

Making Plans
By Harrison M. Starrett

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CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

NATHAN: male, mid-twenties, JESSIE's boyfriend

JESSIE: female, mid-twenties, NATHAN's girlfriend

SAM: male, mid-twenties, friend of NATHAN and JESSIE

ADAM: male, teenager, SAM's tutee

RODGERS: female, forties-fifties, ADAM's mother

GREENE: female, thirties-fifties, SAM's boss, recorded lines

SETTING

All scenes of the play take place in an apartment shared by Nathan, Jessie, and Sam. The play spans over a few days. I-1 and I-2 occur on a Tuesday afternoon. I-3 follows very early on Wednesday morning, ending Act I. II-1 occurs Thursday afternoon and II-2 follows on Friday around noon, ending Act II.

SET DESCRIPTION

The apartment isn't too shitty, but it's not nice by any means either. It requires at least a couch, an armchair, a coffee table, an entrance to the apartment, a door to each of the bedrooms (two), and a door to the bathroom. Doors may be substituted by other means of entrances/exits as needed by the production.

THE TEXT

The text is not grammatically correct to provide creative flexibility.

A comma (,) indicates a short pause/hesitation in speech.

An ellipsis (...) indicates a longer pause/hesitation in speech. If at the end of a line, it can represent a variety of things, such as a wavering of speech, mumbling, or a character's choice to omit a very obvious word or phrase.

A dash (–) indicates a cut-off of speech that the character employs themselves.

A slash (/) indicates where the succeeding line begins. Sometimes the succeeding line cuts the previous line completely off; other times, the succeeding line overlaps the previous line.

“Beat”, “several beats”, and “long silence” are to be interpreted by the production as needed by the moment. One “beat” may be longer than another “beat”, and non-verbal action by the actor(s) may occur during that “beat” or “several beats” or “long silence”.

*Lights up on the apartment.
NATHAN is sitting on the couch.
Several beats pass.
JESSIE enters from the bathroom.
Beat.*

JESSIE
I'm not pregnant.
Beat.
It's negative.
Beat.

NATHAN
You took two tests?

JESSIE
Yeah.

NATHAN
Okay.
Beat.
But no uh, no... ?

JESSIE
No... it'll be soon though. I can feel it.

NATHAN
Yeah.

JESSIE
Maybe tomorrow.
Beat.
You okay?

NATHAN
Yeah, is it ring day?

JESSIE
What?

NATHAN
Is it ring day that's making you act weird?

JESSIE
I'm not acting /

NATHAN
Yeah you are.
Beat.

JESSIE
I'm just uh... I'm not scared.

NATHAN
Scared?

JESSIE
I, I don't know I thought maybe you thought that /

NATHAN
Gotcha.
Beat.

JESSIE
I just don't want you to worry.

NATHAN
Then talk to me, tell me what's wrong.
Beat.
Say something!

JESSIE
Nathan I... I don't know.

NATHAN
What do you /

JESSIE
I don't know how I feel.

NATHAN
But you feel /

JESSIE
Yes. I do. I just... I need time.

NATHAN
Before ring day?

JESSIE
Fuck I don't /

NATHAN

“Don’t know”? What do you –

Beat.

Is it recent?

JESSIE

It?

NATHAN

God what you’re feeling, is it recent?

JESSIE

Yeah, yeah I think so.

NATHAN

How recent?

JESSIE

Like, I don’t know the past few days. Why?

NATHAN

If you know when it started maybe you can know /

JESSIE

It’s not cause and effect up here, hon. It just is.

NATHAN

It doesn’t have to be.

JESSIE

Well, this is what you got, so /

NATHAN

Please don’t get like that.

JESSIE

You’re like, interrogating me right now.

NATHAN

I’m only trying to help.

JESSIE

And I’m telling you, I need time.

NATHAN

How much?

JESSIE

I don't know! I'll tell you when I'm done, just, I need to think over –

NATHAN laughs.

Don't laugh at me.

NATHAN

Why? It's like you're glitching on me. "I need more time, I need more time, I need more time."

Time to do what?

JESSIE

I don't know yet / that's what I'm saying.

NATHAN

No, no, no, no that is such bullshit. You have to know something. You have to have a sliver of a thought. You write fuckin' poetry for Christ's sake.

JESSIE begins to exit

Don't walk away from me.

JESSIE

Why?

NATHAN

It's immature.

JESSIE laughs.

JESSIE

Immature? Alright, got it.

Continues to walk away.

NATHAN

Jessie!

JESSIE stops.

I am trying to help.

JESSIE

You aren't listening to me. This can't / be a conversation if you aren't listening to me it requires for you to give a shit /

NATHAN

You cannot give me nothing and walk away like I'm the bad guy that is not cool, I need –

Cutting her off.

I do give a shit!

Beat.

You are scaring me.

JESSIE smirks.

NATHAN (continued)

I am scared. I'm sorry you don't know, I really am. I wish I could look into your brain and take out, or fix, I don't fucking know, I wanna stop the things that aren't working, that aren't helping you get better. But I can't, so I am asking you, please, to just try. Try to give me something. I can't know nothing except for the fact that you aren't okay two days before we are supposed to get engaged. A day we have been planning for two years.

Beat.

I don't want to be scared Jessie. Not when we're this close.

Several beats.

JESSIE

I'm sorry for scaring you.

Beat.

NATHAN

It's okay... thank you.

Beat.

JESSIE

I think it's your job.

Beat.

NATHAN

I don't /

JESSIE

I know you don't have it yet but come on, it's you Nathan. You're gonna get it.

NATHAN

You don't... thanks.

Beat.

JESSIE

Not one fiber in my body is scared of marrying you baby. I love you, and I promise that I'm committed. These are our plans. Okay?

NATHAN

Okay.

Beat.

JESSIE

I'm in a really strong... space, in my work. The heads at the magazine seem to finally get me. I'm this close to getting published, I can feel it.

NATHAN

So you're scared of moving?

JESSIE

I don't want to start over, that's for sure.

Beat.

NATHAN

Look, I get that it's scary.

Beat.

And I understand that, that I can't know what it's like to be you. My MBA world is way different than uh, than your world... but like you said, your writing is getting better.

JESSIE

Thanks.

NATHAN

No, seriously, I like it. I feel like I get it more now. The one with the homeless guy juggling /

JESSIE

We don't need to talk about that /

NATHAN

They support you for a reason, right? You have a product, that I can understand! You have a product, and wherever you go next, if I get this job, you are going to take that product with you.

JESSIE

Nathan it's not that /

NATHAN

Trust me, you are not talented only in the eyes of the people who know you.

JESSIE

How do you know?

NATHAN

I just do. It's not like your boss would urge some copyeditor to keep writing to then print their shitty poetry as a reward for a good job. You're an employee, that's what a paycheck is for. He doesn't owe shit to you besides that.

JESSIE

She.

NATHAN

Right, she, when you do get published baby, it'll be 'cause you earned it. You've already earned respect, motivation, and support, so it's just a matter of time til you earn the rest. And you will because that's who you are. That's who I feel in love with.

Beat.

You gotta believe in yourself like I believe in you.

NATHAN (continued)

Several beats.

Let me help. Please.

Several beats.

JESSIE

Nods.

Thank you.

NATHAN

You're welcome.

Several beats.

JESSIE

When do they call?

NATHAN

He checks his phone.

In thirty-ish minutes.

JESSIE

You're going to /

NATHAN

The college, yeah. He wants to be there when they call. For support.

JESSIE

That's sweet.

NATHAN

Yeah. Being there will be good for me too.

JESSIE nods.

Several beats.

You're really not pregnant?

JESSIE shakes her head.

NATHAN sighs.

Periods are weird.

JESSIE

Yeah. You could say that.

Beat.

NATHAN

I almost wish that you were pregnant.

Beat.

Know what I mean?

JESSIE

No.

Beat.

NATHAN

I'm minutes from this interview, days away from graduation, you're maybe a week away from getting published, and we're only two days away from getting engaged... we're always waiting for things, planning for things... I just want shit to happen at this point.

Beat.

Don't you?

JESSIE

What?

NATHAN

Don't you... aren't we ready?

Beat.

JESSIE

To have kids?

NATHAN

I mean... yeah?

Beat.

JESSIE

No.

Beat.

NATHAN

You don't think we /

JESSIE

Not for that.

NATHAN

Why?

Beat.

Why?

JESSIE

It's too much too fast. You're just getting out of school, we're not even engaged.

NATHAN

Practically we are /

JESSIE

It'd change everything. It'd become everything.

NATHAN

Maybe but /

JESSIE

No, not maybe. Not at all maybe.

NATHAN

Okay, but don't you think together we could handle it?

JESSIE

You don't handle a child. You have a child.

NATHAN

I know but, I, what I mean is like we're emotionally ready, and that we have what it takes.

JESSIE

I don't want a child right now Nathan.

NATHAN

Then when do you want children?

JESSIE

I don't know, five years from now maybe?

NATHAN

Five years?

JESSIE

Nathan it's not... I don't want to have this conversation right now. I know its starts, its stops, I know its complete fuckin' itinerary and I don't want to do it right now, okay? Can that be okay?

Beat.

NATHAN

Fine.

Long silence.

What if it was positive?

Several beats.

Right.

Several beats.

I get it.

Several beats.

It's good you're not pregnant then.

Several beats.

JESSIE

I'm not ready love.
Several beats.

NATHAN

I know we are both in our own walks with God, and I know that your walk is definitely a little bit different than mine, but with something like that... it's like we'd be walking in opposite directions.
Several beats.

JESSIE

Then wear a condom.
Beat.

If you're so scared of what you know would happen, then avoid it.

NATHAN

I can't.

JESSIE

Why not?

NATHAN

You know why, it's not /

JESSIE

Then why are we having sex?

NATHAN

Jessie, you're on the pill. We've talked about this.

JESSIE

I think we should talk about it again, 'cause if you're gonna guilt-trip me about "walking in the opposite direction", then I'd like to know why I don't ever hear you pray for forgiveness after each time you fuck me.

NATHAN

Jessie /

JESSIE

Without a condom.
Beat.

NATHAN

We are going to get married. It's gonna happen, so it's more okay than not. Condoms are just /

JESSIE
Too far?

NATHAN
Yes.

JESSIE laughs.

We're already having sex, I don't want, I'm not trying to stack anything else on top of that.

JESSIE
So it's my fault that we're having sex?

NATHAN
No! It's just...

Beat.

I do pray about it. And confess. A lot.

Beat.

I never want to hurt your feelings.

JESSIE
As long as you don't hurt God's feelings right?

Several beats.

I'm sorry, I didn't mean /

NATHAN
It's okay.

Beat.

I get it.

Several beats.

It's just, you're really okay for it? For getting the rings?

Beat.

I have to ask.

JESSIE
I'm okay.

Several beats.

NATHAN
Six years.

JESSIE
Six years.

Beat.

NATHAN
That means we've been together for what, a quarter of our lives?

JESSIE

Yeah... it's wild...

Beat.

I don't know how you've managed it.

NATHAN

What?

JESSIE

Nothing. It's stupid.

NATHAN

No, what do you mean?

Beat.

JESSIE

I just don't know why you haven't left me by now... I know I would've.

Beat.

NATHAN walks to JESSIE and embraces her.

NATHAN

I love you. No matter how much you scare me, I will always love you.

JESSIE

Promise?

NATHAN

Promise.

They kiss and hold each other.

JESSIE

You have to go.

NATHAN

Groans.

No I don't.

JESSIE

This is important.

NATHAN

He checks his phone while still holding her.

Dr. Smith texted me twice.

JESSIE

You gotta go.

JESSIE (continued)

Looks at NATHAN's face.

It's okay.

NATHAN

Sighs.

Okay.

He detaches from JESSIE and moves around the apartment to grab his bag and jacket.

Wish me luck.

JESSIE

You don't need it.

They kiss.

Love you.

NATHAN

Love you more.

NATHAN exits.

Several beats pass.

JESSIE sits at the couch and opens her laptop, which is sitting on the coffee table.

She types on it sporadically and seems to be reading a great deal very quickly.

After using the laptop for several beats, she seems to find what she is looking for.

JESSIE

Fuck me.

She continues to read.

Fuck me. Fuck. Me.

She sits back and looks at the screen. She begins to breathe heavily and closes the computer.

She then stands and paces, trying to maintain composure.

After a moment of doing so, she grabs a pillow and screams into it.

FUCK!!!

She puts the pillow down and struggles to slow her breathing.

After breathing for several beats, she retrieves a small glass pipe, lighter, and notebook with pen from her and NATHAN's bedroom. The pipe has a bowl of marijuana that has already been smoked, but not completely. She sits down on the couch begins to smoke from the pipe. She smokes quickly and forcefully. She opens her notebook writes in it sporadically as she smokes.

Several beats.

SAM enters from his bedroom. He looks scruffy and yawns.

He looks at JESSIE for a beat.

SAM

No no no no no no... if this is a wake and bake, then we're doing this right.

SAM (continued)

SAM prepares for a wake and bake as if it is a ritual. He turns off the lights if there are any, closes the blinds if there are any, and then ceremoniously pulls a chest of sorts from under the coffee table and places it atop. He gently opens the chest and pulls out candles, incense, an incense burner, a small baggie of bud, and a Gandalf glass pipe. He first lights the candles and incense. Then he grinds bud and packs the Gandalf glass pipe's bowl. After doing so, he takes JESSIE's pipe out of her hands and replaces it with his pipe, which he lights for her.

At some point in this ritual, he resumes talking to JESSIE.

So?

Beat.

JESSIE

So?

SAM

What's up?

JESSIE

Jesus Christ.

Beat.

Can't I smoke just to smoke?

SAM

No. I smoke because I want to. You always smoke for a reason.

Beat.

Alright.

JESSIE continues to write.

Several beats.

Workin' on something new?

JESSIE

Yeah.

Beat.

SAM

Fun.

Beat.

You know, if your poetry career ever goes further down the toilet, you can always work with me and tutor writing again to uninterested high schoolers. It'd only increase your suicidal thoughts by maybe, I don't know, ten-percent.

JESSIE

Thanks Sam. I really appreciate the support.

SAM

Don't mention it.

As JESSIE writes, SAM slowly pulls a headscratcher out of the chest and tries to scratch JESSIE's head with it.

JESSIE

Yo, what the, what fucking, stop!

She pushes SAM away.

SAM laughs.

What the fuck is that?

SAM

Headscratcher! Here try it.

JESSIE

No.

SAM

You sure? Shit's otherworldly.

JESSIE

I'll pass.

SAM laughs.

SAM scratches his head with the headscratcher, groaning several times.

Can you like, not orgasm right next to me?

SAM

Laughing.

I have never met someone who smokes as aggressively as you do. You hit that bitch fucking determined to feel good. Are you even high?

Beat.

Alright alright, you're right. I'll wait.

JESSIE looks at SAM.

'Til you're ready. You're obviously in your feelins' for some shit and I bet my left nut that Nate tried forcing it out of you this morning and failed miserably, as always, making you have no choice but to get zooted as a motherfucker in complete silence. Alone. So yeah, I'll wait until you're ready to talk because I, am a good friend.

JESSIE

Sounds like a plan.

They continue to smoke.

SAM turns a Bluetooth speaker on that is on the table. He looks through his phone, trying to find a song to play.

He plays either "Circles" by Mac Miller or a song similar to it.

Groans.

You're such a child.

JESSIE (continued)

SAM laughs.

Both continue to smoke for several beats.

JESSIE clears her throat and closes her eyes.

SAM notices this and turns down the volume.

I need five hundred dollars.

Beat.

SAM

Is this your new poem?

Beat.

JESSIE

I need five hundred dollars, I need to borrow your car, and I can't tell you what it's for... will you help me?

Beat.

SAM

Uh... I don't have /

JESSIE

I know you do.

SAM

How do you /

JESSIE

You keep all your savings in that Scooby-Doo lunch box under your bed. You showed me when we tripped the first time.

SAM

Oh my God I totally did.

JESSIE

Yeah. You were really weirdly proud of it too. You cried.

SAM

I love that lunch box. It was like, half my personality in pre-school.

JESSIE

Yeah. I know.

Beat.

Can you help me?

Several beats.

SAM
You're not asking Nate?

JESSIE
I can't.
Beat.

SAM
That's kinda fucked Jessie.

JESSIE
I know.

SAM
No that's really... you're not in trouble / are you?

JESSIE
No I'm not, I...
Beat.
I am.

SAM
Then tell me what's /

JESSIE
I can't.
Several beats.

SAM
I don't like this.
Beat.

JESSIE
I'm sorry.
Beat.
I need it. I wouldn't be asking you if I didn't.

SAM
No shit.

JESSIE
I really need your help.

SAM
Why can't you tell me?

JESSIE

It's something I need to do alone.

SAM

So I can't come with you?

JESSIE

No.

SAM

How long are you gonna be gone?

Beat.

Jessie?

JESSIE

All day.

SAM

Like 10 PM all day or like, all day all day.

JESSIE

All day.

SAM

Solid... what happens if you don't do it alone?

JESSIE

I don't know.

Beat.

It'd be really bad.

SAM

That's ominous.

Beat.

Would someone get hurt?

Beat.

JESSIE

Yes.

SAM

That's why you're doing it alone?

JESSIE

Yes.

Beat.

SAM

So... just to confirm, you're telling me to agree to something I don't know with a lot of money, and if I don't, someone gets hurt.

Beat.

JESSIE

I'm not trying to blackmail you Sam.

SAM

Sounds like blackmail to me.

JESSIE

I'm asking for your help.

SAM

By threatening that someone will get hurt!

JESSIE

You asked!

SAM

Well you could've lied! That's a lot to put on someone.

JESSIE

I...

SAM

And you're really not telling Nate?

JESSIE

I told you, I can't.

SAM

And I can't tell him either?

JESSIE

Fuck no!

SAM starts to laugh.

What?

SAM laughs louder.

What? Don't fucking...

SAM's laughter turns into harsh coughs from the smoke.

JESSIE begins to laugh as well.

Stop laughing at me! Stop!

Both keep laughing.

SAM

No longer coughing, but still laughing.

What kind of wake and bakes are you used to?

Laughter.

Fuckin' blackmailing me and shit. "I need five hundred dollars now or someone dies!"

Both keep laughing.

Shit!

Laughter slowly dying down.

Oh I really don't like this Jessie.

Laughter dies completely.

Beat.

JESSIE

I know.

Several beats.

SAM

Okay.

Beat.

JESSIE

Okay?

SAM

I'll do it.

He pulls out his keys.

JESSIE

She reaches for his keys.

Thank you, Sam. I really can't /

SAM

He pulls the keys away.

On one condition.

Beat.

Read me your poem.

JESSIE

Sighs.

Goddammit, Sam.

SAM

Read me your poem, or I won't give you the money.

JESSIE

You know I don't like sharing my writing. It gives me anxiety.

SAM

Well, I don't really enjoy being blackmailed for hundreds of dollars while smoking a fat bowl, but here we are.

JESSIE

I hate you.

SAM

Love you bunches.

Beat.

Come on, whatcha waiting for?

Beat.

JESSIE

It's called "Abscission."

SAM

Ooooh fancy.

JESSIE

Fuck you.

SAM laughs.

Beat.

JESSIE clears her throat.

I pray for cold abscission...

JESSIE awkwardly giggles/sighs, almost quitting.

SAM

No no no, keep going.

Beat.

JESSIE

Let my leaves fall in quiet severance

Without pause for regret.

Linger not in the breeze,

Plummet down into the

Jagged cracks between soil and rocks

That hold me tight in my place,

Where sheltering worms can spare more

Warmth for you than I.

Beat.

I'd fall with you if I could.

Beat.

That's what I got so far.

Beat.

SAM

Damn. I like it... maybe not quite worth five hundred dollars /

JESSIE

Sam /

SAM

I really like it. You should show me more of your stuff! I shouldn't have to bargain with your blackmail every time I want to hear your poetry. It's not a healthy way of gaining readers.

SAM exits to his bedroom.

JESSIE takes a deep breath.

SAM enters and gives the cash and keys to JESSIE.

JESSIE

Thank you.

JESSIE holds the cash and keys in her hands for a moment and then begins to cry.

SAM

Hey hey, it's okay.

SAM holds JESSIE as she cries into him.

It's okay. Don't worry, everything's okay.

Beat.

Whatever this is, it's temporary. Everything is temporary.

Beat.

It is temporary right?

JESSIE

Crying and muffled.

I think so.

SAM

See. I told you. You're gonna be okay.

They hold each other for several beats.

JESSIE slowly stops crying.

They hold each other a little longer and then JESSIE pulls away from SAM.

JESSIE

Shit. I got your shirt wet.

SAM

It's okay. I'll burn it and buy another one.

JESSIE

Laughing.

Fuck you.

Beat.

JESSIE (continued)
I'm sorry.

SAM
It's okay. Kind of. I wish you would tell me.
Beat.

I understand though. Doing things by yourself. Big things.
Beat.
I'm... I'm proud of you. It shows you're strong.

JESSIE
I feel pretty fucking weak.

SAM
Trust me, I'm actually proud of you. When's the last time you did something by yourself? Like, completely by yourself?

JESSIE
It's been a minute.

SAM
Yeah. Bet it has.
Beat.
Maybe... maybe teamwork's a little overrated.
Several beats.

JESSIE
You playing another song?

SAM
Oh. Yeah.
SAM searches for another song on his phone and plays "Chateau (Feel Alright)" by Jo, or something similar.
SAM and JESSIE finish smoking their bowl as they listen to the song.
After they finish the bowl, SAM begins cleaning up, returning the room to its appearance before they started smoking. He leaves the candles burning. JESSIE remains seated, listening to the song, sometimes writing in her notebook.
SAM brings a notebook and calculator out from his bedroom and then stands for a moment looking at JESSIE. She doesn't notice.

SAM
Jessie?

JESSIE
Yeah?
Beat.

SAM

I have my tutoring session soon.

JESSIE

Oh, right. Sorry, I'll leave. I need to anyway.

SAM

Okay. Oh, yeah. Right.

SAM puts the notebook and calculator on the table.

JESSIE prepares to leave.

Beat.

What do I tell Nate when he gets back? You know he's gonna notice my car's gone.

JESSIE

Don't tell him anything. You don't know anyway.

SAM

Yeah, sure.

Beat.

I hope it goes okay, whatever it is.

JESSIE

Thanks.

Beat.

They hug.

I'll see you later.

SAM

See ya.

JESSIE exits.

SAM remains standing for a beat, then he continues to prepare for tutoring. He sits on the couch.

Several beats.

There is a knock on the door. SAM looks at the door.

Lights fade to black as the song continues to play during the scene transition.

End of scene.

The song fades out as lights fade up on apartment. SAM is near the end of his tutoring session with ADAM; they're sitting on the couch together with a couple of notebooks and a math textbook in front of them.

SAM

So what's the main thing to remember with these, as almost always?

Beat.

ADAM

The uh... the little things?

SAM

Yes sir. It's always the little things that are gonna screw you over. You know the math, you get the principles, it's just things like signage and missing exponents and such, the things you forget about, yeah?

ADAM

Yeah.

SAM

Do you have any more questions on the bigger stuff?

ADAM

No... I just feel like it's the same thing over and over again, but like different a bit?

SAM

Yeah, you get used to it. Once you get out of Algebra 2 and into Calculus and Trig you'll actually get into new territory.

ADAM

Like what?

SAM

Uh, well, pretty much calculus is about graphing patterns and figuring out how to predict them, while Trig is a buttload of circles.

ADAM

Huh.

SAM

Stimulating right?

There's a knock on the door.

Come in!

SAM (continued)

RODGERS enters.

Hi Mrs. Rodgers!

RODGERS

How you doin' sweetie?

SAM

Oh just swell.

RODGERS

Wanna drive again Adam?

ADAM

Can I?

RODGERS tosses car keys to ADAM.

Sweet, thank you!

ADAM collects his things.

RODGERS

Warm up the car for us will ya? And please don't play the music too loud.

ADAM

Of course. I mean, yes ma'am.

He moves to exit.

Thank you Sam!

SAM

No problemo. Hey, what don't we forget?

ADAM

The little things!

ADAM exits.

SAM

You so sly Mrs. Rodgers.

RODGERS

Works like a charm.

She sits on the couch.

SAM begins to gather his things and put them away.

What'd y'all work on today?

SAM

Today we did some practice on the composition of functions, which seem to be the main focus of his final coming up.

RODGERS

How's he doing with it?

SAM

Good! Just has to pay attention to the details and make sure he doesn't rush. Besides that, I'm feelin' solid that he's gonna come out with another A this semester.

RODGERS

Wonderful! I can't tell you enough how great of a help you've been. Especially with letting us use your place.

SAM

Of course! It's my job.

RODGERS

You still searching for another one?

SAM

Another place?

RODGERS

Another job.

SAM

Yes and no, I don't know. I haven't really felt drawn to anything yet. The regular?

RODGERS

I actually was thinking of trying something new.

SAM

Ooooh getting experimental are we?

RODGERS

You're too much honey.

SAM

He brings out the chest and displays its contents to her.

I might have something that will spark your interest.

RODGERS

Oh?

SAM

He pulls out a small baggie of bud.

Alaskan Thunderfuck.

Laughter.

RODGERS
Are you serious?

SAM
Deadass.
He hands RODGERS a nug.

RODGERS
She smells it.
Sativa?

SAM
Very good.

RODGERS
She hands it back to him.
I must say you do have my attention.

SAM
Want a taste?

RODGERS
Why else would Adam be driving?
Laughter.
SAM starts to grind and pack a bowl in the Gandalf glass pipe.
So you haven't felt anything?
SAM sighs.
Come on hon, you can't sidestep me forever.

SAM
You can't be my tutoring client, my bud client, and my therapist.

RODGERS
Says who?

SAM
Says my tutoring contract. It must say it somewhere.

RODGERS
Maybe in your contract, but in mine, as a public high school guidance counselor, being your bud client and "therapist" are definitely in there.

SAM
We better start lookin' for lawyers then.
RODGERS waits patiently.
Okay okay... I haven't been looking.

He offers the pipe to RODGERS.

RODGERS

No, you packed.

SAM

Classy lady.

He lights the bowl.

RODGERS

Why aren't you looking?

SAM

It depresses me.

They begin passing the pipe between themselves.

None of it appeals to me.

RODGERS

Nothing?

SAM

Nada.

RODGERS

Have you considered just trying something?

SAM

Yeah, I have, but I don't want to try something and fail at it, or even worse learn to hate it but find myself dependent on it and then get really depressed.

RODGERS

What about teaching? I wouldn't mind working with you.

SAM

I'm tired of school.

RODGERS

You do enjoy it, though, don't you?

SAM

No, I'm tired of school. I'd have to do a year of classes to get a certificate to teach.

RODGERS

Oh.

SAM

Which is such bullshit for my case. I mean, I've got a degree in mathematics and a degree in communications. What else do you want?

RODGERS

More money and more paperwork.

SAM

You're telling me. Plus I'd be forced to teach here for like four years.

Beat.

I don't want to commit to anything, especially something I shouldn't.

RODGERS

How would you know?

SAM

I don't. Not yet anyway. It's why I'm taking my gap year.

RODGERS

Years.

Beat.

It's been two years Sam.

SAM

I know.

Beat.

I know.

Beat.

RODGERS

Are you still meditating?

SAM

Yeah.

RODGERS

That's good. Keep listening to yourself, but not to the point you're shutting everything else out.

SAM

For sure.

SAM's phone rings. He pulls it out to see who's calling.

Ah shit.

RODGERS

Laughing to self.

"Ah shit."

RODGERS (continued)

She takes another hit and watches the smoke.

Damn. This is pretty freakin' good, Sam.

SAM

Right?

He answers the phone.

Hello?

Hi ma'am how you doin'?

RODGERS

Who is it?

SAM

He holds his hand over the phone.

My pimp.

Laughter.

Beat.

Speaking to the phone.

Um... yes ma'am. That's correct.

He holds the phone away from him.

Did you tell Mrs. Greene that I'm tutoring Adam here now?

RODGERS

Was I not supposed to?

SAM

Fuck me.

Back to the phone.

Yes, yes ma'am I'm listening.

No. I understand.

I was just –

I –

Yes ma'am.

Yes, I was just trying to help Mrs. Rodgers out. My place is like a minute-walk away from the school and –

He takes the phone away from his ear.

Jesus Christ, *(to RODGERS)* can you kill me? Please kill me.

RODGERS

What's she saying?

SAM

She's getting on my ass about tutoring Adam at my home. It's "unethical."

RODGERS

What? Put her on speaker.

SAM puts the call on speaker.

GREENE

From the phone.

– and not only is it unethical, but it is also dangerous. You are putting yourself and me at risk. What if something happened to Adam while you were tutoring him? What if he was hurt in any... sort of way? Now I am not implying that you would do anything like that, I hope you don't think I would ever think you would do such a thing, but if something did happen to Adam, I would be liable to be sued for serious allegations. / Did you think about that? Of course not. I don't know what I'm going to do with you. You've put me in a terrible position.

RODGERS

Overlapping.

I emailed her saying “thank you” for your understanding and then complimented you.

Laughter.

Oh shoot can she hear /

SAM

Nah I put her on mute.

Laughter.

GREENE

Moreover, I am still missing three, three reconciliations from you. We have been over this: you need to do them immediately after your session. Not whenever you get to it. Immediately. / How else am I able to confirm that you did indeed have your tutoring sessions? How am I supposed to know exactly how much I am supposed to pay you?

RODGERS

What a bitch!

Laughter.

SAM

How much do you think she makes per session?

RODGERS

I don't know.

SAM

Guess.

GREENE

Are you listening to me?

SAM

He unmutes the phone and takes it off speaker.

Yes ma'am. I understand. I'm terribly sorry.

He mutes the phone.

Guess.

RODGERS

The same as you?

SAM

Doubled.

RODGERS

What?

SAM

I get twenty, she gets forty.

RODGERS

My goodness, she is a pimp.

SAM

Right!

He unmutes the phone.

Yes ma'am, I promise to work on this.

He mutes the phone.

Laughter.

RODGERS

You know what hon, why don't you just work for me?

SAM

Privately?

RODGERS

I'll pay you more.

SAM

Are we negotiating?

Beat.

Thirty dollars.

RODGERS

Done.

SAM
Really?

RODGERS
“Deadass.”
Laughter.

SAM
Wait, do you think my other parents would do the same thing?

RODGERS
Why not! It’d definitely be cheaper, you can be more flexible, and nobody would have to deal with this piece of work anymore.
Beat.

SAM
Fuck it. I’m in.
They shake hands.

RODGERS
Fantastic! You’re hired.
Laughter.

SAM
Guess I better update my soon-to-be ex-employer.
He unmutes and returns the call to speaker.
Mrs. Greene? Yes can I speak for a moment?

GREENE
Yes Sam.

SAM
I’ve very recently learned about a different more profitable career opportunity, so I regret to inform you that I will no longer be offering my services.
Beat.

GREENE
What?

SAM
I quit.
Beat.

GREENE
Okay, Sam. Would you be willing to assist me in transitioning your students to another of our tutors?

SAM

That won't be necessary.

He ends the call.

Laughter.

Damn that felt good.

RODGERS

You know what also feels good? Alaskan Thunderfuck.

Laughter.

Holy smokes Sam.

SAM

I know. Fuckin' hits different.

RODGERS

It really does.

SAM

Isn't Adam still waiting?

Beat.

Laughter.

NATHAN enters.

NATHAN

Sam you can smell that shit in the stairwell.

He sees RODGERS.

Oh, hi?

Laughter.

RODGERS

Hi sweetie! I'm Adam's mom.

Beat.

NATHAN

Who's Adam?

Beat.

Laughter.

RODGERS

To SAM.

I really do have to go though.

SAM

How much you want?

RODGERS

Oh you know me, I don't need much. I'm old.

SAM

Oh shut it.

He prepares a small baggie with bud in it.

Two g's good?

RODGERS

That's perfect.

SAM gives her the baggie.

She starts to take money out of her wallet.

SAM

Don't worry about it.

RODGERS

No no I gotta /

SAM

You just increased my pay by fifty percent. Trust me, it's yours.

RODGERS

No I... well alright, if you say so.

SAM

Same time Thursday?

RODGERS

Yes sir!

She stands and begins to walk but then and stops.

Woah. Yep. I've uh... I'm high.

Giggles.

Thank the gods Adam is sixteen.

Laughter.

SAM

Have a good one Mrs. Rodgers! And seriously, thank you so much.

RODGERS

Thank you honey. And hey, this conversation about uh... about...

SAM

My life?

RODGERS

That. It will be continued.

SAM

I'm sure it will.

RODGERS

Bye-bye sweetie.

SAM

See you Thursday!

RODGERS exits.

SAM puts his feet up on the table and puffs at the Gandalf pipe.

NATHAN smirks.

NATHAN

So after your two-year gap year, you decide to pursue drug dealing.

SAM

I'm not a drug dealer.

NATHAN

Right.

SAM

I'm a drug mediator.

NATHAN

Fuckin' A Sam.

SAM

I mean it I'm / not a dealer I...

NATHAN

Can't you be serious for once in your life?

SAM

Jesus "Dad" all I'm doing is getting the drugs for them.

NATHAN

Them?

SAM

Yes. Them.

NATHAN
How many parents you selling to?

SAM
I'm not selling /

NATHAN
How many?
Beat.

SAM
All of them.

NATHAN
All of them?

SAM
Newsflash Nate: people like to get high. Especially middle-aged women about to go through menopause.

NATHAN
Apparently.

SAM
They don't like dealing with dealers alright. I help them out.

NATHAN
And they pay you, right?
Beat.

SAM
I consider it more like a tip.
NATHAN smirks.
Do you want my third of the rent or not?

NATHAN
You shouldn't have to sell drugs to pay rent.

SAM
I know an entire social class that would disagree with you.

NATHAN
Sam, you got two degrees. Two, private college issued fucking degrees. What are you doing?

SAM
Using them.

NATHAN

Got it, my mistake. You should call up admissions, they'll wanna interview you for an alumni spotlight! Show them kids how you're using your degrees to the fullest fucking potential.

SAM

Nate, can you not be a dick? I have money coming in, I'm moving forward, I'm meditating, I'm fucking happy!

NATHAN

Fine. Then you shouldn't be too worried when I tell you that Jessie and I are moving out next Monday.

Beat.

SAM

What are you talking about?

NATHAN

I got the job.

SAM

The job?

NATHAN

God save me the fucking job I interviewed for today. I told you about this... are you always high? Or do you have moments in between when you're sober that I can put in my calendar.

SAM

Next Monday?

NATHAN

Sighs.

Yes.

SAM

That's less than a week.

NATHAN

Yeah, it is. Meaning you /

SAM

Wait, hold up, are you paying next month's rent?

NATHAN

Now he's getting it.

SAM
Nate?

NATHAN
I don't know.

SAM
You don't know?

NATHAN
Should I pay for a month that I'm not here?

SAM
Oh fuck me.

NATHAN
Look, this can be a good thing. It'll exponentially accelerate your process of finding a real job and ending this /

SAM
I just quit my job.

NATHAN
You what?

SAM
I'm gonna be tutoring Adam privately now for more money so I quit my job and, oh god I need to make sure all the other parents agree to do it too or I am beyond fucked.

NATHAN
You quit before you asked them?

SAM
It was /

NATHAN
Laughing.
Why the hell would you /

SAM
Just fuck off for a minute alright! It was a spur of the moment thing and it's a good choice it just... fucking fuck!
SAM grabs the calculator and begins tapping at it quickly.

NATHAN
What're you doing?

SAM

Calculating if I'll be homeless next month what do you think?

SAM continues using the calculator.

Beat.

NATHAN

Well?

SAM

Gimme a sec, Jesus.

Beat.

SAM stops using the calculator.

Either I get another job or find a roommate.

NATHAN

Obviously it's find a job.

SAM

Bro did I ask /

NATHAN

It's been two years, man. It's time.

SAM

Is everyone counting!

NATHAN

Who's gonna be your roommate? It's not like you have many people to choose from.

SAM

Apparently not.

Beat.

NATHAN

I'm trying to help you.

SAM

Every time you say that I honestly wonder if it's supposed to make me feel better or you.

NATHAN

How am I gonna help you if I can't tell you the truth?

SAM

Your truth.

NATHAN

Oh shut the fuck up with that / hippie bullshit.

SAM

I do not need to choose my career right now. I'm not like you that I had a passion since I was eight years old selling fuckin' laffy taffy one dollar a piece during recess. I was the little dipshit playing four-square, pelting all the girls that I could. When I find my passion, I will go for it. But right now, I don't have it.

NATHAN

How long's it gonna be Sam?

SAM

Dude, I don't / know.

NATHAN

Two years from now? Three? Five? / Ten?

SAM

I don't know!

Beat.

Why do you gotta be an asshole to me man?

NATHAN

You don't give me a choice.

SAM

I'm not making you do anything.

NATHAN

Exactly. You want me to do you the "good service" of doing nothing at all. How the fuck am I supposed to feel about that? You think it feels good watching you smoke your life away? You think that I'm getting a second-hand high, making wonderful lasting memories? I hate this Sam, and I really hate that this is how I'm probably gonna leave you, and that there's nothing that you'll do about it.

Beat.

It's fucking disappointing.

Beat.

SAM

I'm sorry Nate, but no matter how much of a disappointment I might be, this apartment is as much mine as it is yours. Just because I don't pay for it with a nice little stipend every few months doesn't change that. And don't act as if you're above me just because you "have a plan."

Beat.

You tell Jessie?

NATHAN
She's coming with me.

SAM
You are so beyond oblivious.

NATHAN
You know something I don't know?

SAM
Do I?

Smirks.

That pissed you off, didn't it?

Beat.

All I'm saying is that you can get on my ass "as a friend" and tell me that I'm a stoner without any resemblance of a plan, but that doesn't make any of your shit more in order than mine. She has something going on, and you'd be fucking stupid if you think she'll be all rainbows and sunshine when you tell her about y'all's plan's "new development."

SAM puts down the pipe and prepares to leave.

NATHAN
Where you going?

SAM
I'm going for a walk, maybe check out some potential spots to live in my car, wanna come and give me advice on that too?

Moves to exit.

NATHAN
Wait.

SAM
What?

Beat.

NATHAN
I want only the best for you, Sam.

SAM
Fuck you.

NATHAN
Sorry if I'm brutal about it, but I think you deserve more than this. You've worked too hard to be here.

Beat.

I... you would tell me if you knew something about Jessie, right?

SAM
She's your partner.

NATHAN
I'm not blind, I know she isn't good right now. But she won't tell me anything.
Beat.
Has she said anything?

SAM
No.

NATHAN
I know she took your car. Is she going somewhere or something?

SAM
I don't know.
Beat.

NATHAN
Look, I know you both got closer last summer when I was gone so /

SAM
She didn't tell me anything Nate. Matter of fact, I'm in the dark, too.
SAM moves to exit and then stops.
Be patient for once. She needs to come to you. Not the other way around.
He points at the pipe on table.
And by all means hit that! You need it way more than I do.
SAM exits.
Several beats pass.

NATHAN
He pulls out his phone and calls JESSIE. He leaves a voicemail.
Hey, um, I know you're probably busy so I'm sorry for calling, but uh, I got big news... they offered me the job.
Beat.
I have until Friday to tell them yes or no, and if I say yes, I'd start next Monday. Crazy right? Just *immediately* after graduation... so yeah, I obviously want to talk about it with you. When you're back home of course and uh, not busy.
Beat.
If you can't give me a call back that's fine, I'll just wait for you to get home.
Beat.
I love you. Bye.
He ends the voicemail and then stands for several beats holding his phone. He looks at the pipe for a moment, then looks away.
Blackout.
End of scene.

Lights up on apartment. It's around 3AM the next morning. NATHAN is asleep on the couch. Several beats. JESSIE enters the apartment. She is carrying a white bag. She pauses a moment, thinking, and then moves to the bathroom. She comes out of the room without the bag and looks at NATHAN. She is thinking a great deal about what to do next. After a moment, she decides to wake NATHAN up. She moves to him and gently touches him.

JESSIE

Whispering.

Nathan... hey baby.

NATHAN grunts a little, slowly waking up.

Hey, you wanna come to bed?

NATHAN

Rubbing his eyes and face.

Hey, um...

JESSIE

Let's go to sleep baby.

She starts to move to the bedroom.

NATHAN

Hey, wait.

Beat.

Where were you?

Beat.

JESSIE

I was driving.

NATHAN

I called you.

JESSIE

I know.

NATHAN

Then...

Beat.

JESSIE

Let's go to bed honey. I'm / really tired.

NATHAN

No, no I waited for you.

JESSIE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to wait.

NATHAN

It's okay just... I wanna talk.

Beat.

JESSIE

Okay.

Beat.

NATHAN

Okay?

JESSIE

Yeah.

Beat.

NATHAN

I want to take this job. I really liked interning there last summer. They're good people... a good structure, and I think I, that we would do really well there.

Beat.

They said they'd provide a hotel room for us as we find a more uh, a permanent place.

Several beats.

What do you think?

Beat.

JESSIE

It feels really sudden.

NATHAN

It's been /

JESSIE

Two years, I know.

Beat.

I'm so close here.

Beat.

NATHAN

Yeah.

Several beats.

We don't have to decide right now.

Beat.

It is in three days...

Beat.

What are you afraid of?

Beat.

I mean, we've talked about you not wanting to start over. I thought we were through that.

JESSIE

Yeah.

NATHAN

Then what else is there?

Beat.

It's something else, right?

Beat.

I know you baby.

Several beats.

JESSIE

I don't...

Beat.

I think I want to start seeing a therapist.

Beat.

NATHAN

Are you serious?

Several beats.

What the fuck Jessie?

JESSIE

I said I'm thinking about it. I think it'd help me.

NATHAN

I can help you.

JESSIE

You do help me, but /

NATHAN

I could help you more if you let me, you don't /

JESSIE

Nathan you can't /

NATHAN

You don't talk to me!

JESSIE

I am talking to you I /

NATHAN

No you don't! Not at all! I ask you a straightforward question and you say "I think I need a therapist." Are you serious? How fucking unaware can you be?

JESSIE

Nathan I am trying / to be honest...

NATHAN

You don't share, you keep all your shit to yourself. I have to work so hard to /

JESSIE

You don't have to!

NATHAN

How?

JESSIE

Let me do the work Nathan. You can't fix me.

NATHAN

I'm not trying to /

JESSIE

Yes you are!

Beat.

It's okay, I get it... I love you for it. You care, a lot, but you gotta let me figure me out by myself sometimes.

NATHAN

How do I know you are though? How do I know you're working on... what am I supposed to do?

JESSIE

Trust me. Fuck, have some faith in me.

NATHAN

You don't make it easy.

Several beats.

JESSIE

I just need more room. If you give me room to figure things out by myself, to process... it's not like I want to feel suffocated when I talk to you, okay? I don't want to not want to talk to you, I just... I need some room.

Beat.

And I think that means therapy.

Beat.

Please don't make me hide.

Several beats.

NATHAN

Okay.

Beat.

JESSIE

Thank you.

Beat.

If you think about it like religion, you might feel more okay about /

NATHAN

Don't... please don't do that.

JESSIE

I'm just saying, you talk to God to deal with your problems. God supports you. I think I need /

NATHAN

I get it, I do. I'll support you.

Beat.

JESSIE

Okay.

Several beats.

I do love you.

Beat.

Trying to be playful.

I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you /

NATHAN

Jessie /

JESSIE

I love you I love you I love you I love you I /

NATHAN

I love you too.

Checks phone.

Fuck me... it's 3:30 in the morning.

Beat.

Oh my God.

JESSIE looks at him.

Tomorrow's ring day.

Beat.

JESSIE

Happy almost six years.

NATHAN

Happy almost six years.

Several beats.

JESSIE turns on the Bluetooth speaker on the coffee table in front of them and then searches for a song to play on her phone.

What are you doing?

JESSIE

You'll see.

Continues searching for a song.

Beat.

Selects a song.

"Still Together" by Mac DeMarco plays through the speaker.

JESSIE stands up and gestures her hand towards NATHAN, asking to dance. He hesitates.

One song.

Beat.

Please.

Beat.

NATHAN takes JESSIE's hand and stands with her. They slowly start to slow dance to the song. As they slow dance, they cannot see each other's faces.

Several beats.

NATHAN

I'm sorry. I just get... I'm sorry.

Beat.

JESSIE

It's okay.

After several beats of dancing, JESSIE begins to cry silently. NATHAN doesn't notice.

NATHAN

Gold or silver?

NATHAN (continued)

Beat.

For our rings.

JESSIE

Trying to fight tears.

Um... what do you think?

Beat.

NATHAN

I think I like gold.

Beat.

JESSIE

I like gold.

They continue to slow dance.

JESSIE continues to cry silently.

Several beats.

NATHAN

Do they ever get annoying?

JESSIE

What?

NATHAN

Rings. Do they get like, uncomfortable? I've never worn one and I have this irrational fear that I won't like the feeling of it.

JESSIE

They feel fine. If they don't at first, you get used to them.

Beat.

It'll be okay.

Beat.

NATHAN

Okay.

They continue to dance for several beats. JESSIE cries. NATHAN smiles.

At some point, NATHAN kisses JESSIE's forehead and then slowly detaches himself.

I'm gonna get ready for bed.

JESSIE

Okay, love.

NATHAN

Moves toward bedroom.

You comin'?

JESSIE

In a second.

NATHAN looks at her for a beat and then nods and exits to their bedroom.

JESSIE remains standing for a beat and then stops the song. She opens the chest and pulls out rolling papers and a grinder. She dumps leftover bud from in the grinder on the table and begins to roll a joint. She wipes away any tears that are still coming down her face. Several beats. She pauses.

I'm sorry... I'm... I didn't... I'm sorry...

She resumes and finishes rolling the joint.

Fade to black as she lights her joint, making the flame of her lighter the last bit of light on stage.

Blackout.

End of Act I.

Lights up on apartment. It's Thursday afternoon. SAM and ADAM are in a tutoring session. They are both sitting on the couch working on math problems in their individual notebooks.

A couple candles are lit.

Beat.

ADAM looks up for a moment.

ADAM

Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

ADAM

What's that smell?

Beat.

The candles?

SAM

Totally is. My mom sends them to me in like, uh, what are they called, uh, care packages! I don't even know what scent they are I just light them.

Awkward laughter.

ADAM

They're very strong.

SAM

Tell me about it, how's it going with number twelve?

Knock on door.

Come in please!

RODGERS enters.

Hi Mrs. Rodgers!

RODGERS

Hey sweet pea, how you doin'?

SAM

Alright, I'd be better if Adam promised that he's gonna ace his midterms next week.

ADAM

I don't know about all of them. Maybe Algebra, but US History has been hard.

SAM

Eh, don't worry about History. It's in the past.

SAM (continued)

Beat.

Anyway we continued our work on the composition of functions and we also re-looked at some older homework sheets to better study and prepare for his midterm, which is next week on...

Snaps his fingers and points at ADAM.

ADAM

Thursday.

SAM

Meaning we'll hopefully get a chance to look at the study guide next week.

RODGERS

Great!

To ADAM.

How you feelin' about it?

ADAM

Good. When I get the study guide I'll feel even better.

RODGERS

But are you gonna ace it?

ADAM

Can I drive if I say yes?

RODGERS tosses her car keys to ADAM.

Then yes ma'am. Plus extra credit.

RODGERS

That's the spirit.

ADAM

Getting up to leave. Collects his things.

Thank you Sam!

SAM

No problem. Have a good weekend!

ADAM

You too!

To RODGERS as he exits.

See you in an hour Mom.

RODGERS

Oh quit it.

ADAM exits.

SAM

So, what'll it be today... more thunderfuck?

RODGERS

Not today, I was feeling thunderfucked 'til the next morning.

SAM

What?

RODGERS

I told you I only need a little!

SAM

Fair fair.

RODGERS

I actually might have something for you, a proposition.

SAM

Oh?

RODGERS

Taking a seat and gesturing to the couch.

Step into my office.

SAM

Sits on the couch very formally.

Yes ma'am.

Beat.

RODGERS

I want to start a program at the school that combines tutoring and mindfulness, and I want you to do it with me.

Beat.

SAM

Um, okay... wow... well, that's very forward of you... um, a program in the school?

RODGERS

For now.

SAM looks confused.

If it takes off and it seems to work, we can take it out of the school and start a company. I like the sound of "Mindful Tutoring".

SAM

Wow... that's uh... yeah.

SAM (continued)

Beat.

Is the school like, into it?

RODGERS

They seem to be. I talked to David yesterday and he seemed pretty intrigued.

SAM

Who's David?

RODGERS

The principal. A few teachers are interested as well and would want to work with you.

SAM

Work with /

RODGERS

I've maybe mentioned you a few times. Mrs. Jenson has already offered her classroom for us to use too.

Beat.

SAM

I don't know what to say. This is... a lot.

Beat.

Would we tutor together? Like, I tutor math and then you lead them through a meditation?

RODGERS

Maybe. It'll depend on the student. It could be better for one student to meditate and then tutor, while another needs to relax afterward. There might be some sessions that we only discuss mindfulness in preparation for a big test, or a mid-term /

SAM

Or the ACT.

RODGERS

Exactly.

SAM

Like mindful test-taking strategies.

Beat.

Holy shit Mrs. Rodgers that's genius.

RODGERS

I believe it could work... if you're a part of it.

Beat.

SAM

Could I still sell weed to all the moms?

RODGERS

Laughs.

That might not be the best idea Sam. Besides, with this job, your drug dealer days would probably be over.

SAM

Drug mediator.

Several beats.

I have to think about it. Can I give it a think?

RODGERS

How come?

SAM

I really enjoy drug dealing, I'm getting a real knack for it and /

RODGERS

Sam.

Beat.

SAM

It's... it's a big step, you know? It's like, real.

RODGERS

This isn't?

SAM

You know what I mean.

Beat.

It's a risk.

Beat.

RODGERS

Can I ask you another question?

SAM

No.

Small laughter.

Fine, but be gentle. I'm very fragile.

Beat.

RODGERS

In the grand scheme of things and life and whatnot, what do you want?

SAM
Uh...

RODGERS
You don't have to overthink it.
Beat.

SAM
To be happy. Content.

RODGERS
Nods.
Are you happy?

SAM
Right now? Like in this moment?

RODGERS
Sure.

SAM
Then yeah, I mean, I don't really feel like /

RODGERS
What about generally?

SAM
I didn't realize I actually walked in your office.
Beat.
No, I don't think so.

RODGERS
Do you want that to change?

SAM
Awkward laughter.
Well yeah, obviously I'd rather not be generally sad.

RODGERS
Yeah, most people don't... how do you think it can change then?

SAM
Shrugs.
Could always smoke more.

RODGERS

That's one tactic. How's it been fairin' so far?

SAM

Makes an awkward sigh.

So so.

Beat.

RODGERS

What else then?

SAM

I don't know, doing things that make me happy.

RODGERS

Meaning what?

SAM

Can't you tell me what?

RODGERS

I don't have answers, just questions.

SAM

Lucky me.

Beat.

It means I'm not doing enough things or whatever that make me happy.

RODGERS

Okay... so how is doing this program with me risky?

Beat.

What's at risk?

SAM

I don't know, it's, I don't want... what if it's a bad idea? Not that it is a bad idea, I think it's a great idea, really, but what if it's not like for me? What if it's not the idea, the thing I should, this might sound stupid, but like the thing I should give myself to. Commit to.

RODGERS

I'm not asking you to sign a contract Sam.

SAM

I know, but what if somehow it becomes like that, like a long-term thing.

RODGERS

Like a career?

SAM

Sort of, yeah.

RODGERS

A career is something most people strive for, even dream of.

SAM

It terrifies me.

RODGERS

Why?

SAM

I could get trapped?

Beat.

I don't know Mrs. Rodgers, maybe I'm just being a fuckin' pussy and I need to wake up and start my life before smoking pot isn't enough anymore, but I don't... it really scares me. I'm terrified of getting trapped in a life that I don't want just because I rushed into it.

Beat.

I'm sorry, you're being really nice by asking me to do this, and I'm like propelling myself into an anxiety attack right in front of you, I don't mean to /

RODGERS

It's perfectly fine hon. I understand.

SAM

You do?

RODGERS

I do... as much as I can.

Beat.

Do you want a hug?

Beat.

SAM nods. SAM awkwardly hugs RODGERS, but as they hold each other it becomes much more natural and loving.

Beat.

It's okay... you don't have to give me an answer right now.

SAM

Okay.

Beat.

Thank you.

RODGERS

Of course.

Several beats.

RODGERS (continued)
You ready?

SAM
Maybe another five minutes.

Laughter.

Yeah, I'm ready.

They detach and stand, then sit down.

Beat.

RODGERS
That feeling, feeling trapped, it's interesting, right?

SAM
That's not one of the most immediate words that come to mind, but yeah, sure, it can be interesting.

RODGERS
Hey, be curious with me for a second. It's the mindful way right? Curiosity, / and some kindness.

SAM
And some kindness, never too much.

RODGERS
Exactly.
Beat.
So... feeling trapped, it's something we all experience, nothing we can do about it. Hell, we are forced into entrapment for the vast majority of our childhood.

SAM
Oh I know.

RODGERS
I'm sure you do.
Beat.
When people are trapped, physically or emotionally /

SAM
Or both.

RODGERS
Or both... they all react differently. Some get aggressive, violent maybe. Some cry and pity themselves. Some lie to others or themselves. A lot shut down, completely. In extreme cases, you may not have many so-called "choices." European Jews in Auschwitz, they had very few.
Beat.

RODGERS (continued)

And when you put mindfulness into the mix, it can get a bit, disheartening. That's the thing that a lot of people miss. They come across mindfulness as this new perspective that is going to uplift their maybe dull lives into something better. They download an app and choose when they'd like to meditate, and after those peaceful moments of breathing and sitting with themselves in their homes, they're able to look outside at the birds in the trees and finally find whatever they were missing. Gratitude, relief, release, whatever.

Beat.

But... what if you're Polish and Jewish in 1944, and all you have to look at are the skeletons walking next to you on your way to this mysterious, dark cement building that rains the ash of your family and friends down on you every day, down through the space where the birds in the trees used to be... how are you to be "mindful" then? Or even Jewish, or Christian, or whatever faith or identity you may have committed to prior to that moment?

Beat.

It's in those moments, the moments that mindfulness actually prepares you for, when it's easier to just say "fuck it."

Beat.

Please don't think that I'm trying to compare your life to victims of the Holocaust to qualify your emotions, that's not at all what I'm trying to do.

Small laughter.

Your emotions are real, but you're not trapped Sam. You feel trapped. It's a feeling, just like any other feeling or thought. And what does meditation teach us?

SAM

We aren't our thoughts.

Beat.

But it's so hard to not think that what you think is real and everything that you are, it's... I think all the time, and I wish I didn't, and I know I'm not supposed to wish that, or that it's unhealthy to some extent, but fuck if only I could just, stop... I don't want to die, I just... it's a lot.

Beat.

I get that we aren't our thoughts... I just don't necessarily believe it all the time, if that makes sense.

RODGERS

Nods.

Beat.

The stories in our heads are so convincing, that we identify with them to the point that there is only one reality, one perspective, one plan, and we'll do anything to block ourselves from any other chance of different lived experiences.

Several beats.

What I'm trying to tell you is that the story in your head is just a story, and it only goes as far as you let it.

NATHAN and JESSIE burst into the apartment. NATHAN is helping JESSIE walk.

JESSIE looks in pain and sick. NATHAN is wearing his jacket.

Beat.

NATHAN

Sorry.

NATHAN and JESSIE walk past them and exit into the bathroom.

Beat.

RODGERS

She doesn't look well.

SAM

No. She doesn't.

Beat.

I'm sorry, um, can I /

RODGERS

Don't worry. I'll get out of y'all's hair. I'm probably losing Adam's love with every minute I make him wait.

Moves to exit.

Take your time. However much you need. Then call me.

SAM

Definitely. Thank you.

RODGERS

You're welcome. Tell her I hope she feels better soon.

SAM

I will.

Beat.

They hug.

RODGERS smiles and then exits.

Beat.

SAM nears bathroom door to listen in.

NATHAN quickly exits the bathroom and closes the door behind him.

What the fuck /

NATHAN

I don't know.

Beat.

She said she just got her period and was feeling, you know, bad cramps, but I've never seen her like that.

SAM

Were you able to get the rings or /

NATHAN

Scoffs.

No. We were looking at a few when she started. It was okay at first but then shit went zero to sixty real quick, and... and you know how I am with blood... so... I... I just um...

Breathes heavily.

SAM

Hey, it's okay, why don't you sit down for a sec?

NATHAN continues to breathe heavily as he sits down. He tries to calm down. As he does, he takes off his jacket and tosses it away from him.

Just breathe.

Beat.

You're all good man.

Beat.

NATHAN

We were right there. I was fuckin' asking the girl about karats or whatever, and she just...

Beat.

This shit's scaring the fuck out of me.

SAM

What's scaring you?

NATHAN

This uh, this phase we're in? I don't know. It's so... I'm constantly feeling like we're in a spaceship with the, the levels, and the levels are dropping, and /

SAM

The levels?

NATHAN

The fuckin' levels you know, and the alarms are going off, like we're losing oxygen. I keep trying to fix it, but it just keeps getting worse, and trying to fix makes me use even more of the oxygen, and we're both just dying man on this bullshit spaceship in the middle of fucking nowhere.

Beat.

They were right there.

Several beats.

We took a pregnancy test Tuesday, 'cause she was late. It was negative. Then she finally got it today and it's just, I don't know, heavier.

Beat.

SAM

Yeah.

Beat.

NATHAN

I shouldn't have pushed her.

SAM

It'll be okay Nate.

NATHAN

No, I fucked up. I've been pushing her hard and I, it's not fair to her. No wonder she's so late, she's fuckin' stressed out and it's my fault. I really am oblivious aren't I?

SAM

Dude, it's not your fault. She's /

NATHAN

Did she tell you that she wants to go to therapy?

Beat.

SAM

No she didn't, she told you that?

NATHAN

Two nights ago.

Beat.

Oh God I just need a break. I can't do this scary shit much longer Sam, it's /

JESSIE enters from the bathroom.

JESSIE

Hey.

Walks to the couch and lays down.

SAM

Nate told me you and your uterus are fighting?

JESSIE

You can say that.

Beat.

I'm sorry to do this to you baby, but can you go to Walmart and get me more pads?

NATHAN

You're out?

JESSIE

I forgot last week and didn't get any when I got groceries.

NATHAN

Um, yeah... isn't CVS closer?

JESSIE

They don't have the ones I like. Do you remember /

NATHAN

Yeah I do, it's just gonna take me longer.

JESSIE

That's okay, I'll make it.

NATHAN

Okay.

Gets up to exit and stands for a moment.

You sure you don't want to go to a hospital?

JESSIE

I'll be okay.

NATHAN

You can barely walk.

JESSIE

Don't worry, I'm not gonna get up any time soon. I've gotten them this bad before, it's just been a while.

NATHAN

Okay. How many you need?

JESSIE

Two packs of twelve would be nice.

NATHAN

Alright.

JESSIE

Oh, and some ibuprofen. And Midol. Please.

NATHAN

Sure.

About to leave.

Uh... Midol' the purple box, right?

JESSIE

Yeah baby, you got it.

NATHAN

Yeah.

NATHAN (continued)

Moves to exit, then looks at SAM.

Sam /

SAM

I got it bud.

NATHAN

Nods.

I'll try to be quick.

JESSIE

Thank you love.

NATHAN exits.

Several beats.

SAM

Walmart huh?

JESSIE and SAM look at each other until JESSIE looks away.

Several beats.

JESSIE

Could you get me my heating pad?

Beat.

Please Sam.

SAM goes to her room.

It's under my side of the bed.

Beat.

SAM enters with the pad.

Thanks.

JESSIE configures the heating pad around her.

SAM continues staring at JESSIE.

Sam, I'm sorry to do this, but... can I have your car again for a bit?

SAM smirks.

I'm being serious.

SAM

I don't doubt it.

JESSIE

So can I?

Beat.

Please Sam, I can't be here when he /

SAM

When did you find out you were pregnant?

SAM (continued)

Beat.

'Cause you sure as hell didn't find out and get an appointment at a clinic the same fuckin' day.

Beat.

JESSIE

Last week.

Beat.

SAM

You didn't like, plan for today to be the day to /

JESSIE

It was the soonest they could get me in. I wasn't gonna push it back any further.

SAM

Jesus fucking Christ Jessie what the fuck? I mean what the actual fuck?

JESSIE

He can't know.

SAM

I know you guys had problems but shit.

JESSIE

He can't know Sam.

SAM

So you're just gonna up and leave?

Beat.

How is that the choice?

JESSIE

It wasn't alright! I was hoping to make it through without him questioning too hard, make it seem like a heavy period but...

Painful cramp.

It's hitting me like a freight train right now.

SAM

What were you expecting?

JESSIE

Not everyone gets hit this hard. I was hoping I'd...

Breaks into laughter. SAM doesn't laugh.

I can't stay, not with him fuckin' googling everything he can think of right next to me. He didn't put his phone down for a second on the drive back.

SAM

Jessie, you gotta think this through.

JESSIE

Laughs again.

Trust me, I've done nothing but think.

SAM

Yeah?

JESSIE

Just help me please.

SAM

I don't know.

JESSIE

Sam.

SAM

You're making a huge mistake.

JESSIE

You don't –

Painful cramp.

SAM

This would be a major fuck-up.

JESSIE

She stands up and struggles to move towards the bathroom.

I'm trying to protect him.

SAM

No, you're protecting yourself.

JESSIE continues to struggle.

What are you doing?

JESSIE

I need... I need my pain medicine...

SAM

Your pain medicine?

JESSIE

Yes, my pain... they gave me... fuck...

JESSIE sits on the floor.

SAM

Getting up.

Where is it?

JESSIE

It's in the white bag on top of the top cabinet.

SAM exits to the bathroom.

Beat.

SAM reenters with the bag.

SAM

Come on, let's get off the floor.

SAM helps JESSIE up and walks her to the couch. He helps her lay down on the couch.

He puts his hand to her forehead.

Jesus you're hot. Is that normal?

She nods.

He configures the heating pad around her.

I think the best thing for you is to lay down and /

JESSIE

I swear to God, Sam, if you try to mansplain to me how to have an abortion right now I'm gonna /

SAM

Okay okay, I get it. I just... I don't want to let you hurt yourself even more.

JESSIE

You think I'm hurting myself?

SAM

No that's not... not what I meant.

JESSIE pulls medicine out of the bag and puts the bag on the end of the couch.

She dry-swallows some pills.

Damn, I would've gotten you some water or something if you'd asked.

JESSIE

Can you get me a trashcan?

SAM

Uh, sure.

Exits to bathroom. Reenters with trashcan and sets it near her.

JESSIE takes it in her arms and holds it close.

Oh you're not gonna /

JESSIE pukes into the trashcan.

SAM (continued)

Lovely.

JESSIE continues to puke.

Several beats.

So uh... that five-hundred dollars... am I seeing that any time soon?

JESSIE pukes again..

'Cause your soulmate or whatever basically told me that I won't have a place to live soon so it would be somewhat nice to /

JESSIE

Regaining composure a little. She struggles with her nausea the rest of the scene.

You'll get your money back Sam.

SAM

Awesome.

Several beats.

JESSIE

That wasn't supposed to happen.

Beat.

I was supposed to get a loan Tuesday, or I thought it was Tuesday, I guess I'm just a fucking idiot.

Beat.

Whenever it comes I'll give you the money.

SAM

You applied for a loan?

JESSIE

Yep.

SAM

Wow... how was that?

JESSIE

Honestly the hardest fucking part.

Some laughter.

Beat.

No... driving back alone for five hours was the hardest part.

SAM

What?

JESSIE

I'm seven weeks... was.

Beat.

JESSIE (continued)

Good thing I've always wanted to visit New Mexico.

SAM

Jesus Christ.

JESSIE

Yeah. Operation was definitely off the table.

Small laugh.

Beat.

SAM

I... I could have gone with you.

JESSIE

And what? Tell Nathan that we're gonna go on a little joy ride and come back ten hours later? "Be back in time for ring day!" No... no way, trust me, I've thought about everything.

SAM

You still could've told me.

JESSIE

It was none of your business.

SAM

It was my car... shit it was my money.

JESSIE

I know, and I'm sorry... I can't imagine how fucked of a position I've put you in.

SAM

Putting. You're still doing it.

JESSIE

I know.

SAM

Then stop.

JESSIE

I don't have a choice.

SAM

No, you just don't like the other ones.

JESSIE

Fine. You're right. Is that what you want to hear? What all men want to hear?

Nearly pukes but stops herself.

You are right that I would prefer not to tell my overly sensitive controlling Bible belt partner that I am aborting his child at the same time as buying engagement rings with him. You are correct in that assumption.

SAM

Jessie, I'm not trying to /

JESSIE

Do you really want him to find out?

Beat.

What do you think's gonna happen if he does? Do you seriously believe that you're in the clear, and that he's not gonna blame you for everything I did? I mean without you, none of this would be happening.

Beat.

SAM

What?

Beat.

Are you being serious?

Beat.

Jessie?

JESSIE

I just need your keys, Sam.

Several beats.

SAM

What happens when he comes back and you're gone with my car?

JESSIE

You'll figure it out.

SAM

Alright, then how do you expect to get away with leaving and coming back?

JESSIE

I honestly have no idea, but it's gotta be better than staying and him figuring it out. He's not stupid.

Beat.

SAM

This is insane. You're acting insane.

JESSIE

No, I'm just in a fucking shit situation. There's a world of difference, believe me.

Pukes again.

Beat.

SAM

He can't be worth this.

JESSIE

How do you know?

Beat.

What if Nathan makes me happy? You ever consider that?

SAM

But you're not happy.

JESSIE

Is that Nathan's fault?

SAM

I, Jessie why /

JESSIE

Is it his fault?

Several beats.

What if none of this has anything to do with him?

SAM

How the hell does this not /

JESSIE

It could be me. That'd make more sense anyway, that it's my fault. Everyone wants to blame me anyway so why not fucking own it.

SAM

It's not your fault.

JESSIE

Then who's is it, Sam? Who's fault is it that I'm so unhappy and making such bad choices?

Several beats.

I think bad things, Sam. I think really, really bad things, but when I'm with him, it's easier.

SAM

That's not healthy.

JESSIE

It's the best thing I got.

Beat.

You're never gonna understand.

SAM

I could if you helped me.

JESSIE

It wouldn't matter.

SAM

It's the only thing that matters.

JESSIE

Face it Sam, you're not mentally ill. You're just lazy and sad. We are miles apart.

Beat.

It's got nothing to do with him, it's all me. I'm the undiagnosed fuck-up with unattended trauma that rapes me every time I'm triggered, and I don't even know what those triggers are. I'm depressed, I'm addicted to misery, and because I came into this world with tits and a pussy, every gender virus there is grows like fucking cancer inside my of brain. I'm a goddamn psychiatrist's wet dream.

Beat.

It's all me Sam. I'm the problem. It's my job to be, isn't it?

SAM

Then do something about it!

JESSIE

I'm trying to!

SAM

How would this help?

JESSIE

I might not lose him.

Several beats.

Maybe I'm making a mistake. I don't know, and I won't until I do, so I gotta try. If Nathan is gonna keep trying for me, after six years of trying, I have to try for him. He deserves it.

Several beats.

SAM

Pulls his car keys out of his pocket and fiddles with them for a moment.

What do think's gonna happen when you move?

JESSIE

What do you mean, “what’s gonna happen?”

SAM

Your life? What’s gonna happen?

JESSIE

Hopefully something better than this.

JESSIE pukes.

SAM

Wanna know what I think?

As SAM speaks, JESSIE pukes a few times intermittently.

You’re gonna move and he’s gonna buy you the engagement rings himself. He’ll propose and you’ll say yes because, well, that’s part of the plan, right?

Beat.

So y’all will get engaged and he’ll tell his family, you won’t tell yours, and in the next few months of waiting for “the big day” you’ll try half-heartedly to find another job because at that point he’s making money and it doesn’t really matter anymore, and also he’ll tell you, “No honey it’s okay, you stay home and work on your writing. I’ve got it.” By the way, when was the last time you finished a poem?

Beat.

So you’ll live in your new big apartment alone, writing maybe in a journal from time to time but not really poems, just emotional sentence fragments that you don’t see the point of trying to say out loud anymore. It’s not like you ever tried to anyway.

Beat.

Then you’ll get married! Get celebrated by the people you know and people you don’t know and couldn’t give a shit about, and he’ll fuck you without a condom as always and you’ll get pregnant again, only this time you don’t have to get rid of it behind his back ‘cause you don’t have any reason to, it’s the next step of the plan. Now you have this kid that you don’t want, with a guy that you don’t really love as much as you used to, in a place that won’t really feel like home no matter how much he tries to show you all the “cool little places,” and then y’all will move into an even bigger house for the baby, ‘cause now everything is about “the baby.” And what’s really fucked up is you’ll see even less purpose of staying in the relationship, my bad, marriage, because all his toxic loving attention is now on the kid, not you. The kid will probably grow up happy for most of their childhood, full of love and money from their daddy, and they’ll be so distracted by their own little happy suburban life that they won’t even notice that you’re depressed, just like their daddy doesn’t.

Beat.

You’ll spend the next twenty years forgetting how you used to write, making it even harder to pick it up once in a while, and you’ll just start driving every night before you go to bed. You’ll drive and listen to songs because those songs will be the only friends you have, and in one of those night drives, you’ll get one of those little intrusive thoughts everyone gets of “huh, I wonder what it’d be like if I just kept driving straight into one of those trees.” Only this time you’ll disassociate just enough to crash your car, sending your body flying into the air and tumbling into fuck all...

SAM (continued)

Maybe you'll die, maybe you won't, I don't know, but it doesn't really matter anyway. It'll at least make everything just stop for one moment, and that'll be good enough.

Several beats.

If you think I'm wrong, then by all means –

He tosses his keys to JESSIE.

Throw your fucking life away.

Several beats.

JESSIE stands and moves to exit.

NATHAN enters.

Several beats.

NATHAN

I uh... I forgot my wallet...

Beat.

JESSIE looks confused.

I left it here.

Gestures to jacket.

In my jacket.

JESSIE

Looks at the jacket and then back to NATHAN.

What?

NATHAN

I left it in my jacket, why are you up?

JESSIE

You forgot your wallet?

NATHAN

Are those his keys?

JESSIE

Why did you forget your wallet?

NATHAN

I don't know, I didn't choose, why the fuck does it matter? What's going /

JESSIE

You never forget anything!

Beat.

What the fuck, Nathan!

Beat

Oh God –

Goes back to couch and pukes in trash can.

NATHAN
What's going on?

JESSIE
Pukes into trashcan several times.
After several beats of regaining her composure, she looks at NATHAN for a beat.
I'm having an abortion.
Pukes again.
Several beats.

NATHAN
No you're not.

JESSIE
I am.
Beat.

NATHAN
But you aren't.
Several beats.
When?

JESSIE
Right now.

NATHAN
That's where you're going?

JESSIE
No, it's happening right now.
Beat.

NATHAN
What?
Beat.
No.
Beat.
You got your period.

JESSIE
I didn't.

NATHAN
No, you got your period, that's what you said.
Beat.

NATHAN (continued)

That's what you said Jessie, you got your period, so that's what it is. You... that's what you said!

JESSIE

It's a medical abortion. You can do it at home.

NATHAN

Uneasy.

No, I don't... no...

JESSIE

They gave me pills. They force a miscarriage which pushes –

NATHAN rushes to the trash can and pukes in it.

He tries to gain control of his body and breathes deeply.

JESSIE rubs him on the back.

JESSIE

Deep breaths... you can do it.

NATHAN pukes some more.

Let it out.

NATHAN

Tries to speak through his breaths and also not to puke.

Stop... stop...

JESSIE

Take your time.

NATHAN

Please... don't touch me...

JESSIE lingers and then stops.

Several beats.

Wow.

Several beats.

I...

He continues breathing deep, rocking a little as well.

This... this is real?

Beat.

This is really happening?

Beat.

JESSIE

I'm sorry.

NATHAN pukes again.

NATHAN crawls away with the trash can down center stage.

JESSIE stays on the couch. NATHAN remains on the floor. SAM stands frozen.

Long silence.

NATHAN

You're good... I'll give you that.

Lets out a little laugh.

You're really fucking good.

JESSIE

Stop.

NATHAN

You played me hard. Like a fuckin'... God... oh my God... oh my God...

JESSIE

Please, you have to /

NATHAN

Who do you think I am for you to, to, I mean... you fuck... you fuck... and you tell Sam? Seriously? I'm your partner!

JESSIE

I didn't tell him, Nathan.

NATHAN

Starting to cry.

Why are you still lying?

JESSIE

He didn't know.

NATHAN

But he does now.

JESSIE

He figured it out.

NATHAN

I'm sure he did.

SAM

Nate, I /

NATHAN

Shut up!

Beat.

SAM

I'm sorry, I'll just...

Exits into his bedroom.

Several beats.

JESSIE

Nathan, you have to understand that I lied to you because I was / scared of hurting you...

NATHAN

Crying hard now.

No, don't try that.

JESSIE

Please baby, I need /

NATHAN

Liar!

Beat.

You have no right!

Beat.

Not to my understanding, or my sympathy, or my fucking name... you did nothing but lie.

Beat.

You have no rights here.

JESSIE

You don't know everything that was... I need to tell you everything.

NATHAN

You don't need to tell me shit. You told me everything you needed to when you said that you weren't pregnant.

Breathes heavily.

You fucking... said it all...

NATHAN shakes his head repetitively as he rocks harder, trying to breathe.

I don't... I don't wanna be here... this isn't... / no, no, no, no, it's not... real... I'm not... you're not here... you're not... not... it's a nightmare... you're just my nightmare...

JESSIE

You have to breathe... breathe Nathan... breathe Nathan.

Beat.

There you go, just breathe.

Beat.

Focus... Nathan you have to...

If not on his knees already, NATHAN positions himself on his knees and bows his head in prayer. As he prays and breathes, JESSIE attempts to talk to him, but he ignores her.

NATHAN (overlapping JESSIE)
Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Beat.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Beat.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Several beats.

NATHAN
You didn't include me in the choice.

JESSIE
What choice?

NATHAN
"What choice" there was a choice that /

JESSIE
What was going to happen was always going to happen. You know better than that.

NATHAN
Fuck you.

Several beats.

JESSIE (overlapping NATHAN)
Fine... go ahead. Ask for help from the Virgin Mary, she'll save you. Don't ask for help from me though, no sir, that'd be fucking blasphemous, it'd be satanic, you fucking prick.

Beat.

I'm dedicated to you Nathan. Do you hear me? I am dedicated to you, and I will do anything for the life that you want because that's the life that I chose. I chose you a long time ago and I will always choose you. I want the plans that we made. That we agreed upon. So don't you dare hate me for this. Nowhere in the plans that we made was there having a kid before we got married.

Beat.

I couldn't... I would've fallen apart. I would've fallen apart, then we would've fallen apart, and I can't bring a kid into that. I... I'll be a bitch, or a liar, or anything else you wanna call me, but I won't do that. I'll hurt myself, I won't hurt other people.

Beat.

I did what I had to do. I did it for us.

Beat.

I put my body on the line so that you didn't have to.

NATHAN (continued)

Why today?

Beat.

JESSIE

It was the earliest they could get me in.

NATHAN

Really?

Beat.

Laughs a little.

JESSIE

If I had waited any longer you would have found out and /

NATHAN

You're such a liar.

JESSIE

I'm not lying, it was the earliest /

NATHAN

Have you always been a liar?

JESSIE

I, no Nathan.

NATHAN

What else have you lied about?

Beat.

Did you fuck Sam last summer?

JESSIE

Oh my / god.

NATHAN

Is he actually the father?

JESSIE

Of course he isn't, Jesus.

NATHAN

Then what?

Beat.

There had to be more. This can't be some one-time nuclear bomb fucking Armageddon bullshit. I won't believe it.

Beat.

JESSIE

Grad school.

Beat.

I told you that I didn't apply to Michener, that I was gonna wait.

Beat.

They sent me an acceptance letter two days after you got yours.

NATHAN

The night we went out to celebrate?

JESSIE

A few hours before, yeah.

Beat.

NATHAN

The entire time we celebrated my acceptance, you knew that you had been accepted too?

JESSIE nods.

We should have been celebrating both of us.

JESSIE

No.

NATHAN

No?

JESSIE

We wouldn't have celebrated. We would have spent the entire night planning out how long-distance would work. You would have wanted to plan each visit, each date, each phone call, each and every single detail, and I... I was tired... I'm still tired.

Small laugh.

And that was the night we planned ring day.

Several beats.

NATHAN

Why today then?

Beat.

JESSIE

I guess I thought that I could have both.

NATHAN

What?

Several beats.

JESSIE

I want to marry you Nathan. You're committed to me, more than I am to myself, and somehow you love me.

NATHAN

Jessie if you think /

JESSIE

I didn't lie to you when I said I'm scared to move... but I'm willing to do it for us. Us is more important to me than just me.

Beat.

But I also deserve to not have a kid because I don't want a kid.

Beat.

I want both.

Beat.

I tried my best Nathan.

Long silence.

NATHAN

I don't forgive you.

Several beats.

JESSIE

Could you?

Beat.

Starts to cry.

You said... that no matter how much I scare you... that you'll always love me.

Beat.

You promised.

Beat.

NATHAN

I do love you... but I don't want to. This doesn't... I think I made a mistake. This doesn't work with what I, who I am and, it just doesn't work.

Stands up.

I can't be here, anymore... I'll stay with Dr. Smith if he lets me. I'll come back to get my things on Sunday.

Beat.

I'm sorry.

Exits.

Long silence.

SAM enters from his bedroom.

SAM

Jessie, I'm sorry... I...

Beat.

What can I do?

Several beats.

JESSIE

Roll me a joint.

Beat.

SAM goes to the couch and pulls the chest out from underneath the table and places it on top. He pulls out a baggie of bud, a grinder, some rolling papers, and begins to roll a joint. He struggles to roll the joint, making a mess.

Shit.

He tries again, still struggling, but fumbles again.

Fuck me.

JESSIE

Just give it to me.

SAM

No, I /

JESSIE

Sam it's okay.

Beat.

SAM gives it all to her.

She rolls the joint with ease and lights it.

After her first hit she notices NATHAN's jacket and lets out a small laugh.

SAM

What?

Beat.

JESSIE

He forgot his wallet again.

She continues to smoke.

SAM watches her but remains seated.

Several beats.

Blackout.

End of scene.

Lights up on apartment. The next day around noon. SAM is standing behind the couch, looking tense, but a bit more cleaned up than he ever has. He paces a little, looking at JESSIE's door intermittently.

SAM

To JESSIE's door.

Come on Jessie she's gonna be here any second.

Beat.

Jessie?

Walks over to the door and takes a sniff. It smells very dank.

Fuck me.

RODGERS enters.

Hey Mrs. Rodgers!

RODGERS

Hey hon!

They hug.

You know, if we're about to start working together, we might as well be on a first-name basis.

SAM

Alright.

Extends his hand out.

Sam, nice to meet you.

RODGERS

Shakes his hand.

Hi Sam, call me Anodea.

SAM

Ana-whatta?

RODGERS

Anodea.

SAM

That's badass. How do you spell that?

RODGERS

A-N-O-D-E-A.

SAM

Cool.

RODGERS

Picked it myself. You still wanna go to the coffeeshop?

SAM

Yeah uh, I figured we could talk here first for a bit and then go over.

RODGERS

Okay... where's Jessie?

SAM

In her room. She'll be out in a sec.

RODGERS

Alright.

Beat.

SAM

Um, what do you think the plan should be today?

RODGERS

Well, we should talk about our schedules, when we can all get together at the school and set up shop. Then we should talk about the details, what a session looks like, what kind of sessions we will offer, basically a breakdown of our product. We definitely need to nail down our mission statement too.

SAM

Right.

RODGERS

We won't get all that done today of course, but when we do, the next step should be meeting with David and making our proposal.

SAM

That's not scary at all.

RODGERS

Small laugh.

It'll be less scary if we have all of our stuff in order. The more prepared the better.

Beat.

You sure she's interested Sam?

SAM

She is. We talked about it a little and she's really into it. She was actually a writing tutor in college. Really good too.

RODGERS

Of course... after everything you told me though, this might not be what she wants at the moment.

SAM

I know but... well like you said, we have to get prepared ASAP right?

Several beats.

I'ma go check on her real quick.

Walks to JESSIE's door.

Tries to open door – it's locked.

Knocks on door.

You almost ready Jessie? Mrs. Rod – I mean, Anodea's here.

Beat.

Knocks harder.

Jessie?

JESSIE opens the door. She is dressed in a very large t-shirt, underwear, and fuzzy socks.

JESSIE

What Sam?

Beat.

SAM

Anodea's here. She's here to /

JESSIE

Ana-who?

SAM

Mrs. Rodgers. Remember we're supposed to /

JESSIE

Oh, yeah.

Pokes head out of door frame.

Good morning Mrs. Rodgers.

RODGERS

Hi dear.

SAM

We're thinking of going to that /

JESSIE

I gotta put pants on.

Closes door.

Beat.

SAM

SAM turns to RODGERS.

She's super excited.

RODGERS

I can tell.

Several beats.

Why don't you go get us lunch?

SAM

What?

RODGERS

Pick some food up for us from the coffeeshop. We can get to know each other while you're gone.

Beat.

SAM

Um... yeah, that works.

Moves to exit.

Beat.

You sure?

RODGERS

We'll be fine. Besides, I don't know how long it'll be before she even comes out.

SAM

Good point... alright, I'll be back in a minute.

SAM exits.

Long silence.

JESSIE enters from her bedroom.

JESSIE

Where's Sam?

RODGERS

He went to get us lunch, he'll be back soon.

JESSIE

He just left you here, alone?

RODGERS

He sure did. Guess that means it's your turn to keep me company now.

JESSIE awkwardly laughs.

I'm only joking, you don't have to /

JESSIE

No, no, it's okay, I'll... yeah.

Sits down awkwardly with RODGERS in the living room.

Several beats.

RODGERS

How long have you been livin' with Sam?

JESSIE

Since we graduated, so two years.

RODGERS

Y'all were friends in college?

JESSIE

Yeah, we met through Nathan.

RODGERS

Nathan, your partner?

JESSIE

Yeah, well, no.

Several beats.

JESSIE stands up and exits to her bedroom.

Several beats.

She enters carrying a bong and lighter.

She awkwardly smiles and sits back down.

She takes a massive hit, so long that it gets the attention of RODGERS.

She blows it out and as she does, realizes that RODGERS is somewhat staring.

Sorry, I uh, I didn't finish the bowl and uh, I thought there was less, but there was actually more, and, yeah...

RODGERS

There was more huh?

JESSIE

Laughs.

Yeah.

Moves to have another hit, then hesitates.

Wait do you want a hit?

RODGERS

I thought you'd never ask.

Small laughter.

JESSIE passes the bong to RODGERS.

RODGERS takes a very long smooth hit.

JESSIE

Alright alright.

RODGERS passes it back.

RODGERS

Bongs were my first.

JESSIE

Really?

RODGERS

Yep.

JESSIE

Me too.

RODGERS

Really? How'd it go for you?

JESSIE

Greened out after two hits.

Laughter.

Had a nice little panic attack and then fainted.

RODGERS

Beautiful.

JESSIE

Yeah. Ten out of ten, would recommend. You?

RODGERS

I puked straight into it.

JESSIE

Stop.

RODGERS

It wasn't mine either. He was not happy to say the least.

JESSIE

I can imagine... but I don't want to.

Several beats.

RODGERS

I have to ask, and I might as well ask now before Sam gets back... are you at all interested in doing this program with us?

Beat.

JESSIE

I'm not, sorry.

RODGERS

It's okay! You don't have to say sorry to me, or Sam.

Beat.

Have you ever even meditated before?

JESSIE

Small laugh.

Like once or twice.

RODGERS

Sighs.

Oh Sam.

Beat.

What'd you think?

JESSIE

Of meditating?

RODGERS nods.

It was okay. Kinda frustrating. Always got easily distracted by (*gestures to her head*) everything.

RODGERS

Yeah... some days there can be a lot to be distracted by.

Beat.

Most days.

Small laughter.

JESSIE

What helps you?

RODGERS

For me... the intention. If I can keep focus on my intention, then I can keep going. Sometimes it might not be the right intention, but if it's strong enough, and honest, then it'll help.

JESSIE

I guess you've meditated a long time.

RODGERS

Yeah, I guess it has been a long time. I started when I was pregnant.

JESSIE

Oh wow.

RODGERS

Yep. Lots to be distracted by.

Small laughter.

JESSIE

I bet that it helped though.

RODGERS

It did.

JESSIE

And that Adam is thankful.

Beat.

RODGERS

It wasn't Adam.

JESSIE

Oh, you have two?

RODGERS

No, just the one.

Beat.

I guess that calls for a story, huh?

Small laughter.

When I was seventeen, which is many many years ago if you believe it, I was pregnant. I was still living with my parents, in the same Pepto-Bismol pink bedroom I grew up in, and I was "goin' steady" with a guy that I thought I was in love with. Now thinking about it, my parents were probably more in love with him than I was, particularly my mother.

JESSIE

What?

RODGERS

He was our pastor's son who lived across the street.

JESSIE

You're kidding.

RODGERS

Two blocks down and a year older than me. When we started dating, it seemed like it was the right thing to do. I fell in love with him because, well, I was supposed to fall in love with him, and I was also supposed to have all the babies he could give me.

Beat.

I didn't feel terribly in love though when I started puking every morning.

JESSIE laughs.

RODGERS (continued)

It's not as great as you might have thought.

Beat.

I also didn't feel very in love when my mother took me out of school to help "prepare" me for "my blessing." That's what she called the baby. It became kind of like her project, or really her life. I had to wear the right clothes for "my blessing" and eat the right food for "my blessing" and go to church every Wednesday morning and every Sunday morning so that "my blessing" was extra blessed by the would-be grandfather.

JESSIE

Weren't they like, at all upset that y'all...

RODGERS

Of course they were all a little upset that it had happened before we were married, but they figured it served well as our engagement. It was God's wish after all. My engagement with the boy was announced in front of the whole church before I even had a ring on my finger.

Beat.

JESSIE

Were you even asked?

RODGERS

Maybe. I honestly don't remember.

Beat.

Even though we were engaged I still had my nights to myself, and to that I was thankful. I could still cry in privacy.

Beat.

I cried a lot. In my sleep too apparently. At least that's what my father told me. I don't remember much of what he said to me around that time, but I do remember that.

Beat.

The first four months were horrible. I was sick nearly all the time. I didn't want to eat. I couldn't sleep comfortably. The boy and my mother had more conversations about "my blessing" than I did with him. It was all very spiritual and procedural for them, discussing where the nursery would be, how equipped I was, what was left to do. I felt very... I didn't know how I felt. I never had the time or privacy to really process it.

Beat.

Fortunately, I still had my library card. It was mostly being used for preparation books that my mother hand-picked for me. To her horror I finished not one of those books. One day she let me go in by myself to return a few and pick up some others, and as I was walking past the "expecting" aisles, I saw the aisle for religion and spiritual practice. I don't know why I felt the desire to go over to it, but I did, and a book called "Be Here Now" found me. You know it?

JESSIE shakes her head.

It had all these funny lookin' pages that were brown and written the wrong way, and the drawings fascinated me. So I took it, along with some books about the art of toilet-training to make my mother happy.

Beat.

RODGERS (continued)

That book changed my life. You should give it a read.

Beat.

In the third part of the book, the author describes different meditation techniques, which I tried. It was difficult at first, confusing, but I'll never forget the first time I "got it". It was a simple candle meditation, and once I felt what I understood to be what I should feel, I was hooked. I did a candle meditation every night. I stopped crying as much. I slept better. I was in less pain, or at least could live through it with more ease. My mother didn't like it, not one bit. She called it witchcraft and devil work, but I did it anyway. I felt like I was doing my part in preparing for the baby, and that if I kept doing it, this baby would take care of me and my life. It would help me feel even more in love with the boy, it would help me prove to my mother that I can take care of myself and more, and it would maybe even reconnect me with my father, who was having more conversations with his liquor cabinet than me. My mother was right about one thing – this baby was going to be "my blessing." I meditated with that intention every night... and I thought I was happy.

Beat.

The baby came three weeks early. On a Sunday. It had been the plan that we'd be wed before I gave birth, so this was obviously a shock to everyone. On the way to the hospital I laid in the backseat of our pastor's truck and he and my mother talked about how they could quicken our wedding plans, maybe even get away with getting married before the church body found out. They didn't notice that I was bleeding all over the seat, and I was too scared to say anything.

Several beats.

The baby was stillborn.

Several beats.

My mother blamed me in the hospital room. Said that I had played with devil magic and wished it upon myself. The pastor nodded with her but didn't look at me, and when his son finally got finished with Sunday school, he made sure not to let him see me either. I only saw the boy once after that, years later. He's the pastor now, as you can guess. I think he has a family too.

Several beats.

I didn't feel a thing for about a month. I didn't eat unless my father fed me. My mother didn't want to be near me, maybe she thought I was dangerous, but she didn't have the heart to kick me out. My father fed me canned soup. It was all he knew how to cook.

Beat.

One night he came in late and set a new candle he had bought on my dresser. My mother had thrown out all the ones I had the day we came back from the hospital, and I didn't have the desire or will or anything to go get more. I didn't have a car or money either for that matter. Something told him to get me one. I guess I was crying in my sleep again.

Beat.

He lit the candle before he left the room 'cause he knew I wouldn't have, so that when the sun set, no light came into the room. It was just me and the candle, just like old times. My body sat up into position, and I kind of followed it along as it did. Before I realized it, I was meditating.

Beat.

That's when I started feeling again.

Beat.

I didn't want to at first, but I couldn't stop it. It was too much, far too much. It all came at once, and I... I was lost in myself for what felt like hours.

RODGERS (continued)

Beat.

But as I settled into my breath with every inhale, and every exhale, I started to find words to what I was feeling. And I was able to take it in and then let it go, piece by piece.

Several beats.

I discovered a few things about myself that night. I was angry with my mother for turning my pregnancy into hers. I was disappointed with my father for not participating in my life. I hated the pastor for trying to direct my life like God. I was confused about the boy... I realized I didn't really know who he was.

Beat.

The most important thing I learned though is that I blamed myself.

Beat.

Not for getting pregnant or going along with everything that everyone around me was telling me to do. But for the baby, what happened to it.

Beat.

I felt that I had killed the baby, because I had put so much weight and responsibility on its life before it was even born. It was my intention to set my life as the baby's responsibility, and it died because there was no way that it was ever going to be able to carry that burden. I destined the baby with a purpose that was purely my own. It was unfair.

Beat.

I felt so bad for doing that to it. For being so selfish.

Beat.

I still feel that way at times... so I'm still healing.

Beat.

It never really stops.

Beat.

It's okay, though, because I learned what I needed to learn. I moved out soon after, lived my life, and when I was ready, I worked towards adoption. Then Adam came into my life, when he was supposed to, when it was his purpose to. Not mine.

Beat.

Funny enough, he probably is thankful, like you said. Just not in the way that I understand it.

Several beats.

JESSIE starts to cry softly. Several beats pass as she does.

JESSIE

I'm sorry... I just... um...

RODGERS

It's okay.

Several beats.

He told me what happened.

JESSIE

Still crying.

He did?

RODGERS

Yeah, he probably shouldn't've.

JESSIE

No... it's whatever...

RODGERS

He told me everything from his perspective at least.

JESSIE

Great.

*Small laughter as she still cries.
Several beats.*

RODGERS

I'm very sorry you had to go through that.

Several beats.

JESSIE

Trying to stop crying.

It's okay.

RODGERS

No it's not.

JESSIE

Small laugh.

No... no it's not, is it?

RODGERS

No. Not at all.

Small laughter.

I'm proud of you.

JESSIE

Tears returning.

Why?

RODGERS

I don't know if I would've been able to do what you did.

JESSIE

What? Hide and lie to your partner about killing his child?

RODGERS

No. Doing what you needed to do because it's your life.

Beat.

JESSIE
I don't know.

RODGERS
It's your life.

JESSIE
I... but...

RODGERS
It's your life Jessie.
Beat.

JESSIE
I want it to be.

RODGERS
It can be.
Beat.

It's yours.
Several beats.

I have one I love in my phone, a meditation, and if you don't mind, I'd like to show it to you. I think you'd like it.

JESSIE
Right now?

RODGERS
If at any point during it you wanna stop, just tell me.
Beat.

JESSIE
Okay.

RODGERS
Smiles.
Okay, one second.
Pulls out phone and prepares to read the meditation.
Here it is. I'll read it to you.

Beat.
You ready?

JESSIE
I think so.

As RODGERS reads the meditation, the lighting somehow correlates with the words and JESSIE's experience. There is a level of isolation that continually grows on JESSIE, to the point that we can't see RODGERS by the end of it. But her voice is slowly magnified over the course of the meditation.

How JESSIE experiences the meditation is artistically open.

RODGERS

Let's take a moment to get into a comfortable seated position... could be a chair, a couch, the floor, maybe even a soft cushion... when you're seated, make sure your back is nice and straight... you can rest your hands on your knees, or in your lap, and when you're ready, let's get into a soft focus... not looking at anything in particular, just simply seeing the space around you... we'll start by gently taking a few deep breaths... in through your nose... and out your mouth... again, another deep breath in... and out... and on the next exhale... you can gently close your eyes... letting your breath return to its normal rhythm...

Beat.

Take a moment to enjoy having stopped... let your awareness spread throughout the body... how does the body feel today... what areas are relaxed, and at ease?

Beat.

What areas are stiff, maybe even feeling a degree of pain, or discomfort?

Beat.

What emotions do you feel, or have felt, over the course of day?

Beat.

Let's also take a moment to be in the space around you... what sounds are there?

Beat.

How does floor or seat feel beneath you?

Beat.

And now, let's return to the breath... follow the body as it breathes in... and out... where do you feel the breath... if you have trouble feeling the breath, feel free to place your hands gently on your stomach... no need to breath any certain way, all we are doing is following the breath in... and out... in... and out...

Beat.

As you follow the breath, I invite you to imagine a steady stream of warm sunlight flowing into your body... starting with the top of your head, and making its way slowly through the rest of your body, all the way to the tips of your toes... with each inhale of breath, the warmth of the sunlight seeps in further, inch by inch... with each exhale, feel all the stress, pain, or emotional distress you have been carrying slowly melt away... feel the sunlight seep downward through your head, past your face, and into your neck, putting any unneeded tension at ease... follow the sunshine, visualize it, as it slowly descends past your neck and into your chest... no need to rush... let your breath and the light go at its own pace...

Beat.

And as you follow your breath and warm sunlight melt away all the things you've carried and no longer serve you... let thoughts come and go like clouds in the sky... when you realize that one thought has strayed you away from the breath and the sunlight, don't get frustrated, or upset... just give thanks, recognition, and let it go...

Beat.

RODGERS (continued)

Maybe by now, the sunlight has reached your legs, and it is now trickling into your thighs, relieving your body from any possible strain or discomfort... note how the sunlight is now radiating throughout the majority of the body... how does it affect the breath?

Beat.

Do you feel lighter... or maybe heavier?

Beat.

And when you can feel the warm sunlight flowing all the way to your feet and toes, flowing through all areas of the body... let's take some deep breaths, and sink further into this feeling of warmth and ease... in through your nose... and out your mouth... again, another deep breath in... and out...

Beat.

And on the next exhale... you can gently let the breath return to its natural rhythm... lose all focus on the warm sunlight and the breath... and take a moment to sit with yourself... focusing on nothing in particular... letting the mind do whatever it would like...

Several beats.

And when you're ready... at your own comfort... open your eyes.

Beat.

JESSIE opens her eyes. She sits isolated on the stage, becoming fully present again with her body. She is very vulnerable.

How do you feel?

*JESSIE looks in the direction of RODGERS and then quickly looks away with a little laugh, embarrassed. She wipes away tears but is still smiling. She looks back at RODGERS and nods a little, and then returns her gaze forward. She takes a deep breath. The lights fade to black on her exhalation.
End of play.*