

Blood Replacement

a comedy about drama and authenticity and finding stand-ins on the playing field
by Jennie Webb

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Characters:

HANNAH - A hopeful woman, early 30s. Not a wallflower, but not an early bloomer. While appearing open on the surface, has a hard time trusting and is somewhat of an outsider. Is maybe ready to do what it takes to invest in herself, in all respects. Needs to believe

LARISSA – A dynamic woman, probably 40s. Or 50s. Not afraid of making a statement, and a loud one, usually. Which means she doesn't have to listen much or look past the surface. Always on, she appears ready to run but maybe should stick around for a while. Needs to leave an impression.

FRANCES – An accomplished woman, probably 40s. Or 50s. Good at self-promotion, on the surface anyway. Takes care of what she needs to, and invests in the decisions she has made; if she can handle the worst she can handle anything. Maybe. Needs to be needed.

Setting:

Someplace that looks an awful lot like an outdoor athletic field from most perspectives

Time:

Sunday Morning

Casting:

Multi-racial casting encouraged; at least one if not all characters should be played by actors of color.

Dialogue:

— *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.*

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SYNOPSIS

A comedy about drama and authenticity and finding stand-ins, *Blood Replacement* finds three women waiting for a rugby match to begin. Only there's something a bit off about this particular playing field. And are they there to heal old wounds or rip them open?

All sorts of lines are crossed in this somewhat ruthless exploration of women's relationships—to men and to each other—and our sometimes desperate need for connection and validation, to not be alone.

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We see a young woman, Hannah, alone onstage, standing on the sidelines of what looks to be an outdoor athletic field. We may see a locked gate behind her, indicating a recreation center of sorts. But there's something about the place that's a bit off. Not quite right. You can't put your finger on it, but...

Beside Hannah is a small camp chair and a blanket. She's wearing a jacket and thick stockings; it's chilly. She seems to have been here a while, but still looks hopefully out front. Suddenly she sees someone. Not someone she was expecting.

HANNAH:

Hello? (louder, waving) Hiiiiii?

There's no response.

(even louder) Hey!! Over here!!

Nothing.

(louder still, accompanied by impossible to miss movements) Helloooooooooo!!!

We hear a voice which, although distant, is still quite dynamic.

LARISSA:

(offstage) Ah, yes! Hallo! I'm right there!

HANNAH:

(loudly) Great!! (to herself) Okay, then!

LARISSA:

(offstage) Goodness! How on earth did you find this place? I never would have guessed in a million years that this was here...

Larissa comes tottering onstage carrying bulging paper bags and a small chair. She's wearing sunglasses that make a statement, significant heels and an oversized coat; maybe it's fur.

And you! Standing there, shivering like a little lost lamb in the wilderness!

HANNAH:

Yeah, it got cold! I didn't expect to see you; can I help with those?

She moves to take the bags.

LARISSA:

But of course! Merci. A ton. And look what I found!

She displays her darling little chair to full effect; it's like a small, byzantine throne.

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HANNAH:
Wow!

LARISSA:
It was just sitting there, by the entrance to... wherever we are.

HANNAH:
It's not someone's?

LARISSA:
It's mine, now! Reminds me of one I had as a child—I had royal aspirations, even then. *(taking off her sunglasses)* So where is everyone?

HANNAH:
I only invited you and—

LARISSA:
(interrupting) I mean them. *(gesturing out front)* The men, the boys, the playahs in their sweet, sweet musclebound shorts.

HANNAH:
Yeah. I guess we're early.

LARISSA:
We're definitely early. *(looking around)* Significantly early. Ridiculously early which is unheard of for me. How about we go somewhere cozy and come back when we've company to warm us up?

Hannah has pulled out her phone and is texting.

HANNAH:
Yeah. I mean no... I'm trying to figure out what...

LARISSA:
Didn't you say the game started at 10?

HANNAH:
Match. In rugby it's a match.

LARISSA:
So what time is it now; how late am I?

HANNAH:
10:42.

LARISSA:
If that doesn't sound like a cue for Bloody Marys I don't know what does!

HANNAH:

It might have gotten switched to later. I would have called you, but I had no idea you were—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) And I have no idea what happened to my phone, so it wouldn't have mattered, ha ha ha! So how will we find out? About the "match"?

HANNAH:

I've been texting him.

LARISSA:

How clever of you. What does he say?

HANNAH:

I haven't been able to... You know how it goes. I talked to him last night and told him I'd be here, maybe with friends. But things get switched and they don't always tell them. Or they tell them at the last minute.

LARISSA:

But the last minute would have been... nearly an hour ago?

Short pause. Hannah returns to her phone.

Okay. It makes no difference. So we're matchless. Let's go somewhere and brunch. Tell him to meet us!

HANNAH:

No, it's not...

Very short pause.

LARISSA:

It's not what?

HANNAH:

You'll never guess who just texted me she was coming!

Short pause.

LARISSA:

I thought she said she had to go into work today. She sent that "Oh, I'm so important I can't abandon my boss on a weekend watch me tweet" e-mail.

HANNAH:

She did go in; she was able to finish early, though.

LARISSA:

(attempting to pick up her bags) And it was so lovely spending time with you! We must do this again, sooner than later; I do not see enough of you!

HANNAH:

Don't be silly. You two have to get over this.

LARISSA:

But I am over it! Miles above it in every way! Should I leave my chair or do you think she'll sit in it?

HANNAH:

Come on.

LARISSA:

You knew she was coming and you didn't tell me.

HANNAH:

I wanted— I didn't know *you* were coming.

LARISSA:

Oh, you are a wily one. You're a wretch and you're forgiven. However, I am just not up for this sort of confrontation today.

HANNAH:

(getting a new text) Hold on—now they're on their way.

LARISSA:

"They?" Who's she got with her? Not Alice.

HANNAH:

She didn't mention her daughter.

LARISSA:

There's a first.

HANNAH:

But I mean the guys. The guys are coming: the team. *(reading her phone)* The time did get switched; they should get here soon, so you might as well stay. I love you both and you know you love each other!

LARISSA:

Oh. My. God. Fine.

She pulls out a thermos from one of her bags.

Irish coffee?

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HANNAH:
Oh. No. I—

LARISSA:
(interrupting) No is not an answer. You must join me as I take necessary steps to prepare for her arrival. Not to mention the burly rugby lads.

She drapes the blanket around Hannah and pours two cups.

Salud!

HANNAH:
Cheers!

LARISSA:
Now! Refresh my memory again—what’s the story of this fellow?

HANNAH:
He was working at the restaurant close to where I work.

LARISSA:
Oh, yes! The waiter!

HANNAH:
He was actually filling in behind the bar.

LARISSA:
That’s right. The bartender.

HANNAH:
But just temporarily. I always go in there; the guy who runs it is great. Anyway, he had this friend who was helping him out.

LARISSA:
Aha, so it’s the helpful friend. Does he have a name?

HANNAH:
Sam.

LARISSA:
Sam. Could not be sweeter. And you and Sam have been seeing each other for how long, now?

HANNAH:
About six months, but I’m not sure if “seeing each other” is the right—

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LARISSA:

(interrupting) Whatever it is, tell me about him. He's not a waiter and not a bartender...

HANNAH:

He's between jobs.

LARISSA:

I feel close to him already. Does he have a brother and do you need a refill?

She pours more for them both.

HANNAH:

Thanks. I don't—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) I was kidding.

HANNAH:

Yeah, ha ha.

LARISSA:

Kind of. I'll bet he's incredible.

HANNAH:

Well, he's probably not what you'd expect!

LARISSA:

And what's more unexpected than rugby! Here here!

HANNAH:

Ha ha!

As they drink, Frances comes onstage. She is very put together and looks as if she's done great things. She's dressed for mild weather, perhaps in a light sweater, and carries a compact picnic basket.

FRANCES:

Well! I thought I was going to be late! Hello, ladies. *(to Larissa)* What a surprise!

HANNAH:

Hi! You got here fast. *(holding up her cup)* Irish coffee? *(to Larissa)* I mean, if...

LARISSA:

It's fine.

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FRANCES:

No thanks. A bit too early in the day for me.

LARISSA:

It's Sunday.

FRANCES:

My boss is expecting me back at the office.

LARISSA:

On Sunday.

FRANCES:

Yes! Sunday! It's great to see you. How are you?

LARISSA:

I'm wonderful. Just fantastic. And you?

FRANCES:

Terrific. Does that mean you got the lawsuit all straightened out?

LARISSA:

That's still a complete disaster, but what's new?

FRANCES:

Always something! Some things never change.

LARISSA:

What can I say? My mad, mad life.

FRANCES:

You've gotten away with it this far, right? Keep on keeping on!

LARISSA:

Ha ha ha. Do people really say that?

Short pause. Hannah sheds the blanket.

HANNAH:

Wow, it warmed up, huh?

FRANCES:

I hope it doesn't get too hot. The A/C's out at the office; it's a refurbished loft, and... *(to Larissa)* Look at you!

LARISSA:

Ha ha ha, yes. Do you like it? Isn't this fun?

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Larissa has removed her coat and is dressed in tight-fitting, flashy rugby gear. Set off rather notably by her high heels.

HANNAH:

That's great! Where'd you get that?

LARISSA:

An ex-boyfriend of mine. Fabulous, right? I didn't even know I had it then was looking through some boxes and...

FRANCES:

Do I even want to ask under what circumstances you wore that?

LARISSA:

I didn't, he did! You can't see me dating a rugby player?

HANNAH:

Oh! Really?!

LARISSA:

Really! It was ages ago; short-lived but passion-filled, let me tell you. During my athletic phase. Or athlete phase. He was a wonderful man.

FRANCES:

Did I ever meet him?

LARISSA:

I don't believe so.

HANNAH:

I like it. The guys will go nuts.

FRANCES:

Or was he the strange little fellow you brought to that New Year's Eve party in New York?

LARISSA:

Was he?

FRANCES:

That's what I'm asking you.

LARISSA:

I really can't... He may have been. When was that?

FRANCES:

It was a few years before I had Alice, so—

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LARISSA:

(interrupting) Yes! Were we staying at his brother's?

FRANCES:

You were. I'd rented the hotel room for the two of us and then at the last minute you—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) That's right! Boy, that was a wild night, wasn't it?

FRANCES:

In so many ways.

LARISSA:

We all went out and got matching tattoos the next morning?

FRANCES:

You're seriously just now remembering?

HANNAH:

Wait. You have a tattoo?

FRANCES:

Had. It's gone now.

HANNAH:

But you told me not to get one.

LARISSA:

I sometimes forget I still have mine.

FRANCES:

(to Hannah) I did?

LARISSA:

(looking down her blouse at her breasts) Or try to. Now that I'm left with these unfortunate, drooping rose petals.

HANNAH:

(to Frances) Yes! I still have the e-mail.

LARISSA:

It's like they're mocking me.

HANNAH:

(to Frances) I said I was thinking of getting a tattoo and you told me—

FRANCES:

(interrupting) Ah. I told you not to do it haphazardly, without giving it serious thought.

LARISSA:

Oh, come on. A few tequila shots is all the serious thinking we did! *(to Hannah)* So when was this? You contemplating ink, as it were. Did I know about this?

HANNAH:

It was early last year. When my friend Michael died.

LARISSA:

Of course. I'm so sorry. Poor soul; he was a very dear boy.

HANNAH:

He was amazing.

LARISSA:

He had such a lovely spirit.

HANNAH:

And I wanted a tattoo to keep him with me, a part of me.

LARISSA:

Ohhhhh, that's just beautiful, it's not too late, you know. Let's go! I'll get another one!

HANNAH:

I... I already did.

FRANCES:

You did?

LARISSA:

You did! Fabulous! Can I see it?

FRANCES:

Why didn't you say anything?

HANNAH:

I thought you'd— This was it. For Michael.

She pulls back her hair and-reveals a small mark behind her ear.

LARISSA:

How sweet is that?! And it's a... what?

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HANNAH:

A lizard. Kind of silly, I guess.

LARISSA:

No! It's lovely!

FRANCES:

A lizard?

HANNAH:

It was kind of our thing. He liked lizards.

LARISSA:

It's a symbol of survival: You lose your tail, you keep moving.

HANNAH:

I— Yeah.

FRANCES:

Behind your ear; that must have hurt.

HANNAH:

I don't remember.

LARISSA:

(holding her breast) Well, I certainly remember. I was sore for weeks.

FRANCES:

That's different; that's fat tissue.

Hannah's phone begins to ring.

LARISSA:

Not then, so much. But thanks.

HANNAH:

(into her phone) Hi! What? Hang on.

She moves to get a better signal, then turns back to the women.

I'm just...

LARISSA:

Sure! *(loudly)* Hi Sam! *(to Hannah, under her breath)* That is Sam?

Hannah nods and hurries off. Alone, the other women consider each other and their surroundings. Larissa wedges herself into her petite seat.

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LARISSA:

So. Did you know this was here? I never would have known this was here.

FRANCES:

(eyeing Larissa's chair) You didn't bring it? It looks like the sort of thing you'd acquire.

LARISSA:

Ha ha ha, yes. It's too perfect, isn't it? I meant this. *(gesturing out front)* This whole... this.

FRANCES:

Oh, yes, I did. I think this was where they had that farmers market reduced carbon footprint benefit and I consulted. Virtually.

LARISSA:

Of course you did.

As Larissa extricates herself from her chair, Frances decides Hannah is out of earshot.

FRANCES:

So how are we going to help our little friend? Poor baby.

LARISSA:

Help? Why does she need help?

She moves toward Frances' picnic basket.

What do you have in there?

FRANCES:

She's doing it again. Some nice cheeses. Olives.

LARISSA:

Wine? Doing what again?

FRANCES:

No wine.

LARISSA:

No wine?

FRANCES:

No wine. The guy.

LARISSA:

What guy? The dead guy? What are these?

She holds out a small bag.

FRANCES:

Green almonds. I got them at that Middle-Eastern market by my house. Try one.

LARISSA:

It's furry.

FRANCES:

Open it with your fingernail. I wish I could join you, but I can't eat them, anymore.

LARISSA:

Hmmmm. Tastes... green.

FRANCES:

I really miss nuts. But I meant the new guy. Even though they're all one and the same. Sadly.

LARISSA:

What are you talking about? *(going back to the basket)* You said you have cheese?

FRANCES:

Yes, in the little container. Brie and Manchego. I love it, but shouldn't have too much. Because of the chemo.

LARISSA:

Yummy! And look what we have here!

Breezing past the chemo, she pulls a collapsible table from behind her chair and begins to set out contents of a very organized basket: glasses, napkins, utensils, etc.

FRANCES:

Where'd you get that table?

LARISSA:

It was right there, left by some forgetful picnickers.

FRANCES:

Didn't we used to have one just like this?

LARISSA:

Trés convenient, no? Just like home.

FRANCES:

I suppose. Put some napkins over it. So, about her guy...

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LARISSA:

Right. He sounds absolutely adorable.

FRANCES:

I'm sure he's adorable. But he's gay.

LARISSA:

He— When did you meet him?

FRANCES:

I didn't; I haven't.

LARISSA:

Then why do you think he's gay? You think everyone's gay!

FRANCES:

Everyone is gay! Everyone she dates.

LARISSA:

That is ridiculous.

FRANCES:

Her friend Michael?

LARISSA:

She wasn't dating Michael.

FRANCES:

She thought she was. Before he told her he was gay.

LARISSA:

That's not— Michael was obviously gay. Everyone knew he was gay.

FRANCES:

Everyone but the woman in love with him.

LARISSA:

There are different ways to be in love with someone.

FRANCES:

Well, I love you but I'm not getting a tattoo when you die.

LARISSA:

No, you got a tattoo when you were drunk.

FRANCES:

And before there was Michael, there was Javier. Before that, Ben. It's heartbreaking!

LARISSA:

Why are you so sure he's—

FRANCES:

(interrupting) Look where we are!

Short pause.

LARISSA:

An athletic field?

FRANCES:

A pitch. In rugby it's called a pitch.

LARISSA:

Acch. *(returning to the basket)* You really don't have any wine in there?

FRANCES:

I've had to cut back. Because of the chemo. But I looked them up.

LARISSA:

Looked whom up?

FRANCES:

The team. When I was at work this morning I was re-reading her post and I had this feeling and looked them up online. This is not just rugby, it's gay rugby.

LARISSA:

You're making that up.

FRANCES:

I am not. The rugby team is gay. It's actually a thing.

LARISSA:

Gay rugby?

FRANCES:

There's an international association; it's on their website. And even if it wasn't... They're "the Penetrators." The team's called the Penetrators.

LARISSA:

Seriously?

FRANCES:

So let's just say there are no secrets here; these boys do not do their "rucking" in the closet.

LARISSA:

Tell me, why do you know about rugby and "rucking"?

FRANCES:

You're the one wearing the knee socks and nylon; why don't you?

LARISSA:

It's not like I ever went to a game, for christ's sake.

FRANCES:

A match.

LARISSA:

Whatever. Back to Sam.

FRANCES:

Sam.

LARISSA:

Sam, her new boy?

FRANCES:

Right. Sam.

LARISSA:

Just because he plays gay rugby, does he have to be gay?

FRANCES:

Come on. What straight guy would choose to play on a gay team?

LARISSA:

An enlightened straight guy?

FRANCES:

Or a not-so-straight guy.

LARISSA:

Well, he sounds lovely, and she seems crazy about him.

FRANCES:

Which is precisely why I got myself over here today! I've been reading: It's because she was wounded so deeply when she was young. She gets in these relationships that aren't real.

LARISSA:

What are they, then?

FRANCES:

What I mean is, they're not real in the way she thinks they're real.

LARISSA:

Or the way you think they should be? You being the diviner of childhood wounds? She's having fun!

FRANCES:

She's chasing after a missing gay rugby player, waiting for a game that is never going to take place.

LARISSA:

You don't know that!

FRANCES:

This has "tragic ending" written all over it!

LARISSA:

What I see is she's deliriously happy!

FRANCES:

"Delirious!" Exactly! This is all a fantasy! But you can't possibly see that, because you are entirely—!

Short pause.

LARISSA:

Entirely what? Just what am I, entirely? What were you going to say?

FRANCES:

Does it matter?

LARISSA:

Of course it matters.

FRANCES:

Like you ever really listen to anyone?

Hannah runs back in, flushed.

HANNAH:

I'm so so so so so so sorry! Connections are horrible out here. The league messed up the scheduling so everyone's running all over the place and— What's wrong?

LARISSA:

I'm not quite certain! Apparently something's wrong, and that something has to do with... my hearing problem? Or is it my vision, not seeing the inevitable doom that lies ahead. I left something in the car. I'll be right back.

She leaves hurriedly.

HANNAH:

Is she okay?

FRANCES:

Oh lord. Is she ever okay? I'm sorry, I just can't take the drama anymore.

HANNAH:

What happened?

FRANCES:

I was just trying to have a real conversation with her. Which is impossible, because she makes up her reality as goes along and doesn't care about how it impacts anyone else and here's the thing: She could get away with it when we were younger, but now it's finally backfiring on her! She's all alone and alienating her friends and refuses to ask for help!

Short pause.

HANNAH:

Looks like it's going to be a nice day!

She takes off her jacket to reveal a long-sleeved blouse and a skirt over her stockings.

FRANCES:

Yes! It's much warmer here than Downtown.

Hannah checks out the picnic items on the table.

Listen, about your tattoo: I just didn't know you had done it. So it was a surprise.

HANNAH:

To me, too. I was surprised how much it... changed me.

FRANCES:

Well, you did it at a time when you were acting out of grief. We all make mistakes and I had to live with mine until, you know: the surgery.

HANNAH:

The— Oh! Right! I'm sorry, it was...*(touching her breast)*

FRANCES:

Yes. But they're getting better at removing them now. Tattoos. You don't want to go the route I did!

HANNAH:

I don't. No.

FRANCES:

So! Did you find out about the game? I mean, match.

HANNAH:

I'm sorry. This was so not supposed to be like this. I feel awful.

FRANCES:

I understand.

HANNAH:

Thank you. I know this kind of thing drives you bonkers and, really, it makes these guys even crazier. They can get very fussy so I hope they behave!

FRANCES:

Uh huh. Do you see them play a lot?

HANNAH:

Not a lot. Sam is kind of an extra guy, an alternate substitute. When he plays, it's mostly as a blood replacement.

Short pause.

FRANCES:

A what?

HANNAH:

A blood replacement. Funny, huh?

FRANCES:

This is a position on the team? A blood replacement?

HANNAH:

Kind of. The rules say he only goes in if someone gets hurt in the match, and he replaces them until they, well, aren't bleeding.

FRANCES:

He plays until the blood flow stops.

HANNAH:

Ha ha. Yeah. Or sometimes it doesn't stop and he has to take over.

FRANCES:

When a limb is severed?

HANNAH:

No, no. It's mostly nosebleeds or scrapes. I mean, it's all very civilized. "A game for hooligans played by gentlemen." As opposed to football, a game—

FRANCES:

(interrupting) Sure. I just try to avoid organized violence, altogether.

HANNAH:

But that's it! It's not violent.

FRANCES:

With a "blood replacement" written into the rules?

HANNAH:

It's rough. But it's fast, and just so... physical in a pure way. Elegant but forceful. And exciting! You'll see!

FRANCES:

Sometime today?

HANNAH:

Yeah. Sorry. *(taking her phone out again.)* I don't know what...

FRANCES:

Listen, sweetie, I got off track here. So you've seen the team. I mean, you've seen them play.

HANNAH:

(still with her phone) Sure. They're really...! Well, this may not sound right, but you'd never know that it's gay rugby.

Short pause.

FRANCES:

Oh.

HANNAH:

I told you that, didn't I?

FRANCES:

Uh, no. But I... knew.

HANNAH:

Yeah, there's sort of this big subculture. Sam found out about it from this guy he met on the side of the road. He was a hooker.

FRANCES:

On the side of the road.

HANNAH:

Sam was driving home late one night and saw this guy who's motorcycle had spun out or crashed or something so he pulled over—he's trained as a paramedic—and ended up taking care of the guy until the ambulance arrived and it turned out this guy played rugby as a hooker—that's a position, the lead guy in the scrums, which are like the huddles, and he's the guy who tries to get and mostly throws the ball? Anyway, Sam always wanted to play rugby but... the right situation never really presented itself. It's complicated. So after he met this guy he went to check out the team and they loved him and he just started playing with them. I mean, whenever he can, especially during fire season because he's a volunteer firefighter and he's away for weeks or even months. But when he plays I try to come, even though it's sometimes tricky. A lot of times.

Short pause.

FRANCES:

Was he okay?

HANNAH:

Was who okay?

FRANCES:

The hooker on the bike.

HANNAH:

Oh. Yeah! And they all made a big deal about what a hero he was: Sam. But he says that when there's an accident or people get hurt or need rescuing, he just always seems to be in the right place at the right time!

FRANCES:

Uh huh.

HANNAH:

It's the way he's wired, deep down inside. He's incredibly courageous. It's unbelievable the things he's been through. He's done so much to make himself who he is. I mean, seriously. Literally. He really has.

FRANCES:

Well. Just when do you think we might meet him? I have to pick up Alice at her father's by—

HANNAH:

(interrupting) Ack! I'm sorry, I...

She returns to her phone for updates.

FRANCES:

Also, my boss wants me back before it gets too late. Let me check in; Alice had an interview for what could be quite an advantageous internship abroad but I'm not sure she was really prepared...

She pulls out her phone. Both women begin to text. They might do this for an extended period. Then Larissa makes an entrance. She is wearing an extravagant plastic rain coat and rubber boots and brandishes a large, colorfully patterned outdoor umbrella. The women are otherwise engaged and don't acknowledge her arrival.

LARISSA:

Psssst! Am I interrupting some sort of world-wide secret communique?

HANNAH:

Hey! I was just trying to find out what's going on.

FRANCES:

So guess what Alice just—!

She looks up from her phone and notices Larissa's getup.

Good lord, what's that about?

LARISSA:

(ala "Winne the Pooh") Tut tut! Looks like rain!

HANNAH:

(looking up at the skies) Ooof! It really does! Where'd those clouds come from?

LARISSA:

But look what I found in the parking lot!

She props up the umbrella.

FRANCES:

You found that?

LARISSA:

By the rubbish bins. Same design as the ones by the pool at our old apartment. Funny, huh?

FRANCES:

What's funny is that they didn't say rain... (*looking at her phone*) This place seems to be in its own weather zone.

LARISSA:

Imagine!

FRANCES:

That can happen, you know. Micro-climates.

LARISSA:

I did not know, but thankfully I have you for my edification.

FRANCES:

I'm sorry. That I choose to be informed and connected to the world, rather than hiding from it.

LARISSA:

You're accusing *me* of hiding?

FRANCES:

I haven't seen you in months. You don't answer your phone—

LARISSA:

(*interrupting*) I don't know where my mobile is, and my home phone seems not to be ringing!

FRANCES:

I know that; it goes straight to voice-mail.

LARISSA:

But I never set up the voice-mail so I can't get the messages!

FRANCES:

Obviously. And e-mail? What about e-mail?

LARISSA:

I don't have a computer!

FRANCES:

What do you mean you don't have a computer? I went with you to—

LARISSA:

(*interrupting*) Not one that works! That one broke; I have to get it fixed!!

HANNAH:

Is that champagne?

FRANCES:
What?

HANNAH:
I was ask—

LARISSA:
(interrupting) Why yes, as a matter of fact! This *is* champagne in my pocket, and I *am* glad to see you, ha ha ha!

She pulls a bottle of champagne out of a large pocket in her raincoat.

HANNAH:
(moving to the table) I'll get glasses.

LARISSA:
(popping the champagne) Hooray!

FRANCES:
None for me.

HANNAH:
No?

LARISSA:
Come on. A taste won't kill you.

FRANCES:
Easy for you to say. I really shouldn't.

HANNAH:
Neither should we, ha ha ha!

FRANCES:
Well, maybe if I eat something. I can't drink on an empty stomach. The chemo.

HANNAH:
The— Oh! I'm sorry, I didn't—!

LARISSA:
(interrupting) Then let us eat cake!

She lifts a fancy cake box out of one of her bags.

FRANCES:
Ooooh! Is that from that bakery on 6th? What kind of...?

LARISSA:

Lemon-filled, with Amaretto.

FRANCES:

My favorite!

HANNAH:

That's wonderful! *(she takes the cake; to Larissa)* Do you have a cake knife?

FRANCES:

(moving toward her picnic basket) I have some biodegradable cheese knives...

LARISSA:

Is that what those are? They're not real knives. We'll use this.

She picks up a grand silver knife from the ground.

HANNAH:

Whoa, where'd that come from?

LARISSA:

Detritus from an outdoor quinceañera, perhaps? After a little Latin virgin was sacrificed to christ?

HANNAH:

They do have a lot of events, here.

FRANCES:

It's got to be filthy!

LARISSA:

Another reason for alcohol!

She splashes some champagne on the knife, perhaps using her clothing to clean it.

It's rather like my mother's, actually. *(to Frances)* Remember? You used it for your very own shotgun wedding. *(to Hannah)* Big piece or small piece?

HANNAH:

Big, please.

LARISSA:

That's my girl.

She cuts a piece for Hannah, then grabs a chunk for herself with her bare hand.

LARISSA:

(to Frances) You don't know what you're missing; I'm actually enjoying this cake through every one of my pores. Will anyone mind if I slather it all over my body?

HANNAH:

Ha ha ha!

FRANCES:

Ha ha indeed. Well. Maybe I'll have just a taste.

Using one of her tiny cheese knives, she attacks with unexpected vigor.

LARISSA:

Of course you will!

FRANCES:

Mmmm! Delicious. And so rich—I hope I don't pay for this later. My digestive system is completely out of whack.

HANNAH:

Right. You know, I'm so sorry I didn't ask before. How have things been going?

FRANCES:

Thanks! As well as can be expected. But the doctors are pleased and my boss is very supportive. So that's good news.

HANNAH:

It is! Very good! Cheers!

The women toast with glasses and/or cake.

FRANCES:

Unfortunately this cake and champagne are beyond very good! I'll be right...
Where is...?

HANNAH:

In the back of the building, up by the main parking lot?

FRANCES:

That's where I parked?

HANNAH:

Was there a building?

FRANCES:

Yes.

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HANNAH:
Then yes.

FRANCES:
Right.

HANNAH:
Will you be okay? Do you want to take the umbrella?

FRANCES:
I've got one in the car if I need it.

LARISSA:
Hurry back or there won't be any cake left!

FRANCES:
That's the idea.

She heads off and Hannah waits for her to be out of earshot.

HANNAH:
I feel terrible.

LARISSA:
This will help.

She refills Hannah's glass.

My lord! Who'd have imagined she could become even more high maintenance?

HANNAH:
But I totally forgot about her cancer. I mean, I thought they got it all. Now chemo?
Did I know that?

LARISSA:
She does try to keep it a secret.

HANNAH:
But she looks great! We haven't seen all that much of each other for a while; I mean, we Facebook...

LARISSA:
The true measure of modern friendship.

HANNAH:

She's on there all the time, but she just posts about her job and Alice and college abroad and her soon-to-be-empty house and all of the amazing things she's up to so I thought she was done with everything. You know, that everything was fine.

LARISSA:

Oh, she was. It is. Was that a rain drop?

HANNAH:

But she still has to do chemotherapy?

LARISSA:

She doesn't have to, she wants to. Help me put this umbrella up.

HANNAH:

Huh?

LARISSA:

I'm not letting this cake get ruined!

Hannah moves to help her.

HANNAH:

But no one *wants* chemo.

LARISSA:

You have not been around her as long as I have, or you would not say that. It would not be enough for her to just have cancer, she has to have some kind of rare, special cancer. That even the specialists can't diagnose. So when the doctors recommend a simple lumpectomy, she tells them to take half her breast. When they insist they got it all, she forces them to give her chemo anyway. Not that it surprised me. I just refuse to validate her decision.

HANNAH:

Really?

LARISSA:

Absolutely! I love her, but have you ever tried to stop her when she sets her mind to something? Nice, huh?

The umbrella is up and she poses under it.

HANNAH:

I meant, why do you—? Oh. That is rain.

She joins Larissa under the umbrella.

LARISSA:

So if— When the boys arrive, will they play in the rain?

HANNAH:

What?

LARISSA:

The boys, the boys, your beefy rugby pups.

HANNAH:

Oh, yeah. They love it. And they really are like puppies—rolling around, the muddier the better.

LARISSA:

How wonderful. If I wasn't such a piglet I'd let them roll around in this cake, too!

HANNAH:

But it's been— (*perhaps she looks at her phone again*) I don't know what could have happened. And now she's sick...

LARISSA:

Trust me: She's fine.

HANNAH:

I guess this was a stupid idea.

LARISSA:

Darling, it's a brilliant idea! I can think of nothing I'd rather do than meet "The Penetrators!" Sounds like they're right up my alley, ha ha ha!

HANNAH:

Ha ha. Yeah, well, they'll definitely love *you!*

LARISSA:

And it's been so long since I've made an entire team happy! Ready?

She refills both their glasses.

HANNAH:

Thanks...

LARISSA:

Now, sit!

She squeezes back into her chair and Hannah finally sits in hers.

LARISSA:

This is very nice, isn't it? Shelter from the storm. How marvelous to spend time with you. I feel like we're getting closer and closer.

HANNAH:

Me, too. I...

Very short pause.

Can I show you something?

LARISSA:

But of course, my pet!

HANNAH:

It's this. I got it not long after my first one.

She unfastens the top of her blouse, revealing another small tattoo near her collar bone.

LARISSA:

And it is... rabbit paws?

HANNAH:

Tracks. Wolf tracks.

LARISSA:

Wolf tracks! A lone wolf?

HANNAH:

To help me move forward, to trust in myself.

LARISSA:

I love that! Can I tell you how much I love that? Wolves are very powerful. Very spiritual. Symbols of family.

HANNAH:

Family? Really? That makes sense! It really does.

LARISSA:

Of course it does!

HANNAH:

Because I felt like I was "lone" when I got it. Always holding back. But now I want to feel like, part of something. Like I belong. Like you two! Right now you're in a... whatever but I feel like no matter what, you're there for each other. Like family, right? I've never really had that.

LARISSA:

Oooh, now you'll never get away from us!

HANNAH:

Ha ha thanks! I'm so glad you both came, today!

LARISSA:

Why wouldn't we?

HANNAH:

But really! I told Sam about you and he was like, "Women are amazing. Reach out to them. There's a reason you're in each other's lives right now!" And so you're here, together, and I do feel closer to you, even if it hasn't turned out exactly how I expected. But I think I'm starting to get—to trust—that things aren't going to be what you expect and maybe that's okay. That sometimes life pushes you in a direction and you can't figure out what it's telling you. It's like you're just hanging there, for forever, and nothing gets in or seems real, but then when you do something that's... undeniable, sometimes everything just falls into place and suddenly you're ready. Finally. You're finally ready to—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) What do we have here?

HANNAH:

Huh?

Larissa picks up something covered in dirt; a little wiping—and maybe some champagne—reveals shiny metal.

LARISSA:

It's... a watch. A man's watch.

HANNAH:

Oh. Yeah. Could be one of the guy's. They played here last weekend.

LARISSA:

It's been here a while...

HANNAH:

It looks old.

LARISSA:

It's mine.

HANNAH:

Ha ha. I should ask the team, in case. Whenever they get here...

She pulls out her phone again.

LARISSA:

No. I mean, it really is mine. From ages ago. An ex gave me this watch when I was... in my twenties. *(winding the watch)* It was his dad's. Ah! *(holding the watch to her ear)* It's still working.

HANNAH:

Whose was it?

LARISSA:

Mine! I used to wear it all the time, but then I must've lost it somewhere.

HANNAH:

You said you'd never been here.

LARISSA:

I haven't! Isn't that incredible? I have to set it. What time is it?

HANNAH:

(checking her phone) 11:11.

LARISSA:

Really? One-one-one-one?

HANNAH:

Yes.

LARISSA:

That is even more—! All right: My ex's father? Whose watch it was? He was so dear and old fashioned and I adored him to no end. Anyway, he didn't like digital clocks. Or that was even before they were actually digital; they were those flip type clocks?

HANNAH:

Yeah?

LARISSA:

Because he said they weren't real clocks, it wasn't the real time. But then his wife got one, right before she died, god rest her soul. And after she was gone he was going to get rid of it—he said he kept hearing the flip-click-clicking in the middle of the night. But then he noticed something: Every time he looked at the numbers on clock it would say twelve-twelve. Or four-four-four. Or...

HANNAH:

One-one-one-one?

LARISSA:

Yes! It was like his wife was reaching out to him. Telling him that she was there. That she loved him. That she was with him and everything would be okay.

HANNAH:

Wow. That's—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) I knooooow! just remember thinking, "I want something like that! I want that kind of genuine connection. The kind of relationship that I can count on until the end of time, no matter what!." Ahhhhhhh!

She starts to sob uncontrollably and Frances returns.

FRANCES:

Hello. And I thought the rain clouds had cleared.

LARISSA:

(quickly recovering from her tears) Oh, I can't apologize enough. I guess we just needed a good cry, didn't we?

FRANCES:

It is a rather strange picture: blue skies, cool breezes and you two, huddled under there in the dark.

LARISSA:

We're very cozy. You're welcome to join us, you know.

HANNAH:

(getting up, to Frances) Here, sit down.

FRANCES:

I'm fine. Although I do have to be careful of the sun. The chemo.

HANNAH:

Really, sit! I'm gonna figure out what's going on.

She steps away with her phone.

LARISSA:

(to Frances) Look here! You'll never believe what I found!

FRANCES:

A dirty watch?

LARISSA:

You don't remember this watch? It belonged to my ex-boyfriend's dad?

FRANCES:
The old guy with the time story?

LARISSA:
Yes!

FRANCES:
You lost it, like you lose everything.

LARISSA:
But I just found it.

FRANCES:
Where?

LARISSA:
Right here!

FRANCES:
That can't be the same watch. It's impossible.

LARISSA:
It's incredible! And do you know what time it was when I found it? Eleven-Eleven
One-one-one-one.

FRANCES:
Let me see.

She looks closely at the watch.

You must have brought it with you.

LARISSA:
How could I have done that? You said it yourself, I lost it years ago.

FRANCES:
For all you know, it could have been in one of those bags for years. Fell out, today.

LARISSA:
No, it was half buried.

FRANCES:
You could have stepped on it and buried it.

LARISSA:
You think I'm trying to pull some giant hoax? That I'm lying to you?

FRANCES:

Lying to yourself, is more like it.

LARISSA:

Extraordinary things happen. That can't be explained. They happen to me every day.

FRANCES:

Oh, I'm sure they do.

LARISSA:

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

FRANCES:

That maybe, just maybe, you look for extraordinary things. Maybe ordinary isn't good enough for you!

LARISSA:

Oh, please. I'm not the one who pretends that—

Short pause.

FRANCES:

Pretends what?

LARISSA:

Never mind.

FRANCES:

What were you going to say?

LARISSA:

I was going to say I'm starving. What else you have in that micro basket of yours?

FRANCES:

I—

Her phone is making a noise.

I have to take this. It's Alice.

She moves away to take the call as Larissa retrieves a bag from the basket.

LARISSA:

(under her breath) Of course it's Alice. *(calling to Hannah)* Here. Have some green almonds.

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Hanna joins her and takes one.

HANNAH:
They're fuzzy.

LARISSA:
Right.

Larissa takes off her raincoat. She is wearing a tropical poolside outfit—perhaps a loud sarong over a swimsuit.

HANNAH:
Whoa!

LARISSA:
Isn't this something? I never get to wear it, so when I saw the pool...

She takes off the rubber boots to reveal new heels which scream "Cabana."

HANNAH:
Ha ha. Too bad the gate's locked.

LARISSA:
I don't actually know how to swim. But I have known my share of lifeguards.

HANNAH:
I'll bet.

LARISSA:
Ahhhh, the sun, the sun, the glorious sun. Our lady of self-induced carcinogens doesn't know what she's missing!

She pulls the chairs out into the sun, setting them in basking positions.

HANNAH:
Maybe you shouldn't—

LARISSA:
(interrupting, sitting and baring almost all) But you should! It's time to shed some of those layers! Show the world where those wolf tracks might lead!

HANNAH:
Ha ha ha.

She looks toward Frances.

LARISSA:

There's no need to be afraid of her; it's all a bluff, her little act. You should have seen her in her wild days!

HANNAH:

Her wild days?

LARISSA:

Oh, she was completely reckless. Made me look like a Catholic school girl. Not that that's a very good comparison because I actually was a Catholic school girl and...

HANNAH:

You have to tell me!

LARISSA:

She does not like to be reminded. Was always trying to prove something, go one step further; hated when anyone else got attention. But then she had Alice, and that showed us all, didn't it? The woman with the tight ass we see here today is living proof of the cost of motherhood.

HANNAH:

That's terrible; don't say that.

LARISSA:

I'm sorry. I am terrible. I'm completely irresponsible and a total waste, just like she says. Of course she's right, as always, and I need another drink. You?

HANNAH:

Oh. Sure. But she doesn't say that; she doesn't think that.

LARISSA:

I know exactly what she says, and exactly what she thinks.

She refills their glasses from a new thermos, trying to hold back alcohol-fueled tears.

And what she doesn't realize is that I'm onto her. She's built up her tidy little everything's Jake facade, but now is panicking because Alice is leaving the country and her beloved ex- wants nothing to do with her and she acts like she never made promises and she's made up this whole other— Well! Now, she'll be all alone, won't she? She can look down on me from her glass ceiling or loft space solarium or whatever the fuck it is, but I tell you this: I wouldn't trade what I've got for anything in the world. Or for anything she's got, anyway.

HANNAH:

Especially not cancer.

LARISSA:

Yes. Well. There's that. Too bad I haven't earned that particular badge of honor. Pre-cancerous was all I ever achieved.

HANNAH:

Are you okay?

LARISSA:

Oh, I'm fine. Fabulous. But my god, what a cliché I've become. *Me* of all people! As good as benign and reduced to begging for...

FRANCES:

What?

Frances has returned.

HANNAH:

Hi.

FRANCES:

Begging for what?

LARISSA:

I was just babbling. You've caught me with my knickers down, metaphorically speaking. Not that I'm actually wearing any, ha ha ha!

FRANCES:

Stop. Will you please just stop?

LARISSA:

Now you've joined the panty police?

FRANCES:

No, as your friend, I'm telling you to stop the show. We've had enough. We don't want costumes, we want to see the real you, your authentic self.

LARISSA:

My "authentic self?" Oh, that is fabulous. *(to Hannah)* Isn't that fabulous? *(to Frances, lifting the thermos)* Mai Tai?

FRANCES:

Seriously?

LARISSA:

Nah, just joshing with you. I'll be right back.

She and her thermos leave in a hurry.

FRANCES:

Argh! I don't know what to do. I really don't. I love her, but she's going off the deep end. I mean, a deeper end.

HANNAH:

And she can't swim.

FRANCES:

Exactly!

HANNAH:

(finally taking a sip of her drink) Wow. This is a Mai Tai.

FRANCES:

So are you with me on this?

HANNAH:

On what?

FRANCES:

An intervention. And I'm not just talking the booze, here. It's her whole "look at me" act—ridiculous when you get to our age.

HANNAH:

But I love that she just... puts it all out there!

FRANCES:

Whatever "it" is! Honestly? She couldn't find her authentic self if she was stripped naked. Or maybe it's that there's no there, there; that's why it's impossible for her to be there for anyone else!

HANNAH:

I— In her own way she's—

FRANCES:

(interrupting) You know that I'm there for you, right? I love her but even after all these years, I'm saying give me a clue, a genuine clue into who you truly are!

As a response, Hannah lifts her shirt to reveal a large giraffe tattooed along her rib cage.

HANNAH:

You mean like this?

Short pause.

FRANCES:

Is that a giraffe?

HANNAH:
Yeah.

FRANCES:
It's very... large.

HANNAH:
Yeah.

FRANCES:
And when did that appear? Why didn't you—

HANNAH:
(interrupting) You said that a tattoo was an angry violation of your body.

FRANCES:
When did I—?

HANNAH:
(interrupting) In your e—

FRANCES:
(interrupting, holding her breast) That might have been a reaction to the surgery.

HANNAH:
But you know what? For me it was exactly the opposite. *(touching behind her ear)*
With the first one, I felt this kind of healing that actually... connected me.

FRANCES:
To Michael? All right, well—

HANNAH:
(interrupting) No, not to Michael. I mean, he's why I got it. But when I got it, it was like it went deeper. Through this small spot I couldn't even see without a mirror, I was suddenly connected to myself. To my body. It was like this little lizard made me more me. More present. And then I got this *(opening her shirt collar)* to help me find my path.

FRANCES:
Well. Look at that.

HANNAH:
So after the wolf tracks I wanted something I couldn't ignore, that couldn't get lost.

Perhaps she ties up her shirt and touches her ribs, exploring new territory.

FRANCES:

Who told you to—?

HANNAH:

(interrupting) No one. I didn't know why I chose a giraffe, but I knew it needed to be something big. Something at my core. And then I met Sam and somehow, even before we were together, I felt safe showing it to him. Even though I was embarrassed he was like, in this incredibly gentle way, "No it's cool; I've never seen a giraffe tattoo how did you think of that?" And I couldn't answer him but when I found out—about his past—it seemed perfect. He said what a giraffe had was a higher perspective. A giraffe can see all around him at a distance but is still on the ground.

FRANCES:

Okay. I'm your friend, and I love you. But from my perspective, I'm a bit concerned about this "Sam."

HANNAH:

Shit. I wonder if something did happen!

She checks her phone again.

FRANCES:

No, I—

Larissa makes an entrance wearing extravagant pajamas, a robe and heeled slippers.

LARISSA:

Don't let me interrupt you, but I thought I'd slip into something more comfortable. Is that a giraffe?

HANNAH:

Yeah. A giraffe.

LARISSA:

Not that one ever needs a reason for a giraffe, but...?

HANNAH:

He's incredibly flexible and incredibly strong, and that can help us own our bodies, our physicality, in a complete, intuitive way.

LARISSA:

Why, that is remarkable! *(to Frances)* Look at the detail. It's extraordinary!

FRANCES:

I didn't bring my glasses.

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LARISSA:
Use these.

She picks up a pair of eyeglasses from the ground.

FRANCES:
Those are—

LARISSA:
(interrupting) Crazy! Just like the ones you wear, right?

She hands them over.

FRANCES:
(examining the glasses) But mine are custom made. From France...

LARISSA:
Of course they are. *(examining the tattoo)* So. A giraffe of one's own. Are those ears? Or wait: horns? What are those little knobs they have? *(to Frances)* Come on! You're missing all the fun! As usual.

FRANCES:
I think I'll sit down. I'm getting a little fatigued.

She perches on the camp chair and tries on the glasses, which fit and function perfectly.

HANNAH:
(to Larissa, considering her giraffe tattoo) Does this seem strange?

LARISSA:
Ha ha ha. It's not predictable, that's certain. But I think it's spectacular. My breast petals pale in comparison; if only I had known...

HANNAH:
Would you have gotten something different?

LARISSA:
No, it's— My tattoo and I seem to have grown apart, that's all.

HANNAH:
It doesn't feel like it belongs to you?

LARISSA:
Well, neither does the 20 lbs I've put on in the last 10 years.

HANNAH:
You look great.

LARISSA:

Thanks. I suppose I might feel different if I decided to actually live in my body, ha ha ha.

FRANCES:

Well, some of us don't have that choice, ha ha ha.

She shifts painfully.

HANNAH:

Are you all right?

FRANCES:

I wish they made these chairs with a little more support, that's all.

HANNAH:

Do you want to try the other one?

FRANCES:

No, it's not the— It's really more about me. The chemo.

HANNAH:

I'm sorry.

LARISSA:

We all are.

HANNAH:

Can I get you anything?

FRANCES:

No, I'm fine. *(seizing the moment to stand)* At least until Sam, the ad hoc first responder, comes to sweep me off my feet!

HANNAH:

Right! I am so sorry! This is not like him, it really isn't!

FRANCES:

Which is precisely what we need to address. This is what happens with these guys. They start out like the sweetest guys on the planet, here to save the day, and then...

HANNAH:

Then?

FRANCES:

I'm worried that you've got yourself mixed up with a controlling bully, my dear!\

Pause.

HANNAH:

Ha ha ha ha! No! That is so far off base!

FRANCES:

Think about it! He thrives on violent sports, he—!

HANNAH:

(interrupting) No! I told you, rugby's not like that! I mean, I can't even watch football or boxing or anything like that because of— Because. But rugby is totally different! I mean, the guys are strong and they run and knock each other down and smash into each other but they're not those huge monsters. They're a bunch of different guys who are gay and straight and everything in between and they come together when they play in this indescribable way and they sweat and they bleed and lock up in these fierce formations where they embrace each other and become part of one another. It's amazing to watch. To experience. They're one force but at the same time each teammate is taking care of and compensating for everyone else and there's nothing frightening going on, they're not trying to hurt each other— even the opposition. The rules make it so their arms have to be around each other, they're bound to each other, like when they're mauling or rucking or—

FRANCES:

(interrupting) Mauling?!

LARISSA:

And just when I was getting all hot and bothered.

HANNAH:

But that's just it. Nothing's like it sounds. Nothing's what it seems before you really understand, before you get it. And then you do and it's all very... safe. And for me, it lets me, for the first time in such a long time, not be afraid of things like, well, okay, intimacy and sex and pleasure and letting someone in and belonging and being a partner and... It's opened doors for me. That's what I'm saying.

FRANCES:

But maybe it's the wrong doors.

LARISSA:

Or maybe it's not.

Short pause.

HANNAH:

And maybe it doesn't matter. Because look at me. Here I am. Again. A lone wolf.

Suddenly, a gust of wind hits them from out of nowhere, almost knocking her down.

HANNAH:

Fuck!

FRANCES:

You know, I did bring a chair. It's in my car. Take my keys.

Keys in hand, Hannah hurries off and the wind picks up.

Well! That wind certainly came out of nowhere!

Larissa takes down the umbrella to keep it from blowing away, then starts to collect the objects around her. Frances tries to re-assemble her picnic basket.

Did I tell you that we've found a host family for Alice, her first year? Which will help enormously in a foreign country. Keep her in the right place, with the right people; that's one nightmare averted.

LARISSA:

You did. In multiple e-mails.

FRANCES:

Yes, I— I thought you said your computer wasn't working.

LARISSA:

Sometimes it works, most of the time it doesn't. I have to get it fixed.

FRANCES:

If you want I can take it to my computer guy.

LARISSA:

No, it's okay. I think I can handle it on my own.

She hands Frances the bag of almonds.

These are yours.

FRANCES:

Yes. So. What are we going to do about Sam.

LARISSA:

What's there to do?

FRANCES:

I'm not at all surprised he's kept her waiting like this. It's typical for his kind of hero complex.

LARISSA:

“Hero complex?” Where did you get that?

FRANCES:

She and I had a private conversation.

LARISSA:

He’s unemployed. Can you have a hero complex if you’re unemployed?

FRANCES:

It’s all part of the package. He looks for tragedies so that he can save people; he may even create those tragedies.

LARISSA:

That’s sounds like someone I know!

FRANCES:

So you understand that we have to protect her.

LARISSA:

Protect her from whom?

FRANCES:

This man! He’s a... blood replacement, for christ’s sake!

LARISSA:

What is—? Why is it so hard for you to be happy for my friend?!

FRANCES:

Your friend? I introduced you!

LARISSA:

Oh, I’m sorry. I don’t have access, anymore?

FRANCES:

I completely see through you, you know! You spend your all time searching for meaning amidst the chaos you leave in your wake, but—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) I spend my time accepting what the universe has to offer!

FRANCES:

Because you don’t know what it’s like to truly give!

LARISSA:

How can you say that?!

Hannah comes back in carrying a modern folding chair.

HANNAH:

Okay. I've had some time to think, and I cannot apologize enough. I haven't been able to reach anyone, and I've decided that I am pretty much done with being humiliated here today. Let's just say the match has been cancelled. Thank you for coming and you might as well go home.

She sets the chair with the others. The wind has died down; it's now perfectly still.

LARISSA:

You know what? Not just yet. We're not quite done here! I'm apparently the most selfish person on the planet, so I must make up for that now.

She picks up a small framed photo from the ground and hands it to Hannah.

Here. Wipe it off. Good as new.

FRANCES:

What is wrong with you? She doesn't—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) What? It's a nice frame.

FRANCES:

That's not— You have absolutely no idea what it means to be a friend!

LARISSA:

I brought you a cake!

HANNAH:

(clearing dirt from the photo) Wait. Who is this? In the photo?

FRANCES:

Never mind! Just throw it away!

HANNAH:

But look! Is that...?

LARISSA:

(taking a closer look) Why, yes! It is! How's that for extraordinary?! It's the one and only beloved father of Alice!

FRANCES:

That can't be.

LARISSA:

And look who he's with! On one side of him there's you, and on the other, me. Weren't we all something? Friends to the end, no one will come between us?

FRANCES:

Where did you get this?

LARISSA:

You saw—it was right here.

FRANCES:

So that's what's going on. You set this whole thing up today because you're still angry about our romance?

LARISSA:

Romance? You got pregnant!

FRANCES:

We were a family.

LARISSA:

You played at being a family. For a very short time in some made-up world I was not good enough to be a part of.

FRANCES:

What are you talking about? You're the one who always kicked *me* to the curb whenever a new man showed up!

LARISSA:

That is not true, and totally different.

FRANCES:

I have always made room for you in my life.

LARISSA:

And what about now?

FRANCES:

What about it?

LARISSA:

Have you really forgotten? "When Alice goes away to school, it'll be you and me. Move in. Fuck men. We'll grow old together."

Very short pause.

FRANCES:

That was a long time ago.

LARISSA:

Not that long ago!

FRANCES:

Is that what you've been upset about? Why didn't you say something?

LARISSA:

What was I supposed to say?

FRANCES:

For one, you could have asked me! "Is this something we can talk about?"

LARISSA:

What's there to talk about? It was a plan!

FRANCES:

It was— I'm sorry, but sometimes plans change. I have been dealing with a lot, in case you haven't noticed!

LARISSA:

Like angling for your boss to move in, instead? *(to Hannah)* Her married boss.

FRANCES:

I— No! *(to Hannah)* It's not like that.

LARISSA:

What's it like, then?

FRANCES:

Very difficult! I find support from whomever I can. Obviously not from you!

LARISSA:

You do know that other people have terrible things happen to them, too. But we go on with our lives without wearing our chemotherapy like a fucking wrist corsage.

FRANCES:

Ah! I have devoted myself to being the best kind of friend to you and yes—you've had some hard times; I know, I was there. But now that I'm facing cancer—

LARISSA:

(interrupting) You are not facing cancer. You kicked cancer's ass and it's running away, terrified.

FRANCES:

So you think I made it up? They took half my breast!

LARISSA:

I was there, remember. You gave it away. As if some crippled child in India had a use for it.

FRANCES:

How dare you! You are— I should—

LARISSA:

What? Attack me with one of your biodegradable cheese knives?

FRANCES:

You don't think I will?

LARISSA:

Go ahead. Let's really get real here. I've been waiting years for this!

She picks up the messy cake knife as Frances dives for her picnic basket.

HANNAH:

AaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhHHHHHHHHHHHHhHHHHHHHHH!

Hannah starts to cry. Or maybe she screams. Whatever the outburst, it's significant and raw and leaves her naked.

LARISSA:

Oh! My duckling! I'm sorry. We just got carried away. Are you all right?

HANNAH:

No. No, I'm not. You two are— I don't know what you are, but it's not best friends. You're not even— It's like I'm watching the nastiest divorce ever! What is it you want from each other and why am I in the middle of it?

Pause.

Never mind. This was a mistake. It's a sham, the whole thing.

FRANCES:

What's a sham?

HANNAH:

This. Here. Sam. The game.

LARISSA:

The match.

HANNAH:

Everything! I thought it was different. I thought he was different. I mean, he is different, but...

She reaches down, and pulls up a sheet of the grass from the ground. It is AstroTurf.

LARISSA:

Well! That certainly fooled me!

FRANCES:

(to Hannah) I'm... I'm sorry. I'm sorry if I... What can I do?

HANNAH:

Nothing. Thanks. I'm going home now.

LARISSA:

No, I'm sure he's on his way! What does your little phone tell you?

HANNAH:

It tells me I've wasted a lot more than one day, that's for sure.

FRANCES:

Sweetie, it's hard to break those patterns. I know. Some of my closest friends are gay. But it's never too late!

HANNAH:

No. That's not... He's not gay. Well, actually, he was gay. But it's not about that.

LARISSA:

He *was* gay?

FRANCES:

How can it not be about that?

HANNAH:

Actually? He was a woman.

Short pause.

FRANCES:

What?

HANNAH:

But it's not about that, either.

LARISSA:

Oh, for me it is. Back up a bit.

HANNAH:

He's a man, but even that doesn't matter. Because he's just... he's just Sam.

FRANCES:

How can that not—

HANNAH:

(interrupting) It doesn't! That's just how it is! I've never felt this way about anyone. And I thought he got it. He said he understood! What I had to do to take back what had been done to me. To my body. Why I had to...

She rolls up one sleeve, and we see a tattoo of a large monkey on her forearm.

LARISSA:

Oh! A monkey?

HANNAH:

A monkey.

LARISSA:

Look at that!

As Frances puts on her glasses, Hannah rolls up her other sleeve.

FRANCES:

A whole barrel of them.

HANNAH:

They symbolize wisdom and knowledge. Some people say they're a sign of evil powers, but it's really that they represent human frailty. There are people that are capable of monstrous things. But we all make mistakes. Monkeys learn from theirs.

Very short pause.

(to Frances) And monkeys help protect children.

LARISSA:

Well, of course they do! I love these monkeys! Those are marvelous monkeys.

After a moment, Hannah pushes down one stocking to reveal winged creatures flying up her leg.

FRANCES:

(to Hannah) And birds...?

HANNAH:

They're sparrows. Freedom and loyalty. A sparrow can fly away but once he finds his soul mate, he'll always come back to her. There's always room but she's still complete without him.

LARISSA:

How perfect! I had a sparrow once, you know. They mate for life.

Hannah then reveals fish swimming down the other leg.

HANNAH:

Love, courage and dignity.

FRANCES:

And female sexuality. The fish.

Short pause.

HANNAH:

Yes.

FRANCES:

You did all this for Sam?

HANNAH:

No. I did it for me. Sam was just... able to read it.

FRANCES:

That doesn't mean he's the only one!

LARISSA:

Of course not. Could be he just came at the right time!

FRANCES:

Too much earlier he would have been Samantha.

HANNAH:

No, his name was...

Very short pause.

Never mind. It's okay. I'm okay. I believe I've got what I needed. Maybe I don't need Sam, at all. Maybe I don't need anyone. But what I definitely don't need is to become like—

Loaded pause, as she looks at the women with her.

Blood Replacement

HANNAH:

You two need to figure some very deep shit out.

Short pause.

FRANCES:

All right, then! Have we pretty much cleaned up, here? Let's—

LARISSA:

(interrupting, looking out front) Wait. Is that someone coming?

FRANCES:

What?

LARISSA:

(pointing) See?

FRANCES:

Where?

LARISSA:

There.

FRANCES:

No...

LARISSA:

Give me your glasses.

FRANCES:

They're not my—

HANNAH:

(interrupting) It's... Sam.

LARISSA:

Sam? *(to Frances, taking the glasses)* How can you....

FRANCES:

I can't...

HANNAH:

I can.

FRANCES:

Really? Is it...?

Blood Replacement

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A light snow begins to fall.

LARISSA:
Snowing! It's snowing!

HANNAH:
Wow, yeah. It is!

FRANCES:
Are you sure? I mean, about...

HANNAH:
Yeah. I am.

LARISSA:
He's... sans squad? Just Sam?

HANNAH:
Yeah. Just... *(shouting)* Sam!

FRANCES:
How can you tell that's...?

HANNAH:
(shouting and waving) Sam!!

LARISSA:
(to Frances) Do you...?

FRANCES:
I don't...

HANNAH:
I do!

FRANCES:
Really?

HANNAH:
Yes! *(shouting)* Sam!!!

With new energy, Hannah moves purposefully offstage. Larissa and Frances stand alone in front of the three empty chairs and try to catch a glimpse of what Hannah sees as the snow covers their friend's tracks. Then, they look back to one another. Yeah. It's time.

End of Play