

## The Middle Place

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
Homeless Woman	A homeless woman on a bench	Ageless	F
Chelsea/ E	A young mother, envious	30's	F
Lydia	A socialite and mother	30's-40's	F
Layla / Glut	Party girl, musician	28	F
Gary	Layla's friend and hook up	28	M
Danny	Gary's unseen roommate	28	M
Sandra / G	A successful lawyer	39	F
Steve	Sandra's boss	49	M
Anne /Elle	An art professor	44	F
Nick	Anne's girlfriend	44	F
Lorraine / Essie	A retired actress turned socialite	76	F
Daughter	Lorraine's daughter	48	F
Granddaughter	Lorraine's granddaughter	16	F
Bradley	Lorraine's butler	30	M
Abigail / Dubs	A young poet	17	F
Dad	Abigails father	49	M
Cassie / P	An IG influencer & baker	45	F
Jean	Cassie's Manager	40's	M
Lilith	The first woman	Ageless	F

There can be lots of doubling if you wish. Casting works well as follows:

Woman 1: Mid 30's, Chelsea/E, Daughter

Woman 2: Early to late 20's, Layla/Glut

Woman 3: Late 30's-early 40's, Sandra/G, Lydia

Woman 4: Mid 50's, Anne/Elle

Woman 5: 70's, Lorraine/Essie

Woman 6: Teens, Abigail/Dubs, Granddaughter

Woman 7: 40's, Cassie/P, Nick, Danny

Woman 8: Any age, Homeless Woman/Lilith

Man 1: various ages, Steve, Dad, Gary, Jean, Bradley

## **THE SETTING**

### **ACT I**

Various years and locations. Ultimately P's first day in The Middle Place

### **ACT II**

Later in P's first day in The Middle Place

### **ACT III**

P's Fourth day in The Middle Place

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

There is a bit of funny punctuation and some other things that may be helpful to know when diving in.

1. Anything in **[brackets]** is the intended dialogue and is probably *not* said. But if you say it and it feels right add it in.
2. A **forward dash /** means that the next character will overlap at that time.
3. If a sentence is missing a period it means the thought continues.
4. An **ellipses ...** by itself it means there is a pause of a length discerned by the actor.
5. If something is in **(parenthesis)** it is more of a muttered aside.
6. In Act II the women often speak quickly, overlapping, finishing each others' sentences, you will find your rhythm but know it is familiar, like sisters. Even P will find that she starts to seamlessly join them.
7. There are a lot of stage directions where it says something like "*maybe she says 'well done,' or something like that*" etc. This just means that you should feel free to say it, not say it, say something entirely different, etc. There is a lot of room for improv-- grunts or yes's or no's or whatever can be added to make it feel more familiar and conversational.
8. To vanish is a fate worse than Hell.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I love you all!

ACT I

## SCENE ONE

1996. An office. Steve sits at his desk. A moment later Sandra pokes her head in, excited but trying to play it cool. We get the sense that Steve is half the helpful mentor and also half believes he's a cat in a perpetual game of cat and mouse that, for the most part, no one else is in on but he greatly enjoys. It makes every conversation with him dizzying.

SANDRA

You wanted to see me?

STEVE

Yeah, come on in.

She does.

SANDRA

Any news?

STEVE

Sit.

She does. A beat.

STEVE

We missed you this morning.

SANDRA

Oh. Okay

STEVE

Where were you?

SANDRA

I-uh, I had a doctor's appointment.

STEVE

You had a doctor's appointment?

SANDRA

Yes.

STEVE

During the quarterly partner brunch?

SANDRA

But I asked you

STEVE

What?

SANDRA

About it. The other day.

STEVE

When?

SANDRA

On...I want to say Tuesday

STEVE

No.

SANDRA

Yes! I'm sure of it, I had just gotten back from lunch with Susan and I asked you after, about missing it, you said you didn't think it'd be a big deal.

STEVE

I wouldn't say that.

SANDRA

I came to your office specifically, Connor was just leaving as I came in.

STEVE

Was I in the middle of something

SANDRA

I don't think so?

STEVE

I must've been in the middle of something.

SANDRA

No, I

STEVE

I can't hear anything when I'm in the middle of something. If you *did* ask.

She bites her tongue and nods.

STEVE

So?

SANDRA

What?

STEVE

Well are you going to apologize or at least explain

SANDRA

Oh. Uh, yeah. I, I'm sorry.

I swear I never would've missed if I thought you thought it was important--

STEVE

I wouldn't do that in the future.

SANDRA

No, of course, I don't plan to. I won't.

STEVE

(He smiles. Maybe even gives her a pat)

Good.

(Beat)

Jim was quite a hit with the other partners this morning.

(Beat)

SANDRA

What does that mean?

STEVE

It means they're interested in putting him as the lead on the 3-M case--

SANDRA

What.

STEVE

With you on the team.

SANDRA

Wait, what?

(Beat)

This, no, that's not, no. No!

STEVE

Hey, I'm on team Sandra. But it's a lot harder when you don't make yourself visible with the other leadership.

SANDRA

I, no, but that's not what I was trying--

STEVE

It looks pretty bad. I hope you can see that.

SANDRA

(Biting her tongue. Again)

Yes.

(Beat)

Did they, for sure...?

STEVE

Not yet. But Jim was very charming this morning.

SANDRA

This is a career changing case!

STEVE

Mmm.

SANDRA

But you promised--

STEVE

No...

SANDRA

Yes!



STEVE

I would never do that. I may have said the odds were very good--that I think it should be yours. But I never promised--

SANDRA

So help me get my odds back up!

STEVE

There will be others.

SANDRA

Not like--I've been working my ass off, I've done all the research for this case! ME! Not Jim!

STEVE

That you have.

SANDRA

The last four cases--

You said, you *said* "just work harder Sandra. Work so hard they can't *not* give it to you." I barely remember what my husband looks like. I haven't gotten home before 10pm in months

STEVE

We don't expect you to stay that late.

SANDRA

It's implied. If you want a big case at Schneider and Weiner you *better* give up your life

STEVE

Is that what they say?

SANDRA

And I *have*. I HAVE. I DESERVE THIS CASE.

STEVE

You do make a good argument.

It isn't just me you'll have to convince.

SANDRA

Great, who then? I'll go talk to--who? Just tell me. Travis? Carter?

STEVE

That won't look desperate at all...

SANDRA  
I am fucking desperate!

A moment as everything changes.

STEVE  
So you want me to help you?

SANDRA  
I do. Yes.

He waits for her to say

SANDRA  
Please.

STEVE  
And what makes you think I can?

SANDRA  
(Is he joking?)  
Um...it's your firm?

STEVE  
Mmm. Why don't you...have a seat.

She does. He starts to do something under his desk.

STEVE  
First, and I'm sure you know, everybody likes Jim.

SANDRA  
That doesn't make him the most qualified.

STEVE  
It rarely does. But it endears people to him, people want to give things to people they like.

SANDRA  
People like me.

STEVE

Sure. Maybe. But...well, you have one of those faces.

(Off her look)

You always look like you're about to slash someone's tires. It wouldn't hurt you to...look more agreeable.

SANDRA

Uh, ok. How, exactly, am I supposed to--

It suddenly becomes abundantly clear that he is masturbating. Sandra freezes. Beat.

STEVE

For one, it wouldn't hurt you to smile more. You have such a nice smile, why don't you use it?

(Beat. Beat)

Hmmm? Sandra?  
Sandra?

SANDRA

I--don't know.

She looks down, ashamed.

STEVE

Why don't you start there.

He increases his speed.

**40 seconds** go by while she sits, uncomfortably, the only sound is his had moving.

Finally

STEVE

And...coffee.

Yeah?

SANDRA

Coffee?

STEVE

Bring...Them...Coffee...Like...A good...Girl.

He comes. Sandra remains frozen. A silent moment while he cleans himself up.

STEVE

Yes. All that together with my blessing, I'm pretty confident you'll get this case.

Good?

SANDRA

(Finally able to move)

yes.

She gets up and heads quickly towards the door.

STEVE

Sandra?

(She turns)

You're welcome.

SANDRA

(Mumbling)

Thanks Steve.

She exits.

A few moments later she appears in the park near some benches. On one lies a homeless woman.

She sits on the other, clutches her stomach and groans. Closes her eyes till the cramps leave.

SANDRA

I had this dream about a month ago that I was being raped. But I was sort of, complicit in it. But. It's hard to explain

He, I've never seen him before, didn't know him, but he reminded me of this kid from middle school, Ruben Patterson, he was this big and dark and greasy with sausage fingers boy and the other kids called him sausage fingers behind his back and I hated it. I hate bullies, fucking... He was slow, Ruben, or maybe he wasn't. Maybe it was fear. Maybe he was smart all along. But so this guy in the dream was like a grown up version of him and *he* was smart, conniving, and he wanted to fuck me and he had something, like he knew a thing about me or he was going to hurt someone I loved...so he used that. To persuade me... He pulled out these condoms he said he'd made himself, they looked like garbage bags, and had me lie on this brown corduroy couch that was shiny and stiff from accumulated sweat and oil.

I was dripping wet. And ashamed too and disgusted but I still wanted him to reach down and feel how wet I was and be impressed. To admire what a freak I was. He wrapped his fat sausage dick up in one of those bags and stuffed it in me and his dick was in the bag but I felt like the trash and he didn't even move. So I started working under him, grinding into him, picking up the pace like I was into it and sucking on his lip and moaning--so he'd come faster and I could get out from under his all hot and sweaty body. But then it got confusing if I was pretending anymore.

When he was done he pulled this heavy bag of semen out of me, it looked like a bag of goldfish water. And I knew all of a sudden that I'd let him do it again.

When I woke up that morning I told my husband about it, that dream. Tried to explain it but I couldn't find the right words or way or... He had a sort of half smile while half listening and he didn't understand and I couldn't make him  
And I felt worse.

(Long beat)

You got a better way then go ahead and tell me.  
But I'm getting mine.

She stands and grabs her bag. When she turns we see her skirt is bloody. She notices blood on the bench. She digs in her bag, grabs a tissue and wipes it up. Throws the tissue away. Takes off her jacket and ties it around her waist. Gives the audience a look. Leaves.

## SCENE TWO

2011. ANNE and NIC's kitchen. Anne, dressed in running clothes, is drinking coffee, grading papers, while Nat King Cole's "The Nat King Cole Story Volume I" record plays (yes, a record.) A to-go mug of coffee sits ready on the counter. Nic, her long-term girlfriend enters in a rush, phone glued to palm and nose glued to phone. She wears trendy business casual and looks frantically around.

NIC

Have you seen my headphones?

ANNE

I put them in your bag.

NIC

Oh. Thanks. You're up early.

ANNE

The thought of reading my students' critiques of 19th century plastic arts propelled me from slumber.

NIC

(Totally distracted)

Really

ANNE

Your coffee's ready.

NIC

Thanks.

She grabs the coffee, goes to give Anne a goodbye kiss.

ANNE

You got a sec?

NIC

Not really.

ANNE

5 minutes? C'mon, you don't want to put someone on your team into cardiac arrest by being *on time*. That would waste hours of productivity.

NIC

(Sighs)

Whats up?

ANNE

I wanted to, just, you know, finish our conversation? From last night?

NIC

Ah.

ANNE

Have you thought about--

NIC

Does this really need to happen / now?

ANNE

Now. Yes.

NIC

I've got kind of a lot on my plate--

ANNE

You always

NIC

Makes it kind of hard to

ANNE

Fine.

NIC

What?

ANNE

No, go.

NIC

C'mon, you can't just spring this--

ANNE

Nope, not sprung. We've been talking about it for...for a while so--

NIC

Sure, but the needing an answer, do you really need, right before, I mean I'm a little-- also, I was thinking, and have you even considered how this could affect our chances to adopt?

ANNE

That's years away.

NIC

Maybe he'd still be living with us.

ANNE

And maybe if you ever ask me to marry you we'll kick him out.

(Beat)

NIC

Nice.

ANNE

What?

NIC

No, I love that, is all. Wasn't your selling point that a thruple was about commitment? You want him to commit to us instead of

ANNE

Yeah

NIC

Ok, so we'll just say "hey Henry, we really want you in this relationship but it has a 5 year time cap--"

ANNE

Three. Three years. We have 10 years in three years so--

NIC

I didn't say *on* the 10 year anniversary--

ANNE

You said "I will propose after 10 years."

NIC

Exactly. *After.*



ANNE

Oh my God.

NIC

I'm not, this isn't some sort of, are we not committed?

ANNE

Yes.

NIC

So why are we nit-picking? 10 years? 12 years?

ANNE

Eight years?

NIC

No. That's, okay, you're twisting, we're talking about Henry, right? And this new-age thruple crap you read on HuffPo

ANNE

Goop.

NIC

Even better. To what? To fix a relationship that I thought was actually pretty good.

ANNE

It is. It is good. It's the best relationship I've ever had, that's why I want to...preserve it.

NIC

Do you love him?

ANNE

I love you. I love us.

NIC

Me too.

(Beat)

ANNE

He's already...around. A lot. He fits. And I think he helps with some of the pressure. That we get. Feel.

NIC

Ok.

ANNE

He's not some replacement. For either of us. I hope. He's--come-on, he's a guy. I don't think either of us is trying to settle down with a guy. Do you?

NIC

No.

ANNE

Right. He's simply...a companion. I don't want to rely on you for everything. And vice versa. He can fill in the stuff we can't.

NIC

Like our vaginas?

ANNE

Ha! That's...and. I don't know.

NIC

Sure, the...nevermind.

Beat. Beat.

NIC

Fine.

ANNE

Fine?

NIC

Ask him I guess. Let's see.

Anne hugs her.

NIC

But just as a trial.

ANNE

It'll be like dating. And if we realize maybe we're not so fond of him as we thought

She makes a throat cutting motion

NIC

(Nodding solemnly)

We'll kill him.

Anne enjoys this. Nic heads for the door.

ANNE

Here, I'll walk out with you.

They start to leave, Nic's nose back in her phone

ANNE

Don't forget your coffee.

NIC

Right.

She grabs it. They exit. The music fades away and Anne puts in her earbuds, runs off-stage. She reappears in a moment out of breath, sees the empty park bench next to the homeless woman and goes to it. She starts doing various exercises- tricep dips, bench push-ups, Bulgarian lunges-while talking to the audience. She is oblivious to the homeless woman.

ANNE

These days it's like, we expect our partner to fill every need, but they can't. We all need to find other ways, other people to take the edge off. I'm embarrassed of getting my hopes up. Of her being too tired to have sex with me or even connect with something other than a screen or, or

There are no dates, no fun surprises, no well-thought out gifts on my birthday or Christmas.

You know the only trips we've ever been on together are business trips? In seven years-- "you can stay here." She loves to remind me, or maybe she hates it but she says it anyways. Fuck, sure, I should be grateful but I guess I'm just not anymore, ok? I'm not.

I'm not--I believe in monogamy, it's not like I planned this. At fifteen I wasn't--I wanted something like my parents. A knight-esse in shining armor and that whole deal.

I left my last girlfriend for Nic cause I thought and I was, mesmerized I suppose you could say. Her charisma. It's funny the things you grow to resent.

Well fuck it. At this point. I don't really see a better--you got a better way then go ahead and tell me. I don't. I tried every--I would make up new games for us to play, I'd plot adventures--I love adventures. I bought every piece of lingerie I thought would pique her interest and  
Nothing.

So the whole threesome thing, it wasn't to change, well it was supposed to help add some pizzazz. I hated I *hated* being that stereotype, that couple that used to do it everywhere and then? After a few years? We were having sex maybe once a month. More like every six weeks

And that's, the thing is I didn't suggest it because I actually wanted to do it. I was hoping she'd recoil. Get mad at me and erupt in a shower of passion and show up and fight and for once in her goddam life put some work into something that, something human.

We only ever did it with Henry, our bartender. We didn't go on a rampage picking up coked out 30-somethings, though maybe we should've. And it was, he's a trip, Henry. The night we finally got drunk enough to ask him, we were so nervous, he answered by--he nodded solemnly as he pulled out these condoms he said he'd made himself

(She laughs at this)

And in the mornings after Nic would leave Henry and I would sit and sip coffee and talk

(Good beat)

We're Nic and Anne. We're amazing together, I'm just trying to make it stronger. Taking initiative.

And she really hasn't given me a better option so I don't want to be labeled the bad guy just because I'm getting mine.

And this will, well, now maybe it won't still feel like cheating when I go to his place.

She checks her phone. Replaces her ear buds and jogs off.

### SCENE THREE

2008. Chelsea walks in Central Park. She wears a "St. Jude's Give Thanks Walk" t-shirt and carries flyers to hand out to people passing. After a moment Lydia, in a matching t-shirt and looking amaze, comes up behind her.

LYDIA

Another great turn out this year!

CHELSEA

Oh tha--oh. Lydia. Hi! Thanks.

LYDIA

So good to see you!

CHELSEA

Yeah! You too!

They hug.

CHELSEA

Wow, I wasn't, I thought I saw on Facebook that you were in, was it Florida?

LYDIA

Key Biscayne. We were, we came back early, couldn't miss *this!*

CHELSEA

Ha! No, of course. Wow, you look, you're looking great.

LYDIA

Oh God, it isn't me, trust me. I mean thank you but no, look

(she leans in and bats her eyelashes)

They're not mine. They're called lash extensions, they actually glue them on, its this new thing and I swear by them. And Fernando my hairdresser. He costs as much as a boob-job but he's worth it. I do nothing. Nothing!

CHELSEA

Wow.

LYDIA

So how've you been? Has it been, what, 6 months?

CHELSEA

Eight, I think, the--

LYDIA

The Gala?

CHELSEA

Right.

LYDIA

Lily was  
How old is she now?

CHELSEA

She turns 11 next month.

LYDIA

That's, yes.  
How is she?

CHELSEA

About the same I suppose. They've just upped her dose of Deflazacort and we're hoping that'll help. With the spasms. She's still--you know. Different.

LYDIA

Yes. Kevin tried Deflazacort, it didn't suit him though.

CHELSEA

No?

LYDIA

No. He was hungry but nauseous all the time. Though hopefully, for Lilly

CHELSEA

Yeah.

They stand awkwardly a moment.

CHELSEA

Well, I guess

LYDIA

(Overlapping)

It was two years last month.

CHELSEA

Oh.

LYDIA

I thought it would be easier by now

CHELSEA

I'm sorry.

LYDIA

No, no. I am, I, I don't know why I just

(she makes a word vomit gesture)

I feel like a broken record

CHELSEA

No

LYDIA

Rob, thank God for him, he

Well, we've finally, look, we haven't been on a trip, like a real trip since before Kevin got sick. So Rob and I finally decide alright, this winter he and I are going to Portugal. I love-- have you been? I adore Portugal.

CHELSEA

I've never been out of the country.

LYDIA

You *have* to go! It's so romantic and Portuguese is the most gorgeous language you can imagine, you would love it. Love it! So he, he didn't even ask me, he just bought the tickets. Him and me.

It's just so different now.

CHELSEA

I'm, I know sorry isn't enough

LYDIA

No, no. It's really for the best, you know. He was in so much pain by the end I just... I just know, well, you understand.

CHELSEA

I haven't had to

LYDIA

No but, just as a mother. With all of this. You *get* it. You understand.

Beat.

CHELSEA

How is Ron doing? With it all?

LYDIA

He's good. He's doing, he's very vulnerable with it all. Open. I credit his new therapist but no, he's always been good with communicating really so. And work is busy busy and yet he still finds time to make for us. The whole trip was his idea.

CHELSEA

Right.

LYDIA

A way to "reconnect" after all of this.

CHELSEA

That's so nice.

LYDIA

Yeah. And he felt *I* needed some time away. To recharge. He wasn't even thinking of *himself*

CHELSEA

Wow.

LYDIA

I know. It's so, I would be lost without him.

CHELSEA

And he without you I bet.

Lydia gives her a grateful smile.

CHELSEA

I didn't--is he here?

LYDIA

No, no. He couldn't get away, unfortunately. Is Toby?

CHELSEA

Yeah, he's with Lily and some of the other parents. They're doing a shorter route. I just went ahead to pass out these flyers.

LYDIA

You two! You are just models of service!

CHELSEA

Oh. Ha! Thanks.



LYDIA

I mean it! I bet your community just adores you.

CHELSEA

Well, most of our community is actually other parents, we don't have a very strong base in Michigan, unfortunately. Or fortunately, I guess. Depends how you look at it.

LYDIA

Sure. At least you have each other.

CHELSEA

For sure. Hey, I'm sorry to chat and run, but I really need to pass these out--get off the beaten path a little. But it was so nice to see you--

LYDIA

So nice! Where're you staying? Maybe we could take you guys out for dinner? For all that you've done--

CHELSEA

Oh no, that's--

LYDIA

No really, I insist!

CHELSEA

But Lily--

LYDIA

Lily's who we want to --oh no, you didn't think we were trying to see you two?

Lydia laughs and the ice finally cracks a bit. Lydia pulls out her phone.

LYDIA

Are you free tonight--oh wait, no, sorry, how about...Sunday? Brunch?

CHELSEA

Um, yeah, I think so?

LYDIA

Fabulous, where are you staying?

CHELSEA

Do you know the Ryans?

LYDIA  
Janelle's parents?

CHELSEA  
Yes, with them.

LYDIA  
Where is that?

CHELSEA  
In Brooklyn somewhere...

LYDIA  
I can't--how have you never stayed with us before?

CHELSEA  
Oh, I don't--

LYDIA  
You *must* stay with us next year.

CHELSEA  
Oh, do you think you'll be--will you still want to, um

LYDIA  
In my small way I want, and I hope, I hope that our experience is helpful to other parents.  
So yes, even without him, we plan to, we'll be here.

I'll text you so we can, I'll find a great place, I know some great spots in Brooklyn, and we'll meet on Sunday.

CHELSEA  
That's, thank you. That's so kind.

LYDIA  
My pleasure, please, it's the least we can do!

CHELSEA  
Alright, I guess, see you Sunday.

LYDIA  
Perfect, see you then.

They hug and do that weird thing where they walk sort of in the same direction but with some distance between them off-stage.

After a moment, Chelsea appears near the bench. Goes over to it and starts riffling through her bag and speaks to the audience. Or maybe the homeless woman.

CHELSEA

(Mocking)

You *must* go to Portugal you will love, love, love it! I wish scalping was still a thing.

(Sighing)

And I'm surprised that Lily has a violent streak. She tried to throw a hammer at me the other day. She's getting a lot stronger--before when she would kick the wall it would dent but now she's making actual holes.

I wonder if she's even in there anymore or if she's been replaced by this zombie thing. Though maybe all the kicking and biting is really her, deep in there, fighting to get out.

(Finds what she is looking for, pulls out a pack of cigarettes)

Aha!

(Disengages a cigarette from the pack)

I don't smoke, just when I have a lot of stress I get a pack, the organic kind, and I smoke 3 a day. That's it.

They take the edge off. They do. Which I always thought was funny because isn't nicotine a stimulant? But it works.

Toby finds his relief is this video game, League of Legends. Sounds gay, right? As in stupid, not homoerotic. I'm not a homophobe. Though he sits talking to these guys all night so I don't know. But yeah, sometimes he's up all night just playing and talking to these guys and why would that be an issue? There's no issue! Why would disappearing all night and leaving me to look after Lily bother me?

I'll sit outside his game room sometimes, it's in the basement and I'll pretend to be doing laundry, and I listen to him, chatting in this foreign code it seems like with his buddies, having a ball. He says stuff about me and Lily sometimes too. And he'll laugh at some jokes they say sometimes and I pretend it's me. That he's talking to.

(Quiet a moment)

I mean, ok, it's not, like, tragic. We talk still, of course we do. Just not about the fun stuff, not jokes and stuff. It always seems to be about "how are we going to pay for this new medication Lily needs" or "the school said they can't take her anymore" or "who knew that the side effect of this medication would be that she forgets her own name?" Yep, at one point my daughter couldn't remember her own name. So sorry Lydia if I don't want to talk about your dead fucking kid pardon my French but does she really have it worse? She's even from here. They *live* in Manhattan. We drive from Michigan every year for this walk. And like, why though? You know? Why raise the money we don't have and make the drive we don't want to and fight so hard to find something interesting to talk about and try to ignore how embarrassing it is for everybody when she won't stop screaming in the gas station and everyone pretends its ok but it's not ok and *Nothing Gets Better*. My kid is gone, that is *not* my kid. Even though and I know I should be grateful but I guess I'm just not anymore, ok? I'm not.

I'm exhausted.

Maybe this sounds horrible but you know those parents, the ones on the news, I mean I would never hurt my kid but in a way I get it, and I'm sorry but I think that maybe we don't know the whole story, maybe they were just trying to help.

Her cigarette is done and she puts it out and looks for a trash-can, sees it next to the bench the homeless woman is on. She drops it in and goes to drop the pack but then thinks better of it, places it like an offering next to the homeless woman. And a book of matches. Walks off.

#### SCENE FOUR

2019. CASSIE and JEAN sit in Jean's office. Cassie has a bandage covering her nose and two black eyes.

JEAN

It's just, well I wasn't expecting--

CASSIE

Surprise!

JEAN

Wow. I mean, well I certainly didn't think--I wouldn't have *told* you to do that.

CASSIE

You don't approve?

JEAN

What, no, it's not, I don't dislike it. Nor do I like it. I am neutral. It is your body and I am a completely neutral party in terms of your appearance and what you do with it.

CASSIE

Oh, yeah. No, I know.

JEAN

So I just wouldn't have told you to either get or to not get a nose job.

CASSIE

Okay...

JEAN

And of course, I hope anyway, that you know that. And that you wouldn't think that I would ever tell you

CASSIE

No, no--

JEAN

My clients, for the record, including yourself, I think you are perfect. All of you. Just the way you are.

CASSIE

That's, nice. Really.

JEAN

Good. I just don't want to give the wrong impression--

CASSIE

You don't.

JEAN

Good.

Beat. He smiles at her.

She smiles back.

He keeps smiling.

And so does she.

Until

JEAN

So, your book tour.

CASSIE

(Beaming)

Yes! My book tour!

JEAN

We're looking good, even these fuckers who are always a thorn in my dick--pardon the expression--in Detroit are being cool.

CASSIE

Awesome!

JEAN

But unfortunately, and I know you were really, you wanted Boston. I do know that. But unfortunately we're gonna have to skip it.

CASSIE

Wait, what? Why?

JEAN

They want a demo.

Beat.

JEAN

I told them you can't--

CASSIE

Right, I can't.

JEAN

And I told them that. But they're saying, you know, all the other chefs do demos--

CASSIE

I'm a baker.

JEAN

Yes, well, a tit's a tit, right? Pardon the expression, but, I mean you know what I mean.

CASSIE  
Right, so what'd you say?

JEAN  
I said I'd talk to you

CASSIE  
Jean

JEAN  
Yeah, no, I know, but they're insisting

CASSIE  
So let's find another venue for Boston.

JEAN  
I can try--

CASSIE  
Great!

JEAN  
but on such short notice--and, well, also Cass--do you ever go by Cass?

CASSIE  
(not really)

JEAN  
--we have a relationship with these people. A good one. They're the biggest--you *want* to do a signing here, ok? This is *the spot* for premiering, they're great. You know? Draw a big crowd. They know how to market from tween to housewife. Really grab em by the pussy!

He waits for the joke to land expectantly. It doesn't.

JEAN  
It was a joke

CASSIE  
The pussy part--

JEAN  
Yes, I would never say that

CASSIE

--or the housewives?

JEAN

Housewives, women. You know what I mean. It's the place to be.

CASSIE

Not if they need a demo.

Beat.

JEAN

Have you considered trying to do one--

CASSIE

Jean

JEAN

I am hearing you, I am. I am not *not* listening or doing some sort of patriarchal mansplaining thing--

CASSIE

I didn't think you were.

JEAN

Good. Cause I respect you, you know that?

CASSIE

Sure?

JEAN

You sound unsure. Are you unsure?

CASSIE

What? No, I'm just like, a little confused

JEAN

Well mop up that confusion girlie, my loyalty lies with you

CASSIE

Okay



JEAN

And in your very capable hands. I'm not one of those guys who thinks you need a man's hands on the wheel. I think lady hands drive just fine. I voted for Hillary.

CASSIE

Uh  
awesome

JEAN

But back to  
The demo!  
I just wanted to double check if maybe you'd considered, you know, trying again?

CASSIE

Jean, listen

JEAN

I am all ears

CASSIE

Great.

JEAN

You can be fully candid

CASSIE

Cool, I

JEAN

And don't hold back, I want you to feel like you can be vulnerable

CASSIE

Yeah, ok

JEAN

I know, this is new, this relationship

CASSIE

Sure

JEAN

But you are safe here and your needs will be heard

CASSIE

Ok, great. I just don't think

Do you trust me?

JEAN

Trust you.

CASSIE

Yes. Do you?

JEAN

Trust you?

CASSIE

Trust me.

JEAN

Sure. Yeah.

CASSIE

If you fell, do you think I would try to catch you?

JEAN

I guess?

CASSIE

Good, that's good, you're not totally sure yet because I haven't *proven* myself yet. But all I ask, Cass, all I ask, is let me earn your trust.

JEAN

Okay...

CASSIE

Will you do that?

JEAN

I, yeah. Sure.

CASSIE

Great!

JEAN.

So, you were saying

CASSIE

Yes, about why I can't do a demo

JEAN

K but there, real quick, let me cut you off real quick, just cause, can't, can't we don't like.

CASSIE

We don't?

JEAN

No! Can't is the enemy of CAN! Yes we CAN! Say it with me.

CASSIE

I get it

JEAN

*Say. It. With. Me!*

CASSIE

Uhhh

JEAN

Yes we can!  
Come on!

JEAN

YES WE CAN!

CASSIE  
yes we can.

JEAN

Good.  
So.  
When was the last time?

CASSIE

What?

JEAN

That you did one.

CASSIE

Yeah so that's what I'm trying to tell you

JEAN

Was it recent or...?

CASSIE

JEAN

JEAN  
Yes?

CASSIE  
I am trying to explain

JEAN  
Yes, sorry. Go on.

CASSIE  
Thanks.

A moment where she waits for him to interject. He doesn't.

CASSIE  
So

JEAN  
Sorry for cutting you off before

CASSIE  
Ok, should I maybe email you or

She makes a gesture like "should she go?"

JEAN  
What? Why?

CASSIE  
I'm just not sure if you want me to tell you right now or like...?

JEAN  
Oh, no. Nonono! Please!

He makes a zip the lips gesture. She waits a second, and once she's convinced he really means it she starts.

CASSIE  
Ok, the last time. The last time I tried to speak in public my whole body froze. It would be, like, like a disservice. To you, to them. I'm sorry, ok, I am. But I can't. Ok? I wish I could, I wish I had the like, the flair and and charisma of Martha Stewart or whatever but I don't.

You know, even Meryl Streep gets panic attacks when she goes onstage? That's why she only does movies now.

He nods slowly, taking this in for a moment. Then

JEAN

So does that mean you are or are not willing to give it a shot exactly?

A moment. Then

CASSIE

Well, all in all great news. Boston is important. Please.

JEAN

Yes!

CASSIE

Cool. Thank you.

If it's ok I'm going to go for a walk now.

JEAN

Of course. You are a free person, you can do what you want with your body and if you wish to walk it then by all means walk it!

He jumps up and holds his arms out for a hug. They do so awkwardly as Jean makes sure their bodies don't touch.

JEAN

Have you been losing weight? Ohmygodishouldn'thavesaidthat!

CASSIE

It's fine, it's fine, it's the stress.

JEAN

Great!

CASSIE

What.

JEAN

No, I mean, also not great, or fine. You know what I mean. You look and looked and will always look amazing so you do you girl!

CASSIE

Right.

JEAN

Don't go wasting away now!

CASSIE

Yeah. K. Bye

JEAN

Bye now!

(Calling after her as she exits)

So call me later with a yes or a no!

Cassie leaves the office.

Reappears by the bench, looks around and settles on it. She gingerly pulls a decorated cookie out of her bag and begins to pose with it, taking selfies. She tries various positions, showing cleavage, a pout, making sure not to show her bandages.

After taking a few she looks through them, and then, utterly dissatisfied, she throws the cookie back into her bag, frustrated and starting to cry.

CASSIE

Ugh, I'm not supposed to sweat or cry--I mean, I hate crying, anyway-- until my nose heals. Or sniffle or submerge it underwater

I liked it, my nose, I mean, I didn't like have a problem with it. It got me this far, but to be competitive in this field you have to be willing to make sacrifices. To be the best. I tried to avoid it, trust you me. I was working my ass off, coming home after my shifts at the restaurant to decorate, just the most gorgeous stuff. But it didn't matter if I made a whole cookie garden, no one except maybe my mom gave a flying fuck until tits got involved.

I wish she could see me. Or not, as in, she was a harsh critic my mom, and trust you me she had plenty of her own doo doo to work on but I bet she'd be here now, telling me that I was abusing my body or something. Nope, don't miss that part. But I do miss her.

Honestly, I miss my family, they don't tell you that that's the first thing you gotta kiss goodbye. I haven't talked to my sister except through an IG comment in, what? Almost a year?

I just

I didn't expect--it's not like I planned this! It's like this dream come true that I didn't even know I had, wouldn't have dared to have honestly. A Cinderella story and I'm the star--that doesn't happen to girls like me.

The idea for @sweetsugarcrave - that's my IG if you wanna check it out, no pressure or anything- honestly just came to me one day at work while these guys were drooling over some models eating cake and I was like, hell, why not me? I can look hot with the right clothes and make-up and and honestly it was great. I was having a ball.

And here we are.

It wasn't like, easy though. I hustled. I made all these little videos and edited and designed and worked out on top of being the pastry chef at one of the best restaurants in the city and revealed and networked and now Jean. Wants me. To do. A DEMO?

I don't do demos Jean, I DO NOT.

The problem with him, with this whole lot, they all think I need their eyes to see me to exist when the fact is that without the me's of the world, the actual talent, he'd be some middling wannabe investor at some financial start-up being sent to HR every other day because he keeps trying to guess if some woman has had kids yet or for asking them if they really drink cranberry juice during their periods.

Beat as she thinks.

Ugh, I don't know. It actually has been a long time since I tried to do a demo.

She walks off.

## SCENE FIVE

2014. Loraine, her daughter and granddaughter sit at the dining room table having finished their meal. Throughout the scene Bradley the butler comes in and out, cleaning things up.

They don't seem to notice him.

Loraine downs the last of her rosé, which Bradley seamlessly refills, and then lights a joint.

DAUGHTER

Mother!

She motions towards the granddaughter who is absorbed in texting.

GRANDDAUGHTER

(Not looking up)

I know what pot is mom.

DAUGHTER

Do you smoke it?!

GRANDDAUGHTER

What? I'm not an idiot. No offense grandma

LORAINÉ

It is not possible to offend me

GRANDDAUGHTER

They do random testing

LORAINÉ

I started smoking grass around your age

DAUGHTER

Nice mother

LORAINÉ

Lighten up, they're doing much worse--if I recall correctly you were on your first abortion at her age

DAUGHTER

Oh my God

LORAINÉ

(to Daughter)

Or was it the second?

DAUGHTER

Let's change the subject please

LORAINÉ

(to Granddaughter)

Are you still a virgin?

DAUGHTER

Seriously?

LORAINÉ

Well?

DAUGHTER

I don't want to hear this



Daughter covers her ears.

LORAINÉ

You should be happy that she's attractive enough to get a man

DAUGHTER

Lalalalalalala

GRANDDAUGHTER

(Over this)

Get a man?

LORAINÉ

I know I know, you're off to school to make your own--where are you intending on going again?

GRANDDAUGHTER

Barnard.

LORAINÉ

(Knowingly)

Ooooooh. Do you, do they still say eat box?

DAUGHTER

Mother Jesus Christ.

GRANDDAUGHTER

(Overlapping)

Wait what?

LORAINÉ

It's a term for, I don't want to be crass but when a woman licks

GRANDDAUGHTER

I know what it means, grandma.

LORAINÉ

I don't mind. At your age I was boy crazy is all, but if you're into women there's nothing wrong

GRANDDAUGHTER

I'm not into women

LORAINÉ

It's a horny time

DAUGHTER

It's--ugh, it's fine if you do--are--honey

LORAINÉ

That's what I said

GRANDDAUGHTER

No, I--

LORAINÉ

(to Daughter)

I bet you've been wondering for months

DAUGHTER

No! No I have not

LORAINÉ

(Sarcastically, maybe she even throws in a  
wink)

Oh, okay.

GRANDDAUGHTER

(to Daughter)

Wait, you thought I was gay?

DAUGHTER

I didn't think nor did I care one way or the other

LORAINÉ

She did!

DAUGHTER

Did not!

LORAINÉ

Did so!

DAUGHTER

Did not!

GRANDDAUGHTER

Why didn't you just ask?

LORAIN

Because heaven forbid anyone talk about anything, really

DAUGHTER

No, because, no! I truly didn't care, that's why.

LORAIN

Bradly's gay.

DAUGHTER

Oh he is not

LORAIN

Of course he is, no straight man looks that good.

Loraine takes a big hit, coughs, drinks.

DAUGHTER

You are maddening!

Lorain enjoys this a moment. Bradly comes in to do something. They all watch him with a newfound curiosity.

He leaves. Then

LORAIN

(To Granddaughter)

Want some advice?

GRANDDAUGHTER

Me?

LORAIN

Yeah.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Okay...

Always wear a bra.

LORAINÉ

She gives her a knowing nod like she just dropped the wisdom of all wisdom. Granddaughter nods skeptically. Daughter has heard this all before and reacts accordingly.

GRANDDAUGHTER

K...?

LORAINÉ

Best advice I ever got. Know where that came from?

Granddaughter shakes her head.

LORAINÉ & DAUGHTER

Howard Hughes.

LORAINÉ

Hey!

GRANDDAUGHTER

Who?

LORAINÉ

No. No! You don't know / Howard Hughes

GRANDDAUGHTER

No?

DAUGHTER

They did that movie, with Leo, about him

GRANDDAUGHTER

Titanic?

DAUGHTER

The Avatar

LORAINÉ

The AVIATOR!

She is in genuine disbelief but Granddaughter gives her a "I still have no idea who the fuck you are talking about" gesture.

LORAINÉ

As the pilot!

DAUGHTER

I thought that was Catch Me If You Can?

LORAINÉ

That was some other silly--they're just not what they were. Films. We used to do musicals, though Leo isn't too bad to rest your eyes on,

(to granddaughter)

Not that you would care

But Howard now, he, HE was incredible. A genius. He and your grandfather, that's how I met him, your grandfather, they were pals and I was working on one of Howard's movies

GRANDDAUGHTER

You were an actress? I never knew

LORAINÉ

I most certainly was!

DAUGHTER

A good one, too.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Did grandpa make you give it up? To have kids?

LORAINÉ

(Laughing)

Not exactly, no.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Then why

LORAINÉ

Have you ever tried to be an actress?

GRANDDAUGHTER

No.

LORAINÉ

It's a lot of work.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Did you love it?

LORAINÉ

Oh sure.

GRANDDAUGHTER

I think if you love something it's never too much work.

LORAINÉ

That's because you've never really had to work.

Beat. Was that an insult or...?

DAUGHTER

She couldn't shave her legs.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Huh?

DAUGHTER

When filming

LORAINÉ

That's right

DAUGHTER

He wouldn't let her shave

GRANDDAUGHTER

I thought they didn't shave back then?

LORAINÉ

No we did, but Howard hated it, when we'd shave.

GRANDDAUGHTER

He was a lesbian.

A second. Then Loraine laughs uproariously and a bit too much. Daughter and Granddaughter exchange a glance maybe. After she calms down

LORAINÉ

How is it that some people touch our lives for the briefest moments and yet make such a lasting impact, whereas, can you even remember your teachers from grade-school? Gone. All gone.

GRANDDAUGHTER

That's morbid.

LORAINÉ

Oh settle down I just mean their memory. They're probably still alive and well, washing chalk out of their clothes--do you remember any of them?

GRANDDAUGHTER

Of course

LORAINÉ

You don't count I meant your mother.

DAUGHTER

Well sure--

LORAINÉ

Tell me who!

Daughter thinks. Can't come up with anyone.

LORAINÉ

Mhmm. Who knows who they are. Who they ever really were. Just gone.

A moment while Lorraine is lost in thought. Then

LORAINÉ

They *were* though. They had it.

DAUGHTER

What's that?

LORAINÉ

Purpose.

(to Granddaughter)

Do me a favor?

GRANDDAUGHTER

Hmm?

LORAINÉ

Don't turn out like us. Get out of this nasty city. Go make a simple life for yourself. Go have the balls to, to be something. Anything. A cashier or a nurse or a goddam teacher just

Exist. Just *be* something different than we are

DAUGHTER

Good thing I don't take offense easily

LORAINÉ

(Erupting suddenly)

Give me a break, you've never been offended in your life. You don't have the courage

DAUGHTER

(Rising to the challenge)

Oh that's really something coming from you

LORAINÉ

At least I can speak my mind!

DAUGHTER?

Really? Ha! When? To whom?

LORAINÉ

Not like when Jeff was leaving you

DAUGHTER

Oh don't you

LORAINÉ

for that sex doll

DAUGHTER

How dare you? How

LORAINÉ

because you probably just laid there like a fucking fish

DAUGHTER

And who taught me that you old nasty bitter witch?! Who sold herself?

LORAINÉ

I did no such--

DAUGHTER

Maybe if I'd had an example other than a doormat



LORAINÉ

At some point you're going to have take responsibility for your inadequacies.

A standoff

Then Bradly enters to do something useful.

DAUGHTER

(to Granddaughter)

You ready?

GRANDDAUGHTER

Sure.

LORAINÉ

What, no, don't

DAUGHTER

Time to run.

LORAINÉ

Don't leave just because  
We haven't had dessert

DAUGHTER

No, no, we need to, swim practice.

LORAINÉ

Ah.

DAUGHTER

Thank you for lunch mother.

LORAINÉ

It was lovely to have you.

GRANDDAUGHTER

Yes, thank you grandma.

LORAINÉ

Maybe, what if next week we could, what's that one you like? Nobu, or, whatever you like? My treat.

DAUGHTER

Oh, I don't think so. We have, we're just so busy, it was hard enough today, I'm afraid we just couldn't get away.  
Soon though.

LORAINÉ

Of course.

They are at the door now.

DAUGHTER

And please don't go gallivanting around by yourself, take Bradley with you.

LORAINÉ

He's occupied

DAUGHTER

You're going to get arrested.

LORAINÉ

They don't arrest old ladies.

DAUGHTER

They might start.  
Goodbye mother.

LORAINÉ

Goodbye.

Maybe Granddaughter gives her a quick goodbye hug.  
They leave.

Lorraine goes to the window, looks out.

Bradley exits with a tray of glasses and such.

She decides to go out. She grabs a jacket and quietly leaves.

She reappears by the bench in the park. Sits. Pulls a cigarette case from her purse and from it a perfectly rolled joint any pothead would envy. Smokes and watches people pass.

## LORAINÉ

I pity my granddaughter. She has a loud truth coming.

That's not it though, it's actually alluring and cozy, an insidious truth that you knew was there all along but hits you hard in the gut when you try to step out of line.

When you're just a normal woman, most of us are just normal women. It's hard. We get married and live next to a man and that's no easy thing--grow his babies and then prepare them for a world that only gets harder if you stop to think about it. Try it, take it in. Do you ever really think about it? No, you know why? Cause when you do nothing gets accomplished except for you get a headache

or anxiety

or depression

trying to make it make sense. I think life is better off spent...living. Not thinking forever.

Living

...

Women's lib was big when I was young. I was just married when they did that protest at the pageant. With the freedom can? They threw all kinds of things, my friend Marianne was there, she told me, and she threw in my favorite lipstick--I could've killed her when she told me, Revlon had stopped making that shade. It was all she had with and she wanted...to contribute. And she didn't have any of the other types of things, the other things she said went in, shoes and mops. And bras of course. Into the can, into the freedom can! What a waste of silk and suede--*for the cause*. Did anything get done? accomplished?

Trust me, no. I've seen it. Nothing really changes, for worse or nothing gets better.

And when our sister, fed up finally, released herself and torched her lacy shackle, did she at least feel as if she'd made a difference?

(She stops to think about this for a moment)

Honestly, I never, I don't know. I don't honestly know.

She reaches back and undoes her bra, awkwardly working it out from under her clothes without flashing anyone in that clever way women do.

After some struggle she gets it off.

Lights it. Maybe it takes a few times. Finally it catches and she drops it, letting it burn up. Once it's out she looks around a bit. Then addresses the audience again.

As I suspected. The wage gap is still alive and well.

She toes the remnants. Leaves.

**SCENE SIX**

2016. An empty apartment with party residue - bottles, beer cans, pizza, a full ashtray. After a moment Layla stumbles in from the bedroom, carrying her stuff, including her guitar. She drops it on a chair.

LAYLA

Whoa.

(Calling off)

Your place is wrecked.

A phone buzzes-a text. She looks around and finds it, it isn't hers, but she reads the text anyway. Gets a look on her face.

Noise from offstage and she drops the phone and moves away from it quickly

GARY

What're you doing?

LAYLA

Cleaning up, dummy.

She grabs a beer can. She starts to fake dribble. He sees her and goes to play defense. She slips past him.

LAYLA

You gonna gimme some D or what?

GARY

I thought I already did?

LAYLA

C'mon asshole!

He tries to block her and they shuffle around some more. She shoots. Beer flies out of the can, spraying everything in its path except the trash can, which it misses.

Ewww! Again!

LAYLA

She runs across the couch, grabs another beer can from the floor.

GARY

Shh, you're gonna wake up Danny.

DANNY (O.S.)

I'm already up.

LAYLA

He's already up. This one's full.  
Ready, I'm gonna shoot it--

GARY

Wait--

LAYLA

Three, two...

GARY

No no no--

He covers himself to avoid be covered in beer, but she tilts the can back and gulps it down.

GARY

Classy.

LAYLA

Damn fucking right. Woof, I'm like, still drunk.

GARY

That outta help.

LAYLA

Beer? Beer is a beverage. But that--

(She grabs a 1/2 full bottle of Jack off the counter)

outta help.

A buzzing is heard--Gary looks over and finds his phone where Layla dropped it

GARY  
There you are...

He reads the texts, gets a look on his face. Layla watches him like a hawk.

LAYLA  
Bad news?

GARY  
Huh? No, I'm, look, I gotta--are you, can you walk home ok?

LAYLA  
I can walk just fine. It's wether or not I'll be tackled and ravaged by the horny hobos lurking in wait in the dark alleys --can I just sleep here?

GARY  
It's disrespectful to Danny.

DANNY (O.S.)  
I don't mind.

LAYLA  
He doesn't mind.

GARY  
He's being polite.

LAYLA  
(Calling off)  
Is that true Danny?

DANNY (O.S.)  
Whatever Gary says.

She pouts. Goes over to her stuff. Laughs.

LAYLA  
Oh my God!

GARY  
Huh?

LAYLA  
I can barely walk. I think you tore my--

GARY

(Loudly)

Shhhh!

LAYLA

What? Don't you do this to all the girls?

GARY

You don't need to advertise--

LAYLA

Danny doesn't--he doesn't give a fuck

(Calling off)

Danny?

DANNY (O.S.)

Yeah?

GARY

(To her)

Stop!

(Calling off)

Nothing!

LAYLA

(Calling off)

Do you know/ Gary...

GARY

Seriously!

LAYLA

(Calling off)

...likes to be the little spoon?

She smiles at him sweetly.

DANNY (O.S.)

Sure did.

LAYLA

Gotcha bitch.

GARY

Yeah, great. Thanks. Ok, I really gotta go--

LAYLA

Ooo, I know! Take me with you!

GARY

(Incredulous)

What?

LAYLA

It totally, okay, so I'll hide under your desk! I'll be so quiet and I'll feed you little fruits and tell you jokes or witty come-backs when Pamela tries to emasculate you again--

GARY

That's not what she--

LAYLA

And if you're extra nice I'll diddle your wiener once in a while.

She attempts to diddle his wiener. He evades.

So do you miss her?

GARY

Pamela?

LAYLA

Yeah.

GARY

No, I mean I don't know

LAYLA

You would. She's such a cunt

GARY

Whoa!

LAYLA

She *is*. (It's ok, it's sort of endearing for us to say it about each other) and dudes always fall for these prissy assholes who are like half helpless and half super controlling.



...

When's the last time you talked to her?

GARY

I see her every day

LAYLA

No not at work I mean.

Fuck, how much do you think it sucks for her to know her employee put it in her butt all the time? There's a power dynamic for you.

GARY

Well, how's it feel to you?

LAYLA

You're my bass player. It's, no. Different realm entirely.

...

So?

GARY

What?

LAYLA

When's the last time you talked?

GARY

To Pamela?

LAYLA

Ya.

GARY

Jesus, I don't know, not that long ago? I have to get ready

LAYLA

Last night?

GARY

No.

LAYLA

Oh, cause I thought it was funny that she texted "I miss you too," cause you know usually people use that as a response, right? They don't say "I miss you too" as the initiator of misses

GARY

I'm a little confused as to why you were reading my texts

LAYLA

I wasn't--no, your phone was there and it just lit up, ok? I don't know what other kind of kinky dom shit she showered upon you

GARY

Nothing

LAYLA

I'll shower dom shit upon you

GARY

K, seriously--

LAYLA

I am the most serious!

GARY

I gotta shower, ok?

LAYLA

(Seductive)

Can I come?

GARY

(Frustrated)

No Layla

LAYLA

(Erupting suddenly)

GOD YOU DUMB FUCKING PUSSY PIECE OF SHIT WHY DON'T YOU LOOSEN UP FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE AND STOP POUTING ABOUT YOUR FUCKING EX AND MAYBE YOUR FRIENDS WOULD ACTUALLY WANT TO HANG OUT WITH YOU

He is shocked. Danny, though we can't see him, is shocked.

And then she goes and grabs her stuff. Grabs the bottle of Jack.

LAYLA

For the road.

She heads for the door. Stops.

LAYLA

Can you imagine if Pamie found out? About our...

GARY

I thought we agreed not to tell anyone?

LAYLA

Yeah. It'd be bad. Really bad.

(beat. Then, off)

Hey Danny?

DANNY (O.S.)

Yeah?

LAYLA

(Calling off)

Don't tell anyone!

DANNY (O.S.)

Mum mum.

LAYLA

I'll text you or something later.

GARY

Cool.

She heads to the door, upon reaching it turns back.

LAYLA

Oh yeah, thanks for the fun.

She walks back over to him, throws her arms around him dramatically and gives him a long kiss. Pulls away.

Laughs a little, gives him a rough pat on the cheek. Gets to the door. Stops and looks back

Shhhhh

A wink and she leaves. A beat.

DANNY (O.S.)

You fucked up fucking that one.

Gary rushes off to shower.

A few moments later Layla stumbles over to the bench with the homeless woman. Takes a seat. Looks around. Takes out the bottle of Jack. Swigs. Hides it again.

She pulls out her guitar, places her case open in front of her, and starts strumming it absentmindedly. She is maybe awesome at it, or is maybe just learning, but either way she'll sing bits as she tells her story. It isn't rehearsed, just riffing.

LAYLA

I used to go to a yoga studio down the street from here. *Used to.*

See, we did this meditation one time after class, it was cool, it was like, you imagine this ball of golden light floating above you, right? And the top of my head got all hot and sweaty, I was into it. And then I had to imagine that it worked its way down my body, it's supposed to go all the way down to your bottom, your pelvis, right? So I do, I imagine that it starts seeping down and filling my brain and my face, doing its light thing and fighting its way out through the cracks in my veneer. It goes down my throat and shoulders, into my heart and lungs, you get it. So, but once it reached my belly button it stops. Like abruptly. It wouldn't go anymore. It was like, like it hit a wall or no, no a mirror, and it bounced right back up and out and I couldn't coax it... Nope.

So after class I tell my teacher about it, and he's like "whoa, yeah. Sounds like you're dealing with some pretty deep shame. Demons. But, the question is, are they hiding from you, or are *you* hiding from *them*?" This profound shit, right? So when he suggests coffee so we can talk about it I'm like, yeah, cool.

(Takes a swig)

I'm a seeker. That's what my grandma would always say, "she's a seeker."  
Plus he was hot.

Yeah, so then coffee turns into drinks and drinks turns into going back to his place to “examine my demons” and the examination turns into him ignoring my texts which turns into me not returning to that studio cause guess what? I don’t actually like being surrounded by WASP-Y moms who’s eyes ooze pity in my direction and I don’t actually need to be slut-shamed by a wannabe guru to know that maybe I have shit to work on.

That’s what I get though. For looking outside for the answers that were inside all along.

She takes another pull. Puts her guitar away. Leaves.

## SCENE SEVEN

1961. A man, Dad, sits at the kitchen table smoking and drinking coffee and listening to the news on the radio. A dirty plate sits next to him. The room is sparse but clean, they are poor but proud.

After a moment the story ends and he switches it off, picks up the newspaper and starts reading.

A minute or so later Abigail rushes down, stops abruptly when she sees him. From here on she makes as little noise or commotion as possible, walking on eggshells. She is monotone and subdued in every way. She silently goes to the counter and grabs a bowl and box of cereal. She pours it and adds milk. Grabs a spoon. Sits and slowly eats. She glances at Dad. Dad never looks up from his paper.

When she is done she brings her bowl to the sink, washes it, dries it, puts everything away as quietly as possible. Then she picks up her book-bag and starts towards the door.

DAD

\*clearing throat\*

He holds out his cup. She sets her bag down, goes and grabs it, refills it from the coffee pot, considers spitting in it, maybe she actually does, then returns it to him.

She turns to leave again when

DAD

Abigail?

She freezes.

DAD

I left something on the counter for you.

She turns and looks. Walks over to the counter and picks up a piece of paper. As she reads her hope of leaving silently for school this morning is crushed. A moment

DAD

Care to explain?

ABIGAIL

I  
I don't know.

DAD

You don't?

She remains silent.

DAD

Ok, well do you think Mrs. Fredricks would know? I think maybe we should call her and ask. Hmm?

ABIGAIL

I think  
I'm bad at it. French.

DAD

Being stupid isn't an excuse to get a B-. Is it?

ABIGAIL

No sir.

DAD  
Have you been studying?

ABIGAIL  
Yes sir.

DAD  
Not enough, obviously. Right?

She shrugs.

DAD  
Are you saying I'm wrong?

She shakes her head.

DAD  
Pardon?

ABIGAIL  
No. Sir.

He stares at her a moment as she stares anywhere else.  
Then he shrugs, returning to his paper

DAD  
Nothing a week of restriction can't fix

ABIGAIL  
But--

DAD  
Hmmm?

ABIGAIL  
It's  
the  
dance.

tonight

DAD  
Are you talking back now

She shakes her head

DAD

Use your goddam words Abi--

ABIGAIL

nosir

DAD

You can't even speak English no wonder you're failing French.

He laughs at his own joke. Peers at her.

DAD

What, are you crying now?

She probably is but she shakes her head.

DAD

(Sighing folding his paper)

You might be mad now but one day you'll look back and thank me. It'll all be water under the bridge.

He gets up to leave

Clean this mess up before you leave.

He leaves. She gets and then washes his dishes silently.  
Puts them away. Grabs her schoolbag and leaves.

She reappears near the park-bench.

Abigail approaches the bench and throws her bag down. She takes off her shoe and in a moment of sudden violence shakes out a pebble. After this she returns to normal. Replaces it. To audience

ABIGAIL

Have you ever read Howl? When I'm done with school I'm going to go join those guys, Alan and the rest of them, in San Francisco. I've never been but its supposed to be far out. I'm a writer so, and they don't have any women. I write poems. Mostly

(Beat)



I'm working on one now, do you want to hear it?

(Beat. Stands)

Dear dad, you're bad, it makes me sad, then later mad, and I'll be glad, when you're rotting in hell.

(She waits a beat. Then smiles shyly,  
loosening up)

That was a joke. That's not...

She lets out a big breath, shakes herself out. She makes "Okays" and "Whews" and other nervous sounds as she gets ready to share.

The lights change.

Dad appears, dressed in a black body suit or the like. Very 60's mod dancer.



She doesn't even see him until she starts to share her poem and suddenly they are dancing. A tango maybe. She is stiff at first, the Abigail we expect, but as she speaks she loses her robotic, monotone demeanor and becomes a fiery, spirited young woman. The dance becomes consuming, passionate, like Roxanne in Moulin Rouge. It builds in movement and tempo until the end.

## ABIGAIL

It wasn't that  
you grabbed the lapels  
of  
my vulnerability  
and did your best to  
shake it out of me  
--I hate crying anyway

It wasn't that  
you shattered  
my pride against the wall like  
a plate of hot spaghetti  
bloody noodles sliding down to join the guts  
already on the floor  
--I don't eat meatballs anyway

It wasn't that you tried  
to smother even my silence  
the last sizzling strands  
of my torched and lacy shackles,  
doused in sand but then  
--I know no one listens anyway

and how you expected me to then  
swim happily  
in my crystal bowl of goldfish water  
till you'd smash it on a whim and  
watch me drown in air  
--I guess what is glue for anyway?

It was that you thought I needed  
YOUR eyes to see me to exist  
and decided that the that way I look through them  
is who I really am  
A sad and silly simpering simpleton.  
And above all lacking.

When the truth is I was  
 ADEQUATE IN EVERY WAY.  
 But I swallowed up truth to protect you  
 I thought it was my job  
 I thought that you deserved it and  
 I thought it was my job  
 The illusion lasting past the evidence  
 Wasn't that my job?

I. Don't. Owe. You and  
 You. Don't. Own. Me.

When I fly away  
 I won't look back  
 I won't look back  
 I don't look back.

Now I'm getting mine.

A clock-bell rings, breaking her trance and the lights abruptly return to normal, the dancing man leaves. She rushes over and picks up her bag from the bench, transforming back into the subdued, shy, monotone Abigail we know.

CASSIE (OFF STAGE)

Hello?!

All of a sudden Cassie walks on. Abigail doesn't notice her.

CASSIE

Excuse me, can you

Abigail brushes past and leaves.

CASSIE

Dick.

Will somebody please, please just acknowledge my existence!

The homeless woman sighs, sits up and throws off her ratty cover. Underneath she is perfectly clean and coifed.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Hello Cassie.

CASSIE

Oh! Hi! Oh thank God, I've been, sorry, this is like, everyone is just ignoring me for some reason

HOMELESS WOMAN

They're just in their own worlds

CASSIE

I'll say. So, hi, I'm just trying to get directions, I'm lost

HOMELESS WOMAN

You're not lost, you're right where you're meant to be.

CASSIE

Sure, ok, well I don't know where that is?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Where you're meant to be?

CASSIE

No, here. Where we are.

HOMELESS WOMAN

It's the Middle Place.

CASSIE

okay...where is that exactly?

HOMELESS WOMAN

It's right here.

CASSIE

No but

(She tries a new tactic)

So I'm trying to get back where I was.

The Last Place. HOMELESS WOMAN

Exactly. CASSIE

You can't. HOMELESS WOMAN

I can't. CASSIE

Correct. HOMELESS WOMAN

Like, by foot? CASSIE

Nope. HOMELESS WOMAN

That's fine is there a bus maybe? CASSIE

Not to the Last Place. HOMELESS WOMAN

Then how do I get back? CASSIE

You don't. HOMELESS WOMAN

I have to. CASSIE

You can't. HOMELESS WOMAN

Really? CASSIE

Really. HOMELESS WOMAN  
But I know how you can some day.

CASSIE

Look lady, I've had a really long fucking day and I don't want to be rude but if you don't start making sense it is entirely possible that I will strangle someone.

So, I'm gonna ask and just, please,

How do I get back to The Last Place?

Small, loaded beat. Then

HOMELESS WOMAN

The only way to The Last Place is through The Next Place.

Cassie throws a full blown tantrum.

After she has calmed down she goes and sits by the Homeless Woman on the bench.

CASSIE

Do you have a name?

HOMELESS WOMAN

I'm Lilith.

CASSIE

Hi.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Hi.

CASSIE

How did you know my name?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Hmm?

CASSIE

Before. You said "Hello Cassie."

She shrugs. Moment.

CASSIE

So, I'm stuck here, is that it.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Pretty much.

CASSIE

Can you tell me how I got here?

HOMELESS WOMAN

I can.

CASSIE

(Finally hopeful)

You can?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Of course my dear.  
You died.

CURTAIN.

**END OF ACT I**

## ACT II

### SCENE ONE

The Middle Place. Shadows flicker by torchlight. Fruit hangs overhead, just out of reach. In the center of the room is a large white tub and nearby there is a stream from which they get water.

The women are who they were but are also now known as G, Elle, P, Essie, Glut, Dubs, and E.

Dubs sits in a chair, writing in a notebook. Essie and Elle sit with their eyes closed. E has a bottle of water near her and does yoga with Glut. G files her nails.

G

What if I cut my hair?

E

Ooo, like Samson!

Glut shakes her head.

G

(Off Glut's reaction)

What?

Glut starts to pantomime that he didn't cut his hair, it was cut against his will by a temptress while he was tied to a chair and then he lost all his strength and was depressed. E & G look on confused.

E

I think she's saying you look sexy with long hair?

Glut shakes her head violently.

G

You don't think I look sexy?

Glut gives her a "come on, of course I think you look sexy" look.



	E	
Of course she does.		
	Glut breaks it down for them.	
	G	
Okay, one? Oh first word! Got it, ok first word, penis? No. /Man?		
	E	
Man!		
	Glut gives them a “so-so but good enough” gesture. Continues.	
	G	
Second word		
	E	
No?		
	G	
Not?		
	E	
Isn’t?		
	G	
Wasn’t!		
	Glut is frantically trying to point them towards the word “didn’t” and failing. She makes a throat-cutting gesture.	
	E	
Oh, oh! Dies! Died?		
	Glut sighs. Notices Dubs writing, gets an idea. Holds up a “wait here finger” and then goes Dubs and points to her notebook and pen.	
	DUBS	
Yes?		
	Glut pantomimes “could I borrow that for a second please?”	

DUBS

You want me to read you my latest?

She shakes her head.

DUBS

(pretending to be hurt)

Oh, you don't?

Glut tries to mime "no, it's not that, sorry, I do, it's just that I want to use your notebook quick." Dubs pretends not to get it.

DUBS

Ooooh! You want me to write a poem for *you*!

Glut shakes her head.

DUBS

It's no trouble at all, I don't mind, in fact I'm honored you'd ask.

Glut stomps her foot.

DUBS

If you just tell me what you want

G

You're evil.

Glut lunges for the notebook which Dubs yanks out of reach.

DUBS

Hey!

Glut goes for it again and Dubs jumps up

DUBS

Oh no

And runs away. Glut chases after her, they run around, Glut trying and trying to snatch it away.

DUBS

All you have to do is ask

Glut growls.

E

Just let her use it

DUBS

I will! As soon as she says please.

Dubs is backing away from Glut and doesn't see

Elle. Over whom she trips.

ELLE

Aaah oh my god you two Jesus!

GLUT

Sorry Elle.

(Suddenly realizing what she's done)

Fuck!

She lets out a frustrated groan as Dubs giggles.

DUBS

I'm sorry

Glut crosses her arms and stomps away.

DUBS

Hey! Come-on!

You broke it now anyway, you may as well

But Glut continues to ignore her.

DUBS

(To Elle and Essie)

Anything?

ELLE

In *this* din?! Fat chance.

DUBS

I would've thought by this point your ears would be so seasoned.

ELLE

I don't get how the last Glut did it.

G

She was at it a lot longer than you two have been.

ELLE

True.

DUBS

We're also not sure it helped

ELLE

She rose fast though

DUBS

Mmm.

G

I've decided. I'm cutting my hair.

ELLE

How much?

G

All of it.

ELLE

Bald?

G

No! Like man hair. Like Samson did when he cut his. It's from the bible.

Glut lets out a frustrated gesture.

ESSIE

Samson didn't cut his hair.

G

Yes! He was the strong man

ELLE

Yes but a woman cut his hair

ESSIE

(Giving up listening and joining the convo)

Delilah. Though she wasn't the one who actually cut it, some guy Delilah knew did the cutting, she just gets the blame. When really Samson wasn't supposed to tell the secret behind his strength to begin with.

ELLE

Typical.

G

No shit.

I thought he was in mourning or something

ESSIE

He was after he lost his strength. And his eyes.

DUBS

Gruesome.

E

I cut my hair once when I was, well, not mourning exactly. I was depressed.

ELLE

Me too. Fresh start. After I cheated on a girlfriend. I know I know it sounds horrible but I was in an absolutely toxic relationship.

Meanwhile Glut has been miming that she, too, partook in hair-cutting after she didn't get a gig that she auditioned for once. The others barely notice her.

G

Yeah, see, doesn't it give you, it's cleansing. No?

DUBS

I think it's more meant to be humbling.

G

Even better.

DUBS

It doesn't work. I tried it.

G

Meaning it didn't work *for you*.

DUBS

I've seen multiple people, even a P do it and so far with zero correlation to rising. I think it's a lost cause.

Besides, you have great hair.

ELLE

You do have great hair.

E

Yeah.

G

Oh then maybe that's it like a sacrifice!

DUBS

But that's not why you're here

G

IT'S ALL I HAVE LEFT.

To try.

Let me try.

Beat.

DUBS

Go ahead if you want. Sheesh.

The women return to what they were doing or other things too while G goes to a box and grabs a scissors.

Considers.

Grabs a big chunk and holds the scissors up.

Stops.

G

Has it really never worked?

DUBS

Nope.  
But go ahead. It'll grow back.

G takes another moment, her courage mounting. Then  
drops her arm.

G

I'll do it tomorrow. I don't want to meet her looking like an orphan.

She walks back over to the bin and drops the scissors.  
Starts digging around.

G

Where is this girl anyway?

GLUT

Probably--shit!

DUBS

(to Glut)

Give up

E

Still being debriefed.

G

But it's taking so long

E

Maybe she's resisting a lot.

G pulls out a discipline with 7 chords.

G

Who wants to spank me?

E

That's  
Stop. This is serious

G

I'm serious.

Can you <i>please</i>	ELLE
That's	E
be quiet?	ELLE
Give it to me.	E
No.	G
It's not a toy G	E
I'm not an idiot E.	G
You're goofing around	E
No	G
Then use it.	E
Jesus. <i>You</i> use it.	G
I <i>did</i> .	E
	G
Oh yeah.	(remembering)
Oh YEAH.	(then <i>really</i> remembering)



Yeah. E

G drops it.

Elle sighs and opens her eyes.

ELLE  
Maybe you two could do something useful and get started?

E  
I can't expend too much energy. I'm fasting.

ELLE  
Still?

DUBS  
It's only been a day

E  
This is day three

ELLE  
How long are you going?

E  
40

ELLE  
Of course you are

DUBS  
Did you hear anything?

ELLE  
Nada.

She gives G, E, and Glut a meaningful look. Glut makes a 'wasn't me" gesture.

Suddenly Essie shushes them sharply. They all stop abruptly frozen and silent.

For 5

10

20 seconds. Then

ESSIE

Oh dammit.

GLUT

Sorry Ess--gaaa!

E

(to Glut)

Don't beat yourself up, this is truly the best you've ever done.

ESSIE

(to Glut)

Why don't you just start over tomorrow?

Glut starts miming "because it's the intention and I won't be deterred from my mission by one or two little fuck ups." As she does this, the women try to guess what she's saying. They get really into it, calling stuff out. In the midst of this G says something like "I love Glut's vows of silence," and Dubs probably agrees.

Behind them P enters. She still has her black eyes and bandages.

Glut is the only one facing her and thus, the only one who sees her. She starts pointing, trying to get them to look, but they still think she's trying to mime words and keep trying to guess until finally

GLUT

SHE'S HERE.

They all stop. Turn. See P.

LIGHTS OUT.

**SCENE TWO**

Later. The women are using buckets to carry water from the stream to fill the tub in the center of the room. Mid conversation.

G

*WHAT?*

P

Yep.

G

He *said* it or *did* it?

GLUT

Does it matter?

G

The president? Of the United States?!

P

Yep.

ELLE

What does that even mean.

GLUT

(Grabbing Elle's crotch and pulling her aggressively towards her)

You know, taking what you want!

E

Your vow!

P

What vow?

GLUT

Tomorrow. Of silence. I'm the worst.

ESSIE

Donny wouldn't, he doesn't, I'm sure it was for attention. He always loved the spotlight.

E

Maybe it was a joke?

ESSIE

Of course it was.

ELLE

(eye-roll)

A super funny one.

GLUT

And the shit he said about Hillary?!

DUBS

Who's that?

P

Hillary Clinton. /His opponent.

G

/Bill's wife?

ELLE

what'd he say?

P

Correct.

GLUT

Basically that if any woman isn't the perfect plastic version of herself standing submissively behind him then she's a pig and not fit for office.

DUBS

(to P)

Oh, is that why you...

She indicates her general plastic-ness.

P

What?

DUBS

No  
nothing.

ESSIE

He doesn't honestly  
They're *friends* for chrissakes! We've all eaten dinner together!

ELLE

I doubt they are anymore.

GLUT

Is it true he has tiny hands?

ESSIE

Of course they are, it's all for show.

GLUT

But doesn't that make it worse?! He's saying shit he doesn't believe to convince other  
people *to* believe it  
It's dangerous

ESSIE

It's politics.

P

It was the former secretary of state versus a reality tv star

ESSIE

/He's a very successful businessman

DUBS

(Whats a reality star?)

E

(I'll explain [later])

G

Damn, the US *still* can't handle a woman president

ESSIE

That's not fair.

GLUT

No dude, G's right. The guys who ran my local bodega, they were from Puerto Rico,  
right? No green cards.

And they told me they were voting for Trump and I was like are you insane? He wants to deport you! And they were like “yes but he is machismo.” It was fucked.

ESSIE

You knew?

GLUT

I try not to think about it  
That’s why  
when I found out she lost  
That’s when I decided to try heroine

P

(Oh my God!)

GLUT

with this guy only we didn’t realize it was laced with Fentanyl.  
Fuckers.

ALL

...

P

What’s insane to me  
So everyone, every man who looked sideways at some chick?  
Fired.  
*Except* Trump. Look at Cosby

GLUT

Yeah but he actually raped a bunch of women

G

Bill Cosby?

ELLE

No!

GLUT

Like half of Hollywood went to prison. They unearthed, just, *all* this stuff. *All* your heroes? Forget it.

P

Anderson Cooper, Michael Jackson..

GLUT

They never caught Michael--

P

They *did*, they released, there's a ton of evidence now.

G

No! For what?!

P

He, he touched kids, dude.

G

No...

DUBS

In my day, you knew what was happening

P

I doubt it

DUBS

I'm sorry, were you there?

P

...

DUBS

Right.

Anyway, in my day, you knew where you stood. Who was doing what, even if it was unsavory. It was out in the open.

All I hear from all of you is how politically correct everyone pretends to be while eating each other alive and hoping you do it slowly enough they don't notice till they've bled out.

GLUT

(woof)

ALL

...

E

What about. What else? *Nice* stuff?!

P

Um, well, the royal wedding was kind of a big deal.

GLUT

Will and Kate!

P

Oh, yeah, yeah, yes but also Harry.

ELLE

The little ginger one?

G

The princess has adult--Jesus, how old is she now?

DUBS

I have zero clue [who that is]

GLUT

Well, she's not, she died, actually. A while ago.

G

What?! No!

GLUT

Car crash

G

How has no one mentioned this?!

DUBS

That's how I felt about Kennedy.

ELLE

Which one?

DUBS

Uh..the president? You don't know [JFK?!]

ELLE

No, because

ESSIE

All the Kennedy's bit it.



DUBS

Really?

G

I wonder if famous people are doing this too or if being a celebrity gets you off the hook?

GLUT

That would be so unfair.

G

Life was unfair, why wouldn't death be?  
Physics.

Small moment.

DUBS

What about, do you, have you heard of Elvis?

ESSIE

The king my king!

GLUT

Oh girl

DUBS

I don't know!

ESSIE

Those hips!? That HAIR! THOSE LIPS

She starts her Elvis impression and Dubs joins her like two excited girls they sing a bit of Jailhouse Rock. A couple others probably join in too, less enthusiastically and with shoddier knowledge of the lyrics.

ESSIE

You know I was in a couple of his pictures

DUBS

Get out!

ESSIE

he almost got in a fight over me.

DUBS

What.  
What happened?!

ESSIE

We were, there was this scene they just couldn't get one night and I was trying to sneak out because Chuck had come by to pick me up for dinner but Elvis caught me and grabbed me by the hand and started dancing with me, he was such a goofy fool, and then he started singing--I think my panties actually evaporated and that's when Chuck marched in and grabbed me

it was all so long ago

DUBS

*He* isn't in jail for rape, is he?

GLUT

He, no. He died. He got fat and died.

ESSIE

Unconfirmed!

DUBS

What do you

ELLE

He definitely got fat

E

And there was a funeral. When he died, but some people think he's still out there

ESSIE

There were reports

E

Or that he was picked up by aliens

DUBS

Oh.  
That's stupid.

ESSIE

The alien conspiracy I concede was silly, but he's been spotted all over the world.

G

We could ask Lil.

ESSIE

No no, I like the mystery of it all.

ELLE

I never loved Elvis.

ESSIE

Then you're a fool. They don't make em like that anymore.

DUBS

Who did you like?

ELLE

You know, classics. Sam Cooke. The Beatles.

DUBS

Ew, what? The *Beatles*?

GLUT

No! You don't  
*you know The Beatles!*

DUBS

No.

Glut starts singing a Beatles song. Dubs stares at her blankly.

GLUT

Or

So she starts on another and the others join in.

G

Oh, wait, what about

G starts a 3rd song and they all join in, the most enthusiastic on this one.

Dubs still watches blankly.

After they finish

DUBS

Yeah, no.

P

Wait, Dubs, when did you, um, pass?

DUBS

‘62

P

Oh. And you’re still [here]

DUBS

Guess I’m a slow learner.

GLUT

She’s a crotchety old lady thats what she is!

(to Dubs)

Wait, did you see the moon landing?

G

That was later.

DUBS

No

DUBS

I heard about it.

E makes some noise or mumbles to herself.

DUBS

What?

E

No, nothing, I, my daughter, I completely forgot, was obsessed with astronauts. She could recite all of the spaceship launches NASA ever did but she couldn’t remember to brush her teeth. And then she’d lie about it and I would get, just

I didn’t know if she actually thought she was telling the truth or if she thought she could get away with it.

...

and I would, I would scream at her is the thing.

Some more quiet. The women finish filling the tub and take turns to wash. The washing is thorough, they scrub vigorously. P will be last.

ELLE

We didn't know.

E

Hmm?

ELLE

That. We didn't know it didn't matter.

P

Family stuff is so tricky. Like knowing...

When my mom, but ok there was nothing she could do by the time we found out, or maybe ever, and I just couldn't

I was the closest, with my mom, I was the baby.

And my sister and her husband had a big house and everything and I had, I was working in this restaurant in New York as a pastry chef and it was *grueling*, oh my God, so anyway it just made sense. That they would take her.

I didn't know how to be there or, or the right way to show up and I couldn't...

*Watching* her just die? Like that?

DUBS

Wait, so you just

Did you go and visit?

P

I wanted to

DUBS

But you didn't?

P

It, it was too much.

Go ahead and judge me if you want and maybe that's why I'm here but it was too hard. I couldn't handle it. I'm sorry. I'm just not made to handle that kind of stuff. Some people are. Like my sister, she could, but I'm, it's different for me.

DUBS

Is anyone else hearing this?

P

Oh, sorry girl whose been here longer than anyone, did *you* have to sit and watch your mom die?

DUBS

Never had the luxury, my mom went out for milk one day and didn't come home for dinner.

P suddenly notices scars all over Dubs' arms. Grabs her arm. Dubs yanks it back.

P

What the--

G

Don't

P

Did *you* do that?

DUBS

Probably.

P

Here? Or there?

DUBS

I honestly can't remember.

P

But why?

DUBS

I needed to drain out some of the feelings that were feeling trapped.

A moment as P considers pursuing this.

She drops it.

P

So, what else do we do?

ELLE

Relive, try to rise, rinse, repeat.

P

How *do* we rise?

Dubs laughs/scoffs sarcastically. Maybe throws in an "oh God," for good measure.

DUBS

*That's* why your briefing took so long...

P opens her mouth to say something

GLUT

Hey, she doesn't, it's all new

ESSIE

All we know is you rise after the relivings, if you changed.

P

And that's when you go to The Next Place and join everyone else?

E

And the All Knowing.

P

Ok but when do you go to The Last Place?

GLUT

*After* The Next Place.

P

Got it.  
Basically my reliving has to change /but I have no control over my reliving.

ELLE

Correct.

G

That's the point.

E

It has to emanate, out of you. You can't force it, something has to shift. Internally.

P

How?

The women all sort of shrug or shake their heads or go  
"ahhmm?"

E

I'm fasting for 40 days.

G

I'm cutting my hair off

P

What'll that do?

G

Hopefully shift something.

P

Hopefully.

DUBS

It's different. For everyone it's different. So we don't know. So we try anything and everything we can think of.  
I'm only telling the truth.

P

Do you not normally?

DUBS

I mean the real ones. The hard ones.  
The ones none of us likes to say.

P

Sounds easy to me.

DUBS

Great, give it a go. Start with you.

P

That's  
What do you mean? Exactly.

DUBS

Well, start by looking at yourself and calling yourself what you really are.

ESSIE

Don't take the bait.  
Elle and I listen. For the words of the All Knowing.

E

Different things seem to work better for different types, but nothing's a guarantee.  
So we do it all.  
One of the other Elles even tried suicide once.



GLUT

Which doesn't work, obs, but we're pretty sure it made her--

She stops herself, looks at the others nervously.

P

What?

...

WHAT?

GLUT

Nothing.

P

Come on.

GLUT

I don't [want to]

G

It's hard to explain.

ELLE

And it's not

It's not important.

P

Great, then tell me

ESSIE

Another time.

ALL

...

DUBS

It made her Aviyakum.

E

Dubs!

P

/What?

DUBS

She's a big girl.  
Vanish. She vanished.

P

What's that?

E

We shouldn't be, you shouldn't say it.

DUBS

How did young people get so afraid?

P

I'm not afraid.

DUBS

You should be.

GLUT

The, there's something, it's other

G

It's pretty much the opposite of rising.

ELLE

We *think*.

G

We can pretty well assume

E

It's, it's sort of like dying

GLUT

But forever.

G

You don't join everyone or The All Knowing in The Next Place.

GLUT

Don't get to The Last Place.

It means  
E  
You're not worth saving.  
ELLE  
Little beat.  
E  
It's rare.  
Little beat.  
P  
Why didn't Lilith  
ESSIE  
She, they don't really talk about it.  
Some silence for a bit.  
GLUT  
Hey! I know! Let's play a game!  
DUBS  
[Eye-roll]  
GLUT  
Come on! Which...what one  
G  
Let's play "would you rather."  
GLUT  
Good! You got one?  
G  
Uh...  
E  
(Mine always suck)  
ESSIE  
I do! Alright, would you rather have cloven feet or...

Or?  
GLUT

I'm thinking...  
ESSIE

Or be bald?  
E

Too easy  
G

Oh, ok, I've got, ok would you rather know what you know or know what you don't know?  
ELLE

yeah ok I can fuck with this  
GLUT

That's hard  
G

G, you first.  
ELLE

Would I, so would I forget what I know?  
G

Mhmm  
ELLE

my family and, and my experiences  
G

All of it.  
ELLE

ammm, huh, it would change me, as a person, and then, well, maybe I wouldn't be here or I'd have a different [reason for being here]  
G

That's the thing, you wouldn't even be you anymore.  
ESSIE

K, Essie?  
ELLE

ESSIE

Maybe if my essence would stay, I'd still be me then

G

but your experiences shape you

And what, ok so there's a reason we're here, no? So aren't we supposed to know these specific things and not know the other things? To help with The Next Place?

ELLE

We don't know that.

G

So, but if that's the case then wouldn't I just be required to go back and learn all this stuff again anyway?

ELLE

Assume we're not trying to get to the Next Place then

G

But then

I don't know come back to me.

ELLE

Okay, Glut?

GLUT

If I didn't have to relearn or re-experience everything  
What I don't know.

ELLE

Really?

GLUT

There's a lot I don't want to know anymore.

ESSIE

I could see that. It was never fully confirmed that my husband was having an affair but I could fairly certainly assume. I certainly considered having one myself a number of times.

ELLE

Why didn't you?

E

(Obviously)

She loved him

ESSIE

Oh darling, they're so much work.

ELLE

It sounds like a vote for what you don't know.

ESSIE

Maybe. I just can't decide if what you don't know is worse?

DUBS

P

I think

YES!

P and Dubs stop, look at each other. Wait politely for the other to go. When they don't

DUBS

P

So I think

This one time

They stop again. Dubs looking annoyed. Wait a second for the other. Then.

DUBS

P

What I'm trying

This one time

DUBS

Go

P

I can wait.

DUBS

Just

P

Please

ELLE

P. Go.

P

Yeah?

She looks to Dubs for permission who gives her a “go ahead” gesture.

P

Sorry, so, yeah, I just, I guess I like, really relate to that

ELLE

Yeah?

P

cause, yeah, and I hate that I remember this but my friend, this one time at dinner, I don’t know why but he way saying, I guess he saw this thing on YouTube

G

That’s the video thing?

DUBS

(Nodding knowingly)

On the internet.

ELLE

Right.

P

No no yeah, he was saying this one time how he was like watching this video of this kid, in China? a Chinese kid who, I guess he wanted to show off so he like went up on this skyscraper and his friend was on, I guess like the neighbor skyscraper filming him and he decided to do these pull-ups. And he did like three but then his arms got tired and he couldn’t pull himself back up so...he just had to hang there till, till his arms gave out and he let go. And the only thing his friend could do was film it.

GLUT

Oh, Jesus

DUBS

If that’s something you want to forget why would you tell us that story?

ESSIE

Worse, why would you watch something like that?

P

Well I think he didn't, I, actually, I don't know actually.

DUBS

I'm so glad I missed all this.

G

Ok, forget that kind of stuff, what about, don't you want to know what people said about you? Or how much your boss made?

ESSIE

Not really

G

Or, but bigger things though also. If we will ever see our spouses or parents or kids again or is there other life out there? And how does the universe end and what are our brains actually capable of and who was Jesus?

DUBS

Sure, but without the context of your individual personality those things will be lackluster-if your personal lens is shattered meaning dissipates.

ELLE

True, if you're not really you anymore than you have no emotional attachment to how much your boss made, it's like me telling you how much *my* boss made.

G

Then what about the meaning of life?

DUBS

I'd argue the reason we care is because we wonder if *our* life has meaning. Had meaning. And then if it doesn't...

P

That's like, really depressing.

DUBS

I'm guessing yours didn't?

GLUT

Rude.

DUBS

Did *yours*?



GLUT

Did *yours*?

DUBS

Probably not

E

What about love?

DUBS

What about it?

E

Well, is it knowledge? Would you forget? Or is it a feeling? Cause I don't--  
I want to keep that part. Love *is* the meaning of life, isn't it?

DUBS

Highly doubtful.

ESSIE

It's not a defect darling

DUBS

I don't think it's an asset. People get together for a year or two, get tired of each other, or things get hard and they just quit

ESSIE

That's typically lust

ELLE

And how are you supposed to tell lust from love exactly? It always seems like love until it doesn't and then

E

I think, with love, for one, it grows, for two, you just know...

DUBS

How though? It's a chemical slurpie. It's not some, some sublime, some achievement.

E

Maybe you shouldn't talk about stuff you don't know about.

Tense moment.

E

I think what we know we know for a reason. And, it's, it's hard earned.

G

Yeah, there's a lot of pain in learning.

P finishes washing and E hands her a towel.

E

Here.

Lilith enters during this and grabs a torch off the wall. As she does

ELLE

Hey Lil, would you rather--

LILITH

What I don't know.

ELLE

I thought you knew everything

LILITH

Almost.

ELLE

What do you want to know, then?

LILITH

(quoting)

"Did I request thee, Maker, from my Clay,  
To mould me man, did I solicit thee  
From darkness to promote me?"

ESSIE

Shakespeare?

LILITH

Milton

ELLE

Ok, tell us something we should know.

LILITH

(quoting)

“The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.”

ALL

...

LILITH

I’m re-reading Paradise Lost.  
Done?

The women nod and back away from the tub. P notices and follows suit. Lilith touches the water with her torch and it erupts like lighter fluid on a grill. P jumps back in surprise and probably says something like “oh shit!”

The other ladies are unfazed.

Lilith replaces the torch on the wall and exits.

P

She’s like, a total badass, huh?

GLUT

She’s who I want to be when I grow up. Except in the Next Place.

E

Yeah

As they continue to talk the women grab a slab of wood and place it on the tub. They grab chairs and then utensils.

P

Is she an angel?

DUBS

No?

GLUT

Yes?

ELLE

Not exactly

more like a guard G

a hot guard ELLE

Totally G

Ok, so you know Adam? GLUT

Should I? P

Yes, *Adam*. Adam the first man? GLUT

Ooooh P

So she was his first wife. GLUT

What? No. P

Yep G

No, Eve P

Nope. So, ok, you know how God took one of Adam's ribs and fashioned Eve etc? GLUT

Ya P

Well originally he actually made a separate woman as in not a rib woman but her own thing and that was Lil and they were married cause well 1. they were the only two people on Earth and 2. they were actually madly in love but they fought like cats and dogs cause

Ok, so her side of the story is that he was a controlling dick head like, when they were naming all the animals he'd be like "lets call it a beast who idles, rides, and dives upon the air" and she'd be like "let's just call it a bird for short" and the animals would agree with her but he'd keep trying to force them to do it his way and would lose and get pissed.

(big breath)

So then eventually Adam got insanely jealous and so he went to God with this tall tale about how commandeering she was and said the animals were gonna mutiny and demanded that God make him a new woman and God didn't really know better cause this was the first time he'd made humans (and I think he was dealing with Lucifer around that time too) so he said "sure ok" so he told Lilith to pack her bags and she couldn't really say no cause, cause he's God and he'd just make her anyway so she did, and she left.

And then a couple days passed and then Adam realized too late that he was totally heartbroken but his pride was like, mongo major so he couldn't admit he'd made a mistake but his heart was so swollen with pain that his rib was actually digging into it so he asked God to take it to make the new woman.

P

Wow.

GLUT

Yeah.

P

That's so / messed up

ELLE

Typical

P

Well, but why isn't this in the bible?

G

If your great-grandad was a whiny bratty bitch baby you wouldn't want to write the truth either.

P

Does she still love

G gives her a "shut up look" as Lilith enters and they all look at her or away guiltily. She carries a covered tray.

Steam billows out from under the lid. Sets it on the  
devised table.

E

Thanks Lil.

LILITH

Enjoy your meal.

DUBS

Most certainly.

Lilith goes to leave, stops. Gains knowledge.

LILITH

There is, news.

Someone's time is ending. Soon. Very soon.

That is all I know.

She leaves.

The women look at each other, shocked.

G

What's that

E

Does she mean

P

So someone's gonna rise?

ELLE

Not.

She calls it rising when we rise. She says the word "rise."

GLUT

That's the vanish one. Isn't it?

Isn't it?

DUBS

I think so.

P  
Oh.  
Shit.

GLUT  
Yeah.

E  
(Quickly)  
We should eat now.

They sit and take hands. P follows suit.

E  
Thank you for bringing us nourishment. We are grateful for this opportunity to grow closer to the Next Place and further from our past errors. Vitu.

ALL  
Vitu.

P  
Vitu?

GLUT  
Yeah, it sort of means, your place of belonging

ELLE  
Like “home.”

GLUT  
Exactly! That’s where we’re trying to get to.

P  
So, the Next Place?

ELLE  
Maybe?

E  
We don’t know where it is

GLUT  
We just know it’s called Vitu.

E removes the top and steam billows out,  
revealing...plates with what look like polenta mash.

P

Oh. That's not [what I wanted]

G

It gets better.

They start to eat except E who guzzles from her bottle.  
P's face says it all.

P

It doesn't, there's no taste.

ESSIE

I think it's a cruel joke

E

No it's  
It's a way to get closer by not  
By being void of  
It's cleansing.  
And we remember not to take it for granted. Flavor. Because it's so easy to forget that.  
That life is full of little miracles.

P

Oh.

GLUT

It still sucks though.

They sit in silence for a bit, poking at their food.

Suddenly G violently pushes her plate away.

G

I honestly can't today.

ELLE

Thank you!

G

I'd rather starve.



GLUT

(an idea)

I know! Let's play next meals!

G and E and Elle say something along the lines of "yeah, ok" "sure" or "good idea."

E

Whose turn is it?

DUBS

Mine.

GLUT

Let's have P try!

P

Oh, I

DUBS

It's my turn.

GLUT

So?

DUBS

So we should go in order. P comes after Essie.

GLUT

So? She can go then too. It'll be nice to get some fresh blood in the mix.

DUBS

Then she gets two turns.

P

I don't mind waiting

GLUT

You don't even like this game.

DUBS

Sure I do.

GLUT

You don't act like it.

DUBS

I think we should stick to the order, is all

ESSIE

Christ, it's one time.

GLUT

Yeah

ESSIE

I can forfeit my turn

DUBS

I don't want you to forfeit your turn, I want to follow the rules.

GLUT

Jesus Dubs

DUBS

I just--What? She doesn't even know how to play.

GLUT

It's not like this complicated

(to P)

You just tell us about the first meal you're going to have in the Next Place.

Dubs throws up her hands in a "whatever, I fucking give up," gesture.

GLUT

(to Dubs)

Just [chill]

P

In the Next Place? How would I know?

Dubs does a lil "see" gesture.

GLUT

It can seriously be anything. The best thing you've ever had

G

Or will ever have. So it should, try to think of something so good, so beyond

ELLE

And describe it

G

In great detail. The more the better. Got it?

P

Um, okay...

ELLE

Start with an appetizer

P

Like a

G

Something other than a salad

P

So a

ELLE

Or not steamed veggies. Something with heft

P

Like

G

Not soup either

ELLE

Lobster bisque would be ok.

G

True, I'd be ok with that.

GLUT

Ok, ok let her

ELLE

Sorry, go ahead

P

Crab cakes?

The women approve. Throughout the description they will “ooo” and “awe” and “mmm” and “yes!” It feels like they are coaxing a naughty story out of her and get more and more excited as she goes, interjecting more and more. -the ultimate food porn.

Except Dubs, who just sits.

As she goes they start to pretend the food on their forks is what P is describing and eat.

ELLE

Good, ok, details. What kind? Of crab.

P

Er, blue snow crab?

ELLE

Nice yep

P

Blue snow crab cakes that, they’ll have these, these big chunks of juicy crab meat...

E

I can taste it

G

Yes!

P

I like my crab cakes to be like, mostly crab, you know? Not like, batter with some shreds. And they’ll have garlic and green onions and farm egg yolks and the secret ingredient, nutmeg!

G

I completely forgot about nutmeg. As a thing

ESSIE

Same.

P

It brings out the natural brine and sweetness in the meat.

And lobster?

ESSIE

Huh?

P

Oooo! Yes!

GLUT

Do they have lobster?

ESSIE

Uh, yeah. Yeah, there's lobster in there too. Fried in butter. And the edges will like, caramelize and get all crispy

P

Oh my God

GLUT

Remember when you'd bite into something fried perfectly how the grease would squirt out

G

Holy. Fuck.

ELLE

Or it would drip? Down your hand? Like a super greasy burger

G

With chipotle mayo...

E

Or french fries?

ELLE

FRENCH FRIES

GLUT

With honey mustard! Or pesto!?

E

Or waffle fries?

GLUT

I *love* waffle fries, with nacho cheese

E

P  
Or nacho cheese on garlic fries

E  
Yeah!

ESSIE  
Truffle fries

ALL  
(except Dubs)  
Truffle fries!

E  
With garlic aioli.  
What kind of fries do you like, Dubs?

DUBS  
I don't like fried food.

G  
You're insane

E  
That's how you stayed thin I bet

ELLE  
She's also 16

DUBS  
17

ELLE  
Anyone under 40 still has a metabolism

DUBS  
Well technically I'm closest to Essie's age

ESSIE  
I certainly got the short end of that stick.

DUBS  
You get off doing half the work

My my we are feisty today  
ESSIE

I want more crab cakes!  
GLUT

Yes, keep going P.  
G

Where was I?  
P

They're full of meat  
E

And lobster  
ESSIE

Yeah and they'll be fried in butter...  
E

Yes and on top I want a ton of sauce-- I'm a sauce queen  
P

Me too!  
E

And I need everything drenched.  
P

I would always poke holes in things like in pancakes so that they'd absorb more syrup and butter  
E

I did that too! I would get sick  
GLUT

So sick! They were like a sponge  
E

Yes! That's what I'm gonna do too, so I'll have like, a brown butter and lemon sauce and I'll poke holes in them and then drench--  
P

The women are squealing with delight. But

Dubs suddenly gets up,

DUBS

Okay

G

Wait, no, what? Sit down!

DUBS

Nah, I'm good. This is gross.

GLUT

What the fuck is your problem today?

ESSIE

You have seemed on edge.

DUBS

Oh, I don't know guys, maybe it has something to do with the fact that one of us is probably going to fucking *vanish* any day now and instead of trying to address and fix and avoid it we're all just sitting around playing Next fucking Meals!

GLUT

(No you started before that)

ELLE

What should we do then? Hmm? Cause I sat and listened for anything, anything from The All Knowing all morning while you fucked around. Do you know something we don't? Great, tell us this new big solution that you've come up with and we'll all do it.

...

Go ahead.

...

TELL US DUBS.

She doesn't cause she doesn't know.

ELLE

Right.

Quiet moment.

P

What if we did a group prayer?

Dubs laughs.



What? P

A group prayer? DUBS

Yeah? P

Don't you think we've tried that? Don't you think we try all of it?! DUBS

It was just a suggestion. P

You can keep your suggestions, thanks though. DUBS

Can I P  
So do you always hate the new girl, or is it just me?

What are you even DUBS

You've been acting ratchet since I arrived P

Ratchet? DUBS

Like, unmannered. Not nice. P

Oh please, I think maybe you're just a little extra sensitive. Everyone in your generation takes everything so personally. DUBS

See! Like that. P

Do we really ELLE

P

The micro-aggressions.

I had this manager, he tried to act like, like he was some great guy when in fact he was a fucking douche and he'd always joke around about how ugly I was or unattractive and if I got upset? He'd play it off like it was my problem. And I took it. Just took it. And that was so dumb.

DUBS

I have no idea what you're talking about.

P

Don't talk to me like that. Okay? I, I'm a person, in the same place as you and I have needs too and I am going to voice them because it's time I started putting myself and my needs first instead of minimizing myself. I am making me a priority in a way I always should have.

Beat.

DUBS

You *didn't* put yourself first? *Didn't* make yourself a priority?  
Then what would you call it when you made your sister a hospice nurse?

P

This has nothing to do with that.

DUBS

Of course it does! It's just that this part happens to be inconvenient for you.

Do you know what happens when you leave?

There are consequences.

Other people suffer. When you don't do your job as a member of your family then other people need to pick up the slack that you left behind. They take the blame and the anger while you flit around

P

Don't confuse your mom walking out with me pursuing my dreams.

DUBS

(Laughs)

You can't even hear how fucked up that sounds.

P

You can't even see how stuck you are, everything you touch everything you say is twisted drowned in this one event that took place that you can't get past

DUBS

Oop, you got me! Boohoo I tread the water of a lake of self pity and righteousness because of my childhood and now I'm some sad two dimensional tale and I'm so lucky you understand thank you for understanding thank you for finally showing me to myself!

P

Glad I could help.

Small beat.

DUBS

I can admit I had some mommy issues. I've done the work. But you know what? If she left me every day for 100 years I sure as hell wouldn't've wandered off in her moment of need and then blamed it on my fragile constitution.

ELLE

(Okay...)

P

That's not--you don't know, ok? You weren't--have you ever worked 90 hours a week trying to climb up a ladder with grips made too big for your hands and covered in vaseline? Cause that's what it takes now. And, she got that, my mom That that's what was needed. From me. For me. She wanted me to be happy.

DUBS

Is that what she told you?

P

Yeah, actually, it is.

DUBS

I doubt she meant she wanted you to turn your back on your family.

G

Guys, come [on]

P

That's not what happened.

DUBS

/That's what you said.

ELLE

Can we please

P

I think you're just scared I might be right. About you. About leaving here.

DUBS

Oh honey please. There is so much you don't see  
That you don't even know to look for yet.

P

Maybe, but it's not cause I'm unwilling to wipe off my lenses.  
You wanna live in truth? Turn that lens around

DUBS

Yes, yes, I know. You have it all figured out,/ thanks so much

P

That's not what I'm saying, actually, and if you let someone else talk

DUBS

I do when they have something to say

G

Guys, let's stop. Please?

P

God you're so closed minded. That's *why* you're stuck. Not cause of me, not cause the world has moved on and passed you by and maybe you're mad about that, I would be frustrated as hell if I stayed rooted in myself for however many years but don't take it out on me cause you  
Cause you're unwilling to try.  
You're stuck honey. Stuck.  
And you all must get *so tired* of this "back in my day crap."  
I've been here an hour and I'm beyond sick of it. "Back in the day" sucked, honestly.  
That's why the rest of us have moved on. Broken free and found some independence.  
Some self love.  
I feel bad for you honestly.

DUBS

Essie, you must be distraught.

ESSIE

Don't drag me into this

DUBS

Well I'm distraught. We thought we were creating empowered, equal people. People who moved past the material, the surface level bull-shit.

But look at you.

All that fighting, all those protests and lives ruined and lost so that

We could have

You.

And it turns out things didn't change. Not for the better anyway. Not as far as I can tell.

You're a mess. You bleed discontent and self loathing and a lack of original thought--

I guess it was self love that gave you that nose job and those tits and whatever else you've had glued or sewed in? I guess self love plastered that makeup on your face and asked you to dress like, like, God I don't even know how to describe that

P

Like someone who isn't scared of their body

DUBS

No like someone who thinks that sex is all they have to offer.

You know, the women I knew didn't get plastic surgery because they were cool with just being them.

P grabs Dubs' arm.

P

Someone who does this shit shouldn't talk.

Or no, that's it though. That's exactly what you should've been doing all along. You think you're some great, what, truth teller? You can't even communicate, you can't even speak so you do this shit instead.

You know why your mom left?

DUBS

Yeah, because she was selfish. Something you would know a lot about

P

She left because she didn't know how else to express how un-fucking happy she was.

DUBS

You dumb

ESSIE

STOP IT STOP IT STOP IT.

Both of you.

The rest of us don't feel like listening to a screaming match between a pot and a kettle, alright?

DUBS

I'm

G

Please, Dubs, we should  
We need to stick together

DUBS

Don't make, I'm not the bad guy here, I'm not the one trying to upset things.  
She comes in here thinking, what? You've got it figured out?  
You don't. You've got nothing figured out. At least I can be honest with myself. Your self mutilation is, believe-it-or-not, worse than mine because you disguise it as self-improvement when it has no *meaning*. You're confused and you think you're better than us but at the end of the day guess what?  
NONE OF US HAS IT FIGURED OUT.  
No. Okay? This

and honestly  
you all know  
it's gonna be me this time.

G

No

DUBS

It has to be. And you all know it. *I know*. And I know deep down you're all relieved.

(gesturing towards P)

Even though you're probably the only one willing to admit it.

Uncomfortable silence as most of them realize they *are* relieved that it's probably Dubs.

E

We can't, that's not true Dubs.

DUBS

I'm just so,  
tired.

You don't even,  
do you realize I've been here like four times longer than I was even alive?  
having to eat this crap day after day when it's not even--we're dead, we're dead so why  
are we eating?!

And then and *then* being forced to to *perform* the same moments the same words over  
and over like I'm some kind of fetish puppet for God or an energy or aliens or who the  
fuck even knows? Who knows? We don't but there we go.

And *why*? I had a shitty fucking life back there so why am I stuck in here?

...

And you know what? I don't know what kind of fries I like  
Cause I can't even remember what they taste like.

Beat. Beat. Then

DUBS

(Exhausted, to P)

The last 6 of us have vanished.

P

Wait, I thought  
you said it was rare.

E

Dubs

DUBS

The P before you, it happened to her

P

Are you serious?

E

Stop!

DUBS

She should know.  
She should know the truth.

Any of us could be next, sweetie.

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT III**SCENE ONE**

The women are in various spaces, each in front of a park bench, oblivious to each other but each repeating their monologues exactly as from the beginning of the play (the exceptions being Dubs, who dances solo but as if her partner were there with her. The others may or may not have props). The sense, as they go, is that they do it over and over, unaware as it is happening that they are reliving those moments in time. When they happen to overlap they are unaware that they are doing so. When it is not their turn to be heard they can freeze or still speak quietly or...? (Whatever you think, you brilliant director you!)

Everyone, that is, except Lilith, who sits in the middle of it all, painfully aware of what is happening and listening and looking bored or tired or fed up or maybe at times all of these and more.

GLUT

I used to go to a yoga studio down the street from here. We did this meditation one time after class, it was cool, it was like, you imagine

E

Portugal, you will love, love, love it!

DUBS

I've never been but it's supposed to be far out.

GLUT

It was cool, it was like, you imagine

E

Portugal, you will love

DUBS

to be far out.

GLUT

Imagine



Portugal E

Far out. DUBS

You must go E

I'm a writer so, and they don't have any women DUBS

Sounds gay, right? E  
I'm not a homophobe

I made all these little videos and P

I'd plot adventures--I love adventures. I bought every piece of lingerie ELLE

I wanted him to admire what a freak I was G

What a waste of silk and suede ESSIE

He was hot GLUT

I wanted him to admire what a freak I was G

He was hot GLUT

He was up all night E

To admire what a freak I was G

ELLE

I wanted her to recoil. Get mad and

G

I still wanted him to reach down and feel how wet I was and be impressed. To admire what a freak

ALL

I was

ESSIE

young. I was just married

G

He, I've never seen him before, didn't know him, but he

DUBS

shattered my pride against the wall

E

I wish scalping was still a thing. And I'm surprised that Lily has a violent streak.  
And I'm surprised that Lily has a violent streak.  
And I'm surprised that Lily

G

Had this dream a while back that I was being raped. But I was sort of

ELLE

Mesmerized I suppose you could say. Her charisma. It's funny the

ESSIE

Truth that you knew was there all along but it hits you hard in the gut when you try to step out of line. It's easy to

P

sniffle or submerge it underwater. I liked it, my nose. I mean, I didn't

GLUT

actually need to be slut shamed by a wannabe guru to know that maybe I have shit

P

Doo-doo

GLUT

Shit

P

Doo-doo

GLUT

Shit

GLUT AND P

to work on

P

but I bet she'd be here now, telling me that

DUBS

I swallowed up truth to protect you

P

she was a harsh critic my mom, and

ESSIE

it hits you hard in the gut when you try to step out of line.

P

I'm not supposed to sweat or cry or wash my face even

DUBS AND P

I hate crying anyway.

GLUT

So after class,

ELLE

We finally got drunk enough to ask him, we were so nervous, he answered by--he nodded solemnly as

ELLE AND G

He pulled out these condoms he said he'd made himself

(Elle laughs at this)

G

They looked like

E

The organic kind, and I smoke 3. That's it. They

Take the edge off  
ELLE AND E

I had this dream  
G

this dream that came true that I didn't know I had  
P

I'm embarrassed of getting my hopes up.  
ELLE

The illusion lasting past the evidence  
DUBS

Of her being too tired to have sex with me or even connect with something other than  
ELLE

a plate of spaghetti  
DUBS

All hot and sweaty  
GLUT AND G

Body. But then it got confusing if  
G

She doesn't care anyway and  
E

Nothing really changes, for worse or  
ESSIE

nothing gets better.  
E AND ESSIE

But then it got confusing if  
G

I was into it  
GLUT AND G

It was my job  
DUBS

I was ALL  
 Fed up finally, released herself and ESSIE  
 Torched (her) (and) lacy shackles ESSIE AND DUBS  
 Doused in sand but then DUBS  
 I was ALL  
 Having a ball. P AND E  
 He says I E  
 needed (your) (their) eyes to see me to exist DUBS AND P  
 No, I DUBS  
 pity ESSIE AND GLUT  
 My granddaughter. She ESSIE  
 Loves to remind me, or maybe she hates it, but she says it anyways. Fuck, sure, ELLE  
 I should be grateful but I guess I'm just not anymore, ok? I'm not. ELLE AND E  
 And I'm sorry but I think E  
 It looked like a bag of G

Goldfish water	G AND DUBS
Till you'd smash it on a whim	DUBS
Trying to make it stronger. Taking initiative.	ELLE
Wasn't that my job?	DUBS
He had a sort of half smile while half listening and he didn't understand.	G
I was	ALL
Cheating	ELLE
I was	ALL
Not thinking	ESSIE
I was	ALL
Complicit	G
I was	ALL
Slut shamed	GLUT
I was	ALL
Shattered	DUBS

ALL

I was

P

Abusing my body

ALL

I was

E

Just trying to help.

Small beat.

ELLE AND G

You got a better way then go ahead and tell me

G

But

ELLE AND G AND DUBS

I'm getting mine.

The women all freeze.

And then P looks up, as if seeing everything for the first time.

P

I was gonna go see her

My sister, she's up in Boston. That's where her husband

It doesn't matter.

But I was supposed to see her, just her and me were gonna go out for dinner one night, I was gonna treat cause, after my book deal, you know

I really wanted, I was really looking forward to it.

...

I want to go home.

I want to do it right. I see it now. It never had anything to do with me, not who I am

My essence

It was always about our fear. Our mutual fear. And I watched it hold me back

Just like all of you

I watched it rule like it belonged more than any of us and

WE LET IT

I will not be cornered

I will not be compliant

I will not be nice

I will not lie here being penetrated and devoured bodily and spiritually and emotionally by a force so insidious and pervasive and unparalleled that the best most of us can do on our best days is to just pretend it doesn't exist.

I WILL RISE above this and whether or not you will take me

I'm getting mine.

I'm getting mine!

I'm getting mine! I'mgetting mine! I'mgettingmine. I'MGETTINGMINE.

IMGETTINGMINEIMGETTINGMINEIMGETTINGMINEIMGETTINGMINE

She screams and screams the words and as she starts to become more and more wild she grabs her bench and topples it, grabs the bandages off of her face revealing a perfectly intact nose, the one she was born with, and she smears her bruises, they were make-up all along.

She grabs the trash can and empties it everywhere, an explosion of garbage that ends up being garbage from the Freedom Can like

Spanx and permanents and fake tanner and bleaching cream and hair remover and lipstick and mop heads and oven mitts and books like *The Ginger Man* and *A Good Man is Hard to Find* and *Atlas Shrugged* and photos of little girls in beauty pageants and young women in bikinis choking on Carl's Junior and middle aged women getting tummy tucks and lonely senior women and female politicians being hated and ads that tell her what she's supposed to be.

Above and around her we hear news clippings and advice and violence and pornography and fear.

The other women are still in their trance, oblivious.

Except Dubs and Lilith, who watch everything.

Finally P is exhausted. She sits in the midst of it all.



The other women are released from their trance. They turn to Lil, aware now that they are in the relivings.

ESSIE

What happened?

GLUT

Holy shit. P!

ELLE

Are you okay?

P

I  
Don't  
Know.

DUBS

She changed.

GLUT

Oh my god you did?! That's great!

(to Dubs)

But wait, how did you?

DUBS

I was there somehow.

P

What happened?

ESSIE

What did she say?

E

Was she enlightened?

G

Did she ask for forgiveness?

GLUT

Or forgiven maybe? I think, isn't that [a part of it]

DUBS

No...

ELLE

(gesturing to the destruction)

But look? Were you hurt?

ESSIE

Punished, you were punished, was she

DUBS

No, no. She  
She threw a fit.

Tiny beat.

E

Oh

G

No.

DUBS

Yes.

A moment while everyone takes this in and realizes what  
it means.

P

I'm gonna vanish, aren't I?

No response.

P

Well?

LILITH

Yes. You are.

DUBS

No

G

She just got here!

E

Do--Lil you have to intervene

LILITH

I have no power over this

E

She should

GLUT

She hasn't even had a chance!

LILITH

The All Knowing has chosen her path now, we cannot pretend to understand.

G

This is bull-shit and you know it! It's getting faster, it's getting greedy

LILITH

It does not feel greed.

ESSIE

Do any of us even have a chance anymore?

DUBS

I don't know if we ever really did.

Pause.

Lilith goes to P and takes her hand.

LILITH

We are all a part of The All Knowing. Whatever its reasoning, you don't need to be afraid. You may not understand the why, but you can trust. It has been and will always be a mystery but you can trust.

It could be that your future was only suffering and you are being spared, the chains of existence are being broken. Look at your life. So much that you complained about, so much that you took for granted and couldn't see--only then to have to reflect on it over and over again. To be doomed to that pain and that, that senselessness.

It is that you are perhaps being spared. Being made free. It is doing for you what you couldn't.

It will be easier if you can accept this.

P

But I'm being destroyed

LILITH

Who's to say the alternative is better?

Pause.

P

I wasn't, I know, I was never perfect.

But I'm not a bad person. Or, or worthless.

I don't think I am.

I followed the rules. I did everything pretty much the way I was supposed to, I didn't steal or, I followed the commandments, you know? And

And I didn't really hate my life actually.

G

(To P)

You know the others, the ones who were taken, they were all really something.

They weren't worthless. They

They were beautiful. They were the best of us. And they should have risen. They should've gone to the highest

I don't know what this is but I don't think I can trust that whatever is pulling the strings really knows anything at all.

A long pause where no one knows what to say. So they don't.

GLUT

Can I, could we do anything for you? Or say, carry a message or anything, if we make it?

P

Oh, um, I, maybe

Yeah. My mom. My mom, if you see her, will you tell her what happened? And that I love her?

I guess I don't know why but I guess I thought I'd see her again and I'd just

But just tell her that.

Please.

GLUT

Yes.

G

We will.

P

Okay.

Beat.

E

(To Lilith)

Should we?

She nods. The women approach her one by one, take her hands and recite their farewell to the vanisher.

G

If I ever see a YouTube I will see it  
In your memory.

ELLE

If I ever smell fresh nutmeg I will smell it  
In your memory.

ESSIE

If I ever bake a cookie I will bake it  
In your memory.

E

If I ever drench a crab-cake I will drench it  
In your memory.

GLUT

If I ever meet the royals I will greet them  
In your memory.

DUBS

And if I

Beat.

She drops P's hands and turns to Lilith.

DUBS

No.

LILITH

No?

DUBS

No.

Take me.

G

Dubs, what are you

DUBS

I can't, I won't watch this again. I won't

ELLE

But it's her time

DUBS

I'll go instead.

GLUT

(pitying)

Oh Dubs

ESSIE

Honey

G

That's not possible

DUBS

But it is.

It is possible.

It happened before. Remember Lil? Almost 60 years ago.

When a new girl threw a tantrum and an older one stepped in to take her place, and I didn't know why then but now I think it was  
So one day she could do the same for another.

Don't you think Lil?

LILITH

Perhaps.

DUBS

And I don't

I think

I am just waiting here, I think, I have been, I don't know what I'm supposed to do or learn or become here but it isn't happening.

(to P)

Maybe you're right. I think maybe I can't change.

G

You don't know that though! You could still rise!

DUBS

I

Maybe I could've, once. I had this little moment back then and I should've jumped. But instead I stayed still.

No worse, I reverted. Back to fear and anger.

G

That doesn't mean you should stop fighting

DUBS

I'm not! I'm not! I'm *moving*. I'm making a choice. I am standing up to this thing for once for me or not just for me but for us! I won't continue this way, whatever this thing wants from me I can't give it and you know what? That's ok. I have peace, I am at peace with that. My time here, it's done, and it's on *my* terms. Not the All Knowing's, *mine*. So let me do this, okay? Let me have this.

The women accept it.

DUBS

(to P)

You need to go. To your mom. To your sister. When you get to The Next Place to make it right. Not us. Okay?

P

Yes.

DUBS

And then you never abandon anyone again. Promise me.

P

I promise.

Dubs thinks.

DUBS

If you see my dad, any of you, tell him  
tell him it's all water under the bridge. And  
And tell him I miss being his daughter.

...

Okay. Let's do this

G

Oh, Dubs, I can't

DUBS

Please.

Please don't make this harder.

The women approach her one by one as they did with P.

ELLE

If I ever read a poem I will read it  
In your memory

E

If I ever have a french fry I will eat it  
In your memory

ESSIE

If I ever dance like Elvis I will dance  
In your memory

GLUT

And if I ever sing The Beatles I will sing them  
In your memory

G

If I ever meet my daughter I will name her  
In your memory

A break in tempo. They all look at P

P

And if I ever get to rise then I will rise  
In your memory.

Dubs goes to Lilith who puts her hands on her shoulders.

LILITH

Among us you will never be forgotten.



G

Abigail?  
We love you.

DUBS

(Realizing)

Me too.

(Back to Lilith)

Do it.

LILITH

Aviyakum!

The rumble. The deafening echo of a vanishing that builds and builds into a wall of sound. Gusts of wind create a whirlwind of trash. Dubs leans backs and screams into the air.

And as it reaches its climax

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE TWO

A small, gentle light starts to glow, showing Abigail, dressed in what looks like the galaxy that spreads on and on to fill the entire space, the stage, the theatre, the ceiling, the audience, **everything**.

Abigail looks around with surprise and SEES. And in this recognizes she is finally

ABIGAIL

Vitu.

Home.

She laughs and falls backward, disappearing into everything.

**END OF PLAY.**