

Murphy Lives

By

Tom Cocklin

tcocklin@mac.com

503 705 8550

Murphy Lives ©2023

(4/f, 2/m) Murphy, the immortal prankster, pulls one stunt too many and is banished to the mortal realm by his older sister, Karma, keeper of rules and justice. While Murphy struggles with his fate, his immortal family and apartment-dwelling companions try to find a way to end his internment.

CHARACTER NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS

GAIA (F, any age)

She is the immortal oldest sister, older than Time, and represents Nature (AKA Mother Nature). She loves her job and is sometimes at odds with Karma and Amora. She is overworked and distracted. She is dressed in green-layered garb.

KARMA (F, any age)

She is the immortal second-oldest child and represents Justice and the rules of the universe. She loves her brother but finds him annoying. She has a serious affect. She is dressed like a referee with a black and white striped top, black pants, and shoes and carries a whistle.

AMORA (F, any age)

She is the immortal third-oldest sister and represents Love in all its cosmic forms. She's a flake but is very focused and looks up to Karma. She is dressed in layered skirts and a blouse with puffy sleeves. She has glitter and sparkles in her hair.

MURPHY (M, any age)

He is the immortal prankster and the youngest of the four siblings. He has a quick wit, is naturally silly, and has no conscience. He exists merely to fool and prank. He wears an old suit, sneakers with no socks, and a black tie. His clothes have not been washed in several years.

JOHN (M, any age)

John, a young school teacher and apartment dweller, is between jobs. He's handy, loves Faye, and dresses comfortably in jeans and a T-shirt.

FAYE (F, any age)

Faye is a young engineer who lives in an apartment with her husband John. She is serious and loving towards John. In Act 1 and Act 2 - Scene 1, she wears comfortable clothes, and in Act 2 - Scene 2, she wears maternity clothes.

SET

This is a single-set play with the simple furnishing of a one-bedroom apartment. At center stage is a couch, two end tables, and a coffee table; the kitchen is stage right and has a simple kitchen table and a few chairs. There is a small refrigerator and a counter. One would envision a sink SR. There are three doors: one CS that exits the apartment, one SL to the bedroom, and one for a small broom closet SR. Pictures are on the wall, and a small table/lamp is in the corner SL.

BLOCKING

This is the director's choice, but instead of having the characters talking to each other from off stage, consider putting them in low light in the wings and slightly illuminating them when they speak.

PROPS

The props include table lamps, one that is intact, and one in pieces for Act 1. There are pillows on the couch and an area rug under it as some blocking is done sitting on the floor. The door knob from the front door will need to be removed and replaced. Also required: nurse hat, stethoscope, two cloth grocery bags with dry goods and cans of soup, a cell phone (preferably not being used), long scarf for Amora, underwear with hearts on it (or similar) for Murphy, tools for John including screwdrivers and pliers, a coffee cup, a whistle on a lariat for Karma, a toothbrush, a towel, a small bowl of water backstage for the cell phone, a bottle of aspirin, beer in bottles (empty), baseball bat, magazines, potato chips, TV remote, glass of water, towel, coat for Faye, two whole place settings, a red card (from soccer), unassembled baby crib, nuts and bolts and assorted tools, instructions for crib, knitting magazine, knitting yarn and needles with some knitting already started, wallet, and handcuffs.

SFX

Sound effects used in this play: Thunderclap, audience applause, car crash, birds chirping, baby crying, harp song, cymbal crash, wind chimes, wind whistling in tall grass, long groan, wind in trees, breaking glass, crash, moaning thud, crickets, kittens, fanfare.

ACT I - SCENE 1

John sits on the floor in front of the coffee table, fixing a lamp. Parts and tools for the lamp are on the table and floor.

Faye crosses from the kitchen to the couch. She is carrying two cloth grocery bags. Murphy, an immortal prankster, lurks behind the couch. He is not seen or heard by John or Faye, but his sisters from the immortal plane can communicate with him.

FAYE

I'll be back in a bit. Do you need anything else? I have most of what I need for dinner, but I'm going to stock up.

Faye stops at John.

JOHN

I'm good. Thanks for running to the store. I still have no idea why this won't turn on.

John drops a part that goes under the couch. John feels around for the part and comes up with it.

JOHN

Damn it. I swear Murphy is the reason this doesn't work.

Faye stops before leaving the apartment. Murphy looks up from behind the couch and comes right next to John. John or Faye do not see him.

MURPHY

(Blows raspberries) Pfffft!

FAYE

Really. Mr. Fumble Fingers, you might as well blame this mess on Tinkerbell.

Murphy fumes to no one and stomps around.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

TINKERBELL? What? THAT no-talent pixie. Why, I'd...

John continues his conversation with Faye.

JOHN

Careful! You could make things worse. Everything I drop disappears.

FAYE

I think Murphy's in your head!

Murphy makes crazy movements around his head and acts like a lunatic.

JOHN

He might as well be living there rent-free.

FAYE

Well, you'll figure it out, or Murphy will have his way with you!

Murphy falls on the floor laughing.

MURPHY

HA HA. You'll find out!

JOHN

(To Faye) That's NOT funny.

Faye moves in to inspect John's work. She giggles. Murphy moves over to watch John work on the lamp.

FAYE

Well, did you try turning it off and back on again?

JOHN

Very funny. Have fun at the store. I'll try not to electrocute myself while you're gone.

FAYE

Don't work on it when it's plugged in—just a suggestion.

Amora enters from the bedroom and is not seen by John or Faye. Amora and Murphy can see and interact with each other.

John continues to work on the lamp. Amora is finishing a conversation with someone offstage.

AMORA

Have fun, you two wonderful love birds! Just be careful around water, and don't eat too many slugs! *(To herself)* Those two are adorable...

Gaia enters from the bedroom and is also not seen by John or Faye. Gaia, Amora, and Murphy can see and interact with each other. Gaia wanders around the kitchen.

GAIA

I haven't been down here in an age. Where did all this junk come from? I sure didn't make any of it.

Amora spots Gaia inspecting the kitchen.

AMORA

Hi, sweet sister! I'm so glad you're here. Love you!

Amora twirls.

GAIA

How's our little love goddess? I got a sprite from Karma that we should come here and keep an eye on Murphy until she gets a break.

AMORA

I got the same sprite. She was pretty blunt. *(In a KARMA voice)* 'You get down there and babysit your little brother until I can get away. I'm not happy.' Maybe this has something to do with these two?

They both turn their gaze toward John and Faye.

GAIA

Maybe. But most likely, this has to do with him.

Gaia points at Murphy. John and Faye continue.

JOHN

Maybe you should be doing this, Ms. Smarty Pants. You're the engineer.

FAYE

(Laughs) Not that kind! Love you!

Faye kisses John on the forehead and exits out the front door. John continues to work on the lamp. Murphy lurks close by.

AMORA

(To herself) Ahh. Isn't that sweet? I did that!

GAIA

Huh? What are you taking credit for now? Remember, I created both of them. We do this every time we get together, and it's always the same thing. Why is it that when two 'somethings' pair bond, you get all romantic? Love does this, and Love conquers that. It's so... SO gross!

AMORA

Hey, Romance is a good thing. Try it sometime, or are you too busy making things that EAT other things? I swear you create some creatures that are next to impossible to pair bond. Like, where did you come up with a manatee? Cute and butt-ugly at the same time. How do they even...

GAIA

Easy, sister. They have fun like everything else. In an eerily wet and weird sort of way, but... *(Beat)* Look, in this universe, eggs come first, then chickens, and then whatever you call chicken love. I can't imagine...

Amora gets in Gaia's face.

AMORA

Fine, eggs are first. But eggs don't fall in love; chickens do! Love doesn't care what came first!

GAIA

You're not making sense! Without my egg, you wouldn't have the chicken. It's hard to be lovey-dovey with a pair of Nothings. How would they even flirt? Do you even listen to yourself?

AMORA

Piffle. Go ahead! Take credit. You're always right, or at least you think you are.

Amore grumbles and changes the subject to John and Faye.

MURPHY LIVES

AMORA

I had to work at coupling those two.

GAIA

He's not the brightest thing ever I've made.

AMORA

Slow, too. Expressing his love for her was tricky! I almost had to get her to sit on him to get his attention.

Murphy sneaks around the couch, eyeing lamp parts. He prepares himself for an attack.

GAIA

Well, Ms. Cupid, whatever you did seems to have worked.

AMORA

I'll work my magic on you someday. You'll never know what hit you.

GAIA

Oh, don't you dare! I can manage on my own; thank you so much. *(Beat)* What's he doing now?

Murphy leans in, picks up a part, hides it under the table, and slaps a tool away. John can't see him. John searches for the missing parts.

MURPHY

(Hums blows raspberries and sings nonsense songs. Ad lib.) Humming...

John finds parts, but Murphy slaps away another part. Amora talks to Gaia.

AMORA

Is this why Karma wanted us to watch him? *(At Murphy)* Hey, Murphy! Leave him alone! I'm sorry, brother, but this behavior is OLD NEWS.

GAIA

Listen to her, Murphy! Cut it out!

AMORA

(To Gaia) He loves his pets so much.

MURPHY LIVES

GAIA

I think you're confusing puppy love with an outright frontal assault. Why is Karma worried about him now? Murphy is just being his typical awful self. He's such a...

*Murphy hides another part under the couch.
John starts talking to himself.*

JOHN

What the hell?

*John reaches for parts under the coffee table.
Murphy pushes pliers off the table.*

MURPHY

I'm just getting warmed up.

Karma enters from the bedroom and joins Amora and Gaia in the kitchen, where they watch. John does not see Karma, but Karma, Amora, Gaia, and Murphy can see and interact with each other. Karma is finishing talking to someone offstage.

KARMA

No! You don't cut in line, ever, you arrogant ninny! Who does that!? So, for fun, here's a big pimple on your forehead to remind you to behave yourself. Do it again and I'll keep adding pimples.

There is the sound of a low groan, and then Karma turns to Gaia and Amora.

GAIA

How do you get from cutting in line to pimples? I have questions...

Karma ignores Gaia...

KARMA

You got my sprites... good. How's this going?

John and Murphy struggle to control parts of the lamp while the three sisters look on.

GAIA

Oh, watch for a second. Murphy's exercising his right to be an idiot.

MURPHY LIVES

KARMA

Could he be any more ridiculous? He's getting worse.

JOHN

Now, where did that go? Man, this lamp has too many parts.

John searches for parts. Amora lovingly interrupts Karma.

AMORA

I'm afraid this is how he behaves when he loves something.

John continues to talk to himself and look for parts.

GAIA

Amora! Get a grip! This isn't LOVE!

AMORA

Please don't yell at me! Murphy's Love is still Love somehow. It's just MEAN Love. There's nothing worse than Mean Love!

KARMA

Stop it, you two! You may not know, but he's been a terror lately. He's going to break something or someone else if we don't do something.

GAIA

He's had way too much coffee.

Murphy swings around to talk to his sisters.

MURPHY

This guy is super easy. Watch this!

Murphy rubs his hands and giggles. John finds a part he wanted but now can't find the pliers.

JOHN

How is this happening? I'm losing it, damn it. It has to be Murphy cause it sure ain't Tinkerbell.

John finds the pliers, but Murphy pushes another part off the table. Gaia, Amora, and Karma look at each other. Murphy laughs hysterically.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

No way! He's been talking to me all morning! Like he can see me! I've got him now!

Murphy flies into joyful hysteria and dances around.

KARMA

Stop it! You're going to go too far this time, little brother!

AMORA

That's no way to treat your pets, Murphy! You have to show them some compassion.

Murphy runs around acting up. Finally, John stops and sits on the couch.

JOHN

I need more coffee. What a fumble fingers today. I call Uncle. *(Beat)* Murphy lives...

MURPHY

You're damn right I do!

John looks away, and Murphy knocks over the lamp. Murphy raises his hands over his head triumphantly.

MURPHY

Tah Dah!

Murphy makes a ballerina spin move and bows low and gracefully to an invisible audience.

GAIA

You're going to mess this up!

KARMA

Oh, brother, you are a moron. Listen to Gaia!

John mumbles to himself.

JOHN

I'm taking a break.

Murphy gets in front of John to confront Karma. Murphy talks to Karma.

MURPHY

I know what I'm doing! Leave me a...

John gets up, but Murphy steps in his way and trips John, who crashes to the floor. John is face down on the floor and doesn't move. Murphy runs to John to inspect.

MURPHY

Ooooh. Um. Uh oh, Oreo. What just happened? That wasn't in my curtain call. I was taking my final bow!

KARMA

I told you, my brother! What a jerk! Did you see that, you two?

AMORA

Yep! *(To Murphy)* Now, what are you doing?

MURPHY

Not a problem. He just fell over...

GAIA

(To Amora)

I'm not buying that. Murphy tried to kill him with kindness. Nice job, huh, Amora?

AMORA

(To Gaia)

What he did was far from kindness. I can't figure out who is worse, you or our broken brother here.

MURPHY

I got this! Hold on...

He pulls John off the floor and onto the couch. Murphy produces a nurse hat from behind the couch and goes into full EMT mode. The sisters gather to watch.

GAIA

This should be good.

Amora covers her eyes.

MURPHY LIVES

AMORA

I can't look...

Murphy is all over John, who is still unconscious.

MURPHY

WET CHECK!

Murphy swipes his hands from the top of John's head to his toes.

KARMA

You're making this worse. You don't know what you're...

Gaia and Amora share a confused look.

MURPHY

OK, no blood! *(Yells)* AIRWAYS!

Murphy holds an imaginary mirror to John's mouth and pretends to look to see if the mirror fogs. Murphy puts his head on John's chest to feel the rise and fall of the chest.

GAIA

Is that supposed to help? *(Head in hands)* I shouldn't watch this, but I have to.

AMORA

He's being so gentle and caring. I love this...

KARMA

Love it or not, he's gone too far. Like he always does.

GAIA

Murphy, stop it!

MURPHY

(To Gaia)

Shush. OK, he's breathing!

(Yells)

PULSE CHECK! What do they call that thing again? A carrot artery?

AMORA

Sweetie, I don't think...

MURPHY LIVES

Panicking, he searches John's head and neck

MURPHY

I don't feel the CARROT!

Gaia comes over to where Murphy is working on John.

GAIA

It's not a Carrot, you idiot.

Gaia feels her pulse at her neck.

GAIA

You're looking for the carotid artery in the neck right here! It's part of their anatomy!

Murphy checks the artery on John's neck and pretends he can feel a pulse.

MURPHY

Whatever, he's got one!

Murphy yells.

MURPHY

ELEVATE THE LEGS!

He scoops John's legs and elevates them quickly. Then Murphy grabs John's head and looks in John's face. John is still out cold.

MURPHY

Holy Macaroni!

Murphy bends over to inspect John's face.

MURPHY

You could maybe take better care of yourself. If those eyebrows keep up their march, they'll meet in the middle of your face like two caterpillars kissing on a first date!

AMORA

I love it when they do that.

Amora scrolls a big heart in the air with her fingers.

MURPHY LIVES

GAIA

Amora, sweetie, caterpillars don't have lips.

AMORA

They would if I were in charge...

KARMA

Stop with the bickering, you two!

Gaia waves off Amora and Karma and gets in Murphy's face.

GAIA

What are you doing? He's not getting any better...

MURPHY

(To Gaia) Mind your own business! *(To John)* And maybe some lip balm. But just a bit right here *(Grabs John's lower lip)* and right here *(Grabs John's upper lip)*. It looks like you've been chasing parked cars. OK, last check for a concussion!

Murphy opens John's eyelids and checks for pupil dilation with an imaginary flashlight.

MURPHY

OK, pupils are dilating and contracting in unison, so no concussion.

GAIA

I've never seen a worse exam. It's like he's prepping a chicken for a pot pie.

Murphy tosses the hat behind the couch and steps back. John starts to come around, holding his head.

JOHN

Um, ouch. Oh man, what was that?

MURPHY

I didn't see anything.

John sits up and talks to himself.

JOHN

What the hell did I trip on? *(Beat)* Wait a minute. I was over there, so how did I end up here?

John feels his forehead.

JOHN

Ouch!

Murphy stands and looks around like he's in trouble.

KARMA

That's it!

Murphy comes around to John and talks to him condescendingly even though John can't hear him.

MURPHY

Did something happen? Did you lose your blankie again? Poor dear...

AMORA

Shush, don't make it worse. That's Karma's job, remember? She's not happy.

KARMA

Oh, that's rich.

MURPHY

Nothing happened here! I was going to...

Karma interrupts Murphy and signals her sisters to gather around her.

KARMA

OK, my fine sisters, we're having a family meeting NOW! Gather 'round.

Karma blows the whistle she has around her neck. Time stops. Lights flicker. John freezes on the couch. Murphy runs behind the couch.

KARMA

Listen up. OK, now that the commotion is over.

Karma looks over at Amora.

KARMA

Amora, my sweet sister, I love you, but did you dress in the dark? I mean, do you have to go out like that?

Gaia piles on.

GAIA

Yeah, sweetie, did you get that dress at Burning Man? Or maybe you stole it from a preschool lost and found.

AMORA

What, this? I love this outfit! I got this from the free clothing bank. They know me there. Do you like it? *(To Karma)* You don't exactly excite anyone with your outfits. You look like an old crow. And Gaia? Green is NOT your shade.

KARMA

Never mind, just try to keep your clothes on. Gaia, you've been busy. Did you hear about one of your micro-creations wreaking havoc down here?

Gaia waves off Karma.

GAIA

Yeah, just now. I can't leave this place for five minutes. From the looks of it, they had a management change, and sometimes things around here get a mind of their own.

KARMA

Sounds like good fun, my sister.

Karma blows her whistle.

KARMA

So glad to see you all. Murphy here has overstepped his boundaries again. This is the third time today.

GAIA

Is this why you called us here? We hadn't been out this way for a while, so we were looking around. What else happened?

KARMA

He pranked poor Ms. Lapinski early this morning. She received a nasty head wound when she tripped over one of Murphy's pranks. BOOM, head first into the dishwasher!

Karma shakes her head. Murphy doesn't move.

MURPHY LIVES

GAIA

I'll bet that hurt.

Amora starts to whimper and sniffle.

AMORA

Murphy can be so cruel...

Karma talks to Gaia.

KARMA

He also tried to kill Mr. Doral. He fell down the stairs and broke EVERYTHING because Murphy tripped him while taking another one of his stupid curtain calls. What is it with you and all the bowing?

Murphy starts to bow and then suddenly stops.

KARMA

He's losing his touch, and I want answers before he takes out three more of them.

AMORA

But Karma, Murphy loves his pets and cares for them by making their life, well, interesting.

Gaia talks to Karma.

GAIA

To Amora's point, Murphy seems to care for them. What's the big deal? Maybe he might be doing some good. You know, survival of the fittest meets extinction of the dimmest? I can't imagine him doing any better job at messing in their pathetic lives than you do.

KARMA

Hey! I'm JUSTICE... and he's (*pointing at Murphy*) JUST NUTS! There's a difference!

AMORA

He was helping. Sort of.

Gaia comes over to Amora and talks to her.

GAIA

That's hardly help...

Karma addresses her sisters.

KARMA

He's never going to change if you keep encouraging him! I mean it! I'm calling a halt to his nonsense until I figure out how to correct this silly behavior.

AMORA

No wait! Can't we...?

Karma interrupts Amora and raises a finger. She turns, points at Murphy, and steps toward him.

KARMA

Here's a taste of your own medicine, little brother.

She pulls out her whistle, raises her right arm, blows a long whistle blast, and then walks over and pushes Murphy with a finger.

KARMA

You're in TIME OUT!

With a distant clap of thunder, the lights flicker, and time STARTS. The family looks at John and then at Murphy. Amora starts to weep quietly into her hands. Gaia shakes her head. John begins to recover from his fall. Amora talks to Murphy.

AMORA

Boy, you did it this time, little brother. I still love you!! (To Karma). Why do you have to be such, such, a NOT-FUN-SISTER sometimes? (Mutters under her breath) In a kind, loving way, of course.

KARMA

What!?! What did you say?

Karma waves off Amora.

GAIA

It'll be good for him. At least we know where he'll be for a little while anyway. I need to focus on corralling the tiny little creatures infecting everyone down here.

KARMA

Let's go before he gives me a reason to turn him into a step stool.

Karma, Amora, and Gaia exit out the front door. John struggles to recover. Murphy goes to the couch and crouches by John, who is still seated. Long pause. They make eye contact and stare at each other from arm's length. John holds his head and stands.

JOHN

What? Who are...?

Murphy stands with him.

MURPHY

Who. Who? Um, what do you mean, *(Panicked)* WHO?

JOHN

Who are you, and what are you doing in my apartment?

John steps back and almost falls. Murphy panics.

MURPHY

Um, I'm nobody. I should be going now. Nice to meet you.

Murphy runs around the apartment and tries the front door, but it won't open. He's trapped.

MURPHY

(Whispers to Karma)

Look what you've done, Karma! Get me out of here!

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Ha, ha, ha, ha. *(Beat)* No...

MURPHY

No, wait! I can get out of this. I must have some magic left over from yesterday's raid on the dental school. *(Checks pockets)* I used a toothbrush to make my escape.

Murphy frantically pulls out a toothbrush and makes random movements with his arms. He waves the toothbrush like a wand to make himself disappear, but with no effect.

JOHN

What are you doing? Who are you?

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

(Ignoring John)

Oh crap, I forgot the order. What am I supposed to do first?

He tosses the toothbrush behind the couch.

JOHN

STOP! How did you get in here? I'm calling the...

MURPHY

Um, oh, you don't want to do that. *(Thinking)* Do you want a biscuit?

JOHN

A what?

John holds his head and feels a bump.

JOHN

Ouch! YOU! You stay right there.

John goes to the freezer for a bag of frozen peas. Murphy raises his arms and puts his fingers in his ears.

MURPHY

(Blows raspberries)

Pfffft...

Time stops, the lights flicker, and John freezes in space on his way to the kitchen.

MURPHY

Karma! Karma, get in here! What the hell?

Karma enters from the front door, holding a tire iron and a wig like nothing has happened.

KARMA

Yes?

MURPHY

(Points to the tire iron and wig)

Huh? What the hell is that? Did you break something? *(Beat)* Never mind. Why did you do this to me?

KARMA

I've had it up to here, my dear idiot brother. It's about time, and I'm so sick of...

MURPHY

Of what? This IS what I do. I DO this, and I'm good at it. (*Pointing to the wig*) By the looks of it, WAY better than you. Why now?

KARMA

(*Furious*)

Why not now, you stinker? You just pulled one prank too many—way too many, including the three this morning. And I'm tired of cleaning up your messes. I'm not your mother!

GAIA (OFFSTAGE)

You got that right! At least she had a...

KARMA

(*Ignoring Gaia*)

You. Off racing around causing all sorts of damage with no, zero, NADA consequences. Well, you may be GOOD at whatever it is you do, but I'm better at handing out the consequences. As payback, you're stuck with HIM for now.

She pauses and walks around the apartment, checking for dust with her finger. She pauses, looks at the result, and holds her nose.

MURPHY

Let me go! I don't belong here. The light sucks, the colors are wrong, and this place smells BAD.

KARMA

Deal with it! I'm warning you if you don't do something about your behavior...

MURPHY

I'm fine!

Karma looks at the ceiling.

KARMA

Oh, this is like talking to the ceiling.

She focuses back on Murphy and tries again.

KARMA

Listen. Very. Carefully. You stay here in their world. Stay! BAD DOG! Think about what you're doing to these poor creatures, if thinking is even possible. I'm fed up! I'll be back later to see how you're doing.

MURPHY

Wait! You can't seriously leave me here. He just fell over! They ALL fall over. All the time! So what? I was pretty graceful, especially there at the end.

KARMA

Graceful? I'm leaving. Right now, I get to reward some guy who did something useful. Get this. He saved his neighbor's poor dog from eating two pounds of raisins! Could you imagine?

Karma blows her whistle. The lights flicker, and Time gets unstuck. Karma exits the front door, and John continues his quest for a frozen bag of peas. Murphy tries to hide behind the couch but keeps peeking out. John notices Murphy behind the couch and stops.

JOHN

Come here, you! How did you get in here? Answer me!

MURPHY

Um, I...

JOHN

Answer me! What are you? Stupid?

Murphy comes out from behind the couch, stands up straight, composes himself, and goes to lecture.

MURPHY

That's an ugly rumor. I'm actually quite well-educated. I've graduated several times, you know.

JOHN

I can't imagine!

MURPHY

Huh... *(Slowly and spelling out letters)* I have earned a B.O. and an E.U.U. from reputable institutions including ACME College and Screw U. I didn't want to get stale at just one school. I hear that isn't good for one's academic reputation.

MURPHY LIVES

JOHN

What!?

Murphy starts pacing.

MURPHY

My professors hold me in the highest...

JOHN

SHUT! UP!

Murphy crawls onto the couch and curls up in a ball. John goes looking for his cell phone in the kitchen.

JOHN

Stay right there. When the cops arrive, you can tell them what you're doing here. And who you are and how you got in here.

Murphy sits motionless. John continues to search for his phone.

MURPHY

Are you looking for that sad little box that's usually connected to your hand? Or your ear?

Murphy walks around, pretending to talk on an imaginary cell phone.

JOHN

Yeah, it's called a PHONE! We punch in numbers, and someone answers on the other end. Pretty simple. In this case, the cops answer, get my address, and come and arrest you for breaking in here. *(To himself)* Where'd I put it?

MURPHY

Look, all this puttering around is never going to work. You need to relax a little bit. Take a nap. *(Talks down to John like he's a little kid.)* Where is your emotional support blanket? Go get your blue fuzzy one with the kittens.

John ignores Murphy, searches the couch where Murphy is, and rechecks his pockets.

JOHN

(Points to the couch)

I swear my phone was right here. I just used it to call Mom.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

We're still talking about that little box thing with the lights.

Murphy points toward the bedroom.

JOHN

Seriously? You don't know what a cell phone is?

MURPHY

Look in the little white pond in that tiny room back there. *(Giggles)* I found out it didn't float so well. I pushed the magic handle, and the pond made a whooshing sound, but the box still didn't float or light up or ANYTHING.

JOHN

(Beat) You put my phone in the toilet?

MURPHY

OK, a toilet. I know what that is! Or, a water closet, tuvalet, gabinetto, or some other weird translation. It depends on where you drop your pants.

Murphy drops his pants to reveal his boxers with red hearts. He looks down.

MURPHY

My sister gave me these.

AMORA (OFFSTAGE)

They look SO good...

Murphy gets in John's face.

MURPHY

I love messing with you. You'd be surprised at how many times those boxes go in the toilet without my help. They're pretty slippery, in a way.

John runs to the bedroom and back out again with a wet phone. He dries his wet hands on his pants. He puts the phone on the kitchen table and then goes to the front door.

JOHN

I'm going next door to my neighbor. She's got a phone. You're a psycho, and I'm leaving.

John tries the door, but he pulls the door knob off. He drops the doorknob, backs up, and panics. John walks over to Murphy and stares.

JOHN

What is this? What's going on here?

Murphy picks at his clothes.

JOHN

OK, you. Who are you?

MURPHY

Oh, finally, you want to know a bit about ME? Not that I want to tell you. You seem, I don't know, self-absorbed?

Murphy strolls around and then goes over to John. He grabs his hand and gives it a hard shake.

MURPHY

Now, try to pay attention. *(Beat)* Some know me as Pan. Or Anasi. Or The Coyote, Jack, Loki, Pock, or The Joker; I love the Joker, but I go by Murphy around these parts! Hey, it doesn't matter what you call me; my work speaks for itself.

Murphy bows low.

JOHN

You're suffering from some pathology. I need to...

MURPHY

I've taken on kings and con men, goddesses and grandmothers, and I don't care who they are, where they live, or if they wear plaid over stripes. And yes, you've been talking to me all morning.

JOHN

Is this some kind of joke? I always talk to Murphy, but not like...

Murphy continues to pontificate.

MURPHY

And get this. I'm not here. Well, I'm usually here but not here, but when I'm not here, I'm here whether you like it or not. So here, not here, it's all the same to me. But creating misery for you is my thing. Anything that you do, I can undo *(Snaps fingers)* in a flash.

Murphy looks at John, tosses a lamp part off the coffee table, and takes another low bow. There is the sound of an audience clapping in the distance.

JOHN

Murphy. *(Beat)* As in the Murphy from Murphy's Law? Anything that can go wrong will go wrong? That Murphy? And you think you're him? Did I call you here?

John walks around Murphy a couple of times. Murphy ignores him.

MURPHY

Yeah, you've talked to me more than a few times. Just lately, in fact. Normally, cursing or worse, but you did say MY name like, 'Murphy this!' Or 'Murphy that!' And you swear a lot, like 'Darn you, Murphy!'

Murphy composes himself.

MURPHY

Typically, you yell other names like GEES-US and his pal, GAWD. *(Spelling it out)* G-A-W-D. Am I spelling that right? Anyway, they don't run in my circle.

JOHN

Great. I'm talking to an atheist who used to be invisible. *(Sarcastically)* Could this get any better?

John is still a bit dizzy from his fall. He holds his head and sits on the couch. Murphy sits next to him.

MURPHY

So far, so good. You're a quick study. I'm surprised 'cause everyone I've dealt with down here is dumb as soup. You're always trying to second-guess me or, worse, ignore me.

Murphy reaches over and starts to poke John.

MURPHY

NOT. GOING. TO. HAPPEN. Like I was telling Karma, I can't mess with your kind enough. It's my reason for living and I live it UP! Karma is my older sister and more compassionate. *(Beat)* Sometimes... She thinks I should stop messing around with all of you. She put me in Time Out *(Under his breath)* the B...

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Watch it! You're already on thin ice, mister!

JOHN

She put you here? Does your sister think she's Karma? Is she as loony as you are?

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Hey!

Murphy regroupes, stands, and paces. He finds something to eat off his clothes and continues.

MURPHY

I was trying to explain. I'm not like her. She's the referee around here and is not all that nice about it.

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

REALLY! If you keep that up, you're not getting out of the penalty box.

Murphy talks to Karma offstage.

MURPHY

I'm getting better. *(To John)* She's way more direct. And she blows a mean whistle.

Murphy holds his ears like Karma is going to blow the whistle, but nothing happens. John stands while holding his head and follows Murphy around while he paces.

JOHN

So, what was I doing 'wrong' when you tripped me?

MURPHY

You're fine. Karma and I had a slight disagreement today, though we agreed on one thing. We both think your kind is too stupid to do anything right. That much is certain. But then, we part ways. She corrects you when you misbehave to get you back on track, and me, well, I don't care what you do. I'm just in it to have FUN.

JOHN

I got it; Your sister stuck you here for having too much fun. *(More sarcasm)* This must be so annoying for you.

John stops following Murphy and collects himself.

JOHN

OK, if I can't leave or call the cops, why don't you leave? Just walk out of here? Clearly, you don't want to be here.

MURPHY

Nope, I can't do that. Karma wants me to make this right, though I'm not sure what to do.

JOHN

Again, what exactly is it that you do DO? If you can tell me that we might...

Murphy gets excited and starts to pace.

MURPHY

That's it! I DOO DOO! All over your life! When you are DO - ING something, I doo doo on it! (*Beat*) I love this!! The amount of doo-doo I make depends on my effort and whether I get distracted. In your case, I was laser-focused. That's my normal M.O. But, the next thing I knew, you were down for the count. What happened to you was a silly accident.

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

You are the VERY DEFINITION of an ACCIDENT! What are you telling him...

JOHN

Accident? You tripped me. I could have been seriously injured, Mr. Murphy, or whoever you are.

MURPHY

Baloney. I never touched you. I almost never touched you. (*Beat*) I certainly don't deserve a time-out.

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

You don't get a vote...

Murphy paces.

MURPHY

Now, I have to find some way to get out of this mess.

JOHN

OK, so you're here to make my life miserable. How exactly do you, (*Hesitates at the wrong choice of words*) no, DID you manage all that when I wasn't looking?

MURPHY

Let me demonstrate.

He goes to the lamp, picks up a part, and tosses it under the couch with a flourish. He slides the another part under the coffee table. He knocks the lamp over and then moves the shade around. Finally, he pauses, tosses a tool under the couch, stands up, and takes a bow.

MURPHY

I'm usually super fast, but my abilities seem a bit limited under the circumstances.

JOHN

OK, so you do this for a living? And you've chosen me as your only victim, and now I am cursed. Great...

MURPHY

OH, NO! I can do this a million billion times a day to just about anyone and everyone. I'm really that good. I pull fantastic stunts. I made the news at the senior center last week with just a few jars of honey and a family of squirrels!

JOHN

Honey and squirrels, that's creative. *(To himself)* He's nuts...

MURPHY

(Looking humble)

Never mind. I work mostly alone, but sometimes I have help, of course.

John looks more skeptical, gives up, and sits on the couch.

JOHN

(Exhausted)

Help?

MURPHY

Well, yeah, help. You guys help me in ways I couldn't dream of. You're so busy sabotaging yourselves that I don't get to step in half the time. It's like you're trying to put me out of a job.

JOHN

What do you mean? Who's helping you do this?

Murphy is on point and very focused. He paces like he's lecturing.

MURPHY

Oh, let's see. Here's a couple on the shortlist. OK. (*Giggling*) Anyone who creates your stupid packaging. You know, the protective FILM thing under mayonnaise lids that takes TWO HUNDRED foot-pounds of torque to remove!

Murphy acts out wrestling with an imaginary jar.

MURPHY

I love the faces you make when you're trying to get that off. Result? (*Emphatic*) NO. MORE. MAYO. FOR. YOU! Or at least not without a crowbar!

JOHN

That 'film' is there for a reason, but you don't open mayonnaise jars, do you?

MURPHY

I'm more on Team Mustard...

John stands and wobbles on his feet.

JOHN

My head hurts. You wait right there. I'm going for an aspirin.

John starts for the kitchen. Murphy follows.

MURPHY

OH, and the caps on that aspirin bottle and, frankly, all the other crappy pill containers you use. (*Acts this out*) Push. Squeeze. Turn. Pull up. Spin around. Bang it on the door frame. Hilarious. Like you'll DIE trying to get into your medicine! (*Pause*) LITERALLY!

Murphy grabs his chest and falls over, feigning dead, then stands up

MURPHY

Cruel. I love these folks. Is making stuff so hard to get into somehow funny to you all, or what?

John comes back with the aspirin bottle he found on the kitchen counter. He struggles with the cap.

JOHN

I can get into the aspirin bottle just fine. (*Whispers to himself*) If I could just line up these stupid arrows...

John gives up on trying to open the bottle. Murphy paces and then raises a finger in the air like he's thought of something else. Murphy picks up John's cell phone.

MURPHY

Another helper is these little boxes that are glued to your hand that bleep and bloop and distract the hell out of you. Is there something important going on there?

Murphy shakes it before John can stop him and bangs it on the table. John grabs his phone.

JOHN

Stop that! What are you doing?

MURPHY

There must be magical secrets in these things. You all are so serious looking at your little boxes, not noticing where you're going or what you're doing. I especially like it when you all walk into furniture.

Murphy acts this out, holds the phone, falls over the couch, and recovers.

MURPHY

Or into traffic. I'm not recreating that one for you. Hilarious! I can't compete with this and a half-dozen other little destructive gizmos. You do this to yourselves. Like you're in a hurry to end your feeble existence for no reason other than to watch, WHAT? CAT VIDEOS?

Murphy tosses the phone on the table.

JOHN

So you think the people who make packaging and cell phones are helping you make us miserable?

MURPHY

Help!?! They're professionals and don't need my help. Everything they create messes with you all day. (*Feigns sadness*) I often feel like I am not needed. (*Beat*) Oh, I also get help from my family, if you want to call it that. Such as they are.

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Oh, you're a REAL saint!

JOHN

Family? What family? Do they harass everyone, too?

MURPHY

No one is harassing you. You all get what you deserve. I told you about Karma. She works hard every day trying to spread her message, except when she's at Pilates. There is no harassment there.

John stares. Murphy continues trying to explain to John.

MURPHY

Our older sister Gaia runs all the nature stuff.

JOHN

Nature?

MURPHY

You know, Mother Nature. She manages creation and then disasters and then creation again. And then disasters again. She's never been quite sure... She can't make up her mind, but she stays busy!

GAIA (OFFSTAGE)

There's a method to my... *(Beat)* Method!

MURPHY

She's called Mother down here, though I'm not sure why. That'd be something, huh? What would Mother Nature give birth to besides EVERYTHING all at once?

GAIA (OFFSTAGE)

That's not funny... And quite gross.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

MURPHY

Gaia's an artist. She can create anything. But you keep her busy by wrecking all the cool stuff that took her a long time to make. She's NOT happy with any of you.

GAIA (OFFSTAGE)

Damn, I hate it when you're nice to me. Love you, too, little brother.

Murphy stops and thinks.

MURPHY

Oh, yeah. My other sister, Amora, is a marshmallow. She's all about romance and LOVE!

Murphy puts his finger down his throat and pretends to gag.

MURPHY

Ick! She can couple anyone or anything together. I've seen it. (*Beat*) Even you!

AMORA (OFFSTAGE)

Murph, that's sweet of you. Love you, too.

JOHN

What do you mean, me? I've never seen or met this Amora in my life.

MURPHY

She's shy, so you won't see her around except on Valentine's Day. She's good, though. She once made a frog fall in love with a princess! It didn't end well. The Princess was very enthusiastic at first, but the frog ended up being dee-licious.

AMORA

She was confused and wasn't into a long-term commitment.

JOHN

That's a fairy tale, for Pete's sake. Did she eat him?

MURPHY

Yep, she had frog legs with a little dill sauce and capers. Great recipe. Anyway, I love messing with her projects. You Losers, um, Lovers are SO distracted.

JOHN

Anyone else? Never mind. So your sisters prank everyone as well? They just run around and make our lives miserable?

MURPHY

Buddy! Calm yourself. There's only ONE me. How could there be more than one? I'm the best.

Murphy bows low.

JOHN

Great. So what do we do now? My wife will be home any...

He is interrupted by the front door opening. Faye enters, carrying two cloth bags full of groceries in her arms.

MURPHY

OH BOY! Watch this!

JOHN

(In a loud whisper)

No! Wait! Don't do that!

Murphy grabs one of the bags Faye is carrying and pulls it out of her hands. Groceries fall to the floor.

FAYE

Oh, No. What the...?

She struggles to hold on to the other bag, but Murphy pulls the top over, and groceries fall out. She bends over to reach for a can. Before she can pick it up, Murphy kicks it under the kitchen table.

JOHN

(To Murphy in a loud whisper)

Oh, crap. Look what you've done.

Faye interrupts John as she composes herself but can't see or hear Murphy.

FAYE

John, what are you doing?

John looks around and finds Murphy sitting at the kitchen table, picking his teeth. John glares. Faye collects groceries; her back is turned.

JOHN

(To Faye)

Oh, um, sorry, honey. Let me help...

MURPHY

(To John)

She can't see or hear me. You're the only one who can. Isn't that precious? I'd be careful about who you call names.

Faye collects the groceries and the bags off the floor and starts to put them away.

JOHN

(Whispering to Murphy)

What do you mean she can't see you? You're right here. Why the full-on assault? Why her? And really, both bags? No wonder you're in so much trouble.

FAYE

What? Did you say something? What trouble?

JOHN

No. No. Nothing. No trouble. Let me help you. Man, that was something...

John starts to collect groceries while Murphy tries to anticipate his next move by kicking cans out of the way. Faye is also helping collect groceries. John and Faye put the groceries on the table.

JOHN

(Whispering to Murphy)

Stop for one sec! Let me get her settled. I'll get back to you.

FAYE

That was something. I thought I had a good grip, and the next thing I knew, groceries were flying everywhere. I bought the list and some extra cans of soup. I might have overpacked *(She picks up a bag)* these.

JOHN

They looked heavy.

FAYE

I should have used the handles. I can't believe they just slipped out of my hands like that.

She spies the doorknob on the floor and retrieves it.

FAYE

Hey, what happened to the doorknob?

John grabs the door knob from Faye. He tries unsuccessfully to jam it back on the door. He puts it on the floor.

JOHN

Another thing to fix around here...

John picks up the groceries Faye hasn't collected and sets them on the table. Murphy helps by kicking items away from him.

JOHN

(Under his breath to Murphy)

Really? Now? Cool it, damn it!

MURPHY

(Giggling)

I have to stay in practice. I'm working out here. I can't lose my edge, you know.

After all the groceries are collected, Faye hugs John.

FAYE

Thanks for helping. I don't know WHAT happened. Anyway, I'm going to change and lie down before I make dinner. We're having goulash like Mom's, only better. I'll go easy on the green pepper.

JOHN

(Not enthusiastically)

Oh, boy.

Faye walks by the half-finished lamp project.

FAYE

How's the lamp project coming? Is it fixed yet? I love that reading lamp.

Faye grabs a small white paper bag from the counter and exits to the bedroom.

JOHN

(Fuming)

What the hell was that!? Is messing with Faye somehow going to get you 'back' to wherever you're from? I don't think so. Maybe I should talk with Karla or Kasha or whatever her name is...

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

Karma!

JOHN

Fine. I'd like to have a word with her.

MURPHY

Hey, have at her. You think I'm bad? Ha! Let me know how that turns out...

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Hey, I'm not that bad!

JOHN

(Under his breath)

OK, I don't need any more trouble. Dealing with you is enough.

MURPHY

The grocery bag thing was hilarious! The final punt was incredible! Did you see that? Boom! Right under the table. Usually, I'd finish with one of my 'spin' moves.

Murphy acts his spin move on an imaginary thing on the floor. John confronts him.

JOHN

Leave! Just go out the door and go SOMEWHERE ELSE!

FAYE (OFFSTAGE)

Is someone here? Why are you yelling? Why do you want me to leave?

JOHN

Um, no, sweetie, I was, um, *(Beat)* watching TV.

John gets in Murphy's face.

JOHN

(Loud whisper to Murphy)

Listen, you! Just go. Really. What's stopping you? You've had your fun.

MURPHY

Fun? You call that FUN? What I did to the Pope yesterday was fun. This is not fun.

JOHN

Look, there's the door. Walk out of here.

MURPHY

Um. Well. I... *(Beat)* I can't.

JOHN

What do you mean you 'Can't?'

MURPHY

You're stuck with me until I figure this out, or Karma shows pity on me and lets me leave. Ridiculous really. This is not what I would have picked for punishment. My sister doesn't have a lot of imagination.

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

Next time, I won't be so nice about where I put you in time-out...

Murphy waves off Karma's comments.

JOHN

(Still in a loud whisper)

So you're stuck? What now!?

MURPHY

My word, you're excitable.

JOHN

How long is this exile going to last?

MURPHY

For your sake, I hope not long. I get bored pretty easily. *(Giggling)* If I were you, I'd stop working on that lamp.

JOHN

What? No way!

MURPHY

(Ignoring John)

She's never stuck me in a place like THIS *(Points to everywhere)* before. I'm a bit lost here. You'll have to put up with me until we figure this out.

JOHN

We? Who's WE?

MURPHY

You started this! If you hadn't hit your head, I'd have done two or three thousand little projects by now. Give or take. You ruined my whole day.

JOHN

What about my day? And the lump on my head and the lamp and groceries? How am I going to explain you to Faye? How's this going to work if she can't see you? She can probably smell you, though. I don't see a happy ending here.

MURPHY

She's not going to be a bother. I can deal with her like I've dealt with so many others. If she gives me trouble, I'll do that cool twist, slash, spin move, and when she's out cold, I'll drag her COLD, LIFELESS body out back and bury her next to the cat you thought you buried last year. Man, you DID NOT do a good job with the cat-burying thing. Your neighbor's dog was horking up cat fur for a week!

JOHN

Cold lifeless what? And what about poor old Whiskers?

Murphy pats John on the back.

MURPHY

Kidding! I was kidding. Lighten up, Buddy. Don't take yourself so seriously.

JOHN

Listen, you leave Faye out of this, and I'll help you get 'back' to where you belong, which is Hell as far as I'm concerned.

MURPHY

Hell? Really? Don't pull the Catholic crap on me, Mister. I saw you at Mass, and you're no choir boy. Lots of missed practices, oh, and remember Lolly Templeton?

JOHN

How do you know her? My girlfriend from State?

MURPHY

Man, I know everyone! I saw your shenanigans behind the altar.

Murphy starts to pace again.

MURPHY

(To John)

There's nothing you can do. I seem to drain Karma's 'cosmic bank account.' She feels like you all down here are somehow an INVESTMENT. In what? I have no clue.

Murphy's pace quickens. He straightens his tie and starts talking like a hedge fund manager.

MURPHY

She can do better. To put it more succinctly, if Karma divested her psychic portfolio and remixed it to hold more stable ethereal equities and long-term universal ETFs, without the free-floating fiduciary capitalizations, she'd get ahead of that 'mortal' risk component and that, my dear investor, would drive her long-term forecast into positive territory for the foreseeable...

KARMA (OFFSTAGE)

You are so full of...

JOHN

What the hell are you talking about? Capitalizations? ETFs. What does that have to do with Karma? She won't do anything, *(Beat)* BAD, will she?

MURPHY

Nah, she'll do what she always does. First, she'll make an example of some Real Bad Apple. Then, she'll watch from the sidelines as the consequences unfold. She's all about the drama since she was a theater major. She works very quickly, but once she intervenes... *(Trails off)*

KARMA

Faster than you, dear brother.

Beat. Murphy looks for a long time at John.

MURPHY

Her interventions can be quite permanent, capiche? Lately, there have been a lot of bad apples, and she's preparing some frightening consequences. I've seen this before. When she gets excited, I usually hide under the bed.

JOHN

Look, I'd rather not have to deal with your sister. My hands are full with you at the moment.

MURPHY

OK, moving on. We should get a few things straight if I have to stay here.

JOHN

You can't stay here!

MURPHY

Hey, it'll be fun... *(To himself)* Not...

Murphy starts to pace.

MURPHY

Here's how it's going to work. I don't need a bed because I don't sleep. When I am awake, I pace a lot.

Murphy's pace gets quicker.

MURPHY

I mean A LOT! When I'm pacing, I tend to pick at myself: my teeth, my nose, or anything I can get my finger in or on—a nervous habit. My therapist thinks I have a CONDITION, and she's not wrong.

Murphy grabs a stethoscope from behind the couch, puts it around his neck, and launches into full psychiatrist mode.

MURPHY

(Bit of a German accent)

Under observation, the general finding is that I have several conditions, but my coping mechanisms usually prevail over most of those, especially across my emotional affective range. My neurological thematic energies in-spectrum are self-derived closed-loop manifestations. Oh, of course, those are the best kind. Everyone knows that. Most of my more serious triggers stem from a deviated central cortical...

JOHN

Stop talking! Now, what are you going on about?

Murphy snaps out of it and tosses the stethoscope.

MURPHY

I'm just a bit anxious, is all. I'm pretty maintenance-free overall. I only have a few MUSTS. Like dry clean only and folded, no hangers. I mean, who HANGS anymore? So not cool.

JOHN

You don't look like the dry-cleaning type. Have you looked in a mirror lately?

Murphy waves him off.

MURPHY

No worries. I don't change my clothes. I mean, this is a badass outfit, right?

Murphy spins around to show off his outfit.

JOHN

(Hesitates)

Sure... Ok.

MURPHY

Oh, and a firm mattress and no cheap sheets. They don't last and are hard to iron. But none of that matters since I don't sleep.

JOHN

If you don't sleep and always pace, Faye will hear you!

MURPHY

No, she's not part of this party. Just you and me, pal!

Murphy slaps John on the shoulder and laughs.

MURPHY

Oh, and about the food. I'm allergic to dairy, meat, anything that flies, wheat, shellfish, rice, beans, anything green or red. I love gluten, not the wheat variety. Is that a thing? And nothing chewy, squishy, hard, rubbery, greasy, acidic, or fizzy. I think that covers it. I really can't remember the whole list. I'm an impulsive eater, so I'll try anything once. Oh, but I love coffee.

JOHN

If I was allergic to everything, didn't sleep, ate crappy food, and drank pots of coffee, I'd be as messed up as you. *(Sarcastic)* How lucky for me.

MURPHY

(Ignoring John)

I can be a real asset if I want, you know. I have powers.

JOHN

I smelled your powers already. Do not use your 'powers' anymore; you got that?

Murphy raises his butt like he's going to fart but belches instead and then smiles.

MURPHY

(Giggles)

One of my special powers.

John backs away and stares. There is a sound of a car crash in the distance. Karma enters from the front door.

KARMA

(Talking to someone offstage)

That's what I call 'Texting And Driving - Penance 101.' I'm sure that's going to leave a mark. Good luck explaining that to your parents!

Karma raises her whistle and blows. Time stops, including Murphy. The lights flicker and recover. Gaia emerges from the bedroom. Karma wanders around the apartment.

KARMA

I'm calling another family meeting before he uses his special powers again. Phew!

GAIA

Are you going to leave him here like this? In addition to that smell, he could do a great deal of damage. Damage I may not be able to fix. Or it might take a couple hundred of their years to repair. Maybe you should reconsider?

KARMA

No way. *(Beat)* Where's Amora?

GAIA

She's in couple's counseling with a couple of quadrupeds. Some arguments about stripes versus spots. She told me to tell you not to bother her.

KARMA

Fine. It's you and me.

GAIA

You did this once before, but you don't remember because your pet died, and you were all, 'Woe is me' and had to take out your frustration on our little brother there.

KARMA

This isn't getting us anywhere. I say we give dear Murphy some conditions. He needs a way to redeem himself. He may not be able to change, but it might be fun watching him try.

GAIA

Oh, I know! *(Excited)* He could help chase off the micro bugs that are infecting this place! His eyesight is better than mine. *(Pause)* No, that's never going to happen.

Karma stops and thinks.

KARMA

Anyway, do you have other ideas on how to resolve this?

Karma points to Murphy.

KARMA

THIS?

GAIA

Why don't you just let him sit and stew for a bit? I have a date tonight with a hot landscape architect I met on Timber, so I need to get going. Amora's idea...

Gaia rolls her eyes.

GAIA

We'll have to let Nature take its course. *(Giggles)* I love that saying.

KARMA

OK, I'll leave him here for now. I don't have time to babysit the jackass, either.

Karma waves her hand like she's hailing a cab and STARTS Time. Birds chirp in the distance. The lights flicker and return to normal. Gaia through exits the front door.

KARMA

(To Murphy)

I was going to give you a chance to make amends for your behavior, but honestly, I can't come up with a way for you to make up for all the trouble you've caused. I'm done. I'm going to leave you here with them for now. I'll figure this out later.

MURPHY

(Panicking)

NO! Wait! Don't leave me here! I'll do anything!

KARMA

Yes, that's the problem right there. You do ANYTHING. You have no control. Pull yourself together, little brother.

Karma blows him a kiss and exits through the front door. Murphy picks up something to throw, shakes it, and then puts it down, but not gently.

MURPHY LIVES

BLACKOUT

ACT II - SCENE 1

The apartment is trashed. Murphy dances around the apartment, tossing pillows on the floor, skewing picture frames on the walls, and kicking stuff under the couch. The lamp is still in pieces on the coffee table.

MURPHY

(Humming and dancing around)

I'm pretty good at this roommate stuff. I could like this! I'm getting into a rhythm here, getting my timing down.

He looks around, eyeing his chaotic creation.

MURPHY

Look at how nice this looks! Why wouldn't someone want to live with me? This is perfect!

John enters from the bedroom.

JOHN

What the...?

Waved off by Murphy.

MURPHY

I know, right? Doesn't it look great? I love these little piles, and oh man, look at this arrangement.

He points to the pillows on the floor.

MURPHY

Watch this!

Before John can react, Murphy races around the room, rearranging all the piles he made.

MURPHY

And Voila! I'm also an excellent cleaner! Look at how tidy this is!

MURPHY LIVES

JOHN

No, no. This isn't going to do the trick. You need to calm down. We'll talk about how to clean later.

Faye enters. Murphy folds into the background.

FAYE

John? *(Beat)* Why is the living room messed up, and what's all that under the couch? What's going on?

JOHN

I was trying out some different decorating ideas, and it got out of hand. I'll put it back, don't worry. Why don't you get some coffee, and I'll straighten up.

Murphy giggles from the corner. Faye moves to the kitchen.

MURPHY

This is going to be a riot! Like the OLD me but in a NEW WAY!

John moves quickly to put stuff back, but Murphy interferes.

JOHN

(Under his breath at Murphy)

Cool it! She's right here!

MURPHY

I know! That's what makes it so much fun!

Faye moves to get coffee. Murphy moves around the room, undoing all of John's straightening. John moves to put it back. Both finally give up. Murphy sits on the couch, pretending to smoke a cigarette. The room is half-tidy. Karma and Gaia enter through the front door. They sit at the kitchen table. Karma is polishing her whistle. Gaia pulls out knitting and starts to knit. Faye comes back with a coffee cup.

KARMA

(To Gaia)

So far, I don't see any fires or holes in the floor.

GAIA

Everything looks OK to me. Wasn't their stuff in a different place last time we were here? It seems a bit more...organic... More to my taste, anyway.

KARMA

I wouldn't know. I got an 'F' in Style. I have a feeling someone here won't like this arrangement.

FAYE

(To John)

What's going on with you lately? Yesterday, you were talking to yourself. Today, you're acting like a little kid.

John sits in the clutter. Murphy dances around with a pillow.

JOHN

I don't know. Stress maybe? Being between jobs doesn't help. And my mother is coming over. I just haven't been...

FAYE

I love you, honey. The job will happen when the Universe wants it to...

GAIA

(To Karma)

Wait! Does the Universe hand out jobs now? I've been to their office and seen postures on the corkboard of BAD people, but no job postings. Are you in on this?

KARMA

I have no idea what she's talking about.

FAYE

(Back to John)

Your Mother is fine. She's just a bit anxious. Like you! You two are a pair. I don't know who makes who more nervous. We're going back to the store. You have to get your Mom a present. I'm going to put on a sweater, and then you and I are leaving. You need to get some fresh air.

John looks at Murphy, who pretends to blow air at John's head.

JOHN

Clearly.

Faye exits to the bedroom.

JOHN

(Loud whisper to Murphy)

Clean this up! Now!

MURPHY

No way! It's perfect... or, as I like to say, MURPH-ECT! Get it? Murphy Perfect? *(Beat)*
Okay, fine!

KARMA

More like MURPH-PIDITY.

GAIA

Good one! You always were clever with words.

John confronts Murphy.

JOHN

NOW! Put this stuff back, or I'll expose you for who you truly are.

MURPHY

Your wife would never believe you. She can't see or hear me, and you're already in the dog house. *(Barks like a dog a few times)* All she needs is more ammo. You go right ahead. Have fun!

Murphy sits and plays with the clutter. John moves to the kitchen.

JOHN

OK, I'll make YOUR life miserable.

John goes to the kitchen closet and gets a baseball bat. John moves to confront Murphy.

MURPHY

Now wait! That's assault! That won't fix anything. Besides, you can swing at me all you want. I'm not here, remember? All you're going to do is make a bigger mess.

John pokes Murphy in the belly with the end of the bat. Murphy recoils.

MURPHY

OUCH! Cut it out! What? Wait a minute!

John pokes Murphy again. Karma and Gaia look at each other and giggle.

JOHN

Seems like you're getting the message just fine from my friend here. Go ahead! Do something. Come get me. Throw my bat under the couch. Turn it into a banana or something! Come on, Mister Special Powers, let'er rip.

John approaches and pokes Murphy.

MURPHY

(Backs away)

OK, this is new. Look! OK. Stop poking me with that thing, OK? Is that some special wand? Karma, did you give that to him?

KARMA

(Laughing)

Nope! It looks like it tickles.

GAIA

He's got a lot of padding there. I'm pretty sure he doesn't feel it. He's such a baby!

John steps forward.

JOHN

Here's how this is going to work. You're going to put this apartment back the way you found it. RIGHT NOW!

KARMA

(Chuckles)

You better listen to him, Murph. *(To Gaia)* I'd love to watch this, but we should get going.

Karma and Gaia sneak out the front door, but Karma leaves her whistle on the kitchen table.

FAYE (OFFSTAGE)

Honey, is that you again? Who are you talking to? I'll be right out.

JOHN

(Whispers)

You get moving. Or I'll do more than poke you.

Murphy moves to half-heartedly restore the room. He moves a few things around and arranges a pillow on the couch. John puts the bat by the door.

Faye enters the bedroom and puts her cup in the kitchen. Murphy looks disgruntled. Faye comes close and hugs John.

FAYE

I see you didn't get very far. I'm ready. Are you still watching TV? What's with all the yelling? *(Looks around the apartment)* Come on, get your coat.

JOHN

I'm looking forward to getting away from HERE for a while.

Murphy sticks his tongue out. John gets his coat from the hook. Faye finds the baseball bat by the door.

FAYE

(Looks at the bat)

What's this doing out here? Is this what you've been cleaning with? Looks like it from here.

JOHN

Oh boy, nothing says CLEANING like a baseball bat. *(At Murphy)* Next time, I'll add a tennis racket for those hard-to-clean spots.

Faye takes the baseball bat and leans it against the wall. John looks at Murphy.

FAYE

We need to get you out of here. Let's go.

John and Faye grab their coats and exit the front door.

Murphy sits, pushes stuff off the couch, and messes with magazines on the coffee table. He finds a couple of old potato chips in the couch and eats them.

MURPHY LIVES

Then he finds something else in the couch that looks edible, puts it in his mouth, and spits it out. He stands up and acts out like a boxer with gloves.

MURPHY

I'll fix him. He'd better not come back here and try to poke me again. I'll be ready for him.

Murphy paces around, looking for something to defend himself with.

KARMA

(To herself)

I left my whistle in this dump somewhere...

Karma goes to the kitchen table to retrieve her whistle. Murphy runs into Karma while she's on the way to the kitchen table. Karma pushes Murphy off her.

KARMA

Look out!

MURPHY

Whoa! Holy Moly. I didn't see you...

KARMA

What's going on here? Looks like you're doing a hell of a job helping out around here. What a train wreck! I've never...

MURPHY

What? Look at this place. This is a showcase of perfect entropy that is beautiful in its randomness.

Murphy bows before the room he's wrecked.

KARMA

You don't get it, do you?

MURPHY

To live in chaos is to live among the gods...

Murphy waxes poetic and offers a pillow to Karma.

KARMA

You're pathetic. I'm leaving.

Karma holds the front door open, and John and Faye enter. Karma exits after they enter. John has a gift bag for his Mom. John holds the bag tightly. Faye hugs John and takes the bag.

FAYE

I'll put this in the bedroom. Maybe you can put this place back together? I love the experimentation, but I'm unsure where you're going.

Faye exits to the bedroom. John starts putting the apartment back in order. Murphy pops up from behind the couch.

MURPHY

Yo, dog!

JOHN

(Startled)

Whoa. Oh, crap. You!

MURPHY

Do you like what I've done with the place?

JOHN

Yeah, you're a regular Martha Stewart. NO, I don't LIKE IT! I've got to fix this before she comes back.

John continues straightening the room while Murphy, right behind him, undoes everything. John sits on the couch. Amora and Gaia enter through the front door. Amora spins around once and dramatically raises her arms. Time stops. There's a slight sound of a harp in the distance. The lights flicker and then recover. John is frozen, sitting on the couch.

GAIA

I thought I heard Karma in here again. Look at this place! Did she help you with this? Wow!

MURPHY LIVES

AMORA

No, I think this is the result of a one-Murphy show. *(To Murphy)* Nice job! Not really. Can't you do anything right?

MURPHY

Hey, this is as right as I get. Bug off!

GAIA

(Looking around)

I like this look. Like something out of the Amazon rainforest. Natural and yet oddly organized. It just needs a few finishing touches...

Gaia moves around the room and makes a few adjustments to the pillows and paintings.

GAIA

So satisfying.

AMORA

Let me try!

Amora moves to further the mess.

AMORA

Yes. Perfect order requires perfect chaos! I'm starting to see...

Murphy steps back to critique their work. He's excited.

MURPHY

You get my vibe, and I love your work! BRAVO!

Karma enters.

KARMA

What the HELL? Seriously? Were you trying to help Murphy clean this up or recreate some dystopian hellscape?

Karma circles both her sisters for a long beat.

AMORA

We half-thought you would like this. It's definitely your style. I like it...

GAIA

Yeah, well. The place may not look how THEY want it to look, but (*Giggles*) I like it, too. So, if we like it, his pets will love it.

KARMA

Put a lid on it! All of you! Family huddle. NOW!

They gather around Karma, looking at their shoes or picking lint off their clothes.

KARMA

Look, this isn't clean or tidy in the way they think of clean and tidy. This looks like a home invasion make-over or, (*Pause*) some custodial coup! These creatures know where stuff goes.

Karma picks up a pillow, shows it to everyone, and puts it on the couch.

AMORA, MURPHY AND GAIA

(Collectively)

GASP!

KARMA

You can't just toss all their possessions around or arrange them in random piles. Look here...

Karma points at the floor where the coffee table is turned over.

KARMA

This table doesn't work this way. If you bothered looking, you'd know they put stuff ON it.

Karma points to the upturned legs.

KARMA

These aren't used for a hat rack or to hold tiny plates.

GAIA

Maybe they have tiny hats or plates or...

Karma cuts off Gaia in frustration.

KARMA

(Cuts off Gaia)

They can't negotiate the room, especially at night, if their stuff is upside down or tossed everywhere in piles. Oh, and listen, you two. THEY ARE NOT Murphy's PETS!

Karma reaches for another pillow; they watch as Karma returns it to the couch. She fluffs it while looking at frozen John.

KARMA

Pay attention. I want the pillows on the couch, the coffee table back on its legs, the books, and other assorted *(Loss for words)* STUFF back where you found it.

AMORA

Where? What stuff?

KARMA

Put the end tables next to the couch. Make sure the lamp is ON one of the end tables, not under it, and the shade goes on the lamp! I want the shoes next to the door and everything off the floor. *(Stares at them)* Go!

They all hesitate and fumble with themselves. Murphy stops to eat something off of Gaia's clothes. Murphy recoils.

MURPHY

Ick! Kale!

Gaia smacks Murphy.

KARMA

(Loudly)

GO!

Reluctantly, they go about the room putting stuff where Karma wants it, but they gently push each other when they disagree on where something should go or how many fluffs a pillow needs. Gaia follows Amora. The whole process is done very quickly and not well.

Amora finds the TV remote, holds it high for all to see, and looks at Karma.

AMORA

(To Karma)

Where does this go?

KARMA

(Barely contained and in Amora's face)

OH! OH, if I could only tell you where to put that! *(Beat)*. Just put it down on the table and get away from it!

Karma inspects like a Marine Sergeant, making adjustments, inspecting with a finger for dust, and doing some final straightening. The rest watch, shaking their heads or looking despondent.

KARMA

Now, you all come over here. Not you, Murphy. You stay over there and watch.

Amora and Gaia join Karma next to the couch. Karma starts Time. There is a cymbal crash in the distance. The lights flicker and recover, and John, still discouraged, looks up to see the apartment is back in some order. Very quickly. Karma, Amora, and Gaia retreat to the front door. Murphy paces.

John looks around for Murphy and looks at the apartment. Faye enters from the bedroom.

JOHN

(To himself)

Huh, This looks OK, I guess. *(To Faye)* Did you get Mom's present stowed away? I think I have this place wrestled to ground.

John looks sheepish. He sits on the couch and fluffs pillows.

FAYE

This looks better.

Faye walks around inspecting, straightens a picture, sits on the couch, and kisses John on the cheek. Faye goes to the kitchen and gets a glass of water.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

She sure likes to spend time in the bathroom. She probably likes the white, shiny pond.

JOHN

(Under his breath)

Bathroom? Pond? Murphy, what are you talking about now?

MURPHY

Nothing.

JOHN

(To Faye)

I need to find the parts to this lamp and get it back together. I have no idea why it doesn't work.

MURPHY

I do. You worked on it, and now it's in worse shape.

John starts to pull lamp parts together on the coffee table. Faye comes back to sit next to John. Karma, Amora, and Gaia continue to watch.

FAYE

John, sweetie, I have something to tell you.

JOHN

Does it have anything to do with this stupid lamp?

FAYE

Nope, the stupid lamp is fine. I'm sure it's in good hands.

MURPHY

(With derision)

SNORT!

John stops collecting lamp parts and sits closer to Faye.

FAYE

(She stares in his eyes - long beat). I just took a pregnancy test. I'm pregnant!

AMORA

Oh, that is so sweet! Love is so wonderful...

GAIA

That's pure fluid mechanics, sis. Love has very little to do with it.

Amora glares at Gaia.

John stares at her and holds her hand. He is speechless. Long, pregnant pause.

JOHN

Oh! My! (*Stuttering*) I don't know what to think.

John looks at Faye, and they have a long hug.

AMORA

Oh, I love this part! Babies! So much more love to spread, and they smell SO good.

KARMA

Oh, Amora, you are such a... *She stops herself*

Karma stops herself.

GAIA

Hopeless romantic?

Karma snorts and laughs.

JOHN

I thought we were using... I mean, I have been using protection. How did that happen?

MURPHY

Well, if I may, that would be a FAILURE of PACKAGING! I keep telling you! (*To Amora*) Did you have something to do with this?

AMORA

Um... (*Giggles*) Maybe...

GAIA

Amora! You little perv! I'm not surprised.

Murphy is cracking up laughing. John looks at Murphy and back at Faye.

JOHN

Oh, my! I'm thrilled. *(Beat)* I think I'm thrilled. That's a lot to take in. Wow! How are you feeling?

FAYE

I'm feeling okay, and I don't have any morning sickness. I think the cravings have kicked in. I finished off the peanut butter last night.

Faye sits closer to reassure.

FAYE

I'm only a couple of months along. You'll have time to get used to the idea of being a Dad. You'll be amazing! You can show the little girl or guy how to fix a lamp! And how to lose all the parts! *(Looks around)* And make a mess! And then how to clean it up. Sort of?

John tries to smile. Murphy finds a lamp part behind the couch and holds it up for John to see.

MURPHY

Ha! How you accomplished this, I'll never know. I saw a better performance at the petting zoo last week. Boy, were those kids surprised! Amora, you were in on that one?

AMORA

(To Murphy)

It was a one-off, but they were such a cute pair of donkeys. I don't think the kids there quite understood.

Murphy brays like a donkey

MURPHY

(Acting out in a high kid's voice)

Mommy, what's that donkey doing with that other donkey? *(Mom's voice)* Oh my! OK, Little Jimmy, it's time for ICE CREAM.

MURPHY

(Laughing and then to John)

Well, there you go. I hope you're happy.

John ignores Murphy. Faye holds John's hand. They sit on the couch very close.

FAYE

You OK? I love you, John Willis, you know that. Our little one will make us a family. You'll be an amazing DAD! You two will be inseparable. Now I need to go lie down. Try to be quiet out here. You've been talking to yourself a lot lately.

Faye gets up to leave and abruptly sits back down.

FAYE

OH! I stood up too fast...

Faye holds her head and faints on the couch. She is unconscious.

MURPHY

Holy Bologna! Is that all you two do around here is break stuff and PASS OUT? I need new playmates. You two are broken.

John comes to Fay's side.

JOHN

Faye! Hey sweetie! Are you OK? Faye?

John gently takes her shoulders and gives Faye a slight shake with no result. Gaia goes over to look at Faye.

GAIA

I don't think she's broken. I think...

Murphy pushes Gaia away.

MURPHY

Get away from her. Let me try something. She's just had a bit of shock. She'll be right as rain in a moment. Though, I don't know what rain has to do with it. I think that's just an expression. It better not rain in here. Anyway, watch this!

Murphy goes around the back of the couch and holds her head.

MURPHY

Braph-no. Ex-Pa, Nema Loop da Doop!

Murphy raises his hands.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

(Booping Fay's nose)

Boop! Boop! Boop!

Murphy steps back.

MURPHY

I now pronounce you WELL! Rise! *(Faye does not respond; he looks at everyone)*. I learned how to do this incantation from an old movie with a wizard. It was a parlor trick, I know, but it was impressive.

KARMA

Ugh, could you be any more...? Oh!

Murphy moves around and looks at Fay's closed eyes. He pats her head a little.

MURPHY

I thought that would work...

JOHN

Hold on.

John lays her on the couch and puts a pillow under her feet. He holds her hand and talks to her.

JOHN

Faye? We need to get up and go to the clinic, OK? *(Panicked and shaking her shoulder a bit)*. Hey, come on, sweetie. We can't lay around like this all day. We need to get going! Lots to do! *(John has no more ideas)*

Karma, Amora, and Gaia gather around the couch to look at Faye. Gaia sweeps her arms left and right. Time stops, and a faint wind chime is heard in the distance; the lights flicker and recover. John is frozen, sitting on the floor.

KARMA

Murphy! What did you do? Answer me!

MURPHY

I didn't DO anything! She did that all by herself. The little thingy in her head isn't getting enough syrup, and now she's sleepy. I don't know!

KARMA

Fix this, or I swear I'll...

GAIA

Sister, for once, I don't think this is Murphy's doing. She fainted due to low blood pressure, probably from a natural hormonal imbalance.

KARMA

Humph. What?

GAIA

(Looks at Murphy)

She's not getting enough 'syrup' to her brain. She'll probably be fine in a moment, but she should get checked by her doctor. Let me see what I can do to push this along.

Gaia moves over to Faye and checks her pulse. She blows gently in her face. There's a sound of wind whistling through tall grass. A single light shines on Fay's face. The light dims—Gaia and the family step back. Time starts. The lights flicker a bit. Everyone watches. Faye struggles to sit up. John helps her.

FAYE

Huh. Oh my! What happened? I was so excited to tell you the news.

JOHN

Let's go to the clinic right now to make sure you two are OK. You sit here. I'll get your coat. You scared me! Can you walk to the car? *(Beat)* I'll help you. I love you to the moon, you know.

AMORA

The bond is strong between these two. Can you feel that... Energy!

KARMA

(To Amora)

No, I'm pretty sure you're the only one getting a suntan right now.

GAIA

(Laughs to herself)

Ha, ha, ha.

John stands with Faye, holds her, and Murphy runs over, grabs Fay's coat off the hook by the door, and hands the coat to John without hesitation.

JOHN
(To Murphy)

Thanks.

The room goes quiet. There's a long pause. Everyone stares at Murphy. Karma claps her hands hard. Time stops, and the lights flicker and recover. Faye and John freeze in place.

MURPHY
What!? What now?

Everyone moves to circle Murphy. They all are staring.

MURPHY
WHAT?

AMORA
(Looking at Gaia)
Did he mean to do that? I can't believe what I just saw. Did Murphy perform an act of, dare I say, kindness?

GAIA
Nope. I don't believe it, either.

Karma approaches Murphy.

KARMA
Did you mean to do that?

MURPHY
Do what? What'd I do? Tell me, and I won't do it again. *(To himself)* Whoa, I need to lay off the triple-shot Macchiatos.

GAIA
No, what you did was OK and oddly unbelievable. What did you do just then? *(Points to John)* For him?

MURPHY

Nothing! I was going to punt his shoes into the parking lot, but I thought if he had her coat, they could...

Gaia interrupts.

GAIA

That! Right there! You handed him her coat. Dear brother, you actually did something nice! We know it was an accident, but sometimes, that's how good things get started.

Murphy sits down on the floor, looking at his hands.

MURPHY

But...but I didn't mean it! *(Sobbing)* This can't get around—my reputation. I'll be laughed out of the Coyote Club! I won't get my ACME badge this way! They'll never let me forget this. *(Begs, head in hands)* You won't tell anyone. Please?

AMORA

Little brother, don't fret so much. We won't tell anyone.

KARMA

Huh. I have my doubts his little act of decency was genuine. Let's start over.

Karma looks skeptical. She claps her hands again. Time STARTS, there's a slight sound of wind in the trees, and the lights flicker and recover. John and Faye move to the door.

JOHN

Let's get you to the clinic. Easy and steady. Let's go slow.

John steadies her and helps her put on her coat. She kisses John on the cheek, and they exit. Karma calls a family meeting. Murphy paces.

KARMA

OK, gather around. What just happened? I think that was a 'one-off.' He didn't mean it. He forgot himself, and it just happened. *(To Murphy)* You really didn't mean to hand him that coat, did you? *(Loudly)* Answer me!

MURPHY

Um, I did? (*Stops*) I DID! (Boastfully) I was so helpful just then. Pretty spectacular stuff, huh? He got up, and there I was. With the coat! Standing there! With the coat I handed him. He looked at me like I'd saved his life!

KARMA

It's more like he'd seen a ghost. I'm glad she didn't see her coat magically wander through the air. That would have required an Intervention, and these creatures don't do well with Interventions.

GAIA

I want to add...

KARMA

Zip it, Gaia. Go back to playing with your biology...

Gaia interrupts Karma angrily.

GAIA

At least he tried! Even if he helped accidentally? Show a little compassion. He's our little brother, after all. He was right there with the coat. You saw it yourself.

AMORA

He shared an honest, caring, loving moment! There was strength in his tender act.

KARMA

(To all)

That was an accident, and that's all! He couldn't repeat that if he tried. He wasn't in his right mind, whatever that is, and forgot himself. His true nature will show itself. All he loves is to torment these poor creatures.

GAIA

Being a bit judgmental, aren't we?

Karma waves off Gaia.

KARMA

(To Gaia)

That is my JAM. Where have you been?

AMORA

You, two... Be nice.

KARMA

For example, yesterday, he let out a cat on a crowded airplane. Then he found a dog and let it go, and, for bonus cruelty, he let another cat out! But he still wasn't finished. Then, he stopped up all the vents and dropped all the party bags above everyone's seat. Hilarity DID NOT ensue. Between the screaming and chasing, it was chaos. (*Sighs*) He's pathetic! Pay attention!

GAIA

I've been a bit distracted, but I did hear about that. Why didn't you step in?

KARMA

By the time I got wind of it, he was off pranking everyone in New Jersey. He's just too fast for me. I had to help the pilot get a cat out of the cockpit and land the plane.

AMORA

I'm sure his love for his buddies drove him to help in this special way.

*Amora makes heart shapes with her hands.
Karma throws up her hands.*

KARMA

I'll show both of you that he's the same old obnoxious meddling little imp and doesn't have one wit of self-control.

Karma goes to the kitchen table and pretty quickly stacks a plate on a cup and then another cup and another plate. Murphy comes closer, sneaking up carefully. Karma continues to stack dishes.

KARMA

There's no way he can avoid the temptation. Look at him. He's about to explode. Bless his heart. He's literally shaking. (*To Murphy*) I'm warning you. If you even so much as touch these dishes, I'll...

Murphy smacks the top dish off the kitchen table, giggles, and runs behind the couch.

KARMA

Members of the jury, for your consideration. I give you, Murphy: a loathsome menace and a danger to anyone unfortunate enough to cross his path. I hope you will find him guilty so we can move to the penalty phase of this sordid and unpleasant trial.

Murphy looks up from behind the couch. Amora and Gaia huddle for a beat.

GAIA

(To Karma)

We're not convinced. We want to test him our way. Helping with the coat seemed genuine, and the dish thing, that's just a bad habit. He does that all the time.

AMORA

Murphy, get over here.

Murphy comes around from the back of the couch and stands before Amora.

AMORA

Now you know we all love you, but you need to be more helpful.

Amora removes her shawl from around her shoulders and hands it to Murphy.

AMORA

I want you to help me put this back on my shoulders. Be nice, OK?

Murphy quickly takes the shawl and wraps it around her shoulders and over her head. Amora can't move and can't see. She struggles. Murphy giggles, bows low to an invisible audience, and runs behind the couch.

GAIA

Oh, what the...

Gaia rushes to untangle Amora.

GAIA

Murphy! Really?

Behind the couch, Murphy is giggling wildly. Gaia unwraps Amora.

AMORA

That wasn't funny, Murphy! You could have ruined this. It was made in (*Upset, struggles to remember*) in... In Michigan! (*Beat*) By Michiganders!

Amora sobs quietly.

GAIA

There's dumb, and then there's tying up your sister. Boy, are you high? (*Fading away*)
Wow.

Gaia helps Amora sit down.

KARMA

This trial is over. (*To Gaia and Amora*) Do you have any further objections?

Gaia and Amora look stunned, and they get behind Karma.

KARMA

Murphy! Get out here!

Murphy comes from behind the couch very slowly. He's looking at his shoes.

KARMA

You have been found guilty of abusive, uncontrolled behavior that has gone too far for too long. Given the immediate transgression and all the ones that have come before, I now have no choice but to dispense the ultimate punishment. I now banish you to (*Points around the apartment*) THIS PLACE. (*Beat*) Forever.

Karma pulls out her whistle, holds up a Red Card, and blows. Murphy is still.

GAIA AND AMORA

(*Loudly*)

Oh!

Murphy falls to his knees in shock.

GAIA

She gave you the red card! You're off the pitch! Oh, brother, you may not make the playoffs. I saw Tortellini of the Italian Footballer Squad get one last week. He head-butted a ref! They say he'll never play again!

AMORA

Red-card? Pitch? Playoffs? Is that stupid sports talk? I hate ball sports. Gaia, can you speak in REGULAR for a change?

KARMA

That is REGULAR speak. Try reading something besides romance novels for once. The RED CARD is a permanent TIME OUT for what he's done.

MURPHY LIVES

Karma talks to Murphy.

KARMA

Stay here, behave yourself and don't contact me. You're finished!

Karma gathers the family.

KARMA

We're done here. Let's go.

Gaia pats Murphy on the shoulder.

GAIA

Good luck.

Amora hugs Murphy.

AMORA

We still love you, brother, but this is for your own good.

Karma gets in Murphy's face and points a finger.

KARMA

Keep up the pranks, and I'll find ways to make your miserable existence even worse!

Karma, Amora, and Gaia exit the front door.

MURPHY

(Sobbing)

I'll show them I can do the coat trick again. I think that was me. They'll see. They'll be sorry!

Murphy collapses on the floor, crying.

BLACKOUT

ACT II - SCENE 2

John is on the floor assembling a small baby crib. Faye, who is eight months pregnant, is on the couch knitting. Murphy lurks behind the couch.

JOHN

There's not a single word in these instructions, just pictures.

FAYE

(Laughs)

Seems like déjà vu with the lamp. Can you put it together in time for her to sleep in it?

JOHN

That's not funny. I'm not sure. I don't think anyone has ever tested these instructions.

FAYE

(Looks up from her knitting)

Looks like they're testing them on you.

JOHN

Feels that way. So far, putting this together hasn't been much fun.

Murphy grabs a part and drops it by John. John swipes at Murphy and collects it. They swipe at each other. Faye doesn't notice.

JOHN

Boy, there sure are a lot of different-sized nuts and bolts! *(Holds up a rail)* And what is this?

Murphy fights to get the rail.

JOHN

(Whispers to Murphy)

Stop it!

MURPHY

(Sarcastically)

Stop it! Stop it! She can hear you, you know. She's going to have you committed! *(Beat)* Wait! *(Fakes crying)* Then I won't have anyone to play with!

FAYE

What? Stop what? Are you talking to yourself again?

JOHN

Yeah, it's just me talking to myself and getting ready to be a Dad. A crazy old Dad.

John takes a swing at Murphy

JOHN

Just being crazy...

*Faye looks at her knitting magazine, and
Murphy takes Fay's yarn and tosses it under the
coffee table.*

*Amora enters through the front door. She
watches Murphy, who is holding a side of the
crib for John. Murphy looks bored.*

AMORA

Gaia, get in here! Murphy's holding up the wall to that jail while the guy puts it together.
Did you show Murphy how to do that?

Gaia enters from the bedroom.

GAIA

No way! This isn't like the coat business? Another scam from Murphy?

AMORA

(To Gaia)

No, I think this is something else.

GAIA

He's still holding up the side of the tiny jail.

MURPHY

*(Talking to his sisters and holding the
side of the crib)*

This is NOT going to work! I can't just DO-DO on these two creatures like this all the
time. They're boring.

AMORA

(To Murphy)

I know you love them, but you're not getting the 'big' picture.

MURPHY LIVES

MURPHY

I have limited material; their script has no plot, and this set is cramped and smelly.

AMORA

Maybe you should try being a bit more... Caring?

MURPHY

Caring. Schmaring. No one cares. He doesn't know what he's doing anyway.

*John continues to work on the crib using parts
Murphy is holding. Faye continues to knit.
Murphy yawns.*

JOHN

Oh, here's the missing bolt! It was under the instructions, which are worthless.

Faye looks up from her magazine.

FAYE

That doesn't look very easy. Could they have assembled this for you at the store?

JOHN

They charge an arm and a leg to assemble it at the store. I might as well build one from scratch.

Amora gasps.

AMORA

What!?! First, they put their newborns in jail, and then, when they're old enough, they sell off body parts for services. Gaia, what have you done here? This is awful!

GAIA

I don't know what happened here. I've been away for a long time... I need to put this place back on my regular rounds...

AMORA

Do better, sister! We can't have a bunch of post-incarcerated amputees selling organs to the local furniture store!

*Gaia and Amora continue to watch. John shows
the instructions to Faye. Faye leans in.*

FAYE

They made this in Sweden. I think they make all their furniture there, then ship it here unassembled to make us suffer.

JOHN

If you mess it up, that gives Swedish Furniture Company the perfect opportunity to charge even more money to come over and fix it.

Faye returns to knitting but has to search for the yarn.

GAIA

Karma. (*Louder*) KARMA! Get in here. Murphy is being weird.

There is a loud sound of breaking glass and a crash. Karma enters through the front door; her hair is slightly messy. She closes the door, and there's another crash and a low moan that fades away.

KARMA

(Looks at the door)

It serves you right, you nitwit. Next time you think about stealing packages from someone's front porch, you might want to think about the consequences. You may believe you are above the law, but you're not above MY laws.

Karma brushes herself off and composes herself in front of her sisters and Murphy.

KARMA

(To herself)

From trial to penalty phase in ONE easy step. I'm sure you'll recover in a few months. Enjoy the limp! (*Laughs to herself*).

AMORA

(To Karma)

Sometimes, you are not a loving person. (*Under her breath*) Such a B...

KARMA

Stuff it! (*To the group*) What's going on? How long have you two been here?

AMORA

I just got here. I just got back from coupling this guy back together with his first wife. They didn't even know who was who because he came out dressed like her. She was love-struck—my idea.

GAIA

I came in with Amora. I've been wrestling with this stupid virus, but they're too damn small, and I keep losing them. I lost my readers somewhere and can't see a thing.

AMORA

Murphy's been sitting there doing his usual thing, but then... He found some, dare I say it out loud, connection?

KARMA

What's so weird about that?

GAIA

He seems like he's helping them, in a way. Oh, and he needs a bath. Phew!

AMORA

I've seen him. He's holding up the wall and handing the guy tools.

Amora goes to look closely at Murphy and backs away. Murphy holds another side of the crib. John ignores him and then finds a part he wants.

AMORA

He does need a bath. Phew is right. He's ripe.

GAIA

I've been watching closely, and when the moment is right, Murph reaches out and does something for him, probably without thinking. He hasn't pranked him in a while.

KARMA

What's the deal with the jail bars? That's usually my territory.

GAIA

Amora and I've been talking about that. Looks like some sort of confinement. Why would they put their new offspring in jail right after it's born? Is that some tradition? Karma, is this your doing?

KARMA

This isn't on me! The little ones haven't done anything. *(Beat)* Yet...

AMORA

Fits in with the small, padded, swinging coffin back there. *(Points toward the bedroom)* These creatures are kinda sick... I won't even tell you what they do with their arms and legs when they get older.

KARMA

(Ignores Amora)

I'm not sure...

AMORA

Are you sure that's a jail? If it is, what did they do to warrant this kind of punishment? I'm sure you had something to do with this, Karma. Doesn't seem like an act of Love to me.

KARMA

Hey! No way! I let them mess up before I assign punishment, which normally fits the crime. Oh, and I wait until they grow up a bit. Murphy pranks them right out of the gate.

MURPHY

(Looks up)

I do not! Well, maybe a little. I love the rattles Mommies give their babies. Ah, give me a baby, a rattle, the new puppy, a full diaper, and a few moments, and I can create the best kind of Hell. *(Sighs blissfully)* That's living...

Gaia is watching while Murphy holds the walls to the crib while John continues to build.

GAIA

(Walks around pondering)

I lost track of these creatures and have so many questions. I don't remember any of this, especially the jail business.

AMORA

Anyway, jail or not, there doesn't seem to be a method to Murphy's madness. I figure he's either bored or confused. This guy on the couch seems to be able to ignore Murphy, which must take real patience. And yet, he's making progress on his baby jail with Murphy's help.

Gaia studies what Murphy is doing for a beat. Murphy starts to fuss with different parts.

JOHN

(Under his breath to Murphy)

Stop it! She's going to notice!

KARMA

Yeah, stop it, you clown. You're not helping the guy, and you're being the jerk you always are. You're just WORTHLESS!

There's an eery sound, a thud, and the lights flicker and recover. Murphy looks despondently at Karma, looks at his hands, and stops holding pieces of the crib. Gaia is angry and goes to Karma.

GAIA

Whoa, Karma! Really! That was out of line. I mean, what an awful thing to say to your brother. I don't see you down there holding anything for that guy. You hypocrite. You think you're so special, Ms. Balance Blah Blah Blah. Maybe you should try a few consequences on yourself. Murphy, she didn't mean it.

Amora goes over to Murphy.

AMORA

(Tries to comfort)

Murphy, she didn't mean it. She's just upset because she knows she's not perfect. She loves you, truly and forever.

Amora makes a heart shape with both hands.

KARMA

Oh, for pity's sake!

MURPHY

(Muttering to himself)

I try to help, but then I'm told I'm not helping, and when I'm not helping, I'm told I'm helping. I call Uncle! I give up.

Murphy stands and goes over by the bedroom door and sits.

GAIA

(Goes to Murphy after a beat)

He's pretty sad, Nice going, Karma!

AMORA

(Joins Gaia)

Karma, you're evil.

Gaia raises her arms and drops them suddenly. Time stops. There is a sound of crickets; the lights flicker and then turn on.

John and Faye are frozen in place. Gaia pulls Murphy to a standing position.

GAIA

(To Murphy)

Come on, snap out of it. Karma didn't mean it. Karma! Tell him you're sorry!

KARMA

I will not.

GAIA

Do it, or you'll be hatching locusts out of your 'you-know-what' for a month!

KARMA

Try it!

AMORA

Stop it, you two. Love you both.

Murphy blows a burping noise at her and looks at his shoes. Gaia feels his forehead.

GAIA

Stop yelling at him, Karma. Look at him. He's all gross and gloomy. We can't leave him like this.

AMORA

I have an idea. Gaia, please help me.

KARMA

He's a spoiled brat. No one wants...

GAIA (INTERRUPTS)

Can it! Ok, Amora, what do you have in mind?

Gaia and Amora get on either side of Murphy.

GAIA

(To Amora)

Follow my lead. *(To Murphy)* No one likes a Grumpy Gus. You are the best prankster in the room; we all love you.

Gaia straightens Murphy's clothes while Amora fixes his tie.

GAIA

You're handsome AND respected in your field. They love you at the ACME company. There's no one like you, little brother. *(Pulling on his clothes)* There! You look amazing!

Murphy sits, not moving. He sticks his tongue out.

AMORA

(To Gaia)

Let me try something.

Amora gets close to her brother. She produces a red spongy ball in her hand and then makes it disappear (an old magic trick). She does this several times.

AMORA

He should be coming around by now. Just wait... *(Beat)*

Amora makes the ball disappear once more.

AMORA

Huh. I'm not getting much here.

Murphy doesn't move. Amora stops, picks up one of Murphy's arms and the other, and lets them fall. Gaia watches.

GAIA

Karma, what did you do to him? He's broken!

KARMA

I didn't DO anything. He deserved a good talking to. It must be something else. What a baby! Did he find more food to eat from the couch? I've looked under the cushions, and there's enough bio-waste to choke an elk.

GAIA

Oh you mean a *Cervus Canadensis*?

AMORA

Gaia, now is not the time for Latin, OK?

Gaia waves off Amora.

GAIA

Karma, you went too far and hurt his feelings. *(Beat)* I'm going to restore this little party and see what happens.

Gaia, Amora, and Karma circle Murphy, and Gaia starts up Time again. There is a faint sound of many kittens in the distance; the lights flicker and recover. Murphy sits there. John resumes his activities, and Faye stands.

FAYE

I'm going for a walk. Do you want to come with me?

JOHN

I think I'll struggle with this for a while. I'll find you in the park in a bit.

Faye goes to the bedroom to change clothes. John notices Murphy not moving by the coffee table.

JOHN

Hey. *(Nudging Murphy)* Hey!

Murphy sits quietly and looks straight ahead.

JOHN

What's with you? I've seen more energy at senior bingo night.

Still, Murphy sits and doesn't move.

JOHN

I'm going to count my blessings. Maybe the world will be better if you don't move around so much. Certainly, my life would be simpler.

John waves his hands in front of Murphy's face, and when he gets no response, he stands and goes to the bedroom.

Amora and Gaia see that John had no luck with Murphy, so they sit beside him again. Karma stands.

GAIA

Karma! Why are you such a... A POOP all the time? What purpose does this serve?

KARMA

Listen, you keep creating your special little creatures, and I'll keep them in line. Deal?

Karma looks at Murphy.

KARMA

I can't believe a little scolding put him in this state. Such a sensitive flower. Funny, he can dish it out, but he can't take it.

AMORA

He seems like he's been like this FOREVER!

KARMA

Amora cut the dramatics. It's been like five minutes.

Gaia waves a hand in front of Murphy's face.

GAIA

Karma, it's like he's in a coma.

KARMA

A little scolding shouldn't make this big of an impact. Let me look.

Karma sits next to Murphy to start an exam. She looks in his ears, eyes, and nose, pulls his hair, sniffs, and slaps him on the back of the head. Murphy doesn't move.

KARMA

Hum. He's OK. He has the blues. And it's not entirely my fault.

AMORA

Yes, it is! You don't love him as much as we do.

KARMA

I do, too, Amora. Could you drop the lovey-dovey crap for a second?

Karma pauses for a moment and goes to Murphy.

KARMA

He's come to realize he's stuck here. I've seen him in a funk before. Recovery took some time, but that pre-school full of little kids did the trick. Those kids were so cute and such easy targets.

AMORA

Oh, I dropped in on that at the end. That was the most colorful chaos.

KARMA

(Laughing)

After hours of hiding toys, tossing blocks out the windows, and sticking crayons up their noses, he mainly was his old self.

GAIA

I'm not sure a school full of screaming little kids will help this time.

Karma paces around thinking. She calls a family meeting. Amora and Gaia huddle with Karma.

KARMA

We need a plan.

AMORA

We're trying! He doesn't get the compliments, and I couldn't even distract him with my best magic trick.

KARMA

He sure doesn't listen.

GAIA

He doesn't listen to YOU! You started all this with all the yelling and name-calling.

Karma is more or less in the middle but now pacing and pointing.

KARMA

I'm so frustrated; I lose it sometimes with him. I'm not apologizing. He's always the center of attention. Me, me, me. Solipsistic little imp.

GAIA

Before you get all wound up, Karma, I'd like to share something...

Karma spins around hard.

KARMA

WOUND UP! Who's wound up here? I've spent more time than I care to babysitting Mr. Charming over there, and I don't like this place anymore than he does. I'm tired, and I'm going to be late for my therapy appointment.

Amora talks to Gaia in a loud whisper.

AMORA

Some anger management would help her and the rest of us. Geez.

Karma goes over to Amora and gets in her face.

KARMA

I heard that!

Gaia gets in between them.

GAIA

Just stop both of you and listen for once, please? Before Karma put the brakes on his jolly mood, he was helping the guy here.

Gaia walks over to the crib and handles some of the larger parts.

GAIA

He was talking to him and holding jail parts, and at one point, he seemed to care about what he was doing. But then, Karma yelled at him.

AMORA

She's right. The guy was putting it together, and Murphy held walls for him. Murphy WAS being helpful. *(At Karma)* Then you got all up in his grill, and he ended up like that.

KARMA

I'm telling you, I was not that hard on him! I need more than just, 'He was holding walls and parts.'

GAIA

He was sitting on the floor next to the guy. There were parts the guy needed to be held, so Murphy stuck out his hands and held them up.

KARMA

Like the whole wall? Both hands?

GAIA

Yep, he held it right in front of the guy. Sometimes, the guy would look up and say, 'Thank you,' or 'Move it over a little?' Murphy actually followed orders.

AMORA

She speaks the truth, Karma. We thought maybe we were seeing things or that he was possessed. But he really was helping.

KARMA

Stop—both of you. I'd love to have seen this, but I don't have time right now, so I'll have to trust you. What do we do now?

John and Faye enter from the bedroom and go to the front door. John notices Murphy sitting still. The rest stand back.

JOHN

I just have these two sections to put together. Can I meet you out at the park in a minute? I won't be long.

Faye puts on her coat, walks over, and hugs and kisses John.

FAYE

Okay, don't be long.

Amora dances at the mere sight of a romantic connection. Faye exits through the front door. John goes to Murphy and sits next to him.

JOHN

How are you doing, little buddy?

John rubs Murphy's shoulders. Murphy stares straight ahead.

MURPHY

(A deep sigh)

I don't know—Karma's right. I'm a loser! But I'm an active guy. I need to move around and stay loose! I can't sit around here all day and help you build your baby *(Beat)* prison.

JOHN

That's it, right there! You were building the prison. I mean, crib! I don't think you once hid or knocked a part out of my hand or tried to bury something in the couch cushions. We worked together! You were helpful!

The family gathers around the back of the couch to listen to John.

AMORA

(To Karma)

See? Listen to the guy. He was there!

KARMA

Obviously, he was there, my dear sister.

JOHN

I have to go catch up with Faye. You stay here and think about what you've done. We might be able to use this, whatever you did, to find a way to get you back to the Emerald City or East Jesus or wherever the hell you're from.

John starts to get up. Murphy rises.

MURPHY

Not East Jesus! Are you kidding?

John gets his coat and exits through the front door. The family gathers around Murphy, who goes silent again.

KARMA

Our poor brother might have some potential, but he's worthless in this state. And yes, I'll give him a break if he lightens up on these guys.

GAIA

I've had this theory about him for a while, but it's ridiculous. I was researching evolutionary bio-influencers at Cosmic U last year when I came up with this idea.

AMORA

I think he needs more Snuggle Love.

Gaia looks at Amora.

GAIA

Not now, dear.

Gaia herds her sisters to her side and calls Murphy over.

GAIA

Snap out of it and come over here.

Murphy walks over to Gaia by the kitchen table.

KARMA

I can't imagine what you have planned, but could we hurry this up?

GAIA

That's it right there! You're getting warmer.

KARMA

What right where?

GAIA

Just stop! *(Beat)* What we want is for Murphy to leave these guys alone. There's a trick to avoid his pranks that even *(points at Murphy)* he doesn't know. Follow along and pay attention. Amora! Pay attention!

AMORA

I was thinking about my pet unicorn, Daisy. I need to braid her...

Amora makes heart shapes with her hands. Gaia interrupts.

GAIA

Just focus. We'll talk about hairstyles for unicorns later. There are a couple of things in play. First, if you didn't know this already, he has no attention span, and second, he's Murphy.

KARMA

He's focused when he wants to be. I'm not buying this.

Gaia straightens the tablecloth and puts the chairs in the right place.

GAIA

No, one thing leads to another, Ms. Knows Everything. A demonstration is in order. First, let's talk about the usual situation. You know, the one that gets Murphy all Murph'd up?

Gaia goes to the kitchen table and sets the table with dishes RAPIDLY. Murphy sees her and suddenly comes alive. An excited Murphy is watching carefully. He moves silverware on the table just as Gaia puts it down. When Gaia puts glasses on the table, Murphy knocks a couple over.

When Gaia is finished, half the dishes are on the floor, and the other half are in a pile. Murphy retreats.

GAIA

(Points to the floor)

OK, this is a typical result. Right?

AMORA

Something you did energized him. I love you, GAIA, but I'm lost.

KARMA

Nothing has changed except that he seems to have found his latest victim.

GAIA

All will be clear in a moment. Now, let's start over.

Quickly, Gaia collects all the dishes from the table and floor and sets them on the kitchen counter. Murphy comes closer to watch and stands ready to launch.

GAIA

Now, watch this.

Moving SLOWLY and deliberately, Gaia collects dishes from the counter and slowly walks past Murphy, who suddenly doesn't see Gaia. Gaia carefully sets a single place setting at the table. Murphy goes to the couch, curls up, and picks at his clothes.

KARMA

What the...? What just happened?

AMORA

Did you hurt Murphy? Gaia, what did you do to him? *(Sobbing a little)* He's still broken. We're going to have to put him down.

Murphy looks up in horror.

AMORA

Oh, I didn't mean that. That's what they do down here to their small fur buddies sometimes, maybe after they're done living in a jail...

GAIA

No, there's nothing wrong with Murph. Actually, he's fine! I first noticed his 'off switch' while he was holding up jail parts. His guy was going so slow putting the bars together. Murphy forgot why he was there. Who'd a thunk it? He only seems to see what gets his attention and is mostly blind to everything else. Attention-deficit Akinetopsia is the proper diagnosis, but I didn't bring my notes.

KARMA

Oblivious AND caffeinated. Sounds right.

MURPHY

She was boring!!

AMORA

I didn't think it made any difference how fast they were moving.

KARMA

(Waves off GAIA)

I'm not buying this. Let me try. Please help me, Amora.

Karma and Amora slowly collect another place setting from the counter and set the table very slowly. Murphy doesn't notice them and picks at his teeth.

KARMA

Huh. *(To Amora)* Have you seen this before?

AMORA

I never noticed that what they did or how they did it mattered to Murphy.

KARMA

I'm with Amora on this. He's just a random act of evil chaos most of the time. I never could figure out how he picked his targets. Now that I think of it, though, he never pranked me.

AMORA

He wouldn't do that on a bet.

GAIA

The theory is he can't attend to the world when it moves around him in a focused, careful way. He gets excited when things happen rapidly. That's what turns him on. Once he focuses, he matches his energy to the energy of his next victim. Chaos for chaos. A classic give and take...

MURPHY

Hey! I get excited when they're NOT BORING!

KARMA

(Ignores Murphy) This is weird, but Gaia's observations seem to have some validity.

GAIA

See, I told you...

Karma signals to her sisters to join her. There's a long pause as she thinks.

KARMA

OK, here's how this is going to work. *(To Murphy)* Your banishment will end on one condition. You need to practice being more useful down here. And maybe help me a bit to prank genuinely deserving idiots.

GAIA

Like you need help? I'm not sure the family needs two of you.

Karma points hard at Gaia.

KARMA

(To Murphy)

I'm not sure how you will pull that off, but you'll have to make some drastic changes. If you snub me or *(pointing to the family)* them, I'll find a nice sewer around here, and you can prank rats for an eternity. Do you understand?

Murphy nods his head for Yes. He stands.

KARMA

I'll give you a few more minutes to think about your decision. I've spent too much time on this already. I'm leaving. I have to reward some guy for picking up trash on the highway. Oh, I know! I'll make it stop raining and maybe put a \$100 bill in an open soup can! Damn, I'm good. *(To the family)* I suggest we all leave Murphy alone with his thoughts. Such as they are...

GAIA

(Under her breath)

Now and then, I have to be reminded she has a good side.

Karma waves off Gaia and then turns to the rest.

KARMA

Let's go, all of you. He doesn't need us here.

The family nods to each other. Karma, Amora, and Gaia exit out the front door.

MURPHY

(Humming and sarcastic)

"Be more helpful." "Don't be so selfish." "Haste makes waste" or WHAT EVER! I'm not sure what's worse, this stinky place or her stupid rules.

Murphy goes to the table and fiddles with dishes. John and Faye enter the front door. John is finishing a stupid story.

JOHN

And then there was a giant bat, and they all ran for it! The bat kept trying to get into Lisa's hair, and the bat had dropped a big bug in her hair, and she was screaming and...
(He stops) Did you set the table?

FAYE

No, I thought you did that before we left. Don't you remember?

JOHN

(Shakes his head)

I guess so.

FAYE

I'm going to fold the rest of the laundry, and then we'll figure out dinner.

Faye exits to the bedroom. John sees Murphy in the kitchen.

JOHN

You're still here. Lucky me.

MURPHY

(Smiling) Not for long.

John stops in his tracks.

JOHN

Are you going somewhere? Did they let you back into whatever Hell you were spawned from? Are you joking with me here? What changed?

MURPHY

They decided I was good for you. I'm not sure how they worked that out, but I'm running with it.

JOHN

That's laughable! How does making people miserable be good for anyone but you?

MURPHY

(Ignores John's missives)

Well, I'm going back to where I belong, so look for me on a project near you.

JOHN

Again, how could this be? Whoever has given you a reprieve has no compassion.

MURPHY

On the contrary, my family rather likes your kind. I have no idea why. Other than that, you'll figure out how to avoid me. *(Giggles)* Eventually.

JOHN

I don't want to 'figure you out.' I want you gone as soon as possible.

MURPHY

Thanks for nothing. And after all that help I gave you with your jail. That's rude, mean, and not all that bright.

JOHN

It's not a jail!

Murphy ignores John.

MURPHY

My sister, Gaia, thinks she has me figured out. "Slow down/You're moving too fast," she sings. That's rubbish. I'm not sure she knows what she's singing about. I'm good at any speed.

GAIA

(To Murphy)

You keep telling yourself that...

MURPHY LIVES

JOHN

Wait, I go slow! What do you mean?

MURPHY

She means to stop thinking about beer and pickleball while you're doing something... ANYTHING else.

JOHN

When you showed up, I was focused on my lamp, and you still made a big mess.

MURPHY

Yeah, but you didn't have your head in the game. You were thinking about jobs and your wife and what might happen if you don't fix it, and then there was all the resentment...

JOHN

What?

MURPHY

You know. Resentment. You hate these lamps. She picked them out with her old boyfriend, and you're reminded of him whenever she turns one on.

JOHN

That's creepy. I do not! *(Beat)* What a minute... How do you know about her -ex?

John retreats to the couch. Karma, Amora, and Gaia slowly enter from the bedroom and the front door to listen to Murphy. John ignores Murphy's muttering.

MURPHY

'Clear your mind,' says Karma. 'Love what you're doing,' says Amora. 'Wash your hands a lot!' says Gaia.

GAIA

That's NOT funny!

KARMA AND AMORA

(Laugh)

That's hilarious!

Murphy talks to his sisters.

MURPHY

Sounds like a load of hooley. You three need to get a clue.

MURPHY LIVES

KARMA

A clue? That's rich, coming from Mr. Clueless.

MURPHY

I'm lucky that most of their kind will never do any of those things. If they did, I'd be out of a job.

There are place settings for two on the table. Murphy walks over to the kitchen table and starts to rearrange the place settings. Everyone gets a bit curious.

MURPHY

What a mess! Who set this?

Murphy sets the table very carefully and with a bit of flourish. He talks to everyone in the room.

MURPHY

(Condescendingly)

OK, I'm working from left to right here, so first the salad fork, then the dinner fork, then the plate, the knife, a little spoon, on the far right is a big spoon.

He finishes and steps back.

MURPHY

That's how to set a table. Oh, and the napkin goes on the far left, not on the right, and guys, there's no plate for the dinner roll here. Who sets a table without a plate for a dinner roll?

KARMA, AMORA GAIA AND JOHN

(A beat and then a loud gasp)

Huh!

JOHN

Um, OK, dinner roll. *(His voice trails off)* Got it. *(Stutters)* I'm going to see what Faye is doing.

John starts to walk to the bedroom.

MURPHY

I may not be here when you get back!

John looks back at Murphy and exits to the bedroom. Murphy sits on the couch. Gaia and Amora gather with Murphy.

KARMA

I saw that bit at the table. That was genius and frightening at the same time! Where did you learn to do that? Last time I looked, you only ate food off your clothes and occasionally what you find in the furniture. Never mind, come over here.

Murphy stands and meets Karma. They look at each other.

KARMA

You're my little brother and a moron, and I still think you're a moron. But you're OUR moron, and we love you to the moon.

GAIA

Even further than the moon!

AMORA

Love you, brother!

Karma hugs Murphy. Amora makes heart signs.

KARMA

Come home now, goofball, and try to behave yourself!

Karma pulls Murphy by the shirt towards her and then pushes him softly. There's a slight sound of fanfare in the distance. The lights flicker and then recover. Murphy checks to make sure no one has taken his wallet. He looks around. The family is all there.

MURPHY

(To Karma)

I love you too, big sister. Try to be nice to me, OK?

Murphy takes a big breath of air.

MURPHY

Ah, it smells better already!

AMORA

So, how are you going to celebrate your homecoming? You'd better be careful and not test her patience.

GAIA

Just try to calm down. Maybe drink half-caff for a while?

Murphy makes a face.

KARMA

It's been quite the day. I feel like I've been on my feet for an eon.

Karma goes to the kitchen table, pulls out a chair, and goes to sit down. Murphy quickly sneaks back and pranks Karma, pulling the chair out from under her as she sits down. Karma lands on the floor with a thud.

Murphy runs away.

AMORA AND GAIA

(A loud gasp)

Ohh!

The family looks on in horror at Murphy, but Karma stands up laughing and brushes herself off.

KARMA

OK, I get it. That's fair, and here's a little reminder, little brother, that ALL is fair where you and I are concerned.

Karma moves over to Murphy, who is grinning sheepishly. She puts her hands on his shoulders and blows lightly and slowly in his face.

BLACKOUT.

There is a crack of thunder in the distance; then, the lights go on after a beat. Murphy steps back only to find his hands are handcuffed behind his back. He spins around and struggles to get free.

KARMA

Good luck with that.

MURPHY LIVES

Murphy struggles to free himself.

KARMA, GAIA, AND AMORA
(Loud laughter)

Ha. Ha. Ha.

Murphy continues to struggle while his sisters huddle together to watch and laugh. Karma, Gaia, and Amora exit the front door, leaving Murphy to spin.

BLACKOUT