

NIGHT

By

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CHARACTERS, in order of appearance:

ANA, twenties
PETER, thirties
CLARE, forties
DAVE, forties
SAMANTHA, thirties *
BILLY, twenties

*The actress who plays Samantha also plays:
MRS. JONES and OLD LADY, both very old

THE TIME: Tonight.

THE PLACE: The city.

THE SETTINGS should be simple. A park is indicated by a bench. A gym, by two exercycles. A restaurant, by table and chairs. Etc.

(SCENE 1: A ROOM)

(From off, we hear the Wedding March.)

(The bride, ANA -- Hispanic, early twenties, in an expensive wedding dress -- hurries in, panicked, dragging in PETER, thirties, who wears a beautiful suit.)

ANA

You got to get me out of this, I can't marry him.

PETER

You just did.

ANA

No no no --

PETER

"I do"? Ring a bell?

ANA

I know but this is wrong --

PETER

You're just having a panic attack, he's a great guy --

ANA

Please Peter, you can fix this, you can fix anything --

PETER

I already fixed this, I got you the wedding of your dreams --

ANA

I know, I'm sorry, I know you paid a fortune and thank you, really, but get me the fuck out of it.

PETER

There are sixty people heading to the reception right now, including Billy's brothers and you know how much he hated to invite them --

ANA

So that's why I should be married? Cause his brothers --

PETER

This is nerves, it happens all the time --

ANA

How would you know?

PETER

Because I go to weddings all the time -- I was actually enjoying myself at this one --

ANA

Cause it's deductible.

PETER

Because this one isn't --

ANA

Stop correcting me --

PETER

You begged met to correct you --

ANA

Well not today!

(She weeps.)

PETER

Ana he loves you, you love him --

ANA

He didn't use a condom.

PETER

Okay, too much information --

ANA

Last night, he wants kids, he wants me to have babies.

PETER

You must've talked about this --

ANA

Yeah...

PETER

And?

ANA

That's where we are, talking about it, suddenly he "forgets"? Bullshit, he wants me to change.

PETER

And you want him to change, that's life, that's relationships, that's why I don't do them.

ANA

He likes where we live, he loves the water stains on the ceiling, to him they're hearts and flowers, he calls it Bohemia. It's crap.

PETER

I'll find you a place --

ANA

Stop being so nice! We'll never have the money, not with him making me stay home and take care of babies, and then I'll never make the big sales 'cause -- because you can't make those sales if you get distracted. Who taught me that, nice guy?

PETER

Okay Ana? You're officially hysterical --

ANA

He's the best sous-chef in the city but he's stuck there, he's never gonna get ahead --

PETER

I'll put in a call to Mario --

ANA

It wouldn't matter if you blew Mario, Billy's got no ambition -- and he could go the whole way, the TV show, the books, everything, he's got no fire.

PETER

Then why'd you say Yes?

ANA

You owe me this, everything I done for you --

PETER

I've done for you --

ANA

(at same time, correcting
herself)

I've done --

PETER

People weren't exactly throwing jobs at you when you were
folding laundry.

ANA

You got me cheap --

PETER

And don't you like being my assistant more than, oh I don't
know, getting bleach under your nails?

ANA

Help me.

PETER

I'm trying to. Look. I believe you --

ANA

So --

PETER

I believe you believe what you believe -- but people get
nervous at big events, big passages --

ANA

It's not nerves!

(off his look:)

Okay yes I am nervous but that's not it --

PETER

So you're absolutely positive you're not going to feel
different tomorrow?

(She hesitates.)

PETER

Because if you're sure, I'll tell everybody to go home. I'll calm Billy down, I'll hope his brothers don't kick the shit out of me, I'll do that, but you've got to be one hundred percent sure you want this to be completely totally over because trust me it will be.

ANA

... Nothing's a hundred percent --

PETER

It's got to be.

(Silence.)

PETER

Or... there's a beautiful honeymoon suite waiting for you, the rose petals, the --

ANA

The cinnamon sticks?

PETER

The cinnamon sticks, everything just the way you wanted it, no water stains on the ceiling. Ana. Go, spend the night with him, if you feel this way tomorrow I'll help you, one night you'll lose. But if you're wrong about how you feel and you do this now...

ANA

And tomorrow, if I still -- you'll help me?

PETER

Absolutely.

ANA

Promise?

PETER

Promise.

(Ana nods, okay.)

PETER

You're doing the right thing.

(Ana leaves.)

(Peter swings out his cellphone,
speed dials.)

PETER

Clare you've got to get me out of town tonight --

(SCENE 2: A SUBURBAN BEDROOM)

(CLARE, forties, is on the phone,
partially dressed in her best
evening outfit.)

CLARE

Tonight? That's going to be tough --

(DAVE, forties, comes in, tucking
a dress shirt into suit pants.)

DAVE

You're kidding --

CLARE

(shooting him a "shush"
look)

It's just we've got dinner reservations and tickets for --
that's right, you got us those great seats for our
anniversary --

DAVE

I didn't even want to see the show, it was your idea --

CLARE

(sitting at computer)

It's fine, I'll get right on it, where do you want to go? ...
No preference at all?

DAVE

Who's he think he is, anyway?

(Dave storms out.)

CLARE

I know, aisle, preferably right side, as far front as possible but not the first row --

DAVE (O.S.)

Control freak!

CLARE

First row's okay? Oh. That may help but I have to tell you getting something this late, they've already given away upgrades and ... No no don't worry about us, maybe if I get lucky we can still make it to the theatre --

(Dave comes back in:)

DAVE

You're a doormat!

CLARE

(still into phone)

If we could find a place in the city, it wouldn't be such a big deal but ... That'd be great, we'd really appreciate it, Peter, you know we would ... Right, I'll get back to you.

(She hangs up, accelerates her work on the computer.)

DAVE

Where's my blue tie with the --

CLARE

Davey borrowed it.

DAVE

He's a grown man, he doesn't even live here any more, can't he buy his own things.

(He goes back out --)

CLARE

Why don't you tell him that --

(-- and comes back in with a tie, which he tries to tie as:)

DAVE

And he's Dave, not Davey. We've been planning this for --

CLARE

You didn't even want to go --

DAVE

That's not the point --

CLARE

Peter's my best client, he's good for lots of favors --

DAVE

Like getting us into the hottest restaurant and the hottest show and then calling you at the last --

CLARE

Which you didn't want to see in the first place --

DAVE

That's not the point!

CLARE

This can help us --

DAVE

I'm going to see the fucking show.

CLARE

Didn't you hear me slip in about living in the city? He said he'd look for an apartment for us --

DAVE

He said that before.

CLARE

The more he owes me, the better for us. The city, Dave, keep focused on moving in to the city.

DAVE

Never gonna happen.

CLARE

(stopping her work)

What.

DAVE

Not from him, he's never gonna help.

CLARE

(back to work)

You want to go to this show or not? Cause the more you slow me down --

DAVE

I want to go to the fucking show cause you want to go to the fucking show. Let's fucking go.

(He storms out, again.)

CLARE

Then let me get this done.

(Dave marches back in, throws down a magazine.)

DAVE

By the way, nice move, leaving it open in the john to "Hot New Second Careers". We argue about coupons and then --

CLARE

I was just trying to save money, I didn't know it would humiliate you --

DAVE

-- and then you shove Newsweek up my ass. And it didn't humiliate me, it made me mad, I'm getting your coat.

(He storms out again.)

CLARE

(under her breath)

Jesus.

(Dave's back in with her coat, which he throws on the floor:)

DAVE

Florida!

CLARE

What?

DAVE

I'm not going to Florida. Tomorrow. Or ever. I hate it, you knew that when you insisted we buy that time-share --

CLARE

It's a good investment, we agreed --

DAVE

No, you researched, you planned, you did flow charts, you showed me how wise it would be, I didn't want to fight, we bought it.

CLARE

Will you let me do this?

DAVE

I just want...

CLARE

(stopping work, turning to him:)

What??

DAVE

Not this.

CLARE

I understand, honey I do. Look, look we just got the last one out of the house, right? Now's our time. Everything we planned for, saved for -- an apartment back in the city, it'll be like it used to be, things happening all the time, all night long, theatre and museums and... life, it'll be better, it will.

DAVE

We can't afford a place in the city.

CLARE

Peter will help.

DAVE

What, he's going to pay for it?

CLARE

You do want to move back, right?

(Dave doesn't respond.)

CLARE

Right?

DAVE

... I don't know.

(She fumes back to work.)

DAVE

Well do you want me to tell the truth, you're always saying I don't communicate!

(She attacks the keyboard.)

CLARE

You think I wanted this? You think I wanted Costco and ironing and planning other people's vacations instead of my own? You have any idea how long it's been since I went to a museum?

DAVE

A museum? We're... and you talk about museums?

(He leaves.)

(She's lost something on the computer:)

CLARE

Fuck!

DAVE (O.S.)

No fuck you!

(We hear a door slam.)

(SCENE 3: A GYM)

(Two exercycles. Peter cycles while talking on his cellphone.)

PETER

Billy, it's Peter, don't tell Ana, is she in the hotel room with you? ... Good, I'll make it fast, head's up dude, she's ready to bolt -- hang on, I got another call --

(checks caller ID, clicks)

Victor, hey big guy, I got you a meeting with the co-op board... Don't thank me yet, just make sure you tell them your children will be living full-time with your ex ... They don't have to know that yet.

(He clicks back to the other call as SAMANTHA, thirties, comes in, gets on the other exercycle, starts pedalling.)

PETER

Billy, sorry about that, Ana still in the john? ... Good, all I'm saying is treat her with kid gloves, she's really nerv-- shit I got another call --

(checks caller ID, clicks)

Ana? Where are you? ... Why're you calling me from the hotel bath-- okay you're just looking for an excuse... Well first you're pissed off because he wants kids and now you're pissed off because the champagne is domestic.

(lying:)

Ana, I got another call, hold on.

(clicking back to Billy)

Billy, sorry I got to go -- what? ... You're asking me? I don't know, give her some space I guess ... No problem.

(clicking back to Ana)

Ana? ... Ana? Hello?

(clicking again)

Ana? ... Victor?? I thought we were done -- sorry, must be something wrong with my phone --

(Samantha gets off her exercycle, goes to him, as he clicks back and forth:)

PETER

Hello? Anybody?

(She takes his phone.)

PETER

Hey!

SAMANTHA

(pleasantly)

The sign? "No cellphones"?

PETER

Sorry, it was an emergency --

SAMANTHA

An emergency?

PETER
(checking her out)

Emergency-lite.

(She holds out the phone for him.
He doesn't take it, just looks at
her.)

PETER
... Don't I know you?

SAMANTHA
Oh my gracious no.

PETER
"My gracious"?

SAMANTHA
(still holding out the
phone)
Don't you need to make your call?

PETER
It's screwed up, my whole life depends on that thing.

SAMANTHA
Your whole life?

PETER
I know this is weird and it's going to sound like I'm coming
on to you but --

SAMANTHA
Would you like me to fix your phone? I'm good with
mechanical devices.

PETER
It's pretty complicated -- not that you wouldn't --

SAMANTHA
If I fix it, will you promise not to use it here?

PETER

Interesting. If you fix it, I have to promise not to use it, but if you don't fix it, I won't be able to use it anyway. I figured that out by myself, too.

(He smiles. She smiles back. He motions for her to go ahead. Samantha pushes buttons, etc., as he keeps pedalling:)

PETER

It's a new model, I couldn't figure it out, my assistant had to --

(She holds it out for him.)

PETER

You fixed it already?

SAMANTHA

I believe so.

(Peter takes it, dials it:)

SAMANTHA

You promised.

PETER

Save me from myself.

(He hands the phone back to her. She smiles, puts it in her pocket, gets back on her exercycle:)

PETER

It was work though, the phone call. Calls.

SAMANTHA

You're very diligent.

PETER

I know, it's ridiculous, working this late on a Saturday night.

SAMANTHA

And yet you're --

(stops herself)

PETER
No, go on. Please.

SAMANTHA
You're proud of it.

PETER
Don't you enjoy getting things done?

SAMANTHA
... That's a -- vexing question.

PETER
You use such old-fashioned words --

SAMANTHA
Sorry.

PETER
It's cute.

(Samantha doesn't respond.)

PETER
You're good at fixing things, I'm helpless.

SAMANTHA
My grac-- helpless and ridiculous? Are you a good salesman?
(quickly:)
I'm sorry, that was remarkably rude --

PETER
No not at all, I like being a salesman -- but you, you are
"remarkably" spooky.

SAMANTHA
No, no I'm not.

PETER
How'd you know I was a salesman?

SAMANTHA
Lucky hunch.

PETER

"Hunch."

(Samantha pedals faster.)

PETER

I don't know anyone who's good at things, mechanical things, actual things, everyone I know hires people for that --

SAMANTHA

They probably don't read the manuals.

PETER

You read manuals?

SAMANTHA

I adore manuals.

PETER

And why do you "adore" them?

SAMANTHA

You're making sport of me.

PETER

"Sport" --

SAMANTHA

You see?

PETER

No, I'm interested, really -- manuals, reading thereof, why?

SAMANTHA

I don't know...

PETER

Of course you do.

SAMANTHA

... The contemporariness, is that a proper word?

PETER

It is now.

SAMANTHA

They're about life. No really, they are. Take "navigation" -- that's a whole seminar right there. And macros, they can achieve many different functions by just performing one simple task. You can learn how to install a pause into a string and the many reasons you might wish to do so. How long to charge you batteries -- and the dangers involved in over-charging. How to re-program without losing your settings...

(She wipes away perspiration from her cheek -- or is it tears?)

PETER

All right?

SAMANTHA

I haven't had much time for exercise lately.

PETER

I liked Lincoln Logs. No manual, but there was always this "vexing" problem: So many logs, so few roofs.

SAMANTHA

Bigger houses then.

PETER

You'd think so but the roofs weren't big enough.

SAMANTHA

You were trying to...

(stops herself)

PETER

Tell me.

SAMANTHA

You were trying to make a home.

PETER

You're psychic, right?

SAMANTHA

No no, it's simply logical --

PETER

You're batting a thousand. No really, what do you do?

SAMANTHA

Well, I am not a clairvoyant. You mean a career? I don't get out of the house much, actually. At all.

PETER

You live in the neighborhood?

SAMANTHA

My entire life. In the house out of which I do not get.

PETER

One house? Your whole life?

SAMANTHA

Since I was a little girl. And you, where do you live?

PETER

I buy places and live in them while I fix them up. Then I sell them and move on to the next one. In between I live in hotels, like now. I adore hotels.

SAMANTHA

You're still making sport -- fun of me.

PETER

No really I like hotels, I like being picked up after.

SAMANTHA

That would be blissful. I can't imagine.

PETER

You should try it sometime.

SAMANTHA

I'm ready for a change. You have to force yourself.

PETER

To what?

SAMANTHA

Get out, do things. I've read so much about things I'd like to do, see. Meet people.

PETER

Well... I'm Peter.

SAMANTHA

Samantha.

PETER

One goal accomplished.

SAMANTHA

You're quite brash, aren't you?

PETER

There you go again, "brash" --

SAMANTHA

Sorry --

PETER

I like it.

SAMANTHA

You're just flirting.

(They pedal in silence. Then:)

SAMANTHA

Do you suppose we're there yet?

PETER

There?

SAMANTHA

The destination towards which we've been travelling?

(Peter's phone rings from inside her pocket. He stops pedalling. It continues ringing.)

SAMANTHA

If you ask for it, I'll give it to you.

PETER

The phone, you mean.

(She doesn't answer, instead takes his phone out of her pocket and hands it to him -- just as it stops ringing.)

SAMANTHA

I hope it wasn't anything vital.

PETER

Couldn't have been as important as meeting you.

(The phone rings again. He can't help but check the caller ID.)

PETER

Would you mind? It's my travel agent, I know that sounds --
(answering the phone)

Clare ...

(checking out Samantha)

I'll never make that, can you get me something later? Ah
shit, hold on Clare --

(clicking over to another
call)

Hello? ...

(surprised, thrilled)

Oh! oh thank you so much for calling me back, thank you
really, can you hang on just one quick -- just -- really
quick -- can you -- sorry, I didn't catch that, it's a bad
connection --

(He moves around to improve the
reception, and doesn't notice
Samantha leave.)

PETER

Can you hear me, Mrs. -- Sorry? ... I'd totally love to, I've
been wanting to see your home forever, it's the last one in
your area of its size that hasn't been cut up into -- what?
... Can you hear me? What?

(He turns to apologize to
Samantha, cupping the
mouthpiece:)

PETER

Sorry, she just keeps talking straight through --
(sees Samantha's gone)

Midnight? Tonight? You sure that's not too late for you --
Mrs. Jones? Hello?

(SCENE 4: A LAUNDROMAT)

(Ana thumbs through a magazine.
Tosses it down on the folding
table:)

(She looks at the pile of neatly
folded laundry on the table.
Suddenly scrunches it all up.
Then starts folding it again.)

(Samantha comes in with a hamper
of laundry. She starts sorting.)

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry to disturb you, I feel like such a ninny, but I
forgot detergent -- might you have any...?

ANA

Supposed to charge you for it.

SAMANTHA

All right, what's the charge?

ANA

Don't know what she's charging now -- used to be two bucks.

SAMANTHA

Forgive me, I thought you worked here --

ANA

My friend Rosa, she does, I'm filling in.

(Samantha hands Ana the money.
Ana gives her the detergent.)

SAMANTHA

Latina Bride.

ANA

(alarmed)

What the fuck?

SAMANTHA

The magazine --

(that Ana tossed aside)

Latina Bride. Everything's become so specialized, next they'll have Latina June Brides, then Latina June Brides Who Get Married In Churches...

ANA

Hey you can't wash that -- the lace, you'll ruin it.

SAMANTHA

... What was I thinking?

ANA

My grandmother had lace like that, her wedding dress...

SAMANTHA

Did you wear it for your wedding?

ANA

What makes you so sure I'm married?

(Samantha points to Ana's ring.)

ANA

... I don't know what happened to that dress, she doesn't live here.

SAMANTHA

Do you visit her?

ANA

After what I went through to get here?

SAMANTHA

Sorry, silly of me, you can't leave without --

ANA

No hey I'm legal, even before I got married. But it took me four tries to get across. One time I almost died, we were in this -- shit, what do you call it, a tunnel, a metal tube under the ground...?

SAMANTHA

A culvert?

ANA

Culvert, a culvert. I got all cut up, it got infected, I still have the scar, see?

SAMANTHA

You must miss your family.

ANA

I snuck back once before I was legal, when my father was dying -- I couldn't stand it, the animals, the dirt, the smell of it, the smell of being poor, it made me sick. I send them money.

SAMANTHA

My grandmother was an immigrant...

ANA

She's dead, too?

SAMANTHA

She was a character. So strong. She came here with nothing and ended up richer than Midas. Out and about all the time. Famous for her hats -- never the same one twice...

ANA

She must have worked hard to get all that.

SAMANTHA

She was a maid, fell in love with the eldest son, their marriage was quite the scandal.

(Samantha looks at the clothes
that they are sorting.)

ANA

... These were hers, huh?

SAMANTHA

She wanted me to give them away -- I thought it'd be best to wash them first...

ANA

So she died recently?

(off her nod)

Let me help --

SAMANTHA

No really, I couldn't impose --

ANA

I like doing laundry, takes my mind off things.
(sorting)

You guys were close, huh?

SAMANTHA

My parents and brother died when I was little, she took care of me. And then I took care of her -- for a long time. Thank goodness for the computer, otherwise I wouldn't have had much connection with the outside world.

ANA

You never been married?

SAMANTHA

I had to take care of her.

(Ana's phone rings. She checks the caller ID, turns it off.)

SAMANTHA

Is that him?

ANA

I smelled that same smell on the way here tonight, like back home, never used to smell that way here but more and more -- that's why I wear too much perfume, Billy doesn't like it...

SAMANTHA

If you love him so much why didn't you answer his call?

ANA

You loved your grandmother but you gave up something, you missed out on something, right?

SAMANTHA

Maybe I can still find it.

ANA

That's what I'm saying, maybe it's still out there and if you look hard enough and work hard enough you can find it.

SAMANTHA

I...

(stops herself)

ANA

What? ... Come on, what?

SAMANTHA

I met this man on-line --

ANA

Get out!

SAMANTHA

Well, I haven't actually met him, in person. We became acquainted in a chat room -- it's perfectly respectable, it's for cat lovers --

ANA

Cat lovers?

SAMANTHA

You know... cats.

ANA

Oh.

SAMANTHA

It was a way to connect with people who have something in common, I was so desperate to -- I assure you, I had no intention of...

ANA

Sure sure I get it, what happened?

SAMANTHA

We email each other a couple of times a week -- lately it's been more. We talk about everything. And then tonight there was a message from him. Asking me to meet him at a coffee shop.

ANA

Girl, what're you doing here?

SAMANTHA

I had to wash --

ANA

You came here so you wouldn't go to meet him, I know all about this, I know all about screwing yourself up.

SAMANTHA

No really, I could've washed these at home.

ANA

Then why did you come here?

SAMANTHA

To meet you. It seems.

ANA

Okay, that's too woo-woo for me. Listen to me: Go meet him, I'll take care of your laundry, you can come back later.

SAMANTHA

I couldn't --

ANA

Things don't just fall into your lap, you gotta go out and make them happen, go.

SAMANTHA

You sure you don't mind?

ANA

Go.

SAMANTHA

I don't even know your name, I'm Samantha --

ANA

Ana. Go!

(Samantha nods her gratitude,
leaves.)

(After a moment, Ana turns on her
cellphone. It immediately rings.
She checks the caller ID.
Answers.)

ANA

Hi ... Sorry, I was out of range ... I'm okay, how about you?
... I'm helping a friend ... Samantha ... She's a new friend
... I can't, not yet, I promised to help her ... You'll get
upset but it's something I want to do and it doesn't mean
anything about us, it's just for me, okay? ... I'm doing her
laundry -- hello? Billy?

(She puts down the phone. Starts
sorting again. The phone rings.
She answers it. Peter appears:)

Ana. PETER

Where are you? ANA

Why are you answering your phone? PETER

What's up? ANA

Where are you? PETER

What do you want? ANA

You with Billy? PETER

Why'd you call me? ANA

(Peter doesn't answer, deep in thought.)

I'm hanging up -- ANA

Wait -- when you met Billy -- PETER

I'm definitely hanging up -- ANA

No wait -- remember that house on West Street? PETER

That incredible townhouse? The old lady? ANA

Mrs. Jones, she called me tonight, finally returned my calls, wants me come by. PETER

Great! Everybody's been trying to score her. ANA

PETER
At midnight. Weird.

ANA
Old people get weird.

PETER
You knew it was something special, right away, when you met Billy?

ANA
Jesus Christ, I said I'd wait till tomorrow to decide --

PETER
I'm just asking.

ANA
Why?

PETER
Can't I just ask?

ANA
It was intense, okay? But we'd been drinking --

PETER
It wasn't just booze, just booze is a one-night stand --

ANA
What is up with you?

PETER
No what's up with you? The fucking world's about to explode, you've got a great guy, you love him and --

ANA
You don't know what I feel!

(She hangs up. Turns off her phone.)

(Lights down on her, as Peter gets a call. He checks the caller ID:)

PETER
Clare? ... Eight a.m., where am I going? ... Well, I never been there, maybe I can start a real estate rush...

I won't forget, we'll find you a place and I'm really sorry I screwed up your anniversary, I'll get you tickets for another night. Hey how'd you and Dave meet anyway? ... Really? Was he a good tipper?

(laughs)

So it wasn't love at first sight ... Think that ever works?

(SCENE 5: A COFFEE HOUSE)

(Dave sits, nervously nursing a cup of coffee.)

(Samantha comes in. They look at each other. He stands. She comes over.)

DAVE

You came! Great! Great. Wow. I mean your photo was great but I didn't think you'd be so...

SAMANTHA

Oh my. Thank you.

DAVE

So. Sit. You want something? Coffee? Espresso?

SAMANTHA

Not just now, I feel jumpy enough.

DAVE

Yeah, me too... Chamomile tea? I'm always hearing from my --
(catches himself)
It's supposed to be calming.

SAMANTHA

I'm fine, really. Thank you.

DAVE

No, thank you for coming, I know it was kind of last minute --

SAMANTHA

Last minute's fine --

DAVE

I can't believe we're meeting after all this time.

SAMANTHA

It's strange, isn't it?

DAVE

Oh god yeah, I'm so glad you said that, I mean, we've like shared so much with each other and now to meet you after all that... How's Pedro?

SAMANTHA

Pedro. He's fine. Shedding.

DAVE

Yeah well, Persians do that. This time of year.

SAMANTHA

How's Waldo? Such a charming name for a cat.

DAVE

Yeah, the kids liked it, they used to scream, "Where's Waldo?" He's okay I guess, I don't see him now that we're divorced.

SAMANTHA

Oh.

DAVE

I hope that doesn't --

SAMANTHA

No no, I'm glad -- oh how horrible, of course I'm not glad. I wondered, we never really --

DAVE

I know. It's kind of recent. What about you?

SAMANTHA

No, I've never been married.

DAVE

A beautiful woman like you? I mean it, I'm not just -- you know. It's weird, huh? We've talked about everything but this -- cats, world events... Cat world events.

(They laugh.)

DAVE

But you've been in relationships?

SAMANTHA

Oh yes. One in particular.

DAVE

Long term?

SAMANTHA

Very much so. It just ended.

DAVE

Kind of the same, the two of us, huh? Sorry, I'm nervous, I've had like two hundred cups of coffee -- and I've never done anything like this.

SAMANTHA

Really?

DAVE

No way. How about you?

SAMANTHA

No.

DAVE

Why not, right? We're both available. But it is kind of weird, both splitting up not so long ago...

SAMANTHA

Do you mind my asking why?

DAVE

The kids left, we didn't want the same things any more but we didn't know it till the kids left.

SAMANTHA

And what do you want now?

DAVE

Don't worry, it's not like I've got your typical boring mid-life crisis and I'm looking for typical boring mid-life thrills. I just don't want to fight any more, when's it get to be easy? Shouldn't it be easy? After twenty years of one marriage, one job -- till they downsized --

SAMANTHA

That's so unfair.

DAVE

It keeps getting harder and harder. Sure we had to work hard and sacrifice to get things, to get the kids through school, but I liked that, we were so busy -- and then somehow we kind of lost each other. Jeez, listen to me, tell me about you, about your relationship.

SAMANTHA

Not much to tell...

DAVE
Come on, I spilled.

SAMANTHA
He's in real estate, works all the time, he's always on that damn cellphone --

DAVE
That's annoying.

(Silence.)

DAVE
Music, you like music?

SAMANTHA
Oh yes, do you?

DAVE
Not really.

(Another silence.)

SAMANTHA
Do you like to read?

DAVE
Sure, you bet, what about you?

SAMANTHA
I love stories that take you somewhere you've never been.

DAVE
Yeah, that's fun.
(then)
Read anything lately?

SAMANTHA
Well, there's this story about a family in the mid-west --

DAVE
Guess I wouldn't like that, I grew up there.

SAMANTHA
Oh?

DAVE

You said you like things that take you somewhere you never been.

SAMANTHA

Someplace emotional you've never been. This is about a normal family, two parents, a boy and a girl -- that's very different from my situation so I was intrigued.

DAVE

So what happens?

SAMANTHA

The brother and sister, in this very normal family, they were so close, so sweet with each other. They did everything together, he was a couple of years older and he looked after her. He taught her the hymns he sang in church, which was his favorite time of the week. When he sang in the church, with the choir, he had this image, this beautiful picture that he was talking to God, talking directly to God with nothing and nobody in between.

(Dave, transfixed, stares at her, frozen, his cup of coffee raised in his hand.)

SAMANTHA

And then one day their mother asks him to go to the store to get something -- milk, I think. Yes, milk. Anyway, the sister, she's not supposed to go to the store because the mother thinks she's too young and to get to the store they have to cross a busy street. But once the boy leaves the house, his sister runs after him and she wants to go with him so badly, she so badly wants to feel grown-up, she begs and begs him, and so he agrees, and he takes her, and he's so sweet, he holds her hand tight and he makes sure they look both ways before they cross the street, and they go into the store, and the milk, it isn't where it's always been, and so the boy asks the man who owns the store where the milk is, and the man who owns the store says they moved it, and the boy goes to get it while the man who owns the store gives his little sister some candy, and then the boy hears an ice cream truck outside, playing its tune, and then he hears brakes, brakes screeching, and then a thud, and then some screams, and his sister, his sister's been run over. The man who owns the store had to take care of a customer, and the boy's sister heard the ice cream truck and she ran into the street to get some ice cream. And the boy, he's never all right again. The book is about the rest of his life, and how he never sings again and doesn't believe in God any more, and --

Stop it.

DAVE

I'm so sorry --

SAMANTHA

Who are you?

DAVE

What do you mean?

SAMANTHA

DAVE
It was cereal. You wouldn't move milk, the milk was in a refrigerated case, you couldn't move a refrigerated case. It was cereal. Who the hell are you?