

THE FENCERS

a play

by Ruth Apolonia Zamoyta

Semi-Finalist, Bay Area playwright Festival

SYNOPSIS

Maddie is broke and unemployed, with a chronically ill kid who needs surgery. She has one thing going for her: she's an extraordinary fencer, and she just turned 50, so she can try out for the Veterans' World Championships. When Maddie makes the controversial decision to give custody of her son to his deadbeat dad so she can train, she is knocked out of the qualifiers by Donna, a transgender woman.

Bold in their defiance of expectations, resolute in their struggle against injustice, and mentally programmed to win, Donna and Maddie become compatriots in fencing and in life. They help each other navigate discrimination, motherhood, and the mistakes they made in the past, and carry Team U.S.A. to victory.

Copyright © 2025 by Ruth Zamoyta Productions, LLC
5915 Boulevard East E7, West New York NJ 07041 U.S.A.
1 (973) 960-8761
woodthrush@gmail.com
ruthzamoyta.com

CHARACTERS

Maddie Perez:	cis-woman, 50, on the short side, beleaguered but determined
Donna Cruthers:	transwoman 50s, on the tall side, snarky, witty, a true fighter
Cindy Robinson:	cis-woman, 50s, daffy, rich, just wants everyone to be happy
Sue Navar:	cis-woman, 50s, smart, serious, feminist doctor
Gretchen Schneider:	cis-woman, 50s, DONNA's ex-wife, angry and vicious
Damion:	cis-man, 50s, MADDIE's coach and ex-lover, wants to put it behind
Jason:	cis-man, 50s, MADDIE's ex-husband, resentful and brash
Petie:	boy, 11, MADDIE & JASON's son, chubby, outspoken, demanding
Saba:	any adult age; any gender but you might need to change the pronouns

Can be doubled by SABA:

Referee	any adult age; any gender but you might need to change the pronouns
Randy	any adult age; any gender but you might need to change the pronouns

TIME & PLACE

2009-10. Various locations throughout the United States and Lithuania.

Note: Make every effort to find a transgender woman to play Donna, and to fill the other roles with a diverse cast. In a pinch, Gretchen Schneider, Damion, and Jason could double, but this is not ideal.

Scene 1

SETTING: December, 2009. Club Salieri, a fencing club in New York. A fencing strip runs the length of the stage, flush with the floor but visible. On one end of the strip there is a practice dummy. These objects remain in every scene.

AT RISE: DAMION is giving an épée lesson to PETIE, repeating the same series of actions. MADDIE is sitting at a table on a laptop, in suit and sneakers.

DAMION

Pick it up, Petie. Be quick or get hit. Now, I lunge, you retreat, advance-lunge, tempo.

(PETIE lunges and falls. He drops his weapon, tears off his mask, and runs off the stage. MADDIE looks at him, concerned.)

DAMION (Cont.)

(lifts his mask and shouts)

Maddie Perez!

(MADDIE drops her skirt—there are yoga pants underneath. She takes off her suit jacket and blouse, under which is a workout shirt. She grabs a mask, puts on a glove, picks up PETIE's weapon. DAMION gives her a silent, exciting, beautiful lesson. After a swift exchange of blades, MADDIE finishes with a lunge at his chest. He holds it there for a beat or two, then they salute and take off their masks.)

DAMION (Cont.)

You need to show your son how to take a lesson.

MADDIE

When he's gotta go, he's gotta go.

DAMION

Didn't he start the transfusions?

MADDIE

Yeah. Not working.

DAMION

What about the other stuff he's on?

MADDIE

The mercaptopurine is making his hair fall out. There's a bald patch in the back of his head.

DAMION

Jesus.

MADDIE

(stretching)

Luckily he hasn't noticed it yet.

DAMION

Are you going to do the surgery?

MADDIE

The coinsurance is twelve thousand dollars. I don't have that.

DAMION

What about Jason?

MADDIE

He owes me forty grand in child support and alimony.

DAMION

(doesn't want to go there; starts taking off gear)

I think Petie should give fencing a break till he's better.

MADDIE

He was OK Saturday.

DAMION

But look at today. The kid is miserable.

MADDIE

You don't want to coach him?

DAMION

I didn't say that.

MADDIE

What am I supposed to do? Bring him here while I fence, and make him sit in the parents' lounge?

(DAMION'S flip phone dings. He looks at the screen.)

DAMION

Hey, I've got to go. Chicago. One week from today. When do you fly in?

MADDIE

Friday night.

DAMION

What?! You know the tournament's Saturday, right?

MADDIE

Yeah.

DAMION

And weapon-check is at six a.m.?

MADDIE

I actually got an interview Friday.

DAMION

You've got to make the semifinals in at least two NACs ["nacks"].

MADDIE

I know, coach.

DAMION

If you think a job interview's more important than qualifying for the team—

MADDIE

Since I started fencing, all I've wanted to do was make the team. And I'm finally old enough. I don't know any other woman in the world who was so psyched to turn 50.

DAMION

Who's got Petie while you're in Chicago?

MADDIE

His father. Allegedly.

DAMION

You sure there's no business trip this time?

MADDIE

I was sure last time.

DAMION

...and missed the regionals.

MADDIE

(ironic)

Of course, Jason's business trip is more important than my fencing trip.

DAMION

Let's hope he shows up this time. This tournament counts. See you at weapon check. No fencing between now and then and, as soon as you get to the hotel, bed. No bar.

MADDIE

OK, coach.

(MADDIE pulls a wad of damp cash from her bra and hands it to
DAMION who sniffs it without touching it and refuses it)

DAMION

Take it home and give it a shower. You still got scholarship money on your tab.

MADDIE

I need to save that for travel expenses.

DAMION

(gently pushes the money back to her)

Keep it. You're the only one of my students to get this close to an international championship.

MADDIE

An old lady like me?

DAMION

It counts.

(They look at each other significantly as they knock fists. He exits,
MADDIE follows him with her eyes. CINDY enters.)

CINDY

Fence?

MADDIE

(sneezes; looks to make sure DAMION is out the door)

I'm on training rules but ... one bout wouldn't hurt.

(pulls gear out of her fencing bag, then remembers)

Damn! Petie's here! I can't. I have to get him home.

CINDY

Aw, man! There's no one else good here. Can Petie-baby hang for, like, 20?

MADDIE

I might have no choice. He's on the toilet.

CINDY

Poor Petie.

MADDIE

And his math homework! Ugh! I have to get him home. Hey, you're taking my stuff for weapon-check, right?

CINDY

Yeah. *No problemo.*

(Through the following dialogue, MADDIE pulls equipment out of her bag and gives them to CINDY, who puts them in her bag.)

MADDIE

Thanks so much for doing this, Cin.

CINDY

When I heard you got an interview, I was totally going to dunk your head in a margarita.

MADDIE

Hold that idea till I actually get a job.

CINDY

Hey, if it's any consolation, sweetie, you're not alone. I hear unemployment's up to 10%.

MADDIE

Great. Even more skilled, experienced, young people to compete against.

CINDY

God, I wish you'd let me help you.

MADDIE

I'm not going there, Cin. I appreciate the job leads, but I'm not taking money from my friends.

CINDY

It's killing me to write checks to Green Peace and the kitty rescue, when my best girlfriend has to, like, buy store-brand stuff.

MADDIE

I am not asking my friends to pay for what Jason should be paying for. Let's stay positive. I've been job hunting for eleven months. Something's got to turn up soon.

CINDY

Yeah! That's the spirit! I've heard plenty of people say, "I've been looking for a job for a year." But I never heard anyone say, "I've been looking for a job for over a year."

MADDIE

By then they're sleeping in Penn Station.

CINDY

Hey. We're going to do it, bestie! We're going to get you a totally fab job!

(CINDY hugs her; MADDIE sneezes. PETIE emerges, with a sweat jacket tied around his waist.)

CINDY (Cont.)

El guapo!

(opens her arms for a hug)

PETIE

(submits to hug reluctantly)

Hi, Aunt Cindy. Ma, let's go.

(stuffs his gear in his bag)

MADDIE

Yeah, yeah. I just have to change.

PETIE

No! Now!

(he whispers in MADDIE's ear)

MADDIE

OK. OK. OK. See you in Chicago, Cin.

CINDY

It's me and you. Gold and silver, baby! Bye, Petie-weetie. Remember, boyfriend. We got a movie date when I get back!

(MADDIE grabs her stuff and runs to catch up to PETIE, who is rushing off stage.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

SETTING: Later that night. MADDIE's ramshackle apartment.

AT RISE: MADDIE leans against counter with a beer, bothered by PETIE'S groans coming through the bathroom door.

PETIE

(offstage)
Mom!

MADDIE

(dread)
What?

(silence)
Petie? You called me.

(silence)
Hey, remember not to flush.

PETIE

(offstage)
I can tell you if there's blood.

MADDIE

No. I have to see it myself. See how much. So I can tell Dr. Patel.

(Flush. MADDIE rolls her eyes. PETIE enters from bathroom.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

I told you not to flush.

PETIE

There was blood, OK?

MADDIE

How much?

PETIE

I don't know.

MADDIE

Bring your math book to the table. We'll do it when we eat.

PETIE

I'm not eating anymore.

MADDIE

I'm a mother. I have to feed you. That's my job.

PETIE

A human can go 52 days without eating. I'll eat on day 51, so you don't get arrested. You'll save money on groceries.

MADDIE

Eat the food, Petie.

PETIE

Mom, I can't handle this anymore!

(starts breaking down)

I live in the bathroom! At home, at school, everywhere! I can't go out anymore. Even to Robert's birthday 'cause I won't know where the bathroom is. And I can't go with dad to Knicks games 'cause there's always a line. And ... I'm not fencing anymore!

MADDIE

You can fence.

PETIE

(Petie turns and shows her the soiled seat of his white knickers)

This is what fencing means to me! I don't want to fence anymore and the only reason you bring me is 'cause you want to fence but you can't leave me alone and you can't afford a babysitter!

MADDIE

(half to herself)

Whose fault is that?!

(PETIE approaches her threateningly. She backs up.)

PETIE

I want the surgery now! I want to get this thing out of my body so I can have a normal life! I'm sick of living like this! And if you don't get me surgery—

(he grabs a steak knife from the kitchenette)

I'll take it out myself!

MADDIE

Jesus! Put that down!

(MADDIE swiftly lunges at the knife and cuts her hand. PETIE, startled, throws down the knife, runs to his room, and slams the door. MADDIE follows, tries doorknob. It's locked.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Petie, that's it! I'm going to take the lock off this door! Open it! Now!

(Silence. MADDIE gets a screwdriver, looks for screw on doorknob but doesn't see any. She throws the screwdriver in the corner, drinks beer, looks at her hand.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

(to herself)

Shit. I had to grab it with my weapon hand.

(MADDIE wraps a towel around her hand, then figures she ought to say something.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Petie! Don't hurt yourself!

PETIE

(offstage)

How can I hurt myself more than these knives constantly cutting me inside?

MADDIE

I'm sorry. What am I supposed to—

(The sound of a video game emanates from the door. MADDIE unwraps her hand and picks up an épée that was leaning against a wall. She tests out her wounded hand by lunging at the golf ball a few times. Suddenly realizing something, she drops the weapon and takes out cleaning supplies from the closet)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Petie! I have to go clean the office on 138th before it closes. I almost forgot. C'mon. Hurry up. We've got to go.

(No reply, but the sound of a video game. MADDIE stares at the bedroom door for two beats.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Petie. I know you hate going but it's a short job. Twenty minutes tops. ... I can't leave you here. C'mon, Petie. I can't lose this job.

(She walks to the front door, thinks about leaving, returns, puts down bucket, sits on the floor, and hangs her head.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 3

SETTING: One week later. Competition venue in Chicago.

AT RISE: SUE and DONNA are on the strip, in the break period in the middle of the final match. DONNA, alone at her end of the strip, sips water. MADDIE, in Club Salieri sweats, is coaching SUE at her end of the strip. REFEREE is looking at his flip phone, bored. CINDY, in her Club Salieri jacket, is sitting removed. She's fooling with her new iPhone 3Gs. Score is 9-6, DONNA.

SUE
Any ideas?

MADDIE
Who is she? She just came out of the blue.

SUE
We can do background checks later, but right now I've got to win this match. What would you do against her? I'm fucking clueless.

MADDIE
Sue. You have three minutes to score four touches. That's plenty of time.

SUE
No. I have three minutes to prevent her from hitting me once and score four touches.

MADDIE
Invite in six, parry eight, and close in on her. Infighting's your forte.

SUE
She might fall for it once, but not twice. You should be the one fencing her.

MADDIE
I fucked up.

SUE
You didn't fuck up. You never fuck up.

(Time clock buzzes.)

REFEREE

Fencers, on guard.

(adjusts clock to three minutes)

MADDIE

Don't worry. At the very least you're walking away with the silver. You'll make the team.

SUE

It's not about making the team. It's about winning. Fencing is all about winning.

REFEREE

(to SUE)

Ma'am?

(SUE and DONNA approach the middle of the strip, test bell guards, salute, don masks, get on guard. MADDIE joins CINDY.)

REFEREE (Cont.)

The score is nine, six, Cruthers. Fencing to ten. Fencers ready? Fence.

(As MADDIE and CINDY cheer, CINDY, unbeknownst to MADDIE, records the bout on her iPhone. MADDIE periodically takes notes in a notebook.)

MADDIE

C'mon Sue!

CINDY

Lookin' sweet out there, Sue-Bee-Honey! You can do it!

MADDIE

You got this! Be smart! This one's yours!

CINDY

You're on fire, baby! You're a hot tamale! Burn that strip! Make it sizzle!

[After a bit of teasing, SUE invites DONNA in six, but DONNA instantly *fleches* (runs) at her and scores.]

REFEREE

Halt. Bout. Cruthers.

(SUE and DONNA take off their masks, shake hands. SUE turns towards MADDIE and holds out her arms as though to say "WTF?" She and DONNA sign the ref's score sheet. DAMION, in Salieri sweat jacket, wanders on stage, lost in his phone. MADDIE stops him and nods towards DONNA.)

MADDIE

Who is she?

DAMION

Cruthers? Junior World Champion and All American 1983.

CINDY

There weren't any women's épée championships in 1983. There wasn't any women's épée at all.

DAMION

Men's Junior World Champion.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 4

SETTING: That night. Hotel bar in Chicago.

AT RISE: CINDY, MADDIE, and SUE are sitting at the bar. CINDY and SUE are wearing medals. MADDIE and CINDY wear Salieri sweats, SUE Central Kentucky Fencing Club sweats. MADDIE is doing calculations in her notebook.

SUE

(to MADDIE)
You're playing with fire.

MADDIE

(looks up from the paper, satisfied)
I'll be OK. If I either win in Atlanta or Reno, or just finish in the top four in Atlanta and Reno, I'm on the team.

SUE

That's not what I mean. You can't go throwing bouts.

MADDIE

I wanted you to make the team.

SUE

So, you gave me those touches, like a benevolent dictator or something?

MADDIE

The ref didn't say anything.

CINDY

He was texting the whole bout. Did you see him?

MADDIE

It was like an intentional walk. In baseball.

SUE

We're not playing baseball. We're fencing. You get on the strip, you're supposed to fight to win.

MADDIE

Just trying to help.

SUE

If I need your help to make the team, I shouldn't be on it.

MADDIE

And I wanted to watch you fence Cruthers. I have notes on everyone except her.

SUE

So, now I'm your laboratory animal. So much for the six, eight, close-in.

MADDIE

You said you were out of ideas.

CINDY

Notes aren't going to help you against Gorilla Girl, Mads. What if you meet her before the semi's?

MADDIE

She never will have fenced me. She won't know what to do.

SUE

And you will?

(MADDIE flips through her notes, looking for the answer.)

SUE (cont.)

Of course you will. You have notes.

CINDY

(holds up her iPhone)

I took a video.

SUE

What?!

MADDIE

Your phone has a video camera?

SUE

Let me see it!

(They move in closer to watch the video. MADDIE sneezes.)

CINDY

I swear her arms are three inches longer than yours. She's the missing link.

MADDIE

Sue has beaten men before. Tall men.

CINDY

But, not A-rated, All-American, Junior-National-Champion tall men.

SUE

You can't see it from this, but she's got this drive. It was like fencing a locomotive.

MADDIE

Like fencing a man?

CINDY

Sue, you're the only person who actually did burn her bra in the 70s. Are you saying men have a drive that women don't?

SUE

No! Of course not! ... Well, maybe...

MADDIE

Do I fence like a man or a woman?

CINDY

What makes you fence like a man? Drive? Ego? Testicles?

SUE

Well, there *are* significant effects of testosterone on the brain of a fetus.

CINDY

But, if we took testosterone we'd be disqualified!

SUE

Not if it was naturally occurring.

CINDY

But, we're women. We don't get to have testosterone.

SUE

There are plenty of women with high androgen levels. Y chromosomes. Hidden testicles. Impossible to benchmark sex definitively.

CINDY

Where do the testicles hide?

MADDIE

And, Cruthers is a woman. Right?

SUE

... Right. I didn't say she's a man. I said she's ... a locomotive.

(CINDY spots DONNA entering the bar with a martini. She sits at a table at the other end of room, seeming not to notice them. She is wearing a Boston Dueling Society sweat jacket.)

CINDY

Amtrak 456 to Lithuania arriving on track five.

(MADDIE and SUE look towards DONNA.)

SUE

Lashawna, Deb, and I asked the Vets' committee to put this on their agenda tomorrow.

CINDY

Put what?

SUE

(nods towards DONNA)

This isn't fair.

MADDIE

But, the Olympic guidelines. Transgender people can fence.

SUE

The IOC guidelines are for 20-year-old Olympic hopefuls. We're middle-aged women.

CINDY

Yeah. She doesn't get to have hot flashes in the middle of a bout.

MADDIE

Are you saying she shouldn't fence as a woman? But, she can't fence as a man.

SUE

She can fence with us, but should she be taking a spot on the Vets' team?

CINDY

Yeah. We work hard to earn that shit. Imagine there were more of her. We wouldn't stand a chance. I mean, that's why they created women's divisions, isn't it? To give us a chance.

MADDIE

Maybe if we train harder we can beat her?

CINDY

I can't train any harder than I already am. I have a life too, you know.

SUE

Oh yeah. Sangria meditations at the Temple of Dionysus.

CINDY

They're on Wednesdays. There's no fencing on Wednesdays.

SUE

And cleaning up after two dozen rescue cats.

CINDY

Sor-ry it's not like, being the only abortion provider in Kentucky, but my kitties depend on me!

SUE

I manage to get to the club three nights a week, but I just can't go to tournaments on the weekends. The clinic's open and I'm booked solid.

MADDIE

I never thought I'd feel lucky to be unemployed!

CINDY

Why do you say that?

MADDIE

More time for fencing.

CINDY

Is that why you turned down the job my gift officer got you?

SUE

Maddie, you turned down a job?!

CINDY

At NYU. I told my gift officer guy he's got to find my bestie a job at the university.

MADDIE

It was 50% travel. I appreciate it, Cin, but there was going to be a trip to D.C. the same week as the Atlanta NAC.

CINDY

Girlfriend. You could have gotten Petie, like, free tuition.

(SUE's BlackBerry rings.)

SUE

Shit. It's the ICU. It's not looking good for one of my patients. Excuse me, ladies.

(SUE exits, phone to ear.)

CINDY

Hey, I got an idea. Let me employ you. You can help me with my kitties. I'll give you twenty dollars an hour. That's not a handout. And then you can fence any time you want.

MADDIE

I appreciate it, Cin, but ... my allergies.
(sneeze)

CINDY

You can take, like, two bottles of Benadryl before you come. Or shoot yourself with an EpiPen.

MADDIE

Those things are mega expensive. And, look, we're in Chicago and your cats are in New York and they're still making me sneeze.

CINDY

Oh man. I keep forgetting my lint roller.

MADDIE

But, I appreciate the offer.
(hugs her; sneezes)

CINDY

Hey. Division One's tomorrow. We have to hit the sack, girl.

MADDIE

I'm going to finish my beer. I'll see you in the morning.

CINDY

(sees MADDIE looking at DONNA)
Sure thing. 'Night Mads.

(CINDY exits.)

MADDIE

(approaches DONNA)
Mind if I?

DONNA

Be my guest.

MADDIE

(extends hand)
I'm Maddie.

DONNA

Perez. We meet at last.

MADDIE

Congratulations.

DONNA

Congratulations for what? I had one goal for this NAC and you shattered it.

MADDIE

What do you mean? You won the gold.

DONNA

My goal was to beat you. And you didn't even make it to the quarter finals.

MADDIE

Bad luck, I guess.

DONNA

In your game, luck has no dominion. You gave Navar every touch.

MADDIE

I didn't give her any. I just made some dumb mistakes.

DONNA

The only dumb mistake was to make that remark and think I'd believe it. Wait. No. Two mistakes. The other was missing the regional upstate last month.

MADDIE

You were there?

DONNA

Yes. You could have followed me around with your little notebook, then faced me in the finals today.

MADDIE

I didn't have a choice. My son was sick.

DONNA

I don't see any little boys here. Who's watching him now who couldn't watch him in November?

MADDIE

My ex.

DONNA

Ah, whimsical sire, in a moment of magnanimity, shows up to watch the child, leaving his mother to wanton swordplay.

MADDIE

I wouldn't say whimsical—

DONNA

How long have you been fencing?

MADDIE

Started four years ago. I was bringing my son to practice and just sitting there, watching. One day I asked Coach if I could try. He put an épée in my hand and I fell in love.

DONNA

With the coach?

MADDIE

(ping)

No. The épée.

DONNA

Let me buy you a drink.

MADDIE

Thanks. I had way too much. And Div One's tomorrow.

DONNA

Never underestimate the power of a prior night's inebriation.

MADDIE

You're not registered.

DONNA

I'm not wasting my time on Div One.

MADDIE

But, it's Div One. The best fencers on the continent.

DONNA

At the Div One regionals I knocked out a senior trying to get into Columbia. Her father stuck his puss in my face and told me I got balls. I said I gave them to a dumpling man in Singapore.

(beat)

Anyway, I don't need Div One to get to Lithuania.

MADDIE

It would be great to have you on the team.

DONNA

You too. It'll easier to cream the Krauts with you on the team. Not so sure about Navar and Robinson.

MADDIE

Sue and Cindy are excellent fencers.

DONNA

But you're supernatural. ... And you've got to medal in the next two NACs to make the team.

(picks the skewered olives out of her glass)

So, tell your son that a queer fairy creature will marinate his toes in gin and eat them if he dares get sick again.

(eats olives)

MADDIE

Petie's like, really sick.

DONNA

With...?

MADDIE

Ulcerative colitis.

DONNA

Which is...?

MADDIE

Immune system attacks the colon. So, he has to go "number two" all the time. Without warning. I mean, the other day we were in a cab and he screamed, "Pull over, now!" And even before the cab stopped, he jumped out, pulled down his pants and lost it on the sidewalk.

DONNA

Shit. In both senses of the word. How old is he?

MADDIE

Eleven.

DONNA

Is there a cure?

MADDIE

Removing the colon.

DONNA

They can do that?

MADDIE

You only need it to retain water.

DONNA

Who needs water?

(DONNA downs her martini.)

MADDIE

Then there's a second operation.

DONNA

You could miss a whole year of fencing, taking care of Franken-kid. ... When's the surgery?

MADDIE

I ... haven't scheduled it yet.

DONNA

Why?

MADDIE

"Whimsical sire."

DONNA

He doesn't want the surgery?

MADDIE

Obviously not, because he refuses to pay for it.

DONNA

Isn't the kid on a health plan?

MADDIE

The co-insurance is twelve grand. And Jason ... owes me forty grand in child support.

DONNA

Is he married?

MADDIE

Yeah.

DONNA

Other kids?

MADDIE

One. Came with the wife.

DONNA

House?

MADDIE

Duplex on the Upper West Side. A boat and a BMW.

DONNA

Then, give him custody.

MADDIE

What?!

DONNA

Whimsical sire divorced you. You got a sick boy and penury, he got a new wife, new kid, a boat, and a BMW. He spits in the face of his obligations, so send your little obligation to his doorstep with his suitcase and teddy bear.

MADDIE

If I do that, I have no Petie, no money, nothing.

DONNA

If you don't do that, you have no fencing.

(beat)

What's the first thing you think of when you wake up?

MADDIE

(doesn't understand)

What?

DONNA

Quick. What's the first thing you think of when you wake up?

MADDIE

Fencing.

DONNA

What shows do you watch?

MADDIE

Just ... fencing on YouTube.

DONNA

What do you think about when you're trying to get to sleep?

MADDIE

Fencing.

DONNA

What do you dream about?

MADDIE

Fencing.

DONNA

What are you?

MADDIE

What am I?

DONNA

Don't think about it! Answer! What are you? I am a ...

MADDIE

Fencer.

DONNA

Not a mother?

(beat)

Then, it's time for Jason to take Petie so you can fence. The boy wants this surgery more than anything in the universe, and Jason will pay for it if he's living at his house.

MADDIE

How do you know that?

DONNA

The seats of his BMW covered with shit? The wife scrubbing the undergarments of someone else's kid, day in, day out? They'll get him the surgery.

MADDIE

I mean, how did you know Petie wants the surgery so bad?

DONNA

There's something in his body that shouldn't be there. He wants it out. And his father can pay to have it removed. Give him custody. Let yourself fence. Let yourself live. It's only fair.

(stands and throws money on the table)

Well, it was lovely chatting with you, Perez. See you tomorrow at my public vilification.

MADDIE

What do you mean?

DONNA

The committee meeting. There's to be a mob of angry crones with swords, demanding my head.

MADDIE

Are you going to say anything?

DONNA

I don't need to. I have the law behind me and the International Olympic Committee. There's nothing they can do to stop me from fencing.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 5

SETTING: The next day. Vets Committee meeting, Chicago venue.

AT RISE: SABA sits behind a folding table. SUE and CINDY are seated in the house. MADDIE and DONNA stand at the foot of the stage, to the left and right.

SABA

Unless there's further business, motion to adjourn?

(SUE stands.)

SABA (Cont.)

(oh god, here it comes)

Dr. Navar.

SUE

I didn't see the transgender issue on the agenda.

SABA

The committee has reviewed this matter previously. We must abide by IOC guidelines.

CINDY

(stands)

But her arms are longer, her legs are longer, her hips are skinny. She can advance and retreat faster.

SABA

U.S.A. Fencing assured us that she has documentation proving she's been on hormone therapy and ... met all the required...requirements.

CINDY

She benefitted from male hormones years ago and it's not like she's going to suddenly grow hips.

SABA

Some "born women," or "cis-women" I should say, are seven feet tall and have long arms and no hips. Your colleague, Ms. Perez, here, is a force to reckon with and she's, what? Five-four?

CINDY

What about menopause? She doesn't have to go through it.

SABA

Again, some menopausal women, I am told, do not get hot flashes or ... whatever. Look. I run an automobile upholstery shop. I'm not a medical professional. I shouldn't be talking about these things. The IOC hired doctors and scientists, did extensive research, heard many arguments, and they settled on the current guidelines.

SUE

The medical data were grossly incomplete. The committee was predominantly male.

CINDY

And they wrote the guidelines for 20-somethings. We're asking you to draft different guidelines for us Vets.

SABA

Dr. Navar, please inform Cindy of the staggering amount of resources and medical expertise that would take. This is a volunteer committee. We don't have the money or the influence or the constituent base that the IOC has.

SUE

True, I would not recommend that U.S.A. Fencing take up scientific research. But that's not saying further research isn't necessary. Even though testosterone loss does result in lower hemoglobin levels and decreased muscle mass, there are still questions about bone density and circumference, lung capacity, type-two muscle fibers, VO2 max, and knee strength. But, even if we had these data, how can we prove that certain physical characteristics will always present an unfair advantage?

SABA

And how can we measure them without the consent of the athlete? We test one person, we'd have to test them all. A nightmare.

SUE

Still, I do want to motion that the committee ask U.S.A. Fencing to make an exception for Vet Women's Épée. For a different reason. As you know, American women had no opportunity to fence épée at the highest competitive levels until 1989. And women's épée wasn't present in the Olympics and the NCAA until the 90s. Even then, it took the top-tier coaches years to get serious about us. Ms. Cruthers, on the other hand, has had the privilege of fencing and training at the highest levels and with the best coaches since she was in Kindergarten.

SABA

I see your point, but still, the amount of training and experience a person has does not automatically translate into an unfair advantage. Look at Ms. Perez. She only started fencing four years ago and how many times have you medaled at the NACs?

MADDIE

Three?

SUE

(knows she's losing)

It's a matter of access denied. Women were denied access to elite-level épée training for years, but not women who once were identified as male.

SABA

If we ban transgender people from fencing as women, what are they going to fence as?

SUE

I'm not saying they shouldn't fence. I'm saying they shouldn't be on the team.

SABA

Are you asking that we force a woman who has trained her heart out, has gone through the time and expense of travelling around the country for a whole year, and has medaled in three qualifying competitions, to then step aside, and clap as the team is announced? A team that doesn't include her?

SUE

There are only four spots on the Vets Team, it only competes once a year, and you can only qualify when you've turned 50. When our bodies are going through dramatic loss. It's a dream for us women—the ultimate achievement—to make the team. So, when I go to a competition, and I've trained my ass off and I'm put on the strip with another fencer, I want to have the hope that I can win. With this woman, there is no hope.

(beat)

I know dozens of Vets who feel the same and I can get their signatures if that's what you want.

SABA

You want us to have an exclusion policy.

SUE

Only for the team.

SABA

So, our non-transgender Vet Women's Épée team will go abroad and be fencing transgender women from Germany, Brazil, Lithuania, wherever, while some extraordinary women fencers are back home filing lawsuits against us? This is not a decision for a volunteer committee. We're part of a world organization and it's up to the International Olympic Committee. Try your luck with them.

(looks at papers with the results)

Ms. Navar and Ms. Robinson, it looks like unless one of you gets struck by lightning before the Nationals, you'll be joining Ms. Cruthers in Lithuania to represent the United States of America. I advise you to unite and start acting like a team.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 6

SETTING: That night. Bar in Chicago.

AT RISE: MADDIE, SUE, CINDY, buzzed, in sweat suits.

CINDY
We should start a, a ... movement. A march. With a ribbon. And a car magnet.

SUE
I planted a seed. Maybe in ten years we'll have enough results-based data to bring to the IOC.

CINDY
Maybe if, like, Karim Abdul-Jabbar got a sex change and tried out for the Vet Women's Basketball Team, they'd figure out how to make it fair.

MADDIE
Donna's 56. In three years she'll be in the 60-to-69 bracket.

SUE
And I'll be following her three years later, with two titanium hips and a prolapsed uterus.

CINDY
This is really important shit. It's like we turn 50 and we got another shot at the Olympics. Besides, it gives us an excuse to travel to exotic places like Lithuania with our bestest girlfriends.

MADDIE
It's been my dream for four years.

CINDY
And our dream to bring you with us.
(hug, sneeze)

SUE
But, if you don't make the team, Mad, it's me, Cin, Donna, and ...

ALL
Shannon McGillicuddy.

CINDY
Last year? In Lubjana? The airline lost Shannon's equipment, so she had to borrow my stuff and she broke my lucky blade.

SUE

And she froze in every bout.

CINDY

She might as well paint two bull's eyes on her boobs.

SUE

And we lost our winning streak against the Germans.

MADDIE

I think with Donna we'd beat the Germans.

SUE

You were quiet at the meeting, Maddie. You behind her?

MADDIE

We want the best people on the team, don't we?

SUE

We're easy meat for you, Mad? You bored with us or something?

CINDY

(defusing the situation)

I still can't believe you knocked out Kelly Hanson in Div One today.

(raises beer)

To Maddie Perez, bane of all young whippersnappers and their helicopter parents.

SUE

Hanson was crying in the ladies' room. She needed these points to make the world qualifiers.

MADDIE

You told me not to throw any more bouts.

SUE

What I'm saying is, maybe you're in the wrong league.

CINDY

You fence that smart in Atlanta, girl, and you're going to crush Cruthers into pesto.

MADDIE

Cruthers isn't the problem. I just have to keep Petie out of the hospital.

SUE

Maybe you need to put him in the hospital.

MADDIE

We've been over this. I can't.

SUE

Maddie. It's no big deal if you've got to skip a few months of fencing to take care of your kid.

MADDIE

But, I might come back with a prolapsed uterus.

SUE

I was being facetious. This is serious. Petie's hair is falling out.

MADDIE

Do you think I don't know that?

SUE

It's at a point where the drugs are more dangerous than the disease. He's a sick child and you have a responsibility—

MADDIE

Jason has a responsibility! You guys think you're so feminist, then why are you berating me and not him?!

CINDY

Honey. Let me help you with the co-pay. It can be a loan, and then we work it out with Jason.

MADDIE

No. He has to be held accountable.

CINDY

But I'm, like, going to New Mexico for indigenous jewelry, and you can't get Petie surgery?

MADDIE

Jason has to pay for it.

SUE

You don't want it to get to the point where you have no choice—where he's rushed to the emergency room and they do it anyway. Under risky conditions.

MADDIE

Are you saying I'm putting Petie's life at risk?

SUE

It could amount to that, yes.

MADDIE

Then so is Jason.

SUE

You have to show him you're better than he is.

MADDIE

But that means giving up fencing.

(Beat.)

CINDY

Hey! People! It's 10:50. Häagen-Dazs closes in ten minutes. We've got to get out of here. C'mon!

(CINDY dashes off stage. SUE stands, ready to follow, but sees that MADDIE remains seated. She lifts her by the arm.)

SUE

Maddie Perez never gives up. Look. We'll figure it out, ok? Chocolate-chocolate-chip and vanilla Swiss almond. My treat.

(MADDIE smiles a little and exits the stage with SUE.)

(FADEOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 7

SETTING: April, 2010, MADDIE's apartment.

AT RISE: MADDIE, in sweats, is jumping in agitation. There's a fencing travel bag and a roller-bag in the middle of the room. MADDIE tries the bathroom door. It's locked.

MADDIE

How's it going in there, Petie? We've got to leave for Ricardo's. Now. Or I'll miss my flight to Atlanta.

(silence; she checks her watch)

Big tournament. If I win, I'm on the team.

(a few beats; knocks on bathroom door)

Petie? What's going on?

(PETIE stumbles out and falls into her like a rag doll, fainting.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 8

SETTING: May, 2010. MADDIE's apartment. There's a pile of suitcases and items in the middle of the floor.

AT RISE: PETIE sits at the table behind a plate of untouched food, stabbing the table with a fork rhythmically.

MADDIE

(offstage)

Want Shaq?

(MADDIE enters from PETIE'S room carrying a life-size vinyl wall decal of Shaquille O'Neill that she peeled off the wall.)

PETIE

I'm not going.

MADDIE

You're going because your father and I say you're going.

PETIE

Stop saying "your father." It's like you're accusing me of his existence or something. Call him Jason. Or dad.

MADDIE

Just be thankful I'm not using any of the other words I've got for him. Your father will be here any minute. Aren't you going to eat? I made your favorite stuff.

PETIE

I'm not going.

MADDIE

It's not like you'll never see me again. We went over this already. You'll see me every other weekend. Like you've been seeing dad.

PETIE

When I see him he's on the phone the whole time, and you'll probably be fencing, so what's the point?

MADDIE

The point is your dad's got to watch you so I can get a job. It's been 15 months.

PETIE

You're not getting rid of me so you can get a job. It's fencing. It's all about fencing. I'm stopping you from going to the Nationals and the Worlds. So, you get rid of me.

MADDIE

I'm not getting rid of you.

(Knock on door. PETIE resumes stabbing the table.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Your father will have custody and I'll have visitation. It's vice versa.

(JASON enters, in tailored suit and Italian shoes, talking on his phone. He ignores MADDIE and hugs PETIE, who doesn't respond.)

JASON

(into the phone)

Hey, I have to run. I'll call you at three.

(to Petie)

Hey, bud. Today's the big day! It's going to be me and you!

PETIE

I'm not going.

JASON

C'mon. I already talked with Ricardo's mom and Jimmy's mom. They're coming over next weekend for a playdate.

PETIE

Yeah, right. Then I'll never see them again.

(drops fork, runs into his bedroom and locks the door)

JASON

Look, when you settle in and start a new school, you'll meet loads of new friends—

PETIE

(offstage)

I'm not going to your house and I'm not going to a new school!

MADDIE

(to Jason)

Why'd you have to say that?!

JASON

(to PETIE)

When you have surgery, then you'll have a tutor and it won't matter.

PETIE

(offstage)

I'm never having surgery. Mom can't afford it and you won't pay for it.

JASON

That's not true. I talked with the surgeon yesterday. That's what you want, right, bud? You come live with me and I'll do right by you.

(to MADDIE)

I don't know why you didn't authorize the surgery last month when he was in the hospital.

MADDIE

I couldn't because there was no guarantee you'd pay the bill. You owe me fifty grand. Fifty! And you're walking around in goddamn Ferragamos!

JASON

You got a job now.

MADDIE

Oh yeah! Part-time mopping floors and scrubbing toilets for eight fifty an hour. How am I supposed to pay for a colectomy with that?

JASON

Well, you don't have to worry about taking care of your son anymore, do you?

(to PETIE)

Are you ready to go, Petie?

MADDIE

Don't think this gets you out of alimony.

JASON

I told you not one dime of my money is going to that mother-fucker. So go ahead and pay for your own lessons by scrubbing toilets.

(to PETIE)

Hey bud, I'm going to load this stuff in the car. Are your video games in here? ... I was going to get the XBOX 360-S. ... Think I should get it? ... And a puppy?

(PETIE races out of the room and turns a tight corner into the bathroom. JASON thrusts his foot in the door, slips into the bathroom with PETIE, shuts the door. They talk behind the door.)

PETIE

(offstage)

Get out!

JASON

(offstage)

I won't look.

PETIE

(offstage)

Get out!

JASON

(offstage)

But you're going to lock the door.

PETIE

(offstage)

I won't lock the door. I promise.

(JASON emerges. PETIE locks the door. JASON tries the handle.)

PETIE (Cont.)

(offstage)

I'll open it when I'm done.

JASON

(to MADDIE)

This is how it should have been at the start.

MADDIE

The start of what?

JASON

The divorce. You divorced me; you divorced him. I was a fool for giving you custody.

MADDIE

Who's been cleaning the shit off his pants and sheets every day for the past year?! Who's been inserting the suppositories?!

(JASON doesn't want to hear it. He carries boxes out the door. She trails him.)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Who's been bringing him to the cancer center for infusions, surrounded by pale bald kids you know are going to die, and you have to make small talk with their mothers?! Who's been there, on the other side of the bathroom door, saying something—anything—when he's crying that he has no life and wishes he were dead?! He's 11 and wishes he were dead!

JASON

You think you're Mother Theresa when all you do is fly around the friggin' country sleeping with your fencing coach.

MADDIE

I'm not sleeping with Damion.

JASON

That's what you told me when you were my wife!

(hits wall with his fist)

Why should I believe you now?!

MADDIE

Now you have Kimberley to take your money and sleep with her yoga instructor or whatever.

JASON

(marches up to her until his face is an inch away from hers)

Kim is faithful to me, unlike you, you fucking whore!

(PETIE enters. He's heard them. Jason looks at him, steps away.)

JASON (Cont.)

I'll put the stuff in the car.

(JASON exits. MADDIE moves the rest of the items into the hallway. PETIE watches, crying. JASON returns.)

JASON (Cont.)

After we get your things home, we can go to the animal rescue. I wasn't joking about the puppy.

PETIE

(sarcastically)

A dog? Really?! I don't want a dog! I don't want to move! I just want a real life and real parents!

(PETIE slides his dinner plate off the table, turns to the counter and starts swiping at things. JASON restrains him.)

JASON

Dude! Dude! Take it easy, buddy. Stop fighting me. I'm trying to help you. We have to go. Look, if this doesn't work out, we renegotiate.

PETIE

(starts to cry)

Negotiate?! This is parenthood, not a business! What am I? Merchandise?!

JASON

Petie, let's go.

(JASON carries him out.)

PETIE

No! No! Let go of me! I don't want to go! Mom!

(MADDIE looks at the door. Looks at the mess on the floor. Looks at the strip. Turns and picks up the épée. Lunges at the dummy.)

(FADEOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 9

SETTING: July, 2010. The National Championships, Reno.

AT RISE: MADDIE and DONNA are facing each other in the last period of the final match. They are saluting each other. REFEREE is officiating. DAMION is standing to the side of the strip behind DONNA, so that MADDIE can see him as she fences. Through the bout he periodically makes hand signals. SUE and CINDY are at the foot of the stage, cheering. Score is 8-8.

REFEREE

Second and final period of the final match. Score is eight, eight. Fencing to ten. Three minutes on the clock. On guard, ladies. Ready? Fence.

(They fence.)

SUE

C'mon, Mad! You got this one!

CINDY

This game is yours, Maddie! Take it all the way, babe!

SUE

Be smart! You're on top!

(They both score simultaneously.)

REFEREE

Nine, nine. On guard. Fencers ready? Fence.

CINDY

C'mon Maddie! You can do it, girlfriend! Work your magic!

SUE

Plenty of time!

CINDY

This one's yours, sugar cakes!

SUE

Your game! Your game!

(DONNA scores the winning touch.)

REFEREE

Halt. Bout, Cruthers.

(They lift their masks, salute, and shake hands. REF turns around to fill out paperwork.)

DONNA

(retaining MADDIE's hand)

Beautiful fencing, Perez. I thought you had me there, at the end.

(She looks for a reply, but MADDIE is too upset. They part. DONNA approaches REF and signs score card. DAMION approaches MADDIE at her end of the strip.)

DAMION

(testing her)

What'd she do?

MADDIE

Closed distance.

DAMION

What were you watching?

MADDIE

Her mask.

DAMION

So you didn't see her back foot?

(He demonstrates by assuming an *en garde* position and pulling his back foot all the way up to his front foot, while keeping his torso motionless, then lunging.)

MADDIE

Thus the twenty-foot lunge.

(grabs her head)

I needed to win this! Now I have to wait another year! I was so stupid!

(In anger, MADDIE tosses her weapon several feet into her equipment bag which is lying on the floor to the side.)

REFEREE

(sees her throw her weapon)

Uh, ma'am?

DAMION

Easy. You can still get carded. And then you won't even be the first alternate.

MADDIE

(to REF)

Yes sir?

REFEREE

Score card?

(SUE and CINDY approach. MADDIE unhooks from the reel and dangerously lets the cord spring back. Everyone looks at each other—she's blowing a gasket.)

SUE

Hey, you want to be alone for a while?

(MADDIE nods.)

CINDY

All right, honey. We'll be at the Black Jack table. I'll buy you some chips and you can have my free drinks, sound good?

(They wait for her to nod. She nods.)

DAMION

Hey, I'm flying out in about three hours. When you're ready, come see me.

(SUE, CINDY, DAMION exit. MADDIE approaches REF, signs the card, shakes REF'S hand. REF exits with paperwork. MADDIE turns to go but DONNA stops her.)

DONNA

Missed you in April. Petie's doing well, I trust?

MADDIE

I wouldn't know.

DONNA

Whimsical sire decided to pick him up?

MADDIE

Yeah. And took all his clothes, video games, stuffed animals, pill bottles, toothbrush—

DONNA

You gave up Petie.

MADDIE

(beat)

Yeah. ... I gave up Petie. So I guess I'll just go home and apply for jobs as usual because I'm never going to see the money he owes me, and I'm not even going to friggin' Lithuania!

(MADDIE storms out.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 10

SETTING: One hour later. Same venue, somewhere secluded.

AT RISE: MADDIE still in gear, is sitting on the strip, sniffing.
DAMION enters.

DAMION

I've been looking for you.
(sits down next to her)

MADDIE

I made a stupid mistake.

DAMION

It wasn't a mistake. She showed you a move you haven't seen before. So what? You learn from it, and keep fencing.

MADDIE

I should have been at that April NAC, damn it. I would have fenced her then. I would have learned her little tricks.

DAMION

Petie was in the hospital. You couldn't go.

MADDIE

I should have given him up then.

DAMION

What do you mean, give him up?

MADDIE

I gave Jason custody.

DAMION

What?!

MADDIE

I never should have been a mother.

DAMION

How can you say that?

MADDIE

I let everyone talk me into it. My friends. My mother.
(Dominican accent)
Madelena! Your biological timeclock! It is ticking!

DAMION

You're upset. You don't realize what you're saying—

MADDIE

Too scary to think? A mother regretting her child?

DAMION

You're a good mother.

MADDIE

I'm not a good anything. The only thing I was good at was fencing. Until today.

DAMION

Maddie, you're going to Lithuania.

MADDIE

Donna, Sue, Cindy, and Shannon McGillicuddy are going to Lithuania. I'm just a dumb alternate.

DAMION

Shannon can't go.

MADDIE

Why not?

DAMION

She got tickets for a Hawaiian cruise. You know, for some people there are more important things than being on the team.

MADDIE

(beat; smiles as it sinks in)

Not for me.

DAMION

(rising)

Well, then, congratulations.

MADDIE

(rises, grabs his arm)

Come to Lithuania. Coach me.

DAMION

Maddie, I have to tell you something. ... We're moving to Colorado.

(MADDIE looks at him quizzically, lets his arm go.)

DAMION (Cont.)

Kajowski's retiring. He was the only épée coach in Denver. There's money there. And talent.

MADDIE

What am I going to do about a coach?

(half jokingly)

Hey, maybe I'll move to Colorado, now that I don't have Petie.

DAMION

Maddie, Jason called my wife.

MADDIE

What?! When?

DAMION

Back then. When he found out about us.

MADDIE

Why didn't you tell me?

DAMION

She asked me not to.

MADDIE

What did he say to her?

DAMION

That you and I were having an affair.

MADDIE

What'd she do?

DAMION

She dropped to the floor and cried. ... It was—It was the worst feeling of my life, seeing her there, sobbing. Because of me.

MADDIE

(beat)

You're still together.

DAMION

We're good now.

MADDIE
She let you keep coaching me?

DAMION
I told her I would stop seeing you ...

MADDIE
And you did.

DAMION
...but I wouldn't stop coaching you.

MADDIE
And she agreed to that.

DAMION
She knows that's what I am: a coach.

MADDIE
(beat)
I've done well with you.

DAMION
You're one of the reasons I got the job in Colorado.

MADDIE
When do you leave?

DAMION
September.

MADDIE
So, I'll have you for training before the Worlds.

DAMION
Yeah. You'll need help if you're going to beat Gretchen Schneider.

MADDIE
Who's that?

DAMION
Germany. Two-time Olympic foil medalist.

MADDIE
Can I beat her?

DAMION

I don't know.

MADDIE

Can Donna beat her?

DAMION

(raises eyebrows)

That will be an interesting bout. Hey, my flight's in two hours. ... One week off, then back on the strip. Next Thursday, seven o'clock lesson.

MADDIE

Thanks, coach.

(They knock fists. He leaves.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 11

SETTING: September, 2010. Restaurant in Lithuania.

AT RISE: MADDIE, CINDY, and SUE, wearing Team U.S.A. sweat suits, are picking at a spit-fired coffee cake. MADDIE is wearing a bronze medal. She reaches across the table towards a bottle of wine. CINDY stops her.

CINDY

You've had too much. It's the team relay tomorrow. You and Donna will reclaim victory for America! But you've got to be asleep in one hour. No wine.

(slides medicine bottle across the table)

Xanax.

SUE

(downs her wine; pours another)

This is not good. This is not a team. They didn't take away all her manhood. She's still an arrogant bastard.

CINDY

She got the gold today in individuals, for god sake. She should be here, helping us finish this ... Lithuanian cake.

MADDIE

After what you said at the committee meeting, do you blame her?

SUE

I made a sound argument grounded in data. I never called her out.

CINDY

Yes, you did.

MADDIE

(to Cindy)

So did you, Mrs. Hot Flash.

CINDY

She shouldn't take it personally.

MADDIE

She obviously is taking it personally. You should say something to her.

CINDY

Where is she? You invited her, right?

MADDIE

Yeah, and she said she'd rather order room service, take an arsenic bath, and watch Lithuanian game shows in her underwear.

CINDY

(indicates MADDIE)

I thought your last match with Donna was the bout of the century. Till I saw her fence Schneider.

(SUE searches the air for a memory.)

CINDY (Cont.)

I mean, they really looked like they were trying to kill each other. Did you hear her growl?

MADDIE

Who?

CINDY

Both of them were growling.

MADDIE

Schneider's all they got. Donna and I should have an easy go of it tomorrow.

SUE

There's a back story here, Cin. Don't you remember Gretchen Schneider?

(CINDY searches for a memory; MADDIE's flip phone rings.)

MADDIE

(looks at screen)

Why is he calling? This'll cost a fortune.

(into the phone)

Is everything—

(stands, shocked.)

Oh my god. What happened?!

(rises; pause)

Oh my god. Oh my god. Is he going to be ok?!

(pause)

I— I'll look into flights.

(pause)

But I'm his mother—

(pause; she has a guilty look)

What hospital is he in?

(pause)

MADDIE (Cont.)

Jason?

(looks at phone screen)

He hung up.

CINDY

What happened?

MADDIE

Petie went unconscious. He collapsed. In the shower.

SUE

Was there blood?

MADDIE

Yeah—

SUE

But, he's in a hospital now?

(CINDY puts her arm around MADDIE, who nods.)

SUE (Cont.)

Is he stable?

MADDIE

They're going to do the operation.

CINDY

It was supposed to be next month.

MADDIE

They're doing it now.

CINDY

Oh damn. I'll call the airline and see if there's a flight tonight.

SUE

Would you like us to help you pack?

MADDIE

(struggling)

I don't know if I need to go back.

CINDY

(exchanges glances with SUE)

This is radical surgery, Mads.

MADDIE

There aren't any complications, usually. It'll work out.

SUE

If something happens, you've got to be part of the decision-making.

CINDY

Sue and I are backups. Don't worry about the match.

MADDIE

Jason said he's got this. He said ... stay in Lithuania and fence.

SUE

Bastard.

CINDY

You have a right to be there, Mads.

SUE

You're his mother. You need to leave now.

MADDIE

But even if I went, he probably wouldn't even let me in the hospital room!

CINDY

How about I call the airline just in case? Let's see how soon you can get to New York—

MADDIE

No, no. Not yet. I— I've got to do something. I'll see you back at the hotel.

(MADDIE exits.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 12

SETTING: Twenty minutes later. DONNA's hotel room, impeccably tidy, with hand sanitizer bottles and packs of antibacterial wipes.

AT RISE: DONNA is in a robe, lunging at the dummy. A knock. She stops, a bit scared, checks the peep hole, and opens the door. MADDIE is there, sobbing.

DONNA
You clearly have what Sister Emanuela in first grade called "the gift of tears."
(invites her in)

MADDIE
Petie's hemorrhaging! They're going to operate!

DONNA
Now?

MADDIE
Now!

DONNA
Did you come to tell me you're abandoning the team?

MADDIE
I don't know!

DONNA
You need to clear your mind and ponder this carefully. Here.

(DONNA hands MADDIE a bottle of Stolichnaya. She swigs.)

DONNA (Cont'd)
Even if you get a flight tonight, he'll be in a morphine stupor till Wednesday. You'll be sitting there watching a sleeping child, cursing yourself for not being in Lithuania.

MADDIE
What if something happens to him, and I'm sitting here ... fencing?

DONNA

Nothing will go wrong. Surgical technique has advanced considerably since the Middle Ages ... well, somewhat.

MADDIE

They're taking an organ out of his body!

DONNA

An organ that's killing him.

MADDIE

What if he dies and I'm not there?!

DONNA

The odds he will die are so preposterously slim I swear to eat my miniature schnauzer if Petie dies.

MADDIE

You had ... surgery, right?

DONNA

Don't tell me you're one of those tactless gimps with a castration complex who wants to know what was cut off and how.

MADDIE

No! I just want to know ... if it hurt.

DONNA

Don't be silly. It was enchanting. Like a sunset stroll through Elysian fields with daffodils in my hair.

MADDIE

No, really. What did they give you? For the pain.

DONNA

Patient-controlled morphine.

MADDIE

Patient-controlled?

DONNA

They give you a trigger you hold in your hand. Feel the pain, pull the trigger, kill the pain. Like a video game. Your kid'll love it.

MADDIE

You think they'll give Petie that?

DONNA

Anything less would be child abuse.

MADDIE

Did you need it for long?

DONNA

In a day or two they took it away. Then it was Tylenol. And Stoli's.

(DONNA takes the vodka, wipes the rim, swigs.)

MADDIE

My son's in the hospital! I'm supposed to be there!

DONNA

According to whom? Are you going to get arrested if you're not there? Drawn and quartered? Black-listed by the Ladies' Hospital Society?

MADDIE

I'm his mother!

DONNA

You're a world-class athlete. You're supposed to be at the world championships. Petie will be fine with his father.

MADDIE

But, Sue and Cindy will hate me—
(grabs the bottle and takes another swig)

DONNA

Are you going to yield to society's expectations?

MADDIE

(beat)
You don't think I need to be with Petie?

DONNA

That's what you wanted, wasn't it?

(DONNA's BlackBerry buzzes. She looks at it and sighs.)

DONNA (Cont.)

And, the team needs you here, Perez. Navar and Robinson can't possibly beat the Germans on their own.

MADDIE

What about you?

DONNA

They want me disqualified. I've been on the phone all night with my assistant, having her fax documents upon documents to the Lithuanians.

MADDIE

But, the Olympic guidelines.

DONNA

They're trying to get around the guidelines any way they can.

MADDIE

Why?

DONNA

Because deep down inside, they don't believe I'm a woman.

(Beat. There's a knock. DONNA opens the door without checking the peep hole. SCHNEIDER enters. They stare at each other silently for a beat. There is a hint of fear in DONNA's demeanor.)

DONNA

What are you doing here?

(SCHNEIDER notices MADDIE.)

SCHNEIDER

What is she doing here? You still like girls?

MADDIE

Schneider?!

SCHNEIDER

(walks in and shuts the door)

Nice match, today Perez. Sorry I stole the silver from you.

MADDIE

It was, uh, great fencing you—

SCHNEIDER

Or, you could say someone who should not have been fencing stole the silver from you and the gold from me.

DONNA

Why are you here?

SCHNEIDER

(reaches for the sash of her robe)

What did you do to yourself?

MADDIE

Whoa! Hey!

DONNA

(turns away from her and tightens belt)

I became myself.

SCHNEIDER

That isn't your 'self.' Your 'self' is shit-head Roger Cruthers, and you think you got rid of him but you didn't.

(to MADDIE)

Did you know your girlfriend's a shit-head?

DONNA

Why are you here?

SCHNEIDER

Why are you here? So you can fence me? Is this why you wear lipstick and stilettos?

(SCHNEIDER picks up the épée.)

DONNA

Don't flatter yourself. My transition had nothing to do with fencing or you.

SCHNEIDER

Did the men start beating you? So you became a woman? So you could have a chance?

DONNA

I have a right to fence.

SCHNEIDER

(blows up)

You have no right to do anything! You have no right to live! To breathe!

DONNA

It's a fencing match, for Christ' sake! Keep him out of this!

SCHNEIDER

Maybe you've been able to bury him—

DONNA

You did that very well without me.

SCHNEIDER

—but to me he’s still alive. He is everywhere, in my dreams and in my waking hours. The image of his face is a screen I look through.

MADDIE

Uh, do you guys want me to leave?

SCHNEIDER

(to MADDIE)

Do you know what your girlfriend did? Your girlfriend took his son’s head in his hand and slammed it into the driveway!

(On “slammed,” SCHNEIDER swiftly breaks the épée by ramming the tip against the floor, so what remains is the broken shaft with a sharp, jagged point.)

MADDIE

What are you doing—?!

DONNA

(over her, to SCHNEIDER)

This is not the place—

SCHNEIDER

(over her)

Because he refused to go to a picnic! You slammed his head into the driveway!

DONNA

That was years before he—

SCHNEIDER

He relived it every day of his life! Including the final hour— when he wrote this letter to you.

(SCHNEIDER gives DONNA a letter. She doesn’t look at it, but her hand trembles. After a beat, she crumples it.)

DONNA

It doesn’t matter anymore. He’s gone.

(SCHNEIDER swings the épée at DONNA’s face. It grazes her cheek, cutting it open. DONNA gasps, cowers; MADDIE grabs SCHNEIDER’s arm.)

MADDIE

Leave now and I won’t say anything.

SCHNEIDER

(to DONNA)

You think you changed everything. Nothing's changed. You're not a man. You're not a woman. You're an animal! Still an animal! A loveless brute with no sense of shame!

(SCHNEIDER drops the weapon and exits. MADDIE grabs a towel and presses it to DONNA's bleeding cheek.)

MADDIE

Gretchen Schneider is your wife?

DONNA

Not anymore, thank god.

MADDIE

You have a son. What happened?

DONNA

He killed himself.

MADDIE

Oh my god. I'm ... sorry.

(MADDIE reaches out to DONNA but she pulls away.)

DONNA

It was six years ago. I'm over it.

MADDIE

And this is his...suicide letter?

DONNA

Put it down! It's fake! That whole theatrical interlude was fake. An attempt to mess with my head.

(picks up broken weapon)

She doesn't want me to fence, the Germans don't want me to fence, my teammates don't want me to fence— And can't you see they're doing the same to you?

(DONNA repeatedly lunges at the dummy. Her BlackBerry buzzes, but she ignores it. MADDIE walks to the phone and looks at the screen.)

MADDIE

The Germans lost their appeal. You can fence. ... Are you going to fence?

DONNA

No one's going to stop me. ... You?

MADDIE

I'll stay. And fence.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 13

SETTING: The next day. Venue, Vilnius.

AT RISE: DONNA and SCHNEIDER are fencing each other with ferocity. REFEREE is officiating. MADDIE, SUE, and CINDY are sitting in folding chairs at the end of the strip. It's the last bout in the final team relay match. Cumulative score is 25 to 25. It's a five-minute bout to 30. The clock is counting down.

SUE
Come on, Donna! You got this one!

CINDY
U.S.A. all the way, baby!

MADDIE
Show her who's boss!

SUE
You're on top, now! Stay on top!

CINDY
You go, girl!

MADDIE
Be smart, now!

CINDY
(to MADDIE)
Any word?

MADDIE
What?

CINDY
Duh. Petie.

MADDIE
Cin, it's the last bout—

CINDY

But, he should have been out of the surgery by now. It's been two hours!

MADDIE

I'll call after the bout.

(to DONNA)

Plenty of time, Donna!

SUE

Work, it, baby! Work it!

(SCHNEIDER delivers a blow to DONNA's knee. DONNA simultaneously hits SCHNEIDER on the top of her arm. Both fencers' lights go off—they both should get a point. However, DONNA wails in pain when she gets hit and collapses to the floor. The clock stops. REFEREE holds a red card to DONNA.)

REFEREE

Pour retarder le jeu. Touche à droite.

(The score board changes to 26-25 in SCHNEIDER's favor. SUE, CINDY, and MADDIE explode.)

MADDIE

What?!

SUE

(over her)

She was injured for fuck's sake! Of course she's going to fall!

CINDY

(over her)

Give her the point, you lame-brain! This is insane!

DONNA

Monsieur, je demande dix minutes pour me récupérer.

REFEREE

Dix minutes dès maintenant.

(REFEREE checks his watch. MADDIE and SUE rush to the strip.)

REFEREE (Cont.)

Mesdames, le capitaine seulement!

DONNA

Je suis capitaine.

SUE

Je suis docteur.

(REFEREE points at MADDIE to get back. SUE tends to DONNA, feeling her knee.)

CINDY

(to MADDIE)

It's time-out. You can call now.

MADDIE

The call will take longer than ten minutes.

CINDY

Stop making excuses.

MADDIE

I'm not making—

CINDY

(pulling out her phone)

I'm calling.

MADDIE

You don't know the hospital.

CINDY

I have Jason's number.

(CINDY puts the phone to her ear and exits. MADDIE looks guilty.)

DONNA

(to SUE)

I never thought I'd get a chance to receive healthcare from a Kentucky abortionist.

SUE

Can you straighten your knee?

(DONNA straightens it, but can't hide the pain.)

DONNA

I'll take my ten minutes and I'll be fine.

SUE

This guy's ten minutes is going to be more like five. There's a hematoma the size of a golf ball. You can't fence.

(calls to MADDIE)

Maddie, suit up!

(MADDIE gets ready to fence.)

DONNA

I will fence. Help me stand.

SUE

No. Withdraw.

DONNA

All right, I'll stand by myself and you'll look like a moron for not helping me.

(stands, winces)

SUE

How are you going to fence like this?! Stop being ridiculous and let Maddie finish!

DONNA

(hobbles back and forth painfully)

I've got to do this!

REFEREE

Une minute!

(MADDIE approaches them, geared up.)

SUE

I was wrong. His ten minutes is more like two minutes. Let Maddie fence or you're going to blow the whole match.

DONNA

I know exactly what to do with her. Maddie's clueless.

(MADDIE'S face drops.)

SUE

What do you mean?! She nearly beat Schneider in the semi-finals yesterday and Maddie never loses twice.

DONNA

Gretchen was toying with her like a killer whale and a seal pup. See what difficulty I just had?

SUE

So, Maddie's a seal pup and you're a shark or something?

DONNA

Exactly.

MADDIE

How can you say that?!

(Ignoring MADDIE, DONNA tries to bend down to pick up her weapon but fails.)

DONNA

Give me my weapon.

REFEREE

Le temps de blessure est terminé. Retornez en garde sur la ligne, mesdames.

SUE

Stop being a stupid bitch. You're going to hurt yourself and let the team down.

DONNA

Give me my weapon!

SUE

Fuck you!

DONNA

No one's going to stop me from fencing! Especially my own teammate! Now, give me my weapon!

(When SUE won't, MADDIE hands DONNA her weapon. They exchange glances. DONNA hobbles to the on-guard line. SUE glares at MADDIE. They sit down.)

SUE

You can't let her do that, Mad.

MADDIE

What?

SUE

She makes you think you're a fencing goddess or something, but now you heard what she really thinks.

REFEREE

En garde. Êtes-vous prêtes? Allez!

(The bout continues, with DONNA, compromised, making desperate moves. SUE and MADDIE watch in silence, MADDIE slumping, SUE with her arms crossed. CINDY enters.)

CINDY

I can't believe Donna and Gretchen were, like, the Barbie and Ken of fencing, and now look at them. Total carnage.

SUE

Where were you?

CINDY

I called Jason.

SUE

(sarcastically, looking at MADDIE)

What a great idea!

CINDY

The surgery went awesome. Petie's sleeping like an angel.

MADDIE

Did he say anything about ... me not being there?

CINDY

He said it was cool. Petie didn't even ask for you.

MADDIE

He's saying that to make me feel bad.

SUE

Maybe he's saying it to make you feel better.

MADDIE

Not that asshole.

CINDY

Well, that asshole just got your son through radical surgery.

(With seven seconds, the fencers engage and DONNA scores.)

CINDY (Cont.)

(jumps up)

Woo hoo! Way to go, Donna-baby!

(looks at SUE and MADDIE who haven't moved)

Why aren't you cheering?

(They don't answer. CINDY sits down. Score changes to 26-26 with five seconds on the clock.)

REFEREE

Vingt-six, vingt-six. En garde, Mesdames.

DONNA

S'il-vous-plait le temps qui reste?

REFEREE

Cinq seconds. En garde. Êtes-vous prêtes? Allez!

(SCHNEIDER drops her guard and walks backwards, signaling she wants to go into overtime, but DONNA breaks the code of sportsmanship and *fleches*, catching SCHNEIDER by surprise. She scores a single touch as the clock runs out and the bout ends. DONNA cries out in pain as she lands on the injured leg. She struggles to prevent herself from falling again and getting the touch annulled. The display shows 26-27 in DONNA's favor. CINDY jumps up and cheers, but when no one else does, sits down.)

SUE

(scoffs)

Well, the bitch did it. She won. Whoopee.

(looks at watch)

Wonder if I can get an earlier flight home.

MADDIE

(sees something)

Hold on a minute—

(SCHNEIDER has approached the REFEREE, offering him the tip of her weapon. The bout has not been called.)

SUE

What the—?!

(REFEREE checks SCHNEIDER's wires for disconnection. He looks at SCHNEIDER furtively, then depresses the button on the tip of her épée. No lights go on.)

SUE (Cont.)

She rigged her weapon!

REFEREE

Mesdames, une arme qui ne fonctionne pas. Retornez en garde sur la ligne.

CINDY

For Christ' sake, ref! She pulled out her wire!

SUE

You slimy, cheating bitch!

(REFEREE resets the clock to five seconds and the score to 26-26. DONNA sits on the strip, in pain. Her knee is now bleeding through her pants. SCHNEIDER gets another weapon. SUE reluctantly attends to DONNA.)

SUE (Cont.)

(to DONNA)

Now there's blood on your knickers. You can't fence.

DONNA

Give me your knickers.

SUE

I am no way giving you my knickers.

(REFEREE approaches DONNA and SUE.)

REFEREE

C'est du sang?

DONNA

Non, c'est du rouge à lèvres.
(puckers)

REFEREE

C'est du sang. Vous devez vous retirer.

SUE

Monsieur le judge. Un remplacement, s'il vous plait. Maddie!

(Less spirited, MADDIE gets her gear and approaches the strip.)

DONNA

No. I'm going to fence.

SUE

You paid to bring Maddie here and now you don't want her to fence?!

MADDIE

What do you mean?

SUE

She bribed Shannon to drop out so you could come.

MADDIE

What?!

(to DONNA)

Why did you do that?

SUE

Because she wanted to win. Because Cindy and I aren't good enough. You're not her friend, Maddie; you're her pawn.

(to DONNA)

For Christ' sake, the ref just said you can't fence. Show a little humility for once and unhook.

MADDIE

Donna. Please. ...I've got to get home to my son.

(DONNA unhooks her cord from the reel, hands the wire to MADDIE. SUE tries to help DONNA walk but she shakes her off. DONNA and SUE sit with CINDY. Meanwhile, the REFEREE inspects MADDIE's equipment. MADDIE and SCHNEIDER come together to test bell guards.)

SCHNEIDER

At last. A fair bout.

MADDIE

I'm not so sure with you on the strip.

REFEREE

Cinq seconds. En garde. Êtes-vous prêtes? Allez!

(When the action begins, SCHNEIDER again lowers her guard and steps backwards. MADDIE steps back as well. The clock buzzes and stops. REFEREE readjusts it to show one minute.)

REFEREE (Cont.)

Un minute de temps ajouter. Avec la première touche qui emporte l'assault.

(digs a coin out of pocket)

Mademoiselle Schneider, pile ou face?

SCHNEIDER

Face.

REFEREE

(flips the coin)

Face. Priorité, Schneider. Mesdames, en garde.

(They salute, put their masks on, and get on guard.)

REFEREE (Cont.)

Prêtes? Allez!

(For 50 seconds, MADDIE and SCHNEIDER test each other while SUE and CINDY cheer.)

SUE

Be smart, Mads.

CINDY

Shish kabob that bitch, Maddie-baby! Stick her! Stick that slimy piece of—

(SUE clamps her hand over CINDY's mouth.)

SUE

Plenty of time, Maddie.

CINDY

Come on, Maddie. Look smart. Be strong.

SUE

You got this.

CINDY

This one's for Petie, baby.

SUE

Oooh!

CINDY

C'mon, Maddie! Attack! Attack!

SUE

Easy does it, girl.

CINDY

Don't fall for it, Maddie!

SUE

That's the way.

CINDY

Keep at it, keep at it.

SUE

Almost had it there.

CINDY

Next one's yours, baby.

(The clock shows ten seconds.)

SUE

Ten seconds!

(MADDIE starts pressuring SCHNEIDER.)

DONNA

Do what I did to you!

(MADDIE brings her back foot up to her front foot, and does a double lunge, scoring a touch right before the buzzer. SUE, CINDY, and DONNA erupt in victorious screams, but MADDIE waits nervously as SCHNEIDER has her weapon checked. REFEREE takes her blade and presses the point into his palm, as before. This time the light goes off.)

REFEREE

Victoire, Team U.S.A.

MADDIE

(at the top of her lungs, dropping to her knees)

Yesssss!!!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 14

SETTING: An hour later. Venue at Vilnius.

AT RISE: DONNA stands downstage, facing the audience, favoring her leg, face slashed, mascara running, sweaty, pants bloody at the knee, jacket unzipped, weapon dangling from the wire at her cuff, the letter in her hand. After a few beats, MADDIE enters, wearing a gold medal. She stands back.

DONNA
She was right, you know. ... I rammed his head into the driveway. When he was 15.

MADDIE
Why?

DONNA
Oh, you could say, "Because I told him to get into the car and he didn't." Or, "Because his junky girlfriend was there and I wanted to show her who's boss." Or, "Because I lost a client." Or, "Because my wife had transformed into a locust." Or "Because my father did it to me when I was young." Is there ever an excuse?

MADDIE
Was it just once?

DONNA
Once is forever.
(refers to letter)
Once I shoved him when he got caught playing hooky. Once I slapped him when he called me an alcoholic. Once I threw him against the wall when he wouldn't eat the undercooked steak— It's all listed here.
(looks up from letter)
But I never touched him after that summer afternoon when I held his skull in my hand and crushed his head into the hot, black macadam. He didn't move. I knew he was OK. Maybe his nose was broken— But he lay there, like he had ... given up.
(beat)
And now I can't say I'm sorry.

MADDIE
Sure, you can.

DONNA

He wouldn't hear it.

MADDIE

You're the one who needs to hear it.

DONNA

(beat, turns to her)

She's right. I'm a monster. Look what I did to you.

MADDIE

You were upset.

DONNA

Don't make excuses.

MADDIE

It worked out—

DONNA

And ... I kept you here because I wanted to win—

MADDIE

It was my own choice—

DONNA

I wasn't even thinking of ... the living. Tell me Petie's ok.

MADDIE

He's ok. The surgery went really well.

(DONNA breaks down. MADDIE hugs her.)

DONNA

Will you ever forgive me?

MADDIE

I probably would have done the same thing.

(DONNA recovers herself, pushes back.)

DONNA

That's the problem with us, Perez. We don't know when to stop fighting.

(sees the gold medal on MADDIE's chest)

Congratulations. You're the best woman fencer in the world. Over 50.

(MADDIE takes a gold medal from her back pocket and puts it around DONNA's neck.)

MADDIE

Not till I beat your ass. ... Hey, I've got to get back to my son.

DONNA

(looks at letter before folding it gently)

Yes you do.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 15

SETTING: The next day. PETIE's hospital room. There is a bed, a convertible armchair, and a table-tray.

AT RISE: PETIE is sleeping, hooked up to an i.v. MADDIE enters, in sweats and medal, pulling her roller bag and fencing bag. She gently lifts the sheets to inspect his abdomen. DONNA enters, limping, in a suit and pumps, with her roller bag, fencing bag, and multiple shopping bags. MADDIE is shocked. They speak in hushed tones.

MADDIE
What—?!

DONNA
I'll connect to Boston later.

MADDIE
How did you get here? Your flight was, like, two hours after mine.

DONNA
You did JFK and the A-train. I did Newark and a cab.

MADDIE
Well ... thanks for coming.

(As she speaks, DONNA unloads contents of the bags: cupcakes, teddy bear, an XBOX 360-S, some cartridges, and a potted plant.)

DONNA
Hospitals are plague pits of putrefaction and decay. The boy needs an advocate. Don't worry. I'll take care of everything. And anyway, I needed to make sure he wasn't faking it. Have you called the nurse about the state of this floor?

(picks up a gauze from the floor and casts it in the bin)

MADDIE
I just got here.

DONNA
(indicates a brown spot on a sheet)
The filth and squalor of this place is absolutely unacceptable! How long has this i.v. been in?

MADDIE

Should I push the call button?
(reaches for it)

DONNA

(under her breath)
Don't! They'll scream over the intercom and wake him. I'll find a nurse.

(DONNA exits. PETIE, eyes closed, pushes his morphine trigger,
which beeps repeatedly. MADDIE panics. DONNA returns.)

DONNA (Cont.)

That's the morphine trigger I was telling you about.

MADDIE

He just pushed it twenty times. Can he overdose?

DONNA

No. It will only administer a set amount on the first beep.

MADDIE

Then why does it still beep?

DONNA

Imagine how you would feel if you were in infernal pain, pushed the button, and there was no beep. Where is that damn nurse? Varnishing their nails or something? He's about to blow a vein.

PETIE

(in his sleep)
Ow! Ow! Dad!

(RANDY enters, carrying an i.v. kit)

DONNA

Just in time.

RANDY

(calmly clamps the iv tube and inspects the lead)
Petie? It's Randy, honey. What's going on?

PETIE

(half awake)
Burning.

RANDY

Did the burning stop?

(PETIE drifts back to sleep.)

RANDY (Cont.)

(to MADDIE)

You the aunt?

MADDIE

His mother.

(RANDY looks at DONNA accusingly.)

DONNA

I told you I was his mother to get you in here.

(points at PETIE's arm accusingly)

And it's a good thing I did!

RANDY

(pulling out the lead)

His vein blew. Not a big deal. I'll start an i.v. in his other arm.

DONNA

What do you mean it's not a big deal?! He was in unconscionable pain!

RANDY

(looking at the machine on the i.v.)

His last dose of morphine was three minutes ago. He is definitely comfortable.

DONNA

Don't fuck it up.

(Through the following dialogue, RANDY inserts a new lead in PETIE's arm as he sleeps.)

RANDY

Who are you?

DONNA

His hedge fund manager! Now, do it! Quickly! Before he wakes!

RANDY

(to MADDIE)

He's been doing fine, mom. We lowered his morphine dosage yesterday, and tomorrow it will be discontinued.

DONNA

You're rushing to get him out of here. We'll talk to the doctor about that. Would you please get him on the phone?

RANDY

I'll let her know that Petie's hedge fund manager would like to speak with her.

(to MADDIE)

Mom? Were you thinking of spending the night?

MADDIE

Uh, yeah. Can I?

RANDY

You'll have to work it out with Dad. We can only accommodate one parent.

(starts to leave)

MADDIE

Uh, when will his father be back?

RANDY

He left about a half hour ago to pick something up. He'll probably be back soon. Hit the call button if you need me.

MADDIE

Thank you.

(RANDY exits. DONNA picks up an empty needle wrapper.)

DONNA

The epitome of incompetence!

(Beat.)

MADDIE

So you, like, paid Shannon McGillicuddy to drop out?

DONNA

I told her I had two non-refundable cruise tickets to Honolulu. But I would much rather go to Lithuania. Would she like to have them?

MADDIE

Hawaii? That must have cost a fortune.

DONNA

Amex points.

MADDIE

Still. You could have just waited till next year—

DONNA

In my bout against McGillicuddy, all I had to do was stick out my arm and she impaled herself five times.

MADDIE

But she qualified, fair and square.

DONNA

Come on, Maddie. Somewhere around Kindergarten we all learn the world is not fair. You deserved to be on the team. Shannon deserved to sit on a beach eating macadamia nuts. Everyone's where they belong: that's what's fair and square.

PETIE

(waking)

Mom?

MADDIE

I'm here darling. How do you feel?

PETIE

(seeing medal)

You won!

MADDIE

Yeah. We won the gold!

(puts medal around PETIE'S neck)

DONNA

Your mother carried the team to victory.

MADDIE

This is Donna, my teammate.

DONNA

Pleased to meet you, Petie.

PETIE

Did you fence too?

DONNA

Yes. Like a lame hippopotamus.

PETIE

Ow, ow, ow!

(clicks trigger repeatedly)

MADDIE

What's wrong, sweetie?

PETIE

(relieved by the beeps)

Nothing. I'll be better in a couple of days. Hey, mom, guess what? I'm going to the opening game in Boston. LeBron versus Shaq! Dad got courtside seats.

MADDIE

Look. Donna brought you some video games.

(DONNA hands him the XBOX.)

PETIE

I already got this one, but thanks anyway.

DONNA

What about these?

(shows him game cartridges)

PETIE

Halo Reach?! Awesome! How'd you get that?!

DONNA

I made the kid in the game shop an offer he couldn't refuse.

PETIE

Thanks!

(PETIE starts loading the game into his console. JASON approaches from the hallway. He remains behind the door but sticks his arm in. In his hand is a softball trophy. PETIE sees it poke through the door.)

PETIE (Cont.)

The Pigeons won!

(JASON enters, wearing a softball hat and an unbuttoned "Pigeons" jersey over his T-shirt. He stops when he sees MADDIE, but follows through and gives PETIE the trophy.)

JASON

Yeah. The team won. We're going to the finals.

PETIE

Even without you?

JASON

(rubbing it in)
Yeah, even without me, bud.

DONNA

(observing that MADDIE is not going to introduce them)
I'm Donna Cruthers. Maddie's teammate.

(JASON and DONNA shake hands. PETIE is playing his game.)

DONNA (Cont.)

How'd it go? The surgery.

JASON

When they went in, he was in pretty bad shape. Said if they waited one more day, it would have been too late.

(glances at MADDIE)

DONNA

(changing the tone)
Petie seems in good spirits.

JASON

He was a real trooper. Tomorrow he takes a walk, and he might be going home the day after that.

PETIE

(without looking up from his game)
Mom won the gold.

JASON

Congratulations.

PETIE

Where's Bowzer? You said you'd bring Bowzer.

JASON

Tried to smuggle him in, bud, but he yapped and a guard kicked him out. Kim and Johnny are walking him around the block.

(Uncomfortable silence while PETIE taps away on his device.)

DONNA

Maddie? Is there anything else?

MADDIE

No. No. I'm just exhausted.

JASON

It's all under control.

DONNA

Well, after two days of mortal combat with German cheats and snotty airline attendants, I'm ready for a martini. Shall we, Maddie?

MADDIE

I have to go, kiddo, but I can come back tonight. Want me to bring you Suvio's?

PETIE

Yeah. Sausage.

JASON

Hey, bud. You're on liquids.

PETIE

Aw! Come on, dad! Just a bite?

JASON

Nuh-uh. Doctor's orders. The spice will make your stoma sting.

MADDIE

(kisses PETIE on the head and starts to leave)

I'll ask the nurse on the way out.

JASON

I said, he can't have it.

MADDIE

I'll ask the nurse when it will be OK for him to eat pizza.

DONNA

It was nice meeting you, gentlemen. Hope you feel better soon, Petie.

PETIE

Thanks for Halo Reach. Hey dad, she got me Halo Reach!

JASON

How'd you get that? It just came out this morning.

DONNA

Only the latest and greatest for Petie.

JASON

Well, thanks.

(JASON shakes DONNA's hand. MADDIE's back is turned. The women walk out, into the hallway. During the following dialogue, PETIE hands JASON the console, then reaches for a contraband cupcake. Without looking up, JASON takes it away.)

MADDIE

Thanks for coming. And bringing him all that stuff. ... You going back to the airport? I mean, after a martini?

DONNA

There's something else I've got to do. ... How do you get to Middle Village?

MADDIE

What's in Middle Village?

DONNA

St. John's Cemetery.

MADDIE

(beat)

There's no train. You've got to take a cab.

DONNA

(looks at phone, looks up)

Would you come with me?

MADDIE

Yes.

(FADEOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 16

SETTING: An hour later. Cemetery. There's a patch of turf over the middle of the strip. On either side there are a few headstones. Around one that says "Humberto Ruiz" are daisies. There is no headstone at the head of the turf.

AT RISE: DONNA and MADDIE stand on the strip, on either side of the grave, roller bags and fencing bags to the side.

DONNA
Six years and no headstone.

MADDIE
There's a monument dealer across the road?

DONNA
(sees daisies)
We had a patch of daisies in the back garden. He'd pick bouquets for Gretchen. Make crowns for her hair.

MADDIE
There's a nursery next to the monument dealer?

DONNA
Daisies. Like little blond boys smiling up at me.

(MADDIE plucks some daisies and places them on the turf.)

MADDIE
I don't think Humberto's going to complain.

(They sit for a while.)

DONNA
You and Jason were as cold as porcelain toilet seats.

MADDIE
Nothing new.

DONNA
How much are the arrears now?

MADDIE

Seventy grand.

DONNA

How'd you pay for Lithuania?

MADDIE

Emptied my 401k.

DONNA

Why didn't you empty it for Petie? He could have ended up here.

MADDIE

...I thought about it at one point, but then I got an email from Jason saying he and Kim were going scuba diving in Belize, so he couldn't watch Petie. That's just not right.

DONNA

My college roommate is a divorce lawyer in New York. They call him the Pit Bull. He enters the courtroom and they scatter like roaches.

MADDIE

I go after Jason in court and I'll never see Petie.

DONNA

The Pit Bull can get you the money and the kid.

MADDIE

I don't know. I love Petie but— I see him every other weekend which is working out great and ... he's better off with his father.

DONNA

What I saw in there was a happy little boy. Even after being disemboweled. Jason's a good father, but ... you're 50. You need a retirement plan.

(DONNA takes a scrap of paper from her purse, scribbles on it, and hands it to MADDIE.)

DONNA (Cont'd)

The Pit Bull. Call him. He'll give you options.

MADDIE

Thanks.

DONNA

Well, the last flight to Boston is at ten. I'd better grab a cocktail then hit the monument dealer. Is there a dive bar nearby? I've always wanted to go to a dive bar in Queens.

MADDIE

Next to the nursery.

DONNA

Join me?

MADDIE

I better go home. And call the Pit Bull.

(DONNA pulls Stephane's letter from her pocket, squats painfully, places it on the grave under the daisies, runs her hand across the turf, then stands.)

DONNA

Well, Perez. Until we meet again. At the Pomme de Terre.

MADDIE

The Pomme de Terre?! But that's in two weeks. What about your knee?

DONNA

Nothing can stop me from fencing ... you.

(They exit with their bags.)

FADEOUT

END OF SCENE

Scene 17

SETTING: That night. Hospital.

AT RISE: PETIE is asleep. Jason is next to him, playing Halo Reach.
MADDIE walks in, juggling her roller bags and a pizza box. She is still wearing her U.S.A. sweats.

MADDIE
Hi.

(JASON glances up. Returns to game.)

MADDIE (Cont.)
(eyes trophy)
You're playing slow pitch again.

JASON
(without looking up)
Yeah, except when my son's having surgery. I sit out the game.

MADDIE
(beat)
I have to talk to you.

JASON
Is this the place?

MADDIE
He's asleep.

JASON
What is it?

MADDIE
I talked to a lawyer—

JASON
For Christ' sake. Are you going to drag this into the courts?

MADDIE
No. I'm not suing you. I'm suggesting we rewrite the alimony agreement.

JASON

Alimony, alimony. It's always about friggin' money.

MADDIE

It's not about money. It's about me getting back into the workforce after 11 years and that takes training. Look, I'm suggesting that instead of permanent alimony you give me a chunk of money to go to technical school, apprentice for a couple of years, then the alimony ends after four years.

JASON

Ends completely?

MADDIE

Yeah.

JASON

And I can pay the school directly?

MADDIE

I still need living expenses.

JASON

"Living expenses?" I know what that means.

MADDIE

Damion's moving to Colorado. With his wife. He won't be getting the money.

JASON

I don't care. It wasn't that shit-head who ruined my family. It was fencing. Not a dime of my money is going to fencing.

MADDIE

To me, fencing is living. I'm a fencer and there's nothing wrong with that.

JASON

There's something wrong with it when you go around sleeping with your coach.

MADDIE

(beat)

Where'd you go that day?

JASON

What day?

MADDIE

The day you saw me with Damion.

JASON

(under his breath)
How dare you bring that up here!

MADDIE

You stormed out of the apartment.

JASON

What was I supposed to do? Stand there and watch some other guy fuck my wife?

MADDIE

Where'd you go?

JASON

I went and got Petie from school.

MADDIE

What'd you say to him?

JASON

Nothing. We went to the park and threw stones in a pond.

MADDIE

Why Petie?

JASON

I needed to know someone in this family still loved me.

(PETIE's trigger starts beating repeatedly and he starts swinging his head back and forth in his sleep. MADDIE and JASON rush to his side. MADDIE reaches for the call button. JASON grabs her hand and stops her. At that point PETIE mumbles, in his sleep.)

PETIE

Roller coaster. I want to ride the roller coaster.

(PETIE falls silent. MADDIE and JASON look at each other. MADDIE can't help but smile, but JASON is not smiling and not letting go of her arm. He needs to hear it.)

MADDIE

It wasn't fencing that ruined our family. It was me. I hurt you. And I am sorry. But I'm not sorry for fencing.

JASON

He could have been dead.

MADDIE

I'm not sorry for fencing but I'm sorry for putting it before Petie.

(After a pause, JASON lets go.)

JASON

I put it before Petie, too.

(turns away)

...What about custody?

MADDIE

I love Petie, and I want to be in his life. But you're a good dad and you can give him what he needs. I'm fine with the alternate weekends.

JASON

So, four years, and that's it? No more alimony?

MADDIE

Pretty much. We can work out the details.

JASON

I'll consider it.

MADDIE

I made an appointment with the lawyer. Will you come?

JASON

Yeah. But, I'm bringing my own lawyer.

MADDIE

Fine.

(pats PETIE's hair, kisses him)

Hey, I have to get going. I've been up for over 24 hours.

(hands JASON the pizza box)

JASON

I told you they said no pizza.

MADDIE

It's for you. ...Meat-lovers with olives.

JASON

(beat)

Thanks.

(takes the box)

Why you still got your bags?

MADDIE

I went to my apartment and they changed the locks. I owe three month's rent, and I just spent my last three dollars on pizza.

JASON

Where are you going to sleep?

MADDIE

I'll call Cindy.

JASON

But the cats.

MADDIE

She'll probably get me a hotel.
(turns to go)

JASON

(just before MADDIE leaves the room)

Hey. Don't worry about the rent. I got it.

MADDIE

Thanks. See you tomorrow.

JASON

See ya.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Epilogue

SETTING: September, 2010. Mexican restaurant in Columbus, Ohio, after the Pomme de Terre tournament.

AT RISE: MADDIE, SUE, CINDY, and DONNA around a table with margarita glasses, shot glasses, tequila. They are wearing sombreros, Team U.S.A. sweats, and medals around their necks: MADDIE gold, DONNA silver, SUE and CINDY bronze. MADDIE is on the phone. DONNA is opening a tin of caviar. The women hold out their fists while DONNA spoons caviar near the base of their thumbs.

MADDIE

Don't worry, sweetie. He's just a dog. He'll ... lick it off or something.

(pause)

Soon you'll be back to normal and not have to worry about it. OK?

(pause)

Love you too, sweetie. I'm bringing you home a big gold one.

(eyes DONNA, who snarls back)

OK. OK. Bye, sweetie. Love you.

(hangs up)

CINDY

Is Petie-baby OK?

MADDIE

Yeah. His stoma bag fell off and liquid feces spurted all over the dog.

DONNA

Ladies, please! We're about to sample one of the world's finest delicacies. No f-words!

CINDY

I don't think PETA approves of caviar. Don't tell them I'm doing this.

DONNA

No fish were harmed in the making of this caviar.

CINDY

How'd they get it out, then?

DONNA

They dilate the hole and squeeze it out. Then throw her back in.

CINDY

Hole? Like the vagina? They dilate the fish's vagina?

SUE

Not vagina. Papilla. A small opening next to the anus.

DONNA

Ladies! Please! Show some decorum!

MADDIE

Sounds pretty painful to me.

SUE

A lot kinder than what they did to the cow in your taco.

DONNA

(puts a small scoop on her own hand, finishing the tin)

There you go, ladies. A hundred bucks on each of our fists.

MADDIE

This is a hundred dollars? Wow!

DONNA

(raises her hand in a cheer; they do the same)

The road to Kazakstan is officially open. May the best women win!

CINDY

In other words, us!

MADDIE

Kazakstan?

SUE

That's where they're sending us for the next World Championship.

CINDY

Olé!

MADDIE

Cin cin!

SUE

Mazel tov!

DONNA

За дружбу! [za DROOZH-boo]

CINDY

What's that mean?

DONNA

To friendship!

(They eat the caviar.)

CINDY

Mmmmm. Awesome!

SUE

Wow. That's good shit

MADDIE

Tastes fishy.

SUE

(raises a margarita glass)

Ladies! Ladies! To Maddie's new career!

DONNA

Maddie Perez, Royal Electrocutoner!

MADDIE

Electrician, for now.

CINDY

Maddie? Sometimes my light doesn't go off. Can you fix my weapon?

DONNA

Perhaps it's because you're not hitting anything.

MADDIE

I just started the apprenticeship. All I know are the state codes.

CINDY

Hey! Hey! We have to take the team picture before we can't stand up anymore.

(DONNA takes a box from under the table. She pulls out wigs one-by-one.)

DONNA

Who's Kate Jackson?

SUE

That's me.

DONNA

Jaclyn Smith?

MADDIE

I call Jaclyn! I love her hair!

DONNA

Cindy, you're Cheryl Ladd.

CINDY

Me? A Cinderella Southern Belle bitch? Really?

DONNA

Sorry, Robinson. Ever since watching the pilot episode in 1976, I've wanted nothing more in the universe than to be—

(puts on Farrah wig)

Farrah!

CINDY

(props phone, camera timer on)

Places, ladies. We have eight seconds.

(CINDY counts down as they all grab épées and assemble in a Charlie's Angels pose.)

CINDY (Cont.)

Eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one...

ALL

Team U.S.A.!

(Camera flashes.)

(BLACKOUT)

END OF PLAY