

# THE VERI\*\*ON PLAY

## Scene 1

*A small pool of light comes up on JENNI.*

**JENNI.** Life changes on a dime, doesn't it?

*(She drifts off into a reverie, then—)*

I'm sorry... I lost my train of thought. Uh...

*(Remembers the dime she's holding in her hand.)*

Oh. Dime.

They say in the old days you could make a phone call with a dime. Can that really be true? Was it really that simple? Were there really little booths on corners where you could just slip a dime into the jingling slot and...

*(Sliding into an imaginary conversation.)*

Hi. I'm good, how are you? Oh, I don't know, what do *you* want to do tonight? Oh, that sounds fun. That sounds like so much... Funny, the things we take for granted until one day a little billing problem with Ferizon rips your life to shreds and everything you thought you knew about yourself and your world and everything just...just...

*(She takes her cell phone out of her pocket and looks at it.)*

How can something so little cause so much pain? It's not supposed to be that way. It comes with a PLAN! I thought it was a plan to make my life easier and better—but I was wrong. Oh my god, I was so wrong.

*(Collapsing.)*

*Oh why??? Why can't it all go back to the way it was???*

*(Ten months earlier. The sounds of a party in full swing—music, chatter, laughter. The lights come up on the shared Williamsburg apartment of JENNI and her sister ANISSA. Way too cool people are lounging, chatting, looking bored with how cool they are, holding cans of PBR, smoking, texting, watching videos on their iPhones, and grooving to the music in a hip and ironic way. We see a group of party goers gathered around JENNI and ANISSA; JENNI and a group of party goers are in the wind-down section of a big laugh.)*

**ANISSA.** Oh, that's a good one.

**PARTY GOER #2.** That is funny.

**JENNI.** Oh, that is so funny. I've told you what's happening with me and Ferizon, right?

**PARTY GOER #1.** Oh no.

**JENNI.** Oh yes.

**PARTY GOER #1.** What?

**JENNI.** Okay. So—a couple of months ago, I got this Ferizon bill that said I had an unpaid balance of \$153.64.

**PARTY GOER #1.** Those fuckers.

**JENNI.** Right? And I was like—I know I paid that bill. So I looked through my records and discovered that I had paid the bill but I'd paid it to Ferizon *Wireless* because—okay, so boring—I used to pay Ferizon and Ferizon Wireless separately but then they changed it and put it together into one // bill and—

**PARTY GOER #1.** This is so like what happened to me—

**JENNI.** Okay, but just let me finish. It turns out that when I'd paid in March I'd clicked on the old Ferizon Wireless line instead of the Ferizon line in my automatic bill paying.

**PARTY GOER #2.** Uh-oh.

**JENNI.** I know. So I call Ferizon customer service and they're like—Yeah, we see you did that. No problem, we'll credit that amount to the correct account.

**PARTY GOER #2.** Yeah, see? This is how they do it—

**JENNI.** Right? So I was like, Great. How long until that money is credited? And they were like: Five or six weeks.

**PARTY GOER #2.** Mother. Fucker.

**JENNI.** And I was like: because you're sending a small pouch of ducats from one part of your company to another via mule team?

**ANISSA.** Did you really say that?

**JENNI.** I did. I was like—Do the divisions of your company communicate with each other via, like, notes on parchment paper that are transported by mule team?

*(JENNI is now back in the conversation with the CUSTOMER SERVICE LADY.)*

**CUSTOMER SERVICE LADY #1.** I'm sorry?

**JENNI.** No, no, I'm sorry. I know it's not your fault. I'm just not sure why it takes so long for a credit to be processed. I mean, you are a telecommunications company so I thought you had computers but, I'm sorry. I know it's not you. Apparently it just takes that long. So... So... If that's how long it takes I guess there's nothing I can do about it. So... Thanks for your help.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE LADY #1.** You're welcome. Is there anything else I can do for you today?

**JENNI.** No. Just get the money transferred to the right place. That'd be great.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE LADY #1.** (*Cheerful.*) Okay then, thank you for choosing Ferizon.

(JENNI *back in party.*)

**PARTY GOER #1.** That is totally fucked up.

**JENNI.** I know.

**PARTY GOER #2.** So the thing that happened to me was—

**JENNI.** But hold on, that's not the end. So, like, two months pass and the charge is still there!

**PARTY GOER #1.** Unbelievable.

(JENNI's *back in the phone call.*)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** (*Super nice, super helpful.*) Oh yes, I can see here that two requests have been made. I see them right here. I'm going to put another one in here for you and we'll hope this one goes through.

(*Beat.*)

**JENNI.** So... Should I like, light a candle? Or buy an amulet or something like that?

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** (*Genuine.*) I'm sorry?

**JENNI.** Well, if I'm interpreting you correctly it seems that our method here is just to hope. I'd thought maybe Ferizon had some kind of computerized systems that might enable one part of the company to communicate with other parts of the company but apparently it's more of a mystical system so I was wondering if you thought, like, praying or something might be helpful?

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Uh, I'm sorry... I don't...

**JENNI.** Never mind. I'm sorry. I know it's not you. I don't mean to take out my frustration on you personally.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** No, it's fine. I understand. If I were you I'd be way more frustrated than you are.

**JENNI.** Oh. No—

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I can see this must have been really frustrating.

**JENNI.** It really has.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Wow. Yeah. I can see that. Yeah. Jenni, I'm going to personally make sure this gets taken care of for you.

**JENNI.** Well, that would be great.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Of course.

**JENNI.** What's your name, by the way?

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** (*Micro pause—which JENNI doesn't notice.*) Steve.

**JENNI.** Steve. Thank you so much, Steve.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** No problem. Is there anything else I can do for you today, Jenni?

**JENNI.** No. But thanks. If you can get that money moved to where it's supposed to be and get that outstanding balance off my bill I will be totally happy.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** I'm going to take care of it right now.

**JENNI.** Fantastic.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Thanks for choosing Ferizon, Jenni.

**JENNI.** Thank you, Steve.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** You have a great day, Jenni, okay?

**JENNI.** I will, thanks, Steve. You too.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (STEVE).** Alright then. Bye-bye, Jenni.

**JENNI.** Bye.

*(She looks affectionately at the phone for a second before coming back to the party.)*

So, that's what happened.

**PARTY GOER #1.** Steve fixed your bill?

**JENNI.** Uh, yeah. That call was just last week—but yeah, I'm sure he did. But isn't that crazy?

**PARTY GOER #2.** It's *crazy*. So listen, this is what happened to me—

**JENNI.** Oh, right, you had a story...

*(She and ANISSA exchange a subtle look.)*

**PARTY GOER #2.** Okay so, my identity has been stolen 17 times—

*(The next song on the playlist comes up—Daniel Powter's "Bad Day.")*

**JENNI.** Oh my god no! Who put this song on? No.

**PARTY GOER #2.** *(Shrugging.)* I don't know. So anyway—

**JENNI.** Anissa, is this you?

**ANISSA.** *(Affectionate.)* J.J., if I wanted to irritate you I could think of better ways than that to do it.

**JENNI.** Bryce!

**BRYCE.** Ladies!

**JENNI.** You put this on!

**BRYCE.** Most excellent par-tay. No I did not. But I wish I had. I am diggin' it!

(INGRID, *standing in a corner and moving to the song in a peculiar 1970's foreign film way, begins to sing along in a strange and tuneless way*)

**JENNI.** Who is *that*?

**BRYCE.** That's Ingrid. You know Ingrid.

(*They shake their heads, no.*)

Dudes! Yo, Ingrid. Come meet my peeps.

**INGRID.** Good party.

**JENNI.** Did you put this song on?

**ANISSA.** J.J., be nice.

(*To INGRID.*)

I don't think we've met. I'm Anissa and this is my sister, Jenni.

**INGRID.** Jenni or J.J.?

**JENNI.** It's Jenni, my sister is the only one who calls me J.J.

**INGRID.** Jenni. Jenni. Hello.

**JENNI.** Hi.

**INGRID.** Anissa.

**ANISSA.** You look familiar to me. Have we met before?

**INGRID.** I don't know. Where do you shop?

**JENNI.** Bryce, I thought we knew all your friends. Where did you two meet?

**INGRID.** Oh, kind of, the swirl of the Billyburg scene.

**BRYCE.** Yeah, like, just—on the street?

**INGRID.** Yeah.

**BRYCE.** Yeah, and she was like, "I'm looking for a party, do you know any?" And I was like, "Dude! I'm going to one right now," and she was like, "Can I come wees you?" And I was like "Totally!" And she was like, "Whar ees eet?" And I was like, "Uh, right here." And then...we just, like, came in. And here we are.

**ANISSA.** Wait—You *just* met? Just now?

**BRYCE.** I know, dude, it's awesome!

**INGRID.** Time is so elastic.

**BRYCE.** I'm *loving* this *chick*!

**INGRID.** And how do *you* all know each other?

**BRYCE.** Well those two met, like, in the womb.

**INGRID.** No. No. *Twins*?

**JENNI.** Well, not identical.

**ANISSA.** We're the mirror image kind of twins.

**BRYCE.** Cool, right. Cool. They're like a sister team. Like opposite day but in sisters. Like: good sister-bad sister. But which is the good one and which is the bad one? You can't tell because they're both so cool and nice. *It's breaking my mind, man!* Wait, what was your question again?

**JENNI.** She asked how we all know each other.

**BRYCE.** Oh yeah! I don't remember.

**JENNI.** You came to Kimberly's House.

**INGRID.** Who is Kimberly?

**JENNI.** No. No... "Kimberly's House."

**BRYCE.** (*Astonished.*) You haven't heard of Kimberly's House? It's the most awesome place!

**JENNI.** (*Modest.*) Oh, Bryce.

**BRYCE.** It is! I get, like, choked up just thinking about it.

**JENNI.** (*To INGRID.*) Kimberly's House is a free clinic for poor children in the Financial District.

**INGRID.** Are there a lot of poor children in the Financial District?

**JENNI.** There are poor children *everywhere*.

**INGRID.** Of course.

**JENNI.** The brokerage firm where Bryce works is one of our sponsors. Yay, Bryce!

(BRYCE *makes prayer hands and bows.*)

And Anissa's company, VSOP is // our—

**ANISSA.** VCI

**JENNI.** VCI, I always get that wrong, is our *largest* corporate sponsor.

(*Side-bugging her.*)

Yay, Anissa!

**ANISSA.** (*Sbrugging it off, modest.*) We try to contribute where we can. And helping poor people has been Jenni's dream since she was a little girl.

**JENNI.** (*Glowing, blushing.*) Stop.

**ANISSA.** (*Poking JENNI, affectionately.*) Why? I'm proud of you.

**JENNI.** (*Poking her back.*) Well, I'm proud of *you*.

**ANISSA.** (*Playful, sweet.*) No you're not. You think I'm a sellout.

**JENNI.** Are you kidding? Your company's support is what keeps our doors open for those kids!

**ANISSA.** (*Laughing.*) Not to mention it pays your rent here in this apartment.

**JENNI.** (*Laughing, mock incredulity.*) Anissa! I pay my share of the rent.

**ANISSA.** Well, most of the time.

**JENNI.** I can't believe she said that!

**ANISSA.** I'm kidding.

*(Starting a slap fight. Laughing.)*

**JENNI.** You're terrible!

**ANISSA.** I'm so much worse then you even know!

**JENNI.** I can't believe you!

*(Slap fight climaxes and ends in a hug.)*

**ANISSA.** Love you, sis!

**JENNI.** Love you!

**BRYCE.** Twins, man. I get *off* on that twin *vibe*!

**JENNI.** So what do you do, Ingrid?

*(INGRID's Blackberry vibrates.)*

**INGRID.** Sorry. *(Takes it out and—)* Damn! My Blackberry just crashed!

**JENNI.** Oh no.

**ANISSA.** Oh god, I feel sick to my stomach. That is my worst fear!

**JENNI.** I know.

**INGRID.** I need to text my boss or she's going to freak.

**JENNI.** Okay...

**INGRID.** I noticed your MacBook? Do you think it'd be alright if I...

**JENNI.** Oh, sure. Come on.

**INGRID.** Thanks, I really appreciate it.

*(INGRID and JENNI go into another room.)*

**JENNI.** Let me log you on.

**INGRID.** Yeah, thanks, this is really going to—

*(As they both bend over the computer.)*

It's not over with Ferizon.

**JENNI.** What?

**INGRID.** Believe me. I've been there. It's never over that quickly.

**JENNI.** Well, it's been three months and two phone calls. So. And the last guy I talked to, Steve, is going to take care of it. He told me. He's going to take care of it personally.

**INGRID.** *(Short bitter laugh.)* Steve?

**JENNI.** Yeah?

**INGRID.** Is that what he told you his name was?

**JENNI.** Why wouldn't he tell me his correct name?

**INGRID.** You are so naive... It almost hurts...

*(INGRID starts furiously typing into JENNI's computer.)*

**JENNI.** What are you doing?

**INGRID.** (*Typing into her computer.*) I'm putting some information in your address book.

It's a group of people who've been hurt...like you're already being hurt. Do you understand me? No. Of course not. You don't believe me. I can see. But, Jenni, do me this favor...okay? Or...do this for yourself. Don't erase this number.

(JENNI *looks skeptical.*)

Don't.

(JENNI *still looking...*)

Don't.

(INGRID *takes a Gauloise out of her purse, preparing to smoke in a Bergmanesque way.*)

**JENNI.** Please don't smoke in here.

(INGRID *flicks the cigarette away, rips a nicotine patch off her own arm, holds it to her nose and inhales deeply, then flicks that away as well.*)

**INGRID.** I give it three months...maybe just two, until they break you.

**JENNI.** What are you talking about?

**INGRID.** Listen to me. Someday you will need us. And we'll be there for you. We're the only ones who can help you.

(*They stare at each other for a moment. INGRID mysterious, JENNI confused and skeptical. Then:*)

Could I send that e-mail? My Blackberry really did crash.

**JENNI.** Sure.

## Scene 2

### Jenni and Anissa the morning after the party.

JENNI *sits in the kitchen, looking so day-after. ANISSA comes in, dressed for work, scrolling through her Blackberry.*

**ANISSA.** Morning.

**JENNI.** Morning. Want some coffee?

**ANISSA.** No, I'll stop at Starbucks on the way in. How'd you sleep?

**JENNI.** Terrible! I couldn't get that "Bad Day" fucking bullshit nightmare of a song out of my head.

(*Shaking her fist.*)

Ooh, if I could get my hands on the demon who put that on...

**ANISSA.** Then what? You'd thank me?

**JENNI.** I *knew* it was you!