

11th Annual Playwright's Festival Plays
Scroll down for all scripts

***Barb's Big Break* by Julia Greenblatt and Abby Roll:** A young newscaster, Barb, gets her big break, but she must come together with her guests, Anne and Kathy, to prove themselves to the world.

***Head Over Heels* by Jeremy Gordon:** Three good friends meet up at a coffee shop and get to catching up on life when one of them reveals the identity of his unconventional love interest, and the other two friends take sides in support and against him.

***LDR* by Gabriella Matos and Martha Bennett:** When their main method of communication unexpectedly disconnects, two teens in a long distance relationship find themselves questioning how well they truly knew each other.

***Stage Left* by Lonnie Miller:** Two actresses, a talent agent, and a gun are sitting in a Vaudeville dressing room; this isn't going to be a very funny joke.

***Star-Crossed* by Emma Richmond and Ilai Gavish:** A woman going on a blind date and a woman headed to a college interview accidentally meet up with the wrong people, and all hell breaks loose.

***Dog Years* by Amar Ahmad:** While walking in the woods two old friends find a dying dog; they explore their past life choices while deciding what to do with it.

***The Earth Men* by Adam Chapnik:** A teenager tries to decide whether to go on a one-way trip to Mars while working at a community library in Vermont with his socially inept boss and her son.

***To Touch Saturn* by Achille Ricca and Maeve Slack-Watkins:** A mother and a daughter use their broken planet to discuss their broken relationship.

***Towers* by Ian Reid:** The classic fairy tale princess-rescue gets a before and after, as three pivotal moments for a storybook relationship interweave across space and time.

***Traces* by Lily Chen and Maria Gervagina:** A girl is faced with a tough decision when her mother comes home after disappearing for ten years.

Barb's Big Break!

By: Julia Greenblatt and Abby Roll

Characters:

BARB- late 20s/early 30s, a young fresh face in journalism.

KATHY GRANT- Fresh graduate of Harvard Law– she knows her stuff and she knows that she knows it. She is less concerned with liberal/conservative and more concerned with the law. To most it seems that kathy has a stick up her bum, but her sorority sisters would say otherwise and reference spring break junior year.

ANNE LAWRENCE- badass woman, established professor at a great college, author, and regular consultant for the news station which Barb works at.

Lights up on BARB sitting at the center desk giddily spinning in her swivel chair. On her desk is a white mug and papers.

BARB *(to herself)*:

(Looks off stage somewhere as if to a camera operator) What? 10 until I'm on? Oh Oh Oh Oh Okay! You've got this Barb! Don't fu— *(a green light switches on to signal we're on air)* Hello everyone thank you for joining us tonight, I'm your host Barb, and this is Up To Date with Eri- Barb. This is Up To Date with Barb. I'm sure you miss Eric's devilishly handsome face delivering the news *(laughs a 'classic BARB' laugh to herself)*, but, Eric is out. His cat died. But don't fret for a second folks, we've got a great show for you tonight. Frequent consultant, Anne, and legal expert, Kathy, will be on to discuss the president's recent explicitly worded tweet, just after the break. *(BARB holds a smile for a beat too long, the green light switches off).*

KATHY and ANNE enter

ANNE:

Kathy.

KATHY:

Anne.

ANNE:

Good to see you again.

KATHY:

As always, the pleasure is all mine Dr. Lawrence.

BARB:
Ladies! How ARE we feeling tonight?

ANNE:
What happened to Eric?

BARB:
FUNNY story. (BARB *laughs*) his cat, Rasmeowtin, died.

(KATHY and ANNE look at each other and then look back at BARB— *who's gone back to going over her notes— with judgemental confusion*)

BARB (*looking up*):
Which... right... isn't exactly funny if... you think about it BUT it does mean that I'm here now! (*under her breath*) FINALLY.

ANNE:
Right and you are...

BARB:
Oh! I'm BARB! (*shakes ANNE's and then Kathy's hand*) I'm Eric's new understudy. Just got hired last week actually, wasn't expecting him to be out this soon but...lucky me!
(*nervous BARB laugh*)

ANNE:
Oh okay! I don't think we've ever been formally introduced. I'm--

BARB (*fangirling*):
Anne Lawrence! Professor, author, AND consultant right here on this very station. I'm a BIG fan of yours. I was watching this station for years before I was hired and I've gotta say YOU are my favorite!

ANNE:
Oh well thank you.

BARB:
Professionally I'm unbiased of course but I mean you are just great!

ANNE:
Thank you.

BARB (*continuing*):
I mean the way you can just come up with a rebuttal on the spot it's just...wow.

ANNE (*starting to feel awkward*):
Hah. Thanks.

KATHY (*Under her breath*):
She's not that great.

BARB:
Oh look at me I'm getting carried away! YOU (*pointing to Kathy*) are Kathy Grant, esteemed lawyer and someone I am very excited to welcome to the show tonight!

KATHY:
Thank you. I think that's enough chit chat should we get started?

BARB:
Oh we don't go on the air for another minute so we've got time!

(Awkward silence as KATHY and ANNE nod reluctantly)

KATHY:
Maybe we should do a little debriefing then. Can you give us a loose outline of the direction you're planning to take us in?

BARB:
...huh?

KATHY:
What you've prepared.

BARB:
Oh! Well I've got some notes for context but for the most part I'll just let the spirit move me. That's the best kind of journalism, if you ask me.

(KATHY and ANNE exchange glances)

KATHY:
Wing it?

BARB:
I guess you COULD put it like that but there's/ no need to be such a negative nancy.

ANNE:
/We weren't planning on "winging it" Barb. We're discussing politics.

BARB:
Well I'd hardly call this tweet political.

ANNE:
We're put under a microscope with topics like this. We can't have any slip ups.

KATHY: *(under her breath):*
Wouldn't you know.

BARB:
Oh Anne. Loosen up!! Stop with all the worrrryyiiiiiinggggggg. This may be my first time on the air but I know what I'm doing. I'm ready. *(reassuring herself)* I. AM. READY.

BARB sees someone signal from offstage and readjusts herself a bit.

Oh look at that! About to start. Are you ladies feeling alright? I know I am. I mean I'm not just alright I'm JAZZED. *(KATHY and ANNE stare and nod with confusion)* Oh look at me I'm rambling. Of course you're alright; you two are PROS. *(BARB gives a nervous chuckle. The green light switches on; BARB doesn't notice, she's silent for too long)*

ANNE:
Ummmm... ehchem Barb?

BARB *(snapping back into it):*
Oh dear! *(clears throat)* Sorry everyone, welcome back. I guess I was just starstruck by our two ah-may-zing female powerhouses! Anne and Kathy go on ahead and introduce yourselves.

KATHY:
I'm Kathy. I'm a lawyer.

BARB:
So succinct!

ANNE:
I'm Anne, author, professor, and longtime political consultant here. Shall we get to discussing the topic now, Barb?

BARB:
Surely! The tweet. Many are condemning the president's use of some...explicit... language in his most recent 140 character update. But his supporters seem to see no problem. Kathy, are there any laws that president is breaking with this tweet.

KATHY:
None. The constitution says nothing about the president's ability to use or not to use explicit language in tweets.

ANNE:
Well of course it doesn't! There were no smartphones let alone any social media platforms in 1787-

BARB (*in classic BARB innocence- she doesn't see what she's doing wrong*):
Woah there smarty-pants year drop much? For any of you who don't know, Anne here is referencing 1787 because that is the year the constitution was ratified. Carry on, Anne!

ANNE:
As I was saying, this isn't about if what the president is doing is constitutional, this is about if he acting as a president should. And I have to say using the f word several times in a tweet, that is just inappropriate.

KATHY:
Well sure Anne, maybe it's not your favorite thing, experimental writing usually isn't, but he's not perfect, and the law never says a president has to be. I don't know about you but I'd rather have a trustworthy leader and deal with a vulgar tweet every now and then than some crooked, untrustworthy floozy in office and be constantly worrying about the nation's security.

BARB, *who has been distracted playing with her papers and zoning out is pulled in by KATHY's aggressive remark. She cannot help herself and makes a disgusted face.*
KATHY and ANNE notice.

Kathy:

Um, excuse me (*trying to remember*) Barb, is something the matter?

BARB (*she cannot believe she has let her personal opinions affect her newscasting, so in a in a flustered panic she says...*):

Uh.. um.. What? No! I'm just gassy... super gassy... I'm trying to figure out if I tooted or pooped hahaha (*everyone— including BARB who is thinking, “really Barb THIS is what you come up with to cover yourself?”— is WILDLY uncomfortable*) I'm sorry I made such a face, it was nothing about you Kathy. You ladies are doing great! Your thoughts, Anne?

ANNE:

Well Kathy, I have to say I think you're obfuscating the issue here. We are not discussing the election, nor are we discussing national security, this is about potentially offensive language being used by the leader of the free world.

BARB:

Well what a great place to leave off, we'll be back right after these commercials. Look out for the M&M one, it's hilarious!

The green light switches off

BARB (*cont.*):

Well that wasn't bad!

KATHY:

Are you kidding me?

BARB:

You know Kathy, you're being a little bit of a debby downer.

KATHY:

I'm doing my job Barb. I'm being professional.

BARB:

So am I!

KATHY:

Ha!

BARB:

What?

KATHY:

You call that professional?

BARB:

As a matter of fact I do! What I can't crack a joke every now and then?

ANNE:

Well Barb it's one thing to crack a joke, it's another thing to openly talk about your bowel movements on the air!

BARB:

Well if you ladies hadn't made me so nervous with your (*mimicking*) Oh we have to be professional! We MUST be prepared! This newscast is life! or! death!

KATHY:

It's not our job to make you feel better Barb!

BARB:

Well no of course not but I mean you could lighten up a little. Or at least give me a chance I felt like I was on a roll out there!

ANNE:

A roll?

BARB:

Yes Anne! A roll. A ROLL! A nice, buttered, delicious dinner ROLL. I am giving the people what they want! I am giving them the NEWS and MAYBE it's not exactly how YOU would do it, but SO WHAT? This is Up To Date with Barb for God's sake.

(ANNE scoffs)

KATHY:

Is there a problem, Anne? Can't handle something not being *exactly* how you want it?

ANNE:

Excuse me?

BARB:

ALRIGHTY I think we're all feeling a little tense...I'm sorry for my outburst, but we're going to be back on... why don't we do some meditative yoga breaths, get back on track.

ANNE (*to Kathy, ignoring Barb*):

What makes you think you can talk to me like that?

KATHY:

What makes you think I can't?

ANNE:

Show a little respect Kathy you're not presenting well.

KATHY:

You can't tell me what to do you're not my teacher anymore.

ANNE:

Oh come on is that what this is all about? You're still holding a grudge?

KATHY:

You shouldn't have failed me Anne! I deserve an A/ in that class not a B-

ANNE:

/I gave you a B-! How is that failing? I told you to stop equivocating and muddling the important issues, (*under her breath*) but it seems like you can't even refrain from doing that on national television.

BARB:

Ohhhh! I sense drama here. Let me help, I can be a GREAT mediator.

ANNE/KATHY (*overlapping remarks of annoyance first directed at BARB but develop into ANNE and KATHY fighting about past professor/student qualms*):

ANNE:
Are you kidding me?

KATHY:
What are you talking about?

ANNE:
What on earth compelled you to say that? Don't act like you have any authority to give
ME advice (*directed at Kathy*)

KATHY:
Are you serious that was ONE TIME!

ANNE:
Oh sure.
(*etc. ideally improvised by actors with solid comedic timing for a **good time***)

The green light comes on in the middle of ANNE and KATHY's exclamations of irritation

BARB (*noticing they're on air*):
Okayyy (*clears throat*) um... ladies. Ladies. Anne? Kath? (*ANNE and KATHY finally notice they're on*). Whoops sorry about that folks, we got too caught up in our fun little break (*classic BARB laugh*). Anyways... the president's tweet. We've heard Anne and Kathy's respective takes on it. Why don't we bring in another voice. Columnist and vehement opposer to political correctness, (*BARB and ANNE cannot help but make a slight face and KATHY cannot help but make a slight face at their faces*) Ethan, is currently dialing in. In the meantime, Kathy I'm curious about what you have to say in regards to Ethan's previous writings— in terms of the law of course.

KATHY (*with an AGGRESSIVE amount of shade*):
Well, Barb, I appreciate how Ethan isn't afraid to go on a meaningful tangent once and awhile.

BARB:
Interesting commentary on his rhetorical devices, but from your perspective as a lawyer?

ANNE (*under her breath with exaggerated mouthing and eye contact with KATHY*):

B minus.

KATHY (*losing it*):

GOD I KNOW WHAT MY JOB IS BAAAAARRRRBBBB!

BARB (*oblivious to KATHY and ANNE's interaction*):

Oh, right of course ummmm (*she scrambles to look for her notes and in her flustered-ness she is distracted by her thoughts: "is this really how my first day on air is going to be? My last?! Ugh Barb!" and she spills her water*) Oh my god!

KATHY (*laughing*):

Oh of course, ruin journalism for all women, Barb!

ANNE:

I am soaking wet! Can I have a napkin please? Kathy stop laughing!

BARB:

Hey! You know what! I am trying my best! (*a stage manager runs on with paper towels*) Thank you. Speaking of my best/ back to the news, to what the people want.

ANNE:

/You know, Kathy, even if you didn't get the grade you wanted in my class, look where you are now.

KATHY:

Sitting with Barb? I wouldn't say I'm doing so hot...

ANNE:

I was just trying to make nice so we could get back to politics

KATHY:

GREAT so why don't we? Barb, let's get this over with and put Ethan on.

ANNE:

Oh great he's gonna love this. Three women losing it on the air! (*laughing a "my career is over!" laugh.*)

BARB:

Uhh...we'll be right back after this break!

(Light signals they have gone to commercial)

KATHY:

Oh god.

BARB:

OK ok it's gonna be fine it's gonna be fine! We can save this. Ethan is.....experienced at the very least. Just... sticks and stones ladies here we go.

ANNE:

He will never take another woman seriously again.

BARB:

Ya know what Anne, you're probably right. But do you know what else? That's RIDICULOUS! So I spill a little water? So you two have your little disagreement? I'm pretty sure we got to all the issues and I KNOW I've seen worse broadcasts—

KATHY:

—I don't know if I have.

ANNE (during this monologue, Anne pulls a Cinderella and spins so that her clothes become those of a hippie, crunchy, feminist as fuck gal—maybe patriotic music plays in the background. This is her true self and she is so into it):

But Barb is right Kathy; think about *WHY* this feels like the worst broadcast in the world to you. It's because of Ethan! Ethan and the boys like him who tell strong, powerful, smart women like us to SCRUTINIZE every little detail. We are held to these impossible standards which society puts in place, and then I come along and as a women put them on you and Barb, and that was wrong. I have seen the light now. We are strong.

KATHY:

Jeez Dr. Lawrence I thought you always told us to show not tell.

ANNE:

Sometimes all one can do is tell.

BARB *(making sure no tears fell out of her eyeballs):*

Anne. That was beautiful.

KATHY:

I can't believe I almost let the Ethans of the world convince me I'm stupid! I am so fucking smart!

BARB and ANNE affirm this

BARB (*noticing*):

We're back on in three.

KATHY:

I think it's time for us to give Ethan a piece of our mind.

ANNE:

I couldn't agree more. You got this, Barb.

The three triumphantly face forward, ready to face Ethan and the world.

BARB:

Ok we're on in 3,2,1!

Blackout. Outro music, iCarly Theme Song plays

Dog Years

By Amar Ahmad

Characters:

JAHLI (*JAH-LI*) - 18

NOAH- 18

AT RISE: Lights up on a forest area with 2 friends walking. They push themselves through bushes and branches. NOAH is in the back while JAHLI is leading.

JAHLI

Sounds like you wasted your summer.

NOAH

How did I waste my summer? Nature camp was the best, I met some real nice people and the-

JAHLI

Yea but did you hook up with anyone?

NOAH

No bu-

JAHLI

So you did waste it.

NOAH

I don't think you understand the point of camp.

JAHLI

Camp is for sex, what's to understand?

NOAH

It's not!

JAHLI

It is! Every camp ever! 4-H Camp, sex. Girl Scout Camp, sex. Jewish Community Center Camp, sexapalooza! (*In a quieter tone*) Did you know Camp David was built so presidents could have orgies?

NOAH

That's not true! You can't just say absurd things without citing so-

JAHLI

Whatever man, you wasted your summer.

NOAH

You're right. Remind me what you did with your's?

(Beat. A little hurt that NOAH would bring the past up against JAHLI)

NOAH

Y'know what I'm gonna head back, I gotta pack for college tomorrow anyways.

JAHLI

Chill, we're close. How are we gonna hang when you're in Cali?

NOAH

(matter-a-factly) We won't hang. Because I'll be in California... You still too lazy to say the ends of words?

JAHLI laughs but is hurt. Beat.

NOAH

Are you sure it's this way?

JAHLI

I know where we're going, it's only been what, two years?

NOAH

Try three.

JAHLI

I know how long I was away.

NOAH

Yeah, but we hadn't been to the campsite for months before that.

JAHLI

(dreamy and honest)

Well I've missed this. The sound of leaves crunching, the fresh air... staring at the wall there all day, It's all I thought about... time passed like fucking dog years...but mostly I just missed hanging / out with you.

NOAH

(dismissive) I think we passed the fork.

JAHLI

Huh? Nah it's all good, I remember those trees from the last time we came. Those green ones over there...

(trails off while pointing into the distance)

NOAH

A green tree? Jahli, that's an awful landmark, we're in a forest... Let's turn around, you don't / remember.

JAHLI

(irritated) I'm gonna get us to the campsite ok? I don't have to be some eagle scout to find it. I learned stuff while I was away, self reliance and-

NOAH

Dog.

JAHLI

Don't "dog" me bro, I know what I'm doing.

NOAH

(takes a pause and stares at something in the distance)

No, dog.

JAHLI

What?

NOAH walks across the stage and moves to a bush where the dog is hidden. He gets down on one knee to inspect it.

Beat.

NOAH

It's a Rhodesian Ridgeback I'm pretty sure, see how the fur runs the opposite way down its spine?

(whispers to the dog) It's okay boy.

JAHLI

What the hell are you talki-

(JAHLI walks over to inspect, he sees it and jerks his head back)

JAHLI

Jesus that's crazy.

NOAH

He's all cut up.

JAHLI

It probably came at someone and they had to kill it.

NOAH

No it's not an aggressive breed, also it's not dead, it's-

JAHLI

(confidently getting closer to the dog)

Yeah it is.

NOAH

No it's-

JAHLI slowly nudges part of the dog with his foot and he hears a high pitched whimper come from it. NOAH jumps back a bit, but JAHLI quickly becomes scared and backs FAR away.

JAHLI

Oh shit!

NOAH *(pets the dog trying to calm it back down)*

Dude!

JAHLI

I thought it was dead!

NOAH
What should we do?

JAHLI
We *should* try to make it to the campsite by dark. It's just a dog.

NOAH
He's really hurt though. Look how deep this cut is. Only two things we really could do.

JAHLI
(*Irritated*)
Yeah, we leave or *leave*. We woke up at 5am for this, I drove on the freeway for like an hour, now you wanna sit here and play with a dog?

NOAH
We *could* leave and let nature take its course, or y'know..
(*takes a beat to understand the seriousness*) we could kill it.

JAHLI
Kill it?

NOAH
Kill it

A beat

JAHLI
Fine, let's kill it and bounce.

NOAH
You think it's that easy? Killing a-- wait we should move away from the dog, you're stressing him out.

JAHLI (*sucks teeth*)
I'm stressing him out? I'm not the one who stabbed 'em.

NOAH
(*Noah gets frustrated and speaks angrily but quietly*)

Move away from the dog man.
(they take a few steps away from the dog and discuss)

NOAH

You remember, Bo? We had to put him down last year and it sucked, his eyes got so glossy and gone and...we've gotta take this seriously.

JAHLI

I can't believe Bo's dead... Damn I've missed a lot.

NOAH

This sucks.

JAHLI

(thinks for a beat) Listen he's probably in a buttload of pain, you wouldn't want to him to suffer more, so why don't we put him out of his misery? ... That way we can move on to the campsite.

NOAH

The campsite? You're living in the past man, who gives a shit about the campsite? It's never gonna be like how it was.

NOAH starts towards the dog when JAHLI stops him.

JAHLI

Stop. You know animals better than anyone and *you said* this dog just isn't long for this world. Shouldn't we make his transition easier?

NOAH

(Doesn't listen to JAHLI and frantically starts to think of ways to help the dog)
Help me get it's legs, I learned this thing at camp where-

JAHLI

We're just gonna end up with a bloodied up dog in the back of my trunk and a day wasted.

NOAH

You know what, fine! Kill the damn dog!

JAHLI

(stunned a little) Me?

NOAH

Yes *you* If you know it's best for it, If you're so certain... then *you* kill it.

JAHLI

Uh OK...*(JAHLI grabs a rock from the ground and starts towards the dog, you see him trying to get hyped up and kill the dog even though deep down he is unsure)* OK..., *(He tries to reassure himself)* OK, I will.

JAHLI

I could do this in my sleep. Y'know I've done way worse Noah, I didn't get put away for nothing. Piece of cake.

(He hastily moves towards the dog as NOAH takes a step back. JAHLI brushes back the fur on the dog to reveal a collar, it makes him stop dead)

JAHLI

Bentley.

(He hunches back, away from the dog, and takes a beat)

JAHLI

His name is Bentley.

NOAH

So? What's the matter?

JAHLI

Nothing! I just need a second to-to kill it right.

NOAH

To kill it right?

JAHLI

Yes! Shut up for two seconds!

(JAHLI raises the rock again, higher this time)

JAHLI

(sigh) Bentley.

(He drops the rock)

JAHLI
I can't do it

NOAH
What?

(JAHLI springs to his feet suddenly and NOAH takes a couple steps back. He starts to get in his face about it while he talks, frustrated with himself)

JAHLI
I *(pause)* can't *(pause)* do it! I can't kill Bentley. Jesus Christ, I sat next to a kid named Bentley in 4th grade. We traded snacks. I was the damn lookout, that's why they locked me up okay? I'm not a killer.

NOAH
I know you aren't! You just- you have to think through your decisions. *(Trying to comfort JAHLI in some way but hints to JAHLI'S past)*

JAHLI
What's that supposed to mean?

NOAH
You know what I mean.

JAHLI
I hoped that at least my *best friend* wouldn't judge me for my *past* mist-

NOAH
We stopped being best friends when you met what's her face and started skipping every camping trip to go suck face.

JAHLI
So it's my fault that you wanted to sit in your room, burying your face in books?

NOAH

Yes, yes it is.

JAHLI

I always invited you to come! You just *want* to play the victim.

NOAH

You're right I should be just like you. Just go with the flow and never make any real choices with my life.

JAHLI

So you're just perfect? Noah's just perfect?

NOAH

I'd rather know about stuff like forests and leaves, so I could get out of difficult situations, like hmm... maybe being lost in the woods with a hurt dog?

JAHLI

Yea it's really helping us now! I'm sure you being in denial about the goddamn facts of nature is bringing him great relief. *(talking to Bentley in a cute dog voice)* You feel better boy? *(JAHLI gets low and real close to the dog)* Huh!? Huh!?

(The dog whimpers again. NOAH jerks JAHLI back by the collar of his jacket and pushes him away)

NOAH

Back off!

JAHLI

No you back off man!

(JAHLI starts to rush towards NOAH but thinks better off it, instead turning around and walking to the opposite side of the stage.)

JAHLI

Fuck!

A quick beat while they both catch their breath

JAHLI

Are we waiting here all day or what? It's getting dark.

NOAH

Just face it you can't do it, you never could.

JAHLI

You know what Noah, you're right, okay? Are you happy? I can't kill the dog. But tell me what I can do to make you stop hating me because honestly I'm clueless.

NOAH

(thrown off) Hate you? I don't hate you, I don't know what--

JAHLI

(blurts out) How come you never visited me?

NOAH

What?

JAHLI

You know *what*. I was there 33 months and 5 days and you never came. No letters, no nothing. It would've been nice to see... even talk to a friend.

(NOAH gets flustered and walks around nervously looking for an excuse when called on his shit)

JAHLI

I never felt more alone in my life.

NOAH

(looking for words)

I had work... and school...and SAT stuff, I was too busy.

JAHLI

Too busy?

NOAH

I wish I said something. But I didn't. And we... I... I can't get back those years you lost. *(tries to justify it in his head)* I didn't think it would matter. You always blend in wherever you go anyways!

JAHLI

Nah Noah. I'm my own person, I make my own decisions.

NOAH

See you aren't. You practically changed overnight.

JAHLI

People change! That's what high school's all about!

NOAH

But when were you planning to stop? You kept changing and changing, and for who? I'd be fine if the guy who started getting wasted with those idiots and got put away was *you*. But it wasn't and... that breaks my fucking heart.

JAHLI

So it got messy, I know it did, It's not your fault. It was me who messed up, but I'm different now I swear. I know who I am.

NOAH

Really? You can't even decide whether to kill this dog or not.

JAHLI

Well you can't either!

NOAH

You're right, but at least I don't go around robbing Chick Fil A's just because my friends want to.

JAHLI

Can't we just *go camping*?!

NOAH

Can't you do things because *you* want to, not because it's the easy way out.

(JAHLI stops dead and is unsure of how to respond to NOAH'S comment, he starts to talk but is choked up. Beat. NOAH gets disappointed in him and he seems exasperated while he talks)

NOAH

(gives up)

You know what let's go. Forget I brought it up, let's just leave like you wan--

JAHLI

No. I want to do it. I'll do it.

NOAH

Do what?

JAHLI

Bentley, I'm going to put Bentley out of his misery. It's the right thing to / do

NOAH

Nevermind what / I said

JAHLI

It isn't about you. I should've done this a while ago. Long before this dog even existed.

(quickly picks a rock off the ground and starts to sparratically move towards the dog. JAHLI gets on his knees and take a beat before raising the rock above his head. NOAH notices that the decision JAHLI has made is hurting him. NOAH grabs JAHLI'S arm as he is getting ready to kill the dog).

A beat

NOAH

Give it to me.

JAHLI

I can do it.

NOAH

I know you can.

NOAH takes the rock out of JAHLI'S hand and JAHLI moves back slowly. NOAH gets on his knees and hits the dog. The dog lets one more sharp yelp. JAHLI is shocked and backs away. After NOAH finishes there's a long beat)

JAHLI

Th-th-thank you. I - I-- *(trails off)*

NOAH bends down into the bush, he pats his hand up and down like he's petting the dog)

NOAH

(whispers) Good boy, Good boy

Beat.

NOAH

(slowly gets up and composes himself)

The campsite is back north.

NOAH starts walking off stage in one direction and JAHLLI pauses, looks down at the dog and then follows without a word of hesitation.

BLACKOUT

HEAD OVER HEELS
By Jeremy Gordon

Characters:

ELIJAH: Male, late 20s, introspective.

HANK: Male, late 20s, brutally outspoken.

JESSE: Female, late 20s, empathizes with others.

Lights up outside a trendy café. ELIJAH is sitting at a small table with his pen and pad of paper. He is trying to write down his ideas. JESSE pops onto stage, three drinks in tray, and looks over at ELIJAH, smiling. JESSE then steals the seat next to ELIJAH.

JESSE

Hey!

ELIJAH

Ah!

ELIJAH recoils clutching the letter.

JESSE

I thought you'd be here. I brought your usual if you want it.

ELIJAH

What the heck! I could've had a heart attack!

JESSE

Do you want your coffee?

ELIJAH

No! (*gentler*) I mean yes. Thank you.

ELIJAH takes a light sip.

JESSE

Sorry for the spook, I should've thought to knock or something.

ELIJAH

It's fine.

JESSE notices the paper in ELIJAH's clutches.

JESSE

What do you have there?

ELIJAH

Nothing.

JESSE

Seems to be something.

JESSE reaches for the pad, but ELIJAH pulls back.

ELIJAH

Well it's really nothing.

JESSE

Is it a letter to that girl?

ELIJAH's eyes go wide.

ELIJAH (*badly lying*)

What girl? I don't know what you're talking about?

JESSE

First off I know that you're lying, second it's fine your secret is safe with me.

ELIJAH

How do you know about that?

JESSE

Elijah, we are more connected than you think.

ELIJAH

But you'll keep this between us two?

JESSE

Well for your sake I want to, but I have to tell-

HANK butts into the conversation.

HANK

Coming in hot, watch out! I can't steer this thing! Captain Hank is going down! Mayday! Mayday!

HANK lands in between ELIJAH and JESSE, all the while doing his various sound effects. HANK boisterously snatches his tea off of the table.

HANK

Luckily the medics were already on the scene with a nice chai tea to console the pilot.

JESSE

Of course, anything for the survivor of such a horrible accident.

HANK

Even some mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?

JESSE

A small peck should do the trick.

JESSE kisses HANK.

JESSE

How is everything going on with you honey?

HANK

Oh you know, it's normal, Jesse. No more different from the ordinary day, it's no big deal. (*turns to ELIJAH*) But you! How's life? I've barely seen any of you since you moved out.

ELIJAH

Uh...

JESSE

Well actually, Elijah just wanted to talk to you about how he's been writing a letter to a very special girl, right before you burst onto the scene.

ELIJAH

I was?

HANK

A letter? The only people who write letters are homesick campers or old timey kidnapers. So which one are you?

ELIJAH

Neither.

HANK

So then who are you writing to?

ELIJAH

She's, uh, a friend of mine.

JESSE

Come on, tell him! He won't judge.

ELIJAH

I'll tell you if you just be quiet. No comments from the peanut gallery alright?

JESSE

Yes of course. Shutting up now.

HANK

I'll do the same.

Beat.

ELIJAH

Her name is Mona. Mona Lisa.

Another beat.

HANK

Wait hold on. The Mona Lisa? Like no eyebrows, kinda smirky, hazel eyes?

ELIJAH

Yeah that's her. She's the one.

HANK

Oh brother.

JESSE

Hank, you said you wouldn't judge.

ELIJAH

We've been in correspondence since I went to Paris (pronounced pair-ee).

HANK

No no no no, back it up. How'd you meet?

ELIJAH

Here's the classic rom-com setup: I'm a lonely tourist looking for love

JESSE

in Paris-

ELIJAH

Right, in Paris (pronounced pair-ee again)-

HANK

And?

ELIJAH

-And, I'm getting no responses from anyone. But then I wind up in the Louvre and I lock eyes with this girl from across the room. Initially I think nothing of it, but I keep looking back, and her eyes keep following me.

JESSE

Get to the part where you start writing to her, that's the meat of it.

ELIJAH

Well I inevitably didn't talk to her.

HANK

You didn't talk to her because you literally couldn't talk to her.

ELIJAH

Yes.

HANK

It was impossible.

ELIJAH

It was impossible because I couldn't work up the courage. But the funny thing is, I was talking to a barista the next day, and he knew how to get a hold of her address. And I haven't stopped writing since!

JESSE

I'm sure she's glad those letters are always with her to let her know somebody loves her.

HANK

But, she... isn't real.

ELIJAH

Yes she is.

HANK

I mean yeah, she's a real painting, but not a real person.

ELIJAH

I can assure you that what I feel is real.

HANK

No not that you don't have these feelings but that-

JESSE

If Elijah says it, you have to trust him, right?

HANK

Well yes but she can't-

ELIJAH

If she wasn't real then how did she write me!

HANK

She wrote you?

ELIJAH (*fondly*)

A few times. They were sweet and kind.

HANK

And do you have these letters?

ELIJAH

No, I left them at home. I didn't think I'd need them.

HANK

Well that's a good alibi. How'd you even get the letters back?

ELIJAH

Sent in the mail.

HANK

But that doesn't add up. Your mail still forwards to our address.

ELIJAH

Well I couldn't believe it at first, but now it is wonderful!

JESSE

Hank, don't discourage him from what this is! I mean look at him! He's in love!

HANK expresses his disdain.

You know how love makes you feel. To be madly in it is to be alive! That's when you know!

HANK

All I'm saying is that you need to see where the relationship could go, logistically speaking. Like I get the feelings and all that, but you have to look at the options-

JESSE

Right, of course.

ELIJAH

Hmm?

JESSE

I mean that would be your your approach to this.

HANK

Yes, the rational approach.

JESSE

That's best for you in the long run.

HANK

Exactly. That's how we live.

JESSE

That's why we aren't too much of anything.

HANK

Why are you dancing around this?

ELIJAH

Am I in the middle of something? Because if so-

JESSE

I'm just trying to get an answer.

HANK

But Elijah is right here, we should do this later, in private.

JESSE

I don't care what he hears, I just want an answer.

HANK

Jesse, you want to know about us? Remember back to what I told you when we first met. I told you in the beginning, I wasn't looking for anything too serious. That wasn't what I had planned. You chose to be with me, even though you knew I would never "love you deeply" back.

JESSE

Yes but-

HANK

But what? This is all in your head. We are fine. We have what we have, and we stand by each other, and I don't understand why you're against me right now.

JESSE

I'm supporting Elijah.

ELIJAH

Thank you.

HANK

But why aren't you with me?

JESSE

Do I always have to be on your side? And Elijah needs someone-

HANK

Yes I need you to stand with me! How can we be anything if we don't even agree?

JESSE

I'm with Elijah on this, okay? I want him to have this love.

HANK

Why?

JESSE

I sympathize with him, alright?

HANK

But why?

ELIJAH

Hank I feel like that's far enough with the questioning, she doesn't need to answer to you.

HANK

I just want to know-

JESSE

Because I wrote the letters!

ELIJAH

What?

HANK

What?

JESSE

I'm her. Just like you said Hank, Elijah's mail forwards back to our apartment and since there was no Mona Lisa to receive them, they arrived at our doorstep. I was going to discard the

letters, but I read them and I wasn't going to let love die for Elijah,

Turns to ELIJAH.

So I wrote you back. Initially I didn't mean much of it, but it grew, and eventually I found a way for me to love you. You filled a part of me that I wasn't getting.

ELIJAH

So it's been you? That's-

HANK

What the hell? How could you blindside me? How could you go under my nose, behind my back, over my head?

JESSE

That wasn't my intention Hank.

HANK

Why couldn't we talk about it?

JESSE

You never talked about it. You never wanted to talk about it. You would have the bare minimum of contact with me, every day. It wasn't enough, Hank.

HANK

I realize that now.

JESSE

Look, I don't know what I was thinking, maybe I thought it would be fine for the time being.

HANK

I thought I had you as a constant. Maybe not a committed girlfriend, but that you would always be there.

JESSE

Even though you never actually felt that way?

HANK

You know in a weird way, you were the constant source of comfort in my life.

JESSE

Did you love me back?

Beat.

HANK

In a way I suppose. I shouldn't have been dismissive. I made a few miscalculations on where I thought we'd go.

Beat.

HANK

I tried to keep my life in balance, can you fault me for that?

ELIJAH

I mean yeah a little bit.

HANK

Oh, I see.

ELIJAH

Well I mean you hurt me too. But, I know you're not completely terrible. You're a good guy, Hank, I know you are you've just.. lost your way.

JESSE

A fallback, Hank? A fallback? I don't know. You just never..

Beat.

JESSE

I mean I want to forgive you but..

HANK

No, I understand.

JESSE

It's going to take time, for the both of us.

HANK

Well, I think I better head out then. Thanks for the tea.

Beat.

HANK

And I'm sorry. To both of you.

HANK walks away, distraught. Beat. JESSE turns to ELIJAH.

JESSE

So... what about us?

ELIJAH

Us? Is us a "thing"?

Slight beat.

Do you want us to be a "thing"?

JESSE sort of half nods yes.

JESSE

I mean there is something there. There is undeniably this.

ELIJAH

But what to do about this?

Beat.

ELIJAH

I...I mean I want it, but not this way, in this way. Not the way this turned out.

JESSE

I know what you mean.

ELIJAH

It's too fresh right now. I need to take some time. To process.

JESSE

And after that?

Beat.

ELIJAH

Maybe we'll grab a coffee or something?

JESSE

I'm a fan of coffee.

ELIJAH

I know.

Beat.

ELIJAH

Okay. Bye.

ELIJAH walks away from the table, regretting the way things played out. JESSE sits at the table alone. She looks at the letter ELIJAH left on the table. She takes it in her hands and reads it, smiling.

Blackout.

LDR

By Gabriella Matos and Martha Bennett

CHARACTERS:

Paris: Female, 17 years old.

Camden: Male, 17 years old.

SETTING:

Stage is broken into two symmetrical halves by two beds, the headboards of each up against the backs of each other. Each half of the stage represents a bedroom, and have small pieces of furniture within them.

AT RISE:

CAMDEN and PARIS are each sitting on their beds, facing back to back from each other. CAMDEN is scrolling through some form of social media on his phone. PARIS is dialing CAMDEN's number and putting her phone to her ear.

PARIS and CAMDEN: *(simultaneously)* How are you?!

CAMDEN: *(laughs and lies down on his bed)*

PARIS: I'm good...yeah I'm really good. You?

CAMDEN: I'm okay. I'm FREEZING though. The power's out and there's no way to know when it's coming back. It's like the third storm this month! *(clumsily puts earbuds into his phone and then his ears)*

PARIS: Ohmygod are you surviving?

CAMDEN: Ha. I'm trying. Actually, oh my God—so today in Physics this guy Henry—everyone calls him Julius because he tried to take—

PARIS: *(interrupting)* I like you.

CAMDEN: Paris.

PARIS: I'm sorry, I just—it had to—sorry.

CAMDEN: No no! It's just crazy because we've only known each other for, what, 2?

PARIS: 3.

CAMDEN: 3 months and...I really—*(pauses, takes a long breath)*

(During this long breath PARIS realizes she cannot hear him anymore. She starts pressing her phone frantically. CAMDEN does not realize he is no longer being heard)

PARIS: Hello? Hello?

CAMDEN: ...Really like you too.

PARIS: What? I can't hear you *(beat)* Hello?

CAMDEN: Paris? *(stares at his phone)* Parisparisparisparisparis!

PARIS: Oh for the love of Go—Guysaresofuckingstupid whatiswrongwithhim *(flops face forward onto her bed)*

CAMDEN: Mom!

PARIS: *(reaches one arm out holding her phone hanging off the bed and texts him without looking)* Where are you?

CAMDEN: Oh God. *(frantically tries to plug phone into charge. Realizes this will do nothing since the power is out)*

Wait. Mom! Can I borrow your phone for a minute! *(exits)*

(Scene shifts to PARIS)

PARIS: This is fine. It's so chill. I'll just find him, yeah.

(PARIS takes out her laptop.)

PARIS: Facebook... *(typing)* Camden...Camden...I don't...Camden Walsh? Williams? It was something just *so* generic. Okay, Snapchat? No...not on the computer...And he's always so proud of how he doesn't have Instagr—oh god. I can't believe I don't know his *name*.

(Scene shifts to CAMDEN. He enters with his mother's old iPhone)

CAMDEN: Siri call Paris.

Siri: I don't see Paris in your Contacts. Should I look for locations by that name?

CAMDEN: Oh...Siri can you google her numb—Nevermind.

(CAMDEN sits on the edge of his bed. CAMDEN begins to play through a fantasy scenario in his head. PARIS crosses the stage and stands in front of him)

CAMDEN: I think I'm in love with you.

PARIS: (*opens her mouth to speak. Takes in a breath. Stares at him*)

CAMDEN: She would text "what."

PARIS: What. (*neutral tone. A statement. As if Google Translate is reading it*)

CAMDEN: Wait— she doesn't include question marks in her texts. Would it be—

PARIS: What? (*exaggerated intonation*)

CAMDEN: or—

PARIS: What. (*harshly monotone*)

CAMDEN: No, okay. She would say it the first way.

PARIS: What?

CAMDEN: If you think about it we're not *really* that far apart—

PARIS: We're exactly 1,934 miles away from each other.

CAMDEN: It *could* work...

PARIS: We could work.

CAMDEN: Yeah but how?

PARIS: *(opens her mouth to speak. Takes in a breath. Stares at him)*

CAMDEN: She would text “idk” but...

PARIS: Idk.

CAMDEN: ...how do you *say* that?

PARIS: *(opens her mouth to speak. Takes in a breath. Stares at him)*

CAMDEN: All lowercase?

PARIS: I don't know. *(in a meek way)*

CAMDEN: No, normally, but with a question mark.

PARIS: I don't know? *(exaggerated intonation)*

CAMDEN: Or, an exclamation mark?

PARIS: *(yelling exasperatedly)* I don't know!

CAMDEN: No. She would add a period this time.

PARIS: *(morosely)* I don't know.

CAMDEN: I'll get a job! Save up for a plane ticket. Jason says that the trampoline park pays like, mad money. By the end of the month I could have three-hundred *easy*.

PARIS: Yeah except, basketball. UCLA?

CAMDEN: She would definitely say that.

(to Paris) I'll quit. Seriously. I'll come visit every time I have \$300 saved up.

PARIS: No. You can't do that for me.

CAMDEN: It's worth it.

PARIS: Okay!

CAMDEN: I mean, like I think so.

PARIS: Okay?

CAMDEN: Or maybe she'd just go—

PARIS: No.

CAMDEN: Period. *(takes out laptop. Says out loud as voice trails off)* Dear Coach... I know we should probably talk about this in person...

(PARIS walks back across stage and sits on her own bed)

PARIS: *(slams computer shut)* It's like he doesn't exist.

PARIS: *(directed more towards audience)* Maybe it's fine. Maybe he got so happy he had to get

right onto a bus to come see me to tell me–

(CAMDEN runs across stage into PARIS' room. PARIS' own fantasy begins to play out)

CAMDEN: Do you know how easy it is to actually find someone on SnapMap? It's so creepy.

PARIS: Oh my God...how did you get here so fast?!

CAMDEN: It doesn't matter! I like you too...you're amazing!

PARIS: You are more! *(goes into hug CAMDEN. CAMDEN freezes in place)*

Wait. Is he a hugger?

(Onstage the actors "rewind" into their positions from the beginning of the scene.)

CAMDEN: It doesn't matter! I like you too...you're amazing.

PARIS: You are more.

(PARIS and CAMDEN shake hands awkwardly for an uncomfortable amount of time)

PARIS: What if he doesn't do eye contact?

(PARIS steps away, semi-frozen.)

How tall is he? Do I look up at him or visa-versa?

(CAMDEN, as if a robot, bends his knees to "shrink down")

PARIS: No, no he couldn't be that short. He plays basketball. He's the captain of his team.

(CAMDEN stretches up on his tiptoes)

PARIS: Yes...okay. That's probably it. But what if he said...

CAMDEN: *(in character)* Do you know how easy it is to actually find someone on SnapMap? It's so creepy. I just had to tell you, I really like you too.

(CAMDEN leans down to kiss her. They kiss and hug. CAMDEN smiles at her and they stare at each other)

PARIS: Wait– what color are his eyes?

(CAMDEN walks across the stage back into his “room.” The moment he crosses the threshold, he immediately gets back into his normal character. PARIS sits on her bed with her face in her hands. CAMDEN and PARIS start talking almost simultaneously—the dialogue is fast paced and staggered)

CAMDEN: How do I tell my Mom? What if Paris has been reading my texts all wrong? Maybe she took all of my sarcasm as serious this whole time. She probably thinks I'm a sociopath. Or just crazy! I only type in lowercase letters. Does she think I'm passive aggressive? Or that I'm trying too hard to be “original?” She likes me but, who does she think I am?

PARIS: I have no idea who he is. Who am I looking at? Maybe it's his voice, it's his voice on the phone but not in person, like how would I know? God he must think I'm weird. Stupid. Or just crazy. *(Runs to stand in front of a mirror in her room)*

He's never even seen the rest of my body. I'm a torso with no legs! What if he's the world's shortest basketball player? Who *is* the Big Spoon? We could be terrible together. Maybe love is blind...but this isn't even that.

CAMDEN's power comes back on. Beat. He races to the charger and plugs it in. There are approx five seconds of silence as he waits for the phone to turn on. He calls PARIS.

PARIS: Hello?

CAMDEN: *(almost yelling)* Hi! I'm sorry my phone died—

PARIS: Hi!!

PARIS and CAMDEN: How are you?!

PARIS: I'm good..I'm really good. You?

CAMDEN: What I was going to say—what I meant to say—I mean I don't even know if you heard before—I really like you. A lot a lot.

PARIS: Oh my G—

CAMDEN: So— We have to stop. I've been thinking about it and we should stop.

PARIS: *(beat)* What?

CAMDEN: Like it's our senior year, Paris! ...I'm going to wish...every day that I could be with you. And yeah there are some things we could do to visit but...this isn't...um...

PARIS: Worth it?

CAMDEN: It's too soon to say "worth."

PARIS: Well you mean it's not real life. If you were here, or I were there, things would be—

CAMDEN: Normal. Obviously.

PARIS: Normal, yeah.

CAMDEN: And I just don't think it makes sense, I thought for so long it did but it doesn't.

PARIS: *(beat)* Oh.

CAMDEN: Who knows, maybe somewhere down the line we'll see each other again.

PARIS: But you're saying right now—

CAMDEN: Yeah, right now it just doesn't make sense.

PARIS: *(a little too loudly)* Who cares about making sense? We're not *supposed* to have anything figured out...I like talking to you more than I've ever...I don't understand why suddenly—

CAMDEN: It's not sudden!

PARIS: Yes it *is* -/

CAMDEN: /-No it's *not*.

(Silence)

PARIS: Wait. Can I ask – What’s your last name?

CAMDEN: Marshall.

PARIS: Oh. Yeah I just didn’t know. I didn’t really know anything I guess.

CAMDEN: Yeah. *(beat)* Just think of it as a blip. Nothing else will change.

PARIS: What?

CAMDEN: Please.

PARIS: Can we ever talk again?

CAMDEN: Paris. I– *(steadies himself)* Just a blip, okay? A weird dream? A good memory? I–
(PARIS is silent) Paris...

PARIS: Yes?

CAMDEN: I’m going to miss...*(beat)* A lot of things. Thank you. *(hangs up before PARIS can say anything)*

PARIS: Of course.

Blackout.

Stage Left

By Lonnie Miller

Cast of Characters:

Lillian, an actress

Judy, an actress

Al, Lillian's agent

SETTING:

A Vaudeville dressing room containing a couch, a vanity, and a table with a newspaper on it.

AT RISE:

LILLIAN stands. AL holds out a gun. Uncertainty.

AL

Well?

LILLIAN

I don't know, Al. It don't feel right.

AL

Come on, Lilly. You know you can't get anywhere with Judy always upstaging you. Don't make this harder than it has to be.

LILLIAN

Don't it bother you, though?

AL

What other choice is there? Better to just do it quick and not think about it too much.

LILLIAN

Couldn't you ask for an advance? Maybe get a night shift somewhere?

AL

They raised the rent again. It'd never be enough.

LILLIAN

Then I guess there isn't any other choice. *(beat)* If she made it, she'd just be another of Flo's expendables.

AL

Exactly. Whereas you, Lilly, would be a star in your own right.

LILLIAN

It's about time they saw that. *(beat)* Al? You haven't heard anything about Ida, have you? I mean, the police ain't come or nothing?

AL

As far as the police are concerned, Ida was killed by a gas leak. *(beat)* Why, have they talked to you?

LILLIAN

No. But I just worry.

AL

Well, we'll be careful this time, too. They won't find us, I promise. But listen, you have to make sure nobody sees me leave today, or my whole career could be—

JUDY *(O.S.)*

Lillian!

(LILLIAN hides the gun under the newspaper on the table as JUDY enters.)

JUDY

Lillian, have you seen my compact? I swear I left it on the- Al? What are you doing here?

AL

(looking at table) Dropping something off.

JUDY

I don't see why they put such a horrid picture on the front page. I mean, a murder report is plenty bad, they don't gotta–

LILLIAN

A what? I ain't read it yet.

(LILLIAN lifts the front section, leaving the rest of the paper:)

“Ida Dunn, 27, was found dead in her home last Friday evening.”

JUDY

Oh, isn't it awful? And right when she got her big role, too. I was worried when she didn't show yesterday, but I never thought she'd be...

LILLIAN

I'd have thought you'd be pleased. That she didn't show, I mean. She was your biggest competition.

JUDY

Pleased? Who do you think I am, Lilly? Pleased. That's sickening.

AL

Oh, come on, nobody's that saintly. You're happy, admit it.

JUDY

No, Al, it may come as a surprise to you, but I didn't want Ida dead, no matter how much I wanted her part–

AL

So you admit you wanted her part, then. Not so sweet after all, huh?

LILLIAN

Jeeppers, Al, will you give it a rest?

JUDY

Give what a rest? What did I say?

AL

Nothing, doll. Lilly and I had an argument earlier, that's all. She thinks I've been too ambitious with my... career.

JUDY

Well, you have been a little pushy. Demanding promotions and bonuses and whatnot. Maybe you ought to step it back sometimes—

LILLIAN

Oh, like you've been doing? At least Al actually put in the work to get where he is.

JUDY

You don't really believe that. Siding with your fella every time an argument comes up isn't gonna get you any brownie points.

LILLIAN

Now hold on a moment, Judy, what are you on about?

JUDY

What I'm "on about" is I've had enough of you throwing yourself at him! It's pathetic, Lilly, and frankly, I thought you were better than that.

LILLIAN

Throwing myself at— Judy, he's my agent! I'm not having meetings to flirt, I just happen to care about my career! Not all of us have our gigs handed to us on a silver platter, some of us have to actually work for what we want.

AL

This is your choice, Lillian. You've seen what your options are. You ain't getting no silver platter. So what'll it be?

LILLIAN

I— that's not what I meant.

AL

Isn't it? Judy's got it made. You and me, we gotta work for it. So you put in the work, or you ain't going nowhere.

JUDY

Okay, I'm sorry, what the hell is going on here? *(beat)* Fine. Suit yourselves. You always did understand each other so well. *(JUDY goes to exit. The sound of applause comes from offstage and she turns back.)* And a fat lot of good my silver platter does me now. I missed the number.

AL

Tough break.

JUDY

Will you hush?

AL

I was just trying to be friendly.

JUDY

I don't believe you.

LILLIAN

Aw, leave him be, Judy.

AL

What did I do this time?

JUDY

If you've ever just been *friendly* in your life, then I'm the queen of Sheba.

AL

(kneels) Your Majesty.

JUDY

Stop it, Al. You and your charm and your smile and your "nothing, doll". You're up to something and you're not fooling anyone.

LILLIAN

Hey, give it a rest!

JUDY

And don't think I don't see what you've done to Lillian.

AL

Hey, if Lillian's decided she's had enough of your self-satisfied golden girl act, that's on you.

JUDY

Self-satisfied? Who are we talking about again? You think you're so clever with your little psychotic plans—

LILLIAN

Hey, hey. Nobody's done anything to me, Judes. I'm right here, see?

JUDY

Lilly, listen to me. Get out while you can. You can get a new agent. Please.

AL

Oh, but I'm the one manipulating her. Give me a break.

LILLIAN

You know what? No. Nobody is manipulating anyone. I can make my own decisions, you know.

JUDY

Of course you can, but you have to be careful, Lillian. There's something shady going on around here. Look at what happened to Ida!

(JUDY picks up the paper. LILLIAN and JUDY look at the gun, now lying revealed on the table.)

JUDY

Lilly? Is that—

LILLIAN

Oh, uh. Don't worry about that, it's just—

(LILLIAN reaches for the gun. JUDY grabs it instead and holds it away from her.

Overlapping:)

JUDY

What are you doing?

LILLIAN

I told you, it's nothing.

JUDY

I'm not an idiot, Lillian. I know something's up.

(All at once:)

LILLIAN

Nothing, it's nothing, give that back!

AL

Get the damn gun and finish it!

JUDY

You're crazy, what the hell are you doing?

LILLIAN

(to AL) Just because *you* take pride in killing people—

AL

I killed Ida because I had to.

(Beat.)

LILLIAN

Al, you can't—

AL

Well, it's not like she can tell anyone.

(Beat.)

JUDY

No... you didn't... you're *insane*, Al. You're insane. Oh my god, you murdered her.

AL

That's a strong word.

(AL approaches JUDY. JUDY points the gun at him.)

JUDY

Stay back, or...

AL

Or what? Or you'll shoot me? I'd pay to see that, wouldn't you, Lillian?

JUDY

Don't try to drag her into this.

AL

Oh, she was in it already.

JUDY

She— what?

LILLIAN

Judy, put the gun down.

JUDY

(turning the gun on LILLIAN) You helped him! You did it too!

LILLIAN

(inching towards her) Just hear me out—

JUDY

Don't you come any closer!

LILLIAN

God dammit, Judy, put the gun down! *(beat.)* Yes, I did it, okay? I killed Ida. Is that what you want to hear?

JUDY

I— No!

LILLIAN

I don't know what you want me to say. You wouldn't believe me even if I said I didn't.

JUDY

You're right. I wouldn't. *(beat)* What's happened to you? You're not a murderer.

LILLIAN

Then what am I? I hurt people, Judes. I hurt them to get what I want.

JUDY

It's— Al was— He made you do this. He did this to you.

LILLIAN

But I let him, Judy. I let him. Lord, sometimes I think Al is right, that we're all just...

(LILLIAN cries. JUDY sets the gun down on the table and goes to her.)

JUDY

Hey, hey. Hey. You're okay now. I've got you now. I've got you.

(Beat. AL nods his head towards the gun.)

AL

Now or never, doll.

LILLIAN

God, you just never stop, do you?

AL

Lillian, we don't have time for this. Just get it over with.

JUDY

Get what over with?

LILLIAN

No.

JUDY

Lilly, get *what* over with?

AL

No? What do you mean, no? We're in this together, you have to do your part.

LILLIAN

I don't owe you a damn thing, Al. All you've done is tangled me up in all this. Just leave us alone.

AL

Aw, Lilly, you wouldn't want that. What would happen to your dreams of the Follies? Of being in the spotlight? You can't do any of it without me. You've got no other choice. Besides, if I leave, I lose my job. I'll go hungry. You wouldn't do that to me, would you?

LILLIAN

(beat) You've played that card too many times, Al. It won't work anymore.

(JUDY has let go of LILLIAN and backed away.)

JUDY

Lilly, tell me you weren't...

LILLIAN

I wasn't.

JUDY

That's not what he made it sound like. "Just get it over with. You have to do your part..." *(Beat.)*
I loved you, Lillian. And the whole time, you were just...

AL

Lillian, please.

JUDY

And you! You took her and turned her against me. You're despicable, both of you. I should just—

(JUDY reaches for the gun, then stops.)

I'll turn you in. Both of you. I'll tell everyone. I'll go to the *Journal*, the *Times*...

AL

You'll do no such thing.

(He approaches the gun. LILLIAN blocks the table.)

LILLIAN

Al— Judy, both of you, stop.

AL

What are you doing? Please. We're so close.

LILLIAN

"We" aren't anything, Al. Go home.

AL

I can't. Don't you understand? There's nothing else left for me.

LILLIAN

I'm sorry, Al, but you can't do this. Not anymore. I won't let you hurt her, I won't let you hurt anyone.

JUDY

Oh, I see. So NOW you—

LILLIAN

Leave the gun and go. Just go.

AL

Get out of the way, Lilly.

LILLIAN

No.

AL

I said get OUT OF THE WAY!

JUDY

LILLIAN!

(AL dives for the gun. LILLIAN struggles with him. JUDY screams. Blackout. A gunshot sounds. Lights back up. LILLIAN lies on the ground. AL holds the gun, breathing hard. JUDY is crying. AL turns to her. Blackout.)

Star-Crossed

By Emma Richmond and Ilai Gavish

Cast of Characters:

SHELBY, female, 18

COLLEGE SAM, male, 22

MELLOW SAM, male, 19

SHELLY, female, 18

SETTING: Your local coffee shop. There are three tables, with two chairs at each table.

NOTE: When one pair is talking, the other pair continues their conversation sotto voce.

AT RISE: SHELLY enters with a to-go cup of coffee. She sees COLLEGE SAM sitting at table 1, typing on his laptop. She fixes her hair/clothes, then goes up to him.

SHELLY

Hiiiiiii, are you Sam?

COLLEGE SAM

You must be Shelby.

SHELLY

It's Shelly. It is SO nice to meet you! *(She sticks out her hand, and SAM gives it a hearty shake.)*

COLLEGE SAM

You can just grab a seat. *(She sits down across from him, eyeing up the laptop)* So, let me start by asking you some questions, and then you can ask me anything you might want to know. Sound good?

SHELLY

Are you gonna put that laptop away? *(She tries to close it for him)*

COLLEGE SAM

(Grabbing the laptop) Oh no, I'm gonna be taking a few notes. Pretend it's not there.

SHELLY

Oh.

COLLEGE SAM

I do this with everyone, so don't let it stress you out. I want to help you figure out if this is going to be a good fit for you.

SHELLY

Oh! That makes two of us, then. I want to know if THIS (*she gestures to the two of them*) is going to work out!

COLLEGE SAM

So, tell me a little bit about yourself.

SHELLY

Well, I'm 18 years young, I like long walks on the beach, hanging out with my friends, going to the movies. . . I dunno. . . I like to think I'm pretty romantic. . . I'm a gemini. What about you?

COLLEGE SAM

Excuse me?

SHELLY

Like, what's your sign?

SHELBY enters as SHELLY and COLLEGE SAM continue talking. She sits at the empty table and starts to take papers out of her bag, preparing for her interview.

COLLEGE SAM

Uh. . . capricorn?

SHELLY

You're not into that astrology stuff? I don't really believe in it either, I just think it's fun. Don't worry Sam, I know I can make my own choices in life. I'm an empowered woman!

COLLEGE SAM

Oh, are you interested in majoring in Gender Studies?

SHELLY

I haven't picked a major yet, actually. I'm thinking about doing french poetry. It's so romantic, you know? Bonjour mon cheri.

COLLEGE SAM

Okay, so that's something.

MELLOW SAM enters, and notices SHELBY right away.

MELLOW SAM

Shelly! Dude! I'm sorry I'm late! I hope you weren't waiting around for me.

SHELBY

Oh, it's actually Shelby. And it's totally fine. Gave me a few extra minutes to prepare!

MELLOW SAM sits at table 2.

MELLOW SAM

I'm Sam. It's so groovy to finally meet you!

SHELBY

Nice to meet you too. *(She hands him her resumé)*

MELLOW SAM

What's this for?

SHELBY

It's my resumé.

MELLOW SAM laughs, a bit confused.

SHELBY

Is it too much? Sorry, I figured it was a good idea to be over prepared, just in case! I want to show that I care.

MELLOW SAM

No, it's fine. Passion is important to me. *(He reaches to get her resume and spills his cup of coffee in the process. Unfazed, he uses the resume to wipe it up. SHELBY is dismayed)*

SHELBY

Um.

MELLOW SAM

So, tell me about yourself. What're you into?

SHELLY

I don't really want to talk about school, Sam. There's so much more to me than that.

COLLEGE SAM

Are you really involved in extracurriculars?

SHELLY

That's one way of putting it.

MELLOW SAM

What do you do for fun?

SHELBY

Fun? Well, I'm the captain of my school's mock trial team, I'm the vice president of my class and valedictorian, and I volunteer at a soup kitchen on the weekends. (*Beat*) I like to read for fun!

MELLOW SAM

Wow, I could never do all that. I like to just go with the flow, see where life takes me. Do you ever get to just, like, relax? Hit up a couple parties?

SHELBY

...Is this some sort of test?

MELLOW SAM

What? No! I'm just trying to get to know you.

SHELBY

Well, I consider myself to be a very driven, organized, hardworking, and dependable person.

SHELLY

I like to think of myself as pretty laid back. I like to see where life takes me, you know?

COLLEGE SAM

And where has life taken you?

SHELLY

Sam, I like to have fun. I need someone who can keep up with that! I've been to a couple of craazy parties in my time. . .

COLLEGE SAM

Parties? I'm gonna level with you, Shelly, that's really not something I like to hear. (*He types vigorously*)

SHELLY

What?

COLLEGE SAM

I'm looking for someone who takes their academics more seriously. Who makes smart choices in their free time.

SHELLY

Excuse me?

COLLEGE SAM

What I'm really looking for is someone who thinks ahead. Who has a plan for their future. Who's going to go out into the world and make a difference!

SHELBY

I just wanna do stuff that's important to me, you know? I want to make a DIFFERENCE!

SHELLY

I do have a plan! I'm just trying to find someone I can be happy with. It's cheesy, but I want happily ever after and all that stuff. That's what's important to me. What about you?

COLLEGE SAM

Let's keep the focus on you, Shelly.

MELLOW SAM

Is there anything you're, you know, wondering about me?

SHELBY

I guess a big concern for me is financial assistance?

MELLOW SAM

Oh, don't worry about it, it's on me. Do you want a coffee?

SHELBY

Uh, okay.

MELLOW SAM gets up to order. SHELBY sits alone, and eventually starts listening in on SHELLY and COLLEGE SAM's conversation.

SHELLY

You're really direct, Sam. I like that.

COLLEGE SAM

I know what I'm looking for. So, where do you see yourself ten years from now?

SHELLY

Well. . . Who really knows what the future holds, you know? But I'm optimistic. If I found the right person. . . (*she grabs his hand*)

COLLEGE SAM

Shelly, I'm really interested in your career aspirations and long-term goals.

SHELLY

I like to live in the moment. . . I really don't think that far ahead. It's more fun that way!! You seem like a really brainy guy, Sam. That's hot.

COLLEGE SAM

Shelly, I really want this to go well for you.

SHELLY

I want this to go well for both of us! It's hard finding someone you can actually talk to.

COLLEGE SAM

But you really need to think about how you're presenting yourself. I try to find the positives in everyone I talk to, you know? I'm gonna go to the bathroom, and when I get back, we can try again.

COLLEGE SAM leaves; SHELLY sits at the table, flustered. As soon as he is gone, SHELBY gets up and goes to talk to SHELLY.

SHELBY

Are you interviewing for Princeton too?

SHELLY

What?

SHELBY

Princeton University. That guy's shirt.

SHELLY

Oh, no I'm, uh, actually on a date.

SHELBY

Oh, so sorry to bother you.

SHELLY

It's fine. It's not even going that well anyway.

SHELBY

I'm sorry. Well, good luck anyway!

SHELLY

Thanks.

SHELBY goes back to her table. MELLOW SAM comes back with a croissant and hot chocolate.

MELLOW SAM

I've never actually been on a blind date before, but I think this is going well.

SHELBY

Wait.

MELLOW SAM

(mouth full of croissant) Mmm?

SHELBY

Oh. My god. *(Beat)*

MELLOW SAM

Do you not think so? Cause I really--

SHELBY

It's not that, it's just. . . I think I'm in the wrong place? *(she is distracted and keeps looking over at SHELLY)*

MELLOW SAM

The wrong-- oh, so like destiny and all that?

SHELBY

Uhhhhh, sure.

MELLOW SAM

Do you believe in fate?

SHELBY

Um.

MELLOW SAM

That's kind of a big question for a first date, I know. And this might be crazy, because we literally just met, but I get the strangest feeling that we're MEANT TO BE TOGETHER.

SHELBY

(not listening) Right.

MELLOW SAM

Shelby, I'm in--

SHELBY

Yeah, I totally agree, Sam. Give me one second, I'll be right back.

SHELBY gets up and goes to SHELLY's table

SHELBY

Hey, sorry, I think you're with the wrong guy.

SHELLY

Excuse you?

SHELBY

Your date!

SHELLY

Who are you to say?

SHELBY

What? No, I mean--

SHELLY

You don't know what my type is! Back off.

SHELBY

Look, I'm just trying to help both of us. I'm meant to be with your date.

SHELLY

You're meant to get your ass out of this booth!

SHELBY

Excuse me?

SHELLY

You heard me.

COLLEGE SAM enters and returns to the table

COLLEGE SAM

What's going on here?

SHELBY

(introducing herself to COLLEGE SAM) Hi, I'm-

SHELLY

LEAVING. *(she shoves SHELBY away from their table, who storms back to her own table)* Now, where were we?

COLLEGE SAM

Okay, let's start fresh. How about we talk about your goals. So, Shelly, do you have any plans at all?

SHELLY

I'm free this Tuesday if you wanna meet up then...

COLLEGE SAM

(losing all hope) I don't think that will be necessary. I have all the information I need. *(He starts to pack his things)*

SHELLY

Wait, what? You're leaving?

SHELBY

Sam, I really need to fix this.

MELLOW SAM

What are you talking about? Was I too forward? I'm sorry, but you can't pretend you don't feel it too!

SHELLY

Don't go! We have something here! Don't pretend you can't feel it!

COLLEGE SAM

I have had quite enough of this. You just aren't serious enough.

SHELBY

Seriously? It's not about you. You see those two people over there?

MELLOW SAM

What about them?

SHELBY

I need to break them up.

SHELLY

You're not even giving me a chance! I can be serious!

MELLOW SAM

Whoa, Shelby, I don't think you should be interfering in other people's love lives.

SHELBY

They're not supposed to be together though!

SHELLY

We're supposed to be together!

MELLOW SAM

So you do believe in fate! Forget about them Shelby. It's just me and you in this crazy world.

COLLEGE SAM

Don't be crazy. (*quick beat*) Shelly, I really tried. But people like you make me lose all hope for the future.

SHELLY

Are you FUCKING kidding me? You're an asshole!

COLLEGE SAM

Well YOU'RE an IDIOT!

SHELBY

He's being an idiot! Listen to them! He thinks that she's me! I need to go over there!

MELLOW SAM

What are you talking about?

SHELLY

(*BIG gasp*) HOW DARE YOU.

SHELBY

I'm not who you think I am.

COLLEGE SAM

I'm just being honest.

MELLOW SAM

What do you mean? Wait, actually, it doesn't even matter. I like you as you are.

SHELLY

You know what? I don't have to stand here and take this from you!

SHELBY

Can you please just listen to what I'm saying?

COLLEGE SAM

Then GO! See if I care! You NEVER WOULD HAVE EVEN GOTTEN IN HERE ANYWAY!

SHELLY gasps and slaps him, and then begins to collect her things

MELLOW SAM

Shelby! Shelbs! Shelberson. Listen to me. (*Taking her hands*) The world is full of people who expect things from you, but I'm not like that. I like the real you, no matter what that is. This is the most magical blind date I've ever been on.

SHELBY

This isn't a blind date!

MELLOW SAM

I know what you mean. It's like our souls have been able to see each other for years.

SHELBY

Sam, listen to me! I'm not interested, okay? (*she turns and moves towards the other table*)

MELLOW SAM

Oh. You could have said so sooner.

SHELLY

Thanks for nothing, loser. (*she grabs her bag and turns to leave*)

SHELLY and SHELBY meet in the middle of the stage and do an awkward/angry dance. SHELLY groans and shoves past her, and runs directly into...

MELLOW SAM

Wait, Shelby, you forgot your coffee! (*he runs into SHELLY and spills coffee all over her*)

SHELLY

Oh my GOD! This day couldn't get any WORSE!

MELLOW SAM

Oh geez I'm so sorry. (*he runs to grab napkins and helps her clean up*). That's totally my fault, Lemme help you.

SHELBY

Hi, are you interviewing people for Princeton?

COLLEGE SAM

(packing up his things) Not anymore. None of these high schoolers are good enough to get into an establishment like Princeton.

SHELBY

Please, give me a chance! I was actually supposed to interview for you, but there was a mix up and I--

COLLEGE SAM

Sorry to hear it. *(he continues packing his things)*

SHELLY

I'm sorry I shouted at you.

MELLOW SAM

It's okay. I'm Sam.

SHELBY

Wait, just listen! I have good test scores and I've done all my research! Just ask me a few questions, please.

COLLEGE SAM

Let's be real. You're not gonna get into Princeton.

SHELLY

The world needs more kind men like you, Sam. *(she pats him on the head)*

MELLOW SAM

Thanks. You know, this might sound crazy cause we just met, but--

SHELLY

NOPE. Sorry, I've sworn off men forever. *(She gets up and goes to the third table, blotting at her dress as she sits alone.)*

MELLOW SAM

Oh. *(he sits back down at his table)*

SHELBY

Hey! You don't know anything about me! I'm meant to go to this school!

MELLOW SAM

(realizing slowly) Wait...

COLLEGE SAM

But I know what you're like. All these applicants are the same. And none of you have what it takes!

SHELBY

Why are you being so rude to me? This isn't fair!

COLLEGE SAM

If I wanted to be fair, I wouldn't work in college admissions.

MELLOW SAM

Hey, come on, man. Just give her a chance, okay? She's like, really smart and stuff.

COLLEGE SAM and SHELBY

Excuse you?

MELLOW SAM

You heard me. Just because you have a humongous stick up your ass doesn't mean you have the right to ruin this girl's future!

SHELBY

Um, I don't know him.

MELLOW SAM

How dare you, sir. How dare you deprive this wonderful, amazing, smart woman of the future she deserves. I've only known her for a few hours—

SHELBY

Minutes.

MELLOW SAM

But I know that she can and will accomplish anything she puts her mind to, and you know what? It'll be your loss if you don't let her achieve her dreams.

SHELBY

Will both of you just shut up and listen to me for FIVE seconds?? (*The SAMs are taken aback*) Sam- (*they don't know who she's talking about*) THAT Sam (*she points to MELLOW SAM*) You have no idea who I am. If you had actually listened to me when we were talking, maybe you would learn something about me. But I don't need any of your help. And you (*She points to COLLEGE SAM*) are a complete and total DOUCHEWAD. I don't wanna go to this school if THIS is how prospective students are treated.

SHELBY walks away in a huff. She spots SHELLY at the table and goes to sit with her.

MELLOW SAM

(to COLLEGE SAM, after a beat) You're a dick.

COLLEGE SAM

I'm just trying to do my job. I care about the future of this school!

MELLOW SAM

Who cares about the future if you're an asshole in the present?

MELLOW SAM makes a "mind blown" gesture, and exits, proud of himself. COLLEGE SAM takes a beat then slams his laptop shut, gathers his things, and exits

SHELBY

Hey. (*SHELLY glares at her*) I'm really sorry about before. I think there was some sort of mix-up.

SHELLY

Were you supposed to. . . (*she makes some wild switching gesture*)

SHELBY

Yep.

SHELLY

And I was supposed to. . . (*she makes another gesture*)

SHELBY

Mmmhmmm.

SHELLY

(*Beat*) It's okay. It wasn't your fault. I just really wanted this to go well, you know?

SHELBY

Yeah. I do know. (*Beat*) But Sam was kind of an asshole, right?

SHELLY

Which one?

SHELBY

Both of them. (*Beat*) I guess in another universe, we both ended up with the right person.

SHELLY & SHELBY

(*Beat. They look at each other and burst out laughing*) That was a close one!

(*BLACKOUT*)

The Earth Men
By Adam Chapnik

Cast of Characters:

Dominic (Dom) - 19, male

Wanda - 68, female

Elliott - 45, male

Note: “/” marks overlapping dialogue. Left aligned dialogue is spoken, and right aligned dialogue is an unspoken, texted conversation between Claire (18) and DOM, as seen on DOM’s phone. Normal text is from DOM, and italicized text is from Claire.

SCENE:

3:16 PM, April 8th, 2024. Vermont. Inside the Vergennes Public Library. There’s a table with a few chairs around it, a bookshelf, and a checkout desk. Outside, a total solar eclipse is about to happen, and there are large crowds gathered outside to see it. They can be heard inside.

AT RISE:

The library is empty except for WANDA and DOM. WANDA is at the checkout desk, struggling to focus on her book. DOM is shelving some books. He has his phone out, and the screen is projected on the floor or wall. He’s looking at a message from “Mom” that says “We just got a letter from NASA we want to talk to you about. Please call.” He has already responded “Don’t worry I’m not going.” He gets a text from Claire and switches to that conversation. Two texts from Claire, “hey dom,” and “how far u in Martian Chronicles?” are visible.

WANDA: Can you believe that?

The Martian

DOM: Yeah.

shit ur fast!!

WANDA: That's pretty significant.

just finished and the moon be still as bright

DOM: Yeah.

It's good right?

WANDA: Do you have any pets?
Dominic?

AMAZING

DOM: *(looks up)* Oh, sorry. What was that?

so scary but i felt so bad for spender

WANDA: Do you have a dog?

Same

DOM: No.

WANDA: You should get one. If you're going to be living alone, it would be good for you.

DOM: I guess so.

Pick up on the colonialist thing?

OH YEAH

what u up to?

Work

WANDA: There's this great shelter right by here in... darn, I can't think of the name...

(beat) Anyway, you should see this place—it's incredible. All the dogs are rescues, so some of them have been abused.

DOM: Wow.

vergenes library?

YEP

WANDA: No, I mean they're still so happy to see you, even with what they've been through.

Oh, there was this one dog I remember—I think she was a beagle—and her first owner had burned her with his cigarette butts...

DOM: Wow.

u off for the totality?
My boss kind of sucks

*what do u expect!!
so no?*

WANDA: She had dot-shaped scars on her and her ears, but she was so cute and she jumped right up on top of me when I first met her, actually pushed me over.

I think she's in a home now.

But all the dogs there are like her, if you were worrying you missed out.

DOM: Yeah.

Oh ya I am
GOOD cause its the LAST IN OUR LIFETIME
Yeah I couldn't miss it

WANDA: Yep.

(beat) Well, if you ever decide to get a dog—which you should, I promise you you won't regret it.

And I mean that study...

(beat) Yep.

DOM: Yeah. Thanks.

WANDA: Yep.

(ELLIOTT and Monkey, who is invisible, enter.)

This old guy came in yesterday
He and my boss were flirting and she asked him how old he was and he said she looked 40
She's 68!!!

ELLIOTT: *(to Monkey)* Okay, fine. But remember we don't have much time so pick something short.

WANDA: Monkey! It's so great to see you!

oh thats kinda weird

(Monkey and WANDA embrace. WANDA staggers back.)

It was painful

WANDA: Woah, careful. You're so big and strong now.

sorry

ELLIOTT: Hi Mom.

WANDA: *(to Monkey)* So how are you enjoying school?

(beat) Really. What do you like to do together?

(beat) That sounds like so much fun.

Almost forgot to tell you

(Beat.)

You know about that mars mission?
like the oneway trip thing?

ELLIOTT: *(interrupting)* Hey Monkey, if you still want to read a book you should get it quick because we don't have much time.

(beat; pointing) Right over there.

(beat) I'll be right over here with Grandma.

Yeah
I got a spot in the crew

(Monkey exits. Awkward silence.)

ELLIOTT: *(cont'd)* Hey Dom, how's it going?

DOM: Oh. Hey.

WANDA: Um, Dominic, could you take over the checkout desk?

(DOM does so.)

WAIT WHAT?!

(Awkward silence.)

Yeah I've been going to the trainings and I thought it was just for fun but now I'm actually going

ELLIOTT: So... how is everything?

WANDA: The same as usual. You know.

ELLIOTT: No, I don't know.

THIS IS INSANE

WANDA: Well... I'm working—you know that... I don't know what else to say. I think you know everything.

Yeah I know

ELLIOTT: Read any good books?

WANDA: Oh yes, that reminds me, I was just talking to Dominic about this, I just read this great article on CNN about a study where they found that dog ownership reduces your chance of cardiovascular disease by one third.

NO I MEAN U HAVENT TOLD ME YOU WERE DOING THIS!!!

ELLIOTT: Hmm.

How are Einstein and Sydney?

WANDA: Oh, well, since you ask, actually Einstein just turned 17.

I didn't?

ELLIOTT: Wow.

Um, how's his limp?

WANDA: Not any better.

I'm considering putting him down. I think it's time.

NO!?!?

ELLIOTT: Oh.

(beat) Is Sydney okay though?

UR GONNA GO KILL URSELF!?!?

WANDA: Yeah, she's fine.

ELLIOTT: Good.

Sorry hold on, it's my break

WANDA: Yep.

(Pause.)

DOM: Hey, Wanda. Um... Sorry, um, it's my break now, so I'm gonna head off?

WANDA: Already?

DOM: Yeah.

WANDA: Okay.

(DOM steps outside and looks up at the sun, then re-enters. He gets The Martian Chronicles from the desk, and sits behind the bookshelf, leaning his back on it. He reads a little, but he's distracted.)

Want to call?

WANDA: *(meanwhile, to ELLIOTT)* I should probably take over the desk just so—actually, everyone's going to be outside for—how much longer until the totality?

huh??

ELLIOTT: *(looking at his watch)* Um, about five minutes.

Like with voices??

WANDA: Yeah, okay, it should be fine.

(beat) Yep.

*oh yea actually i cant right now
i still want to get through this tho*

ELLIOTT: / I met someone.

WANDA: The woman at the shelter said putting him down would be for the best, but I'm still not sure about it.

Sure

ELLIOTT: Huh.

WANDA: Remember Ranger?

so u gonna go??

ELLIOTT: Yeah?

WANDA: Really?

ELLIOTT: I do.

I mean this is a really cool opportunity and I'm really excited about it

WANDA: Well, I don't think you know what happened after she got hit.

ELLIOTT: We buried her.

DO U UNDERSTAND WHAT UR SAYING??!

WANDA: She survived, actually. But we had to put her down because her injuries were so bad.

ELLIOTT: Oh.

WANDA: I still—

Nevermind.

I still think about that sometimes.

I'm not going to kill myself

(Pause.)

ELLIOTT: I don't know.

The people at shelters usually know what they're talking about.

And you still have Sydney.

u cant go

WANDA: I know.

It's still hard.

ELLIOTT: Hey Monkey, how's it going back there? We're not going to have any time to finish.

Why not?

(Monkey enters with a book that is also invisible, and sits at the table next to ELLIOTT.)

ELLIOTT: *(cont'd)* You still want to read it even though we won't finish?

(beat) Okay... What did you get?

(beat; reading) *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me by Eric Carle.* I don't know this one.

WANDA: I love that one.

(to ELLIOTT) I can read it.

ELLIOTT: Sure.

(WANDA takes the book, and Monkey moves next to her.)

I am going

WANDA: Okay, ready? Okay.

(reading) *Before Monica went to bed, she looked out of her window and saw the moon. The moon looked so near. "I wish I could play with the moon," thought Monica, "and reached for it."*¹ This is so cute.

(noticing Monkey) What's wrong, Monkey? Why are you crying?

(beat) This is a happy story. You don't need to be sad.

DONT

ELLIOTT: Thanks Mom, but I can handle this.

(beat; to Monkey) Hey Monkey, are you thinking about Mommy?

(beat) Me too. But we're just about to see her, and it's been so long, Mommy's going to want to see how strong you've been.

(beat) I know, I know.

(beat) Do you want me to go with you?

(beat; pointing) Okay. Right over there.

(Monkey exits.)

How many people get this opportunity?

DYING IS NOT WORTH IT

(Beat.)

¹ Eric Carle. *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me.* Little Simon, 2015.

ELLIOTT: Um... are you still dating around?

I guess you're right

i am

dont go

there r so many great things u will do if u stay and dont be stupid

WANDA: Actually, I walked into this man the other day. Tom. He's this tall, lean man, clean shaven. He's a construction worker. I started talking to him because he had this cute dog with him. She looked just like Ranger, with the same black spots on her ears.

sorry

ELLIOTT: So you went out with this guy?

WANDA: I was getting there.

We had dinner, and it was very nice but it's not going to work out. But the food was very good.

You don't have to apologize

ELLIOTT: Well, it's good that you tried. You still have Sydney.

(beat) You know, I met / someone.

(Monkey enters.)

ELLIOTT: *(to Monkey)* Are you ready to go see the eclipse?

(beat) You sure?

(beat) Mom, do you want to... ?

WANDA: Sure.

(beat) Okay, ready? Okay, where were we...

(reading) *But no matter how much she stretched, she could not touch the moon. "Papa," said Monica to her father, "please get the moon for me." Papa got a very long ladder* ⁻²

(cut off by Monkey) Of course you can! Here, go ahead.

(pointing) Right here.

(Monkey reads; beat) Can you read out loud like I was?

(beat) That's okay too, I guess...

(beat) I actually I have to go to the bathroom really quick, but your Dad will be here to finish with you.

(WANDA exits. Long beat.)

² Eric Carle. *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*. Little Simon, 2015.

ELLIOTT: Hey. Dom?

DOM: Yeah?

u still there??

ELLIOTT: Where are you?

DOM: Back here.

ELLIOTT: Oh, I didn't see you.

I think I saw something about you in the news the other day?

DOM: Wait, really?

ELLIOTT: Yeah, it said you got an offer to go to Mars? That's not you is it?

DOM: I didn't think they'd publish that.

ELLIOTT: You're actually going?

DOM: I don't think so but I'm not sure yet.

ELLIOTT: It's a one-way deal, right?

DOM: Yeah.

ELLIOTT: That's tough.

DOM: Yeah.

ELLIOTT: If it was me I'd turn them down. It's such an incredible opportunity, but it's a desert out there, you know?

And think about your parents and Wanda and all the other people you're leaving behind, what that would do to them.

DOM: You're probably right. It's more so I can say I could have gone.

ELLIOTT: I get that.

Well, congrats anyway.

DOM: Yeah, thanks.

(Pause. A loud thud offstage.)

WANDA: *(O.S.)* Fuck!

ELLIOTT: Stay here Monkey.

(ELLIOTT runs to WANDA. DOM watches.)

ELLIOTT: *(cont'd, O.S.)* What happened? Are you you okay?

WANDA: *(O.S.)* Yeah.

(beat) No, I got it.

(WANDA and ELLIOTT enter.)

u there???

WANDA: *(cont'd)* Dominic, what were all of those books doing on the floor?

DOM: They're donations.

WANDA: And it didn't even register that somebody might trip over them?

ELLIOTT: Mom, I don't think he was trying to / do anything—

please dont go

WANDA: Elliott, don't contradict me in front of my employee. If you have a problem, you can speak to me where he can't hear us.

(Beat.)

ELLIOTT: Did you hear what I told you earlier?

WANDA: I don't know, is this a test? Please don't do this / right now.

ELLIOTT: *(cont'd)* I met someone, okay?

WANDA: Why are you telling this to me right now?

ELLIOTT: We're going to get married.

WANDA: Oh.

(beat) Are you sure?

ELLIOTT: Mom...

WANDA: I just don't want you to have any regrets again.

ELLIOTT: I don't regret anything.

WANDA: I know, but last time—

Sorry
I'm still here
Weird stuff happening at work

ELLIOTT: Why would I regret that? Without Luna there wouldn't be Monkey.

WANDA: I know, but... I just don't want you to regret anything. I mean, you understand what happened between me and your father?

please dont go

ELLIOTT: Mom.

WANDA: Hmm?

I'm going to turn them down
I won't go
GOOD

ELLIOTT: *(ad libbed, using this as an outline)* She's—ugh...

Um, I heard this great podcast about trees. They were talking about how the roots of all of the trees in these huge forests are connected by these microscopic underground mushrooms, like plumbing.

WANDA: Interesting.

You doing anything tomorrow?
dont think so

ELLIOTT: *(ad libbed, using this as an outline)* But the amazing thing is it's like how our brains work. Inside our heads are tiny little forests, the neurons and everything, and we live in a larger forest of society, and probably the whole universe is like this, forests in forests in forests, and we're all connected somehow by this force, this tiny, you know, mushroom plumbing.

Want to get coffee or something?

WANDA: Interesting.

(beat) I just don't want you to regret anything.

where?

ELLIOTT: We're moving to California next week. With my fiancée.

(A very long pause. Monkey interrupts.)

I don't know

Near you?

ELLIOTT: *(cont'd, to Monkey)* What's that? Oh shoot, quickly, let's go. You have your glasses? Okay, run, run.

(ELLIOTT and Monkey run outside. WANDA watches them go.)

where?

(The room quickly darkens. Crickets. The crowd gets louder and louder. There's cheering and applause.)

Where do you live?

WANDA: I'll call you tonight!

ELLIOTT: *(O.S.)* We're going to be out. If you leave a message I can call you back tomorrow—
(to Monkey) Look, look!

my moms pissed at me i have to go sorry

(Eventually, WANDA walks outside.)

See you around

ELLIOTT: *(O.S.)* Oh my god... Look, wave to Mommy! Holy—oh my god. Isn't she beautiful? Look at her. Look at her.

(The phone screen goes black.)

(DOM exits. The sound of a rocket can be heard under the noise of the crowd. The room turns red. The roar grows louder and louder, finally hitting a climax.)

(A sudden silence. Serenity.)

BLACKOUT

To Touch Saturn

Alette: 17, then 19.

Tasneem: 40's to 50's , Alette's mother.

AT RISE: TASNEEM sits at the kitchen table on a tablet, typing away. ALETTE storms in.

ALETTE
Mom!

TASNEEM
Yeah?

ALETTE
What the hell?

TASNEEM
What?

ALETTE brushes TASNEEM's hands out of the way and types furiously. She takes the tablet and reads the headline:

ALETTE
"Tasneem Jones to Set Out on Solo Mission to Saturn's Moon!"

Beat.

TASNEEM
Alette, please.

ALETTE (*still reading*)
"On Thursday, July 7th, 2164, the heroic journey to scout out potential new settlements on Titan will be championed by Tasneem Jones-"

TASNEEM
Alette, sit down, drink some Coca-Col-

ALETTE

I'm not gonna (*mocking*) "sit down and drink some Coca-Cola"-

TASNEEM

Alright-

ALETTE

You know they stockpiled food-

TASNEEM

That was *at least* fifty years ago-

ALETTE

I don't care!

TASNEEM

Well, what're you gonna drink, *water*?

ALETTE

It's expensive but at least it won't melt my insides.

TASNEEM

Would you just calm down? You sound like a conspiracy theorist.

beat.

ALETTE

Why are you even taking funding from them?

TASNEEM

From where I stand, they're funding a ticket off this planet. I know you're into the whole big bad corporation thing, but, I mean, *they're* the ones with the air production tech-

ALETTE

Yeah, exactly. And then they slap a tax on it. A corporation literally in control of the air that we breathe? It's shady.

TASNEEM

It's not like they're Big Brother or anything.

ALETTE

Well, on earth at least oxygen wasn't taxed.

TASNEEM (*totally not serious*)
I mean, would you rather go back?

Beat.

TASNEEM

(*Laughing disbelief*) You're insane.

ALETTE

I'm not saying we can snap our fingers and just fix everything. I know that. We could start small, maybe clean up a country.

TASNEEM

Listen. Earth is dead. It died the second we left it. There's no point in going back.

ALETTE

Well, there's no point in staying here.

TASNEEM

Yeah, no shit. We have to go somewhere.

ALETTE

Then why not earth?

TASNEEM

Moving backwards? I don't think so.

ALETTE

It's not moving backwards, it's.... think of it like revisiting a failed project.

TASNEEM

The key word there is failed.

ALETTE

The key word *here* is failed. Look at the kind of life we're living on Mars.

TASNEEM

It's not... ideal, but we're working with what we've got, I mean would you have rather be stuck on Earth? You've just read about it, I lived it, I *saw* it, we were surrounded by oceans full of oil, water that comes out of the faucet on fire, no bees-

ALETTE

What's a bee?

TASNEEM

Exactly!

ALETTE

Well, maybe things got so bad because nobody tried to help.

TASNEEM

Honey, Earth was going to hell in a handbag, I did all that I could-

ALETTE

I didn't say you-

TASNEEM

(talking over each other) You most certainly implied it.

ALETTE

I was talking about the-the-the businesses and the

TASNEEM

And the people?

ALETTE

Yes- no-

TASNEEM

Well, the people who stayed back, I'm guessing by now that they look like fish monsters.

(TASNEEM puts her hands on her face in her perception of what a fish monster is and makes fish monster noises)

ALETTE

OH my God.

TASNEEM (*still laughing at her own joke*)

What?

ALETTE

That's not funny.

TASNEEM

It's pretty funny.

ALETTE

I guess it's funny that people who try to clean things up get punished. It's *so* funny that we're just leaving a path of destruction behind us and not even *talking* about it. It's goddamn hilarious that some people actually stick around and try to fix what they've got instead of hopping planets.

beat

TASNEEM

I don't have to sit here and listen to this.

ALETTE

Mom-

TASNEEM

I think we're done here.

Blackout. TASNEEM is wearing a spacesuit (more Star Trek than Buzz Aldrin) at a podium. Flashing lights indicate that there are cameras going off.

TASNEEM

(throughout this speech Alette makes her way to the front, holding a sign)

As the old adage goes, "space; the final frontier" -

ALETTE (*yelling*)

Ms. Jones!

TASNEEM

after a deep breath- but space is not our *final* frontier, it is a limitless one, in which we
can-

ALETTE (*yelling*)

Ms. Jones!

TASNEEM(*snapping*)

What?

ALETTE

Is it true that the temperature regulation machines have shorted out? With Titan's
temperatures, is that not a dangerous game to play?

TASNEEM

Really? We're doing this now?

ALETTE

Is it true that the oxygen conversion prototype has only worked in one trial?

TASNEEM

Alette.

ALETTE

Is it true that the terraforming to be carried out on Titan would-

TASNEEM

ALETTE! That's enough.

ALETTE

You need to listen to the voice of the people-

TASNEEM

"The people" don't usually protest alone.

ALETTE

Well then listen to *me!*

TASNEEM

No! I am your mother! I get that you're going through your rebellious phase or whatever, but you're embarrassing me and you're embarrassing yourself. You're being a child.

ALETTE

I'm seventeen!

TASNEEM

Exactly! *Beat, collecting herself, then addressing the audience.* Mars, it's been a good run, but now, humanity reaches for a farther planet, and eventually, a brighter star.

ALETTE

Mom, please don't go.

Long beat.

TASNEEM

I'll call. I promise.

Blackout. Years later. Lights up on TASNEEM, in a spaceship. ALETTE, now an adult is sitting with a clearly fake plant on her desk. Bright, sterile light shines down on her head. Her whole environment is organized and clean. The whole room is calm and she sits as she works.

TASNEEM

(pacing back and forth, annoyed with the technology)

Come on, come on.

(she smacks a gear on the side of the wall. A blue light comes over both ALETTE and TASNEEM as the skype dial tone plays)

TASNEEM

Finally!

ALETTE

Shit.

(ALETTE presses a button on her earpiece)

ALETTE
Hey, mom.

TASNEEM
Hi, baby! Ugh, I've been trying to call you for an *hour*.

ALETTE
(still doing some work, indulging her) Oh, really.

TASNEEM
So...

ALETTE
So?

TASNEEM
How're things going?

ALETTE
Fine.

TASNEEM
Good. *(beat.)* Y'know, I'm almost there.

ALETTE
You close enough to touch Saturn?

TASNEEM
Titan.

ALETTE
I know.

(beat)

TASNEEM
Saturn's a gas giant, you couldn't even walk around on it, so-

ALETTE

Mom.

TASNEEM
Right.

ALETTE
I have a lot of work, so I'm gonna-

TASNEEM
No, wait. I just wanted to say that you weren't wrong about... everything.

(silence, then:)

ALETTE
Is *that* your definition of an apology?

TASNEEM
(slowly; this feels like a trick question) Yes...?

ALETTE
Oh my god.

TASNEEM
(defensively) What?

ALETTE
So you completely shoot me down, you refuse to listen to me, and then you fucking go to Saturn anyway?

TASNEEM
(joking) Well, no one was going to listen to you anyway.

ALETTE
You know what? Block my number.

TASNEEM
Come on, it was just a joke-

ALETTE

Well you're not funny.

(beat)

TASNEEM

First of all, I'm hilarious. I know it, you know it, Mars knows it-

ALETTE

I'm hanging up.

TASNEEM

Wait, no-

(beat)

ALETTE

I've been waiting for you to call for two months, but all you're doing is rubbing it in. It's not enough that you got your way, and that you humiliated me in front of the whole planet, and that I got a job at fucking Coca Cola, at this point we're not even talking, you're just gloating.

Beat

TASNEEM

You got a job at Coca Cola™?

ALETTE

Yeah. Yeah, I did. Because, I'm smart, and I'm capable, and... and I got fired from my job after I tried to get a whole campaign against the mission going and *no one else* would have me.

TASNEEM

Wow.

ALETTE

Yeah, thanks to you I'm working for big brother, I hope you're happy.

TASNEEM

I'm not.

ALETTE
Shocker.

Beat.

TASNEEM
Alright, how do I do this?

ALETTE
What?

TASNEEM
Apparently, saying “you weren’t wrong about everything” isn’t a real apology, so... what
is?

beat.

ALETTE
An “I’m sorry.”

TASNEEM
(interrupting) Will that be enough?

ALETTE
You have to mean it.

TASNEEM
Oh.

ALETTE
Yeah.

beat

TASNEEM
I’m sorry. I mean it.

(beat. They then rush through their next lines.)

ALETTE

Ok, I'm gonna go-

TASNEEM

Yeah, yeah, of course, love you.

ALETTE

Yeah, cool, bye, mom.

*ALETTE hangs up and takes a moment to collect herself and then gets back to work.
TASNEEM stares out of her window up at the stars. A can of Coca-Cola rolls across the
stage to ALETTE.*

TOWERS**by Ian Reid**

ARIANNA - appears 22

TEEN RUPERT - 18

YOUNG RUPERT - 21

ADULT RUPERT - 32

YOUNG LILY - 21

ADULT LILY - 32

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE: This play takes place during three different points of time. For the majority of the play, each alignment of text (left, center, and right) represents a different conversation. Each of these conversations is confined to the people in it; characters share set pieces and a space but do not interact until ARIANNA sees RUPERT's future at the end.

Lights up. ADULT LILY sits at a desk, writing with a quill and ink.

YOUNG LILY lies in bed, not moving.

A shelf and stool are placed on one side of the stage.

ADULT RUPERT enters, wearing a rusted chestplate of armor.

ADULT RUPERT

Hey.

ADULT LILY

Hey.

ADULT RUPERT

Can you help me out of this armor?

ADULT LILY

Just a minute.

TEEN RUPERT enters, wearing a bright, new chestplate.

TEEN RUPERT

Hello? Is anyone here? Miss Fortune Teller? Hello? Are you here?

ADULT LILY finishes writing and helps ADULT RUPERT take off his chestplate.

ADULT RUPERT

Thanks.

ADULT LILY

Sure.

ARIANNA enters behind TEEN RUPERT.

TEEN RUPERT

Miss Fortune Teller?

ARIANNA

Behind you.

TEEN RUPERT

Ah!

YOUNG LILY stirs in bed. She sits up.

ADULT RUPERT

How's your day so far?

ADULT LILY

Good. Haven't done much. Just figuring out the castle expenses.

ARIANNA

What do you want, stranger?

TEEN RUPERT

Are you the fortune teller?

ARIANNA

(tiredly)

That's my job.

TEEN RUPERT

I want you to tell me my future.

ADULT RUPERT

You could get one of the stewards to-

ADULT LILY

It's okay. I like it. It's relaxing. Calming.

ADULT RUPERT

Okay. Are you...

ADULT LILY

Am I what?

YOUNG LILY

(to no one in particular)

Good morning!

YOUNG LILY makes her way to the desk. She sits and begins to write.

ADULT RUPERT

Are you okay? You seem a bit off. You're talking all... short.

ARIANNA

Do you have money?

TEEN RUPERT

(holding out coins)

Is this enough?

ARIANNA

It's not a lot...

TEEN RUPERT

I don't have a lot.

ARIANNA

It's enough.

ADULT LILY

I'm fine. I'm a little down, but it's fine.

ADULT RUPERT

Is it because of... last night?

ADULT LILY

I don't know. *(beat)* Probably.

YOUNG LILY

(writing)

It's been a while since I've had any visitors. No one's tried to rescue me for about a month, which is kind of disappointing. Hope they haven't forgotten about me.

TEEN RUPERT

Do I sit?

ARIANNA

Over there.

ARIANNA points TEEN RUPERT to the stool. He sits.

ADULT RUPERT

I, um... I wanted to apologize about that. I didn't mean to get the way I did. I didn't mean to get... confrontational.

ADULT LILY

Okay.

ADULT RUPERT

Okay?

ADULT LILY

I just don't understand why you were mad at me.

ARIANNA

Is this your first time?

TEEN RUPERT

What?

ARIANNA

Having your fortune read.

TEEN RUPERT

Don't you already know all about me?

ARIANNA

(pulling a potion bottle off the shelf)

Not until I've read your fortune. For now, you're just a stranger.

ADULT RUPERT

I wasn't mad at you.

ADULT LILY

You seemed mad at me.

ARIANNA

So, is it your first time?

TEEN RUPERT

Oh. Yeah, it is.

YOUNG LILY

(writing)

I wish the people who are trying to rescue me would plan a little more. They can't think it's easy, trying to rescue a princess, and I really want company.

ADULT RUPERT

I just didn't understand where you were coming from. When you were talking about endings. We don't have to end. We're the king and queen, Lily, we don't... it doesn't have to be anything.

ARIANNA

Nervous?

TEEN RUPERT

A little.

ADULT LILY

But it does, right? We either split up or we stay together until we die. There are only two ways this thing can go.

ARIANNA

(pulling some leaves off a plant)

Scared of the future?

TEEN RUPERT

Aren't you?

ARIANNA
I don't age.

TEEN RUPERT
Oh.

ADULT LILY
Even kings and queens die.

TEEN RUPERT
I didn't mean to-

ARIANNA
(sprinkling the leaves into the liquid)
It's alright. You didn't know.

ADULT LILY
Even kings and queens leave each other.

YOUNG LILY
(writing)

Maybe they haven't been real heroes. Maybe they've just been amateurs. Princess-rescuers by night, or something. I just need a *full-time* hero to come along. Brave, and dashing, and charming, and all that good stuff.

ADULT RUPERT
Do you want to leave me?

ADULT LILY
Why would you say that?

ADULT RUPERT
Because you keep talking about endings.

ADULT LILY
I keep talking about endings because we keep fighting.

TEEN RUPERT
I just want everything to work out, I guess.

ARIANNA
What do you mean "work out"?

TEEN RUPERT
I don't really know.

ARIANNA
Sounds like you have a lot to figure out.

TEEN RUPERT
I guess it's a good thing I'm at a fortune teller's, then.

ADULT LILY
I don't *think* I want to leave you.

ADULT RUPERT
That doesn't sound too sure.

ADULT LILY
Are *you* sure?

ADULT RUPERT
I thought I was, yeah! But the more you keep starting fights like this-

ADULT LILY
Are you blaming this on me?

ADULT RUPERT
A little!

ARIANNA
I'm gonna need to take one of your hairs. Is that good with you?

TEEN RUPERT
Uh... yes. Gently.

ARIANNA
Of course.

YOUNG LILY
(*writing*)
I guess the real issue here is that I have been kidnapped, and *surprisingly*, I don't like being kidnapped.

TEEN RUPERT
How old are you?

In response, ARIANNA rips a hair from TEEN RUPERT's head. It's not that gentle.

TEEN RUPERT
Ow!

ARIANNA
Oops.

TEEN RUPERT
Sorry! I didn't mean-

ARIANNA
It's okay.

ADULT RUPERT
It just feels like you're down all the time, and I-

ADULT LILY
Who's Arianna?

ADULT RUPERT
What?

ADULT LILY
I was working this morning and I found a sealed letter on your desk from someone named Arianna. You've never talked about her.

TEEN RUPERT
What I meant is, like, you look so young, um, and pretty, um, and...

ARIANNA
Uh... thank you. That's nice of you to say.

TEEN RUPERT
I bet a lot of people think that it's true.

YOUNG LILY

(writing)

Maybe I'm just tired of being-

YOUNG RUPERT runs onstage. He wears a chestplate of armor that looks mostly new but slightly worn.

YOUNG RUPERT

Princess Lily?

YOUNG LILY

Who are you?

YOUNG RUPERT

Rupert.

YOUNG LILY

Rupert?

YOUNG RUPERT

That's me.

ARIANNA

I don't see a lot of people. I mean... I live in a tower in the woods.

ADULT RUPERT

Arianna is... she's a friend.

ADULT LILY

The letter's dated from before you met me.

ADULT RUPERT

She's an old friend. It doesn't matter.

YOUNG LILY

Are you here to rescue me, Rupert?

YOUNG RUPERT is slightly unsure of princess-rescuing protocol.

YOUNG RUPERT

That was the plan...

TEEN RUPERT
Don't you have friends, Miss Fortune Teller?

ARIANNA
I have a name.

TEEN RUPERT
What's your name?

ARIANNA
Arianna.

ADULT LILY
Why haven't you told me about her?

ADULT RUPERT
I promise it doesn't matter, Lily. Do you need to know everything about me?

ADULT LILY
No, I just thought that you would have mentioned someone important to you ten years into our marriage.

ADULT RUPERT
We were just friends. Barely that. We only met once. The letter is just the note she wrote when we first met.

TEEN RUPERT
Don't you have friends, Arianna?

ARIANNA
They aged.

TEEN RUPERT
Why did you become a fortune teller, then?

ARIANNA
You mean apart from the stunning social life?

YOUNG RUPERT

I just kind of came across this tower and I thought, "Hey! I can do that!" And I didn't know what to expect, but um... one dead dragon and a couple guards later, I'm here!

ARIANNA

(mixing the potion)

I mean, there aren't many paying jobs for witches. It was either be a fortune teller or kidnap a princess.

TEEN RUPERT

Glad you didn't kidnap a princess.

ARIANNA

Why?

TEEN RUPERT

I'd have to... fight you.

ARIANNA

(teasing)

Are you in the business of rescuing princesses?

TEEN RUPERT

Don't mock me.

ARIANNA

I'm not mocking you!

TEEN RUPERT

You are.

ADULT LILY

If you were barely friends, why do you still have the letter?

ADULT RUPERT

It's important to me.

ADULT LILY

Then why isn't it opened?

ADULT RUPERT

I can't tell you that.

YOUNG RUPERT
So this is where you've been living for-

YOUNG LILY
437 days.

YOUNG RUPERT
Sorry about that.

YOUNG LILY
Nothing you could've done.

YOUNG RUPERT
I could've come a bit quicker.

YOUNG LILY
You're here now.

YOUNG RUPERT
I am.

YOUNG LILY
You're the first one to do it.

YOUNG RUPERT
I am?

YOUNG LILY
You are.

ADULT LILY
Are you sure you wouldn't rather be with someone else?

ADULT RUPERT
Of course! Who else would I be with?

ADULT LILY
I don't know. Arianna.

ADULT RUPERT
What? You're being ridiculous!

ARIANNA

Okay! I didn't mean to... I didn't mean to cause any... offense, or anything like that. I'm just... are you in the princess-rescuing biz or not?

TEEN RUPERT

Not yet.

ARIANNA

Not yet?

TEEN RUPERT

That's why I'm here. I want to know whether it works for me.

YOUNG LILY

And you're here now.

ADULT LILY

Oh, I'm being ridiculous? I'm ridiculous for being upset that you're keeping secrets? For thinking that maybe when you have a secret letter from a secret friend that maybe there's something going on?

ARIANNA

Princess-rescuing?

TEEN RUPERT

Yeah.

ARIANNA

Why do you want to rescue a princess?

TEEN RUPERT

I guess I'm just... looking for love.

YOUNG LILY

And that's good enough for me.

ADULT LILY

And even if I'm wrong, even if there's nothing going on, no problems, nothing extra, nothing more than just friends, Rupert... why did you keep it secret? Who is Arianna?

ARIANNA

What if you pick the wrong tower? What if you pick the wrong
princess?

TEEN RUPERT

I guess I'd just have to keep looking.

ADULT RUPERT

Arianna's a fortune teller.

ADULT LILY

A what?

YOUNG RUPERT

Wow.

YOUNG LILY

What?

YOUNG RUPERT

You're really nice.

YOUNG LILY

I think you're really nice too.

TEEN RUPERT

And I wanna know when to stop looking. I wanna know when I find the
right person. You have to understand that.

ARIANNA

Not really. I haven't... I haven't read my own fortune.

TEEN RUPERT

Why not?

ARIANNA

Cause I can already tell what's gonna happen.

ADULT RUPERT

She's this fortune teller I went to see before coming to find you.
Before rescuing you.

ADULT LILY

But you told me that it was chance. That you just stumbled onto my castle, and my tower, and-

ADULT RUPERT

That wasn't true. I was looking for you. I wanted to rescue a princess. I wanted to find love.

TEEN RUPERT

How do you know if you don't read it?

ARIANNA

Everything will age. That doesn't change.

TEEN RUPERT

Of course everything ages, it's just a part of-

ARIANNA

Everything except me.

TEEN RUPERT

Oh.

YOUNG RUPERT

Sorry, I'm bad at talking to people who are pretty... I mean, pretty new to me. You're pretty new to me.

YOUNG LILY

I think you're doing a good job.

YOUNG RUPERT

Yeah?

YOUNG LILY

Yeah.

YOUNG RUPERT

I didn't really think past the getting-inside-the-tower thing.

ADULT LILY

Why didn't you tell me?

ADULT RUPERT

I didn't want you to think I'd... lied. I thought it would be less beautiful if it was planned.

ADULT LILY

But you did lie. You lied about how we met.

ADULT RUPERT

Yeah.

ADULT LILY

And here we are.

ARIANNA

But I should get on with reading your fortune.

TEEN RUPERT

You don't need to, if you're not... comfortable, or-

ARIANNA

I just don't really wanna...

ADULT RUPERT

Are you mad at me for... for looking for you?

ADULT LILY

I just wish you hadn't kept it a secret. A secret from the very beginning. *(beat)* We're too old for secrets, Rupert. Or at least I thought we were.

YOUNG RUPERT

Glad you don't think I'm weird or something.

YOUNG LILY

I think you're kinda cute.

TEEN RUPERT

You don't really wanna what?

ARIANNA

I don't want to talk to you too long. I don't want to get attached. You're a client. You're mortal. I'm not.

TEEN RUPERT
Hey, it's gonna be okay-

ARIANNA
No, not if I let myself-

TEEN RUPERT
Arianna! *(beat)* It's gonna be okay.

ADULT LILY
It's just... it's just a lot.

ADULT RUPERT
Maybe it always will be.

ADULT LILY
That's not an excuse.

ADULT RUPERT
I know. I'm sorry for not telling you.

TEEN RUPERT
I'm not gonna be around forever, but that doesn't mean I don't have to worry about losing things. They're just... different things. I know it hurts to have to worry. To have things you don't want to lose. But I think it's worth it.

ADULT RUPERT
I hate fighting with you, Lily.

ADULT LILY
I didn't mean to make this a fight.

ADULT RUPERT
What did you mean to do?

ADULT LILY
Talk. Listen.

YOUNG RUPERT
Do you wanna, um...

YOUNG LILY

Yes?

TEEN RUPERT

So, yeah, I get why you don't want to read your fortune. But if you're not gonna read it, don't waste it. *(beat)* Sorry, I'm not trying to tell you how to live your-

ARIANNA

It's okay. Thank you.

TEEN RUPERT

Of course.

ADULT RUPERT

I'm sorry this happened. I'm sorry... I screwed up.

ADULT LILY

Yeah. I think... I think we both did. At some point along the way.

YOUNG RUPERT

After we escape this tower, do you wanna... maybe...

YOUNG LILY

Go on...

ADULT LILY

We're eleven years in a week. Eleven years since that tower.

ADULT RUPERT

That's a hell of a long time.

ADULT LILY

I know. I... I want us both to be better.

ADULT RUPERT

Me too.

ADULT LILY

But I want us both to be better because I think we can be better.

YOUNG RUPERT

Do you wanna go to a tavern? Get a drink with me or something?

YOUNG LILY has never gotten a drink with someone before.

ADULT LILY

And if this has to end someday... I don't want it to end now. I want to have as much as I can.

YOUNG RUPERT

Lily?

YOUNG LILY

I would love to get a drink with you.

YOUNG RUPERT

Um... sounds like a plan!

TEEN RUPERT

I don't know if I want to know my fortune anymore.

ARIANNA

At all?

TEEN RUPERT

Not just yet.

ADULT RUPERT

Me too. That's why I'm here. That's why we're both here. In this big old tower together. *(beat)* Because it's worth it.

YOUNG RUPERT

Hey, I don't really want to rush us, but I don't know how long the guards are gonna be out, and people will notice the dragon being dead, so we *might* want to head out soon.

YOUNG LILY

Oh, of course. Um... before we go?

YOUNG RUPERT

Yeah?

YOUNG LILY

In stories, the princess and her rescuer always kiss.

ADULT RUPERT

The letter from Arianna is the answer to a question I asked her. A question I didn't want to know yet.

YOUNG LILY

Do you wanna...?

TEEN RUPERT

Can you write it down for me? Can you write down whether I find what I'm looking for? That way, I can... I can open it when I'm ready.

ARIANNA

Of course.

YOUNG RUPERT

I'd like that a lot.

ADULT LILY

Why didn't you want to know?

ADULT RUPERT

Cause back then it was everything. I didn't know whether I'd find anything at all, and I wanted to... I wanted to be able to know. But I think I know now. And now that piece of paper is just a piece of paper.

YOUNG LILY and YOUNG RUPERT approach each other.

ARIANNA

Are you ready for me to read your fortune?

TEEN RUPERT

I'm ready.

YOUNG LILY and YOUNG RUPERT kiss.

ARIANNA drinks the potion she's been making. She closes her eyes, then opens them. She looks around, now seeing the people in the other times/conversations onstage.

TEEN RUPERT

Do you see it?

ARIANNA
I see it.

YOUNG LILY and YOUNG RUPERT pull apart.

YOUNG RUPERT
Do you wanna get married and become king and queen and live together
in a big castle and love each other and kiss a lot and make
everything perfect and live happily ever after together?

YOUNG LILY
Sounds like a plan to me.

YOUNG RUPERT
Yeah?

YOUNG LILY
If that's good with you, of course.

YOUNG RUPERT
Yeah! It's... really good with me, actually.

*ADULT RUPERT crosses to the desk. He picks up the letter and gives it
to ADULT LILY.*

*ARIANNA crosses to the desk. She writes something on a piece of paper
and seals it. She picks up the letter and gives it to TEEN RUPERT.*

ADULT RUPERT
I want you to read it.

ADULT LILY
Really?

ADULT RUPERT
Really.

ARIANNA gives TEEN RUPERT the letter.

TEEN RUPERT

Thanks.

ARIANNA
No problem.

TEEN RUPERT
I hope you find what you're looking for too.

ARIANNA
So do I. Time will tell.

YOUNG LILY
How about that drink?

YOUNG RUPERT
After you.

YOUNG RUPERT follows YOUNG LILY offstage.

ADULT LILY opens the letter.

TEEN RUPERT starts to exit.

TEEN RUPERT
Goodbye, Arianna.

ARIANNA
Goodbye, um...

ADULT RUPERT
What does it say?

TEEN RUPERT
Rupert.

ARIANNA
Rupert.

ADULT LILY
You find her.

Blackout.

Blackout.

Blackout.

Traces
By Lily Chen and Maria Gervagina

ELAINE - 14 years old

VICTORIA - in her early 40's, Elaine's mother

GRANDMOTHER - in her 60's, Victoria's mother

SETTING:

An apartment in Russia, January 2006

AT RISE:

ELAINE is in her bedroom, doing homework.

GRANDMOTHER is off stage on the side opposite the bedroom.

(VICTORIA enters covered from head to toe in heavy winter gear, walks up to the front door, and rings the doorbell. GRANDMOTHER and ELAINE start shouting back and forth.)

GRANDMOTHER (O.S)

Elaine! Can you get the door?

ELAINE

I'm trying to do my homework!

GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)

I'm making soup!

ELAINE

I can't, I'm stuck on this problem! If I leave, I'll lose my place and I'll never get it right! Do you want me to fail?

(VICTORIA rings the doorbell again, multiple times, impatient)

GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)

Could have gotten the door in the time it took you to say that!

ELAINE

Ditto.

GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)

What?

ELAINE

Fine, I'll get it!

(ELAINE enters the living room and looks into the peephole)

ELAINE

Kto tam?

(Opens door. VICTORIA enters)

ELAINE

Hello?

GRANDMOTHER (O.S.)

Who is it?

VICTORIA

Elaine! Oh my gosh! You're so tall now!

(Waddles to hug ELAINE, but ELAINE pulls away)

ELAINE

Babushka! There's a lady at the door! *(to VICTORIA)* I'm sorry, she'll be here in a second.

VICTORIA

I can't believe you don't recognize me, Elaine!

(VICTORIA is removing her outerwear. GRANDMOTHER enters)

ELAINE

Wait, how do you know my name?

GRANDMOTHER

Who is it, hon-- Oh! Victoria! Bozhe moi! Come in, come in.

(Hugs VICTORIA)

It's been so long!

ELAINE

Mom? *(hugs VICTORIA)* I can't believe you're here!

GRANDMOTHER

It's been a year since we last heard from you!

VICTORIA

I've just been so busy. I missed you both so much!

ELAINE

Are you finally coming back home?

VICTORIA

Not quite. Okay, so I guess I'll get straight to the point. *(pause)* I want you to come live with me.

(Awkward pause)

ELAINE

But I don't want to leave. I jus- just-

VICTORIA

I thought you'd be excited.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh wow! We've always wanted to visit California.

ELAINE

Yeah, *visit*. Not move in! And why now?

VICTORIA

I finally have all the paperwork done.

ELAINE

And you never even asked me if I wanted to go!?

VICTORIA

I just never thought you'd be so opposed to it, I guess.

ELAINE

I just don't feel prepared for this.

VICTORIA

I'll do anything I can to help you.

(pause)

ELAINE

(sighs) Babulya? Do you want to go?

GRANDMOTHER

Of course! Just think of all the opportunities you can have in America!

ELAINE

But all of my friends are here! I've lived in this house my entire life, I--

VICTORIA

You'll make new friends.

ELAINE

But--

GRANDMOTHER

Yes, it will be hard at first, but it'll be worth it in the end. You'll study hard, go to a good university, and find a great job.

ELAINE

I can get a job here! I can do all of that without having to go somewhere else!

GRANDMOTHER

America has so much more to offer. We just want what's best for you.

ELAINE

I think I know what's best for me!

(Runs back to her room)

VICTORIA

Wait, Elaine!

GRANDMOTHER

She's just overwhelmed, give her some time.

VICTORIA

This is not how I thought this would go. Oh goodness. *(pause)* Mom, I'm sorry, but I can't take both of you. I just came for Elaine. We couldn't figure it out for you in time, and I just couldn't wait any longer to get her.

GRANDMOTHER

I see.

VICTORIA

Really, I didn't want this to happen, I tried so hard.

GRANDMOTHER

Do you think you can take care of her by yourself?

VICTORIA

I found a job, I found a good school in a lovely neighborhood. It's gonna be great for her!

GRANDMOTHER

I'm just worried for both of you. You've been gone for 10 years, it's going to be hard to reconnect.

VICTORIA

There's nothing to be worried about. She's my daughter, we will figure it out.

GRANDMOTHER

Can you tell me honestly, were you planning on having me join you at all?

VICTORIA

Maybe. That would take at least a few years.

(beat)

VICTORIA

I'm sorry--

(ELAINE enters the living room)

ELAINE

Babulya, your soup is burning.

GRANDMOTHER

Ugh! I'll be right back.

(GRANDMOTHER exits)

ELAINE

I've been thinking... And maybe this isn't a bad idea?

VICTORIA

Elaine, there's something else you should know.

ELAINE

What now?

VICTORIA

I can't bring babushka with us right now.

ELAINE

What do you mean you can't bring her?

VICTORIA

I'm sorry. We can figure out a way to bring her later, it will just take a little longer for that to happen.

ELAINE

So it's just gonna be us?

VICTORIA

Well, no--

ELAINE

I *need* babulya with me!

VICTORIA

It's gonna be okay, we'll get to know each other better. The plane ride alone is 12 hours.

ELAINE

If you really cared about me, you could have visited.

VICTORIA

No, I couldn't have. There are guidelines. You can't leave for long amou--

ELAINE

You could have done it! People do it all the time! They go back and forth, and they visit their families!

VICTORIA

I wouldn't be able to go back if I came here.

ELAINE

Then you shouldn't have left in the first place.

VICTORIA

Elaine, that's not what I'm saying. I wasn't exactly supposed to stay there for so long.

ELAINE

What?

VICTORIA

Well, I guess I can just tell you. *(beat)* I got married.

ELAINE

You got married?! / Wait, what does that have to do with anything?

VICTORIA

/ He's a great guy, you'll love him! He cannot wait to meet you!

ELAINE

Did *he* not let you visit me?

VICTORIA

No, no, that's not it.

ELAINE

What, then?

VICTORIA

You'll understand when you're older. Trust me, he's a wonderful man.

ELAINE *(frustrated)*

Of course, I'm sure.

VICTORIA

You'll love it there, I promise.

ELAINE

Not without *babulya* I won't.

VICTORIA

Elaine--

ELAINE

Stop, I don't think I wanna go anymore.

VICTORIA

Please.

ELAINE

I can't leave without her!

(GRANDMOTHER enters)

GRANDMOTHER

Devochki, what's going on? Soup is almost ready, I fixed it.

ELAINE

She thinks I'm gonna live with her and her husband in their big house in America, and leave you behind.

VICTORIA

That's not how I phrased it.

GRANDMOTHER

You're married? Since when?

VICTORIA

Since I met the right person at a very convenient time.

GRANDMOTHER

I didn't get invited to the wedding?

VICTORIA

The timing wasn't right, we were in such a rush.

ELAINE

Well I don't want to move in with you and some man I've never met.

VICTORIA

Well, actually...

(VICTORIA goes over to her bag and pulls out her wallet. She takes out a picture of a baby. She goes back to ELAINE and GRANDMOTHER and shows them the picture.)

VICTORIA

Here.

ELAINE

Who's this?

VICTORIA

This is your sister, Irene.

ELAINE

My *sister*!?

(GRANDMOTHER snatches the picture out of her hands and brings it close to her eyes to see.)

GRANDMOTHER

She's so precious! Oh, Elaine, you have the same nose!

VICTORIA

Don't they look so much alike? I always tell Richard they're like twins!

ELAINE

She's adorable.

VICTORIA

You'll get to meet her if you come with me.

GRANDMOTHER

Let me bring out the soup, it should be ready to eat.

VICTORIA

What kind of soup is it?

GRANDMOTHER

Borscht.

VICTORIA and ELAINE

Oh, my favorite!

(GRANDMOTHER exits, smiling)

ELAINE

Wait, how come you never mentioned getting married or having a baby when you called us?

VICTORIA

I didn't know how you would react. I wanted to tell you in person.

ELAINE

So you thought that through, but you never thought about how I would react to you coming down here and asking me to move in with you and your new family?

VICTORIA

I guess I thought you would be more eager to go once you saw me.

(GRANDMOTHER enters with three bowls of soup on a tray.)

GRANDMOTHER

Here you go. Fresh off the stove!

(She sets the tray down. Everyone takes their bowls and eats as the conversation is going on.)

VICTORIA

Wow, I haven't had borscht since I left. It's just how I remember it.

GRANDMOTHER

Some things you just can't get in America.

ELAINE

I don't think I'd be able to live without it. Without you.

(beat)

GRANDMOTHER

(To VICTORIA) I can give you the recipe. You can make it for your family.

ELAINE

But, babulya, why would you--

GRANDMOTHER

Now you can have my borscht even in America.

VICTORIA

That would be amazing. Thank you so much.

GRANDMOTHER

(To ELAINE) There's a whole world out there. I just want what's best for you, and living with your mother would make you a much happier person.

ELAINE

I can't be happy without you.

GRANDMOTHER

You'll have my soup. It will be a little trace of me you'll have in America.

ELAINE

But--

GRANDMOTHER

And once you have become successful, you can come visit me as often as you'd like.

(beat)

ELAINE

I guess so. Then I will try my best to make that happen.

VICTORIA

So you're coming with me?

ELAINE

Only if you make borscht every week.

(Beat. VICTORIA and ELAINE finish their soup and exit to the kitchen. GRANDMOTHER sits on the couch alone and eats her soup.)

Blackout.