

TimeVent:
A Paradox With Real Bad Science

A Play
by

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Characters:

Wife- (40s or 50s) A wife. Whatever type she is.

Husband- (40s or 50s) A husband. Forgetful and lost.

Son- (34, but playing 11) Whiny, little bitch.

Daughter- (25, but playing 16) Speaks only Spanish, smarter than everyone else in her family.

Grandma- (Pretty old) Has been slowly losing parts of her speech, and now only speaks the words that are in **Bold**.

Setting: A theatrical space meant to represent a living room.

Time: Now and then. Soon, next and distant.

A Living room. No, not that kind of living room. A theatrical living room. It could be decorated to look like a fake living room, where fake living has occurred. Let's not pretend we're in a real space. Instead, it should be a wide open stage. The opposite of closed in, there should be breathing room. There can be some furniture, some chairs, maybe a sofa, something for the actors to sit on. At rise, Husband is standing and staring intently, at what, you ask? It doesn't matter. He is at that crossroads in life where the last decision he made has led him to something irrevocable. Grandma looks dead, eyes closed, slumped over, probably in a chair, but perhaps on the ground. Son and Daughter have noise cancelling headphones on and they should be doing something that looks studious or whatever. Wife can be doing anything that isn't engaging with the rest of them. She is engaged with herself, it should also be something emblematic of a feminine trope that is wildly outdated, knitting, for example. Everyone continues doing their own thing while Husband stares out. After a pause.

HUSBAND

Oh dear.

WIFE

What is it, darling?

HUSBAND

It appears that as I was remodeling the room, I've gone and placed a wall where the door should be. I seem to have sealed off all possible exits.

WIFE

Well, what a very strange Sartre thing to do.

HUSBAND

I'm afraid we're all terribly trapped.

Unfortunate.
WIFE

Yes.
HUSBAND

Confounding.
WIFE

Quite.
HUSBAND

Have you weighed all the options, darling?
WIFE

There seems to be only one.
HUSBAND

And in your inestimable opinion, you've estimated...?
WIFE

We are terribly trapped.
HUSBAND

Unfortunate.
WIFE

Yes.
HUSBAND

What should we do now, poodle? With no way out, there is surely cause for great alarm. And being the man, sugar dumpling, you must have the answer we will all line up behind.
WIFE

*Daughter takes off her headphones,
which are useless as she has heard everything.*

I hope I haven't left the pot roast in the oven! Oh, sometimes my mind wanders so far from the menial tasks I perform all day long that I could just burn the entire house down without realizing it. Could just set it on fire. Burn. It. Down.
WIFE

I don't know what I've done.
HUSBAND

DAUGHTER

Estamos atrapados en una contradicción que salta a la vista. (We are trapped in a perfectly obvious contradiction.)

WIFE

Biblio, honey.

Daughter rolls her eyes and puts her headphones back on.

WIFE

Perhaps I did turn the oven off. I haven't made a pot roast since I was knee high to a pigs...thigh? Maybe it was a thigh roast.

HUSBAND

We've been cut off from the rest of the world.

WIFE

Can you cook a pig's thigh?

HUSBAND

I've sealed us in.

WIFE

I guess you could cook anything. Technically. Though I wouldn't eat a pig's eye. Or would I?

HUSBAND

I've built a permanent wall.

WIFE

It's called symbolism, dear.

HUSBAND

It's indestructible! It's far too impenetrable for any human to tear down.

WIFE

And that is called contrivance. And not an electronic device in sight to save the day. Oh how very last century of us.

HUSBAND

It's because of your no electronics in the living room rule that may cause our demise.

WIFE

Don't blame me for your clearly passive aggressive attempt to maintain masculine control of your now entirely trapped familia.

Son removes his headphones.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? What preposterous situation has daddy got us into now?

HUSBAND

I don't think I like your tone, young man. That's two extra chores for you tonight.

SON

But Daddy!

WIFE

Don't but daddy your daddy, boo-bear, you know it only agitates his eczema. Or scratches his noble insecurities. I can never remember which malady goes with which neuroses. Now get back to your studies. Existential crisis aside, you will still get a first class education, or what is the point in believing in the significance of our status in society?

SON

But Daddy is always going through a crisis.

HUSBAND

How dare you. I would send you to your room, posthaste, were that not impossible. So, I will stare at you with a threatening paternal look that makes you feel bad about yourself and forever question my love.

Husband stares at Son, defeated, Son puts his headphones back on.

WIFE

Well done, dear.

HUSBAND

Well. Enough of that. Back to the crisis at hand.

WIFE

I was worried something like this would happen. What with your...issue.

Dramatic music?

HUSBAND

My...issue?

Music?

WIFE

I suppose it's only natural that you've forgotten the...issue.

?

HUSBAND

Just tell me what it is!

WIFE

Your short term memory loss, pumpkin head.

HUSBAND

Wasn't pumpkin head a serial killer?

WIFE

Only fictitiously. I think deranged murderer is actually more correct.

HUSBAND

Do you suppose the short-term memory loss I've been suffering from is to blame? I forgot I was suffering from it altogether.

WIFE

Yes, that is a side-effect.

HUSBAND

What is?

WIFE

Let's try to problem solve, shall we?

Beat. Daughter removes her headphones.

DAUGHTER

Hay que romper esa muralla. Que idiota. (This wall has to be broken down. What an Idiot.)

WIFE

Nada. Bienvenidos, or whatever.

Daughter, increasingly frustrated puts her headphones back on.

HUSBAND

I don't understand why she doesn't speak English.

Wife is not interested in engaging.

WIFE

You know how teenagers can be.

HUSBAND

It says something about our parenting.

Nope. Still not going to engage.

WIFE

Spilled milk, darling. I mean, young girls these days are just impossible. Have you seen my thimble?

HUSBAND

Spilled milk? Our own daughter speaks to us in a language we can't understand!

WIFE

And yet we feed her anyway. I'd say we're the one's getting the fuzzy end of this particular lollipop.

HUSBAND

Oh, a cliché, is it? I think your attempt at rationalizing our daughter's alienation from this family is meant to mask your utter contempt for all of us.

Beat.

WIFE

Do you?

Beat. Husband stands his ground. Probably literally.

HUSBAND

I do.

Beat. Wife will now engage.

WIFE

Well. I think your attempt at verbal deflection is merely to hide the fact that you have entombed your family in an unfinished living room. If I'm right in my assumption, pookie pie, the room may prove to be the death of us all. Ironic, though it may be, I am weary that you can question my choice of platitudes amidst such a pressing matter. Pressed, as it were, by you! You and your faulty mental faculties!

HUSBAND

You're going awfully heavy on the prose tonight, darling.

WIFE

The word is prosaic!

HUSBAND

The word is Cun...ning!

WIFE

Careful. Some things can't be unsaid.

HUSBAND

Oh? And what things can?

Son and Daughter remove their headphones to listen.

WIFE

Let's assess. Let's...problem solve as Doctor overpaidhippiequack would say! It seems that in our current state of emergency, we must resort to primal instinct if we are to survive.

HUSBAND

But—

WIFE

Shut up! I'm pontificating. You poked and you prodded, seeking my engagement. Well, buckle up bucko, because now it will be up to me, oh yet again, to solve another of your imprudent predicaments. So, first, we have a sealed off room, five people, no food and no toilet. We also have my limited patience for your general company and so the repartee and chitchatting I assume will rapidly decline as will our desire to live. Then there is the base human instincts that will kick in once starvation hits.

Worried that the children are listening.

HUSBAND

But the children.

WIFE

Yes, they provide far less to the betterment of society than we, so they shall be the first to be eaten.

HUSBAND

Good god, woman! Is it as desperate as that? We can't eat our children!

WIFE

Oh calm your nuts. Did you know that some Eskimo cultures allow for infanticide if the child proves to be too much of a burden on a family?

HUSBAND

We're not Eskimos!

WIFE

Social contract dictates that the adults are responsible for the entire well-being of the child, and in the absence of well being—

HUSBAND

We're permitted to eat them? That's psychotic! And they're not infants!

WIFE

Ugh! Let's not split hairs until we have to. Besides you've always been partial to Eskimo culture. You love their pies!

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are you going to eat us?

WIFE

Do your homework, dear. It's impolite to eavesdrop on grown-up talk.

SON

Even if you're plotting my murder?

WIFE

Yes, dear, even then.

Wife snaps her fingers and Son and Daughter put their headphones back on.

HUSBAND

Wait.

Beat.

WIFE

Oh are you epiphanizing?

HUSBAND

My "twin" brother will be here tomorrow morning. We only have to survive the night.

WIFE

But the wall, darling. I thought you said it's impenetrable, remember?

HUSBAND

Did I say that?

WIFE

You did.

HUSBAND

Yes, it's a fortress. Can't be broken. But only from this side. The other side is as fragile as an egg, I assume.

WIFE

Why would you assume that?

HUSBAND

Did I air quote "twin" brother?

WIFE

I wasn't looking.

Daughter removes her headphones.

DAUGHTER

Es algo que no comprendo. (I do not understand this.) La respuesta es aparentemente obvia. (The answer is patently obvious.)

WIFE

Nintendo, dear.

HUSBAND

Isn't that Japanese?

Son removes his headphones.

WIFE

Well, now you're just being racist. We are more than the color of our skin. We are also the marrow of our bones. And the intolerance of our privilege.

SON

Teacher says that's fellatio.

HUSBAND

Good god! What are they teaching you in that school?

WIFE

It's fallacious, dear.

HUSBAND

It certainly is!

WIFE

No, no. No. The word, darling. The word that your undereducated son was trying to say was fallacious. He also has your inverted chin. Makes it hard to look at him.

SON

Teacher says that Shakespeare said that things without a cure must be avoided.

WIFE

What's done is done. Paraphrasing Shakespeare is like microwaving crème brulee. And your teacher is a faggot.

SON

That's called a straw man.

WIFE

And that is called backtalk, mister. Now drop and give me twenty push-ups.

SON

What is this the army?

WIFE

Now it's fifty!

HUSBAND

How can you be so cruel? You know he can't do push-ups.

SON

That's right. Because of my deformed elbow. See? (*He shows them his elbow*)

WIFE

We don't say deformed, darling. We say retarded or lame. Mustn't mince our adjectival meanings.

SON

I wasn't mincing anything.

WIFE

Now you will give me a hundred.

SON

I can't give you any. My elbow—

WIFE

Did Helen Keller say she couldn't learn what water was? Did she say she would just give up so easily?

SON

I don't think she said anything.

HUSBAND

There must be a means of escape.

WIFE

We're sort of past that plot point, shnookums. We're chastising our son. Keep up! He's been taken in by a homo.

SON

And my teacher isn't a homo. He's a black.

WIFE

We don't say a black, sweetheart. And faggots come in all colors. That is why they're flag is a rainbow.

HUSBAND

If I could just attack the wall with enough strength. And he can't help because of his elbow. Poor kid.

Daughter is staring at Husband with a look of "I'm right here" on her face.

HUSBAND

And there are no other men in the room, so there is nothing we can do.

DAUGHTER.

Esto es estúpido e innecesario. (This is stupid and unnecessary.)

WIFE

I don't know what she wants.

HUSBAND

Biscuits and gravy! We may die in here! What do we do!?

WIFE

Way to keep calm under pressure, noodle bucket. You're becoming hysterical. Is that the kind of influence we want to impose on our children?

HUSBAND

You know what I need when I get hysterical.

WIFE

I do. And I won't.

HUSBAND

But, I'm hysterical.

WIFE

Well, you're just going to have to blow yourself, aren't you?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is daddy going to blow himself?

HUSBAND

Now look what you've done. My son, my own son is talking about oral sex because of you.

SON

Mommy. Mommy. What's oral sex?

WIFE

Darling, you're thirty-four years old (*Or whatever actual age the actor playing Son is*). I can't have this talk with you.

SON

I am not. I'm eleven. I'm eleven and I have a deformed elbow.
Deformed! Deformed! Do you hear me?

DAUGHTER

¿Cómo en nombre de Dios podemos salir de esta ambigua situación?
(How in God's name can we get out of this ambiguous situation?)

WIFE

Como! *(Beat)* I don't know. *(To Son)* Your retarded elbow aside, I
am still your mother and I will not tell you what oral sex is.
So start those push-ups boy, or I'll give you something to cry
about.

SON

I wish I was dead!

*Son goes to the ground and tries to do
pushups.*

HUSBAND

Maybe there's a soft spot.

WIFE

You mean like on your head?

HUSBAND

And unlike in your heart. I was referring to the wall.

Daughter assesses the wall.

WIFE

And we haven't restocked the bar! You son of a bitch. You're
forcing me to a night with my family without gin? Lesser crimes
have called for castration in dignified societies.

HUSBAND

You think cutting off my balls could emasculate me any more than
I already am!

WIFE

Was that target aimed at me?

HUSBAND

It might have been!

WIFE

Well then, a very palpable hit!

HUSBAND

You know I don't know what that means.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are you going to cut off daddy's balls?

HUSBAND

I was remodeling. The air is filled with asbestos. Do you want asbestos in your gin?

WIFE

Don't be ridiculous. Everyone knows asbestos belongs in your peritoneal cavity.

Daughter starts trying to break the wall down. It is impossible.

HUSBAND

Should we help her?

WIFE

And coddle her? Never! She needs to understand that life is a series of disappointments. And when she fails to break the wall down, we'll laugh at her and call her mean names. It's the way the world works, darling. We must be there for our children. And I have to be there sober! Dick whistle!

HUSBAND

If you're nice to me, I could share the paint thinner. In a pinch it should be adequate. I assume ethanol is really all your after.

WIFE

You must remind me, at some point tonight, why it is that I ever married you.

HUSBAND

It was for my money, darling.

WIFE

Oh, so kitten does have claws! Let the onslaught of vicious slights commence.

HUSBAND

I don't understand all of those words.

WIFE

Troll!

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Why are you calling daddy mean names?

WIFE

Because life is disappointing, son! And the realization of it is all the more so when you're hyperconscious because someone forgot to stock the gin!

SON

Teacher says that's called deflection.

WIFE

Well teacher can wipe my ass!

Son cries.

HUSBAND

Now look what you've done. You've made our only son cry.

WIFE

Well he's a pussy. The truth is my tonic. I can't help it if my tonic is another man's poison.

HUSBAND

You are going rather heavy on the metaphors tonight, dear.

WIFE

And I've grown weary playing the dutiful wife! I mean, honestly. How is that even still a thing!? Is she still hitting the wall?

HUSBAND

I marvel that you can call yourself dutiful! Yes, as a matter of fact she is. Why is he still on the floor?

WIFE

Are you calling me a bad wife? Maybe we should stop her. And he's doing his pushups.

HUSBAND

No, no of course not, I wouldn't dream of insulting your wifery. She'll tire out soon enough. And he can't do them because of his elbow!

WIFE

Wifery?! She looks ridiculous! And stop coddling him! What doesn't kill us!

HUSBAND

Excessive platitudes tonight, dear heart.

WIFE

My platitudes have been in excess. Oh yes, I've been heavy on the metaphors tonight, haven't I, darling? Do I really need a third cliché? Switch places with me Mr. Magoo, and see how much originality you can retain playing this role!

HUSBAND

Oh, so it's my fault you're unhappy?

WIFE

You want me to answer that?

HUSBAND

I think it's time we spoke the truth in these walls.

WIFE

Which walls, the new ones? Is it time? Yes, I'd say it is, they've been standing there for nearly three hours now! You are dumber than dirt.

HUSBAND

And you are long-winded.

Wife gasps.

HUSBAND (Cont'd)

That's right. You pontificate incessantly like a cracked-out parrot. You sprinkle simile like cinnamon on a hot bowl of mush. No! No. Not hot, cold. It's cold like your vernacular. You squander all civility and decency for biting banter and bullying badinage!

WIFE

And I shan't stop!

Beat.

WIFE

What the hell does badinage mean?

HUSBAND

Your personality has become lost in your solipsism.

WIFE

And your chin has become lost in your neck!

HUSBAND

I'm through trying. I can't help you! But I can assure you that my absent-mindedness is not the only thing to blame for our situation.

WIFE

I agree. I'd say it's your complete failure as a man that led us to this particularly stupid impasse.

HUSBAND

And my short-term memory loss, but that is neither here nor there.

WIFE

Wrong! It's here. It's right here!

HUSBAND

Sometimes I wish I could choose what to forget. Sometimes I don't know who I am anymore. And then I forget that I ever was anyone at all. And then I forget...that I've ever remembered what I've forgotten. You know how hard it is to be seen as this? As the man? As some sort of villain keeping the rest of the world down? It's exhausting. Sometimes I want to forget.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Has daddy forgotten something again?

WIFE

Just his place in society darling. He's having a second mid-life crisis. Won't that be fun?

HUSBAND

I was fired yesterday.

WIFE

Oh, so the plot, like your waist, has thickened.

HUSBAND

Yes, we'll be broke within the year.

WIFE

Well, let's not project too far into the future, fruit loop, we may be dead within the night.

HUSBAND

And don't talk about my weight. You know I'm sensitive about it.

WIFE

Fat girls always are.

SON

Teacher says we all should only live in the moment.

WIFE

Yes, that's something desperate older people say to get young people to touch their genitals. So, you know, don't fall for it.

SON

Gross.

WIFE

Oh grow up! And you'd better start making like a pregnant woman dilated all the way to ten and keep pushing!

SON

But-

WIFE

Do it!

Son lies face first on the floor.

HUSBAND

I have failed entirely as a man. And I honestly don't know if that's a bad thing. I mean, men are bad, right?

WIFE

Only historically. And at all things.

SON

Teacher says most people live in the past or the future.

WIFE

Why don't you go get gay married to your black teacher since you love what he says so much!

Son jumps to his feet.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Do you want me to be a gay?

WIFE

We don't say a gay, darling. We say faggot or Nancy boy. And I really don't care what you do.

HUSBAND

Maybe I subconsciously trapped us in here so that I didn't have to face the world tomorrow.

WIFE

I doubt your subconscious is that clever.

HUSBAND

And I think I hate you.

WIFE

One coin, two sides, buttercup.

HUSBAND

It makes it all the more tragic. That I may have to die at your side after eating our children.

Daughter has given up trying to break down the wall.

DAUGHTER

Existe un problema de extrema gravedad: el muro... Impenetrable.
(There is an extremely serious problem: the wall...impenetrable)

Beat

DAUGHTER (Cont'd)

Comprende?

HUSBAND

I wish I did comprende. I wish I did. Perhaps I did at one time. Is that one of things I've forgotten? Am I Spanish? Is it possible to forget something like that?

WIFE

I don't know dear, I stopped listening years ago. But perhaps I listened at one point. I was probably drunk. You know what they say about happiness. If you think you're happy...you're probably just drunk.

HUSBAND

But for the matter at hand! Yes, we should be considering an escape route. I am extremely masculine. Never forget that.

WIFE

I don't have to. You already have.

HUSBAND

We just have to escape.

WIFE

From who we are?

HUSBAND

From the room.

WIFE

The room is who we are, isn't it? I hate that I'm clever. It's as if I were auto-immune to philistine simplicity. And like a suppressed nervous system of wit, there is no subtlety that I won't catch. Isn't that the bitch of it? All of it. There is no way out of it. *(beat)* I think your mother's dead.

HUSBAND

Well, she had a good life.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is grandma dead?

WIFE

I don't know. We'd better stab her in the heart to make sure.

HUSBAND

So that's it? Our marriage is over?

WIFE

Well, our lives might be, so I guess we can't beat a dead horse.

HUSBAND

How long have you felt this way?

WIFE

Around the time I realized I was trapped in this room!

HUSBAND

I make one little life threatening mistake and all of a sudden you can't be my wife anymore!

WIFE

I suppose I've just been counting the hours to my death anyway. At least this way I have unburdened myself. *(beat)* Seriously, I don't think your mother's breathing.

HUSBAND

Well, that's awfully inconsiderate of her.

WIFE

Yes, we shall all be forced to smell her now.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Does grandma stink?

WIFE

Put your nose on her and breathe in darling. He's hopelessly stupid.

HUSBAND

He takes after me, I suppose.

WIFE

Don't suppose.

HUSBAND

How did we get here?

WIFE

Have you already forgotten?

HUSBAND

I don't mean here. I mean here.

WIFE

Right. I would say I don't follow, but I don't follow.

HUSBAND

We've missed so much.

WIFE

No, you have. I've paid attention. My brain isn't defunct. Stop smelling your grandmother.

SON

She smells like eggs.

DAUGHTER

Me voy a morir (I'm going to die).

HUSBAND

She's not saying anything.

WIFE

I told you, she's dead!

HUSBAND

Not her. Her!

WIFE

Maybe no one should say anything at all! We clearly don't know how to communicate with one another effectively, so let's all shut the hell up!

*Everyone is still for a long time.
Grandma opens her eyes and gasps.
Grandma only says the words that are
bold.*

HUSBAND

Mommy? Mommy? You're alive?

GRANDMA

I had the most peculiar **dream**. I was **alone** on a beach, eating a **shell**. And then I **woke** up. Are we **trapped** in here?

WIFE

Oh good. Now she's lost her adverbs! She really must stop napping, she wakes up with fewer and fewer parts of speech.

GRANDMA

What on Earth is going on in **here**? Are we **trapped**? Are you trying to **escape**?

DAUGHTER

Abuela, estas vivo! (Grandma, you're alive!)

WIFE

We're not like other people. There seems to be some kind of generational disconnect, an imperceptible communication error, or

we've all been inhaling gas and are about to drop dead from asphyxiation, and this is a shared hallucinatory experience. Or maybe I've finally snapped. The tether was staggeringly taut at this point, wasn't it?

Wife crosses to the bar.

HUSBAND

What are you doing?

WIFE

Looking for the paint thinner, darling. I'd rather poison myself than face this family in a hyperconscious state. The world is changing, perhaps it's forcing something? Philosophy is just an exercise in shifting bad ideas into new ones.

GRANDMA

Escape?

HUSBAND

Yes, we're going to figure out a way to escape.

WIFE

Another perfect metaphor for all of life. All of miserable, cold, dead-eyed, butt-raping life. Is this off-brand paint thinner? You're so cheap.

HUSBAND

Go back to sleep, mother.

GRANDMA

Don't you take that **tone** with **me**, young **man!**

WIFE

Oh look you remembered the Vermouth.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are you getting drunk again?

WIFE

Yes, dear. Your incessant questioning has driven mommy to the bottle. It'll take you decades and more than one shrink to get over it. Now do your homework. Impending death is no reason to slack on your studies. Or you know what? Don't. I couldn't care less. You know it occurs to me that my recent truth speaking is empowering. I shall continue.

HUSBAND

You think you're the only one with truth to speak?

WIFE

Lay it on me, brother man!

HUSBAND

I almost cheated on you once.

WIFE

What a surprise! The cold, distant husband clamored for yet another cliché! And there's another word for almost, dear heart, it's called failure.

HUSBAND

I wanted to leave you once.

WIFE

I wanted to leave you ten thousand times!

HUSBAND

I wanted to make you cry.

WIFE

I wanted to poison your coffee!

HUSBAND

Why didn't you? Save me from the hell of our marriage!

WIFE

Maybe I did! Maybe I poisoned us all! Maybe this is the after-life we deserve!

Beat. She swigs the Vermouth.

WIFE

Flavored Vermouth? God, I hate you.

DAUGHTER

Dios mio! (Oh my God!)

Daughter gets up and crosses down and points out into the audience.

GRANDMA

What are **you pointing** at?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is she pointing at the audience again?

WIFE

Yes, she does that from time to time.

SON

Why is she doing that?

WIFE

To shatter the only illusion we have left. It is the thing I like least about your sister.

HUSBAND

The vent! She's pointing at the vent.

WIFE

Right. Way to bring us back darling. An escape route. Huzzah, huzzah, and all that jazz.

Wife takes another swig.

Daughter and Grandma look at each other and both nod. Daughter is going to go through the vent.

GRANDMA

Good...

HUSBAND

Good what? Mother, I have told you time and time again don't encourage her! She's enabling such minority behavior.

WIFE

Darling, we can't understand either of them! Who gives a rat's ass if they enable one another or not?

HUSBAND

Well, we can't get crazy. This is still America. I don't want brown or unknown languages taking over my world.

WIFE

Yes, beautifully put darling.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is daddy being a racist?

WIFE

Yes, but only out of fear of losing his own privilege dear. Racism will always be an acceptable form of discourse as long as it has humanistic merit to back it up.

SON

Does daddy have humanistic merit?

WIFE

I don't have an answer to that.

GRANDMA

We **need** to **let** her go, so that we can get **Out** of here.

HUSBAND

Uh-huh.

GRANDMA

They **don't** know **how** to listen. They don't **hear**.

WIFE

Oh my god! Make her stop talking. This is why no one listens to old people.

Daughter hugs Grandma

HUSBAND

What are they doing now?

WIFE

It's a hug darling. There not speaking now. God, your spinal cord just doesn't quite touch your brain does it?

HUSBAND

Do you suppose it's very dangerous to send our daughter into a small vent that could potentially be filled with rats or poisonous chemicals?

WIFE

I don't suppose it's any more dangerous than keeping her in here with us. Your repartee is pedestrian enough to kill a clown!

HUSBAND

What the fuck does that even mean?

Beat.

WIFE

Oh. So it's fuck time, is it?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are we saying fuck now?

WIFE

Yes, apparently we are, fuck face. We've opened that can of fucking worms. Your fucked up father seems to fucking think it's an appropriate time to start fucking us with his tongue!

Beat.

HUSBAND

Is that how you meant to phrase that?

WIFE

Fuck off, fuckwad.

DAUGHTER

Chinga tu Madre!

GRANDMA

Everyone fuck **off!** She is **going** into the **vent!**

HUSBAND

Shut the fuck up, mother!

Beat; all are stunned.

HUSBAND (Cont'd)

Yes, well, I think we can all see the dangerous road that we've started down. I call the fuck embargo back on! No more fuck. And that's it. I will not be held fucking responsible for the fucking destruction of this fucking family.

WIFE

Of course not, fuck muffin. You're too busy trying to forget who we are.

HUSBAND

Our daughter is going into a fucking vent, to what could be her fucking death, do you think it might be possible that we could holster the fucking hostility until she's safe? Fuck!

GRANDMA

What is **wrong** with the **two** of you?

WIFE

Ugh, a bucket of profundity this one. It's like playing retarded twister with a colorblind toddler! Wrong two?! Right three! You old hag.

DAUGHTER

Te amo, Abuela.

GRANDMA

I **love** you too. You'll be **back!** I know it.

Daughter walks through the audience and exits. Grandma sits and prays.

HUSBAND

I feel like that was something sweet that we just missed.

WIFE

Don't worry darling, I'll make something up when you've forgotten it's happened.

HUSBAND

I should have never confided in you.

WIFE

You didn't. You sealed me in a living room! I think a little de-rision is earned, taco stand! Or maybe it's meant to make me grateful. You know, now that I think of it, my life on the other side of these walls isn't so intolerable. There is after all running water, and food, and doors that lead to somewhere else! It's like that old saying: every exit is an entrance to somewhere else. And in the absence of exits there is only here! Here with an idiot, his awful children, and his slow-witted mother! It's like Dostoevsky without the humor.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is grandma retarded?

WIFE

Yes, darling, you get that from her.

HUSBAND

How dare you call him retarded!

SON

It's my elbow that's retarded. See?

WIFE

Put your fleshy elbow down! And shut up, or mommy will break an andiron across your face.

HUSBAND

How can you be so cruel?

WIFE

Only to be kind. I'm clearly having a woman breakdown! You know we can't handle stressful situations without heightened emotions and tears!

HUSBAND

You know what I think I forget most often?

WIFE

That no one cares what you're going to say next?

GRANDMA

Shh! Do you hear **that?** I think she's **free!**

WIFE

Shouldn't we put her in a home or something?

HUSBAND

Yes, seeing as how we can't leave this room, that's a good idea.

WIFE

Derision is my thing. Take it from me, and I take your kidneys.

HUSBAND

What I was about to say is what I forget most often is the woman you used to be.

WIFE

That's because you weren't interested in the woman I was. You only cared that I was the woman you wanted me to be.

HUSBAND

We've just been going about doing the same thing over and over again. How can so much change happen inside of us, when nothing changes on the outside? I feel so stuck.

WIFE

What's your point?

HUSBAND

I think we're stuck in the same place.

WIFE

Quite literally! You've pointed out the obvious contrivance that your absent-mindedness has created. Thank you for that. You are a real man.

HUSBAND

And you just use words to make yourself feel better

WIFE

That is wildly untrue. I drink, darling.

*Grandma, still listening for Daughter
walks to the edge of the stage and
stares out.*

HUSBAND

What are you doing mother?

WIFE

Why do you ask her questions? It's like you revel in not understanding things.

GRANDMA

She's **gone**. Something's happened. I **don't** hear her anymore. She's **found** the other **side**.

WIFE

It's like talking to a tomato.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is grandma a vegetable?

WIFE

No dear, she's just old. When you get old, you become useless like a tomato.

SON

Are tomatoes useless?

WIFE

No! And they're not vegetables. How many times do I have to tell you that! They're fruits! Like your black homo teacher.

HUSBAND

You don't have to shout at him.

WIFE

Look at him. What good is he going to be to anybody. That's really what the world needs. Another man.

GRANDMA

Shh! She's on the other **side** of the wall.

*Grandma walks to the side of the room
and puts her ear to the wall.*

HUSBAND

What do you hear, mother?

WIFE

What is she a fucking Cherokee? She doesn't hear anything!

SON

Mommy? Mommy? What's a Cherokee?

WIFE

A redskin darling.

SON

Like a potato?

WIFE

No, like an alcoholic casino owner.

HUSBAND

Why do you teach him these things? You're teaching him to be a racist.

WIFE

"You have to teach a child to stop hating."

HUSBAND

Who said that?

WIFE

Gandhi!

GRANDMA

Will the two of you shut **up!** She's **coming!**

WIFE

Down! Going! I officially hate your mother.

After a moment. Daughter enters in different clothes. She is now an adult.

GRANDMA

It's **you!** Oh thank the **lord!** I am so **relieved.** How did you get in **here?** We're still **stuck?** What **happened?**

WIFE

Answer her! Make it stop!

DAUGHTER

Thank god, I've made it back!

WIFE

Did you—

HUSBAND

Are you—

WIFE

Can you...?

DAUGHTER

Yes. I speak English now.

WIFE

Yes. Good to know that all those Rosetta Stone CDs finally paid off. They say it just clicks one day.

DAUGHTER

Oh, how I've missed you all! I thought I hated you, but then the harsh reality of the world has taught me how lucky I was to have you. I come with news.

WIFE

Okay.

HUSBAND

How did you get in here? The walls...they're still sealed.

DAUGHTER

Yes, It's rather upsetting, I'm afraid. I'm not here.

WIFE

What?

HUSBAND

You mean, I'm the only one that can see you?

WIFE

Why would she mean that?!

HUSBAND

She just said-

DAUGHTER

I'm not supposed to be here. But here I am. And so, I'm not here.

WIFE

You made more sense when you didn't speak English.

GRANDMA

Let her **talk!** Jesus!

HUSBAND

Talk to us!

DAUGHTER

It's the future. The other side of that vent is the future.

Beat.

WIFE

It's the huh?

HUSBAND

When you say future...?

DAUGHTER

It's the future. It's like for real the future. Like the for real future.

GRANDMA

Holy shit. Am I still **alive** out **there?**

DAUGHTER

As soon as I climbed out of the vent, I realized something had shifted. It was the future. It's ten years in the future. The science hadn't been discovered in the future yet for me to get back to you from the future, so I had to wait ten more years in

the future before I could leave the future and return. And so here I am, from twenty years in the future.

WIFE

Yeah, we can do that math. And stop saying future. It's starting to sound like a made up word.

DAUGHTER

I've missed you all.

HUSBAND

Future. Future. It does sound weird.

Wife rolls her eyes.

DAUGHTER

There is one thing, though. When you sealed off the room, you created a time paradox, and there's no way to reverse it. These time holes have been discovered at different points all over the world. They were placed there by a future society. A society of evolved and like minded women, who are seeking to give all of a history a matriarchal makeover. That's for another time. Right now, we have to get you out of this room, out of this particular place in time. We won't be able to rescue you for years and years. And so the only way for you to get out of the room...This is so difficult. What I'm saying is..

WIFE

What you're saying is, we can stay where we are until you can rescue us in the future. Or we have to go into the vent and lose ten years of our lives?

DAUGHTER

Yes. I guess it wasn't that difficult.

HUSBAND

Are we...I mean, am I...what happens to me in the future?

DAUGHTER

I can't say.

HUSBAND

Why not?

DAUGHTER

You weren't there.

HUSBAND

I wasn't.

DAUGHTER

No, you were here.

HUSBAND

I was? How?

DAUGHTER

Because you're here right now!

HUSBAND

But it's the future.

WIFE

Okay, let's stop before he drowns in the deep end of this!

DAUGHTER

The women who found the time hole have sanctioned it, and are refusing to let most people back through it?

WIFE

The women who found the what?

DAUGHTER

There is an uprising. It's a time of great change. The Traveling Women's Association of Time, or TWAT/-

WIFE

/That's an unfortunate name.

DAUGHTER

Has been recruiting and training women operatives to travel back in time to key moments in history to correct the many wrongs that have been perpetrated upon us by men.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Did she say twat?

WIFE

She did, dear.

SON

Okay.

DAUGHTER

We've made the women's suffrage movement happen three hundred years earlier. We have operatives in Salem, turning the witch hunts into glorious exultations of women. Someday, women will overthrow all of men and the world will never know what suffering we endured.

WIFE

Okay. But isn't that just another extreme?

DAUGHTER

You're brainwashed by the patriarchy. You can't understand.

WIFE

Overthrowing all men? Isn't that ill-mannered?

HUSBAND

Does that mean that every woman is like...a lesbian?

DAUGHTER

You're my father, and I love you. But your sexual fetishizing of women is actually punishable by death in twenty years, so take that as a warning.

WIFE

I'm confused. Why did you come back?

DAUGHTER

Mom, you have to come with me.

HUSBAND

But we lose ten years?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Do I have to lose the rest of my childhood?

WIFE

I suppose it's apropos to the fact that you are, in fact, already an adult.

GRANDMA

I want to **go** with **you**. I can't **stay** in this **room** with **them**.

DAUGHTER

Are you sure, Grandma?

Beat. Grandma nods.

HUSBAND

Does she want to go? But...ten years into the future, surely she's dead.

GRANDMA

How **old** do you think I **am**?

DAUGHTER

Seriously, dad, you have to stop talking like that. We've now over-corrected men so severely, that they have been reduced to only saying corrected pronouns.

HUSBAND

Cool.

DAUGHTER

They're going to love you there, Grandma. In the future, we revere and respect older women. In fact, the older you get the more desirable you are. All fashion models are nearly a hundred years old. We don't leave the elderly alone to be forgotten like stray animals or pop stars.

Grandma nods.

WIFE

Wait. Wait. Wait. As much as I'd like to comment on that last ludicrous statement, I would like to ask a few questions.

DAUGHTER

What?

WIFE

If we go with you through that vent, we'll be ten years in the future. So we just have to accept losing ten years of our lives? I don't think I like that idea. I wasn't thrilled at having to reach this age, I don't think I want to go skipping an entire decade. I mean unless I don't physically age. Do I age?

HUSBAND

That's what you care about? Honestly?

DAUGHTER

Would you rather age ten years in here?

WIFE

Can I at least have five minutes to consider it?

HUSBAND

Why would you even consider it?

WIFE

Because I'm human, darling. Human beings feel things. Things that prevent them from arbitrary action. It's why we don't shit in public.

HUSBAND

Is it? Is that really the analogy you want to go with?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are you going to defecate in public?

WIFE

If I could break through these walls...I'd shit all over the front porch. As it is, we're all going to have to deal with holding our shit as long as humanly possible. Which is another beautiful metaphor for our septic lives!

DAUGHTER

You ready, Grandma?

Grandma nods and takes daughters hands.

HUSBAND

Wait. Wait. I don't understand. I have so many questions as to the science of this. How can there be a time, what did you call it, paradox? Hole? It doesn't make sense. I absent-mindedly put up a wall, and now you're telling me that I've created some kind of time vacuum that makes our present state in direct correlation with a future one through a small heating vent in our living room? And somehow the fate of all womankind hangs in the balance?

DAUGHTER

Yes, that's it exactly.

HUSBAND

Oh. Well. Fuck me.

Daughter and Grandma start to exit.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Where is she taking Grandma?

WIFE

To...I don't know. Leave me alone. I don't have all the answers all the time!

SON

Teacher says, answers are just questions in disguise.

WIFE

I don't even know what that means.

DAUGHTER

Don't be scared. It won't hurt.

GRANDMA

I'm not **scared**. I find the idea of going **into** the future to **be**, terribly **exciting**. I'm glad you're with **me**. I can't wait to **see** who I **become**.

DAUGHTER

After I leave with her, I will come back for you. For all of you.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Is she taking Grandma through a wormhole?

WIFE

I don't know! Do your homework! Stop asking stupid questions. Revert back to a fetus and crawl back inside of me! I'm having a moment!!

HUSBAND

Your desperation is starting to show.

WIFE

It was growing jealous of your ineptitude!

Daughter and Grandma exit.

HUSBAND

Now what?

WIFE

Stop asking questions! I need something to go back to the way it was. Can't we just please have one moment that's like something that we used to have?

Wife sulks off to a corner and sits.

SON

Daddy? Daddy?

HUSBAND

Yes what is it son?

SON

Teacher says that a wormhole is an impossible topological device that would serve to prove space as a two-dimensional surface. Like the board game Clue, where a secret passage leads from the conservatory to the lounge, two fixed points in space could be interconnected through an invisible traveling thread. Like a straw, a giant invisible straw. Or a tunnel, like a giant invisible tunnel. Or a-

WIFE

Oh for the love of God, make it stop!

SON

Teacher says that what we can not imagine is where the future must be.

HUSBAND

Well that's, that's a bit over my head.

WIFE

Quell Surprise! Shouldn't we try to break down the wall? Why haven't we done that? Are tired theatrical tropes really the only thing we have? Why haven't we at least tried to break free?

HUSBAND

It's useless. We've already lost them.

WIFE

Oh, what haven't we lost in life?

HUSBAND

We still have our health.

WIFE

Yes. That's true. And in the absence of real hope, we have our clichés. Why aren't we trying to escape?

HUSBAND

Because there is no there there.

WIFE

But we have a bird in the hand.

HUSBAND

Yes, but we can't make him think.

WIFE

Not even if we look him in the mouth?

HUSBAND

Even then.

WIFE

Even now.

HUSBAND

It's not working, is it?

WIFE

No.

HUSBAND

And here we are.

Beat.

WIFE

Yes.

HUSBAND

What if we're dead on the other side of the vent? If we follow her it could very well be nothing but blackness on the other side.

WIFE

Nothing.

HUSBAND

Or hell? What if hell is real? Is this hell?

WIFE

Please, we've done so well, let's not get derivative now.

HUSBAND

Hmm. Ten years.

WIFE

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Where will I be in ten years?

WIFE

Probably dead, so just...stop asking stupid questions!

SON

Teacher says there are no stupid questions.

WIFE

Your obsession with your gay, black, sexually promiscuous teacher is upsetting! What is happening to the world?

HUSBAND

Where do I see myself in ten years?

WIFE

What?

HUSBAND

I was asked that at my last job interview. That was ten years ago. What did I say? Was I right?

WIFE

What are you going on about now?

HUSBAND

I got the job. I must've answered the question well.

WIFE

Yes, but then you were fired, dear, so...it's all moot. It's water under the boot. Great! I'm starting to lose my prosaicisms. You see what happens when chaos is allowed to rule the day!

HUSBAND

Perhaps they remembered my answer, and when I failed to live up to it, they saw me as a failure and fired my ass.

WIFE

Where did you see yourself in ten years? Holed up in a living room somewhere between now and ten years from now with your loving family who one by one escaped into the future through a small vent in the wall? Because any other answer was clearly incorrect.

SON

Mommy? Mommy?

WIFE & HUSBAND

Shut up!

SON

But...But...

Son weeps.

HUSBAND

What are we becoming?

WIFE

Where I saw myself in ten years. Of course that was only five minutes ago.

HUSBAND

I'm so sorry son.

WIFE

We can't just go through a vent into the future! It's an easy out.

HUSBAND

But, if we stay in here, It's a hard in.

WIFE

Those are not opposing ideas! An opposite must have a reaction to the thing it opposes. I think. I don't even know, anymore. Besides, what if this is exactly where we're supposed to be?

HUSBAND

You don't believe that!

WIFE

I don't know what I believe!

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Do you believe in determinism?

WIFE

I said I don't know! I thought I had no beliefs. However, it's only because of my slightest fear of hell that I don't put a gun into my mouth every night before I go to bed.

HUSBAND

But, we're trapped in here. How can you not see this as the only real solution to this dilemma?

WIFE

How can you be advocating for this? Didn't you hear her? The world is hostile to men. You really want to go into a future as a victim of feminism?

HUSBAND

I don't think there's a right way to answer that.

WIFE

And how can a space time thing suddenly exist where it didn't before?

HUSBAND

All things are things that, at one point, did not exist before.

WIFE

That is...dumb. Just because you can't see it, doesn't mean it doesn't exist. We didn't invent fire we found it.

HUSBAND

Because of a shift!

WIFE

A shift? In what?

SON

The cosmos.

Beat.

WIFE

Ugh! Right, your father controlled the cosmos when he put up cheap dry wall over the entrance to our living room.

SON

Microcosmic shifts in the universe, brought on by the tiniest of circumstances, can change the shape of time and space forever. If you look closely at something long enough, it will become something else, even if only on a cellular level. Nothing stays the same. That is the only thing that is certain in all the universe.

HUSBAND

Did you hear that dear?

WIFE

I'm standing right here. What am I deaf?

SON

Teacher says that someday nothing will exist.

WIFE

That's an impossibility, and deplorable logic. For nothing to exist, nothing would have to be an entity, because something that is made up of nothing is actually not made up of anything at all! Therefore, said nothing clearly cannot ever exist. So the correct way to say that is that someday all things will cease to exist. Now stop interrupting!

HUSBAND

Your words have no real meaning.

WIFE

Neither does your moustache.

HUSBAND

I grew it for you.

WIFE

Well shave it for Jesus.

HUSBAND

You know how I feel about that.

WIFE

All too well.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Do we believe in Jesus?

WIFE

No, darling, we believe in the power of Greyskull. Don't piss mommy off when she's sober. It's a slippery slope and your sled-
ding without a helmet.

HUSBAND

Does it make you feel better? To use words to wound us? To hide behind a pretense of bravado and grandiloquence? To speak words

like weapons, daggers stabbing at your family's vulnerabilities?
You are the most awful bitch I've ever known.

WIFE

(Flattered)

Oh. Go on. Your toxic masculinity is finally rearing his head.
Baring his teeth. Worrying that the animated parts of him are of
inadequate size!

SON

Mommy? Mommy?

*There is a loud noise. Daughter enters
again in different clothes.*

DAUGHTER

Holy shit!

WIFE

How was your trip through time? Comfy?

DAUGHTER

Something has changed. You must listen to me. Your very lives
depend on it.

HUSBAND

Those are some very high stakes.

WIFE

Yes, and we were in desperate need of some more stakes. It was
like a vegan restaurant in here.

HUSBAND

What?

WIFE

Homonym, dear.

HUSBAND

Okay. Cinnamon, love.

WIFE

I genuinely hate you.

DAUGHTER

Listen to me!

SON

Listen to her!

WIFE

Stop talking and I will!

HUSBAND

Everyone shut up!

Beat.

HUSBAND (Cont'd)

No, not you. Obviously.

DAUGHTER

The time holes are all being sanctioned by the new political group that's taken power. It's only a matter of time before we're not able to travel through them anymore.

WIFE

The new political group?

DAUGHTER

Yes, the Dudes Only Union for Complete Heteronormative Existence, or DOUCHE.

WIFE

These acronyms are terrible.

DAUGHTER

Women everywhere are being taken from their pods and forced back into homes, back into traditional gender roles! Not to mention the LGBTQIASZRP at symbol, ampersand community. They're being given a new drug that makes them like mixed martial arts and power fishing. It's inhuman!

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Do I have to be one of those terrible men?

WIFE

It seems you don't have a choice, dear. That's what happens when you're born into privilege.

HUSBAND

Wait a minute! Where's my mother?

DAUGHTER

It's a long story. After her election to the board of elders, before the Gloria Steinem day sit out-

WIFE

Okay! Stop saying things like they're normal things to us! Everything you're saying is crazy.

DAUGHTER

Grandma was taken prisoner by the terror group that calls themselves Brosif.

WIFE

Of course she was.

HUSBAND

Oh no. Are they going to kill her?

DAUGHTER

No, they don't kill their prisoners. They program them.

WIFE

Of course they do.

DAUGHTER

They brainwash and program them and then send them back to their communities to infiltrate and destroy them! It's sort of like The Real Manchurian Housewives of Stepford.

Beat.

WIFE

Well, I, for one, am starting to see why staying in this room is the best option.

HUSBAND

I don't understand. How does something like this just happen?

WIFE

I don't suppose it's just happened. I assume we've done something to make it happen.

HUSBAND

Did we cause this? But we were just existing. How does our existence warrant such unseemly consequences?

WIFE

Privilege darling, and I suppose that's a question we should've asked ourselves before we decided to remodel our lives.

HUSBAND

I was remodeling the house.

WIFE

Yes. And now we're stuck in a time space paradox where some terrible future is known to us. This is why human beings aren't supposed to know the future. None of us would get out of bed! Look what you've done!

HUSBAND

You're blaming me?

WIFE

I can hardly blame the mailman! Though he does have a larger penis than you.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are we going to be stuck forever?

WIFE

No dear, forever is only a man made construct meant to add comfort to the suck that is life. We create forever to handle the awful now.

SON

Teacher says the saddest truth of all is that we don't understand how lucky we are to have the now.

Beat.

HUSBAND

What does this man teach?

WIFE

Don't encourage a dialogue, darling.

DAUGHTER

We don't have time for this. This may be our last chance to get out of here. Once the holes are sanctioned, men simply won't allow us to use them.

WIFE

Well, isn't this just typical? Even in some science fiction future, men are still sanctioning women's holes!

SON

Mommy?/Mommy?

WIFE

I know how it sounded!

DAUGHTER

Mom, this is where you come in.

WIFE

Me?

DAUGHTER

Yes. I found a time thread where you went through the vent. It changes the entire course of history. You become our elected leader and under your rule, we are victorious.

Beat.

WIFE

What?

DAUGHTER

I know it's crazy. I mean, you're a terrible representation for women, as a dutiful wife and mother, and whatnot, but your years of oppression and resentment made you the greatest female leader the world will ever know.

WIFE

I mean, that makes sense.

DAUGHTER

Come on! This is your chance out of this life. Out of this terrible role. You know you don't want to play this anymore. Come with me and change the world. You have to.

HUSBAND

But the hole is closing.

SON

Giggity?

DAUGHTER

Yes. So she has to come now.

HUSBAND

This is the worst of all possible worlds. Our dilemma is an impossible one.

WIFE

So it seems, sugar dumpling. Our inherent search to find meaning in life has led us to this absurd impasse, and to the unfortunate awareness that there clearly isn't any meaning to be found. Just identity politics.

HUSBAND

I'm not sure that's where I was going with that.

DAUGHTER

Mother, you need to come with me.

WIFE

I am busy dear. Haven't you heard, I'm in an existential crisis.

DAUGHTER

All womankind needs you.

WIFE

Okay. Stop with the hyperbole. I'm not buying that I'm the savior of all womankind.

DAUGHTER

Do you honestly want to stay here in this terrible role that you've been reduced to?

WIFE

And stop saying that! This isn't a role. This is life. This is a series of bad decisions that I was compelled to make in order to maintain harmony in, some kind of, oh I can't remember!

DAUGHTER

Look at you. Look at how you live. You're a housewife for god's sake! You gave up all your dreams for some man, so you could take care of him and his home and his children?

WIFE

That man is your father, and you were one of those children. Just because you climbed through a vent and found feminism doesn't mean you can completely invalidate the outdated world from whence you came!

DAUGHTER

You're a victim of the patriarchy, like we all were. Look at me,

and my generation. You couldn't even teach me English, because white men didn't want to hear my opinions.

WIFE

That's not true—

DAUGHTER

And grandma was so useless to men that she was put on medicine that made her slowly lose her ability to speak. A degenerative communication breakdown. The slow death of female perspective. Don't you think it's strange that women started becoming complacent again? I mean, after all the strides we made, we started falling back in line with what men wanted. They gave us hints of equality, but it was always under their control. Mom! You're just a victim of it. Don't you want to be in control for once?

WIFE

You're speaking nonsense! No man has ever told me what to do?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are you a victim of male dominance?

WIFE

No, sweetheart. Mommy has never been a victim!

DAUGHTER

We have to stop the uprising. We need you! How can you turn your back on your sisters?

WIFE

I've never gone in for all that man-hating feminism. The men I know aren't trying to suppress and dominate women. They're just trying to live their lives. Look at your father, do you honestly think he's trying to hurt womankind?

HUSBAND

How could I? I truly fear most women.

DAUGHTER

It's not his fault, but yes, he is. They all are. And so are all the women who fall in line with them and refuse to break free.

WIFE

So you're telling me that any woman who chooses to be a wife and a mother is helping to suppress all women?

DAUGHTER

Yes. We've been placed into these roles by men, and if we don't fight to break out of them, we'll never be anything else.

WIFE

What about the women who don't want to be anything else?

DAUGHTER

They're brainwashed. No woman wants to be this.

WIFE

And you're qualified to speak for all women?

DAUGHTER

Mother. You're not enlightened. You certainly can't speak for women. You're a prisoner. A literal prisoner to a man's world. It's his world, and it was his wrongdoing that led you to being trapped, wasn't it?

Beat.

WIFE

As much as I agree with you that it was his fault, I will not go along with the rest of this. It's absolutely preposterous.

SON

I want to go through the vent.

HUSBAND

What? Why? Son, it's hostile to men on the other side of it. Have you been listening to any of this?

DAUGHTER

You see. It's only their self interest they have at heart.

WIFE

Oh, that proves nothing. He's worried about his son. Jesus Christ, a man can't be worried about his son without it being anti-woman?

DAUGHTER

Everything they do is against us. It's subconscious, they don't even know they're doing it.

HUSBAND

Well, then how can I be blamed for anything? If I don't even know I'm doing it.

SON

I want to go! I don't want to die in here. In this awful man's world. Take me to the women.

DAUGHTER

/Objectifier!

WIFE

/Shut your dumb mouth!

HUSBAND

Are you insane?

Son slowly walks, unseen to the vent.

DAUGHTER

Mom. I need your help. Don't you want to be part of the movement?

WIFE

Well, I don't want to age ten years in the next thirty seconds! You're asking me to throw away an entire life, and then skip ten years and go into some kind of hostile, dystopic future where I'll have to fight? Ugh! I get overwhelmed by laundry day.

DAUGHTER

You'd stay here? And just be this perfunctory role forever?

WIFE

Well, I mean don't be so dramatic, we are trapped, so forever feels awfully impending.

DAUGHTER

But you're a victim here!

WIFE

Stop saying that! I'm no more a victim than he is. Or you, or anyone else who's alive! We're all reduced to the roles we choose. I'm no more a wife than he is a husband. And his obligations to his role are no easier than mine. Why can't we all just finally understand that!?

DAUGHTER

I didn't choose to be a daughter. I certainly didn't choose to have no voice, and to be stuck in this absurd male created predicament.

HUSBAND

Son! No!!

It's too late, Son has disappeared into the vent.

DAUGHTER

Idiot!

Daughter goes toward the vent.

HUSBAND

What has he done?

DAUGHTER

I have to get to him, or he'll be taken prisoner. Are you coming mom?

WIFE

Have you not been listening to me at all?

DAUGHTER

For god's sake! I can't believe I have to clean up another man's mess! I'll try to get back to you as soon as I can! I hope it won't be too late. And I hope you start becoming reasonable. You can't stay here, mom. It will be the end of you. Please.

Daughter exits.

Long pause. This is the first time Husband and Wife have been alone in quite some time.

WIFE

You know, it occurs to me that what you've done here is most certainly excellent grounds for a divorce.

HUSBAND

Have I really kept you down?

WIFE

Don't tell me you're starting to fall for this nonsense.

HUSBAND

You haven't been happy in years.

WIFE

Nobody's happy. How could anyone be alive in this world, in the

state it's in and be happy? Happiness is what crazy people tell themselves they are.

HUSBAND

Do you love me?

Beat.

WIFE

I don't know.

HUSBAND

I've been so forgetful lately. Maybe I've forgotten how to make you happy. How to make you love me.

WIFE

You're as delusional as your daughter. Apart from extremely irritated at this very moment, you can't make me anything.

HUSBAND

I don't know if I love you either.

Beat

WIFE

Well, then we're even.

HUSBAND

You know. I can't even remember at this moment, how we met.

Beat. Wife sighs.

WIFE

What difference does it make?

HUSBAND

If something is going to end, I'd like to at least fondly remember how it began.

WIFE

Well that's dumb. Why remember yesterday with fondness if tomorrow is impossible?

HUSBAND

Sometimes it's the memory of something that keeps you invested.

WIFE

No dear, that's guilt.

HUSBAND

So, you don't remember either?

Beat. Wife walks to the other side of the room and sits.

WIFE

When I was a little girl, I was obsessed with clouds. I had them wallpapered in my bedroom. There was something dreamlike about them. These massive, billowing puffs of cotton floating above the world. Weightless and dense. I would close my eyes and imagine the feel of them between my fingers, soft sinewy strands of filament, sterile and pure. Untouched. Malleable enough for me to shape into whatever I could imagine. And I imagined. A knitted kingdom in the clouds. A swirling castle of pristine white. And I, the fairest princess, resided in the highest window of the tallest tower on the highest cloud, floating gently on the breeze through a cobalt sky, above the arctic ocean, with icebergs, these sparkling white jewels floating on the rich blue sea. Mirrored images above and below. Reflections of each other. But both just out of reach of man. And I was alone. A young princess floating above the anodyne world. Where nothing could grow and no one could even try to rescue me. Which was fine with me. I wasn't hoping to be rescued. And it wasn't until I was old enough to understand the fantasy, that I realized I was trapped. I wasn't daydreaming of a life that was perfect and safe, I was removing myself from the world and placing myself somewhere out of reach. Because there was no prince charming, and there was no happily-ever-after. There was only escape and isolation. And I've always taken comfort in both.

We met at your brother's college graduation. I was a year behind him, back when I thought I could go to law school. I was friends with his girlfriend. I don't even remember her name now. She was majoring in Women's studies and used to fight with him all the time about his chauvinism, and his inability to understand the significance and male aggression behind men's inability to remember to put the seat down. You said you liked that I was going to be a lawyer. You said it was sexy. And when I bombed the LSATs, you took me out for ice cream and made me laugh with all your terrible lawyer jokes. And you said, "see, you don't want to be one of those, do you?" And we just...I don't know, it seems that who I was and who you were stopped being two different things after that. We blindly followed each other into the future. To this future. To this. To...

And we've stopped being those people and have become these roles. Wife, Husband, Mother, Father. Bitter. Unhappy. I gave up something. But so did you. Maybe it was compulsory, I don't know. But we're standing at this moment where we can't ever go back. Suddenly all that derision and resentment is reduced to a small intangible ball of sadness, and for the first time in my life, I am filled with such regrets.

Beat.

HUSBAND

I'm sorry.

WIFE

I don't love you.

Beat.

HUSBAND

I know. When did that happen?

WIFE

I wake up disappointed everyday. I made the wrong choice.

HUSBAND

Do you think it was because I made you? Are you saying that it's my fault?

WIFE

No. It has nothing to do with you. It probably never did. God, you can be so narcissistic sometimes!

HUSBAND

Wow. Just when I thought you couldn't say anything to make me feel worse, you do!

WIFE

I'm so tired of caring how you feel!

HUSBAND

Oh. Oh! Oh! Excuse me! Excuse me! When the fuck have you ever cared how I feel!?

WIFE

Oh are you asserting your male dominance? Is that what's happening?

HUSBAND

You just admitted you don't love me! And somehow I'm the bad guy here?

WIFE

My feelings have nothing to do with your knuckle-dragging behavior!

HUSBAND

Why do you have to be such a...such a...

WIFE

What? Say it! Go on, you fucking pussy, say it!!!

HUSBAND

No! I wouldn't give you the satisfaction. You hateful...

WIFE

Bitch?

HUSBAND

Cunt! You're hateful cunt!

Beat.

WIFE

You gonna hit me now?

HUSBAND

Have you lost your fucking mind? When have I ever even hinted that I would hit you?

WIFE

Oh, I thought we were devolving into the gender roles that we clearly have always been skirting? Isn't that what's happening? I'm the dutiful wife who's stepping out of line, aren't I? So hit me! Go ahead, you dickless fuck bucket! Hit me!!

HUSBAND

Hit yourself, you crazy bitch!

WIFE

There you go. Reducing me to offensive terms! You're getting better at this.

HUSBAND

I don't know what prompted this, but I'm not engaging.

*Husband tries to walk away from Wife,
but there's nowhere to go.*

WIFE

Typical. Just as soon as I'm in the mood, you're not engaging.
How does it feel to be a man who's never satisfied his wife?

HUSBAND

I just want out of this fucking room!

WIFE

Yes, that is the predicament we're in, isn't it, darling!

HUSBAND

Stop talking to me!

WIFE

Or what? You'll just forget what I've said, anyway? Isn't that
right? Or is that part of the act?

HUSBAND

What act?

WIFE

I almost fucked your brother once. He is your "twin" after all!
And he looks like he knows how to satisfy a woman.

HUSBAND

You're pathetic!

WIFE

We're all just victims of our roles, darling. Remember? And your
role clearly should include being a stupid cuckold, right? I bet
he has a bigger dick than you do.

HUSBAND

Okay.

WIFE

We are alone, darling! Why don't you take me and hate fuck me on
the couch? On your mother's spot! I bet that makes your dick
hard! Think of mother. You might be able to finally satisfy me.

HUSBAND

Get away from me!

WIFE

Oh don't pretend you haven't fantasized about it! Put your hands around my neck and strangle me while you fuck me as hard as you can on the spot of the sofa where your mother takes her naps!

HUSBAND

I don't want to even look at you.

WIFE

Be a fucking man! For once in your pathetic life! And fuck me like you mean it! Hurt me. I want you to hurt me. I want to see how much of a man you can be.

HUSBAND

Shut up!

Husband grabs Wife, she kisses him, he pulls her off of him. She grabs at his crotch, he tries to squirm away, she slaps him across the face.

WIFE

Do it! You fucking pansy-ass, momma's boy!

She slaps him again.

HUSBAND

Knock it off!

WIFE

Hit me back.

She slaps him again.

HUSBAND

Stop it!

WIFE

Hit me then! Hit me and fuck me!

She pulls his hair until he yells.

HUSBAND

Let the fuck go!

WIFE

I want you to fuck me until I bleed!

She leads him by the hair to the couch.

HUSBAND

Stop!

WIFE

Do I have to do it for you!!!

She goes to throw him down, but he overpowers her, breaks free from her grip and raises his fist to her. She smiles. Beat. Husband catches his breath and puts his fist down. She goes to say something, he puts his hand, roughly across her mouth so she can't talk, he turns her body so her back is to him, with his hand over her mouth, he bends her over the couch and starts to tear off her clothes.

HUSBAND

Is this what you want? You fucking whore! Is this it? Is this making you wet? Yeah, you like that?

His hand moves from her mouth to continue taking her clothes off when son enters.

SON

Mom? Dad?

Husband and Wife jump upright and immediately pretend as though nothing was happening.

HUSBAND

Son!

WIFE

Dear, what a relief! You're alive.

SON

Wow. You look exactly like I remember.

WIFE

You left five minutes ago, darling. Good to know time travel doesn't expedite intelligence.

HUSBAND

You're all grown up.

SON

Yeah.

WIFE

He looks exactly the same too! Are we really doing this?

HUSBAND

Where's your sister?

SON

She couldn't come.

HUSBAND

Why not? Is she all right?

SON

Not really. And it's dire that you come with me. I was allowed to travel because the first born sons are being sent on eradication missions.

HUSBAND

That doesn't sound good.

WIFE

What does that mean?

SON

I'm supposed to be traveling to the night you conceived her and stop you.

HUSBAND

You mean, while we're-

WIFE

Oh for God's sake, you're going to time travel to watch your parents fucking? That's upsetting.

SON

No, the mission is to somehow separate the two of you on that day. It's because my sister has been declared an enemy of the state.

WIFE

What? What did she do?

SON

She plotted the assassination of the leader of Brosif. The assassination attempt failed, thank god! But she's been on the run ever since. They think she's hiding out in one of the time holes somewhere in the past. There's a nationwide hunt for her. That's why I went to work for the leading agency that is looking for her. I got assigned to eradicate her.

WIFE

And this agency, what are they called?

SON

The People's Union of Strong Sons Extraditing Girls Running Away By Becoming Exiled Regime... or PUSS-E GRABBERS.

WIFE

Why did I ask?

HUSBAND

You're not actually going to do that, are you son?

SON

No. I'm a double agent. I work for an agency that is trying to help women. We're the Moral-

WIFE

Oh for god's sake! Just give us the acronym.

SON

We're MOMMAS BOYS.

WIFE

So, what do you want from us?

SON

Time travel is going to be banned forever soon. Both sides have abused it, and now the uprising is working to make sure that it stops happening.

WIFE

Well there's always an uprising, isn't there?

HUSBAND

So, we should go with you?

SON

Yes. Before it's too late.

WIFE

Okay, but nothing about this future that you're speaking of is the least bit appealing! I mean, it's ten years from now, so there's aging involved, and it's filled with man hating women and women hating men. I think I'd rather starve to death in the comfort of my own oblivious present.

HUSBAND

You can't escape this. No matter how much you want to. There is no way you survive staying here.

WIFE

I don't think you have all the answers. I think I'm willing to risk it.

HUSBAND

I'm through talking with you.

Beat.

WIFE

Well, then I guess this is goodbye.

HUSBAND

Son, will you give us a minute?

SON

Sure. Mom. I think he's right. You can't stay here. Who you were, you'll never be that again. And the future is only about who you are. There are lines everywhere, separating everyone from everyone else. Divisions are the only thing left. But here...this is only your demise if you stay. Please come.

Son hugs Wife. Wife doesn't hug back at first and then she does. Before he walks away she grabs his arm.

WIFE

Son?

SON

Yes?

Beat

WIFE

You turned out...better than I would have imagined.

Son smiles and exits

HUSBAND

I never dreamed it would end like this.

WIFE

How could anyone have dreamed this? You're about to climb through a vent into the future.

HUSBAND

A hostile future.

WIFE

Well that was inevitable, I suppose. You're leaving a hostile past.

HUSBAND

We may never see each other again.

WIFE

Oh, please. Let's not get sentimental. We've both fantasized about not seeing each other again, haven't we? When dream and reality align, we're supposed to not take that for granted.

HUSBAND

Was it all a mistake?

WIFE

Yes. For me. I didn't know that until just now. But yes, I suppose it was. Maybe love always is.

HUSBAND

But we don't love each other. Did you ever? Love me?

WIFE

I don't know. It's hard to know what's real sometimes, isn't it? But I guess if we think it's real, maybe that's the thing that makes it so.

HUSBAND

I did love you. Once.

WIFE

Maybe that's the best anyone can do.

Husband hugs Wife. She doesn't hug back.

HUSBAND

Goodbye. And if I had anything to do with it,
I'm sorry you became this version of you.

Husband exits.

Pause. Wife looks around, and after a moment sits on the couch.

Projected images of clouds appear all around her. She is alone, and probably feels free. She revels in the freedom of it for a minute and then...

Daughter enters, she is now played by the actress playing grandma.

GRANDMA

Mom?

WIFE

What? Did you just call me mom? What is happening?

GRANDMA

I've finally made it back! Oh my goodness. It's been so long.
Mom. I've missed you.

Grandma hugs Wife.

WIFE

You're calling me mom.

GRANDMA

It's me, mom. It's me.

WIFE

You. But you look like just your grandmother. That's disappointing. I thought you took after my side.

GRANDMA

It's been fifty-five years. I never thought I'd see you again.

WIFE

That's right. You were in trouble for trying to assassinate a bro, or something.

GRANDMA

I had to stay in hiding all this time. Men took back over and were determined to stop all of the women from having any power. We lost, mom. We lost it all. Finally, last year there was a peace agreement with all the exiled women. Women of a certain age they call us. In exchange for our freedom and inclusion back into society, We have to agree to the medication.

WIFE

Medication?

GRANDMA

A pill twice a day that stops us from having strong opinions and keeps us from wanting autonomy. It also stops us from voting. One of the side effects is loss of speech, one part at a time. I haven't had any side effects yet, but I understand that I will soon. That's why I snuck back here to see you before I lost my ability to speak to you.

WIFE

That seems like a drastic pill.

GRANDMA

And all young women must be taught a language their family doesn't speak, so as to not be able to persuade them. Why didn't you ever leave?

WIFE

I was rather fond of the idea of life here alone.

GRANDMA

But you can't survive in here.

WIFE

I can't survive anywhere, can I? I'm not sure certain death is worse than the fate I was resigned to with your father.

GRANDMA

I told you—

WIFE

Yes, I know. You had all the answers, didn't you! You and your women's liberated Twat movement, or whatever the hell it was! You climbed through that vent just a little over an hour ago! Less than ninety minutes ago, you were my teenage daughter who couldn't speak English, and who left to find a way out of this...impossible situation we'd found ourselves in. Then you return, fully capable of speaking to us, and you proceeded to demean and belittle all of my life choices with your feminist bullshit and your futuristic propaganda!

GRANDMA

I was only trying to help you!

WIFE

Well you made me see myself. The me that I put inside a fucking shoebox and pushed all the way into the back of the closet! The girl that wouldn't conform. The hypocrite. All those things that I didn't want to look at because I didn't know how to reconcile that I lost them. You made me ashamed.

GRANDMA

I didn't want to do that.

WIFE

Where's your brother?

GRANDMA

He was killed in the war. At the battle of the sexes.

WIFE

My son's dead, a punchline to a bad pun. And your father?

GRANDMA

He worked for the government for a while. On the wrong side of history.

Wife chuckles.

WIFE

Isn't that a peculiar thing, to be on the wrong side of history, somewhere in the future? He was always a failure. In his own way. I suppose I don't have a choice anymore. I will die alone in this room. You should go back before you get into any trouble. Don't worry. I'll be fine. I mean, I will be slowly starving to death, but don't let that keep you up at night.

GRANDMA

You can come with me.

WIFE

Well, you're fifty-five years in the future. I don't think I'm ready for that much culture shock.

GRANDMA

You could be my long lost daughter. We could tell people I gave you up and we just reunited.

WIFE

That's too weird for me.

GRANDMA

You can't stay here. The world has passed you by.

WIFE

I'm fine here! The world hasn't even moved here! Nothing has passed me by right here. I don't need you to try to make me feel bad about my life choices anymore. Okay?! I'm doing great!

Son enters, he is now Daughter's son.

SON

Mom!

GRANDMA & WIFE

Son!

WIFE

Wait, what?

GRANDMA

Mom, this is my son.

SON

Is this...is this my grandma?

WIFE

Ugh! That word! An hour ago I had two underage children and now I'm a grandmother?!

GRANDMA

Yes, this is her.

SON

I can't believe I'm meeting you.

He goes up to wife as if she were a rare antique or collectible of some kind, and speaks to her as if she were really old.

SON

Hello.

Son hugs wife.

WIFE

What's happening?

SON

I can't believe I'm here. This is incrediballs.

GRANDMA

Where's your sister?

SON

She's coming.

WIFE

I have a granddaughter as well?

SON

She doesn't speak English, though. So...

WIFE

What?

GRANDMA

It's the government program that won't allow this generation of girls to speak English. Which is the official language of the world and parts of Mars.

WIFE

I have so many problems with everything that's happened tonight.

GRANDMA

It's part of the complacency program that the government has been putting into place for the last eighteen years. The struggle is real, mom. And it's not going anywhere. Once the world got a taste of what womankind could do, everything changed. Now minorities are all under governmental control. Divisions, broken into separate parts like a well-oiled machine. With only a dew

privileged people at the top able to live any kind of real life. Identity politics has lost. But we'll get back there, one day. I don't think I'll be alive to see it. But you could be. You can't stay hidden though. Mom, you have to participate.

WIFE

Stop saying things like that! What can I do? I failed as a wife and mother, for god's sake! How am I going to help all woman-kind?

GRANDMA

It's your birth right. Like all of us. Who cares what mistakes you've made in this awful place. The future can't happen without all of us united together. And we're losing because of people who are hiding. People like you. Our voice is only one when we all join in. What if you had come with me in the beginning? Maybe none of this would be happening.

WIFE

Yes, I'm sure I would have changed the course of the future by climbing through a vent.

GRANDMA

What if you had?

WIFE

What if it's because of your incessant need to believe you were better than others? What if the divisions were created by the minorities looking to separate themselves as something better? What if you were on the wrong side too? What if there was no right side?

Daughter enters.

DAUGHTER

¡Oh, Dios mío! Que estaba jodidamente locos! (Oh my god! That was fucking crazy!)

WIFE

There she is.

GRANDMA

Mom. This is your granddaughter.

DAUGHTER

Ella es real? Pensé que esto era una broma. (She's real? I thought this was a joke.)

GRANDMA

She is very real.

WIFE

You understand her?

GRANDMA

Of course. The resistance movement is secretly teaching all women. We must never misunderstand each other again.

WIFE

Why are you all here?

GRANDMA

For you. To get you and take you back with us.

WIFE

If I go, it'll only be to find a way to get back to a time before now when I can change all of my decisions and live a life that I don't resent. It would erase you. Both of you.

GRANDMA

I know this sounds crazy, but you have to **believe us**. We're going to be **all right**. **It's all** going to be okay **now**.

WIFE

I would go back to that day...I should have studied for that stupid test instead of spending the night with your father. I should have seen what I was trying to become even then. It wasn't so I could be a wife and a mother. It was so I could be loved. But I didn't know. I didn't know what that meant. And now, the world is filled with more people than ever before and yet, somehow never lonelier.

*Wife walks away from them and thinks.
She is confounded, perhaps more than
she has ever been before in her life.*

DAUGHTER

(In Spanish) Qué está haciendo ella?

GRANDMA

Shh. Give her a **minute**.

Grandma sits on the couch.

WIFE

I should have walked out of that room. I remember thinking it wasn't me. This isn't you! This isn't you!

Beat.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? What is she going on about?

GRANDMA

Shh!

WIFE

Nothing real is happening or will ever happen again. It's just going to be going through the motions until I forget that I ever knew anything was ever really happening. Maybe he was right to forget. Maybe that's the only way we can endure. We can't hold on to what he have, we have to become something we never dreamed we'd be. Until all that's left is darkness. I should go, and find my way back. I want to do it right. I want to do it right this time! Be the woman that I should have been. Would I even recognize her though?

*Wife sits; Son and Daughter also sit.
Grandma closes her eyes. It is the same
image as the beginning minus Husband.
Lights change. Something has happened.*

*Husband enters. He might be Husband's
brother, or perhaps Wife went through
the vent and reset the past. Or
maybe...?*

HUSBAND

There you are! What the hell? I've been banging on that wall for an hour.

WIFE

What?

HUSBAND

How long have you been in here?

WIFE

Not very.

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are we free?

WIFE

What?

SON

Mommy? Mommy?

GRANDMA

I **knew** we'd be **rescued**. I just knew **it**.

DAUGHTER

¡Dios mío! Tengo que hacer pipí. (Thank God, I have to pee.)

HUSBAND

Are you all all right?

SON

Mommy? Mommy? Are we all right?

Beat.

WIFE

Of course, darling. Of course we are. Do your homework, dear.

HUSBAND

It's rather late. Perhaps we should let them go to bed. What are you doing in here? I was standing on the other side of that wall, and I must have forgotten what I was doing. What are you doing?

WIFE

I've...I've just been waiting.

SON

We're free mommy?

WIFE

Yes. It seems we are.

SON

What do we do now?

WIFE

Now?

It's time to go now.

Beat. No one is sure of what to do. No one moves. Grandma is asleep, Husband is in the middle of the room staring off confused. Daughter and Son are staring at Wife, who wants to stand up and run out, but she doesn't move. She stares as if she understands something that she hadn't before. After a beat:

WIFE

It's time to go.

Blackout

End of Play.