

THE MORAL WAIVER

By
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THE MORAL WAIVER

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THE MORAL WAIVER

for Andrew

THE MORAL WAIVER

CAST: 3 Women 2 Men

LAINÉ	19, pronounced Lay-nee; a quiet fire and fury within
BRUCE	20s, Laine's roommate
HARVEY	45-50, fire burning out
JUNE	40s, Laine's mother
SAMANTHA	40, Harvey's wife

TIME: 2015

PLACE: Rural Pennsylvania

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ACT 1
SCENE 1

A tiny, cheap apartment. There is a mattress against the wall, a weight bench with a pile of laundry, and ashtrays on the floor. LAINE stands in front of full-length mirror practicing saluting and other military movements. She wears an old Army patrol cap. She tries to 'about face' and nearly trips over herself.

LAINE. *(To herself, looking in the mirror and still playing Soldier.)* Yes, Sir! Right away, Sir. *(Salutes.)* Keep a sharp eye, Johnson, the enemy is inside the wire. Sir, look out! Behind you! *(We hear the metallic action of a switchblade knife opening as Laine whirls around and jabs it into an imaginary adversary's throat. BRUCE enters as Laine twists the knife and completes the 'kill'.)*

BRUCE. Nice work, General.

LAINE. I didn't hear you coming in.

BRUCE. You were really into it. *(He approaches her and grabs her suddenly, kissing her hard on the lips.)* And thank you for your service.

LAINE. *(Embarrassed.)* Shut up. I was just playing around.

BRUCE. Nice hat.

LAINE. It was dad's.

BRUCE. Cool. Smoke with me.

LAINE. No. I can't.

BRUCE. Oh, that's right. I forgot. Solidarity then. *(Bruce pulls out and lights a conventional cigarette.)*

LAINE. I will take one of those, though. Please.

BRUCE. It's my last. Sorry. Hey, can you run down CVS and pick up some more?

LAINE. I'm headed out to mom's in a bit.

BRUCE. Oh. Yeah. I forgot about that.

LAINE. You don't have to come along.

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BRUCE. I don't mind going to your mom's. But if you don't mind, I'll skip it today. I need to...do some stuff.

LAINE. It's OK. I don't want to be there long. Definitely don't wanna get sucked into staying for dinner.

BRUCE. What do you need over there?

LAINE. I need my diploma and some other documents and shit for the...guy.

BRUCE. Oh yeah. For the guy. *(Silence.)* So, you've changed your mind. Again.

LAINE. No. I never changed it before. I was just...conflicted.

BRUCE. And how about now? *(Waits a moment for an answer.)* Never mind. It's your life.

LAINE. Something really weird happened to me at work today. You wanna hear it?

BRUCE. What'd you do? Stab someone.

LAINE. Yes, Bruce. No, one of the regular customers. He --

BRUCE. --What?

LAINE. I was saying about this guy that eats lunch there a lot.

BRUCE. What about him?

LAINE. No big deal. This weird old guy. Just got me thinking about my dad and some other things. You know how one thought bounces off another, and then you're...somewhere else.

BRUCE. Oh sure. That happens to me all the time. *(Silence. He is somewhere else.)*

LAINE. You wanna hear about it?

BRUCE. What? About your thoughts?

LAINE. About what happened at work.

BRUCE. Sure, Laine. You sure we can't get high? A little?

LAINE. No. I'd like to, but I can't.

BRUCE. Yeah. Sorry. Come here a second. Please.

LAINE. I have to go soon.

BRUCE. Only take a second.

LAINE. No. It won't. *(She goes to him, and he pulls her down onto the mattress. They kiss and he tries to escalate things, but she half-heartedly resists taking it further. He climbs on top of her. He pauses.)*

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BRUCE. Wait. What'd you do with that knife?

LAINE. This old man at the diner gave me something today.

BRUCE. This young man would like to give you something today.

LAINE. Stop.

BRUCE. Sorry. What did he give you?

LAINE. I thought it was like a long note at first.

BRUCE. A long what?

LAINE. There is all these pages typed up all fancy.

BRUCE. Uh-huh. Like a love letter.

LAINE. But it isn't that. It's like a story. A very long story.

BRUCE. How long?

LAINE. Extremely long. Like six whole pages.

BRUCE. Man hands you a story. What's the story?

LAINE. I don't know. He said it was for me.

BRUCE. That's all he said? He just said, *'here young lady, have this.'*

LAINE. He said he wrote it for me.

BRUCE. What do you mean by, wrote it for you?

LAINE. I don't know. Like I am the inspiration. For the story.

BRUCE. That's what he said?

LAINE. More or less. *(She rolls him off of her and gets up.)*

BRUCE. Where is the thing, or whatever it is? The thing you inspired?

LAINE. I've got it. It's really not a big deal.

BRUCE. Feels like it is kinda. Big.

LAINE. Oh, get over yourself.

BRUCE. Hey!

LAINE. What?

BRUCE. Don't tell me about some guy trying to get in your pants --

LAINE. -- Bruce --

BRUCE. -- Because call it whatever you want, that's what this is.

LAINE. No. It's not --

BRUCE. -- and then say to me, get over yourself.

LAINE. OK.

BRUCE. I will not get over myself.

LAINE. What do you want to know?

BRUCE. Who is he?

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LAINE. He's harmless. Some old guy.

BRUCE. A harmless guy.

LAINE. That's what I said. Old.

BRUCE. Yeah, I heard you.

LAINE. So?

BRUCE. Writing you poems.

LAINE. It's not poems.

BRUCE. Whatever. Can I see what he wrote?

LAINE. No.

BRUCE. No?

LAINE. It's not a love letter, Bruce.

BRUCE. You know him. He wrote for you. To you.

LAINE. He comes in three or four times a week during lunch.

BRUCE. To see you.

LAINE. To eat lunch. He's an old man. They eat.

BRUCE. How old?

LAINE. I don't know. Old.

BRUCE. Like your mom's age? Like a lovable old hobo.

LAINE. He doesn't look like a hobo.

BRUCE. Or old as in like, he's in his thirties.

LAINE. I don't know, Bruce. I'm not going to guess, I don't work at a carnival. Older than you.

BRUCE. He's in love with you.

LAINE. That's...gross.

BRUCE. Why is it gross? You like older guys.

LAINE. Shut up.

BRUCE. What's the harmless old man's name?

LAINE. Harvey.

BRUCE. Oh. Yeah, that has to be old.

LAINE. Told you.

BRUCE. So, you know him? You two know each other.

LAINE. I don't know him. He comes in all the time, so I know his name.

BRUCE. How?

LAINE. His credit card.

BRUCE. Big shot, I bet. Thinks he can walk around like...

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LAINE. Yeah, big shot. Going into diners, ordering lunch, and then paying for it.

BRUCE. You know what I'm talking about. He thinks you'll be impressed because he wrote you his fucking memoirs or something.

LAINE. He doesn't act like a big shot.

BRUCE. What does he act like?

LAINE. Like a normal old guy. A guy that could be your uncle or something.

BRUCE. You gonna read it?

LAINE. Not in this moment.

BRUCE. Let me read it.

LAINE. No. Hell no.

BRUCE. Hell no? Oh, this is something special just between you two.

LAINE. You don't read, Bruce.

BRUCE. I know how to read.

LAINE. Just forget about it.

BRUCE. All right. *(Silence.)* I bet it's hilarious.

LAINE. I need to get to my mom's house. Are you coming, or...?

BRUCE. Probably you're a character in the story. And he rides on a horse, or some shit like that.

LAINE. The recruiter needs my birth certificate and my high school diploma. I need to get those things. So that's where I will be.

BRUCE. What am I supposed to do about this situation, Laine?

LAINE. I said you don't have to come with me.

BRUCE. I mean about Harvey. The big shot writer of long-ass notes.

LAINE. You don't have to do anything about him. He's got nothing to do with you.

BRUCE. Should I be jealous?

LAINE. Just shut up about it. That's what I'd do, honey.

BRUCE. Maybe I should challenge him to a duel. Why can't I read it?

LAINE. Christ, if you won't shut up about it. Here. *(She hands over the pages, Bruce snatches them, starts reading.)*

LAINE. *(Snatching them right back from him.)* Not now! Jesus.

BRUCE. Oh, come on, Laine.

LAINE. Not in front of me, Okay?

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BRUCE. I'll take it in the bathroom.

LAINE. Definitely not.

BRUCE. We don't have a lot of time together. Let's not...just forget it. OK? I'm sorry.

LAINE. *(Sitting, taking a breath.)* So much shit to take care of. *(Silence. He crawls to her, puts his head on her lap. She pets him.)* I was in the sixth grade when my father died.

BRUCE. Changing the subject.

LAINE. Yeah, shut up, that's not the point.

BRUCE. OK. I'm listening. Sixth grade Laine.

LAINE. After he died I missed a lot of school, and all my little friends, they made me these cards out of construction paper and glue. Writing things like, *I'm so sorry this happened.* Mrs. Duncan made 'em all do it. During English. Wish she hadn't. Worst year of my life. But at least I got a card from David Johns.

BRUCE. Now who's that guy?

LAINE. Kid in my class, stupid. Yeah. I thought, dad's dead, but maybe at least David Johns wrote something really sweet to me. I threw most of those other stupid cards in the trash but at least David Johns wrote something to me. I was excited to read the card that he made. Maybe he could... he would fix it. When I got to his, it was just some little stupid thing, like all the other ones. *'I'm so sorry for the tragedy.'* And he misspelled my name. And he misspelled tragedy, too.

BRUCE. That's a tough word.

LAINE. I thought David Johns was...perfect. I sat behind him in class and I would just stare at the back of his neck. His neck was the perfect color.

BRUCE. What's the perfect neck color?

LAINE. I would follow David Johns around the playground. Like a weirdo. I kept far back lurking and watching, but he knew I was there. He and his buddy. He would turn and notice me, and I would smile at him, a kind of sad smile. He felt sorry for me. Because he was nice. But I could tell he kinda hated me for stalking him. *(Pause.)* I could tell he wished I'd disappear. I should have wrote him a note. Told him how I felt.

BRUCE. Life is full of missed chances like that, right?

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LAINE. One day out on the playground I was walking behind him and I got tired of him ignoring me, so I yelled at him. Right there in front of everybody. I yelled, ‘*God dammit, David Johns, I love you!*’ You believe that?

BRUCE. You little freak. And he came running into your arms, right?

LAINE. No. He did not come running into my arms. First time I ever saw a mean look in David Johns’ eyes. Like, ‘*Christ, why did she pick me? Why did the weird girl with the dead dad pick me.*’ I didn’t follow him around anymore after that incident. (*Silence.*) I wanted to stab him after that.

BRUCE. It just got really cold in here.

LAINE. That’s right. I used to fantasize about stabbing David Johns in the gut with my dad’s old bayonet. (*Pause.*) Eventually that feeling passed. He moved away the next year. Never did know where.

BRUCE. Moved away? Are you sure?

LAINE. What are you talking about?

BRUCE. You sure he didn’t turn up dead from some mysterious bayonet related symptoms?

LAINE. I’m not a complete monster.

BRUCE. Can we talk some more?

LAINE. You want to hear more about this? Story kinds trails off there.

BRUCE. Not about David Johns. Or the old man. The other thing.

LAINE. What about it?

BRUCE. You can still back out, Laine.

LAINE. (*Stands up.*) I know. But I have a ship date.

BRUCE. I talked to --

LAINE. --Bruce--

BRUCE. --Now, wait a second --

LAINE. --Why would I back out? Why would I do that now?

BRUCE. I talked to someone. Someone who knows about this stuff. Wait a second, Laine. And he said. And he said that you can back out of this thing. Right up until the day you have to leave you are allowed to just tell them to fuck off. And they can’t do nuthin’ to you.

LAINE. I’m sure it’s not that easy.

BRUCE. They can’t force you to go. They won’t tell you that, but it’s true.

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LAINE. I signed up, Bruce. I'm not being drafted.

BRUCE. You're conflicted about it. You admitted that.

LAINE. Yeah. Some days I am. Sure. But I'm going through with it.

BRUCE. It's up to you. But realize that you still have the power to say, no. All I'm saying.

LAINE. I thought you were used to the idea by now.

BRUCE. We've never been apart like this before, Laine. And now I have to tell people my girlfriend is...

LAINE. You don't have to tell people anything.

BRUCE. People will think I'm... 'my girlfriend is in the Army.' And they'll be like...

LAINE. What will they be like?

BRUCE. You know what they'll be like. They'll be like, I'm some kind of pussy or something for letting you do this.

LAINE. It ain't up to you.

BRUCE. I know that. But you know how people are.

LAINE. You could join up too. We could join up together on the buddy program.

BRUCE. No thanks, buddy.

LAINE. You'd have to take a drug test.

BRUCE. See? There you go. No thank you, big brother. Big government. Stay out of my business. My body. My choice.

LAINE. It's a job, Bruce.

BRUCE. You have a job.

LAINE. This one is more exciting.

BRUCE. You don't need to shoot guns and jump out of airplanes to impress me.

LAINE. My dad jumped out of planes.

BRUCE. Your dad was hardcore. But you got nothing to prove.

LAINE. I'm not trying to prove anything. I just want to be able to pay my bills.

BRUCE. Think hard about this.

LAINE. I know mom is going to ask me for money when I go over there.

BRUCE. How much money do they pay when you join?

LAINE. She'd take it all if she could.

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BRUCE. You don't trust your mother?

LAINÉ. She's done it before. Once during Christmas season I gave her access to my account. It was empty in a week. Been promising me for years to pay it back.

BRUCE. Hard to imagine your mom doing that.

LAINÉ. You don't really know her.

BRUCE. She's always been nice to me.

LAINÉ. You missed out on the cruel version of mom. Didn't know her when they were both drunks. My brother got the worst of it, because of his weight and all. But, it wasn't all just dad.

BRUCE. You can just tell her, no.

LAINÉ. They're my family. I'm theirs.

BRUCE. It's your money.

LAINÉ. Yeah, and she can smell it.

BRUCE. Do you want to smoke? Take the edge off.

LAINÉ. No. I told you I'll start getting tested now. I can't.

BRUCE. That sucks.

LAINÉ. I don't even want that stuff around me.

BRUCE. So now I can't smoke?

LAINÉ. Not when I'm around, please.

BRUCE. Laine, come here.

LAINÉ. I have to go now.

BRUCE. You won't come to me?

LAINÉ. I can't talk about it right now, Bruce.

BRUCE. You never answered my question yesterday.

LAINÉ. We'll talk about it. After I get back.

BRUCE. So, you are coming back?

LAINÉ. I'm not going off to war.

BRUCE. I looked it up. They pay you more money if you're married.

LAINÉ. You looked it up?

BRUCE. I worry about you. I worry about us.

LAINÉ. Jesus, I am not joining the Navy Seals. It's the National Guard.

BRUCE. It's just not like you, Laine.

LAINÉ. They took me in.

BRUCE. They take anybody.

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LAINÉ. They do not take just anybody.

BRUCE. I'm sure that's what they told you.

LAINÉ. What else should I be doing, Bruce? I can't even afford to fix my car.

BRUCE. I help out when I can. I'm dry now but I got some big deals coming.

LAINÉ. You plan to do this forever?

BRUCE. Anyone who ever said drugs are bad has never sold them.

LAINÉ. Exactly.

BRUCE. I got plans.

LAINÉ. Get me pregnant?

BRUCE. I don't know. Get a job. Find a career I can really feel good about. *(Pause.)* Get married.

LAINÉ. I'm not staying around here until I get pregnant.

BRUCE. What if I asked you, like, formally?

LAINÉ. Yeah, what if?

BRUCE. Would you tell me no?

LAINÉ. I have to go.

BRUCE. Do you even love me anymore?

LAINÉ. Bruce...I... *(Laine hugs him. He kisses her hard. They take it onto the mattress, breathing hard. It escalates throughout their following exchange.)*

BRUCE. Don't you want to...?

LAINÉ. I have to leave.

BRUCE. Have to?

LAINÉ. Want to.

BRUCE. Need.

LAINÉ. I hate you.

BRUCE. Tell me what you need.

LAINÉ. I need my diploma.

BRUCE. You graduated? Ha!

LAINÉ. Did you?

BRUCE. You can go to your mom's any time.

LAINÉ. The recruiter needs my diploma.

BRUCE. Who?

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LAINE. My recruiter.

BRUCE. Recruiter? I just met her. Ha!

LAINE. God, you're stupid.

BRUCE. I love when you say that. *(The sounds of a thunderstorm and heavy rain. Bruce is on top of her, dominant position.)* Go to your mom's tomorrow. It's raining.

LAINE. What am I going to do with you?

BRUCE. That's not the question, baby.

LAINE. Yes, it is, Baby. *(She rolls him on to his back, gets on top of him and sits up. She pulls out the switchblade knife.)* Wouldn't want this to go off. *(She pushes the action on the knife, extending the blade, and holds it menacingly for a few moments, then casually tosses it over her shoulder. Bruce is terrified and madly in love. They embrace passionately.)*

SCENE 2

HARVEY and SAMANTHA sit at the dining table. Dinner is finished and coffee is served. Samantha reads from her phone. Harvey looks over some loose papers.

SAMANTHA. I love this time of night. Don't you?

HARVEY. Yes, Samantha. This time of night. It's OK.

SAMANTHA. It feels so safe and warm. And peaceful. *(Pause.)* But that's never been enough for you. *(No response.)* Why is that?

HARVEY. I did something today.

SAMANTHA. You didn't. You?

HARVEY. You'll be quite shocked. And maybe a bit proud of me too.

SAMANTHA. You bought me flowers?

HARVEY. Do you want to hear this or not?

SAMANTHA. *(With a sudden gasp.)* Oh. Oh! You took the position in the UK.

HARVEY. No. No, that contract award is still pending. I already told you that.

SAMANTHA. You told me Al thought it was a perfect fit for you.

HARVEY. Al talks a lot. Anyway, it's still pending. As I said.

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SAMANTHA. Oh. OK, then I give up. You did something. You ate something besides a chicken sandwich for lunch?

HARVEY. No. I did order that.

SAMANTHA. Wheat bread and American cheese.

HARVEY. Pepper jack.

SAMANTHA. Oh, since when?

HARVEY. Since today.

SAMANTHA. I am so proud of you, then.

HARVEY. I helped a girl change her flat tire today.

SAMANTHA. Oh, bullshit.

HARVEY. That's right. I did that.

SAMANTHA. Harvey.

HARVEY. What?

SAMANTHA. Seriously.

HARVEY. Now you're just trying to get me mad.

SAMANTHA. You don't know how to do that. Do you?

HARVEY. Are you telling me or asking me?

SAMANTHA. I've never seen you do that.

HARVEY. Today I did.

SAMANTHA. OK. (*Silence.*) Any witnesses or pictures?

HARVEY. I know how to change a damn tire.

SAMANTHA. I don't doubt that you understand the theory...

HARVEY. Forget it.

SAMANTHA. OK. Then tell me all about it.

HARVEY. It was raining hard when I left work. Across the street in that little shopping center, I saw this girl. And she's just standing there next to a little beat-up sedan getting soaked.

SAMANTHA. That poor thing.

HARVEY. She was holding that thing in her hand. The...lug nut loosener thing...you know?

SAMANTHA. Yes, I know what that is.

HARVEY. Whatever. Her right front tire was flat. She looked like she needed some help. So, I pulled in --

SAMANTHA. -- When you tell the story you should say lug wrench. Or tire iron. Either is fine. Much better than *lug nut loosener thing*.

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HARVEY. So, I pulled in. Beside her. And I got out.

SAMANTHA. Very noble.

HARVEY. Right. And then I asked her, I said, do you need help changing the tire?

SAMANTHA. I'll bet she was so happy to see you.

HARVEY. She says that the lug nuts are too tight. So, I used the thing, and I loosened the nuts.

SAMANTHA. You big strong beast.

HARVEY. Wasn't easy. They were tight, and I'm not as strong as I was in my prime.

SAMANTHA. God knows none of us are.

HARVEY. Right. But I finally got them off. The lug-nuts. And then I jacked up the car and...you know, changed the tire.

SAMANTHA. Jacked it up and got it done and then let it back down. Well done.

HARVEY. In the rain. Also. So, wasn't easy.

SAMANTHA. You still got it, Harvey. In very short bursts.

HARVEY. You don't believe it, do you?

SAMANTHA. I believe everything you tell me.

HARVEY. Why?

SAMANTHA. That's part of the deal.

HARVEY. Why don't you believe it?

SAMANTHA. I absolutely think you'd want to help a wet girl in the rain, Harvey. But the tire thing? It sounds...off.

HARVEY. I did it, though. That's why I changed my clothes when I got home. I was all soggy.

SAMANTHA. Maybe I'll get you a chain saw this year for your birthday.

HARVEY. It would have been easy to just keep driving and leave her there.

SAMANTHA. That would be the most predictable course of action. For you. Leave a girl wet and helpless.

HARVEY. To choose comfort and warmth in that moment.

SAMANTHA. But you chose struggle instead. Bravo.

HARVEY. You don't have to believe me.

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SAMANTHA. I wonder what made you decide to stop. *(Pause.)* I bet she was very grateful.

HARVEY. She thanked me.

SAMANTHA. I imagine that you took your shirt off to do that job.

HARVEY. No sense in ruining my good blue button-down no-iron shirt.

SAMANTHA. Stripped down to your undershirt. Working the jack.

HARVEY. That was me. Like a doughy middle-aged superhero.

SAMANTHA. And she got to stand there watching your arms and shoulders work and strain like that. Lucky girl.

HARVEY. That part is just in your mind.

SAMANTHA. She should have been able to change her own tire, though.

HARVEY. Sometimes the right person comes along just when you need them. *(Silence.)*

SAMANTHA. How old?

HARVEY. Just as I was finishing up the boyfriend finally pulls up. You believe that?

SAMANTHA. How old?

HARVEY. Just as I was bringing it down.

SAMANTHA. Harvey.

HARVEY. I don't know. She was maybe twenty. Twenty-two. Low twenties.

SAMANTHA. That boyfriend must have felt emasculated. You changing his girl's tire.

HARVEY. Sure. I do the work and he gets to take her home.

SAMANTHA. And console her. *(Pause.)*

HARVEY. I'll definitely feel it in my back tomorrow. *(Samantha stands up and begins rubbing his shoulders from behind.)*

SAMANTHA. This story of a helpless young girl reminds me of another one. But I won't dwell on it. *(She goes to leave the room.)*

HARVEY. Sam. *(She doesn't answer.)* Hey!

SAMANTHA. What?

HARVEY. Can't we just sit here and talk about things without someone storming out of the goddamn room?

SAMANTHA. I'm not storming anywhere. I was going to get more coffee.

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HARVEY. Fine.

SAMANTHA. Would you like some?

HARVEY. No, thank you. Sorry.

SAMANTHA. I really genuinely hoped you were going to tell me that you took the job in England.

HARVEY. I told you it's not up to me.

SAMANTHA. It could be great for us.

HARVEY. I'm still waiting to hear an offer from Al.

SAMANTHA. An opportunity to live abroad. New things. Fresh start. *(Pause.)* What was her name?

HARVEY. I don't know.

SAMANTHA. It never came up?

HARVEY. If she said it, I don't remember.

SAMANTHA. It didn't say on her nametag?

HARVEY. Did I say she had a nametag?

SAMANTHA. She works there doesn't she? At that diner you go to all the time.

HARVEY. There was no nametag.

SAMANTHA. You flattened the tire yourself. *(Pause.)* Then you swooped in to rescue her when she's all wet and vulnerable. That's your thing, right?

HARVEY. It was a nice thing to do.

SAMANTHA. Because maybe now she feels indebted to you. Might even let you touch her or... You never know what a girl will do if she feels grateful. Someone from that class of people. You know how they are, right? Of course you do.

HARVEY. No one goes from zero to crazy quite like you, Samantha.

SAMANTHA. Lousy son of a bitch. *(Samantha throws a coffee mug to the floor, shattering it. She storms out of the room.)*

SCENE 3

Inside JUNE's home. June wears a housecoat and sits on an old couch drinking coffee. Piles of clothes need to be sorted. Laine is helping to sort them, using an ironing board. An ashtray sits atop the ironing board with June's burning cigarette.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. Are you eating with us tonight, Laine?

LAINE. I wasn't planning to.

JUNE. Might as well eat. Long as you're here.

LAINE. What are you making?

JUNE. Just those frozen chicken pot pies I always get.

LAINE. You sure you have enough?

JUNE. I don't expect your brother to come home. He's...you know.

LAINE. I can stay.

JUNE. Nobody's forcing you.

LAINE. It's fine, mom. *(Pause.)* Will Roger be eating with us?

JUNE. He's been knocked out for a while. Pain meds.

LAINE. How in the world did a tree fall on him?

JUNE. Dustin says wasn't so much that. More like, he fell out of the tree. But the tree was also falling. So, you know...it was...

LAINE. Jesus. How bad was the damage?

JUNE. Two broken ribs. Bump on the head. Maybe a concussion.

LAINE. What are you guys gonna do?

JUNE. Dustin's been helping out. Going on jobs with Roger two or three days a week. That helps. He helps. When he can.

LAINE. What about the hospital bill?

JUNE. Let's not make a list of every single thing I have no control over right now, OK?

LAINE. Sorry.

JUNE. You ask me, *what are you going to do?* I'm not going to do anything. What can I do about it? I'm gonna sit here. The fuck you want me to do?

LAINE. Just making conversation, Mom. I'm sorry.

JUNE. I got enough anxiety as it is. And those kinds of questions don't exactly make the time pass by easy, you know. *(Pause.)* Do you think Bruce could get Roger something for the pain?

LAINE. I don't know anything about that stuff.

JUNE. You can ask him. As a favor.

LAINE. I can ask.

JUNE. Seems like it would be something up his alley. Connections and that.

THE MORAL WAIVER

LAINE. I'll ask.

JUNE. He's always welcome to come here, you know.

LAINE. He was just busy, that's all.

JUNE. He's never really liked being here. I guess I wouldn't either.

LAINE. I don't want Dustin buying anything from Bruce.

JUNE. That's his business.

LAINE. So where is Dustin?

JUNE. Your brother is down at the corner. He spends most of his time there since he met this latest one. This latest piece of work.

LAINE. Is it that bad again?

JUNE. You know how he gets.

LAINE. Yeah.

JUNE. That girl don't help. But she pays, so...you know. *(Pause.)* How long will you be gone for, Laine?

LAINE. Training is like a total of ten months or so. About ten months.

JUNE. Good lord, that long. How do we even get a hold of you?

LAINE. I don't know. I hadn't thought about that. I guess you don't.

JUNE. Are you sure it takes that long?

LAINE. It's a lot of training. There's basic training and then all the specific job stuff. That part will be really interesting. The recruiter he told me that that's kinda like going to college. And I may get even more training if I qualify for other things. Like foreign languages and stuff like that.

JUNE. What's your Army job gonna be?

LAINE. Intelligence.

JUNE. Intelligence. *(Laughing.)* Woo-hoo! I didn't know you were the James Bond type.

LAINE. That's not what it means.

JUNE. More like James Blonde, right?

LAINE. That's not what it is.

JUNE. Is that just what you hope to do? Sometimes they tell you one thing to get you to sign your name, but then...

LAINE. I qualified for it. I took a test.

JUNE. Oh. You took a test.

LAINE. It's what I signed up to do. It's in the contract.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. Well, congratulations.

LAINE. Like I said, they might even send me to learn another language. That's what the recruiter told me. That's what I'd really like to do. They send you to school for that out at this place in California.

JUNE. From sandwich maker to secret agent in ten months.

LAINE. It has nothing to do with being a secret agent.

JUNE. I always hated when your father was away like that. It's not easy.

LAINE. Soldiers go away for years sometimes.

JUNE. They go off to fight. You ain't going off to fight no one.

LAINE. I could. It's possible.

JUNE. What does Bruce think about you leaving?

LAINE. It's not up to him.

JUNE. I know that, Laine. I know that. You don't need to snap at me.

LAINE. I don't know what he thinks, Mom. He says he doesn't like it but it ain't up to him.

JUNE. Bruce always been kind of needy. Just my observation.

LAINE. Do you know where those papers are?

JUNE. The what?

LAINE. The documents. I told you that I need my diploma and...

JUNE. Oh. All that stuff is in the back bedroom closet.

LAINE. OK. Good. Can I go look?

JUNE. Don't go in there right now. Wait 'til Roger wakes up.

LAINE. Fine.

JUNE. Nobody's making you stay for dinner, Laine.

LAINE. It's fine, mom. I'm happy to wait. I just need those papers.

JUNE. All that stuff is in a box, and I know exactly where I put it.

LAINE. My recruiter needs to make copies.

JUNE. Don't worry, baby. You'll get them.

LAINE. OK.

JUNE. Are you sure you wanna go do this?

LAINE. I signed up for it.

JUNE. But why? Why now? I'm just curious.

LAINE. Because I like the idea. I like the idea better than any other I can think of right now.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. They really sold you on it, huh? Those recruiters really know what buttons to push.

LAINE. I don't think he pushed any buttons.

JUNE. Oh, you don't, huh?

LAINE. Dad always seem to like it.

JUNE. You'll be back, though.

LAINE. Are you asking me or telling me?

JUNE. You will be back. Is all what I'm saying.

LAINE. I'm not running away.

JUNE. If you're doing this to be like your dad, don't forget --

LAINE. -- I'm not doing it for him --

JUNE. -- Don't forget. Shut up for a second. It didn't change who he was.

LAINE. What does that got to do with anything?

JUNE. The Guard won't take you away from this place. You'll end up right back here.

LAINE. I am not trying to escape.

JUNE. You sure? You would be if you had any sense. And another thing about your dad --

LAINE. --That isn't why I'm --

JUNE. --Hush. Remember him for what he was.

LAINE. He had...problems.

JUNE. Problems. Yeah.

LAINE. The war didn't help.

JUNE. Oh, Jesus. The war.

LAINE. What?

JUNE. Your dad was no hero, Laine.

LAINE. He was a good soldier.

JUNE. And he never went to any goddamn war. *(Silence.)*

LAINE. He always told us that...about Iraq.

JUNE. No. Lies. He couldn't find it on a map.

LAINE. But he went away. I remember. For a long time.

JUNE. He disappeared for a long time. Yes. Then he came back.

LAINE. He told us all he'd been to Iraq. He told us stories.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. He never went there, Laine. I don't know why he told people that he did. Maybe he was ashamed that he didn't go. But some people believed him. Rude not to, I suppose. But he didn't.

LAINE. You went along with it. Did you believe him?

JUNE. I went along with it for you guys. And because I wasn't in such great shape myself.

LAINE. All those stories.

JUNE. He stole them stories from other people. Made them his own memories. And he kept adding lies on top of other lies.

LAINE. Did he ever jump out of planes?

JUNE. Jesus, no. He never did that kind of stuff, Laine. He was a laundry specialist. That was his job in the military. There ain't nuthin wrong with that, but that was his job. He washed clothes.

LAINE. Am I the only who didn't know he was full of shit? All these years, am I the only one, Mom? Does Dustin know?

JUNE. Dustin figured it out. Hell, Dustin always knew.

LAINE. Is that why dad...?

JUNE. Nobody knows why. Nobody knows why he did it.

LAINE. He lied to us. Like some child on the playground.

JUNE. The man never faced a day of danger in the Army.

LAINE. I believed him.

JUNE. You were young, sweetheart. You didn't know him.

LAINE. I know how he treated you guys. I just always figured he had reasons.

JUNE. I'm sure he did. Had nothing to do with any war. *(Silence.)* And don't forget about the cat.

LAINE. I know.

JUNE. Because that did happen. No matter what Dustin told you.

LAINE. I know, Mom.

JUNE. That's really all you need to know about the man.

LAINE. All those fucking stories. *(We hear a groggy voice from off, coming from the back room cry out, "June!")*

JUNE. Roger needs me.

THE MORAL WAIVER

SCENE 4

Bruce and Harvey are seated at a table inside Laine's diner.

HARVEY. How do you know my name?

BRUCE. I didn't until I called out, Harvey, and you looked over.

HARVEY. So, you've been sitting here calling out the name Harvey to everyone comes in.

BRUCE. Just ones that look like you.

HARVEY. Ruggedly handsome ones.

BRUCE. Old and harmless. That's how Laine described you, by the way. Just so you know.

HARVEY. It would be foolish to try and fight the facts there.

BRUCE. You think you're just allowed to write her letters and...?

HARVEY. You're not making any sense to me.

BRUCE. Maybe it's a generational thing.

HARVEY. Could be.

BRUCE. To write things to her like that. What gives you that...right?

HARVEY. She shared that with you?

BRUCE. That's right.

HARVEY. It's not really your business, is it?

BRUCE. It is.

HARVEY. Why?

BRUCE. Because you're trying to fuck my girlfriend. *(Pause.)* Or marry her. I don't fuckin know what you want.

HARVEY. I think I'll leave now. Nice meeting you.

BRUCE. Bruce. That's what my girlfriend Laine calls me.

HARVEY. Bruce.

BRUCE. How old are you?

HARVEY. I'm not trying to have sex with your girlfriend, Bruce. So how about you turn it down a notch.

BRUCE. Then why you coming here to see her every day. And passing her rather lengthy writings and such?

HARVEY. I eat here because I like the food. It's close to work. I'm a creature of habit.

THE MORAL WAIVER

BRUCE. Are you some kind of artist?

HARVEY. No. I'm a boring guy in a boring job. Always have been. I grew old and now I have these visions of grasping at some sort of salvation or escape. So, I write stories. I wrote one about her, about Laine, and I wanted her to read it.

BRUCE. You wrote one about her. What's she to you? Laine your salvation?

HARVEY. Laine was the inspiration for a character I created. I thought she might like to know.

BRUCE. Why do you think that she would like to know that?

HARVEY. To know she inspired something beautiful. I don't know. Wouldn't you like to know that?

BRUCE. You think your writing is beautiful?

HARVEY. I have no idea.

BRUCE. It's not.

HARVEY. Oh.

BRUCE. Now you have an idea. You guys are pretty close friends then?

HARVEY. Is that what she said about me?

BRUCE. No. But I always assume she's hiding more than she's telling. And I figured maybe you and her have something going.

HARVEY. Now what do you think?

BRUCE. Seems unlikely. Not her type.

HARVEY. Look. I talk to her and ask her how she's doing. That's it. I order a sandwich. She gives me refills on coffee. That's it.

BRUCE. She knows your name.

HARVEY. I come in here quite a lot.

BRUCE. You know she's leaving? Yeah. She joined the military. Army I think. I don't know how that shit works. But she's going away.

HARVEY. For how long?

BRUCE. For a long while.

HARVEY. I didn't know.

BRUCE. That's right.

HARVEY. That's too bad. I'll miss her.

BRUCE. I got a feeling she's not coming back. I doubt she's ever coming back.

THE MORAL WAIVER

HARVEY. She say that?

BRUCE. Just a feeling.

HARVEY. You're her boyfriend. You know her best.

BRUCE. Yeah.

HARVEY. Don't you?

BRUCE. I don't know. Better than you, but...

HARVEY. I wasn't trying to hurt your relationship, Bruce. I didn't even know you existed. You seem like an OK guy.

BRUCE. Thank you.

HARVEY. Shall we leave it at that?

BRUCE. I known her for a long time. We've been together for a long time. Live together, you know?

HARVEY. You must really love each other then.

BRUCE. Yeah, we been sleeping together for...four five years.

HARVEY. In a row?

BRUCE. Off and on. Like anyone. And yeah, I love her. What about you?

HARVEY. What about me?

BRUCE. Are you in love with her?

HARVEY. If I said, yes, I'd look pretty...creepy.

BRUCE. Kind of pathetic.

HARVEY. I'm not in love with your girlfriend.

BRUCE. That's right because you don't even know her.

HARVEY. That's right. Not like you.

BRUCE. So quit giving her shit.

HARVEY. You are a lucky man.

BRUCE. Your wife know that you get your artistic inspirations from a girl barely out of high school?

HARVEY. I would never bother my wife with those sorts of details about my inner life.

BRUCE. That's a shame.

HARVEY. Why is it a shame?

BRUCE. You should share things with the person you love. You owe it to them.

HARVEY. Everything?

BRUCE. What if someone told her?

THE MORAL WAIVER

HARVEY. Is there something I can help you with, Bruce?

BRUCE. How you gonna help me?

HARVEY. You're mad about the story I wrote for Laine, so you came in here to see me. I apologize for what I did. OK? So, what are we doing?

BRUCE. What do you love most about her, Harvey?

HARVEY. You're tugging on this like a loose tooth. Do you want the pain to stop, or are you having too much fun here?

BRUCE. You know she practically comes from the trailer park? Her people, I mean. Her folks' house smells pretty awful. What do you think about that?

HARVEY. Does that matter to you?

BRUCE. You don't look like you move in those circles.

HARVEY. Where someone comes from doesn't matter.

BRUCE. Or is trailer trash your thing?

HARVEY. Why would it be my thing?

BRUCE. Some people like that. Maybe you think that someone like that will be more thankful when they get some attention. Or maybe you think she's a slut.

HARVEY. Is that what you think she is?

BRUCE. Never said that.

HARVEY. I just gave her something to read.

BRUCE. No, you wrote something for here to read. There's a lot more thought and effort in that. Anyway, Laine doesn't read stuff like that.

HARVEY. Laine is nice to me. I wanted to do something nice for her.

BRUCE. She gets paid to be nice to you.

HARVEY. Probably not enough.

BRUCE. You still get it up at your age?

HARVEY. How old do you think I am, Bruce?

BRUCE. No, I didn't mean that as a cut.

HARVEY. You want to fight or something?

BRUCE. No. You couldn't beat me. Probably.

HARVEY. Would you like to order something to eat?

BRUCE. Her smile, right? That's what did it? She smiled at you.

HARVEY. Yeah. That's about it. I come in here one day and I saw her smile. Then I knew I wanted to come in every day.

THE MORAL WAIVER

BRUCE. You jerk off to her? You do. That's OK, I guess. Free country. Do it while you're still able. *(Silence.)* She ain't really even the third hottest girl works here. I been benching two-twenty-five lately. You bench? You lift? *(Silence.)*

HARVEY. Feel better?

BRUCE. Not really.

HARVEY. Because she's probably not coming back, huh? *(Silence.)* Her bottom lip.

BRUCE. What?

HARVEY. If I had to pick something about her.

BRUCE. That it?

HARVEY. When she talks, if the angle is just right, the vibrations of her voice do something amazing to the back of my neck.

BRUCE. Really raises your pulse, huh?

HARVEY. And she has a sweet smile. Not so easily given out.

BRUCE. She flirts with you for the tip. You know that, right? And just so you know, Harvey. I've had my tongue on every inch of her body.

HARVEY. Congratulations, Bruce.

BRUCE. Got pictures of her, too. Stuff she sent me. Good ones. *(Pause.)* Yeah, she showed me the thing you wrote.

HARVEY. What did you think?

BRUCE. I didn't read it.

HARVEY. Then what are you so mad about?

BRUCE. I ain't mad anymore.

HARVEY. Can I ask you a serious question, Bruce?

BRUCE. You want me show you some of them pictures of her?

HARVEY. No. I don't want you to do that.

BRUCE. They're good ones. She wanted me to take them.

HARVEY. What do you want me to do for you, Bruce? *(Silence.)*

BRUCE. Do you know how I can make her stay with me?

HARVEY. Once Laine goes out there and sees the world you think you might be in some trouble?

BRUCE. No. Yes. Fuck.

HARVEY. Even though two-fifteen is a pretty solid bench.

BRUCE. Two-twenty-five.

THE MORAL WAIVER

HARVEY. Of course. Sorry.

BRUCE. She gets around all them Army guys it's probably game over for me. Right?

HARVEY. You always got your memories. And your pictures you keep going on about.

BRUCE. Help me.

HARVEY. Help you what?

BRUCE. Help me, please.

HARVEY. No, that's not what I...meant.

BRUCE. Please. C'mon man. Please. *(Silence.)*

HARVEY. I'm hungry. Let's order.

SCENE 5

Inside June's home. She and Laine have eaten dinner and are drinking coffee at a small table. June will receive and answer texts from her drunk son, Dustin, throughout the scene. Laine's phone gets texts from him too but she ignores them.

JUNE. The asshole keeps texting me.

LAINE. I stopped answering him an hour ago.

JUNE. I know, right? Smoke?

LAINE. No. I can't. Drug tests. I told you that.

JUNE. Oh, yeah. Sorry. What was I thinking?

LAINE. I'll take a cigarette if you have one.

JUNE. My last. Sorry. I told Dustin to pick some up. But it don't look like he'll be home anytime soon.

LAINE. Roger looked really miserable during dinner.

JUNE. Don't take the stuff he says personal, Laine. He's in a lot of pain.

LAINE. It's fine. He wasn't expecting to see me. I understand. I know how he gets. *(Silence.)* How are you doing with all this, mom?

JUNE. Dustin says he's got a chance for a barge. I mean a job on a barge.

LAINE. Terrific.

JUNE. A buddy of his might be able to get him on.

THE MORAL WAIVER

LAINE. That sounds interesting. You know? Like something Dustin would actually enjoy.

JUNE. They drug test.

LAINE. Oh.

JUNE. That's why there's always openings. But it's decent money. He'd get away from here for weeks at a time. And away from her.

LAINE. Good for him. I hope he doesn't blow the chance.

JUNE. We really could use it.

LAINE. I can see Dustin out on the river. Standing around smoking, watching the sun go down. When he's not drinking, he's really a peaceful soul. Almost.

JUNE. He can't drink out on the barge.

LAINE. Isn't that a good thing?

JUNE. Laine, how are you set for money? (*Laine shrugs.*) Seems like you're getting a lot of hours these days.

LAINE. I had to pay the rent, the whole rent, this month. And I just paid to get the stupid air conditioning fixed in Bruce's car. We'll see when he pays that back.

JUNE. I don't know what we'll do around here after you leave.

LAINE. I'm not leaving the country, Mom.

JUNE. I'm just worried about you, is all.

LAINE. I'm gonna be fine. Just a little scared.

JUNE. I know.

LAINE. And you guys won't starve.

JUNE. Sometimes I wish this whole place would just burn the fuck down. With me sitting right in the middle. (*Silence.*)

LAINE. Do you need more coffee?

JUNE. I was just thinking the same thing. (*Laine gets up to retrieve the coffee pot. June checks her text messages.*) So how will they pay you while you're out there doing all that training?

LAINE. Twice a month.

JUNE. Twice a month and right into your bank account.

LAINE. That's right.

JUNE. What do they start you out at?

LAINE. Not a whole lot as just a private.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. More than what you make now, I'd imagine.

LAINE. It's a bit more.

JUNE. At least it's steady. And you'll be too busy to spend it. *(Silence.)*

LAINE. It will be nice not to think about it.

JUNE. Will I be able to reach you while you're doing all that stuff?

LAINE. The recruiter says I should plan on being out of contact. No phones or nothing like that, for at least a month. After that they ease off a bit on the restrictions.

JUNE. I was wondering, Laine. And I hate to ask this of you, sweetheart.

LAINE. What is it, Mom? *(We hear a voice from off, coming from the back room cry out, "June!")*

JUNE. Roger wants some coffee. *(As she goes to take him the coffee.)* I was wondering. Would it be at all possible to get access to your account while you're away?

LAINE. For you to get access to my account. My bank account? I don't...why?

JUNE. Just while you're gone on all that training. For emergencies and, you know, stuff like that.

LAINE. Just you?

JUNE. Of course. Just me.

LAINE. *(Lowers her voice.)* What about Roger?

JUNE. Just me. Only me. I'd be in charge.

LAINE. But he would know. And Dustin would know too.

JUNE. For emergencies, Laine. *(Silence.)*

LAINE. I suppose we could set that up, but...No. No, Mom. I don't think that...

JUNE. Because, you know, it's not like I just can call you up and bother you while you're out there doing all that training and stuff.

LAINE. What kind of emergencies do you mean?

JUNE. *(Lowering her voice.)* Roger can't really work. You seen tonight what condition he's in. There's bound to be more appointments and more doctors. Winter's coming.

LAINE. I see, but...I don't...I'd rather not give anybody access to my money.

JUNE. I'm not just anybody.

THE MORAL WAIVER

LAINE. I know, Mom.

JUNE. We need to heat the place.

LAINE. Because we tried that before.

JUNE. I'm going to pay that back, sweetheart.

LAINE. How? (*Silence.*)

JUNE. That's a hell of a thing to ask your mom.

LAINE. I know and I hate myself for asking, but I keep on asking because I don't see a way. (*Referring to June's phone vibrating.*) What does Dustin want?

JUNE. He's being an asshole. Like he gets.

LAINE. What does he say?

JUNE. He says, tell Laine that I say good luck with all them push-ups you're gonna have to do.

LAINE. I won't be unreachable. I'm not disappearing off the earth. Not escaping.

JUNE. I just thought it would be easier for all of us if...

LAINE. If you guys need help then write to me, or whatever. I'll get it to you. (*Texting.*) I can handle the push-ups, asshole.

JUNE. (*Reading the phone.*) He says they make you do a lot of running too. And you ain't never been an athlete.

LAINE. Tell him that I said I'm not fifty pounds overweight either.

JUNE. Don't start with that.

LAINE. What's he saying now?

JUNE. Says, you've never even held a gun. Now that's not true. Is it, Laine? Remember when your dad tried showing you how? You cried because of how scared you were. Suppose you can't cry in the Army.

LAINE. I was a scared child.

JUNE. I'm scared now, Laine.

LAINE. Of what, Mom? I always help you. Don't I always help you?

JUNE. You do. You were always the one. I'm afraid of not having you when we need you.

LAINE. And tell Dustin that I said to go sign up himself if he's so goddamn tough.

JUNE. (*Reading a text.*) He says, you'll probably quit first time they start yelling at you.

THE MORAL WAIVER

LAINE. Tell him to fuck off. And that he's a lazy piece of shit.

JUNE. I'm afraid, Laine. Afraid of sinking into this pit. Now more than I ever was.

LAINE. You won't sink, mom.

JUNE. If we had access to your account, then at least things wouldn't feel so hopeless.

LAINE. If Randy's barge job comes through, then you guys will be doing all right. Right?

JUNE. He won't stop drinking. He just won't. And Roger is...Roger is going to keep taking too many of those pills. I can see the dang future. Not the future of the world like I'm a prophet. But definitely the future of this house. And it...it's hell.

LAINE. Things have always been bleak. And we muddled through. Always. I don't want to do that anymore. Just muddle through until I get pregnant.

JUNE. Do they still cut all your hair off the first day?

LAINE. They don't shave your head in the Army. Not the females. Mom...*(Knocking on the front door. JUNE goes to the window.)*

JUNE. I just don't know.

LAINE. Mom, we'll figure something out.

JUNE. *(Looking out the window.)* Bruce is outside.

LAINE. What the hell? Why?

JUNE. How should I know? You didn't know he was coming?

LAINE. I didn't know he was coming.

JUNE. He seems to be carrying flowers. And chocolate? That's peculiar, Laine. *(June send a text.)*

LAINE. Oh no.

JUNE. Dustin says to tell you that you should say, yes. *(A voice from off cries out, "June!")*

SCENE 6

Ten minutes later. Laine and Bruce on the front porch.

LAINE. You had no right to do that in front of her. In front of them.

THE MORAL WAIVER

BRUCE. It wasn't meant as an insult.

LAINE. You put me on the spot. And now she knows. They all know.

BRUCE. So what?

LAINE. Everything in my life is not everybody's fucking business.

BRUCE. Jesus, Laine. I was hoping you would be happy about this.

LAINE. I can't give you what you want right now.

BRUCE. Can't you tell me why? Laine?

LAINE. And I told you we need to talk about this later.

BRUCE. Will you at least wear the ring? Until you make up your mind.

LAINE. How could you afford this?

BRUCE. I'm not worried about that right now.

LAINE. I am. I am worried about that. (*Lowering voice.*)

BRUCE. It's nothing. Trust me.

LAINE. My mom is desperate to pay bills and buy food and terrified they'll freeze to death, and you come to the door with this?

BRUCE. I can't stand the thought of you going away, Laine.

LAINE. So, you buy me this and I am obligated to stay. Is that it?

BRUCE. I'm not trying to buy you. That's not what I meant. If you have to go away then I want you to want to come back.

LAINE. It's a nice ring. (*Checks her phone.*)

JUNE. (*From inside the house.*) You see what Dustin just texted?

BRUCE. What did he say?

LAINE. He says he'll marry you, Bruce. Just for the free weed.

BRUCE. I talked to your friend Harvey.

LAINE. What did you do, Bruce?

BRUCE. Nothing. We talked and...Harvey and me, and he...loaned me the money for the ring.

LAINE. Oh God, Bruce. You're sitting on my chest. Trying to pin me down.

BRUCE. No! You make me sound like some kind of a creep. I just want to marry you.

LAINE. I don't have an answer for you, Bruce.

BRUCE. Just tell me that you'll come back.

LAINE. I'm not running away! Where am I gonna' go?

BRUCE. What should I do about the rent?

THE MORAL WAIVER

LAINE. Is this why you want to marry me so bad? So that I'm obligated to pay your rent?

BRUCE. It might not be so easy to transfer money from a fox hole in the woods or whatever.

LAINE. I won't stiff you, Bruce. I promise.

BRUCE. But it's easier to have the money go into a joint account.

LAINE. A joint account.

BRUCE. And plus, if you get married they pay you more money in the Army. I looked it up.

LAINE. You looked it up.

JUNE. *(From just inside, through a window.)* He's right. That's true, Laine.

BRUCE. If you're coming back anyway then what's the big deal? *(June has slowly come outside onto the porch.)*

JUNE. What if there's some emergency, Laine? What then?

LAINE. Jesus, I don't know, Mom. Call fucking 9-11! *(Laine's phone vibrates. She reads it, angrily makes a call.)*

LAINE. Dustin, go fuck yourself you fat pathetic drunk!

JUNE. Laine!

BRUCE. You shouldn't talk to him like that.

LAINE. Yeah, get a job and be a fucking man. You too. *(She ends the call.)* Shut up, Bruce.

BRUCE. They're your family.

JUNE. Laine, you do as you please, but I don't want to freeze to death this winter.

LAINE. Set fire to this place and go south, Mom. *(Silence.)* I'm sorry.

JUNE. Only income I got now is what I get cleaning the church.

LAINE. You are not getting access to my money, Mom. You have two grown sons. Let them go sign up. I mean they'll take anybody, right, Bruce? They don't even care about Dustin's breaking and entering charge. They have moral waivers for all that stuff now. God, I hope that they send me off to the war. I'm not coming back here. I am not living in this fucking town anymore.

JUNE. We can get by, Laine, but I'm so scared.

LAINE. I won't let anything bad happen to you.

THE MORAL WAIVER

JUNE. I've been taking Roger's pain meds just so I can sleep.

LAINE. I'm sorry that Roger got hurt. But I cannot...I cannot just hand over all of my money to you.

BRUCE. It's your mom, Laine. Don't yell at her.

LAINE. *(Ferociously.)* I know who she is! *(Silence.)*

JUNE. And I know who you are. Miss Intelligence. *(June goes back inside the house.)*

LAINE. I need my papers.

BRUCE. Maybe you shouldn't go in right now.

LAINE. I'm not leaving without them. You are not going to tie me down to this place. *(Bruce holds out his hand to Laine but she doesn't take it. June comes back outside with a box. She finds a picture on top of a pile of papers that stops her cold; she breaks down crying.)*

JUNE. It's all there. Everything they tell you to keep. You don't need to dig through it right here. Just take it all. It's OK.

LAINE. Mom. I didn't...please. Please understand me. *(We hear from inside a voice calling, "June!")*

JUNE. It's OK, Laine. It will be OK.

END OF ACT 1

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS--
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