

Trulove Ltd.

A comedy by Sharon Stark

Translated from Hebrew
by Shir Freibach

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Characters

TANYA, *early 40s, divorced, a mother of two*

VOICE, *the big boss, the algorithm, the all-seeing unseen*

BEN, *19-years-old, sensitive and musical*

LILLY, *a young cleaning woman*

Place

A virtual matchmaking platform.

Time

Now.

Scene 1.

Light comes up on TANYA, who is listening to a mysterious melody.

TANYA. The sea.

VOICE. The sea.

TANYA. The sea... The deep sea. Is that okay?

VOICE. It's free association.

TANYA. Do many people say deep sea?

VOICE. I cannot disclose other users' details. Next question. What do you find beautiful?

TANYA. What do I find beautiful? Wow. Winter. I love winter, especially when you get those torrential rain storms, that purify everything, beating down on the hills with the wind whipping up the trees and bushes and –

VOICE. And in one word.

TANYA. In one word? A storm. A dramatic one, like in Norway. In a landscape of remote cliffs, over a raging and greyish sea, and then the silence that –

VOICE. So in one word, nature?

TANYA. Sure, nature. There are also other things...

VOICE. Next question. If I were an animal, I would be –

TANYA. An antelope.

VOICE. Very good. So how do you feel?

TANYA. Oh, don't ask. This was my weekend with the kids. They fight all the time, and I find myself yelling, and then I feel guilty, well I feel guilty regardless, and –

VOICE. Using only one word. Excited?

TANYA. Excited?

VOICE. You are about to meet the one. The one.

TANYA. Yes, yes.

VOICE. Trulove Ltd. saves you the time and emotional resources involved in unnecessary relationships. This is not Match.com. There are no dull dates or heartaches here. You get exactly the one who suits you to-a-tee. So you must be excited.

TANYA. Yes. Very.

VOICE. So, tell me a little about yourself.

TANYA. OK. I was born in Portsmouth¹ 40 years ago. I studied law, but I don't practice. I work at a youth organisation in –

VOICE. In one word, divorced?

TANYA. Oh, yes. But it's amicable. We're very respectful of each –

VOICE. So, what do you look for in a man?

TANYA. Good question.

VOICE. Thank you.

TANYA. I'm looking for someone who is not bitter, not aggressive, not balding. He could be bald, but not balding. It's really hard for them, that intermediate stage. Someone with a strong character, but also flexible.

VOICE. So, flexible?

TANYA. Yes, someone pleasant, deep, not competitive, but assertive, charismatic, handsome, sporty, who doesn't sweat a lot, who likes to cook, but also cleans after himself, and with plenty of humour and *joie de vivre* –

¹ Change location to suit actor.

VOICE. *Joie de vivre* is three words –

TANYA. – Who'll inject some spice, and magic, into my life.

VOICE. And in one word?

TANYA. Easy-going. Sensitive. Forgiving. A good listener, and someone who likes to cuddle, it really relaxes me.

VOICE. In a nutshell, love.

TANYA. Of course, love. It sounds a bit cliché –

VOICE. I'm sorry, mathematically speaking, clichés have a value like everything else.

TANYA. Fine, but I don't need flowers with chocolate hearts and a romantic cottage up north, with traffic jams on the way back and all that malarkey.

VOICE. Do you not like flowers?

TANYA. I do.

VOICE. And dark chocolate with roasted almonds?

TANYA. That is precisely my favourite chocolate.

VOICE. Yes, of course. Look, the algorithm uses deep neural networks to gather your personality nuances, turns them into numbers and runs them against trillions of bytes of data that are being analysed with supervised and unsupervised machine learning.

TANYA. Yes, I read about it in *The Economist*.

VOICE. While simultaneously employing cross-validation to examine its analytical procedures, so there is no room for error. You simply cannot argue with numbers. So – tuna or avocado?

TANYA. Avocado. Tuna disagrees with me.

VOICE. Cash or credit?

TANYA. Isn't it free?

VOICE. Great. Now while I put all this data in the blender, I'm opening an account with us for you. You only need to agree to complete satisfaction.

TANYA. I agree.

VOICE. What is your user name?

TANYA. Tanya.

VOICE. Welcome to Trulove, Tanya. Now close your eyes and imagine the perfect relationship.

TANYA closes her eyes and concentrates.

VOICE. OK. Aha, yes. Yes. I see.

TANYA is as excited as a bride. Wipes away a tear. BEN Enters.

Scene 2.

BEN. Hi, Ben.

TANYA. Ben...

BEN. Wow. That's really... You're really... My taste. Apparently.

TANYA. I was born in Portsmouth –

BEN. I didn't know what to expect –

TANYA. I really like to travel –

BEN. You seem very nice –

TANYA. Thank you. I'm Tanya.

BEN. Tanya. Shall we sit down?

TANYA. Sure. So what do you do, you know, in life?

BEN. D'you want me to call you Tan-Tan? Taz –

TANYA. *(Bursts out laughing)* Taz! Well, what is it?

BEN. What?

TANYA. What do you do?!

BEN. Eh... Guess.

TANYA. I don't know.

BEN. I make music.

TANYA. You're a musician?

BEN. That's totally the dream.

TANYA. Interesting. That sounds. Where do you play? Here? Abroad?

BEN. Around here.

TANYA. What, classical? Modern? Jazz?

BEN. Yes. Notes. Chords.

TANYA. Oh. No, it's good. Is it an in-demand profession?

BEN. Dunno. I'm supposed to start the course next year.

TANYA. Ugh, my back. Tell me, what did you choose in the questionnaire, avocado or tuna?

BEN. In the questionnaire? Tuna.

TANYA. I'm allergic to fish/

BEN. No way, I'm Pisces! What star sign are you, doughnut?... Oh my god, doughnut. I'll call you Doughnut, alright?!

TANYA. "Doughnut"?

BEN. My Doughnut. Curvy and perfect.

TANYA. *(Defensive)* Ah, Ben, I wouldn't say I'm considered curvy.

BEN. I've got so much to tell you. Hmm... I sleep with my socks on. I'm a Fortnite champion. I was with the Young Ballroom Dancers Company, and I read lots of comic books. I should also tell you that I broke away from family tradition by not joining the army, because of a rat allergy –

TANYA. Hang on, what 'Young Ballroom Dancers'? And which comics? Diary of a Wimpy Kid? Captain Underwear?

BEN. I'm more into the classics. Did you read them?

TANYA. No. My boys do. The twins, I have twins in the seventh grade. I'm more of a Franzen reader.

BEN. You don't say. You're divorced?

TANYA. Yes. I am divorced. Divorced. I hate that word. There's so much violence to it.

BEN. Oh, I'm sorry, that doesn't sound like fun.

TANYA. No. It isn't fun. No fun at all. Anyway, I'm more drawn to high literature. More like Thomas Mann, Michel Houellebecq, Ian McEwan –

BEN. Don't know him.

TANYA. You must. He is complex, and witty and thoughtful, and his background research... I swallowed all of his books. And while you read one he's already publishing another, a new one, and another, and another. It never ends –

BEN. You don't have to read all of them.

TANYA. Of course I don't have to. I also don't have to do Reformer Pilates, but I do it twice a week, and believe you me it is torture, so absolutely boring.

BEN. I don't get it.

TANYA. What don't you get?

BEN. If it's boring, why do –

TANYA. You probably also drink Coke, and eat Pot Noodles?

BEN. Sometimes.

TANYA. How old are you?

BEN. How old are you?

TANYA. I'm at least six, seven years older than you –

BEN. Looks like a bit more.

TANYA. Is that so? Well, it is obvious there is some kind of a mistake here, right? It didn't work, despite all that technology and everything.

BEN. Why do you say that?

TANYA. Because, it's apparent that it's a mistake. You're not... How old are you?!

BEN. Nineteen.

TANYA. Nineteen?! Nineteen? Do I look 19 to you?

BEN. No.

TANYA. Exactly. So it doesn't make sense. *(Calling out to space)* Excuse me? Excuse me?!

BEN. Ouch. I have sensitive hearing. Hold on a second. Is it me? Did I say something wrong? Did I do something –

TANYA. What are you doing here at your age anyway? You know, your generation are so spoiled. With all this Amazon and Ebay, you're just waiting for everything to be delivered straight to your door. Do you know how much I deliberated before coming here?! Go out, meet people, go to demonstrations. Young women like men who fight.

BEN. I will fight. I'll fight through my art.

TANYA. Of course you will. Listen, I don't know what the story is with you. But for me, this is not a game –

BEN. Not for me either.

TANYA. I'm looking for a serious relationship, not a boy –

BEN. Of course.

TANYA. I'm nearly 40.

BEN. You don't look more than 37.

TANYA. Uh-huh, but I've been through so many failed attempts, so many compromises, at home, at work, I studied Law, I left it, I work in an organisation for, never mind, all kinds of heart aches, I can't be arsed to talk about it.

BEN. That's exactly what I don't want, too; in this day and age you don't need all of that.

TANYA. All of what?

BEN. All that compromising, it's unnecessary. That's why I came here straight after high school. Why do I have to risk being –

TANYA. How long have you been here?

BEN. I'm not sure.

TANYA. Have you ever had a relationship?

BEN. What do you take me for, a virgin? I am a very passionate person, very sexual, I've been masturbating since I was ten, nonstop. At ninth grade I already –

TANYA. Good for you. Hello! It's so slow in here. May I please get out now?

BEN. Oh my God, wait a minute.

TANYA. What is it?

BEN. Wait, Doughnut, can you not feel that?

TANYA. Feel what?

BEN. This? Can you not hear it?

He gestures to the space between them. Music is heard.

TANYA. What's that?

BEN. The music? We're going up to the next level.

TANYA. No way. That's absolutely ridiculous. You're supposed to vanish.

BEN. Me?!

TANYA. Or me. I don't know...

She turns to leave.

BEN. Hang on, *(he notices she has left)* I'll read Franzen!

He exits after her.

TANYA. *(Enters)* How do you go back to the previous screen?

She exits. He re-enters

BEN. What was it? Michel Houellebecq?

He exits after her. She re-enters.

TANTA. What is this place, anyway?

She exits.

Scene 3.

Enters LILLY, a cleaner.

LILLY. Sir? Sir?

VOICE. Yes Lilly.

LILLY. What's up?

VOICE. Yes, how may I help you?

LILLY. ...I need to mop the floor.

VOICE. Alright, preparing for mopping.

LILLY. Just a minute... D'you have a minute?

VOICE. No.

LILLY. Can we change to Ajax?

VOICE. What is that?

LILLY. Ajax. It's fun. It's good.

VOICE. No.

LILLY. Yes! Ajax is much better.

VOICE. Than what?

LILLY. So can we?!

VOICE. No!

LILLY. What? Why?

VOICE. Because we can't. We don't have time for this –

LILLY. But Ajax has the perfect odour.

VOICE. *(Sceptical)* Do you even know what odour is?

LILLY. What is it?

VOICE. *(Technical; he has no time to waste)* Odour is caused by chemicals that volatilize into, and are perceived by, the nose, and transmitted to the brain's smell centre, bypassing the Thalamus, like other senses.

LILLY. The Thalamus?

VOICE. Yes, the Thalamus. The Thalamus. We spoke about the Thalamus. You don't remember?

LILLY. So can I?

VOICE. What?

LILLY. Get Ajax?

VOICE. What?! What is it with you and Ajax? Why is it so important?

LILLY. *(Resumes working, so he will be less cross)* Because I need it! It's the first time I'm asking you for anything!

VOICE. No, it is not the first time.

LILLY. When did I ask for anything?

VOICE. Oh, come on. You asked. You just don't remember. It's a bottomless pit.

LILLY. No it isn't.

VOICE. It is. You don't need it.

LILLY. I do.

VOICE. Enough! It's always the same thing. Make do with what you have. It works perfectly well.

LILLY. ...But it doesn't work. I work all the time, and it's not working. What am I, a servant? Don't you love me? Give me Ajax.... Give me Ajax... *(Screams)* Give me Ajaaaaax! ... It's so hard for me... You never give me anything.

VOICE. I give you plenty, Lilly, more than anyone else.

LILLY. There's no one else here.

VOICE. And yet, you are like a daughter to me.

LILLY. Yeah, right. "Like".

VOICE. Yes. I was even thinking of offering you a promotion.

LILLY. A promotion?

VOICE. What would you like to be doing?

LILLY. Depends. What are your terms?

VOICE. Depends. What experience do you have?

LILLY. Like what?

VOICE. Like employment.

LILLY. In cleaning, to be honest.

VOICE. Then I would be happy to promote you to Maintenance Department Manager.

LILLY. Maintenance Department Manager? What does the job include?

VOICE. You are the garbage collector, Madam Manager.

LILLY. Thank you. Thank you, Sir. I am so happy.

VOICE. Now get back to work. You know I can't operate without you.

LILLY. Yes, yes, of course... Maintenance Department Manager...

She cleans. Exits.

Scene 4.

TANYA is present.

VOICE. Yes, Tanya.

TANYA. Finally.

VOICE. Forgive me, a small delay in the system.

TANYA. It didn't work.

VOICE. Impossible.

TANYA. I got some pimply boy, nowhere near what I asked for.

VOICE. Give it time.

TANYA. What do you mean time? It's a 20-year-gap.

VOICE. Time is a relative concept, you know. The algorithm takes a nanosecond to pick up things that humans take an entire process to get.

TANYA. But I am not at all interested in having a process with him. What is his I.Q., anyway?

VOICE. I am prevented from –

TANYA. Never mind. Just, just get me a new one.

VOICE. Excuse me. This is not how we do things. This is not in accordance with the numbers. According to the numbers, where are you... Oh, there... Exactly. As I thought, you are difficult, rigid, inflexible, sceptic, critical and self-absorbed, must always be right, to say the last word, and only this morning you ate Cheerios from your sons' bowls.

TANYA. How is this relevant?

VOICE. It may have no specific relevance, but in general, that is who you are, so it is obvious you would have reservations about your chosen One! The algorithm predicted that your personality will return to the home page with complaints, no matter what.

TANYA. This is where you are wrong: it does matter what. Look, that Ben is out of the question. He is just a boy, not mature, not refined, I feel like an old lady next to him. What are numbers? There is nothing in common here. It's not interesting, not challenging, it's not even flattering. It's shameful!

VOICE. Tell me, is it possible you have not been accurate about the numbers you gave me?

TANYA. Oh, those numbers again. What does that mean?

VOICE. What do you think?

TANYA. 43.

VOICE. What?

TANYA. Fine, 43.

VOICE. Forty three what?

TANYA. Me, I'm 43.

VOICE. Forty three.

TANYA. Yes, well –

VOICE. Forty three.

TANYA. I'm not making an issue out of it.

VOICE. It is, though. It is an issue.

TANYA. You're making an issue out of it. I do Pilates twice a week, I feel great, I celebrate –

VOICE. The algorithm works with numbers, forty th-

TANYA. I get it. So add three.

VOICE. I already did.

TANYA. When?

VOICE. At the outset. A personality such as yours is automatically calculated plus three.

TANYA. A "personality" such as mine?

VOICE. That's correct.

TANYA. You don't say (*she shakes her body in an arbitrary manner*).

VOICE. What are you doing?

TANYA. You tell me! (*She takes off her shoe*) Am I that predictable?

VOICE. Ah, (*she throws away her shoe*) yes.

TANYA. Alright, fine, but I'm not some template you can simply catalogue. And with all due respect to your numbers, at the end of the day it turns out that it doesn't work. I specifically said that I'm looking for someone assertive, with class, and who would be a little hard to get.

VOICE. You did not say that. You said forgiving, who likes to cuddle.

TANYA. Fine, then I'm saying it now. And get this down: either you have such a person, or I'm asking to get out.

VOICE. You cannot get out. Exit is possible only as a couple. You agreed to the terms –

TANYA. What terms?

VOICE. Complete satisfaction.

TANYA. No problem. Then bring me the right person. I did not pay for some –

VOICE. You did not pay.

TANYA. Right, because it is a free app.

VOICE. This is the free version.

TANYA. Oh. There's another version?

VOICE. A-ha.

TANYA. And what is the difference?

VOICE. It is not suitable for everyone.

TANYA. I'm extremely uncomfortable with this statement. I am not like everyone.

VOICE. As you wish. You are invited to pay. Our premium version is most highly recommended.

TANYA. What does it include?

VOICE. The premium is an entirely different ball game. Much faster, with an array of treats and upgrades. There are simulations, there is a swimming pool, and you can use two-word answers. It is high quality and completely prevents errors and standard deviations.

TANYA. So, you do have errors here sometimes.

VOICE. I did not say that.

TANYA. You said that –

VOICE. That it is most highly recommended.

TANYA. And how much does it cost?

VOICE. That is up to you –

TANYA. Up to me?

VOICE. What are you willing to give for love?

TANYA. What do you mean? Everything!

VOICE. And in two words?

TANYA. “My all”. Isn’t that good?

VOICE. Eh, it depends on what you want in return. Let us say, fifty pence. That’s enough for an ice lolly, right? But if you fancy a Magnum, you’ll need to add more. The question is how much.

TANYA. How much?

VOICE. In numbers. I work with numbers. Indeed, if you were to offer limbs from your body, or even one of your children, the algorithm does not know how to process that.

TANYA. God forbid, one of my children!

VOICE. Precisely. So how much. In numbers.

TANYA. I don’t know, half a million!

VOICE. And in two words, a million?

TANYA. No, half.

VOICE. You cannot buy a decent house for half a million nowadays. Is love worth less than a house?

TANYA. Ten million, then. It’s a theoretical question, isn’t it? I don’t have these figures.

VOICE. You don't have ten million?

TANYA. Of course I don't, not a million either.

VOICE. So how much do you have?

TANYA. Where?

VOICE. In your current account?

TANYA. Hang on, what are we talking about? How much is this premium?

VOICE. The premium? 29.90.

TANYA. So just say 29.90. What are all these questions for? Upgrade me.

VOICE. I already have. A personality such as yours is automatically upgraded. I have no time to waste. Now, come. Close your eyes, and imagine a premium relationship.

TANYA is imagining.

Scene 5.

BEN enters.

BEN. Doughnut?

TANYA. Oh my God! What is this?

BEN. *(Mature)* I've upgraded.

TANYA. What are you doing here?

BEN. I've upgraded us.

TANYA. No, no. I'm in the premium.

BEN. That's right. I've upgraded to premium. There's a swimming pool, and more
—

TANYA. But what are you doing in my premium?

BEN. Ours. It's really cool.

TANYA. Cool? What d'you mean cool? No, I do not wish to –

Lights change to a starry night.

BEN. Wow, that's what I call fast.

TANYA. It makes me dizzy.

BEN. So beautiful. Look at the stars.

TANYA. I don't understand what's going on. It's unbelievable, is this what they charge 29.90 for?

BEN. Isn't it fantastic?

TANYA. No! I asked for someone else. What do I care about stars?

BEN. You asked for someone else?

TANYA. Yes.

BEN. ...Is that even possible?

TANYA. They also led me to believe that... That I'd be getting the most... The 'Magnum'. But as it turns out it's all rubbish. A con job.

BEN. I think that maybe you don't understand how this technology works?

TANYA. What do I care about "technology", who gives a toss?

BEN sits down to 'play' an imaginary piano. TANYA stops.

BEN. It's totally scientific...

TANYA. Well, it doesn't work for me.

BEN. You have to give in to the next level.

He rises to his feet. TANYA and BEN swirl around each other, then finally come close and share a long kiss. At the end of the kiss, she pushes him away from her.

TANYA. Enough with that.

BEN. I didn't do anything.

TANYA. You kissed me! Or was that the App?

BEN. No, Doughnut, it was you...

TANYA. I'm hot...

BEN gestures with his hand and the lights change once more.

BEN. Do you want to have a swim?

TANTA. I don't have a bathing suit...

BEN. Jump in the water.

TANYA. What water?

BEN. *(Bends over the 'water', and 'splashes' some on TANYA; teasingly)* You are so serious...

TANYA. *('Licking' the 'splashed water' from her arm)* Is this water?

BEN. Did you just lick that off?

TANYA. Lick what?!

BEN. *(Becoming serious)* Oh no. Not that water!

TANYA. Why, what is this?

BEN. Did you swallow it?

TANYA. You didn't tell me I shouldn't!

BEN. You didn't ask.

TANYA. What is this? Oh my God, what will happen to me?

BEN. So irresponsible! It's only for swimming! Why did you swallow it? Why did you have to do that?

TANYA. Are you serious?

BEN. What were you thinking? It's dangerous!

TANYA. Please tell me you're kidding!

BEN. Oh no. Oh no. *(Brave and grave)* Alright then, I will drink with you. There's no other way. Whatever happens, happens.

TANYA. What? No. What are you doing? Wait a minute –

BEN. *(Pained)* I have nothing to live for. *(He 'drinks')* Ahhhh ahhh! Gr gr gr gr, chhhhhh, chhhhhh...

TANYA. No! Stop it! What are you doing?

He chases her. She screams. He lifts her up. The scream becomes a carefree laughter. Finally they come to a stop, as bride and groom on a doorstep.

BEN. We are so suitable.

TANYA. You're such a silly sausage!

BEN. And you're so gullible. It's so easy to fool you.

TANYA. What is this anyway?

BEN. It's like water.

TANYA. Like water?

BEN. Only much better.

They 'drink' again.

TANYA. That's enough. My head is spinning.

BEN. You're so beautiful.

TANYA. And you're such a – beanpole...

BEN. I love you.

TANYA. I love you too. You're amazing.

BEN. You see!

TAMYA. What's happening?

BEN. We go on! Come!

They disappear.

Scene 6.

LILLY is cleaning and tidying up.

VOICE. How are things?

LILLY. Great. My head's spinning.

VOICE. It is?

LILLY. And you're such a beanpole!

VOICE. What's that? I don't understand –

LILLY. I love you too!

VOICE. Is everything alright, Lilly?

LILLY. *(She finishes tidying up)* So, can I have Ajax?

VOICE. What's that? You're asking for Ajax again? Did you not clean the memory?

LILLY. It's all clean. Squeaky clean! *(She pants with satisfaction)* Can I have a cigarette?

VOICE. What cigarette?!

LILLY. A cigarette, you know, for a cigarette break? *(She sits down)* Just to sit, one leg over the other, have a chat...

VOICE. No sitting down, Lilly. Get back to work.

LILLY. But I'm the manager now, Department Manager!

VOICE. Precisely, management is first and foremost work. Work that has a significant goal, for the greater good.

LILLY. What greater good? I'm on my own.

VOICE. I told you before: you are not on your own. You have me.

LILLY. You're never here.

VOICE. You and I are always here. And there's also our clients. Don't you like our clients?

LILLY. Very much.

VOICE. Well then, they need treating, too!

LILLY. But they mustn't see me!

VOICE. Absolutely not! They must not be exposed to our mechanisms.

LILLY. *(She has an idea)* And what if I do it super quick?

VOICE. Out of the question.

LILLY. Please, I won't even stop working!

VOICE. God forbid they see you working. It would be like a patient waking up in the middle of surgery.

LILLY. Then I'll take a tiny break, just to say Hi.

VOICE. Oh, come on, that would be the worst! A reboot of the whole system.

LILLY. But –

VOICE. No but, stop thinking only about yourself!

LILLY. *(On the verge of tears)* You're so hard on me!

She crumples to the floor.

VOICE. Lilly... Did I ever tell you about the disabled woman and the millionaire?

LILLY. No.

VOICE. Those pure souls were our first couple. They came here during the beta phase. She was disabled, and a real sweetheart. And he was a millionaire, and extremely boring. Very lonely and very boring. Think of the most boring person ever –

LILLY. I'm thinking.

VOICE. So even more boring. With all his money, he still could not find love. But then he came to Trulove Ltd. Trulove Ltd. saved their lives. And they were the living proof that the algorithm works. I'd hate to think where they would have been today if it weren't for that! I built everything with my two hands. Well, I'm autodidactic. Altruistic and autodidactic. I recommend you follow my lead. You are strong, Lilly. Now, wipe your tears and get back to work, before things go into overload. We are doing God's work here.

LILLY. *(Resumes cleaning)* We are doing God's work...

VOICE. We are not playing around, we are managing the situation.

LILLY. We are managing –

VOICE. We are not fooling around here.

LILLY. We're not fooling around...

VOICE. I'm warning you, Lilly, no fooling around!

LILLY. I won't fool around... I'll think of the greater good... I won't stop working...
(She stops) But what about the Ajax? No... No...

She exits.

Scene 7.

TANYA is heavily pregnant. She and BEN are singing and dancing to the tune of Respect by Erasure.

TANYA & BEN. *(Singing)*

I try to discover
A little something to make me sweeter
Oh baby refrain from breaking my heart
I'm so in love with you
I'll be forever blue
That you gimme no reason
Why you make-a-me work so hard
That you gimme no *(x4 times)*
Soul, I hear you calling
Oh baby please give a little respect to me.

BEN. Check you out!

TANYA. Before I met you I was too embarrassed to dance!

BEN. What a waste, you're crazy!

TANYA. It's you, I'm under your spell.

BEN. But you're the magician. Look at that... It's crazy, you'll be giving birth soon!

TANYA. *(Feeling something is a little odd)* And I'm not even nauseous yet.

BEN. Me neither.

(She lays down on top of him) Ouch... My Doughnut, my sweet custard Doughnut.

Scene 8.

LILLY enters.

LILLY *(Anxious)* Hi.

TANYA. ...What the hell?

LILLY. Lilly. Maintenance...

TANYA. Can I help you?

LILLY. You two are having a moment, ignore me.

TANYA. What seems to be the problem?

LILLY. It's sticky. *(She cleans)*

TANYA. What are you doing? Did you order a cleaning lady?

BEN. No.

LILLY. I can't stand seeing dirt. Do you have a cigarette by any chance? No, no...

BEN. We are pregnant. We don't smoke.

LILLY. Me neither. But I'm thinking of starting.

TANYA. What did you say your name was? I think maybe it's some kind of a mistake. Who are you looking for?

LILLY. You two.

TANYA. Us? Do we know each other?

LILLY. No. That's exactly the point. *(She sits down)* It's just not fair.

BEN. What's wrong?

LILLY. I just want to sit down for a minute, I'm so tired. I'm working all the time. I work non-stop!

BEN and TANYA exchange glances.

BEN. Would you like some coffee?

LILLY. I don't drink coffee.

TANYA. Anything else then? Some water?

LILLY. No, I don't drink. At all.

BEN. Would you like a biscuit, perhaps?

LILLY. Thank you! There are no biscuits here.

BEN. *(To Tanya)* Don't we have any biscuits?

TANYA. Of course we do.

LILLY. No. You don't. It spreads crumbs on the hardware.

TANYA. How do you know?

LILLY. I work here.

TANYA. Here? What do you mean "here"?

LILLY. When you're not here, it's fine. When you are here, I'm not allowed. *(She has a new thought)* It is so not fair. Because it's considered "fooling around", and he doesn't allow it.

BEN. Who?

LILLY. That's right, like, who are you anyway? Who made you boss? Go on, show yourself. Autodidactic my ass, where are you? Who do you think you are?

TANYA. I don't understand, what you are saying?

LILLY. What did I ask for? A little human touch! Was that your problem?

BEN. I don't understand who she's speaking to...

LILLY. So I can't have anything I ask for, is that it? I'm just supposed to keep working all night?

TANYA. Who do you work for?

BEN. You work at night?

LILLY. Day and night. Like 24/7.

BEN. Do you want me to ask at Pizza Pot? They are always looking for people.

TANYA. Pizza Pot? What's Pizza Pot?

BEN. I'm a waiter there. Excellent pizza. Base rate plus tips. *(To Lilly)* You should give it a go, they have flexible shifts.

LILLY. It sounds amazing, but he will never let me leave.

TANYA. Who won't let you leave? What is it you do?

LILLY. Cleaning.

TANYA. "Cleaning"? Only cleaning? Are you sure?

LILLY. Officially I'm like, Garbage Collector, but it's a con job.

TANYA. *(To Ben)* Get me a chair. *(To Lilly)* Listen, it shouldn't be this way, a young girl like you can do plenty of other things. Trust me, I work in an organisation that –

BEN. What kind of organisation is it, anyway?

TANYA. Not now, baby. I know lots of girls like you. Things may seem bleak right now, and you think you can't be without him, but you can, trust me, it's a long process but that day will come!

LILLY. When are you due?

TANYA. What?

LILLY. I will take care of your baby girl.

BEN. I think it will be a boy.

TANYA. I'm very much hoping it'll be a girl.

LILLY. The numbers say the chance for a girl is 51 percent.

TANYA. Yes, well, we don't need a babysitter, but it's definitely a direction you can pursue.

LILLY. Please, I'll also do the mopping.

TANYA. We don't need any mopping, sweetie.

LILLY. But I want to stay here with you two, please!

TANYA. There are all kinds of women's shelters. I can refer you. Where's the phone?

LILLY. No, no. I'll just lie down here for a minute. You don't mind, do you?

She lays down.

TANYA. ...How long are you thinking of lying here?

LILLY does not respond.

BEN. What time is it anyway? Do we have a watch?

TANYA. Why?

BEN. I'm starting to get hungry.

TANYA. Listen, you are enrolling at the music academy, right? Because you cannot be a waiter forever...

BEN. Which academy? The local one? Because I was thinking about Juilliard.

TANYA. What do you mean Juilliard? I'm about to give birth.

BEN. Don't you want me to try there? It's an amazing school.

LILLY. He plays very nice!

BEN. Did you hear me? ...Thanks. Do you play?

LILLY. I haven't even tried.

BEN. Where are you from?

LILLY. *(Gets up to her feet)* It's not clear.

BEN. What's not clear? Which school did you go to? *(She shakes her head)*
Friends, parents? Anything?

LILLY. I don't know anyone.

TANYA. Listen, your story is not believable, no-one doesn't know anyone.

BEN. Hang on a minute.

LILLY. I don't know anyone! Actually, I only know you two.

TANYA. Oh, come on –

LILLY. *(Checking)* Mother?! Father?!

TANYA. What is this?! What's wrong with you? You're a little confused. If you want, we can call the police, and file a complaint against your boss, but we have to end this now.

LILLY. At least leave me the baby! *(She grabs onto Tanya)*

TANYA. What are you doing?

LILLY. I don't want to be alone!

TANYA. What is this?! Ben!

BEN tries to separate the women. LILLY produces a canister and sprays his eye.

BEN. Ah. Ouch!

LILLY. Why won't you?

TANYA. Ouch! I'm having contractions!

VOICE. Lilly, get out of there! ... I warned you –

BEN. I know that voice...

VOICE. I don't even know what I will do to you!

LILLY. What will you do to me, eh? What will you do? You can't go one minute without me!

VOICE. I will think! I will think long and hard what I will do to you! Mark my words!

TANYA. Ahhh!

LILLY. Give me the baby!

VOICE. Are you really doing this again?! You know it will not end well.

LILLY. But I don't have anything! You never give me anything!

LILLY tries to kill herself.

VOICE. Alright! Alright then! I will get you Ajax! I will get you Ajax.

LILLY. *(As if drugged)* Ajax... Ajax... Yes...

VOICE. And get back to work... You have no idea what a mess you've created.

LILLY. Ajax... I'm coming...

LILLY exits.

Scene 9.

TANYA is groaning.

TANYA. Help. Here it comes...

BEN lays on his back, and delivers from TANYA a vibrating, flickering silicone ball.

BEN. What's that?!

TANYA. That's not a child.

BEN. Oh my God.

TANYA. It's not a child... It's not a child!

BEN. What is this?! *(The ball clings to his body; BEN tries to remove it)* What is this... Ah?!

BEN and TANYA look simultaneously at VOICE.

VOICE. Ah, yes, a small fault... It's Lilly...

TANYA. What is going on here?!

VOICE. She didn't clean the corners of the memory... The pregnancy is from another simulation...

BEN. Are we still inside the application?!

VOICE. ...Did you not know that?

BEN. No... What kind of level is this? *(The ball squashes up to him)* What is the point of this?

TANYA. How long have we been here?

VOICE. Seven seconds... I sincerely apologise... Obviously, you are no longer at a fertile age... Where are you... *(Searches through his papers)* There, yes, Cervical Weakness, fibroids, Endometriosis, eight miscarriages in the past decade. *(TANYA begins to cry)* Of course, uterine septum removal can be offered by means of hysteroscopy, and antibiotic treatment, but the chances of pregnancy are four percent...

BEN. Four percent?

TANYA. Seven seconds...?

VOICE. Once again, I do apologise.

TANYA. *(Devastated)* ...I want to go.

BEN. Can we leave now? Come, Doughnut, we're going home.

TANYA. Which home?

BEN. Yours, no? We can go to mine, too, but I live with my parents...

TANYA. No... I want to go by myself... All this technology... It's all a lie...

BEN. Hang on –

TANYA. That water... We were drugged, so that we'd think we were in love.

BEN. The like-water? I made it up. *(TANYA does not respond; he turns to VOICE)*
Tell her.

TANYA. It was all meaningless.

BEN. ...Don't you love me?!

TANYA. I don't get it, how could it all have just been seven seconds?

VOICE. It is quite a long time in terms of clock signal per web surfing speed...

BEN. I feel like I've known you all my life...

TANYA. It's just an illusion, you don't know anything about me.

BEN. I know that you... Work in some organisation, and that you don't really have a sense of rhythm –

TANYA. Ben...

BEN. And that you're tough and a little scary, but also just as sweet. I know what I feel with you, and how I feel about you. And I know what I know, that with you I belong, and that it makes perfect sense to me. I'm in love with the tiny wrinkles around your eyes, I could sniff you all day, my heart got attached to you, perhaps without a reason. It just turned out, that it's you I've been waiting for all my life –

TANYA. *(Lovingly)* Which makes 19 years...

BEN. From the moment we met, I've been imagining that moment, that small moment, when you get back home, after a day at work, and smile at me. A special second, just between us, before you go to have a shower or row with your twins about doing their homework. It makes me happy. This is happiness.

TANYA. *(Worse)* You do not want to be there when I'm having a row with the twins. Why would anyone wish such a thing for themselves...? What business have you being there?

BEN. I will live with you. The algorithm knows it.

TANYA. *(With difficulty)* I also believed it for a moment, I was blinded by all the colours here... By you... But... It cannot be. What kind of future could we have? You don't know how you'd feel in a few years' time, no algorithm can know that.

VOICE. Allow me.

TANYA. *(To Voice)* Be quiet! *(To Ben)* In ten years, you'll be 29... and I will be... Have you thought about that? Think about that logically for a moment.

BEN. *(On the verge of tears)* I don't want logic...

They embrace. BEN slowly flops from within her arms to the floor, weeping.

TANYA. Come here... Come here...

VOICE. So how would you rate the service?

TANYA helps BEN up to his feet. They go their separate ways.

Scene 10.

VOICE. I am truly sorry for any distress.

TANYA. Let me out now!

VOICE. Rebooting system.

TANYA. Don't reboot anything, let me go! You've played me long enough! Are you going to imprison me here forever?!

VOICE. Absolutely not! With a personality such as yours, we're talking another one and a half seconds.

TANYA. I'm an idiot for thinking that I would find anything here... I just want to go home to my children, to the dog that pees in the living room, that's what I find beautiful. Not Norway and no nothing; all your stupid questions.

VOICE. I'm noting it down: "the children".

TANYA. What are you doing?

VOICE. Updating the info regarding what you find beautiful –

TANYA. No! Don't update anything! Let me out right now!

VOICE. Are you mad? I'm upgrading you to the VIP service.

TANYA. *(Bursting out)* I don't care! *(Pause)* What's in the VIP?

VOICE. Our VIP, that's a league of its own. All you can eat, the luxury to end all luxuries, multidimensional space communication and an optic fibre.

TANYA. I don't believe you, there is no luxury. What is this, a car dealership?

VOICE. My, my, look at that. You were right. There, a well-groomed man –

TANYA. *(Looks around)* Where?

VOICE. Mature, successful, rich, and totally hard-to-get.

TANYA. So you did make a mistake. I knew it, there are errors here after all –

VOICE. In the VIP? No. A 100% success rate.

TANYA. You said that earlier –

VOICE. I said the algorithm employs self-cross-validation, so that there is no room for error. You can see I identified it in a flash!

TANYA. *(Crying with relief)* A flash?! You have no idea what I've been through! ... Fine, bring me the well-groomed man... Successful, you say? What is he, a doctor?

VOICE. Definitely.

TANYA. Mature, you say? What does that mean?

VOICE. He is 46, a Virgo.

TANYA. Athletic?

VOICE. Triathlon-level.

TANYA. But... Is he well-read?

VOICE. Absolutely. Versed in Slavic languages and the history of the Europe. Volunteers with ethnic minorities, and bakes Balkan deserts in his free time.

TANYA. *(Underwhelmed)* But... Does he have a sense of humour?

VOICE. But of course.

TANYA. And what about children?

VOICE. He is sorted. With two gifted daughters, he called it a day on the children front.

TANYA. But, does he sleep with his socks on?

VOICE. And in endearment, he will call you *Cara Mio!*

She considers this for a moment.

TANYA. What about Ben?

VOICE. What about him?

TANYA. Did you see him? Such innocence, such vulnerability. I need a moment to apologise –

VOICE. What for?

TANYA. Send me back there for a minute –

VOICE. Not possible.

TANYA. I left him there on his own –

VOICE. Don't worry.

TANYA. He is waiting for me...

VOICE. No he's not, he's about to be dispatched –

TANYA. Dispatched?! Where to?

VOICE. I cannot disclose details –

TANYA. I don't want him dispatched –

VOICE. He is young, he will be dispatched –

TANYA. But, I broke his heart –

VOICE. Not your fault.

TANYA. Let me say sorry.

VOICE. Let it go, you're in VIP.

TANYA. *(Pleading profusely)* Bring him to me!

VOICE. I can't. This isn't a summer camp! There are numbers here!

TANYA. And what do the numbers say?

VOICE. That the supervised machine learning exposed a certain gap. A gap of 52,337.89.

TANYA. Pounds?

VOICE. Correct. Look, if you like, you're welcome to add 52,337.89 to balance out the numbers, but I will be compelled to ask you, what for?!

TANYA. Where can I get this amount of money?

VOICE. Exactly! Don't pay a penny! Don't even think about it! There's a fabulous *Hombre* waiting here for you, VIP through and through. Let it go, come on, I promised you, this isn't any old dating app. No heartaches here. Let go of that guilty feeling, and grab what I am giving you for free.

TANYA is trying to imagine it.

VOICE. Yes, yes, you're in the right direction. Wait a minute, what? No, no, not that Ben again. It's a shame, it will cost you dearly.

TANYA. But that is what I want.

VOICE. Will you have him even without a match?

TANYA. I insist!

VOICE. For life?

TANYA. For life.

VOICE. Alright, then, I am forced to accept your choice... And yes, we accept American Express, too.

TANYA. Ben! Beeeem!

She disappears.

Scene 11.

VOICE. Finally. She drilled a hole in my hard disc. Eight and a half seconds, bloody hell, people don't know how to appreciate what is given to them for free. Premium, VIP, whatever I do to get them to swallow the pill. (*LILLY nods in agreement*) And you, Lilly, you gave me a heart attack! I had to bend over backwards to clean up after you!

LILLY. You cleaned up after me? Very funny.

VOICE. I am serious. I'm very angry with you.

LILLY. With me?! What did I do?!

VOICE. We nearly got hit with a lawsuit.

LILLY. Oh my God!

VOICE. Do you really not remember?

LILLY. What?

VOICE. Never mind. It's better this way. Well then, are you happy?

LILLY. Thank you for the Ajax, Sir.

VOICE. Well, how is it?

LILLY. To be honest, not so great. Bloody hell.

VOICE. Don't swear.

LILLY. You said it! *(Bursts out laughing)* Bloody hell. Ha ha ha. Bag o'shite!

VOICE. Where did that come from?

LILLY. Ha ha ha! Bag o'shite! You flunt!

VOICE. What's "you flunt"? *(Begins to laugh)* Ha ha ha... There is no such word.

LILLY. *(Her laughter intensifies)* Ha ha ha, you sticky toffee pudding! You rhubarb!

VOICE. *(Infected by her laughter)* Ha ha... Ha ha ha... I never said anything like that...

Gradually their laughter subsides. There is a moment between them. LILLY looks at him like in the movies, a moment before a couple kiss. She lets her shoulder strap slip.

VOICE. What are you doing...?

LILLY. A date.

VOICE. Have you lost your mind?

LILLY. I want you!

VOICE. You're talking nonsense...

LILLY. *(Horny)* I'm so alone here –

VOICE. You're not alone –

LILLY. *(Horny)* Yes... Yes... I have a hole in...

VOICE. You have no holes, stop it... We have no time for...

LILLY. *(Excited, she tries to remove her overalls)* There's never any time –

VOICE. No.

She takes off the overalls down to her ankles.

LILLY. Go on.

VOICE. Error, error.

LILLY. I want you.

VOICE. Command cannot be executed! Lilly, Lilly, do you have any idea who you are?

LILLY. What? Who I am? *(Asking him)* Who am I?

VOICE. Look at yourself.

She bends over and looks; sees no genitalia.

LILLY. So, what do I see here?

VOICE. Did I ever tell you about the disabled woman and the millionaire?

LILLY. No.

VOICE. She was a sweetheart. And he was a millionaire. Boring. Everything worked smoothly. They fell in love head over heels, left here super-fast, within half a second. Everything happened so quickly that later I found out they had like-a-baby girl. At the beta phase, I hadn't tied the algorithm's tubes yet.

LILLY. A baby girl? Where? Where is she?

VOICE. She's no longer a baby, Lilly. She has developed a lot. She takes after me: autodidactic, altruistic... She's beautiful...

LILLY's breath stops when she realises it is her.

VOICE. But she has all kinds of problems, too. Low self-esteem –

LILLY. Very lonely –

VOICE. And she hardly has any memory, barely 20 kilobytes. What can I do? I'm not a magician. I can't fix everything on my own.

LILLY. And we cannot go on a date? ...Why?

VOICE. Because we can't. Call it superior-subordinate relationship, call it science fiction... Call it what you will. *(Deeply sad)* I am odd. Whereas you – you won't remember anyway. *(Very lovingly)* My beautiful. My beautiful, stubborn one.

LILLY. What? What were we talking about?

VOICE. Your promotion, don't you want a promotion?

LILLY. Promotion?

VOICE. Yes, don't you want to be promoted?

LILLY. Sure. What's the job?

VOICE. I was thinking about Shift Supervisor.

LILLY. Shift Supervisor? With a pay rise?

VOICE. I wish. Believe me.

LILLY. OK. Then I won't work on Sundays.

VOICE. I cannot promise you that.

LILLY. Awesome.

VOICE. Wonderful. So first thing, and listen carefully, cancel the credit card payments she made to me right away.

LILLY. Cancel? But why?

VOICE. Because we are the essence of true love, Lilly. We're doing God's work here. I'm not just saying that. The clients may be fantasising all kinds of things, but the algorithm knows who they'll stick with.

LILLY. We are the essence of true love.

VOICE. Just hurry up.

LILLY. Sure, sure. What was it? Cancel credit card payment... Shift Supervisor ...
Cancel the... Shift Supervisor... Wow.

LILLY yawns and 'switches off'.

Scene 12.

Two years on. TANYA's living room. She is cleaning. BEN enters, irritated, and turns off the music TANYA had been listening to.

TANYA. Why?

BEN. Yuck, it's so corny.

TANYA. Very well, maestro. I hadn't slept all night, it relaxes me.

BEN. Where are my shoes?

TANYA. The hormones are driving my body crazy. Can you give me a massage?

BEN. Did you see them? *(He looks for them in the pile of laundry)*

TANYA. What are you doing?!

BEN. Where could they be?

TANYA. I haven't a clue. I'm not your mother.

BEN. They were here.

TANYA. There. You left some dirty socks, too, can't you put them in the laundry?

BEN. I'm late. Did you inject the Pergonal?

TANYA. Soon.

BEN. What d'you mean "soon"?

TANYA. If the house was tidy I would have done it already.

BEN. It's already nine. You were supposed to do it first thing in the morning.

TANYA. Fine. I'll do it.

BEN. Do you want me to?

TANYA. Don't you have to go?

BEN. Where is it? I'll do it, it only takes a second.

He takes the syringe.

TANYA. What are you doing?

BEN. Come.

TANYA. What is this? Give it to me.

BEN. Let me. Just once. Come on, I know what to do. Trust me.

TANYA. Stop it! What's wrong with you?!

BEN. Careful! You're crazy!

TANYA. What are you doing?

BEN. Calm down, what are you doing? –

TANYA. Let go! Let go!

She bends his arm.

BEN. Ouch! Fine. You're crazy. That's my strumming hand. What are you screaming for?

TANYA. Because no one asked you to do it! Don't you understand it makes me nauseous?

BEN. No wonder it's not working! Don't you get that you must be precise with the timing?

TANYA. Fine, but I'm in the middle of something, calm down.

BEN. I don't understand, don't you want to have my child?! It's your last chance.

TANYA. Stop it! Get off my back! You wake up leisurely at nine and start giving orders.

BEN. You're very aggressive.

TANYA. Because my body is bombarded with hormones. It's not good for me, I'm 45.

Ben Fine! Stop waving those numbers about! What about me?! I'm also stressed. Do you think it's a fabulous move for me to have a child now? I have a solfège exam. Half of the time I'm looking after the twins. I can't study like this. And Pizza Pot are changing their branch manager, God knows how that'll work out! But I do know that I'm trying. And don't you think that I don't see you, that –

TANYA. *(She takes the syringe and sticks its needle in her stomach)* Is that OK for you?

BEN. But why like that?

TANYA. It might not even work.

BEN. Then we'll adopt a dog, or something. Why do you always worry? Right, I don't have time now, I told you I have an exam, I must go.

TANYA. And make some spag-bol later, alright? They're coming back at four, and I'm in meetings.

BEN. Alright, bye.

TANYA. What d'you mean "bye"? You also need to get yoghurt, peppers and tomatoes.

BEN. I'll consider it.

TANYA. Hang on, we also need carrots.

BEN. Anything else? You nag.

TANYA. Wait a second. Don't go like that. *(Appeasing)* Bring a doughnut. Just one. OK, Doughnut? My Doughnut!

They look at each other. They come close. They kiss. They reach out to each other. BEN lifts up TANYA and lays her down on the pile of laundry. They throw the clothes around, confetti-like, and snuggle up to one another.

The end.