

The Wedding Dress  
By  
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The Wedding Dress  
Dramatis Personae

Ted	<i>Sally's Husband</i>
Sally	<i>Ted's Wife</i>
Ginny	<i>John's fiancée</i>
John	<i>Ginny's fiancé</i>
Molly	<i>John's Mother</i>
Natalie	<i>Ken's fiancée</i>
Susan	<i>Natalie's friend</i>
Cathy	<i>Natalie's mother</i>
Steve	<i>Natalie's father</i>

## SCENE 1

*(Exterior Scene, played in front of curtain, or even in front of the stage. There is a table with a number of junk items on it, but the centerpiece is a large box, which reads "Wedding Dress: Never Opened Never Worn" A sign nearby reads "Free" or "Town Dump")*

*Ted, dressed causally, jeans, t-shirt, enters, carrying a couple trash bags. He walks by the table, pauses, and looks the box over. He finally crosses and exits. He enters again, walking back empty handed. He lingers at the table again, this time picking up the box. He looks it all over, sets it down, exits out. He returns a moment later with another trashbag, stops, looks at the dress again. He exits out, returns empty handed again, and this time he picks the box up, holds it. Then, visibly coming to a decision, he exits out the way he started, carrying the box.*

## SCENE 2

*(Curtain opens, interior Scene, present day. The scene is a comfortable living room, couch, easy chair, TV, knick-knacks, etc. It looks lived in, and loved. Sally is cleaning, she tidies up the magazines on the coffee table, dusts under the knickknacks.)*

*(Ted enters from SR carrying a large box.)*

TED: Hey, babe! I'm back from the dump!

SALLY: *(Looking up)* Good, you're just in time to help me finish in the kitchen ...what on *Earth* is that? *(pointing to the box)*

TED: I found it at the dump. It was on that table I was telling you about, the one that people put stuff on they don't want to throw away but don't want to keep either? Kind of like freecycle. *(Sets*

*the box down on the low coffee table, and hugs Sally. He tries to give her a kiss, but she is not distracted by the ploy.)*

SALLY: Yeah, I figured that, but what *is* it?

TED: The box says it's a wedding dress. Never worn.

SALLY: What? (*Picks up box, reading*) Wedding dress...never opened, never worn. Whatever possessed you to bring home a wedding dress? From the dump? And where are we going to put it? It's not living on my coffee table.

TED: (*He hasn't thought this far ahead yet.*) I...uh...I dunno. I just thought...well, it didn't seem right for it to be at the dump. I thought maybe it should go to Good Will, or we should take it to church and see if someone there needs one.

SALLY: (*Ever the practical one*) What size is it?

TED: I dunno, I didn't open it.

(*Sally sits down on the couch and begins to open the outer box.*)

SALLY: My God, it's still in the shrink wrap! (*She draws out an interior box, shrink wrapped. Through the window, the wedding dress can be seen*)

TED: (*Sitting down next to her and helping her manhandle the box*) Is there a size on the box?

SALLY: (*She looks at it all over*) No. We'd have to open it.

(*They stare at the box for a moment.*)

TED: It's pretty. (*A pause, Sally shoots him a look*) Not as pretty as yours, though.

SALLY: (*Amused*) Nice recovery. (*She gives him a peck on the cheek*) So what are we going to do with it?

TED: I dunno. Make an announcement in church?

SALLY: If anybody needs a wedding dress, we found one at the dump? But don't worry it's still in the box?

TED: Okay, so maybe Good Will. Or I could take down to the high school. Maybe their drama department could find a use for it.

SALLY: Don't be ridiculous. It's too nice to do that...it'll get ruined there.

TED: It was just a thought.

*(There is a pause again, as they look at the box.)*

SALLY: I don't want to open it, but people will want to know what size it is when we offer to give it away.

TED: So open it.

SALLY: But...I don't know. It just feels weird.

TED: I guess.

SALLY: Makes you wonder why it was at the dump in the first place.

TED: What do you mean?

SALLY: Why would someone put a never worn wedding dress at the dump?

TED: It was with a bunch of stuff, looked like yard sale leftovers. Maybe they tried to sell it but couldn't?

SALLY: But *why*?

TED: I don't know, sweetie. (*Shaking his head*)

SALLY: I wonder what its story is...

(*Long pause*)

SALLY: Well, come on, (*She slaps her husband on the knee and stands up.*) That kitchen floor isn't going to Swiffer itself. And guess whose turn it is to clean the bathroom?

TED: Awww...but I did it last week. (*rising, setting the box on the table*)

SALLY: No you didn't, you were out last week, remember?

TED: (*Stubbornly*) No.

SALLY: (*Grabbing his arm*) C'mon.

TED: I'm coming, I'm coming. (*Sally lets go, Ted trails.*)

SALLY: Come on, slow poke. You won't get out of it this week.

TED: I'll be there in a minute.

(*Ted lingers, casting glances back at the box as if drawn to it. He stops at the edge of the stage, still staring at the box, as the lights fade down around him, the box bathed in a halo of light.*)

(*The lights all go down, save the light over the box, and then it goes down too. Crew rearranges the furniture and changes the knickknacks.*)

### SCENE 3

*(Ted has changed his clothes, he is now John. He enters the edge of the stage as lights come up, taking a seat on the couch reading legal documents.)*

*(Ginny, his fiancée, runs in from SL)*

GINNY: John! John! I found it! *(She jumps on the couch next to him)*

JOHN: *Oaf!* Found what?

GINNY: A dress! *The dress!*

JOHN: The dress for what? *(Not looking up from his reading)*

GINNY: *John!* *(She hits him)*

JOHN: Oh, *that* dress! Good. *(He goes back to his file)*

GINNY: *John!* *(She rips the file out of his hands)*

JOHN: Okay, okay, Ginny, you found the dress, congratulations. *(He kisses her on the cheek)* What else do you want me to say?

GINNY: I don't know, be excited with me!

JOHN: *(Grins like an idiot and hops in place on the couch)*  
There, is that excited enough.

GINNY: *(Eyerolling)* Jo-hn.

JOHN: So you found it, huh?

GINNY: Yes, it's beautiful! You're going to love it.

JOHN: I'm sure I am, it's going to be on you, isn't it? And after the wedding, I get to take it off you, right?

GINNY: John! (*Slaps him gently, at his flattery.*)

JOHN: So when do I get to see it? You don't buy into all that claptrap about seeing it before the wedding day, do you? It seems kind of silly when we're living together.

GINNY: It's being delivered here. They didn't have my size in stock. It'll be here in a few weeks.

JOHN: A few weeks?

GINNY: It'll probably be here right around the time I get back from LA.

JOHN: (*Hugging Ginny*) I wish you didn't have to go. I'm going to miss you.

GINNY: It's only for a few days. And besides, distance makes the heart grow fonder right?

JOHN: I'll show you fonder (*Growling, he tackles her onto the couch.*)

GINNY: No, stop! (*Giggling and shrieking*)

*(The lights goes dim as from offstage, a telephone rings. From off stage, Sally's voice is heard. John/Ted rises from the couch and steps forward, softly highlighted by the spot)*

SALLY'S VOICE: Can you get it, Ted?

JOHN/TED: Yeah, hang on!

*(John/Ted picks up a portable phone from somewhere on the stage. He answers)*

JOHN/TED: Hello...? Yeah. Yeah, hang on. Sally!

SALLY: *(Enters)* Who is it? *(She holds out her hand for the phone.)*

JOHN/TED: *(Confused, puzzled)* It's your sister.

SALLY: *(frowning her brow)* Oh? *(She takes the phone)* Hello, Karen?...What?...When?

JOHN/TED: *(Concerned)* Is everything okay?

SALLY: *(Turning to him. Abstractedly, distantly.)* Yes. Fine...*(Adding hurriedly)* I'm going to take this in the other room.

JOHN/TED: *(Calling after her as she goes, bewildered and a bit forlorn.)* Okay...let me know I can do anything.

*The lights fade to black.*

#### SCENE 4

*(At lights up, John is carrying a suitcase into the living room. Ginny is on the telephone, sitting on the couch)*

GINNY: Yes...my flight leaves in three hours. I'm on my way to the airport now, someone will meet me there?  
Really?...Excellent. I look forward to meeting you. Yes. Thank you. Bye.

*(Rising from the couch, excitedly)*

GINNY: The gallery is having someone meet me at the airport!

JOHN: Hey, that sounds like the big time.

GINNY: (*Gives him big hug*) I know, I'm so excited.

JOHN: I just wish it wasn't in Los Angeles.

GINNY: Oh, you worry too much. (*She pulls him down to the couch.*) Everything is going to be fine.

JOHN: (*Sighing*) I know, I just hate watching you leave.

GINNY: I'm not going away forever. It'll only be a couple of nights. And then I'll be back home to my favourite lawyer. (*This has the air of an inside joke*) You'll behave yourself while I'm gone, right?

JOHN: (*Snorting*) Yeah, sure. I'll get up, go to work, work late, come home, burn dinner, eat too much dessert, watch tv, fall asleep. Lather, rinse, repeat.

GINNY: You won't call me? (*pouting*)

JOHN: (*Smiling*) Of course I will. Every night.

GINNY: And you should do something fun while I'm gone...go out to dinner at a new place, or take a walk through Central Park.

JOHN: And why would I do that without you?

GINNY: Because you're not spontaneous enough. And besides, you call me after, and tell me all about it, and we'll have lots to talk about.

JOHN: Won't you have enough to tell me about, with this gallery and your paintings?

GINNY: Well, I don't want it to be all about me. You have to have something to share, too.

JOHN: *(Smiling)* Okay.

GINNY: And when I get back, my dress should be here.

JOHN: I'll let you know when it gets here.

GINNY: Good! *(Sighing)* Only a few more months until the wedding.

JOHN: Seems like an eternity.

GINNY: It won't be that long. I'm so lucky you found me. I hated being alone.

JOHN: I hated being alone too. But we won't ever be alone again, will we?

GINNY: No, we won't.

*(Horn from outside.)*

GINNY: There's the cab. Grab my bag?

JOHN: I've got it. *(Grabs suitcase)*

*(Ginny kisses him on the cheek, picking up large art portfolio)*

GINNY: I'll be back before you know it. And next time, you can come with me.

*(They exit. Lights down)*

## SCENE 5

*(At lights up, John is walking onto the stage, talking on his cell phone. The wedding dress is now sitting on the coffee table.)*

JOHN: Yeah, it's here. They delivered it this morning. Ginny's going to be so happy, now she can have the alterations done...no, I don't know why it takes five weeks for a wedding dress to come in...yes, we'll let you know. Yes. Okay. Love you, too Mom. Bye.

*(John hangs up the phone and enters the main room. He crosses to an answering machine, and hits play.)*

GINNY'S VOICE: Hey honey, it's me. I know you're not home yet, but I called to tell you I got an earlier flight out. I'll be at the airport by five. *(John looks at his watch, startled, and starts to turn)* It's Northeast Flight 715. I can't wait to get home to you. See you soon! I love you!

*(John exits the room, and the lights dim. A stagehand enters the room, and turns on the television.)*

TELEVISION VOICE: In the three weeks since Northeast Flight 715 tragically plunged off runway during take off, investigators still have not yet determined the cause of the crash. Investigators located the Boeing 737's black boxes shortly after the crash, but the data has so far proved inconclusive. A spokesperson for the NTSB refused to speculate on the nature of the the direction of investigation, only that it is ongoing. In other news, families said their final farewells to the last of the victims to be laid to rest...

*(The television turns off, as the lights come back up. Boxes have been scattered around the stage during the black out, some half full. John and Molly enter. They're dressed as if from a funeral.)*

MOLLY: Is there anything I can get you?

JOHN: No, I'm all set. *(He shucks off his jacket, tossing it carelessly over the couch, he then starts to rollup his sleeves.)*

MOLLY: Are you sure?

JOHN: I'm fine, Mother. Fine. *(He grabs the nearest box, and puts it on the table, he begins grabbing knickknacks, apparently at random and puts them in the box.)*

MOLLY: Why don't I just go whip up something in the kitchen?

JOHN: *(Angrily)* I'm fine, leave me alone!

*(There is an awkward, horrible silence.)*

MOLLY: Oh, Johnny, I'm sorry.

JOHN: It's fine. I just don't feel like anything right now. *(He continues packing)*

MOLLY: I'm just trying to help.

JOHN: I know! I know. I just...need to keep moving.

MOLLY: But, sweetie, you've done nothing but keep moving since the crash. You need to take time for yourself.

JOHN: If I stop, I have to think.

MOLLY: Honey, sometimes you have to think. You can't keep moving forever.

JOHN: Mom, just please stop, okay. I love you, but just...be quiet.

*(For a long moment, Molly watches John as he continues to pack up things around the living room. John reaches the table, and,*

*under the mail, and other debris, the box with the wedding dress reappears. John freezes, and gasps. He drops into the couch, shaking.)*

MOLLY: John?

JOHN: What am I going to do with this stuff? What am I doing? There's no where to send it...Ginny had no one...just me...and, oh God, she's gone...gone... *(The dam breaks. John loses it.)*

MOLLY: *(Crosses to the couch, and sits next to him, hold his shoulders, as John sobs.)* Oh, John. My poor baby boy. I'm so sorry

JOHN: Why, Mom, why? It's not fair!

MOLLY: Oh, I know. I know how hard it was for me when I buried your father.

JOHN: But you were married to Dad for nearly 30 years! Ginny and I...never even got to one. *(He holds his head in his hands.)* I don't understand. It hurts so much to even...look at this stuff.

MOLLY: Is that why you're trying to put it away?

JOHN: I thought maybe, if I couldn't see...if there weren't any reminders...*(his breath hitches)*...but she's everywhere I look.

MOLLY: Of course she is.

JOHN: She decorated this place when we moved in...the paintings...they're all hers. That's why she was out in LA...there was this gallery...they were interested in doing an exhibit...she was so excited...*(He trails off as he sobs again)*...ever since I met her, at the firm, she wanted to be an artist...get out of her cubicle...and she was so close now...so close. And now she's gone...I didn't want her to go!

MOLLY: You never told me about how you met.

JOHN: I never did?

MOLLY: No...you just called me up one day and said, guess what Mom? I'm moving in with this girl, and I love her, and we might get married.

JOHN: Oh.

MOLLY: Tell me about it?

JOHN: Well...I had just started, the junior-est junior partner, my office was this tiny closet, but it was right next to the bullpen...the big area with cubicles where all the para-legals worked. Ginny worked there, almost right outside my office. She was...different. She never ate lunch with the others, always at her desk. So I started stopping by to say hello...and then we started to eat lunch together....then the movies...she loves...loved movies. (*His breath hitches as he speaks in the past tense*)

MOLLY: And?

JOHN: We liked to take walks through the city together. She said they inspired her. (*He gets up and wanders around the room. He points out a window to the street*) And we were walking up the street one day, and there was a sign out front, for an open house. We walked in on whim, and she fell in love with the place...it all happened so fast. I still can't believe I bought it the next day. . I was never spontaneous before Ginny. She helped me...live.

MOLLY: (*She rises, and comes up behind John, putting a hand on his shoulder*) She sounds like a wonderful girl, John.

JOHN: She was. (*He turns and sobs into his mother's shoulder.*)  
Oh, Mom, I don't know what I'm going to do... (*He cries, Molly consoles him gently, leading him back to the couch*)

MOLLY: Shhh. Shhh.

(*They reach the couch and sit down again, Molly rubbing John's back. Eventually, John takes a deep breath and clears his throat, trying to control himself.*)

JOHN: Sorry, Mom...I...I'm just

MOLLY: John, it's okay. You're allowed to fall apart. It's okay to mourn.

JOHN: I just keep thinking that maybe I'll wake up...that it will all be a nightmare.

MOLLY: I know. I know. I remember what that was like, when your Dad died.

JOHN: But it's not the same, Dad had cancer...we knew he was dying. Ginny's just...gone.

MOLLY: Do you think that means I missed him any less?

JOHN: No...I suppose not.

MOLLY: These things take time. I know it's not what you want to hear now, but it will get easier with time. (*John nods*) And when that day comes, you'll want to remember, not forget.

JOHN: I know Mom. (*Heartfelt*) Thanks. (*Looks around the room*). But now I don't know what to do with all this. (*He looks at his mom*) Can you help me?

MOLLY: Of course I can, what do you need?

JOHN: I should...put some of this stuff away...back where it goes...I guess.

MOLLY: (*Rising*) Come on, you can carry boxes and point.

JOHN: There's still some stuff...some stuff, I'm gonna wanna...you know...

MOLLY: I'll take care of it, John. We have that big rummage sale every year at the church.

JOHN: (*Nodding, rises with her.*) Okay. (*He stops and picks up the wedding dress box.*) She would have looked beautiful in this dress.

MOLLY: (*Resting her hand on John*) I know, John. I know.

JOHN: Try and find someone...someone who'll do it justice? (*He holds the box out for Molly*)

MOLLY: (*Taking it from him*) Of course.

(*Lights fade out*)

## SCENE 6

(*The scene has returned to the original set, Ted and Sally's living room. "Ted" has returned, and is standing exactly where he was when Scene 1 ended.*)

SALLY: (*From off stage*) Ted? Where are you?

TED: (*Starting*) Right here!

(*Sally enters, crosses to Ted.*)

SALLY: I'm sorry I snapped at you. (*She hugs him. He does not relax into it, a bit tense.*) Hey, you all right? You look like you're a million miles away.

TED: What? No, I'm fine. (*He smiles at her and gives her a kiss.*) I was just, you know, thinking about the dress. (*His tone is light, but it's clear he's holding back*)

SALLY: (*Probing*) What about it?

TED: What you said...about it's story. (*He makes a lame attempt at humour.*) Too bad it can't talk, right?

SALLY: Well, what did you come up with?

TED: (*Shaking it off.*) Not much...maybe later. (*He grabs her waist, starts to drag her off*) What do you need? (*Brusquely*)

SALLY: (*Pulling away, and with forced lightness, she's upset at being put off*) The downstairs bathroom, it's calling you. (*Their banter becomes forced*)

TED: The toilet?

SALLY: And the sink, and starting the laundry...

TED: Awww...

SALLY: Not getting out of it this week, big guy. You want to watch Notre Dame play football this afternoon or not?

TED: Yes...

SALLY: Then hop to it. No TV till the cleaning's done.

TED: Yes, dear.

SALLY: Now, scoot. I'm going to tidy up here and then go grab the laundry basket from upstairs.

TED: 'kay.

*(Ted exits, leaving Sally onstage. Sally straightens up the magazines and books on the coffee table. She tidies up, but her gaze keeps returning to the wedding dress. She sits down on the couch and picks up the box. As she does so, the light fades out)*

## SCENE 7

*(Ted and Sally's place is gone once again, the furniture rearranged, walls changed. Sally has changed, to become Natalie. She is sitting with Susan on the living room couch, drinking tea at lights up. There is a sound effect of a driving rainstorm)*

SUSAN: So tell me all about it Natalie, where did you find it?

NATALIE: Well, you remember that cute little bridal shop down near the mall?

SUSAN: The one where we looked at that God-awful bridesmaid dress?

NATALIE: That's the one...well, anyway, I went back the other day, just to look, because I got a flyer in the mail. I wasn't expecting much, but when I got there, they had it out on a mannequin, and oh, God, Susan, it was divine! I just had to have it.

SUSAN: So...where is it?

NATALIE: It's in the other room, I'll go get it. *(Natalie rises)*  
More tea while I'm out there?

SUSAN: Sure!

*(Natalie exits. As she does, a doorbell rings)*

NATALIE: *(From off stage)* Who could that be in this weather? Sue! Can you get that?

SUSAN: Sure thing! *(Sue gets up and crosses to opposite, just off the stage.)* Oh, please, come in out of the rain. *(Susan reenters with Cathy)* Just watch your step up...

NATALIE: *(Entering)* Sue, who is it...? *(NATALIE stops dead..)*

CATHY: Hello, Natalie.

NATALIE: Why are you here? What are you doing here? How did you know where I was? *(Confused)*

*(Cathy says nothing. Susan looks at Natalie, and back at Cathy)*

SUSAN: Natalie...?

NATALIE: *(Bitterly)* Susan, allow me to introduce...my mother.

SUSAN: *(Involuntarily)* Oh my God...

NATALIE: God has nothing to do with it. *(Turning to her mother, angrily.)* What are you doing here?

CATHY: I suppose it was too much to hope for that you would be happy to see me.

SUSAN: Natalie, I'm just going to... *(She gestures indiscriminately, helplessly.)*

NATALIE: My Sex in the City DVDs are on the shelf in the den. Help yourself. I'll be joining you shortly. My mother was *just* leaving.

*(Susan exits, leaving Natalie and her mother staring at each other)*

CATHY: *(Unable to help herself)* You've grown up so much. What a beautiful woman you are, Natalie.

NATALIE: And what? What do you want me to say now?  
*(Sarcasm)* Oh my God! Mom! I've missed you so much!

CATHY: I...

NATALIE: And you know? You might have had a chance to see me grow up to be this woman, if you hadn't, I dunno, disappeared for *ten damn years!*

CATHY: I tried, Natalie, I did try. You never let me.

NATALIE: No Mom, you left us! You left! You left Dad, you left Brian, you left *me*. *(She turns her back on her mother, swiping surreptitiously at her eyes.)*

CATHY: *(After a pause)* I heard you're getting married...

NATALIE: Is *that* what this is about? You came out here to...to...*ruin my wedding?* How did you even find out about it?

CATHY: I...

NATALIE: No...I know how you found out. Brian. I'm going to murder that lousy excuse for an older brother...*(She reaches for the phone)*

CATHY: Natalie...Natalie! *(she touches Natalie's arm)*

NATALIE: What?

CATHY: Your dad told me.

NATALIE: (*Uncomprehendingly*) What?

CATHY: Your father told me.

NATALIE: (*Sinking to the couch*) Dad...? But...why?

CATHY: He said he thought...thought it might be nice, if...

NATALIE: If what?

CATHY: If your mother was there. If you got the chance to live out your dream.

NATALIE: What dream?

CATHY: Remember when you were a little girl? And you used to look at the wedding album? (*Natalie nods*) Do you remember what you used to say to me?

NATALIE: (*Softly*) Yes...

CATHY: How you used to want to wear your mother's wedding dress on your wedding day.

NATALIE: (*Jumping up, shaking off the spell*) But you ruined that! You went and threw it all away! (*She turns her back on her mother*)

CATHY: (*Smiling despite the words, shaking her head*) You haven't changed too much I see. Still my stubborn girl.

NATALIE: (*Turing back to her mother*) I'm not *your girl* any more, Mother. You gave up that right the day you walked out on Dad. (*The "and me" is not spoken, but is as evident as if it had been shouted through a bullhorn*)

CATHY: You'll always be my girl, Natalie. My beautiful baby girl.

NATALIE: Well if I'm so great, why did you leave?

CATHY: It's...complicated.

NATALIE: Complicated? Complicated! You were married! You walked out! What's so complicated about that?

CATHY: Lots of things.

(*There is a pause, as Natalie sits down again. It is an expectant pause.*)

NATALIE: Well? I'm waiting for my explanation.

CATHY: (*Standing up, turning away*) Is Ken the first guy you dated?

NATALIE: What? Mother, I'm 31. Of course not.

CATHY: Did you ever feel like you were in love before?

NATALIE: Yes. Of course.

CATHY: But it didn't work.

NATALIE: So, what, are you saying that after nearly 20 years of marriage and two kids you just...fell out of love with Dad?

CATHY: No, that's not it. It's more complicated than that.

NATALIE: I should hope so.

*(There is another long pause, Cathy is finally nervous under the strain, Natalie is still flustered. Clearly they are still uncomfortable)*

NATALIE: *(Babbling)* If you came here to try and make me understand, you haven't done so well, Mom. I just don't get it. Dad called you? Why did Dad call you? How long have you been in touch with Dad? I mean, I know Brian talks to you, but I didn't think Dad...

CATHY: Your dad and I have been talking for some years now.

NATALIE: *(Angrily)* Why didn't I know?

CATHY: I imagine he decided it wasn't worth upsetting you.

NATALIE: Frankly I don't know what's more upsetting, anymore.

CATHY: I've tried, Natalie. You know that.

NATALIE: I thought I'd made it clear that since you wanted nothing to do with us, I wanted nothing to do with you.

CATHY: Yes...you did. *(A pause)* I know it was hard on you, Natalie. I know that...well, it wasn't exactly the best time for me to add to your stresses...

NATALIE: Wasn't exactly the best time?? I was 16 years old, and you dropped completely out of sight. No forwarding address ...no mother to help me through boyfriends, school, proms, college. Dad didn't understand.... You left *nothing*, except a note for Dad. And then you reappear when I'm 26, calling Brian out

of the blue. I managed to avoid you this long, and now here you are. Well, I don't need you Mother. I don't need anyone! No one!

*(Natalie is barely holding back tears. Cathy stands still, almost stiff.)*

CATHY: *(Softly, hurt)* I think I'd better go.

NATALIE: I think so too.

*(Cathy leaves, and Natalie collapses onto the couch, the lights dim, and the spot picks Natalie/Sally out.)*

TED: *(From offstage)* Sally?

NATALIE/SALLY: Huh, what? *(With a start)*

TED: *(Entering. Voice flat)* Where's the big jug of 409? I need to refill the spray bottle. *(He holds up the bottle. He pauses, looks at her)* Is everything all right? Your sister's okay?

NATALIE/SALLY: *(Brushing him off)* What? Yeah. Fine. Fine. *(Pausing, thinking, points at the bottle)* It's not under the kitchen sink? *(Ted shakes his head)* Did you check the cabinet over the washer and dryer?

TED: *(Brightening a little)* No, I'll check, thanks. *(He turns to go, pauses, half turns)* You'd let me know if there was anything I could do, right?

NATALIE/SALLY: Yes, Ted. I'm fine. *(Clearly, not fine.)*

*(Ted begins to exit, and then,)*

NATALIE/SALLY: *(Calling after him)* Ted?

TED: *(Turning, hopefully.)* Yeah?

NATALIE/SALLY: *(After a pause, reluctantly)* Never mind.

TED: *(Looking at her for a moment, then nodding.)* Okay. *(He exits)*

*Natalie/Sally sinks back down to the couch.*

*Lights down.*

## SCENE 8

*(Time has passed. Lights up, Natalie is sitting on her couch, reading a bridal magazine. There is a knock on the door.)*

NATALIE: Come in!

*(Natalie's father Steve enters.)*

NATALIE: *(Pleased)* Daddy! *(She jumps up to give him a hug and a kiss on the cheek)* I wasn't expecting you, what a nice surprise.

*(She leads him to the couch, where they sit down.)*

STEVE: I don't think you'll be happy to see me after I tell you why I'm here.

NATALIE: *(Looks at him oddly)* What's that supposed to mean?

STEVE: It's about your wedding.

NATALIE: What about it?

STEVE: I was wondering if I could bring a date.

NATALIE: (*Surprised*) Dad, of course! You never told me you'd met someone! Who...(*She trails off, the other shoe drops. She and her father stare at each other for a long moment.*) Why Dad? (*Her voice sounds broken, betrayed*)

STEVE: She has a right to see her daughter married, Natalie.

NATALIE: She left, Dad. She forfeited that right.

STEVE: Perhaps. (*There is a pause*) I realize that her showing up here unannounced was not the world's greatest idea, but I think you hurt her a great deal with some of the things you said.

NATALIE: Well, she deserved it. She hurt me.

STEVE: Yes, and she's sorry.

NATALIE: (*She snaps automatically*) Sorry doesn't make everything better.

STEVE: Yes, I see that's one lesson you've retained from your childhood. Who taught you that?

NATALIE: I...(*Her mouth snaps shut*)

STEVE: Like it or not, sweetie, your mother is still your mother.

NATALIE: But Dad, she left!

STEVE: Your mother...had some issues she needed to work through.

NATALIE: What do you mean?

STEVE: (*Looks at her.*) Did you even let your mother get a word in edgewise last week?

NATALIE: I...uh...guess not.

STEVE: (*Nods*) I thought not. (*Rises*) Really, you should hear this from her, but since you never gave her a chance to speak...(*Natalie starts to protest but a sharp look from Steve silences her*)...maybe I ought to fill in some blanks. (*He pauses a moment to gather his thoughts*) Your mother and I got married at 20 years old. It was the logical thing to do then, we'd been going steady in high school, and in the time and place we lived, that was how it was done.

NATALIE: I thought you wanted to get married! You were high school sweethearts!

STEVE: Of course we wanted to get married, at 20 years old. Do you remember what it was like at 20? The desire for certainty, stability? I remember you talking about it.

NATALIE: (*Slowly*) Yeah.

STEVE: So, there we are. 20 years old, and married off. Before we've even finished college. Your mother never finished college...at least then. Because your brother came along. And then you. Your mother spent the next 18 years pouring herself into other people. Your brother, me, you. She was 39 years old, and had no idea who she was, because she'd given it all away to other people.

NATALIE: (*quietly*) Oh.

STEVE: She had no outlets. Not many friends, and suddenly, with both of you kids in school, and out in the evenings as high schoolers and becoming more independent, a whole lot of time to think. And when she went looking for herself, for her own identity, she couldn't find it anymore, if she'd ever had one...and she just snapped. Do you remember back to the time before she left? Do you remember how she and I used to fight?

NATALIE: Over stupid things. And then Mom would break down and cry for hours.

STEVE: Yes. And of course, I was too dense to see what was going on, too. And therapy was out of the question, at least at that time, because it never occurred to either one of us...a product of our cultural conditioning.

NATALIE: Right.

STEVE: Farmhouse wives don't go to therapy...they tough it out. Well...your mother...couldn't.

NATALIE: Oh.

*(Steve comes back to sit with Natalie)*

STEVE: So she finally just left. She was in prison, Natalie. And she escaped the only way she knew how...

NATALIE: What did she do...while she was gone, I mean?

STEVE: *(Shrugging)* She worked as a waitress for a little while, and finished school. She got some therapy, and started putting herself back together. And when she was healthy again, that's when she came back to us.

NATALIE: How did you handle it...when she came back?

STEVE: It was hard. I didn't understand at first either, sweetie, I won't lie. I was angry. I was hurt. I always thought that it was my job to solve her problems...that was the husband's job, you know.

NATALIE: *(grinning a little)* So you keep reminding Ken.

STEVE: But this was something I couldn't handle and didn't know how. I finally got some help, too, and that made a big difference. I...understand better now.

NATALIE: So you're friends again?

STEVE: In a way. Understand, we never really stopped loving each other. We're separate now. She needs her space, but...well, it's complicated.

NATALIE: (*Angrily*) Why am I the last to know all this?

STEVE: Because you didn't want to. You made it abundantly clear that you wanted nothing to do with her. I think Brian and I kept things from you to protect both you and your mother. (*Natalie nods*) But your mother really wants to be a part of this. She really is quite proud of you...you have turned into quite a woman.

NATALIE: (*Smiling*) Thanks, Dad.

STEVE: (*Patting her and rising*) You're welcome sweetie. I'm going to head off now and let you think.

NATALIE: (*Hugging herself*) I've got a lot to think about.

STEVE: Indeed you do. But you're a bright girl.

NATALIE: (*She jumps up and hugs him*) Oh Daddy. I'm so confused.

STEVE: I know, sweetie, but you'll figure it out.

(*Natalie nods, and Steve turns to leave.*)

NATALIE: Dad! (*Steve turns*) Do you have Mom's phone number?

*(Steve pulls a slip of paper out of his pocket and places it in Natalie's hand. He kisses her cheek and then he turns and goes. Lights fade down on Natalie holding the slip of paper)*