

CAPE HAVEN

by Janet Kenney

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TIME: 2019 – six years after the Boston Marathon Bombing. August.

PLACE: Cape Haven, a big old house on Cape Cod. It is a haven, a source of comfort to all who go there. Kids spent their summers here, people got married in the yard. It hasn't changed much in the 40 years ANGEL and ROSS have owned it. It's wonderfully clean and tidy; most of the furniture is older, a few pieces are the worse for wear, but that only makes it cozier. Quilts. Shelves and ceilings are crooked in places.

The LIVING ROOM and DINING ROOM are open to each other. The KITCHEN, SR, has a swinging door.

Above, there's a landing just outside the ATTIC from where JESS can hear and see what's going on downstairs without being observed.

There's a DECK off to the side with a small bar, a table, lots of chairs and a hammock.

There's a small dog in the house, SCOOCHIE, but he doesn't like crowds, so he hides.

AT RISE: Empty house. Stillness but for BIRDS calling. The occasional SWISH of a car driving by slowly.

CHARACTERS:

AUNT ANGEL (Angela) - 70's

UNCLE ROSS - her husband, 70's

LOU - Angel and Ross's niece. thirties. She's missing the lower part of a leg

DREW - Lou's husband, thirties

BARBARA - Angel and Ross's niece, late thirties

JESS - Angel's great-nephew, Barbara's son. Late teens

NATE - Barbara's gentleman friend, forties

HELLO THE HOUSE!!

LOU (calling from OS)

ANGEL comes tearing out of the kitchen. She's happy, robust. The last of her sisters. She NEVER stops. Tidying or working on quilt squares always.

Visible is the small ATTIC, where JESS, 17, wearing noise-cancelling headphones, is tinkering away at an electric keyboard, scribbling notes. The keyboard is running through the headphones so we can't hear it. JESS is a slim, petite young man. Nervous. Nice looking under his acne.

LOU!! Lou! Baby Lou! Ba-loooo!!

ANGEL (calling)

LOU enters using crutches. She's not wearing her prosthesis (lower leg). She's attractive, bright, energetic, in pain.

Baby gi — Where's your leg?

ANGEL

Drew's bringing it. It was killing me -- Ah! The smell of this house! Ocean and sea air and sand and old furniture and quilts and good cooking — it smells like you!

LOU

Old lady and talcum powder.

ANGEL

Yummy!

LOU

ROSS enters from the kitchen. He sort of meanders. Easy-going, avuncular. The last of his brothers.

ROSS

Ba-loo. Baby Lou -

LOU
Uncle Boss! Come here, let me
look at you!

How're you feeling?

ROSS

Fine — you look great —

LOU

Your aunt takes good care of me.

ROSS

The yard is gorgeous!

LOU

The impatiens are cooperating this year.

They're monsters!

LOU

HELLO THE HOUSE!

DREW (calling from OS)

*DREW enters. LOU's age. Handsome in
an unassuming way. He's carrying
LOU's prostheses (2 of them, slightly
different styles) and her travel
wheelchair, plus all of their suitcases.*

ANGEL
Drew!! Welcome, welcome, welcome! Put that stuff down! You'll hurt your back!
Get in here - let me look at you - you've lost weight!

DREW
We've been running a lot. Uncle Ross!

Young man. How was the bridge traffic?

LOU
You've been running a lot—

DREW
About what you'd expect.

ANGEL

Lou, we put a stool in the kitchen bathroom for you — (calling upstairs) Jess! Your Aunt Lou is here! Uncle Drew is here!

Boys, why don't you put the suitcases away and I'll make fresh coffee.

(whispers to LOU)

How's the pain?

LOU (whispers back)

Awful, Auntie.

ANGEL

Have tea.

LOU

O.K. (calling upstairs) Jess! Aunt Lou is here!

(calling) Scoochie! Scoochie Poochie!

Where's Scoochie?

ANGEL

He heard the car pull up and took off. He hides from company these days. He's getting strange in his old age.

She tears into the KITCHEN to set the coffee on.

Focus falls on ROSS and DREW in the BLUE BEDROOM. It, unlike most of the bedrooms, is on the first floor, but off to the side so it's private. It's decorated in light blue, pretty old wallpaper, light blue chenille bedspreads that have been there forever on the twin beds. Quilts.

ROSS

The fishing's been great the past few weeks — the cod are enormous. Cook 'em on the grill - lemon and oil, salt and pepper - that's all you need.

DREW

Yessir. That's all you need. The grill is the trick — we'll go out first thing.

ROSS

Nice to bring a meal home. How's your wife?

DREW

Unh. Her leg's killing her.

ROSS
Jesus, Mary and Joseph. That poor girl —

DREW
She doesn't want to operate. But —

ROSS
Jesus, Mary and Joseph —

LIVING ROOM

ANGEL
— so I said to Barbara, "He's not the slightest bit of trouble" —

LOU
You don't ask anything of him.

ANGEL
He's a big help! He opens jars and bottles; he reaches things for me. He even helps in the garden, setting the debris in the mulch pile. He sets the table. He's very good at it. We eat inside because of the bugs. They're too awful this time of year.

LOU
That's a shame —

ANGEL
We go out on the deck later.

LOU
You should let Drew screen that in.

ANGEL
Oh, yes, one of these days—

LOU
One of these days —

ANGEL
Don't be fresh.

ROSS and DREW come back.

DREW

All set.

ANGEL

You look wonderful, Drew. Not that you don't look good with a few more pounds on you, too —

DREW

I'm enjoying running. I thought Lou was crazy all these years. I didn't see the point of running to get back to the place you left, and, at first, it's awful. The first ten minutes, God. But I'm liking it. After a while, you get to a point where all you hear is your breath, regular and strong, and the music's going and, over that, the sound of your shoes hitting the pavement in a perfect, regular rhythm...It's so relaxing. You lose track of time. I'd miss it if I stopped now.

ANGEL

It's nice you have something you can do together.

LOU

I don't go.

DREW

Just now. You'll come soon.

(re: the ceiling) Geez, you guys. That ceiling slipped another 6 inches. You should let me try to fix that. I'd have to rig something in the basement, lift the house to the other side --

ANGEL

Oh, it's fine. Adds to the charm.

LOU is examining one of the framed photos in a small collection. Picks up one.

Ooohh. Who's this?

ROSS

That's Marcie.

ANGEL

That's Margie.

ROSS

Margie.

ANGEL

She's Carl's new Respiratory Therapist.

LOU

What happened to – Donna?

ANGEL

She moved back to Maine. Wanted to be with her family.

LOU

She good?

ANGEL

Lovely. She sings ABBA songs to him. She says he likes them.

LOU

Great. Barbara coming?

ANGEL

She said it's important for the manager to work weekends - it looks better.

LOU

We'll just have a quiet weekend. I'm up for that.

ANGEL

Everything you've been through. All these years later. That's not right.

LOU

Life's not fair, right?

JESS finishes his task and takes the headphones off. This time he hears:

ANGEL

Not at all, love. (calling) JESS! Drew and Lou!

JESS bolts out of the attic and tears down the stairs, calling:

JESS

Be right down!

LOU

Who would have thought a virus would finish me off? A tiny little infinitesimal speck of nothing. God. Who could imagine a virus could do this much harm?

Aunt Lou! JESS (calling on the way down)

Baby! LOU (calling back)

ANGEL
Awful. You thought you used up all your tragedy at the Marathon. But I guess it doesn't work that way –

LOU
Why not, though? That's what I'd like to know.

ANGEL (re: JESS)
Here he is!

DREW (to JESS, who is embracing LOU)
Easy, there, bud. Don't knock her over.

I'm fine. LOU JESS
Oh, sorry. I –

How's my love? JESS sits close to LOU whenever possible and stays close to her.

JESS
Great. Great – no problems.

ANGEL
He's thriving! The sea air agrees with him.

DREW
You should come fishing with us in the morning –

JESS
Uncle Ross and I went fishing the other morning. It was disgusting.

ROSS
He's not an outdoorsman yet.

LOU
He doesn't have to be –

ROSS

It'd be good for him.

JESS

Throwing up at five in the morning is not good for me.

DREW

Ah, that'll stop after a while -

ROSS

You need to get used to the boat -

LOU

What he needs to do is come into the city to stay with us for a while. It's been ages, kiddo.

JESS

As soon as the semester is over.

LOU

Fair enough. You could stay for a couple of weeks – the city's better for a young person anyway. You could stay with us for the Fall! You could switch schools --

JESS

City's too noisy –

LOU

You'd get used to it.
You've been here a month? Five weeks –

JESS

Six weeks? Five weeks?

ANGEL

Not too long.

JESS

Not too long.

LOU

What happened? Mom and Nate –

JESS

It went on for hours. A brawl. I took off. Drove all night, ended up here.

ROSS

I found him out in the hammock at dawn. Invited him to go fishing – no interest - so I sent him into Angela for breakfast.

ANGEL

He ate like a horse!

JESS

I was starving!

ANGEL

He's been a blessing!

ROSS

Yes, indeed.

LOU

You should have gone back for your graduation, though.

JESS

Didn't care.

LOU

But you made it through high school!

JESS

Barely.

LOU

All the more reason to go back.

ANGEL

Well, now, sit down, Lou. We have news for you.

ROSS

Let's wait a bit –

ANGEL

But we said –

ROSS

Plenty of time this weekend to talk about things –

LOU

What's up?

ANGEL

It's your cousin Carl – he –

LOU

Oh, God. What's wrong?

ANGEL

Oh, nothing, nothing. Everything's fine –

ROSS

Who wants lunch? Your aunt has fresh-cooked bacon and lettuce and tomato from the garden.

ANGEL

Ross –

ROSS

Lou's tired, Angela.

LOU

I'm not tired.

ROSS

You must be –

LOU

Drew. What did you say?

DREW

I didn't say --

ROSS

He just said you'd been tired –

LOU

Drew –

DREW

Your aunt and uncle know what's going on –

LOU

Did you wait two seconds to give an update?

ROSS

Of course, I asked him how you were doing –

Then what's up? LOU

I don't want to ruin your weekend. ANGEL

How are you going to ruin our -- LOU

Your uncle is right. We'll talk after lunch. ANGELA

Now I'm worried. LOU

Now, now. No worrying down the Cape. ANGELA

He's fine. ROSS

Should we go visit him? LOU

Oh, now, you should relax this weekend. ANGELA

Well. Don't talk about it if you don't want to. But -- LOU

Something we can help with? DREW

Yes, tell us. Maybe we can help. LOU

I'm sure you can, but— ANGELA

Then tell us. LOU

ROSS

Well, you can imagine the house is getting to be a little much for us.

ANGEL

It's so big! I swear it didn't used to be this big – and it's falling apart!

ROSS

Every day we find something new that needs tending!

DREW

So you need some help? We can certainly find you some –

ROSS

Oh, no. uh... It's not that.

LOU

Then what is it?

ANGEL

We have to sell the house to pay for Carl's care.

DREW
What?
What's going on
(etc.)

LOU
What?
what are you talking
about?
Auntie! Uncle Boss?

JESS
What the heck?
Aunt Angel?

Don't worry, Jess.

ANGEL (to JESS)

JESS
I have to leave? Where am I –

ANGEL

Don't worry. We thought of everything.

LOU

OK, OK. Wait. Wait. You're selling the house? To – wait – wait - what about your insurance?

ROSS

It's a long story –

LOU

Tell it, please.

ANGEL

It's a very long story – we've been fighting them for two years –

ROSS
Two long years of – every day, every week
They won.
We have good insurance -

ANGEL
Exhausting. We're exhausted –
I guess they won. They did win.
Very good insurance –

LOU
Yes, we know, but these things work out eventually --

ROSS
But there's a limit -
There's a limit -

ANGEL
I suppose there's a limit to -
to everything, yes?

ROSS
Anyway. There's. We hit the limit. That's what they keep telling us – over and over and -

LOU
Wait, wait, wait. You can't just sell the house! The house? Cape Haven? This house?
You can't just sell the – it's the house! It's the family Cape house – you can't –

ANGEL
We'll fill you in on everything. All in good time. We have time. (Jess: don't touch your
face.)

ROSS
It's not going to be for some months yet –

ANGEL
Several months --

LOU
Months? Months?

DREW
Months? What are you --

ANGEL
Oh, let's not get into the details – it's all too much to take in at once –

ROSS
We're going to enjoy the weekend. We'll go fishing, we'll eat corn on the cob. "Butter
and Sugar" is in season! Oh, the kernels pop right off the cob! Pop right off –

ANGEL
I put fresh herbs in the mayonnaise!

LOU

Stop, stop – guys –

DREW

Wait, wait, wait. Let's hold up here – what are we talking about? Please. Please. What's going on?

ANGELA

Oh, Drew. You're such a good person. Such a good man. We love you so much.

DREW

Thank you. But –

ROSS

We want you and Lou to buy the house and move to the Cape.

ANGELA

Jess comes with the house, of course.

ROSS

Of course. Come, come! Auntie put rosemary in the mayonnaise!

ANGEL

Dill.

ROSS

Dill.

ANGEL

Let's eat!

ROSS

Let's eat!

ANGELA and ROSS head into the
KITCHEN. Everyone else stays
put, stunned

DOWNSTAIRS BATHROOM. AFTERNOON. LOU and JESS. She sits on the stool behind and to the left of him and he's looking in the "mirror," facing the audience. He's tending to his zits.

LOU

— because lemon has astringent properties and it dries them up —

JESS

I don't know. Fruit on your face? It's a little weird. And it would sting.

LOU

A little. In a good way. We're lucky they have a gob of them around here for the fish. You should rub it on your face twice a day. Is the fish nice?

JESS

It is.

LOU

You've been eating, I can tell.

JESS

Angel's a good cook.

LOU

Aunt Angel.

JESS

Aunt Angel. What's up with Carl?
I mean, I know he's in the nursing home, but what, exactly, is wrong with him?

LOU

God, what isn't? He came out with an entire collection of birth defects. He was just – my mother told me once it shook her up just to look at him. They kept him home as long as they could. But. He just got too big. He was 13, 14? It takes 3 people to change his diaper.

JESS

When I was a kid, I thought you guys made him up. I wouldn't mind meeting him.

LOU

I don't know if he knows you're there, kiddo.

JESS

Still.

LOU

I guess we can go over if you want.

I do. JESS

We'll pop over. LOU

Good. JESS

LOU (re: his skin)
Maybe we should do this later. Your face will be red all day.

It's already red. JESS

LOU
Are you using the baking soda to wash?

Sometimes. JESS

Why not? LOU

JESS
It makes my mouth taste like salt —

LOU
Pretend it's from potato chips.
Whatcha been doing?

JESS
Nothing much.

LOU
What have you been doing, though?

JESS
Not much. Some stuff I get around school. Klonipin, Vicodin. Don't worry. I know what I'm doing.

LOU

I *do* worry. And you *don't* know what you're doing. A doctor can get you some stuff so you know what to do with it, and you're not guessing at a dosage, getting whatever from buddies —

JESS

I'm gonna have to squeeze this one —

LOU

Oh, no! That'll scar. Get a needle and sanitize it with a match —

JESS

I can't stick a hot needle in my face —

LOU

Aunt Angel has a ton — oh, no! oh, no. Oh, shoot -
Don't keep picking at it — oh, that's going to scar for sure.
Someday you won't have acne, then you'll be sorry you
did that —

JESS
Got it.

Looks like I'll
always have acne —

Don't be silly. It goes away eventually —

JESS

I thought it would go away when I graduated high school.

LOU

No, it just goes in its own time. I read you should splash it with sea water whenever you're at the beach.

JESS

Maybe it's my nerves. Mom always says I have "a bad case of nerves."

LOU

You were a nervous baby, even. God, you'd cry at the drop of a hat. Your mother's not well-suited for that.

JESS

Mom's nervous herself.

LOU

She is.
Do you have counseling at school?

JESS

A little.

LOU

A little? Do you go?

JESS

Once in a while.

LOU

Yeah, see - it doesn't work that way —

JESS

There's nothing to fix, Aunt Lou, I'm just --

LOU

But the divorce, that was awful. So ugly. Then your DadAnd your mother with her boyfriends —

JESS

I'll be OK. I'll be Ok in the world. I have to squeeze this one —

LOU

Needle! — oh, damn.

JESS

Don't worry. It won't matter. Just need to make it to adulthood. See if my skin clears.

LOU

Then what, bud?

JESS

Then I'll be good. I'll be fine.

LOU

Gimme a nibble here. Doing what?
Doing what, bud?

JESS

Don't tell anyone. Even Uncle Drew.

LOU

Swear.

JESS

You know who Paul Simon is?

LOU

I think I do.

JESS

James Taylor ... Leonard Cohen...gonna write songs. Sing them.

LOU

Have to do something with all that stuff you've been scribbling since you were 3. You wrote as soon as you could hold a pencil. I'd be doing my homework and you'd sit beside me - you made squiggly lines on pages and pages. (Do you even remember that? You were so *cute*!) So you'll write songs and perform them?

JESS

Don't say anything.

LOU

I'm not discouraging you, but have you ever sung in front of anyone?

JESS

Not in front of anyone, no.

LOU

You might think about that. There are a million little cafes down here. You have to start somewhere.

JESS

I go. A coupla times a week

LOU

To sing?

JESS

'Course not. I just watch.

LOU

I've never heard you sing, bud.

JESS

I do when no one's around. I'm pretty good.

LOU

How can you tell?

JESS
I can hear myself.

LOU
Try the stage. It'll be fun.

JESS
Nobody wants to see a gross, pus-sy face kid on stage. If my skin clears, I'll do it.

LOU
When it clears. I suppose you could see a doctor.

JESS
I don't want to take any of that medicine.

LOU
Well, I don't like the idea of it either, but –

JESS
No, no. No medicine. It screws up your, what? Liver ?

LOU
I think that goes away when you stop using it.

JESS
When it clears, I'll sing.

LOU
No, sing now! Come on –

JESS
Not in the house.

LOU
Sing! (trying various options for the word) Sing! Sing! Sing! Sing –

JESS
Stop –

LOU
(a la Carpenters) Sing. Sing a song/sing out loud./
Sing out long --

JESS
Stop! They'll hear you --
Stop! Stop. Aunt Lou. Stop.

LOU
I stopped. Another time, though.

JESS
OK. Just not now.

LOU
How many songs have you got?

JESS
Three. Three that are really good.

LOU
Good start.
You should let Drew help you with marketing.

JESS
Not yet.

LOU
You should – (on his look) OK.

Jess tends to his skin quietly for a moment. Then:

JESS
Where am I gonna go? What am I supposed to –

LOU
“*Going to go.*” Don’t worry. You could come live with us.

JESS
I don’t really like the city –

LOU
Suburbs? Get some roommates?

JESS
Nah.

LOU
Middle of the woods? Parking lot? We’ll figure it out. We’ll figure everything out, OK?

JESS

I wanna stay here.

LOU

Let's see. We don't know the details yet. Bet we can talk them out of it. We'll figure it out. Don't worry, yet, OK?

JESS

But if you guys buy the house –

LOU (re: her leg)

Oh, God. We haven't even figured out what they're doing with all this –

JESS

I don't wanna go back with Mom. Think I'll have to go back with Mom?

LOU

How is she?

JESS

I don't know.

LOU

You should call her.

JESS

I just texted her last week.

LOU

Can't you call her, bud?

JESS

I have to watch the timing. I need a Klonopin after.

LOU

So time it. And skip the Klonopin. Take an aspirin.

JESS

But – I never know what to say to her. I can't say the thing I want to say: "Don't be an idiot." She should know better, the things she does.

LOU

She's got bad taste in men.

JESS

But you don't. Uncle Drew is great.

LOU

He is. I was much younger when our Dad died.

JESS

And he hit your mother?

LOU

He did. She can't help it. Your Mom. I mean. No, she could help it if she tried, or maybe if she went to therapy. She was 14 when he died. She had a lot more exposure than I did. She does try, I guess. As much as she can. She loves you, bud.

JESS

I know. But --

LOU

I love you, too, bud.

JESS

I know, Lou. Aunt Lou. Lou.

LOU

Aunt Lou.

JESS

Aunt Lou.

LOU

No, never mind. You know who I am. Lou.
You're a good kid.

JESS

Not really. I'm selfish and I'm lazy.

LOU

You've always been young for your age, a little behind yourself. It was that year you skipped a grade. You'll catch up. Then you can sing in front of people. Put the lemon on.

JESS

No, come on --

LOU

No, do it.

JESS (trying the lemon, as LIGHTS FADE)

Ow – ow – ow – ow (etc.)

LIVING ROOM. LOU and DREW are packed up for the beach. ANGEL is working on a quilt square and ROSS is settling down with the paper.

Scoochie!
(*nothing*)
That crazy dog –

ROSS (calling)

Should I go find him?

ANGEL

He'll turn up eventually.

ROSS

OK. We're good.

DREW (re: beach supplies)

Put some sun block on.

ANGEL

We did.

LOU

Bring the umbrella.

ROSS

We're fine –

LOU ANGEL
 They don't need the umbrella.

Last call: special requests from the market?

ANGEL

God, no. Whatever you get will be fine –

LOU

Don't get the lobsters too big – they're tougher sometimes –

DREW

LOU
They know how to pick out lobsters.

DREW
Sorry.

ANGEL
You're fine.

LOU (to DREW)
Sorry.

DREW
You're fine. OK. Let's go.

LOU
Wait. Should we stay here? We have so much to talk –

ROSS
Go to the beach.

LOU
Uncle Boss --

ROSS
Go to the beach.

ANGEL
Do.

DREW
Come on. It's fine. We'll get into that later, babe.

ROSS
Your Aunt needs you to go the beach.

ANGEL
I do. You and Drew go to the beach. Talk.

LOU
But we should be talking to you guys --

BARBARA (OS, calling from outside)

HELLO THE HOUSE!

ANGEL
Barbara?

LOU
Barbara? You said she wasn't coming.

ANGEL
She wasn't.

BARBARA makes her entrance. She's very pretty, petite, impeccably put-together. She wheels in an enormous suitcase.

BARBARA!
Aunt Angel! Uncle Boss! Oh my gosh - it's so good to see you! The yard looks fabulous, Uncle! I'm stealing a bouquet on the way home, I mean it! You look great - taking good care of yourselves! Eating all that summer fish! Ah! The smell of this house! Oh, Lord. Wonderful. Lou! How are you, honey? Drew! You look great (did you lose some weight? You look fabulous -)

JESS comes out on the landing; he doesn't come down.

BARBARA, (con't)
I know I said I wasn't coming, but at the last minute I decided: wait! I thought: I have the cutest little shirt on – perfect for the Cape – this very shirt and I thought: why don't I take this little shirt – with me in it – to the Cape for the weekend! I deserve a break! I deserve a weekend at the Cape. So I – quick - scheduled some girls to cover my shifts for the weekend and came right on down. It'll be dead in the store. August is dead. Everyone's at the Cape or the Islands. *My* clients are at their summer houses! I hope you don't mind me surprising you! I thought that would be the most fun way to do it. So, at the last minute, here I am!
(calling upstairs) Jess!
Baby Lou. How are you feeling?
I tell you, I don't mind missing a slow weekend – I like it when the place is a mad house! When you barely get to spend time with a client before the three behind her in line are tapping their feet and you know what that means. The girls can handle it. If you've trained them well, you can leave them to watch the counter once in a while. Though, no matter how well I train them, I always get a little knot in my stomach when I'm not there.

Those girls! I can't keep them because they are almost always new and they're just learning and they put the wrong color foundation on the ladies and they would walk out of there looking like a ghost or a Bedouin wanderer – (you could wear a little make up, Lou, just think about it. Sometimes I think you do it to annoy me. You have a perfect face-shape - not too round, not too square — people would kill for that face-shape!) – where was -? Oh! Bedouin! - and I have to put a stop to it, of course, just do an emergency color correction right there, yes, of course in front of the ladies because they're the ones going to walk out in the wrong color and I get it all straightened out but then the girls go running up to HR and try to get me in trouble because I embarrassed them in front of a client, but they have to learn - and anyway, management doesn't harass me too much because I have the best numbers every month for years so I must be doing something right and, really, how are they going to learn?

(calling) Jess! Come see Mom! Honey?

So I finish a shift and I'm exhausted - partly from my ladies and partly from my girls! So sensitive!

Drew, can you bring that suitcase up for me? You're a doll. The Rose Room. (Can I get the Rose Room?)

And my feet! You try standing on high heels for ten hours a day! Oh, I'm scheduled for eight, of course, but the manager never gets out of there on time - always some form to fill out, some numbers to crunch and reconcile, always a drama going on with my girls. It's hard being the manager! You have to eat lunch alone.

JESS!! (is he up there?)

ANGEL

Barbara. You came.

BARBARA

I did.

ANGEL

The Rose Room doesn't have any fresh flowers in it.

BARBARA

We'll get them later. Let me go freshen up. I'm a mess!

DECK. BARBARA and JESS. She's in a new shirt.

BARBARA

— Don't you miss me, though?

JESS

Yeah, sure. I don't miss the fights.

Nate's gone.
BARBARA

He's gone?
JESS

I asked him to leave. I asked him to leave so I could get you back.
BARBARA

And he left?
JESS

It was amicable.
BARBARA

Nothing with you is amicable. Big drama.
JESS

A little bit.
BARBARA

A little bit of big drama. You don't want me home. You just don't want to be alone. You could get a dog.
JESS

That's not the same thing. (Did Schoochie die? I haven't seen him - I didn't want to ask.)
BARBARA

He's hiding under things. He doesn't like people in the house.
JESS

He never liked me.
BARBARA

That's because you pat him on the head. They don't like that. They like to be scratched.
JESS

Oh, my God. I can't even pet a dog right.
BARBARA

JESS

Look - It's — we're OK. You send funny texts. I send funny texts. We do fine on text. I don't think that's terrible. I don't even think my therapist would want me to move back in with you. I'm doing pretty well.

BARBARA

What kind of therapist would not want you with your own mother?

JESS

My own mother drives people crazy. Dad. Me. The boyfriends —

BARBARA

Oh, you say that like there were a thousand —

JESS

There've been a few. All those "uncles."

BARBARA

You never gave any of them a chance.

JESS

They weren't there to see me.

BARBARA

I have been a good mother —

JESS

Then why do I live here?

BARBARA

Ross and Angel are easy. They let you get away with murder —

JESS

What murder? I clean up. I lift things for Angel. I open things. She says she doesn't know how she managed without me. I set the table —

BARBARA

You never set the table at home. Don't touch your face. (Why is it all red? Have you been picking at it?) Have you thought about that drug you can take? For acne? I hear it works great.

JESS

It's poison.

BARBARA

You drink Coke; it's just as bad —

JESS

Don't start on the Coke. Aunt Angel keeps some for me. There's always something to eat around here.

BARBARA

There's always something to eat at home.

JESS

Nuts and berries.

BARBARA

I'm vegan.

JESS

I'm not.

BARBARA

You should be. It's better for you, better for the plan —

JESS

You could keep some hot dogs in the house for me.

BARBARA

Oh, God. Do you know what's IN them — Chicken feet and beaks —

JESS

I like them —

BARBARA

But you shouldn't eat them —

JESS

That's what teenagers eat. Not tofu scrambled eggs that taste nothing like eggs — that's just garbage —

BARBARA

Don't call food, "garbage."

JESS

You just called hot dogs garbage —

BARBARA

They are —

JESS

I'm just saying, you could keep them in the house.

BARBARA

But then you'd cook them, and the house would smell like —

JESS

— like meat, which I like.

BARBARA

They're bad for your skin.

JESS

Always some around here. Aunt even keeps an extra package in the freezer in case we run out. And she doesn't mind when I cook them at two in the morning —

BARBARA

Why are you cooking hot dogs at two in the morning —

JESS

I get hungry —

BARBARA

You should go to bed.

JESS

I do, after I eat.

BARBARA

You should go to bed early.

JESS

Just because you do something doesn't mean everyone should do it —

BARBARA

Do you ever think I might know more than you do? I'm older than you are. Just wiser from more years on the planet —

JESS

How smart is it to stay with someone who beats you?

BARBARA

Don't be dramatic. He doesn't beat me —

JESS

He's rough with you.

BARBARA

No relationship is perfect.

JESS

Fine, stay with him. But I'm never coming home till he's gone.

BARBARA

You should come home to protect me.

JESS

That's your job.

BARBARA

Well, according to you, I don't do a very good job of it —

JESS

According to anyone.

BARBARA

What did you tell the others?

JESS

Nothing. It's your business if you want to get knocked around. You must like it somehow.

BARBARA

I can be very annoying. I talk too much and I'm high-strung. You know that better than anyone.

JESS

I guess. Still, it's idiotic to let yourself be treated that way.

BARBARA

Jess! Don't call your mother an idiot -

JESS

I didn't. I said —

BARBARA

I heard you.

JESS

I'm sorry. I'm just not coming home.

LIVING ROOM. LATE AFTERNOON.

JESS is on the DECK with the headphones off. Afternoon doze.

BARBARA is hovering near the bottom of the stairs. She doesn't know where the heck he is.

Almost goes up, doesn't. Starts up. Comes down.

KNOCK at the door. BARBARA turns.

BARBARA (through the screen door)

Nate? Nate. What are you doing here?

NATE (O.S)

Nice greeting.

BARBARA (through the screen door)

No, I just, you know, didn't expect you.

Long pause

NATE (O.S)

Can I come in?

BARBARA

Oh! Sure! Of course. Come in, come in. Lord, my manners.

NATE lets himself in. 40's, hearty, impatient. A little worse for the wear.

JESS sits up and listens.

NATE

A note? You leave a fucking note? What's the matter with you? You just walk out like that? "Please be gone when I get back?"

You had to know I'd come for you

BARBARA

Nate, don't. This is my aunt's house – you can't --

NATE

A note?

BARBARA

I'm sorry. I didn't want a big mess —

NATE

You have a mess now, all right. Jesus, Barbara. Where's your head sometimes?

BARBARA

Please, just go —

NATE

Where's the gang?

BARBARA

Auntie and Uncle are shopping, Drew and Lou are at the beach --

NATE

No beach for you --

BARBARA

Too sandy and –

BARBARA and NATE

"The sun destroys your skin."

BARBARA

Well, it does.

*Pause. NATE begins an
examination of the house.*

NATE

So this is the famous Cape house? All filled with "memories and lovely old furniture and quilts that my aunt made." I wondered if I'd ever get to see it.

BARBARA

Here it is. Nate, you can't just come here —

NATE

You can't just leave. I've got two years invested in this saga —
Where should we stay? The Rose Room? Isn't that your favorite?

BARBARA

No!

NATE

The Blue Room? The Red, White and Blue room?

BARBARA

We can't stay in the same room! We're not married —

NATE

Don't start that -

BARBARA

I'm not. Angel wouldn't like it -

NATE

We're guests. We can do what we want.

BARBARA

Please, Nate, this is my family's house - don't embarrass me— (calling upstairs)
Jess! Nate is here! Come say hello to Nate!

NATE

I'm invited wherever you go —

BARBARA

You're not —

NATE

I am.

BARBARA

You're not —

NATE

I am -

BARBARA

Nate, please.

NATE

This is your fault. You can't just throw me out —

BARBARA

You must have seen this coming. It's been bad for a while —

NATE

Then let's talk about it. Look at all these vases! Who needs this many vases?

BARBARA

She likes vases. We'll just fight —

NATE

You're giving up already — we gotta work this out.

BARBARA

We'll work it out when we're back home.

NATE

You need me.

BARBARA

I'll figure it out —

NATE

How? How are you gonna —

From O.S., LAUGHTER. DREW and LOU are back from the beach, a little red in the face. They stop short when they see NATE.

DREW

Oh. Hey. Nate.

LOU

Hey, Nate.

Little pause.

How're you doing?

NATE

Great, great. Never better. How are you guys doing?

LOU
Fine, fine.

DREW
Great, all's well -

You just got here?
We didn't expect you –

Huh. it's nice to see you, guy.

DREW
We didn't know you were coming –

NATE
Barb invited me. I hope nobody minds.

LOU
Oh, no, don't be silly -

DREW
No, of course not –

LOU
Always room for one more – that's what Angel always says. Doesn't she say that, hon?

DREW
She does.

NATE
How was the beach?

LOU
Perfect. Not a cloud in the sky....

DREW
Ocean's like glass. Just a little
breeze...

Little pause.

BARBARA
OK! Well, let's get you settled! I'm up in the Rose Room –

LOU
Auntie won't like that.

BARBARA
Oh, it's fine. She won't mind. (to NATE re: his little bag) Oh! You didn't bring much!
Come on, honey.

*JESS settles back down on the
hammock as BARBARA and NATE
head upstairs.*

KITCHEN. EVENING.

BARBARA, LOU and ANGEL are doing some dinner prep together: husking corn, shelling peas, mixing up a potato salad, crunching up Ritz crackers for the lobster casserole, etc.

In the DINING ROOM, DREW, ROSS and NATE are playing a card game, penny poker or gin rummy — something suitable for the Cape. We catch bits of their dialogue, too.

JESS is in the ATTIC, kicking back, headphones on. He might even be studying.

BARBARA

Why are we eating inside on such a beautiful evening?

ANGEL

The bugs are unbearable till after 9. They quiet down after that.

BARBARA

Get those candles -

ANGEL

Oh, those don't work.

LOU

Citronella. They don't work. We'll go out after dinner.

ANGEL

Your uncle won't eat outside.

BARBARA

Let him eat inside.

LOU

Barb.

BARBARA

We all have to sit inside on a beautiful night - on the Cape - because —

ANGEL

I don't like the bugs either. The bites are awful. You need to take a Benadryl!

DINING ROOM

Angela!

During these lines, ANGEL pours ROSS a cup of coffee, fixes it the way he likes it and brings it to him.

NATE

Why do you call her Angela? Everybody else calls her Angel.

ROSS

That's her name. And anyway, who'd want an angel for a wife?

NATE (to DREW)

We should get together for dinner one of these days.

DREW

Yeah, we should.

NATE

'Course, we hate the city.

DREW

We could meet half-way—

NATE

Sure, sure.

ANGEL brings a cup of coffee to ROSS. Stays to chat a moment.

ROSS

(to Angel, re: the coffee) Thank you.

ANGEL

Welcome. Who's winning?

DREW

Who do you think?

ANGEL (to the others)

Who else wants coffee?

NATE

No, thank you, ma'am.

ANGEL

Oh! We're not formal in this house!

DREW

No thanks, Aunt. I haven't seen Scoochie yet. He all right?

ANGEL

He was in the kitchen with me earlier.

DREW

He's fine?

ANGEL

He's shy these days, that's all. (to ROSS re: card game)

ANGEL

Go easy on them. They're your guests.

ROSS
I'll try.

KITCHEN

BARBARA

You spoil him.

LOU

You do.

ANGEL

If a wife can't spoil her husband, I don't know whom she can spoil.

BARBARA

We're only wondering if you could let him do something for himself once in a while.

LOU

That's why I called him 'Uncle Boss' when I was little. Even as a kid, I noticed it.

ANGEL

Nonsense. You couldn't say your "R's. Everything came out like "B's" and "D's." Baba. Barbara came out "Baba."

LOU

God, I was adorable.

ANGEL

Your mother, God rest her, (everyone blesses herself) thought you needed a professional, but I said you'd outgrow it and you did.
We can go outside later. I got the nice china out.

LOU

Oooh! I haven't seen that since —

LOU and BARBARA

Since Dan's wedding —

BARBARA

What a nice day that was.

LOU

Beautiful. You outdid yourself.

BARBARA

But I came down here for the fresh air.

LOU

Fresh air comes in from the screen doors. The windows. There's always something blowing through.

BARBARA

I know air comes in through the windows, Lou.

LOU

It'll be out there after dinner.

ANGEL

Well, I don't want to deprive anyone of fresh air —

LOU

She can smell the ocean. You can smell it from inside. (re: Ritz crackers) Pass me that box —

BARBARA

Oh, God. That lobster casserole. I look forward to it every year.

LOU

Lobster and butter. I thought you were vegan again.

BARBARA

Not down the Cape.

DINING ROOM

DREW

-- and she talks about this place like it's paradise. It is paradise for her.

ROSS

She doesn't have to lose it.

DREW

God, Ross, I don't see any –

ROSS

We'll talk next week. What if it's our last weekend here together? We might get one more visit in. But things happen. Maybe we won't.

DREW

How's your mother, Nate?

NATE

Oh, God. She's great! I take her to the hairdresser's every week. Gets her hair and nails done. Then we go do her little grocery order. I tell her, Ma! Just give me the list! I'll go! But, no. She has to do it herself! 92 years old! She's a character!

KITCHEN

BARBARA (calling)

Jess! Come set the table!

(to the others) I want to see this famous setting-the-table thing.

ANGEL

He'll be down. He doesn't miss dinner.

BARBARA

JESS!

LOU

Oh, let him alone. He'll come out eventually.

BARBARA

At midnight.

ANGEL

He's a night owl.

BARBARA

He's a vampire.

ANGEL

Many people his age are day-sleepers. That's why he takes his classes at night. He'll come down when he finishes his homework.

BARBARA

He's doing his homework?

ANGEL

What else would he be doing up there all this time?

BARBARA

How are his grades?

ANGEL

I have no idea.

BARBARA

You're supposed to be helping him get through school!

ANGEL

I don't do his homework.

BARBARA

You should track him, though. If he's not getting good grades —

ANGEL

Then he'll fail.

LOU

I'm sure he's OK.

BARBARA

You always defend him. Always have, even when he didn't need it, even when he was doing something that didn't need defending. It's nice that you're close even though you're not his mother. But I think I know him a little better than you — I bore him, after all. Being an auntie is easy. You give them back at the end of the day.

LOU

I stayed with him day and night when he was little!

BARBARA

I certainly appreciated that, while I was out working to feed him. You're a good aunt, but it doesn't make you his mother.

LOU

He tells me things he doesn't tell you.

BARBARA

Like what?

LOU

I can't tell you that. I wouldn't betray him like that.

BARBARA

Don't be ridiculous. I have a right to know everything that's going on with him.

LOU

Only if he tells you.

BARBARA

I doubt he tells you anything he doesn't tell me –

LOU

He certainly does.

ANGEL

Girls! Girls! You're both pretty.

We think he might be in a band – he goes out for hours at a time with his guitar -

BARBARA

He shouldn't keep secrets from you! He's living with you!

ANGEL

It's not a secret if we don't care –

BARBARA

Auntie!

ANGEL

We care, but... a young man like that. He needs his privacy. A boy that age –

BARBARA

Just because you taught high school for thirty years doesn't mean you know everything there is to know about young people – you should send him home if you're not going to watch him. He was happy at home.

LOU

Then why is he here?

BARBARA

He doesn't like Nate. I've asked Nate to leave.

LOU

Then why is he here?

BARBARA

We're working it out. Isn't it sweet he came all the way down here?

LOU

Jess always went for long walks when he was staying with us.

BARBARA

Isn't that odd? A person his age going for long walks?

ANGEL

Not if he likes to walk.

DINING ROOM

DREW

... and we kept saying, it's only part of a leg, as if that mattered, as if that was a battle that we'd won. We, yeah, we were so grateful she was alive. But. Part of her leg was intact, so...It's the noise that haunts her. The noise from the bombs. It still wakes her sometimes.

NATE

I'm so sorry, my brother. Russian ass holes.

DREW

She's crazy with pain. Last week, the dry cleaner left a stain on a blouse. A nice blouse, but still. She called them, just went OFF on them and then she burst into tears and cried for an hour. She set off a pain jag. She's just miserable.

ROSS

So are you.

DREW

Of course I am. I almost lost her at the Marathon. I'm losing her again. She's stronger than I'll ever be. The way she just changed her life, the way she kept some things the same, let some things change. But there's a limit --

ROSS

Women are stronger than we are.

DREW

Amen to that. Raise you two nickels.

NATE

Are you sure we can't play real poker?

ROSS

Not on the Cape. Same set of skills.

DREW

He says that because he's got the best poker face I've ever seen —

NATE

Now, listen, Drew. I could put you in the sweetest little Mercedes A-Class -

DREW

I don't know. That's a little rich for my blood.

NATE

Come on! You've got it! Let the world *know* you've got it!

ROSS

You'd need a nice car down here. Can't keep a nice car in the city. Nowhere to park it. No space in the city. Tiny little apartment.

DREW

The loft is enormous. In the South End. It says we've got cash, if you care about showing that, which we don't. It's just easier for Lou to get around a loft. Nice elevator —

ROSS

That thing's a hundred years old! Not safe.

DREW

Perfectly safe.

NATE

I'm telling you: the A-Class is the way to go. You should come see me at the lot next week! I'll get you my employee discount!

DREW

That's nice of you, but –

NATE

Happy to do it! Happy to do it!

KITCHEN

LOU

But where would we go, to see you, I mean?

ANGEL

To wherever we are -

LOU

But not to sleep over. If you really want to visit you have to hang around in your PJ's ...have to have coffee together.

ANGEL

See? That's why you should you buy it. Then *we* can visit *you*.

LOU

How can I? Sometimes I need a wheelchair. And the loft is just perfect for me. Some days I don't even put my leg on! Rainy Sunday afternoons – forget it. And other days I don't feel like it. I could never get a break from it.

ANGEL

You get along just fine down here.

LOU

Auntie, I haven't been off the first floor in six years.

ANGEL

You could re-do the blue bedroom so it's the master bedroom.

LOU

You've been planning this –

ANGEL

Of course. How could we not? It's all we talk about. Have you ever seen your uncle this upset?

LOU
Um...

BARBARA
Well...

ANGEL
But we don't have to dwell on it this weekend. This weekend –

LOU
But you can't just hit us with this and then say, "Let's not talk about it."

ANGEL
Call me next week. We'll go over all the details. You'll love it. I mean, to live.

LOU
But, Auntie, I don't see how we can.

ANGEL
Nonsense. You can if you want to.

BARBARA
Don't look at me –

ANGEL
I didn't. It'll cost a fortune.

LOU
Can you trim his expenses in any way?

ANGEL
We thought about that. But. He needs so much. We thought he might do without the daily massage, but we think he might like.

BARBARA
How can you tell? Poor Carl.

ANGEL
This house is all we have left to give to our son. The way he is, so unfair, so difficult to live with, but what choice do we –

BARBARA
Well, that'll be the cleanest condo anyone ever saw!

The absolutely cleanest con --

LOU

LOU has an excruciating jab of pain. Gasps, writhes. Screams:

DREW!!

LOU

Oh, shit.

DREW

DREW tears into the bedroom and grabs her pills from the bureau drawer. Runs back to the kitchen where LOU is doing breathing techniques and whatever else she can do to manage this bout of pain. ANGEL stays connected to her physically. BARBARA takes to a corner.

When DREW hands her the bottle, LOU shoves a couple of pills down her throat — ANGEL backs off, lets DREW handle it. He wraps his arms around his wife in a full-body vice-grip. She forces her body into his. In a well-practiced routine, the two of them slowly get her, at least, to calm herself.

You got it. You got it. Good. Good.

DREW

Fuck. (to ANGEL) Sorry. Fuck. Sorry.

LOU

I got it.

DREW
You got it. Got it. Settle. Settle.

Shit —

You're OK. It'll pass. It always does, right? Right? Right.

After a bit, DREW loosens up his vice grip. She starts to get hold of the bout. The pain's not much better - too early for the pills to kick in - but she calms herself anyway. Drew puts his hands on either side of her nose to get her to breathe through her nose.

DREW (breathing with her)

Nose, nose.

By now, EVERYONE is in the kitchen except NATE, who stays in the DINING ROOM. He stands up when ROSS goes into the KITCHEN, then thinks better of it. Hovers for a moment. Heads back. Peeks at the cards. Sneaks some liquor.

Passing now.

LOU (to the group)

Sorry —

DREW

You're fine. It's passing —

When it quiets down, DREW stays connected to LOU. Stillness for a bit, till:

BARBARA

What was *that*?

DREW

Pain snag. She's all right.

LOU

I'm great —

DREW

She's great —

BARBARA

But - what happened? Was that your leg, Lou?

DREW

It was. But not the — she had that virus last spring —

BARBARA

Yes, I know about that —But—

DREW

It destroyed the nerves.

BARBARA

Oh, my God. Lou. That was awful.

LOU

Sorry.

BARBARA

Why did no one tell me you were this bad?

DREW

We've been keeping it kind of quiet -

BARBARA

But I'm your sister. God, you never tell me anything —

LOU

It doesn't matter -

DREW

It doesn't matter
who knows and doesn't know -

BARBARA

Still —

ANGEL

Barbara, hand me that platter.

BARBARA

Nobody tells me anything.

ANGEL

Barbara, that's enough.

LOU (re: a sea breeze blowing through)

Oh! Smell that —

DREW

Oh, yeah.

ANGEL

Wonderful.

BARBARA

Mmmm. God.

LOU (deep breaths)

Mmmm. Sea breeze clears your head.

NIGHT. TEN O’CLOCK. Early bedtime on the Cape.

ROSE ROOM

Fresh flowers on the bureau. NATE is in one of the twin beds. BARBARA is standing in front of the full-length mirror. She tries on some outfits that have all been carefully laid out on the bed. She primps, she poses. She’s a high-end fashion model on a runway. She walks up and back at the mirror, experimenting with different facial expressions and hands in hair to re-shape it. She uses the fan to get that wind-blown effect. NATE watches, loving it.

ATTIC

JESS is writing in his notebook, headphones on, PLAYING snatches on the piano.

MASTER BEDROOM

ANGEL is on her knees in prayer. ROSS is reading on top of the quilt, slippers on, comfy on the pillows.

ANGEL gets up after her prayers, ROSS has a clever way of helping her up - maybe he holds both hands from the other side of the bed and pulls her up.

She crosses to his side of the bed, carefully loosens the laces on his slippers and slips them off his feet. She places them on the floor beside him.

ROSS

Thank you.

ANGEL

Do you think they'll do it? Buy the house?

ROSS

Of course they will. Don't worry about it tonight. We're all going to work it out.

ANGEL

But all these stairs.

ROSS

Drew will rig ramps all over the place.

ANGEL

But they like the city. They want –

ROSS

Don't talk about this before bed. You'll stay awake all night and not enjoy your company.

ANGEL

I'm awake half the night, anyway.

ROSS

I know, Angela. In the morning your sheets are hardly ruffled. But try. Get some sleep this weekend. Lou and Drew will buy the house.

ANGEL

I'm not sure. I wish I were, but –

ROSS

They couldn't stand to let the house go. Go to sleep. Do. Good night, Angel face.

ANGEL

Good night, Rossie.

*A brief kiss then they settle down.
ANGEL is still sitting up, though.*

BLUE ROOM

LOU

-- It's just crazy. Three levels! How could – but. Should we?

DREW

God, I don't know. I don't want to leave the city. Our work is there. Our home is there –

LOU

But. How can we just let it go? It's the family house. It belongs to all of us.

DREW

But it doesn't. How could we buy it –

LOU

Not if you put the ramps in right. We could hire a contractor if you like –

DREW

The stairs are so steep. You'd be sliding all over the place – you'd fall.

LOU

No, I wouldn't.

DREW

And then it wouldn't be the Cape house – it would be, I don't know –

LOU

Not fit for me –

DREW

That's not what I mean.

LOU

Sorry.

DREW

No, don't be. It's too much to take on right now, with --
You must be exhausted. The drive down, and all. The beach. Then that horrible – geez.
Did you have to take two pills? One works. Two doesn't really do much more.

LOU

How would you know that? What it feels like — what helps and —

DREW

I can tell by the way you're acting, how you're feeling. How could I not?

LOU

Whether or not I'm a bitch.

DREW

You're baiting me.

LOU

You're bating me. How can anyone but me know how much I need at any given time?
You're judging me on —

DREW

I'm not. I just have seen - I've observed, which you can only do from the outside - that when you take two, you're spacey later. It's more than you need or you wouldn't get spacey. You never used to take two. You're going to hurt yourself.

LOU

Maybe it's getting worse. Maybe I'm getting used to the drugs and they don't work as well anymore.

DREW

You've been taking them a long time.

LOU

You want me to stop?

DREW

You know how you can do that.

LOU

Stop that. You're in a mood yourself.

DREW

I'm not. No, I am. I'm exhausted —

LOU

You're exhausted! That's nery. I'm sorry for your troubles.

DREW

I'm just exhausted from worrying about you, from watching you go through this, trying to figure out what we should do - you should do - I know I don't even really get a vote. I'm exhausted from walking on eggshells, never knowing what's going to set you off, and that brings you to spasms and then I feel like I did something, or I could have done something better - said something or not said something. Then I'm tired of feeling like an asshole for feeling like this.

LOU

I'm a beast.

DREW
We can't live this life — this has to —

LOU
Don't start. It'll get better.

DREW
When? It's been over a year. That's enough.

LOU
Enough for you.

DREW
You, too. Good God. It has to be.

LOU
Of course I'm sick of it. You're just sick of waiting on me —

DREW
Only because you don't like it.

LOU
Of course I don't.

DREW
Then do something about it.

LOU
I can't.

DREW
Don't you want to feel better?

LOU
It might not even work —

DREW
It probably will.

LOU
No, no. If I lose the rest of the leg, they win.

DREW
Don't think that way.

LOU

All that horror, pain, all those operations. All that, God, that wretched therapy. All that time, sitting in the court room, victim statement. The verdict. Death penalty. (But he'll appeal it for the rest of his disgusting life.) The bombers will win — they'll get everything - the whole leg. I'll look down and see only chair. Maybe a pair of pants meant to cover my butt.

DREW

At first. At first, you'll see that. But only for a while —

LOU

For a long while. You remember how long it took for the wound to heal. One operation after the other. God, no.

DREW

That was after a traumatic loss. This would be controlled and carefully —

LOU

Cut. Carefully cut. Cutting off my leg is not careful. It's reckless. — You make an appointment to get the rest of your leg cut off. That's sick. They can't even guarantee it'll work —

DREW

Oh, come on. It almost certainly will. And then you'll get a prosthesis. Then you can get one of those fancy blade things and you can go running again. We could go together. I'll race you.

LOU

No, you go. You're such a big fan of it.

DREW

What? I like it.

LOU

Not really. You're just saying that to torture me.

DREW

Jesus, Lou. Why would I do that? God. I want my wife back. I just want my Lou back.

LOU

What's left of her.

DREW

Anything. Anything at all.

LOU

Oh, God. What I've put you through. Do you ever regret that "Lou" and "Drew" rhyme? Didn't we think that was fate, at some point?

DREW

It was.

LOU

Poor you.

DREW

No. Lucky. Lucky me. I wouldn't have anyone but you.

LOU

Wouldn't you? Who has a wife who goes to watch the Marathon and gets herself blown apart?

DREW

I do. We'll get through this. We'll figure out what to do. One of these days. We still rhyme. We'll manage.

LOU

How?

DREW

Not sure. Not tonight. Not this weekend. But one of these days, we'll know what to do.

LOU

Sure?

DREW

Sure.

LOU

Come here.

*And they Begin the Beguine,
settling down for some nice love-
making. It's going well, till --*

LOU (in pain)

Ah! Shit! Ow! Shit – shit Ow! shit shit –
Ow! Ow! Shit! Ow! Ow! (etc.)

DREW
What? What? Shit –

I'm sorry – God. I'm so sorry -

LOU

DREW
Shit. I'm sorry, I'm sorry –

No, I'm sorry – here, gimme a
minute – I can do it --

LOU

DREW
I'm so sorry. I wasn't thinking –
No, babe –

It's OK, it's OK. I'm OK. Try it again.

LOU

DREW
Horny asshole – you look so
pretty in that tank top –

I'm OK – false alarm -

It's fine, it's fine – Try again –

LOU

No way!

DREW

Oh, come on! We have such good sex down the Cape –

LOU

DREW

No, babe, no. I can't hurt you –

You won't –

LOU

DREW
I'm getting up early to fish –

You can take a nap --
Get me a pill, will you?

LOU

DREW
Good night – you had a long day.

Oh, no - don't go to bed –
I'll take some pills -
Never mind – I'll get them myself –

LOU

DREW
No. Good night. Love you.

Shit. Fine. Fine. Go to bed --

LOU

DREW
All right, all right.
Pills. As many as you want.

*He tosses them to her. She hurls
them back at him.*

DREW

Come on. Don't be like that. Say good night, Lou. Come on.

LOU

Yeah, right. Good night. Fine. Good night.

DREW

Don't be like that –

LOU

I said, "Good night." It's fine. Have fun fishing.
Good night. Lou.

DREW

Good night, babe.

'Night.

*He brings her the pills. Goes to
his bed.*

KITCHEN. 2 A.M, SATURDAY MORNING.

ANGEL is doing the dishes. LOU comes in on her crutches. Prosthesis off at night.

LOU

What are you doing up? — the dishes – ha. You're funny. We said we'll do them in the morning.

ANGEL

I couldn't sleep with this mess down here. What are you doing up?

LOU

Pain. Pills didn't work. Made a little dent, but...Can I help you?

ANGEL

Oh, no, I'm all set.

LOU

Hey. Scoochie's bowl is empty.

ANGEL

He's up in our room. He's fine.

LOU

Is there cake left?

She goes to get it and ANGEL swoops in to get it on the table with a plate and a fork before Lou can even reach for it. ANGEL pours her a glass of milk.

LOU

Thanks.
What should I do, auntie?

ANGEL

Buy the house and move to the Cape. Much healthier. You need to slow down, sweets
–

LOU

No, no. I mean my leg.

ANGEL

That's what I meant.

LOU

No, stop.

ANGEL

What do you want to do?

LOU

Grow my leg back and be done with this. Be normal.

ANGEL

When your cousin Carl was born, God. That first sight of him. Poor creature. Not like a baby at all. Not beautiful. Just, not. Little stumps where his arms should have been... his little legs all twisted. And that face. That tired little face. At first, I had fifty fits of tears, went on all day. But then, that slowed down. I guess I got used to him being the way he was. And I grew to love him. I'm ashamed to say it took a while. And then there was some peace. Some habit. But, then, when we had to send him away for care, I wept again. When I say my prayers at night, I talk to him as if he's listening. People get used to things because they have to. Not because they want to.

LOU

I couldn't get used to that –

ANGEL

Putting him in care. Well. If that didn't kill me, nothing will.

Including losing the house?
LOU

Now, that would kill me.
ANGEL

It wouldn't.
LOU

ANGEL
Losing the rest of your leg. That wouldn't kill you. It's just a leg. It's not your heart or your brain. It's not what makes you Lou. Your *self*. Your Baloo-ness.

But it's my leg.
LOU

ANGEL
Not anymore. It's your heartache.

*BARBARA comes in. Fetching
night clothes.*

BARBARA
Why are you guys up? Oh, good. There's cake.

ANGEL
I thought you didn't eat sugar? Why are you up?

BARBARA
I'm making an exception for the weekend. Nate's snoring.

LOU
Nudge him.

BARBARA
That works for about five seconds. Most nights I sleep right through it. Some nights, not.

LOU
Drew doesn't snore, thank God.

ANGEL
Ross used to snore. I made him stop.

LOU
You can't make someone stop—

BARBARA
You can't possibly make someone
stop -

ANGEL
No, I put up with it for years, and one day I just told him he'd have to stop.

LOU
Not possible.

BARBARA
No, you can't make someone —

ANGEL
We got him one of those breathing machines. He used it for about a month, hated it,
stopped using it. But he stopped snoring.

LOU
That's a miracle, then.

ANGEL
We've been hoping for a miracle. With the house.

LOU
It's so unfair, auntie. Now – because of Carl, poor dear. Poor Carl. I remember when he
talked a little bit.

BARBARA
Really? I don't.

LOU
Of course you do. "Mah." Dah."

ANGEL
"Woo," Lou. "Up." (That was "cup.")

LOU
I taught him my name that that summer – what was I, eight? nine?

ANGEL
Seven or eight?

BARBARA
Did he say, "Baba?"

LOU
ANGEL

Hmm.. .

I can't remember.

BARBARA

He probably did. Dear Carl.

LOU

But, so awful. You love this house!

BARBARA

This house loves *you!*

ANGEL

I lost my son the day he was born. I've had this to distract me. To please me. Look after. Fuss over. In every corner, there's a treasure. We might lose the one thing that gives us joy. Carl doesn't give me joy. God forgive me. He doesn't give me anything anymore. Not since that last stroke. Nothing. I had to forgive him for that. I'm not sure I ever have. For not being a . . . son. But. God help us. Nobody owes us anything because of Carl. Nothing special, just a small run-of-the mill tragedy. But nobody owes you anything for that.

LOU

What about a reverse mortgage? You should talk to Drew about it. The bank pays your mortgage for you, and --

ANGEL

Oh, child. We've been doing that for a couple of years. Enough about the house. Eat your cake.

*Little awkward pause. Eating
cake. Drinking milk.*

BARBARA

Now, Lou. I want to ask you something. I want Jess to move back home.

LOU

Are you sure that's a good idea? It's exhausting for both of you -

BARBARA

A boy belongs with his mother. I only have a few more years before he's out in the world and gone for good —

LOU

What's this have to do with me?

BARBARA

Can you talk to him? Convince him it's better for him?

LOU

I'm sorry - I'm not sure it is.

ANGEL

He can stay here. Or come with us. He's perfectly happy here and we love having him around.

BARBARA

That's because you don't want to be alone with Uncle Ross. You'd have no one to talk to.

ANGEL

He doesn't have to talk.
I know what he wants.

LOU
He talks —

BARBARA

Don't rob me of the time I have left with him.

LOU

Me? Rob you? How am I robbing you —

BARBARA

By not talking to him! He doesn't think clearly on his own. He needs an adult to guide him.

LOU

How about you?

BARBARA

Oh, a boy that age doesn't listen to his mother —

*JESS comes in the kitchen door toting
his guitar, surprised to find the ladies.*

ANGEL

There he is!

LOU

Hey, babe. Want some cake?

ANGEL

Want a hot dog?

BARBARA

What in God's name are you doing roaming around with a guitar at two in the morning??

DECK Sunday morning, 9 or 10. JESS is snoozing on the hammock. LOU comes out and WHACKS the hammock to wake him. She whacks it a little hard and he goes tumbling, startled:

JESS

What the – oh – hi – what's --

LOU

I'm missing some pills.

JESS

Oh. Oh. I... I just wanted to try them.

LOU

They're mine.

JESS

Sorry. I only ---

LOU

How was it? Hmm? How was it?

JESS

Strong. A peaceful feeling. But. Dizzy, though.

LOU

This is the one thing that helps me and you walk off with them.

JESS

I just took—

LOU

Three. You took three of the one thing – it's still unbearable. I still can't think or breathe and you walk off – you're getting a little old for that kind of stuff. One of these days, you're going to have to grow up. You can't take something just because you want it. Five-year-olds do that. That's not OK at your age.

JESS

Here... I only borrowed three. Here's two. I'm sorry. I just wanted to try it – you had plenty.

LOU

That's Dilaudid! It's not candy! It's not even Vikodin! You can get addicted to it in a couple of tries. You can get physically dependent on it –

JESS

Are you?

LOU

Watch your mouth – You can't just say anything you want.

JESS

I'm sorry.

LOU

What have I told you? Apologize once and mean it. You haven't meant it yet –

JESS

I have –

LOU

That's not what I'm hearing. I'm hearing: Lou, calm down! It's just three pills.

JESS

Well, it is. And I gave two of them back. You have plenty.

LOU

I need them! Do you know what it's like to be in excruciating pain 24/7 for a year?

JESS

I don't.

LOU

Years of hell and you think it's over and you go on with your life and you think you're pretty slick with that – think you're pretty cool –

JESS

You are cool -

LOU

And, suddenly it's on again!
Worse than ever – you think
you've had it hard? I'll let you

know when you've had it hard.
Can't be a great songwriter till
you've suffered –

JESS

I've had some stuff –

LOU

Then get therapy and stop medicating yourself. Stop stalling, hiding out down here,
medicating yourself – you gotta grow up, Jess.

JESS

I will –

LOU

When?

JESS

But if I'm not screwed up then I might not be able to write songs –

LOU

Where did you get that?

JESS

Everyone knows that. I said I'm sorry and I meant it. I just don't understand why you're
in so much pain. I thought your leg problem was much better. You were biking and
running and we went hiking that time in the Blue Hills – I thought your leg problem was
a long time ago.

LOU

You know what's going on. You've been listening from the landing.

JESS

But I don't understand. A virus? Something about a virus? But – you lost – the Marathon
Bombing – What's that got to do with a virus? That doesn't make any sense.

LOU

It sure doesn't. The worst day of my life has become a bad life --

JESS

I was too young when it happened. I've been wanting to ask you. Hear it from you –

LOU

It's gross. It's too much for you.

JESS

I'm seventeen years old! Aunt Angel says I should know my family history.

LOU

You should. When you're older.

JESS

My mother babies me. You never do.

LOU

I'm not trying to punish you. I just got mad.

JESS

So, what, did you, like, did you run that marathon? I always thought you did.

LOU

No, I hadn't trained that year. I just went to watch with a couple of friends. They were traumatized. I was maimed. And traumatized. You don't want to hear this.

JESS

So you were kind of near one of the bombs?

LOU

The second one. I heard the first bomb, tried to run. But, as you can see, I didn't run fast enough. I ran in the wrong direction. How could I have known? Which way to run? Still. I wonder.

JESS

I'm glad you ran, though That you're alive.

LOU

That's nice.

JESS

Was Uncle Drew there?

LOU

He wasn't. I was calling for him, but...It's funny – some people, other survivors I've met, they hardly remember anything. That would be nice. God. I remember everything... chaos. People running away, then the police running in... right into the bomb scene, God love 'em...smoke, like fog. It was like fog. Screaming. So much screaming. Then, it got quiet. I could still hear things. But. Not really. It was quiet inside my head. Good God, Jess. You don't want to hear this.

And I could see my leg, part of it, lying on the ground just, what, four, five feet from me, and I kept trying to reach for it. Kept thinking, Get it. Because, I thought, if I could get it, they can re-attach it. The way they do fingers, or arms or whole legs, even, when there's a shark attack. I thought, Sure. That'll work. The doctors assure me that there was too much damage, that the blast was so — that they could not have re-attached it. Still, when I woke up, I was furious. I was livid. I was angry that no one had brought it to me. I kept asking your Uncle Drew to go back and get it. He said he'd try, then he said he did go, but he couldn't find it. Of course, he didn't actually go - it was a crime scene. You couldn't just go in there. But to calm me down, he told me he went and it wasn't there. He told me later, much later, that he didn't go. Only much later. I was so angry at the EMT's and the police. Why didn't they gather it up? Bring it to me at the hospital so they could put it back on. I was so — how could they just leave it there? How could they just, what, pick it up and throw it out? God, I wanted to kill. I swear to God, I wanted to tear someone apart. I was trying to be grateful that I was alive - everyone was telling me, "You're lucky to be alive." And I was trying to hear that, but. Who took my leg, you know? Is it in an evidence room somewhere ... does it ... is someone handling it, when it's mine? Is someone, what, checking it for evidence, explosive traces of what — when it's mine? Don't be touching my — it's not a thing that you study! It's mine! But. It was gone, I guess. I guess they couldn't even figure out whose it was...body parts all over. That's what I've heard, what I've been told. So one leg wouldn't matter much to anyone. Anyone but me.

JESS

But that was a long time ago. I thought it was over.

LOU

I thought it was done, too. Just living my new life, which is not new anymore, all these years later, but still weird. Then last year I got a nasty virus. It started in my arms, tingling and sore - it was horrible. Spread everywhere. They couldn't figure out what was going on - and it ended up in my legs. Especially the **right /left** one. It settled in the nerves in my leg. I guess it was vulnerable. Everything else is fine now, but the leg. God. It's killing me. I'm dying.

JESS

That's why you have pain meds.

LOU

They don't really help anymore. It's just too awful, and I'm used to them. All the pain came back: the phantom pain, the real pain, the nerve pain.

JESS

But the meds are so strong. Don't they —

LOU

I know that. (Why you shouldn't be taking them.) I keep taking more and more of them.
Your Uncle Drew is not happy with me -

JESS

But if you need them —

LOU

Don't touch your face. He thinks I take too much.

JESS

He's not in pain.

LOU

Ha! You're funny. Tell him that. Unh. I'm such a beast a lot of the time. A lot. I'd drive anyone crazy.

JESS

You wouldn't.

LOU

Thanks, bud. If I could keep my temper once in a while...but I'm just sick with it. All this pain. The doctors want me to...lose the rest of it. The leg. But. I don't know. And, I mean, Give me a break. No, really Give me a break. After all that we did to save the rest of the leg, then a VIRUS gets it.

It's the smell that haunts me. Burned flesh. You can't imagine what that is until you smell it. Then you never get it out of your nose.

I'm sorry, bud.

JESS

For what?

LOU

Telling you all that. It's too much.

JESS

I asked you to.

LOU

It's your own fault.

JESS

It is. Thank you.

LOU

Going to write a song about it?

JESS

Maybe. Maybe one day.

LOU

That'll be nice.

JESS

Lou? How did you know I took three?

LOU

I counted them before I left. And this morning.

JESS

You were afraid I'd take some?

LOU

I was right, Bud. I was right.

JESS

If it's so dangerous, maybe you should get off of it.

LOU

Mind your busi – oh. Sorry.

JESS

Sorry. Nonna my business.

LOU

"None of."

JESS

I'm surrounded by English teachers.

LOU

It's good for you.

DECK. EVENING. EVERYONE outside.

They have finished dinner. There might be a plate of cookies they're picking at. They're sun-and surf-tired, glowing from a little too much sun. The bugs are driving them all crazy, and they SLAP AT MOSQUITOS from time to time.

BARBARA is trying to do a little something to LOU's hair, which is usually just down, or in a simple ponytail.

They've made a batch of Angel's special punch and NATE's going at it pretty good. Even JESS has a bit of it.

BARBARA

--You always look like you just came back from a run. You could tidy up a bit. Wouldn't you like that, Drew?

DREW

I like the way she looks.

LOU

This way, he's never disappointed.

BARBARA

Nonsense. A woman ought to tidy up for a man. I get up before Nate and clean up, fix my hair. He's never seen me not nice. Isn't that true?

NATE

I guess so. Guess I'm asleep when you do that.

BARBARA

Exactly. (*re: punch*) Leave some for someone else, honey. People shouldn't drink anyway.

JESS

Mom. Just because you don't do something doesn't mean no one should -

BARBARA

It's not good for you. And you're not even old enough.

JESS

Almost.

BARBARA

Four years from now.

LOU

It's just sparkling wine. It won't bother him—

BARBARA

I guess I can decide when he's ready to drink.

NATE

Let it go, Barb. We're just having some of Angela's nice punch. It'll be better with a little o' this —

He pours some hard liquor from the sideboard or a flask into his glass.

He sneaks some into JESS' glass.

BARBARA

Well. Maybe I'll have just a little glass. (to the others) LOU
Exception for the Cape.

Exception for the Cape.

BARBARA

Oh, stop.

NATE

FUCKING mosquitos! Why are we hanging out here?

BARBARA

I thought it would be nice. I didn't know about the bugs.

NATE

Great idea.

ANGEL

They're usually gone by now. We'll all need Benadryl.

ROSS

We should move inside.

ANGEL

We should stay out here. They'll settle down soon.

BARBARA

Lou, you have a little sunburn! Your nose is red.

So is yours.
LOU

NO!
BARBARA

Yes!
LOU and DREW

BARBARA
Oh, my God - Oh! It is! I knew I shouldn't have gone to the beach! You shouldn't have talked me into it, Nate.

NATE
You could use a little sun.

BARBARA
Oh, it's so bad for your skin! When you hit forty you have to pay attention to everything! Your hair starts to thin, you see a little gray, maybe, your stomach isn't the flat, lean table top it used to be... oh...oh...

DREW
You should run, Barbara.

BARBARA
I don't like to get all sweaty.

LOU
It's worth it. It's very. Relaxing. And, oh so ... refreshing. After a while, you lose everything else. Stupid little daily problems go away. Nothing matters. It's just you, and your breath and... I don't wear headphones, don't listen to music. I'm waiting for that sweet spot where everything is quiet and all you hear is the pounding of your feet in perfect rhythm and the sound of your breath in your ears - same rhythm, same thing, perfectly in synch, there's nothing else. Just that.

DREW
Do it again. You could do it again.

LOU
Drew – this is really not the time to--

BARBARA
Why don't we vote on it?

DREW and LOU
What?

JESS
Mom!

JESS
Mom, you can't just say everything you think of –

ANGEL
It's not the sort of thing you vote on, Barbara–

BARBARA
Oh, yes, you're all ganging up on me, but I'm right. If you know what everyone else thinks, it might make your decision easier. As for me, I –

LOU
I don't care what anyone else thinks.

DREW
She doesn't even care what I think -

LOU
That's not true. OK, we're not voting on it. We're not discussing what to do with my leg this evening –

BARBARA
But that pain – what? Jag – that was – Nate, you should have seen it!

LOU
He shouldn't have --

NATE
Barb. Stop.

Little pause

BARBARA
Well. We can't talk about the house. We can't talk about your – situation. What can we talk about?

ANGEL
You can talk about the house...but only a little. Just for a minute. We're not spending the weekend discussing it.

BARBARA
The only good thing about it is that Jess can move back in with me.

JESS

DREW

I don't want to --

He can stay with us.

LOU

That would be great, bud.

ANGEL

He can stay with us if he wants. A little tight, but we'll figure it out.

NATE

He's fine where he is, Barb.

BARBARA

Oh, listen to all of you -- "he can stay with us." "he can stay with us." What's wrong with a boy being home? And anyway, he's my son - he should be home. I'm making a sacrifice here. It's hard to live with a young man.

JESS

I'm a big help. I open jars and bottles, help out in the garden --

BARBARA

Dirty laundry. Loud music. Hair in the bathtub that's not mine -- toilet seat --

ANGEL

-- He always leaves the seat down.

JESS

I leave the seat down.

ROSS

He's a good man -

ANGEL

I was so afraid he wouldn't.

BARBARA

I taught him that. But he forgets.

JESS

Mom'd throw a nutty anytime I left it up.

BARBARA

Not a nutty, honey. I'd just calmly correct you, Nate, on the other hand, is an old dog, if you get my meaning.

NATE

I'm actually really good. Think about it. If I didn't raise the toilet seat, I might splash and miss. I'm making sure you don't have to sit on pee --

BARBARA

Meanwhile, I sit on the rim and fall half-way in —

NATE

If you want to live with a man, you have to put up with a man, right, Ross?

ROSS

I had four brothers. My mother made sure we closed the seat.

NATE

Oh, geez. You can tell who runs this house.

BARBARA

Nate.

NATE

What? Don't pester me.

ANGEL

He's happy here. When Drew and Lou buy the house, he can stay. It'll be perfect.

JESS

That would be the best thing.

NATE

He's happy down here going to that shitty little college.

DREW

He could go to a shitty little college in the city —

BARBARA

I guess college is college. How are you doing, honey?

JESS

I like English. I might pass Sociology.

BARBARA

See? You could be a Sociologist. I think you'd make an excellent Sociologist. Wouldn't he be a good Sociologist?

General agreement.

NATE

An excellent Sociologist, whatever that is. Or a brain surgeon — So then what? After community college. Harvard, Jess?

BARBARA

Don't be silly. I can't afford Harvard.

JESS

Not going to Harvard, Mom.

NATE

Harvard! Ha!

BARBARA

You used to love school. What happened?

LOU

He wasn't mature enough to skip a grade.

BARBARA

It was my call, Lou. Not yours. Well, do stay in school. Something good will come of it.

NATE

Child Support. Still getting child support because he's in school. And I pay half the mortgage.

BARBARA

I work hard for my money. Nobody ever walked away from my counter unhappy.

NATE

Then you spend half of it on clothes. (to the group) Doesn't she? You could pay your mortgage if you didn't spend half your money on clothes. I'm picking up half her mortgage plus my child support – I pay through the nose.

BARBARA

It's not my fault! A decent blouse costs \$500!

LOU

Maybe you have enough decent blouses. Then you could pay your own mortgage.

NATE

Hey, Lou. Butt out.

DREW

Hey!

LOU

OK, settle down. I'm just saying, she's a grown woman. She should be able to pay her own –

BARBARA

They're not like sweatpants, Lou. They need to be replaced every year, and you need to freshen up your wardrobe each season -

LOU

You really don't.

BARBARA

I can't help it! They're right in front of me all the time! You know I always loved clothes -

LOU

That's why you shoplifted when we were kids —

JESS

Mom shoplifted? Cool.

BARBARA

Oh, now, Lou. Don't go making stuff up. I just can't tell you how nice it is to put on new clothes. Can I tell you what a thrill it is, to get something new?

LOU

You can try.

BARBARA

They're so new and vibrant - they give off a little vibration, I swear. And they have that little chemical smell that lets you know that they are right off the factory floor - never been worn by anyone else. It's just – it just tickles me.

LOU

But you could cut down.

BARBARA

It's not my fault everything looks good on me. When you're a size 6 – and - Oh, Lou. What else have I got?

LOU

Jess? Nate?

BARBARA

No, for fun? I mean, just for me. That didn't come out right.

LOU

You should let Drew look over your finances. He could help you figure out how to –

BARBARA

Is there anything he can't do?

LOU

He's a Financial Planner. That's his job.

BARBARA

I know what he does, Lou.

DREW

For instance, you don't need that whole big house when you could sell it and get a condo for half the price. It's only you there –

NATE

And me, most of the time –

BARBARA

That'll be a third of the space. When Jess is there, we'll be squished.

JESS

Mom, I'm not –

ANGEL

He's happiest here. Lou and Drew will buy the house and Jess can stay here.

LOU

No, auntie. We can't. We've been talking about it all weekend. We can't make it work.

ANGEL

It's a shock at first, I know, a big mortgage like this, but –

DREW

We have a big mortgage. The loft is worth a ton –

ANGEL

Then you'll be used to it already. It'll be fine –

LOU

But, Auntie, think about it. My leg –

ANGEL

You get along fine.

LOU

Not these days. Not anymore –

ANGEL

Well, you know what to do about that. Sometimes you have no choice, I mean, in what you have to do. It would put an end to this nightmare. Then you could buy the house, no problem. You can teach English anywhere.

LOU

I like my little city guys. They need me.

ANGEL

But what about when the children start coming along? They'll need a yard.

DREW

They'll have playgrounds. We want to raise them in the city.

LOU

If I can pull it off at all – there was so much internal damage. We don't even know if I can pull it off once. She'll be an only child, almost for sure. She'll need other kids. We're not exactly getting pregnant this week, but --

ROSS

We need a chunk of money. We owe them –

LOU

I know. What you owe them after fighting for two years. It's insane. But if you rent it and get the rent on a yearly basis –

ROSS

We need a chunk of money --

DREW

And we don't want to take Lou away from her doctors. You never know what could –

ANGEL

We have doctors down here.

LOU

No, not world-famous experts in - no offense – they saved my life. More than once. Who knows what'll happen in the future? We just --

BARBARA

What if Carl dies?

LOU
Barb!
That mouth!

ANGEL
Barbara!
Bite your tongue!

ROSS
That's!
enough!

JESS!
Jesus, Mom!
That mouth!

LOU
Jesus, Barbara!

LOU

BARBARA

Oh, yes, oh, yes – yell at me. But wait – what if you sell the house and he dies? He wasn't supposed to live this long! What? They gave him what, five years? That was 100 years ago - what if he dies and you already sold the house -

ANGEL

Let's assume your poor cousin has years to live. We'll be paying for care for the rest of our natural lives. The life insurance is enough to cover care when we die. But for now, there's nothing else for it. Lou. Drew. Please. I'm an old woman. I need this house. Just to visit. Even if it's not even mine. How many hours did you girls stand at this window – first to hear the cars won. How many hours did you play on the deck? How many naps in the hammock? How many bedtime stories in the blue room? How many mornings waking up to the smell of the Cape?

What have I ever asked of you children? I'm blessed to have you here. I'm blessed to be your auntie. To have cared for you since you were born. Truly. It is an honor. Past your Father's death, past your Mother's death. Always open arms. It was my greatest joy in life. But what did I ever ask of you? Please. Buy the house. Let me keep a little part of it.

LOU

Auntie. Uncle. There's nothing more that I ever wanted than to own this house. When I had all those surgeries, all that... stuff – they'd tell me to think of my favorite place. It was here. I could conjure the smell in my nose. For a bit. The quilts. The Blue Room. The Rose Room. The deck. The hammock ... the kitchen! Everything about the kitchen! I wanted to be just like you – an English teacher; I've been on medical leave for a year. Take care of my family; Drew takes care of me. Own this house. Retire to this house. Cape Haven. This blessed house. But. My life. I sure didn't see this coming. Two bombs. Two bombs. Full of ball bearings and nails and ... they changed everything. Three floors. It just won't work. We can't. We just can't. This house. It's a full-time job. It needs work, and it always will.

ANGEL

But Drew's so good at—

LOU

He'd spend his life working on the house.

ANGEL

But you could hire people to --

ROSS

Angela. Stop. That's enough. They can't take the house.

ANGEL

But they just need more time. To think about it and --

ROSS (to LOU and DREW)

We just figured. We just figured... We didn't mean to upset you. Sorry. We just didn't want to lose house. Sorry, Baby Lou, Drew.

Pause.

BARBARA

Oh, hell. I'll buy it. (to NATE) What do you say, honey?

LOU

What? You can't buy this house
This is too much house for
You! Just you and Nate—

DREW

I don't think you
can afford - no -

JESS

You don't have any money, Mom.

NATE

What are you talking about?

And, simultaneously:

ROSS

I don't think that's a wise idea --

ANGELA

Where are you getting the money to --

BARBARA

All right, all right. Everyone settle down --
I can't lose this house. It's the only place in the world I feel relaxed. If you sell the house, we all lose the house.

ANGEL

Barbara, it's a nice idea, but --

BARBARA

What do you say, Nate? Let's do it.

NATE

I'm not moving to the fucking Cape.

LOU

I thought you were breaking up --

BARBARA

(to LOU) Oh, hush. (to NATE) You'll like it once you get used to it.

NATE

I thought we were breaking up.

BARBARA

We can certainly work it out this time.

NATE

That's not what you said in your note. You said you were fin –

LOU

You left a note?

BARBARA (to LOU)

Mind your business.

LOU

Oh, shut up.

BARBARA (to LOU)

You shut up.

ANGEL

Girls –

BARBARA (to NATE)

What do you say?

NATE

What do you think I say? You're crazy. Nutty as a fruitcake - we're breaking up –

BARBARA

Then why are you here? You followed me all the way down here. You must want to stay together. You can afford the house if you sell the other one. I can find work on the Cape. Plenty of high-end shops – you can sell cars anywhere.

NATE

What am I supposed to do with my kids? Leave them up in –

BARBARA

Oh, you hardly ever see them.

NATE

Jess will live anywhere rather than with you –

BARBARA

That's not true! He likes the Cape –
(*sotto voce* to the others) Children are not Nate's favorite thing.

NATE

Fuck you –

ROSS

That's enough, young man--

DREW

Nate, calm down –

NATE

Oh, Fuck you! Sorry, Uncle Boss! Am I offending the women-folk? Why don't you all go to hell –

ROSS

You're upsetting my wife --

DREW

You're offending everyone, guy.
Why don't we take a walk? Huh?
Let's go check out the beach –

NATE

Take me for a walk – calm me down! The only thing I can do to calm down is to kick the fucking door off the hinges on my way out! Look at this fucking family! I'm supposed to buy the house because you can't keep your shit together. This fucked up whacked out family - get a cripple to buy a three-story house!

DREW

NATE!

NATE

Fuck you, Drew! This is between Barbara and me ---

BARBARA

Nate, don't be a horror show – sweetie - honey –

She reaches for him to calm him down and he gives her a hard shove. She goes flying and lands with a thud on the ground. During that –

JESS

Mom!

Mom!

etc.

LOU

Barbara!

God almighty-

ANGEL

Barbara!

Barbara

ROSS

Jesus, Mary and

Joseph –

JESS lunges at NATE and NATE hits him. He, also, goes tumbling and lands hard.

DREW, who apparently even knows Karate, grabs NATE and subdues him.

As if they've done it before, LOU sits on NATE'S legs to help keep him still.

During the previous action, JESS gets up and runs upstairs. He goes into the ATTIC and tosses back a bunch of pills. Then he sneaks down to the BLUE ROOM and roots around till he finds LOU's pills in her open suitcase, takes a bunch of them, sneaks back upstairs.

DREW

Settle down!

NATE

Fuck you! Get offa me, you ass hole!

DREW

Not till you settle down.

After a moment of thrashing:

NATE

Ass hole!

All right. All right.

Get off me. Drew. Get off me.

ROSS moves to the phone. Dials three numbers. BARBARA reaches for him.

No, no, please Uncle Ross –

BARBARA

ROSS
He should be arrested --
He can't toss people around
like that --

BARBARA
No, no, don't – don't call the police –
Don't. Please. He has children.

ROSS puts the phone down.

Thank you.

BARBARA

Drew. Don't be an asshole.

NATE

Please, Drew. That's enough. That's enough.

BARBARA

You have to leave.

DREW

Ya think? Get me outta this fucking dump.

NATE

Nate. Please. Just go.

BARBARA

DREW helps LOU up. NATE gets up.

NATE
You think I don't know you were using me for the money? I know I'm not the brightest bulb on the light. But how could I not know?
But. You're – you are just...Fuck it. Pay the mortgage without me.

He leaves. Everyone takes a moment to catch their breath.

DREW (to LOU)

You sat on his legs! Are you crazy?

LOU

I'm fine. It's OK. We still rhyme.

DREW

You're OK?

LOU

I'm fine.

BARBARA

Someone should check on Jess. Lou, can you run up there for a minute?

LOU

You should go.

BARBARA

Maybe better if you go. He's not going to be happy to see me.

He likes you better.

Drew?

No one answers her, so she heads slowly upstairs, occasionally looking back and coaxed by the others.

BARBARA (knocking)

Jess? Jess? Honey? It's Mom. Can you open up for a minute? Honey. I'm sorry. I'm done with Nate, I promise.

He tries to get up and falls over. He's out. BARBARA looks down into the LIVING ROOM. The others coax her.

BARBARA

Jess? I'm sorry.

She starts back down.

LOU (soto voce)

Go! Just go in.

She knocks one more time, then lets herself in. Finds him on the floor.

Jess? JESS? What's the matter with you? Lou? Come up. JESS? Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Jess. Wake up! Wake up! LOU! DREW!

DREW dashes upstairs.

DREW gets to the ATTIC first. Seeing the situation, he runs to the BLUE ROOM, rifles through LOU's things, finds her pills half empty.

Damn! Lou!
DREW

He runs back to the ATTIC, calling:

I'm coming, baby!
LOU

He got Lou's pills!
DREW (to Everyone)

Jesus! JESS! What did you --
LOU

LOU's a little slower on the stairs, but she's heading up, till she has a terrible, awful PAIN JAG. Worse than the one in the KITCHEN. She screams and collapses, screeching, on the landing.

DREW!
LOU (habit)
Oh God, oh my God! Oh Fuck! Fucking aah. – etc.

,
DREW
SHIT! (calling) LOU!

Habit, he starts to run to her, torn between her and JESS. Quickly, he turns back to JESS.

LOU

No! No! stay with Jess!

BARBARA

He's dead! He's dead! He's dead, etc.

ANGEL, to the best of her ability, dashes up the stairs and tries to tend LOU. Panicked, she's not very good at it.

ANGEL

Baby Lou! I'm here! I'm here, baby! Deep breaths! Breathe through your nose! etc.
JESS! Jessie.

DREW (back in the ATTIC)

JESS! Jessie! Talk to me, guy!

ROSS (dials 9-1-1)

God help us! Yes, 237 Sea Breeze Road. Possible overdose.

BARBARA

He's dead — he's dead he's dead he's dead, etc.

DREW

BARBARA SHUT THE FUCK UP JUST SHUT THE FUCK UP!
!

She switches to moaning and whimpering.

ROSS

17 years old. (listens, then:) Is he conscious?

DREW

A little bit – really out of it.

ROSS (into the phone)

A little bit. Really out of it.
Breathing?

DREW

Very shallow.

Oh, Jesus! I'm coming, baby!

LOU

*She tries. It's a disaster.
Screams.*

Lou!

ANGEL

Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

ROSS (still on the phone, under)

JESS! I'M COMING! DON'T GO!

LOU

Tries, collapses again. Gives up.

JESS! I'm coming! I'm coming...I'm coming ...

KITCHEN. 2 a.m. ANGEL and ROSS are at the kitchen table. Heavy waiting.

Can I not keep a child in this house?

ANGEL

We have Scoochie.

ROSS

Oh, stop.

ANGEL

Carl can't live here, Angela. Of course he can't.

ROSS

But, Jess.
Has he been doing this all along? Taking ---
Lord, help me.

ANGEL

We couldn't have known about this.

ROSS

We should have.

ANGEL

Angela, please. Water, please. ROSS

Not now, Ross. ANGEL

Please, Angel. ROSS

She sighs, goes to the counter, uses the Brita pitcher of water to fill a glass. She comes to him. Instead of putting it on the table, she tips the water to his mouth and tips it and tips and tips until his throat fills water and the water starts dribbling down his chin and shirt and he giggles, spurts some through his nose, out his mouth. . . she giggles and she continues to pour water till they're both wet and gently laughing.

When they're finished, they settle back down at the kitchen table. Heavy waiting.

LIVING ROOM. MORNING. ANGEL and ROSS snoozing in their chairs. They both have quilts or afghans over them.

After a moment, LOU and BARBARA come in. Exhausted.

Oh! I put fresh coffee on - ANGEL

I'll get it. LOU

I'll get it. ANGEL

Let Baloo get it. ROSS

BARBARA (to LOU)

You knew he was fooling around with drugs. Why didn't you tell me?

LOU

He wouldn't have wanted me to.

BARBARA

But I'm his mother. You had no right to keep it from me.

LOU

I had no right to tell you.

She heads to the KITCHEN.

BARBARA (to ANGEL and ROSS)

Did you know about Jess?

ANGEL

He spent a lot of time in his room. Maybe I should have asked him to come out? He's always been moody. Even as a child.

BARBARA

You blamed me for that.

ANGEL

A little.

BARBARA

God. God forgive me. I should have known. I should have known.

*DREW and JESS enter,
exhausted. JESS looks like hell.*

ANGEL

There he is! Come baby!

*She engulfs him, practically
knocks him off his feet.*

ANGEL (con't)

Child. You gave us a scare.

JESS

I'm fine, I'm fine –

ROSS

You don't look fine, kiddo.
You look a little pale -
You look like you've a long night
Ha ha. I'm kidding. It's good to see you, bud.

ANGEL

Oh, stop that, Ross. (to Jess)
He's teasing --
He's awful. Don't mind him --

JESS

It's OK. He can tease me. I'm an idiot --

ANGEL

Now, now. Stop that.

DREW

Today, we celebrate. Tomorrow, we give you hell. O.K.?

JESS

O.K.
Why did you have Narcan?

DREW

For Lou. In case of an accident.

JESS

And for me?

DREW

It came in handy.

*LOU comes back in with a tray
with the coffee urn and cups and
fixings.*

*She and BARBARA fix
everyone's coffee the way they
like it.*

*After a moment, on a look with
DREW:*

LOU

Jess: We love you. We want you to stay with us. As long as you like. But here's your rent: no more fooling around with drugs. Counseling or NA or both. Get good grades or drop out of school. Your mother can live without alimony if she has to --

BARBARA

Wait – oh...uh ... yeah. Yeah.

DREW

We'll fix up the upstairs for you. We don't use it. It'll be private. But that's your rent.

JESS

I don't really like the cit –

LOU

We can get used to anything, babe. It's only for a year or so. I'm going to need some help. For a year or so. I have to have that operation to – I thought you were dying. You were dying. And I couldn't get to you. I don't want to be that person. I don't want to be the person who – when you need me, I can't get to you.

(to Drew) When you need me, I can't get to you.

So I have to do the, uh –

(back to Jess) I'll need you.

JESS

O.K.

BARBARA

That'll be nice, hon. You can help your aunt.

JESS

Right. Right. OK. You got it.

DREW

And the year after that, I'll need you. Because I am FREAKIN' exhausted.

Little pause

BARBARA

Well. I should go.

ANGEL

Oh, no stay for a bit --
At least get a little rest -

LOU

You need some rest –
Take a nap at least.

JESS

Mom. Stay a couple of days. Make sure Nate is gone.

BARBARA

Oh, he's gone all right. I always throw him out. He never *leaves*. Never till now. Never till now.

ANGEL

You've been up all night. Don't drive right now. Stay.

BARBARA

Well. If you don't mind...I could use a little nap.

GUITAR. Strings, chords. Then JESS's VOICE. A very nice voice after all.

*During this, LOU and BARBARA finish pouring coffee, folks sip at their coffees. They remove shoes and sweaters and prostheses * and settle for a bit. A few minutes of song.*

JESS (V.O.)

Broken lamps and chairs thrown from the kitchen
I wished I had a tree fort I could live in
But I'm hiding in the den with the TV on
wake up in my bed wondering if they're gone
The love you thought you needed to survive
Didn't make it through the night. Well. Not alive.

REST OF SONG, OR MOST OF IT
COLLABORATING WITH A SINGER/SONGWRITER
AUGUST 20, 2021

The music fades to be almost imperceptible as the scene continues.

LOU (to Angel)

How are you doing? With the – I'm so sorry. We --

ANGEL

Nonsense -- the house. The house. I don't know. But Jess is alive. Carl is safe. And his Therapist sings ABBA for him. All is – well? It's good. Jess is ... Jess is home. My heart is broken. It's just broken. That's all.

JESS (to LOU)

The doctor gave me a prescription for that stuff.

LOU

The acne stuff?

JESS

Yeah.

BARBARA

Well, that's good. Let's see how that goes.

JESS (to LOU)

It's not lemons.

LOU

Think we have to try it.

JESS

We'll see.

BARBARA

That's nice, hon. You're so handsome.

JESS

Sorry, Mom.

BARBARA

We'll talk about it tomorrow. We'll talk then.

*She heads up to the ROSE
ROOM.*

ANGEL (to DREW and LOU)

You scoot. Get some rest.

DREW

But you need a rest –

ANGEL

We napped. Go.

DREW

We have to keep an eye on his breathing –

ANGEL

I'll do it. Lou is exhausted. She'll have pain if she gets over-tired. Go.

LOU

But I already took my foot off --

*DREW scoops her up like a bride, brings her over to the BLUE ROOM. **

LOU (con't)

Put me down, ya nut.

DREW

I gotcha.

They head over to the BLUE ROOM, settle down on the same bed.

JESS heads upstairs.

ANGEL

Stay here, love.

He flops onto the couch, grabs the quilt from the back of the couch and crashes.

ROSS (calling)

Scoochie! Treats!

SCOOCHIE, any small breed, tears into the room from an inconspicuous doggie door near the front door. ROSS gives him the promised treats and scoops him up and feeds him the promised treats.

ANGEL

There he is!

ANGEL picks up her duster, starts to clean.

Leave it, Angela. Rest.

ROSS

She puts it back and settles herself in her chair to rest. Picks up some sewing.

JESS is already out and ROSS settles down with the dog. ANGELA sews while JESS' SONG plays and the lights slowly dim, till:

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY

**** LOU's extra prosthesis should be in the bedroom so she can put it on for curtain call.***