

Currency

a love story set in changing times of overextended trust and inflated intimacy
by Jennie Webb

Represented by:
Mary Alice Kier
Cine/Lit Representation
Dramatic/Film/Literary Management
310.413.8934
makier@att.net

Jennie Webb
1977 Escarpa Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90041
323.828.8708
jenniewebbsite@gmail.com

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Characters:

THE RESILIENT WOMAN, HELEN—mid 40s to early 50s, there is something open about her that often gets the best of her.

THE LARGE MAN, DAN—mid 40s to early 50s, there is a hesitation in his manner that's often his undoing.

HIS SISTER, RAE—late 30s to early 40s, there is the threat of a takeover in her every move.

THEIR BROTHER, SPARKY—late 20s, there is a huge amount of slacker energy at work.

THE WOMAN'S GIRLFRIEND, GEORGIA—40s or 50s, there is an absolute certainty in the way she handles herself.

Setting:

An enormous bedroom in Los Angeles

Time:

A weekday morning.

Casting Notes:

Dan, Rae & Sparky are probably white, but not necessarily. Helen and Georgia can be any race or ethnicity, although it's suggested that Georgia be played by an actor of color.

Dialogue Notes:

— Indicates a character's dialogue is interrupted, by another character speaking, an event or a character abruptly shifting gears within a line of dialogue.

... Indicates a character is searching for words, does not complete a thought or leaves a line of dialogue open.

Characters talking over one another is indicated by columns within the script, with suggested staggering of overlap and emphasis.

Production/Design Notes:

The play take place in a somewhat skewed reality, so any degree of stylization is encouraged.

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Synopsis

Currency is a love story set in changing times of overextended trust and inflated intimacy. After sharing a night of unexpected romance, a middle-aged couple is waylaid by even more surprises and left searching for value in a world that's moving way too fast.

It's the "morning after," and Dan and Helen are navigating toast and coffee in Helen's enormous bedroom when Dan receives a phone call: there's been a horrible family tragedy. Life's sometimes like that.

But in today's surreal age of virtual connections, hyper-consumption and global financial meltdowns, who's got a way of getting through life that still works? What truly has worth and meaning anymore? Is the only real thing we have left to hang onto, each other? And is that enough?

SPECIAL THANKS

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Director Annie McVey, Holly Fulger, Ron Bottitta, Jennifer Kenyon, Josh Stamell, Veralyn Jones & Daniel Shoenman, Bonnie Hallman, Tommy Dunn, Elliot Shoenman, Inkwel Theater Development LAB (December, 2015);
Mary Alice Kier, Christie Craft & Heather Helinsky, Dramaturg.

Currency received its World Premiere in April/May, 2016
An Inkwel Theater Guest Production at VS. Theatre
Directed by Annie McVey, with Dale Waddington, Warren Davis,
Gina Torrecilla, Josh Stamell & Shirley Jordan;
Producers Daniel Shoenman, Bonnie Hallman & Diana Wyenn.

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We see a large bedroom. Like a really big bedroom. A bedroom that's too big for one person. That's too big for this particular house. There are at least three doors—one is open—and various areas for sitting, reading, dressing... Although the room is relatively tidy, it feels old-fashioned and contains lots and lots of stuff. The bed is unmade.

We hear footsteps and a woman comes through the open door; she's barefoot and dressed in pajamas. She has a bright resilience about her, and also a transparency that allows us to see she's a bit apprehensive about having opened herself up to something new. She's juggling two cups of coffee and a plate with napkins and a few pieces of toast.

HELEN:

So I only had Coffee Mate. Sorry, I don't really keep milk or anything; I thought I might have some half-and-half, but...

She's expecting someone to be there who isn't, and is momentarily panicked. Really panicked, to a degree we didn't see coming.

Nooooo... Hello? Hello?!!

DAN:

(offstage) Hey! In here.

A somewhat large, soft but nonetheless energized man opens a door and walks into the room. He wears slacks and a button down shirt, which he's tucking in. He's also barefoot.

That's okay. Coffee Mate is great! Oh. Hang on.

He goes out again and she waits, willing herself to stay grounded. Then we hear the toilet flushing. He comes back in, leaving the bathroom door open behind him.

Sorry.

HELEN:

Ha ha. Thanks. Sorry if I got... I tend to lose things in this room.

DAN:

Ha ha. Things like people?

HELEN:

Well... *(re the coffee she's holding)* Oh!

She hands him a cup of coffee.

DAN:

Thanks. Good. *(sipping his coffee)*

HELEN:

I like it strong.

DAN:

Yeah! Great! And hot!

HELEN:

Yeah. Sorry.

DAN:

No. It's perfect.

HELEN:

It's coffee, anyway.

DAN:

(drinking, or nursing a burned tongue) Mmmm!

HELEN:

And I made some toast. I didn't really have anything else. For just me, I usually just do toast. Do you want some toast?

DAN:

Oh. No thanks.

HELEN:

Ah. Yeah. I'm probably the only person in LA who still eats bread.

DAN:

Oh, no. I eat bread. I love bread!

HELEN:

That's right! You do. I know that. You ate bread last night.

DAN:

I did. That was great bread.

HELEN:

And that time you brought me a picnic we had bread. Awhile back.

DAN:

I— Yes! I didn't actually remember that. But how clever of me.

HELEN:

What is?

DAN:

To know you were the only person in LA who ate bread?

HELEN:
Oh! Ha ha.

DAN:
Ha ha.

Short pause.

HELEN:
So... no toast. Is that like a raw food thing?

DAN:
Ha ha. No, it's like a no food thing.

HELEN:
What?

DAN:
Or a no breakfast thing.

HELEN:
Huh?!

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
No breakfast? You don't eat breakfast? Oh, no, no no no. This whole thing was a huge mistake. Pack up and get out of here.

DAN:
Wait. No. I completely eat breakfast. I love breakfast!

HELEN:
(nibbling provocatively on the toast) A toast-free breakfast? I'm sorry, why bother?

DAN:
I completely agree. 100%. I just have to wait.

HELEN:
Do not tell me you're saving yourself for marriage, at your age, mister!

DAN:
Ah...

HELEN:
Ew. I didn't mean... Obviously! I meant toast. But that wasn't funny. I'm sorry.

DAN:
No, it was fine. It was funny! It's just I take pills. In the morning. Before I eat.

HELEN:
Oh! Well. That's a drag.

DAN:
I guess. I just... It's not that big of a thing, really.

HELEN:
No, I understand. Pills.

DAN:
Right? At a certain point in our lives? No avoiding it. All about the pills.

HELEN:
Yeah. Well, actually no. I don't take any pills.

DAN:
Oh! You're lucky, then.

HELEN:
No, I just fake it.

DAN:
Luck?

HELEN:
Yeah.

She finishes a piece of toast. Maybe licks her fingers. There's a sense that this could lead to something interesting.

DAN:
Well. That really looks great. If only I'd known. Ha ha.

HELEN:
Ha ha. I should have told you last night to bring your pills?

DAN:
Ha ha. I would have.

HELEN:
If only I'd known.

DAN:
Oh. It's not like I take that many.

HELEN:
No. Of course not. And I didn't mean...

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
I didn't mean pills, like, you needed them last night. Like...

Short pause.

DAN:
Oh! No, I didn't think you meant that.

HELEN:
Good!

DAN:
I hope you didn't mean that!

HELEN:
No! I really didn't, I didn't at all!

DAN:
Good. Ha ha.

HELEN:
Ha ha!

Pause.

DAN:
Okay, then. I... should get going. I guess.

HELEN:
Yeah. Me, too. We have to do a bunch of terminations at work today. I hate hate hate layoffs. I just want to hide under my desk. I almost did, last week. People come in with this look on their faces—they don't know but they know something, and I have to pretend to be professional and not take into account the actual person but, you know, I know. And then I'm the one who has to tell them!

DAN:
Right.

HELEN:
(recognizing her misstep) Oh! I... It's not easy for anyone. Out there. Getting harder and harder. Seems like no one's safe anymore.

DAN:
(looking for his shoes) Where'd I leave my...?

HELEN:
Your phone's there, on the bed.

DAN:
No. Yeah. I mean...

Short pause.

Can I say this? This bedroom is huge. This is the biggest bedroom I've ever seen.

HELEN:
I know. It's ridiculous. Long story.

DAN:
I mean, it's great! But your house didn't seem... It's not that big a house, is it?

HELEN:
No, it's not. The bedroom is, like, half the house.

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
Or more. The bedroom's—

Dan's phone begins to ring.

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
I'll tell you later.

DAN:
Okay. 'Cause I do want to hear this. And I do want to be invited back.

HELEN:
Oh, really?

DAN:
Wait. Not that I'm presuming anything.

HELEN:
No, it's fine!

DAN:
I wouldn't want you to think that—

HELEN:
(interrupting, re the phone) Will you please get that?

DAN:
Yes! I will. *(answering phone)* Hi!

HELEN:
(whispering, grabbing his coffee cup) I'll take this.

DAN:
(whispering) Thanks! *(into phone)* No, it's okay. What's up?

She finds his shoes which have his socks stored inside of them.

HELEN:
(more to herself than anyone) Oh! Looky here! Who knew just how clever you actually were? Protecting the socks. Good idea in here. I can't keep a pair for more than a week. Not that I wear socks, much. Or shoes, even, unless I have to. Maybe I'll just start wandering around barefoot, even on the streets. Let big calluses grow to protect my feet from the elements. So big I won't ever be able to wear shoes again!

DAN:
(into the phone) Where?

HELEN:
(whispering, handing him his footwear package) Here you go!

DAN:
(into the phone) Yes. *(to her, more as an automatic response)* Thanks.

He sits on the bed, fumbling with his socks and shoes as he listens to the voice on the other end of the phone line. She collects his cup and the empty plate.

HELEN:
Oh. Maybe you wanted more coffee. *(gesturing with the cup and whispering again)* Did you want more...?

He shakes his head no, a bit too emphatically. She notes this but rebounds.

Okay. I'll just go and... God, what time is it?

She moves to the nightstand, maybe removing a piece of clothing to uncover a clock. Everything takes too long to find in this bedroom.

HELEN:

Oh, geez. I'm gonna be late.

Dishes in hand, Helen takes another look at the possibilities of Dan.

(whispering) So how long do you think you...?

He only has room for his phone call, and abruptly puts his hand up without looking at her. This hits her hard and she shuts tight.

Okay! Well. There's an answer, I guess!

He shifts his body away from her and she connects some self-protective dots.

(to herself) And apparently that's the end of that. *(back to Dan, gesturing re the dishes)* I'm just going to...

DAN:

(into the phone) Right. I understand.

HELEN:

Right.

Perhaps she sets the dishes back down as she walks out of the room, leaving the door open behind her.

DAN:

(into the phone) No, I— Yes. Good. Okay. Thanks.

He hangs up his phone and puts it into his pocket. He sits on the end of the bed. He just sits. After a moment Helen comes back in, more closed off than when we saw her last.

HELEN:

So this was fun! I don't mean to be rude, but I have to get ready for work, so...

She sees Dan has not moved.

Um... Are you okay?

DAN:

I...

HELEN:

Did something happen?

DAN:

Yes. My brother was murdered.

Pause.

HELEN:
What?

DAN:
My brother was murdered.

HELEN:
Oh my god. That was...?

DAN:
My sister.

She sits beside him, opening slightly.

HELEN:
That's terrible. That's absolutely... I'm so, so sorry. What happened? Can I ask that?

DAN:
Yes. He was found stabbed.

HELEN:
What?

DAN:
Someone stabbed him. And left him in an abandoned building.

HELEN:
Oh, no.

DAN:
My brother's... not well.

HELEN:
He's not dead?

DAN:
Yes. He's dead. But he's— He was... pretty much crazy.

HELEN:
Oh.

DAN:
And pretty much homeless. So... maybe we were expecting it?

HELEN:
Really?

DAN:
Or expecting something. But... No, not this.

HELEN:
Of course not, I... I don't know what to say. Is there anything I can do?

DAN:
I don't know.

HELEN:
I'll tell them at work, I won't go in today.

DAN:
You don't have to do that.

HELEN:
I want to. I can stay with you. I feel like I should. I mean... if you want me to?

Short pause.

DAN:
Thanks.

HELEN:
Okay.

She moves to a land-line phone on a bedside table and starts to dial.

I'm sorry, this is just so dreadful. Was it here in LA? Was he living here? Like Downtown, on a sidewalk? Under cardboard?

DAN:
Out in Acton.

HELEN:
Ah.

DAN:
He—

She interrupts him by holding her hand up.

HELEN:
(into the phone) Oh, hi! Yeah, I know. It's— Well, I can't now. There's been a death.

Dan gets up from the bed, not knowing where to go.

(into the phone) Yes, she is. My mother is dead already. This is someone else.

She and Dan look at one another.

HELEN:

(into the phone) No. But I'll be in tomorrow... Okay. Bye.

She hangs up the phone.

DAN:

I'm sorry about your mother.

HELEN:

Thanks. She was... *(re the room)* This was all hers. And she died at home. That was a good thing.

DAN:

I... Okay.

HELEN:

So. Your brother. What was he doing in Acton?

DAN:

I don't really know. He was in a shelter there. Kind of. He just could never... He'd show up, here, every once in awhile. Lost.

HELEN:

My god, that sounds—

DAN:

(interrupting) I mean, not lost, lost. In life, lost. Everything changed too fast for him. He couldn't figure it out, he couldn't find—

He's interrupted by a doorbell ringing.

HELEN:

(getting up) Lemme go; I have no idea who that could be.

DAN:

It might be my sister.

HELEN:

What?

DAN:

She said she—

He's interrupted by loud knocking.

RAE:

(offstage, muffled shouting) Hello?

DAN:
It's my sister.

HELEN:
Oh!

DAN:
I'm sorry. I'll go? Get that? Is that okay, I'll just tell her to wait, and then I'll...

HELEN:
Sure. You go.

He leaves the room. She sits on the edge of the bed. Then remembers her attire.

Oh, geez. I gotta put something on.

We hear voices as Helen grabs clothes from a bureau and starts to undress.

RAE:
(offstage) They were lucky they found him. He could have been lying there for days, it if wasn't for one of the guys who was in on it. That's lunatic, huh? The police randomly picked the guy up and he told them what happened, 1-2-3 case closed.

An expansive woman comes in the open door followed by Dan, catching Helen as she pulls her pajamas back on.

(to Helen) Hi! I'm sorry to barge in like this, but I just wanted to say hi.

DAN:
(to Helen) She wanted to meet you.

RAE:
(to Helen) I wanted to meet you.

HELEN:
Hi.

RAE:
Dan's told me a lot about you.

HELEN:
He has?

RAE:
Yes. Human Resources? That's such a valuable skill. "People." One I certainly don't have. I'm a numbers gal. We're actually looking for someone—my company—if you're interested in shaking it up a bit. Do you have a card?

HELEN:
What?

RAE:
A business card.

HELEN:
Um... in my purse, it's out—

RAE:
(interrupting, handing Helen her card) Here's me. Wealth consulting. Not as fancy as it sounds, 'cause we do it all, the real life nitty gritty, from financial planning to investments, risk management...

HELEN:
Oh.

RAE:
Retirement. Estates and legacies.

HELEN:
Yeah.

RAE:
End-of-life decisions.

Short pause.

HELEN:
Sure.

RAE:
Now this is an amazing bedroom. Who knew, in this little... bungalow, huh? It's like some luxury hotel suite!

HELEN:
Not really.

RAE:
No. Not really. But it's certainly big enough. What a surprise, huh? Although perhaps on the scale of bedroom surprises... *(looking at Dan)* Ha ha ha.

DAN:
(to Helen) This is Rae.

HELEN:
(to Rae) I'm so sorry about your brother.

Short pause.

RAE:
Right!

HELEN:
Can I get you anything?

DAN:
You don't have to—

RAE:
(interrupting) Do you have any coffee?

HELEN:
Yeah, I do!

DAN:
(to Rae) We should really—

RAE:
(interrupting, to Helen) That would be so amazing. Black. God, do I need it. I didn't have time to make any then I was going to grab some on my way over, but, well, you know. Nothing worse than being uncaffeinated in a crisis, huh?

HELEN:
I ... can't even imagine.

Helen starts out.

DAN:
Thank you!

HELEN:
It's fine. *(to Rae)* Oh. You don't want toast, do you?

RAE:
You know something? I don't usually eat bread, but right now I think toast is just the ticket!

HELEN:
Okay!

She leaves the room and closes the door behind her.

RAE:
(to Dan) And how awful am I? She says "I'm so sorry about your brother" and the first thing I think of is "Why? What happened to Dan?"

DAN:
Nothing happened to me.

RAE:

I know that. Well, actually, something did happen, huh? How long have you guys been...

She indicates the unmade bed.

...intimate?

DAN:

This is new.

RAE:

How new? Must be like, new, new, right?

DAN:

Like last night, new.

RAE:

Really! This is the first "morning after?" The scene of the crime? Hah! How is it getting biblical in the Taj Mahal of bedrooms, then?

DAN:

You are not allowed to ask me that.

RAE:

No?

DAN:

No. You're my sister.

RAE:

Oh. Well. I didn't mean to intrude. I know you've got your privacy issues, Dan.

DAN:

No, it's—

RAE:

(interrupting) She seems like a nice girl, is all. I'm surprised.

DAN:

Why are you—?

RAE:

(interrupting) And you're right. It's none of my business.

DAN:

That's not—

RAE:

(interrupting) Even if you have been living at my place for six months now, rent free...

Short pause.

DAN:

Did they say what happens next? What we should do? I mean, there's a body, right? What about the body?

RAE:

It's still in Acton.

We hear a knock on the door.

Hello?

Helen tentatively peeks in, carrying three cups of coffee.

HELEN:

How's it going?

RAE:

Good. You?

HELEN:

I... good, I know you probably have lots to talk about. Should I leave you alone?

RAE:

No! It's fine. *(taking the coffee)* Thanks, you're a lifesaver!

HELEN:

I wish! *(to Dan)* Um, here. Thought you could use a new cup.

DAN:

That's very nice. Thank you.

HELEN:

You're very welcome.

Their hands touch around the warm cup. It's more than nice.

RAE:

He doesn't drink coffee.

DAN:

What?

HELEN:
No?

DAN:
I drink coffee.

RAE:
Since when?

DAN:
Not every day, but I drink coffee. *(to Helen)* And this is really good coffee.

RAE:
It's hot.

DAN:
And strong.

RAE:
Anything probably tastes strong to a non-coffee drinker.

HELEN:
I like it strong.

The doorbell rings.

RAE:
As do I!

HELEN:
(re the doorbell, moving) Lemme go...

RAE:
The stronger, the better.

HELEN:
(to Dan) Wait. Is that anyone...?

DAN:
I don't...

RAE:
And this *is* good. It's fantastic coffee. Just what I needed!

We hear knocking on the half-open bedroom door.

GEORGIA:
(entering) Hello?

A woman with sharp edges has let herself in. She's dressed in office attire and carries an impressive bag.

HELEN:

Oh, hi! *(to all)* This is my friend, Georgia.

DAN:

Hi.

RAE:

Hey!

GEORGIA:

Yeah.

HELEN:

Ha ha. *(pulling Georgia aside)* What are you doing here?

GEORGIA:

Honey. What is going on here and who died?

HELEN:

How did you—?

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) Janice. In payroll.

HELEN:

But—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) You know shit's coming down today at work, right?

HELEN:

Well—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) So what's with the death in the family story? You don't have any family.

Very short pause.

HELEN:

No. I don't.

GEORGIA:

Then whatever you got goin' on here, today is *not* the day for you to not come in.

RAE:

(joining Georgia and Helen) I couldn't help overhearing. You two work together? So many changes going on, start-ups crashing right and left. But like I said to Helen: the money's there—and opportunities, if you know where to look—so get out while you can! *(handing Georgia a card)* Here's me. *(to Helen)* Did you say there was toast?

HELEN:

It's toasting.

DAN:

I'll get it!

HELEN:

No, I can—

DAN:

(interrupting) I'd like to. If that's okay?

HELEN:

Um, sure. I left the butter out.

RAE:

Make mine dry.

HELEN:

Dry toast?

DAN:

Okay. I'll be right back.

HELEN:

Okay!

Dan leaves the room through the open door.

RAE:

(to Helen) There's my brother, pitching in when you need him most, ha ha ha. *(to Georgia)* Men!

GEORGIA:

Who are you?

HELEN:

Oh! This is Dan's sister.

GEORGIA:

And who's Dan?

HELEN:
(*gesturing toward the door*) Dan. The guy I've been seeing.

GEORGIA:
The guy you've been...

RAE:
It's been a little while, right? How did you two meet?

HELEN:
We met through... a friend at work.

GEORGIA:
Wait. I thought he was—

HELEN:
(*interrupting, to Rae with Georgia in her sights*) Sort of.

RAE:
Oh, sure! I remember.

HELEN:
Really? He told you?

RAE:
Of course!

GEORGIA:
(*to Helen, re the unmade bed*) So you and Dan...?

HELEN:
(*to Rae*) What did he tell you?

RAE:
Or he might not have.

HELEN:
I didn't think so.

GEORGIA:
(*to Helen, or the bed*) Really?

RAE:
Oooh, I bet there's a story, there, huh?

HELEN:
Not really.

GEORGIA:

All right, then! Hate to interrupt this... post-coital sibling reunion...

As the two women start to talk over one another to Helen, a man who bears a resemblance to Dan but is younger and maybe larger and definitely less buttoned-down, wanders into the room through the open door. He wears military-esque cargo pants, carries a camouflage backpack and is eating a piece of toast. He also seems to be talking to himself at times, mouthing words silently and perhaps very animatedly. Helen is the only one who takes notice of him.

GEORGIA:

But, sweetie, you really have to pull it together and come with me, back to the office.

There are some nasty wheels in motion but if we can get our butts down there, there are things we can do.

Actions we can take.

RAE:

Well, my brother isn't always the full disclosure type. But you two have been going at it for some time now, right?

I mean, of course not "it," it.

Between us girls, Dan sometimes needs a little push.

RAE:

GEORGIA:

I know how to do this; we stop it before it's too late!

A kick in the ass when it comes to doing the actual deed, you know?

HELEN:

I... I...

HELEN:

Wait! Hang on...!

The man opens another door across the room from the bathroom; it's a closet. He disappears into it, closing the door behind him. Georgia's phone begins to ring inside her bag.

(to the women, re the man) Who is that?

GEORGIA:

(re her phone) I don't know. One sec.

She finds her phone and answers it.

(into the phone) Hey—what's up? No, I'm over at Helen's. (to Helen) Be right back.

She moves away into a corner of the room and we hear murmurs of her side of the conversation, occasionally clearly.

HELEN:

(to Rae, re the man) I'm sorry, is that someone—?

RAE:
(interrupting) No need to apologize to me!

Very short pause.

HELEN:
Thank you. Listen: I don't really know what's going on, here...

RAE:
I'll bet! I hope you're not having second thoughts. About Dan. I mean, of course you are, don't we all, but I'm sure—

HELEN:
(interrupting) No. No! But it's... It's just so terrible. And I am sorry.

Pause.

RAE:
Oh. About Frank.

HELEN:
Frank?

RAE:
Our brother. Yes. It is. It's actually a terrible, terrible situation. Dan told you the whole story?

HELEN:
No, just that he'd been found... murdered.

RAE:
Really! Now that's very odd. He said "murder"; he used the term murder?

HELEN:
Yes. Wasn't he stabbed?

RAE:
Yes. Stabbed. He was stabbed. I suppose that would be murder.

GEORGIA:
(from the corner, into the phone) I already told you, don't worry about those!

RAE:
Funny, I was just thinking "killed." That made it less personal, somehow. How much intent is involved if it's murder?

HELEN:
I don't know.

RAE:

Not that it matters, I guess. But can I tell you something?

The man opens the closet door and comes back into the room.

GEORGIA:

(from the corner, into the phone) Like I said, just ignore it.

The man passes Georgia who's completely wrapped up in her phone call.

HELEN:

(re the man) Okay. I don't—

RAE:

(interrupting) The first thing that went through my mind when I found out? The very first thing? "I'm just glad he didn't kill someone else. One of us!"

HELEN:

Wait. What?

RAE:

Right? Frank was completely unstable. He could not figure out a way to function and believe you, me, there have been many, many threats in recent years. Most of them targeted at his twin, your boyfriend.

HELEN:

My— It was Dan's twin brother?

RAE:

Uh huh. And he's taking this really hard.

GEORGIA:

(from the corner, into the phone) Because I've got it covered, that's why!

HELEN:

Well, of course he is!

RAE:

Where'd I put my coffee?

As she looks for her cup, the man draws Helen's attention to him by pulling an old children's book from a bookcase. He flips through it, perhaps lounging on a divan.

HELEN:

I... *(to the man)* Hello?

The man does not acknowledge Helen or anyone else.

RAE:

He really should have been institutionalized. Frank. That's what should have happened, when this all started, after he got back.

HELEN:

Got back from where?

RAE:

Iraq. He wasn't there long; it was ridiculous, the thought of him in a warzone. But the system is so fucked up, when he came home they couldn't keep him anywhere. He'd go off his meds and do whatever the fuck he wanted! It got to be pretty terrifying, actually. Here it is!

Rae reclaims her coffee and Helen considers the man and his attire—and behavior—with a new perspective.

HELEN:

Frank...

RAE:

Oh, yeah. It absolutely tore our parents apart. I mean, they stayed together. But individually? They were devastated.

HELEN:

Your parents. Do they—?

RAE:

(interrupting) They're gone now.

HELEN:

I'm... sorry. But maybe that's for the best?

The man puts the book down and Helen watches as he enters into what seems to be an agitated conversation with himself.

RAE:

Definitely! I mean, if he was blown up while he was over there that would have been one thing. But they just kept holding out hope, pretending everything was fine. We all did what we could for him but he just threw it all away. Everything we gave him, everything he had. Lived in some sort of angry altered state where he valued absolutely nothing. My god. At least this puts a stop to it.

HELEN:

Right...

The man leaves through the open door to the rest of the house.

HELEN:

I think I should lie down.

RAE:

Go ahead. But you have to tell me: What's with this room? The house could not have been built like this.

HELEN:

Oh, no...

RAE:

I thought not. These places usually have such small rooms. Like they were built for miniature people. Thirties?

HELEN:

What?

RAE:

I used to be in real estate. When was this built, around 1930?

HELEN:

The teens, I think.

RAE:

Really! It's that old? I guess you can tell. But it's a lovely little place. I just hope you have earthquake insurance.

Georgia re-joins them.

GEORGIA:

Sorry about that. My spouse. You know her, she gets all panicky around medical stuff, doctor's bills, approval—she doesn't know how it works.

Rae has picked up the book the man was reading.

RAE:

Quite a little library, here! I had this book when I was a kid. It might have been my mom's, actually.

HELEN:

That was my mom's.

RAE:

Really? How funny.

GEORGIA:

All right, doll. Will you please put some clothes on?

HELEN:

Oh. Yeah...

She goes to move to the bureau again but pauses by the closet. She reaches in for some clothes and shuts the door.

GEORGIA:

And buckle up, when we get to the office we've got to—

HELEN:

(interrupting) No. That's what I was trying to tell you.

Georgia's phone buzzes loudly.

I'm not—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting, looking at her phone) Crap. It's Janice.

She moves away again, responding to a text.

RAE:

(to Helen) So is this your remodel? It doesn't look particularly new.

HELEN:

What? No, this is my mother.

RAE:

Aha. You don't have to say anything else. It's not your house, then?

HELEN:

It is, now.

RAE:

Lucky you!

Short pause.

HELEN:

My mother died. She left it to me.

RAE:

Right?

DAN:

Hello?

Dan is at the door.

HELEN:

Hi!

She sets down the clothes and quickly moves to him; it's really good to see him.

HELEN:

How's it going?

DAN:

Okay. I mean, not okay. But...

HELEN:

Yeah, I know.

DAN:

You do?

The man walks in with a platter piled high with toast. Helen's definitely not okay.

HELEN:

Yeah...

RAE

Now where'd my coffee go... *(to Helen)* Did you say you had more?

The man takes off his backpack and sits on the edge of the bed, eating toast.

HELEN:

I...

DAN:

I'm so sorry. We'll be out of here, soon.

HELEN:

Dan...

DAN:

Yes?

HELEN:

(pointing to the man) Do you... see that man, there?

DAN:

My brother?

HELEN:

Your brother?!

DAN:

Yes, sorry. I thought you met.

HELEN:
Wait. What?

DAN:
That's my brother, Sparky.

HELEN:
Sparky.

RAE:
Our baby brother. *(to Sparky, getting his attention)* Right? Our little, baby brother!
(picking up her coffee again) And here we are...

Sparky removes a pair of earbuds and engages for the first time.

SPARKY:
(to Helen) Baby brother. That's me. Sparky the accident. Hi.

HELEN:
(to Dan) Oh! I'm so relieved. I thought... I don't know what I thought.

DAN:
I didn't even know he was in town. He doesn't... Sparky's just... Sparky.

HELEN:
No. It's okay. *(to Sparky)* Hi, there. I'm Helen.

SPARKY:
Toast?

HELEN:
Oh. No, thank you. *(moving toward the unmade bed)* Let me...

SPARKY:
You want me to help you make your bed?

HELEN:
No, thanks. I've got it.

She throws covers over at least part of the bed.

SPARKY:
Is this really supposed to be a bedroom? It's fantastic. I'd never leave.

HELEN:
Ha ha.

SPARKY:
And I like this mattress. Is it a king?

HELEN:
A queen.

SPARKY:
It looks so small in here. But it's nice and firm!

HELEN:
Why don't I find a little table or something? (*pointing to a corner*) And I've got chairs...

DAN:
I'll get them.

Helen grabs a table as Dan retrieves a pair of dainty, almost child-sized chairs.

SPARKY:
Whoa. Look at those. Are they for humans? Those are amazing!

HELEN:
My grandmother's. When I was little, my mom and I used to—

RAE:
(*interrupting, to Dan*) Ah! Your pills!

She produces a bottle.

DAN:
Thanks.

He sets down the chairs.

RAE:
(*to Helen, re the table*) Here, I've got that.

She takes the table and sets it down alongside the bed, arranging an improvised dining area with the chairs. The three siblings settle in—Sparky still on the bed—and Dan washes down his pills.

SPARKY:
(*to Dan*) You drink coffee?

DAN:
Yes. I drink coffee.

Georgia reappears with her phone.

GEORGIA:
(*to Helen, re the new dining arrangement*) Seriously?

DAN:

(re drinking coffee) Yes!

HELEN:

(to Sparky) Would you like a cup?

SPARKY:

Nah, it'll just keep me awake.

GEORGIA:

(pulling Helen aside) Girlfriend, explain to me the reason behind this little...
Teddy Bear's picnic?

HELEN:

I thought I told you. It's Dan's brother.

GEORGIA:

(re Sparky) What about him?

SPARKY:

Man, this is great toast. *(to Dan)* Isn't this great toast?

RAE:

He can't have any yet. He just took his pills.

SPARKY:

Oh! Yeah! The pills.

HELEN:

(to Georgia) No, Dan's other brother. He was murdered!

GEORGIA:

What?

HELEN:

Or killed. Stabbed.

GEORGIA:

So someone *is* dead?

HELEN:

Yes! And it's all absolutely horrible. Sounds like he was psychotic, or bi-polar, or something. PTSD? He was a veteran. And it was Dan's twin. Dan's crazy, dead twin brother. In Acton!

GEORGIA:

Ah!

RAE:

(to Helen, raising her voice) Did you say there was more coffee?

SPARKY:

(to Helen) Do you have any herbal tea?

HELEN:

Oh. Yeah, I think so.

SPARKY:

Chamomile, preferably.

GEORGIA:

(to Helen, re her texting) No. Baby, I put out the fires and bought us some time, but you have to come with me, back to work.

HELEN:

I can't just leave.

GEORGIA:

Why not?

SPARKY:

(to Helen) Or peppermint. But whatever you have

HELEN:

They lost their brother.

GEORGIA:

They should have kept a closer eye on him.

HELEN:

It was murder!

SPARKY:

(to Helen) Anything except Ginseng. Ginseng in my system is like meth.

GEORGIA:

(to Helen) Which is tragic, yes. But it wasn't your brother. You don't have to take care of them. You don't even really know them!

HELEN:

I know Dan!

Dan joins them.

DAN:

Hi. I'm—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) Yeah. Hi. I'm... sorry about your brother.

Dan looks over at Sparky and Rae who are making their way through the toast.

DAN:

Thank you.

GEORGIA:

I actually meant your dead brother.

DAN:

I know. Thanks. But, I have done my share of apologizing for Sparky.

HELEN:

Ha ha ha ha!

Her laughter is a little forced, and loud enough to attract attention from across the room.

RAE:

What's so funny?

GEORGIA:

I said I was sorry about your brother.

RAE:

Oh.

Short pause.

Thank you.

GEORGIA:

Can I ask you all a really big favor? Do all you mind leaving me alone with my friend for a minute?

For the first time, she sets down her bag.

DAN:

Look, I know this must seem strange...

HELEN:

It's okay!

RAE:

(to Georgia) Of course we don't mind! It'll give us a chance to see the rest of the house, what there is of it. Come on, Sparky.

DAN:
(to Helen) Listen, why don't we go. Like, really go.

HELEN:
No, it's okay. You're fine.

GEORGIA:
I, on the other hand, am not. Need some girl time in the bedroom.

SPARKY:
I certainly like the sound of that!

RAE:
Why, Sparky! Listen to you...

SPARKY:
(to Helen) You said you had tea?

HELEN:
It's in the cupboard next to the sink.

Rae and Sparky head through the door.

RAE:
Dan?

DAN:
I'm coming.

He starts out after them.

(to Helen) Are you okay?

HELEN:
I... Yes. Thank you. I'm good.

DAN:
Good. I'm sorry for—

HELEN:
(interrupting) No.

She gives him a brief but heartfelt kiss. It's a kiss that counts. Dan reluctantly leaves.

GEORGIA:
Really?

HELEN:
What?

GEORGIA:
You're good? Really? With...

She closes the door and the room breathes a sigh of relief.

...whatever this is?

HELEN:
I should get dressed.

Instead, she takes in the room's new state of disarray.

GEORGIA:
Do it. And about Dan...

HELEN:
Yeah...

She finishes making the bed.

GEORGIA:
Dan's the guy you told me you stopped seeing, right?

HELEN:
I—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) Dan's the guy you just weren't attracted to even though he was a nice enough guy but you didn't have any sort of chemistry and it was going nowhere and taking forever to get there?

HELEN:
Well...

GEORGIA:
So you didn't stop seeing him.

HELEN:
I was going to.

GEORGIA:
Then how'd he end up here?

HELEN:
Last night was supposed to be the night... of stopping.

GEORGIA:
But it ended up being a night...

HELEN:
Of drinking.

GEORGIA:
Honey. You're too old for that shit.

HELEN:
Speak for yourself.

GEORGIA:
Really, though.

HELEN:
It wasn't like a one-night stand. We've known each other for—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) Still. You weren't sleeping together, were you?

HELEN:
No, but—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) And it's not like you *wanted* to know him; your asshole ex-husband introduced you!

HELEN:
Not exactly.

GEORGIA:
You have to set boundaries, sweetheart! Look what you've allowed, here: This is a guy you're not at all interested in but it's fine if his entire family—

HELEN:
(interrupting) I'm not sure about that!

GEORGIA:
There are more of them?

HELEN:
That I'm not interested in him! I mean, after last night...

GEORGIA:
Really. It was that incredible.

HELEN:
Stop it. It was nice.

GEORGIA:

Then it's definitely been too long. I know you can't judge a book by its unimpressive, oversized cover...

HELEN:

He's a very nice guy.

GEORGIA:

You said he reminded you of your Late Great Uncle Lyle.

HELEN:

Whom I loved.

GEORGIA:

Please.

We hear the loud noise of machinery coming from offstage.

What the...?

HELEN:

Let me go see.

GEORGIA:

No. Just get rid of them!

The mechanical noise becomes scary and threatening.

HELEN:

I'm sorry. I need to do this.

She opens the door and leaves. Georgia's phone begins to ring again. It takes her a minute to find her bag and answer it.

GEORGIA:

(into the phone) Hi Hon, I'm sorry if I— What? Why? You don't do that. The minute you—

Because I know. I deal with this every day, it's my job. Who'd you talk to?

At the insurance company. You have to get a name, that's— Okay. Fine. Love you, too.

She disconnects then starts dialing another number.

(to herself, in frustration) Accchh.

As she puts the phone to her ear, Sparky comes in through the open door with a cup of tea.

SPARKY:

Hey! Oooh, shhh, sorry, didn't know you were on the phone!

GEORGIA:

I'm on hold.

She taps the screen to turn on her phone's speaker. We hear faint muzak.

SPARKY:

Sure, I get it. Forgot to ask. Did you want anything? Coffee? Tea? Toast?

He helps himself to another piece.

GEORGIA:

Thanks. No.

SPARKY:

So! How long have you been friends?

GEORGIA:

Helen and I? Almost... 15 years.

SPARKY:

Fifteen years! Wow. You seem like you're really there for each other.

GEORGIA:

We are.

SPARKY:

That's fantastic. It's just fantastic.

He sets down his tea and starts to root around in his backpack.

I mean, we're all making these profound shifts in our personal operating systems—how we manage the “me” and the “we” while the existing paradigm’s collapsing around us—but reliability is still such a huge part of every dynamic.

GEORGIA:

Really.

SPARKY:

Absolutely. Of course, some people can't manage to move beyond that...

He swipes and taps his own phone.

Here's me.

Georgia's phone dings; she reads his “card.”

SPARKY:

I'm very active in the search for an equitable world, from a cooperative venture standpoint.

GEORGIA:

(re the rest of the house) Can you tell me what's going on out there?

SPARKY:

Ah! Yes! We found a juicer.

GEORGIA:

Congratulations.

Sparky starts to take oranges out of his pants pockets. Lots of oranges.

SPARKY:

And we found this orange tree, just loaded with oranges. The neighbors weren't home. I'm sure they won't mind.

GEORGIA:

No?

SPARKY:

But then the juicer may have found a spoon.

GEORGIA:

Where are you people from?

SPARKY:

You mean, ethnically? Culturally?

He's now putting oranges into his backpack.

GEORGIA:

I mean, do you live here?

SPARKY:

I wish. What's with this bedroom, anyway? It's palatial. Our whole family could live in here. Well, especially now.

GEORGIA:

Especially now?

SPARKY:

Because of Frank.

GEORGIA:

Who's Frank?

SPARKY:

I thought Helen told you. It's just us, now. Frank was stabbed to death.

GEORGIA:

Oh, yes. Frank. I'm sorry about your brother.

SPARKY:

Thanks.

He takes a shirt out of his backpack and begins to change.

So have you heard the whole story? Got the deets as I Ubered over. It was some friends of his. Or not really friends. Obviously. Because they killed him. But I'm sure he thought they were friends. He wanted to believe in the goodness of people. He could have really gone places. He could have taken that and made something out of it.

GEORGIA:

I thought he was crazy.

SPARKY:

He had some anger issues. Medication helped.

GEORGIA:

Hang on.

She taps her phone and holds it to her ear again.

Hello? Ach.

Another tap and we hear musak again; Sparky sits on the bed and slips off his shoes.

SPARKY:

I recognize that tune. Health insurance?

GEORGIA:

Uh, yes.

SPARKY:

Female problems?

GEORGIA:

What? No. Billing.

SPARKY:

Sure. "Coverage." Doesn't that word just make you feel naked?

GEORGIA:

I'm going to finish this call, and then Helen and I have to get to the office.

SPARKY:

You and Helen... Oh! Moment: do you work together?

GEORGIA:

Yes...

SPARKY:

Okay! But you were friends first. You haven't been working for the same place for 15 years, have you?

GEORGIA:

No...

Sparky puts his feet up on the bed and starts to unpack, while tapping and swiping his phone.

SPARKY:

That's a relief! Be like a death sentence, right? How did anyone used to survive, you know? I remember growing up, everyone was always at work, toiling away, day after day. And after work, they'd get together and talk about work. Working for the man. Like that's all there was. By the time I came along, my parents were so done parenting and they had no real network of humanity to fall back on. There was no connective outlet, no core validation, no way to share stories. Boy, I wish I were a kid, today. *(putting his phone away)* You don't have any, do you? Kids.

GEORGIA:

Why are you asking me these questions?

SPARKY:

I'm curious. I'm a curious guy.

He changes his pants.

GEORGIA:

Mmm hmm.

SPARKY:

But I get it. You're a little... wary. I mean, you don't know me.

GEORGIA:

No, I don't.

SPARKY:

Can I just put something out there?

GEORGIA:

(averting her eyes while he's pantless) I wish you wouldn't.

SPARKY:

Two words: "Trust" and "Strangers." I know your generation grew up with—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) "My generation?"

SPARKY:

Okay. Adults of a certain age.

GEORGIA:

"Sparky," was it?

SPARKY:

Was and is!

Georgia suddenly puts the phone to her ear as the muzak stops and a voice comes on.

GEORGIA:

Hi! Yes. Give me someone in membership. Now. Yes. No! Don't you dare put me on— Ah!

The phone comes down and we hear faint muzak again. Sparky helps himself to another piece of toast.

SPARKY:

See? This is just what I was talking about.

GEORGIA:

What is?

SPARKY:

The person on the other end of that line? Not your enemy.

GEORGIA:

I realize that. I'm in Benefits. I do this for a living.

SPARKY:

Rage at people from India?

GEORGIA:

I wasn't— You just have to get past them to get to the people who count.

SPARKY:

So this is work?

GEORGIA:

This is personal.

SPARKY:

It's all personal! And the mesh of today's technology is what makes us all part of it!

GEORGIA:

Are you for real?

SPARKY:

I get you. It's so not easy to walk away from a lifetime of self-orientation.

Dan walks through the open door carrying two glasses of juice.

Speaking of which... *(to Dan)* Hey!

DAN:

Hello. I've brought juice.

SPARKY:

And did we get the juicer emergency handled?

DAN:

We had something in backwards.

SPARKY:

Ah, the old backwards juicer, that'll trip you up, every time.

He takes the glasses, offering one to Georgia.

Juice? Was it... Georgia?

GEORGIA:

Yes.

SPARKY:

Well, then!

He puts the glass in her free hand.

GEORGIA:

Oh, I didn't—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Juice for Georgia! Georgia Juice. Were you born there?

GEORGIA:

No, I was born here.

She sets the glass down.

SPARKY:

Here, in this enormous bedroom? Ha ha ha. Georgia Juice! Let's all have some Georgia Juice. *(to Dan)* What do you think? A new peer-to-peer marketplace platform?

DAN:

(heading toward the door) I'll leave you to it.

SPARKY:

No juice for Dan?

DAN:

No, I'm just the delivery guy. I can't—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) The pills. How could I forget.

DAN:

(to Georgia) I have to wait before I—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Georgia and I were having a nice conversation, you walked in on. About moving from a capitalist mindset where we arm and protect ourselves, from each other, to a community where the real value is in trusting each other.

DAN:

Sparky, please. There's a time and a place—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Yes, Dan, there is! The time is now and this is the place. We have no choice, anymore! *(to Georgia)* My brother, here, can't get his head around it. What it takes to be part of the sharing economy.

DAN:

(to Georgia) Sorry. He's—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) Hang on. You said sharing...

SPARKY:

Economy. It's the new reality of commerce, the end of hyper consumption. We pursued wealth, and now we have more of everything than we can use. We only live in a portion of our homes. Our cars just sit there, unused, for like 90% of the day.

GEORGIA:

In Los Angeles?

Short pause.

SPARKY:

I'll look it up. But the bottom line? For the first time, we're in a collective position to reject money as a motivating force. We can find alternate currencies, create a collaborative culture in pursuit of things that are easily shared, that operates on a currency of trust. And our first investment has to be in strangers.

GEORGIA:

Hmm.

A recorded voice cuts into the muzak coming from Georgia's phone.

DAN:

You're on hold?

SPARKY:

Health insurance.

DAN:

Sorry.

SPARKY:

Right? As a cop once said to me, "I feel your pain." *(to Dan)* Remember that?

DAN:

I don't... I think we should leave Georgia alone.

SPARKY:

Ah, yes. Georgia and her alone time. I get it. But Georgia: You know what won't happen once you're alone?

GEORGIA:

Shall I guess?

SPARKY:

Sharing. One cannot share, alone. And without sharing, we *are* alone!

GEORGIA:

I'll keep that in mind.

SPARKY:

Okay!

DAN:

(guiding Sparky toward the door) Come on, Sparky.

GEORGIA:

Dan!

DAN:
Yes?

GEORGIA:
You and I need to have a little chat, is that all right?

DAN:
Oh. Okay...

GEORGIA:
(referring to her phone) If you don't mind the soundtrack.

DAN:
Ha ha. No. Sorry, I know how it is.

GEORGIA:
You boys are very empathetic.

SPARKY:
Ha ha ha. We certainly have the potential! Where did I put my tea?

He searches for tea.

DAN:
(to Georgia) I promised Helen I'd be—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) Just give me a second. *(re her phone)* I'm in the middle of something, too, so...

DAN:
Sure.

GEORGIA:
All right. I understand that you— that your family is still in shock from this terrible tragedy.

DAN:
Yeah. None of it seems real.

GEORGIA:
I'll bet! And I know that Helen wants, more than anything, to make herself available and take the day off to be here for you, whether it's real or not.

DAN:
I didn't ask her, she wanted to.

GEORGIA:
Well, that's what she does.

DAN:
She's amazing.

GEORGIA:
She is. We've been friends for a long time.

DAN:
And this is all so sudden.

GEORGIA:
Yes, it is.

DAN:
But it feels right, strangely enough.

GEORGIA:
She's a giver; she can't help herself. That's why I'm here.

DAN:
What?

GEORGIA:
Dan, I know what Helen needs now and it's not—

SPARKY:
(interrupting) Here we are, safe and sound. Right by the little boys room!

Holding his tea, he points to the open bathroom door.

(to Georgia) Any objections?

GEORGIA:
It's all yours.

SPARKY:
And that, my friends, is what makes the new world go 'round! Shared resources!
Access over ownership!

He heads into the bathroom without closing the door behind him.

DAN:
You work in Benefits, don't you?

GEORGIA:
I— Yes.

DAN:
I thought I remembered that.

GEORGIA:
From when?

DAN:
When I... Late last year. I was supposed to work there.

GEORGIA:
With us?

DAN:
Not in your department. I thought I had a job. There was kind of a... mix-up.
Helen didn't tell you?

GEORGIA:
No. Or I don't remember. I thought you were a friend of Peter's? Her ex.

DAN:
No, no. Not a friend. He sent me to you. Or to Helen. Basically told me I'd been
hired. I wasn't. I used to work with him.

GEORGIA:
Ah. Well, Peter was an asshole. Where are you working now?

DAN:
I'm not. I'm still looking.

GEORGIA:
At your age. Tough. It's a different market out there.

DAN:
It used to be if you wanted a job, you could find a one.

GEORGIA:
Times have changed.

DAN:
Everything's changed. It's a different *world*. I mean, we all thought Frank was
crazy when he got the job in Iraq.

GEORGIA:
The job? He was in the service, right?

DAN:
No, he was a civilian contractor. But he went over there, no one could talk him
out of it, and now... I understand. He had experience and skills. That had weight
and worth. He wanted to be part of something. Even if...

GEORGIA:
Even if.

DAN:

Or maybe he just needed the money. Because here, no one cared. No one cares. Now, it's all about targets and platforms and breakthrough ideas you're supposed to capture in keywords and upload into online profiles.

GEORGIA:

It's a learning curve.

DAN:

But tell me: How can anyone possibly know anything about a real person from searching and tagging on a goddamn website? What about someone who does their job and does it well and, I don't know, keeps showing up and believes that someday it'll be recognized and rewarded and—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting) Look: I am sorry. You're all dealing with... what you're dealing with, but there's stuff going on and I really need Helen in the office today. She needs to be there. Are you all right with that?

DAN:

No. I mean, yes! Of course. And I'm not usually like this. Not at all. But I didn't expect... I didn't expect any of this.

GEORGIA:

Thanks. You do seem like a nice guy. I'm glad to meet you, even under these circumstances, and I am sorry about your brother.

DAN:

Thanks.

SPARKY:

What a bathroom, huh? It's like an entire spa!

He has come out of the bathroom with his cup.

(re his tea) I went in there and realized I had my tea. Felt funny carrying it in with me, to, you know. But then I started walking around, and, my god! A bathroom like that, you could put in a little cafe. Is there Wi-Fi?

DAN:

(to Georgia) Helen's alone with my sister, and I should—

SPARKY:

(interrupting, to Georgia) So did I hear that correctly? The two of you have never met? And you're Helen's best friend?

GEORGIA:

Put that one on me, and my solitary, non-sharing ways.

SPARKY:
Ha ha ha.

The music suddenly stops on Georgia's phone and she puts it to her ear.

GEORGIA:
(into the phone) Hello? Hello. Yes... No, that was my spouse. She talked to someone... What? I thought you already had that. Didn't they...? Fine. Let me get the number. Hang on.

Not tracking where she deposited her bag, she quickly leaves through the open door to the rest of the house.

SPARKY:
I like her. In a co-working community, she could be infinitely knowable.

DAN:
(heading toward the door) All right. I'm going to go get Rae and—

SPARKY:
(interrupting, setting down his tea) Hey. Remember, Dad used to take his coffee into the john with him in the mornings? He'd just sit there? For, it seemed like, hours with it? Like some religious experience?

DAN:
No.

SPARKY:
Really?

DAN:
I don't remember that. I'm going to tell Helen we're leaving.

SPARKY:
Man, that's one of my fondest memories. Of course, I had a completely different childhood than you all had!

DAN:
Fine. We have to get going. We have to get out of here.

SPARKY:
Of course we do. *(indicating the bathroom)* But first I gotta visit the temple.

DAN:
You don't care that Frank's body is who knows where? With open wounds. Just lying there?

SPARKY:
Whoa! You must be taking this really hard.

DAN:

And you're not?

SPARKY:

Yeah, but you! Bro. I get you. I mean, how you are.

DAN:

How I am? And how is that?

SPARKY:

You gotta stop living in the past. We need to be here, now, present for each other.

DAN:

Like we were present for Frank? How long since you'd seen him?

SPARKY:

My business keeps me moving.

DAN:

You don't have a business, you couch surf.

SPARKY:

You should try it! It'll blow your mind.

DAN:

I don't need my mind blown, thank you. My mind's already—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) You took your pills, right?

DAN:

What does that have to do with—?

SPARKY:

(interrupting) It's all chemical, is all I'm sayin'.

DAN:

This is insane. He'd been better, lately. I thought he was better.

SPARKY:

Frank.

DAN:

I thought, where he was staying, I thought he'd found something.

SPARKY:

In Acton?

RAE:
Hah!

Rae is at the door with a glass of juice balanced on a large stack of papers and files.

What he'd found, our certifiably wily fox of a brother, was that it wasn't nearly enough to wallow in his own "inner turmoil" and post traumatic entitlement. No! He found the perfect way to punish everyone else, too.

SPARKY:
Whoa.

DAN:
You make it sound like he committed suicide by stabbing!

RAE:
Well. First, he had to bleed out our parents, suck them completely dry.

DAN:
What?

RAE:
Their bank account? The income stream I set up? He was dipping into it right and left.

DAN:
They probably gave it to him; they had enough.

RAE:
There is no such thing as enough when it comes to money.

DAN:
I'm sure they were glad they could help.

RAE:
Only it's not just their money, it was ours. Frank was stealing from you, too, Dan.

DAN:
No! You can't look at it that way.

RAE:
How else is there to look at it? This is what I do. For Mom and Dad and our meager "estate?" I worked with those numbers until I set up something that worked for them, that would have kept working. Then Frank would show up and it's all down the drain. If he got his way, we'd all be going down with him!

SPARKY:
Are you going to drink that juice?

RAE:
Yes, Sparky. I am.

She sets the stack of files on small table.

DAN:
(re the files) What are those?

RAE:
I thought I'd take a look at a few things for Helen. The house, and her accounts—see what she's made of, make sure she's on track to get everything she can.

DAN:
They're Helen's? Where is she?

RAE:
Taking out the trash. It takes a lot of oranges to make juice.

SPARKY:
And if we weren't here, they all would have been left to rot.

DAN:
What are you talking about?

SPARKY:
The oranges. Her neighbors couldn't possibly have used them all.

DAN:
You don't know that.

SPARKY:
A tree full of oranges? It's meant to be shared.

DAN:
Who are you to say that?

SPARKY:
Someone who helps the planet by helping himself to its excess.

DAN:
Sparky...

SPARKY:
You gotta understand, Dan. We're living in a world where we've got too much of everything, it's just not all in the right places. I mean, look at this bedroom!

RAE:
Right! I really do need to talk to Helen about this. It does have a certain disproportionate charm...

SPARKY:

And it's full of so many... belongings!

RAE:

(to Dan) But resale? She'll get slaughtered.

SPARKY:

Belongings are a barrier to happiness, you know.

DAN:

(to Rae) Helen is not selling her house.

RAE:

Not until she does a whole lot of work. Especially in this part of town...

SPARKY:

I mean, it's impossible for one person to actively use all of this.

RAE:

(to Dan) I do have people I could call!

DAN:

Wait. No. She's not moving.

RAE:

You've decided to move in here, then?

DAN:

No!

SPARKY:

(by the bedroom table) Like this phone? It belongs in a museum.

RAE:

(to Dan) Why not?

SPARKY:

(by a shelf or trunk) And some very brave children might want these toys.

RAE:

I wouldn't call Helen particularly comprehensive but she did take care of that mother of hers.

She's looking through Helen's files.

DAN:

Put those down. Did she say you could do that?

SPARKY:

(by a bookcase) All these kids' books? A source just screaming to be opened!

He's pulling them out, one by one.

DAN:

Why are you—?

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Because we need to re-negotiate our relationship with ownership!

RAE:

(to Dan) Look, I know this is difficult for you. But we're entering a new phase, here, as a family.

SPARKY:

A communal sphere. With Helen at the center.

DAN:

What? No! *(to Sparky re books)* Stop that! *(to Rae)* You leave Helen out of this.

RAE:

Is that really what you want, Dan?

DAN:

She has nothing to do with—

RAE:

(interrupting) She has *everything* to do with. Now that we have a Frank-free focus, it's time for you to step up and make some decisions.

SPARKY:

Hey. Dan was asking: Where is Frank, anyway?

RAE:

Where is Frank?

SPARKY:

The body. Where do people in Acton put bodies?

RAE:

(to Dan) What's with you? A little obsessed, here?

DAN:

He was murdered!

SPARKY:

Acton's farmland, right?

Perhaps he's looking at a large picture book of the Old MacDonald variety.

RAE:

(to Dan) "Murder." Please. I've taken care of it.

SPARKY:

I'm guessing lots of sheep.

DAN:

(to Rae) What does that mean?

SPARKY:

Grazing goats. There's some agri-efficiency for you.

RAE:

(to Dan) Oh, you'll get to say goodbye. In the meantime, do not waste this opportunity!

DAN:

Opportunity?

SPARKY:

(with a thin paperback) Oh, wow! "Key to the Treasure." Remember this? From when we were little?

RAE:

(to Dan) Helen's got a house, a job. Don't pass up a good thing, here.

DAN:

No! No no, that is not what this is.

RAE:

It's not? Hooking up after a decades-long hibernation is not a good thing?

DAN:

Yes! But no, that's—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Guys! Guys! Remember? It's about three kids who find all these mysterious clues? There were like puzzles?

RAE:

Not now, Sparky.

SPARKY:

No! Look! "Key to the Treasure?" You all had it first, and tore out the pages with the answers, so it was keyless?

RAE:

That was probably the boys. They liked their secrets.

SPARKY:

Oh, yeah. "The boys." Frank and Dan. And then there was Sparky.

DAN:

(to Rae) You know something? Helen *is* good.

SPARKY:

No gender identity issues here.

DAN:

(to Rae) She's the best thing that's happened to me in I don't know how long.

RAE:

Right?

SPARKY:

Or abandonment issues.

DAN:

(to Rae) And she should have only good things happen to her.

SPARKY:

It was always little Sparky, all by himself.

DAN:

(to Rae) Which is why I can't do this.

SPARKY:

Hiding under the bed, waiting for someone to find me...

RAE:

(to Dan) What are you saying?

DAN:

(to Rae) I can't do this to Helen.

SPARKY:

For weeks, sometimes.

RAE:

Do what?

DAN:

Any of it.

SPARKY:
Boy. That takes me back.

DAN:
We have to leave. I have to stop this.

SPARKY:
(back to the book he's holding) Wait...

RAE:
(to Dan) No!

SPARKY:
(searching the room) Where's my phone?

DAN:
(heading toward the door) I can't be with her.

RAE:
Don't you walk away from me!

DAN:
I'm going to find Helen and tell her!

RAE:
Tell her what? That you're afraid of what you want? You're afraid of what she has?

This hits Dan somewhere he didn't expect and as Sparky and Rae start to talk over one another, he moves back into the room and sits on the edge of the bed. He just sits.

SPARKY:
(re his phone) Yes! I knew it! I can get this online, now! And look: there's like a whole series, with the same kids! "Pirate Island Adventure." "Clues in the Woods."

And "The Mystery of Hermit Dan!"

See? Guys! This is just what I was talking about! It's like Helen is the conduit and all the answers are out there! It's all available. Discoverable.

RAE:
You know what, Dan: you can go on defending Frank, using him as an excuse, but there's enough trauma to go 'round for everyone, here. So stop playing wounded warrior, already!

Because I am trying to help you. Do you not recognize that? Do you not appreciate that? Do I even get so much as a thank you, for taking care of everything?

SPARKY:
It's shareable!

RAE:
No. It's only me. But why am I surprised

SPARKY:
I'll be back.

He heads into the bathroom with his phone and shuts the door behind him as Helen peeks her head through the open door. She carries a bowl of grapes.

HELEN:
Hello? I'm sorry if I'm interrupting...

DAN:
Hey!

He stands but stops himself from rushing to Helen; she takes this in.

RAE:
A welcome interruption! Are those grapes?

HELEN:
Yeah, I thought you might—

RAE:
(interrupting) Not quite yet, for my brother, anyway. *(helping herself to some)* I, on the other hand, am starving. And these are sweet! Crisp and sweet. Where did I leave my juice?

She searches for juice and Helen takes a step in Dan's direction.

HELEN:
(to Dan) How's it g—

DAN:
(interrupting) I am so sorry. This is so incredibly screwed up.

HELEN:
It's not your fault!

DAN:
Fucking Frank. I knew he was in trouble. I should have been there.

HELEN:
I know. Your sister was telling me.

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
Oh. No. She was saying that he was a soldier and he tried to kill you.

DAN:
That's not— No!

HELEN:
No?

DAN:
No. He wasn't in the military; he worked with them. He went over there after—
And he didn't ever really try anything. They had him on something. It was the
medication. It wasn't him.

HELEN:
But he was your twin!

DAN:
He... yes.

HELEN:
You didn't tell me that.

DAN:
I didn't?

HELEN:
No.

She is still clutching the bowl of grapes.

DAN:
Did you give my sister your files?

HELEN:
What?

DAN:
Your records. *(pointing towards the files on the table)* Those.

HELEN:
Oh! How did—?

DAN:
(interrupting) You didn't. I knew it. I'm so, so sorry. For everything.

HELEN:

No! It's okay. I guess. We were talking, and she said she could help me. I said I needed help...

RAE:

(spying a full glass) And there's my juice. Or wait. Is that mine?

DAN:

(to Helen) No. There's no way you need this. Me, or any of this.

HELEN:

What?

DAN:

I'm sorry. We're leaving.

HELEN:

No, don't go! *(re the files)* I don't even know what most of this is. There are whole ledgers that don't mean anything to me and piles and piles and piles of papers from who knows when that I'm afraid to get rid of so, yes: I need help!

DAN:

Helen, I can't—

HELEN:

(interrupting, re the files) Or don't go because of these. I mean, if you want to go, go... But at least wait until you've had breakfast!

Short pause.

DAN:

Okay.

She sets the grapes by the files, and navigates the new distance between them.

HELEN:

So. What's it like to have a twin? I always thought it would be great.

DAN:

Everyone says that.

HELEN:

Ew, yeah. Stupid, huh?

DAN:

No. It's all right. It wasn't like anything, it's just how it was.

HELEN:

Well, I was an only child, so I always thought it would be great to have anyone!
Ha ha.

DAN:

Be careful what you wish for.

RAE:

(finding another glass) Ah! Here we are.

HELEN:

(to Dan) But I sometimes pretended I was a twin. I mean, I was my sister, I wasn't me. For years, I did that. Until I figured out I wasn't fooling anyone, even myself. Oh. Wait. Were you identical?

DAN:

Yes.

HELEN:

Identical, identical? Like, when you looked in the mirror did you see him?

RAE:

Who you should really ask is the rest of us. When those two were kids? Couldn't tell them apart. Couldn't *tear* them apart!

Rae helps herself to more grapes and a few more files or papers.

HELEN:

(to Dan) Really?

RAE:

Yes, sirree. They were thick as thieves. Got anything they wanted. Like a pair of little princes, hiding behind each other, watching out for each other...

HELEN:

(to Dan) That sounds wonderful!

RAE:

But times change, don't they? The past ten years? You couldn't even tell Frank was one of us.

DAN:

(to Helen) He was sick. Last time I saw him, I outweighed him by almost 50 lbs.

HELEN:

Oh, no. That's terrible!

RAE:

Not that terrible. He looked pretty good.

DAN:
He didn't. Not at all! *(to Helen)* It was hard for Frank.

RAE:
Yeah, well. We all have challenges, don't we? And of course, you two were still the same on the inside, right? You always had that... connection? You and Frank. Frank and you. And then there's the rest of us...

Perhaps she opens a ledger or file for emphasis and moves away again.

HELEN:
(to Dan) Connection?

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
You had a connection. Just the two of you?

DAN:
Yes. We... did.

HELEN:
What about now?

DAN:
Now?

HELEN:
That connection. It's gone?

Short pause.

DAN:
Yes. It is. It is gone. I didn't realize, before. It does feel like something's missing, but I don't know whether to believe it. I don't want to believe it. That Frank's not still there, somewhere. I mean, what she said, we're not the same. But there is something we've always had, both of us, and now it's like I'm suddenly, completely... untethered, or something. I have absolutely no bearings. I don't even know why I'm saying all this—this isn't how I usually am. But I feel different, now. I do. And I don't know how I feel about that, or how I'm supposed to feel. I mean—

HELEN:
(interrupting) Dan. When did it happen?

DAN:
When did what happen?

HELEN:
When did Frank die?

DAN:
Oh. Late last night. Probably just before midnight.

HELEN:
Just before midnight.

DAN:
That's what they said.

HELEN:
So that would be right around....

DAN:
What?

HELEN:
The time when.... we...

DAN:
Oh.

HELEN:
When we were—?!

DAN:
(interrupting) Yeah!

Pause.

HELEN:
Yeah.

RAE:
Well! Look what I've found here!

She has discovered a seating area.

It's a little nook! A tiny little nook, all but hidden away here. How sweet! And there's a pint-sized TV! Wouldya look at that!

She squeezes herself into a small armchair, her arms full of documents.

HELEN:
(to Dan, re the seating area) My mother had that specially built. Just for her.

DAN:

I didn't even notice it before.

HELEN:

Of course not. This room doesn't know its own limits.

RAE:

(to Helen, with a remote) Do you not have cable? You have to show me how this works.

HELEN:

Everything gets swallowed up in here.

RAE:

Oh, I've got it. And what adorable ear buds! Right in the remote! How cute!

Rae inserts buds, shutting herself off from Dan and Helen who are, in a sense, alone for the first time since the beginning of the play. We can definitely feel this.

HELEN:

Sometimes I don't know what my mother was thinking. She worked her entire life so that everything was, finally, just how she wanted it—like this was the whole world and she was the only person in it and it was never ever ever going to end. She loved this room. Couldn't get enough of it. She owned it, claimed it, every bit of it. And then one day there was me. Just me, tiptoeing around in here, not wanting to move things in or take up space in a room that's too big, too much, always bursting at the seams. You never know what's anywhere or where it will end up.

Short pause.

Me, alone, I usually just sleep out on the couch.

DAN:

How long has it been? Or did you tell me?

HELEN:

How long has what been?

DAN:

Since you've been alone. I mean, not sleeping alone. Since your mother died.

HELEN:

A few years, now.

DAN:

I'm sorry.

HELEN:

Thanks. But I moved here after Peter, so it has been awhile, before that, even, since I've... not slept alone.

DAN:

Ah. Well, me, too. I'd say too long, but to tell the truth it's not like I was looking, and no one was looking for me, so it hasn't really felt that way.

HELEN:

I know what you mean.

DAN:

See, now that makes no sense to me. How can that be? You are so amazing.

HELEN:

Oh, I'm so not! I'm amazed that I can put one foot in front of the other, most days.

DAN:

No. You are amazing. And Peter was an asshole.

HELEN:

Well, that's true. He was an asshole. Only—and I hate to say this, because it seems like you've bought into something, here, I shouldn't mess with—but I'm afraid that there's absolutely nothing even remotely amazing about me.

DAN:

You're wrong.

HELEN:

I'm not. And I keep thinking I'm going to be found out.

DAN:

Okay. This is not at all how I wanted our... it's not how I wanted it to end.

HELEN:

To end? End of what? What do you mean?

DAN:

I— No. I just meant last night. So what I really mean is, this is not how I wanted it to... begin?

HELEN:

Oh!

DAN:

I know I have no right to say that.

HELEN:

No! I feel like that, too.

DAN:
You do?

HELEN:
Yeah. So I'm glad. I mean, not about the murder.

DAN:
Oh. No.

HELEN:
But I do feel like, now, I know you. You and I are connected. That doesn't make sense, I guess.

DAN:
It does make sense. I feel the same way.

HELEN:
You do?

DAN:
I feel very lucky. I mean, that you're here. That I'm here. Not about—

HELEN:
(interrupting) No, no.

DAN:
No.

We can guess where their connection might take them.

HELEN:
So what happens now?

DAN:
What were you thinking?

HELEN:
Well, I should probably get dressed.

DAN:
Please don't.

HELEN:
Ha ha. I mean, what are you supposed to do now?

DAN:
Oh. About Frank.

RAE:

(to Dan, shouting with the earbuds in) I am loving this! You've seen it, right? This whole little system? Super!

DAN:

(to Helen) I wish I could just stay, and—

HELEN:

(interrupting) Me, too.

DAN:

Oh! Did you talk to Georgia? You need to go into work.

HELEN:

We started to but she's busy with some insurance thing.

DAN:

She said it was important.

HELEN:

It's okay. I can miss work for a day. I'm in HR, what are they doing to do?

DAN:

But you—

RAE:

(interrupting, shouting again to Dan) Hey! We should get something like this for Mom and Dad. I bet they could work it. It's very intuitive.

HELEN:

(to Dan) I thought your parents were dead?

DAN:

Why would you think that?

HELEN:

Your sister. She said... your brother had made things very difficult for them.

DAN:

Frank.

HELEN:

But that they were gone, now.

DAN:

He's dead. They're in Arizona.

HELEN:

I'm so sorry.

Georgia rushes in the door, carrying a silent phone.

GEORGIA:

Shit shit shit shit. *(into the phone)* No, sorry. I wasn't saying... *(to the room)* Did I leave my bag in here?

HELEN:

I don't know.

GEORGIA:

Shit. *(into the phone)* No. Please don't hang up. I've talked to too many idiots. Let me get... just hang on, okay?

She sets the phone down and begins to frantically search the room for her bag.

(to Helen and Dan) Can you believe this? My spouse wasn't supposed to... *(to Helen)* Well, you can probably believe it.

HELEN:

I—

GEORGIA:

(interrupting, having found her bag) Aha!

She takes a tablet out of her bag and pokes at it, quickly bringing up a screen.

All right. And where did I...?

She finds the phone and brings it to her ear.

(into the phone) Hi. I've got— Hello?

No one's there.

Mother fucker! I cannot fucking believe this!

She throws or slams the phone down.

HELEN:

What happened?

GEORGIA:

The bitches hung up on me.

DAN:

I'm sorry.

GEORGIA:

It's...

She takes the couple in; Helen and Dan are now undeniably a couple.

GEORGIA:

No, *I'm* sorry. *(to Helen)* Honey, I should not have gone there. Tried to deal with it this morning, here, but she's been on edge and our situation... has new variables.

HELEN:

Oh, I know how it is! That's totally fine! Everything's fine!

GEORGIA:

Okay. But it's not. We need to get our butts into the office. Now.

HELEN:

No, I'm staying with Dan today.

DAN:

You don't have to—

HELEN:

(interrupting) I do!

GEORGIA:

Sweetie! You can't. I've been trying to tell you: I found out when I went in, you're on the list!

HELEN:

What list?

GEORGIA:

What list do you think? The term list!

Pause

HELEN:

How did I not know? Who told you?

GEORGIA:

Janice! Payroll got the names and yours was one of them.

DAN:

What's a term list?

HELEN:

Terminations.

GEORGIA:

Downsizing.

HELEN:
Layoffs.

DAN:
You lost your job?

GEORGIA:
Not yet. That's why you have to be there.

HELEN:
If payroll's already processing—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) "In process." There's got to be something—

HELEN:
(interrupting) There's nothing. That's how it works. It's a done deal. If I'm on that list, if payroll was notified, there's nothing I can do. There's nothing to do. I'm gone.

GEORGIA:
I can talk to someone.

HELEN:
There's nothing to say! They're cutting staff in every department. It's what I do. I do the Reductions in Force.

DAN:
That sounds awful!

HELEN:
It is awful! It's an awful job and I'm dreadful at it.

GEORGIA:
I wouldn't say dreadful.

HELEN:
I would. And so would everyone else! The only reason I got the job in the first place was because of you!

GEORGIA:
That's not true.

HELEN:
It is! And you're the only reason I've kept it. I don't know why this didn't happen before. I'm reducible. If I'm not there, they'll just make someone else do it. Someone else will have to absorb my awful duties.

GEORGIA:

I know! And that someone would be me!

Pause.

HELEN:

What?

GEORGIA:

That's what Janice said. And I'm... My workload: I can't take on any more.

HELEN:

Wait. So you—

The doorbell rings.

Who in the hell is that, now?

RAE:

Okay then!

She disconnects herself.

Come on, Dan. *(shouting in the direction of the bathroom)* Sparky!

DAN:

Wait. What's going on?

RAE:

(to Dan) I need your help. *(moving towards the bathroom)* Sparky!

DAN:

For what?

The doorbell rings. Rae knocks on the bathroom door.

RAE:

Sparky come out of there!

From the other side of the room, Sparky comes out of the closet with a large box or boxes, overflowing with clothes & accessories.

SPARKY:

All right, remember what I was saying before? About the burden of surplus?

HELEN:

(re the closet) How did you—?

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Gotta hand it to you, Helen: I've certainly seen my share of closets, but I have never experienced a walk-in that size! *(setting the box down)* Now. Can you tell me what all this is about?

He holds up a few diminutive pieces of clothing.

DAN:

What do you think you're doing?

HELEN:

Those are my mother's!

SPARKY:

Okay, I wondered—because I so cannot see these things fitting modern bodies!

DAN:

Put those back!

The doorbell rings.

RAE:

Come on! I need you two for heavy lifting.

SPARKY:

Helen: did I hear what I think I heard? You lost your job?

HELEN:

I— Yes.

RAE:

Sparky, don't put your nose where it doesn't belong.

The doorbell rings.

(heading toward the door) Dan? Let's go!

DAN:

(to Helen) Don't worry. We'll figure this out. I'll be right back.

RAE:

They're probably charging me by the minute.

SPARKY:

(to Helen) And losing a job is not necessarily a bad thing. Where would I be if I looked at it that way!

DAN:

(heading out) Have you ever actually had a job?

SPARKY:

(passing by the empty platter) Hey! Who finished all the toast?

RAE:

(offstage) Sparky!

The siblings are gone. Georgia closes the door behind them.

GEORGIA:

Honey, I'm so sorry, I should have told you. But I thought if we just—

HELEN:

(interrupting) No.

Short pause.

GEORGIA:

No. All right. Well. Look at you! You're still standing!

HELEN:

I am. I am standing.

GEORGIA:

I don't know if I would be, after a morning like this!

HELEN:

How long ago did you hear about—?

She's interrupted by a loud buzzing. It's Georgia's phone.

GEORGIA:

I'm sorry. Do you mind?

Very short pause.

HELEN:

No.

Georgia reads her phone.

GEORGIA:

You might as well know, we're trying to have a baby.

HELEN:

What?

GEORGIA:

Or she is. We are, she might already be, I...

HELEN:

I...

GEORGIA:

It's complicated.

HELEN:

Congratulations.

GEORGIA:

Thanks. This certainly isn't something I ever thought I'd be doing, even with a wedding license. Excuse me for a sec?

She finds her bag and takes out her tablet again.

The whole system's falling apart, and now I can't even escape this crap in my newly domesticated homelife. *(re the tablet, for Helen's benefit)* Okay, live customer service. Yes, I would very much like to chat right now. *(to Helen)* So I'm currently.... 427 in the queue.

HELEN:

Okay.

Helen moves to the box(es), examining clothes and other items, perhaps glancing at the open door of the closet.

GEORGIA:

Let's get back to you, my friend. I have to tell you, whatever you think may be happening today, whatever you think you and Dan may have started here, is doomed.

HELEN:

Excuse me?

GEORGIA:

Doomed. Or worse.

HELEN:

Worse than going along every day, living in someone else's house, working an awful job, thinking you were doing the right things, for the right reasons, but not even recognizing yourself then waking up one morning—

She's interrupted by Georgia's tablet beeping.

GEORGIA:

One sec. *(touching the tablet screen)* Yes, I am still here. *(to Helen)* Number 356.

HELEN:

My whole life, it's like everything and everyone has always just slipped away. But what if I wasn't supposed to be hanging on? To any of it. Something feels very solid about this... uncertainty. Like my feet are finally on the ground even though it's moving.

GEORGIA:

The job thing, we can work it out. I'm not losing you; there's got to be an opening in receivables.

HELEN:

Even they're not going to hire me! Everything *is* falling apart. It's crumbling, it's imploding, it's collapsing, it's getting more and more surreal but now I've got something that makes sense, that's mine.

GEORGIA:

Are you seriously telling me you're giving up everything you have for that man?

HELEN:

I'm not giving anything up! I'm opening up, taking a risk!

GEORGIA:

This is not the kind of risk you want to take. Trust me.

Her tablet beeps.

323. 45 minutes. Christ.

HELEN:

No. It's like there's a big hole in him, now.

GEORGIA:

And that is not a hole you have to fill. There are warning signs all over that man and his hole.

HELEN:

You're wrong.

GEORGIA:

Are you fucking kidding me? He's unemployed!

HELEN:

Hello!

GEORGIA:

And what about the whole mental illness issue?

HELEN:

What issue? Frank's dead.

GEORGIA:

Mm hm. I wasn't going to say anything, but doesn't it seem odd to you that Dan's not-so-doting siblings are overly concerned about his medication?

HELEN:

At a certain age, everyone takes pills.

GEORGIA:

You don't, I don't. Maybe I should. After today.

HELEN:

Exactly!

GEORGIA:

Listen to me. I'm saying this because I love you. And I know what mistakes you've made in the past. One huge mistake.

HELEN:

That was different. I was young. I didn't realize what I was getting into.

GEORGIA:

Yeah, and now you do! What part of "He could be a psychopath!" do you not understand? It's in the genes. They were twins, for chrissake! Look at the whole picture! The whole family album. Is this the future you really want to invest in?

HELEN:

I...

Short pause.

Oh... god.... What if you're right?

She sits down on the bed, maybe crawling into it.

GEORGIA:

Baby, I'm sorry. You know I'm here for you. And I need you almost as much as you need me, but sometimes friends have to—

Georgia's tablet beeps.

(checking it) 95 minutes? Eat me!

She takes out her phone to text.

(to Helen) Sorry...

RAE:

(offstage) Okay, straight ahead... Will you pick up your end, Dan? We're about to capsize here!

Without knocking, Rae comes into the room and holds the door open. The brothers carry in a large, thick plastic bag with a zipper down the center. It's a body bag.

SPARKY:

(to Dan) Not so high!

RAE:

Boys!

GEORGIA:

What the fuck?

RAE:

(to Helen) You don't mind, do you?

DAN:

(interrupting) I'm so sorry! I didn't know she was going to—

RAE:

(interrupting) Hey! You're the one who kept going on and on, "Where's my brother?" "Where's Frank?" "I want to see the body!"

DAN:

But I didn't mean for you to—!

SPARKY:

(interrupting) Watch it, Dan!

RAE:

(to Dan) Never satisfied. You are just like him!

DAN:

Who?

RAE:

Who do you think?

She zips open the top of body bag. Helen stands up on the bed to see inside.

HELEN:

Oh!

SPARKY:

Wow.

GEORGIA:

Yeah.

RAE:

Right?

DAN:

Frank.

Pause.

HELEN:

(to Dan) You don't look at all alike.

RAE:
You shoulda' seen them as kids. Where should we put him? The bed okay?

HELEN:
No!

RAE:
Ah, gimme those chairs...

She sets the small chairs apart, in a row.

GEORGIA:
(to Helen) You're sure you don't want to try your luck back at work?

RAE:
Great. Okay. Right here. And the prodigal son returns.

They lay the body down, suspended between the two chairs. It's rather precarious. Dan stands over it. He just stands.

SPARKY:
Well! I certainly didn't foresee this turn of events? Did you, Georgia?

GEORGIA:
No, I did not.

SPARKY:
A day chock full of surprises.

GEORGIA:
You can say that, again.

As Sparky goes back to the box(es), we hear a phone ring. It's Georgia's.

Goddamnit. (re the phone, to Helen) It's the office. Cocksuckers... (into the phone) What do you want from me?! (switching tone immediately) Oh! Hi! How are you, sir...!

RAE:
So, Dan. How are you handling it now?

GEORGIA:
(into the phone) What? No, it was personal— My own policy.

RAE:
(to Dan) Anything else I can do for you, to help you in this process?

GEORGIA:

(into the phone) Wait. They told you I said what? But it wasn't in any professional capacity!

RAE:

(to Dan) 'Cause you really gotta start holding up your part of the bargain, here.

GEORGIA:

(into the phone) I do understand—corporate liability.

SPARKY:

Whoa! Look at this! Beyond vintage!

He's holding up an odd, outdated hat or other accessory.

RAE:

Sparky, what *is* that?

HELEN:

That's—

SPARKY:

(interrupting) I know, I know! That mother of yours must have been a real pistol!

RAE:

Lemme see those...

She joins Sparky and they take more items out of the box(es).

GEORGIA:

(into the phone) Of course. Yes. I'm on my way in.

Her tablet beeps. She glances at it.

Be there as soon as I can. Thanks.

She hangs up her phone. She looks at her tablet.

Number 139. Two hours 14 minutes. Fuck you.

She snaps her tablet shut and sits on the bed close to where Helen still is standing.

HELEN:

What happened?

GEORGIA:

Apparently, we now live in an entirely transparent cyber space where the personal is actionable and all it takes is a complaint from some delicate flower in Bangladesh to end a 25-year career!

HELEN:
I'm sorry?

GEORGIA:
There's no fucking privacy anymore. We're all walking around like open, bloody books and they're going to fire me! Why? Because everyone at my insurance company has got their head up their ass!

SPARKY:
That's the mesh, for you. The yin and the yang of shared information.

GEORGIA:
Perfect.

Rae displays some particularly teensy items.

RAE:
Hah! Get a load of these!

SPARKY:
And you know the market is huge for doll clothes right now.

RAE:
Really?

GEORGIA:
(to Helen) Shit. What am I going to do?

She clutches her bag and all it contains in her lap; Helen sits next to her.

HELEN:
You're not going back to the office?

GEORGIA:
Fuck no! Janice's probably told the whole goddamn building by now.

HELEN:
Then go home. You have someone, there. And you might be—

GEORGIA:
(interrupting) I know, I know! I might be!

SPARKY:
(to Rae) Frank would have loved this.

GEORGIA:
(to Helen) I wasn't meant to be a parent!

RAE:

(to Sparky) I never knew you had such an eye, baby brother!

She's sporting a particularly colorful scarf or accessory.

SPARKY:

Right?

GEORGIA:

(to Helen) Why do you still have your mother's old clothes?

HELEN:

I didn't know what to do with them.

GEORGIA:

Do you want me to—?

HELEN:

(interrupting) No. I want you to go home.

GEORGIA:

What am I going to say to her? How am I going to take care of her?

HELEN:

You'll figure it out.

GEORGIA:

But even if I still have a job, I won't have you there!

SPARKY:

(to Georgia) Or you could stay with us!

He joins Dan by the body.

What you've got going is a currency all its own, Georgia. We could totally use someone with your intimacy skills.

DAN:

Sparky, what are you talking about?

SPARKY:

How we should honor Frank, here. Or not Frank. Here. This is not Frank.

DAN:

It certainly is!

SPARKY:

No, I mean "Frank." Not this corporeal form, Frank's spirit. Because we're the "boys," now, Dan. It's up to us.

DAN:
I don't understand a word you're saying.

SPARKY:
No, you don't. But Frank would have.

RAE:
Good lord: What is it with you two and Frank?

She joins them, perhaps sporting various ill-fitting pieces from the box(es).

SPARKY:
You want to know about Frank? Frank left us because he was too good for us. He was too good for the lousy hand life dealt him. He was too good for Acton!

RAE:
I can't argue with that.

SPARKY:
But there is something we—(to Helen and Georgia) and this includes you, ladies—can all do to see that the good in him lives on and makes our family even stronger.

DAN:
And that is?

SPARKY:
Two words:

He looks down at the exposed body as if it was a religious sacrifice, or holy communion.

"Collaborative consumption."

DAN:	HELEN	GEORGIA:	RAE:
What!?	Ah!	Uch!	Sparky?

SPARKY:
No! I'm talking about all this stuff! The clothes and everything else. None of it's benefitting anyone. *(gesturing around the room)* Do you know what these things are?

GEORGIA:
Her mother's!

SPARKY:
No. They're assets. Valuable assets, going to waste.

DAN:
They're not your assets!

SPARKY:

But they could be *our* assets, in the peer economy!

DAN:

You can't just take them.

SPARKY:

We're not taking them, we're sharing them!

DAN:

They're not yours to share!

SPARKY:

Open up your mind, Dan. Helen doesn't think that way. To her, all of this is just dead weight (*to Helen*) right, Helen? Oh, I— (*to the body*) sorry, Frank.

RAE:

You know something? I like this! I think we got a plan, here! A little family business!

She heads toward the closet and Sparky follows her through the open door.

SPARKY:

Not a business; a global, sharing community!

GEORGIA:

Have they done this kind of thing before, Dan?

DAN:

No, this is completely new. (*to Helen*) I'm sorry. I had no idea—

HELEN:

(*interrupting*) No. It's okay! He's right.

DAN:

He's— Who? Sparky?

HELEN:

Yes!

She joins Dan by the body.

RAE:

(*offstage*) Look at all this! It just goes on and on and on! It's fantastic!

SPARKY:

(*offstage*) It's the future! Resources going to people who can use them!

We start to see an array of odd items being thrown out of the closet into the room.

HELEN:

(to Dan) None of this is really mine. It has nothing to do with me, now. I don't need any of it.

GEORGIA:

Are you sure about that?

HELEN:

Yes!

DAN:

How can you be sure of anything, anymore?

HELEN:

I'm sure of this: Frank's dead. You're not. And you're not Frank!

Very short pause.

DAN:

No. I'm not.

RAE:

(offstage) Sparky! Who knew?

SPARKY:

(offstage) I told you, I did!

DAN:

(to Helen) Helen, I haven't the faintest idea what's next, or what to do when it comes. But I haven't given up. I won't.

HELEN:

I won't, either!

Helen and Dan connect again.

RAE:

(offstage) I am seeing a whole lot of dollar signs here!

SPARKY:

(offstage) Wait. No, this can't be about money.

As Dan zips up the body bag, Rae comes back out of the closet wearing a hard hat, carrying what look like blueprints, followed by Sparky, clutching an armful of belongings.

RAE:

(to Sparky) You won't say that when it starts rolling in.

SPARKY:

You don't understand. My currency isn't tied to the transience of wealth.

RAE:

Well, that's because your currency is tied to bullshit!

SPARKY:

My— What?

RAE:

You heard me. It's time to live in the real world, Sparky.

We begin to hear the sounds of construction coming from the closet.

SPARKY:

We're going to be part of the sharing transformation, that's what's real!

RAE:

Riiiiiiight.

SPARKY:

It's people that matter, not profit! Don't you get that? Frank did!

RAE:

Oh, he did, did he?

SPARKY:

Yes! He knew what it took to live a rich, full, unburdened life.

RAE:

That's why's he's lying there, sliced open in a plastic bag?

SPARKY:

You—! I don't know why I thought you had changed. You're incapable of change!

RAE:

I am all about change! Get a load of the transformation in here: Mega-retail with a personal touch. Now that's progress!

As she unfurls the blueprints, the construction sounds grow louder. Maybe we hear offstage voices accompanying them. Helen and Dan step away from the body.

HELEN:

Wait. What?

DAN:

What's happening, now?

SPARKY:

Its not progress, that's for sure!

RAE:

I was lucky I could get contractors and a crew in here on such short notice! The location is perfect; we'll just expand the footprint.

GEORGIA:

(to Helen) Okay, doll. I'm ready to go if you are.

HELEN:

To where?

GEORGIA:

At this point, anywhere!

RAE

(to Helen) No, we need you. Are you with me on this, Dan?

DAN:

I don't know what "this" is!

SPARKY:

It's the opposite of what should be happening!

RAE:

(to Dan) You gotta decide one way or another! This is the only way I the numbers will work.

GEORGIA:

(to Helen) Bring Dan with you if you want!

SPARKY:

We need de-growth right now, not new construction!

RAE:

(to Dan) Well?

DAN:

This isn't mine! It's not up to me!

RAE:

And that is exactly what's stopping you in life, Dan! Every time you don't decide, you are making a decision!

As Rae, Georgia and Sparky talk over one another to Helen and Dan, the building sounds continue and escalate, perhaps adding jackhammers and heavy construction equipment, eventually causing the walls and the floor to shake.

GEORGIA:

Oh, god. I don't know anything, anymore!

Maybe you're right; maybe you two are meant to be together. **Maybe everything I've been doing my entire life is completely wrong!**

All I can tell you, is this has gone way beyond my pay grade, and I'm not talking metaphors.

But you know what? **I am an expert in Human Capital Management! I can handle a kid!**

And even in a third-world conspiracy, I can find options! So watch out, you bastards, **I have a family to raise!**

RAE:

Well, I'm done waiting. Money has to stay in motion and here's how it'll go down: Everyone's got heirlooms, right? And you know what they are? Worthless memories just begging to be cashed out. I'm talking disposable income. **We'll get it into the pipes, flowing, working. For us!**

Hey! Mom and Dad have tons of junk! But I'll definitely need your help, there. Both of you!

We all have to be in this together! And **Helen: I'm counting on you to pick up the slack, here! I cannot do this alone!**

SPARKY:

Why is no one listening to me?! Do you hear that? It's the sounds of Industrial Age Armageddon! That's what she's creating, here! **Echoes of the economic meltdown, all over again!**

We need to let go of any collective inheritance that smells like wealth. All of it! **Traditional icons of success have no meaning, anymore, you don't get that, do you?**

Then go ahead! Destroy yourselves! Pretend I'm invisible! You don't love me, you never did! I don't need you! **I don't need any of you!**

Sparky rushes past the body toward the bed; the stack of files crashes amidst increasing construction noises; the ground shakes and the small chairs holding Frank's body topple, the body crashes to the ground. Helen and Dan jump up onto the bed out of harm's way and Georgia heads for the door to the rest of the house with her phone and her bag.

RAE:

Sparky! Look what you've—

She moves to the body as Sparky moves to the bed.

Where are you going?

SPARKY:

Back to the commons! Where I belong!

He starts to force himself under the bed.

RAE:

And I have to clean up the mess. Just like always! Okay, Frank...

She hoists the body up as Georgia moves toward the door to the rest of the house.

GEORGIA:

Dan! Promise me you'll take care of Helen!

RAE:

(lugging the body) Adaptive re-use my ass.

SPARKY:

Hah!

Sparky disappears as Rae carries the body with her into bathroom; maybe we see electrical sparks or shadows of more workmen through the now open door. Georgia and her devices are gone, as well, the door closed behind her. Alone, Helen and Dan stand on the bed together, like two small children. We continue to hear low-level construction sounds and sense motion from each of the two open doors inside the room. Dan takes in Helen.

DAN:

I'm sorry. I don't know how to stop this. It's all gotten so hard and it's not supposed to be this way! Not at this point in our lives!

HELEN:

I know.

We now hear a different sort of noise, a deeper rumbling coming from the floor; it shakes the bed and Helen and Dan throw their arms around one another.

DAN & HELEN:

Ah!

The noise begins to subside and from on top of the bed, they both look down like the floor was hot lava, maybe. Or as if there were sharks swimming in it.

DAN:

Okay. Here's what I want. I want to keep you safe. I want to take care of you. But I don't think I can!

HELEN:

Why not? I mean, I don't need you to—

DAN:

(interrupting) You need someone else. I'll stay if you want but I have nothing. This is it.

HELEN:

Me, too!

DAN:
Right! So how can we make plans—

HELEN:
(interrupting) Like it makes sense to plan for anything, right now?

DAN:
I—

HELEN:
So don't just stay. Decide to stay. With me.

Short pause.

DAN:
Okay! Helen, I will stay with you wherever, through whatever, until whenever and I will do whatever it takes to make sure that happens!

There is a moment of near silence while he kisses her. It's a really good kiss. We maybe get lost in the kiss. For a moment. Then more noises, more rumbling.

HELEN:
Dan. Are you crazy? Like, your brother, crazy. Frank, not—

DAN:
(interrupting) No. Or I don't think so.

More rumbling begins, this time throughout the entire room. They hold each other again.

HELEN:
But you're not going to have a psychotic break, or anything, are you?

DAN:
I wasn't planning on it!

HELEN:
Ha ha. Good. What about your medication?

DAN:
My thyroid pills?

HELEN:
Your thyroid pills!

DAN:
Yes. They help with my weight. Well, somewhat.

HELEN:
Oh. So you're fine!

DAN:
Except I am kind of hungry.

The rumbling and other noises starts to grow louder.

Just hang on. I've got you.

HELEN:
You do?

DAN:
I do.

HELEN:
Then we've got each other. That's enough.

The rumbling is now dark and threatening and really, really loud and Helen and Dan hold onto each other for dear life.

DAN:
(shouting over the rumbling) That's enough. That's enough! Enough!!

DAN & HELEN:
Eeenooooogh!!!

Blackout.

End of Play