

Toy Cars Down Steep Slopes
By: Caitlin Turnage

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
CATHY	Home owner	45	Female
JACK	Cathy's adventurous son	24	Male
RAINY	Cathy's diseased son	29	Male
AMY	Married to Rainy	27	Female

SYNOPSIS:

Cathy is a mother who has shoved her children out of her house with a tendency to hoard. However, when she's diagnosed with Huntington's disease she understands it's time to change--and time to move, but she can't do it without her estranged sons help. When the boys return, they have to come to terms with their mother's hereditary disease, and their own death sentence.

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

Staged Reading at the University of Houston

Act I

SCENE 1

Interior of a manufactured home in Mississippi. The home has been encased in brick to make it a permanent residence. In the main bedroom, shelves line the walls with various knickknacks. The room has a distinct theme of childhood whimsy.

The room is somewhere between a collector's haven and a hoarder's hovel; it's organized chaos. On one side of the bed is a piled collection of ceramic dish-ware. In another corner of the room are toy cars, some of them still in their shiny packages stacked high on top of each other. Coloring books and stickers and different objects with toy car or race car themes also litter this mountain. Along the back wall surrounding the bed is a book case lined with journals of all sizes and shapes. The journals on the left hand side are untouched and pristine, while the journals on the right side are worn and battered like someone's tossed them around. There is a clear demarcation halfway through the shelf from nice journal to distressed journal.

In the center of the room is a bed with a simple white comforter. It's littered with grandma and great aunt quilts that have been passed on from the baby cribs of relatives past. In the bed is CATHY, 45, wearing an oversized nightgown made of simple cotton, the kind with the tiny cloth rose in the center. Her hair hasn't been brushed in two days, and her shaking hands nervously clutch a plush wind-up dinosaur toy that when wound plays "You are my Sunshine". She hums along with the dinosaur. Throughout the play she has moments that will be specified where her body doesn't work how it should, where she's in pain. She has Huntington's disease, but her sons don't know. JACK, 24, sits in the middle of a ring of plates. He's dressed up in slacks and a button down, as if attending a funeral, but his boots are the muddied working kind. He snaps the journal he's been reading closed and puts it on the book shelf. Jack goes over to the pile of toys and pulls out a kids coloring book with a car theme.

JACK

Box or burn, mama?

CATHY

(Without looking, pouting at her dinosaur.)

It smells like ash and smoke in here.

JACK

Burn?

CATHY

Keep.

JACK

Not what I asked.

CATHY

Next item. Can't we douse the fire? I'm tired of this, Jack.

JACK

We've got too much junk to douse it.

CATHY

It's not junk. It's my precious stuff.

JACK

Do you need this stuff?

A pause.

JACK

Mom?

CATHY

It brightens my day, would you take away the things that make me smile?

JACK

Rainy's not gonna like it. And you know that. If he walks in that door to concrete resolutions--

CATHY

Keep the book, Jack.

Jack rummages through the pile of toys. He pulls out a shiny red convertible car.

JACK

Box or burn?

CATHY

We're not gonna do that pile.

JACK

Why not? Gotta do it at some point. Today even.

CATHY

We don't need to do that pile.

JACK

It's blocking the bathroom door and I kind of gotta pee so--

CATHY

Crawl over it.

JACK

You're just gonna make me hold it? That's cruel punishment. Stabbed right in the bladder, my own mother won't care enough to let me pee.

CATHY

Go to another bathroom.

JACK

Not an option--box or burn?

Cathy peels her attention off the dinosaur for the first time and looks at Jack.

CATHY

That pile stays, okay?

JACK

We'll box it for now.

CATHY

I want to see them. They're pretty. Just leave 'em out. Let them breathe.

JACK

Okay then, we'll leave this little guy out on a shelf and the other fifty of his friends can meet my friend the box.

CATHY

They're different, I want to see them all. How could you ever pick and choose?

JACK

(Muttered.)

Mom, so many of these are almost identical.

CATHY

I want to show them to Rainy.

JACK

Is he even into cars?

CATHY

Little boys are always into cars. Rainy most of all.

Cathy scoots across the bed to pick up a hand mirror on her side table. Jack continues to sort stuff. Cathy pushes up the muscles of her mouth into a smile. She repeats this over and over.

CATHY

Should I have made food, should I have been better--made dinner for us?

JACK

(Sass)

Well mamma--that's what coming home parties are about--casseroles and mud slinging.

CATHY

Is the house clean enough--you think?

Jack laughs. Cathy frowns and then catches how old it makes her look in the mirror, she smiles a little more forcibly.

JACK

Are you really practicing your smile? For them?

CATHY

No. Checking my face.

JACK

Practice harder mom, that shit eating grin's frozen tundra. Your teeth are cracking like the ice in the arctic.

Jack crosses to the pile of dish-ware. He holds up a plate with chipped edges.

JACK

Box or burn?

CATHY

You can't burn ceramic. I got those for you. Don't you like 'em? Every time I go down to Main I get a new one.

JACK

They're not right. I don't collect this shit.

CATHY

Jack.

JACK

Honesty--it's good for us, right. Surprising.

CATHY

Don't be so hurt.

They're pretty. Let 'em make you happy, honey. All we got to add to daily life is the things we collect.

She pats Jack's cheek who pulls away from her.

CATHY

And when I get 'em I can think on you.

A pause. Her obvious lie.

JACK

Bull shit, mamma.

Jack kisses her cheek. Cathy, annoyed, starts to respond but he cuts her off.

JACK

Can I mazel tov it then? I saw a wedding where they shattered the glass. I always wanted to smash something. It's like all my life has been a motor revving up to breaking this fine china.

Jack raises his arm but Cathy grabs his wrist to stop him.

CATHY

You can't be serious?!

JACK

As a dead heart beat.

CATHY

Stop it.

JACK

You stop it.

CATHY

Jack don't.

JACK

Come on mom, breathe. You're acting like I shot you in the foot. It's just a plate.

Cathy searches for any excuse.

CATHY

You'll nick the floor. You don't want to nick the floor of *your* home. It's *your* home!

JACK

It's really nice. I like the new wood.

Jack scuffles along the floor in a little dance.

JACK

It's the sock slidin' kind of floor. You know, where you run down the hallway and slide straight to the kitchen without ever taking a step.

CATHY

Rainy always wanted a floor like that. Linoleum's too sticky. I can't count the number of skinned knees and bruised noses from tripping over his own socks.

JACK

Did I fall a lot?

CATHY

You weren't the kind of kid who cried.

JACK

Yeah--I know.

Jack full of anger but hiding it behind a smile moves to hug Cathy. She relaxes in his arms thinking he's listened. Jack pulls slightly away from his mother until the plate is out in front between them.

JACK

But I probably cried once.

And then his grin splits into a wolfish smile and he shrieks.

JACK

Mazel Tov, mamma.

As Cathy struggles to stop his arm before he finishes the motion, her arms seize up and she winces.

Jack throws the plate to the ground and howls in laughter.

CATHY

My plate--

JACK

As opposed to your other 50 of the exact same? Come on. It was already broken, no big deal. One plate down and the rest to wrap up. Not bad odds, okay? No one's hurt.

CATHY

You scratched the floor! The floor's hurt.

Her eyes never leave the broken shards.

JACK

The floor is inanimate.

CATHY

Look how sad the floor is. Trying to make this place pretty with you in it is like trying to light wet logs.

The floor made this place homey again. I want them to open it up and remember--know this is it. Comfort. I want my son to find his way home again.

JACK

It's barely a nick. This place isn't worth skirting around anyway. Let's move somewhere that doesn't have roach remains and a pink plastic rim around the sink.

I don't wanna--
CATHY

She moves towards the broken plate.

You gotta change.
JACK

Jack goes to take a step towards Cathy, but Cathy holds up a hand stopping him from bumping heads with her and stepping on the broken plate.

CATHY
Enough of it. You're not paying attention to what's in front of you, and like always, my reckless one is gonna find himself hurt.

She pats his cheek tenderly, patronizingly again. But she's worked up trying to mask it. Cathy sweeps the pieces of the plate, going to her night stand pulling out a plastic bag to put the pieces in. After sealing them in safely she places them back on top of all the dish-ware.

CATHY
There--when the other plates crack and lose pieces we can fill 'em in with these. Like a puzzle.

Really?
JACK

CATHY
They do it in Japan...if there's a crack they fill it in with gold--make it beautiful--they know the value of keeping their things. Unlike ungrateful sons.

Throw them away.
JACK

It's tradition. It's art.
CATHY

It's trash.
JACK

Unappreciative shi--
CATHY

JACK

The last time I checked you were cutting out magazine clippings that you thought shined, and were using them as your kitchen art. You don't have a right to lecture me on the value of your garbage sack keepsakes.

A pause. Jack kisses his mother's cheek.

JACK

But it's okay, mamma, I liked your collage of lipstick tubes.

A pause. Cathy hesitates.

JACK

Mom, you really need to throw them away.

CATHY

No.

JACK

Hard headed.

CATHY

Like mamma like ass hole kid.

Jack makes a move like he's about to take the bag with the pieces and Cathy moves to block him, but instead of reaching for the bag he grabs the dinosaur toy from her hands.

JACK

Where's *my* baby toys mom?

CATHY

In the garage with the rest of the stuff.

JACK

(Referring to toy in his hand.)

Stuff--huh. Box or burn?

CATHY

You are not going to burn your brother's dinosaur.

JACK

What would Rainy do with a dinosaur toy?

CATHY

Love it.

JACK

Well, I want to love it--look at it mom. Its got a smiley face smile. A half moon smile. Can I love it?

CATHY

Of course not.

JACK

Why is Rainy always “of course yes”, and I’m “of course not”?

A pause. Cathy can't answer.

JACK

He would've taken it with him all those years ago if he wanted it. Box or burn?

CATHY

Keep.

JACK

Not an option. Box or burn?

CATHY

Keep.

Jack drops the dinosaur on the floor.

CATHY

What are you--

Jack lifts his mud covered boot over the dinosaur.

JACK

These boots have seen a lot of hell mom. I laid over in a truck stop in Texas coming back from California and there were puddles all over the tile. Just last night I went out to get the ruffage for today and standing not half a foot in front of me was a glowin' eyed red tail deer snorting like mad getting territorial. These boots were splashing in miles of deer shit all for you--and that's what this earth here is made of so--I'd hate to get Mississippi mud all over Rainy's favorite toy.

CATHY

Jack--you wouldn't--don't ruin it, please?

Jack's foot edges closer.

CATHY

(Trying to distract Jack.)

Jack, we'll get you new shoes. You should have new shoes. These have been coming and going just all too much. You need party shoes, for when Amy gets here--pretty Amy with all her party spirit. We gotta look nice for company, don't we?

JACK

(Laughing)

You're not distracting me.

CATHY

You'd do better with a good pair of church shoes. When's the last time I bought you Sunday clothes?

JACK

Years.

A pause.

JACK

Hopefully this mud doesn't drip all over the toy--right mom?

CATHY

The mud'll ruin it.

JACK

I don't know, I think he would look more natural with some mud, baby toys aren't supposed to be perfect--dinosaurs were notorious mud rollers--having a ball in their own shit, or their brother's.

CATHY

You are not gonna smear mud on Rainy's favorite toy.

JACK

Box or burn?

CATHY

Please?

JACK

Box--or burn? If you don't answer the question's gonna change to burn or burn?

CATHY

KEEP!

Cathy lunges for the toy gripping Jack's ankle to keep him from stomping on it. Cathy chucks the dinosaur across the room.

CATHY

I'm doing a good thing for us and you come in here with your father's angry spirit and ruin it all.

JACK

It is a plush dinosaur. Your grown son wasn't gonna miss it.

CATHY

You have toys too. Jealousy is an ugly color on you, kid. That's his favorite. He cried when I had to take it every once in a while to wash.

JACK

If he cries over his baby toy then he really has been gone so long I don't know him anymore.

CATHY

Don't say that. He's *here*--he just--has had work--Amy. He's got a big life.

JACK

A big life in a big new place.

CATHY

Bitter baby, you always did try and ruin his toys.

JACK

When I was four.

CATHY

And he still blames you!

JACK

They weren't smiling. Who wants to play with dolls that serious. I gave them--expression. The Barbie dresses from the toy box in Pre-K made those soldiers damn beautiful and Rainy's side mouth spittle and red faced raging lunatic screamfests were worth every second of him hating me when I messed with his dolls.

GI Joes.
CATHY

Which are dolls.
JACK

Cathy, flustered but also slow as if in pain, moves to Rainy's pile and starts straightening it. She nitpicks putting cars of the same color next to each other, cars of the same size beside one another.

CATHY
They were his GI Joes. They were his. He took care of them, and protected them and you messed them up. You just destroyed his toys. Like a baby always tearing apart your brother's toys. You crayola'd their faces, and popped off their heads / you trapped them down toilet bowls or I would pick them off the floor with teeth marks through their faces--and you just grinning on the carpet, chewing on their limbs until their arms would be forever bent out of shape.

It starts innocent enough, this is just her usual. But she's becoming more flustered. A micro-panic attack. Her breathing is shallow and heavy. Jack, who thought this was a joke at first is desperate to make his mom stop, he bear hugs her back pulling her away from her panic. Jack softens toward his mother.

JACK
Oh come on, mom. Stop. Mom, seriously stop. It's not a big deal. Mom. I WAS A BABY! Mom, stop messing with the cars--come on. Let's get away from the pile of cars.

Just breaking his toys.
CATHY

Fine, mamma, I'm sorry.
JACK

Sorry for what.
CATHY

For picking on Rainy's things.
JACK

You should be.
CATHY

JACK
Yeah--yeah, I know.

Jack climbs around the pile of cars carefully trying to get to the bathroom.

JACK
Fuck, mom--

CATHY
Language.

JACK
You have so much stuff you can torch back here you don't even need lighter fluid.

CATHY
Don't touch anything.

JACK
Oh--trust me, I'm gonna touch everything. On purpose.

He exits into "the bathroom" and the sound of peeing is heard.

CATHY
Peeing with the door open's real cute son--who gave you those manners?

JACK
(Offstage)
Modesty has never been your strong suit, mamma.

A pause. Cathy picks up her mirror again practicing her smile. She exhaustedly taps her forehead against it sagging as the energy of life leaves her.

CATHY
(Softly, Jack can't hear)
I called him, Jack. I know you said you would call for me like usual, but I called Rainy. And he answered, and he said "hello". He said "hello" Jack, so I said "hello" back. And then he said yes. When I invited him. When I promised. When I could be better--he said "I'm coming home." Then hung up. But he said it. For the first time in--years. "I'm coming home."

The sound of a flush is heard. Jack comes back holding a brush. He scoots around the pile again, combing his hair in-between.

JACK

What'd you say? The giant mountain of fire fuel is kind of a sound barrier in front of your door.

CATHY

It was nothing. Just--trying to decide what to get ready. Should I dust the fans?

JACK

You've got a fritzed plug back there. That can't be up to code.

CATHY

[I] Don't use it.

JACK

It's a hazard.

CATHY

I don't use it.

JACK

I want you safe mom. If I head off for a time, I don't want to get back to a fried mamma fritter.

CATHY

I'm fine.

JACK

God, you're a hard headed--

CATHY

If I don't use it it's not a fire hazard.

JACK

Your stuff is the fire hazard!

Cathy pouts sitting on the bed.

JACK

Did you want to get ready, before they come? Come on mope--we can make you look pretty-show you off like a shiny penny.

CATHY

You're just gonna judge me. Like you do my house, and my smiles.

JACK

I'm sorry, mom.

CATHY

You're not.

JACK

Well, take pride in knowing you make me feel like I should be.

CATHY

(Utterly Depressed)

I don't know what to wear.

JACK

How 'bout some kind of dress. Want to impress, Rainy, right?

CATHY

I feel like a little girl on my first date.

Jack goes back to the bathroom, scooting around the piles again. He re-emerges with a wadded up black dress.

CATHY

Jack--I--I'm nervous, what will he like? He's coming--he's really--. I've missed--. Does he-- what should I be to him?

JACK

He just wants you to look like a mom. That's it. Just a mom, mamma.

Cathy hides behind the pile of plates and takes off the nightgown, sliding on the dress. She tries to zip the back but something's wrong. She's panicking as her hands seize up. Her back hurts. Her arms are hard to control. And Jack can't see it.

CATHY

Want to do your mamma a favor?

JACK

For being the pain in the ass I am? Anything for you.

CATHY

Zip me up.

Jack zips up her dress tenderly, like a dutiful son. He kisses her cheek and leads her to the bed. Wanting to atone for pressing his mother Jack sits behind her on the bed trying to brush out her hair.

CATHY

I'm so bad at this. You're much better at taking care of me, Jack.

JACK

Yeah, guess so.

CATHY

I'm lucky, having a son who takes good care of me.

JACK

Well, gosh mamma, you still know how to make a boy blush.

CATHY

Do you have to go away so often?

JACK

Yeah.

CATHY

Why?

JACK

There's not room for me here...you know that.

CATHY

But I'm making room.

JACK

I know. You're--yeah.

CATHY

So stop leaving.

JACK

I like what I feel when I travel, mom.

CATHY

Where did you go this time--where'd you go on your travel through the world?

JACK

It's the U.S. I don't really leave beyond that.

CATHY

What'd you see? Be my window, Jack. Show me what the world is. It's too big for me to see. I'm too exhausted for experience.

JACK

Most of it is shitholey anyway, you wouldn't want to see it. Most of it's bitter and mean. Well--on second thought you'd get along just fine.

CATHY

It must be better than the four walls around me. It must be better than home. Where no one visits. People visit America--people come to see the United States. It must be better out there somewhere, at least better than in here.

JACK

Sometimes---yeah it is. There's moments when it just feels like expansion--like the more you look up and away from home the bigger you can be. The farther north--it's almost a different world.

CATHY

Tell me Jack--

A pause.

CATHY

Kid?

JACK

(While brushing her hair.)

I went to Alaska--I saw a moose, mamma. For the first time in my life, I saw a moose up close and personal. ---Well. Not so much up close, they're scary. And aggressive. But personally I saw him. And he was--calm--he was just breathing. The sun was setting and it was bone cold. The kind that you feel all the way to the tip of your tongue even when it's inside your mouth, closed in.

I saw this girl, a wild girl, you know? The kind of girl who's lived at the top of this mountain where this moose was, with maybe just her dad and the wind--and her hair was black and wild, and her lips were red and wild, and her legs were so long and wild, her eyes, were all white with pinpricks of black wildness in the center and when she showed her teeth to smile I swear to god I thought she was some kind of animal. A feral cat licking at her gums with her bone cold tongue.

And she had this baby tucked up under her arm, with creamy baby cheeks flushed pink with the skin cracking cold. And that baby cried and cried and looked up at her hoping she would swallow him whole so he could feel warm again.

See, I think he saw her as some kind of feral cat too--all feminine and feline and wanting to lick and lap at all the wounds she had. The lonely wounds that were too much for her at the top of this mountain. I think that kid was waiting for her to set him down--oh he wanted to be totally just consumed by her, but instead he waited knowing that she was gonna put him down and he was just gonna have to go.

And you know what, mamma. She did. She did lap and cuddle her own torn skin--and she set the kid down. Let the kid run off, scooting like the kid had some place better to be. And she tended to the wounds of isolation with me and that moose up there on a mountain in Alaska--and for the first time in my life I woke up feeling just how far away I could ever really be.

CATHY

So you fucked her.

A knock is heard at the door. Cathy hears it, distracted. Jack picks up a faux glass cup with car stickers from Rainy's pile. Cathy's attention snaps to him. He can't ever impress his mom.

JACK

Box or burn.

CATHY

They're here--kill the games.

JACK

You get to judge me, so I can judge you. Box or burn.

CATHY

I'm sorry Jack, I wasn't trying to kill your--

Another knock is heard.

JACK

Box it? Or burn it.

Cathy leaves to go get the door but Jack stops her. She has to make a split second choice.

CATHY

Let's go slower. I'm not good at decisions.

A key going into a door and opening it is heard. Followed by a door closing in another room..

AMY, 27, enters carrying a bottle of wine.

AMY

Hey, I can actually see the floor! That's real progress!

Jack makes a little boys mock imitation of an explosion noise and throws the cup on the floor. Amy squeaks when it scares her and it bounces until it rolls into the car pile.

JACK

Wish it had smashed--the sound of a good authentic *makes explosion sound again* gives me this real happy giddy feeling.
Amy--so glad y'all could come. You found the key?

Cathy scrambles to get the cup. Her hands are shaky. Her legs have a subtle and slight inward step. Something is off in her physicality that makes her slower than normal.

AMY

Dear god Jack, was that really necessary? You scared us half to death.

Cathy looks at Amy and her face falsely stretches into a large grin. Jack rolls his eyes.

JACK

(Muttered)

Practically arctic.

CATHY

You're here! And you brought wine!

Cathy goes and kisses Amy's cheek. Amy sees the cup in Cathy's hand.

AMY

Was that Rainy's, that's just the best.

CATHY

Yeah--the plastic's peeling.

Amy automatically grabs the cup out of Cathy's hand who has an internal panic. Amy flips it around in her hands.

AMY

So, how are we sorting? Let's get this stuff separated out. Are you putting the cups and stuff here?

She points to Jack's pile.

AMY

Don't worry about it Cathy, we've got you all taken care of. More hands make this easy--I got it. Let me just--

She starts to put the cup on Jack's pile but things start shifting. Cathy grabs the cup.

CATHY

You don't need to--. I know where it goes. Let me be involved. My house--y'all are just helping. Wouldn't want you to--

Jack snatches the cup from Cathy and balances the cup on top of the tower. He winks at his mom.

AMY

There--now we're perfect again. It's all together.

JACK

Yeah, a real leaning tower. Good job.

AMY

Be supportive, maybe?

Her hand automatically seeks her stomach protectively. Jack notices Amy's nice dress and sweeps her up into a dance.

JACK

Oh, you brought the liquor so, I am supportive!

Jack grabs the wine bottle from Amy popping the cork and taking a swig.

CATHY

Jack could you at least pretend like you had a mother who raised you right?

AMY

Save some please?

JACK

You dressed up for this. Who you trying to impress Amy? Rainy's already got you. See mom, it's a real party!

Jack does a little jig with his mom, spinning her into confusion.

JACK

We're all dressed to the nines. Amy brought wine, we can sip and share and box and burn and we can sacrifice all your crap to the gods of bullshit! I won't give up if you don't, mamma, and we'll have just the cutest little funeral for the home we used to love.

AMY

It's weird. Being in the same house that the person you love was raised in. We should get rid of this stuff *right*, you know? It's special. I mean my husband became a real person right here in this house./ Cathy, what are you gonna do with all the photos?

JACK

(Snark)

Really, I don't remember that.

A pause as Cathy can't answer Amy's question. Amy moves on.

AMY

Anyways it's things to cherish. Right Cathy?

JACK

It feels like a lot of shit we have to dig through.

AMY

We'll work on that.

CATHY

I keep it here for ya'll to come home too. So leave it alone, Jack.

AMY

You don't need to keep it here for us.

CATHY

I do, what if y'all want to spend the night?

AMY

We'll bring stuff.

CATHY

That's ridiculous. I can take care of y'all.

JACK

Mom she's talking knick knacks not a blow up mattress. The cars, the plates, the bullshit can go.

AMY

It's okay, we're gonna help.

JACK

Doesn't mean we'll make it. We might be buried in memories by nighttime.

CATHY

I can do it. Jack--I'm gonna make it good here. I have to make it good here.

AMY

It is good here.

Jack gives her a look.

AMY

I read these bedside table books, and one of them was talking about how positive childhood memories result in a happier adulthood.

JACK

Well Rainy must be one happy son of a bitch. But I can be counted out right?

CATHY

I bought things for you. You just keep smashing them!

JACK

Guess I never grew up--just toddling around breaking all of your valuables.

Jack snatches a clown off the shelf. He walks around and hugs Cathy, holding the clown in front of her.

JACK

Box or burn, mamma?

She wiggles, uncomfortable at being pressed on getting rid of things.

Jack visibly softens. He kisses her cheek, trying to soften the blow of disposing her stuff.

AMY

What is that?

CATHY

I bought it for Jack, the last time we went to the circus.

JACK

No, you bought it at a flea market the next day without me because you wanted me to remember our day together.

AMY

That's sweet.

JACK

And possessive.

CATHY

You liked the clowns. They made you laugh and your laugh is the contagious kind.

JACK

Great, so can I kill this thing?

AMY

It's kind of awful.

CATHY

It's important.

JACK

If you don't start picking and choosing by the end of the night we'll be burning everything. So box it or burn it?

AMY

We could donate it.

JACK

I thought we were clean slating this thing. Burning your stuff in a puff of smoke, a real Viking funeral for all your shit. There's no donating allowed.

AMY

He's right, actually. It's healthier, the clean break is the fastest break. I promise a few hours tops and you won't miss the things as much as you thought you would.

CATHY

I--

JACK
Better mom--remember?

AMY
I just think--

CATHY
It's not your stuff.

AMY
Cathy--we're here to help.

CATHY
It's hard.

JACK
Where's Rainy? We can get him in here--weigh the real value behind this poor little clown. Apparently I'm too judgmental. I'm the one ready to condemn everything to fire.

AMY
This is supposed to be hard.

JACK
This is supposed to be brutal.

CATHY
Sure, but all on my terms.

AMY
Rainy said yes because he thought this would be different then the last time. And I know it will. We're here for you-I promise.

CATHY
I won't drive him away again.

JACK
If I remember right he's the one who drove away...and I don't think he called when he got home.

Cathy smiles through her teeth.

CATHY
You're home too, so I must be better...right, Jack?

JACK

For now.

AMY

And Rainy believes you.

JACK

Oh, but that stubborn will of steel is/relentless .

AMY

Change is for family to make together. So, we'll be just fine.

She touches her stomach. Jack peers out a window that leads to the driveway.

JACK

Is that why Rainy's sitting in the car taking a nap?

AMY

He is not.

JACK

Look how cute your little asshole is now, mom!

CATHY

(Panicked)

He's outside?

AMY

I can't believe him. He said he was right behind me.

CATHY

He's here?

JACK

Here and snoring in the front seat, chair leaned back and all. Are those his feet propped up on the dashboard? Why--I think it is. A regal throne for his highness.

CATHY

Jack--what do I--is he? Why isn't he coming in? Is he tired? Should I make the bed?

Cathy rushes to the window looking out with Jack.

CATHY

He looks so sweet.

Cathy hurries to the bed fixing the sheets up and stretching some of the quilts under the bed.

JACK

You're gonna fix the bed up for him? He's sleeping in the fucking car Mom, because he doesn't want to come in.

CATHY

He said he was coming home. So he's gonna come in. I promised. He knows I don't break promises.

JACK

He's in the drive way--he is home. Don't overestimate the lengths he'll go through to avoid this. It'll only upset you.

CATHY

Do you think it's too hot in here? Should I turn the fans on? But I didn't dust them.

JACK

I'm sure Rainy won't mind the balmy 80 degree house in the safety of his car.

CATHY

It smells like smoke--Rainy won't like that.

JACK

Good thing he's in his car.

CATHY

Should I leave his dinosaur--or put it up?

JACK

Him and Rainy can be reunited *in his car*.

Silence.

CATHY

You lied. Didn't you Amy? He doesn't believe it. He doesn't believe this'll go away. He doesn't believe that I can be better.

There's silence for a moment. Cathy's nerves can't handle it. She goes back to the quilts laying them out.

Jack let's it go on for a minute before he takes the other side of the quilt and tries to pull it from her. They have a tug of war over the quilt.

JACK

Put it down.

CATHY

He's sleepy.

JACK

You have too many quilts. We'll burn this one.

CATHY

He likes quilts. Blankets are too thick!

JACK

Burn the quilt.

CATHY

No.

JACK

Be better, mom.

CATHY

He needs to be warm. He needs to be taken care of.

Cathy wins continuing to fix the bed.

CATHY

I'll make this good for him. I'll make it comfortable so he'll come in.

AMY

Oh, he's coming in. He doesn't get to say no to his wife.

Amy turns to exit but Cathy stops her.

CATHY

Let it be his choice.

JACK

He's choosing mom, but like always the cotton in your ears is too thick to hear anything but the concrete decisions in your head.

Cathy doesn't want to hear this. She begins rearranging the toy cars. She takes a few out displaying them at the foot of the pile.

Amy makes her way over to the pile of cars and toys. Her hand always seems to be brushing her stomach, like she's sick, or protective. She tries to placate Cathy.

AMY

You know, he was saying the other day how much he missed coming home from Sunday school, Sundays at lunchtime for chicken spaghetti. I can't make it like you, you should teach me. It can be for us--you and me...our secret.

CATHY

Yeah?

AMY

And I swear to god I put fifteen saccharine tablets into my tea just like you but I never think it comes out sweet enough.

Cathy accidentally knocks over a coloring book.

AMY

Us girls have to stick together--all these boys running around making messes. Here let me--there's a cup in the wrong pile.

Amy reaches in and pulls out a sippy cup with car stickers all over it. She haphazardly chucks it by the ceramics pile, and both mountains begin to avalanche a little. Shifting snow. Cathy panics. Jack stops her by holding both of Cathy's shoulders, keeping her in place.

JACK

Breathe.

CATHY

But--

JACK

No.

Cathy releases a big sigh.

CATHY

You're right.

A pause of tension.

AMY

Well then--now--and your trips Jack? How are they going? Anywhere new planned?

CATHY

No. He stays here. This time--right?

JACK

Gotta let go of something mamma. I'm trying to save money to go to Branson. Silver Dollar City here I come.

CATHY

Really?

JACK

Yes.

CATHY

You're leaving?

AMY

How many plates have you got so far?

CATHY

He has enough, so now he doesn't have to go. Right Jack?

JACK

Mom-stop.
48, Missouri will be my 49th and final.

AMY

You won't collect any for home?

JACK

Plates from here are made out of river mud and dirt--I'm trying to keep my collection pristine.

CATHY

He doesn't sleep with Mississippi women--if he has baggage from previous relationships he wants to dump it off here. It's just another pile in this home instead of an obvious mountain in his own. Anyways Mississippi girls are dirty. Mississippi girls are too much like his mamma--they're full of shit they're not getting rid of. Jack likes 'em breezier. The kind that never ask to "see where home is."

AMY

I'm sorry--girls?

JACK

I travel. I get girls, and then I buy a souvenir plate to remember them by.

CATHY

A fuck a plate--he only leaves to fuck.

JACK

A bit vulgar for a Viking funeral isn't it mom?

CATHY

It's a sore subject, what with you trying to chuck all my stuff and leaving me to rot with the--what did you say, roaches and pink plastic sink rims?

AMY

So you aren't really collecting plates, but girls?

JACK

More like memories. I figure one day I'm gonna have my own burning off of life party--with my greying beard dangling over the fire, being singed off hair by hair.

CATHY

Melodramatic little sh--

JACK

And I'm gonna be eighty six and have been married for fifty plus years to a woman I stopped loving minus fifty of those fifty plus years ago. And the fun, the joy of life, the sex will have been sapped out of every conversation I have ever had--and it's gonna be nice to kiss my plate goodbye and pretend it was the same twenty one year old curly haired concert going bar hop that I made out with on a whim. When I was just a fresh faced twenty-four.

Jack winks at Amy.

AMY

(To Cathy)

How'd you do it? Two little mud handed boys against one woman just doesn't seem fair.

Her hand subtly and automatically goes to her stomach.

CATHY

Boys aren't so bad. It's when they're men that you've gotta stop loving them quite so much, right Jack.

Because no man wants love.

It's just the little boys that are all reaching arms and grasping legs. Rainy always behaved like a hero. He was obsessed with medieval knights and Robin Hood when he was just three. He'd take things from his dad and give them to me, because he was rich--and I was poor. I counted myself the luckiest swept off her feet mother in the world.

JACK

Way mamma builds him up your husband's nothing short of lionhearted, Ames.

CATHY

He helped fold laundry at four and whenever I came home from a store he was out at the car waiting to help me carry in packages.

JACK

I did that too, we both did that, to see if you had brought home snacks.

AMY

I can't imagine children that helpful.

JACK

Just hungry--not helpful.

CATHY

They were little heroes around the house.

JACK

You flatter me.

CATHY

Rainy was just my little pint sized knight in shining armor.

JACK

(Serious Snark)

Dear lord, so sweet, bless his little heart.

Cathy wistfully watches Rainy out the window. Amy comes up beside her to try and connect with her mother in law.

AMY

Thank you for--being a good mom.

A pause.

JACK

Man--all this talk, let's destroy some shit. I'm done keeping up with the hugs and kisses. It's time to let stuff go.

Jack crosses the room to the journals and scoops out a handful of the most battered ones.

JACK

Dad and all his crap--this will be fun to torch.

AMY

Shouldn't you call him?

JACK

He only answers Rainy's calls.

AMY

Than we should wait.

JACK

Or he should've come in already.

AMY

It just seems like we might want to pack 'em away.

JACK

Mom?

A pause.

CATHY

I sleep by them every night.

JACK

And now you don't have to.

CATHY

No...really? Jack--I--

JACK

I'm dead serious.

CATHY

We're burning them? Oh god, I never thought I'd--

There's a pause.

JACK

You're whiter than the spare sheets.

Cathy tugs at her hair to keep her hands from shaking.

JACK

Mom, you okay?

A smile breaks out on Cathy's face.

CATHY

Let's light him on fire without the trial.

JACK

That frozen tundra just got brighter than the Sahara sun. I've never seen you look warmer, mamma.

CATHY

I have lived like there's a tether around my history to those books and permission feels like a good first step.

JACK

See, I told you this could be a party!

CATHY

I never have to look at them again.

Jack catching onto his mom's elation grins like an idiot.

JACK

Dad's shit goes away. Pinky swear.

CATHY

A real pinky swear?

JACK

I'll even kiss the thumb.

They pinky swear and kiss thumbs. Cathy's grin could not be bigger.

CATHY

Hand one over.

JACK

Really?

CATHY

Just hand me a match, a pair of scissors, or a bucket of water.

JACK

Mom's on board? We'll kill them?

CATHY

Ask it.

JACK

Dear lord, my savior has finally come.

CATHY

Box or burn, Jack?

JACK

Box or burn, Mamma!

Jack let's out a battle cry and hands his mom a beat up journal.

AMY

Are any of those blank? I've been meaning to keep a journal.

JACK

No, they're filled in every fucking page.

CATHY

So we'll take all the pages out.

JACK

Drawn and quartered!

AMY

Shouldn't Rainy call his dad? Has he read them? Don't y'all want to read them?

JACK

I have--time and time again, and let me tell you--true poetic bull shit has never been so thick.

CATHY

Am I allowed to do this, Jack? For me?

JACK

You are the strongest Viking warrior I know, mamma.

Jack grabs Cathy's arm.

Here's your bow and arrow, chief, dipped in fire--now destroy. You have my Nordic blessing.

CATHY

How can I/ do this?

JACK

My Nordic blessing trumps your doubt. Do it.

CATHY

Jack.

JACK

Do it!

CATHY

Stop it.

JACK

DO IT!

CATHY

OKAY!

Cathy takes a page and rips it out.

AMY

This seems wasteful?

JACK

Therapeutic is the word your looking for Ames.

Cathy rips out another page.

JACK

Therapeutic, wonderful, religious--the worlds great inward sigh that 24 years later my mamma is LETTING GO! Say it with me mamma "FUCK YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH!"

AMY

You're so extreme.

CATHY
 FUCK YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH!

JACK
 Take a big breath of air mamma!

Cathy does.

JACK
 Now one more time! FUCK YOU, YOU DOOR SLAMMING ASSHOLE!

CATHY
 FUCK YOU ROY!

Cathy is ripping out pages left and right, her hands shaking crazily. She's ripping so frantically that her hands and fingers can barely keep up. She's getting so worked up about it she drops to her knees. She becomes an animal--every rip becomes a grunt, a scream, a frustration. Jack eggs her on. With every page that falls to the ground Jack kicks them up creating a whirl wind of pages. He grabs the book from Cathy tearing page after page and then begins grabbing random journals tearing pages from them. He scoops Cathy up and they dance amidst the blizzard of pages screaming--having real fun, a thing mother and son haven't done in years. Amy is mesmerized by them. Amy wants to be a part of this family. She snatches up the first journal on the shelf, one of the most pristine. She tears out a page and Cathy stops--she goes sheet white.

JACK
 Shit. Mom--

CATHY
 What did you just do?

Amy is petrified, she has no idea what she did.

AMY
 I wanted to make it easier.

CATHY
 I--

Cathy starts to go to take the page, but trips on her own foot which is refusing to work.

JACK

Mamma?

He goes over to her and helps regain her balance.

JACK

Better mom. I'm tired of watching this hurt you--we can parachute them down the toilet like army men.

CATHY

That one Jack--that one though. That's your dad's first.

JACK

Don't make me do this. Stop turning me into the bad guy--my mustache can't curl that far and tying you to train tracks is exhausting.

CATHY

I've slept with that book Jack. I know that book. My first memory of Rainy is in that book. You can't just burn him away with the rubbish heap.

JACK

Well, Roy left 'em behind so--

AMY

Why is it okay to tear up some but not--

JACK

The nice ones are all the places my dad would take my mother, all the ways he'd hold my mother--be her husband.

AMY

The beat up ones?

JACK

All the places Roy wanted to be without my mother, all the women he saw who weren't my mother, and some about how much he wanted to hit my mother-- in those he could be her ex-husband.

AMY

Why cling to the things that hurt you?

CATHY

Because they don't. Those are all of Roy that live here anymore.

JACK

My dad put on shoes and walked away. Books can't do that. Books don't wear shoes. These books--are not Roy.

Jack is hovering by the door ready to burn the handful of books he's holding.

CATHY

Hand them over, Jack.

JACK

Fuel for the fire mamma. I'll load 'em into a bow and shoot them into the pyre. It'll blaze like our Yule log. I give my self my own god damned Nordic blessing. I was wrong. Maybe you can't be better.

AMY

Don't joke. This is clearly hard for her.

JACK

Don't you just love the way inked paper smells when it burns? Come on, mamma you're not gonna smile for me anymore?

CATHY

I didn't say yes.

JACK

You asked me box or burn.

CATHY

Give them back.

JACK

Burn mamma--my answer is burn.

Jack rips a page out of the special book. Cathy absolutely freezes. A deer caught in the headlights, or a person trying not to move because when they do they'll finally feel the pain.

JACK

Dance with me, let's be pagans! Let's torch the fire and jump it to prove our mortality! Let's dance in circles on twigs until our feet bleed.

AMY

What are you learning on these trips?

JACK

Let's smell smoke until it replaces our oxygen and we pass out.
Let's laugh until we cry because I know that's how you're feeling right now.

CATHY

Because of you--you ass.

JACK

I'm doing my job, mamma--I'm the most duty bound of dutiful sons you will ever have.

Jack spins Cathy around getting her focus away from all the stuff. Letting her just have fun. Amy takes the opportunity to take the book from the bed and slide it into her purse.

Amy moves to the car pile picking some up and organizing them into groups. She makes her way semi behind one of the piles. There's a clatter as some of the piles fall. Cathy's attention snaps to the avalanche and she desperately tries to right it.

Rainy enters carrying lighter fluid and a book of matches.

RAINY

Years later, and I feel like you're glued to the same spot I left you--only there's more stuff.

Cathy snaps her attention to Rainy.

CATHY

You're here.

AMY

And in so much trouble--I thought you were right behind me.

CATHY

You--came in.

JACK

He walks into the room and the lay people fall to their knees. Worship. Worship. Bring out the palm trees.

Leaves.

AMY

There's a pause as Cathy drinks in the sight of her son in the same room as her. She's worshipping him in this moment.

CATHY

It's like a home again.

JACK

Did you have a nice nap?

RAINY

I just walked in the door, mom.

CATHY

Have a seat! Sit down, are you tired! Do you want a drink? I can get a glass for the muscadine wine.

Jack takes the thing of lighter fluid from Rainy.

JACK

Great, more supplies. Don't worry--we've got plenty of fuel just in here. And a fritzed plug, we could be a raging inferno any second now. I know you're sleepy so I'll take it from you.

He starts to exit with the journals but Amy stops him.

AMY

Don't.

CATHY

You actually came.

RAINY

I was invited. Amy wanted to come. Jack said I should.

JACK

Your voice is pretty gravelly still- sure you're awake?

CATHY

I've invited you before.

RAINY

I know.

CATHY

You answered the phone. You said "I'm coming home."

JACK

Yep--he's here mom, next subject.

CATHY

And you actually came?

RAINY

I don't break my promises.

CATHY

I've got things for you. Rainy--I, I thought maybe you might like these things, and I kept seeing things that just looked at me--little flashy cars that just screamed "Rainy"--"Rainy would want this" and so I snatched 'em up. I just thought you could use 'em, that you might come pick 'em up. Jack thought they were dumb.

JACK

Yep.

CATHY

But I called Amy and she said--

RAINY

You told her to?

AMY

Once, I told her to once, for--I thought it might be nice.

RAINY

Well it's not.

JACK

Not helpful either.

CATHY

But they're just little things, to put a smile on that gloomy face--you work too hard, son. I thought I raised you to play more than that.

RAINY

Well--that's not what I /remember.

AMY

It's okay, we'll sort through what we want. Right?

RAINY

Great.

CATHY

I know how much you like toy cars.

JACK

Mom--stop.

CATHY

If I don't do it now they'll be gone by the time I look for them again. You're burn crazy. Ruining his things.

JACK

Awesome, mom. I appreciate that.

CATHY

You're sucking up everything I love in a vacuum.

JACK

That's what we're trying to do. Disappear shit.

Cathy picks up a toy car from the pile.

CATHY

(Like trying not to startle a rabbit.)

Look--Rainy. A blue convertible. I don't know the make or model or any of--I was never very--

RAINY

Dad did that stuff with me.

CATHY

I got you a bunch.

AMY

And that's sweet, thank you.

JACK

Are you even into cars?

RAINY

I'm not.

CATHY

Yes you are. I have a height chart that remembers for me--age 7 is marked "race car driver." And you'd race 'em up and down my arms. I remember. "Mom bend your elbow" and I would and you zoomed over them like mountains, and then "No, Mom straight." and you'd zip 'em down at break neck speeds using my veins as tracks, and blowing raspberries the whole time. Making motor noises, winning every race. Of course you're into cars.

AMY

Rainy, we could use them for--

RAINY

Nothing. We can't use them. You can take 'em all back.

CATHY

But I've had them for years.

RAINY

I wasn't here.

CATHY

But you were supposed to come.

RAINY

But I didn't.

CATHY

But I'm making things okay again.

JACK

You can't fix it with toys, mamma. 7 was a long time ago. And he wasn't here for the in-between.

CATHY

(To Rainy)

But I knew you would be--when you knew they were here.

A pause.

JACK

So I guess that means the thirty day return periods passed then, right? Guess you slept through it Rainy.

RAINY

Shut up.

JACK

I just, wanted to make sure you were feeling okay--you were napping so hard--out there--not in here--in your car.

RAINY

Yeah--sure.

A pause.

JACK

Did you like the new storefront--on the old home--it's looking pretty shiny, like when you wrap the leftovers in aluminum. I've been helping mamma with everything for months.

CATHY

When you're not thieving out in the middle of the night.

JACK

And I think our design choice was "What would the prodigal son like best". It's a winner I think. Right, mamma?

RAINY

You made her real pretty. A joke, right? Red brick like caked on makeup for a home encasing a garbage dump?

Cathy's face falls, hurt.

JACK

Hey--I mean--I know it's dumb, and I know it's still--well it's still here but she's trying to do a nice thing. It's not right, but--

RAINY

But what, I'm a grown man, I don't parlor to my mom's wishes with bribery.

JACK

She wanted to make you smile.

RAINY

And you're stuck sticking up for her.

AMY

Come on, I thought you were gonna put on your happy face today.

JACK

You said yes, why'd you come--to yell? Like dad?

RAINY

Why are you defending her?

(To Cathy)

Do you even see him? Putting his nose where the axe swings for you. I don't play with toy cars mom. And Jack doesn't collect generic ceramic plates--he doesn't even have a home to put them in! And he sure as hell doesn't have space here.

JACK

(Mumbled)

I keep 'em here.

CATHY

I just wanted to see you--I wanted to give you happys.

RAINY

And that--don't call 'em happys, this stuff, that you buy that you think will force our hands--they're not making anyone happy. Least of all you. Mom--this much--it's dangerous. I came to get rid of this stuff. Not to keep it. A fritzed plug? Jesus, do you want to die in a fire--do you want Jack to? No one needs this crap.

CATHY

But your cars, don't you want them?

RAINY

No.

CATHY

But you want them Rainy, right?

RAINY

No.

CATHY

But you can display them in your house Rainy, they're all for you.

RAINY

Mom, no.

Jack sees his heart broken mamma and goes to her giving her a kiss on the forehead.

JACK

Cheer up, chin up kiddo. Remember it's shit has to go D-day. And we're all here, one big happy family!

Jack goes over to Amy winks at her and takes a big swig of wine.

JACK

So--box or burn?

Cathy throws him a look.

JACK

Burn? Okay.

Jack picks up a whole armful of cars. Rainy hesitates though. A car rolls to his foot. He crunches the car under his foot like a bug.

AMY

Did you really have to do that?

RAINY

It's trash anyways.

Amy grabs some cars out of Jacks hands.

AMY

We're not burning these.

JACK

We're Vikings!

AMY

So?

JACK

Viking's burn.

AMY

I swear to god--

RAINY

Yeah Ames, and if we stuff the shit in boxes who's to say when we turn our backs for a second she doesn't go undoing everything we've worked hard to get done?

I wouldn't do that. I'm trying.

CATHY

Never hard enough.

RAINY

Hey--

JACK

What, that a little too honest?

RAINY

It's done with a good heart--you don't have to stomp on it.

JACK

Are you going soft, or are you going to light a match.

RAINY

Rainy shakes the match box in Jack's face.

That's a waste. We could just donate it. I was reading how people who collect or--hoard things will be slightly more okay with getting rid of the object if you--

AMY

A pause.

She's not hoarding.

JACK

Well if we just donate the stuff maybe Cathy will feel better about--

AMY

Why do you even come back?

RAINY
(To Jack)

The abrasive Jack we've seen becomes shy, uncertain--obviously the younger brother.

I don't know--mom needs me.

JACK

He's just so much better at taking care of things than I am. I can't get to everything.

CATHY

RAINY

So you force your adult son, who should have an independent life of his own, to climb over mountains of stuff to get to the bathroom so he can get out your hair dryer? Leave Jack. Find a place without her to live, so you're not embarrassed to bring girls over.

CATHY

You're embarrassed?

JACK

That's not for me. I'm fine here.

CATHY

No you're not--you always want to/ leave.

JACK

No, I don't.

RAINY

It's time, Jack. You've had to deal with mom and her growing piles longer than I ever did. She's gonna shove you right out of the house.

CATHY

(Mumbled desperately)

He's right.

JACK

(To Rainy)

It's okay. That's more your dream anyways. I like doing what I do. I go away, I have fun for a month. Maybe two. But mom needs me. You can see--if I don't come home who says these piles stay at this minimum. Who says I'll even be able to walk in the living room. Mom can't just stay here by herself. I'd rather not come home to her buried in a pile of boxes without so much as an "Amazing Grace" to send her on her ghostly way.

AMY

That's a little much, isn't it?

RAINY

Well, so is/she.

Amy annoyed rolls her eyes and picks up a toy car handing it to Cathy.

Amy

I'm so sorry, I swear to god this morning when I woke up I didn't think it was next to a grouch.

He agreed to put on his happy face, but man oh man--I really don't want to know what his ecstatic one would look like right now.

(To Rainy)

Could you at least pretend to be a part of this family, helpful, supportive--because I don't really like the you, you have on.

CATHY

No--don't blame them. It's my face--It's me--I'm wearing the me none of them can deal with.--I get that--I can--

Cathy desperately goes over to the cars and sifts through the pile until she finds a slightly damaged one and grabs it.

CATHY

Box or burn, Rainy?

RAINY

Burn.

CATHY

Done.

She drops the car where she's standing.

CATHY

See, I can even move them. They don't have to stay in their piles.

She goes to the pile of plates and grabs one.

CATHY

We can smash more. Jack we can smash all of them if you want.

Cathy gives the plate to Jack. She laughs breathlessly--more like a windless cry. Her hands are shaking badly. Her body is hunched like she's in pain. Her smiles are hardly smiles but more like she's trying to hold herself together.

CATHY

Opa--or Mazel Tov or whatever Jack. Here.

She shoves plates into Jack's hand. Jack passes one to Rainy.

Viking funeral? JACK

Sure--why not. RAINY

Jack and Rainy begin to ruthlessly smash plates. The stack diminishes drastically.

A plate for our dad. JACK

To Roy. RAINY

To Roy. JACK

They smash two plates together. Cathy winces.

For growing up to fast. RAINY

Mazel Tov, mamma. JACK

No. CATHY

Jack throws the plate down smashing it.

For never coming home at Christmas time. RAINY

Please stop. CATHY
(Whispered)

There was no place to set up a tree. JACK

To countless grocery bags saved in drawers for years. RAINY

JACK

And getting your fingers pinched trying to shove them all in.
For so many journals full of crap memories that you should've been part of but weren't.

RAINY

To having so many toy cars you have no idea what to do with them.

CATHY

(mumbled)

You were supposed to/ love 'em.

JACK

For having a shit ton of dishware but no house.
For zipping my mothers funeral dress--for a house and not a person.

RAINY

For all of this family sentimental bullshit.

JACK

For being twenty years old, and a self proclaimed traveler of only the United States.

RAINY

To living in routines.

JACK

To being able to feel how far your boundaries are actually allowed to fall.

RAINY

To emptying this god damned tomb.

Rainy throws a plate down as hard as he can and it
splinters everywhere.

RAINY

Mazel Tov!

Jack howls somewhere between monkey and wolf.

Cathy is huddled by the stack of cars-protecting it. She
breathes harshly. Wringing her hands. She's terrified. Like
a trapped animal.

AMY

Stop it. She doesn't want this. She just wants to make ya'll happy. Right Cathy?

RAINY

They're plates, Ames. It's not gonna kill her.

AMY

Could you have been possibly any more insensitive or hurtful?

RAINY

Are you really that concerned over a stack of plates?

Amy hesitates for a second, clearly actually kind of lusting after the memory of the smashed plates.

AMY

No but this excitement's not good for--

JACK

For what?

RAINY

Amy's just skittish. She's a sensitive person.

JACK

Well isn't that sweet--they're just plates.

CATHY

(Punched in the gut.)

Just plates? Just? Jack--they're yours. Don't you want them? I got them for you--for when you come home. So that you have something here to come home too. So that when you're gone I see the plates and know you'll be here soon. To make this place your home--and now you have nothing--now you've obliterated your home.

AMY

(To Jack)

Children aren't really supposed to come back home. It's damaging when a kid returns after a peak in their life--or after a big trip. Like they've already achieved the ultimate level of adulthood they really can.

RAINY

Amy.

AMY

I just thought--

RAINY

You didn't.

JACK

Thanks, but I've been part of this family my whole life. I already know I'm damaged. But I come back--I gotta. No one else is.

CATHY

(Whispered, upset about plates.)

They're yours.

JACK

Those plates are not me, mom. I am not those plates. Plates can't wear shoes either.

CATHY

I know that--it's just--whenever you're away--

JACK

I'm never away for long.

Jack goes over and picks up one more plate. He hands it to Cathy.

JACK

Smash it. For me.

Cathy's hands are shaking.

JACK

You can't be that nervous about this.

RAINY

It's her fix, Jack. She hoards things like they're drugs.

JACK

She doesn't *hoard*. Smash it mom. For me.

A pause as Cathy's frozen.

Smash the plate. Or don't. But if you don't I'm burning it. And it'll melt away slowly and painfully in the fire.

CATHY

(Whispered.)

You can't burn ceramic.

JACK
So smash it. Hear it break. It'll feel good.

CATHY
No.

JACK
Smash.

CATHY
Keep

JACK
Break.

CATHY
Keep.

JACK
Trash.

CATHY
KEEP!

Cathy lunges to grab the plate from Jack but her hands shake too much and together they drop the plate. It smashes to the floor.

AMY
Oh my god. Please stop with the smashing plates thing. It's loud. And I don't need that kind of anxiety.

JACK
You're that skittish?

AMY
I'm not skittish at all--Rainy.

RAINY
It just makes her jump.

JACK
Well then pardon me if I don't have a drive to stop immediately.

RAINY
Don't be an asshole.

JACK

You were supposed to smash it. For me.

CATHY

It smashed.

JACK

But not on purpose.

CATHY

It smashed either way.

JACK

But you couldn't even smash one out of a billion plates--for me.

RAINY

She can't do it for anyone. Mom didn't go to kindergarten and learn how to share. All this shit--it was never meant for us. It was only meant to be in her personal menagerie of memorabilia--to shove out all the bad things.

We aren't monsters--we're organizers. You invited us. If you're okay swimming in collectibles then I guess we'll just have to take off!

CATHY

You can't go.

RAINY

Then you gotta start saying yes.

JACK

Mom I'm trying to get you to unlatch--unlatch the lamprey hooks you have sunk deep into everything. It's not always the sentimental bullshit you think it is.

RAINY

Just break it all.

AMY

Please don't.

JACK

Help us. It could be fun. You seem uptight--breaking things is good for that. Think I read that somewhere.

Jack winks at Amy.

AMY

It makes my heart pound and that's not good for--

JACK

For what?

RAINY

For nothing.

AMY

But Rainy--

RAINY

For nothing.

JACK

Than what should I stop smashing the plates for?

RAINY

Don't, Ames...not today. Please?

AMY

I want to tell them.

RAINY

You have your concrete wall face on.

AMY

Let me tell them.

RAINY

I know but--

AMY

But you're angry.

RAINY

Yeah.

AMY

So be happy instead.

RAINY

It's not that easy.

A pause.

AMY

I'm pregnant--we just--we just found out and...I'm gonna have a baby.

RAINY

God damn it.

AMY

So would you please stop smashing the plates?

JACK

What?

AMY

Yeah.

CATHY

A baby? You're pregnant.

AMY

Yeah...Rainy and I--he's a daddy. You're a grandma.

CATHY

I never even thought about a baby.

(Whispered)

This isn't going to be enough. I can't fix this.

Jack's the only one who hears his mom whisper this. He looks at her confused.

JACK

Mom?

Amy's distracted by her own joy.

AMY

That was the main reason I wanted to come today.

Cathy's hands shake. She takes a step and her foot lands heavier than normal. She sinks to the ground amongst the photographs and shards of smashed plates. For a second the lights in the room turn blue focusing in on Cathy and down stage right is the orange pit of a fire.

It's like the focusing of an eye only on Cathy. As soon as it happens it's back to normal. The light was insight on her panic.

CATHY

To tell us.

RAINY

To tell you about her baby. Yeah.

AMY

To tell you about *our* baby. Rainy didn't want to say anything.

RAINY

(To Cathy)

Well...you aren't a great mother to begin with. I didn't really expect your credentials to skyrocket you into grandmotherhood so I was avoiding it.

CATHY

You're pregnant.

JACK

You're pregnant?

AMY

I'm having a little Rainy of my own.

JACK

Oh god, I promise you don't want that.

CATHY

A baby?

JACK

Holy shit, Mom. Do they need to spell it out for you?

AMY

We are. We're pregnant. I couldn't help it, Rainy. I was just gonna explode about it since I walked in here. Did you know I read this entire chapter on how you have to support the baby in all kinds of ways, financially, emotionally but no one really thinks about having to learn how to physically support a baby. Your arms aren't used to it.

You hold them under the armpits and then they get sore bruised ribs and cry every time you pick them up and that's when they start to resent you because the memory of your face holding them close is associated with armpit pain, and so you have to learn to support them and hold up their heads so that your memory isn't painful to them.

JACK

Hey mom, maybe that's why we fight so much.

CATHY

You're going to be a dad. You're having a kid. With your genes.

RAINY

Yeah. I'm gonna be a dad.

AMY

There can be so many complications--god, I've read about so many, and with us trying to get this house emptied and taken care of, Rainy thought it would be better not to bother you about it but I'm just excited beyond words.

Amy picks up the dinosaur toy from the bed.

AMY

Cathy--I know that a lot of this stuff is specific and special to Rainy, so I was wondering. If I could--or we could have just a little of it for our boy.

CATHY

It's a boy?

RAINY

Of course we don't know yet.

AMY

Yeah...it's too early for that, but I mean--a little Rainy of my own. Cathy it would mean the world to me if we could fill our home with some of Rainy's old baby toys for our new baby.

A beat.

CATHY

No.

RAINY

What?

CATHY

No.

RAINY

I thought they were mine anyway. You were giving them to me.

CATHY

Not to the kid.

AMY

It's our kid.

CATHY

I can't--I'm sorry.

JACK

Oh god--you're psychotic. Let go mom--one big whoosh.

CATHY

If I give these to them--Rainy, if I give these to you and your kid, then you'll keep them--at your house. You'll keep them and you won't come back and they're my one reminder of you so how can I just not have them anymore? I see them and I know you're home.

JACK

That doesn't make sense, mamma.

CATHY

The fire gets them if Rainy won't keep them here--if Rainy won't come home.

RAINY

That can be arranged.

AMY

Would you stop trying to destroy everything please. You're making me nauseous.

Amy puts the dinosaur toy in front of her stomach protectively.

CATHY

That's not yours.

JACK

Mom?

CATHY

You took him from this house. You don't get to relabel a suburby wonderful new home with a baby under it's roof and convince him that it's better than here. This is where he belongs. Please--do you have to take him from me? I'm begging-I'm asking--why do they both always go?

Rainy takes the dinosaur toy from Amy and everyone stops in their tracks watching him hold it. Cathy once again is worshipping, reverent mother. The ways she respects Rainy is holy.

CATHY

There--doesn't that just look right to you.

JACK

There are serial killers who look like you do right now.

RAINY

You're selfish.

CATHY

Every mother is selfish for her children. Amy--learn that. Learn that and give every selfish love to your kid.

Cathy let's out one big massive sigh.

CATHY

The dinosaur is home.

This is how little boys look. This is the serenity I saw when I held you for the first time and you looked up and smiled. On the very first day. You smiled and you coo'd and for a second we were no more than birds. You were just cooing like a dove. And I was soaring on happy. And it was like a drug your smile. All it took was me to smile. And you would smile. All it took was me to cry and you would cry. All it took was me to reach out to touch you and you would be there to touch me too. It was heaven for those minutes of bliss being on vacation in the maternity ward--in labor--away from a marriage, away from chores, and work, and school, away from struggle. And I was going down hill really fast with my stomach bottoming out--I knew it would end within seconds but the feeling was just so strange that I could think of nothing else. And that's what little boys should look like, the feeling of your stomach dropping right out of your body so all you are is air and weightless. And that's what you are to me now. Holding your dinosaur.

RAINY

My kid's dinosaur.

CATHY

You wouldn't--you couldn't give your toy to it. Rainy, you can't have a baby.

AMY

Um--too late.

CATHY

But you won't come home--not to me--not again.

RAINY

You know--I just don't get you. I don't. All this time it was preserve the memories, preserve the childhood hoard, keep, cling and now when it comes time to let your legacy flourish, to see your grandchild happy with things you--his grandmother gave to him--provided for him--to give him a happy loving home--you're going to sit on them like a man just asking for more wishes until he dies without using a single one? And you're going to cry and guilt me--saying that instead of being part of a family, with a grandchild, you're stubborn that I replaced my mom with my own kid. Why can't you just--be a mom? Why can't you just be the mom I always needed.

A pause, Cathy's been emotionally punched in the gut. She's trying her best. And as she reaches for Rainy's hand her fingers seize and cause her pain. She winces. Rainy thinks it's at his jabs--and it infuriates him.

RAINY

Jack--I'm thinking this is enough. That we have too much to get done before this argument wipes us all out for the day.

JACK

I couldn't say it any better myself.

The boys pick up plates and start dumping them in boxes haphazardly, clearly breaking some of them in the process but Cathy doesn't stop them, her body is failing--hurting her. Jack notices and leaves Rainy to continue on the plates. He goes to the pile of cars and starts racing them around the room in all different directions, aiming some of them at Amy's feet who looks absolutely done. Cathy silently but desperately races around collecting car by car and bringing it back to the pile. Jack looks broken but remains steadfast in his task.

JACK

Here mom, go get this one.

Jack zooms another car across the room.

JACK

Can't forget that one, Rainy'll cry if you don't get that one.

Jack zooms one towards the door and it hits the wall with a thud. Cathy collects it inspecting it for any scratches.

JACK

Uh, oh! The paint's chipped on that one!

He digs through the pile finding one that looks almost completely identical.

JACK

But look! You bought two for this reason!

Cathy is winded. Her movements are slow and sluggish. She's clearly in pain. Every time she reaches for anything her legs don't quite move the right way. Her arms can't quite straighten. Every time she almost falls.

CATHY

He likes to race them. I got him two of those because he likes to race them.

JACK

Of course! I remember! That one time when Rainy was home from--no, wait he never came home from college. You must be talking about that one time he came home after his wedding to--nope. Wait. He hasn't been home since his wedding. Hmm...you must be talking about that one time that he raced them. When he was nine years old. And he had two because you bought him one...and dad bought him one.

CATHY

Jack.

Jack takes the car from his mom, takes the identical car from the pile and zooms them across the floor in opposite directions. One stops at Rainy's foot. He scoops it up and is stiller than a statue. Cathy watches him before she approaches Rainy snatching the car away from him. She gets the other one and puts them both on her bed with the dinosaur.

JACK

Good for you mom, you picked them all up. And put them all right back where they started. No progress was made.

Jack sits and holds a toy car in his hands. Cathy takes it from him. Almost crouching, but mostly falling in pain and kisses Jack's cheek.

JACK

Where are all my toy cars mamma.

CATHY

You were never into that--you were into plates.

JACK

I was into leaving.

The clatter of Rainy smacking a plate in a box interrupts Jack and Cathy's moment.

RAINY

It's too god damned hot.

AMY

I'll turn the fans on.

RAINY

Not in the house--in all of fucking Mississippi.

He throws a plate in the box.

AMY

Rainy--stop.

RAINY

Stop what?

AMY

Working yourself up.

RAINY

I'm not worked up.

AMY

You want a fight? I'm pregnant and hormonal and I would actually like a set of dish-ware if you don't break it before I can salvage it.

RAINY

Another! For a day of cleaning out crap and being in no mood to do it.

He starts to slam a plate down but Amy gives him a look so he rests it in the box.

AMY

That's better.

Jack starts picking up different knick knacks around the room. As Rainy continues his plate "packing."

JACK

Box or burn, mamma?

CATHY

He called it crap?

JACK

Mamma--

CATHY

Rainy did you just call it crap?

JACK

What do you want me to do mamma?

CATHY

Keep.

RAINY

It is crap.

AMY

You don't have to be heartless about it.

Jack puts another toy in front of Cathy's face.

JACK

Box or burn?

CATHY
Jack, I don't want to.

JACK
Box or burn?

CATHY
Don't make me!

JACK
Do it!

CATHY
I won't. Stop.

RAINY
Here's one, cheers to all the times we didn't call.

He slams a plate into a box.

AMY
We did call.

RAINY
I'm just being honest.

AMY
And bitter.

RAINY
And what about all the times my brother, has been stuck--here--waiting, helping, cleaning, drowning.

AMY
Rainy, stop.

RAINY
And how about all of the times where I was the adult, where I was middle aged without being young, escaping from my house while being shoved out from behind. Having to watch as your own mom--

(Addressing Cathy)

Your own mom was the one who placed both hands firmly on your back and gave you the final push with a locked door once your foot crossed the threshold.

A pause.

CATHY

I tried to get you back--maybe not the way you wanted Rainy--maybe in a way that pushed you out. But this crap--this crap that you see a broken life in was me screaming at you to come home.

Rainy's about to slam the plate down but Amy grabs it from him quickly and cradles it to her chest.

AMY

Baby.

RAINY

Right...baby.

Rainy takes the plate back from her and gently places it in the box.

CATHY

Rainy, I'm--

RAINY

If you say you're sorry I will walk out of this house because there has never been a day in your life that you have ever meant that.

CATHY

I need to talk to you.

RAINY

Then talk--I dare you--prove you're any different than you were when I left.

CATHY

Jack, why don't you and Amy go make sure the fire's billowing.

JACK

The fire that's gonna burn out all your stuff? You want us to make it bigger? Are you okay?

CATHY

Jack go with Amy.

JACK

Hold up, are you trying to get rid of me?

CATHY

I just need the fire to keep going.

JACK

You would do a rain dance if it would put that fire out.

Jack rain dances for half a second.

Call down the spirits, wipe out my son's hell blaze.

You don't want me to tend that fire, you want me to get the hell out of here so you can talk to him. What can't you tell me mom...you're other son.

CATHY

I would never try to get rid of you.

JACK

I should hope not, because I'm the only one who comes back. I'm the only one who ever comes home.

AMY

I'll go.

Amy exits. She reenters at the very front, stage right where a red pool of light that represents the fire is crackling. Amy takes some wood and throws it into the red light and as she does it flares orange. The lights around Amy turn a dim blue so that the glow of the fire illuminates only her face, while the white hot lights are still blazing on the bedroom. Jack nervously stands by Rainy's pile of toy cars, like he can't pull himself away from it. He's on its gravitational orbit. Cathy makes her way to the bed and pulls off the sheets. Rainy watches her. Her movements are labored and hard. Something has definitely been wrong with Cathy. It's hurting her. Her movements are jerky and uncontrolled. She hands the sheets to Rainy.

CATHY

Take these to the utility closet?

Rainy exits with the sheets. Jack exits to the bathroom immediately re-entering with a new set of sheets. He helps his mom put the fitted sheet on the bed. Rainy re-enters and when he does Cathy takes the top sheet from Jack and beckons Rainy over, replacing the second son for the first.

RAINY

Mom?

CATHY

I know it doesn't mean the same thing to you as it does to me--but it's nice to hear you say mom.

Cathy hands Rainy the bed sheet. She lays on the bed.

RAINY

You expect me to what? Make the bed with you in it?

JACK

Mamma...

CATHY

I just want to lay here. I want to lay here and fall asleep and pretend that my two sons are little boys again.

Jack without hesitation goes to the bed and lays on it by his mother. He kisses her forehead and holds her hand.

JACK

When I was a little boy I really did think you were Viking strong. And beautiful.

CATHY

And who taught you to spew such utter bullshit.

JACK

That's what boys are supposed to do when their dad's are assholes.

CATHY

Oh.

JACK

I love you mamma.

CATHY

Yeah. You're always so good at taking care of me Jack. Why am I no good at taking care of me?

RAINY

It seems like you're no good at taking care of anyone mamma.

A pause.

CATHY

So I need your help--

Rainy scoffs.

RAINY

Yeah right.

CATHY

I'm moving.

Rainy freezes. And for the first time he looks like an actual scared little boy.

RAINY

You're leaving?

JACK

I never thought you would. I never thought of anywhere but here as home.

RAINY

You're really--You're moving?

JACK

When I come home, where am I coming home to?

Cathy can't answer.

JACK

But Mamma, this is what I know.

CATHY

But change--it's a lot of what we need--huh? Right Jack?

JACK

But this is home.

RAINY

(Whispered)

Even though we hated it.

A pause.

RAINY

I can't--I'm sorry. If this is another game--another trick to get me here--to get me dependent on you--I can't. Why? Why now? Why call me back just to say you're taking off? I don't understand it. Why are you moving?

Cathy starts to speak but Rainy cuts her off.

RAINY

Mom--me and you--we're only meant to make each other cry. We're not family that survives each other. So pardon me if I don't stick it out to hear your placating bullshit and web spinning lies.

Rainy exits and goes and joins Amy in the bonfire tableau. He picks up a twig by the fire and cracks it in half violently with his knee. Jack picks up the sheet his brother dropped. There's a pause.

CATHY

I'm not lying Jack.

JACK

Yeah you don't have that arctic grin. I know you're honest face, mamma. It's when you look scariest.

He expects her to laugh, but she doesn't. She tries to cross to him but trips on her own foot when it steps inward. He notices and catches her, supporting her.

CATHY

Jack--I need you to understand. I have to move.

JACK

Why?

CATHY

If I don't--well I've caused you enough trouble--my reckless one, who jumps in headfirst. I should sell. This--this is what I'm doing for you Jack.

JACK

Mom?

CATHY

Do you remember the game I used to play with Rainy? You probably don't--His dad helped. Your dad when he came back to pack his stuff up would help sometimes so Rainy didn't feel forgotten. We called it fluffy. The game we played when the sheets were freshly washed and dried was fluffy. We'd lift the top sheet around him and let it descend creating an air bubble--a cave. Rainy would pop his head out and scream "Mommy what am I?!" And I'd just--"I don't know Rainy, a dinosaur? And he'd scream NO! "What Rainy, a Duck? And he'd giggle and scream and NO! And then he'd pop his head out and say "I love you mamma, That's what I am, I love you" and he'd squeal thinking he was just the funniest little king in the damned world. And when he laughed you smiled. Your sleepy eyes would droop like a baby's and you smiled.

But when Roy finally left--when your dad left--when Rainy's dad left. We stopped playing fluffy. I had to make both sides of the bed. Do you know how hard it is to make both sides of the bed?

JACK

Impossible.

CATHY

Take care of me now, Jack. Let me be the baby. Let me be a kid. Fluff the sheets on me. Because if I think about why I have to move--I can't breathe.

Cathy lays back on the bed closing her eyes. She's as still as death. The bed is her coffin. The room is her tomb.

Jack takes the top sheet and spreads it over Cathy creating an air tent for a few seconds. It's as high as it can be and Cathy sits up cross legged under the descending sheet. It falls like a St. Mary veil framing her face.

The lights start slowly fading to blue, like the light, and life in the room is fading.

CATHY

He'd poke his head out just like this--he'd poke it out just like this and he'd say "What am I"--

JACK

I don't know mamma, what are you?

CATHY

What am I? I have to move, Jack. I have to move because... I'm dying. Of Huntington's.

She looks up at him lost.

CATHY

And you probably are too.

Cathy pulls Jack under the sheet with her and it tents around them. She's pulled him into her illness--a hereditary disease. She looks him directly in the eyes desperately grabbing his hands. Maybe he's surfacing her.

CATHY

Rainy---Jack---I'm dying.

ACT TWO

A pool of blue and orange light surrounds a Hot Wheels toy car ramp. There's a car precariously balanced on the top of the ramp just waiting for the fall. The orange light overtakes the blue and by a mechanism all on its own the car flashes down the ramp. It careens off the device and sails across the room. The lights turn pitch black.

The lights rise on Amy and Rainy in the bedroom, each laying on the bed with different cars and toys between them. Amy points to a car.

AMY

Did you play with this one?

RAINY

Yeah--a lot. My dad got me that because I saw his sleepover leave the next morning. He thought bribes would make having divorced parents easy. He did that a lot actually--to the point where I would watch him like a hawk and wait for him to fuck up so I could get what I wanted. Easy--like divorce could be--like I could be bribed into loving my family.

AMY

Were you? Did the bribes work?

RAINY

His did...because I let them.

AMY

And this...did you play with this?

She picks up one of the newer cars.

RAINY

No. I've never seen that. Hell, all I know she went to the store last Monday and picked it up from the toy aisle.

A pause.

AMY

Let's not--talk about her. Right now. Okay?

RAINY

Ames...

AMY

What were you like, playing with your toy cars?

RAINY

That's not really a part of my life I like to remember.

AMY

Why?

RAINY

I don't know it's just--

AMY

Because of your dad? Is that why?

RAINY

No--I just--I think about it...and those are mostly happy moments.

AMY

Happy? I'm sorry but with all the things they pulled with you? I just don't know if I believe it. I don't know--god, I just--what parent does that? I kind of want to smack 'em both.

RAINY

No they were happy--independent of my parents--they were really good moments. Have you ever just looked at the road in front of you when you drive. Not the cars, not the sky, not the cut in half roadkill in your rearview, and not the people in the seats around you--but just stared--never blinking at the road in front of you? This thing happens, where your eyes blur up and you can't look away, and yellow stripes become dashes through your thoughts, like a clock swinging back and forth daring you to look away from it--and it knows there's no way in hell you can. I was a road trip kid--we went to the coast--almost weekly really. My dad liked the bars, and the women, and my mom didn't really know anything other than the tchotchke sea shell shops and the inside of motel rooms. But I went for the road. Hours of road noise silence and I'd press my forehead against the glass in the back seat and watch my mind get mesmerized. A world of grey and yellow--until I was forced to blink. But in those moments of just dazedness, I felt exactly who I was, individually without the hassle of gluing my mom and dad together, and I felt closer to them because I was content. And that's why I like the cars. That's why I played because it felt like my eyes couldn't ever move--like they wouldn't ever blink--because I was so content in just being--unmovable.

AMY

That sounds lonely.

RAINY

Sometime's dad would flick my knee when I was too quiet. There was a lot of "You dead back there, kid?" when I didn't scream like they thought I should.

A pause.

RAINY

When I didn't scream and fight as much as them.

AMY

Dad's are fragile things. If you're not careful your image of them shatters.

RAINY

Yeah well--mine did.

A pause.

AMY

Did you play with this one?

RAINY

I don't want to do this anymore.

AMY

Come on, sorting through these is mindless.

RAINY

For you maybe but--I left her.

Amy doesn't respond.

RAINY

And now she's what--she's dying?

AMY

I told you I didn't want to talk about her.

RAINY

We have to.

AMY

We don't.

RAINY

She's dying.

AMY

Stop saying that.

RAINY

She's my mom! Ames...she's my mom, and she won't be around much longer. And I've lost the most of my years with her because I'm stubborn.

AMY

It's not your fault.

RAINY

Yes it is.

AMY

You didn't curse your mom.

RAINY

But I didn't help her either.

AMY

She was born having Huntington's. It's not like you're the one killing her.

RAINY

But I did, mentally. I did kill her, because I hated her. I could have made her happier.

AMY

And she could've made you happier. She didn't tell us! Rainy! She didn't tell us she had a hereditary disease! She didn't tell us you might have it too! She didn't tell us that if you have it our kid'll have it! She didn't tell me that I'm gonna wake up one morning to you not remembering my face, instead she let me hug her. And let you believe you were coming home to help her. To make her better. But she can't be better! How could she be better when she lied about having Huntington's to the two people it effects most! And how could she not tell me when I'm the only one amongst us who's going to be left here--to take care of and watch you die. She could've made you happier--but she didn't. She poisoned you. And Jack. And she took away the baby I just found out I was having and made it sour. And so I don't want to fucking talk about her. She doesn't deserve to be talked about, or sympathized with. And after years of you telling me how she can't change--Rainy.

Cathy enters with Jack.

AMY

I finally believe it.

Amy sees Cathy.

AMY

You can't change. The same kind of anger that made Rainy leave--well it's still there behind all your phony smiles and for all my trying how can I be part of this family when you lied to me? When you lied to your kids?

AMY begins to pick up the bottle of wine from earlier to take a swig but stops half way putting a hand on her stomach.

AMY

I'm sorry. I--I...actually I'm not.

CATHY

Amy.

AMY

No, tell me--tell me every bad thing.

RAINY

What?

JACK

Come on Amy, we gotta be--

AMY

Supportive? Jack? I've tried that already. Tell me Cathy--spell it out for me. What's gonna happen to my husband. What's gonna happen to my kid.

CATHY

It's bad.

RAINY

Mom, you don't have to--

Cathy holds up a shaking hand stopping him. It barely shakes and then stills.

CATHY

That's a start. Do you like picking up things, Jack? Rainy? Because I do--I hold things to me. I want to hold y'all to me, but I won't be able to soon. Maybe you won't be either. And when your arms stop working all together--well it'll be much worse because your whole body just might not work. Including your mouth. And when you can't talk, how can you identify what you want and--Jack you're already impatient. So I've decided to live in a facility and I--

JACK

Mom.

CATHY

You can go out on your own. These are things we gotta talk about--clinically. I'm dying clinically. And that's good because there's no emotion but hate in this family and so the more medical my death--well then. I figure that's better on all of us.

AMY

Then explain it--step by step.

RAINY

Amy stop.

AMY

Please--I want to hurt when you tell me.

CATHY

What do you want to hear? It makes you moody, it makes you forget, it makes your body fail you, it makes your capacities into mush when your brain still works, and eventually it effects your brain too.

RAINY

Mom...please.

CATHY

We might all die. Is that what you wanna hear? I did this. You're right. You're gonna have to brush your husband's teeth, and he'll probably drool on you. You're gonna have to clean every crevice on his body. Like I did when he was a baby. Like I did when his home was mine and not yours. But at least it will be you. Take some solace please, take some in knowing that you'll be the wife who loves him who never left him. Instead of letting him rot with white walls in a home he never felt a part of.

JACK

I'll take care of you mom.

CATHY

No.

JACK

But I can--

AMY

Solace? You want me to find comfort in knowing that I have to tie his shoes while he's angry and embarrassed, and in pain?

A pause.

I won't. I can't do that.

AMY

That's what Roy said.

CATHY

Amy charges at Cathy and Rainy stops her. She struggles desperately against him. She frees herself and picks up a car on the bed, the one that Rainy played with and chucks it at Cathy. It hits the wall behind her hard and clatters to the ground. Amy shrieks and then scrambles to the car picking it up and holding it to her, coddling it. Rainy looks at her horrified.

Look--when you have things to lose--well, nobody's that different.

CATHY

Fuck you.

AMY

Put it down, Ames.

RAINY

It's for my son.

AMY

Put it down.

RAINY

It's for you.

AMY

And now you understand.

CATHY

Amy gracefully stands ignoring Cathy and brushes by her aggressively.

I'm going outside.

AMY

Amy exits to the fire pit. She sits down and pulls out the journal from earlier.

She's illuminated by the glow of orange in a sort of tableau and she reads the journal touching her stomach here and there.

Cathy sighs in the bedroom.

RAINY

Do you need anything? Water? Are you feeling okay?

CATHY

I'm fine.

JACK

Bull shit, mamma.

CATHY

You should go talk to her.

RAINY

I don't need your advice right now.

JACK

You're not exactly the best at giving it.

RAINY

She's right to be mad.

CATHY

So are you.

RAINY

I am.

CATHY

Good.

RAINY

Mom--

CATHY

Shh. Son. Just wanted to make sure that was clear between us.

RAINY

Why didn't you tell us?

CATHY

You were already gone--and I knew--you would think I was guiltig you into coming home, to take care of a mom who was feeling fine.

JACK

(Whispered)
Why didn't/ you tell me?

RAINY

But it effects us!

CATHY

I know that.

RAINY

So you were fine with that?

CATHY

I didn't want you to live your life like a dying man.

JACK

Mom--

CATHY

Would you have married Amy if you knew you were making her responsible for being tied to you? Would you have let her be tethered to a dead man?

RAINY

No.

CATHY

I know you.

RAINY

But you still couldn't fix this.

JACK

Duct tape couldn't fucking fix this--mom? Why didn't you tell me?

CATHY

Go talk to her.

RAINY

I need to be with you right now.

CATHY

We haven't been choosing each other--so go choose her.

JACK

You don't get to turn on the mom switch now--hate to break it to you.

CATHY

I'm sorry.

RAINY

You're not--If you were you would've told us sooner.

CATHY

But I didn't.

RAINY

And now I could be dying.

CATHY

Could be--it's a coin toss.

RAINY

If I don't play?

CATHY

You still might lose. So go talk to your wife.

Rainy nods.

RAINY

Okay.

Rainy exits and Joins Amy in the the tableau. Cathy takes one big exhausted chug of wine from the half emptied bottle. Jack angrily goes over to the bed. He begins ripping the sheets off.

CATHY

(Exhausted)

What are you doing?

Jack grunts and rips the sheets from the bed.

CATHY
Jack what are you doing?

JACK
Play the game with me?

CATHY
What game?

JACK
You know mom--Rainy's game. Play it with me. The one you told me. The one you excluded me from.

He throws a pillow at Cathy who gut catches it.

CATHY
I'm too tired for this--it's been a--

JACK
Was that what this was? This whole time?

He picks up the hand mirror and looks at it fake smiling and dropping the smile and picking it back up.

JACK
These--the smiles.

He tosses the mirror onto the mattress.

JACK
You weren't practicing your fucking smile--you were rehearsing your fucking lie.

Jack picks up the photographs scattered around the room. He starts flipping through them one by one.

JACK
Rainy and the sprinkler.

He flips through another one.

JACK
Rainy and dad.

He finds another one.

JACK

Rainy's first grade school photo.

Jack laughs maniacally.

JACK

Holy shit mamma it's a picture winter wonderland of the saga of Rainy's life!

Jack throws the photographs up in the air twirling under them.

JACK

You know it's pretty easy to ignore for a while. Hell, I love him too. He's my hero. He's like a dad--because well--since because of you I don't have one of those.

Jack rips the pillow out of Cathy's hands.

JACK

What's funny mamma--are the sheets--even then, when you were telling me the truth. When you unburied your lie, and told me--not Rainy but me the truth--it was under the blanket of Rainy's shadow. It was under a story of how adorable the prodigal son was.

CATHY

Jack.

JACK

Did you know? Did you know that I can't look at him without feeling kind of ill. Did you know I can't think his name without hearing it in the same god awful oozing way you say it--how you seep it out of your lips with love and affection--and he just came in here to pick a fight. And now he's guilty like you were. So now he's sweet like you were. And now nothing's changed like you haven't because guilt is all the two of you are driven by and I want to yell at him and scream "She fucking worships you" but even then I think you'd deny it just to save face because loving people is not a thing either of you have known how to do ever and I keep coming back to emptiness and--

A pause.

JACK

God damn it--mom. I was here. I was here in front of you. I have been here. I reside here. I exist here. I breathe here. I made a here again, and Why--what on earth reason could you possibly have--for not telling me first.

CATHY

I did tell you/ first.

JACK

Bull shit, mamma. See--I always come home. I always do because who else is gonna call you on your bullshit.

CATHY

I didn't want to hurt you.

JACK

Hurt me? Guilt him? Man--seems like you did all of that and then some mamma.

CATHY

There's a fifty percent chance you don't have it.

JACK

You really think this is about the Huntington's? You think dying scares me? Do you know the first state I visited - I didn't tell you I left. I was 17 years old, the same age Rainy was when he moved out. And when he left--well goddamn, mamma. I heard you cry for an entire year. That was a year of just eating scrambled eggs because you were crying too much to cook and that was all I knew how to make. I left at 17 and I went to Maine. Portland, Maine--this beautiful little beach town with sleepy lazy birds that swoop and glide on the wind--birds always do kind of look like the scribbled V's of a kindergartner's proud parent bound picture. But I never really had any of those did I mamma? I don't remember having any refrigerator art.

But in this place--it was my haven. They had sleepy lazy people who spent rainy days reading actual literature and beautiful days soaking in sunlight. I had a push pin pencil lined map laid out on my bed before I went. I spun around and then pointed up--just as far up as I could point on my map of the United States--I just thought North-- and I landed on Portland. I slept along the shore in a tent that I had taken from our neighbors garage, and I garbage dived for two entire weeks. There was this sandwich place that sometimes would throw away expired packs of chips, still sealed in the dumpster, and I would grab and go. I came back home after two weeks. I walked through the door with my little backpack full of stuff--I even got a keychain from a gift-shop, and you kissed my head and said how was your day at school?

You never knew I was gone. But mamma, last night--I heard you crying over Rainy.

CATHY

I didn't know you paid attention that hard.

JACK

My entire childhood has been spent tip toeing around you--and your mountains of stuff.

CATHY

First sons are special.

JACK

Ouch. Really, I give you a chance and that's all you have to say?

CATHY

It's hard Jack.

JACK

Why--how could it be hard? Mamma, loving a kid seems like the easiest thing in the world for a good parent to do.

CATHY

But I'm not one of those right? And I won't be around long enough to fix it now.

JACK

Fix it. Time doesn't matter. I'm begging you to--see me.

CATHY

I can't.

JACK

Why?

CATHY

Jack--

JACK

No mamma-don't shut me up. Are you gonna box or burn this relationship--because I need to know. Keep me--or leave me--but choose one. Why is Rainy always "Of course yes" and why am I always "Of course not".

A pause.

JACK

Box me--or burn me--but you owe me.

CATHY

Jack I can't--it's hard. When I see you you're like a big row of mistakes.

JACK

A mistake you can fix if you want too!

CATHY

But I don't.

JACK

I'm your kid!

CATHY

He left because of you. Your dad. Roy left because of you. He left because of the pregnancy. He didn't want another kid--and he didn't want to be guilty of condemning another one to death.

A pause.

CATHY

Because he knew I had Huntington's. We both did. We didn't find out until Rainy was already born. And we could've prevented you. He wanted me to prevent you from having it too--but I wouldn't. And so he left. Because he couldn't be guilty like I could. He couldn't live in guilt--like I do everyday I see your face.

Jack doesn't answer. He's been sucker punched.

CATHY

Do you understand now? Do you understand how hard it is when I wake up and you're in your room. Every time you have a headache--or you hurt--I sit there and know that it's a fraction of the pain I've probably caused you. You say you can't look at Rainy without being sick--but looking at you Jack feels like a thousand pins sinking into my heart--because I hurt my baby. My reckless one--your adventure won't be what kills you--but your home will.

Cathy hunches over, her limbs aching and sinks on the bed. Jack goes and sits next to her.

JACK

He left--because of me?

CATHY

Yeah.

JACK

He doesn't answer my calls.

CATHY

Yeah.

JACK

I've talked to him--maybe twice.

CATHY

Roy's not good at loss.

JACK

Well I wasn't good at being dad-less.

CATHY

You can't blame him--it's circumstance.

JACK

Oh, but I can. In fact it's pretty easy to point the world's largest finger at him.

Cathy goes over and tenderly pats Jack's cheek.

CATHY

Jack, you're the mistake that never goes away for him.

A pause.

JACK

Yeah--well, Roy's an asshole so--give me Huntington's.

CATHY

What?!

JACK

Bring it on. I can take it.

CATHY

Jack--

JACK

Give it to me, not Rainy. Let us share it. I want to share it. I want to share you. I want to be the one that you deeply *will* home. So--I'm okay with it. Kill me. Big deal. But it's me and you mamma all the way.

CATHY

You're crazy.

JACK

You'll go first, so I'll carry you places. I'll sit you out back on the Adirondak chairs and we'll huddle around a fire eating s'mores until we can pick up everything we touch with our sticky finger pads.

CATHY

Sure--you wheeling me around.

JACK

And I'll go all the way across the bay and bring back a jar of sand and you can put it in your room so that when you really want to feel the sand between the toes but you can't quite make it, I'll pour it out and hold you up so you can squish your feet in it. Or--no! We can put it in the bathtub--so it's like you're walking through the waves! Baths and fun in one--see I can take care of you. Mom--I have lived my life.

CATHY

No you haven't.

JACK

I have gone the places I want to go. In shoving me out of the house--in forcing me to see the bigger things than my own hand in front of me, mamma, you called me back here so I can be the moon that orbits your planet and I'll take care of you until the very end. Huntington's is deadly sure--so give it to me. It's deadly but it's also our bond. Rainy can live his life with Amy--his big life--in that big place--in that big away from us. All I need is you, mamma. You and the stories you already forced me to have.

CATHY

(Stunned)
Jack.

Jack waggles his eyebrows at his mamma, Cathy laughs. Jack laughs. And he lifts her up dancing her around the room. Putting her into a dizzy.

JACK

We'll drink ourselves under tables.

CATHY

And live.

JACK

And we can eat anything we want. All the chocolate for my mamma, please! One of everything for me.

CATHY

We'll be pagans.

She smirks at Jack who lifts her up off her feet.

JACK

We'll jump fires, and prove that we've had the fullest life we can.

Jack stops twirling his mother. He has a wicked smile.

JACK

And if we die before we can land we'll shout. FUCK YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH.

CATHY

FUCK YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH.

JACK

The world's greatest inward sigh that she finally decided to share--she finally decided to give to me. FUCK YOU DEATH!

CATHY

FUCK YOU DEATH!

Rainy walks in angrily he grabs a handful of cars from the bed. And turns straight around without saying a word. Cathy zeroes in on him as he grabs the cars. Jack growls in frustration.

JACK

Mom. No.

CATHY

What are you doing?

RAINY

Nothing.

CATHY

Rainy--what are you doing?

RAINY

They're mine. I'm burning them.

JACK

So what you're just tossing them in the fire? Geronimo?

CATHY

Why?

RAINY

She wants to keep 'em. All of 'em. She wants to give them to her child. And then when he dies...when he dies because of--

Rainy focuses on Cathy.

CATHY

Me.

RAINY

She wants to keep them all. And collect more. Because all of this unending hereditary bullshit is cyclical. And my wife is left in the circle of destruction because of all of this.

JACK

Oh, boohoo.

RAINY

Are you serious?

JACK

It's okay, big baby you don't have to throw yourself a pity party. You don't have Huntington's.

Rainy blanches. A pause.

RAINY

What?

JACK

Yeah.

RAINY

No--Jack--What?

JACK

Yeah. You don't have it because I do. We just decided.

RAINY

Jack are you--

JACK

I want it. Mamma has it. I have it. It's okay. You'll be fine. Your kid will be fine.

RAINY

That's not how this works.

CATHY

Jack--that's not--

JACK

I know but the anger--the fear--until we get tested--medically--you wanted to keep this clinical right mom? Until we do--I have the Huntington's not you--so go live your life. It's a fifty fifty chance anyways.

RAINY

If it's fifty I might have it too.

JACK

Oh dear lord, ego trip, will you come down from your high horse and get off your guilt ride so that you can realize that the only reason you're mentally assuming your curse of Huntington's is because you feel bad about leaving mamma behind in the dust to be sick alone for twelve years.

RAINY

Jack--this isn't about anything other than genetics.

JACK

You've had her missing you. You don't get her mourning too.

RAINY

So you're wishing yourself dead for her?

JACK

Dead together.

RAINY

That's fucked up.

JACK

So is this family.

RAINY

I'm not guilty for leaving her.

JACK

She's guilty for pushing you out.

RAINY

Well she should be.

JACK

But you've forgiven her because you feel guilty she's dying of Huntington's. And you don't want to feel guilty about your wife too--so instead of talking about it you're gonna burn all these cars so she can't turn into the mother you feel guilty about but hate.

RAINY

You don't understand what she did.

JACK

Enlighten me then, because I just see my jackass brother being his normal self.

RAINY

She shoved me out.

JACK

She didn't.

RAINY

She pushed me out that door because of Roy.

JACK

She didn't push you because of Roy--she didn't push you at all!

RAINY

No?

JACK

No! You left.

RAINY

What?

JACK

You were like my dad--you became her one true love--god damned Rainy she would have fallen at your feet if you had just come home once--and just like him. Just like your dad, the dad who ran because he didn't want to look at me and feel bad about himself--JUST LIKE HIM. You left. And you didn't come back. Sure you had mommy issues. But you also had a brother.

RAINY

I'm here now. I'm helping now. I came back.

JACK

You think she pushed you out--sure. But she didn't keep you from me. But I was the one who had to pull teeth to get you to grace me with your presence.

RAINY

Come on, Jack don't be that way.

JACK

Worship, worship, the little king of the house returns.

Jack bows to Rainy.

RAINY

Stop it.

Jack picks up the wine and takes a big swig, then spits in the glass. He shoves the bottle in Rainy's face.

JACK

Only the best vintage for his majesty.

RAINY

I wasn't leaving you, when I left.

JACK

Maybe not on purpose, but I was behind your "get out of here wagon"--billowing in kicked up dust, and mom tears.

RAINY

I supported you.

JACK

With a check to send me on my way. With a check to get me away from her. Because your hate couldn't outweigh your brother needing you.

RAINY

I answered your calls.

JACK

And not hers. I watched you crush her. I watched her crush me. So give me Huntington's so I can finally be the loved son that I always felt I was meant to be.

Rainy tenses.

RAINY

I won't listen to this.

He begins to walk out the door with the handful of cars.

RAINY

I won't fight with you about which one of us--which one of us mom poisoned.

CATHY

Rainy, please. Don't--they're yours. Let Amy have them.

RAINY

I'm not gonna let her become you.

CATHY

It's what love does.

RAINY

Then there's no room for it.

He exits and reappears where the fire pit is. Lights go up on it and out on the house. Cathy and Jack run following behind Rainy. Amy crawls to him on her knees.

AMY

Rainy look, I'm sorry but put the cars back. Please? This isn't the end of the whole world, okay?

Rainy approaches the fire. Amy scrambles to her feet trailing behind him. Cathy follows.

CATHY

Stop.

AMY

Rainy, honey. What are you going to do? Leave them alone. Let's just talk.

CATHY

Don't do this. I'm your mother and I'm telling you not to do this.

Rainy watches her for a moment.

RAINY

Funny--you know. That's really the first time I ever remember you saying that. Mom. I'm sorry you're sick. I really am. But I can't let my wife hoard like you.

Jack charges Rainy.

JACK

She doesn't fucking hoard. Okay?!

Rainy shoves him back.

RAINY

Yes she does.

JACK

No!

RAINY

Can you not see what's right in front of you--are you that jealous of me even when I wasn't there that you can't see that she is ruining you. This house. I love her--but I can't let this continue.

He holds a car out in front of his mom.

RAINY

What this car is made of--it doesn't make me.

Rainy kisses Cathy's forehead.

RAINY

I still hate you--and I am guilty.

Cathy squeaks as Rainy tries to toss it in the fire. Jack creates a barrier between Rainy and the blaze. Rainy doesn't stop, just plowing into Jack.

JACK

Back off.

RAINY

They're mine.

AMY

We were taking them--for our son.

JACK

Come on, don't do this.

RAINY

I'm only burning what's mine.

JACK

You sound like her. I hope you know that. You sound exactly like her.

Cathy's reduced to whimpers.

RAINY

She's not good for us. We're dying because of her.

JACK

We don't know that.

RAINY

Yes we do. Jack. Stop living in whatever land you're going to, to escape all your shit.

JACK

The glass is half full, I believe in the tails. 50% chance and I'm on the positive side that if anyone has it--it's me.

RAINY

You are the worst optimist ever. Stop joking your way out of this.

JACK

I am happy here. Mom's--she's a good mom.

RAINY

You are lonely here.

JACK

I take care of her like sons should do.

RAINY

For her to ignore you.

JACK

Because of you! Because of you she ignores me! Stay. Stay with us.

RAINY

Will you burn it with me?

Jack takes one of the cars out of Rainy's hands.

JACK

Do you ever try to see what she does? Do you ever hope that when she looks in the tinted windows of these toy cars that she remembers your face in them. That she's seeing exactly what shade the color of your eye is, exactly how each hair falls out of place. That maybe she can even remember the slope of your nose. Do you ever just pray that when she holds up this toy car she says "Rainy, I love you." Even if you're not there to hear it. Because I do. Every time she buys a new plate I hope she's saying "Jack--you're mine."

There's a pause.

JACK

Do you see him mamma, when you buy those cars.

Cathy opens her mouth as if about to respond but Jack cuts her off.

JACK

Do you see me? When you buy plates? Do you see me, mamma?

Rainy takes the car from Jack and drops the entire pile in the fire letting them fall slowly so that they truly crash and burn. At each car, he laughs a little more. Jack solemnly stands by as if attending a funeral.

Cathy just shakes. Amy's hands fly to her stomach and she drops to her knees by the fire. She scrambles reaching into the flames at no regard for herself or her belly. She quickly grabs a few of the cars throwing them out of the way. Her frantic motions mimic Cathy's in act one.

AMY

I promised, I made a promise Rainy, when I peed on that stick and got a pink plus sign back that I would take care of him and that I would protect him and that I would sing him stupid lullabies that made no sense, or sickly sweet ones that make too much sense--and that I would buy him every single toy he ever wanted so that I could see the gummy smile on his face the next day when he played with it! I made a promise Rainy, I made a promise to my giant belly button that I would not outlive him and now I might! And now I get to watch as my kid slowly deteriorates and loses his ability to move his arm to touch my cheek, I'm gonna observe as his legs turn inwards and he won't be able to take a step towards me. I'm gonna sit and stare as he opens his mouth to say "I love you mamma" and all that comes out is spit at the edge of his lips and a desperation in his eyes that says "I'm dying". And before I watch the good part of my life turn to ash in my mouth, I have to watch you destroy what little I can keep? That's too much Rainy, that's more sad than I can afford. I can't survive you taking away the only thing I can give my kid before I tell him he's gonna die young and before me--and that's not how it's supposed to be.

Rainy takes some of the cars that Amy has pulled out and throws them back in the fire. It becomes a circle, him throwing them, her catching them before they fall or pulling them from the fire, both of them desperate.

AMY

Stop it!

Rainy seizes a toy from Amy and they tug of war over it. He gets it from her but is worn out and exhausted.

RAINY

It's cyclical. Little boys become their father's and then their mother's when their father's are not around.

Rainy leaves his hand hovering over the fire.

RAINY

When I was 5 years old my dad got me my first car. A white Miata convertible, like the one that we had in our garage. "This is our thing. No one but you and I can touch it. Even when it rains outside all you have to do is put the top down on this little thing and it'll be sunny and the two of us will coast down to the beach. Rainy, promise me. This is our thing. Not your moms. Not your brothers. It's just me and you, little bud." And so I promised him. I promised that it would be me and dad, forever in our white Miata. I had dreams of blue sky, ice cream cones, and my dad building sand castles with me.

Rainy's hand drops closer to the fire but Amy grabs it, lacing her fingers through his.

RAINY

I was playing outside with the car just a few weeks after dad had given it to me. I knew they were yelling. They were always yelling in the house--mom and dad--lot's of "fuck you's" and "who's she" that I didn't really understand. But what I did understand was that when mom came out of the house with black smudges streaking down her face she grabbed my car from me--and threw it in the fire. I screamed at her, I tried to hit her, she spun me around and held me. Pinned me in place, and made me watch as the toy car went up in smoke. She laughed. When I started crying she laughed. "You and your bullshit father--something only y'all can do." She screamed. "You won't exclude me from all the happy parts, Roy." I think it was the first time I had ever heard someone say my father's first name out loud. And she looked at me then, kissed my forehead and said "it's all your fault. Where'd the sunshine go on my rainy day?"

AMY

Rainy--

RAINY

So don't you get it? It's fucking cyclical. He made a promise to me, you made a promise to him, she destroyed my promise, I destroyed your promise, she collects the things that she broke, you grab at the things that break you. It's a vicious cyclical joke.

Cathy touches Rainy's shoulder.

CATHY

I'm sorry.

RAINY

Little kids, hold grudges.

JACK

I didn't.

RAINY

Because you're such a morally better man--you come home, right? Have you ever thought of this, Jack--You leave her more.

JACK

I just--I wanted to feel--important.

CATHY

You are.

JACK

But see, I'm not--he is--he's the Jesus in every madonna and child with his glowing halo of translucent paint. That's important. What I am is attached to you, mamma. What I am is unendingly loyal. So give me Huntington's so I can live out your legacy. And the rest of us can be happy.

See, I'm good. I've traveled. I got my life stamped and done before I even reached 30. If I can't move in less than 20 years at least I'll be able to remember how I saw what Utah looked like and say I walked on a California beach barefoot.

RAINY

Jack.

JACK

I'll be able to lay on my death bed with mom's grandma quilts around me--stuck in the same old space I've always been and say I dipped my toes in the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Gulf of Mexico, that my feet have crossed oceans.

RAINY

That's not okay.

JACK

And I'll be able to say I've not only seen mountains but climbed them to the very peak and felt how much oxygen my body could do without and I sucked in precious gasps of air and prayed to god I wouldn't pass out or black out--And it was worth it because I'll be able to say I've seen bigger mountains than these piles of crap I see at home and so I'll keep mom's mountains just the way they are.

CATHY

You would?

JACK

I'll be able to say I fucking lived. I lived like a lion out in giant fields of gold never watching my back because I am the biggest thing with a biting roar while you have hermit crabbed your life away with your wife and baby--where you're tucked in your hollow shell--away from our mother--but it'll be okay because I'll be the big man beating his chest saying look at what I've built and what I've provided and what I can label a home--and that's all I've ever wanted. And it'll be okay that you ran away from here for years and years and years--because I STAYED home.

RAINY

This isn't right.

JACK

So let it be me, so that my big brother can be with his wife taking care of his kid. So that he can run away again. So that I can take care of my mother like I always have. So I can rot here in Mississippi and work up the nerve to buy a plate for home and then smash it as hard as I can on the ground. So that you can be king.

Jack's heaving.

RAINY

Neither of us deserve to die--because of her mistake.

JACK

But, I want to. I want her to own me--to realize that I'm not coming home--that I am home.

Rainy sighs rubbing his face in his palms.

RAINY

Amy, honey go inside. Get your stuff. We're leaving.

JACK

What?

CATHY

Don't, please.

AMY

I'm not just gonna leave--the cars!

RAINY

They're trash.

AMY

But Rainy--your--your mom.

RAINY

My word is final. Go get your things. We're leaving. Now.

Amy angrily shoves past Rainy and kisses Jack on the cheek. She goes to Cathy putting the fire between them.

AMY

Because of you--I'm alone even with family. But I understand. I understand why you never let him go. And I hope you never stop feeling guilty.

Amy takes the book she read and hands it to Cathy who's eyes go wide. Cathy takes the book hugging it to her chest. Amy kisses Cathy's cheek. Jack and Amy exit.

Rainy goes over to Cathy kissing her on the cheek with more malice than forgiveness.

CATHY

Rainy, my blue sky for a Rainy day. My beautiful boy, my first child--I was never ready for you--I shouldn't have had you--but I've always loved you.

RAINY

The day you burned my car you broke my heart. So--

A pause.

RAINY

Mamma--it's all your fault.

Rainy smiles.

RAINY

See? We're not family that survives each other. And now your heart's broken too.

Rainy starts to exit.

RAINY

Bye mom.

Rainy exits. Cathy stands hollowly swaying in the "wind" with the glow of orange from the "fire" under-lighting her. After a few beats a car ignition is heard.

Simultaneously there's a sound of a crash, and a glowing white noise roar of flame. Cathy lets out a sob and falls to her knees. The fire grows wider and wider. The orange light spreads to the house behind Cathy.

Jack runs in his face Ashen.

JACK

Smoke. It smells like smoke!

CATHY

The fire...

JACK

A fire. The house smells like smoke. They didn't listen to your rain dance, mamma. It just got worse. Where's the hose?--Come on we gotta get it out.

Cathy exhaustedly, crazily, desperately laughs.

CATHY

You were right, Jack. Goddamned frized plug.

JACK

Mamma?

Cathy laughs harder. A true mad woman.

JACK

We gotta go back in--get the stuff.

CATHY

Box or burn.

Jack tugs on his mom's arm trying to get her to turn around and go get the stuff from inside.

JACK

Come on mom. We gotta get the plates. If you wanna keep 'em we gotta go.

CATHY

No--Jack. Box or burn?

JACK

Let's go.

CATHY
No.

JACK
But the stuff--

CATHY
No.

JACK
But--the cars, the plates.

CATHY
Jack. No.

Jack looks at her and then sprints for the house.

JACK
(Offstage)
I'll do it for you mamma, I'll be your viking warrior, I'll leap fires--all for you.

Cathy turns her back on the audience facing the burning home.

CATHY
Jack! Jack?

There's a long silence. Cathy crumples.

Jack runs on stage with a handful of state plates.

JACK
You can't--we can't burn them.
These...matter to me.
You have made these--me.

Cathy crosses to Jack and takes a plate from him. She throws it to the separated outside fire.

CATHY
I don't want it.

Jack as shattered as the plate runs back to get more. The sound of Rainy's car pulling away is heard.

JACK

I'll save them for you mamma--

He looks back at her.

JACK

The cars. Not the plates.

Jack runs in the house.

There's a crash of Cathy's mountains of stuff falling inside and the glow of orange consumes the entire stage and Cathy standing in the middle.

CATHY

I don't want it anymore.
Jack...

Cathy screams out knowing this is her chance to repair her relationship.

CATHY

JACK!

Cathy stands with her back facing the audience watching her house and her life burn down.

END PLAY.