

# **Conservatives in Love**

**by Dave Carley**

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## **Conservatives in Love**

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### Play history:

Conservatives in Love premiered at The Fringe of Toronto Theatre Festival. It opened on Wednesday, July 4 with the following cast and crew:

Jason Jazrawy ... Alex McDonald, Ric Stac and Kenny  
Richard Lee ... Gustavo, Jimson Camper, Edward  
Anne Page ... Chelsea Pickett, Val Magnasson  
Naomi Snieckus ... Tiffany Esteves, Annette

Director: Sue Miner  
Costumes by Nina Okens  
Stage Management: Hilary Unger  
Producer: Mark Brownell

### Acknowledgments:

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A workshop was held in January, 2007 at the Tarragon Theatre. Sue Miner directed and Mark Brownell was dramaturge. Anne Wessels was assistant director. The actors were Marie Beath Badian, Darren Keay, Anne Page and Gray Powell. A public reading was held on Sunday, January 7 in the ballroom of The Gladstone Hotel.

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### Setting:

A great big city.

### Time:

Now.

### Cast:

All are in and around their Thirties.

#### Actor One:

Chelsea Pickett – a perfume salesperson

Val Magnasson – a conservative organizer with aspirations

#### Actor Two:

Tiffany Esteves – a lipstick salesperson

Annette – Gustavo's depressed confidante; down on her luck

#### Actor Three:

Alex McDonald – a plastics buyer

Ric Stac – a condo mogul

Kenny – Val's assistant at Young Conservatives

#### Actor Four:

Gustavo – a friend of Annette

Jimson Camper – IT billionaire

Edward – caterer/waiter

## Conservatives in Love

### Scene One – A crowded subway car

*Pre-show: Intro music – urban – mixed with sounds of the city. Sounds of the city give way mostly to subway noises, as lights fade.*

*In darkness, the subway car screeches through a tunnel into a station, coming to a stop.*

*ALEX is now visible, holding on to an overhead bar. CHELSEA and TIFFANY squeeze on to the car. They are wedged close to ALEX but he is turned away from them.*

CHELSEA: You in?

TIFFANY: Barely.

*(Door warning sound.)*

I hate rush hour.

CHELSEA: We should've gone for a drink across the street.

TIFFANY: Yeah.

CHELSEA: It's just three stops to The Firkin. Or do you have to meet Ric?

*(Subway starts up. TIFFANY nearly falls.)*

TIFFANY: Whoa.

CHELSEA: Novice driver.

TIFFANY: It's these heels. Mm – you smell nice.

CHELSEA: I do?

TIFFANY: What is it?

CHELSEA: Euphoria. Eau de parfum spray du Calvin.

TIFFANY: I like it.

CHELSEA: What does it remind you of?

*(TIFFANY is stuck.)*

It really helps if I have an evocative phrase handy. Sniff again.

*(TIFFANY sniffs long and seriously.)*

So?

TIFFANY: *(Thinks.)* Sex on a beach.

CHELSEA: Oh, that's helpful.

TIFFANY: It is?

CHELSEA: I can use 'sex on a beach'. Not with everyone. Like if a nun's buying. And if it's parents, I'll say, "Frothy waves on a virgin beach". Or "rainforest". You can say "rainforest" and sell anything. I love your lips.

TIFFANY: It's honey nude. Nude is the new red.

CHELSEA: But it's kind of red too.

TIFFANY: The boundaries between nude and red are smudging. And I've got on Chanel Poudre Coromandel Iridescent Face Powder.

CHELSEA: I was about to ask.

TIFFANY: It's \$57 for *(Indicates.)* this much. But the more I wear, the more I sell. Is it true about 'rainforest'?

CHELSEA: Absolutely.

TIFFANY: It's too bad you can't smell yourself.

CHELSEA: I worry that I put too much on. Will you tell me if I do? And I'm afraid if I keep mixing perfumes, I'll develop a toxic aura and everyone around me will die. Remember when they had that terrorist scare on the subway – what was it? Ricin.

TIFFANY: *(With her.)* Ricin.

CHELSEA: It was probably just Lady Stetson mixed with Celine.

TIFFANY &  
CHELSEA:

Ew.

*(They shudder. Subway car is coming in to stop.)*

Hang on.

TIFFANY:

This is the fullest I've ever seen it. At least I can't fall over – no room to.

CHELSEA:

Pretty soon they're going to have to hire subway pushers, like in Japan.

TIFFANY &  
CHELSEA:

Shiseido.

*(Subway car stops; doors open.)*

CHELSEA:

You didn't answer me about Ric – can you stop for a drink?

TIFFANY:

He hasn't called yet. That means he's doing something with his daughter. Soccer practice probably – he coaches. Emma's out in the 'burbs so he won't get back until later. I was stupid to wear these heels. But I had this dumb idea Ric'd show up at the store and take me for lunch.

*(Subway car starts up. TIFFANY loses her balance and falls against ALEX, who still faces mostly away.)*

Sorry. Sorry.

*(There is no response from ALEX. If anything, he seems to be leaning further away.)*

Yeah, let's go for a drink. You can tell me your idea. Chelse, if I'm being honest? You might have a bit too much on.

CHELSEA:

Damn.

TIFFANY:

It's your Disability.

CHELSEA &  
TIFFANY:

Anosmia.

CHELSEA:

Chelsea Pickett sold perfume until she could smell no more.

TIFFANY: Which is so ironic.

CHELSEA: Is it really strong?

TIFFANY: It's like you're having a whole orgy on a beach. Oh my God. Oh my God.

CHELSEA: Oh my God. What!?

TIFFANY: Look at his collar!

*(ALEX has turned a bit. The collar of his shirt is now visible – there is a very clear lipstick print on it.)*

CHELSEA: What.

TIFFANY: It's honey nude!

CHELSEA: So?

TIFFANY: It's my honey nude!

*(Subway is coming into another station.)*

When the car lurched I fell against him.

CHELSEA: He would wear a white shirt on a crowded subway!

TIFFANY: But Chelse – honey nude does not come off!

CHELSEA: So.

TIFFANY: So – his shirt?

CHELSEA: Men don't mind.

TIFFANY: Women will!

CHELSEA: Who, you?

*(Warning bells for doors closing.)*

TIFFANY: Not me, his wife!

CHELSEA: How do you know he's married?

TIFFANY: Look how he's standing! No penis! (*Demonstrates.*) Look around if you don't believe me. Married. Married. Single.

(*CHELSEA maneuvers into scoping position on ALEX.*)

CHELSEA: No ring.

TIFFANY: Not definitive. He might be in a relationship that rejects shackles.

CHELSEA: "Shackles"?

TIFFANY: Ric says his wife "shackled" him. Suppose I'm right and he is married. He goes home. Lipstick on his collar. Wifey takes one look and throws a fit. She assumes he's having an affair, maybe with his secretary, maybe with his boss, maybe with the girl who manages cosmetics at the Bay.

CHELSEA: Are you speaking from experience?

TIFFANY: Duhh.

CHELSEA: He doesn't look like the affair type.

TIFFANY: Ric didn't look like the affair type and look at all the trouble we got into. And there was only the teeniest bit of Chanel Aqualumiere Sheer Colour Lipshine in Bali on his right cuff.

CHELSEA: Why were you kissing his wrists? That's so subservient. Ew.

TIFFANY: Ew. I wasn't kissing his wrists.

CHELSEA: Then how'd it get there?

TIFFANY: Irrelevant. Anyway, because of the lipstick Ric got caught.

CHELSEA: But that ended up being a good thing, right?

TIFFANY: I can't help thinking of the poor wives in all this. Because I'm Catholic and prone to guilt. I have to warn him.

(*Train is coming into the station again.*)

CHELSEA: Tiffany: you're insane.

TIFFANY: They were my lips.

*(Train is in station. Doors open. ALEX leaves just as TIFFANY is about to tell him.)*

Excuse me. Oh! Sir. Oh my God. I uh – Chelse – he’s – oh my God – he’s leaving

*(People jostling on; TIFFANY and CHELSEA are pushed a bit further into the car.)*

He got off!

*(Warning bells.)*

He’s gone! Fantastic. I get off work at 6 and by 6:05 I’ve wrecked a marriage.

*(Car starts up.)*

CHELSEA: Look at it this way: maybe he’s in a bad marriage and he’s better off.

TIFFANY: More likely he’s a jerk and *she*’s better off.

CHELSEA: *(Pause.)* Tiff. Is Ric a jerk?

TIFFANY: How was I to know? It was so romantic at the start. Oh Chelse, you can never tell with men. They’re like Russian dolls. The outer layer is always so promising. But then the second doll – you start to think: ‘Haven’t I seen this before?’ And it’s shrinking. So you open more dolls and they keep getting smaller until finally you get to the last one – you think, ‘God, let there be a ring in it’ - but the damn thing’s glued shut!

CHELSEA: Tiff: don’t cry. Chanel Iridescent is way too expensive for tears over some clown. Oh my god oh my god!

TIFFANY: What!?

CHELSEA: I’ve got an idea! What did that famous guy say when he got his brainwave?

TIFFANY: What famous guy.

CHELSEA: The inventor.

TIFFANY: “Mr. Watson, come here I need you.”

CHELSEA: - “Eureka”! That kiss on his collar! Listen – we definitely have to go for a drink.

TIFFANY: I could use a stiff one.

*(Subway sounds coming up.)*

CHELSEA: Couldn't we all. Let's go.

*(Light off them.)*

### **Scene Two – A snazzy loft**

*ALEX comes in his door. It's been a long day at the office and an unpleasant subway ride home. He can't get his perfume-drenched suit-jacket off fast enough.*

ALEX: Hey babe. I'm home. What a day. Everyone's on my case at work because I haven't decided on the plastic for next spring yet. But how do I know what people will want! Plastic decking with a redwood sheen or faux-weathered? And then – on the way home I was wedged beside this woman who was wearing a bucket of perfume, you know how allergic I am. I had to get off one stop early and

*(He has his jacket off and, walking by a mirror, or somehow, the lipstick mark has caught his eye.)*

*(To himself.)* What the hell – what – is that lipstick?

*(He's trying to pull the shirt collar around so he can see it clearly.)*

How'd that get there – Damn. It must've been Lucy. But when -

*(ALEX is immediately worried at being discovered.)*

Goddamn. Lipstick.

*(He starts grabbing solvents, spraying his collar.)*

I'm just – don't come down I'll come up I'm just going to uh get myself a drink you want me to bring you up a drink – why won't it come off, oh man oh man...

*(ALEX rips his shirt off, tries cleaning it some more.)*

Stay there, I'll come up – it-won't-come-off

*(He doesn't know where to pitch the shirt and will eventually try stuffing it in his briefcase)*

I'll make you a martini, I'll be up there in a second, I'm coming, I'm coming

*(GUSTAVO appears just as ALEX has the shirt almost entirely stuffed in his briefcase.)*

GUSTAVO: Honey, why are you stuffing your shirt in your briefcase? Why do you look so guilty? Give it to me. Alex. Give it. Alex. Lipstick on your collar! You've been kissing someone. Again. *(Sniffs.)* And what's that. Euphoria! I knew it. I knew it. You were with a woman. A tacky woman! Who? Don't tell me. I don't want to know. Yes I do. No, I don't. Ah, who am I fooling: I already do know. It's that Lucy slut again. Lucy from your Mixed Gender Book Club. Is it Lucy? Don't tell me. I don't want to know. It's her, isn't it. Youuuu bastard. Get out.

*(ALEX leaves.)*

Gustavo needs a stiff one. A drink. What were you thinking?

### **Scene Three – The women's washroom at the Firkin**

*There are two cubicles. ANNETTE enters and faces the audience – the mirror – and works on herself, perhaps humming to the bar music outside the door. GUSTAVO bursts in.)*

GUSTAVO: They told me you were in here.

ANNETTE: Gustavo, you've got to stop coming in the women's washroom

GUSTAVO: - Oh Annette, you just won't believe what Alex did this time! Well you might. No you won't. Yes you will.

ANNETTE: Another woman?

GUSTAVO: There was lipstick smeared all over his shirt. He was trying to get it off with Mr. Clean, the dumb shit.

ANNETTE: So have you forgiven him yet or are we going to have a couple of drinks while you vent - and then you'll forgive him?

GUSTAVO: I don't like your tone.

ANNETTE: Gustavo. This is an old, old tune.

GUSTAVO: I most surely do not know what you mean.

ANNETTE: Every other month. For the last three years. You catch Alex with a woman. You scream for an hour. Then you take him back. Before Lucy of the Mixed Gender Book Club it was his pilates instructor. And before that it was the twin sisters from Single Lutherans.

GUSTAVO: You're not being very supportive.

ANNETTE: I'm sick of it. I'm sick of you and me being all about him.

GUSTAVO: Annette!

ANNETTE: In the past three years, I have had a cancer scare, I lost one job then I started another and then I lost that, I feel old and unemployed, and very, very undersexed. But in those three years we have spent zero time, zero, discussing those things – and we have spent hours talking about 'Alex the Undecided'.

GUSTAVO: Oh Annette.

ANNETTE: Sorry.

GUSTAVO: No, I'm sorry.

ANNETTE: I didn't mean to yell.

*(Pause.)*

GUSTAVO: I never knew you were undersexed. But I should have guessed. You haven't been with a man since that copier repairman with the horribly crooked dingle dangle.

ANNETTE: See? That's all you remember! His dick!

GUSTAVO: You handed out photocopies! *(Pulls out paper.)* I've still got mine.

ANNETTE: Gustavo!

GUSTAVO: Well, good news, we won't have to talk about Alex ever again.

ANNETTE: Right.

GUSTAVO: I really did throw him out.

ANNETTE: And you've never said that before?

GUSTAVO: I'm not taking him back!

ANNETTE: (*Beat.*) Are you serious?

GUSTAVO: Yes.

ANNETTE: Honestly?

GUSTAVO: Just think, I'll be free of the morning "Do I want instant or do I have time for real coffee" or "Am I getting fat, should I do more crunches, should I"

ANNETTE: - You're doing it again!

GUSTAVO: Doing what?

ANNETTE: Obsessing about him. (*Packing up and starting to exit.*)

GUSTAVO: Where are you going?

ANNETTE: I have a meeting.

GUSTAVO: A meeting?

ANNETTE: It's a kind of group. You wouldn't be interested.

GUSTAVO: You know I always want to know everything you're doing. Annette!

ANNETTE: Forget it.

GUSTAVO: Come on. Is it something therapeutic with crafts?

ANNETTE: No.

GUSTAVO: Is it something with 12 Steps?

ANNETTE: No.

GUSTAVO: Am I getting warmer?

ANNETTE: A bit.

GUSTAVO: Is it - something with men?

ANNETTE: Yes.

GUSTAVO: Tell me!

ANNETTE: No.

GUSTAVO: We've never had secrets.

ANNETTE: *You've* never had secrets. And you're not going to like it.

GUSTAVO: How could I not like something with men?

ANNETTE: It's Young Conservatives.

GUSTAVO: What!

ANNETTE: See?!

GUSTAVO: Yuh yuh – Young Con – Con - Conservatives – Aren't they kind of yucky?! Weird glasses and pasty manboobs?

ANNETTE: They're surprisingly attractive.

GUSTAVO: But don't they sit around and talk about - conservative stuff?

ANNETTE: We have speakers sometimes but mostly we have events – we've bowled, we've gone sugaring off... Tonight we're meeting at the Art Gallery. For an important Naming Opportunity.

GUSTAVO: A Naming Oppor-que?

ANNETTE: A wealthy young conservative has given a whack of money to the gallery and we're going to see his donation get named. The Minister of Culture is coming.

GUSTAVO: Get out!

ANNETTE: No shit. The Minister of Culture.

GUSTAVO: *(Pause.)* Who is the Minister of Culture?

ANNETTE: I haven't a clue. But she'll be there.

GUSTAVO: Maybe it's a man.

ANNETTE: No, it's always a woman. She'll be there - along with fifty horny men. And me.

GUSTAVO: *(Pause.)* Do you think I'd have any luck at a meeting of the yuh – young conservatives, there I can say it.

ANNETTE: You'd probably have to tone things down a bit. They do have a gay branch. The Voyageurs.

GUSTAVO: No, I want to go with you. I promise I won't cramp your style.

*(ANNETTE is exiting.)*

Seriously – can I come? It sounds like a hoot. But I need to go home and change first. Wait! I dressed up as Margaret Thatcher one Hallowe'en.

*(GUSTAVO exits. The bar sounds come up as they leave, then quiet again. A moment of silence – then, from behind the cubicles:)*

CHELSEA: You sure called that one!

TIFFANY: Yup, wrecked a marriage.

CHELSEA: Sounds like you did that Gustavo a favour.

TIFFANY: How can you say that!?

CHELSEA: You heard him – his partner was always messing around!

TIFFANY: But Gustavo dumped him on false information! Gustavo deserves to know the truth.

*(Two flushes and CHELSEA and TIFFANY emerge from their respective cubicles.)*

Quick, let's go after them and tell them.

CHELSEA: Are you out of your mind?! “Hi. You don’t know us but we were in the cubicles eavesdropping.”

TIFFANY: But I really hate having this on my conscience. Distract me – oh, what’s your big idea.

CHELSEA: My Big Idea. I’ve been saving for ten years – I thought I was saving for a house but – what’s a house?

TIFFANY: Well, I don’t say this in front of Ric, because of course he’s Mr. Real Estate, but a house is like ‘who-cares’.

CHELSEA: Exactly. You have to live on a street with other people who own houses. Ew.

TIFFANY: - Ew.

CHELSEA: So I’ll use my savings to start a business. But right off the bat I run into trouble. What’s my big area of expertise?

TIFFANY: Perfume.

CHELSEA: Except now I have

TIFFANY: Anosmia.

CHELSEA: Who’s my best friend?

CHELSEA & TIFFANY: Tiffany Esteves.

CHELSEA: What’s her area of expertise?

CHELSEA & TIFFANY: Lipstick.

CHELSEA: So, one hour ago. We’re on the subway. What does Tiffany do?

TIFFANY: She topples off her heels on to the white collar of a bisexual.

CHELSEA: Marital chaos results. Because her honey nude lipstick will-not-wash-off. Lipstick. Indelibility. Infidelity. Opportunity.

TIFFANY: But there already *are* lipsticks that stay on lips.

CHELSEA: But none that wash off collars.

TIFFANY: I had to be so careful kissing Ric before the cuffs incident.

CHELSEA: Those cuffs, yeah, you told me.

TIFFANY: We were in one of his presentation suites. He was having a shower. I sort of left the Bali Lipshine on his cuffs on purpose. He got dressed, went back to the woman he was seeing, bingo, World War Three. And now I've busted up those guys too. To be honest, lipstick has always pissed me off. I've got drawers and drawers of used stuff.

CHELSEA: Oh my god! Oh my god!

TIFFANY: Oh my god! What.

CHELSEA: I've got drawers and drawers too! How inefficient is that?!

TIFFANY: It's not like you can donate them to a food bank.

CHELSEA: What if it was One-Use? Zip zip and toss?

TIFFANY: Washable, disposable, lipstick and gloss. Plastic throw-away tubes.

CHELSEA: Biodegradable tubes.

TIFFANY: From new growth trees.

CHELSEA: And oh my god – scented! Rainforest.

TIFFANY: *(With her.)* Rainforest.

CHELSEA: Oh Tiff. Partner?

TIFFANY: Partner.

*(They re-face the mirrors.)*

What do we do now?

CHELSEA: We have to find a chemist.

TIFFANY: Why?

CHELSEA: To formulate stuff. Ooh – what's that?

TIFFANY: Duh, Bali Lipshine. *(Sighs.)*

CHELSEA: What.

TIFFANY: I'm thinking about that Gustavo again. Maybe because of all the sneaking around I've done with Ric over the past two years.

CHELSEA: But Ric was bound to break up with his wife. You can't wreck a strong marriage.

TIFFANY: Oh – I didn't break up Ric's marriage. He was cheating with me on the girlfriend who broke up his marriage And now Gustavo. Where did they say they were headed?

CHELSEA: Young Conservatives. At the art gallery.

TIFFANY: Let's go there!

CHELSEA: But which art gallery?

TIFFANY: Ric took me to that famous one once.

CHELSEA: Which famous one?

TIFFANY: The one that's always under construction. We went to look at pictures. Every time we saw a nude we kissed.

CHELSEA: I thought Ric wouldn't show affection in public.

TIFFANY: We were all alone! No one actually goes to galleries to look at the art, they go for the receptions.

CHELSEA: OK.

TIFFANY: That was easy.

CHELSEA: Well, there's bound to be at least one young conservative there with a whack of capital. Let's go. Partner.

TIFFANY: - Partner.

*(TIFFANY's cell phone rings. She looks at it.)*

It's Ric. Should I pick up. I – uh – maybe I will later. He'll keep calling. You watch. OK Chelse, let's make tracks.

**Scene Four – On the Don Valley Parkway and in a taxi**

*Ric is sitting in his Porsche. It's cramped. He's trying to change out of his suit into a soccer coach's uniform.*

RIC: Tiff. Where are you. Listen, I'm stuck on the Parkway - but guess what I'm stuck in. My brand new Porsche. Got delivery today. Listen, Emma's got a game at 7, I can be back downtown by 8:30, meet me at the presentation suite at The Caramel Factory. Shit a call's coming through – it's Old Lady Shackles. *(Transfers over.)* Hello Frances. Yes, Frances, I'm taking Emma to the game. Tell Emma I'm stuck on the Parkway, and – actually, can you put Emma on? Frances. Frances, put my fucking daughter on. Hi pumpkin. Yeah, I'll be there, don't worry. I'm changing into my coach's uniform right now so – it's a bit cramped in Daddy's brand new sports car so just a sec. *(RIC gets out of car, leaves door open, it is binging.)* That dinging? That's Daddy's brand new Porsche talking to him. I'm outside the – that's my door. Hey, you want to hear the sound of a Porsche door shutting. *(Thunks door shut.)* How's that? That's what I call a 'thunk'. A Porsche thunk. *(Pause.)* Oh God. Oh God. The door's locked. Daddy's locked out of his car I'm in my boxers NO NO - listen Emma, Daddy will still get there in time. What do you mean 'You can get a ride with Uncle Andrew.' You don't have an Uncle Andrew. Emma! Does Mummy have a special friend named Andrew – Emma? Emma! *(Punches in new numbers.)*

*(Light comes up on TIFFANY. She's in a taxi with CHELSEA.)*

TIFFANY: I love taxis. I feel so urban. *(Phone rings; she looks at display.)* It's Ric again. I better pick up.

CHELSEA: Do you have to?

TIFFANY: Hi.

RIC: Thank God you're there. I'm stuck on the Parkway. I need you to come and get me.

TIFFANY: But I'm in a taxi.

RIC: Yeah.

TIFFANY: I'm taking the taxi somewhere else.

RIC: I'm locked out of my car, I'm in my boxers, I've got to get to Emma's game, I don't have much time.

TIFFANY: One moment please. (*Puts RIC on hold.*) He's locked out of his car on the DVP in his boxers. He wants me to go and get him.

CHELSEA: Why's he in his boxers?

TIFFANY: Why are you in your boxers?

RIC: I was changing into my coach's uniform!

TIFFANY: Just a sec. (*Back to CHELSEA.*) Should I?

(CHELSEA shrugs.)

This is one of those pivotal moments, isn't it.

CHELSEA: Yes.

TIFFANY: (*Puts RIC back on.*) You still there?

RIC: Why do you keep putting me on hold!? Where are you right now?

TIFFANY: Avenue Road. Just south of Eglinton.

RIC: Perfect. You're only ten minutes away.

TIFFANY: - Ric.

RIC: What.

TIFFANY: I can't. I've got a reception.

RIC: What kind of reception.

TIFFANY: At the art gallery.

RIC: Which art gallery.

TIFFANY: The one we went to. The meeting is for young conservatives and I'm

RIC: - Young whats?

TIFFANY: Conservatives.

RIC: Since when were you into politics?

TIFFANY: You never asked. Anyway, the Minister of Culture's coming and I'd like to meet her.

RIC: Him.

TIFFANY: No, it's a her.

RIC: It's a him. He's from Quebec. He's a fucking separatist. Did Val invite you?

TIFFANY: Who's Val – what, do you mean Val as in your ex-girlfriend? Nooo. Why would she

RIC: - Val asked you, didn't she. You're going to sit around and bitch about me like it's a First Wives Club only just remember: neither of you are wives, and Val is a castrating, scheming

TIFFANY: - I have to go. *(Beat.)* Forever. Give my love to Emma.

*(TIFFANY hangs up. Light off RIC.)*

That felt amazingly good.

### **Scene Five – The subway**

*Lights come up on JIMSON and VAL riding the subway. It's a new experience for VAL.*

VAL: They're always barking about how we should take public transit but what's the upside of being squished in with a bunch of moldy proles?

JIMSON: This is the better way.

VAL: You have a car. You have a driver. For that matter, Jimson, we could have taken a helicopter from the top of your condo. The gallery built a helipad for its patrons.

JIMSON: But Val, if we ‘coptered in, it’d blow my cover. And I want everyone I meet tonight to like me for who I really am, a guy who breaks out in spots when he talks to women.

VAL: Just so you know: I don’t give a poop you can buy and sell half this city. But your generosity is deeply impressive. And your support of our group.

JIMSON: I like donating. And Val, I am pretty conservative. I’ve never had time to be anything else. Being liberal takes an immense amount of effort. Keeping up. Shifting. Dodging.

VAL: We’ll keep your identity secret until the Minister of Culture cuts the ribbon. Then you can step forward. Or not.

JIMSON: Ironically it was being uncool that made me rich. All through university my roommates were ladies men. I was always getting kicked out of my dorm room – so I spent most of my nights at the library. Reading, thinking. And because I had all that time – I came up with the software.

VAL: That’s such an inspiring story. Pathetic too. Plus I knew it already. I facebooked you. I was going to wiki your software too, but my Mandarin coach was coming over and

*(ALEX has appeared. He’s wearing a sports jacket and is shirtless underneath.)*

For gosh sakes. Alex.

JIMSON: Who’s he?

VAL: Alex. From my Mixed Gender Book Club.

JIMSON: Men read novels?

VAL: Who knew eh. Alex. Alex! Hi!

*(ALEX comes over.)*

Alex, this is Jimson. Jimson – Alex.

ALEX: I’d never have pegged you for a subway type.

VAL: We’re on our way to an Event. Where are you headed?

ALEX: To buy a shirt.

VAL: I just noticed.

JIMSON: Is it the style?

ALEX: It is, for people whose partners have just thrown them out of their condo.

VAL: Was it because of Lucy?

ALEX: How'd you know that?

VAL: Intuition. I bet she showed up at your house, searching for a book. Probably a Margaret Atwood. It's her favourite ploy. The Atwood Fetch.

ALEX: Where are you guys off to?

JIMSON: Can we say?

VAL: Young Conservatives you got a problem with that? I'm the Chair. We're having a reception at the Art Gallery. Jimson has made a big donation and we're naming something after him.

ALEX: You're the software guy! Jimson Camper!

JIMSON: Yes.

VAL: - Yes.

ALEX: Wow – I'm really pleased to meet you

VAL: The Minister of Culture is coming, too.

ALEX: What - that farmer from BC?

VAL: I think it's a woman from St. John's. The one with the red hats. Hey – you ought to come.

ALEX: Aren't I a little under-dressed for Young Conservatives?

VAL: Well, it is a social event.

JIMSON: Shirtless could be the new shirted.

ALEX: Is there food? I got thrown out before dinner.

VAL: You can stuff your - tummy - there's going to be canapés, crudités... We get grants from the David Frum Institute. And oh, Alex – I know what else will get you. There's a spy.

JIMSON: A spy?

ALEX: - A what?

VAL: Someone's infiltrating our events, recording our conversations and putting them on a blog. It's adding a real sense of excitement to our meetings – underscoring the existing sexual synergy.

ALEX: I think I will come. I can get a shirt anytime.

JIMSON: And listen, if you need a place to crash

ALEX: Oh well

JIMSON: I've got lots of room.

VAL: He's got a whole building.

ALEX: But we just met, sailor.

JIMSON: Think about it. I could probably even lend you a shirt. I've got a few without pocket protectors.

VAL: The view from his loft is astonishing.

JIMSON: How'd you know?

VAL: Google-earth. He's got a giant lap pool right on his terrace. You can see it from five miles above.

ALEX: I could use a place – just for a day or two

JIMSON: Great.

VAL: - Great.

ALEX: Thanks.

JIMSON: I'm not actually a sailor. Oh - this is the gallery stop.

- VAL: Gosh – I’m glad you know. They all look the same to me. I’m completely lost without visual clues. Brokerages. Banks.
- ALEX: Which reception room are you in?
- VAL: The sculpture court. Go in the front door, past the Starbucks. Then left around the gift shop. Proceed past the Members-Only Starbucks. There are six reception rooms and then voila: Young Conservatives.
- ALEX: I’m going to run over to the drugstore and get a toothbrush – meet you there.
- (ALEX leaves)*
- VAL: Well, well, well. Alex McDonald. I can’t believe my luck, running into him. He is the perfect man for me.
- JIMSON: Out of curiosity - what’s he got that I haven’t? I’m rich, I like to think I’m nice, I’m generous – I own shirts. But I’m not even on your radar except as a kind of career stepping stone.
- VAL: That’s a bit self-hating. I don’t see you as a stone at all. But you’re right. I’m not attracted to you - and Alex makes me weak. Because *Alex* is weak. Any man who lets a woman throw him out without even a shirt is spineless. That’s exactly the kind of man I need. Oh, I’ve had strong men, lots of them. The last one – he’s a condo developer. His face is on every bus shelter in town. But I dumped him. Way too alpha. Oh, and he was messing around on me. You’re strong, Jimson. You have a map for your life. I have a map for my life. I need a man completely lacking in global positioning. Now. Let’s go name something.

### **Scene Six – The Art Gallery.**

*The gallery’s sculpture court, with one large, vaguely Henry Moore piece mid-stage. The sculpture is never treated with dignity and, in fact, may even have a wet-bar cut into it. KENNY is pacing, nervously practicing his introduction.*

- KENNY: It is with great pleasure now that I introduce to you the Minister of Culture. And Winter Sports. Please give a warm conservative hand to The Right Honourable (*Doesn’t know her name; fumbles for his prep sheet.*) The Right Hon

*(EDWARD – in caterer’s uniform – enters, testing the tape recorder in the canapé tray.)*

EDWARD: Testing 1, 2, 3 (etc.)

KENNY: Over there, anywhere.

EDWARD: You were talking to yourself.

KENNY: So were you.

EDWARD: Was not.

KENNY: I’m practicing my speech. I’m introducing the Minister.

EDWARD: What Minister. *(Switching on something in the canapés.)*

KENNY: The Minister of Culture and Winter Sports.

EDWARD: Oh.

*(Pause.)*

Who is he.

KENNY: That’s the thing, I’m not sure.

EDWARD: I think it’s that American.

KENNY: Really?

EDWARD: Yeah, there was a bit of a stink but it turned out there’s nothing in the constitution that bars an American from running Culture. It’s just recognizing reality.

KENNY: Well yes but

EDWARD: - It was because no one was going to our movies. You should put that in your speech. Something like, “Thank God we’ve finally got a Yank in charge of our movie industry.” I’ve got to get the rest of the food.

*(EDWARD exits, smirking.)*

KENNY: That was a bit of a luck. Caterers have more to offer than you might think. *(Writing in.)* Thank God we've finally got a Yank...

*(TIFFANY and CHELSEA hurry on.)*

TIFFANY: *(Entering.)* But I feel bad. He's stuck on the DVP in his boxers and

CHELSEA: - Don't go soft on me.

*(TIFFANY and CHELSEA see the sculpture – it stops them dead in their tracks.)*

TIFFANY: Wow.

CHELSEA: It's beautiful.

TIFFANY: *(Reading nameplate.)* 'Declining Nude 32'.

CHELSEA: *(Still awestruck.)* Wow.

TIFFANY: If you were Ric I'd kiss you.

CHELSEA: *(Still blown away by the sculpture.)* Wow.

TIFFANY: Glad you came?

CHELSEA: Yes. Thank you, Tiff.

KENNY: Hi.

TIFFANY: Hi.

KENNY: May I help you?

TIFFANY: We're here for the Naming Opportunity.

KENNY: You're not the Minister of Culture, by any chance?

*(CHELSEA and TIFFANY laugh. KENNY joins in.)*

I knew you weren't. You're new. I'm Kenny.

TIFFANY: Tiffany Esteves.

CHELSEA: Chelsea Pickett.

KENNY: Pleased to meet you. I was just practicing my introduction of the Minister. I'm on the Executive.

TIFFANY: What's your position?

CHELSEA: Somewhere to the right I bet.

*(KENNY is in love with both women. He laughs too long.)*

We're sorry we missed the bowling night.

TIFFANY: We didn't even know you existed until an hour ago.

CHELSEA: Our commitment is so fresh.

KENNY: We had a maple bush sugaring off. And a sleigh ride too. Well, sort of. There was no snow this winter.

CHELSEA: Darn that global warming!

KENNY: We don't believe in that.

CHELSEA: Sorry. Early spring.

KENNY: Where did you hear about us?

TIFFANY: A washroom.

KENNY: How appropriate!

CHELSEA: Why?

KENNY: Oh - that's a surprise for later.

*(KENNY really is in love but, like most Conservative men, quite shy without a drink.)*

TIFFANY: Kenny, we're looking for a young conservative wannabe who is in gay marital distress.

KENNY: He's probably at the Voyageurs – they're meeting just down the hall.

TIFFANY: No, he's coming here.

KENNY: What's his name?

CHELSEA: Gustavo.

KENNY: What's he look like?

TIFFANY: We've only seen him from here down.

CHELSEA: We were both in a toilet cubicle at the time.

KENNY: *(About to pitch a tent.)* Whoa.

TIFFANY: He hasn't come yet?

KENNY: You're the first.

TIFFANY: Do you know someone named Annette?

CHELSEA: Again, we've only seen her shoes.

TIFFANY: She smells like White Musk from the Body Shoppe.

CHELSEA &  
TIFFANY: Ew.

KENNY: Oh - Annette! We met at the Autumn Leaf Fort Party.

TIFFANY: Annette will be with Gustavo.

CHELSEA: - But don't let us interrupt you if you have to rehearse your introduction.

KENNY: I'm good to go. Though there's a lot of pressure on us. Someone has been secretly recording our events and posting them on a left-wing blogsite. It's forcing us to exercise extreme caution. Our Chair says incredibly condescending things. At Bowling Night she slagged the entire lower middle bowling class and it got blogged. What line of work are you ladies in?

CHELSEA: We're businesswomen.

TIFFANY: Cosmetics.

CHELSEA: And you?

KENNY: Aw, nothing as glamorous as that.

CHELSEA: Tell.

KENNY: Naw.

CHELSEA: I betcha it's something amazing. Kenny.

KENNY: I – I'm an entrepreneur.

*(CHELSEA and TIFFANY are suitably impressed.  
EDWARD reappears, pushing another tray of canapés.)*

Good. More food.

EDWARD: Where d'you want it?

KENNY: With the other food, I guess. Maybe move it over there.

EDWARD: I'm leaving it here.

KENNY: Is there more?

EDWARD: How would I know.

KENNY: Have we met before.

EDWARD: Five minutes ago, you idiot.

KENNY: Your rudeness rings a bell.

EDWARD: Does not.

KENNY: You were the guy renting out the shoes at Bowling Night!

EDWARD: Was not.

KENNY: You gave everybody three sizes too small. You were also the farmer at the sugaring off!

*(EDWARD snorts again.)*

TIFFANY: Why is there a tape recorder in the canapés?

EDWARD: Centrepiece.

CHELSEA: It's a pretty strange centrepiece.

EDWARD: Is not.

CHELSEA: Is too.

EDWARD: Uh, lady. You're in an art gallery?

CHELSEA: Uh, it's in the food?

EDWARD: It's an installation? Something's gotta justify the fact they only use this place for receptions.

KENNY: Aren't there supposed to be fruit plates as well?

EDWARD: I'll go look.

KENNY: And drinks.

CHELSEA: I'll give you a hand.

*(EDWARD snorts, but he and CHELSEA disappear behind the sculpture.)*

TIFFANY: Chelsea's always the first to pitch in. She's always covering people's shifts at the store –

KENNY: Store?

TIFFANY: Er – the spy thing! That's kind of exciting, isn't it?

KENNY: The bugger could be anyone.

TIFFANY: That caterer seemed sketchy.

KENNY: Shifty and rude.

TIFFANY: Sarcastic and negative.

KENNY: Hallmarks of the Left.

TIFFANY: Really?

KENNY: There's a lot of hate speech directed at us from that quarter. Now that we're rampant.

VAL: *(Offstage.)* Isn't this typical!

KENNY: Speaking of rampant, here's Val.

*(VAL enters, followed by JIMSON.)*

VAL: *(Entering.)* Isn't this typical! Nobody here! Is that all the food you ordered? I thought we got food from Frum.

KENNY: Some Frum fruit's about to come.

VAL: You're new.

TIFFANY: I'm Tiffany Esteves.

KENNY: She's a conservative businesswoman.

VAL: Oh, another grant whore. I mean that in the nicest possible sense.

*(VAL and TIFFANY shakes hands. VAL sniffs.)*

That smell – your perfume. It's oddly reminiscent...

TIFFANY: Actually it's my lip gloss. It's scented. Chanel Aqualumiere Sheer Colour Lipshine in Bali.

VAL: This is Jimson. He's dirt poor. Kenny, we need a sign out in the hall. The Voyageurs are poaching our boys again. *(To KENNY)* I need help? KENNY COME!

*(KENNY and VAL exit. TIFFANY and JIMSON stand awkwardly for a moment.)*

TIFFANY: I'm sorry that you're dirt poor. So am I.

JIMSON: Then you're probably here to meet a rich young conservative.

TIFFANY: No! Chelsea's hoping to find a venture capitalist chemist. I'm here to rescue a fractured homosexual relationship.

JIMSON: That's OK then.

TIFFANY: I've never been here before.

JIMSON: *(Almost with her.)* It's my first time.

TIFFANY: What do you do?

JIMSON: *(Almost with her.)* What line are you in?

TIFFANY: Lipstick.

JIMSON: Computers.

TIFFANY &  
JIMSON: Boring huh.

TIFFANY: Samesies.

JIMSON: Jinx.

*(A love connection is being made.)*

TIFFANY: I'm not even sure if I'm conservative. Are you one?

JIMSON: I think so.

TIFFANY: Do you just wake up some morning and know?

JIMSON: Some do. Others switch over in adulthood. Some conservatives have bad experiences with liberals in childhood. It could even be genetic.

TIFFANY: Is there a definition of 'conservative'? I'd really like to know 'cuz I'm eating their canapés. Which, by the way, are bugged. *(Sotto.)* Tape recorder.

JIMSON: So - what's a conservative. You really want a definition from me?

TIFFANY: It would help.

JIMSON: I think a conservative believes an individual is better able to achieve his - or her - potential in life without being shackled by a

*(TIFFANY intakes breath.)*

- Did I say something wrong?

TIFFANY: That word again. Who is "shackling" the individual?

JIMSON: The government.

TIFFANY: Oh my god, the government can do it too?

JIMSON: You must know how much red tape there is in this country!

TIFFANY: We're just starting out. We haven't encountered any tape yet.

*(ALEX enters, still shirtless, in his jacket. He has a toothbrush sticking out of his jacket pocket.)*

ALEX: Sorry I took so long. You wouldn't believe the selection of toothbrushes they have now. It really makes choosing hard. *(Notices TIFFANY staring at him.)* Where's Val?

JIMSON: Down the hall. Some of the guests have gone AWOL. This is Tiffany. Tiffany, Alex.

ALEX: Pleased to meet you. It's a zoo out there. There's a reception going on in every gallery. I went into one room by mistake and the fellas thought I was the entertainment and started ripping at my - is there something wrong - you keep staring.

TIFFANY: Can you turn around for a moment?

ALEX: That's exactly what *they* asked!

TIFFANY: Turn.

*(ALEX does.)*

Put your arm up. No just one. Yes. Turn more. Sway a bit. Act like you're ashamed of your penis. Oh God, it's you! Come with me.

ALEX: Pardon me?

TIFFANY: Now!

JIMSON: Wow.

ALEX: But I uh - Val - uh - Jimson? Help?

JIMSON: Pal, I don't think you need any help at all.

*(TIFFANY tows ALEX off behind the Henry Moore. JIMSON watches them leave.)*

JIMSON: But things were going so well with Tiffany.

*(JIMSON follows behind the sculpture. VAL comes around the other side, followed by KENNY.)*

VAL: Where is that goddamn Minister? And you're right about that caterer. I noticed him too, at the sugaring off. He was driving the tractor. I remember thinking he looked too bitter even to be a farmer.

KENNY: But wouldn't a smart infiltrator try to blend in more?

VAL: Kenny, he's a leftist. He's probably got "principles" about entrapment. And you say the tape recorder is in the canapés?

KENNY: Should we destroy it?

VAL: Let me think. How do you beat a leftist?

VAL  
& KENNY: With a baseball bat.

*(They laugh; this is a good conservative joke.)*

VAL: You can stomp 'em down but they pop right back up with an even greater sense of moral righteousness.

KENNY: They like being stomped.

VAL: You can be quite smart at times. We mustn't take him on directly.

*(Towing KENNY over to the canapés.)*

From now on, we only say smart things in front of the canapés, agreed? That'll teach Mr. Fidel I'm So Bitter Chavez. What's he going to do when he rewinds and hears only pearls of right-wing wisdom?

KENNY: Instead of the patronizing shit you come up with.

VAL: Exactly. That's twice in a minute you've impressed me. Now, I'm going to say something incredibly wise. *(At the canapés.)* 'The essence of conservatism is that we're prepared to treat each person's life as inviolable. We are unwilling to sacrifice the few for the good of the many.' Top that.

KENNY: Fuck recycling bins.

VAL: God, competitive conservatism. I love it. We need to fill this room so let's go turf up some warm bodies, but then you and I are going another round.

*(VAL exits, towing KENNY. TIFFANY immediately appears with ALEX. JIMSON follows at a distance, and watches from behind a sculpture.)*

TIFFANY: Chelsea's around here somewhere. Alex, come on!

ALEX: Why do you want me to meet your friend?

TIFFANY: She got a much better look at you than I did.

*(CHELSEA appears near the sculpture with a tray of drinks.)*

There she is! Chelsea!

ALEX: *(Shaking hands.)* Alex McDonald.

CHELSEA: Chelsea Pickett.

TIFFANY: Recognize him?

CHELSEA: He looks familiar but I can't quite

TIFFANY: - Think back two hours. *(Makes subway sound.)*

CHELSEA: Turn around. Arm up. Penis in. Sway.

ALEX: Your perfume – it's

CHELSEA: Euphoria.

ALEX: I'm allergic.

CHELSEA: You weren't so allergic to Lucy.

TIFFANY: Or those skanky Lutherans.

ALEX: I don't know what you're talking about.

TIFFANY &  
CHELSEA: Deny deny deny.

ALEX: I'm going to leave now.

CHELSEA: You're staying right here.

*(CHELSEA restrains ALEX.)*

JIMSON: *(Appearing, off.)* Unbelievable – he's already got two.

TIFFANY: I have a confession to make.

ALEX: A what – who are you?

TIFFANY: Do you recognize my lips?

ALEX: No!

*(TIFFANY kisses CHELSEA and leaves a mark.)*

Whoa.

*(TIFFANY turns CHELSEA's face to ALEX.)*

JIMSON: I'm fighting fire with fire!

*(JIMSON exits.)*

TIFFANY: Now do you?

ALEX: Oh my God. The smell, the lips, my shirt..

CHELSEA: My smell.

TIFFANY: My lips.

ALEX: Your lips have ruined my life. Two hours ago I was in a warm and loving – what the hell?

*(JIMSON has reappeared from the other side of the sculpture, with no shirt. He comes over and stands with ALEX, maybe puts his arm around him.)*

JIMSON: Heyyy Alex. Dude. Pal.

TIFFANY: You two know each other?

JIMSON: We're old friends.

TIFFANY: How old?

CHELSEA: How friendly?

JIMSON: We live together.

ALEX: I'm crashing with him. In his massive luxury loft.

TIFFANY: But I thought you were dirt poor

JIMSON: - It's not big at all. Really, it's just a bachelor. A Murphy bed and a microwave.

TIFFANY: I'm confused.

JIMSON: *(Models new shirtless look.)* So – you like?

ALEX: *(Thinks he's being hit on.)* Ew.

CHELSEA: Ew.

TIFFANY: Yeah. I mean, ew. Yeah. God I hate being confused.

ALEX: Me too! Like what to wear to work. That's my worst one.

CHELSEA: - Me too!

JIMSON: *(Getting in on it.)* Me too! Which shirt *not* to put on. I agonize. And pants. Some days I think: why not leave the pants at home?

*(TIFFANY is towing CHELSEA off.)*

TIFFANY: Chelsea, I need to mull over these recent developments. Let's have a drink!

*(CHELSEA and TIFFANY move off behind the sculpture.)*

JIMSON: *(Of TIFFANY, but ALEX misinterprets.)* I'm in love.

ALEX: Jimson, no offense, you're a really sweet guy and thank you for the offer of a place to crash – but I think I'll stay in a hotel tonight. *(Moving off.)* But God, which one. *(Exiting.)* It'd be smart to stay near work, but there's that boutique hotel near the gym

*(ALEX has left. JIMSON stands alone.)*

JIMSON: Tiffany – oh Tiffany.

*(CHELSEA and TIFFANY re-emerge and pause in front of the canapé tray.)*

TIFFANY: *(Entering.)* As far as I can tell, young conservatives are a bunch of confused freaks. They're not even young. Let's steal some food. I'll feel guilty tomorrow but

*(They catch sight again of JIMSON.)*

Ugh - Mr. Confused. I'll eat in the powder room.

*(TIFFANY exits. JIMSON comes up to CHELSEA.)*

CHELSEA: Well, you certainly made an impression.

JIMSON: I love her.

CHELSEA: Aren't you more Alex's type?

JIMSON: He just blew me off.

CHELSEA: I didn't need to hear that.

JIMSON: He's not staying with me now.

CHELSEA: He's quite the one for burning bridges. That's two in one day.

JIMSON: What do you mean?

CHELSEA: He and his lover Gustavo split up today as well.

JIMSON: Gustavo? He's – are you thinking – wait – do you think I'm

CHELSEA: Gay.

JIMSON: But I'm not!

CHELSEA: The old denial's back in style.

JIMSON: Alex and I just met a half hour ago on the subway!

CHELSEA: *(Beat.)* Honest?

JIMSON: Tiffany thinks I'm -

CHELSEA: Gay as springtime. You better go clear things up with her. She's in the salle de poudre.

JIMSON: *(Exiting; pauses.)* I can't go in the Ladies!

CHELSEA: She'll just be eating. Mind the drapes over the door. Take your time – I'm not quite ready to leave here yet.

*(JIMSON exits.)*

*(To the canapés.)* My name is Chelsea Pickett. I have ten years experience in the fragrance industry and I can offer a unique investment opportunity for a venture capitalism.

*(EDWARD appears with a tray.)*

EDWARD: I found the fruit tray. It was three doors down. Hijacked by the Daughters of Meech Lake. Were you just making a personal ad?

CHELSEA: I'm a woman with an idea, looking for a backer.

EDWARD: Don't look at me. I haven't got two toonies to my name. And that tape recorder isn't for personal use.

CHELSEA: Who says.

EDWARD: I say.

CHELSEA: So it *is* your tape recorder.

EDWARD: No?

CHELSEA: You really are the leftist blogger.

EDWARD: I'm conservative to the bone?

CHELSEA: Prove it.

EDWARD: I'm an entrepreneur?

CHELSEA: Elaborate.

EDWARD: I hate people on welfare but I haven't met a government trough I didn't wallow in. Regional development grants make me hard. Yessiree, I am a Canadian capitalist.

*(RIC enters. He focuses immediately on CHELSEA.)*

RIC: Hey.

CHELSEA: Pardon.

RIC: I said 'hey'.

CHELSEA: And I said, could we display a bit more class?

RIC: Is this the Young Conservative Party party?

CHELSEA: Who's asking.

RIC: Ric. Ric Stac. You probably recognize me from my famous bus shelter ads. You must be the president.

CHELSEA: I'm actually here for the first time.

RIC: Me too. You look presidential though. Presidential and hot. Listen. I've got a bit of business to tie up here and then I'm going down to inspect my newest development. The Chocolate Chip Factory Lofts. We tore down an old bakery, gutted a church, facaded three heritage houses - and we're building a ninety story spire for people desperately seeking a lifestyle. You and I could have a great time banging in the presentation suite.

CHELSEA: What did you say your name was?

RIC: Ric.

CHELSEA: Do you have a brand new Porsche, Dick?

RIC: Ric. And yeah, I gotta Porsche. You want a ride?

CHELSEA: Prick.

RIC: Ric. Who are you? Are you a friend of Val? She should watch her mouth.

CHELSEA: Is that a threat?

- RIC: If she wants to run for office she doesn't want to piss people like me off.
- CHELSEA: Oh – and what kind of people are you?
- RIC: I'm people with money.
- CHELSEA: I've actually never met Val. But if you're looking for Tiffany, she's in the washroom. I'm her best friend. But why would you care about that? That's a Tiffany detail.
- RIC: Get her for me, angry woman.
- CHELSEA: She's in there with a man. A man with no shirt. So Porsche off. Oh wait. You can't. It's locked on the side of the Parkway ha ha.
- RIC: A mechanic came and opened it for me, ha ha.
- CHELSEA: I hope you tipped him.
- (CHELSEA exits to the loo.)*
- RIC: *(Calling after her.)* Porsches have worldwide free roadside maintenance. No gratuity necessary.
- EDWARD: Typical.
- RIC: Pardon me?
- EDWARD: Isn't that just typical of the ruling class. There's no such thing as "free roadside maintenance". That mechanic is probably earning minimum wage. He relies on tips to feed his family.
- RIC: That's ridiculous. I bet he makes more than I do – and I make a lot. Where'd you come from anyway, serving boy?
- EDWARD: I was here the whole time. But why would *you* notice *me*? *(Exiting.)* God I am soooo pissed off.
- (EDWARD exits. RIC loiters near the canapés, sampling them.)*
- RIC: This is a very hostile place.
- VAL: *(Appearing with the canapés, yelling back.)* Hey Kenny, you should see what I swiped from the Voyageurs! *(Sees RIC.)* You!

RIC: Hello, Val.

VAL: What the hell are you doing here, Ric Stac?!

*(They make out.)*

RIC: Why did you invite Tiffany?

VAL: Tiffany who?

RIC: My Tiffany. Tiffany Esteves.

VAL: Wait – that Tiffany is *that* Tiffany?

RIC: As if you couldn't tell. She reeks of Bali Lipshine. And now you've organized a bitch session. Who else did you invite – Frances?

VAL: - This is a meeting of the Young Conservatives. We're expecting the Minister of Culture and Winter Sports any moment.

RIC: She's a frustrated bitch too.

VAL: The Minister is a satisfied American male. And I don't like the b word, so eff off you a-hole.

RIC: You are so fucking hot.

*(They kiss passionately until VAL pushes him away. She leans over and speaks to the canapés.)*

VAL: I'm standing here with Ric Stac. Yes, Ric the Condo King, the man who's transforming our downtown with a little help from his friends at City Hall: Councilor Sticky Fingers and Councilor Take Me Out To The Raptors and

RIC: - I knew you were looking in my Blackberry.

VAL: Only after you started smelling of Bali. I have enough on you to sink your condo empire.

RIC: I doubt you want to do that.

VAL: But do you deny any of that?

RIC: It's how things work, Val. And look about you: this city glistens. You always liked things tall and shiny. You don't like the dirty little people who used to live down here.

VAL: I've changed Ric. I've learned to love the little people. I bowl. I ride the subway. I sugar off.

*(They make out passionately.)*

Now get lost. I have a Minister to introduce. But first I want to say a few more words to the canapés.

RIC: *(Edging away, under.)* She's crazier than when I dated her. Hotter too.

VAL: - My name is Val Magnasson and I am on the cutting edge of a brand new conservative movement. One that will recognize the contribution of the little people. To the economy. And – and to winter sports. And to culture. Winter and summer culture.

*(RIC has edged his way to the washroom door and, when VAL isn't looking, he ducks in. Meanwhile, from the opposite side, EDWARD has edged in, and begins hearing VAL's treatise.)*

I reject the hard right, I reject the sluttish centre, I reject the negative left. Shoot, what does that leave. Erase.

*(VAL plunges finger into canapés, erases, then starts again.)*

But I cannot do this alone. I need a man. At my side. Or, better: one step behind.

*(EDWARD edges closer. He seems a bit turned on by this.)*

He will bring me food when I am hungry.

*(EDWARD acknowledges the tray he's carrying.)*

He will serve me drink when I'm parched.

*(EDWARD has a drink.)*

He will smile for me when I can no longer smile at the little people, because they are so dank and splotchy.

*(EDWARD smiles.)*

And last but not least, my man will fuck me senseless every night, right after the National.

EDWARD: *(To himself.)* I can do all that I've always wanted to belong to a movement all I've ever gotten from the left is questions upon questions never answers upon answers NO She's a conservative I can't sleep with her She's the enemy shave my head I need her I'm a collaborating swine OH GOD resistance is futile I want her NO She wants me NO I must flee this room.

*(EDWARD rushes off to the loo. VAL remains by the canapés, looking tragic and alone.)*

VAL: Who is the man that can do all that for me?

*(GUS and ANNETTE finally arrive, with their own sexual expectations.)*

ANNETTE: Hi Val, sorry we're late. I've brought a new recruit. Gustavo. Gustavo. Val.

GUSTAVO: It's totally my fault we're late. I was absolutely STUMPED about what to wear to a conservative shindig.

VAL: Gustavo. I like what you finally wore. I like it a lot. Go fetch me a drink, Gustavo.

ANNETTE: *(Sotto to VAL.)* Voyageur.

VAL: Catch you later, Gustavo, where the hell is the Minister.

*(VAL exits out towards the hall.)*

GUSTAVO: *(Watching her leave.)* Drag queens can never quite master heels.

*(VAL runs smack into ALEX, who is staggering in and who seems to have lost his jacket and a few other articles of clothing.)*

VAL: Alex – you're shedding.

ALEX: The Voyageurs, they attacked me!

*(ALEX, GUS and ANNETTE all see each other at the same time.)*

Oh God.

GUSTAVO: - ALEX!

ANNETTE: - ALEX!

GUSTAVO: What the hell are you doing here?

VAL: He came with me.

GUSTAVO: *(To ALEX, referring to VAL.) You're sleeping with him!?*

VAL: I do not like your use of gender. And no, he is not sleeping with me. He's staying at Jimson's.

ALEX: I suddenly needed a place to crash, remember?

ANNETTE: For an indecisive guy you sure work fast.

GUSTAVO: Where is this Jimson?

ANNETTE: Let it go. Sorry for yelling.

ALEX: Did you guys follow me here?

ANNETTE: I belong to this organization.

GUSTAVO: And we most certainly did NOT follow you here. I'd hoped to never lay eyes on you again.

VAL: You guys really know each other?! Wow. I seem to be the one degree of separation here. All my years of networking are finally paying off.

ALEX: - Gus – please, babe. There's a woman here who can explain everything.

GUSTAVO: You brought Lucy!?

VAL: I wouldn't let that book slut in here!

ALEX: No, her name's Tiffany and that lipstick mark – it was all a mistake.

GUSTAVO: Likely story.

ALEX: Don't believe me. Ask Tiffany.

GUSTAVO: Where is this Tiffany?

ALEX: In the women's washroom. Behind that curtainy thing.

GUSTAVO: Come on.

*(GUSTAVO and ALEX head off to the loo, leaving ANNETTE and VAL alone.)*

ANNETTE: Is - is Kenny here tonight?

VAL: Why.

ANNETTE: Kenny and I uh swapped ideology at the last meeting and I was hoping that things might progress tonight

VAL: Female confidences. Yuk. *(Motions her off.)* Back! Shoo!

ANNETTE: Sorry. Sorry.

*(ANNETTE, dejected, goes over to the canapés and starts to eat. Noises have mounted from the washroom – men shouting, slugs, slaps, trays falling. RIC piles out of the washroom.)*

VAL: Ric. Stac. I thought you left.

*(They make out passionately until RIC breaks away, rubbing his jaw.)*

RIC: A man just came into the woman's washroom with no shirt on.

VAL: That was Alex.

RIC: You don't find that unusual?

VAL: No.

RIC: Then add this: a foreigner followed him in

VAL: - Gustavo

RIC: and screamed at him to keep his hands off a geeky third man

VAL: - Jimson

RIC: who was already in the women's washroom and who also has no shirt. Then the first man with no shirt

VAL: - Alex

RIC: insisted to the foreign guy

VAL: - Gustavo

RIC: that Tiffany had kissed his shirt and not someone from his Mixed Gender Book Club.

VAL: Lucy.

RIC: You're still going to that eh?

VAL: Yup.

RIC: Chicks who read are so fucking hot.

*(They kiss passionately, then break off.)*

Anyway, I decked the first man with no shirt.

VAL: - Alex. Why?

RIC: For messing around with my Tiffany. But then the foreign shirt-on guy

VAL: - Gustavo

RIC: hit me!

VAL: - Ric Stac.

ANNETTE: Gustavo *hit* you?

RIC: It was more like a frisky slap. Who are you?

VAL: - Annette.

ANNETTE: Sorry.

RIC: The aggressive shirt-on guy wants to talk to you.

ANNETE: *(Exiting.)* Gustavo.

*(ANNETTE exits to washroom. VAL's phone rings and she moves off a bit from RIC.)*

VAL: Val Magnasson. She's what? Well, fucking fucker fuck fuck.  
*(Hangs up.)* The Minister double booked. She's opening a stinking rink in Pickering. *(Exiting behind sculpture.)* Kenny! Kenny! Code red, Kenny!

*(TIFFANY emerges from washroom as VAL moves off.)*

TIFFANY: You're still here.

RIC: We need to talk. Let's go somewhere safer.

TIFFANY: I like it here.

RIC: It's a madhouse!

TIFFANY: Chelsea and I are having a good time now. We're learning new things and I've even met a nice man named Jimson who is dirt poor but nevertheless has

RIC: - We were hot together. Admit it.

TIFFANY: There was a certain illicit fun to making love in your presentation suites.

RIC: It was more than fun. It was hot.

TIFFANY: It's true, it's amazing to look around this city and see all the sparkling condo towers and know that in every one of them I was the first woman to have sex. *(Starts rooting through the canapés.)*

RIC: We were urban love pioneers. What are you doing?

TIFFANY: Chelsea told me if I started to waver, I should hit playback.

*(TIFFANY hits Playback through the canapés.)*

RIC: *(On – edited – Playback:)* You look presidential. Presidential and hot. Listen, Chelsea. I'm going down to inspect my newest development. The Chocolate Chip Factory Lofts. We could have a great time banging in the presentation suite.

*(TIFFANY hits the Off switch.)*

TIFFANY: I didn't really need to hear that. But I'm Catholic and always seeking proof. It's over Ric. Not only are you a philandering piece of shit, you're not even a faithful one. In fact, the only thing you really care about is your lovely, sweet little daughter Emma. *(Pause.)* Which may redeem you as a human being. But I need someone who will take me out in public.

RIC: I took you out in public!

TIFFANY: You took me out in crowds! Anyway, I'm in business now. I don't have time for you. Goodbye.

*(TIFFANY turns to leave, but then turns back and shakes RIC's hand solemnly. JIMSON and CHELSEA have emerged and are watching this.)*

I've never ridden in a Porsche. But when I do, it'll be because I own it.

*(RIC leaves. TIFFANY is upset and heads back to the loo, passing CHELSEA coming out.)*

CHELSEA: Tiff – are you OK?

JIMSON: Should I?

CHELSEA: Go!

*(CHELSEA pushes JIMSON after TIFFANY, with a tray of food. She then spots KENNY, who has returned with a new tray of food.)*

Kenny - there you are!

KENNY: Look - look what I stole from the Hedge Fund Managers of Colour! Smell these!

CHELSEA: I can't.

KENNY: Seriously – just take a whiff. You don't have to eat any. You're not on a diet are you? You don't need to be.

CHELSEA: No, I just can't sniff them

KENNY: Is your conscience bothering you? They have tons of food and

CHELSEA: - I can't sniff because I have anosmia.

KENNY: No way!

CHELSEA: Way. Wait – you know what anosmia is?

KENNY: The inability to smell. But that's terrible – you said you were in the fragrance trade!

CHELSEA: I have to rely on Tiffany to describe every new fragrance to me. And to warn me if I've exceeded my scent circle.

KENNY: What's a scent circle?

CHELSEA: (*Closer.*) A perfume shouldn't reach any further than this.

KENNY: It's still a little faint.

*(CHELSEA moves closer.)*

I can smell it now. Whatever you have on – it's incredible.

CHELSEA: I applied it here.

KENNY: May I.

*(KENNY sniffs.)*

CHELSEA: And here.

*(KENNY sniffs.)*

And maybe just a little down here. It's important to perfume those parts of the body where blood vessels congregate.

KENNY: Because blood warms the skin, which evaporates the alcohol in the perfume.

CHELSEA: It's Euphoria.

KENNY: It reminds me of – of

CHELSEA: What.

KENNY: This is a little embarrassing.

CHELSEA: Sex on a beach?

KENNY: Yes! Not that I have ever. Had it. On a beach. Have you?

CHELSEA: Not yet, Kenny.

KENNY: I've heard about it.

CHELSEA: Me too.

KENNY: And I've seen the videos. Spring Break Girls Gone Wild

CHELSEA: - Stop.

*(They seem almost about to kiss over the tray of food when  
KENNY pulls back.)*

Is something wrong?

KENNY: I have a confession to make.

CHELSEA: You're not

KENNY: - I'm not an entrepreneur.

CHELSEA: Oh.

KENNY: I only said that because I thought it would impress you. It's the holy grail of young conservatives. Heading out on your own. Making millions only to have a midlife redemptive moment when you realize that money is not, in fact, everything. So you begin ejaculating your name all over institutions. Like philanthropic seed.

CHELSEA: If you're not an entrepreneur, what are you?

KENNY: A teacher.

CHELSEA: Kenny, there's nothing wrong with that.

KENNY: In the public system.

CHELSEA: What other system is there?

KENNY: I'm not even a Business Ed. teacher.

CHELSEA: I don't care.

KENNY: But you probably hated my kind of teacher.

CHELSEA: What's your subject?

KENNY: Chemistry.

CHELSEA: Eureka.

KENNY: You hate me.

CHELSEA: Mr. Watson, come here. I need you.

*(CHELSEA grabs KENNY and gives him a long kiss, then takes him behind the sculpture. EDWARD comes and checks the tape recorder. VAL enters, speech in hand.)*

VAL: You. You really messed up on the food. You're an incompetent twit.

EDWARD: I know.

VAL: And your machine is running out of tape.

EDWARD: Damn!

VAL: So it *is* yours! You *are* the infiltrator!

EDWARD: Double damn!

VAL: You can't even conceal your identity properly. Why do you hate us so much?

EDWARD: Uh, you're conservatives?

VAL: I'm going to need something slightly deeper than that. But not a lot deeper because I don't have much time.

EDWARD: Your eyes are mindlessly fixed on a goal.

VAL: And your problem with that?

EDWARD: I hate your goal.

VAL: Is that all?

EDWARD: And I could never be so mindless.

VAL: I'm beginning to understand.

EDWARD: Understand what?

VAL: You are paralysed by principle.

EDWARD: So?

VAL: So you need someone to follow. Anyone?

EDWARD: Anyone on the left.

VAL: What about someone veering towards the middle?

EDWARD: How middle can you be?

VAL: Middle enough to win.

VAL: In all the time I've been standing out in right field I haven't found a single man who was interested in lining up behind me, because I am a woman. I *am* a woman. Gustavo seems confused.

EDWARD: I've never won anything before.

VAL: Never?

*(EDWARD shakes his head.)*

The middle wins with awesome regularity.

EDWARD: That's so scary.

VAL: It turns me on. And I think you might like me when I get turned on. Now go steal a mic from the Voyageurs. I've got a speech to make.

EDWARD: *(Exiting.)* Yes ma'am!

*(EDWARD exits with a new sense of purpose. VAL goes over to the canapés and speaks into them)*

Your serving boy identification badge may say 'Edward' but to me you are so much more. Every woman should have a socialist clinging gently to her arm. The ultimate accessory. Her own private John Ralston Saul.

*(ALEX, GUSTAVO and ANNETTE emerge from the washroom. ALEX is nursing a wound and GUSTAVO is likely administering a wet towel to it as well.)*

ALEX: You see? It really was a misunderstanding. So you'll take me back?

GUSTAVO: No.

ALEX: Why not!?

GUSTAVO: This time it was Tiffany falling against you in the subway. But last time it was Lucy and that wasn't any accident. Next time? We can't live that way.

ALEX: You said "we". Have you replaced me already?

GUSTAVO: With Annette. Do you know what's happened to her these past three years?

ALEX: No. What.

GUSTAVO: *(Beat.)* Do you want to tell him?

ANNETTE: You tell him.

*(There's a pause.)*

Go ahead, Gus. Tell him.

ALEX: Tell me.

GUSTAVO: It's your story. You tell him.

ANNETTE: I want to hear you tell it.

GUSTAVO: Oh, I talk way too much.

ANNETTE: You don't remember!

ALEX: He never listens.

GUSTAVO: She hasn't had sex in three years! And the last time, it was with THIS!

*(GUSTAVO produces a photocopy. They all look and react in shock and awe.)*

ALEX: Wait honey, that's you.

GUSTAVO: *(Pulls out another copy.)* I meant with this!

*(They are all horrified. GUSTAVO turns it; they are even more horrified.)*

She's starving for sex and all I have ever done is complain about you. That's not fair to my best friend. And brand new roommate.

ANNETTE: Gus, what are you asking me?

GUSTAVO: Come and live with me! We can get a cat. At night we'll brew herbal tea and nurse our grievances against the world. We'll be lesbians.

ANNETTE: I'm overwhelmed with elation. Yes Gus. Yes.

*(Lights off them. Up on VAL who is at a podium. Outside washroom door. About to give speech. Sound of a mic squealing. She addresses the crowd.)*

VAL: The Minister of Culture and Winter Sports has been detained by ice in Pickering. She has asked me to say a few words on her behalf. On the Value of Art.

But cripes. Look at this rusty old thing. The plaque says it was donated by the Ford Motor Corporation. Probably because it looks like one of its cars. But does anyone have a clue what its artistic value is?

Of course you don't. Neither did I. But I googled. It all starts with some empty bush-land up north. No little people live on it, not even First Nations little people. One day a guy walks over it with

one of those coin finders little people use in mall parking lots. The machine starts beeping. Copper! Someone pays the prospector. Someone pays off the environmental assessor. Someone pays a miner to dig the copper up. Someone pays the railway company to take the copper ore to the refinery. Where it's bought by a sculptor who shapes it into Declining Nude. 32. Ford buys it, pays to ship it here and we pay admission to see it. Well, *we* didn't pay because we were coming to this reception but if someone was coming to this art gallery to actually look at art, they'd have to pay. And they'd have to pay for parking too unless (*To canapés.*) they come on the subway like I did. Or maybe they're coming from Buffalo and staying overnight, then you have to factor in hotels and meals and escort services.

Do you see my point? This rustbucket has generated millions of dollars of economic activity. And *that* is the Value of Art.

*(Rising tide of applause for VAL. Fade to washroom entry area, behind the curtains. JIMSON and TIFFANY are standing together, reluctant to return to the event.)*

JIMSON: I think we're missing the speech. I have to go.

TIFFANY: Wait. Jimson. I'd like to see you again.

JIMSON: Really?

TIFFANY: Yes. I don't care that you're dirt poor. I just want an honest man.

JIMSON: "An honest man".

*(Focus includes VAL, who is just outside the curtained washroom area.)*

VAL: And now I'm going to segue gracefully into our Naming Opportunity.

TIFFANY: Yes, Jimson: an honest man. I'm sick of men sneaking around and I'm even sicker of sneaking around with them.

JIMSON: If you want honesty, then we've already started out on the wrong foot.

VAL: As you look about this room, you will see it sprayed with the glorious evidence of past Naming Opportunities.

TIFFANY: Aw – don’t tell me you’re married!

VAL: The exit door is paid for by Pfizer.

JIMSON: I’m not dirt poor. I’m rich. I’m obscenely rich.

VAL: The chandelier is a gift from Rogers.

TIFFANY: Why did you say you were poor?

VAL: Every one of those chairs is donated in memory of a person who died of a fatal disease.

JIMSON: I wanted to meet a woman who wouldn’t judge me on the size of my wad.

VAL: And now, I am proud to introduce this reception gallery’s newest Namer.

JIMSON: But you fell for me when you thought I was dirt poor, didn’t you?

TIFFANY: Oh yes.

VAL: Jimson Camper! Jimson, where are you?

JIMSON: Then that’s all that matters, Tiffany.

TIFFANY: Jimson.

VAL: Serving boy! Have you seen Jimson? It looks like we have a Shy Namer on our hands.

JIMSON: Tiffany.

TIFFANY: Jimson.

VAL: My fellow young conservatives – I give you the JIMSON CAMPER TOILETS!

*(The curtain falls from the entry to the washrooms, revealing JIMSON and TIFFANY locked in a passionate kiss. Over the entrance is “The Jimson Camper Toilets”. But as the curtain falls, so too does the lighting and sound ambiance change, back to that of the subway.)*

**Scene Seven – the Subway again**

*First we see RIC at one end of the car, swaying. He's posed himself in front of one of his condo ads. He ruefully rubs his bruised cheek. Black on RIC.*

*Light up on GUSTAVO and ANNETTE. ANNETTE picks up her cat-carrying case and they both coo at the occupant, happy parents. Light off them.*

*Light comes up on ALEX, standing alone, swaying to the movement of the car. He ruefully rubs his bruised cheek. Black. Light back up on ALEX. He ruefully rubs his other cheek and then ruefully rubs his first cheek again – he can't quite decide which one got slugged.*

*Light up on VAL and EDWARD. He is standing two steps behind her, holding her bag and purse. She looks ahead. EDWARD puts down his packages and moves closer to VAL, putting his arms around her from behind. They begin to sway in time with the subway car; VAL being very happy and maybe instructing EDWARD on where to put his hands. Light off them.*

*Light up on TIFFANY and JIMSON, and CHELSEA and KENNY. All four of them are standing fairly close (in couples) and swaying to the car. The car lurches and they all nearly fall into each other, and recover. And then TIFFANY leans over to CHELSEA and deliberately kisses the collar of her blouse.*

*Music up. Fast black.*

**The End.**