Rabbit Hole
a play in two acts
by David Lindsay-Abaire

TIME
the present

LOCATION
Larchmont, New York

CAST
Becca: late thirties / early forties
Izzy: mid thirties, Becca’s sister
Howie: late thirties / early forties, Becca’s husband
Nat: mid-sixties, Becca’s mother
Jason: a seventeen-year-old boy
ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

(Late February. A kitchen with a comfortable living room and dining room nearby. Saturday afternoon. Becca, late 30's, is folding the laundry, kids' clothes, and putting it in neat piles on the dining room table. Her sister Izzy, early thirties, is in the middle of a story, getting herself a glass of orange juice from the refrigerator.)

IZZY
And everybody kinda steps aside for her, like the Red Sea, or whatever - just clears a path for her, and I'm like, "what's with this nut job."

BECCA
But you don't even know this woman.

IZZY
Never seen her before. I was just sitting there with Reema— Do you remember Reema?

BECCA
No.

IZZY
She's a friend of mine. I was sitting there with Reema, and suddenly this lady is in my face. And she's all sweaty and yelling and really pissed.

BECCA
Why?

IZZY
I don't even know at this point. It has something to do with her boyfriend, who's apparently at the end of the bar.

BECCA
Were you flirting or—?

IZZY
No, I don't even know who she's talking about. So she's all up in my face, and her breath is like—

BECCA
Boozy?
IZZY
Yeah boozy, but even worse, you know, like there's something rancid stuck to the roof of her mouth.

BECCA
Ew.

IZZY
Rotting peanut butter or something.

BECCA
Good lord, Izzy.

IZZY
And she's harassing me, and blowing her stank-breath in my face. And cussing. My god, you wouldn't believe the words that came out of this lady's mouth.

BECCA
And you don't even know who she's talking about.

IZZY
She's talking about her boyfriend.

BECCA
No, I know but—

IZZY
Auggie.

BECCA
(beat)
Oh. I thought you didn't know who she—

IZZY
No, at the time I didn't know who she was talking about, because I didn't know he was there. But then I figured it out later, "Oh, she must be Auggie's girlfriend."

BECCA
So you know him.

IZZY
Yeah, I know him, but still. Lemme finish.

BECCA
I'm sorry.
IZZY
So she’s all “you bitch, you. Fuck you, you bitch.”

BECCA

Izzy—

IZZY
Sorry. “F-U, you B” and all that. Just talking like a maniac.

BECCA

Uh-huh.

IZZY
And people are looking at us, so I’m starting to feel self-conscious.

BECCA

Of course.

IZZY
And she’s just going off, and I can’t really do anything because the place is so crowded, you know? And she’s a big lady. Real hefty. More chins than—what does Mom say?

BECCA

IZZY
Exactly, so I can’t even get around her to escape or whatever. And I’m starting to feel violated, you know?

BECCA

Sure.

IZZY
My personal space, and my dignity, or what have you, so I just made a fist, hauled off, and BOOM!

BECCA

(beat)
What does that mean?

IZZY
It means I hit her.

BECCA

No, you didn’t.
Crazy, right?  

IZZY

You hit her?

BECCA

Yeah. Right in the face. BOOM. She went down.

IZZY

Oh my god, Izzy— You hit that woman?

BECCA

I couldn’t get around her. And she was screaming like a retard.

IZZY

What would you have done?

BECCA

Well I certainly wouldn’t have hit her. Jesus.

IZZY

And you know what they don’t tell ya? It really hurts. To punch someone. It frickin’ hurts.

BECCA

Well, yeah.

IZZY

They don’t put that on TV. It’s all “Now that oughtta show him.” But for me it was like “Motherfucker, that killed!” Look at my knuckles.

(shows her — then off her look)

What?

IZZY

Nothing.

BECCA

You don’t approve?

IZZY

I didn’t say that.

BECCA
This lady was *at* me.

I know. I didn’t say anything.

But you wanna though.

(beat)

I just worry about you.

Don’t worry about me. *She* was the one on the floor.

That’s not what I meant. You were in a bar fight.

So?

A *bar fight*, Izzy.

She was up in my face!

I know, but it’s so....

What?

Jerry Springer.

What’s that supposed to mean? You think I’m trashy?

You punched a woman in the face!

She provoked me!
Were you drunk?

IZZY

No.

BECCA

I thought you were getting it together.

IZZY

Don’t judge me.

BECCA

You said you were gonna take it easy.

IZZY

Man, Becca. Why do you have to—?

BECCA

You can’t be doing this kinda stuff, Izzy. You’re not a kid anymore.

IZZY

I didn’t realize there was a cut-off date.

BECCA

Well there should be. For acting like a jackass there should be a cut off date.

(beat)

Were you on anything?

IZZY

Oh my god.

BECCA

Were you?

IZZY

No. Man, why did I say anything to you?

BECCA

I don’t know. Why did you?

IZZY

Look, I went out. I got into a fight. I thought it was a funny story. I thought you’d be amused.
BECCA
I’m not.

IZZY
Clearly.

BECCA
I thought you were gonna go easy, that’s all. That you were gonna do less of this.

IZZY
Hey, I’m still coping too, Becca. I know it’s not the same, but it’s still hard. Okay?

BECCA
(beat)
Don’t do that.

Do what?

IZZY
Gimme a break.

BECCA
What? I’m not allowed to be upset anymore?

IZZY
No, you’re not allowed to use him.

BECCA
What are you—?

IZZY
As an excuse.

BECCA
I’m not.

IZZY
You’re not allowed to use him to justify your own shit. Just don’t do that. Please.

(Silence. Becca folds the clothes.)

IZZY
That’s not what I was doing.
Okay.

IZZY

I'm hungry. Mind if I get something?

BECCA

Since when do you ask?

IZZY

You're making me feel sensitive.

(Izzy heads back to the fridge.)

IZZY

Where's Howie?

BECCA

He's with Rick. They're playing squash.

IZZY

(chuckles)

Squash.

(re: something in the fridge)

What's this? Pudding?

BECCA

It's gonna be crème caramel.

IZZY

Howie's a lucky man. Ya won't see me making anyone crème caramel.

BECCA

If you're hungry, Isabel, grab something. Don't stand there with the door open.

IZZY

(holds up an individual crème caramel)

Can I have one of these? There's an extra in here.

BECCA

(beat)

Yeah, okay.

IZZY

Well I won't eat it if you don't want me to.
BECCA
No, go ahead. You’re right, there’s an extra.

IZZY
You sure?

BECCA
Just let me finish it.

IZZY
I can eat it like this.

BECCA
No, then it’s just custard.

IZZY
I like custard.

BECCA
I didn’t make custard, I made crème caramel.

(Becca goes into the kitchen. She gets a dessert plate, and over the following she takes the ramekin and runs a knife around the inside edge of it.)

BECCA
How’s work?

IZZY
Don’t ask me that please.

BECCA
Why not?

(beat)
You got fired?

IZZY
It never ends with me, does it?

BECCA
Not often, no.

IZZY
Don’t tell mom.
BECCA
How can you get fired from Applebee's?

IZZY
It was all politics. I don't really wanna get into it.

(Becca flips the ramekin over onto the plate, and the crème caramel comes out. Izzy watches. Becca finishes the dessert, gets a spoon and hands both to Izzy.)

IZZY
Thank you.

(Becca wipes down the counter, cleans up. Izzy pokes at the caramel with her spoon.)

IZZY
I like how it oozes.

Of course you do.

BECCA
(takes a bite)
Mmmmm.

IZZY
Better than custard, isn't it?

BECCA
Yes it is. You were right. Again.

IZZY
And again and again and again.

(taken a beat)
I wasn't using him as an excuse. I was just saying that it's been hard to pull it together, that's all. For all of us.

BECCA
Izzy, please.

(Izzy eats her crème caramel.)

IZZY
And I wasn't drinking when I hit that lady. Stone sober.
Yeah right.

I was. I just had soda that night.

(We hear the dryer buzz.)

IZZY

Yeah right.

I was. I just had soda that night.

(We hear the dryer buzz.)

BECCA

(off)
She gonna press charges, ya think?

IZZY

No, Auggie would kill her. She’s over it anyway. She moved out. Went to her cousin’s or something.

BECCA

(off)
What are you talking about?

IZZY

She moved. Out of Auggie’s place. They’re not together anymore.

(Becca comes back from the hallway.)

BECCA

(confused)
I’m sorry... Do you know these people?

IZZY

Auggie I do. The girlfriend I only heard about.

BECCA

(beat)
What’d you do, Izzy?

IZZY

Whadaya mean?

BECCA

To that woman. What’d you do to her?

IZZY

I told you, I hit her.
BECCA

Before that.

IZZY

Nothing. That was the first time I met her.

BECCA

People don’t scream in your face for no reason.

IZZY

Sure they do. You should get out more.

BECCA

Were you sleeping with him? This Auggie guy, whatever his name is? You were sleeping with him, right?

IZZY

(beat)

Where ya goin’ with this?

BECCA

Well Jesus, Iz, you tell this story like you’re an innocent bystander. You say you don’t know who this woman was—

IZZY

I didn’t!

BECCA

You were having sex with her boyfriend!

IZZY

That is so beside the point.

BECCA

It is?

IZZY

It was over between them for a long time. They were just living together because of the rent situation. She didn’t care what he did.

BECCA

Then why did she accost you in a crowded bar?

IZZY

Because she’s a lunatic!

(beat)
IZZY

And Auggie told her I was pregnant.

BECCA

(beat)
Why would he...?

(No response. The question just hangs there for a few beats. Becca is not thrilled.)

BECCA

Oh my god, Izzy.

IZZY

I know, right?

BECCA

You are not.

(izzy just shrugs. Whadaya gonna do?)

BECCA

Oh my god.

IZZY

He’s a really good guy, Bec. You’re gonna like him. He’s a musician.

BECCA

(oozing irony)
That’s terrific.

IZZY

No, not like you think. He gets work. He’s a working musician.

BECCA

Is that why you’re here? To tell me you’re pregnant?

IZZY

Pretty much.

BECCA

I knew something was up. You’re not one to pop by on a Saturday afternoon.

IZZY

I pop by.
How long have you known?

IZZY

A few weeks.

BECCA

And you’re just telling me now?

IZZY

Well Jesus, Bec…

BECCA

What? You didn’t wanna tell me?

IZZY

No.

BECCA

Why not?

IZZY

Why do you think?

(beat)

God, everything’s so fucked up.

BECCA

Does Mom know?

IZZY

Yeah.

BECCA

You told Mom before me?

IZZY

I had to.

BECCA

Oh my God, Izzy.

IZZY

Stop saying that.

IZZY

What are you gonna do?

BECCA
IZZY
Well I'm gonna keep it, if that's what you're asking.
(beat)
Auggie wants to too. We're excited about it. This is exactly the kind of thing that gives
a person clarity.

BECCA

(beat)
Izzy...

IZZY
Look, I'm sure this is really hard for you, for a bunch of reasons. But can I just say...? I
don't need any advice right now. Or any lectures or whatever it is you're composing inside
your head at the moment. I just need you to pretend to be happy for me. Okay? Even if
you don't feel that right now. I'd like you to pretend that you do. Alright?

BECCA
(after a pause)
Well...of course I'm happy for you. I was just taken aback. If you think a baby is
gonna...fulfill you, or give you clarity or whatever, then, obviously it's wonderful thing. I
am happy for you. I don't need to pretend. Jesus, Izzy, gimme some credit.

(Izzy hugs her sister.)

IZZY
Thank you.

(Silence. Becca looks to the stacks of folded kids' clothes.)

BECCA
Well I should probably hold off on this then.

What do you mean?

IZZY

BECCA
I'm washing all these clothes to give to Goodwill, I might as well save them for you. In
case you have a boy. No sense in my giving these away.

(Izzy looks from Becca to the clothes. Piles of tiny pants and shirts
and balled up socks. They're all clothes a three year old might
wear. Izzy looks uneasy. Becca notices.)

IZZY
I don't know Bec, they're in baby clothes for so long, it'd be a few years before he could
even fit into this stuff.
BECCA
It comes up very quickly. You wouldn’t even believe it.

IZZY

Plus we don’t have a lot of room to—

BECCA
That’s okay. I’ll keep them here. In the basement. You’ll be happy I saved them.

IZZY

But what if it’s a girl?

BECCA
Then I’ll bring them down to Goodwill. What’s the big deal? You’re gonna thank me. A couple years worth of free clothes here. Think of the money you’re gonna save.

IZZY

It’s not about the money.

BECCA
Well it *should* be. You need to start thinking about stuff like that, Iz. Especially if the dad’s a musician. It costs a lot to raise a child.

IZZY

It’d be weird, that’s all. If it’s a boy. To see him running around in Danny’s clothes.

(beat)
I would feel weird. You would too, I think.

(beat)
I’m sorry.

BECCA
No, I’m sorry. Of course it’d be weird. I don’t know what I was—

IZZY

It was a nice offer. I just—

BECCA
You’ll get a lot of clothes anyway, Christmas and birthdays. You won’t have to worry about that.

IZZY

No I know but—

BECCA
It would be one thing if they were hand-me-downs but—
Exactly.

(Pause.)

It's probably a girl anyway.

You think?

I'm definitely getting a girl vibe. I'm a little psychic about this stuff.

Oh yeah?

Remember I said Debbie was having a girl.

You did.

And Karen?

Karen too, I remember.

I think there's a girl in there.

I hope there is. That's what I want. I mean, either way, so long as it's healthy obviously, but if I had to pick, I hope it's a girl.

Me too.

(pause)

What'd Mom say?

She was happy.
BECCA
(beat)
Really?

IZZY
I know. I thought she'd lay into me but...

BECCA
Huh.

IZZY
(pause)
Thanks for the crème caramel.

BECCA
Sure.

IZZY
(beat)
I'm sorry, Bec. If this is hard. I know the timing really sucks.

BECCA
Hey. What can ya do?
(beat)
I'm glad you told me.
(beat)
And I'm really happy for you.

(Lights fade on them.)
SCENE TWO

(Becca and Howie’s livingroom, later that Saturday night. Dessert has moved in here. They’re finishing up their crème caramels, chatting.)

BECCA

HOWIE
You said she wasn’t drinking.

BECCA
No, she said. But you know Izzy. Plus the place was probably clogged with cigarette smoke.

HOWIE
Not anymore. Clean Indoor Air Act.

BECCA
She was in Yonkers. You think they enforce that in Yonkers?

HOWIE
I wouldn’t worry about it. If the babies in France turn out okay, I’m sure this one’ll be fine too.

BECCA
You think this is funny, Howie?

HOWIE
Of course not. But you need to relax about it. Izzy could be right.

About what?

BECCA
The baby getting her on track. It can wake a person up. It did us.

HOWIE
She was bragging about a bar fight.

BECCA
It wasn’t a bar fight.

HOWIE
They were in a bar! Fighting!
HOWIE
Izzy hit someone, she didn’t get into a fight. Blows were never exchanged.

BECCA
What is your point? It’s okay for a pregnant woman to be punching people?

HOWIE
Well so long as they don’t punch her back, it’s probably all right.

BECCA
What are you--? Why are you defending her?

HOWIE
I’m not. I just think it’s silly to get worked up about it.

BECCA
I’m not worked up. I’m just saying.

HOWIE
You’re right, it’s a mess, but what can we do? Maybe it’ll be fine. Izzy’s not a moron.

(off her look)
Okay, she acts like one sometimes but... A baby can be good for a person.

BECCA
I know that, Howie.

HOWIE
Alright then.

(beat)
This was good. The crème caramel.

BECCA
Thank you. Izzy tried to eat one upside down.

(Becca clears the crème caramel dishes. She brings them into the kitchen.)

HOWIE
You want more wine?

BECCA
No, I’ve had two already.

HOWIE
Half a glass, I wanna empty this bottle.

(he empties the rest into her glass)
Mom’s thrilled by the way.

She called?

Izzy must’ve told her I knew.

And how was that?

What, two hours on the phone with Mom?

(Howie lowers the lights in the room.)

What are you doing?

My eyes are sore, staring at that computer all day.

(Becca settles onto the couch with her wine.)

You think this means she wants baby stuff? For her birthday? Maternity clothes or something?

(joins her on the couch)
No, wait for the baby shower. Just get whatever you were gonna get her.

Good, because I was gonna buy her a bathroom set.

A what?

A bathroom set. Shower curtain, bath mat...a little skirt for the sink. They sell them as sets.

This is for Izzy’s birthday?
BECCA
The last time I was over there, you should’ve seen her bathroom. It looked like a frat boy decorated.

Huh.

HOWIE

BECCA
What?

HOWIE
It just seems like a funny gift. A bath mat.

BECCA
It’s the whole set, Howie.

HOWIE
No, I know. Still.

BECCA
I thought it’d be nice.

HOWIE
It is nice. But maybe she’d rather have perfume or something.

BECCA
Izzy doesn’t wear perfume.

HOWIE
No, I know, but—

BECCA
I was trying to be practical.

HOWIE
Okay.

BECCA
It’s a good gift. I’d like it if someone gave it to me.

HOWIE
I’ll make note of that for Christmas.

BECCA
You think it’s dumb.
H O W I E

No, get her the sink-skirt, the set-thingy whatever.

B E C C A

Bathroom set.

H O W I E

Get her that if you think she'll like it.

B E C C A

I'm gonna.

H O W I E

Great. She'll love it.

B E C C A

You should've just said that to begin with.

H O W I E

Yeah, I know. Now.

(Howie looks at her and smiles. She smiles back. A moment passes between them.)

B E C C A

How was squash?

H O W I E

Good. I lost but it was good.

B E C C A

How's Rick?

H O W I E

Rick's fine.

B E C C A

And Debbie?

H O W I E

Debbie wasn't there.

B E C C A

I know, but did Rick mention her?
HOWIE
Not really. I guess she took the kids to her mother's this weekend.

BECCA
Rick didn't wanna go?

HOWIE
He has work.

BECCA
How are the kids?

HOWIE
Fine, I guess. He said that Robbie's doing tee-ball now, and Emily has mastered the plié.

(beat)
Anything else?

BECCA
No, that's it.

HOWIE
You can call her, you know. You can call Debbie and ask her these questions yourself.

BECCA
I don't wanna call her. She should call me.

HOWIE
Okay.

BECCA
Why can't she call me?

HOWIE
I don't know.

BECCA
No?

HOWIE
She's uncomfortable, Bec.

BECCA
Is that what Rick said?
HOWIE
Rick didn’t say anything. But obviously if she hasn’t called you it’s because she doesn’t know what to say.

BECCA
How about “Hey Becca, how you doing? Haven’t seen you in awhile.”

HOWIE
If you’re pissed, you should call her and tell her.

BECCA
No, Howie, it’s her job to call me.

HOWIE
Okay.

BECCA
I would’ve been there for her if god forbid something had ever happened to Robbie or Em. I wouldn’t have vanished the way she did.

HOWIE
People get weird, you know that. It’s probably hard for her.

BECCA
Hard for her?

HOWIE
I’m just saying. Look at my brother. Spent the whole funeral talking about the Mets. Obviously he couldn’t deal. He’d talk about anything but Danny. And that’s my brother.

BECCA
Yeah well, your brother’s an asshole.
(beat)
I should drop her a note.

HOWIE
Maybe you should.

BECCA
“Dear Debbie – just so’s ya know, accidents aren’t contagious.”

HOWIE
Okay, let it go.
Let what go?

HOWIE

Whatever’s making you tense. You should try to relax a little.

BECCA

I am relaxed.

HOWIE

We’ll see.

(Howie grabs a remote and clicks on the stereo. Al Green’s “Livin’ for You” plays quietly.)

BECCA

Oh jeez, Howie.

HOWIE


BECCA

For what?

HOWIE

Just face that way.

(She does. He moves in to massage her shoulders.)

BECCA

Thank you.

HOWIE

(masses her)

See? You’re shoulders are all knotted up.

BECCA

Yeah, well...

HOWIE

Forget about Debbie and Izzy and whoever else is bugging you.

BECCA

She has no idea, by the way. Izzy. No idea what she’s getting into.

HOWIE

(massaging her)

I know.
BECCA
Do you remember how exhausted we were? The feedings at all hours. The sleep-deprivation. Do you think Izzy's ready for that? The utter torture of it all?

HOWIE
Enough about Izzy.

BECCA
I'm sorry. But she's a sleeper. Izzy needs sleep more than other people. You talk about wake-up call or whatever you were saying, well she's gonna get one, big time.

(Howie continues to massage her. Becca seems to warm up to it.)

HOWIE
Maybe we should go somewhere. A cruise or something. You need to be pampered.

BECCA
You've taken off enough time as it is.

HOWIE
I'll talk to Alan. What's another week? I can handle most of my accounts from out of town anyway.

(kisses her neck)

What are you doing?

BECCA
I'm kissing your neck.

HOWIE
Why?

BECCA
I'm trying to relax you.

HOWIE
Uh-huh.

BECCA
Something wrong with that?

HOWIE
I see what this is. Dimming the lights.
What? I can’t massage my wife?

You don’t have eye-strain.

So?

“Oh I’ve been staring at that computer all day.”

Well I do stare at that computer all day.

You’re trying to seduce me.

Am I?

Plying me with liquor.

It worked in college.

Alright, Romeo.

What?

(pushes him away playfully)

Enough.

Why?

You’re being very naughty.

Naughty’s good. You used to like naughty.
(She gets up from the couch.)

Where are you going? HOWIE

I still have stuff to bag up. BECCA

Are you kidding? HOWIE

No, there are piles of clothes up there, Howie. BECCA

Well if they've waited this long. HOWIE

I wanted to get it done. BECCA

We'll get it done tomorrow. I'll pitch in. HOWIE

Yeah, right. BECCA

I will. HOWIE

Uh-huh. BECCA

Becca... HOWIE

I'm sorry. I'm feeling kinda antsy tonight. You're right, the Izzy stuff got under my skin. BECCA

Right. HOWIE

(He clicks the music off. Pause.)
So, what, you’re gonna pout now?

Well Jesus, Bec...

Jesus, what?

It’s been almost eight months.

(beat)
But who’s keeping track?

I am. I’m keeping track.

(beat)
I’m sorry.

(off her look)
What? That makes me perverted? Wanting to have sex with my wife?

I didn’t say that.

Well you give me these looks like I should feel guilty.

Funny, I’ve been getting the same looks from you.

When have I ever made you feel guilty?

I’m just not ready yet, Howie. I’m sorry if you think that’s abnormal.

I don’t.

Then what’s the problem here?

We’re never gonna be ready.
If this is just about the sex, Howie—

BECCA

It's not *just* about the sex.

HOWIE

No, then what else is this?

BECCA

It's also... about... I don't know. Maybe it *is* just the sex. I don't even know honestly. But we're not gonna suddenly wake up one day and be back where we were.

HOWIE

I know that.

BECCA

So we need to... head in that direction at least. Which will feel strange for a while—

HOWIE

But you wanna have sex.

BECCA

Don't say it like that.

HOWIE

Why not?

BECCA

Because it sounds crass and selfish.

HOWIE

Well considering everything else - the fact that Danny died for example - don't you think maybe it *is* a little crass and selfish? For you to be roping me into sex when I don't wanna have it?

BECCA

I wasn't roping you into anything. Jesus.

HOWIE

No? Al Green isn't roping?

BECCA

No.

HOWIE
BECCA

Al Green.

HOWIE

(beat)
I thought it was nice. That’s all. I was trying to make things nice.

BECCA

Well...you can’t. I’m sorry. But things aren’t “nice” anymore.

(Silence.)

HOWIE

(after a pause)
I think you should see someone.

(beat)
I know you’re not one for therapists, but I think you should. We could go together if that’d help. Or maybe you could try the group again.

BECCA

No.

HOWIE

There are a couple new parents now. It’s changed the dynamic a little.

BECCA

We’ve had this discussion, Howie.

HOWIE

Fine, a psychiatrist then. Someone to talk to.

(pause)
No? Yes? Do you have an opinion?

BECCA

I think we should sell the house.

HOWIE

(beat)
Come on, Becca, what?

BECCA

I’ve been thinking about it for a while, and since we’re on the topic—

HOWIE

How were we on the topic?
I think it'd help if we moved.

I don't wanna move.

He's everywhere, Howie. Everywhere I look, I still see Danny.

We love this house.

I can't move without- I mean, Jesus, look at this.
(grabs a toy from the shelf)

Everywhere. Do you even know?
(grabs a kid's book from a stack of magazines)
Here: "Runaway Bunny" for godsake. The puzzles. The smudgy fingerprints on the door-jambs.

I like seeing his fingerprints.

Because you don't have to sit and stare at them day in and day out.
You get to escape. You get to go to work.

Well, if you want to go back to work, Becca –

I don't.

—you can call up Sotheby's.

No I can't. That's not who I am anymore. I left all that to be a mom.

Well...

Well, what? Well that didn't work out?
I didn’t say that.

Then what?

If that’s the issue—

If what’s the issue?

—then…maybe we should try again.

(beat)
Oh for godsakes, Howie...

What? I’m only saying.

Is that…Is that what this was?

No. No, of course not. It just…it might be something to talk about at some point.

I…I can’t. I’m sorry. I can’t have that talk.

Okay.

(They are silent, then Becca heads for the stairs. She stops and turns back.)

Look maybe…maybe we can consider it at least? The house?

(beat)
Yeah. we’ll consider it.

Thank you.
(Becca heads for the stairs with the monkey under her arm. Howie watches her go. He sits alone for a couple beats. Then he gets up and goes to the TV cabinet. He rummages around quietly, looking through videotapes. He finally finds what he’s looking for.

He glances up the stairs, then pops the video in. He shuts off the lights, then sits and watches, the light from the TV flickering on his face. He’s watched this tape dozens of times. He doesn’t tear up. He just watches it, occasionally smiling at something he hears. The volume is low, but we can hear some of it.)

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Now can I?

**VOICE OF HOWIE**

Let me just get the dog. Taz, lay down.

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Ready?

**VOICE OF HOWIE**

Hold on. Taz, down!

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Lay down, Taz!

**VOICE OF HOWIE**

I got him. Quick now, before he gets up. Come-on-come on...

(Danny comes running)

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Aaand...

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Geronimo!

**VOICE OF HOWIE**

Good job!

**VOICE OF DANNY**

Did you see me, Daddy?

**VOICE OF HOWIE**

I did.

**VOICE OF DANNY**

No you didn’t. I’m invisible.
Ohhh.

VOICE OF HOWIE

I have magic.

VOICE OF DANNY

Oh, I didn’t realize.

VOICE OF HOWIE

Do you wanna be invisible?

VOICE OF DANNY

Okay.

VOICE OF DANNY

Pfffttttt.

VOICE OF HOWIE

Is that it? Am I invisible?

VOICE OF DANNY

Yeah. I made you invisible.

VOICE OF HOWIE

Did you see me?

VOICE OF DANNY

Yeah.

VOICE OF DANNY

No, you didn’t. I’m invisible.

VOICE OF HOWIE

But I can still see you because I have magic.

VOICE OF DANNY

Ohhh.

VOICE OF HOWIE

Did you forget that part?

VOICE OF DANNY

Yeah, I forgot that part.

VOICE OF HOWIE

(The lights fade on Howie, watching the video.)
SCENE THREE

(Kitchea. A week later. Evening. Becca, Izzy and Nat, their mom, are gathered around a birthday cake singing Happy Birthday. Nat has a glass of wine.)

NAT AND BECCA

(end of song)
Happy Birthday to you...

NAT

Blow 'em out.

(Izzy blows out the candles. Ad lib yays and clapping.)

BECCA

What did you wish for?

IZZY

I can't say.
(re: the cake)
It looks good, Becca.

NAT

Where'd you buy it?

BECCA

I didn't. I made it.

NAT

Of course you did. What a stupid question. Of course you made it.

BECCA

(catches Izzy scooping off the frosting)

Izzy--

IZZY

It's my cake.

BECCA

Well let me cut it first. Watch your fingers.

(Becca cuts slices of cake and puts them on plates over the following. Howie enters with a couple papers.)
You didn’t wait for me?

Howie

You said not to.

Becca

I didn’t mean it though.

Howie

I tried to stop them, Howie.

Nat

I wanted cake.

Izzy

Rude.

Howie

I didn’t know how long you were gonna be up there. Once you get on that computer...

Becca

Did you get it?

Nat

Yeah right here.

Howie

(Howie hands Nat the papers. She looks them over.)

Let me get my glasses

Nat

Did you have to?

Becca

She wanted me to look it up.

Howie

(Becca good natured)

Any excuse to escape for ten minutes.

Becca

(Re: Nat)

Well do you blame him?
(looks up from papers)

What is this?

Mom, cake!

It's a timeline, starting with the lobotomy. The plane crashes. It's the whole list. It's long.

Well still, that doesn't make it a curse.

Nobody said it was a curse, mother.

Everybody says. That was my point. Everybody says it's a curse.

Well nobody in this room.

You know what it is, really? Hype. Perpetuating the myth. That whole American royalty crap.

It's good cake.

But the Kennedy's aren't cursed. They're just really unlucky. And kinda stupid, a lot of them.

Cut me a piece, wouldja Bee?

Too much money, that's their curse. And too much time on their hands. If they had to go to work, like normal people, then most of those Kennedy's would still be alive.

Thanks, Howie. I'm so glad you went and got that timeline.
NAT

Maybe if they had stayed home and watched television once in awhile, instead of zipping off to Vail, then none of that stuff would’ve happened.

BECCA

You have the most interesting theories.

NAT

Don’t patronize me.

BECCA

I’m not. I was being serious.

IZZY

(re: cake)
This is so good.

NAT

Normal people don’t fly around in their own planes for example. I don’t know anyone with his own plane, do you? Do you, Howie?

HOWIE

Well, yeah I know one guy but—

NAT

Well, you know someone, but that’s not the norm. An average person doesn’t own an airplane.

HOWIE

No, you’re right, he’s not average.

BECCA

He’s a member of the jet-set.

NAT

Exactly! That’s what that word means! The jet set. Jet-setters! Buzzing around in little Pipers or whatever, crashing off the coast of Massachusetts. All I’m saying is regular people don’t have ten relatives die in separate plane wrecks.

HOWIE

It’s not ten.

NAT

Just about, if you count Teddy who survived his.

IZZY

Well I think it’s sad.
BECCA

Teddy surviving?

(Izzy and Becca chuckle.)

NAT

Well of course it’s sad. All those good-looking people falling out of the sky like that. It’s a frickin’ waste. But it isn’t a curse. It’s just rich people acting stupid.

BECCA

I thought you liked JFK?

NAT

I’m not talking about JFK. I’m not talking about the ones who were assassinated. Although getting shot by a crazed gunman is kinda of a rich-guy problem too, isn’t it?

Well, not necessarily.

HOWIE

NAT

It doesn’t matter, that’s not who I’m talking about. I’m talking about the unqualified pilots. I’m talking about playing football. And skiing. At the same time!

IZZY

That was stupid.

NAT

“Hey, look at me! I’m a Kennedy! I can catch a ball while flying down a mountain on sticks!” Of course he died. Idiot. And I know that’s a terrible thing to say, but this was a grown man acting like a moron. The arrogance of these people.

HOWIE

The Greeks would call that hubris. “Arrogance in the face of...” It might not technically be hubris actually.

NAT

If hubris means reckless, then that’s right.

HOWIE

No, it doesn’t mean reckless. It’s more about the gods.

NAT

That’s probably the right word then. They’re very Catholic, those Kennedys.
NOW I'M CURIOUS, I'M GONNA LOOK IT UP.
GOES TO FIND DICTIONARY

NOW I'M CURIOUS, I'M GONNA LOOK IT UP.
GOES TO FIND DICTIONARY

NOW I'M CURIOUS, I'M GONNA LOOK IT UP.
GOES TO FIND DICTIONARY

RE: WINE BOTTLE
FILL ME UP, WOULDJA BECCA?

(Debea reluctantly refills her glass.)

ISN'T THIS NICE? SITTING AROUND TALKING POLITICS? I NEVER DO THIS. IT'S A NICE CHANGE.

(Debea turns to pour Izzy some wine. Izzy puts her hand over the glass.)

IT'S JUICE. I'M DRINKING JUICE.

RIGHT, SORRY.

THAT'S THE THIRD TIME YOU'VE DONE THAT.

I KNOW, I'M SORRY.

ARE YOU TESTING ME, BECCA?

NO, I'M NOT TESTING YOU. IT'S JUST HABIT. I'M SORRY.

(WITH DICTIONARY)
HERE IT IS: "HUBRIS, AN INSOLENT PRIDE OR PRESUMPTION."

THAT'S THEM ALRIGHT. INSOLENT PRIDE.

AND NUMBER TWO IS "IN GREEK TRAGEDY, ARROGANCE TOWARD THE GODS LEADING TO NEMESIS."

IT'S LIKE COMING TO SCHOOL WHEN WE VISIT YOU TWO.
Is that right?          HOWIE

Izzy hated school.       BECCA

No, I didn’t.            IZZY
(to Howie)
Don’t listen to her, Howie. I liked school. Just because I was lousy at it didn’t mean I hated it.

Sounds like you and squash, Howie. BECCA

(to Izzy)
She means the game, not the vegetable. HOWIE

I knew what she meant.    IZZY

You know who was cursed? Rose Kennedy. A hundred and four years old. Living through all that death, one after another. She’s the one I feel sorry for. NAT

(beat)
Anyone want more cake? BECCA

None for me. HOWIE

We should do gifts then. BECCA

Yay! Gifts! IZZY

I don’t know how I got on all that Kennedy stuff. What was I talking about before? NAT

Aristotle Onassis. HOWIE
NAT
Oh right, that makes sense. What was I saying about him?

IZZY
You were saying how he’d get really tipsy and never stop talking.

NAT

(laughs)
You bitch. I’m not tipsy. I’m sure I had a very interesting point to make.

(Becca hands a big present to Izy.)

BECCA
This is from us.

IZZY
Wow. Thank you.

HOWIE
Happy Birthday.

IZZY
It’s wrapped so nice. It’s a shame to rip it open.

NAT
Becca always makes such nice bows. I don’t have the patience. My fingers are too fat.

(Izzy unwraps a very tasteful bathroom set.)

Ohh, look at that.

BECCA
It’s more of a practical gift, but I thought you could use it.

HOWIE
It’s a bathroom set.

IZZY
I see. It’s nice.

NAT
Look at the colors. So pretty.

BECCA
The gift receipt’s inside if you want a different style.
NAT
Why would she want a different style? It’s beautiful. Isn’t it beautiful?

IZZY
Is this your way of telling me you don’t like my Three Stooges shower curtain?

BECCA
Of course not.

IZZY
Okay.

BECCA
This is for when you want a change, you’ll have it.

NAT
That Three Stooges thing is kinda goofy, honey.

IZZY
The word is kitschy, Mother.

NAT
Look up kitschy, wouldja Howie? See if it says crap?

BECCA
I didn’t know what to get you.

IZZY
This is great. Seriously, thank you.

BECCA
I like your shower curtain.

IZZY
I know, I was kidding.

NAT
And since you’re moving in with Auggie—

IZZY
That’s right. His bathroom needs a little froothing up. Thank you.

BECCA
You’re welcome.
Thanks, Howie.

DON'T THANK ME. BECCA PICKED IT OUT.

Okay, now me.

(Nat hands Izzy an envelope.)

OO, AN ENVELOPE. SMELLS LIKE CASH.

YOU WISH. YOU THINK I'M GONNA TRUST YOU WITH CASH? IT'S A GIFT CERTIFICATE.

(Opens it)

TO A PEA IN THE POD!

THEY HAVE VERY NICE MATERNITY CLOTHES. NOTHING SCHLUBBY.

THANK YOU, MOMMY.

(HUGS HER)

I THOUGHT WE WEREN'T DOING BABY STUFF.

WHO SAID THAT?

FOR THE BIRTHDAY. I THOUGHT WE'D WAIT UNTIL THE SHOWER.

I'LL GET HER SOMETHING ELSE FOR THE SHOWER. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

NOTHING, I JUST WOULD'VE GOTTEN HER SOMETHING DIFFERENT HAD I KNOWN WE WERE DOING BABY STUFF.

THAT'S MY FAULT. I TOLD HER TO—
NAT
It’s not baby stuff, it’s mommy stuff. She’s gonna need clothes.

BECCA
I know, that’s why—

IZZY
This is perfect, Bec. I needed a bathroom set.

BECCA
I know you did, but you need baby stuff more.

HOWIE
So take it back. We can take it back.

IZZY
Don’t tell her that.

BECCA
No, he’s right. I should.

IZZY
Becca, please.

BECCA
(tries to take the bathroom set back)
I’ll get you a basket of Mustela lotions instead. They prevent stretch marks.

IZZY
Becca, let go.
(she does)
I like the bathroom set. You can get the lotions another time.

BECCA
Okay.

IZZY
Thank you.

NAT
It’s a nice set. I like the colors.

HOWIE
More juice, Izzy?
IZZY

No, I'm good.

NAT
So can anyone use those stretch-mark lotions, or just pregnant ladies?

(They sit in silence for a couple beats.)

HOWIE

Hey, how's Taz.

NAT
He's good. The vet says he needs to lose some weight though.

Really?

NAT
Yeah, he eats like a trooper.

HOWIE

What are you feeding him?

NAT
Just regular dog food. Whatever's on sale.

HOWIE

Oh. Because I wrote down the name of what he usually eats on that printout I gave you. Do you still have that printout?

NAT
Yeah.

HOWIE

We were feeding him Science Diet. They have this special low-fat mix.

NAT
Oh that stuff's so expensive though. He likes what I've been giving him.

HOWIE

Except it makes him fat.

BECCA

Howie—
He's not fat. He's just a little chubbier.

IZZY

I think the weight suits him.

NAT

Maybe he eats too much because he feels punished. I think he misses you.

IZZY

Remember Pickles? Now she was fat.

(to Howie)

That was our dog growing up. She was this enormous...I don't even know what.

(to Becca)

What breed was Pickles?

BECCA

She was a mutt.

IZZY

No, I know, but she was mostly Collie I think, with some German shepherd mixed in. Remember how fat she was?

HOWIE

Probably because of what you fed her.

IZZY

Well, yeah, probably.

NAT

Now I remember what it was. What I was gonna say about Aristotle Onassis.

IZZY

Mom, do you have to—?

NAT

It was about his son, the one who died in the plane crash.

BECCA

I'm gonna wrap up the cake for you.

(she does)

NAT

I know, another rich kid in a plane crash, but this was my whole point. You should've stopped me from going off on that Kennedy tangent, because my point was about Onassis, and how when his son died, he was so distraught by the senselessness of it all,
NAT
that he put up this big reward to anyone who could prove that someone had sabotaged the plane. Have you read this, Howie?

HOWIE
I'm not sure.

NAT
He just couldn't accept that what had happened was an accident, so he offered all this money to anyone who could give him a reasonable explanation. He needed someone to blame.

BECCA
(to herself)
Aw, Jesus. Here we go.

NAT
He needed a reason for losing his son. But it didn't come of course. And it killed him. The grief did. He only lasted a couple years after that. Because he never came to terms with it. There was nothing to give him comfort, and so he died. You see? He would rather his son have been killed by some kind of secret assassination than by bad luck. It's like the Kennedy curse, isn't it? People want things to make sense.

BECCA
We don't think Danny died because of a curse, Mom.

NAT
Of course not.

BECCA
Or because someone sabotaged us, or was out to get us. We know there's no sensible explanation.

NAT
I know you do.

BECCA
Then why are you telling this story?

NAT
I'm just talking. I can't talk?

BECCA
You never just talk. It sounds like you're just talking but it's always so much more, isn't it?
I don’t even know what that means.

IZZY

Hey here’s an idea, let’s change the subject.

BECCA

(to Howie)

Didn’t I say no wine?

HOWIE

She brought it herself, what was I supposed to do?

NAT

What’d I say?

IZZY

Mom, you promised.

NAT

Promised what? It’s not my fault she missed my point.

BECCA

What point? That Aristotle Onassis died of grief because he couldn’t find someone to blame?

NAT

I’m not talking about blame, I’m talking about comfort.

BECCA

Ohhh, comfort. Well then.

IZZY

You guys, this is supposed to be my party.

NAT

Where are you getting it?

BECCA

Comfort?

NAT

Yes, if I may ask.
I'm not.

Well...

Well, what?

Well I think you should.

Okay. I'll get right on that then. See what I can dig up on Ebay.

Don't get flip, Becca. I'm just trying to talk to you.

I'm gonna clean up, because I think we're just about done here.

Howie says you won't go to the support group.

(beat)
Oh. Howie said.

She was asking how you were doing.

Why didn't you just say fine? You know she's gonna run with whatever you give her.

I always thought talk was healthy. Isn't that what all the books say, Howie?

So this is what exactly, an intervention?

If it is, then I'm really pissed.

It's not an intervention.
We’re just having a discussion.

IZZY
You couldn’t wait until tomorrow? It had to happen on my birthday?

HOWIE
Izzy, please.

NAT
I remember when Arthur died, I found the support group very helpful.

BECCA
Well that’s you. It isn’t me. And Arthur isn’t Danny.

NAT
I’m not saying he is. I’m just saying it was helpful.

She doesn’t like the people.

HOWIE
Howie—

BECCA
What? You don’t. I was just explaining.

NAT
What’s wrong with the people? They’ve lost children too. They understand what you’re going through.

BECCA
No they don’t. They understand what they’re going through.

Still, you must have things in common.

BECCA
You would think so, mother, but actually we don’t. Other than that dead kid thing, of course.

NAT
It can’t hurt to give it another try, Becca.

BECCA
Yes it can. You haven’t met that room full of God-freaks.
They’re not God-freaks.

HOWIE

BECCA

Most of them are, Howie. That’s all they talk about. God’s plan. “At least he’s in a better place.”

HOWIE

They’re not all like that.

BECCA

My favorite is “God needed another angel.” What is that? He’s God! Why can’t he just make another angel? These people...

NAT

Maybe God gives them comfort.

BECCA

Well it pisses me off. Trying to find some ridiculous meaning in— “Hey look, I stepped in shit, it must be part of God’s plan.”

NAT

Now you’re just being silly.

I’m being silly.

BECCA

NAT

Faith helps people cope. What’s wrong with that? I know when your brother died—

Again with Arthur.

BECCA

NAT

If I didn’t have God—

BECCA

See? That’s exactly why I don’t go. “If I didn’t have God.”

HOWIE

They’re not all like that, Bec. Kevin’s not. Gabby’s not like that.

NAT

It sounds like you’re jealous of their comfort.
BECCA
Yes, I am. Of course I am. How nice they all have something that makes them feel a little better. Like I don’t feel bad enough, I’ve gotta go and have that rubbed in my face?

HOWIE
Nobody’s rub—You’re not being fair.

NAT
I don’t know why you don’t believe in God anyway.

(to Howie)
BECCA
You see? Now look where we’re going!

NAT
I brought you to church every Sunday. You used to believe in God.

BECCA
Well I don’t anymore.

NAT
Well you should. What if you’re wrong? What if there is a God?

BECCA
Then I would say he’s a sadistic prick.

IZZY
Whoa, hey now...

NAT
Becca, please.

HOWIE
Aw, geez...

BECCA
“Worship me and I’ll treat you like shit.” No wonder you like him, he sounds just like Dad.

NAT
You don’t need to strike out at me, Becca. I know you’re still in a bad place, but I’m trying to help you.

BECCA
Right.

NAT
I wish someone had sat me down when Arthur died. I wish someone gave me a little advice.
BECCA
You know what I wish? I wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur. Danny was a four year old boy who chased his dog into the street. Arthur was a thirty year old heroin addict who hung himself. Frankly I resent how you keep lumping them together.

(Silence.)

NAT
He was still my son.

BECCA
And I don’t recall anyone giving you instructions on how best to grieve for him.

(beat)
I think it’s time for me to go to bed now.

(turns to her sister)
Izzy, I hope you enjoy the bathroom set.

IZZY
I’m gonna.

(Becca heads upstairs. Izzy continues loading the dishes into the dish washer. Nat is still shaken by Becca’s comment.)

NAT
I was never that mean to anyone. When Arthur died, I was just as upset as she was, but I never took it out on other people like that.

IZZY
Huh. What about Mrs. Bailey?

NAT
Nobody’s talking about Mrs. Bailey. Izzy, please.

HOWIE
You know what this was about?

IZZY
(re: Nat)
Yeah, her and her mouth.

HOWIE
I knew the party was a bad idea.

IZZY
(to Nat)
Didn’t I tell you not to get into anything with her?
HOWIE
We got a letter today. From Jason Willette.

NAT
(beat)
What, why? What'd he want?

HOWIE
She said it didn't bother her but...
(re: the gathering)
Sorry Iz.

IZZY
No, hey, this was great. Let's do it again next year.

(Crossfade to...)
SCENE FOUR

(Lights up on Becca in Danny’s room. She sits on Danny’s bed reading the letter from Jason.)

(Lights up as Jason Willette enters.)

JASON

Dear Mr. And Mrs. Corbett, I wanted to send you my condolences on the death of your son Danny. I know it’s been eight months since the accident, but I’m sure it’s probably still hard for you to be reminded of that day. I think about what happened a lot, as I’m sure you do too. I’ve been having some troubles at home, and at school, and a couple people here thought it might be a good idea to write to you. I’m sorry if this letter upsets you. That’s obviously not my intention.

Even though I never knew Danny, I did read that article in the town paper, and was happy to learn a little bit about him. He sounds like he was a great kid. I’m sure you miss him a lot, as you said in the article. I especially liked the part where Mr. Corbett talked about Danny’s robots, because when I was his age I was a big fan of robots too. In fact I still am, in some ways (ha-ha.)

I’ve enclosed a short story that’s going to be printed in my high school lit magazine. I don’t know if you like science fiction or not, but I’ve enclosed it anyway. I was hoping to dedicate the story to Danny’s memory. There aren’t any robots in this one, but I think it would be the kind of story he’d like if he were my age. Would it bother you if I dedicated the story? If so, please let me know. The printer deadline for the magazine is March 31st. If you tell me before then, I can have them take it off.

I know this probably doesn’t make things any better, but I wanted you to know how terrible I feel about Danny. I know that no matter how hard this has been on me, I can never understand the depth of your loss. My mom has only told me that about a hundred times (ha-ha.) I of course wanted to say how sorry I am that things happened the way they did, and that I wish I had driven down a different block that day. I’m sure you do too.

Anyway, that’s it for now. If you’d like to let me know about the dedication, you can email me at the address above. If I don’t hear from you, I’ll assume it’s okay. Sincerely,

Jason Willette

(beat)

P.S. Would it be possible to meet you in person at some point?

(Jason exits. Becca picks up the story and reads it.

Meanwhile, the lights rise on Howie in the living room. It’s later that night. He clicks on the TV, then hits play on the VCR. We
hear a documentary on tornadoes playing. Howie is confused. Something isn’t right.

He gets up off the couch and ejects the tape. He examines the tape, panic starts to set in. He pops the tape back in and hits play again. More tornado documentary.)

What is this? Becca? Becca?
(hits fast forward)

(from upstairs)

What?

Becca?! Becca?!

(Coming down the stairs)

What?

What’d you do here?!

(Howie keeps pressing fast forward, but it’s all tornadoes. He’s beside himself.)

What’s the matter?

What is this?

What’s what?

The television. What is this?

(looks to TV)

It’s the Discovery Channel. The tornado program. You said you wanted to watch it. I recorded it for you. Why?
For chrissake!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

It's Danny's tape. You recorded over Danny's tape.

(Beat)

No, I didn't. *Pride and Prejudice* was on that tape. We were watching it last night.

I switched them.

WHAT?!

I watched Danny's tape later. After you went to bed.

Why didn't you take it out of the machine?

Why didn't you check to see what was in there?

I assumed it was the TV tape.

Jesus, Becca!

It was one of the baby videos?

No, it was the most recent, the long one. The park was on it, and Mexico--

How was I supposed to know you snuck down here?

—and Christmas.
I thought it was the TV tape.

BECCA

It wasn’t!

HOWIE

I know, Howie.

BECCA

So it’s gone. The whole thing.

HOWIE

I’m sorry.

BECCA

it’s the only copy, Becca!

HOWIE

Well, I didn’t do it on purpose.

BECCA

Are ya sure?

HOWIE

(beat)

What does that mean?

BECCA

(no response)

You think I recorded over Danny’s tape on purpose?

HOWIE

I don’t know.

BECCA

You don’t know?

HOWIE

I should’ve taken it out.

BECCA

Why would I deliberately record over it?

HOWIE

I don’t know.

BECCA

Why would I?!
I don’t know!
(Silence.)
You took the paintings off the fridge. Danny’s paintings.

To save them. I put them in plastic.

And shoved them in a box.

For safekeeping.

Okay.

I didn’t throw the paintings out.

I know you didn’t.

You think I didn’t want that tape?

I don’t—...Of course, you did. Obviously it wasn’t on purpose but—

What?

Maybe subconsciously.

Subconsciously. Is this what they’re telling you at group? How I’m doing things subconsciously?

You’re trying to get rid of him. I’m sorry, but that’s how it feels to me sometimes. Every day, it’s something else. It feels like you’re trying to get rid of any evidence he was ever here.
BECCA

(It’s as if she’s been slapped.)
I didn’t know that tape was in there.

HOWIE

I’m not talking about the tape. Not just the tape.

BECCA

And the paintings are downstairs. In a box. You can look at them whenever you want.

HOWIE

The clothes. His shoes.

BECCA

We don’t need all that stuff. Why would we keep—?

HOWIE

Your wanting to sell the house.

BECCA

We already talked about—

HOWIE

Taz. Sending Taz to your mother’s!

BECCA

There was a lot going on, Howie. We couldn’t deal with the dog.

HOWIE

I was fine with the dog. I was the one walking him.

BECCA

Well he got under foot.

HOWIE

And he was a reminder.

BECCA

Yes, he was a reminder. So what? I wanted one less reminder around here. That’s perfectly normal.

HOWIE

And since you never wanted the dog to begin with—

BECCA

Oh for godsakes—
Well if I hadn’t bought the dog—

And if I hadn’t run inside to get the phone, or if I had latched the gate—

I left the gate unlatched.

Well I didn’t check it. I’m not playing this game again, Howie. It was no one’s fault.

Not even the dog’s.

I know that.

Dogs chase squirrels. Boys chase dogs.

Are you telling me or yourself?

He loved that dog!

Of course he did.

And you got rid of him.

Right, like I got rid of the tape. I get it.

(losing it)
It’s not just the tape! I’m not talking about the tape, Becca! It’s Taz, and the paintings, and the clothes, and it’s everything! You have to stop erasing him! You have to stop it! You HAVE TO STOP!

(She takes him in. She seems more confused than affronted.)
BECCA
Do you really not know me, Howie? Do you really not know how utterly impossible that would be? To erase him? No matter how many things I give to charity, or how many art projects I box up, do you really think I don’t see him every second of every day? And okay, I’m trying to make things a little easier on myself by hiding some of the photos, and giving away the clothes, but that does not mean I’m trying to erase him. That tape was an accident. And believe me, I will beat myself up about it forever, I’m sure. Like everything else that I could’ve prevented but didn’t.

HOWIE
That’s not what I want, Bec. It’s not what I’m talking about.

BECCA
No? Because it feels like it is. It feels like I don’t feel bad enough for you. I’m not mourning enough for your taste.

HOWIE
Come on, that’s not—

BECCA
Or mourning in the right way. But let me just say, Howie, that I am mourning as much as you are. And my grief is just as real and awful as yours.

HOWIE
I know that.

BECCA
You’re not in a better place than I am, you’re just in a different place. And that sucks that we can’t be there for each other right now, but that’s just the way it is.

HOWIE
His stuff is all we have left. That’s all I’m saying. And every bit of it you get rid of—

BECCA
I understand that. You don’t wanna let go of it. I understand, Howie.

HOWIE
Do you? Do you?

(none)

This isn’t… Something has to change here. Because I can’t do this…like this. It’s too hard.

(beat)

It’s too hard.

(Neither speaks for awhile.)
HOWIE
And I want that dog back. Your mother's making him fat.
(beat)
I want the dog back.

BECCA
Why don't we wait until—

HOWIE
I don't want to. How much more do we have to lose?
(beat)
I miss the dog. I'm sorry, but I miss him. I want him back.

(They regard each other silently. The lights slowly fade.)

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO
SCENE ONE

(Two months have passed. It’s early May. Howie is in a suit, holding a clipboard with a sign-in sheet, waiting for people to pop by for an Open House. Izzy is in the kitchen. A car is pulling away.)

IZZY
They were weird, huh? The last couple? The way they kept opening everything? Cabinets, closets...

HOWIE
It’s an Open House.

IZZY
Still, it was kinda nervy. I’d never do one of these things. Strangers strolling through, looking under my beds.

HOWIE
That’s what you gotta do to sell a house.

IZZY
Well lucky for me I’ll never own a house then.
(comes out of the kitchen with a plate)
What is this, pie?

HOWIE
It’s a torte.

IZZY
Is it good?

HOWIE
Yeah, it’s good.

(Izzy grabs a fork and carries the plate into the living room. We see now that her pregnancy’s starting to show. She’s four and a half months along.)

IZZY
We done?

HOWIE
Fifteen minutes. We’re supposed to go ‘til four.
(Howie’s looking over the sign-in sheet.)
IZZY
How many'd ya get anyway?

HOWIE
Not many. No serious buyers. Maybe the German though. It's hard to tell.

IZZY
Is that what he was, German? I couldn't place the accent. I thought maybe Irish.

Irish?

HOWIE
I couldn't tell.

IZZY
We should probably get a broker. I think a lot of people are afraid of fisbos.

Afraida who?

HOWIE
Fisbo. For Sale By Owner. No middleman. I was trying to avoid the commission but we probably need one.

(re: sign-in sheet)
This was a wash I think. I thought we had a bite with that family – the little girl. Nothing though. Maybe I priced it too high. Or they were just browsing maybe.

IZZY
(eating)
You freaked them out, Howie.

HOWIE
(beat)
No, I didn't. What are you talking about?

IZZY
You should've cleaned out Danny's room. Made it look like a guest room or something. An office, or whatever.

Why?

HOWIE

IZZY
Because everyone that went in there was like "Oh, you have a son, how old is he?" Did you think people wouldn't ask that?
HOWIE
I didn’t think about it. I just thought it’d be good for them to see there was a nice room for a kid.

IZZY
But common sense, Howie. You’ve got these robot sheets on the bed, the conversation’s gonna come up. And so everyone asks, and then you tell them, and then there’s this weirdness in the air.

HOWIE
Only two people asked. That’s all.

IZZY
Well you ooged them out. If you had a kid, would you wanna move into a house where a boy just died? People believe in that stuff, you know. House karma, or whatever you wanna call it.

HOWIE
Well they’re stupid then.

IZZY
Yeah, they are. But if you wanna sell your house you gotta take that into consideration. I can’t believe I’m giving you business advice.

HOWIE
Is that what this is?

IZZY
I’m just saying, sometimes you gotta sort out what is and isn’t appropriate to say to people.

HOWIE
It isn’t appropriate to talk about my son?

IZZY
Uh-uh, you’re not pulling me into that conversation. You wanna tell total strangers all about Danny and how he died, it’s none of my business. God knows it’s something you enjoy doing, so you go ahead. But don’t be surprised if nobody wants to buy your house.

(finishes torte)
Good god, Becca has gotta stop baking. I’m gynormous.

(We hear the dog barking out in the yard. Howie looks outside.)

IZZY
Someone coming?
(re: Taz)
No, he’s just mad he’s still tied up.

IZZY
So, hey, let me ask you something...

HOWIE
Alright.

IZZY
Why is Becca so mad at me? Is it just because I’m pregnant or...

HOWIE
Becca’s not mad at you.

IZZY
Then why does she act so pissed at me sometimes?

HOWIE
I don’t know. You should ask her.

IZZY
I can’t.

HOWIE
Why not?

IZZY
Because that’ll only make her more pissed.

HOWIE
Yeah, probably, but –

IZZY
Is it because she blames me? A little bit maybe?

(pause)
Oh my god, Izzy...

IZZY
Because if I hadn’t called to bitch about Mom she wouldn’t have left Danny to run in to –

HOWIE
Ten months later and you’re asking me this?
IZZY
Well, I don’t know.

HOWIE

IZZY
Okay.

(beat)
So it’s just the baby then. The fact that I’m having a baby.

HOWIE
Honestly, I don’t think Becca’s mood has anything to do with you.

IZZY
She thinks I can’t do it, right? I’m not cut out to be a good mother?

HOWIE
She doesn’t think that. You should really be having this conversation with her.

IZZY
I know I’ve been a fuck-up, but people get their shit together.

HOWIE
Of course they do.

IZZY
And maybe I’m not as organized as Becca, or homey, or whatever—

HOWIE
Nobody’s comparing you.

IZZY
Really? Because that’d be a first.

HOWIE
Everyone’s excited about the baby, Iz. But you gotta understand that there’s other stuff going on around here.

IZZY
I’m not talking about the other stuff. I’m talking about me being a capable person who can raise a child, and look after it and protect it. I resent the feeling I get from her, and you too sometimes, honestly, that I don’t deserve the baby. Or that I’m not mature enough, or smart enough or something, to take care of it. I mean, my god, if my mother could do it, how hard could it be?
You’d be surprised.

IZZY

Look, hey, I didn’t mean to... I just want to feel like you guys have some faith in me, because I’m up to it.

HOWIE

Great. I hope you are.

IZZY

Oh, you hope. Thanks, Howie.

HOWIE

I don’t know where you want this conversation to go, Izzy. And I really don’t know why you’re having it with me.

(glances at his watch)

Aw fuck it, nobody’s coming.

(Howie takes off his jacket and tie. He tosses them onto the couch, then heads into the kitchen.)

IZZY

Are you mad?

HOWIE

No.

IZZY

You seem mad.

HOWIE

I’m just getting a beer. You want one?

IZZY

No, I don’t want a beer. God.

(Howie gets himself a beer out of the fridge. After a beat...)

Can I ask you something else?

HOWIE

What do you got, a list? “Things to ask Howie when he’s cornered?”

IZZY

No. Not a list.

WHAT IS IT?

YOU'RE NOT GONNA LIKE IT.
Well then, even better.

IZZY

Do you know my friend Reema?

HOWIE

That's the question?

IZZY

No, this is the prolog. You know how some books have prologs?

HOWIE

I'm familiar with the concept.

IZZY

That's Reema. You remember her?

HOWIE

Not really.

IZZY

I brought her to that barbecue like two years ago? Curly hair, kinda chubby.

HOWIE

Okay. I'll take your word for it.

IZZY

Well, Reema works at Calderone's. In New Rochelle. You know that restaurant?

HOWIE

(beat)

Yeah.

IZZY

Well Reema, even though you don't remember her, remembers you pretty well from the barbecue, and she said she waited on you a couple weeks ago.

HOWIE

Did I stiff her on the tip? Because had I remembered her, obviously I would've—

IZZY

She said you were with a woman.
HOWIE

(beat)
I was with another parent from the support group. Two weeks ago, right? We grabbed a bite after the meeting. If Reema had identified herself, I would’ve introduced them.

IZZY

Her husband doesn’t attend the meetings?

HOWIE

Is this still part of the prolog?

IZZY

Why were you holding hands?

(beat)
Reema said you were holding hands.

HOWIE

And Reema’s what exactly, your spy?

IZZY

No, she’s a waitress. She was just at work. You were the one sneaking around.

HOWIE

Okay, now I am mad.

IZZY

I told you, you weren’t gonna like it.

HOWIE

That woman is a friend of mine whose daughter died of leukemia six months ago. Jesus, Izzy, what are you trying to—?

IZZY

I’m just asking a question. You don’t have to get defensive.

HOWIE

Just because I was holding a person’s hand doesn’t mean—

IZZY

I know you and Becca are having troubles—

HOWIE

What are you talking about?
IZZY

--but I'd like to think that if things got to a point where they were unsavable, that you'd be man enough to fish or cut bait--

HOWIE

Who said we were having troubles?

IZZY

--and not make things worse than they already are by fucking around behind Becca's back.

HOWIE

You are way off-base, Izzy!

IZZY

And I know there's "other stuff going on around here" but that doesn't excuse it.

HOWIE

This is so beyond ridiculous, I don't even know how to respond to you.

IZZY

I don't need you to respond. I just wanted to ask the question and say what I had to say. You can do whatever you want about it.

HOWIE

About what? I'm not having an affair!

IZZY

Okay.

HOWIE

I was comforting a friend!

IZZY

Great, I'm glad to hear that.

HOWIE

And I don't know where this Reema person gets off making these offensive assumptions about me--

IZZY

She'll be happy to hear it was a misunderstanding.

HOWIE

I mean, god, Izzy. And right after your shpiel about us not having faith in you. What do you think of me?
IZZY

I’m sorry, it’s my sister. I had to ask.

HOWIE

Well you’ve asked.

IZZY

Indeed I have.

HOWIE

Jesus.

(beat)

I’ll tell ya one thing, if I ever see this Reema again, I’m gonna tell her what I think of her talking shit about me.

IZZY

You should. She’ll like that.

(heads into the kitchen.)

HOWIE

And for the record, I hope I did stiff her on the tip.

IZZY

Yeah well, for the record, you did.

(Left alone, Howie is reeling, but trying not to show it. He drinks his beer.

After a couple beats, Becca and Nat come in through the front door carrying bags of groceries. They’re in the middle of an argument. They head to the kitchen and put away groceries over the following.)

NAT

Luckily she had read about it in the papers –

BECCA

Of course she did.

NAT

- so when I explained it, she realized who you were.

HOWIE

Heeecey, they’re back.
BECCA
You should've gotten her phone number. We could've had her over for cocktails.

NAT
I was just trying to help.

BECCA
Well I don't need you chasing after me cleaning up my messes.

HOWIE
What happened?

BECCA
Or apologizing for me.

NAT
That's not what I was doing.

HOWIE
Did something happen?

IZZY
Did you get my message about the olive loaf?

BECCA
No, I shut my phone off.

NAT
I had to do *something*, Becca.

IZZY
(to Becca)
Why?

(to Izzy)
Because you kept calling me.

BECCA
But I wanted olive loaf.

IZZY

NAT
If I didn't say something, she would've had the cops there

HOWIE
Cops where?
(to Nat)
She would not have called the cops.

You don’t know that.

Someone was gonna call the cops?

What happened?!

Nothing.

We had a little scene, that’s all.
(re: groceries)
Lemme do this.

(Nat puts the groceries away in the kitchen through much of the following scene. Becca comes into the living room and looks over the sign-in sheet on the clipboard.)

How’d we do here? Looks a little light, doesn’t it?

What kind of scene? What scene did you have?

In the supermarket.

You and Mom?

No, I was not involved.

It’s so stupid.

What happened?
BECCA
This is why I hate shopping. Everything in there’s like “Oh look, Froot Loops, Danny liked Froot Loops. Hey, string cheese. Danny hated string cheese.” Everything. Howie, you’ve got to do some of the food shopping. I’m sick of saying it.

NAT
Becca got a little upset.

HOWIE
About what?

NAT
There was a boy there.

HOWIE
He reminded you of Danny?

BECCA
No. Maybe a little, but not really, no.

NAT
He had red hair.

BECCA
What happened was we were in the same aisle as this kid and he wanted these roll-ups, fruit roll-ups, and his mother was being a hard-ass about it, saying she wasn’t gonna buy them for him.

NAT
And it wasn’t because she couldn’t afford it, because you could tell she had money.

BECCA
But the kid was getting whiny about it. Which makes sense, because he’s five years old and he really wants these roll-ups, but the mother wouldn’t give in. In fact she starts ignoring him completely, just turns her face away and pretends he’s not there. Just goes about her shopping, like that’s gonna shut him up, or teach him a lesson or something. Case-closed sort of thing. But that only gets him more upset. So that pissed me off for some reason.

HOWIE
What did?

BECCA
The way she was ignoring him, instead of trying to explain why he couldn’t have them.
So she walked over to her.

What? Why?

I don’t know. I just did.

What’d you say?

I said “It’s only three bucks, why don’t you just get him the fucking roll-ups?”

Oh no.

And she looked a little miffed, but she smiled a little – I don’t know why – and explained to me that she didn’t want her son eating candy. And so I said it wasn’t actually candy, in fact fruit roll-ups are relatively healthy, and they’re made with real fruit, and why not give him a treat? And she told me to mind my own business, and then tried to move her cart around me, but ran over my foot by accident, so I smacked her.

(beat)

What?

I smacked her.

She did. She smacked her. I couldn’t believe it. Real hard too.

Becca...

I know. It was awful, and then the boy started crying. I felt terrible, but she pissed me off.

You hit that woman?
Izzy, don’t.

IZZY

I’m just saying. Glass houses.

BECCA

She was ignoring him.

NAT

She was ignoring him. It was pretty bitchy.

BECCA

I wanted to shake her. “Look at him: Don’t pretend he isn’t there!” But I didn’t say that. I just stood there, kinda startled, and she was kinda startled, and then mom came over and told me to go out to the car, which I did not want her to do.

NAT

I just explained everything to her. That’s all I did. And she was mad at first, but I explained it, and she understood.

BECCA

No she didn’t.

NAT

After I talked with her, I’m saying.

BECCA

Still, she didn’t understand, Mom. I’m sure you just made it seem like I was a crazy person. Some unstable—

NAT

You did slap her, Becca.

BECCA

She was lucky that was all I did. Not that it helped. Not that she’ll suddenly...realize... I mean, it was a fruit roll-up. Just let him have it. Am I wrong?

IZZY

No. I would’ve smacked her too.

BECCA

Yeah, well, obviously.

(beat)

And I was doing well too, wasn’t I, Howie? I had a bunch of good days in a row.
IZZY
You can come shopping with me anytime, Bec. I'm gonna give my kid whatever he wants. Candy, whatever.

BECCA
That wasn't my point, Izzy.

IZZY
No, I know, you're saying be with him. She blocked him out instead of...appreciating him, or whatever. I understand. I totally get it. And if you ever see me doing what she did, smack me too, okay?

BECCA
(beat)
Okay.

IZZY
Maybe you taught that lady something.

BECCA
Yeah, I don't think so.

IZZY
Hey Mom, did they have any Bosco?

NAT
Right here.

IZZY
Oh good. Let's crack that bad-boy open.

BECCA
(off Howie's look)
What?

HOWIE
Nothing.

BECCA
Have I shocked you?

HOWIE
No. Not shocked, no.

BECCA
Well you look shocked.
HÖWIE
Do I?

BECCA
Or something.

(Taz starts barking. It immediately gets to Becca.)

Go quiet him down, wouldja, Howie?

(Howie turns to go. Jason is standing by the front door. He's entered, unnoticed. They all become aware of his presence.)

JASON
Hello. Hi...um...I saw the sign outside, so...the Open House sign. And the door was open.

You looking to buy a house?

No.

HOWIE

BECCA

Howie—

WHAT? He said he saw the sign.

I just wanted to say hey.

(Taz has not stopped barking.)

HOWIE

Taz! Shut it!

(Taz stops barking. They all stare at Jason.)

JASON

You know who I am, right?

Yeah, we know.
JASON
So, since the sign was out there, I thought it'd be okay if I just poked my head in. I've been wanting to say hello for awhile and—

HOWIE
Now's not really a good time for us.

JASON
Oh. Okay.

HOWIE
We've got family visiting.

JASON
Right. I was just saying hey anyway. I didn't wanna bother you. Just say hello in person. But...maybe another time would be better.

HOWIE
Yeah. It's just we have relatives here.

JASON
Right, you said. Hi.

NAT
Hello.

JASON
Another time then.

BECCA
Yeah, we're around, so—

HOWIE
Becca...

BECCA
What?

JASON
I could come by any afternoon really, if there's a day you're—

HOWIE
Well the problem is we're trying to sell the house, which takes up big blocks of our time.

JASON
It wouldn't take long. I just wanna sit down with you at some point.
HOWIE

Still—

JASON

I’d really like to arrange something if that’s possible.

HOWIE

And I just told you now’s not really a good time.

JASON

No, I know, but I wasn’t talking about right now.

HOWIE

Great. So why don’t you take off then? And if we can arrange something in the future we’ll do that.

JASON

Okay. Well I wrote my number down…
(pulls crumpled paper from his pocket)
So if you free up at all…

HOWIE

Can I just say something to you?

BECCA
Howie, don’t--

NAT
Hey, easy now.

HOWIE

An Open House sign doesn’t mean we’re holding walking-tours in here.

JASON

I know that.

HOWIE

You can’t just pop in because the door’s open. We were conducting business.

JASON

That’s why I waited until that couple left. It looked like things were finished here.

HOWIE

Well they’re not.

JASON

Then I apologize.
HOWIE

We live here, okay? This is our home.

BECCA

Alright, Howie.

HOWIE

You don’t just walk into someone’s home like that. Especially given the circumstances. You should show a little respect.

JASON

I’m sorry.

(looks to the others)

I’m sorry I interrupted.

(beat)

Sorry.

(Jason exits. They’re all silent for a couple beats.)

HOWIE

You believe that? The balls on that kid. Walking in here?

NAT

(re:groceries)

I’m gonna finish this

(Nat heads into the kitchen with the rest of the groceries.)

HOWIE

And what was he, out there hiding behind a tree or something? No wonder Taz was barking.

BECCA

Or maybe he was barking because he’s hungry. Did you feed him?

OH...no. I caught up with—

BECCA

No, of course not. You wanted that dog so badly, but you can never remember feed him.

(turns to go)

HOWIE

I’ll do it.
BECCA
Yeah, it's nice to know things are getting back to normal around here.
(heads into the kitchen)

HOWIE
(after Becca goes)
That was the last thing she needed. That kid showing up.

IZZY
She seemed fine with it. You were the one who got upset.

HOWIE
Yeah well, I'm not the one slapping people.

IZZY
I don't know, you came pretty close just then.
(after a pause)
So I'm free next week if you wanna try this again. Another Open House.

HOWIE
(beat)
Maybe. We'll see.

IZZY
You really should do something about that room though. Auggie does some renovation stuff on the side if you want me to ask him. He could get in there and—

HOWIE
Oh, I don't know...

IZZY
He does good work. He put up my mother's dry-wall.

HOWIE
I think we got it covered. Thanks though.

IZZY
Still, you should really try to fix things up a little.
(beat)
The room, I mean.

HOWIE
Yeah, I know what you meant.

(Izzy heads into the kitchen, leaving Howie alone. The lights fade on him.)
SCENE TWO

(About a week later. Nat is helping Becca clean out Danny’s room. Becca is taking Danny’s books out of a bookcase and placing them into a milk crate. Nat is taking toys, stuffed animals, kids’ puzzles, etc. out of the closet and either placing them into a garbage bag, or into a box labeled “KEEP.”)

(holds up toy)

Keep or toss?

Toss.

(another)

This too?

Yeah.

(Nat puts both toys into the garbage bag. Becca finds “Runaway Bunny.” She flips through it.)

Remember this one?

(holds up the book)

That was your book.

I know.

(Beccaputs it in the KEEP box. Nat pulls a Curious George toy out of the toy box.)

(holds it up)

Monkey?

Urn, keep, I guess.
NAT

(she does)
Howie doesn’t mind this?

BECCA

It was his idea. After that Open House. Seems his grief goes out the window when it comes to maximizing profits.

(beat)
Sorry. I don’t even know why I said that. Just being mean.

(They go back to work.)
Besides, it’s not like we’re getting rid of everything.

(Something stops Nat. She’s holding one of Danny’s sneakers. They’re smaller than she remembers. Becca glances over at her and realizes what’s happening.)

BECCA

(simply)
Don’t do that.

(takes the sneakers)
Quick and clean, like a band-aid.

(places the sneakers in a garbage bag)
Otherwise we’ll never get through it.

(Becca grabs a Kleenex from the bureau and passes it to Nat without missing a beat. She carries on as if the moment never happened.)

BECCA

Did Izzy tell you I was taking a Continuing Ed. class? We’re reading Bleak House. Isn’t that hilarious? He handed out the syllabus and I just laughed. Bleak House. Of course no one knew what I was laughing at, which was great.

(Nat looks up at her.)
It’s in Bronxville so no one knows me. I’m normal there. That’s what I like best about it. I don’t get “the face” every time someone looks at me.

NAT

What face?

BECCA

You know.

(demonstrates — solemn pity)
“Oh, hi. How ya doin? Hangin’ in there?”

(Nat laughs a little)

I hate it.

(strips the robot sheets off the bed)
BECCA
And you know what's nice? These ladies, don't even talk about their kids or their husbands, or any of it. I think they're just so happy to be away from all that. It's probably the last thing they wanna talk about. Because I'm sure most of them are bored housewives, right?

NAT
I don't know. I've never met these people.

BECCA
Well that's who takes Westchester Continuing Ed. classes, isn't it?

NAT
I guess.

BECCA
Sure, and they're just so happy to be talking about Dickens instead of what's for dinner. "Yay, we're reading literature." It's like they're in college again. Who'd wanna talk about their families? I know I don't.

(beat)
Anyway, I like it. I like that I'm just a lady taking a class. And next week we start Madame Bovary. That oughta get the ol' girls goin', huh? Toss.

NAT
I don't know that book.

BECCA
No, I know.

(Nat accidentally flips the switch to a ridiculously annoying toy.)

NAT
What the hell?

(trying to turn it off)
How do I—? That's annoying!

BECCA
(over the noise)
Try listening to it or hours on end!

(switches it off)
Izzy gave him that. Only people without children give those kinds of gifts. Or people who want to punish parents.

(then...)
You know what? Debbie's kids might like that. We should save it for them. That'd show her.
(Nat pops the toy into the keep box.)

NAT

Still haven’t heard from her?

BECCA

Nope. Howie plays squash with Rick but… And I hear the kids are good. Toss. Do you remember Emily?

BECCA

Of course.

NAT

She’s getting big now.

BECCA

(beat)
I thought you haven’t seen them?

NAT

(beat)
I passed by Danny’s daycare last week, and the kids were all in the yard.

(off her look)
What? I was just walking by. That’s how I get to the post office.

NAT

Yeah, anyway, that’s too bad about Debbie. But that can happen. Friends disappear. I remember when Arthur died—

(stops herself)

Sorry.

(pause - holds up a toy)
What about this?

BECCA

No, it’s busted.

(Nat throws it in the garbage.)

NAT

You know, the thing about Debbie….

BECCA

Yeah?
NAT
It's just as bad the other way sometimes. Do you remember Maureen Bailey?

BECCA
Sure.

NAT
Well I couldn't get rid of her after your brother passed away.

BECCA
I remember.

NAT
Always at the house. Always checking in on me. Eatin' up the cinnamon buns Uncle Jimmy brought me. I never had a moment to myself. And of course it was nice, I guess, but it didn't feel like it was about me. It just felt like she had nothing else to do. Like consoling me became her hobby. Something to fill up her day. And finally in the middle of coffee one afternoon, I said "Maureen, why are you here all the time?"

BECCA
What'd she say?

NAT
She said "I want to be there for you, Nat, I want to share in your grief." And so I said "Well it's not working. I seem to have it all to myself still. You plant your fat ass in that chair every frickin' day—"

BECCA
You did not say that.

NAT
I did. "and suck up all my coffee, and I don't see you leaving with any of this grief you're allegedly sharing with me. In fact the only thing you do take outta here are my cinnamon buns."

(beat)
So I never saw her again obviously.

(beat)
Which was too bad actually, because she was the only one who was willing to talk about Arth...

(trails off)

BECCA
You can say his name.

NAT
Can I? I don't know your rules, Becca. I don't wanna get scolded.
BECCA
You can talk about Arthur. I just don’t like the comparisons.

NAT

Okay.

BECCA
It’s not like the Arthur stuff didn’t... He was my brother, so obviously that was a really hard time for all of us.

NAT

I know.

BECCA
But that was a long time ago, and it was very different. For me.

NAT

Of course it was.

BECCA
Okay then.

(Back to work. Becca continues sorting books. Nat finds some papers on a bookcase.)

NAT

What’s this?

BECCA
Oh, it’s a....It’s just a story that boy wrote. He sent it to us.

NAT

(re: the title)

What is it, an Alice in Wonderland kind of thing, or—

BECCA
No, it’s more science fiction.

NAT

(turns a page)

It’s dedicated to Danny.

BECCA

Yeah, he asked if he could do that.
Why? It's about Danny?

No, not at all. It's about a scientist.

Oh.

Or the son of a scientist, actually. The father discovers this warren of— It's like a network of holes to other galaxies, or parallel universes, I guess, but he dies somehow. And so the son goes into these holes trying to find him. Well not him, because he's dead, but another version of him.

It doesn't sound very good.

It's okay. He's young.

Keep it?

(beat)
Yeah, we should keep it. I'll just put it in the box.

(Nat puts the story inside the KEEP box and goes back to cleaning. Becca contemplates telling her something, and finally relents. She tries to sound off-hand.)

I think I'm gonna see him actually.

Who?

Jason Willette.

Why?

I don't know. I just... want to.
(beat)
What about Howie?

BECCA
Howie’s not really into it.

NAT
Well I thought it was weird. The way he walked in like that. Creepy. You don’t think that was creepy?

BECCA
Not really.

NAT
Well I think it was creepy. You should ask Howie what he thinks.

BECCA
I don’t have to ask him what he thinks. Frankly I don’t care what he thinks.

NAT
I’m just saying.

(Howie appears in the doorway. He looks around. The bed has been stripped. The walls are bare. He regrets popping in, but it’s too late now.)

BECCA
Hey.

HOWIE
How’s it goin’?

BECCA
Fine.

HOWIE
Good.

(beat)
I thought we could put the brown bedspread in here.

BECCA
Okay.

HOWIE
And maybe hang the Ansel Adams prints that are in the basement?
Sounds like a plan.

BECCA

Making progress I see.

HOWIE

BECCA

Yup.

BECCA

GOOD. Looks good.

(HOWIE)

I'm gonna take Taz for a walk. You need anything while I'm out?

BECCA

I don't think so.

HOWIE

Okay.

(to Nat)

Thanks for helping out, Nat.

NAT

Sure.

(He goes.)

BECCA

(whispers)

I hate that bedspread. I'm gonna put the blue one on. It's neutral enough.

(They work in silence for several beats. Nat suddenly smiles. She remembers something.)

NAT

Hey, you know what I was thinking of this morning?

BECCA

What?

NAT

(chuckling a little already)

Remember that gourmet basket you and Howie got me for Mother's Day last year, with the biscotti and the fancy biscuits? And I put the chocolates out when you came over for dinner, and Danny ate the entire bowl of chocolates when no one was looking?
BECCA

(she's heard this story many times)

Yup.

NAT

And then Howie was like "Where'd all the chocolates go?" And I said "Danny ate them. Leave him alone, kids like candy." And then Howie said "But those were chocolate covered espresso beans!" Remember?

BECCA

I do.

NAT

But Danny had eaten the whole bowl, so he was, you know, really really wired. And running in circles and climbing up the walls, and putting things on his head, and he was up until like three AM. Remember that?

BECCA

Only too well.

NAT

I didn't know what the damn things were. I just thought they were candy. You get me these fancy baskets with all this crazy stuff in 'em - espresso beans. I tell that story to everyone. People get a kick out of it.

Mom?

(Nat looks up at her.)

Does it go away?

What.

BECCA

This feeling. Does it ever go away?

NAT

(beat)

No. I don't think it does. Not for me it hasn't. And that's goin' on eleven years.

(beat)

It changes though.

BECCA

How?
NAT
I don't know. The weight of it, I guess. At some point it becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under and carry around. Like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in awhile, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is. "Oh right. That." Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it's kinda... Not that you like it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is...

BECCA

What.

NAT

Fine... actually.

(They're silent for a couple beats. Becca takes the bag of toys and exits. The lights fade.)
SCENE THREE

(A few days later. Jason is sitting on the couch in the living room. He looks around. Becca enters from the kitchen with a plate.)

I made some lemon-squares.

(She puts them on the table.)

Thank you.

Can I get you milk or something? I don’t have any soda. Unless you want seltzer.

I’m fine.

You’ll need something to wash it down though. You don’t drink coffee, do you?

Sometimes.

You want coffee?

No thanks. Really, I’m okay.

Alright. But let me know if you change your mind.

(They sit in silence for a couple beats. Jason takes a bite of lemon-square.)

It’s good.

Thank you.

Still warm.

(she smiles - pause)

So, you’re moving?
BECCA

We’re thinking about it. If we can find a buyer.

JASON

Where are you moving to?

BECCA

We’re still looking.

JASON

Far away?

BECCA

Probably not, no. My husband works in the city, so we can’t go that far.

JASON

What does he do?

BECCA

He works at Prime Brokerage. Risk Management.

JASON

(doesn’t know what that is)

Uh-huh.

BECCA

He takes the train in.

JASON

Right.

BECCA

So we don’t wanna go too far.

JASON

It’s a nice house. I hope you find one as nice as this.

BECCA

We’ll probably go smaller. This is too big.

(Jason goes back to the lemon square.)

BECCA

I’m sorry Howie couldn’t be here.
That’s okay.

Becca

He’s, uh…

Jason

Not ready?

Becca

I was gonna say working, but yeah, that too.

Jason

He seemed mad. The other day.

Becca

No, he was just surprised that you dropped by.

Jason

Okay.

Becca

You just scared him a little bit.

Jason

He didn’t seem scared.

Becca

Yeah well... Maybe that’s not the right word. But...Howie’s not mad at you. What happened was an accident. Howie knows that.

(beat)

You know that too, right?

(Jason takes a bite of lemon-square. Pause. Taz barks out back.

Becca cringes.)

Becca

That bark goes right through me. I swear, we better move somewhere without squirrels.

Jason

You should have his vocal cords snipped.

Becca

What?
JASON
That's what some people do. If their dogs won't stop barking.

BECCA
Huh. I've never heard of that.

JASON
Yeah, because some dogs just never shut up. So that's what they have to do. Otherwise the alternative is give 'em away. Or put 'em to sleep, I guess. You should look it up online. I bet there's all sorts of information, if you're interested.

BECCA
No, Howie would never allow it. He loves that dog too much.

Do you have any pets?

(beat)

JASON
No.

BECCA
Well that's lucky.

JASON
Yeah?

BECCA
Unless you want a pet. Do you want a pet? Because I've got one you can borrow. Just kidding.

JASON
We read that book.

BECCA
Bleak House?

JASON
Yeah, in English class.

BECCA
Did you like it?
Not really. It’s too long.

I know. I barely made it through.

I liked *David Copperfield* though.

Also very long.

Yeah, but it didn’t feel as long.

No, you’re right.

(pause)
So, I don’t see any photos anywhere.

Of Danny?

Yeah.

Well, we put most of them away. Because of the open house.

Okay.

Do you want to see pictures? Because I could—

No thank you.

(beat)
Okay.

The one in the article was nice though. Him at the beach.
BECCA
That’s at Annaport Bay.

JASON
I used to have a shirt just like that one. The one he’s wearing in the picture.

(Pause. Jason avoids her gaze. After awhile, he speaks.)

I might’ve been going too fast. That day. I’m not sure, but I might’ve been. So... that’s one of the things I wanted to tell you.

(beat)
It’s a thirty zone. And I might’ve been going thirty-three. Or thirty-two. I would usually look down, to check, and if I was a little over, then I’d slow down obviously. But I don’t remember checking on your block, so it’s possible I was going a little too fast. And then the dog came out, really quick, and so I swerved a little to avoid him, not knowing, obviously...

(beat)
So that’s something I thought you should know. I might’ve been going a little over the limit. I can’t be positive either way though.

BECCA

(pause)
I’m gonna get you some milk. You don’t have to drink it if you don’t want it.

Okay.

(Becca heads into the kitchen. Jason eats some more of the lemon-square.)

BECCA

(from the kitchen)
So you’re a senior?

Yeah.

Where you headed in the fall?

JASON
Connecticut College. They have a good writing program.

BECCA
Oh, well that’s nice for you. And not too far from home. Your parents must be happy about that.
JASON
It's just my mom, but yeah, she's happy about it. She's already started picking out sheet-
sets for the dorm room.

BECCA
(smiles)
Uh-huh.

JASON
She keeps saying she's gonna apply to the graduate program so she can keep an eye on
me while I'm up there. She's just joking though.

BECCA
Right.

JASON
She's not really looking forward to it, since I'm the only one at home now, but I told her
I'd come back on the weekends when I could.

BECCA
That'll be nice.
(re-enters, brings him the milk)
There ya go.

Thanks.
(puts the milk down)

BECCA
And you graduate when?

JASON
Thursday. Matt Lauer is gonna speak. His niece is in my class.

BECCA
Well that's great. I like Matt Lauer.

JASON
Yeah. So does my mom.

BECCA
So you must have a prom coming up then.

JASON
It was last Saturday actually.
And you went?

BECCA

Yeah.

JASON

Do you have a girlfriend or—

BECCA

No. I mean, I *did*, but we broke up awhile ago, so I went with this girl Carly who’s just a friend, and this other girl Tina went with this guy Jake whose dad owns this old-fashioned Rolls Royce that he brings to car-shows and stuff, so we all went in that together.

JASON

That must’ve been fun.

BECCA

Yeah, it was a tight squeeze though, because no one wanted to sit up front, but it worked out. We had champagne in the back— not to get drunk or anything, just to celebrate— but Carly is really skinny so she got a little tipsy, even though she barely had like one glass of champagne. And she kept telling the driver to put the top down because she wanted to stand up in the back and act crazy, but the car wasn’t even a convertible, so we essentially made fun of her all night for that. That part was pretty funny.

(Beca tears up as she listens. And with little warning, she is crying. A lot. It goes on for a few beats.)

JASON

I’m sorry.

BECCA

No, that was stupid of me.

JASON

I asked.

BECCA

Still, I shouldn’t have— Should I go?

JASON

No. I’m fine.

BECCA

(She collects herself. She grabs a napkin and blows her nose.)
I'm sorry.

(They sit in silence for a couple beats.)

So did you have a good time? At the prom?

It was okay.

(beat)

Well it sounds like it was very nice. I liked that story you sent by the way. I'm sorry we never thanked you for it.

That's okay.

We appreciated it.

(beat)

So the scientist that the boy is looking for...

Yeah?

Is that your dad?

(beat)

No.

I mean, is it based on him?

No. My dad was an English teacher.

Oh. Okay. I was just curious about that part. He is dead though, right?
It's just a story.

No, I know. I'm sorry. It's none of my business. I was just—

Reading into it?

Yeah.

(beat)

Well, anyway, I liked it very much. It reminded me of Orpheus and Eurydice. Do you know that Greek myth?

Not really.

Eurydice dies, and Orpheus misses her so much, that he travels to Hades to retrieve her, but in the end it doesn't work out.

I should read it.

Yeah, it's similar. But instead of Hades, you have the rabbit holes. The parallel universes. It's interesting. I liked that part.

Thank you.

Is that something you believe in?

Parallel universes?

Yeah.

Sure. I mean, if space is infinite, which is what most scientists think, then yeah, there have to be parallel universes.

There have to be?
JASON
Yeah, because infinite space means...it means it goes on and on forever, so there’s a
never-ending stream of possibilities.

BECCA
Okay.

JASON
So even the most unlikely events have to take place somewhere, including other universes
with versions of us leading different lives, or maybe the same lives with a couple things
changed.

BECCA
And you think that’s plausible.

JASON
Not just plausible - probable. If you accept the most basic laws of science.

BECCA
Huh.

(beat)
So somewhere out there, there’s a version of me -- what? -- making pancakes?

JASON
Sure.

BECCA
Or at a water park.

JASON
Wherever, yeah. Both. If space is infinite. Then there are tons of yous out there, and
tons of mes.

BECCA
And so this is just the sad version of us.

(beat)

JASON
I guess.

BECCA
But there are other versions where everything goes our way.

Sure.

JASON
BECCA

(beat – a change)
So those other versions of us exist. They’re not hypothetical, they’re actual, real people.

JASON

Yeah, assuming you believe in science.

BECCA

Well that’s a nice thought. Somewhere out there I’m having a good time.

JASON

So, could you tell your husband for me? How I might’ve been going a little over the limit? I know he’s probably still mad but—

BECCA

He’s not mad. Nobody’s mad.

JASON

Okay.

BECCA

(beat)

Can you tell him though?

Sure.

(Jason takes another bite of lemon-square as the lights fade.)
SCENE FOUR

(Same. Dusk. Nat enters from the basement with a box of toys for
Izzy. Izzy follows behind her reading the Runaway Bunny)

IZZY

I don’t remember Runaway Bunny being so weird. The mother’s like a stalker.

Oh come on. She’s not a stalker.

NAT

IZZY

Well of course you don’t think so. But look, she turns into wind and shit, a mountain
climber. Poor kid needs to get himself a restraining order.

(Izzy puts the book in the box, and finds the noisy toy she had
given to Danny.)

IZZY

Heeey, I remember this. She said I could have it?

NAT

Oh yes, that one especially she wants you to have.

(Belka enters with a recipe she’s printed out for Izzy.)

BECCA

Here. I typed it all out for you. I put down lime zest in the filling, but you can also use
orange zest, or even a little grapefruit. Or lemon, obviously.

(looking at the recipe)

Jesus. It’s like three pages long. This looks hard, Becca.

BECCA

It’s not. I promise. I put everything down.

IZZY

Okay. I hope the oven works. I don’t think Auggie’s ever used it. He keeps dishes in
there.

BECCA

If you get stuck, you can call me.
Okay.

(beat - chuckles)
Me - baking. Auggie's gonna be shocked.

NAT
Well, anyone in their right mind would be.

IZZY
Ha-ha.

(Howie enters, home from work, calling as he enters. He's carrying something in tin foil. Becca is surprised to see him)

HOWIE
Hello-hellooo....

IZZY
Hey, Howie.

NAT
Hello.

Hi.

HOWIE
You're home.

BECCA
(taking off his jacket)
Yeah.

HOWIE
I thought you had group.

BECCA

HOWIE
I decided to skip it.

IZZY
(beat)
Mom, we should get going, if you wanna get to bingo.

NAT
Why, what time is it?

IZZY
We gotta go. Auggie wants to register for Lamaze, so I can learn how to shove a baby out of my body.

(re: box of toys)
Thanks for the stuff.
You’re welcome.

Bye, Howie.

Bye, Sweetie.

Bye, guys.

(As they exit)

NAT

Bingo’s just at St. Catherine’s, you know. What’s the bum rush?

IZZY

Can we talk about this in the car, please?

NAT

I didn’t even get a lemon square.

IZZY

They were good.

NAT

They looked good.

(They exit, Izzy carrying the box of stuff. Howie has placed the tinfoil on the table.)

HOWIE

(re: bread)

Alan brought in his zucchini bread again. He made me take what was left. He wants you to try it.

BECCA

That was nice of him. You’ll have to thank him for me.

(Howie gets himself a beer from the fridge.)

BECCA

We had paillard if you’re hungry. It’s in there.
No, Alan kept pushing that bread on me all day.

Okay.

(after a couple beats)
So how'd it go with the kid?

Fine. It was totally fine.

What'd he want?

Just to...I don't know, introduce himself, I guess, talk a little.

Did you let him off the hook?

What do you mean?

Well, he seemed pretty intent on sitting down with us. I assumed he wanted to be absolved or something.
(no response)
Is that what he wanted?

Not really. Not in so many words, no.

Huh. Did you tell him we didn't blame him?

We don't blame him.

No, I know, but did you let him know that?

I guess so.
(beat)
Howie
That's good.
(beat)
So I don't have to meet him then, do I?
Becca
Not if you don't want to, no.
Howie
Okay.
Becca
Why aren't you at group?
Howie
(beat)
I just decided to skip it tonight. Wasn't up to it.
Becca
How come?
Howie
I think I might be done. With the group. I don't think I'm gonna go back.
Becca
Why, what happened?
Howie
Nothing. I just don't think it's as helpful to me anymore. I wanna try it on my own for awhile. I mean, not on my own, obviously, but... without the group.
(beat)
That sound okay?
Becca
Sure. If you're not getting anything out of it then why go?
Howie
Exactly.
Becca
(beat)
Are you okay?
Howie
Yeah. I'm just tired. And full of zucchini bread.
BECCA
Alright. I’m gonna have a piece. It’s good?

HOWIE
Yeah, it’s great.

BECCA
So Rick and Debbie invited us over for a cookout this weekend.

HOWIE
(beat)
Really?

BECCA
Sunday they said. Are you free?

HOWIE
Yeah. You talked to Rick?

BECCA
No. Debbie.

HOWIE
You talked to Debbie.

BECCA
Yeah. I called her.

HOWIE
(beat)
Wow. She must’ve been surprised.

BECCA
She was.

HOWIE
What’d she say?

BECCA
Oh you know, she cried mostly, and then apologized about sixty times, and then cried some more.

HOWIE
Sounds great.
BECCA
It was okay. She said she kept meaning to call, but she felt freaked out about everything and so she kept putting it off, and before she knew it months had gone by, and so then she really couldn’t call because she felt like such an asshole, and assumed I hated her, so it just seemed easier to not pick up the phone.

HOWIE
And that was good enough for you?

BECCA
I don’t know. Probably. We’ll see how the barbecue goes.

Are the kids gonna be there?

HOWIE
Of course.

BECCA
(beat)
That’ll be hard.

HOWIE
Yeah. It’ll be good to see them though. We should get something for Emily. We missed her birthday. She turned four last week.

BECCA
(pause)
Right. Okay.
(pause)
Danny’s is coming up.

HOWIE
I know.

BECCA
That’s gonna be a tough one.

HOWIE
Yeah.

(Silence as Becca eats the bread.)
(re: zucchini bread)

BECCA

It's good.

HOWIE

I'll tell Alan you liked it.

(More silence.)

HOWIE

It's so quiet.

BECCA

That's because I slipped Taz a couple Ambien.

(smiles)
You're funny.

BECCA

You think I'm joking.

(Bbecca takes another bite of zucchini bread. After a beat...)

BECCA

You think we should reconsider the house?

HOWIE

If nobody bids, we might have to.

BECCA

There are worse things, I guess.

HOWIE

Yeah.

BECCA

(beat)
It's a nice house.

HOWIE

I know.

(Bbecca stops eating, and faces Howie. Pause.)
BECCA

So what are we gonna do?

HOWIE

About what?

BECCA

I don’t know, pick something.

HOWIE

Well...

(thinks it over)

We could go to Village Toys tomorrow and pick up Candyland for Emily. That’s probably something she’d like.

BECCA

Okay, Candyland. That’s a start. Then what?

HOWIE

Then we wrap it.

BECCA

Uh-huh.

HOWIE

And then on Sunday we go to the cookout, and we give her the gift, and we talk to Rick and Debbie, and to make them feel comfortable we ask the kids a bunch of questions about what they’ve been up to, and we’ll pretend that we’re really interested. And then we’ll wait for Rick and/or Debbie to bring up Danny while the kids are playing in the rec-room. And maybe that’ll go on for a little while. And after that we’ll come home.

BECCA

(beat)

And then what?

HOWIE

(beat)

I don’t know. Something though. We’ll figure it out.

BECCA

Will we?

HOWIE

I think so. I think we will.
(Silence. They just sit for several beats, not even looking at each other.

And the lights slowly fade.)

END OF PLAY