

HERO & VILLAIN

A play in One Act

Marc Sully

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HERO & VILLAIN**Setting:**

New York City: Pete's Tavern. East Village Apartment. Beth Israel Hospital. Village Cafe. (It could be any area in any city that has gone from Dangerous to Edgy to Gentrified.)

Characters:

MIRANDA - 60's. Well-off housewife from the Suburbs. Even with the city always nearby, it remains a place she doesn't frequent often. There's a past here, one she doesn't like to remember

CHARLES - 50's-60's. Bartender. At one point, he came here to leave his mark. After twenty years at this bar, he's found his place, at least, has this bar his place.

EDDIE - 20's. An East Village resident constantly on the verge of a big break. Pursuer of any number of pursuits. Little patience for those things that don't happen right away, are not perfect. Maybe has cut some corners.

BRIAN - 30. NYC doctor. After years of school, he's finished, finally a working physician, finally out on his own. The city offers him a chance to be himself, yet he's not entirely sure of his person nor satisfied what he's accomplished. *Is this it?* Not a young man of many words.

LYNN - 20's. Dove in fully. Moved to the city. Chased a dream or two. Aged-out of all that surrounded her. One day she woke up and was too old to be there anymore.

Characters can be any race. Miranda, Brian, and Lynn must be the same.

SCENE 1

PETE'S TAVERN, NYC

Late weekday afternoon.

CHARLES, a bartending veteran wipes the counter, waits for the after-work crowd. It's quiet and calm inside the bar. It's the way he likes it. Television airs afternoon baseball.

MIRANDA, 60's, enters. Prim and proper, upper middle class in an overcoat and carrying a fancy bag.

As she enters, she's not sure whether to sit at a table or at the bar. What's the proper thing to do? The bar empty, she has lots of choices.

All of this very exciting. A new adventure. She's particularly impressed to discover little hooks under the bar, perfect for hanging her bag.

She hangs her bag and jacket like a seasoned pro, sits at the bar.

Charles' afternoon is over. He continues to watch a ball game yet finds a moment to acknowledge Miranda.

CHARLES

What can I get you?

MIRANDA

I'm not sure.

CHARLES

Something to eat? Soup's good today.

MIRANDA

Soup?

CHARLES

There used to be a law saying if you were going to serve beer, you had to serve soup.

MIRANDA

Oh. Sort of limits the menu, huh? I'm okay. I had a sandwich on the train.

CHARLES

Sandwich on the train. That a Hitchcock movie?

MIRANDA

Mother said it was better to take something with you rather than rush in and eat once you arrived.

CHARLES

Mother knows best. What did you have? Back then. What did she send you out into the big blue world with to eat?

MIRANDA

She used to make these horrendous tomato sandwiches. She was so proud of them. Her own tomatoes. Big slices of bread she made. Thing is, those whopper tomatoes? She'd cut them so thick, the sandwich never stayed together. And her bread was always soggy. It got to the point where I never unwrapped the sandwich, I just threw it out. And don't get me started on her meatloaf sandwich. Oh. The friends I lost from those.

CHARLES

Today? On the train. What did you have?

MIRANDA

Liverwurst.

CHARLES

Liverwurst?

MIRANDA

Like Ingrid Bergman in "Spellbound". So in love with Gregory Peck. "Would you like ham or liverwurst?" "Liverwurst...."

CHARLES

How about a drink?

MIRANDA

That's what I'm here for.

CHARLES

That's what I'm selling.

MIRANDA

What's a good vodka?

CHARLES

You want vodka?

MIRANDA

What's a good one?

CHARLES

Kettle One is nice. People still like Stoli. It was bigger in the Eighties. All that cocaine.

(MORE)

CHARLES (cont.)

There are lots of small batch vodkas. Most of that is just marketing. Grey Goose. That's my favorite.

MIRANDA

I don't know you well enough to trust your favorite.

CHARLES

I'll get you one anyway. What do you want with that?

MIRANDA

Excuse me?

CHARLES

You want a Goose and - ??

MIRANDA

Vodka.

CHARLES

Grey Goose is the vodka. Do you want it straight?

MIRANDA

I'd rather something subtle.

CHARLES

Then you don't want it straight.

MIRANDA

I don't want to get drunk. Tight, but not stupid.

CHARLES

It's a fine line, sister.

MIRANDA

I guess you would know. Vodka martini?

CHARLES

For you? Maybe something with juice.

MIRANDA

I know what I don't want. I don't want one of those drinks obnoxious women on television drink. All colorful and bright, those "Look at me" drinks. I don't want one of those.

CHARLES

Let me make you something?

MIRANDA

Specifically for me?

CHARLES

Created here for the first time.

MIRANDA

I bet you've made it before.

CHARLES

It's a house special.

MIRANDA

Okay. However -

CHARLES

What?

MIRANDA

Mother also said don't trust a man you've just met to make you a drink. She was terribly adamant about that. *

CHARLES

That's my job.

CHARLES mixes her a drink.

MIRANDA

Old, isn't it?

CHARLES

I think I'm aging nicely.

MIRANDA

This bar. There's Pete's. And Landmark. And Chumley's. Is Chumley's still around? There's a Steak house in midtown. Oh. McSorley's.

CHARLES

Bar-hopping at your age? Tsk-tsk.

MIRANDA

My children used to do that. Bar-hopping. Sounded athletic. They'd come home unable to walk.

CHARLES

The Binge Drunk generation.

MIRANDA

What an awful way to be remembered.

CHARLES

Every generation has its calling. They've made their bed, now they can wet it. Moderation. That's the key. Here's your drink.

Charles places a coupe glass drink in front of her. MIRANDA suspicious, then sips.

MIRANDA

That's very nice. What is it?

CHARLES

If I tell you, you could go elsewhere to get it.

MIRANDA

Are we suddenly exclusive?

CHARLES

Why not? A man can not be everyone's bartender. He can not service every woman he meets. When he finally realizes that, he's able to commit. *

MIRANDA

My my. So much riding on a drink. ... This is very good.

CHARLES

You're welcome.

CHARLES watches baseball.

MIRANDA

There's a ball game on?

CHARLES

Yep.

MIRANDA

You're very interested?

CHARLES

I am.

MIRANDA

Must be exciting.

CHARLES

It is.

A cheer from the stadium on television.

CHARLES

HOT DOG!

MIRANDA

What?

CHARLES

Double play. Don't you love baseball?

MIRANDA

I love peanuts. Do you have peanuts?

CHARLES slides a bowl of peanuts in front of her.

MIRANDA

Thank you. ... Excuse me - Not to be a ninny, but have other people put their fingers in this bowl?

CHARLES

Without a doubt. Here.

HE pours a fresh bowl.

CHARLES

I don't do that for everyone.

MIRANDA

I'd say something about offering me fresh nuts but it wouldn't suit a woman my age.

CHARLES

Ha! You're all right. Baseball. Same product for a hundred years. Every season they repackage it, try to sell it to you again.

MIRANDA

You're angry about this?

CHARLES

Just when I adjust to a new distraction, there's something else to deal with. Look. Those stats under the picture? You can't help but look and when you do you miss the action. Still, I watch. Particularly now. You have to love spring baseball.

MIRANDA

I do?

CHARLES

Start of a new season. For the moment, before the heat and humidity and baseball's desperate attempt to stay relevant when football comes back -

MIRANDA

I don't like football.

CHARLES

- the game in spring remains somewhat pure.

MIRANDA

Such passion.

CHARLES

Why force sports on everyone? The over-commercialization ruins it. Look what happened to hockey?

MIRANDA

No more ice?

CHARLES

Sports these days, we've lost our way.

MIRANDA

Have we? I never understood everything that went with sports. The sport was always more ancillary to car ads and beer drinking, pork consumption, and swimsuit models.

CHARLES

That's what I'm talking about! That's not sport. That's Cross Marketing. You think you're watching a game and then suddenly it's a beer ad or a car ad or an erectile disfunction ad. Bull crap.

MIRANDA

I liked basketball. When I was younger. It made the most sense to me. Angles. Passing. I had a crush on Senator Bradley.

CHARLES

Dollar Bill?

MIRANDA

We'd go see him at Princeton. Shorts were shorter then.

MIRANDA finishes her drink.

MIRANDA

My. I can feel that already.

CHARLES

You want another?

MIRANDA

I shouldn't. We're having dinner.

CHARLES

We are??? Christ, let me find a comb -

MIRANDA

My son and I. He's a doctor. Works at a hospital down here. "BETH" - something.

CHARLES

Beth Israel?

MIRANDA

That's her.

CHARLES

You and the doctor going bar-hopping?

MIRANDA

He doesn't have time for that. He's very busy. Surprised he had time to see me.

CHARLES

You must be proud.

MIRANDA

I am. He's worked hard. Kept his nose clean. Serious. Sharp young man. It's the boys who don't work hard that frighten me. Idle hands. Lazy bones. You can't trust them.

CHARLES

Hate those guys. They end up working in bars.

MIRANDA

I don't mean -

CHARLES

- Just kidding. I put it all out there once. No regrets.

CHARLES back to the television.

CHARLES

Come on! All right!

MIRANDA

Did we score?

CHARLES

We sure as hell did.

MIRANDA

I used to come to the city all the time - when I was younger.

CHARLES

Oh yeah?

MIRANDA

During summer break I'd visit a friend who worked at McSorely's. Nine a.m., Shauna would be cleaning and taking nips from the tap. We'd spend the day in Tompkins Square smoking cigarettes.

CHARLES

You little rebel.

MIRANDA

My parents didn't like me coming into the city. They didn't approve of Shauna either. Irish.

CHARLES

Hey.

MIRANDA

That's how it was back then. So silly. So much else going on in the world. ... Where was I?

CHARLES

Proving your independence.

MIRANDA

Right. My parents. The thing about "breaking free" is that inevitably you come back. See this broach? When I grew up all my aunts had a broach like this. It became a symbol of everything I didn't want to become. This is mother's.

CHARLES

It's very pretty.

MIRANDA

I love it dearly. How about another drink?

CHARLES

You sure?

MIRANDA

Absolutely. I don't want to be the gushingly proud but mousey mother. I want to be cool. Hip.

CHARLES

Another drink would help?

MIRANDA

It's too late to go clothes shopping. I haven't seen him in a while.

CHARLES

Your son? Well, he's busy, right?

MIRANDA

Of course he is. He's -

CHARLES

A doctor.

MIRANDA

It's just strange. Meeting here. Not at his apartment. It's strange. Isn't it strange?

CHARLES

Maybe it's more convenient.

MIRANDA

Not for me. I mean, here I am because he doesn't come home enough and - I'm sorry - I'm being a bore. Am I being a bore?

CHARLES

I have an ear for every customer. I bet he has a nice restaurant picked out.

MIRANDA

He does have good taste. In food. He rarely calls. When he does it's just small talk. I am being a bore, aren't I? I can tell.

CHARLES

No, no, no. I'm just going to change the channel.

Charles changes the channel.

MIRANDA

I'm afraid he has a secret to tell me.

CHARLES

Like?

MIRANDA

I'm not sure.

CHARLES

Is he moving?

MIRANDA

No. I don't think. He likes the city.

CHARLES

Marriage?

MIRANDA

I doubt that.

CHARLES

Who's he dating?

MIRANDA

I don't pry. Anymore. He lives alone. He's busy.

CHARLES

He's a doctor.

MIRANDA

Exactly. And it wouldn't matter. I don't think. I'd have to be confronted with it first. "Confronted" doesn't sound right. Maybe he is engaged. A change of heart. Maybe when he isn't so busy, he's groping a busty young nurse.

CHARLES

If we could all be so lucky. Here you go. Number two.

CHARLES finishes the drink.

MIRANDA

Thank you. I always felt if I got involved with the kids' dating, maybe they could skip the obvious mistakes. I wonder if I jinxed them.

CHARLES

Looking forward to grand kids?

MIRANDA

There isn't much left, is there? Do you have a ladies room?

CHARLES

Through the back and downstairs.

MIRANDA

I don't want to lose my seat at the bar. "Seat at the bar". I like that. Sounds like I have a calling.

CHARLES

They call it a disease these days.

MIRANDA

And I do love these little hooks under the bar too.

CHARLES

Some of those old drunks knew what they were doing.

MIRANDA

Be right back.

Miranda wobbly off her stool.

Charles works around the bar.

EDDIE enters. Mid 20's. Haphazard, disheveled, a lame attempt to be corporate but his suit doesn't fit and his tie hangs loose.

Eddie spots Miranda's purse and jacket. He edges towards them.

Charles turns back, sees Eddie.

CHARLES

Hey!

EDDIE

What?

CHARLES

Whatca'ya doing?

EDDIE

Nothing.

CHARLES
Someone's sitting there.

EDDIE
So?

CHARLES
So you can't sit there.

EDDIE
I'll sit next to them.

CHARLES
No you won't.

EDDIE
I'll sit over here. (*mumbles*)

CHARLES
What?

EDDIE
Nothing.

CHARLES
You know what? It's a little early for you.

EDDIE
What's that mean?

CHARLES
No one here for you to bother.

EDDIE
I don't bother people.

CHARLES
Not people. Women. Women with jobs and a free hour after work. You bug them.

EDDIE
I don't bug them.

CHARLES
Annoy. Pester. Latch onto.

EDDIE
I make conversation.

CHARLES
You ever get a date with any of them?

EDDIE
What do you care?

CHARLES

All the time you spend here, I'm curious what fruit has bloomed.

EDDIE

I hooked up last week.

CHARLES

I don't remember you leaving with anyone.

EDDIE

What is this, man? I walk in and you're in my grill. I leave good tips.

CHARLES

You leave good tips like you leave with women.

EDDIE

Name was Kerry. Little blonde. Worked in accounting. Button-down pink blouse. Tight black pants. Sexy office girl. Went home with her. Had my head up her bush faster than a gopher in daylight. Satisfied?

CHARLES

Sure. One time I caught a fish this big.

EDDIE

Why are you hassling me? Is it this woman?

CHARLES

How do you know it's a woman?

EDDIE

There's a purse and a jacket.

CHARLES

She's here for a drink.

EDDIE

Charlie's got a girlfriend.

CHARLES

Where's your hat?

EDDIE

What hat?

CHARLES

Your hook-up hat. Your conversation hat. The movie company hat. "Dreamworks". "Miramax". Gets your foot in the door. "Ooh, do you work there?" Like you work there.

EDDIE

Maybe I did.

CHARLES
Where is it?
EDDIE
Fuck off.
CHARLES
Don't use that language in here.

EDDIE
Sorry.
CHARLES
Why don't you come back later?

EDDIE
Maybe I'll go find a new hat.
CHARLES
If that's what you need.

EDDIE
It's not.

Eddie exits.

Charles goes to see if Miranda's jacket and purse are still there.

Miranda returns to see Charles inspecting her purse.

MIRANDA
Is everything all right?

CHARLES
Oh. Everything is fine.

MIRANDA
You were looking in my bag?

CHARLES
I wanted to make sure it was still there.

MIRANDA
Why wouldn't it be?

CHARLES
Some people came in.

MIRANDA
I didn't hear anyone.

CHARLES
They didn't say much. One guy came close to your stuff. I stopped him.

MIRANDA
By looking in my purse yourself?

CHARLES
I wasn't looking in it.

MIRANDA
It's my fault.

CHARLES
Your fault?

MIRANDA
I trusted you.

CHARLES
And I abided.

MIRANDA
You were snooping. I do not call that trustworthy.

CHARLES
Who the hell do you think I am?

MIRANDA
I can only judge you from what I saw.

CHARLES
I'm an okay guy. I take people straight up. Not like I'm asking you what you were doing in my bathroom.

MIRANDA
Whatever.

MIRANDA inspects her belongings.

CHARLES
Everything in order?

MIRANDA
Didn't you find out?

CHARLES
I can call the cops.

MIRANDA
It's fine. I suppose. Maybe I should thank you.

CHARLES
That's all right.

MIRANDA

... What would I be doing in there?

CHARLES

Where?

MIRANDA

In the bathroom?

CHARLES

Oh. You'd be surprised. Back in the day, we had to install blue light. Had to cut holes in the spoons.

MIRANDA

What for?

CHARLES

Kids steal spoons, go into the bathroom, shoot up.

MIRANDA

What did the light do? "Trip" them out?

CHARLES

It's okay. But it's often the people you wouldn't suspect. Guys in suits. Clean cut. Into the bathroom.

MIRANDA

I remember women who used to smoke in the bathroom. You'd walk into their house and follow the cord all the way to the john. That's where they'd be, sitting, smoking, talking.

CHARLES

Guys usually come to the bar.

MIRANDA

That's it exactly. People are lonely. We were having pleasant conversation before. I've got a newspaper?

CHARLES

No, no, no. Not the newspaper.

MIRANDA

Why not?

CHARLES

You know how many people come in here and regurgitate everything they read as if it's important? Fifteen minutes with a newspaper and everyone's a foreign policy expert.

MIRANDA

I like being well informed.

CHARLES

You like to "believe" you're well informed. How do you know? You read this paper, you're outraged.

(MORE)

CHARLES (cont.)

You read that paper, you're moved to tears. But no matter what, you have a moment and you finish your coffee.

MIRANDA

It's irresponsible to ignore what's going on.

CHARLES

There's your past, your future, and there's you here and now. That's what's going on. And these days it's not even newspaper but people's faces in their phones, reading something, seeing something on their smart phone which once and for all proves there's nothing more to voracious newspaper habit than the dopamine hit. After twenty years doing this, I know. It's the same shit. Everyone chasing something that gives them that spike. ... How's your drink?

MIRANDA

I preferred it when it was icy.

CHARLES

Then let me freshen that up. No charge.

MIRANDA

Knock me up.

CHARLES

Woe, woe, woe.

MIRANDA

Whoops. I was trying to sound cool.

CHARLES

That one missed.

MIRANDA

Yes. That was drilled into us. "Don't let the wrong boy knock you up."

CHARLES

But if there was a right boy?

MIRANDA

Then by all means! Ha! I'll let you in on a little secret: we all believed there was. Right Boy versus Wrong Boy. If the right boy knocked you up, you could bypass all the other stuff. You'd be married with a house, children. It would all be over. At least that's what we thought.

CHARLES

You're sure you want another drink?

MIRANDA

"Liverwurst".

CHARLES mixes a new drink, shakes it.

CHARLES

"The trick is in the shaking. A Manhattan is shaken to a rumba. A martini, a waltz."

MIRANDA

Nick Charles! I adore the *Thin Man*.

CHARLES

Did you know the Thin Man wasn't the Thin Man in the movie?

MIRANDA

Makes no difference. He should be here by now.

CHARLES

William Powell?

MIRANDA

My son. Maybe that's the last lesson to being a doctor. After years of studying, being exact and punctual, you must allow yourself to be the most important person you know. Your work is more important than anyone else's. Once you understand that, you learn how to let people down.

CHARLES

Most of us do that naturally. Here you are, my dear.

CHARLES hands her another drink.

MIRANDA

Perfect. Whatever it is, it's perfect. And you won't tell me what it is.

CHARLES

If I tell you, you'll never come back.

MIRANDA

Oh, you men. Don't you get it? It's always better when you know where it's coming from.

CHARLES

I'll have to write that down.

MIRANDA

This is so good. Makes my feet tingle. I drive a big car.

CHARLES

You do?

MIRANDA

Do you have a lot of women hitting on you?

CHARLES

Never much of a ladies' man.

MIRANDA

What's happening on the television? You switched channels? Golf?

CHARLES

Second day at Augusta. See this hole? "Amen Corner".

MIRANDA

"Amen"! You know what burns my butter? Friends who've gone religious. Fifty years of decisions, good ones, bad ones, and now they start relying on someone else? I mean, faith is wonderful but take some responsibility.

CHARLES

People are scared.

MIRANDA

Have you heard about these Traditionalists? Modern spirituality bores them to tears so they've gone back to the basics. Chanting. Dancing around the campfire. Waving dead animals and foreskins at each other. Woe! My god! What's in this drink? *

CHARLES

Dead animals and foreskin.

MIRANDA

And you're worried I can get that elsewhere??

Eddie returns. His tie gone. He stands back, away from the bar. Charles sees him, ignores him.

CHARLES

He have an extra room? Your son?

MIRANDA

Are you worried about me?

CHARLES

Just wondering.

MIRANDA

He might have an extra room. Being his mother I don't know. Can you trust a man who doesn't let his mother see his apartment?

CHARLES

Don't worry. He'll be making doctor money, buy a place, and it'll knock your socks off.

MIRANDA

A corner. That's all I've ever asked for. Wherever they live, whatever house, apartment, I would like a corner. A little area I can always be comfortable in.

CHARLES
Sounds nice. I wouldn't mind -

The bar phone rings.

CHARLES
Hold on. Be right back.

Charles goes to the opposite side to answer. His conversation muted.

Eddie moves next to Miranda.

EDDIE
Hey.

MIRANDA
Hello.

EDDIE
Mind if I sit?

MIRANDA
Sure. Hey. They have little hooks under the bar. See?

EDDIE
Neat.

MIRANDA
Having a good day? You look tired. Are you tired?

EDDIE
I'm like this after work. All my energy goes into my job.

MIRANDA
What kind of job?

EDDIE
A boring one. A desk. A chair. A phone. And one of those big computers.

MIRANDA
But you don't wear a tie? What kind of job doesn't require you to wear a tie?

EDDIE
I've got a tie. See?

Eddie pulls out his crumpled tie.

MIRANDA
Good god. Give me that.

Miranda starts putting Eddie's tie back on as if he's a prep school boy who hasn't learned how. She ruffles his collar, zips the tie around in no time flat.

MIRANDA

A young man should wear a tie. Shows people you're not wasting their time. Shows a boss you're worth the money.

EDDIE

It's just a tie.

CHARLES returns.

CHARLES

Hey? What are you doing?

EDDIE

I'm just sitting. That a problem?

CHARLES

(to Miranda)

Is it a problem? I could get rid of him.

MIRANDA

I've dealt with his type before.

EDDIE

You don't know my type. You don't know a damn thing -

CHARLES

HEY! Don't talk like that in here.

EDDIE

Ease up.

MIRANDA

Please, please, please. I was enjoying myself. Here. Let me buy this young man a drink.

CHARLES

Don't do that. He does this all the time. In here. Bugging people. Sometimes he's the happy-go-lucky bar guy. Sometimes he's the depressed lost soul. But this little shit always gets people to buy him drinks.

MIRANDA

Count me among them.

CHARLES

He ain't worth it.

MIRANDA

Can you get him a beer? From my money?

CHARLES
Fine. I'll do that. For you.

MIRANDA
Thank you.

EDDIE
You know what I like.

Charles gets Eddie a beer. He changes the television back to baseball.

EDDIE
That pitcher sucks.

CHARLES
What do you know?

MIRANDA
Let's keep it civil.

CHARLES
Not that guy. He's as feral as they come.

MIRANDA
He's a young man. I'm sure you had time in his shoes.

CHARLES
"Had". You know what he has? Hats. Company hats he goes around wearing. Tells people that's where he works.

The phone rings again. Charles crosses to answer it.

EDDIE
Thanks for the beer.

MIRANDA
No problem.

EDDIE
I know where the doctor is. Your doctor. It's okay. We're close.

MIRANDA
Are you?

EDDIE
Is that so hard to believe?

MIRANDA
I just didn't think -

EDDIE

He's too good to hang out with me?

MIRANDA

I didn't say that.

EDDIE

Do you want to see him?

MIRANDA

He's supposed to show up.

EDDIE

He's busy. He told me to come find you. Told me to find you and bring you to him. Down that drink.

MIRANDA

I shouldn't. Feeling tipsy already.

EDDIE

Knock it back.

Eddie guzzles his beer. Miranda finishes her drink.

EDDIE

Let's split.

MIRANDA

I have to pay.

EDDIE

You've got money on the bar.

MIRANDA

I should say goodbye.

EDDIE

He'll be on the phone for a while.

MIRANDA

How do you know?

EDDIE

His girlfriend calls around this time. His chick on the side. This is where they can talk.

MIRANDA

Really?

EDDIE

You can't trust a big jerk like that. Guy like him, he's barely holding on. His only means of longevity. You coming?

MIRANDA

I should wait.

EDDIE

Come with me, see the doctor or stay here with that bum.

MIRANDA

Wait. I'm coming with you.

Eddie holds the door for her.

As Miranda exits, Eddie walks back to the bar, grabs the money and exits.

Moments later, Charles returns to an empty bar, money missing as the baseball game continues.

CHARLES

Son of a -

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 2

AN EAST VILLAGE APARTMENT. LATER.

A single room apartment. Windows along the avenue. Sheets for curtains. A fluffy chair, a reading lamp, a foot stool in one corner. A bed, television, book shelf and stereo opposite.

Upstage, a small stove and REFRIGERATOR.

Two doors. One leads out to the hall. The other to a bathroom and the only sink.

The second-half of Pink Floyd's "The Great In The Sky" plays. Misplaced theme music searches for meaning, tries to be profound during what is an unseasonably warm spring evening.

EDDIE, out of his ragged suit, sits on his bed in t-shirt and boxers as if he lost his thought and focus about what to wear next.

MIRANDA across the room in the comfy chair. The warm air in the apartment has her shoes off. She might even open her shirt to reveal a very conservative undergarment.

Both of them heated, sweaty. An enervated, languid atmosphere. Neither looks at the other nor speaks.

A BLAST of street noise stirs them both to life.

EDDIE gets up, changes the music, puts on pants, considers making the bed. What's the Point??

The silence unnerves Eddie, he puts on more music. Radiohead "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi". He's not sure what it's about, but it hits all the right notes for him: Cryptic. Big. The Mystery of Loneliness.

He goes to the fridge, gets beer. He offers MIRANDA one. She declines.

They listen. Eddie now on the floor of the apartment, stares at the ceiling. Finally,

MIRANDA

What are you looking at?

EDDIE

There's a crack up there. If you follow it from one side of the room to the other, you can map out land masses, create your own world. The trick is remembering what each line has turned into next time you look up. If you forget, you have to start all over. It's a fun game. Makes me crazy. Or maybe I do it because I'm crazy. ... Sorry we didn't find him.

MIRANDA

I should have known better.

EDDIE

He said he'd be there.

MIRANDA

Of course he did.

EDDIE

He did. Honest.

Eddie turns off the music. It seems like the right thing to do. But then the silence is too much. He needs to fill it.

EDDIE

Hot. Hot hot hot. Burning hot. Stinking hot. Hot salsa. Hot tamale. Hot-cha-cha-cha-cha.

MIRANDA

... I have to do something. Maybe I'll clean up.

EDDIE

What? Why? Sit down. Relax. I'm a little hyper. That ADHD thing. That HD thing. Whatever THING they call it these days. ... I don't wave my hands anymore. I've got that under control. ... I haven't had company in a while.

MIRANDA

Good thing. It's filthy in here.

EDDIE

It's a city apartment. Open a window, filth flies in.

MIRANDA

You can't live like this.

EDDIE

Sure I can.

MIRANDA

There are roaches. I've seen five already.

EDDIE

There are roaches everywhere, not just here.

MIRANDA

If you clean up, there wouldn't be so many.

EDDIE

Clean, unclean. They're here. They'll rule us one day. Embrace the roach and maybe they'll spare you when the time comes. "All hail the roaches, all hail the roaches."

MIRANDA exits with glasses and plates into the bathroom.

MIRANDA (O.S.)

I can't believe your kitchen sink is in the bathroom.

EDDIE

That's because it's not a KITCHEN SINK. It's just "SINK". It's not one or the other. People used to have one sink. They didn't need like eighteen sinks in their mansions. They were fine with one. I'm fine with one.

MIRANDA returns.

MIRANDA

You're not living on the frontier, you know.

EDDIE

They used to call this area a "frontier." I've heard old-timers say that. Bet I could. Live in the frontier.

MIRANDA

You think?

EDDIE

Apartment isn't great. Better than most. This apartment I almost moved into, the shower and kitchen sink were one. For a shower, you had to like, step up into it. Otherwise it was a sink. A huge fucking sink.

MIRANDA

You could have done dishes while you showered.

EDDIE

That's smart.

MIRANDA

I was joking.

EDDIE

Less water wasted. That's important. For the environment.

MIRANDA

You're living in filth, with roaches, your nasty underwear and you're worried about the environment?

EDDIE

I care about the Earth, you know? I should probably join one of those conservation movements.

MIRANDA

Why don't you?

EDDIE

I don't want to be one of those dicks annoying people on the sidewalk.

Loud truck horn from outside.

MIRANDA

What was that??!

EDDIE

It gets loud. I'm used to it.

MIRANDA

You just jumped.

EDDIE

I didn't.

MIRANDA

I saw you.

EDDIE

Yeah well, every now and then. Sometimes I think I hear traffic while I sleep. That's got to be fucking with my dreams, huh? *Snore, snore, beep. Snore, snore, HONK, HONK!! AHAHAH! "The baby, save the baby!!"* No big deal. This dude in the building, he shoves a big board of foam into the window each night. Says it keeps sound out.

MIRANDA

Why don't you have one?

EDDIE

I'd have to put it in at night, take it out every morning.

MIRANDA

So?

EDDIE

That's a hassle. Another thing to do when I wake up.

MIRANDA

So?

EDDIE

So if I put a window plug in, I might never take it out. Then it would always be dark in here. I need my sun.

MIRANDA

Yes, you've got such a healthy pallor.

EDDIE

I'd rather have the noise.

MIRANDA

Do you have a mop?

EDDIE

Only for emergencies.

MIRANDA

Wallpaper might help.

EDDIE

Why make this place look good?

MIRANDA

Because you live here.

EDDIE

This is only temporary.

MIRANDA

How long have you been here?

EDDIE

What's it matter? Everyone says I shouldn't leave. This place is subsidized. I'll never find an apartment this cheap again.

MIRANDA

You'll say that until you're too old to move.

EDDIE

It's the perfect place for right now. Relax, would you?

MIRANDA

If the roaches don't carry me away, maybe I will.

Miranda stares out the window, the traffic, the people outside.

MIRANDA

It's nice to see youth still being wasted down here.

EDDIE

No one is wasting. Unless they're trying to. Then there's like A LOT of kids wasting. Two bars on every block, the clubs, coffee shops. If you had the money, you could really waste away. I know these trust fund kids and they -

MIRANDA

Doesn't change, does it?

EDDIE

How do you know? You lived down here?

MIRANDA

For the briefest of moments.

EDDIE

No way.

MIRANDA

Me and a girlfriend. A summer. An adventure.

EDDIE

What did you do?

MIRANDA

Wore black. Smoked too many cigarettes.

EDDIE

Wish I could smoke. Always makes me sick.

MIRANDA

What brought you here?

EDDIE

The indie film scene.

MIRANDA

You're a filmmaker?

EDDIE

I did some PA work, a couple of low budget films. Too many people into that around here. Well, not so much movies these days. It's more Limited Series thing.

MIRANDA

"If everybody is thinking alike, someone must not be thinking" Know who said that?

EDDIE

No.

MIRANDA

General Patton.

EDDIE

I'm more into General Sou. You hungry?

MIRANDA

No.

EDDIE

Me neither. ... What brought you here?

MIRANDA

We thought we were part of something. A high water mark that would define our generation. Everyone was passionate about - something. Maybe that's just the age we were. We all thought we were on the cusp of something different. That it all meant something. You weren't wasting youth. You were on the forefront, the frontier. Parties with artists, authors, intellectuals and all the students who followed them. We were going lift the world around us.

More noise outside. Miranda stares.

MIRANDA

What's it mean to be Bohemian these days?

EDDIE

Living without cable. ... You ever do anything wild?

MIRANDA

I used to run barefoot through the streets.

EDDIE

Ooooooh. Crazy.

MIRANDA

That was the extent of my letting go. There was a apartment building, right - over - somewhere around here. It was near the Charlie Parker house. I can remember the smell of the stairwell, and the sunrise from the roof, and the last night before I went back to Rhode Island, but - Could they have knocked that building down?

EDDIE

What's it matter?

MIRANDA

Without the building I have a hard time remembering his face.

EDDIE

Who?

MIRANDA

This Beatnik shit. I suppose he was cool for the time.

EDDIE

You just said he was a shit.

MIRANDA

He was. He knew how to take advantage of a clueless college girl. But I still want the memory. That building is definitely gone.

Miranda continues to stare out the window.

MIRANDA

I walked around for a bit. Earlier. Before the bar. Thought all I had to do was walk down the streets, absorb the scene, and it would come back. The atmosphere, the energy. It didn't. There used to be an edge here. There used to be an anxiety that kept you on your toes.

EDDIE

It's out there. It's all out there.

MIRANDA

I didn't see it. New buildings. Lots of Glass Walls. There were these kids, college kids, nose pierced, spiked hair, asking for money.

EDDIE

Like robins every April? We have Punks on the sidewalks. Spring has sprung.

MIRANDA

Punks? There are shops selling soap, wedding dresses, -

EDDIE

It's still punk. Sid Vicious. Joey Ramone. The Beats.

MIRANDA

Auden walking down St. Marks in the snow.

EDDIE

Yeah! I've seen that picture.

MIRANDA

Why live the life when you can buy the t-shirt?

EDDIE

It's not as simple as that. Those shirts are expensive.

MIRANDA

... Where did it go? Back when I came here, it was meant as an inoculation, a vaccine, a shot in the arm to avoid this current, infected me.

Not much said. The noise. The depressing apartment.

MIRANDA
So is this it?

EDDIE
It's a studio.

MIRANDA
Your highest rung?

EDDIE
For now.

MIRANDA
How does it feel?

EDDIE
I dunno.

MIRANDA
Time to move on. What's next, YM?

EDDIE
YM?

MIRANDA
Young Man.

EDDIE
Sounds like a girl's magazine. YM. Young Miss.

MIRANDA
Young Miss is a fruit fly. A young man has endless potential. He's still "young" past thirty. He has power, energy, nerve, initiative. He does things. That's you, YM.

EDDIE
That's hardly me.

MIRANDA
Sure it is. Watch.

MIRANDA takes a Magic Marker and draws "YM" on the front of Eddie's t-shirt. It looks like the Superman logo.

MIRANDA
There. Nothing can stop you.

EDDIE
Oh man. I don't have enough t-shirts for you to be drawing on them.

MIRANDA

This is not meant to be seen. It's for underneath. Only you know your full power. Time we got you on your feet, YM.

EDDIE

I'm on my feet.

MIRANDA

Take this seriously. Everything about your life hinges on this moment. You still have this time, your time, to be cock of the walk, to impress, to indulge. A Young Man can do that. Be anything. A rascal. Irresponsible. Do you have a girlfriend?

EDDIE

I don't want to talk about that -

MIRANDA

Many a man has based his success on how well he did with the ladies. We elect those men President. Isn't that a sign? I bet this neighborhood is still ripe with young women who don't know any better.

EDDIE

And the outfits they wear? These itty shirts and the jeans are so low -

MIRANDA

That's the spirit! Embrace that rambunctious urge or two. Let's start by getting your confidence up, if you know what I mean. Are there women in the building? I'll knock on some doors.

EDDIE

Do you really care?

MIRANDA

Of course I care. I can't sit by and watch you screw this up! Don't you get it? You have this moment, it's yours. You can't be content to sit in this apartment with your roaches and the noise. Young Man. A sure bet. Not like Young Miss. A young miss has "X" amount of time. Her confidence based on someone telling her she's pretty, glamorous, a princess. Like that lasts.

EDDIE

Look, I'm alright.

MIRANDA

No. You're not. It's almost not your fault. A Young Man's first twenty years are passive. You didn't do anything. We buy you clothes. Ice cream. School. I tell you what? College ruined most of you. Left you depleted. Soft. You drink too much. You don't apply yourself. You don't have to. College grants you four years of faux elitism.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (cont.)

The moment you graduate, that's over. But after all that, all you've grown dependent on, the drinking, the porn, the video games, this moment is still yours. What you can't do now is quit at the first sign of adversity.

EDDIE

What about the eighth?

MIRANDA

Let's go, YM! Let's feed this first base desire. Get you a girl. After that you can walk into any office you'd like.

EDDIE

I don't think screwing and office work go together.

MIRANDA

Just remember: it's okay to fail. Make mistakes. Now. Today. Before you know it, that girl at the bar won't be looking your way, that employer will be searching for the next young man to walk through his door.

EDDIE

Maybe I don't want any of that.

MIRANDA

You don't have a choice!

EDDIE

Can we just sit?

MIRANDA

You can not just sit. Not at your age. You made the choice to live here, so do something with it! You owe it.

EDDIE

To who?

MIRANDA

To those who didn't get the same opportunity!

EDDIE

I told you, if you came up here, don't get freaky.

MIRANDA

If I were given a few these days again, I'd do something with them. You're lazy.

EDDIE

I'm not.

MIRANDA

Hiding? Scared? A few bad moments? Did you stub your toe?

EDDIE

I'm doing stuff. I've got my own apartment. One or two things click, and it all -

MIRANDA

Stop lying.

EDDIE

Fuck you.

MIRANDA

I will not be talked to like that.

EDDIE

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you. My apartment. My bed. My chair. You're not even a guest. You just followed me.

MIRANDA

That's enough.

EDDIE

Says who? You can't come in here and start telling me what I'm doing wrong. Look at you. You're old. Did you know that? I did. I noticed.

Miranda starts to dress.

EDDIE

Where are you going?

MIRANDA

Call me old. Call me whatever you want. You quit.

EDDIE

I didn't quit! Things just haven't - Don't leave. You want some tea? I'll make you some tea.

Eddie fills the kettle in the bathroom. He plugs the electric kettle in.

EDDIE

It takes a moment. This thing heats up fast. Okay? It heats up fast. Okay. Tea? Don't leave.

MIRANDA

What kind of tea?

EDDIE

I don't know. I'll look.

He scans his cabinets.

EDDIE

There's some herbal. You want that?

MIRANDA

Black tea. Something with caffeine.

EDDIE

Okay. There's got to be some of that here. Oolong.
"Oolong"?? What the hell is that? Wait! Earl Grey! I
have Earl Grey. You want?

MIRANDA

Okay.

EDDIE

I don't have any milk.

MIRANDA

You can't even pour a proper cup of tea?

EDDIE

You can't handle tea without milk?

MIRANDA

I've been drinking vodka. Milk will coat my stomach.

EDDIE

Should I go out and get milk?

MIRANDA

Would you mind?

EDDIE

Serious? Okay. That's fine. There's a bodega on the
corner. I'll be right back.

Eddie dresses and races out the door.

*Miranda in the apartment. She looks
at books, the bed. She finds a box
of condoms.*

MIRANDA

An unopened box of condoms. Is there anything more pathetic.

*Eddie reenters with milk. It's
almost perfectly timed with the hot
kettle.*

EDDIE

Don't blame me if this milk curdles. They never keep it cold
enough. This should just be a second.

EDDIE

What did you do in here???

MIRANDA

Where would I begin?

EDDIE

You did something, didn't you?

MIRANDA

Let's see: I washed your clothes, cleaned your dishes, oh and I dusted that neglected bookshelf of yours. *Ulysses*?? Really??

EDDIE

I'm going to read it.

MIRANDA

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire? Gibbon? At your age?

EDDIE

Looked interesting. So boring.

MIRANDA

I poured Pine Sole around the apartment and scrubbed the soap scum out of the tub.

EDDIE

You did not.

MIRANDA

I had the roaches tap dance.

EDDIE starts making tea.

MIRANDA

Maybe they'll raze this building. So poorly built in the first place. A fresh start. That's what you need.

EDDIE

Keep it up you're not getting any tea.

MIRANDA

First failure is a bitch, isn't it? First failure affects everything.

EDDIE

Who says I failed?

MIRANDA

Look around. A pattern in the making.

EDDIE

Great. Now. We'll have tea.

MIRANDA

We should pick a color for the walls. After that, maybe something about your appearance. What kind of loser has fifteen pairs of sneakers?

EDDIE

You're not getting tea.

MIRANDA

Is that because you can't boil water properly? My daughter used to boil water. She could boil water like no one's business. We had tea all the time. Lovely black tea on fine China. She knew just how long to let it seep.

EDDIE

This was a bad idea.

MIRANDA

I'd like my tea please.

EDDIE

You should go.

MIRANDA

Don't be such a baby. We're having fun. Let's play charades. I'll be YOU. "Look at me. I can't do anything. Ain't it cool?" Do you have any idea how depressing this is?

EDDIE

We all can't be doctors.

MIRANDA

Be something. Make an effort. Look! You've got stains on your sheets. A soiled comforter. What is that? Is that loneliness? Is that frustration? Does having that moment alone relieve you of the anxiety of doing it for real??

EDDIE

Last chance.

MIRANDA

I'd rather a drink out of that disgusting toilet of yours, or excuse me, is that the sink?

EDDIE

What is wrong with you?!

MIRANDA

I have no desire to get old by myself!

EDDIE

Get out!

MIRANDA

Oh. Look. Anger? Some say anger is a motivator. I look around and I don't see much motivation. At least show some anger.

EDDIE

Shut up, shut up, shut up! Leave me alone!

MIRANDA

Why? So you can masturbate? Pretend? You're pathetic. You weren't worth the effort. Weren't worth her time.

Eddie out of control, hurls the kettle across the room.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 3

THE HOSPITAL.

The waiting area.

Hospital noise all around.

EDDIE sits/stands. One second he's drained of energy, the next he's frantic, not sure what to do.

His clothes, whatever he was wearing earlier, are covered in blood. Blood across his chest and arms and legs.

BRIAN, 30, in doctor's scrubs there to help, console, whatever he can.

I tried to help. EDDIE

I know. BRIAN

Is she going to die? EDDIE

I don't know. BRIAN

I don't want her to die. EDDIE

We'll see. BRIAN

That would suck. EDDIE

...Yes. BRIAN

Hospital noise.

I don't want her to die. Ever. Don't even let her age. EDDIE

You have to calm down. BRIAN

Don't let her die. Please. EDDIE

BRIAN

I can't tell you that's not going to happen.

EDDIE

Everything will be all right. Right?? Am I right??

BRIAN

Things - happen.

EDDIE

I didn't do anything. It was hot. I opened the windows but then that just made it noisy.

BRIAN

You should sit down.

EDDIE

It's the floor. The floor is hot. The floor heats the whole apartment. It's that nail salon below my apartment. Like it's not enough they send noxious fumes through my window, they use florescent lights too. Florescent lights are hot. They heat the floor. The apartment gets hot.

BRIAN

You don't have to explain.

EDDIE

I wanted her to be comfortable. And maybe, for a second she was. For a second she even looked like - fuck!

BRIAN

Calm down.

EDDIE

Makes me anxious, my palms get all itchy. ... Where are the police?

BRIAN

Maybe they had something else to do.

EDDIE

What else could they have to do?

BRIAN

It's a busy city.

EDDIE

Would you check?

BRIAN

You're ready?

EDDIE

Yeah. NO. Yeah. I'm ready.

BRIAN

Okay. Sit. Here. Don't go anywhere.

EDDIE

Okay.

BRIAN

If you leave, it will make things worse.

EDDIE

I'm sitting. I can explain it now. It's at the top of my head. Behind my eyes. I can talk about it. I might not want to later.

*Brian not sure if he should leave,
but exits anyway.*

*Eddie fidgets, scratches his hands.
He starts to exit. Stops. He moves
back and forth in indecision.*

Brian returns with a cup of coffee.

BRIAN

Where were you going?

EDDIE

You said you were going to find the police.

BRIAN

You were leaving.

EDDIE

I wasn't - I was - just up - my hands.

BRIAN

I got you this.

EDDIE

What is it?

BRIAN

A double bourbon.

EDDIE

Really?

BRIAN

It's coffee.

EDDIE

What kind?

BRIAN

It's coffee from the machine over there.

EDDIE

Oh. I was wondering where it came from. Like is it from Ethiopia or Columbia? Columbian is okay but I don't like Latin American coffee. I like Sumatra because it's acidity -

BRIAN

Just drink it!!

EDDIE

Okay, okay.

Eddie sips, does not like it.

EDDIE

No. I can't drink this.

BRIAN

Why not?

EDDIE

I'm accustomed to a better grind. This was a coarse grind. I can taste it. Is there a Starbucks in here?

BRIAN

There isn't a Starbucks in the hospital.

EDDIE

I bet it would do very well.

BRIAN

You're ridiculous.

EDDIE

What?

BRIAN

You can't afford rent, or a clean pair of pants, but you buy expensive coffee?

EDDIE

Did you taste this? It's tepid. Weak. Blonde. It's not very good.

BRIAN

Then don't drink it. Jesus. I thought when you spoke to the police you should be more alert.

EDDIE

Could I have done what I did if I wasn't alert?

BRIAN

I guess not.

EDDIE

There was, maybe, like a moment to react. ... I did.

BRIAN

You can tell the police.

Another moment of hospital noise.

EDDIE

I'm going to pay you back. For the rent and stuff.

BRIAN

Don't worry about it.

EDDIE

You'll see. ... You know what song I have in my head?

BRIAN

What?

EDDIE

Watermelon Man. That's the song. *Watermelon Man.*

BRIAN

Herbie Hancock?

EDDIE

Buddy Guy. Or Coleman Hawkins. Or Ellington. I'm flip flopping back and forth.

BRIAN

Whatever keeps you calm.

EDDIE

That's why I could never play an instrument. The flip flopping. I couldn't control the instrument. Like the drums, I could never make what was in my head come out.

BRIAN

Things don't just "happen". You can't start something and then quit.

EDDIE

I didn't quit.

BRIAN

Maybe you weren't meant to play an instrument.

EDDIE

But I have all this stuff in my head!

BRIAN

You said there was a moment when you -

EDDIE

- If I could play the opening of *Sketches of Spain*, that would be enough. Yeah. I should take up trumpet.

BRIAN

Like the drums. Before that it was piano, and before the piano it was guitar.

EDDIE

Everyone plays guitar.

BRIAN

Not you.

EDDIE

Too many douche bags walking around with guitar cases these days. Fucking tools. ... Wish I had some coffee.

BRIAN

You're being an idiot.

EDDIE

Mr. Perfect, Mr. Perfect, Mr. Perfect.

BRIAN

What happened to painting? Weren't you splattering oil and calling it art?

EDDIE

See, that's just ignorance. I'll forgive you because you don't know any better. Every line, every scratch, every stroke, it's done for a reason.

BRIAN

Now I know.

EDDIE

You have to know composition, depth, detail. You have to know your paints before you start throwing it. You have layer. Edge. Scumble. What effect the varnish will have.

BRIAN

I only ask because I thought you enjoyed doing it.

EDDIE

Never sold anything.

BRIAN

That's not the point, is it?

EDDIE

They charge rent for a space on the sidewalk. And if you don't sell anything, you end up with canvases you have no room for. Where am I supposed to keep them?

BRIAN

Storage space?

EDDIE

I just - other artists paid me for some canvases. I'm sure they painted over, but a sale's a sale, right? ... Did you like the ones we made for you? For your apartment? Are they on your wall?

BRIAN

I'm trying to find the right spot. ... You should keep at it. Maybe try a different technique. Watercolor?

EDDIE

Jez. Say I suck first. Say, "Your paintings suck and I don't like them." Don't tell me to try watercolor.

BRIAN

Just an suggestion.

EDDIE

Have you seen watercolors lately, Bri? At street fairs? Arts festivals? Watercolors. Landscapes where half the scene is snow. Is that what you want me to do, leave half the canvas blank?

BRIAN

I'm not saying you have to do that, I'm just -

EDDIE

You can't leave half a canvas blank and call it snow, Brian! You can't take credit if you didn't do a damn thing!

BRIAN

Calm down.

EDDIE

Yeah, me and watercolor. A table at an arts and crafts fair next to some lady making pot holders and some guy making clocks out of driftwood. *"Oh Hi, Mr. Macaroni Painting Guy. See my work? It's a watercolor. A winter wonderland. Here are kids skating. Here are happy snowmen. And there is a house on a hill. And see this white canvas? It's snow. No, not canvass I haven't touched. It's Snow."* I don't want to paint that shit.

BRIAN

Then don't.

EDDIE

... Turner. I'll never put it down like that. He made real snow. Hannibal in the Alps. A train running through mist. I can't do that.

BRIAN

People dedicate their lives to an art form. You can't just pick up a brush and expect it to happen.

EDDIE

I don't have twenty years to learn what he knew at my age.

BRIAN

No one said you had to paint in the first place.

EDDIE

If I can't get what I see, what I hear out of my head, then why bother? ... You know what we need? What we need are, like, new forms. New forms. And if we can't have them, we're probably better off with nothing. ... That's like, from *The Seagull*, I think. I did that in acting class.

BRIAN

Look, I can't stay here with you. I'm on duty. I've got rounds to make. I've been up for twenty-six hours.

EDDIE

Twenty-six hours? What good are you after twenty-six hours?

BRIAN

It's the way they do it.

EDDIE

Well, that's a mistake.

BRIAN

Eddie, -

EDDIE

It is. Tell your patients you've been up for twenty-six hours. "*Hi, I'm your doctor, and I've been up for twenty-six hours.*" See how quickly they get better. You can't leave.

BRIAN

I have to work.

EDDIE

You're as much to blame as I am.

BRIAN

What are you talking about?

EDDIE

None of this would have happened if it weren't for you. I'll tell the police that.

BRIAN

Eddie, slow down.

EDDIE

You were supposed to meet her.

BRIAN

I couldn't. I called. She was already on the train.

EDDIE
I didn't want to see her.

BRIAN
There was no one else.

EDDIE
Where were you? We came by.

BRIAN
I didn't have time.

EDDIE
Are you avoiding her?

BRIAN
No.

EDDIE
Do you still do that?

BRIAN
I should have seen her but I couldn't. People need me here.

EDDIE
How convenient.

BRIAN
I'm not good - with her.

EDDIE
Real news flash, Bri. ... I didn't do anything. - There was a moment, a thought, like I could get something back. Nothing happened. ... I don't want her to die.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 4

**VILLAGE CAFE - MUCH EARLIER SAME DAY.
LATE MORNING.**

*BRIAN at a table across from LYNN.
mid 20's. His hand on top of hers.*

*They sip coffee, look at the
newspaper, comfortable enough to not
speak. Finally-*

LYNN

You like it around here?

BRIAN

It's quiet. I like that. Sort of staid, sterile, maybe a little boring. Not trying to be one thing or the other.

LYNN

Sounds like you.

BRIAN

Hooray for me. Like your new place?

LYNN

It's okay.

BRIAN

Quite a whirlwind of moving.

LYNN

I wouldn't call it "moving." Sleeping on floors, a couch here and there, my belongings scattered. I slept at work once. Said I had a project to finish. ... I hadn't planned on moving back right away. College friends with an unexpectedly cheap room to rent? Who's going to say No to that? ... Uptown's a different vibe. Different city. Families, wide sidewalks, museums.

BRIAN

You don't like it.

LYNN

It's fine. For now.

BRIAN

Uh-oh.

LYNN

The city is great. It's been fun.

BRIAN

And?

LYNN

And maybe it's not for me? Can I say that?

BRIAN

Sure.

LYNN

Granted, I've only been here three years, but everything is so needlessly competitive. Like where you drink, what taco place you're eating at, what secret clubs to you know about. All of it has to be The Best. I'm tired of trying to be "in the know." I can't read anyone else's Feed or another emailed newsletter or some snarky downtown broadsheet. I know there are other things happening here, but at this age, that's been my daily existence; trying to keep up. Remember how much we hated the mall? The city feels like a mall. People eating, walking in front of you, usually at the same time. Every street, every corner, endless examples of things you can't afford. And the worst thing about the mall? Wherever you walk, you're trying to avoid the cool kids.

BRIAN

Okay. Then where to? The good old suburbs?

Yeah, right. All the girls I went to high school with and their fancy baby strollers, making plans to go to the County Fair. Oh god, Bri. Could you imagine?

BRIAN

The Fair is foul.

LYNN

No more painful way to end the summer. Warm beer, greasy corn on the cob, endless roulette wheels to spin. ... Here's what I'm thinking: College town.

BRIAN

What? Why? What college?

LYNN

Who cares? College town. A hub of diversity, music, culture. It's all happening in a college town.

BRIAN

Drunken kids, crappy apartments, cheap food?

LYNN

Let's say, on the periphery of all that. A College town is a well of potential, nascence, optimism.

BRIAN

There are things here you can't find anywhere else.

LYNN

But do you need EVERYTHING? Like when was the last time you went to the Park?

BRIAN

Which park?

LYNN

Exactly. Besides, I won't miss anything. Everything is connected these days. ... College town.

BRIAN

And what are you going to do there?

LYNN

Work at the college??

BRIAN

Sooner or later, Lynn, you've got to -

LYNN

Fuck, Brian! Stop undermining. I'm thinking out loud. Don't figure it out for me. It's my journey. I'll figure it out. On my own. ... What about you, Bri?

BRIAN

What about me?

LYNN

Have you figured it out yet?

BRIAN

I'm trying.

LYNN

Really? You made the decision to come here, to this particular cafe, didn't you?

BRIAN

So?

LYNN

Look where you sit.

BRIAN

There's always a table out back.

LYNN

Away from everyone.

BRIAN

Doesn't mean anything.

LYNN

Oh come on.

BRIAN

It doesn't.

LYNN

You're not one thing or the other back here.

BRIAN

I'm not trying to be.

LYNN

Hovering, hanging around the periphery, never committing.

BRIAN

How do you know?

LYNN

Am I wrong?

BRIAN

It's none of your business.

LYNN

Am I??

BRIAN

We're not here to talk -

LYNN

About you? But it's okay to talk about me? I bet you sit in back all the time. Observing. Philosophizing.

BRIAN

Hadrian, the philosopher king.

LYNN

Waiting for your Antinous.

BRIAN

Tossing him into the Nile when I'm finished.

LYNN

Sounds like a good TV show. The man constantly tossing ex-lovers overboard.

BRIAN

I don't like boats.

LYNN

You do fall in love too easily. Maggie Butler.

BRIAN

I assumed when someone does that to you, you have to say I Love You.

LYNN

Julie Catalino.

BRIAN

Breasts.

LYNN

The Rack of Gibraltar.

BRIAN

It's a bit confusing. Like some new diet I'm supposed to adhere to now. *You can have that, but not those.*

LYNN

Imagine what a women like Julie would do to get a man like you now.

BRIAN

I don't think that's what I need.

LYNN

Who says you can't go home again? Your choice.

BRIAN

Like sitting up front? At the window on the sidewalk?

(gazes up towards the cafe's
front room)

Look at them. Like puppies at a pet store. Amped up little things hoping to lure a potential buyer.

LYNN

Doesn't have to be a transaction.

BRIAN

Isn't it always?

LYNN

Build that wall, Hadrian. Keep those barbarians away.

BRIAN

Thing is you can't just build a wall. You have to live behind it. At some point you will have people on your side.

LYNN

You're a doctor and a misanthrope?

BRIAN

Hospital is different. People come in, they don't want to be there. They're sick, injured, vulnerable, helpless. More often than not, I can do something about that. It's a great feeling to be there for them.

(jokingly)

Except those cancer patients, some real assholes there.

LYNN

You nasty bastard.

BRIAN

But I'm not a bad doctor. You have money for another move?

LYNN

If I work for a bit. Save. I'm not spending much right now. ... I'm going to pay you back.

BRIAN

Do it when you can. ... I should go. It's a long shift. Normally at this hour, I take a nap.

LYNN

We could have done this another time.

BRIAN

I wanted to see you. Could you do me a favor?

LYNN

Don't ask me to pick up dry-cleaning.

BRIAN

I wish I had clothes to dry clean. ... I invited mother for dinner. Low and behold she said YES.

LYNN

No way.

BRIAN

I know, right? I made plans ages ago and now, I can't. This shift. Please. Can you meet up with her?

LYNN

Just like that?

BRIAN

Does there need to be some grand reconciliation? A peace accord? Versailles??? Meet her, have dinner. I'll pay. Hang out until I get off work.

LYNN

I choose when that's going happen.

BRIAN

She was so excited to be included again.

LYNN

I'm sure she has. You've been conveniently "too busy" for her the last eight years. The only reason she's been EXCLUDED with me is because she's an overbearing ogre.

BRIAN

She's only wants good things.

LYNN

Does she accept you?

BRIAN

I can't tell her to go home.

LYNN

That's your fault.

BRIAN

She took your side, you know? She defended you.

LYNN

Only once you told her what happened.

BRIAN

It was better she knew why you left. Please.

LYNN

NO.

BRIAN

There are not endless opportunities to rectify things, Lynn. A life. There's all that comes before, which is all gobbly gook and confusing and filled with grievances, gripes, grudges, mistakes stretched across years. But there's nothing but the infinite after.

LYNN

Pretty flowery for you, Bri. Is she dying?

BRIAN

No. We're all on limited time. I see that at the hospital. Every day I watch someone rip their eyes out, wish they had one more day, one more hour. That ruddy face alcoholic. Some truly innocent felled by a simple virus. Whatever the cause, they're there, at the same place, wishing for the same thing. All these people. The end nothing but a series of regrets. And it pisses me off.

LYNN

Can you really have an opinion about that?

BRIAN

Yes. There are things in this life we do control.

LYNN

Thanks for the coffee. Go get a nap. I do not understand those doctor hours.

LYNN prepares to leave.

BRIAN

It's a bar on Irving Place. Five. Five-thirty. I'll come over as soon as I can.

LYNN
... What about Eddie?

BRIAN
What about him?

LYNN
You talk to him, don't you?

BRIAN
Sometimes. Sometimes he needs money.

LYNN
I don't want to know.

BRIAN
You asked.

LYNN
Why don't you ask Eddie?

BRIAN
I hadn't thought of it.

LYNN
You should. ... I hate that was my suggestion. Habit. I never liked that in such a short period of time he and I were so linked. Names interchangeable. *If you can't get Lynn, ask Eddie.* Too much, too soon. Lessons. By the end thought, I almost felt like I had to stay with him because the two of you liked him.

BRIAN
No one said you had to.

LYNN
Did you?

BRIAN
What?

LYNN
Like him?

BRIAN
Lynn....

LYNN
I mean, with mom, she was close to him because it meant she had a link to me. And you, you just sort of liked him.

BRIAN
He's more - younger brother material.

LYNN

Right. ... Not to talk about him.

BRIAN

But...

LYNN

I couldn't watch him self-destruct every other week.

BRIAN

Someone trying to figure themselves out. You never know how that plays out.

LYNN

With you, I'm still waiting. For Eddie, it meant self-injury.

BRIAN

What?

LYNN

Wasn't it obvious? That first time we came to see you? We said he fell, broke his hand? Punched a fire escape window. His nose? Not skateboarding. Confronted a dealer in the park for no good reason. Got his ass beat. It became a trend. An outlet. A release.

BRIAN

It wasn't obvious. Was he violent? He never hit you, did he?

LYNN

No. But it became part of the process. His process. That delirium that washed over him with every new idea. The plans he'd start to make. That freaking ridiculous hyper-intensity and focus. Every time I'd get sucked in. How could he not be on the precipice of something great, some burst of creative freedom set to change his life? I wanted that for him. I really did. He made me believe every time. He could just - do things, things out of the ordinary. He came home with this electric keyboard one day, stayed up with it all night with earphones on. He was playing a Paul McCartney song by the morning. Just like that. He did that all the time. He'd figured something out, like he was born to do it. And then something didn't happen the way he thought, he'd get frustrated, junk it all, and the bottom would drop out. ... Maybe towards the end, I was scared, Bri. I thought, if I break up, I'll be taking away the one thing he was sure he figured out. ... I don't feel guilty. I regret how long I waited. But I don't blame him. He wasn't the root of my ennui. Twenty-five, crappy job, living with someone? All my own doing. ... Wish I had had a wall. ... My life was so underwhelming, so not what I wanted, I existed in a bubble. I'd engage less and less. I didn't talk much.

(MORE)

LYNN (cont.)

At night, I began plotting this other life I'd live one day and it was glorious. Like being fifteen again, imagining how great life would be. Was it better to move out in spring or fall? Should I find an apartment first? Do I have money for a deposit? Did I need to buy a car? If I needed a car, what sort of car did I see myself in? Fun stuff. I started to go to bed earlier and earlier. Sounds sad, but as soon as I hatched this inchoate plan, the light at the end of the tunnel, a page of my life turned. I could feel it. A flip of the page felt like a monsoon. I was young woman again, one with boundless potential. ... And then I'd feel his leg against mine. A stray hand. Easily *de-rectified*. He didn't have a clue. Thought we still were connecting. I regret I played along, but honestly, maybe I needed to feel as lost as I did to make the change.

BRIAN

... Things don't always work out.

LYNN

They do for you.

BRIAN

But I'm the guy who sits in the back of the cafe?

LYNN

Recognition is progress. ...

LYNN gets up, readies to go.

BRIAN

He should know. Lynn? You have every right to be out, on your own, feeling good about yourself. You're too young to feel trapped, to be trapped. You're too young to not like who you are. It was the right choice and I fully support it. But he should know the truth.

Lynn exits.

BRIAN at the table. Noise from the cafe. He looks up front.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 5

THE HOSPITAL - LATER

Noise from the ER.

BRIAN has returned from a shift. He sits across from EDDIE.

Eddie stares down at his shirt.

BRIAN

I can find you some clothes. A shirt.

EDDIE

Where from??

BRIAN

Oh. Yeah. The used selection here isn't great. Maybe you're fine.

EDDIE

Blood's all over, huh? ... She'll be okay?

BRIAN

We'll see.

EDDIE

You don't know any better than the rest of us, do you?

BRIAN

You're right. The last ten years of my life have been an utter waste. Want these scrubs?

EDDIE

She came to see you. Not me.

It was a pretty small favor to ask.

EDDIE

None of my business anymore. I have problems of my own.

BRIAN

Name one.

EDDIE

Everything. Everything that makes me think.

After a moment, BRIAN laughs.

BRIAN

Well then stop thinking. ... "Everything that makes me think." *I'm so intense my brain hurts.* ... I haven't - laughed like that - thanks. ... You were a last resort.

EDDIE
 Fuck you too. Mr. Perfect.

BRIAN
 I have to go.

EDDIE
 So do I.

BRIAN
You have to talk to the police.

EDDIE
 I'm tired of sitting here.

BRIAN
 Talk to the cops. Then you're freed to go play trumpet or fiddle or paint. Go buy a typewriter. They're cheap these days. An old Olivetti.

EDDIE
 I wrote a screenplay.

BRIAN
 I bet you did. Fifty pages before you gave up??

EDDIE
 I'm leaving.

BRIAN
 No, you're not. Sit. Wait.

EDDIE
 I hate hospitals.

A moment.

EDDIE
 Haven't been in a hospital in ages. ... Not even a clinic. ... They vacuumed it. Did you know that's how they do it?

BRIAN
 Lower your voice.

EDDIE
 She said she put it on a credit card. I didn't know you could put something like that on a credit card.

BRIAN
 I can't talk about this right now. ... It's unfortunate.

EDDIE
 Is that what it is? Unfortunate? Gee, I couldn't find the word. Let's ask the over-educated doctor. *UNFORTUNATE.*

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont.)

An unfortunate event. Like a tornado through a trailer park. Unfortunate. Can't do much about it.

BRIAN

You're focusing on one thing. Deal with the whole.

EDDIE

I didn't run away!

BRIAN

And now you have to move on.

EDDIE

Just like that?? My god. I knew you were the cold, Stoic type, but that's - wow. ... Sorry to say, I'm having a tough time with it, Doc. Who knows? Could have been the one meaningful thing I've created. ... I'm sure you knew, right? How is it I didn't? Or have a say? She comes home and tells me that. Like she stopped to have her teeth cleaned.

BRIAN

Lower your voice.

EDDIE

And if that wasn't bad enough, we agree to not talk about it. With anyone. I bring it up, she shuts me down. ... Bet she told your mom.

BRIAN

That's their fight. Has nothing to do with you.

EDDIE

It had everything to do with me. How was I supposed to face her when she knew that?

BRIAN

We can talk about this later?

EDDIE

It's the first time I'm allowed to talk about it with anyone. She shuts me out. I give her space. I get out of town for the day. I come back and she's gone, Bri. I didn't think people actually did that. Just leave?? I get that it was hard on her, emotional, but that's when we should have come together to and -

BRIAN

That's how she dealt with it.

EDDIE

No word. No note. No idea where she was. I'm dealing with that and your mother starts calling, asking where she is. Starts telling me I'm the one who scared her daughter away. I'm the one who ruined their relationship. Where were you?

BRIAN

I was here.

EDDIE

Right. Can't bother the doctor. I couldn't even go to work. I thought employers were all about social and emotional well-being these days. I tell them my girlfriend left town and I got laid off.

BRIAN

You sure that's the reason?

EDDIE

Whatever. Wasn't a great time to be unemployed and alone.

BRIAN

It was unfor -

EDDIE

No, no, no. That can't be unfortunate. We already have something unfortunate. ... I don't want her to die.

BRIAN

(exasperated)

She won't. She shouldn't. I don't know.

EDDIE

That lack of sleep is killing you, doc.

Noise from the hospital.

BRIAN

You did a good job. Eddie? Seriously. Getting her here. Getting her here as quickly as you did.

EDDIE

I didn't hurt her?

BRIAN

You did what you did when you did it. The husband said two cars just missed you.

EDDIE

It's a blur. I was more scared than anything else.

BRIAN

But you got her here.

EDDIE

But I didn't cause it.

BRIAN

No one said you did.

EDDIE

It was hot. It's that nail salon. They shouldn't use florescent lights. Floors get so hot. I complain but no one does anything about it. I was making tea.

BRIAN

You made tea?

EDDIE

It was almost nice. She kept hounding me.

BRIAN

She does that.

EDDIE

I threw something.

BRIAN

... Did you hit her?

EDDIE

I'm not sure -

BRIAN

It hit her or it didn't.

She looks like Lynn, you know?

BRIAN

Eddie??

EDDIE

Lynn in thirty years. That was nice. To be with Lynn again. ... Yeah, I threw the kettle. But I was sorry. I really was. I ran over, to make sure I didn't hit her - and it was Lynn. There she was. In her chair. Lynn's corner. There she was. I didn't realize I did it. It just happened. To have her back. There she was. I caressed her face....

BRIAN

Jesus christ!

EDDIE

I caught myself, Bri. I did. I mean, at first it was everything I wanted, but - - but I caught myself. Okay? I pulled my hand away and that should have been that.

BRIAN

But what?

EDDIE

It's not like she wanted me to continue. I didn't want to continue. But there was - something. I don't know.

(MORE)

EDDIE (cont.)

Disappointment? Rejection? She was off. Down the stairs. I chased after her.

BRIAN

Why didn't you tell me this before?

EDDIE

Because the two things - how am I'm supposed to be able to process all that so quickly? She's out the door, running barefoot in the middle of the street. Up Thirteenth. Past Kiehl's. You'd figure she'd stop. Onto Third Avenue. Traffic both ways. The movie theater. She avoided a bus, and then a taxi and then -

BRIAN

The car.

EDDIE

Young couple. Having a night. Crazy lady streaks in front, he cuts the wheel. Car hops the curb, smashes the lamppost. Glass shatters. The woman somehow half-way out the passenger window; a broken doll I'm suddenly running for. She fell into my arms. Right when I got there, I caught her. ... I didn't hurt her getting here, did I?

BRIAN

You and that cab driver. She might have died waiting for an ambulance.

EDDIE

Okay. Good. ... After the horns and tires screeching and the sound of metal smashing, she kept running. It could have been me. I could have been the one hit. She'd never know.

BRIAN

Maybe she didn't hear it. She's probably on the train home.

EDDIE

... For a little while, it was nice. Seeing her again. The bar. The apartment. Her in that corner. Things were okay.

*Brian digests it all, ready to
extricate himself from it all.*

BRIAN

Eddie? I have to get back. Okay? Talk to the police. Go get some coffee. Do you have money?

EDDIE

Some.

BRIAN

Here's -

EDDIE
- No. I told you last time -

BRIAN
Take it. Get coffee. It'll be fine.

BRIAN hands him some bills.

EDDIE
Will it?

BRIAN
Let me get the police. Don't run away.

EDDIE
I won't.

BRIAN
I'm not giving you money for you to walk out.

EDDIE
I won't.

BRIAN
Good.

EDDIE
... I'm pathetic, huh?

BRIAN
Sometimes. And sometimes you're less at fault than you think. Sometimes you can hero and villain.

Brian sees "YM" on Eddie's t-shirt.

BRIAN
YM. "Young Man." HA. She tried that with me. Works for you, huh? Helped you do what you did tonight. ... I'll send them in? The police?

EDDIE
I'm ready.

Brian starts to exit, but stops.

BRIAN
Hey. Listen.

EDDIE
What?

BRIAN
You should know. By now. You should know by now.

EDDIE

What?

BRIAN

I'd like to think you'll understand. It's important to take it for what it is. To understand what's behind it.

EDDIE

Behind what??

BRIAN

... It never happened. Okay? Lynn. Her "procedure."

EDDIE

It never - ???

BRIAN

Happened. There was a moment she thought she was. That freaked her out. She came to see me. I've never seen her like that. We took the test together. She was crying, dry heaving, and then she wasn't. It was negative. Okay?

EDDIE

Negative.

BRIAN

Right. And after that, after being so freaked out, I guess she decided it would be her excuse, a way out. I didn't know. It was a childish thing to do, it was wrong but that's what she did.

EDDIE

She did it just to leave me?

BRIAN

Yes. You understand? It's fucked up, but - Okay? Felt wrong you not knowing. This will work out. ... You know what? I'll get off this shift. Say I'm sick. Say my mother is running around the city. We can talk. Get a beer. Laugh. I need that. Some days, in here, you question everything. ... I'll be back. You'll talk to the police.

BRIAN exits.

EDDIE waits. After a minute, he gets up, counts the money, exits.

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 5

PETE'S BAR. LATE NIGHT.

CHARLES behind the bar. If there are other customers, we can't see them. There's talk from darkened nooks and corners of the bar; a den of drunken late-night laughter and furtive mutual groping.

Eddie enters, a bruised eye, a beaten up face. Combined with the blood from earlier, he's a total mess.

CHARLES
What the hell happened to you?

EDDIE
Nothing ever happens to me.

CHARLES
Okay. ... What do you want?

EDDIE
I'd like a beer.

CHARLES
You're kidding?

EDDIE
No. A beer sounds right.

Charles gets him a beer. Eddie sips. The drink stings.

CHARLES
Okay?

EDDIE
Game on?

CHARLES
West coast maybe. I can check. ... What happened?

EDDIE
No bun in the oven. No tyke up the dyke. You should drink with me.

CHARLES
Pay for that beer first.

Eddie pulls out money, pays.

CHARLES

How do you have money?

EDDIE

I just do. ... I used to buy stuff downtown, go to Mid-town, resell it at a higher price. I used to do that.

CHARLES

Do that tonight?

EDDIE

I tried. I didn't know the turf anymore. Wound up on someone's corner.

CHARLES

They took your stuff?

EDDIE

But for some reason, not my money. Whole new breed of dealer out there these days.

CHARLES

You're more of an idiot than I thought.

EDDIE

Ain't that the truth.

CHARLES

All this time, you were one of those skin-poppers in my bathroom?

EDDIE

No. But I did sell it here. Okay. I'm coming clean. I took advantage of your good graces and I sold here.

CHARLES

Son of a bitch.

EDDIE

But I never did it. I thought about it. Felt like the coolest thing in the world. *"That Spoon, That Spoon, That Spoonful..."* It's the last Merit Badge living downtown. The "I did Smack" badge. You were part of the cool crowd, somehow tied to Miles Davis.

CHARLES

All this time, I had no idea you were doing that shit.

EDDIE

No no no. You're not listening. I never did. I sold. ... What's it take?

CHARLES

To do what?

EDDIE

To put up with - I don't know, everything.

CHARLES

Patience.

EDDIE

That's it?

CHARLES

Boy-o, you have no idea.

EDDIE

What's patience?

CHARLES

A crowded elevator at eight fifty-five in the morning. The subway was hot. You've walked through a sea of people into your building with a cup of coffee and some muffin. Your tie itches. You're sweating. You're standing there, scanning the monitors, watching the cars up and down. A crowd forming behind you. There wasn't a crowd a couple seconds ago. A couple seconds ago you thought you'd have a moment to yourself, to get ready for the day. You imagine that just once you'll get into an empty car, the doors will close and zip into some mediative state. Now there are people behind you. This elevator will be packed. The next one will be packed because at this hour they're always packed. You don't want to come to the office any later because it's your job, and you don't want to come in any earlier because it's your life. So you wait. You get in, shuffle to the back. You look ahead. And you drift off. It's eight fifty-five in the morning and all you can thinking about is the end of the day. That's patience.

EDDIE

I don't have any of that.

CHARLES

Neither did I neither.

EDDIE

Now that I confessed to selling, you want me to leave?

CHARLES

... You're alright.

EDDIE

I'm not a dad. Let's celebrate. To being a proper citizen.

CHARLES

You're going to be Mayor!

EDDIE

I'm going to find a rich lady.

CHARLES

Ain't life great?

EDDIE

Sometimes I want to stick a fork in my gut.

CHARLES

Bury that. Got me?? I don't have patience for that.

CHARLES turns back to the television.

EDDIE

West Coast baseball. I hope it goes extra innings.

BRIAN at the doorway. Scrubs under a long coat. He scans the bar, spots Eddie, turns back, yells...

BRIAN

Officer. He's in - My mistake. He's not here.

BRIAN closes the door and enters. He takes his time walking in.

CHARLES

Hey, doc? It hurts when I do this.

BRIAN

Don't do that.

CHARLES

That's the right answer. You'd like a beer, wouldn't you?

BRIAN

That'd be great.

CHARLES

That's what I thought. I know people.

Charles opens a bottle, slides it over.

Brian sits.

BRIAN

... She's happy. If that means anything. It should. ... We speak more now. I'm a daily phone call. We never did that growing up. We shared plenty, but now, to have a mature relationship with Lynn? I didn't expect to have that. Should thank you. Through that one traumatic experience -

EDDIE

Almost traumatic.

BRIAN

Right. Whatever. Through that, we're closer. I like that she's happy. You still have to talk to the police.

CHARLES

Police?? Goddamn, kid, what the hell did you do?

MIRANDA enters. She's come full circle, past the point of drunk to sober again. She gamely tries to fix her hair, her scarf, etc.

Brian gets up, starts towards her. Miranda puts up a hand, stops him cold.

MIRANDA

No. I'm fine.

Brian sits again.

Miranda comes over to the bar, further down.

Charles comes over.

MIRANDA

They didn't wait.

CHARLES

Who?

MIRANDA

These kids - young people. There's this bar on University. A place we used to see Pollack, De Kooning, Mailer. I used to be so fascinated by that. These artists and the women hanging around them do they might be misrepresented in print, on canvases. I'd been running and there I was in front of that bar. I had to walk in. Crowded. Not with painters or writers. Just kids. Obnoxious kids. Entitled kids. I bet we must have been obnoxious too. I don't really mind loud conversation. As long as it's interesting. Young people can be interesting. So many things happening, so much about to happen. I stood by myself. Listened in. Waited for a little taste of what their lives were like. This crowd wasn't interesting. It was all pop culture, clothes, sports. I needed to use the lady's room. I asked this group if they would watch my bag. ... There was this girl in ladies room. She propped up against the wall like a post-it note. As I entered she stumbled, staggered, attempted to get sick in the sink. Dreadful sound. Retching. The trick is to not panic. The body knows what it's doing. It's the same advice for child birth. I didn't want to help her. Her big watery eyes filled up and I'm forever a sucker. Poor girl.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (cont.)

Dressed up as well as she could. Looked more slutty than stylish. Maybe in a few years she'll be making money, exposed to culture, style. Or maybe she'll be married before she acquires any sense of herself. She'll miss that big window meant only for her to experience. Those vital things you need to learn. That happens. It's what you give up - well, one of the things you give up. ... She was breathing awkwardly, kept ingesting loose ends. I brought her to the toilet, knelt beside her, pulled her hair back, talked her through it. She cried. Called me "Mommy". After about ten minutes she stood up. Some water on her face, some makeup out of her bag, and the evening continued. I advised against it, but there was no stopping her. I wiped the last bit of foulness from her cheek. I told her there was nothing the world desires more than a young woman. A young woman has the world at her feet. I think she liked that. Some inner light clicked back on. Out she went. ... No one watching my purse. It was still there, on the bar stool right where I left it, but that group of young people didn't stay until I returned. No one was watching it. They said they'd wait!

CHARLES

Can I get you something?

MIRANDA

I went out of my way to assist one of them, and yet they couldn't do me the decency of waiting. Children don't have permission to move on without telling you. Not after the sacrifice, the nurture, the faith you put in them. You know they're going to stumble, vomit, cry, but you know they'll be fine. And they are fine because of all you've done. ... After twenty-five years, you aren't FREE to do whatever you want. You can't skip off because you're young, or having fun, or you're in love. The people in your life, no matter what they did, or who they've become, you have to deal with them. ...

(to Brian)

You can't guess how I'd react, how I'd respond. I'm only as disappointed as you are. I'm only disappointed when you are. I just want to be part of it.

Charles offers her water.

BRIAN

I had to work.

MIRANDA

How convenient.

EDDIE

That's what I said.

BRIAN

There was an accident.

MIRANDA

I know. I'll deal with that later.

BRIAN

You can do that right now. The two of you.

EDDIE

He just doesn't get it.

MIRANDA

Eddie, please.

CHARLES

What we have here, is a failure to communicate.

MIRANDA

I've never had to worry about you, Brian.

BRIAN

Didn't mean I liked being ignored.

MIRANDA

Sure. Fine. I want a grandchild. I hate being old.

(to Eddie)

I'm free to not care what happens now. But I do.

(to both)

... I just want a corner. A coign of vantage to watch your lives from. ... I'm talking too much.

BRIAN

I have a spare bedroom.

MIRANDA

Did you hear that, Charles? My son is inviting me to see his apartment.

CHARLES

Good news.

Brian and Miranda get up to leave.

EDDIE

(to Miranda)

You knew she wasn't?

MIRANDA

I'm sorry you didn't know.

EDDIE

... What happened - earlier... I miss her and -

MIRANDA

Stop. ... I remember me at Lynn's age. I remember the mistakes. There's that look, the stare. Men watching me in Washington Square, following me down MacDougal.

(MORE)

MIRANDA (cont.)

All of them wanting me. Alive; strong, powerful. Anything was possible. ... I had my time. ... It's a solo journey. Discovery of self. It scares most. Some people don't take the time. Some never try. But if you're to do it, no one can do it for you.... So, Young Man, what are you going to do now?

EDDIE

I don't know.

MIRANDA

Maybe that's okay.

Outside the bar, LYNN's silhouette. She had considered going inside, but doesn't. Her shadow walks away.

Brian and Miranda at the door.

Charles gets Eddie another beer.

LIGHTS DOWN.

THE END.