

good at puzzles. I think they're kinda fun. Maybe I can help ya put the pieces back together. Look at the bigger picture.

DENNIS: It's no use.

SALLY: Come on, now. Don't be so negative. Ya got a nice office here. Lots of people to give advice to. You make a killing.

DENNIS: It's just not worth it. And I'm sick of giving advice. Giving, giving, giving.

SALLY: Well maybe you should think that you're telling, not giving. And taking, taking, taking lots of money.

DENNIS: You seem so positive about it. Why don't you take it? Huh? You think my job's so easy — take it!

SALLY: OK. I will. I think I'd like to do this job. Make my own hours, be my own boss, tell people what to do, make lots of money. *(Beat. Realizing.)* Wow, I'm really glad I came to see you. You are very good. To tell you the truth I didn't really think you'd find me anything. But look, ya did. Just goes to show you, the world isn't quite so black. And you were right. Ya gotta make that initial investment. *(Beat.)* So, Dennis, in order to find the perfect career match, I'd like to do a little exercise with you . . .

BACK TO SCHOOL

Greg and Tess, late twenties, are married and have been living together for several years. Tess has gotten into the habit of spending large sums of money at Office World and other office supply stores. Things have gotten worse ever since Greg's hours at work have increased. Crisis point hit when they realized she had maxed out several credit cards. Greg has been understanding and has even gone with Tess to Shopaholics Anonymous meetings, but he has now reached his limit. Tess, therefore, has made a promise not to buy anything from Office World without Greg's approval. Tonight, he has found some suspicious new-looking paper products. Tess is just arriving home as the scene begins.

CHARACTERS

Greg: 20s, Tess's husband

Tess: 20s, Greg's wife

SETTING

Greg and Tess's apartment

TIME

The present

TESS: *(Entering. Surprised by seeing Greg.)* Oh! *(Waves.)* Hi!!

Greg! Wow! I didn't expect you to be — here.

GREG: I got off early. I finished writing my story early.

TESS: Oh. Yeah. *(Looking at her watch.)* It's early. My gosh. It's real early for you.

GREG: Yes! We covered that. Now, where were *you*?

TESS: What? Well, I was out. I was out. I went out.

GREG: Out? Oh. Where'd you go?

TESS: Food. I was out with dinner. I mean — *for* dinner. Out with Tanya and Joe for dinner. They called me last minute at work.

GREG: Uh-huh. How are Joe and Tanya doing then?
TESS: Great, great — wonderful — really great — They're great!
GREG: I heard they both got laid off yesterday.
TESS: Ohhh! (*Laughs.*) Right. Wow. Yeah. Wow. I forgot that.
Yeah, yeah, that sucked, huh? But besides that, they're great.
We had a great time. (*Sweetsie voice.*) I wish I knew my Little Honey-Bunny was going to be home. I would have grabbed you to come with us.
GREG: Yeah?
TESS: Yeah, of course. I missed my Little Honey-Bunny.
GREG: Don't Honey-Bunny me.
TESS: What is that supposed to mean?
GREG: Just as it sounded.
TESS: Well, it sounded like Honey-Bunny is getting a little Poopsy-Whoopsy for no reason at all. Every night I come home to an empty apartment. And now suddenly, I'm not at home *one* night and out pops Poopsy-Whoopsy.
GREG: Myyy aren't we defensive? Isn't that interesting?
TESS: Defensive? I'm not defensive! I just don't like your accusations!
GREG: (*Calmly.*) Accusations? Did I make accusations? No, I think we're acting a mite guilty.
TESS: (*Feeling guilty.*) Why would I be feeling guilty?
GREG: You tell me, Tess? Why would you?
TESS: I wouldn't. I shouldn't. I don't. I asked you first.
GREG: I know where you've been tonight, Tess.
TESS: Ohhh. Oh, I see. I see now. Well, you couldn't know where I was, Greg. Unless, of course, you followed me which you promised me that you'd never, never, never do unless someone hung you by your toenails!
GREG: I saw the desk organizers, Tess.
TESS: (*Pause.*) Yeah. So? (*Beat.*) So! Tanya gave them to me for your information. Ha! Did you think I would just leave them out if there was anything suspicious about them?
GREG: And the new manila folders in the file cabinet?

TESS: (*Can't look him in the eye.*) Oh, well . . . She gave me those too.
GREG: Oh come on! Since when does Tanya bring you office supplies?
TESS: Well, she did. She dropped them by last week sometime, Mr. Accusations. One of those nights when you were at the paper until some god-awful hour. Do you want to do an all out investigation? (*Lifting up her arms.*) Search me for paper clips and staples if you'd like.
GREG: Doesn't Tanya know about our little problem?
TESS: Yes, she knows about our little problem. But I don't think it's part of our little problem if I'm not purchasing the things . . . if I'm given the things. It's not part of the little problem. No one's presents were part of the little problem. I don't think a couple of desk organizers and a few piddily-widdily folders are a problem. Do you?
GREG: That's all she gave you?
TESS: Of course.
GREG: Ah-hah! See! Then explain the pink stinky notes.
TESS: Stinky notes?
GREG: Sticky notes! Don't distract me. You know what I mean. Those sticky notes are brand new.
TESS: I knew you were going to bring those up. I knew it! They were in the back of our office closet. I cleaned up that closet this week. I didn't buy them. I found them.
GREG: Wait a minute. The ones I remember having brand new were yellow.
TESS: (*Beat.*) Maybe you remembered wrong. Pink sticky notes, yellow sticky notes. What do you know about any sticky notes anyway? The only kinds of notes you write are on little pieces of scrap envelopes spread out throughout the apartment.
GREG: Come on. You went there, didn't you?
TESS: Like a post office gone wrong —
GREG: You've been back there, Tess, haven't you?

TESS: Birthday card envelopes, phone bill envelopes, work envelopes —

GREG: Admit it! Haven't you?

TESS: Every which way like a tornado sucked the mailman into our apartment and slammed him through the paper shredder!!

GREG: Tess!!

TESS: So I went! Big deal! It was just one time. And that's not where I got the pink stinky notes — we had them.

GREG: I knew it! I knew it!

TESS: I didn't buy anything — I just looked.

GREG: What will Michelle say? And the rest of the SAA group?

TESS: Nothing. Because you aren't going to tell them. Right, sweetheart?

GREG: Tess, you went to Office World unaccompanied, without phoning for help first, and of your own free will — despite your promises to me, to Shopaholics Anonymous, and to yourself.

TESS: But . . . but I didn't buy anything. I just . . . browsed.

GREG: For you, there is no such thing as browsing. One peek at some pretty pens, one touch of a corkboard, one whiff of a freshly opened notebook and wham! You're sunk. *(Beat.)* How bad was it?

TESS: Gregggg. *(Silence.)* One plastic portfolio pocket. *(He waits.)* And a six-pack of Scotch tape — it was on sale. And some stuff.

GREG: How much?

TESS: Just a few things.

GREG: How much?!

TESS: Two hundred and seventy-four dollars and thirty-three cents.

GREG: What?!

TESS: It was a bargain!

GREG: For who? How do you spend two hundred and seventy-four dollars at an office supply store?

TESS: It's really easy. I can show you.

GREG: *(Crazed.)* I don't want you to show me!! I want you to stop!!

TESS: I didn't buy the postal scale with the print-your-own stamps option.

GREG: Well, isn't that good news considering the post office is in the building!

TESS: You're getting a little excited! We aren't supposed to get excited at me!

GREG: I'm just feeling the need to express myself. Of which I am allowed!

TESS: Excited!

GREG: I'm not excited! I'm broke!

TESS: *(Panicked.)* Word! Word!

GREG: OK. Heard. Heard. I think we should stop and have a meeting right now.

TESS: But the meeting isn't until Wednesday night.

GREG: I know, but this is a special meeting. It's a keep-a-roof-over-our-heads-until-Wednesday meeting. Just the two of us. Of course all S.A.A. rules will remain intact so there is no cross talk. Now. Who wants to start? OK, I will.

TESS: But —

GREG: No cross talk please. *(Takes a long deep breath.)* I put up with converting our living room into an office. I even bought you the connecting file cabinets and the revolving computer stand. Even though you don't have a home business. I know you like to be organized but there has to be a limit. I have been going to the Shopaholic meetings with you every Wednesday. I listen to you. I support you. But now I want to kill you.

TESS: Hi, I'm Tess. *(Looking at him.)* I'm just trying to stick to the rules. Today I'm feeling a little annoyed because my husband has been getting a little excited. Repeatedly. We're not supposed to be getting excited. That's a rule. I only had one little splurge. It wasn't anywhere near as bad as that time at the seventy-two-hour sale at Paper Max. Although, I admit, I did break a few promises —

GREG: A few?!

TESS: *(Points, warning.)* Cross talk. *(He bushes.)* I must say that I did refrain from some difficult bargains which included a fabulous make-your-own stamps electronic postal scale. Anyway, the point is . . . I had a breakthrough today. You see, I was burrowing through boxes of binders that hadn't been on display yet. I picked up one with Winnie the Pooh on the front, and I remembered when I was a little girl how exciting it was at "back to school" time. I got to go shopping. And my mom would buy me all kinds of brand new folders and notebooks and pencils and stuff. It was a time to start a new adventure . . . a new beginning each year. And it all started with those school supplies. God, how I loved them!

GREG: I never knew that.

TESS: How could you? *I* just remembered. So, my big breakthrough today is that I realized that I have been addicted to supplies since I was a child.

GREG: Tess?

TESS: Well, that's all for today. Thank you for listening. *(Beat.)* Yes?

GREG: Do you think that maybe you want to go back to school?

TESS: Well, I . . . I hadn't really thought about it. I do feel kind of lonely and bored when you're at the paper. I know I could get an office job, but that's so . . . grown up-and yucky. *(She giggles.)* Can you imagine me starting school all over again? Going to classes? Doing homework? God, that sounds exciting!

GREG: It does?

TESS: It does.

GREG: Really?

TESS: Really-really-really!

GREG: Tess, I think we just solved our little problem!

TESS: Yes! If I went back to school, I'd actually have a reason to buy all those supplies!

GREG: No, no, no — you have enough to last you from freshman to Ph.D.

TESS: Did I say buy? I meant that I'd have a reason to *need* them.

GREG: Need still sounds a little . . . needy.

TESS: Use! To *use* them, Greg. That's what I meant to say. *(They kiss.)*

TESS: God, college. How exciting! So many choices. *(Beat.)* Honey, do you think I should get a backpack or a tote bag?

GREG: Aaaaahhhhh!