

A condo. A dining room table. Only two chairs. Like in a kitchen or dining room. Probably pretty simply appointed. It could be anywhere in the world, really. At the table sit two people, a woman and a man, across the table from one another. On the ground next to the woman's chair is a courier box (like, FedEx or UPS or wherever) that's just been opened. Packing peanuts spill out of it, and a few are on the ground around her feet. The woman, ERICA, is attractive, in her late 40's, tastefully dressed but with a bit of a before-jail Martha Stewart vibe. Across from her sits MIKE, her husband, who is a little older than she is, dressed in a button-down shirt and chinos. They look like a totally normal couple you'd see anywhere in the world. But they're not looking that normal right now. In fact, they're looking like they've been hit by a ton of bricks. They've just learned something that we don't know about yet, but the sense is that their lives have just changed in a serious way. They sit with looks of shock on both of their faces. Like, they're sitting, stunned, staring at what's in the middle of the table.

Oh, yeah: sitting between them, standing up on its end, in the middle of the table, is an almost comically large butt-plug. Interpret that as you will, but just know that in this case, size matters.

ERICA and MIKE just sit there, staring at the thing. It's like it's a scene featuring three performers, so conspicuous is the butt-plug. It's one of those ones that seem so big it's like it's designed as a practical joke, or for some really extreme users. There's no doubt it is what it is. It doesn't need to be any particular color or pattern, but

it's an extremely aggressive piece of hardware. ERICA has a folded sheet of paper in her hand, which she rests mostly in her lap. She's protective of this sheet of paper right now.

They sit. And look. At the butt-plug.

After a while it's pretty clear that both ERICA and MIKE are trying to figure out what to make of this. They're speechless. Mike seems less stunned than Erica, but he's also loath to move first because he can see how upset she is. After a painfully long time, Mike tries for levity.

MIKE

It's... got to be a joke, right?

No response. ERICA stares at the butt-plug. Clearly there are a lot of things rushing through her head. MIKE is floundering as to how he will manage this.

I...

He doesn't actually have anything to say. He's filling the air. He looks helplessly over at ERICA.

Hon?

(no response)

Honey?

(no response)

Erica?

ERICA manages to nudge herself out of her thoughts to finally focus her eyes on MIKE.

ERICA

What?

MIKE

...it's a joke, right?

ERICA

What... is?

MIKE

(gesturing vaguely)

All this. The box. The card. The...

He can't bring himself to say 'butt-plug'. MIKE is pretty conservative. He's never seen a butt-plug before. He's never said the word 'butt-plug' either.

ERICA

No.

MIKE

Okay. No joke. I just...

MIKE reaches out to poke at the butt-plug with a finger, almost to bobble it like it's a bobblehead doll. He has a look of morbid fascination on his face.

ERICA

(suddenly, loud)

DON'T.

MIKE

(shocked)

Okay. Sorry.

ERICA

Sorry.

Silence. The butt-plug still sits happily on the table. At least now we have established a new rule: MIKE isn't allowed to touch it. He doesn't know why, neither do we. ERICA just stares at it. Then, compulsively, she raises her hand up in exactly the same way MIKE did and pokes at the butt-plug. It sways a little bit on his flat end, with the bulbous end undulating just a little as she pokes it. It wobbles. She's fascinated. She lowers her head to 'eye-level' of the butt-plug and pokes it again. It unceremoniously falls on its side on the table. Maybe it falls on the floor. ERICA freezes. She doesn't really want to pick it up again but she also doesn't want to leave it lying there. She quickly scoops it up and stands it back in its original position. MIKE looks cautiously at her.

MIKE
It's handy that it has a built-in stand.
(beat)
For display purposes.

ERICA
It's not a...
(reconsiders, doesn't want to quibble)
Sure. Handy stand.

MIKE
And you say it just...

ERICA
What?

MIKE
Came?

ERICA
So to speak.
(MIKE blushes, down to his socks.)
Sorry. Yes. This afternoon.

MIKE
And *why* can't I read the...

ERICA
Did I *say* you couldn't read the...

MIKE
Twice.

ERICA
Did I?

MIKE
Yeah.

ERICA
Well, that's because you can't.

MIKE
Three times now.
(beat)
Did you *order* it? Because I...

ERICA
Would I be reacting this way if this was something I was
looking forward to opening?

MIKE
I don't know, people order things on the internet after a
few drinks...

ERICA

No Michael. I didn't order this on the internet after a few drinks.

MIKE

Okay. That's... good?

(beat)

Although they say that learning new things about your partner is a good thing.

(beat)

So I wouldn't mind.

(beat)

If this is yours.

(beat)

And you are just embarrassed.

(beat)

To show me the receipt.

All of a sudden, ERICA finds herself inexplicably annoyed by MIKE.

ERICA

It's not a receipt. It's not mine. I didn't buy it. I don't even know where you'd go to buy something like this.

MIKE

Internet?

ERICA

Well, yes, but...

MIKE

A... sex shop?

ERICA

It's called *hyperbole*, Mike. Of course that's where you'd get it. But that's not where I got it. I got it on our doorstep this afternoon.

MIKE

And you're *meant* to get it? Maybe a delivery mix-up? I mean, maybe the fulfilment center put the wrong...

ERICA

The *wrong* butt-plug?

Embarrassed, MIKE cringes at the word, but acknowledges what she's said.

As in, I ordered a *different* one and this is the one I got? Tell me, Mike, what *alternate* butt-plug would you see as more appropriate for me?

MIKE

Well, I...

ERICA

In *nine years* of marriage, how many hints have I given that this was something I've been harboring?

MIKE

I don't know, hon, I just want to support you, and you seem pretty freaked out by this.

ERICA

"This"?

MIKE

This... uh... marital aid.

ERICA

A vibrating bullet is a marital aid. Fluffy handcuffs are marital aids. A three pound, 9 inch, bulbous butt-plug? That's a marriage in serious need of aid.

MIKE

I don't know, Erica, this is all strange to me.

ERICA

(misguidedly caustic)

Ya think?

ERICA has a thought, and looks down at the piece of paper. She opens it up and reads it over for the fiftieth time, but for the first time since we've met her. She still can't believe what she's reading.

MIKE

So can I...

ERICA

(snapping)

No, Mike.

MIKE

No, no, you keep your secret receipt. Tell me in your own time. I was just going to ask if I could get you anything. Tea?

ERICA

(composing herself)

Tea would be lovely.

MIKE gets up and moves over to upstage to fuss with an imaginary

kitchen area. He sneaks a quick glance at the butt-plug. He's strangely fascinated by it. ERICA continues to read, and re-read. MIKE attempts casual conversation.

MIKE

I finally heard back about the Kaufman audit: they were seeking a continuance based on prior knowledge!

This is presented as sort of a joke, like something they'd laugh at. She doesn't.

ERICA

(not listening at all)

Mm.

MIKE

They said the filing was improper.

(no response)

Because they'd claimed their car as a second office.

(floundering)

A second office!

ERICA

(checking back in)

What?

MIKE

Second... office?

ERICA

I literally have no idea what you're talking about.

MIKE

Oh, I...

ERICA makes a quick decision and pulls out a cell phone. Looking at the sheet of paper, she finds a phone number written there and dials.

Sorry, you're on a call. I'll...

ERICA ignores him. She's agitated. Then she gets voicemail. She gets even more agitated. Tries to decide whether she'll leave a message or not. Decides not to, and goes to press the end button, then changes her mind and raises the phone just as the message beeps. MIKE is trying not to seem like he's

eavesdropping but he's totally confused.

ERICA

Hey. Hello. Um. This is Erica Chapman... uh, or at least... uh... I guess I used to be Erica ... Monroe. Before. Anyway. I'd like to talk. I got the... item. Please call me back at...

Her phone buzzes. The person is calling her back before she can finish leaving a message. She looks at her screen. Back to the call.

Oh. You're calling me now. Um. So I guess I'll...

Looks back at the phone, finds the end button for the message and picks up the call.

Hello, this is Erica?

(we never hear what the other person is saying, nor does ERICA over-sell what she's hearing.)

Yes. Hi.

(listens)

I was just leaving you a voicem...

(listens)

Right. So just ignore...

(listens)

I wasn't sure if...

(listens)

Yes. Right.

(listens)

Yes, it did.

(listens)

It's right here.

(listens)

I do, but I'm not...

(listens)

I understand that, but...

(listens)

No, not right now.

(listens)

I'm not alone. My husband...

(listens. MIKE is openly listening now)

Can we not? I'd rather just...

(listens)

Look, I get that, but...

(listens)

I don't want to be insulting, but...

(listens)

Can I finish a thought?

(listens)

Thanks. I don't want to offend anyone, but I don't want this. I didn't ask for it, and getting something like this is a lot right now.