! Might I get that glass of water now?

**CARMEN.** You want to stop.

**LISA.** Just for a minute, if that's okay.

**CARMEN.** Very well. (*Carmen pours Lisa a glass of water, hands it to her. Lisa takes a gulp or two. Carmen moves to the French doors.*) Have you seen the garden?

**LISA.** The...no... (*Lisa rises, moves to doors, takes it all in.*) It's gorgeous.

**CARMEN.** Isn't it?

**LISA.** Do you have planter's hands?

**CARMEN.** Mother did; I do not. Working in the garden holds no great joy for me.

**LISA.** Your rose bushes are tremendous.

**CARMEN.** Here: take a closer look. (*Carmen opens wide-the-doors, invites Lisa outside with a gesture. Lisa walks past Carmen and onto the patio. Carmen remains in the doorway, never setting foot on the patio itself.*) What do you think?

**LISA.** It's breathtaking.

**CARMEN.** I'm not out here much.

**LISA.** I'd be out here every spare moment I had.

**CARMEN.** You're a green thumb.

**LISA.** I am.

**CARMEN.** Everything I plant withers and dies. I have neither the time nor the inclination for all the work it takes: the planting, the watering, the replanting—yuck! Hand me a gin and tonic and leave the gardening to the professionals.

**LISA.** Before I decided on nursing, I considered landscape architecture.

**CARMEN.** Did you?

**LISA.** Ever since I was a girl, I could look at someone's lawn or how things are planted and arranged in a garden and tell you exactly what's wrong with it and how it could look better. I see it all in my mind, like a computer program on one of those home improvement shows. I move things in, move them out, see where the azalea should be planted, where the rhododendron needs to be cut back because it's blocking too much of

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the sidewalk. It's like a puzzle, you know? It gets my mind racing. I just love it.

**CARMEN.** But you're not a landscape architect.

**LISA.** Nursing seemed more promising employment-wise, I guess. But I still love seeing how an outdoor space has been put together.

**CARMEN.** Take a minute then.

**LISA.** You sure?

**CARMEN.** By all means! *(Carmen moves to her desk, sips from her own glass of water, and watches Lisa. After a few moments, Lisa reluctantly returns from the patio.)* Hand sanitizer?

**LISA.** Please. *(Lisa holds out her hands. Carmen squirts the liquid into Lisa's hands then uses some herself. Each woman rubs her hands together.)*

**LISA and CARMEN.** Ah!

**CARMEN.** Bob used to tell me I had OCD, I used so much of this stuff. But you know what? I haven't been sick in years. I'm convinced this is the reason why. They used to say that overuse lowers your immunity, but I read an article in the *New Yorker* that says that's just not true. It's not an antibiotic, after all.

**LISA.** I just like the smell.

**CARMEN.** Smells clean, doesn't it?

**LISA.** Yes.

**CARMEN.** I realize that I can be blunt, Lisa, though you're no wilting flower yourself.

**LISA.** I'll take that as a compliment.

**CARMEN.** It's how I hoped you'd be.

**LISA.** Why's that?

**CARMEN.** When one has money, or fame, the people that work for you tend to elide their true feelings. Before long, you find yourself surrounded by "yes" people.

**LISA.** That must make it hard to trust.

**CARMEN.** It does. If all you ever hear are compliments and praise, it can distort your views of the world, of yourself.

**LISA.** The "bubble"—isn't that what it's called?

**CARMEN.** It *is* a bubble, though I'd argue it's harder on the men.

## WITHOUT CONSENT

**LISA.** You think so?

**CARMEN.** Women are more grounded generally. We like our fine wine and our jewelry and our clothing—the accoutrements, shall we say. Men need constant validation—about their wealth, their status, their potency. They’re much more insecure than we are. And that’s where the “bubble,” as you call it, can hurt them. Thus, when things occur...

**LISA.** Things?

**CARMEN.** Mostly those stories you read in the tabloids.

**LISA.** Who’s getting Botox? Who’s sleeping with whom?

**CARMEN.** That’s right. When these things occur, men crumble like cookies. Remember Tiger Woods years ago. He cheated on his wife—he’s a serial cheater. All the public asks is, “How could he cheat? How *could* he?” The truth is women followed him everywhere. They climbed through the windows of his hotel rooms. You can’t expect a man to resist that kind of constant temptation. Men like Tiger don’t live in the world that most people do. The rules are different. The question isn’t, “How *could* he?” The question is, how could he *not*? Even Tiger’s wife got caught up in the momentary embarrassment. Notice, he didn’t file for divorce; she did.

**LISA.** She had to do something, didn’t she?

**CARMEN.** What she should have done was find her own interests, focus on the long game, and carry on. What she should have said to the media was, “So what?” That would have shut them up.

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