

# LYING

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“We’re all liars.”

–Pamela Meyer

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Melinda Lopez, playwright, actress and Wellesley professor, for giving me guidance and supporting me throughout my endeavor to write this play. Two things she said struck me the most. First, she informed me that writing something, even if it is terrible, is infinitely better than not writing anything at all. This gave me the motivation to write. Second, she reminded me that the stage is a safe place to discuss difficult topics, so I should not hold myself back from writing something just because it makes me uncomfortable.

I would also like to thank Casey Karst and Sasha Sproch for editing my many drafts; Gillian Epstein for helping me set deadlines and sticking to them; Mitchell Cieminski, Molly Grossman, Ian Hoover, and Ilana Walder-Biesanz for reading to me; and Sasha, Molly, Ian, Ilana, plus Emily Guthrie for reading to other people.

**Plays and Characters**

1. INTERVIEW
  - Miss Smith
  - Karen
  - Lydia
2. PROMISES
  - Mother
  - Daughter
3. STEALING
  - Maggie
  - Julie
  - Mia
4. THE KEY
  - Narrator
  - Person 1
  - Person 2
  - Person 3
5. PARENTS
  - Jamie
  - Alex

## The Interview

Miss Smith – interviewer, early 30s

Karen – interviewee, mid 20s, recent college graduate

Miss Brown – early 30s

*(Ding)* – I thought about having some kind of cue to the audience about when a character is lying: Perhaps a bell or other sound or visual cue. Because lying will be a big part of the play, it might be interesting for the audience to always know when someone is lying and when they are not.

## Setting

An office. There is an office desk with regular office things on it and two chairs: one on each side of the desk. There is a lie detector upstage center.

The lie detector is a big, heavy-looking box with several knobs and buttons on the side. There is a single, red light on the top.

## Play

*(MISS SMITH, wearing business attire, is fiddling with the lie detector. KAREN enters, also wearing business attire, and holding a portfolio.)*

MISS SMITH: *(Stands if she was sitting.)* Hello, welcome. I'm Judie Smith. *(Holds out her hand)*

KAREN: Hi, I'm Karen Wiley. *(Shakes hand)*

MISS SMITH: It's nice to meet you. Please sit down. *(Sits)*

KAREN: Thank you. *(Sits in the other chair)*

MISS SMITH: How are you?

KAREN: Good—*(The lie detector lights up and makes a sound. This phenomenon will henceforth be referred to as "Ding".)* *(KAREN looks at the device, perplexed.)*

MISS SMITH: Ah yes, this is the newest gadget our R&D department has created. It's a lie detector, and we're going to market it as an aid in interviews and criminal investigations. You're interviewing for a marketing position, correct?

KAREN: Yes.

MISS SMITH: Well, then what do you think of the product?

KAREN: It's wonderful. *(Ding)*

MISS SMITH: Is it?

KAREN: Well, it is an amazing device, and I can see how useful it would be. But there's some conflict of interest, seeing as it's being used against me.

MISS SMITH: *(Laughs)* You make a good point. But it will be a valuable experience for you should you get hired.

KAREN: That's true.

MISS SMITH: Of course it is, since the device didn't go off. *(Ding)* *(MISS SMITH looks at the device in surprise, then laughs it off.)* I suppose that was not entirely true. The lie detector can only detect lies you are aware of.

KAREN: What do you mean?

MISS SMITH: The device can only find incongruities between what you say and what you believe. If you believe what you say, then it thinks you're telling the truth.

KAREN: So I could say something wrong but because I'm not aware that it's wrong, it won't trigger the detector?

MISS SMITH: Correct.

KAREN: Well, if nothing else, no one will be able to pin you for false advertising.

MISS SMITH: *(Laughs)* Quite true. Did you happen to bring a résumé?

KAREN: Yes. *(Pulls a résumé from the portfolio and hands it to MISS SMITH)*

MISS SMITH: Tell me about previous employments. Which would you say you enjoyed the most and why?

KAREN: My second internship. *(Ding)*

MISS SMITH: Really now?

KAREN: Well, I really enjoyed the work itself. It was fulfilling and exciting.

MISS SMITH: So why the lie?

KAREN: (*Hesitates*) I had... personal problems with some of the people there. That's also the reason I didn't choose to go back. I really enjoyed the work though, and I thought you wouldn't be interested in the personal stuff.

MISS SMITH: Of course. (*Ding*) (*Pause, acknowledging the lie.*) Well, you understand that in light of this information, I will be obligated to look into the matter to make sure the problem would not resurface here.

KAREN: Yes. Of course.

MISS SMITH: It's only a formality. Tell me more about this internship, though. Can you describe a project that went particularly well?

KAREN: The company was a consulting firm, and one of the clients was a kitchenware manufacturer. The manufacturer was revamping the production line for the whisk, and wanted to revamp the product's image too, so my group was tasked with figuring out how to market the new and improved whisks. The whisk is now selling better than it used to, so I would count that a success.

MISS SMITH: What was your role in the project?

KAREN: Well, I entered the project partway through. The team had already developed some possible new packaging, and so my work mostly entailed presenting the different packaging to test audiences and garnering feedback.

MISS SMITH: Tell me more about your role in these test sessions.

KAREN: The team worked in pairs. (*Ding*) Well, I was told that normally they did, but that summer, we usually split into groups of three, with two full-time employees and one intern per group. That way, the intern could learn the ropes without much pressure. I was often put in a pair because I had previously done similar work at another internship. (*Ding*) Well, that's the reason I was given. In any case, at the beginning of the internship—

MISS SMITH: If you don't mind my asking, why do *you* think you were put in a pair?

KAREN: It's because of those personal reasons I referred to earlier.

MISS SMITH: Which were...?

KAREN: My manager liked me a little too much. He usually paired himself with me.

MISS SMITH: That sounds absolutely terrible. (*Ding*)

(*Pause.*)

KAREN: Really?

MISS SMITH: I'm so sorry. I mean, it just sounded like you had some good opportunities you would not have had otherwise, but I really do think it was out of line for him to abuse his managerial position like that. I just... I mean, you obviously enjoyed the work, so it can't have been all terrible.

KAREN: (*Accusing*) You think I encouraged that kind of behavior, don't you? So that I could get some perks?

MISS SMITH: What? No! (*Ding*) Well, now that you bring it up...

KAREN: How dare you! I didn't! I would never whore myself out like that. I gave every indication short of reporting it to his superior that I wanted him to stop!

MISS SMITH: If you really didn't like it, why didn't you report it?

KAREN: Because I still wanted to be able to find a job after that internship!

MISS SMITH: What do you mean?

KAREN: It's not good for me to make a fuss when I was just an intern. You said if yourself: once you found out I left my last company on bad terms, you would have to include that in my background check. Think: if you had found out that I had filed a sexual harassment suit that had resulted in any kind of negative media coverage, would you be more or less likely to hire me?

MISS SMITH: I see your point.

KAREN: Then that puts you in the minority.

MISS SMITH: I'm really sorry that happened to you.

KAREN: Are you really?

MISS SMITH: (*Points to the device, which isn't activating.*) Yes. I am.

KAREN: (*Beat*) It's alright. It's just... I didn't get the kind of support I hoped I would when it happened.

MISS SMITH: I'm very sorry to hear that.

KAREN: To be honest, that's one of the things that stood out to me about your company: you're one of a few with a lot of women in supervisor positions. I assumed that with a more even gender balance, sexual harassment and the like is rare. Would you agree?

MISS SMITH: Well, sexual harassment is a tricky subject. What some people would consider being friendly might be interpreted as sexual harassment by others.

KAREN: Do *you* ever feel sexually harassed?

MISS SMITH: Oh no, never!

KAREN: And do you feel like others get sexually harassed.

MISS SMITH: Like I said, sexual harassment is defined very vaguely and it really depends on who is involved. I've known some women consider it sexual harassment when a man buys her coffee.

KAREN: Oh no, nothing that extreme! Things like... someone using their position to force someone else to spend time alone with them. Does that ever happen?

MISS SMITH: What if there is a legitimate reason why a person must spend time alone with another?

KAREN: Miss Smith, perhaps you're not doing this on purpose, but I feel like you're dodging my questions. This is very important to me. I *need* to know what kind of environment this company has to see if this is good fit for me. So please give me a straight-forward answer: Do you see sexual harassment to be a problem here?

MISS SMITH: *(Pause, as she tries to convince herself of her answer.)* No. *(Ding.)*

KAREN: *(Angrily.)* Why would you lie to me? You're heard my reasoning, you've said you understand, so why would you lie to me about this?

MISS SMITH: Because it's a problem but not in the way you meant. I just *worry* that certain actions might be interpreted as sexual harassment. I don't think there is any real sexual harassment happening. *(Ding.)* At least, I *hope* there isn't.

KAREN: You like someone.

MISS SMITH: *(Looks at the lie detector and reluctantly answers)* Yes.

KAREN: Does he know?

MISS SMITH: I hope not. I try very hard not to let on.

KAREN: He might feel the same way.

MISS SMITH: The person in question got engaged last month, so I doubt it.



KAREN: Oh. I'm sorry.

MISS SMITH: It's alright.

KAREN: But apart from that?

MISS SMITH: No, no sexual harassment as far as I can tell.

KAREN: That's good to hear. I'm sorry about your situation.

MISS SMITH: That's quite alright. I never had a chance anyways.

KAREN: Miss Smith, I don't know you very well, but I'm sure that wasn't the case.

MISS SMITH: I appreciate that, though I assure you it was. But if you don't mind, we'll get back to the interview?

KAREN: Sure. *(Ding.)* Sorry, I'm just curious.

MISS SMITH: That's alright. *(Ding.)*

*(Pause. Neither is sure how to move on.)*

MISS SMITH: Well, I think this is *not* the appropriate setting for the lie detector.

KAREN: I agree.

*(MISS SMITH looks around the box. She's unsure how to turn it off.)*

MISS SMITH: Let me go ask how to turn it off.

*(She goes to the door and calls through it.)*

MISS SMITH: Lydia, can you come here?

*(LYDIA enters. LYDIA wears an engagement ring.)*

LYDIA: Yes?

MISS SMITH: Do you know how to turn this thing off? *(Remembering her manners.)* Oh, Miss Wiley, may I introduce my assistant, Lydia Brown.

KAREN: *(Stands and extends her hand.)* It's nice to meet you.

LYDIA: *(Shakes her hand)* It's nice to meet you too.

KAREN: Oh, congratulations.

LYDIA: What?

KAREN: Your engagement. Your ring is beautiful.

LYDIA: Oh, right! Thank you. I haven't had anyone congratulate me in a while since I got engaged a month ago. Thank you, though.

KAREN: (*Surprised.*) A month ago?

LYDIA: Yes. Why?

KAREN: Oh. No reason. (*Ding*)

MISS SMITH: Oh, Lydia, that's why I wanted to turn the lie detector off: it seems to be malfunctioning. (*Ding*) Do you know how?

LYDIA: Let me see. (*She examines a device, then toggles something. The detector starts to beep incessantly. Panicked, she toggles the thing back and the noise stops.*) No, I don't.

MISS SMITH: Okay, well, we really can't continue with this here. Can you help me bring it outside?

LYDIA: No, the R&D guy was very adamant that we don't try to move it. I can probably find you another room.

MISS SMITH: That'd be great.

(*LYDIA exits.*)

(*Pause.*)

KAREN: So she's your crush?

(*MISS SMITH is silent.*)

KAREN: Is that why you said you never had a chance? Because she doesn't swing that way?

(*Silence.*)

KAREN: Does she know that *you* swing that way?

MISS SMITH: No, and please don't tell her. We're really good friends, and if she found out I liked her, it would make her really uncomfortable. She might start feeling towards me what you felt towards your boss. I resigned myself to a platonic relationship a long time ago, and it would crush me to lose that.

KAREN: Are you sure she doesn't know?

MISS SMITH: How could she?

KAREN: Maybe you've been subconsciously hitting on her? Buying her coffee or treating her as if she were special?

MISS SMITH: No! Never!

KAREN: Never?

MISS SMITH: *(Pointing to the lie detector)* Never. I value her friendship. Doing anything that might make her avoid me would be the worst idea. *(Ding)* Okay, would be a *really bad* idea. So please don't tell her.

*(There's a knock on the door. MISS SMITH looks at the door, then at KAREN.)*

KAREN: I won't.

MISS SMITH: Thank you. *(Calling to the person outside the room.)* Come in!

*(Lights out.)*

## Promises

### Characters

MOTHER: A woman who lies to appease: she promises people the things they want so they will stop bothering her.

DAUGHTER

### Scene

A room in a comfortable, upper middle class house, which includes a table and a phone. There is a coat rack on which hang several coats, suggesting four family members: a mother, a father, a 5-year old daughter, and a 2 year-old son.

### Play

*(The DAUGHTER, age 5 and holding a doll, walks up to her MOTHER, who is filling out paperwork at the table.)*

DAUGHTER: Mommy, play with me!

MOTHER: Not now, sweetie. Mommy has to finish filing her taxes.

DAUGHTER: What are "taxes"?

MOTHER: An important thing mommy has to finish.

DAUGHTER: When are you gonna be done?

MOTHER: In a few minutes.

DAUGHTER: Will you play with me when you're done?

MOTHER: Did you ask your dad?

DAUGHTER: He's fixing the sink, and he's all dirty. He'll get Mr. Gumbles dirty too! And I want to play doctor! I like it better when mommy plays doctor. Daddy always wants to cut Mr. Gumbles' leg off, even when Mr. Gumbles has tummy aches!

MOTHER: Uh-huh.

DAUGHTER: You'll come play doctor?

MOTHER: Yes, sweetie.

DAUGHTER: When are we gonna play?

MOTHER: When I'm done. Then I promise I'll come play with you.

DAUGHTER: Really?

MOTHER: I promised, didn't I? And when someone makes a promise, they have to keep it. Why don't you get your brother to play with you meanwhile?

DAUGHTER: Okay, I'm gonna get my doctor things!

(DAUGHTER exits.)

(MOTHER checks the time and is surprised by how late it is. She fetches her coat, purse and keys. The noise attracts DAUGHTER back into the room.)

DAUGHTER: Mommy, are you done?

MOTHER: Sorry sweetie, mommy has to go.

DAUGHTER: But mommy, you promised!

MOTHER: I'm sorry. I promise I'll play with you next time. Mommy has to get to the store before it closes, okay?

DAUGHTER: Okay.

(MOTHER exits.)

*(Time passes. The children's coats change to that of a 7 year-old daughter and a 4 year-old son. MOTHER enters from the garage, wearing her coat. She calls into the house.)*

MOTHER: Come on, sweetie, we don't want to keep daddy waiting.

(DAUGHTER enters.)

DAUGHTER: Will I get to see airplanes?

MOTHER: I don't see why not.

DAUGHTER: And we're going to have steak!

MOTHER: Where did you get that idea?

DAUGHTER: You promised daddy you'd make steak when he got back.

MOTHER: I didn't say that.

DAUGHTER: Yes you did! Daddy was sad that he had to be working on a weekend, so you said you'd make him a big steak to cheer him up.

MOTHER: Are you sure?

DAUGHTER: Yes, and you promised so you have to do it! Yay, steak!

MOTHER: I'll cook a steak tomorrow.

DAUGHTER: But you promised daddy!

MOTHER: But I already prepared dinner for tonight. We're having lasagna.

DAUGHTER: Boo, I don't want lasagna, I want steak!

MOTHER: Now, now, young lady, you behave or you'll stay here with Auntie Laura and your brother, okay? And then no airplanes.

DAUGHTER: *(Pouts)* Okay.

*(They exit.)*

*(Time passes. The children's coats change to that of a daughter of 14 and a son of 11. The DAUGHTER walks into the room, wearing a gaudy costume for her play's opening night, ushered by her MOTHER.)*

MOTHER: Okay, break a leg, sweetie. *(Kisses her on the forehead.)*

DAUGHTER: Remember, try to sit on the left side of the auditorium.

MOTHER: Okay, we will.

DAUGHTER: Did dad say if he would end up coming?

MOTHER: He just called, and he has to stay late tonight, so he won't make it.

DAUGHTER: But you and Teddy will be there?

MOTHER: Yes, I promise. Now off with you. You don't want to be late!

DAUGHTER: And you'll remember to sit on the left? Your left when *facing* the stage?

MOTHER: Yes, I'll remember, okay? Now go!

DAUGHTER: Okay! Bye!

*(DAUGHTER exits out the house.)*

*(MOTHER exits into the house. It is later the same evening. MOTHER enters and opens the door to let DAUGHTER in. DAUGHTER is still in her costume.)*

MOTHER: There's my little star!

DAUGHTER: You didn't come see the play.

MOTHER: I know. I'm so sorry, sweetie. There was an accident on the route home so traffic from your brother's game was terrible, so it took us two hours longer than usual to get back. Then, I still had to give your brother some kind of dinner. We would have been way too late to your show.

DAUGHTER: You could have come anyways. They let people in when there's applause.

MOTHER: Honey, we only got home an hour ago. We would only have seen maybe the last half hour. I want to get the *full* effect of my baby's first high school show! And your father will be able to come tomorrow, so the whole family can enjoy it together!

DAUGHTER: But I wanted you to be there for opening night!

MOTHER: Would you rather we had come anyways and only seen the very end? *(Pause)* Look, honey, I'm sorry. I didn't realize it meant so much to you. I promise we'll all be there tomorrow. And I'll be there for all of your other opening nights! Okay?

DAUGHTER: I wanted you to be there, tonight. You promised you'd be there!

MOTHER: Honey, I can't control the traffic, and I can't change the past. All I can do is come tomorrow. And I will. The whole family will. Okay?

DAUGHTER: *(Pause.)* You'll really come this time?

MOTHER: Yes, I promise.

DAUGHTER: Okay.

*(Time passes. The son's coat now fits a 15 year old boy. The daughter's coat is gone. The DAUGHTER walks in holding a box labeled "Coats and Misc." and talks to MOTHER)*

DAUGHTER: But you promised you'd help me move in.

MOTHER: I know, sweetie, but with your father being called away so suddenly, I can't go. Plus, you're an adult now, you can handle yourself. And you're only a couple hours away.

DAUGHTER: But you promised.

MOTHER: But your brother needs someone that can drive him to practice and back.

DAUGHTER: Can't he get a ride?

MOTHER: Honey, I would rather not force other people to change their plans so last minute. I'll come visit you soon, I promise, okay? *(Pause.)* Okay?

DAUGHTER: This is so like you.

MOTHER: What?

DAUGHTER: You always make promises you never keep, mom.

MOTHER: I never break a promise unless I absolutely have to.

DAUGHTER: Do you absolutely have to be the one driving Teddy?

MOTHER: The sass is not attractive, young lady.

DAUGHTER: Well neither is lying!

MOTHER: I don't lie!

DAUGHTER: Maybe you don't mean to, but you do lie. Or you're just careless about your promises. I'm not sure which is worse, because on the one hand, you're lying to me, and on the other, you're lying to yourself.

MOTHER: But I don't intend to break them!

DAUGHTER: I know that! But that doesn't change the fact that you still do! Your promises already don't mean anything to anyone that knows you, and I should have known better than to think that maybe you would keep this one because I'm moving out. *(Pause. MOTHER processes what her DAUGHTER has been saying.)* Look, I don't actually mind that you can't come, I just mind that you said you would and didn't.

MOTHER: I'm sorry about that. I can find a ride for Teddy if it really means that much to you.

DAUGHTER: *(Giving up)* No, I'll be fine by myself.

MOTHER: I'll come visit you soon.

DAUGHTER: *(Doubtfully)* Sure, mom.

MOTHER: I will! I promise, and I will keep my promise this time!

DAUGHTER: Mom, could you please not make promises to me anymore?



MOTHER: What if I really mean it?

DAUGHTER: Even if you really mean it. I just don't like it.

MOTHER: ... Okay.

DAUGHTER: Bye, mom.

MOTHER: Bye. Drive safe.

*(DAUGHTER exits. Lights out.)*

## Stealing

Mia – Maggie’s daughter; she’s about 15 years old; she’s had drug problems

Maggie – woman in the mid-40s; her daughter is stealing money from her; she doesn’t want to confront her daughter for fear of the truth, and she doesn’t want her to get in trouble; she lies to cover for her daughter.

Julie – In her late 20s; Maggie’s little sister; she was the baby of the family

## Setting

A kitchen: a table and a coat rack on which hang several coats. Under one of the coats also hangs a purse. There are two exits: one towards the garage, which the family uses as their main door, and one into the rest of the house.

## Play

*(MAGGIE enters, followed by JULIE, who is holding a purse. MAGGIE walks towards the coat rack, and searches for the purse hanging there.)*

JULIE: In retrospect, I should have told her that I designed it that way purposefully, so it would match her personality.

MAGGIE: *(Laugh)* I would have paid to see that.

JULIE: Ah well, opportunity missed. *L’esprit de l’escalier* strikes again.

MAGGIE: “Less-pree de” what now?

JULIE: It’s French.

MAGGIE: Yes, I figured as much. *(She finds her wallet in the purse.)* What does it mean?

JULIE: Oh, it’s when you think of a good comeback too late. It literally means “the spirit of the stairs” because you think of these good comebacks when you’re on the stairs on your way out.

MAGGIE: Useful phrase.

JULIE: Of course, it *is* French. *(MAGGIE is searching frantically through her purse and wallet.)* What’s wrong?

MAGGIE: It’s odd. I’m missing some money again.

JULIE: “Again”?

MAGGIE: Well, not necessarily again. Sometimes, I just feel like I could have sworn that I have more money than I actually do. I went to the bank right before coming home, though, and you know I always count twice before leaving. So this time, I’m sure I’m missing money.

JULIE: How much?

MAGGIE: \$20.

JULIE: Are you sure you had it?

MAGGIE: Yes.

JULIE: Did you take it out of your purse?

MAGGIE: Possibly.

*(JULIE lays her purse on the table and she and MAGGIE begin looking around the kitchen.)*

JULIE: Maybe your husband borrowed it.

MAGGIE: Paul hasn't been home since I went to the bank.

JULIE: Well, maybe one of your kids took it.

MAGGIE: *(Stops searching. Says forcefully)* My kids are not like that.

JULIE: I wasn't suggesting that! Maybe they meant to ask you and just didn't have the chance.

MAGGIE: That's possible, but what would they need money for so quickly that they didn't ask first?

JULIE: I don't know. *(Joking)* Maybe someone just really needed another hit right now?

MAGGIE: That's not funny.

JULIE: Sorry. Just trying to lighten the mood.

MAGGIE: Well joking about drugs is not the way to do it.

JULIE: I thought you said that was all in the past, and it was all sorted out.

MAGGIE: It is. But it was a very serious matter at the time, and I still don't like you making light of it.

JULIE: Sorry.

MAGGIE: It's okay. Anyways, is \$40 enough?

JULIE: Yes. *(MAGGIE hands her the \$20s)* Thanks, sis, you're a life saver! But you know, if you're often missing money you thought you had, maybe someone...

MAGGIE: No.

JULIE: Maggie.

MAGGIE: I said no.

*(Enter MIA with a red carnation, from the garage. She stops when she sees others are in the room.)*

MIA: Hi mom. Welcome back. I got you something. *(MIA hands the carnation to MAGGIE.)*

MAGGIE: A carnation?

MIA: Yeah. They're your favorite, right?

MAGGIE: Yes.

MIA: I saw it and thought you might like it.

MAGGIE: Thank you, Mia.

JULIE: Hi Mia. You've gotten really big.

MAGGIE: Mia, do you remember your aunt Julie? *(To JULIE)* When was the last time you visited?

JULIE: On my road trip right after graduation, I think. So, I guess five years ago.

MAGGIE: Oh, right. Mia, do you remember?

MIA: No, I don't.

JULIE: That's alright. I only stayed for a night, after all. By the way, you wouldn't happen to know what happened to your mother's money, would you?

MAGGIE: *(Warningly)* Julie...

JULIE: I'm only asking. It doesn't hurt to ask, does it?

MIA: Oh. Yes. Sorry, mom, I intended to tell you when you got home. I had to borrow the money because it's Tatiana's birthday tomorrow and I forgot to buy her a gift.

MAGGIE: Is she having a party?

MIA: Yeah.

MAGGIE: When?

MIA: This Saturday.

MAGGIE: What time?

MIA: Seven.

MAGGIE: We're going to dinner with the McArthurs then.

MIA: Ah. I forgot. I'll let Tatiana know I can't come.

MAGGIE: Okay. (*MIA heads for the exit.*)

JULIE: What did you get her?

MIA: (*stops*) What?

JULIE: What did you get for your friend?

MIA: It's private.

JULIE: Oh come on, you can tell me! If you're worried about your mom, I won't tell her. Maggie, let me talk to Mia. We'll have a little *tête-à-tête*.

MAGGIE: Julie! Mia said it was private. It's none of your business.

JULIE: I just want to know what's cool with teens nowadays.

MIA: I wouldn't know. I'm not exactly "cool".

JULIE: Oh, counter-culture! Even better!

MIA: Mom, can I go?

MAGGIE: Yes.

(*MIA exits.*)

JULIE: Maggie...

MAGGIE: No.

JULIE: She's obviously hiding something.

MAGGIE: She was not! It's just no one appreciates a stranger butting in like that.

JULIE: I'm not a stranger! I'm family!

MAGGIE: But you never visit. She's met you maybe twice in the last eight years, and she doesn't even remember you. She's a good kid and has been clean for months. Look, she even remembered my favorite flower.

JULIE: (*Takes the carnation from MAGGIE and lays it on the table.*) She probably felt guilty or is trying to distract you. (*Forces MAGGIE to look her in the eyes.*) Come on, you have to admit she was lying right then.

MAGGIE: But she wouldn't lie to me.

JULIE: Everyone lies to everyone, Maggie. Sometimes, it's okay, like when we tell dad he sings well. But something important like this...

MAGGIE: She wouldn't lie about something this important. I trust her.

JULIE: If you really trusted her, then you wouldn't be afraid of questioning her. If you really trusted her, you wouldn't be worried about the answers you might hear. You know, I've heard it said that lying is a cooperative act. You're agreeing to be lied to by refusing to ask her about it.

MAGGIE: Are you saying it's my fault she's lying to me?

JULIE: So you admit she's lying?

MAGGIE: I meant if she were lying, which she isn't!

JULIE: Maggie, why are you being so defensive?

MAGGIE: I am not being defensive!

JULIE: Yes, you are. You're defending her and just lying to yourself! If your daughter is doing something bad, don't defend her! It's your duty as her parent to make sure she grows up right!

MAGGIE: And what would you know about being a parent, Julie? You can't even keep a boyfriend for more than a couple months. How could you possibly know what it means to raise a family?

JULIE: That's low, Maggie.

MAGGIE: Maybe, but it's true. You go around on your high horse, dispensing your wisdom for us poor plebeians with our quaint family troubles, letting the *schadenfreude* fill the gaping hole in your life where a man should be.

JULIE: I don't need a man!

MAGGIE: Fine. A woman. Or maybe one of each, so you can fulfill your Francophile fantasies.

JULIE: I don't need anyone else to complete me.

MAGGIE: Then why is it that the only reason you ever contact me is to complain about your love life?

JULIE: That's not the only reason!

MAGGIE: Do you remember the first words you said when I picked you up from the airport?

JULIE: "Long time no see"?

MAGGIE: After that.

JULIE: ... No.

MAGGIE: I asked how you were, and you said, "Sexually frustrated."

JULIE: Oh. Well, that's one occasion.

MAGGIE: That's every occasion!

JULIE: You know what? I was just trying to help you, but if you're going to be like that, I don't have to sit here and take this.

MAGGIE: Then why don't you go? Or do you need to borrow money for a cab, too?

JULIE: I'd rather walk! *(Exits to the garage, sound of slamming door.)*

MAGGIE: Don't you slam *my* door! Get back here! *(Waits. When it's obvious JULIE isn't coming back, exits to the rest of the house.)*

*(JULIE re-enters, looking for her purse. She sees it on the table and heads towards it. MIA enters from the opposite side coming to fetch a snack from the kitchen. They see each other.)*

JULIE: Hi Mia.

MIA: Hi.

*(MIA picks up the snack she wanted and heads back towards the exit while JULIE picks up the carnation that lies on the table next to her purse. She speaks before MIA can exit, stopping her escape.)*

JULIE: That was really nice of you to get your mom this flower.

MIA: Thanks.

JULIE: She really likes carnations, you know?

MIA: Yeah, they're her favorite.

JULIE: You know, our mother has this beautiful garden.

MIA: Yeah, I've been to grandma's. I've seen it.

JULIE: Her carnations are prize-winners, you know.

MIA: That's nice.

JULIE: Yes, and she would get so angry at your mother and me if we damaged the plants, or if she thought we were doing anything that was endangering them.

MIA: They *are* prize-winners.

JULIE: True. But whenever your mom or I got sick, she would cut a whole bouquet of them and put them in our room. Did you know that?

MIA: No.

JULIE: She used to say the vivid colors brightened the room and would help us heal faster. I hated those flowers, you know? I got into so much trouble because of them. Your mom, though. Your mom was always the good kid. As soon as sis would get healthy again, she would insist on being the one to take care of her bouquet. Maggie's flowers always lasted much longer than mine did.

*(Pause. When it's clear JULIE is done talking, MIA starts to leave.)*

MIA: Okay, well I'll be going now.

JULIE: Does sis do that for you?

MIA: Do what?

JULIE: Put carnations in your room when you get sick?

MIA: Yeah.

JULIE: Figures. You know, when sis got older, she was the one to cut the bouquet for me whenever I got sick. She would come in with her hands full of flowers and fret over me for at least an hour before I could convince her to leave me alone and rest.

MIA: Yeah, she does that to me too. It's kind of annoying.

JULIE: I know what you mean. She always looked so distressed, like I was dying or something. I mean, I was the one sick, but watching her worry so much made me wonder if she was the one losing years.

MIA: Yeah. It's really ridiculous sometimes. She just needs to relax.

JULIE: I agree. Still, it doesn't hurt to help her out by not giving her anything to worry about, right?

*(Pause. They maintain eye contact, trying to read each other's thoughts and intentions.)*

MIA: Right. I'm going to go.

*(Exits)*

JULIE: *(As MIA exits)* Alright, take care!

*(MAGGIE enters.)*

MAGGIE: I thought I heard your voice. Did you decide you didn't want to walk?

JULIE: I just forgot my purse.

MAGGIE: Oh. Okay.

*(Pause)*



*(Simultaneously)*

JULIE: I'm sorry—

MAGGIE: I'm sorry—

*(Pause. They smile.)*

JULIE: I still think you should talk to Mia.

MAGGIE: I really don't think there's anything wrong.

JULIE: Then it wouldn't hurt to ask, now would it?

MAGGIE: But if I asked, that would basically be saying I don't trust her.

JULIE: If you can't ask, then you definitely don't.

MAGGIE: ... I'll think about it.

JULIE: Really?

MAGGIE: Really.

JULIE: Okay. *(Checks her phone)* Oh, my ride is here.

MAGGIE: Alright. Do you want anything to eat or drink for the road?

JULIE: No thanks, we're going out to dine with the clients soon.

MAGGIE: Okay, take care. Will I see you again before you go back?

JULIE: Yes. Probably.

MAGGIE: Alright, see you when I see you.

JULIE: See you.

*(JULIE exits to the garage.)*

*(MAGGIE sits at the table and looks at the carnation. After debating it, she makes a decision.)*

MAGGIE: *(Calling to offstage)* Mia, can you come down? Tell me more about Tatiana's birthday party.

## The Key

### Setting

An empty stage.

### Play

*(The NARRATOR stand apart from the other three, who are in a line across the stage and facing the audience. When it is time for PERSON 1, 2, or 3 to speak, the PERSON steps forward, delivers their line, and then steps back.)*

NARRATOR: The key to getting what you want from someone is to tell them what they want to hear. You can even lie, because if it's really what they hunger for, then it won't matter.

PERSON 1: I was really impressed with that presentation.

PERSON 2: There is no doubt that the regime possesses weapons of mass destruction.

PERSON 3: I love you.

NARRATOR: They will believe you because they want to believe you.

*(They are responding to the first line they said.)*

PERSON 1: Aww, thanks.

PERSON 2: That's terrible!

PERSON 3: I love you too.

NARRATOR: You can then make requests.

PERSON 1: Could you look over my presentation for me?

PERSON 2: We must maintain the operation to identify and find those weapons, along with the people who have produced them and who guard them.

PERSON 3: Want to go back to my place?

NARRATOR: And in exchange for what they crave, they will give you what you want.

PERSON 1: Sure! I'd love to help.

PERSON 2: We mustn't let them get away with this!

PERSON 3: Okay.

*(In the following scenes, each PERSON involved steps forward and acts out the scene. Then they step back once the scene is complete. )*

NARRATOR: If you want to make a small request, you don't need to tell them something groundbreaking.

*(PERSON 1 and 2 step forward.)*

PERSON 1: Hi, I'm lost. Could you help me find Elm Street?

PERSON 2: Yes, I can. I love feeling helpful.

*(PERSON 1 and 2 strike a pose to show how happy they both are (perhaps they both give thumbs-up to the audience). Then they step back.)*

NARRATOR: If you say just the right thing, even to a stranger, you can get a lot out.

*(PERSON 2 steps forward, looking sad and lonely. PERSON 3 steps forward.)*

PERSON 3: Are you tired? Because you've been running through my mind all day.

PERSON 2: *(Laughs)* Let me buy you a drink.

*(PERSON 2 and 3 strike the same pose as before. They step back.)*

NARRATOR: This can help smooth interactions with the people close to you.

*(PERSON 1 and 3 step forward.)*

PERSON 3: I was thinking of bringing something new to the potluck! Maybe try out that dish with the macaroni, mayonnaise and pears that Peter told me about.

PERSON 1: Oh. I was hoping you'd make a casserole. You make the most delicious casseroles I have ever tasted.

PERSON 3: Well, I guess I haven't made that in a while. Alright. I'll try my new recipe some other time.

*(Pose. Step back.)*

NARRATOR: And it can push people to do things that may not be a good idea for them.

*(PERSON 1 and 2 step forward.)*

PERSON 2: Come on, it'll be fun.

PERSON 1: I don't know. You know how clumsy I am. I'm not sure this is the best idea.

PERSON 2: This doesn't take any coordination, you just need to hold on! I'll take pictures and we can show them to your son! He'll think you're so cool.

PERSON 1: Okay, I'll give the mechanical bull a shot.

*(PERSON 2 poses. PERSON 1 looks apprehensive. They step back.)*

NARRATOR: The technique can be used to fool whole nations.

*(PERSON 2 and 3 step forward.)*

PERSON 2: As you can see, all of our investors have profited, and we guarantee that, should you choose to invest with us, your money will see the same kind of growth.

PERSON 3: Alright, I'm sold. I'll invest!

PERSON 2: Glad to have you on board. Just make out the check to Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities.

*(PERSON 2 poses while PERSON 3 mimes looking for their checkbook. They step back.)*

NARRATOR: Or to fool those closest to us.

*(PERSON 1 and 3 step forward. PERSON 3 is drunk.)*

PERSON 1: Did you go drinking?

PERSON 3: A little. We shipped out a new product at work, so everyone went celebrating.

PERSON 1: I thought you said you'd try to cut down.

PERSON 3: I am cutting down! But we've been working on this project for months, and Clara wanted to do team shots.

PERSON 1: Looks like you had more than just one shot.

PERSON 3: It's just this one time! It was a team bonding activity for a special occasion, so I got a little carried away. I won't do this regularly and I'm not that drunk! Can't you just be happy for us that we finally shipped?

PERSON 1: Of course I'm happy you shipped. I'm just really worried about you. And I'm disappointed you did this right after we just had a talk.

PERSON 3: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disappoint you! I know you're only looking out for me, and I do appreciate it. We were just so excited to let loose, you know? I'm sorry I yelled at you.

PERSON 1: It's okay. I just want you to take care of yourself.

PERSON 3: I will! So don't you worry! I'll fix this. I just need to go to bed right now. Bed time!

*(They freeze.)*

NARRATOR: It's foolproof.

PERSON 1: I can't not worry about it. I think you have a problem.

NARRATOR: *(Insisting)* It's foolproof!

PERSON 3: Honey, I've told you, I can control my drinking! It's not a problem. I'll fix it.

PERSON 1: You said that yesterday. And a week ago. Yet every time you find yourself near alcohol, you get completely smashed!

PERSON 3: I'm not smashed!

PERSON 1: Did you see how much trouble you had with the stairs? Because I did.

PERSON 3: Please, not now. Can we talk about this in the morning? I had a long day, and I'm exhausted.

PERSON 1: Fine. You probably wouldn't even remember what we said if we talked now.

PERSON 3: Thank you.

*(They step back.)*

NARRATOR: Right. In case that wasn't clear, this person *(Indicates to PERSON 3)* gave the other comfort, so this person *(points to PERSON 1)* dropped the subject.

*(PERSON 1 steps back forward.)*

PERSON 1: Sweetie, can we talk?

*(NARRATOR and PERSON 3 look at each other. NARRATOR shakes his head to tell PERSON 3 not to step forward.)*

PERSON 1: Honey?

*(PERSON 3 shrugs and steps forward.)*

PERSON 3: What is it?

PERSON 1: It's about your drinking.

PERSON 3: That again?

PERSON 1: Yes, again.

PERSON 3: I thought we already discussed this.

PERSON 1: Yes, and then you went out to drink again.

PERSON 3: No, didn't we talk about it before going to bed?

PERSON 1: We said we would talk about it tomorrow. Which is today.

PERSON 3: Look, I'm sorry honey. I just got a little carried away because of the shipping. It won't happen again.

PERSON 1: You said that last week about Jessie's birthday. And about the few nightcaps you had to de-stress after a long day. Or do you not remember those conversations.

PERSON 3: I'm sorry, love. Okay, sometimes I drink too much. From now on, I'll make sure not to drink more than two drinks per night. Okay?

NARRATOR: Good. Problem solve. Moving on.

PERSON 1: No, that's not good enough.

NARRATOR and PERSON 3: What?

PERSON 1: I'm not going to just accept the easy route anymore. Yes, I want this problem to go away, and I want you to fix it, but I'm not going to lie to myself or let you lie to yourself. You're an alcoholic.

PERSON 3: I am not!

PERSON 1: I printed this out last night when you didn't come back. (*She hands him a pamphlet, the only prop in the play.*) Read it and try to convince me that those don't apply to you. You realize that only four of those need to be true for people to label you as alcoholic, right?

PERSON 3: But I can control myself! I didn't go drinking that Thursday when everyone else was going.

PERSON 1: Great, but what were you doing the Friday after? Honey, you have a problem. It's okay. We'll get through it together. I still love you. I just want you to get better.

PERSON 3: I will! I'll tone down the drinking.

PERSON 1: You say that, but if the past is any indication, you'll come stumbling in drunk before the week is out.

PERSON 3: How about this? I won't drink at all. No chance of me getting drunk if I don't drink alcohol.

PERSON 1: None?

PERSON 3: None.

PERSON 1: And if you do end up drinking again?

PERSON 3: I won't.

PERSON 1: But if you do, will you go see a professional?

PERSON 3: A professional?

PERSON 1: If you go drinking again when you've promised me you wouldn't, I would really feel better if you consulted a professional about a possible drinking problem.

PERSON 3: Alright, *if* I drink again, I'll go see a professional.

PERSON 1: Thank you. (*PERSON 1 and PERSON 3 embrace.*)

NARRATOR: Well done, both of you!

(*Lights out.*)

**Parents**Characters

Jamie: A 20-years old woman.

Alex: Same age as Jamie and a woman.

Setting

A bedroom.

Play

*(JAMIE is on the phone, sitting on the bed.)*

JAMIE: Yup... Yes... I know, dad. I will... Sure... Nope, nothing new here. Just same old, same old...

*(ALEX enters. ALEX goes in for a kiss, but JAMIE puts a hand up, stopping ALEX.)*

JAMIE: That's great!... Okay... You too... I love you too... Bye. *(Hangs up.)*

ALEX: *(Sitting on the bed next to JAMIE. ALEX puts an arm around JAIME.)* Who was that?

JAMIE: My dad.

ALEX: What did he say?

JAMIE: He wants to visit next week.

ALEX: Why?

JAMIE: He's going to be on a business trip here, so he figured he'd also take the weekend and visit.

ALEX: The whole weekend?

JAMIE: Yes.

ALEX: So are you going to church on Sunday, then?

JAMIE: Yeah, probably. *(ALEX sighs heavily.)* What?

ALEX: It's just two wasted hours.

JAMIE: It's not wasted.



ALEX: Right.

JAMIE: Really! It's not that bad. It's actually kind of nice, with all the music and stuff. Very Zen.

ALEX: Uh-huh.

JAMIE: Plus, dad likes to discuss the sermons afterwards. It's rare quality time, especially since we don't really have anything else in common to talk about. You should come with us, and you'll see.

ALEX: No thanks. I'll pass.

JAMIE: Why not?

ALEX: I could do something else. Something better.

JAMIE: Like what?

ALEX: Like get drunk.

JAMIE: On a Sunday morning?

ALEX: It was a joke.

JAMIE: It wasn't funny

ALEX: I thought it was... (*JAMIE shoots ALEX a dirty look*) Sorry.

JAMIE: Well, if you're not going to get drunk, you might as well come to church.

ALEX: Why are you being so insistent about this?

JAMIE: It would just mean a lot to me.

ALEX: Do your parents know I'm not Christian?

JAMIE: Um...

ALEX: Well?

JAMIE: No, they don't.

ALEX: You haven't told them?

JAMIE: It's not like I've been hiding it from them! It just hasn't come up, and I figured if they didn't ask, there's no reason to bring it up. Look, I really like you so I want my parents to like

you too. And I'm sure my parents will like you once they get to know you. I just don't want them to make snap judgments before they even get to know you.

ALEX: Will my religious views really matter that much?

JAMIE: Well, if that's the only thing they know about you, then probably. That's why I want you to meet my dad before that comes up. I'm sure he'll love you once he gets to know you.

ALEX: It's outrageous that he should judge me on just my religion.

JAMIE: Religion is important to him. You judge people based on whether or not they like the same hobbies as you, so why can't my dad judge you on whether you agree with his religion?

ALEX: The difference is, I don't think people who don't enjoy my hobbies are bad people.

JAMIE: He won't think you're a bad person! I have plenty of non-Christian friends, and he likes them. He has non-Christian friends himself.

ALEX: Then why are you so worried that he won't like me?

JAMIE: I'm not worried, I just want to give you the best possible beginning.

ALEX: It's ridiculous that they would judge me on this one thing that is really mostly a matter of opinion.

JAMIE: Maybe, but I'd still like you to come to church with us.

ALEX: What? Why?

JAMIE: Because even if it's ridiculous, I still want you to make a good impression. Please come?

ALEX: But aren't churches against same-sex couples? Wouldn't I just make it awkward?

JAMIE: No, my parents made sure to find a church that was LGBT friendly! It's only a couple of hours. Please come. I know it'll make my dad really happy if you come too. And he'll get to you know you and he'll love you, I just know it!

ALEX: Fine. I'll come, but I won't like it.

JAMIE: Yay! Also... I'd really like it if you didn't mention you're not a practicing Christian anymore.

ALEX: What?

JAMIE: Only so he can get to know you first!

ALEX: Wouldn't lying make it worse?

JAMIE: Don't lie to him! Just... don't mention it. Let him warm up to you first. You know, she him how wonderful of a person you are, so that he'll know that the religion thing doesn't matter.

ALEX: What if he asks?

JAMIE: He won't. And if he does ask, you can tell him the truth. But if he doesn't, there's no need to open that can of worms just yet.

ALEX: Alright. He's your dad. I guess you know him best.

JAMIE: Thank you, Alex.

*(JAMIE kisses ALEX on the cheek.)*

*(Lights out.)*

*(Lights up. JAMIE and ALEX return from church.)*

JAMIE: See? That wasn't so bad!

ALEX: It wasn't unpleasant, yes, but I would rather have been doing something else.

JAMIE: Well, I'm very grateful you deigned to grace us with your company.

ALEX: Damn well better be. And I kept my heretical thoughts to myself the whole time! I think I deserve a reward!

*(ALEX tackles JAMIE onto the bed. JAMIE laughs and pats ALEX on the head.)*

JAMIE: Yes, you did admirably. They were completely fooled.

ALEX: When are we going to un-fool them?

JAMIE: ... I don't know. When it comes up.

ALEX: Do your parents know *you* don't practice anymore?

JAMIE: Well, they know I don't go to church every week.

ALEX: But they still think you believe in all that crap?

JAMIE: It's not crap! It's a faith. Just because it can't be proven doesn't mean it isn't true. In any case, it gives them comfort to think there is a greater plan. It doesn't mean they don't accept

scientific explanations and discoveries, and they don't let it affect their political decisions. So what's the harm?

ALEX: You say "they". Do *you* believe in that stuff?

JAMIE: It could be true! You never know!

ALEX: But do you yourself believe it?

JAMIE: ... Not really. But I see the appeal! And I think it's perfectly legitimate—

ALEX: And your parents don't know that you don't believe it?

*(Pause)*

ALEX: You haven't told them.

JAMIE: I'll tell them eventually. I just don't think the time is right.

ALEX: Are you afraid?

JAMIE: No, they're reasonable people. I'm sure that they'll react as well as they did to my coming out. I just need to prep them first.

ALEX: So once you've proven to them that good, lesbian non-Christians exist by having them get to know me, then they'll be prepped?

JAMIE: What?

ALEX: *This* is why you wanted me to meet your father so much and make a good impression. To be a shining example to your parents. I feel so used.

JAMIE: I wasn't using you.

ALEX: Weren't you? Why did you care so much that your parents like me?

JAMIE: It's because I really like you, and if we're going to be long-term—

ALEX: We've barely been dating for a month. That's hardly enough time to even start judging if we'd be good life partners. Let alone start bringing me home to meet my future in-laws. I don't even know if you want to have kids, where you want to live, or even if you prefer flowers or chocolate! You just wanted to show your parents you can still be a good person, despite not being the person they were hoping you would be.

JAMIE: That's not true! My dad and you are never in the same location, but today you were, so I wanted you to meet him. I didn't know when the next opportunity would be, and I've told him a lot about you.

ALEX: Only the good parts, of course.

JAMIE: Well yes. I wouldn't trash talk you to my parents. That would be entirely counter-productive.

ALEX: But you conveniently left out that I'm not Christian.

JAMIE: Well, sorry if I wanted him to meet you with an unbiased view.

ALEX: Unbiased except for all the great things you built me up to be! He seemed to have pretty solid expectations of what to expect.

JAMIE: He's been asking about you.

ALEX: Really? I can believe that our volunteering would come up in conversations, but my grades?

JAMIE: Well, why shouldn't I highlight your good qualities?

ALEX: And hide the less-than-admirable ones? If your parents like me, I want them to like who I really am. At the very least, I want them to know who I am, and screw them if they don't like what they see.

JAMIE: But I really want them to like you!

ALEX: Why?

JAMIE: Because... Because I like you! And I like them! And I want them to like you!

ALEX: Is it really better for them to like something fake, some façade that you created, than for them to know who you really are?

JAMIE: (*JAMIE starts crying.*) But what if they don't like me? You should have seen their faces when I came out to them. They looked so disappointed. They tried to put on a brave face, but I could see the disappointment. What if this time, they just give up?

ALEX: Jamie... (*ALEX holds her.*) Your parents love you. Your dad is proud of you. Anyone can see that in the way he introduced us to the pastor. I've never seen anyone look so proud to announce he had brought his daughter and her girlfriend. Come clean to your parents. Stop

pretending to be who you *think* they want you to be, and trust that they will love you as you are. And if they stop loving you, then fuck them; they aren't worth caring about!

(*JAMIE cries harder.*)

ALEX: (*Panicked*) Ahh! Wrong thing to say! I'm sorry! I was just kidding! I didn't mean it. I was just joking. Sorry! It was joke. I know your parents will love and accept you no matter what!

JAMIE: You tell terrible jokes.

ALEX: I know. Sorry. That's what I get for trying to be funny. You'd think I would have learned after that joke I tried to tell your dad.

JAMIE: (*Giggling through her tears*) Why did you ever think a menstruation joke would go over well?

ALEX: I don't know. Nobody was talking, and it was kind of tangentially related. Maybe? Kinda?

JAMIE: Not at all. From now on, I'll tell the jokes, okay?

ALEX: And what should I do?

JAMIE: Stand next to me and look pretty.

ALEX: Pretty sure you got me beat on that one too.

JAMIE: Well, then what good are you?

ALEX: Um... I'm a damned fantastic cuddler.

JAMIE: Alright, I guess that'll have to do.

ALEX: Yay! I'm useful! (*JAMIE laughs. They cuddle.*) See? If you can accept me for who I am, flaws and all, how could your parents not accept you, who can tell joke and looks damn fine?

JAMIE: Religious views and the ability to tell jokes are a little different, Alex.

ALEX: I know. I guess I was trying to tell a joke again.

JAMIE: You have to stop that. You're terrible at it.

ALEX: Okay, sorry. I am serious when I say that you should tell your parents, though.

JAMIE: I will. Eventually.

ALEX: No. (*Hands JAMIE her phone.*) Do it now.

JAMIE: Now?

ALEX: When else?

JAMIE: I don't know, after college? Maybe once there's no chance that they'll make me come back home or transfer to some kind of convent.

ALEX: I thought you said your parents were reasonable.

JAMIE: They are.

ALEX: So would they really do that?

JAMIE:... No...

ALEX: The longer you put it off, the more difficult it will be and the more it will hurt everyone. Plus, the sooner you do it, the sooner everyone can start acclimating to the idea.

JAMIE: But my dad isn't even home yet. It would just be my mom.

ALEX: Perfect! Divide and conquer!

JAMIE: But...

ALEX: No "but"s! Come on, don't you want your parents to love you? If they don't know you, how can they love *you*? (*JAMIE hesitates.*) Stop living a lie, Jamie. You'll never be happy that way.

(*JAMIE dials her parents' phone. She waits until her mother picks up.*)

JAMIE: Hi mom!... I'm good... No, he already left... Yes, he was doing fine... Church was good. (*JAMIE looks to ALEX, and ALEX signals for her to go ahead.*) Listen mom, about church...

(*Lights out.*)

**Interview (Part 2), a continuation of the first play**

*(MISS SMITH's office is as before, with a desk, two chairs and the lie detector. MISS SMITH and LYDIA enter.)*

LYDIA: The R&D guys say they can't come pick up the lie detector until tomorrow. They've shown me how to turn it off, though.

MISS SMITH: Good.

LYDIA: Also, Stephen came by.

MISS SMITH: Oh God.

LYDIA: He just wanted to know if you would like to get a cup of coffee with him this afternoon.

MISS SMITH: Will you stop trying to set me up?

LYDIA: I'm not trying to set you up! *(Ding)*

*(They look at the detector.)*

LYDIA: Well, it seems to be working fine now.

MISS SMITH: Lydia!

LYDIA: Look, Stephen's a really nice guy. I think you'd like him if you just gave him a chance.

MISS SMITH: I don't think so.

LYDIA: Why? What have you got to lose?

MISS SMITH: It's not that I have anything to lose; it's that I have nothing to gain.

LYDIA: You don't want a boyfriend at all?

MISS SMITH: No.

LYDIA: Oh. Well, I guess if that's what you want, there's nothing more for me to do here.

MISS SMITH: I guess so.

*(Pause.)*

LYDIA: Really? You want to stay single all your life?

MISS SMITH: Yup. *(Ding)*



LYDIA: Ha! Liar! What do you like in a guy?

MISS SMITH: I told you, that thing is broken. (*Ding*)

LYDIA: Tall? Do you like them tall?

MISS SMITH: (*Warningly*) Lydia...

LYDIA: How about sporty? Rugged? Maybe sensitive?

MISS SMITH: Lydia, I don't want a boyfriend. Not now, not ever. (*She points to the lie detector*) And see? That thing is contradicting itself. Now will you please just drop it?

LYDIA: (*Pause, thinking.*) Then do you want a girlfriend?

MISS SMITH: (*Admonishingly*) Lydia!

LYDIA: That would make so much sense! Why didn't you ever tell me? Oh. Stephen will be heartbroken though.

MISS SMITH: Sure he will.

LYDIA: What kind of girl do you like?

MISS SMITH: I'm not talking about this.

LYDIA: Or is there a girl you already like? Maybe someone I know? (*LYDIA pauses to see MISS SMITH's reaction. MISS SMITH adamantly refuses to respond.*) You know, if you just answer "No" and the lie detectors says you're telling the truth, I'll drop it.

MISS SMITH: I told you, that thing is broken. (*Ding*)

LYDIA: Okay, it's someone I know then. (*Accusing*) Is it Leslie? If it's Leslie, I'll be very disappointed in you. (*MISS SMITH shoots LYDIA a dirty look*) Okay, not Leslie. Is it someone that works here?

MISS SMITH: Can we just drop this?

LYDIA: What? Come on, I won't tell. Promise! And you know I never break my promises.

MISS SMITH: Lydia, drop it.

LYDIA: Judie, I'll be the only who knows.

MISS SMITH: And that's one too many!

LYDIA: (*Hurt*) You don't trust me.

MISS SMITH: That's not it.

LYDIA: Isn't it? I tell you everything about me, and it turns out I didn't even know your sexual orientation! And now you won't tell me who you like, even though I promised I wouldn't tell anybody! The only way that would change anything is if you liked... me. (*Realizes that's probably what's happening.*) But that's just silly. (*Ding*)

MISS SMITH: I can't stand that thing anymore. Can you turn it off?

LYDIA: Yeah! Sure. (*She goes behind the device and pulls the plug.*)

MISS SMITH: Is that the only way?

LYDIA: Yeah. R&D didn't think anyone would actually want to turn it off and not know whether something was a truth or a lie.

MISS SMITH: I guess they never thought it would malfunction, either.

LYDIA: I guess so.

MISS SMITH: Thanks.

LYDIA: No problem. Well, if you don't need anything else, I should go.

MISS SMITH: Oh, no. Go ahead. (*LYDIA begins to exit.*) Lydia?

LYDIA: (*LYDIA stops and turns back.*) Yes?

MISS SMITH: I do trust you.

LYDIA: I know. That's why we're such good friends.

(*LYDIA smiles reassuringly at MISS SMITH and exits.*)

(*Lights out.*)