Becky’s New Car

a comedy

by Steven Dietz

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Commissioned by ACT Theatre, Seattle.

Post-Premiere Draft: 24 October 08.
Cast of Characters  (3 women, 4 men)

BECKY (REBECCA) FOSTER ... a woman in her late 40’s.
JOE FOSTER ... Becky’s husband, a roofer, late 40’s.
CHRIS FOSTER ... their son, a psychology student, 26.
WALTER FLOOD ... a very wealthy businessman, widowed, 60’s.
KENSINGTON (KENNI) FLOOD ... Walter’s daughter, 23.
STEVE ... Becky’s co-worker, widowed, 50.
GINGER ... a neighbor of Walter’s, single, 50’s.

Time and Place

The present.  Summer.
An American city very much like Seattle.

Setting

The play will move without transition between four primary locations: Becky’s LIVING ROOM, her CUBICLE at work, her CAR, and the TERRACE of Walter Flood’s estate.

In point of fact, these are all ONE area, in place onstage at all times.  Furthermore, in the case of the CUBICLE and CAR, these areas may actually a part of Becky’s LIVING ROOM which has been re-defined by lighting.

Simplify.  It is not necessary, nor is it desirable, to fully depict any of the play’s locales.

We have two lives -- the one we learn with, and the life we live after that.

- Bernard Malamud
ACT ONE

Becky’s Living Room. Evening.

Lights rise quickly on the empty room, as we hear what might be a vacuum cleaner running offstage. And then ---

We hear things falling and crashing -- being grabbed, discarded, hurriedly put away, and then ---

BECKY appears, in slacks and light sweater, somewhat disheveled, wearing one long rubber cleaning glove. With this gloved hand she is holding a toilet plunger upside-down, with a new roll of toilet paper skewered on the handle. In her other hand is a “dust-buster” -- still running. A cleaning rag is draped over her shoulder. And, yet, despite this dubious first impression ---

She is all charm, the perfect (if somewhat ill-prepared) hostess when she greets the audience:

BECKY
(to audience)
Hi. Hello. Wait a second ---

She turns the “dust-buster” off.

BECKY (cont’d)
There we go. Sorry. Hi! So glad you stopped by. I was just picking up the house a bit ---

She gives the new roll of toilet paper to an AUDIENCE MEMBER.

BECKY (cont’d)
Could you put this in the bathroom when you go? Thanks.

She moves about during the following, putting things in place, readying the house.

BECKY (cont’d)
You know how it is: things ran late at work -- so I called Joe, he’s great, you’ll love him, you’ll probably

(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
end up liking Joe way more than you like me -- anyway, I told Joe I was still at work and could he pick up the pizza? -- but he was stuck at his job-site longer than planned -- he’s finishing up this apartment south of here, good money but a real long drive -- and because of the rain last night, god that RAIN last night, because of that he had to -- wait ---

She finds an empty trash can and hands it to an AUDIENCE MEMBER.

BECKY (cont'd)
See that drip right there. Just watch ...

It drips, just a bit -- from the grid -- near the edge of the stage.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to AUDIENCE MEMBER)
There. See. Could you put this over there for me? Thanks so much.

She watches as the AUDIENCE MEMBER puts the trash can under the drip.

BECKY (cont'd)
Wait. Let’s be sure ...

She waits with the AUDIENCE MEMBER until a drip of water falls into the trash can. Smiles.

BECKY (cont'd)
Got it. Thanks. Did I mention that my husband is a roofer? Yes. A very good one. Twenty-plus years, but you know what they say -- the shoemaker’s kids and all that ...

She continues to busy herself in the room.

I should wake my son so you can meet him -- that would be Chris -- that would be his crap lying around here everywhere.

She quickly holds up a piece of newspaper -- offers it to an AUDIENCE MEMBER.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to AUDIENCE MEMBER)
Sports section?
(as needed)
(Here you go.) // (I don’t blame you.)
Back to straightening up ---

BECKY (cont'd)
Don’t get me wrong, I love my son -- fruit of my actual loins -- but god forbid he emerge from the basement where he lives as the Eternal Freeloader -- sleeping off a hangover from another night of grad student “angst” and two-dollar shots. He didn’t even do the one thing I asked of him, which was to get the dishwasher loaded -- so, there you have it, that’s the update: my son was loaded and the dishwasher was not -- but, anyway, this is our humble home:

She shoves a final magazine under
the cushion of a chair or couch,
strikes a friendly pose, and says:

BECKY (cont'd)
Welcome!
(beat, looks around)
The fact is: we need a new house. My friend, Rita -- beautiful, wonderful woman, passed away last year, her husband Steve still hasn’t gotten over it -- anyway, Rita had this theory:

When a woman says she needs new shoes, what she really wants is a new job.
When she says she needs a new house, she wants a new husband.
And when she says she wants a new car, she wants a new life.

A beat. BECKY opens a drawer or cupboard and pulls out a very large (and nearly empty) carton of Diet Sprite. She fishes out the final can (or two), pops the top, starts to drink -- stops ---

BECKY (cont'd)
(to an AUDIENCE MEMBER)
Oh, I’m sorry. Did you want one?

If this person says YES, she digs out the final can, saying ---

BECKY (cont'd)
(as needed)
(Here you go.) // (Okay, if you change your mind ...
ALSO: if this person says YES, she turns to the person NEXT TO this AUDIENCE MEMBER, saying ---

BECKY (cont’d)
(Sorry. I'm all out. Money's been tight and we let our Costco membership lapse, so ... you know.)

BECKY now ... sits, for the first time in the play. Breathes deeply. And drinks her soda.

BECKY (cont'd)
I think we’ll just stay here in the living room, if that’s okay.
(points)
The kitchen's that way, if you need something -- but promise me you won't look in the back yard. It's a disaster. Used to be a garden. We should just pave it over. Keep our cars back there. Yes, I know that’s terrible -- but I need to ask you this: have you ever really been as happy in your garden as you’ve been on a good day in your car?


PHONE RINGS.

Becky goes to a cluttered work table in the middle of the room. When she lifts the phone, lights immediately reveal this area to be ---

Becky’s Cubicle at work. Evening.

BECKY
(into phone, upbeat) Thank you for calling Bill Buckley Lexus-Saturn-Nissan-Mitsubishi, Home of the Fifty-Thousand Mile Smile, this is Becky, how may I direct your call?
(listens) Oh, I’m afraid they’ve gone home for the night.
(listens) Well, yes, good point: if I’m still here doing paperwork why can’t the salesmen still be here selling cars, but that’s ---
(listens) Yes, right, but can I just --- would you mind terribly if I put you on hold for just a second, thanks so much ---
Presses a button on the phone.
Sets the receiver down.

BECKY (cont’d)
(to audience)
Sorry. You know how it is. As soon as you start to have a conversation with someone ---

PHONE RINGS AGAIN.

Excuse me.

BECKY (cont’d)
She answers.

BECKY (cont’d)
(on phone, faster now)
Thank you for calling Bill Buckley Lexus-Saturn-Nissan-Mitsubishi, Home of the Fifty-Thousand Mile Smile, this is Becky, how may I ---
(stops, listens)
You were on hold. Why did you -- no, I did not hang up on you. I put you on hold. For less than a minute -- yes, it was really no more than a -- all right, sure, go ahead and yell ---

As the Caller presumably rants on the other end, BECKY sets the phone down, and speaks to the audience.

BECKY (cont’d)
Anyway, this is where I work. I’m the Title Clerk and Office Manager. I process the new car sales. This place used to be Bill Buckley’s main car lot -- his “Super-Dealership” -- but now he’s got plans to open a “Mega-Dealership”, three hours south of here, and he’s been trolling our offices to see if any of us are worthy to make the jump from Super to Mega.
(re: phone)
Wait. I think he stopped.

She picks up the phone.

BECKY (cont’d)
(into phone)
Yes, I wrote down every word you said and I’ll put it right in front of your salesman when he comes in tomorrow.
(beat)
No, wait, is tomorrow Wednesday? He’s actually off on Wednesdays, so ---
Holds phone away from her ear once again.

BECKY (cont'd)
(re: Caller)
--- oh, there he goes again!
(into phone)
I'M GOING TO PUT YOU ON HOLD FOR JUST ANOTHER SEC.

She puts the call on hold again.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to audience)
I've been here at Buckley's for nine years. With Chris in school -- and the economy in ... flux ... just totally fluxed -- with all that, Joe and I need the money. What else would I do? Bag groceries? Be a crossing guard? Go back to school and study what? -- massage therapy?!
(beat)
Friend of mind from high school called -- my age -- husband died suddenly, left her with nothing, no insurance, piles of bills -- and do you know what she's doing now? Porn. Older Woman stuff. Tasteful. No animals. Just a little leather and lot of make-up. But, you know what she said?

"Becky, I know what you must think of me ... but I needed a new life."
(pause, more quietly)
Anyway: this is where I work.
(looks around)
Let's go back to the house.

Light immediately restore to:

The Living Room.

BECKY
Joe should be home any minute and then we can ---
(stops)
My Sprite. I left it at work. Just a sec.
(to the Booth)
I need to go back to work. I left my drink.

Lights immediately shift to:

The Cubicle.

BECKY grabs her soda ---
BECKY  
(to the booth)  
Thanks.  

--- and is about to walk away when  
she remembers ---  

BECKY (cont’d)  

Ooops.  

--- and picks up the phone.  

BECKY (cont’d)  

Still there?  Sorry, I had to run home -- but now I’m back.  

(beat)  
Are you ... are you crying?  
(to audience, whispers)  
He’s crying.  
(back on phone)  
It’s a car ... it’s just a car ... and if you don’t get  
this one, well ... I mean, something else always comes  
along, right?  
(listens)  
You don’t think so.  
(pause, quiet and simple)  
I guess I don’t think so either.  Bye.  

She slowly hangs up the phone.  
Pause.  And then ... her upbeat  
demeanor returns.  

BECKY (cont’d)  
(to audience)  
Found my Sprite!  

Lights instantly restore to:  

The Living Room.  

BECKY  
(calls toward basement)  
CHRIS.  ARE YOU DOWN THERE?  I NEED YOU.  
(to audience)  
He’s a good kid.  Studying psychology -- which might  
come in handy.  I mean, he’s twenty-six years old and I  
just wish he’d meet a nice young woman who is, I don’t  
know, completely the opposite of every girl he’s ever  
dated.  Is that too much to ask?  

CHRIS enters in basic slovenly  
college garb, pencil in his mouth,  
carrying a large textbook.
CHRIS
Yeah -- hey -- what’s up ---

BECKY
Oh, hi, you’re here ---

CHRIS
--- trying to study down there, you know? ---

BECKY
Yes, I’m ---

CHRIS
--- got midterms next week -- full load -- pressure’s on, big time ---

BECKY
Yes, right ---

CHRIS
--- but hey -- okay -- I’m here now, so: lay it on me.

“Lay it on you”?

BECKY
You needed something?

BECKY
I need you to pick up the pizza. Down at Angelo’s. Money in my purse. Dad’ll be here soon. I’ll make a salad.

CHRIS
I already ate.

BECKY
I told you I was ordering pizza tonight.

CHRIS
Yeah, but on the way home I was walking by Angelo’s -- and it smelled good ---

BECKY
You already ate there?

CHRIS
I was hungry. I was awake.

BECKY
But I got something special tonight -- I had a coupon -- I ordered the ---
CHRI S
(finishing her sentence)
--- the Double Ham and Artichoke Supreme.

BECK Y
How do you know that?

CHRI S
I saw the guy write it down.

BECK Y
You were there when I called?

CHRI S
He was ringing me up. I saw him write your name down.

BECK Y
And you couldn’t sit there for twenty minutes and ---

CHRI S
Not “twenty minutes” -- more like “thirty-seven to forty” minutes -- because it’s DEEP DISH ---

BECK Y
Okay, okay -- but you couldn’t call me and say I’m right here at Angelo’s, Mom -- I’ll wait -- read the paper -- flirt with some spoiled coeds -- and then BRING OUR DINNER home with you?!

CHRI S
I NEEDED TO STUDY.

BECK Y
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?

Quick beat.

CHRI S
Huh?

BECK Y
You’re a twenty-six year old man ---

CHRI S
I thought this was about pizza ---

BECK Y
--- and you’re still shacked up with your parents ---

CHRI S
Oh, can we please not ...
BECKY
*(overlapping)*

--- and, hey, we love you to death but when does a psychology student get around to all that stuff about “Self-Awareness” and the “Unexamined Life” ---

CHRIS

That’s Socrates ---

BECKY

--- okay, thank you ---

CHRIS

--- and that’s Philosophy, not Psychology.

BECKY

--- but when does a person *look in the mirror*, Chris?

CHRIS

Do you mean when will I “*self-actualize*”?

BECKY

Yes, maybe I mean that.

CHRIS

Most experts believe only a few people *in history* have ever “*self-actualized*” -- like Plato, Ghandi, Einstein, maybe Bono.

BECKY

Okay, maybe I don’t mean that. But at what point do you stop and realize that all your friends have grown up and moved on and *here you are without* ---

CHRIS

That’s “*Perceptual Constancy*” -- the ability to recognize that an object or organism has *not changed* ---

BECKY

Yes, that’s what ---

CHRIS

*(overlapping)*

--- even though the surrounding stimuli -- their physical characteristics, for example, have changed.

BECKY

And once someone recognizes this -- this failure to *change along with their age and circumstance* ---

CHRIS

I don’t think the word “*failure*” is accurate ---
--- at that point don’t they -- don’t you think “hey, maybe I better get out there and do something with my life”?

CHRIS
(interested now)
Have you been reading Erikson? His seminal work: “Childhood and Society”?

BECKY
Who?

CHRIS
Because what you’re talking about is “Generativity” -- the term Erikson gives to the age at which a person has the impulse to become more “productive”, to “do something worthwhile” with their life.

BECKY
Yes! That’s exactly what I’m talking about!

CHRIS
And in most cases this happens in middle adulthood -- often right around your age, Mom ---

BECKY
No, this is not about ---

CHRIS
--- and so now that we’ve got our Terms identified, let’s begin with General Inquiry, for example: Mom, what are you doing with your life?

Quick beat.

BECKY
Me?

JOE enters, saying ---

JOE
Pizza!

--- and sets the huge pizza down in their midst, as lights instantly shift to ---

The Cubicle. Day.

BECKY
(to audience)
And right then I thought about Mrs. Tipton. Mrs. Tipton (MORE)
is awaiting delivery on her new car -- our top of the line sedan, black, fully-loaded. Steve, my co-worker, had been her salesman.

STEVE enters. He wears casual business clothes, a blazer and -- incongruously -- an extremely old and worn pair of hiking boots.

BECKY is busy with paperwork.

STEVE
Have you seen her, yet? Has she come in?

BECKY
Seen who, Steve?

STEVE
She was sitting across from me -- I had closed the sale and I was going over some of the extras and customized packages -- she wants everything, Becky, that woman wants it all -- and so I slid one of the brochures across the desk to her ... are you listening to me?

BECKY
Right here.

STEVE
(sits on her desk)
... and I looked down at her hands, these amazing hands, for a woman her age -- the fifty side of forty -- just priceless hands, and the thing is: her nails had this black polish on them, this incredible black, this ebony hue from the end of the known world, with a lustre like the '56 Thunderbirds once had, the blackest of blacks, positively mesmeric ... and as I glanced down at the jet-black inky splendor of that nail polish, I swear to you ... I could see my own face in her fingers. Ten Little Steves looking back at me. And Mrs. Tipton said: "Is that all there is, Steve? Is there nothing more to be done?" And the tone in her voice just broke me in half. I watched the Ten Little Steves just ... nod a little.

You wait, Becky, you’ll see: she has this beautiful ... pain. I mean, I have pain, too -- this past year, since Rita died. But not like Mrs. Tipton. A man could fall into that pain and never find his way out.

Beat.

BECKY
Thanks, Steve.

STEVE nods.
BECKY (cont'd)
I’ll need the bill of sale.

STEVE
Oh -- on my desk -- I’ll be right back.

And STEVE goes.

BECKY
(to audience)
You see, when Mrs. Tipton arrived last week ---

Becky’s DESK PHONE RINGS.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to audience)
AUGH! I’ll get this told, don’t worry ---
(into phone)
Thank you for calling Bill Buckley Lex---

The Living Room. Same.

JOE, on his cell phone, holding the
sports page. CHRIS is eating and
maybe “texting”, busily.

JOE
(interrupting her)
Hey, Beck -- it’s me.

BECKY
Oh, Joe, I’m sorry -- we got swamped ---

JOE
Yeah, I figured. Did you see the news?

BECKY
--- and I still have these quarterly reports to get out,
so you and Chris should go ahead and eat.

JOE
Yeah, we did. Chris brought home a pizza.

BECKY
You’re having pizza again?

JOE
Don’t worry, we made a salad.
BECKY
Carrot sticks are not a salad.

CHRIS (imitating his Mom)
Carrot stick are not a salad.

JOE (cont'd)
Hey, I was just wondering if you saw the news. Big story on CNN ---

BECKY
What is it?

JOE
--- the internal combustion engine has been outlawed. All auto sales ended at 6 p.m. today.

BECKY
Okay ---

JOE
Car dealerships nationwide have been shut down. Workers were sent home.

--- very funny.

JOE
And since it’s now twenty minutes after nine and you’re still not home ---

BECKY
Joe, I’m sorry.

JOE
Are you the only one there?

BECKY
Francine is here.

JOE
Francine is the janitor -- she’s supposed to be there ---

BECKY
Joe, I know, I’m sorry ...

JOE
--- I mean, really, it’s just a job, Beck. It’s just cars.

CHRIS has torn a piece of paper from his notebook, scribbled a note on it -- and now hands it to JOE.
JOE (cont'd)

Hold on.

(reads)
"This phenomenon is known as 'Normative Social Influence' -- the desire to gain approval through situational behavior, despite not believing in the value of what one is doing."

Pause. JOE sets the paper down.
Waits for BECKY'S response.

JOE (cont'd)
Beck -- you there?

In silence, she hangs up the phone.

The Cubicle.

BECKY
(to audience)
Sorry, again.
(looks down at her work)
God: the more I do, the further behind I get.
(to an AUDIENCE MEMBER)
Does that happen to you?
(as needed)
(It's terrible, isn't it?) // (Really? Lucky you.)

She hands some pages and a stapler
to this AUDIENCE MEMBER.

BECKY (cont'd)
Can you give me a hand, for a second? I need these collated and stapled. Just like this. Thanks.
(to audience)
Okay -- quick -- before we're interrupted: Mrs. Tipton bought her car from Steve. But the model she wanted -- customized, loaded with extras -- could not be delivered for another three or four weeks. When I told her this, she said: "What's it matter, Becky? I've waited this long." Then she told me her story.

And now lights slowly begin to
feature the DISTANT SILHOUETTE of a
FIGURE IN BLACK: MRS. TIPTON
(**played by the actress who plays Ginger**).

Her husband was wealthy, well-known, and -- like her -- well into middle age. One day Mrs. Tipton stepped out of the shower. Her husband looked her up and down -- handed her a towel -- said: "Time is cruel, honey" -- and left her for a swimwear model.

(MORE)
There were no kids. No family to speak of. Mrs. Tipton was alone. She sat on the floor of her white-carpeted living room for the next seventeen days. Then she stood up -- put on her shoes -- walked to Safeway -- signed her house over to the checkout girl ... and walked away from her life. Cleaned out all her accounts. Kept just enough cash to buy a really good manicure and this one fully-loaded black car.

I asked what she planned to do now. “Drive away,” she said. To where?, I asked. She said nothing.

I handed her my card, told her I’d call the minute her car came in. She looked at me with that beautiful pain: “Is that it, Becky? Is that all there is?”

The SILHOUETTE of MRS. TIPTON fades away, as ---

WALTER, nicely dressed, appears behind BECKY.

WALTER
Good evening ---

BECKY
We’re closed.

WALTER
Yes, I know, but I wondered if ---

BECKY
You’ll need to come by tomorrow.

WALTER
--- yes, but you see, this is kind of an emergency, I need to ---

BECKY
The dealership closed three hours ago, so if you’d ---

WALTER
I won’t take up much of your time. I can write you a check, give you a credit card, have my accountant wire the full amount to you -- whatever you prefer.

BECKY
The full amount for what?

WALTER
I need to buy some cars. As a gift for my employees. We have our Company Breakfast at 7 a.m. tomorrow morning and we’ve had a very good year, so I want to get them all a little something. But I’m just terrible at gifts. (MORE)
WALTER (cont’d)

My wife, Sheila, she was so good at it. Just had a knack. Knew just the perfect thing to buy for people -- no matter what the occasion. But ever since she passed, I’m a total wreck. I’m told I should hire a Gift Consultant, put a sort of Swag Master on my payroll, but I really wouldn’t know where to begin ——

BECKY

Look, now is not a ——

WALTER

—- so, I had my driver take me to some stores -- I had no idea there were so many stores, they’re everywhere -- and I walked around those stores, not a clue, no idea what to get, and so I asked my driver to take me home and within moments, there we were, stuck in traffic ... and I looked out the window and I said to myself: cars. People like cars. I’ll get them some cars. So, I know it’s late, but may I please buy some of your cars?

Pause.

BECKY

How many do you need?

WALTER

Nine. Just nine of them will do.

BECKY

Nine cars ... 

WALTER

I could arrange payment for them tonight -- and maybe you could just put the keys in little gift boxes -- Sheila always kept a shelf filled with these neat little gift boxes, fitted with ribbons, just perfect -- anyway, I thought I’d just hand out these boxes at the Company Breakfast and shake their hands and be done with it.

Pause. She stares at him.

BECKY

What ... um ... what kind of cars would you like?

WALTER

Oh, whatever you think. Nine of ‘em.

BECKY hands him a brochure -- still not really believing all this.

BECKY

Maybe you should look at this -- these are the current models.
WALTER

(paging through brochure, agitated)
Oh, see -- this is where it gets tricky -- maybe just one of each style ---

BECKY
And what colors?

WALTER
See what I mean?! This is impossible! God, I miss Sheila.

BECKY
(re: the brochure)
Towards the back, there are color and fabric swatches -- interior and exterior. Plus we offer ---

WALTER
No, no, no, I can’t do this. My driver is waiting. I’m supposed to be at a birthday party for my daughter and I don’t have a gift for her either! -- unless you count my entire net worth which she’ll inherit the moment I drop dead from trying to buy some gifts for all these people -- so please, I know how this must sound and how foolish I must look, but please ... can you help me?

She stares at him. A beat. Then:

she takes the brochure from WALTER’S hands, saying ---

BECKY
(all business)
I recommend our all-wheel drive sport coupe. Very popular. My husband ... he always wanted one of these.

WALTER
Oh, did he?

BECKY
--- and the thing is: you don’t need to pick colors or interiors in advance -- the new owners can do that when they come in. And I suggest you buy each of them the same car -- to avoid the appearance of playing favorites.

WALTER
That’s very smart.

She is quickly punching numbers into a calculator, as she talks ---
BECKY
They could take delivery almost right away. And if you
choose the “Top Flight” package on each car, they can
add any extras they might want.

WALTER
Good. Let’s do that.

BECKY
Okay ---

The calculator spits out a very
long piece of paper -- BECKY rips
it off -- and hands it to WALTER.

BECKY (cont'd)
--- your cost for nine of these cars, taxes, title and
fees comes to this number right here.

WALTER looks at the number for a
long moment. Then: he looks up
into BECKY'S eyes.

WALTER
You still wear your ring. I do, too. I thought about
leaving it with Sheila -- having it buried with her ...
(touching his ring)

It was my daughter who told me to hold onto it. That it
would be a nice reminder.
(beat)

I see you’ve done the same.

BECKY
Pardon?

WALTER
Kept your wedding ring.

BECKY
Well -- yes.

WALTER
It’s lovely.

BECKY
Thank you -- yes, I wear it because, I mean ---

WALTER
Was he a good man? Was he kind to you?

BECKY
Yes -- he was -- is -- I mean, he still is.
WALTER
Oh, I know the feeling ---

BECKY
He’s still with me -- we’re still together ---

WALTER
Exactly -- that’s what I tell people, too ---

BECKY
No, you ---

WALTER
--- it’s like she’s still with me, right by my side, guiding me through my days ---

BECKY
Yes, but my husband is still ---

WALTER
--- and leading me here tonight. Leading me to you. I’m Walter. And you are ...

She says nothing. He lifts one of her business cards from the desk.

WALTER (cont'd)
(reads)
... Rebecca.

He extends his hand.

WALTER (cont'd)
I’m sorry for your loss, Rebecca.

BECKY
You don’t understand ---

WALTER
I like that name: Rebecca. It has substance. Ballast. I hope you don’t let people call you “Becky.”

BECKY
Well ---

WALTER
“Becky” is the name of a dull housewife in a sad movie about a poor family struggling to hold onto their vanishing hopes and dreams. In the movies, a “Becky” always gets the shaft.

Pause.
BECKY
Walter, I need to tell you about my husband ---

WALTER
And I need to tell you more about Sheila -- I think that’s healthy, to do that kind of sharing -- but let’s not do that here. Let me pay you for these cars and then maybe we can go somewhere -- get a bite to eat.

BECKY
You have a party to attend -- your daughter’s birthday.

WALTER
And of course you’d remember that! Of course you place “family” above everything. Sheila was like that, too. You’re right, I should go -- and I still don’t have a gift for my daughter.

BECKY
Does she need a car?

WALTER
She has plenty of those. Maybe I’ll get her a loft downtown. Kids like lofts, don’t they?

BECKY
I bet they do.

WALTER
Here is my card -- with my accountant’s name on back.

BECKY
(re: his card)
“Walter Flood” -- I’ve seen that name.

WALTER
Maybe on billboards.

BECKY
Do you advertise there?

WALTER
I am the billboards. I own the billboards.

BECKY
Which ones?

WALTER
Pretty much all of them. Go ahead -- you can say it: they’re an “eyesore” -- “visual pollution” ---

BECKY
Well ---
--- and all of that is true. Believe me, if I could have made hundreds of millions of dollars by doing something good and noble for the world, I by-god would have done it. But my father handed me this business and said “Walter, don’t screw it up.” You play the hand you’re dealt.

BECKY
You must have played it well.

WALTER
Who knows. Life is chaos and holidays. Who can say why things turn out the way they do. All I know is that my life has become the story of a handful of people I met by chance and the things we did together.

Pause. She is staring at him.

BECKY
We have these “gift keys” ... they don’t belong to any actual vehicles, but they look real, and people use them when they’re giving a car as a gift.

WALTER
I’ll need nine of them.

BECKY
And some gift boxes.

WALTER
Perfect.

Pause.

WALTER (cont’d)
May I keep your card, Rebecca?

BECKY
Sure.

WALTER
And may I call you?

Pause. She stares at him, then turns to the audience ---

BECKY
(to audience)
I made a sound that was sort of a cross between “Mm-hmm” and “Hmm-mm” ---

WALTER turns and leaves.
--- and I thought "Well, okay, THAT happened" -- no big deal, except for the fact that I failed to explain to this kind gentleman that my husband is not currently DEAD.

JOE’S VOICE is heard from OFF ----

JOE’S VOICE
Beck -- you still awake?

BECKY turns quickly to the AUDIENCE MEMBER who has been collating/stapling, and says ---

BECKY
Oh -- sorry -- how’s it going over here? (as needed, quickly) (That’s great. Good job.) // (That’s it?! What have you been doing?!) She takes these papers to a table in the room and begins to sort them, as lights expand to ---

The Living Room. Night.


JOE
It’s eleven-fifteen.

BECKY
I know. I’m sorry.

JOE
(re: the papers)
And you brought work home?

BECKY
I told Buckley I’d pull together some info for his new office manager.

JOE
At the Mega-place?

BECKY
Yeah.

JOE
Has that opened?
BECKY
Two weeks.

JOE
And he’s paying you overtime for this, right? -- for setting up his new office, on top of running your own?

The answer, of course, is no. And BECKY just sheepishly looks at JOE ... who opens his arms ---

JOE (cont'd)
Come here.

--- and holds her tight.

JOE (cont'd)
Let me tell you how this goes: you take your shoes off, go upstairs, put your nightgown on, put all those mysterious lotions on your face, climb in our bed, arrange your pillows, and crack open that big biography you’ve been reading for the past two years. That thing always puts you to sleep.

BECKY
I really want to finish it.

JOE
Don’t ruin a good thing.

BECKY
Is Chris home?

JOE
Had a date.

BECKY
Oh, no.

JOE
Some girl he met at a party.

BECKY
Is she a student?

JOE
It doesn’t matter, Beck ---

BECKY
I’m just ---
JOE
--- and why would you even ask? He’s never going to
tell us anything about this girl, any girl ---

BECKY
You’re right. I’m not going to pry ---

JOE
Good.

BECKY
(can’t help it)
--- did he say where they were going?

Quick beat. JOE starts off.

JOE
You coming?

BECKY
Right behind you.

JOE goes.

BECKY goes to turn off a final
light, and as she does so ---

Her CELL PHONE RINGS.

She stares at it. Answers it.

BECKY (cont'd)
(on phone)
Hello?

The Terrace of the Flood Estate.
Night.

WALTER -- in a shaft of moonlight --
is on his cell phone.

WALTER
(on phone)
Rebecca?

Beat.

BECKY
(on phone)
Yes?
WALTER
My daughter tells me there’s a rule of some kind, when a man has been given a woman’s number — a “twenty-four hour” rule.
(looking at his watch)
Well, I’m afraid I wasn’t able to wait that long. Still ... it’s a lovely night ... and I thought I’d ... (voice fades)
Pause.

BECKY
(business voice)
What can I do for you, Mr. Flood?

WALTER
(beat, tone changes)
Oh, I’m sorry. I’m terribly sorry.

BECKY
Pardon me?

WALTER
Just there. In your voice. I’ve been a fool, haven’t I?

BECKY
Why do you ---

WALTER
Mistaking your kind and helpful behavior for something more. God, what a fool ---

BECKY
Please, it’s ---

WALTER
--- I’m sorry, Rebecca -- I won’t trouble you again.

BECKY
--- I didn’t know what ... you were calling about.

WALTER
I see.

BECKY
You have the nine gift boxes ---

WALTER
Yes.
BECKY
--- and I’ve memo’d the sales manager to expect payment
from your accountant.

WALTER
Thank you.

BECKY
So, I think ... that’s it.

Pause.

BECKY (cont’d)
Mr. Flood, are you there?

WALTER
(simple, no self-pity)
Things narrow, don’t they? As we age. The things in
our life -- our life itself, whether we admit or not --
it begins to narrow. And the unexpected fades away.

Hearing this, BECKY sits down.

WALTER (cont’d)
You surprised me, Rebecca. And even if we never speak
again: I am in your debt for that. You are that thing
in my life that I thought would never come again ... 
that unexpected thing.

(pause)
I’ll say good night now. And, once again: I’m sorry.

Pause. WALTER begins to hang up
his phone, as ---

BECKY turns to the audience.

BECKY
(to audience)
And the word out of my mouth was supposed to be
“Goodbye.” But something happened ---

WALTER
Yes?

BECKY
(on phone)
Pardon?

WALTER
You said “Wait”.

BECKY
No, I didn’t.
WALTER
I was about to hang up ---

BECKY
(to audience)
Yes, I did. I said “Wait.”

WALTER
--- and you said ---

BECKY
(on phone)
I’m sure I didn’t say “Wait.” I wouldn’t say that. I’d say something else.

WALTER
Such as?

BECKY
Such as ... thank you. For calling. And ... for what you’ve said. I’m very ...

(voice fades)

JOE peeks his head in, saying ---

JOE
(whispered)
Everything okay?

Startled, BECKY turns -- nods.

JOE (cont’d)
Is that Buckley? At this hour?!

BECKY just grimaces.

JOE (cont’d)
(shakes head)
Unbelievable.

BECKY
It’s okay.

JOE
Gimme the phone ---

BECKY
Joe, no ---

JOE
--- does he have any idea how lucky he is to have found someone like you?!
BECKY

Joe ---

JOE
You tell him that or I will!

And JOE heads back to bed.

WALTER
It’s that hour, you know. That late hour on a summer night when words come out easily. “Too easily” -- Sheila used to say. She claimed most of her friend’s heartaches and divorces could be traced to things spoken freely and foolishly, on long summer nights.

(beat)
And I suppose I’ve just done the same.

BECKY
Don’t take this wrong ---

WALTER
All right.

BECKY
--- but you really have to stop talking about your deceased wife. You really have to stop that.

WALTER
And you’ll do the same.

BECKY
What’s that?

WALTER
Your husband. No mention of him. Is that our agreement?

BECKY
But it’s different, Walter ---

WALTER
I will ask nothing of you, Rebecca. Nothing you’re unwilling to give. Keep your husband in whatever place, wherever he belongs in your heart. We needn’t speak of him again.

Pause.

WALTER (cont’d)
I was hoping to see you. Nothing too intimate -- just a small gathering of friends. At my home. Sunday night. A pleasant group. I think you’ll enjoy them. If you

(MORE)
WALTER (cont'd)
don’t enjoy them, I’ll send them home and bring in some
other people.

He awaits her reaction. Nothing.

WALTER (cont'd)
I’ll send directions to you at work. Hope you can join
us. Good night, Rebecca.

BECKY ends the call. She goes to a
chair, cradling a pillow to her
chest, and at the instant that she
sits down ---

The Living Room. Dawn.

--- CHRIS enters, great mood,
dressed to go for a run.

CHRIS
Hey, Mom -- you’re up early.

BECKY
(surprised)
Huh?

CHRIS
Terrific morning out there. “Crisp” -- like Dad always
says. Now I finally know what he means! Catch you
later ---

BECKY
Chris, wait!

CHRIS stops, turns to her.

BECKY (cont'd)
What’s going on?

CHRIS
What do you mean?

BECKY
It’s five-thirty a.m.

CHRIS
And it’s crisp out there.

BECKY
You don’t run. You barely walk. So, what’s with the ---

CHRIS
This girl I’m seeing -- she’s a runner. It’s so weird
and awesome.
BECKY
Whoa whoa whoa whoa ---

CHRIS
She’s really into it -- five days a week -- except right now she’s on crutches, has some ligament damage ---

BECKY
So, how is she ---

CHRIS
--- so right now I’m running and she’s driving her car alongside me. We have these really good talks.

BECKY
Let’s back up: you’re exercising and you’re having really good talks with a girl. How long was I asleep?!

JOE enters -- dressed for work.
Pencil behind his ear. Big mug of coffee in his hand.

JOE
Look at this: you all got up to see me off to work?

BECKY
Joe ---

JOE
That’s so nice.

BECKY
--- Chris was telling me about a girl he’s seeing.

JOE
I always liked Candace. What happened to her?

CHRIS
Oh, not again.

JOE
Even your Mom liked Candace.

BECKY
She was a nice girl.

CHRIS
Candace had no inner life! She was all lipstick and spandex and exclamation points!

JOE
(whoa)

Okay ---
CHRIS
I don’t need that, Dad.

JOE
--- sorry I ever brought it ---

CHRIS
(overlapping)
--- I’m not looking for a cosmetic connection here -- I don’t require a partner who provides mere auditory and visual stimuli ---

JOE
You have your I-phone for that.

CHRIS
Exactly! -- I am looking -- I would hazard to say that ALL OF US are looking to put our fundamental nature forward, in hopes of one day tapping the well-spring of another human soul.

JOE and BECKY just stare at him.

JOE
So you don’t care what she looks like?

CHRIS
Look, Dad: obviously the process of finding your soul mate can be greatly accelerated if she also happens to be really hot.

JOE
Okay -- good to know.

JOE leaves, giving a smile to BECKY, just as ---

CAR HORN, OUTSIDE, is heard.

CHRIS
That’s her. I gotta run.

BECKY
Where’s this girl from?

CHRIS
I’ll find out today. We’re going on a huge run. Turns out we’re both really interested in the “Mere Exposure Effect”.

BECKY
The what?
CHRIS
The "Mere Exposure Effect" posits that you can begin to
like someone for no reason other than repeated exposure
to them. Isn’t that awesome?!

HORN SOUNDS, AGAIN.

CHRIS (cont’d)
Gotta fly. Peace.

And CHRIS is gone.

BECKY
(to no one)
Peace?

STEVE enters, carrying paperwork,
looking for BECKY at ---

The Cubicle. Day.

--- but she’s not there.

STEVE
Becky -- I’ve got those invoices.
(looking around)
Becky?

BECKY throws on her shoes and
hurries to meet STEVE ---

BECKY  STEVE
I’m here, Steve -- Are you just
- sorry -- I getting here?
just --- It’s after ten.

BECKY
No, I was -- I needed to ---

STEVE
Did you sleep here? You look like you slept here.

BECKY
I didn’t sleep here.

STEVE
It’s okay. After Rita died, I slept here ---

BECKY
Yes, I know.
STEVE
--- couldn’t bear it at home. Couldn’t bring myself to
look at her things ... her hiking boots ... her funny
winter cap ---

BECKY
It was hard, I know.

STEVE
(overlapping)
--- and then, when I went upstairs, there was our little
hallway ... the paint ... the pictures on the walls ...
our bedroom door ...
(a beat, we think he’s
done, then ..)
... the door knob ... our bed ... the quilt ... the
pillows ... Mr. Dibble ---

BECKY
YES, STEVE -- you told me.

STEVE
--- so you know what I did:

Yes, I do.

BECKY
I curled up under my desk and fell asleep. Spent three
nights like that. Right here in the sales room.

BECKY
Yes, I know.

STEVE
I see her falling, Becky. My mind goes to this place
... where I am reliving that moment on that mountain and
no matter how long I wear these hiking boots, and not
matter many times I see it happen: I can’t catch her --
my arms won’t reach -- and all I can do is watch.

Pause.

BECKY
(BIG change of subject)
OKAY, Steve, what have you got there for me?

STEVE
When did you get so cold?

BECKY
I’m sorry?
STEVE
You were always there for me -- you and Joe and the others -- you were such good friends -- always willing to talk me down the mountain ---

BECKY
We just wanted to help, Steve.

STEVE
--- but then it changed. Like you turned the page in your calendar one day and said: “Okay, time’s up. Steve should be over it.”

BECKY
No, that’s not ---

STEVE
“We gave him X-number of months to mourn good ol’ Rita, we took him out for beers and listened to him tell the story of her fall for the two-hundredth time ---”

BECKY
(trying to make a joke)
Three-hundredth ---

STEVE
THAT IS NOT FUNNY.
(pause)
You don’t know, Becky ... you and Joe, you’re set, you’re locked in, you’ll have each other forever ... but some of the rest of us ---

BECKY
I know ... I’m sorry ...

STEVE
(overlapping)
--- I want to get past this stuff. I really do. I’m sick of talking about it, and you must be really sick of hearing it ---

Becky’s DESK PHONE RINGS, but ---

STEVE lifts and hangs up the receiver, in one motion, and never stops talking ---

STEVE (cont’d)
--- but it’s like yesterday I’m getting a coffee, and this little boy and his mom are in line behind me, and they have this puppy, and I’m standing there minding my own business, and I hear the mom say to her son: “Why don’t you go show the puppy to that sad man over there ---

(MORE)
maybe the puppy will cheer him up!” -- and I am really trying to ignore this, but now the puppy is sniffing at my boots and the little kid is saying: “Hi Mister, you look sad -- do you want to pet my puppy?”

And what I THOUGHT -- what I didn’t SAY, even though I wanted to -- what I THOUGHT was:

“You bet I do, sonny boy -- I want to pet your little puppy -- and then I want to take him for a nice walk, a little hike in the mountains with you right by his side -- and as we approach the rugged vista which is our destination, I want to let go of his leash for just a second, just an instant, right when the path beneath his little paws starts to give way -- and I want you to watch your puppy’s desperate eyes as he tries to grab at that ground -- but his little paws touch nothing but air, nothing to hold onto, nothing but you and your screams and you might as well scream your heart out, sonny boy, because THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO for that puppy of yours who is falling DOWN DOWN DOWN into a dark abyss that will NEVER EVER GIVE HIM BACK.”

Pause.

BECKY
At least you only thought it.

STEVE
I only thought I thought it. Turns out I said it.

BECKY
Oh my god ...  

STEVE
It was ugly. The kid cried till he threw up. His mom poured a Frappuccino on me.

STEVE sits down.

BECKY is looking at a driving map printout.

BECKY
You ever driven out to Cedar Cove?

STEVE
You don’t drive to Cedar Cove, Becky -- you achieve Cedar Cove. Or marry into it.

BECKY
Looks like it’s an hour to the ferry ---
STEVE
--- depending on traffic -- forty or fifty minutes on
the water -- and once you dock, another hour’s drive to
the far side of the island.

BECKY
People commute from there?

STEVE
People have sea-planes. What’s in Cedar Cove?

BECKY
Oh, just something for a client.

STEVE
What client? One of my clients?

BECKY
No one you know.

STEVE
Maybe I do. Gimme a hint.

BECKY
So: plans for the weekend?

He hands her a flier.

STEVE
Oh, you bet -- here’s a flier -- you and Joe have plans
on Sunday?

BECKY
We might -- I might have something.

STEVE
I’m doing a fund raiser for the Wilderness Co-op -- at
my apartment -- we’ll have organic juices and trail-
friendly gorp ---

BECKY
(300th time)
And your slide show.

STEVE
--- and of course the slide show of my hikes with Rita,
but this one has a couple new photos -- never before
seen -- which really makes it worth watching the whole
thing over from the beginning ---

BECKY
Okay, great ---
A strange CELL PHONE RING, coming from somewhere on STEVE.

STEVE
--- whoa, that’s me, gotta take this, thanks for talking me down the mountain again ---
(stops)
Oh, they need these by five.

And STEVE puts a full box of invoices on Becky's desk ---

STEVE (cont'd)
See you Sunday!

--- and is gone, as ---

The DESK PHONE RINGS and RINGS.

BECKY stares at the invoices ... at all the work on her desk ... at her RINGING PHONE, then ---

She looks to the Booth, saying ---

BECKY
Can I go home?

Light instantly bump to:

The Living Room. Evening.

BECKY
Thank you.

And BECKY stands in her home ... in silence.

BECKY (cont'd)
I used to love a quiet house. Nothing but the sound of my thoughts. Those were the moments when I was most grateful for my life.

I'd sit and remember what a cute little boy Chris was -- before he entered this phase called “manhood.”

BECKY lifts a framed 8x10 PHOTO of a “smiling Becky & Joe”.

I'd think about Joe and his great big Soviet-style heart: solid and strong and much bigger than it needs to be. Twenty-eight years of marriage ... and counting.

(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
When my house was quiet, I could see my life for what it was: content. And complete.

BECKY sets the PHOTO down.

Then...

She seeks out THREE WOMEN from the AUDIENCE.

Ideally, she will say nothing whatsoever to these WOMEN -- just approach them and gesture for them to please join her on stage, to help her with something. [She may need to whisper “Will you help me for a minute?” to facilitate this.]

When BECKY has all THREE WOMEN on stage, she begins ...

BECKY (cont'd)
Okay -- thanks for being here. Since I don’t know you, it should be easy for us to be honest with each other, don’t you think?

She ad-libs off their responses, as needed.

BECKY (cont'd)
As you know, I’ve been invited to a dinner party at Walter Flood’s house on Sunday. Which is tonight. Now: if you think I should go to this dinner party, would you please raise your hand?

To THOSE WHO RAISE THEIR HARDS:

BECKY (cont'd)
Thank you! Are you sure?! (Okay, thanks. // Yeah, me neither.)

(As needed) to THOSE WHO DID NOT:

BECKY (cont'd)
(as needed, shaking hands)
(Thanks for being honest. God knows you’re probably right. You can go now.)

BECKY turns to the WOMEN who remain.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to the WOMEN)
Okay, ready? We’ve got work to do.
(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
(to the Booth)
Some music please?

MUSIC: something classic (ala Blossom Dearie’s “Give Him the Ooh-La-La”), or perhaps something more contemporary (ala Bonnie Raitt’s “Wah She Go Do”), as ---

BECKY, with ad-libs, sends the WOMEN in various directions (onstage and off) to retrieve: Her dress. Her shoes. Her make-up and hair items.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to audience)
Yes, I know this is usually done offstage -- for the same reason that women disappear into the “powder room” -- to maintain “the mystery.” The mystery to me is why we go to all this trouble just so a man can look at us and think to himself: “Wow -- doesn’t a beer sound good?”

During the following, the WOMEN help BECKY get dressed, coiffed, and made-up. They also bring on her coat.

BECKY (cont'd)
Sometimes you just want to look nice, feel good about yourself -- is that so wrong?

And if that means getting a little gussied up and going out to party -- what’s the harm?

And if that means spending a week’s salary on a new dress and then travelling for three hours in cars and on ferry boats, all to arrive at the estate of some loopy widower and a roomful of rich strangers who will take one look at you and say “I think you want the trailer park up the road” -- well, if that's what it takes, damn it all, I'm gonna do it.

In only a minute or two: the transformation of BECKY is complete. She looks great.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to the WOMEN)
You’re good at this. Thank you. Do you want to come with me?

(ad-libs off them)
(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
No, better not. Never arrive with someone prettier than you.

JOE’S VOICE
(from OFF)
Hey, Beck -- are you still here?

BECKY
(to the WOMEN)
Okay -- you gotta go -- if he sees you in here -- well, I’m not sure he would see you in here -- but let’s not take any chances ---

She ushers the WOMEN offstage ---

BECKY (cont’d)
Thank you -- thanks so much ---

--- just before JOE arrives.

JOE
Traffic shouldn’t be too bad on Sunday except near the stadium. I filled your car with gas, and put a new flashlight -- with fresh batteries -- in the trunk.

BECKY
(with a smile)
I’m not going camping.

JOE
In this city, driving and camping are a lot alike.
(pause)
You look ... 

She waits, a little nervous.

BECKY
... what?

JOE
Like a million bucks.

BECKY gives the AUDIENCE WOMEN (her “dressers”) a quick and covert “thumbs up”.

JOE (cont’d)
So, is he gonna put you up?

BECKY
What?
JOE
Buckley. Three hours to the Mega-Ship for this -- what? -- this fancy “office party” ---

BECKY
This “corporate event” ---

JOE
Oh, right.

BECKY
--- to wine and dine the regional reps -- show them the new store -- stuff like that.

JOE
Three hours there, couple hours at this event, three hours back -- it’s gonna be late, Beck.

BECKY
(with a smile)
I have a flashlight.

JOE
Take this.

JOE holds up a key.

JOE (cont’d)
You’re gonna be ten minutes from that apartment complex I roofed. I know the owner. He keeps an extra apartment there. Furnished. When I had some late nights down there, he offered it to me -- in case I didn’t want to make the drive home. It’s small, but clean. Single bed, fridge, towels.

BECKY
Joe, I couldn’t ---

JOE
It’s just sitting there, Beck. He’s not renting it till the fall.

JOE holds up the key, again.

JOE (cont’d)
Just take it. In case it’s too late to drive home.

BECKY
It won’t be.

JOE
All you’d have to do it call me -- say you’re gonna spend the night and drive back in the morning.
She does not take the key.

BECKY
I’m coming home tonight.

Pause.

JOE
You have your phone?

Yes.

JOE
Stay in your far left lane near the stadium.

BECKY
Got it. Joe?

JOE
Hmm?

BECKY
Why are you so good to me?

JOE
Oh, Beck ... we’ve had a nice day -- let’s not ruin it by having a “talk”.

BECKY
I just ---

JOE
Because I know where this goes: “why are you so good to me?” leads to “I hope I’m just as good to you” and that leads to “of course you are” -- “you’re just saying that” -- “no, it’s true” -- “why can’t you be honest with me” -- “I am being honest with you” -- “no, I don’t think you are” ---

BECKY
Joe, please ---

JOE
(overlapping)
--- and then pretty soon we’re fighting about how much we love each other. That’s weird.

BECKY
Okay ---

JOE
That’s a weird thing to do.
BECKY
--- you’re right. No more “talks”, I promise.

    JOE gets her a plastic bottle of water.

    JOE
For the road. It’s cold.

    As she takes the bottle, she can’t help saying ...

BECKY
But, if there was someone ---

    JOE
Oh, jeez.

    BECKY
--- someone who was better than me, treated you better than I did -- no, let me finish -- someone you were attracted to, liked spending time with, anything like that ... I hope ...

    JOE
You hope I’d be honest. Tell you all about it.

    BECKY
... I hope you’d lie. Or not lie, really ... just not tell me right away.

    JOE
Okay ...

    BECKY
Because maybe it would just play itself out. These infatuations don’t last. Maybe in a couple days, couple weeks, you’d be over it -- no harm done ---

    JOE
No contact, no foul ---

    BECKY
--- right, but if you’d already told me, I’d be devastated -- just torn up for no reason at all.

    JOE
Okay. I’ll lie to you. God, I hope I meet someone so I can try this out.

    JOE hands BECKY her coat.
BECKY

What about you?

JOE

Hmm?

BECKY

If I ever ... met someone like that. What would you want me to do?

JOE

Oh, my plan is a lot simpler.

BECKY

How’s that?

JOE

Just tell me. Right away. If that happens, I want to know about it.

BECKY

Even if it meant nothing?

JOE

Yes, I’d want to know ——

BECKY

Why?

JOE

—— so I could kill the guy.

(beat)

Love you. Drive safe.

He gives her a kiss and goes, as ——

BECKY moves to a chair, which lights will now reveal as ——

Becky’s Car. Evening.

BECKY speaks to the audience, as she “drives.” Her mood is edgy.

BECKY

This is a bad idea. Just a terrible idea -- a Terrible Idea Which I’m Going To Be Late For, unless I make this 5:20 ferry. Can someone tell me why they put these boats so far from the highway -- way out by the water?! I’ll call him. Easy. I’ll call Walter and tell him something came up. Or better yet, I’ll tell him that my husband is ALIVE and we are still married and I am not the type of person who sneaks around behind his back ——

(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
but, of course, I AM that person, apparently I am exactly that person: that sneaking-around-and-trying-to-catch-the-5:20-ferry person.
(reaching into her purse)
Still -- I have to call him. Tell him I might be late. Or lost. Or insane.
(re: purse)
And can someone tell me why my lipstick is the first thing I find when I reach into my purse ---
(pulls out lipstick)
--- unless what I'm trying to find in my purse is my lipstick?! Then it's nowhere to be found.
(beat)
Like my phone.
(rummaging through purse)
Oh, come on, Becky -- find your phone -- you know it's in here -- Joe handed you your coat, and you grabbed your purse and your keys and ... 
(realizes)
... you left your phone at home.

Becky’s CELL PHONE RINGS in ---

The Living Room. Same.

--- and JOE answers it.

JOE
(on phone)
You forgot your phone.

The Terrace. Same.

WALTER on his phone, dressed for the party.

WALTER
(on phone, confused)
Hmm?

JOE
After all that, you forgot your phone!

Becky’s Car. Same.

BECKY
(to audience, disbelief)
I forgot my phone.

WALTER
Who’s this?

JOE
Oh, I’m sorry ---
WALTER
Rebecca?

JOE
--- you’re trying to reach Becky?

WALTER
It’s Walter.

JOE
Walter?

WALTER
Yes.

JOE
Are you the new guy?

WALTER
Uh, well ---

JOE
She’s on her way -- probably hit traffic.

WALTER
Who’s this?

JOE
It’s Joe.

WALTER
Joe?

JOE
She left her phone here.

WALTER
Oh, I see -- at work ---

JOE
When she gets there, tell her she left her phone.

WALTER
I’ll do that.

JOE
And tell her to spend the night.

WALTER
Pardon me?

BECKY
In my car ...
JOE
She deserves that, right? ---

WALTER
(confused)
Yes, I suppose so ...

JOE
--- the money they make on those cars.

BECKY
Alone ...

WALTER
Oh, they loved them.

JOE
What’s that?

WALTER
They all loved their cars.

MUSIC, UNDER.

BECKY
Radio on ...

JOE
(confused)
I bet they did ...

WALTER
Thanks for your help.

BECKY
Traffic moving, nice and easy ...

WALTER
See you, Joe.

JOE
See you, Walter.

BECKY
Heaven help me.

MUSIC RISES, as ---
The lights rush to black.

End of Act One.
ACT TWO

The Terrace. Night.

COCKTAIL MUSIC from OFF, as the dinner party is in full swing.

KENNI and GINGER are looking at the view. They each have a drink. They both look smashing.

KENNI
He bought me a loft.

GINGER
For your birthday?

KENNI

GINGER
Your father loves you, Kenni.

KENNI
(beat)
Do you need a loft?

GINGER
You don’t want it?

KENNI
He bought me one last year, too.

GINGER
It’s been hard on him. Since your Mom died.

KENNI
Turns out Mom was right about everything. She told me exactly how Dad was going to behave when she was gone: said he’d get a little daft about things. Lose his confidence -- be a little adrift with people ---

GINGER
Sheila was always very perceptive.

KENNI
--- and that he’d probably get snookered by a woman.

GINGER
She said that?

KENNI
She knew her friends, Ginger. She knew that once she died, they’d smell blood in the water.
GINGER
Did she mention any names?

KENNI
Oh, come on! -- Mom knew you’d swoop right in with your charming smile and your backless dress. It’s no big deal. Dad’s a big boy. Given certain very clear boundaries, he can take care of himself.

GINGER
Keni, I assure you ---

KENNI
I sort of envy him. And you.

Why?

KENNI
There’s no pressure to “find someone” -- not at your age.

GINGER
Thanks for that.

KENNI
Or to find the “right someone” -- I mean, did you ever meet someone who was sweet and kind and funny and odd and had almost nothing in common with you? -- who had no idea you were from a wealthy family -- someone who just liked you because of who you were -- and when you’re with him you have dopey songs that you can’t get out of your head -- and all the hard things seem so easy and all the easy things seem so important -- I mean, really, Ginger, it can’t just be me, right? This must have happened to LOTS of people -- this must have happened to YOU.

GINGER
(simple)
No. You’re the first.

WALTER arrives, tense. He holds a martini.

GINGER (cont'd)
When are we eating, Walter?

WALTER
I wish I knew. I kept following the caterer around the house, asking him about dinner -- but he never answered me. Turned out he was the exterminator. Why must everyone wear white?
KENNI
I’ll handle it.
(with a look at GINGER)
Have fun.

KENNI goes.

GINGER
Walter.

WALTER
Ginger.

They are looking at the water.

GINGER
Your daughter thinks I’m swooping in.

WALTER
Pardon?

GINGER
On you. She thinks I have some plan to swoop in.

WALTER
Well, you know Kenni, she’s very protective ---

GINGER
Yes, of course ---

WALTER
--- but I personally don’t feel ... swooped in ... upon.

GINGER
Good.

They drink. Look at the view.

WALTER
I don’t see your boat. I don’t see either of your boats.

GINGER
The boats are gone. The art work is gone. The horses.

WALTER
Even the horses?

GINGER
No way to keep them. Or the place at the lake. Or the season tickets.
WALTER
You gave up your season tickets?

GINGER
Along with three cars and most of my jewelry.

WALTER
I had no idea.

GINGER
It finally caught up with us -- the Timber Baron’s kids. We all assumed that the money none of us made would never run out -- then the investments went bad, the trust funds got emptied, and the bills came due.

WALTER
I’m so sorry ---

GINGER
No -- please -- the last thing we deserve is sympathy. The fact is: after a hundred years of being pampered and deferred to, none of us know how to do a fucking thing. Oh, sure, we know how to stay busy -- we’re all the time telling each other how busy we are -- but if we had to walk out the door tomorrow and do something practical, something useful -- something other than dressing up, attending a function and eating with the proper fork: we wouldn’t have a clue.

WALTER
Ginger ---

GINGER
If our great-Grandpa -- the Timber Baron -- came back and saw what soft little spoiled ninnies we’ve become, he’d kick our ass to hell and back.

And here I am: the woman who kept putting off getting married -- putting it off till the last minute and beyond -- and I could do that, you see, because I always had this safety net. I had my money. And I knew that even when my looks were long gone, I’d still have my inheritance ... and maybe some man would want that ... even if he didn’t really want me.

KENNI appears.

KENNI
I found the chef. Dinner’s being served.

GINGER
Wonderful. I’m starved.
GINGER goes.

WALTER
I had no idea about Ginger. What she’s going through.

KENNI
Mom would say ---

WALTER
(sharper than he intends)
I don’t want to hear what your mother would say. Not tonight. So ... how’s the loft?

KENNI
It’s nice.

WALTER
Do you paint there?

KENNI
Paint?

WALTER
Isn’t that what people do in lofts? That’s what they do in the movies. They paint and play the saxophone. Do you need a saxophone?

KENNI
Dad, listen ---

WALTER
Or maybe a treadmill? I know how you and Ramsey love to run.

KENNI
Yes, well ---

WALTER
Is he in town?

KENNI
No, the trust fund playboy Ramsey McCord is still back East. Trolling for debutantes.

WALTER
You talk that way -- but everyone assumes you’ll marry him, anyway.

KENNI
Including you?
WALTER
No -- I hope you’ll surprise me. I’ve come to believe in surprises.

BECKY appears, behind WALTER.

BECKY still wears her coat, and still carries the water bottle which Joe gave her.

KENNI
(to BECKY)
Catering staff?

BECKY
Umm ...

KENNI
I can show you to the kitchen ---

WALTER turns to see her.

WALTER
You made it!

BECKY
I guess so.

WALTER
Rebecca, this is Kensington Hermione Flood -- my daughter.

KENNI
Keni
(re: catering remark)
Sorry, I thought ---

BECKY
That’s quite the name.

KENNI
My mother was a terrible Anglophile.

BECKY
Yes, I’ve heard a lot about your Mom ---

WALTER
--- but you won’t hear another word about her tonight.
(re: water bottle)
Now, let’s get you a proper drink ---

BECKY
I’m fine.
WALTER
Well, I’ll get you a tumbler and some ice ---

BECKY
No thanks -- this is all I need. Really.

BECKY continues to clutch her water bottle like a security blanket.

KENNI
Well ...

WALTER
Keni lives downtown. She has a new loft.

BECKY
Oh, right -- Happy Birthday!

KENNI
(odd)
Thanks.

WALTER
(to BECKY, concerned)
Were my directions wrong?

BECKY
No -- they were fine -- but no sooner had I driven off the ferry, but I ran into a breakdown -- middle of the road -- it was pretty bad -- and I didn’t have my cell phone ---

WALTER
Yes, I know.

BECKY
(overlapping)
--- and I was running late -- but somehow I made it through and I got here and what do you mean “you know”?

WALTER
I spoke to Joe.

Beat.

BECKY
Really?

WALTER
He answered -- told me you’d left, that you were on your way here ---
BECKY

He did?

WALTER

Such a pleasant guy. Is he one of the salesman?

KENNI breaks in, with purpose ---

KENNI

Maybe I should take your coat ... if you’re staying?

WALTER

She’s staying.

KENNI helps BECKY out of her coat.

KENNI

Okay.

(to WALTER)

We’re waiting.

KENNI goes.

WALTER

You look ...

BECKY

Like I’ve been driving all day?

WALTER

... stunning. Completely stunning.

As WALTER takes a sip of his martini ---

BECKY once again gives a quick, “thumbs-up” to her “dressers”.

WALTER (cont'd)

I was starting to think I’d made you up. Or known you in some other time or place. Do you ever do that -- imagine a kind of parallel life?

BECKY

Umm ...

WALTER holds up his martini glass -- making a toast.

WALTER

Cheers.
BECKY touches her water bottle to his glass ---

BECKY

Clink.

Lights isolate Becky.

BECKY
And we went inside. And I was seated across from Walter -- with a Nobel economist on my left, and a woman who looked like Lauren Hutton on my right.

The food was terrific. The conversation stimulating. And I started feeling braver by the minute. Yes, I’d told one outright lie to my husband and I wasn’t proud of that -- but no one was hurt. Not yet. And if it stopped here -- if I had dinner, said good night and drove home -- that would be the end of it. No harm done.

The Living Room.

JOE and CHRIS -- sharing a bag of chips -- follow a distraught STEVE into the room.

JOE
Really? Not one person came?

STEVE
I put up fliers, sent E-vites to everyone -- nothing.

JOE
Sorry to hear it, Steve.

STEVE
I had organic fair trade shade grown coffee in biodegradable mugs!

CHRIS
Doing good is hard, man.

JOE
Have a chip.

STEVE reaches into the bag of chips, saying ---

STEVE
These are terrible for you.

--- and then devours the chip.
CHRIS
You know, Steve, I think this has produced in you a certain level of dysphoria.

STEVE
"Dysphoria"?

CHRIS
Think of it as the opposite of euphoria. A sort of stew of anxiety, restlessness and depression -- but you can’t really diagnose or treat it like a standard disorder. It’s more a state of being.

STEVE
A way of life.

CHRIS
Exactly.

STEVE
Can I have another chip?

JOE
You bet.

STEVE grabs the entire bag, and starts eating, avidly.

STEVE
Where’s Becky?

JOE
You know -- that big shindig that Buckley is throwing.

STEVE
What shindig?

JOE
That corporate event -- the sneak peek for the all the industry insiders, down south at the new Mega-Ship.

STEVE
That’s impossible.

JOE
Huh?

STEVE
It’s not open, yet. That dealership ---

JOE
This is a preview, a kick-off ---
CHRIS
She got all dressed up.

JOE
(beat)
You really don’t know about this?

STEVE
No.
(beat)
I wonder what else I don’t know about.

CHRIS
Don’t go there, Steve.

Lights isolate Becky.

BECKY
(to audience)
Dessert was to die for. And the Lauren Hutton-look-alike turned out to be an activist who had infiltrated the dinner to convince Walter to tear down his billboards. She cornered him over the pistachio flan. He took her card. She took his arm. I watched them from across the room and I felt something rise up from a much younger part of my heart. I believe it’s called “jealousy.”

The Terrace. Later.

GINGER enters, wine in hand.

GINGER
(re: Becky’s water bottle)
Must be some special elixir. You can’t seem to let go of it.

BECKY
I guess I can’t.

GINGER
Well, it’s working. Walter seems very fond of you. They all do.

A beat. They sip their drinks.

GINGER (cont'd)
Where’s your husband tonight?

BECKY
He’s -- he -- well, he -- passed.
GINGER
Passed on the invitation?

BECKY
Yes -- well -- no -- away. He -- passed -- away.

Really?

BECKY nods.

GINGER (cont'd)
How convenient.

WALTER enters, drink in hand.

WALTER
Ginger, have you met Rebecca?

GINGER
Yes, I have -- and how refreshing to meet someone who actually works for a living.

WALTER
(lightly, to BECKY)
You’ll have to forgive Ginger: she and I have always managed to say to each other exactly what’s on our mind.

BECKY
I see.

GINGER
Is that true, Walter?

WALTER (cont'd)
Well, I certainly think we ---

GINGER
Because if that’s true, I’d like to tell you this: Sheila was not well-liked. You loved her to death, I know, and she was a good mother to Kenni -- but most people found her ... fakey. Always upbeat, always on the ball, always the right thing to say, the right note in the mail, the right hand-towels for all the right occasions -- IT WAS TOO MUCH, Walter, and after awhile nobody was buying it.

WALTER
Now, listen to me ---

GINGER
(sharp)
That woman was about as deep as a cookie sheet.

KENNI enters, espresso cup in hand.
KENNI
They’re bringing the cars around.

GINGER
(re: BECKY, with a smile)
Be careful, Walter. This one’s for real.

GINGER leaves.

WALTER
Keni, are you staying over?

KENNI
No -- I have my morning run.

WALTER
And the cottages -- are they full?

KENNI
I think Cottage Four is available. Why?

WALTER says nothing.

KENNI (cont'd)
Well ...
(to BECKY)
Nice to meet you. Safe travels.

And KENNI is gone.

BECKY is looking at the view.

BECKY
Lovely.

WALTER is looking at her.

WALTER
Yes.

BECKY
This place ... how long have you had it?

WALTER
Nearly four decades.

BECKY
And who did you buy from?

WALTER
You mean the original owners?
BECKY

Yes.

WALTER
I believe the original owners were a sovereign Indian nation.

BECKY smiles. Pause.

WALTER (cont'd)
Rebecca, I wonder if you’d ---

BECKY
I couldn’t possibly stay. If that’s what you’re thinking. If that’s what you were going to ask me. Is that what you were thinking and were going to ask me?

WALTER
Not any more.

BECKY
According to the schedule, if I leave now I can still make the last ferry ---

WALTER
But you’ll miss the sunrise over the water tomorrow. Like nothing you’ve ever seen. Like the first morning of the world.

BECKY again looks at the view.

WALTER (cont'd)
You’re tempted ... 

She looks back at WALTER.

WALTER (cont'd)
... but you’re going to leave.

BECKY

Yes.

She drinks the last drop of her water.

WALTER
Let me propose something. Come next week. Take one of the cottages. See me as much or as little as you’d like. But, just ... spend a little time here.

BECKY
That’s impossible.
WALTER
You can’t get away from work?

BECKY
Well, no -- I can’t, actually -- but Walter, listen: the “breakdown” that happened on the road tonight had nothing to do with cars: it was my breakdown. I had a head-on emotional crash -- pounding the dashboard with my fists and crying my eyes out and saying “What the hell am I doing?” ---

WALTER
I do that all the time!

BECKY
(re: her water bottle)
--- and WHY AM I STILL HOLDING THIS? MY HUSBAND GAVE THIS TO ME.

WALTER
And you saved it?

BECKY
YES, I ---

WALTER
I’VE DONE THAT, TOO! Oh, how we hold onto things! Do you know I have a POPSICLE in my freezer -- one half of a GRAPE POPSICLE that I shared with Sheila before she died?! Why can’t I get rid of that?!

BECKY
I really don’t ---

WALTER
Let’s throw our rings in the water!

BECKY
What? No!

WALTER is struggling to remove his wedding band.

WALTER
C’mon -- we’ll do it together -- free ourselves from the past ---

BECKY
Walter -- wait -- you don’t need to ---

WALTER
Do it, Rebecca -- or let me do it -- shall I do it for you?!
WALTER reaches for her hand, but
BECKY pulls it away -- and begins
taking off her own wedding ring.

WALTER (cont'd)
Let’s SAY GOODBYE TO THESE BANDS THAT BIND US! -- that’s
it, slide it right off -- GOODBYE TO THESE SHACKLES OF
REMEMBRANCE!

BECKY
My god, you’re serious ---

WALTER
Now, Rebecca -- do it with me -- on the count of three:

BECKY
But, Walter ---

WALTER
ONE! TWO! THREE!!!

And WALTER hurls his wedding ring
into the distance, into the water.

BECKY pretends to do the same --
although, in truth, she has palmed
her ring in her other hand. WALTER
does not know this.

Silence ... as they both stare at
the water.

WALTER (cont’d)
I don’t feel like I thought I’d feel. I thought I’d
feel free. But I just feel like I threw my ring in the
water.

He looks down at her ringless hand.

WALTER (cont’d)
What about you? ... how does it feel?

BECKY looks down at her hand, then
up at WALTER.

She kisses him on the cheek.

BECKY
Good night, Walter.

WALTER goes, as lights reveal ---
The Living Room. Day.

BECKY
(to audience)
My house is quiet again.

Buckley called the morning after I first went to Walter’s. He wanted to transfer me to the Mega-Dealership -- along with a promotion and a raise. Apparently I sold more cars in one night than some of his salesmen had sold all quarter.

I hesitated. Told him I didn’t think I could manage the travel. Needed to talk to Joe. Buckley told me he was willing to sweeten the deal. He ordered me to say nothing about this to my co-workers. And then he offered me an immediate three weeks paid vacation, PLUS a major bonus in the form of a top-of-the-line new car. Final offer.

I didn’t tell my co-workers.

I also did not tell Joe.

JOE enters. Wearing reading glasses; doing the month’s bills.

JOE
It has to be your call -- like when I did that roofing job down south ---

BECKY

JOE
--- it’s a long drive, but if the money’s good ---

BECKY
What would you do? -- with me on the road that much?

JOE
I don’t want you on the road that much. Six hours a day in your car -- that makes no sense ---

BECKY
Right, so why should ---

JOE
--- so if you really want to take this job, we should think about making a move down there ---

BECKY
We can’t move down there.
JOE
Why not? People have roofs down there.

BECKY
But all your contacts are here -- your clients, your crew ---

JOE
I’m just saying ---

BECKY
And what do we tell Chris?

JOE
We tell him he won. We’re moving out before he is.

BECKY
What if I stayed down there.

(off HIS look)
At that apartment -- the rental unit you told me about. I’ll just use it when I need it. Maybe a few nights a week. And then I’m home every weekend.

(beat)
You hate this.

JOE
No, I just ---

BECKY
It was your idea -- me staying down at that place ---

JOE
Yes, right, but ---

BECKY
But what?

He looks at her. Reaches into his pocket. Holds up the key.

BECKY (cont’d)
Are you sure?

JOE
Hell, Beck: I’ll probably see you more than I do now.

She takes the key from him, as ---
A light rises on Walter.

WALTER
I think about you. For no reason at all I find myself thinking about you -- how much sugar you like in your coffee ... the way you turn the pages of your books.

BECKY walks to WALTER ... and they kiss.

The Terrace. Morning.

WALTER and BECKY sip their coffees.

BECKY
(to the audience)
How does it happen? In only a few days, Walter and I had rituals. Coffee on the veranda; watching the sunset from the dock. I had a hook for my jacket and a place for my keys, and in no time at all ... I began to feel at home. One day at the Cedar Cove Market, the cashier said to me: “Are you the new Mrs. Flood?” I smiled ... but said nothing. Because it was Friday ...

She puts her wedding ring back on.

BECKY (cont’d)
... and I was needed at my other life.

The Living Room. Morning.

CHRIS -- having just returned from his morning run -- is waving OFF.

CHRIS
(calling OFF)
See you tomorrow!

CAR HORN HONKS, in response.

CHRIS bounds in, getting something from the fridge ---

CHRIS (cont’d)
Beautiful morning.

BECKY
“Crisp”?

CHRIS
Not crisp exactly. I’d say: pert.
BECKY
The morning is "pert"?

CHRIS
Sassy. Brazen. Fresh as can be.

BECKY
You’re in a good mood.

CHRIS
Endorphins, Mom. Best drug on earth. Home grown, street legal, and free of charge.

BECKY
Did you go out last night?

CHRIS
We don’t go out -- we just run. And oh, man, we had a great run this morning. She’s almost off the crutches.

BECKY
And what about her inner life -- how’s that going?

CHRIS
Her inner life is kicking my ass! It’s amazing.

BECKY
When do I get to meet this girl?

CHRIS
Mom, I don’t want to screw this up.
(points)
Dad left you a note. He’s already gone -- two appraisals and an inspection ---

BECKY
He works so hard, Chris.

--- and, hey, Steve’s been trying to reach you. Says you never answer your phone down at the Mega-Ship.

BECKY
What did he ---

CHRIS
I told him to try your cell.

Becky’s CELL PHONE RINGS, as ---

CHRIS (cont’d)
Gotta shower. Peace!
--- CHRIS leaves the room.

BECKY
(calling after him)
Would you stop saying that!

Becky’s answers her phone, as ---

A light rises on Steve.

BECKY
(on phone)
This is Becky.

STEVE
(on phone, full of confidence)
And this is the New Steve, calling to see how things are down at the new Mega-Ship!

BECKY
(lightly)
Oh -- things here are great.

STEVE
And the Old Steve would have believed that!

BECKY
(trying to laugh)
What are you talking about?

STEVE
It’s all a ruse, Becky! Did you really think no one would find you out? There was no big corporate “shindig" ---

BECKY
Steve ---

STEVE
--- they’re way behind schedule -- nobody’s working down there at all -- certainly not you!

BECKY
Look -- I can explain ---

STEVE
So this made me think: “Why is it that Becky can get promoted to a job she doesn’t have to show up for, and Steve Singletary -- Regional Sales Leader and Five-Time Customer Satisfaction All-Star -- gets left with nothing but a bucketful of snot?!”
BECKY
Wait -- Steve -- listen to me ---

STEVE
And so I marched into Buckley’s office and spit that question right into his face! And you know what he did? He closed the door, grabbed my arm, and whispered these words to me: “What Becky Foster’s been doing for the past few weeks is no one’s business but HERS -- and MINE.”

BECKY
Oh, god ...

STEVE
He’s a married man, Becky! And, okay, I’ll keep your secret -- even though I don’t know how you could do a thing like this to Joe -- but the point is: the New Steve is not gonna back down from the Buckley’s of the world anymore!

BECKY
Oh, god ...

STEVE
If he doesn’t want his wife to know about this affair -- it’s gonna cost him!

BECKY
Oh, my god ...

STEVE
(looking OFF)
Hey -- he’s here! -- he’s walking through the door! ---

DOORBELL RINGS.

BECKY
Steve -- NO ---

STEVE
(calling OFF)
MR. BUCKLEY -- DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?

BECKY
Don’t do it, Steve! ---

STEVE is gone, as ---

DOORBELL KEEPS RINGING, REPEATEDLY.
The Living Room. Same.

BECKY looks at the door -- looks at her watch -- looks quickly to the audience, saying ---

BECKY
I need to change. I mean: everything. I mean: completely.

BECKY rushes off, calling ---

BECKY (cont'd)
CHRIS -- CAN YOU GET THAT?

--- just as CHRIS -- hair wet, wearing only sweatpants and a towel around his neck -- answers the door:

It is KENNI. In sportswear, looking great. She holds a pair of crutches.

KENNI
(a rush of words)
It’s a lie, okay?! There is nothing wrong with my ankle. I don’t have any ligament damage. I just really hate running, okay?!
(throws crutches to floor)
I hate running, I hate exercise, I hate to sweat, but I really really really like you.

And she plants a good long kiss on CHRIS’ lips.

CHRIS
(stunned, happy)
Thanks.

KENNI
And I have a boyfriend. His name is Ramsey McCord. He’s in Nantucket for the summer. Or maybe Barbados. It depends on the winds. I can’t stand him. I don’t ever want to see him again.

CHRIS
One of the McCord’s?

KENNI
Yes.
CHRIS
The billionaire hedge-fund McCords?

KENNI
Yes. We grew up together. Got thrown together by our families. Spoiled rich kids -- collect the whole set. But the thing is ---

CHRIS
I can’t believe you know the McCords.

KENNI
--- right, who cares, it’s no big deal ---

CHRIS
I read that one Christmas they gave each kid their own island.

KENNI
--- WOULD YOU PLEASE JUST LET ME SAY THIS?
(a breath)
Ramsey is gone. And you’re here -- you are kind and funny and sweet and odd -- but the main thing is: you’re real. You’re real and you are right here ---

CHRIS
That’s called Proximate Urgency.

KENNI
--- yes -- sure -- whatever ---

CHRIS
And that means ---

KENNI
--- that means you should put your clothes on so I can take you home and rip ‘em off you ---

CHRIS
Um, okay ---

KENNI
--- we can take my car -- it’s parked on the lawn, I never even turned it off ---

    CHRIS is hurriedly throwing on a sweat shirt and some flip-flops ---

    BECKY’S VOICE
(from OFF)

    CHRIS? ---
KENNI
Is that your Mom?

--- and now CHRIS is pulling KENNI
toward the door ---

CHRIS
Let’s go ---

BECKY’S VOICE
--- WHO WAS AT THE DOOR?

KENNI
How great! -- I’d love to meet her.

CHRIS
--- not while your motor is running ---

BECKY’S VOICE  CHRIS
CHRIS?? --- --- C’MON ---

--- and they are gone, just as ---

BECKY rushes back in -- wearing
business garb -- brushing her hair.

BECKY
--- did I hear someone?

She sees the crutches. Lifts and
looks at them, confused, as ---

JOE enters from another direction,
in work clothes.

JOE
(re: the crutches)
Hard week at the Mega-Ship?

BECKY
No -- these are -- I don’t know what these are.

JOE
Forgot my billing folder ---

He gives her a quick kiss, as ---

She gathers up her purse and keys.

BECKY
Oh -- okay ---
JOE
And now you’re running out? It’s Saturday, Beck ---

BECKY
I need to find Steve -- it sounds urgent ---

JOE
How’s the apartment working out?

BECKY
(starting off)
Oh, it’s fine -- it’s great ---

JOE
Thought I’d come down and see you this week -- spend the night ---

BECKY
Oh, that’s -- that would be ---

JOE
(overlapping)
--- maybe I’ll sneak up, tap on your window -- like we’re back in your dorm room at the U.

BECKY
Just call first, okay?

BECKY is trying to leave, but JOE is holding her, playfully ---

JOE
No way! I’m gonna surprise you! Doesn’t that sound like FUN?

--- but now BECKY pulls away, still trying to appease him ---

BECKY
SO MUCH FUN.

--- and lights instantly reveal:

The Terrace. Morning.

NOTE: the light changes and opening lines of the following scenes should be IMMEDIATE -- forcing Becky to rush to “keep up with the play.” She rarely succeeds; the scenes often start “without her.”
WALTER
Later I thought we’d go into the city. Meet Kenni for lunch.

BECKY
But the drive, Walter ---

WALTER
I’ll have Rex bring the ‘copter ‘round. Kenni wants us to meet her new boyfriend.

BECKY
Oh, sure, that would be ---

Becky’s CELL PHONE RINGS – LOUD.
She tries to ignore it.

WALTER
I thought maybe the four of us could do something this weekend. Why is it I never see you on the weekends?
(over SOUND OF PHONE)
Wouldn’t something on the weekend be FUN?

BECKY
SO MUCH FUN.
(into phone)
Hello? ---

Living Room. Night.

BECKY
(into phone, same call)
--- oh, Mrs. Tipton -- yes, I know you’re still waiting for your car. The thing is ---

JOE walks through the room,
brushing his teeth.

JOE
Comin’ to bed?

BECKY
(to JOE)
Yes, just a ---
(quickly, on phone)
--- no, I don’t have that information with me -- I would need to swing by my old office ---

Becky’s Cubicle. Day.

BECKY
(into phone, same call)
--- okay, here we are:
(MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)
(re: info on her computer)
It looks like they’re giving us a new delivery estimate -- just another day or so. You can wait another few days, can’t you?
(no response)
Are you there?! Mrs. Tipton?!

STEVE arrives.

STEVE
Do I look the same? Or do I look like the new Assistant Regional Sales Director!

BECKY
Steve, you promised! -- you swore you would not talk to Buckley about ---

STEVE
Turns out I was right! -- Buckley was having an affair. Some hot little pharmacist who works nights as a stripper. I got my promotion and the Wilderness Co-op got a huge donation.

BECKY
That’s amazing.

STEVE
Blackmail is fun! And I’m sorry, Becky -- I don’t know what I was thinking: you could never pull off an affair! -- you don’t have it in you! -- now, c’mon -- let’s celebrate ---

BECKY
Steve, I’ve got to tell you something ---

STEVE
--- I’ve got some vegan cup-cakes in the car.

Living Room.

CHRIS
You’ll meet her soon, I promise. Now, listen ---

BECKY is digging through her purse.

BECKY
Does she have a name, Chris? Can you tell me that much at least?!

CHRIS
(re: her digging)
Mom, what the hell are you doing?
BECKY
I’m trying to find my LIPSTICK.

CHRIS
And I’m trying to TALK TO YOU. There’s a new vibe in the house and I thought we should rap about it.

BECKY
“Rap about it”?!?

CHRIS
I don’t know how down you are with “Reciprocal Determinism” -- but there are certain Emerging Factors in our home that begin to pose a Definitive Question.

Like what?

CHRIS
Do you think Dad’s cheating on you? (off HER look)
Little things. He doesn’t answer his cell anymore. Won’t say where he’s going at night. I’m sure you’ve noticed.

BECKY
Um ...

CHRIS
How are things in the romantic quadrant?

BECKY
The what?

CHRIS
Any problem there?

The Terrace. Day.

JOE enters, in work garb, with a clipboard -- followed by KENNI.

JOE
Nothing that can’t be fixed.

KENNI
Thanks for coming all the way out here.

JOE
No problem.
KENNI
Now, I’ll need to say good night -- we’re having guests for dinner.

JOE
Great old house.

He hands a piece of paper to KENNI.

JOE (cont’d)
Here’s the estimate for the roof. Any questions, just give a call.

JOE exits, just as ---

The Terrace. Night.

--- GINGER enters, opposite.

GINGER
Kenni, your Dad’s looking for you.

KENNI
Okay, thanks.

And KENNI goes.

GINGER
Rebecca ---

BECKY appears, holding a flute of champagne.

BECKY
Yes?

GINGER
--- you look right at home.

BECKY points into the distance.

BECKY
Walter tells me that’s your house.

GINGER
It was. Belongs to the bank now.

BECKY
So, where are you staying?

GINGER
I’m at the Holiday Inn -- near the ferry terminal.
BECKY
You’re living there?

GINGER
And working weekends as a hostess. The money’s no good, but they’re training me to bartend.

BECKY
Ginger --

GINGER
You taught me this, Rebecca. That a woman can turn the page.

WALTER and KENNI enter.

WALTER
Hello, ladies. Our guests have arrived -- and you’ll never guess who’s here?

Who?

WALTER
Bill Buckley! He’s used my billboards for years -- and without his cars I would have never met you.

GINGER
Isn’t that sweet?

BECKY
Um ...

WALTER
His wife is out of town, so he brought his niece. Her name is Amber. She’s a pharmacist.

BECKY
I wonder if you’d excuse me ---

KENNI
Rebecca -- my new boyfriend is here, too. I really want you to meet him.

BECKY
--- maybe some other time. I need to catch the ferry!

And BECKY leaves in a rush, as ---
Lights isolate Becky.

BECKY
(on phone, desperate)
Joe -- pick up! Joe -- are you there?!

Living Room. Night.

STEVE sits in the darkened room. He is eating chips.

STEVE
Is this it, Becky? Is this all there is?

BECKY
Steve ... it’s after midnight ... 
She turns on a light.

STEVE
I need to talk to someone. But Chris is at a dinner party -- and Joe’s driving back from Cedar Cove.

BECKY
He’s what?

STEVE
He was bidding a job out there.

BECKY
I didn’t know that.

STEVE
Isn’t it amazing the things we don’t know? Like Buckley selling the company. What are we gonna do now?!

BECKY
He did what?

STEVE
I heard those of us who just got promoted are gonna be the first to go.

Becky’s CELL PHONE RINGS.

A light on Walter.

WALTER
(on his phone)
You’ll never guess where I am? Right here in the city -- and I’m gonna swing by!
Becky’s Car.

BECKY
(on her phone)
I’m not home, Walter. I’m driving.

A light on Joe.

WALTER remains lit.

JOE
(on his cell)
Hey, Beck -- I’m ten minutes away.

BECKY
You’re what?

WALTER
Meet me for a pizza. There’s a place called “Angelo’s”.

BECKY
Oh, Walter, I ---

JOE
I was bidding a job down here -- thought I’d swing by the Mega-Ship.

BECKY
Oh, Joe, I’m ---

JOE
And hey, I stopped by the apartment. Doesn’t look like you were ever there.

BECKY
Listen to me ---

JOE and WALTER both remain lit, as BECKY continues to drive.

Becky’s Car. Late night.

BECKY
What I really want to do is keep driving ... NOT to see Walter -- NOT home to my family -- I’d rather just ... drive away ... in some other car ... any car other than this one ...
The lights on JOE and WALTER expand around them, until we realize they are standing in the ---

Living Room. Day.

The two men stare at each other. They set their cell phones down.

JOE
Want another beer?

WALTER
Sure.

JOE gets him one.

WALTER (cont'd)
That was really good pizza.

JOE
Angelo’s is not bad.

WALTER
And they bring it to your house. I love that.

JOE
They don’t do that where you live?

WALTER
Not unless I send the ‘copter.

JOE
God, could I do some roofing with a helicopter.

WALTER
I’m told I need some roofing. At my house. Up on the roof.

JOE
Who told you that.

WALTER
Kenni had a man out.

JOE
So, you’ve got a leak somewhere? (points to bucket)
Like that one.

WALTER
Yes, I do. And you put a bucket under it. What a good idea.
JOE
What did you do?

WALTER
I’d rather not say.

They drink their beers.

WALTER (cont’d)
Must be hard work -- roofing. Keeping people dry.

JOE
Pays the bills. And I get to stand on people’s houses.

WALTER
I would like that. But not the heat. Not the weather. Not the noise -- and all those tools. Not the work part of it. I’d complain. I’m pretty sure I’d complain. You probably don’t complain.

JOE
I learned something a long time ago, Walter: no one -- and I mean no one on earth -- wants to hear how busy you are, how tired you are, or what happened to you at the airport.

They drink their beers.

WALTER
Are you going to kill me, Joe?

JOE
I don’t think so.

WALTER
That’s wonderful. As I was driving over here -- I started to think that maybe you were ...

JOE
... laying a trap?

WALTER
Yes.

JOE
An ambush.

WALTER
Something like that.

(beat)
Are you?
JOE
Did you think I’d just “let it go”?

WALTER
What I thought was ... I thought you were dead.

JOE
I’m not dead.

WALTER
That much is clear. But Becky kept insisting you were -- and so I didn’t fear a living guy who might kill me. I feared, you know, a dead guy who might just ... haunt me for awhile.

JOE
Oh, I can still haunt you, Walter. You can count on that.

Pause. They drink.

WALTER
So ... when did you know?

JOE
Little things. Becky’s clothes started to smell like fresh pine. Red dirt on the tires of her car. Receipts to the ferry in the glove box.

WALTER
(impressed)
Joe, you’re a regular dick.

JOE
I’m gonna let that one go, Walter.

WALTER
And what now? How do you plan to tell her?

JOE
I don’t.

(off WALTER’S look)
She has her secret. Now, I have mine.

WALTER
You can’t be ---

JOE
You owe me this much, at least. I want to see what happens next. How she plans to keep pulling this off.

WALTER
But what about the kids?
JOE
Nothing. We’re not gonna say a word to them. Got me?

CHRIS enters, joyous -- wearing a sport coat and loose tie. Carries an open bottle of champagne.

He does not immediately see WALTER.

CHRIS
Dad -- where’s Mom? -- I need Mom to hear this too!

JOE
She’ll be back soon.

CHRIS
But we can’t wait! We’re on our way to buy something -- something very important -- Kenni’s in the car and ---

CHRIS now turns and sees WALTER.

CHRIS (cont’d)
(baffled)
--- and her Dad is in our living room ...?

WALTER
Hello, Chris. That’s a sporty blazer.

CHRIS
Mr. Flood -- why are you ---

JOE
Walter, where do you know my son from?

CHRIS
That’s what’s so weird and awesome -- see, the girl I’ve been wanting you to meet ---

JOE
Kenni, right?

CHRIS
--- right, well she’s -- I mean, Mister Flood is her ---

KENNI enters.

KENNI
Dad? What are you doing here?

CHRIS
(to KENNI)
They know each other! Isn’t that awesome?
JOE
You mean to tell me ...

CHRIS
(re: Kenni)
This is her, Dad.
(re: Walter)
And this is her Dad.

JOE
I know Kenni.

CHRIS WALTER
You what? How’s that?

JOE (cont'd)
(to KENNI)
I stood on your house.

CHRIS KENNI
That’s amazing! Oh, right ---

KENNI
(re: Walter)
--- but how do you know ---

JOE
We have someone in common, right, Walter?

WALTER
(re: champagne bottle)
Is that empty?

CHRIS
Let me get you a glass ---

But WALTER has already grabbed the bottle -- taken a big swig from it.

JOE
So, what’s the big news?

CHRIS
We really can’t tell you till Mom gets here ---

KENNI
--- but we’re on our way to buy a ring!

WALTER
Say again?

KENNI
We’re gonna be married, Daddy. Isn’t that amazing?
JOE smiles and says ---

JOE
Yes, it is!

--- as WALTER has more champagne.

KENNI
(to WALTER)
I can’t wait to tell Rebecca!

JOE
Oh, is that your Dad’s new lady-friend? We were just talkin’ about her.

KENNI
She’s great. I’ll definitely want her at the wedding.

JOE
Oh, she’ll be there.

CHRIS
You can’t say a word to Mom. You’ve got to let us tell her.

JOE
I wouldn’t miss that for the world.

KENNI
(to CHRIS)
What time’s our appointment?

CHRIS
(to KENNI)
We should be going.

JOE (cont’d)
Perfect.

And KENNI and CHRIS are gone.

JOE (cont’d)
Another beer, Walter?

WALTER
You have anything stronger?

JOE
Like what?

WALTER
Maybe a pistol.
JOE
Oh, cheer up: it’s all gonna work out. Won’t take long. Things unravel a lot more quickly than they, you know ...

WALTER
... ravel?

JOE
Exactly. Now, c’mon: let’s give her another call.

WALTER
I don’t know, Joe ---

JOE
You owe me this, Walter. And this time, a little twist.

JOE is looking at their two cell phones, sitting side by side.

JOE (cont’d)
Your phone.
(lifts it)
My phone.
(lifts it)
Oops.

JOE purposefully “switches” the phones -- giving his to WALTER and keeping Walter’s for his own.

WALTER
You can’t be serious.

JOE
Press 3 for speed dial. Here we go ...

The MEN dial the phones -- and stand near one another, waiting ...

WALTER
So -- just to be clear: am I you, or me?

JOE
Up to you. But for god sakes, Walter: have a little fun with it.
(listens)
Voice mail.

WALTER
(starts to hang up)
Oh, well.
JOE
Leave a message.

WALTER
But, Joe ---

JOE
Don’t make me haunt you, Walter.

With a slight imitation of EACH OTHER’S VOICES, the MEN begin to leave their messages ---

JOE (cont'd)
Rebecca, it’s me -- Walter, your lover.

WALTER
Hello ... this is Big Joe. Your hubby.

JOE
Oh, sweetie, how my sailboat misses you.

WALTER
I just finished doing some roofing ... 

JOE
Darling, I’ve made some plans for us:

WALTER
... with my tools, on some, you know, roofs.

--- as BECKY enters and stands in the room, unseen, behind the MEN. As she listen, she is frozen. She hears everything.

JOE
I thought we’d climb in the ‘copter and visit a few graves.

WALTER
And now I’m home here ... 

JOE
I’d like you to take me to where they buried Joe.

WALTER
... here at our home.

JOE
Would love to pay my respects to the Old Dead Roofer. Wouldn’t that be keen?
And now, still unseen by the MEN,  
BECKY quietly backs out the room  
... and is gone.

WALTER  
(to JOE, overhearing him)  
What in the world are you ---

JOE  
(re: phone)  
Oh -- we got cut off. You did pretty good, Walter.

WALTER  
Just kill me already.

The Cubicle. Night.

BECKY  
(to audience)  
I didn’t know where to go. So I came here. To my old  
job. Maybe I’d sleep under my desk. Maybe Walter Flood  
would walk in, like that very first night ---

A quick light on Walter.

WALTER  
Good evening.

BECKY  
(SHOUTS)  
I’M MARRIED AND MY HUSBAND IS ALIVE!!

WALTER  
Goodbye.

Walter is gone.

BECKY  
--- and I would realize that it had all been a dream.

She sees something out the window.

BECKY (cont’d)  
And that’s when I saw it. It must have been delivered  
after-hours. It was at the edge of the lot, gleaming in  
the moonlight:

Mrs. Tipton’s new car. Sleek and smart and fully-  
loaded. And right next to it ...  

Another one. Identical. There’s been some mistake ...  
they’ve sent two cars ... and that would explain the  
delay ...  

(MORE)
I called Mrs. Tipton. Told her the good news. She asked if she could get the car right away -- tonight. I didn’t see why not. She was on her way.

I finished the paperwork on Mrs. Tipton’s car. Then I grabbed our universal key and put it in my purse -- and I walked out into the night to see that second car …

Becky’s NEW Car. Late Night.

BECKY

(continuous)

... it was luminous. I got inside. It enveloped me like a cult.

I wrote down the VIN number of this second car, this phantom vehicle. I walked back inside -- went into the data base -- entered this VIN number -- and this time the name of the registered owner came up: Becky Foster. It was my bonus from Buckley. If I never got my new life … at least I had my new car.

The SILHOUETTE of MRS. TIPTON is seen, as before …

Mrs. Tipton arrived. When she saw her car, she said “May I go? May I finally just go?” I said sure. I walked back inside to get her final paperwork, her warranty and extra key …

... and that’s when I heard it. I heard that car’s engine roar to life. And I raced to the door and called across the lot -- telling her to wait just one more minute ---

The SILHOUETTE fades away.

But she was gone. And her car was still there. She had taken the wrong car. She had driven away in mine. With my purse on the seat next to her.

Instinct took over. I jumped in her car -- fired it up -- oh, man, the sound of that thing, like the roar of a velvet tiger -- and now I was chasing her towards the freeway. I made the exit ramp not long after she did -- and I had that black car in my sights -- a shadow chasing its shadow -- but that woman -- I should have known -- she had nothing to lose -- there was no catching her, hard as I tried … and ten miles out of town, I lost her for good …

... but I kept driving -- leaving the lights of the city in my wake. Every billboard I passed had the same two (MORE)
BECKY (cont'd)

words at the bottom: Walter Flood, Walter Flood, Walter Flood, mile after mile. My reasons for going back were as strong as ever ... but they were not as strong as this car ... this thing moving through the night ... putting miles between me and my life.

Two days later, in a motel room six hundred miles away from home ... I turned on a television, and I learned what happened to Mrs. Tipton:

BECKY speaks from the CAR, and ...

... the room around her gradually fills with people carrying "devotional" candles: JOE, WALTER, CHRIS, KENNI, STEVE and GINGER. The men wear dark suits; the women are in black. They set the candles around the room.

BECKY (cont'd)

She had driven all the way to Deception Pass -- to the bridge that spans those rugged waters -- and when she reached that bridge in the middle of the night, she floored it -- and she was gone ... safely over that bridge and straight ahead to that first sharp turn overlooking the sea -- where apparently she floored it again ... and she did not turn -- and the guard rail did not stop her -- and that amazing machine continued to roar as it soared through the air -- and fell -- a sheer drop -- down into the night ... into the churning waters below.

Her body was not found. The divers worked for several days ... but found only the car: registered in my name.

And a purse, which contained several forms of identification: all mine.

And the driver was presumed to be dead.

And to be me.

Living Room. Evening.

The mood is sombre.

CHRIS and KENNI are serving mugs of coffee. A moment between them:

KENNI

I can’t believe we’re doing this. So soon.
CHRIS
It’s what Dad wanted.

KENNI
You okay?

CHRIS says nothing and moves away.

GINGER and JOE:

GINGER
I’m Ginger. A friend of Walter’s. Rebecca -- Becky -- was just the ---
(stops)

JOE
Yes?

GINGER
I was going to say she was the best thing that ever happened to Walter. I’m sorry.

JOE
No -- I understand. Thanks for being here.

STEVE approaches them.

JOE (cont’d)
Do you know our friend Steve?

GINGER STEVE
Hello. Hi, there.

JOE (cont’d)
Steve worked with Becky. At the dealership.

STEVE
(to JOE)
How you holdin’ up, Joe?

JOE
(“not good”)
Oh, you know ... you’ve been there ...

STEVE
Yes, I have.

JOE moves away, leaving ---

GINGER and STEVE:

STEVE (cont’d)
We had candles at Rita’s memorial, too.
GINGER
Everyone has candles, Steve.

(beat)
You sell cars?

STEVE
I’m afraid I do. Or used to. Before it all, you know ... crumbled into dust. And your line of work is what?

GINGER
Pardon?

STEVE
Oh god, I’m sorry -- it’s just small talk, I know -- but I’m not really good at it -- I’m not good at making my talk small enough when I talk to people who are ... female ... people. I’m way out of practice.

GINGER
Steve.

STEVE
Yes?

GINGER
I would very much like you to ask what I do for a living.

STEVE
Okay, well ---

GINGER
I bartend.

STEVE
Really?

GINGER
Yes. Five nights and Saturday lunch.

STEVE
I see.

GINGER
I’m pretty good at it.

   Beat. He stares at her.

STEVE
I was just headed to the kitchen. I brought some Pomegranate Spritzer.
GINGER
I brought some scotch.

    GINGER goes toward the kitchen ...
    and STEVE follows her.

WALTER and JOE:

WALTER
It didn’t have to end like this, Joe.

JOE
Maybe not.

WALTER
I’ll never understand it -- you wanted to see how far she’d push it ---

JOE
Right.

WALTER
--- how far she’d go to pull it off?

JOE
And now we know.

    WALTER moves away, lost, as ---

KENNI joins them.

KENNI
I’m sorry, Mr. Foster.

JOE
Keep an eye on your old man, okay? -- he’s taking this hard.

    CHRIS joins them.

CHRIS
You need anything, Dad?

JOE
We should head to the restaurant. They’re holding a room for us. Will you tell the others?

CHRIS
Sure.
JOE
(more intimate)
She’s okay, Chris. She’s in a better place. You gotta believe that.

CHRIS nods -- and then circulates amid the others, as ---

EVERYONE finishes their coffees, grabs their jackets, purses, etc. ... and leaves.

The last person remaining in the room is JOE.

JOE places an 8x10 PHOTO (which Becky looked at in Act One) in a prominent place ... sets a few candles in front of it, as ...

BECKY appears, opposite, behind him.

BECKY
(quietly)
It’s nice.

JOE turns, sees her.

BECKY (cont’d)
You imagine it, I guess. What your family, your friends -- what they’ll do when you’re gone.

Silence.

BECKY (cont’d)
Joe ...? Please say something ...

In silence, he walks to her, stands before her. We await the embrace, but instead he simply says:

JOE
You hungry?

He moves away -- taking off his suit coat, loosening his tie.

BECKY
Joe ...?

JOE
I think we’ve got some cold cuts.
BECKY
I missed you, Joe.

JOE
Mm hmm.

BECKY
And I’m sorry -- I’m so sorry -- but I just had to ---

JOE
So, how was being dead? Around here, it didn’t go over so great.

BECKY
Yes -- I know -- but please let me tell you this:

He pops open a beer. Finally
gestures: “go ahead”.

BECKY (cont’d)
I drove ... and I lost track of time. Avoided the news -
didn’t read a paper -- just found a road and followed it. It was so strange. I knew what people thought happened. Knew no one was looking for me. That I could turn that car in any direction I wanted. I could go anywhere.

JOE
They found the body.

BECKY
What?

JOE
Beverly Tipton. Her body washed up. A few days ago. The State Patrol called me. Told me you were no longer presumed dead. Only missing.

She stares at him ... stares at the room, the candles ...

BECKY
But if you knew -- why would you do all this if ---

JOE
I didn’t tell them. Any of them.

BECKY
You let them think I was dead?

JOE
No. I think you did that.

(beat)

(MORE)
JOE (cont'd)

Look, Beck -- there are things you want me to say, and
god knows someday I'll probably say 'em, but not yet.
Right now I've just got to live with it a little. And
so do you.

BECKY
But I just wanted to ---

JOE

(sharp)

You don't get to put a marker in your life. Oh, you can
walk away, you can always walk away -- but you don't get
to come back to the same place you left. Ask anyone.

(indicates an AUDIENCE MEMBER)

Ask this guy. Am I right?
(as needed, to the
AUDIENCE MEMBER)

(See, I told you.) // (I’ll talk to you later.)
(to same AUDIENCE MEMBER)

Did she offer you a beer?
(gets response)

You want one?
(as needed)

(Okay, here you go.) // (If you change your mind, the
fridge is right there.)

If the AUDIENCE MEMBER says "yes"
to the beer -- JOE gets him one.

BECKY
What are you doing?

JOE

What’s it look like? You think I can’t see these people?

BECKY

Joe, listen ---

JOE

No, you listen to me -- I’m gonna tell you how this goes:

JOE gestures to the Booth and
immediately ---

Lights isolate Joe.

JOE

(turns to audience)

I called the restaurant. Got Chris on the phone. Told
him that his Mom was home, and safe. And everyone came
back to the house.
The Living Room. Night.

The candles remain lit.

CHRIS, WALTER, KENNI, STEVE and GINGER appear at the edges of the room, surrounding: BECKY.

Long silence. Finally ...

KENNI
(quietly)
Welcome home.

BECKY
Thank you.

KENNI embraces BECKY. Then she turns to the OTHERS ...

KENNI
Chris? ... Dad? ...

CHRIS and WALTER do not move.
Instead: STEVE steps forward.

STEVE
It was terrible, Becky.

BECKY
Yes, I’m ---

STEVE
It was like being on that mountain again. When Chris first called me ---

KENNI
He had heard from my Dad.

WALTER
It was Ginger who saw it.

GINGER
Saw it on the news.

STEVE
We all rushed over here ---

KENNI
We were glued to the TV ---

WALTER
Making calls ---
GINGER
Trying to find you, Rebecca ---

STEVE
Trying to imagine where you’d gone.
(beat)
Where had you gone?

CHRIS
It’s called “Paranormal Transference”. When the soul
tires of its “host body” and seeks a new identity, a new
vessel to inhabit.

BECKY
No, Chris -- really, that’s not what I was ---

CHRIS
(points to KENNI)
THAT WAS MY GIRLFRIEND, MOM. That’s who you’ve wanted
to meet -- but you already know her, since you’ve been
shacked up with her old man!

BECKY
I’m sorry --- Joe, please ---

CHRIS (cont’d)
But, the thing is: she’s not my girlfriend anymore ---

BECKY
Oh, no, that’s ---

CHRIS
--- SHE’S MY FIANCEE. How weird and awesome is that,
HUH, MOM?!

BECKY
Chris, if you’d listen -- if ALL of you, please, could
just let me say this:

A charged beat. They are ALL
staring at her, listening.

BECKY (cont’d)
When it started, I didn’t know what to make of it. And
I didn’t know why. But now -- looking back on it --
it’s so clear to me ---

CHRIS
That’s “Hindsight Bias”. Very common. Once an outcome
is known, we tend to think we could have “foreseen” it,
somehow. It’s total arrogance!
WALTER
And total hogwash.

STEVE
I agree.

JOE
Amen to that.

GINGER
(sharp, to the MEN)
Are you boys finished?
(to BECKY)
Becky -- I, for one, am glad you're home.

STEVE
(sharp)
We're all glad, Ginger -- but the point is ---

GINGER
That's not what it sounds like.

STEVE
I was going to ask you to go hiking!

GINGER
I don't hike, Steve.

STEVE
I knew you'd say that. I knew you weren't Rita. That you could never be Rita. That I can never go on that hike again. That it's over.

Silence. STEVE turns to BECKY.

STEVE (cont'd)
(from his heart)
It's over, isn't it?

BECKY nods.

STEVE (cont'd)
What do we do now?

BECKY has no answer. STEVE just stands there, lost. Then ... 

GINGER
(to STEVE)
You ever worn a pair of nice Italian loafers? Hand-molded leather, artisan-cured.

STEVE
No -- but please keep talking.
GINGER

Get your coat.

GINGER nods, cordially, to the OTHERS and is out the door.

STEVE starts to follow, but then stops, looks back into the room ---

STEVE

Becky, I want you to know ---

JOE

Steve: GO.

STEVE nods and goes, quickly.

CHRIS approaches WALTER.

CHRIS

Mr. Flood -- I’m sorry. This is not the way I wanted it to happen.

WALTER

You think you can outsmart it, don’t you?

CHRIS

Sir?

WALTER

(to the OTHERS)

Look at them! They’re so fearless. It’s breathtaking.

(to KENNI and CHRIS)

You really believe it, don’t you? You think you’ll be the First Two People in History to beat love to the punch -- to get it before it gets you.

CHRIS

Yes, sir. We do.

WALTER

Well, then, Chris and Kenni ... as your elder ... it is my responsibility ... to not tell you otherwise: to let you go on believing the impossible.

WALTER takes KENNI’S hand.

WALTER (cont’d)

Of course I’ll be at the wedding. Just don’t make me shop for a gift.
CHRIS
Thank you, sir.
(to KENNI)
The ring is ready. The jeweler is open till nine -- we can still get there ---

KENNI
It’s okay ... we can wait a little.

CHRIS
All right -- tomorrow’s good, too ---

KENNI
There’s nothing wrong ---

CHRIS
Sure, whenever ---

KENNI
--- with waiting a little ... giving it a little time.

She has stepped away from him.

KENNI (cont'd)
(gently)
I’d like that ... I’d like to ... just step back a little ... okay?

CHRIS just stares at her.

KENNI (cont'd)
(to BECKY)
And someday ... I’d like to talk to you.

And KENNI goes. Silence.

WALTER
Give her all the time she needs, Chris. And when she’s ready ... 

WALTER reaches into a pocket and removes a small velvet box.

WALTER (cont'd)
... perhaps you’ll give her this.

WALTER hands the small box to CHRIS. WALTER nods -- and CHRIS opens the box ... revealing a stunning diamond ring.

CHRIS
Mr. Flood ...?
WALTER
It was meant to be in the family ...
(a look at BECKY)
... just in a different way.

WALTER extends his hand ... CHRIS
shakes it -- and leaves.

An awkward silence.

JOE
Well. Just us three. Should I get a deck of cards?

BECKY
Joe ...

JOE
Walter’s starting to feel right at home here.

WALTER
Another beer, Joe?

JOE
Sure, Walt.
(to BECKY, re: Walter)
We’ve had some real good chats.

WALTER
(getting the beer)
And Joe didn’t kill me.

JOE
That option is nearly completely off the table.

BECKY
There’s no way I can explain -- to either of you -- all
the things I learned about ---

JOE
(sharp)
You’re right -- you can’t. Because we don’t want to
know. Either of us.

WALTER brings JOE a beer.

JOE (cont'd)
Thanks, Walt. And this is where we say goodbye. You
have my card. Call me about your roof.

WALTER
(caught off-guard)
Yes, sure, all right ...
WALTER is looking at BECKY, as ---

JOE speaks to the audience.

JOE
And as I stood there with my wife: I watched Walter Flood give Rebecca a final look ... and then he walked out of our home and ---

WALTER starts off.

BECKY
Wait a minute.

WALTER stops.

BECKY (cont'd)
(to JOE)
What are you doing?

JOE
Just telling them what happened.

BECKY
You’re not going to let me say goodbye to him?

JOE
Wasn’t planning on it.

BECKY
Just a word or two?!

JOE
(beat)
Okay.
(to audience)
And then -- as Walter turned to leave -- Becky said to him:

BECKY
Walter, I want you to know ---

JOE
But it was too late. He was gone. Out the door and into the night.

WALTER leaves.

JOE (cont'd)
She never saw him again.
(to BECKY)
Or did you?
BECKY
Now: **BECKY moves around the room,**
**turning off the lamps and lights;**
[perhaps] **blowing out the candles.**

JOE
(to audience)
Becky got her old job back. She lost the raise and promotion, of course -- but they offered to let her keep the car.

BECKY
Joe, we don’t need that car -- there might be too many bad memories, you know?

JOE
To which I said: “Are you crazy? Of course we’re keeping the car!” -- and that was that. Life went on. Becky thought about maybe going back to school. Massage therapy.

BECKY
Joe?

JOE
Hmm?

BECKY
Not now ... but sometime, someday ... could you ever ...

JOE
Forgive and forget?

She nods.

JOE (cont'd)
Probably not.

Pause. She nods.

JOE (cont'd)
But, it’ll be okay, Beck.

BECKY
Why? How?

JOE
I’m a roofer. I’ll cover it. Just cover it over.

MUSIC, as ---
BECKY turns off the final light in the room ...

JOE (cont'd)
(to audience)
We started taking long drives together in that car.

... and we are once again back in:

Becky’s New Car. Sunset.

BECKY sits. JOE pulls up a chair next to her. He is driving.

JOE
One day we even took that car up to Cedar Cove. From the road we saw divers trolling the waters, near Walter’s dock. They were searching for a wedding ring.

Other days, we just ...

BECKY
... drove.

JOE
Radio on.

BECKY
Together.

JOE
Traffic moving, nice and easy.

Pause.

BECKY
Heaven.

MUSIC BUILDS AND PLAYS OUT, as ---

Lights fade to black.

End of Play.