

The Takeoff

By Collin Doyle

Production Rights:

Collin Doyle

collindoyle@hotmail.com

CHARACTERS

JOAN In her sixties. Married to Frank. Mother to Paul and Emily.

FRANK In his sixties. Married to Joan. Father to Paul and Emily.

EMILY In her thirties. Married to Allan. Frank and Joan are her parents. Paul is her brother

ALLAN In his thirties. Married to Emily.

PAUL In his thirties. Dating/Engaged to Margo. Frank and Joan are his parents. Emily is his sister.

MARGO In her thirties. Dating/Engaged to Paul.

GRACE In her eighties. Married to Joe. Joan is her niece.

JOE In his eighties. Marries to Grace.

PHIL In his sixties. He is dating Joan.

AJAY In his twenties. Ajay had a one night stand with Emily.

Setting

The play takes place in various locations. The set and props should be kept simple to allow for the story to move quickly from scene to scene.

Punctuation

An ellipsis ("...") at the end of the sentence is the character trailing off. In the middle of the line it's the character trying to find their next word or thought.

A dash ("—") at the end of the line is an indication for a cut off by the other character. In the middle of the line it indicates a quick change in a thought or a correction in a thought.

Beat is my all-purpose word for pause or silence or a shift in the conversation or a new unit or...the wind rustling...or he wipes his brow. I leave it up to the director and actors to figure out how long of a pause or silence or shift in conversation the beat is.

Silence is used when the characters are at a total loss for words. Silence is also my way of saying that this is a really, really important Beat.

SCENE 1.

(A bus. Joan and Grace sit together on a bench. Phil, the bus driver, is at the front, driving the bus.)

GRACE
Suck it up and do it.

JOAN
I will.

GRACE
This is your last chance.

JOAN
I know.

GRACE
He retires tomorrow.

JOAN
I know.

GRACE
It's time to be courageous for once in your life, Joanie.

JOAN
I know.

GRACE
You have three more stops and then it's done. Your fate is sealed.

JOAN
I know.

GRACE
Sally Forth! (Grace pushes Joan out of her seat. Joan stumble, trying to get her balance.) Be brave! Be Bold! Be beautiful!

JOAN
Thanks, Auntie.

(Light shift. A bedroom. Ajay sits in the bed. He watches Emily sleep.)

AJAY

Are you awake? I think you're awake. You were doing this really deep—well almost snoring—breathing and then it shifted a little like you woke up and you were pretending to sleep. Like you were hoping that if you laid here long enough pretending, that I would eventually leave. Emily? Emily? Ms. Parker? Ms. Parker?

EMILY

Don't call me that.

AJAY

You are awake!

EMILY

Ms. Parker? That's just disturbing.

AJAY

You are my teacher.

EMILY

Was your teacher. Student teacher. Fourteen years ago. Don't make me sound like a perv. I'm maybe five years older than you.

AJAY

You taught me a few things last night.

EMILY

Seriously? Seriously what is that? Is that you trying to get some morning action?

AJAY

Did it work?

EMILY

No.(Beat.) Take the hint, Ahmed.

AJAY

Ajay.

EMILY

Ajay? You're not Ahmed? I thought I taught you third period social studies.

AJAY

No. I was in your honour's English class.

Really?
EMILY

Really.
AJAY

EMILY
That's a shame. I liked Ahmed. He always sat at the front of the class. Always raised his hand.

AJAY
All of us do look a like.

EMILY
You know...you're right, you do.

AJAY
Please tell me you're teasing.

EMILY
Take the hint, Ahmed. We had fun last night. Now it's time to leave.

AJAY
Breakfast?

EMILY
No. Nope. Buh-bye.

(Beat. Ajay gets out of bed. Offstage there is the sound of door opening and then slamming shut.)

ALLAN(Offstage)
Honey? Em? I'm home!

EMILY
(Whispering) Oh shit. Get back into bed. Now! Hide under the covers. Not the covers. Go under the bed. Under the bed. Go,Go,Go!

(Ajay slides under the bed just as Allan enters. Light shift. A kitchen. There is an open suitcase on the table. Margo is going through it, refolding the clothes. Paul watches.)

MARGO
Your mother would be embarrassed.

PAUL
What's my mom got to do with this?

MARGO
The way you pack.

PAUL
You're making no sense.

MARGO
Didn't your mother teach you how to pack?

PAUL
(Beat.) No. I don't think so. If she did, I forgot.

MARGO
Why do you need all these clothes?

PAUL
Why do you need all your clothes?

MARGO
I have outfits planned out. You...

PAUL
Yes?

MARGO
Honest to God, Paul, it looks like you emptied your dresser into this bag.

PAUL
That sounds about right.

MARGO
Why do you have three sweaters? We're going to Hawaii.

PAUL
It could get—

(Margo starts throwing clothing onto the floor.)

MARGO
Gone. Gone. Gone. And...What's this?

(Margo holds up a ring box.)

PAUL
It's a...it's a...

(Light shift. A living room. Frank and Joe watch TV.)

FRANK

A trial separation. What does that mean?

JOE

This is the wrong show.

FRANK

I know what it means. But what does it mean for us?

JOE

It means were watching the wrong show. (In reference to the program on the TV.) What's with all this god talk?

FRANK

Does it mean she expects me to move out or is she going to move out?

JOE

I wanna watch that morning show with the drunk woman and the nice black lady.

FRANK

I tell ya, I'm not movin' out. She can move out.

JOE

It's the show that's on channel—channel 3—I think.

FRANK

But she won't move out. You want to know why?

JOE

End of times! Why is it that these ministers are always predicting the end of times?

FRANK

She's too afraid. She's got it too good. So let her try this trial separation.

JOE

The end is coming.

FRANK

Nothing is going to change.

(Light shift. The bus. Joan is standing by the bus driver.)

JOAN

(Delighted.) You're right this isn't my stop!

PHIL

Did you want to get off here?

JOAN

...No...

(Phil pulls the bus back into traffic.)

PHIL

Okay.

JOAN

...You seem like a really nice guy. You are right? A nice guy?

PHIL

I hope so.

JOAN

I've been riding this bus route for a long time and you've been the driver for all these years.

PHIL

I retire tomorrow.

JOAN

And in all that time, I've never seen you get angry or upset or be cruel to any of the passengers. And there have been times you could have been mean--

GRACE

(Shouting from her seat.) Like with that drunk kid!

(Joan gives Grace a look.)

JOAN

The teenager with the fish in the plastic bag.

PHIL

Right.

JOAN

You could've been a jerk to him. You had every right. But you didn't. You just talked to him. I liked that.

(Beat.)

GRACE

(Shouting from her seat.) She has a letter for you!
Give him the letter, Joanie!

(Joan takes the letter out of her
purse.)

JOAN

Are you single?

(Phil pulls the bus to the curb,
another stop.)

PHIL

Yes. I am. Yes.

JOAN

I thought you were, but then I thought how can a man
this nice possibly be single...so good...so...

(Grace is up, shuffling to the front of
the bus.)

GRACE

Give him the letter. It's our stop.

JOAN

That's why I wrote you a letter. Because I knew I was
going to do this...stumble and mumble...I'm
separating--separated from my husband.

GRACE

Divorced, soon. Knock on wood.

PHIL

I'm sorry.

JOAN

Don't be.

GRACE

It's a good thing.

PHIL

Then congratulations.

JOAN

I like you a lot.

PHIL

Oh.

JOAN

And I know we don't know each other and we've never talked and I don't know anything about you and you don't know anything about me and how I can I feel this way, sort of queasy and weak in the knees, about someone I only see on the bus--

GRACE

Breathe, Joanie.

(Joan breathes.)

JOAN

I look forward to seeing you every day.

GRACE

Good.

JOAN

Sometimes you're the reason I get out of bed in the morning.

GRACE

A bit too much.

JOAN

I'm sure I'm making you late.

PHIL

No...(The sound of somebody ringing the bell over and over again.) Well maybe a little bit.

(Beat.)

JOAN

Here's my letter. (Joan hands Phil the letter. Phil goes to take it, but Joan continues to clutch it. A tiny tug-of-war ensues.) It's just a letter telling you how I feel about you...and telling you about me...and my phone number is in there...

GRACE

Let go of the letter.

(Joan lets go of the letter.)

JOAN

So give me a call...if you want.

GRACE

Let's get off the bus, sweetie.

(Grace and Joan step off the bus.)

PHIL

What's your name?

JOAN

Joan.

PHIL

I'm Phil.

JOAN

Well...have a good day, Phil.

GRACE

You better call her. She's golden. Golden.

(As the lights shift, there is the sound of the bus pulling away. The bedroom. Allan is changing his shirt. Emily is still in bed.)

ALLAN

It smells like sex in here.

EMILY

Really?

ALLAN

Booze and sex.

EMILY

Really?

ALLAN

It's sexy. You go out last night?

EMILY

With the girls.

ALLAN

Explains the booze.

EMILY
It would.

ALLAN
What about the sex then?

EMILY
What sex?

ALLAN
The smell. Why does it smell like sex?

EMILY
That's because my lover is hiding under the bed.
(Beat. Allan begins to laugh.) What does sex smell like?

ALLAN
You horny? You wanna fool around?

EMILY
...Are you...horny?

ALLAN
More than a little bit. Like a lot. C'mon, I've been on the road for a week. I'm horny like a dog. You want to?

EMILY
Now?

ALLAN
Yeah, I got about ten minutes before I gotta head to the office.

EMILY
So not a quickie.

ALLAN
Funny.

(Allan rips of his shirt. He dives in to the bed. He starts kissing Emily.)

EMILY
Allan! Allan! What the hell are you doing?

ALLAN

Come on. Please. Pretty please. (Ajay crawls out from under the bed.) I've got nine minutes now.

(Emily kisses Allan. Ajay tiptoes for the door. Light shift. The kitchen. Paul is on bended knee proposing to Margo.)

PAUL

I wanted to do this in Hawaii...but...

MARGO

No.

PAUL

Will you--What?

MARGO

No.

PAUL

No. No?

MARGO

No--Well not no--but not...but not yes.

PAUL

I think not yes is a no.

MARGO

No not yes is not a no it's more a...more a...maybe?

PAUL

What?

MARGO

Maybe? Maybe, I'll marry you.

PAUL

Hunh.

MARGO

Hunh.

(Beat.)

PAUL

I guess...well let's just pretend that didn't happen.

(Beat.)

MARGO

What didn't happen?

PAUL

Your saying no to my--Oh. Right. I get it. You're pretending. Thanks.

(Beat.)

MARGO

Maybe.

PAUL

What?

MARGO

I didn't say no. I said maybe.

PAUL

Why the maybe?

MARGO

It's too soon.

PAUL

It's been a year.

MARGO

'Kay, when you say a year you make it sound like a long time. But when I say a year, it's a...

PAUL

What?

MARGO

It's like Holy Fuck I'm already living with this guy and now I'm going to Hawaii with this guy and now this guy wants to marry me and it's been a year. One year. One, for the most part, beautiful fucking year. But it's a year.

PAUL

This is about your ex.

MARGO

Of course it's about my ex. I just got out of a long-term--

PAUL

You didn't just get out of long-term relationship. It was--

MARGO

I think we perceive time differently. For you a year is a long time. For me--

PAUL

For you, it isn't. I get it.

(Beat.)

MARGO

I can't be a person that...

PAUL

Tell me?

MARGO

That just says yes. Not when it comes to marriage.

(Light shift. The living room. Frank and Joe are watching TV.)

JOE

You know how I know the end of the world is coming?

FRANK

What are we watching?

JOE

Nobody can use a signal light.

FRANK

What channel did you want to watch?

JOE

Nobody can use a signal light!

FRANK

Whoa! Calm down, Joe. What are you talking about?

JOE

A signal light. An easy choice of moving your hand up on a lever to indicate you're going to go right. Or the choice of moving your hand down on the lever to indicate--to communicate--to tell all the other drivers going at these...magnificent speeds, that you

are going to turn left. Basic communication. And no one can do it. The world is doomed.

DRAFT

SCENE 2.

(Light Shift. A kitchen. Frank, Joe, and Grace eat supper.)

GRACE

Are you happy? That's what I want to know. Are you happy? Have you been happy in years?

FRANK

In comparison to what? To the past?

JOE

I'm happy.

GRACE

I know, honey. Of course you're happy.

JOE

I have you.

GRACE

And I have you. (Joan takes her napkin and wipes some sauce away from the corner of Joe's mouth.) But, Frank, are you happy?

FRANK

Yes. I'm happy. I'm frickin' happy. I have a happy frickin' life. With two happy frickin' kids and a happy frickin' marriage.

JOE

You're not happy. You seem angry.

GRACE

I don't think you've been happy in a long time.

FRANK

Well thanks for telling me.

GRACE

And Joan hasn't been happy in years.

JOE

She's been sad. Very sad.

FRANK

And I'm the one that's been making her sad?

GRACE

I'm going to tell you something you don't want to hear.

FRANK

I know she's on a date. She already told me. Bragged about it.

GRACE

Not that. No. I'm going to tell you something about yourself that I don't think you realize.

FRANK

What?

JOE

What?

GRACE

You don't like your wife.

(Beat.)

FRANK

Well that's just...that's just...

(Light shift. A park. Joan and Phil are strolling.)

JOAN

What happens on the fourth date?

PHIL

I don't know. What happens?

JOAN

The fourth date is strange. Don't you find it strange?

PHIL

No. Not really.

JOAN

Well the first date was the get to know you date. The second date was...

PHIL

Getting to know you more?

JOAN

It was. The third date was a movie. So we really didn't talk.

PHIL

And the fourth date is strange.

JOAN

It is.

PHIL

Why?

JOAN

Decisions need to me made.

PHIL

Deciding if there'll be a fifth date?

JOAN

Deciding if there'll be a...God, did I just turn red?

PHIL

Why would you be red?

JOAN

Because...(Whispering.) Because I'm trying to decide if there should be a sleepover date. Tonight.

(Joan smiles. She begins to giggle and then laugh. Phil joins in. Light shift. A restaurant. Allan and Emily have finished eating supper.)

EMILY

What? What did you say?

ALLAN

Distracted. I asked if you were distracted. I said you seem distracted. Are you distracted?

EMILY

No.

ALLAN

Dessert?

EMILY

What?

ALLAN
Em? What the fuck is going on?

EMILY
Let's get a dessert menu.

ALLAN
Em? Talk to me.

EMILY
I'm pregnant.

ALLAN
Really?

(Beat.)

EMILY
I've cheated on you. Been cheating on you. A lot. A lot of times in the past few years.

ALLAN
Do you love him?

EMILY
Him?

ALLAN
Do you love him?

EMILY
Hims.

ALLAN
Hims? What?

EMILY
Different guys. One night stands. So, no, I don't love him. Or the hims. (Beat. Emily looks around the restaurant.) Never a waiter when ya need one.

(Light shift. A park. Phil and Joan.)

JOAN
I'm tired of doing the right thing.

PHIL
Really?

JOAN

I want to be...bad.

(Joan Laughs.)

PHIL

How bad?

JOAN

Bad might be wrong word. I don't want to be responsible.

PHIL

For what?

JOAN

Everything.

PHIL

That's a lot of things not to be responsible for.

JOAN

Cooking supper. Cleaning. Taking care of someone else.

PHIL

Are we talking about your marriage now?

JOAN

Well...married is mainly what I've been. It's what I know. Well that and being a mom. Or mommy.

PHIL

It wasn't good?

JOAN

It was good. The being the mom. The marriage? Well the more the marriage went wrong the more we'd focus on our kids. I guess. But my kids have their own lives now--they don't need their mommy.

PHIL

What are their names?

JOAN

You don't want to know.

PHIL

I do.

PHIL
Good kids?

JOAN
They are. I think. I hope.

PHIL
I'm sure they are amazing people.

JOAN
You are?

PHIL
No. But it's the smart thing to say if I'm going to
get you to have that sleepover with me.

JOAN
It is.

PHIL
You wanna come home with me?

(Beat.)

JOAN
I do. I do.

(Light shift. A restaurant. Emily and
Allan.)

ALLAN
I'm not paying for this meal.

EMILY
Seriously?

ALLAN
I am not paying for this fucking meal!

EMILY
You don't need to shout.

ALLAN
I'm not paying--

EMILY
I heard you. I'll pay for the meal.

ALLAN
Not with my credit card.

Our--
EMILY

Mine!
ALLAN

Quit shouting--
EMILY

Mine! My credit card! Give it back! Now!
ALLAN

Allan.
EMILY

Shut up.
ALLAN

(Beat. Emily takes the credit card out of her purse and hands it to Allan.)

Did you want the keys to the car? The house keys? My wedding band?
EMILY

Why?
ALLAN

Apparently it's all about the possessions.
EMILY

Why did you tell me?
ALLAN

You can't have kids. It was going to become obvious.
EMILY

I can't believe--
ALLAN

Quit with the anger.
EMILY

I'm hurt.
ALLAN

Give me a break.
EMILY

Give you a--
ALLAN

EMILY

Hey, Allan, I'm telling you about the affairs. Isn't that better than waking up finding out you got an STD from your fuckin' husband?

ALLAN

That was so long ago.

EMILY

There's no time limit.

ALLAN

So that's what this is about, my cheating more than ten years ago?

EMILY

No. This is about me doing the right thing.

ALLAN

The right thing?

EMILY

Yes. I'm pregnant. It's not yours. What do you want to do?

(Light shift. The Kitchen. Frank, Joe, and Grace eat supper.)

GRACE

You're always trying to do the right thing.

FRANK

Thank you.

GRACE

That's not a compliment. Do you know why it's not a compliment?

JOE

Do you, Frank?

GRACE

Do you?

FRANK

No idea.

GRACE

It doesn't make you happy.

FRANK

Back to happy.

GRACE

Did you marry Joanie because you loved her?

FRANK

Sure.

GRACE

Or because she was pregnant?

FRANK

It was the right thing to do.

GRACE

Exactly.

JOE

Exactly.

FRANK

There is nothing wrong with doing the right thing.

GRACE

But why are you doing it now? Why are you doing it when you hate it?

JOE

End the suffering.

FRANK

I'm not suffering.

GRACE

Thirty-five years you've been together. You don't love your wife. You don't like your wife.

JOE

When's the last time you had sex?

FRANK

Pardon?

JOE

When's the last time you made love to your wife?

FRANK

That's—that's private.

JOE

Come on!

FRANK

When's the last time you two...made...

JOE

Last night!

FRANK

Last night?

JOE

Last night! I was wonderful, wasn't I?

GRACE

Quit doing the right thing, Frank. Start doing what you want, not what you think you should do. Be selfish. You'll be happier.

JOE

So much happier. And you need to have sex. Lots of it. It's good for your health.

SCENE 3.

(Light shift. Grace and Joe are getting ready for bed.)

GRACE
Did you brush your teeth?

JOE
I did.

GRACE
You did?

JOE
I did.

GRACE
Bathroom?

JOE
Of course. I think.

GRACE
Joe?

JOE
Pretty sure.

GRACE
Your pills?

JOE
Everything in the Saturday P.M. container.

GRACE
It's Friday.

JOE
Oops.

GRACE
It's fine. I'll just move the Friday to the Saturday.

JOE
Sorry.

GRACE
I'm going to read for a bit.

JOE

Sure.

GRACE

Are you going to go to sleep?

JOE

No, I'll just stare at you.

(Light shift. Joan and Phil lie in bed.)

JOAN

That was good. Great. It was good, right?

PHIL

It was.

JOAN

Good? Or great?

PHIL

How about...

JOAN

Magnificent? Fabulous? Spectacular?

PHIL

Special.

JOAN

Special?

PHIL

Special.

JOAN

That bad?

PHIL

No. Not bad. Not bad at all.

JOAN

When I hear special, I think of my mother. Not in a good way.

PHIL

Why are we talking about your mom? Is she even around?

JOAN

She's gone. Passed away years ago. But her response to anything she didn't like was, Isn't that special?

PHIL

Well, I didn't mean special like that.

JOAN

No?

PHIL

I meant it like it's...it's something precious...

JOAN

My lady parts are precious.

(They laugh.)

PHIL

Okay not precious...we fit. No dirty joke, Joan. We're figuring each other out.

JOAN

We are. It is special. Wanna go again?

(Light shift. Paul and Margo sit on the couch. Margo is staring at her engagement ring.)

MARGO

It's just a lunch.

PAUL

It's not just a lunch. And I don't see why you're having it.

MARGO

It sparkles. See how it sparkles.

PAUL

The guy's an asshole.

MARGO

How much did you pay for it?

PAUL

He treated you like shit.

MARGO

Was it a lot?

PAUL
It's a mistake.

MARGO
Tell me you didn't spend more than—

PAUL
Are you listening to me?

MARGO
How much did you spend?

PAUL
Would you listen to me?

MARGO
How much did you spend on the ring?

PAUL
I'm not telling you. Back to the lunch.

MARGO
I hope you didn't spend more than a thousand.

PAUL
I—of course I spent more than a thousand—you don't know how much a ring costs?

MARGO
No. I don't. That's why I'm asking.

PAUL
It doesn't matter. Margo, I don't think you should meet him for lunch. I don't want you to meet him for lunch.

MARGO
Did you spend more than...five thousand?

PAUL
Would you quit doing that!

MARGO
What?

PAUL
I'm trying to have a serious conversation.

MARGO
Me too. I wanna know how much you spent on my ring?

PAUL

The price doesn't matter.

MARGO

I always lose my jewellery.

PAUL

What?

MARGO

Sunglasses and jewellery. I always lose them.

PAUL

Please do not lose the ring.

MARGO

That's why I'm asking how much it cost.

PAUL

So if the engagement ring was cheap it would be okay to lose it?

MARGO

No.

PAUL

So what is your point?

MARGO

I wouldn't feel as bad if I lost it.

PAUL

That makes no sense. Just like the lunch makes no sense.

MARGO

Nice segue.

PAUL

Well?

MARGO

I won't meet him!

(Light shift. Phil and Joan in bed.)

JOAN

You have broader shoulders.

PHIL
Than?

JOAN
Than my husband. Ex. Soon to be Ex.

PHIL
That's a weird thing to say.

JOAN
It is? It is.

PHIL
I've never been complimented on my shoulders.

JOAN
I didn't compliment you.

PHIL
You didn't?

JOAN
No, I was just making an observation.

PHIL
What inspired the observation?

JOAN
Well...when you were between my legs...

PHIL
Doin' my thing?

JOAN
Doin' your thing?!!(Joan and Phil laugh for a bit. It trails off. Joan looks at Phil. She touches his chest.) Phil.

PHIL
Joan.

JOAN
(Enjoying saying his name.) Phil.

PHIL
Joan?

JOAN
Is this real? It's hard to believe this is real?

PHIL

Why?

JOAN

I did spend about fifteen years silently stalking you.

PHIL

Is it stalking if it's the bus you need to take all the time?

JOAN

But I didn't need to take it all the time. If I was having a really hard day, sometimes I'd just go and catch it so I could see you.

PHIL

Really?

JOAN

Really.

PHIL

You're not going to boil my rabbit are you?

JOAN

You have a rabbit? (Beat.) What did you think about me?

PHIL

When?

JOAN

On the bus.

PHIL

Ummm...nothing. Not nothing, I didn't know you. You were just another rider.

JOAN

That's it?

PHIL

A good rider. A rider with always accurate bus fair.

JOAN

But a rider.

PHIL

Yeah. Then.

JOAN

Now?

PHIL

Now? You wanna be my girlfriend?

JOAN

Girlfriend? The last time I was someone's girlfriend was...1972?

(Light shift. Paul and Margo in bed.)

MARGO

It's hard to let go. That's all I'm saying.

PAUL

You haven't let go?

MARGO

I have. But I haven't. Don't get mad.

PAUL

I'm not mad.

MARGO

That's all the lunch is about.

PAUL

Letting go.

MARGO

Moving on. A clean slate. Whatever shitty saying you want to use, I guess.

PAUL

One last kiss?

MARGO

You said you weren't mad.

PAUL

I'm not.

MARGO

Then quit being a dick. I'm with you.

PAUL

Sure.

(Beat.)

MARGO

I'm trying to untangle.

PAUL

What?

MARGO

That's the best shitty saying for what I'm trying to do.

PAUL

Okay.

MARGO

I built a life with someone before you, Paul. A messy, complicated life. And I loved that person. Eight years together. And maybe all I've ever told you about, or complained about, is the bad. Maybe I just told you all about the bad to justify our cheating.

PAUL

We don't need to talk about that.

MARGO

But there was also good...we had good times.

PAUL

And now?

MARGO

And now? I'm tired of feeling guilty because we hurt him. I hurt him.

PAUL

Why did you say yes?

MARGO

I said maybe first.

PAUL

But then in Hawaii you said yes. Why?

MARGO

Because we were in Hawaii.

PAUL

Well we aren't anymore.

(Margo looks at her ring.)

MARGO

Nope.

(Light shift. Grace and Joe in bed.
Grace is reading. Joe is staring at
her.)

JOE

I'm sleepy.

GRACE

Then go to sleep.

JOE

Will you hold me?

(Grace puts her book down.)

GRACE

Alright. Get ready for some cold feet.

JOE

Not fair.

GRACE

If you want to be held you gotta warm the toes.

JOE

That's the deal?

GRACE

That is the deal.

SCENE 4.

(Light shift. A doorway. Emily and Frank. There are a couple of suitcases on the floor.)

FRANK

Pregnant? You're pregnant? That's a good thing. Isn't it?

EMILY

Yes. No. I don't know.

FRANK

What the hell's going on?

EMILY

Allan and I are done. It's not his.

FRANK

What?

EMILY

It's not his. This place looks like a shit-hole. Where's Mom?

FRANK

Who cares.

EMILY

What?

FRANK

Let's not worry about your Mother--let's worry about you.

EMILY

There's nothing to worry about.

FRANK

You're...with child.

EMILY

We tried to work it out.

FRANK

Who?

EMILY

Me and Allan. We tried to work it out.

FRANK

That's what you should do.

EMILY

But of course he's Mr. Self-fucking-righteous.

FRANK

Doesn't he have a little bit of right--

EMILY

No. He doesn't. Not after he told me, told me, everything is fine, everything will be fine, we will make it work. We should keep the baby.

FRANK

Well that's--

EMILY

And then he starts treating me like a fucking convict.

FRANK

A convict--

EMILY

Going through my stuff. Checking my email. Asking me where I've been. And, to top it off...following me! I caught him fucking following me. Can you believe it?

FRANK

Ahhh--

EMILY

He wants to know who the father is. He's obsessed about who the father is.

FRANK

Oh.

EMILY

So I told him.

FRANK

I--

EMILY

I said it's a former student of mine.

FRANK

Teaching? When did you start--

EMILY

Back in the day when I was a student teacher.

FRANK

Back in—

EMILY

Ajay Gandhi. That's his name. Go look him up. Are you going to pick a fight with him?

FRANK

Why would I pick a—

EMILY

Not you. Allan. That's what I told him. His name is Ajay Gandhi. It was a meaningless one night fucking stand. You gotta problem, go look him up.

FRANK

That's what you said to Allan?

EMILY

God, keep up, Dad!

FRANK

And then what happened?

EMILY

He's looking him up.

(Light shift. A street. Ajay and Allan.
)

AJAY

I didn't know she was married.

ALLAN

Emily.

AJAY

Yeah, Emily. I didn't know she—

ALLAN

Don't call Emily she. It cheapens things. It makes me think you didn't know Emily's name. You know, that night?

AJAY

I did know Emily's name. Well, her last name. Ms. Parker.

ALLAN

What?

AJAY

Before that night, the last time I saw her, uh, Emily, was when she was my teacher.

ALLAN

That's fucked.

AJAY

Look can we not do this on the street, there's a coffee—

ALLAN

So you see her in a bar for the first time in ten years—

AJAY

Fifteen, probably.

ALLAN

Fifteen and you decide you're going to hit on my wife?

AJAY

I just said hi.

ALLAN

Hi?

AJAY

Hi. Remember me. You were that student teacher. Something like that. Then we started chatting. I wasn't hitting—

ALLAN

You're not what I expected. You're not better than me.

AJAY

I guess that's a matter of opinion.

ALLAN

You're just average like me.

AJAY

Matter of opinion.

ALLAN

When I cheated on Em it was with someone better. Physically. This lady was a ten.

AJAY

Age ten?

ALLAN

Out of ten. Not that Em isn't a ten, but after a while a ten doesn't seem to be a ten anymore. Know what I mean?

AJAY

Can we not do this here?

ALLAN

That's why I'm a little surprised. What's the point of cheating if it's average?

AJAY

Maybe you weren't fulfilling her needs.

ALLAN

I am fulfilling her needs.

AJAY

Maybe not.

ALLAN

Maybe you're right. I mean, I didn't get her pregnant.

AJAY

What?

ALLAN

I didn't get her pregnant. Come on, figure it out, Ajay.

(Light shift. A restaurant. Paul has just approached the table Margo is sitting at.)

MARGO

You followed me?

PAUL

Yeah.

MARGO

And you see nothing wrong with that?

PAUL

You lied to me. You see nothing wrong with that? How did it go?

MARGO

Didn't you see the whole thing?

PAUL

I saw a hug. I saw some handholding. Some tears.
Another hug. I don't know what I saw. What did I see?

MARGO

Sit down.

PAUL

You need to tell me what I saw.

MARGO

Sit down.

PAUL

Because I don't want to be this person.

MARGO

What person?

PAUL

Angry. Jealous. Controlling.

MARGO

I'm not responsible for who you are.

PAUL

I guess it just fucking feels that way.

MARGO

I guess it does. Will you sit down?

PAUL

What's the point? You're not even wearing the ring.

MARGO

Sit down and we'll talk.

PAUL

Did you just forget to wear the ring? Or was it deliberate?

MARGO

It was deliberate.

(Light shift. A living room. Grace and Joan standing. Joe is fast asleep in a chair.)

JOAN

And then he said he wanted me to move with him.

GRACE

That's wonderful!

JOAN

And I took off.

GRACE

What?

JOAN

I asked him to make me some tea. And when he went to the kitchen, I snuck out like a...like a mouse.

GRACE

Why would you do that?

JOAN

I was scared.

GRACE

Of what? You need to call him. You can't do that to your bus driver.

JOAN

I just keep holding my breath. When I'm around him. I hold my breath waiting for it to go bad.

GRACE

Joanie, he made you tea. Has Frank every made you tea? Have you ever asked Frank to make you tea?

JOAN

No.

GRACE

See? He's not Frank.

JOAN

Well, I know that.

GRACE

No. You don't. You can't treat him like Frank. It's not fair to him. It's not fair to you.

JOAN

What if he turns into Frank?

GRACE

What if he does? Are you going to runaway because of a what if?

JOAN

But what if he does?

GRACE

Then you leave. You leave.

(Beat.)

JOAN

It's all happening so fast.

GRACE

Honey, you're old. It should happen fast.

JOAN

What if it's too fast?

GRACE

Does it matter?

JOAN

If it starts fast, it could end just as fast.

GRACE

And what would be wrong with that? Would you rather wait five years to find out it's not going to work? I think you should move in with him.

JOAN

It's not just moving in. It's moving with him.

GRACE

Who wouldn't want to be in Phoenix for the winter?

JOE

I'd go.

GRACE

See? (To Joe.) Honey, if you're going to sleep you should go to bed.

JOE

Just resting my eyes.

GRACE

You're going to hurt your neck sleeping like that. Joe. Joseph! You need to go to bed.

JOE

Alright, alright.

(Joe gets up and leaves.)

JOAN

I wish I had someone like Joe. Someone that cares just as much about me as I care about them.

GRACE

I don't have that.

JOAN

You do.

GRACE

I have a child, not a husband.

(Light shift. Allan and Ajay.)

ALLAN

It's not mine. I shoot blanks. Congratulations.

AJAY

I...

(Beat.)

ALLAN

You wanna know what's fucked? Ajay. Do you wanna know what's fucked? I convinced her to keep the baby.

AJAY

You asshole.

ALLAN

No asshole intentions. I didn't want to lose her. I wanted to be a dad...but...my mom remarried when I was

five. I know what it's like to be raised by someone that isn't your father.

AJAY

It's not always like that.

ALLAN

Since I convinced her that we should keep it, every time I look at Emily, at this little bump that's growing, all I feel is jealousy. Anger. Rage.

AJAY

At me.

ALLAN

At you. At Em. The little gift you've left for us. (Beat.) I thought if I found you, met you, smashed your fucking face in...I'd feel...

AJAY

I really don't want to be punched, Allan.

ALLAN

...I really wanted to be a dad.

AJAY

I don't want to be a father. I don't need to have any-

ALLAN

I really don't care about what you want.

AJAY

Then raise the kid as your own.

ALLAN

He's not my own. And no matter how much I want to pretend he's mine, I'll know, you know?

AJAY

No.

ALLAN

I won't do that to a child. (Beat.) Thanks.

AJAY

For what?

ALLAN

Helping me to see things...Have a good life, Ajay.

(Light shift. The restaurant. Paul and Margo.)

MARGO

So you want me to move out? Or did you want to move out?

PAUL

I didn't meant that.

MARGO

I can move out.

(Margo goes to stand.)

PAUL

No. Please. I didn't mean it. Margo?

MARGO

What?

PAUL

We can make this work.

MARGO

We can?

PAUL

I'm confident. I've invested too much into this relationship--

MARGO

Invested?

PAUL

We've invested--

MARGO

I'm not an investment.

PAUL

We've invested--

MARGO

A relationship isn't an investment.

PAUL

Can we just forget that word? It was the wrong word to use.

MARGO

What word would you like to replace it with?

PAUL

Speculation? (Beat.) Look, can we act like all of this didn't happen? Forget about the marriage. The engagement. The proposal. (Beat.) We were happy. We were having fun. We were in love. Why can't we go back to that?

(Beat.)

MARGO

Why do you keep...editing our history?

PAUL

Editing?

MARGO

If you don't like something—a disagreement, a fight, our affair—

PAUL

We don't have to talk about the affair.

MARGO

See!

PAUL

Well of course I don't want to talk about--how we met. I mean, come on!

MARGO

But that's the entire problem.

PAUL

No, my problem is you lying about meeting with your ex.

MARGO

Because you didn't want to know. You didn't, Paul.

PAUL

And it was easier for you not to tell me.

MARGO

Yep. It was.

PAUL

Just like it was easier for you not to wear the engagement ring? That way while you're making amends to your ex for--for...our relationship, you're still--

MARGO

Okay. You caught me. I always take the road more travelled.

PAUL

What? What does that mean?!

MARGO

I don't--I lie to avoid conflict.

PAUL

And how's that workin' out for ya?

MARGO

It's awesome. How's your pretend world of everything is fine between us going?

PAUL

It's going good. One day I'll fondly look back on this intimate lunch.

(Beat. Margo sighs, almost laughs.
Beat.)

MARGO

So if we were to get married--

PAUL

If?

MARGO

If we were to get married...how would you tell people how we met?

PAUL

Does it matter?

MARGO

How would you tell your family?

PAUL

I don't tell my family anything.

MARGO

Paul.

PAUL

I don't.

MARGO

Would you tell them it started as an office romance? That we snuck around for six months before I broke up with my...common-law husband.

PAUL

Common-law husband?

MARGO

Common-law husband.

PAUL

I wouldn't mention the common-law part. I'd say we meant at the office, or a coffee shop, or on some internet site.

MARGO

Why?

PAUL

Because...because it's messy and it makes us look bad.

MARGO

It does?

PAUL

It makes us look like horrible people. And it wasn't like that. Yeah we were sneaking around...and, okay, I didn't give a fuck about your--common-law husband...but it was exciting, and crazy, and goofy, and we were in love. And I don't want anyone to judge it. To judge you.

MARGO

Judge me? You're protecting my honour?

PAUL

No--That's the wrong--Can we pretend that--

MARGO

No! Okay. Number one. You don't need to protect my honour. People can judge away. They don't matter. Okay?

PAUL

'Kay. (Beat.) And number two?

MARGO

Two?

PAUL

You said number one, so I assumed there was a...number two?

MARGO

(Thinking) No. There's no number two. No. Wait. Number two. I should've worn my ring today.

(Light shift. The living room. Grace and Joan.)

GRACE

Sometimes he tries to hit me.

JOAN

Are you okay?

GRACE

He gets confused and he gets angry and he doesn't want to do things like take his medication.

JOAN

But are you okay?

GRACE

I'm fine. I'm fine. For now. (Beat.) Do you remember Joe before the cancer?

JOAN

Kind of. I thought he was dreamy.

GRACE

He was dreamy. And confident. Funny. Aggravating. I wonder what he'd be like now.

JOAN

If he hadn't had a brain tumor ?

GRACE

I wonder if we would've stayed together.

JOAN

You would've.

GRACE

What we want changes. Who we are changes. The world changes. (Beat.) When I was twenty all I wanted was to

be married to Joe—my Jet Pilot. When I was in my thirties, I wanted the Joe before the tumor and the surgeries. I didn't want to have to work, but I did. In my forties, I wanted money. A lot of money. So I worked more. In my sixties, I wanted to travel. So I dragged Joe across the world. Now, at almost eighty, I want Joe to die before me. (Beat.) What do you want, Joanie?

JOAN

I have no idea.

GRACE

What did you want at twenty?

JOAN

To be happy?

GRACE

And what do you want now?

JOAN

To be happy?

GRACE

I think you should move.

JOAN

But what about you?

GRACE

What about me? I can take care of myself.

JOAN

What about my kids? Emily keeps calling me and I've just been avoiding calling her back.

GRACE

They're grown ups. They'll deal with it.

JOAN

What about Frank?

GRACE

Really?

JOAN

There'll be consequences.

GRACE

From Frank?

JOAN

For my life. There will be consequences. There will...

(Beat.)

GRACE

Honey. Joanie. Joan. Look at me. You are beautiful. You are.

JOAN

Okay, auntie.

GRACE

Listen to me. In the last four months you have changed. You're smiling. You're laughing. You're beautiful.

JOAN

Because of Phil.

GRACE

Phil might have a little bit to do with it, but don't give him all the credit. It's you, Joanie. It's you. If what you want is to be happy, then you need to do whatever it is that makes you happy and...fuck the consequences. You have spent too long being afraid. Too long in a bad marriage. Too long not being good to yourself.

(Beat. Joan takes out her cellphone. She dials a number. Beat.)

JOAN (On the phone)

It's me. Sorry for running out. Yes. That's what I wanted to say. Yes. Yes to what? To anything. To anything at all.

(Light shift. A kitchen. Emily and Frank.)

EMILY

Good for her. She should have a good time. That's what I think.

FRANK

Hmmm. I wonder if I could take him?

EMILY
What?

FRANK
Your mom's boyfriend. In a fight.

EMILY
You want to fight him?

FRANK
Or something. An arm wrestle?

EMILY
This is a joke. Right?

FRANK
I need to do something.

EMILY
You're going to beat someone up? That's your answer?

FRANK
I need to do—

EMILY
Something. Yeah, I heard you dad. You know what the something is you should do? Treat your wife with some..

FRANK
Love?

EMILY
I doubt there's love anymore. Kindness. Show her kindness.

FRANK
Hmm.

EMILY
Yeah, hmm, that's what I thought.

FRANK
What?

EMILY
It's just a little too difficult and complicated for you, isn't it?

FRANK
What?

EMILY

Being a human being. Nevermind. I don't know why I'm here.

(Beat.)

FRANK

You're doing what I'm doing.

EMILY

Yeah?

FRANK

Waiting for your Mother.

(Emily looks at Frank. She doesn't know what to say.)

DRAFT

SCENE 5.

(Light shift. Paul and Emily in a bedroom. Emily is packing a box. Other packed boxes are scattered around her.)

EMILY

I think it's a good thing.

PAUL

How is this a good thing?

They hate each other.

PAUL

No they don't.

EMILY

Did we grow up in the same house?

PAUL

Hate? Hate is a really strong word. They...

EMILY

Should've never gotten married? They should've never had children? They should've divorced decades ago? If they had divorced it--

PAUL

Hold on--

EMILY

Lemme finish. If they had divorced it probably would've helped with the health and social development of their children.

PAUL

Are you saying there's something wrong with me?

EMILY

With you? With us. With the whole family.

PAUL

There's nothing wrong with our family.

EMILY

Our family is totally dysfunctional. Our dysfunction is so severe we don't even talk to each other.

PAUL

I talk to them.

EMILY

Mom and Dad have been separated for about five months. I found out about a month ago. When did you find out?

(Beat.)

PAUL

About five minutes ago.

EMILY

And when did you find out that Mom has gone to Phoenix for the winter?

PAUL

She's in Phoenix?

EMILY

With her boyfriend.

PAUL

She has a boyfriend?!

EMILY

I think I've proven my point.

PAUL

Well that's...hunh...

EMILY

Why are you here?

PAUL

I...I came to tell Mom and Dad that I'm...engaged...and I wanted us all to get together to meet my...fiancee.

EMILY

I think I've proven my point.

PAUL

Waitaminute. What are you doing here? What are you packing?

EMILY

This is going to be the baby's room. I've moved in. I'm pregnant. Allan's not the father.

PAUL

You're right, you have proven your point.

(Light shift. A kitchen. Phil and Joan.)

JOAN

Then don't help me. Don't help me all. I'll do it. It's fine.

PHIL

I'll help you.

JOAN

Don't get up. Just sit there. Watch TV. Watch your dumb movie.

PHIL

It's not a dumb movie.

JOAN

Watch your--your not dumb movie then.

PHIL

I can put it on pause. They have this thing called pause now.

JOAN

Pause?

PHIL

It's one of those new-fangled, hi-tech thingies.

JOAN

Don't mock me.

PHIL

I'm not...what's going on?

JOAN

I didn't come down here to be your servant.

PHIL

What?

JOAN

I didn't come down here, I didn't abandon my family, to wash your meals and cook your dishes!

PHIL
What?

JOAN
I meant the opposite. I meant the fucking opposite of what I said.

PHIL
I...I cooked the meal.

JOAN
And I'm washing the dishes!

PHIL
I thought...I thought that was the deal.

JOAN
The deal?

PHIL
Yesterday you cooked the meal and I washed the dishes.

JOAN
I helped wash the dishes.

PHIL
You did, but you didn't have to. Do you remember when I said you don't have to help?

JOAN
You were just saying that.

PHIL
I meant it. I meant you didn't have to help.

JOAN
How was I supposed to know?

PHIL
Because I said you don't have to help.

JOAN
Well how was I supposed to know that's the deal?!

PHIL
You could've asked? (Beat.) Ignore that. You're right. You're right you didn't know. We didn't talk about it. Let's do the dishes.

(Beat. Joan is still angry. She doesn't know what to do with the anger. She walks out of the room. Light shift. Frank, Grace, and Joe sit at a kitchen table.)

GRACE

Let's try it again.

JOE

That's good. I think it's good you're trying it again.

FRANK

Again? Jesus Christ. Again?!

GRACE

If you want this new date to go better than your last. You need to learn how to talk. You're not a very good communicator.

FRANK

I'm a...I'm a...

JOE

Sad specimen of a man.

FRANK

Fine let's do it again. Let's fricking do it again.

GRACE

Did you want me to be waiting at the table or did you want to be waiting at the table?

JOE

I think Frank should be waiting at the table. It's always better if the man gets there earlier. Orders the wine. Sets the scene. You have to be confident, Frank. Show this Lady that you are a man. The man. The manliest of men.

GRACE

I wouldn't do that.

JOE

That's what I did on our first date.

FRANK

Can we do this? Let's just start at the table like...like we've already said the hellos.

GRACE
 Whatever you need. We are here for you.

JOE
 For you.

FRANK
 Thank you.

JOE
 Anything you need.

FRANK
 Thanks.

JOE
 You can do this.

GRACE
 Then let him do it, Joe. Shh.

JOE
 Don't shush me!

GRACE
 Shhh!

(Beat.)

FRANK
 So...a...Mary Ann...you're a...retired school teacher?

JOE
 Wrong!

FRANK
 What?

JOE
 Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

GRACE
 Joe!

JOE
 You need to compliment the woman! That is always the first thing you do on a date. You compliment the woman. You say, My, Mary Ann, how beautiful your hair, or breasts, or buttocks is. Always.

FRANK
Grace, you have a lovely ass.

GRACE
Thank you.

JOE
Exactly.

GRACE
Go sit down in the corner. No talking.

(Beat.)

FRANK
So, Mary Ann, you're a school teacher?

GRACE
Retired.

FRANK
Retired. And...how...

GRACE
Do I like being retired?

FRANK
Sure..Sure...how do you like...

GRACE
What?

FRANK
I miss Joanie.

JOE
Do you not know how to woo a woman? The art of it?
Never bring up your old woman with the new woman.
Wrong!

(Light shift. The living room. Paul and Emily.)

PAUL
Couldn't they have waited just like one more year
before they split up? And you? Like what the hell? You
were happily married!

EMILY
No, I wasn't.

PAUL
Allan's a great guy.

EMILY
You never liked Allan.

PAUL
I liked Allan.

EMILY
No you didn't.

PAUL
I just didn't like that he called me big guy.

EMILY
What?

PAUL
I just don't think a guy bigger than me should be calling me big guy. But besides that...Couldn't you have pretended you were happily married?

EMILY
I did.

PAUL
Well for a bit longer. Until after I was married.

EMILY
I guess I could've if you had, you know, ever mentioned you were in a relationship.

PAUL
How I'm going to tell Margo this?

EMILY
Who's Margo?

PAUL
My fiancée.

EMILY
Does it matter?

PAUL
It does.

EMILY

No, it doesn't.

PAUL

It does because what I've told her about my family and life growing up doesn't match up with--

EMILY

What did you tell her?

PAUL

I gave her the happier version of our life.

EMILY

The sitcom version?

PAUL

Yeah.

EMILY

Did you tell her about the family cat?

PAUL

Don't bring that up.

EMILY

So you told her about...Snowflake?

PAUL

Snowball.

EMILY

You did tell her! What is wrong with you?

PAUL

They're great stories from my childhood.

EMILY

Yes, they're stories. Totally fictional stories, that you created.

(Beat.)

PAUL

Look at this place. Look at all this shit.

EMILY

This is just one room. I have found all our report cards, artwork from when you were two, everything from their wedding. Love letters.

PAUL

Love letters? You didn't read them, did ya?

EMILY

Scanned a couple. They wrote to each other a lot. All the way up to the wedding. They're...sweet. And I can't throw any of it out. Mom and dad need to go through it.

PAUL

Do they?

EMILY

Mom might want to take some of it. Division of the property, as my lawyer explained it to me.

PAUL

Who the fuck is going to take care of dad?

EMILY

Who says he needs to be taken care of?

PAUL

C'mon, this is dad. When's the last time--or ever--that you saw him cook or do the dishes or laundry?

EMILY

He's doing his laundry.

PAUL

Since when?

EMILY

Since he ran out of clean clothes.

PAUL

Did you have to show him how to use the washing machine?

EMILY

And the dryer. The dishwasher. The stove. He knew how to use the microwave.

PAUL

Of course he did. Two minutes on high, it's the magic of the microwave! As Dad used to say.

EMILY

How does a man make it to his sixties without knowing how to use an oven? I had to explain the difference

between bake and broil. It's was, seriously, a ten minute conversation. He was mystified.

(Paul and Emily laugh.)

PAUL

Aaah man, this is nightmare. This is going to be a nightmare.

EMILY

Probably for us. For them it'll be better.

PAUL

Them? Not them. For Mom it might be better with her new...

EMILY

Lover.

PAUL

Make me puke. (To an imaginary Margo.) Margo, I like you to meet my dad, my mom, and my mom's lover.

EMILY

(To imaginary Margo) Hi Margo, I'm Emily and this little bundle of joy is my little bastard...Snowflake.

PAUL

Snowball!

EMILY

Snowball.

(They laugh. Beat.)

PAUL

Oh god. I just had this horrible image--vision--of ten years from now when Dad is in his seventies and I have to change his...colostomy bag. I'm sure there's a colostomy bag in our future.

EMILY

No, you know, I don't think so. Cancer doesn't really run in our family. Dementia? Dementia does. I can see a day where he just starts shitting in bags. Brown paper bags. Just left all around the house like...little gifts.

(Light shift. A patio. Joan sits on the edge of a chair. Phil stands behind her.)

PHIL

What do you want me to do? When you get angry like that? Well, not when you get angry, but when you get so angry that you get quiet and you walk away. (Beat.) What should I do?

JOAN

I don't know.

PHIL

Do you want me to leave you alone? Or should I come and find you? At first, I thought I should just leave you alone, let you calm down...but now I'm not so sure.

JOAN

Do you ever get mad?

PHIL

Uhhh...yeah. Sure.

JOAN

Do you? I haven't seen it. I've seen you get frustrated but never angry. You haven't even raised your voice once in the past five months.

PHIL

What's going on, Joan?

JOAN

How come you never get angry?

PHIL

I was a bus driver for almost forty years.

JOAN

So?

PHIL

You can't survive that job for forty years by being mad. I had to deal with angry people, and I mean the worst of humanity angry people, every day.

JOAN

How'd you deal with them?

PHIL

I'd listen. Mostly they just wanted someone to hear them out.

JOAN

And when listening didn't work?

PHIL

I'd call security.

JOAN

Please don't call security on me.

PHIL

What's going on?

JOAN

I usually don't get angry like I did in the kitchen. Actually, I do get that angry. I usually don't say anything.

PHIL

You just get quiet and walk away?

JOAN

That's my M-E.

PHIL

M-O?

JOAN

M-O. I'm trying to be a different person...That's wrong...I'm trying to figure out the person I am in this relationship with you. (Beat.) And sometimes the old Joanie shows up. The one that always made the meal and always cleaned up afterwards while Old Joanie's husband kicked back to watch TV. (Beat.) And it's not fair to you, but I got so angry about you sitting there watching television while I cleaned. And I wasn't going to say anything, but then I thought that's Old Joanie. Old Joanie wouldn't say anything, she'd just get angry and stew and go to another room...but this...this...

PHIL

New Joanie?

JOAN

Joan. This new Joan should say something. I should say something. And I did. I'm sorry.

PHIL

You have nothing to be sorry for.

JOAN

Come and get me. If I walk away. I want you to come and get me and talk. Always.

(Light shift. The kitchen. Grace and Joe and Frank sit at the kitchen table.)

FRANK

I think it's because I left her on the couch.

GRACE

What?

JOE

What?

FRANK

I've left her on the couch. A lot of times over the years. We would be watching TV and she'd fall asleep and I'd say Joanie. Joanie! It's time for bed. You gotta get up. We gotta go to bed! And you know Joanie, she'd sleep like the dead. So I'd give up trying to wake her and I'd leave her there on the couch and go to bed. (Beat.) I always took care of Joanie. I always paid the bills. We always had a home. We were never hungry. I always gave her money so she could get something nice for herself. I should've never left her on that damn couch. I should've picked her up and carried her to bed. (Beat.) But I didn't. So here we are.

SCENE 6

(Light shift. A kitchen. Phil and Joan wash dishes. Music plays on the radio. They sway as they wash dishes.)

PHIL
You wanna dance?

JOAN
Right now?

PHIL
Right now.

JOAN
Why not. Sure.

(Light shift. A bedroom. Joe sits on the edge of the bed. Grace stands in front of him.)

GRACE
Give me your pants.

JOE
No.

GRACE
Take off your pants.

JOE
No. No. No.

GRACE
You have to take off your pants.

JOE
I don't want to take off my pants.

GRACE
Joe. I can smell it. I can smell you. You don't smell very good.

JOE
I didn't. I didn't.

GRACE
You did, Joe.

JOE

You're imagining that smell.

GRACE

I'm not imagining it. Why would I imagine the smell of shit?

JOE

You're a weirdo. You imagine weird things.

GRACE

Take off your pants. Take off your goddamn pants right now! Right now! Joseph!

(He tries to unbutton his pants but his hands shake too much.)

GRACE

Here. Let me help you.

JOE

Don't touch me. Keep away.

(Joe raises his fist to punch Grace. He is angry. Grace steps back. Joe tries to unbutton the pants but he can't do it. He begins to cry. Grace kneels down. She takes his hands. She holds them. She kisses his hands.)

JOE

I don't want to wear diapers. (Beat.) I'm a man. A man shouldn't wear diapers.

GRACE

Why would you wear diapers?

JOE

That's what you said last time.

GRACE

Why would you remember that?

JOE

I remember everything.

GRACE

Did you take your pills today?

JOE

I don't remember.

GRACE

Do you know what day it is? Month? Year? No?

JOE

No.

GRACE

But you remember the one horrible thing I said to you in the last six months. (Sighing.) Oh Joe.

JOE

I don't want to wear diapers.

(Grace unbuttons Joe's pants and starts to pull them off. Light shift. A kitchen. Frank, Emily, and Paul have finished eating supper.)

FRANK

That crockpot is amazing.

EMILY

It was good.

FRANK

It was?

PAUL

Very good.

FRANK

Who knew, hunh? I just found it when I was cleaning out the basement. I don't think we've used it since the eighties. I think your mother used to make a...make a chili in it?

EMILY

I think she did.

PAUL

I do remember something with ground beef.

FRANK

Did you enjoy it? Frank's pulled pork.

EMILY

You've named it.

PAUL

(Overlapping) Sandwiches.

FRANK

Hunh?

PAUL

It sounds a little strange as just pulled pork. It sounds like you're pulling your...

EMILY

They were delicious.

FRANK

Easy, too. I just slapped that pork in the crockpot, dumped a bottle of barbeque sauce on top of it and turned it on. I tell ya that crockpot is up there with the microwave as best kitchen gadget ever. (Beat.) So how are you, Paul?

PAUL

Good.

FRANK

How's life?

PAUL

Good.

FRANK

And the wedding planning?

PAUL

Good.

FRANK

And when will we get to meet this lady of yours?

EMILY

Yeah, Paul, when will we meet her?

PAUL

Soon.

FRANK

Good. Good. Margo? That's her name, right? Margo?

PAUL

It is.

Lovely name. FRANK

It is. PAUL

And how'd you two meet? FRANK

Excuse me? PAUL

Where'd you meet Margo? EMILY

Aaa...the internet. PAUL

I met some ladies on the internet. Which dating site were you using? FRANK

Ummmm...Christian Mingle. PAUL

Christian Mingle?! EMILY

(Overlapping.) Christian Mingle? FRANK

(Overlapping.) Christian Mingle. PAUL

Interesting. So she's a religious girl? FRANK

Sshhheee is. And how are you Em? PAUL

Yes, how are you Emily? FRANK

Fine. EMILY

And how are things? FRANK

EMILY

Things are good. Just like they were good this morning, dad, when you asked me. Just like last night when you asked me just before I went to bed.

FRANK

I'm just checking in. Just making sure everything is fine with my children. And my grandchild.

EMILY

The grandchild is fine, as far as I know. Only two more months until we get to meet the little bundle of joy.

FRANK

And the divorce? How's the divorce?

EMILY

The divorce is...awesome. I betcha can't wait until you start your own divorce, right dad?

(Beat.)

PAUL

And...a...hmmm...how are you, dad?

FRANK

Thanks for asking, Paul. I'm excellent. I'm happy.

PAUL

Good.

FRANK

Do you want to know why I'm happy?

(Beat. Paul looks at Emily.)

PAUL

Sure. Why are you happy?

FRANK

Because I'm having dinner with my family. I've come to realize...with your mom leaving...just how important my family, my kids are.

EMILY

Too bad it took mom leaving for you to realize that.

PAUL

Em.

FRANK

No. That's fine. That's fair. That's correct. That's why I wanted us to have supper. I wanted to ask you two a question.

PAUL

Oh god.

EMILY

What's the question?

FRANK

I...Listen, I've made us some brownies for dessert. I'm going to make some whipped cream--

EMILY

Make?

FRANK

Yeah, it's really easy. I had supper with this older lady that I meant online—not Christian Mingle—not older either, she's my age. But she showed me how to make whipped cream from scratch. It's really easy, it's just cream and sugar and you whip it.

EMILY

I guess that's why they call it whipped cream.

FRANK

(Laughing.) I guess you're right. Hunh. Funny. Anyway, I'll get the brownies, make some whipped cream, and then I want you guys to answer a question. I want you to be totally honest with me.

EMILY

Totally honest? Did you hear that, Paul?

PAUL

What's the question?

(Beat.)

FRANK

Was I a good father?

(Light shift. A bedroom. Joe sits on the edge of the bed. He is wearing a bathrobe. Grace dries his hair with a towel.)

GRACE

It was a Saturday night. Do you remember that? I was with my friend Ellen. You came with her boyfriend Sam.

JOE

Sammy.

GRACE

Do you remember what you said to me? That night?

JOE

You have lovely hair.

GRACE

I meant later in the night. The thing you said later in the night that made me go on a second date.

JOE

Not a clue.

GRACE

You said...May I kiss you?

JOE

No. I didn't. I wouldn't ask. I would've just kissed you.

GRACE

If you had just kissed me there would've never been a second date.

JOE

Why don't we have children?

(Beat.)

GRACE

We decided not to.

JOE

(Angry.) That was a stupid thing to decide.

GRACE

You wouldn't have been a good father. (Beat. Joe starts to cry.) Joe, I'm sorry.

JOE

Why would you say such an awful thing?

GRACE

Because I'm an awful person.

JOE

No you're not.

GRACE

Sometimes you make me angry.

JOE

I'm sorry.

GRACE

You don't have to be.

JOE

It would've been nice to have someone. A little boy or girl running around. To take care of.

GRACE

I suppose.

JOE

We could always try. Did you want to try?

(Grace laughs.)

GRACE

We can try.

JOE

I like trying.

GRACE

I know you do.

JOE

Have a little boy. Name him Samson, but we'll call him Sam.

GRACE

What am I going to with you?

JOE

Keep loving me.

GRACE

I will. But there's going to be a time when I won't be able to take care of you.

JOE
Why?

GRACE
Because my bones are old.

(Beat.)

JOE
Sometimes I remember.

GRACE
Remember what?

JOE
How to fly. I can remember the takeoff. The taxiing to the runway. The running up the engines to check for problems. The anticipation of flying. The possibility of being in the air. The starting of an adventure, even if it's just a short haul. I'll remember the feeling...the surge down the runway, pushing me into my seat. The sound of the engines. The plane starting to climb. I can remember it, but then...

GRACE
What happens?

JOE
Disappears. Just Fragments.

(Light shift. A kitchen. Frank, Emily, and Paul.)

FRANK
So you're saying it's all my fault?

EMILY
Yes. It is.

FRANK
Paul?

EMILY
What are you playing at dad?

FRANK
I'm not playing at anything.

EMILY

This act you've put on for the past few months. I'm not buying it.

FRANK

What act?

EMILY

This is the first fucking family dinner I've ever been at where you've talked to us. Asked us questions about our lives.

FRANK

It isn't.

EMILY

Let me remind you what our family dinners were usually like. You sitting at the head of the table, judging all of us for not living up to your mystical standards. Me for marrying too young. Me for not having kids. Paul for not being married. Paul for making poor career choices.

FRANK

I was concerned for you kids.

EMILY

And the worst was the way you treated mom.

FRANK

How did I treat her?

EMILY

Like a servant.

FRANK

I did?

EMILY

Yes. You did. The cooking. The cleaning. The always having to take care of you.

FRANK

A marriage is a partnership.

EMILY

Yours was a partnership?

FRANK

She did the cooking and the cleaning and the raising of the you two. I worked every day. I paid the bills. I provided. That was the deal.

EMILY

The deal?

FRANK

It was a partnership.

EMILY

Then it was a horrible fucking partnership and it wasn't equal. If it was equal then mom should've been able to come into your job and judge your work.

FRANK

I know you're angry, but could you make a little sense?

EMILY

The constant criticism you had of how she mopped the floor, or washed your clothes, or the bland food she made, or--and this is my favourite--the quality of apples she bought. The quality of fucking apples she bought. Remember that?

FRANK

Safeway has better fruit. (Beat.) And you Paul? What do you think of me?

PAUL

You're my dad.

EMILY

What a chicken shit non-answer.

PAUL

Hey, he's my dad.

FRANK

It's not an answer.

PAUL

What do you want me to say?

FRANK

Just tell me how you feel.

PAUL

Great. Talking feelings with my dad. (Beat.) Why were you so angry?

FRANK

I...

(Beat.)

PAUL

You would always come home from work and you'd be mad. And I remember me, Em, and Mom would always try to avoid you, keep out of your way, try not to do anything to upset you.

FRANK

You did?

EMILY

Don't make dad angry.

PAUL

But it never worked because everything upset you, dad. I'd ask you to help fix a flat tire on my bike and you'd start shouting at me for not riding my bike properly. And if I didn't ask you, if I tried to fix the flat on my own, then I'd be screamed at for not doing that properly. Everything made you angry. Why? (Silence.) So, back to your original question, were you a good father? No.

(Beat.)

FRANK

Thanks. Thank you for being honest.

(Light shift. A kitchen. Phil and Joan are still dancing. The song comes to an end. Joan dips Phil. They laugh. They go back to washing dishes.)

SCENE 7

(Light shift. A bedroom. Emily and Ajay are in bed. Emily watches Ajay sleep.)

EMILY

Ajay. Ajay, nap time is over. It's time to get up. It's time to go back to your life...your job...whatever that is. Ajay? Ahmed?

AJAY (Still trying to sleep)

Ajay. Video games. That's my job.

EMILY

Really? You play video games?

AJAY

I play them. I also make them.

EMILY

Hmmm. Neat. You gotta get up. You gotta go. I don't want my dad to know about our afternoon delight.

AJAY

When you say afternoon delight you're implying sex, right?

EMILY

Yeah.

AJAY

I thought we had a nap, did something happen when I was asleep. And if it did, was I amazing?

EMILY

My dad would never believe that we were just napping up here.

AJAY

Would he really care that much?

EMILY

At one time he'd care very much about a strange boy in my childhood bedroom...but now...

AJAY

This was the best nap I've ever had.

EMILY

Oh.

AJAY

I'm not much of a napper. Maybe it's because of the quiet house, or the sunlight through the window, or the comfy bed, or the company.

EMILY

So it could be anything.

AJAY

Probably all the breathing we did at prenatal.

EMILY

That's probably it.

AJAY

Was it a good nap for you?

EMILY

Top twenty.

AJAY

Top twenty?

EMILY

You should take that as a compliment. I'm a award winning napper.

(Beat.)

AJAY

Okay. Time to go. (Ajay gets out of bed.) Next week?

EMILY

Next week. Pick me up?

AJAY

And after the class...We nap! I bet next week we'll get you a top ten nap.

(Beat.)

EMILY

Are you gonna go?

AJAY

What is this? What are we doing?

(Light shift. A living room. Margo and Paul.)

PAUL

Isn't that what we're doing?

MARGO

Rest of your life? When I hear rest of your life, part of me wants to flee the room. Thank god for divorce.

PAUL

We're talking about our marriage not divorce.

MARGO

If I didn't know I could get divorced, I'd never get married.

PAUL

Are we calling this off again?

MARGO

No.

PAUL

Are you sure?

MARGO

Yes.

PAUL

Yes?

MARGO

Yes, Paul, yes. We're getting married. Apparently you want it to be on the scale of the wedding from the Godfather, but fucking yes!

PAUL

I've never seen the Godfather.

MARGO

Surprise two.

PAUL

What was surprise one?

MARGO

That you want a giant wedding! I don't even know why we're discussing this.

PAUL

You can't plan a wedding if you don't discuss it.

MARGO

Can we discuss it later?

PAUL

When?

MARGO

A couple of years from now.

PAUL

Are you serious?

MARGO

Yes. No. I don't know. I haven't even met your family and we're already inviting fifth cousins to our country wedding.

PAUL

About that.

MARGO

About what?

PAUL

My family.

MARGO

You're embarrassed of me.

PAUL

What? No!

MARGO

Of course you are.

PAUL

Not at all.

MARGO

Then what is it?

PAUL

I might not have been totally honest about my family.

MARGO

So they're not the perfect family you've been describing?

(Light shift. A patio. Joan and Phil.)

JOAN
You're a kind man.

PHIL
You're a swell gal.

JOAN
I was talking to Emily earlier.

PHIL
How is she? How's the baby?

JOAN
Good. I think. She asked me about you. What you're like. I told her you were a kind man. I just wanted to tell you that.

PHIL
Why?

JOAN
I guess...every day you say or do something nice for me. You'll give me a compliment, or you make me laugh, or you'll just put your hand my shoulder. And I don't even think you realize you do it.

PHIL
It's all part of my plan to keep you down here in Phoenix with me.

(Beat.)

JOAN
Why do you do it?

(Beat.)

PHIL
My wife...

(Beat.)

JOAN
We don't have to talk about it.

PHIL
No. We do. I mean I want to.

JOAN

You do? It's just I go on and on about my family and there problems and you never mention her.

PHIL

I know.

JOAN

You don't have to. I don't need you—

PHIL

I want to.

JOAN

I didn't mean for us—

PHIL

I want to. (Beat.) My wife...Julie was manic-depressive. Bipolar. I used to always get mad when someone would say they were feeling a little depressed because...well, because I've seen depression and it's not—you're not a little depressed. When it was bad, when she'd be curled up in a ball in our bed all day, when she'd look at me with these haunted eyes...I thought the more I loved her, the more I showed her I loved her by kissing her, by hugging her, by touching her, by trying to make her laugh...

JOAN

You'd help her.

PHIL

You can't make someone happy. You can't will someone better. It took me a long time, but I learned that all I could do for my wife was be there. Be patient. Be understanding. Listen.

JOAN

What happened?

PHIL

She was changing medications. Trying to find something that didn't have as many side effects. I thought she was okay. She told me she was okay.

JOAN

Oh no.

PHIL

I was at work. Julie decided to go for a walk, I guess. I don't know if she'd been planning this for a while or if it was an impulsive decision. I think it was a little bit of both, something that had always been at the back of her mind...a choice if the pain got too bad. She jumped off a bridge. The police found her, down river, a day later.

(Silence. Light shift. A bedroom. Ajay and Emily sit on the edge of the bed.)

AJAY

Do I have a say in what our child's name will be?

EMILY

Did you want a say?

AJAY

Maybe if you're thinking of a really bad name like Hubert, or Engelbert, or Burt.

EMILY

And what else do you want a say in? Daycare? School? Religion? University?

AJAY

Hold on.

EMILY

Let's establish all the rules right now. All the guidelines. I'll take the little bastard Monday to Friday. You can have weekends. Does that work for you?

AJAY

I didn't mean—

EMILY

What did you mean?

AJAY

We just had a great nap together.

EMILY

Is there more to your argument?

AJAY

It was a great nap. And...I am confused and making an asshole of myself.

(Beat.)

EMILY

I haven't thought about baby names. I'm just trying to take things day-by-day. If I don't do that, I start to panic.

AJAY

I'm panicking you?

EMILY

Remember when you showed up here a few weeks ago and said you wanted help and that help would be whatever I needed it to be?

AJAY

Yeah.

EMILY

Then that's what this is. That's what we're doing. Whatever I need. Prenatal classes. Rides to the doctor.

AJAY

Naps?

EMILY

That was a mistake.

AJAY

Why?

EMILY

Seriously?

AJAY

It wasn't--

EMILY

I'm not even divorced yet.

AJAY

That's just a process, a filing, it doesn't--

EMILY

And now with Allan everything is being done through a lawyer. And the lawyer is accommodating to everything I want.

AJAY

That's good, isn't it?

EMILY

I thought there'd be one last conversation. Talk. Fight. Allan just disappeared. I've never been on my own, Ajay. I went from living with my parents to being married and living with Allan. And now it's like the last seventeen years never happened. (Beat.) I don't know what it is to be by myself. To be alone.

AJAY

It's lonely.

(Light shift. A kitchen. Paul and Margo.)

PAUL

It all started in grade two with a cat.

MARGO

Snowflake? Is this the same cat that you told me about with the lunchmeat and the litter box?

PAUL

...Snowball.

MARGO

Snowball! So cute.

PAUL

There's no Snowball.

MARGO

No Snowball?

PAUL

No Snowball. When I was in grade two my teacher, Mrs. Hamlock, had the class write in a journal every morning about what we'd done the night before. You know the fun things like swimming lessons, or hockey practice, or the time you spent with your family playing board games. The thing is I never did any of those things. Most nights I just watched TV by myself. Every morning I'd be so stressed about going to class and having to journal about what I'd watched on TV.

MARGO

Why was that stressful?

PAUL

How many times can you write about what happened on Simon and Simon or the A-Team, before Mrs. Hamlock starts to think there's something wrong at home?

MARGO

So you made up a cat?

PAUL

It just started with me impulsively writing in my journal that my parents had taken us to the animal shelter to look at the cats. Then I journaled about us thinking about adopting a cat. Then I journaled about the day we adopted the cat. Then we named the cat Snowball. Then I started journaling about the adventures that Snowball and I had. Then I started including my family in the adventures with Snowball. And as the weeks went on this cat became real to me. The amazing adventures that my amazing family went on with this cat became real. And then instead of writing about the adventures in my journal that only Mrs. Hamlock read, I started telling them to anyone that would listen.

(Beat.)

MARGO

Were you abused?

PAUL

What? No!

MARGO

You weren't?

PAUL

Never. I was never abused.

MARGO

I can understand you telling these stories at seven, you were seven right?

PAUL

It started at seven.

MARGO

But why are you still making up these stories in your thirties?

PAUL

I always wanted the TV family. The happy mom and dad. The chipper kids. The sweet but smart family cat. I wanted a family that even though they had their struggles they still liked each other. My real family...we were always in different rooms. Dad in the living room. Mom in the kitchen. My sister in her bedroom. Me in the basement watching TV. And if we were all in the same room it was just...uncomfortable.

MARGO

Why?

PAUL

Because we were all pretending, I think, that we were the TV family.

MARGO

So. Just to be clear. You were never abused? (Paul shakes his head, no.) You really need to start talking about your real childhood because I thought you were seriously traumatized. I thought there was all this horrible history and...

PAUL

And?

MARGO

And you're not special, Paul. You just have a shitty family like everybody else. If it's so uncomfortable being around your family, why do you want a big wedding?

PAUL

Everybody is on their best behaviour at a wedding.

MARGO

Have you ever been to a wedding?

(Light shift. A patio. Joan and Phil.)

JOAN

This past seven months with you has been a fantasy. A dream.

PHIL

And now it's time for you to go home.

JOAN

How did you know?

PHIL

You've had that sad smile.

JOAN

Emily needs me. She hasn't asked me to come home. She never would. She's stubborn. But she'll need me.

PHIL

And you need her.

JOAN

And I have an irrational need to protect her.

PHIL

From what?

JOAN

From everything. I'm her mom.

PHIL

When do you plan...when will you be leaving?

JOAN

Next week. I think.

PHIL

Okay. A week. Okay. We should make it special.

JOAN

Special. My favourite word.

PHIL

We'll have fun. Go hang-gliding or something.

JOAN

Or something. (Beat.) Will you come with me?

PHIL

What?

JOAN

I want you to come back with me. I don't want this to be a fantasy anymore. I want this to be very real. I want you to meet my children. I want you in every part of my life.

SCENE 8

(Light shift. A dining room. Frank, Emily, Margo, Joan, Phil, Joe, and Grace sit at the table.)

FRANK

I just want to tell you I'm sorry Margo.

MARGO

It's all good.

FRANK

It's not. It's not good at all. This was supposed to be a meal to welcome you into the family and I go and mess it up.

MARGO

It happens.

JOE

What the hell were you thinking?

GRACE

Joe--

JOE

I'm starving.

GRACE

The chinese will be here soon.

JOE

The chinese?

EMILY

Food. Uncle. The chinese food. Paul went to pick it up.

JOE

Good! Good it's Paul picking it up. (To Frank.) This idiot would've messed that up too.

FRANK

I should've stuck with the crockpot.

JOAN

The crockpot?

FRANK

I'm a master of it. Right, Em?

EMILY

You don't know what you've been missing mom. All the soft, flavourless food we've been having for weeks now.

FRANK

Hey, c'mon. She's teasing. You've been gobbling everything up.

EMILY

That's what happens when you're pregnant. Put it in front of me and I'll eat it.

MARGO

When's your baby due?

EMILY

A month. Can't wait.

MARGO

I bet.

FRANK

Are you a cook, Phil?

PHIL

I try.

JOAN

He's an amazing cook.

FRANK

An amazing cook? Really? What do you cook?

PHIL

I like to barbeque. Pastas. I'm a fan of the crockpot myself.

EMILY

But are you a crockpot master?

PHIL

I wouldn't say...I'm a...master. I'm sure your crockpot skills are excellent, Frank.

FRANK

They are. I've been told by people.

Who? JOE

What? FRANK

Who has told you this? JOE

I've had some ladies-- FRANK

Ladies? JOE

Some ladies over. Sorry, Joanie. FRANK

Why are you sorry? JOAN

I don't want to make you jealous. FRANK

I'm happy for you. JOAN

I don't want to shove it in your face. That's not what I'm trying to do. FRANK

I didn't think you were. I have Phil. We're happy. I think it's great that you're out there dating. JOAN

Wonderful. Anyway, these ladies have been pretty impressed by my pulled pork. I have a pretty mean pulled pork. FRANK

(Emily and Margo giggle.)

Pardon. GRACE

What's your secret? PHIL

I dump B-B-Q sauce all over my pork. FRANK

PHIL

It sounds good.

FRANK

Since my wife up and left me, I've come to really enjoy cooking. (To Joan.) I've made a couple of your old recipes.

JOAN

Which ones?

FRANK

Oh. Ummm. The meatloaf.

JOAN

I thought you hated my meatloaf.

FRANK

I love your meatloaf.

JOAN

That's not how I remember it.

PHIL

And what else? What other recipes?

FRANK

I don't know. Well, this turkey dinner I tried to make was a Joanie recipe.

JOE

Joanie you had the best turkey dinner ever.

GRACE

It was amazing.

EMILY

It was delicious, mom.

MARGO

I wished I could've tasted it.

FRANK

That's the turkey I was hoping to serve for you tonight, but...

JOE

A man like you should've never attempted it. Now we're stuck with the chinese.

GRACE

Don't listen to him, Frank. (To Joe.) You love chinese food.

JOE

I love Joanie's turkey more. Why didn't you make the dinner?

JOAN

I didn't have the--

FRANK

Because I wanted to do it. Goddamn it. And I would've except that recipe card had the wrong cooking temperature.

JOAN

It did not.

FRANK

The recipe card said 425. That's what I put it on. It was wrong. I burnt the goddamn turkey.

JOAN

Go get the card.

FRANK

I'm not getting the card.

JOAN

You did your usual thing.

FRANK

My usual thing?

JOAN

You glanced at the directions instead of reading them properly.

FRANK

I read them properly and they were wrong.

JOAN

Get the card.

FRANK

No.

JOAN

Get the goddman card.

No. FRANK

I'll get it. JOAN

You'll do no such thing. (Joan gets up and heads to the kitchen.) This is my house. I read the card properly. FRANK

It doesn't matter. GRACE

I'm happy to have chinese. MARGO

I read it properly. FRANK

How are you feeling, auntie? Mom said you had the flu. EMILY

Still tired. Sore. But the nausea is going. Joe's been taking care of me. GRACE

I have? JOE

(Joan enter with the recipe card. She shows it to Frank.)

That's a three, not a four. JOAN

It's smudged. FRANK

(To Phil.) Does this look smudged to you? JOAN

I... PHIL

Emily? JOAN

No. EMILY

JOAN

Thank you.

(Joan sits down. Beat.)

EMILY

I think it's better that we're having chinese anyway.

MARGO

Why's that?

EMILY

The turkey has been thawing on the counter for the past three days.

FRANK

Two days.

JOE

What's wrong with that?

GRACE

That's how you thaw a turkey.

JOAN

It is.

MARGO

I've never made a turkey.

GRACE

So, Margo, are you excited?

MARGO

Excited?

GRACE

About the wedding.

MARGO

Yes. The wedding. Very excited.

GRACE

Will it be big?

MARGO

I'm trying to talk him out of that.

FRANK

Paul wants a big wedding?

MARGO
He does. He does. Why is that?

EMILY
Yeah. Why is that?

FRANK
Because you didn't have one.

EMILY
Thanks, dad.

JOAN
Paul always liked a celebration. Do you remember his birthdays?

FRANK
Oh yeah.

MARGO
His birthdays?

JOAN
He always wanted a clown or a--

FRANK
Magician.

JOAN
Magician. Or one year he wanted He-Man? Was that it?

FRANK
Yep.

EMILY
It was always some outrageous request.

JOAN
It was. And he was always disappointed on his birthday.

MARGO
You didn't get him a magician?

FRANK
We got him a magician. We even got him He-man.

JOAN
He always expected more.

FRANK

Every birthday ended with him upstairs in his room.

JOAN

Crying.

MARGO

Every birthday?

JOAN

Until he became a teenager.

EMILY

I'm sure the wedding will go much better.

JOAN

It will. It will.

GRACE

How did you two meet?

FRANK

They met on Christian Mingle, right?

MARGO

Ummm...

JOAN

(To Frank.) What are you talking about?

FRANK

The dating website for the, you know, religious.

JOAN

They met at a coffee shop.

FRANK

No they didn't.

JOAN

Paul told me all about it. It was a crowded coffee shop and you asked if you could share his table and then the two of you started talking. It was so romantic.

FRANK

No, no. It was Christian Mingle.

JOAN

That's absurd. Paul doesn't even go to church.

FRANK

He's found his faith. You'd know that if you ever talked to your son.

JOAN

I talk to my son all the time.

FRANK

Margo settle this. Where'd you meet Paul?

(Beat.)

MARGO

At the office, actually. Paul was brought in on contract for a project. I was in an eight year relationship. We had an affair. I left my common-law husband. A year later, Paul proposed.

FRANK

Hm.

JOAN

(Overlapping.) How special.

GRACE

(Overlapping.) That's so nice.

JOE

Good on ya!

(Beat.)

MARGO

The proposal was very romantic. We were in Hawaii.

(Beat.)

EMILY

We've been snowflaked—

MARGO

Snowballed.

EMILY

Snowballed!

GRACE

Snowballed?

JOAN

Paul's imaginary cat.

GRACE

Oh yes, Snowball, that sweet but smart cat.

JOAN

(To Phil.) I'll explain later.

FRANK

The cat! I forgot about that. Our son...

EMILY

That Paul...such a storyteller...

JOAN

How you met doesn't matter. I can tell he loves you very much.

FRANK

He does. He does.

JOE

I had a cat. Mr. Whiskers. Got run over by a big truck. I cried a lot. She was a good cat. So you're the one that's marrying Paul?

GRACE

She is.

MARGO

I am.

JOE

You have a lovely chest.

GRACE

Joe.

EMILY

Ohmygod.

PHIL

Well.

MARGO

Thanks.

GRACE

I'm so sorry. Somedays he can be horrible.

What?
JOE

Ignore him.
GRACE

Am I right, Frank?
JOE

Joe.
FRANK

(To Phil.) Back me up new--new--Frank.
JOE

Phil.
PHIL

Back me up Phil.
JOE

I'm afraid I can't.
PHIL

You guys are making me look like an asshole. Margo? Is that your name?
JOE

It is.
MARGO

You'll be a beautiful bride.
JOE

It'll be wonderful to have you part of the family.
JOAN

It will be.
FRANK

Phil and I were talking about you and Paul coming down and visiting us in Phoenix next year.
JOAN

That'd be nice.
MARGO

And of course everyone here is welcome to visit at any time. Or borrow the place when we're not there.
PHIL

GRACE

That's so kind.

JOE

You're not going to invite Frank are you?

FRANK

Even if I was invited, I would never go.

JOAN

You're not invited. Phil was just being polite.

FRANK

That's what I thought. You're one of those polite guys, hunh?

PHIL

I suppose I am.

JOAN

What does that mean?

EMILY

Dad.

FRANK

It means he's a polite guy. He's a real polite guy.

JOAN

He is.

FRANK

I never liked polite guys.

PHIL

I guess you don't like me then.

FRANK

I could be honest and tell you what I think of you.

PHIL

Please do.

EMILY

Please don't.

FRANK

But instead I think I'll be polite and say you seem like an alright fella.

JOE

I like you Phil. And I'm not being polite.

FRANK

What are you hiding?

PHIL

Excuse me.

JOAN

(Overlapping.) How dare you.

FRANK

This whole Phil the friendly bus driver--

JOAN

You shut your mouth.

FRANK

Nobody can be this nice!

JOAN

We didn't come here--

FRANK

Every story Emily's told me this last month is about how great Phil is. How kind Phil is. How wonderful Phil is. I have had my fill of Phil. So what are you hiding Phil?

JOAN

He's hiding nothing. I know it seems alien to you Frank, but this is what a decent man looks like.

FRANK

A decent man?

JOAN

A decent, caring, loving man. A better man than you.

FRANK

Then let the better man answer the question, Joanie. What are you hiding Phil?

EMILY

It's a third nipple isn't it?

FRANK

Emily--

EMILY
We have company, dad.

FRANK
We have a home-wrecker here.

JOAN
You're the home-wrecker.

EMILY
(To Frank.) You're being an asshole.

FRANK
I'm the asshole?

EMILY
If you gotta ask...

FRANK
I'm--

GRACE
Just be quiet, Frank. You're embarrassing yourself and you're giving me a headache.

FRANK
I'm just asking a question.

GRACE
It's the tradition that bride-to-be doesn't see how crazy the family is until she's married into it.

(Paul enters with the chinese food.)

PAUL
And who's hungry?!!

EMILY
Excellent timing.

PAUL
What's wrong? Did something happen?

GRACE
Everyone's hungry.

EMILY
Starved.

MARGO

I was just telling your family how we met.

JOAN

This will be so much better than a badly burnt turkey.

JOE

Is there ginger beef?

PAUL

How we met?

FRANK

If only that recipe card had said 325.

JOE

Give me the ginger beef!

PAUL

Sorry, uncle. Ginger beef. Right. How'd you tell everyone we met?

(Paul begins to unload the chinese food onto the table.)

JOAN

Go pull your pork, Frank.

EMILY

Pass the rice.

FRANK

When did you get such a mouth?

MARGO

I told them the truth.

JOAN

I've always had a mouth. I'm just using it now.

PAUL

The truth? That's...

GRACE

(To Paul.) Nobody cares.

JOE

I care. I care about the ginger beef. There is ginger beef, right?

GRACE

(To Joe.) Not so loud. Let Paul get everything on the table. What would you like, Phil?

PHIL

Is there a veg and cashew thingie?

EMILY

(To Phil.) I don't see it.

PAUL

I meant to clear it all up. Sorry.

JOE

I don't think there's ginger beef here.

EMILY

Are these soups?

MARGO

(To Paul.) We'll talk.

FRANK

You were so much nicer when you didn't speak.

EMILY

We didn't order soup.

FRANK

Much prettier.

PHIL

(To Frank.) Excuse me?

MARGO

Would anybody like some of--it might be chicken?

EMILY

Why did you order tofu, Paul?

FRANK

(To Phil.) You got a problem?

PAUL

Tofu? I didn't order tofu.

JOE

No ginger beef!

GRACE

Joseph! I can't take your screaming right now.

JOE

Tell me there's some chicken in a red sauce.

PHIL

(To Frank.) I do have a problem.

MARGO

(To Joe.) I don't see anything red.

JOAN

(To Phil.) It's fine. It's fine.

FRANK

See, Phil? It's fine.

JOE

(To Paul.) What the hell did you order?

EMILY

This soup looks--

MARGO

What did you order Paul?

PHIL

(To Frank.) I'd ask you to apologize--

FRANK

Ask me to apologize?

JOE

Just give me anything that looks like deep fried meat!

FRANK

Ask me to apologize? Joanie, do you want me to apologize?

PAUL

I think this is the wrong order.

JOAN

I don't want anything from you.

GRACE

They gave you the wrong order?

(Frank stands up.)

PAUL

This is the wrong order.

FRANK

In fact, I want you to apologize.

PAUL

I think we have the chinese people--

FRANK

Apologize--

PAUL

--chinese food--

FRANK

--for stealing my wife.

PAUL

And not the normal chinese food!

FRANK

For stealing my life!

PAUL

Dad, what are you doing? Sit down.

(The doorbell rings.)

FRANK

I'm not sitting down.

EMILY

Stop it.

(The doorbell rings.)

GRACE

Oh, Frank.

JOAN

What are you doing?

FRANK

I'm picking a fight.

EMILY

There'll be no fighting.

FRANK

(To Phil.) Stand up.

JOAN

We should go.

FRANK

Stand up. (The doorbell rings.) Would somebody get that!

(Grace gets up to answer the door. The doorbell rings.)

GRACE

(To Frank.) This is pathetic.

JOE

Where ya going?

GRACE

To answer the door, Joseph. And get some Advil.

(Grace exits.)

FRANK

Are you going to stand up?

PAUL

(To Phil.) I'm really sorry about this. (To Margo.) Dad's not normally like this.

EMILY

No, this is pretty much how he always is.

JOAN

Let's go, Phil.

FRANK

Stand up. Be a man!

PHIL

And if I stand up what are we going to do?

JOE

Fight. I think he wants to fight you.

PHIL

That's my point. We're going to fight?

JOAN
You can't fight.

FRANK
I'm gonna kick some ass.

PAUL
Dad--

MARGO
Wow.

EMILY
Really, dad? Really!

JOE
I don't know what this meat is but it's pretty tasty.

PHIL
(To Frank.) I don't think so.

FRANK
Are you a coward? Are you chicken?

JOE
I don't think it's chicken.
(Ajay enters.)

EMILY
Ajay?

AJAY
Em'. Hello. Everyone.

FRANK
Who's this?

AJAY
Is this a bad time?

JOE
Sit down, have some of the chinese people chinese food.

EMILY
It's a bad time.

FRANK
Who's this guy?

AJAY

I'm Ajay. Sorry an older lady let me in. She told me to come in here.

JOE

Where's my Grace?

AJAY

The older lady? She's sitting in the front room. She said she needed to take a break from...the sideshow.

FRANK

Ajay?

AJAY

Yeah.

FRANK

Ajay Gandhi?

AJAY

Yep.

FRANK

You're the father?

JOAN

(To Emily.) This is him?

PAUL

You're the dad?

EMILY

It's him.

AJAY

I am the father. I'm proud to say. My sperm. Yep. I don't know why I said that. Nervous. Sorry.

MARGO

Congratulations.

EMILY

What do you want?

AJAY

Could we go someplace and talk?

EMILY

No. What do you want?

AJAY

I...okay...I wanted to tell you that I--well--I think I--well...(Beat.) When I was in high school, when you were my teacher--

PAUL

Teacher?

EMILY

Student teacher.

AJAY

I had a crush on you...I had a really big crush on you. And I didn't tell you that before because, well because when we met in the bar, I'd thought you'd think I was totally nuts if I'd approached you and that's what I started with...and once I got you pregnant it seemed even creepier if I were to bring it up...but...back in the day, your Social Studies class was what I lived for. And at the end of the term, when I knew I would probably never see you again, I wrote you a letter. A love letter. I was going to give it to you on your last day. Telling you how I felt. Dear Ms. Parker...I didn't even know your first name. But I loved you.

JOE

Good on ya!

(Beat.)

AJAY

And I just felt the need to race over here and tell you that. And now I've told you that. And in my imagination this conversation was a lot different.

EMILY

It was?

AJAY

There was less of a crowd in my imagination.

FRANK

(To Ajay.) Well. Welcome to the family. Maybe I'll get to know you better, Ajay. Maybe I won't. That's up to Emily. Right now I have some other business to take care of. So if you could stand over there.

AJAY

Uh. Okay. Sure.

(Ajay goes and stands by Emily.)

EMILY

Great timing, Gandhi.

FRANK

(To Phil.) Stand up!

JOAN

We're going.

MARGO

(To Paul.) We should go?

AJAY

(To Emily.) Are they about to fight?

PAUL

(To Margo.) And this is why I didn't want you to meet them.

EMILY

(To Ajay.) This is how we end all family dinners.

JOAN

(To Phil.) Come on, let's go.

JOE

Where's Grace?

FRANK

(To Joan.) He's not going anywhere.

JOE

Grace?! The food is getting cold.

(Joe gets up and exits.)

FRANK

Come on, Bus Driver. Let me give you the exact change. Let me ring your bell. Let me punch your ticket!

JOAN

(To Frank.) You're a clown.

FRANK

(To Joan.) Oh Joanie, just shut your yap, shut your fucking mouth.

(Phil stands up.)

PHIL

That's it.

JOAN

Phil. Phil! Sit down.

PHIL

I can't let him say that--

JOAN

Sit down, sit down. It's okay. You want someone to fight, Frank? I'll fight ya.

FRANK

I don't--

JOAN

You don't what?

FRANK

I didn't mean--

JOAN

Didn't mean what? (Joan pushes Frank. Frank stumbles back.) Didn't mean what?

FRANK

I'm sorry.

JOAN

What are you sorry for? What are you apologizing for?

FRANK

What I said.

(Joan pushes Frank.)

JOAN

What you said when? Now? What you said to Phil? Or are you apologizing for what you've said for the past thirty-five years? Telling me to shut my fucking mouth. Let's fight.

FRANK
C'mon, Joanie.

JOAN
Never again, Frank!

(Joan pushes Frank.)

FRANK
Stop it.

JOAN
Never again! I have so much rage. So much rage. So let's do this. Let's fight! Come on!

(Joe enters.)

JOE
Joanie?

JOAN
Come on!

JOE
Joanie?

EMILY
Mom.

PAUL
What is it uncle?

JOE
Joanie.

JOAN
What? What's wrong?

JOE
I think...I think there's something wrong with my Grace.

FRANK
Grace?

(Emily goes to exit.)

EMILY
(Calling to Grace.) Auntie?

JOE

She's just sitting there on the couch.

EMILY (Offstage.)

Auntie?!

JOE

She won't wake up. (Paul exits.) I tried to wake her.
But she won't, she won't, she won't, she won't--

EMILY(Offstage)

Somebody call an ambulance.

JOE

--she won't wake up, Joanie.

(Joan hugs Joe. Phil goes to the phone.
Frank puts his hand on Joe's shoulder.)

JOE

She won't wake up. My Grace won't wake up. My Grace...

SCENE 9

(Light shift. A bedroom in a care facility. Joe is slumped in a wheelchair. He is a ghost of the man his family has known. He has shaving cream on his face. Phil is shaving him. Joan sits across from him. Joan is showing him a photo on her phone.)

JOAN

And this is Grace. See, Uncle. It's Grace.

JOE

Grace?

JOAN

Em's baby.

JOE

Em's baby?

JOAN

Mmhmm. She's two months old.

JOE

A little eater, hunh?

JOAN

She is chubby. You'll see her at the wedding.

JOE

The wedding?

JOAN

Paul's wedding.

JOE

Paul's getting hitched?

JOAN

To Margo. Today. That's why we have to get you ready.

JOE

Who's this guy touching my face?

JOAN

This is Phil.

Phil?
JOE

Hi.
PHIL

Why's he touching my face?
JOE

I'm shaving you.
PHIL

Why are you shaving me?
JOE

Because the staff here forgot to.
PHIL

You're doing a good job. You have a confident hand.
(Beat. Whispering.) Joanie? You messing around on Frank? I understand if you are. You gotta get the milk someplace, right?
JOE

I'm not—
JOAN

But maybe you shouldn't bring him around here. I'm not going to say anything, but there's no guarantee that Grace won't say something. You know how she is.
JOE

I haven't been with Frank for a while.
JOAN

Oh. That's probably for the best. (Beat.) I'm sad, Joanie.
JOE

You're sad? Why?
JOAN

What did I do?
JOE

I don't think you've done anything.
JOAN

Well I must've done something.
JOE

JOAN

No.

JOE

I did something. I wouldn't be here if I hadn't done something. C'mon, Joanie. Goddammit.

JOAN

...This is...this is...just the best...

JOE

Would you tell her I'm sorry? Just tell Grace I'm sorry for whatever I did. I'm sorry. I just want to come home. I just want to see her.

(Silence.)

JOAN

Uncle. Grace...Your wife passed away.

(Beat. Joe covers his face, trying to hide his crying. Light shift. Ajay and Emily are walking to the wedding. Ajay pushes a baby stroller.)

AJAY

Excited?

EMILY

Hmm?

AJAY

About seeing your brother say I do?

EMILY

Hmmm?

AJAY

Are you day dreaming?

EMILY

Hmmm? No.

AJAY

So what are you thinking about?

EMILY

Doing the right thing.

AJAY
And what's that?

EMILY
I'm not sure, Gandhi.

AJAY
You breaking up with me?

EMILY
I've been thinking about the home I want for our daughter.

AJAY
You're not talking about any of the houses we've looked at, are you?

EMILY
What was your home like? Your family?

AJAY
You've met them. They're normal.

EMILY
What's normal?

AJAY
A boring, suburban home. I guess.

EMILY
Was there love?

AJAY
Sure.

EMILY
When I imagine the home for our daughter, the two words that pop into my mind are love and safety. I want Grace to always know that she is loved and that she is always safe.

AJAY
Good.

EMILY
It's not good. It's bullshit.

AJAY
It's not bullshit.

EMILY

It is.

AJAY

Why's it bullshit?

EMILY

Because my parents probably thought they were providing a loving and safe home. And they did, I guess. But if they did, why did I end up so fucked up, needy, and selfish. (Beat.) So I've been thinking about how I—we—do that. How do we do that every day?

AJAY

Loving each other.

EMILY

When you showed up at dinner and declared your love for me—

AJAY

Declared? I don't think I—

EMILY

—It was like something from a movie. It was. It was great. It kept me all warm and fuzzy and tingling. But that's just bullshit, too.

AJAY

You are breaking up with me.

EMILY

(Surprised.) I am. I am.

(Light shift. A bedroom. Margo and Paul sit on the edge of the bed. Margo is in a wedding dress. Paul is wearing a suit. Paul has his eyes closed.)

MARGO

If our marriage ends in divorce it won't be because you saw me in my wedding dress on the day of our marriage. It'll probably be because you cheated on me or I cheated on you or we got bored with each other or started to hate each other or any of the other things that happen to a relationship as time eats away at your body and soul. Would you look at me?

PAUL

It's not why my eyes are closed. I'm doing it for the photos.

MARGO

What?

PAUL

When I see you in your wedding dress for the first time, I want the photographer to capture a genuine moment. My genuine response to how beautiful you look.

MARGO

Really?

PAUL

I'm a horrible smiler.

MARGO

Really?

PAUL

It's always this fake, toothy smile.

MARGO

No it isn't.

(Paul smiles. His eyes are still closed.)

PAUL

See? It's bad.

MARGO

It's...It doesn't have to be that big.

PAUL

I know that.

(Beat.)

MARGO

Okay. Keep your eyes closed. We need to rewrite our wedding vows.

PAUL

Now?

MARGO

Yes.

PAUL

What's wrong with them?

MARGO

They're meaningless. It seems like you googled wedding vows and copy and pasted them.

PAUL

That's because I did. Because you said there were more important things than the wedding vows like seating arrangements and table centrepieces.

MARGO

And now those things are done and we need to do our vows. They can't be meaningless.

(Light shift. Emily and Ajay.)

AJAY

We're doing good, aren't we?

EMILY

We are. We are. We're negotiating it.

AJAY

Negotiating?

EMILY

If there wasn't a baby here, what would we be? Would we be looking for a house together?

AJAY

Maybe.

EMILY

No. We wouldn't. We'd still be circling each other, sniffing each other out. Okay, that's a bad image. We'd be discovering each other.

AJAY

We're still doing that.

EMILY

Yeah, but that's the negotiation.

AJAY

Why's it a negotiation?

EMILY

Because there are things you do right now that irk the fuck out of me. Just a little bit.

AJAY

You don't think there are things you do.

EMILY

I'm sure there are. And we're both negotiating them, because of this one. In my head, I keep saying it's not a big deal, it's not a big deal—

AJAY

What's not a big deal?

EMILY

It doesn't matter, 'cause it's not a big deal. But then I think, well it's not a big deal now, but will this be a big deal five years from now? Ten years? In twenty years, will this not a big deal thing be the big deal thing that makes me want to either smother you in the middle of the night or make me slit my wrists? Twenty years from now will I be despising you or hating you or just not wanting to be in the same room with you because of this currently not a big deal thingie? And when will our daughter be able to pick up on that not a big deal thingie that's now a big deal thingie? When will she know that Mommy and Daddy don't really communicate, don't really spend time together, don't really have anything in common, don't really like each other, in fact they kind of despise each other, and the only reason they are still in a relationship is because of her. And what will that do to her? Because a kid picks up on that shit really fast. Really fast. It messes them up.

AJAY

I can change.

EMILY

I don't want you to change, Ajay. You shouldn't want to change. You shouldn't have to change.

AJAY

I'm willing to. I want to. I do. I want this to work.

EMILY

See? We're negotiating. It's a mistake.

AJAY

Why's it a mistake?

(Beat.)

EMILY

Because you care more about me than I care about you.

AJAY

That's what I'm doing?

EMILY

At the heart of it, yeah.

(Silence. They begin walking again. Light shift. Margo and Paul are still sitting on the edge of the bed. Margo is writing in a notebook. Paul's eyes are still closed.)

MARGO

Not vows. Promises then.

PAUL

Promises?

MARGO

Promises we're making to each other.

PAUL

Ummm...okay. Do we really have time for this?

MARGO

Yes.

PAUL

Okay. Promises. Promises to each other.

MARGO

Yes.

PAUL

Promises. What do you want me to promise you?

MARGO

I don't know. That you'll stop reading so much into my text messages.

PAUL

I do that?

MARGO

I'm kind of getting tired of putting exclamation marks and smiley faces at the end of my texts just so you don't think something's wrong when I text Yes or Okay or Later.

PAUL

Brief texts cause me panic. I can do that. I can.

MARGO

What's a promise you want from me?

PAUL

Ummm...That'll you'll say you're sorry when you're late. You always have a reason, but you never apologize for being late.

MARGO

I do?

PAUL

Yeah.

MARGO

Sorry. I can do that.

PAUL

This just seems...

MARGO

I know. We're just listing off really petty shit.

PAUL

Yeah.

MARGO

It kind of what it is.

PAUL

Is there a way to make it sound better?

MARGO

Okay. Okay. Why are we getting married?

(Beat.)

PAUL

Because we love each other.

MARGO

But why do we have to be married?

PAUL

Because we're committing to that love.

MARGO

Yeah, yeah. I get that. But what is a tangible reason for us to publicly declare that and make this legally binding commitment to each other. What is that? That's what has to be in these vows.

(Margo and Paul try to think of a reason why they're getting married.)

MARGO

I like falling asleep next to you. I like waking up next to you. I like curling into your warm body, putting my cold feet against your calves.

PAUL

That's why you're marrying me?

MARGO

I sleep better with you next to me. You?

(Beat.)

PAUL

I dread having conversations with people. I dread being on a plane, or a bus, or in a lineup having to make conversation with the person next to me. I even dread having lunch with friends. When I have to, I spend hours planning the conversation...because I dread, really, really dread, the awkward pause. That moment when you have nothing to say and the other person has nothing to say and you just sit there in this ugly growing gap between the end of the last conversation and hopefully the start of the next conversation. I've spent so much time trying to avoid the awkward pause that I don't know how often in my day-to-day life that I have had a real conversation with another person—a co-worker, a stranger, a friend. But with you...I don't even think about it. I'm not planning the next thing I'm going to say. I just talk, and laugh, and listen. I actually listen. There's no awkward pause. There's just silence. (Silence.) Because my eyes are closed right now, I'm assuming you're just sitting here enjoying the silence with me. If you could just

confirm that with a little sigh or grunt, that'd be great.

MARGO

Would you open your eyes.

PAUL

Think of the photos.

MARGO

Can we just have the genuine moment now? For us. For no one else. Look at me. Paul. Look at me.

(Paul opens his eyes. He smiles. Light shift. The care facility. Phil has finished shaving Joe. He pats aftershave on to Joe's cheeks.)

JOE

Do you love her?

PHIL

I do.

JOE

Good. You, Joanie?

JOAN

I love him.

JOE

Appreciate that. A lot will happen—life will happen—but try and appreciate that. It's always good to know that there's somebody that cares for you. Like my Grace.

JOAN

We should go?

JOE

Go where you need to go.

JOAN

All of us should go. To the wedding, Uncle.

JOE

Right. Right. Grace is going to meet us there?

SCENE 10

(Light shift. Outside the Wedding Venue. Frank waits by the doors. He holds a big envelope. Ajay and Emily enter pushing the baby stroller. Phil and Joan enter pushing Joe in his wheelchair. The family comes together. There are hugs and handshakes. Their voices overlap.)

FRANK

Ajay you're looking good.

JOAN

(To Emily.) Look at the little darling. I'm happy to hold her the entire time.

AJAY

(To Frank.) You too. (To Phil.) How are things?

EMILY

(To Joan.) Oh, I know you are Grandma.

PHIL

(To Ajay.) Things are good. Perfect day for a wedding.

FRANK

(To Joe.) You still good for Friday?

AJAY

(To Phil.) You couldn't ask for a more perfect day.

JOE

(To Frank.) Friday?

EMILY

(To Phil.) You look great.

FRANK

(To Joe.) I'm taking you to the air show.

PHIL

(To Emily.) It's my tie, it brings out the colour in my eyes.

JOAN

(To Emily.) It does too! Doesn't it, Em?

JOE

(To Frank.) Can't wait. Good to go.

EMILY

(To Joan.) I guess it does.

JOAN

(To Emily.) It does.

FRANK

It sure does. Phil, how are you?

PHIL

Good. You?

FRANK

Great. Great.

(Beat.)

JOE

(To Frank.) You forget to mail something?

(Beat. Frank stares at Joan.)

JOAN

We should get inside.

EMILY

Paul would hate for us to be late.

(They begin to go inside.)

FRANK

Joan? Can I talk to you for a second?

EMILY

Dad—

FRANK

I just—

EMILY

This isn't—

JOAN

It's fine. All of you go in. It's fine. (Emily and Ajay head in. Emily pushes the stroller. Ajay pushes Joe in the wheelchair. Phil stays. To Phil.) Save me a spot.

PHIL

The spot's probably already saved.

JOAN

(To Phil.) I know. It's fine. It'll be fine.

FRANK

This will be quick. I promise I'm not going—It's my son's wedding—I'm not going to cause problems.

JOAN

(To Phil.) It's okay.

(Joan kisses Phil. Phil goes inside.
Joan and Frank are alone.)

JOAN

Well?

FRANK

I need to know what you want me to do with our stuff.
Your stuff. Our stuff. Here.

(Frank hands Joan the envelope.)

JOAN

What is this?

FRANK

Mementos. Photos. Letters. Cards.

JOAN

Of what?

FRANK

Not of us. There's plenty of that...stuff, too. It's photos of your parents, things from when you were a little girl, some photos of Em and Paul. I found it in a box. You must've put it all in there years ago. It seemed important. To you. At some point.

JOAN

Thanks.

FRANK

You're welcome. (Beat.) Listen. You do have to come home Joanie.

JOAN

I do?

FRANK

I don't mean—Yeah the lawyers can deal with the money part, but there's forty years of stuff—our stuff—we have to deal with. I've been trying to clean it up—clean it out—but I don't know what I should keep and what I should throw away.

JOAN

Keep the photos.

FRANK

Well, yeah, of course.

JOAN

Do what you want with the rest.

FRANK

Do you mean that? The letters and the pictures in that envelope I know are important to you. But there's gotta be other things just as important to you that I don't know about. There must be, because we have some things that I cannot for the life me figure out why you kept it.

JOAN

Like what?

FRANK

...Like a chinese takeout menu from the early eighties.

JOAN

That can probably be tossed.

FRANK

It has poem written on the back. Your handwriting. There's some journals you must've kept in your twenties. There's a cookbook that has some scribbles of Em's from when she was a little girl written in the margins. There are letters from me when we started dating. Cake in the freezer from our wedding. A card I gave you for our fifth anniversary. I feel wrong tossing it all without you having a chance to go through it.

JOAN

Did you want to toss it all?

FRANK

Some days. Some days I spend hours just going through it.

JOAN

You shouldn't do that.

FRANK

I know I shouldn't do that but...

JOAN

But what?

FRANK

There are days where that's all I want to do. I miss you.

JOAN

Frank—

FRANK

I know, I know. I'm not—we're done, I know that. You've moved on. You're gone. You're happy. But there are days when I miss you, Joanie.

JOAN

You just want someone to take care of you.

FRANK

I don't. I can take care of myself. I've been taking care...I don't want to fight. I'm just telling you I miss you. That's why you have to come and help me clean it up. I can't spend hours looking at this stuff anymore.

JOAN

Okay. I will.

FRANK

Thanks.

(Beat.)

JOAN

Let's go inside. (Beat.) Frank?

FRANK

When did you decide? That you were going to leave me. When did you know?

JOAN

I don't know.

FRANK

Because I've been looking at these photos of us. And there are letters and cards. Years of it. And I can't figure it out. You look happy. We look happy.

JOAN

We do?

FRANK

Happyish. I have a birthday card from you from two years ago and it says love Joan on it. Two years ago you loved me.

JOAN

It's just what you put on a card.

FRANK

I suppose it is. (Beat.) Just tell me...it's not because of the dishes or cooking or the cleaning.

JOAN

What?

FRANK

It's not because I wasn't helping you with chores. That's not why you left me. Is it?

JOAN

No.

FRANK

Because if it was that...I would've changed. I would've changed. I would've.

(Joan takes Frank's hand.)

JOAN

It's okay.

FRANK

Is it?

JOAN

It will be, eventually.

FRANK

What did I do? What did I do wrong? What did I do so wrong that you could leave so easily after forty years?

JOAN

Frank.

FRANK

Just tell me what I did?

JOAN

Frank.

FRANK

Please. I need to stop thinking about it.

(Beat.)

JOAN

Do you remember when Em bought me that purse for Christmas?

FRANK

No.

JOAN

A few years back. Anyway, I didn't use it—I just didn't feel like cleaning out my old purse. She found out. She wasn't happy about it.

FRANK

She was outraged?

JOAN

Of course she was. One night she made a point of coming over to help me clean out my old purse and move everything into the new purse. We were in the front living room. Me, you, and Em. You were in your chair. We were on the couch. Em was complaining about all the crap I was holding onto. Remember?

FRANK

Maybe.

JOAN

We're going though my wallet and Em finds an old employee I.D. card I had from when I worked for the city. It had my picture on it. This is from the 70s. From right around when we started dating. Remember?

FRANK

Maybe.

JOAN

Em takes the I.D. out. She's about to go on a rant about me hanging on to crap like this, when she stops and says, "Mom, look at you, you're gorgeous." That's what she says. You're gorgeous. Then she turns to you and says, "She's gorgeous, isn't she dad."

FRANK

Right.

JOAN

And then what did you say?

FRANK

I agreed?

JOAN

You looked at the picture and then handed it back to Em. You didn't say anything.

FRANK

Oh.

JOAN

Why didn't you say something?

FRANK

I was probably distracted.

JOAN

You weren't.

FRANK

I don't know.

JOAN

That's what you did.

FRANK

That's what I did?

JOAN

Yes.

FRANK

Seriously? C'mon, I didn't compliment you.

JOAN

You hurt me.

FRANK

How?

JOAN

We'd been together almost forty years. Forty years, Frank. We've been through so much. There'd been a time when we'd been in love. There'd been a time, right around when that photo was taken, when you thought I was gorgeous. But that night, sitting in the living room with Em, you couldn't even say that—

FRANK

I—

JOAN

Let me finish. Em says, "Isn't she gorgeous?" And all you had to say was yeah, or she was, or even given a grunt—that's all I was looking for—that's all I expected—a compliment about a time when I'd been young and pretty and you were crazy about me...but you could not even do that. You made a decision, a choice—I saw you do it, I remember you doing it— to not say a thing. I remember for days afterwards trying to figure out what I had done to you to cause you to be hurtful. To be cruel. What had I done that caused you so much animosity to me that you'd withhold an easy, offhand, compliment? What I had done? I thought about that for a while. And then I started to notice how often you did it—you refused to say thanks, or smile when I entered a room, or say goodnight when we went to bed, or even acknowledged me. That's when I started to think about leaving.

(Beat.)

FRANK

I don't know why I did it. I really don't know.

JOAN

I've thought about us a lot since we ended things. How I felt about you. How I treated you. I was doing the same thing. I'd refuse to say I love you, or say thank you, or offer you any kindness. And what would it've cost me to offer you that? To say, I love you. Or, thanks. Or just to hold your hand.

(Beat.)

FRANK

And is it different? With him?

JOAN

It is. Of course it is. We're not mired in a forty year history.

(Beat. Frank reaches out to touch Joan's face.)

JOAN

What're you doing?

FRANK

You gotta—

JOAN

Why are you—

FRANK

You got a—

JOAN

What—

FRANK

Just stop—Just stop moving for a second. You got an eyelash—

JOAN

An eyelash?

FRANK

On your cheek. Stop Moving. I'm trying to get that eyelash off your cheek.

JOAN

Okay.

(Frank delicately goes to pick the eyelash off Joan's cheek. Joan moves her head a little.)

JOAN

Did you get it?

FRANK

Just give me—

JOAN

Is it gone?

FRANK

Would you quit being so impatient.

JOAN

I don't like fingers by my eye!

FRANK

I know that. I'm trying to be delicate!

JOAN

This is delicate?

FRANK

Joanie, for the love of God, stop moving!

(She stops moving. Frank removes the eyelash. They stay close to each other.)

FRANK

I got it.

JOAN

Thank you.

(Beat.)

FRANK

I'm sorry.

JOAN

I'm sorry, too.

(Beat. They start to head inside. Light shift. Inside the Wedding Venue. Paul and Margo are saying their vows. Phil, Emily, Joe, and Ajay watch. Ajay holds his baby. Frank and Joan pause to watch.)

PAUL

I promise to warm you when you're cold.

(Frank and Joan split apart. Joan heads to Phil. Frank heads to Emily.)

MARGO

I promise to kiss you every morning when we wake up.

(Emily puts her arm around her dad.)

PAUL

I promise to stay curious as we grow old.

(Joan takes Phil's hand.)

MARGO

I promise to laugh with you loudly.

(Ajay kisses his baby, calming her.)

PAUL

I promise to live with you heartily.

(Frank places his hand on Joe's shoulder.)

MARGO

I promise to love you, always.

(Phil kisses Joan on the cheek.)

PAUL

I promise to love you, always.

(Lights fade to black.)