

DEFLECTION
a short play by Jenny Kirlin and Kitt Lavoie

Lights rise on the gymnasium of PS 234 in Astoria, Queens.

MALCOLM, DIANE, and McKENZIE, mid-twenties, stand together in a line decked out in matching dodgeball uniforms -- each emblazoned with "POORTAL: The app for inexpensive doorway solutions."

Behind them, a sign reads: "Astoria App Developer Dodgeball League."

Malcolm and Diane face the audience. McKenzie stands between them faced away, her head turned over her shoulder. They look badass.

Their faces are mean, serious, and fierce. After a beat...

MALCOLM

LET'S DO THIS.

DIANE

I still don't think this is a good idea.

McKenzie spins around, revealing a very pregnant belly.

MCKENZIE

Oh, we're doing this.

DIANE

I don't want you to get hurt.

MCKENZIE

Stop being a little bitch. We have a perfect record. We're going to keep our perfect record.

DIANE

You're pregnant. There has to be a rule against this.

MALCOLM

There isn't.

McKenzie shoots him a look.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

I checked. I don't want to get disqualified.

DIANE

Did your doctor say it was okay?

MCKENZIE

My doctor is a punk.

DIANE

Oh my god.

MCKENZIE

There was a woman last year who ran a marathon seven months pregnant. I can pound a ball across the court at six-and-a-half.

DIANE

I'm just worried about you.

MCKENZIE

We're not at work. It doesn't matter if you're worried. You're not liable.

DIANE

Well, it's the company team--

MALCOLM

You're not liable. I checked.

DIANE

(to Malcolm)

Well, thank you, but--

(to McKenzie)

--as your friend, I'm worried. That's all.

MCKENZIE

Listen. I'm the best player we've got.

DIANE

You *were* the best player. But there's a reason Karl took your place on the team.

MCKENZIE

Not because he's a better player than me.

DIANE

No, but he's a lot less pregnant than you.

MCKENZIE

And he doesn't work here anymore, so GAME ON!

MALCOLM

She's right. Now that Karl is at Transapption, we don't have a chance of beating Thrifty-gress without her. I heard they demolished Citygrazr last week. They're monsters.

McKenzie hops up and down, shaking out her hands.

MCKENZIE

And we're going to beat them so hard they're going to have to dissolve their corporate charter and look for jobs on MONSTERS-DOT-COM!

(she pumps her fist)

Ba-BANG!

DIANE

McKenzie, you know how much I want to beat Thrifty-gress. And I know they'd like to beat us after we beat them for the rights to sell through DomicIsle. I'm just saying, our company is twice the size of theirs now, so maybe it's okay if we don't win a schoolyard game, under the circumstances.

MALCOLM

It's a perfect season.

DIANE

It's a cost-benefit, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Yeah, the cost is our perfect season, and the benefit is we keep our perfect season. They're undefeated, too. If we lose to them, they're going to win the championship.

DIANE

Maybe we can call Roxanne and see if she can get down here--

MCKENZIE

Roxanne? That girl's a good programmer, but she's like if a china tea cup had osteoporosis. I'm playing. We are not losing to *them*. I am not watching Tabitha hold that trophy over her fat fucking head.

Whoa. #CelebrateMySize.

DIANE

She can celebrate my ass.

MCKENZIE

Who's Tabitha?

MALCOLM

She's a bully.

MCKENZIE

I think you're being a bully.

DIANE

It's not bullying to stand up to a bully. That's standing up for yourself. She doesn't like the positions I chose? She can choose her own. That's my life. That's not her life. And she can keep her stupid mouth shut. #StandUpForYourself.

MCKENZIE

Where do you even know her from?

DIANE

Class.

MCKENZIE

Like, debate class?

DIANE

No. Lamaze class.

MCKENZIE

A beat.

MALCOLM

Wait-- What?

MCKENZIE

My life, my choices.

DIANE

She's pregnant.

MCKENZIE

Yeah.

DIANE

Why didn't you say that before?

MCKENZIE

It is not my job to tell you who is knocked up at Thrifty-gress.

DIANE

I am really not okay with this.

MALCOLM

I am not throwing a ball at a pregnant woman.

MCKENZIE

Oh, yes, you will.

MALCOLM

I could maybe catch it if she threw it at me.

MCKENZIE

(re: throwing at Tabitha)

Yes, you will.

MALCOLM

No, I won't.

She starts in at Malcolm.

MCKENZIE

You scared?

MALCOLM

Yes.

MCKENZIE

You scared you're going to get beat by a pregnant woman and everyone's going to say you're not a real man?

MALCOLM

No.

MCKENZIE

Because I think that's what they're going to say.

MALCOLM

I'm not scared of babies, if that's what you heard.

MCKENZIE

I didn't say anything about babies. I was talking about pregnant women. And you for positive sure were fine with them throwing balls at *me*.

MALCOLM

That's different.

MCKENZIE

Excuse me?!

MALCOLM

One, that wasn't me throwing balls at a pregnant lady. And two, I could protect you.

MCKENZIE

I don't need your protection.

MALCOLM

Yeah, well, I'd protect you and your baby and if you heard different I want to know who you heard different from.

MCKENZIE

Oh, come on. Man up, the both of you.

MALCOLM

You want to tell your kid it's brain damaged because some girl named Tabitha knocked you out with a dodgeball?

DIANE

He's right.

MCKENZIE

No one's getting brain damaged. They're throwing the ball from way over there.

(re: the distance between her and Diane)

It's not like they're throwing it from this close. $A = \frac{V^2 - U^2}{2S}$. Deceleration, bitch.

MALCOLM

Well, I'm not taking any chances. I'm not whipping balls at some pregnant woman's belly.

MCKENZIE

Then aim at her head.

MALCOLM

I'm not going to aim--

MCKENZIE

You don't have to spend your Saturdays with her for the next six weeks.

MALCOLM

Just breathe, okay.

McKenzie does that whistle-y Lamaze breathing thing.

MCKENZIE

Better?

MALCOLM

You're getting yourself all worked up and they haven't even shown up yet.

MCKENZIE

Are you guys on my side? Or not?

DIANE

(definitively)

You can't play, Mac.

MCKENZIE

What?

DIANE

I'm not going to let you play just to get back at some girl in your Lamaze class.

MCKENZIE

You're not liable. Malcolm checked.

DIANE

Not legally. But it would be a PR disaster.

MALCOLM

She's right.

DIANE

Plus, P.S., I don't want you to get hurt.

MALCOLM

Or your baby to get hurt.

MCKENZIE

What do you care!? It's not *your* baby.

A beat.

MALCOLM

Yes. I am aware of that.

MCKENZIE

You cannot win without me. You said that yourself.

MALCOLM

I know.

MCKENZIE

Then what are we going to do?!

MALCOLM

We forfeit.

MCKENZIE

And lose our perfect record?

MALCOLM

Yeah.

MCKENZIE

Of course. You chicken out of everything, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

I don't chicken--

MCKENZIE

You chicken, like a cluck cluck chicken cluck chicken cluck cluck.

MALCOLM

I don't chicken. Did you ever think that maybe you just don't give people a chance to not chicken? Like some sort of very fast bird that always runs away. Like a...? A...?

DIANE

Roadrunner?

MALCOLM

No, that's a cartoon.

An emu?
DIANE

But, like, on a farm.
MALCOLM

Like a turkey? A duck?
DIANE

Peregrine falcon! Like a peregrine falcon! You just peregrine falcon away before people have a chance to decide anything.
MALCOLM

I am not a falcon.
MCKENZIE

Why couldn't you just be a swan? Just be a swan. Or a puffin. And stand by your man.
MALCOLM

Diane looks back and forth between them.

Wait. You're together?
DIANE

No.
MALCOLM

Not anymore. He chicken falconed away because he didn't want to have a baby. So I'm not so sure why he's suddenly acting like Mr. Mom.
MCKENZIE

Malcolm shakes his head.

That's not fair.
MALCOLM

Am I the only one who didn't know?
DIANE

YES. MALCOLM NO. MCKENZIE

I just said we should think about it.
MALCOLM

MCKENZIE

Who knew?

MALCOLM

Like, everyone knew.

DIANE

Well, I should have known. You're supposed to register your relationship with the company. This opens us up to all kinds of liability.

MCKENZIE

Diane, we're a five person company. Four, now that Karl is at Transapption. This is not some corporate fucking crisis.

DIANE

I didn't found this company to be a five-hand start-up--

MCKENZIE

Four-hand.

DIANE

--and we're charted for growth. And dress for the job you want.

MCKENZIE

Keep your pants on. It's Saturday. We're not at work. And we were certainly not at work any of the times he was in danger of putting a baby in me.

MALCOLM

Except that one time.

MCKENZIE

Well, except that one time.

(to Diane)

But mind your business.

DIANE

Well, excuse me, but I am minding my *business*.

MCKENZIE

Your wordplay isn't adorable.

DIANE

Is it Karl's baby?

Excuse me?
MCKENZIE

Is that why he left?
DIANE

No.
MCKENZIE

Because that would explain it.
DIANE

That, plus the higher salary and better title, sure.
MCKENZIE

Is it? His?
DIANE

No.
MCKENZIE

You wouldn't lie to me about this?
DIANE

I would, because it's none of your business. But I'm not now.
MCKENZIE

So it is his.
DIANE

No.
MCKENZIE

Because that would explain it.
DIANE

He just didn't like working here.
MCKENZIE

He never said anything to me.
DIANE

Well, he quit.
MCKENZIE

DIANE

He said he got a better salary and title.

MCKENZIE

(“like I was saying”)

Well then, maybe that was it.

DIANE

Did he say anything to you about not liking it here?

MCKENZIE

...No.

DIANE

So he did like it?

MCKENZIE

I don't know.

DIANE

But then why did he leave?

MCKENZIE

I don't know.

DIANE

So he didn't like it?

MCKENZIE

I don't know.

DIANE

Why wouldn't he have liked it?

MCKENZIE

Maybe because of this.

DIANE

Excuse me?

MCKENZIE

Nothing.

DIANE

Because of what?

MCKENZIE

Nothing.

DIANE

This what? He didn't like dodgeball? He didn't have to be on the team.

MCKENZIE

Because of *this*. We're all impressed, we really are, Diane, that you put everything into founding this company. And we understand that *this is your life*. But this is *our job*. And the things that happen away from our job are none of your business.

A beat.

DIANE

So it is Karl's.

MCKENZIE

Oh, my god.

MALCOLM

Is it?

A beat. McKenzie looks Malcolm in the eye.

MCKENZIE

No.

MALCOLM

Because I would have had a baby with you, if that's what you wanted. I *want* to have a baby with you. I'll have *this* baby with you, if that's what you wanted.

MCKENZIE

That's not what I wanted.

MALCOLM

Well, you asked me to have a baby with you, so at some point you wanted.

MCKENZIE

I didn't.

MALCOLM

Then why did you ask?

MCKENZIE

I didn't. I said "I think I want to have a baby." And you said, "Are you sure we can afford it with what we make?"

MALCOLM

And that's a reasonable question to ask. I wasn't saying I didn't want to have a baby with you. Or even that I didn't want one with you *now*. I was just saying that we should think through the contingencies. I'm the guy that checked about the liability of the company dodgeball team, remember? Contingencies are like, my thing.

DIANE

And your salaries are very reasonable for a start-up our size with the option structure we agreed on. If you stayed on four years with our growth tracking the way it is, you could afford to have all the babies you want.

MALCOLM

I wasn't hesitating. I was starting to think about *how* and what could go wrong and how to keep it from going wrong. That's how I start doing things. That wasn't me saying "I don't know." That was me saying "yes."

MCKENZIE

But it wasn't me *asking*. I didn't say "will you have a baby with me?" I said, "I think I want to have a baby." And you started problem solving with your contingencies about crib safety data. But that was the beginning of a speech I had been working on for a month. "I think I want to have a baby. And I have been thinking about it and what it would look like. And when I think about it, Malcolm, you're not there."

(a beat)

That is where I started in that conversation. Not where I ended up.

MALCOLM

Well, you packed your bags that night and two months later, you were pregnant. So I guess it didn't matter who. As long as it wasn't me.

MCKENZIE

No. I knew who.

(a beat)

That was part of the speech, too.

MALCOLM

So you wrote a speech about who you were fucking, and I didn't get to hear it because I interrupted it with plans about how we were going to have a family together.

MCKENZIE

Not *fucking*. I... once. One time, and then I knew I didn't want to do it again until I had settled things with you.

MALCOLM

Well, I'm glad you felt things were settled.

(re: her belly)

Clearly. Man, that must have been some great fuck.

MCKENZIE

It wasn't the--... It was a while in coming. And then when I saw him in San Francisco...

MALCOLM

This happened at DevCon? *That's* why you told Diane not to let me go this year.

MCKENZIE

I didn't tell Diane not to let you go. That was a budget thing.

DIANE

It was a budget thing.

MALCOLM

(to McKenzie)

You're in charge of the budget.

MCKENZIE

I didn't even know he was going to be there.

DIANE

Who is it?

MCKENZIE

It doesn't matter.

DIANE

If it's one of our competitors, it matters.

MCKENZIE

It's not. And it's none of your business.

DIANE

It happened on company time. Is it one of our clients?

MCKENZIE

No.

DIANE

Well, everyone at DevCon who isn't a client is a competitor.

Motherfucker.

MALCOLM

Malcolm paces away in a sudden rage.

Fucking A!

MALCOLM (cont'd)

(he wheels around on McKenzie)

It's David fucking Tobenowski.

McKenzie looks away.

DIANE

Is that why we got the DomicIsle deal?

MCKENZIE

No. Not entirely.

MALCOLM

(to Diane)

Wow, I guess you really have found yourself someone who will do anything for the company...

MCKENZIE

It was something that developed over our pitch meetings and lunches and... I really didn't expect it, Malcolm. And then when I saw him in San Francisco, something just... happened.

DIANE

And a week later he signed with us to be their primary partner for entryways and entryway needs. It's like an eighteen year contract!

Diane puts her hand up to McKenzie's belly.

DIANE (cont'd)

High five!

MALCOLM

Well, I'm glad this is working out so well for the both of you.

DIANE

We're building something. All of us, Malcolm. Together. And it's going to be better than any baby could be.

Five years from now, you're going to be sitting in your beach house in Montauk with a sexy wife and a beautiful baby all your own and you're going to think this was the best thing that ever happened to you. That's what I want for you. That's what I want for all of us.

MALCOLM

Well, you do know, McKenzie can't just bone every potential client. You're going to have to hire more people. I can put an ad in the casual encounters section of Craigslist, if you want.

MCKENZIE

That's not why he went with us. We were always offering as good a deal as Thrifty-gress. But he had been seeing Tabitha... and that made it complicated. For him to go with us. So when we got together, and Tabitha went away, that cleared the way for us to close.

(a beat)

But I don't think she knew Dave and I ended up together. And then she showed up with some guy at our Lamaze class, and it became a whole thing. And she was all over him, like "Come back" and "We can be together" and "We'll build an empire" and "Don't mind him, he's just my baby daddy."

DIANE

(to Malcolm)

You can definitely aim at her head.

MALCOLM

I don't think I can. I don't think I can be here right now anymore. In fact--

(re: McKenzie)

--I don't think I can be around you anymore. At all.

(to Diane)

Diane, I don't think I can come to work anymore. I'm sorry.

DIANE

Malcolm!

MALCOLM

I'm sorry.

Malcolm heads for the exit.

DIANE

Malcolm!

MCKENZIE

Malcolm! Don't!

MALCOLM

I can't have you in my life anymore.

MCKENZIE

You won't have to. Not for long.

A beat.

MCKENZIE (cont'd)

We're leaving. Once the baby comes.

MALCOLM

To where?

MCKENZIE

Arizona. It's where his family is. And I hate the cold.

MALCOLM

I remember. I kept it like an oven in my apartment so you'd want to stay over.

MCKENZIE

I thought that's how you liked it.

Malcolm shakes his head.

DIANE

What about his business? Is he moving DomicIsle out west?

MCKENZIE

You need to talk to him about that.

DIANE

I'm talking to you about it. You work for me, and if you know something that is going to affect my business, you tell me.

A beat.

MCKENZIE

He's closing it down. He's had a good run, but he's just not making the headway he had hoped against Home Depot and Lowes. No one in the app space is going to be able to. And with a family on the way... Time's just up.

DIANE

Our partnership with DomicIsle is responsible for 60% of our business. It's why we were able to double our office size. It's why we were able to hire Roxanne. This is going to crush our business.

MCKENZIE

You need to talk to him about that.

DIANE

I am talking to you about it. You work for me. If you knew this, you should have told me.

MCKENZIE

It's his business. He didn't want you to know.

DIANE

You don't work for his business.

MCKENZIE

And I'm not going to work for yours much longer. So...

A long beat.

MCKENZIE (cont'd)

Look, I just came here to wing a ball at a pregnant lady. So if we're not going to do that, I think I'll just see you on Monday.

DIANE

This is going to ruin me. We are going to close if we lose DomicIsle.

MCKENZIE

I'm really sorry Diane. You're smart. You'll start another company. That's what Dave is doing.

DIANE

I won't. I can't. I borrowed *half a million dollars* to start this company. Against my parents' house as collateral. So I could give you a job.

MCKENZIE

You didn't start this company so you could give me a job. You started the company and then hired me because I answered an ad.

DIANE

I took all of the risk. So there could be a company. So you could have a job. So you could have the kind of life everyone wants.

(a beat)

This is *it* for me.

MCKENZIE

I'm sorry.

DIANE

I thought you were my friend.

MCKENZIE

Diane. I like you. But I've never seen you outside of work.

DIANE

All I do is work.

(a beat, then pleading)

This company is *my life*.

MCKENZIE

(hands on her belly)

This is mine now. I'm sorry.

A long silence. Diane glowers at McKenzie. McKenzie looks calmly back.

Suddenly, Diane winds up and wails McKenzie in the stomach with a ball from a couple feet away.

McKenzie collapses to the floor.

DIANE

Fuck that baby.

Diane stalks off.

Malcolm rushes to McKenzie and kneels by her side.

MALCOLM

Are you okay?

A beat. No answer.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

McKenzie?

MCKENZIE

Yeah. Yeah. Sorry. I was just startled.

MALCOLM

Are you okay?

MCKENZIE

Yeah.

Malcolm helps McKenzie to her feet.

MALCOLM

You're sure?

McKenzie holds her stomach in her hands.

MCKENZIE

Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine.

McKenzie looks off after where Diane went.

MCKENZIE (cont'd)

That was crazy.

A beat.

MALCOLM

She's not wrong, though. Fuck that baby.

Malcolm turns and walks off, dropping his ball as he goes.

The ball bounces. McKenzie is left alone.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY