

# GORILLA

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By Holli Harms

“Sex was of course —it always is— the most enticing of mysteries,…”

**Doggerel By a Senior Citizen W.H. Auden**

Synopsis: Claire can no longer have sex with her husband, Fletcher, so they hire a sex surrogate. Things take a turn when Fletcher steps over his wife unexpectedly and leaves her wondering how invisible does a woman become when she has aged past cat-calls, wolf whistles and double takes.

Cast of Characters:

Claire Holden - 50's, any ethnicity, wife of Professor Holden. She is an emotional mess as she is in the onslaught of Menopause.

\*\*Grayson Stone - 20's, any ethnicity, Works for not-for-profit group. Free thinking girl. Positive. Confident.

Fletcher Holden - 50's, any ethnicity, University Professor. He is in love with his wife and doing his best to make her happy.

Avery Holden - 20's any ethnicity, daughter of Fletcher and Claire. A little high strung.  
(Suggestion: you leave the name of the actor playing Avery out of the playbill. Creates a surprise of her arrival.)

\*\*Mama - Claire's mother, any heavy regional accent. She is played by the same actress who plays Grayson with no change of costume or appearance.

Time: Present Day

Place: Old walk up apartment building in New York City, London, Rome, any large city

Open on room with coffee table, chair(s) and couch. ( or nothing just suggested) Enter Claire Holden. She is attractive woman in her mid to late 50's. She is followed by Grayson Stone, an attractive young woman in her 20's.

CLAIRE

So that will be your room and bathroom and we're here. First door on the right. Left. I mean left. Directions. Ugh. And so this is the main living area. We use it for entertaining and sitting and reading and you know - living. The coffee table is my husband's idea. I prefer side tables. I'm not so adamant about it. Fletcher is. He's adamant about his coffee table. He says there's poetry in it. In the words passing over the table. There's beauty in it, he says. I don't see it. I think coffee tables get in the way of conversations. Conversations if you ask me suffer over coffee tables. Words and ideas having to pass over glasses of wine and mugs of coffee and large books on art, architecture. All these distractions lying right there under the words and thoughts passing over them. But he's the professor of poetry so... I love my husband. I want what he wants. I want for his - pleasure. So there it is the coffee table. Oh and the landline. We have other means of calling, of talking but I wanted to keep the landline as well. I like that there's something here on the land that's nothing but a phone. It's here and the information comes through telephone wires that are also here. Here on the ground. Not in the air, floating all around me. The landline makes me feel grounded, solid. Solid. We have a daughter. Avery. She's twenty three. Did I mention that? Its her room you'll be... She's all grown up. All grown and gone. She lives in Hawaii with her boyfriend, Malachi. He surfs. She sells T-shirts. They're happy. For now. So this is our home. Like any other.

GRAYSON

I like the paintings.

CLAIRE

Oh yes. Those. They're mine. I used to paint. A lot. Paintings of mine hang in offices. You know in places with purpose.

GRAYSON

What are you working on now?

CLAIRE

Now? No desire to paint. No desire.

GRAYSON

Well they're really cool.

CLAIRE

A combination of water color and oil. I don't know why I did that.

Claire thinks she sees something out of the corner of her eye. She jumps.

CLAIRE

Oh! God!

GRAYSON

What?

CLAIRE

Nothing. I thought there was something there. But it was just a shadow. There are lots of shadows in this apartment. As the night creeps in, the shadows creep out. You know how it is these old apartments. Shadows.

GRAYSON

Claire, are you all right?

CLAIRE

Clearly I'm not if I get distracted by shadows.

GRAYSON

We don't have to do this if you don't want to. I mean, if you've changed your mind.

CLAIRE

No. Grayson. It's okay.

GRAYSON

You sure?

CLAIRE

It's necessary. That I'm sure of.

GRAYSON

Because I'm young.

CLAIRE

Well...

GRAYSON

Because my vagina's young.

CLAIRE

Wait wait! Who said anything about...??

GRAYSON

You did. At the party.

CLAIRE

No, no. At the thing, the party what I said was....

GRAYSON

That you “were no longer able to have proper intercourse with your husband and so you needed some one like me.”

CLAIRE

Well I - wow that’s like verbatim.

GRAYSON

And so that’s why I’m here. Because of my young vagina. It’s young and can still take a....

CLAIRE

Stop! Don’t uh - I’ve made a... it’s a - what’s the word ... list. It’s a list. If we are to live together...

GRAYSON

Weekends only.

CLAIRE

The weekends yes of course. If we are to exist under the same roof - on the weekends- then we should know our... oh our... oh what is the word? Oh! Words! The word. When we have to have floors and ceilings?

GRAYSON

Floors? Ceilings?

CLAIRE

Yes. What is the word when we have to have floors and ceilings? When we need floors and ceilings?

GRAYSON

I have no idea.

CLAIRE

Oh god what is the word. Boundaries! That’s it! We need to know our boundaries. There have to be boundaries, always, and the list is where we start - with words we do not say.

Claire hands Grayson the list she had in her pocket. Grayson without thinking starts to go down the list reading the words out loud.

GRAYSON

Vagina. Penis. Orgasm. Groin. Menstruation. Moist.

CLAIRE

Stop! Please stop! You're saying them out loud. The point is not to say them. Not to say them out loud. That's the point of the list - not to say the words.

GRAYSON

Okay. Great. I have my list.

CLAIRE

You can tape it to the mirror or the inside of the closet door.

GRAYSON

I'll memorize it.

CLAIRE

That's nice. But still I think you'll need a reminder.

GRAYSON

I have a photographic memory.

CLAIRE

Fine. Fine. Fletcher should be home any minute and then you two can discuss the details.

GRAYSON

We discussed a little at the party.

CLAIRE

You did?

GRAYSON

When you were in the bathroom.

CLAIRE

Well when I was waiting in that long line for the bathroom. Long, long line.

GRAYSON

There's more than one bathroom there. Sorry I should've told you.

CLAIRE

How many times have you been to those kind of parties?

GRAYSON

A lot.

CLAIRE

That can get expensive.

GRAYSON

For couples it's more. Single women are the commodity that all the couples are looking for so we pay a lot less.

CLAIRE

What's a lot less?

GRAYSON

Twenty bucks.

CLAIRE

That's a lot less. Grayson if you enjoy it so much why are you here?

GRAYSON

I've gotten bored with them. Bored with the parties. I thought something else would be interesting. And a lot of the couples are so young and kinda dumb and the conversations are so banal.

CLAIRE

Conversations? Aren't people there just to you know - hook up?

GRAYSON

Stimulating conversations for me are foreplay. The better the talk the better the night.

CLAIRE

What's going to happen when you get married and you're bored?

GRAYSON

I have no plans to marry.

CLAIRE

You could meet someone. Fall in love. Then what?

GRAYSON

Then he better want to join me on my adventures.

CLAIRE

And if he doesn't?

GRAYSON

Then he's not the guy for me. You know, after you two left I kept trying to figure out where I knew Professor Holden - Fletcher.

CLAIRE

Professor?

GRAYSON

I had him for poetry 101. My freshmen year.

CLAIRE

So you're a poet?

GRAYSON

I wouldn't say that. I wrote some poems but they were trash.

CLAIRE

Couldn't have been that bad.

GRAYSON

Most poetry that people write is trash.

CLAIRE

Your "Freshmen" year?

GRAYSON

I graduated four years ago.

CLAIRE

Oh that's right you said. You work for...

GRAYSON

Not -for -profit group. Really Claire, if you want to wait a little while, we can wait. You know if you want.

CLAIRE

Are you having second thoughts?

GRAYSON

No. I just don't want things to be weird for you.

CLAIRE

And they're not for you?

GRAYSON

Sex is not a big deal for me. Its not this intimate beautiful thing. Its fun and feels good but it's, you know, not this huge deal. That's why I like the parties. I get to hook up and there are no strings attached. The people who are there are already in a relationship. They aren't looking for anything else but fun. I'm the fun.

CLAIRE

That's very interesting way of looking at it.

GRAYSON

Have you tried some of the creams? You know the stuff that is supposed to lubricate...

CLAIRE

Yes! Yes! I know about those...Could you not... Can I have the list? Please?

Grayson hands the list to Claire. Claire gets a pen and starts to write on it.

CLAIRE

The "creams" as you mentioned have side effects. Disastrous side effects. May cause cancer, swelling of arms, legs, liver failure, kidney failure, trouble sleeping, trouble breathing, trouble eating. Trouble. You can have intercourse with your husband but you could also die. No. No that's not an option. Here.

Claire hands the list back to Grayson.

GRAYSON

Okay. No more saying "Lubricate" or "creams" or "intercourse". Wait! You said "creams" and "intercourse". So you're saying you can say them but I can't?

CLAIRE

No from here on out no one will say them.

GRAYSON

Are you going to continue adding to the list?

CLAIRE

Let's consider it on going.

GRAYSON

I think I will post this on the mirror - as a reminder.

CLAIRE

Good.

GRAYSON

Claire, you know, you may feel like kinda old or whatever, but I just want to say that if I was here for you, instead of your husband, I'd be really excited by that.

CLAIRE

What?

GRAYSON

Yeah.

CLAIRE

Uh....

From off stage we hear Fletcher.

FLETCHER (O.S.)

Claire!? You home?

CLAIRE

Here! In here!

Fletcher Holden enters. He is 50's and very handsome. He clearly loves his wife.

FLETCHER

Hey!

CLAIRE

Hi.

They kiss. He puts his hand out Grayson.

FLETCHER

Hi?

GRAYSON

Hi.

FLETCHER

Fletcher Holden.

GRAYSON

Um? Grayson Stone.

They shake.

CLAIRE

Fletch this is Grayson. You know Grayson?

FLETCHER

Oh yeah. Grayson. Good to see you.

GRAYSON

You as well. If you don't mind Claire I'm going to go and get myself settled in?

CLAIRE

Not at all. Towels are...

GRAYSON

In the closet by the bathroom, got it.

Grayson exits.

FLETCHER

I ran into Sully. He's having a little birthday get together at McBride's, said for us to stop by and raise a pint in his - Wait "towels?" "Settle in?" Where's she going?

CLAIRE

To Avery's room.

FLETCHER

Why?

CLAIRE

Fletcher that's Grayson. From the thing, the - What do they call it? The thing.

FLETCHER

Thing?

CLAIRE

The Caligula thing. The thing. The sex party thing.

FLETCHER

Is that today? It's today. Oh Claire I'm sorry. Final exams. I'm not all here. I'm ...forgetting. I'm so sorry honey. So it's today? She's here to move in?

CLAIRE

Weekends only.

FLETCHER

Weekends. Right.

CLAIRE

This is for you. For us.

FLETCHER

I don't...

CLAIRE

Well I do. I can't take this feeling of inadequacy, of not being a - . Look, she's nice and interesting and, and, and if you're not happy, if she's not happy then we end it straight away.

FLETCHER

And if you're not happy?

CLAIRE

Fletch could we not discuss it tonight. Can we just have the sushi and then a drink with Sully.

FLETCHER

Claire I want you to be happy.

CLAIRE

I'm going to get dressed. This may be a good time for you to have the talk with Grayson and discuss the details...

FLETCHER

Details?

CLAIRE

Of how things should go. How the weekends will go. Are you forgetting everything? Just discuss what we were thinking... How it should play out... how it should... Oh my god. Just talk to her.

FLETCHER

Yes. Talk. I'll talk. To Grayson.

Grayson enters.

GRAYSON

Sorry to bother but there are no sheets on the bed and I couldn't find any in the closet.

CLAIRE

They're probably still in the dryer. I'll get them.

GRAYSON

Oh I can get them.

CLAIRE

No they're in the basement and it's weird. You stay and talk. You talk. I'll get the laundry.

Claire leaves.

FLETCHER

You got everything you need?

GRAYSON

Everything but the sheets.

Her attempt at light humor is lost on Fletcher.

FLETCHER

Good. Good. That's good. So...

GRAYSON

You know I had you for Poetry 101.

FLETCHER

Really.

GRAYSON

Freshmen year.

FLETCHER

You're one of my "students?"

GRAYSON

Former student. It was 8 years ago. Fletcher, this is a unique situation, and I'm well aware of it's tender and delicate needs.

FLETCHER

Thank you Grayson. That's good of you to say. Nice choice of words, "Unique, delicate, tender." It is an emotionally tender time right now. And I'm sorry I forgot... this...you. I'm forgetting lately. Its the job, the students and well my concern for Claire. She's having a rough time of it. So I've been forgetting. My mind busy with thoughts and... So Claire and I discussed and we decided best to start with a schedule of sorts. Starting right away.

No time to rethink it. Just go. As Auden wrote “Leap before you look”. Best not to wait. You wait and you may get cold feet. So...um... we’re going out to eat tonight. We do every Friday night. Sushi. Claire’s favorite. She gets the sushi I get the Udon noodles and Edamame. We share the tofu. We’re usually back around eight thirty but tonight probably closer to ten. We have a birthday gathering. And then on Friday night’s we um... well we’re intimate. Fridays and Saturdays we’ve found, over the years, are the best time - for that. So... Would you like a drink?

GRAYSON

No thank you. I’ll be awake in my room waiting. You knock when you’re ready.

FLETCHER

Just like that?

GRAYSON

Just like that.

FLETCHER

Then I’ll see you - when I...

Fletcher mimes knocking. Grayson copies the mime.

GRAYSON

I have plenty of condoms so you don’t have to worry about that.

FLETCHER

Plenty of - ?

GRAYSON

Condoms.

FLETCHER

Oh yes. Yes. Good. Yes. (Slight pause) Yes.

She smiles

GRAYSON

“A solitude ten thousand fathoms deep  
Sustains the bed on which we lie, my dear:  
Although I love you, you will have to leap;  
Our dream of safety has to disappear.”

FLETCHER

W. H. Last stanza. Good. Very good.

Grayson exits.

Fletcher goes to the liquor cabinet and makes himself a drink. He downs it. He looks around the apartment. He looks around and around. He starts to spin around like a kid. Spinning until he is dizzy. He falls down from the dizziness.

Claire enters. She is dressed very nicely. Very very. She is just putting in her earrings. The fancy ones.

CLAIRE

Why are you on the floor?

FLETCHER

I was spinning.

CLAIRE

Why would you do that?

FLETCHER

I'd forgotten how much fun it was. When we were kids, remember?

CLAIRE

No.

FLETCHER

All kids love to spin.

CLAIRE

I wouldn't know. I never did. I never spun.

He gets up from the floor.

FLETCHER

I didn't know that. Learn something new.

CLAIRE

Did you have the talk?

Yes. You look great.

FLETCHER

Thank you.

CLAIRE

You don't have to dress up for Sully.

FLETCHER

I'm not - are you ready?

CLAIRE

Yes.

FLETCHER

They exit. Lights shift and Grayson enters from kitchen with a water bottle in her hand. She is reading a book of Poetry. She looks at the coffee table.

"Ode To A coffee Table."

GRAYSON

She exits to the bedroom.

Lights shift.

Claire and Fletcher enter. They had a good time. They've been drinking.

Sully's jokes are so bad.

CLAIRE

That's what makes them so funny.

FLETCHER

Are you hungry? I've got some leftover spaghetti.

CLAIRE

I'm good. So... Lets' go lie down.

FLETCHER

Oh Fletch.

CLAIRE

FLETCHER

Lie down together. I want to hold you.

He smiles. They go to the bedroom.

Lights shift.

Claire appears in a pool of light.

CLAIRE

I loved the - you know - and I was good at it. So good. Always. My body just took to it. When other girls were saying how terrible their first time was I was saying “Really? I had no idea because my first was fantastic. I was 16. He was 17. He was my next door neighbor and all I wanted to do was be at his house in his upstairs attic bedroom with him. His parents even commented “How much Claire just loves our house”! He was the first - of many. See my mother, when I was thirteen, gave me this speech. We were in the kitchen, it was a school night. I remember because I was doing homework at the kitchen table and she was preparing dinner. She had the radio going and on came ( she sings the lyrics) “*Ooh child things are gonna get easier. Ooh child things are gonna get brighter.*” I remember that because my mother loved that song and would stop everything to sing along. I loved it too and so we would sing together.

From behind Claire we see Fletcher step out of their bedroom and walk down the hall. We hear a knock and a slight pool of light as a door opens then closes as Fletcher goes in.

We were singing. Enjoying the song. After the song she said, “Claire I want to talk to you about horses”. We lived in town there were no horses. I had ridden one once when I was eight but that was the extent of my horse experience. So horses. “Yes ma’am,” I said.

Appearing in the background is Grayson as Claire’s mom who has Long Island accent ( or any accent of the region)

MAMA

Now Claire when you go to buy a horse you don’t just buy the first one you ride.

CLAIRE

Are we getting a horse?

MAMA

No. Now listen. You have to ride several horses before you choose the right one. You have to ride several different horses with different saddles. Side Saddle, western saddle, no saddle at all. This is how you find out what ride you like best.

CLAIRE

Are you and daddy getting me a horse?

MAMA

No we are not getting you a horse. Good heavens why would you think that? Now once you've found the ride that you like, that's the horse you buy because you'll have it for a long time. You want to make sure that every time you mount your ride you're happy with it.

Mama disappears.

CLAIRE

It was when she said "mount" that I understood or at least I thought I understood what she was talking about. This was my mother's sex speech. She was encouraging me to be promiscuous. I took her advice. I rode a lot of horses.

Fletcher steps out from the direction of his and Claire's bedroom and goes to Grayson's room. Pool of light as the door opens once again and closes.

And what I found is that most of the rides are pretty similar, some better here and some better there but all pretty much the same. The part that was different was the after time. The time to talk and be together. That's the time that made the difference. The talk. And with Fletcher the talk was easy and warm and good. It was good. It has been ever since. But the last two nights. He didn't come back to me for the talk. I thought he would come back. To me. Instead, I found him on the couch.

Lights shift to morning. It is Sunday. Fletcher enters from the kitchen eating cold pasta from it's container.

CLAIRE

I was going to offer to make you pancakes but I see you've already got breakfast.

FLETCHER

Sully sent me a text. We're gonna to go the pier and hit some balls.

CLAIRE

Why didn't you come back to bed?

FLETCHER

I didn't want to disturb you.

Claire sees something out of the corner of her eye. She jumps.

CLAIRE

Oh!

FLETCHER

What?

CLAIRE

Shadows.

FLETCHER

It's an old building.

CLAIRE

With old shadows. You wouldn't have disturbed me. I was waiting for you.

FLETCHER

Why didn't you say something on Saturday?

CLAIRE

I wanted you to want to come back on your own not because I requested it.

FLETCHER

How would I know to come back unless you asked?

CLAIRE

Because it's what we do. We sit afterwards and talk and maybe get some wine and oh why I am having to explain this to you.

FLETCHER

I'm sorry, why are you mad at me?

CLAIRE

I'm not mad. Just disappointed. Go. See Sully. Hit your balls.

FLETCHER  
Claire, this was your idea.

CLAIRE  
I know.

FLETCHER  
I'm not sure how to navigate myself.

CLAIRE  
You don't have to "navigate."

FLETCHER  
I don't understand what you want.

CLAIRE  
I want the shadows to stop haunting me. I want...

FLETCHER  
Claire...

CLAIRE  
Go. Go have fun. I'll be fine. Go. Really. It's okay.

Fletcher gets two wood clubs from the closet.

FLETCHER  
We're gonna be at the driving range working on our woods, no putting today so...

CLAIRE  
Are you going to have lunch there?

FLETCHER  
Well usually - but if you want me to come home for lunch...

CLAIRE  
No. You go. Hit balls with Sully. Have lunch with Sully.

FLETCHER  
Claire.

CLAIRE  
It's all right.

FLETCHER  
I'll be back in time for dinner. We can go out. Some place nice.

They kiss good bye. A peck really.

He leaves.

Claire stands for a moment and then Fletcher comes back in on his cell. He walks to the kitchen talking the whole way. He does not acknowledge Claire.

FLETCHER

I'm on my way. I just... I forgot... my wallet. Yeah I know I've been forgetting. I know!

He goes to the kitchen and Claire tries to think of something to do or say but quickly just drops to the ground. Lying there face up, straight as a board.

Fletcher comes out of the kitchen putting his wallet into his pants' pocket. Without the slightest pause he continues the conversation and steps over Claire. Never acknowledging her.

FLETCHER

Look Sully don't invite Jake..... Because we're always paying for him... Oh come on... last month|? The Monkey?

He exits. Claire sits up and stares at the door.  
Grayson enters.

CLAIRE

He stepped over me!

GRAYSON

He...?

CLAIRE

Stepped over me.

GRAYSON

Why are you on the ground?

CLAIRE

To see what he would do. To see if he would ... I don't know. I was on the ground because it seemed like a good idea. Like a good thing to do. To lie of the floor and see what my husband would do. And he stepped over me. Never lost his stride. Just - STEP.

You have to lift your foot to step, there is lifting involved and so he lifted it, he lifted his foot but he didn't even notice. He had no attachment to the lifting. Either I'm the 800 pound Gorilla in the room - thrashing my emotions about - which I have no control over - and vomiting them on everyone, while they politely pretend it isn't happening. Or I'm the middle aged invisible woman you step over.

GRAYSON

It's elephant in the room.

CLAIRE

What?

GRAYSON

It's a common mistake. The gorilla in the room actually refers to someone or something like a corporation that has a lot of power and is throwing it around as they please without any regard for others. The elephant in the room is the thing that everyone's trying to pretend isn't there, but, well - it's an elephant.

Claire waves her hands around.

CLAIRE

Elephant! Gorilla! Elephant! Gorilla! You know what I want to do? I want to pound my chest like a gorilla and blow my trunk like an elephant and then I want to... to... to howl like a wolf, and gallop like a horse and and and and spit like a camel. And smash the coffee table. Smash it good! I feel very expansive right now. Very liberated. Liberte'!

GRAYSON

Liberte'.

Grayson kisses Claire. Just boom and it's done.  
 Claire kisses her back. A nice somewhat long  
 kiss. Then they break. Claire takes a moment and  
 then...

CLAIRE

I'm hungry. You hungry?

Claire heads for the kitchen.

GRAYSON

Claire...

CLAIRE

As a woman you want to be able to meet the male virility head on. To take it. All of it. It's how we've been surviving for thousands of years. If women of my age can no longer give our husbands the one thing that is based on our survival, then where does that put us on the food chain?

GRAYSON

We're not gorillas pounding our chests. We're not just about procreation. And there are things you can do that will be even better than regular old intercourse.

CLAIRE

Oh uh...

GRAYSON

I know! I said "Intercourse". I know. It's on the list.

CLAIRE

I know about the other things. Lots of things. To do for one another. To do to one another. But they don't replace the actual... the ...the ... the

GRAYSON

Penetration?

CLAIRE

Yes! God! That! Oh these words. Why are they so so so... I don't know. There's no poetry in them. Have you ever noticed that? The words of sex have no poetry.

GRAYSON

No but the actual act of sex can.

CLAIRE

Grayson, you're young you don't see the future so gloomy because it feels so far away, but it's not. Trust me. You turn a corner and there it is.

GRAYSON

I don't care much about the male virility.

CLAIRE

Fine! Fine! Don't care about the male virility. Pretend it doesn't have any power. Pretend you can work your way through it with no consequences.

GRAYSON

Claire! You said you didn't want to actually HAVE sex at the sex party because you wore the wrong underwear and that the two of you had simply agreed to go and see what happens.

CLAIRE

That's right but then we talked and made this plan, this plan, this is the plan - what is happening here and now. And this is a good plan.

GRAYSON

You didn't want to have any sex at the party because of how you feel about yourself. I used to not want to undress and be judged by my body but no one there is judging. That's the freedom of the place. No one is there to judge or be judged. We're there to enjoy.

CLAIRE

Easy to say when your not-so -perfect body is young. Wait until you see all your bits and pieces fall and drop and just dissolve into unrecognizable forms.

GRAYSON

You need to stop thinking of yourself like that.

CLAIRE

For the love of Mike! I'm hungry.

GRAYSON

So am I.

Grayson kisses Claire again. Long deep kiss.

GRAYSON

There are things that don't require male virility.

CLAIRE

Things you showed my husband?

GRAYSON

No. Better things.

They go to Grayson/Avery's room. Fletcher appears on a separate part of the stage. He is on his cell phone and holds a golf club in his hand. The sound of landline at the flat rings and the machine picks up. Claire steps out in a pool of light.

CLAIRE

Hi. You've reached The Holdens. Claire and Fletcher and Avery, who lives in Hawaii. For now. Please leave a message at the beep and we'll get back to you as soon as possible. Whatever that means. Here's the beep. BEEP!

Claire is gone.

FLETCHER

Hi honey. I just wanted to make sure...uh... You were spinning? Right.? You were lying there on the floor because you had tried spinning and were enjoying the feeling of it? Right? There on the floor? Spinning? Claire? Okay you know what - I'm on my way. I'll be there soon. It won't take long and - I'm on my way.

Lights shift to flat. Silence and then through the front door enters Avery. She carries a huge duffel bag and backpack. She drops them and looks around. She stretches and yawns. It was a long plane ride from Hawaii.

She goes to the kitchen and returns with a container of cold cooked spaghetti. She eats. She stands and eats and looks around.

AVERY

Hello Coffee table. Did you miss me?

She eats a little more, yawns again and heads for her bedroom for a long nap.

A moment of silence and...

And then a scream and Avery is running out, her mouth agape - shock and confusion on her face.

She is followed first by Claire who has a sheet wrapped around her, and next Grayson who is buttoning her shirt.

AVERY

What the...? What the...?

CLAIRE

What are you doing here?

AVERY

What am I doing here ? What are you doing here?

GRAYSON

I was giving your mother a massage.

AVERY

Massage! Massage? I know massage and that was not a massage!

CLAIRE

This is my home. I don't have to explain myself.

AVERY

That's my room.

CLAIRE

Was! Was your room. You moved to Hawaii.

AVERY

Well I'm not in Hawaii anymore.

CLAIRE

What is going on is none of your business. It's none of your business - for now. It will be your business one day, but for now it's not.

AVERY

What!

GRAYSON

Avery, I think I can explain.

AVERY

How do you know my name? How does she know my name?

CLAIRE

Avery you need to calm down.

AVERY

Oh I'm sorry! Am I acting a little insane? A little over the top? Well its not every day that you find your mother in bed - in your bed - with another woman. A woman!

CLAIRE

I would have thought that you of all people would understand.

AVERY

"Me of all people?" What does that mean? Mother, are you having an affair in our home with a woman - whom I might add is much younger than you?

GRAYSON

I am not having an affair with your mother. She hired me to have an affair, of sorts, with your father.

AVERY

Wha wha wha!!!

GRAYSON

I was showing your mother just now how she can attain pleasure without “intercourse.” Sorry Claire. I was helping your mother.

AVERY

What is she talking about? What are you talking about?

CLAIRE

Sexton wrote, “I am watercolor. I wash off.” And look at me! I am!

AVERY

What! Mom! You’re not watercolor.

CLAIRE

Yes! I am. Watercolor. And you and Grayson - you’re oils. Rich, deep colors. Thick malleable paints. I was once oil but now, lousy water.

AVERY

Mom!

GRAYSON

Wyeth painted in watercolors.

CLAIRE

Dipped in egg. Great! I can no longer make eggs but I can dip myself in them.

AVERY

Mom!

CLAIRE

Coat myself in egg and see if maybe, just maybe I can stop myself from fading. Stop myself from washing away.

AVERY

Mom! This is crazy.

CLAIRE

What is?

AVERY

All of it.

CLAIRE

You know, right now, I want to leave the two of you and start walking. Away. From this. From ALL of this.

Just then the front door opens and Fletcher arrives. He rushed over. Running probably with his two golf clubs.

FLETCHER

Claire!

CLAIRE

Oh god.

She stands tall and wraps the sheet even tighter around her.

CLAIRE

Fletcher. Hello.

AVERY

Daddy!

FLETCHER

Avery? Claire? What's going on?

AVERY

Wouldn't you like to know?

FLETCHER

What?

CLAIRE

Fletcher! I am a gorilla. I am a gorilla pounding my chest. And I am an elephant blowing my trunk and a wolf howling, and a horse galloping and a camel spitting. Watch out I may spit. I may spit on you! You stepped over me. You didn't see me and you stepped over me.

FLETCHER

Claire, I...

CLAIRE

Stepped over me! And so Grayson is here and she didn't step over me and - there you have it. There is it. We are sharing Grayson. We're sharing her.

FLETCHER

It's not a share. Grayson and I never did anything but talk.

CLAIRE

What? You were supposed to have sex!

AVERY

Mother!

CLAIRE

You were supposed to help me! Both of you! To take the pressure off of me!

FLETCHER

I know this is difficult. Trying to understand how your body is changing and becoming a new you.

CLAIRE

A mess me.

FLETCHER

Transformations are messy. They're messy, complicated, ridiculous. That's how they are. That's life. Your body's changing. That's what bodies do. They change. Again and again. Babies become young girls who one day go through puberty and then voila' sexuality, needs, drives, emotions, blood. But now you don't need the blood. You can move on.

CLAIRE

Move on to what. There is no terrain for this. Women don't talk about this.

GRAYSON

No we don't. We don't rally around each other, or support each other. Or even chant to the goddesses any more.

CLAIRE

Goddesses?

GRAYSON

We used to worship to goddesses way back. Back when ancient societies were matriarchal.

AVERY

We know that. We know about goddesses.

CLAIRE

We do?

AVERY

Yes Mother we do.

GRAYSON

Then you know that not only did we worship goddesses, but also the most important person in society was the healer of the village, who was a woman of age. When she became older and her body had changed she was looked on as wise, as “new” again.

CLAIRE

I don't feel very wise or new. I feel stupid and old.

AVERY

Mom! I'm not sure what's happening but it can't be as bad as you're making it out to be.

CLAIRE

Oh Avery! Do you know what it's like to no longer be desired? To have men no longer think of you as attractive, as someone they might want to - I don't know - flirt with?

AVERY

You taught me to think of myself as a full person not as some sex object.

CLAIRE

Well I lied!

AVERY

What!

GRAYSON

Claire!

FLETCHER

Honey!

CLAIRE

It's our power. I know it and you two... (*pointing to Grayson and Avery*) You know it.

GRAYSON

The power of the pussy!

CLAIRE

Oh god these words!

FLETCHER

Claire you are an intelligent...

CLAIRE

Salman Rushdie kissed books. He kissed books until he discovered girls. I'm books.

AVERY

Mom!

GRAYSON

Salman Rushdie kissed books because they're important. Wyeth painted in watercolors and Turner and Whistler and Sargent. So if you are watercolors and books then you're made of the nectars of life.

CLAIRE

"The Nectars of Life" Oh god. That's so - trash poetry. Please stop! Everyone stop. Stop talking. Stop - Talking? If all you were doing for the last two nights was talking, what were you talking about?

FLETCHER

You.

GRAYSON

He told me about your first date and the car breaking down. How you knew what to do. How cute you were in your dress and grease on your face and hands. He told me things like that.

FLETCHER

Claire, I called. I left a message. There on the landline. I asked if you had been spinning.

CLAIRE

You called? I didn't get it.

AVERY

That's because you were in my bedroom getting a "massage".

CLAIRE

This is how it goes. You start to unravel. All of it unraveling.

FLETCHER

I stepped over you because I thought you had been spinning and that you were enjoying the feeling. I didn't want to get in the way of the feeling.

CLAIRE

The spinning..

FLETCHER

Yeah.

CLAIRE

Hold me, Fletch. Please.

Fletcher goes to her and holds her.

CLAIRE

You too, Avery.

AVERY

Mom, I'm not so sure about this... about...

CLAIRE

Come to your mother.

Avery goes to her mom.

CLAIRE

Oh honey! It's good to have you back. You are back?

AVERY

Malachi does nothing but surf and dive and he never picks up after himself. And I'm not made for Hawaii. Little tiny islands in the middle of nowhere. It felt claustrophobic. London never feels like that.

CLAIRE

My city girl. Grayson. Join us.

GRAYSON

Well this is more of a family...

CLAIRE

It's okay.

Grayson joins the holding.

CLAIRE

Hold tight and hard. Hold back the gorilla, the elephant, the wolf, the camel, the horse. Hold back the growling, the spitting, the chest pounding, the galloping. Hold it all back.

They all move in tighter and then Claire bursts out from under them. She starts to spin.

Faster and faster and faster. Then she falls. Lies there. A sigh. She feels it.

Lights out.

End of play.