

# B1 *Mr & Mrs* 1 Blacke

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY KEIRAN KING  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

SAMANTHA, 35. A pampered housewife. Smart, but lazy, she never became the success she should have, and takes her frustrations out on her husband.

NICHOLAS, 35. A harried financial executive. Hard-working but materialistic, he never gives his wife the attention she needs.

## SETTING

The living area of an upscale house in Kingston, Jamaica.

## SYNOPSIS

Nicholas arrives home from work, hungry and tired, with business to get through, and no time for his wife. She is feeling disillusioned about their marriage, and tries to regain the happiness she remembers. As they get in the way of each other's efforts, secrets are revealed, deceptions uncovered and their comfortable lives are slowly eroded past repair.

For Mom & Dad



# ACT ONE

*The living area of a small but expensive house somewhere in the hilly suburbs of Kingston.*

*The aesthetic is modern and exclusively white—the floor, the walls, the front door, even glimpses through doorways of a powder room, a hallway (to the bedroom) and the kitchen. Frosted glass obscures the back garden, and a stylized picture of a kissing couple occupies an entire wall, behind protective glass. A couch, armchairs and a coffee table sit catercorner, along with stools, chairs and a dinner table.*

*But the clean minimalism of the house is offset by its habitation. Books, clothes and everyday debris lie everywhere, cluttering every available surface and some unavailable ones.*

*It is about eight, when evening cedes to night.*

*Samantha, 35, stands by the window, staring into the darkness beyond. She is tall and slender, with the airbrushed look of too many hairdresser visits. She wears a simple black evening dress that comes to about mid-thigh.*

*The front door opens and Nicholas, 35, enters carrying an attache. Trim and handsome, he wears a black three-piece suit and an expression of accumulated fatigue. He presses a remote and outside, his car responds with a tap of its horn.*

NICHOLAS

Hey.

SAMANTHA

Hey.

*He moves into the room and rests his attache down.*

SAMANTHA

Long day?

NICHOLAS  
Is there anything to eat?

*He exits into the kitchen.*

SAMANTHA  
Clouds.

NICHOLAS (OFF)  
There's nothing on the stove.

SAMANTHA  
There's a storm coming.

*He reenters.*

NICHOLAS  
Did she come today?

SAMANTHA  
No.

NICHOLAS  
Leftovers?

SAMANTHA  
No.

NICHOLAS  
Why do we pay her?

SAMANTHA  
I don't eat what she cooks, anyway.

NICHOLAS  
Have you eaten?

SAMANTHA  
A smoothie.

*He sits down.*

NICHOLAS  
I could have stopped, you know.

*Samantha comes over to him.*

SAMANTHA  
Did you miss your wife today?

NICHOLAS  
Where's the paper?

SAMANTHA  
Of course not.

NICHOLAS  
I can never find anything in this house.

SAMANTHA  
It's right there.

NICHOLAS  
Where?

SAMANTHA  
There.

NICHOLAS  
There where?

*She grabs the paper and gives it to him.*

SAMANTHA  
I got my nails done.

*A tasteful French manicure.*

NICHOLAS  
Very nice.

*He opens the newspaper.*

SAMANTHA  
The [Mailpak] courier liked them.

NICHOLAS  
Great.

SAMANTHA  
How was work?

NICHOLAS  
Fine.

SAMANTHA  
I had an appointment today.

NICHOLAS  
Good.

SAMANTHA  
Nicholas.

NICHOLAS  
What?

SAMANTHA  
Put down the paper.

NICHOLAS  
I just picked it up.

SAMANTHA

I'll summarize. Men continue to squabble for tiny bits of land and power. In sports, for trophies. In entertainment, for fame. In business, for money. Did I leave anything out?

NICHOLAS

This article about men who beat their wives.

SAMANTHA

They deserve it for marrying the animals in the first place.

NICHOLAS

It probably happens a lot in the ghetto.

SAMANTHA

I was telling you about my day.

*He refolds the paper.*

NICHOLAS

I heard. There's a package for me.

SAMANTHA

It's somewhere.

NICHOLAS

Where?

SAMANTHA

Over there.

NICHOLAS

Here?

*She finds it and hands it to him. He opens it.*

SAMANTHA

I'm going out.

*He examines the contents as he talks.*

NICHOLAS

With?

SAMANTHA

Gina.

NICHOLAS

Where?

SAMANTHA

Movies.

NICHOLAS

Good. You should get out the house.



I've been out. SAMANTHA

Where? NICHOLAS

You look tired. SAMANTHA

I am tired. NICHOLAS

Doesn't it get to you? Every day like the day before and the day before that. SAMANTHA

Not when you're investing people's money. NICHOLAS

There once was a man named Blacke/  
Who spent all his days as a hack SAMANTHA

He ignored his wife— NICHOLAS

Which ruined his life/  
But soon he'll beg her to come back. SAMANTHA

You should be a writer. NICHOLAS

I am. SAMANTHA

Not until you write something. NICHOLAS

I could, you know. SAMANTHA

If not for me? NICHOLAS

If not for this. SAMANTHA

*She sweeps her hands to take it all in.*

SAMANTHA  
You know what I feel like sometimes? One of those big moths, before it becomes a moth. It's all wrapped up in its cocoon. Its own silk straightjacket. Waiting to burst out in its colours and fly.

NICHOLAS  
I'll be here when you get back.

SAMANTHA  
Comforting.

NICHOLAS  
Along with all the other things you've discarded.

SAMANTHA  
You could come along. I know, I know. You're busy. Work.

NICHOLAS  
Conversation's efficient this way.

SAMANTHA  
I really don't know why I bother.

NICHOLAS  
Talking?

SAMANTHA  
Making an effort.

NICHOLAS  
Maybe one day you'll meet the right guy.

SAMANTHA  
I did.

NICHOLAS  
Looked like me?

SAMANTHA  
Except he smiled more.

NICHOLAS  
Must have been a clown.

SAMANTHA  
Hardly see him anymore.

NICHOLAS  
Maybe he got a better job.

SAMANTHA  
Maybe.

*She exits to the kitchen, mildly exasperated.*

NICHOLAS  
(calling)  
Is there anything to drink?

SAMANTHA (OFF)  
Water and soy milk.

NICHOLAS  
 Never mind.

*She returns munching a handful of macadamia nuts. He picks up the paper again.*

SAMANTHA  
 You like this dress?

NICHOLAS  
*(without looking up)*  
 You look fine.

*She takes the newspaper from him, forcing him to look.*

NICHOLAS  
 What, is it new?

SAMANTHA  
 Didn't you buy it?

NICHOLAS  
 One way or the other.

SAMANTHA  
*(seeing the paper in her hands)*  
 Your old boss is in the paper again.

NICHOLAS  
 Yes. She's doing well.

SAMANTHA  
 I was hoping for another sex scandal.

NICHOLAS  
 Rumour.

SAMANTHA  
 It was more than a rumour, darling.

NICHOLAS  
 It was less than a scandal, cupcake.

SAMANTHA  
 Did she or didn't she?

NICHOLAS  
 How would I know?

SAMANTHA  
 You worked under her.

NICHOLAS  
 With these things, it's all he said, she said.

What did he say? SAMANTHA

No. NICHOLAS

What did she say? SAMANTHA

No. NICHOLAS

So who said yes? SAMANTHA

Everybody else. NICHOLAS

Why's that, I wonder. SAMANTHA

She kept unusual hours. And she had a bad habit of getting good promotions. NICHOLAS

*She picks up the section of the paper with the photo.*

She's doing it again. SAMANTHA

*(reading)*

"In a surprise decision, Ms Natalie Winters was named president of Isle Five in a hastily scheduled board meeting on Tuesday afternoon. Formerly, the 42-year-old executive oversaw financial operations for the supermarket group. The management shake-up is seen by some as a last-ditch effort to avoid bankruptcy, blah blah blah... In 2009, she resigned her senior post at [JMMB] amid allegations of immoral conduct. She was quickly snatched up by Isle Five. Ms Winters, known for her tenacity and deal-making ability, now has a chance to rescue both the ailing retailer and her tarnished reputation."

You were telling me about your day. NICHOLAS

So she left voluntarily? SAMANTHA

Would you have stayed? NICHOLAS

Depends. SAMANTHA

She'd have been fired. NICHOLAS

SAMANTHA  
The one time I met her at that office party, she left a bad taste in my mouth.

NICHOLAS  
Didn't know she went for girls.

SAMANTHA  
I think you're more her type.

NICHOLAS  
Hard worker?

SAMANTHA  
Co-worker.

NICHOLAS  
She helped me.

SAMANTHA  
Plucked you off the ground floor.

NICHOLAS  
Gave me my first office.

SAMANTHA  
Why you?

NICHOLAS  
Good at my job.

SAMANTHA  
All you need is a head for numbers. Buy, sell, hold. Any fool can do that.

NICHOLAS  
Evidently.

SAMANTHA  
Women like that always want something.

NICHOLAS  
Sam, I'd never even look at another woman.

SAMANTHA  
Of course not. You barely look at me.

*She moves off.*

NICHOLAS  
Hey.

*He chases and catches her.*

NICHOLAS  
Hey.

What? SAMANTHA

Sorry. NICHOLAS

What are you apologizing for? SAMANTHA

I don't know. NICHOLAS

I forgive you. SAMANTHA

For? NICHOLAS

I don't know. SAMANTHA

*He gives her a squeeze as the house phone RINGS.*

Nicky. SAMANTHA

Let it ring. NICHOLAS

*Ring.*

It might be Gina. SAMANTHA

You're busy. NICHOLAS

*Ring.*

I should answer it. SAMANTHA

She'll call back. NICHOLAS

Nicky, let go. SAMANTHA  
(*wriggling*)

Sam. NICHOLAS

Let me go! SAMANTHA

*She frees herself and grabs the phone, which has stopped. Nicholas moves away. They don't quite know what to say. She exits to the bedroom.*

*He checks his Blackberry, goes to the couch, stands. Should he deal with Samantha or work?*

*Samantha reenters, carrying her heels, putting on earrings.*

NICHOLAS

You look... nice.

SAMANTHA

Thanks.

NICHOLAS

Which movie you going to see?

SAMANTHA

The one with that guy.

NICHOLAS

From long time? With what's-her-face?

SAMANTHA

She's in it, too.

NICHOLAS

The one where they—

SAMANTHA

That's the one.

NICHOLAS

They're all the same. Do they have to fall in love every time?

SAMANTHA

Nobody wants to watch people fall out of love.

*She slips into her heels.*

NICHOLAS

Maybe we can have a glass of wine later.

SAMANTHA

You're sitting on my purse.

*She extracts the purse from his behind and heads for the door.*

SAMANTHA  
Smells like rain.

NICHOLAS  
Take the umbrella.

*She takes the white umbrella by the door.  
Hesitates.*

SAMANTHA  
No, I like it too much to use it.

*She leaves.*

*A silence descends as the room adjusts to its new  
equilibrium. Nicholas relaxes. But as he is about  
to begin work, Samantha bursts back in, already  
in midstream.*

SAMANTHA  
I mean two is a coincidence, three is a pattern. I don't know what four is, but five is  
a whole handful of things that don't add up and that's three too many for me, for  
one.

NICHOLAS  
Short movie.

SAMANTHA  
Don't get smart.

NICHOLAS  
Wouldn't dream of it. My stupidity is one of the hallmarks of our marriage.

SAMANTHA  
What's going on?

NICHOLAS  
What are you talking about?

SAMANTHA  
You tell me.

NICHOLAS  
What?

SAMANTHA  
You're not telling me something. What is it?

*No answer.*



SAMANTHA

One. You brought home your briefcase. Which means you have work to do. Nothing strange in that. Two, it's important, because you skipped lunch. That's why you're hungry. Three. Normally, I'd never hear the end of it going out with Gina, but tonight, nothing. Why? You want me out of the house. Four, that mystery package. It gets delivered, then it gets discarded. Five. A certain indefinable anxiety, which since I know you better than you know yourself means a woman is involved. Now if it's not too much trouble I'd like the truth. Straight.

*He has no answer to such a polite excoriation, so he walks over to the breakfast counter.*

SAMANTHA

Where are you going?

NICHOLAS

To get the truth, straight.

*He retrieves a tumbler and a near-empty bottle of [Sangster's Rum Cream], sits on a stool and pours himself a small amount.*

NICHOLAS

You're mostly right. I had a lunch meeting with one of our top clients. They've run out of cash, so they need a loan or else they might go bankrupt. Their president requested I do the paperwork myself.

SAMANTHA

It's too much for one person.

NICHOLAS

Except that big companies have accounting firms that do most of the work. In this case, actually, the same firm John works for. So I called him this morning and asked him to send the company statements here.

SAMANTHA

You threw them away.

NICHOLAS

The president was a step ahead of me. Handed me a copy at lunch.

SAMANTHA

*(slowly)*

That makes sense.

NICHOLAS

It's true.

SAMANTHA  
 So what do you have to do?

NICHOLAS  
 Make sure the documents are in order, then tomorrow morning recommend the loan.

SAMANTHA  
 And getting me out of the house?

NICHOLAS  
 I didn't want to tell you about the client.

SAMANTHA  
 Because?

NICHOLAS  
 Their president is—

SAMANTHA  
 A woman.

NICHOLAS  
 Not just any woman.

SAMANTHA  
 Unless it's your mother, I think I can handle it.

*He walks over and holds up the newspaper. An attractive face smiles back in black-and-white.*

SAMANTHA  
*(undisguised disdain)*  
 Natalie?

NICHOLAS  
 Naturally.

SAMANTHA  
 You had lunch with Natalie.

NICHOLAS  
 Naturally.

SAMANTHA  
 I knew something was up.

NICHOLAS  
 Nothing happened. I didn't even eat.

SAMANTHA  
 Think she'd poison you?

NICHOLAS  
 That's not what I meant.

SAMANTHA  
She needs you until tomorrow, at least.

NICHOLAS  
I was very business-like.

SAMANTHA  
Was this before or after you looked at her cleavage?

NICHOLAS  
It was a plunging neckline.

SAMANTHA  
You're so predictable.

NICHOLAS  
You're not. I thought you'd be furious.

SAMANTHA  
Even a little deceit is preferable to boredom, darling. Go on, now. Impress me. How much?

NICHOLAS  
The loan?

SAMANTHA  
No, the lunch. Yes the loan.

NICHOLAS  
A lot.

SAMANTHA  
Fifty million?

*Nicholas doesn't respond.*

SAMANTHA  
A hundred million?

*Nothing.*

SAMANTHA  
Two hundred million?

NICHOLAS  
I'd rather not say.

SAMANTHA  
You've never handled that much.

NICHOLAS  
It's a lot.

What's a lot?  
SAMANTHA

You know my usual bonus?  
NICHOLAS

Under four hundred thousand.  
SAMANTHA

This year, times three.  
NICHOLAS

*She struggles with the magnitude of it.*

Did you say 'times'?  
SAMANTHA

I did.  
NICHOLAS

But that's... that's... I can't do the math.  
SAMANTHA

Over a million dollars.  
NICHOLAS

A million dollars?  
SAMANTHA

Bonus.  
NICHOLAS

But that means the loan is more than... than... I can't do the math.  
SAMANTHA

I know.  
NICHOLAS

It's too much.  
SAMANTHA

What?  
NICHOLAS

It's too much.  
SAMANTHA

You can never have too much money, honey.  
NICHOLAS

SAMANTHA

No wonder they're nervous. I'm nervous. This much money, people do crazy things.

NICHOLAS

Like what?

SAMANTHA

I don't trust her.

NICHOLAS

Natalie? She's trying to make sure there's a company for her to run.

SAMANTHA

Too much at stake.

NICHOLAS

That's why she won't eff it up.

SAMANTHA

I don't like that you're back in bed with her.

NICHOLAS

*(holds up his wedding band)*

Last time I checked, I was in bed with you.

SAMANTHA

Last time you checked, my breasts didn't sag.

NICHOLAS

It'll be fine.

SAMANTHA

I have a bad feeling about it, okay?

NICHOLAS

Yes, well fortunately the world of high finance does not rise and fall on your feelings. Tomorrow morning, I'm going to recommend the loan. Natalie looks good. They get a lifeline. [JMMB] gets a payday. You and I go to [Ritz-Carlton] for the weekend. Everybody's happy.

SAMANTHA

*(checking the clock)*

Not Gina. I've missed the movie.

NICHOLAS

One more thing. She's going to call at nine o'clock.

SAMANTHA

Why?

NICHOLAS

Checking up on me, I guess.

SAMANTHA

A bit late for a business call.

Not for her. NICHOLAS

Whose idea was this? Natalie? SAMANTHA

Naturally. NICHOLAS

We could be in the middle of sex. SAMANTHA

Not likely. NICHOLAS

She doesn't know that, does she. I'm telling you she's an all-consuming, power-hungry, man-eating woman. She'll grind you into dust with her four-inch heel and mix it into her marguerita with a wink, a smile and a hint of perfume. I hope you know what you're doing. SAMANTHA

Yeah, me too. NICHOLAS

Give a woman a career and she becomes God's own nightmare: sex on the outside, steel on the inside. SAMANTHA

Maybe that's why you're unemployed. Not enough iron in your diet. NICHOLAS

Bite me. SAMANTHA

Out of practice. NICHOLAS

You don't have to tell me. SAMANTHA

*She exits to kitchen.*

So? What's happening with that? Anything? NICHOLAS  
(calling to her)

Not really. SAMANTHA (OFF)

Are you looking? NICHOLAS

*She returns nibbling some expensive white cheese.*

Yes. SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS  
What about that woman with that thing at the place?

SAMANTHA  
Schools don't want anybody in [July]. And I don't want forty boys watching my ass. Read, write, regurgitate. Any fool can do that.

NICHOLAS  
Did you go down there?

SAMANTHA  
I don't want to teach.

NICHOLAS  
What about the email I sent you?

SAMANTHA  
They wanted somebody to design book layouts.

NICHOLAS  
You're creative.

SAMANTHA  
I wouldn't know where to start.

NICHOLAS  
Learn.

SAMANTHA  
I don't want to design.

NICHOLAS  
What do you want to do?

*She thinks before answering.*

SAMANTHA  
Write.

NICHOLAS  
I mean for a living.

SAMANTHA  
If I knew, I'd be doing it.

NICHOLAS  
Pick something.

SAMANTHA  
It's not Cash Pot.

NICHOLAS  
You need to pick something and do it.

SAMANTHA  
That's why everyone we know hates their jobs. Too scared to wait.

NICHOLAS  
Wait for what?

SAMANTHA  
Purpose.

NICHOLAS  
You've been waiting for three years.

SAMANTHA  
It's not like we need the money.

NICHOLAS  
It would still be nice for you to earn it and me to spend it for a change.

SAMANTHA  
You're about to make a million dollars overnight. What more do you want?

NICHOLAS  
You can never have too much money, honey.

SAMANTHA  
You can't.

NICHOLAS  
Forget the money. You need to be productive.

SAMANTHA  
Let me tell you something. Today, while you were in front of a screen for eight hours, I did 30 minutes on the treadmill, a full-body workout, a tennis lesson, played three sets in the midday sun, paid the bills and had an appointment at—  
(*pauses almost imperceptibly*)  
at the hairdresser. If I were any more productive, I'd have my own GDP.

NICHOLAS  
All I'm saying—

SAMANTHA  
You're saying I should be like you.

NICHOLAS  
Like everybody.

SAMANTHA  
I'm not. I'm smarter.

NICHOLAS  
If Einstein had a day job, so can you.



SAMANTHA

I'm not going to waste my time doing nonsense. End of discussion.

NICHOLAS

Listen, I'm trying to help you, okay? You're thirty-five years old. If you don't get out there soon, it's over. Nobody is going to hire you to do anything, anywhere if you've never done something, somewhere.

*Nicholas notices Samantha's hair.*

NICHOLAS

You went to the hairdresser?

SAMANTHA

Yes.

NICHOLAS

Looks the same.

SAMANTHA

I got it washed.

NICHOLAS

It's dry.

SAMANTHA

They dried it.

NICHOLAS

Look, I'm not the bad guy here.

SAMANTHA

It's easy for you. People need you. Nobody needs me.

NICHOLAS

Look harder.

SAMANTHA

I shouldn't have to look at all. I graduated with honours. I ran circles around my peers. I'm in the prime of life. Why am I looking for them? They should be looking for me.

NICHOLAS

Maybe they are.

SAMANTHA

This country is so backward.

NICHOLAS

But you have to be out there.

SAMANTHA

We have a six-year-old's idea of a workforce.

*(puts on a child's recitative voice)*

Doctor, lawyer, teacher, nurse—

*(sneers)*

Disgusting. You know in high school Gina used to make jewelry out of paper clips? She was so talented, but she never took it seriously because she knew she was going to law school. That's why we have ten thousand lawyers and no jewelers.

NICHOLAS

You've lost me.

SAMANTHA

I'm an expert in 17th century literature living in the 21st in a country stuck in the 19th!

NICHOLAS

I need to eat.

SAMANTHA

Fruits and yoghurt are in the fridge.

NICHOLAS

Food.

SAMANTHA

Can't help you.

NICHOLAS

And that's another thing. You're a better reader than writer.

SAMANTHA

I have ideas all the time. In my head. Stories. Poems.

NICHOLAS

Like what?

*She turns away.*

SAMANTHA

I don't want to tell you.

NICHOLAS

Why?

SAMANTHA

You already think it's stupid.

NICHOLAS

I don't.

Forget it. SAMANTHA

I'm your husband. NICHOLAS

That's why. SAMANTHA

I promise. NICHOLAS

No. SAMANTHA

Just tell me the stupid idea! NICHOLAS

See? SAMANTHA

I'm going to do my work. NICHOLAS  
(*rising*)

Okay, okay, I'll tell you. SAMANTHA

*He sits.*

Now I've built it up too much. SAMANTHA

Samantha. NICHOLAS

Okay. You know how grandma always talks about the Myrtle Bank Hotel? SAMANTHA

Not really. NICHOLAS

Anyway, I got this idea about four young people, you know, like you, me, John and Gina— SAMANTHA

I know what four people are. NICHOLAS

SAMANTHA  
 Spending a night at the hotel way, way back. Like in the forties. And it would be  
 full of romance and glamour and all the things we don't have in our lives.

*(then)*

You think it's stupid.

NICHOLAS

I think it's old.

SAMANTHA

Old?

NICHOLAS

Now.

SAMANTHA

No, it's new.

NICHOLAS

No, the old knew it new, but now, no one new will know, even though for you it's  
 new for now, you know?

*Samantha stares blankly.*

NICHOLAS

Never mind.

SAMANTHA

Or even how we met. That's a good story.

NICHOLAS

At the tax office?

SAMANTHA

In adjacent lines.

NICHOLAS

You were on my right—

SAMANTHA

Left.

NICHOLAS

Right, left, reading Walcott—

SAMANTHA

Wallace.

NICHOLAS

Whatever. Bad story.

SAMANTHA

Good story.

NICHOLAS

You can't write about ordinary people. It's boring.

I find myself fascinating. SAMANTHA

I need to eat. NICHOLAS

You said that already. SAMANTHA

I'm still hungry. NICHOLAS

Order something. SAMANTHA

What's quick? NICHOLAS

Chinese. SAMANTHA

Too light. NICHOLAS

Cooked food. SAMANTHA

Too heavy. NICHOLAS

Jerk. SAMANTHA

Too hot. NICHOLAS

Salad. SAMANTHA

Too cold. NICHOLAS

Okay, Goldilocks, you're on your own. SAMANTHA

What's in the middle? Average? NICHOLAS

You. SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS

Pizza. I could eat pizza. You want piece a pizza?

SAMANTHA

*(making a face)*

Too greasy.

*He dials on his Blackberry. She drifts off.*

SAMANTHA

I wonder if this is really my life. This—nonstop, until I'm dead.

NICHOLAS

*(on phone)*

I'd like to place an order for delivery.

SAMANTHA

I guess I didn't expect it to be so—

NICHOLAS

Medium.

SAMANTHA

Small.

NICHOLAS

Better make it large.

SAMANTHA

I need more life in my life.

NICHOLAS

Mushrooms.

SAMANTHA

More spice.

NICHOLAS

Extra pepper.

SAMANTHA

I need to be—

NICHOLAS

Free? Sure.

SAMANTHA

But I'm stuck in this house.

2 Summit Avenue. NICHOLAS

And I don't know how to get there. SAMANTHA

Well, tell him to call for directions. NICHOLAS

*He hangs up.*

It's on the way. Were you saying something? NICHOLAS

*She turns to him.*

No. SAMANTHA

I thought you said something. NICHOLAS

I did. SAMANTHA

What did you say? NICHOLAS

Nothing. SAMANTHA

Okay. NICHOLAS  
*(gives up)*

*He takes the attache to the dining table. Sheds his tie. Arranges papers across the surface.*

Cold tonight. NICHOLAS

*He dons his jacket for warmth.*

Something's on your mind. NICHOLAS

You have to do whatever it is you do. SAMANTHA

I'm looking at a list of companies and figures. I can listen while I work. NICHOLAS

*She hesitates.*

Gina's trying to get pregnant again. SAMANTHA

Oh. Good for them. NICHOLAS

Is it? SAMANTHA

Sure. Why not? NICHOLAS

No reason. SAMANTHA

*He works, she fiddles with the strings of a nearby tennis racket.*

SAMANTHA  
She had problems last time. Something with her uterine wall. Too thick. Or too thin. I can't remember.

NICHOLAS  
I'm trying to focus on Natalie's numbers, not Gina's vagina.

*Samantha starts restringing the racket.*

SAMANTHA  
Have you thought about it?

NICHOLAS  
Her vagina?

SAMANTHA  
No, about, you know... it.

NICHOLAS  
It?

SAMANTHA  
Us.

NICHOLAS  
What are you saying?

SAMANTHA  
Me. You. Do the math.

*He rests down his pencil.*

NICHOLAS  
Oh.

SAMANTHA  
Well?

NICHOLAS  
What?



Have you changed your mind? SAMANTHA

Have you? NICHOLAS

I'm still on the pill. SAMANTHA

Still? NICHOLAS

Yes. SAMANTHA

No, I haven't changed my mind. NICHOLAS

Because if you had now would be the time. SAMANTHA

Is this because I said you were thirty-five? NICHOLAS

I am thirty-five. SAMANTHA

But is it because I said— NICHOLAS

No. SAMANTHA

Comparing yourself to Gina? NICHOLAS

No— Yes— I mean, she's my friend, so yeah, to some extent, but not— SAMANTHA

Something's going on. What is it? NICHOLAS

*Samantha bites her lip again.*

I didn't go to the hairdresser. SAMANTHA

Okay. NICHOLAS

I went to the doctor. My gynae. To talk about a tubal ligation. SAMANTHA

Oh. Okay. NICHOLAS

What's that? (then)

I'm thinking of tying my tubes. SAMANTHA

*She sips Nicholas' liquor glass.*

I get the feeling there's more. NICHOLAS

No, there's nothing more. Nothing at all. SAMANTHA

*Nicholas resumes work.*

I mean, neither of us wants one. You're too busy. I wouldn't even know what to do. Plus I'd put on weight. It would be a complete disaster. SAMANTHA

Disaster. NICHOLAS

The stress and the headache, sleepless nights, morning sickness. Who would put themselves through that? SAMANTHA

Nobody. NICHOLAS

Then the dirty feet, bruised knees, soiled diapers, grubby fingers, runny noses, it's a wonder anybody reproduces at all. SAMANTHA

Madness. NICHOLAS

*Melancholy creeps over her face.*

And yet... SAMANTHA

And yet? NICHOLAS

They do seem happy. SAMANTHA

Who? NICHOLAS

Parents. SAMANTHA

Not mine. NICHOLAS

Here. SAMANTHA

*(touches her chest)*  
Nothing takes it away. I see it in Gina.

And you're jealous? NICHOLAS

Sometimes. SAMANTHA

*Nicholas considers the best response.*

Is that what you want? NICHOLAS

I want us to be happy. SAMANTHA

We are. NICHOLAS

No, we're not. SAMANTHA

Either way, a child isn't going to make any difference. NICHOLAS

I know. That's why I made the appointment. But, I dunno. Feels like I'm giving up. SAMANTHA

*She comes over and sits beside him, interlocks their arms and leans on his shoulder. This still leaves his other hand free to write, which he half-heartedly attempts to do.*

Remember the apartment? SAMANTHA

How could I forget? It was like living on the Titanic. The fruit rolled from the kitchen into the bedroom. NICHOLAS

Jamaicans don't build anything properly. SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS  
And I hear it got worse after we left.

SAMANTHA  
But we were better.

NICHOLAS  
How long has it been?

SAMANTHA  
It was easier.

NICHOLAS  
Almost four years.

SAMANTHA  
Lighter.

NICHOLAS  
Your hair was longer.

SAMANTHA  
You didn't have the moustache.

NICHOLAS  
Remember why I shaved it?

*They laugh at this naughty memory.*

SAMANTHA  
We didn't have a lot, but there was a lot of that.

NICHOLAS  
Lots of that.

SAMANTHA  
Almost every day.

NICHOLAS  
Sometimes twice.

SAMANTHA  
On the bed—

NICHOLAS  
On the balcony—

SAMANTHA  
In the bath—

NICHOLAS  
On the floor—

SAMANTHA  
On the couch—

NICHOLAS  
 By the window—

*They look at each other and laugh.*

SAMANTHA  
 The best part was after, when we'd talk about whatever.

NICHOLAS  
 We still talk.

SAMANTHA  
 Not like that.

NICHOLAS  
 We're talking right now.

SAMANTHA  
 It was different. You'd tell me I was pretty, and I'd tell you you were going to be rich. We believed each other. In each other.

NICHOLAS  
 Now we have so much more.

SAMANTHA  
 Nicky, let's do something fun tonight. Like we used to.

NICHOLAS  
 We gonna tilt the floor?

SAMANTHA  
 We'll raise the roof!

NICHOLAS  
 I'd rather finish my work.

SAMANTHA  
*(urging him on)*  
 Cho, man. Ten minutes isn't going to kill you. You want to dance? Let's dance.

*She skips over for the stereo remote, and turns on [Power 106FM]. The baritone disc jockey intros 'Careless Whisper' by George Michael.*

*She shows off her curves. Against his protestations, she drags him out of the chair and they start slow-dancing. She rests her head against his chest, and he succumbs to the music and the moment. He starts leading her into a couple spins. She laughs girlishly, happy for the brief respite from loneliness.*

*At the next opportunity, she embellishes, spinning away from him. Unfortunately her arm knocks his glass over, spilling liquor and ice all over his documents.*

Shit!  
NICHOLAS

*He pushes her aside roughly, trying to salvage the papers. Still holding the remote, she cuts the radio.*

NICHOLAS  
Jesus Chri— Damn it to hell, Samantha!

SAMANTHA  
I'm sorry, I'm so sorry—

NICHOLAS  
Why are you standing there?! Go and get some— Don't touch anything!

SAMANTHA  
I didn't mean to— I'm not—

*She scampers into the kitchen and runs back with a roll of paper towels.*

NICHOLAS  
It's too late. They're all soaked.

*He presses his eyes with his hand, as if having a bad headache.*

NICHOLAS  
Can't you do anything without making a mess?

SAMANTHA  
*(small)*  
It's not my fault.

NICHOLAS  
It's not mine.

SAMANTHA  
You should have moved the glass.

NICHOLAS  
You should have looked where you were going.

SAMANTHA  
I don't have eyes in the back of—

NICHOLAS  
You get too carried away, Samantha—

SAMANTHA  
I was enjoying myself—

NICHOLAS  
This isn't about you!

SAMANTHA  
First time we've danced in forever—

NICHOLAS  
What am I going to tell Natalie when she calls?

SAMANTHA  
She can kiss my fine black—

NICHOLAS  
If I didn't know better—

SAMANTHA  
What?

NICHOLAS  
I'd say you did it on purpose.

SAMANTHA  
*(exploding)*  
You know what? I wish I had!

*She takes the liquor bottle and holds it upside down, dripping the (entirely superfluous) remains on the ruined ledgers.*

SAMANTHA  
There!

*Nicholas stares at her, a combination of amazement and disdain on his face.*

NICHOLAS  
Have you lost it?

SAMANTHA  
*(approaching with eyes wide)*  
Booga booga booga!

*And laughing emptily, she exits to the powder room.*

*The phone RINGS. Nicholas ignores it, tending instead to his saturated spreadsheets.*

SAMANTHA (OFF)  
Nicholas.

NICHOLAS  
Let it ring.

*Ring.*

It might be important.  
SAMANTHA (OFF)

I'm busy.  
NICHOLAS

*Ring.*

Answer it!  
SAMANTHA (OFF)

They'll call back.  
NICHOLAS

*She rushes out with a handtowel. Again she is too late. She glares at Nicholas, but decides to bite her tongue.*

*She tosses the towel on a random chair. Nicholas notices but says nothing. She exits to the kitchen.*

*He grabs the trashcan and extracts the crumpled documents he threw away earlier.*

NICHOLAS  
Great. On smell alone, they'll think I'm either drunk or homeless.

*He scoops most of the wet documents into the trash. Examines the two versions side-by-side.*

*She returns with a cup of hot tea. Nicholas is comparing documents at the dining table. She sits as far away as possible. Sips her tea, with a small slurping noise. Slurp. Pause. Slurp.*

*Finally, Nicholas can't take it.*

Samantha.  
NICHOLAS

*Slurp.*

Yes?  
SAMANTHA

Please.  
NICHOLAS



What?  
SAMANTHA

Stop.  
NICHOLAS

It's hot.  
SAMANTHA

You're driving me crazy.  
NICHOLAS

The feeling is mutual.  
SAMANTHA

*Slurp.*

I can't concentrate.  
NICHOLAS

I thought you couldn't read it.  
SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS  
That's why I'm counting both copies, to make sure they're the same. But your insipid sipping keeps throwing me off, so I counted 24 here and then 25 here.

*Slurp. He tries again.*

NICHOLAS  
Look, I'm sorry I shouted at you. I know you didn't mean to spill it. The first time.

*Slurp.*

NICHOLAS  
I said I'm sorry. What else do you want me to say?

*She looks at him.*

SAMANTHA  
(*sadly*)  
Many things. Many, many things.

*She puts her cup down.*

SAMANTHA  
But you're more at home in a mortgage than a marriage.

*She moves to the hallway.*

SAMANTHA

Like father, like son.

*And she disappears into the bedroom. He scrutinizes the papers in front of him.*

NICHOLAS

*(aside)*

It still doesn't add up.

*(loudly)*

Samantha. Come here.

SAMANTHA (OFF)

What's the magic word?

NICHOLAS

Now.

*She appears in the doorway, akimbo.*

SAMANTHA

Try again.

NICHOLAS

I need your eyes.

*He goes over to her.*

NICHOLAS

I've counted it twice. They don't match. I think there's an extra entry here, but I can't find it.

*She doesn't take the paper from him. He looks at her, and softens.*

NICHOLAS

I'm sorry.

*It sounds genuine, so she softens, too. She looks at the papers.*

SAMANTHA

Here it is. Wonderland Limited.

NICHOLAS

Read what it says.

*She looks again.*

SAMANTHA  
Wonderland Limited. Ninety five thousand, something something dollars.  
Recurring.

NICHOLAS  
Wonderland.

SAMANTHA  
Sounds like a candy company.

NICHOLAS  
Never heard of it.

SAMANTHA  
I thought you knew every business in the island.

NICHOLAS  
Only the ones that trade publicly. What's strange is it's not over here.

*The original, damp copy.*

SAMANTHA  
Maybe that one's older.

NICHOLAS  
It's not.

SAMANTHA  
How do you know?

NICHOLAS  
Dates are the same. But yours has the payment and mine doesn't.

SAMANTHA  
*(hers, crumpled)*  
This is from the accountants?

NICHOLAS  
*(his, damp)*  
And this is from Natalie. Hm. Recurring.

*He flattens out some of the other crumpled papers, searching.*

NICHOLAS  
Here it is again last month. And the month before that. But it's not on any of hers.

SAMANTHA  
What do you think?

NICHOLAS  
I don't know.

SAMANTHA  
Is it a big deal?

I don't know. NICHOLAS

What are you going to do? You don't know. SAMANTHA

I need to find out about this company. Where's the phone book? NICHOLAS

That side. SAMANTHA

What side? NICHOLAS

Left side. SAMANTHA

Whose left? NICHOLAS

My left. SAMANTHA

My right? NICHOLAS

Right. SAMANTHA

Your right? NICHOLAS

Always. SAMANTHA

What? NICHOLAS

I'll do it. You Google it on your Blackberry. SAMANTHA

*He punches it into his smartphone and she riffles through the heavy directory.*

It's not here. NICHOLAS It's not here. SAMANTHA

How is that possible? NICHOLAS

*He takes the phonebook himself.*

See? Women's Centre, Women's Club, nothing. SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS  
It's not here.

SAMANTHA  
That's what I said.

NICHOLAS  
Same here.

SAMANTHA  
On the Internet?

NICHOLAS  
Well, there's Christmas lyrics, kids movies, but nothing on a company.

SAMANTHA  
Maybe it's new.

NICHOLAS  
They've been getting paid for months.

SAMANTHA  
Well, you're good at this stuff. Figure it out.

NICHOLAS  
What can ninety-five thousand dollars get you?

SAMANTHA  
Many things.

NICHOLAS  
In a supermarket.

SAMANTHA  
Everything.

NICHOLAS  
And the name could mean—

SAMANTHA  
Anything.

NICHOLAS  
Of course, it has to be—

SAMANTHA  
Something.

NICHOLAS  
Which means—

Nothing. SAMANTHA

What kind of company doesn't have a phone? NICHOLAS

The phony kind. SAMANTHA

A fake company? NICHOLAS

I don't trust her. SAMANTHA

Natalie? NICHOLAS

Naturally. SAMANTHA

Nonsense. We need facts. NICHOLAS

We don't have any. SAMANTHA

But I know who might. NICHOLAS

*He speed-dials from his Blackberry.*

John. Nicholas. Sorry to call so late. She's fine. NICHOLAS

SAMANTHA  
(urgent whisper)  
No, tell him I'm not feeling well.

Actually, she's not feeling well. I hear you and Gina are trying again. NICHOLAS

No, no! Don't tell him! SAMANTHA

Listen, what do you know about a company named Wonderland Limited? Yeah, thanks. NICHOLAS

(to Samantha)  
What's the matter with you?

SAMANTHA

That's the worst thing you could have done. Don't you understand that Gina told me but told me not to tell you because she knew you'd tell John and John told her not to tell anyone.

*Nicholas looks at her blankly.*

SAMANTHA

Never mind.

NICHOLAS

*(to John)*

Yes, John. Okay. Thanks anyway.

*He hangs up.*

SAMANTHA

Nothing?

NICHOLAS

No tax records. No number, no address, no website. It's like it doesn't exist.

SAMANTHA

Somebody's getting the money.

NICHOLAS

I need to know who.

SAMANTHA

What if you can't?

NICHOLAS

Have to.

SAMANTHA

But what if you're not supposed to?

NICHOLAS

What do you mean?

SAMANTHA

Suppose she set up Wonderland herself.

NICHOLAS

Natalie again? Ridiculous. Why?

SAMANTHA

Why not?

NICHOLAS

She's trying to save the company, not steal from it.

SAMANTHA

Think about it. It would have been easy. Every month, she gets an extra hundred thousand, lost in a sea of payments, and nobody knows because she runs the finances.

Then for whatever reason, the company runs into trouble, and now she has a problem. Whoever rescues them is going to examine the books. She approaches her old investment firm, but she still needs a man on the inside, someone who won't look too hard. And she can't bribe him, because it's all out in the open.

So she schedules lunch with a former employee, who she knows feels a sense of gratitude and maybe even attraction. She lays it on thick, an irresistible cocktail of sensuality and desperation. She needs you. The company needs you. You can be the hero. Where the truth isn't enough, she makes it up. Then she smiles, hands you the papers, says she'll call later. You're so smart you think you can kill three birds. Repay a favour, land a commission, line up a promotion. Those papers are the last thing on your mind.

She almost got away with it. But we danced.

*He paces around the room, trying it on for size.*

NICHOLAS

Quite a story. You should be a writer.

SAMANTHA

I prefer fiction.

NICHOLAS

That's what this is.

SAMANTHA

Do you really believe that?

NICHOLAS

There's no evidence, no proof, not a single fact to support what you're saying.

SAMANTHA

No, just common sense and a woman's intuition.

NICHOLAS

Is that what I should tell my boss?

SAMANTHA

I don't care what you tell him.

NICHOLAS

Natalie's salary is way more than those payments.



SAMANTHA

You can never have too much money, honey.

*More pacing. He shakes his head as he walks.*

SAMANTHA

Look, how did the company get in trouble?

NICHOLAS

The financial crisis and the recession.

SAMANTHA

Translate.

NICHOLAS

They got hit from both sides. Less sales and less credit.

SAMANTHA

What are you saying, she didn't see it coming?

NICHOLAS

None of us saw it coming.

*He sits down on the arm of the sofa. Knits his brow, rubs his temples.*

NICHOLAS

Let me tell you a story.

SAMANTHA

About what?

NICHOLAS

You like stories, don't you?

SAMANTHA

Is this the best time?

NICHOLAS

Let me tell you the goddamn story!

*She sits, anxiously.*

SAMANTHA

I'm listening.

NICHOLAS

You know what paper trading is?

SAMANTHA

No.

NICHOLAS

It's how people used to learn the market. You trade pieces of paper instead of real stocks. It's how my dad taught me, when I was eight or nine.

He'd point to a stock in the newspaper, and I'd try to remember whether it was up or down from the week before. One day, I asked if I could buy one. So he grabbed a napkin, wrote the words 'Air Jamaica' on it, and gave it to me. One became two, two became four and soon I had a whole stack of napkins. The dinner table was my market, and Dad was my broker. Once, I tried cheating and he got very angry. We didn't play for a while after that.

Even now, when I make a big investment, I still write up a napkin. It's stupid, but it makes it feel okay. I guess it reminds me of Dad. I really wish he was here. He always knew what to do.

*Samantha watches him closely.*

SAMANTHA

What did you do, Nicholas?

*He doesn't answer. Instead, he gets his briefcase.  
From inside, he pulls out a cocktail napkin.*

SAMANTHA

What's that? Is that a napkin? What did you do, Nicky?

*He holds out the napkin, and she takes it gingerly.*

SAMANTHA

Why does this say 'Isle Five'? What's going on? What did you do?

*She's getting a bit hysterical.*

NICHOLAS

You know, he didn't always treat Mom right. But he was a good father to me. I really loved him.

*Are his eyes moist?*

SAMANTHA

Nicky, look at me. I'm your wife. Tell me what you did.

*Pivoting moods, he starts laughing, an empty  
laugh that Samantha doesn't know how to handle.*

NICHOLAS

*(punctuating his words)*

What did I do? That is the question. What. Did. I. Do.

SAMANTHA

*(calmly)*

I'm not going to get mad. Whatever it is, we'll get through it.

*This prompts more hollow laughter.*

NICHOLAS

Okay. I'll tell you what I did.

*He drumrolls on the coffee table. When he speaks, it is with large gesticulations and vocal flourishes.*

NICHOLAS

Three weeks ago, when Isle Five's stock went down, I took some of the money in our investment account and bought some shares. Because you see, my dear wife, I knew the company was healthy. They just didn't have any money. But all they needed was a loan, and the stock would go up again.

Then two weeks ago, when a boardmember spoke to the press and the price went down further, I took the rest of the money in our investment account and bought some more shares.

*At this point he produces, with a little flourish, another napkin from the briefcase, again marked with a handwritten 'ISLE FIVE'.*

NICHOLAS

Because you see, my dear wife, I knew the company was healthy. They just didn't have any money, or PR. But all they needed was a loan, and the stock would go up again.

Then last week, when they fired their president and the price went down further, I scraped together some loose cash, borrowed some more from friends, went down to the bank and mortgaged this lovely two-bedroom, two-and-a-half bathroom house, and bought a whole truckload of shares.

*He overturns the briefcase, and dozens of napkins rain down.*

NICHOLAS

Because you see, my dear wife, I knew the company was healthy. They just didn't have any money, or PR, or a president. But all they needed was a loan, and the stock would go up again.

Then this week, it fell into place perfectly. Natalie became president.

She came to me for the loan. My fate was in my own hands. In a few days, when the stock went up, I would make so much money my commission would look like a rounding error. I could smell it.

Until about ten minutes ago. Because you see, my dear wife, now I don't have a fucking clue whether the company is healthy or not. And if you're right, and Natalie is dirty, all the napkins in the world won't scrub her clean.

*He grabs handfuls of napkins in his fists. Then drops them, listless.*

NICHOLAS

We're chained to them, like slaves on a ship. If they go under, we go under.

*He looks out the window.*

SAMANTHA

How could you do this without asking me?

NICHOLAS

What do you know about taking risks? You're afraid to go to a job interview. What great insights would you have provided, O literary one?

SAMANTHA

"Vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself/ And falls on the other."

NICHOLAS

What the hell is that?

SAMANTHA

Macbeth. Shakespeare.

NICHOLAS

Don't lecture me with dead white men. If you were out there earning a salary, we wouldn't be here.

SAMANTHA

Oh yes, we would. You'd still love money first, and me second.

NICHOLAS

Shakespeare?

SAMANTHA

That one's mine.

NICHOLAS

How do you think I pay for your club memberships, your many dresses, your manipedis, your Mini Cooper parked outside? I work seventy hours a week, fifty weeks a year. I'm tired all the time. I wake up tired. I go to work tired. I come home tired.

I go to bed tired. If I see a big, juicy opportunity to get some rest, you better believe I'm going to vault at it.

SAMANTHA

I don't know what happened, Nicholas, but you changed. You were different—softer, humbler, barer. Now all you care about is interest rates and index reports.

NICHOLAS

You know what happened, Samantha? I grew up.

SAMANTHA

So what was Constant Spring Rd? Playtime?

NICHOLAS

Yes, dammit! It was my father's apartment, and your mother's furniture. It was make-believe, a set, and we acted out the part of the newlyweds.

SAMANTHA

Those were the happiest days of my life. I thought we could do anything, go anywhere. I dreamt about us moving to England, in forests of Gothic spires.

NICHOLAS

While you were dreaming, I got us all this. And now it could be gone, all of it, by this time next week.

SAMANTHA

You'll have only yourself to blame.

NICHOLAS

No, no, a thousand times, no! It is your fault! You, perched like a bird of misfortune on my shoulder, always harping about my inadequacies and failures, always what I should have done, what I could have done, instead of what I have actually done. Even now, when a better wife would reach out to her husband, you're too busy exonerating yourself. You want a get-out-of-jail-free card? Here! Here! Here!

*He throws the napkins ineffectually at her. Then, spent, he crumples, sitting haphazardly on the floor. She doesn't know what to say or do.*

*With a bass rumble, the overdue rain adds its metallic percussion to the silence. Cooling the world down.*

*The phone RINGS, startling them. Samantha moves to answer it.*

NICHOLAS

Let it ring.

Why?  
SAMANTHA

It might be her.  
NICHOLAS

*She lets it ring out. Nicholas plays idly with a ten-dollar coin.*

The only way to know for sure is to ask her.  
SAMANTHA

Impossible. If I'm wrong, she'll be offended. If I'm right, she'll cover her tracks. You can't beat Natalie Winters.  
NICHOLAS

Winters. Winters' Wonderland.  
SAMANTHA

Could be a coincidence.  
NICHOLAS

Or a bit of cleverness.  
SAMANTHA

Everything about this has been two-sided, like this coin.  
NICHOLAS

*He flicks a coin on the coffeetable, sending it spinning like a top.*

That's it.  
SAMANTHA

What's it?  
NICHOLAS

*She holds the coin in her fingers.*

Every coin is stamped with the year it was created, right?  
SAMANTHA

Yeah. So?  
NICHOLAS

Companies are like that, too. There must be a record of when the company started.  
SAMANTHA

And if it's been around forever—  
NICHOLAS

SAMANTHA

Then she's safe, but if it's new—

NICHOLAS

Then we still don't know.

SAMANTHA

She's a liar and a thief.

NICHOLAS

There's an office in New Kingston. But that information isn't public.

SAMANTHA

Don't you know anybody who works there?

NICHOLAS

No. And even if I did, I wouldn't find out until after my meeting tomorrow, and long after Natalie calls in ten minutes.

SAMANTHA

I'll tell her you're not feeling well.

NICHOLAS

That might gel with Gina, but not with Natalie. No, there's no way around it. I have to decide now.

SAMANTHA

How?

NICHOLAS

Well, money got me into this mess.

*He takes the ten-dollar coin from her.*

NICHOLAS

Might as well get me out. I'll flip for it. Heads, I win it all back. Tails, I lose.

SAMANTHA

I don't understand.

NICHOLAS

Heads, I approve the loan. Tails, I reject it.

SAMANTHA

Are you joking? You can't do that.

NICHOLAS

Who's going to stop me?

SAMANTHA

You can't leave something like that up to chance.

NICHOLAS

It already is. We don't know whether Natalie is guilty or not.

SAMANTHA

I can make an educated guess.

NICHOLAS

I don't have that luxury.

SAMANTHA

Education?

NICHOLAS

Guesswork.

SAMANTHA

And what happens when they find out?

NICHOLAS

[JMMB]? How can they find what they're not looking for?

SAMANTHA

You can't cover it up. That's illegal.

NICHOLAS

No. It's good old-fashioned negligence, which is legal and as Jamaican as ackee and saltfish.

SAMANTHA

And what if they ask you?

NICHOLAS

I've never heard of Wonderland.

SAMANTHA

Yes, you have.

NICHOLAS

No. I haven't. And if they ask, neither have you.

SAMANTHA

No, no, no, sweetheart. I'm not playing this game.

NICHOLAS

Really? You want to go back to living in that tiny, one-bedroom apartment, with the smell of the Chiney-people on one side and the sounds of the black people on the other? No driveway, no front lawn, no space to escape. Because make no mistake, that's what's going to happen if Isle Five goes bankrupt. All of this is going to go bye-bye.

SAMANTHA

There has to be another way.



NICHOLAS

Why, Samantha? So you can sleep at night? Welcome to adulthood. Sometimes, it sucks.

SAMANTHA

I need a few minutes to think.

NICHOLAS

*(game show host)*

I'm sorry, but that's all the time we have left.

SAMANTHA

Be quiet.

NICHOLAS

Fine. I'm going to liquidate some assets.

*He unbuckles his belt and exits to the powder room, leaving the door half-open.*

*Samantha grabs the cordless handset and dials.*

SAMANTHA

*(sotto)*

Pick up, pick up, pick up...

*No answer on the other end. She looks in the direction of the bathroom. The sound of peeing. She redials. Someone answers.*

SAMANTHA

*(sotto)*

Gina? Don't say anything, I don't have time to explain. As a lawyer, do you have access to company records?

*(then)*

I don't know what it's called, it's like the registration papers.

*(then)*

Girl-child, just answer me.

*The toilet flushes inside the bathroom.*

SAMANTHA

Wonderland Limited. W-O-N... yes, like Alice. No, don't call me back. Text it to Nicholas' phone.

*She hangs up as Nicholas reappears, his hands still dripping.*

NICHOLAS

Hand-towel.

*She tosses it to him. When he exits briefly to replace it, she swipes his cell phone off the coffee table. Hiking her dress, she slips it into the only hiding place on her person, the waistband of her underwear.*

*He returns.*

NICHOLAS

Decision time.

*He takes the coin. Right before he flips it—*

SAMANTHA

What would your father say?

*This halts him. For a beat.*

NICHOLAS

My father is dead.

SAMANTHA

Only if you want him to be.

*He flips the coin. It sails gracefully up and down, landing in his palm. He slaps it onto the back of his other hand, glances at it, then repalms it.*

NICHOLAS

Heads.

SAMANTHA

I didn't see it.

NICHOLAS

It was heads.

SAMANTHA

I want to see it.

NICHOLAS

*(finality)*

I said it was heads.

*He goes over to the dining table, takes the now-flattened papers, rips them into pieces and throws them into the trash with finality. Then he moves the trashcan into a back corner.*

NICHOLAS

There. It's done. Behind us. Let's forget about it. What do you want to do? Want to dance?

SAMANTHA

I'm not in the mood.

NICHOLAS

Sam, this is the best thing for both of us. This way, our lives stay the same. You can still lace up your New Balance shoes, grab your Wilson racket, hop in your Mini Cooper, drive to Liguanea Club, buy a Gatorade, stop at Subway.

SAMANTHA

My life stays the same. I can hardly wait.

NICHOLAS

You can skip the sarcasm.

SAMANTHA

You can skip the altruism. This isn't about me, it's about you.

NICHOLAS

I can't go back there.

SAMANTHA

The apartment?

NICHOLAS

There. Out there. With them.

SAMANTHA

Who?

NICHOLAS

Our fellow Jamaicans, dressed in their ridiculous clothes singing their ridiculous songs, standing in the street begging me for school books, school clothes, school fees, or selling me some fruit they stole from someone else's tree. They talk like dyslexics and drive like maniacs. This whole city is one big, endless ghetto session and if I had my way, I'd shoot everybody with a green weave, a gold chain or a red plate. Until then, I just want my security gates and security guards and security systems to keep them out. This is my sanctuary. This is my home.

SAMANTHA

It's my home, too.

*He checks the time.*

NICHOLAS

This pizza is taking forever. Where's my phone?

SAMANTHA

I don't know.

I thought I left it right here. NICHOLAS  
 You must have moved it. SAMANTHA  
 I don't think so. NICHOLAS  
 Why don't you get a bottle of wine, and I'll look for it. SAMANTHA  
 I thought you weren't in the mood. NICHOLAS  
 I changed my mind. SAMANTHA  
*He shakes his head as he moves to the kitchen.*  
 Women. NICHOLAS  
*He exits. As he does, she reaches up her dress for the phone.*  
 Red or white? NICHOLAS (OFF)  
 White. SAMANTHA  
*She checks for a message.*  
*SAMANTHA*  
*(to herself)*  
 2009. SAMANTHA  
*Checks the newspaper.*  
 2009. SAMANTHA  
*She holds up the phone as Nicholas returns with a bottle of wine, a corkscrew and two empty glasses.*  
 Got it. SAMANTHA  
 Where was it? NICHOLAS  
 Hiding in plain sight. Thank you. SAMANTHA

*She takes one of the glasses. He pours both.*

I'm sorry about before. NICHOLAS

Me too. SAMANTHA

I shouldn't have shouted at you. NICHOLAS

I overreacted. SAMANTHA

And I should have told you. NICHOLAS

You did what you thought was best. SAMANTHA

I'll do better. NICHOLAS

And I'll follow your lead. SAMANTHA

*Nicholas holds up his glass.*

To honesty. NICHOLAS

Honesty. SAMANTHA

*They clink, and sip. Samantha has her legs tucked under her on one end of the couch. Nicholas leans back at the other.*

Mm. This is nice. NICHOLAS

It is. SAMANTHA

Where's it from? NICHOLAS

Remember I went to that function with those people that time? SAMANTHA

Oh, yes. NICHOLAS

They gave me. SAMANTHA

NICHOLAS

You know, sometimes I forget how gorgeous you are.

*He takes her hand in his.*

SAMANTHA

I bet you say that to all your wives.

NICHOLAS

I do.

*He brings her hand to his lips, kisses it. She's enjoying the attention.*

*Slowly, he trails his hand down her arm and cups her breast gently.*

*She responds by crawling over to him on the couch. He puts his arm around her, she tilts her head and they KISS. It is a slow, lingering kiss that turns them both on.*

*He leans her back onto the couch, hovering over her. The clock above their heads lands on nine o'clock. On cue, Nicholas' Blackberry RINGS. They both turn to look at it.*

SAMANTHA

You should answer it.

*He reaches for it. Cautiously brings it to his ear.*

NICHOLAS

Hello, Natalie.

*A glance at his wife, lying mussed on the sofa.*

NICHOLAS

No, you're not interrupting. Yes, I can hear you.

*He pushes himself upright.*

NICHOLAS

Yes. I think I've pieced it together.

*Samantha gets up and stands behind the couch. Behind Nicholas.*

NICHOLAS

Yes, everything is fine.

*(then)*

I was saying everything is fine.

*She picks up the corkscrew from the side table.*

NICHOLAS

That's more than you asked for at lunch. No, there's no problem. I'll revise the—

*He doesn't get any further, because in one swift and athletic motion, Samantha grabs the phone with her left hand and swings her right hand outstretched. In the space of a second, the phone is at her ear and he is staring into the gleaming sharp end of a luxury corkscrew.*

SAMANTHA

Now you listen to me, because I'm only saying this once. I hope you enjoyed your little adventure in Wonderland. You think you can run my husband down the rabbit hole, but you forgot about me. I'm the Queen of Hearts, you Cheshire pussycat, and tomorrow morning Isle Five is gonna lose its head.

*And just as gracefully she tosses the phone back to Nicholas, who catches it in a state of petrified shock.*

*The speed of her interference has robbed him of speech. One minute he was in control, and now...*

*They stand there.*

*After an interminable silence—*

SAMANTHA

One of us had to have the balls.

NICHOLAS

Jesus H Christ.

*Samantha returns to the sofa and her glass of wine. Nicholas is distraught.*

SAMANTHA

Where were we?

NICHOLAS

What was all that about honesty?

SAMANTHA

Darling, that's about as honest as I can get.

NICHOLAS

Dear God.

SAMANTHA

I said I'd do what was best for us, and I did.

NICHOLAS

Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay. Don't panic. Think. How do I fix this?

SAMANTHA

Flip a coin.

NICHOLAS

What have you done?

SAMANTHA

Made you Employee of the Month.

NICHOLAS

You just erased ten years in thirty seconds.

SAMANTHA

They might even give you a raise.

NICHOLAS

I have to call her back.

*He presses redial, puts the phone to his ear.*

NICHOLAS

Voicemail. My life is falling apart and I get voicemail.

SAMANTHA

Finish your wine.

NICHOLAS

She can't go to another firm. They won't disburse the funds in time to avoid bankruptcy. Then again, if she stole the money, it suits her to let the trail get buried in the collapse.

SAMANTHA

She's as guilty as they come. Wonderland Limited appeared the same year she took over Isle Five's finances.

NICHOLAS

Then it's worse than I thought. She doesn't care what happens with the loan. She either stays CEO or gets away with millions.

SAMANTHA

Always one step ahead.

NICHOLAS

Played me for a fool.



SAMANTHA

I never trusted her.

NICHOLAS

And now she knows I know.

SAMANTHA

No, she knows I know.

NICHOLAS

If you know, I know. She knows that.

SAMANTHA

You said it. You can't beat Natalie Winters.

NICHOLAS

There has to be a way.

SAMANTHA

So you can sleep at night?

NICHOLAS

Why, Samantha? Why'd you do it?

SAMANTHA

You really want to know.

*His face is in his hands. Lost in despair.*

NICHOLAS

No.

SAMANTHA

Good. I'll tell you. I did it because ten years ago, I married a handsome, hard-working, humble man. He wanted to make a place for himself, live somewhere nice with his wife. I was a smart girl, but I didn't have your drive. With you, I felt I could do anything. You inspired me.

And for a while, it was great. You made a living in the day and made love to me at night. We started saving. I felt lucky to have you. I wanted you to feel lucky to have me, too.

Then we moved here. And I don't know what it was—maybe it's because we have all this space—but it's never been the same. The money isn't for us anymore. It has a life of its own. It turns into furniture and clothes and a thousand things we don't need. I've never known what to do with all this... stuff. All I ever wanted was that handsome, hard-working, humble man I married. My husband.

*She beckons to him. But he doesn't move. And so the moment hangs there, pregnant.*

NICHOLAS

You really should be a writer. I mean it. Maybe even for a living. I mean, if I hadn't been there, I'd believe you. You see, that's not the way I remember it. I remember the garbage in the kitchen used to smell up the whole apartment, so we'd spray half a bottle of Lysol and then suffocate. If it rained like this, water seeped into the walls. We must have painted it five different times. Didn't make a difference. And how much money did we pour down the drain trying to fix the plumbing? I lost count.

Then we moved here.

*A wry smile, an upward glance, seeing this house. His house. He moves around the space, touching the furniture, caressing the walls.*

NICHOLAS

This cushion. This vase. This wood. You know what this is? Peace of mind. Ten years of my nasty, stinking sweat transformed into pure, pristine peace of mind. And then you—

*(a mirthless chuckle)*

You.

*(with rising bile)*

You, you, you, you—

*But instead of throwing whatever vile words were on his lips, he stops. Takes a deep, calming breath. When he opens his eyes, there is a new coldness. When he speaks, it is with a terrible, quiet stillness, like the eye of a hurricane.*

NICHOLAS

I won't forgive you. Not tomorrow. Not next week, next month, next year. Whether they foreclose on the house, or I buy six houses. Whether I die of cancer or live to be a hundred, I will always, until my very last breath remember what you did to me tonight, and I will not forgive you.

*Out of all the reactions she may have expected, this was not among them. It hits her with full force, and she didn't brace for it. It strikes her in the very middle of her body, and radiates outwards, slowly, imperceptibly, mercilessly, so that her heart reacts first, then her shoulders, then her arms and legs, and then, only after she has been hollowed out by its brute intensity, do the tears brim, and spill over.*

*Throughout this miniature implosion, Nicholas watches her, as immovable and impassive as the rock of Gibraltar. If anything, her tears only make him harder. Under that exterior, however, roils a volcano of emotions.*

*She cries silently.*

*She takes a step towards him.*

*He takes a step back.*

SAMANTHA

I only wanted—

NICHOLAS

I don't care.

*Her tears flow freely. Unashamedly.*

NICHOLAS

I think I will finish my wine. Might not be able to afford it next week.

*He steps past the heap that is his wife, picks up his crystal glass, and drinks generously. It burns on the way down.*

NICHOLAS

Mm. That is good.

*He sits. Redials Natalie.*

NICHOLAS

I apologize for my wife. Please disregard what she said. She's very jealous and gets carried away. This doesn't change anything. I'm sure we can find a way to make us both happy. Okay. Give me a call when you hear this. Thank you.

*He hangs up, defeated. He has betrayed himself. Samantha laughs, a sad laugh.*

NICHOLAS

You think this is funny?

*She dries her eyes.*

SAMANTHA

I'm sure your father would be proud. His one begotten son.

NICHOLAS

*(sadly)*

What he doesn't know can't hurt him.

SAMANTHA

His biggest investment.

*He shakes his head.*

NICHOLAS

It wasn't supposed to be like this. I'm a good person. I don't get drunk, I don't smoke, I don't sleep around. I'm a good person. A good person.

SAMANTHA

There are no good people. Only people. And the choices they make.

NICHOLAS

Well, you made one hell of a choice.

SAMANTHA

Ten years ago.

NICHOLAS

Ten minutes ago.

SAMANTHA

I did it for us.

NICHOLAS

No, you didn't. You did it because you're childless, jobless, friendless and directionless, wasting your life at the gym and the salon, clinging to a fairytale version of our marriage that never existed. Out of some demented mixture of confusion and delusion you expected me to give you the life you didn't have, intact with hopes and fears, friends and family. It's pathetic, really.

SAMANTHA

You're angry now, but you'll thank me later.

NICHOLAS

*(clearly angry)*

I'm not angry. I'm fed up. I've had it up to here with your condescension, your mood swings, everything. I don't want to even see or hear you right now. In fact, I think you should spend the night somewhere else.

SAMANTHA

What?

NICHOLAS

You heard me.

*She can't believe what she heard.*

SAMANTHA

You're kicking me out?

I'm asking you. NICHOLAS

Asking me what? SAMANTHA

To go. NICHOLAS

No. SAMANTHA

You're going. NICHOLAS

You're telling me? SAMANTHA

We're not both staying here. NICHOLAS

Then you leave. SAMANTHA

It's still my house. NICHOLAS

You're kicking me out. SAMANTHA

Call Gina. NICHOLAS

You're serious. SAMANTHA

Tell her we've had an argument. Tell her I've kicked you out. Tell her whatever you want. NICHOLAS

It's raining. SAMANTHA

Take my umbrella. NICHOLAS

Stick it up your ass. I'm not setting foot outside this house. SAMANTHA

*She retreats into an upstage chair, and parks herself.*

*Nicholas exits to the bedroom and reappears with a small white duffel bag.*

*Going around the room, he collects various pieces of Samantha's clothing—pants, blouse, panties—and stuffs them inside. He zips the bag up.*

*Marching to the front door, he throws it open and drops the bag at his feet. A gust of cold night air sweeps in. Beyond, the rain awaits.*

NICHOLAS

Out.

*She doesn't twitch.*

NICHOLAS

I'm not going to tell you again.

*It's a standoff, him by the door, her in the chair.*

*He approaches her, but as he does so, she swiftly stands and produces a tennis racket that was laying nearby. She holds it up between them.*

SAMANTHA

I've been working on my backhand.

*He is undeterred. She does swing at him, but in his anger he catches it in his hand and yanks it roughly from her.*

*He wraps his arm around her waist and half-pulls her to the door, while she scratches and kicks with surprising strength.*

*He kicks the duffel outside, and grabs his umbrella.*

NICHOLAS

You might need this.

*He tosses that outside, too. She's still wriggling. He talks right by her ear.*

NICHOLAS

And if you see the pizza man, tell him he's late.

*With a heave, he forces her through the door, slams it shut, and twists the lock.*

*After a moment, she starts banging on the door. Nicholas starts tidying up. He takes the wine back into the kitchen.*

*Eventually, the banging stops.*

*He returns. Eases off his leather shoes. Loosens a couple buttons on his shirt and cuffs. It's not clear whether he is any calmer, but he's certainly making a show of relaxing.*

*And then it happens.*

*The silence is shattered by the unmistakable sound of something heavy hitting sheet metal, followed immediately by the loud klaxon of a horn and flashing red lights. The alarm on his Audi. Another impact. And another.*

*He leaps to the door, unlocks and opens it. What he sees drains the blood from his face. He exits into the rain.*

*A few moments later, he drags Samantha unceremoniously inside. She is soaked to the bone and still clutching the broken remains of the umbrella. She is also shivering, from the cold without and the fire within.*

*He deposits her in the middle of the room, where she forms a puddle. He finds the car remote and clicks it. Silence returns.*

NICHOLAS

You unstoppable bitch.

*She looks at him.*

SAMANTHA

Sticks and stones, darling. Sticks and stones.

*She rises. Squeezes water from her hair. Grabs a nearby towel. Wraps it around herself.*

NICHOLAS

Look at you. Shivering like a wet rat, having racked up yet another cost.

SAMANTHA

Our marriage is crumbling like a sand castle at high tide, and you're still thinking about money. You're such a sad man.

NICHOLAS

Your handiwork, dear.

SAMANTHA

What I thought was drive is nothing but garden-variety greed.

NICHOLAS

Cheap words from such expensive lips.

SAMANTHA

*(patronizing)*

Oh, you're trying to keep up. That's cute.

NICHOLAS

How many flowers will it take to buy happiness this time?

SAMANTHA

Flowers?

NICHOLAS

You don't eat chocolate.

SAMANTHA

After everything you've said to me, you think flowers are going to solve anything?

NICHOLAS

You know what? You're right. I really don't care. I have more important things to worry about. Gina can sort out your asinine feelings.

SAMANTHA

I might not return.

NICHOLAS

What you gonna do, Samantha? Live off the non-existent savings from your non-existent writings? Sleep in Gina's guest room the rest of your life? Move in with your parents? You have nothing. Nothing.

SAMANTHA

Hm. I guess next week we'll have that in common.

*He slaps her. Hard. She reels. It's so hard he actually hurts his hand a little.*

*She can't believe it.*

*She exercises her jaw, touches her finger on the inside of her lip. Blood? No.*

SAMANTHA

*(softly)*

You hit me.





This table— *(paws books and tchotchkes to the floor)*  
 This vase— *(sweeps everything off the dining table)*

*She picks up a vase with flowers and hurls it at Nicholas. It hits him and smashes. He's had enough. He approaches her. She grabs the house phone and throws it at him, wire trailing in the air. He dodges it and grabs both her arms.*

NICHOLAS

You want to play rough? Okay, my turn.

*While he talks, he pushes her backward until her back is up against the glass of the decorative wall.*

NICHOLAS

You think I married you because you were so super-smart? I'll let you in on a little secret. I put up with you for ten years for one reason and one reason only: You're a hot piece of ass.

*(he gropes her ass)*

That's it. I wanted a hot piece of ass for a wife, and I got it.

SAMANTHA

No.

NICHOLAS

Oh yes. I got ten good years out of you, but now it's over. There's no turning back. You've pushed me to my very limit. It's over, you hear me? OVER!

*He punches the glass right beside her face, and it cracks into a spiderweb of shards.*

*There's nothing left to say.*

*So they don't say anything.*

*It is over.*

*The phone RINGS.*

*Samantha picks her way through the wrecked living area and finds the phone. She picks up without saying anything.*

SAMANTHA

*(into phone)*

Ah, yes. The Winters of our discontent.

*(to Nicholas)*

It's for you, White Rabbit.

*He takes the phone from her, and she exits to the bedroom.*

NICHOLAS

Hello, Natalie.

You've been calling all evening? Why didn't you—

Yes, I know Red Hills has bad reception. So you didn't hear anything that—  
Nothing at all? Then why did you call?

Yes, I know it's missing. The last entry. Wonderland. Why?

*His face falls as he hears the truth.*

NICHOLAS

The printer. Of course. Your printer chopped off the bottom of each page.

What do they sell? Party supplies.

I see.

No, the thought never crossed my mind.

Yes, you too.

*He ends the call.*

*Samantha returns, wearing black sweats and a sweater. A bag slung over her shoulder.*

*And a bright red scarf.*

NICHOLAS

It was a mistake.

*(shakes his head in disbelief)*

It happens at the office all the time. The printer didn't print the last line. She's been trying to tell me the whole night, but I never answered the phone. She didn't even hear what you said, because she lives on a hill. We invented the whole thing. It was all a mistake.

*A pause.*

NICHOLAS

You know, I don't like my job, really. I do it because I know how to do it. You were right about that, at least.

*She walks to the front door.*

Don't leave. NICHOLAS

*A pause.*

Please. NICHOLAS

*A pause.*

I love you. NICHOLAS

That's what makes this so hard. SAMANTHA

*Silence.*

Goodbye. SAMANTHA

Bye. NICHOLAS

*She exits.*

*He sits on the messy floor.*

*Stares into empty space.*

*Surrounded by meaningless wealth.*

*And cries.*

*Slow fade to black.*

FIN.