

“ F o u r C h a r a c t e r s . ”

A play adaption of
Steven Soderbergh's
'Sex, lies and videotape'

Adapted and Directed by Dmitry Tolonen
2000

Prologue Textual “John in Limbo”

Audience has settled. House lights out. Black.

Cynthia appears and walks DS in front of the audience. Hair ruffled, she blows flower petals from her palm towards the audience, yawning.

Cynthia

I'm just not up to performing in a film today. (She walks off to her US door position.)

(Female Voice over)

Sex, lies and videotape, draft.

Graham Dalton, twenty- nine. There is only one key in his key ring and it is in the ignition.

Ann Bishop Millaney, twenty-six, sits opposite her therapist. She is an attractive woman and there is a wedding ring on her left hand.

John Millaney, lawyer, twenty-nine, sits at his desk talking on the telephone. He fingers the wedding ring on his left hand.

Cynthia Bishop, Ann's sister, opens the door to reveal a freshly coiffed John Millaney. She has a definite carnal appeal and a air of confidence that Ann lacks.

Prologue Visual

Music on, (Durufle's pt. 8 “In Paradisum” from Requiem Op.9) and then lights up.

This short visual piece introduces John and Ann sitting on the corner of a bed, as a variant of Adam and Eve sharing an apple. Durufle's Mass for the Dead sets it in a darker tone with John in red light and Cynthia taking Ann's place on the bed as Ann leaves for the psychiatrist's chair (in the darkened downstage). Upstage, we see a male figure, Graham, standing in front of a chest of drawers. His back is to the audience. This formation will be repeated at the end with different characters in the established roles.

One “The Establishing Plot”

As the music is ending, Doc enters (with small mirror) from downstage left, sips drink from table, with small mirror, checks his appearance and shirt collar, looks at his eyebrows, gives them a lick and looks straight into Ann's face as is into a small mirror. John and Cynthia are in bed upstage. *As Doc enters the lights change for scene one* and he sits himself, back to audience, in front of Ann. She points a remote control at him and starts (puts remote on his lap);

Ann

Garbage. All I've been able to think about all week is garbage. I mean I just can't stop thinking about it.

Doctor

what kind of thoughts about garbage?

Ann

(sighs) I just...I've gotten real concerned over what's gonna happen with all the garbage - we've got so much of it ... you know, I mean we have to run out of places to put this stuff, eventually. *(beat)* Last time I started to feel this way was when that barge was stranded and you know it was going around that island and no one would claim it, do you remember that ?

Doc

yes, I remember... do you have any idea what may have triggered this, um, concern?

Ann

(abruptly) yeah.. yeah, you see the other night John was taking out the garbage and he kept spilling things out of the container and that made me - I started imagining like a garbage can that produces garbage and it doesn't stop - it just keeps producing garbage and it just keeps on overflowing and you... you know , what would you do, y'know, to try to stop something like that ?

Doc

Ann, do you see any pattern here?

Ann

what do you mean?

Doc

Well, last week we were talking about your obsession with the families of airline fatalities and now we're talking about your concern over the garbage problem...

Ann

Yeah. So?

Doc

Well, if you think about it, I think you'll see that the object of your obsession is invariably something negative which you have no control over.

Ann

Yeah ...but how many people do you think run around obsessing over how great and how happy things are. You know what, I mean, maybe they do, but I don't think that They 're in therapy – anyway...being happy isn't all that great. I mean – the last time I was really happy ...I got so fat, I must've put on 25 pounds...I thought John was gonna have a stroke.

John

(sits up to answer phone)

As soon as you get a ring on your finger, you start to get serious attention from the opposite gender. Seriously, I wish I had Super Bowl tickets for every time some Philly just come up to me and start talking to me without the slightest provocation. That never happened to me before I got married. Shit, if I'd known that I 'd have gone out and bought me a ring when I was eighteen and saved myself a lot of time and money. (looks at his watch) Shit, I gotta be someplace. (quickly) Look, raquetball Thursday? You're the *coolest* (sits pensively with hands drooping over knees).

(Lights up on Graham shaving in front of a dresser, upstage left corner. Silence as he dips his razor in water).

Doc

(to Ann, points indirectly to USSR John and Cy) Are you still keeping these thoughts from John ?

Ann

yes

Doc

Are you afraid of his reaction? Of his finding you silly for thinking of such things ?

Ann

No. I don't know. I'm really angry at him right now. He's invited some old college friend of his to stay at our house for a couple of days, and he didn't even ask me about it. I mean, I would've said yes, I just wish he would've asked.

(at 'really angry' Doc looks at watch and leaves, as if nothing important was being said. He takes a sip of drink from the table and throws a couple of coins on the table. He moves towards his audience seat again. At the same time, Graham comes down to the now silent Ann, sits on the psychiatrist's chair and lands a dollop of shaving cream on her nose. She laughs in a neurotic fashion like in Sei Personaggi but quickly wipes the cream off and assumes her 'serious' face again. Cuts abruptly to John.)

John

Oh, I've got to go back to the office.

Cynthia

I only get one today? Gee, how exciting.

(John rolls over and begins to put his clothes on)

John

I already skipped one meeting. I gotta get back.

Cynthia

John, if you want to leave, leave. My life doesn't revolve around these little meetings, y'know? (John is amused but curious)

John

Why don't you just tell me what you really feel? (he stands up and begins to put on the rest of his clothes) I have a friend coming in from out of town, I'll probably be spending some time with him the next couple of days.

Cynthia

Meaning we'll have to cool it for a while, right ?

John

Right. (A silent shrug from Cynthia . John is almost completely dressed.)

John

I wish you quit that bartending job.

Cynthia

Why?

John

I hate the thought of guys hitting on you all the time.

Cynthia

I can handle it.

John

(joking) Sure.

Cynthia

And besides, the money is good and some of the guys are cute. And you are in no position to be jealous.

John

Who said I was jealous?

Cynthia

I did.

~~(We now find Graham sitting where the psychiatrist was earlier.)~~

Ann

Well, I kind of tried it once. It just seemed stupid, I kept seeing myself lying there and it seemed stupid, and kind of ,uh, I don't know and then I was wondering if my dead grandfather could see me doing this and it just seemed like a dumb thing to be doing when we don't know what to do with all that garbage, you know?

Graham moves back to dresser and removes shaving cream.

Cynthia (luxuriously, on the bed)

You know, I'd like to try your house sometime. The idea of doing it in my sister's bed gives me a perverse thrill. (John thinks about that)

John

(looking at Cynthia)

Oh, so it was recently that you tried this?

Ann

(pause) I'm just not up to having a guest in the dollhouse. (Ann clears the two chairs away and starts setting the table for the next scene)

Cynthia

I wish I could tell everyone that Ann's a lousy lay. The beautiful, the popular, Ann Bishop Millaney.

John (not paying attention)

Could be risky.

Cynthia

Well, how about I just start a rumour, then.

John

No, I mean doing it at my house.

Cynthia

Afraid of getting caught?

John

Yeah!?

Cynthia

You should be. Can I meet this friend of yours?

John

Who, Graham? I gotta tell you, years ago – close. But now – I think we're very different now.

Cynthia

I'm intrigued.

John

You're intrigued ?

Cynthia

Sure. Maybe he's the man I've been looking for. Then I won't have to fuck worried husbands all the time.

John

(John looks at her for a moment before heading off) --Bye. (Cynthia remains in bed for the whole duration of *part two except for Ouija board. lights*)

Two "Couple looking into sunset of gas oven"

The Millaney's House

(evening)

Scene change. Now the main setting will be a dinner table centre stage with John, Ann and Graham around it. Cynthia lurks in the background by the bed, dresser or downstage sofa, and will later enter table as a 'ghost'. They are dining.

John

Graham, I gotta tell you. That's the first thing that ran through my mind when I saw you. "Call the cops" (laughs). I thought this is not the same man that rode the unicycle naked through the homecoming parade.

Ann

You did that?

Graham

Well, yeah, everyone has a past. That's mine.

John

What's with the get up ? someone die, or?

Ann

John!

John

(smiles at Graham)

What do you think the Greeks would make of that outfit you're wearing?

(John takes a sip of his wine)

Graham

Well, I don't know. (to Ann) this food is excellent.

Ann

Thank you.

John

Yeah. Usually Ann has some critical salt action going. I keep telling her, you can always add more if you want, but you can't take it out.

Ann

Yeah, you say that, don't you ?

Graham

(to Ann) So, you have family here also ?

Ann

Mom, father, sister.

Graham

Sister older or younger ?

Ann

Younger. (John takes a large swig of drink)

Graham

Are you close ? (Graham sees Ann and John exchange looks) I'm sorry. I am prying again. I 'm sorry.

John

You were prying before ?

Graham

Yes, I was grilling Ann about your marriage this afternoon.

John

(smiling) Really, how'd it go ?

Graham

(looking to Ann for approval) ...very well..! (Ann laughs)

(to Ann) so I was asking about your sister.

Ann

(Ann's smile fades. John resumes eating.) Oh, we get along okay. She's just very...she's an extrovert. I think she's loud. She probably wouldn't agree. She *definitely* wouldn't agree.

John

(to Graham) Are you going to see Elizabeth while you're here?

Graham

(An almost imperceptible reaction by Graham) I don't know.

Ann

(interested) mm, who's Elizabeth ?

John

Girl Graham dated in school. Still lives here, far as I know.

(Graham eats in silence.)

Ann

So, Graham and I were talking about apartments and I told him to check the Garden district, there are some nice little places there...(garage apartments and stuff)

John

(interrupts) Stay away from the garden district . Serious crime. I don' t know what kind of place you're looking for, but there are a lot of studio-type apartments available elsewhere.

Graham

I wish I didn't have to live someplace.

John

(laughs, chokes on his big idea) excuse me ?

Graham

(Graham thinks for a while) Well, see, right now I have this one key, and I really like that. Everything I own is in my car and if I get an apartment that's two keys. If I get a job, maybe I have to open and close once in a while, that's more keys. Or I buy some stuff and I'm worried about getting ripped off, so I get some locks, that's more keys. I just really like having one key. It's clean, you know?

Ann

Yeah, I 'm always losing my keys, and...

John

Get rid of the car when you get your apartment, then you'll still have one key.

Graham

I like having the car, the car is important.

John

(pushing) if you want to leave someplace in a hurry.

Graham

Or go someplace in a hurry.

Ann

(Ann takes her plate to the kitchen) - Excuse me. (Graham offers to help)

John

(quietly to Graham) Graham, do you pay taxes ?

Graham

(hands plate to Ann) Yeah I pay taxes, if I don't pay taxes I 'm a liar. And a liar is the second lowest form of human being on the planet.

Ann

(from the kitchen) what's the lowest ?

Graham

Lawyers.

Ann

(to John) Gee, that's you, honey! (John smiles, thinking)

John

Hey, why don't you go with Graham to hunt for apartments ? Show him how the city has changed.

Ann

(looks at Graham from Kitchen) would you mind Graham?

Graham

No, I 'd love that.

Ann

(shouts back to John) I'd like that too, let's do that!

Graham

Ok, how about tomorrow?

Ann

That'd be great.

Graham

Good.

John

(to Graham) One key, huh? Great idea.

At a Café

(day)

(lights change. Graham and Ann are having lunch. Slight pause to get feeling of location. Sounds of spoons, glassware and business. Then slide into text.)

Graham

Have you ever been on television?

Ann

Television?

Graham

Yes.

Ann

No. no, why?

Graham

I was just curious. (the central air-conditioning switches on . Ann smiles.)

Ann

Can I tell you something personal. I mean, I feel like I can . It's something I couldn't tell John. Or *wouldn't*, anyway.

Graham

It's up to you. But I warn you, if you tell me something personal, I might do the same...well, you've gotta go first.

Ann

Okay. I *think* ...I think sex is overrated. I think people place way too much importance on it. And I think that stuff about women wanting it just as bad as men is crap. I 'm not saying women don't want it, I just don't think they want it for the reason men *think* they want it. (smiles) I'm getting confused. (Graham smiles) Do you understand what I 'm ... ?

Graham

I think so. I remember reading somewhere that men learn to love what they're attracted to, whereas women become more attracted to the person they love.

Ann

God, that's beautiful ! I like that.

Graham

(watches Ann take a sip of wine) Well, I'm just quoting.

Ann

So, what's your personal thing ? (Graham nods)

Graham

Do you want me to ?

Ann

Yeah, as long as it's not something gross, like a scar or something. I want it to be ...(giggles softly)
something really personal.

Graham

All right. Ok (takes a sip of his soda). I'm impotent.

Ann

(looks at him closely) you're what ?

Graham

I'm impotent.

Ann

You are ?

Graham

Well, let me put it this way : I cannot get an erection while in the presence of another person. So, for all practical purposes, I am impotent.

Ann

(she fidgets with her wine glass) does this bother you ?

Graham

(exhales) – no. I mean, I haven't known many guys that could think straight with an erection , so I feel I'm way ahead of the game as far as being clear-headed goes.

Ann

Well... does it make you self- conscious ?

Graham

(coughs and smiles) ..not *usually*. Yes, I am self-conscious, but not in the way that you are.

Ann

(Bursts out) Me?! You think I am self-conscious ?

Graham

Well, I've been watching you. I've watched you eat, I've watched you speak, I've watched the way you *move*, and I see somebody who is extremely conscious of being looked at.

Ann

Y'know, my therapist said...

Graham

You're in therapy ?

Ann

Aren't you ?

Graham

(laughs gently) no. I was a miserable failure in therapy.

Ann

So you don't believe in therapy ?

Graham

No, I believe in it for some people. I mean, for me it was silly, I was confused going in. So I just formed my own personal theory that you should never take advice from someone that doesn't know you intimately.

Ann

Oh, but I know my therapist intimately.

Graham

You had sex with your therapist ?

Ann

No!!(laughs) No!!

Graham

Oh, no, I meant someone you've had sex with. that's what...I'm sorry. That's what I meant. It's part of the theory.

Ann

Oh. I don't understand...how would you know ?

Graham

Oh...oh, no, I wasn't always imp--...

(Ann takes another sip of wine and thinks for a moment.)

Ann

(slowly) Ok, ok. So, let me get this right. You should never take advice from someone that you don't know intimately, right? Right?

Graham

Basically, yes.

Ann

...and, uh, we haven't had sex, right?

Graham

-- Right... (both burst into laugh)

Ann

So I guess since I've never had sex with you, by your own advice I shouldn't accept your advice.

Graham

That's correct. I wouldn't. (both laugh. Beat.)

(there is a confusion in time and place as we turn to yesterday's discussion)

...So how do like being married ?

Ann

(caught slightly off guard) I like it just fine.

Graham

What about it don't you like. I 'm not being critical , I'm curious...

Ann

(has a slightly dreamy look about her) Well....well, the cliché about the security of it,

that's really true. We own our house, and I really like that y'know ?And I like that John was just made junior partner, so he has a steady job and he's not some ...

(Ann looks at Graham and stops. He smiles again.) ...free-lance. You know.

Graham

Yes. So you feel security, stability. Like things are going to last a while.

Ann

Oh, definitely. But, like, just this past year has gone by like Phew! I hardly even knew it passed.

Graham

That's interesting. Sometimes your life can be broken down into the sections of time that formed your personality . For instance, when I was twelve, I had an eleven minute conversation with my father that to this day defines our relationship. It just seemed, that everything we'd experienced together, we're crystallised in that eleven minutes.

Ann

(fascinated, but a bit overwhelmed) Oh, uh-huh.

Graham

Anyway, I would say the fact that you feel the first year of your marriage has gone by quickly means lots of things.

Ann

So, how long is it since you've seen John last ?

Graham

Nine years.

Ann

Nine years ?

Graham

Yes, I was a bit surprised that he invited me to stay until I found a place.

Ann

Why didn't you know him well ?

Graham

I knew him *very* well. John and I were very much alike.

Ann

Really? That's hard to believe. The two of you seem so different now.

Graham

(laughs) yeah, I would imagine that we are. Ok, I'm ready to use the bathroom, finally. (She laughs.

Graham heads for the upstage door. She sits alone in the light, thinking, with a bemused smile on her face.*lights*)

Three “Seducing – Elizabeth”

The Millaney's House

(*night*)

(Cynthia and Ann lie in the upstage bed, as they did as children). Everyone but Ann is asleep. She gets up from her bed and sneaks quietly into the guest bedroom where Graham is staying. She walks cautiously up to his bed to watch him as he sleeps. Moonlight caresses his face as he breathes peacefully. Exhaling, he turns over slowly, facing the audience. As Ann leaves, we notice that Graham has been awake all along. *Lights change.*

Cynthia's apartment

(*day*)

Ann

(Ann stands watching Cynthia get dressed for work) I don't know. He went to school here, then he was in New York for a while, then Philadelphia, and then just kind of travelling around.

Cynthia

Must be nice. So, what's he like, is he like John?

Ann

No, not at all. Actually, I don't think John likes him much anymore. He said he thought Graham had gotten strange.

Cynthia

Is he? strange, I mean?

Ann

Nah. Not really. Maybe if I just saw him on the street I'd have said that, but after talking to him... he's just kind of ...I don't know, unusual.

Cynthia

Uh- huh. So what's he look like ?

Ann

(a pause) Why ?

Cynthia

I just want to know what he looks like , that's all.

Ann

Why, so you can go after him ?

Cynthia

Jesus, Ann, get a life. I just asked what he looked like. (Ann says nothing) Besides, Even if I decided to fuck his brains out, what business is that - of yours?

Ann

Do you have to say that ?

Cynthia

Say *what?*

Ann

You know what. You say it just to irritate me.

Cynthia

I say it because it's descriptive.

Ann

Well, he doesn't strike me as the kind of person that would go in for that sort of thing, anyway.

Cynthia

Ann, you always underestimate me.

Ann

Well, I wonder why.

Cynthia

I think you're afraid to put the two of us in the same room together. I think you're afraid he'll be undeniably drawn to me.

Ann

Really, Cynthia, really, I don't think he's your type.

Cynthia

(laughs) 'my type'? How would you know what 'my type' is?

Ann

I have a pretty good idea.

Cynthia

Ann, you don't have a clue. Look, I don't even know why we're discussing this. I mean, I should just call him myself.

Ann

He doesn't have a phone.

Cynthia

Well, I'll call him when he does.

Ann

he won't.

Cynthia

What are you talking about ?

Ann

He doesn't like talking on the phone. He's not getting a phone.

Cynthia

Oh, please. Okay, so give me the zen master's address. I'll think of a reason to stop by.

Ann

Please, just let me talk to him first

Cynthia

Why? Just give me the address, you won't even have to be involved.

Ann

(pause) I don't feel right just giving you the address so that you can go over there and...

Cynthia

What ?

Ann

And...do what ever it is that you do.

Cynthia

(laughs) "do what ever it is you do" !Listen to the way you talk (Ann, not happy, watches her dig through the jewellery box. She puts out Cynthia's cigarette)
thank you , I was still smoking that!

Ann

lose something?

Cynthia

that goddam diamond stud earring that cost me a fucking fortune.

Ann

Are you getting Mom something for her birthday ?

Cynthia

I don't know, I'll get her a card or something.

Ann

A *card* ? for her fiftieth birthday?

Cynthia

yeah, what's wrong with that ?

Ann

Don't you think she deserves a little more than a card? I mean, the woman gave birth to you. It's her fiftieth birthday –

Cynthia

Will you stop? Jesus.

Ann

I just thought it might –

Cynthia

Okay, Ann, okay. How about this: you buy her something nice, and I'll pay for half. All right?

Ann

Fine.

Cynthia

Good. Now, if you'll pardon me, *I* have to go to work. (she points the way to the door. *lights*).

Graham's Apartment

(*day*)

Graham sits naked on a sheet-covered sofa facing his the audience. He is listening to a tape, which contains footage of himself interviewing a girl about her sexual preferences. This is his 'intimate moment'. There is a knock on the downstage door and Graham gets up goes through the upstage door and starts dressing backstage. It's Ann.

Graham

It's open

Ann

Hi!

Graham

(off) Ann. Hello.

Ann

Are you in the middle of something?

Graham

(off) Nothing I can't finish later.

Ann

I just wanted to see how the place looked furnished.

Graham

(off) I'm afraid there's not much to see. I 'm sort of cultivating a minimalist vibe.

Ann

You could use a book shelf!

Graham

(Enters) yeah? (laughs) you think so? Well, you know they're all library books.

(he picks up a book. Nin, or something and shows Ann the library sleeve) Cheaper that way. And cuts down on the clutter. (Ann walks to the dresser upstage, where Graham has a bundle of disorganised papers and a video camera. There is also a selection of minidisks)

Ann

What are these?

Graham

Tapes.

Ann

I can see that. Of what ?

Graham

(goes in to the kitchen/bedroom) it's – a personal project I'm working on.

Ann

What kind of personal project?

Graham

Oh, just a personal project like anyone else's personal project. Mine's just a little more personal, I guess.

Ann

Who's Donna?

Graham

What?

Ann

Donna. On this tape it says 'Donna'.

Graham

(thinking) Donna was a girl I knew in Florida.

Ann

You went out with her?

Graham

No, not really.

Ann

(looks at the materials again) How come all these notes and tapes have got women's names?

Graham

(Preparing drink)

(thinks for a moment, comes into the room with a drink) well. Because I enjoy interviewing women more than men. (observing her drink) – did you want some lemon?

Ann

(shakes her head) so, all of these are interviews? Huh?

Graham

Yes.

Ann

Can we watch one of them ?

Graham

No.

Ann

Why not?

Graham

Because I promised all of the subjects, that no one would see the tape except me.

Ann

...What are these interviews about ?

Graham

(shortly) the interviews are about sex, Ann.

Ann

Sex?

Graham

Yes.

Ann

What about sex ?

Graham

Uh, everything about sex.

Ann

Like what?

Graham

What they've done, what they do, what they want to do but are afraid to ask for, what they wouldn't do even if asked. Anything I can think of. (Ann's glass starts to tip over)

Ann

You just ask them questions?

Graham

Yes.

Ann

And they answer them ?

Graham

Mostly. Sometimes they do things.

Ann

To you?

Graham

No, not to me, for me, for the camera.

Ann

(stunned) Graham, this is just... so...

Graham

I'm sorry this came up.

Ann

No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry this came up and I'm gonna go. I'm ...bye.

(Ann nods and absently heads for the door. After she has left, Graham sits on a chair by the table, centre stage, and puts in one of his earphones. He has gone back to his tape and we hear a female voice being interviewed : "...name: Cynthia Bishop". *Lights out*).

Four "The Disposability of Images"

Three scenes from the film at once, yet again. The two main scenes contrasted are of John and Cynthia having an argument in bed (upstage, mechanical repetitive love-making routine) and Ann watching Graham sleep (downstage). Ann, wandering or sleepwalking in a timeless space between the two scenes, walks to the image she has of Graham by his sofa. At the sofa, she accuses her husband (upstage scene) of adultery. (*lights up on Graham's sofa only*)

Ann

(by sofa) John ?

John

(distracted, facing audience with Cynthia in his arms, back to audience) Mmmmm...

Ann

I called you last Monday at 3: 30 and they said you weren't in. Do you remember where you were?

(subtle lights up on John and Cynthia in bed)

John

(he looks at the audience and then his watch, taps it) Monday? A – ah...I had late lunch.

Ann

Did you see a message to call me when you got in ? (Graham is waking up a little, leaning on his elbows. John doesn't answer) It's just so blatantly stupid, I have a hard time believing you did it. Who did you have lunch with?

John

I ate by myself.

Graham

(waking up still, to audience) Something wrong ?

Ann

Are you having an affair?

John

Jesus Christ! I have a late lunch by myself and now I'm fucking somebody?

Cynthia

(from bed)What's so stupid about it?

John

(to Cynthia) that you ... you don't even know the guy.

Cynthia

Well, *you* know him, he's a friend of *yours*, do you think he can be trusted?

John

Shit, after what you've told me, I don't know. I should've known, when he showed up dressed like some undertaker for the art world.

Ann

Well, are you?

John

(still obviously embracing Cynthia, on his lap) No, I'm not. God, I'm offended at the accusation! (John turns to Cynthia) what if your tapes get into the wrong hands?

Cynthia

"the wrong hands" ? John, we're not talking about military secrets. They're just tapes that he makes so he can sit around and get -- off.

John

(stands up and walks in small circle) And he doesn't have sex with any of them ? They just talk?

Cynthia

(lies down and puts hands behind head) They just sit around and talk.

John

I could almost understand it if he had sex with them, I mean almost. Why doesn't he just buy some magazines or porno movies or something?

Cynthia

Doesn't work . He has to be able to know the people, he has to be able to interact with them.

John

Interact, whatever that means. But did you have to masturbate in front of him, I mean (talks over the next exchange)

Cynthia

I felt like it, so what? Goddam, you and Ann make such a big deal out of it.

John

(interrupts) you told Ann about this? (looks towards audience)

Ann

(now being caressed on sofa by Graham – 'dream' reality) If I'm right, I want to know. I don't want you to lie. I'd be very upset but not as upset as if I'd found out you'd been lying.

John

(at downstage door hands on upper frame, looking at audience, not Ann. Lighting to emphasise image of him "being framed by everyone") there's nothing to know, Ann

Ann

I can't tell you how upset I would be if you lie to me.

John

Is this paranoia ? I mean, if anyone should be paranoid , I should be...hey, every time I touch you, you act as if I were dipped in shit. I think there are a lot ...of women that would be glad to have a young, straight male making a pretty good living beside them in bed with a hard on.

Ann

My sister, for one. Is that who it is? (she slides away from under Graham to sit next to him now)

John

For God's sake, Ann, I am not fucking your sister . I don't find her that attractive, for one. (he walks to stage right of table and sits down on chair)

Ann

Is that supposed to comfort me?

John

I was just saying, you know? I didn't get paranoid when you didn't want to make love. I could have easily assumed that *you* didn't want to because you were having an affair.

Ann

But I'm not.

John

I'm not either. (Ann bolts up, goes to door and leans onto upper door frame, with her back to the audience)

Ann

Then why don't I believe you ? (she goes to stage left of table and after leaning on back of chair, sits down)

John

Look, this conversation is utterly ridiculous. I mean, maybe when you have some evidence ...

Ann

(interrupts) evidence!?! There's evidence?

John

No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm just saying that we shouldn't not ever talk. Just don't give me conjecture and intuition.

Ann

Always the lawyer.

John

Well, damn right. I mean, can you imagine ; “ Your honour, I'm positive this man is Guilty. I can't place him at the scene or establish a motive, but I have this really strong *feeling*.”

Ann

(bursts of in laughter) All right, all right. You've made your point.

John

I'm sorry. It's just ...I'm under a lot of pressure with this Kirkland thing, it's my first big case as junior partner, and I work all day, I come home, I look forward to seeing you, and ...it hurts that you accuse me like that.

Ann

(a pause. Ann exhales and starts laughing guiltily) I'm sorry, too. I ...I get these ideas in my head, you know , and I have nothing to do all day but sit around and concoct these little intricate scenarios. And then I want to believe them so I don't think I've wasted the whole day. Last week I was convinced you were having an affair with Cynthia, I don't know why.

John

Isn't therapy helping at all?

(There is a shift in lighting over the central table. It is here we start playing with the characters)

Ann

(still at the table with John. Ann speaks with a different voice – Cynthia's) you told Ann about this ?

John

I wish you hadn't

Ann

Ann is just very...

Cynthia

(in bed) ...hung up!

John

It just wasn't a very smart thing to do. Did you sign any sort of paper, or did he have any contract with you saying he wouldn't broadcast these tapes?

Ann

No. Sir. (Ann visibly fingers her wedding ring over the lit table)

John

You realise you have no legal recourse legally ? (Ann laughs) It's not funny. This stuff could end up anywhere.

Ann

It won't. I trust him.

John

(turning his head slightly) You trust him. That's funny.

Cynthia

(in bed) Yeah, I do. A helluva lot more than I trust you.

John

(curious) What do you mean? (hands up to face, looking at Ann)

Graham

(half-lit, suddenly sitting up, with demi-god like presence) just what I said. I'd trust me before I'd trust you.

John

(melodramatically, to Graham and past Ann) It hurts that you would say that to me.

Ann

Oh, come on, John. You're fucking your wife's sister and you're a liar. But at least I know you're a liar. (Ann turns around on the chair. She now sits knees to audience and is looking at Graham).

John

(dramatically) I know : second lowest form of human being ...and the first!

Cynthia

What are you talking about?

John

(John stands up, places both palms on the table and goes upstage to Cynthia) Look, are we going to do it or not ?

Cynthia

(pre-occupied, now sitting) Actually, no. I've changed my mind. I shouldn't have called.

John

(putting his hands in his pockets and walking around with that 'nothing to do' - look on his face) well, I'm here now. I'd like to do something.

Cynthia

(sitting up she says, jokingly) Would you like to help me to straighten up the room?

(John doesn't smile) Oh, come on John. You should be happy, we've gone this far without Ann finding out, I'm making it real easy on you. Just walk out of here and I'll see you at your house for a family dinner sometime.

John

Did Graham put you up to this?

Cynthia

Who?

John

Graham.

Cynthia

No, he didn't put me up to this. Jesus, I don't need people to tell me what to do. I've just been thinking , that's all. Now, just *leave*.

John

Maybe I don't want to leave. Maybe *I* want to talk.

Cynthia

John, we have *nothing* to talk about.

John

Yeah, you're right. Things are getting real complicated.

Ann

No, John, things are getting real simple.

(lights down except on Graham, light blue light. John leaves stage right, perhaps sits in audience. Cynthia moves to bed, under sheets, and Graham sits up to think as Ann slides into cleaning upstage. They don't notice each other)

The Millaney's House

(no dialogue)

(Lights up on Ann as she makes upstage bed, as 'new' sheet descends on bed. She stands in front of it, inspecting. She only does the bed, but very meticulously, fixing creases, seeing to the corners of the bed and placing pillows exactly. She notices the diamond stud earring which she has dislodged by removing the sheets. For a while, she sets her gaze upon it, surprised. She picks it up, and sits on the bed silently, trying to recall where she knows it from. Once she recognises it to be Cynthia's lost earring, she drops it in front of her on the floor and, in despair, tries to crush it with her heel. She stands up, and approaches the table with the ring in her hand, flicks it on the table and leans on the table facing the upstage door. She wraps her arms around her, and goes to sit under the downstage door frame. Lights change to reveal Graham sitting, reading or looking away from her, and her sitting, facing the audience, with her arms wrapped around her knees. She is under harsh stage lighting and he under the same dreamy blue.) Lights.

Five "The archaeology of images"

Graham's apartment

(day)

(Graham is in his kitchen, washing dishes. There's a knock at the door. Graham listens, not sure he heard anything. There is a second, weak knock. Cynthia fidgets in bed, plays with toes)

Graham

It's open! (seeing Ann enter down stage door) want some thing to drink?

Ann

Yeah. Thanks.

Graham

Sorry, I've no more Ice – tea. (A weak smile from Ann. She drinks, swallowing with difficulty.)

Ann

(sarcastic) John and Cynthia have been ... ‘fucking’ .

Graham

Yes, I know.

Ann

(stunned) you know?

Graham

Yes.

Ann

How do you know?

Graham

(takes a long swig of water) she said it on her tape.

Ann

Thanks for telling me. I really appreciate it.

Graham

Well, I haven't seen you. (Ann says nothing) and I ...I don't think I would've told you even if I had seen you.

Ann

Why not?

Graham

(pause) because it's not really my place (Ann shakes her head).

Ann

My life is ...shit. It's just shit. It's like someone saying “okay, chairs are not chairs, actually they're swimming pools”. Nothing is what I thought it was. I vaguely remember the wedding, but a lot of it's a blur. ...like I was watching from a distance.

(Graham says nothing) John's a bastard (long sigh, Ann looks at floor). Let's make a tape.

Graham

No, Idon't think that's such a good idea.

Ann

Why not ?

Graham

Because I don't think it's a choice that you'd make in a normal frame of mind.

Ann

And what would you know about a normal frame of mind?

Graham

(smiles) that's a good question.

Ann

So, what do you have to do to get ready?

Graham

Um.. load a tape and turn on the recorder.

Ann

Let's do it. (pause. Graham looks at Ann. She is preparing for the interview. He gets up and opens a new box of videotapes.)

Ann

So...how do you get your money from . I mean for rent, and tapes and stuff like that.

Graham

Underneath my mattress.

Ann

(smiles) and what will you do when this money runs out?

Graham

It won't ...are you comfortable there? (she walks and looks around, past the camera and drags a chair to the upstage side (behind) of the table. Sits down.)

Ann

Yeah. I'm comfortable.

Graham

(turns the camera on) ok, I'm recording. *Tell me your name.*

Ann

(looks down and then up again) *Ann Bishop Millaney.*(she walks to him, slowly)

(same evening)

(lights slide into 'dusk' to show time passing. By way of a 'fast forward', we are now at a time AFTER the video. We find Ann and Graham holding each other on the sofa. Graham stops the video recorder. The record meter is stopped at 46: 02. Ann sits beside Graham on the couch. She looks into his eyes, stroking his hair. With the lighting change, we notice John standing down stage right, in the shadows, watching the couple). Lights.

The Millaney's House

(night)

(The house door is wide open. Ann walks through the door. *Lights up on John, standing, frozen.* He walks out of the shadow with his first line. John is completely animated by every line. Ann moves to the couch, her expression calm. Cynthia up from bed to table).

John

(to Ann) -- sus Christ! What the hell happened? I come home and your car was gone, the door was open, I thought you'd been abducted by some mad fucker. I was literally just calling the cops when you walked in. What happened ?

Ann

I want out of this marriage.

John

(genuinely shocked) what?

Ann

(Spelling it out for him) I-want-out-of-this-marriage.

John

Why?

Ann

Why?! You are asking me why? (John moves to sit beside her. Ann does not look at him).

John

(conciliatory) I'm married to you and you want out of this marriage.

Ann

(like a little girl. Ann turns to look at him for a moment, then turns away) ...Fuck you! Fuck you!

John

(turns around first time hearing this. He is dumbstruck) All right. Can you tell me where you went ?

Ann

I drove around. Then I went to talk with Graham.

John

(smacks his hand on his leg and jolts up) Goddammit, goddammit !! That son of a bitch !! That back stabbing son of a bitch! – oh, mister honesty, huh, oh Mr Apostle of truth !!Uh! (pause) ...well, at least I know you didn't fuck him. (John is seething) ...so it's you, leaving me, isn't it? Well, that makes some sad sort of sense. He can't and you won't (Ann is taken back by this last remark. He walks over to Ann). Did you make one of those goddam tapes? (John grabs her. Ann says nothing) Annie, answer me goddammit, goddammit answer me, *did* you make one of those tapes ?

Ann

Yes. (John threatens to slap her, but hits the air over her instead. She covers her head from the blows.

John bolts from the house infuriated).

Ann

DON' T YOU TOUCH HIM !

(John leans onto downstage doorframe). *Lights.*

Six “The Mouse trap” 6.1

Graham’s apartment

(night)

(John bursts through the door without bothering to knock. Graham looks up, startled. Before he can even react, John has him by the lapels.)

John

I’m not kidding, Graham, you’d better do what I say. Give me those tapes.

Graham

No. (John punches him on the jaw, knocking him onto the floor. Graham feels his mouth for blood as John picks him up by the shirt.)

John

Graham, I swear to Christ I’ll kill your scrawny ass. Now give me those tapes.

Graham

No.

(John roughly pushes Graham into one of the director’s chairs Graham has, which topples over and throws Graham to the floor once again. John looks around. He sees the boxes of tapes and begins to go through the contents. He bends over and starts to go through Graham’s pockets. Getting Graham’s keys, John drags him into the hallway and leaves him there. John then locks himself inside Graham’s apartment. *He watches the monitor come to life. The image is of Ann, sitting on a chair. Blue lights fade up on Ann at table. We see John watching her as if she were ‘a tape’*).

Ann

...**Ann Bishop Millaney** (still 6.1 bec. A is only a vid-image).

(pause. She is answering questions, but no one seems to be asking them. We are privileged viewers of this intimacy).

...well, what do you usually talk about?

(pause)

ok, *let’s* talk about sex.

(pause)

“Do I have sex?” ...not very often, no.

(pause)

John

(aside, puts fingers to brow) - bastard.

Ann

...he does. He initiates it.

Ann

(pause) “Is the sex satisfying?” Ahhh....I don’t know. (laughs nervously) I don’t know what you mean.

(pause)

(laughs) ...I don’t think so. I mean I guess since I ‘m not sure that I never had an orgasm. (John looks.

Ann wipes her nose. John is literally so mad he can’t speak. He watches the ‘screen’ in mute anger.

Graham still listens from the hallway).

John

(repeating an imaginary question from the video) “have you ever wanted to make love to someone other than your husband?” (Graham wipes blood off the side of his mouth)

Ann

(sarcastically. this is a question from the video, but to Ann it sounds like John) uhhh...*here we go...*(Then she hesitates)

Graham

(turns head, but faces floor, not Ann) why don’t we stop?

Ann

No, I don’t want to stop. (long pause. John picks up Ann’s chin with his thumb and index) ... I have thought about it, yes. (Graham gets up, brushes his clothes and sits at the sofa.)

John

(quickly) You bitch. (to Ann’s image) I knew it. Lighting changes to emphasise Graham and Ann. John moves to upstage bed.)

6.2 (because lighting changes into warm and john’s absent)

(Lights change. The previous afternoon. We are no longer looking at Ann on the monitor, but watching her and Graham AS THEY MADE THE TAPE. We can now see the two of them in the same space etc. – we are now INSIDE THE TAPE.)

Graham

Did you act on it?

Ann

No.

Graham

Why not?

Ann

Because that's how Cynthia thinks. I hate it when I have feelings that she has. It bothers me when I think about men, because that's the way she thinks –

Graham

You're not your sister. You couldn't be like her if you *wanted* to.

Ann

(long pause) I know... I had forgotten.

Graham

What other men have you thought about?

Ann

(smiles) I've thought about you. Have you thought about me?

Graham

(readily, as if unimportant) Yes.

Ann

What did you think?

Graham

I thought about what you'd look like having an orgasm.

Ann

(smiles in amazement) ...I'd like to know what I look like having an orgasm (wide smile) ...can you do that – give a woman an orgasm?

Graham

yes.

Ann

Could you do that for me?

Graham

No.

Ann

Why not?

Graham

Because I can't

Ann

Can't or won't ?

Graham

I can't because I won't.

Ann

You said you weren't always impotent.

Graham

Er...that's correct.

Ann

So you have had sex.

Graham

Yes.

Ann

So what happened? Was it so bad that it turned you off?

Graham

No, that wasn't the problem.

Ann

What was the problem?

Graham

The problem was ...I was...or, I am, I should say, a pathological liar. Lying is like alcoholism, one is always "recovering".

Ann

So that's it. You lied?

Graham

That was part of it.

Ann

So what else happened?

Graham

I loved her for how good she made me feel, and I hated her for how good she made me feel. I used to express my feelings non-verbally and often scared people who were close to me. I couldn't handle anyone having that much control over my emotions.

Ann

And now you can?

Graham

Now I make sure that no one has the opportunity to test me.

Ann

Don't you get lonely?

Graham

(pause) anyway, I'm asking the questions. Are *you* happy?

Ann

I don't know anymore. I thought I was, but obviously I was wrong.

Graham

Did you confront John with the fact that you knew about him?

Ann

Not yet. I 'm not sure I will. I just want out.

Graham

If you do get out of your marriage, will you continue to be inhibited?

Ann

I don't know. It all goes back to Cynthia. I don't like her...eagerness. There's nothing left to imagine, there's no...

Graham

Subtlety?

Ann

Subtlety, yes. No subtlety. Plus, I've never really felt able to open up with anyone. I always feel like I'm being watched and I shouldn't embarrass myself.

Graham

And you feel the same way with John?

Ann

Kind of. I mean, John's like this kind of...craftsman. Like he's a carpenter, and he makes really good tables. But that's all he can make, and I don't need anymore tables.

Graham

Interesting analogy.

(Ann sits quietly for a moment. Graham watches her silently, the camera continues to roll.)

Ann

(looks up at Graham) so, you're never going to make love again?

Graham

I'm not making any plans or anything...

Ann

(pause) If you were in love with me, would you ?

Graham

(quick to correct) I'm not in love with you.

Ann

(interrupts) but if you were?

Graham

I...I can't answer that.

Ann

Why not ?

Graham

I've told you.

Ann

But I don't understand –

Graham

Forget about the sex... You know, I'm not the same person that I was, even remotely. I'm different in so many different ways that ...it'd have a profound effect on the way that I relate to other people or communicate – I mean...this, for instance, the way in which she and I are talking, that could never have been possible...

Ann

(cuts in very abruptly) ...“she”? ... “way she and I are talking”?

Graham

(awakened) I'm sorry? I was just...I was (mumbles) talking...I...(gestures with hand to 'explain')

Ann

S - she's Elizabeth? Is that who it is? That's the girl John talked about. Is that who it is?

(REALLY SLOWLY W/ SOUND-TRK)

Graham

(nervous laughter, almost crying) I guess...hmm....I'm sorry...

Ann

So, you're still in contact with her... with Elizabeth?

Graham

No – I'm ...

Ann

So what do you think Elizabeth is going to think about all these videotapes?

Graham

I don't know. I really would rather not talk about it.

Ann

(has to laugh) Whoa! I'm so glad we got that on tape!! You won't answer a question about Elizabeth, but *I* have to answer all these intimate questions about my sex life!! Graham, what do you think she's going to make of all these intimate stories? But you're going to tell her, right? ...since you don't lie anymore?

Graham

As I said, I don't know what I'm going to do, exactly. I mean, (beats hand in fist) perhaps I won't do anything...

Ann

So, you just came back here to think about it?

Graham

No, I ...I moved back for a sense ...a sense of closure... a resolution of sort. I wanted somebody, who was important to me, to understand it.

Ann

(sharp as a knife) That's pathetic. I mean, you can't just...my god, Graham, you can't just walk up to her and show her you've changed like it's some sort of gift or something?and look at what you've changed into. Nine years. Nine years and this is what you've come up with. Is this what you want for the rest of your life? Why are you doing this? Can you tell me that? Why are you doing this to yourself? (Ann picks up the camera and points it directly at Graham) are you gonna answer me?

Graham

No, please don't do that.

Ann

Why not?

Graham

No, really, don't ...don't do that.

Ann

Why not? (now with loud bloodhound journalist voice) I just want to ask you a few questions, like why do you tape women talking about sex?! Can you tell me that, huh?! Why do you do that?! Can you tell me why?! Come on! ... I'm just going to keep asking –

Graham

I (just) don't find this 'turning the tables' thing very interesting –

Ann

Well I do.. tell me why, Graham, why?!

Graham

What? I...what? What do you want me to tell you? "Tell me why"? (laughs) Ann, you don't even know who I am – you don't have the slightest idea who I am, and I should just ...I am I supposed to recount whole points in my life leading up to this moment and then ...and just hope that it's coherent, that it makes some sort of sense to you?! It doesn't make any sense to me and, you know...I was *there* ...and why...no, tell me...tell me why, why do I have to explain...myself to you?

Ann

Because maybe I can help you.

Graham

Help me...With what?

Ann

Your problem.

Graham

My problem? Do...do I have a problem? You know, I look around me in this town – and I see John and Cynthia and you, and I – I feel comparatively healthy.

Ann

(pause. Disbelieving smile) you've got a problem.

Graham

(long pause. strong eye contact) you're right.(pause) I've got a lot of problems (pause) ...but they belong to me.

Ann

You only think they're yours. But they're not. Everybody that walks in that door becomes part of your problem, anybody that comes in contact with you – I didn't want to be (a) part of your problem, but I am. I'm leaving my husband. And maybe I would have anyway but the fact is that I'm doing it now (pause) and part of it is because of you. (Graham closes his eyes) -- You've had an effect on my life.

Graham

(.bittersweet smile.long pause) ...this isn't supposed to happen. I spent nine years structuring my life so that this wouldn't happen. (looks out of window into bright white light)

(The Eclipse Scene) 6.3

(Ann looks at him for a long moment and then sets the camera down, still pointing at him. She moves in front of Graham and stands. Ann reaches out, and Graham instinctively begins to move away. Something in her voice (whispers) makes him stop. Their eyes lock. Graham slowly moves back toward her. Ann's hand eases out to him. Graham closes his eyes, accepting Ann's touch . She caresses him. Slowly. Delicately. She touches his arms, his face, his hair. Closing her eyes, she takes his hand and puts it against her face. She begins to lie him back against the couch. When he offers light resistance, she gently persists. Graham lies back, silently obeying. She gently lowers herself into a sitting position on his waist. Ann quietly begins to move her face towards his. Soon she is hovering inches above him, her hair touching his features. She lowers her lips to his forehead and kisses him . She waits for a negative reaction. Getting none, she moves lower and kisses his eyes. Still receiving no discouragement, she moves to his nose. A subtle movement from Graham, Ann waits for a moment. She kisses him lightly. Graham's hands make their way up Ann's back until they have reached her neck, but his gaze happens to fall on the video camera, which continues to record. Reality slowly

envelopes him. He looks at Ann, gets up, holding her, and shuts off the camera.) *lights snap off and all we can see is the video snow.*

CUT BACK FROM VIDEO (via lighting) TO :

John

(watching the tape. There is video snow on the monitor now. The tape timer reads 46:02. John stands holding himself firmly, and before leaving, sits by the sofa. pause. He opens the door. He looks at Graham for a moment before reaching into his pocket and drops Graham' s keys on the porch. Here Ann gets up from her chair, neutrally, straightens her clothes and goes to sit at the edge of the bed)

you know... I never told you this, because I knew it would crush you, but now... (pause) I fucked Elizabeth. Before you broke up. Before you were having problems, even. She's no saint. She was good in bed. She could keep a secret. That's about all I can say about her (*leaves*).

(fighting back tears, Graham walks into his apartment. He pulls Ann's tape from the videotape player. He reaches inside the cassette cartridge and pulls the videotape itself out, ruining it forever. Calmly. Deliberately. Methodically. He tears some notes up before slamming them in the bin. He then drops the damaged tapes into the bin where they disappear. He exits through the upstage door. *Lights down.*)

Epilogue : "The Establishment of Order"

(*Lights up.* Setting as in Prologue. Graham and Ann are sitting at the edge of the bed. Cynthia arrives from upstage door, as if this were a rehearsal, and sits downstage (in patient's chair). John, in *casual, untidy* clothes, moves from down stage left to (Doc's) chair opposite Cynthia.

Rather quick fade 6.4 – EL but need time to throw clothes off.

John

Man, not having to answer to anybody... I feel like this huge weight has been lifted from my shoulders! I mean, come on, if I decide that I'd rather live alone, what's so bad about that? It's not like I've decided to live a life of crime, right? (he stands up and continues, trying to convince audience, on

his way to the upstage dresser. There he starts shaving as Graham did in the Prologue) Anyway, like I've always said, the work is critical. I can be happy without a marriage, but take away my work, well then that's different. And if Ann can't handle that, well... you know what I'm saying, right?

Cynthia

(identical performance to Ann's opening)

Garbage. All I've been thinking about all week is garbage. I mean I just can't stop thinking about it. I just ...(sighs) I've gotten real concerned over what's gonna happen with all the garbage and we've got so much of it...y'know, I mean we have to run out of places to put this stuff, eventually. (pause) last time I started feeling this way was when ...that barge was stranded and you know it was going around that island and no one would claim it....do you remember that ?

(no answer. She wrings her hands and starts rocking like a child worried, half turns her head towards SR to Ann. After a beat, Ann replies,)

Ann

I remember. (beat. Ann looks SL downstage top corner) I think it's going to rain.

Graham

(laughs. They're holding hands.) it already is. (he looks down at shoes, Ann directly at audience. John continues to shave with his back to the audience. Cynthia rocks and wrings hands, with her face to the floor. *Lights fade slowly. Music up.*)

Snap. Cast - off. To B-52 music, cast off after beat.

END