

SARAH: Please.

MANDY (*Softly, to Richard*): Be right back.

(*Sarah and James watch Mandy and Richard kiss. Mandy goes to the bathroom. The remaining three sip coffee in silence.*)

RICHARD (*Jocularly*): Fuck you.

JAMES (*Feigned innocence*): What!

SARAH (*Laughing*): We didn't say anything!

RICHARD: You don't *have* to say anything. You guys are the worst poker faces ever.

SARAH: She's darling, Richard, really.

RICHARD: Don't give me that, you don't think she's "darling."

SARAH (*To James*): Don't you think so? Don't you think she's darling?

JAMES: Adorable.

RICHARD: I knew you'd give me shit for this . . .

JAMES: She is!

SARAH: I think it's sweet: You always wanted a little girl.

(*James is enjoying this.*)

RICHARD (*To Sarah*): I don't *care* you're on crutches, I will hurt you so bad . . . !

SARAH: Imagine my surprise: I wake up from *a coma* and Astrid is gone! Replaced by this . . . changeling! This sprite!

JAMES (*Remembering*): Yeah! Good old Astrid!

RICHARD: Oh, *now* she's "good old . . ."

JAMES: I *liked* her.

SARAH: So did I.

RICHARD: You *hated* Astrid!

SARAH: I did not!

JAMES: Shhh . . . She can hear you in there.

SARAH (*Lower*): I never said I *hated* her . . .

RICHARD: You called her the "attack-girlfriend"! Remember?

SARAH: Oh, yeah.

JAMES (*To Sarah*): We did, didn't we.

(*Sarah and James share a laugh.*)

RICHARD: You accused me of *siccing* her on you; said I used her to act out my hostility.

JAMES: It's all coming back to me now.

RICHARD: Astrid was brilliant. Okay? But you know what? *Fuck* brilliant. I've *done* brilliant. I'm sick of analyzing every goddamn thing to death. Deciding where to go out to eat was like . . . arbitration. Maybe I got off on it once, arguing about *everything*. Not anymore. Too much work. I want something *simple* for a change.

SARAH: Well, congratulations.

RICHARD: When have you ever approved of any relationship I've ever had? Huh? Never!

SARAH: This is not a "relationship," Richard, who are you kidding? You're *screwing* this *girl*!

JAMES: Shhh . . . !

RICHARD (*Lower*): What kind of man do you think I am? One of those creepy middle-aged guys who prey on women half their age? I *hate* guys like that! Just because she's young.

SARAH: I have no problem with her being young.

RICHARD: You were young once, too, you know . . . You were her age when I hired you as my intern! Younger, even!

SARAH: Not like *that*! . . .

JAMES: Shhh! . . .

SARAH (*Lower*): I was never like *that* . . . There's young and there's . . . embryonic. This girl is a lightweight. She's a lightweight, Richard.

RICHARD: Make fun all you want! There is nothing remotely cynical about her. She's guileless. Open.

JAMES: And very hot.

RICHARD: Yes! She's hot! Okay?

JAMES: Shhh!

RICHARD (*Lower*): Richard's got himself a hot girlfriend! How do you like that? Now I'll know what it's like! I can die happy. Look: I love you and I'm glad you're alive, but you know what? I don't give a shit what you think. JAMES: Fair enough.

(*Pause.*)

RICHARD: She delights me.

SARAH: Good.

RICHARD: She's . . . fun! She's light. I discovered I *like* those things. I *missed* them. I'd lived without sunlight for so long during The Astrid Years . . . It was like going from black and white to color. Like being in East Berlin when the wall came down. I met Mandy and I said, "Yes!" And I never would have let myself go for it if it wasn't for you.

SARAH: Me?

RICHARD: Almost dying like that. Shook me to the core. Nothing puts things in perspective like a near-death experience.

SARAH: Yeah. Preferably someone else's.

(*Mandy emerges from the bathroom.*)

MANDY: I love the soap you have in there! (*Holds her hand to Richard's nose*) Smell this. (*He does*) Isn't that cool?

RICHARD: Mm. (*He kisses her hand.*)

MANDY (*To Sarah*): Where did you get it? Someplace exotic, I bet.

SARAH: Depends on how you feel about The Body Shop.

MANDY (*Embarrassed*): Oh. I thought maybe you brought it back from the Middle East or something.

(*Sarah shakes her head. A beat.*)

RICHARD (*To Sarah*): I was over at ICP the other day. (*Meaning: the International Center for Photography*)

SARAH: Oh, yeah?

RICHARD: Everybody's very excited you're home. They'd be thrilled to have you teach a class, you know.

SARAH: Oh, really?

RICHARD: I said I would talk to you. Whenever you're able.

Ideally, they'd love to have you in residence for a year.

SARAH: A year? I couldn't give them a year . . .

RICHARD: Why not?

SARAH: I don't expect to *be* here in a year.

RICHARD: What do you mean? Where will you be?

SARAH: Where do you think?

(*A beat.*)

RICHARD: You're not serious.

SARAH: You know me pretty well . . . You don't expect me to sit around for a whole *year* . . . If I really work my ass off in rehab, I could be back by spring.

RICHARD (*To James*): You're encouraging this?

JAMES: I'm going with her.

RICHARD: Are you out of your fucking minds? Both of you!

MANDY (*Calming*): Sweetie . . .

RICHARD (*To Sarah*): You almost died . . .

SARAH: Richard . . .

RICHARD (*To James*): You had a fucking breakdown . . .

JAMES: Not a "breakdown" . . .

RICHARD (*To Mandy*): They're the Sid and Nancy of journalism!

MANDY (*Aside, to Richard*): Who are Sid and Nancy?

RICHARD (*Patently*): Sid Vicious. Punk rocker. And his girlfriend. Famous drug addicts, long dead. (*To James and Sarah*) What more has to happen? Huh, guys?