

LOVE DISORDER

A COMEDY

by

Joe Bardin

joe@relativitywriting.com
602-361-7567

LAURA&PERCY, ROBNKIKI, JUSTINERICA

All three couples are in their late 30's, early 40's.

Laura

Percy

Rob

Kiki

Justin

Erica

Texting exchanges could appear simultaneously on a video screen visible to the audience.

SCENE 1: ROB AND KIKI'S HOUSE -- BARSTOOLS IN THE KITCHEN

KIKI

(reading text on her phone)

R U wednesday night to diner, we have someting import to announce, xxoo Laura

ROB

An "announcement", it's about time.

KIKI

(anxious)

I don't get it, why does texting make it OK to write like crap?

ROB

(dictionary-like)

In texting, comprehension, not grammatical or spelling accuracy, is the only real objective, so all kinds of short cuts are perfectly acceptable.

KIKI

I mean does she really want to eat at a diner? We never eat at diners.

ROB

I know exactly what they're announcing and I think it's fantastic. I think we should think about it too. We're all at that point in our lives when marriage just makes sense.

KIKI

Marriage gives me this weird choking feeling, like I can't get air.

ROB

(reassuringly)

That's only because your childhood was rotten and your parents are so fucked up.

KIKI

Your parents are as stable as this granite counter top, but do you really want a relationship like theirs?

ROB

Of course not. My father has always been incredibly overbearing, and totally clueless about it.

They look at each other for a beat, as if in recognition, then continue.

ROB (CONT'D)

And my mother always resented him for it, still does to this day. But does that mean marriage can't work?

KIKI

Only that we know of no actual real life example we'd want to live up to, even if we could.

ROB

(agreeing, to something else entirely)

Exactly.

KIKI

Sometimes I don't feel like you're really listening to me.

ROB

What?

KIKI

It's as if because you met me when I was still dancing, that's the only way you know me.

ROB

Best lap dance I ever had.

KIKI

That was ten years ago, Rob. I was putting myself through college.

ROB

(warmly)

You haven't changed a bit.

KIKI

Yes, I have. I got my real estate license, which I never used, and went into office equipment sales, where I'm top ten in the company.

ROB

But you'll always be Kitty Claw to me. I still remember the night we met, it was Halloween and you were wearing this awesome Catwoman mask. I'd had a thing for Catwoman since I was eleven, and there you were. I knew right then I wanted to be with you, but you wouldn't go out with me.

KIKI

You were a customer.

ROB

But you eventually saw the light.

KIKI

You kept showing up.

ROB

I asked you if you liked Thai food and you finally said yes.

KIKI

I was starving.

ROB

I ordered for both us, and we just felt so relaxed together.

KIKI

It was like 2.30 in the morning, and I was exhausted. But it's true. I did feel relaxed with you.

ROB

I asked you how you learned to lap dance so well, and you said your mom taught you.

KIKI

I can't believe I told you that on our first date.

ROB

And you asked me why I chose to major in finance, and I said to make a shitload of money.

KIKI

You really remember all that?

ROB

We had Pad Thai. It was the first time you'd ever had it, and you loved it.

KIKI

I'm really sick of Pad Thai now.

ROB

Good times.

SCENE 2: AIRPORT AND HAIR SALON

Stage left is an airport where Justin is waiting for a flight.
Stage right as hair salon where Erica is sweeping her
station at the end of the day. They speak on their phones.

JUSTIN

My flight should board in ten minutes.

ERICA

Did you have your muffin?

JUSTIN

How did you know?

ERICA

You always eat a muffin at the airport.

JUSTIN

It's my comfort food when I'm away from my real muffin.

ERICA

I'm your "muffin", that's so sweet, what flavor?

JUSTIN

My favorite flavor, banana nut.

ERICA

Are you making fun of me?

JUSTIN

Of course not. My favorite flavor is banana nut, you know that.

ERICA

Because that could mean a lot of things. My therapist, Julia, says our everyday conversation is really a code full of deeper meanings.

JUSTIN

I thought she was helping you feel *less* paranoid.

ERICA

Turns out I'm not paranoid, just acutely insecure.

JUSTIN

That's good news.

ERICA

Are you trying to tell me something, Justin?

JUSTIN

I'm not sure how to answer that.

ERICA

Then you *are* trying to tell me something.

JUSTIN

You mean about the muffin?

ERICA

Why do you keep bringing that up?

JUSTIN

I'm just trying to understand you.

ERICA

You know I'm complex.

JUSTIN

And I love that about you.

ERICA

You saw Laura's text?

JUSTIN

About eating out at a diner?

ERICA

She's pregnant, I know it, and she just can't wait to rub my nose in the Johnson & Johnson.

JUSTIN

I'm not so sure Percy and Laura are doing all that great together.

ERICA

Which is why they got pregnant, trying to bring some new life to their dying relationship.

JUSTIN

But why let that bother you, honey?

ERICA

You know I consciously and subconsciously measure myself with Laura -- she's two years younger than me, she's got straight hair like my sister, and I should be having that baby not her.

JUSTIN

You could straighten your hair.

ERICA

I don't like the shape of my head, which is why I became a hairstylist in the first place, to find purpose in my struggle by serving others who suffer alongside me.

JUSTIN

Your head is beautiful.

ERICA

It protrudes like an oblong bulb.

JUSTIN

I love the shape of your head.

ERICA

My mother has the exact same peanut shaped head, and she doesn't even know it.

JUSTIN

Your head is much more of a hazel nut than a peanut, honey.

ERICA

You really think so?

JUSTIN

I know so.

ERICA

Thank you. But I'm still not willing to risk straightening my hair. Which brings me back to the baby you don't want to talk about.

JUSTIN

You're really starting to build up your clientele at the salon. And I'm on the road so much. We've still got plenty of time.

ERICA

Not to have the *first* baby.

JUSTIN

Does it have to be the first? Have you talked to your therapist about this?

ERICA

She says I've got Competitive Reproductive Disorder.

JUSTIN

Really?

ERICA

We just diagnosed me last week.

JUSTIN

You didn't tell me you had a new diagnosis. I've never heard of Competitive Reproductive Disorder.

ERICA

CRD --It's much more common than the public at large realizes.

JUSTIN

We'll work through it together -- what are the symptoms?

ERICA

Competitive Reproductive Disorder strikes women in their early thirties, who start to experience anxiety over their own limited number of fertilizable eggs . . .

JUSTIN

That's us.

ERICA

. . . causing them to fear their eggs are actually an accessible, shared resource they must protect from other women of comparable age and socioeconomic background.

JUSTIN

Sort of like cloud-hosted ovaries ...

ERICA

I'm not going Saturday night, I won't be seeing Laura anymore, or Kiki either. Justin, I'm taking my ovaries back.

JUSTIN

Erica that's the disorder talking. Your eggs aren't really being stolen or even threatened by Laura, or Kiki for that matter.

ERICA

I suppose not.

JUSTIN

That's right. Your eggs are really your own.

ERICA

My eggs are my own.

JUSTIN

You must add that to your already substantial list of daily affirmations. Your eggs are your own.

ERICA

My eggs are my own, my eggs are my own. So why don't you come home and impregnate me?

JUSTIN

You know we're not ready, but we can do pretend preppers sex?

ERICA

I think my subconscious orgasm trigger mechanism has copped on to that one.

JUSTIN

I could act like my condom broke?

ERICA

That would be hot!

SCENE 3: IN A RESTAURANT, TABLE FOR SIX, ALL THREE COUPLES
TOGETHER

LAURA

You guys are all so important to me, to both of us, so thank you, RobnKiki and JustinErica for being here with us . . .

ROB

(interrupting)

Where else would we be?

JUSTIN

I've been on the road providing in-depth client support to optometrists using my practice management software -- Bottom Line Results You Can See.

LAURA

I'm glad you could be here, Justin.

ERICA

It's very important to Justin to be supportive. I make it a point to always give him something to support me on.

JUSTIN

You're great that way.

ROB

So, Laura&Percy you have an announcement to make. Go ahead with what you're going to announce to us.

KIKI

Don't rush her, she may not be ready.

ROB

Of course she's ready. We're all ready.

KIKI

I'm not sure we're *all* ready.

JUSTIN

Ready for what?

ROB

For Laura&Percy's announcement -- go ahead Laura&Percy.

LAURA

Well, this is not really coming from both of us. I mean we've talked about it, but I can only really speak for myself. Right Percy?

PERCY

Hhmm

ROB

I speak for Kiki and me all the time. It's much more efficient.

LAURA

But that's just the point, I don't want to speak for Percy. I want Percy to speak for Percy.

ROB

You should really have worked these details out in advance. It makes for a much smoother presentation.

KIKI

Let her talk.

ROB

This is one of the most important announcements they'll ever make and they don't even know who's making it.

LAURA

We, that is, I, appreciate your concern.

ROB

We're just so excited for you.

LAURA

But you shouldn't be.

ROB

But we are. You're the first to take the big step. I just hope your wedding is better organized than ...

LAURA

(interrupting)

Wedding? We're not getting married. We're breaking up.

ROB

What? What are you talking about?!

LAURA

There's no communication between us at all. It's like we're already separated, even while we're living together.

ROB

You ... You can't break up ...

LAURA

Why not?

ROB

(flustered)

I don't know ... it's July in Scottsdale, it's too hot to breakup.

KIKI

It is a dry heat.

LAURA

We really don't agree on anything anymore. I mean you can't agree if you don't communicate.

ROB

Percy's always been quiet, haven't you Percy?

PERCY

Hhmm

ROB

He's the quiet type.

LAURA

The only thing Percy talks about is sports.

ROB

Well there you go, sports are a great topic for conversation. . .

LAURA

(interrupting)

It's just random information.

PERCY

There's nothing random about LeBron James.

JUSTIN

Well said, Percy.

LAURA

He's a basketball player, he throws a ball through a hoop.

ROB

Now you're communicating. What do you say to that, Percy?.

PERCY

Lebron James, Michael Jordan, or Dr. J?

LAURA

What?

PERCY

Lebron James, Michael Jordan or Dr. J?

Laura throws her hands up in the air.

JUSTIN

What are you trying to say, Percy?

PERCY

Lebron James, Michael Jordan or Dr. J -- who's changed the game more?

LAURA

Jordan, of course.

PERCY

Are you sure? Could Jordan play all five positions on the court?

LAURA

Jordan's got six championships.

PERCY

You can't judge a player only based on championships.

LAURA

You see, this is what you.

(to the others)

This is what he constantly does.

(to Percy)

You continuously suck me in to your ridiculous sports arguments, instead of us talking about what's really in our hearts. Are you trying to tell me something? Or is this really all you think about?

PERCY

All I'm saying is it takes a team to win championships.

LAURA

Do you know what you sound like? Do you even know what you sound like?

(to the others)

All I want is for us to talk, and to know what's really going on in his heart. Even if we disagree. I don't care.

ROB

I understand exactly what Percy's saying. He's saying that you guys need to be more of a team.

LAURA

He would rather watch the WNBA than have an actual conversation.

ROB

It's a cry for help.

JUSTIN

Some men use sports and sports metaphors because they are afraid to express intimate personal feelings.

LAURA

But that's just it, he doesn't seem to *have* any intimate personal feelings, only *sports* feelings.

ERICA

You're talking about him like he's not even here. What do you say Percy?

PERCY

He's so much more than just a shooter. It's his all around game that makes him the perennial MVP candidate that he is.

ERICA

What?

LAURA

He's talking about LeBron James. God, I hate it that I know that.

PERCY

He can score like Michael Jordan. He can rebound like Carl Malone. And he defends the opponent's best player on a regular basis. And do you know what's really overlooked? What a great passer he is.

LAURA

I don't want to live like this.

ROB

You're *not* breaking up.

KIKI

She says she's breaking up.

ROB

How can you break up? We're your best friends, and we all thought you were going to announce you were getting married tonight.

LAURA

Married? God no!

ROB

Did any of you think they were going to announce they were breaking up?

Kiki, Justin, Erica, Rob all shake their heads.

LAURA

I'm sorry. I'm to blame as much as Percy. We haven't been open with you guys. You all seem so great together, I didn't want to air our dirty laundry, and I guess I always thought there would be some kind of change.

JUSTIN

We're your friends, Laura.

LAURA

We've been more worried about projecting a pretty picture of our relationship, and the performance of our favorite teams, then the actual life we're living. But now that the Suns have traded Steve Nash, to the Lakers of all teams, I see no reason to continue with this charade. We're ending all that! At least I am.

JUSTIN

Steve who?

ROB

But what about the trip to Cancun? I was told you had a fantastic trip.

KIKI

They fought.

ROB

You even told me how Percy got out on the dance floor for the first time in their relationship and how surprised Laura was.

KIKI

He hurled behind the DJ stage.

PERCY

Everyone lost it that first night.

JUSTIN

Good share, Percy.

KIKI

(continuing, as Laura's proxy)

But he wouldn't slow down the next night or the next.

PERCY

It was all inclusive, drinks were paid for.

JUSTIN

Now you're opening up.

ROB

Why didn't you tell me Percy threw up in Cancun?

LAURA

Three straight nights.

PERCY

It was paid for.

KIKI

Laura didn't want me to -- she knows how judgmental you can be.

ROB

Judgemental? What is that supposed to mean?

ROB (CONT'D)

(to Percy)

You disgust me.

Erica breaks down in tears, stands up and walks around the table to Laura, putting her hands on Laura's shoulders.

ERICA

Oh Laura, I'm so sorry! You've been putting on weight, I was sure you were pregnant, now I realize it's just *relationship eating*.

JUSTIN

Erica has Competitive Reproductive Disorder.

KIKI

What?

JUSTIN

It's a surprisingly common condition, when women become suspicious of their female friends stealing fertilizable eggs from their womb.

ERICA

Ovaries.

JUSTIN

Of course, ovaries. What did I say?

ERICA

You said womb.

ERICA (CONT'D)

(to the others)

Justin is actually quite knowledgeable about the female reproductive system, but occasionally he defaults to Bible talk.

JUSTIN

I actually enjoyed Sunday School, I loved the stories, and it got me out of the house.

LAURA

(upset, to Percy)

Do I look fat?

JUSTIN

(quickly)

I like you a little fuller.

ERICA

(with venom)

Full of doughnuts.

JUSTIN

Honey, remember, she's not pregnant, she didn't raid your womb.

ERICA

Ovaries!

LAURA

I would never do that.

ERICA

I know, believe me I know, it's just me, I struggle with my self worth, don't I honey?

JUSTIN

She does.

ERICA

So I seek to find my value as a person in propagating the species, which would, in and of itself, be a beautiful experience, were I not wrapping the banner of motherhood so tightly around the flagpole of my own insecurities.

Everyone pauses here for a beat, attempting to digest this over-packed piece of self analysis, then giving up.

LAURA

We're giving up our condo, the mortgage is killing us, and for what? So we thought we'd stay with you guys, if that's alright.

ROB

I don't think either of us really has room for you two.

KIKI

We've got nothing *but* room, the house is huge.

LAURA

See, I'm doing it again. I'm speaking for both of us. But it's not actually us two anymore, so you only have to have room for one of us.

ROB

Of course it's you two. Laura&Percy, Percy&Laura! I can't even remember your names without saying them in sequence. I don't even know you as not-you-two. I don't even know if I like you just you.

JUSTIN

(translating)

Rob really cares about you and doesn't want to see you make a big mistake.

ROB

A massive mistake. Have you done your due diligence? Do you have any idea what's available out there in terms of a replacement?

LAURA

A replacement?

ROB

You want be alone?

LAURA

I feel alone now.

ROB

But you're alone *with* someone, someone we all know, Percy.

LAURA

But if I'm alone with him, and I stay with him, how will I ever have the chance to be with someone I'm *not* alone with?

ROB

What is that supposed to mean?

KIKI

She says she feels alone.

ROB

But she has *Percy*.

KIKI

But she feels alone.

ROB

But she has Percy!

KIKI

(screaming)

But she's alone!

ROB

(screaming)

But she has Percy.

KIKI

(screaming)

But she's alone.

LAURA

RobnKiki, please! Look I appreciate your concern about us, I really do. But I need more in my life and I'm willing to risk losing what I've got in order to get it. If Percy can't stop replacing his personal feelings with sports feelings then I'm not living with him anymore. Maybe if we're apart for a while he'll step up to the plate and raise his game.

She stops. They all look at her.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Oh god.

KIKI

It's OK, honey.

LAURA

No, it's not OK. It's really not OK. I need a time-out. Shit, I can't stop it!

KIKI

It's OK, Laura.

LAURA

I feel like just sleeping next to him at night I'm soaking up sports cliches by osmosis.

ROB

First you complain he's not communicating enough, now you say he's sharing too much.

LAURA

Percy and I have been all through this. That is, I've expressed my feelings to him, and he put the Diamondbacks game temporarily on mute in acknowledgement, didn't you Percy?

PERCY

(nodding)

Dbacks Reds, 5-3 final.

LAURA

I'm sorry if this is upsetting to you and I'm sorry we weren't more open with you about what was going on.

KIKI

You don't have to apologize.

ROB

Yes she does.

LAURA

I can't live this anymore.

SCENE 4: STAGE LEFT: ROBNKIKI'S BEDROOM

Kiki and Rob lie in a bed made of chairs pushed together. They reveal their awareness of the inadequacy of this arrangement, sharing the joke with the audience, bedroom as comic theater. Stage right is dark, suggesting the darkness of the rest of the house.

KIKI

I think it might be good to have someone else in the house with us.

ROB

They could chip in on bills.

KIKI

That's not what I mean.

ROB

Or offer some other tangible benefit, such as dish washing, waste disposal, or even professional services like tax preparation, or some other in-kind exchange . . .

KIKI

Sometimes I don't think couples were meant to live just to themselves, two people isolated on their own little island, which no one else can ever really enter. Are we supposed to be soulmates or cell mates? It's like relationship is really some kind of shipwreck -- at first you're just happy to have survived to that point, to have some solid ground under your feet. But after a while you start wondering, isn't there something more? Can one person ever really be the total answer for another person, the fulfilment of all emptiness, the redemption of all past rejection?

ROB

I don't see why not.

KIKI

(Sighs, stares at the ceiling)

Does that crack look like an elephant ear to you?

ROB

You know I never see what you see. To me that looks like the upward swooping data line in the growth quadrant of a graph.

KIKI

I think we need to repaint the ceiling.

ROB

(conceding, as if this is what they have been negotiating all along)

Which one of them do you want to take?

KIKI

I want Laura.

ROB

Fine, we'll take Laura.

SCENE 5: JUSTINERICA'S BEDROOM

RobNKiki's bedroom (stage left) goes dark. Stage right lights up revealing JustinErica's bedroom, and the same awkward arrangement of chairs. They lie in bed.

ERICA

I know it's not real, but I still don't want her anywhere near my ovaries, especially at night while I'm sleeping.

JUSTIN

(quickly)

We'll take Percy.

ERICA

You're so good to me.

JUSTIN

(sincere)

Being good to you is being good to me.

SCENE 6: GUEST ROOM -- ROBNKIKI'S

Laura is unpacking her things, assisted by Kiki.

LAURA

Thanks for having me here Kiki, I really appreciate it. I'd much rather be here with you than renting some furnished one-bedroom somewhere.

KIKI

Sure, I'm just glad you're taking everything so well.

LAURA

Thank you, I just know I need a change.

KIKI

Just because you're with a guy for a while doesn't mean you have to ache with loss when you break up, right?

LAURA

I don't know what it means exactly, I feel like I almost don't know anything right now. The only thing I know is that I don't want to keep doing what I know. If that makes any sense at all...

KIKI

Of course it makes sense, I mean it doesn't have to be this flesh-tearing from bone, heart-searing-in-a-sauce-pan-of-fond-memories-that-you'll-never-live-again kind of feeling, right?

LAURA

I don't know what I'm supposed to feel like, to be honest with you. I think that's what gets me in trouble, trying to feel a certain way with a certain person at a certain time. As if there's this plan in my head I'm constantly trying to live up to, instead of just *living*.

KIKI

Right on. I mean, you can leave a guy without feeling all bruised and battered and alone and guilty and scared and inadequate and like, on some basic human level, as a woman, a complete failure.

LAURA

I know I'm going to miss him, I know I will, but right now I'm just so glad to be having an actual conversation with a human being without hearing a game on in the background.

KIKI

I'm really glad we're getting to talk like this too. I've always sort of looked up to you, Laura.

LAURA

I admit, in basketball, I like the playoffs. But the regular season really drags, and don't even talk to me about baseball.

KIKI

I just want you to know I'm happy you're here with us, Laura. I think it's going to be good for both of us that you're staying here.

LAURA

Here we are 75 games into the season with 87 more to go, and the Diamondbacks are barely playing 500 ball.

Kiki looks at her.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What?

KIKI

Nothing.

LAURA

No, what is it?

KIKI

I just told you I'm really really glad you're here. And you gave me a baseball statistic.

LAURA

(embracing Kiki)

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

KIKI

It's alright.

LAURA

It's not alright. I've been living with the ESPN family of sports networks too long.

KIKI

What is it with men and media?

LAURA

Percy has all the bonus channels.

KIKI

The LA Times was never enough for my father. He had to get the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post as well. He wore this white terry cloth robe at breakfast which was all smudged up with ink. My mother hated that robe. Whenever she tried to say anything about it he would roll up a section of newspaper and smack her with it.

LAURA

Kiki, I didn't know.

KIKI

What was terrifying was how she got used to it. He'd smack her with the newspaper, and she'd just look down at the floor and then clear the breakfast dishes.

LAURA

That must have been terrible for you.

KIKI

I think I hated my mother for it more than my father. Sometimes in high school, when I'd come home in the afternoon, she'd still have ink on her forehead and cheeks, she didn't even bother wiping it off. As if she was proud of it, and she knew I was judging her for it. I cleaned her up, but it scared the shit out of me, that that was what I had to look forward to.

LAURA

I'm so sorry, Kiki. I never knew.

KIKI

I've never told anyone.

LAURA

You never told Rob!?

KIKI

Of course I've told Rob.

LAURA

Oh.

KIKI

I don't know why I said that. I mean telling Rob counts, right?

LAURA

Right.

SCENE 7: JUSTINERICA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Stage left: Justin and Percy sit on a couch watching a baseball game. Stage right is black.

JUSTIN

You know I was raised by my mother and my two older sisters and I never really had a chance to get into sports. I might have liked it, I just never really had the time. I was so busy dealing with issues at home, weight issues, boyfriend issues, someone always had their panties in a knot about something. So this is really great for me -- I finally get a chance to get into sports.

Percy watches with no comment.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Good game, huh?

Percy watches with no comment.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I get it, just shut up and watch, right? That's the beauty of it. We don't have to verbalize every little thing like women do.

They watch together for a couple moments.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I like it, I like this whole not talking thing. Who needs to talk all the time? We got baseball.

They watch together for a couple moments.

PERCY

She likes the playoffs, she just can't take the regular season.

JUSTIN

You mean Laura?

PERCY

But it's the regular season that sets up the playoffs.

JUSTIN

Uh, I'm sure you're right, why doesn't she get that?

PERCY

I don't know.

JUSTIN

I don't know either.

They watch for a couple moments.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Do you miss her, Percy?

PERCY

Hm?

JUSTIN

I know we're watching the game, but do you miss Laura?

PERCY

It's a fifty-fifty call.

JUSTIN

A what?

PERCY

It's like a charge/block. The call could go either way.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, there again, I'm not familiar with all the sports jargon. But this will be good. I'll learn something new . . . and you, you can explain it to me. So what's charge-block?

PERCY

Sure, so Dwayne Wade catches an outlet on the wing and

JUSTIN

(interrupting)

I'm sorry, Dwayne who?

PERCY

Doesn't matter, could be Steve Nash.

JUSTIN

He plays for the Suns right?

PERCY

Not anymore.

JUSTIN

Too bad, he was the one guy who's name I could remember sometimes.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

We're doing it, aren't we?

PERCY

What?

JUSTIN

We're talking sports.

PERCY

Damn right.

JUSTIN

Damn right, now what about this block-charge?

PERCY

Right, so Nash gets the ball on the wing and drives toward the bucket.

JUSTIN

(confidence increasing)

And . . . the bucket is the same as the basket?

PERCY

Right. But on the way to the hoop, a guy steps in to block him and they bump each other.

JUSTIN

(pleased with his own progress)

Bucket, basket, hoop -- all the same apparatus, I'm assuming.

PERCY

But is it a block or a charge?

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, what?

PERCY

(intense)

Ref blows his whistle, is it a block or a charge?

JUSTIN

Is it a what?

PERCY

(upset)

What's the call, block or charge?

JUSTIN

I ... I don't know.

PERCY

But you still gotta make a call, right?

JUSTIN

I ... don't know.

PERCY

You gotta make a call.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, Percy, I really am. I wish I could help you more. I'm just such a sports illiterate. I used to have a girlfriend who watched football, and I could never figure out what the hell was going on. She kept explaining to me what a first down was and what offside was, and I couldn't admit to her that I didn't even see where the ball went when they hiked it.

They look at each other. A moment of understanding passes between them.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(excited)

I just did it, didn't I?

Percy nods, comforted.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I used a sports metaphor to make life more comprehensible.

Stage left goes black. Stage right lights up revealing Erica in bed, reading a magazine. Justin walks across the stage and joins her in bed, getting under the covers, just as he is, shoes and all, suggesting whatever is odd or out of whack in their living, they are both thoroughly used to is.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(excited)

I told him.

ERICA

You told who what?

JUSTIN

Percy. I told him about not being able to see the football when it's hiked.

ERICA

Good, honey, that was important to you.

JUSTIN

It's the first time I've ever admitted that to another guy.

ERICA

I'm proud of you, Justin. What'd Percy say?

JUSTIN

Well, you know Percy, he didn't actually say anything, but it just felt good to get it out.

ERICA

I know, I felt the same way about my Competitive Reproductive Disorder with RobnKiki and Laura&Percy.

JUSTIN

You were very brave.

ERICA

Was I? Does it make you want me?

JUSTIN

You know it does.

Stage left goes dark. Stage right lights up with Percy still on the couch. His phone buzzes with a new text. Laura stands behind the couch, texting him.

LAURA

(reads her texts out loud into her phone)

How r u doin

PERCY

(reads his texts back)

OK

LAURA

What r u doin

PERCY

Dbacks v Mets

Laura sighs. She texts a smiley face.

Smiley face.
LAURA

Fourth inning.
PERCY

Where r Justinerica
LAURA

N bed
PERCY

???
LAURA

Every night
PERCY

Really!!??
LAURA

Yep
PERCY

How do u know
LAURA

Overheard from the bedroom are Justin and Erica, very much in role playing mode.

Oh no!
(role playing)
JUSTIN

What's wrong honey?
ERICA
(role playing)

I can't believe it!
JUSTIN

You can't believe what?
ERICA

My condom!
JUSTIN

What about your condom?
ERICA

My condom ...
JUSTIN

What about your condom?
ERICA

It broke.
JUSTIN

You mean there's nothing between your potent seed and my fully fertile womb?
ERICA

Nothing!
JUSTIN

Oh no!
ERICA

Stage goes dark.

SCENE 9: ROBNKIKI'S KITCHEN -- MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

As Laura sips a mug of tea, Kiki walks in.

What are you doing up?
KIKI

I'm not used to sleeping alone.
LAURA

Rob sleeps like a rock and I stare at the ceiling half the night.
KIKI

LAURA

I'm usually a good sleeper.

KIKI

I see things there, you know, in the cracks, shapes of things I don't like. Rob's painted it twice already but it doesn't seem to help.

LAURA

What do you see?

KIKI

Iguanas, mainly, in this flat very primitive style. Makes me feel like I'm in a cave, like the whole thing could come crashing down on me. I've never been claustrophobic, elevators don't bother me but my own bedroom does.

LAURA

What do you think it means?

KIKI

(shrugs)

Probably nothing.

LAURA

I texted Percy.

KIKI

And?

LAURA

(shaking her head)

He was watching the game.

KIKI

Of course he was.

LAURA

Kiki, he wasn't always like this. How did I let this happen to us? In our first year together, we had moderately good conversations about reasonably personal subjects.

KIKI

I know, *communication* is different during that first year.

LAURA

Percy and I had communication like every day.

KIKI

Every day?

LAURA

We did it in the living room, in the kitchen. Wherever.

KIKI

We never did it that much, but we did do it.

LAURA

I remember us communicating all the time, even in the car.

KIKI

Don't take this the wrong way, but it's sort of hard to believe.

LAURA

I know, I know.

KIKI

But it's different at the beginning, you don't actually know each other yet, so you have to talk. You actually have to ask each other questions and listen to the answers.

LAURA

Once he told me how his older brother left him alone at the zoo for over an hour when he was just four years old.

KIKI

Why would someone do that?

LAURA

Some sort of sibling rivalry. Percy thought his brother resented him being born.

KIKI

Poor little guy.

LAURA

He was smart enough to stay put, but unfortunately, it was in the elephant house and the smell became so overwhelming he passed out.

KIKI

Oh no.

LAURA

To this day Percy will not go to a zoo. Fortunately, it was feeding time and the elephant people found him and gave him some hay, to sit on, until his brother finally came back for him.

KIKI

Wow. Percy told you all that.

LAURA

But we never have that kind of communication anymore. Now we almost do it just to get it over with. *How was your day, how was your day. Good night.*

KIKI

I hate to admit it, but that's how I feel sometimes. I just wish Rob would finish, communicating, because he's not really listening to me anyway. Getting to know each other might be the worst thing that ever happened to us.

LAURA

Something happened after that Cardinal's Super Bowl loss to the Steelers -- when Pittsburg scored with just three minutes left on the clock.

KIKI

I have no idea what you're talking about.

LAURA

You didn't watch the Superbowl?

KIKI

I spent the day at Nordstroms.

LAURA

Nordstroms is open on Superbowl Sunday?

KIKI

You've got a lot to look forward to.

LAURA

It was as if Percy blamed himself. After that Steelers comeback, he just wouldn't let go, it was all sports all the time.

KIKI

I don't think I could stand that. Fortunately, all Rob talks about is himself.

LAURA

If only he didn't take it so *personally*. Why blame yourself when you can blame the coach?

KIKI

It's just a game, right?

LAURA

The best sex we ever had was after watching a replay of the 2001 World Series game seven Diamondbacks win over the Yankees.

KIKI

Rob still likes me to wear my Catwoman mask.

LAURA

Unfortunately, it's the only championship a Phoenix team has ever won.

KIKI

(getting up)

I'm getting tired again. I'm glad we talked - I think I can go to sleep now.

LAURA

Kiki, thanks again for having me in your home like this.

KIKI

You're welcome to stay with us as long as you want. It's good for me that you're here.

Kiki leaves Laura sitting at the kitchen table.

SCENE 10: JUSTINERICA'S LIVINGROOM -- NEXT EVENING

Percy and Erica sit on the couch watching a Diamondbacks game.

ERICA

So Justin's in the Midwest all week-Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City.

PERCY

Tough road trip.

ERICA

He loves it though. Customer support. How's your work going?

PERCY

Slowing down for the summer, four shifts a week max.

ERICA

Bartending is how you and Laura met, isn't it?

PERCY

She liked my Margaritas, I don't make them too sweet.

ERICA

It was more than just the Margaritas, Percy. It was you. She liked you. I remember her telling me about meeting you. She liked you right away.

PERCY

(to the TV)

Get him outa there Gibby. He's throwing on fumes.

ERICA

What?

PERCY

Pulling the pitcher, and not a moment too soon.

ERICA

You really are into your sports, aren't you?

PERCY

(still to the TV)

When it's time, it's time. You gotta make the move.

ERICA

No I get it, it gives you something to think about other than yourself, right?

PERCY

Man on first and second. We need a strike out.

ERICA

You can think some pretty weird thoughts when you're stuck in your own head all day.

PERCY

Or a double play.

ERICA

I'm not even going to ask what that is.

PERCY

Strike one. A strike out will work just fine.

ERICA

This is kind of nice.

PERCY

Strike two, don't give him anything good to hit.

ERICA

I can just talk, and you don't make too much out of it by analyzing every little thing I happen to mention.

PERCY

That was not a ball!

ERICA

Let's face it, you don't make *anything* of it.

PERCY

There it is, one down.

ERICA

Sometimes I think I need to *not* be listened to all the time.

PERCY

What are you gonna do pitcher? What are you gonna do?

ERICA

I mean it's OK not to dissect every little thing I think or do, right?

PERCY

(to the TV)

We can still get out of this.

ERICA

Because sometimes that kind of attention only makes it worse.

PERCY

(to the TV)

You gotta be strong!

ERICA

But sometimes it feels like my insecurity is the strongest part of me.

Percy looks at her, then back at the TV.

PERCY

If you're going to throw a strike, now would be a good time.

ERICA

Now?

PERCY

Right now.

Erica takes the remote and switches off the game.

PERCY (CONT'D)

Hey!

ERICA

I like the way you don't listen to me, Percy.

She snuggles up to him.

PERCY

The game ...

ERICA

Oh come on there's like a hundred games every season.

PERCY

162.

ERICA

And there's only one me right now.

Percy looks at her, not saying anything.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Maybe this is just what you need. Maybe this is what we both need.

Laura's always so on top of everything, I'm not like that. I'm not on top, Percy, of anything.

Percy takes the remote back from Erica, switches the game back on.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Why, because I mentioned Laura? If you still have feelings for her, then what happened to you two. What happened Percy?

PERCY

What happened is that nothing happened. Laura liked me like this. We had fun together. Her mother is so serious and intellectual and big business and all that and she wanted something different and I'm this bartender who loves sports and she loved me for it. And the more she loved me, the more I just went all the way with it. And now this is who I am and she wants me to be something different, and I . . . I just can't change the channel.

ERICA

(more gently)

I'm not trying to fix you Percy.

PERCY

(snaps back at her)

Why not? I'm broken aren't I?

Erica looks at him tenderly. Percy returns her gaze. She regains the remote control.

Percy continues looking at her.

ERICA

I'll just mute it, OK?

PERCY

OK.

ERICA

I like the way you look at me.

She takes his hand.

ERICA (CONT'D)

You have really nice brown eyes.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I like the way you don't say anything ... because I can read into it anything I want, like uncomplicated male adoration for example ...

She leans in as if to kiss him then pulls back.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I don't think we should be doing this. I'm only moderately attracted to you, and that on the most basic physical level.

She leans in and kisses him.

ERICA (CONT'D)

But I find the validation of your masculine attention to be an almost overwhelming aphrodisiac...

They kiss again. She pulls back again.

ERICA (CONT'D)

... particularly because you're *not* Justin, whose everyday attentions just don't register in the same way ...

Percy kisses her. She pulls back again.

ERICA (CONT'D)

(worried)

Don't you want to hold my boobs?

They kiss as he puts a hand on her breast. She pulls back again.

ERICA (CONT'D)

We shouldn't do this. But it would be a terrible blow to my already dangerously diminished self-esteem not to.

They get up together and walk to the bedroom.

SCENE 11: ROBNKIKI'S KITCHEN, BAR STOOLS -- SAME EVENING

ROB

I'm still not sure how I feel about this whole breakup thing.

LAURA

Fortunately, it's not up to you Rob.

ROB

I'm just not convinced.

KIKI

Rob never got over the Brad Pitt Jennifer Anniston breakup.

ROB

They were perfect together.

KIKI

You probably thought Gwyneth and Brad were perfect too.

LAURA

I forgot about them.

ROB

No, I knew that was off. She was way too Manhattan for him. But Jennifer was just the right amount of *simple*.

LAURA

You say that word, simple, with such relish.

ROB

He really let a good one get away there.

LAURA

I never knew you were so into celebrities.

ROB

I keep up with the important ones.

LAURA

Are any of them really important?

ROB

I mean the A-listers, you know the ones that make the cover of National Enquirer on a regular basis.

KIKI

Rob, you know how I feel about you reading newspapers.

ROB

It's for work, honey. Clients expect me to be up to speed about Oprah's love triangle and such.

KIKI

What else have you been reading about?

ROB

(pulling out his phone)

I'd have to check my notes.

KIKI

(to Laura)

I can't believe he's reading newspapers behind my back.

ROB

(scrolling on his phone)

Let's see -- J Lo Cheating with Hunky Hotelier.

LAURA

It's not like he's running off to strip clubs.

ROB

Obama Enters Secret Cigarette Rehab. Boring.

KIKI

We met in a strip club.

LAURA

(quickly)

And I have no judgement of that.

ROB

Here's a good one: Barbara Walters Pregnant with David Beckham Love Child.

KIKI

I knew this was going to happen. This is how it starts ...

ROB

(interrupting)

How could you have known, the story just broke this week.

KIKI

I need you to not read the Enquirer.

ROB

I don't read it, I just scan the headlines.

KIKI

(to Laura)

It's like what you experience with Percy -- they're always trying to avoid something.

ROB

How is Percy? Are you two talking more?

LAURA

If anything it's worse.

ROB

So maybe this whole breakup move isn't working.

KIKI

How do you figure?

LAURA

He doesn't even use sports clichés anymore. Now, he just texts me statistics.

ROB

Numbers don't lie.

LAURA

Please don't start.

ROB

You're being too tough on the guy.

KIKI

She just wants some *communication*.

ROB

Percy communicates.

KIKI

Using baseball statistics!?

ROB

It is a long season with numerous, irrelevant triumphs and setbacks, but at least he's trying.

LAURA

(suddenly guilty)

You think he's trying?

KIKI

(hand on hip attitude)

Define: trying.

ROB

Try.ing, To make an effort to do or accomplish (something).

LAURA

It does sort of fit the definition.

KIKI

Texting baseball statistics?

ROB

He's just sharing what's on his mind.

LAURA

Those numbers mean everything to Percy.

KIKI

That's crazy.

LAURA

Yes, to you or I, but to Percy, statistics are the very lifeblood of the sports he loves.

ROB

Statistics of love.

LAURA

So when he shares with me, for example, a comparative listing of on base percentages for the National League West, he's really sharing the poetry of his heart.

ROB

So beautiful and so true.

KIKI

You can't be serious.

LAURA

Why didn't I see it sooner?

Laura stands up.

KIKI

Laura, no.

LAURA

I have to go to him!

SCENE 12: JUSTINERICA'S HOUSE

Stage remains dark.

ERICA

Do you like this?

ERICA (CONT'D)

Does it feel good?

ERICA (CONT'D)

How about this? Is this good?

ERICA (CONT'D)

I can also do this, if you like it better ...

ERICA (CONT'D)

(touch of annoyance)

You really are quiet, aren't you?

ERICA (CONT'D)

Percy, baby, what are you doing?

ERICA (CONT'D)

Oh, the TV, really?

ERICA (CONT'D)

I thought we could just, you know, be overcome by your ruthless desire for my naked body, and throw all caution and TV watching to the wind...

We hear a baseball game in progress switch on, volume at low, background level.

ERICA (CONT'D)

But I guess not. I guess this was all a mistake ...

ERICA (CONT'D)

Percy ... Oh Percy, yes Percy, yes. I knew this passion was in you, and it is, it is!

The doorbell rings.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Who the hell is that?

ERICA (CONT'D)

Percy, I think you need to stop.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Percy ... For someone so dialed in to TV you certainly have a remarkable capacity to tune out doorbells.

The doorbell rings again.

ERICA (CONT'D)

My god, you're a maniac, what's wrong with you?

ERICA (CONT'D)

What's wrong with me? Who have I gotten in bed with? What am I doing here?

Door bell rings again.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Get off of me!

A loud thump.

Erica in a state of dishevelment answers the door.

LAURA

You *are* home. What took you so long to answer the door?

ERICA

I ... I fell asleep.

LAURA

At 7.30? Where's Percy?

ERICA

Uh, he's in bed too.

LAURA

Percy's in bed with you?

ERICA

We're watching the game.

LAURA

But you look flushed, are you running a fever? And there's a close feeling in here, like

ERICA

(interrupting)

Percy! Laura's here!

Percy stumbles in.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Percy really gets into the game, don't you Percy?

PERCY

Hey Laura, what's up?

LAURA

I'm not sure.

ERICA

I know the feeling.

LAURA

You do?

ERICA

So, what brings you over here at this particular moment in the on-going endless continuum that is time?

LAURA

I should go.

ERICA

No. No you really shouldn't go.

LAURA

Yeah, I should, I should go.

ERICA

No, you really shouldn't.

LAURA

Erica?

ERICA

What?

LAURA

What's going on here?

ERICA

What do you mean?

LAURA

Why do you feel so strongly about me staying here?

ERICA

I don't feel *that* strongly about it.

LAURA

You act like it would have serious consequences for you.

ERICA

Well, uh, have you ever heard of the butterfly effect?

LAURA

You mean that whole thing about a butterfly flapping its wings in India causing an earthquake in Europe? What does that have to do with anything?

ERICA

That's the whole point, everything has to do with everything, we're all interconnected.

PERCY

Hurricane.

LAURA

What?

PERCY

You said earthquake, it's a hurricane.

ERICA

Finally, you two are talking!

LAURA

About chaos theory?

ERICA

Don't you get it, honey? *You* are the butterfly.

LAURA

I am? I feel much more like a caterpillar.

ERICA

You mean crawling around blindly consuming hundreds of times your body weight every day until you're ready to burst out of your chrysalis?

LAURA

Mostly just the blind part.

ERICA

The point is if you leave now, it just wouldn't be the same, believe me. Come in, you're letting all the A/C out.

(to Percy)

You two need to talk.

PERCY

Want to watch the game?

LAURA

Oh, the game.

Laura enters the condo.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I was talking to RobnKiki about Percy.

ERICA

And?

LAURA

And suddenly I felt an overwhelming wave of guilt about this whole thing.

ERICA

That's intense.

LAURA

So I rushed right over.

ERICA

And?

LAURA

I don't know ... my mom walked out on my dad for cheating on her when I was eleven, and I felt like if I had only scored higher on my California Achievement Tests that year, they would have stayed together. And we didn't even live in California. We lived in Maryland, where we apparently just used their standardized test.

ERICA

You should sit down.

They all sit down.

LAURA

Who's playing, Percy?

PERCY

Dbacks Dodgers.

LAURA

Who's pitching?

PERCY

Saunders.

LAURA

(to Erica)

He won't even listen if Kennedy's on the mound.

ERICA

I have no idea what that means. But you, Laura, you have such an understanding of sport. You can keep up with Percy, it seems a shame to throw all that away.

LAURA

I watched a lot of sports with my father after the divorce. He stopped talking and just turned on the TV. I'd spend whole weekends like that, watching the Baltimore Orioles, because Washington didn't have a team yet.

ERICA

See, you already have the foundation of your relationship in place.

LAURA

It does come naturally.

ERICA

A relationship *should* feel natural.

LAURA

My mind just sort of numbs out ... until the playoffs.

ERICA

But it's a comfortable numbness -- why over-think everything.

LAURA

I do use my head a lot in my work ...

ERICA

Why bring all that "thinking" home with you?

LAURA

Percy is easy to be around.

They both glance at Percy watching the game on low volume.

ERICA

He's *so* easy.

LAURA

But sometimes I wonder if I'm missing something?

ERICA

Like what?

LAURA

Sometimes I wonder if I'm just giving in to childhood trauma, you know, replaying an old escape from life, rather than embracing the moment, even the pain, to blaze a new trail for myself out of the maze of dysfunction handed down to me by my parents and into a more whole, authentic and fulfilling life for myself.

ERICA

What does any of that have to do with Percy?

LAURA

(shrugs)

Probably nothing.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I think he was damaged that day at the zoo, or maybe he's just compulsive, you know, like an OCD thing.

ERICA

I don't know that story -- but why take it personally?

LAURA

Right. Why take it personally.

ERICA

(syncing with Laura's mind)

Maybe just maybe he's *exactly* who you need him to be.

LAURA

He's who I need him to be!

ERICA

He's your anchor.

LAURA

My anchor!

ERICA

And what's a ship without an anchor?

LAURA

Percy, mute the game. We're getting back together!

SCENE 13: ROBNKIKI'S HOUSE -- BARSTOOLS BAR -- BREAKFAST

LAURA

(lovingly, showing them her phone)

Today he sent me team slugging percentages for the entire National League.

ROB

You guys are getting back together, I knew it!

KIKI

I thought you wanted a deeper connection, I thought you were done with the compromise of a comfortable, familiar but totally barren living?

LAURA

I thought so too ...

KIKI

And?

LAURA

I don't know ...

KIKI

You don't know what?

LAURA

I just don't know ...

KIKI

So you're not even going to try?

LAURA

I feel sort of relieved.

KIKI

Relieved of what?

LAURA

Of having to breakup, I guess. It's a lot of trouble to go to, I mean I'm so used to being Laura&Percy, I've been doing it for years, it kinda just comes naturally, and it *should* come naturally, and watching Percy watch sports, it's like my anchor, you know, and even though I have every right to live how I want to live, and I know that, there's this guilt, this guilt of leaving, and I'm *really* relieved to not feel that.

ROB

(warmly)

That's beautiful.

KIKI

But is that all you want out of being with him? To not feel bad about *not* being with him?

ROB

Double negative, honey.

KIKI

This whole situation is a double negative -- two people together who don't really want to be together, is a double negative.

ROB

Obviously, that's not how they see it.

KIKI

How do you know how they see it?

ROB

How do you know how they see it?

KIKI

How do you know how they see it?

ROB

How do you know how they see it?

LAURA

Robnkiki, please!

KIKI

Well does he? Does he want it too?

ROB

Course he does.

KIKI

Laura, does he want to get back together with you?

LAURA

I ... I'm not entirely sure.

KIKI

Laura!

LAURA

I saw him yesterday at JustinErica's.

ROB

And how was he?

LAURA

He was just so *there*, you know.

ROB

Course he was.

KIKI

There? What does that mean?

ROB

There -- as in highly present and just taking it all in and ...

KIKI

(interrupting)

He was watching TV, wasn't he?

LAURA

Yeah, but ... in a really warm way.

ROB

You have to read the body language.

KIKI

Laura, are you out of your mind?

ROB

Love'll do that to ya.

KIKI

(looks at her watch)

I gotta go to work. Laura, think about what you're doing honey, just really think about it, OK, before you jump back into anything?

ROB

I can't believe you're encouraging Laurantpercry to not be Laurantpercry.

KIKI

You gotta realize you can get used to living a certain way, even if it is not the way you really want to live at all. Before you know it, crap, total crap, feels familiar and right, just because you're used to it. My dad used to smack my mother in the face with a rolled up newspaper...

ROB

(interrupting)

Here we go again, the rolled up newspaper. Does everything have to tie back to the rolled up newspaper?

KIKI

Well, yes, it does.

ROB

What does any of that really mean anyway?

KIKI

It means we're highly adaptable creatures, sometimes way *too* adaptable.

ROB

Survival of the fittest -- I love it when you talk Darwin to me.

KIKI

We can be conditioned to accept almost anything. Neglect can feel as normal as a cup of coffee in the morning. Even all out abuse can become completely routine.

ROB

(bored)

Like being beaten with a newspaper?

KIKI

Like being taken for granted by the person you're supposed to be most intimate with.

KIKI (CONT'D)

(to Laura)

Honey, really think this over, OK? I know this breakup is tough, but you were going for more in your life, for what you really want, don't give up on it just yet, you know?

Laura looks at her.

KIKI (CONT'D)

I gotta go to work.

Kiki leaves for work.

ROB

I'm really proud of you Laura.

LAURA

I just want to give us one more chance.

ROB

Absolutely right. Give love a chance. Let's have a drink to celebrate.

LAURA

It's eight in the morning.

ROB

(approaching her)

You're a very attractive woman, Laura.

LAURA

Thank you, Rob. You have nice hair.

ROB

You've always liked my hair.

LAURA

I . . . guess that's true.

ROB

And I've always liked your ass.

LAURA

Rob . . .

ROB

I'm just saying, that there's always been this mutual attraction between us.

LAURA

(laughs)

That I like your hair and you like my ass?

ROB

Why fight it?

LAURA

I'm really not fighting it, Rob.

ROB

Come on, Laura. This has been a hard time for you, admit it.

LAURA

I admit it. You keep stating true things but twisting their meaning.

ROB

Would it really be so bad, if we just let go with each other?

LAURA

You're doing it again. Letting go together is good. But your connotation of having sex together is not good.

ROB

I'm so glad one of us finally said it out loud.

LAURA

I said it out loud to say it's not going to happen.

ROB

Let me make you a martini.

LAURA

You really don't listen to a word anyone says, do you?

He mixes them each a martini. He hands her one and sits down next to her, raising his glass.

ROB

Here's to mutual attractions.

LAURA

I'm sorry I have to do this.

ROB

Don't ever be sorry about your passion, Laura.

She throws the martini in his face.

ROB (CONT'D)

A prelude to passion?

LAURA

You just tell me how happy you are that Percy and I are getting back together, and then you try to hit on me. And what about Kiki? All you talk about is how much you want to marry her.

ROB

I do want to marry her, but she's got a block. We need something to get us over the hump.

LAURA

So you want us to hump to get you two over the hump?

ROB

I knew you'd get it.

LAURA

I don't get it.

ROB

It's very simple. We have sex and then feel ashamed about it, which Kiki picks up on, in that weird way women do, as if they've got some kind of built in Shame Geiger Counter. Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick . . .

LAURA

(interrupting)

A shame Geiger counter? Is that what you really think of women?

ROB

For a couple of days I fight her off. 'What's your problem?' 'I don't have a problem, what's *you're* problem?' 'What's my problem? You're my problem.' 'I'm not your problem, you're your problem'. 'I'm not my problem.' 'Yes, you are.' 'No, I'm not...'

LAURA

Rob, please!

ROB

Finally I let her corner me and I confess to our little infidelity here.

LAURA

What does *that* accomplish?

ROB

Kiki has gotten too secure in our living. So I introduce a little doubt into the relationship, a little fear, like a dash of yeast to make the dough rise.

LAURA

I didn't know you were into baking.

ROB

I've just got a flair for metaphor.

LAURA

Kiki's already scared -- she's terrified of suffocating in your bedroom, she's afraid of newspapers ...

ROB

Right, but what's missing from the mix is the fear of loss, that's the straw that stirs the drink.

LAURA

Mix? Straw? What are you making a margarita?

ROB

I just need to introduce enough fear of loss to trump Kiki's fear of being trapped.

LAURA

I don't think that's the way ...

ROB

Then when the conversation about marriage comes up, she'll feel a healthy dose of urgency to get the deal done.

LAURA

To "get the deal done". Am I supposed to find all this arousing?

ROB

Don't over-think it.

Laura looks at him a moment then walks out.

SCENE 16: JUSTINERICA'S HOUSE - EVENING

Justin arrives home pulling luggage. Erica greets him.

ERICA

I missed you.

JUSTIN

I missed you too.

ERICA

No, I really missed you.

JUSTIN

Missed you too.

ERICA

I missed you more. Can I just once miss you more than you miss me?

JUSTIN

Course you can, honey. Go ahead.

ERICA

(gathering herself)

I missed you. I *really* missed you. A lot.

JUSTIN

That's nice, I missed you too, but I was able to rechannel my missing into supporting optometrists in the St. Louis metropolitan area using my practice management software, so it didn't hit me as hard.

ERICA

Great. How was the weather?

JUSTIN

So humid and sticky. It's such a relief to be back home in our dry desert heat.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Where's Percy? Are you two scoring well together?

ERICA

What are you talking about?

JUSTIN

Isn't that what teammates are supposed to do? Come together to score more often?

ERICA

You're being very strange.

JUSTIN

(pleased with himself)

I was listening to sports talk radio on the way home.

ERICA

Oh, you're using sports verbiage you've just heard, which to you may as well be a foreign language.

JUSTIN

It's all about sticking it in together.

ERICA

(worried again)

What are you saying?

JUSTIN

Little hockey reference, I believe. Or maybe it's sticking it out. It's all about sticking it out together. That's what the great teams do.

ERICA

There's something I have to tell you.

JUSTIN

Is it about your disorder?

ERICA

No, well, yes, sort of.

Justin takes her two hands.

JUSTIN

Do you want me to painstakingly draw it out of you while you withdraw deeper into your shell?

ERICA

(withdrawing into her shell)

I don't know ...

JUSTIN

Does it have to do with work?

ERICA

Not really ...

JUSTIN

Is it your hair?

ERICA

Nah ...

JUSTIN

The shape of your head?

ERICA

Jesus, you'll never get it.

JUSTIN

Sorry, maybe you should give me a hint.

ERICA

OK, here's your hint: Percy.

JUSTIN

You're right, I was going in a totally different direction. What about Percy?

ERICA

We were watching the game together last night.

JUSTIN

Really? Who was playing? -- just kidding.

ERICA

I didn't watch the whole game.

JUSTIN

Of course not, sports means nothing to you.

ERICA

But I watched some of it.

JUSTIN

Which is remarkable in and of itself.

ERICA

To be with Percy.

JUSTIN

That's nice.

ERICA

I was *with* him.

JUSTIN

Yes, you were with Percy, that's nice. He needs our company even if neither of us gives a damn about sports.

ERICA

I mean, I was with him in bed.

JUSTIN

I like watching TV lying down too.

ERICA

Justin, it wasn't that simple.

JUSTIN

Well, honey, baseball is not a simple game.

ERICA

I mean, there was *sleeping together* involved.

JUSTIN

I've learned even many sports fans find the regular season boring. They sit through it just to get the playoffs, or waiting for football to start.

ERICA

I *slept* with him, Justin.

JUSTIN

You slept with him?

ERICA

Yes.

JUSTIN

Why?

ERICA

I don't know why.

JUSTIN

Well, was he having trouble sleeping on his own?

ERICA

No, by *sleep with* I mean, you know ...

JUSTIN

(interrupting)

Were you having nightmares again?

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I'm great at interpreting dreams. Remember the one you had about Rob and Percy and you in a threesome in one of those rooms they use for focus groups with the big table and those cool Aeron chairs, and the two-way mirror, with me and Kiki and Laura behind the mirror taking notes on our clipboards?

ERICA

What did you say that meant?

JUSTIN

I don't remember exactly, something about you over-scrutinizing your own sexuality, but it really seemed to hit the mark at the time.

ERICA

It did?

JUSTIN

Sure, we had incredible sex that night.

ERICA

You mean the possibility of infidelity somehow aroused me to even higher heights of passion with you?

JUSTIN

I think that's it exactly.

Erica steps toward Justin so their noses are practically touching.

ERICA

You think you're pretty hot, don't you?

JUSTIN

In a helpful sort of way, I think I'm irresistible.

ERICA

Well why don't you show me how hot you are?

JUSTIN

It would be my pleasure.

ERICA

It is going to be your pleasure.

JUSTIN

Pretend preppers or broken condom?

ERICA

Pretend preppers, let's go for it.

Stage goes black. We hear Erica and Justin without seeing them.

JUSTIN

Feel good?

ERICA

Good.

JUSTIN

Really good?

ERICA

Really good.

JUSTIN

Super good?

ERICA

Super duper good!

JUSTIN

It's so exciting that we're not just having sex, we're starting our family.

ERICA

Oh yes!

After a few moments.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I don't think they're going to make it together.

JUSTIN

(mumbling)

Laura&percy?

ERICA

No, Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Of course Laura&percy.

JUSTIN

(slurring but understandable)

You know me after shex--shluggish, shashiasted, shimple minded.

ERICA

It worries me.

JUSTIN

Can barely string words together.

ERICA

I mean Laura & Percy. I don't think Percy wants it. He doesn't say anything either way, but ... Anyway, I don't know how she stood it this long. I mean Percy never comes out of his shell. Never. Not even during ...

JUSTIN

Wah?

ERICA

It just makes me wonder...

JUSTIN

Wah?

ERICA

It just makes me wonder, you know, about us. I mean what's going to keep us together, for the long term?

JUSTIN

Ba-ie.

ERICA

Laura is so bright, and so good at going along with Percy and all his baseball bullshit, but how long could she hold out?

JUSTIN

Ba-ie, ba-ie.

ERICA

What? Hold on, here have a bite of this gluten-free, naturally low carb protein bar, with a glycemic-index-friendly sweetener. It will balance your blood sugar.

We hear the crackle of a wrapper and loud, wet chewing sounds.

ERICA (CONT'D)

God you chew loud! This is what happens when people live together too long. The chewing gets louder and louder. The ears become more and more sensitive. Pretty soon every meal sounds like dinosaurs grazing through Jurassic Park.

(MORE)

ERICA (CONT'D)

How long can I stand to live with this? And what everyday habits of mine offend you to the core of your soul? How are we going to make it together?

JUSTIN

(still chewing, but regaining his power of speech)

Baby!

ERICA

What? Yeah, I know I'm your baby ...

JUSTIN

No, a baby. We might have a baby. How's that for a long term plan?

ERICA

I know, I know, down the line, like you always say. But will we make it to that point when we're ready to have children? Will we even get there?

JUSTIN

We just might have gotten started tonight.

ERICA

What!?

Erica switches the light on, revealing that they are not in bed at all, but sitting in chairs on the stage fully dressed. They act surprised along with the audience -- their bedroom relations are not what we thought -- then continue.

JUSTIN

What's better than pretend preppers sex? Real preppers sex.

ERICA

(alarmed)

You weren't wearing protection? How could you not tell me?

JUSTIN

How could you not know?

ERICA

(pauses, finding no adequate response)

How could you not tell me?

JUSTIN

I thought you wanted a baby?

ERICA

Why?!

JUSTIN

All the baby name lists you're constantly coming up with? Catholic names, Jewish names, Buddhist names, Slavic names ...

ERICA

I was raised non-denominational.

Justin just looks at her.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I don't want a baby now. I'm just starting to feel solid in my career.

JUSTIN

Why didn't you say so?

ERICA

I'm finally making money and feeling good about myself.

JUSTIN

But you act so imbalanced all the time.

ERICA

I didn't want you to get bored with me.

JUSTIN

You mean you *don't* have Competitive Reproductive Disorder?

ERICA

I'm sorry, Justin.

JUSTIN

(disappointed)

That one sounded like such a complex condition, which would take constant counseling, encouragement, forgiveness and patience . . .

ERICA

(interrupting)

All the things you love to do. I've tried to be insecure for you, I really have, but I don't know how much longer I can keep it up. Sometimes that personality gets so strong it takes over, against my better judgement...

JUSTIN

(interrupting)

Don't worry honey.

ERICA

That's the point, I don't know if there's enough left to worry *about*.

JUSTIN

We'll find something.

ERICA

But what if I'm tired of being your neurotic love partner?

JUSTIN

Then there's motherhood -- the potential for anxiety is endless.

ERICA

But a baby is the *last* thing I want right now.

JUSTIN

Good because I actually did wear a condom.

ERICA

What?

JUSTIN

I just wanted to know where you really stood on the matter. All this breaking up and making up with Lauranpercay has made me feel like we need to be more real with each other.

ERICA

So you *lied* to me?

JUSTIN

Exactly.

ERICA

So you lied to me about not using a condom? So you really did use a condom?

JUSTIN

Trojan Her Pleasure Condoms -- designed to hit any woman's hot spots. Our current favorite.

ERICA

And you're not just saying that as part of some elaborate lie to make us more honest together?

JUSTIN

Nope.

ERICA

Or as some kind of support strategy to get me through my Competitive Reproductive Disorder that doesn't actually exist?

JUSTIN

Doesn't exist for you? Or doesn't exist at all?

ERICA

Justin?!

JUSTIN

I wore a condom, I wore a condom.

ERICA

(jumping into his arm)

I love you. I really love you!

JUSTIN

I love you too!

ERICA

Even without Competitive Reproductive Disorder?

JUSTIN

Yes.

ERICA

Even if my acute insecurity fades to mild insecurity and eventually no insecurity at all?

JUSTIN

I would love you even if you never presented one single symptom of any known or unknown emotional or psychological complaint ever again.

ERICA

Oh Justin.

They kiss. The stage goes black.

SCENE 15: ROBNKIKI'S BEDROOM

Kiki is packing an overnight bag. Rob walks in.

ROB

What are you doing?

KIKI

Laura told me what you tried to pull yesterday.

ROB

And you believe her?

KIKI

Believe what? I haven't even said what it was, and you're already denying it.

ROB

I'm not denying anything.

KIKI

What exactly is it that you are not denying?

ROB

I'm not denying anything, therefore there's nothing to deny.

KIKI

Don't do that.

ROB

Don't do what?

KIKI

Don't *therefore* me.

ROB

Therefore is a perfectly legitimate article. It means . . .

KIKI

It means you're a pompous, arrogant, self-absorbed, deluded idiot.

ROB

I don't think that necessarily follows. There are several other, equally valid conclusions one could draw from that particular word usage.

KIKI

No, Rob. It follows. It necessarily fucking follows.

ROB

Is this about the ceiling?

KIKI

No, it's not about the ceiling, it's about us.

ROB

Because I just have to say I'm not going to paint it again.

KIKI

We're not connected at all, why do we even live together?

ROB

We could go gloss but that would glare terribly lying in bed, looking up at night.

KIKI

We are so weird.

ROB

I've repainted twice and I really think it's time to move on, unless you want that popcorn treatment, totally tacky.

KIKI

We are such a couple of freaks living like this. Is it just us, do you think, who exist in these *his* and *hers* side-by-side bubbles, attached but never actually touching? Or does everyone settle into this kind of together-but-separate strangeness?

ROB

Life can't be one long lap dance, Kiki, I wish it could be. But at some point fatigue sets in, and you can't keep all the swishing and gyrating and pretend humping going, and you just have to plop down on that lap and sit there.

KIKI

So we're supposed to just sit on each other?

ROB

If we were married we could both feel a whole lot more relaxed about it. That's the beauty of it -- the documents speak for themselves, so we don't have to all the time.

KIKI

The documents?

ROB

It's like when a cop pulls you over, you just show him your registration, end of discussion. Audi A8's mine, officer. Next question.

KIKI

I'm moving out, Rob.

ROB

Honey, every bedroom has a ceiling and every ceiling is going to have *some* imperfection in it. We could put a fan up there, give you something else to look at, while adding resale value when the market turns.

KIKI

I'm not moving out from the bedroom, I'm moving out from you.

Rob stops, pauses, thinks about it. For the first time in the play she's gotten his attention

ROB

Why?

KIKI

Rob, you tried to take Laura to bed to scare me into marrying you.

ROB

Exactly.

KIKI

Every time we agree, we're agreeing to something totally different.

ROB

(exasperated)

I agree.

KIKI

It's like we never really connect on anything.

ROB

Nothing happened between me and Laura.

KIKI

Because Laura didn't go for it!

ROB

If you'd just agreed to marry me, there wouldn't even be an issue to discuss.

KIKI

So it's my fault?

ROB

(finally, she's coming around)

Yes.

KIKI

How does it feel Rob to always, always be right?

ROB

You used to like that about me.

KIKI

I did?

ROB

You used to say, you're always right, Rob, but you said it with a smile. `You're always right, Rob'.

KIKI

I'm sorry.

ROB

(vulnerable)

God, I miss hearing that! You have no idea how good that made me feel. It was such a turn-on. Better than a lap dance, well actually, exactly same as a lap dance.

KIKI

I'm going, Rob.

ROB

We should get married.

KIKI

But you still wish I was Kitty Claw.

ROB

You don't give her enough credit -- she was fantastic.

KIKI

Little girls grow up, but apparently little boys never do.

ROB

What's that supposed to mean?

KIKI

You're holding me in the past.

ROB

What's that supposed to mean?

KIKI

It's like we speak two entirely different languages.

ROB

What's that supposed to mean?

KIKI

I gotta get out of here.

ROB

I cannot believe we're breaking up this way, without any understanding between us whatsoever.

KIKI

Why? It's exactly the way we've lived together.

Stage goes dark.

SCENE 15: BAR WHERE PERCY BARTENDS - AFTERNOON

Laura, seated on a bar stool, watches Percy behind the bar, organizing bottles, wiping down glasses, slicing fruit, stocking toothpicks etc., prepping for the evening.

LAURA

Thanks for the texts.

PERCY

Batting averages with men in scoring positions.

LAURA

Is that what that was?

PERCY

Tells the real story of why we're in third not first.

LAURA

The real story?

PERCY

It's definitely not about the pitching. Pitching is solid.

LAURA

Yes, the pitching.

PERCY

And the batting averages are solid enough, not great, but solid. But with men in scoring positions, that's where we have a problem.

LAURA

I get it. At key moments in the game, when it's time to step up and make a difference, we don't do it.

PERCY

We don't do it.

LAURA

And that's the problem.

PERCY

Fielding is good.

LAURA

So that's not the problem.

PERCY

Pitching's solid.

LAURA

You already said that but ... right, that's not the problem.

PERCY

No hitting in the clutch.

LAURA

That's our problem.

LAURA (CONT'D)

We do this well, don't we?

PERCY

What?

LAURA

You know, what we're doing. I mean we're really good at it, at doing what we're doing.

PERCY

Been doin it a long time.

LAURA

Not *that* long.

LAURA (CONT'D)

A lot of girls couldn't keep up with this kind of conversation, you know that don't you? Erica, no way. Not Kiki either. But Erica watched the game with you the other night. What was that like?

PERCY

Want a Margarita?

LAURA

Now that's a drink offer I can accept, on the rocks, no salt.

PERCY

I know.

LAURA

Yes, you do.

He serves her the drink. She takes a sip.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Now that's how a Margarita should taste. So good, so right. Why can't everyone make a Margarita like you? Why are yours the only Margaritas I like? Is it really that rare and exclusive an experience that in the entire universe of Margaritas, yours is the one and only Margarita that's right for me? I mean there's gotta be more than one great Margarita out there, right? There must be hundreds of Margarita opportunities right here in Scottsdale alone? And yours is the one exclusive Margarita for me?

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

Or is it because I know what I get with your Margarita, that I never go out and experience other Margaritas, so yours just seems like the one and only, when really there could be a bar five minutes from here that serves a Margarita that I like even more, but I've just never gone there to find out.

PERCY

I don't know.

LAURA

I have to admit something to you.

PERCY

What?

LAURA

I never told you this, but sometimes, driving home from the graphic design studio, I listen to sports talk radio.

PERCY

Really?

LAURA

Yeah, I never wanted you to know. I was afraid you'd take it the wrong way, like all I wanted to do was talk sports, but since that's all we're doing anyway ...

PERCY

Ever call in?

LAURA

God no! Actually, I was tempted a couple times.

PERCY

You wanted to set the record straight.

LAURA

Exactly. I wanted to set the record straight.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm so glad I finally admitted this to you. Is there anything you want to tell me?

Percy, agitated, drops a glass.

LAURA (CONT'D)

What is it?

PERCY
Erica.

LAURA
Erica?

PERCY
Misses Justin.

LAURA
What does that have to do with anything? She told you that?

PERCY
He's in St. Louis, really humid right now, so much worse than our dry heat.

LAURA
What are you saying, Percy?

PERCY
Erica misses Justin.

LAURA
I don't understand what you're telling me -- try using a sports metaphor.

PERCY
I can't!

LAURA
You can't?

PERCY
No.

LAURA
But you always do. If it's not baseball, it's basketball, and even hockey. Try hockey!

PERCY
Laura, don't.

LAURA
Don't what?

PERCY
Nothing.

LAURA
Don't *what*, Percy?

PERCY
Don't do that.

LAURA
What are you talking about?

PERCY
Laura.

LAURA
If the team sports don't work, try boxing or golf.

PERCY
No!

LAURA
What's going on with you?

PERCY
Don't coach me.

LAURA
I'm not coaching, I'm *suggesting*.

PERCY
You're coaching.

LAURA
Percy, come on, you're better than this.

PERCY
You're doing it right now.

LAURA
Are you going to quit? Are you a quitter?

PERCY
You're coaching. You're *always* coaching.

LAURA
I'm *always* coaching? Well, you're always acting like a rookie who needs it!

Percy just looks at her.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that ...

PERCY

It's OK.

LAURA

Do you miss me Percy?

PERCY

I ... I don't know.

LAURA

Total rookie answer.

PERCY

I don't know yet.

LAURA

Does it take time to know something like that? If you're close to someone, and then you're not, don't you feel the difference right away?
Does *feeling* take time?

PERCY

Or does time take feeling.

LAURA

Does time take feeling, take it away, you mean? Yes, we use to feel each other more than we do now. Why is that? Did the pheromones wear off? Did we just become part of each other's routine? What happened to the feeling? Where did it go?

LAURA (CONT'D)

You know when you say things like that, deep things, it makes me think maybe, just maybe ...

PERCY

(interrupts)

No.

LAURA

Maybe we need to try harder, to really work at this ...

PERCY

Laura.

LAURA

But what you just said was deep.

PERCY

It's just a phenomena of being a quiet person. When you finally say something, it's bound to sound profound.

LAURA

But that's profound too, Percy. *You* are profound. You just need to show it more. You just need to bring it out and let the world see, and let me see ...

PERCY

(interrupts)

Don't.

LAURA

But it's true, Percy. You have the potential to be such an amazing person.

Percy walks away from her and busies himself at the other end of the bar.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I can see great things for you. What's so wrong about that?

PERCY

Laura, stop.

LAURA

Stop what? Not everybody is your brother trying to abandon you at the zoo!

PERCY

Jesus.

LAURA

I'm sorry, I just don't understand. I mean how can I, you never communicate.

Percy walks back over to her.

PERCY

Would you sign Kennedy for his hitting?

LAURA

He's not bad for a pitcher.

PERCY

OK, but would you sign him to hit in the middle of your lineup.

LAURA

Of course not. He's a pitcher.

PERCY

Exactly. You can't make a pitcher into a slugger.

LAURA

I get that.

PERCY

Except in the case of Rick Ankiel, the St. Louis pitcher, who freaked out and couldn't throw strikes anymore and eventually remade himself into an outfielder, the first player to win ten games and hit fifty home runs since Babe Ruth...

LAURA

(interrupting)

Percy, please, don't start with all the sports trivia.

PERCY

It's not trivia. It's fact.

LAURA

Facts can be trivial, most of them are.

Percy walks away again to the far end of the bar.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Where are you going? OK, I'm sorry, what were you saying? Use all the sports trivia you want.

Percy comes out from around the bar and stands with her.

PERCY

You know what I'm saying.

LAURA

I do?

PERCY

Yes.

LAURA

I felt guilty about leaving you. But I didn't really miss you.

PERCY

Me either.

LAURA

I mean, I miss you. But ...

PERCY

(interrupting)

I know.

LAURA

But I don't *really* miss you.

PERCY

No.

LAURA

We don't *really* miss each other?

PERCY

No, we don't.

LAURA

I mean we do, miss each other, but

PERCY

(interrupting)

Laura

LAURA

You can't make a pitcher into a slugger.

PERCY

Other than in extremely rare cases like ...

LAURA

And I've been trying and trying, haven't I?

PERCY

I'm no Rick Ankiel.

Who is?

LAURA

No one ... other than Babe Ruth.

PERCY

Who started out as a pitcher for the Red Sox, before becoming the greatest Yankee of all time.

LAURA

Percy embraces Laura.

What was that for?

LAURA (CONT'D)

I don't know.

PERCY

Oh.

LAURA

No, I do know. You're really amazing, Laura. You're just a very special woman. And I want you to know that.

PERCY

Thank you Percy. Wow, I really felt that.

LAURA

I really meant it.

PERCY

You are one beautiful guy, you know it?

LAURA

I really love you.

PERCY

I love you.

LAURA

Laura embraces Percy.

PERCY

Want to watch the game? It's Dbacks-Dodgers?

No.

LAURA

Laura leaves. Stage goes black.