

The Butterfly Anchor

A full-length play

By Darrin J. Friedman

Contact:

Darrin J. Friedman
301-351-5423
darrinjfriedman@gmail.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BRIAN, 40s, a former Olympic swimmer

ANGELA, 20s, the caregiver

KATHERINE, 70s, Brian's mother

STAN, 70s, Brian's father and attorney

TANYA, 30s, Angela's girlfriend

JENNIFER, 30s, Brian's ex

SYLVIA, 30s, Escort

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

It's summer. A large, expensively decorated space is revealed with the majestic afternoon glow filling the apartment's living room. Everything is stylish and cosmopolitan. The decor is masculine, a home created for kings.

BRIAN, 40s, sits in an armchair. He is fit and has an athletic build and cares about how he looks. ANGELA, 20s, is quirky but lives comfortably in her skin. She carries a large shoulder bag as she strolls around the apartment ... hunting ...

ANGELA

Impressive. I mean, really. Not kidding. I'm inside a lot of people's houses, and this is something.

She continues her stroll as if searching.

BRIAN

Thanks. I've tried to make it a home I love. Can we get started? I made some coffee. Want some?

ANGELA

No thanks. I'm doing this new detox. Almost two months without caffeine. But I've been loading up on this all-natural protein shake I make. Kale based. It's amazing. Seriously.

She stops cold, looking at a framed piece displayed.

Holy shit! Is that a gold medal?

BRIAN

It is.

ANGELA

Like an Olympic Gold medal. And you won that? Je-sus Christ. I've never seen one in real life before.

BRIAN

That's what they look like.

ANGELA

What did you win it for?

BRIAN

Look, I don't want to be rude, but I'd actually like to start.

ANGELA

You don't look like a gymnast or anything.

She picks up the case and examines it more closely.

BRIAN

I'm a swimmer. Was a swimmer.

ANGELA

I don't know. I don't think we ever stop being what we are. We can add onto it or try to heal from it, but you'll always be a swimmer.

BRIAN

Not always. Please, sit.

He gestures to the couch, and she obliges.

ANGELA

Holy hell, this is comfortable.

BRIAN

I know. They're custom.

ANGELA

Custom?

BRIAN

Special ordered. From Europe. Milan.

ANGELA

Well, I don't know how much you paid for it but consider it money well spent. No bullshit. I might never get up.

BRIAN

I'd like to start.

ANGELA

Her attention is averted once again
Is that!? Is that a Chagall!? Like a real Chagall? Right there.

BRIAN

It is.

ANGELA

Brian, I don't know how to tell you this, but you are a man of exquisite taste.

BRIAN

Look --

ANGELA

I mean custom furniture. Gallery art worth more than I make in a year.

BRIAN

I'm not sure judging me is a good interview tactic.

ANGELA

Not judging, just impressed. Okay, we can start.

She sits.

Pets?

BRIAN

Excuse me?

ANGELA

Pets. Do you have any?

BRIAN

In this apartment? Not a chance. No. No pets.

ANGELA
Girlfriend?

BRIAN
What?

ANGELA
Girlfriend? Do you have one?

BRIAN
How exactly is that relevant?

ANGELA
We're going to be spending a lot of time together.
Girlfriends can get in the way.

BRIAN
No girlfriend. Can we focus on you?

ANGELA
Serial monogamist, right?

BRIAN
Something like that. I'd actually like to ask you some
questions --

ANGELA
You don't have to be that way, you know.

BRIAN
What way?

ANGELA
Snarky.

BRIAN
I'm not being snarky.

ANGELA
You say so.

Angela reaches into her bag and
begins taking objects out of it,
placing them on the table. At first
glance they almost look like sex
toys. Brian CHOOSES to ignore them.

BRIAN

I spoke with your agency. They're extremely impressed by you. They say you've done amazing work with people. That we'd be a great match, actually. Why do you think that is?

ANGELA

Don't know. But if they say I'm a match, they're usually spot on.

She continues with objects. Now with crystals and candles. The coffee table is full of them now.

BRIAN

What are you doing?

ANGELA

Don't mind me.

BRIAN

I assume you've read my profile.

ANGELA

I don't believe in those profiles.

BRIAN

Do you know how long it took me to take that ridiculous needs assessment? The whole point of that profile is that you understand who the hell I am before you walk into my home.

ANGELA

Do you have a light?

BRIAN

Are you listening to me? You're wasting my time.

ANGELA

I wouldn't characterize it that way.

BRIAN

And how would you characterize it?

ANGELA

Taking the opportunity to get to know you. Look, I can scan those files all day long -- I mean, I do need your address, but that's why I prefer coming in this way. It gives the universe the chance to bring spontaneity to the conversation.

BRIAN

Jesus.

ANGELA

What?

BRIAN

Look, I think you need to leave --

ANGELA

I mean, you want the best.

BRIAN

What's wrong with that?

ANGELA

And my agency is basically the highest of high ends.

BRIAN

From what I understand.

ANGELA

So you might want to ask yourself why they sent me here in the first place.

She searches her bag, pulls out a lighter with triumphant glee, and lights a candle.

Lavender!

BRIAN

What?

ANGELA

Smell it. It's so healing. Get's rid of the hoocha.

BRIAN

The what?

ANGELA

Bad mojo.

BRIAN

I don't have bad mojo.

ANGELA

(Ignores him)

Look, I'm discreet. Completely. Anything that happens here stays here. I'm like a Vegas hooker. What I'm trying to say here is that a man like you deserves the best. I'm the best.

BRIAN

Who says?

ANGELA

My clients. My agency.

BRIAN

Well, I just don't want people to know my business. I've been able to keep things under wraps for a while now, and I want to keep it that way.

ANGELA

I know what you want.

BRIAN

Really? You don't know anything about me. You didn't even read my file.

ANGELA

Brian Lynn. Born April 14, 1979. Went to Stanford for swimming and is a four-time national NCAA champion. Holds the world record in the 200-meter Butterfly -- winner of a gold medal for an individual medley. After ... an MBA from Harvard, and has, over the last fifteen years, become the Senior Vice President of Marketing at JP Morgan Chase. Never married and has no children.

BRIAN

Jesus. Why did you say you didn't read the file?

ANGELA

Because I like to keep it loose. Look, you're special. So am I. I haven't won medals, and I don't hold records, but I know how to take care of people.

And, you, my friend, are going to need taking care of. You dictating every moment -- you having control -- that's over now.

BRIAN

What makes you say that?

ANGELA

You need to understand something. Starting real soon, you're going to need to be taken care of. I know. You don't need anybody. But buddy, that ship has sailed.

BRIAN

I'm not dead.

ANGELA

No.

BRIAN

I have my mind.

ANGELA

Yes.

BRIAN

And you come in here and tell me there are no other options?

ANGELA

You could choose another agency. But we both know you've done your homework. No one comes close.

BRIAN

There are always other choices.

ANGELA

Not what the analytics say. The analytics say I am your gal.

BRIAN

Wonderful. Then based on this conversation, my whole foundation in analytics has been blown.

ANGELA

Listen. That's why I'm here. I can handle you.

BRIAN

Handle me? What's that supposed to mean?

ANGELA

Have you met you?

BRIAN

(Brian starts rubbing his
forearm)

You make me sound like I'm some kind of --

ANGELA

I'm not making you sound like anything. You're a man with
very specific needs, and I'm here to meet those needs.
Speaking of ...

Angela gets up and picks up one of
the devices.

BRIAN

What are you doing?

ANGELA

How long has that forearm been tingling?

BRIAN

I dunno. The last hour.

She goes to him.

ANGELA

Scale from one to ten, how bad? Never mind, there you go.

She applies pressure to the spot
using the device. He instantly
feels the effects.

BRIAN

I thought these were sex toys or something.

ANGELA

You wish.

BRIAN

I'm not sure I can do this.

ANGELA

Doesn't this feel better?

BRIAN

Yes. The candle. It smells nice.

ANGELA

I told you. Lavender. It promotes peace and serenity.

BRIAN

And the crystals.

ANGELA

They help me help you. I'm an empath.

BRIAN

A what?

(He continues to be under her
healing powers)

ANGELA

An empath. I can feel the energy of the people around me.

BRIAN

Oh, god, you're one of those people who sway and chant to the feminine divine and meditate over incense and coffee grounds.

ANGELA

I don't sway. And if you really want to know, those crystals are not only connecting to mother earth's energy but are used for healing.

BRIAN

I don't do crystals. I don't do candles. I don't do praying. And this is my house. Blow out the candle.

He releases himself from her
healing grasp.

ANGELA

You're facing a terminal disease and don't want to at least try. Besides, don't you have any kind of sense of spirituality whatsoever? What do you think happens when you die?

BRIAN

I die.

ANGELA

And your consciousness?

BRIAN

This has gone on long enough.

ANGELA

Answer the question.

BRIAN

It's personal.

ANGELA

Tell me.

BRIAN

What's the point?

ANGELA

It's the whole point!

BRIAN

Fine, when it's over, it's over. Done. All I'm saying is I don't do god, or the universe, or anything else.

ANGELA

Brian. You don't realize what's coming.

BRIAN

I do.

ANGELA

You have no idea. ALS is a killer, but first, you'll lose your dignity. I'll be dressing you and feeding you. Help you go to the bathroom? You won't be in control then. Doctors give you a quick talk about the stages and give you a pamphlet. I'm not a doctor. I'm a caregiver for people who face what you're facing right now.

BRIAN

(Resigned)

How does this work? Us? This? You taking care of me, I mean?

ANGELA

You're already symptomatic, so I'll be here almost all the time.

BRIAN

And your boyfriend? What does he think?

ANGELA

She supports what I do.

BRIAN

Oh, sorry. I didn't mean to assume.

ANGELA

No worries. I'm not wearing a T-Shirt that says, "I like Pussy."

BRIAN

Angela, right?

(She nods)

How bad? How bad will it get?

ANGELA

Try not to worry about the future. Let's focus on today.

BRIAN

My arm feels better.

ANGELA

I know.

BRIAN

Can you do it some more?

ANGELA

Yes.

BRIAN

When can you start? Like officially?

ANGELA

Twenty minutes ago.

BRIAN

That's efficient. I actually like that.

ANGELA

I know you. Got that from your profile.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE TWO

Angela and Brian sit at the dining room table. Like all the rest of the furniture, it is masculine and expensive. The music playing is from Brian's playlist, which is being streamed through the room by the personal home technology assistant named Lisi. They are having lunch, and Brian has difficulty maneuvering as he tries to eat. His discomfort is clear.

Angela is having a bacon cheeseburger with fries. Brian is having a salad with Salmon -- dressing on the side.

ANGELA

I can't believe you listen to this crap.

BRIAN

You just heard one of the greatest lyrics ever written. This song is one of the preeminent rock songs of all time.

ANGELA

I need to broaden your horizons.

BRIAN

The hell you do. I like what I like. Besides my music, my house, my rules.

ANGELA

You're such a man.

BRIAN

No. You're unwilling to admit you're seriously deficient when it comes to taste in music.

ANGELA

Hey, Lisi, play Angela's playlist.

(A new song plays. It's a
song a twenty-something
would like.)

This is music.

BRIAN

(Beat long enough to take in
music)

This is crap.

ANGELA

You haven't even given it a chance.

BRIAN

I don't need to. Besides, when did you connect your phone to
Lisi?

ANGELA

Like the second day I was here.

BRIAN

Change it.

ANGELA

Look at you, Brian. You're adorable. It's like our first
spat. Just like a married couple after the honeymoon.

BRIAN

Hey, Lisi --

ANGELA

Finish that sentence -- I dare you.

BRIAN

This is my house!

ANGELA

I like to think of it as more of a shared living experience.
Besides, forget about the music. Eat your salad.

BRIAN

That's another thing. How come I have to shovel shit in my
mouth while you eat a bacon cheeseburger and fries?

ANGELA

Because you need to watch your triglycerides. The last thing that's going to happen on my watch is to see you have a heart attack.

BRIAN

I might die, but it won't be from that. This is still the same body that --

ANGELA

That what? Is this where you're going to remind me that you were once a Greek god on high? You need to get over yourself.

BRIAN

I am -- I mean, was a Greek god. Besides, you're changing the subject. I don't want a salad with salmon, with dressing on the side. I want a burger.

ANGELA

Your body your choice, as they used to say.

BRIAN

That's right -- my choice.

Angela cuts her burger in half, scoops up the remains, and places it on Brian's plate. Brian reaches for it and brings it to his mouth when suddenly his arm violently shakes from a spasm. Brian loses control of the burger and its contents make a mess all over him. The spasm ends and he takes out his frustration on the table as he hits it with his other arm, slamming his fist down with ferocity.

BRIAN

Fuck!

There is a pause in the action as Brian looks pathetic, covered in smashed burger parts.

ANGELA

You done?

Brian begins to cry -- frustration
and anger feeding the emotions
flowing from him.

We've talked about this. The muscle weakness. The spasms.
It's all part of the deal now -- even the crying. Try
forgiving yourself. Try not to think about it.

BRIAN

Not think about it!? Are you out of your fucking mind? It's
all I think about. I can't even eat a hamburger.

Brian's cell phone buzzes. It's on
the table. The caller ID displays
an image and a name.

ANGELA

Not going to take that?

BRIAN

She can wait.

ANGELA

Mothers don't wait. It just makes them more persistent.

BRIAN

Well, it's my usual play. She'll figure it out. She usually
does.

ANGELA

Maybe she wants to help?

BRIAN

Not a chance.

ANGELA

She's your mother.

BRIAN

You don't know her.

ANGELA

Actually, it's probably important that I do.

BRIAN

The last thing you want to do is to know my mother. She's a
vulture.

ANGELA

She can't be that bad.

BRIAN

When I was starting out -- just starting to make some money, she figured out how to take some for her. Twenty percent, off the top, cash. She's disgusting.

ANGELA

Did she need it?

BRIAN

They had plenty of money. But it didn't stop her.

ANGELA

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

That was then. Now they've wasted almost everything. My father still works, when he should be retired. But they still fight to pay those country club fees every month. All about appearances -- everything is about appearances. I swear to god, whenever they're here, it's like my mother is taking inventory, calculating the estate sale profits in her head. She's pathetic. No moral compass at all. The problem is it took too long for me to figure it out. My Dad had to come to me for a loan. Can you believe that? Which I gave him, of course. Stupid.

ANGELA

You're helping out. It sounds like you did a good thing.

BRIAN

My father doesn't deserve the misery she brings him.

ANGELA

She can't be all that bad.

BRIAN

Think I'm exaggerating?

ANGELA

I'm just saying everyone deserves empathy.

BRIAN

She doesn't know the meaning of the word. She's never shown me any. You have no idea what you're talking about.

ANGELA

Then tell me.

The stage shifts. Brian stands up into a full version of his physical self. He is transformed from head to toe. The lights dim on Angela as Brian moves to another part of the stage where a woman stands waiting. He arrives. The woman is KATHERINE, his mother. She begins in rage mode -- the worst kind of sports parent imaginable.

KATHERINE

I can't believe it. Third?! Third place?! Are you fucking kidding me? What the hell are we going to do with that? And it's not like it was the backstroke. The Butterfly, Brian. The Butterfly! It's your stroke. The BUTTERFLY, for god's sake!

BRIAN

I told you. I shouldn't have raced. I was throwing up all night.

KATHERINE

Excuses. Do you think I care about your excuses? Do you think Speedo cares?! They don't sponsor you for coming in third.

BRIAN

I have the flu.

KATHERINE

You're fine. Michael Jordon won a championship while he had the flu -- it didn't stop him. It doesn't stop greatness.

BRIAN

What do you want from me!?

KATHERINE

I would think that would be obvious. You have one job. Win.

BRIAN

I hate you.

Katherine reaches her hand back and strikes him across the face.

The lights dim on Katherine as she walks away. Brian leaves that scene and re-enters the present with Angela. His whole body changes to where he was post-spasm. He sits as if he is an entirely different person -- a man suffering from ALS.

ANGELA

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

Do you know I lost by a fraction of a second? Seriously. And the race was just a run-up to nationals. I wasn't even supposed to compete. My coach wanted to rest me. But she wouldn't have that.

(Pause)

In the end, she got what she wanted. A champion. World record holder. A man known and admired. But she never stopped. Ever.

Another phone rings. It's Angela's phone. She doesn't answer but texts back instead.

ANGELA

Sorry about that.

BRIAN

Sorry for what?

ANGELA

It's my girlfriend.

BRIAN

You don't have to tell me who you text.

ANGELA

I just don't want you to think I'm not focused on my job. On you. While I'm here, I should have my phone on silent. I just have it on for emergencies.

BRIAN

Seriously, it's fine.

ANGELA

(Pause)

You know. I was kicked out of my house when I was fifteen.

BRIAN

What?

ANGELA

No joke.

BRIAN

Jesus, why?

ANGELA

I came out. I was given twenty minutes to pack a bag and leave.

BRIAN

That's horrible.

ANGELA

I slept at my best friend's house the first night. But when my mother told my friend's mother what had happened, that didn't last much longer.

BRIAN

Where'd you go?

ANGELA

I made my way to a group home for young girls. It helped me finish high school, though it wasn't exactly a comfortable way to live.

BRIAN

I can't even imagine.

ANGELA

I went to church. My entire childhood. Seriously. I was brought up on it. Midwest and all. Every Sunday I was at that church. My life was there. All my friends. My entire world. But I knew something was wrong with me. I had these feelings that I couldn't control.

Anyway, I used to sit in a pew when I thought no one was around, and I used to beg God not to make me like girls. I pleaded. I would do anything. Do you know what happened when my mother kicked me out? All those adults who treated me with all that kindness my entire life acted as if I was the spawn of the devil. Seen as diseased -- infected. Everyone cut me out. But I survived.

(Pause)

Look, I'm not comparing myself to you. It sounds like your mother was or still is pretty awful, but you had a chance. You made it to college. You made it to the Olympics. Stanford. Harvard. Look at your career. She didn't do that. You did. I mean Stanford. Full ride, right? Swimming scholarship? And I bet you paid for that MBA in cash from your endorsements after the Olympics.

BRIAN

What are you trying to say?

ANGELA

You have no idea what real struggle is.

BRIAN

Hey, that's not fair.

ANGELA

Fair?

BRIAN

She was --

ANGELA

You are a white man of ultimate privilege, and you've probably spent years in therapy talking about how your mother was mean to you. I was orphaned with nothing at fifteen. I had nothing.

BRIAN

I'm not the enemy.

ANGELA

I'm not saying you are, but don't you get it? You didn't need that scholarship. They would have done anything to have you swim for them. Your parents could have afforded it. I bet a black kid couldn't get in without one, though. Maybe you took his spot.

I'm not saying your mother isn't a narcissistic bitch, but look at what you've done with your life. You broke free. You won.

He looks at her, empathy written
all over him.

Oh, know you don't. Don't give me that look. I don't need your pity. All I'm saying is I worked my way through college with two jobs and finished. I got a nursing degree without any help from anyone. I did that.

BRIAN

Yes, and you should be proud of yourself.

ANGELA

Proud? I don't need you to tell me that I should be proud of myself.

BRIAN

Then tell me what I should say.

ANGELA

Say that you get it. Say that you understand that you were given every advantage in life and took it for granted.

BRIAN

Wait a second. I --

ANGELA

Is this where you're going to say how hard you trained and how hard it was getting a career after being on cereal boxes? You made it! Look around. You appreciate nothing.

BRIAN

She didn't love me.

ANGELA

Spare me.

BRIAN

Why are you being cruel?

ANGELA

It's not cruelty. I'm trying to get through to you. None of that matters now. The fight you have now that's what matters -
- only that.

You must see through all that past bullshit and understand now is the time to live the rest of your life without resentment and fear.

BRIAN

I'm not afraid.

ANGELA

Of course you are. All I'm trying to say is that now, if you can see past all that horrid toxicity that she spewed into you and maybe even try some of the things I've been talking to you about, maybe you'll get a new perspective.

BRIAN

Like what? Try what?

ANGELA

Like these.

She pulls out a necklace. It's simple, with a crystal at its base.

I want you to try this.

BRIAN

We've talked about this, Angela. I'm not --

ANGELA

What? Unwilling to try just one new thing? Putting a crystal around your neck is so horrifying. Why? Why are you so against it? I have an idea ... do it because it would upset your mother. Any reason's a reason.

BRIAN

Fine. Give it to me.

He puts it on.

ANGELA

There. You'll thank me in time.

BRIAN

Okay. Just promise me. I won't have to see that woman. I don't want her here. Understand?

ANGELA

Consider me like Gandalf. She Shall Not Pass! Now ...

She reaches for the remnants of the
burger.
Let's get some of this burger in you.

BRIAN
Really?

ANGELA
Fuck it. It's protein.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE THREE

It's now after Thanksgiving.

*The doorbell rings. Angela comes
from Brian's bedroom and goes to
the door. She opens it.*

*Standing in the doorway is STAN,
70s, Brian's father.*

*He is dressed in a suit and tie
as if he is coming from work.*

STAN
Angela? So nice to finally meet you in person.

ANGELA
Stan. Nice to meet you as well.

STAN
Thanks for letting me come by. I know Brian has things going
on.

ANGELA
Not at all. We just finished his therapy. Perfect timing.

STAN
Good. That's good.

ANGELA
Come on in. Do you want a drink?

STAN

If you're offering. How about a scotch? But I can pour my own drink.

ANGELA

That'd be great. It's right over there. Let me get Brian for you.

Angela goes to the bedroom and exits, leaving Stan alone. He gets his drink and then strolls around the room. He sees candles and some crystals. He picks one up and looks at it as if it were a complete mystery. Then he picks up a candle and sniffs it. His face contorts.

Angela brings in Brian. He is using a cane. Stan puts down the candle and tries not to give away his obvious reaction to the change in his son's physical appearance.

STAN

Brian!

BRIAN

Dad.

STAN

You look ... good. You look good.

BRIAN

Thanks. I just -- I just use the cane sometimes. When I'm feeling a little ...

STAN

No. Not at all. Of course.

ANGELA

I'm going to leave you two alone.

She exits to the bedroom.

STAN

So, I want to thank you.

BRIAN

For what?

STAN

For letting me stop by. I just -- I mean, I know things ...

BRIAN

Don't worry about it.

STAN

No. I want to say I ... I mean --

BRIAN

I said no worries. Have a seat.

STAN

Yeah, thanks.

He does.

So, how do you feel?

BRIAN

I've been better. But Angela makes it all manageable.

STAN

Really?

BRIAN

Yeah. Couldn't get through an hour let alone a day without her.

STAN

What about at night?

BRIAN

I have a night person that comes, but they're just here to keep watch. Make sure I don't shit myself.

(Stan winces)

Don't worry, Dad. I'm fine.

STAN

Good. I mean, I ...

BRIAN

What's up?

STAN

You're not going to like it. But I ...

BRIAN

Finish the scotch, then tell me.

Stan downs the drink.

STAN

It's about your mother.

BRIAN

What about her?

STAN

She's dying over this.

BRIAN

I'm pretty sure I'm the one dying over this.

STAN

Come on. Don't be that way. Thanksgiving was awful for her. You should have seen her. She was devastated -- you not being there and all.

BRIAN

She send you here? So I can know how devastated she is? She send you to tell me about all her feelings?

STAN

It's not like that.

BRIAN

Then what's it like?

STAN

She just wants to see you. She doesn't understand all the hostility. She doesn't get why you're shutting her out.

BRIAN

If she can't figure that out, she needs therapy. A lot of it.

STAN

You know what I mean. She loves you.

BRIAN

We've been over this.

STAN

I know ... I mean, understand the -- I mean, it's the way she is, but she's still your mother, and you're sick and ...

BRIAN

(Pause. A moment of understanding)

What does she want?

STAN

Christmas Eve. She wants -- we want -- to have Christmas Eve dinner together.

BRIAN

Dad --

STAN

Please, Brian. Give her a chance. She wants to have you, and we'll invite the Goodmans and --

BRIAN

No. Nobody else. And it has to be here.

STAN

Here?

BRIAN

Yes.

STAN

But you never have people over.

Stan notices Brian's body react to stress.

Fine. Here. Of course. Do you want us to bring dinner?

BRIAN

I'll take care of it.

STAN

You got it. Thank you. Thank you for doing this.

BRIAN

It's fine. I mean, you're welcome.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE FOUR

It's Christmas Eve! The apartment is lathered in decorations and looks as though it was professionally done -- which it was. There are candles lit and crystals everywhere.

The doorbell rings. Angela enters the main space from Brian's bedroom, walks to the front door, opens it, and reveals a woman, 70s. This is Katherine in the present. She is stunning and obviously makes a great effort to present herself that way. Everything she is wearing is designer. An eclectic mix of soothing tunes plays in the background.

ANGELA

Katherine. So nice to meet you in person.

KATHERINE

Yes.

She walks in as if she owns the place and hands Angela her coat.

ANGELA

(Beat)

Why don't I take your coat?

KATHERINE

Where's Brian?

ANGELA

Finishing his bath. Can I get you something?

KATHERINE

Maybe I should check on him and make sure he's alright.

ANGELA

I was just there. And assure you, he's just fine.

KATHERINE

You were there? While he's taking a bath? In front of ... I mean, while he's naked?

ANGELA

Yes, I'm often around your naked son. The highlight of my day.

KATHERINE

It just seems inappropriate, that's all.

ANGELA

It's part of the job.

KATHERINE

What does he pay you?

ANGELA

Excuse me?

KATHERINE

How much? I was doing some research about that company of yours, but they don't say.

ANGELA

I'm not really a money person. I'm more interested in his care, not really what I make.

KATHERINE

Everyone who makes a good living says it's not about the money. I'm not trying to be nosey, but since he isn't working anymore, I was just curious as to how he can afford this kind of around-the-clock service.

ANGELA

I don't know anything about that.

KATHERINE

I'm sure. I don't want you to get the wrong idea. I'm thrilled he can afford it. It just seems a waste.

ANGELA

How so?

KATHERINE

Well, for one, I could --

ANGELA

Would you like a drink?

KATHERINE

I suppose that would be fine.

ANGELA

What do you like?

KATHERINE

Something I can see through. And can you turn that music off?
It's wretched.

ANGELA

It's just a variation of songs for meditation. Brian likes
it.

KATHERINE

I don't.

ANGELA

Hey, Lisi. Stop.

Angela pours her a drink and hands
it to her. She takes a sip.

KATHERINE

This is good.

ANGELA

Thank you. I used to be a bartender in a former life.

KATHERINE

And now you do this.

ANGELA

It helped pay the bills while I was in school.

KATHERINE

I see.

ANGELA

Anyway, the food should be here soon and --

KATHERINE

I don't understand why all this is necessary. Why we had to come here? I always have Christmas Eve. Our friends are so disappointed they can't see Brian. And ordering out ... It's so pedestrian.

ANGELA

I understand you're disappointed, but it's becoming difficult for Brian to get in and out of cars. And he wasn't up for a dinner party with a bunch of people. He just wants a quiet evening.

KATHERINE

It's just a few friends. People he's known his entire life! A small gathering. I ask you, what's so wrong with that? They're like family. You know, you may not know this, but Brian is quite the charmer. The way he commands a room is something to behold. He can take your breath away.

The front door opens. It's Stan.
He's also dressed well.

STAN

Have I missed anything?

ANGELA

Nothing at all, Stan. Can I get you something?

STAN

Bourbon. Neat. If that's okay.

She hands him one. He swallows most
of it swiftly.

Oh, thank god. You're a godsend.

ANGELA

Not at all.

STAN

Where's Brian?

KATHERINE

In the bath.

ANGELA

He's getting ready.

STAN

Good. So, Angela, how are you spending the evening?

ANGELA

With my family.

KATHERINE

I thought you didn't have family, dear?

STAN

Kat.

KATHERINE

I'm just saying --

ANGELA

I'm sorry. I wasn't clear. I'm spending the holiday with my family of choice. You know us gays, have to take what we can get, especially during the holidays. We get together to prevent suicide due to the PTSD we have from coming out to our parents. We have T-shirts and everything. Like a club. I'll get you one.

STAN

Well, I'm sure whatever you do is going to be great. We hope you and Tanya have a lovely evening.

ANGELA

Thanks, Stan. I'm sure it will be. If you'll excuse me for a minute, I'm just going to go check in on Brian.

She exits.

STAN

What is wrong with you?

KATHERINE

I don't like the way she parades around this house. Like she owns it or something. These people need to be reminded --

STAN

These people? Jesus, Kat. Are you trying to alienate her? She takes excellent care of our son.

KATHERINE

And how do you know that? And who is this Tanya person?

STAN

Her girlfriend.

KATHERINE

How do you know all of this?

STAN

I ask. I know this may be hard for you to understand, but for us humans, socially connecting to those around us by asking about one's life is considered well-mannered behavior in some quarters of decent society.

KATHERINE

All I'm saying is Brian can do better. If he had a wife to take care of him, none of this would be necessary.

STAN

Are you serious? A wife? Like one of those models he used to date? Yeah, I'm sure their compassion would prove to be transcendent.

KATHERINE

Jennifer would have. I never understood why that didn't work out.

STAN

Stop it.

KATHERINE

Well, I could be --

STAN

Kat, if you want to see your son, you're actually going to have to pretend to be sensitive. You know, by acting like an actual mother.

KATHERINE

You're such a bastard sometimes. Are you suggesting I don't know how to connect with my own son?

STAN

Yes, I am. And if we're calling each other names, I would also suggest you try not being an insufferable bitch.

Before she can retort, Brian enters the room in a wheelchair. Angela pushes him into the room and helps him into his large overstuffed chair. His discomfort is obvious.

BRIAN

Mom. Dad.

(His speech is a tad labored)

Katherine makes her way quickly to him and leans in to give him a kiss. He accepts the gesture. Stan stays where he is. The doorbell rings.

ANGELA

That must be the food.

STAN

I'll help.

They grab the food and set it all down in the kitchen.

ANGELA

Who's hungry?

STAN

I am.

ANGELA

Brian?

BRIAN

Yeah.

Angela makes him a plate and cuts up the food into small bites, then places it on a lap desk so he can eat comfortably from his chair.

KATHERINE

What's that?

BRIAN

What's what?

KATHERINE

Hanging around your neck.

BRIAN

It's a necklace.

KATHERINE

Yes, I understand it's a necklace, but why are you wearing it?

BRIAN

It's rose quartz. It helps my body with stress and pain reduction. Healing. It's also supposed to allow me to let go, be free from my past, and concentrate on the present. Anyway, I'm new to the whole thing, but it works.

KATHERINE

Why would you need to be free from your past?

ANGELA

Alright, everyone. Grab your plates.

KATHERINE

We're not eating at the table?

ANGELA

Not tonight.

KATHERINE

But it's Christmas Eve.

ANGELA

It's difficult --

BRIAN

We're not eating at the table.

STAN

You heard him, Kat. This is fine. Let's grab some food and sit about. It'll be great.

BRIAN

Ang, why don't you take off?

ANGELA

But Sal isn't here yet.

BRIAN

Tanya needs you right now more than I do. Go. Have a great Christmas.

ANGELA

You sure?

KATHERINE

Of course he is. I can take care of anything he needs. Now, Brian, let's get you to this table. Stan, help me.

ANGELA

No, really. Please, Katherine, he needs to stay in the chair. It's much more comfortable for him.

KATHERINE

Ridiculous. Brian, just try.

ANGELA

You know what, I'll text Tanya. I can stay a bit longer. Katherine, why don't I make you a plate? You can sit at the table with Stan, and I'll put some candles there. It'll be lovely. Brian can stay where he is, and I can pour more drinks.

Katherine sits at the table and
allows herself to be served by
Angela.

STAN

I gotta tell you, Angela, whatever Brian is paying you, he should double it. Am I right, or am I right? I bet the massages alone are first-rate. Do they have happy endings?

KATHERINE

What's that supposed to mean?

STAN

I'm just joking around. Right, Angela? You know I'm just joking around.

ANGELA

No worries, Stan. And don't worry, if you ever get on my table, I'll make sure you have time left to complete your own.

KATHERINE

How dare -- I -- so boorish, both of you.

STAN

And you're a prude. I'm just saying you're worth your weight in gold.

They all eat for a moment.
So, how did the doctor's appointment go?

KATHERINE

What doctor's appointment? No one tells me a thing. I could have driven you.

BRIAN

She said my symptoms are progressing a bit faster than she had hoped.

KATHERINE

What does that mean?

BRIAN

It means I'm getting worse.

KATHERINE

All the more reason you should move in with us.

STAN

Kat.

KATHERINE

I'm serious. I think about you all alone in this apartment and --

BRIAN

I'm not alone. I'm well looked after and have everything I need.

KATHERINE

I mean family, Brian. You should be around people that love you.

STAN

Kat.

KATHERINE

I mean, if you had a wife, that would be --

BRIAN

A wife?

KATHERINE

All I'm saying is that if you had married Jennifer when you had the chance, she could be here right now taking care of you instead of this girl.

BRIAN

This girl makes my life bearable.

ANGELA

I think --

BRIAN

No, Ang. I want to do this.

KATHERINE

Do what?

BRIAN

You don't get it.

KATHERINE

What?

STAN

Katherine --

KATHERINE

No. If I'm going to be accused of something, I want to know what it is I did. All I've done is based on what's best for you. I put my entire life on hold so you could have the life you have. You didn't get yourself into that pool at four in the morning. I did that. You didn't arrange for all those meets and sponsorships -- I did that. I made all that possible. I never asked for a thank you. I'm your mother. It was my pleasure to do these things. I love you. All I want is to be able to help you now. Let me help take care of you. Like I always have.

BRIAN

You're pathological.

KATHERINE

(Ignores him)

I just think I deserve an explanation of why you're cutting me out of your life.

STAN

I think we need to change the subject.

KATHERINE

I don't want to change the subject. Don't you see? You're hurting me, Brian. You're breaking my heart just at the time you need me most. I know what to do to make you better. It's not too late. You're just sick. I can help you! I'm your mother!

STAN

Kat!

KATHERINE

I'm not done.

BRIAN

Yes. You. Are.

STAN

Brian, please?

BRIAN

I'm deteriorating before your eyes, and you act as though you can save the day. Do you really think that? Do you think you know what it takes to make this bodywork?

KATHERINE

I think I have every idea. I know what that body is capable of. You have so many years left. I've done the research. And it's not too late for children. There are all these new technologies -- and what scientists can do with unwanted genes now. It's amazing. If you just read what I have you'll -
-

BRIAN

You did research. Let me ask you, Mom. Are these the same people who told you the election was stolen?

You'll never get it. Do you know I'm going to drown? My body will literally drown itself. I will die drowning. How's that for irony?

STAN

Please, Brian. Try not to get upset. She doesn't mean it. You know how she gets. She's --

BRIAN

Rotten. You know, Dad. I used to feel sorry for you. I mean, after all those men she had. I don't know how you forgave her. Then I felt sorry for both of you, actually. You've lived your entire adult lives in denial. You shelter yourself with things hoping that will somehow matter and no one will notice how offensive your lives have become. You live like you still have money, yet you don't have any. You act as though you can stand to be in a room with one another. For whose benefit? Really, isn't all the pretending exhausting?

STAN

Now that's not fair --

BRIAN

It's okay, Dad.

STAN

What's okay?

BRIAN

You don't have to pay me back.

KATHERINE

What are you talking about? Pay him back.

STAN

Nothing.

KATHERINE

Stan. Tell me. What is he talking about?

BRIAN

I give Dad money, Mom. Every month. Like clockwork, so you can keep going to that club of yours, and so he can make it seem like he's still capable of providing for you. You live in a fantasy world. One that I provide for.

Well, as of tonight, that's over. I'm sorry, Dad. I am. I'm just not willing to participate anymore. I can't.

STAN

But Brian --

BRIAN

I know. But it doesn't matter. Not anymore. See, Mom. I don't need to be taken care of. Not when you're the one that has to be.

KATHERINE

How dare you speak to me this way. You wouldn't have anything if it weren't for me. Even if this is true, even if you do what you're saying, I molded you. From the very start. Do you think you would be the man you are today without me? Maybe I didn't coddle you, but I made you a champion. I gave that to you, and you never once gave me credit.

BRIAN

You want credit.

KATHERINE

I want acknowledgment.

BRIAN

That what, you're somehow a good mother?

KATHERINE

You're getting off-topic. I deserve --

BRIAN

You deserve nothing.

KATHERINE

(Devastated)

But ... I'm ...

BRIAN

I think you both need to leave now. Angela, would you please take me to my room?

Looks at his parents one last time.
I believe you can show yourselves out.

KATHERINE

But --

Brian exits, leaving his parents
alone.

KATHERINE

He hates me. He blames me for everything.

STAN

Yes. He does.

KATHERINE

I need to go to him.

STAN

Are you insane? You've done enough.

KATHERINE

Then tomorrow. I'll come to see him tomorrow.

STAN

No. You won't.

The two of them exit through the
front door.

Angela reemerges with her phone
pressed to her ear.

ANGELA

Sal. Merry Christmas! ... look, I know this sounds crazy, but
I'm going to stay. I know. It's just that Brian's having a
rough night. No, really. Go be with your family. Yeah.
Absolutely. Goodnight -- and Merry Christmas.

She hangs up and takes out her
phone and hits the icon for Tanya --
the phone rings.

ANGELA

Tanya, baby. It's me.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE FIVE

Brian's apartment on Christmas day. Angela is awake and sipping coffee at the table.

That's when the front door opens. No knock, no bell. It's TANYA, 30s, a bit older than Angela.

TANYA

Unbelievable.

ANGELA

(Confused out of exhaustion)

I'm sorry.

TANYA

Have you lost all sense of reality? Seriously. You stayed here? All night.

ANGELA

I'm sorry, baby. Tanya, look, I couldn't leave him. But we have all day --

TANYA

Don't start. You put a patient over me. Where was Sal?

ANGELA

I sent him home.

TANYA

Jesus!

ANGELA

You weren't here. I couldn't leave him.

TANYA

And why the hell not?

ANGELA

Because it was a nightmare. His mother. It was awful. I couldn't. And Sal's not equipped --

TANYA

And you are? I'm sorry, when did you become a therapist?

ANGELA

You didn't see him.

TANYA

You have lost all perspective. I want you off this case.

ANGELA

You don't get to do that. You don't run my life.

TANYA

Maybe I should.

ANGELA

You don't get to make that call.

TANYA

I do when you're acting like a child.

ANGELA

I'm acting like a caregiver who gives a shit.

TANYA

You crossed a line with him. You've never done this before. You've never blurred the boundaries with anyone like this.

ANGELA

I know what I'm doing.

TANYA

Then act like it. Call the agency and tell them you need relief. You're supposed to have the next few days off anyway. We have been planning this for months.

ANGELA

I know.

TANYA

This is our shot.

ANGELA

I get it.

TANYA

I mean you're ovulating.

ANGELA

Stop.

TANYA

Baby, come on. We've talked about this.

ANGELA

No. You've talked about it, and I sit there and listen to it like I'm a brainless kid who can't think for myself.

TANYA

Nothing is more important than doing this. Nothing.

ANGELA

Maybe for you. If you want it so bad, you do it.

TANYA

Excuse me?

ANGELA

I'm serious. Oh, I forgot. We can't all have the pleasure.

TANYA

You bitch.

ANGELA

Leave, Tanya. Before I say something I'll regret.

Tanya stares at her with absolute horror. Angela has crossed the line. Tanya leaves. Angela sits on the couch and begins to cry.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE SIX

A few days have passed. Angela folds up a massage table as Brian observes from his chair. He's in sweatpants and a Stanford sweatshirt.

ANGELA

You want anything? Juice?

BRIAN

No, I'm good. I think I can actually feel my foot again.

ANGELA

That's great.

BRIAN

The little things, I guess.

ANGELA

Want to take a walk?

BRIAN

Do you mean go outside in the cold while you wheel me around?
No thank you.

ANGELA

Come on ... fresh air will do you good.

BRIAN

Maybe later.

Angela's phone buzzes. She ignores
it, sending it to voice mail.

(Pause)

We need to talk.

ANGELA

About what?

The phone rings again. Angela takes
the same action.

BRIAN

Tanya.

ANGELA

What about her?

BRIAN

You can't ignore her forever.

ANGELA

Brian.

BRIAN

I know. None of my business.

He looks miserable.

ANGELA

What's wrong?

BRIAN

I ... I've been thinking about something but don't know how to talk about it.

ANGELA

Just say it. Whatever it is. I promise -- it's all good.

BRIAN

Am I ever going to be able to sleep with anyone again? Is it too late?

ANGELA

Where's this coming from?

BRIAN

It's just what my mother said. Can't get it out of my head.

ANGELA

First of all, fuck her. She's not welcome back here until you say so. Second, the answer is no. It's not too late.

BRIAN

Really?

ANGELA

But the time is coming. Not now, but maybe in another six months. Year.

BRIAN

Talk about pressure to perform. Not exactly ready for Tinder, am I?

ANGELA

You have options.

BRIAN

Like what?

ANGELA

Now you have to be open-minded. No judgments. No jokes. Swear.

BRIAN

Jesus, are you selling body parts?

ANGELA

I'm serious.

BRIAN

Okay.

ANGELA

The way I see it you have two options. One, we get you an escort.

(Beat)

Don't look at me like that. I'm not talking about some whore. I'm talking about a professional. Educated. Talented. Discrete. She'll know how to take care of you.

BRIAN

Speaking from experience?

ANGELA

Maybe. Anyway, we interview a few, pick a person you feel comfortable with, and then put her on a schedule. Until ...

BRIAN

Until.

ANGELA

Right. Until. So, we do that. The worst thing is you trying to jerk off and hurt yourself.

BRIAN

Okay.

ANGELA

Okay.

BRIAN

What's the other option?

ANGELA

It's trickier. Messier.

BRIAN

I'm listening.

ANGELA

Do you have an old girlfriend? Anyone you know who might be willing?

BRIAN

Who isn't married? Or who can even stand to be in the same room with me? I don't think so.

ANGELA

There's no one on this entire planet. You're not that awful of a human being.

BRIAN

You never saw me in my prime.

ANGELA

All I'm saying is if there is a person you have a connection with or had a connection with, this is a conversation worth having. Even if they're married. You might be surprised by the reaction.

BRIAN

I don't think I could ask her.

ANGELA

So there is someone.

BRIAN

Someone.

ANGELA

Call her. Invite her over. What's the harm in asking?

BRIAN

(Beat)

Okay. I'll call her.

ANGELA

Good. And after you call, we can go for that walk. But call. Please.

She exits to give him privacy.

BRIAN

He takes out his cell and dials a number. He waits. The person answers.

Jen. It's ... me. Please, don't hang up ... I know ... I know ... I get it ... yes. All I'm asking ... would you mind coming by? Just for a cup of coffee. I have to talk to you about something. It's serious, or I wouldn't have called. Alright. See you soon.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE SEVEN

Lights up, revealing Brian's living room. A stunning woman sits across from Brian. This is JENNIFER, 30s. She is the kind of woman people notice when she enters a room. Any room.

JENNIFER

You can't be serious.

BRIAN

I am.

JENNIFER

Do I look like a rehab fuck?

BRIAN

Jen, It wouldn't be like that.

JENNIFER

It sounds like it.

BRIAN

You're the only person --

JENNIFER

Oh, don't even. The only person? You want someone to fuck, so you think of me!? One, I'm married. Or haven't you thought of that? Two, you made it clear how you felt when we ended things.

BRIAN

I was wrong.

JENNIFER

Goddamn right you were wrong. But now, you suddenly see things differently?

BRIAN

Facing your own mortality will do that to you.

JENNIFER

Oh, no. I'm not going to fall for that.

BRIAN

For what?

JENNIFER

Please, Jen. I'm dying. Please? I'm not a hooker, and I'm not your girlfriend to play with anymore. Fucking mind games. Sanctimonious asshole.

BRIAN

You don't have to be so brutal.

JENNIFER

Are you fucking kidding me right now? You call me for the first time in years, you ask me to come over, you tell me you've got ALS, and then before I can even get my head around that, you ask for this.

BRIAN

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

You should be.

BRIAN

Seriously, I shouldn't have asked.

JENNIFER

You haven't changed. Like AT ALL. It's always about you. Have you given even a second thought to how it would affect me? Have you thought about my feelings? Of course you haven't. My feelings don't count. You're the same. You'll always be the same.

BRIAN

I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

And stop saying that! You're not sorry. Since when have you ever been sorry for anything? You're incapable. Unless you've had some kind of therapeutic breakthrough, which we both know you haven't.

BRIAN

I get it.

JENNIFER

No, you don't. That's the problem. You threw me away like trash, and now you want this.

BRIAN

I didn't throw you away.

JENNIFER

The hell you didn't. We were together three years, and one day, poof, you decide it's over. Once things started getting real, you decide you couldn't handle it. You gave up.

BRIAN

You're the one that said no.

JENNIFER

Because you didn't mean it.

BRIAN

YOU SAID NO!

JENNIFER

Yes, I did.

BRIAN

You gave up.

JENNIFER

You were doing what you thought you needed to be doing. You didn't want it. People who want it fight for it. I was doing you the favor because you're a coward.

BRIAN

Look, this was a bad idea. I don't need this. You got what you wanted. Perfect life. A hedge fund guy, right? Really? A little old for you, isn't he?

JENNIFER

He's kind.

BRIAN

He geriatric!

JENNIFER

He treats me like I deserve to be treated.

BRIAN

I never treated you in any way other than like the person I loved.

JENNIFER

But it wasn't healthy. None of it was. Jesus.

BRIAN

I don't think he's coming.

JENNIFER

(She laughs)

Look, Brian.

BRIAN

It's fine.

JENNIFER

I loved you.

BRIAN

I know.

JENNIFER

And you just --

BRIAN

I know. You can go. I get it.

JENNIFER

She gets up, ready to leave.
I don't think you do.

BRIAN

You'd be surprised how your perspective changes.

JENNIFER

Maybe. But my answer is still no. I can't do this for you. I just can't. It took me too long to get over you. I can't put myself through it again.

BRIAN

I know. I should never have asked you to. I'm so sorry.

JENNIFER

(Pause)

I believe you.

Jennifer goes to the front door and
opens it.

Brian? I hope ...

BRIAN

Goodbye, Jennifer.

She leaves, closing the door behind
her. Brian is alone.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE EIGHT

*Later that day, Brian and Angela
sit. He is in his chair. She is
on the couch.*

BRIAN

I should've expected it. I haven't even seen her in two years. No contact whatsoever.

ANGELA

How long were you two together?

BRIAN

Long enough.

ANGELA

We don't have to talk about her.

BRIAN

No. It's fine. She's actually the one person I thought I would be with. Looking back on it. Then I screwed it all up. My mother was pushing for marriage. She wouldn't shut up about it. But with Jen traveling the world as a model and me and my business, it wasn't conducive to settling down. She was something to behold, though. She was actually on the cover of Vogue once. I did love her ... in my way. But I never understood what that meant until recently. I didn't deserve her. I treated her like some trophy and not the person to spend a life with. I should have done anything I could have to marry that woman. Even if it meant changing who and what I was.

ANGELA

I don't think you mean that.

BRIAN

I do. I really do. My life is a mess. With her, maybe it would have been different.

ANGELA

Look, I'm not judging her, but how you tell it, she wasn't exactly making it easy on you. Sure, you were probably a horrible dick back then, but something deep inside you knew you needed better.

BRIAN

You sound so sure.

ANGELA

That's because I am. There is nothing wrong with living a kind of life where you deserve peace of mind.

Angela's phone buzzes. She sends it to voicemail.

BRIAN

Tanya?

ANGELA

Yeah.

BRIAN

It's been days. Don't you think you should actually have a conversation with her?

ANGELA

I don't want to talk about it.

(Pause)

So, it's on with option one, and it can't wait.

BRIAN

Fine. I trust you. Just nothing sleazy. I can't handle it.

ANGELA

I'll take care of it.

BRIAN

So what are you going to do for New Year's Eve?

ANGELA

I don't know yet. Tanya and I had all these plans for this week, but since that didn't happen, I honestly have no idea.

BRIAN

You're welcome to hang here. Sal is fine, but I'd much rather --

ANGELA

I can't.

BRIAN

That was a fast rejection.

ANGELA

I'm serious.

BRIAN

Okay.

ANGELA

It's just not appropriate. Christmas was a mistake.

BRIAN

I didn't ask you to stay.

ANGELA

I know you didn't. All I'm saying is that you're my patient, and I need to --

BRIAN

Okay.

ANGELA

I don't think I've done a good job explaining.

The phone again.

BRIAN

Explaining what?

ANGELA

Boundaries. I'm letting myself get too involved in your personal life.

BRIAN

Well, considering I'm wearing crystals and you're trying to set me up with hookers, I would say you're being too involved is way past us.

ANGELA

I know --

The phone. Again. She sends it to voicemail.

I don't want you to think --

BRIAN

What's going on?

ANGELA

What do you mean?

BRIAN

No, I mean, why aren't you answering the phone? What are you afraid of?

ANGELA

This is what I'm talking about. You are getting in my shit, and it's not okay.

BRIAN

All I'm saying is that Tanya obviously wants to talk to you, and you should answer the phone.

ANGELA

It's none of your business.

BRIAN

Just answer.

The phone rings again. Angela begins to lose it.

ANGELA

Stop. I can't.

BRIAN

Can't what?

ANGELA

Deal with this. Look, are you hungry? I'll make some lunch.

BRIAN

I'm fine. Answer the phone.

ANGELA

Let's watch a movie -- anything you want.

The phone buzzes incessantly. She sends it to voicemail.

BRIAN

She needs you.

ANGELA

And you don't?

BRIAN

That's not what I'm saying. What are you trying to prove? That you don't have a personal life? That you can just shut her out? The universe can't be turned off because of lavender-scented candles. Talk to me. I have the capacity to listen.

ANGELA

You can't be serious.

BRIAN

About what?

ANGELA

You want to listen? Since when do you give a shit about anyone else.

BRIAN

Excuse me?

ANGELA

You know what, I need a break. I'm going to take --

BUZZ!

BRIAN

Just answer her.

ANGELA

NO!

BRIAN

Why?

ANGELA

Because all she wants to talk about is having a baby!

BRIAN

That's wonderful.

ANGELA

Well, I don't want a baby.

BRIAN

Then don't have one.

ANGELA

I mean, since when did having a child become some kind of social mandate for a woman to reach self-awareness?

BRIAN

I don't think it's a prerequisite for anything.

ANGELA

You don't have a kid. I mean, look at your mom. My mom. I mean, if you're looking for case studies, I give you exhibits A and B.

BRIAN

We're not talking about them. We're talking about you and Tanya.

ANGELA

I'm not done living, Brian.

BRIAN

Who says you are?

ANGELA

I'm --

BUZZ!

Instead of sending the call to voicemail, Angela sends the phone clear across the room.

FUCK THIS!

BRIAN

Calm down.

ANGELA

Stop telling me what to do!

BRIAN

If you don't want a child, then don't have one. Have one later.

ANGELA

What's the point? Then it's just pushing off the inevitable and more questions. Like why aren't they having a kid? And when people say they, they mean me. The fucking judgment!

BRIAN

No one will judge you.

ANGELA

They all will. They do now!

BRIAN

Since when do you care what other people think?

ANGELA

What? Are you serious? Since when do you care about anything else? All you do is care. This whole existence you've created for yourself is about what people think of you.

BRIAN

That's enough.

ANGELA

No! *Look at me, everyone. I have a gold medal. I have a million-dollar apartment. I have a Tesla!* How's it been driving lately, Brian? Getting a good charge?

BRIAN

I think you're finished.

ANGELA

You need to get something clear. We're not friends. You're my job. Alright. MY JOB!

BRIAN

Fine.

ANGELA

You don't --

BRIAN

I said that's enough.

ANGELA

Oh, are we done? Good. Now, what would you like to do next? Talk about how wounded you are.

BRIAN

Fuck you.

ANGELA

I don't need this.

BRIAN

Just curious, what happened to all that "I'm the best" bullshit?

ANGELA

The hell with that? I'll have the agency send someone else.

BRIAN

Oh, you're quitting.

ANGELA

I need out of here.

BRIAN

There's the door.

ANGELA

You don't get it. I. Can't. Leave! I'm stuck here.

BRIAN

I'll call SaL.

ANGELA

I have a better idea. Let's call Katherine. I bet she'd love to come in and rescue you and wipe your ass. Maybe she'll be better at it than me.

BRIAN

You've crossed the line.

ANGELA

Good.

BRIAN

Get out!

ANGELA

You can't be left alone. I AM STUCK! Stuck with Tanya. Stuck with you. Stuck with this fucking life. It never ends.

(Pause)

She picks up a candle and throws it, making a mess.

BRIAN

You're fired.

ANGELA

Fuck you, Brian. I'm done.

Angela crosses to the front door
and slams it shut. Brian goes after
her but falls violently to the
floor. He defecates himself.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF ACT

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

Two days after the incident, we find Brian and Angela in familiar positions -- Angela on the couch and Brian in his chair. But the living room has gone through a bit of a transformation. There is more medical equipment.

BRIAN

What?

ANGELA

I'm here to apologize.

BRIAN

Fine, you've apologized. Now get out.

ANGELA

Please. I just need to ...

BRIAN

To what? There is nothing you have to say that will matter.

ANGELA

Let me say my piece, and I'll never bother you again.

BRIAN

What could you possibly have to say that I would want to hear? You left me.

ANGELA

You fired me.

BRIAN

And you're a child.

ANGELA

I called the agency the second I left.

BRIAN

Am I supposed to thank you? It took them thirty minutes to find someone, and when they did get here, they found me on the ground having shit myself.

ANGELA

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

You're pathetic.

ANGELA

I have something for you.

Angela reaches into her bag and pulls out another necklace with a stone at the bottom.

It's Rhodonite. It resonates with the energies of love and compassion. It activates the heart and throat chakras, not only for you but for those around you.

BRIAN

I don't want it.

ANGELA

No. Let me finish. It helps bring acceptance and peace to fraught relationships.

BRIAN

We don't have a relationship. I'm your job. Remember?

ANGELA

What I did -- the things I said -- they were horrible.

BRIAN

Yes, they were.

ANGELA

I didn't mean any of it. I was just --

BRIAN

You left me. I was completely vulnerable. Anything could have happened. Your explanations mean nothing.

ANGELA

I have things I need to tell you.

BRIAN

I'm sorry. Are we sharing now? I thought you didn't do that. Boundaries and all.

ANGELA

Just let me explain. It's not just about the baby. She wants to marry me.

BRIAN

How utterly awful for you.

ANGELA

Please.

BRIAN

Please, what? You know something? Writhing in your own shit makes you see things a bit clearer. Makes me want to say things too. Do you know the agency contacted my mother? My MOTHER! She came here and saw me like that.

ANGELA

I know.

BRIAN

MY MOTHER!

ANGELA

I --

BRIAN

Just leave.

ANGELA

Five minutes. That's all I ask.

BRIAN

Five minutes. Then you leave. And you take your fucking candles with you.

ANGELA

Agreed.

Angela sits forward. Leaning in. She has something monumental to say, and this is her only chance to say it.

BRIAN

I'm listening.

ANGELA

I'm not good.

BRIAN

Not good?

ANGELA

I'm a bad person.

BRIAN

Are you a meth dealer or something?

ANGELA

I'm dirty.

BRIAN

What are you talking about?

ANGELA

When Tanya and I first got together -- I was -- I don't know how to explain it ... it was like we were cosmically connected. I knew from the moment we met she was the person I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. Anyway, after a couple of months together, we went on this ski trip with a bunch of friends. Those first couple of days were magical. We stayed up talking -- had amazing sex -- held each other -- just being there with each other confirmed for me everything I felt about her. She was the one.

Angela changes. Her body goes stiff. It's noticeable.

But it was that third night. There was this one guy -- he came alone. A friend of a friend. Anyway, we all got pretty wasted that night. There were drugs: mushrooms, pot, ex too. It was hardcore. Anyway, I was in another galaxy. Mostly everyone was passed out except for the guy. His name was Harry. Like Prince Harry. That's how I remember the name. So he comes up to me and asks all these questions. Like what it's like to only like women, and do I miss fucking guys, and I'm like, who are you? What the fuck? I couldn't formulate a sentence, and I'm thinking, I need to get away from this guy. Then he says I needed to remember what real dick feels like. That he might be able to change my mind.

It didn't take him much effort. I couldn't fight -- I was just ... well ... I couldn't. He hurt me. I remember that. And I remember his face, still to this day. I can't ever get it out of my mind. After, I went to the shower and sobbed on the floor. I stayed locked in there until the morning when I heard other people. When I came out, he was gone. He just left, not telling anyone. Then my mind started to race. Maybe I made this happen. I was so fierce that night. I flirted with everyone and was all over the place. And I'm thinking maybe I led him on. Maybe I made this happen. I couldn't wrap my head around it. Then, we go home. I say nothing. Just go about our lives. Then I'm late. Can you believe it? That motherfucker got me pregnant. And all I could think was I was holding this **thing** in me. I felt so violated. It was like getting raped all over again. So I got it taken care of. Easy enough -- at least back then.

BRIAN

What did Tanya say?

ANGELA

She doesn't know. About any of it. Don't you get it? That's why I don't want to have a baby. I led him on. Then he raped me. Then I had to get an abortion. Good people don't have to deal with things like that.

BRIAN

Ang --

ANGELA

No. Stop. Don't tell me it's not my fault.

BRIAN

It's not.

(Pause)

Brian gets up and moves to the couch. It takes a great amount of effort.

ANGELA

I can't have a child. I can't. It's like I'm infected. My Uterus is dirty.

BRIAN

You need to talk to Tanya. What happened to you is unthinkable. But that has nothing to do with you leaving me.

ANGELA

I know I just ... I want you to understand that I was triggered or something. I was having all these emotions, and I didn't know how to handle them. You deserve someone you can completely rely on. What I did to you was unforgivable, and I don't expect you to forgive me. I just couldn't stop. It was like I was looking down at myself. I couldn't stop anything.

BRIAN

I know.

ANGELA

I ...

BRIAN

So what would you like me to do now?

ANGELA

Nothing. I just needed you to know. To try and explain things.

BRIAN

Okay.

ANGELA

They fired me, you know.

BRIAN

I know.

ANGELA

Sal will take really good care of you.

BRIAN

He's not you.

ANGELA

Well, he's not a candle guy, but --

BRIAN

Ang, do you want your job back?

ANGELA

They fired me.

BRIAN

Do you want your job back?

ANGELA

I would do anything.

BRIAN

Okay. First, call Tanya. Tell her to come over. I'll give you your privacy. Tell her everything. Then, if she thinks it's okay, ask her to bring your things.

ANGELA

I ...

BRIAN

Say you agree.

ANGELA

I agree. But I don't understand ... I can come back? You'll give me my job back?

BRIAN

You had your job back ten minutes ago.

ANGELA

I don't know what to say.

BRIAN

Say you'll never do anything like that again.

ANGELA

Never. I'll never leave you.

She hugs him. Connection.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE TWO

Brian sits with a WOMAN, 30s. She is gorgeous.

This is SYLVIA, a sex worker. She has the brains and the looks.

SYLVIA

You look terrified.

BRIAN

No. I'm not. I just, it's been a while.

SYLVIA

I know this can be scary. It won't be. I promise.

BRIAN

I know.

SYLVIA

What can I do to help you relax?

Sylvia moves closer to him. Not sexually, but in a way a person would try to help another person feel more at ease.

We don't have to do anything. We can just talk for a while.

BRIAN

Really?

SYLVIA

Really.

BRIAN

But that kind of defeats the purpose.

SYLVIA

I've spoken to Angela. I know what you need.

BRIAN

Enlighten me.

SYLVIA

Companionship.

BRIAN

Companionship?

SYLVIA

We can talk about anything you'd like.

BRIAN

I'm not sure that's what I need.

SYLVIA

What do you think you need?

BRIAN

I ...

SYLVIA

Brian, let's just take it a moment at a time. Angela says you like baths. That they make you feel better.

BRIAN

They do.

SYLVIA

Why don't I give you a bath? Nothing scary about that, is there?

BRIAN

I guess that sounds okay.

SYLVIA

And after the bath, I'll give you a massage -- and we can go from there. Nothing more needs to happen. The only things that happen are between consenting adults. We can do whatever you want.

BRIAN

I'm sorry.

SYLVIA

For what?

BRIAN

I'm not usually this indecisive.

SYLVIA

So I've heard. May I take off your shirt?

He nods in the affirmative, and she does.

And these?

(She motions to his pants. He
nods yes)

Good. Follow me.

BRIAN

Wait. Can you hug me?

Sylvia smiles at him. She moves her
hair from one side of her head to
another, and she moves closer. So
close now. She takes off her shirt.
No equivocation. She embraces him
tenderly.

You're a good hugger.

SYLVIA

I'm good at a lot of things.

BRIAN

Can I kiss you?

SYLVIA

Brian. You can do anything you want.

He moves in to kiss her, and with a
passion he didn't know he still
had, using energy he didn't know
still existed, they ride a wave of
bliss.

BRIAN

You're a good kisser.

SYLVIA

Let's go take that bath.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE THREE

*It is now early summer. The room
is also filled with crystals and
lit candles as they glow and
shimmer with dancing flames.*

Music plays as Angela and Brian sit sharing a joint.

They are lit and playing a game of "Never have I ever." This has clearly been going on for a while.

ANGELA

Okay, I have one.

BRIAN

No more. I'm getting too high.

ANGELA

No such thing, pansy ass. Never have I ever slept with more than two people at the same time.

Brian takes a drag.

Spill it.

BRIAN

It was right after Harvard, and I was in New York working my ass off. Seventy hours a week easy. One night, I went to this club with a buddy, and there was this girl. Off the charts hot. So we hit it off, and after a while, we go back to her place. But what I didn't know was she called in reinforcements. There were two more girls waiting for us. Best night of my life.

ANGELA

Dude, you won a gold medal.

BRIAN

Totally different. I only slept with two women that night.

(He laughs in hysterics)

Now you. Let's see ... never have I ever ...

(He's too high to come up with something)

Never have I ever ...

ANGELA

Yes?

BRIAN

Wiped a grown man's ass?

ANGELA

Three hours ago, dude. You were there. Come on. Be imaginative.

BRIAN

Fine, never have I ever been in love with a man?

She takes the joint and takes a deep drag, then expels the smoke from her lips.

Holy shit. I was just joking!

ANGELA

I am human, Brian.

BRIAN

But still, I wasn't expecting you to say yes.

ANGELA

What can I tell you? I'm a woman of the world.

BRIAN

Tell. All.

ANGELA

It was right after I graduated from nursing school. I was looking for work, but before I started, I wanted to travel. I had just been through a brutal breakup, and I just wanted a summer to figure shit out. I got in my car and headed west. Alone. All by myself and every song the Indigo Girls and Tori Amos ever recorded. It was amazing. Met people from all over. Real people. I camped out. Slept under the stars. It was the great American experience. I made a couple of friends along the way, and we decided to go to Sante Fe. Great town. Anyway, we'd been there about a week when we went to this bar. After a while, I went to get some drinks, and the bartender started chatting me up. This bookish guy -- cute, not hot, but there was something about him. A charisma. What started out as an easy conversation turned into something way more. We talked for hours. He was about to start his grad degree and was just spending the summer trying to make extra money. We closed the place down and we just sat outside. He talked to me about philosophy. He told me about Martin Heidegger and his beliefs about the nature and time around us to develop who we are as beings and help us free our minds.

And Sartre, who believed that human beings are fundamentally free and must create their own meaning in life and that our choices determine our destiny. The point is he enthralled me. Then he talked to me about different indigenous cultures and their use of crystals and meditation and connection to body, mind, and spirit.

BRIAN

Crystals.

ANGELA

Yes. Crystals. I couldn't be without him. For days we just talked about everything. I let him in. Like completely. Told him about every aspect of my life. For the first time, I felt seen.

(Pause)

I fell for him. Hard. Which I didn't understand. I was gay. And I'm telling him this, and he said -- and I'll never forget this -- that we are never one hundred percent anything. We exist in degrees. It made sense. Whatever I was feeling was not one hundred percent gay. We made love that night. I'd never felt that kind of connection. It was a spiritual experience. But then he left, and I decided to come back home and find a job. Whatever I was looking for, I found it in him. He transformed me. Then I met Tanya about a year later. She showed me an entirely different kind of love. Not better. Not worse. Just different. All I know is the night I spent with him is a night I will take with me forever. I cherish that night we had.

BRIAN

What's his name?

ANGELA

Aaron.

BRIAN

He sounds wonderful.

ANGELA

He is. Was. Sometimes I think about him. But that's for another life. But if I was to have a child, I would want it to be from a man like him.

BRIAN

I wish I had an experience like that.

ANGELA

Jen? Not even for a night?

BRIAN

I wasn't equipped. Not capable of that kind of intimacy with her or anyone.

(Brian starts to cry)

ANGELA

I didn't mean to upset you.

BRIAN

You're not.

ANGELA

Brian, I need you to understand something. You are loved.

BRIAN

I don't see a line of people willing to express that emotion, do you?

ANGELA

It's not like that. The universe loves you. I know it. I can feel it in this room. You are so loved.

She moves from where she sits and goes to him and kisses him on the cheek, holding both hands on each side of his face.

Loved.

(Then something remarkable. Understanding flows through Angela.)

She kisses him on his lips. Perhaps platonically. But then a shift. It happens. They have the most intimate of moments as they connect with no words at all.

BRIAN

Would you hold me?

She does. The emotion overwhelms them both, until ...

ANGELA

Come on. Why don't I give you a bath.

She carefully helps him up and leads him to the bedroom, hand in hand. They exit.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE FOUR

It's Fall. We find Angela and Katherine in the living room. Angela is showing as she is towards the end of her first trimester.

Katherine looks wounded. Desperate. She needs something.

ANGELA

I know this has been difficult for you.

KATHERINE

How could you?

ANGELA

I can imagine.

KATHERINE

He won't even talk to me.

ANGELA

He's agreed to see you today.

KATHERINE

That's only because Stan begged him.

ANGELA

Christmas was --

KATHERINE

Almost a year ago.

ANGELA

I know.

KATHERINE

All I want is to be here. Somehow. In any way possible. I'll do anything.

ANGELA

I'm not saying that's not possible. He wants to see you -- that's why you're here.

KATHERINE

Then can you get him? Or should I go in there?

ANGELA

Not yet. First, I need to go over some ground rules.

KATHERINE

Rules?

ANGELA

Rules. First. No talk about women or children or wives. Not even a hint of it.

KATHERINE

Alright.

ANGELA

Nothing about his work life. He doesn't want to know. He doesn't need to be thinking about jobs that he doesn't have anymore, or how anyone else is doing.

KATHERINE

(She nods)

ANGELA

If you have questions, bring them to me, not him. Don't burden him with anything -- it only causes him stress, and stressors are the one thing we can't have.

KATHERINE

I understand.

ANGELA

Another thing. I'm in charge, Katherine. Can you live with that?

KATHERINE

Anything you say. I just want to see my son.

ANGELA

I want that for you too. If you respect the rules, follow my lead, and keep your opinions to yourself, it might be nice to have you here. But if I think you cause him harm in any way, I will kick you out myself.

KATHERINE

Agreed.

ANGELA

Okay. Then let me go get him.

Angela exits and Katherine looks terrified. She's been waiting for this moment. Brian enters in a wheelchair. He is losing his battle.

KATHERINE

Oh, Brian!

BRIAN

Mom. Have a seat.

KATHERINE

Thank you.

BRIAN

Ang. I think we're alright.

ANGELA

I'll go for a little walk.

She exits, and the two are left alone. Mother and son at last.

KATHERINE

She's showing.

BRIAN

Yeah. She and Tanya are having a baby.

KATHERINE

That's wonderful.

BRIAN

Really?

KATHERINE

Yes. I'm happy for them.

BRIAN

That's nice to hear. Surprising, actually.
(Silence)

KATHERINE

You must think I'm a monster.

BRIAN

What I think doesn't matter anymore.

KATHERINE

I've been seeing a therapist. Three times a week since Christmas. I've been committed to changing.

BRIAN

I didn't know that. Dad didn't say anything.

KATHERINE

I told him not to. I wanted to tell you. She's helped me see so much. It's like this veil has been lifted. I see who I am. I see what I've done. Oh, Brian, I'm so ashamed.

BRIAN

Don't.

KATHERINE

What do you mean?

BRIAN

You don't have to confess all your transgressions to me. I know about most of it anyway. I lived through it.

KATHERINE

I've made horrible mistakes.

BRIAN

Have you come to apologize?

KATHERINE

For starters.

BRIAN

Do you even know what you'd be apologizing for?

KATHERINE

Too many things to mention, but I'd like to start with this. I'm sorry that you had to be raised by a woman who couldn't love her son for who he was. When you were twelve, I knew you were extraordinary. You could have done anything you wanted. But I couldn't get you out of that pool. Serenity. That's what you used to say to me. It was the only place where you could truly control your environment. I've come to realize, recently, that you loved that because I gave you none. Oh, I've been so awful. So cruel.

BRIAN

That's some insight.

KATHERINE

There's more. So much more -- I hardly know where to start. I've hurt you ... for so long. I see that now. In therapy, I've come to realize I was just wicked. Out of control. I resented you for so long. You were given these gifts, and when you didn't need me anymore, I just lashed out. I know I wasn't so wonderful before that, but since, I've just been so cruel.

BRIAN

Mom, what do you want from me?

KATHERINE

I just want to be able to see you. Spend some time with you. We can do anything you want. I can just sit here while you watch a ballgame or just be with you while you read. You don't even have to talk to me.

BRIAN

What purpose does any of that serve? Just the way you treat Angela ... I won't have it.

KATHERINE

I know. I've been disgusting. I can't promise that I will suddenly be perfect and not say the wrong thing, but I'll try. I'd like to think I've gained some self-awareness.

BRIAN

You judge. That's what you do.

KATHERINE

Please. Just give me a chance. Before ...

BRIAN

(Silence. Considers)

Before it's too late?

KATHERINE

Yes.

BRIAN

You really started therapy?

KATHERINE

Yes.

BRIAN

And you're committed to staying in it?

KATHERINE

Three times a week.

BRIAN

And you feel that you can respect me for who I am now?

KATHERINE

(Tears begin)

Of course. I've always respected you. I'm trying to let you know I want to love you. The right way. A healthy way.

BRIAN

A year ago, I would have said you were incapable.

KATHERINE

All I'm asking for is a chance.

Brian puts his hands around the base of his necklace. He breathes in and exhales calmly.

BRIAN

I have an idea. It's almost time for my lunch. Why don't we start with that? See how things go?

KATHERINE

(In tears)

She goes to him and kisses him.
Thank you.

BRIAN
Don't thank me. It's just lunch.

KATHERINE
It's a start. And that's all I wanted.

They embrace.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE FIVE

Much time has passed. Brian is essentially paralyzed from the neck down. He still has use of his voice but little else. He and Angela are playing a version of Scrabble that allows him to do so by using his eyes on a device hooked up to his wheelchair. Very high-tech. Lisi plays music. Angela is now VERY pregnant. Third trimester.

BRIAN
Do you know what this song is about?

ANGELA
No?

BRIAN
It's a metaphor for failed relationships.

ANGELA
How lovely. Hey Lisi, turn off.

The music stops.

BRIAN
Are you actually ever going to make a move?

ANGELA
Patience.

BRIAN

Seriously, before I die.

ANGELA

You took like seven minutes on your last turn.

BRIAN

You're such a pain in the ass.

ANGELA

There. "Strange"

BRIAN

Eight points. That's all you got after all that, is eight points.

ANGELA

All I have is 1 point letters. Come on, let's watch a movie. Lord of the Rings trilogy -- extended versions. That's like 12 hours of entertainment right there.

BRIAN

Sure.

Katherine enters. She is holding groceries and heads to the kitchen.

KATHERINE

Who won?

BRIAN

Not her.

KATHERINE

Way to represent the family.

ANGELA

Let me help you with those.

KATHERINE

Not on your life. I promised Tanya you wouldn't be lifting or doing anything else strenuous. Brian, are you hungry?

They both turn and notice Brian is asleep.

How does he do that?

ANGELA

At this stage, it'll be a constant. He'll go from awake and talking to asleep in seconds. Like turning off the lights.

KATHERINE

At least he gets his rest. And you need to rest now too.

ANGELA

I --

KATHERINE

No. You need to get off your feet.

ANGELA

But Brian --

KATHERINE

I'm perfectly capable of watching him sleep.

ANGELA

Thank you.

Angela exits, leaving Katherine
alone.

Hey Lisi, play Katherine's playlist.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE SIX

*Angela examines Brian. Brian
looks like a man who is dying.*

ANGELA

It's pneumonia. Brian, do you understand what I'm telling you?

BRIAN

Yes.

ANGELA

Brian?

BRIAN

I know.

ANGELA

I'm sorry.

BRIAN

Don't do that. Not now. No pity.

Angela nods her head.

Besides, I'm glad I can see it coming. It allows me to say goodbye. Who knew I would have people to say goodbye to?

ANGELA

What can I do?

BRIAN

There is one thing I would like you to help me arrange.

ANGELA

Anything.

BRIAN

Get out your laptop. I have some things I want to say.

LIGHTS OUT.

SCENE EIGHT

The apartment is now clear of all medical equipment, and moving boxes are everywhere. No longer pregnant, Angela sits packing a box, the gold medal in her hands. There is a baby carrier sitting on the coffee table.

Katherine enters.

KATHERINE

Where do you want this one?

ANGELA

That goes in the donation pile.

KATHERINE

Do you need to rest for a bit?

ANGELA

We have too much to do. This place needs to be completely cleared out. The realtor needs it clean. Like really clean.

KATHERINE

Well, we're almost there. Tanya is putting the last of the "keep" boxes in the car. All that's left is the furniture.

The baby wakes. Cooing sounds fill the space.

ANGELA

And I thought he'd nap longer.

She goes to pick up her son. He's still a newborn, and she holds him comfortably to her chest.

KATHERINE

Oh, he's so lovely. Beautiful and healthy. The way you hope every baby should be.

ANGELA

Do you want to hold him?

KATHERINE

Me? I don't know. It's been so long ...

ANGELA

It's fine.

Angela settles her son into Katherine's arms.

There you go.

KATHERINE

Oh, my, what a beautiful boy. No, really, I mean it.

ANGELA

Thank you.

KATHERINE

You know, ever since the funeral, I've tried texting or calling you. I just didn't know what to say.

ANGELA

You know you can always call me.

KATHERINE

I know, I just -- well, it's been ... hard.

ANGELA

(Beat)

Would you like to feed him? It's his lunchtime.

KATHERINE

That would be lovely.

ANGELA

Here you go.

She hands Katherine the bottle. The
baby accepts it.

KATHERINE

There you go, sweet boy.

(The two of them just sit,
letting the space fill in
silence)

I have something I wanted to say to you. I just couldn't. My
therapist says I just need to trust my feelings. Be
authentic.

ANGELA

That sounds like good advice. And a good start.

KATHERINE

At the time, it did. I mean, it does, but now that I'm here
with you, it seems so much harder.

ANGELA

Whatever you have to say, I promise I'll just listen. If
that's what you want.

KATHERINE

(She takes a moment to let
this in. She is calm)

I've been angry for so long. I was never meant to be a
mother. I knew that almost right away. I just didn't have
that urge. I thought I was defective.

Stan gave me what I wanted -- a nurse and then a nanny to care for Brian while he was young. I used to go everywhere. Without him, of course. I'd go to New York and take in a couple of shows and shop. Then I'd go to Miami for a couple of weeks. Oh, the men. Then the drinking. And when that wasn't enough, the pills. I'm so ashamed. I lost all this time. I could have been with him instead I found myself in a Betty Ford clinic. We called it a vacation, but people talked. People always talk. When I got out, I needed a purpose. It was about then that Brian showed true talent. I poured everything I had into that. Not into him ... into his talent.

(Pause)

I just had a breakthrough -- I mean in therapy. I've come to realize that for so much of his life, I treated that boy as a commodity. I sold him. And I took. Oh, did I take. Any chance I had to stake a claim, I would. Then, suddenly he grew up and didn't need me anymore. Not that he ever did. I used to hit him. Did you know that? Only a couple of times, but I did. He told you that, didn't he? Of course he did. I was drunk most of the time or strung out on pills, but there was no excuse. Then or now. I was horrible. Rotten.

ANGELA

But look how much you've changed.

KATHERINE

Not enough. Not in time.

ANGELA

Katherine, you have come so far.

KATHERINE

But how could he ever forgive me for what I did to him?

ANGELA

It doesn't matter how, but he did.

KATHERINE

How can you know for sure?

ANGELA

That's because I am. Would you mind if I read you something?

Angela reaches into her bag and reveals a folded piece of paper. She opens it.

I just want you to listen. Can you do that for me?

KATHERINE

(She nods)

ANGELA

Angela begins to read. After the first few lines, Brian, in full strength of body and mind, comes into a lighted spot on stage. He takes over the monologue from her.

Dear Ang. What do you say when you know you are about to die? I thought I might be overwhelmed by a sense of clarity. Based on the number of crystals I'm wearing you'd think I would be given wisdom beyond my understanding. I just don't think they work that way. Anyway, I want to share with you some of what's on my mind. Based on what the doctor says, I have days at this point, so there seems to be somewhat of a deadline here. I'm stalling. The point.

(Pause)

Looking back upon my life -- the totality of it all -- it seems so wasted. I spent most of it being fairly repugnant. Then I get this diagnosis. And then I met you, and, well, things changed. You were right. ALS is a killer. It's devastating. All that control I cherished over my life -- gone. But I gained. I may have lost dignity over how I was able to care for myself, but I acquired a sense of self I have never experienced before. Looking back on it, the first day we met, I was so lost. I was gripped by fear. It consumed me. Anger too. I was -- for lack of a better word -- swimming in it. But all that began to evaporate. I changed. I changed because you opened my mind to the possibility that perhaps there is a place for my consciousness to go after I die. Maybe part of me does live on. Of course, if it doesn't, I will in other ways. And that means everything.

(Beat)

Listen to me. I know you're scared. Being a new mother is going to be hard, but I think I understand your fear. You are not your mother, and Tanya is not Jen. You are loved. You are so loved. I realize I never really had that in my life.

Maybe because I didn't understand how to reciprocate or understand what it meant to truly let someone in. Until now. Ang, please, promise me you will do one thing for me: fuck fear. Fuck the insecurities of what might cause you anxiety about the future, and embrace the fact that you have this gift of life. God, I sound like I'm preaching. I'll stop. What I really want to say is thank you. You got through to me when no one in this world ever has. You made me see how to forgive and allow myself the freedom to expand my understanding of self. You are a remarkable human, and with Tanya and your child, I have no doubt that you will live a full and meaningful life. As for me, as I sit here in this chair with the inability to move, I actually find myself grateful. Because I can see. I finally see that I'm leaving this Earth, having given something back. I also have come to know who I am, or better said, who I was always capable of being. Maybe it's the vulnerability that arrives when you face death that I'm feeling that is giving me the strength to admit all of this now. Who knows? All I can say is that I feel free. So as I face the inevitability of my own mortality, I see that I want to leave this existence without malice toward anyone. Please tell my mother that I love her and that I appreciate the time we have spent together these last few months. The effort she has made to heal her own wounds is inspiring. And tell her thank you. Thank her for giving me a life so in the end I could understand how to live it, even if it was at the time I was losing it. Anyway, that's all I wanted to say. Thank you for changing the trajectory of my life. In the end, it was you who made all the difference. Love, Brian.

The light on Brian dissipates, and he exits, leaving the women alone on stage.

KATHERINE

I don't know what to say.

ANGELA

You don't have to say anything.

KATHERINE

Those words. I don't ... I ...

ANGELA

I know.

(Silence)

KATHERINE

You know I have nothing left of him. Nothing.

Katherine looks down at the baby's
face.

He's angelic. Truly. My god --

(Realization)

His eyes. Angela, who's the father?

ANGELA

Why do you ask?

KATHERINE

I'm sorry. It's inappropriate, and I'm intruding.

ANGELA

Not at all. The father was a dear friend. A man I loved very
much.

KATHERINE

Was?

(Understanding)

Tears flow.

Oh, god.

ANGELA

Katherine, you are not alone. My home is always open for you
to be a part of Bryson's life.

KATHERINE

Katherine holds the child close.

She is overcome.

I won't ever let you regret it for a moment. I will cherish
this child.

ANGELA

Angela puts her arm around her
child's grandmother.

I know.

(Pause)

Hey Lisi. Play Bryson's playlist.

The song "Let the Sunshine" from
the Musical Hair fills the space.
The two sit in peace as the music
covers them with joy -- for now,
there is only hope.

LIGHTS OUT.

END OF PLAY