

THE GENERATOR

A Play in One Act
(Inspired by True Events)

By

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CHARACTERS

JACK WILSON: Late 50s, former newspaperman originally from Minnesota. Married to Lisa.

LISA WILSON: 40 years old, pregnant with her first child. A food writer married to Jack.

JESS: Early 40s. Lisa and Jack's friend. A single, female book editor who lives in New York City.

TINA: An Australian in her early 30s. Lives next door to Lisa and Jack, married to Shannon.

SHANNON: Originally from the south. A pastry chef in her late 20s, married to Tina.

IRENE: 50 and single, lives in the neighborhood. She runs an award-winning restaurant nearby.

SETTING

The Wilsons' front porch in suburban Rockland County, New York.

TIME

The weekend of Aug. 27-28, 2011, as the Northeastern United States braces for Hurricane Irene.

ACT I: SCENE ONE
“Hurricane Warning”

(It’s late afternoon on a late-summer Saturday on the Wilsons’ porch. Unlit lanterns, houseplants and candles complement a sofa, four chairs and a coffee table. Two steps lead to the porch from the walkway that divides the front yard in half. Small crop rows abut the walkway on either side, and the porch is an open floor plan viewable in its entirety. The door to the house is open. It is at the very back of the porch.)

(The outdoor sound system plays Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power,” as JACK appears in the doorway holding a buzz saw. He wears a bandanna and goggles and looks straight out of *Duck Dynasty*, minus the beard. He is grizzled, though, after losing his job a few months earlier and spending much of the summer drinking—and bitching—on the porch. JACK looks across the street, walks downstage, fires up the saw then disappears stage left. We hear his buzz saw at work offstage.)

(A very pregnant LISA emerges from the house. She carries a vase into which she has placed some flowers. She puts the vase on the coffee table then stands on the top step. She takes a moment to look at the houses across the street. Then she shouts out to JACK, who is still offstage, trimming the branches of a far-off tree.)

LISA

Jack? Jack! Will you turn that off a second?

(The MUSIC and BUZZ SAW keep howling. LISA turns down the music and waddles down the steps.)

LISA – CON’T.

Jack! JACK!

(JACK turns off the buzz saw and, a moment later, appears downstage left. A BABY CRIES in the distance.)

LISA – CON’T.

I appreciate you doing that ... why don’t you trim Dave’s tree while you’re at it? Do him a favor?

JACK

Now why would I do a thing like that?

LISA

Oh, Hunna, don't be that way ... don't you want to make up for that *rant* of yours?

JACK

I'm not saying anything everyone isn't already thinking. Would you listen to that?

LISA

(re: her pregnant stomach)

Well, they'll have to listen to ours soon enough, so we'll be even. Please? It would be a nice gesture. A peace offering to your neighbor.

JACK

(not budging)

Turn the music back on, OK? It helps me focus.

(LISA re-climbs the steps to the porch but doesn't turn the music back on. The BABY CRIES a while longer.)

(JACK fires up the buzz saw again and disappears offstage left.)

(LISA returns to the porch and arranges some of the furniture. She moves a chair a little bit to the left over here, and a little to the right there. After a few moments, she disappears inside the house.)

(JESS, dressed in summer black, enters from stage right and meanders up the walkway. She carries an overnight bag. A bottle of wine and two half-filled glasses sit on the coffee table. She lifts the wine bottle, studies the label then puts it down and picks up one of the glasses. She swirls the wine, sniffs the bouquet and sips, draining it.)

JESS

(into the house, through the open door)

'Allo. Anybody home? I have arrived.

(JESS pours some more wine and takes another sip.)

JESS – CON'T.

The eagle has landed in suburbia. Hello!

(LISA reappears through the door and joins JESS, who is admiring the flowers, on the porch. She carries a glass for JESS, although JESS has now co-opted LISA's.)

(LISA kisses JESS hello and pours herself some wine in the new glass.)

LISA

Welcome to Hurricane Saturday!

JESS

Smack on the heels of Earthquake Tuesday. What a world.

(They clink glasses.)

LISA

I know. It's crazy. Did you get out OK?

(LISA fusses with her flower arrangement while JACK's buzz saw grows louder in the distance.)

JESS

Yeah, it wasn't too bad. God, what's that noise?

LISA

(points)

Jack. Finally.

(LISA and JESS look toward JACK and the buzz saw, still working offstage left.)

JESS

Oh, you didn't tell me he joined Hells Angels ... I take it the job hunt's not going well?

LISA

Could be better. Here, let me get that for you.

(LISA reaches for Jess's bag. JESS keeps it away from her.)

JESS

No, no. I got it. Why do you keep forgetting you're pregnant?

LISA

I'm pregnant, not an invalid.

(gives up on the bag, takes a sip of wine)

LISA – CON'T.

I can still do things.

(LISA makes her immensely pregnant way down into a chair.)

JESS
(re: the wine)

That's really good.

LISA
I know. Keep it away from me.
(takes another sip)

At some point. I've already had half a glass.

JESS
(re: Lisa's pregnant stomach)
Well, she's cooked, so ... you should enjoy yourself. Right?

LISA
So, any news on the book front?

JESS
Not yet. Soon, I hope.

LISA
That would help so much.

JESS
I know. I'm doing everything I can. Promise.

LISA
Thank you.

JESS
Thank you for inviting me up.

LISA
Well, we weren't going to let you stay all alone in the big, bad city.

(JESS reaches into her pocket and withdraws a packet of batteries.)

JESS
Look what I found. These just might be the last double Ds in the entire metropolitan area.

(JESS hands the batteries to LISA, who admires them.)

LISA
I can't believe it. Where'd you find them?

JESS
That little bodega on Franklin.

LISA

Really? Hunna will be so happy.

(JACK appears on the walkway with the buzz saw, which is still loud and grows louder as he approaches JESS and LISA on the porch. He makes some Luke Skywalker lightsaber moves with the saw to try to make JESS and LISA laugh, which he does. Finally, he turns it off. He fist bumps JESS, puts the buzz saw in a corner on the porch and takes a seat.)

JACK

Jesse James. Good to see ya.

JESS

Mr. Wilson, I presume? Ready for our hurricane?

JACK

Nah, it's only gonna be a tropical storm by the time it gets here.

LISA

That's still seventy-mile-an-hour winds. Nothing to sneeze at.

(JESS plops into a chair and puts her feet up.)

JACK

We're gonna be fine.

(to Jess)

All the animals get outta the city OK?

JESS

It wasn't too bad. I think a lot of "the animals" decided to stay put.

LISA

I can't believe Bloomberg's actually shutting down transportation.

JESS

I know. I'm pretty sure I was on the last train out of Grand Central. It was creepy.

(JACK uses his bandanna to wipe the sweat from his forehead. He removes the goggles, settles into his chair, picks his iPad up off the coffee table and consults it. He takes a sip of wine.)

JACK

Well, he can't get caught with his pants down again like that snowstorm. The animals were all over him after that. I actually felt sorry for the little billionaire.

LISA

Look, Hunna. Jess found double Ds.

(LISA tosses JACK the batteries.)

JACK

(studies the package)

No shit? Where'd you find these little beauties?

JESS

That bodega next to the Spanish place.

LISA

El restaurante se llama El Rey del Pollo.

JACK

I love the sound of that.

LISA

Me practicing my Spanish?

JACK

No. Double Ds. It's so, I don't know ... juicy. And rotund.

LISA

(rolls her eyes)

Why do you have to turn everything into tits?

JACK

Why not? It makes the world a more voluptuous place. I don't know about you, but juicy and rotund is the kind of world I want to live in. In fact, I want to suck forever at the teet of a place as warm and wonderful as that.

LISA

Ay yi yi ...

(to Jess)

And he's going to raise a daughter.

JESS

A bilingual one, though. So there's that.

JACK

(admires the batteries)

I bet these are the last double Ds in all New York State. And Kodak, no less. You don't see a whole lotta Kodak anymore. Gotta document.

(JACK rises and disappears through the front door, entering the house.)

JESS

There's nothing better right now than having nothing to do. After this week? Everyone is so on edge. There was such an eerie feeling leaving the city. Everyone has that look on their face, you know? What if this is it? What if this is the time we're done in for good?

(JESS kicks off her shoes.)

LISA

We just have to do the bees. Jack will take care of it.

(loud and toward the door hoping that Jack will hear her)

Eventually, Jack will secure the bees ...

(LISA rises and arranges a few flashlights on the porch.)

LISA – CON'T.

God, I've turned into such a harridan.

(JACK re-emerges from the house with his iPhone and digital camera. He places the batteries on the coffee table, then starts modeling and shooting them with his various devices. A flash pops every now and again.)

LISA – CON'T.

(to Jack)

Do not post anything about Dave, you hear me?

(Jack ignores her)

What about the chairs out back? Hunna?

JACK

I put them away.

LISA

And the shed? Is it locked?

JACK

I'll do it in a minute.

LISA

Would you do it now, please?

(JACK moves a hand at her like it's a mouth: yak, yak, yak.)

JACK

We've survived stronger winds than we're gonna get tonight. Might not even be a hurricane by the time it gets here.

LISA

It's a hurricane, Hunna. Would you please take it seriously?

JACK

I am. I'm tracking it very closely with my myriad Apple devices. We're gonna be fine.

(JESS pours herself more wine and makes herself even more comfortable, placing a pillow behind her back.)

(JACK meanders down the walkway and pokes around in the crops for a while. He is a man surveying his kingdom.)

LISA

We've still got some of that great bacon from Tennessee and Irene's going to bring some goodies from the farm. We're going to make BLTs.

JESS

Irene's coming?

LISA

Yep. The hurricane herself.

(off Jess's grimace)

What?

(Jess doesn't say anything, but she's clearly not thrilled ...
Lisa continues, timidly and optimistically at the same time)

And the girls next door.

JESS

You didn't tell me it was going to be a party.

LISA

What better time to have a party? And I thought you liked our neighbors?

JESS

They're fine. I guess ...

LISA

(gossipy)

Actually, I don't know how long the newlyweds are going to last.

JESS

You're kidding! Didn't they *just* get married?

LISA

I think they did because they could. Is that terrible to say? In any case, please be friendly.

JESS

Of course I'll be friendly. I'm a civilized human being. But I'm warning you, I intend to drink a whole lot of your wine.

LISA

Wouldn't have it any other way.

(JACK returns to the porch, sits down and references his iPad. He puts on his reading glasses.)

JACK

It's going to hit lower Manhattan and Brooklyn the hardest, probably at three or four in the morning. We'll be fine up here. I'd be surprised if we get much of anything. Just a lot of rain.

JESS

Hopefully, it will be nothing but an inconvenience ...

JACK

Do you have any idea how happy I am right now that I got shit-canned? Seriously. I would have to be there this whole weekend, watching everything from the newsroom ... The whole time I'd be worrying about Lisa, the baby, the house. Anytime there's a goddamn snowstorm or wreck on the thruway ... this *hurricane* is the best reason I can think of for not having that job right now.

JESS

That's true. And now the jerk who fired you gets to do it all by himself.

LISA

Small consolation ... if we can just get that book deal. It's time Jack gets to do something *substantial*. When do you think we'll know?

JESS

Well, that paper didn't deserve you.

LISA

(rubbing her stomach)

No, but the timing ...

JESS

(to Jack)

I don't want you to get your hopes up. It's out of my control at this point. You know that, right?

LISA

If you could just get what you got for mine. That would be a huge help.

JESS

Yours was a cookbook. And no one pays real advances anymore.

(LISA doesn't like what she hears. She rises, waddles to the steps, grabs a broom and begins to sweep.)

JACK

Not for peons like me, anyway. And no gold watches, either.

(dreamy, removes his glasses)

You know, I've been working since I'm fourteen. Nearly forty-five years ... nonstop.

(puts on his glasses and goes back to his iPad)

Those poor fuckers in Battery Park, though. I don't know about them. And Jersey? Fuggettaboutit. You see Christie telling everyone to get off the beach? He's like, 'You got your tans, now fuggettaboutit. Getthehellouttahere! Badda boom!'

JESS

And watch. Some mook'll start screaming about how the governor shouldn't be telling people to get off the beach ... during a *hurricane!*

JACK

(makes quote marks with his fingers)

Tropical storm.

JESS

Excuse me.

(quote marks, too)

Tropical storm. And then said mook gets blown into the ocean and drowns.

JACK

Yeah, after risking the lives of first responders while he's at it because he's nothing but a selfish animal. It's the same kind of animal who buys a leaf blower and drives everybody crazy.

LISA

Or a buzz saw?

JESS

Ouch!

JACK

Which is used very sparingly, my dear.

LISA

Too sparingly, if you ask me ...

JESS

Ooooouuuch! Well played, Mrs. Wilson.

JACK

(to Jess)

Whose side are you on?

(JESS shrugs. There are sides?)

JACK – CON'T.

What about the species that runs his lawn mower at the crack of a beautiful Sunday morning? How about that guy? You like him?

JESS

Or lays on his horn while pedestrians are crossing the street—with the right of way?

JACK

(reads from his iPad)

And then? I love this. There's this guy on Long Beach Island who's mad about having to evacuate. He's bitching about a bridge closing so rescue boats can get through. I guess a little thing like boats carrying supplies isn't as important as his desire to spend the weekend at the beach.

JESS

And you wonder why I hate people.

JACK

I don't wonder at all. I'm right there with ya, Darling.

(LISA finishes sweeping and rejoins them on the porch.)

JESS

On that note, I'm going to wash up before your *company* arrives for the great hurricane party of 2011.

LISA

There's fresh towels in the guest room.

JESS

Small consolation ...

(JESS smiles at LISA, takes her bag and disappears inside the house.)

(LISA stands up, once again waddles down the steps, picks up a watering can and waters some of the crops.)

(JACK continues minding his various Apple devices on the porch. In a moment, though, he sees what LISA is doing and joins her on the walkway. He takes the watering can from her.)

JACK

Let me get that. Why don't you take it easy? You've been on your feet all day.

LISA

I got it.

JACK

We're as prepared as we're gonna be. We've done everything we can.

LISA

Have we?

JACK

It's only going to be some rain. That's all.

LISA

You really think we're going to be OK?

JACK

I know we are. Promise.

(JACK puts his arm around LISA as the BABY CRIES once again and JACK and LISA look across the street, to the source of the noise. JACK bristles but LISA hugs her husband in an effort to pacify him. JACK looks at the sky then he and LISA head back up the steps and onto the porch.)

JACK – CON'T.

It's only going to be some rain.

SCENE TWO
“Landfall”

(It’s dusk on the porch. LISA is seated in a chair while JESS sprawls on the couch. JACK stands and, once again, surveys his yard.)

JACK

The only thing I’m even remotely worried about is that tree.

JESS

What tree?

JACK

There.

(JACK points to someplace off stage left, where he had traveled earlier with his buzz saw. JESS and LISA follow his line of sight.)

JACK – CON’T.

That’s the only thing I can think of that could royally fuck us. I took a couple of limbs off, but if that thing goes down, there’s a distinct possibility we could get fucked in the ass.

JESS

How charming.

JACK

Maybe I can trim it some more.

LISA

It’s too late; don’t you think? People are having dinner. They don’t want to listen to that.

JESS

You think it could? Come down on us?

JACK

Depends which way the wind blows. If it’s from the south, then the girls get fucked in the ass.

JESS

Well that doesn’t sound too pleasant, now, does it?

(TINA and SHANNON, the girls/neighbors, appear downstage left and approach the walkway. They walk up the walkway and steps and join JESS, LISA and JACK on the porch. EVERYONE laughs at the auspicious timing of their arrival.)

TINA

(with an Australian accent)

What's this I hear about an ass fucking?

(TINA hands JACK two bottles of wine. TINA and SHANNON carry their own glasses—SHANNON follows behind her wife, carrying a pie.)

JACK

We're all about to get one if that tree decides to come down.

(LISA kisses TINA and SHANNON hello. SHANNON hands LISA the pie.)

LISA

(re: the pie)

Looks terrific. Thank you.

JESS

(not the warmest greeting)

Hello.

TINA/SHANNON

Hello. Hi.

TINA

Which tree is that?

SHANNON

(with a southern accent)

Our tree?

LISA

Technically, it's ours. I think.

(JACK gives the girls hello hugs. Afterward, TINA and SHANNON each take a seat and TINA pours herself and SHANNON a glass of wine.)

JACK

Who knows who's gonna get it? Maybe *Dave* will get it tonight. Or *Gary*.

TINA

Ooh, it's a parlor game. Who's gonna get ass fucked tonight?

LISA

Dave's got his own gnarly tree to worry about. Or is that Gary's?

JACK

Dave's. Along with those power lines. They're all wrapped up.

JESS

Who is this Dave?

LISA

Don't ask.

(LISA takes the pie inside the house.)

TINA

Are you on your Dave kick again?

LISA

(from inside)

Always!

TINA

(to Jack)

Want me to take care of him, Mate?

JESS

Wait. I don't know about this.

SHANNON

Me neither. You mean that guy Dave across the street? He seems nice enough.

TINA

I don't know why you upset yourself with him. I checked him out. He's fine.

SHANNON

You checked him out? What does that mean?

TINA

Babe, it's nothing. The guy's harmless.

JACK

He's not harmless. He's the devil.

JESS

(laughs; incredulous)

What are you people talking about?

JACK
I hate that rat-faced little fucker!

JESS
Whoa.

TINA
Easy, Mate. There's ladies present.

JACK
He's *El Diablo*.

(JACK, JESS, TINA and SHANNON take a moment and look across the street, which is, in fact, the audience.)

(The SHADOW of a person walking down the street makes its way across the Wilsons' porch. A shadow indicates activity on or across the street.)

(EVERYONE lowers his voice until the shadow passes.)

TINA
They just had that kid.

JESS
Someone procreated?

SHANNON
How do you know all this?

TINA
I told you. I checked him out.

SHANNON
What did you do?

TINA
It's for your own protection. Don't you want to know the people you're living with?

JACK
Just what the world needs, another rat-faced little mongrel living across the street—from me of all people. Don't they already have a kid? I mean, how many do you need?

(LISA returns with a freshly opened bottle of wine and a bottle opener.
The SHADOW is gone.)

LISA

This isn't China, Hunna. They can have more than one kid.

TINA

(slaps Jack's back)

Says the father of two-going-on-three children.

JACK

Yeah, but that's my seed. Good, strong, All-American. Not that guy's rape-of-the-planet kind of breeding. We have finite resources, People, and that guy's a weasel. Just like that nitwit friend of his next door.

(sarcasm dripping)

Gaaarrrrryyyy.

SHANNON

What'd they have?

TINA

A boy. Like two days ago. Don't you ever look at Facebook? Jack's been documenting the whole thing. It's hilarious.

SHANNON

Two days before a hurricane?

JACK

Tropical storm.

SHANNON

Pardon me, tropical storm. But what a time to have a kid. Holy smokes.

TINA

And just after an earthquake.

JESS

If I weren't agnostic I'd say it's The Rapture.

TINA

Did you feel the earthquake in the city?

JESS

Yeah. Everyone thought it was construction. Just more noise.

JACK

Just what the world needs. Another rat-faced, tired little weasel.

JACK – CON'T.

(does his best Bogart)

Of all the houses in all the United States, he has to move into the one across the street from mine.

SHANNON

What'd this guy do to you? Steal your tomatoes?

JESS

Yeah, what's so terrible about him?

LISA

He's mad because they named the kid Jack.

SHANNON

What?

TINA

That's great! I can hear it now.

(imitates a mother calling a child)

Jackie, stop throwing rotten eggs at the Wilsons' house. They're really such lovely people.

(SHANNON pokes TINA to stop it.)

LISA

Even if the father despises you for no good reason.

TINA

Welcome to the next eighteen years of your life.

JESS

You know what's the best part?

(gestures to Lisa's stomach)

Little Jackie's gonna be that one's first boyfriend.

(EVERYBODY laughs, including JACK.)

JACK

Oh, that's awful! Stop right there!

LISA

You're probably right.

TINA

Or maybe even her first lay.

(EVERYBODY laughs harder.)

JACK

Now that's going too far.

TINA

If she's straight, of course. If not, it'll be his big sister.

LISA

OK, that's definitely enough. Can we let the kid at least get born before saddling her with a *partner*?

TINA

You better be careful. Little Jackie's gonna be hanging out in your basement, making his moves.

SHANNON

Tina, that's enough.

JACK

(cracks up)

I know. Kill me now!

JESS

Seriously, what's your problem with him?

JACK

He's awful. He and his little rodential friend Gary next door. More animals I have to deal with.

LISA

Lower your voice. They can hear you.

JACK

They can't hear anything. When I'm on my porch I just want some peace and quiet, and not have to deal with these jackwagons.

SHANNON

What in the world did they do to you?

LISA

Why do you insist on encouraging him? They've done nothing to him. Absolutely nothing.

JACK

(glares at their houses)

Rattus norvegicus. Rat-faced little fuckers.

(IRENE arrives like a whirlwind from downstage right and climbs the steps onto the porch. She has shopping bags full of food, another bottle of wine and a dog leash with no dog attached to it. She is overloaded and a more than just a little bit klutzy.)

IRENE

Are you torturing the neighbors again?

(IRENE places the bags on the floor, empty chair and coffee table and LISA begins to rummage through them. She takes out some cheese.)

LISA

How'd you guess?

EVERYBODY

Hi, Irene.

JACK

Of course I'm torturing the animals again. What else would I be doing that's as productive as that?

IRENE

Did they have the baby yet? I'm so worried about my baby. You think Pearl's going to be OK? She's very sensitive. She's a Schnauzer.

LISA

Yes, she'll be fine. And yes, they had little Jackie.

(EVERYONE cracks up at this, including JACK.)

IRENE

They did not name him that!

(JACK picks up the buzz saw and pretends to inflict it upon himself.)

JACK

Yes they did. Kill me now. Put me out of my misery. Please!

LISA

(taking the buzz saw from him)

That's not funny.

TINA

Wow, your hatred runs deep. I can really get behind it.

JACK

Yes, I enjoy it, too. Thank you for noticing. It's an infinitely satisfying little hobby. And now that I have so much time on my hands until the baby comes ...

(JACK rises, takes IRENE's bags and kisses her hello.)

LISA

(handing Jack the buzz saw)

Take this, too, please.

(JACK carries the groceries inside the house. He takes the buzz saw, too.)

JACK

(sarcastically)

Yes, Dear.

IRENE

Oh, thank you. I brought some beautiful cheese. We were at the farm this morning securing all the animals.

(calls after Jack)

Of the four-legged variety.

TINA

Are they acting peculiar?

IRENE

No. No wind yet. But my dear Pearl. I'm so worried about her. She has a lot of nervous energy, you know?

(IRENE nearly knocks over the wine bottles and glasses as she whirls around.)

(LISA puts her hand on IRENE's shoulder to calm her, which is no easy feat. IRENE has a hard time staying still.)

LISA

Did you bring Dandelion?

IRENE

Yes, Dandelion and Sunshine. Uh-huh. I hope they're going to be OK. You think they'll be OK?

JESS

What's that?

IRENE

The cows. That's their names. Isn't it precious? They're so precious.

LISA

The cheese is so good.

(JACK returns from inside the house and LISA hands him one of the cheeses to smell.)

IRENE

By the way, I heard some awful news the other day.

TINA

Oooh, do tell!

IRENE

It's so gossipy, but I was walking Pearl and I ran into Gary. We were talking about this and that, and then he told me ... he likes that new Tea Party guy from Texas.

(covers her mouth with both hands)

Rick Perry!

(Everyone WHOOPS.)

JACK

The animals love that guy.

JESS

Never gonna happen. Four more years.

TINA

It could happen. If that Tea Party gains steam ... I don't have a problem with that.

SHANNON

Well, I do! You know I moved up here to get away from all that good ol' boy stuff.

TINA

(puts her arm around her)

And then you met me and your life became a dream come true, right, Babe?

IRENE

Aw, you guys are cute. Even if you like the Tea Party, Tina ...

JACK

If the economy's still in the crapper and I can't get a job? Hell, I might vote for him.

LISA

Over my dead body!

JESS

And to that I say read my lips: No New Texans. This country's tired of cowboys.

LISA

Shan, will you help me in the kitchen?

SHANNON

Of course.

(SHANNON rises and she and LISA enter the house together.)

JACK

(re: his iPad)

Here's the latest from Bloomie the boy billionaire: This is a storm where if you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, it can be fatal.

JESS

That's a little harsh.

IRENE

They just want people to stay home. Which is what everyone should do during a natural disaster, right? Stay home?

JACK

Hard to tell what's real and what's a boatload of covering your political ass. These are the same animals that get mad when FLOTUS tells you to stop being a fat ass. I mean, if the shit hits the fan, what are you gonna do? Who's gonna help? If this storm goes all Katrina on our ass, it's every man for himself.

JESS

I can't look out for myself during a hurricane.

IRENE

Can anyone?

JACK

Which is why I'd rather have Bloomie or Christie trying to help me out—someone whose actual *job* it is to help, by the way—than some animal down the street who has no idea what he's doing.

JESS

How's the Armageddon escape plan working out? Anything I need to know for the next 24 hours?

JACK

You scoff, but when Indian Point starts leaking radiation, I'll be sitting pretty with our friends in the Great White North, wearing a beret and eating pain au chocolat.

(LISA returns with some hors d'oeuvres and another bottle of wine, which she sets on the coffee table. She takes a seat next to JACK.)

LISA

(to Jess)

Please don't encourage him.

(motions to Tina)

Or her.

JESS

But it's fun.

LISA

Yeah, well, you don't have to live with him—sober.

IRENE

(re: the hors d'oeuvres)

Mmmm, is this that cilantro you were telling me about?

LISA

Yeah, isn't it great?

IRENE

So good. You have to write another book!

LISA

Jack's going to be the next author in the family, right, Hunna?

TINA

(to Jack)

You're writing a book?

JACK

We'll see ...

LISA

Jess is trying to get him a deal. Fingers crossed.

IRENE

I'm happy for you, Jack.

(to Jess)

That's great!

JESS

Yeah, well. We'll see ...

TINA

It's a good thing you came up here. The city's going to get slammed.

JESS

You know? Sometimes I wish I could just not care. Care only about me ...

LISA

(incredulous)

You mean you don't already?

JESS

Ha, ha. If you would let me finish: Care only about me and drive a gas-guzzling SUV and live in a gated community with a ton of ridiculous, wasteful water features. Just put my head in the sand ... The only thing stopping me is that great Dostoyevsky quote.

LISA

The only thing?

JESS

"If god doesn't exist then everything is permitted." If there's no god, then we're on our own. Nothing matters. Everything we do is OK.

JACK

Every man for himself.

TINA

Exactly!

LISA

(to Jess)

So now you believe in god? Since when?

JESS

I don't, but that idea that we're all in this together, whatever *this* is, then you have to care. Right? Even if you don't want to.

JACK

I could live that way.

LISA

You so could not. You're the worst one. You talk so big. You love to think you're this badass, bootstraps *libertarian*.

JACK

I am!

(LISA playfully slaps her husband's knee.)

LISA

Please. You're the first person to go out of his way to help somebody.

JACK

That is so not true. And now I do believe I am offended.

LISA

(mostly to herself)

You used to, anyway ...

JESS

(mostly to herself, too)

I help people.

(to Lisa)

Don't I help people?

(LISA kind of shrugs—maybe she does, maybe she doesn't.)

JACK

Just wait 'til those animals go after social security again. Hell hath no fury like a bunch of geriatrics who can't collect their social security.

(JACK rises and heads for the house.)

LISA

Where are you going?

(JACK doesn't answer and disappears inside the house.)

IRENE

(mouths to Lisa)

Is he OK?

(LISA nods dismissively.)

JESS

So, we're really not worried about anything?

LISA

Besides the Tea Party, our lackluster economy and this hurricane that's about to devastate the Eastern Seaboard? Nah, we're pretty much all set.

IRENE

(to Lisa)

Oh my gosh! You're so *pregnant*. How did I not notice that?

JESS

She can come at any time.

(IRENE looks alarmed.)

LISA

Don't say that. First we have to get through this hurricane.

JACK

(from offstage, inside the house)

Tropical storm!

LISA

That he hears.

IRENE

Jack's not convinced?

LISA

Not yet.

IRENE

Well, I am. When are people going to accept the fact that we're damaging the planet? That we're doing this to ourselves? It makes me so upset.

(JACK returns from inside the house carrying a fresh glass for IRENE. He hands it to her and pours her some wine. SHANNON rejoins everyone on the porch, too.)

SHANNON

(to Lisa)

Lettuce and tomato ready to go.

LISA

Thanks, Shan. We'll eat in a bit.

TINA

Thanks, Babe. Take a load off.

(TINA pats the seat next to her and SHANNON takes it.)

IRENE

(to Lisa)

I can't believe how big you are. I just saw you.

LISA

I know. She's been kicking like crazy ever since.

IRENE

I'm sorry!

LISA

No! Not because of you. Sorry, that came out wrong.

JACK

Probably heard Dave's rat-faced wife gave birth to a rat-faced kid and she started kicking and screaming.

(to Lisa's stomach)

'atta girl. Give 'em hell.

LISA

Lovely, instead of reading Mother Goose he'll sign her up for baby fight club.

JACK

Hey, we could make some money doing that. I'll look into it.

TINA

Now *that's* a new career.

SHANNON

You guys pick a name yet?

(LISA bursts out laughing.)

JESS

Is that a yes?

LISA

Go ahead, Hunna. Tell them your new name.

JACK

Don't you mean *our* new name?

LISA

No. Yours. Tell them your new favorite name for your daughter.

JACK

OK, I will. Remember *Dances With Wolves*?

IRENE

It was so violent.

JACK

Remember Kicking Bird, the great Lakota chief?

(imitates the imperious way Graham Greene's character says it in the film)

Kicking Bird. Has a great ring to it.

SHANNON

Kicking Bird ... Wilson?

JACK

(on a roll)

Kicking Bird ...

JESS

Would Bird be the middle name? Or would you hyphenate?

IRENE

You can't do that!

TINA

Oh yes he can. I'm all for it, Jack.

SHANNON

Please tell me you're not serious.

TINA

Babe, let the man name his child what he wants.

JACK

Kicking Bird ... what better homage could we pay to the poor Native American bastards we fucked over so thoroughly? It would be Lisa's and my small way of saying sorry to such a proud and honorable, *expendable* people.

JESS

She'd be the only one in her class, that's for sure.

TINA

God, I hope you stick with that. I'd love to see the look on people's faces when you tell them her name. Hello, Kindergarten Teacher, we're the proud parents of Kicking Bird.

LISA

As much as I'd like to, and I really would just for the attendant comic relief, but I'm not calling my daughter Kicking Bird. Sorry to disappoint everyone.

TINA

(to Lisa's stomach)

Too bad your mother's such a pill, Kicking Bird. Or you'd be a great warrior queen.

IRENE

You had me worried for a second.

JACK

(rubs his hands together)

OK, so we'll cook up that bacon, and we've got that beautiful lettuce and tomatoes from the garden. And Lisa picked up some fresh bread from the farmer's market this morning.

LISA

What about the bees?

JACK

They'll be fine.

LISA

Would you please call Al? What if the wind knocks them over?

JACK

We've had far worse wind than we're gonna get tonight. It's not even gonna be a hurricane.

LISA

It's a hurricane, Hunna! Hurricane Irene.

IRENE

Sorry! I'm so sorry!

JESS

Right? How many bad Irene jokes have you heard this week?

IRENE

My friend Steve found a news headline, “Video Shows Irene’s Fury,” and asked me on Facebook, in front of everyone, if that meant our sommelier had suggested a poor wine pairing.

TINA

That’s pretty funny.

IRENE

Most haven’t been that clever ... for instance, *somebody else* on Facebook blamed me for ruining his weekend, JACK!

JACK

(cracking up)

Guilty!

IRENE

I’m just glad everyone’s having a field day with my hurricane.
(to Lisa, rises with nervous energy)
So, what can I do to help?

LISA

Nothing. All you have to do is relax. We’re fine. Jack, call Al. Please!

JACK

It’s not gonna be a hurricane!

LISA

We never had bees before. You should put cinder blocks on them. Can’t you just do that, please?

(JACK doesn’t move.)

LISA – CON’T.

(disappears inside the house)

I’m gonna call Al.

SHANNON

Al’s your bee guy?

JACK

Yeah. You should see him. He’s 93 years old and has been stung about a thousand times. He has millions, literally millions, of bees at his place upstate. I love that guy.

IRENE

(to Tina and Shannon)

How are your chickens? Are you worried about them? I'm worried about Pearl. You think she'll be OK?

TINA

The chickens are good. We've been giving these guys eggs. And they give us honey.

IRENE

Ooh, I want some of your honey. If it wouldn't be too much trouble ...

JACK

Not at all, Darling. We'll get you some next week. As long as they survive.

IRENE

Don't say that! I'm so worried about all the animals.

(an afterthought)

People, too ... but mostly animals. Is that awful?

(Nobody responds.)

TINA

We brought a nice rosé. Everyone ready for a new wine?

(JACK puts his head down and holds out his glass.)

JACK

It's probably the wine talking. But I sure would like some more wine.

TINA

(to Shannon)

Babe?

(SHANNON uncorks the bottle then starts pouring drinks all around.)

IRENE

Oh, thank you. That's so nice of you. But I really should go.

(IRENE stays put when nobody insists she stay. Then she holds out her glass for SHANNON to pour wine into.)

JESS

(laughs re: her Blackberry)

You posted the batteries?

JACK

Yup. They're the last double Ds on the entire Eastern Seaboard.

IRENE

You found double Ds?

JESS

I tried three Duane Reades in the city and nothing. Then I came here and passed that little bodega next to the Spanish place.

IRENE

Oh, crap. I never thought to go there. And I've been thinking about batteries since Wednesday. Darn it!

JESS

They had one package left. I felt a little shitty buying the last ones.

TINA

Why would you feel shitty?

JESS

Actually, I didn't. But I'm supposed to, right?

IRENE

You people are so mean.

(The BABY across the street CRIES again for a moment.)

SHANNON

Can you imagine losing power with a newborn?

JACK

We're not gonna lose power. Not even gonna be a hurricane by the time it gets here. Jersey, though ... they're gonna get it.

JESS

Yeah, but nobody cares about Jersey.

TINA

Spoken like a true New York snob.

JESS

Maybe. But it is my birthright as a New Yorker to loathe New Jersey. And who isn't a snob, really?

JACK

And they make it so easy, for Chrissake! Fuggetaboutit! Badda bing, badda boom!

TINA

Please. New York and New Jersey are the same thing. You're conjoined twins.

JESS

I beg your pardon!

IRENE

It's like that *Daily Show* bit. You see that? Come on, with what's her name?

SHANNON

Which one?

JESS

Oh yeah. The Long Island thing. Brilliant.

TINA

What?

IRENE

Samantha ...

JESS

Yeah, Samantha Bee does this skit where Long Island wants to secede from the Union.

IRENE

That's right! Samantha Bee.

JESS

Some ridiculous state senator is tired of paying taxes, so he says Long Island should become the 51st state. And these mooks talk about kicking Jersey's ass. They do this whole bit about which states Long Island can beat up. Like Queens and the Bronx.

JACK

(cracks up)

The Bronx is a state? Animals ...

JESS

And they go on about how secession could lead to civil war.

IRENE

They give it the Ken Burns Civil War treatment.

JESS

Yeah, and they do this black-and-white montage, where one of the mooks does a voiceover like he's reading a soldier's letter to his girlfriend. *Gina*.

IRENE

Such a common American name in the 19th century.

SHANNON

Gina.

JESS

And there's this sepia-toned picture of a guy who looks like The Situation ...

EVERYONE

(totally cracking up)

The Situation!

JESS

And The Situation's leaning against a corvette or Mustang or some silly muscle car, and he does this voiceover of the letter. At the end he says, in this thick LongGuyland accent, 'Gina, give my love to your family. Except your sistah. She's a whooore.'

TINA

That's so good.

JESS

It's brilliant.

JACK

(types on his iPad)

I'll queue that baby up for later.

(LISA re-emerges from the house and joins them on the porch. She is wrapping up a call on her iPhone. She has a plate in her hands with her BLT.)

LISA

(talks into the phone)

Thanks. That's what we'll do, then. Good luck to you, too, Al.

(hangs up, says to Jack)

Al says to put cinder blocks on the hives.

JACK

I wish you wouldn't bother him. He's got his own bees to deal with.

(JACK rises to take care of the bees.)

JACK – CON'T.

I got it.

(JACK tousles LISA's hair as he walks by her into the house.)

LISA

Sorry, I couldn't wait. Everything's ready. Grab a plate and help yourself. Lettuce, tomato and condiments on the counter.

(SHANNON, IRENE, JESS and TINA do as they're told and disappear inside the house. LISA stands alone for a moment, looking at the sky. A BREEZE brushes against her.)

(LISA takes a seat and starts eating. In a moment, IRENE, JESS, TINA and SHANNON return to the porch with their dinner plates in their hands. They take their seats and start eating, too. ANOTHER STRONG BREEZE blows onto the porch, causing them to stop for a moment and take notice. They all look afraid.)

IRENE

Lisa, do you mind if I go after dinner? I hate to eat and run, but I don't want to leave Pearl alone too long.

LISA

Or you could bring her here?

IRENE

No, if it's going to get bad I want us to be home.

(JACK returns to the porch with his dinner plate, too. He takes a seat and joins the others in eating supper.)

JACK

The wind should start kicking in about now.

TINA

Look at Jack and his harem.

JACK

I know, isn't it great? I bet Dave is looking out his window and feeling good and jealous right about now.

JESS

This wine is to die for.

LISA

It's biodynamic.

TINA

Does that mean it's organic?

(IRENE, JESS and LISA look at each other and smile.)

TINA – CON'T.

How should I know? Who can keep track of what everything means all the time? You food people are such snobs.

IRENE

Oh my gosh, this bacon is so delicious.

LISA

It's amazing. We get it every summer when we go to the cabin.

JACK

Their slaughter is made to order!

IRENE

It's humane, though. Right?

(LISA nods and EVERYONE eats in silence for a few moments.)

TINA

(to Jess)

Are you in the evacuation zone?

JESS

Just missed it, but I didn't want to get stuck in my apartment without any power. So here I am, self-evacuated.

TINA

You're not worried about looters? Gotta watch out for those doormen. They make out like bandits in times like this. It's a known fact.

SHANNON

(to Tina)

Don't scare her.

LISA

(reassuring to Jess)

They wouldn't do anything like that ... they like you.

LISA – CON'T.

(unsure)

Don't they?

JESS

Shit. I need to say hello more.

JACK

You'll be fine. We're all going to be fine.

IRENE

You really think so? Gosh, I hope so.

TINA

We just finished our checklist before we came over. Right under the wire.

JESS

Checklist?

TINA

Although I don't think we found any double Ds. Did you, Babe?

SHANNON

Nope, never did. But not for lack of trying.

TINA

Oh well, if we have to we'll come over here, hold Jack at gunpoint and steal his.

JACK

(lifts his arms)

You can have 'em. I don't want any trouble.

IRENE

You have a gun?

TINA

Hell yeah, I have a gun. I'm Australian!

JESS

What does that mean?

TINA

More Australians have guns than Americans do.

JESS

What is that, a requirement of citizenship?

TINA

The crime rate is actually worse in Australia than it is here. It's a known fact.

JESS

Really? Is that even possible?

SHANNON

Australia's a nation of convicts.

JACK

You'd use it, too, wouldn't you? If Dave, that little rat-face, and his friend Gary came over in the middle of the night to abscond with Shannon? You'd use it on them, right?

TINA

I would be delighted to, Jack. And if not to save Shan, then at least for your future storytelling pleasure.

SHANNON

Thanks a lot ...

TINA

Ah, you know I'm kidding, Babe. I'd save ya!

IRENE

I didn't know there was a gun next door.

TINA

Oh, that reminds me! I gotta show you what I got on eBay. Be right back.

(TINA bounces down the steps.)

TINA – CON'T.

I can't believe I forgot.

(TINA races down the walkway and disappears offstage left.)

JESS

What's that about?

SHANNON

You know how Tina and Jack share a love of Doomsday escape plans?

(to Jack)

Just wait 'til you see this thing. She was looking for months and one just came up the other day.

JESS

How fortunate.

SHANNON

She's so excited to show you.

IRENE

I can't believe there's a gun. Right next door.

SHANNON

This was even before we knew about the hurricane. She was looking just for fun.

JESS

For fun?

SHANNON

You have no idea.

(to Jack)

You know how she is.

JACK

How long she have you working?

SHANNON

A few days. She took off Thursday and Friday.

JESS

She took off work? To do what?

SHANNON

Tina likes to ... how can I put this delicately? Plan ahead for natural disasters—even when there are none to plan for. It's like a hobby. So you can imagine how she reacts when a real one is coming.

IRENE

You think you know your neighbors ...

SHANNON

She's had me running around like a crazy person, going to Home Depot, taping up windows, buying enough non-perishable foods to ride out a visit from the Enola Gay. She's crazy.

JACK

I know. I love her so much it's scary!

(to Lisa)

I wish you had some of that going for you.

IRENE
You're so mean!

JACK
Oh, I'm kidding ...

(JACK cracks up—he's not kidding—and JESS thwacks him in fun. LISA feigns amusement.)

JACK – CON'T.
(puts his arm around Lisa)
She knows I'm kidding. And she knows I won't go too far or she'll cut off my beer money!

IRENE
Lisa, did you know Tina has a gun?

(LISA shakes her head no.)

LISA
(to Jack)
And don't you get any ideas.

JACK
It's a 9-millimeter Glock, if I'm not mistaken?

SHANNON
No, Sir. You are not.

JESS
You have one, too?

SHANNON
No, Ma'am, I do not. I believe in only one gun per family. My daddy has a gun and my mother does not.

IRENE
I hate guns. Right next door?

JESS
(half-joking)
Does she sleep with it?

SHANNON
Of course.

JESS

She does? I was kidding. And now I'm afraid ...

IRENE

Under the pillow?

SHANNON

Nope. On the nightstand, on top of the latest issue of *The Advocate*.

JACK

That's so hot.

JESS

And you don't mind?

SHANNON

Why would I mind? I grew up around guns. They don't scare me. Only crazy people with guns scare me.

LISA

Well, they scare the hell out of me.

JACK

Do you ever use it ... in bed?

LISA

Jack!

JACK

What? If you're into guns, I mean ... some people are really into guns.

SHANNON

I hope you don't think I'm being impolite if I don't answer that.

LISA

Of course not ...

IRENE

Please, don't!

SHANNON

Sorry.

(JACK jokingly makes an aw shucks gesture, rises and grabs some of the empty bottles.)

JACK

I'll take these.

(JACK retreats inside the house with the empties.)

(DEAD SILENCE on the porch.)

(SHANNON looks embarrassed. She places her head on her fist, resting her elbow on the armrest.)

(LISA, noticing, puts her hand on her shoulder.)

IRENE

I have to pee.

(IRENE follows JACK inside the house.)

LISA

Are you OK?

SHANNON

Sure.

LISA

I know what's it like to be married to a, um, big personality.

SHANNON

Pardon?

LISA

You know ... Jack and Tina are a lot alike.

SHANNON

Nah, Tina just gets carried away sometimes. Not like Jack.

(JACK returns with a bottle of champagne and a bunch of flutes, which he passes to LISA, JESS and SHANNON. JACK works the bottle's cork.)

JACK

I think it's only fitting that we pull out some stops for our little hurricane party. What do you think?

(JACK pops the cork and licks his hands as the bubbly spills over them. Then he pours champagne all around to his eager guests.)

(IRENE rejoins them on the porch, and JACK hands her a glass.)

JACK – CON’T.

(a fist to the sky)

We’re ready for you, Irene. Good and ready.

IRENE

(sounds like Darth Vader)

As well you should be, my son.

JACK

(re: an extra glass)

We’ll save this for Tina.

(When he’s finished pouring he raises his own glass, then thinks about what to say. The WOMEN raise their glasses, too.)

(A SHADOW from across the street moves across the stage. They all notice it and pause. In a moment, the sound of HAMMERING emanates from Dave’s house.)

LISA

Ignore it, Hunna.

(JACK takes his phone out of his pocket and prepares to take a photo.)

JACK — CON’T.

A special night deserves a special toast. So ...

(just thinks of it)

Remember the Alamo!

(The WOMEN look at each other and laugh–huh? Well, OK!)

LISA/JESS/SHANNON/IRENE

Remember the Alamo!

(EVERYONE clinks glasses, laughs and drinks.)

(JACK takes a photo of his guests toasting with champagne.)

SCENE THREE
“The Eye of the Storm”

(It’s nighttime now and some streetlights have come up, as well as a few lights inside the Wilsons’ house.)

(TINA stands downstage center, facing the audience. She wears a pink camouflage pith helmet. She crouches down and starts hitting herself in the head as she prepares to show off her new purchase to JACK.)

(TINA turns and bounds up the steps, joining the rest of the crew on the porch. She stands before JACK.)

TINA

Look at this thing. Isn’t it awesome?

(TINA thwacks herself again on the side of the helmet.)

TINA – CON’T.

It’s really hard. Hit me!

(EVERYBODY laughs and applauds Tina’s pith helmet.)

JACK

(whistles)

That’s a real beaut.

TINA

Here. Give it a try.

(JACK takes the helmet off TINA’s head and puts it on his own. TINA thwacks him on the side of it a couple of times.)

JACK

I am honored.

TINA

It’s really durable.

JACK

I can see that.

LISA

Is it cork?

JACK
It's pith.

JESS
Hence the name!

JACK
Aeschynomene aspera. It's an Indian swamp plant.

LISA
You see why I love him?

IRENE
(laughing and shaking her head)
No, I don't!

JACK
I wore one to Mount Rushmore once.

JESS
Of course you did.

JACK
I thought Teddy Roosevelt would appreciate it. It was the least I could do to thank him for his stewardship of the environment, among other ideals befitting a rugged individualist such as himself. I felt just like the man in the arena with that thing on.

IRENE
T.R. was really good on the environment ...

(JACK takes off the pith helmet and holds it to his heart, then recites Roosevelt's famous speech excerpt, "The Man in the Arena.")

JACK
It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

(EVERYONE claps and cheers. Bowled over. Wow.)

LISA

Now you see why I love him?

IRENE

(moved)

Yes, I do!

TINA

Ah, if only we could build those bunkers, Mate.

JACK

You said it. Lisa, you hear that? We really should get on those bunkers in the backyard. Adjoining.

TINA

That'd be so awesome.

LISA

That would be so not awesome.

JACK

Why? Kicking Bird would love it in there. We can set up her crib and surround her with canned goods for toys.

LISA

Ay yi yi, you two are too much Be right back.

(LISA rises and disappears inside the house.)

TINA

Every self-respecting, upstanding individual should own a pith helmet. Pink camo, preferably.

JACK

I'll have to get me one of these. And Kicking Bird. Wonder if they make 'em for newborns. EBay, you said?

TINA

Yeah. I'll send you the seller's info.

JACK

Ah, better not. Lisa'll kill me. We're on a very tight budget these days.

(JACK places the helmet back on TINA's head, still admiring it.)

JESS

So we all should own a pith helmet, preferably camouflage, whether or not we hail from a nation of convicts?

TINA

That's right. No Aussie citizenship required. Now I gotta find a suitable one for Shan, here. I'm looking every day, Babe. Don't you worry.

(EVERYONE looks at SHANNON and cracks up, but SHANNON's a little embarrassed.)

(SHADOWS and movement across the street get EVERYONE's attention—it looks like the figures of TWO PEOPLE hauling a bulky object across the lawn.)

IRENE

What's happening over there?

JESS

(excited)

Is that them?

TINA

In the flesh! They're looking at us. Smile and wave, Everybody.

(under her breath)

Hi Gary. Hi Dave.

(EVERYONE, except for JACK and JESS, awkwardly waves across the street with fixed smiles on their faces. JACK doesn't do or say anything; he just watches.)

TINA/IRENE/SHANNON

Hello/hi/how's it going?

(LISA returns with Shannon's pie and some plates, which she places on the coffee table. EVERYONE forgets about what's happening across the street and digs in. But LISA notices the figures and waves, too.)

LISA

Hi, Guys.

(under her breath; squinting)

What is that thing?

JESS

(sarcastically)

I have to hand it to you; you're all such warm and fuzzy neighbors.

LISA

I try to be.

(The SHADOWS recede and disappear.)

TINA

(re: across the street)

Guess we missed our chance to invite them to dinner.

JESS

Hey, have you guys ever eaten at that Spanish place downtown? It smells really good.

JACK

I wouldn't go near it.

TINA

Why not? Does *Dave* eat there?

LISA

Not again!

TINA

(teases)

I actually think I saw him there once.

JACK

That rodent-face most definitely eats there. Lured, no doubt, by the hope of dog on a spit.

EVERYONE

Jack! Oh, no.

IRENE

Now I really need to check on Pearl.

(EVERYONE looks at each other, wishing Irene would shut up already about her dog.)

LISA

He's kidding.

(defeated, to Jack)

Really?

JACK

He can't hear me. He's got that kid in there screaming his head off. Waah! Waah! I'm the son of a rat face!

TINA

By the way, your tweets were hilarious.

JESS

What tweets?

(TINA whips out her phone and hands it to JESS.)

TINA

You haven't seen these?

JACK

And I couldn't care less if he hears me. I'll tell him to his face what a dumbass he is.

(JESS reads what's on TINA's phone and cracks up, but she's also shocked by what she reads.)

JESS

Oh my god!

LISA

(to Jess)

Can you believe that? I can only imagine who's seen them.

(to Jack)

Would you please just delete them already?

JACK

Oh, don't overreact. It's harmless.

LISA

It also doesn't help that you're on the porch all the time. As the only sober person out here these last few months, let me tell you something—voices carry. And we have to live across the street from these people.

JACK

Aw, tell him to go cry to Gary.

JESS

What's wrong with Gary?

LISA

Would you please not egg him on?

TINA

But it's our job, right, Jack?

JACK

Absolutely, Neighbor.

(LISA is really pissed off now, but powerless to do anything about it.)

TINA

So, what's the deal?

JACK

(cracks his knuckles)

Where, oh where, do I begin?

LISA

Since when do you have trouble finding an entry point?

(LISA sits—seething—in a chair. SHANNON looks at her, sympathetically. IRENE, too.)

TINA

(to Jack)

You were saying?

JACK

OK, first off, look at that sorry excuse for a water feature.

(EVERYONE except LISA follows JACK's point of view to the direction of Dave's house.)

JACK – CON'T.

You know how dangerous that is? Look at it. It's a slide, on concrete. Who in the world buys one of those things, and then sets it up on concrete and lets their kid slide into the deep end of a pool? I took a look at that thing ...

LISA

Wait. You went over there?

TINA

(to Lisa)

Would you let the man speak?

JACK

It's not even lined up right. He has a dangerous, living-on-concrete slide that delivers children into the deep end of a pool. And that tree over there? When was the last time anyone on god's green earth trimmed that thing? That thing goes down, both he and Gary are getting royally sodomized.

IRENE

This is what bothers you?

JESS

And renders Dave a rat-faced fuck? Pardon me, but I believe that was the correct vernacular.

JACK

Yes, that is correct. And then, you can't see it from here, but his sidewalk? It's got this massive break in it so it's like an earthquake. You know how many kids ride their bikes over that thing? You can't even walk on it. It's an ankle-breaker. It's been like that all summer and his rat-faced little offspring can't even go for a walk on their own sidewalk. And his wife; she's gonna break an ankle walking in front of her own house.

TINA

It takes skill to be as negligent as that.

IRENE

Why doesn't he fix it?

LISA

He doesn't know what he's doing. He's not handy. You know, there could be worse people in the world to be neighbors with.

(to Tina)

Like those with guns.

TINA

Guns are for protection, Lisa. You know, you guys should have one, especially now that you're going to have a little one running around.

JACK

Can I tell my story, please? And then he lets his little nitwit friend Gary next door have two more feet on his property line.

JESS

What do you mean?

JACK

Look at the back of his fence. Can you see how it abuts Gary right there? He actually moved it two feet closer to his own house so Gary could have a wider driveway.

IRENE

That was nice.

JACK

That's not nice. It's stupid! Dave just fucked himself out of I don't know how many square feet of property.

TINA

Why would he do such a fool-ass thing?

LISA

They're friends, and neighbors. He was being generous. Do any of you know what that means?

JACK

Stupid, stupid animal.

SHANNON

Why do you care so much?

JACK

Look, I don't care if Dave wants to be a moron, but then stop pretending you know what you're doing, buying a slide that can land a kid face-down on concrete. And then don't bother to fix your sidewalk so your wife can walk on it without breaking her damn tibia.

SHANNON

That's not really a reason to dislike someone, is it?

LISA

Thank you!

JACK

That guy has no right owning a house. And he doesn't even realize that Gary, who knows what he's doing, is totally taking advantage of him.

JESS

I can't do those kinds of things. I'm not handy.

JACK

Yeah, but at least you don't try.

JESS

That's true. Don't mind little old useless me. I'll just stay in the city and pay doormen and delivery boys to take care of me.

LISA

How did you find this out? You talked to him?

JACK

I've only ever said two words to that guy. Ever.

TINA

What'd you say?

IRENE

Uh-oh.

JESS

This ought to be good.

JACK

Two words.

JESS

Rat face?

TINA

Fuck off?

JACK

No, I was very neighborly. I said, Nice day.

SHANNON

Nice day?

(to Lisa, trying to reassure her)

That's not too bad.

JACK

Nice day. I'm outside. It's gorgeous. All winter I've been waiting for this. One of those perfect, pristine summer days. Not a cloud in the sky. A cobalt blue like van Gogh would have painted. There's a beautiful, light breeze coming out of the southwest. And I see Dave, tripping over his sidewalk, taking his garbage to the curb. And I'm being all neighborly, taking my garbage out, too, and that ratfink is there and it's like we're the only people in the world, so you have to say hello, right?

IRENE

(an aside to Lisa)

Minnesota boy ...

JACK

So I say, all neighborly like, Nice day. Just like that.

SHANNON

(to Lisa, trying to convince her)

Seems harmless enough.

JACK

Seems like the gentlemanly thing to do. One neighbor to another. Civilized. Nice day, Dave. I may have even put his name in there to make it more personal. And who knows what would have happened if he had responded in a decent, non-rat-faced way? I might have helped him fix his sidewalk. Or trimmed his tree for him. Or warned him of the perils of his death-trap water slide, for god's sake.

JESS

What'd he say?

JACK

He says, get this. He scrunches up his little ratty face, and says, as whiny as humanly possible: It's a little humid.

(EVERYBODY laughs. Even LISA manages a pained smile.)

IRENE

Oh no!

JACK

(incredulous)

IT'S A LITTLE HUMID! What a complete jackwagon. Here it is, a perfect, positively stunning summer day. Van Gogh would have stayed alive another freaking century and moved out of the south of France right here to Rockland County just to paint it. A gorgeous breeze out of the southwest like a sweet little feather, lulling you to take a nice little nappy poo on your hammock. But that Neanderthal thinks it's too humid.

SHANNON

And this is why you hate him?

JESS

(to Lisa)

See? This is why I don't talk to people.

TINA

I totally get it.

JACK

And he doesn't even know enough to know that Gary's taking total advantage of him so he can sell his ugly house.

LISA

Alright, that's enough. You've officially tainted Tina and Shannon. And they have to live here, too. Happy now?

JESS

And Irene. She has to live down the street.

IRENE

Don't get me involved!

(stands, says to Lisa)

On that note, should I get those extra candles? Are you going to have enough?

LISA

Yeah, we'll need them. So make sure you come back. Pearl will be fine without you a little while longer. Promise.

IRENE

(starts to leave, whispers to everyone)

OK, don't go throwing rocks at the neighbors while I'm gone.

TINA

Don't worry. We'll wait for you before we start. Wouldn't want you to miss all the fun!

(IRENE nearly knocks over the coffee table before she bounces down the steps and exits stage right. EVERYONE breathes a sigh of relief that she's gone for the moment.)

TINA – CON'T.

(re: Irene)

Wow.

LISA

Irene's really sweet. And you guys are jerks. Not you, Shannon.

(JESS looks at LISA for her to say not her, either. But she doesn't.)

SHANNON

Where's she going?

LISA

I don't think we have enough candles in case the power goes.

TINA

So she's coming back?

JACK
Irene's good people.

TINA
If you say so, Mate.

JESS
So what about Gary? Why don't you like him?

TINA
Yeah, what's his problem?

LISA
Oh, Christ.

(LISA clears some dessert plates and makes way for the house.)

LISA – CON'T.
If you're going to keep talking about them at least keep your voice down.

JACK
I'm merely entertaining our guests. I'm honoring their reasonable requests.

LISA
(gestures angrily across the street)
Don't let them hear you.

JACK
I wouldn't dream of it.
(the second Lisa is inside, in a purposely loud voice)
OK, so Dave and Gary are friends.

(EVERYONE laughs.)

JACK – CON'T.
(in his normal voice)
And Gary takes advantage of Dave being a colossal goat fuck to extend his property line.

JESS
Sounds like you might be a little jealous you can't take advantage of your own neighbors like that.

TINA
Yeah. Right? Is that what this is about?

JACK

I just can't stand the stupidity.

JESS

Jack, you're one of the nicest people I know yet you hate these guys for no reason.

JACK

What are you talking about? They're idiots! That's the greatest reason in the world. Can you imagine if you had to depend on them for something? I wouldn't trust them with my wine.

SHANNON

(to Tina)

Speaking of which, should I go get that other wine?

TINA

Might as well. You know we're going to drink it.

(SHANNON gets up and exits the porch and stage left.)

TINA – CON'T.

You're too funny, Jack.

JACK

Oh, I'm just kidding.

JESS

No, you're not.

JACK

(cracks up)

I'm so not.

(LISA re-emerges from the house.)

LISA

They happen to be nice people, despite what this one says. And Gary is very capable. Although he's been trying to sell that house for ages.

TINA

Who would buy that thing? Then they'd have to live next to Daaaave.

JESS

What's Gary's story?

LISA

He lives in an apartment downtown and the house is mostly vacant. Maybe he's divorced? He's there a lot, though, doing maintenance and stuff.

JACK

Look at that addition he put on there.

TINA

Yeah, what is that thing? It looks like a hunchback.

JACK

Which is why I call it *Chez Quasimodo*.

JESS

Of course you do.

LISA

Have you ever been inside, Tina?

TINA

I don't really know Gary; haven't checked him out yet. But now, with all the wonderful references he's receiving ...

LISA

See, Hunna? You're poisoning people.

JACK

Hey, I'm saving them time finding out for themselves. I'm doing the legwork.

LISA

Actually, it's nice up there. He took us inside a while back.

TINA

What is it?

JACK

It's a studio. He's got some nice hardwood floors. Great natural light. You should buy it, Jess. So you can watch Kicking Bird grow up from across the street.

JESS

Ah, that's nice, Jack.

TINA

You want to move here?

JESS

Not if it's the war zone you're describing. This is why I make it a rule to not make friends with the neighbors. And no chitchat, either.

LISA

(to Jack)

Well, it's different out here. We have to be able to depend on each other.

TINA

What's he asking?

JACK

I don't know. But it's been on the market a long time. You know, it's not that bad. It's all Quasimodo up top but he did some nice work inside. Gary, at least, knows what he's doing.

(IRENE returns from stage right and climbs the stairs onto the porch. She has a bag full of candles, which she hands to LISA.)

IRENE

Pearl's fine.

LISA

(not surprised)

Oh, good. Hunna, would you put these by the fireplace?

JACK

(mock indignation)

Get off my back, Woman!

(JACK cracks up as he pours himself wine for the trip. He takes the candles from LISA, exits the porch through the door and enters the house.)

JESS

Can I do anything?

LISA

No, we're set. Irene is going to help with the coffee.

(LISA and IRENE enter the house, leaving JESS and TINA alone. JESS grabs the wine and pours TINA a glass.)

JESS

Don't mind if I do.

(JESS fills her own glass, too.)

(SHANNON climbs the steps and rejoins them. She carries another bottle of wine with her.)

SHANNON

(to Tina)

Should I put this in the fridge?

(TINA nods and SHANNON disappears inside the house. TINA and JESS are quiet a moment with not much to say.)

TINA

So, what's Jack's book about?

JESS

It's really good, but ... I don't know ...

TINA

What?

JESS

(confidentially)

It's a hard sell. Short stories are always tough, and he's never written a book before.

TINA

It's not gonna happen?

JESS

I don't know how to tell these guys.

TINA

Oh, shit.

JESS

Yeah, it's not looking good.

(JACK reappears on the porch.)

JACK

What's not looking good?

(Oh, shit!)

JESS

I did hear back from marketing.

(LISA, IRENE and SHANNON rejoin everyone on the porch—perfect timing. LISA carries a tray with coffee mugs and accouterments. IRENE clears the coffee table and LISA places everything on it.)

LISA

You did? What'd they say?

JESS

It's not going to happen. I'm so sorry.

(LISA looks crushed. JACK is stoic. IRENE, TINA and SHANNON don't know what to do. Everyone's frozen and no one touches the coffee.)

IRENE

I'm sorry, Guys.

LISA

What don't they like about it?

JESS

He's never been published. That's a really hard sell for short stories. I told you that—and not to get your hopes up.

(to Jack)

Even if they're terrific—and they are, Jack. They really are. You should try to sell one to a magazine. Then maybe we can sell a collection.

(LISA is devastated and disappears inside the house. JACK turns to her but doesn't follow.)

JESS – CON'T.

I don't know what else I can do. I'm really so sorry.

(JACK is a deer caught in the headlights. No one moves.)

JESS – CON'T.

I just found out.

IRENE

Um, I'm gonna get going. Be safe, everybody. Bye, Jack.

(IRENE rushes off. No one says goodnight.)

TINA

(to Shannon)

We should go, too.

(TINA takes off her pith helmet and places it on JACK's head. He lets her.)

TINA – CON'T.

You'll find something, Mate. Soon enough.

(SHANNON pecks Jack on the cheek.)

(The SHADOW of the tree sways far and wide—the wind is really picking up. TINA and SHANNON descend the steps and head for home.)

(JESS just sits there, not sure of what to do or say.)

(JESS gives up on hearing anything from JACK and limps inside the house. She slowly closes the door behind her.)

(JACK stands at the top of the steps, surveying the scene before him as the stage grows DARKER and the WIND picks up.)

(JACK turns on the music on the porch sound system and “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy once again sounds out of the speakers. JACK cranks the volume.)

(A STRONG BREEZE swirls around JACK, and he watches as that vulnerable tree sways in the breeze.)

(A SHADOW dances across the stage. Someone has joined him outside, somewhere across the street. JACK notices the figure, and sways a bit from the wind and the wine.)

(JACK studies the SHADOW a moment, then he bends over a little as though he's just been punched—he's the man in the arena.)

(The stage gets darker, the SHADOW grows larger and a fierce WIND BLOWS against the house.)

(The SHADOW retreats and, after it's gone, a wary and wobbly JACK takes a last look at the sky. Afraid.)

SCENE FOUR
“Direct Hit”

(The porch the next morning. LISA opens the front door and peeks outside, worried about what she might find. She ventures onto the porch dressed in the same clothes she wore the night before.)

(The errant tree has been seriously compromised. It took a hit overnight, and now it's bent way over onto the stage—and some power lines are tangled in it. The whole thing is precariously balanced and could come down even more, and perilously close to the porch.)

(LISA sees that the Sunday *New York Times*, wrapped in its signature blue plastic, waits on the walk. She descends the steps, retrieves the paper, unwraps it and looks at the front page. After a moment, she tosses the paper on the porch.)

(JACK appears in the doorway, looking a bit worse for wear.)

JACK

All clear?

LISA

Yep. Except the tree. We'll need to take care of that.

JACK

I'll make coffee.

(JACK disappears inside the house. TINA appears on the sidewalk downstage left.)

TINA

Morning.

LISA

Morning.

TINA

My precision planning pays off, as usual. No damage to report. Except your tree did not remain celibate last night. Definitely a degree of sodomy. We're lucky, though. Right?

LISA

I guess.

TINA

I thought for sure we'd lose power, but everything's fine. No blinking alarm clocks. I think we dodged a bullet.

(LISA is clearly not in the mood for chitchat, but TINA keeps trying.)

TINA – CON'T.

There's flooding and downed wires all over the place. We should stay close to home, today, you know? Don't want to win any Darwin awards for surfing through electrified puddles ... Jack up?

LISA

Uh-huh. Making coffee.

TINA

OK, say hi for me. And take care of your tree.

(TINA exits stage left.)

(JESS appears in the doorway and makes eye contact with LISA, who looks away.)

JESS

Morning.

LISA

Morning ...

(JESS gingerly walks onto the porch, picks up the paper, takes a seat and begins to read.)

(JACK joins JESS on the porch with coffee mugs in his hands. He hands JESS a mug.)

JESS

Thank you.

(LISA climbs up to the porch and she and JACK take their seats and grab sections of the paper. They all sit quietly for a moment, reading and sipping.)

JESS – CON'T.

(quotes the paper)

Predicting Irene's strength proves difficult.

(no response; another try)

Damage and flooding scar Atlantic Seaboard.

JESS – CON'T.

(yet again)

Emergency assistance call centers overwhelmed; use 911 appropriately.

JACK

(quotes the paper)

Is this your cat?

JESS

Huh?

JACK

Seriously, is this your cat in *The Times*.

(reads)

Does this cat belong to you? Local reader Justine Barry found this sweet white and orange kitty in front of her apartment building today. If the cat is yours please email us at bklocal@nytimes.com.

(JACK holds up the paper so they can see the photo.)

JESS

That's sweet.

JACK

I think I'll check the bees.

(JACK rises and kisses LISA on top of her head. Then he notices the pith helmet sitting on the floor and places it on JESS's head. She looks especially grateful for this gesture and smiles a thank you at JACK. JACK exits the porch and enters the house.)

JESS

(reads to Lisa)

One climate-change projection is that the annual number of the most intense storms will double over the course of the 21st century.

LISA

(rubs her belly)

So much to look forward to.

(She speaks! JESS is grateful for this opening.)

JESS

I'm so sorry, Lisa. I didn't know how to tell you.

(no reply)

I tried everything. I really did.

(JESS doesn't know what to say next, and LISA clearly doesn't feel like talking. LISA never makes eye contact and continues reading. JESS takes her phone out of her pocket to make a call. She notices something, though, first.)

JESS – CON'T.

Oh, god.

LISA

What?

JESS

Jack posted that photo, with the champagne.

LISA

So?

JESS

He captioned it.

(LISA covers her eyes with her hand, bracing.)

JESS – CON'T.

“No, Dave. You are not invited.”

(LISA doesn't respond.)

JESS — CON'T.

(dials the phone)

Carlos? Hi, it's Jess in 3G. How are you? Good. I just want to make sure everything's OK. Really? The power didn't go out? OK, great. Thanks.

(JESS ends the call and puts her phone on the coffee table.)

JESS – CON'T.

So much for the great evacuation of Gotham. I'll check the train schedule.

(JACK returns to the porch. He carries his iPad with him.)

JACK

The bees are fine. I don't even think they got spooked. I hate to say I told you so ... but I told you so!

(JACK cracks up—of course he loves it—then retakes his seat and reads his iPad instead of the paper.)

JACK – CON'T.

There's no Metro North service. They're hoping to restore it by tomorrow. Maybe. It's all hands on deck out there.

JESS

Oh, I guess I'll have to stay tonight. Is that OK?

(LISA doesn't respond. JACK waits a beat before replying.)

JACK

We'll have a nice quiet day. Read the paper. Take a nap or two. Make some dinner ...

JESS

Sounds good. Thank you.

(JESS stands up and puts the pith helmet on LISA's head—it's a peace offering. LISA doesn't respond, but removes it from her head and puts it on the ground beside her chair.)

JACK

(per the paper)

There were a thousand National Guard troops in the city yesterday. And the nursing home on Burd Street had its roof blown off.

JESS

Isn't that right here?

JACK

A few blocks away.

JESS

You think we should go over there? See if they need help, maybe?

JACK

(re: his iPad)

First cat comment: I love her. Please let me know if she needs a home.

JESS

Makes me not hate all people.

JACK

Next comment: The cat is a gift from Olympus. Touched by Zeus.

JESS

Scratch that. I hate everyone. Present company excluded, of course ...

(JESS looks at LISA, and LISA manages a small smile.)

(The LIGHTS DIM on the porch to denote the passage of time. All the phones, iPads, etc. stay resting on the coffee table.)

(JACK lies down and naps on the couch.)

(LISA picks up the magazine section and works on the crossword puzzle.)

(JESS takes a seat on the top step, daydreaming.)

(The LIGHTS DIM some more and gradually COME UP inside the house, indicating that even more time has passed and it's now early EVENING.)

(JACK rises and lights some candles and lanterns on the porch.)

(LISA lies down on the couch for her nap.)

(JESS ambles down the walkway and stretches her arms up over her head. Then she falls forward and lets her head hang by her feet.)

(After this nice, quiet interlude a LOUD, DRONING NOISE sounds for a moment, like a switch being flipped at a power plant. The lights inside the house FLICKER and fade then the theater goes DARK, alighted only by the candles and lanterns on the porch.)

LISA

(jumps up from the couch)

Is that the power?

(JACK goes inside the house and soon re-emerges on the porch. JESS meets him and LISA there.)

JACK

Yep. Power's out.

(A SHADOW dances across the stage, reflecting the image of someone in motion across the street.)

JACK – CONT.

(to Lisa)

Where'd you put those flashlights?

LISA

They're here somewhere.

(LISA looks at her phone.)

LISA – CON'T.

I barely have any juice left.

(JACK and JESS find their phones and look at the screens, which light up like fireflies for a moment. Based on their reactions, they don't have much juice left either.)

(LISA, JESS and JACK look around the porch in search of the FLASHLIGHTS. Each finds one and turns it on.)

(A VERY LOUD noise sounds, startling them as A BRIGHT, KLIEG-TYPE LIGHT shines on the stage.)

JESS

What the hell is that?

(JACK walks downstage center down the walkway. He looks around in the dark but can't locate the source of the LOUD NOISE that sounds like a chorus of lawn mowers.)

(JACK shines his FLASHLIGHT in various places throughout the audience, searching across the street for the source of the noise.)

LISA

See anything?

(LISA and JESS join JACK downstage and help him search with their FLASHLIGHTS.)

JACK

I was afraid of that.

LISA

What?

JACK

It's a generator.

JESS

What? Where?

JACK

Between the houses. You can just make it out. Fucking rat faces. Gary must have loaned his to Dave.

LISA

That's what they were moving last night?

JESS

I thought it was a lawn mower.

JACK

That's a big one. Gotta be worth at least five grand.

JESS

What do they need it for?

JACK

They don't.

JESS

Then why is it on? And how long can it run?

JACK

As long as they keep it gassed.

LISA

Hours?

JACK

Yup.

LISA

Christ. What are we gonna do?

JESS

Besides try not to go deaf?

(JACK turns and heads back to the porch. The LIGHTS DIM and the HUM lowers a bit so the audience can stand it, but that doesn't mean it's changed for LISA, JESS and JACK, who return to the porch with the candles and lanterns. The KLIEG LIGHT continues to shine on them, symbolizing the continued noise of the generator.)

(It's a bit later. A hot, tired and cranky LISA and JESS play a game of Trivial Pursuit around the coffee table.)

(LISA picks up the pith helmet, puts it on her head and fans herself with a section of the newspaper while JACK and JESS share a bottle of wine. JACK stands on the top step, seething and watching the generator.)

LISA
(reads a card)

Who wrote *Common Sense*?

JESS
Shouldn't that be *Common Fenfe*?

LISA
Yes, good point. Who wrote *Common Fenfe*?

JESS
Thomas Paine.

LISA
Yup.
(to Jack)
You sure you don't want to play?

(JACK doesn't respond. He's too angry to move or talk. He just stares across the street.)

JESS
How long is this gonna go on?

LISA
It'd be fine if it weren't so damned hot and we could go inside. How are we gonna sleep if that thing stays on?

JESS
Do we have any idea what time it is?

LISA
It can't really stay on all night, can it?

(The generator SPUTTERS and stops. The KLIEG LIGHT DIMS, too.)

JESS
Finally.

(The SHADOW projects again across the stage. LISA, JESS and JACK watch the movements occurring across the street.)

LISA

You've got to be kidding me.

JESS

He's not gonna put it on again!

LISA

What are they using it for? Is it the baby?

(JACK doesn't respond.)

LISA – CON'T.

(to Jess)

Your move.

JESS

What about Kicking Bird? Does your glorious fetus not count? Her mother needs to get to sleep tonight.

(JACK walks downstage a few feet.)

LISA

Hunna, what are you doing?

(LISA rises and watches JACK.)

JACK

(to Dave/the audience)

You're gonna do us all a favor and kill that thing, right?

(JACK stands quietly and waits for a response. There isn't one.)

JACK – CON'T.

Come on, Dave. Do the right thing, here, Pal. Sorry about the tweets, OK? Neighbor?

(The generator FIRES back up and the KLIEG LIGHT glows again.)

(JACK waits a moment then stalks back to his chair and re-takes his seat.
JESS rolls the dice and moves her piece.)

JESS

Lisa?

(LISA returns to her seat and extracts a game card. But she's distracted and worried about what JACK might do.)

JESS
Entertainment.

LISA
(reads)
Who starred in the 1949 film version of *Roseanna McCoy*?

JESS
No clue.

LISA
Farley Granger.

JESS
Oh, he was in *Rope*. Love that movie.

JACK
That waste of five grand can only keep one room running. It's probably for the fridge.

LISA
Should I go over there and ask him to turn it off?

(JACK doesn't respond.)

LISA – CON'T.
Or call the police? They're disturbing the peace.

(LISA reaches for her phone but doesn't turn it on.)

JESS
We can't call them about this, can we? What about that nursing home and who knows what else is going on out there?

(LISA reluctantly slips her phone into her pocket.)

JACK
I can knock those sparkplugs out. A couple of good swings with my Louisville Slugger and that thing is silenced forever.

LISA
Don't you dare.

JACK
It'll take five seconds.

LISA

It's private property.

JACK

Which is disturbing my private property.

LISA

Great, so on top of everything you get arrested. Sounds like a great idea for a man about to have a child. Why don't I just go over there and talk to him?

JACK

Those assholes have been driving the entire neighborhood crazy with this thing for hours, and we have to live with it? How do you think Kicking Bird feels in there with all this noise? You think of that?

(JACK gets up and starts to walk inside his house.)

LISA

Stop it. Come back here. Wait! Do not get that bat. You hear me?

(JACK disappears inside the house.)

LISA – CON'T.

I'm serious!

(LISA just looks at the front door, watching after Jack.)

JESS

Are those things even safe?

LISA

Is it really so terrible to call the cops? I mean, that thing's gonna keep us up all night. I have to work in the morning.

JESS

I don't know, but they're dealing with stuff all over the place. Real stuff.

LISA

Yeah, well, this is just a very loud, irritating, sustained noise that's been going on for hours. Nothing to complain about, right?

(LISA hunches over in pain. JESS rises to her feet to help her.)

JESS

You OK?

LISA
(still hunched)

Yeah.

(bites her lip)

God she's strong.

(takes a moment to compose herself)

You know what? I'll text Gary. Maybe he'll come turn it off.

JESS

You don't want to just go over and ask?

LISA

I don't think Dave cares too much about our happiness, Jess. Especially after last night and, lest we forget, Jack's fondness for social media. Gary's a better bet.

(TINA appears downstage left, on the sidewalk in front of her house. She carries a lit FLASHLIGHT.)

TINA

Are you freaking kidding me with this thing? What an asshole.

SHANNON

(from offstage)

Tina, get back here!

(TINA ignores her.)

JESS

What can we do?

TINA

For starters, I can go over there and shoot that bloody thing. That ought to quiet it once and for all.

LISA

No you can't. And don't you dare say anything like that in front of Jack, you hear me? Tina?

(JACK reappears on the porch. He carries a bottle of bourbon and his baseball bat tucked under his arm. He puts the bottle on the coffee table and starts fondling the bat.)

TINA

(to Jack)

What do you want to do, Mate?

JACK

I want to kill that selfish bastard.

TINA

He's got a lot of nerve, that one.

LISA

Guys, stop it!

(JACK grabs the bottle, descends the steps and stands on the walkway. LISA waddles up behind him. He is not aware of her and might accidentally hit her with his bat, which he's swinging around like a windmill. He sets up to take a real swing.)

JACK

One quick smash and that thing is toast.

(JACK just misses LISA with the bat.)

LISA

(backing off)

I'm warning you.

(SHANNON appears on the edge of the sidewalk, under the tipped tree. She whispers loudly.)

SHANNON

Tina! Get back here. Now!

(LISA retrieves her phone from her pocket and turns it on.)

LISA

That's it. I'm gonna text Gary and tell him to come shut it off. Everyone just calm down and let's give this a minute, OK?

(to Jack re: the bat)

Put that away. Do you hear me?

(texts on her phone)

I'm gonna ask Gary to turn it off.

JACK

You're going to ask him?

(in a high-pitched, mocking voice)

Ooohh, please, Gary, come turn off your little torture chamber. We'd all really appreciate it if you'd be so kind.

LISA

OK, I'll *tell* him to turn it off.

JACK

Never gonna happen.

LISA

(texting and reading as she types)

How's this? Gary, would you please turn off the generator? It's really loud and we need to sleep. Work tomorrow. Thanks.

JESS

Great. Send it.

SHANNON

Tina!

TINA

(to Shannon)

Babe, go home!

LISA

Sent.

(re: her phone)

Shit, my battery's almost dead.

JACK

If he's not here in ten minutes, the bat and I are going over. Or maybe even the gun. Tina, would you go get that little beauty, please?

TINA

On it.

LISA

Tina! Don't you dare!

(TINA disappears off stage left and heads home. SHANNON follows.)

SHANNON

(loud whisper)

I told you not to get involved!

LISA

(furiously to Jack)

You know what? If you weren't so loud talking about how much you hate them all the time, this wouldn't be happening.

JACK

Oh, please ... you think this is my fault?

LISA

Maybe this is a little fuck you to you. And well deserved if you ask me.

JACK

Give me a break.

LISA

Your twitter rants about another breeder bringing unwanted children into the neighborhood?

JACK

It's true!

LISA

Your Facebook posts about "DIY fails" showing pictures of people's houses?

JACK

Beyond educational!

LISA

Never mind the fact that you've been sitting on the porch for months—drinking and getting angrier and angrier ... How late were you up last night and how loud was the music?

JACK

You couldn't hear anything over the wind.

LISA

I heard it. It was loud and it was late. And you were drunk.

JACK

It was Saturday night. Forgive me for having a few friends over for a little fun.

LISA

If you weren't such a jerk we could just go over there, knock on the door and ask Dave to turn it off. But because you've been such a, a *Neanderthal*, we can't even do that.

(LISA nervously checks her phone. JACK takes a swig of bourbon out of the bottle.)

JACK

Seven minutes.

(JACK swings the bat with one hand as the other holds the bottle. He's starting to get really wobbly.)

(IRENE arrives from downstage right.)

IRENE

Hi, Guys. Do you have any earplugs I can borrow?

(IRENE stops when she realizes there's a whole lot of drama going on.)

LISA

This isn't funny, Jack. I am so not amused.

IRENE

What's going on?

(JACK takes the pith helmet off LISA's head and walks farther down the walkway with his bottle and his bat, looking a bit like Joe Don Baker in *Walking Tall*. He ignores IRENE.)

JACK

I agree. None of this is funny. It's a public fucking nuisance. That's what it is.

(JACK puts the pith helmet on his head.)

JESS

(clearly nervous)

It's a little funny. Let's not go overboard.

IRENE

Can someone please tell me what's going on? Are you really playing baseball right now?

JACK

Go home, Irene.

(IRENE stays put—and hurt—on the sidewalk, trying to figure out what's happening.)

LISA

(to Jess)

What would be overboard? Calling the cops, or letting him get arrested for trespassing? Or destroying someone's property?

JACK

They're destroying my quality of life!

LISA

That would be great; probably send me into an early labor. We can frame your mug shot over Kicking Bird's crib! How would you like that?

JACK

I'd love it! Then she'd know her father didn't take any shit.

(JACK puts the bottle on the ground and takes a few full swings with the bat, warming up. IRENE quickly scoots backward and away from him.)

JACK – CON'T.

I could sure use that gun right about now. Just go over there and spray a bunch of bullets through that ratface's window.

(JACK holds the bat like a shotgun and makes loading and shooting motions and noises.)

IRENE

What the hell is happening?

JACK

Pop. Pop. Pop. Pop goes the little rat-faced weasel.

LISA

OK, that's it. I'm calling the police. They can see you!

JESS

Really? You're gonna call the cops? You can't call the cops.

JACK

Five minutes!

(LISA dials 911. JESS watches nervously while JACK makes more shotgun gestures with his bat and drinks more bourbon.)

JESS

(helpless)

Jack, come on. Stop it.

LISA

(to Jess)

Would you go down there and keep him still? Do not let him take one step off our property. Irene? Help her!

(JESS pauses, afraid, then heads down the walkway and takes JACK's arm. He shakes himself free of her and she stands awkwardly beside him. She has no idea what to do. JACK takes another step toward the street and, this time, JESS grabs him and holds on.)

JESS

Irene, grab him!

(IRENE doesn't know what to do, either. But she warily and weakly comes forward and takes hold of JACK's other arm. JACK sways as JESS and IRENE try to keep him steady—and put.)

(LISA stands on the top step and makes sure JACK can hear her conversation with the police.)

LISA

(into the phone)

Hello, yes. I know you're extremely busy tonight with very important problems ... but I have a question. Lisa Wilson. Ten Maple Street. Yes, the house across the street has been running a generator all night. It's very disturbing. I hate to bother you, but ... no, we don't feel comfortable asking them. OK, great. Thank you. Thank you so much.

(LISA ends the call.)

LISA – CON'T.

They're sending a car. Get back up here. Five-to-ten minutes. Hunna? That's it. Just a little while longer and this will be over.

JACK

Three fucking minutes ... Tina, where are you? Get over here.

(TINA runs over to them from stage left and joins JACK, IRENE and JESS on the walkway. She shows JACK her gun, which she wears in a holster hidden beneath her oversized, men's button-down shirt.)

(IRENE sees the gun, lets go of JACK's arm and makes a mad dash out of there. But she stops and waits a few feet away. SHANNON runs out behind TINA.)

SHANNON

I'm not kidding! Get back here! You're acting crazy.

LISA

The cops are coming, Tina. Let them handle it.

TINA

The cops never help. They just get in the way.

(LISA starts waddling down the walkway to meet them. She carries her phone with her.)

JACK

These are the times in life when you have to take matters into your own hands. It's the only way this entitled prick is gonna learn his lesson.

LISA

No, it's not!

JACK

I am so tired of these animals who get to behave like shit all over the place and there's nothing I can do. That we can do.

LISA

This is not your job!

JACK

This is my job. This is my number one job, Lisa, to protect my family... my house, my property. This is my a-number one, full-time, everyday job.

(JACK holds out his hand to TINA.)

LISA

Don't you dare, Tina!

(JACK takes the gun out of TINA's holster and she lets him. He looks at it then makes a few mock shots with it, aiming across the street.)

JACK

Pow! Pow! Pow!

(SHANNON grabs TINA and tries to drag her away from JACK. IRENE runs away. LISA reaches for the gun and a struggle ensues.)

LISA

Give it to me! Jack! Give it to me!

(JESS runs away, too, back up to the porch.)

LISA – CON'T.

The cops are gonna be here any minute. Put that away!

(JACK wrestles the gun away from LISA, nearly knocking her to the ground, and aims it at the generator across the street. He doesn't realize that he nearly knocked down his wife.)

(SHANNON helps steady LISA on her feet.)

JACK

Year after year, you put your head down, you do your job, and you just keep getting fucked in the ass again and again and again by a bunch of no-good animals.

(JACK cocks the gun and looks over his shoulder as he speaks.)

JACK – CON'T.

I work twenty-five years for a place. Twenty-five years, and they fire me? They let me go because of a number on a spreadsheet? They don't even care about my name? What I've done after all that time?

TINA

OK, Jack. That's enough. Give it here.

(to Shannon; a plea)

Babe?

(SHANNON approaches and stands beside JACK.)

JACK

The only way to stop this thing is to do it ourselves. You know that, right?

(to Tina)

No one else seems to know that.

(JACK sways a bit and LISA slowly approaches and reaches out to him, trying to keep him steady. She puts her hand on his shoulder and her head down. She might be sobbing. SHANNON holds out her hand.)

SHANNON

Not tonight, Jack.

LISA

Let the police take care of it. Please.

JACK

They are not more important than us. You hear me? They're not more important than you or me. Or Kicking Bird ...

(JACK looks at LISA and appears as though he's going to hand over the gun. But at the last moment he aims it in the sky and SHOOTS, shocking

everyone. He shoots it because he can, and because that's about all he can do.)

(The BABY CRIES and the LIGHTS COME UP in DAVE's house across the street.)

(JACK lowers the gun. TINA and LISA back away.)

(SHANNON still holds her hand out to JACK. She never moved—or flinched.)

SHANNON

You're right. They're not more important. But you have to stop now. That's what you can do.

(JACK gives her the gun and SHANNON heads back to her house.)

(The generator SPUTTERS a moment then shuts down, going silent once again. The BRIGHT KLIEG LIGHT softens on the porch.)

(The RED LIGHT of a police siren swirls across the stage like a strobe.)

(TINA runs off back to her house, and JACK takes his bottle and his bat and skedaddles up the walkway, atop the steps, and disappears inside the house. He blows right past JESS.)

(JESS waits at the top of the steps and watches as LISA composes herself then greets the POLICEMAN downstage right.)

LISA

Hi, I'm the one who called. Thanks for coming.

(LISA and the COP gather at downstage right while JESS watches from the steps. We can't hear their conversation.)

(JACK joins JESS on the porch, without the bat. She stiffens and moves away from him. Just a little.)

(The HEADLIGHTS of another car dance across the stage. It's driving down the street toward them.)

(JACK and JESS continue to watch LISA and the COP and now GARY'S arrival. A car door SLAMS and Gary's SHADOW sweeps across the stage.)

(The police car's RED LIGHTS activate again as it drives away.)

(LISA comes up the walkway and rejoins JESS and JACK on the porch.)

LISA
Talk about impeccable timing.

JESS
That's Gary?

LISA
He just stood there, watching.
(sardonically)
I'm pretty sure he knows we called the police.
(to Jack)
You are so lucky they didn't hear that gunshot.

JESS
What'd the cop say?

LISA
Nothing he can do.

JESS
Is he gassing that thing again?

(LISA, JESS and JACK just stand there, looking across the street.)

(Gary's SHADOW hovers over the generator.)

JESS – CON'T.
Here we go.

JACK
That's it!

(JACK makes a quick motion to jump off the porch and race across the street to attack Gary but LISA and JESS reach out and try to hold him back. He stumbles down the steps and falls to the ground.)

LISA
No! Jack!

(LISA and JESS follow Jack onto the yard and pick him up. It takes a while.)

LISA – CON'T.

You're alright. It's OK.

(JACK shakes them off and stands on his own. They just watch him. Defeated, he retreats to the porch and slumps in a chair.)

JESS

(to Lisa)

How long can this go on?

JACK

It can go on forever. Because they're Gary and Dave. And all those animals who do anything they please in this world. And we're just the peons who let them get away with it.

(JACK reaches over to the sound system and turns on the MUSIC. Softly, this time.)

(With nothing else to do, JESS retakes her seat.)

(The HEADLIGHTS of Gary's car drive off, shining across the stage as they go.)

JACK – CON'T.

(mockingly waves across the street)

Bye, Gary! Thanks for being such a helluva good neighbor! See you at the potluck!

LISA

Wait a minute. Shut that off.

JESS

What?

LISA

Turn it down.

(JESS shuts off the music. There is complete silence. Gary left the generator turned off. LISA, JESS and JACK listen to the silence for a moment.)

LISA – CON'T.

It's gone.

(JACK takes LISA's empty glass and pours her a sip of wine, like nothing ever happened.)

JACK

About fucking time.

JESS

Hallelujah. Is that it?

(They just look at each other.)

JESS – CON'T.

(to Lisa)

Should we play?

(LISA picks up the dice and, all of a sudden, the power comes back on. The LIGHTS inside the house flicker once or twice and then stay on for good. After a moment, LISA rolls the dice and moves her piece.)

LISA

History ...

(JESS picks up a card.)

JESS

(reads)

What was the date of the official end of the Civil War?

LISA

April 1865.

JESS

The specific date.

LISA

You mean it's over? I had no idea.

JESS

April 18th.

(JESS picks up the dice and holds them out to JACK.)

JESS – CON'T.

You want a turn?

(JACK holds out a hand to LISA, but she doesn't take it. JACK pauses, then takes the dice from JESS and rolls them. JESS and JACK look at each other but LISA looks away.)

JESS – CON'T.

Mmm, that breeze feels nice.

JACK

Yeah, it's finally cooling off. We can sleep with the air-conditioning tonight.

(JACK moves his piece around the board.)

JESS

What a relief.

(JACK lands his piece on the board.)

JACK

OK, tell me something about science and nature, you animals ...

(LISA turns her head even farther away.)

(The LIGHTS FADE and go out.)

THE END