PERFECTLY NORMAL

By
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for all the women in my life

PERFECTLY NORMAL

CHARACTERS:

CASSANDRA: (29 years old) Daughter of Gillian and Arthur. Older sister of Mitchel. Producer's Associate at a local NYC news station. Single. Lives in New York City. Witty and sharp. Career driven.

GILLIAN: (mid 50's) Mother of Cassandra and Mitchel. Wife of Arthur. Stay at home Mom/Wife. Unfulfilled. Values outward appearances.

ARTHUR: (late 50's) Father of Cassandra and Mitchel. Husband of Gillian. CEO of his own company. Oblivious to the realities around him.

JACOB: (early 30's) Person of Color. Executive Assistant of Arthur. Newly married. A lackey, yet shrewd. Former boyfriend of Cassandra.

MITCHEL: (18 years old) Son of Arthur and Gillian. Brother of Cassandra. Student at Yale. Disabled. He had an accident in Freshman year of high-school and it has affected his leg and his mobility.

TIME & PLACE:
Present day. Affluent town in Connecticut.

ACT 1 & 2: All takes place in the kitchen of Gillian and Arthur's home.

SETTING:
The kitchen is modern and grand in every way with granite counters and chef's quality appliances. The size and style indicates it is part of a mansion-size house. It is spotlessly clean and there are fresh flowers in a vase on the counter. One door leads to inside the house, the back door leads outside onto the patio.

AUTHORS NOTE: when *(beat)* is present, it is a moment of a breath and/or intention change.

This play is intended to be performed with an intermission between Act 1 and 2.

PERFECTLY NORMAL

ACT 1

SCENE 1

Early evening. The kitchen. ARTHUR (wears a crisp white dress shirt and a dark well-tailored suit jacket, suit pants, and fine leather shoes-no tie) sits at the kitchen counter completely engrossed in his phone. GILLIAN (dressed and coiffed to the nines in designer clothes and millionaire level jewelry) sits looking through a fabric sample book. They have their dinner in front of them. Gillian stops, looks at Arthur and almost says something but doesn't. She goes back to looking at the sample book. A moment passes. She stops again, looks at Arthur and almost says something, but again doesn't. She returns looking at her sample book and picks at her food.

GILLIAN. I think I'll definitely find something in here that I like.
ARTHUR. *(Distracted)* Uh-huh.
GILLIAN. The fabric samples.
ARTHUR. Yeah.
GILLIAN. It's going to look beautiful when it's done.
ARTHUR. Sure it will.
GILLIAN. Maybe I'll set up the painters.
ARTHUR. Okay. *(Gillian again looks up at Arthur, he's still distracted, she almost says something then goes back to her dinner and sample book. A long moment.)*
GILLIAN. I spoke with Cass today. She says one of the journalists at her job mentioned she was thinking about redesigning her apartment.
ARTHUR. *(Looks up from his phone)* Someone at her job?
GILLIAN. Yeah...she wants me to do it. Actually, she insisted. And I was thinking...maybe, possibly...I'm not sure though, it's been so long since I've worked professionally.

ARTHUR. What about our porch?
GILLIAN. Arthur, we call it a sun-room.
ARTHUR. Okay. Our sun room?
GILLIAN. I can do both.
ARTHUR. I know you can. *(Gets up and kisses her on the cheek. Walks over to the refrigerator, opens it and looks in.)*
GILLIAN. Really, I can.
ARTHUR. I know. That's what I just said Gillian.
GILLIAN. Wasn't I able to attend all those charity ribbon cutting ceremonies they honor you at *while* finishing that major renovation upstairs? And tearing down the ceiling to have the beams exposed was no small task. Work-men everywhere!
ARTHUR. *(More intimate, flirtatious)* You know we have the employee's holiday party coming up in a few short months and everyone's going to want to see the sunroom. It'll be the showcase of your talents. No one can give it your touch. But, I wouldn't want you to get overwhelmed. We can hire a designer if it's too much for you.
GILLIAN. It was just a thought, that's all. I'll do the sun room of course.
ARTHUR. Whatever you want dear. *(Arthur goes back to his phone. A moment.)*
GILLIAN. Mitch finally called. Yale is keeping him so busy, he barely has time to talk to his own mother.
ARTHUR. Yeah, well. He's a freshman. He's occupied.
GILLIAN. I miss our Sunday dinners. Cassandra with her career, Mitch now away at college...
ARTHUR. That's what happens.
GILLIAN. *(Notices Arthur still on his phone)* Can you please put down that phone for just one minute?
ARTHUR. There's something...the merger. I have to deal with the merger.
GILLIAN. Now? At dinner? *(Gillian gets the bottle of wine and pours more in Arthur's glass, then even more in her glass.)*
ARTHUR. Oh, and ah, Jacob needs to stop by later.
GILLIAN. Jacob? So late?

ARTHUR. Yeah. We need to go through some things. You'll probably be in bed by then.
GILLIAN. Still can't believe you hired him, despite...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Gillian, I told you, I needed a new assistant. The last one didn't understand what was required of him and he had to be let go. *(Arthur begins to exit.)*
GILLIAN. Arthur. Dinner.
ARTHUR. Gillian. Work. *(He exits. Gillian sits for a long moment in her aloneness and stares at both plates of food and then drinks both glasses of wine.)*

SCENE 2

Later that same night. Gillian's fabric samples are on the counter. Arthur is searching through all the kitchen cabinets. JACOB (wearing a suit and tie) sits on a kitchen stool next to two crystal rocks glasses and a fine-looking bottle of Scotch.

ARTHUR. Gillian just went to bed so keep it down. *(He continues to search)* God dammit! Where is it? *(Jacob pours Arthur some Scotch then pours himself some. Examines the bottle. Takes a sip.)*
JACOB. Everyone these days is so sensitive. I bet in the good old days, it was all your call and no one questioned that...musta been nice. *(Notices Arthur still searching)* Do you always put it in here? Odd place.
ARTHUR. I thought I put some in one of these cabinets in a sealed Stevia container. Gillian thinks I use lots of sweetener. *(Beat)* Damn. Maid probably threw it away.
JACOB. Do you keep any in your study?
ARTHUR. I finished up what I had in there the other night. Why don't you be useful and call someone.
JACOB. Um, sure. *(Takes out his phone and begins to make a call.)*
ARTHUR. *(Stops searching.)* I probably did it and don't remember. I stash Stevia everywhere...though sometimes it is actually Stevia. Ah, never mind. It's late anyway. Hey, did you change that appointment for tomorrow?

JACOB. Yes Arthur.
ARTHUR. And the report?
JACOB. *(Puts his phone away. Gets a folder out of his messenger bag and hands it to Arthur.)* Right here. *(Beat)* We know there's a system in place that we all just have to deal with. It's not our fault. We didn't invent it. *(Notices Arthur looking through papers)* It's what you asked for.
ARTHUR. I'm aware of that. Damn Board meeting was called behind my back.
JACOB. I know you're aware and that's why I brought some fine Scotch right here...for the man of the hour. *(He hands Arthur the Scotch.)* Try that. *(Arthur's perplexed yet takes a sip of Scotch anyway.)* Now, no worries. Your general council has contacted *the best* crisis team. This will all go away. It'll hardly leave a scratch. Standard procedures are in place.
ARTHUR. Standard for others, but this time seems more involved and with the papers almost signed for the merger, we can't risk anything. Thankfully I have all faith in my council. They got the press off my ass when asking me to comment.
JACOB. The press has already contacted you? That was fast.
ARTHUR. They got them to hold off for the moment. We just got to get through this merger. After that, everyone will be at our mercy. This company will finally be what my father imagined it would.
JACOB. Your father must have been quite something.
ARTHUR. He was all business. His initial investment made this company what it is today. He had a vision. No time for bullshit. I'll tell ya, even when I was a kid, I saw how he dealt with these situations.
JACOB. Your crisis management people, Sam and Robert, just spoke to me. Got off the phone with them as I was rushing over. So, just to be clear, you said you had private meetings?
ARTHUR. That's what I said.
JACOB. And you think this is an intentional strategy?
ARTHUR. Didn't we go over this already?

JACOB. Yes. I just want to be thorough. They may contact me again. Is there anything else I should know? Any details that may help? Even the smallest something?
ARTHUR. I've already told you everything to say to them. I know you're new to this, but I assume you know to always talk to me first, before talking to anyone...even people I hire. Understand?
JACOB. Of course Arthur. I value my position as your Executive Assistant and I know the deal. And Sam and Robert know how to take care of things.
ARTHUR. I don't need this on my plate right now.
JACOB. It's all under control. *(Arthur takes another sip of Scotch. A moment.)*
ARTHUR. This is the most beautiful Scotch.
JACOB. I got it on my last trip to London. I know a man in Kensington who has a private collection...said there were only about a dozen bottles left in the world. These old scotch making brothers, the Pattinsons, made this for decades. But, they got over confident and flamboyant with their business style and got brought down. Both went to jail and the company was shut down. A shame. Some damn good stuff. I figured we'd have an occasion to drink it.
ARTHUR. This is not exactly an occasion.
JACOB. Oh, but it is. When you come out of this looking like you were set up, the public will give you sympathy and the merger will go through. Your company stock will soar. *(Gillian enters.)*
GILLIAN. Oh, Jacob. Here so late?
JACOB. Yes, well...
GILLIAN. Arthur, do you let this boy have time with his new wife? How is she, by the way?
JACOB. She's great. She's been getting into gardening lately. Herbs, flowers, that sorta stuff.
GILLIAN. Ah, gardening? How wonderful. I wish you many years of happiness in your marriage like me and Arthur have.
JACOB. I hope my marriage can be just as strong as yours is.
ARTHUR. Gillian, we were having a meeting.
GILLIAN. I was just coming down for some tea.

ARTHUR. Why don't I make you some and bring it up? We'll be done here in a few minutes anyway.
GILLIAN. *(Beat)* Okay. *(To Jacob as she begins to exit)* Tell your wife I say hi.
JACOB. Will do. *(Gillian exits. Stalling so Gillian does not hear)* As I was saying, this was aged in oak barrels from the seventeenth century. Now, distillers are working on new techniques. Who knows, Scotch made like this may soon be a thing of the past. *(Jacob holds up his glass to toast Arthur. Clink. They both take a sip.)*
ARTHUR. Enough of that, let's get back to the present...Jacob, we got to play this carefully. *(Beat)* Hey, after this is all settled, let's see if we can't find you a position that's more suited to your qualifications. *(Arthur almost exits.)* You know how to make tea, right?
JACOB. Yes.
ARTHUR. Make Gillian a cup. I got to head to my study for a minute. *(He takes the folder as he exits.)*
JACOB. Thank you for this opportunity Sir...despite...
ARTHUR. Just make the tea.

SCENE 3

The next evening. CASSANDRA (wears jeans and a sweater, nothing indicating wealth). She looks through the refrigerator. She calls out to Gillian.

CASSANDRA. Is there a ros*é* in here? *(Gillian Enters holding two different styles of light bulbs.)*
GILLIAN. What was that?
CASSANDRA. I know you always keep a chilled ros*é* ready at a moment's notice.
GILLIAN. What did I do to deserve this impromptu visit?
CASSANDRA. You said, every time I come by there's wine in it for me. And though I fully appreciate the bribe, I'm ready to cash in.
GILLIAN. It was not a bribe.

CASSANDRA. *(Overly exaggerating an imitation of Gillian as if she was on the phone with her)* "Cassandra. Would you be a dear and come have dinner with me when you have a spare moment for your mother? I know you're always busy in that big city. I'll have some wine chilled for you."
GILLIAN. I do not sound like that.
CASSANDRA. Sure.
GILLIAN. Wait...are you here to get me to redesign that journalist's apartment? I have the sun room and I'm working on our employees holiday party coming up in a few months. That'll keep me plenty busy.
CASSANDRA. Can't I just visit my Mom, jeez. *(Beat)* You would give it just the right touch though. I saw your old portfolios. They are amazing. Like Architectural Digest cover worthy! You'd bring so much to her place with your fashion sense.
GILLIAN. I integrated women's decor into offices in the eighties. Is that what she wants?
CASSANDRA. Yes, that's the appeal. *(Off Gillian's look)* I know you can do both. You know what I'll do...I'll let her know you'll do it.
GILLIAN. Wait a minute wait a minute...don't go through my boxes for my portfolios. You know that! And I didn't agree to any job. I knew there was a reason for your visit...not just for wine. *(She turns and gets her fabric sample book off the counter and holds out both lightbulbs.)*
CASSANDRA. Actually, there was something that...
GILLIAN. *(Cuts her off)* Since you're here, which do you like better for the sun room I'm redecorating?
CASSANDRA. Well if there's sun, why do you need light bulbs?
GILLIAN. Which one?
CASSANDRA. ***(****Points to one)* That one.
GILLIAN. *(Referring to the one she didn't pick)* This one it is then. Just wanted to confirm what I already decided.
CASSANDRA. *(overlap)* Mom! *(She notices a huge diamond ring on Gillian's finger.)*
CASSANDRA. Wait. *(She grabs Gillian's finger)* What is this? I never saw this one before?

GILLIAN. Your father surprised me with this out-of-the-blue last week for no reason...'just because'. *(Beat)* Wine's in the bottom...
CASSANDRA. *(She finds the wine, opens it and pours herself a full glass.)* Ah, Mom...
GILLIAN....and I wanted to mention before I forget, don't get any ideas about buying some New York big city apartment. You mentioned it last when you called. We said, we'll buy you a place when you give me grandchildren...or at least when you're married.
CASSANDRA. I've only been looking into what's out there. Plus, I'd love to put my rent into a mortgage. *(She looks through the refrigerator and pulls out some food to snack on.)*
GILLIAN. Cass, you work too much. Take some time for yourself. Start dating again.
CASSANDRA. I need some time after Jacob....well, you know...and I want to focus on my career for the moment. *(Beat)* Mom, I....
GILLIAN. *(Cuts her off)* Work, work, work, just like your father. And he had the nerve to have Jacob here late last night going over some business stuff. I popped in, of course, to see how his new wife is doing.
CASSANDRA. I don't want to know.
GILLIAN. She's gardening! He should be bored with her any day now.
CASSANDRA. Please. I don't want to hear about it. And just so you know, being single isn't as bad as you might think. *(Beat)* Mom...
GILLIAN. *(Cuts her off)* Family is the priority...I've always said that. Now that Mitchel is away at Yale, and you are always working, doesn't seem to take much for the family to slip away.
CASSANDRA. Still can't believe Mitch got in.
GILLIAN. Yes, well, your father did donate a lot of money there.
CASSANDRA. *(Beat)* Uh...what now? You never told me that?
GILLIAN. Oh Cass, business has been really good the last few years and Mitch needed a little help.
CASSANDRA. Really? I can't believe this.
GILLIAN. Things were different when you went to college. You went to Fairfield. You got a nice job. Local news in New York City is still something honey.

CASSANDRA. Well, yeah, work can be fulfilling...crazy as that may sound. I work my butt off...
GILLIAN. Cass, relax dear. *(She goes back to her lightbulbs and book.)*
CASSANDRA. Ah, sorry. I didn't come here to argue. *(She gulps down her glass of wine. A moment.)* Mom. *(No response.)* Mom.
GILLIAN. Yes? *(Beat)* Cassandra you look pale.
CASSANDRA. I didn't just come for the wine.... *(Gillian shows Cassandra the sample book and the lightbulb.)*
GILLIAN. You want to help redecorate with me? Okay. Let's look at fixture options.
CASSANDRA. Mom. I was saying something.
GILLIAN. What were you saying?
CASSANDRA. You have to listen to me this time.
GILLIAN. Oh Cass, you know I do. I was just looking through the samples, that's all. *(Cassandra grabs the lightbulb and sample books out of Gillian's hands.)*
CASSANDRA. Mom!
GILLIAN. Cassandra!?
CASSANDRA. Stop interrupting me! I have to tell you something and you need to listen. Sit. Please. *(Hearing a door open from outside)* What's that?
ARTHUR. *(From off)* Gillian?
GILLIAN. In here. *(To Cassandra)* It's your father dear. *(Arthur enters holding a leather business folder.)*
ARTHUR. Cass! Come over and give your Dad one of your famous hugs. *(Cassandra awkwardly hugs Arthur. While they're hugging)* Finally, I get to see my princess. You hardly ever call me anymore.
CASSANDRA. Every time I call you're busy. But, I surprised Mom with a visit.
GILLIAN. Arthur, I didn't expect you for a few more hours?
ARTHUR. I have to get something from my study. Then an important conference call. *(He mechanically kisses Gillian on the cheek then he looks in the refrigerator, doesn't find anything he wants. He goes into the cabinet, gets a glass and pours himself a Scotch.)*

GILLIAN. What time is it?
CASSANDRA. *(Looks at her watch)* 6:15.
GILLIAN. Oh no. I completely forgot I ordered dinner from our favorite bistro tonight. The chef does us the favor and plates it for us to pick up if we don't dine in and I'm so late. *(Kisses Cassandra goodbye)* Honey, I'll be back really soon. We'll have dinner then. *(Gillian grabs her belongings and exits.)*
ARTHUR. So, busy at work? *(He gets out his phone.)*
CASSANDRA. Yeah...ah...yeah.
ARTHUR. Your Mom would like you to visit more often. She's looking for something to do now that you and Mitch are out of the house. Spend some time with her, why don't ya?
CASSANDRA. I am. But work you know...what about you?
ARTHUR. Me?
CASSANDRA. This is your time to be alone with your wife after all these years of waiting for me and Mitch to be out of the house, finally.
ARTHUR. A lot's going on for my team. We've got a big merger happening and it's just about a done deal.
CASSANDRA. Dad? *(She gulps some wine from her glass.)*
ARTHUR. Jacob's working out well.
CASSANDRA. Oh, so great. Though I'd really rather not hear about him.
ARTHUR. I can see him staying long term. Maybe moving up to being more than my assistant.
CASSANDRA. Dad. *(Beat)* Speaking about my work before...this morning when I went there...
ARTHUR. Yes, honey...something happened? You okay?
CASSANDRA. Actually, my boss pulled me aside.
ARTHUR. Everything going well at your job?
CASSANDRA. One of the journalists, not the one I usually work as the Producing Associate for, another one, has been building a story on you...figured I had the right to know because you're my father. I don't even know how to...oh, god...how to say this.
ARTHUR. Cass, dear, what is it?

CASSANDRA. *(Beat)* A woman who used to work for you says...alleges...you...you harassed her while she worked there. The sexual type of harassment.
ARTHUR. Did you tell your mother about this?
CASSANDRA. Wait...what? Did you just hear what I said dad?
ARTHUR. There is an investigation going on with this woman...it'll all be cleared up in a day or two. The press has already contacted me for a comment and my legal council is handling everything. So, hey, why don't you make sure your mother does not find out about this. We don't need to worry her.
CASSANDRA. You want to keep this from mom? Wait...this has been something you knew about? For how long?
ARTHUR. Listen, I need a few days to clear all this up. *(Takes out his wallet and a black credit card, hands it to Cassandra.)* Why don't you take your mom out and go shopping, or maybe a spa day? Keep her company while this gets straightened out. *(Cassandra does not take credit card.)*
CASSANDRA. They have details...legit details they've checked on. *(Beat)* Dad, please tell me this isn't true.
ARTHUR. Cass, you're in the media. You know how these stories get made up and sensationalized to be something they're not.
CASSANDRA. But at our station we don't do...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Honey, princess...it's all a set up. It's about money...a big pay out. This is not good for my company to be dealing with right now.
CASSANDRA. But I was told...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Hey, why don't you call your boss and tell him it's not even news worthy. Huh, honey, you can do that for your father. Can't ya?
CASSANDRA. You know that's something I have no control over. I can't do that!
ARTHUR. Cassandra, you can help make this disruption go away. You don't want your dad in the news for this, now do ya?
CASSANDRA. No. Of course not...

ARTHUR. Do it for your mother...for this family. Don't you want to help us all out?
CASSANDRA. *(She hesitantly takes out her phone. Starts to make the call. Then pauses.)* Maybe, before I talk to my boss, can you just tell me something I can tell him? I just don't want it to sound biased because you're my father.
ARTHUR. Cassandra, that woman just wants to get a big pay out.
CASSANDRA. They told me she refused a settlement.
ARTHUR. What? They don't even have their facts straight. See, that's why you should call your boss.
CASSANDRA. My boss is going to need more than they don't have the facts straight dad. I'm telling you, it would really help to tell me something specific about the situation so they'll consider...I dunno...putting the story off, like you said.
ARTHUR. I already told you what to say. Everybody helps out in this family. That includes you! You move away and you've so easily forgotten about us? When did you turn against your old man? Or your mother for that matter?
CASSANDRA. *(Overlap)* No. That's not...
ARTHUR. Until this gets cleared up, don't bother her with this. Now, make that call.
CASSANDRA. *(holds her phone not yet making the call.)* I have always done things to help out in the family. I am the one who is always with mom because you are *always* working. I am the one who went to college close by so I could be near to her because you can never be there for her.
ARTHUR. Now I'm not a good husband, according to you? You have some news job and you think you can dictate how things play out in this house *and* in the press?
CASSANDRA. No. That's not...
ARTHUR. Oh, I get it. How much do you want?
CASSANDRA. Huh?
ARTHUR. How much? I can go make a bank transfer.
CASSANDRA. Wha...
ARTHUR. You want a luxury apartment in the city? Maybe off the park? Just for yourself?

CASSANDRA. This isn't *Yale* Dad. Yeah, I know about you getting Mitch in. You can't buy your way into the press like you did his acceptance. I won't take your bribe, I earn a living. Not like the men you work with, or like the way Mitch will, but I do. *(She pauses then puts her phone away.)*
ARTHUR. This is going to look really bad for your station in the end. When all is said and done, I just may have to sue them for defamation of character. And just think, you could have made a simple phone call.
CASSANDRA. You won't do that.
ARTHUR. Is this about Jacob? You're still angry that I hired him after he broke up with you? I told you, he had the experience to be a good exec assistant and I needed a new one.
CASSANDRA. You think that's what this is about? I can't believe this.
ARTHUR. My own daughter.
CASSANDRA. That's right. Your own daughter. *(Beat)* You tried to pay her off too and make her sign a non-disclosure. Isn't that right?
ARTHUR. Cass, there are things you don't understand about business.
CASSANDRA. I was told you patted her on the ass multiple times. Did you? Huh?....Or....or...did you expose yourself during a private meeting, like she said?
ARTHUR. Enough! *(He gets out his phone.)* This discussion is over! My team will take care of this now anyway.
CASSANDRA. Fuck! *(There is a stand off for a moment. Cassandra looks around the room. Almost leaves, then stops and goes to say something.)*
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Oh...and ah, don't think you'll have any influence where your mother is concerned either. *(Dials his phone.)*
CASSANDRA. How could you?
ARTHUR. I'm your father. How dare you? I was so much better to you than my father was to me. You show me respect. Remember that.
CASSANDRA. Respect?...That goes both ways.
ARTHUR. You know where the door is. *(She grabs her purse and leaves out the front door.)*

ARTHUR. *(On his phone)* Yeah. *(Pause)* My daughter's station told her. Take care of this. Now! *(He ends the call and exits.)*

SCENE 4

Several minutes later. Gillian is at the counter with bags of takeout containers sorting through them. Arthur enters.

GILLIAN. Where did she go?
ARTHUR. Cass just said she had to go and up and left.
GILLIAN. So, she just said she had to go and then just left? She knew I would be right back.
ARTHUR. I don't know why Gillian. She got a call...
GILLIAN. All of a sudden?
ARTHUR. I don't know why dear. I think it was something to do with her work.
GILLIAN. Okay. I'll call her later and see if she's alright.
ARTHUR. She's so busy at work. Give her some time to settle. *(He takes the food containers and begins to exit.)*
GILLIAN. Aren't we going to eat here? My doctor suggested we should try to have more time together. He says I'm headed in the direction of a breakthrough and I wanted to tell you about it.
ARTHUR. Isn't that between you and your doctor?
GILLIAN. Yes, but you're my husband and I want to share it with you. All the years I've been going, I think something's finally starting to work for me.
ARTHUR. Gillian, I have a conference call and need to run out after. *(He just about walks out the door.)* But, let's talk later, how about that?
GILLIAN. Can't that wait until tomorrow? Let's spend some time together now.
ARTHUR. Gillian, I have stuff I need to get to. *(He stops, turns back. Kisses her cheek.)* I promise. Tomorrow. *(He exits. Gillian pours herself a big glass of wine. She sits alone.)*

GILLIAN. *(To herself)* A break through? Dammit, shouldn't have said that. *(She drinks the wine. Cassandra sneaks in from the back door of the kitchen.)*
CASSANDRA. Mom.
GILLIAN. *(Startled)* Cass, didn't you leave to go home?
CASSANDRA. I waited in the backyard. I was waiting until dad left.
GILLIAN. Huh?
CASSANDRA. I was trying to tell you something when he came home before.
GILLIAN. But, he's in his study.
CASSANDRA. No he's not. I just saw him pull out of the driveway.
GILLIAN. But he said...
CASSANDRA. *(Cut off)* Yeah, he says lots of things and does lots of things.
GILLIAN. Did he have papers with him?
CASSANDRA. Mom, listen to me. This is important.
GILLIAN. What dear? You're anxious. What is it?
CASSANDRA. Mom. Please. Listen. *(Beat)* You know at my job I'm an associate in producing segments for one of the journalists.
GILLIAN. Yes.
CASSANDRA. One of the other producers pulled me aside this morning and had a meeting with me.
GILLIAN. Oh Cass, you're getting promoted?
CASSANDRA. No, no that's not it. *(Beat)* They've been building a story about dad.
GILLIAN. What?
CASSANDRA. Dad. And tomorrow, it's going to come out in the press. By the time you wake up, other media outlets will have picked it up also.
GILLIAN. About Arthur?
CASSANDRA. And I want to tell you what's going on so you can prepare yourself and choose what to do. And I want you to know I'm here for you.
GILLIAN. Arthur? You mean your father?

CASSANDRA. Yes. Dad. Arthur Ajax, of Ajax Management Capital. Mom listen. *(Beat)* A woman who worked for him is saying...alleging that dad sexually harassed her for months. Then when she made a formal complaint to HR, she was retaliated against by the company. Dad's doing. And he tried to pay her off and make her sign a non-disclosure when she said she was going to expose this. An investigation has been opened with the Equal Employment Opportunity Council.
GILLIAN. No. No. This can't be true. She's making this up. She just wants money right?
CASSANDRA. She refused the pay off.
GILLIAN. Stop them from reporting this!
CASSANDRA. I can't! I don't have the power to do that. *(Beat)* But what I was told, is that they won't report your name, or mine, or Mitch's either.
GILLIAN. Our names? This can not be happening.
CASSANDRA. She has details. *Personal* details about dad. She said...she...oh god, Mom, don't make me go into details. I'll be sick.
GILLIAN. Cassandra. This is your father. He compliments women all the time. He's done it right in front of me. That's who he is! He's harmless. She must be using something he said to set him up.
CASSANDRA. What? No.
GILLIAN. Are you angry at your father because of Jacob?
CASSANDRA. This is not about that. Mom please...
GILLIAN. I have been with this man for over thirty years. He's not one of those Hollywood types.
CASSANDRA. He doesn't have to be to have done this.
GILLIAN. Then are you trying to hurt me? Did I do something to you that would make you say this to me?
CASSANDRA. How could you think that? No. I would never want to hurt you mom.
GILLIAN. I don't like the way you're speaking about him. And if this woman didn't like having him as her boss, why didn't she just quit? Some women just can't adjust to an office full of men. I had to before you came along.

CASSANDRA. She did leave actually, about six months ago. She shouldn't have to leave her job because of this.
GILLIAN. If she left, then it's done and over with. And she could have said something sooner if it was almost a year ago.
CASSANDRA. People have different reasons for not coming forward. They're afraid, they think they won't be believed, financial instability...
GILLIAN. *(Overlap, cuts off)* Okay. Okay. Enough.
CASSANDRA. Mom, I know this is hard to hear. It's hard for me to tell you. Please believe me.
GILLIAN. It seems pretty easy for you. Do you want to believe he's guilty?
CASSANDRA. Please, listen to me. He locked the conference room and exposed himself to her and patted her on her butt multiple times. He called her something like.... *maple sugar,* or *sugar maple,* then...
GILLIAN. STOP! STOP! YOU'RE LYING! SHE'S LYING! *(Gillian tries to exit but Cassandra stops her by standing in front of the door, blocking her.)* I choose to be a good wife to him. I take care of him *and* the family and he provides for me *and* the family. The family you are part of. Or did you forget that all of a sudden? Seems like now, since you're so concerned with your career, you're making a case against your own father. You didn't think things like this when you were a child. I don't know what happened to you between then and now.
CASSANDRA. You're right. I didn't think these things when I was a child. Because when I was a child, he was just my dad.
GILLIAN. That city you live in has changed you...I can see that now, and not for the better.
CASSANDRA. It has. The past few years I've looked at things in my life and realized some things about him.
GILLIAN. This is the part where you say it's all the parents' fault.
CASSANDRA. No. Mom, please don't think I'm blaming you. I'm just realizing things about myself and my relationships.
GILLIAN. You can't blame your father for everything.
CASSANDRA. This is incredible. I thought maybe you would at least hear her side and weigh both sides out fairly.
GILLIAN. I'm his wife.

CASSANDRA. You never suspected anything about dad? Ever? All the parties you threw for his employees, you never saw anything?
GILLIAN. I was supposed to have seen something besides a harmless compliment?
CASSANDRA. Mom, it's not your fault. I'm just asking.
GILLIAN. We have cocktails and hors d'oeuvres out by the pool and mingle on the patio. It's perfectly normal.
CASSANDRA. Perfectly normal that there's always an attractive woman as one of his employees that seems to come and go in the company.
GILLIAN. How do you know that?
CASSANDRA. You don't remember telling me about them when we talk after each party?
GILLIAN. I just tell you about the party.
CASSANDRA. And about Janice, Donna, Lili, Barbara, Serita....
GILLIAN. They are career women and move on to other opportunities.
CASSANDRA. Career women? Is that what he tells you?
GILLIAN. Yes.
CASSANDRA. Wow. It all makes sense now.
GILLIAN. I can't believe you're turning against your own father. The man who provided you with vacations, college, and any other gifts you wanted.
CASSANDRA. Just because he paid for things doesn't mean he didn't do this. Didn't he buy that ring for you? He knew this was going to be exposed and he was setting you up.
GILLIAN. This was a gift!
CASSANDRA. *(Beat)* Mom, I'm here for you. Just please think about what you need to do after tomorrow.
GILLIAN. Everything will be fine after tomorrow!
CASSANDRA. Please Mom, I don't mean to upset you with this. Really I don't. I love you. This is going to be big and I want to make sure you have all the information you need, so that if the company...
GILLIAN. *(Cuts off)* Nothing will happen to the company. *(A moment.)*

CASSANDRA. Yeah, okay. Okay, I see this is going nowhere. *(Hearing a door open and voices of Arthur and Jacob.)* What's that? Is he home? Shit, he thinks I left. Just know that I support you. *(She grabs her hands)* Please Mom. Know that. *(She scrambles to grab her bag and she begins to run out the back door.)* Ask him about where he's been. Don't tell him you know anything. Let him tell you. *(Cassandra exits.)*

SCENE 5

Moments later. Arthur and Jacob walk through the kitchen door as Gillian sits and eats as she did when Arthur left previously.

GILLIAN. Did you go out?
ARTHUR. I ran out for something and Jacob was driving up the street. *(He goes into the cabinet and gets out the bottle of Scotch and two glasses. Pours some Scotch into the two glasses.)*
JACOB. Gillian, good evening.
GILLIAN. Jacob. Arthur, where were you going?
ARTHUR. I mentioned before I had some things to do.
JACOB. *(Jacob takes a glass. To Arthur)* None for Gillian here?
GILLIAN. Oh, no thank you. Not a Scotch drinker.
JACOB. Puts hair on your chest, so they say. *(Corrects himself)* But, we wouldn't want that on you, now would we?
GILLIAN. No we wouldn't.
JACOB. Your support as his wife has been of the utmost importance to Arthur. I'm envious.
GILLIAN. I've been supportive of him since we met thirty two years ago.
ARTHUR. Gillian, darling, wasn't there some movie you were going on and on about, you wanted to watch in the TV room?
GILLIAN. But I'm finishing my dinner. You can talk about work and whatever else in front of me. I may have insight into what a woman is thinking.
ARTHUR. *(Beat)* Was there ah...something you were referring to?
JACOB. Gillian here is being supportive.

ARTHUR. I was asking my wife something. *(To Gillian)* Was there something you were referring to? Gillian?
GILLIAN. I'm only saying, if there was something that you wanted to say about work or anything else, you know that you can trust me and I'll be understanding.
ARTHUR. Did you speak to Cassandra tonight?
GILLIAN. No...well, I mean, we talked about light fixtures, then she left after...
ARTHUR. After?
GILLIAN. I meant, before you came back.
ARTHUR. That was after I left.
GILLIAN. I don't know...before, after, it doesn't matter.
JACOB. Did she mention anything?
GILLIAN. Well, there was that thing she told me...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* She told you what?
GILLIAN. Just some nonsense about some woman who used to work for you, says you did some things. Don't worry, I set her straight.
JACOB. Naturally, Arthur here would never...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Jacob.
GILLIAN. Nothing to worry about dear. I know women use all sorts of ways to get money out of rich men.
JACOB. And we have a crisis team digging up anything to discredit her.
ARTHUR. *(To Jacob)* I will take care of this.
GILLIAN. She refused any payment?
ARTHUR. Gillian, what did Cassandra tell you exactly?
GILLIAN. That...um...that...
ARTHUR. That what?...That what dear?
GILLIAN. That they have a story on you and they're reporting it tomorrow.
ARTHUR. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. *(To Jacob)* You said Sam and Robert were stalling this?
JACOB. They are.
GILLIAN. Stalling what?
ARTHUR. Then, how is this happening tomorrow?
JACOB. She doesn't have a case.

GILLIAN. Arthur, what's happening? You're scaring me.
ARTHUR. Gillian, darling, this woman, employee, I had a meeting with every week because she's an Investment Portfolio Manager and we manage the companies financial policies and firm up any investments. She comes in, I close the door for the sake of the company's confidentiality, and we go over business...pure business. She mentioned to me once how she realizes she's the only woman to be in the position she's in at the company. Maybe somewhere she got it in her head she'll use that as a strategy to move ahead in her career. I employed this woman thinking she'd be an asset to the company and she goes and does this to me.
GILLIAN. But, she quit, didn't she?
ARTHUR. She's making herself available for other job offers. Darling, that's how this game is played.
GILLIAN. Has she ever come to one of our parties we've had here? Have I met her?
ARTHUR. I don't remember. We have big guest lists at those things. Look, don't think about this for one second longer. It'll be taken care of.
GILLIAN. But if she recently worked for you....
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* Gillian, we have the merger to work on and you have the sun room.
GILLIAN. But if I met her...
ARTHUR. Don't worry yourself for another second about this. It will all be cleared up soon. Hey, maybe after the sun room and this merger is done, we'll take a nice beach get away. Maybe Tahiti like you always wanted? Now doesn't that sound relaxing?
JACOB. Sounds relaxing to me.
ARTHUR. Now, let us get back to work. Why don't you go watch that movie and I'll be up as soon as I can. *(Gillian hesitates)* Go. I'll be up in a few minutes. *(Gillian hesitates again.)* Darling, please. We have things to go over. *(Gillian gets up and takes her glass of wine with her. She begins to exit.)*
JACOB. Sleep well Gillian. *(Gillian turns and exits.)*

ARTHUR. *(Arthur slams down his glass of Scotch.)* This has gotten way out of hand. My wife now has to deal with this. And tomorrow! Start making calls!
JACOB. Yes Arthur. I'll take care of it.
ARTHUR. Do whatever it takes.
JACOB. It will be handled. Really.
ARTHUR. I'm going to calm Gillian down and make sure she's on the right side of this. I don't need anything else on my plate right now.
JACOB. Your people will know how to spin this.
ARTHUR. See yourself out. *(He just about exits. Comes back and gulps down the Scotch. Then exits. Jacob makes a call. Cassandra sneaks in from the back door and overhears his call. Jacob does not know she's there.)*
JACOB. *(On phone)* His wife knows. *(Beat)* Yeah. *(Beat)* Yeah, I'll be in touch. *(He hangs up his phone. Cassandra enters the kitchen.)*
CASSANDRA. I see my father has been grooming you well in just a few short months.
JACOB. Cassandra.
CASSANDRA. You know what's going on, don't you? You know all the details.
JACOB. I am assisting your father...my boss, in his company's merger. I set up appointments for him. Get him business lunch reservation...handle minor tasks. That's all.
CASSANDRA. Oh, that's all? "His wife knows?" Need that for a merger?
JACOB. I understand if you're still upset about our breakup and me getting married...
CASSANDRA. *(Overlap)* Upset?
JACOB. ...right after to Chrystie.
CASSANDRA. You've convinced yourself of some story that you're holding onto. I was asking about my father. Tell me what you know.
JACOB. Cass, I need to be headed back home.
CASSANDRA. Yes. I'm sure Chrystie's waiting up for you. So just tell me quickly. What is my father planning?
JACOB. I'm not going to do this Cassandra. *(He begins to exit.)*

CASSANDRA. Who were you calling?
JACOB. My job is to be the support of the CEO at Ajax Management Capital. And that's what I'm doing.
CASSANDRA. Of course, just following blindly. I wouldn't expect you to take accountability for anything.
JACOB. It was nice to see you.
CASSANDRA. Was it? *(Jacob exits.)*

SCENE 6

The middle of the night of that same evening. Gillian wears a bathrobe yet somehow still appears put together and glamorous. She sits sipping a mug of hot cocoa in only the moon light and a small kitchen night-light. Arthur enters as if he was looking for her.

ARTHUR. I came to bed earlier and you were out cold?...*(notices)* hot cocoa? *(Gillian affirms. He goes to the cabinet and pours himself a nip of Scotch.)* Ah, this will do it for me.
GILLIAN. Hot cocoa...my mom used to make this for me when I couldn't sleep. She'd put little marshmallows in it. I loved that. She'd have tea and we'd sit and talk, no matter what time it was. I knew she was tired from working all day then having to take care of us, but she always made time for my cocoa. *(Beat)* I miss sitting and talking. To her...and to you.
ARTHUR. We talk.
GILLIAN. Not like we used to. *(Beat)* And now...there's this...this space. It's grown over time. When we lost Helen...and I know that was over two decades ago, I think that's when it started. We just moved through the motions of our day. I raised Cass and Mitch, you worked, we brought houses, I planned dinners, had holidays, barbecues and birthdays. You had golf trips, and conventions, and meetings, and the list goes on and on...but I was left behind.
ARTHUR. You were there the whole time.
GILLIAN. No Arthur. Me. The thing that makes me, me. Where did I go? What am I doing now? I'm capable of more than just deciding on

the paint color for a room we never sit in, in a big empty house. I want to do more with my life then just go on shopping trips to impress the women I lunch with and plan your next employee cocktail party.
ARTHUR. Then go do whatever you want to do.
GILLIAN. You always say that, but when you need something, it's the priority. I've put everything aside to be there for you...for decades. And when it was my time, you weren't there for me.
ARTHUR. I'm right here Gillian. I've been right here. I don't know what you're talking about.
GILLIAN. Helen.
ARTHUR. I tried to do what I could.
GILLIAN. You went right back to work the next day. And every day after that.
ARTHUR. We've been over this for years. I run my company, the company my father built and I am responsible for. All the employees. Gillian, dear, work is the thing that keeps me going.
And after that, I didn't know what to do. I thought I was just in the way.
GILLIAN. I didn't know what would help me then. It's not like I had experience in what to do after losing a child during delivery. I just wanted you to be there. To be at my side. And I've been waiting, and now our children are grown and out of the house, and I'm still waiting...and...
ARTHUR. *(Cuts off)* I've been building our family's legacy. You have to understand. I thought you knew that. This is for us. And Helen, isn't that what you've been going to the doctor for all these years?
GILLIAN. It's not the doctor's job to talk to me instead of my husband.
ARTHUR. No, I'm not saying...
GILLIAN. What are you saying Arthur? I'd really like to know exactly what you mean when you say words.
ARTHUR. I think you're upset and it's the middle of the night. Let's go back to bed and we can talk in the morning. *(He guides her to try to get her up.)*
GILLIAN. *(She resists.)* I know what you're not telling me.
ARTHUR. What are you talking about?
GILLIAN. I saw the papers on your desk.

ARTHUR. You were in my study?
GILLIAN. It's our house. I can go into the study.
ARTHUR. I thought we agreed it's my study.
GILLIAN. They made it seem like if this merger doesn't go through the company will be done.
ARTHUR. That's not *(stops)*...this merger will happen. Those must have been some old tax papers and that's been cleared up for a long time now. You shouldn't worry yourself with that stuff.
GILLIAN. It's everything we have. It is my right!
ARTHUR. Everything will be fine. *(Beat)* Now, darling, let's go to bed. *(He starts to exit.)*
GILLIAN. And that woman?
ARTHUR. *(He stops.)* Cassandra really got in your ear about that didn't she? I don't know what she wants by doing this. *(He comes back and tries to hold her.)*
GILLIAN. *(She resists.*)What's her name?
ARTHUR. I really think this is not the time to talk about this. I'm tired. I have a long day tomorrow.
GILLIAN. Oh, a long day tomorrow.
ARTHUR. Gillian, please, we have everything handled. Don't think for a second I'll let anything affect this company. Didn't I set things straight with those union plumbers when your father's business had his troubles? Huh? See? I know what I'm doing. Please believe me when I say this. *(Beat)* Now, let's go up stairs. *(He hugs her.)* After things are settled, we'll spend some time together, just us. We'll think about what you want to do. Maybe start a small venture for yourself? Huh, my sugar maple. *(A moment.)*
GILLIAN. You remember the first time you called me that?
ARTHUR. I've been calling you that since we met. *(Whispers)* My sugar maple.
GILLIAN. The first time was right after we started dating exclusively. We were sitting under a sugar maple tree on campus....
ARTHUR. *(Continuing her thought)* And you were shivering in the cold, and I took you *(he plays out what he's describing)* and...*(he kisses her)*. Let's go up now.

GILLIAN. I'll be right there. I'm going to finish up my cocoa.
ARTHUR. *(He begins to exit. Stops. Turns back and kisses her neck, then her ear.)* These beautiful ears could use earrings to match that ring. *(Beat)* See ya in bed. *(He exits. Gillian sits by herself again.)*

END OF ACT 1

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