

TOO CLOSE TO HOME

A Play in One Act

By

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CHARACTERS

CONSTANCE HILL: 60. Former teacher living with her husband in the same house in which they raised their three children.

GENE HILL: 60. Retired businessman.

SHELLEY HILL: 37. The eldest child of Constance and Gene. Long history of mental illness. Lives near her parents in an assisted-living facility.

BOBBY HILL: 34. Lives with his wife and daughter in a nearby town.

ABBY HILL: 32. The youngest daughter. Single. Lives in Los Angeles, a plane ride far away from her immediate family.

SETTING

Constance and Gene Hill's suburban house, somewhere in the Northeast. The open kitchen and living room space is nicely appointed. Well off but not overtly so. Homey and comfortable without being precious, cluttered or bland.

TIME

A few days in the present.

SCENE I: Tuesday

(The sunset over leafless trees in the backyard is visible through a large bay window. It's late afternoon in late fall.)

(CONSTANCE is home alone, putting the finishing touches on her elaborate cocktail hour set-up. Awaiting company on the coffee table in the spacious living room are several bottles of wine, a cheese plate and hors d'oeuvres. Should she put out more napkins or will there be enough? What about plates and utensils? Regardless of the answer, she's overdone it quite a bit.)

(CONSTANCE surveys the liquor bottles on the bar cart, making sure there are plenty of both brown and clear options, as well as enough ice cubes in the ice bucket.)

(CONSTANCE hums to herself, excited about the imminent arrival. After a few moments, her husband, GENE, and their daughter, ABBY, appear on the stoop. GENE slides a key in the front door. CONSTANCE claps her hands together in unadulterated joy. GENE and ABBY join her inside the house; GENE carries ABBY's suitcase.)

GENE

Connie? We're home!

(CONSTANCE rushes to meet them at the front door.)

CONSTANCE

Abby!

(CONSTANCE throws her arms—and much of herself—around ABBY.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Oh, Abby. My baby's home! I'm so happy my baby's home. Look at you!

(CONSTANCE leans away for a moment to take a look at her daughter.)

CONSTANCE— CON'T.

You have no idea how happy I am to see you.

GENE

(to Abby)

We both are, Sweetheart.

(CONSTANCE wraps her arms around her daughter once again.)

CONSTANCE

You have no idea!

ABBY

Actually, I think I do.

CONSTANCE

It feels like forever since I've seen you.

ABBY

It's only been four months, you guys. It hasn't been that long.

(CONSTANCE peppers ABBY with kisses and holds her close.)

CONSTANCE

That's too long. Isn't that too long, Daddy?

GENE

Alright, Con. That's enough. You'll scare her off.

CONSTANCE

I will not!

GENE

It's bad enough she lives clear across the country.

CONSTANCE

Oh, she's happy to be here. Even if it's only for a little while.

(CONSTANCE pinches ABBY's cheeks and talks to her like she's a child—or a pet.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Aren't you happy to be home with your mommy and daddy? Yes, you are!

ABBY

(through pinched cheeks)

Are you asking me now or the 10-year-old version of me?

CONSTANCE

Oh, indulge an old lady. It's so good to have you here. You have no idea.

(GENE kisses ABBY on top of her head, takes her coat and disappears with her bag.)

GENE

I'll put this in your room. Wait, Shelley's room, right?

CONSTANCE

That's right. She'll sleep in Shelley's room tonight.

ABBY

Thanks, Dad.

(CONSTANCE takes her daughter's hand and leads her toward the food and the bar cart.)

CONSTANCE

It's so good to see you!

ABBY

You, too, Mom.

CONSTANCE

Really? Good. Now, what would you like, Honey? Some cheese and crackers? Are you hungry? Or, how about some wine? I got that Sancerre you liked last time.

ABBY

Can I have a martini?

(CONSTANCE likes her question and claps her hands and whoops.)

CONSTANCE

You most certainly may! I'll have one, too. We all could use a stiff drink around here. I'll have Daddy make us one.

(calls out to him)

Gene? Where are you? Hurry. Abby wants a martini and I do, too. Would you get in here, please?

(grabs Abby's hands and sits on the couch)

Come here, sit with me.

(CONSTANCE pulls ABBY down on the couch beside her.)

GENE

(from offstage)

Be right there.

ABBY

I can make them.

(CONSTANCE shakes her head no. She is practically on top of her daughter. There is little space between them. ABBY tries to inch away but to no avail. It's kind of funny.)

CONSTANCE

So, how was your flight?

ABBY

Fine.

CONSTANCE

Yes, well, of course it was. Daddy found you OK? At the airport?

ABBY

I'm here, aren't I?

CONSTANCE

You know what I mean. Don't be such a wise guy. I just want to make sure everything's OK.

ABBY

Everything's fine.

CONSTANCE

I worry about you. You have no idea how much I worry about you. All of you.

ABBY

Everything's OK. Promise. There's nothing to worry about.

CONSTANCE

Good, good ... and work is good?

ABBY

Which work?

CONSTANCE

Oh, I don't care. The acting. The real job. What's the difference?

ABBY

Yes, work is good.

CONSTANCE

And your apartment? Did they fix the heat? It's going to get cold soon. The beach gets cold in winter.

ABBY

I live in the Valley, now, remember?

CONSTANCE

Right, right. The Valley.

ABBY

You know I like Sancerre but you don't know where I live?

CONSTANCE

Oh, I know where you live, Abby. Come on ...

ABBY

And, yes, I am aware that L.A. gets chilly in winter. I'm all set. No need to worry.

(CONSTANCE is clearly angling toward something and ABBY is clearly waiting for it. CONSTANCE keeps patting ABBY's hand.)

CONSTANCE

Good, good. So ... are you going to see Bobby while you're here?

ABBY

I hope so.

CONSTANCE

So, you spoke with him? He knows you're here?

ABBY

Of course.

CONSTANCE

Oh, good.

ABBY

He's going to try to come over tomorrow.

CONSTANCE

Good, good ... It's good you talk to your brother. God forbid he calls us. I don't know what goes on over there that he can't bring himself to call us.

(GENE joins them in the living room.)

GENE

Connie ...

ABBY

(meekly, and now visibly squirming, which only prompts her mother to hold her tighter)

Can we please not talk about Bobby?

CONSTANCE

(to Gene)

Can't I talk to my daughter in peace?

GENE

No one's trying to stop you. Just, *behave* ...

CONSTANCE

(to Abby)

Can't we gossip just a little? It's been ages since I've seen you.

ABBY

Not if you're going to bitch about Bobby.

CONSTANCE

OK, OK. We won't talk about Bobby. Promise. It's just very frustrating that he doesn't call.

GENE

He calls ...

CONSTANCE

He calls you. He doesn't call me.

GENE

He calls both of us.

CONSTANCE

No, Gene, he calls you. But only because you call him so much he has to call you back. You force him to call you.

GENE

He calls me because he wants to. I'm his father. We have a very nice relationship. Kind of like 'don't talk about anything substantial'—for dummies. You should try it.

CONSTANCE

Oh, please. You smother him. You know you do. You like to pretend you've mellowed, that you're the calm one now, but you're not. Still type-A all the way!

(ABBY manages to squirm free of her mother and walk over to the bar cart. She and GENE share a look—what can you do?)

ABBY

I can make the drinks.

(ABBY reaches for the martini shaker, glasses and ice bucket and starts to make their cocktails.)

ABBY – CON'T.

Gin. Right, Mom?

CONSTANCE

Always, my dear. As you well know, vodka does not a martini make.

ABBY

Dad?

GENE

Thanks, Honey. But I can do it.

(GENE moves toward her but ABBY holds out an arm to keep him at bay.)

ABBY

I got it.

(ABBY mixes the drinks in silence while CONSTANCE tries to think of what to say next. She rises and stands next to ABBY, watching her. Again, and always, too close.)

CONSTANCE

No, no, Honey. You have to use less vermouth. Just a tiny smidge—a pinky nail's worth—around the glass. Here, let me do it ...

(CONSTANCE tries to take the glass away from ABBY but ABBY manages to hold on.)

ABBY

I got it. Would you ... please ... just ... both of you.

GENE

Connie ...

(CONSTANCE holds up her hands in surrender and wanders back to the sofa to retake her seat.)

CONSTANCE

OK, OK. Just trying to help. Excuse me for living.

(ABBY finishes making and pouring the cocktails and hands one to her father and one to her mother then holds out her glass to clink with theirs. It's a peace offering.)

(CONSTANCE waits for GENE to cheer ABBY and then clinks her glass, too, grateful to her daughter for her forgiveness.)

GENE

(changing the subject)

So, how's work?

(ABBY looks at him as if to ask, which job?)

GENE — CON'T.

The new one. The paying one.

ABBY

Good. That Op-Ed I wrote is going to publish soon.

CONSTANCE

Oh, Abby!

ABBY

It's just a small one ...

CONSTANCE

That's wonderful!

ABBY

For a local website.

CONSTANCE

Just wonderful. They are so lucky to have you.

ABBY

Well, we'll see about that.

GENE

As long as the fella who signs your paycheck is happy. That's what's important.

ABBY

I think *she* is.

GENE

That's all that matters.

ABBY

She only had a couple of revisions, so that's good.

CONSTANCE

(raising her glass)

Good for you, Honey. Such a smart girl. I knew you'd find yourself in a good place. Eventually.

GENE

You've been there now, what? Three months?

ABBY

Four. But I'm still acting. Still going on auditions.

GENE

Four months. That's good.

ABBY

I'm committed. Which is why I can only stay a few days ...

GENE

We'll take what we can get. We're just happy to see you.

CONSTANCE

Lots of changes, Abs. You handle change well. No fuss, no muss. Just get on with it. Move forward.

ABBY

I have to make a living, right? I can't let you guys buy my plane tickets forever.

CONSTANCE

You really got the best of us, you know that? Of your father and me? Bobby's a good kid, of course. But you got the best mix. Shelley, well ...

(ABBY thinks she should say something but doesn't know how to respond. She hides behind her glass, takes a sip and looks embarrassed.)

GENE

(raising his glass)

Congratulations, Sweetheart.

ABBY

Thanks, Dad.

(They all sip their drinks and try to think of what to say next.)

CONSTANCE

I'm so glad you weren't here for all that mess.

ABBY

I'm sorry...

CONSTANCE

That anesthesiologist? Boy, did he make a stink.

GENE

Con, not now.

CONSTANCE

Refused to gas her. I don't know what we would have done if your father hadn't convinced him.

GENE

It took a while, but he came around.

CONSTANCE

She was yelling and kicking—she actually kicked the anesthesiologist. Can you believe that?

GENE

She didn't *kick* him ...

CONSTANCE

She did so! I was there. You weren't. You were in the bathroom.

GENE

I was there, Connie. Come on. I wasn't in the damn bathroom.

CONSTANCE

(to Abby)

She kept yelling, 'I don't want the operation! I don't want the operation!' The poor man was afraid of her.

GENE

He wasn't *afraid* of her ... why do you insist on making things worse than they are?

CONSTANCE

(ignoring him; still to Abby)

You know how she can be when she gets something in her head. Relentless! We had to wait five hours to re-do the paperwork and convince the guy to give her the damn gas. I was like Shirley MacLaine in that movie—“give my daughter the gas! My daughter needs the gas!” Remember that?

(ABBY doesn't.)

GENE

She has problems, but she's harmless. You have to take it easy on her, Con.

CONSTANCE

(to Abby)

I'm so glad you weren't here, Sweetie. I have enough to worry about your sister to have to worry about you, too.

(Long beat as they all look at the floor and try to think of what to say next.)

ABBY

Well, I'm here now.

CONSTANCE

Yes, you're here now. That's what matters. Shelley can't wait to see you. She's so excited to see her little sister. You need to spend time with her; to be there for her. That's all I ask.

(CONSTANCE rises from the couch and prepares a plate for ABBY.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

Look, Abs, I got those olives you like. With the pits.

ABBY

Oh, good. Thanks.

CONSTANCE

I don't usually buy olives with pits. I like them without pits. But I got them for you.

ABBY

Thanks, Mom.

CONSTANCE

I don't know why you insist on those pits when all they do is get in the way.

ABBY

They keep the flavor. And I don't *insist*.

CONSTANCE

Then you have to bite around the pit and take the pit out of your mouth and throw the pit out.

GENE

Heaven forbid!

(GENE and ABBY share a knowing smile.)

CONSTANCE

Or pile them up in a poor old cocktail napkin. That's a lot of work for one lousy olive, if you ask me.

ABBY

Are you serious?

(to her father)

Is she serious?

GENE

She's your mother.

ABBY

She's your wife. I had no choice in the matter.

CONSTANCE

Why burden yourself with just another thing to have to do? Seems like a waste of time to me.

GENE

You're unbelievable, Con. You know that?

CONSTANCE

Me? Why's that?

GENE

Because you're *so* busy ...

CONSTANCE

I am. I look out for everyone around here.

GENE

Oh, and I don't?

CONSTANCE

What do you have to do except play golf, pay the bills and take Shelley to lunch on Sundays? I take her to the doctor, the dentist, the eye doctor ...

GENE

I handle all her disability and social security ...

ABBY

And they're off!

(ABBY turns away. Clearly, she's heard this all before.)

ABBY — CON'T.

Can't you find other things to talk about? How about books? Read any good books lately?

CONSTANCE

Your father doesn't read.

GENE

What are you talking about? Of course I read. I read every day ...

CONSTANCE

The *Wall Street Journal* doesn't count. She means books. Literature.

ABBY

Would you please stop?

CONSTANCE

Oh, don't be so sensitive. Daddy didn't mean it. We're just kidding.

GENE

Daddy didn't mean what?!?

(ABBY puts her hands over her ears and makes "la la la" sounds like she's a little kid blocking them out.)

CONSTANCE

Alright, alright Gene, change the subject.

GENE

What would you like to discuss, Con?

ABBY

Can we please just have a nice normal night and keep it light? Please? That's all I ask.

GENE

Of course. We always do.

CONSTANCE

I thought that was what we were doing. Keeping it light.
(mostly to herself)

Excuse me for living.

(A moment of quiet as everyone tries to think of what to do or say next.)

(GENE sticks an olive in his mouth and bites down on the pit. He grimaces, groans and removes it from his mouth.)

GENE

Oh, Christ!

CONSTANCE

What'd you do? I told you there were pits in there.
(rising to help her husband; to Abby)
See? Daddy's hurt! Those pits are very dangerous.

ABBY

Oh, my God. Can you just stop with the pits?

GENE

I could have broken a tooth.

CONSTANCE

Oh, stop whining. It doesn't matter.

GENE

What do you mean it doesn't matter?

CONSTANCE

You don't have any teeth left to break.

GENE

What are you talking about? I still have three of my own on top and five on the bottom.

CONSTANCE

You have two on the top and six on the bottom. Don't you listen to Dr. Arnold when you see him?

(to Abby)

He doesn't even know how many teeth he has in his head. Did you ever? I have to keep track of everything around here.

ABBY

You OK, Dad?

GENE

Yeah, I'm OK.

(to Constance)

At least someone around here gives a crap about me.

CONSTANCE

Why are you always so sensitive?

(CONSTANCE takes the evil pit from her husband and wraps it in a cocktail napkin. She walks over to the kitchen and tosses it in the garbage.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Did we tell you about your brother's *wife* ...?

ABBY

Yes, Mom. Several times.

CONSTANCE

One time in how many years she has to deal with your sister? And she can't even handle that. Karen was so bothered. So put out. Like we don't have enough to deal with with Shelley, and she's gotta hang a puss ... she never visited her in the hospital. Not once! Can you believe that?

ABBY

Sorry I wasn't here.

CONSTANCE

I know, Sweetie. But there wasn't anything you could have done. Shelley looked terrible. If you had seen her.

GENE

You're here now.

CONSTANCE

We'll let you know if we need you. Believe me; we'll let you know. Shelley's been out nearly a week and Karen hasn't even called her. Not once!

GENE

Connie ...

CONSTANCE

You'll all have plenty of time to deal with all of this after we're gone. That is, of course, if I ever die. Which I won't.

GENE

Me neither.

CONSTANCE

Hear, hear.

(CONSTANCE raises her glass to GENE, who raises his, too, and they sip their drinks.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

But that doctor, he's something else. Isn't he something else, Gene?

(CONSTANCE heads over to the kitchen and checks on the oven.)

GENE

Dr. Akbar? Yes.

GENE/CONSTANCE

A nice Indian fella/He's from Pakistan.

CONSTANCE

He's Pakistani.

GENE

He is?

CONSTANCE

The chicken needs more time. He's the loveliest man. He must take very good care of his parents. Very thoughtful and concerned. Alert.

ABBY

Alert?

CONSTANCE

Yes, you know? With it.

ABBY

That's a funny word to use.

CONSTANCE

Why must you be so critical?

ABBY

I'm not critical. That's just an odd word for an oncologist. It's like you're describing a watchdog.

CONSTANCE

Well, when I was teaching we would describe with-it children as being alert.

ABBY

People don't say that anymore, Mom.

CONSTANCE

I'm not *people*. I'm your mother.

GENE

What your mother is saying is Dr. Akbar ...

CONSTANCE

Akhtar.

GENE

I thought it was Akbar?

CONSTANCE

It's Dr. Akhtar, Gene.

GENE

OK, *Akhtar*, he's not like most doctors. Maybe because he's from India.

CONSTANCE

Pakistan.

GENE

Whatever!

CONSTANCE

He's very young.

GENE

Thirty-five, thirty-six, maybe.

CONSTANCE

Maybe he became a doctor to actually help people. Imagine that? It must be generational.

ABBY

Like being alert?

CONSTANCE

Exactly. Wise guy.

ABBY

What does he say? About Shelley?

CONSTANCE

We don't know. He hopes he got it all, but ...

GENE

We won't know till he calls.

ABBY

When is he supposed to call?

CONSTANCE

Any minute. It's supposed to be, anyway. Your father has called and called ... I don't know why he isn't ... Gene, are you sure he hasn't called?

GENE

Con, I promise he hasn't called.

(to Abby)

Can you believe she thinks I could keep this from her?

CONSTANCE

She just thought we would have heard by now.

GENE

No response. How do you not call back? We're worried over here.

ABBY

Maybe he doesn't have the results yet. Maybe he's on vacation? There could be a million reasons.

CONSTANCE

It's not like him. He's been so responsive ... When that anesthesiologist didn't want to gas her, Dr. Akhtar was very helpful. He talked him into it; assured him everything was going to be OK.

GENE

I did, too. I talked to the fella. I took care of it.

CONSTANCE

Well, she did kick the poor man. He thought she was crazy.

Constance ...
 GENE
 Well, she *is* crazy.
 ABBY
 Abby ...
 GENE
 It's true, Gene. Our daughter is nuts. That's what paranoid schizophrenics are.
 CONSTANCE
 What a stupid thing to say. She's your daughter.
 GENE
 Don't forget the OCD ...
 ABBY
 Oh, right. And the depression ...
 CONSTANCE
 (ABBY and CONSTANCE share a small laugh.)
 GENE
 That's enough.
 CONSTANCE
 Never lose your sense of humor, kids, no matter what. That's what my mother always used to say.
 GENE
 Oh, and she was hilarious, that one.
 CONSTANCE
 Don't you start on my mother ...
 GENE
 I have work to do. Call me when dinner's ready.
 (GENE kisses ABBY on top of her head.)
 GENE — CON'T.
 And take it easy on our youngest, Con. Don't run her off.
 CONSTANCE
 Don't be ridiculous ...

GENE

We only have her three days; it's bad enough she had to up and move three-thousand miles away.

CONSTANCE

We're just having a conversation.

(GENE disappears into his office. After he's gone ...)

ABBY

What work does he have to do?

CONSTANCE

You think I know what he does in there? I don't care what he does. He goes there, I stay here. How else do you think we've stayed married all these years?

ABBY

That's the spirit.

CONSTANCE

He watches his money, I guess; up and down, up and down ... thank God I let him turn your bedroom into an office. You're OK in Shelley's room, right?

ABBY

It's fine.

CONSTANCE

He spends all his time in there now, which is better for both of us, if you ask me. And we have so much crap loaded into Bobby's room—you would not believe! There's no place for a bed in there anymore. How in the world did we ever accumulate so much junk? I swear, one day I'm going to get rid of everything. Just throw it in a great big heap out in the yard and light it all on fire.

(CONSTANCE makes a motion with her hands like she's lighting a match in the sky.)

(ABBY pours more of the martini from the shaker into her mother's glass.)

ABBY

Here, Mom. This dividend's for you.

CONSTANCE

Dividend. You're funny. Thanks, Honey. I could use it.

(CONSTANCE tries to think of something to say.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

So ... any nice guys at that new job of yours?

ABBY

Maaaaa ...

CONSTANCE

Come on, tell me something good. Can't we have a conversation about something fun for a change? You have to know you're a rare source of happiness for me, Abby. Indulge your old mother. Please.

ABBY

There's nothing to tell at the moment.

CONSTANCE

At the moment. What does that mean? That something could happen in another moment?

ABBY

Mom!!!

CONSTANCE

Like a new boyfriend is imminent?

ABBY

It means nothing. No one. Understand?

CONSTANCE

Aw, you're no fun.

ABBY

And you're a pest.

CONSTANCE

You broke up with Alex a year ago already. It's time to get back out there. Don't you want to get married? Have children?

ABBY

I'm out there. But that doesn't mean the love of your life just miraculously materializes because you're out there. OK, we're done here. Next topic.

CONSTANCE

Daddy thinks you have a fear of commitment. Do you?

ABBY

No!

CONSTANCE

I'm just asking ... it's an innocent question.

ABBY

You haven't asked an innocent question since you spoke your first syllable. How many times do I have to tell you I don't want to talk about this?

CONSTANCE

I can't talk to you about Bobby. We can't talk about Alex. What can I talk to you about?

ABBY

Plenty. You just insist on choosing all the wrong things.

CONSTANCE

OK, wise guy. Why don't you give me a list of appropriate topics of conversation and I'll adhere to them very closely. Promise.

ABBY

That's a great idea. I'll get right on it.

CONSTANCE

And if you're going to continue behaving like a child, then I'm going to treat you like one.

(jokingly reaches for Abby's glass)

No more martinis for you.

ABBY

You're impossible ...

CONSTANCE

Well, that's what mothers are, Abs. Impossible. My mother was impossible and now I am, too, I suppose. To everything turn, turn ...

(tries again to get in her daughter's good graces)

I'm not that bad. Am I?

ABBY

Maybe you're not that bad.

(CONSTANCE takes a seat on the sofa and pats the space next to her.)

CONSTANCE

Come here, Sweetie. Have a seat next to your poor, old, impossible mother.

(ABBY does as she's told.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

(holds Abby's hand)

Can you do something for me?

ABBY

Of course ... what?

CONSTANCE

I need you to be very careful with Shelley tomorrow. We all have to be careful. If she so much as hears the word cancer, it's over. Finished. I'm telling you. I know my daughter.

ABBY

I know; I promise. I just...I can't believe she doesn't know.

CONSTANCE

Please. Be careful.

ABBY

I won't say a word. But when are you going to tell her?

CONSTANCE

As long as she keeps taking her medication, everything will be fine. The last thing we need is for her to flip out and go off her meds again. Hopefully, the scan will come back clean and that will be that.

ABBY

You think that's going to happen?

CONSTANCE

In all likelihood, Dr. Akhtar got everything. We have to believe that's true.

(They are both silent.)

ABBY

What does she think is happening?

CONSTANCE

That she had the hysterectomy and now she's fine.

ABBY

Well, she might be, right?

CONSTANCE

You can't imagine what I had to go through to convince her to get that surgery. It was a nightmare. 'No, no, no,' she said, over and over and over. Finally, I got her to agree.

ABBY

How?

CONSTANCE

I got so angry, I said, 'Shelley, if you don't have this operation you're going to have cancer! And then what will you do?'

ABBY

What did she say?

CONSTANCE

She said, 'I'll kill myself. I'll kill myself, Ma.' Just like that.

(CONSTANCE snaps her fingers and she and ABBY are quiet.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

The trick is the hormones. I don't know how long I can get her to keep taking them. More and more pills. You know how she is about more responsibility. She shuts down. More helpless. More childlike. Did I tell you about that woman at Whole Foods? She asked if Shelley had Down's. Down's, did you ever? And the hormones ... they're on top of the Clozaril and everything else she has to take. It's a lot. But she has to take it. She has to take all of it. I tell her all the time, 'Shelley you have one job to do: take your goddamn medication.'

ABBY

But the doctor thinks he got everything, right?

CONSTANCE

We don't know. He hasn't called. It was supposed to be yesterday. The scan was Friday. Can you imagine the weekend we had over here? Your father was a wreck.

ABBY

Well, I'm sure he'll call as soon as he knows anything. It's only Tuesday. Maybe he's getting a second opinion.

CONSTANCE

He's a nice man. I think he understands what we're dealing with. Hopefully, it will be a long, long time before you need to concern yourself with any of this. For now, you and Bobby are off the hook.

(patting her knee and rising)

Dinner should be ready. So, what movie are you taking her to?

ABBY

I have to see what's playing.

(CONSTANCE heads to the kitchen and starts setting the table.)

CONSTANCE

Would you get on that, please? She's so excited. She loves spending time with you, you know? You may not think so, but it means so much to have her little sister want to spend time with her.

ABBY

I know.

CONSTANCE

And you're so sweet. She tells me every time you call. 'Abby called today,' she says. I wish your dopey brother would call her. I don't know what goes on at that house that he can't bring himself to give a damn about his sister.

ABBY

He calls her.

CONSTANCE

What? Once a month? That's not enough.

ABBY

Bobby has a lot going on, Mom. He's got his job, his kid ...

CONSTANCE

So do we. You see what we're dealing with over here? You think your father's any help?

ABBY

He's patient.

CONSTANCE

Yes, I'll give him that. He's certainly more patient than I am. But he has no idea what's going on. It's like he doesn't even listen. You think he knows what stage 3 means? You think he'd look something up, for Chrissake. But I'm the one who's on the computer all the time, reading and researching. I'm her mother, Abs ...

ABBY

I know ...

CONSTANCE

You're a good kid, you know that? First my brother, now Shelley. My whole life ... and he blames me. Says it comes from my side of the family. Don't even get me started on *his* mother. She was a maniac. Always picking up after everyone all the time. You'd barely

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

step foot inside that house and she'd be on her hands and knees, wiping the ground after you. That one was downright bananas.

ABBY

Yes, Mother. I know. Grandmother Elizabeth was downright bananas.

CONSTANCE

It's true. She was!

ABBY

So you've said. Many, many, many, many times.

CONSTANCE

You don't believe me?

ABBY

I believe you.

CONSTANCE

You were too little when she died. You don't remember.

ABBY

I remember she gave me candy cigarettes.

CONSTANCE

You loved those awful things.

ABBY

I did. And I loved her for giving them to me.

CONSTANCE

You always did like pretending to be a grown-up. Stealing my *real* cigarettes when you were underage. Getting caught drinking beer in the park with your friends. Remember? I had to pick you up at that security booth?

ABBY

I don't remember that.

CONSTANCE

Ah, selective memory! How convenient.

ABBY

Yeah, well ... I turned out OK, didn't I?

CONSTANCE

Maybe you're alright ...

(They share a smile and a soft moment, then CONSTANCE continues preparing the table for dinner.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Do you know how glad I am you're here? Even if you won't give me any good gossip.

ABBY

I'm glad to be here, too, Mom.

CONSTANCE

Are you?

ABBY

Of course.

CONSTANCE

I wish it were under better circumstances. Can't you tell me something good? I wish we could have some good news around here for a change. That would make all this a little easier to take. Just a tiny bit easier.

ABBY

I wish I had some to give you. Can I help? With dinner?

CONSTANCE

Go get your father, that pain in the neck, and tell him it's ready. We'll have a nice, quiet dinner, and then your brother and sister will be here tomorrow and I won't let anything drive me crazy.

ABBY

Me, neither.

(holds out her hand)

Deal?

CONSTANCE

(shakes her daughter's hand)

Deal. I got us some nice steaks. Daddy will cook them and then Shelley and Bobby ... we'll have a nice meal. Just our family—together under one roof.

ABBY

Sounds good, Mom. But I'm a vegetarian, remember?

(CONSTANCE stops what she's doing but doesn't say anything.)

ABBY – CON'T.

It's fine. I can eat the sides. No problem.

CONSTANCE

We all have to do our best around here. Now go get Daddy.

ABBY

(yells without moving)

Dad! Come in for dinner!

SCENE II: Wednesday

(ABBY sits on the sofa, reading a paperback version of *The Glass Menagerie* when the front door opens. In walks her brother BOBBY, who has a key to the house. ABBY rises excitedly from the couch when she hears him.)

(BOBBY is a perfectly nice, salt-of-the-earth, mainstream kind of guy: Dad jeans, polo shirt and a baseball cap.)

Anybody home? BOBBY

Bobbo? ABBY

Abba! BOBBY

Bobbo! ABBY

Hey, Kiddo. How are you doing? BOBBY

(ABBY rushes over to her brother and gives him a hug.)

I'm so glad to see you! ABBY

Me too. How's it going? BOBBY

Good! ABBY

Are they here? BOBBY

The coast is clear. But only for the very short-term, foreseeable future. ABBY

Where are they? BOBBY

ABBY

Getting Shelley at the bus stop. They signed her out for the night.

BOBBY

Oh, good. I could use a few before the onslaught, you know? To ease in a little ...

ABBY

You're telling me. I've been here less than twenty-four hours and I'm already wiped.

BOBBY

Yeah, it's a lot. "The Gene and Connie Show."

ABBY

Crazy as ever! You want anything? A drink? You hungry?

BOBBY

No, I'm fine. I can't stay long. I have to pick up Gracie at her swimming lesson ...

ABBY

You're not staying for dinner?

BOBBY

Can't.

ABBY

Uh-oh. Bobbo's gonna get in trouble. Connie's gonna give you the strap.

BOBBY

What else is new? As long as you're not mad at me.

ABBY

Never, my bruthah.

(they high five each other)

ABBY — CON'T.

Well, come in. Stay a while. This house always freaks me out when it's quiet.

BOBBY

I know. It's like *The Twilight Zone* when someone isn't screaming at somebody for no good reason.

ABBY

Totally.

(ABBY and BOBBY sit beside each other on the sofa.)

BOBBY

So, how're you doing? All good in Hollyweird?

ABBY

(like a grade-schooler)

You're high-larious, you know that? Soooooo funny. What about you? You keeping up with the douchoisie?

BOBBY

Ha, ha. That's so funny I just pissed my dad jeans. It's fine ... everything's fine.

ABBY

Karen?

BOBBY

Can't complain.

ABBY

Good. Tell her hi for me.

BOBBY

Will do. How's the new job? What's it been now? A month?

ABBY

Four.

BOBBY

Four months? Wow, that's like a record for you.

ABBY

(playfully hits him)

Stop it. You sound like Dad.

BOBBY

I'm kidding. But, seriously, it's going OK?

ABBY

Yeah, it's not my life's work, but it's fine. For now.

BOBBY

How's the acting?

(ABBY shrugs and picks up the play she was reading and hands him the book.)

BOBBY – CON'T.
(reading the cover)

The Glass Menagerie.

ABBY

I'm auditioning for Laura.

BOBBY

I've heard of it. Are you impressed?

(BOBBY laughs and tosses the book aside. ABBY picks it up again and runs her fingers along the cover.)

ABBY

It's just a little theater in Burbank ... it's small, but it's something.

BOBBY

Well, break your fucking legs. Isn't that what you're supposed to say? Seriously ...

ABBY

Thanks. That's why I can only stay a few days. The audition ...

BOBBY

It's cool you're still trying.

ABBY

Yeah, well... So, you think you guys will come visit sometime? Maybe over the summer?

BOBBY

Gracie's gonna go to Maine with Karen's parents this year, so I doubt it. Soon, though. Hopefully.

ABBY

So, how's it been around here?

BOBBY

Mom's been in overdrive.

ABBY

I can imagine.

BOBBY

Yeah, but ...

ABBY

What?

BOBBY

You blow in every few months or so. I have to deal with them *all* the time. They're impossible. And they're only getting worse as they get older.

ABBY

Yeah, but you can just see them for dinner or lunch or something, with your wife and kid.

BOBBY

So?

ABBY

They have unfettered access to me when I'm here. No buffers. I gotta tell you, I don't miss Alex all that much—I really don't. But I miss him like crazy when I have to see Mom and Dad.

BOBBY

Yeah, well ... Karen won't even come over anymore. She's had it.

ABBY

What does that mean?

BOBBY

Major holidays, birthdays and that's it. She freaks out that everyone's looking at Gracie like something's wrong.

ABBY

Get out!

BOBBY

Like they're studying her to see if she's gonna be crazy, too.

ABBY

They don't do that. ... do they?

BOBBY

Karen thinks they do. Hey, we grew up in this. She didn't. It, *we*, are too much for her. And all the bickering ... it's nonfuckingstop.

ABBY

So what? They're not her parents.

BOBBY

Look, she's an only child, and her parents barely even talk. They sit at opposite ends of the house and don't say a word. It's like *détente*. Not like here.

ABBY

Still ...

BOBBY

Anyway, I bring Gracie with me. They see her. And let's be honest—they don't give a shit about Karen.

ABBY

Yeah, well ... so Gracie's swimming? How's that going?

BOBBY

Good, she likes it. And she's pretty good at it, too. As much as a four year old can be a good swimmer.

ABBY

She still such a Daddy's girl?

BOBBY

(can't help but smile)

Yeah ... and she better stay that way.

ABBY

She will. And work's good?

BOBBY

Can't complain. People still think they need flood insurance. Thank god.

ABBY

Good ... good ...

(ABBY and BOBBY try to think of what to say next.)

ABBY — CON'T.

So, was it really that bad?

BOBBY

Shelley? You should have seen her. She looked so ... *bad*.

ABBY

Sorry I couldn't make it any sooner ... with work and ...

BOBBY

It totally sucked.

ABBY

What do you think they're gonna do?

BOBBY

I don't know. Dad's been calling the doctor. Constantly, I imagine.

ABBY

Yeah ...

BOBBY

Poor guy. Getting the full-court Geno.

ABBY

The worst.

BOBBY

So ... I guess we wait and see.

ABBY

I can't believe Shelley doesn't know.

BOBBY

It's so fucked up.

ABBY

I know, right? But what do you think?

BOBBY

About telling her? I'm with Mom and Dad. I mean ... who knows what she would do? I think we need to wait to hear what the doctor says.

ABBY

Yeah, but she's been good. For a long time.

BOBBY

This is different.

ABBY

I know. But when was the last time? I was trying to remember but I couldn't.

BOBBY

Five years, maybe?

ABBY

What'd she do again?

BOBBY

She went off her meds, right? Or overdosed?

ABBY

Huh. You know what else I was thinking? When she was in the hospital that time?

BOBBY

Before the wedding?

ABBY

Yeah, that summer. I used to go see her. Why didn't you go with me?

BOBBY

Huh?

ABBY

Did you go?

BOBBY

Of course I went ... I think so.

ABBY

We didn't go together.

BOBBY

I was getting married; we were planning the wedding ...

ABBY

But you went?

BOBBY

(really not sure)

Yeah. Of course.

ABBY

Sorry, I guess all this stuff ... the hospital ... not being here ... I can't figure out why we didn't go together. Or why Mom didn't go with me.

(BOBBY just shrugs.)

ABBY – CON'T.

That's some pretty heavy shit if you think about it. I was, what? Eighteen? Nineteen? I wasn't allowed to drive at night or to the beach, but I was allowed to drive all the way out there and see her? In that place? It was like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* out there.

BOBBY

It wasn't that bad.

ABBY

Yeah it was. There was that huge door, remember? It was massive. And they had to buzz you in and there was all that security?

BOBBY

That was when she had the ...?

ABBY

Yeah, and you'd walk in and there were all these *people*, just sitting there. They had nothing to do but sit and stare. What the hell was that?

BOBBY

It was a psychiatric hospital.

ABBY

I know, but ... I remember going to see her, and she kept saying, 'Do you shave your pubes? I shave mine. It feels really good.' And she kept saying it, over and over and really loud.

BOBBY

(recoiling)

OK, OK!

ABBY

(an admission)

I was telling a friend ... about Shelley. Just a little, and she said, 'You went by yourself? Why did you go by yourself?' And I honestly had no idea why she would ask that. It never occurred to me that it was weird. Or wrong.

BOBBY

What'd you tell her?

ABBY

Nothing. Just a little.

BOBBY

I haven't thought of that in years. I guess I was busy with the wedding.

ABBY

Yeah ... it's so strange. I mean, obviously it was worse for Shelley, but ...

BOBBY

Yeah. We must have thought it was normal.

ABBY

Or we would have said something, right? Or gone together? Maybe that was Mom's way of pretending things were OK? I mean, who doesn't have to see their sibling in the psych ward at some point, right?

(BOBBY shrugs and they're quiet for a moment.)

BOBBY

You ever think about what's going to happen? You know? When Mom and Dad are gone. It's just gonna be you and me.

ABBY

I try not to think about it.

BOBBY

We're fucked. Royally. I don't even know where to begin with her.

ABBY

I know. But Mom's going to live forever, right? To spare us?

BOBBY

I hope she's right about that.

ABBY

Don't you think it's weird Shelley went back to the group home? I mean, she just had major surgery, right? You'd think they'd want her here.

BOBBY

It would drive them nuts, having her here all the time. So, when do you think they'll be back?

ABBY

Soon, probably. They left a while ago.

BOBBY

OK, I guess I'll have a beer then.

(talking himself into it)

I should stick around ... say hi to Shelley.

(BOBBY walks over to the kitchen and grabs himself a beer out of the refrigerator. He holds one up for ABBY to see.)

BOBBY — CON'T.

Abba?

ABBY

Sure. Thanks.

(BOBBY cracks open the beers and clinks them together before handing one to ABBY.)

BOBBY

Cheers, my sistah.

ABBY

Cheers, my bruthah.

(They each take a sip and try to think of where to go next.)

BOBBY

You know what? I don't think they got it all. I'm not basing it on anything real. I just have this feeling. And I think Mom and Dad think so, too.

ABBY

Me too.

BOBBY

I don't know what I'd do if it was Gracie. What do you think they're going to do?

ABBY

I don't know. It just kind of sucks. All around.

BOBBY

That's for sure. Same as it ever was ...

(The front door opens and in walk CONSTANCE and GENE, followed by SHELLEY.)

CONSTANCE

Bobby? Is Bobby here?

BOBBY

Hi, Mom.

CONSTANCE

I saw your car in the driveway.

BOBBY

You got me—busted. I'm here.

GENE

Hi, Son.

(CONSTANCE races over to BOBBY and ABBY and gives BOBBY a hug. When she's finished, GENE kisses his son and hugs him for a moment.)

CONSTANCE

I'm so glad you're here! Is Gracie here, too?

(BOBBY shakes his head no and CONSTANCE tries to not look disappointed.)

(SHELLEY enters behind her parents. She moves slowly. She is slovenly and poorly dressed in her mother's—or are they ABBY's?—hand-me-down clothes. Physically, she appears to be much older than her 37 years—her short, mousy hair and old lady glasses don't help—but emotionally, and with all the illness and medication, she's like a child.)

(SHELLEY is straight out of some kind of time warp. There's something about her that seems stuck in the '90s, which was when she got sick. Everything just kind of stopped for her then.)

(SHELLEY has a hard time modulating her voice so she speaks too loudly. She carries a purse, which she drops onto a chair. She is very medicated and her hands shake.)

SHELLEY

Where's my sister?

ABBY

Hi, Shel.

(ABBY walks over to meet SHELLEY and gives her a quick peck on the cheek.)

SHELLEY

I love my sister. You came to see me, right?

That's right.

ABBY

And Bobby? Bobby's here?

SHELLEY

Hi, Shel.

BOBBY

(BOBBY gives SHELLEY a quick peck on the cheek, too. SHELLEY heads for the kitchen.)

I love my brother. What'd you make, Ma?

SHELLEY

We're going to have steak.

CONSTANCE

Cool, steak! And mashed potatoes? Did you make mashed potatoes? The instant stuff, right? That's the best. Isn't that the best?

SHELLEY

Yes, mashed potatoes and a salad.

CONSTANCE

You like mashed potatoes, Abby?

SHELLEY

I don't want to know the person who doesn't.

ABBY

You're funny. Isn't my sister funny, Ma? Bobby? You like them, too?

SHELLEY

Huh?

BOBBY

Mashed potatoes.

SHELLEY

Yeah, but I can't stay. I have to pick up Gracie.

BOBBY

Oh, you can't? Why not?

CONSTANCE

GENE

He just said he has to get Gracie.

CONSTANCE

Bring her back with you.

BOBBY

I can't. I just stopped by to say hi. I'll see you guys at Gracie's swimming thing next Saturday.

CONSTANCE

Gracie will be there, right?

BOBBY

Ma, it's Gracie's *event*. At the school.

CONSTANCE

Right, right ... I wish you could stay. Can't you stay for dinner? Visit with your sisters a little while?

BOBBY

Ma ...

GENE

Go ahead, Son. We'll see you next weekend.

BOBBY

OK, see you later. Abba, have a good visit.

(BOBBY pecks ABBY and CONSTANCE on their cheeks and heads for the door.)

BOBBY – CON'T.

Bye, Ma.

CONSTANCE

What about Shelley?

(BOBBY doubles back and walks over to give SHELLEY a kiss goodbye.)

SHELLEY

Bye, Bob. I love my brother. Abby, don't you love our brother?

ABBY

Yup. I do.

BOBBY

See you guys.

(BOBBY gives ABBY thumbs up—good luck!)

(CONSTANCE follows him to the door and watches him go.)

CONSTANCE

(calling after him)

See you next Saturday! Give a kiss to Gracie!

(CONSTANCE closes the door and looks at GENE, but GENE just shrugs and that's that. CONSTANCE tries to pretend she's not sad that he left.)

(SHELLEY mutters to herself under her breath; she's having a conversation with a voice in her head. EVERYONE ignores it for the time being, even though they hear her—they don't like it but they're used to it.)

GENE

(to Abby)

Anybody call?

ABBY

Nope.

(Still, GENE walks over the answering machine and hits play.)

MACHINE

You have zero new messages.

(GENE and CONSTANCE share a nervous look.)

GENE

I'll get washed up for dinner.

(to Constance)

I'm going to try him again.

(GENE heads for his office and SHELLEY's murmuring gets louder.)

CONSTANCE

Shelley, stop that!

SHELLEY

(snapping out of it)

When's dinner? I'm starving. Abby, aren't you hungry?

ABBY

Getting there.

SHELLEY

Are there any peanuts? Or cheese and crackers? I only had a Pop Tart today. I love Pop Tarts. Don't you love Pop Tarts, Abby?

ABBY

Sure.

CONSTANCE

I wish you'd eat real food, Shelley. Not that packaged crap all the time.

SHELLEY

I eat healthy, Ma.

CONSTANCE

That's not real food.

SHELLEY

It was a blueberry Pop Tart. That's healthy, right? It's fruit.

CONSTANCE

Why don't you go take a shower? When was the last time you took a shower?

SHELLEY

I don't want a shower. I don't smell. I only take showers when I smell.
(to Abby)

Aren't you hungry?

ABBY

I'm OK.

(CONSTANCE pours peanuts into a bowl and hands it to SHELLEY. When SHELLEY eats, she focuses on nothing but the food in front of her—food means a lot to her.)

CONSTANCE

Here, have some peanuts. But not all of them. Share with your sister.

ABBY

I'm not hungry.

CONSTANCE

Eat, Abby. Go ahead. Shelley, share with Abby. Shelley looks good, doesn't she? She lost a little weight ... I don't want you to gain it all back, though, Shel. You need to stay thin.

SHELLEY

Right, Ma.

CONSTANCE

And would you please take a shower? When was the last time you took a shower?

SHELLEY

(to Abby)

I lost a lot of weight cause I was sick. Did you know I was sick?

ABBY

Uh huh.

SHELLEY

You knew I had a hysterectomy, right? No more periods! Aren't I lucky?

(SHELLEY jams peanuts into her mouth and CONSTANCE takes the bowl away from her.)

CONSTANCE

That's enough. Save room for dinner.

ABBY

You're lucky about that.

SHELLEY

But I was really sick, right Ma? I had to have surgery. Can you believe it, Abby?

ABBY

Uh-uh.

SHELLEY

And now I have to take all these pills. Ma, remember I need to take my medicine. At seven-thirty. What time are we gonna eat?

CONSTANCE

We'll eat around seven. Now, shower. Go.

SHELLEY

But I don't smell.

(to Abby, sniffing herself)

SHELLEY – CON'T.

Sometimes I smell.

CONSTANCE

Fine, don't take a shower. But you better take one in the morning or else Abby isn't going to take you to the movies.

(ABBY lip-synchs to her sister, assuring her they'll still go to the movies.)

(CONSTANCE plops on the sofa.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

I am pooped. You girls really knock me out. You know that?

SHELLEY

I have to take my pills at seven-thirty. We'll have water, right? I need a full glass of water to take my pills.

CONSTANCE

Yes, we have water! Of course we have water, Shelley!

SHELLEY

Where's my pocket book, Ma?

CONSTANCE

I don't know where your pocket book is. Where'd you put it?

SHELLEY

I need my pocket book. My meds are in there and they won't let you check me out if I don't take my meds.

(to Abby)

I can't sleep over if I don't take my meds.

(CONSTANCE notices it on the chair and points it out.)

CONSTANCE

There.

SHELLEY

There it is. Isn't this nice, Abby? Look, Ma gave it to me. Isn't it pretty?

ABBY

Uh huh.

(SHELLEY retrieves her pill case from her purse and starts putting her pills, one by one, on the kitchen island. There are about a dozen of them.)

(ABBY watches as SHELLEY very carefully counts them and puts them in neat little OCD rows.)

(SHELLEY talks to herself as she counts her pills; this pisses off CONSTANCE, who looks like she's in the midst of a migraine over on the couch.)

CONSTANCE

Shelley, talk to us. Not yourself.

SHELLEY

I can't forget to take my pills. I had a hysterectomy but now I'm OK. I still have to take these pills, though. Ma, when can I stop taking them?

CONSTANCE

Soon. You have to heal first.

SHELLEY

I'm better now. You should have seen me, Abby. I was in bad shape, but now I'm OK.

ABBY

Good.

SHELLEY

I only have to take these other pills a couple more weeks. Then Ma said I can stop. Look at them all! But I won't get my period anymore, so that's good. You still get your period?

ABBY

Uh huh.

SHELLEY

Isn't that the worst? I always get bad periods.

ABBY

I know. You never miss an opportunity to tell me when you have your period.

SHELLEY

I do? Well, not anymore!

CONSTANCE

Put those away, Shelley. You don't need to take them yet and you don't want to lose them.

(But SHELLEY keeps going.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

(to Abby)

What movie are you going to see tomorrow?

SHELLEY

Yeah, what do you want to see? Can we get popcorn?

ABBY

Whatever you want.

SHELLEY

Cool. I'll look in the paper. You know where to go, right? Ma, you'll give Abby directions?

ABBY

I know where to go, Shel. I grew up here, remember?

SHELLEY

Right. We all grew up here. Me, you and Bobby. There's gas in the car, right, Ma? Abby can drive your car?

CONSTANCE

Yes, there's gas in the car. OK, I'm going to lie down for while. She's all yours, Abs.

SHELLEY

Bye, Ma. Have a good rest.

CONSTANCE

Thank you, Shelley.

(CONSTANCE disappears into her bedroom offstage.)

SHELLEY

(to Abby)

You'll make sure there's gas in the car, right?

ABBY

There's gas and, if not, we'll get some. No big deal. Just relax.

(SHELLEY goes back to counting her pills.)

ABBY — CON'T.

Mom said to put those away.

(SHELLEY ignores her and keeps counting.)

ABBY — CON'T.

Shel? Mommy said.

SHELLEY

I have to take my medicine at seven-thirty. There's water, right? I have to take them with a whole glass of water. I'm not healed yet. I just got out of the hospital last week.

ABBY

Yes, there's water. Of course there's water.

SHELLEY

Cool, we'll go to the movies and get popcorn. And a soda. Don't you like soda? I want a Coke. A big one. And then you have to drive me home. Ma said you would drive me home.

ABBY

Yes, I will drive you home.

SHELLEY

Cool. Ma will give you directions.

ABBY

I know how to get you home, Shelley. How many times have I driven you home?

SHELLEY

Right. You know where I live. That's my sister! God, look at all these pills I have to take.

(SHELLEY keeps arranging her pills then puts them back in the case. ABBY plops down on the sofa, exhausted, just like her mother. Some MUSIC plays during this interlude ...)

(After a few moments, CONSTANCE and GENE rejoin ABBY and SHELLEY in the living room/kitchen area. ABBY and SHELLEY walk over to the kitchen table and take their seats for dinner. SHELLEY puts her pill case on the table in front of her.)

(CONSTANCE and GENE convene in the kitchen and serve their daughters their steaks and sides. After another couple of moments, GENE and CONSTANCE take their seats, too, and they all eat dinner together.)

SHELLEY

Mmm, the steak is really good, Ma.

CONSTANCE

I'm glad you like it.

SHELLEY

Isn't it good, Abby?

ABBY

(not eating steak)

Uh huh.

(CONSTANCE realizes she accidentally served Abby a steak and quickly forks the meat from ABBY's plate over to GENE's. GENE is puzzled but continues eating; he knows better than to second-guess.)

(The PHONE RINGS and CONSTANCE, like a dog of Pavlov, lunges for it. GENE rises from his chair and stands next to her, trying to hear who is on the other end.)

CONSTANCE

Hello? Oh, Gracie. Hi, Sweetie, how are you? Oh, he did? Daddy told you to call us? Well that was nice of him. Yes, we were hoping he could have stayed for dinner. I see. You swam in the pool? Well, that's wonderful. Good for you. OK, yes. Tell your daddy we'll see you next weekend. Yes. You want to say hi to Aunt Abby? OK, hold on a sec.

(CONSTANCE hands the phone over to ABBY and stands, watching over ABBY as she speaks to GRACIE. GENE retakes his seat and resumes eating his dinner.)

ABBY

(into phone)

Hey, Kiddo, how are you? Yeah? That's great. Yeah, your dad told me. I'm so happy for you. I know; I wish I could stay. Next time. Uh huh. Say hi to your mom for me. OK, bye.

(ABBY clicks off the phone. CONSTANCE takes the phone from her, sits down once again and places the phone beside her on the table.)

CONSTANCE

So, what did you and Bobby talk about?

ABBY

Nothing.

CONSTANCE

Nothing?

GENE

Con ...?

What?
CONSTANCE

We reminisced, mostly.
ABBY

Reminiscid? What did you reminisce about?
CONSTANCE

I don't know. The wedding, I guess. He wasn't here long.
ABBY

The wedding? Why were you talking about the wedding?
CONSTANCE

Bobby's wedding? Did I go to Bobby's wedding?
SHELLEY

(ABBY starts to chuckle and gives her mother a playful look, which upsets GENE.)

Hmm ... did you go to the wedding? Who can remember if Shelley went to Bobby's wedding?
ABBY

Are we going to play the wedding game?
CONSTANCE

(GENE lets his fist fall heavily on the table, but this doesn't stop them.)

Did I?
SHELLEY
(chuckling, too; she's in on the joke)

Let's not start this again. Please!
GENE

Don't you remember the wedding, Shel?
ABBY

Christ.
GENE
(giving up)

Was I there?
SHELLEY

ABBY

Dum-dum-dum-dum, ladies and gentlemen, it's time for *Do You Remember the Wedding?* Starring Shelley Hill!

SHELLEY

I was there, right? I'm his sister. I was invited.

GENE

Yes, Shelley. You know you were there. You've seen the pictures a hundred times, and you've made us tell you about it even more. How many times are we going to do this? It's not funny!

SHELLEY

How'd I look?

ABBY

(like she's an announcer on a TV show)

You looked fabulous. Like a brand new car!

SHELLEY

I did?

CONSTANCE

Tell her, Abs. Remember? You were both bridesmaids.

ABBY

Ah, yes. If memory serves, you were a vision in teal.

(also like a game show host)

Were you a vision in teal? Survey says?

(ABBY makes a buzzer sound.)

ABBY — CON'T.

Yes, we were both visions in teal.

SHELLEY

Teal? What's that? Like a green? I wore a green dress?

CONSTANCE

Yes, it's an awful shade of green.

(CONSTANCE and ABBY crack up again.)

GENE

This isn't funny. I don't know why you insist on finding this funny.

SHELLEY

I looked pretty, Dad. Didn't I?

GENE

(reaching for her hand)

Of course you did. You looked gorgeous, Honey. You all did.

SHELLEY

And Abby? Did Abby look pretty?

ABBY

I was incredibly foxy if I do say so myself. *And* in a teal dress, no less. Not easy to pull off.

CONSTANCE

The whole family was incredibly foxy.

SHELLEY

Dad, too? You looked good?

CONSTANCE

Your father was very handsome.

GENE

Well, thank you, Constance.

(GENE and CONSTANCE share a soft moment.)

SHELLEY

Did you wear a tux?

(CONSTANCE looks imploringly at GENE to play along.)

GENE

I looked dynamite, Sweetheart. And yes, I wore a tux ... if memory serves, I believe I even wore tails.

(ABBY and CONSTANCE cheer GENE's response.)

SHELLEY

Did I dance?

CONSTANCE

We all danced.

ABBY

Like it was going out of style.

CONSTANCE

We danced until the cows came home.

ABBY

And you know those cows?

ABBY/CONSTANCE

They never come home!

(They all crack up for a moment. Even GENE chuckles, in spite of himself.)

GENE

(to Shelley)

We danced a slow dance.

SHELLEY

We did?

CONSTANCE

You were the belle of the ball, Sweetheart.

SHELLEY

What song?

GENE

“The Sunshine of My Life.”

SHELLEY

Cool. I know that song. Abby, you know that song?

ABBY

Of course. Stevie Wonder.

SHELLEY

I'm glad I had fun.

CONSTANCE

You had a great time.

SHELLEY

Then I went back to the hospital.

Too Close to Home

(A silence comes over everyone and no one knows what to say next. After a few moments, SHELLEY breaks the silence with a tremendous FART.)

SHELLEY — CON'T.

Excuse me, sorry, sorry. I didn't mean to fart.

(CONSTANCE throws her utensils on her plate.)

CONSTANCE

Shelley!

SHELLEY

Sorry, Ma.

GENE

Alright, it was an accident.

SHELLEY

It was an accident. I won't do it again. Sorry, sorry, Everybody.

CONSTANCE

Do you do that in the dining hall? Or in front of your roommate?

GENE

Constance.

SHELLEY

I can't control it. Does that happen to you, Abby? Sometimes you can't control it. It won't happen again. Sorry.

CONSTANCE

And at the dinner table ...

SHELLEY

Everyone's finished. It's OK. Abby, aren't you done eating?

GENE

Alright, enough. It won't happen again.

SHELLEY

Ma, what time is it? I have to take my meds at seven-thirty.

(SHELLEY fiddles with her pill case, resting on the table in front of her.)

CONSTANCE

It's seven-fifteen. You're fine.

SHELLEY

I need more water.

CONSTANCE

OK, OK. Hold your horses.

(CONSTANCE rises, takes SHELLEY's glass and refills it with water.)

(SHELLEY takes her pills out of the pill case and starts counting them and putting them into rows.)

(GENE shoots CONSTANCE a warning look, but CONSTANCE can't help herself.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Honey, can you not do that right now, please? You have fifteen minutes to enjoy your dinner.

SHELLEY

I need to take my meds.

CONSTANCE

You haven't touched your salad.

SHELLEY

I don't want salad. The steak was good, Ma. Really good. And the mashed potatoes. I love them. Abby, don't you love steak and mashed potatoes?

ABBY

Uh huh.

SHELLEY

Me too. It's so good. What time is it now?

(CONSTANCE ignores her and looks at ABBY, who decides to try to save the day by changing the subject.)

ABBY

So I was thinking about the wedding ...

GENE

Can we please stop with the wedding?

CONSTANCE

What about it?

ABBY

I had to bail on that internship at Williamstown. Remember?

GENE

It was your brother's wedding. Are you saying you should have missed your brother's wedding?

ABBY

No ... I've just been thinking about things ...

CONSTANCE

What *things*?

GENE

That was years ago. Water under the bridge.

SHELLEY

I was in the hospital. Not a good time for me.

CONSTANCE

(to Abby)

I don't know why you worry about things that happened years ago.

SHELLEY

I had shock therapy. Did you know that, Abby? Not a good time for me. I went off my meds and they put me in the hospital. Remember?

(ABBY nods, nearly imperceptibly, and everyone is quiet for a moment.)

SHELLEY – CON'T.

Ma, is it seven-thirty?

CONSTANCE

(throwing up her hands)

Yes, Shelley. It's seven-thirty.

SHELLEY

Is it really? Are you sure?

CONSTANCE

I'm sure. Go ahead. Take your meds.

GENE

Shhh ... easy, Connie.

CONSTANCE

Stop shh-shing me, Gene. It's exhausting. Always shh-shing me all the time. Just lay off.

SHELLEY

I have to take my pills.

CONSTANCE

Five minutes isn't going to make any difference. I promise.

SHELLEY

(looks to Gene)

I can take them?

GENE

Sure, go ahead, Honey. Five minutes won't make a difference.

SHELLEY

OK. I need water, Ma.

CONSTANCE

(motioning to the refilled glass, trying hard to keep her cool)

It's right there, Shelley.

(ABBY, GENE and CONSTANCE watch as, one by one, SHELLEY takes pill after pill. Her hands shake as she takes them. Everyone is silent, watching her.)

(After her final pill, CONSTANCE clears SHELLEY's plate while ABBY and GENE continue eating. Also, CONSTANCE replaces the phone in its cradle on the kitchen counter.)

SHELLEY

Good dinner, Ma. I love mashed potatoes.

CONSTANCE

I'm glad.

SHELLEY

I'm tired. Aren't you tired, Abby?

ABBY

Getting there.

Ma, are you tired?
SHELLEY

Impossibly.
CONSTANCE

Can I go to bed now?
SHELLEY

Be my guest.
CONSTANCE

Connie, would you please?
GENE

Where am I going?
SHELLEY

You're sleeping in your room.
GENE

Where's Abby gonna sleep?
SHELLEY

She's on the couch.
GENE

Cool. I want to get a good night sleep for the movie tomorrow. You have directions, right, Abby?
SHELLEY

Yes, for the love of all that's good and holy, I have directions.
ABBY

Can you please, just ... everybody!
GENE
(to Abby)

There's gas in the car, right Ma? You got gas?
SHELLEY

Yes, there is plenty of gas in the car. Don't worry about it, Shelley. Now off to bed.
CONSTANCE

SHELLEY

OK, I'm going to bed now. Bye. Good dinner, Ma.

(Without any further ado, SHELLEY limps off to bed.)

(CONSTANCE rises, turns away from the table and walks over to the island. She grabs the corners, holds her arms straight against it, and looks like she might lose it. Everyone has the same sad, tired expression.)

(ABBY reaches for the wine and pours a large glass.)

CONSTANCE

I can't, I can't, I just can't ...

GENE

Shhh, OK ... everyone just calm down.

(GENE rises from his seat, walks over to his wife and holds CONSTANCE from behind. She might be crying. But if she is, it's only for a moment before she composes herself and pushes GENE away.)

CONSTANCE

Don't shhh me. I've had enough of that. Always shhshing me all the time.

(GENE tries to hold her but she's already too far away from him.)

GENE

Why can't you just go easy on her?

CONSTANCE

I try, alright?

GENE

Well, try harder, would you please? Christ. Give her a break.

CONSTANCE

I try, Gene! I am trying. I am always trying.

GENE

Well, I have work to do. Everyone just settle down, alright?

(to Abby)

I'll be in my office. Goodnight, Abs.

(GENE walks back over to the table and kisses ABBY goodnight.)

GENE — CON'T.

Take it easy on the wine, OK?

ABBY

Night, Dad.

(GENE exits toward his office. CONSTANCE starts clearing the table. She looks like she has recovered, but she keeps her head down and, after gathering a few plates, she sits down with ABBY and pours herself some wine. She looks like she might finally be able to relax for a moment.)

(The PHONE RINGS and CONSTANCE jumps up to get it. She nearly falls jumping out of her seat and racing to the landline on the kitchen counter. She answers it after only one ring. GENE's voice can be heard through the phone, too. He picked up an extension in his office.)

CONSTANCE

(into phone)

Hello? Hello?

GENE — (OS)

Hello? Hill residence. Gene speaking.

CONSTANCE

(shouts)

I got it, Gene.

(into phone)

Hello? Gene, I got it. Shhh! Hello?...Oh, hi. Yes!...Yes, this is her mother. Is the doctor there?...Oh, I see...OK...And when will that be? Well can he maybe just--?...Do you mind though if--?...OK, please let him know we are greatly anticipating his call. Greatly. Yes. Thank you.

(she clicks off the phone, says to Abby)

Dr. Akhtar is having another doctor look at the results. We should hear by tomorrow. Friday at the latest.

(GENE rejoins them in the kitchen while CONSTANCE wraps up the call.)

GENE

That's all she said? What does *he* think?

CONSTANCE

Jesus, Gene, he didn't get on the phone. Weren't you listening?

GENE

Of course I was listening.

Too Close to Home

CONSTANCE

You think I'm withholding information?

GENE

So, tomorrow?

CONSTANCE

That's what she said. Or Friday. Tomorrow or Friday.

(to Abby)

That was the nurse. We'll know something tomorrow. Or Friday.

(GENE looks at his wife then returns to his office. CONSTANCE turns her back to ABBY and starts wiping down the counter.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

Does Gracie sound alright to you?

ABBY

Gracie? Yeah. She's fine. Just a little shy.

CONSTANCE

You think so?

ABBY

She's fine, Mom. She's four.

CONSTANCE

So, will I have any more grandchildren, or is Gracie it?

ABBY

Jesus.

CONSTANCE

Oh. Forgive me. Off limits? Sorry. Excuse me for living ...

(CONSTANCE clears some more plates and puts them in the dishwasher. ABBY sits and drinks and doesn't help her mother.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

You just sit and relax. I'll take care of cleaning up.

ABBY

I'm happy to help if you want me to.

(But ABBY doesn't move.)

CONSTANCE

No, that's OK. You take it easy. You're our guest. This is your vacation, after all. A nice vacation with your family. What could be better than that? You know, I hope you find out one day what it's like to have children.

ABBY

Do you actually go out of your way to make me feel like shit? Christ!

CONSTANCE

No. But I wish you knew what it's like. Loving a child, it's like, trying to hold the ocean. It's so wondrous. Fierce and wild. Constant. Relentless. You love it so much you can hardly stand it. But as much as you love it, you can't hold it. You can't keep it. Because children? They're like water. They slip through your fingers and float away. And there's nothing you can do to hold them.

(CONSTANCE catches herself and, after a moment of silence, continues loading dishes in the dishwasher.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

After tomorrow, we can make some decisions. Until then, we wait ...

(CONSTANCE keeps her back to ABBY. ABBY stays seated, quiet, at the table, and drinks her wine. She pours herself another glass and takes a sip.)

SCENE III: Thursday morning

(CONSTANCE sits on a stool beside the kitchen island, sipping her coffee and working on a crossword puzzle. She makes grunting noises, sighs and taps her pen against the wood, making rat-a-tat-tat sounds that succeed in her mission to “innocently” wake ABBY, who is asleep on the couch.)

(ABBY opens her eyes and realizes her mother has purposely awakened her. Needless to say, she’s annoyed.)

ABBY

Jesus, Mom. Can you keep it down?

CONSTANCE

Morning, Sunshine!

ABBY

I’m sleeping.

CONSTANCE

Oh, good. You’re up. I need you.

ABBY

I am not up. I’m still asleep.

CONSTANCE

Come on, you slept long enough. What time did you go to bed?

ABBY

What time is it?

CONSTANCE

I hope you’re not hung over.

ABBY

I am not hung over.

CONSTANCE

I need you.

ABBY

Go away.

CONSTANCE

Abs, come on. Help me with my crossword.

What?
 ABBY

What's a nine-letter word for illegal cooperation or conspiracy?
 CONSTANCE

I have no idea.
 ABBY

Yes you do. Come on. Think.
 CONSTANCE

I don't know.
 ABBY

It begins with a C.
 CONSTANCE

I have no idea. What time is it?
 ABBY

Eight-thirty. Time to get up.
 CONSTANCE

Why won't you let me sleep?
 ABBY

It's late. And you slept all day yesterday.
 CONSTANCE

It's five-thirty where I come from. And I did not sleep all ...
 ABBY

That was your choice to move. I still don't know why you had to move to L.A. to try to be an actress when New York is right here.
 CONSTANCE

(ABBY groans and buries herself under her pillows.)

You went to bed early, didn't you? Come on.
 CONSTANCE — CON'T.

(ABBY starts to stretch and wake up a little more.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Is it complicit?

(CONSTANCE counts the number of letters on her fingers.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

(writing the letters in the puzzle)

No, that's not right. Shit. Abby, what is it?

(ABBY slowly sits up and rubs the sleep from her eyes.)

ABBY

I don't know, Mom. I'm barely conscious at the moment.

CONSTANCE

(reading the clue)

Secret cooperation for an illegal or dishonest purpose. And it's not complicit ...

ABBY

Is there coffee?

CONSTANCE

Give me the answer and I'll give you coffee.

ABBY

Seriously?

CONSTANCE

I always forget what a grump you are in the morning.

ABBY

When you wake me up at five thirty, yes, I am a grump. Guilty.

CONSTANCE

You can't sleep all day. You have to take Shelley to the movies.

ABBY

I wasn't planning on sleeping all day, Mom. Just to a human hour. Not five thirty in the goddamn morning.

CONSTANCE

Please be in a good mood, Sweetie. Shelley's been looking forward to this for weeks. Spending a nice day with her sister. You know she's going to be up and dressed and ready to go in no time.

ABBY

I know.

CONSTANCE

Please be patient with her. I know it's hard.

(CONSTANCE pours ABBY a cup of coffee and brings it to her on the couch.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Here you go, with that awful vanilla soymilk you make me get for you.

ABBY

I don't make you ... never mind. Thank you. That's all I'm going to say.

CONSTANCE

I don't know how you drink that stuff.

ABBY

I drink it because I like it. Obviously.

CONSTANCE

It's so sweet. Yuck.

ABBY

Then it's a good thing you don't have to drink it.

CONSTANCE

Such a wise guy. Please be in a good mood today. For Shelley's sake.

ABBY

Mom, can you give it a rest? Just for like a minute?

CONSTANCE

I want to visit with you.

ABBY

That's what we're doing. Visiting.

CONSTANCE

You know what I mean.

ABBY

What? We should sit and stare at each other the entire time I'm here?

CONSTANCE
Yes, I would like that.

ABBY
I know you would.

CONSTANCE
I would like that very much.

ABBY
Thanks for the coffee.

CONSTANCE
Anything to make my daughter happy.

(CONSTANCE retakes her seat on the stool and goes back to her crossword. ABBY sips her coffee.)

ABBY
Where's Dad?

CONSTANCE
Golfing.

ABBY
Has he turned pro yet? How many letters did you say?

(CONSTANCE happily turns to ABBY, glad she's playing along.)

CONSTANCE
Nine. Begins with a c. Do you know it, Honey?

(ABBY nurses her coffee and thinks for a moment.)

ABBY
It's not complicit?

CONSTANCE
I tried that. It doesn't work.

ABBY
Collusion.

CONSTANCE
Collusion? Yes! You might be right.

Too Close to Home

(CONSTANCE tries the letters and exults when she realizes they fit.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

Such a smarty-pants. Collusion is correct. How'd you get so smart?

ABBY

Just lucky, I guess.

CONSTANCE

You probably got it from your remarkably intelligent mother. If I do say so myself.

ABBY

Shelley still asleep?

CONSTANCE

Yep. She'll be up soon.

ABBY

God, how much does she sleep?

CONSTANCE

About twelve, thirteen hours. It's all that medication. It knocks her out.

ABBY

It's like having an infant.

CONSTANCE

You don't say? You know, I never imagined I'd be 60 years old and still raising a child. And then, when you put your father in the mix, it's like I have two children at home. It's a good thing you left or I'd have triplets.

ABBY

Hardy har har ...

(The PHONE rings and CONSTANCE rushes to answer it.)

CONSTANCE

Hello? Hello?

(disappointed it's not the doctor)

Oh, hi. Yes, she's here. I will. Yes, the kids came over last night for dinner. I know; it's wonderful having all my babies under one roof. Uh huh, OK. Hey, Helen, can we talk about this later? Yes. I want to spend time with the girls. OK, thanks. Later today. Bye, bye.

(CONSTANCE hangs up the phone and returns to her puzzle.)

Helen?
ABBY

She says hello.
CONSTANCE

How is she?
ABBY

Fine.
CONSTANCE

And Don?
ABBY

Fine, fine ...
CONSTANCE

Joey and Christina?
ABBY

All fine and dandy. Everybody's just fine and dandy.
CONSTANCE

What does she say about Shel?
ABBY

Helen? Oh, I don't know.
CONSTANCE

What do you mean you don't know?
ABBY

What does she need to know about Shelley?
CONSTANCE

She doesn't know?
ABBY

What would you like her to know? That Shelley hears voices? That she thinks cellphone towers are sending her messages? Or that she talks to herself—and far more often than the average, normal crazy person like you and me?
CONSTANCE

ABBY

Well, she's your closest friend, isn't she?

CONSTANCE

So what? What is she going to say? Sorry?

ABBY

I can't believe she doesn't know.

CONSTANCE

I don't see the point.

ABBY

Don't you want to talk to someone?

CONSTANCE

About what?

ABBY

About what's going on?

CONSTANCE

I talk to you. I talk to Daddy. And Bobby, when he lets me.

ABBY

But she knows Shelley's sick, right?

CONSTANCE

She knows Shelley has problems, but she doesn't know about, you know ...

ABBY

That's amazing.

CONSTANCE

What? That I don't blab to the world about my problems?

ABBY

It's not blabbing. And Helen's not the world.

CONSTANCE

What's she going to say?

ABBY

I don't know. Maybe she could help.

CONSTANCE

What's she going to do to help Shelley? Or me?

ABBY

I don't know. I was just asking ... it's an innocent question.

CONSTANCE

I don't need to talk about my problems. Why? Who do you talk to?

ABBY

Nobody.

CONSTANCE

What do you tell them?

ABBY

Nothing.

CONSTANCE

You sure?

ABBY

Yeah. And would it matter if I did? It's my life, too, you know.

CONSTANCE

I don't care who you tell.

ABBY

It sounds like you do.

CONSTANCE

Did you tell Alex?

ABBY

Some things ... maybe.

CONSTANCE

Like what?

ABBY

Nothing. I don't know. He met Shelley, Mom. He could see for himself that she was sick.

CONSTANCE

What did you tell him?

ABBY

Nothing. I swear.

CONSTANCE

Is that why you broke up? Because of Shelley?

ABBY

No, no. God no. *I* broke up with *him*, remember? It had nothing to do with Shelley.

CONSTANCE

Well, that's what my family is for. I don't need to talk to anyone else.

ABBY

But Helen knows us. She's known Shelley her whole life.

CONSTANCE

So what? She's not family. And things like this are best left to family.

ABBY

Don't you want to talk about it, though? I mean ... how much help is Dad with all this?

CONSTANCE

Look, I love Helen. But do you really think I want her asking how Shelley is all the time? Do you think it would be helpful to have friends who, out of the kindness of their hearts, questioned me about her health, her welfare, her quality of life? I couldn't handle that all the time, every time we spoke. Solicitous ...

ABBY

I just thought ...

CONSTANCE

That's not fair to Shelley. Or me. Or Helen. Who wants to be burdened with that kind of information?

ABBY

It's not a burden.

CONSTANCE

It's not?

(CONSTANCE stares at her daughter, then turns back around to her puzzle.)

ABBY

So ... what does she know?

CONSTANCE

That Shelley has some emotional issues, which is true. And that's that.

ABBY

That's sad.

CONSTANCE

Why is that sad?

ABBY

Well, other people can give you new perspective ... insight, you know? You might be surprised.

CONSTANCE

Insight? I have plenty of that, don't you worry. I've been dealing with this my whole life. Don't you worry about me and my insight.

ABBY

I just thought ...

CONSTANCE

You know, *insight* ... that's funny coming from you.

ABBY

Why?

CONSTANCE

You're the one who told me Shelley was sick.

ABBY

What?

CONSTANCE

You confirmed it for me. For us—Daddy and me. Years ago.

ABBY

What are you talking about?

CONSTANCE

Daddy and I were away, with Helen and Don as a matter of fact, and I called home to check on you. Bobby was away somewhere, and you and Shelley were here by yourselves. You don't remember that?

ABBY

No.

CONSTANCE

You must have been about, oh, I don't know, fifteen or so? Shelley had just graduated college. And you and I had a chat.

ABBY

A chat?

CONSTANCE

You answered the phone and the first thing out of your mouth—I'll never forget it—you said, 'Mom, Shelley is *so gross*.'

ABBY

I didn't say that ...

(ABBY makes a face, clearly disgusted with herself for having said that.)

CONSTANCE

'*Shelley is so gross*.' You wanted to borrow that yellow sweater. Remember? That angora one you shared?

ABBY

That was mine. She always took it from me.

CONSTANCE

Yes, your older sister borrowed her little sister's sweater.

ABBY

You gave it to me.

(ABBY gets lost for a moment. CONSTANCE looks at her, questioning.)

ABBY – CON'T.

I forgot what it was like to think of her as ... a sister.

(Long beat as the weight of this statement resonates with CONSTANCE.)

CONSTANCE

Well, it was in her drawer and you went and got it and told me it smelled. You told me to tell Shelley to take a shower.

ABBY

I didn't ...

CONSTANCE

Yes, you did.

ABBY

I don't remember that.

CONSTANCE

Of course you don't. It was such a mundane, stupid little thing. But that's when I knew something was wrong. Really, really wrong.

ABBY

Sorry, I ...

CONSTANCE

Daddy and I suspected, *feared* ... but she made it through college and seemed to be doing OK. Sure, she was strange and shy—she barely had any friends—but we didn't think it was anything *clinical*, you know? She wasn't like your Uncle Charlie. She wasn't violent. It happens earlier in boys, in their teens ... but Shelley was fine ... functioning ... and she was never violent, thank god. But that day? That phone call? I knew it. You told me. You didn't mean to, of course, but you did.

(pauses a moment, then admits ...)

In that instant, I realized what I *should* have known all along. For years I'd been pretending ... hoping ... if I had taken her to a doctor ... *at the very least* ... who knows? It might have prevented her from getting worse.

ABBY

I don't remember that at all.

CONSTANCE

(laughing ironically)

Well, I sure do, Kiddo. Nearly twenty years we've been dealing with this, your father and me. And even more with your Uncle Charlie.

ABBY

So, you didn't take her to a doctor?

CONSTANCE

We tried ...

ABBY

You tried? What does that mean?

CONSTANCE

It was a long time ago, Sweetheart ...

ABBY

Jesus. Forget selective memory. That's straight up denial. You did *nothing*?

CONSTANCE

We didn't know ... we were hoping.

ABBY

How could you do nothing? You could have stopped it, or at least tried to. Or prevented it from turning into so much shit.

CONSTANCE

What do you know about it? What the fuck do you know about any of it?

(ABBY shrinks a little and CONSTANCE softens a bit.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

This is why I want to protect you and Bobby as much as possible. I don't want you to have to deal with this, this, shit. Until you absolutely have to.

ABBY

But I do deal with it. And Bobby does, too.

CONSTANCE

No you don't. Not in any real way. Daddy and I make sure of that.

ABBY

But we do.

CONSTANCE

How do you deal with it? By coming to visit a couple times a year? For a few days? By calling your sister every once in a while?

ABBY

I do more than that. I deal with more than that.

CONSTANCE

Oh yeah? What do you deal with when it comes to your sister? Huh? Tell me what you and Bobby do to make things better for Shelley?

ABBY

I call her every week, sometimes two or three times if I'm feeling guilty enough.

CONSTANCE

You shouldn't feel guilty.

ABBY

Well I do, and you don't help with that by the way.

CONSTANCE

Oh, really?

ABBY

And every time it's the same conversation: How was group today, Shelley? Oh good, I'm glad Mom sends you *People* magazine and you're gonna watch ESPN. We have the same stupid, mind-numbing conversation every time.

CONSTANCE

Big deal. That's the least you could do.

ABBY

Bobby, too. You know, every time I hang up with her I look at my phone to see how long the conversation was. It's always under three minutes.

(CONSTANCE is really getting angry now.)

ABBY — CON'T.

The worst three minutes of my day, bar none. Going on a couple of decades now. And that's not counting everything else.

CONSTANCE

Oh, poor Abby ... Poor Bobby.

ABBY

Why *not* poor Abby? Why *not* poor Bobby?

(CONSTANCE just looks at her, not sure if she should be angry or compassionate.)

ABBY – CON'T.

You know, sometimes I'll get her to actually talk about something, *substantial*, for a second or two, and then we might even talk for more than three minutes. You believe that? And then you know what I do? I text Bobby and tell him, 'Guess what? Shelley and I broke our record. Three minutes and twelve seconds. Four minutes and three seconds. Three minutes and twenty-six seconds.'

CONSTANCE

(trying to remain calm)

I appreciate that you talk with your sister. That you try.

ABBY

And Bobby will text me, too, and tell me when he breaks his record with her. It doesn't happen a lot, but when it does, we tell each other. It's funny. It's hilarious. It's all we can do to not throw our phones against the wall and want to kill someone every time we have

ABBY – CON'T.

to make that call. That same voice. Those same sentences. That same fucking intonation. The same old tired, boring, miserable conversation, week after week, year after year

CONSTANCE

Well, I'm sorry it's been so hard for you. But she's your sister, goddammit! Deal with it! What are you, a child?

(CONSTANCE slams her hand down on the island.)

ABBY

You know she can do more, and be more, Mom. You and Dad baby her. You baby her like crazy.

CONSTANCE

Baby her? She's sick!

ABBY

You treat her like she's an infant, which is why she behaves like one.

CONSTANCE

That's not true.

ABBY

And me. And Bobby. You treat us all like we're Shelley; helpless little creatures who need their Mommy and their Daddy like when we were babies.

CONSTANCE

I don't mean to.

ABBY

But you do. And how did you not know she was sick? Why didn't you do something about it?

CONSTANCE

It's hard to separate you sometimes ...

ABBY

She knows so much more than she lets on. You know what? I bet you she knows—I bet you she knows she has cancer. I bet you she knows everything!

(CONSTANCE and ABBY just look at each other. After a moment, CONSTANCE turns away.)

(SHELLEY wanders into the living room, dressed in the same clothes as the night before and ready for the day. It's unclear whether she heard any of their conversation.)

(SHELLEY's voice is lower and more lucid than she's sounded before.)

SHELLEY

Are you fighting? Why are you fighting?

ABBY

We're not fighting, Shel.

SHELLEY

I don't want you to fight.

ABBY

We weren't. Just having a little disagreement. That's all.

SHELLEY

I'm hungry. Ma?

(CONSTANCE doesn't move or acknowledge SHELLEY.)

SHELLEY — CON'T.

You OK, Ma?

(CONSTANCE collects herself, hops off the stool and attends to SHELLEY. She's clearly worried SHELLEY might have heard their conversation and she wants to change the subject and mitigate any damage.)

CONSTANCE

I'm fine. You want breakfast, Honey?

(SHELLEY speaks too loudly, again, sounding more like herself.)

SHELLEY

Yeah, can you make me breakfast?

CONSTANCE

Of course, Sweetie. What would you like? I have some bacon ready. Would you like that?

SHELLEY

Is there bacon? Yum!

(CONSTANCE buries her face in the refrigerator.)

CONSTANCE

Yes, I have bacon and eggs and toast. How's that?

SHELLEY

Cool. I love bacon. Abby, you like bacon?

ABBY

(under her breath)

I'm a vegetarian.

CONSTANCE

And some orange juice?

SHELLEY

Good breakfast, Ma. Thanks. Can I sit here?

(CONSTANCE closes the fridge and pulls up a stool for SHELLEY.)

CONSTANCE

Of course, Honey. Sit right here. I'll get your breakfast.

SHELLEY

Thanks, Ma. Abby, what time are we gonna go to the movies? Did you look at what's playing?

ABBY

I'll check.

(ABBY grabs her phone off the coffee table and checks the movie listings.)

SHELLEY

Wow, look at that phone. That's cool. I have a phone, right, Ma? But it's not as cool as Abby's. I don't do Facebook or any of that stuff. You do that, Abby?

ABBY

Uh huh. You want to see the new Sandra Bullock movie?

SHELLEY

What's that? Is that a good one?

ABBY

Sandra Bullock's in it. You like her, right?

SHELLEY

Yeah, she's cool. Isn't she cool? Let's see that. What time?

ABBY

Noon.

SHELLEY

What time is it now?

ABBY

Almost nine. Plenty of time.

SHELLEY

OK, I have to take my meds. Ma, can I take my meds?

CONSTANCE

Here's some water.

(CONSTANCE places a full glass of water on the island before
SHELLEY, who starts putting her pills in order.)

SHELLEY

Thanks, Ma. OK, so what time do we have to leave?

ABBY

It takes ten minutes to get there.

SHELLEY

So we should leave soon.

ABBY

It starts at noon, Shel.

SHELLEY

We want to get good seats.

ABBY

It's noon on a Thursday.

SHELLEY

You don't think it'll be crowded?

ABBY

No.

SHELLEY

What time should we leave? Ma, what time should we go?

CONSTANCE

Whenever Abby says.

ABBY

We'll leave at eleven-thirty.

SHELLEY

OK, I'll eat breakfast and take my meds and then we'll go. And we're gonna get popcorn, right? Ma, Abby said we could get popcorn.

CONSTANCE

Yes, you can get popcorn. You can have anything you like.

SHELLEY

Cool. Ma, I didn't shower.

CONSTANCE

It's OK.

SHELLEY

I'll shower when I get home. I don't smell.

(sniffing her armpit)

See? I don't smell.

CONSTANCE

That's OK. It's OK. Abby, you want breakfast?

ABBY

(still buried in her phone)

I'll get something in a bit. Thanks.

(CONSTANCE serves SHELLEY her breakfast, along with a glass of water for her meds.)

CONSTANCE

OK, I have to run some errands this morning. You want me to get you anything special at the store? Abby?

(ABBY can't bring herself to make eye contact with her mother.)

ABBY

No, thank you. I'll take Shelley to lunch after the movie. And don't forget I'm having dinner with Jane and Diana tonight.

SHELLEY

Can we go to KFC? I love KFC. Mom and Dad take me every Sunday.

ABBY

Whatever you want, Shel.

CONSTANCE

Can't you have dinner at home tonight? With Daddy and me?

ABBY

Ma, I told you ... I didn't get to see them the last time I was here.

CONSTANCE

But it's your last night.

ABBY

You can call me if you hear anything, OK? That's why the good lord invented cell phones.

(CONSTANCE is disappointed but puts on a brave face.)

CONSTANCE

(to Shelley)

Have fun today. What a treat you get to spend this nice time together. And Abby, remember she needs to be signed back in by 4.

ABBY

No problem.

(SHELLEY mumbles to herself as she devours her breakfast and pays no attention to her mother and sister.)

CONSTANCE

Please, Abs. Be patient. And kind.

ABBY

(staring at her phone)

Sure thing.

CONSTANCE

Shelley, don't forget to bring your bag with you. Abby's going to drive you home later. She's a good sister.

(ABBY looks at her mother and manages a small smile.)

SHELLEY

(never takes her eyes off her plate)

OK, Ma. She knows where she's going, right?

CONSTANCE

She knows.

SHELLEY

You know how to get there, right, Abby?

ABBY

Yep. No problem, Shel. I know where to go.

SHELLEY

Is it nine yet? I have to take my meds.

CONSTANCE

She's all yours.

(CONSTANCE puts on her coat, grabs her bag and heads for the door.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

You sure I can't get you anything, Abby?

(ABBY shakes her head no and waves her off.)

CONSTANCE – CON'T.

OK, bye. Have fun, Girls.

(CONSTANCE exits and ABBY stops hiding in her phone.)

SHELLEY

Abby, is it nine?

ABBY

Yes.

SHELLEY

I have to take my meds.

ABBY

It's nine on the dot.

(Once again, SHELLEY takes her pills, one by one with shaking hands.
ABBY watches her from the couch.)

SHELLEY
Where's Ma?

ABBY
She went to the store.

SHELLEY
You're gonna see your friends tonight?

ABBY
Uh-huh.

SHELLEY
Cool. Are you going to a cool restaurant?

ABBY
Sure.

(SHELLEY starts talking to herself.)

ABBY – CON'T.
Shel ... stop it.

(SHELLEY talks louder and becomes a bit agitated.)

ABBY – CON'T.
Shelley ...

(But she keeps going.)

ABBY – CON'T.
Shelley!

SHELLEY
We shouldn't go to the movies. It's dangerous.

ABBY
What? What are you talking about?

SHELLEY
There's gonna be a bomb in the movie theater. The voices are telling me. Don't you hear voices? You have to pay attention when they talk to you.

(ABBY rises from the couch and approaches SHELLEY.)

ABBY

Shelley, you know that's not true.

SHELLEY

Yeah. There's going to be a bomb at the movies. And in Portugal. On a train. Don't you hear voices? Sometimes they don't bother me, but sometimes they do. You have to listen.

ABBY

Nothing's going to happen. You know that.

(ABBY stands behind SHELLEY as she starts shaking and rocking back and forth. ABBY puts her hand on her sister's back but SHELLEY reacts with a violent jerk and accidentally whacks ABBY in the face. SHELLEY is unaware of what she's done, but ABBY backs away, holding her face.)

SHELLEY

They're telling me. I have telepathy. Don't you have telepathy?

(SHELLEY turns to face ABBY, who removes her hands from her face. She doesn't want SHELLEY to see what she's done.)

ABBY

No. And neither do you. Shelley. Shelley? Look at me. If you don't believe me, then we don't have to go to the movies, OK? Or KFC. I can take you home right now. Is that what you want?

(SHELLEY just looks at ABBY. She's very upset.)

ABBY – CON'T.

I'll take you right now. Come on. Let's go. Grab your stuff.

(Long beat.)

SHELLEY

Let me see what they say.

(SHELLEY turns away and starts murmuring to herself again, occasionally loudly.)

(ABBY walks over to the bay window. She looks out at the trees in the backyard then reaches for her cellphone and dials a number. There's no answer. ABBY looks over at Shelley, unsure of what to do, and tries another number.)

(SHELLEY continues to gently rock herself on the stool, like a child who is trying to calm down after a tantrum.)

ABBY

(into phone)

Hi, Bobby. Are you busy? Oh, OK ... Um, nothing ... I was just hoping we could we get a coffee, or a drink? Yeah, I'm dropping her off at 4 and then I have a couple hours before dinner. Tomorrow morning. No, that's OK. Everything's fine. I understand. Last minute. OK. Love to Karen and Gracie. Bye.

(ABBY hangs up the phone and looks like she's about to have a panic attack. She starts to hyperventilate, leans over and struggles for breath for a moment.)

(ABBY soon calms down and her breathing begins to come back to normal. SHELLEY has no idea; she's been talking to herself this whole time and is unaware of what's happening to ABBY.)

(And then, just like that ...)

SHELLEY

OK, we can go. You're right. They've gotten quiet. Sometimes they change their mind.

(SHELLEY gets off the stool and heads for her bedroom.)

SHELLEY – CON'T.

I'm gonna get my pocket book and then we can go. We don't want to be late. I like Sandra Bullock. Don't you like Sandra Bullock? She's so cool.

(ABBY just watches SHELLEY as she shuffles toward her bedroom.)

(After SHELLEY's gone, ABBY walks over to the kitchen island and braces herself against it for a moment—just like CONSTANCE did the night before. ABBY realizes she's assuming that same position as her mother, catches herself and moves, then clears away SHELLEY's dirty breakfast dishes.)

SCENE IV: Friday morning

(ABBY carries her suitcase out of Shelley's bedroom and places it by the front door—it's almost time for her to go to the airport to return home to Los Angeles. The house is very quiet until the PHONE rings, startling her a bit, but she doesn't seem to realize it's *the call*.)

(The phone rings a couple of times and then the murmured voice of CONSTANCE can be heard in her bedroom, answering the call.)

(ABBY wanders over to the fridge and retrieves the water pitcher. She removes a glass from a cabinet and pours herself a drink. She drinks the water down in gulps—she likely has a hangover from the night before.)

(A few moments later, CONSTANCE enters the room. She stands still for a moment, looking like she's in shock.)

ABBY
(absentmindedly)

You're out of orange juice.

(CONSTANCE doesn't say a word. ABBY pours herself some more water.)

ABBY – CON'T.

Did you hear me?

(CONSTANCE just stands there.)

ABBY — CON'T.

Mom?

CONSTANCE

Where's your father?

ABBY

He's not here.

(ABBY heads to the coffee maker and puts on a pot.)

CONSTANCE

Where'd he go?

ABBY

I don't know. He wasn't here when I got up.

ABBY – CON'T.

(finally dawning on her)

Wait. Was that him? What'd he say?

(CONSTANCE breaks down a little.)

CONSTANCE

Her lymph nodes look suspicious. And her bladder ... other organs.

ABBY

Oh.

CONSTANCE

When will he be back?

ABBY

Dad? I don't know.

(ABBY just watches her mother, unsure of what to do—should she stand beside her? Hold her hand or leave her be?)

ABBY – CON'T.

What happens now?

CONSTANCE

He wants her to have a PT scan.

ABBY

What will that do?

CONSTANCE

Confirm if it's spread.

ABBY

Oh, OK, well then we can go from there, right?

(CONSTANCE collapses a little bit. ABBY walks over to her and stands beside her.)

CONSTANCE

We can't do that. She's been through enough. She can't take those machines.

ABBY

Oh. What did Dr. Akhtar say?

CONSTANCE
I'll tell him no.

ABBY
What?

CONSTANCE
We'll take care of it. Daddy and me.

ABBY
He's going to want her to get the scan, though. Right?

CONSTANCE
She doesn't know anything.

ABBY
Yeah, I know, but she has to decide, right. About treatment?

CONSTANCE
Not necessarily ...

ABBY
What does that mean?

CONSTANCE
Abby, if your sister had any idea what was going on ...

ABBY
I know, but what did Dr. Akhtar say?

CONSTANCE
What can he say? He said to get the scan.

ABBY
Well, she's his patient, right? He's going to have to treat her.

CONSTANCE
I'm her mother.

ABBY
I know, but ... what does that mean?

CONSTANCE
He'll do what I say. I'll tell him what we want. Your father and I already decided, when this all started ... we made the decision that we wouldn't put her through it.

(CONSTANCE wanders over to the couch and ABBY follows her.)

ABBY

Can you do that? You have, what is that? Power of attorney?

CONSTANCE

We used to, but we gave it back. She was doing well. Remember? She was doing really well for a while ... we thought we should give her more responsibility. That it would be good for her. We tried.

ABBY

Why didn't you get it back?

CONSTANCE

We would have had to go to court. We'd have to tell a judge. Shelley would, too. And then she'd know. We can't do that. We have to do this our way.

ABBY

But who does the doctor talk to? About all this? Isn't there a case worker or something?

CONSTANCE

Just me.

ABBY

Who else?

CONSTANCE

Your father.

ABBY

Yes, but, who else? Beyond you?

CONSTANCE

Why would we need anyone else? We know what we're doing, Abby. We've been doing this a long time.

ABBY

I know, but ... does he *think* you have power of attorney?

CONSTANCE

Maybe.

ABBY

Maybe?!?

CONSTANCE

He never asked.

ABBY

He never asked?!?

CONSTANCE

He's a very nice man. He understands what we're dealing with.

ABBY

Mom, this is serious. Like really, really serious.

CONSTANCE

You think I don't know that? You think I don't know that if it weren't for Daddy and me, Shelley would be homeless?

ABBY

I wouldn't let that happen ...

CONSTANCE

Or dead? In all likelihood she'd be dead in the street by now. If she didn't have a family that could care for her? Who knew what they were doing?

ABBY

I know, but ...

CONSTANCE

All those people you see out there? They're there because their families didn't know how to care for them. Or couldn't. You need money, know-how ...

ABBY

I know, I know ... so, Dr. Akhtar? He's going along with this?

CONSTANCE

He's very sympathetic.

ABBY

He can get in trouble, can't he? What if her insurance or a social worker finds out? He's lying for you.

CONSTANCE

He's not *lying*.

ABBY

She could lose her disability, social security. Right? You think no one's going to find out?

CONSTANCE

Shelley has cancer, Abby. Stage 3 ovarian cancer. That's what Grandmother Elizabeth had, OK? Dr. Akhtar is helping us. He is doing whatever he can to treat the problem. He is doing the right thing for us—and Shelley. He's a hero, OK?

(ABBY wanders around the living room, trying to make sense of what her mother is saying.)

CONSTANCE — CON'T.

I can barely get her to take a shower and now I'm going to put her through radiation? Chemo? I won't do it. So why put her through another scan? More drugs? We are not putting her through any of that anymore! Hasn't she been through enough? She's been through so much already. Enough! I don't want her going through any more than she already has.

ABBY

Is this for you or for her?

CONSTANCE

I would trade places with her if I could. Don't you know that? But anything we did would make her life ... and ours, too. She's happy, Abby. She has us. You and Bobby. Gracie. She goes to KFC and watches ESPN. She has her life. She has her little life.

ABBY

But you have to tell her. Don't you?

CONSTANCE

Do you realize we walk right past all these people, every time we see Dr. Akhtar? There in the waiting room, there's a sign that says oncology, oncology, oncology. It might as well be in neon. And people are hooked up, right there, to chemo. IV's drip, drip, dripping into their arms. Shelley doesn't say a word. She doesn't ask a question. Not one question after all this time.

ABBY

How can she not know?

CONSTANCE

Maybe she does. Maybe she doesn't. Your sister is not stupid, Abby. Sick, yes. But stupid? No, no, no, no.

ABBY

I know she's not stupid ... can't you try to explain it to her?

CONSTANCE

Have you been paying attention to anything that's gone on around here all these years?
Do you know your sister at all?

ABBY

That's not fair ...

CONSTANCE

If she does know, she's put it down so deep it's never coming out. Believe you me. It's how she copes. With everything. And when she can't do that, she goes off her meds and all hell breaks loose. You know that.

(GENE approaches and puts his key in the door, CONSTANCE looks nervously at ABBY and, in a moment, GENE joins them inside.)

GENE

Con? I'm home.

(GENE sees his wife and, within seconds, he knows she got the call. CONSTANCE can't hold back her tears.)

CONSTANCE

Oh, Gene!

(CONSTANCE bounces up off the couch and meets GENE in the middle of the room. They hug in silence for a mighty long time.)

GENE

It's OK. It's alright. Shhhh ...

(ABBY just watches them. Long pause as they clutch each other.)

ABBY

I can stay, you know. I don't have to go back today.

(It's not clear if they heard her. CONSTANCE and GENE are in their own little world at the moment.)

ABBY

Mom? Dad?

GENE

(finally noticing Abby)

It's OK, Honey. We'll be OK.

ABBY

I can try to reschedule my audition. It's really not...want me to reschedule?

(ABBY just waits. After another moment, GENE holds up his hand to her and whispers.)

GENE

It's OK.

(CONSTANCE finally breaks away from GENE and puts on a brave face.)

CONSTANCE

No, you should go. It'll be alright. Daddy will take you. You have all your stuff?

ABBY

I can take another day.

CONSTANCE

No. I want you to go.

GENE

(to Constance)

You want to take a ride?

CONSTANCE

You take her. I want to sleep. I want to forget about all this for a while. For as long as I can.

GENE

OK.

(to Abby)

Are you ready?

ABBY

In a minute.

GENE

OK, let me get my clubs.

(to Constance)

I'm going to hit a few after I drop her off.

CONSTANCE

Of course. Go, go. Everybody go.

(GENE disappears inside his bedroom. ABBY looks at her mother.)

What can I do?

ABBY

You're a good kid, you know that?

CONSTANCE

Am I?

ABBY

Yes, you are. And don't worry. I'm going to live forever so you and Bobby don't have to worry about her. I'm strong; I take care of myself. I'll be around, you'll see. And, you know what?

CONSTANCE

What?

ABBY

As horrible as this is ... it's a blessing. For you. And your brother.

(CONSTANCE breaks down a little.)

ABBY

Don't say that.

CONSTANCE

It's true. It's such a burden. I don't want you kids to have to deal with this your whole lives.

ABBY

Mom ...

CONSTANCE

It's true. It's OK.

ABBY

What do you want me to do?

CONSTANCE

Just continue to call her, and come visit from time to time. That's all you can do. Get on with it. Move forward.

ABBY

What about you?

CONSTANCE

I'm going to pray that each morning when she calls, she's going to tell me she feels OK. She feels good. Because when the day comes that she doesn't ...

(CONSTANCE breaks down a little more and stops speaking. In a moment, GENE reappears with his golf bag.)

GENE

(to Abby)

Ready, Honey?

ABBY

I don't have to go.

CONSTANCE

Go, go. I want you to go.

(ABBY walks over to her mother and hugs her.)

ABBY

I'll be back. Anytime you want.

CONSTANCE

OK, OK ... Go ahead, Honey.

(GENE gives his wife a kiss.)

GENE

Be back soon.

CONSTANCE

I'll be fine.

GENE

I'm just going to hit a few. Then we'll call Bobby.

ABBY

Goodbye, Mom.

(CONSTANCE nods, wipes her tears and walks them to the door, then closes it behind them. She stands behind the closed door. GENE has gone off with his clubs and ABBY's suitcase to start the car, but ABBY stands still on the stoop.)

CONSTANCE

(to herself, resting her head on the door)

Safe travels, my darling girl. Safe trip home.

(CONSTANCE takes a deep breath and turns around, facing the bay window at the back of the house.)

(Unbeknownst to CONSTANCE, ABBY is still right outside. ABBY waits a moment, then turns around and looks at the door.)

(The LIGHTS go out.)

THE END