

# The Cure

A play in two acts

By Bruce Hoogendoorn

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**CAST**

SARAH: Paraplegic, 19

BILL/DAVE: University Administrator, 53

ALEX: Sarah's mother, School Principal, 50

BEV: Support worker, paraplegic, 25

MICHAEL: Sarah's father, Public Servant, 50

CATHERINE: Gender Studies Tutor, feminist, 60

**SCENES**

**Act 1**

Scene 1: Sarah's home – living room

Scene 2 Sarah's home – living room

Scene 3: Bev's home

Scene 4: Bev's home

Scene 5: Public park

**Act 2**

Scene 1: Sarah's home – living room

Scene 2: Outside the front of Bev's house

Scene 3: Bev's house/Dave's house

Scene 4: Reclaim The Night rally

Scene 5: Outdoors – footpath

Scene 6: Bev's backyard

ACT 1

SCENE 1

*Lights up revealing SARAH, a woman of nineteen, sitting in a wheelchair. She is reading a book. After a moment, the sound of someone knocking on a door.*

SARAH: Come in.

*BILL, a man of fifty, enters dressed in a labcoat. He has a stethoscope around his neck and is holding a clipboard.*

SARAH: Doctor Stevens.

BILL: Good morning, Sarah. How are you feeling today?

SARAH: The same.

BILL: Still no feeling in the legs?

SARAH: No, nothing.

BILL: Not even a tingle in the toes?

SARAH: No.

BILL: Right, let's have a look, shall we?

*He kneels and feels her toes.*

BILL: Anything?

SARAH: No.

*He touches different parts of her legs.*

BILL: Now?

SARAH: No.

BILL: How about now?

SARAH: No.

*BILL stands up.*

BILL: Well, that's no good, is it?

*Pause*

BILL: Sarah, I looked at your latest x-ray this morning.

SARAH: Yes?

BILL: There's no damage to your spinal column or to your spinal cord.

SARAH: But there must be.

BILL: I've been over it with a fine tooth comb, as have my colleagues. It's a perfectly healthy spine.

SARAH: That can't be.

BILL: The fall you had was not very serious. And while it's possible to injure your spine from such a fall, it's not likely.

SARAH: There must be something wrong with your x-ray machine.

BILL: The x-ray machine is the best in the country. The fact is irrefutable: there is nothing wrong with your spine.

SARAH: Why won't you believe me?

BILL: The psychiatrist tells me your problem is psychosomatic.

SARAH: No, that's not possible.

BILL: I agree. I just think you're a spoilt little girl who's seeking attention.

SARAH: What?

BILL: I've run out of patience with you, Sarah. It's time for you to walk again.

SARAH: But I can't!

BILL: You can, Sarah! Now stand and walk to me.

SARAH: I can't, Doctor Stevens!

BILL: You can and you will!

SARAH: I can't!

BILL: Sarah, this is your last chance. Get up and walk to me, or I will punish you.

SARAH: I can't! I can't ! I can't!

*SARAH bursts into tears.*

BILL: That's it. My patience has run out.

SARAH: What are you going to do?

BILL: I'm going to spank you!

SARAH: You can't do that!

BILL: I most certainly can. Then we'll find out if you're paralysed or not. My bet is you'll be screaming for mercy after the first stroke.

SARAH: But that's malpractice. I'll sue you!

BILL: No, you won't, because you'll be thanking me for it in a minute.

*BILL moves towards her. SARAH hurries away in her chair.*

SARAH: Nurse! Help! Help me!

*BILL grabs her chair and stops her.*

BILL: No-one can hear you. They're dealing with an emergency case.

SARAH: Help, anyone!

BILL: If you really want help, help yourself and run.

*Pause.*

BILL: I didn't think so. *(beat)* Now get out of that wheelchair.

*He tries to pull her up, but struggles. She fights back.*

SARAH: Help me! Help me!

*BILL finally manages to lift her up. He sits in the wheelchair and puts her over his knee.*

SARAH: You can't do this. Remember the medical motto: first, do no harm.

BILL: That's not my motto. My motto is, the end justifies the means.

*He roughly pulls down her pants revealing her bare buttocks.*

BILL: Now let's see how paralysed you are.

*He raises his hand high and theatrically, ready to spank.*

SARAH: Please, don't! Please! Please!

*BILL is about to spank her when there is a scream from a woman. Both BILL and SARAH look around, shocked, and see ALEX and MICHAEL watching in horror. ALEX is SARAH's Mum, and MICHAEL is her dad.*

ALEX: Let her go!

*ALEX runs at him, and starts slapping him.*

BILL: Oh shit!

SARAH: Mum! Stop!

MICHAEL: Alex!

*BILL struggles to his feet and SARAH falls to the floor. BILL runs to the corner. ALEX chases him. MICHAEL restrains her.*

ALEX: Don't you touch her!

BILL: I wasn't going to hurt her!

ALEX: You were about to bash her, you animal rapist!

BILL: I'm not a rapist! Tell her, Sarah!

MICHAEL: Sarah! Are you okay?

SARAH: Just help me up.

*MICHAEL helps pull her pants up and puts her in the wheelchair.*

ALEX: Michael, guard him while I call the police.

*MICHAEL does so, reluctantly. ALEX takes a phone out of her bag.*

BILL: But I haven't done anything wrong! Tell them, Sarah. Please.

SARAH: Mum, stop. I invited him here.

ALEX: What? But he was going to hit you.

SARAH: Oh God, why did you come home? You're supposed to be at the Hyatt!

ALEX: I tried to call you dozens of times, but you didn't answer. I was worried sick.

SARAH: Shit! I left the phone outside.

MICHAEL: What do you mean you invited him here? Where do you know him from?

SARAH: I can't believe this is happening.

ALEX: What is going on here?

*Pause.*

BILL: Sarah, we're going to have to tell them.

SARAH: I want to die.

MICHAEL: Will you just tell us what's going on?

*Pause.*

ALEX: Well?

BILL: Sarah and I met online in a chat room. After we got to know each other we decided to act out a fantasy which would end in...would end in me spanking her.

ALEX & MICHAEL: What?

BILL: That's what was about to happen when you came home.

SARAH: I'm going to be sick.

ALEX: This can't be true. This can't possibly be true. Sarah?

*Pause.*

SARAH: It's true, all right. It's true! It's true! It's true!

*Pause.*

ALEX: I can't believe this.

BILL: I'm sorry you had to see this. I'll leave you alone.

*BILL starts to leave.*

SARAH: Bill, don't go. I need to talk to you first.

ALEX: You're not talking to him ever again. Now get out of my house, you sick individual.

BILL: I am not sick. Spanking is a perfectly normal sexual practice.

ALEX: Normal is it, for a man over fifty to spank a girl of nineteen, who's also a paraplegic?

BILL: What?

SARAH: Mum, just shut-up! Please, just shut-up!

BILL: You really are a paraplegic?

ALEX: You didn't know?

BILL: I thought it was just part of the fantasy. You see, I was playing a neurologist and she was playing a patient who -

ALEX: I don't want to hear it!

*Pause.*

BILL: I'm sorry, I really am. I swear, if I'd known she was a paraplegic I would never have come here. I would never spank a disabled person. *(beat)* Why didn't you tell me?

SARAH: You just answered that yourself.

BILL: *(pause)* But why would you want to do it anyway? You wouldn't have felt anything.

SARAH: If we could talk alone then I can -

ALEX: You are not seeing him alone! Now get out of our house.

*BILL starts to leave.*

SARAH: I'm an adult! I can do what I want!

BILL: Sarah, it wouldn't do any good anyway. The fantasy's ruined now. I'm sorry.

BILL *exits*.

SARAH: Bill!

SARAH *tries to follow, but ALEX grabs the chair*.

SARAH: Let go!

ALEX: No!

MICHAEL: Alex, come on, just let her go.

*She does. SARAH sobs.*

MICHAEL: Come on, sweetheart, it's okay.

MICHAEL *hugs her*.

ALEX: It's not okay, Michael. *(to Sarah)* What on earth inspired you to do this? I guess it has something to do with the trauma of the injury.

SARAH: It has nothing to do with that!

ALEX: Well, whatever the reason, I think it's best if I call your social worker.

SARAH: I am not talking to her! You can't make me.

ALEX: Well, you need to talk to someone. You put yourself in a very dangerous situation.

SARAH: It wasn't dangerous.

ALEX: It was the first time you met him. He could've done anything to you. It's just as well we came home when we did.

SARAH: We'd talked on the phone. We opened up to each other.

ALEX: People like that always pretend to open up. It's to win your trust so they can use you.

SARAH: He didn't lie. I know he didn't.

ALEX: And what if he had spanked you? You could have got pressure sores. You could have been stuck lying on your stomach for months. Did you consider that?

*Silence.*

ALEX: I can't believe this. I thought there was finally light at the end of the tunnel. You actually wanted to be independent for a weekend. But then we discover this? Put yourself in our shoes and think how you would react?

*Pause.*

SARAH: I'm going to my room. I don't want to be disturbed.

ALEX: We'll talk about this later.

SARAH: I'm never talking about this again!

*SARAH exits.*

ALEX: Yes we - !

MICHAEL: Alex, that's enough, come on.

ALEX: But -

MICHAEL: Alex, please. Leave her for the moment.

*Pause.*

*ALEX bursts into tears. MICHAEL hugs her.*

*Fade to black.*

**SCENE 2**

ALEX *sits in front of a computer, clicking away impatiently.* MICHAEL *walks in.*

MICHAEL: Well, she's speaking to me now.

ALEX: Has she come out of her room yet?

MICHAEL: No. And I don't think she will for the rest of the day.

ALEX: At least she's safe in there.

MICHAEL: She's really calmed down, too.

ALEX: Good.

MICHAEL: In fact, I think it would be okay if we left her and went back to the Hyatt.

ALEX: Go back? You've got to be kidding. I doubt I'll feel confident leaving her alone for months.

MICHAEL: Alex, she is an adult.

ALEX: No she isn't. She's a very disturbed young girl who is currently a serious danger to herself.

MICHAEL: I think that's a bit of an exaggeration.

ALEX: What is wrong with you? She invited a middle-aged man over here to beat her. Do you think that is the behaviour of a well-balanced young woman?

MICHAEL: It was role-playing. A fantasy.

ALEX: What about pressure sores? They can become gangrenous.

MICHAEL: I don't think spanking is going to cause pressures sores.

ALEX: I can't believe you're taking this so lightly.

MICHAEL: Well, people's sexuality can be a bit unusual at times. But it's her choice.

*ALEX groans in disgust.*

MICHAEL: Look, even if she asked that man to come back, there's no way he's going to. Not after what happened.

ALEX: I'm not willing to take that risk. We're not going back to the Hyatt.

MICHAEL: *(pause)* Alex, I think for our own sanity we need to go back. You know what the social worker said about carers burning out.

ALEX: I agree, but this is not the time.

MICHAEL: But the room's paid for, and we can't get our money –

ALEX: The only reason you want to go back is because you want to have sex!

MICHAEL: *(pause)* That's not true.

ALEX: It is true. Stop trying to pretend it's about helping me overcome burn-out. The whole idea was to get me back into bed.

*Pause.*

MICHAEL: Is there anything wrong with that?

*Pause.*

ALEX: No, I s'pose not. But don't pretend you're worried about burnout, when it's all about your needs.

MICHAEL: It's not all about -

ALEX: And why would you be burnt-out anyway? I'm the one who does all the caring.

MICHAEL: Let's not turn this into a competition, okay?

ALEX: Did you give up your job so you could look after her? Do you check her body for pressure sores and cuts? Do you clean her up when she has a bowel accident?

MICHAEL: *(pause)* A man can't do those sort of things for his daughter. We talked about that. That's why I'm still working.

ALEX: Yes. Longer and longer hours. It's like you don't want to be here at all.

MICHAEL: *(pause)* I find it very hard to see her...like that. She used to be so full of life, in and out of the house on her way from one thing to another, and then...the car accident. *(pause)* And then you -

ALEX: I've been tired and stressed. I haven't been in the frame of mind.

MICHAEL: I know, but our lives have to go on, too. And it was an important part of our life, and we've lost that. And yes, I was hoping going to the Hyatt would rekindle it.

ALEX: *(pause)* I promise I will make an effort. But give me time. I can't do it right now, and I can't go back to the Hyatt today. Okay?

*Pause. MICHAEL nods.*

ALEX: Anyway, I've got a woman coming over to talk to Sarah.

MICHAEL: Not her social worker?

ALEX: No, she's a support worker. She takes people out to do fun things.

MICHAEL: She won't be happy about this.

ALEX: Well, we have to try something. Get her life going again so she doesn't have time for sick thoughts. And this woman is a paraplegic, too. The social worker says she's mentored other young women and really helped them.

MICHAEL: Well, it might be all right.

ALEX: Good.

*ALEX starts typing on the computer.*

ALEX: Oh, for God's sake! Do you know how to look up the history on the internet?

MICHAEL: History?

ALEX: You know, what sites people have been into.

MICHAEL: Why do you want to do that?

ALEX: To see what sites Sarah has been looking at.

MICHAEL: Alex, what will that achieve?

ALEX: Well, if she's going into sites that she shouldn't be then we can activate that program.

MICHAEL: What program?

ALEX: I think it's called Kidsafe.

MICHAEL: Kidsafe! She's nineteen! She'll work out how to get around it.

ALEX: Then we'll just have to get the internet cut off.

MICHAEL: Alex.

ALEX: Can you just help me, please?

MICHAEL: *(pause)* All right. Let me sit down.

*ALEX stands and MICHAEL sits down.*

MICHAEL: Here.

ALEX: Oh my God!

MICHAEL: What?

ALEX: Spankers Paradise! Click on it.

*MICHAEL does.*

ALEX: Oh!

MICHAEL: *(aroused)* Shit.

ALEX: Look how red her...her bottom is!

MICHAEL: Yeah.

ALEX: Don't tell me if that happened to Sarah, she wouldn't get a pressure sore.

MICHAEL: She's ah...very attractive, isn't she?

ALEX: You're not getting turned on, are you?

MICHAEL: Well, a little.

ALEX: Oh!

MICHAEL: Oh, come on. Stop acting like such a prude. You've got up to your fair share of fun and games in your time.

ALEX: Yes, all right, but not this sort of thing.

MICHAEL: Worse, I'd say.

ALEX: Worse?

MICHAEL: Would you like me to remind you?

ALEX: No thank you.

MICHAEL: I think I still have the scars.

ALEX: Ha ha.

MICHAEL: Come on, look at them. It doesn't look like they're evil people. They're just having a bit of fun.

ALEX: Yeah, right.

MICHAEL: If I'd suggested it to you when you were in your prime, I bet you would have been up for it, wouldn't you?

ALEX: I doubt it.

MICHAEL: You would've loved it, wouldn't you?

*He smacks her on the bum playfully.*

ALEX: Ow!

MICHAEL: Don't pretend you didn't love it. Not hard enough for you, was it? Here, try this.

*He stands and gives her a few more smacks, quite hard.*

ALEX: Ow! Stop it!

*SARAH rolls in.*

SARAH: Oh my God!

*MICHAEL stops.*

ALEX: Oh no!

MICHAEL: It's not what you think. I was just having a joke.

SARAH: You're spankers, too! It's hereditary!

ALEX: We are not! Your father was just being silly. We went into one of the sites you've been looking at, and we were making fun of it. Weren't we, Michael?

MICHAEL: That's right.

SARAH: It looked pretty serious to me.

ALEX: It was not serious. Michael, how could you have been so stupid?

MICHAEL: Sorry, I was just mucking around.

ALEX: Frankly, Sarah, we're disgusted with what you've been looking at. So we've decided to ban you from the internet.

SARAH: What?

ALEX: Until you show signs that you're doing something productive with your life, you can't access it.

SARAH: But I need the internet!

*There's a knock at the door.*

ALEX: That must be the woman who's come to see Sarah.

SARAH: Who's come to see me? Did you call my social worker?

ALEX: No. It's a Support Worker. She's someone who can spend a bit of time with you each week, go on outings, that sort of thing.

SARAH: I'm not speaking to her!

*SARAH starts to roll out.*

ALEX: Then you're going to be off the internet for a very long time.

*SARAH stops.*

SARAH: How dare you go behind my back like that.

ALEX: I had no choice. You wouldn't speak to us.

SARAH: Dad, why do you let her do these things?

*MICHAEL just looks away.*

*There is another knock at the door.*

ALEX: So, will you speak to her? She's in a wheelchair, too. She might be able to give you tips.

SARAH: (*thinks*) All right, fine.

ALEX: Good.

*ALEX opens the door, revealing BEV, a muscly woman in a wheelchair holding a basketball.*

ALEX: Hello, you must be Beverley.

BEV: Bev.

ALEX: Oh, okay. Bev.

BEV: And you're Alex?

ALEX: Yes, good to meet you.

*They shake hands.*

ALEX: Come on in.

*BEV rolls in.*

ALEX: Bev, this is my husband, Michael.

MICHAEL: Hello.

BEV: G'day, Mike.

ALEX: And my daughter, Sarah.

BEV: G'day, Sarah. How are you?

SARAH: Not too good, actually, Bev.

BEV: That's no good, but we'll turn that around. We'll go out in the fresh air and have a game of basketball. You'll feel great before you know it.

SARAH: Actually, I don't think that's going to help.

BEV: Why not?

SARAH: Well, I've just been very traumatised.

ALEX: She's pulling your leg.

SARAH: No, it's true. I came out here to go on the 'net only to discover my father spanking my mother.

ALEX: That's not true!

MICHAEL: It was just a joke! That's all!

SARAH: I didn't find it very funny.

ALEX: It was just a misunderstanding.

SARAH: He was really laying into her.

MICHAEL: It was just a couple of taps. That's all. A joke.

SARAH: I almost called the police.

ALEX: Sarah, tell Bev it's not true.

SARAH: *(pause)* Bev, in your professional opinion, how can I overcome this trauma?

ALEX: Oh, for goodness sake!

*Silence.*

BEV: Um...well, that's a bit out of my field of expertise. I don't know much about domestic violence.

MICHAEL: It wasn't domestic violence!

ALEX: Michael was just having a bit of fun, that's all.

BEV: Fair enough. Whatever floats your boat.

ALEX: It doesn't "float our boat". *(beat)* Bev, I asked you here to try and get Sarah involved in healthy activities, because this morning we found her over a man's knee about to be spanked.

BEV: Shit!

SARAH: I can't believe you just told her!

MICHAEL: Alex, that was totally unnecessary.

ALEX: I had to call her bluff.

SARAH: I've got to get out of this house!

ALEX: You were distorting the situation. I had no choice.

SARAH: This is fucking bullshit!

ALEX: Sarah!

BEV: Alex and Mike, would you mind if I had a word with Sarah alone, please?

ALEX: Not at all.

MICHAEL: Fine.

SARAH: Maybe, for once, someone could ask me if I'd like to talk to them of my own free will?

BEV: Sarah, would you like to have a chat with me?

SARAH: *(pause)* Yeah, fine.

ALEX: Good. We'll leave you to it.

*ALEX and MICHAEL exit.*

BEV: Is all this true?

*Pause.*

SARAH: Yes it is.

BEV: God. Why'd you do it?

SARAH: I don't want to talk about it.

BEV: Fair enough. But to be honest I think you're living in a very unhealthy environment.

SARAH: Gosh, how'd you work that out?

BEV: In fact, I get the impression that you're living under the rule of a brutal patriarch.

SARAH: What?

BEV: You know, patriarchy. A society run by men for men, at the expense of women's freedom.

SARAH: Not really.

BEV: It's all right. I know it's a hard to understand if you don't know the lingo. For the last six months I've been studying Gender Studies at the Uni and I'm only just getting the knack.

SARAH: Is that like...feminism?

BEV: Yeah, that's right. And I think your Dad is controlling you and your Mum through violence.

SARAH: Actually, Dad, isn't that bad. In fact, it's the first time I've ever seen him do anything like that.

BEV: See? You're defending him. That's how much control he's got over you.

SARAH: Honestly, dad's great, he just lets mum walk over him a bit.

BEV: He was hitting your Mum. She's not walking over anyone. We have to get you out.

SARAH: Get me out?

BEV: Are you happy living here? You said you were traumatised.

SARAH: Well, yeah, but -

BEV: We disabled people are very vulnerable to being abused by our carers. Have your parents hurt you in any way, or taken away things that give you pleasure?

SARAH: *(pause)* They banned me from the internet.

BEV: Oh shit. For most disabled people that's the main way they connect with the world.

SARAH: And they stopped me seeing a friend of mine.

BEV: This is worse than I thought. I've go to get you out.

SARAH: But where would I go?

BEV: You can stay with me until you find a place. It's all fitted out for us crips so you won't have any problems. Now pack a bag and we'll get going.

SARAH *hesitates*.

BEV: Sarah, your mum just betrayed your trust by telling me that you're a total devo.

SARAH: I'm not a devo!

BEV: All right. She shared something intimate about you with a stranger. Is this the sort of household you want to live in?

*Pause*

SARAH: Give me a few minutes.

BEV: Chuck your bag out your bedroom window, so they don't get suspicious, okay? Then we'll tell your Mum we're going out for a game of basketball.

SARAH *nods then goes. A few moments later ALEX comes in.*

ALEX: Oh, she's stormed off on you, has she?

BEV: No, not at all. We're just about to head off down to the basketball courts for a bit of a game.

ALEX: You're kidding?

BEV: No, she's really keen, actually.

ALEX: That's fantastic.

BEV: I hope she likes it. The ACT wheelchair comp's down on numbers at the moment and we could really use her. Just not enough people getting paralysed.

ALEX *looks at her, shocked. Fade to black.*

**SCENE 3**

BEV and SARAH roll on to an empty stage. BEV still has her basketball.

BEV: So what do you think of the place?

SARAH: It's great. Lots of room.

BEV: Best of all, you can come and go as you please. And use the internet anytime you like.

SARAH: Thanks, Bev.

BEV: So what do you do with yourself during the day? Do you have a job?

SARAH: No, not at the moment.

BEV: Are you studying?

SARAH: No, I'm not doing anything.

BEV: Well, it takes a while after you get injured before you get going again. What were you going to do this year, before the accident?

SARAH: I was going to go overseas with my two closest friends. Work in London and then travel around Europe.

BEV: Did your friends still go?

SARAH: Yep. Only three weeks after my accident. They didn't even delay it.

BEV: Shit, that must have hurt.

SARAH: You could say that.

BEV: Well, I know what it's like to lose friends. Some people just can't handle seeing you in a chair, but mostly it's because you can't do the things you used to do together. I used to love bushwalking, but I had to find other interests. That's how I made new friends.

SARAH: The wheelchair basketball?

BEV: I reckon it saved me. I loved it straight away. Everyone banging into each other, not treating each other like porcelain dolls. Then afterwards we go out for beers. You should see the looks we get when we all roll into a bar like a heavy metal army.

SARAH: Sounds amazing.

BEV: And it's not just about basketball. We're like this big support group. You need that when you're a crip, cause it can get a bit isolating.

SARAH: It does sound good, but I don't know if basketball is my kind of thing.

BEV: Well, you won't know until you give it a try.

SARAH: I was never the sporty type.

BEV: Yeah, I got that impression.

SARAH: How?

BEV: Well, look at your skinny little arms and upper body? Haven't you done any exercise since rehab?

SARAH: Not a lot.

BEV: But you've got to look after your body. More so than when you were a walkie. I go to the gym three times a week.

SARAH: I used to do pump classes.

BEV: Well, you should come to the gym with me.

SARAH: I don't think so.

BEV: You're not going to be girlie about this are you?

SARAH: What do you mean?

BEV: Some women are real girlie girls. Don't want to get Madonna arms. You know, they want to stay traditionally pretty. But not me. I love people seeing how strong I am. Look...

*BEV tenses her biceps.*

SARAH: That's...incredible.

BEV: Show me yours.

SARAH: No. I've got nothing to show.

BEV: Come on, show me. Don't be shy.

SARAH *hesitates, then does it. BEV feels it.*

BEV: I see what you mean. Not too good.

SARAH: They're all right.

BEV: You don't even look like you could lift a cup of tea. Don't you even get out for a roll occasionally?

SARAH: Not often.

BEV: I do three 10 k rolls per week. It's not a patch on Louise Sauvage, but it's not bad. Have you read her autobiography?

SARAH: No, I haven't.

BEV: It's great! She'd train every morning at six am, come rain, hail or shine. I got so much inspiration from it. What about Janine Shepherd's *Never Tell Me Never*? Have you read that?

SARAH: No.

BEV: But you must! She used to be a top class skier until some idiot ran her over. Then after she did rehab she went for a swim for the first time, but was disappointed because she only swam twenty laps! Twenty laps! Most people can't even swim one, and she does twenty the first time after becoming a paraplegic. You've got to read it.

SARAH: Okay, I will.

BEV: Good. Now how 'bout we go out for a game of basketball?

SARAH: Actually, I'm feeling a bit tired.

BEV: Oh come on, don't be so soft. Here.

*She throws the ball to SARAH and it bounces off her head.*

SARAH: Ow!

BEV: Shit! Sorry, Sarah. Are you okay?

SARAH: Yeah, fine.

BEV: I shouldn't have thrown it so hard. Let's try again.

SARAH: No thanks. I'm going to have a lie down.

BEV: Oh, okay. But afterwards, we're going down to the court, and I won't take no for an answer.

SARAH: Okay. And Bev....thanks for letting me stay here. I really appreciate it.

BEV: No worries. It will be good to have some company again.

*SARAH nods and then goes out. BEV calls after her...*

BEV: Oh! That Janine Shepherd book is next to your bed. A few months after she started swimming again, she learned to fly a plane. A plane! Unbelievable.

*BEV has a few bounces of her basketball and then stops. She takes a mobile phone out of her pocket and dials.*

BEV: Can I speak to Catherine Johnson, please?

*Fade to black.*

**Scene 4**

CATHERINE, *a woman of sixty, stands in the room thinking. BEV is next to her.*

CATHERINE: Jesus Christ! I've heard some weird things, but this is right up there.

BEV: But that's not the half of it. As soon as I got there she told me she'd just rolled in on her dad spanking her mum.

CATHERINE: What?

BEV: Really laying into her, apparently. Screaming and carrying on.

CATHERINE: Unbelievable. And no doubt the father has done the same to her. Now the only way she can cope with the pain and humiliation is by turning it into a pleasure.

BEV: I never thought of that.

CATHERINE: But what pleasure? She can't feel anything!

BEV: That's true.

CATHERINE: Maybe it's an unconscious desire to punish herself for no longer conforming to men's ideal of physical attractiveness?

BEV: That sounds more like it.

CATHERINE: Whatever it is, she's going to need a lot of help to get through it.

BEV: That's for sure.

CATHERINE: Bev, I can't tell you how much I admire you for getting her out of there. None of my other students would have done that. All semester I've been trying to get them excited about next week's Reclaim The Night rally, but most of them have given pathetic excuses for not coming. I mean, they're studying feminism as though it's past history! When I tell them how the virulent growth of pornography has normalised degrading sexual practices, like women shaving off pubic hair so they look like porn stars, they say, "Oh well, it's up to individual women how they express their sexuality". If *they'd* come across Sarah they wouldn't have feared for her safety, but applauded her for not letting her disability interfere with her sexuality. And the academics are just as bad! They're too busy with their research to actually help real women. When I started here this year I had no idea there would be such apathy. If it wasn't for you, Bev, I'd have given up hope. You have a very promising career ahead of you helping abused women.

BEV: Thanks, Catherine.

CATHERINE: And you've only completed one semester! God knows what you'll be like in a few years.

BEV: Well, if I do get anywhere it will only be because you encouraged me.

CATHERINE: Well, I'm delighted to hear that. I just wish there were more students like you. In fact, I'm so disgusted with them I'm tempted to change my Master's thesis from the relationship between pornography and domestic violence, to the brainwashing of young women in accepting degrading male sexual practices.

SARAH *enters*.

BEV: Here she is.

SARAH: Oh, sorry, am I interrupting? I can –

BEV: Of course not. In fact, I want to introduce you. Sarah, this is Catherine Johnson, my Gender Studies tutor at uni'.

SARAH: Hello.

*They shake hands.*

CATHERINE: How are you feeling after your lie down?

SARAH: Much better thanks.

CATHERINE: That's good. I bet you needed it after all the stress you've been through.

SARAH: *(pause)* Bev, what have you said about me?

BEV: *(pause)* I told her everything.

SARAH: Bev!

BEV: Catherine can help you. In fact, without her teaching I wouldn't've had the guts to get you out of that patriarchal prison.

SARAH: But it's private!

CATHERINE: Sarah, I assure you I will protect your privacy. I've worked in refuges for the last twenty years. I've had a great deal of experience counselling victims of domestic violence.

SARAH: But I'm not a victim of domestic violence!

CATHERINE: Has your father ever hit you?

SARAH: No!

CATHERINE: Even as a child?

SARAH: No, never.

CATHERINE: Oh. Yet it's true that your parents banned you from the internet and refused to let you see one of your friends, isn't it?

*Pause. SARAH finally nods.*

CATHERINE: Sarah, do you know much about feminism?

SARAH: Well, a little bit I s'pose.

CATHERINE: And what do you think it's achieved?

SARAH: Well, um...I s'pose it's given women the chance to have their own careers, live independently, that sort of thing.

BEV: That's a pretty good definition, I reckon.

CATHERINE: It's not bad. Do you regard yourself as a feminist?

SARAH: I don't know. I've never really thought about it.

CATHERINE: Well, that's understandable. You're young, having fun.

SARAH: *Was* having fun.

CATHERINE: Of course.

BEV: I never thought about it either until I became a paraplegic.

CATHERINE: No, because the way men treated you suddenly changed, didn't it?

BEV: Yeah. My boyfriend dumped me pretty fast after I got hurt. Some others sniffed around, but they didn't want a relationship. Just wanted to see what it was like to sleep with a paraplegic.

CATHERINE: Bev's accident, as tragic as it was, allowed her to see how men treat you when your body no longer conforms to their limited ideal of attractiveness.

BEV: It did. And doing Gender Studies has helped me even more. I can't believe how much I was manipulated by men before.

CATHERINE: It could do the same for you, Sarah.

SARAH: *(pause)* You want me to study Gender Studies?

CATHERINE: It could help you overcome your desire to be punished for not living up to men's physical ideal.

*Silence.*

SARAH: Actually, before the accident I'd been thinking about studying advertising.

CATHERINE: Advertising? Did you know that advertising is one of the main ways degrading sexual practices are normalised?

SARAH: Um...no, I didn't.

CATHERINE: Well, unless you've been educated about these things it's impossible to know. So to help you out I've brought you a book.

*She gives her a book.*

SARAH: *The Mainstreaming of Pornography.*

CATHERINE: After you read it we could discuss it. And if you're interested you could come along with Bev to a tutorial.

BEV: That's a great idea. Then afterwards we could go down to the gym for some basketball. What do you reckon?

SARAH: *(pause)* Bev, can I use your phone, please?

BEV: No worries. Are you going to call your parents?

SARAH: Ah, no. Just a friend.

*BEV gives her the phone.*

CATHERINE: Sarah, I suggest you call your parents first. Tell them that you're safe, but need a break from them to give yourself time to think. Okay?

SARAH: Ah, sure. Thanks, Catherine, for the book and everything.

*SARAH hurries out.*

BEV: Catherine, I don't think she's calling a friend.

CATHERINE: Why do you say that?

BEV: Her best friends are travelling in Europe. I think she means the man who spanked her.

CATHERINE: Of course.

BEV: I'd better stop her.

*BEV starts to wheel off*

CATHERINE: No, Bev, let her do it.

BEV: Why?

CATHERINE: I have an idea.

*Blackout.*

**SCENE 5**

SARAH *is in a park waiting. There is a bench. After a moment BILL enters wearing sunglasses, not looking pleased to be there.*

SARAH: Bill! You came.

BILL: Yeah, but I can't stay long. I have to get back to work.

SARAH: Oh. *(beat)* I'm sorry about what happened yesterday.

BILL: Yeah, so am I. It was pretty embarrassing.

SARAH: I know. They were supposed to be at the Hyatt.

BILL: Yeah, well.

SARAH: But I'm not living at home now. So I can see you any time.

BILL: *(pause)* Sarah, let's just leave it.

SARAH: But why?

BILL: The fantasy's ruined now.

SARAH: It's because I'm a paraplegic, isn't it?

BILL: No, no -

SARAH: It is, isn't it?

BILL: *(pause)* Yes, it is.

SARAH: But why?

BILL: Because...because I don't think it's right.

SARAH: You think it's wrong to spank a paraplegic?

BILL: Yes. And frankly I think it's pretty weird. Maybe you should get some counselling.

SARAH: What?

BILL: It's a bit sick. Even for my tastes.

SARAH: You think I'm a weirdo?

BILL: *(pause)* No, I think you've been through a terrible trauma and it's made you -

SARAH: Why does everyone think the accident has made me go mad!

BILL: *(pause)* Look, I've been decent enough to come here, but it's not going to change anything. So I think I'd better –

SARAH: But we opened up to each other.

BILL: *(pause)* Yes, but you lied to me.

SARAH: I didn't lie, I just didn't tell the full truth.

BILL: You said you'd recovered from cancer.

SARAH: But I told you how my friends went overseas without me. How lonely I was. How I'd thought about suicide. That was all true.

BILL: Sarah, please -

SARAH: And you told me about your divorce, and how your kids don't speak to you any more. I felt close to you, didn't you feel close to me?

BILL: Yeah, I s'pose. But to be honest you're just a bit too full-on for me. I just wanted a bit of fun. That's all. I'm sorry, Sarah, but I've got to go.

*He turns to leave.*

SARAH: Bill!

*BILL is about to leave when CATHERINE comes in and confronts him.*

CATHERINE: So you're the little wimp who likes to bash women?

BILL: Who the Hell are you?

CATHERINE: I'm the woman who wants to grind little weeds like you into the dust.

BILL: Is this some sort of joke?

SARAH: Catherine, what are you doing here?

CATHERINE: Why do you hate women so much?

BILL: Sarah, have you set me up?

SARAH: No, I swear I didn't.

CATHERINE: Does it make you feel like a real man, putting a women over your knee and bashing her?

BILL: Look, I don't know what your problem is, but I'm leaving.

CATHERINE: I don't think so.

*CATHERINE pushes him back. BEV quietly rolls on behind him.*

BILL: Hey! Get your hands off me.

CATHERINE: Or what? You're going to bash me, too? Does that thought give you an erection?

BILL: What the hell is your problem?

CATHERINE: My problem is men who can't get sexual satisfaction unless they're dominating and humiliating women.

BILL: Right. I'm warning you. If you touch me again, I really will hit you.

*BILL backs away into BEV's chair. She grabs him, pulls him down and holds in a fierce headlock.*

BEV: Hello there, little fella.

BILL: Shit.

BEV: What do you think of my grip? Bet it feels like a boa constrictor's got you, doesn't it?

BILL: Sarah, help!

CATHERINE: Just stay out of this, Sarah.

SARAH: What are you going to do to him?

CATHERINE: Well, let's see. How about we give him a little bit of his own medicine? Fancy giving him a spanking, Bev?

BILL: What?

BEV: That'd be great. I haven't been to the gym for a few days, so I could use the workout.

BILL: But I didn't spank Sarah!

CATHERINE: But you were going to.

BILL: No, I never would spank a disabled person.

CATHERINE: So you discriminate against disabled people, do you?

BILL: Of course not! I wouldn't spank anyone from a minority.

CATHERINE: So who would you spank? Would you spank an Aborigine?

BILL: No! Never!

CATHERINE: Why not? Are you racist, too?

BILL: You're twisting my words!

CATHERINE: How about me? Would you spank me?

*Silence.*

CATHERINE: You would, wouldn't you?

BILL: You bet I would!

CATHERINE: Of course you would. There's nothing you'd love more than to get hold of a strong, independent woman and cut her down to size.

BILL: No, I'd like to spank you because you're a bitch!

*Pause.*

CATHERINE: Bev, feel free to start any time.

BEV: Away we go then.

BILL: No!

*BEV gives him a hard smack.*

BEV and BILL: Ow!

BEV *shakes her hand.*

CATHERINE: What's wrong?

BEV: I hit his wallet.

CATHERINE: I'll get it out. Let's see who he is anyway.

BILL: If you do I'll go to the police!

CATHERINE *takes it out and opens it up.*

CATHERINE: David Glass.

SARAH: That's not right. His name's Bill.

CATHERINE: It isn't. Look...

*She shows SARAH.*

SARAH: Your name isn't Bill?

DAVE *doesn't answer.*

SARAH: You lied to me.

DAVE: For God's sake, don't sound so hurt. I never give my real name when I first meet someone over the net. They could be a total psycho.

SARAH: But I trusted you.

DAVE: Oh, grow up!

SARAH: Was anything you told me true?

CATHERINE: Oh my God!

BEV: What is it?

CATHERINE: He works at the uni! Look...

DAVE: Oh Christ.

CATHERINE *takes off his sunglasses*

BEV: I recognise him. I think he works in Student Admin.

CATHERINE: Yes, I've seen him around campus.

DAVE: And I've seen you. At that anti-porn rally of yours that no-one showed up to.  
And why would they? Porn is perfectly normal these days.

CATHERINE: It is not normal! It has simply been normalised by the flood of it on the internet.

DAVE: You're just a killjoy. Taking the fun out of sex.

CATHERINE: The things a man like you would call "fun" are actually ways of subordinating women.

DAVE: Yeah, yeah. You're a typical feminist from the women-are-victims school. They do those things because they want to.

CATHERINE: Yes, I know all about those things women *want* to do. The women I counselled in refuges told me all about it.

DAVE: Oh for God's sake.

CATHERINE: No doubt your love of spanking was born from pornography. I bet you spend hour after hour on the net. Your pants round your ankles, tissues flying everywhere.

DAVE: You are sick!

CATHERINE: No, that's you, mate. You've seen so much porn you think that's what women want.

DAVE: How would you know what women want? You're a lesbian.

*Silence.*

CATHERINE: For your information, I was married for thirty years.

DAVE: Until your husband came to his senses.

CATHERINE: Until he died!

*Silence.*

CATHERINE: Sarah, next week I'm running Canberra's Reclaim the Night rally. I want you to speak there and tell everyone that Dave Glass here is a low-life spanker.

DAVE: You can't do that!

CATHERINE: In fact, it'll be the perfect way to get an anti-pornography debate going! Surely the staff and students won't tolerate a man among them who gets pleasure from hurting women.

DAVE: You'll ruin my career!

CATHERINE: And thank God you're an administrator! The academics can unite against you rather than feel they have to protect one of their own. This is going to cause the biggest public debate since Helen Garner's *The First Stone*!

DAVE: Sarah, please, you can't do this to me.

SARAH: I'm not going to.

DAVE: Thank you.

CATHERINE: Sarah, you opened your heart to him and all he told you was lies. Just so he could use you for his pleasure and then disappear back into cyberspace.

DAVE: It wasn't like that, Sarah. I just wanted to find out what you were like first. I would've told you the truth about myself.

SARAH: If I wasn't a paraplegic, that is.

DAVE: Okay, I admit I couldn't get my head around that. But that's no reason to destroy a man's life.

CATHERINE: Sarah, this man likes to hurt women. Eventually he may even kill one of us.

DAVE: I don't hurt women, I never spank hard.

BEV: Would you hit this hard?

*BEV spans him hard.*

DAVE: Ow! No! Much softer than that.

BEV: How about this?

*She spans him again.*

DAVE: Ow! That's still way too hard.

CATHERINE: Rubbish. The pleasure comes from inflicting pain.

DAVE: No! It comes from the role-playing and the comforting afterwards. You have no idea what spanking is really about.

CATHERINE: And why would you want to role-play violence against women in the first place? Could it be a repressed desire, perhaps?

*Silence.*

CATHERINE: Sarah, he rejected you because you couldn't feel pain. He dismissed you as a freak. Are you really going to let him go on hurting women?

DAVE: Sarah, please, she doesn't know what she's talking about.

*Silence. They all look at SARAH. Suddenly she spansks DAVE very hard.*

DAVE: Ow!

CATHERINE: That's the way, Sarah! Again! Teach him a lesson!

*SARAH belts and belts him, she is out of control, all of her frustration is coming out.*

CATHERINE: Sarah, that's enough! That's enough!

*She drags here away.*

*DAVE is whimpering.*

CATHERINE: (to DAVE) See how easy it is to lose control? Don't pretend that never happened to you.

DAVE: Just let me go.

CATHERINE: One for the road first.

*CATHERINE cracks his buttocks hard. He cries out.*

CATHERINE: God that felt good. I've always wanted to do that. (beat) Let him go, Bev.

*DAVE staggers up.*

DAVE: I'll get you for this!

*DAVE runs out, whimpering and hunched over.*

CATHERINE: (*yells*) Aren't you going to stay to be comforted?

*Blackout.*

**ACT 2**

**SCENE 1**

*ALEX is on the phone, walking around the room impatiently. MICHAEL walks in.*

MICHAEL: Still on hold?

ALEX: These automated telephone systems should be banned! For God's sake, our daughter is missing!

MICHAEL: Just be patient, you'll get through.

ALEX: She could be dumped in a river by then.

MICHAEL: Alex, let's not overreact, okay?

ALEX: Why are you always so calm? It really gets on my nerves.

MICHAEL: Well, one of us has to be.

*There is a knock on the door.*

ALEX: She's home! She's home!

*ALEX throws the phone on the couch and races off stage. We hear her scream and she races back in.*

ALEX: It's the spanker! Get him out, Michael! Get him out!

*DAVE enters, hunched over.*

MICHAEL: What the Hell are you doing here?

DAVE: It's about your daughter.

ALEX: What have you done to her?

DAVE: Nothing. But she sure as Hell did something to me.

ALEX: You've seen her?

DAVE: Yes. And she has just beaten the life out of me.

MICHAEL: What?

ALEX: So she's all right?

DAVE: Fine if you're happy that she's fallen in with a group of male-bashing, lesbian feminists.

MICHAEL: What are you talking about?

DAVE: She and this gender studies tutor from the uni, and another paraplegic –

ALEX: Bev?

DAVE: Yeah, that's her. They held me prisoner while Sarah spanked me to the point where I almost passed out.

MICHAEL: Sarah would never do that.

DAVE: She wouldn't have if it wasn't for the lesos. But they kept at her until she did it. Then she went berserk.

ALEX: I don't believe it.

MICHAEL: Neither do I.

DAVE: Well, it's true. And what's worse, she's going to speak at next week's Reclaim The Night rally and out me as a woman-bashing spanker. I'll be run off the Uni!

MICHAEL: You work at the Uni?

DAVE: Yes, I'm the manager of student admin.

ALEX: What's Reclaim the Night?

DAVE: It's a rally protesting violence against women.

ALEX: Well, I think you should be outed.

DAVE: What?

ALEX: A man who spanks women shouldn't be dealing with young female students.

DAVE: *(to Michael)* You see, this is what I'm always up against - people who don't understand the reality of spanking.

ALEX: And don't want to, you sicko!

*The phone rings. ALEX answers it quickly.*

ALEX: Hello? *(pause)* Sarah! Sweetheart, are you okay? We've been worried sick.  
*(pause)* Good, good. When will you be home? *(pause)* Time to think? *(pause)* Oh, don't be silly. You can think at home. Tell me where you are and I'll come and get you?

DAVE: Tell her not to ruin my career.

*ALEX waves him away.*

DAVE: *(yells)* I could go to the police, you know, Sarah.

ALEX: But you must tell me where you are. *(pause)* Please, sweetheart, why don't we sit down and talk? *(pause)* Sarah? Sarah!

*She puts down the phone.*

MICHAEL: What did she say?

ALEX: She's not coming home.

MICHAEL: What?

ALEX: And she wouldn't tell me where she's staying. She said she needs time to think and will contact us when she's ready.

MICHAEL: Oh God.

DAVE: That den of lesons is behind it. They're controlling her so she won't change her mind about outing me.

ALEX: What are we going to do! What are we going to do!

MICHAEL: First, let's just calm down!

ALEX: Don't you tell me to calm down! If it wasn't for you spanking me, Sarah would be home right now safe and sound.

DAVE: You spanked her? Really?

MICHAEL: No! No!

ALEX: Yes, he did. And right in front of our daughter. Scaring her out of our home.

DAVE: Jesus, aren't you a dark horse.

MICHAEL: It was nothing like what you do.

DAVE: No, you've taken it a step further - in front of your own daughter!

MICHAEL: Bill, just be quiet, please.

DAVE: Actually, my name's Dave. I only use Bill when I meet people on the net.

ALEX: (*eureka!*) Bev!

MICHAEL: What?

ALEX: Her place will be modified for disability. There isn't anywhere else for Sarah to go at such short notice.

*ALEX starts to head off into the unseen kitchen.*

MICHAEL: Where are you going?

ALEX: To see if she's listed in the phone book.

*ALEX exits.*

DAVE: Well, I never would've picked you for a fellow spanker.

MICHAEL: Will you just be quiet, please?

DAVE: (*pause*) You know, the worst thing you can do is repress it.

MICHAEL: Oh for God's sake.

DAVE: For years I turned my back on who I was, letting the desire eat away at me. It was a very unhappy time. The sooner you accept who you are the happier you'll be.

MICHAEL: It was a joke! Alex got me to check the internet history to see what Sarah was going into and we found Spanker's Paradise.

DAVE: Great site! That's where I met Sarah.

MICHAEL: Thanks for telling me.

DAVE: So you got a bit turned on, did you?

MICHAEL: No! I just gave Alex a few gentle smacks for a joke.

DAVE: Did she love it?

MICHAEL: Hardly.

DAVE: That'd be right, she's so uptight. I bet you have a terrible sex life, don't you?

MICHAEL: *(pause)* This conversation is at an end.

DAVE: I just don't want you to go through what I did. *(beat)* Look, next month I'm going to a spanking enthusiasts weekend. Why don't you come along? Find out who you really are.

MICHAEL: *(pause)* There's just no getting through to you, is there?

*ALEX hurries back in.*

ALEX: I've got her address. Let's go.

DAVE: Good work. We can go in my car.

ALEX: You're not coming!

DAVE: You bet I'm coming. My career and reputation are at stake.

ALEX: Michael, can you deal with him, please?

MICHAEL: Well, he has got a point.

ALEX: Typical, Michael. Absolutely spineless. Let's get going then.

*She exits.*

DAVE: I can see why you want to spank her.

*They hurry after her.*

**SCENE 2**

ALEX and MICHAEL enter. DAVE follows, still struggling to walk.

ALEX: This is it. Come on, Michael.

DAVE: Wait!

ALEX: What do you want now? Can't you just get lost?

DAVE: Well, what's your plan?

ALEX: What do you mean "plan"?

DAVE: This Bev is extremely dangerous. She had me in a headlock for minutes and I could barely move. You won't be able to get Sarah out without a fight.

ALEX: I'm not fighting anyone. I'm just going to reason with her and I'm sure she'll come home.

DAVE: Reason won't work. You're not dealing with the daughter you knew before.

ALEX: She only left home this morning.

DAVE: Yes, and she's already assaulted me and cut-off contact with you. Would you have expected that from her this morning?

*Silence.*

DAVE: And since then they've had plenty more time to indoctrinate her. They're probably indoctrinating her as we speak.

MICHAEL: I think that's a bit far-fetched.

DAVE: No it isn't. They use the same methods as cults.

MICHAEL: What rubbish.

ALEX: Just listen to him, Michael.

MICHAEL: You're taking him seriously?

ALEX: Well, what should we do?

DAVE: *(to Michael)* You have to take out Beverley.

MICHAEL: Kill her?

DAVE: No. Fight her while Alex and I get Sarah out.

MICHAEL: Why do I have to fight her?

DAVE: She's your daughter.

ALEX: And you're the man of the family, Michael.

MICHAEL: But I've got a bad back.

DAVE: Are you a total soft cock? Do you want your daughter back or not?

ALEX: Look, someone's coming out.

DAVE: That's her! That's the leso I was telling you about.

CATHERINE *enters*.

CATHERINE: If you don't leave immediately I'll call the Police.

DAVE: Good. Then I can tell them what you did to me.

CATHERINE: And where are all your witnesses to back you up?

*Silence.*

ALEX: We'd just like to see our daughter, please.

CATHERINE: Are you Alex?

ALEX: Yes.

CATHERINE: Oh, you poor thing. Sarah has told me all about what you've been through.

MICHAEL: Oh God, here we go. I refuse to defend myself again!

CATHERINE: She told me that you gave up your career to care for her, and that you've received very little support from your husband.

MICHAEL: That's not true! I help stretch Sarah's legs occasionally. But it's very hard for a man to look after his adult daughter.

CATHERINE: It's just typical of men, isn't it? You have the more successful career, but it's you who has to give it up, while he works until all hours to avoid any responsibility at home.

DAVE: She earned more than you?

MICHAEL: A little more. Not much.

CATHERINE: And then after all you've done, does he show you any appreciation? No, he beats you!

MICHAEL: How many times do I have to say this - we were looking at a spanking site that Sarah went into -

DAVE: Spankers paradise.

MICHAEL: - and we were making fun of it, weren't we, Alex?

ALEX: So you keep saying.

MICHAEL: What?

CATHERINE: So you looked at some spanking pornography and immediately started to beat your wife?

MICHAEL: No! No!

ALEX: Yes, that's right.

MICHAEL: Alex!

CATHERINE: This proves my point - pornography drives men to violence!

DAVE: What crap!

CATHERINE: Alex, you have been living under the rule of a selfish and brutal patriarch and you need to get out.

ALEX: Actually, he isn't that bad.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Alex, for supporting me for once.

ALEX: For once?

CATHERINE: Unbelievable. You give up your career and let his continue, and still he feels unsupported. How often has he thanked you for all you've done?

MICHAEL: Hundreds of times.

ALEX: Hardly ever.

MICHAEL: What?

ALEX: Often I've felt abandoned.

MICHAEL: That isn't true, Alex.

CATHERINE: Of course it is. You get no support whatsoever, then you have to go through the trauma of seeing your daughter get spanked by this low-life.

DAVE: I didn't spank her!

CATHERINE: Alex, you have to stay here for a while. Bev and I will look after Sarah so you can have the break you deserve. Don't you deserve a bit of support for once?

*ALEX bursts into tears. CATHERINE walks towards her.*

CATHERINE: Come on, let's reunite you with Sarah.

*MICHAEL leaps in front of her.*

MICHAEL: You keep away from her!

DAVE: That's it, Michael, show some balls!

CATHERINE: Alex, this is a perfect example of what patriarch's do. They treat you as their property. Are you going to let him do that?

MICHAEL: I will not let you destroy my family!

CATHERINE: You already did that yourself. Come on, Alex.

*ALEX starts to head inside. MICHAEL grabs her arm.*

ALEX: Let me go, Michael!

MICHAEL: You're not going in there!

CATHERINE: Bev! Bev! Domestic violence! Hurry!

DAVE: Oh shit!

*BEV races on.*

BEV: Get your hands off her!

*BEV charges at him. MICHAEL and DAVE run away.*

BEV: Come near her again and you'll get the headlock from Hell.

CATHERINE: Come on, Alex, let's get you inside.

*CATHERINE put her arm around her and begins to guide her off.*

CATHERINE: And if you two don't leave immediately I'll call the police.

*CATHERINE and ALEX exit.*

DAVE: That's right - call the patriarchy to do your dirty work.

BEV: I'll do worse than them.

*BEV charges at him again. DAVE and MICHAEL run off stage.*

CATHERINE: Come on, Bev, don't waste your time.

*BEV exits. DAVE and MICHAEL enter again.*

MICHAEL: Alex! Alex! *(pause)* What am I going to do?

DAVE: We'll go back to my place, grab some cricket bats, then come back and run amok!

MICHAEL: We can't do that.

DAVE: Why not? She calls us the patriarchy, so let's start acting like it!

MICHAEL: I would never hit a woman!

DAVE: What about - ?

MICHAEL: Don't say it!

DAVE: I was going to say what about Bev. She'd like nothing more than to beat the hell out of us.

MICHAEL: I could never hurt a woman.

DAVE: Haven't you fully grasped the situation you're in yet? You're wife and daughter are trapped inside being indoctrinated by rampant feminists! If we don't act quickly you may never get them back.

*Silence. MICHAEL thinks.*

DAVE: Not only that, you're in danger of being outed at Reclaim The Night, too.

MICHAEL: What?

DAVE: I can see it now: Alex up there telling everyone how you turned into a wife-beater after one viewing of pornography.

MICHAEL: She wouldn't.

DAVE: Do you really believe that after what you've just seen?

*Pause.*

MICHAEL: Maybe I am a wife-beater?

DAVE: Don't be ridiculous.

MICHAEL: Some of those spanks I gave her did have a bit of a sting to them.

DAVE: So they should. It get the endorphins going.

MICHAEL: No, it was my frustration coming out. I was angry at her.

DAVE: Why?

MICHAEL: *(pause)* Because she hasn't wanted to have sex for a long time.

DAVE: I knew she was frigid!

MICHAEL: She never used to be. But since she's been caring for Sarah she says she's been too tired and stressed. And to be honest, I haven't given much support.

DAVE: Well, someone has to earn the money.

MICHAEL: My job's not that hard. I'm just a middle manager in the public service. Those extra hours I spend at work, I usually waste on the internet. I just couldn't bare to see my Sarah like that.

DAVE: That's understandable. It must have been Hell for you.

*Pause*

MICHAEL: I'm going to apologise.

DAVE: What for?

MICHAEL: For being a wife-beater and being unsupportive.

*DAVE grabs him to stop him going in.*

DAVE: Don't be stupid.

MICHAEL: But it's true!

DAVE: Even if it is, it won't get your family back. Catherine will just use it as part of her attempt to get the anti-pornography debate going. You'll be further distanced from them.

MICHAEL: Alex won't let that happen.

DAVE: She will. And if you go in there you'll be indoctrinated too. And before you know it you'll be outing *yourself* at Reclaim The Night.

*There is a Police siren.*

DAVE: Shit, they've called the patriarchy - I mean, the Police. Let's go.

MICHAEL: No, I have to talk to Alex.

DAVE: You confess to anything and you'll be leaving here in that police car. Now let's go to my place. You can stay there for a while.

MICHAEL: But what about your family?

DAVE: They left years ago. Come on!

*DAVE runs off. MICHAEL hesitates, then follows.*

**SCENE 3**

*This scene cross-fades back and forth between the men and the women.*

CATHERINE *and* ALEX *are talking.*

CATHERINE: I know you were shocked by Sarah's behaviour. I was too. And if I was her mother I would've done exactly what you did. But it's important to understand that she did it because she hates her body at the moment, because it no longer meets men's ideal of perfection. She wanted to punish herself for that.

ALEX: She told you that?

CATHERINE: No, but it's a standard response from people coming to terms with disability.

ALEX: Getting spanked?

CATHERINE: Punishing themselves. So don't even mention the spanking. Just reconnect with her. Here she is.

*SARAH comes on, followed by BEV.*

ALEX: Oh Sweetheart. I'm so sorry.

*ALEX rushes to her, hugs her and starts to cry. SARAH cries too. BEV has a little weep, too.*

*Cross fade to MICHAEL alone at a table. DAVE runs in holding a piece of paper.*

DAVE: I've got the timetable.

*He hands it to MICHAEL.*

DAVE: It starts at 7pm next Wednesday.

*MICHAEL looks at it.*

DAVE: They start with a march from the uni into Garema place. Then they have the guest speaker. Some man-hater no doubt. Then they're doing an exert from *The Vagina monologues*.

MICHAEL: The what?

DAVE: *The Vagina Monologues*. It's a play about women talking about their vaginas.

MICHAEL: With actors?

DAVE: Yeah.

MICHAEL: Oh. I had this image of a puppet show with vaginas on sticks.

DAVE: Wouldn't that be funny! These two vaginas talking. *(putting on a voice. Voice A)* If you see a penis, call the police immediately. *(voice B)* But what if it's a nice penis? *(voice A)* None of them are nice! They only want one thing, and they'll do anything to get it. *(normal voice)* Then this huge penis turns up. *(penis voice)* G'day, girls. What's a couple of nice vaginas like you doing in a place like this? *(voice A)* It's a penis! Call the Police! *(voice A)* But he seems a nice penis. *(penis)* I'm a very nice penis. And I give great massages. See? *(voice A)* Rape! Rape! *(voice b)* No, it's nice. Why don't you try it? *(penis)* Yeah, you'll be converted in no time. *(normal voice)* Then the penis beats her into submission and she loves it. That'd be funny, wouldn't it?

MICHAEL *just stares at him.*

DAVE: Maybe not. Right. Now after *The Vagina Monologues* is when they have the speakout.

MICHAEL: Speakout?

DAVE: That's when anyone can get up and talk about how they were sexually assaulted. That's when Sarah and Alex would get up and out us. So, I think we have no choice but to nab them during *The Vagina Monologues*. So let's have a drink and come up with a plan.

*Cross fade to SARAH lying on her back. CATHERINE has her leg over her shoulder, stretching her hamstring. BEV is on the ground, too, rolling around doing some stretches. ALEX is sitting down drinking a glass of wine, watching them.*

CATHERINE: How's that?

ALEX: You can go much further than that. And hold it for at least ten seconds. She won't break you know?

SARAH: It's too late for that.

BEV *pretends to play a violin.*

SARAH: Ha ha.

CATHERINE: How about this?

CATHERINE *pushes a little more.*

BEV: Harder. She's not made of glass. Get stuck into her.

CATHERINE *pushes further forward. SARAH screams out.*

SARAH: Ow! Ow!

CATHERINE: Oh my God! What have I done? Where does it hurt?

SARAH: Here.

SARAH *points to her hamstring. CATHERINE starts to rub it.*

CATHERINE: Is that feeling better?

*After a moment BEV and ALEX start to laugh.*

SARAH: Got you.

CATHERINE *laughs, too.*

CATHERINE: You cheeky Monkey!

BEV: Let's get her, Catherine. Toughen this crip up!

SARAH: What?

BEV: Bash her!

BEV *leaps on SARAH and wrestles her.*

SARAH: Mum help!

BEV: Come on, Catherine. Get her!

CATHERINE: Why not?

CATHERINE *jumps on.*

SARAH: Mum!

ALEX: It'll do you the world of good. In fact, I've felt like doing this to you for ages.

ALEX *jumps on and they all wrestle her.*

SARAH: Help! Anyone!

*They are a giggling, screaming mess.*

*Crossfade to DAVE and MICHAEL drinking beer. They clearly have had a few. DAVE is talking animatedly to MICHAEL, while showing him a picture in a magazine.*

DAVE: Look at the expression on her face. Go on. Look at it closely. Now, you cannot seriously tell me that she is not absolutely loving that.

MICHAEL: She's screaming.

DAVE: Yes! For more!

*Cross-fade to BEV watching SARAH do an arm curl.*

BEV: Come on, you can do it, dig deep!

*SARAH does it.*

BEV: Well done, You're not such a girly girl after all.

SARAH: That killed.

BEV: You'll get used to it.

SARAH: I'd much rather exercise my legs.

BEV: That'd be great, wouldn't it?

SARAH: I used to have the best legs. You should have seen me in my little black dress at my year twelve formal. All the guys were drooling.

BEV: Better not say that around Catherine.

SARAH: No. She would have hated me. I used to flaunt myself. I just loved all the attention.

BEV: My legs actually look better now. Before they used to look like tree trunks.

SARAH: Mine don't. They look like matchsticks. I'm never wearing shorts again.

BEV: You could use one of those special bikes that exercise your legs for you. I hear they help a bit.

SARAH: I s'pose. But I want to feel it. To run again.

BEV: I run in my dreams.

SARAH: Do you?

BEV: It's the best. Sprinting barefoot on the grass. Out of breath, but just loving the feeling. I hate it when I wake up. I always start to cry.

*Pause.*

SARAH: I used to fly in my dreams.

BEV: Really? I've never had them.

SARAH: Swooping and soaring, in total control of it. It was fantastic. But suddenly I'd fall out of the sky, about to crash to my death, when at the last second I just bounce onto my bed, safe and sound. I loved it.

BEV: Sounds great.

SARAH: I never have them any more, though. Not since the accident.

*Cross-fade to DAVE and MICHAEL, now a bit drunker. Empty beer cans on the table.*

DAVE: Michael, do you ever get a bit...

MICHAEL: What?

DAVE: *(pause)* Sad?

MICHAEL: *(pause)* Yes. In fact, sometimes I get very sad.

DAVE: So do I. And you know what? - It's the fault of women...isn't it?

MICHAEL: Well -

DAVE: It is! They're so beautiful, so tempting, promise so much...then they turn on you. Don't they?

MICHAEL: Sometimes, I s'pose.

DAVE: No, all the time. All the time! It makes me so mad I just want to...

MICHAEL: *(pause)* Do you...um...want to talk about it?

DAVE *stares at him, considering.*

DAVE: No, we have to work on our plan. But thanks for offering. You're a good bloke.  
A bit soft, but a good bloke.

MICHAEL: Thanks. You're a good bloke, too.

DAVE *impulsively hugs him.*

MICHAEL: Even though you wanted to spank my daughter.

DAVE *breaks the embrace.*

DAVE: But I didn't, though, did I?

MICHAEL: But if you did, would it have led to...to sex?

DAVE: No! No! The spanking is enough. More than enough.

*But his look betrays him.*

DAVE: Okay?

MICHAEL *nods.*

DAVE: Good. Right, let's work out how we're going to take out Bev. Now, do you know anyone who can get us one of those tasers?

*Blackout.*

**SCENE 4**

*Darkness. We hear a large group of women chanting...*

CHANT: We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/reclaim the night!

*Lights up on BEV, SARAH and ALEX all chanting. CATHERINE is leading the chant. She is holding a microphone.*

CHANT: We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/reclaim the night!

CATHERINE: Come on, Sisters! Put more heart into it! Like you really do want to reclaim the night

CHANT: We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/reclaim the night!

CATHERINE: One more time!

CHANT: We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/reclaim the night!

CATHERINE: Finally! That time I actually believed it. Give yourselves a big round of applause.

*BEV, SARAH and ALEX all start to clap.*

CATHERINE: Sisters, we're here today to demand an end to violence against women. However, to make it a reality we need to raise money to fight for our cause. Next Thursday is V-Day when *The Vagina Monologues* is performed all around the world to raise money for women in need. I urge you all to attend. To give you a taste of what you're in for, please welcome Alice Bennet performing a monologue from *The Vagina Monologues*!

*CATHERINE gestures off stage, indicating where the performance will take place. She then applauds, as do the rest of them.*

BEV: Catherine, that was great. It's going so well.

CATHERINE: Thanks, Bev, but it's a pity about the turnout.

BEV: But there are lots of women here.

CATHERINE: A lot of *older* women, not young women. Those students of mine are even more apathetic than I thought. What do you think so far, Alex?

ALEX: I had no idea this sort of thing went on.

CATHERINE: Well, I hope it's opened your eyes a little.

ALEX: It certainly has. And now she's going to talk about vaginas?

CATHERINE: That's right.

*ALEX looks embarrassed.*

CATHERINE: Is that shocking to you?

ALEX: No, not at all. Sarah, why don't you get some drinks for everyone? My treat.

CATHERINE: No, no. She's a mature women. She doesn't have to be shielded from this sort of thing.

SARAH: It's okay, Mum, I won't start exploring my vagina mid-performance.

ALEX: Sarah!

CATHERINE: How are you feeling, Sarah? Are you nervous?

SARAH: I'm...

CATHERINE: Yes, Sarah?

SARAH: I'm worried about what people will think of me.

CATHERINE: They'll think you're very brave for speaking out.

SARAH: But will they think I'm a victim? Because I'm not a victim. I'm not.

CATHERINE: Don't worry about what people will think of you. Just remember what you're doing is for the good of women. You're bringing the normalisation of pornography into the mainstream debate, where it needs to be.

DAVE: *(off)* I don't think so!

*DAVE and MICHAEL run on. MICHAEL has a bike lock chain, DAVE has pepper spray. The women scream.*

*DAVE sprays at BEV and CATHERINE. CATHERINE is hit in the face and screams out, but BEV avoids it.*

CATHERINE: Shit!

MICHAEL: Dave, get Bev.

SARAH: Dad!

BEV: Rape! Rape! Sisters! Rape!

MICHAEL: Spray her!

*DAVE tries again, but hits MICHAEL instead.*

MICHAEL: Shit!

ALEX: Michael, what are you doing?

DAVE: Get the chain on!

*MICHAEL blindly tries to thread the chain between BEV's wheelchair wheels.*

BEV: No you don't!

*BEV gets MICHAEL in a headlock.*

CATHERINE: Sisters! Sisters!

MICHAEL: Dave, help!

DAVE: Sorry, Mate.

*DAVE grabs SARAH's chair and starts to push her off. SARAH tries to stop him.*

SARAH: Let me go!

ALEX: Let her go!

*DAVE sprays ALEX. She lets out a scream and holds her eyes.*

*DAVE pushes SARAH off.*

MICHAEL: Dave! Dave!! Dave!!!

*Blackout.*

**SCENE 5**

DAVE *races on, wheeling SARAH, and stops.*

SARAH: How dare you do this to me!

DAVE *looks back, to see if he has been followed.*

SARAH: You've kidnapped me!

DAVE: You were about to ruin my career!

SARAH: You deserve it. Preying on young women so you can oppress them.

DAVE: Shut-up with that feminist cant! The only reason you want to get me is because I wouldn't spank you.

SARAH: That isn't true.

DAVE: And had the good sense to hide my true identity from you.

SARAH: Why do you hate women so much?

DAVE: *(pause)* Look, I'm really sorry for -

SARAH: Don't bother! No matter what you say I'm still going to say what I have to say. Whether it's today or tomorrow, or next week.

DAVE: *(pause)* Well, there's only one thing left to do then.

SARAH: What?

DAVE: Give you what you want.

DAVE *grabs her and tries to pull her out of the wheelchair.*

SARAH: Get your hands off me!

DAVE: But it's what you want, isn't it?

SARAH: You animal! Let me go!

DAVE *sits in the chair and drags SARAH over his knee. He starts to spank her viciously.*

DAVE: Giving you a thrill, is it? Does it feel like you imagined it would? Can you feel anything at all?

*He stops. SARAH lies over his knee like a rag doll. DAVE stands and puts her back in her chair.*

DAVE: Happy now? I've never spanked anyone like that before. Never. *(pause)* Are you okay?

*She nods.*

DAVE: Did you feel anything?

SARAH: *(pause)* No.

DAVE: What a surprise. Why on earth did you think it would?

SARAH: *(pause)* I thought... The most alive I've ever felt was the only other time I was spanked. It was on a school camp when I was fifteen. We were hiking through Namadgi, and the PE teacher put me in charge of leading the group, so he gave me his compass. But I was flirting with one of the guys, pushing each other, that sort of thing, when I dropped the compass and stepped on it. It broke. The teacher was furious, especially when we got lost for an hour. That night he called me to his tent and told me off for being so immature and for putting lives at risk. I just rolled my eyes. He said if I was going to act like a little girl then I should be treated like one. Then he grabbed me, put me over his knee, and spanked me. I was in total shock. But before I could complain my groin started to burn, getting hotter and hotter until something in me burst open and it felt like this hot liquid surge through my whole body. It was heavenly. He stopped spanking me and I was just flopped over his knees like a rag doll.

He said, "you loved that, didn't you, you little sicko?" I couldn't answer. So he stood me up and looked me up and down, and said, "it's a pity you're my student. The things I could do to you." And he could've. I wouldn't have stopped him. Then he said, "go back to your tent. And tomorrow I want to see you acting more maturely". But I couldn't move, I just kept staring at him. Then he yelled, "Go!" and that snapped me out of it, and I ran out.

*Pause.*

DAVE: Jesus. People have gone to gaol for that sort of thing.

SARAH: I thought about reporting him, but I was really confused. I knew he shouldn't have done it, but I thought I really was a sicko because I loved it so much. And I wanted it to happen again, but I didn't have the guts to do anything about it. Then I had the accident, and I...I cried for two months... Then one day I stopped. No more pain, just nothing. It was like I was dead inside. *(pause)* Then one day I started fantasising about the spanking again. And my chest would just swell with heat. It was the most alive I'd felt since I'd stopped crying. I started to fantasise that if I was spanked again, the feeling would be so strong that...that my legs would come back to life.

*She starts to bawl. He hugs her.*

DAVE Oh, Sarah, I'm so sorry.

*After a few moments...*

SARAH: It's so stupid, isn't it?

DAVE No, not at all. Not at all.

SARAH: Yes, it is. Thinking being spanked would cure my paraplegia.

*They both laugh.*

DAVE If it did, I could quit the uni and spend my time curing people.

*They laugh again.*

DAVE Sarah, I know it sounds stupid coming from me, but I hope you don't get...inspired to try it again.

SARAH: *(pause)* I won't. It's dead now.

DAVE Good. The price you pay is just too high.

SARAH: What do you mean?

DAVE: I um...lost my wife and kids because of the spanking.

SARAH: Are you serious?

DAVE I put pressure on her to try it early in our marriage and she did. But she hated it, and finally she put her foot down and said if I asked her to do it again the marriage would be over. So I stopped. And I controlled myself for years. But the desire kept building and building until I finally couldn't resist anymore and I went to other women. And finally she caught me. She left and told the kids why. And now none of them speak to me. I tried to rid myself of it, but I couldn't. I even went to counselling. But it's just part of me. It makes me feel more alive than anything else.

*Silence. SARAH holds his hand.*

DAVE It was a huge price to pay for something I do only occasionally.

*Suddenly CATHERINE and ALEX run in.*

CATHERINE: Get away from her!

CATHERINE *pushes* him away from SARAH.

ALEX: Sweetheart, are you okay?

SARAH: I'm fine, Mum.

CATHERINE: Has he hurt you?

SARAH: No, not at all.

CATHERINE: You're sure?

SARAH: Yes.

CATHERINE: *(to DAVE)* That was a very stupid thing to do. The Police are on their way and you'll be charged with assault and kidnapping.

SARAH: I'm not going to press charges.

CATHERINE: What?

SARAH: I'm not going to press charges.

CATHERINE: Oh, Sarah, what has he done to you?

SARAH: Nothing. I just...we've talked, and I'm satisfied. Nothing else needs to be done.

CATHERINE: Oh God, not another hostile witness!

DAVE: Thank you, Sarah. Thank you so much.

CATHERINE: Well, I'm still pressing charges!

ALEX: Even against, Michael?

CATHERINE *is silent.*

ALEX: I don't want Michael to be charged. Please, don't charge him, Catherine.

CATHERINE: *(pause)* Oh, you weak women! Aren't there any Amazonians left in this world?

DAVE: Where is Michael, anyway?

CATHERINE: Bev has him under citizen's arrest while we wait for the police to arrive.

DAVE: Poor bloke.

CATHERINE: I wouldn't be surprised if he's been torn to pieces by the time we get back.

*Suddenly we hear BEV on a microphone. They all listen...*

BEV: *(through microphone)* Sisters! Sisters! Please! I know you're angry, we all are. I'd love nothing more than to let you rip this patriarch apart. But he's begged me to let him speak, so I reckon we should give him the chance. *(to MICHAEL)* Don't try anything stupid.

MICHAEL: *(microphone)* Thanks. My name is Michael Davis and I'm a wife-beater.

DAVE: Oh my God!

MICHAEL: *(microphone)* I didn't used to be. I love my wife very much. But I accidentally came across some spanking pornography, and suddenly I found myself laying into her. I'm so ashamed!

ALEX: Oh Michael!

*ALEX runs off.*

CATHERINE: Alex, don't try to stop him!

*CATHERINE runs after her.*

DAVE: Come on. We'd better get back before he turns himself into the police.

DAVE *starts to push her.*

SARAH: Hey! I can do it.

DAVE: Of course you can. Sorry.

SARAH: That's okay.

*They exit.*

*Blackout.*

**SCENE 6**

*In the darkness, we hear...*

BEV: Hip hip!

ALL: Hooray!

BEV: Hip hip!

ALL: Hooray!

BEV: Hip hip!

ALL: Hooray!

*Lights up on ALEX, MICHAEL, BEV, CATHERINE and DAVE all standing around SARAH. A small outdoor table is in front of SARAH. On it is a birthday cake with the candles burning.*

ALEX: Happy birthday, Sweetheart.

*ALEX kisses her.*

ALEX: Time to blow out the candles.

*SARAH tries, but fails.*

BEV: What sort of girly blow was that? Fill your lungs to capacity and let them have it!

*SARAH takes a huge breath and blows out all the candles.*

BEV: That's it! Now make a wish.

*SARAH closes her eyes. Then feels her legs.*

SARAH: No, still no feeling.

ALEX: Oh well, sweetheart, maybe next year.

BEV: How about some presents before the cake?

SARAH: Okay.

BEV: Happy birthday, Sarah.

BEV *gives SARAH a big square box in wrapping paper, followed by a kiss.*

MICHAEL: Wow, that looks impressive, Bev.

BEV: It's the best present she'll ever get.

SARAH *opens it.*

SARAH: A basketball. Thanks, Bev.

BEV: No worries. You'll need all the practice you can get if you're going to play for my team.

SARAH: I'm not sure I'm going to yet.

BEV: Sarah, if you're going to live here with me, there's only one rule, and that is you have to play for the ACT Rollers, okay?

SARAH: *(pause)* All right, I'll give it a try.

BEV: Good on you. Anyway, we really need you. I rang ACT Health this morning and no-one in Canberra's been paralysed for the last six months! The roads here are just too good.

DAVE: Happy birthday, Sarah.

DAVE *hands her a long thin present.*

CATHERINE: Some sort of whip, is it?

DAVE: For God's sake! There's more to me than just spanking.

SARAH: Please, you two. You agreed that you wouldn't fight today.

CATHERINE: Yes, all right. Sorry, Sarah.

DAVE: Yeah, sorry, Sarah.

SARAH *opens it, revealing long incense sticks.*

SARAH: What are these?

DAVE: Incense sticks.

SARAH: Oh

DAVE: If you're ever feeling down or stressed you can light one, lie back and relax.  
They're really good.

CATHERINE: You use them?

DAVE: Yeah, it's my favourite way to relax, apart from gardening.

CATHERINE: You like gardening?

DAVE: I've got a big native garden at home.

CATHERINE: I can't believe we have something in common.

DAVE: You're a gardener, too?

CATHERINE: Yes. Every weekend. Plants are easier to nurture than people.

DAVE: That's for sure. *(beat)* You could come over and see my garden if you like?

CATHERINE: That'd be great! We could work in the garden together, reveal our innermost thoughts and fall deeply in love. Then you could spend the rest of your life bashing me.

DAVE: I was just trying to be friendly.

SARAH: Dave and Catherine, please!

DAVE & CATHERINE: Sorry.

CATHERINE: Here's my present. Happy birthday, Sarah

*She kisses her and hands her what looks like a book. SARAH starts to unwrap it.*

DAVE: Let me guess? - Andrea Dworkin or Catherine Mckinnon? Which one?

CATHERINE: I can't believe you actually know their names.

DAVE: Know thy enemy.

SARAH: A chess set.

DAVE: Oh.

SARAH: Thanks, Catherine.

CATHERINE: Can you play?

SARAH: A little.

CATHERINE: It's great for the intellect. We'll play some time.

DAVE: I play, too.

CATHERINE: Oh God! Dave, if you discover anything else we have in common, can you keep it to yourself, please?

DAVE: Fine.

MICHAEL: Sarah, here's a present from your mother and me.

*He hands her an envelope.*

SARAH: Thanks, Mum and Dad.

*She opens it.*

SARAH: Oh great. Membership to the uni gym.

ALEX: I got one, too. Since you're going to be living here now and I'm going back to work, I won't see you as much. It'll be a chance for us to catch up.

SARAH: That'll be great, Mum.

DAVE: You're going to uni?

SARAH: Yeah, next semester.

DAVE: Not Gender Studies I hope?

CATHERINE: *(disgusted)* No, she's doing Advertising.

DAVE: Thank God for that!

SARAH: Catherine, I was wondering if I could help advertise next year's Reclaim The Night rally? I should have a few skills by then.

CATHERINE: Of course you can, Sarah. We could use your help motivating those students of mine.

BEV: How about a game of basketball, everyone?

DAVE: Can't we have some cake first?

BEV: You can earn it on the court.

SARAH: Actually, I want to try one of these incense sticks first. You go ahead, and I'll join you.

*SARAH puts an incense stick in the cake and lights it. She inhales deeply, sits back and closes her eyes.*

BEV: Okay. It'll be me, Catherine and Alex versus Dave and Michael.

DAVE: That's not fair. We'll get flogged.

CATHERINE: Feel a bit threatened being outnumbered by the women, do you?

MICHAEL: Come on, Dave, be positive. We can take them! Come on!

DAVE: You're in a very good mood today. What's got into you?

MICHAEL: Nothing.

DAVE: *(quietly)* I know. You're dominating in the bedroom again, aren't you?

*MICHAEL giggles.*

BEV: Come on you two, let's get into it. You can start since you're outnumbered.

*BEV throws the ball to DAVE, who drops it and yelps.*

DAVE: My hand! God!

CATHERINE: Oh no! It's not your spanking hand, is it? Have a few swings, make sure it's okay.

*DAVE stares at her.*

DAVE: Let's give them a thrashing!

MICHAEL: Yeah!

ALEX: Keep your voice down, Michael. Look!

*She points at SARAH who is asleep.*

DAVE: I told you those sticks are relaxing. So let's flog them quietly.

*The light starts to fade from the outer edges of the stage, finally becoming a tight spot on SARAH.*

CATHERINE: Have you ever noticed how your language is littered with violent imagery? Flog, thrash, beat... All born from men's desire to dominate women.

DAVE: Can we just play, please, Catherine?

CATHERINE: Lash, whip, belt -

DAVE: Catherine!

CATHERINE: Fine.

*The spot is now tight on SARAH. Then the rest of the cast gather around her and lift her up, holding her horizontal in the air, facing the audience. Suddenly SARAH opens her eyes, disoriented, then after a moment she gasps in delight and then sticks her arms out in front of her like superman. She's flying.*

*Blackout.*

*The end.*