

PLAYING

By Cecilia Copeland

**Setting**

City suburbs.

A small studio apartment. There is a pull out couch and kitchen directly behind it. It feels claustrophobic.

**Characters**

DONNY Late twenties male.

DANA Late twenties female.

**Time**

Present day.

SCENE ONE (Lies)

DONNY is sleeping on the pull out/futon sofa.  
DANA comes in the door quietly. She turns on small light getting undressed slowly. She takes a shirt off, and under it is a bright red silk camisole. She takes out a small object we can't quite see (a chess timer). She rubs it on her breast, kisses it, and then hides it. Then she gets into bed.

What time is it?

DONNY

It's late.

DANA  
(Crawls into bed.)

I thought you'd be home...

DONNY  
(Sleepily.)

DANA snuggles into DONNY, and he wraps his arm around her. Pause.

You smell like smoke.

DONNY CONT.

Jackie locked her keys in her car. I had to give her a ride home. She lives pretty far. Her boyfriend was gonna pick her up but it would've taken him a half an hour to get there, so I just drove her myself. I let her smoke in the car.

DANA  
(Rolls away from him. Sits up fluffing her pillow)

Okay, I have to get up early.

DONNY

Sorry. Go back to sleep.

DANA

Goodnight.

DONNY

Goodnight.

DANA

SCENE TWO (Not Yet)

The next morning. DONNY is walking around the apartment getting dressed. He makes a great deal of noise. Finally DANA sits up quickly.

Sorry.

DONNY

What the fuck?

DANA

Sorry!

DONNY

DANA lies back down.

Are we still going to my parents place on Sunday?

DONNY CONT.  
(As if to say, please)

What?

DANA  
(Groggily.)

Sunday?

DONNY

I don't... I think I have to work.

DANA

You said you were gonna try to get it off?

DONNY

I... What time is it?

DANA

It's 7:45.

DONNY

Are you serious?

DANA

Just say yes or no. You're the one who told my mom we would come by, and she's making a roast so are you coming?

DONNY

DANA

I want to. I'm just still asleep right now babe. I gotta call and make sure I can get it off. I requested it off, but you know how it is.

DONNY

I know.

DANA

It's not like...

DONNY

I just know my mom is looking forward to it. She likes you.

DANA

I like her.

DONNY

I think she likes you more than me.

DANA

I think that too sometimes. It's not right. She's not that nice to you

DONNY

She means well.

DANA

I guess so. She does love you.

DONNY

I love you. Give me a kiss goodbye.

DONNY goes to her and kisses her.

DANA

By honey.

DONNY

Call me.

DONNY exits.

DANA

(Gets up. She starts making the bed. She picks up the phone while she does this and makes a call.)

Hey Scott. Yeah, I know it's fucking early... Hey, can you check if I'm on on Sunday?... Thanks... Great... Thanks Scott. See ya later.

(She hangs up, and calls Donny. While she does this, she goes to place she hid the timer. She peeks at it.)

Hey honey, look I can't get out of work... I asked... I did, but there's nobody who can do it for me... I know... Tell her I'm really sorry. I'll go next week, and next week I'll bring something too.

(She hangs up and calls someone else. While she does this, she does one arm push ups against the back of the couch. They are difficult for her.)

Hey, I know you're sleeping, but I just wanted to say... you may have kicked my ass last night, but don't get used to it.

Lights down.

SCENE THREE (Your Move)

It's evening. They are in a small studio apartment. He sits in front of the computer and types. She is behind him, and she is buttering a piece of toast. He can't see her face.

DONNY

I ran into Scott at the café on wheels at lunch. Apparently his brother works downtown.

(Pause.)

He told me you were next in line for a management position if you want it. I said that was great.

(Pause)

I think it's great. You deserve it. Nobody else there has any clue what they're doing.

(Pause)

You could have Mandy's job easy. She's got no idea.

DANA

Mmhm.

(She starts to eat her toast.)

DONNY

Did you make me a piece?

DANA

Did you wanna piece?

DONNY

Pretty please with sugar on top?

DANA

Have mine. I'll make more.

(She brings him the toast on a paper towel.)

DONNY

Did you put butter on it?

DANA

Yes.

(Little laugh.)

Make your own next time.

DONNY

I always cook for you.

DANA

(She walks over to him and wraps her arms around him.)

Sweetheart... I thought you weren't hungry.... If you were hungry, why didn't we go out? I would've rather gone out.

DONNY

I'm sick of going out.

DANA

(She moves away from him.)

That's cuz you never want to go anywhere new.

DONNY

That's because every where else sucks. The food sucks everywhere else.

DANA

How would you know if you never try anywhere else?

DONNY

I said you could go out.

DANA

I opted to have a piece of toast instead of eating out by myself. Again.

DONNY

I gave you money to buy groceries.

DANA

I did.

DONNY

I gave you twenty bucks.

DANA

We needed toothpaste and shaving cream and toilet paper. That, plus bread, and coffee-

DONNY

Why did you buy coffee?

DANA

You said we were out of coffee.

DONNY

God, you're so stupid sometimes.



DANA  
You're an asshole Donny.  
(She puts the bread back in the bag instead of in the toaster.)

DONNY  
No, I fucking said don't buy any more coffee. I finally finished the last of it. I'm getting a new cappuccino maker.

DANA  
Where's my purse?

DONNY  
I've been trying to get rid of that coffee for weeks. We bought that huge bag when we went up to Niagara Falls-

DANA  
Whatever, I'm going out.

DONNY  
Where're you going?

DANA  
For dinner.

DONNY  
Where?

DANA  
I don't know. I'll... Keys... I need my keys, wherever.

DONNY  
They're on the... here.  
(Grabs her keys and hands them to her.)  
Let me buy you dinner. I feel bad. I should've given you more money for groceries.

DANA  
(Starts to put it on.)  
It was your *turn* to buy groceries. Don't act like it was a favor for you to buy the groceries.

DONNY  
Then let me buy you dinner!

DANA  
I'm not hungry.

DANA goes to the hiding spot of the chess timer.  
She looks at it, but doesn't touch it.

DONNY

Don't be such a-

DANA

What? Don't be a what?

DONNY

(In the way of an apology.)

Just let me take you to dinner. I'll go wherever you want. You want Sushi?

DANA

We always have Sushi. I just want a burger. I don't need a whole fancy place, I just want a beer and a-

DONNY

I'm sick of burgers. You always feel like shit when you eat burgers anyway.

DANA

Then don't come.

DONNY

Take some money.

(He gets his wallet.)

DANA

For what?

DONNY

(Starts to take out money.)

Buy yourself a burger, and then pick up some Sushi for me.

DANA

I'm not your pawn that you can just send out for shit.

DONNY

You're going out anyway.

(Holds the money out.)

DANA

I'm not coming right back.

Oh.

DONNY

(Pause)

When are you coming back?

DANA

Later.

DONNY

(Puts the money back in his wallet.)

Fine.

DANA

I'll see you later.

(She leaves.)

DONNY

(He types on his laptop for just a second and then he starts to surf the net for porn. We hear the sound of moaning coming from the laptop. He grabs a few tissues, and starts to unbutton his pants. The phone rings. He checks to see who it is, closes the laptop abruptly, and answers the phone.)

Hi mom... What?... Oh yeah... Sunday at three. She's looking forward to it. She wanted to make something to bring, but I said not to bother. I told her you would have everything... I know mom. Yeah, we'll be there... I'll call you Saturday... Okay. You too...

(He hangs up, and tries to eat some of the now cold toast. It's disgusting. He looks back at the computer. He calls DANA.)

Hey... I... I'm sorry. I just... Where you going?...

(Long pause while he listens to her, and then decides what to do.)

I'll come. No, I'll drive. I'll meet you there.

SCENE 4 (Checkmate)

A few days later.

Donny comes into the studio apartment to find Dana asleep on the couch with a blanket covering her. He noisily puts down his briefcase. She stirs.

DONNY

Have you moved since I left this morning?

DANA

What? Oh' yeah. I didn't get to bed till late.

DONNY

What time did you get home?

DANA

I was wide awake when I finished work. I knew you'd be in bed so-

DONNY

You went to that place again.

DANA

(Quietly. More to herself than DONNY.)

I beat Christoph last night.

DONNY

Don't you have work tonight?

DANA

They said I could take the night off. There were only four bookings for tonight.

DONNY

I thought you were gonna start training for-

DANA

Not now Donny.

DONNY

Fine, whatever.

DANA

I'm tired, fuck... I was... I didn't even get home until after four.

DONNY

What were you doing til-four?

DANA

I told you. I beat Christoph last night. It was a legitimate win. Of course he beat me the first five times-

DONNY

Yeah I get it, you won.

DANA

(Gets up and folds the blanket.)

Do you have any appreciation of how hard it is to beat Christoph? He's not one of those guys who hang around the club for a taste of something he's never had. He's practically a legend.

(Pause)

I wanna go to Vegas next month.

DONNY

Are you serious?

DANA

I beat Christoph last night Donny. Jesus-

DONNY

How do you plan to pay for it? You can barely make rent.

DANA

They're called credit cards.

DONNY

And then how are you gonna pay them off?

DANA

I'll pay them off with what I win.

DONNY

That's so stupid.

DANA

Fuck you.

DONNY

No really.

DANA

Fuck you Donny.

DONNY  
(Pause.)

Will the restaurant give you the time off?

DANA

Who cares? I'm -

DONNY

So stupid. I bet you haven't even started training yet.

DANA

I've been at the club every-

DONNY

Not the God Damn chess club! Training for the management position.

DANA

What? Fuck the management job.

DONNY

Easy for you to say.

DANA

Excuse me?

DONNY

Well one of us has to pay the bills.

DANA

Did I ask you for money?

DONNY

Not this week.

DANA

I always... Fuck... When have I not paid you back?

DONNY

I hate this shit hole! I hate... I hate having to tip toe around every morning so I don't wake you up. I hate waking up with... in front of a coffee table. I hate buying a shitty cup of coffee when I have a cappuccino maker sitting right there!

DANA

So use it. I don't care if-

DONNY

No. I can't make a cappuccino three feet from your head while you're sleeping. You only started going to that chess club after work because you can't come home and watch tv anymore, cuz I'm-

DANA

What's your point?

DONNY

We need a bigger place.

DANA

You know I can't afford to move right now.

DONNY

Exactly.

DANA

What do you want me to do Donny?

DONNY

Honestly? I want you to earn more money so we can move out of here.

DANA

You don't have to stay here.

DONNY

Don't be irrational.

DANA

I'm not. You wanna move out, so move out.

DONNY

I didn't say-

DANA

Look, clearly you want me to be something I'm not.

DONNY

Why do you insist on holding on to some fantasy of being a chess player? What's wrong with being a restaurant manager? You'd be good at it. We could move to-

DANA

(Spoken clearly so he doesn't miss it.)

I quit this afternoon.

When were you gonna tell me?  
DONNY

I just did.  
DANA

Why?  
DONNY

DANA  
I FUCKING BEAT CHRISTOPH LAST NIGHT!

DONNY  
(Little Pause.)  
He probably felt sorry for you. You've never even beaten me. Anytime we've played, I've beaten you, and I'm not even that good. A couple of times you did okay, but come on?

I let you win.  
DANA

What?  
DONNY

DANA  
I. Let. You. Win. And I'll tell you something else, not only are you 'not that good', you suck.

DONNY  
Bullshit. I was being nice. You never came close to beating me.

DANA  
Oh' really? Never came close? Do you know how many times I had you in check just waiting for you to see it? Countless.

DONNY  
Let's play then.

DANA  
Now?

DONNY  
Yeah' right now.  
(Gets the chess board.)



DANA

This is a bad idea.

DONNY

Cuz, you're full of shit. If you're so good, I'd like to see you beat me if you can.

DANA

I'm warning you, this isn't going to end well.

DONNY

I'm calling your bluff that's why. Let's play.

(He sets up the board and sits down to one side.)

DANA

If you really want to do this let's do it right.

(She goes to the hiding place and gets the timer.)

DONNY

When did you get the chess timer Bobby Fisher?

DANA

I've had it for a while. You may go first if you wish.

DONNY

Ladies first, I insist.

DANA

I wouldn't want you to feel that you were giving me an unfair advantage.

DONNY

No, I wouldn't want you to feel that way.

(He takes one white pawn and one black in his hands and she chooses one. It's white.)

Smoke before fire.

DANA

Very well.

(She moves a knight out and clicks the timer.)

DONNY

What are you doing?

DANA

You're wasting time. I'd move if I were you.

You never open with a knight.

DONNY

How would you know?

DANA

Fine.

DONNY

(He counters with a knight of his own.)

DONNY forgets to click the timer, and DANA does it for him. She then brings out her other knight, and clicks the timer. He counters, and clicks the timer. They each take a series of moves. He takes longer for each of his moves. The next move DANA makes is very fast.

Check.

DANA

(Clicks the timer.)

Impossible.

DONNY

Not at all. Check.

DANA

Fuck. Wait.

DONNY

(Moves a piece, and clicks the timer.)

DANA moves, and doesn't click the timer.

You forgot the timer.

DONNY CONT.

(Clicks it.)

No I didn't.

DANA

Pause.

No.

DONNY

Checkmate.

DANA

No. Yes. Fuck. I didn't see it.

DONNY  
(Spoken quickly, but each word has a different value.)

I know.

DANA

Let's play again.

DONNY  
(Starts to set up the pieces for another game)

No.

DANA

You got lucky.

DONNY

No I didn't. I beat you in seven moves. That's not luck.

DANA

Was it seven moves?

DONNY

Yeah.

DANA

Shit.

DONNY

Donny.

DANA

Yeah?

DONNY

I don't love you. I don't think I ever did.

DANA

I don't... I don't even know you do I?

DONNY

DANA

You never wanted to. Whenever I showed you a deeper part of me you made fun it, or you tried to make it small.

DONNY

No, I didn't.

Pause.

DANA

You just did.

DONNY  
(Little pause.)

I did, didn't I?

DANA

Every, time.

DONNY

Why didn't you say anything before?

DANA

I only realized it recently. You don't love me either.

DONNY

I thought I did.

DANA

You don't.

DONNY

Why did you-?... Why were we-?...

DANA

Do you really want me to tell you?

DONNY

Yes.

DANA

You wont like it.

DONNY

If you know, then I think you should tell me.



DANA starts to play chess against herself.

How long?  
DONNY

I don't-  
DANA  
For a while.  
(Pause.)

You're fucked up.  
DONNY

So are you. You wanted to be with me, and you didn't even like the real me.  
DANA

I didn't know the real you.  
DONNY

Didn't you?  
DANA

Now you're fucking with me.  
DONNY

I'm not trying to.  
DANA

You say I didn't know you, but then I did know you.  
DONNY

Yes.  
DANA

I don't know what you want.  
DONNY

Nothing. I don't want anything.  
DANA

So... you're saying it's over?  
DONNY

Well yes, it's over.  
DANA  
(Little pause.)

DONNY  
What do you mean, well yes? You mean... well maybe?

DANA  
I'm sorry.

DONNY  
Okay.

DANA  
Okay... You okay?

DONNY  
I guess so.

DANA  
Okay.

DONNY  
No.

DANA  
(Dryly.)  
I'm sorry.

DONNY  
You're a bitch.

DANA  
(Little pause.)  
Very possible.  
I'll go stay with Jackie tonight.

DONNY  
No, I'll go. I hate this place.

DANA  
I know you do.

DONNY  
GOD!

DANA  
You leaving now?

Oh yeah. DONNY  
(Gets up and goes to the door.)  
Did you tell me just to be cruel? I didn't deserve that.

You said you wanted to know. DANA

I was wrong. DONNY

I know. DANA

Fuck, is there anything you don't know? DONNY

I don't know why I can't stop myself....When at the start... I can already see the end. DANA

I'm leaving. DONNY

Okay. DANA

What kind of person are you? You don't care at all. DONNY

I feel bad. DANA

Not that bad. DONNY

You're right. Not that bad. DANA

You can really play. DONNY  
(Picks up his coat and goes to the door.)

You don't have to say that. DANA



DONNY

I mean it. I didn't see you. I didn't want to. I was wrong.

DANA

So was I.

DONNY

(Pause.)

Do you think... ?

DANA

(She looks at the chess board. Pause.)

I can see the end.

DONNY

(Small pause.)

Goodbye Dana.

DANA

G'bye.

DONNY Exits.

DANA moves out a knight and stares at it. After a moment she pushes over the table knocking over all the pieces to the floor.

THE END