

## Act Two

### 1.

*Spring. Evening. Four months later. The detritus of James and Sarah's wedding celebration: a partly eaten cake, discarded cups, plates, wine and champagne bottles, flowers, a CONGRATULATIONS banner, etc. A flat-screen TV is a new addition to the room. Furniture has been rearranged to accommodate dozens of guests, the last of whom Sarah has escorted downstairs. Mandy, her pregnancy showing, tidies as best she can in her current state, throwing trash into a Hefty bag. With the others pitching in, the room is restored by the end of the scene. James and Richard have a buzz on. Mid story:*

JAMES (*Wearily*): This thing went on and on . . . And there were all these fucking monologues!

RICHARD: Uy. (*Meaning: "How tedious."*)

JAMES: Middle Eastern-looking man stands in a spotlight telling some horror story, you know, some *atrocious* that took place in his village . . .

RICHARD: Uh-huh.

JAMES: . . . or, uh, women in burkas talking about honor killings, how their fathers tried to hack them to death 'cause their brothers raped them . . .

MANDY (*Holding up an empty bottle*): Excuse me? Recycling? (*James gets up*) Don't get up. Just tell me where.

(*James shows her.*)

RICHARD: Honey, come sit down.

MANDY: I can't when there's a mess.

JAMES (*Continuing, to Richard*): The thing is, I *know* the people they put onstage . . . I *know* them, I've *lived* with them, *both* of us have. So seeing them turned into anthropologic curiosities, like dioramas in a museum, bathed in this romantic Caravaggio light with, *you* know: hallowed, Persian-sounding music . . .

(*Sarah, in a smart dress [not a bridal gown], enters, walking with a cane.*)

SARAH: What . . . ?

JAMES: The play the other night.

SARAH (*Unenthused*): Uh.

RICHARD (*To Sarah*): Did you hate it, too?

SARAH: Not as much as *he* did. (*To Mandy*) He *hates* plays. He's like one of those miserable men you see at matinees whose wives force them at gunpoint. (*Mandy laughs*)

JAMES: It's like you're trapped! Those fucking seats: you can never leave.

SARAH: I need a drink. Stat. (*She helps herself*)

JAMES (*To Sarah*): They gone?

SARAH: Gone. In a town car, on their way to JFK.

JAMES: Thank God.

MANDY: Who?

JAMES: Her father.

SARAH: My father and his new wife. Evita.

MANDY: Is her name really Evita?

SARAH: Evelyn. My little joke.

MANDY: Oh. Duh.

JAMES (*To Sarah*): You'd better watch it: You're going to call her Evita to her face one of these days.

SARAH: I think I already have.

RICHARD (*To James, resuming their discussion*): Wait, I want to know why you went to this thing in the first place.

JAMES: Everybody was telling us we had to see it.

RICHARD: Busman's holiday, no?

SARAH: It got that incredible review.

RICHARD: I saw that.

JAMES: "Shattering!" "Unforgettable!"

SARAH: Place was packed!

JAMES: People are dying to be shattered. They'll pay a hundred *bucks* to be shattered.

MANDY: I like musicals. I don't know why people would pay all that money to be depressed.

JAMES: I'm with you, kid.

(*Sarah picks up trash.*)

MANDY (*To Sarah*): Sit; it's *your* wedding . . .

SARAH: *You* sit; all that bending can't be good for you.

MANDY: I'm fine; I've been doing all this prenatal pilates.

JAMES (*Resuming, to Richard*): Anyway, what I'm saying is . . .

RICHARD: What are you saying?

SARAH (*To Richard*): How long has he been carrying on like this?

JAMES: It's not truth! (*Too loud*) It's kitsch!

SARAH: Shhh . . . Inside voice.

JAMES: Fake, sentimental shit that *passes* for truth! People *trick* themselves into thinking they're having an authentic experience when it's completely manufactured! Hell on earth made palatable—*packaged*—as an evening's entertainment!

RICHARD: But people are *seeing* it, though, right? I mean, isn't that encouraging? They want to be informed.