

A Feminine Ending

Written by Sarah Treem

DARK COMEDY

Characters: *AMANDA* (Mid 20s, oboist, aspiring composer)
 KIM (Early 50s, Amanda's mother. Homemaker)

AMANDA: *(softly)* Mom?

KIM looks up. Gasps.

KIM: Why didn't you knock?

AMANDA: The lights were out. I didn't think anyone was home.

KIM: Good. That's the point, isn't it?

AMANDA: What's the point, Mom?

KIM: Vacancy. Abandonment It would be pointless to knock. Or stop in for a chat. We are, so very clearly, not at home.

AMANDA: You want people to think you've gone away?

KIM: I must be left alone to work in peace. Did anyone see you come in? Does anyone know you're here?

AMANDA: Jack knows where I am.

KIM: Who?

AMANDA: Jack, Mom, you know Jack. My fiancée.

KIM: Jack. Yes. You're still seeing him, I gather?...

AMANDA: We're engaged Mom.

KIM: Oh don't say that.

AMANDA: Why don't you like him? He's a really good guy.

KIM: He's unbearably formal.

AMANDA: You make him nervous!

KIM: I don't make anyone nervous. Not even squirrels.

AMANDA: Squirrels?

KIM: They don't find me intimidating. Not in the least. Everyone else – they're afraid of. Your father looks in

their direction and they scatter. But me, I'll be walking down the road, and there, right in the middle of the path, two squirrels will be having an argument -

AMANDA: An argument?

KIM: A discussion. A conversation. Whatever. The point is, they don't move. Not even when I'm half a foot away from them. Not even if I step over them. They stay right where they are. As if I wasn't even there. As if I didn't even exist. I have become invisible.

AMANDA: No, Mom, you're just in a rut -

KIM: - Do not pity me. I'm not seeking sympathy. It was a deliberate choice. Phase one.

AMANDA: Phase one?

KIM: Are you aware that you're repeating everything I say?

AMANDA: What are you talking about?!

KIM: You just said "phase one", after I did. Earlier you said "Squirrels"? And then "an argument"? You're trying to belittle me. But it won't work. I'm determined to do it.

AMANDA: Determined to do it?

KIM: There you go again -

AMANDA: What are you determined to do?

Beat.

KIM: Leave your father, of course.

AMANDA sits down. She is suddenly very, very tired.

AMANDA. Of course.

KIM. You just did it again!

AMANDA. When?

KIM. This weekend.

AMANDA. That's why you needed me to come up.

KIM. To help me pack. We need to be gone by the time your father comes home.

AMANDA. Which is?

KIM. Tomorrow night.

Pause.

KIM. That's plenty of time, Amanda.

No response.

KIM: At school, some of my students snort Ritalin when they have to stay up all night to study. They gave me some, in powder form. Ground it right there in front of me.

KIM takes some white powder out of her purse to show AMANDA.

KIM. Is that what cocaine looks like?

AMANDA. I don't know, Mom. I don't do coke.

KIM. Still, now that Jack's a rockstar, you must be exposed to it.

AMANDA. He's not a rockstar.

KIM. That's not what my students say.

AMANDA. Your students are talking about Jack?

KIM. The ones that snort Ritalin are. They somehow found his webpage and saw he had dedicated some songs to Amanda Blue. They only wanted to know if you and I were related. I gave them your address. They wanted to send him something to sign.

AMANDA. Mom, do you have a student named Katrina?

KIM. Yes, actually

AMANDA. Don't give my address out anymore, okay?

KIM. Why? Did she send a letter?

AMANDA. It's just not a good idea.

KIM. Are you hungry? I made tuna melts.

AMANDA: Mom, I -

KIM. Thank you so much for coming, Mandy. You can't possibly imagine what it means. It's times like these when I remember why I had a daughter.

(Beat) That didn't come out right.

AMANDA. Don't thank me. You know, I'm leaving.

KIM. You just got here -

AMANDA. And I realize I made a mistake. So I'm leaving.

KIM. I think somebody's a little cranky. I think somebody could use a tuna melt -

AMANDA. I have a wedding to plan Mom. I have a job. I have a life back in New York that I cannot believe I let you coax me away from because Dad is gone for the weekend and you're feeling lonely.

Beat.

KIM. I'm leaving your father, Amanda.

AMANDA. Like hell you are.

KIM. Why do you think I've packed this suitcase?

AMANDA. Because you're bored and you're looking for a fantasy to entertain. This isn't the first time you've done this. Remember Nantucket?

KIM. That was different -

AMANDA. How was that different?

KIM. I didn't go through with it then.

AMANDA. And you're not going to go through with it now. We're going race around the house all weekend, in the dark apparently, packing up the silver and the china and the linens -

KIM. I'm leaving the linens. They're hideous. They belonged to his mother -

AMANDA. - And you're going to change your mind at the very last moment, right before Daddy comes back, and shove everything into the closet and we're all going to have dinner tomorrow night as if nothing ever happened.

KIM. It's different this time.

AMANDA. It took me a year to look Daddy in the eye again after Nantucket.

KIM. You always were such a ridiculously sensitive child -

AMANDA. You told me he was a bad man -

KIM. You were ten. Was I supposed to tell you your father hadn't fucked me in a year?

Beat.

AMANDA. No!

KIM. Well, what should I have done? Left you there? If you hadn't thrown such a temper tantrum we might have made that ferry

Beat.

AMANDA. I'll make it easier for you this time. I'll get out of your way now.

AMANDA gets up and grabs her coat.

KIM. This time I have proof.

AMANDA stops.

AMANDA. What kind of proof?

KIM. Hold on. Just hold on.

KIM exits into the kitchen and comes back with a small package of linfoil. She hands it to AMANDA.

AMANDA What is this?

KIM. Open it and see.

AMANDA. Why is it cold?

KIM. It was in the refrigerator.

AMANDA pulls out a pair of hot pink, lacey women's panties.

AMANDA. What are these?

KIM. They look like panties to me.

AMANDA. Whose panties?

KIM. I couldn't tell you, darling. I could only make an educated guess. I found them in your father's coat pocket.

AMANDA. Did you ask him what he's doing with them?

KIM. No, I didn't.

AMANDA. Why not?

KIM. Because I don't particularly want to know what he's doing with them or to whom they belong. I just want to leave him.

AMANDA hands the panties back to KIM.

AMANDA. What are you waiting for?

KIM. You think I should do it?

AMANDA. You don't need my permission -

KIM. But I do need your key.

AMANDA. What key?

KIM. I need some place to stay, just for a few months, until I find a job.

AMANDA. No.

KIM. Aman -

AMANDA. No! No! No! No! This has gone far enough. You can't move in.

KIM. It wouldn't be for very long -

AMANDA. You said a few months -

KIM. You lived in my house for eighteen years, Amanda. Time is relative.

AMANDA. I'm getting married -

KIM. I've done that before I can help.

AMANDA. I don't want your help.

KIM. Fine, then I won't help. I won't even talk to you. I'll talk to Jack.

AMANDA. Jack's never home.

KIM. Is he having an affair?

AMANDA. No! He's - I don't know - he got meetings and - photo shoots. They're so excited about his album, they pushed up the release date. Which is why we had to change the wedding day.

KIM You've changed the wedding day?

AMANDA. We sent out those change-the-date cards -

KIM: I never got a card.

AMANDA: Are you sure?

KIM. You'll only be the first Mrs. Handel. You do understand that, don't you? Famous people never stay with their first wives. Let Jack marry somebody else this time around. You can pick him up again in five or six years. Hey, where are you going?

AMANDA is heading out the door.

AMANDA. It's been a pleasure Mother, as usual.