

# *Successful Strategies* (or how to make love stay)

By  
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loosely adapted from the Marivaux by the same name

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**Time:**

A day in the early autumn.  
Just before the fall grape harvest.  
In the middle of a heat wave.

**Place:**

A hillside in the Willamette Valley.  
Oregon.

**Characters:**

**Susan:** The owner of a struggling Willamette Valley vineyard and winery. Early 50s.

**Hugh:** Her husband and co-owner. Mid-50s.

**John:** The new neighbor up the hill. Mid-40s. Silicon valley tech millionaire.

**Misty:** John's girlfriend. An artists. Mid-30's.

**Natasha:** Susan and Hugh's daughter. A college student. Early 20's.

**Laurent:** A poet (but really a foreign exchange student). Early 20's.

**George:** An emergency services worker. Scottish accent. Ageless.

**Background:**

This play is an adaptation of Marivaux's *Successful Strategies*. The original play deals with the handlings, schemes, and strategies around trying to make love stay in 1733 Burgundy, France, the ancestral home of the Pinot Noir grape.

This play examines the same questions.  
But it takes place now.  
In Oregon.

The North American home of the Pinot Noir grape.

A play about love, grape growing, and wine making in all of their individual and exquisite pains.

*Scene 1: Beautiful Heartbreaking opera. Puccini's "O Mio Babbino Caro". The inside of a vineyard farmhouse with an entire wall of racked wines, a deck, rolling hills beyond. Everything is bathed in a glowing morning light. Pastoral.*

*As we contemplate the set we notice elements of life not matched to the pastoral: dying flowers in a vase, unwashed dishes, sitting around, papers piled high, wilted plants. It's hot. Too hot for September and it's only morning.*

*At a high point of the music there's a giant explosion. Loud. Epic. Biblical. The music stops. Susan enters carrying a shot gun, a refractometer and zip lock bags with grapes. She turns around and yells behind her.*

SUSAN

Asshat. Fucktard. Dipshit.

*John enters.*

JOHN

I'm sorry.

*He's holding his phone, waiting*

SUSAN

So help me god, if anything, anything happens to my property I will shove your head -

*John's phone vibrates. He holds up his finger to Susan and puts the phone to his ear.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

so far up your LEED certified ass -

JOHN

Uh huh. Uh huh.

SUSAN

that you'll be considered...

JOHN

Uh huh....

SUSAN

A new biodynamic specimen.

*John hangs up. Smiles. Waits.*

Well? SUSAN (CONT'D (CONT'D)

It's all fine. JOHN

What is all fine? SUSAN

You know. JOHN

No. I don't. SUSAN

They hit the boulder.  
They blew some of it up.  
Unfortunately a few pieces got lodged potentially too *near* the side of a water pipe. JOHN

I'm going to kill you. SUSAN

It'll be fixed.  
They're getting up emergency services.  
They're closing the road. JOHN

What do you mean? SUSAN

Precautionarily. JOHN

You can't just close the road fartface. SUSAN

Could you...watch your tone? JOHN

My tone? My tone? Sure I'll watch my tone.  
Fuck you Mr. Napa-Valley-holier-than-thou.  
We, down here, we have business to do. SUSAN

Right.  
Look. I don't see how this is productive right now.  
They're closing the road so they can bring up emergency services. JOHN

Put someone on the phone.  
Let me talk to one of your engineers. SUSAN

JOHN

It's beyond me. It's the city now.

SUSAN

For thirty years nothing like this ever happened then you move in and -

*John's phone vibrates. He answers.*

JOHN

Uh huh. Uh huh. Uh huh.

*He hangs up.*

SUSAN

And?

JOHN

Nothing.

*She narrows her eyes at him.*

SUSAN

How long are they closing the road for?

JOHN

I don't-

SUSAN

Do you see what's out there?

Look out there.

Do you see what's there?

*John looks.*

Those are grapes.

A whole vineyard full of grapes.

Ripening.

And soon, maybe very very soon, some of those grapes will want to be picked.

And when we pick the grapes is very important around here.

Because we make a product with these grapes, on which we base our livelihood.

A product that you may in fact have heard of. A product called wine, you dipshit.

*She pulls at his tie and shirt collar, choking him*

And do you know what we need when we pick the grapes?

JOHN

(choking)

Could you loosen your grip please.

SUSAN

We need the road open.

JOHN  
(still being strangled by Susan)

Look

*He coughs*  
It's beyond my control.

*She lets go of his collar.*

SUSAN

I hate you.  
I hate you the way a lodgepole pine hates a bark beetle.  
I hate you the way a tomato hates an aphid.  
I hate you the way a migrating bird hates a wind turbine.

*Everything is still. Hugh enters wearing socks with no shoes, carrying a guitar on his back, a partially empty bottle of wine, and a woven basket filled with grapes.*

JOHN

Hi. I'm...ugh.

*He points "up the hill"*  
I live...I'm John.

*Hugh pours two glasses of wine and hands one to John. John looks at him. Hugh knocks back the wine and sets the glass on the counter. Susan snorts.*

HUGH

Sorry Susan. I had to come by to get some socks.

*To John*  
I think. Well you know, there was an explosion up at your house.

SUSAN

We know.

HUGH

I'm talking to him.

*To John*  
Sounded pretty big.

JOHN

Well we were blowing up a basalt boulder which was in the way. Of the foundations. For the new buildings. All LEED certified by the way. It got a little- well - emergency services is on their way up there. Just precautionarily. You know.

HUGH

Huh.

SUSAN  
They're closing the road.

HUGH  
Huh.

SUSAN  
That's all you're gonna say?

HUGH  
Uhhh. Well, what can we do about it now anyway?

SUSAN  
What can we do about it now?  
What can we do about it now?  
I can't believe you just asked that.

*Pause.*

JOHN  
Well he's right. What can we do about it now?

HUGH  
You know what Susan. I'm sorry.  
I'm just a little drunk, my head hurts, and I just came by to get some socks.

*To John*  
I forgot to pack them.

*John looks at Susan. Susan looks away.*

And I've got a date with the grapes. They at least want to see me.

*John moves to shake Hugh's hand.*

JOHN  
Well it was very nice to meet you. I'm glad I've finally had the opportunity. I hope we see more of each other.

SUSAN  
Doesn't anyone care?

*Misty enters. She is wearing an odd collection of boho-chic clothing and work boots which have been partially bejeweled. She looks like an LA fashion designer turned Oregon farmer. She has a bag with her.*

MISTY  
They told me to leave the house.

JOHN  
I'm sorry-I-

MISTY

I was working. Look.

*She shows a half-bejeweled boot*

All I am trying to do is finish one thing and every single time I get interrupted.  
It's impossible to do anything here.

JOHN

I'm sorry. It should all be-

MISTY

They said they'd give an "all clear" when I could go back up.  
I don't even know what that is, do you?  
How am I even supposed to know what an all clear is?  
And there was such a sense of urgency about it.  
Like take your things and clear the area.  
Now.

*Misty takes John's glass of wine and knocks it back. She sets the empty glass on the counter.*

SUSAN

(To John)

Get me on the phone with them.

JOHN

Who?

SUSAN

I don't know. Whoever evacuated your house.

MISTY

It was the guy with the hard hat.  
Oh but wait there are only guys with hard hats around.  
Well now what am I supposed to do?  
The road is closed, I can't drive anywhere, I had to leave the house, and I'm hungry.

*They all stare at her.*

HUGH

You know what, I'm hungry too.

MISTY

Yeah. I didn't get breakfast.

HUGH

Me neither. And I've been drinking all night. And my socks are wet.

JOHN

Well-I'll-I could. I'm sorry.  
Let me see.  
I've got some lemon bars here.  
My grandmother's recipe.



*He digs around in his pocket and comes up with a few lemon bars wrapped in saran wrap. He puts them on the table as an offering.*

I just wanted to be neighborly.

SUSAN

You're blowing up the hillside. How's that neighborly?

*Hugh takes a lemon bar. Susan shoots him a look.*

HUGH

What? I'm hungry.

*Susan looks away. Hugh eats.*

MISTY

I'm tired of my life being a construction zone. You said it would be peaceful up here. Tranquil.

JOHN

Well it was at first. But you hated that too.

HUGH

This is excellent. Really lemony.

MISTY

I didn't hate that. It was just too quiet. And then it's been a construction zone.

HUGH

She's right.

SUSAN

Well she is.

JOHN

I'm bringing things up there. To build with. Building supplies.

SUSAN

We know. We know.

*Hugh turns to Misty.*

HUGH

I know what you mean.

MISTY

You do?

HUGH

Yes.

My life feels like a construction zone too.

You want to hear the birds in the trees and the blades of grass singing and feel your heart is singing along with them.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

That in short the noise -  
the detritus of a construction zone is not an internalized condition.  
The interior should represent the exterior from a blade of grass to the innermost sigh of  
the heart.

*They all stare.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

In short you want to feel like there is purposeful work to be done  
and that that purposeful work is part of a journey that while not always clear to us  
represents some kind of movement forward. The antithesis in fact of a construction  
zone.

*Misty stares at him.*

MISTY

Yes. That's it.  
You've said what my heart is longing to say.  
And that's why I bejewel. It is purposeful work.  
Look.

*She lifts her work-boot-bejewelled-leg dancer like right  
up to Hugh. Hugh looks at her leg all the way down to  
the work boot.*

HUGH

Beautiful work.

*Misty brings her leg gracefully down.*

MISTY

Thank you.

JOHN

I understand too. I do. I do understand.

MISTY

You've never looked at my work the way he has.

JOHN

Well I can. I can now.

*They all stare at each other.*

SUSAN

So am I to understand that you two

*She points to them.*

JOHN

John and Misty.

SUSAN

Yes. Thank you.

HUGH

Hugh.

SUSAN

You two, are to stay down here?

MISTY

I don't know. They just told me to clear the area.

*Susan glares at John. John pulls out his cell phone.  
Susan speak to Hugh.*

SUSAN

What are you doing?

HUGH

What do you mean?

SUSAN

Oh grow up.

HUGH

Grow up? Is that what I'm supposed to do after my wife of 30 years tells me I should move into the garage apartment?

*Misty leans over and begins to bejewel some of her work boot.*

SUSAN

I didn't tell you. We decided.

HUGH

I didn't decide. If I had decided I would have maybe stayed in the house and you could've slept in the garage.

*John motions for everyone to be quiet.*

JOHN

Uh huh. Uh huh. Uh huh.

*He hangs up.*

They would like us to stay down here. They'll give us an "all clear".

MISTY

What is an "all clear" exactly?

SUSAN

Oh for Christ's sake what does it sound like it is?

MISTY

I don't like you.

SUSAN

Well I don't like you either, *Misty*.

HUGH

There'll be a siren and then you can go home.

MISTY

Fine. Great. Terrific.

JOHN

I'm terribly sorry. I feel as if this is all my fault.

*Beat.*

ALL

It is.

*John nods. They wait. Hugh pours a glass of wine and  
knocks it back. Misty drinks a glass of wine. Beat.*

HUGH

(strumming his guitar, sings the following)

Oh Misty Oh Misty  
You are so pretty  
Oh Misty oh Misty  
You are so pretty  
You're so pretty and I want you to eat breakfast with me.

*Pause*

MISTY

Oh Hugh Oh Hugh  
I would love to  
But I'm a vegan  
So I probably can't eat much here.

JOHN

Just a minute here.

HUGH

Oh Misty Oh Misty  
Let's eat a vegan breakfast  
whatever that is  
and I will show you  
how the grapes live

MISTY

Oh Hugh Oh Hugh  
That sounds splendid  
Since I'm stuck here  
I might as well-

SUSAN

Hugh.

What? HUGH

What are you doing? SUSAN

I'm being neighborly. HUGH

I think that's nice. I think he's nice. He's the only nice one here. MISTY

*Hugh holds out his arm, Misty takes it. They exit. Susan pours a glass of wine.*

I love her. JOHN

*She slams it back.*

I don't want to hear about it. SUSAN

I love her. I've never loved anyone but her. She makes life fun. JOHN

*Susan pours another glass of wine.*

Why is your husband hitting on my partner? JOHN (CONT'D)

Now hold on a second. Did you see that leg thing? SUSAN

Oh yes. I did. JOHN

What's that supposed to mean? SUSAN

She just held up her leg. *He's* the one who started touching it. JOHN  
You people are so weird in Oregon.  
In California you know what you're getting.  
In Oregon your partner is being hit on by the neighbor in five minutes and everything's gone off the rails.

Now hold on. SUSAN

I just came down to introduce myself, just to say hello and now suddenly... JOHN

SUSAN

Whoa, whoa whoa...Now that's not true. You came down to tell me that you were about to blow up a boulder seconds before you blew it up.

JOHN

And to introduce myself.

SUSAN

Well you've been here since July. You could have introduced yourself sooner. You needn't have waited until you were blowing up half the hillside.

JOHN

Well you could have come up to say hello.

SUSAN

You can appreciate that I am not overly excited that you've moved here can't you?

JOHN

Personally or in the abstract?

SUSAN

Both.

JOHN

Oh.

*John knocks back the glass of wine.*

SUSAN

Well look -

JOHN

No it's fine. It's fine. I get it. You liked them. They were your friends.

SUSAN

They were.

JOHN

And now they're not here.

SUSAN

Right.

*Beat.*

JOHN

Oh my God. Did you all sleep together too? Is that what's going on here?

SUSAN

No!

JOHN

Oh good. I thought maybe there was some pattern playing out here or something.

*Beat*

JOHN (CONT'D)

They wanted to sell you know.

SUSAN

Right.

JOHN

Well they were happy with the offer.

SUSAN

Of course they were happy with it. It was all cash.

*Beat. Susan sighs.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It's just you know.

They started when we did.

Except for now we're the ones still doing it.

Maybe they're the smart ones.

I don't know what I mean.

No offence but things just have not been the same since you came.

We've been watching all those trucks going up there with pipes and steel and... well, you know.

JOHN

It's for the windmill. Sell power back to the grid....you see I calculated....

SUSAN

That's terrific. Really it is.

JOHN

What do you think they're doing?

SUSAN

Who?

JOHN

You know.

SUSAN

Oh, I don't know. Eating breakfast.

JOHN

Does this kind of thing happen to you guys a lot?

SUSAN

No.

You?

JOHN

Of course not.

It was your husband who was stroking my fiancé's leg.

SUSAN  
Oh my god. Are we back to that again?

JOHN  
I'm just saying.

SUSAN  
Well don't.

*Beat.*  
I didn't know she was your fiancé.

JOHN  
Well...

SUSAN  
Well?

JOHN  
She doesn't know it either. I mean I haven't asked her yet.

SUSAN  
So she's not your fiancé?

JOHN  
Well no. Not yet.

SUSAN  
So my husband is NOT stroking your fiancé's leg?

JOHN  
Well.

SUSAN  
Let's be clear.

JOHN  
Ok. Your husband was stroking my girlfriend's leg.

SUSAN  
Right.

JOHN  
Right.

SUSAN  
Well you can see that that's a big difference can't you?

JOHN  
No it's not.

SUSAN  
Yes it is.



JOHN

No. He's still not stroking your leg.

*Susan looks away.*

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

*Susan sighs and then sighs again.*

Oh no. Are you? Oh jeez. Don't.

SUSAN

I'm not.

JOHN

I heard the breathy thing and I thought...

well usually it goes breathy thing then the tears.

And then with the tears I kind of stand there, dumbly, not knowing what to say.

Then I pat them on the shoulder and say "don't worry, it'll all be fine" and then they cry harder and I pat them more on the shoulder

*He pats Susan on the shoulder with intensity.*

And then they cry harder and I pat them more and they cry harder and I pat more and harder and more and harder and more and in the end my arm is tired and they're still crying.

*Susan stares*

And then I start crying. And after that it's over. And usually they never call me again.

Women don't like men who cry while trying to make them feel better.

I'm just giving you a fair warning. You know. In case we get to be friends.

SUSAN

Well, thanks.

*They stand there.*

JOHN

You should feel free to do what you were going to do today anyway. I mean you shouldn't feel you know, obligated, to spend time with me, to entertain me, just because I'm here. And have nothing to do and can't go up to my house.

SUSAN

Don't you think it's kind of odd that they don't want you up there?

JOHN

No.

SUSAN

But it's your property. Your engineer. Your boulder.

JOHN

They all liked it better when I "ran things" out of California. I mean I know a lot about business, and start ups, and seed money, and investors, and financial returns and I know what's trending and what's hot. And I like wine. And I had to leave California. Because it was killing me. And I don't want to know more about trending and futures.

SUSAN

Do you even know anything about wine?

JOHN

I read wine spectator.

*She snorts.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

I had to get out of California.

SUSAN

You're a tourist. You're a wine tourist with money. Instead of buying a case of wine you bought a vineyard. And now you're my neighbor. Great.

JOHN

They think I'm a tourist too.

*He points up the hill.*

The wine maker I hired is polite enough but he's made it the intern's main job to get me out of the winery every time I come by. And the vineyard manager rolls his eyes when I'm not looking.

SUSAN

You've got to get out more. On the land. Not just in the office. You want to do it, then go out and do it. Right?

*John sighs and sighs again. Susan pats his back.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You're not gonna...you know...

*John takes a deep breath*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Cuz I'm not really good with that kind of...I don't really...

JOHN

I'm not going to.

SUSAN

Ok good. So what I was going to do now is to check the sugar level around the vineyard and make sure the birds are staying away.

*She holds up her gun.*

JOHN

Ok.

*Susan pulls out binoculars.*

SUSAN

And with these we can see what's going on up at your place.



SUSAN

Can you see the year?

JOHN

I can't...I can't see that close up.

SUSAN

That man's got a memory like an elephant. It's encyclopedic. He can remember every detail of the harvest condition, the emotional condition, the weather patterns, the life events for every vintage of wine he's made. As a result when he picks a certain vintage sometimes I know what he's after.

*John stares.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

1988 means sex.

JOHN

It does?

*He strains to look.*

SUSAN

Yeah. 1984 and 1997 are snuggling with a movie. 1984 on a rainy day and 1997 on a summer night. 2003 is for meals with depressed people. 2001 is romance.

JOHN

Well whatever it is, they're drinking it. Wait now he's emptied his glass. He's standing. He's singing. Now she's singing. Now they're dancing together.

SUSAN

Let me see.

*She looks. Stares.*

JOHN

What?

SUSAN

It's "Ape Man".

JOHN

What?

SUSAN

By the Kinks.

He...um...well he sings to the grapes.

And when they sing back to him it means it's time to pick.

JOHN

What?

SUSAN

Yeah. He sings to them. They sing back.

JOHN

That is the strangest thing I've ever heard.

SUSAN

I know but he's right every year. I check his accuracy against the sugar levels, acidity, all the lab tests.

JOHN

That is definitely an Oregon thing.

*Beat*

And only the Kinks?

*Susan nods*

JOHN (CONT'D)

And only "Apeman" ?

SUSAN

Yep.

JOHN

Not "Come Dancing" or "Lola"? "L-O-L-A, Lola"?

SUSAN

Nope.

JOHN

Huh.

SUSAN

Here

*She hands him the binoculars. John looks.*

JOHN

Now they're both dancing.

*Susan points to a bottle of wine on the wall.*

SUSAN

1986. The first one. We picked all the grapes ourselves. Well with Cassie and Dave.

*She points upwards, towards the top of the hill.*

We helped them. They helped us.

*She opens the bottle and pours the wine into the glasses.  
The both sniff it the way the wine tasters do.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Early bud burst. Hot summer. A wet fall.

JOHN

And...something else...

*He sniffs.*

SUSAN

Pregnancy.  
Newly pregnant. We were gonna conquer the world.

JOHN

Linda Applebaum. In 1986 I had a huge crush on Linda Applebaum. It ended up she was only pretending to like me so I would do her honors math homework but in the fall of 1986 I didn't know that yet.

*They hold up their glasses.*

JOHN AND SUSAN

1986.

*They toast. Susan looks through the binoculars.*

SUSAN

She's taking off her shirt.

*John grabs the binoculars.*

JOHN

She's wearing a bathing suit.

*Susan grabs them back*

SUSAN

That's not a bathing suit.  
Look.  
They're singing.

*Susan half speak/half sings the lyrics to "Apeman" by the Kinks as she looks through the binoculars.*

I think I'm sophisticated 'cause I'm living my life  
Like a good homo sapien  
But all around me everybody's multiplying and  
They're walking round like flies man

*Susan looks through the binoculars.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

So I'm no better than the animals sitting  
In their cages in the zoo man  
'Cos compared to the flowers and the birds and the trees  
I am an apeman.

*Susan looks through binos.*

(MORE)

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, oh I'm an apeman  
I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voodoo man, oh I'm an apeman  
Cause compared to the sun that sits in the sky,  
Compared to the clouds as they roll by,  
Compared to the bugs and the spiders and flies I am an apeman."

*Scene 2. Misty and Hugh are in the room where John and Susan were. The bottle of 1986 Pinot that Susan opened is capped and on the counter. Misty is looking through the binoculars.*

MISTY

It looks like...I think she's letting him drive.

*Hugh strums his guitar.*

HUGH

The John Deer or the tractor?

MISTY

Looks like the John Deer.

HUGH

She doesn't let anyone drive that.

MISTY

They're stopping.

HUGH

She's gonna-

*Shotgun noise*

MISTY

Oh my God. He's just dropped to the ground.

HUGH

She's shooting at the birds.

*Misty moves the binoculars.*

MISTY

I think she startled him.

HUGH

I'm sure he didn't expect it. It's always like that, you're like mid-sentence with her when BAM, she pulls out a shotgun and shoots at the birds.

MISTY

Oh my god. It looks like he's crying. She's helping him up.

HUGH

She is? Let me see?

*He takes the binoculars.*

He's not moving much. Maybe she ran him over.

*Misty takes the binoculars back.*

MISTY

No. He's crying.

*Hugh takes them*

HUGH

She's patting him on the back.

MISTY

He likes that. That back patting thing.

HUGH

She's not really the back patting type. Usually I mean.  
Does that happen a lot?

*Misty looks.*

MISTY

Well...

HUGH

Well?

MISTY

He did it at an investor meeting a few months ago.

HUGH

Wow.

MISTY

Yeah. He just started crying. They called me to come and get him.

*Misty spreads out her bejeweling equipment on the table. She takes off her boot. She starts to bejewel it. Hugh looks at the wine that is open. He picks it up.*

HUGH

Agh. The 1986.

*He looks at the wine.*

It rained and rained. 3 inches of rain over ten days in September. Susan's Dad kept coming up to me and clapping me on the back and asking me if I felt ready to support a family. I kept thinking, how am I going to make something drinkable after all this rain. And then he would clap me on the back again.

*He pours some in a glass. They taste.*



MISTY

1986. My parents moved from North Dakota to LA and then got divorced. The first legal act they shared in California was divorce.

*Misty continues to bejewel. Hugh looks through the binoculars.*

HUGH

I don't see them.

She's probably testing the grapes. She's good with all the tests. I mean I like my singing method but I wouldn't trust it entirely if she didn't have some real data. She charts it from year to year.

*To grapes*

Hi little grapes. Soon. Soon.

*Misty bejewels.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

What is that exactly?

MISTY

Bejewel.

I'm making a line of bejeweled boots.

With a friend. In LA.

HUGH

It looks very LA.

MISTY

John doesn't know. He thinks, I don't know. I guess he thinks I just like bejeweling or something. Which is kind of weird right, because why would he want to be together with someone who does this all day for no reason. And then I ask myself, "do I want to be together with someone who is happy with a partner who bejewels all day with no apparent reason?"

HUGH

You could tell him.

MISTY

He'd help me with it.

HUGH

I can't imagine him bejeweling. Well actually, maybe I can.

MISTY

Not with the bejeweling. With the business.

*Hugh looks through the binoculars.*

HUGH

I think she's teaching him to shoot.

MISTY

Let me see.

*He hands her the binoculars.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

She's holding his arms. She's showing him how to aim.

*Loud gunshot. They both jump. Misty looks.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

She's picking him up off the ground. I think the shot gun sent him reeling backwards. He's on the ground again. She's helping him up. They're laughing. She's pushing him up. He just pulled her down. They're laughing more. He's touching her hair. They're getting back on the John Deer.

*Beat.*

They're gone.

*Hugh looks.*

HUGH

Emergency vehicles are going up the road.  
No sign of the John Deer.

MISTY

He wants to marry me.

*Hugh looks through binoculars*

HUGH

John does?

MISTY

Yeah. I found the ring accidentally four days ago. I put it right back where it was. Since then I can't sleep. And I can't be in a room with him. And I can't tell him why. I don't even really know why. Sometimes I start to think that I do love him and then I realize that it will never work out. I can't even keep a hobby for more than three months, how can I keep a husband? I mean really, how does it work? How do you make love stay?

HUGH

I don't know.

MISTY

And when it doesn't?

HUGH

I don't know that either.

*Misty nods.*

MISTY

Let's go out there. Let's go tell John about the emergency service people.

HUGH

Susan will want to know too.

MISTY

And anyways it's almost lunch time. Maybe they'll be hungry too.

*Beat.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

Let's bring them some wine.

HUGH

The 1990. Long cool year. Dry fall. It's subtle. We were subtly happy that year. You know what? I think you can't worry about it.

MISTY

What?

HUGH

Making love stay. You just have to - well you know.

MISTY

What?

HUGH

You have to be OK not knowing.

*Scene 3. Susan and John in the farm house  
main room, a little drunk, laughing.*

SUSAN

Oh my god. Did you see them waving at us?

JOHN

Like they thought we were gonna be jealous.

SUSAN

They kept speeding up and waving crazily so that we'd know they were there. And together. So childish. And then they kept holding up that bottle of wine and the picnic basket. It's not enough that they're doing what they're doing but in addition they have to make sure we know?

JOHN

Yeah.  
What are they doing?

SUSAN

Well you know. I don't know. Spending time with each other.

JOHN

But we're spending time with each other.

SUSAN

Yes, but we're spending time with each other because they are. If they weren't spending time with each other then we wouldn't have to.

JOHN

Right.

SUSAN

And now not only are they spending time with each other, drinking wine, having a picnic - and I might add that Misty is barely dressed -

JOHN

She-

SUSAN

I know. I know. It's a bathing suit. Just a rather small one, don't you think?

JOHN

Well I like it when she wears it for me.

SUSAN

I don't want to know about that.

JOHN

Right. Sorry.

*Beat*

Did you see how she was laughing at me?

SUSAN

No. But did you see Hugh's look of determination in trying to catch up with us on the tractor. We out ran them!

*Susan holds up her hand and they high five.*

JOHN

It was fun. Especially when we kind of like--what do you call it-

SUSAN

Jumped over the hillside and on to the back end of the trail. It took me two years to perfect that trick.

JOHN

You practiced that for two years?

SUSAN

I'm a woman of determination.

JOHN

I looked back at them after we landed. They hadn't even attempted it. They were just waiting on the trail and I was like "see you later suckers".

SUSAN

Did you say that?

JOHN

Well no. I mean I don't scream things out like that. But I said it with my eyes.

SUSAN

Oh, with your eyes. That's funny. You can say things with your eyes. That must be a handy trick say in a crowded elevator.

*She laughs.*

JOHN

Are you laughing at me?

SUSAN

What? Oh. No. Sorry.

JOHN

Isn't it enough that Misty is--well--leaving me? Do you have to laugh at me too?

SUSAN

Woah-woah-woah. She's probably not leaving you.

JOHN

Probably? She seems to be having an awfully good time with your husband.

SUSAN

I'm sorry about that. It's just we--it was poor timing for us.

JOHN

Poor timing? Well it's not like I was planning to create an environmental disaster. If I had I would certainly have tried to find a more compatible time for all of us.

SUSAN

I know. I know. Ok.

*Beat.*

JOHN

Well she seems to be having an awfully good time.

SUSAN

You just said that.  
Anyway.  
How do you know it's true?

JOHN

What?

SUSAN

Maybe she just wants to make you think that she's having a good time.

JOHN

What?

SUSAN

Maybe they wanted us to see them. To jump to conclusions about them. Get jealous.

JOHN

Like they planned this?

SUSAN

I don't know. Just all the waving and trying to catch us. And laughing.

JOHN

So you think they're trying to make us jealous. But I don't understand why. We are already jealous.

SUSAN

I'm not jealous.

*John looks at her.*

Ok fine.

JOHN

So let me understand this. We're trying to figure out if they really like each other or if they're pretending to like each other to make us jealous. And in either case are they trying to make this fact known to us by flaunting their happiness in front of us or are they actually having such a good time that they are not actually thinking about us? What if what we are observing is just the wild abandon of true love?

SUSAN

I don't know.

JOHN

This feels like a *Three's Company* episode.

SUSAN

Or a French farce.

JOHN

Well if this were *Three's Company*, or a french farce, what would happen next?

*Susan thinks*

SUSAN

You and I would pretend to be in love.

JOHN

And they'd get jealous.

SUSAN

Right. And there'd be people showing up unexpectedly to complicate the plot and hiding behind doors and in closets, overhearing the wrong things and jumping to conclusions.

JOHN

And then?

SUSAN

And then they'd come running back to us.

*They look at each other*

JOHN

Do you think it would work?

SUSAN

Well. They were clearly *trying* to get us to notice them.

JOHN

And now we'll get them to notice us?

*Susan nods.*

*Beat*

How do we start?

SUSAN

Well, we wait for them to enter a room together, we put on some kind of show making it seem like we really like each other and then we pretend to hear a noise, pretend to be concerned that we'll be caught and then hide while we observe their reaction.

JOHN

Are you sure this will work?

SUSAN

Do you have a better idea?

JOHN

I don't think so. No.

*We hear offstage Hugh strumming his guitar and Misty giggling.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

They're coming.

SUSAN

Quick!

JOHN

Quick what?

SUSAN

Come here.

*They move deeper into the room. Misty and Hugh are approaching. John and Susan look at each other. He pulls her closer-she gives him a look. They nuzzle closer into a decent looking embrace. John looks pained.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Are you ok?

JOHN

You're on my toe.

*She adjusts.*

SUSAN

Better?

*John nods tightly. Misty and Hugh are almost there. John and Susan pull into a posed embrace. Misty and Hugh enter. They see Susan and John and then back up so as not to be seen. Susan and John pretend not to notice them and carry on with their charade.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Oh I'm so happy to be alone with you.

JOHN

Me too.

*Susan nudges him and gives him a look.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

Um me too. I have dreamed of this moment.

SUSAN

(whispering to John)

When you would be in my arms.

JOHN

When you would be in my arms.

SUSAN

Oh and you have such strong and wonderful arms. Kiss me.

*John stares at her. He does. They kiss. Misty and Hugh stare. Hugh "shushes" Misty. Susan and John pull apart.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I fear I heard a noise. It could be somebody coming who would discover us like this.

JOHN

Yes, someone could discover us like this.

SUSAN

Quick my love, let's hide before we are found out.

*They duck behind the furniture. Misty and Hugh look at each other. The audience can see Susan and John hiding.*



Um. I-I-  
HUGH

MISTY  
How I've longed for this moment.

HUGH  
What?

*Misty looks at him.*

HUGH (CONT'D)  
Me too.

MISTY  
In these strong wonderful arms.

HUGH  
Yes.

MISTY  
Which are much more strong and toned than John's.

*John tries to jump up to protest but Susan pulls him down.*

HUGH  
Seeing you in your exquisite beauty.

*He twirls her around.*

HUGH (CONT'D)  
And knowing we'll love each other through time.

MISTY  
(whispering to Hugh)  
Kiss me.

*They stare at each other. They kiss. Susan tries to jump up but John stops her. A noise.*

MISTY (CONT'D)  
Quick. Someone could find us and in the heights of our passionate desire blinded by any other sensations other than those coming from the sparks of our own bodies we might fail to hear a noise and then we'd be discovered.

*Susan and John are about to jump up when we hear another sounds from offstage. Natasha and Laurent.*

NATASHA  
(offstage)  
This way. This way. Wait until you see it all in its verdant early fall beauty. Come my love. The sun is shining, the grapes are ripening, and we are young.

*Hugh and Misty hold their positions and whisper.*

HUGH

Someone's coming.

MISTY

Who?

HUGH

I don't know.

*Susan and John look towards the door and John leans out almost being spotted by Misty.*

MISTY

What should we do?

HUGH

(loudly)

It could be them coming in. We must hide before they discover the true nature of our love.

NATASHA

(entering)

Hello? Hello? Anyone here?

*Misty and Hugh duck behind the furniture. Natasha enters.*

They must be out.

*Laurent enters. He is the epitome of all that is love. And he's French. With a French accent.*

LAURENT

Have I told you today how many ways I love you?

NATASHA

No.

LAURENT

I love the way you drive the car. I love the way you gently honked at the Honda Accord that pulled into our lane and almost side-swiped us. I love how you drive with the windows open letting the hot wind rush into the car and letting the breath of nature warm our souls.

*All four hiding people try to figure out a plan for escape.*

NATASHA

And I love how you bought me the perfect sandwich from the deli. A sandwich I didn't even know I wanted and how you spread your sweatshirt on the ground for me to sit on as we ate.

LAURENT

Well you were wearing the white.

NATASHA

I love how you think about grass stains on white linen.

LAURENT

I love how you still wear white linen.

NATASHA

What is that supposed to mean?

LAURENT

It means that you have your own sense of style. Which I love.

NATASHA

Oh.

LAURENT

And makes me glad I love you.

NATASHA

I love you.

LAURENT

I love you more.

NATASHA

I love you like a Sandhill Crane. For life. Forever building a nest together. Never distracted by another. Purposeful. Singular. Strong in our love.

LAURENT

I love you when you talk about love.

NATASHA

I love your lips.

LAURENT

I love your lips on my lips.

*They are about to kiss. Hugh and Misty try to crawl away. Susan and John try to crawl away. They all run into each other and have to crawl back to hiding before Laurent and Natasha see them.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Are you sure no one's here?

NATASHA

No one's here.

LAURENT

In that case I will tell you that I love your whole body. All that time sitting next to you in the car. I can not wait until tonight.

NATASHA  
Under the full moon.

LAURENT  
Out in the fields.

NATASHA  
Our first time.

LAURENT  
Listening to the sounds of the nature.

*They are about to kiss. Laurent is leaning in towards her. John muffles a sneeze. They all freeze and stare.*

NATASHA  
Shhhh.

LAURENT  
What?

NATASHA  
Did you hear that?

*Laurent is still waiting for the kiss*

LAURENT  
It was my heart beating so loudly for you.

NATASHA  
No. I heard a noise.

*He tries to kiss her.*

LAURENT  
An old house creaking.

NATASHA  
No. It was something-

LAURENT  
The inside of my soul reaching for your soul

NATASHA  
No it was more like-

*Natasha starts to look around.*

LAURENT  
Come back my love.

*Natasha looks around and the four crawl behind another piece of furniture.*

It was nothing. Let me put my lips on yours.

*They get back into kiss position. Just as they are about to kiss the four make a break for it, but Natasha breaks the kiss and they drop back into hiding.*

NATASHA

That was definitely a noise.

LAURENT

I'm pretty sure it wasn't.

NATASHA

I know what I heard.

LAURENT

Sometimes we think we hear things that are not really there.

NATASHA

Are you saying that I'm hearing things?

LAURENT

No no my love. Of course not. It's just sometimes we think-

NATASHA

You ARE saying that?

LAURENT

No no.

NATASHA

How long can this lying go on?

LAURENT

What lying?

NATASHA

Is this how it's going to be between us?

*She turns and all four try to blend into furniture. She turns back having not seen them.*

LAURENT

What do you mean?

NATASHA

That you won't listen to me. Trust what I'm saying.

LAURENT

No.

NATASHA

Well it seems that way to me. You'll paint a rosy picture of what's going on in our lives. When I'm dying of stomach cancer you'll tell me it's just in my head.

LAURENT

No no. I am an honest person. I think honesty is the greatest quality.

NATASHA

That's all talk.

LAURENT

No No. I pledge to you my honesty.

*Natasha is unmoved.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Which you discount as anything important because it's not a tangible quality.

NATASHA

What's that supposed to mean?

LAURENT

It means you only believe what you see and I have the soul of a poet and my world exists from what I feel.

NATASHA

You don't have the soul of a poet. You're 21 years old. You have the soul of a college student.

LAURENT

Oh there you go discounting me. Belittling what I believe in. Is this what it will come to in the end?

NATASHA

In the end?

LAURENT

Yes. In the end. After tonight. After that moment in the fields when we are completely together and in love.

NATASHA

Well the way you're acting now I don't even think there will be a moment in the fields. I'm sorry I even brought you here to meet my parents.

LAURENT

You said you wanted me to meet them. That you wanted them to love me as much as you did.

NATASHA

Well that was when I still loved you.

LAURENT

So that's how you are. You just wanted me in the physical sense. A sense of corporal longing. That's all I was to you. A guy who might be good in the fields. I strive for a love greater than that. A love of the soul.

NATASHA

Oh knock it off. That's all you ever wanted from me. You just looked at meeting my parents as a way of getting in my pants.

LAURENT

Well that's the last thing I'd want to do. I don't even want to meet you parents.

*He spins around and sees Susan, Hugh, Misty and John frozen, having tried to escape. They motion shhh. Laurent stares at them.*

NATASHA

Well now you'll never get to meet them.

*Still staring at them.*

LAURENT

What do you mean?

NATASHA

This weekend is off.

LAURENT

(looking at all four)

Uhhh.

NATASHA

That's all you have to say?

LAURENT

Uh.

*All four try to back away, motioning to Laurent.*

NATASHA

Uh.

LAURENT

Well...

NATASHA

For a poet you're pretty inarticulate.

LAURENT

Ummm.

NATASHA

So this is how it's going to be. You'll eventually be unable to talk about your feelings. I'm glad tonight won't happen. I'm happy that we won't be having sex for the first time in the fields of my parent's vineyard.

*She turns and sees Laurent staring at the four.*

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Mom?

*Susan waves and moves a step away from John.*

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Dad?

*Hugh waves and moves a step away from Misty.*

NATASHA (CONT'D)

Who-

JOHN

Hi. I'm John. I live

*He points "up the hill"*

And that is my

*Points to Misty*

MISTY

Former.

JOHN

Former. I guess.

*Misty points to Hugh*

MISTY

He and I are in love.

SUSAN

You are?

NATASHA

Oh this is too cliché. What is this, the 70's? This is so embarrassing.

LAURENT

Hello. I am Laurent.

NATASHA

I can't believe this. You've never given me any privacy and now when I finally bring someone home, you're spying on me.

SUSAN

Sweetie-



NATASHA

Don't.

*Susan looks at Hugh.*

HUGH

Natasha-

*She holds up her hand to silence him.*

JOHN

See what happened is-

MISTY

Why do you always think you know what's happening?

*They all stare.*

LAURENT

I am Laurent. I am an exchange student from France. I am here to do the studying in your American University system. It is very nice to meet you. All.

NATASHA

What are you doing?

LAURENT

I am meeting your parents. That's what I came here to do, despite any thoughts you may have otherwise, and I shall do it.

*He bows.*

SUSAN

Well it's nice to meet you Laurent.

NATASHA

Great. Now you're siding with him.

*Laurent bows to Hugh.*

LAURENT

Laurent.

HUGH

Uh. Welcome.

NATASHA

"Welcome". Jesus Christ.

*To Laurent*

I can't believe you're condoning their behavior.

LAURENT

I'm not. I mean what behavior?

*She points out that they are clearly with the wrong people.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Aggh. Well in France...

NATASHA

So THAT'S what I can expect from a relationship with you?

LAURENT

And I can expect from you only jealousy.

*They all stare at each other.*

NATASHA

I'm leaving.

LAURENT

But we just walked up the hill to get here.

NATASHA

So you know the way back then.

LAURENT

It's your car. How am I supposed to get back to school?

NATASHA

Maybe you'll find some naive love-sick maiden with a car who believes your cute little French poet act.

*She exits. Laurent drops to the floor and curls into a ball. They all stare.*

LAURENT

She's gone.

*They all stare.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Love is a fickle beast charging at the light of the new day.

MISTY

I agree with him.

SUSAN

Of course you do.

MISTY

Is that supposed to be disparaging?

SUSAN

Yes.

Susan. HUGH

Oh grow up. SUSAN

Grow up? I should grow up? HUGH

What was that about back there? SUSAN

Me? HUGH

Yes. I can see what's going on here. SUSAN

Well so can I. HUGH

I'm not sure I know. MISTY

Well... JOHN

I don't need you to explain it to me. MISTY

Sorry. JOHN

He's fun. He's more fun than you. MISTY  
(points to Hugh)

Oh yeah. He's fun alright. SUSAN

Well Susan, I am. HUGH

I can be fun. JOHN

You can. You are. SUSAN

No he's not. MISTY

Well I think he is. SUSAN

HUGH

You were having fun on that John Deer.

SUSAN

Well so were you.

HUGH

I'm surprised you even noticed us.

SUSAN

Noticed you? With all that yelling and waving who could miss you?

MISTY

(to John)

You saw us waving and ignored us.

JOHN

Well, we...we...we...

SUSAN

We were having our own good time.

LAURENT

She was the love of my life and now she is gone. All will be forever more in darkness.

*They pause to look at him on the floor and then  
continue.*

MISTY

You're own good time? What does that mean?

SUSAN

I'm sorry if I like him. He's fun. And thoughtful. And I like him.

MISTY

We heard.

JOHN

But I wasn't really-

MISTY

What?

*Susan shoots John a look*

JOHN

...Meant to be overheard.

MISTY

Oh so that's the justification? You weren't meant to be overheard? Or seen?

JOHN

And anyway, you two are hardly innocent.

MISTY

One can not stop feeling the way one feels.

JOHN

So you do feel the way you felt, I mean the way you said you felt-

HUGH

Can we all be adults here?

SUSAN

That's a laugh.

LAURENT

One moment you are fully bathed in love's glory and the next moment in the depths of despair. I must write this down.

*He pulls out a notebook.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

Love is the worst of all emotions. One that keeps your heart in the grips of fear.

HUGH

I think we can all be adults here.

JOHN

Frankly I don't see what that has to do with anything.

HUGH

I'm coming to the point.

SUSAN

When?

MISTY

People sometimes need a moment to get their thoughts in order.

SUSAN

Not people with good cognitive functioning.

MISTY

Are you saying I'm stupid?

HUGH

No. She's saying I'm stupid.

JOHN

Hold on a second here.

MISTY

(pointing to John)

Well he's definitely not stupid.

SUSAN

That's why we're well matched.

JOHN

I like all types.

*Susan shoots him a look.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

In the abstract.

MISTY

Nothing's ever concrete with you.

JOHN

Last week you said I was too concrete.

HUGH

Well sometimes people don't always say what they mean. Sometimes people say the opposite of what they mean.

SUSAN

Thank you Freud.

MISTY

Yeah. What he said.

JOHN

So now you're just going to say what he says?

HUGH

Hold on a second-

SUSAN

You're not making things any better.

HUGH

Well neither are you.

SUSAN

But I'm not trying to. You are.

JOHN

I try. I'm trying. I don't know what you want. The harder I try the less you want me.

HUGH

That is also a known fact.

MISTY

I'm trying too.

SUSAN

This is ridiculous.

JOHN

And it's completely frustrating.

MISTY

If I'm so frustrating maybe we should just end this all now.

HUGH

Listen everyone-

JOHN

Well that's what you want anyway isn't it?

MISTY

Now I do.

HUGH

If everyone here could take a deep breath-

LAURENT

Love is a pain that never goes away.

SUSAN

I don't think breathing is the answer here.

JOHN

Fine. Fine. Have it your way.

MISTY

Oh so now it's all my fault?

HUGH

No it's not-

SUSAN

Don't mix in-

MISTY

(to John)

I hate you.

SUSAN

(to Hugh)

I hate you.

JOHN

(to Misty)

I hate you.

HUGH

(to Susan)

I hate you.

*They continue on saying "I hate you" maybe in a choreographed "I hate you" session with sound and movement. Maybe there's a door frame that's moved on the set. Maybe they walk through the door frame slamming the door with each "I hate you".*

*A terrific loud explosion stops this. The lights flicker.  
They drop for cover. Silence. Beat. George appears.*

GEORGE

Hello there. Hello there. Please stay calm.

*They are silent.*

No reason to get upset.

*They stare.*

This will all be worked out soon enough. And like my granny always said:  
Tá grá nach féidir a rá. Tá sé cosúil le císte cáise fuair a tógadh go amach ar feadh  
seachadta agus riamh tháinig sé ar ais.

*They all stare.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It's an interesting history you know, the Gaelic people on the north coast. Kinda similar  
to here really. You know 10,000 years of people living with their language and  
traditions and then blam. Civilization comes. Like this here valley. 13,000 to 15,000  
years ago the Missoula Floods. 265 years ago Lewis and Clark. I'm sort of a history  
buff really. Well it's like my other granny would say...

SUSAN

Excuse me.

GEORGE

Sorry about that. Some say I do rattle on a bit.

LAURENT

She's left me. I feel the pain in my heart. Like a rock it is wedged in there, never to  
come out again.

*He writes.*

MISTY

He's French.

SUSAN

(to John)

Or maybe like a giant basalt boulder.

GEORGE

Now it's interesting that you mention the boulder because basalt is one of the very  
things that makes this region so special. It's that geology that makes the wine the way it  
is. I mean down in California, it's easy. Valley floor planting, all that sun...but  
here...here the grapes...

HUGH

have to work for it.

GEORGE

And that working for it...well that stress-



HUGH

It makes the best fruit.

GEORGE

That's it. Stressing the plant to make the most beautiful fruit.

HUGH

I sing to the grapes.  
And when they sing back they're telling me they're ripe.

GEORGE

Oh yes. I've read about that kind of cross species chatter. A most interesting subject. Really, another hobby only. Oh, before I forget, I wanted to give you these.

*He holds out candles, emergency blankets, flashlights.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It should be everything you need.

JOHN

I'm sorry. Who are you again?

GEORGE

Oh, I'm George.

JOHN

And you work for?

GEORGE

Emergency services.

*John nods.*

JOHN

Are my engineers still up there?

GEORGE

Oh no. They're all gone. Once we got up there they all took off.

JOHN

They did?

GEORGE

Nothing they can do really. I like what you're doing up there with that gravity feed system. I like to think of systems really. The interconnected-ness of a system.

SUSAN

Excuse me-

*George puts down a few more items.*

GEORGE

There are some flares in there too. Should you need them.

SUSAN  
Flares?

GEORGE  
Well it's just part of the kit. I can't imagine you'll need them. Well unless--

SUSAN  
Unless?

GEORGE  
Well you never know. I mean the future in general is relatively uncertain. I mean what can you really count on? Nothing if you think about it.

MISTY  
I think that's true.

GEORGE  
It's just your basic emergency kit.

SUSAN  
Right. So, that explosion before, that was...

GEORGE  
Us trying to blow up that boulder again. This time some pieces are lodged near a gas line. So we had to turn that off.

MISTY  
So we have no gas?

SUSAN  
(re: Misty)  
Oh my God.

MISTY  
I'm just making sure.

SUSAN  
(to Hugh)  
How can you bear it?

MISTY  
(to Susan)  
We do other things besides talk.

JOHN  
You do?

*Susan nudges John.*

JOHN (CONT'D)  
I mean so do we.

*Misty gives him a strange look.*

GEORGE

The root cause of the boulder are the volcanic eruptions in Eastern Washington that took place 16.7 to 5.5 Million years ago. So you could say it's the-

SUSAN

I can't believe this. I can't believe this. How can anyone be expected to do business like this?

*She turns to John and Misty*

Maybe this all looks like fun and games but some people have real stakes here. Some people need to bring in a harvest and make money. Some people are in debt because of the last two harvests. Some people have to pay their kid's college tuition, the second bank loan on their vineyard, the loans on all the new equipment. Some people have not pre-bank rolled their lives with a tech fortune.  
Oh fuck it.

*She exits. Hugh looks after her, about to go. Hugh looks at John.*

HUGH

You go.  
Don't take it the wrong way.  
She's just kind of fiery sometimes.  
Give her

*He looks at his watch*

Six and a half minutes and then bring her an iced tea.

JOHN

An iced tea?

HUGH

I made some last night. It's in the fridge.

JOHN

Is it true what she said?

HUGH

Yeah. More or less. I mean I mainly pay attention to the wine. And the grapes. She does the business. But yeah.

LAURENT

I can not stand this pain. This pain in my heart that will not get better. I close my eyes and I see her. I open my eyes and I see her. I don't even know anymore why we are fighting. I can not go on like this. I must find her. Natasha! NATASHA!

*He runs off.*

GEORGE

(to Laurent exiting)

Don't wander too close to the boulder.

*To the others*

That boulder is really the largest basalt boulder I've ever seen. It's probably of geological interest.

JOHN

Really?

GEORGE

Well to amateurs like me.

JOHN

Oh.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(to Hugh)

I'm sorry about

*He points up the hill*

HUGH

Yeah. Well. Yeah.  
Let's open the 1996.

*He goes to open the bottle.*

1996. The third child is born. The one out there.  
A decent yield. Moderate rain at harvest.  
A sturdy year.

GEORGE

Nice label.

HUGH

I designed it myself. Back when we still sold wine that you could design the label for yourself.

*He puts the wine on the table. They pour some. They drink.*

GEORGE

1996. I was running a gas station in Alabama. It was a sweet time.

JOHN

I was the super star of silicon valley. I was interviewed by Maxim. My girlfriend dumped me.

MISTY

I spent the summer in Georgia with my cousins. It looked so green compared to LA. And we called all soda "coke" whether or not it was a coke.

*Hugh picks up his guitar. Misty settles down to bejewel.*

JOHN

I guess I should go after her.

HUGH

Trust me. Six and a half minutes is perfect. She'll be tired out from fuming, she'll take you in her arms, and you'll feel like the most valuable guy alive. Go for it.

*John looks at Hugh.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

Really. Go ahead.

*John looks at Misty.*

MISTY

Yeah. Go for it.

JOHN

OK. OK then.

*He finishes his wine and puts down the glass, pours the iced tea and exits. George looks around.*

GEORGE

Well. I've got to go back up there. I'm on the clock. I guess we all are though, aren't we?

*George empties his glass. He exits. Blackout.*

*End of Act I. Intermission.*

*The audience goes out to the lobby. To drink wine. Made in the Willamette Valley.*

*Act II: Scene 1: Hugh and Misty.*

MISTY

He's still in there. With her. I didn't think he'd go.

*Hugh nods.*

HUGH

Me neither.

MISTY

You told him to.

HUGH

I didn't want to stand in his way.

MISTY

But did you want him to?

HUGH

No.

MISTY

But he wanted to. I could see that.

HUGH

And he's probably better for Susan than I am.  
They're a good match.

MISTY

She says smart things. He probably likes that.

HUGH

He'll be clever with numbers. She'll like that.

MISTY

She's able to make up her mind.

HUGH

He wouldn't bring his guitar to important wine marketing dinners where people want to hear the wine maker talk about his work.

MISTY

Did you do that?

*Hugh nods.*

HUGH

Susan told me not to. Actually she begged me not to. She said they wanted to meet me. She said I should go and talk about the wine. Be charming. I don't want to be charming. I just want to make the wine. So I brought my guitar. And when they asked about the wine I played them a song.

*Misty laughs*

MISTY

That's the dumbest thing I ever heard. Even I wouldn't do that.

HUGH

Thanks.

MISTY

What'd you play them?

HUGH

I'd rather not talk about it.  
Let's just say I maybe should have selected something that was not Joni Mitchell at her most depressed.

MISTY

When was this?

HUGH

Three weeks ago.  
We didn't get those accounts.  
I just can't do that.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

I don't want to do that kind of work.  
I just want to make the wine.  
But Susan says we all have to do things we don't want to do.  
And people want to meet the wine maker.

MISTY

And?

HUGH

Yeah.  
She got mad after that.  
Then I got mad.  
Then she stopped talking to me.  
Then I stopped talking to her.  
Then she did try to talk to me and I was mad.  
So I told her that if she wasn't going to talk to me we might as well not even be together.  
So she said if I felt that way that maybe we shouldn't be together.  
Which wasn't really what I meant.  
I was just mad about the wine dinner thing that I had to go to.  
And she was annoyed that I fucked it up.  
And I was annoyed about that too.  
Because I don't feel anymore like the guy who could do something great like in 1986.  
I don't feel like I could do anything great.  
I don't feel like that guy anymore.  
So I said I could move into the garage.  
And she said fine. She said she thought that would be better.  
And I said I know it would be better.  
So I did.  
I mean I went there last night.  
But I didn't sleep.  
I drank whiskey and played the odd collection of CDs that were in there and drank more whiskey.  
I thought about, like in the middle of the night, I thought about what if I just went to her and told her that I wished I could go to those dinners but that I just can't...and that I don't feel really good at anything right now.  
And that I feel old.  
And that my stomach sags.  
And that I'm scared I'll die before it's time or I'm scared I'll die after it's time or I'm scared that I'll lose my mind before I die and slowly forget how to tie my shoes but otherwise be healthy as a horse.  
But that's not the kind of thing that you want your husband to wake you up to tell you in the middle of the night so I didn't go there and I didn't tell her that.  
Finally I fell asleep just as the sun was coming up and then two hours later I woke up because someone was blowing up a boulder.

MISTY

I'm sorry.

HUGH

Yeah.

MISTY

Bejewel.  
You'll feel better.

*She expands the crafting stuff.*

HUGH

You know you'd be a great catch.

MISTY

Yeah right.

HUGH

No really. You're nice. You're genuinely nice. And you care.

MISTY

I guess people generally want more than that out of a life partner.

HUGH

People don't know what they want. And usually they want the wrong things.

MISTY

That's a nice thing to say. Thanks. Thanks for saying it.

*She holds up her glass*

MISTY (CONT'D)

To the leftovers.

HUGH

To the leftovers.

*Scene 2: Main room. Misty bejewels.  
Natasha enters.*

NATASHA

What is that?

MISTY

I'm bejeweling.

NATASHA

Why?

MISTY

Because I want to.

NATASHA

Oh.

MISTY

And because I have nothing else to do  
and I'm stuck here  
and I'm trying to find my calling in life  
(MORE)



MISTY (CONT'D)

and find a purpose  
and figure out what I want to do with the rest of my life  
and why I exist on this planet  
and if I even want to stay in this state  
and if I even like living way out here all the way away from any city  
and if I was ever really in my life ever happy  
and because I want to understand what happiness means  
and because I don't understand how you can possibly know the future and if you're  
going to be happy in that unimaginable future.

NATASHA

I tried to leave.  
They wouldn't let me down the road.  
Which was annoying because I made a big speech about how I was leaving  
and now I can't leave.  
Then there was this explosion. Then a guy with a hard hat. I waited outside. I thought  
maybe Laurent would come after me. He didn't.

MISTY

You told him not to.

NATASHA

But I was hoping he would.  
Even though I was so angry at him.  
I still wanted to see him.  
And hear his dumb little French accent.

MISTY

He seemed pretty miserable. He kept saying his heart was like a rock.

NATASHA

He did?

MISTY

Yeah.

NATASHA

Good.  
I waited out there a long time.  
In the sun.  
On the side of the hill.  
I drove around in the John Deer.  
I ate some grapes.  
He didn't come.

MISTY

He wanted to.

NATASHA

But he didn't.  
And where is he now?

*Pause.*

NATASHA (CONT'D)

So I hate to ask this.  
Cuz it's kind of embarrassing.  
And because I really do not even ever want to think about the fact that my parents have sex lives.  
Even saying the words "parents" and "sex lives" in the same sentence makes me feel kind of gross.  
So what's with them?

MISTY

They got into a fight because your father brought his guitar to some important business dinner and played depressing Joni Mitchell songs instead of telling wine merchants about the wine and the vineyard.  
And then your mother told him to sleep in the garage.  
And then he wanted to apologize but didn't  
and then the boulder exploded and everyone came down here.  
And I hadn't already been talking to John for four days  
on account of the fact that he wants to marry me  
and Hugh got drunk on account of being sent to the garage and feeling like a jerk about the guitar thing  
So then I was mean to John and I wanted to show him that I didn't care about him anymore so I went to hang out with Hugh but then we both realized that we were being silly so we went out to find John and Susan but it turns out they were having a really great time so we didn't want to interrupt them but then it also really  
Well it kind of hurt.  
And then we found them together, like you know, together, so we pretended we were together so you know they would think we didn't care  
because we were so happy that we weren't even thinking about them.  
And then you and Laurent arrived and broke up  
and then the second explosion happened and then the hard hat guy showed up and then Susan flipped out on John about being a rich wine dilettante and then he went after her  
and then Hugh and I drank some of the 1996

*She points to a collection of open wines.*

Which made him nostalgic for the salad days and made me think about being 13 which is universally a terrible age.

NATASHA

I see.

MISTY

And I guess here we are.

*She bejewels.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

You want to do some?

NATASHA

I'm not good at art.  
Laurent of course is good at art.

MISTY

It's not really art. Just something to do with your hands.

*Natasha looks at what Misty is making.*

NATASHA

Is that the vineyard? It is. There's the back slope.  
You're bejeweling the hillside on that boot.  
That's the view from here.

*She points*

That's really good.

MISTY

Thanks.

NATASHA

That's definitely art. A mean a kind of art.

MISTY

Yeah. Well. It's kind of the only thing I feel really good at right now.

NATASHA

At least you have something.

*Misty pushes some bejewel stuff over to Natasha.*

MISTY

You can help me. You do this one.

*She hands a shoe to Natasha.*

NATASHA

You sure?

MISTY

Yeah.

*They bejewel.*

NATASHA

I waited a pretty long time on that hillside. Then that guy with the hard hat came over. I gave him a tour of the vineyard. The whole time I kept hoping Laurent would come. I gave him a really long tour so I could look for Laurent. And then I stood for a long time talking to the guy in the hard hat. I thought for sure Laurent would see me. He'd know where I was. He'd miss me so much that he'd come by. But he didn't.

MISTY

Yeah.  
I know.

*Natasha pulls out a bottle.*

NATASHA

2005. This was the first year that I really helped with the harvest. There were thousands of birds that year. They were starving in Alaska or something so they came down here early. We got this machine that made distressed bird noises.

*She makes some distressed bird noise sounds.*

NATASHA (CONT'D)

It didn't really work. The birds came anyway. Nobody made me go to bed. Or to school. They were all so stressed about the birds. And then the fruit was in terrible condition. We had to pick through it. It took forever. I liked it. I felt like I was part of...I don't know. Something.

*They drink.*

MISTY

2005. I booked a voice-over spot for a mattress commercial on the radio. I had a roommate I couldn't stand. I met John at a party. I was working as a caterer. He was a guest. I did my mattress spot for him. He laughed. I didn't see him again for another 3 years until he was sitting behind me on the roller coast on the Santa Monica pier. He'd remembered the mattress ad.

*They bejewel.*

*Scene 3: Laurent is in the main room looking out over the vineyard. Hugh enters.*

HUGH

Oh hello.

*Laurent sighs.*

I'm sorry about- you know I feel partially responsible for - it just maybe wasn't a great time to have visitors. At that moment. Any other time would have been fine, but today, well today wasn't ideal. Today is not a typical day.

*Laurent sighs.*

Look. Probably it will be fine. You two will - how long have you been dating my daughter anyway?

LAURENT

Dating?

HUGH

Well whatever you call it now.

LAURENT

The term "dating" reduces our relationship to the definable. Even the term relationship attempts to define the undefinable. We exist without definition.

HUGH

OK.

Well right now it seems-

LAURENT

About that I do not wish to speak.

HUGH

Ok.

*Pause*

LAURENT

She was out there with him. The construction man. The one with the hat that is hard.

LAURENT (CONT'D)

She was showing him around. For a long time. It seemed to me as if she was taking an extra long time with him. Feeding him different grapes.

HUGH

She was feeding him grapes?

LAURENT

Well maybe not feeding him, rather maybe showing him which ones to eat, then explaining something, pointing to it, and then he ate them.

HUGH

So she wasn't feeding him grapes.

LAURENT

She was spending a long time with him. Knowing I was out there somewhere. Wanting me to see. Showing me that she does not care.

HUGH

Maybe she-

LAURENT

What?

HUGH

Oh I don't know. I'm hardly the one to give advice.

LAURENT

I loved her the moment I first saw her.

*Hugh opens his mouth to speak*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

I know you will tell me that love at first sight is not real.

*Hugh closes his mouth.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

But you are wrong. It is real. You just don't remember. You just don't remember that it is real. You just have to think back.

*Hugh nods.*

LAURENT (CONT'D)

We were in badminton class together. She could not hit the birdie. I showed her how to serve. And then she told me she was a business major. So I switched into her macro-economics class. But then she dropped it.

HUGH

She did? She didn't tell us-

LAURENT

But I did not realize it until it was too late and now I must take the macro-economics class. But then she appeared in my poetry class which was good because I had to switch from badminton to Tai Chi because of the macro-economics class.

HUGH

So you're in class together.

LAURENT

We are reading the Walt Whitman. In the car. Driving here. We read it to each other. That seemed like a lifetime ago. Like the people we were before we became the people we are now. Maybe from before we could forgive. But now she flirts with the man who wears a hat that is hard and she throws my face in it-

HUGH

Rubs-

LAURENT

What?

HUGH

Nothing. It's just. Never mind.

LAURENT

And she throws my face in that so I will be jealous. No. From this we can not come back. We will return to school separately. I will take the bus rather than drive with her and have to think in every moment how our lives together have ended. We could have just gone to the coast or the mountains for the weekend. Anywhere. It was me who wanted to come here. To meet you. I told her in France that we meet each other's families and do not try to run from them. And she smiled and we decided to come here. And then because of the passion of Walt Whitman, and in honor of the grape harvest, and because of this book on biodynamic farming our poetry professor assigned to us we decided to come here, to make love here, in the fields, under the full moon, for the first time, with each other.

*Pause.*

HUGH

Yes. It sounds like things are different in France.

LAURENT

But it does not matter because all of this is over now and I will ride the bus alone back to school and she will make an excuse to the dean to drop out of poetry class or if she can't because of her credits then she will stay in the class but we won't sit near each other or talk to each other or even acknowledge that we once cared, that we once felt something for each other. American poetry will become cold and boring. Devoid of life and passion. And then at the end of the semester I will return to Paris, sad and alone, always thinking back on the love that went wrong before it even began.

*He pours himself a glass of wine. He gulps it down.  
Hugh watches. He pours himself another.*

And even just now, before, she was in here with

*(he points to Hugh)*

HUGH

Susan?

LAURENT

No. The other one.

HUGH

Misty.

LAURENT

And when they heard me coming, they left. Look at the things over there.

*He points to bejewel things.*

They are still warm.

HUGH

It's kind of fun actually.  
The bejewelling.

LAURENT

Is this an American thing?

HUGH

Now look. The point is, there's no reason to sit around moping. It does a person no good in this kind of situation. You can trust me on that. So take off your shoe, sit down here, and you know, make some patterns with this stuff.

LAURENT

In France this is what they give mental patients to do all day long so they don't scratch out their eyes.

HUGH

Just glue. Make the French flag or something.

LAURENT

I will make an abstract representation of my love and the despair I feel.

HUGH

Terrific.

LAURENT

And then I will wear it on my shoe until my shoes fall apart and are no longer able to be worn. And after that I will carry that picture in my heart forever.

*Hugh picks out a bottle of wine. 2008. He holds it up.*

HUGH

2008. Late fruit set. Late harvest. Cold. Almost frozen grapes.

LAURENT

2008. My grandmother died. We moved to Paris.

HUGH

Susan and I took a trip to Australia. We visited some wine people we knew. It was warm there when it was cold here and we drove around and laughed at the things people said. And I remember there was this one night, we were sitting out with our friends, and I was playing my guitar and the food was exquisite and the night was cool and the wine loosened our tongues and our hearts and made us laugh. And that's when I knew that what I do, the thing I make, it's an experience in a bottle. I craft it and shape it and grow it and make it and it will shape someone's evening and that evening could shape their life. But in order to make that experience it has to be honest. It has to reflect that year, that place, those struggles. Otherwise it is dishonest. I want to make a wine that is honest. Because life is too hard.

*They toast. They drink.*

LAURENT

Did you ever love someone so much that it hurts?

HUGH

Yes.

LAURENT

Why does it have to hurt?

HUGH

Because then otherwise I guess it wouldn't be love.

*They bejewel.*

*Scene 4: Susan and John. John looks around at the bejewel items. Susan looks at the wine.*

SUSAN

He pulled out the 2008.

JOHN

What does that mean?

SUSAN

I can't remember what it means exactly in his system.

JOHN

Well do you have the feeling that it's good or bad?

SUSAN

I don't know. That was our last year of good profit. And we went to Australia. Yeah. It was a happy year.

JOHN

2008 was my first date with Misty. She took me to a sensory deprivation tank.



SUSAN

That's kind of a strange first date. Didn't you see the movie about the person who went crazy doing that?

*John stares*

JOHN

We just floated there for 90 minutes. We emptied our minds. Everyone else I'd been out with was well, complicated. They expected complicated questions and conversations. I just wanted to be with someone and be quiet.

*Susan looks at bejewel stuff.*

SUSAN

What are these things exactly?

JOHN

It's like a craft project. She's been kind of secretive about it.

SUSAN

Why would someone be secretive about a craft project?

JOHN

I don't know but every time I come in she puts stuff away like she doesn't want me to see.

SUSAN

And you don't find that weird?

JOHN

Well sure, but in the master scheme of things that are weird in relationships...

SUSAN

I guess.

JOHN

The project has something to do with shoes. So you take off your shoe and you bejewel that.

*John takes off his shoe and shows her how it works.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

See these little rhinestones get glued on here in a specific pattern.

*Susan tries it.*

SUSAN

Look at that.

*She points to bejeweled shoe. John looks.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

It's the vineyard. And look.

*She points.*

There's Dave and Cassie's-I mean your house.

*He looks*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

They wrote to us. From Arizona. A post card. They sounded happy. But what can you tell from a post card anyway. It could really be that they are the smart ones. Dave's learning to para sail. I didn't even know they had lakes in Phoenix. I didn't even know he wanted to learn to para sail. I don't even really know what para-sailing is.

JOHN

I would go to Arizona with you.

SUSAN

What?

JOHN

I mean if we were, well you know.

SUSAN

You would?

JOHN

Yeah. I would.

You can drive a John Deer like nobody's business.

And you have a terribly vulgar vocabulary which I find kind of refreshing.

Except when it is directed against me of course.

And you're not not attractive.

SUSAN

Does that mean I am?

JOHN

Yeah. In that kind of tough-no-nonsense way. You're not afraid to say what you think.

SUSAN

Well I'd move to Oregon to marry you.

JOHN

You would?

SUSAN

Yeah. I mean you have plans. And they're not not exciting.

JOHN

It's too bad I don't love you.

SUSAN

Thanks-

JOHN

No I-

SUSAN

I know what you mean.

JOHN

It would be much more convenient. We're both the practical sort.

SUSAN

Yep.

JOHN

Where do you think they are?

SUSAN

I don't know. Hugh's probably giving her a tour of the wine cellar.

*Beat.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

For people who supposedly love us they haven't seemed particularly interested in our relationship.

*John thinks for a moment.*

JOHN

What if...

*He laughs*

What if...

JOHN (CONT'D)

*they're* pretending to be in love with each other to make *us* jealous and they're watching how *we* react?

*They look at each other.*

SUSAN AND JOHN

No.

*They laugh.*

SUSAN

That's ridiculous.

It's obvious they really like each other.

I mean you can see it when they stand next to each other.

JOHN

Right. I don't know what I was thinking.

SUSAN

That felt like a relief almost.

JOHN

What?

SUSAN  
That maybe it wasn't all true?

JOHN  
Why does it have to hurt?

SUSAN  
I don't know. I guess otherwise it wouldn't be love.

*They bejewel. They drink.*

*Scene: 5. Hugh playing guitar by himself.  
Susan enters, sees Hugh, is about to exit,  
and then comes back in.*

SUSAN  
And?

HUGH  
And?

SUSAN  
What about the grapes?

HUGH  
They haven't said a peep.

SUSAN  
Sugar's high.

HUGH  
I know. I tasted them.

SUSAN  
What do you think. Of this year I mean.

*Hugh looks at her.*

I know. I know. You don't like to speculate.

*Beat.*  
Where's bikini?

HUGH  
She's taking a shower.

SUSAN  
Oh.

HUGH  
She is stuck here. I'm just being neighborly.

SUSAN  
Did you lend her my shampoo too?

HUGH

Where's

*He gestures for John.*

SUSAN

Trying to get a hold of one of the engineers.

HUGH

You know Susan-

SUSAN

Let's not. I can see what's going on here. And maybe this is the way it's supposed to be.

HUGH

What's that supposed to mean?

SUSAN

We had a good run of it.

HUGH

Wait a minute-

SUSAN

I wouldn't want to hold you back from

*She indicates Misty*

HUGH

Right. Me too. I wouldn't want to stand in your way. I mean I want you to be happy.

SUSAN

Right. Me too. That's what I was saying. We shouldn't hold each other back from what we really want.

HUGH

Right.

SUSAN

I mean maybe it is time. It's not like you plan it. The end of something I mean.

HUGH

Right.  
I can see that.  
Well yes. Let's not stand in each other's way.

SUSAN

Because I want you to be happy.

HUGH

Of course.

*Beat*

SUSAN

Because sometimes this is just what it is. You spend your life building something only to un-build it in 24 hours.

*Hugh strums his guitar.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

You want to test the grapes.

HUGH

I just did.

SUSAN

Oh. OK.

HUGH

Do you want me to? I mean now?

SUSAN

No it's ok. Not if you don't feel like it.

HUGH

Maybe in a bit. I'll text you the results.

SUSAN

OK.

HUGH

Will you let Misty know I'm in here. If you see her.

SUSAN

Sure. And can you tell John that I went to...test the grapes.

HUGH

Sure.

*Beat. Hugh looks at Susan. Susan looks at Hugh. She exits. He looks after her and then he goes to the porch and sings to the grapes. He listens after to see if they'll sing back.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

In man's evolution he has created the city and  
The motor traffic rumble, but give me half a chance  
And I'd be taking off my clothes and living in the jungle.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Come on little grapes...

HUGH (CONT'D)

'Cos the only time that I feel at ease  
Is swinging up and down in a coconut tree,  
Oh, what a life of luxury, to be like an apeman.

HUGH (CONT'D)  
My sweet little grapes. Talk to me. Sing it with me!

*He tries again.*

HUGH (CONT'D)  
I'm an apeman, I'm an ape, apeman, Oh, I'm an apeman,  
I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voo-doo man,  
I am an ape man.  
I look out the window, but I can't see the sky,  
'Cos the air pollution is fogging up my eyes,  
I want to get out of this city alive,  
And make like an ape man.

*End scene.*

*Scene 6: Hugh is bejewelling. Misty enters.*

HUGH  
This is pretty fun.

MISTY  
Is that a guitar?

HUGH  
I thought it would be appropriate to have one on my shoe.

MISTY  
Maybe then you wouldn't need to bring the real one with you all the time. I mean sometimes.

*She shows him the shoes she's been working on.*

MISTY (CONT'D)  
Almost done.

HUGH  
Wow.

MISTY  
I know. Such talent that no one will ever want to buy.

HUGH  
Sometimes the act of doing is more important than the act of selling. Sometimes I think Susan doesn't get that.

MISTY  
You don't think she gets that? She's been married to you for all this time and you don't think she gets that? Of course she gets that.

HUGH  
So what then? She just no longer appreciates it as one of my better qualities?

*Misty looks at him*

HUGH (CONT'D)

Ok. Ok. I get it.

*Beat.*

What about John?

MISTY

What about him?

HUGH

The man obviously loves you.

MISTY

Loved.

HUGH

Doubtful.

MISTY

I'm just not the right match for him. Susan's a better match for him.

*Hugh looks*

Sorry but she is. I saw them in here before. They were laughing. They seemed happy. He laughed with her the way he used to laugh with me.

HUGH

She's not an easy laugh-er. I used to work to make her laugh. But then it would be worth it, Actually I started carrying my guitar around because of her. So I could make up silly songs when she was around. And she'd laugh.

*Hugh pulls out a wine.*

This moment now, this feels like disappointment. 2004. Disappointment. I had really high hopes for this one. Certain select grapes, an ideal start to the season, an ideal harvest, but it just didn't blend. Flow together. The product in the end was not the best. It was disappointment.

*He opens the bottle.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

Try some disappointment.

*They drink.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

I wanted to make a special label for it. It would have been called "Disappointment 2004 estate reserve". Susan thought it was a bad idea.

MISTY

I think she's right.

HUGH

She was of course. I just thought it would be cool if the label matched that place in that year at that time. Like a snapshot of that moment in time.



MISTY

That's what John talks about too.

HUGH

He does?

MISTY

Yeah. I think he gets it. I mean the Oregon thing. It's just not working out too great for him at the moment though. He gets it though. The snapshot thing.

*Misty pulls out a shoe box that she has tucked under a piece of furniture. She shows Hugh. He looks inside. We do not see.*

HUGH

Ah.

MISTY

What do you think?

HUGH

It's for...

MISTY

It's my big plan. My big business plan.

HUGH

Ah.

MISTY

They're for teams.

HUGH

Teams?

MISTY

You don't think it's a good idea?

HUGH

I'm not...I don't...

*She pulls the contents of the box out. They are bejewelled roller skates.*

MISTY

They're for roller dancing teams.

*Misty puts them on.*

HUGH

Roller dancing.

MISTY

I don't know why, but I had this vision of decorated skates.

*She skates around the room.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

And then I found these skates at the Goodwill in town. So I thought it was a sign. And then I started working on them. And then the explosion happened.

*She skates.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

But I can imagine it. The whole team coming out with these bejeweled skates. And I will be the one to outfit them. The lights will go out. The music will come on.

*Hugh plays something fast paced on his guitar.*

The first skater will float out on to the dance floor.

*She demonstrates. Hugh strums.*

The lights will pop back up.

*Hugh strums.*

MISTY (CONT'D)

A spotlight.  
And then -

*Misty executes a roller dance move, maybe a version of the earlier leg lift with Hugh. Hugh strums.*

Everyone's eyes will be focused, focused on her bejeweled feet as she glides across the dance floor.

*Scene 7: John and Susan sit in the room. It's semi-dark. They are passing around a flask.*

SUSAN

What is this?

JOHN

Whisky. Sometimes you've just got to move past wine.

SUSAN

I didn't peg you for a flask carrying kind of guy.

JOHN

I got it at a wedding. For being a best man. They got divorced two years later anyway. But I got to keep the flask. Seems like the kind of thing you give your best man at your wedding. Not that I would know. Having never had the opportunity myself. And probably never going to have it.

SUSAN

Don't.

JOHN  
Did you see them?

SUSAN  
Yes.

JOHN  
They were dancing.

SUSAN  
She was dancing.

JOHN  
She was roller skating.

SUSAN  
I don't want to talk about it.

JOHN  
It's so strange. Just earlier today so much was different.

*He passes Susan the flask.*

SUSAN  
I like this light. I mean evening. Just before the sun set. Everything looks so peaceful out there.

JOHN  
I'm tired of staying in here.

SUSAN  
Well where do you want to go?

*John looks up the hill.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
You're kidding?

JOHN  
I just want to look at it.

SUSAN  
What?

JOHN  
The boulder. The cause of all of this. I want to look at that fucking geologically important boulder.

SUSAN  
They told us not to go up there.

JOHN  
They also said they'd be back soon with more information.

SUSAN

Well maybe they will be.

JOHN

I did not move to Oregon to have to do what other people say. I could have done that back in California.

SUSAN

Listen, I'm not sure it's such a good idea - (to go and mess around)

JOHN

Wasn't it you who told me that I had to just "do it"? Get out of the office more? Get out on the land? Well I'm ready. I'm ready to do that.

SUSAN

Alright. Alright. We'll go look at the boulder.

JOHN

Really?

SUSAN

Yes. Just don't touch anything.

*Scene 8: A loud explosion. Biblical. Susan and John enter.*

SUSAN

You could have gotten us killed.

JOHN

Sorry.

SUSAN

Sorry? Sorry? That's the last time I'm touring a construction site with you.

JOHN

Sorry.

SUSAN

God, why would you do that?

JOHN

Well it worked didn't it?

SUSAN

We don't know if it worked. It's dark out there.

JOHN

I just wanted to push that button.

SUSAN

Well let's just hope that you didn't majorly screw anything up.

JOHN  
Nothing happened.

SUSAN  
We think.

*Susan peers out with the binoculars.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
I can't see anything.

JOHN  
Me neither.  
And I'm hungry.  
I don't think we had lunch.

SUSAN  
Could you try to call the guy from emergency services?

JOHN  
He didn't leave his number.

SUSAN  
Shit.

JOHN  
It seems fine.

SUSAN  
It is not fine. Did you hear that explosion. It is not fine.

JOHN  
I think it's fine. Except I can't see anything.

*Susan's looking outside.*

SUSAN  
You think it's fine?

JOHN  
There's no water pouring down the hill, no fire. Seems fine. I think I blew it up. And now we can be done with this whole thing. I was just tired of that boulder. Life seemed fine before it happened. I just wanted it gone.

*Susan looks outside.*

SUSAN  
You just wanted it gone. Great.  
Wow. Look at all those stars.

*John flips a light switch. Nothing.*

Look. There's Orion's belt.

*John flips another switch. Nothing.*

JOHN

Uhh. Susan.

SUSAN

And there's the little dipper. And the milky way. I don't remember seeing the stars like this.

JOHN

Uh Susan...

SUSAN

And it's so dark. Look at that.

*John is still testing lights. Nothing.*

JOHN

Susan.

SUSAN

Yeah?

JOHN

It's so dark because we don't have any power.

SUSAN

What?

*She comes in and tries the lights.*

Great. Just great.

JOHN

It's probably only temporary.

SUSAN

This is because of you. This is because you blew up that friggin' boulder. Where's emergency services now? Huh? Where are they?

*John has found a bag of pretzels and opens them. He hands some to Susan.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)

I have to pick the grapes.

*Hugh enters with Misty. She's still on roller skates.*

MISTY

We think the power went out.

SUSAN

Really? What gave you that idea?

JOHN

It's only temporary.

HUGH

It was just after the explosion.

SUSAN

Yes.

*Susan sits down. Hugh and Misty look at each other.  
John offers around pretzels.*

HUGH

Did anyone talk to emergency services?

JOHN

Pretzel?

*Susan sits.*

MISTY

John?

JOHN

Yeah?

MISTY

Did they say anything?

JOHN

No. Nobody said anything. Or called.

*Hugh looks out the back.*

HUGH

Wow. It's really dark out there. Look at that sky. I can't remember seeing this many stars. Look. There are no lights on up the hill. Looks like emergency services knocked out their own power too.

JOHN

Well I'm sure someone will be along soon.

*Susan sits. It gets darker. They eat pretzels.*

JOHN (CONT'D)

I just want to say that I'm sorry about this.

*No one says anything. Laurent enters.*

LAURENT

I think there is not any of the electricity.

MISTY

There's not.

LAURENT

And the sky is so dark. I was looking all over for Natasha but I suspect she is not wanting to see me. The last I saw of her was with the man with the hat of construction.

*John offers him the bag of pretzels. Natasha enters.*

NATASHA

This has been the worst day ever.

LAURENT

Where is he?

NATASHA

Who?

LAURENT

The man who is most obviously missing here.

NATASHA

I don't know what you're talking about.

LAURENT

The man you were taking around the vineyard. The man with the hat.

NATASHA

Oh. Now you're accusing me of being unfaithful?

LAURENT

You wanted me to see you with him!

NATASHA

Yes. Yes I did.

LAURENT

See!

NATASHA

Ugh. How could I have ever thought I was in love with you?

LAURENT

I ask myself that same question every minute.

NATASHA

Well I ask myself every second.

LAURENT

Well I ask myself every nano second.

*It's getting darker. They're all sitting there.*

JOHN

It sure is getting dark.



LAURENT

I do not care. It is better to sit here in the dark than to see the face which does not love me. Which mocks me.

*The light fades more. They pass the pretzel bag back and forth.*

JOHN

I am *really* sorry about this.

HUGH

It's just.  
Well.  
Yeah.  
It's OK.  
Susan?

SUSAN

Yeah.

HUGH

Just wanted to make sure you're still there.

SUSAN

I'm here.

NATASHA

Mom?

SUSAN

Yeah.

NATASHA

Do you have a plan?

SUSAN

No.

*Silence.*

I do not, for the first time in 31 years, have a plan. I have no plan. I am done planning. I have tried to plan. It is not possible to plan. This is beyond planning.

JOHN

So we just sit here in the dark.

HUGH

I don't mind.

LAURENT

I like it.

NATASHA

If we have to sit here together let's at least do it as separately as possible.

LAURENT

It is enough you do not love me. You do not need to throw my face in it.

HUGH

This reminds me of the 1995.

That was the year about not knowing what would happen next. Remember?

SUSAN

Oh yeah. We had about 12 different weather conditions in 12 hours.  
And the kids were sick.

HUGH

And I was trying to fix the tractor.

SUSAN

Except you didn't know how to do it.

HUGH

So I stayed with the kids and you fixed the tractor.

SUSAN

And then it started hailing.

HUGH

And the kids started howling.

SUSAN

And then the sun came out for ten minutes.

HUGH

And then came torrential rains.

*He looks around.*

I'm going to find it.

*Misty turns on her cell phone flashlight. Hugh crawls around. Then John turns on his cell phone light and then Natasha and then Laurent. Hugh crawls around.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

Here it is. 1995. The year of not knowing what would happen next.

*Hugh opens the bottle. They all take their glasses. He pours. They sit there in the dark.*

MISTY

1995. I was sent to New Jersey over the Christmas break to stay with my grandmother. She smelled like old things. It was freezing. I overheard her telling a friend of hers that I might be staying for a while. That my mother needed some time to work things out with my step-father. Alone, I stayed in New Jersey until April. My mom and step-father never did get back together. That was my year of not knowing what would happen next.

JOHN

You never told me that.

MISTY

Yeah.

*They drink.*

JOHN

1995. My first year in graduate school at MIT. I thought I was in love with Maria Delarosa. She was a lifeguard at the MIT pool. I thought about how maybe I could fake drown so that she would have to save me. My plan was I'd pretend to drown and then tell her it was all a joke and then ask her out. I'm not sure why I thought this would be a successful strategy. So this one time I was in the pool and I was the only person there and we were laughing and joking and then while I was swimming I thought, "I should do it now." And I was about to. But then I changed my mind at that last minute and just finished swimming and said goodbye. Soon after that she stopped life guarding and left school. I never saw her again.

*They drink. They pass the pretzels.*

LAURENT

In 1995 I was minus one. My parents went away to the nudist colony. They are embarrassed now at the pictures. They laugh because it was a hippy thing to do. There is a picture of my father, completely naked, pulling a sail boat up on the beach. My mother's in the background smiling. They look very brave. Ready to live.

NATASHA

That's poetic.

*She pours more wine.*

I remember hearing about that year from Tim and Justin. You kept trying to make them take oatmeal baths.

HUGH

Yeah and they wouldn't stay in them. Those brothers of yours just kept getting out of the tub leaving long lines of oatmeal down the floor while your mother tried to figure out what the weather would be.

SUSAN

And I kept wishing I could see into the future so that I would know what would happen and how to best prepare for it.

JOHN

And it was ok?

SUSAN

It was ok.

*Hugh gestures to the wine bottles.*

HUGH

Every single year's been ok. Some great. Some not.

*They sit there. They eat pretzels. Natasha finds and lights some candles.*

MISTY

But you don't know that before it happens.

*They drink.*

LAURENT

Natasha. I have tried to not feel this way. All day I have tried to not feel this way. I still love you. Even if you love the man with the hat.

NATASHA

I don't love the man with the hat. I never did.

LAURENT

But why then, why did you want me to see you with him?

NATASHA

Because I wanted you to see me and come over to me.

LAURENT

You did? Why didn't you say that?

NATASHA

Because I thought you hated me.

LAURENT

But I don't hate you. I love you. I loved you all day.

NATASHA

Me too. And I kept leaving because I was trying to figure out where you were.

LAURENT

But that's why I kept leaving.  
Why did you switch out of badminton?

NATASHA

I didn't want you to see me in my gym clothes.

LAURENT

I liked your gym clothes.

NATASHA

You did?

LAURENT

Very much.

NATASHA

Why did you drop out of macro-economics?

LAURENT

I didn't. I was just sick with the headache for three days. When I came back you were gone.

*Laurent whispers something to Natasha. She smiles at him.*

JOHN

Misty?

MISTY

Don't.

JOHN

Don't?

MISTY

You don't want to ask.

JOHN

Because you'll say no?

MISTY

Because then you'll be stuck with me. And you won't be happy. And we'll grow to hate each other. So it's better not to ask.  
I found the ring. In your drawer.

JOHN

Oh. And that's why you've been acting...  
because you don't want to.  
And you didn't know how to tell me.  
And you had to wait for me to ask you before you could say no.  
And this whole time you knew you didn't want me the way I wanted you.  
I should have known.

*John goes to exit*

MISTY

Wait-

*John does.*

No.

JOHN

You told me to wait to tell me no?

MISTY

No.

JOHN

No?

MISTY

I mean yes.

JOHN

Yes you told me to wait so you could say no or “yes” like you are saying “yes”.

MISTY

I love the way you laugh and then cry and then need to be patted on the back.

JOHN

I love the way you scrunch up your mouth when you bejewel.

MISTY

I love how you track how many steps you’ve taken per day and feed that number into some complicated algorithm.

JOHN

I love how you try different things and are open to what interests you. And that you always make a sandwich and offer me half.

MISTY

I love that you bake lemon bars.

JOHN

I love that you are fun to be around.

MISTY

I love how you get excited about selling energy back to the grid.

JOHN

And I love your bejeweled shoe line.

MISTY

And roller skates.

JOHN

And roller skates.

*John points to Hugh.*

So all this-

HUGH

The whole time she thought of you.

JOHN

She did?

*Hugh nods.*

SUSAN

And he thought about you.

MISTY

He did?

*Susan nods.*

Will you? JOHN

Will I? MISTY

You know. JOHN

You have to ask her. SUSAN

I'll help. HUGH

*Hugh strums his guitar. He strums more.*

SUSAN  
It's like going out on the land.  
You just gotta you know get out of the office.  
Just step out the door.

*John thinks. Hugh strums.*

JOHN  
Oh Misty... Oh Misty  
Will you  
marry me?  
I don't know  
what will happen.  
Maybe you'll grow to hate me and want to gauge my eyes out.  
Though I hope not.

*They all stare.*

MISTY  
Oh John Oh John  
Marriage could be the biggest disappointment ever  
it usually ends up in bitter divorce  
but I will say yes if we can get married  
on roll-ller-skates.

JOHN  
Yes. Yes we can. Even though I don't know how to roller skate.

*They stand next to each other.*

JOHN (CONT'D)  
(to Susan)  
Tell him.

HUGH  
Tell me-

*Susan looks down.*

JOHN  
The whole time she thought about you.

HUGH  
Is that true?

SUSAN  
It is.

*They all stare.*

HUGH  
And?

SUSAN  
It made me god-damn angry.

HUGH  
What?

SUSAN  
Thinking about you. I don't want to love you.  
I kept trying to fall in love with him.

*She points to John.*  
But I couldn't.  
(To John)  
No offence.

MISTY  
(To Susan)  
He talked about you the whole time.

SUSAN  
Is that true.

*Hugh nods.*

HUGH  
I'm sorry about the guitar thing.

SUSAN  
I told you not to bring the guitar.

HUGH  
They wouldn't have bought our wine anyway. They just like having the wine makers out there.

SUSAN  
They like having them out there because they do buy wine.



HUGH

I don't want to talk to those people about wine. I don't want to defend myself from wine spectator. Look what I made here.

*He points to the bottles of wine.*

That's a life there. That's a life. And I'm sorry that you're tired. But I'm tired too. So if that means its over then let it be over.

SUSAN

Fine.

*They all pause and look at each other.*

HUGH

Fine.

SUSAN

Fine.

HUGH

Fine.

*The mood is shattered. They all stare at each other.  
George enters from emergency services.*

GEORGE

So sorry folks. It's been a doozy of day. As you probably noticed the power's gone out but that is nothing to worry about. I have an emergency lantern for you all here.

*He turns it on. It sheds some light in the room.*

We're hoping to get everything restored just as it had been before. It was a transformer that blew across town.

JOHN

Not the boulder?

GEORGE

No. Though we did hear that explosion. Can't check on that until daylight comes.

*He looks at all the couples and then at Susan and Hugh.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Well this is a side of my job that I don't often engage in.

But also I consider it of the emergency variety.

Now I am going to tell you a story that will make everything all right.

Like in a play when the deus ex machina comes down and sets everything in the path of where it should be.

"O mio babbino caro" ("Oh My Beloved Father") is a soprano aria from the opera Gianni Schicchi (1918) by Giacomo Puccini to a libretto by Giovacchino Forzano.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

It is sung by Laretta after tensions between her father Schicchi and the family of Rinuccio, the boy she loves, have reached a breaking point that threatens to separate her from Rinuccio.

She pleads with her father to let her buy a ring and marry this fellow whom she desperately loves.

It provides an interlude expressing lyrical simplicity and single-hearted love in contrast with the atmosphere of hypocrisy, jealousy, double-dealing and feuding in the medieval Florence of Puccini's only comedy.

You all have probably heard this aria at some point, yes?

Well.

I will lead you in singing it.

Now.

Here are your parts.

*He hands out papers with parts. He arranges them. He leads them in singing. The English supertitles are projected.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

O mio babbino caro,  
mi piace, è bello, bello.

*George conducts them. They repeat the above text after him.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Vo'andare in Porta Rossa  
a comperar l'anello!

*They repeat.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Sì, sì, ci voglio andare!  
e se l'amassi indarno,  
andrei sul Ponte Vecchio,  
ma per buttarmi in Arno!

ALL (IN RESPONSE)

Mi struggo e mi tormento!  
O Dio, vorrei morir!  
Babbo, pietà, pietà!  
Babbo, pietà, pietà

*There is tremendous emotion. Laurent and Natasha embrace. Misty and John stare into each others' eyes. Susan and Hugh remain unmoved. George notices and turns to them.*

GEORGE

And there's something else I want to tell you  
I have to say being tired might be the stupidest reason to get divorced I've ever heard.  
No offence.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Whoever said that it would be any different than bone aching tiredness?  
Whoever said it would be easy?  
In California there's abundant sunshine and the wine flows like water and people are on their fourth marriage.  
Here in Oregon it rains all the time and we are under a bit more pressure.  
But that pressure, that stress, it can make something beautiful. Just like the Pinot Noir grape.  
Love is like a grain of sand to an oyster.  
Somehow we have lost this.  
When did we start to believe it was easy?

*Susan and Hugh look at him. This has not worked. They are unmoved.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Alright. Alright.  
This is a tough one.  
Let's try this.  
My grandfather and grandmother were married for 62 years.  
On his deathbed my grandfather called my father over and he whispered into his ear a secret that his father passed on to him and his father passed on to him.  
The secret of how to make love stay.  
And since I am in emergency services. And this is an emergency, I will share this secret with you.  
Now line up.

*He arranges them in a giant game of telephone. He whispers the secret to Laurent. Laurent whispers to Natasha. Natasha whispers to Misty. Misty whispers to John. John whispers to Hugh. Hugh looks confused...*

HUGH

Love is like a...bicuspid?

GEORGE

No. No. Let's try again.

*They try it again. This time they all whisper to the other ending in Susan. She receives the info, smiles, and nods.*

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That is it. That is the secret to making love stay. That and the aria is all I have to offer you. Perhaps it is not enough. Or too late.

*Natasha and Laurent have started whispering and shuffling.*

LAURENT

We do not wish to seem rude. It has been an interesting day certainly. But now we would like to have some recreational time

*Natasha whispers to him*  
And go outside and look at the stars.

*They exit. Misty and John look after them. John whispers something to Misty. Misty nods.*

MISTY

We'd like to go look at the boulder. Or what's left of it. I guess that boulder is now a prominent part of our relationship. Like when we open a bottle of 2016 Pinot Noir. We'll say it was hot. So hot. And the sugar was high. And we had an environmental emergency surrounding a boulder and...well you get it.

*She and John exit. She's on roller skates.*

GEORGE

I should be getting home too. I'll be back in the morning of course. Cleaning up the boulder. Once the power is back on. All in good time. But for now, I bid you good night.

*He exits. Susan and Hugh stare at each other.*

SUSAN

What now?

HUGH

I don't know.

*Susan nods.*

SUSAN

Look.  
I'm sorry I made you go to that dinner.

HUGH

You didn't make me go.

SUSAN

I'm glad you brought your guitar.

HUGH

You are?

SUSAN

Well not from a business perspective, but on the whole yes.

HUGH

I thought. I don't know. I thought I was being charming. And witty. And I thought that Joni Mitchell song made that point well.

SUSAN

Maybe it did.  
I guess you never really know why someone decides not to buy your wine.  
But I guess, in the end, I'd rather have you, well...  
you know...

HUGH

No.

SUSAN

Oh don't make me say it.  
It sounds hokey. And sentimental. And I generally don't go in for that kind of thing.

HUGH

That's OK. I like that about you.  
Even if sometimes I wish you could say things.  
At least I know when you do say them you mean them.

*Susan looks around uncomfortably.*

SUSAN

Oh alright.

*Pause*

HUGH

Yes?

SUSAN

I guess I'd rather have you... authentic. You know, real. True to who you are.  
There. Now don't make me say it again.

*Hugh smiles*

HUGH

So you do get it?

SUSAN

Of course I get it. I just don't like it.

*She pauses*

But I guess in the end I kind of do. You know what I mean?

HUGH

Yeah. It's like the thing you really love about someone you also kind of hate.

*Susan nods.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

So what now?

SUSAN

We do what we always do.

HUGH

Which is?

SUSAN

The work at hand.  
Like every year.

HUGH

They're ready.

SUSAN  
The grapes?

*Hugh nods.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
You heard them singing?

*Hugh nods.*

SUSAN (CONT'D)  
So that's it then.

HUGH  
What?

SUSAN  
That's this year's harvest.  
The 2016 will be started at daybreak when we have no electricity, no pickers, and an exploded boulder. And it's supposed to be just as hot.

HUGH  
They'll all help.

*Susan nods.*

They'll wake up sometime tomorrow or we'll wake them up. The sun will be shining in and I'll sing. And we'll all go out and pick the grapes.

*Susan nods.*

HUGH (CONT'D)  
I've got to ask you something.

SUSAN  
What?

HUGH  
Did you understand him?

SUSAN  
Who?

HUGH  
George. I mean what do you think he said? The big secret.

SUSAN  
Is this a test?

HUGH  
I guess. Sort of.

SUSAN  
Truthfully?

HUGH

Yeah.

SUSAN

I couldn't understand what you said. I just thought he'd make us do it again if I didn't pretend that I got it.  
Why? Did you get it?

HUGH

I don't know. It sounded something like "love is a dieffenbachia"...you know those house plants we had that the cats used to chew that gave them laryngitis...well I don't know. It's some kind of plant. So no. I don't think I got it.

SUSAN

Does it really matter?

HUGH

No. I guess not.

SUSAN

And who knows if anyone really understood it. He's kind of difficult to understand.

HUGH

Maybe that was his point.

SUSAN

What?

HUGH

That the secret to making love stay is indecipherable.

SUSAN

Maybe. Or that it's a dieffenbachia.

*Hugh pulls out his guitar. He looks at her. He starts to strum. This is it...the potential moment to start the reconciliation.*

HUGH

Come and love me, be my ape man girl  
And we will be so happy in my ape man world  
I'll be your Tarzan, you'll be my Jane...

*He waits for her to sing. She waits. Finally, still half hearted --*

SUSAN

I'll keep you warm and you'll keep me sane

HUGH

And we'll sit in the trees and eat bananas all day  
Just like an ape man.

*He strums. They look at each other.*

HUGH (CONT'D)

I'm an ape man, I'm an ape ape man, I'm an ape man

SUSAN

I'm a King Kong man, I'm a voo-doo man  
I'm an ape man.

HUGH

I don't feel safe in this world no more  
I don't want to die in a nuclear war

SUSAN/HUGH

I want to sail away to a distant shore  
And make like an ape man.

*They exit.*

*The stage remains empty.*

*End of play.*