



# Ironbound

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“There is an old story about a worker suspected of stealing:  
every evening, as he leaves the factory,  
the wheelbarrow he rolls in front of him is carefully inspected.  
The guards can find nothing. It is always empty.  
Finally, the penny drops:  
what the worker is stealing are the wheelbarrows themselves.”

Slavoj Žižek, “Violence”

“Now near the end of the middle stretch of road  
What have I learned? Some earthly wiles. An art.  
That often I cannot tell good fortune from bad,  
That once had seemed so easy to tell apart.”

Robert Pinsky, “Jersey Rain”

**People.**

**Darja.** [*dar-ya*]

**Tommy.**

**Maks.**

**Vic.**

Darja and Tommy can be late 30s/early 40s.

Maks can be 30s.

Vic should appear teenage/early 20s.

**Place.**

A bus stop at night, a quarter mile from a factory in Elizabeth, NJ.  
Or where there used to be a factory, depending on the year.

The play spans 22 years. In 2006, Darja is 34.

**Dialogistics.**

Slashes // indicate overlap.

Ellipses ... are active silences.

Foreign language is italicized.

**A note on staging.**

The play should be performed without an intermission.

Darja does not leave the stage until the very end of the play.

**A note on performance.**

It can be tempting to play the circumstances of these characters' lives and end up missing the comedy. It is my hope for an audience to laugh and understand.

**A note on New Jersey:**

The Jersey I know is gravel and cattails. Empty quarter drinks and Buds litter parking lots. A marsh, a highway, bridges. Almost everyone is from somewhere else. And, yes, there's a reason they're not living in New York.

**Scene One.**

**2014.  
Winter.**

*(A streetlight zaps on.)*

*(Night. An environment of black.  
Stars exist beyond smog; we don't see them.  
A bus stop. Perhaps a faded sign. But probably not.  
This world is one of constant less.)*

*(The chill of winter is just starting to set in.)*

*(Two people fight. DARJA in sweats, a scarf, and a hoodie – the clothes of a cleaning lady. She carries a large tote bag with her. Slavic accent. TOMMY wears a Jersey Devils jacket over his postal worker's uniform. Shorts. A tribal calf tat.)*

DARJA

What you don't understand is how so much you // hurt me.

TOMMY

I'm sorry!

DARJA

And I suppose to do with this what? What I suppose to do with this?

TOMMY

What you need to realize is it was from a different time. A Different Time.

DARJA

It was four month ago.

TOMMY

And I'm different now. Get in the car.

DARJA

Four month you keep from me and how many times we, since you, how many?

TOMMY

Can you please fuckin please get in the fuckin car please?

DARJA

This was not the week. This was not good week to do this.

TOMMY

I didn't do it this week. This week's the week you chose to find out about it.  
Just get in the car. Yer not ridin that bus.

DARJA

I rode the other bus here.

TOMMY

And I tailed you in my – and that bus was not *this* bus, was not *this* neighborhood, waitin in *this*.

DARJA

I was riding that bus whole the time. Since that factory open, I ride.

TOMMY

O wow *that's* the factory you used to work at – ?

DARJA

We are not having nice conversation now. The past. Memories. No.

TOMMY

(*trying*) What happened to it // again?

DARJA

No.

...

TOMMY

Okay. Y'know what, Darja? What you gotta understand, man, is that people fuck up. It's planned that way. Yer Catholic. You know. It's planned this way for people to fuck up cuz if we were all perfect, fuck, who'd need to be Catholic. It's a cycle a system listen: we're not in control of these things, okay? Okay? We are Outta Control. And if you wanna crossify me for one little, man, after *everything* we've, everything *I've* done, for you, how many years?, if you wanna do that, Darja, then...

I don't know, man. I just don't think you should do that, Darja.

(*longer than it should take*)

I'm sorry.

DARJA

Me too.

Also you have no idea what you talking about, also.

TOMMY

The bus won't come. It's too late.

DARJA

And with rich lady, hey. Congratulation to you.

Did you hear me? TOMMY

It will come. DARJA

Fine, it comes, then what? You get off at Market and, what, walk? Yer gonna walk through Newark now? A woman like you? TOMMY

I do this many year before you, Tommy. A woman like what. DARJA

Get in the car. TOMMY

No. DARJA

DARJA GET IN THE FUCKIN CAR. TOMMY

...

You are not the one what gets to curse. DARJA

We're goin to the same place. TOMMY

And I pack when I get there. DARJA

Yer not gonna – TOMMY

No. You pack. DARJA

I'm not goin – TOMMY

No. Me. I am going. DARJA

Yeah? With what car? TOMMY

HEY! I had car. DARJA

Well you don't now, do you. TOMMY

...

I will find someone. I will find someone else. DARJA

Where? TOMMY

I found *you*. I was not blind person. I was not stupid. I know exactly what was I doing so I was not stupid. I weighed you on scale and I say mm Okay. DARJA

"Okay"? TOMMY

I am 42 years old, married-twice-already woman: I have no time for stupid. So I weigh you on scale. Okay? So tell me, Tommy. How many times you – DARJA

What good's that kinda information? TOMMY

How many? DARJA

Why? TOMMY

Five? Four? One time every month? DARJA

Why do you need to know? TOMMY

Is some numbers I can handle. And some I probably cannot. DARJA

...

If you leave, I don't know what's gonna happen to me. TOMMY



Five? DARJA

I'm not good alone, you know that. TOMMY

Five? DARJA

...

Five. TOMMY

Not nine? DARJA

...

Nine. TOMMY

Not twelve? DARJA

No. TOMMY

Not twelve? DARJA

No. TOMMY

Not fourteen? DARJA

...

No. TOMMY

DARJA  
You look in my face and you lie. Why you lie my face when I find out things so good?

TOMMY  
You never made a mistake?

DARJA  
Fourteen times it's not // mistake –

TOMMY  
– A very //big mistake –

DARJA  
– Fourteen times it's career.  
Just answer me one thing. You want me I stay?

TOMMY  
Yes. Yes, of course I, yes.

DARJA  
Why.

TOMMY  
I love you.

DARJA  
NO. WE ARE NOT HAVING NICE CONVERSATION.

TOMMY  
Well, you wanna know why, that's why.

DARJA  
You love me, okay, but you consider leaving. You, so obvious, you consider this –

TOMMY  
I didn't *plan* // like – Things Happen.

DARJA  
I TALK NOW.  
Must be something what scares you more than leaving and so you stay. People imagine things. Things what can happen them, alone. In nights, they make pictures this thing in their heads. What you imagine? For me, is when I am cleaning her house and –

TOMMY  
Does she know you know? About, that you know?

DARJA  
What good would be if she know? I need job. And she have - *you* know - very dirty house.  
No. She don't know.  
You have broke me to one hundred pieces.

TOMMY  
I'm sorry. How much you want me to apologize? I apologized. So much. It's in the past.

DARJA

What you imagine?

...

TOMMY

It's the nights. At the apartment. When yer workin late and no one's home. Yer always workin. And late.

There's no sound.

And thoughts come.

I'm not good alone. You know that.

DARJA

And what happens if you can't fill apartment with someone?

TOMMY

I could find someone. But it's not about findin *someone*.

DARJA

Yes this is.

TOMMY

No. No, it's not. It's about *you* not leavin.

DARJA

Where? Where you would find someone? In *post office*? Go to someone's house? Slip to them *letter*? Slide in their mail slot your letter? "Meet me tonight."

TOMMY

I never slipped her a letter.

DARJA

Did I say you did?

TOMMY

That's not even my route. Montclair. Not my postal route.

...

If you think about it...I'm the best you ever had.

...

DARJA

This stupid bus. I am walking.

TOMMY

I'll just tail you, you start walkin. HEY!—

*(She has set out. He grabs her arm, stops her.)*

Don't be fuckin crazy.

Okay?

Get in the car.

DARJA

Or you will just hold me like this until what?

*(A moment.*

*He lets go.*

*A breath.)*

What if I did to you what you did to me? What if?

TOMMY

I'd stay with you. And forgive you. And love you so very very much.

DARJA

You would stay with me, yes sure. Yes sure, because I make easy your life. For you, I cook, I clean, I lay there for you. I make sounds. Easy life. And you can whatever you want because I will lay there. Of course you would stay with me.

TOMMY

That's what you think?

DARJA

I weigh you on scale.

TOMMY

Well that's not what I think.

And, actually, you lay there very loudly.

Yer welcome.

DARJA

No, you are welcome.

Everything can change. You come home one day and maybe it's no one there.

Everything it's already changed.

So what you will give me now?

TOMMY

What?

DARJA

What you will *give* me. For me to stay. Because you love me. So very very much.

You think you can whatever you want with whoever you want for one night. One hour. Ten minutes (I know you). But everyone goes their homes after.

TOMMY

What is this “everyone” shit? It was One Person.

DARJA

And I know she have her home, her kid, her husband – rich husband – to go after. But you? What you have?

*(TOMMY inhales to reply.  
No response.)*

Okay. So what you will give?

...

TOMMY

I could...try to be more understanding—

DARJA

No. These it’s fake ideas. Concrete, I need. Concrete. I need How Much You Will Give.

TOMMY

How much what?

DARJA

I need figures. Numbers. Money.  
You are not my great love, okay? You are not my great love for talking to me fake ideas.

TOMMY

Yer mine. Yer my great—

DARJA

We are not having nice conversation! I can’t trust “understanding.” I can’t trust “try.” I can trust \$3,000 in my hands.

TOMMY

3000!?!

DARJA

Dollars. In my bank. It’s number I can trust.

TOMMY

3000?

DARJA

At least.

...

TOMMY  
So I give you 3 grand and you do what with it?

DARJA  
Pay bills.

TOMMY  
Not a car? Not buy a car?

DARJA  
Maybe. Maybe I buy car.

TOMMY  
You have no idea where he is.

...

DARJA  
Does not matter what I buy.

TOMMY  
It does if yer gonna take my money and run.

DARJA  
You have \$3,000?

TOMMY  
That's not the point.

DARJA  
I think point is if you want me I stay or no. You have no kids, no house, one credit card. Car payments and rent you have.

TOMMY  
The *majority* of rent.

DARJA  
That it's all you have. I buy, I make, all your food. Laundry. Birth control! Birth control it's costing! How nice this is, only worry for yourself, no kids, just pay // for yourself—

TOMMY  
Aleks is 25 years—

DARJA  
Two! Two! Aleks is 22! It's two two's, how hard this is?

TOMMY

20-anything, in my mind, makes you a grown ass man. If he wants to go, he's gonna go. And he's gone.

DARJA

He it's not okay to go! You have 3,000 dollars. You have more than 3,000 dollars. What is for you 3,000 dollars? Nothing. Is nothing for you.

...

I will come back. Okay?

TOMMY

You have no idea where he is.

DARJA

That's why I need 3000 shit dollars! I need 1,000 for car so I can go find him and 2,000 maybe for whatever he needs.

TOMMY

Rehab?

DARJA

Whatever he needs.

TOMMY

I told you I'm not payin for some deadbeat's kid.

DARJA

No, you paying me. You paying me to make noise.

TOMMY

You know how much rehab costs? Cuz that's what that kid needs.

DARJA

I can find something for cheap. Listen, you have broke me to millions pieces. You take my last good years I have in my life –

TOMMY

You were 35 when we got together.

DARJA

And you know how shit were the first 35.

You don't wanna pay for my son, Tommy?, okay, it's fine. So just you pay for me and what money I make, I pay for my son. That's Fine. I say Fine to this before, I say Fine now. And right now I need car.

TOMMY

I'm not payin you to find him. So he can, fuckin, steal from me, trash our place. No, please, I'd love to see the cops again. Re-connect. I'd fuckin love it.

DARJA

For work, I need money for car.

TOMMY

No. If I give you money, I'd be payin you to stay. No, I'd help *support* you. I'm not *payin* you like a, I'm not *payin* you. This would be me offerin you support. Cuz you know what, D? I respect you. You work hard. I respect you. It's not your fault where you were born. It's not your fault you were dealt a shit hand. All those Communists 'n Nazis 'n shit. But you came here. Home of the brave. Make a better – home of the brave! Even if you knew you'd be behind, you came. And that?: Respect. That, from me, gets you respect. So if you need money, I can give you money. I can help you out. Not much, not \$3,000. But you'd need to stay.

...

DARJA

How much?

TOMMY

See, this is terrible right here. This is a terrible thing to talk about.

DARJA

How much or I am moving tomorrow.

TOMMY

You always threaten to move.

DARJA

And you listen then.

TOMMY

You never do.

DARJA

This time it's different.

TOMMY

Fine. Okay, fine, but for one mistake? For one mistake you'd trash it all?

DARJA

I counted seventeen times in four months with her. One time in 2013. Three in 2012, but this was someone else. "Allison." And in 2011, this was also someone else. "Courtney." And this is only counting times I know you go to meet with them. Your phone has tap.



Since I know something is going on, it's have tap.  
I listen every Monday to what I collect. While I clean Linda's house.

...

TOMMY

I put a password on my phone.

DARJA

Your mother's birthday. Backwards. Her birthday backwards.

...

TOMMY

You can't tap a cell—

DARJA

There is app.

...

...

TOMMY

So you know...how much exactly?

DARJA

I start in 2010. I start collecting things I can hold in my hands then.

TOMMY

And you waited til now.

DARJA

I was tired of lying.

TOMMY

Why'd you wait til now?

DARJA

I am tired of you lying.

...

...

TOMMY

You were holdin onto it? To tellin me you knew? For, what, for a rainy fuckin day?

DARJA

You pay or no?

TOMMY

Aleks left. He –

DARJA

No, // this is not about –

TOMMY

– he’s never left before. He’d fuck shit up. Plenty. Torment you. Me. But he never left. So you were waitin, huh? Til, what, til you needed a trump? Til you really needed a fuckin bail out?

DARJA

This is just the situation.

TOMMY

He makes you cry.

DARJA

What?

TOMMY

Worse than I ever seen in a woman. Why you hold onto him, he makes you fuckin cry?

...

DARJA

2,000. Just for car.

TOMMY

I don’t do that. I don’t make you cry.

DARJA

Just 1,000 even.

TOMMY

I don’t steal your car and run off for, how many, three days?, without a call. So you gotta take two buses to work. In this fuckin – wasteland. I don’t do that.

Shoulda tapped *his* phone, huh?

...

DARJA

Okay.

I leave you tomorrow.

TOMMY

Yeah? When the bus comes? Where's yer bus?

...

Huh, Darja? Where's yer bus?

...

DARJA

Just 1,000.

Tommy.

Seventeen times. In four months.

You owe me so much more than just 1,000.

TOMMY

I have pictures of you.

I have pictures of you doin things. To me. I have the video. Remember the video? I said I erased it. I have it.

I could show it to people.

You can start makin demands when you got a leg to stand on.

Get in the car.

DARJA

*(nice try)* No one here knows me.

Show them.

*(a challenge)* No one in this country knows me.

...

Just—just 1,000?

**Scene Two.**

**1992.  
Summer.**

*(The sound of cicadas.)*

*(DARJA and MAKS. They wear shirts with sleeves, rolled up. Uniforms. Tags. Sweat stains. A hot night. MAKS is from the same country as DARJA.)*

*(They count out their change. This is their game. Taking turns, they put forward one coin from their respective pockets. That's one coin per turn. Before them rests a small mass of coins.)*

*(DARJA takes out a coin from her pocket, places it.  
Then MAKS takes out a coin from his pocket, places it.  
And so the game goes.  
The winner gets a sexual favor tonight.)*

Five.	MAKS
...ten.	DARJA
Twenty.	MAKS
Fourteen five!	DARJA
Mm. Forty.	MAKS
What?	DARJA
Forty five.	MAKS
	DARJA
	<i>("you jerk":) Yes yes. Forty five. Twenty, thirty, forty, yes okay.</i>
Fifty.	MAKS
Sixty.	DARJA

Eighty...five.	MAKS
One...ten.	DARJA
One...fifteen.	MAKS
Uh oh. Close. ...	DARJA
One...twenty.	
One twenty...one. ...	MAKS
Twenty six!	DARJA
<i>(disbelief) No kurdy...</i>	MAKS
I win! One twenty six!	DARJA
No no, bus is costing more in nights.	MAKS
No no, I win!	DARJA
Yes yes. You win.	MAKS
Pay up.	DARJA
Now, pay up?	MAKS
I don't see anyone.	DARJA
Really? Now? Here?	MAKS

Do you see anyone...	DARJA
<i>(He gets down on his knees. She's loving this.)</i>	
Dobra, to dziś zrobię Ci coś // co –	MAKS
You have to practice –	DARJA
So tonight I –	MAKS
<i>(He rides his hands up her thighs.)</i>	
Roztopię Cię, kobieto –	
Practice –	DARJA
I don't know how to say in English –	MAKS
Say: Tonight you make me happy.	DARJA
Tonight –	MAKS
Because I win.	DARJA
Because you win, tonight I make you //happy.	MAKS
Tonight you make me happy.	DARJA
<i>(fifth time this week)</i> Again.	MAKS
<i>(damn right)</i> Again.	DARJA
<i>(damn right indeed)</i> Again.	MAKS

DARJA

*(pure joy)* Again!

MAKS

You are too good this game.

DARJA

You are too good for me not to be this good this game.

*(They kiss.*

*A car passes by, honks at them, trying to be funny.*

*They both flip it the bird, without taking their mouths off each other.)*

You think rich people have this games?

MAKS

They have other kinds games, rich people.

*(They kiss. Just a little too long.)*

DARJA

*Maksiu*, wait.

Tonight it's special night.

MAKS

*(still holding her, kissing her neck)* Yeeeeaaahh it is.

DARJA

No no...I mean *yes* but...I have something tonight to tell you.

Look in my bag.

MAKS

Right now?

DARJA

Right now.

MAKS

...Right now?

DARJA

Right now!

*(He looks in her tote bag.*

*Looks at her.*

*Looks at bag.*

*Looks at her.)*

MAKS  
You buy this?

DARJA  
You funny.

MAKS  
You...

DARJA  
...rent this. Just for tonight. For special night.

*(MAKS pulls out a delicate nightgown.)*

MAKS  
From who?

DARJA  
From woman I work for.

MAKS  
Woman you, the crazy? She it's one hundred years old woman, why you want this. And she it's crazy.

DARJA  
She it's sick.

MAKS  
She it's sick with crazy.

DARJA  
She it's not wearing this. This it's from when she's just married, when she was 19. I am just married and I am 20 so really I am late to have something like this. I find in some box with tape on whole this thing. These people always are throwing beautiful things. She can't to throw this beautiful thing. Look at this.

*(He feels the nightgown. Flower petals.)*

Is just for tonight. She will never know.

MAKS  
What if she does?

DARJA  
...she it's crazy.  
Is just for this night.



MAKS

*She it's crazy?*

DARJA

You talking so much. You will not be talking so much tonight.

*(She models it against her.)*

*Maksiu.*

MAKS

Bring this back.

DARJA

Why?

MAKS

I want you wear something what's for you.

DARJA

And this it's not for me?

MAKS

It's, no, this it's not for you, you stole this.

DARJA

So, okay, I give this back. After tonight.

MAKS

*No, Darju, ty nie rozumiesz –*

DARJA

English.

MAKS

*Jezus Maria.*

DARJA

You will never go no place you don't speak English.

MAKS

Yeah? I speak English whole time am here. Since I come here, I speak English. You know who else speaks English? Whole rest this country. Is nothing special you speak English this country.

You don't *take* things like some bullshit person. Bring this back.

...

I buy for you one.  
One day.

*(They stand in silence.  
Then he takes out liquor. Swigs.)*

You want?

DARJA

No.

MAKS

Now you mad?

DARJA

I just don't want drink.

MAKS

Why?

DARJA

I just don't.

MAKS

You steal but you don't drink. What sense is this.

DARJA

Why that is not for me?

MAKS

You did not buy it.

DARJA

What if she give to me this?

MAKS

She did not give to you that.

DARJA

She throw this away, same thing like if she give me. I am wearing her clothes sometimes. When I push her in wheelchair, I wear her hats so if she turn around her head, I can fast take this off. When I shop for her food, I wear her scarf. When I take her bills to post office. Sometimes I even walk in Central Park - just for like, little bit - in her dress. Beautiful dress. Blue. I take this off before I go inside and clean her furnitures. But people on the street...in life...they for some reason they always know who am I. I wear her clothes but.

Maks.

Why you think we look poor?

MAKS  
Because we don't look rich.  
You wait. You have one day rich husband.

DARJA  
You are divorcing me?

MAKS  
You are not funny.

DARJA  
Yes I am.

*(He takes out a cigarette, lights.)*

MAKS  
Want?

DARJA  
No.

MAKS  
No?

DARJA  
No.

MAKS  
No?

DARJA  
No.

...

MAKS  
No?

DARJA  
No!

MAKS  
Who are you?

DARJA  
Is too hot.

To smoke is? MAKS

Too hot to smoke, yes. DARJA

You okay maybe? MAKS

I am fine thank you very much and yourself? DARJA

(*suit yourself*;) Okay. MAKS

(*He smokes.  
They stare out, waiting for the bus.*)

Late, yes?

(*terrified; taken aback*) What? DARJA

...

The bus. MAKS  
Late.  
Yes?

Yes. DARJA  
Late.

The bus.

(*MAKS smokes.*)

I love this smell.

You can have one. MAKS

No. I can't. DARJA

Why you can't? MAKS

No. DARJA

...

This waiting is bullshit. I want car. MAKS

Yes. DARJA

One day. MAKS

I want house. DARJA

Maybe. MAKS

You don't want house? DARJA

I want to know we can go any place we want. MAKS

(*not smiling*) Chicago? DARJA

(*smiling*) Chicago! MAKS

Please don't do it. DARJA

*(Too late. MAKS has taken out his harmonica.  
He plays.  
He sings the chorus of "Czerwony Jak Cegła" by Dżem – a Polish blues song.)*

*(He's damn good. He shines.)*

*DARJA, however, is having none of it.  
This feels like the 500<sup>th</sup> time he is doing this.)*

(*singing*) Czerwony jak cegła – MAKS

(*this always happens*) Okay.

DARJA

(*singing*) – rozgrzany jak piec,  
Muszę mieć, // muszę ją mieć –

MAKS

Yeah okay.

DARJA

Czerwony jak cegła,  
rozgrzany jak piec,  
Fuck this bus,  
Oh yeeeeaaaaahhhh, fuck this bus.

MAKS

*(He plays, takes her, gets her to dance. She enjoys it in spite of herself. He finds his way into her hair, her neck. Turns into a close, slow dance. He sings or hums the song slower, into her. It's wonderful.  
Then she slips out of the dance.)*

Yes, very nice. You sing very nice. Not like most nice in whole the world but nice.

DARJA

Me and Clinton, we will play together one day.

MAKS

Amazing: The Wall falls down; American dream falls in. Everyone thinks they can be star now. Amazing.

DARJA

It's only American, dreams?

MAKS

Blues it's American.

DARJA

Okay and but this song they write in Poland so.

MAKS

No one understands you.

DARJA

They will understand. It's blues. It's Chicago.

MAKS

There it's black people there for blues, Chicago.

DARJA

MAKS

See?, so I can be like, New Thing.  
Sing.

DARJA

I am not singer.

MAKS

No, you are not singer but you can sing. All people can sing. You can't sing means you are died.

DARJA

I work in factory. That it's what I do. And I clean old woman.

MAKS

And steal her clothes. You can't tell me you don't want more.

DARJA

I do. Yes, Maks. I do, very much, want more.

MAKS

Okay so this is why we go Chicago. I can spend whole my life in this place lifting,  
pushing. But one song? Good song?  
And you know all good music it's come from poor people.

DARJA

And if this don't work?

MAKS

What?

DARJA

Your one song?  
Good song?

*(This is the first time she's voiced this.)*

MAKS

It just will.

DARJA

And what we will do now?

MAKS

Why it's all this questions?

DARJA

I just think we should think.

MAKS

Think what.

DARJA

Think if maybe...think what if maybe...in case...

MAKS

What.

DARJA

We need more money.

MAKS

Because you want, what, things like this? (*re: nightgown*)

DARJA

We can't live always like how we live now. We need money. Now.

MAKS

Okay but what more I can do? I speak English. I have job and I work this all the time. And I am beautiful.

DARJA

What this means, you –

MAKS

So in America, if you beautiful, they give to you jobs. Take two people, put them next each other, both speak English, and, see?, our boss he take the beautiful. You can never be ugly or we will starve. Or fat. Never also be fat.

DARJA

Ania it's not beautiful – not anymore – and she have job. Ania lose her arm and she have job. Is *because* she have job that she lose her arm. And *because* she lose her arm, she keep job. Funny mathematics.

MAKS

(*"stop talking, maybe that's enough for now"*) Okay –

DARJA

You see her? They take skin from her here (*re: stomach*) this skin they take to make the arm again. I see her...how she say this...button. I see her button on her new arm when she shake hands.

MAKS

But she get money. They take care of this.



DARJA

She get money but not so much money. Not like, what this costs to have arm. And she get to keep her job in factory. With us. Hoorah.

MAKS

*(looking around)* Okay, *może teraz nie jest // najlepszy czas* –

DARJA

Anyone here it's Polish so who you think you keeping secrets from speaking Polish?

MAKS

Okay. You know what? Maybe you forget how should you act with me.

DARJA

Maybe you too you forget. You want to be big man? Have me act to you like you big man? Okay. So I want more, MAKS. I need insurance. Apartment. *Out* of basement apartment. Car. I want car.

MAKS

Okay.  
One day.

DARJA

I want more than anything car.

MAKS

Then this is sad life.

DARJA

There will one day be when you have to put away this songs.

*(MAKS lights another cigarette.)*

Don't smoke this by me.

MAKS

You said you "love."

DARJA

I don't want smoke by me.

MAKS

So don't make me mad, I don't smoke.  
This it's what you have tonight to tell me? How much I don't give you? Thank you.  
Thank you so very much.

*(They stand silent.)*

Is music in my head right now. You should know this. And this it's what I do when bus it's late or when someone skin it's rip from bones. Or my wife she say to me am nothing.

Don't try to take this from me.

*(They stand apart a little while longer. Facing forward.  
Then she moves to him. Rests against him, holds his hand, wraps it around her waist.  
But something doesn't quite fit.  
They stare forward.)*

Is good to have thing like this. For some reason you think is bad but is good. I watch people. Singers. Not here because we don't go places but...home. I watch faces them when they sing. They look...pain sometimes. Eyes closed. Mouth big, red. And maybe you don't see this but what I see it's...it's something in them...when they sing...it's like escaping them. Something leaves their mouth what makes inside them red, what burns. Is something hot, something loud, something maybe bad.

Think what things he maybe do if he could not get this out.  
Something maybe bad.

I come from shit, okay?, and I—

DARJA

And me?

MAKS

And we come *to* shit. But we have something. We are not just body. Lift. Pull. Push. We are more than this.

DARJA

Well no one pays us for this “more.”

MAKS

You can burn money. Gone, two seconds. Money it's nothing. Is important. But is nothing. What's most important in this life it's this thing you have what no one can take from you.

DARJA

I can't think what's something can't someone take.

MAKS

Then you make one. One thing what's yours in whole this world. People try to take, you fight.

DARJA

I am fighting.

MAKS

Cars break.

...

I have music. People need to know this.

DARJA

I know this.

MAKS

People in this country need to know this so I don't fall from this world like nothing ever happen.

DARJA

I know this. And I know you. I know only you here. In whole country. In whole country, really, I have only you.

MAKS

And is many things can happen to me.

...

Don't try to take this from me.

*(He smokes. She watches him.)*

...

DARJA

We need money this week. Little extra.

MAKS

Because see?, again money. Whole this time we talk, it's money.

DARJA

This week, we need.  
And maybe for few months.

MAKS

Why.

DARJA

To go to doctor.

...

MAKS

You feel sick?

DARJA

No.

...

...

...

*(MAKS knows.  
He looks at her.  
Looks forward.  
A worried face.*

*They look forward.)*

...

DARJA

There is the bus.

**Scene Three.**

**2014.  
Winter.**

*(Headlights.)*

*(A car horn blares from a distance. Closer. Closer. A car skids. Stops.)*

*(Car door opens, slams shut.)*

*(TOMMY enters in his postal uniform, frazzled.)*

TOMMY  
The fuck's the matter with you!?!

DARJA  
You were not stopping.

TOMMY  
What if I didn't see you? It's fuckin dark out!

DARJA  
You have your lights.

TOMMY  
The fuck is your problem?

DARJA  
You are happy you did not hit me?

*(TOMMY catches his breath.)*

TOMMY  
I coulda //fuckin –

DARJA  
I know what you could. Calm down. Everything it's okay.  
How are you?

TOMMY  
Are you fuckin kidding?

DARJA  
Calm down.

TOMMY  
Why were you standin in the middle of the road!?

DARJA

I know which way you come home.

TOMMY

And you couldn't just see me at home?

DARJA

You pass me in your car, standing this bus stop, two nights, and you never stop to give me ride.

TOMMY

You said you didn't want one, made that pretty clear.

DARJA

AND SO WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU FOR LISTENING.

...

How...how damnit are you, is why I stop you, how are you. Two days already we don't talk, no hello when I come home, nothing. So. How are you.

TOMMY

This how you apologize?

DARJA

Who apologize?, me?

TOMMY

*(moving to exit back to car)* Right.

DARJA

TOMMY HOW ARE YOU.

TOMMY

*(turning back)* I'M HUNGRY. I JUST FINISHED WORK.

DARJA

WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE FOR DINNER.

TOMMY

Are we playin now?

...

I got plans for dinner. I was goin home to change.

DARJA

Where you going?

TOMMY  
Some Italian place.

DARJA  
Which one?

TOMMY  
No.

DARJA  
With "Linda"?

TOMMY  
My new password's good, right?  
Yes. With Linda.

DARJA  
Mm. Linda. It's fancy?

TOMMY  
You jumped in front a my car for a restaurant recommendation?

DARJA  
Sure why not?, since you expert.

TOMMY  
Look if you got a problem with what I'm doin, you can leave. You can pack and leave like you keep threatenin to —

DARJA  
I don't want to leave.

TOMMY  
You want *me* to leave then?

DARJA  
No.

TOMMY  
You know what I'm doin, you don't want me to leave?

DARJA  
No.

TOMMY  
You gonna ask me questions, where I'm goin, what Italian place?

DARJA

No. ... Am just –

TOMMY

What? You gonna come there and, fuckin, mace her, what?

DARJA

No.

TOMMY

Assault her?, I know you.

DARJA

No. Am just...

curious.

I like to

imagine. Just curious.

What you will eat?

TOMMY

I don't know yet. *(really thinks about this a second)* Pasta.

DARJA

Why you ask I would do this? Why you think I could be like this? Mean like this?

I am not like this. Violence. I don't "mace" people.

TOMMY

Fine. Yer right.

DARJA

I find other things to do to people.

...

TOMMY

What did you do?

DARJA

Did you know I lose all of them?

TOMMY

Wait, what did you do?

DARJA

All my houses, I lose. All my jobs. She call to every woman I work for. Every one. She tell to them I "damage." I "damage" things. Yeah okay but what she did not to tell them is why, why I "damage" things.



TOMMY

Did you do something to Linda?

DARJA

Not to her, to stupid her. Her things. Her clothes. The bras, the underwears. Dresses. Few dresses.

TOMMY

Darja.

DARJA

And I drink her wine. The most dusty one.

TOMMY

What did you do to her things?

DARJA

What you think, I burn them.

TOMMY

Like, up? You burned them up?

DARJA

Yes, up. Away. No more.

TOMMY

The woman's a damn millionaire and you just burned her shit up?

DARJA

Her *husband* it's millionaire and she it's sick nasty inside his house –

TOMMY

Is it still burning?

DARJA

Was beautiful. And so was her clothes. You know I think first maybe I keep all this things but then I think No. I don't know what she does in this things. Dirty dirty nasty sick.

She want I clean her house?

I clean the bitch's house.

*(DARJA finds this hilarious.*

*TOMMY watches a woman laugh hysterically about arson.*

*He's more stunned – in awe – than anything else.)*

Tommy, I have no job.

TOMMY  
Did you think you would?

DARJA  
I have NO job!

TOMMY  
What do you want me to do? Get another one.

*(At some point, TOMMY takes out his phone to make a call.)*

DARJA  
How? Please tell to me how. You see peoples here they go to school years, *years* they go, and they don't have nothing now. What I can do? Even the ugly jobs they don't have no more. Look there. Look the factory there. Just empty and glass. No factories here, nothing. No car. What I can do?

TOMMY  
Maybe you shoulda sold her fuckin shit instead of burnin it.

...

DARJA  
You know what?  
Yes.  
Yes, fuck. Yes, I should.

TOMMY  
Prob'ly insured.

DARJA  
Damnit fuck.

*(DARJA, a little lost in the sobering reality of it all, looks at the rubble of the factory, but speaks to TOMMY, who is dealing with his phone.)*

These people, if they could, they would send they houses to China to be cleaned. But we work til day our body breaks. Til place close or I close, I work and I barely –

TOMMY  
*(on the phone, leaving a sexy message)* Hey yeah it's the uh, The Pool Guy. Callin about yer uh, pool. Just callin to check in uh *confirm* that I'm still doin yer pool. Tonight. *(extra sexy)* Call me back.

*(He hangs up. DARJA looks at him.)*

DARJA  
Tommy –

TOMMY

Listen, I don't exactly owe you anything. Except rent. I owe you half the rent while we're still livin together and I left it on the table this morning —

*(She kisses him abruptly.  
He doesn't move away.  
But he doesn't respond much either.)*

DARJA

What time you are meeting her?

TOMMY

I got time. A little time.

DARJA

You could drive any other different way back home. But you drive here. By my bus. Where I stand.

TOMMY

This is just the way home.

DARJA

You came out the car.  
You try to make me jealous? Hm, Pool Guy?

TOMMY

Why, *are* you jealous? Firestarter?

...

...

DARJA

So how you are doing?

TOMMY

Good. Considering. Good.

...

...and yourself?

DARJA

Good.  
Considering.

...

And work?

TOMMY

Oh work is— you know.

DARJA

They are, maybe they are, hiring? At...at post—?

TOMMY

No. I don't think so, no. Budget Cuts. Budget cuts all over the place. People don't mail. I'm lucky to still, y'know. Fuckin Internet.

DARJA

Yes.

TOMMY

Fuckin email.

DARJA

Yes.

*(She kisses him again. Maybe it's more of a mutual one this time.)*

I can make pasta.

Let's go home.

*(TOMMY considers. He sees what she's doing. And is conflicted. He softly extricates himself from her embrace. It's not easy for him to ask her this.)*

TOMMY

You think yer gonna stay at the apartment?

DARJA

I— what?

I, yes, I think I should have enough. Maybe. For next month. But maybe you can just—

TOMMY

I mean, after. Like will you be there after next month. After the lease's up.

DARJA

I have to.

You have to? TOMMY

Yes, I have to. DARJA

“In case he comes back”? TOMMY

He it’s not picking up my calls.  
If Aleks comes back, I should be there. DARJA

You go to the police? TOMMY

Yes. DARJA

Missing kid or stolen car? TOMMY

Missing kid. DARJA

Shoulda told em stolen car. TOMMY

I miss // him— DARJA

The *car’s* never fucked you over. TOMMY

... DARJA

I miss him very much. DARJA

... TOMMY

Listen I’m sorry for what I’m about to but, I kinda, gotta since it’s just a few, weeks really til we gotta decide about the, listen. Can you afford the rent?

I said I think I— DARJA

On yer own? TOMMY

Why. DARJA

Cuz look I'm not gonna throw you out— TOMMY

Why you would throw me out. DARJA

I said I wouldn't, I would Not Throw You Out.  
But— TOMMY

What. DARJA

Just. Can you afford rent? TOMMY

...Yes.  
Somehow.  
Maybe.  
Tommy, I don't have car so where I can go anyway, how I can move. DARJA

There's vans. Trucks. TOMMY

Yeah okay, what money I have for, and I have things, big things what are mine in the apartment. DARJA

Not that many. The furniture's mine. TOMMY

What you try to do? DARJA

I need to know whether to start lookin for a place or— TOMMY

Why you look for place? DARJA

TOMMY

Y'know what, I'll just start lookin for a place. I don't need that extra room. Save a few that way. I'll just look and you can tell me what you wanna do. Or tell Jim. You can talk to Jim about the lease.

DARJA

Why it's lease? Why money? Furniture, numbers. Why these things, all these *things*?

TOMMY

As opposed to what?

DARJA

To...more.

TOMMY

More what?

DARJA

Okay. Okay. You are playing now.

TOMMY

I don't know what yer talkin about, "more." You tap my phone. You destroy my girlfriend's shit –

DARJA

Girlfriend?

TOMMY

And you freeload.  
So more what. What more is it you want?

DARJA

I don't know.

TOMMY

Well. If you don't know, I don't know.

DARJA

My second husband would say this.

TOMMY

He talked? I thought he'd just beat the shit out of you.

...

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I'm bein a fuckin jerk. I just, I can't have you fuckin shit up for me.

DARJA

Like what?

TOMMY

If what we had was different, you and me –

DARJA

We're together 6 almost 7 years.

TOMMY

*Livin* together, we been, for 6 almost 7 years.

DARJA

And so that's just nothing?

TOMMY

I dunno. You tell me. Was that a real kiss?

Was that you kissin me fer real there or puttin in an application fer the post office?

DARJA

For real, Tommy.

TOMMY

Yeah well I dunno. There's just some shit now, with us, that I don't know.

DARJA

And so what it's this with "Linda" now you have? This is real?

TOMMY

I don't know exactly.

Yet.

But I'd like to find out. She's not happy in her marriage and we //been –

DARJA

*("that's enough":)* Okay.

*("you fucking idiot":)* Okay.

...

*(sees he's serious)* Okay.

TOMMY

You don't hafta tell me now but,

just lemme know what you wanna do. About the apartment.

Okay?

Sorry.

*(He looks at her.*

*She's looking away. At the factory.)*



Darja.

(*She looks at the factory.*)

TOMMY

(*leaving*) Okay.

DARJA

There was once woman at that factory –

TOMMY

I gotta get goin.

DARJA

I can be fast. They close this factory. First people they go or they let go and now they just, everything from China so –

TOMMY

Yeah that happens. Listen –

DARJA

Okay, fast. I know. And then you...and then you can...I can be fast. There was woman. My friend. She was my friend. She, one day, she gets her sleeve catch in machine. It's paper factory and she work on one machine we use to cut papers. And this machine it slice her arm like paper. Layers. Like paper. The bone is left.

They tell to us, first day, they say we be careful this machine. They tell to us we be so careful, we must be scared this machine. It can do many things to us. We must be scared always so we do not sleep and nothing happens us.

It was so loud in this place, we wear plugs our ears. So when she was screaming... We do not hear her. No one hears.

I ask her how she could let this to happen to her. How she can forget to be scared.

She say me she could not remember what she was thinking...but she remembers for one moment she was thinking *something*.

She don't tell to me what this was. But I know.

She was thinking being not here.

She was thinking some place, something, what was not for her. Or she would see when her sleeve it's catching and her arm it's taking. Because that's where she is, she is here. Like me.

I am not good person. I am not good person also. I don't know who I think I am to say to you things. I don't know why I judge you. And you help me before. You help me before in bad times. After my second husband. After he...

I don't know how I will make it next month. How I will... And if I have to move...I...I don't know what to do. Truly. I...I don't know.

I am sorry. I am sorry for that I do bad things to you.

*(longer than it should take)*

I love you very much.

I gotta go. TOMMY

Can we go to dinner? DARJA

I'm already goin to dinner. TOMMY

Tomorrow? DARJA

What if I keep seein this woman? TOMMY

... DARJA

What if I don't stop? TOMMY

... DARJA

I like her. TOMMY

*(He tests her. He hopes she answers right.)*

That doesn't bother you?

...

...

DARJA

No.

*(She answers wrong.)*

Just maybe sometimes we can go to dinner?

*(TOMMY's cell phone rings.*

*Rings.*

*He resists picking it up in front of DARJA.*

*Rings.)*

TOMMY

I gotta go.

DARJA

Her car costs more than you make in three years. What you think will happen? She leave her husband for you and your Honda?

TOMMY

It was good //enough for you.

DARJA

She move in with you? What you can give this woman? What you think it's so special //in you?

TOMMY

*(moving to exit, "I'm done":) Have a //good night.*

*(DARJA gets in TOMMY's face, blocks his exit.)*

DARJA

You know what you - HEY! - you know what you are? You are toy for her. Pool toy. She it's bored and there you are. "Girlfriend"? You are fucking dreaming. You never will be for her more. You will never be more.

TOMMY

You done?

*(DARJA attacks TOMMY.)*

*(He restrains her.*

*Pushes her away from him.)*

*(They stand apart.*

*This has never happened before between them.)*

Don't ever fuckin wonder. TOMMY

What. DARJA

Why yer life's been what it's been. TOMMY

*(TOMMY moves to exit. Remembers something.)*

Three weeks.

Don't worry. Am gone tonight. DARJA

...

Okay then. TOMMY

Take fuckin care.

*(TOMMY exits.)*

**Scene Four.**

**2006.**

**Fall.**

*(Very late night. The stage should feel a little different.)*

*(DARJA enters. Her face is badly bruised.)*

*(She looks as though she's traveled a far distance from someplace. She may have just come from across the street, from the factory, but there is deep weathering to her.)*

*(She looks for some cardboard, some debris, to make a bed. A dirty tire is her pillow.)*

*(She takes her coat off, lays it down, lays on it.  
It's too cold.  
She puts it back on.  
She takes off her scarf, lays it on the tire to cushion her face.  
She is about to lay down when she remembers something.)*

*(She takes out a small votive candle. And a lighter.  
Lights it.  
And places it nearby her.)*

*(She does the sign of the cross.  
And lays down.)*

*(A car passes.)*

*(A car stops.)*

*(And a car drives off.)*

*(A young man enters. VIC is teenage. Skull cap, hoodie, jeans. Tattoos. He's physically frail under his many layers but he acts like brick. He considers something in his hands as he enters.)*

*(He sees a body on the ground and quickly stuffs the thing in his pocket.)*

*(He walks up to DARJA, protective of this, his turf. He stands over her.)*

VIC

'Ey.

'Ey, man.

'Ey, man, you cool?

You cool?

You dead?

please no  
DARJA

*(seeing it's a woman)* Oh shit.  
VIC

please  
DARJA

*(seeing her face)* Oh shit, man.  
VIC

please I have no money  
DARJA

Yeah, man, I figured.  
VIC  
Listen, yer not tryin to sleep out here tonight, are you? Cuz I'ma tell you right now that ain't the dopest of thoughts.

What?  
DARJA

'Ey man, don't cry.  
VIC

Is just my face.  
DARJA

You look like you need some ice or somethin.  
VIC

No.  
DARJA

I could get you ice.  
VIC

Is enough cold for me.  
DARJA

Quik Chek ain't far.  
VIC

No please thank you no. Thank you. I am 34 years old woman. I can take care myself.  
DARJA

VIC

Um, lady?, you nappin on a tire.

...

Holy shit, man. Yer like...holy...shit...yer like A Battered Woman. Yer like a legit battered woman.

DARJA

Am sorry. I go.

VIC

Nah, man, nah. Sorry, I'm just, y'know, I'm like, Takin' Stock. This is some crazy shit right here I'm seein. This really happens. Shit.

*(He stares at her a little too long.)*

I mean, I mean if you know where to go, y'know, like a women's place or somethin, man, then go, go, you should totally go. But I mean you don't gotta go. *(checks his pager/phone)* Not yet.

*(VIC spots the lit candle on the ground.)*

You workin on some *ambience* there?

DARJA

What?

VIC

Shit, should I not try 'n make you laugh? It hurt yer face?

DARJA

The bus it's not coming.

VIC

What? Yeah, I know.

DARJA

Not this late.

VIC

Nope. Nope prob'ly not. Were you waitin for the bus?

DARJA

No I just say you in case *you* coming here for waiting.

VIC

Me? Man, I ain't waitin on no bus, man, nah.

DARJA

So what you come for?

VIC

Things.  
Business.  
Sales.  
...  
Things.

*(He stares too long.)*

DARJA

I have papers. Not with me now but I have.

VIC

I look like a cop?

DARJA

You are very questions. You very questions and little answers to be just standing here in the night waiting where is no one around to—oooooh. Oh okay. I know what you are.

VIC

Yeah? What am I?

DARJA

Yeah okay I know.

VIC

Okay. Well, the thing you think I am...it bother you?

DARJA

We all of us need money.

VIC

Not a bad way to make it, I'ma tell you that.

DARJA

Yeah okay I don't think so I agree but. We are different peoples.  
You say you know women's place?

VIC

I know *of* em. That they got em. I'd assume they would around *here*.  
What's the name of the stairs fucked you up?

DARJA

Excuse?



VIC

Who fucked you up?

DARJA

Why?

VIC

Okay. You don't trust me. That's arrright. Why would you, right? But so it was your husband?, boyfriend?

DARJA

Why.

VIC

Father?, yer son?

DARJA

No. Not my son. No.

VIC

O, shit! That is Fucked Up. It was your son?

DARJA

No! Not my son! Why you saying things my son! What the fuck it's your problem saying things you don't know. This it's how people gets to trouble. You kinds people you stay away my son.

...

...

...

VIC

Whoah.

Okay.

Arrright, man. Okay.

But listen. I roll up to, fuckin, this place might as well be *Detroit*, at 1am and I see a fuckin lady turnin in on the ground. A *lady*. Fuckin, tuckin herself in on this hepatitis ground. Shiner like a, *damn*. And you want me just to roll right out like the world don't affect me?

DARJA

Why it's only for lady you stop?

VIC

Woman, are you serious?, someone could – hold up, what you mean like instead of for a man? What, you think I got like intentions?

DARJA

I don't know what you got.

VIC

Man, that's how men get into fuckin trouble. Don't be throwin no *intentions* on me. I'm talkin bout other kinds a men, the shit other kinds a men could do if they find you just laid out here like a free pile a cash. *You* would know. Right?

...

Shit, try to get you ice, try to talk, be nice 'n shit. Fuck. 'N you do me like that? tsss okay.

DARJA

Was my husband. Was my husband did to me this. Happy?

VIC

Yo but why'd he hit you? Was he drunk?

DARJA

Why you asking whole these questions me?

VIC

It happen a lot?

DARJA

Why you asking?

VIC

Yo where you from like, Russia?

DARJA

(*offended*) NO.

VIC

So you from like a Little Russia then like one of them Bosnias or – oh shit. OH. SHIT.  
Were you like...*trafficked*?

DARJA

What?

VIC

Like...*trafficked*?  
...In like a sexual // kinda way?

DARJA

I used to work there. Okay? That factory. When I was working there, I remember sometimes they don't close back door when they do delivery. So I think I go there, sleep there –

VIC

You got no place to sleep?

DARJA

No yes I have but –

VIC

Gotcha. Right.

DARJA

But now some asshole he put lock so. Here I am. Don't call to no one, okay? My husband, he was my boss there. My second husband, he was boss. Before this place close. He used to manage whole that building.

VIC

And now he...?

DARJA

Does not.  
How you come here? You have car maybe?

VIC

Nah, man, shit, I wish I had a car, nah. Where you need to go?

DARJA

Home.

VIC

Yeah, I'ma say that's probl'y not the best thought either.

DARJA

This was not best thought also.

VIC

You wanna get a hotel?

DARJA

Excuse?

VIC

Just, to sleep in.

DARJA

I...

...I have no money.

VIC

You need money?

*(off her look)* Whoah, man. It ain't even like that.

DARJA

How it's like so?

VIC

I mean, I *got* money.

DARJA

Yeah you got but...*how* you got...can't be so good.

VIC

You about to sleep in the street and you really gonna get moral on me right now, ma?

DARJA

Why you call // me this?

VIC

It's just how we do // out here, nah'mean.

DARJA

How who?, // who "we"?

VIC

Well what's yer name then. What's yer name.

*(She considers.)*

DARJA

Darja.

VIC

Yeah? I'm Vic.

*(VIC offers her a fist bump.*

*A pause.*

*Eventually, somehow, DARJA fist bumps back.*

*This ignites a rap explosion.)*

*(rap)* Vic Vic the Slick. Yeah, Vic the Brick. Yeah, Vic the Vic the Buttery Buttery Bisquick. I got a good name for this, right? The Marinara and The Fish Stick. Corner Kick. Deer Tick. Salt Lick.

(DARJA's stone serious.)

VIC

See it's just I don't wanna make you laugh, y'know, cuz a yer face. So I'm not even tryin to make you laugh.

DARJA

...Card Trick.

VIC

Politik! Lightnin' Quick!

...

DARJA

...Stick.

(DARJA smiles.)

("ow") Joj.

VIC

Oh shit, I'm sorry. Sorry.

(VIC watches DARJA holding her face, trying not to smile.)

But I'm not. I'm also not sorry. You got a good laugh.

Yo, lemme get you some ice. And a hotel. It's not terrible how I got money. Not to me.

DARJA

Why you do what you do?

VIC

I like it.

DARJA

You like doing what you do to people?

VIC

Wouldn't do it if I didn't.

DARJA

But...you are hurting people.

VIC

I mean, only if they're *into* that, nam'sayin.

I ain't tryin to *force* nobody to come to me.

And it's good conversation sometimes too. Before, y'know. Before it gets goin.  
Sometimes I'm like shit, should I pay *you*?  
Yeah, man. I like it.

...

So what's up, you wanna go?

DARJA

You must really need this money if—

VIC

I don't. Okay? Truth is, these men *think* they need to pay me. I think they feel better payin, after. And, so, that's cool. Whatever. That's cool.

DARJA

Men?

VIC

Yeah. Men. What.

Don't tell nobody. Okay?

It ain't about money for me. And anyway I don't like bein home either so.

DARJA

Why you don't like?

VIC

Yo, you hungry? Wanna hit up a diner?

DARJA

Why you—

VIC

Look, it's not like *your* situation or anything, my house?, but I mean...it's a different kinda shitty situation but it ain't no better than yours.

I mean.

Shit.

I mean, it's *prob'ly* better than yours but. Fuck.

There's just something very wrong there. At my house.

And if they *really*, y'know, knew about me...

...

So. Tops? Tick Tock? Yo, or we could just walk to Olympia from here.

DARJA

What these places are?

Diners. VIC

I never been these places. DARJA

What. You. What. You live in Jersey, right? VIC

Yes. DARJA

And you never been to a diner? VIC

No. DARJA

GIRL. There's like a third of the country's diners in Jersey and that is a FACT. Babies come out the womb suckin on Disco Fries. You seriously never been? VIC

Is just food, yes? DARJA

"Just" ...okay. You need to come with me right now. This is real. VIC

*(She's not moving.)*

I got this.

And then we go to hotel? DARJA

Yeah. VIC  
I mean NO.  
I mean  
nah.  
I mean *you* can stay at the hotel. I'll crash maybe but that's all. I got school tomorrow.

School? DARJA

High. High school. In the morning. VIC

You? DARJA

I look mad mature. VIC

You go to high school? DARJA

Most days, yeah. VIC

You know my son? DARJA

Oh shit do I? What grade he in? VIC

Freshman. DARJA

Oh word? I'm a junior.  
Where he go?  
Cuz uh I'm at Seton Hall Prep. VIC

*(He fishes under his shirt. Whips out a tie.  
Hangs it over his baggy shirt like a tongue.)*

I'ma guess he ain't at Seton Hall Prep, is he?

You are rich? DARJA

So don't feel bad. VIC  
Cmon, some people were supposed to come get me. Not the first time they ditched me  
so. Whatever, y'know. I kinda got nowhere to go.

You got home to go. DARJA

You don't wanna hang? VIC

What? DARJA



Spend time? Together? VIC

I'm 34 years old woman. DARJA

So? VIC

So you don't want to be spending your time with me. DARJA

...

You don't like my company? VIC

*(the truth)* I...I am so tired. DARJA

Arright, man, so I'll just take you to a hotel. You can sleep. Call yer son. VIC

He's at friend's house. DARJA

Must be nice. VIC  
*Friend's house.*

No. No they are not. DARJA  
No.

...

He can come too. VIC  
To the hotel.

If he cute.

...

Did uh...did stuff happen to him too? To yer son? Tonight?

*(No response.)*

Yeah you ain't goin home tonight.

DARJA

No I should go. I don't even know what time it's –

VIC

It's late. Cmon. They got ice in hotels. You ever been in one?

DARJA

I clean *houses*. Not hotels.

VIC

I think you'll like it.

Or we can just go to my house. I can get us a cab. House is so big no one's even gonna know yer there. You can just crash. Sleep. Eat some breakfast. Yo, I make baller fuckin pancakes. Blueberry 'n shit.

DARJA

I don't know I should go –

VIC

Okay. Yer skeeved. Understandable. You don't know me. Look, I'ma just give you the money. We'll get you a hotel. And I'll walk you there. I can even drop you off like a block away if you want. I don't hafta stay if yer not good with it.

Or, here. Why don't you just, here.

*(VIC takes out a wad of cash. Extends it to DARJA.  
DARJA looks at VIC a long moment. Considering.)*

For real. It's cool.

*(Suddenly, DARJA embraces him to her, strong.  
He's taken aback.  
But sinks into it.)*

It's cool, man. No bigs.

DARJA

I can't take it.

VIC

I'm sure you can, man. Look, I was gonna pay for a hotel tonight anyway. Guys from school they can't like, toke at home obviously so. I know they only call me up so I can bankroll that shit for em. I usually just sit in the corner while they smoke and like, feel girls up 'n shit. Most times they're too fucked up to even say Thank You. It's just like a hundred bucks. Seriously, it's just pocket money. It's just money. You can have it.

I can't. DARJA

Why? VIC

*(A car passes. It blares its horns.  
VIC and DARJA separate.)*

Oh, shit.  
Oh shit that's them.  
They  
shit wow  
they actually showed.

You should go. DARJA

Nah, man. VIC

...

*(tempted)* Should I?

You want to? DARJA

Can I? VIC

...

Yes. DARJA  
Go.

You sure? VIC

I know you want to. DARJA  
Be careful.  
*(genuine)* Have fun.

'Ey but, here, man. *(re: money)* VIC

No. I can't take nothing from you. DARJA

Yeah you can. VIC

Is okay, I can sleep behind factory – DARJA

Take it. VIC

– or maybe I go to diner, stay there what it's left of the night. DARJA

Just take it. They're turnin the car around. VIC

So you will need this for tonight. DARJA

Take it. VIC

No. DARJA

Cmon, I gotta go. VIC

No. DARJA

Give it to yer son then. VIC

*(Car horn.)*

You think this can do something?, this hundred dollars? DARJA

What? VIC

I sleep one night in hotel and then I what? One night I sleep and then, next day, I what? DARJA

Or I go get my son, we sleep or we take bus some place and then we what? Everything will just okay?

I take care myself my son.

But *I* do this.

Don't give to me money you feel bad my son.

VIC

Yo I'm just tryin to help.

DARJA

Don't give to me money so you don't feel bad.

*(Car horn.)*

VIC

Don't fuck him over so *you* don't feel bad.

*(Car horn.)*

DARJA

They will not wait so long. Go. Your friends are waiting.

VIC

Yo, if I throw this on the ground, will you take it or you gonna let it roll away?

*(Car engine. VIC looks toward it. Back at DARJA.)*

Look over there.

DARJA

What?

VIC

Look over there. That way.

*(VIC points in the opposite direction of the car of friends.)*

DARJA

*(knows what he's doing)* No.

VIC

Just, cmon, man, look over there.

"Oh shit!

Look at that moon!"

Wow.

*(She hesitates.)*

*She knows what VIC will do.  
But she does. She looks at the moon.*

*They both look at the moon a moment.*

...

*Then, simultaneously, DARJA extends her hand, softly,  
and VIC, also softly,  
slips some money into her hand.*

*A hand-off, of sorts.*

*They squeeze hands as a goodbye  
But never look each other in the eyes.*

*Then VIC runs away, toward the car.  
It drives off.)*

*(DARJA, alone.)*

*(She looks down at the money in her hands.  
Looks back after VIC, now gone.  
And holds this stranger in her heart for a moment.*

*She remembers the money.  
She considers.  
Decides.  
And takes out her phone.)*

DARJA

*Halo, kochaniu. Is me. Your mom.  
I'm okay.  
I hope you okay.  
Wherever you go.  
Tonight.*

*I know where you go and I don't like it.  
Call me back.*

*(She hangs up.  
Considers.  
Calls back.)*

*Halo. Kochaniu.  
Don't go home tomorrow.  
Tomorrow, am cleaning house in Montclair. They won't be there so after school I want  
you take bus to Montclair. Meet me there. Don't go home.*

We figure out what we will do.  
Don't go home.  
We will not go home.

Okay.

Am going to diner now.

Call me back.

*(She hangs up.)*

*(Considers leaving.  
Something stops her.)*

...

*(She calls again.)*

*Halo.*

Aleks.

*Kochaniu.*

It's me. Your mom.

I am so fucking sorry.

...

*(bye:)* Okay.

*(She hangs up.*

*She knows he won't call back.*

*She looks up at the sky. Dawn.  
She blows out her candle.*

*Sits and considers just waiting here until morning.)*

...

*(DARJA's phone rings.  
She sees who's calling.  
She picks it up, hurriedly.)*

Aleks?

Aleks!

**Scene Five.**

**2014.  
Winter.**

*(The thaw.  
Early morning, where it still looks like night.)*

*(DARJA holds her phone in her hands.)*

*(TOMMY enters. He's better put together than we've seen him. He's trying.  
He fixes his hair with his palm. He carries flowers wrapped in plastic, bought at a gas  
station on the way here.)*

*(TOMMY has thought about what he'd say all day.)*

TOMMY

Before you say anything... Okay, before you say anything, just lemme say:

*(nerves)* Woo. Okay. OKAY.

OkayOkayOkay.

I just wanna, lemme just say, I know it's been a few days. I know we haven't talked in, a few days so lemme just start with, lemme just say:

I'm sorry.

You can come back home.

No charge.

I could just take you home. Right now. You can quit wastin money at motels and hostel whatever. And you can borrow my car. Anytime. Where you goin? You goin to work? You get a job? Goin to work? Wanna borrow my car? You *want* my car? Shit, I can even start takin the *bus*. Try *that* out.

I got you flowers.

DARJA

Did her husband find out?

TOMMY

What?

DARJA

Is this why she leave you?

TOMMY

What're you talkin about?



DARJA

Linda's husband. Did he find out and so you are alone now? With space in the apartment? Time to buy flowers?

...

...

...

TOMMY

Will you marry me.

...

So I um I don't got a ring. There's a funny story actually for why no ring. But I *was* gonna do um —, cuz I don't want you thinkin I didn't like, *plan*. See, I was gonna, see —

*(TOMMY points his key-fob at an offstage car.*

*Beep-Beep.*

*Headlights.*

*Then, staticy Springsteen...*

*The intro to "Secret Garden," from the soundtrack to "Jerry Maguire.")*

Bruce.

Only the best for my baby.

*(They listen.*

*TOMMY, totally into it.*

*DARJA, not so much.)*

*(Perhaps he inches closer to her.*

*Perhaps he takes her hand. Or tries to.*

*They stare ahead.*

*They listen to the song and stand awkwardly for a long time.)*

...

Will you marry me?

...

*(They listen to Bruce.)*

...

DARJA

My husband died.

What? TOMMY

Maks. DARJA

*(TOMMY turns off the Bruce.)*

My first husband.  
Aleks' father.  
He died.  
Last night.  
Aleks called me.  
He it's in Chicago.  
With my car.  
They, apparently, he and my car and Maks, they all are in Chicago.  
That's where he go.  
To Maks.  
Before he — .  
To  
meet him.

What happened? To... TOMMY

He was sick. DARJA

But what...happened? TOMMY

...he got sick. DARJA

Holy fuck. TOMMY  
Holy fuck, I'm so sorry.  
Were you close?

What? DARJA

Sorry that's, that's a stupid fuckin. TOMMY  
Fuck. Darja.  
I'm sorry.  
...

What time's yer flight?

DARJA

Flight?

TOMMY

To Chicago. You want a ride?, to the airport?

DARJA

I don't have flight.

TOMMY

So why're you here?, at the bus stop?

DARJA

I just, I just come here.  
I don't know why.  
This is just what I do.

...

I want to go.

TOMMY

I can take you.

DARJA

No.

TOMMY

I can help you.

DARJA

No, Tommy.

TOMMY

I can lend you the money. For a ticket. It's no problem.  
But  
But I could also just buy it.

*(DARJA considers.)*

Don't be stubborn, D.  
Funerals happen once. And fast.

...

I'll buy it.

Okay?

DARJA

Fuck. I hate this.

TOMMY

It's okay.

DARJA

I don't want to be like this.

TOMMY

It's okay.

DARJA

Your insurance it's still Blue Cross Blue Shield?

...

TOMMY

Are you serious?

DARJA

Yes.

...

TOMMY

For Aleks?

...

DARJA

*(a rare nervousness)* Yes.

...

...

TOMMY

There's co-pays.

DARJA

I can co-pay.

TOMMY

And he can only use it til he's 26. After that, good luck.

DARJA

That's four years. That's good. In four years, many things can change.

TOMMY

And I dunno if rehab's covered.

DARJA

Better than nothing.

TOMMY

You think he cares about you this way?

DARJA

What?

TOMMY

You think your son would ever take care of you?

DARJA

I don't do this so he can pay me back.

TOMMY

So why then? Why all the time Aleks? How come he can — ?, and you still...how come?

DARJA

You would not know how to understand this.

TOMMY

Then it doesn't exist. Everyone's capable of understandin everything. We got all the same parts. You just gotta put it in my terms.

DARJA

You would not understand.

TOMMY

You want health insurance?

DARJA

You want woman what don't leave you?

TOMMY

Sounds like there's no guarantee of that, is there.

DARJA

And it's no guarantee your Blue Cross can do anything but what I can do but try? I am not this kind of person what sits and thinks Why whole the time. He it's my son. He can do every horrible thing to me and I will look to him and say This is Mine. This is what I have in whole this world what's mine. You have your love and you give to everybody.

This world it have millions peoples like me, millions womens. But is only one me for him. He can't to throw this away.

TOMMY

Billions.

DARJA

What?

TOMMY

Billions of women, actually. There are actually billions of women out there. And maybe even close to a million just like you.

I was just doin that thing where I listen real well.

Millions. Just like you. To choose from. But you see what I'm doin here?

*(He gets down on one knee.)*

I don't have a ring but do you see what I'm doin? Look, I'm not a fuckin stud, okay. I know that. I'm arright. But listen. And no I don't exactly make bank. But I pay my bills. And yeah I've fucked up. Fucked around. Okay. But yer also not a model sorry and I still love the fuckin shit outta you. Yer logic's aggravation, yer English is ridiculous, and you are one straight up crazy fuckin – yer crazy, D, sometimes. But you got wonderful legs. And yer heart is good. You like goin to the movies. I LOVE goin to the movies. You need a car. I got a car. I can make you pasta. You could make me lunches. And it's good to know that someone's got the keys if I forget mine.

Darja. Aleks didn't get to choose.

And he hasn't. He hasn't been. Choosin. Lately. You.

I do.

And I will. Everyday. Fuckin swear.

...

Yes?

...

No?

...

...

Okay.

*(TOMMY gets off his knee.)*

Okay. Okay, I'll just drop it. I guess you can forget it. Sorry. I don't even have a ring. Not even a fuckin silver one.

(The stores don't open – I just wanna say – not this early.)

...

I knew Linda would leave. I think. In my like, heart.  
They always leave. Allison. Courtney. All of em. Eventually.  
I mean...stay. They never leave. They just stay where they always been and I gotta leave.  
I go home.  
But now yer not there.  
And it's so – ...

At least you tap my phone.  
Which is fucked but.  
At least you gave a fuck enough about me to tap my phone.  
Which is something.

You know my mother's birthday.  
Backwards.  
Which is something.

I knew you'd be here.  
I knew that.  
Which, I think,  
is something.

...

*(dropping it)* Okay.

*(TOMMY moves to exit.)*

DARJA

Bruce was nice.

TOMMY

Yeah?

...

...will you marry me?

...

DARJA

Probably.

TOMMY

(spiking the flowers) YES.

DARJA

But wait. Wait. Talk to me like, terms. So you would give insurance, rent –

TOMMY

Half the rent once you get on yer feet.

DARJA

Okay –

TOMMY

And I'll make pasta sometimes.

DARJA

(he makes shitty pasta) Okay. Insurance, half the rent. And then what you want?

TOMMY

A marriage.

DARJA

Yeah okay but I asking what you want. I get insurance and you get someone to come home to. What does not tap your phone. Unless you like that.

//And –

TOMMY

And...and Aleks?

...

DARJA

And Aleks would not have to live with us.

He can live close, very close, but he would not have to live with us.

TOMMY

It's okay, we can //talk about –

DARJA

He does not *have* to live with us.

But he might. Or close.

So, okay, so all this and then you do whatever?

TOMMY

That's not a marriage, just doin whatever.

DARJA

Okay, you are never married.



Just maybe we can get all this in writing? That we will try to be nice like this to each other.

TOMMY

If we get married, that's pretty much what we're fuckin doin. Listen, I'm gonna get the car right now and drive you to the airport. This bus shit?,: aggravation.

DARJA

You are never married and you never ride this bus. You don't know what's aggravation.

TOMMY

I never rode this bus cuz I never had to.

DARJA

No. No one rides this they don't have to.

TOMMY

You don't have to.

DARJA

I have to.

TOMMY

Aggravation! I'm gettin the car.

*(Heads off.)*

DARJA

Tommy.  
But what this is? What would be deal?

*(He turns back.)*

TOMMY

You do things for me. I do things for you. Marriage. Like right now, I'm about to get the car and pull up and get you like it's my fuckin job. Right up to your toes. Without you even askin.

DARJA

And later I do things for you.

TOMMY

Maybe.  
If you want.

*(DARJA considers.)*

Can I come?

Where?  
To Chicago?  
Can I take you?  
We can drive.  
...  
I did not say yes yet.  
I know.  
So don't try to be sneaky-charming, okay. Because everything it's not all fixed.  
I know.  
"Probably" means maybe and not yes.  
Okay.  
I can't answer now this, your, I can't answer right now your, question.  
Okay.  
And I will drive.  
...  
*(she's a shitty driver)* Okay.  
...  
We maybe figure something out.  
Maybe.

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

TOMMY

DARJA

We'll //see—

*(TOMMY's cell phone rings.  
Freeze.*

*Ring.*

...

*TOMMY turns off the phone in his pocket,  
without even looking to see who is calling.)*

...

*(DARJA remembers  
and guards herself.)*

DARJA

Get the car.

*(TOMMY exits.)*

*(DARJA stands alone, hesitant to move.)*

*(Harmonica music.)*

*(MAKS enters from another part of the stage.  
We're in the 1990s for a moment.  
He goes to stand with DARJA.)*

MAKS

Five minutes.

Last chance.

We are here waiting, thinking, already two hours. Soon will be no more buses left.

...

Four minutes.

DARJA

No.

MAKS

Why no?

DARJA

Because I have already job.

MAKS

In shit factory.

DARJA

Yes.

In shit factory.

MAKS

It's shit factories in Chicago. Jobs, many kinds jobs, in Chicago. There it's one already waits for me. For you too can be one, if //you –

DARJA

I have job.

In New Jersey.

Right there. (*indicates factory*)

...

MAKS

He it's picking you up?

DARJA

(*taken aback*) What?

MAKS

After I go? With car?

DARJA

Who?

MAKS

Nice car?

I see you talking this week. With the boss.

He picks you up? Hm? Takes you home?

DARJA

No.

(*a dig*) Am taking bus.

And so what we talk?

He likes me. I'm great person.

MAKS

Even with little Maks he likes you? Wow. What a guy.

...

He knows, in few months, you will have...little...?

...

DARJA

I hope Chicago will not be too cold for you.

...

...

MAKS

Just come. I still can buy for you ticket. Just come and, and you see how you like.

DARJA

This it's not I like one place this world or some other place. Chicago or – There it's life already here, Maks.

I follow you this country. This it's enough far for me.

Maybe now you follow me. And stay.

MAKS

*Darju*, this is last one. Last bus. My ticket it's say today. Not tomorrow. Today.

I can't use tomorrow this ticket. They don't give you money back.

DARJA

So? It's just money.

MAKS

It's not just –

DARJA

You can burn money. Gone, two seconds. Money it's nothing.

MAKS

Money's it's not nothing and you know this.

This has to be today.

We can talk forever this and nothing will happen, we just will be standing here.

...

...

*(She looks at him.*

*And makes the decision to let him go.)*

DARJA

You speaking English.

I know. I practice all the fucking time.

MAKS

Is nice.  
Is good.  
You will go far.

DARJA

*(Headlights.  
The last bus is coming.)*

*(They watch it approaching.)*

I can send you money.

MAKS

I can send *you* money. I work harder.

DARJA

*(tries to give her money)* Here, // take this, it's all I have –

MAKS

No!, go. No! Maks, I don't want –

DARJA

Take it. So you can buy ticket.

MAKS

No.

DARJA

Then sing.

MAKS

What? //No.

DARJA

Sing with me. One time.

MAKS

Your bus –

DARJA

Just one time you sing with me. Then you and  
you and  
you go have good life.

MAKS

And you will have nice thing of me for remembering.  
I would like my home in your mind to be nice place.

*(DARJA considers.)*

DARJA

//Play –

*(The sound of the bus readying to depart.  
They look toward it.)*

Go. It's going, go.

MAKS

Darju –

DARJA

Go!

*(MAKS and DARJA quickly and achingly say goodbye without words.  
There's no time.  
MAKS runs after the bus.)*

*(MAKS is gone.  
DARJA watches him leaving.  
DARJA watches MAKS in the bus, leaving forever.)*

DARJA

*Nie idź! Proszę cię. Ja nie mogę. Nie mogę sama. Sama nie mogę. Kochaniu...*

*(Harmonica.  
MAKS appears somewhere else in space and time.  
Somewhere in a different, re-written reality.)*

*(MAKS plays.  
"Sittin on Top of the World" by Howlin Wolf.)*

*(The stage falls away.  
The smog falls away.  
What was once a bruised black backdrop becomes a sky full of stars.  
A huge moon.  
A beautiful night.)*

*(MAKS plays.*

*It's wonderful.)*

*(DARJA opens her mouth to sing.*

*Then:  
Beep-beep. Car horn.)*

*(The stage returns to how we've seen it.)*

*(2014.)*

*(MAKS is gone.)*

*(The stars are gone.)*

...

*(DARJA stands alone in the quiet of the present.)*

...

...

*(Car horn.)*

*(DARJA looks toward it.*

*And begins to walk toward the car.*

*Then,  
stops a moment.)*

*(DARJA sings for herself.  
It's lovely  
quiet  
small  
and entirely un-virtuosic.)*

DARJA

*(singing) fuck this bus...  
oh yeah...  
fuck this bus...*

...

*(She looks at where she is.)*

*(She looks at what was.)*

*(She looks at where she is.)*

...



...

*(She exits.)*

...

*(Dawn.*

*A bus stop stands alone.)*

*(A day begins.)*

**. end of play .**