

Challenge A
by Linda Barsi

New Year. New Neighbor.

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INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

We're in a shabby apartment building.

A tall woman, CHRISTINE (30) in a sparkly silver cocktail dress waits for the elevator. Her dress is *stunningly* sparkly.

She gets a text: "**Where are you?**"

She SIGHS and taps her foot. Her heels are just as silver as her dress.

The elevator doors open. It's empty, save for --

A handsome young man, MARK (23), who is quite a bit younger than her. He leans against the elevator in a flannel shirt. His hair a mess, he exudes confidence like it's his job.

MARK

Hey! Don't you look nice.

There's chest hair visible at the collar of his loosely buttoned shirt. Christine's eyes linger there for a second.

CHRISTINE

(conflicted)

Um. Actually. I can just walk.

She looks to the stairs.

MARK

Nah, c'mon. There's plenty of room.

A beat. Finally, she gets in the elevator and stares straight ahead -- *not* at him.

He looks over her outfit.

MARK

Nice heels.

With her SILVER HIGH HEELS she's at least 4 inches taller than him. They both notice this.

CHRISTINE

(cold)

Thanks.

MARK

How's the magazine?

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Fine. How's unemployment?

He smiles, acknowledging the burn.

MARK

Also fine.

She continues ignoring him.

MARK

Hey, it wasn't personal, with your
friend you know.

(a beat)

She's just not really what I'm
looking for right now.The elevator comes to a halt. Christine, confused, presses
elevator buttons.

CHRISTINE

(distracted)

A college girl your age isn't what
you're looking for?

MARK

Interesting how you said "girl"
just now.

CHRISTINE

What do you mean?

The doors still don't open. She presses more buttons.

MARK

Instead of "woman."

Christine realizes something about the elevator --

MARK

Don't get me wrong, I appreciate
the setup-

CHRISTINE

Mark, the elevator's stuck.

MARK

(calmly noticing)

Oh. Yeah.

Christine BUZZES the alarm button. It's very loud. He
grimaces as she holds it down.

MARK
Hey, it's okay.

Mark GENTLY TOUCHES HER ARM so she'll stop --

MARK
I'll text Pat from 3B. He gets this
open all the time.

A little flushed, Christine looks at where Mark touched her. Then she pulls out her phone and makes a call. It RINGS next to her ear. Someone answers.

CHRISTINE
Hi Teddy, I'm stuck in an elevator-

We hear an angry voice on the other end.

CHRISTINE
Honey, I know the tickets are for
nine-

More grumbling from Teddy.

Mark frowns.

MARK
You guys still fighting about where
to put that couch?

Christine, horrified, covers the mouthpiece, scared Teddy heard.

MARK
(half-whispering)
I'm sorry. I know, it's a crime how
thin these walls are.

More displeased sounds from Teddy.

CHRISTINE
No, Teddy. No one else is here.

Mark raises an eyebrow. Christine turns away from him.

CHRISTINE
Teddy, I'll be there as soon as I
can.

She hangs up. There's a beat as both she and Mark just stare. Mark leans against the other side of the elevator.

CHRISTINE

(defensive)

He's just really stressed at work
these days.

MARK

Of course.

Then, a little pissed, she remembers something--

CHRISTINE

You heard us arguing-
(she changes her mind)
-talking about the couch?

Mark nods.

She SIGHS, closing her eyes.

He looks her over -- taking her in, height and all.

CHRISTINE

(noticing)

What?

MARK

You wear heels a lot.

CHRISTINE

So?

MARK

Nothing. I was just wondering what
you would look like without them.

Suddenly, Christine's phone RINGS. We see it up close: **"Call
from Teddy."**

Christine thinks a beat. Then she SILENCES IT.

Mark, impressed, looks at her. The two share a LONG LOOK.

Slowly, she TAKES OFF HER SHOES and pushes them to the side.
Mark watches her. Carefully, he walks over. They're EYE TO
EYE now, standing about a foot apart.

CHRISTINE

It'll get better. Once he gets
promoted.

MARK

Right. When he has more time for
you.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTINE

Exactly.

MARK

And maybe then you won't have to
get yourself off in the next room
after he's sleep.

Mortified, she covers her face.

CHRISTINE

Oh god.

MARK

Christine, wait. Look at me-

But then there's a BANG on the door.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Marky Mark! You in there?

MARK

(disappointed a beat)

Yeah.

PATRICK (O.S.)

Cool, one sec.

Christine finally looks up at him. We can feel the sexual
tension between them. He mouths the words "It's okay." A
beat. Will he kiss her? But then he just turns to her ear.

MARK

(whispering)

Happy New Year, Christine.

Patrick animatedly opens the door.

PATRICK

FREE AT LAST!

Mark steps back to his side of the elevator. Christine
quickly puts her shoes back on.

PATRICK

Oh hey, Christine! Need a hand?

He helps her out of the elevator. She walks off.

CHRISTINE

Later, guys.

Mark watches her go as he climbs out.