

# ***Rabbit Hole***

a play in two acts  
by David Lindsay-Abaire

## **TIME**

the present

## **LOCATION**

Larchmont, New York

## **CAST**

**Becca:** late thirties / early forties

**Izzy:** mid thirties, Becca's sister

**Howie:** late thirties / early forties, Becca's husband

**Nat:** mid-sixties, Becca's mother

**Jason:** a seventeen-year-old boy

ACT ONE  
SCENE ONE

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

IZZY

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

BECCA

But you don't even know this woman.

IZZY

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

BECCA

No.

IZZY

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

BECCA

Why?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Were you flirting or—?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Boozy?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Ew.

IZZY

Rotting peanut butter or something.

BECCA

Good lord, Izzy.

IZZY

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

BECCA

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

IZZY

She's talking about her boyfriend.

BECCA

No, I know but—

IZZY

Auggie.

BECCA

(beat)

Oh. I thought you didn't know who she—

IZZY

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

BECCA

So you know him.

IZZY

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

BECCA

I'm sorry.

IZZY

So she's all "you bitch, you. Fuck you, you bitch."

BECCA

Izzy—

IZZY

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

BECCA

Uh-huh.

IZZY

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

BECCA

Of course.

IZZY

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

BECCA

More Chins than a Chinese phone book.

IZZY

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

BECCA

Sure.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(beat)

What does that mean?

IZZY

It means I hit her.

BECCA

No, you didn't.

IZZY  
Crazy, right?

BECCA  
You hit her?

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

BECCA  
Oh my god, Izzy— You *hit* that woman?

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

BECCA  
Izzy—

IZZY  
What would *you* have done?

BECCA  
Well I certainly wouldn't have hit her. Jesus.

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

BECCA  
Well, yeah.

IZZY  
They don't put that on TV. It's all "Now that oughtta show him." But for me it was like "Motherfucker, that *killed!*" Look at my knuckles.  
(shows her — then off her look)

What?

BECCA  
Nothing.

IZZY  
You don't approve?

BECCA  
I didn't say that.

IZZY  
This lady was *at* me.

BECCA  
I know. I didn't say anything.

IZZY  
But you wanna though.

BECCA  
(beat)  
I just worry about you.

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

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

IZZY  
So?

BECCA  
*A bar fight, Izzy.*

IZZY  
She was up in my face!

BECCA  
I know, but it's so....

IZZY  
What?

BECCA  
Jerry Springer.

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

BECCA  
You punched a woman in the face!

IZZY  
She provoked me!

BECCA  
Were you drunk?

IZZY  
No.

BECCA  
I thought you were getting it together.

IZZY  
Don't judge me.

BECCA  
You said you were gonna take it easy.

IZZY  
Man, Becca. Why do you have to—?

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

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

BECCA  
Well there should be. For acting like a jackass there *should* be a cut off date.  
(beat)  
Were you on anything?

IZZY  
Oh my god.

BECCA  
Were you?

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

BECCA  
I don't know. Why *did* you?

IZZY  
Look, I went out. I got into a fight. I thought it was a funny story. I thought you'd be amused.

I'm not.

BECCA

Clearly.

IZZY

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

BECCA

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

IZZY

(beat)  
Don't do that.

BECCA

Do what?

IZZY

Gimme a break.

BECCA

What? I'm not allowed to be *upset* anymore?

IZZY

No, you're not allowed to *use* him.

BECCA

What are you—?

IZZY

As an excuse.

BECCA

I'm *not*.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(Silence. Becca folds the clothes.)

That's not what I was doing.

IZZY

BECCA  
 Okay.

IZZY  
 I'm hungry. Mind if I get something?

BECCA  
 Since when do you ask?

IZZY  
 You're making me feel sensitive.

(Izzy heads back to the fridge.)

IZZY  
 Where's Howie?

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

IZZY  
 (chuckles)  
 Squash.  
 (re: something in the fridge)  
 What's this? Pudding?

BECCA  
 It's gonna be crème caramel.

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

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

IZZY  
 (holds up an individual crème caramel)  
 Can I have one of these? There's an extra in here.

BECCA  
 (beat)  
 Yeah, okay.

IZZY  
 Well I won't eat it if you don't want me to.

BECCA  
No, go ahead. You're right, there's an extra.

IZZY  
You sure?

BECCA  
Just let me finish it.

IZZY  
I can eat it like this.

BECCA  
No, then it's just custard.

IZZY  
I like custard.

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

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

BECCA  
How's work?

IZZY  
Don't ask me that please.

BECCA  
Why not?  
(beat)  
You got fired?

IZZY  
It never ends with me, does it?

BECCA  
Not often, no.

IZZY  
Don't tell mom.

BECCA

How can you get fired from Applebee's?

IZZY

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

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

IZZY

Thank you.

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

IZZY

I like how it oozes.

BECCA

Of course you do.

IZZY

(takes a bite)

Mmmmm.

BECCA

Better than custard, isn't it?

IZZY

Yes it is. You were right. Again.

(beat)

And again and again and again.

(after a beat)

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

BECCA

Izzy, please.

(Izzy eats her crème caramel.)

IZZY

And I *wasn't* drinking when I hit that lady. Stone sober.

BECCA

Yeah *right*.

IZZY

I *was*. I just had soda that night.

(We hear the dryer buzz.)

BECCA

(off)

She gonna press charges, ya think?

IZZY

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

BECCA

(off)

What are you talking about?

IZZY

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

(Becca comes back from the hallway.)

BECCA

(confused)

I'm sorry...Do you *know* these people?

IZZY

Auggie I do. The girlfriend I only *heard* about.

BECCA

(beat)

What'd you do, Izzy?

IZZY

Whadaya mean?

BECCA

To that woman. What'd you *do* to her?

IZZY

I told you, I hit her.

BECCA

*Before that.*

IZZY

Nothing. That was the first time I met her.

BECCA

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

IZZY

Sure they do. You should get out more.

BECCA

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

IZZY

(beat)

Where ya goin' with this?

BECCA

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

IZZY

I didn't!

BECCA

You were having sex with her boyfriend!

IZZY

That is so beside the point.

BECCA

It is?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Then why did she accost you in a crowded bar?

IZZY

Because she's a lunatic!

(beat)

IZZY

And Auggie told her I was pregnant.

BECCA

(beat)

Why would he...?

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

BECCA

Oh my god, Izzy.

IZZY

I know, right?

BECCA

You are *not*.

(Izzy just shrugs. Whadaya gonna do?)

BECCA

Oh my god.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(oozing irony)

That's terrific.

IZZY

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

BECCA

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

IZZY

Pretty much.

BECCA

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

IZZY

I pop by.

How long have you known? BECCA

A few weeks. IZZY

And you're just telling me now? BECCA

Well Jesus, Bec... IZZY

What? You didn't wanna tell me? BECCA

No. IZZY

Why not? BECCA

Why do you *think*? IZZY  
(beat)

God, everything's so fucked up.

Does Mom know? BECCA

Yeah. IZZY

You told Mom before me? BECCA

I *had* to. IZZY

Oh my God, Izzy. BECCA

Stop saying that. IZZY

What are you gonna do? BECCA

IZZY

Well I'm gonna keep it, if that's what you're asking.

(beat)

Auggie wants to too. We're excited about it. This is exactly the kind of thing that gives a person clarity.

BECCA

(beat)

Izzy...

IZZY

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

BECCA

(after a pause)

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

(Izzy hugs her sister.)

IZZY

Thank you.

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

BECCA

Well I should probably hold off on this then.

IZZY

What do you mean?

BECCA

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

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

IZZY

I don't know Bec, they're in baby clothes for so long, it'd be a few years before he could even fit into this stuff.

BECCA

It comes up very quickly. You wouldn't even believe it.

IZZY

Plus we don't have a lot of room to—

BECCA

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

IZZY

But what if it's a girl?

BECCA

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

IZZY

It's not about the money.

BECCA

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

IZZY

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

(beat)

I would feel weird. You would too, I think.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

BECCA

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

IZZY

It was a nice offer. I just—

BECCA

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

IZZY

No I know but—

BECCA

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

Exactly.

(Pause.)

It's probably a girl anyway.

You think?

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

Oh yeah?

Remember I said Debbie was having a girl.

You did.

And Karen?

Karen too, I remember.

I think there's a girl in there.

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

Me too.

(pause)

What'd Mom say?

She was happy.

BECCA

(beat)

Really?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Huh.

IZZY

(pause)

Thanks for the crème caramel.

BECCA

Sure.

IZZY

(beat)

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

BECCA

Hey. What can ya do?

(beat)

I'm glad you told me.

(beat)

And I'm really happy for you.

(Lights fade on them.)

## SCENE TWO

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

BECCA

Ridiculous, right? Nine weeks pregnant. In a bar. Drinking.

HOWIE

You said she wasn't drinking.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Not anymore. Clean Indoor Air Act.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

You think this is funny, Howie?

HOWIE

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

BECCA

About what?

HOWIE

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

BECCA

She was bragging about a *bar* fight.

HOWIE

It wasn't a bar fight.

BECCA

They were in a *bar*! *Fighting*!

HOWIE

Izzy hit someone, she didn't get into a fight. Blows were never exchanged.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

I'm not worked up. I'm just saying.

HOWIE

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

(off her look)

Okay, she *acts* like one sometimes but... A baby can be good for a person.

BECCA

I know that, Howie.

HOWIE

Alright then.

(beat)

This was good. The crème caramel.

BECCA

Thank you. Izzy tried to eat one upside down.

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

HOWIE

You want more wine?

BECCA

No, I've had two already.

HOWIE

Half a glass, I wanna empty this bottle.

(he empties the rest into her glass)

BECCA  
Mom's thrilled by the way.

HOWIE  
She called?

BECCA  
Izzy must've told her I knew.

HOWIE  
And how was that?

BECCA  
What, two hours on the phone with *Mom*?

(Howie lowers the lights in the room.)

BECCA  
What are you doing?

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

(Becca settles onto the couch with her wine.)

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

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

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

HOWIE  
A what?

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

HOWIE  
This is for Izzy's birthday?

BECCA

The last time I was over there, you should've seen her bathroom. It looked like a frat boy decorated.

HOWIE

Huh.

BECCA

What?

HOWIE

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

BECCA

It's the whole set, Howie.

HOWIE

No, I know. Still.

BECCA

I thought it'd be nice.

HOWIE

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

BECCA

Izzy doesn't wear perfume.

HOWIE

No, I know, but—

BECCA

I was trying to be practical.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

I'll make note of that for Christmas.

BECCA

You think it's dumb.



HOWIE

Not really. I guess she took the kids to her mother's this weekend.

BECCA

Rick didn't wanna go?

HOWIE

He has work.

BECCA

How *are* the kids?

HOWIE

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

(beat)

Anything else?

BECCA

No, that's it.

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

Why can't *she* call *me*?

HOWIE

I don't know.

BECCA

No?

HOWIE

She's uncomfortable, Bec.

BECCA

Is that what Rick said?

HOWIE

Rick didn't say anything. But obviously if she hasn't called you it's because she doesn't know what to say.

BECCA

How about "Hey Becca, how you doing? Haven't seen you in awhile."

HOWIE

If you're pissed, you should call her and tell her.

BECCA

No, Howie, it's her job to call me.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

Hard for *her*?

HOWIE

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

BECCA

Yeah well, your brother's an asshole.

(beat)

I should drop her a note.

HOWIE

Maybe you should.

BECCA

"Dear Debbie – just so's ya know, accidents aren't contagious."

HOWIE

Okay, let it go.

Let what go?  
BECCA

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

BECCA  
I *am* relaxed.

HOWIE  
We'll see.

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

BECCA  
Oh jeez, Howie.

HOWIE  
What? It's chill music. You need it. Now turn around.

BECCA  
For what?

HOWIE  
Just face that way.

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

HOWIE  
Thank you.  
(massages her)  
See? You're shoulders are all knotted up.

BECCA  
Yeah, well...

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

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

HOWIE  
(massaging her)  
I know.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Enough about Izzy.

BECCA

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

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

You've taken off enough time as it is.

HOWIE

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

(kisses her neck)

BECCA

What are you doing?

HOWIE

I'm kissing your neck.

BECCA

Why?

HOWIE

I'm trying to relax you.

BECCA

Uh-huh.

HOWIE

Something wrong with that?

BECCA

I see what this is. Dimming the lights.

HOWIE  
What? I can't massage my wife?

BECCA  
You don't have eye-strain.

HOWIE  
So?

BECCA  
"Oh I've been staring at that computer all day."

HOWIE  
Well I *do* stare at that computer all day.

BECCA  
You're trying to seduce me.

HOWIE  
Am I?

BECCA  
Plying me with liquor.

HOWIE  
It worked in college.

BECCA  
Alright, Romeo.

HOWIE  
What?

BECCA  
(pushes him away playfully)  
Enough.

HOWIE  
Why?

BECCA  
You're being very naughty.

HOWIE  
Naughty's good. You used to like naughty.



BECCA  
So, what, you're gonna pout now?

HOWIE  
Well Jesus, Bec...

BECCA  
Jesus, *what?*

HOWIE  
It's been almost eight months.

BECCA  
(beat)  
But who's keeping track?

HOWIE  
I am. I'm keeping track.  
(beat)  
I'm sorry.  
(off her look)  
What? That makes me perverted? Wanting to have sex with my wife?

BECCA  
I didn't say that.

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

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

HOWIE  
When have I ever made you feel guilty?

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

HOWIE  
I don't.

BECCA  
Then what's the problem here?

HOWIE  
We're *never* gonna be ready.

BECCA  
If this is just about the sex, Howie—

HOWIE  
It's not *just* about the sex.

BECCA  
No, then what else is this?

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

BECCA  
I know that.

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

BECCA  
But you wanna have sex.

HOWIE  
Don't say it like that.

BECCA  
Why not?

HOWIE  
Because it sounds crass and selfish.

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

HOWIE  
I wasn't *roping* you into anything. *Jesus*.

BECCA  
No? Al Green isn't roping?

HOWIE  
No.

*Al Green.*

BECCA

HOWIE

(beat)

I thought it was nice. That's all. I was trying to make things nice.

BECCA

Well...you can't. I'm sorry. But things aren't "nice" anymore.

(Silence.)

HOWIE

(after a pause)

I think you should see someone.

(beat)

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

BECCA

No.

HOWIE

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

BECCA

We've had this discussion, Howie.

HOWIE

Fine, a psychiatrist then. Someone to talk to.

(pause)

No? Yes? Do you have an opinion?

BECCA

I think we should sell the house.

HOWIE

(beat)

Come on, Becca, what?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

How were we on the topic?

I think it'd help if we moved.

BECCA

I don't wanna move.

HOWIE

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

BECCA

We love this house.

HOWIE

I can't move without- I mean, Jesus, look at this.

BECCA

(grabs a toy from the shelf)

*Everywhere. Do you even know?*

(grabs a kid's book from a stack of magazines)

Here: "Runaway Bunny" for godsake. The puzzles. The smudgy fingerprints on the door-jamb.

HOWIE

I like seeing his fingerprints.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

I don't.

HOWIE

-you can call up Sotheby's.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Well...

BECCA

Well, what? Well that didn't work out?

I didn't say that.

HOWIE

Then what?

BECCA

If that's the issue—

HOWIE

If *what's* the issue?

BECCA

--then...maybe we should try again.

HOWIE

(beat)  
Oh for god's sake, Howie...

BECCA

What? I'm only saying.

HOWIE

Is that...Is *that* what this was?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

I...I can't. I'm sorry. I can't have that talk.

BECCA

Okay.

HOWIE

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

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

BECCA

(beat)  
Yeah. we'll consider it.

HOWIE

Thank you.

BECCA

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

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

VOICE OF DANNY

Now can I?

VOICE OF HOWIE

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

VOICE OF DANNY

Ready?

VOICE OF HOWIE

Hold on. Taz, down!

VOICE OF DANNY

Lay down, Taz!

VOICE OF HOWIE

I got him. Quick now, before he gets up. Come-on-come on...  
(Danny comes running)

Aaand...

VOICE OF DANNY

Geronimo!

VOICE OF HOWIE

Good job!

VOICE OF DANNY

Did you see me, Daddy?

VOICE OF HOWIE

I did.

VOICE OF DANNY

No you didn't. I'm invisible.

Ohhh. VOICE OF HOWIE

I have magic. VOICE OF DANNY

Oh, I didn't realize. VOICE OF HOWIE

Do you wanna be invisible? VOICE OF DANNY

Okay. VOICE OF HOWIE

Pffffhh. VOICE OF DANNY

Is that it? Am I invisible? VOICE OF HOWIE

Yeah. I made you invisible. VOICE OF DANNY

Did you see me? VOICE OF HOWIE

Yeah. VOICE OF DANNY

No, you didn't. I'm invisible. VOICE OF HOWIE

But I can still see you because I have magic. VOICE OF DANNY

Ohhh. VOICE OF HOWIE

Did you forget that part? VOICE OF DANNY

Yeah, I forgot that part. VOICE OF HOWIE

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

## SCENE THREE

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

NAT AND BECCA

(end of song)

*Happy Birthday to you...*

NAT

Blow 'em out.

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

BECCA

What did you wish for?

IZZY

I can't say.

(re: the cake)

It looks good, Becca.

NAT

Where'd you buy it?

BECCA

I didn't. I made it.

NAT

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

BECCA

(catches Izzy scooping off the frosting)

Izzy--

IZZY

It's *my* cake.

BECCA

Well let me cut it first. Watch your fingers.

(Becca cuts slices of cake and puts them on plates over the following. Howie enters with a couple papers.)

You didn't wait for me? HOWIE

You said not to. BECCA

I didn't *mean* it though. HOWIE

I tried to stop them, Howie. NAT

I wanted cake. IZZY

Rude. HOWIE

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

Did you get it? NAT

Yeah right here. HOWIE

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

Let me get my glasses NAT

Did you have to? BECCA

She wanted me to look it up. HOWIE

(good natured) BECCA  
Any excuse to escape for ten minutes.

(re: Nat) IZZY  
Well do you blame him?

NAT

(looks up from papers)  
What is this?

IZZY

Mom, cake!

HOWIE

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

NAT

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

BECCA

Nobody said it was a curse, mother.

NAT

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

BECCA

Well nobody in this room.

NAT

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

IZZY

It's good cake.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Cut me a piece, wouldja Bec?

NAT

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

IZZY

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

NAT

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

BECCA

You have the most interesting theories.

NAT

Don't patronize me.

BECCA

I'm not. I was being serious.

IZZY

(re: cake)

This is so good.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Well, yeah I know *one* guy but—

NAT

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

HOWIE

No, you're right, he's not average.

BECCA

He's a member of the jet-set.

NAT

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

HOWIE

It's not ten.

NAT

Just about, if you count Teddy who survived his.

IZZY

Well I think it's sad.

Teddy surviving?

BECCA

(Izzy and Becca chuckle.)

NAT

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

BECCA

I thought you liked JFK?

NAT

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

HOWIE

Well, not *necessarily*.

NAT

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

IZZY

That *was* stupid.

NAT

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

HOWIE

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

NAT

If hubris means reckless, then that's right.

HOWIE

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

NAT

That's probably the right word then. They're *very* Catholic, those Kennedys.

HOWIE

Now I'm curious, I'm gonna look it up.  
(goes to find dictionary)

NAT

(re: wine bottle)  
Fill me up, wouldja Becca?

(Becca reluctantly refills her glass.)

Isn't this nice? Sitting around talking politics? I never do this. It's a nice change.

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

IZZY

It's juice. I'm drinking juice.

BECCA

Right, sorry.

IZZY

That's the third time you've done that.

BECCA

I know, I'm sorry.

IZZY

Are you testing me, Becca?

BECCA

No, I'm not testing you. It's just habit. I'm sorry.

HOWIE

(with dictionary)  
Here it is: "hubris, an insolent pride or presumption."

NAT

That's them alright. Insolent pride.

HOWIE

And number two is "in Greek tragedy, arrogance toward the Gods leading to nemesis."

IZZY

It's like coming to school when we visit you two.

Is that right?

HOWIE

Izzy hated school.

BECCA

No, I didn't.

IZZY

(to Howie)

Don't listen to her, Howie. I liked school. Just because I was lousy at it didn't mean I hated it.

Sounds like you and squash, Howie.

BECCA

(to Izzy)

She means the game, not the vegetable.

HOWIE

I knew what she meant.

IZZY

NAT

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

(beat)  
Anyone want more cake?

BECCA

None for me.

HOWIE

We should do gifts then.

BECCA

Yay! Gifts!

IZZY

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

NAT

Aristotle Onassis.

HOWIE

NAT

Oh right, that makes sense. What was I saying about him?

IZZY

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

NAT

(laughs)

You bitch. I'm not tipsy. I'm sure I had a very interesting point to make.

(Becca hands a big present to Izzy.)

BECCA

This is from us.

IZZY

Wow. Thank you.

HOWIE

Happy Birthday.

IZZY

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

NAT

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

(Izzy unwraps a very tasteful bathroom set.)

Ohh, look at that.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

It's a bathroom set.

IZZY

I see. It's nice.

NAT

Look at the colors. So pretty.

BECCA

The gift receipt's inside if you want a different style.

NAT

Why would she want a different style? It's beautiful. Isn't it beautiful?

IZZY

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

BECCA

Of course not.

IZZY

Okay.

BECCA

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

NAT

That Three Stooges thing *is* kinda goofy, honey.

IZZY

The word is kitschy, Mother.

NAT

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

BECCA

I didn't know what to get you.

IZZY

This is great. Seriously, thank you.

BECCA

I *like* your shower curtain.

IZZY

I know, I was kidding.

NAT

And since you're moving in with Auggie—

IZZY

That's right. His bathroom needs a little froofing up. Thank you.

BECCA

You're welcome.

Thanks, Howie. IZZY

Don't thank me. Becca picked it out. HOWIE

Okay, now me. NAT

(Nat hands Izzy an envelope.)

Oo, an envelope. Smells like cash. IZZY

You *wish*. You think I'm gonna trust you with cash? It's a gift certificate. NAT

(opens it) IZZY  
To A Pea in the Pod!

They have very nice maternity clothes. Nothing schlubby. NAT

Thank you, Mommy. IZZY  
(hugs her)

(beat) BECCA  
I thought we weren't doing baby stuff.

Who said that? NAT

BECCA  
For the birthday. I thought we'd wait until the shower.

NAT  
I'll get her something else for the shower. What's the difference?

BECCA  
Nothing, I just would've gotten her something different had I known we were doing baby stuff.

HOWIE  
That's my fault. I told her to—

NAT

It's *not* baby stuff, it's mommy stuff. She's gonna need clothes.

BECCA

I know, that's why—

IZZY

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

So take it back. We can take it back.

IZZY

Don't tell her that.

BECCA

No, he's right. I should.

IZZY

Becca, please.

BECCA

(tries to take the bathroom set back)

I'll get you a basket of Mustela lotions instead. They prevent stretch marks.

IZZY

Becca, *let go*.

(she does)

I *like* the bathroom set. You can get the lotions another time.

BECCA

(beat)

Okay.

IZZY

Thank you.

NAT

It's a nice set. I like the colors.

HOWIE

More juice, Izzy?

IZZY

No, I'm good.

NAT

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

(They sit in silence for a couple beats.)

HOWIE

Hey, how's Taz.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Really?

NAT

Yeah, he eats like a trooper.

HOWIE

What are you feeding him?

NAT

Just regular dog food. Whatever's on sale.

HOWIE

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

NAT

Yeah.

HOWIE

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

NAT

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

HOWIE

Except it makes him fat.

BECCA

Howie—

NAT

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

IZZY

I think the weight suits him.

NAT

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

IZZY

Remember Pickles? Now *she* was fat.

(to Howie)

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

(to Becca)

What breed was Pickles?

BECCA

She was a mutt.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Probably because of what you fed her.

IZZY

Well, yeah, probably.

NAT

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

IZZY

Mom, do you have to—?

NAT

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

BECCA

I'm gonna wrap up the cake for you.  
(she does)

NAT

I know, another rich kid in a plane crash, but this was my whole point. You should've stopped me from going off on that Kennedy tangent, because my point was about Onassis, and how when his son died, he was so distraught by the senselessness of it all,

NAT

that he put up this big reward to anyone who could prove that someone had sabotaged the plane. Have you read this, Howie?

HOWIE

I'm not sure.

NAT

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

BECCA

(to herself)

Aw, Jesus. Here we go.

NAT

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

BECCA

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

NAT

Of course not.

BECCA

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

NAT

I know you do.

BECCA

Then why are you telling this story?

NAT

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

BECCA

You never *just talk*. It *sounds* like you're just talking but it's always so much more, isn't it?

NAT

I don't even know what that means.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(to Howie)

Didn't I say no wine?

HOWIE

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

NAT

What'd I say?

IZZY

Mom, you promised.

NAT

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

BECCA

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

NAT

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

BECCA

Ohhh, comfort. Well then.

IZZY

You guys, this is supposed to be my party.

NAT

Where are you getting it?

BECCA

Comfort?

NAT

Yes, if I may ask.

I'm not. BECCA

Well... NAT

Well, what? BECCA

Well I think you should. NAT

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

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

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

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

(beat)  
Oh. Howie said. BECCA

She was asking how you were doing. HOWIE

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

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

So this is what exactly, an intervention? BECCA

If it is, then I'm really pissed. IZZY

It's not an intervention. HOWIE

NAT

We're just having a discussion.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Izzy, please.

NAT

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

BECCA

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

NAT

I'm not saying he is. I'm just saying it was helpful.

HOWIE

She doesn't like the people.

BECCA

Howie—

HOWIE

What? You *don't*. I was just explaining.

NAT

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

BECCA

No they don't. They understand what *they're* going through.

NAT

Still, you must have things in common.

BECCA

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

NAT

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

BECCA

Yes it can. You haven't met that room full of God-freaks.

HOWIE

They're not God-freaks.

BECCA

Most of them *are*, Howie. That's all they talk about. God's plan. "At least he's in a better place."

HOWIE

They're not all like that.

BECCA

My favorite is "God needed another angel." What is *that*? He's *God*! Why can't he just *make* another angel? These people...

NAT

Maybe God gives them comfort.

BECCA

Well it pisses me off. Trying to find some ridiculous meaning in-- "Hey look, I stepped in shit, it must be part of God's plan."

NAT

Now you're just being silly.

BECCA

*I'm* being silly.

NAT

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

BECCA

Again with Arthur.

NAT

If I didn't have God—

BECCA

See? That's *exactly* why I don't go. "If I didn't have God."

HOWIE

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

NAT

It sounds like you're jealous of their comfort.

BECCA

Yes, I *am*. Of *course* I am. How nice they all have something that makes them feel a little better. Like I don't feel bad enough, I've gotta go and have *that* rubbed in my face?

HOWIE

Nobody's rub— You're not being fair.

NAT

I don't know why you don't believe in God anyway.

BECCA

(to Howie)

You see? *Now* look where we're going!

NAT

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

BECCA

Well I don't anymore.

NAT

Well you should. What if you're wrong? What if there *is* a God?

BECCA

Then I would say he's a sadistic prick.

IZZY

Whoa, hey now...

NAT

Becca, please.

HOWIE

Aw, geez...

BECCA

"Worship me and I'll treat you like shit." No wonder you like him, he sounds just like Dad.

NAT

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

BECCA

Right.

NAT

I wish someone had sat me down when Arthur died. I wish someone gave me a little advice.

BECCA

You know what I wish? I wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur. Danny was a four year old boy who chased his dog into the street. Arthur was a thirty year old heroin addict who hung himself. Frankly I resent how you keep lumping them together.

(Silence.)

NAT

He was still my son.

BECCA

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

(beat)

I think it's time for me to go to bed now.

(turns to her sister)

Izzy, I hope you enjoy the bathroom set.

IZZY

I'm gonna.

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

NAT

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

IZZY

Huh. What about Mrs. Bailey?

NAT

Nobody's talking about Mrs. Bailey. Izzy, please.

HOWIE

You know what this was about?

IZZY

(re: Nat)

Yeah, *her* and her mouth.

HOWIE

I knew the party was a bad idea.

IZZY

(to Nat)

Didn't I tell you not to get into anything with her?

HOWIE

We got a letter today. From Jason Willette.

NAT

(beat)

What, why? What'd he want?

HOWIE

She said it didn't bother her but...

(re: the gathering)

Sorry Iz.

IZZY

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

(Crossfade to...)

## SCENE FOUR

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

(Lights up as Jason Willette enters.)

JASON

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

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

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

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

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

(beat)

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

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

Meanwhile, the lights rise on Howie in the living room. It's later that night. He clicks on the TV, then hits play on the VCR. We

hear a documentary on tornadoes playing. Howie is confused.  
Something isn't right.

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

	HOWIE
What is this? Becca? Becca? (hits fast forward)	
	BECCA
(from upstairs)	
What?	
	HOWIE
<i>Becca?! Becca?!</i>	
	BECCA
(Coming down the stairs)	
What?	
	HOWIE
What'd you do here?!	
(Howie keeps pressing fast forward, but it's all tornadoes. He's beside himself.)	
	BECCA
What's the matter?	
	HOWIE
What is this?	
	BECCA
What's what?	
	HOWIE
The <i>television</i> . What <i>is</i> this?	
	BECCA
(looks to TV)	
It's the Discovery Channel. The tornado program. You said you wanted to watch it. I recorded it for you. Why?	

For *chrissake!*

HOWIE

What's the matter?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

(beat)

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

BECCA

I switched them.

HOWIE

*What?!*

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

I assumed it was the TV tape.

BECCA

Jesus, Becca!

HOWIE

It was one of the baby videos?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

How was I supposed to know you snuck down here?

BECCA

--and Christmas.

HOWIE

I thought it was the TV tape. BECCA

It wasn't! HOWIE

I know, Howie. BECCA

So it's gone. The whole thing. HOWIE

I'm sorry. BECCA

It's the only copy, Becca! HOWIE

Well, I didn't do it on purpose. BECCA

Are ya sure? HOWIE

(beat) BECCA

What does *that* mean?  
(no response)

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

I don't know. HOWIE

You don't *know*? BECCA

I should've taken it out. HOWIE

Why would I deliberately record over it? BECCA

I don't know. HOWIE

Why *would* I?! BECCA

HOWIE

I don't *know!*

(Silence.)

You took the paintings off the fridge. Danny's paintings.

BECCA

To save them. I put them in plastic.

HOWIE

And shoved them in a box.

BECCA

For safekeeping.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

I didn't throw the paintings out.

HOWIE

I know you didn't.

BECCA

You think I didn't want that tape?

HOWIE

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

BECCA

What?

HOWIE

Maybe subconsciously.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

The clothes. His shoes.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Your wanting to sell the house.

BECCA

We already talked about—

HOWIE

Taz. Sending Taz to your mother's!

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

Well he got under foot.

HOWIE

And he was a reminder.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

And since you never wanted the dog to begin with—

BECCA

Oh for godsakes—

HOWIE

Well if I hadn't bought the dog—

BECCA

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

HOWIE

*I* left the gate unlatched.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Not even the dog's.

BECCA

*I know* that.

HOWIE

Dogs chase squirrels. Boys chase dogs.

BECCA

Are you telling me or yourself?

HOWIE

He *loved* that dog!

BECCA

Of course he did.

HOWIE

And you got rid of him.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

(losing it)

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

(She takes him in. She seems more confused than affronted.)

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Come on, that's not—

BECCA

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

HOWIE

I know that.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Do you? Do you?

(no response)

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

(beat)

It's too hard.

(Neither speaks for awhile.)

HOWIE

And I want that dog back. Your mother's making him fat.

(beat)

I want the dog back.

BECCA

Why don't we wait until—

HOWIE

I don't want to. How much more do we have to lose?

(beat)

I miss the dog. I'm sorry, but I miss him. I want him back.

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

**END OF ACT ONE**

ACT TWO  
SCENE ONE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

It's an Open House.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

That's what you gotta do to sell a house.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

It's a torte.

IZZY

Is it good?

HOWIE

Yeah, it's good.

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

IZZY

We done?

HOWIE

Fifteen minutes. We're supposed to go 'til four.  
(Howie's looking over the sign-in sheet.)

IZZY

How many'd ya get anyway?

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

*Irish?*

IZZY

I couldn't tell.

HOWIE

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

IZZY

Afraid who?

HOWIE

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

(re: sign-in sheet)

This was a wash I think. I thought we had a bite with that family – the little girl. Nothing though. Maybe I priced it too high. Or they were just browsing maybe.

IZZY

(eating)

You freaked them out, Howie.

HOWIE

(beat)

No, I didn't. What are you talking about?

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Why?

IZZY

Because everyone that went in there was like "Oh, you have a son, how old is he?" Did you think people wouldn't ask that?

HOWIE

I didn't think about it. I just thought it'd be good for them to see there was a nice room for a kid.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Only *two* people asked. That's all.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Well they're stupid then.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Is that what this is?

IZZY

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

HOWIE

It isn't appropriate to talk about my son?

IZZY

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

(finishes torte)

Good god, Becca has gotta stop baking. I'm gynormous.

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

IZZY

Someone coming?

HOWIE

(re: Taz)

No, he's just mad he's still tied up.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Alright.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Becca's not mad at you.

IZZY

Then why does she act so pissed at me sometimes?

HOWIE

I don't know. You should ask her.

IZZY

I can't.

HOWIE

Why not?

IZZY

Because that'll only make her *more* pissed.

HOWIE

Yeah, probably, but –

IZZY

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

HOWIE

(pause)

Oh my god, Izzy...

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Ten months later and you're asking me this?

IZZY

Well, I don't know.

HOWIE

No, Izzy. No. Nobody blames you.

IZZY

Okay.

(beat)

So it's just the baby then. The fact that I'm having a baby.

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

She doesn't think that. You should *really* be having this conversation with her.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Of course they do.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Nobody's comparing you.

IZZY

Really? Because that'd be a first.

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

You'd be surprised.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Great. I hope you are.

IZZY

Oh, you *hope*. Thanks, Howie.

HOWIE

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

(glances at his watch)

Aw fuck it, nobody's coming.

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

IZZY

Are you mad?

HOWIE

No.

IZZY

You seem mad.

HOWIE

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

IZZY

No, I don't want a beer. *God*.

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

Can I ask you something else?

HOWIE

What do you got, a list? "Things to ask Howie when he's cornered?"

IZZY

No. Not a *list*.

HOWIE

What is it?

IZZY

You're not gonna like it.

HOWIE  
Well then, even better.

IZZY  
Do you know my friend Reema?

HOWIE  
That's the question?

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

HOWIE  
I'm familiar with the concept.

IZZY  
That's Reema. You remember her?

HOWIE  
Not really.

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

HOWIE  
Okay. I'll take your word for it.

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

HOWIE  
(beat)  
Yeah.

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

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

IZZY  
She said you were with a woman.

HOWIE

(beat)

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

IZZY

Her husband doesn't attend the meetings?

HOWIE

Is this still part of the prolog?

IZZY

Why were you holding hands?

(beat)

Reema said you were holding hands.

HOWIE

And Reema's what exactly, your spy?

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Okay, now I *am* mad.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

I know you and Becca are having troubles—

HOWIE

What are you *talking* about?

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Who said we were having troubles?

IZZY

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

HOWIE

You are *way* off-base, Izzy!

IZZY

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

About *what*? I'm not having an affair!

IZZY

Okay.

HOWIE

I was comforting a friend!

IZZY

Great, I'm glad to hear that.

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Well you've asked.

IZZY

Indeed I have.

HOWIE

*Jesus.*

(beat)

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

IZZY

You should. She'll like that.  
(heads into the kitchen.)

HOWIE

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

IZZY

Yeah well, for the record, you *did*.

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

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

NAT

Luckily she had read about it in the papers –

BECCA

Of course she did.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Heeey, they're back.

BECCA

You should've gotten her phone number. We could've had her over for cocktails.

NAT

I was just trying to help.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

What happened?

BECCA

Or apologizing for me.

NAT

That's not what I was doing.

HOWIE

Did something happen?

IZZY

Did you get my message about the olive loaf?

BECCA

No, I shut my phone off.

NAT

I had to do *something*, Becca.

IZZY

(to Becca)  
Why?

BECCA

(to Izzy)  
Because you kept calling me.

IZZY

But I wanted olive loaf.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Cops where?

BECCA  
(to Nat)  
She would not have called the cops.

NAT  
You don't know that.

IZZY  
Someone was gonna call the cops?

HOWIE  
What *happened*?!

BECCA  
Nothing.

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

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

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

HOWIE  
What kind of scene? What *scene* did you have?

BECCA  
In the supermarket.

IZZY  
You and Mom?

NAT  
No, I was not involved.

BECCA  
It's so stupid.

HOWIE  
What happened?

BECCA

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

NAT

Becca got a little upset.

HOWIE

About what?

NAT

There was a boy there.

HOWIE

He reminded you of Danny?

BECCA

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

NAT

He had red hair.

BECCA

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

NAT

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

What did?

BECCA

The way she was ignoring him, instead of trying to explain why he couldn't have them.

NAT

So she walked over to her.

HOWIE

What? Why?

BECCA

I don't know. I just did.

IZZY

What'd you say?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Oh no.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

(beat)

What?

BECCA

I smacked her.

NAT

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

HOWIE

Becca...

BECCA

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

IZZY

You hit that woman?

HOWIE

Izzy, don't.

IZZY

I'm just saying. Glass houses.

BECCA

She was *ignoring* him.

NAT

She was ignoring him. It was pretty bitchy.

BECCA

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

NAT

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

BECCA

No she didn't.

NAT

After I talked with her, I'm saying

BECCA

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

NAT

You did slap her, Becca.

BECCA

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

IZZY

No. I would've smacked her too.

BECCA

Yeah, well, obviously.

(beat)

And I was doing well too, wasn't I, Howie? I had a bunch of good days in a row.

IZZY

You can come shopping with me anytime, Bec. I'm gonna give my kid whatever he wants. Candy, whatever.

BECCA

That wasn't my point, Izzy.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(beat)

Okay.

IZZY

Maybe you taught that lady something.

BECCA

Yeah, I don't think so.

IZZY

Hey Mom, did they have any Bosco?

NAT

Right here.

IZZY

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

BECCA

(off Howie's look)

What?

HOWIE

Nothing.

BECCA

Have I shocked you?

HOWIE

No. Not shocked, no.

BECCA

Well you look shocked.



JASON

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

HOWIE

Now's not really a good time for us.

JASON

Oh. Okay.

HOWIE

We've got family visiting.

JASON

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

HOWIE

Yeah. It's just we have relatives here.

JASON

Right, you said. Hi.

NAT

Hello.

JASON

Another time then.

BECCA

Yeah, we're around, so--

HOWIE

Becca...

BECCA

What?

JASON

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

HOWIE

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

JASON

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



HOWIE

We *live* here, okay? This is our *home*.

BECCA

Alright, Howie.

HOWIE

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

JASON

I'm sorry.

(looks to the others)

I'm sorry I interrupted.

(beat)

Sorry.

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

HOWIE

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

NAT

(re:groceries)

I'm gonna finish this

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

HOWIE

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

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Oh...no. I caught up with—

BECCA

No, of course not. You wanted that dog so badly, but you can never remember feed him.  
(turns to go)

HOWIE

I'll do it.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

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

IZZY

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

HOWIE

(beat)  
Maybe. We'll see.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Oh, I don't know...

IZZY

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

HOWIE

I think we got it covered. Thanks though.

IZZY

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

HOWIE

Yeah, I know what you meant.

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

## SCENE TWO

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

NAT

(holds up toy)

Keep or toss?

BECCA

Toss.

NAT

(another)

This too?

BECCA

Yeah.

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

BECCA

Remember this one?

(holds up the book)

NAT

That was *your* book.

BECCA

I know.

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

NAT

(holds it up)

Monkey?

BECCA

Um, keep, I guess.

NAT

(she does)  
Howie doesn't mind this?

BECCA

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

(beat)

Sorry. I don't even know why I said that. Just being mean.

(They go back to work.)

Besides, it's not like we're getting rid of *everything*.

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

BECCA

(simply)

Don't do that.

(takes the sneakers)

Quick and clean, like a band-aid.

(places the sneakers in a garbage bag)

Otherwise we'll never get through it.

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

BECCA

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

(Nat looks up at her.)

It's in Bronxville so no one knows me. I'm normal there. That's what I like best about it. I don't get "the face" every time someone looks at me.

NAT

What face?

BECCA

You know.

(demonstrates – solemn pity)

"Oh, hi. How ya doin? Hangin' in there?"

(Nat laughs a little)

I hate it.

(strips the robot sheets off the bed)

BECCA

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

NAT

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

BECCA

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

NAT

I guess.

BECCA

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

(beat)

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

NAT

I don't know that book.

BECCA

No, I know.

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

NAT

What the hell?

(trying to turn it off)

How do I—? That's annoying!

BECCA

(over the noise)

Try listening to it or hours on end!

(switches it off)

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

(then...)

You know what? Debbie's kids might like that. We should save it for them. That'd show her.

(Nat pops the toy into the keep box.)

NAT

Still haven't heard from her?

BECCA

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

NAT

Of course.

BECCA

She's getting big now.

NAT

(beat)

I thought you haven't seen them?

BECCA

No, but...

(beat)

I passed by Danny's daycare last week, and the kids were all in the yard.

(off her look)

What? I was just walking by. That's how I get to the post office.

NAT

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

(stops herself)

Sorry.

(pause - holds up a toy)

What about this?

BECCA

No, it's busted.

(Nat throws it in the garbage.)

NAT

You know, the thing about Debbie....

BECCA

Yeah?

NAT

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

BECCA

Sure.

NAT

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

BECCA

I remember.

NAT

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

BECCA

What'd she say?

NAT

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

BECCA

You did not say that.

NAT

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

(beat)

So I never saw *her* again obviously.

(beat)

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

(trails off)

BECCA

You can say his name.

NAT

Can I? I don't know your rules, Becca. I don't wanna get scolded.

BECCA

You can talk about Arthur. I just don't like the comparisons.

NAT

Okay.

BECCA

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

NAT

I know.

BECCA

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

NAT

Of course it was.

BECCA

Okay then.

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

NAT

What's this?

BECCA

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

NAT

(re: the title)

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

BECCA

No, it's more science fiction.

NAT

(turns a page)

It's dedicated to Danny.

BECCA

Yeah, he asked if he could do that.

NAT  
Why? It's about Danny?

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

NAT  
Oh.

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

NAT  
It doesn't sound very good.

BECCA  
It's okay. He's young.

NAT  
Keep it?

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

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

BECCA  
I think I'm gonna see him actually.

NAT  
Who?

BECCA  
Jason Willette.

NAT  
Why?

BECCA  
I don't know. I just...want to.

NAT

(beat)  
What about Howie?

BECCA

Howie's not really into it.

NAT

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

BECCA

Not really.

NAT

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

BECCA

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

NAT

I'm just saying.

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

BECCA

Hey.

HOWIE

How's it goin'?

BECCA

Fine.

HOWIE

Good.

(beat)

I thought we could put the brown bedspread in here.

BECCA

Okay.

HOWIE

And maybe hang the Ansel Adams prints that are in the basement?

BECCA  
Sounds like a plan.

HOWIE  
Making progress I see.

BECCA  
Yup.

HOWIE  
Good. Looks good.  
(pause)  
I'm gonna take Taz for a walk. You need anything while I'm out?

BECCA  
I don't think so.

HOWIE  
Okay.  
(to Nat)  
Thanks for helping out, Nat.

NAT  
Sure.  
  
(He goes.)

BECCA  
(whispers)  
I hate that bedspread. I'm gonna put the blue one on. It's neutral enough.  
  
(They work in silence for several beats. Nat suddenly smiles. She remembers something.)

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

BECCA  
What?

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

BECCA

(she's heard this story many times)

Yup.

NAT

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

BECCA

I do.

NAT

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

BECCA

Only too well.

NAT

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

BECCA

Mom?

(Nat looks up at her.)

Does it go away?

NAT

What.

BECCA

This feeling. Does it ever go away?

NAT

(beat)

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

(beat)

It changes though.

BECCA

How?

NAT

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

BECCA

What.

NAT

Fine...actually.

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

## SCENE THREE

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

BECCA

I made some lemon-squares.

(She puts them on the table.)

JASON

Thank you.

BECCA

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

JASON

I'm fine.

BECCA

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

JASON

Sometimes.

BECCA

You want coffee?

JASON

No thanks. Really, I'm okay.

BECCA

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

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

JASON

It's good.

BECCA

Thank you.

JASON

Still warm.

(she smiles - pause)

So, you're moving?

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

JASON  
Where are you moving to?

BECCA  
We're still looking.

JASON  
Far away?

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

JASON  
What does he do?

BECCA  
He works at Prime Brokerage. Risk Management.

JASON  
(doesn't know what that is)  
Uh-huh.

BECCA  
He takes the train in.

JASON  
Right.

BECCA  
So we don't wanna go too far.

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

BECCA  
We'll probably go smaller. This is too big.

(Jason goes back to the lemon square.)

BECCA  
I'm sorry Howie couldn't be here.

JASON  
That's okay.

BECCA  
He's, uh...

JASON  
Not ready?

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

JASON  
He seemed mad. The other day.

BECCA  
No, he was just surprised that you dropped by.

JASON  
Okay.

BECCA  
You just scared him a little bit.

JASON  
He didn't seem scared.

BECCA  
Yeah well... Maybe that's not the right word. But...Howie's not mad at you. What happened was an accident. Howie knows that.  
(beat)  
You know that too, right?

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

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

JASON  
You should have his vocal cords snipped.

BECCA  
What?

JASON

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

BECCA

Huh. I've never heard of that.

JASON

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

BECCA

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

(beat)

Do you have any pets?

JASON

No.

BECCA

Well that's lucky.

JASON

Yeah?

BECCA

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

JASON

We read that book.

BECCA

*Bleak House?*

JASON

Yeah, in English class.

BECCA

Did you like it?

JASON  
Not really. It's too long.

BECCA  
I know. I barely made it through.

JASON  
I liked *David Copperfield* though.

BECCA  
Also very long.

JASON  
Yeah, but it didn't feel as long.

BECCA  
No, you're right.

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

BECCA  
Of Danny?

JASON  
Yeah.

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

JASON  
Okay.

BECCA  
Do you *want* to see pictures? Because I could—

JASON  
No thank you.

BECCA  
(beat)  
Okay.

JASON  
The one in the article was nice though. Him at the beach.

BECCA

That's at Anneport Bay.

JASON

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

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

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

(beat)

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

(beat)

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

BECCA

(pause)

I'm gonna get you some milk. You don't have to drink it if you don't want it.

JASON

Okay.

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

BECCA

(from the kitchen)

So you're a senior?

JASON

Yeah.

BECCA

Where you headed in the fall?

JASON

Connecticut College. They have a good writing program.

BECCA

Oh, well that's nice for you. And not too far from home. Your parents must be happy about that.

JASON

It's just my mom, but yeah, she's happy about it. She's already started picking out sheet-sets for the dorm room.

BECCA

(smiles)

Uh-huh.

JASON

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

BECCA

Right.

JASON

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

BECCA

That'll be nice.

(re-enters, brings him the milk)

There ya go.

JASON

Thanks.

(puts the milk down)

BECCA

And you graduate when?

JASON

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

BECCA

Well that's great. I like Matt Lauer.

JASON

Yeah. So does my mom.

BECCA

So you must have a prom coming up then.

JASON

It was last Saturday actually.

BECCA

And you went?

JASON

Yeah.

BECCA

Do you have a girlfriend or—

JASON

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

BECCA

That must've been fun.

JASON

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

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

BECCA

I'm sorry.

JASON

No, that was stupid of me.

BECCA

I asked.

JASON

Still, I shouldn't have-- Should I go?

BECCA

No. I'm fine.

(She collects herself. She grabs a napkin and blows her nose.)

BECCA

I'm sorry.

(They sit in silence for a couple beats.)

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

JASON

It was okay.

(beat)

BECCA

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

JASON

That's okay.

BECCA

We appreciated it.

(beat)

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

JASON

Yeah?

BECCA

Is that your dad?

JASON

(beat)

No.

BECCA

I mean, is it based on him?

JASON

No. My dad was an English teacher.

BECCA

Oh. Okay. I was just curious about that part. He is dead though, right?

JASON

It's just a story.

BECCA

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

JASON

Reading into it?

BECCA

Yeah.

(beat)

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

JASON

Not really.

BECCA

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

JASON

I should read it.

BECCA

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

JASON

Thank you.

BECCA

Is that something you believe in?

JASON

Parallel universes?

BECCA

Yeah.

JASON

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

BECCA

There *have* to be?

JASON

Yeah, because infinite space means...it means it goes on and on forever, so there's a never-ending stream of possibilities.

BECCA

Okay.

JASON

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

BECCA

And you think that's plausible.

JASON

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

BECCA

Huh.

(beat)

So somewhere out there, there's a version of me -- what? -- making pancakes?

JASON

Sure.

BECCA

Or at a water park.

JASON

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

BECCA

And so this is just the sad version of us.

JASON

(beat)

I guess.

BECCA

But there are other versions where everything goes our way.

JASON

Sure.

BECCA

(beat – a change)

So those other versions of us exist. They're not hypothetical, they're actual, *real* people.

JASON

Yeah, assuming you believe in science.

BECCA

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

JASON

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

BECCA

He's not mad. Nobody's mad.

JASON

Okay.

(beat)

Can you tell him though?

BECCA

Sure.

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

## SCENE FOUR

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

IZZY

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

NAT

Oh come on. She's not a stalker.

IZZY

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

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

IZZY

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

NAT

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

(Becca enters with a recipe she's printed out for Izzy.)

BECCA

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

IZZY

(looking at the recipe)

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

BECCA

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

IZZY

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

BECCA

If you get stuck, you can call me.

IZZY

Okay.

(beat - chuckles)

Me - baking. Auggie's gonna be shocked.

NAT

Well, anyone in their right mind *would* be.

IZZY

Ha-ha.

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

HOWIE

Hello-hellooo....

IZZY  
Hey, Howie.

NAT  
Hello.

HOWIE

Hi.

BECCA

You're home.

HOWIE

(taking off his jacket)

Yeah.

BECCA

I thought you had group.

HOWIE

I decided to skip it.

IZZY

(beat)

Mom, we should get going, if you wanna get to bingo.

NAT

Why, what time is it?

IZZY

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

(re: box of toys)

Thanks for the stuff.

BECCA  
You're welcome.

IZZY  
Bye, Howie.

NAT  
Bye, Sweetie.

HOWIE  
Bye, guys.

(As they exit)

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

IZZY  
Can we talk about this in the car, please?

NAT  
I didn't even get a lemon square.

IZZY  
They were good.

NAT  
They *looked* good.

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

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

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

(Howie gets himself a beer from the fridge.)

BECCA  
We had paillard if you're hungry. It's in there.

HOWIE  
No, Alan kept pushing that bread on me all day.

BECCA  
Okay.

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

BECCA  
Fine. It was totally fine.

HOWIE  
What'd he want?

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

HOWIE  
Did you let him off the hook?

BECCA  
What do you mean?

HOWIE  
Well, he seemed pretty intent on sitting down with us. I assumed he wanted to be absolved or something.

(no response)  
Is that what he wanted?

BECCA  
Not really. Not in so many words, no.

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

BECCA  
We *don't* blame him.

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

BECCA  
I guess so.

HOWIE

(beat)

That's good.

(beat)

So I don't have to meet him then, do I?

BECCA

Not if you don't want to, no.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

Why aren't you at group?

HOWIE

(beat)

I just decided to skip it tonight. Wasn't up to it.

BECCA

How come?

HOWIE

I think I might be done. With the group. I don't think I'm gonna go back.

BECCA

Why, what happened?

HOWIE

Nothing. I just don't think it's as helpful to me anymore. I wanna try it on my own for awhile. I mean, not on my own, obviously, but...without the group.

(beat)

That sound okay?

BECCA

Sure. If you're not getting anything out of it then why go?

HOWIE

Exactly.

BECCA

(beat)

Are you okay?

HOWIE

Yeah. I'm just tired. And full of zucchini bread.

BECCA

Alright. I'm gonna have a piece. It's good?

HOWIE

Yeah, it's great.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

(beat)

Really?

BECCA

Sunday they said. Are you free?

HOWIE

Yeah. You talked to Rick?

BECCA

No. Debbie.

HOWIE

You talked to Debbie.

BECCA

Yeah. I called her.

HOWIE

(beat)

Wow. She must've been surprised.

BECCA

She was.

HOWIE

What'd she say?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Sounds great.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

And that was good enough for you?

BECCA

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

HOWIE

Are the kids gonna be there?

BECCA

Of course.

HOWIE

(beat)

That'll be hard.

BECCA

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

HOWIE

(pause)

Right. Okay.

(pause)

Danny's is coming up.

BECCA

I know.

HOWIE

That's gonna be a tough one.

BECCA

Yeah.

(Silence as Becca eats the bread.)

BECCA  
(re: zucchini bread)  
It's good.

HOWIE  
I'll tell Alan you liked it.

(More silence.)

HOWIE  
It's so quiet.

BECCA  
That's because I slipped Taz a couple Ambien.

HOWIE  
(smiles)  
You're funny.

BECCA  
You think I'm joking.

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

BECCA  
You think we should reconsider the house?

HOWIE  
If nobody bids, we might have to.

BECCA  
There are worse things, I guess.

HOWIE  
Yeah.

BECCA  
(beat)  
It's a nice house.

HOWIE  
I know.

(Becca stops eating, and faces Howie. Pause.)

BECCA  
So what are we gonna do?

HOWIE  
About what?

BECCA  
I don't know, pick something.

HOWIE  
Well...  
(thinks it over)  
We could go to Village Toys tomorrow and pick up Candyland for Emily. That's probably something she'd like.

BECCA  
Okay, Candyland. That's a start. Then what?

HOWIE  
Then we wrap it.

BECCA  
Uh-huh.

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

BECCA  
(beat)  
And then what?

HOWIE  
(beat)  
I don't know. Something though. We'll figure it out.

BECCA  
Will we?

HOWIE  
I think so. I think we will.

(Silence. They just sit for several beats, not even looking at each other.

And the lights slowly fade.)

**END OF PLAY**