THE MISCALCULATION

by

Stephen Davis

s.davis@mail.com

623-332-6853

WGA # 1923101

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's an upper-middle-class bedroom with top-of-the-line furnishings and navy blue 624-thread count Ralph Lauren sheets.

And this is no rip-your-clothes-off-in-a-fit-of-passion sex scene. This is a man and a woman making long, slow, tender, sweet love with each other.

The man, MARK HANOVER, is 42 with salt-and-pepper hair and a face that could easily have been on the cover of GQ.

The woman is Mark's wife, SARAH HANOVER, also early 40s, shoulder-length light brown hair with blond highlights, and equally attractive.

Mark suddenly stops the sex in the middle and rolls off of Sarah onto his back, leaving Sarah's beautiful body fully exposed.

MARK

Sorry ... I can't do it.

SARAH

(surprised at the interruption) Mark? What's wrong?

MARK

There's something I have to tell you, Sarah.

SARAH

Okay....

When Mark hesitates, Sarah rolls on her side to face him and pulls the sheet up to her waist.

SARAH (CONT'D)

What is it, Mark?

MARK

Sarah, you know how much I love you, even after twenty years, right?

SARAH

Yes, I do, Mark, and I love you, too. Now, what's going on?

Mark turns on his side to make eye contact with Sarah.

MARK

Well, Sarah ...

(beat)

... I'm having an affair.

(slight pause)

Actually, that's not true. I'm in love with another woman.

(slight pause)

That's not right, either. Well, shit, yes it is. But it doesn't mean I love you any less. In fact, I love you more the more I love.

Sarah now pulls the covers all the way up to her neck, but her voice remains calm.

SARAH

How long has this been going on?

MARK

Almost 6 months.

SARAH

(another long pause, consciously keeping her emotions in check)

Have you been having sex with her?

MARK

Yes. But it's not about the sex. The sex with you is fantastic. That's not what I was looking for.

SARAH

What were you looking for?

MARK

I really wasn't looking for anything.

(beat)

This isn't about you or anything you've done or haven't done. This is about ...

Mark stops, not sure of what to say. Sarah sits up in bed, but remains calm and cool on the outside.

SARAH

What's it about, Mark?

MARK

(beat)

They say "you don't choose who you fall in love with." They should also say, "you don't choose how many you fall in love with."

SARAH

Personally, I think "you don't choose who you fall in love with" is bullshit. I chose to fall in love with you. I assume you chose to fall in love with me.

Sarah looks at Mark for an answer, even though it wasn't a question.

MARK

You're right, I did. And I am still in love with you. I don't want anything about us to change.

Sarah laughs sarcastically and loses her cool slightly.

SARAH

You tell me you love another woman, and then you say you don't want anything between us to change. How fucking naive are you, Mark?

Mark doesn't answer, realizing that his statement was pretty fucking naive.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(calm again)

Let me get this straight. You love me - more than ever, you say - and you also love this other woman.

(beat)

Are you that unhappy, Mark?

MARK

No! In fact, I'm the happiest I've ever been.

SARAH

The funny thing is, so was I, until a few minutes ago.

MARK

And now?

SARAH

Now, I don't know how I feel.

(beat)

Look, I'm going to need time to think about this, Mark. I don't want to talk any more tonight. Can we continue this tomorrow?

MARK

Of course, babe.

(beat)

Do I need to sleep in the other room tonight?

SARAH

(somewhat sarcastically) That would be a good idea.

Mark nods in understanding and gets up to leave, still naked.

SARAH (CONT'D)

The sheets are clean.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mark closes the door to the guest bedroom, sits down on the side of the bed and speed dials his cell phone.

MARK

(to the phone)

Hi.

(beat)

Yes, I told her.

(beat)

No, we didn't get that far in the conversation.

(beat)

Absolutely. I didn't want to keep hiding anything from her.

(beat)

Sarah knows how much I love her, and she took it like she takes everything in life - not an ounce of emotion.

(beat)

Yes, I know, I know. You've told me before - when she loses it, she **really** loses it. But she didn't lose it.

(beat)

Well, I just want to make sure you know how much I love you, too.
(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

And we're going to make this work - the three of us - I promise.

(beat)

See you at the office tomorrow. Good night.

He ends the call, crawls into the guest bed and turns the lights out.

EXT. HOTEL SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

It's the weekly girls' day out. Four women are sitting around an outdoor table not far from the hotel entrance just finishing lunch. There's Sarah Hanover, along with BETTY ZIMMERMAN, HELEN HARTMANN, and RUTH JACKSON.

All three are approximately the same age as Sarah, all dressed appropriately for the upper-middle-class, neatly manicured fingers and toes, recently coiffed hair. Sarah is dressed differently, in blue hospital scrubs and a white doctor's coat.

BETTY

I'm so glad we came here today. I love this place. Maybe we should come here every week.

RUTH

Wrong, Betty. I think that would get boring. I like trying out different places all the time.

A moment of silence as Betty regroups from Ruth's put-down and thinks of some other topic.

BETTY

Oh, Helen, did you finish Sons of Anarchy yet?

HELEN

(finishing a sip of wine)
Uh-huh. Jeff and I watched the last
two episodes last night.

RUTH

It's about time. I don't know why you have to wait for Jeff's approval to do everything.

HELEN

(ignoring Ruth)

I was so relieved when that bitch Gemma - excuse me - finally got what was coming to her. I just wish that--

Betty is not really listening and notices Sarah is not participating.

BETTY

(interrupting)

--Sarah, you didn't eat your lunch, and you've hardly said a word. What's going on?

All eyes turn to Sarah who sits quietly, trying to figure out what she wants to do.

SARAH

Oh, what the hell. You might as well know ... Mark is having an affair.

BETTY

Oh, no, sweetie. That's terrible.

RUTH

That son of a bitch.

HELEN

When did you catch him?

SARAH

I didn't "catch him," Helen. He told me last night.

HELEN

Of his own free will?

Sarah nods.

BETTY

How long has it been going on?

SARAH

Six months.

RUTH

(repeats)

That son of a bitch.

SARAH

The strangest thing is that the last six months have been the happiest in our twenty years of marriage. We've done more things together, like dancing and going to concerts, than we ever did before...

Ruth starts to say something, but Sarah won't let her.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Let me finish, Ruth. I've had all the sex I wanted - and it was good sex. Mark has been the sweetest, most attentive, happiest husband I could have asked for this whole time.

RUTH

Of course Mark's happy. He's a typical man who has his cake and is eating it, too. But it was all done out of guilt, believe me.

Ruth starts searching through her purse.

SARAH

I don't know about that, Ruth.
 (beat)

The other strange thing is that I didn't feel jealous when he told me. I actually was glad for Mark that he had found such happiness. After all, aren't we supposed to want the people we love the most to be happy?

Ruth pulls out a business card from her purse and hands it to Sarah.

RUTH

Here. Call her. She's the best. She'll bleed Mark dry for every blessed cent. Take it from me - I was her most successful divorce ever.

SARAH

(pushing the card back at Ruth)

Ruth, the problem is that I don't want to be like you.
(MORE)

Yes, you're rich, but you're so negative and unhappy - a bitter, angry manhater who's going to grow old all alone.

Before Ruth can object, the WAITER arrives at the table.

WAITER

(cheerfully)

Would anyone like dessert today?

RUTH

Fuck off.

When the waiter runs away, Betty intervenes before Ruth can say anything.

BETTY

Well, surely you're going to divorce him.

SARAH

I really don't know what I'm going to do yet. It seems crazy to me to throw away everything we've worked so hard together to build up, especially when I'm not that upset.

BETTY

You're just in shock, dear. You'll see things differently very soon.

HELEN

(looking past the tables)
Sarah, isn't that your sister Kate
walking out of the hotel?

KATE WHITTAKER, 38, Sarah's younger sister, is leaving the hotel. Blond, with her hair in a bun, very attractive, dressed professionally in a pants suit.

Sarah turns to look, then immediately turns back to Helen - obviously trying to avoid eye contact with Kate - and nods.

SARAH

Yep, that's Kate all right.

BETTY

I didn't know you had a sister.

SARAH

She's a lawyer who works in Mark's office. But we don't get along, to put it **mildly**.

BETTY

A lot of sisters have issues.

SARAH

It's a long story, but it's different with Kate. The hate runs deep.

Betty turns back to look at Kate again and sees Mark also exiting the hotel, catching up with Kate and taking her arm as they walk away.

Betty looks at the other women, realizes she's the only one who saw Mark, and decides to keep quiet as Sarah's cell phone rings with a text message.

SARAH (CONT'D)

The hospital needs me. I've got to go.

Sarah puts \$40 on the table, gets up, gathers her things, pulls a stethoscope from her bag and flings it around her neck, and starts to leave in the opposite direction of Mark and Kate.

Helen jumps up and catches up with her and walks with her.

HELEN

Sarah, I didn't say much back there, because, well, it might not have been well received. But I understand what you're going through. I've been there, as you know, but you might not know that I wish I had never gotten a divorce. I mean, I'm happy that I met Jeff, but still....

Helen grabs Sarah's arm to stop her from walking. She takes a card out of her purse.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Anyway, there's someone you might want to talk to while you're going through all of this.

(handing Sarah the card) Call her, please.

Sarah glances at the card and puts it in her bag.

SARAH

Thanks, Helen. But I really do need to go.

Sarah hurries off down the street to her car while Helen waves goodbye to her and calls out.

HELEN

We love you Sarah.

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE AT THE HOSPITAL - DAY

Sarah is at her desk finishing dictating patient notes. She puts down the microphone mouthpiece, sits forward and covers her head in her hands. Then she picks up her bag and takes out the card Helen gave her.

She looks at it for a minute, and then dials her cell phone.

SARAH

(to herself)

What the hell. It's worth a try.

(to the phone)

Yes, hello, Jessica? You don't know

me. My name is Sarah Hanover, and

I'm a friend of Helen Hartmann.

(beat)

Oh, she did.

(beat)

Sounds like she told you pretty

much everything.

(beat)

Look, I don't know what you're going to say that I don't already

know, but I do need to talk to somebody.

/baa+ \

(beat)

I guess so. Where do you want to meet?

icec:

(beat)

Well, okay. What's the address?

(beat)

Hang on a second, let me get

something to write with.

Sarah finds a pen and scrap of paper on the desk.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Okay. Go ahead.

Sarah writes down the address.

SARAH (CONT'D)

All right, then. See you at 6.

Sarah speed dials another number on her cell phone.

Mark, I'm going to have dinner with ... someone Helen suggested. I'll be home, but not until later. We can continue our conversation then. Love you.

As Sarah hangs up, she looks at her phone.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Love you? Really, Sarah?

EXT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah walks up to the house, which is quite up-scale with a neatly manicured and landscaped lawn and a very nice large hand-carved wooden front door. She shifts the bottle of wine she brought into her other hand and rings the doorbell.

JESSICA, well-dressed, in her 40s, wearing glasses, opens the door.

JESSICA

Sarah? Nice to meet you. Come on in.

INT. JESSICA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah walks in and sighs as her body immediately relaxes, feeling at home in familiar minimalist surroundings. She hands the bottle of wine to Jessica.

JESSICA

Thank you so much. You didn't have to ... Would you like a glass now?

SARAH

Yes, please.

(looking around)

Beautiful house.

JESSICA

(opening the wine and pouring two glasses)

Thank you. It's simple, but we like it that way. Come, have a seat and let's talk while I finish getting dinner ready.

Jessica points to a bar stool for Sarah on the other side of the kitchen peninsula while she remains standing in the kitchen. ROBERT enters the house through another door in the kitchen, presumably from the garage. He is early 50s, tall, with pure white hair, strong features and a trim, toned body.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Oh, hi, Robert.

Jessica and Robert exchange kisses.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Robert, this is Sarah. Sarah, this is my husband, Robert.

ROBERT

Very nice to meet you. Glad you could join us for dinner.

SARAH

I appreciate the invitation.

JESSICA

Robert, would you like a glass of wine with us?

ROBERT

Maybe in a minute. I want to catch my breath first. By the way, Sarah, Jessica loves any chance she gets to talk about us ...

(winking at Jessica)

... so be prepared for an earful.

Robert leaves the kitchen.

JESSICA

I'm sure Sheila will be along soon as well.

SARAH

And who's Sheila?

JESSICA

Robert's other wife.

Sarah looks a little shocked.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

We're a polyamorous triad - actually soon to be four. Monica will be joining us in a couple weeks.

Sarah looks puzzled.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Go ahead. Ask your questions. It's okay. That's why you're here tonight.

SARAH

Aren't you jealous? I mean, maybe not now. But weren't you jealous when it first happened?

JESSICA

Maybe a little. But it soon went away when I met Sheila. For some people, it's the opposite - they don't get jealous until they find out who the new lover is, or meet them face-to-face, and then they feel threatened.

SARAH

I didn't feel jealous when Mark first told me, either.

JESSICA

Yes, Helen told me. And I'm not surprised. I think you really love Mark, and love and jealousy do not go together.

Sarah looks at Jessica even more puzzled.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Think about it. Think how jealousy feels. Pretty awful, yes? Now think how love feels. Pretty wonderful, right? No matter what society says, or what the soap operas say, love and jealousy are two very different and very opposite feelings that cannot coexist. Jealousy is not part of love. In fact, jealousy can destroy whatever love there is, and anything else that gets in its path. If you really love someone unconditionally, their happiness will bring you joy, not jealousy.

Jessica checks the oven as Robert comes back into the kitchen and pours himself a glass of wine.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Hope you like eggplant parmigiana...

SARAH

Sounds wonderful, and smells great, too.

Sarah's cell phone rings. She sees that it's Betty, sends the call to voice mail and then silences the phone.

SARAH (CONT'D)

But, Jessica, I recall some wedding vows that said: "forsaking all others, to be faithful as long as you both shall live." Was that all bullshit - if you'll forgive me?

Robert lovingly touches Jessica's arm.

ROBERT

I've got this.

As Robert talks, Jessica gets out the plates and silverware for dinner and puts them on the table near the kitchen.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

No, not bullshit at all. Monogamy can be a very valid choice to focus all your love and attention on one other person for a certain time.

Robert starts fixing the salad as he talks.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

But unfortunately, most people choose monogamy out of fear and lack of self-confidence, and they use it as leverage against their partner. They're afraid that if the one they love should find someone else, that someone else would beat them out for the job and they'd be on the street. So they make their partner promise not to look.

SHEILA walks into the kitchen through the same door that Robert used. She is late 30s, very attractive, professionally dressed, and clearly belongs to a fitness center. She kisses both Robert and Jessica, and then reaches out to shake hands with Sarah.

SHEILA

Hi. I'm Sheila. Please don't let me interrupt.

(to Jessica)

Could I have a glass of wine?

Jessica nods toward the bottle, and Sheila pours herself a glass while Sarah continues.

SARAH

So how do you tell if you're choosing monogamy out of fear or love?

SHEILA

Looks like I'm just in time. This one's mine.

She leans over the kitchen counter to look closer into Sarah's deep brown eyes.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

We're all free to choose, right, Sarah? So you can choose monogamy for yourself out of love, but your partner has to be equally free to make a different choice - without affecting your love or your relationship. For example ...

Sheila steals a crouton from the salad Robert is making, and then blows him a kiss.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

... I'm monogamous with Robert. He never asked me to be. That's my choice. But I don't need him to make the same choice, because the minute you require your partner to choose monogamy as well, it's fear. That opens the door to jealousy, which then destroys the love. And when someone is jealous, they can do some very crazy things.

SARAH

And this ...

(pointing to the three of them)

is what's called "polyamory"?

JESSICA

That's the latest term. It's been called many things, but it's simply the recognition that we are all capable of loving more than one person at the same time, and that loving another does not mean you love the first one any less.

SARAH

Just out of curiosity, does polyamory go both ways?

SHEILA

(laughing)

Absolutely. We're not polygamists, or Mormon, for that matter.

(glancing at Jessica for agreement)

We know of many women, don't we, who have two or more husbands - not legally, of course, because that's not possible. But in reality, yes.

Jessica nods her agreement, takes the dinner out of the oven and puts it on the table. Robert adds the salad bowl and tongs.

JESSICA

Time to eat.

The four of them sit down at the table.

SARAH

Honestly, I don't know whether I could do this.

ROBERT

What? Eat?

SARAH

(laughs)

Well, that too, at the moment.

SHEILA

I could take the rest of the night telling you how great it is, all the advantages and benefits that make life so much better this way especially for us women.

Jessica begins dishing out the eggplant parmigiana while Robert passes the salad.

JESSICA

But the burning question for you right now is, do you want to divorce Mark and throw away all the love you have for him, and all the life you have created and shared together? Your women friends will expect that, and so does society, so you'll have a lot of support.

Jessica stops serving in order to focus on what she wants to say to Sarah.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

But it's clear to me that you are a very self-confident woman who doesn't need monogamy to define who you are. So are you willing to look at some other solutions to your situation?

SARAH

(beat)

Right now I'd like to look at some more wine.

They all laugh as Sheila empties the bottle into Sarah's glass.

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah is seated on the deck of their lake house, looking out over the lake at a full moon rising. Debussy's *Claire de Lune* is playing in her earbuds. She's vaping a Pax Era pod and sipping on a glass of wine, and appears deep in thought.

After a minute or so, her phone rings. We can see MARK as the caller ID over her shoulder. She hesitates, then answers it.

SARAH

(to the phone)

Hi, Mark.

(beat)

I'm fine, really. I just came out to the lake house to get away from everyone, and the noise ... to be able to think quietly for a few minutes.

(beat)

I'll tell you all about dinner when

I get home.

(beat)

Yes, I'll be there in a while. I

just need a little time.

(beat)

See you soon.

As she ends the call, she sees several messages from Betty. She plays the first one from voice mail:

BETTY (V.O.) Sarah, it's Betty. Please call me before you see Mark tonight. It's

important. Thanks.

Sarah saves the voice mail message but then silences the phone. She takes another hit on the Pax.

Sarah picks up her phone again and starts flipping through pictures. She wipes the tears from her eyes as she looks at them.

MONTAGE - PHOTO ALBUM

Various photos of Sarah and Mark and the kids over a span of years:

- -- Sarah and Mark's wedding
- -- The birth of the twins
- -- Sarah and Mark pushing the twins in strollers
- -- Sarah holding a "SOLD" sign in front of their new house
- -- The twins at Halloween
- -- Mark working on renovating the lake house
- -- The twins graduating high school
- -- Sarah and Mark on their 20th wedding anniversary

EXT. LAKE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sarah closes the photo album, lays the phone in her lap, takes another hit on the Pax and looks out over the lake again, listening to the music. Then she picks up her phone and wipes away the tears enough to speed dial.

SARAH

(to the phone)

Hi, Mom. It's Sarah.

(beat)

No, mom, I'm not okay. Mark is

having an affair.

(beat)

He just told me yesterday. (beat) (MORE)

I've decided that I still love him, and I'd rather share Mark with another woman than live without him.

(beat)

No, I don't know who she is yet. But what does that matter? I trust Mark's judgment, and I'm sure whoever it is, I can get along with her.

(beat)

Claire de Lune gets louder as Sarah's conversation with her mother trails off.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I know, mom, but we'll find a way....

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

With Claire de Lune still playing in the background, the love-making going on between a man and a woman is the same kind as in the first scene - long, slow, tender, sweet love.

Except this time, both partners are able to finish, looking into each others' eyes, before Mark rolls off of Sarah as the music also climaxes.

They stare at the ceiling.

MARK

Wow! That was definitely unexpected.

SARAH

I love you, Mark.

Silence as Sarah reaches for a t-shirt at the foot of the bed and slips it on, then lies back down.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I ate dinner tonight with some people involved in a polyamorous relationship - one man with 2 wives, soon to be three wives. They all seemed to love and care about each other very much.

(beat)

Is that what you want, Mark? (MORE)

Is that how you want us to solve this little problem we suddenly have?

Mark rolls on his side to look at Sarah, to make sure she is serious.

MARK

Oh, my god, Sarah. That would be a dream come true, because I don't want to have to choose between the two of you. I truly love you both. And I definitely don't want to lose you because of this.

SARAH

Well, I realized at the lake house that I don't want to destroy what we have created together out of jealousy. That seems crazy to me. So I'm willing to talk about the alternatives, even if it means sharing you with another woman.

Mark reaches out to touch Sarah's face as he tears up from the joy and the relief and the hope.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Mark. We're two very intelligent people. I'm sure we can make it work.

(beat)

But I have some questions, like would we all live in the same house?

MARK

(coming back to reality)
I haven't thought that far ahead. I
suppose that's a possibility.

SARAH

And you'd alternate nights - one night sleeping with me and the next night with her?

MARK

Sarah, I don't have all the answers right now. That's something the three of us should decide together.

SARAH

And she's okay with all of this?

MARK

I don't think she's thought that much about it, really.

SARAH

Why not?

MARK

Because I think she thinks you won't go for it.

SARAH

Mark, who are we talking about? Someone at your work?

MARK

Yes.

SARAH

Do I know her?

MARK

Yes.

(beat)

It's Kate.

Sarah sits straight up in bed.

SARAH

Kate who?

MARK

Kate Whittaker ... your sister
Kate.

Sarah throws off the covers and jumps out of bed in a rage, pacing up and down.

SARAH

(yelling)

You've got to be fucking kidding me. My sister? I can't believe it!

MARK

Calm down, Sarah.

SARAH

(still livid)

My sister? Are you fucking nuts, Mark? Goddamn you!

Sarah opens the drawer of the bedside table and pulls out a Smith & Wesson 638 revolver kept there in case of an intruder.

(pointing the gun at Mark)

You asshole!

MARK

Sarah, stop... don't--

SARAH

(screaming now) --I HATE MY SISTER! AND NOW I HATE YOU FOR FUCKING HER!

BANG! Sarah shoots Mark in the head, killing him instantly. Blood spatters all over the pillow and headboard.

SARAH (CONT'D)

(still screaming)

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I HATE MY SISTER. ARE YOU A FUCKING MORON?!

BANG! Sarah shoots Mark again, this time in the chest. His body twitches from the blow of the .38 special bullet.

Sarah takes a couple steps backwards until her back hits the bedroom wall, lowers the gun, takes a deep breath, and seems to calm down a little.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Or did you think having me share you with her would make everything between us okay again? Always looking for a settlement, aren't you, Mark?

(raising the gun and screaming again) WELL, THINK AGAIN, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

BANG! She shoots Mark in the head again, then pauses to look at Mark's dead body and begins to flip in and out of control.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I told you, Mark, I was even prepared to say Yes tonight to another woman coming into our marriage ... maybe someone like Jessica, or Sheila ...

> (loses it and screams again)

... BUT NOT MY FUCKING SISTER!

BANG! She shoots Mark again.

SARAH (CONT'D) ANYONE BUT MY SISTER!

BANG! She shoots Mark one more time before she's out of ammo, and the trigger just clicks impotently as she pulls it again and again.

Sarah collapses on the floor in a total breakdown, sobbing.

SARAH (CONT'D) (through the sobs)
Anyone but her ...

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Sarah is seated in a chair looking out the window with a blanket over her legs. Her face is pale, her hair messy, her eyes vacant. She is obviously drugged and doesn't move.

SUPER: "Sarah Hanover was found not guilty of murder by reason of volitional insanity."

"She currently resides in the Park View Psychiatric Hospital."

"Her license to practice medicine was revoked."

"Betty, Ruth, and Helen visit her once a month for lunch."

FADE OUT.

THE END