

Five Frickin Winters

A Play

by Kim E. Ruyle

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## Five Frickin Winters

### Cast of Characters

<u>ROGER QUILL</u>	Male; 60-ish, intelligent but some rough edges; in reasonably good shape. A writer and next-door neighbor to Kev and Kat.
<u>CARM RUIZ</u>	Female; 50s, bouncy, brainy, and brash. Employed as a golf pro.
<u>KAT ROBINS</u>	Female; 50s, a simmering, volatile brew of intensity. Employed as a nurse. Kev's wife.
<u>KEV ROBINS</u>	Male; 60s, retired, simple, and amiably tottering through life. Kat's husband.
<u>COURIER (DOUBLING)</u>	Female; off-stage voice provided by Carm's character.
TIME:	Summer, 2017.
SETTING:	The adjacent condos of Roger and Kev/Kat somewhere in Florida.
SET	Condo living area consisting of kitchen/dining area with dining table, four chairs; a living area with settee, a couple of armchairs, and one or more end tables and lamps; door to exterior; door to bedroom; door to bathroom. The set is rapidly modified between scenes to reflect differences in the living areas in adjacent condos. There's a large, prominent painting on the wall in Roger's condo of a fierce, sword-wielding Celtic warrior. At a minimum, the condo of Kev and Kat is distinguished by slightly repositioning the furniture, changing or adding a tablecloth, adding a throw to the settee, and changing the painting on the wall to a prominent surrealistic print that suggests absurdity, perhaps a work by Picasso, Dali, or Magritte.
SYNOPSIS:	The year is 2017, and in Florida, Hurricane Irma won't come calling for a couple of months and no one's thinking about a global pandemic. Life is good for most everyone but Roger, a struggling writer faced with an uncertain future and disappointing past. While Roger struggles with choices surrounding his career and relationships, his next-door neighbors and a paramour create thorny and perilous complications.

ACT I  
Scene One

SETTING: Roger's condo.

TIME: Saturday early afternoon.

AT RISE: An unopened bottle of scotch sets in the middle of the kitchen table. A t-shirt is thrown over a chair, and a pair of men's tennis shoes and pair of women's sandals are on the floor near the table. A doorbell RINGS.

ROGER

*(Off, from bedroom.)*

Oh, god!

*(Projecting.)*

Who's there?

COURIER

*(Off, raised voice from outside.)*

Package for Roger Quill.

ROGER

*(Off, projecting from bedroom.)*

A minute!

*(ROGER appears at bedroom door hopping as he pulls up and then buttons his jeans. He enters, grabs the t-shirt and quickly pulls it on as he crosses, barefooted, to open the front door.)*

ROGER

Signature?

*(Stepping partly through open door, a beat, then stepping back in holding a thick overnight envelope.)*

COURIER

*(Off.)*

Thanks.

ROGER

Yeah.

*(The unseen COURIER GIGGLES as ROGER closes the door, throws the package on the table, then notices he's unzipped.)*

Shit.  
 ROGER

*(ROGER zips up, falls into chair, cradles his head in his hands.)*

All clear?  
 KAT  
*(Off.)*

Yeah.  
 ROGER

Aren't you coming back?  
 KAT  
*(Peeking out from bedroom.)*

I'm not... No.  
 ROGER  
*(Aside.)*  
 God, no...

*(ROGER shifts his gaze to the bottle of scotch and pulls it near. His gaze alternates between the package and the scotch. We see the backside of KAT through the open bedroom door wearing only panties. She slips a sundress over her head and enters, her hair mussed, barefooted. ROGER sits and stares at the scotch as Kat comes behind, wraps her arms around his neck and kisses his ear.)*

Christ! A wet willy?! What are you doing?  
 ROGER

You didn't open it.  
 KAT  
*(Pulls back a bit but smiling, keeping hands on his shoulders. Turns her gaze to the bottle of scotch and grin turns pensive.)*

I thought just a massage... What are we doing?  
 ROGER  
*(Picks up the package, then slaps it back down on the table.)*

I mean the scotch... Fifteen years. You can't backslide now.  
 KAT  
*(Moving to sit in an adjacent chair, pausing to study Roger.)*

ROGER

*(Taking firm hold of the bottle.)*

Hell I can't.

KAT

But you won't. Let me take it home, give it to Kev.

*(A beat, then indicating the package.)*

Is that...?

ROGER

Yeah.

KAT

Open it.

*(Considers ROGER who just stares, no response.)*

We didn't have to get dressed. Still have some time.

ROGER

He drives the golf cart slowly as he drives his car, yeah, probably lots of time. But no way we're... Just keep your clothes on.

KAT

You never go out with him.

*(ROGER sighs, dismissively wags his head.)*

You really should. He'd love it. You know he adores you.

ROGER

I need to think.

KAT

Think about golf or the package? ...Or, the scotch? ...Or, maybe you're thinking about me!

ROGER

Thinking, what the hell are we doing here?

*(Studies Kat a moment before turning his attention to the package.)*

And wondering if I can endure five fucking winters in Minnesota.

KAT

Uh-huh. But why five?

ROGER

At least five. What I need to sock something away.

KAT

Forty years you've worked. Already. Forty years!

ROGER

So, what's another five? ...But for those fucking winters...

KAT

You're doing okay. Stay.

*(Rises, hugs his neck and kisses his cheek.)*

Please stay. Things are dead in the winter. Here, we're alive! I'm alive! You're alive! You've got a good life here, Rog.

ROGER

I've got shit.

KAT

*(Moves to study painting a moment before returning attention.)*

No interest in Judy?

ROGER

I'm talking about assets. Property. Capital.

KAT

I was afraid you might like her.

ROGER

A woman isn't an asset. And she bored hell out of me.

KAT

Good... I don't like to share.

ROGER

Share?! Christ, what do you think's happening here?

KAT

Maybe you find me boring, too.

ROGER

Didn't say that. But sharing?! Shit. We can't... This thing... This is not a thing. We are not a thing! You understand that, right? We're not doing this... I can't believe we almost... God, what's wrong with me?! And what's going on with you? You seem... Are you okay?

KAT

More than okay. Simply adjusting my priorities. About time I did, too. And what thing? I'm not making any demands, and don't tell me you wouldn't enjoy it. Damn it, Rog! You're so uptight. Relax. Get comfortable.

ROGER

Well, I'm not comfortable. I'm...

KAT  
Don't tell me you're conflicted.

ROGER  
Fucking A. Exactly what I am.

KAT  
God! Get over it!

*(KAT bends down to give ROGER a kiss which he only receives by turning so it lands on his cheek. There's a knock on the door. KAT gasps, grabs her sandals, and rushes to exit to bedroom, closing door behind her. ROGER slowly rises, apprehensively traipse to open the door. KEV enters.)*

KEV  
Hot out there.

ROGER  
Yeah. Get you something to drink?

KEV  
Uh... Sure.

ROGER  
I've got water... Or scotch.

*(KEV shrugs, takes a seat at table, looks around. He turns, studies the scotch bottle. ROGER retrieves water bottle from kitchen.)*

KEV  
Thought Kat might be here. Car's in the drive, but she ain't home.

ROGER  
*(Hands him the water and takes a seat.)*  
Uh, yeah. She's in the bathroom.

*(Beat, notices KEV'S look of confusion.)*  
You've got a good wife, Kev. Just gave me a hell of a shoulder massage.

KEV  
*(Looking to bathroom door which is ajar.)*  
She's in the bathroom?

ROGER  
Uh, yeah. The second bath. Guess she wanted some privacy.

KEV

Oh.

*(Beat.)*

Hey, you think you could handle nine holes? With the shoulder?

ROGER

*(Wincing as he rubs a shoulder).*

Maybe one of these days.

KAT

*(Entering fully dressed, flushed but otherwise put together.)*

You're back early.

*(KAT gives Kev a pat on the shoulder, steals a glance at ROGER, then takes a seat.)*

KEV

Too hot. Just played nine.

KAT

Did Roger tell you? He just received his package. We were about to open it.

KEV

And... You were... You were –

ROGER

Yeah. That, too.

*(Rubbing his shoulder and looking to Kat.)*

I admitted to getting a massage.

KAT

*(Rises, moves behind Roger to clinically massage his shoulder.)*

And you're still stiff.

KEV

Still? I was hoping he could –

ROGER

Keep on nagging, Kev. Maybe one of these days.

*(Twisting around to address Kat.)*

Wants me to go golfing.

KAT

What I told you.



KEV

What's with the scotch? You don't –

KAT

*(Reaching over to slide the bottle toward Kev.)*

Rog got it for you. Isn't that sweet?

ROGER

*(Intercepts bottle, gives Kat a look, then slides it to Kev.)*

Yeah. I'm a sweet guy. Here you go, Kev.

KEV

For what?

ROGER

Uh... Reciprocity.

*(KEV gives a puzzled look.)*

For sharing.

KEV

Sharing?

KAT

*(Continues to massage).*

What he means –

ROGER

Your stories.

KEV

What stories?

KAT

What he means –

ROGER

You're a storyteller, man.

KEV

Whatcha talkin' 'bout? You're the writer.

ROGER

Yeah, but where do my best ideas come from?

KEV

Uh...

ROGER

You think I'm not paying attention when you're telling me about those riveting adventures on the golf course?

KEV

Thought you didn't like golf.

KAT

I think Roger –

ROGER

I don't like it. Tell the truth, I hate it. The pointless activity, I mean. But, the stories, Kev! The stories! Thanks to you, I vicariously get all the pleasure and none of the aggravation of chasing a little white ball for hours in the sweltering sun.

KEV

Aggravatin', but tain't pointless.

ROGER

Yeah. And a beetle's making a point when it rolls a little ball of shit through the dirt.

KAT

*(Seeing ROGER and KEV study each other, shifts gears.)*

Roger's got that job in Minnesota... If he wants it.

*(Looking down at Roger while speaking to Kev.)*

But don't you think he should stay here?

KEV

Tell me 'gain. What's it for?

ROGER

Account manager. A goddamn account manager.

KEV

*(Picking up the package.)*

And this the contract?

ROGER

It's not a contract.

KAT

Let's open it.

KEV

Yeah but, ya know. The offer?

ROGER

Not a contract.

KEV

Well, okay then. But it's 'fficial, right? Got your salary and bennies. For an account manager. That's sumpin.

ROGER

A glorified salesman.

KAT

I thought it was consulting. Managing consulting accounts.

ROGER

They don't want my consulting skills. It's all about selling. Business development. Fucking consultants. You eat what you kill.

KEV

Why you should golf! That's the point of it. Best place to develop business, on the golf course.

KAT

Maybe when it cools off. And when your shoulder loosens up.

*(KAT gives the shoulder a final rub and takes a seat.)*

KEV

Golf is relaxing. Whatcha need. Lately, you been wound tighter than –

KAT

Yep! Wouldn't hurt to slow down. Relax a little.

KEV

Teaches patience, golf does.

ROGER

Patience is for pussies. And what do you mean slow down? I've been coasting the past two months.

KEV

Ya think Jack Nicklaus is a pussy? Arnold Palmer? Tiger Woods?

KAT

Not coasting. You've been writing.

ROGER

Yeah, couple pages on a / good day.

KEV

/The Golden Bear ain't no pussy.

KAT

The problem is, you stew.

KEV

Your mood, what she means. Last coupla days ya been kinda –

KAT

You imagine problems that aren't even there.

ROGER

God...

*(Uncomfortable pause before KEV shifts gears.)*

KEV

Hey! Whadja think 'bout Judy?

KAT

He found her boring.

KEV

What I figgered.

ROGER

I'm not really looking.

KEV

*(Looking to Kat.)*

Remember Carmen? Carm? ... Ya know, the one –

KAT

From the club?! The golf pro?

KEV

Yeah!

*(Looking to Roger.)*

She's separated from her husband and –

KAT

She's not his type!

ROGER

How old?

KEV

She's nice lookin'.

KEV (CONT.)

*(Turning to Kat.)*

What's his type? Dontcha think she looks good?

KAT

I guess. But –

ROGER

How old?

KEV

Younger than you, that's for sure.

KAT

How old? That's your first question? Jesus.

ROGER

Just the first. First of many.

KAT

You can be an ass, you know. Thought you weren't looking.

KEV

Take it easy. I 'vited her over for drinks later.

KAT

You what?!

KEV

I knew Judy wasn't goin' to hold his interest. Jes knew it.

KAT

When? Tonight?!

KEV

Judy. She was too –

ROGER

Please! Kev. You can stop playing the pimp.

KAT

Tonight?! What time?

KEV

'Bout six. When she's off.

KEV (CONT.)

*(Looking to Roger.)*

And just so ya know, I tol' her all 'bout you.

ROGER

Told her what? Oh, god. You told her I'd be there tonight?

KAT

For drinks or dinner?

*(Fingers to her temples. Turns attention to Roger.)*

Damn. You got any aspirin?

ROGER

*(Points to bathroom. Addresses Kev. KAT exits to bathroom.)*

You can't convince me to golf, but figure she can? That it?

KEV

She's interestin', Rog. And she's funny.

KAT

*(Off, projecting from bathroom.)*

Oh, yeah. Hilarious.

ROGER

But she golfs?

KEV

Club pro. And she's smart, too.

KAT

*(On entering from bathroom.)*

Six o'clock. That means dinner.

ROGER

Kev, you must think my balls are bluer than a peacock's.

KEV

You're my best friend. Just wantcha be happy.

KAT

Well, come on then. I've got to get some steaks out of the freezer. Thanks for the notice.

KEV

She's smart, Rog. You'll see. A reader.

Really? She can read?  
 ROGER

You know. Like, she's super literal.  
 KEV

You mean literary?  
 ROGER

Smart. Real smart.  
 KEV

A literary bimbo.  
 KAT

Literary bimbo... A high price to pay for a slab of steak...  
 (Beat.)  
 Six o'clock?  
 ROGER

Let's go then. Six o'clock! What were you thinking?!  
 KAT

Go on ahead. I'll be over in a minute. I wanna see Rog's contract.  
 KEV

It's an offer is all. Not a contract.  
 ROGER

And she ain't no bimbo.  
 KEV

You really grilling steaks?  
 (KAT gives a noncommittal shrug.)  
 Remember, I like mine rare.  
 (KAT returns an icy stare, exits abruptly without a word.)  
 Oh, oh. She's pissed.  
 ROGER

Naw. Not really. She likes t' entertain.  
 (Picks up, studies package, lays it down. Appears very troubled.)  
 Rog, lemme ask ya sumpin'.  
 KEV

What's wrong? You okay?  
 ROGER

KEV

Lemme ask ya, what's longest ya ever hadda pair a shoes?

ROGER

Shoes? I don't know. There's a pair of cowboy boots in my closet I've had, must be at least twenty years?

*(Beat.)*

What? Are you collecting shoes for the needy?

KEV

They still fitcha?

ROGER

The boots? Well, sure. What are getting at, Kev?

KEV

But if'n they dint fit, who d'ya blame? Not the boot's fault, is it?

ROGER

You want a pair of old cowboy boots, you can have them.

KEV

We're married thirty years. She always tol' me I was like an ol' pair a shoes ya never gonna throw way cause ya got used to 'em. Got sentimental value. Might look like crap and stink, but they're comfortable, ya know? Ya jes never gonna throw 'em way.

ROGER

I'm sure she doesn't –

KEV

A joke! It's a joke! She always said it like a joke. Ya know, like she was teasin' and dint really think I stink or look like crap.

ROGER

Oh... Good.

KEV

Last coupla weeks, she skipped church. And you noticed she's gettin' a real potty mouth?

ROGER

Now you mention it...

KEV

Used t' be, she made sweet tea ever day. Always got me a glass, I come in from golfin'... She thinks I drink more tea, maybe won't drink so much beer. Ya know? Nuther joke tween us.



Sure. ROGER

And her books. KEV

Uh...? ROGER

KEV  
You know how she's always readin'? ...I'd come in and start talkin' 'bout my golfin', and she'd listen a bit then tell me if'n I was gonna talk golf, she's gonna talk 'bout her dang novels. It was kinda a joke. Ya know, like jokin' 'bout the tea keepin' me t' not drink so dang much beer.  
*(Uncomfortable pause.)*

Last coupla weeks, she ain't been readin'. Says maybe she needs new glasses... But, Rog, she ain't makin' sweet tea neither... We ain't been jokin'.

ROGER  
Yeah. You've got a sense there's something...

KEV  
And then... It seems you been kinda... Is sumpin' wrong?

ROGER  
With me? No. I mean, well, I've got a lot on my mind.

KEV  
I's jes wonderin' if'n it's me that's changed. Ya know... Maybe now the shoes don't fit so good no more. For Kat... Maybe for you, too.

ROGER  
Oh, god, Kev. No. Don't get down on yourself. It's not you. I haven't been myself lately, and look, I was just being a jackass giving you a hard time about the golf. Sorry, but you know I didn't mean it. Sometimes I can be a real jackass...

KEV  
It's okay, man... I know my stories ain't gonna grab ya by the throat and shake ya... Kat says I'm so danged boring, could put me in a room with a Tasmanian devil hopped up on caffeine... inside a five minutes, the critter'd be in a coma.

ROGER  
Predictable's a better word. I'd say you're predictable... Most predictable guy I know.

KEV  
That don't sound so –

ROGER

No! It's good. Predictable suits you. You're always upbeat. I count on that. Most people pay too much attention to all the shit going on around them. It affects them. But Kev, you're steady. That's what you are. Steady. And you see the good in people. You ever notice that most of the time when you come to visit, how it puts me in a good mood? We have some laughs, don't we?

KEV

Not so much lately. So, I's thinkin' maybe I'm wearin' on ya. Wearin' on Kat.

ROGER

Wearing on me? No way. You're not just predictable. You're a nice guy. I guess the nicest guy I know. Tell the truth, Kev, I think about that... I wish I was more like you.

KEV

Like me?! Daaang!

*(Overwhelmed by this, nearly choking up, wags head in disbelief.)*

Ya really wanna be like me?

ROGER

More like you, for sure. Nicer.

KEV

Kat always tole me she kep' me 'roun cause I's a nice guy. But now... I don't know.

*(Uncomfortable pause, getting very serious.)*

Sumpin's off. With Kat. I mean weird off.

ROGER

I see it, too. Something's going on. Different.

KEV

Ya know, my birthday's a coupla days ago, and –

ROGER

Oh, man! I missed it!

KEV

Naw. No big deal. But Kat...

ROGER

Yeah?

KEV

You're my friend... I can tell ya stuff...

*(Uncomfortable pause as ROGER nods his assent.)*

My birthday. I come in from golfin'... And Kat... Uh... She's on the bed... On her knees... Hind end in up in the air like a dang chimpanzee.

Oh...  
ROGER

Butt nekked on her knees jes waitin' for me.  
KEV

God, Kev, you paint a picture.  
*(Covers eyes and wags head before continuing.)*  
I guess you got your birthday present.  
ROGER

Tol' me I could take my pick...  
KEV

Huh?  
ROGER

I tell ya, Rog, I never, never, never tol' her I's lookin' for a rectum as a birthday present.  
KEV

Wow. I really don't know what to say here.  
ROGER

Thing is, one minute she's bein' all nice and tryin' t' be sexy, and then... I guess cuz I wasn't jumpin' at the chance... Next minute she's freakin' out. Yellin'. Cussin'. Dang! She can be downright mean. I tell ya...  
KEV

Look. I'm going to be straight with you. I do think somethings off. With Kat.  
*(Beat.)*  
Would it be okay if I try to find a therapist for you? I mean, would be for Kat.  
ROGER

You mean like a shrink?!  
KEV

Someone for her to talk to.  
ROGER

Oh, man. She's never gonna go for that.  
KEV

Maybe you can go first. On your own. Don't even have to tell Kat about it. Talk to someone other than your next-door neighbor. You might get some ideas to convince her to go, too.  
ROGER

KEV

You're a good friend, Rog. Jes glad I can talk with you but don't know 'bout no therapist.

ROGER

You don't have to decide anything right now. But I think we have to do something. Let me do a little investigation and let you know what I find. No pressure.

KEV

Thanks.

*(Nods, bucks up, and after a moment, picks up, studies package.)*

Gonna open it?

ROGER

Go ahead.

KEV

Yeah?

ROGER

Sure.

KEV

*(Opens package, peruses cover letter, gives a low whistle.)*

You'll be rollin' in chalupas. I know Kat wants ya should stick 'round so she can find ya a lady.

ROGER

You think?

KEV

But this ain't bad. Chalupas like this might 'tract lotsa ladies.

ROGER

You're the one always trying to set me up. Besides, those are commission-based chalupas. Nothing's guaranteed.

KEV

But a dang good offer... Ya gonna take it?

ROGER

I don't know, Kev. I don't know.

*(Pulling the scotch back over and studying the label.)*

It means. Five. Fucking. Winters.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Two

SETTING: Condo of Kev and Kat.  
TIME: About 6 p.m., same day.  
AT RISE: KAT is arranging the table.

KAT

*(Projecting toward bedroom.)*

We need some diet soda.

*(KEV enters from bedroom having changed his clothes.)*

For Roger. All we've got is beer and regular soda.

KEV

We got water.

KAT

For god's sake. We've got guests.

KEV

And we got the scotch. Rog ain't no guest.

KAT

But Carm. Maybe she'd like diet soda or some wine.

KEV

Carm? Naw. I seen her drink beer.

KAT

You're the one invited them, so get your butt to the Publix for diet soda and a bottle of wine. Get two, a good red and a white. And maybe some decent snack crackers. Assuming they stay, I'll grill the steaks and toss a salad.

KEV

Might not stay to dinner.

KAT

If there's steak, Roger will stay.

KEV

So, ya think he'll take to Carm?

KAT

Hell no, I don't. What are you thinking?

KEV

He's a picky son of a gun. No beer. No regular soda. No woman good enough...

KAT

Not picky. Selective. Man just knows what he wants. You don't know him well as you think.

KEV

Oh. Ya think ya know him better 'n me?

KAT

That's not what I mean. Get going now. It's coming up on six.

*(There's a KNOCK on the door. KAT looks at her watch, sighs, shakes her head, and quickly exits to bedroom. KEV watches her go and opens door to greet CARM.)*

KEV

Hey, Carm. Come on in.

CARM

*(Enters carrying a fruit tray and looks around.)*

Thanks. This still a good time? You said when I finished my last lesson.

KEV

Sure. Kat'll be right out.

*(KEV takes the fruit tray and sets it on the table. KAT enters.)*

Thanks for the – Oh, here she is.

KAT

*(KAT greets CARM with a kiss on the cheek.)*

Hi, Carm. How have you been? Have a seat. What can I get you to drink?

CARM

Thanks. Whatever you've got... Maybe a glass of white wine.

KAT

Sure. Kev was just heading out to pick up some wine.

CARM

Oh, no! Don't make a trip!

KEV

We got beer.

KAT

We need diet soda anyway.

CARM

Beer's fine.

KAT

*(Handing keys to KEV and pushing him to and through the door.)*

Wine, diet soda, crackers. Go!

KEV

*(Voice fades on exiting as KAT shuts the door.)*

But we got beer...

CARM

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to –

KAT

No, no! Kev's good-natured but can be a real boob. Sometimes he needs a good goosing.

CARM

Some men do need a nudge, don't they?

KAT

*(Retrieving water for Carm.)*

A hot poker up his butt what he needs. Wish I could tell you he'll be right back, but he gets in Publix and it's like a goddamn obstacle course. For god's sake, it's just a grocery store! But he's like a rat stuck in a maze. Drives me fucking crazy. I'm living with a constant headache... Sorry... Anyway, here's some water until the wine arrives.

CARM

Okaaay, thanks... Are you sure this is a good time? And if you've got a headache...

KAT

We didn't have plans for tonight so it's nice to have some company. And I pretty much live with the headache.

*(Aside.)*

Married to it.

CARM

Okay, if you're sure.

*(Beat.)*

I got the feeling Kev's trying to set me up with your neighbor.

KAT

Roger. From next door. Come and sit down.

*(Takes a seat with CARM.)*

What'd Kev say about him?

CARM  
I guess he's a writer.

KAT  
Out of work writer.

CARM  
Oh. Well, I guess writers –

KAT  
*(Jumping in forcefully.)*

Are you really interested?

*(Beat.)*

I'm sorry, but I didn't even know about you and Marco.

CARM  
We've been over for a long time. You met him, right? At the tournament last year?

KAT  
He seemed a nice guy but I only met him that once at the club.

CARM  
Oh, he's a great golfer. You need a scratch golfer to round out your foursome, fine. But around the house, he was a... No. Not going to say it.

*(Beat.)*

I almost said he was a mean prick.

KAT  
A tall, athletic, handsome prick – the worst kind.

CARM  
So, what about this Roger?

KAT  
You ready to get back in the saddle?

CARM  
A writer would be quite a change from a prick athlete.

*(Beat.)*

Roger's not a prick, is he?

KAT  
I think he's going to be moving. Kev should have told you. So, I'm not sure –

CARM  
My divorce will be official any day.



KAT

I don't know. Maybe all writers are pricks.

CARM

Moving when? I'm not looking for anything long-term.

KAT

Oh?

CARM

What's he like? I kind of imagine writers to be brooding and intense.

KAT

And impatient.

CARM

Is he?

KAT

You know how Kev's motor's always idling? Well, with Roger, it's the opposite. Always revved up to the red line.

CARM

Ooh, a race car.

KAT

I mean, he just hates to waste time. Can't stand to be idling.

CARM

Well, that's not so –

KAT

Guy needs to take a leak, whips his dick out on the way to the toilet to save time.

CARM

Well, then... I guess you know him pretty well.

KAT

Just an illustration. I don't know anyone who's so... He's so goddamn self-critical. Dissatisfied. With his life, you know?

CARM

I'm not looking for /gloomy.

KAT

/Down on himself.

CARM

Someone who'll make me laugh. Doesn't take life too seriously.

KAT

You must meet lots of guys at the club.

CARM

None I can date.

KAT

Don't make you laugh?

CARM

Fraternizing with members would just lead to trouble.

KAT

Must be tough. Like working in a candy store. Or, maybe an outdoor meat market.

CARM

I'm no vegetarian, but none of the club sausage appeals to me.

KAT

Aren't most of the members pretty well heeled?

CARM

I'm not looking for a sugar daddy or a young buck just shooting for the hole-in-one.

KAT

Guess I don't have to be concerned about Kev, then.

CARM

Just a regular guy who's got, I don't know. Energy. Wit. Who's got a pair but doesn't have to wear them outside his jeans for all the world to see.

KAT

*(Aside.)*

Got a pair. Yep. Definitely not Kev.

CARM

Intelligence. God! Wouldn't that be sweet?! Find a guy who's smart but not a smart ass.

KAT

Roger is a total smart ass.

CARM

Well, no worries then. I'll be polite and we'll just have a drink or two and I'll be on my way.

KAT

I don't mean to be negative, but also... About Roger...

CARM

There's more?

KAT

He worries about money. Worries a lot.

CARM

Must be tough to make it as a writer.

KAT

I think he's moving soon to take a job up north. Guess he's looking to climb out of a hole.

CARM

Needy, is he?

KAT

God, no! Stubborn? Sure. Independent? For damn sure... Whoever said no man is an island hadn't met Rog. He'd be the lone island in a sea of introverts.

CARM

But unsuccessful...

KAT

He was. Successful, I mean. As a free-lancer, but one by one, magazines have been folding. Cutting back. He lost some savings in a bad investment – some asshole relative shined him on. Ex-wives got most of the rest. I know he's hoping to get something from his novels, but so far –

CARM

He's a novelist?!

KAT

Several ex-wives.

CARM

He's got a real publisher? Not self-published?

KAT

Well, yeah. He's –

CARM

What kind of novels?

KAT

Trashy novels, according to Rog. Actually, not bad. Easy to read. He writes about... Let's see... How does he put it? Uh... *Sneaky Scoundrels. Dizzy Dames. And Reluctant Rescuers.*

CARM

Guy's really into alliteration.

KAT

I guess.

CARM

Kev makes me laugh. You should hear him go on about Roger in the clubhouse. To hear him tell it, Roger is a brilliant, successful writer. He goes on and on about his writer friend.

KAT

Yep. That's Kev. Easily impressed. A year ago, he golfed a round with the mayor of DeFuniak Springs and still talks about it like it was yesterday. Totally star struck. You'd think he'd been part of a foursome with Obama, Trump, and Dalai Lama.

*(There's TAPPING at the door. KAT admits ROGER who steps in carrying a couple of books. He nods and mumbles a greeting to Kat, then locks eyes with CARM as she stands. ROGER extends a hand without waiting for an introduction from Kat.)*

ROGER

Hi. I'm Roger.

KAT

This is Carmen.

CARM

It's Carm. Nice to meet you, Roger.

ROGER

Yeah. You, too.

*(Looking around and setting books aside.)*

Where's Kev?

KAT

Ran to the Publix for some diet soda.

ROGER

Oh, hell. He didn't need to do that on my account.

CARM

Kat tells me you're a novelist.

KAT

Why don't we all sit down. I'll grab you a water.

ROGER

*(Takes a seat. CARM sits nearby.)*

Thanks.

KAT

*(Hands Roger a bottle of water and takes a seat.)*

Roger doesn't drink alcohol.

CARM

Oh.

ROGER

Probably explains my failure to achieve notoriety as a writer.

CARM

So, alcohol's a lubricant for creativity?

ROGER

No doubt.

CARM

Guess it was for Hemingway.

ROGER

And Steinbeck.

CARM

*(A pause considering and growing a smile.)*

And Faulkner.

ROGER

*(Grinning... and game on.)*

Truman Capote.

CARM

Dorothy Parker.

ROGER

Eugene O'Neill

CARM

Tennessee Williams

ROGER  
F. Scott Fitzgerald

CARM  
F. Scott Fitzgerald.

*(ROGER and CARM share a moment in which, for them, Kat isn't even there. Throughout remainder of scene ROGER and CARM mostly ignore KAT who repeatedly attempts to insert herself.)*

	KAT
Jesus. What was that?	
	ROGER
So, a golf pro...	
	CARM
I coach duffers on their grip and swing.	
	KAT
Carm's married to –	
	CARM
No! Not really married.	
	ROGER
Me neither.	
	KAT
Marco's a financial advisor.	
	ROGER
Marco's your –	
	CARM
My ex... So, what do you write?	
	ROGER
You mean –	
	CARM
Your genre.	
	ROGER
I don't know... I write about capers of one sort or another. Ordinary people trapped in extraordinary circumstances with extraordinary antagonists.	
	CARM
Cool. After Elmore Leonard or do you lean to Carl Hiaasen?	

ROGER

God, to be able to write like either one of them!  
*(Takes a moment considering Carm.)*  
 How'd a golf pro score literary chops?

CARM

I might have had a golf scholarship, buddy, but I was also a lit major. Duke University.

ROGER

No shit?!

CARM

No shit, *Shakespeare*.

*(ROGER and CARM again share a moment as KAT looks on.)*

KAT

Uh... Roger's moving.

CARM

What have you written that I might have read?

KAT

Moving to Minnesota.

ROGER

Probably nothing unless you're into obscurity. I guess that's my genre.

KAT

Roger! Why don't you tell us about your new job?

ROGER

*(A beat before turning attention to Kat.)*  
 I thought you wanted me to stick around.

KAT

Well, I—

CARM

Okay. Who do you emulate?

ROGER

I'm too old to emulate.

CARM

Mature, not old. And authentic, too? *Sui generis!*

ROGER

You speak Latin.

CARM

Not really. But I do appreciate authenticity.

ROGER

The very essence of art appreciation.

CARM

Authenticity?

ROGER

Sure. Young artists. Aspiring artists... musicians... writers... We all start out imitating our idols. But if you're still imitating when you're geriatric, like me, well, then you've failed to achieve artistry.

CARM

Stop it! You're not geriatric. But tell me your titles so I can check them out, judge your originality.

ROGER

If you're into judging, stop by my place later and help yourself to a complimentary copy.

KAT

Roger says all writers suffer from insecurity.

CARM

Don't we all?

ROGER

Even golf pros?

CARM

It's a general human condition.

*(To KAT'S discomfort, ROGER and CARM continue to regard each other intently, leaning in a bit.)*

KAT

Well, I guess Kev should be back soon if you want to wait for the wine and diet soda.

ROGER

No hurry.



I'm good

CARM

KAT  
*(Rising and moving to kitchen.)*  
I have some steaks but didn't know if you would be staying for –

Great!

ROGER

CARM  
That sounds wonderful, Kat. Thank you.

*(KAT watches ROGER and CARM share another moment until...)*

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Three

SETTING: Condo of Kev and Kat.

TIME: Evening, same day after dinner.

AT RISE: KEV, ROGER, and CARM sit around the table sipping coffee, the remnants of a meal evident. KAT is refilling one of the cups, returns coffee to kitchen and takes a seat and conversation begins. Banter between ROGER and CARM is frisky and flirtatious even when topic is serious.

CARM

Nothing beats a thick, juicy steak. Thank you, Kat. It was perfect.

ROGER

Yeah, thanks. Good and bloody. Just the way I like it.

KAT

Mm-hmm.

CARM

Bloody sounds so... Better to say juicy.

ROGER

What? And deny my bloody barbarian roots?

CARM

But you don't have to use the term bloody in order to express appreciation for a good steak. And enjoying red meat doesn't make me barbaric.

ROGER

Lots of women would disagree with you.

CARM

Oh. So, it's about gender?

ROGER

Everything's about gender.

CARM

Maybe for you. But I won't deny that describing yourself as a barbarian is a thoroughly masculine trait. No female –

KEV

Conan the Barbarian! He was cool.

*(Uncomfortable silence.)*

ROGER

My people, the Celts, according to the Romans, were fierce, barbaric warriors who beheaded their victims slain in battle.

KEV

Conan whacked Doom with his daddy's sword! Good ol' Schwarzenegger!

CARM

Your people? The Celtic roots run deep, do they?

ROGER

Celtic soldiers, my ancestors, spiked their hair with lime so it stood straight up and ran bare-ass naked into battle screaming and swinging their swords.

KEV

Dang!

KAT

Your ancestors. Right.

CARM

That's a terrifying picture. A horde of screaming, spiky-haired streakers. Swords swinging... And that's probably not all that was swinging. Maybe the origin of the phrase, *every swinging dick*.

KEV

*(Cracking up laughing.)*

Swingin' dicks! Those were some brave dudes. What if'n we hadda golf like that?

*(Beat to sober up.)*

Tol' ya she was funny!

ROGER

And again, gender raises its head.

CARM

*Raises its head.* Writers and their double entendres...

KEV

Naked sword fights! Dang! Well, least they wouldn't mess their pants if'n they got scared.

KAT

Christ.

ROGER

What about you, Kat. Steak or salad?

KAT

What? No, I'm full.

ROGER

Which do you prefer? Men are more likely meat-eaters and women vegetarians.

KEV

I like meat.

CARM

You really hold such a simplistic view?

ROGER

Not simplistic. Intellectually honest. It's not honest to deny differences. I know, I know, we're all individuals, but when we look at the collective, the big picture, it is possible to make some generalizations. If there are anatomical differences in men and women and differences in body chemistry, why is it so difficult to believe there are all manner of psychological differences? Personality differences? Differences in preferred diets? Don't you agree that, on average, men are more likely to be meat-eaters than women?

KEV

I hate brussel sprouts.

CARM

Well, I happen to like meat but don't care to be stereotyped...

*(Giving her winningest smile.)*

And on that note...

*(Standing.)*

Excuse me. The loo?

KAT

Right behind you, or you can go through the bedroom.

CARM

*(Exiting to bathroom.)*

Thanks.

KEV

What I tell you? She's hot. Right?

KAT

Don't be a jackass.

KEV

Jes sayin'.

*(Beat.)*

Well? Whaddya think?

ROGER

Great meal. Good company. Thanks for the invitation.

KEV

She likes ya. Can tell, she really likes ya.

KAT

Yep. You've got such insight into the female psyche.

*(Turning to Roger.)*

You know, she's still married.

ROGER

Technically.

KAT

And you're taking a job in Minnesota.

KEV

Ain't there jobs here? Then ya wouldn't hafta shovel snow and ya could get to know Carm.

ROGER

She's definitely not what I was expecting.

KEV

Yeah. She 'preciates a good steak.

KAT

Why don't you mind your own fucking business?

KEV

I's jes... Okay. Let's go sit in there.

*(KEV and ROGER take seats in living area. KAT follows more slowly. CARM enters and studies the painting on the wall a moment before taking a seat.)*

CARM

Interesting print. What do you think it's saying?

KAT

*(Awkward pause before curt response.)*

I like it.

*(Another awkward pause. KEV picks up, studies the cover of one of the books that Roger brought.)*

KEV

*All the Odes.* What's an ode?

CARM

It's poetry. From Pablo Neruda.

*(Slight smile, turning attention to Roger.)*

Very sensual poetry.

*(KAT grabs the book and cheerlessly pages through.)*

ROGER

Hope you like it, Kat.

KAT

Mmm.

KEV

*(Picking up the other book.)*

Well, I love this one. Thanks, Rog. Carm, didja see this? *The Mechanics of Swing*. This is so cool! *Tuning Your Golf Game*.

CARM

That's a new title. I'll need to check it out.

*(Long awkward pause while ROGER and CARM alternately look at each other and at KEV and KAT flipping through the books.)*

CARM

Yes... Definitely... I'll... Check it out.

*(Awkward pause continues.)*

Oh, did anyone see the new Kenneth Lonergan movie?

KEV

About the body guard and the dwarf?

KAT

Jesus, Kev!

ROGER

No, it's nothing like a CGI-driven action movie. More of a... a small screen story.

CARM

Small screen?!

ROGER

Well, what do you expect from a playwright?

CARM

Says the novelist. And what about *Gangs of New York*? Was that small screen?

ROGER

But that was... Wait. Wasn't Lonergan was just one of the writers? It was Scorsese directing.

CARM

Just a writer?

ROGER

No, I'm not saying that. Lonergan can definitely write. *Lobby Hero* is fucking brilliant.

CARM

But a playwright can't be a film director?

ROGER

No, I'm saying –

KEV

What about Bruce Willis?

*(ROGER and CARM pause, consider Kev. KAT shakes her head, gives exasperated sigh, gets up and begins clearing dishes.)*

CARM

*(Beginning to rise.)*

Oh, let me help you.

KAT

No, no. You relax. Carry on with your movie discussion. Kev will give me a hand.

CARM

*(Sinking back into chair as KEV reluctantly stands to help clear.)*

Are you sure?

ROGER

Lonergan's wheelhouse is dialogue, not cinematography.

CARM

Directing's a lot more than cinematography. Playwrights can direct! Mamet wrote a book about film directing, for god's sake!

ROGER

Nicely played. I'd love to discuss the virtues of Mamet with you.

CARM

I suppose we all have a wheelhouse.

ROGER

Aha! We agree. Okay. Here's one. What's Sam Shepard's wheelhouse?

CARM

Good one. Well, I'd guess most people – I mean the general public – I guess they'd consider him to be an actor.

ROGER

But what about you? Actor? Playwright? Screenwriter? Or director?

CARM

Playwright. Definitely playwright. I think Sam Shepard, I think *True West*. *Buried Child*.

ROGER

Damn straight! Don't forget *Fool for Love*.

CARM

And what's your wheelhouse, Mr. Novelist?

KEV

I been tryin' to convince him to go golfin' but he hurt his shoulder.

CARM

Oh?

*(When Kev isn't looking, ROGER discreetly wags his head, moves his shoulder around. KAT sees it, groans, curls her lip in disdain.)*

CARM

If you're going to share your novels, maybe I can reciprocate. Give you a lesson or two.

KAT

What is it you said about golfing, Rog? Just this afternoon I was massaging your shoulder, and you said, what was it? Something about the activity of it?



ROGER

Well, just because I never developed a love for golf doesn't mean I can't love golfers.

CARM

Oh, is that right?

ROGER

Tell the truth, until you, I've only gotten to know one golfer. That's Kev, and I love him like a brother.

*(KEV drops a dish on the table, excitedly comes around behind Roger's chair and attempts a bear hug.)*

KEV

I love you, too, Rog!

ROGER

Okay, Kev. Watch the shoulder.

KEV

*(Releasing the hug in exaggerated motion.)*

Oh! Sorry, man!

ROGER

No problem.

CARM

*(Hint of teasing.)*

How'd you hurt your shoulder?

ROGER

Playing in my wheelhouse.

KAT

*(Aside with a wag of the head.)*

Oh, god.

KEV

Yeah, Carm! Give him lessons!

CARM

Maybe. We'll see.

KEV

Rog? Whaddya think?

ROGER

I think it's time to rustle up a book for Carm. Would it be rude if I leave now?

KEV

Ya don't hafta go.

ROGER

*(Standing.)*

Next time, dinner at my place. I'll grill some mahi-mahi.

KAT

Okay... Maybe.

ROGER

Kat?

KAT

What?

ROGER

Thank you for a wonderful dinner.

KAT

Mm-hmm.

CARM

Well, I think I'll be going, too. Thank you so much for the invitation. The dinner was fantastic.

KAT

You're welcome.

*(ROGER holds the door for CARM, and they exit. KAT closes one eye and glares at Kev with the other while putting fingers to temple. After a moment, she grabs and heaves a plate. KEV ducks as the plate crashes to the floor.)*

KEV

The heck I do?!

*(KAT grabs a dish towel and advances toward Kev whipping the towel at him as KEV circles the table to avoid her.)*

Dang, woman!

KAT

You know this isn't going to end well!

KEV

Whatcha mean?

KAT

He'll hurt Carm! He'll get her all worked up and then dump her when he moves to Minnesota.

KEV

He's not even sure –

KAT

Or, she'll hurt him! She's not even divorced, yet, for god's sake!

KEV

Well, I don't know...

KAT

Of course, you don't know. You don't think.

KEV

Lighten up. Was just a dinner.

KAT

You saw them! Going on and on and on about their goddamn books and movies. Fucking F. Scott Fitzgerald. Kenneth Lonergan. What the fuck?!

KEV

I don't understand why you're so upset. I dint do nothin' wrong.

KAT

Right. You *dint do nothin' wrong*.

*(KAT exits to bedroom, slamming the door. KEV sighs, takes scotch from kitchen to the table, pours a drink, takes a sip.)*

KEV

Right... I dint do nothin' wrong... Daaang!

*(KEV grabs broom and dustpan and begins to clean up the broken plate, muttering to himself all the while as LIGHTS DIM to...)*

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Four

SETTING: Roger's condo.

TIME: Saturday evening, continuing.

AT RISE: ROGER and CARM enter a dark condo. Their banter is lighthearted. Even when verbally jousting, they're mostly smiling, mostly teasing. The mutual attraction is evident.

ROGER

*(Turning lights on.)*

Make yourself at home. Can I get you anything?

CARM

*(Looking around and taking a seat on the settee.)*

I'm good. So, this is it? Your wheelhouse. The wellspring of creativity. Where do you write?

ROGER

Right there. Right where you're sitting. My laptop and an iced tea and I'm good to go.

CARM

Right here? How exciting! So, I'm sitting on the very spot!

ROGER

*(Taking a seat beside her and teasing with a lascivious smile.)*

Sweetheart, you're sitting on a gold mine.

CARM

*(CARM rolls her eyes but smiles as she wiggles her butt.)*

Pure gold... But you don't write for the gold, do you?

ROGER

Of course, I do.

CARM

I mean for the money.

ROGER

Exactly.

CARM

Wait! I thought artists practice their craft out of love. As a calling. Their gift to the world.

ROGER

What a crock!

CARM

What? Are you a crass capitalist?

ROGER

Oh, no! Don't tell me you're one of those.

CARM

One of what?

ROGER

There's nothing crass about capitalism.

CARM

But greed...

ROGER

You mean you can't enrich yourself without impoverishing others?

CARM

Time out! We can have the capitalist, greed-versus-altruism debate later. I'm just talking about art, what motivates the artist. What motivates you.

ROGER

Altruism. That's all a crock.

CARM

You don't write for others? For the enjoyment of others? And for you, too? For the love of writing?

ROGER

Well, I don't do it for the love of money. But money is a scorecard. If people aren't willing to pay for my work, then what's it worth?

CARM

Right. And Van Gogh painted nine hundred paintings over ten years. Know how many he sold?

ROGER

Uh... One. Maybe two.

CARM

Yes! My favorite artist. Sold one or two paintings in his lifetime. So how does that support your argument.

ROGER

Damn. You cut my legs right out from under me.

CARM

I've got Van Gogh prints covering my walls. Sunflowers. Irises. The little yellow house.

ROGER

No starry night?

CARM

If you're ever lucky enough to see my bedroom.

ROGER

I have to tell you; you've thoroughly shattered my golfing bias.

CARM

For my love of Van Gogh?

ROGER

That's just a small part of it.

CARM

Biased against the game of golf or the people who golf?

ROGER

Both. Or, I was. Until tonight, I was a first-class golf bigot. A howling golfer.

CARM

But not now?

ROGER

No. You've broken the back of my golfing bias.

CARM

You're not really a bigot, are you? Please tell me you're not afflicted with biases.

ROGER

Favored, more like it. Just like you. Bias is a general human condition... A human condition that, unlike insecurity, is a blessing, not a curse.

CARM

What do you mean, blessing? And what do you mean, like me?! You think I'm biased?!

ROGER

You have brain, don't you? Intuition? Bias is just another word for intuition.

CARM

Oh, really? So, when the club adopts membership requirements that handicap a particular class of people, it's just being intuitive?

ROGER

Most bias is not pernicious. I'm not talking about racism, sexism, ageism. I don't support toxic prejudices. Hate them, in fact. But understand, most biases are subconscious and helpful, not harmful.

CARM

You're losing me.

ROGER

Okay. Cut me some slack while I try a golfing analogy.

CARM

From a self-described *golfer*. Can't wait.

ROGER

Say you're out on the range golfing with Kev.

CARM

The course. A range is for guns. Artillery.

ROGER

Sorry. I thought golfers played on a driving range.

CARM

*(Failing to hide her amusement.)*

That's different. But okay. Never mind. Continue. You say I'm out on the course with Kev.

ROGER

Yeah. And Kev is what? Let's say a hundred yards from the hole.

CARM

From the pin.

ROGER

Isn't it great? There's so much we can teach each other.

CARM

*(Smiles and lays a hand on his knee but quickly retracts it when ROGER takes notice.)*

Go on. We're a hundred yards from the pin.

ROGER

Yeah, and Kev reaches for a club, but you know it's the wrong one.

CARM

Fair assumption.

ROGER

And how do you know? Because you know Kev's ability, know it better than he does.

CARM

Mm-hmm.

ROGER

You read the wind conditions. The course conditions. You're an expert. Experts have intuition that others don't have.

CARM

You're talking about knowledge, not bias.

ROGER

We are talking about knowledge, but in this case, it's tacit, not explicit. Expertise is transparent to the expert because it's largely intuitive. You might have a difficult time explaining to Kev why one club is better than another, but you just know. Know intuitively. Your brain is sending you a shortcut signal to make a decision. Bias is just a shortcut. Intuition.

CARM

You seem pretty sure of yourself.

ROGER

I am. If our brains didn't grace us with shortcuts, with biases, we'd just explode! We'd drown in the complexity of the world!

CARM

You're a passionate guy, aren't you? Cocky, too.



ROGER

You have no idea. But listen, you decided to come to my place minutes after meeting me. Right?

CARM

It's been several hours.

ROGER

No. Within minutes of meeting you, I suggested you stop by for a complimentary book. And your brain was subconsciously telling you what a great guy I am. That I'm a fascinating, fun guy. Right?

CARM

God, you are cocky. Kat implied you were gloomy, not fascinating and fun.

*(Beat.)*

And what was your brain telling you about me? Your intuition?

ROGER

With the shattering of my bias, I was experiencing severe cognitive dissonance.

CARM

How flattering.

ROGER

Yeah. A golfer who reads! Holy shit! That's cognitive dissonance, big time.

CARM

*(Teasing.)*

Now I'm thinking maybe you are a prick.

ROGER

Nooo, you're not. Now, you're more intrigued than ever... But remember, you were inclined to trust me and see me as safe within minutes of meeting me.

CARM

Okay. But you had the endorsement of Kev and Kat... Well, of Kev, anyway.

ROGER

Oh. Well, that raises some questions. But bottom line, biases save us time.

*(Beat.)*

And Kat... I, uh, I guess I didn't get her endorsement.

CARM

She did say you were very time-conscious. Impatient is what she said.

ROGER

More than most, I guess. Can't argue with that. But gloomy?

CARM

And a smartass.

ROGER

Okay. That, too.

CARM

She stopped short of calling you a prick.

ROGER

What's that if not an endorsement?

CARM

What about your move to Minnesota?

ROGER

Still up in the air. Maybe you can help me decide...

*(CARM nods, studies Roger a moment and then rises and meanders the room having a general look around. She stops and studies the painting on the wall. ROGER admires her. After a moment, CARM spins and drills him.)*

CARM

Does Kev know about you and Kat?

ROGER

Uh... Know what?

CARM

Come on. You're not going to deny it, are you?

ROGER

Deny...? No. There's really nothing...

CARM

There's something. Does Kev know?

ROGER

No, of course not. It's nothing... I mean, we're just friends. Only friends.

CARM

You diddle all your lady friends?

ROGER

No! We haven't! I haven't!

CARM

Haven't, what? Encouraged her?

ROGER

No!

*(Beat.)*

Well, I don't think so. I mean, I've been neighborly, but not flirtatious. Not at all suggestive...

CARM

I hear a but in there.

ROGER

But... She's come on to me. Just in the last couple of days, and it seems so out of the blue and so out of character. This afternoon... Shit. It got out of hand.

CARM

She's a nurse?

ROGER

Yeah. So?

CARM

Knows anatomy. Physiology. Probably gives good head.

ROGER

Jesus, Carm! Can we change the subject?

CARM

You're not going to be able to hide it from Kev. You know that, right? My god, I wasn't with her five minutes and I could read the signs.

ROGER

I talked to him this afternoon.

CARM

So, he knows?!

ROGER

There's nothing to know... Not really.

CARM

You talked to him. He must suspect something.

ROGER

God, no. Well, god, I hope not. Would break his heart.

CARM

But you talked to him.

ROGER

He's so... I really do love the guy.

CARM

Right. You have so much in common.

ROGER

He's easily dismissed for his hillbilly dialect, but don't let that fool you. Verbally-challenged, but the guy's not stupid. A mechanical whiz. Fixed a problem with my bike that stumped a mechanic at the Harley dealership. Intelligence comes in different flavors.

CARM

So, his lack of refinement is all an act?

ROGER

Partly defense mechanism, I think. Like all of us, he's got some insecurity. More than most maybe. But no, he's not acting. He's genuine salt of the earth. Good-natured. Big-hearted. How can anyone not love him?

CARM

Does Kat really love him? And maybe you pity him more than love him. If you really loved him, would you be in this situation?

ROGER

After he left this afternoon, I started calling around and was able to get an appointment for Monday afternoon with a therapist. Rebecca Callahan. She's supposed to be good.

CARM

You're going to see a therapist?! I think that's –

ROGER

It's for Kat. Maybe Kev, too.

CARM

Right. How's that work? How do you make an appointment for another person?

ROGER

No, I know. That's what I talked about with Kev. We're going to try to convince Kat...

CARM

Wow. I don't think you've thought this through.

ROGER

Maybe not, but I've got to do something.

CARM

Kat said maybe all writers are pricks. But if you are, seems you're trying pretty hard not to be.

*(ROGER shrugs. CARM rises, returns to study painting a moment.)*

Rebecca Callahan. She have Celtic roots, too?

ROGER

Oh. Never even consider that.

CARM

You need to know... I've had my fill of barbarians...

ROGER

Yeah.

CARM

Pretty sure you don't spike your hair and scamper around the neighborhood sans clothing. But I have to wonder...

ROGER

The world evolves quickly. Culture can change in a flash. Brains evolve very, very slowly. The male brain –

CARM

Again with the gender?

ROGER

I won't pretend to understand the female brain, but males, are predisposed to just a handful of pursuits. Hunting... Eating... Fighting... Fucking.

CARM

Are you kidding me?!

ROGER

What I mean –

CARM

Mozart! Gandhi! Van Gogh! Shakespeare! My god! Were they all just hunting, fighting, and fucking machines?!

ROGER

In a primitive sense, yes. Brains do evolve, but like I said, they evolve very slowly. You just named some early adopters on the leading edge of the evolutionary curve.

CARM

Oh, I see. And where are you on that curve, Mr. Novelist?

ROGER

Ninety-fifth percentile. Two standard deviations north of the mean. Pay no heed to my glib references to barbarian roots, Carm. I won't disappoint you.

CARM

Is that right?

ROGER

Know why I'm reluctant to take the job? It's not just the fucking winters.

CARM

Snow can't be good for riding your Harley, but what I hear, Minneapolis has great theatre. I'm sure you'll learn to tolerate the weather. A lot of people do.

ROGER

Yeah. It's easy to minimize the icy horror from the warmth of a tropical climate, but try living in a subzero freezer for months on end. By Thanksgiving, my nipples will be frozen solid. Hardened little granite gumdrops that won't soften up until May.

CARM

*(Cupping her breasts and teasing.)*

Stop talking about hard nipples. I'm easily aroused.

ROGER

Really? Tell me more.

CARM

You were talking about the winters in Minnesota.

ROGER

I was talking about my reluctance to take a consulting job that's all about hunting, eating what you kill, being a lone warrior fighting alpha males for every scrap of business.

CARM

Okay, but that's not a gender thing. There are plenty of competitive female consultants. I'm a competitive golfer and, if you haven't noticed, happily celebrate my femininity.

ROGER

When I was fourteen, I was at summer camp out on the archery range with a camp counselor and a bunch of other kids, boys and girls. The targets were set on the edge of a woods, and as we were practicing, a rabbit hopped out of the woods and stopped right between a couple of targets.

CARM

Poor little bunny.

ROGER

Exactly. That's a female response. All the boys immediately took aim, and my arrow hit the rabbit right in the head. The arrow exited through one of its eyes.

CARM

Oh, my god! That's horrible!

ROGER

Also a female response. I, on the other hand, was ecstatic. I ran forward, picked up the arrow with the skewered rabbit still kicking, and ran back to the shooting line with all the boys cheering and all the girls crying.

CARM

Hero of the barbarians. That's sick.

ROGER

I remember that boy of fourteen, but I can no longer identify with him.

CARM

So, you've evolved beyond hunting, eating, and fighting... And what about fucking?

ROGER

If you're ever lucky enough to see my bedroom, I'll put some stars in your night.

CARM

Well, just so you know, until this thing with Kat is resolved ... I can't... We won't...

ROGER

No. I know.

CARM

You think a therapist will help? You really think Kat will see a therapist? And what if it's more than psychological? What if it's physical?

ROGER

She's a nurse. If there's a physical problem, don't you think she'd recognize it?

CARM

Occasionally, I golf in a foursome with some surgeons. They tell me that other doctors and nurses are their worst patients. So... I don't know.

ROGER

I'll talk with Kev again tomorrow. We'll try to talk to Kat.

*(A pause as CARM studies him skeptically.)*

Where are we? You and me?

CARM

What are you looking for? Are you even looking? What Kat said –

ROGER

I wasn't... Looking.

CARM

Oh... But now?

ROGER

Seems like we have a lot in common.

CARM

But not golf.

ROGER

Books. Movies. Plays.

*(Beat.)*

I find you sexy as hell.

CARM

Jeez. You really know how to sweet talk a girl.

ROGER

Your mind, I mean... Yeah, you've got a nice body, but it's your mind that's so goddamn sexy.

CARM

Oh. Okay... But you haven't really seen my body.



That can wait.

ROGER

It will have to.

CARM

And you? What are you looking for?

ROGER

Right now, just a copy of your magnum opus.

CARM

Sure, sure. But how about lunch tomorrow?

ROGER

Just lunch?

CARM

Yeah. Here at my place. What do you like?

ROGER

Deal, but I'll bring sandwiches and you provide the diet soda. I've got a couple of lessons in the morning. One o'clock?

CARM

Perfect.

ROGER

*(Exits to bedroom and returns momentarily with a book and hands it to CARM.)*

Here you go. If you like it, I'll sign it for you.

*(CARM just nods and smiles. ROGER moves in for a kiss, but CARM quickly extends a hand.)*

CARM

Until tomorrow, Mr. Smartass Novelist.

*(CARM and ROGER lock eyes and continue to grasp hands for a long moment until...)*

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Five

SETTING: Roger's condo.

TIME: Sunday morning, the next day.

AT RISE: ROGER, bleary-eyed, enters from bedroom barefooted, wearing only a pair of jeans, and carrying a t-shirt which he tosses over a chair. He steps to kitchen for a cup of coffee, picks up a book from the table, takes a seat in an armchair, and begins to read. After a moment, as he's sipping his coffee, there's POUNDING on the door.

ROGER

Holy shit.

*(ROGER rises, pulls on the t-shirt, and admits KAT who barges in right past him walking quickly toward kitchen scanning the condo and glancing into bedroom and bathroom. She carries the book she received the night before.)*

KAT

*(Tossing book on the table and taking a confrontational stance.)*

So?! She left?! Finally?! Her car's not out there!

ROGER

*(Returning to his seat, on edge.)*

Good morning, Kat. It's pretty early, but come on in. Get you coffee?

KAT

*(Maintaining a head of steam, roams the room.)*

Are you going to answer me?!

ROGER

Sorry. What was the question?

KAT

You know! Carm?

ROGER

Carm? I imagine she's preparing to give a golf lesson about now.

KAT

She spent the night?!

ROGER

No, but she is coming back for lunch.

KAT

She spent the night and is already coming back?!

ROGER

Bringing some sandwiches later, but no, she didn't stay the night. We had a nice conversation and she left with one of my books and a handshake. She didn't stay long.

KAT

Oh, really? Is that so?

ROGER

Yeah. Uh... Where's Kev?

KAT

What? Afraid he's going to interrupt us?

ROGER

No, but I was thinking the three of us could have a talk... A serious talk...

KAT

He already left for the goddamn golf course. You know, his golfing is my only relief. How'd you like to live with the guy?

ROGER

Kev is... I can imagine –

KAT

At least golfing gets him out of the house. You know what he's like!

*(Begins a sustained rant.)*

Dumbass was a teamster. Drove a truck for thirty years. Could navigate his route, make his deliveries. But the man hasn't aged well. Now, dipshit can't find his car keys with a map, a compass, and a goddamn seeing eye dog! Just try sending him to Publix for a can of soup! Three days later the search party's giving up. Fucker got lost. Perished in the frozen food aisle. Finally find his stiff body curled around a bag of frozen peas.

ROGER

Jesus, Kat. You turn a phrase.

KAT

Know what?! I can read, too! Did you know that?! That I can read?!

ROGER

Yes. I/ know.

KAT

/I've read every one of your goddamn books!

ROGER

Yeah.

KAT

Liked them, too. All of them. Even the ones with shitty endings.

ROGER

Shitty endings? What –

KAT

Guy in your book says – I forget his name – Jack or Max or Nick – all your heroes have a masculine single-syllable name – but, whatever, the guy says, *I'm gonna take those fuckers down*. And then he watches the girl drive away and that's the end. But how's he take the bad guy fuckers down? We don't know. You leave us hanging. That's a shitty ending... But still, overall, I liked it.

ROGER

It's a choice. A writer has to make/ choices.

KAT

/And I like movies! Did you know I like movies?!

ROGER

Yeah. / Okay.

KAT

/And plays! I'd love to see a play! You think Kev ever took me to a play?

ROGER

I don't suppose/ so.

KAT

/Used to be, I could tolerate him.

*(Pause and suspending rant for a moment of reflection.)*

I don't know. Must have even been a time when I actually liked him, but so long ago. I stuck with him out of a sense of duty. My Baptist upbringing.

ROGER

I know you as a generous and kind person, Kat. There's a reason you became a nurse. Generous and kind. And loyal. I think that describes Kev as well as you.

KAT

*(Pause, then reflection over. Ratcheting up to a new level.)*

Yeah, well, fuck loyalty! I'm putting all that behind me now. I'm finally admitting that the man just bores the hell out of me! I try to get him to do something adventurous. Try something new. Change things up. Take a risk. He's got to psyche himself up to try a new golf course. For him, the epitome of risk. God forbid he travel, meet new people, learn something new. Think that wooss will experiment? Totally freaks at the thought of a little spice in the bedroom! Such a candy ass!

ROGER

I can see you're unhappy.

KAT

*(Up another notch.)*

Unhappy?! I'm dying! The man golfs, drinks beer, and farts... And visits you. Fucking next door neighbor. Thirty years of marriage were almost bearable. Dumbass was on the road every week, and I could endure him being home on the weekend. He retires, we move to Florida, and he discovers golf. His only topic of conversation. Send him to Publix for three items and he can't remember shit. But he comes in from golfing and has the memory of an elephant. Recounts every stroke taken on eighteen goddamn holes.

*(Holding her head.)*

My head's going to fucking explode!

ROGER

Please calm down. I know he can be a little tedious.

KAT

*(Unhinged.)*

Tedious?! I'm fucking losing it! And you! He talks about you! *I wonder what Rog is up to... Think Rog would ever buy a pickup? ... What kind of toothpaste does Rog use? ... Think Rog would like this shirt?* How the fuck does a non-reader become so enamored with a writer? *Golf Digest* is the only thing he looks at, and he has to ask me what some of the words mean! And then, you go and get him a book. Nice job!

ROGER

About golf. Thought he'd like it.

KAT

Better have lots of pictures!

ROGER

He did read my job offer.

*(Silence. A long pause.)*

KAT

*(Softly.)*

You going to take that job?

ROGER

Probably. Thinking about it.

KAT

*(Wanders to study the painting, looks to book on the table, slowly takes a seat, and radically shifts gears, anger turning to heartache. She cradles her head in her hands and begins to pitifully weep.)*

And then... Then you give me a book of love poems... Next thing, you're leaving with Carm.

*(Continuing to talk through her tears.)*

What am I supposed to think?

ROGER

God, Kat. They're not all love poems. I didn't mean... It wasn't to send a message. I just thought you might like it. The book, I mean. I'm sorry.

KAT

So, what? You're just going to toss me aside for Carm?

ROGER

God's sake. What does that mean? I just met her. And you and I, we're not –

KAT

I'm interesting, too.

ROGER

I never said you weren't. But we're just neighbors. Neighbors and friends. Nothing more.

KAT

Are you really going to move?

ROGER

Yeah. Probably.

*(Silence. A long pause.)*

KAT

*(Softly.)*

Take me with you.

ROGER

What?!

KAT

Living next door to you has been the one thing keeping me going. I'll go with you. I can handle Minnesota. You know Carm would never leave Florida for Minnesota. Do they even golf in Minnesota? You can't golf in snow.

ROGER

Kat! This is nuts! Carm and I just met! Christ! What are you thinking?!

KAT

You want financial security? I make pretty good as a nurse. I can get a job anywhere. Take me with you.

ROGER

Take you?! Look! Listen to me! If I take the job, if I move, I'm not taking anyone with me. And you and I are not –

KAT

Rog! You're the one keeping me alive. Don't leave without me.

ROGER

*(Beat, softening tone as KAT continues to weep.)*

I don't know how we got to this place. I really don't. I'm sorry about the book. Sorry about... Everything... And, Kat, we have to consider your marriage. Think about Kev.

KAT

Forget Kev. He'll be fine. He's got a pension and he's got his golf.

*(Wiping nose and looking resolute.)*

I'm going to tell him about us.

ROGER

Tell him what about us?! There's nothing to tell!

KAT

But first, I'm going out right now to see the new Kenneth Lonergan movie.

ROGER

Kat! Stop! This is crazy!

KAT

*(Rises, puts on a brave face and quickly gives ROGER a kiss on the cheek which he's unable to avoid.)*

I'll come over tonight after I talk with Kev.

ROGER

Wait a minute! Kat! You're not listening!

KAT

Carm won't be here, will she? You'll talk with her?

ROGER

My god! Will you sit back down?!

*(Grabs KAT by the shoulders.)*

Please! Listen to me! Promise me you won't talk to Kev. I'll talk to him first. Or, we can talk to him together. If you can promise me that, I'll promise to talk to Carm.

KAT

You'll talk to Carm? Really?... Okay, I'll wait.

*(Beat, begins to smile.)*

That's better. That way you and I can talk to Kev together.

ROGER

Oh, my god...

KAT

*(Wraps her arms around Roger and manages to land a kiss in spite of ROGER'S attempt to withdraw. After the kiss, KAT continues to hang on.)*

Thank you, Rog. We'll take it slow and figure things out. Everything's going to fall into place.

*(Finally releasing him.)*

Now I need to run if I'm going to make the first showing. Can't wait to talk about the movie with you.

*(Starts to exit but then spins, rushes back to table to grab the book. Beams a huge smile.)*

And thank you for the book. Pablo Neruda. I love it!

*(KAT skips to exit, stumbles but catches herself before falling, gives Roger a goofy smile, and mutters a goodbye as she exits. ROGER, stunned, watches the door close.)*

ROGER

*(Grabbing head with both hands, moans loudly. A moment, then begins pacing the room.)*

Fuck me! Fuck me! Fuck me!



ROGER (CONT.)

*(After a moment of pacing and bemoaning, collapses to a chair  
and looks around the room.)*

Where's that fucking scotch when I need it?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Six

SETTING: Roger's condo.

TIME: Sunday morning, continuing.

AT RISE: ROGER sits in the same chair in an apparent trance. There's a sense that some time has passed, but he doesn't appear to have moved a muscle since previous scene ended. A KNOCK on the door. ROGER starts from his trance.

Who is it? ROGER

It's me. (Off.) KEV

*(ROGER opens the door, and KEV enters and plops into a chair without invitation. Both are on edge, reticent.)*

Another hot one. KEV

Yeah. ROGER

Got anything t' drink? KEV

Sorry. Yeah. I got diet soda or water. Some stale coffee you want it. ROGER

Water'd be good. KEV  
*(ROGER fetches a bottle of water.)*  
How'd it go with Carm?

Yeah. Okay. ROGER

Just okay. Don't want to talk about it? KEV

ROGER

I like her a lot, but not ready to talk about it.

KEV

Oh. Okay then.

ROGER

But, Kev, there is something we need to talk about.

KEV

I know.

ROGER

You do?

KEV

*(Uncomfortable pause.)*

Uh... Thanks for the water.

ROGER

Sure.

*(Another uncomfortable pause.)*

Uh... I need to get something on my feet.

*(ROGER jumps up and exits to bedroom. KEV stands, saunters over to study painting. After a moment, ROGER enters wearing tennis shoes. Awkward pause as KEV continues to stand, study painting. ROGER finally takes a seat.)*

ROGER

I know this is awkward.

KEV

Ya got no idea.

*(Turning finally to face Roger.)*

My balls went crooked today!

ROGER

What?!

KEV

In the rough. Couldn't keep it on the dang fairway. My concentration was off.

ROGER

Oh. Your golf game.

KEV

Cause a... after ya left last night... we had a fight... Big one.

*(Beat.)*

She threw a dang plate at me!

ROGER

Damn.

KEV

Then she went t' the bedroom. Slammed the door.

ROGER

I'm sorry, man.

KEV

I sat out and had a couple drinks a that scotch.

*(Beat.)*

Well, after a couple, I kinda got my courage up to go in the bedroom.

ROGER

I know all about liquid courage.

KEV

And I asked her, ya know, asked what I could do t' make things better.

ROGER

That's good, Kev.

KEV

No! It ain't! She tol' me... She tol' me...

ROGER

Yeah?

KEV

Tol' me I had three choices.

ROGER

Yeah?

KEV

Dint much like 'em... Tol' me I could do ever one a favor. Put myself outta my misery. And if'n I couldn't have a heart attack on the golf course then I could jes use a gun and speed up the process.

ROGER

Aaah, Kev. You know she didn't mean it.

KEV

Other thing she tol' me, I could jes pack up my golf clubs with rest a my shit and haul my sorry ass outta the house.

ROGER

She's obviously having some kind of life crisis, Kev. A break with reality. She's being totally irrational.

KEV

Well, I don't know 'bout that... But she sure ain't makin' any sense.

ROGER

I think maybe you should consider taking a break.

KEV

What?! Move out?!

ROGER

Might not hurt to give her some space for a while.

KEV

Dang. Dint think you'd be wantin' me t' move.

ROGER

No, I don't. But maybe for a week or two. Give her space and time to –

KEV

Hey! Maybe I could move in with you!

ROGER

Oh, well that wouldn't work. See, you need to give some space, and being just next door, that wouldn't be enough... What was the third choice?

KEV

Yeah, well drop dead was last one she said. That's if'n I dint move out. But first she tol' me t' get a life. Do sumpin diff'rent. Sumpin 'sides golf.

ROGER

Okay! Kev, that's great. Something you can work with. I think Kat's really bored. She doesn't want you to move out or to, you know... Die... She's just looking for some excitement in her life. Maybe you could take a trip.

KEV

No! No drugs, man... But I asked her, ya know, do what diff'rent? Said I should spearment. Take a risk.

ROGER

That's what I mean! Travel. Have an adventure of some kind.

KEV

When I asked her what kinda spearment, she jes started cursin' and throwin' stuff... Had t' sleep on the couch.

ROGER

Ah, Kev. I'm sorry.

KEV

Now, I'm 'fraid t' go home. Dint see her car out there, but maybe she hid it. Ya know, is inside waitin' t' ambush me.

ROGER

No, I don't think she's home.

KEV

Or, maybe, she's waitin' for me in the bedroom, hind end up in the air like a dang chimpanzee. Truth, I'd rather she throw stuff than act like some kinda freak.

ROGER

We have to consider she's in some kind of crisis and losing touch with reality. She's being outrageous to shake us up, playing games with our heads. We've got to get her some professional help... I've got the name of a therapist, but now I'm not sure that will do the trick...

*(Aside.)*

I think we need a fucking exorcist.

*(Turning very serious.)*

Kev, you know you're my friend.

KEV

Course.

*(Failing to hide a sheepish grin.)*

Last night even said ya love me like a brother.

ROGER

I would never do anything to hurt you or Kat.

KEV

Course

ROGER

Somehow... I don't know how... Kat has the idea that she and I... She's disillusioned, Kev... Thinks there's some kind of relationship...

KEV

What relationship?

ROGER

She's unhappy. Really, really unhappy. And somehow, she's wanting...

KEV

Whatcha sayin', Rog?

ROGER

I think she got the wrong idea from the book I gave her.

KEV

What idea?

ROGER

She came over this morning, really upset. Upset that I'm interested in Carm.

KEV

I don't get it.

ROGER

Kev, she's talking about doing something drastic. She was talking about leaving.

KEV

*(Tearing up.)*

I knew it. Ol' shoes ain't sposed to cause blisters. But I could tell, I's givin' her blisters. What do I do?!

ROGER

Let's try to stay calm. Why don't you head home and try to relax? When she –

KEV

I got the bottle of scotch.

ROGER

Nothing good's going to come from the scotch. Hide it away. When she gets home, text me. I'll come over to see if we can, I don't know... reason with her.

KEV

*(Bouncing around nervously.)*

She's proolly still mad.

ROGER

Why don't you do this? Text her. Tell her you're on your way home. Ask if there's anything you can pick up for her on the way.

KEV

Dang. What if'n she sends me back to Publix?

ROGER

At least you'll know if she's still mad.

*(KEV takes out his phone, ad libs message aloud while sending a text, then studies painting a moment until the PHONE DINGS.)*

KEV

She's seein' a movie. That new one you and Carm were talkin' 'bout.

ROGER

Oh. Right.

KEV

I guess I got some time.

ROGER

Well, yeah, but Carm's going to be here soon.

KEV

So ya did get on. That's good.

ROGER

Yeah, we did, and she's coming for lunch.

KEV

Whatcha havin'?

ROGER

She's bringing sandwiches. For two. Sandwiches for two.

KEV

No, I gotcha. I'll head on home but you're gonna come over later, right?

ROGER

It's going to be okay. Let her talk. Listen to her. Let her know you love her, that you're ready for an adventure. Talk about something other than golf.

KEV

Okay... Like what?



ROGER

Well, you can ask her about her job. She's a smart, interesting person. You can probably learn a lot from her. She must talk about her job sometimes.

KEV

Tol' me t'other day she was called into a room where an ol' guy was raisin' a ruckus. The ol' guy was wailin' ya know, *I wanna be saaaved! I wanna be saaaved!* Nuther nurse was tryin' t' pray with the ol' guy... Believe that?! But the ol' guy was pissed, gettin' more and more pissed. Then Kat came in and figgered out, the ol' geezer dint want no religion. He jes wanted t' be shaved.

ROGER

A misunderstanding! The other nurse misheard! Not, I want to be *saved!* I want to be *shaved!* See! That's a great story, Kev! Kat's a nurse. Bet she's got tons of good stories like that. Nurses interact with each other, with patients, with doctors. There's probably a lot of miscommunication that leads to funny stories. You can talk to her about those kinds of things.

*(Beat.)*

So, what did you say?

KEV

Tol' her ol' guy prolly jes wanted a shave t' get the nurse's boobies in his face.

ROGER

Okay. I guess that's one approach to building on the conversation.

KEV

She dint seem t' 'preciate it.

*(There's a KNOCK on the door.)*

ROGER

There's Carm.

*(Opens door. CARM enters smiling brightly, bearing sandwiches.)*

Hi. Good to see you.

CARM

You, too. Oh, hi, Kev. I didn't know you'd be here, but I brought plenty.

ROGER

Kev's just leaving.

KEV

Yeah. Okay.

*(Beat.)*

Sandwiches look good.

CARM

Help yourself. We've got ham, turkey, and tuna sandwiches, and pickles.

ROGER

*(Handing Kev a plate.)*

That's really nice of you, Carm. Here you go, Kev.

KEV

*(Piling on some sandwiches.)*

Yeah. Thanks. I guess I'll jes take this next door.

*(Pausing before exit to turn to Roger.)*

What time ya think that movie's over?

ROGER

*(Wags his head.)*

Stay calm... Deep breaths... Just remember what we talked about.

KEV

Yeah. Okay...

*(Intense concentration, struggling to remember.)*

Don't talk 'bout golf...Talk 'bout her job... Be open t' adventure...

*(Big sigh of relief.)*

Thanks, Rog. Thanks for the sandwiches, Carm.

*(KEV exits. ROGER sets drinks on table. CARM takes a seat. ROGER joins her. For duration of ensuing dialog, they make token efforts to eat.)*

CARM

I guess it would have been awkward to invite him to stay.

ROGER

Guy's on a ship going down and doesn't have a clue.

CARM

But you had a good talk?

ROGER

Not sure we even speak the same language. And then there's Kat. She was over earlier.

CARM

Okay. And?

ROGER

Mostly, she talked to me... At me.

CARM

Did you reach an understanding? Set some boundaries?

ROGER

I referred to boundaries in our relationship, as in neighbors and friends only. She referred to state boundaries, as in Florida and Minnesota.

CARM

As long as you came to an understanding.

ROGER

What in the hell makes an intelligent woman go berserk? For God's sake, she wants to move to Minnesota with me!

CARM

That's the understanding?! Wow. You must really have a way with words. Quite the diplomat.

ROGER

They had a big fight last night after we left. She was throwing things and –

CARM

Oh, no! That's when things get serious. Once the cops show up, there's no going back.

ROGER

Speaking from experience?

CARM

Only thing I've ever thrown is a punch to the throat when...

*(Beat.)*

Never mind.

ROGER

Jesus. Your ex?

CARM

Forget it.

ROGER

I'm sorry... Didn't mean to...

*(Pausing to consider CARM who shrugs it off.)*

Well, it's not in Kev to retaliate, but Kat... This morning she was totally unhinged. One minute she was yelling... Didn't throw anything, but damn well could have... Next minute she was sobbing.

CARM

Jeez... You really did talk to her then. Thank you for trying. Really, Rog. Thank you.

ROGER

I appreciate the acknowledgment, but I'm at a loss... Get this, she told me I was what was keeping her alive! It freaked me out!

CARM

That's where a therapist might help. She's not talking about just existing. Living is more than having a heartbeat and breathing. She's talking about hopes and dreams. At least she's running toward something. Not running away.

ROGER

No, no. No way. She only thinks she wants me. She might believe it, but it's not real. Trying to get away from Kev. That's real.

CARM

Everyone's behavior makes sense to them. Whatever she believes is her reality.

ROGER

Running away from her personal hell.

CARM

Running toward stimulation. Toward you.

*(Beat, smiling.)*

It's probably more about intellectual stimulation than physical.

ROGER

That a compliment?

*(Teasing.)*

You have a psych degree, miss smarty pants, to go along with the lit degree? Step right up for your golf lessons, folks. Complementary psychoanalysis included.

CARM

Okay. You got me.

ROGER

Right this way. Piss-poor putters, pricks, and psychotics. All are welcome.

CARM

Stop! We're not talking about psychosis. Fleeing a personal hell. Seeking intellectual stimulation. Whatever. Doesn't make her psychotic. Mildly deluded maybe.

ROGER

Well, you didn't witness her meltdown this morning. And anyone who thinks they can escape hell by running away with another person is more than mildly deluded. You don't need someone else to find intellectual stimulation... Or, physical stimulation, as far as that goes... I'm not a lifesaver. Not her hero.

CARM

*(A moment to study Roger with bit of amusement.)*

The dizzy dame and the reluctant rescuer.

ROGER

What?

CARM

I read your damn book last night.

ROGER

Oh... The whole book?

CARM

Stayed up most of the night. Couldn't put it down.

ROGER

Well, that's... good. Right?

CARM

Are you doing a sequel? I mean, that ending...

ROGER

Leave 'em wanting more.

CARM

Mission accomplished.

ROGER

Think you might be interested in dating a writer?

CARM

I didn't mean to derail the conversation. What are you going to do about Kat?

ROGER

Kat can wait. You're here now.

CARM

But, are you here? For how long, I mean. What about the move?

ROGER

I've got a week or two to decide.

CARM

I'll admit, I am intrigued. You're a hell of a writer.

ROGER

From acknowledgement to adulation. That's something.

CARM

Adulation important to you?

ROGER

I'd like to think not, but since you brought it up. I can live without adulation...  
But I'll die without intellectual stimulation. Boredom is the worst form of hell.

*(Beat.)*

And I have to say, I find you anything but boring.

CARM

Glad to hear it. But know what Van Gogh said? *In order to work and to become an artist, one needs love.*

ROGER

Intellectual stimulation and love. Maybe they're the same thing.

CARM

Mmm... Maybe they are.

*(ROGER and CARM share a moment until...)*

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Seven

SETTING: Condo of Kev and Kat.

TIME: Sunday afternoon, continuing.

AT RISE: KEV sits at the table eating a sandwich. KAT enters, barely managing to handle the door with hands full. She carries several department store packages, a golf club, and her book. Without acknowledging Kev, she goes into the bedroom and closes the door. KEV wolfs down the last bite of sandwich and takes the plate to the kitchen, stands and puzzles over the closed bedroom door. After a moment, KAT, cheery and upbeat, enters wearing a bulky sweater and holding the golf club.

KAT

*(Modeling as if asking a girlfriend's opinion, not provocatively.)*

You like my sweater?

KEV

Is that...?

KAT

*(Holding out the golf club and smiling.)*

Oh, this? The *Bonne Gorille* driver. Model 9000 you're always talking about... Roger reminded me that I'm a kind and generous person, so...

KEV

*(Walks slowly forward, eyes fixated on the golf club. Falls to his knees at Kat's feet, overwhelmed. Choking up. Voice trembling.)*

The Gorilla Boner 9000.

KAT

*(Wagging her head.)*

It's French! *Bonne Gorille*... Jesus.

*(Ceremoniously holding out the golf club with both hands as if presenting a sword to a knight.)*

Well... here.

*(Not quite able to conceal just a bit of derision.)*

May it straighten your balls.

KEV

*(Receiving the club and looking up in adoration.)*

But this cost –

KAT

Six hundred twelve dollars and change... You didn't say if you like my sweater.

KEV

*(Rising, elation giving way to confusion.)*

It's a hunnerd four outside. Ya gonna die in that.

KAT

*(Cheerfully.)*

Where I'm going, I'll be fine.

*(For several minutes during ensuing conversation, KEV is totally distracted with golf club and repeatedly taking practice swings.)*

KEV

Cain't b'lieve it! Never thought I'd get a Boner 9000!

KAT

*(Noticing plate, cheerfulness fading.)*

You were eating a sandwich.

KEV

They say tain't nothin' like a Boner to straighten your balls.

KAT

Did you make...? What kind of sandwich?

KEV

Sorry. Ate the last one.

KAT

*(Showing concern.)*

This is Roger's plate.

KEV

If'n I let him use the Boner, maybe he'll 'cide t' play.

KAT

*(Now distressed and pacing.)*

When were you at Roger's? Was Carm there?

*(Aside while pacing.)*

I know she's there now... He said he'd talk to her.



KEV

Sorry. I ain't sposed to talk 'bout golf. But dang! This Boner!

KAT

*(Beginning to unravel.)*

What do you mean you're not supposed to talk about golf?!

KEV

*(Forces attention away from the golf club, awkwardly.)*

Uh... How's your work?

KAT

What in hell are you doing?

KEV

I mean... Ya got any more funny stories?

KAT

You talked with Roger this morning?!

KEV

Uh...

KAT

When?! What'd you talk about?!

KEV

*(Timidly and struggling to remember.)*

Okay... I'm gonna try t' listen. Ya know... And not talk so much 'bout golf.

*(Reanimating.)*

But this Boner!

KAT

You talked to him about us?!

KEV

You ain't still mad are ya? I mean, ya gave me the Boner.

KAT

We were supposed to talk to you together!

KEV

Well, I dint know.

KAT

Of course, you *dint* know!

KAT (CONT.)

*(Pacing, losing it.)*

What he say?!

KEV

Rog tol' me give ya some space.

KAT

Okay! That's a fucking great idea!

KEV

Said ya dint really want me kill myself.

KAT

I gave you the goddamn golf club, didn't I?! Jesus!

*(Beat.)*

What else?!

KEV

Uh... That if'n I listen, you'd be okay. Ya know, not throw things and we could...

*(A pause before again falling to knees and breaking down.)*

I love ya, Kat.

KAT

Give me that!

*(KAT violently wrestles the golf club from Kev. As she does, the club hits KEV in the forehead and he releases the club, falls to the floor, and moans loudly. KAT looms over him holding the club.)*

Get up.

KEV

*(A moment before managing to sit up. Blood streams into face from the wound. Touches the wound and studies the blood on his hand.)*

You hit me.

*(KAT kneels and lays the club aside to inspect the wound but doesn't give much more than a cursory examination before rising.)*

KAT

This was an accident. You understand that, right? It's just a small laceration. You shouldn't need stitches and you're not concussed, so suck it up.

*(KEV manages to stand, staggers a step toward Kat.)*

KAT

Stay back. Head wounds bleed, and I don't want blood on my sweater.

*(Picks up the golf club while KEV, weeping, stares at her pitifully.)*

I'll let Roger give this to you after we talk with you this evening. Clean yourself up. Don't get blood on the towels.

*(KAT exits to the bedroom and closes the door. KEV staggers to the kitchen and slaps a paper towel on his wound. KAT enters, having changed out of the sweater and carrying the golf club.)*

KAT

You and I... We're going to talk with Roger after Carm leaves to clear up some things. Right now, I have some affairs to get in order.

*(KAT spins and exits. KEV watches her go, bloody paper towel stuck to his head.)*

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Eight

SETTING: Roger's condo.

TIME: Sunday afternoon, continuing.

AT RISE: ROGER and CARM are on the settee sitting close and angled toward each other. They are in synch and showing a familiarity that continues to escalate. They occasionally reach out and touch each other lightly on the hand or knee.

CARM

You know, I've always wanted to be a writer. I was accepted into USC's film school out of high school. Wanted to write, maybe direct movies.

ROGER

Wow. That's quite a contrast with the golf circuit.

CARM

But Duke offered me the scholarship. Full ride, so...

ROGER

You followed the money. You've got a streak of the capitalist in you after all.

CARM

I remember struggling with the decision. Was I trusting my intuition? Or, did I chicken out and take what I thought would be the safer route? I don't know.

ROGER

Human nature to second guess ourselves... But are you not happy?

CARM

My intuition on the golf course serves me well, but it doesn't feel like a career.

ROGER

I have a theory that happiness is the pursuit of something better. You can be happy without being satisfied... The *I'm Okay – You're Okay* doctrine is a load of horseshit.

CARM

Quite the philosopher.

ROGER

Second-rate writer and third-rate philosopher.

CARM

The dissatisfied but yet somehow happy writer-philosopher.

*(Pausing to study Roger.)*

You know, when it comes to men, my intuition has consistently sucked.

ROGER

Until now.

CARM

You're writing about yourself, aren't you? A reluctant hero that overcomes doubt to rush in and save the day, save the damsel.

ROGER

God, no. Writing. It's all just imagination.

CARM

What are you imagining about us?

ROGER

My writer's intuition tells me there's a story here...

*(ROGER kisses CARM. It's just a moment, and he pulls back a few inches. They study each other. A long pause. Then, the DOOR BURSTS OPEN and KEV staggers in, a bloody paper towel stuck to his forehead. ROGER stares in horror as CARM leaps to her feet to assist KEV to a chair. ROGER follows.)*

CARM

My god, Kev! What happened?!

KEV

*(Whimpering.)*

Kat. I don't know...

ROGER

Kat did this?!

CARM

Let me take a look.

*(CARM gingerly removes the paper towel and hands it to ROGER who reluctantly takes it, removes to trash in kitchen, grabs another paper towel, wets it, and brings it to CARM.)*

ROGER

*(On exiting to bathroom.)*

I've got some first aid...

CARM

You should probably get this looked at.

ROGER

*(Returning with first aid supplies.)*

Here you go.

*(CARM begins to clean and dress the wound.)*

KEV

I dint do nothin'.

CARM

You're going to have a knot.

ROGER

She throwing dishes again?

KEV

Hit me with a brand-new Boner.

CARM

*(With ROGER, shares a puzzled look before looking back to Kev.)*

Are you feeling dizzy? Can you see okay?

KEV

Comes in from shoppin' and gives me the Boner.

*(Looking to Carm.)*

You know the one. What I'm talkin' 'bout.

ROGER

Maybe shouldn't try to talk, Kev. You're not making sense.

KEV

*(Beginning to weep.)*

Tol' her I love her... then she grabs my Boner...

ROGER

The hell!?

KEV

Cost more'n six hunnerd bucks. But why'd she hafta hit me?

ROGER

Something made her angry. Did you do something? Say something?

KEV

*(Looking to Carm.)*

You know the one. Boner 9000... More'n six hunnerd bucks.

CARM

*(Failing to hid her amusement.)*

Ooh! Sure, I do. The *Bonne Gorille*.

*(Turning to Roger.)*

He's lucky he's alive. It's one honking big driver.

ROGER

A golf club?! Jesus.

CARM

Are you okay to walk into the bedroom?

*(Turning to Roger.)*

Okay if he lies down on your bed.

ROGER

Uh, sure.

KEV

*(Standing as CARM steadies him.)*

I did whatcha said. Asked about her job. Dint mean t' make her mad.

ROGER

Aah, Kev. I know you didn't. Go lie down for a while. You'll feel better.

*(CARM holds onto KEV as they exit to bedroom. ROGER gathers first aid supplies and returns them to the bathroom. While CARM and ROGER are out of the room, a KNOCK. ROGER enters and opens the door to admit KAT who enters smiling, holding matching winter coats and two pairs of snowshoes.)*

KAT

See what I got us! Matching winter coats. Do you have any idea how hard it is to find snowshoes in Florida? Got these from a couple retired from Michigan.

*(Looks for response from ROGER who is aghast rather than delighted. Her demeanor flips as on a switch, Jekyll to Hyde.*

*Looks around the room.)*

Is Carm still here?! Oh, my god! Is she in your bedroom?!

*(Kat drops everything to the floor except for one snowshoe which she grips as a club, a weapon.)*

ROGER

Take it easy. She's in there with Kev.

KAT

*(Advancing toward bedroom.)*

What!?

ROGER

*(Stepping to block the path to the bedroom.)*

Tending to your husband after the beating you gave him.

KAT

Beating?! It was a fucking accident!

*(CARM enters to stand behind ROGER.)*

KAT

*(Raising the snowshoe as to strike and advancing.)*

What are you doing here?! You, you...!

*(KAT raises the snowshoe as if to attack CARM. ROGER confronts KAT, wrestles her for the snowshoe. In the struggle, KAT gets pushed away, falls to the floor, and begins convulsing wildly. ROGER stands above her in shock, holding the snowshoe. CARM rushes to assist KAT who suddenly seizes and becomes still. CARM examines her.)*

CARM

Damn it! She stopped breathing!

ROGER

What?! What do you mean?!

CARM

Call 911!

*(CARM begins administering CPR. ROGER moves to get his phone. KEV staggers to door way and stands, wobbling, to view the commotion.)*

CARM

*(Pausing just long enough shout another command.)*

Get an ambulance!



ROGER

*(Dialing.)*

I didn't mean to hurt her!

*(On hearing that, KEV rushes and tackles ROGER. They struggle for a moment, then ROGER stands as KEV lies perfectly still on the floor.)*

ROGER

Holy shit! I think he fainted!

*(Into phone.)*

Hello. Yes! We need an ambulance! Ambulance for two!

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT I  
Scene Nine

SETTING: Condo of Kev and Kat.

TIME: Sunday midday, two weeks later.

AT RISE: A sense that a couple of weeks have passed. The condo is unoccupied and basically unchanged except for a couple of potted flowers from well-wishers and a few dishes and some papers left on the table. We HEAR A KEY in the front door lock. ROGER enters carrying a large painting so the back is facing downstage and the image is hidden from audience. He leans the painting against a wall, places keys on the table, and turns on lamps. CARM follows him in carrying another potted plant which she places on a table.

ROGER

Shall I make some coffee?

CARM

I'll put the kettle on for tea.

*(Grabs dishes from table, moves to kitchen, and starts kettle.)*

Can you check the thermostat? She might get chilled easily.

ROGER

*(Looks at thermostat.)*

Says 74. You want it warmer than that?

CARM

I'm fine, but I'll get a sweater out for her just in case.

ROGER

*(Studies surrealism print as CARM exits to bedroom.)*

Surrealism. Is it any wonder she liked this print?

CARM

*(Off, projecting from bedroom.)*

Kev hasn't even made the bed.

ROGER

*(Removes painting and leans it against a wall.)*

I'll just leave this here for now.

*(Beat.)*

Did she ever thank you?

CARM

*(Enters with a sweater and lays it over back of a chair.)*

Kev was effusive... I straightened their bed.

ROGER

But Kat...? You're amazing, you know. You saved her life.

CARM

Don't jinx it. She's not out of the woods, yet. Still a long road...

*(Picking up papers from table.)*

There's a note from Kev and some info from the doctor.

*(Begins reading snippets.)*

Kev thanks us for making the place ready. Wants you to make sure to take the winter coats out of his closet.

ROGER

*(Exiting to bedroom.)*

What we ever do with the snowshoes?

CARM

*(Referring to paper and projecting.)*

Meningioma. Five-centimeter diameter meningioma. Five centimeters!

ROGER

*(Projecting from bedroom.)*

Holy shit! That's what? About two inches? Explains a lot.

*(Entering from bedroom with winter coats.)*

I think that's bigger than a fucking golf ball! You believe that?! Really does explain a lot, doesn't it?

CARM

Benign... That's good...

ROGER

Well... I'm going to run these next door, see if I can get them packed.

*(ROGER exits. Carm busies herself hanging the new print, a bright Van Gogh displaying sunflowers in a vase. As she stands back to observe, the door opens. KEV enters, a yellowing bruise on his forehead still visible. CARM rushes to give him a hug.)*

CARM

Kev, how are you? Where's Kat?

KEV

In the truck. Wanted to check on things before bringing her in. Where's Rog?

CARM

Doing some last-minute packing. He'll be right back. We straightened up a bit, and I've got water on for tea. How's she doing?

KEV

*(With hesitation.)*

Well, the doctors are hopeful.

CARM

That's great.

*(Reaching up and lightly touching Kev's forehead.)*

How are you doing?

KEV

*(Turns away, pauses, moves to table.)*

Be honest, I'm scared. Really scared.

*(Picking up paper from the table and hands it to CARM.)*

Didja see this? 'Bout the memory and personality?

CARM

*(Reading.)*

Yes... Following surgery... Possible difficulties with speech and memory.

*(Beat.)*

Oh, and this... There may be personality changes that vary in degree and duration.

*(Beat.)*

Is that what most concerns you?

*(ROGER enters and embraces KEV.)*

ROGER

I saw Kat in the truck. You need help bringing her in?

KEV

Naw. I got it. Thanks, you guys, for... Ya know... For everthin'.

ROGER

Sure.

CARM

Of course.

KEV

And, Rog, I's sorry I tackled ya... I wasn't –

ROGER

Aah, Kev. No worries. Totally understandable.

KEV

Well... Thanks.

*(KEV exits.)*

CARM

Guy's scared to death her personality's going to be changed.

ROGER

Let's hope so... Maybe she'll return to a state of normalcy. Mellow out. Subdue that hyperactive libido... Whatever it is, I won't be next door to witness it.

CARM

But you'll still be checking on them, right?

ROGER

Well, sure. You know...

CARM

But regularly. It's important.

ROGER

No. I know.

CARM

*(Moving to painting.)*

Oh, tell me quick before she comes in. Is this straight?

ROGER

Looks good.

*(Door is opened by KEV, and KAT enters, head bandaged, walking slowly, using a walker. KEV supports her and guides her to a chair while ROGER and CARM move closer looking to assist and ad lib greetings to welcome her home. KAT seems oblivious.)*

KEV

Uh... There's a suitcase in the truck.

ROGER

*(On quickly exiting.)*

I got it.

CARM

Can I get you anything?

KAT

*(Speaking with a bit of a slur.)*

No. Just good to be home.

*(ROGER enters with suitcase, exits to bedroom, reenters momentarily without suitcase.)*

KEV

Doc says she's doin' good.

CARM

That's great... How about a cup of tea? Anything?

*(KAT is nonresponsive. Uncomfortable pause.)*

KEV

His name's *Kildare*. Believe it? Like that Dr. Kildare on TV we's kids.

CARM

*(Slipping an arm through ROGER'S and looking to him.)*

Kildare. Another Celt. That's a good sign

KAT

*(Looking around the room.)*

What happened to my painting?

CARM

We got you a welcome home gift. Hope you like it.

KEV

That's real nice. Brightens up the place.

KAT

No. I like my painting.

ROGER

*(Quickly replacing surrealism print.)*

No problem. Maybe you'll find another place to hang this one.

KAT

Why you fuck with my painting?

*(Awkward pause as tension hangs in the air.)*

KEV

So, you and Carm? Things a gone good. Knew they would.

Yeah. ROGER

You all packed up? KEV

Yeah. ROGER

Gonna miss ya, man. KEV

(Mumbling.) KAT  
Fuck with my painting.

*(Another awkward pause. ROGER gives KEV a hug, lays a hand on Kat's shoulder. KAT is nonresponsive, but KEV chokes up.)*

Get well soon, Kat. ROGER

*(Still no response from KAT. CARM bends down to give Kat a kiss on the cheek. KAT doesn't respond. CARM give a quick hug to KEV then joins ROGER by the door and takes his hand.)*

Ya haven't tol' us where you're goin'? KEV

I'm going to write a story, Kev. Going to write a story. ROGER

*(KEV looks forlornly at ROGER who holds the door open for CARM. ALL hold the pose as the lights dim.)*

(CURTAIN)

(END OF PLAY)