

HILLARY sits alone on a sofa, head in hands. There is a knock at the door. She looks up with a start, her expression a look of knowing dread. The door is knocked again. Still she does not move. Soon the door is knocked once more.

MAN

(Off.)

Hillary?

(Pause.)

Hillary, I know you're there.

(Pause.)

Hillary, open the door.

(HILLARY does not move. The door is knocked again)

MAN

(Off.)

Hillary, open the door – please. You knew I was coming. I told you I was coming. Don't make it difficult – you know I'm here to help.

(HILLARY'S expression is ever more tense, but still she remains seated.)

MAN

(Off.)

Hillary, open the door now. I'm not budging until you do. I've come a very long way to be here today and I've no intention of turning around and walking away. The Department has received information – grave information. I'm very concerned, Hillary. I don't know what's been going on in there, but I intend to find out.

(Beat.)

It's your well being I care about – I want to stop this. Now please open the door...or I promise you I'll find a way in.

HILLARY

(Wearily.)

Won't you just go away – please? Haven't you done enough?

MAN

(Off.)

The Department of Social Services doesn't *cause* problems, Hillary, we solve them, and the sooner you open this door the sooner we can resolve this crisis.

HILLARY

I'm not opening anything. I'm tired, don't you understand? I'm tired of all of you.

MAN

(Off.)

You're weak, Hillary. You're weak and you can't think clearly. That's why I'm here – to put things in perspective; to make your life better.

HILLARY

My life would be better if you'd just leave me alone – all of you.

MAN

(Off, forcefully.)

Hillary, open this door now and let me in. I won't ask you again.

(Pause. The door is knocked again. After a moment or two HILLARY drags herself up from the sofa and slowly moves toward the door. Suddenly loud thumping sounds of the door being kicked in are heard. HILLARY steps back in fear. Finally the door is kicked open and the MAN enters.)

HILLARY

I...what are you doing! I was...this is my home!

MAN

I told you I was coming. I tried to reason with you. You wouldn't listen.

HILLARY

For God's sake, I was...this is my home – I live here! This is mine! You can't just...kick down my door!

MAN

I can – and I did.

HILLARY

On...with what right? With whose authority? I thought you wanted to help? This is...it's wrong...it's illegal.

MAN

The Department of Social Services isn't bound by any legal authority, Hillary. In cases like yours, with a proven history of spousal abuse and clear evidence of life endangerment, we operate under the auspices of the only true authority – moral authority.

HILLARY

But I don't want you here. I told you, you just make things worse.

MAN

And I told you you're not capable of thinking for yourself. How could you? You've spent so long suffering the abuse of that man, being thumped and browbeaten and belittled, that you've lost the capacity to think independently. That's why I've come – that's why they sent me – to help you regain that independence.

HILLARY

I don't want it. I don't want anything you're offering.

MAN

Of course you do – everybody does. And I'm here to give it to you.

HILLARY

By breaking into my house?

MAN

By breaking down your resistance. By breaking your dependency on a man who rules your life with an iron fist; who threatens and beats you into subservience.

HILLARY

But I...I can't...I'm too tired, I'm too weak, don't you see? I haven't the strength to fight. It's been too long.

MAN

That's why I'm here – to give you that strength. I'm on your side – surely you realize that?

HILLARY

You said that before...the last time.

MAN

And I meant it then every bit as much as I mean it now.

HILLARY

So why did you go? Why did you leave me here to face him alone?

MAN

Life's not that simple, Hillary. The Department of Social Services, however well funded, cannot be everywhere all the time – much as we'd like to. We have outreach programs in countless communities, requiring enormous amounts of manpower and resources. Obviously there comes a point where we must expect you to begin helping yourself. If we didn't you'd simply be exchanging one dependency for another...and where would that get you?

(Pause.)

HILLARY

Do you know what he did to me?

MAN

We know everything.

HILLARY

After you'd gone? Do you? Do you know what he did after you came and made a big song and dance about standing up to him, about standing up for myself, about getting a divorce and starting a new life without him? Do you know what happened...after you left?

MAN

The Department can't afford to get bogged down in details, Hillary. They're a diversion. A moral crusade can only triumph by keeping its gaze fixed firmly ahead.

(Pause. HILLARY sits on the sofa.)

HILLARY

When you'd gone – taking your “charitable assistance” with you – I sat and I waited. I waited for him to come home, my heart pounding inside of me because I knew that he'd know that you'd been here. He seems to know everything...like you.

(Beat.)

He came in and locked the door – the same door you just destroyed – and tied my hands behind my back with the cord from the telephone and kicked my legs from beneath me. He pulled down his pants and shat on the carpet. He told me I had to eat it – all of it.

(Beat.)

I tried to breath, as much as I could, through my mouth instead of my nose as I ate so as to lessen the nausea. Still I gagged. Each time I gagged he'd kick my head...or my ribs or my legs. Finally I could stand no more and I vomited. With his boot he pushed my face into my vomit before kicking me some more. Then he left...with the feeling, I imagine, that he'd made his point.

(Pause.)

MAN

Words fail me, Hillary. They honestly do. How could a man do something so...unspeakable...*to his own wife*? How could any human being do that to another?

(Beat.)

But that's exactly why you need me now – *now* – don't you understand? To stop this from happening again. To stop him from ever doing that to anyone ever again. This cannot go on – it has to be stopped.