

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 be 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?

All alone. Radio on. Traffic moving, nice and easy.
Heaven.

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.

BECKY (cont'd)
Excuse me.

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.

BECKY
"Lay it on you"?

CHRIS
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 ---

CHRIS

(finishing her sentence)

--- the Double Ham and Artichoke Supreme.

BECKY

How do you know that?

CHRIS

I saw the guy write it down.

BECKY

You were there when I called?

CHRIS

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

BECKY

And you couldn't sit there for twenty minutes and ---

CHRIS

Not "twenty minutes" -- more like "thirty-seven to forty" minutes -- because it's DEEP DISH ---

BECKY

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?!

CHRIS

I NEEDED TO STUDY.

BECKY

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR LIFE?

Quick beat.

CHRIS

Huh?

BECKY

You're a twenty-six year old man ---

CHRIS

I thought this was about pizza ---

BECKY

--- and you're still shackled up with your parents ---

CHRIS

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 ---

BECKY

--- 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)

BECKY (cont'd)
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.

BECKY
--- 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)

BECKY (cont'd)

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 ---

WALTER

--- 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.

BECKY (cont'd)

--- 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.

--- and JOE enters. In sweats and a t-shirt. Barefoot. Ready for bed.

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

I'm here, Steve -
- sorry -- I
just ---

STEVE

Are you just
getting here?
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:

BECKY

Yes, I do.

STEVE

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 no 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)

STEVE (cont'd)

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 HANDS:

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 is 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?

BECKY
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
Yes. Downtown. Terrific view. Cost a fortune.

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

Kenni, I assure you ---

KENNI

I sort of envy him. And you.

GINGER

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

Kenni.

(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

Kenni 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.

GINGER
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

Kenni, 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 ---

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.

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.

BECKY

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?

BECKY
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!

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 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)

BECKY (cont'd)

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*.

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.

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 shackled up with her old man!

BECKY

JOE

I'm sorry --- Chris, please ---

CHRIS (cont'd)

But, the thing is: she's not my girlfriend anymore ---

BECKY

Oh, no, that's ---

CHRIS

--- SHE'S MY FIANCEÉ. 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

No.

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.