

**MORTAL SOIL**

**"Green Street"**

A full length play

By

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## **MORTAL SOIL**

### **“Green Street”**

## **CHARACTERS**

MARGIE CURRAN-HICKS, 64: Working class, Bostonian female. Also appears at ages from 12 to 53.

DOTTIE CURRAN: Margie’s mother. Appears at ages from 43 to 99.

KATHY HANLON, 35: Margie’s daughter.

SHALISE MONCRIEF, 33: Kathy’s partner. African-American female.

NIKI HANLON, 16: Kathy’s daughter.

MARK, 17: Australian. Voice from a smartphone.

## **TIME AND SETTING**

Present.

Green Street in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston.

Saturday, early spring afternoon.

## MORTAL SOIL

### “Green Street”

*April 23rd, Saturday, 1:37PM.*

AT RISE We discover the living room of the bottom unit of a three-family house in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts.

A hallway leads off stage right. The front door is stage left. A door upstage that leads to a bedroom is ajar. From within we hear the DEEP, CHRONIC MOANING of an elderly woman.

Next to the door is a parked walker, which along with the worn furnishings (couch, arm chair, two smaller chairs, a cabinet featuring a collection of snow globes, a small desk, card table, television, etc.) indicates an elderly resident. A folded comforter and pillow are stacked on the card table.

A rumpled-looking MARGIE CURRAN-HICKS (age 22 in the early1970s), wearing a saggy, cotton, sweat suit, ENTERS from the bedroom in an agitated state.

MARGIE

I'm done with you!

THE MOANING STOPS.

After a beat, DOTTIE CURRAN (at age 56 in the early1970s) ENTERS from the bedroom. Dottie wears her hair long and sports a black jump suit with flared pants. She's SMOKING.

*NOTE: When Margie speaks to Dottie, we are experiencing Margie's memory. Therefore, Margie assumes the age she was at the time.*

*In all other scenes she is her current age (64).  
No one but Margie can see or converse with  
Dottie in these memories.*

I'm just having one.	DOTTIE
...after another.	MARGIE
It's my first of the day.	DOTTIE
You're not supposed to be smoking at all.	MARGIE
Stop worrying for Chrissake!	DOTTIE
You promised the doctor.	MARGIE
I'll say an extra Hail Mary.	DOTTIE
Why would you lie to him?	MARGIE
I don't like his face.	DOTTIE
He saved your life.	MARGIE
Take a cold shower, will you? He was doing his job, nothing more.	DOTTIE
You sure it wasn't a heart transplant? Maybe you're walking around with Nixon's pumper.	MARGIE
And maybe he's got mine.	DOTTIE

MARGIE

I'm not sure who's better off.

DOTTIE

Him, if he's getting laid.

MARGIE

Stop.

DOTTIE

I feel great. I could run the marathon.

MARGIE

That's pretty bold talk for someone with half a lung.

DOTTIE

Oh, didn't I tell you? I'm living to a hundred.

MARGIE

I'll alert the press. And why are you wearing pants?

DOTTIE

They're comfortable.

MARGIE

It's your husband's funeral.

DOTTIE

He won't care.

MARGIE

Put on a dress.

DOTTIE

I want to show off my figure. That okay with you?

MARGIE

You're not seriously looking, are you?

DOTTIE

Third time's a charm.

MARGIE

If only you were charming.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Margie stiffens.

Margie CROSSES with hesitation to the door and peers through the peep hole. She takes a moment then OPENS IT, revealing KATHY HANLON (35), her easily frazzled daughter.

Kathy ENTERS quickly, passing Dottie, who EXITS unseen into the upstage bedroom.

KATHY

Why aren't you answering your phone?

Margie stares curiously at SHALISE MONCRIEF (33), an educated, African-American woman with dreads.

MARGIE

Been busy. Why are you here?

KATHY

Trying to find out what's going on. Are you okay?

(no answer, turning to her)

Mom?

(sudden realization)

Oh, this is Shalise.

SHALISE

Pleased to finally meet you. Sorry it couldn't be under better circumstances.

(picking up a vibe)

Something wrong?

MARGIE

Nope. Any problems on your end?

SHALISE

Not really.

MARGIE

Then, we're good.

SHALISE  
(realization, to Kathy)

Where's Niki?

Kathy shakes her head ruefully, EXITS back out the front door.

Shortly, she RETURNS with NIKI HANLON (16), four piercings in her ears. Her face is buried in her phone.

What were you doing out there?

KATHY

Mark and I are fighting.

NIKI

Niki's phone DINGS. She reads the text, scowls, prepares to respond.

Put it away.

KATHY

Let me just....

NIKI

Kathy reaches for Niki's phone, but Niki quickly slips it into her shoulder bag and skips around her.

I have to pee.

NIKI

Niki, having palmed her phone, pulls it out and continues TEXTING as she EXITS offstage.

How's Grandma?

KATHY  
(to Margie)

Dying.

MARGIE

Like right this minute?

KATHY

Like for months

MARGIE

Is she close?

KATHY

Who knows?

MARGIE

Is her breathing shallow?

KATHY

One can only hope.

MARGIE

I better check.

KATHY  
(concerned)

Kathy EXITS into the upstage bedroom, leaving Margie and Shalise alone. They abide each other uncomfortably for a bit.

When'd you move back in?

SHALISE

Three months ago.

MARGIE

That's admirable.

SHALISE

Hasn't been easy.

MARGIE

Have you been able to work?

SHALISE

No.

MARGIE

You manage the CVS in Hyde Square, right?

SHALISE



MARGIE

I'm on a leave of absence.

SHALISE

I asked Kathy about end of life care, but....

MARGIE

It was a non-starter.

SHALISE

That's what she said.

MARGIE

"I don't want to be in a place where people die." That was my mother's defense.

SHALISE

People die everywhere.

MARGIE

You try and argue with a ninety-nine year old.

Kathy RE-ENTERS.

KATHY

She's close. Mom, go sit with her.

MARGIE

What do you think I've been doing?

KATHY

Okay, so we'll alternate. Have you eaten?

MARGIE

No.

KATHY

We brought pizza. No one wants to cook, right?

MARGIE

Where is it?

KATHY

What?

MARGIE

The pizza.

KATHY  
(to Shalise, astonished)

Shit, it's in the car!

SHALISE

I thought you had it.

KATHY  
I did. And then I didn't. What's wrong with me? I can't remember anything anymore.

MARGIE  
You don't know how lucky you are.

DOTTIE (At age 79 in the mid 1990s) ENTERS  
from the upstage bedroom, wearing a neon jump  
suit.

During the scene, she CROSSES to the desk,  
opens the top drawer, pulls out a LIGHTER  
AND A PACK OF CIGARETTES, POPS ONE  
OUT, flicks open the flame, LIGHTS IT and  
SMOKES.

DOTTIE  
(to Margie)  
What's wrong with your daughter?

SHALISE  
(to Kathy)  
Give me the keys. I'll get it.

DOTTIE  
(to Margie)  
She's neurotic as hell.

KATHY  
(to Shalise)  
No, I'll go.

DOTTIE  
(to Margie)  
Temperature's got to be just right.

KATHY  
(to Shalise)

You can come with me.

DOTTIE  
(to Margie)

She won't eat anything but pizza.

Kathy and Shalise cross to the front door.

KATHY  
(to Margie)

It's hot in here, Mom. Can you turn it down?

Kathy and Shalise EXIT.

DOTTIE

What'd you do to her? She's a mess.

MARGIE  
(at age 45)

She came out that way.

DOTTIE

The girl needs a father.

MARGIE

Don't go there.

DOTTIE

Someone to ground her.

MARGIE

Into what? I've had four. Do I look better off for it?

DOTTIE

They all liked you.

MARGIE

While they were here. They don't last very long.

DOTTIE

They can't keep up.

MARGIE

You wear them out.

DOTTIE  
I saw Chelsea Clinton on the news. She's sixteen, but she holds herself like a woman.

MARGIE  
She lives in the White House.

DOTTIE  
It's been eleven years, Margie.

MARGIE  
But who's counting?

DOTTIE  
Is this about Brian? Because if you're looking for another version of him....

MARGIE  
I'm open to marrying again.

DOTTIE  
Yeah, I don't see it.

MARGIE  
Pickings are thin.

DOTTIE  
Well, let me give you an incentive. A pint of Haagen Daz and a dildo. That's your future as a single.

MARGIE  
I don't want to be alone. No one does.

DOTTIE  
Well, then pump up the volume.

MARGIE  
Yes, Grandmaster.

DOTTIE  
And shave your legs.

Niki ENTERS from off, passes Dottie.

NIKI  
Where'd they go?

Dottie EXITS unseen into the upstage bedroom.

MARGIE

Your mother forgot the pizza.

NIKI

Of course. Have you met Mark?

Niki hands her phone to Margie, who locates  
Mark's face on the screen.

MARK

(a VOICE from the phone)

Hello.

NIKI

(to Mark in the phone)

This is my Grandma.

MARGIE

I thought you were fighting.

NIKI

Yeah, like five minutes ago.

MARGIE

Mark, I'm going to be quick. Niki's Great Grandma is passing. When we're on the other side of this, I'll have you over.

NIKI

(amused)

I don't think so.

MARK

(from the phone)

I live in Melbourne.

NIKI

Australia. We met playing Minecraft.

MARGIE

How long have you been....?

MARK

(from the phone)

Four months, two weeks and nine days.

NIKI  
(delighted)

Oh, you!

MARGIE  
Have you ever seen each other's feet?

NIKI  
I don't think so.

MARK  
(from the phone)  
Here.

Mark has apparently adjusted the angle of his phone. Niki looks on with Margie.

NIKI  
Oh my God, you have Vans! I so love you now.

MARK  
(from the phone)  
Let me guess. You're barefoot.

NIKI  
I wish. My Mom's afraid I'll get Lyme disease.

MARK  
(from the phone)  
Are limes dangerous, because we have a tree in our back....?

Mark's VOICE IS CUT OFF.

NIKI  
Shit!

Niki takes her phone back from Margie, checks.

NIKI  
No bars.

MARGIE  
The Collusso's must be rewiring their unit. I thought they were going to wait.

NIKI

There's no way I'm staying here now.

MARGIE

Don't you have cell service?

NIKI

Mom makes me pay for it.

Margie crosses to the cabinet and begins gathering up the snow globes.

MARGIE

Here. Take these with you.

NIKI

Great Gran's snow globes?

MARGIE

You told me you liked them.

NIKI

When I was four.

MARGIE

It'll help you remember her. I'll get a bag.

Margie starts to leave.

NIKI

No, just give me Jesus on the Mount...and Goofy.

Margie selects both, crosses back, tries to hand them to her.

NIKI

(changing her mind)

Never mind. I'll wait.

MARGIE

C'mon.

NIKI

She's still alive!

MARGIE

If you want to call it that.

NIKI

Later, Grandma. It's too weird now.

Margie returns the items to the cabinet.

MARGIE

But, I want you to have them, okay?

NIKI

Sure.

MARGIE

And give your mother a break.

NIKI

I try. She's so needy.

MARGIE

Still?

NIKI

She's better since she met Shalise.

MARGIE

What do you think of her?

NIKI

She's nice.

MARGIE

Are they serious?

NIKI

I think so.

MARGIE

I bet your father has an opinion.

NIKI

He calls our house Pussy Park.



MARGIE

He should shut up. He ruined her for men.

NIKI

I don't know. Maybe this is the way it should have always been for her.

MARGIE

Then you wouldn't have been born.

NIKI

Yeah, check that.

Kathy and Shalise ENTER from outside.  
Shalise is carrying a large pizza box.

KATHY

I also left the car unlocked.

NIKI

Bet it's cold now.

SHALISE

I'll heat it up.

(to Margie)

Kitchen?

MARGIE

Down the hall. Thanks.

Shalise EXITS S.R. with the pizza box.

KATHY

Why's it still hot in here?

MARGIE

I like it that way.

KATHY

Go ahead, torture me. I know you enjoy it.

MARGIE

Who's making you stay?

MOANING from the bedroom.

MARGIE  
(regarding the sound)

Shit!

KATHY  
That doesn't sound good. Is she in pain?

MARGIE  
Hard to tell? She hasn't spoken in a week.

KATHY  
Maybe you should give her Vicodin or something.

MARGIE  
Maybe you should go home, Kathy. Don't make this any harder for me. And take stuff with you, okay? I've got boxes packed in the bedroom.

KATHY  
It's too early for that. Anyway, we're here to help

MARGIE  
Then try not to cheese me off.

Margie EXITS into the bedroom.

NIKI  
Let's go, Mom.

KATHY  
Why?

NIKI  
The internet's down.

KATHY  
And you're still breathing? Remarkable.

NIKI  
Shut up.

KATHY  
C'mere.

Kathy reaches out for Niki, who draws close. Kathy leans her face in to hers. Niki is about to kiss her, when Kathy opens her mouth and sticks her tongue out one side of her mouth.

KATHY

Is that a canker on the side of my tongue?

NIKI

What? Gross!

KATHY

It hurts. I'm worried about it.

NIKI

I don't know.

KATHY

Is it pink or white?

NIKI

It's a bump, Mom. It'll go away.

KATHY

I keep forgetting to have it checked.

The MOANING STOPS.

Niki's phone DINGS. She checks it.

NIKI

(pleased)

Four bars! Super!

Niki retreats to a chair with her phone. Kathy deflates.

Margie ENTERS from the upstage bedroom.

KATHY

She okay?

MARGIE

She stopped, didn't she?

Margie plops onto the couch.

NIKI

(to Kathy)

Dad texted me. Something came up. He'll be free in an hour.

KATHY

Tell him we're here.

(to Margie)

Tommy was supposed to get her this morning.

(to Niki)

And he better show up with my check.

Niki texts back.

KATHY

(to Margie)

I called Hanratty's. They asked me about Grandma's plot.

MARGIE

She doesn't have one.

KATHY

Well, what cemetery did she request?

MARGIE

She didn't.

KATHY

You didn't ask her?

MARGIE

How exactly would that conversation work, Kathy?

KATHY

I gave you the paperwork months ago.

MARGIE

She didn't want to hear about it.

KATHY

Well, what am I supposed to tell the funeral home?

MARGIE

Ask them if they recycle.

LAUGHTER from Niki, who's buried in her phone.

KATHY

Are you doing this to screw with me?

MARGIE

I've been neck-deep in diapers for months. What do you expect?

KATHY

How about gratitude?

MARGIE

Coming right up.

KATHY

Would she be opposed to cremation?

MARGIE

I don't know. Set her gown on fire. See how she reacts.

KATHY

(to Niki)

Don't you dare laugh at that.

(to Margie)

Can you at least act like you care?

From the other room WE HEAR....

SHALISE (O.S.)

Pizza's ready!

MARGIE

Go eat.

KATHY

You're impossible.

As Kathy heads for the kitchen she NABS Niki's phone and quickly EXITS.

NIKI

Hey!

Niki rushes after her, EXITS.

Margie takes a long moment to rub the weariness out of her head.

Shalise ENTERS from the hallway, carrying a slice of pizza on a plate and a napkin.

SHALISE

Here you go.

Shalise hands the plate and napkin to Margie.

MARGIE

Look, don't feel like you have to wait on me.

SHALISE

Why would I think that?

Margie ignores her response, considers her food for a moment.

SHALISE

There a problem?

MARGIE

What's on it?

SHALISE

Uh...spinach, zucchini, fresh mozzarella and...marinated tomatoes.

MARGIE

Not really pizza.

SHALISE

What would you call it?

MARGIE

Pizza-like. Where'd you get it?

SHALISE

New place on the corner of Pershing.

MARGIE

That used to be a shoe store, you know. For years. Got my first pair of pumps there.

Margie nibbles on the tip.

SHALISE

(beat)

Is this hard for you?

MARGIE

No, I'll eat it.

SHALISE

I mean your mother.

MARGIE

It's a rite of passage, isn't it? We all go through it.

SHALISE

Hopefully we go through it with grace.

MARGIE

Yeah, good luck with that.

Kathy ENTERS with Niki, who looks miserable.

KATHY

Niki's going to sit with her in exchange for her phone.

MARGIE

(to Niki)

Rub her feet.

NIKI

I'm not changing diapers.

Niki glumly opens the door to the bedroom and EXITS inside.

Kathy sits.

KATHY

Wicked trick, huh? Only thing that works.

MARGIE

You're underestimating her.

KATHY

Of course you'd say that.

MARGIE

It's not a criticism. I know how tough it is with these phones. She just runs deeper than you think.

KATHY

You have no idea. Shalise can tell you.

SHALISE

She's been secretive.

KATHY

Something's going on. She hides it at night. She's missing classes in school.

MARGIE

Is she making up the work?

KATHY

Her teachers say so.

MARGIE

Then give her the benefit of the doubt.

KATHY

Why? God knows what she's up to?

MARGIE

What do you suspect?

KATHY

The mind boggles.

MARGIE

She's not that kind of kid. You know that.

KATHY

You're pretty sure of yourself for someone who doesn't have to deal with her every day.

MARGIE

She's a teenager. Didn't you used to smoke pot in Jimmy Flaherty's car?

KATHY

Shit! You knew about that? How?



MARGIE

I asked him. He was reeking.

KATHY

I can't believe he told you.

MARGIE

It may have had something to do with me jamming the tip of my umbrella into his sneaker.

KATHY

Why didn't you say anything to me?

MARGIE

Drug addiction was never going to be an issue with you. You're too much of a wuss.

SHALISE

So true.

MOANING from the bedroom.

MARGIE

(in response)

Goddamn it!

KATHY

Give her a break, Mom.

MARGIE

You want to pick the spot?

KATHY

You've been doing this too long. It's time for palliative care.

MARGIE

She rejected it, Kathy.

KATHY

Yeah, but she's not aware of much at this point.

MARGIE

I don't break my promises.

KATHY

Well, it's infecting your attitude...and making things worse for me, if that counts for anything.

SHALISE

It's tough for everyone.

KATHY

Especially if you're constipated. Been over a week. It's like someone stapled my...

MARGIE

Hey! We're not sharing here.

SHALISE

(to Kathy)

You both need to loosen up.

KATHY

Go at it, girl.

Shalise begins to rub Kathy's shoulders. Kathy exhales deeply. Shortly she leans into Shalise, feels her warmth. Kathy reaches back and places her hand on Shalise's cheek. Shalise, responds by putting her arms around her.

Margie, meanwhile, eats, doing her best not to notice.

KATHY

This making you uncomfortable, Mom?

MARGIE

I'm sorry, you're confusing me for someone who gives a shit.

KATHY

Are you mad at me?

MARGIE

I'm tired.

KATHY

So am I. You have no idea how much time I've spent untangling Grandma's accounts. She's got money sprinkled everywhere. Thirty-five hundred here, twelve-hundred there.

KATHY (CONT'D)

It's like she was marking her territory. And each bank has a different Power of Attorney policy. It's a mess.

MARGIE

It's your world. Shouldn't be that hard.

KATHY

That only shows how little you know about banking.

MARGIE

How much altogether?

KATHY

Around thirty K.

MARGIE

Put it in Niki's college fund.

KATHY

(insistent)

No, we're going to split it.

MARGIE

You need it more than I do.

KATHY

We'll be fine.

MARGIE

I'll keep the money from the estate sale.

KATHY

That couldn't be much.

MARGIE

It'll do.

KATHY

What if I put your share in a trust?

MARGIE

What if you shut up?

KATHY

We'll talk about it another time.

MARGIE

Fine. I'll put an appointment in my calendar for never.

KATHY

You just don't want to give me credit for anything.

MARGIE

I don't want to argue.

SHALISE

Amen to that.

KATHY

(a sudden sensation)

Hey!

(beat, pleased)

That helped. I'll be back.

Kathy quickly EXITS. A long beat passes.

MARGIE

(to Shalise)

You like handbags?

SHALISE

I guess.

MARGIE

My mother has a ton of them. I'll put them in a box. You can take them with you.

SHALISE

Mind if I make an observation?

MARGIE

Yes.

SHALISE

I'm going to do it anyway. I think you are angry at your daughter. And I think it has to do with our relationship.

MARGIE

I don't have an opinion.

SHALISE

What if I were to tell you we're getting married?

MARGIE

(a sober beat)

Yeah, I'd have something to say about that.

SHALISE

Well, you can breathe easy. I proposed. She turned me down.

MARGIE

And, we're discussing this because...?

SHALISE

It has to do with her fear of disappointing you.

MARGIE

(not buying it)

That right.

SHALISE

Do you have any idea how much your approval means to Kathy?

MARGIE

That's her problem.

SHALISE

You know that's not true.

MARGIE

Do you have an objective here?

SHALISE

I would like you to bless our relationship.

MARGIE

Why are you making this my responsibility? You want to spend the rest of your lives licking each other, go ahead.

Shalise, realizing she's making things worse,  
takes a moment to back off.

SHALISE

I'm sorry. This is the wrong time for this conversation.

MARGIE

You bet.

(long beat)

It can't be all on me, you know.

SHALISE

I understand.

MARGIE

But, that's the way it's always been.

SHALISE

What about her father?

MARGIE

He's been gone for thirty years.

SHALISE

Does she remember him?

MARGIE

No. And it's too bad because he handled certain things better than me.

SHALISE

Like this moment?

MARGIE

Oh, he would have asked you all about it. "Which role do you play?" "Does that translate in the bedroom?" "Do you miss penetration?" He judged nothing, was interested in everything. Dr. Curious, I called him.

SHALISE

Was he a doctor?

MARGIE

He drove a forklift.

SHALISE

I bet he was good at it.

MARGIE

Until six hundred pounds of sheet rock fell on his head.

SHALISE

I'm sorry.

(beat)

But, for what it's worth, you did good.

MARGIE

How so?

SHALISE

She has a big heart, wants things to work out. It's what I love most about her.

MARGIE

Has nothing to do with me.

SHALISE

You'd be surprised.

MARGIE

You're good, slipping the topic back in like that.

SHALISE

So, can we discuss it?

MARGIE

Not a chance.

Kathy ENTERS.

SHALISE

Feel better?

KATHY

I used up the toilet paper.

She hobbles over to the couch and sits.

KATHY

Where's Niki?

SHALISE

In the bedroom!

MARGIE

You sent her in there.

KATHY

(embarrassed)

Shoot me now. I walked into the bathroom...and for a moment...couldn't remember why.

SHALISE

You're just stressed.

KATHY

That's got to be it, right?

MARGIE

What are you stressed about?

KATHY

Grandma. Everything.

MARGIE

Everything?

KATHY

(exasperated)

What's the plan?! Are we thinking about a memorial service or a wake? What about the food? Do we want to put together a photo board? Have you picked out a dress for her to wear?

MARGIE

(answering)

Either. Deli. Okay. No.

KATHY

(to Shalise)

See, this is the behavior when she doesn't want to deal with me?

MARGIE

And what behavior would that be?

KATHY

Wise ass responses.

MARGIE

You're forgetting something.

KATHY

What?

MARGIE

I ignore you by turning on the TV.

KATHY

That's right, you do.



Margie stands and CROSSES to the TV set.

KATHY

(to Shalise)

I can't tell you how many times in the middle of a conversation she.....

Margie TURNS ON the television, returns to her seat and begins watching a NEWS PROGRAM.

KATHY

(long beat, irritated)

I hate you right now.

Kathy STORMS OUT of the living room.

Shalise stares with disappointment at Margie, who remains focused on the TV. She then takes Margie's empty plate and EXITS into the kitchen, passing Dottie who has ENTERED from the bedroom.

Dottie (at 44 in the early 1960s) wears a simple, white wedding dress. Her hair is poofed and lacquered and she's SMOKING.

Dottie addresses Margie, who's eyes are on the TV.

DOTTIE

You ready?

MARGIE

(At age 12, stunned)

They shot him?!

DOTTIE

Who?

MARGIE

The guy who killed JFK.

DOTTIE

When?

MARGIE

Just now. They were moving him and this other guy comes out of nowhere and....

DOTTIE

(cutting her off)

Shhh.

Dottie watches with her for a moment.

A REPORT ON THE LEE HARVEY OSWALD  
SHOOTING IS HEARD FROM THE TV.

Jesus!

(then, to Margie)

Go get the flowers. We need to leave.

MARGIE

We're going?

DOTTIE

Of course.

MARGIE

(tears)

You can't get married today.

DOTTIE

Why not?

MARGIE

It's dangerous.

DOTTIE

In Texas, maybe.

MARGIE

No, it's bigger than that.

DOTTIE

Are you crying? Get a hold of yourself! There's no such thing as perfect timing.  
Anyway, now you have a story to tell.

MARGIE

(sarcastic)

Good icebreaker at school dances.

DOTTIE

Listen to me, the world is not falling apart. Life goes on.

MARGIE

I don't know if that's true.

DOTTIE

That's 'cause you're twelve.

MARGIE

Please don't do this.

DOTTIE

Do you want me to reschedule? Is that what you're saying?

MARGIE

No.

DOTTIE

Will you make some damn sense here. What then?

MARGIE

Don't marry Roger.

DOTTIE

For Chrissakes, Margie!

MARGIE

He doesn't look well.

DOTTIE

He's built like Samson. You're just bothered by his lazy eye.

MARGIE

His fingernails are yellow and his ears are blue.

DOTTIE

Stop!

MARGIE

And his tongue is always sticking through his lips.

DOTTIE

Do you want me to be happy or not?

MARGIE

Don't I count?

DOTTIE

No, actually. You don't. This is my day, not yours. Don't you dare try to spoil it for me. I've had enough of your selfishness. You think I've enjoyed raising you by myself? You're a pain in the ass. You don't know how to put yourself together. Your dress is wrinkled. Your shoes are scuffed. You look like shit. Did you wash your hair this morning? Would you even think of doing that for your mother? Pay attention. Men want to be with me. You know why? Because I know how to look good for them. Who do you think is going to want to marry you, looking like that? You should be following me around, taking notes. You want to be alone the rest of your life? Keep it up.

MARGIE

Is that all you care about? Don't you understand what's going on in the world? The President's dead. What is there to look forward to?

DOTTIE

Sandwiches. Enough cold cuts for fifty. Now wipe your face and get over it!

Dottie EXITS into the bedroom.

Shortly, we hear MOANING from inside.  
Margie winces, closes her eyes, tries to deal with it.

After a few moments, the MOANING decreases in volume. Margie exhales.

Suddenly, and without warning, the MOANING EXPLODES WITH VOLUME.

MARGIE

(snapping)

SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Margie leaps to her feet, heads for the bedroom.

MARGIE

You hear me.? Enough from you!

Kathy and Shalise RUSH IN from the kitchen and intercept Margie at the door.

What's going on?

KATHY

She needs to stop.

MARGIE

She's dying, Mom.

KATHY

Not fast enough.

MARGIE

Kathy pulls Margie away from the bedroom door.

What's the hell's wrong with you?

KATHY

Nothing an accidental fall out the window won't cure.

MARGIE

The MOANING STOPS. They freeze, their ears attuned.

You didn't mean that.

KATHY

Probably not.

MARGIE

Probably? See, now I don't know how to take that.

KATHY  
(beat, concerned)

Does it matter?

MARGIE

Damn right it does.

KATHY

You give me too much power. Make it my problem.

MARGIE

KATHY

Okay. Stop being a bitch!

MARGIE

If it were only that simple.

KATHY

Can't you grieve like normal people? You have to flip out?

MARGIE

Apparently.

KATHY

Well, what's going on with you? What do you need?

MARGIE

(peering at her face)

You have like basil or something in your teeth.

KATHY

Oh, screw you.

MARGIE

No, screw you! I didn't ask you to come here.

Niki ENTERS quietly from the bedroom. She appears dazed.

KATHY

That's the problem. Why not? Do you hate me so much you can't handle my presence?

MARGIE

It's not about you, Kathy! That's the problem. You don't know how to stay out of the way.

SHALISE

Ladies, look....

Niki approaches.

MARGIE

(to Shalise)

No, you back off!

KATHY

Don't talk to her that way.

MARGIE

This is a family thing.

KATHY

She's family!

Margie becomes aware of Niki's presence.

MARGIE

(to Niki)

What is it?

NIKI

Great Grandma is asking for a pedicure.

MARGIE

She's talking?

NIKI

She's sitting up.

The energy suddenly shifts.

Margie and Kathy simultaneously head for the bedroom and EXIT inside.

A wounded Shalise CROSSES to a chair, sits.

Niki FLOPS onto the couch, pulls out her phone and begins scrolling.

SHALISE

(to Niki)

What else did she say?

NIKI

Most of it was weird. She's not making much sense.

(beat)

What were they yelling about?

SHALISE

Nothing we need to get into now.

NIKI

Wasn't about me, was it?

SHALISE

No, honey. You're good.

NIKI

I can't remember when they weren't like this.

SHALISE

That's too bad.

NIKI

It's hard being with both of them at the same time.

SHALISE

I get that.

NIKI

When my Dad was still living with us it was worse. Grandma wouldn't even come over if he was there.

SHALISE

Did he do something to anger her?

NIKI

Yeah, he married my mother.

Margie and Kathy ENTER from the bedroom.

KATHY

(to Margie)

Henry was number three?

MARGIE

Four.

NIKI

(re: her phone)

Shit! No signal.

Kathy crosses to the side table, opens a drawer and begins looking through it.

KATHY

He was the one who dropped dead in the elevator, right?

MARGIE

That was Bobby. Henry had liver cancer.



NIKI  
(re: signal)

Doesn't anyone care?

KATHY  
(apparently not)

I remember him. Is that who she was talking to about fun buns?

MARGIE

I think that was Roger. I don't know. She's mixing them all together.

KATHY

What did she mean by that?

MARGIE

Use your imagination.

KATHY

What happened to Roger again?

MARGIE

Pulmonary embolism.

KATHY

Right, he died in the sack. You had to pry them apart.

NIKI

Yuck!

KATHY

What was Grandpa's name?

MARGIE

Bill.

KATHY

She didn't mention him.

MARGIE

She never does.

KATHY

She wanted soup. Who's taking care of that?

Margie glances at Shalise.

SHALISE

Don't look at me. I'm not your girl.

KATHY

Niki.

NIKI

(re: her phone)

I just started a game.

KATHY

(to Niki)

Go!

Niki rolls her eyes and EXITS into the kitchen.

KATHY

(after her)

Microwave for thirty seconds.

Kathy closes the drawer, CROSSES to the cabinet, opens a drawer and inspects its contents.

MARGIE

She wasn't even talking to us. I think she said, "Henry, bring me soup."

KATHY

Has she eaten?

MARGIE

Not in days.

KATHY

Well, there you are.

MARGIE

So, we're going with this second-wind thing?

KATHY

Unless you prefer to put a pillow over her face.

(to Margie, proud of herself)

Got ya'!

KATHY (CONT'D)

(then....)

Here we go.

Kathy removes a small, zippered case and a bottle of nail polish from the drawer.

MARGIE

What's that?

KATHY

Nail care kit.

MARGIE

You're not going to give her a pedicure, are you?

KATHY

Why not?

MARGIE

You're taking everything she says literally.

KATHY

Her reality doesn't matter, Mom. If she thinks she wants it why shouldn't she get it?  
(noticing Shalise)

Are you alright?

SHALISE

Yeah.

KATHY

Pretty quiet.

SHALISE

Uh huh.

KATHY

Why didn't you come in with us?

SHALISE

Didn't feel it was my place.

KATHY

Of course it is. You should meet her.

Shalise RISES.

I'm going to take a walk.

SHALISE

I'll go with you. Give me a minute.

KATHY

By myself. Sorry.

SHALISE

Shalise CROSSES to the front door, turns back to Margie.

SHALISE

Anything you need?

MARGIE

Toilet paper.

Shalise turns and EXITS.

KATHY  
(to Margie)

What just happened?

Margie shrugs.

Niki ENTERS with a bowl of soup, a spoon and a napkin on a tray.

KATHY  
(to Niki)

Make sure it's not too hot.

Kathy opens the door for NIKI.

NIKI

I tested it.

They both EXIT into the bedroom.

Confident that she's alone, Margie pulls out her cell phone, scrolls through it, finds what she's looking for, presses dial and waits....

MARGIE  
(listening, then into phone)

NIKI (CONT'D)

Two.

(again)

One.

(and again)

Two.

(finally, loud)

Hi, this is Marjorie Curran-Hicks. Can you hear me?...Yeah, I have an appointment scheduled for Monday...Yes, this Monday.

Shalise RE-ENTERS from the front door.

Margie, in response, turns her back to her and lowers her voice.

MARGIE

Things are hard to predict around here right now. Can we move it up a week?...What about the clinic?...Good. Anything in the afternoon? What's the earliest?...That's it? Not great, but okay. Nine-thirty on Tuesday, the eighteenth. Can you send me a text?...Yeah, send that too.

Margie hangs up, gazes at Shalise with confusion, lays the phone on a side table.

SHALISE

Where are they?

MARGIE

Bedroom.

SHALISE

I didn't make it past the landing.

MARGIE

(beat)

So, no toilet paper?

SHALISE

Why don't you consider me family?

MARGIE

You're not.

SHALISE

Biologically, you mean.

MARGIE

That's right.

SHALISE

But I am in other ways. I'm with Kathy, and I'm helping raise your granddaughter. I don't get points for that?

MARGIE

Sure. I'll give you five. How many times a week you walk the dog? I can add a few more.

SHALISE

Do you get pleasure out of being this way?

MARGIE

What's it to you?

SHALISE

Everything if I'm going to be around.

MARGIE

Are you questioning that?

SHALISE

Aren't you?

MARGIE

I don't know why everyone thinks they need my approval. Do what you do. I'll do the same.

SHALISE

Push people away, you mean.

MARGIE

Don't act like you think you know me. You'll lose.

SHALISE

So it's a game?

MARGIE

No. I don't think it is.

SHALISE

Then, what's in it for you?

MARGIE

Peace.

SHALISE

But you're not peaceful. How long have you been alone?

MARGIE

(warning)

Watch it.

SHALISE

It's not an attack. I'm curious. Kathy says you never considered remarrying.

MARGIE

Not true. There were guys.

SHALISE

What happened?

MARGIE

Didn't work out.

SHALISE

On whose end?

MARGIE

What is it you do...for a living?

SHALISE

I'm a legal aid attorney.

MARGIE

Do you see anything illegal going on here?

SHALISE

No.

MARGIE

Then keep out of it.

SHALISE

I can't. It's not my nature.

MARGIE

You're in my face. I don't like it.

SHALISE

I'm just asking questions.

MARGIE

And I'm tired of answering.

SHALISE

So, this is the way its going to be between us?

MARGIE

I'm doing my best.

SHALISE

Hard to believe.

MARGIE

What do you want from me....reparations?

SHALISE

(beat)

You know, the moment I walked in, I sensed resentment from you. I've been thinking it had to do with my sexuality, but that's not it, is it? It's because I'm the wrong color.

Dottie (At 48 in the late 1960s) STORMS IN from the bedroom, WITH A LIT CIGARETTE DANGLING FROM HER MOUTH, and wearing a boldly-designed shift. Her long hair is pulled back by a plastic hair band.

DOTTIE

(to Margie, furious)

Okay, that's it. She's dead!

MARGIE

(to Shalise)

Go finish your walk.

SHALISE

(to Margie)

What?



MARGIE

(to Shalise)

Before things get out of hand.

DOTTIE

(to Margie)

I'm going kill that bitch with my own hands.

SHALISE

(to Margie)

Is that a threat?

DOTTIE

(to herself)

Better idea. Where's Roger's gun? He hid it someplace.

Dottie begins searching the room, opening drawers.

MARGIE

(to Shalise)

I'm asking.

DOTTIE

(to Margie)

I'll put a bullet right through her nappy head.

MARGIE

(to Shalise, softly)

Please.

DOTTIE

(to herself)

Where the hell is it?!

Shalise reflects on Margie's rational tone, then turns and grimly EXITS through the front door.

DOTTIE

(still searching, to Margie)

She's from the Mission Hill projects, right? Got an address?

Margie turns to her mother.

MARGIE

(at age 16)

Mom, stop. You're scaring me.

DOTTIE

I've reached my limit. How many times do we have to go through this? Your principal won't admit there's a problem. The school board's given us the run around. If they're going to leave it up to me, I'll take care of it my way.

MARGIE

By shooting her?

DOTTIE

I'll stick it in her ear. She'll piss all over herself.

MARGIE

That's assault. You can go to jail.

Dottie stops searching.

DOTTIE

Then, what's your plan, Columbo?

MARGIE

She doesn't like tuna salad. Keep giving me that. She'll eventually get tired of stealing my food.

DOTTIE

Or she'll beat the crap out of you like she did today.

MARGIE

You tried to poison her.

DOTTIE

Poison? No. I put Milk of Magnesia in your Bosco.

MARGIE

She could taste it.

DOTTIE

I don't understand this. Does she ever bring her own lunch?

MARGIE

No.

DOTTIE

Why can't her mother make it? They don't know to take care of themselves, these coloreds. Your father left us in debt, but have you ever once gone hungry?

MARGIE

No.

DOTTIE

I would never do that to you. I'd sell everything I owned before I neglected my own child. And why you? What'd you do to her?

MARGIE

I don't know.

DOTTIE

You know what it is? You're white. You go to a white school. She and her friends are bussed in. They see that everyone's wearing clean clothes.. They have Star Trek lunch boxes. These kids don't like what they have to go home to. And I don't blame them. It's screwed up. They should keep them in their neighborhoods and fix their schools. There was nothing wrong with ours until they showed up

MARGIE

Their neighborhoods are bad. The boy who sits next to me in math has a scar that runs down from his right ear under his chin.

DOTTIE

Well, that's what separates you from him, right? You don't have scars.

MARGIE

None you can see.

Niki ENTERS from the bedroom, texting furiously.

Kathy FOLLOWS with the tray on which is an empty soup bowl and nail polish.

Dottie EXITS into the bedroom, passing them.

NIKI

Signal's back.

KATHY

(to Niki)

Isn't your father supposed to be here by now?

NIKI

(her face in her phone)

Yeah.

KATHY

Where is he?

NIKI

I don't know.

Niki heads for the kitchen, EXITS.

KATHY

(to Margie)

She ate every drop.

MARGIE

You paint her nails?

KATHY

In Rocketship Red.

MARGIE

How's she doing?

KATHY

Good for someone in an alternate universe. She asked me if I planned to have children. Niki told her the state had cut me off.

MARGIE

Funny.

KATHY

And mean. She gets it from you.

MARGIE

You think I'm mean?

KATHY

You can be. Shalise not back yet?

She was here.

MARGIE

What do you mean?

KATHY

She left again.

MARGIE

Why?

KATHY

We got into a little thing.

MARGIE

How little?

KATHY

Huge.

MARGIE

Over what?

KATHY

You'd have to check with her about that.

MARGIE

Was she upset?

KATHY

She was.

MARGIE

Well, how'd you leave it?

KATHY

Shalise ENTERS, holding a grocery shopping bag. She closes the door behind her. Kathy and Margie watch as she pulls a roll of toilet paper out of the bag and TOSSES IT IN THEIR GENERAL DIRECTION. She does this again...and again...SIX TIMES. The rolls bounce off Margie, Kathy, the furniture and the walls. Finished, she folds up the shopping bag.

SHALISE

Do you reuse bags?

MARGIE

Under the sink.

Shalise heads for the kitchen.

KATHY

(concerned)

Honey?

Shalise EXITS. Kathy follows, EXITS.

Margie rises, begins picking up the rolls of toilet paper.

Suddenly, Shalise DASHES BACK IN.

SHALISE

Admit it. You're racist.

MARGIE

Not true.

Kathy ENTERS, following Shalise.

SHALISE

Maybe not consciously.

KATHY

She isn't, Shalise. Why would I bring you here if she were?

SHALISE

(to Margie)

Then what am I getting from you?

MARGIE

Distrust.

SHALISE

Do you think I've earned that?

MARGIE

I don't really know you.

SHALISE

So, you're projecting.

MARGIE

Look, I don't care if you're black, gay or married. Just don't invite me to the wedding.

KATHY

(stunned)

You told her?!

MARGIE

(forging on)

And leave my neighborhood alone.

SHALISE

(confused)

What? Where'd that come from?

MARGIE

I feel like I'm being invaded. My favorite ice cream flavor is Brigham's Mocha Almond. There used to be a restaurant right up here on the corner of Green Street. It closed years back. You know what's there now, a cupcake shop.

KATHY

Oh, you mean "Angel Food." I love that place.

SHALISE

You can buy that ice cream at Star Market.

MARGIE

I have to get in my car now.

KATHY

It's a great bakery, Mom. You've got to try it.

MARGIE

I have. Ordered a half dozen macaroons. The girl handed me a box of little sugar burgers.

SHALISE

Macarons.

MARGIE

That's what she called them. I said, no, the hill-shaped coconut things that the Jews eat. She went blank.

SHALISE

So, this is about gentrification?

MARGIE

Why does there have to be a rainbow flag in every other store window?

SHALISE

Identity. Pride.

MARGIE

They have to advertise it?

SHALISE

Better than hiding it.

MARGIE

Why can't they just be?

SHALISE

Because they couldn't for so long.

MARGIE

What would you think if I stuck a giant crucifix in my window?

SHALISE

That you're looking for recognition.

MARGIE

I don't feel I belong here any more.

KATHY

Mom, this neighborhood's never been safer, or looked better.

MARGIE

And the rents have never been higher.

SHALISE

I'll give you that. Ours just went up ten percent.

KATHY

You forget there used to be head shops and second hand clothing stores on Center Street.



MARGIE

Yeah, I didn't like that either.

KATHY

That's because you don't change. Literally! You've been wearing the same sweat suit for weeks.

MARGIE

Who do I need to impress?

SHALISE

I got the toilet paper from that small grocery up the street.

MARGIE

They charge a fortune in there.

SHALISE

But it's owned by a South Asian couple. And there was an elderly, white haired man in a tweed hat buying pipe tobacco. Behind him was a hipster college student and a male couple with two kids. The oldest boy was playing with a Barbie. Where else can you find that kind of diversity? It's what Kathy and I love most about this neighborhood.

MARGIE

Yeah, well....you get to share it.

Margie heads upstage and EXITS into the bedroom. The air goes out of the moment.

KATHY

Why'd you have to bring us up?

SHALISE

I'm sorry. I got too eager.

KATHY

Everyone who has a partner reminds her that she doesn't. I don't want to hear you ever mention marriage again.

SHALISE

You don't think she'll come around?

KATHY

I mean to me.

Kathy turns and EXITS into the kitchen.

A crushed Shalise hangs her head. Filled with self-pity, she collapses on the couch, puts her head in her hand. A moment passes....

Then, FROM OFFSTAGE....

KATHY (O.S

(outraged)

ARE YOU KIDDING ME!!!

Niki RUSHES IN from the kitchen holding her smart phone. Her blouse has been pulled out of her stretch jeans.

A furious Kathy STOMPS IN AFTER HER.

Niki uses the arm chair to separate herself from her furious mother.

KATHY

Give it over!

NIKI

No!

KATHY

Don't screw with me, Niki.

NIKI

You're overreacting.

KATHY

I'll cancel your Goddamn service. You want me to do that?

NIKI

I'll just get Dad to sign me up.

KATHY

I'm going to count to three.

SHALISE

What's wrong?

One!

KATHY

Margie ENTERS from the bedroom.

Niki RUSHES OVER TO HER.

Grandma!

NIKI

Two!

KATHY

MARGIE

Kathy, stop yelling.

Three!

KATHY

Kathy BULL RUSHES Niki, who SCREAMS in terror.

Margie steps into her path.

Calm down!

MARGIE

Kathy PULLS UP, but maintains her fury.

She was showing him her breasts!

KATHY

SHALISE  
(re: the kitchen, confused)

There's someone in there?

Mark, from Australia.

KATHY

SHALISE

When did he arrive?

KATHY

They were Face-Timing! I walked in, she had her blouse pulled up.

Niki, seriously? MARGIE

I just flashed him. NIKI

Why? KATHY

He asked me to. NIKI

Christ! KATHY

Did he reciprocate? MARGIE

I don't know what that means. NIKI

Did he show you his dingle? MARGIE

No. NIKI

Then he's not ready. MARGIE

Wait, what are you telling her? KATHY

MARGIE  
(to Niki)  
Cut him off. You don't want to be the only one delivering the goods.

Mom, stop. KATHY

It puts you at a disadvantage. MARGIE

Neither of them should be exposing themselves. KATHY

MARGIE  
What, you never played doctor?

KATHY  
No!

MARGIE  
Not too late to start.

KATHY  
Alright, that's it. We're going home.

NIKI  
I'm staying with Grandma.

KATHY  
Don't push me. I'm right on the edge.

MARGIE  
Put a lid on it, will ya'? Let the child enjoy them while they're doing her some good.

KATHY  
What does that mean?

MARGIE  
You heard me.

KATHY  
Why would you say something like that?

MARGIE  
(to Shalise)  
Any pizza left?

KATHY  
(to Niki)  
What's she talking about?

Tears begin to form in Niki's eyes.

KATHY  
(to Niki)  
Is this about you?

Niki shakes her head.

KATHY

Then what?

MARGIE

(to Kathy)

It's hormones. Confusing time. Leave her alone.

KATHY

Niki, be straight with me.

Margie cuts Niki off before she can answer.

MARGIE

Stop pushing her. There's nothing going on here.

KATHY

Then why's she crying?

NIKI

(blurting it out)

Because Grandma's sick.

KATHY

Wait. No. What?

NIKI

She's lying to you.

Niki casts a stiff, uncompromising gaze at Margie.

KATHY

(to Margie)

What's going on, Mom?

Margie, surprised by Niki's boldness, can't muster a response.

KATHY

What do I need to know?

MARGIE

Only what I tell you.

KATHY

How dare you!

SHALISE

(to Kathy)

Check your mother's phone. Side table.

Kathy crosses to the side table.

SHALISE

(to Margie)

Sorry.

Kathy picks up Margie's phone and reads the screen.

KATHY

Faulkner Oncology?

(scrolling down)

There's a prep list here.

KATHY

(to Margie)

Do you have cancer?

MARGIE

(beat)

Small amount.

KATHY

Where?

MARGIE

Right breast. Most of it's precancerous.

KATHY

So, that's good news.

Niki shakes head.

KATHY

No?

(losing it)

For Chrissake, I'm not playing charades here!

MARGIE

It's in my thyroid too.

KATHY

Omigod! Are you undergoing treatment?

MARGIE

Radiation.

KATHY

For the thyroid?

MARGIE

No, that will require surgery.

KATHY

(to Niki)

And you knew about this?

Niki nods.

MARGIE

I needed someone to watch Dottie while I was gone.

KATHY

So, you chose my daughter over me.

MARGIE

I did.

SHALISE

That's why she's been missing school.

MARGIE

Not too much.

KATHY

When were you planning on letting me know?

MARGIE

I wanted to get past this, first.

KATHY

(to Niki)

You should have told me.



I just did. NIKI

Earlier. KATHY

Don't make this her problem. MARGIE  
(to Kathy)

No, you're right. It's yours. KATHY

Kathy turns and MARCHES back into the kitchen.

Why'd I listen to you? NIKI  
(to Margie)

You know why. She would have made it harder for me. MARGIE

She loves you. SHALISE

That's not what I need. MARGIE

Can I quote you on that? SHALISE

Shalise heads for the bedroom.

Where are you going? MARGIE

To see your mother. SHALISE

What in God's name for? MARGIE

Someone around here has got to have answers. SHALISE

Don't do anything stupid.

MARGIE

Says the Captain of the stupid squad.

SHALISE

Shalise EXITS into the bedroom.

Niki, what the hell.

MARGIE

Leave me alone.

NIKI

You betrayed me.

MARGIE

I thought you said this wasn't my problem.

NIKI

It's just that I trusted you.

MARGIE

Who's fault is that?

NIKI  
(annoyed)

That stings. Niki rises.

Where are you going?

MARGIE

I need to talk to Mark.

NIKI

Niki heads for the front door.

I'll be out in the hallway.

NIKI

Niki EXITS out the front door. Margie, now alone, lets out an exhausted sigh.

Dottie (87 in mid 2000s) ENTERS from the bedroom. She's wearing a fashionable pants suit. Her hair is white. She's SMOKING.

DOTTIE

You going?

MARGIE

(at age 53)

Yeah, I'm actually late.

Margie heads for the door.

DOTTIE

What you have, what's it called again?

Margie STOPS, turns back.

MARGIE

Lobular carcinoma in situ.

DOTTIE

In situ means it's incased, right.

MARGIE

That's one way to put it.

DOTTIE

It's not going anywhere.

MARGIE

You mean will it metastasize? Not at the moment.

DOTTIE

So, it's a precautionary thing.

MARGIE

That's what they say.

DOTTIE

You really want to put yourself through this?

MARGIE

What's your problem? You had surgery?

DOTTIE

But mine doesn't show.

Margie sighs. Good point.

DOTTIE

I don't know, to deform you like that.

MARGIE

They told me they could reconstruct it.

DOTTIE

Your insurance cover it?

MARGIE

Some.

DOTTIE

How much out of pocket?

MARGIE

A lot.

DOTTIE

I don't know.

MARGIE

You just said that.

DOTTIE

Think about it this way. If someone comes into your life, he's going to need to be okay with your body looking that way. You're not that old. You're still out there.

MARGIE

So are you.

DOTTIE

And I wouldn't do it.

MARGIE

Which I don't understand, because yours are not looking too choice these days.

DOTTIE

But yours are. Always been your best asset.

MARGIE

You mean besides my sparkling personality.

DOTTIE

I should write Bush and have him designate them a national monument.

MARGIE

The new twin towers.

DOTTIE

There you go.

MARGIE

Brian used to fall asleep on my chest. Told me it was his favorite place ever.

DOTTIE

Remember when that doctor said I wouldn't live past sixty five?

MARGIE

I do.

DOTTIE

He died last week. We're of solid stock. Ain't much that can take us down.

Margie checks her watch.

MARGIE

Shit!

Margie puts her hand on the door knob.

DOTTIE

You're not going make it in time. It's lunch hour. The roads will be jammed. Relax, I'll put on some coffee.

Margie takes her hand off the door knob.

MARGIE

I guess I can reschedule.

DOTTIE

Or not.

Margie looks up at her mother. An understanding passes between them.

MARGIE

Right.

DOTTIE

That's my girl.

Shalise ENTERS from the bedroom, shaking her head, passes Dottie who EXITS into the bedroom.

MARGIE

What happened?

SHALISE

The moment I sat next to her she started spilling her guts.

MARGIE

She knew who you were?

SHALISE

She thought I was you.

MARGIE

Is it dark in there?

SHALISE

Don't start.

(beat)

Something's on her mind.

MARGIE

What's left of it.

SHALISE

You should go back in.

MARGIE

No, it'll just confuse her.

SHALISE

It's why she's still here, I think. Unfinished business.

MARGIE

What do you know?

SHALISE

A lot as it turns out. She's quite the chatterbox.

MARGIE

And you think this gives you leverage?

SHALISE

Insight.

MARGIE

You don't know shit.

SHALISE

I know she wonders why you stick around.

Margie is not sure how to respond.

SHALISE

She doesn't feel she's worth it.

Margie stares back.

SHALISE

Did you hear what I said?

MARGIE

(vulnerable)

Don't screw with me.

Kathy ENTERS SWIFTLY from the kitchen,  
HOLDING A HAND GUN.

MARGIE

Christ!

SHALISE

Omigod!

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE as Margie and  
Shalise attempt to seek shelter.

KATHY

(trying to get their attention)

Hey, hey, HEY! Stop! What are you thinking? I found this.

MARGIE

You're pointing at us. Put it down!

KATHY

It's not intentional.

SHALISE  
(demonstrating with her hands)

Lower it!

Kathy lowers the gun to her side.

Okay? Are we good?

KATHY

Shit, Kathy!

MARGIE

I was looking for tea bags. It was in a dark corner of the cabinet.

KATHY

Let me see it.

MARGIE

No.

KATHY

I'm not going to shoot you.

MARGIE

What about yourself?

KATHY

What?

MARGIE

That's why it's here, right?

KATHY

It belonged to Roger. It's probably been in that spot for years.

MARGIE

I don't believe you.

KATHY

Don't be an idiot. Do I look someone who would kill myself?

MARGIE

I don't know. Do I look like someone who would shoot her mother....?  
(to Shalise)

KATHY

Or her lover?



Margie and Shalise silently acknowledge her point.

MARGIE

Is it loaded?

KATHY

(holding it up for inspection)

How do you tell?

MARGIE

Not by peering down the muzzle. Let me have it!

Kathy reluctantly hands it over to Margie, who checks it out, figures out how to open the cartridge.

MARGIE

Empty. Did you find bullets?

Kathy shakes her head.

MARGIE

That answer your question?

Kathy nods. Margie crosses to the side table, opens it's drawer and slips it in.

MARGIE

The tea bags are in the drawer under the sink.

KATHY

No longer in the mood.

SHALISE

I want some.

(to Margie)

She have chamomile?

MARGIE

(confused)

Camel meal?

SHALISE

Never mind.

Shalise EXITS into the kitchen.

Long beat as Margie and Kathy decompress.

Margie sits on the couch. Then....

KATHY

(long beat, then....)

Who's your oncologist?

MARGIE

I forgot his name. He's young.

KATHY

You like him?

MARGIE

He's fine. Office could have better magazines.

KATHY

You wouldn't know this but my supervisor is married to the Associate Dean of Harvard Med. He knows everyone. I left a message. You okay with that?

MARGIE

(beat)

Yeah. Sure.

Kathy joins her on the couch.

KATHY

So, I'm thinking about the time you took me to Disney World and you started passing a kidney stone on Space Mountain. And you hurled all over that boy scout, and one of the employees that helped us was wearing a Pluto costume. And you kept asking the EMT if there was real alligator in the Captain Hook burger. You were so loopy. And I sat beside you and held your hand all the way to the first aid station and from there in an ambulance to the hospital, and at your bedside. And you slept for a bit. And when you woke up, remember what you said to me?

MARGIE

Sorry, I don't.

KATHY

"I'm so glad I have you."

MARGIE

(beat)

That's what you're hanging on to...something I said when I was on drugs and you were eleven? I stink at motherhood. You don't want to be in my world.

KATHY

Why not?

MARGIE

It's full of piles of unrealized crap.

KATHY

So.

MARGIE

How big is your shovel?

Niki ENTERS from the hallway. She has tears in her eyes. She looks utterly lost.

KATHY

You okay?

NIKI

Mark and I just broke up.

KATHY

I'm sorry, honey.

Niki joins them on the couch.

MARGIE

Who suggested it?

NIKI

Me.

MARGIE

Was it because of what I said?

NIKI

No.

MARGIE

What then?

NIKI

He lives twelve thousand miles away.

MARGIE

Yeah, well.

KATHY

What about that boy you used to bring over to the house? He was adorable. What was his name, Andre?

NIKI

He became Angela three months ago.

KATHY

There must be others in your school.

NIKI

They're all on medication.

KATHY

So are you.

NIKI

This one boy, Mohammed, he likes me. How do you think that's going to play in the hallways?

KATHY

(checking her watch, to Niki)

Where's your father?

NIKI

I don't know.

KATHY

He was supposed to be here over an hour ago. Call him.

NIKI

It's okay.

KATHY

No, it isn't.

NIKI

We never do anything anyway.

Silence descends.

Shalise ENTERS with a mug of tea and sits in a chair.

Niki pulls out her phone.

SHALISE

What's going on?

MARGIE

The world is turning to shit and we're rolling it.

SHALISE

I'll make a note.

Shalise takes a sip of her tea. Despite their proximity all four women gradually sink into isolation:

Niki scrolls through her phone.

Kathy tries to rub the tension from her shoulders.

Shalise's eyes soon get heavy as she approaches sleep.

Only Margie is alert, her eyes trained on the bedroom door.

Shortly, Dottie (age 43 in the mid 1950s) ENTERS from the bedroom. She's wearing a nightgown and has her hair in curlers. She's SMOKING.

Crossing down Dottie gazes upon Margie (at age 6) on the couch.

DOTTIE

You deserve better than this, Margie. We both do. I'd love to tell you he's coming back but I don't see it happening. After four years in the Pacific, you would think this would have been heaven on earth for him. I don't want you blaming yourself, though. This has nothing to do with you...or me for that matter. I stood by him. Most women I know wouldn't have put up with the moods, the whining, the public outbursts. I mean he was a good provider. He spent time with us, brought us a snow globe every time he came off the road. It's not like he hit me or drank too much. He just...didn't know how to love.

DOTTIE (CONT'D)

I don't know why I'm telling you these things. Maybe it's because he left behind the one thing I can't do without...you. And I'm thankful for that. Who else is going to listen to a middle-aged, single mother, which I guess is what I am now. But, tomorrow's a new day, right? What's over is over. What's left is what's next. And I am ready. Tell you what, let's do something tomorrow? We'll play hooky, take the trolley downtown to the RKO Keith and see that Sleeping Beauty movie. You've been wanting to do that. We'll have lunch at the Essex Deli and walk over. And afterwards we'll go to Bailey's for a hot fudge Sunday. Sound good to you?

(Margie nods)

You and me. We're still here, right?

Dottie EXITS back into the bedroom.

Suddenly overtaken by emotion, Margie begins to SPUTTER. Soon she's CRYING.

The sound startles everyone. They quickly become aware of Margie's state.

KATHY

What's wrong?

MARGIE

I'm okay. Just had a moment there.

KATHY

Are you in pain?

MARGIE

I don't have symptoms.

KATHY

You want to talk about it?

MARGIE

No, Kathy.

(beat)

I mean not now.

(beat)

Take me to the doctors next week.

KATHY

(beat)

Yeah?

MARGIE

You can come in with me if you want.

KATHY

I should, don't you think?

MARGIE

Yeah, whatever. We'll get lunch.

KATHY

All right.

MARGIE

And maybe some ice cream.

KATHY

I'm lactose intolerant, Mom. How do you not know this?

MARGIE

Sherbet then.

KATHY

That has milk in it. You mean sorbet?

MARGIE

(to Shalise)

Is she like this with you?

SHALISE

Of course.

MARGIE

You have my enduring respect.

NIKI

Don't die on us, Grandma, okay?

MARGIE

I don't know. Is there an alternative?

As the conversation continues, the door to the bedroom OPENS.

Ninety-nine year old DOTTIE CURRAN, fragile-looking and wearing a night gown, SHUFFLES OUT and over to her walker. The toenails on her bare feet are painted red. This is the first time we've seen her in the present. SHE'S UPSTAGE OF EVERYONE SO NO ONE NOTICES HER. Dottie uses the walker to make her way over to the desk, where she opens the top drawer, removes a VAPE PEN, turns it on, takes a DRAG and exhales with pleasure.

KATHY

New topic. How about an activity? We could play Uno, tell dirty jokes.

MARGIE

How many dirty jokes do you know?

KATHY

A ton. What do you call a lesbian with long fingernails?

(beat)

Single.

Kathy LAUGHS at her own joke. Then....

KATHY

I can't remember the others.

NIKI

(revealing her phone)

Want to watch pug videos?

SHALISE

Those poor things. They can hardly breathe.

NIKI

I know. Let's take a selfie.

MARGIE

Why?

NIKI

We're all together.



Is that a thing?

MARGIE

I'm going to do it.

NIKI

Niki raises her phone up in front of her, gazes into the screen, squints.

NIKI

Shalise, you're not in the frame.

Shalise stands and moves behind the couch.

KATHY

No, come here. Sit beside me.

Shalise crosses over to Kathy's end of the couch.

SHALISE

There's no room.

Kathy yanks her down onto the arm of the couch.

KATHY  
(to Niki)

Go ahead.

Niki adjusts the angle.

KATHY  
(to Margie)

How's my hair?

MARGIE

Still on your head.

KATHY

Seriously.

MARGIE

It's fine.

KATHY

Because sometimes one side flattens out.

SHALISE

Let's go. My left cheek is getting numb.

MARGIE

No, wait.

A beat.

KATHY

What did you just do?

MARGIE

I farted.

Disgusted reactions. She chuckles.

MARGIE

That'll teach you to get this close.

NIKI

Okay, STOP!

KATHY

(shocked)

Niki!

NIKI

Do you want to do this or not?

KATHY

Yes, I think we should.

The mood shifts. All eyes on Niki.

Dottie, now aware of the change of energy,  
makes her way over to them.

NIKI

(checking)

Shalise?

MARGIE

Sure, honey.

NIKI

(pointed)

Grandma?

MARGIE

(with respect)

You're in charge, girl.

NIKI

Everyone chill. Okay?

They nod obediently.

MARGIE

Go ahead. Count us down.

Niki adjusts the angle on her phone as Dottie arrives behind the couch.

NIKI

Ready? One...two...three...CRAZY FACE!

They all make crazy faces...including Dottie.

Niki's camera FLASHES.

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY