

SCENE 12

(Brightly colored strobe lights pulse on the empty stage while pinball machine bells and dings whir against carnival crowd noise for a moment. Scott angrily bursts into his apartment and slams the door behind him. Claire arrives a moment later and struggles to fit through the door. She is wearing a very large, very ridiculous hat or headdress resembling an early satellite. She carries a bag full of Dragon*Con souvenirs.)

Start

SCOTT

(angrily)

Are you going to take that off now?

CLAIRE

What, *this old thing*?

SCOTT

It's not funny.

CLAIRE

It's kinda funny. I don't know what you're so wiggled out about - it was about Orbital Debris.

SCOTT

It was a human pinball machine.

CLAIRE

Yeah, about Orbital Debris! "The Galactic Garbage Game". Scott, the planets were mirrored disco balls. It was supposed to be fun.

SCOTT

It was supposed to be a panel discussion.

CLAIRE

I went to the panel discussion. And then I went to - "*Debris Dodgers - Trash Collectors of the Cosmos*".

SCOTT

And take that ridiculous thing off your head!

CLAIRE

"Interactive game piece." That NASA guy made me put this on.

SCOTT

He was not NASA. And no one is making you wear it now.

(SHE removes headdress.)

CLAIRE

- I went to DragonCon without a costume like I promised I would. You don't know how painful that was for me. Like Christmas without presents. But, okay. And I was on my best behavior when you and your friends were talking, congratulating yourselves for how smart you are.

SCOTT

They're not my friends.

CLAIRE

I stayed awake and everything. But then those lights started flashing and that reeer reeeeeer -

(SHE makes goofy siren sound.)

SCOTT

If you were so bored, you didn't have to stay. I told you that.

CLAIRE

I know you did. I noticed that. And now you're angry that I didn't.

SCOTT

He was using flight simulator technology to bounce adolescent boys off of each other like -

CLAIRE

Orbital debris. Exactly.

SCOTT

It was humiliating.

CLAIRE

It was just laser tag with cooler headgear.

SCOTT

Why did you come back in wearing that?!

CLAIRE

(sarcastically at first)

I don't know, Scott, maybe to get you to notice me? I came to get you to come play, too.

SCOTT

I would never do that. I just won the most prestigious academic aerospace competition on asteroid deflection techniques.

CLAIRE

Your team just won.

SCOTT

His email said I was the right "demographic". I thought he meant the aerospace research community, not post-adolescent gamers. He didn't care about the science. He just used the panel discussion to lure the latest crop of astrophysics nerds to play his stupid game.

CLAIRE

Well, it worked.

SCOTT

You embarrassed me.

CLAIRE

No, you were *afraid* I was going to embarrass you. No one even knew I was with you. You didn't introduce me to anyone.

SCOTT

I didn't have to, you made quite an entrance in that thing. And people from NASA were there! We'd just won the RASC-AL Forum. This was going to be excellent networking. The dean, HR guys, every NASA person in the program calendar. I invited them to attend the *esteemed session* I would be participating in. Now they think I'm an idiot. An arrogant, pompous, self-promoting moron.

CLAIRE

(mischievously)

I'm sure they don't think you're a *moron*.

SCOTT

Everything's a big joke to you .

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, but DragonCon is supposed to be fun. You're the only one who doesn't know it. Stalking Captain Jack through the lobby, taking selfies with a rat in a lab coat, following an endless parade of fans and freaks snaking up the escalators - you were having fun. Don't let that one NASA guy ruin it for you.

SCOTT

Ex-NASA. And he didn't ruin DragonCon, he ruined my career.

CLAIRE

C'mon, don't you think you're being a bit dramatic? Your *colleagues* were having fun, too. It was a party. No one is even going to remember you were there.

SCOTT

You always think everything's fine. That everything's going to be alright.

CLAIRE

I just don't think you should dwell on things you can't change. What's the point?

SCOTT

(angrily)

Sometimes to actually change them, Claire!

Stop

(beat, pause)

SCOTT CONT'D

I'm not like you.

CLAIRE

There it is... How so, Scott? How are you not like me? You're not messy? Not stupid?

SCOTT

I never said you were -