

Sunset Artists Of The American West

By

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### Characters:

Anna Torrance - 84, a touch of ambiguous ethnicity about her in a way that's hard to pin down.

Becky Shore - 25, Anna's grand-daughter

Leah Connors - 32, Becky's older sister

Aaron Connors - 34, Leah's husband

Fulwarkin Freml - male, a Native American cloud Kachina

Zaffring Till - female, an assistant Native American cloud Kachina

Tanjer Dreslin - male, cloud Kachina, former pupil of Fulwarkin's, played by the actor playing Aaron

Sorrel Nunez - female, 26, high-school friend of Becky's, played by the actor playing Zaffring

Young Anna - in her late teens, played by the actor playing Leah

Time: The present

Setting: A house in Tucson, Arizona; a sidewalk cafe; a small apartment in Los Angeles; the sky

A note on gondolas and sudden oceans:

For the record, the fantastical imagery such as the flying gondolas or the floating in Anna's room-turned-sea are meant to be suggestions, not hard and fast rules. The gondolas could easily become a window washer's platform. Ladders on wheels. Stationary scaffolding. Something to suggest the kachina spirits are on another plane and move through time and space differently. Anna's floating could be just a matter of light, sound and movement. If your theater happens to have a fly space and a budget, please, go all out. But there's also something to be said for simple tricks executed imaginatively.

## Act One

## SCENE ONE

A huge expanse of desert sky in high sunset mode. Stage Right, some patio furniture in the Southwest style along with a few potted cacti. Stage Center, more furniture denotes a pleasant living room. LEAH, early 30s, sits out on the patio at an easel, painting the sunset.

LEAH

(to the sky)

It's a good one today. Really good. (looks down at her palette) Should've mixed more red.

Offstage Left, a woman's voice moans. Leah freezes, listening intently, body tense, ready to jump up at any moment. No more sounds from offstage. Leah slowly relaxes, then carefully digs into one of the cactus pots, and brings out a pack of cigarettes. She draws one from the pack, lights it, inhales deeply.

BECKY, mid 20s, dressed in a way that manages to seem hip and conservative at the same time, enters drying her hair with a towel.

Unseen by Leah, Becky watches her smoke for a moment.

BECKY

So you're still sneaking cigarettes.

LEAH

Are you going to rat me out again?

BECKY

I didn't rat - I was eleven years old and terrified for your soul! It took Dad a half an hour to convince me you weren't damned for all eternity.

LEAH

(mimicking "Dad")

"Smoking cigarettes probably won't send you to hell" -

BECKY AND LEAH

- "It'll just make you smell like you've been there."

They share a laugh at the memory. Leah takes a long drag, breathes out.

LEAH

I think they taste better when you have to sneak them.

BECKY

From Aaron?

LEAH

I mean, who knows when you're going to get the next one, so you make sure to pay attention.

BECKY

Yeah. You guys are better at that here.

LEAH

At what?

BECKY

Paying attention. Might be what I miss most about Tucson. (gestures to the sky) I mean, look at this. It's so beautiful, and the people in Kansas City just pass it by, like they have it DVR'd or something and can watch it whenever they want. Here, it's an event. Everybody coming out into their yards at sunset, just to watch. Granted, Missouri sunsets aren't quite as, you know, ... "wow". Yeah, God really does paint 'em up special out here.

LEAH

Seriously?

BECKY

What?

LEAH

You and Aaron, with all your - Molecules and air particles scatter the blue and violet light from the sun's rays when it's lower on the horizon. That's what colors the sunset. It's old science that everybody knows, and you're still talking like God's up there with a paint brush, playing Jackson Pollack.

BECKY

Can you imagine what the sky would look like if God actually *was* Jackson Pollack!

LEAH

I expect it from Aaron now. You know where he is, right this minute? Out looking for the dogs again. They got out of the yard three days ago. I've spent the last two plastering the neighborhood with Missing signs. He worked all day, has the Home Group planning session tonight, and in between? He feels "led by the spirit" to go find them. The Spirit leads him all over the place. But I thought you were smarter than that.

BECKY

I am. It's just - isn't it kind of cool to think that even in something perfectly scientific like a sunset, there's some intelligence that's artistically involved just because it wants to be?

LEAH

No. It's not cool. It's naive and lazy.

BECKY

Oh come on!

LEAH

If you had to listen to half the insanity I hear from his parishioners on a daily basis -

BECKY

I'm in ministry, Leah. I get it.

LEAH

- this whole mode of thinking where the Lord is personally responsible for every little thing that happens to you.

BECKY

Or the devil, yes.

LEAH

Exactly. And that's where the "God paints the sunset" train ends up. With you rebuking Satan for hiding your car keys while trusting in Jesus to get you better gas mileage even though you bought an SUV.

BECKY

I know the type, and I'm very glad to be here right now not listening to them.

LEAH

Because there's no reasoning with those people. And it takes a toll on you after a while.

BECKY

Especially when you're on a church staff with them. It can be ... intense.

LEAH

Is that at all what's been keeping you up nights? Staff problems back in Kansas City, or -

BECKY

What? No. It's just - I flew overnight to get here and, you know, wanted to spend time with Gran while she's still ... She pretty much just sleeps during the day at this point, so I started sleeping next to her. Guess it just threw my schedule off.

LEAH

I was worried you weren't going to make it in time. The doctors said "a few days left" a week and a half ago, so -

BECKY

She's a fighter.

LEAH

How much time did you manage to get off?

BECKY

As much as I need 'til ...

LEAH

We hadn't seen you the last couple holidays, I figured they were working you to death out there.

BECKY

I had the time coming to me. And ... (a strange laugh) things just sort of opened up.

LEAH

Well, I'm glad you're here.

BECKY

Me too.

Beat.

BECKY

I'm glad you're painting again.

LEAH

(a sad chuckle)

Only out of desperation, trust me. Gran and I were never really close, but watching her ... slip away like this has been - I needed something else to focus on, so -

BECKY

I know it's been hard carrying -

LEAH

No, you don't.

Beat.

LEAH

I appreciate what you're trying to say, Becky, but you've been halfway across the country. You don't *know* how hard it's been. You don't.

BECKY

You're right. I'm don't.

Something in Leah's painting catches Becky's eye.

BECKY

But I can just make out little bits of it. (points to the canvas) In there. It's how you paint the light. Not out front like we might expect. It's pushing through the field of grey, but not quite out of it. Fighting just to be seen at all, but still there, in spite of everything.

Leah looks up at Becky, not knowing what to say. When she finally does, warm laughter comes with it.

LEAH

You still sound just like them.

BECKY

Like what?

LEAH

Those books that Mom left to you. Uh, Great Artists of the -

BECKY

Lives of the Great Artists, Volumes 1 thru 5, and the Classic Composers Biographical Dictionary.

LEAH

You got so obsessed with those after she -

BECKY

I was obsessed with them before she died. That was just it. I made her read them to me so many times as a kid that when she was gone, I could open them up and still hear her voice in my head. I wanted to write stuff just like that. And then I did, and no one would touch it with a ten foot pole.

LEAH

It might have helped if you'd picked someone more interesting than the "Dogs Playing Poker" guy.

BECKY

C.M. Coolidge led a fascinating life! It's a classic American success story ... in a really, really weird sort of way.

Leah starts to put away her painting supplies.

LEAH

Well, you're probably better off. You've got a solid career going that's right down in the trenches, getting involved in these kids' lives. You're really doing something, not just writing about it.

BECKY

Yeah ... yeah, I guess it all worked out.

LEAH

(indicating the sky)

This is what kills me. Just when I'm finishing up, it all shifts into something even more brilliant that I wish I'd been painting from the get-go.

BECKY

Huh. I wonder if there was a moment where you could have caught it. Where you could have changed course when it did, and painted this instead of that.

LEAH

Maybe, but then I'd be late getting started on dinner. The world doesn't stop, you know? There's always something.

BECKY

There's always something ...

Leah exits through the house. Becky gets up to go after her, but stops and watches the sunset for one more moment.

BECKY

Yeah. It never looks like it's changing at all until it has.

She exits after Leah. A moment of stillness. Then, two white gondolas float through the sky, each piloted by a Hopi Kachina spirit, both a riot of color and ornament barely contained under white painters' overalls.

ZAFFRING TILL, female, wields a paint roller on a long stick, making large swaths of orange through the grey as the sun sets.

FULWARKIN FREML, male, older, handles the details with a fine brush.

FULWARKIN

(to Zaffring)

Some more orange past that cloud, but lay it light.  
I want a gasping ember's glow. Yes. Good.

He sails over to where Zaffring has left a trail of orange light, and goes over it with light touches of red as he speaks.

FULWARKIN

The surge of the electric open sign  
In Tom Wincott's bookshop on Ina Road  
Before he flips the switch one final time,  
And leaves his old dream stranded in the dark.  
The smoke in Gabriel Mendoza's eyes  
When daughter Esmerelda disappears  
Behind the airport metal detectors  
Back to a life without him somewhere else.  
The warmth Kate Pine feels in her lover's kiss  
As she decides that it will be their last.  
That final pulse of fire before the ash.  
They'll look up in the sky, and see themselves  
Commemorated in horizon lines. (to Zaffring)  
Now watch it - not so thick! You'll spoil the mood.

ZAFFRING

You know I love your requiems. I do!  
But don't you think some counterpoint might bring  
To life the composition as a whole?  
Down there, at Oro Valley's public pool,  
Alonso Cruz, age 6, is drying off  
From his first ever swim, all pruney skinned  
And triumphant, from vanquishing water,  
Eye-stinging chemicals and his own fear.  
I put his joy in this bright streak right here.



Fulwarkin examines it carefully.

FULWARKIN

A first time, not a last one. Doesn't fit.  
Perhaps the sunrise crew has use for it.

ZAFFRING

But it's a first that will not come again!  
The last time that sensation will be new.

FULWARKIN

I see your point. But new things all contain  
A little too much yellow for tonight.  
See? Right there at the edges, glowing gold.  
Just tone it down a bit with that cloud there.  
That's better. But it still needs something else -  
An end? An exit. From suburbia?

His look encompasses a vast distance, but he eventually  
finds what he's looking for.

FULWARKIN

Yes, 1422 Oracle Road.

ZAFFRING

That address ... is that where I'm s'posed to -

She brings a small day planner out of her pocket, flips  
through it.

ZAFFRING

Oh.

FULWARKIN

What is it?

ZAFFRING

Just bus'ness that can wait.  
The address of the house reminded me  
Of an appointment scheduled for tonight.

FULWARKIN

And what appointment's that?

ZAFFRING

(sighs)  
You'll just get mad,  
And turn the sky all bitter at the end  
Of what has been a lovely eulogy.

FULWARKIN

Oh god, don't tell me - the biographer!  
That damn book series, "Sunset Artists Of  
The American West", what volume?

ZAFFRING

Five.

They fin'ly found a candidate that meets  
All the criteria. It's quite a coup.  
Her name is Becky Shore, age 25.  
This house is where I'm s'posed to pick her up.  
The usual procedure, wait for sleep,  
Then steal into her dreams and bring her here.  
She interviews you, sums up your career.

FULWARKIN

And who are they to say that my career  
Is ready to be summed up here and now?

ZAFFRING

You have been painting a few billion years.

FULWARKIN

Exactly! Right in my artistic prime.  
I'm still on my first planet, for gods' sake!

ZAFFRING

It's just that you've done such important work.  
Your influence goes whisp'ring through the world.

Zaffring sees Leah's easel, points it out.

ZAFFRING

I see some of it there, in the back yard.  
A new interpretation of your work.

Fulwarkin sees Leah's painting on the easel.

FULWARKIN

That there? Hmm. Not too bad. She gets the shapes.  
Too many artists chase my color schemes,  
While she lays out the forms. Unique approach.  
But far too stingy with her use of red.  
Still find it curious how humans try  
To imitate my work in detail, yet  
They make it all mean something different  
Than what I said with the original.

ZAFFRING

And speaking of, if you have more to say  
With this one, we had better hurry up.  
We're running out of light to work with here.

FULWARKIN

Just one more thing to check on, then we're done.

He looks stage left, where ANNA TORRANCE has appeared. She lies in bed, surrounded by various medical paraphernalia that signals a very rough patch or a coming end.

FULWARKIN

There. Anna Torrance, 84 years old.  
For weeks now, she's been reaching up t'wards death.  
Could grasp it any minute now, looks like.

He shouts down to Anna's bed.

FULWARKIN

Ahoy there! Anna! My associate  
And I are Ka-

ANNA

I know what you are. But which ones? What do you do?

FULWARKIN

The sunsets. Requiems and eulogies.

ANNA

What is it that you want?

FULWARKIN

To mark your passing, write it in the sky.  
To build you a memorial of light.  
Should we do it tonight, or will you stay  
With us another night, another day?

ANNA

I'm still here, for now. And for a little longer, I think.

FULWARKIN

Just let us know when you decide to go.  
No end should go unnoticed in this world.  
(to Zaffring)  
All right, let's start to pull the colors down.

They steer their gondolas toward offstage, making small touch-ups as they go.

ANNA

It is a choice now, isn't it? I could just make up my mind, and go. Life's grown soft, thin. A summer bedsheet I can push off, and let billow away. But death. Death is ... too vast, too deep. I don't know the way through it yet. No up, down, or sideways there. A whole new set of directions I'm still learning. I used to run into things so quickly. Sever ties like that.

I could go out that way. A certain poetic justice in it. But my grand-daughters. I'd be leaving them without a compass. It never bothered me before. Let them make themselves without the baggage of history. But now ... knowing where you came from starts to feel important. I should tell them something. If I still can.

Anna watches Fulwarkin and Zaffring go about their work, now at the other edge of the stage.

ZAFFRING

(to Fulwarkin)

These fuschia trails you're leaving in - that's new.

FULWARKIN

Yes. Slashing color with a double edge.  
This stubborn brightness in the gath'ring grey -  
Both burning need to go, and wish to stay.

They fade the sunset out, and the light with it.

## SCENE TWO

Night. Becky sits on the couch in her pajamas, listening to her phone. Anna is asleep in her bed, stage left.

BECKY'S VOICEMAIL

You have one new message. First new message:

The warm voice of SORREL NUNEZ escapes the phone.  
At the sound of her, Becky blushes.

SORREL (V.O.)

Hey Becks, it's Sorrell again. Look, I'm sorry if I kind of overreacted when we talked earlier. I was just really excited by the idea of actually *seeing* you, you know? Anyways, I should've just respected that certain things make you uncomfortable. (laughs) Just another one of those Christian-y deals I don't get that you're always assuring me aren't as bad as they sound to me.

More laughter from Sorrel. Becky laughs too.

SORREL (V.O.)

But yeah. I hope things are going well with your grandma and your sister. That it's a rich time, and not too hard. (pause) It was good to hear your voice, Becky. I really needed that, I think. So ... thanks. I'll talk to you soon.

The message ends. Becky sits, half glowing, half not knowing what to do with herself. She looks at the time on her phone.

BECKY

11:02. Yeah, that's late to call back. Wait, is it 10:02 in L.A. right now, or is that in the winter? I can never remember -

Becky's thoughts are interrupted by Anna coughing violently in her bed. Becky puts her phone down, and runs in to see what's wrong.

BECKY

Gran? Are you -?

The coughs start bringing blood up with them. Becky rushes to the bed, grabs a towel on the bedside table to catch the blood with, cradles Anna against her. Leah enters, also in pajamas and half awake.

LEAH

Is she - (sees the blood) Oh god. I need to -

BECKY

I've got her Leah, I've got her.

LEAH

This, uh, this happens, but afterwards -

BECKY

Water on the night stand, and uh, these pills here?

LEAH

Yeah.

BECKY

One or two of 'em?

LEAH

Just, um, let me -

BECKY

I'm fine, Leah. I just need to know one or two.

LEAH

... Two.

BECKY

Great. I'll handle it. You need more sleep.

Leah hovers in the doorway in a state of foggy mistrust. Anna's coughing fit starts to subside.

BECKY

It's okay. I was already up anyway.

LEAH

... All right. Come get me if, you know ...

I will. Have a good night.

BECKY

You too.

LEAH

Leah finally wanders out of Anna's room, but not back to her own. She paces the living room, then heads outside to retrieve her secret cigarettes, lights one and examines the night sky as she smokes.

In Anna's bedroom, Becky gets Anna through the last bout of coughing.

There we go. It's all right. I've got you.

BECKY

Anna calms a bit. Becky grabs the pill bottle from the night stand, shakes out two, gets the glass of water.

All right ...

BECKY

She tries to feed Anna the pills, but Anna resists.

Come on, Gran.

BECKY

Anna still won't open her mouth.

These'll make you feel better. Promise.

BECKY

Still no go until a small cough forces Anna's lips open. Becky slips the pills in, but Anna spits them out.

O-kay. Fine. How about water instead?

BECKY

She holds the glass of water up to Anna's lips. Anna gulps it down greedily.

More?

BECKY

Anna opens her mouth for more water. Becky brings the glass in real close, then quickly drops the pills in the water at the last minute. Both pills and water get slurped down this time.

BECKY

Ha! Yes! Wasn't so bad now, was it?

ANNA

(feebly)

I want to go swimming.

BECKY

(laughs)

Okay. It's a date. You and me'll bust out our bikinis and hit the beach.

Offstage, sound of the front door opening and closing.  
Leah hears it, looks at her cigarette, considers putting it out, decides it's not worth it, keeps smoking.

BECKY

You a bikini girl, Gran? Bet you are. You have the confidence for it.

AARON enters with a brief case, sets it down in the living room, sits down and unwinds.

BECKY

Leah got that from you, I think. I never quite had the guts to pull it off. You should take me shopping for one. Better late than never, right?

Aaron notices Leah outside, gets up, watches her for a moment.

AARON

I thought you gave those up.

LEAH

I thought you weren't going to be out late.

AARON

Some of the staff went out for pizza after the board meeting, so -

LEAH

Pizza. (a short, unpleasant laugh) Sometimes I think being in the ministry means never being out of high school. It might actually be easier knowing you were out getting drunk. Makes for a better excuse than "Sorry, honey, the Diet Coke was flowing, we got into a real doozy of a debate about the doctrine of predestination, and I just lost track of time..."

AARON

(sighs)

Leah, I'm sorry. I just -

LEAH

You know, you used to be able to tell when I was joking.

AARON

You didn't used to make jokes about everything.

Silence.

AARON

I'm sorry I was out this late. I should have called you.

LEAH

You're an adult, Aaron. I really don't care. Trust me, if I was waiting up for you, you wouldn't have caught me smoking.

AARON

I can't believe you're still - you didn't have to hide it from me. I understand. It's really hard to quit. I could have been helping this whole time.

LEAH

Maybe I didn't want help. Maybe I like it.

AARON

You like killing yourself slowly.

LEAH

Yes.

AARON

Well, I don't know what to say to that.

LEAH

That's good. That's healthy. You can do what you need to do for work. I can smoke. We can both make our own decisions and not lecture each other over them. How about that?

She puts out her cigarette in one of the cactus planters.

AARON

Look, I know it's been ... a lot lately. But once this Home Groups program is on its feet -

LEAH

You'll have more time.

AARON

Promise.

LEAH

I'm going back to bed.

She crosses past him on her way to their bedroom. He catches one of her hands, holds it tenderly. She stops.

AARON

I'm still sorry I stayed out.

He pulls her in close to him. She comes willingly at first, but something in her stops.

LEAH

It really doesn't matter.



She lets go, heads back to the bedroom, Aaron watching her the whole way.

AARON

(to himself)

Which is why I should have called.

He starts to follow her, but stops, thinks better of it. He undresses down to a t shirt and boxers, then turns off the lights and lays down on the couch with the ease of an old pro.

In Anna's room, Becky has gotten Anna through the whole glass of water.

BECKY

Do you need any more?

But Anna has drifted off again.

BECKY

No? Well, after watching you go to town, I sure do.

Becky carefully extricates herself from the bed, and tiptoes out of the room. She gropes through the dark toward a glass of water left on the coffee table in front of the living room couch. Finds it, is just about to head back to Anna's room when Aaron stirs on the couch. Becky lets out a surprised shriek and half the water in the glass goes flying - right onto Aaron.

AARON

Awww man!

BECKY

Aaron?

AARON

Becky. Okay.

Becky hurriedly turns the lights on, sees Aaron drenched.

BECKY

Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry!

AARON

No, it's all right. I've already been baptized once, but hey, better safe than sorry, right?(motions at his soaked t shirt) Do you mind if I, ah ...

BECKY

Oh, no, that's fine.

AARON

(takes off his t shirt, wrings it out, mops his face with it, then puts his overshirt back on)  
I'm sorry I startled you.

BECKY

It was my fault. I just didn't expect you to be ... there. Is, ah, (looking towards Leah's bedroom) is everything okay?

AARON

What? Oh, no. I mean yes, it is. I just couldn't sleep, and sometimes a change of location -

BECKY

Oh, yeah, I'm the exact same way. It's no fun. And good luck getting back to sleep, 'cause wow. I know it's hard anyway, but getting cold water thrown on you -

AARON

It was more lukewarm, really.

BECKY

Oh. Well, that's good, I guess. Anyways, have a good night.

AARON

You too.

She heads out, almost gets out of the room.

AARON

Has she said anything to you? About us. Or ... me?

BECKY

Leah? No. Should she have?

AARON

No. No. It's just - something's been off lately, and I haven't been able to get anything out of her. I was curious if she'd mentioned anything to you.

BECKY

If there was something, I'd probably be the last person she'd tell.

AARON

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be bothering you with this. I -

BECKY

Don't apologize. If your problem's with Leah, then you're alone in it. Aren't you?

Aaron lapses into the speechlessness of the finally understood. She sits next to him on the couch.

BECKY

You can't tell the other pastors because that would show weakness. And you can't tell any church members because you're supposed to lead by example. You're on your own.

Yes. AARON

BECKY  
You've got to talk to her. Soon. Or it's going to get really bad.

AARON  
It already is.

Beat.

AARON  
Oh wow. That's ... the first time I've said it out loud.

BECKY  
Then tell her. Tell her you feel it. Just that might be enough to -

AARON  
I've tried, but - half the time we talk now I feel like everything I say, whatever I do, she's - she's weighing it as evidence of some crime against her. But I have no idea how to defend myself because I don't know what I'm supposed to be guilty of! I'm completely in the dark. I've prayed and prayed, but the problem still hasn't been revealed to me -

BECKY  
Because you have to talk to her. God isn't going to give you an easy way out of that. He can show you what to say, how to say it - maybe that's what you need to be praying for.

AARON  
Maybe.

Beat.

AARON  
Thank you. For letting me say it. And not judging me for what I needed to say.

BECKY  
You make it sound like that's a good thing.

AARON  
You don't think it is?

BECKY  
I don't know. I used to. But it, uh, hasn't really worked out for me lately.

AARON  
We all go through dry seasons, but they pass.

BECKY  
Ha. You say that -

AARON

You've been a minister of grace to me tonight.

BECKY

I don't know about -

AARON

You have. Your Youth Group kids are lucky to have you.

BECKY

Yeah, their parents might not agree with you on that one.

AARON

It doesn't matter what they think. It matters what God thinks. And He has called you there to change those kids' lives.

BECKY

Aaron -

AARON

And you're doing it. I can tell. You've been placed there for a reason. I know it can be easy to doubt that sometimes, but -

BECKY

Aaron, I got fired.

AARON

What? No -

BECKY

I did. I got canned. I'm here right now because I have nowhere else to go.

AARON

But ... what happened?

BECKY

(a short, unpleasant laugh just like her sister's)

I was a minister of grace is what happened.

AARON

For one of your kids -?

BECKY

Kylie - she's 16 years old, a really bright kid. In both senses of the word. Whip smart and can just light up a room like that, so it's pretty noticeable when the light goes out. She completely withdrew, wouldn't talk to anybody. Took a good long while for her to tell me what was wrong, but she finally did. Her boyfriend had pressured her into sex. And you know how it is, all we're allowed to preach is abstinence, virginity, blah blah blah. So she's wracked with guilt, terrified of damnation, and basically thinks her life is over.

AARON

So you told her it wasn't.

BECKY

Yeah. That she isn't defined by a single act. That God doesn't care what she's done in the past, but how she moves forward from there. I told her I'd made the same mistake when I was her age, but it didn't stop the Lord from using me.

AARON

You made the same - is that true?

BECKY

Yeah, when I was seventeen. And nobody pressured me. I was trying to ... prove something to myself, I guess. And maybe I did. I don't know. Anyway, I told Kylie that I'd done it, and yet here I was, called to God's work, and she could be too. The relief, it shook her whole body - one of those moments where you just feel the Holy Spirit in the room with you, you know? The light glows warm with grace, and everything you believe, it starts to happen exactly the way you were promised it would. When she left my office, she was ecstatic! So ecstatic that she went home and told her parents everything, what she had done, what I told her, the whole deal. And that's when the avalanche started. It was so surreal. Church board members getting woken up in the middle of the night by angry phone calls. I was "encouraging sexual promiscuity in the Youth Group", and what were they going to do about that? Pastor Grayson told me to tough it out, that it'd simmer down eventually and be okay. But it didn't. Suddenly, there was an emergency meeting called, and he ... bent to the pressure. So I was out. Kylie was crushed. She even got up a petition to keep me on. All the kids signed it. It was sweet, but ... not enough.

AARON

I am so sorry.

BECKY

What still gets me about the whole thing is how right it all felt in that room with her. The calm that washed over her face when I told her that she wasn't ruined or alone - my life has pretty much been hell ever since, but still - I wouldn't trade that. I just hope she can hold onto it somehow.

AARON

You have an amazing heart, Becky. You do. And the Lord has something so much better in store for you. I know it.

BECKY

Something better than everybody shunning me for next to nothing? I hope so!

AARON

I mean better than if things had gone differently, and you were still there. Bigger things are coming, just you wait. In fact - oh my gosh, yes. That could be it.

BECKY

What?

AARON

There's this pastor I met on a leadership retreat - Jeremy Gates. He has a huge church in L.A. Really cutting edge, seeker sensitive. You'd love it.

He just called me about a Youth Outreach position he's got open. I've got my hands full here, of course, and at this point, Youth Ministry is kind of a step down for me, no offense

BECKY

At least you're honest.

AARON

But it's not just a stepping stone to you, and this would be a perfect fit. I can call him tomorrow and set something up -

BECKY

That's nice of you, but I don't know. I mean, L.A.? There's some things, some people I know out there that ... that I'm not sure I should be around right now.

AARON

So don't tell them you're there. Just go for a day, talk to Jeremy, and see -

BECKY

They pulled the rug out from under me, Aaron! This whole community of people I loved and trusted, they all turned their backs on me, and it - I don't know if I can just jump back in to that and be okay again. Not right now.

AARON

I know what you mean. I do. There are so many doubts. They swarm around you all at once, and nothing makes sense anymore -

BECKY

Then you see why -

AARON

- but those are exactly the times that you have to keep moving down the path the Lord has put you on, just keep pressing on, no matter what, and trust that He knows where it leads.

BECKY

You have to, huh?

AARON

What else is there?

BECKY

I don't know. But sometimes I really wish I did.

AARON

I'll give him a call tomorrow.

BECKY

Please, not tomorrow. Later. I just - I told Leah I would be here, be with Gran 'til the end. It's the first time I've actually been there for family in ... a while. So I need to stay, and do this. But, um, maybe after -?

AARON

Yes, of course. After that. You're right. I just get excited sometimes, and don't really think about ... everything.

BECKY

Yeah, well ... I guess I should let you try to sleep. One of us still has a job to get up early for, right?

AARON

Right.

BECKY

Oh, and could you not tell Leah about me getting fired? I mean, not right now?

AARON

She's not going to think less of you just because -

BECKY

I know, I know. I just don't want her to think the only reason I came out here finally was because of that. I'll tell her myself, soon, but -

AARON

Okay.

BECKY

Thanks. Well, good night.

AARON

Good night.

Becky starts to leave the room.

AARON

Would you have come here? Taken the time out if they hadn't let you go?

Becky thinks about it.

BECKY

I really hope so.

AARON

Yes. I guess we all do. Have a good night. Or morning. Or whenever it is that you actually sleep.

BECKY

I will. You too.

Aaron lies back down as Becky heads to Anna's room. Anna is asleep again. Becky climbs in bed next to her.

BECKY

What am I doing here, Lord? What am I doing?

She notices a Bible on the bedside table, picks it up.

BECKY

When in doubt, start at the beginning. (reads) “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.” But then it’s another two days until -(looks ahead in the text) yeah. I mean, how do you have day and night for three whole days before you actually get around to making the sun? All these questions now where I got answers before. Maybe because I found darkness in the place light was supposed to be. (heavenwards) Seems You don’t divide them as cleanly as advertised. Even here at the beginning - “...God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” So, God makes the world, and it’s a shambles at first. Then He kinda just floats around for awhile, like ya do, until He ... what? Gets bored, I guess.

She puts the Bible back on the bedside table, then snuggles up next to Anna.

BECKY

Maybe it was peaceful there, resting in the possibilities, before everything cried out to make sense. Life takes so much motion just to sustain itself. We never quite had time for each other, did we, gran? Too busy moving all over the place. (a sad laugh) Maybe it’s a good thing I’ve got nowhere else to go. I can finally just be where I am. With you.

Becky closes her eyes, and drifts to sleep. A strange light starts to emanate from Anna, who begins to stroke Becky’s hair. Becky doesn’t notice.

ANNA

I heard you. I did. Not every word. But I know you’re there. I wish I could have answered back. Opened my eyes and looked at you and smiled. But there’s so much to see here on the inside. My sky has a hole in it now. With a strong reed growing all the way up to it, just like the old legends. But you wouldn’t know those stories. I never told them to you. Your father wouldn’t have wanted me contradicting Genesis. A good book in its own way. Practically the only thing my own father left behind. I had it memorized before I was twelve. But my mother knew other stories. She said that Sotuknang didn’t just make the world once. Humanity destroyed the first one, so he saved the last few peaceful people and hid them underground, with the ants for their teachers, while he made a second world. When he was done, he stuck a hollow reed into the ant hill, and all the people climbed up the inside of the reed into Sotuknang’s new creation. But once again, they brought the world to ruin, and once again, He sent the peaceful ones underground to wait for a new one. We are in the fourth world now. I think I may see the fifth soon. I’ve used my world up. Done all the damage I can do. My body is a ruin now. Maybe I should start climbing. What do you think? Should I stay or go? Dawn will be coming on soon. And something else, too. There, in the distance.

Zaffring pilots her white gondola through Aaron and Leah’s living room. Aaron seems to feel her pass by his couch, and stirs sleepily.

AARON

What? Huh?



ZAFFRING

Oh, don't mind me. I didn't come for you.

AARON

Oh. Okay.

He sinks back into unconsciousness as Zaffring's craft glides into Anna's bedroom.

ANNA

(to Zaffring)

I still haven't decided if I'm ready for a eulogy yet. And shouldn't you be gearing up for dawn?

ZAFFRING

What, me? The dawn? No, that's a different crew.  
I got my start in sunrise painting, yes,  
But it's a bit too mellow for my taste.  
From darkness into light - inspiring, sure,  
But in a one-trick pony sort of way.  
I like the mystery in creeping dark,  
The many meanings people glean from it.  
Sunsets are more dramatic, don't you think?

ANNA

Yes. That's why I like sunrise better. It's comforting. When the sun sets, there's always a hint of dread in my heart that this will be the time when it doesn't ever come back.

ZAFFRING

I'd hoped that bit of dread was coming through!  
The boss said 'no', but I've been sneaking in  
A wisp or two this whole past century.  
He hates it, but I think it adds suspense.  
(to Becky)  
You ready now, Miss Shore? We need to go.

ANNA

Is she expecting you?

ZAFFRING

She isn't yet, but will when she wakes down.

ANNA

Wakes ...?

ZAFFRING

Down. Deep in her subconscious dreaming mind.  
Once there, it all makes perfect sense. You'll see.  
(To Becky)  
Miss Shore, it's time for your appointment now.

Becky stirs from the bed, still a little groggy.

BECKY

Oh, that's right, the interview. Listen, I think you've got the wrong person for this job. I was always more of a biographer than an interviewer, and I don't do either anymore. I'm a Youth Pastor now. Or, was.

ZAFFRING

Still, you're the one they chose, so here I am.

BECKY

I need to spend time with my family right now. I'm sure they can find somebody else.

ZAFFRING

It took them sev'ral years to just find you.  
There's strict criteria involved in this.

BECKY

(to Anna) Will you be okay if I step out for a minute?

ANNA

Well, I'm in bed, unconscious right now, so I think I'll be fine.

BECKY

All right, then. (kisses Anna on the cheek) Love you.

ANNA

I love you too.

They stop for a moment, look at each other.

BECKY

We don't do that a lot, do we?

ANNA

No. But in this state, it almost feels natural, doesn't it?

Becky steps into the gondola. Zaffring steers the gondola back through the Living Room.

BECKY

I have to admit, I'm kind of nervous. I haven't written about artists for years now.

ZAFFRING

But you still dream about it all the time?

BECKY

Yeah.

ZAFFRING

Dreaming's a sort of practice. You'll be fine.

As they sail off, Leah enters the Living Room, sees Aaron asleep on the couch, sighs. She sits in the chair next to the couch, silent for a while. Then, finally -

LEAH

Aaron.

AARON

What? Huh? (sees Leah sitting there) Oh. What time is it?

LEAH

I don't know, four? I woke up, and you weren't there. Again.

AARON

I'm sorry. I've been having trouble sleeping lately, and sometimes a change of location helps, so -

LEAH

You could have tried our bed first.

AARON

I didn't want to disturb you if I was just going to have to get up again -

LEAH

I'm a pretty deep sleeper. You don't have to walk on eggshells.

AARON

Okay. Thanks.

Silence.

LEAH

Is there something keeping you up?

AARON

Maybe.

An expectant moment for both of them. This could be it.

AARON

I'm ... I guess I'm just ... worried about Samson and Lucky. It's been three days since they got out of the yard -

LEAH

(sighs)

I'm worried, too. But we've put signs up everywhere. There's not much more we can do.

AARON

I know. You're right.

LEAH  
 (holding out her hand to him)  
 Come to bed. We can look for them again tomorrow.

AARON  
 Okay.

He takes her hand. She leads him offstage.

### SCENE THREE

Fulwarkin Freml's studio, cluttered with scaffolding, buckets of paint and drop cloths, with some canvases of old sunsets of the past hung here and there.

Fulwarkin sits cleaning his brushes in a pail of water.

FULWARKIN  
 Drink deep, my love, and let the colors go.  
 Surrender to the water's ebb and flow.  
 Embrace the freedom its caress avails,  
 And leave behind your past in gentle trails.  
 Such lucky instruments, so quickly free  
 Of thick experience that clings to me,  
 For Time has marked us both with smear and stain,  
 But when immersed in water, mine remain.

Zaffring sails in with Becky in tow.

BECKY  
 (to Zaffring)  
 That's him - Fulwarkin Freml, one of the greatest artists in the solar system?

ZAFFRING  
 It is indeed. Take special care with him.  
 He's none too thrilled to do this, so you know.

BECKY  
 Really? Why not?

FULWARKIN  
 (not looking up)  
 That you, Zaffring?

ZAFFRING  
 Me and Miss Becky Shore,  
 The interviewer from -

FULWARKIN  
 I know, I know.

Becky scrambles out of the gondola, and up to him.

BECKY

Mr. Freml, just let me say it is such a great honor -

FULWARKIN

You don't look Hopi. How far back is it  
Within your blood? Three generations? Four?

BECKY

Hopey? You mean like Hopi Indian?

FULWARKIN

You're white enough you call them Indians?!  
(to Zaffring)  
So, what? You're hearing me in English now?  
My soul's poetics translated into  
Some clumsy, trotting metre from Europe?

BECKY

Now that you mention it ... uh ... yeah.

FULWARKIN

And seen by eyes that have no cultural  
Grasp upon the thing they're witnessing? (to Zaffring)  
I told you it would be like this! My god!  
Not even the respect to follow through  
And find somebody qualified for me!

BECKY

I'm - (to Zaffring) I'm sorry. What's going on?

FULWARKIN

"A Sunset Artists interviewer must  
Descend directly from a family  
That's dwelt within the artist's area  
Since he began his work there." That's rule one!  
And in my case, that work extends beyond  
The first of your ilk crawling from the sea,  
Encapsulates the sev'ral million years  
It took for you to learn to walk upright,  
And brings us up till now, when it's too much,  
Apparently, to ask for someone from  
The line of men that first looked up to see  
This portion of the sky, my gallery.  
And what about rule two? Are you at least  
A skilled artist's biographer of note?  
What have you published? Who else have you done?

BECKY

I did get published, actually. Right out of college, which was pretty exciting. "Every Dog Will Have Its Day: The Life and Art of C.M. Coolidge". It got some good reviews, and -

FULWARKIN

Coolidge? The one who drew dogs playing cards?!  
Who else?

BECKY

That was kind of it. It didn't sell too well. Or, you know, at all. I started one on Berthe Morisot, but -

FULWARKIN

But you gave up. And this is who they've found  
To sum up my whole legacy in print.  
For Dreslin, they bring out the best they have,  
But for the one who taught him all he knows?  
A novice quitter from the wrong damn place!

BECKY

Now look here, Mr... Fancy Dancy Nature Spirity guy! I've had enough rejection in my real life, okay? I don't need it in my dreams too. You know what? I'm outta here!

She storms off.

FULWARKIN

Good. Fine. And I can get back to my work.  
(calling after Becky)  
Which isn't done, and still has more to say!

A moment of silence. Fulwarkin goes back to his brushes.

ZAFFRING

You really are afraid that you're washed up.

FULWARKIN

Excuse me - ?!

ZAFFRING

Why else would you act like that?  
This wasn't her idea. She's not to blame.  
And what exactly are you chafing at?  
An honor most don't get in their lifespan,  
Yet you're behaving like a condemned man!

FULWARKIN

To be proclaimed a classic is slow death  
That drains all new endeavors' living breath.

ZAFFRING

But she might show you pathways in your art  
That get some more blood pumping to its heart.

Becky walks back in, embarrassed.

BECKY

(to Zaffring)

Could you, um, tell me how to get back to my grandma's bed? I wasn't really paying attention when we floated here.

FULWARKIN

(to Becky)

That sunset to your right. What's it about?

BECKY

What, this one here? (examines it) That depends. When did you paint it?

FULWARKIN

You're s'posed to be the expert. You tell me.

BECKY

I'm no stranger to your work, you know. I did grow up here, even if I'm not from the right lineage, or whatever. And I'd say this is ... early. One of your very first?

FULWARKIN

How could you tell?

BECKY

All my life, I've looked up at your skies, and felt some beautiful, sad story weaving through it all. But this here - you're having fun! No heavy themes, just joy in colors, and the freedom in that. I see almost a completely different artist than I'm used to. Will you tell me about him?

A moment passes by in silence.

FULWARKIN

The brushes still need cleaning, Zaffring. Quick.

Zaffring breathes a sigh of relief, grabs the pail and brushes and exits. Fulwarkin walks over to the sunset Becky is examining.

FULWARKIN

Look at that brushwork - god, so eager then!  
 A storm of art and color swirled inside  
 And beat against my frame with frantic gusts.  
 My mentor, Zelwar Glosset, had just left  
 After the second change in atmosphere.  
 He loved the old sky, thick with methane haze  
 And flowing curtains of volcanic ash.  
 He made grand gestures 'cross that orange expanse,  
 And spoke deep secrets to the empty void.  
 Then life crept in, and cluttered up his sky.

A chorus of bacteria exhaled  
 More oxygen, and sang the heavens blue.  
 Zelwar lost int'rest after that, and fled.  
 But I adored this infant sky, so pale,  
 So ripe for contrast with the other shades.  
 After 2 billion years apprenticing,  
 This canvas was now mine to work upon.  
 (points out another sunset canvas)  
 You'll see in that one where I first plunged in.

BECKY

Oh wow. This is it - Carnation Flurries #1. Incredible. I never knew pastels could be *intense*. So what was it about this time? What finally unbottled that art storm twisting up your insides?

FULWARKIN

There aren't words. Your language is too small.  
 But you've felt it before yourself. You know.  
 The same experience has touched us both.

BECKY

I don't know about that. I'm a 25 year old Evangelical talking to a Native American kachina spirit that's been on the earth for billions of years. And if my Creationist dad heard me say that sentence, he'd probably disown me. You've experienced more of the universe than I'll ever be aware of, so -

FULWARKIN

Existence is consistent, through and through.  
 You humans know more than you think you do.  
 Your birth's a burst of light, then space expands  
 And rushes from the grasp of your small hands.  
 You grow to fill the room that now exists,  
 When gravity grabs hold of you and twists.  
 Now pulled t'ward other bodies, other lives,  
 You dance in orbit, a new system thrives  
 Till youthful passions' temperatures cool.  
 The thread of life grows taut around the spool,  
 And slowly rolls back inward, drawing in  
 Your scope and your ambitions with your skin.  
 You shrink, grow cold, see darkness, shed your frame.  
 Men, galaxies and stars all end the same.  
 There is one single script. We all rehearse  
 The life and death of the whole universe.  
 And if we share a death, we share in joy.  
 (brings a sheet of paper out of his pocket)  
 I was two billion years old, you were four,  
 I painted with the light, while you used these,  
 (brings out a couple of crayons)  
 But our elated hearts sang with one voice.  
 Think back, remember, then you'll find the words.



Fulwarkin hands her the paper and crayons, then stands back. Becky stares at the materials in her hands, transfixed. Then suddenly sits down on the ground, and goes at the paper with vigor. She is four again, newly discovering what she thinks of how colors combine, occasionally laughing in delight at what's happening on the page. Anna crosses behind her, looking a good twenty years younger, sipping a cup of coffee on her way to somewhere else.

BECKY

Gramma. Hey, Gramma! Gramma, look!

It takes the third call for Anna to stop and really look at Becky, who holds up her coloring proudly.

BECKY

See what I did?

Anna takes the coloring page, gives it a cursory glance. Behind her, Leah, aged 11, enters and eavesdrops.

BECKY

(holding up different crayons)

I took this one, and colored over that one! See?

ANNA

(handing the paper back)

Yes, they're very pretty colors.

Becky goes back to coloring. Anna starts to leave, stops, looks at the paper again.

ANNA

But you should try to keep them inside the lines better.

BECKY

Why?

ANNA

Because right now the sky doesn't end at the mouse's skirt like it should. The lines are there to keep them separate.

BECKY

Why?

ANNA

So we can tell that they're two different things. You want people to know what they're looking at, don't you?

BECKY

No! I like it this way.

ANNA

Well, that's fine for you, but others might not like it as much if they can't tell what's what.

She heads back out. Becky stares at her paper, confused. Leah makes her way over to Becky and sits next to her.

LEAH

You really don't have to do what she says, Becky. Gran's kind of weird about that stuff, but I like it just fine.

BECKY

You do?

LEAH

Yup. And you know what I want to see? A big purple streak that goes all the way from here to there.

Becky obliges with relish.

LEAH

Ha! Awesome. Do it again.

Becky does, even crazier this time.

LEAH

Yeah, now what goes over here?

Becky picks out a crayon and starts doodling, with Leah watching intently.

LEAH

Good! Now over here?

Rather than doodling some more, Becky suddenly regains her age. She looks at Leah, taking the memory in, as Leah reacts to more invisible doodling on the paper in front of her.

LEAH

Nice!

Becky gets up and steps out of the scene, leaving Leah with the phantom of her four year old self.

LEAH

Anything you think is missing? Of course! Now let's go show this to mom. Come on!

Leah takes up the paper, grabs an unseen hand, and exits as Becky and Fulwarkin watch her go.

BECKY

Ah, yeah. That tiny moment of joy in beauty for just being what it is. That's really what you felt while painting all of these?

FULWARKIN

Exactly that, for all the early ones.

BECKY

(nodding after Leah)

Did you have someone like my sister, too? Cheering you on, saying "To hell with the lines"?

A deep sigh from Fulwarkin.

FULWARKIN

I did, yes. For a while. My apprentice.  
I took one on myself when Zelwar left -  
Tanjer Dreslin, brilliant, lots of promise.  
Each ev'ning was to us a brand new age  
We'd fashion out of dreams, then flip the page,  
Unlearn the lessons of the previous day,  
Then start from scratch, experiment, just play.

BECKY

(pointing to another canvas)

And just playing made that?

FULWARKIN

(nods)

It did, toward the end.

BECKY

The end of what?

FULWARKIN

That phase.

BECKY

Looking at this, it's hard to believe there's an end to anything. The way those beams of light just keep going, stretching out on both sides ...

FULWARKIN

Yes, reaching for infinity, like fools.

BECKY

But what if they actually managed to grab it, and hold on?

FULWARKIN

Then that's an end to reaching, isn't it?  
One way or other, Change wins ev'ry hand.

The “next big thing” turns into “The Old Guard”,  
Comrades grow into rivals, and declare  
That those who taught them must be overthrown  
For Progress to keep marching on its way.

BECKY

And that’s what happened with you and Tanjer, your apprentice?

Beat. Fulwarkin seems lost for a moment.

FULWARKIN

I’d rather not get into that just yet.

BECKY

Okay. This might be a good stopping place for tonight. If, you know, you did want to keep going with this later.

FULWARKIN

Zaffring!

Zaffring hurries back in.

ZAFFRING

Yes, sir?

FULWARKIN

See that Miss Shore gets home.  
(to Becky) Tomorrow night, the same time. Will that work?

BECKY

Sure. Yes! Absolutely.

FULWARKIN

I’ll see you then.

He gives a curt bow, and is off.

BECKY

Okay, great. Bye.

ZAFFRING

You found a way to win him over, then.

BECKY

Did I?

ZAFFRING

He talked to you, and now you’re coming back.

BECKY

That doesn’t seem like much.

ZAFFRING

(shrugs)

But it's enough for now.

Zaffring pulls the white gondola back on stage, while Becky's eyes go back to the sunset she had been studying with Fulwarkin.

BECKY

"Now." Huh. This sunset - He said it was the end of a phase, but maybe it's more.

ZAFFRING

It's more like what?

BECKY

An invitation to flip the page like he said. Choosing every day to unlearn your own history, your hurts, your defenses, and just be (gestures to sunset) *this*.

ZAFFRING

(looking at the sunset)

To live that ecstasy, day in day out?  
Exhausting just to think of it. No thanks.

BECKY

It would be work. But maybe it would be worth it.

ZAFFRING

So do you think you're ready, then, Miss Shore?

BECKY

I might be.

She just stands there, still peering into Fulwarkin's sunset.

ZAFFRING

I meant, for me to take you back home now?

BECKY

Oh, right! Yes. I am.

Becky climbs into the gondola as Zaffring studies the sunset.

ZAFFRING

Perhaps if I could see it through your eyes,  
I'd get that sense of possibility.  
But my gaze is too clouded by desire.  
I'm chomping at the bit to be this free,  
To take the lead, be reckless with my brush,  
But he's no longer in the mood for that.  
This makes you want to start fresh ev'ry day?  
For me, it fuels more longing to advance.  
I guess it's all in how you look at it.

Zaffring starts rowing them off.

BECKY

And also maybe who's doing the looking.

#### SCENE FOUR

Aaron enters with a cup of to-go coffee, and paces stage right while talking on his cell phone. Leah helps to feed Anna in her bed stage left.

AARON

I mean, what do you want me to say? The whole point of Home Groups is for members to delve deeper into each others' lives in an intimate setting. Of course there's going to be some personal drama that gets ...

LEAH

Come on, you need this, Gran. Don't make it a battle this time.

AARON

Because I didn't think it needed stating. It's one of those things that ...

Anna takes a bite of the food Leah proffers.

AARON

But Pastor, that's where all the good stuff happens! When they have to work through ...  
Yes.

ANNA

Your chicken ...

LEAH

Yeah?

AARON

Yes, I know. Trust me, that's not what I wanted to see at this early stage either, but ...

ANNA

Always too tough.

AARON

Well, we're going to have to see how that works eventually, so why not -? .....

LEAH

(laughs, while feeding her another bite)

Well, you'll just have to show me how it's done sometime.

AARON

Yes ... no, no, I get that. .... You're right. You're right. ... I'll handle it. Tonight. Yes .....  
Of course. ... Well, I do too. ... Great. Got it. See you in a few.

He hangs up. Takes a deep breath. Starts to leave, then thinks of something. Looks at his phone. Ponders it a while.

LEAH

See? It's really not that bad.

Aaron gets back on the phone. Leah's cell phone rings.

LEAH

Dammit, just when - (answers phone) Hey.

AARON

Hey. How's it going?

LEAH

Not bad. Gran's feeling better, I think. (to Anna) I know it's a good day when you have the energy to insult my cooking. (back to Aaron) Becky's actually up and in the shower at a somewhat decent hour, which is encouraging. What did you need?

AARON

I just wanted to let you know, there's some sort of drama going on at Jim Dawson's home group, and Pastor Ken thinks -

LEAH

- that you need to fix it.

AARON

Yeah. So I probably won't be in till late.

LEAH

Okay.

AARON

And I just wanted to let you know. (pause) So ... now you know.

LEAH

Anything else?

AARON

(hesitates)  
No, that's pretty much it.

LEAH

Well, have fun with that.

AARON

Oh yeah, it's going to be a party! So I should get going, but I'll, uh, talk to you ... at some point, I guess.

LEAH

Okay. Bye.

Bye.

AARON

They hang up. Leah goes back to getting Anna to eat. Aaron stares at his phone for a moment, then shakes his head and puts the phone away.

AARON

(to himself)

So you called this time. What did you expect, an award?

He exits. Leah brandishes another forkful of chicken at Anna.

LEAH

I know. You thought you were getting out of this easy, but no such luck.

ANNA

Ugh. Too much.

LEAH

Too much? You've had, like, three bites.

Becky enters, dressed, but still drying off her hair again.

ANNA

Later.

LEAH

Not later, now.

BECKY

Still putting up a fight, huh, Gran? (to Leah) What, did you overcook it again?

A faint smile from Anna.

LEAH

No fair taking her side! You're supposed to be helping me here.

BECKY

Sorry. I'm feeling kind of frisky today.

LEAH

Yeah, being awake during daylight tends to help with that.

BECKY

You're being snarky, but you're right. I really do feel refreshed. Got some actually deep sleep last night for once. Woke up at an almost normal time -

LEAH

Noon is normal for you?



BECKY

I said almost. And I had this really cool, vivid dream - I usually just have lame anxiety dreams about being back waiting tables and stuff. But this one was ... crazy and, I don't know. I just woke up feeling ... different.

LEAH

Different how?

BECKY

I don't know ... aware of possibilities.

A derisive snort from Leah.

BECKY

Is that funny?

LEAH

Not in a "ha ha" sort of way, but yeah. People always talk about possibilities, like there are all these paths that are open to you, but I think that's a myth. Look at me. I'm spending my time ... being there for my family. (to Anna, hold up another forkful) Making them eat their damn chicken!

Anna sighs, and takes another bite.

LEAH

Thank you! Was there ever the possibility that I wouldn't, you know, be here for you guys? And I'm talking about me, personally. I could never decide differently than I did and still live with myself. So was it really a possibility at all? I don't think so.

Leah catches Becky looking at her, trying to recognize something.

LEAH

What?

BECKY

You were in my dream last night. Kind of a memory folded inside of a dream, of coloring with you as a kid. How you always let me go wild, told me the pages could be whatever I wanted.

LEAH

You actually remember that?

BECKY

(nods)

But now I'm awake again, you're talking about there not really being possibilities, and it makes me wonder what happened to that big sister who said it was okay to color outside the lines.

Beat.

LEAH  
She grew up.

BECKY  
Then maybe growing up is stupid!

LEAH  
Gee, thanks.

BECKY  
Do you remember what it was like, waking up as a kid? Like, a really little one?

LEAH  
Honestly? Not really.

ANNA  
I do. Sometimes ... now ... I do.

BECKY  
You just ... woke up. And there weren't rules, or grudges, or obligations. You didn't even have words for these things yet. It was all so simple. I wonder if it still *is* that simple, but we forgot how to be.

LEAH  
There's a word for forgetting how to be simple. It's called "learning".

BECKY  
Come on, Leah.

LEAH  
What? You say these things, and it all sounds very poetic. But right here, right now, it doesn't work.

BECKY  
I know it doesn't. But what if it could? Not on a big scale, but in small ways.

LEAH  
Like what?

BECKY  
Well ...

Becky thinks for a moment, hesitates, then takes the dangerous plunge.

BECKY  
Like you and me. We don't really ... talk.

LEAH  
We seem to be talking a lot right now.

BECKY

I mean about our lives, what we're going through. We don't talk about that.

LEAH

So?

BECKY

So, what if we just ... did?

LEAH

Maybe there's reasons why we don't.

BECKY

Yes, but what if we both just decided that today we were going to start fresh and trust each other again?

LEAH

I don't think it works that way.

ANNA

(to Leah)

No more. I'm full.

Leah looks at the plate. A little less than half remains.

LEAH

All right. I guess that's enough.

BECKY

There is a reason why I haven't been sleeping at night. And you're right. It has to do with church stuff back in Kansas City.

LEAH

What?

BECKY

You asked me about that yesterday, and I lied. So now I'm ... unlying.

LEAH

Okay ...

BECKY

I'm having a crisis of faith, I think. I've dedicated my life to spreading this message, and I'm not sure what I think about it anymore. There are parts of me that don't seem to fit into it, no matter what I do. I don't know how much longer I can keep ignoring that.

LEAH

What brought this on?

BECKY

(hesitates)

I don't know. Lots of little things.

LEAH

You're thinking about quitting? Seriously?

BECKY

It's ... definitely a possibility. I know we're human and we all have our doubts. But when you're a spiritual leader, is there a legal limit? Are there some things you just can't question? I don't know.

LEAH

I think that's okay. At some point, everybody has to fake it for a while. But you just keep going, and hope that it'll make more sense to you down the line.

BECKY

But what if it never does?

LEAH

Then at least you kept at it until you knew for sure.

She picks up Anna's leftovers and heads out of the room.

LEAH

I'd better get this stuff cleaned up.

Becky follows her out into the living room.

BECKY

But you haven't told me anything about what's going on with you.

LEAH

Is that what all this is? You told me something personal, so now you've earned the right to hear something about me? That's not how it works.

Leah exits.

BECKY

(calling after her)

I haven't earned anything. I just want to know. Please, Leah. A fresh start for both of us. Just try it.

LEAH

(from offstage)

I don't know what you want me to say.

BECKY

Say whatever you're thinking. Say how you feel. How are you and Aaron doing? Something like -

LEAH

(from offstage)

Wait. (she re-enters) Why that?

BECKY

You and Aaron? It's kind of an important relationship. I was just curious.

LEAH

But why?

BECKY

Leah, it was an innocent question.

LEAH

It's the least innocent question there is. People only ask that when they think something's wrong and want to give you an opening to talk about it.

BECKY

That's so not -

LEAH

So why do you think something's wrong, Becky?

BECKY

I don't think -

LEAH

Yes you do. Why?

BECKY

I couldn't sleep last night as usual, and I was on my way to the kitchen when I noticed he was sleeping on the couch.

LEAH

Oh. Oh yeah, that's not what it looks like. Sometimes he can't sleep and he just needs a change of location.

BECKY

And that's exactly what he told me.

LEAH

You had a conversation about it?

BECKY

Look, it was dark, and I didn't know anyone was there, and I had this glass of water - it's a whole long story. But yes. We had a brief conversation where I asked if everything was okay, and he said what you just said.

LEAH

So why did you still ask me how we're doing?

BECKY

I don't know! It seemed like a good question to ask! And maybe I was curious to hear your side just to make sure that -

LEAH

Wait - did he tell you his side?

BECKY

Oh my god.

LEAH

Becky, did he mention something was going on with us?! Did he?!

BECKY

Yes, okay? And he didn't even tell me! He just asked if you'd told me anything, and I said no!

LEAH

And then -

BECKY

And then he said that things had been off with you two for a while, but he couldn't get anything out of you -

LEAH

BECAUSE HE NEVER FUCKING ASKED!

Leah bursts into tears. Becky stands with no idea how they got here or what to do.

LEAH

And he told *you*. All this time wondering if he even noticed, and he tells *you*.

BECKY

(goes to embrace her)

Leah, I'm so -

LEAH

Don't touch me!

BECKY

What - what did I do?

LEAH

(laughing through her tears)

Oh, you just got my husband to tell you in three days what he hasn't been able to tell me in two and a half years. Where I just felt ... abandoned ... trying and failing to keep myself from shutting off ... wondering if he even *cared*. And in three days, he told you. So you know what?! I have no idea what it was you did! But you always do it! You always do what I can't. What I - what I - just ... can't.

She runs out of the room. Becky sinks into the couch in disbelief. In her bed, Anna cranes to hear what's going on, but only hears silence.

ANNA

What is it about dying that makes all the important things happen in other rooms? Is life so jealous? It won't share just a little space with death? I hear raised voices, words coming out in choked sobs. Feet running from the room. I wish I knew what it meant.

The tears, to start with. The sound of them - low, angry, that's familiar - so Leah's, then. And her feet doing the running. She doesn't want to cry in front of us. Only one set of steps -

BECKY

What just happened?!

ANNA

And a voice. Becky's still in the room. I can see her there -

Anna gets up from bed, crosses behind the couch.

ANNA

- sitting, I think. The way I remember seeing her so many times in the hospital, waiting for news of her mother, my Renee.

BECKY

I was just trying to - (sighs)

ANNA

The rest of us stood, paced, did busywork, but you always just sat. Confused in such a solemn way, eyes scanning the room as though you were waiting for the person who would finally come tell you what to do with yourself. I never knew what to say to you. Are you still waiting for that someone now?

She sits next to Becky, who remains completely unaware of Anna's mental presence.

BECKY

Why does everything good I try to do ... explode?

ANNA

I'm no more help now than I was then. And now there's you and Leah, not really talking. Did you get that from me? Is that what I've passed down through generations? A soul with sticky gears, rusted shut. Is it too late to pry it open? Would I even have the strength for it now?

BECKY

I don't know. I just don't know.

Becky gets up, and exits. Anna watches her go.

ANNA

Neither do I.

Lights fade out.

## Act Two

## SCENE ONE - SPLIT SCENE

Lights come up on Leah and Aaron's living room, center. Stage right is dominated by the scaffolding and canvases of Fulwarkin's studio. It is late at night. Leah sits on the couch, nursing a cup of coffee, and waiting. Zaffring appears in her gondola stage right, and rows into Leah's living room behind the couch. Zaffring sees Leah from behind, stops the boat.

ZAFFRING

Excuse me, Mrs. Connors? Zaffring Till.  
I've seen your work, the paintings that you do  
Out there in your back yard? Just thought I'd say  
Hello, and let you know you've got a fan.  
You're doing solid stuff, just so you know.

Leah finally stirs, taking a sip of coffee.

ZAFFRING

Oh, sorry. Thought that you'd dozed off. Guess not.  
Well, hopefully we'll meet sometime in dreams,  
Where you can see and hear me. I'll buy drinks!

Zaffring paddles off. Leah gets up from the couch and paces.

LEAH

I had it. What to say all worked out. And then I start thinking of *painting* again? Shit!

She takes a deep breath, paces a couple more times, then settles back down on the couch as Zaffring steers back in, now with Becky in tow.

BECKY

Zaffring, what time is it?

ZAFFRING

1:36am in Mountain Time.  
What makes you ask?

BECKY

What is my sister doing awake right now?

ZAFFRING

You could ask her, I guess,  
But she won't hear. I tried her earlier.



From offstage, sounds of keys, and a door unlocking.  
Leah straightens up, preparing herself.

BECKY

Aaron. Oh my gosh. She's going to- (to Zaffring) Is there, um, any way you could row a little faster at all?

Zaffring rows them off as Aaron enters, visibly exhausted.  
Seeing Leah is an unexpected jolt.

AARON

You really didn't have to wait up. That's why I called.

LEAH

Oh yes, I really did.

AARON

What for?

LEAH

So I could hear it from you.

AARON

That I'd be in late? That's an odd way to go about it.

LEAH

It seems you and Becky had quite the conversation last night.

AARON

So she went ahead and told you?

LEAH

Let's start with what you told her. How about that?

AARON

I told her it wasn't the end of the world, and the Lord obviously has something better in store for her. I was hoping you'd say close to the same thing, and not freak out about it.

LEAH

What?

AARON

I know you've had problems with her ... not being there when things get hard. And I know how it can look. But it really wasn't her fault she got fired, and for what it's worth, even if she hadn't been, I think she'd still be here right now. So can we not put her motives under a microscope, and just focus on the fact that she's here for you for once?

LEAH

What are you talking about?

AARON

Our conversation last night, about what happened back in Kansas City. She -

LEAH

Becky got *fired?!!*

AARON

Oh my lord. Did I just -?

LEAH

She hadn't told me anything about that. Of course she didn't, because she's a sneaky little coward who - never mind. That's not what I stayed up for.

AARON

Then what did she tell you if it wasn't - Oh.

LEAH

So you did. You did talk to her about me.

AARON

(a deep sigh)

Leah, I don't know what it is you want to happen tonight, but it's late, and I'm exhausted from a -

LEAH

I'm exhausted too, Aaron. I am bone tired of the way things have been.

AARON

So you're finally going to tell me, then? You're finally going to tell me what's been wrong?

This brings Leah up short. A pause full of disbelief.

LEAH

Finally tell *you?!!*

Lights go down on the Living Room, up on Fulwarkin's studio. Fulwarkin is perched in the scaffolding, looking out at an unseen canvas. Down on the ground, Becky enters. She spots him above her, her gaze follows his. Then, she spends a moment just watching him look. Finally -

BECKY

The same one we were looking at last night.

FULWARKIN

Yes.

Becky climbs up, and sits next to him.

FULWARKIN

Nostalgia. The disease of fading men.  
And yet, I couldn't help myself tonight.

BECKY

(looking out at the unseen canvas)

There is something about this one. You could make the case that it completely ruined my day, but still -

FULWARKIN

How so?

BECKY

Last night, I got the crazy idea that I could live in it. In this feeling. Always new, carrying no baggage from the past. Turns out it doesn't matter that you've gotten rid of your baggage if the people you're talking to keep theirs.

FULWARKIN

I know the feeling well. Look over there.

He points out another sunset. She takes it in. It's not a pretty sight.

BECKY

Ouch. What is that?

FULWARKIN

Me making the mistake you're speaking of.  
A sad attempt to paint the way I did  
In other times, for different reasons.  
This was the - early Mesozoic? Yes.  
I'd just had that success with my work from  
The Permian-Triassic Extinctions -  
My requiems, the stuff I'm known for now.  
I'd charted a direction, found my voice,  
But then, for some strange reason, felt I had  
To prove that I could still do bursts of joy,  
That it had come from *me*, not just my youth,  
Or newness of position, or from -

BECKY

Working with Tanjer Dreslin?

A pause.

FULWARKIN

Yes.

BECKY

Are you ready to talk about him now?

FULWARKIN

Well, that's direct. Not beating 'round the bush  
Today, are you?

BECKY

I've spent most of the day caught in the middle of two people not saying things to each other. It seemed important to just get it out there.

FULWARKIN

(standing up)

All right then, let's do it.

He turns back to the first sunset they were looking at.

FULWARKIN

As you've found out, the newness doesn't last.  
 Much as I tried to keep my mind unspoiled,  
 The knowledge and technique were sneaking in.  
 My hands could sense what worked and what did not,  
 And they remembered. So now there were rules.  
 But rules I made myself, rules that were mine.  
 They brought my work new focus, lit the fire-

He points out a new canvas.

FULWARKIN

As much, if not more, than the chaos had.  
 New toys to play with! Flourishes and tricks!  
 But Tanjer ... well, he didn't thrive on it.  
 He soon learned to adapt, but it felt odd.  
 We'd moved together with such ease before,  
 Our minds and brushes perfectly in tune.  
 I rested in the kinship of our thoughts,  
 Assumed that it would last, but now I saw  
 It was a fragile thing, not guaranteed.  
 About that time, an ice age started up,  
 Which I got all experimental with.

Another sunset catches Fulwarkin's gaze. So blinding in its intensity that Becky has to shield her eyes.

BECKY

Wow. The brightness is just ... everywhere!

FULWARKIN

We bounced the light right off the ice, went wild.  
 The new reflective surface lent us just  
 Enough of the old magic to ignore  
 That something in our partnership had changed,  
 And would not easily be gotten back.

Lights come back up on Leah and Aaron.

AARON

Did you think I hadn't noticed?!

FULWARKIN

But for a time, we both embraced the cold -

LEAH

I wondered, yeah.

FULWARKIN

And carefully avoided thinking of  
Where we'd stand with each other when it thawed.

Lights go down on Fulwarkin and Becky.

AARON

You thought I couldn't feel this ... this wall going up around you? That I was, what? Just oblivious?

LEAH

If you felt it, why didn't you say anything?!

AARON

If something was wrong in the first place, why didn't you tell me?!

LEAH

Tell you what? That I don't feel like I have a voice in where our lives are going? Like I told you three years ago, in this very - ?

AARON

We got over that!

LEAH

You got over caring about that. I was far from -

AARON

No, that is not -

LEAH

Or should I have asked to go to counselling? Because I know you remember how that conversation went!

AARON

We didn't need counselling. We needed prayer, and -

LEAH

And who decided that?

AARON

WE did!

LEAH

If you really believe that, you're more -

AARON

No, I remember, it was you and me together! We both decided -

LEAH

You decided that I didn't know what I really needed, and I got tired of arguing with you!  
That is what happened.

AARON

No. But ... Leah!

Lights back up on Becky and Fulwarkin, still looking at his art.

FULWARKIN

A world bedecked in frost, yet life adapts -

LEAH

After that, I just stopped ... expecting to get what I really needed.

AARON

After *that* ...

FULWARKIN

Gets used to lying dormant under ice.

LEAH

From you, at least. And that was livable for a while. But eventually -

AARON

Leah, we had that fight two years ago.

LEAH

I know. And we're having this one just now. So what do you think that says about us?

Lights go down on Aaron and Leah, just staring at each other.

FULWARKIN

Familiar now with freezing temperatures,  
The planet's thawing out comes as a shock.  
I watched from here as it all melted down,  
Safe on my perch, big picture all spread out.  
But one night as we made our usual rounds,  
I looked down at the earth, and felt it all -  
The desperate anxiety of Life.  
"The things we know all pass away," it cried.  
"Why do they leave? How can we live without?"  
Small organisms, shiv'ring in the dark,  
Upon this planet, still so very young,  
And yet so scarred by loss, disaster, change.  
The sunrise artists were no help with that.

Nothing but shallow optimism, “Look!  
 The sun got up on time, so have no fear!  
 The old is gone, so what? The new is here!”  
 I wanted to reach down, pick up the world,  
 And cradle the poor child within my arms.  
 To whisper, “It’s all right, go on and cry.  
 It hurts when things that comfort go awry.  
 It’s okay. You can mourn. You can feel lost.  
 A new day’s coming, yes, but with a cost.  
 So feel it. Count it. Take your time. Just grieve.  
 There’s value in what’s left when treasures leave.”

Throughout this, something inside Becky breaks. She tries very hard not to cry, then to do it silently.

FULWARKIN

Of course, I couldn’t say it, not with words.  
 (holds up his brush) But I had this, and so -

Becky loses the fight for silence. Fulwarkin notices, trails off, turns to see her in tears.

BECKY

I’m sorry. It’s just ... is it really ... okay? To feel lost? Because I’ve never heard that. “I once was lost but now am found”. That’s how the song goes. And I’ve tried so hard to feel that, that *foundness*, but now ... the god I’ve believed in my whole life, he’s melting away just when I need him most! These people that were supposed to be the light of the world, they tossed me right into the darkness, like it was *easy*.

Becky sinks to her knees as lights go back up on Leah and Aaron.

BECKY

And everybody says that I’ve just got to keep going. And I’m so tired of pretending I know what that means. And I just - I just -

LEAH

I don’t know if I can do this anymore.

BECKY

That’s really okay? You swear?

AARON

No. No, Leah, this right now - I, I know what it feels like, but you’re not seeing that, that this is a good thing!

BECKY

I can just not pretend anymore?

Lights down on Becky and Fulwarkin.

AARON

Yes, it's good. Because it's new! We haven't been communicating, but now we are! A pattern has been broken here, Leah. And, and, it shows that we can change! (pause) That *I* can change. Because I never meant to - (going to her) Leah, I swear to God, I didn't know that you -

LEAH

(backing away)

Don't you get it? That's the worst part! If you'd done it on purpose, it would be easier. But all this time, you were just being you. And if it's your nature to just -

AARON

Yes, that's my nature, and it's fallen. But by the grace of God, I can overcome it, I can be who God wants me to be. Who you need me to be.

LEAH

What if those are two different things?

AARON

But ... they can't be.

LEAH

But what if they are?

Aaron is speechless.

LEAH

Aaron, I don't think I'm the person you married. Anymore. I, I think different things now, I believe different things. There are parts of me ... now ... that I just don't think you can love.

AARON

That's impossible.

LEAH

You've managed it pretty easily 'til now, so -

AARON

Leah. I love you. Maybe I failed to show it in the right way, maybe I failed to put you first when I should have. But I have always loved all of you.

LEAH

I haven't felt that. Not for a long time.

AARON

But it's true.

LEAH

But I haven't *felt* it, so what good has your love done me?



AARON

(on the edge of tears)

I don't know. I thought that it - I had hoped - I don't know! How do I not know?!

He crumbles to his knees, a heap of sobs. Leah doesn't know what to do. She's never seen him like this. Lights go up stage right to reveal Fulwarkin looking at Becky the same way. The newness of their positions draw Leah and Fulwarkin to the side of the crying person in front of them. Leah gently touches Aaron's shoulder.

LEAH

Aaron...

Aaron clutches onto her hand like it's the last hope in the world. Fulwarkin sits next to Becky, points her toward another sunset.

FULWARKIN

You have my answer right in front of you.  
The same one that I gave eons ago.

Becky studies the light intently.

AARON

I'll keep going, Leah, I will. No matter what. I will keep on loving until it means something.

FULWARKIN

You see it?

BECKY

Yes.

AARON

And my love will get stronger, and it will find more of you.

Leah sinks next to him.

FULWARKIN

Then read it to me.

BECKY

Now?

Fulwarkin nods. Becky peers into the sunset, looking hard, translating.

AARON

And you'll see more of me.

LEAH

Yes.

BECKY

“You can be scared, so long as you don’t run  
Back to the past or forward in the air”-

AARON

And these ten years together, Leah. All this time.

BECKY

“But give the End its due, watch ‘til it’s done”-

AARON

It won’t be wasted!

BECKY

“Allow yourself to taste the cold despair-”

AARON

We’ll look back and see it was just the beginning.

BECKY

“That flows when dreams are cut off at the stem.”

LEAH

Okay. (a pause) Okay.

Aaron wraps Leah in his arms. A desperate embrace  
desperately returned.

BECKY

“To feel the pain is how you honor them.”

Becky keeps looking, not sure if she likes this answer or  
not. Leah and Aaron cling to each other - one last attempt  
to keep from falling.

## SCENE TWO

Anna’s bedroom. Anna lies in bed, looking up at the sky  
outside her window.

ANNA

The sky was dark the last I looked. Now blue again, and clear. When did that happen? Is it  
still even the sky?

She fights her way from under the bed covers, and stands  
on the bed, looking up.

ANNA

It looks so different from the one I used to know.

She reaches out to touch it. Suddenly, ripples of light  
everywhere. Anna looks around her in wonder, no longer  
standing against the sky, but floating underwater.

ANNA

Not the sky at all. An ocean. And that isn't the sun. Just a pearl at the bottom of the sea.

A small circle of light glows center stage.

ANNA

My past, glittering below. My history got pulled along with me by the tide, just deeper underwater. Everything I thought I left behind, still reachable after all these years. If there's a time to bring it up into the light, it's now.

Anna drifts down from the bed on her way toward the light.

### SCENE THREE

In darkness, Becky's voice:

BECKY

Okay. Let's see. Um - yeah.

The sound of a typewriter. Lights come up on Becky, up in the scaffolding of Fulwarkin's studio, banging on an old manual typewriter with several stacks of marbled, sunset colored paper next to it. She consults a small notepad, then looks back at the dusk-streaked paper sticking out of the typewriter.

BECKY

(reciting as she types)

"And there it is. 'Twilight Of The Dinosaurs.' The piece that brought him intergalactic fame, and it's easy to see why: The enormity of the shapes, the majesty and sorrow mingled together."

Fulwarkin appears, living the moment Becky writes about.

BECKY

"But standing before it," - no, wait - "But *as he stands* before it, there is no pride in Fulwarkin's eyes."

FULWARKIN

He left right in the middle of this one.

BECKY

"A sudden break in the silence."

FULWARKIN

Not many people know that, but it's true.

BECKY

"It makes me jump, but thankfully he doesn't notice. Still, it takes a moment to process what he's just said. 'Wait - he? You mean Tanjer Dreslin? Your apprentice left *while* you were painting this?!"

FULWARKIN

He said he couldn't take another dirge.  
 The mournfulness was paralysing him.  
 To be misunderstood by one so close,  
 By one I trusted, that's what hurt the most.  
 Those countless eons he spent by my side -  
 How could he think that our body of work  
 Had anything to do with mournfulness?

BECKY

“So what did it have to do with”? I ask”

FULWARKIN

With being a *witness*. To all of this.  
 To be the eyes that saw this long parade  
 Of starts and stops, beginnings, endings. Life.  
 To translate that for those who needed it.  
 We clearly saw each phase - a privilege  
 That those down in the thick of it had not -  
 So it was our responsibility,  
 Our calling, yes, to share the way we saw.  
 Turns out that was *my* calling, but not his.  
 It felt like a betrayal at the time.  
 But when I look upon it now, I see.  
 To stay would have been to betray himself.  
 Well now he's flourishing, and so am I.  
 The pain of separation, though, still stings.

Fulwarkin vanishes into the sunset. Becky stops typing,  
 takes the page out of the typewriter, reads over it, checks it  
 with her notes.

BECKY

Okay, what is it? Looking at art, feelings of betrayal. There's something. Back, a long time ago.

She seems to see it there, in the distance, in front of her.

BECKY

Wait, is that what - ? Yeah.

She gets down from the desk, walking forward, almost  
 trancelike.

BECKY

That painting, in the upstairs of our old house. I was, what, 16? And she was there too, I think.

Behind Becky, SORREL NUNEZ enters, boyish and laid back, wearing the bright blue polo shirt of Desert Christian School with capris and an ancient pair of Converse All Stars. She deftly entwines her hand with Becky's with that teenage knack of being perfectly casual and at the same time, not.

SORREL

Wow. Your sister painted this? It's pretty awesome.

The touch and the voice startle Becky at first, but they quickly pull her into the past, 16 again, clutching Sorrel's hand, playfully swinging their arms back and forth.

SORREL

So abstract, and ... cool. I wouldn't have guessed it came from her.

BECKY

You don't think my sister's cool?

SORREL

I met her five minutes ago, what do I know? She just seemed ... different from how you always talk about her. I mean, that guy she's with -

BECKY

He seems nice enough.

SORREL

Nice! That's it. They're both so *nice*. I always thought that to paint like that, you had to suffer or something.

BECKY

Maybe all her suffering goes into making that, so then she can just be ... nice.

SORREL

Maybe.

They lean into each other, and just look at it. Becky rests her head on Sorrel's shoulder.

BECKY

She does seem a little - I don't know. But we haven't really gotten to talk yet this visit, so maybe that's it. She's just the only one in my family I can really be honest with, you know? She doesn't think like everybody else. She's okay with different. And I kinda need that right now.

SORREL

Yeah.

LEAH

(offstage)

Becky, you up there?

BECKY  
Yeah!

SORREL  
You, uh, you want a minute with her?

BECKY  
I don't want to strand you by yourself -

SORREL  
It's cool. You need some sister time.

Becky kisses Sorrel on the cheek.

BECKY  
You're the best.

SORREL  
You make it easy to be.

Leah enters, bright and energetic at age 23, wearing a light sundress and wedges. At Leah's entrance, Sorrel and Becky quickly look away from each other, back at the painting.

LEAH  
Oh lord, do you have to show that thing to everybody?

BECKY  
Yep.

SORREL  
It really is cool.

BECKY  
See?

LEAH  
Eh. That was back when I had no idea what I was doing.

BECKY  
Then what's your new stuff looking like? Did you bring any with you?

LEAH  
There's not really any new stuff right now. I've had a lot of other things going on.

SORREL  
Becky, real quick - which way's the bathroom?

BECKY  
Down the hallway, to the left.

Thanks.

SORREL

Sorrel ducks out.

LEAH

So, do you like him?

BECKY

Aaron? Yeah, he seems really ... nice.

LEAH

He is. He's a really good guy. Maybe the best I've ever met. It kind of makes me believe I could be that good too, you know?

BECKY

And you want to be?

LEAH

What?

BECKY

'Cause I thought your goal was to be the 'wild Vagabond' in the family, the one lost sheep and all that -

LEAH

It was, until I did it for a while. And it, uh, it led to some places I'm not really proud of. But Aaron doesn't care about any of that! He believes in me, in what I can be. I wasn't sure I was going to find that again. Becky, he asked me to marry him. (giddy) And I said yes! I didn't wear the ring home, 'cause I wanted you all to meet him without that in your heads. But you had to be the first to know, and I just can't hold it in, I'm so happy!

She wraps Becky in an embrace. Becky returns it, still speechless.

LEAH

And the more you get to know him, the more you'll see why. He's so good for me, Becky. Really, he's incredible.

BECKY

Well ... you chose him, so he has to be. When's the date?

LEAH

Soon. Like, embarrassingly soon. But we just couldn't wait.

BECKY

After the trip to Spain, or is he going with you?

LEAH

The -? Oh, the painting trip. No, Aaron just got a youth pastor position here, so travel's on pause for a while.

BECKY  
He's a pastor. Like Dad.

LEAH  
What's that look for?

BECKY  
Nothing. I'm happy for you, Leah. I am. It's just - I've been the one you've told your dreams to for years. And this doesn't really sound like them.

LEAH  
Becky, you can't put too much weight in what I used to say. I was ... broken. For a long time. But things in me are getting fixed now, and it's a very good thing. I know it was rough for you, me not being there when you started high school -

BECKY  
Yeah.

LEAH  
- and I'm not going to do that to you again. I'm here for you. For Dad. Where I belong.

BECKY  
You're sure this is what you want.

LEAH  
Yes.

BECKY  
(putting on a happy face)  
Then I couldn't be happier for you.

Another embrace.

LEAH  
And you'll be there beside me, won't you? You'll be my Maid of Honor?

BECKY  
Me?

LEAH  
(laughs)  
Who else?

BECKY  
Of course!

AARON  
(offstage)  
Leah, they only hold the reservation for fifteen minutes!



LEAH  
 (calling to him)  
 Be right there!

She kisses Becky on the cheek.

LEAH  
 I'm so glad you'll be next to me.

BECKY  
 No place I'd rather be.

Leah heads out of the room, then turns back in.

LEAH  
 Becky, I know that, where you're at, everything we've been taught about God, the world, all of that - you start to wonder if it's really true for *you*. And sometimes it seems like it's never going to work out the way they said. But it does. You just hold on, and it really, really does.

She runs off, leaving Becky alone in her confusion. After a moment, Sorrel enters.

SORREL  
 I wasn't sure how long to give you guys, but I thought I heard her going down the stairs, so - you two got to talk?

BECKY  
 Yeah.

SORREL  
 And how is she?

Becky just stares ahead. Sorrel takes her hand.

SORREL  
 Becky? Is everything okay?

Becky clutches onto Sorrel's hand, but suddenly thinks better of it, pulls her hand away.

BECKY  
 Yeah, it is. (crosses her arms self-consciously) Leah's good. I think she's ... really good.

For the first time, Sorrel doesn't seem to know what to do with herself. So they both just stand there, looking at Leah's painting, but not seeing it.

#### SCENE FOUR

In Anna's ocean/bedroom, things that were on her bedside table - cups, kleenex, a couple small picture frames - now float between her and the circle of light.

She gently bats them out of her way as she goes. Behind her, on the bed, Becky sleeps.

One last picture frame floats before Anna. She starts to push it away, but stops when she sees what it is. She grabs it, studies the picture inside.

ANNA

My Charlie. My Renee. I missed the chance to show them. I just couldn't somehow. The reasons felt so large and important, but I can't make them out down here.

She lets the picture go, and squares off against the circle of light, which has grown a little larger.

ANNA

(to the light)

I'm not scared of you anymore. What can you do to me now? You're just a pearl in the sea, grains of memory I tried to reject all bundled together. Will your touch still sting? Even so. It's time to bring you back above water, let others see.

Anna reaches for the circle of light. But there's still an IV drip in her arm, tethering her to the stand by her bed. She tugs at it, trying to get more length, but she's reached the end of her medical leash.

ANNA

Dammit. This world is always in my way.

She reaches for it again. Still not enough leeway. Again. But it remains out of her reach. She strains on her tip toes. Suddenly, from deep in her chest, a hard rasping cough that propels her back toward the bed.

ANNA

Oh god. Here it comes.

Another cough, pushing her further back.

ANNA

Back to pain, and the surface.

An eruption of coughing drives her back into bed, wracking her whole body. Somehow Becky manages to sleep through it all. Leah enters at a run, grabs a towel off the bedside table, and cradles Anna in her arms. Leah looks down at Becky, still dozing, and rolls her eyes in disgust.

ANNA

(between coughs)

So close. Almost had it.

LEAH

Had what? Gran, you almost had what?

Anna's fit grows more intense, finally waking Becky up.

BECKY

What - what's happening?

LEAH

The same thing that always happens. You're off in your own world, and I'm taking care of things.

BECKY

Leah -

LEAH

Don't even start with me, Becky. I'm serious.

BECKY

Is - is she okay?

LEAH

What does it look like?

BECKY

I'm sorry. I'm not sure what's going on, and -

LEAH

Well I am, finally. And I'm not putting up with it anymore.

BECKY

What?

Anna's attack subsides.

LEAH

(to Anna)

There we go. You're all right. You're going to be all right. You need some water?

Anna nods. Leah helps her drink some water down along with a couple of pills.

LEAH

(to Becky)

She needed your help and you just laid there.

ANNA

I didn't need ...

BECKY

I'm sorry. It's just, sometimes when I'm sleeping, I don't hear -

LEAH

I was two rooms away. You were right next to her.

ANNA

I'm fine now ... fine.

BECKY

I was just having a really intense dream, and -

LEAH

You've always got an excuse, don't you?

BECKY

What?

LEAH

Why are you here, Becky? I mean really. Why?

BECKY

It's (looking at Anna) ... an important time for our family right now, and -

LEAH

Bullshit. It was important when Gran got sick the first time. Where were you then?

BECKY

Leah -

LEAH

It was an important time when Dad had his bypass, and where were you?

ANNA

(to herself)

Finally in the right room ...

BECKY

You know that's not fair! I had tickets booked, and then-

LEAH

I suppose I should be grateful that you actually managed to make it to his funeral.

BECKY

I've screwed up, okay?! I haven't been a good sister, or a good daughter, or a good ... anything. But I'm trying to do it right this time!

LEAH

Would you be trying if you hadn't gotten fired?

Beat.

BECKY

I was going to tell you.

LEAH

When?

BECKY

Soon. I kept telling myself, “soon”. But it just wouldn’t - I didn’t know how.

LEAH

So you’re here, right now, because you have nowhere else to go.

Silence. Becky gropes for words, but none come. Leah’s anger turns to ice. She gets up from the bed, gathering things up from the table.

LEAH

Aaron said a friend of his has a youth pastor position open in L.A. He can get you an interview. Soon would be better than later.

BECKY

I can’t just - There are things I have to figure out. If you can just give me some time to -

LEAH

For seven years now, you’ve gone off to “do the Lord’s work”, and left the practical things to me. That’s not a choice you can just undo now.

BECKY

Leah, it’s not like that.

LEAH

I’m your sister, Becky, but I do not have to be your last resort. So take the interview, or -

BECKY

I don’t know if I believe anymore, okay? Even the basic things. The existence of God, the divinity of Christ, it’s all up in the air for me right now.

LEAH

So? I haven’t believed for years. Not the way they all expect me to. But I made my choice, and now I’m living with it.

BECKY

You can’t be serious. You just ... keep going, and pretend you still feel it?!

LEAH

It’s called being an adult. You’ve already had one do-over, Becky. Most of us don’t even get that.

BECKY

A do-over?

LEAH

You were going to be a writer. You even got published, for god’s sake!

BECKY

Yeah, and it tanked!

LEAH

So then you just quit, and became something else.

BECKY

And where did I get that idea, do you think?

LEAH

Oh, so this is my fault now?

BECKY

I'm not saying that. It's just - it's complicated, okay? I'm so confused right now, and you want me to, what? Keep telling kids to believe all this stuff when I'm - when I can't even - (a pause and a deep breath as Becky steels herself) Leah, I'm - I'm not sure if I'm straight.

Silence as it sinks in. A moment where a real conversation could happen, but Leah plows forward.

LEAH

There are denominations that are okay with that.

BECKY

Wow. That just came out of your mouth. That's all you have to say, after I just - ?

The circle of light appears again, but only Anna sees it. Becky and Leah are too embroiled to notice their grandmother in bed, straining to reach.

LEAH

After you tell me something like that in the middle of an argument? Yeah. That's what I have to say. Because it doesn't change anything. First you were a biographer, now you're a youth pastor, next you'll be, I don't know, a gay rights activist? So how long does that keep going? How many versions of Rebecca Shore do we have to go through before you finally stick with something?

BECKY

At least I'm still trying! What have you been doing, Leah? You're the walking dead right now, and you're telling me how I'm supposed to live? Well, you can -

Anna throws back the covers, and struggles her way out of bed.

ANNA

(loudly)

Ayaq yayniwhpuveq Susoqaltutuyqawhqa nannanumo tokpelat nikanw pu tuwaqatsit yuku.

Leah and Becky stop, and stare at her. Without taking her eyes off of Anna, Becky grabs her phone from her pocket, and starts filming.

ANNA

Noqw tuwaqatsi qasonilti, piw qahaqam himuu, pu a'no hotsit atsva qatala; noqw Susoqaltutuyqawhqat Hikwsiat pavahut atsva masavuyawnuma.

LEAH

(overlapping Anna, trying to place the language, to Becky)

What is that?

BECKY

(overlapping Anna)

Whatever it is, I'm getting it.

Anna is on her feet now.

ANNA

Pu Susoqaltutuyqawhqat panqawu: Talawvani!

She looks down at the Iv drip in her arm, suddenly starts tearing it out.

ANNA

Talawvani! Talawvani! Talawvani!

Blood starts to gush from Anna's arm. Leah tries to wrap a towel around it, but Anna does her best to push her away, reaching for the circle of light only she can see.

ANNA

Noqw talawva. Pu Susoqaltutuyqawhqat talat awyoriqw, lolma. Pu Susoqaltutuyqawhqat talat qatalat anqw tsika!

BECKY

(overlapping)

Oh my god.

LEAH

(overlapping Anna)

Dammit, Becky! Hold her down!

Becky drops the phone on the bed, and runs to Anna's side. She holds down Anna's arms, so Leah can wrap the bleeding one tightly.

ANNA

Pu Susoqaltutuyqawhqat talat, taloo, yan tunwa, nit pu qatalat, tokila, yan tunwa.

Leah and Becky manage to get her back down on the bed.

ANNA

Noqw milhiktoqaniqw pu talavayniyqa mohti talonvaqa.

Her strength used up, Anna drifts off.

LEAH

Bandages - they're on the bottom shelf.

Becky grabs some bandages from the shelf of the beside table, hands them to Leah.

LEAH

I'll take it from here.

Becky just stands there, still in panic mode.

LEAH

I said I'll take it from here.

BECKY

Oh. Right. Sorry.

Leah begins bandaging Anna's arm. Becky starts to leave the room.

LEAH

And Becky?

BECKY

Yeah?

LEAH

Make whatever arrangements you need to make.

They look at each other. Becky doesn't know what to say, so she just walks out. Leah finishes bandaging Anna's arm with care. She sees Becky's cell phone on the bed. Picks it up. Presses play. Anna's voice comes out of it, bellowing an unknown language. Leah watches the phone screen intently as the lights go down.

## SCENE FIVE

Fulwarkin's studio. Fulwarkin sits up in the scaffolding making preliminary sketches with pastels on sunset colored paper. When dissatisfied or finished with a sketch, he lets it drift down to the ground and starts again. Appearance-wise, there's something different about him. The painter's overalls are gone. He looks a little less human, a little more divine.



FULWARKIN

How to avoid the past? Not possible.  
Set sail for anyplace but where you've been,  
And what you're steering clear of sets the course.  
I'm aiming now to not repeat myself,  
A target narrower than advertised.  
Lines drawn in opposition are not free,  
Bound by the very thing they must not be.

Zaffring sails on with Becky in tow. Zaffring has gone through a similar transformation.

FULWARKIN

You're earlier than usual, Miss Shore.

BECKY

Yeah, I kinda had to force myself to sleep. I've got a long drive in the morning. Can, um, can we still do these interviews if I'm not physically in Tucson?

ZAFFRING

It means more work for me, but that's all right.  
I've got a good sense for the frequency  
Of your subconscious from these last few nights.  
Just let me know where you're going to be.  
It shouldn't be too hard to pick you out.

BECKY

I'll be in the L.A. area for - I'm not sure for how long.

Zaffring nods and rows the gondola off.

BECKY

So, I've gotta ask. What's with the way you're dressed tonight? A special occasion, or-?

FULWARKIN

Dressed?

BECKY

You know, like this instead of the painters' overalls.

FULWARKIN

What exactly is an over-all?

BECKY

What- what you've both been wearing every night.

FULWARKIN

There's been a change in how you picture us.  
And now you're leaving in this unplanned haste.  
So something big has happened. What is it?

BECKY

It's not a huge deal or anything. Just a job interview my brother-in-law set up for me.

He goes back to sketching.

FULWARKIN

I've seen a lot of leaving in my time -  
What's hard, what's easy, know 'em all by sight.

BECKY

(sighs)

Leah's kicking me out. We're not calling it that, but that's basically what it is. Is that what you wanted to hear?

FULWARKIN

I must admit, it helps. You have my thanks.

BECKY

Excuse me?

FULWARKIN

Departures fall within our expertise,  
So seeing yours in action, I'm inspired.  
It must seem like a simple thing for you  
To get into a car and drive away -  
But look, the way you're feeling as you leave  
Composes a specific palette. See?

BECKY

(looking at the sketch)

Emotions like pigments, mixed together in ratios that are hard to recreate. Confusion cut with dabs of anger. Deep hurt with a self-blame-ish undertone. And this will end up in the sky tomorrow?

FULWARKIN

Some traces here and there, all interspersed  
With other final moments, other lives.  
A tapestry of light, and grief, and hope.

BECKY

I don't know how I feel about that - my failures blazing up there for everyone to see.

FULWARKIN

It's you that call them failures, no one else.  
And others may see them much differently.  
(studies his sketch)  
But still, these things don't quite account for your  
Perception of us now aligning with  
Our deeper spiritual reality  
A bit more closely than before.

He points out a particularly colorful patch on the sketch.

FULWARKIN

What's there?

That quiv'ring line of fresh uncertainty  
In colors that seem strangers to themselves?

BECKY

That would be Gran. Or what I kind of learned about her ... and me? It's still a little- Gran spoke in another language tonight. Just out of the blue, there it was. That first night I was here. You were expecting someone of native lineage. Right?

FULWARKIN

Wait. Anna Torrance. 84 years old.  
Is she *that* Anna? Hmm. The dates add up.  
But still-

BECKY

I'm sorry. What?

FULWARKIN

A sunset, many years ago,  
One of my best, I think. You see it here.

Becky and Fulwarkin gaze into a new sunset.

FULWARKIN

Not bad, but lacks that special something grand.  
And then, right on the brink of finishing,  
This girl, no more than 17, walks out  
Into the desert, restless and alone.

YOUNG ANNA enters carrying a slim volume that's  
seen much wear. She sits down, opens the little book,  
pages through it. Becky stares at her in disbelief.

BECKY

Oh my god. Is that- But she grew up in California, so how could you-

YOUNG ANNA

(reading)

Ayaq yayniwhpuveq Susoqaltutuyqawhqa nannanumo tokpelat nikanw pu tuwaqatsit  
yuku.

BECKY

But that's it. That's what it sounded like today.

YOUNG ANNA

Noqw tuwaqatsi qasonilti-

BECKY

And that face-

YOUNG ANNA

Piw qahaqam himuu, pu a'no hotsit atsva qatala-

BECKY

It's too much like the pictures.

YOUNG ANNA

Noqw Susoqaltutuyqawhqat Hikwsiat pavahut atsva masavuyawnuma.

BECKY

There's too much I see in my sister now. I just-

YOUNG ANNA

(looking at the book in her hands)

I used to think this was all you left me with. No memories, no face to picture. Just bits of your beliefs written down in a language you never understood.

BECKY

Wait. Who- who is she talking to?

YOUNG ANNA

But I was wrong. You left me your blood too. Hot. Reckless. Wanting what it wants, and damn the consequences. And they know it. Everyone around me, they know I have your blood inside, and they don't know what to do with it. With me.

BECKY

This - this doesn't fit anything I've heard about her.

YOUNG ANNA

I should stay. Mama tries so hard. I should stay with her. Try to be more- but it won't ever happen. She sees you in my eyes, in my veins. Running. They all do. They always will.

BECKY

So it's her father? That she's-

YOUNG ANNA

And the world you ran back to won't ever make room for everything in me. But that woman. When she leaned in to me, when she said it- I saw what else I'd gotten from you.

BECKY

My god. I don't know anything about anybody.

YOUNG ANNA

You left me your skin. Just enough of it for me to slip into this world of yours where everybody does what they want, and no one cares. And maybe they've always known it. Known I could just go. Maybe they want me to.

BECKY

I never even asked her.

YOUNG ANNA

All right then. Fine.

BECKY

About her past, where she came from.

YOUNG ANNA

I'll follow your tracks.

BECKY

I just assumed I knew.

YOUNG ANNA

Go where I want, do what I want.

BECKY

That she was like everyone else around me.

YOUNG ANNA

I'll listen to your blood now.

BECKY

I never thought for a second that she wasn't.

Young Anna takes out a rusted metal lighter.

YOUNG ANNA

And I won't say good-bye either.

She sets the book on fire. Becky and Young Anna watch it as it burns. Fulwarkin's eyes are on the smoke.

FULWARKIN

Old Hebrew tales set down in Hopi speech,  
Now lifted up to me in plumes of smoke  
As pages of beginnings meet their end.  
You see now what she gave to me that night.

BECKY

I never got any of it. The language, the stories- (to Young Anna) were you even hiding them? Or would you have told me if I'd just- just stopped assuming everyone that matters is the same as me like some stupid- I- I can't think about this right now. I just- there's too much, and I need to-

FULWARKIN

You think not looking makes you free of it.  
But truly, it's the other way around.

BECKY

What?

FULWARKIN

What does the sunset mean to humankind?

BECKY

I really don't have time for-

FULWARKIN

Not just as art. As symbol. What's it say?

BECKY

It says that the day's about to end.

FULWARKIN

But all these colors you associate  
 With ending things, just where do they come from?  
 The day's impurities cling to the air,  
 And rays of light are scattered in their wake.  
 That's what I dip my brush in. That's the paint.  
 And so, this grand illusion we all use  
 To mark the day's demise receives its glow  
 From all of that day's dust still lingering.  
 You want to make an end and start anew?  
 Don't look away from past mistakes, look through.

BECKY

Do you realize how much that is to ask of someone?

FULWARKIN

I've asked it once. That time, it was too much.

The book now a charred mass, Young Anna takes a deep  
 breath, then gets up quietly and exits.

BECKY

With Tanjer Dreslin.

FULWARKIN

(nods)

You'll be in L.A. - You should look him up.  
 See how it is that he does things, and why.

BECKY

That's right - he's the Sunset Artist of Los Angeles now.

FULWARKIN

Go hear his side. I'm curious myself.

BECKY

You haven't spoken to each other in all this time? What has it been, millions of years now?

FULWARKIN

I made a point to reach out a few times,  
 But he never responded. Much like you,  
 He doesn't see the point in looking back.

BECKY

Maybe it's better that way. Cleaner.

FULWARKIN

Perhaps.

BECKY

I keep thinking to myself, when I pull out of that driveway tomorrow ... that could be it. I could just be done. With Leah. With all of that. "You wanna kick me out when I need you, just to make a point? Fine." I'll be what she expects, I'll disappear and never come back. She'd be right, she'd feel justified. And I'd be ... free. To do whatever.

Fulwarkin starts sketching again. Becky notices, and finds herself oddly furious.

BECKY

Will you stop drawing that?!

She snatches the page out of his hand.

BECKY

Others don't get to see what's inside me when I don't know what's going on there. It's not fair!

FULWARKIN

It isn't, no.

He picks up the lighter Young Anna left behind, hands it to Becky.

FULWARKIN

So lash out if you must.

She looks at him, then to the lighter in one hand, the drawing in the other. She sets fire to the sketch.

FULWARKIN

But all your rage against it only adds  
More particles adrift in the night air.

Becky and Fulwarkin watch silently as the smoke billows from the burning page.

## Act Three

## SCENE ONE

In the Living Room, Leah sits on the couch, on the verge of falling asleep. She watches the video of Anna on her phone with a notebook and pen in her lap. She watches a few seconds, stops it, writes something down, looks at it.

LEAH

Is that -?

She rewinds, presses play again. Stops it after a few seconds, looks back at down at her notebook hazily.

LEAH

Hopeless. I don't even know what I'm looking for.

She sits there, defeated, barely able to keep her eyes open. But just can't resist. She presses play again, tries to focus, but dozes off in the middle. The torrent of Anna's language pours from the phone as she sleeps.

Just as it tapers off, Aaron enters the living room. He sees Leah on the couch, and tosses his briefcase on the chair, then starts taking off his suit coat and tie.

AARON

It's getting harder, Leah. Getting them to see the vision I have in my head. I mean, why did they give me this responsibility in the first place if they don't trust me to handle things?! I just don't get it. I don't understand what they were expecting this to be, some - (finally registers her silence) I'm sorry. I just came in and started ranting, didn't I? Um, how was your day? Any change with Anna? Leah?

For the first time since he's entered, he really looks at her, sees that she's asleep.

AARON

(louder)

Leah.

Still nothing.

AARON

How late were you up last night?

He sits next to her on the couch. The weight displacement causes her to shift, vaguely annoyed, but not wake up.



AARON

So ... rough day, then, huh? Me too. You know, the usual. The dream I've been working toward for years is falling apart in front of my very eyes, and I have no idea what to do about it. So that's great. There's all of this pressure for things to work perfectly right away, and if they don't, then the Spirit must not be in them. Maybe they're right. Because here I am, heading a project that's supposed to be all about authentic connections ... and I have never felt so alone. Where did I lose you, Leah? When did it happen? I keep trying to think of some moment when you first began to slip through my fingers, something I can pin down and change, but I can't. I can't find where you left. And I'm just so tired.

He puts his arms around Leah, still asleep.

AARON

I'm so tired of being on my own.

Aaron leans his head against hers, and closes his eyes.

SCENE TWO

A table at a sidewalk cafe in Los Angeles. A glass of coke perched on top. Also a wine glass across the table. Becky nurses the coke while talking on her cell phone.

BECKY

Really? .... No, no, it's just I'm not used to hearing back about a second interview so quickly .... Well, thank you. I- .... yes, I'd love to meet with them, and .... Anything I need to prepare, or-?.....

Sorrel enters, sits at the table across from Becky, grabs the glass of wine.

BECKY

When. That's kind of the tricky part..... See, my arrangements are little up in the air at the moment .... I'm- I'm sorry. I'm right in the middle of something right now. Can I get back to you on that? .... This number. Great .... Yes, real soon. Thank you so much. All right ... You too. (to Sorrel) Sorry about that. Just the church I interviewed with.

SORREL

The one you were telling me about? With the crazy hi-tech sanctuary and the- how many was it?

BECKY

Three. Seriously. Three remote control camera cranes! It was unbelievable. I felt like I was on the movie set of a church, but designed by someone whose idea of religion was going to Sting concerts.

SORREL

(laughing)

That sounds terrifying. How did you manage to not run screaming from the building?

BECKY

It took some willpower, not gonna lie.

SORREL

You really think you could work somewhere like that?

BECKY

I don't know. Maybe? At this point, I'm trying to actively *not* think. About anything.

Sorrel chuckles, and gestures to her glass of wine.

SORREL

In that case, you should probably switch to one of these.

BECKY

A kind offer, but I think I'll stick with Coke for now.

SORREL

Oh, right - (holding up her wine glass) 'cause this is against the rules.

BECKY

Not exactly. But it's considered a gateway to lots of things that are, so it's best not to mess with it. That's the thought, at least.

Sorrel chuckles to herself.

BECKY

What?

SORREL

Nothing. It's just - the way you answer questions about that stuff. It's kind of adorable.

BECKY

There's *a way* I answer questions like that?

SORREL

Yeah. Like you're reciting the party line, but aren't quite convinced by it.

BECKY

Oh.

SORREL

Even back in high school - you were a believer, sure, but I could see this tiny part of you standing back, not quite buying in. I vividly remember watching you out of the corner of my eye in Tuesday chapel every week, arguing with Pastor Ronson in your head. There was this particular slight smile you'd get on your face sometimes, and that's how I knew you'd beaten him up there.

BECKY

What -?

SORREL

I've gotta say, it was pretty damn sexy, too.

BECKY

No -!

SORREL

Oh yeah, it was a turn-on, Becks. For real. Once, you smiled like that at the very end of a sermon, and I ended up wet right in the middle of the Lord's Prayer.

Becky blushes crimson.

BECKY

You did not!

SORREL

I'm totally serious -

BECKY

But you, you - I saw you argue with him in your head too!

SORREL

I was telling him to fuck off in my head. It's different. (can't help herself) But was that sexy too?

BECKY

I - uh - how should I know?!

Sorrel laughs, enjoying the spectacle of Becky in full-out squirm mode.

SORREL

I'm just saying, your combination of true faith and honest skepticism was a rare thing at that school. And therefore, really kinda hot.

BECKY

You never mentioned any of this before ...

SORREL

When was I supposed to do that? Before I was outed junior year, and almost got expelled? Or when I was terrified of scaring off the one friend who stood by me? We've spent all of our twenties so far halfway across the country from each other. This is the first time I've actually been able to talk to you in person after two and a half glasses of wine.

An awkward silence.

SORREL

Which might be why we've stayed friends this long. If I'm making you uncomfortable, we can talk about something else -

BECKY

(suddenly very serious)

No. Say whatever you want. Please. Really. I don't want an edited version of you, Sorrel. I want all of it. Everything in there. I mean, you - you're the only person in my life who doesn't expect me to leave parts of myself on the cutting room floor. And I do. For the others, I do it. I snip off little pieces of me, and smile and nod, and, and *drink Coke!* And I don't want you to have to do that for me. Ever.

Sorrel puts her hand on top of one of Becky's on the table.

SORREL

Becky, I promise you that I will never in your presence ... ever ... pretend to like Coke.

They both crack up.

SORREL

And speaking of, it looks like I need a refill. I'll be right back.

She gets up and heads to the bar.

BECKY

Sorrel.

SORREL

Yeah?

BECKY

Bring me one too.

SORREL

Really?

Becky nods.

SORREL

Cool. What do you want? I'm drinking the malbec, but they've got a pretty good Pinot Grigio here if you're more into whites. Everybody raves about their moscato, but I'm not really into the sweet stuff, so -

Becky looks back at her blankly.

SORREL

You have no idea what any of that means, do you? (sudden realization) Oh my god. Is this going to be the first time you try wine?!

BECKY

Not if you tell the whole restaurant, it isn't!

Sorrel moves back in toward her table.

SORREL

I'm sorry, it's just - you've never? Like, not even once? I don't believe this. It's like randomly finding a ghost orchid just hanging out -

BECKY

Will you just order, please?

SORREL

Okay. Okay. And you're sure you want to? Because I don't want to pressure you into -

BECKY

You're not. I've been ... reciting the party line without being convinced. And it's time to find out why that is.

SORREL

Fair enough.

BECKY

I don't think I want to get drunk, though. Can you, ah -

SORREL

Make sure you don't get drunk?

BECKY

Yeah.

SORREL

I think I can handle that. Be back in a sec.

BECKY

You'd better!

Sorrel smiles, and exits toward the bar. Becky looks around her, taking in the evening.

BECKY

Yeah. Yeah, it's that time.

SCENE THREE

In the living room, Leah and Aaron are still asleep on the couch, Leah wrapped in Aaron's arms. In the bedroom, Anna tries to get her bearings.

ANNA

So quiet. Almost as if nothing happened. Well, I spoke it. Really spoke, for the first time in- that should mean something. Should make some difference. But now? There's just quiet. No Becky lying next to me, breathing soft. No hands in mine. No voices. I'd hoped it would bring them together just enough. Keep them by me until- But they're young. They have other priorities. And so did I. I spoke it, yes. But I never showed them how to say anything back.

She sinks further into her bed. Behind them, Zaffring floats in on her gondola, parks it, and approaches the couch.

ZAFFRING

Excuse me, Mrs. Connors? You asleep?

LEAH

(groggily)

What?

ZAFFRING

I thought I spotted nap time coming on!  
It's great to fin'ly meet you in the flesh,  
Though I feel like I've known you for some time.

LEAH

I'm sorry. What's going on here, exactly?

ZAFFRING

You'll know in just a bit.

She brings out a bottle of wine and two glasses. Leah starts to sit up, discovers Aaron's arms around her. She freezes.

ZAFFRING

What is it?

LEAH

It's just been so long since I've woken up in his arms like this.

ZAFFRING

Well, technic'ly right now, you're waking down-

LEAH

(clutching on to his arm)

I almost forgot how much I missed it.

ZAFFRING

Hey, there you go, you've got it back. Congrats.

LEAH

Do I?

She turns in toward Aaron's face, peaceful in sleep, caresses it.

LEAH

Can you only come this close when I'm asleep? Who are you holding onto right now? Me from five years ago? From ten?

She grabs onto his hand with both of hers.

LEAH

I'm sorry. (deep breath) I'm so sorry.

She closes her eyes, and slowly pushes herself out of his embrace.

ZAFFRING

Care for some wine?

LEAH

Oh god. Please.

ZAFFRING

Last time I promised drinks.

She pours two glasses.

LEAH

Right. You're one of the cloud kachina that paints the sunsets?

ZAFFRING

Well, *helps* to paint the sunsets, anyway.  
I'm still apprenticing, and it's a drag.

LEAH

How long has it been?

ZAFFRING

66 million years now, give or take.

LEAH

That's ... a good long time.

ZAFFRING

You're telling me. But there are upsides too.  
I've time to look around, see other work.  
Like yours, for instance, out in the back yard.

LEAH

You - you look at my paintings?

ZAFFRING

Oh, human art's a big passion of mine!  
The way you guys interpret nature's acts  
In terms of pure emotion can't be beat.  
Your early stuff was promising, but now -  
There's so much more maturity and depth!  
It's good to see you back at it again.

LEAH

I'm not back at it again. Not really.

ZAFFRING

I see you out there ev'ry day -

LEAH

Yes, but it's a hobby now. Nobody actually sees it.

ZAFFRING  
I do.

LEAH  
Well, no one that isn't the spirit of a natural phenomenon, okay? So much of my life right now is wrapped around other people. I just needed something to do for myself.

ZAFFRING  
Could be that's why this new stuff is so good.  
You're not using the canvas as a screen  
For other eyes to peer at, then debate  
The worth of what you have emblazoned there.  
For you, it's just a jar that's meant to catch  
The life that overflows your slender frame.

LEAH  
You - you think my paintings are that good?

ZAFFRING  
Oh yes.

LEAH  
That's kind of you. But I don't feel like an artist. And I'm at least ten pounds away from feeling slender right now, so -

ZAFFRING  
So what is it you feel like, then?

LEAH  
A wife, I guess. A grand-daughter that's doing what daughters are supposed to do. A sister that did what mothers were supposed to do for a long time. I may finally have resigned from the mom part, so we'll see how that goes. But an artist? The time I tried being one just got ... really messy really fast. Then other people needed me to be other things. And those seemed more important, almost heroic, you know? So I went back to them. It felt good at the time.

ZAFFRING  
I bet it did. It's tempting for me, too.  
I've waited long for him to step aside,  
Set free my brush to flourish on its own,  
And see what sky I'd make if it were mine.  
But he has clenched his fists around the air,  
And will not loose this heaven from his grip.  
So I've begun to wonder if I could,  
As you did, set my artist's heart aside,  
And for a season let myself try on  
Some other names, see if I wear them well,  
Then slip my painter's mantle back onto  
My shoulders when I'm done, just as you have.

LEAH  
But I haven't slipped anything back on. I told you, I'm not an artist anymore.



ZAFFRING

Perhaps you do not need the title now,  
But what the name describes still flows from you.  
So what's more true, then? Labels we repeat  
Unto ourselves in hope that they will stick,  
Or things that go unchristened we just do?

LEAH

It's not like that for me, okay? I'm only doing it to distract myself from the person dying in the next room!

ZAFFRING

Your grandmother - I nearly had forgot!

Zaffring heads toward Anna's room.

ZAFFRING

I have some bus'ness to discuss with her.  
But this was a nice chat! You've shed some light  
On things I've been debating for a while.

LEAH

Wait - what business do you have with Gran?

ZAFFRING

We're doing her memorial sunset,  
And need to know when she plans to move on.

LEAH

Plans to - ? So, what? People can just decide when they're going to die?

ZAFFRING

Not usually, but ev'ry now and then -

LEAH

And Gran is one of those?

ZAFFRING

She's at that point where willpow'r is what's left.

LEAH

So what has she said?

ZAFFRING

I haven't asked her yet, and when I do  
It's artist-client confidential, so -

LEAH

But is it soon? Can you at least tell me that?!

ZAFFRING

I'm really not at liberty to say -

LEAH

Oh, come on! I shed some light on things for you! You can't do the same for me?!

ZAFFRING

There's protocol at play. My hands are tied!

Leah makes a desperate dive for her phone, presses play, and brandishes it at Zaffring.

LEAH

What about this? Can you tell me anything about this?

Anna's voice blares out of the phone. Zaffring listens for a bit, then smiles.

LEAH

Oh my god. You know. You understand what she's saying. What is it?

ZAFFRING

You've got me walking delicate ground here -

LEAH

Then don't tell me. Just ... point me in a direction I can follow. Please. I haven't slept 'til just now for trying to figure this out, and I've got nothing.

Zaffring pauses, thinks through her words carefully.

ZAFFRING

Since you're unconscious now, you know more things than usual, like what it is I am -

LEAH

Yes, a kachina spirit. We've covered this -

ZAFFRING

- as well as which race first believed in us.

LEAH

That's, um, Native Americans, right? The Hopi tribe, with the dolls and everything. So ... wait. My grandmother is speaking-

ZAFFRING

A language that you've never heard before,  
And now there's a kachina in your dream.  
How wonderfully symbolic, don'tcha think?  
Okay, bye now!

Zaffring makes a bee line for Anna's room, while Leah sinks back into the couch. She looks at her phone, thinks about it.

Oh my god.  
LEAH

Looks at her phone again.

Oh my *god*.  
LEAH

Meanwhile, Anna senses Zaffring's presence in the room.

ANNA  
Let me guess. You want to know if tonight's the night.

ZAFFRING  
That's it, essentially.

ANNA  
(sighs)  
I used up my strength trying to get a message across. Did it keep Becky here? Make any difference at all?

ZAFFRING  
I think that's past what I'm allowed to say.

ANNA  
All right. Enough. Make it tomorrow.

ZAFFRING  
If that's the case, I'll let Fulwarkin know.  
He may want to come by and speak with you  
To get a sense for anything you might  
Specifically want him to address.  
Is there a time that would be good for that?

ANNA  
I'm not exactly brimming with social engagements here. Whenever's good for him will be fine.

ZAFFRING  
All right, then. Anytime. We'll be in touch.

Anna nods, then Zaffring exits.

ANNA  
I'd hoped for a moment with each of them before I went. This is what I get for waiting 'til now to try and have it. I've lived my life as a locked door. It was foolish to think death might pry it open. That those in the grip of life would bother looking inside if it did. Well, I'll get out of their way. I was always good at that.

Leah jolts awake. She looks around, disoriented, trying to hold on to what she gleaned in her dreams. Sees her notebook, scribbles things down. Sees her phone. Grabs it.

Thinks for a moment, then gets up, heads for her bedroom. She can't resist hitting play on the video of Anna before she's all the way there.

The sounds wakes Aaron. He stirs, sees that Leah is gone. He reaches out and touches the spot where she was, still warm with the heat of her body.

#### SCENE FOUR

Sorrel's apartment. Some comfy pillows surrounding a low Korean tea table. Becky takes the place in. BECKY

It really is great.

SORREL

(offstage)

Tiny, I know. But it keeps things simple, which I like.

BECKY

And this view! Wow. The sunsets really are spectacular out here. Is it me, or do silhouettes of palm trees instead of cacti change the mood completely?

SORREL

(offstage)

More ... casual.

BECKY

Yeah. I think I like it.

Sorrel enters behind her, carrying a teapot and two cups. She sets things on the table, pours them tea.

SORREL

Me too.

BECKY

More than home, do you think?

SORREL

I haven't decided yet. The L.A. skyline's still a recent acquaintance, which is always more exciting, isn't it? But we'll see how we get along when I know it better. New is thrilling. But there's something to be said for old friends.

They clink their teacups together and drink.

SORREL

Thanks for making time for me tonight. I really needed it.

BECKY

Me too.

SORREL

To be honest, I wasn't sure you were gonna show -

BECKY

Really?

SORREL

I mean, considering how squirmy you got on the phone last week when I said you could crash here if you wanted -

BECKY

(grimacing at the memory)

Oh yeah, that - that was a thing -

SORREL

I mean, I get it. I do. I know my being gay is a delicate issue for your beliefs and everything -

BECKY

No, it's -

SORREL

- and you do a really good job of making me not feel that most of the time. But every now and then, it happens, and it's hard not to take personally, even if -

BECKY

Sorrel, it wasn't about - I'm at this strange place in my life right now -

SORREL

You really don't have to explain it, Becky -

BECKY

No, I want to. I want you to know how much you mean to me. And that nothing about you ever made me uncomfortable! You're the only person who doesn't make me feel like I'm broken and need to be fixed. And I was scared of that, of how I felt when I was with you, like all I wanted to do in the world was stand beside you with your hand in mine for forever and forever, and I know that sounds super virginal and lame, but it was true. Still is sometimes. But then there were all these voices saying the part of me that felt that way was diseased, or, or wrong, and I invested a lot of my life in what they had to say, and I could still believe them so long as I wasn't in the same room with you. Because face to face - I knew I wouldn't be able to convince myself that you were broken or diseased like they said, which means that maybe I'm not either. Maybe I could just like who I happen to like. Maybe I could look you in the eyes, and tell you all the things I've been holding back for years - how beautiful you are; how your smile just lights me up; how the reason I went all weird at first when you got caught kissing Jessica Langstrom junior year was because I couldn't stop imagining what it was like to be her, there with your lips against mine - but if I said all that, if I could be okay with feeling that, then my whole life would have to change. Like, completely. And that was terrifying, which is why I sounded so uncomfortable on the phone the other day.

Wow. That was ... thorough. SORREL

Sorry. It all just sort of came out. BECKY

Have you yet? SORREL

What? BECKY

Come out as gay to anybody else. SORREL

Is that what I'm doing? I sort of came out as maybe not straight to my sister. I'm ... not sure what I am right now. I know what I've felt about you, but that's as far as I've gotten at this point. BECKY

Well, that's not a whole lot of pressure for me to deal with - SORREL

I'm sorry. I must sound like a crazy person - BECKY

Sorrel grabs Becky's hand.

No. You sound like you. And it's a voice I love very much, so don't knock it. SORREL

Okay. BECKY

Even if it does occasionally say things that are a hell of a lot to spring on somebody. SORREL

A grin from Sorrel to let Becky know it's true, but okay. Becky returns it bashfully before focus on their hands, still entwined.

So what really matters is what you decide to do now. SORREL

Becky looks at the

It's been a while since ... (indicating their hands) this. BECKY

Nine years. SORREL

You remember. BECKY

So do you. SORREL

Yeah. BECKY

The weekend Leah came back from college. BECKY

I remember pretending to have to go to the bathroom to give you two some time to talk. And when I came back, things were different. Not much, Just the littlest bit. But enough. And yet, somehow, nine years later, (indicating their entwined hands) here it is again. SORREL

Yeah, here it is. BECKY

A quiet moment, each of them lost in the feeling of the other's skin again.

I wonder what would have happened if I hadn't been so scared. If I hadn't pulled my hand away from yours in that room that day. BECKY

We're not there anymore, Becky, so what does it matter? Are you still scared? SORREL

Yes. BECKY

But you're still here. SORREL

Yes. BECKY

So what really matters is what you decide to do now. SORREL

Becky looks at their hands. Then looks at Sorrel. She pulls Sorrel's hand toward her, brings it up to her lips, kisses it. Again. And again. Sorrel watches her, letting it happen, but careful not to push. Becky's kisses play across her fingers, glide down the joint of her thumb, migrate to her wrist. Sorrel closes her eyes.

#### SCENE FIVE - SPLIT SCENE

Anna's bedroom. Anna tosses and turns, but each turn brings a new wave of pain.

In a chair near her bed, Fulwarkin studies her and sketches as she sleeps. Anna jolts suddenly, looking about the room in a panic. The sight of Fulwarkin sets her more at ease.

ANNA

Oh god. Oh god, it's just you.

FULWARKIN

You were expecting someone else, perhaps?

ANNA

I felt someone here. I thought - I thought that you were Death.

FULWARKIN

I'm sorry if I disappointed you.

ANNA

You think I'm looking forward to it?.

FULWARKIN

Death is the nat'ral end of all mankind.  
With sev'ral thousand years of practice, one  
Would think you'd have the hang of it by now.

ANNA

Have you gotten the hang of it? Do your people even die?

FULWARKIN

Not really. There's a sort of migration  
Into new worlds and other elements-

ANNA

Have you ever done it?

FULWARKIN

Not yet. There is my work to think of, and -

ANNA

And now you want to take the only thing I have left, my story, to interpret it as you see fit, and call that 'me'.

FULWARKIN

It's meant to be a celebration of -

ANNA

How would you like it if you were hovering on the edge of, of whatever you call the thing you do, and someone came along to "celebrate" you, like your life was already some dead insect pinned to a board for others to look at?



FULWARKIN

I wouldn't call myself a fan of it.  
 Yes, I have been at work two billion years.  
 Yes, that's a good long time, but ev'ryone  
 Seems to assume that I should be content  
 To call it done, give someone else a turn -

ANNA

But it's not that easy.

FULWARKIN

To let it all go now, give up control -  
 This thing I've slaved away at for eons?  
 I'm terrified my work will not go on!  
 But even more than that ... I'm scared it will.

Lights come up on Becky and Sorrel, cuddled up asleep in  
 blankets and a makeshift pile of pillows stage right.

ANNA

So ... both of us are scared. All right. That's what I needed to know. How would you like  
 me to begin?

Lights go down on Anna and Fulwarkin, as Becky stirs,  
 sees Sorrel next to her, asleep. Becky runs her fingers  
 through Sorrel's hair. Behind her, TANJER DRESLIN  
 sits, sketching.

TANJER

(to himself)

God! Could you ask for a more chic tableau?

Becky nearly jumps out of her skin at the sound of another  
 voice in the room.

TANJER

Oh no, don't stop on my account. You're fine.  
 And compositionally perfect, too!

BECKY

Wait - are you ... are you Tanjer Dreslin?

TANJER

Who else? But really, do that thing again,  
 The running of your fingers through her hair -

BECKY

Which means I'm asleep right now.

TANJER

- so much begins and ends in that one move.  
 A bubbling cauldron of neuroses! Wow!

Becky instinctively covers herself with more blanket, as though it hides the parts of her soul she doesn't want seen.

BECKY

Hey! A little privacy, please? It's my first time with someone I actually have feelings for. I'd kind of like to savor it for a moment. Alone?

TANJER

It's you that asked for this here interview,  
And now's the time that I'm available.  
So take or leave it. I can't guarantee  
I'll have another empty slot this month.

BECKY

Fine. Just give me a second, okay?

She kisses Sorrel's forehead, then throws off the covers, rediscovering that she's in a t-shirt and underwear.

BECKY

Well, hope it's okay if my attire's not exactly "interview appropriate".

TANJER

(shrugs)

It's L.A. Wear as little as you want.

She digs under her pillow, finds a notebook and pen.

BECKY

So I've been working on a piece about Fulwarkin Freml. Now, you worked as his apprentice -

TANJER

60 odd million years ago, I did.  
But I'll be damned if I remember much  
From all the way back then. I mean, come on!

BECKY

He seems to recall your work together pretty clearly.

TANJER

Of course. That's what he does. Remember things,  
Then whine about their passing in his art.  
That's fine for some, but my mind's on the Now.

BECKY

Some might call that a pretty harsh view of his legacy.

TANJER

He has his own peculiar genius, sure.  
There's no denying he does striking work.

But work that's losing relevance. And why?  
He doesn't understand America.

Lights back up on Fulwarkin and Anna.

TANJER

The thing that this whole country's built upon -

FULWARKIN

All right, then. Shall we start with your childhood?

TANJER

And keeps up ceaselessly:

ANNA

Do we really have to?

TANJER

I Re. In. Vent.

Lights down on Becky and Tanjer.

ANNA

I get so bored of "unhappy childhood" stories. The people telling them want one of two things: your pity for how hard they had it, or your congratulations for how well they turned out in spite of everything. I don't want either one, so why tell the damn thing at all?

Leah steps cautiously into the room.

LEAH

Gran, did you - did you just say something?

FULWARKIN

You need a reason? (gestures to Leah) How about this one?

LEAH

Are you hearing what I'm saying right now?

FULWARKIN

Where you came from is part of her as well.  
Don't you think she might have a right to know?

LEAH

Gran? Are you awake?

ANNA

Awake ... awake ... with both of you here, it's hard to tell.

LEAH

Wait - both of us? Are you seeing someone else in the room right now?

ANNA

What? No. Hold on ... just a ... just a minute.

FULWARKIN

You find it hard to open up to me?  
That's fine. Tell her instead. And I'll take notes.

ANNA

Still waking up. Things are ... fuzzy.

Leah sits on the bed next to her. The sound of a dog barking outside.

ANNA

Is that Sampson outside?

LEAH

Aaron found him earlier tonight.

ANNA

Lucky too?

Leah makes a visible effort to ignore the question.

LEAH

I have something to ask you, but I need to know that you're fully ... aware of what it is.

ANNA

I'm fine. Was half-dreaming for a minute. That's all.

LEAH

That's good. But I need to be sure. Can you tell me where you are right now?

Anna summons all of her strength, looks Leah in the eye.

ANNA

Leah, I'm in your guest room, I'm 84, and at this point I like to get on with things.

LEAH

(smothering a laugh)

All right, then. Before you passed out, you were speaking in a different language. Do you remember that?

ANNA

A little.

LEAH

I talked to a linguistics professor tonight. She said you were speaking Hopi. Was that something you learned, or - ?

ANNA  
 (snorts derisively)  
 You speak high school French when you're delirious?

LEAH  
 I need a straight answer on this. Was that your native tongue?

A pause. Anna looks at Fulwarkin, then back at Leah.

ANNA  
 Yes.

LEAH  
 Wow. Okay. So ... you're Native American.

ANNA  
 Half. My mother.

LEAH  
 And your father?

ANNA  
 (shrugs)  
 Some traveling missionary. Never met him.

LEAH  
 My god, what you must have gone through-

ANNA  
 Everyone has problems, so what? I'm not sorry. I became self-reliant. (to Fulwarkin) You can put that up in the sky as bright as you want to. Nowhere was home, so I chose one. Made it for myself.

LEAH  
 When?

ANNA  
 At 17. A lot of tour groups came through, buying crafts, jewelry, taking pictures. One afternoon when I was seventeen, this crowd of sightseers walks by, and one of the girls turns to me and says, 'If we don't hurry, the bus is going to leave without us'. She just assumed I was one of them. Later that night, I decided I would try to be.

Lights up on Becky and Tanjer.

ANNA  
 The next time a group came through, I put on my best dress, stuffed my purse with everything I could fit inside, and just got on the bus. Somehow it felt ... more right than everything before.

TANJER  
 This city's in a constant state of flux -

ANNA

It dropped me off in Los Angeles, not much more than orange groves then -

TANJER

It's torn down and rebuilt three times a day!

ANNA

But I never went back. Not even when your father moved you all out here.

TANJER

And through all that, the people keep moving.

ANNA

Not once.

Lights down on Anna and Leah.

TANJER

They transform with the landscape, growing lithe  
And flexible in spirit and in thought,  
Until there's nothing they cannot become.  
That freedom - to be anything you want,  
For lengths as long or short as you prefer -  
That's rare, and you Americans get that.  
It's why you brag about it all the time.

BECKY

I'm pretty sure that's not the freedom we tend to brag about.

TANJER

Oh, isn't it? Most countries guarantee  
The same rights to their citizens you do.  
All Europe votes. They live as they see fit.  
So what are you free from that they are not?

BECKY

I don't know -

TANJER

From history. You're free to shed your past.  
Encouraged to! This nation came to be  
Because the people here were brave enough  
To cut themselves free from their very roots -  
Their king, ancestral homes, whole families -  
The bonds that held society in place,  
They willingly cast off to make their own  
Identity. To be only themselves.

BECKY

And that's something you admire about us?

TANJER

Yes, very much.

BECKY

And also what you yourself did with Fulwarkin.

TANJER

God, back to that again?

BECKY

He was your friend and mentor for tens of millions of years. You're telling me that time had no effect on you, on the artist you became?

TANJER

Of course it did! But what do you suggest  
I do about it? Spend my time and art  
Obsessing over how the rift occurred?  
Fulwarkin did just that after I left -  
A month of sunsets smeared with loneliness  
When more important things were happening.

BECKY

Were they any good though?

A pause.

TANJER

Completely stunning. But that's not the point.  
While he looked inward, sifting through the past,  
He missed the beauty right in front of him.

He steals a glance at Sorrel, still asleep.

TANJER

I wonder, will the same be true of you?

BECKY

What?

TANJER

You think that I don't see it? That grey haze  
Of thick confusion smothering your soul?

BECKY

It's that obvious, huh?

TANJER

You hope to wait it out, so that you can  
See clearly before charting your next move.

He kneels next to Sorrel.

TANJER

But will this lovely creature wait for you?

BECKY

Can you leave her out of this, please?

TANJER

She's here beside you now, within the cloud.  
Can you not see how beautiful that is?

BECKY

(looking down at her)

It's ... the most wonderful thing I've ever seen. But what am I supposed to do? Pretend I'm not lost? That it's not chaos inside me right now?

TANJER

You could do that. Or you could revel in  
The chaos, thrive on it. That's what I do.

He snaps his fingers, and one of his sunsets appears  
before them. The beauty of it takes Becky's breath away.

TANJER

Example, this one here. A favorite.

BECKY

Wow. Like the whole sky is sculpted out of gold.

TANJER

You know how I got those effects? With smog.  
Now that pollutants crowd the ev'ning air,  
My palette's diff'rent than it was before.  
I could have mourn'd that loss within my art,  
And cramm'd the sky with cautionary tales,  
But I refused to halt or slow my step  
Before this wafting carelessness of men.  
I kept on moving, restless in pursuit  
Of beauty in whatever form it takes!  
I open'd myself up to anything  
This troubled sky saw fit to render me.  
And look at what I found within your waste.

He hands her the sketch he was working on. Lights fade  
up on Anna, Leah, and Fulwarkin.

TANJER

Here's you, with all the tumult that's inside.  
Those knotted fam'ly ties with tangled ends.  
You could go back, and try to sort them out.  
Or you could let it stand. Just flip the page-

LEAH

And you never told anyone.



TANJER

Then start anew, not ever looking back.

LEAH

Not even Grampa? (no response) Not even Mom?

Tanjer gestures to Sorrel, still sleeping soundly as the lights fade.

TANJER

Could you ask for a lovelier canvas?

ANNA

It wasn't like now. "Illegitimate" wasn't shrugged off. And half-breed was something - You never saw it. The way they looked at me as a child. I couldn't see that in my husband's eyes. Not ... not even for a second.

LEAH

Gran, he wouldn't have -

ANNA

Are you sure?

LEAH

Yes!

ANNA

You live in a different world. Maybe a better one. But that's not where we were. I couldn't be as sure as you are.

LEAH

And Mom? After Grampa died, at least, you could have -

ANNA

I tried a few times. Or ... wanted to try.

LEAH

"Wanted to try?" What does that even mean?

ANNA

It went unspoken all those years ... the not speaking it becomes habit.

LEAH

I can't believe this. I can't believe you didn't tell your own husband, your own daughter!

ANNA

Aaron knows all of you? Nothing left out?

LEAH

Nothing like this. Nothing this important.

ANNA

You shove something like that in a dark corner ... you keep it separate from everything else, you start to think that maybe it wasn't so important. If it was part of you, truly, someone would have found it. But nobody really wanted to know.

LEAH

I do.

She takes Anna's hands in hers.

LEAH

I want to know, Gran. All of it.

ANNA

Oh.

LEAH

I want to know everything you can remember. Where you came from, what it was like. I want to know why you were quoting Genesis in Hopi. I want to know what that word was that Professor Perry couldn't make out, the one you repeated over and over.

FULWARKIN

Talawvani.

ANNA

(to Fulwarkin)

Talawvani? Was that it?

LEAH

Will you tell me what it means? What it's meant to you?

Anna looks at Leah and smiles. She leans in, and kisses Leah on the cheek.

LEAH

What was that for?

ANNA

For asking.

FULWARKIN

Talawvani. It means, "Let there be light."

SCENE SIX

Sunlight pours into Sorrel's apartment, its intensity waking Becky and Sorrel, entwined in their pile of pillows and blankets on the floor.

BECKY

Mm. Wow. That's some brightness there.

SORREL

Better than an alarm clock. Can't shut it off. At least until I get blinds for this window.

BECKY  
It feels nice, though. Warm.

She snuggles closer to Sorrel.

SORREL  
Yeah. Nice to share it with somebody, that warmth.

Becky starts laughing.

BECKY  
This is so crazy.

SORREL  
What is?

BECKY  
Just - all of this. Being here, like this, with you. I mean, I'd had daydreams about it, but -

SORREL  
Daydreams? About this exact moment. With me.

BECKY  
Well, yeah. In my head, the apartment is usually bigger, but -

SORREL  
(laughs)  
Did you, ah, "daydream" about what we did last night?

BECKY  
Um ... kinda?

SORREL  
Oh, there's a story behind that!

BECKY  
No! It's going to make me sound so stupid -

SORREL  
Too bad. What is it?

BECKY  
It's just - I've never done anything before. With a girl, I mean. So I wasn't ... quite sure how to picture it. Please don't laugh, but ... what we did last night ... was that ... you know ...?

SORREL  
Sex?

BECKY  
Yeah.

SORREL

(stifling a laugh)

No, Becky. Even for lesbians, that's still second base.

BECKY

That was a lot of sensation for just two bases.

SORREL

I was kinda surprised too. You're very ... demonstrative.

BECKY

Is that bad?

SORREL

(kisses her on the forehead)

It's adorable. Shall I make us breakfast?

BECKY

Could you - could you hold me just a little bit longer?

SORREL

Of course. I'm glad you want me to. I was a little worried that you'd wake up, and ... think twice about things, and ...

BECKY

Devolve into a basket case of Christian guilt?

SORREL

Sort of, yeah.

BECKY

I was worried about that too, but ... there was this moment, back at the restaurant. You'd just brought me that first glass of wine, and I'm sitting there, sipping it, all nervous, so I start looking around. At other tables, other glasses, and all I can think is, "now I'm just like everybody else."

SORREL

And you weren't before?

BECKY

I didn't feel like it. 'Cause see, these rules I'd been following, it was ... armor, in a way. You put on these behaviors- don't drink, don't curse, don't be anything other than straight - and that makes you different from the others, makes you-

SORREL

Better.

BECKY

I mean, we'd never say that out loud, but yeah, basically. On a certain level, it was easier. Because as long as you keep the armor all polished and shiny, who's going to look at what's actually in your heart?

I never realized how much I'd relied on rules to feel like a good person until I was sitting there at that table with just that little glass of wine, with my armor off. Now, if I wanted to be good, I'd have to examine every choice, every action. I'd have to really look at my desires, and ... and ...

SORREL

Actually trust God to guide you for once?

BECKY

(taken aback)

Yeah.

SORREL

Kinda funny, huh? How often religion seems to get in the way of that? Well -(she kisses Becky on the cheek) you've got a safe place here to figure that stuff out. For the time that you need. As for right now, I'm examining my choices and desires, and I think I should make pancakes. (she starts to get up) Any objections?

BECKY

None from me.

SORREL

So that's what I need to do, then. (heads to the kitchen) Isn't it great when it's easy like that?

Becky laughs as Sorrel exits into the kitchen. Alone, Becky grows thoughtful as she stares out the window into the glowing Los Angeles morning.

BECKY

Yeah, I think I know what I need to do too.

## SCENE SEVEN

Leah and Aaron's house. In her room, Anna tosses in a fitful, restless sleep. On the patio, Leah sits, brush in hand, staring at her canvas.

LEAH

(to herself)

It's not that hard. Just finish it. How is that so hard?

She takes a deep breath, puts brush to palette, then starts painting. Aaron rushes in, full of manic energy.

AARON

It finally happened, Leah! He finally showed me what was wrong!

He throws his briefcase on the couch, and heads straight for Leah on the patio.

AARON

That still small voice just cut right through all the noise, and showed me what the problem was.

LEAH

What are you talking about? Shouldn't you be at work right now?

AARON

I'm talking about everything! My problems at work, the problems with us, I see where they all come from now! He's been trying to get us to move on to something new.

LEAH

Who has?

AARON

The Lord. But I've been too stubborn to listen. I started the Home Groups plan in the right spirit, but it got lost somehow, became about proving my value to the leadership staff. That's why it didn't prosper. That's why it became such a wedge between us! I was focused on the wrong thing. But not anymore. My eyes are back on us. On Him.

LEAH

Aaron, are you all right? Has something happened?

AARON

Only what needed to in order to wake me up.

LEAH

And what was that, exactly?

AARON

They scrapped my project. But it's all right -

LEAH

All right?! You've worked for years on this! It's been your dream -!

AARON

Exactly! *My* dream. Just mine. I should have noticed when your interest first dropped off -

LEAH

Aaron -

AARON

I should have felt in the spirit that something was wrong, and looked for another open door right at the start.

LEAH

You have no idea how far back that would be -

AARON

(overlapping)

And I'm so sorry it took this much of a toll on us before I realized that. But it's going to be all right! He's opened a new door for us, and I didn't miss it this time!

LEAH  
Aaron, this is -

AARON  
I called Jeremy Gates this morning, just to check on how things went with Becky -

LEAH  
And?

AARON  
They liked her. Called her back for a second interview, with the board present this time, but she turned it down -

LEAH  
What? Why?

AARON  
Apparently she told him another opportunity came up. Which meant the position was open again, and just like that, it was obvious what I was being led to do -

LEAH  
Obvious. Really.

AARON  
So I did it. Leah, we're moving to L.A.!

LEAH  
What?!

AARON  
Well, technically Temecula, but really, it's close enough -

LEAH  
You just decided that we're going to pack up and move -

AARON  
It wasn't a decision, it was -

LEAH  
- you just took a whole new job without even asking me?!

AARON  
Now hold on, hold on, you're not seeing it yet! This is what you've wanted, Leah! A fresh start for us! I'll just be doing youth ministry again, so I'll have more time. For you. For, for us! It'll be just like it was back at the beginning!

LEAH  
Back when you'd come from work so frustrated that you could barely speak? Just constantly stressed out by the kids, by the parents, by the staff members that treated you like an overgrown teenager? I know that's not what you want, Aaron -

Then I'll learn to want it. AARON

For what? For me? LEAH

If that's what it takes. AARON

Oh my god. You say that now, but you won't be able to. LEAH

You don't know that - AARON

I can guarantee you, because I have tried for ten years to learn to be what you need. And Aaron, I can't do it. LEAH

Leah - AARON

And I really don't want you to try. LEAH

You're forgetting what it was like before! Remember when we met - AARON

We met when I was young and newly damaged, and you showed me love when I never thought I'd have it again. I was so grateful for that. LEAH

So you see that we can -! AARON

I was so grateful that I did what you're offering to. I tried to shelf just little parts of my dream in order to support yours. LEAH

No. No, we were both - AARON

But it didn't work like that. The pieces I put up withered and died, and I didn't have enough 'me' left to help you in the way that you needed. LEAH

Leah- AARON

Oh my god. This is my fault. LEAH

Leah, you're not seeing it right. This happened because I focused on the wrong things, and- AARON



LEAH

No, it's because you've been carrying the weight of what you're meant to do alone.

AARON

There may have been times where-

LEAH

We're both alone in this house, Aaron. I know you've felt it.

AARON

There have been times-

LEAH

Tell me you don't.

AARON

I'm trying to tell you-

LEAH

Tell me you're not starving to death.

AARON

Yes! Yes. Okay? I've felt it. So what is it you want me to do?

LEAH

I don't want you to do anything. It just needs to stop.

AARON

Then come with me! We'll leave that behind, we'll start from scratch, and it *will* be different. I promise.

LEAH

I just met someone who did that. Left some stuff behind not far from here. And she got her new life, and it *was* different. She's 84 now. She's dying in our guest room, and she's still haunted by what she ran away from. I won't run, Aaron. I am not going to end up that way. And I won't be the person you end up that way for.

AARON

Okay. Okay. I haven't quit yet, so nothing's ruined here. They want to keep me on as administrative staff. It's not really what I want to do, but I can stay on for a little while if you need me to and we can -

LEAH

If I need you to- god, have you even been listening?!

AARON

You just said you don't want to go to California! So I'm saying that's fine! It's okay. We can stay here if that's what you want to-

LEAH

You can stay or you can leave, but either way, I'm not coming with you.

Silence.

AARON  
What?

LEAH  
I'm sorry. I just can't do it anymore.

AARON  
But Leah - I love you!

LEAH  
I love you too. But I can't stand what our love has done to us. I'm sorry, but I ... I just can't.

AARON  
Leah - Leah, please!

She turns away right before the tears come, and hurries back into the house to Anna's bedroom. Aaron follows her as far as the living room, then crumples onto the couch, heavy with shock. In Anna's bedroom, Leah lays down by Anna and weeps. Anna, still in and out of sleep, registers her just enough to run her fingers gently through Leah's hair. Elsewhere in the house, the sound of a door opening, steps and bustling of suitcases. Then a voice.

BECKY  
(offstage)  
I know what you're going to say, Leah, but just listen for a minute. This isn't just about the two of us. It's about Gran too, and whatever you think of me, I still care about both of you, and I need to be able to -

Becky enters the living room, awkwardly towing several bags and a suitcase. She's brought up short at the sight of Aaron on the couch.

BECKY  
Oh. I'm sorry. I just expected it to be - I mean, I thought you'd be at work still.

AARON  
So did I. But things change sometimes, don't they?

BECKY  
I guess, yeah. I saw you got Sampson back finally, which is awesome! He was barking at me in the back yard as I drove up. When did you find him?

AARON  
Last night, on my way home.

BECKY  
Are you looking for Lucky still, 'cause I didn't -

AARON  
No. No, she's ... gone.

BECKY  
Gone?

AARON  
She was - I was driving down Ina when I saw them on the side of the road. Samson - it was almost like he was standing at attention. But Lucky had been - had been hit. Hard, it looked like. I hadn't finished pulling over and I could tell just from the way her legs were splayed out that .... Who knows how long she'd been that way. But the whole time, Samson stood right next to her, just waiting by her side, maybe hours, for his master to come find them and make things better. But I was too late. There was nothing I could do but bury her. (fighting back tears) I just kept looking down at my poor sweet girl, all mangled like that, blood matted in her fur, and it felt like we had done it. Me and Leah. Like there was something broken between us all along, and it had waited for this moment to manifest itself. I wanted so badly for all of it to mean something else, something better. But that just made it worse.

BECKY  
Aaron, what's happened?

AARON  
I don't know. I really don't know.

He wipes his hands across his face, trying to get a hold of himself.

AARON  
I should check on Samson. Make sure he's okay.

He gets up from the couch, makes his way toward the back patio.

BECKY  
I'm a little more worried about you right now.

AARON  
No, I'll be - (he means to say 'fine', but can't make the word come out) I'll pray. Talk to the Lord for a while. Ask some questions maybe.

BECKY  
Like what?

AARON  
Like why He was so late.

He goes out onto the patio, and exits into the back yard. Becky watches him go, then turns her attention to Anna's room. She enters quietly, and just looks at Leah and Anna, one crying, one asleep.

Um, Leah?

BECKY

Leah looks up and notices her for the first time.

You came back.

LEAH

Yeah.

BECKY

What for?

LEAH

BECKY

I found somewhere else to go, and it was awesome there. But I needed to be here right now. With you.

Becky approaches the bed carefully.

BECKY

Leah, I'm sorry. I screwed all of this up. I know it. But I just couldn't leave it that way this time. I knew that I needed to -

Leah envelops Becky in a big messy embrace.

Shut up.

LEAH

Okay.

BECKY

Becky holds her older sister, who clings to her desperately. A long moment.

You're here. For me. You're really here.

LEAH

Yeah.

BECKY

Leah starts to sob into Becky's shoulder.

I thought I had to keep it all going. I thought it was only me that could -

LEAH

Becky lets her cry before speaking.

BECKY

You don't. It's not. You don't have to hold anything together, okay? That's not what we love you for. It's not.

Behind them, Fulwarkin and Zaffring float in on their gondolas.

Zaffring takes out her planner, looks through.

ZAFFRING

A fair slate of memorials tonight,  
 With new things growing to an end right now.  
 Conditions looking perfect for that work,  
 The air all full of particles and pasts.  
 Where would you like to start? With lives that hang  
 Along the edges of eternity?  
 With waning childhoods -

She spots Leah and Becky embracing below.

ZAFFRING

- Or perhaps an end  
 To obligations one could not sustain?

FULWARKIN

Good options, all. Which do you fancy most?

ZAFFRING

Wait - me?

Fulwarkin nods. In Anna's bedroom, Leah pulls Becky down onto the bed. The weight shift jostles Anna enough to actually wake up.

ANNA

Becky.

BECKY

Hey, Gran.

Anna wraps Becky's hand into hers. Zaffring watches the scene unfold from above.

ZAFFRING

I'm captured most by that down there.  
 The flowering conclusions in that room.

ANNA

Thought you'd gone. For good maybe.

BECKY

Nah, you're not that lucky.

She smiles and kisses Anna on the cheek.

FULWARKIN

You have a good eye, Zaffring. So we start  
 With Anna Torrance, then?

ZAFFRING  
 You're asking my  
 Opinion still? I'm sorry, this is weird.

FULWARKIN  
 Is that an answer?

LEAH  
 (to Becky)  
 She's got a story for you, too. An important one.

ANNA  
 Later, maybe. So tired today.

ZAFFRING  
 Anna, I agree.  
 It's been a long time coming. Shall we start?

BECKY  
 That's all right. I'm just glad to see you. You get some rest, and tell me when you wake up.

ANNA  
 Yes, good. When I wake up. (to Leah) But if I don't, you fill her in.

LEAH  
 Of course. But you're fine.

FULWARKIN  
 Give her another moment, if you would.

ANNA  
 Yes ... fine. (a pause) But tell me goodbye anyway.

BECKY  
 Gran!

ANNA  
 In case, in case.

LEAH  
 You're just tired. We'll talk in a few minutes.

ANNA  
 And then you can say 'hello again'. But now, goodbyes. I've missed too many. No more words unsaid, all right?

Leah and Becky look at each other.

LEAH  
 All right.

Leah kisses Anna's forehead.

LEAH

Goodbye, Gran. I love you.

BECKY

Goodbye. With my love. Always.

ANNA

I love you too. You'll just be each other's soon. Take care with that. Goodbye. (with a slight smile) And thanks for indulging.

BECKY

Any time.

Anna closes her eyes again. Leah and Becky hold her hands in silence as she drifts back asleep.

ZAFFRING

So, ready to begin then?

FULWARKIN

No. Are you?

ZAFFRING

(looks at him, puzzled)

I'm always ready, sir.

FULWARKIN

Then take the lead.

ZAFFRING

You mean it?

FULWARKIN

Not if I must say it twice.

ZAFFRING

Okay then. (looks up) Hello, sky. You're mine tonight.

(to Fulwarkin)

We'll start with lavenders about the edge,

Then push in red the more we drop it down.

(she calls down to Anna)

Ms. Torrance, once you've woken down, look up.

This patch of sky is for rememb'ring you.

Fulwarkin nods, and follows Zaffring's lead. Leah and Becky lean against the headboard with Anna between them, an early evening drowsiness setting in.

LEAH

Sunset's coming on. Looks to be a good one.

BECKY

Yeah. He really does paint 'em up special out here, doesn't he?

LEAH

Seriously? How many times do I -?

BECKY

Don't worry. It's not quite what you think. I know all about the air particles and the blah blah blah. Not a bad way to deal with the past, I guess. Not burying it, or keeping it in cupboards. Just tossing it all up into the light, then stepping back and seeing what kind of picture it all makes.

LEAH

You make it sound like some kind of ritual.

BECKY

Maybe we need one. We're pretty bad at endings.

LEAH

Maybe Gran was on to something. The importance of good-byes.

BECKY

Maybe.

Another silence. Leah looks up at the sunset thoughtfully.

LEAH

Goodbye, Aaron. I hope you do everything you're meant to. With friends by your side to help lift when your strength fails. I'm sorry I couldn't be one of them. But I hope you find what you need.

Becky looks at Leah, both moved and curious. Becky looks back up at the sky, decides to give it a try.

BECKY

Goodbye to Minister Becky. I needed you for a while. Maybe just for the chance to be the mentor I always wished I'd found, but never did. I hope I used the time well. But I'm more interested in asking questions than giving answers now.

LEAH

Goodbye to the children we dreamed of together. A boy named Silas with my wavy brown hair and his father's hazel eyes. A girl named Tabitha or Eleanor, who I'd color with on Sunday afternoons. I thought about you a lot, even though you never happened. I'll miss you.

BECKY

Goodbye to my parents' god. That tidy universe I accepted without question. You were terrifying sometimes, but mostly comforting when I knew the rules.



I loved to feel the certainty of you. But you're just too small, too safe. I've got to go out and find the real One now, who doesn't fit into such neat little boxes. So farewell.

LEAH

Farewell.

The sit quietly for a moment.

LEAH

Feel any more prepared for what comes next?

BECKY

I don't know.

LEAH

Me neither.

They lean back and close their eyes, as Zaffring does her work in the sky, brushing aside a cloud with a shaft of light.

ZAFFRING

Now Worry, drift away and stay below.  
 You cannot follow where she plans to go.  
 Now Joy, now Fear, please kindly take your leave.  
 What she shall feel from here you can't conceive.  
 All weariness of flesh, all ache of bone,  
 You've had your time, now let the soul alone.  
 Renounce your claim, harsh masters Time and Space,  
 Her spirit grows, and will not fit the case.  
 And Gravity, old bureaucrat, give way  
 To laws that reach beyond your rigid sway.  
 So let this helium truth now fill her heart:  
 That ev'ry ending also is a start.

Meanwhile, Fulwarkin has descended from his gondola, and walks beside Anna's bed. He touches Anna's shoulder. She opens her eyes, and looks to the sky.

FULWARKIN

What do you think? A fair memorial?  
 I know it's not a perfect likeness, but -

ANNA

It's not that, it's ... it's the size of it. Things that seemed important, things that didn't, they're all such different proportions from what they felt like at the time.

Anna nudges Becky.

ANNA

Becky, tell me what you think of this.

What?  
BECKY

Becky sees Fulwarkin.

BECKY  
Hot damn. I must have gone down quick.

ANNA  
Does it seem like me?

BECKY  
Yeah, but in a way I never pictured before. (to Fulwarkin) This is your work? It's very different.

Fulwarkin gestures up to Zaffring.

FULWARKIN  
Assisting once, before I move along.

ANNA  
You're doing that? 'Migrating' to some other world.

FULWARKIN  
(he turns to Becky)  
My story's told, I held it once again,  
And felt its weight, which helps in letting go.

He hands Becky the brush he's holding.

FULWARKIN  
Know anyone who might have use for this?  
I'm thinking, 'a new planet, a new brush'.

BECKY  
What about Zaffring?

FULWARKIN  
She knows this brush too well now. In her grip,  
It could grow heavy with its history,  
Too slow for new strokes of her own design.  
No, best to go to someone unaware  
Of whose it was before. Let it inspire  
Without dictating terms to that new hand.

Becky reaches behind Anna, and carefully places the paint brush in the right hand of Leah, dozing fitfully. Anna's eyes are still on the sky.

ANNA

Becky, look - that beam there, shooting up past all the grey and dark red, like ... like some great reed growing up from a ruined world ...

BECKY

Wow.

ANNA

I think I'm ready for the new one.

BECKY

And that huge expanse below it ...

ANNA

I think I'm ready to climb.

BECKY

... that impossible ocean of gold!

Anna closes her eyes, and drifts slowly back down to her original position on the bed. Becky doesn't notice, still riveted to the sunset memorial in front of her.

ANNA

Up, and up, and up.

BECKY

Gran, was that ... that shining sea ... was that what all your silence meant? Oh Gran .... Oh, you're so lovely ... I had no idea ...

Becky also closes her eyes, and drifts to sleeping position on the bed.

BECKY

... I had no idea at all.

ZAFFRING

(to Fulwarkin)

So. Did I do her justice, do you think?

FULWARKIN

It's perfect, Zaffring. Wouldn't change a thing.

Fulwarkin and Zaffring gather their materials, and start off as Leah stirs in her bed. She starts, groggy, then looks at Anna. Something seems off.

LEAH

Gran?

She nudges her. Nothing. Quickly checks Anna's pulse. Nothing. Leah starts to go into panic mode. Nudges her again.

Gran, are you asleep?  
LEAH

Leah puts her head to Anna's chest. Anna isn't breathing.

LEAH  
Gran, wake up. It's time to wake up. It's time -

She checks Anna's pulse again. Still nothing. Leah slowly realizes there's nothing for her panic to accomplish.

LEAH  
Becky.

Becky remains asleep.

LEAH  
Come on. Becky. It's Gran.

BECKY  
(eyes closed, still mostly asleep)  
I know. (laughs) Isn't she beautiful?

Leah reaches over to rouse Becky, and suddenly sees the paintbrush in her own right hand. She stares at it as the lights go down.