

Pittsfield

By

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CHARACTERS

- HELEN 58. A widow that runs a restaurant and bets on horses.
- ALEXIA 40, widow. Helen's oldest daughter. Recently moved to Maine where she runs a bed and breakfast. Has a 14 year old son, Nicky.
- JILL 37. The middle daughter. Married to Rick. She is a wedding photographer and works slavishly at the family restaurant.
- CALLIOPE (CALLY) 20. The youngest daughter. She has just finished her third year of college. She is eight months pregnant.
- RICK 37, Jill's husband. A junior high school history teacher. Trying to start a World War I re-enactment society.
- FRANKLIN 18, Cally's boyfriend. An incredibly passive aspiring sculptor.
- ELIJAH 35, African-American. A deaf mute priest from Greece. He writes out whatever he wants to say.

SETTING

Pittsfield, IL. Spring of 2009.
Home of John Hay, Lincoln's personal secretary; Pork Capital of the Midwest - host Pig Days festival; high school football team holds the state's longest win streak.

BRIEF SYNOPSIS

In the small town of Pittsfield, Illinois, where cell phones are useless and the neighbors have always been neighbors one family is about to come face to face with their past (and their future). When Helen invites her grown children home to put their beloved and incredibly long-lived dog to sleep, a reunion forces the family to make some life altering choices and come to terms with their history.

*Note: Whenever there is dialogue next to "Elijah writes" that is only included for the actor's knowledge. It should not be shown in any way to the audience.

-Frank does not speak in questions, he just has no confidence.

ACT I
SCENE 1

(A bedroom with two twin beds. The room looks as though no one has lived there for a very long time. It is very neat and clean, but unlived in. ALEXIA enters with a suitcase. She places the suitcase on one of the beds. She then locks the door behind her out of habit. She takes in the room, exploring the decorations and pictures on the walls. Eventually she sits on a bed. She takes out her cell phone and tries to call her son but there is no signal. She tries a few places throughout the room but nothing.)

ALEXIA

Come on.

JILL

(From off-stage.)

Alex? Is that you-

(There is a thud as she walks into the door. ALEXIA is startled and then begins to laugh.)

Open the door.

ALEXIA

Who is it?

JILL

You know who it is.

ALEXIA

Jill?

JILL

Alex! Open the door.

ALEXIA

It is open.

JILL
This isn't funny. Unlock the door.

ALEXIA
In a minute.

JILL
We aren't teenagers Alexia, stop laughing and open the door. I'm serious.

ALEXIA
Okay, okay. Just a second.

(ALEXIA unlocks the door. JILL
Bursts through. She is moving and
touching everything in the room,
straightening up the beds, etc.)

JILL
What's the matter with you?

ALEXIA
What's the matter with you?

JILL
Still locking the door. Thought we'd grown out of that.

ALEXIA
Nope.

JILL
When did you get in?

ALEXIA
Not too long ago.
Have you been here this whole time?

JILL
I just got here. Had to shut down the restaurant.
How've you been?

ALEXIA
Not too bad. Yourself?

JILL
Still plugging along I guess.

ALEXIA

(Slight pause. Then imitating Helen.)

You look tired, honey.

JILL/ALEXIA

(Imitating Helen.)

Let me make you a sandwich.

(They share a laugh.)

ALEXIA

Do you get reception here? I need to call Nicky.

JILL

No. I could have hurt myself. Locking the door like you're sixteen.

ALEXIA

Oh get over it.

JILL

In here all night long writing love letters to...what was his name? That sweaty kid you liked?

ALEXIA

What sweaty kid?

JILL

Oh God Alex, that hairy sweaty kid you pined over your junior year. He used to mow the Hurley's lawn?

ALEXIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

JILL

Unbelievable. I slept on that crappy hide-a-bed downstairs for two weeks because of this guy and you don't remember him? My back still hurts when it rains.

ALEXIA

I didn't realize you were still so hung up on it.

JILL

I'm not hung up on it—

ALEXIA

I haven't been home five minutes and all you can talk about is Peter Manual.

JILL

You're such a brat.

ALEXIA

Peter Manual. I wonder what he's up to? And he wasn't so sweaty that I'd refer to him as the sweaty kid.

JILL

He sweat a lot.

(Pause.)

JILL

How was the flight?

ALEXIA

Fine. I nearly missed my connection in Detroit though.

JILL

Meet anybody?

ALEXIA

No Jill.

JILL

What? Airports are great places to meet men.

ALEXIA

With your fourteen year old son? I'm not looking to meet anyone.

JILL

Sorry for asking about your love life.

ALEXIA

Jill.

JILL

No, don't do that. Don't give me that look.

ALEXIA

What look?

JILL

That one. The way you lift your one eyebrow and sort of look over the top of my head. Mom's look.

ALEXIA

I don't have a look.

JILL

I was just asking about your life. A lot's happened.

ALEXIA

Where is Mom anyway? I'm expecting this big homecoming and there's nobody here. Hell maybe she'll even finally make me her stupid Avgolemono soup - I can make anything - I can carve a swan out of an apple and turn it into a soufflé, but I can't make her stupid egg and lemon soup.

JILL

She hasn't made that soup in fifteen years.

ALEXIA

One day Jill, I will have that soup, one day.

JILL

I wouldn't hold my breath.

ALEXIA

I'm pretty sure she made it for Nicky when he was here last summer. But he wouldn't tell.

JILL

The soup tasters club is very secretive.

ALEXIA

You've had it?

JILL

I can't say.

ALEXIA

Kiss ass. I'm the oldest. I need that recipe. How come she makes it for everyone else?

JILL

May-

ALEXIA

Don't say it.

(Slight pause.)

ALEXIA

How is mom? She taking her meds?

JILL

As far as I know.

ALEXIA

She sounded a little breathy on the phone. Although it could have just been part of the guilt trip.

JILL

Still can't get her to see a doctor.

ALEXIA

She still working night and day?

JILL

She cut back a little.

ALEXIA

I just wish she'd listen to us.

JILL

She's stubborn.

ALEXIA

So how is the restaurant?

JILL

A lot of work.
How's the B&B?

ALEXIA

A lot of work.

JILL

You should have stopped by my place first and we could have come over together.

ALEXIA

I'm not five. I just thought she'd be here. Now I have to sit and wait for her.

JILL

Just like when we were kids.

ALEXIA

Oh God, do you remember when we were like ten the time she left us at that hair place for like three hours?

JILL

That stylist probably thought we were homeless.

ALEXIA

Probably? He gave us ten dollars.

(They share a laugh.)

(Pause.)

ALEXIA

I can't believe Pericles finally kicked the bucket.

JILL

I know. It's weird not hearing his footsteps in the house.

ALEXIA

His nails tap-tap-tapping all over.

JILL

Barking at any non-Greek that came over.

ALEXIA

How did he know?

JILL

Mom trained him.

ALEXIA

Yeah, but you know, how can a dog tell ethnicity?

JILL

There aren't that many Greeks in Pittsfield, so I guess the odds were in his favor.

ALEXIA

It's too quiet.

JILL

I never realized how creepy this house was.

ALEXIA

It's weird, but that little guy kind of held this family together. Heck, he was this family.

JILL

I know. High strung yet relaxed. Everybody's friend yet you knew nothing about him.

ALEXIA

What an enigma.

JILL

Think Mom will get another dog?

ALEXIA

Actually I think she's less likely to get another dog than she is to get remarried. I think she loved Pericles more than Dad.

JILL

Think? She made him steak every day.

ALEXIA

Probably the soup too. It's amazing his little arteries didn't explode.

JILL

I know. She was practically married to Pericles.

ALEXIA

Then it was the curse!

(They laugh.)

God, how old was Pericles?

JILL

At least twenty.

ALEXIA

No?

JILL

Yeah, we got him right before Cally was born.

ALEXIA

What's the human equivalent to that? Like 150?

JILL

What's seven times twenty?

(Slight pause.)

ALEXIA

Can we just say 150?

JILL

Okay.

ALEXIA

I haven't been in this room in ages. It's so small.

JILL

You should come home more often.

ALEXIA

I'm going to hear enough from Mom, can you give me a break? Nobody said you had to stay in Pittsfield.

JILL

Somebody had to fill your shoes at the restaurant.

ALEXIA

Don't.

JILL

What? I love it here. But don't act like you didn't know what you were doing when you left. What's so great about Maine anyway?

ALEXIA

It's not Pittsfield.

JILL

Yeah, it's even colder and darker.

ALEXIA

And on the ocean.

JILL

California is on the ocean.

ALEXIA

Look, it was the right place at the right time. I'm doing what I want.

JILL

(Sarcastically.)

Making beds?

ALEXIA

I'm cooking. In my kitchen.

JILL

With Gary's money.

ALEXIA

Nicky loves it there.

JILL

How old is Nicky now? Fourteen?

ALEXIA

Hard to believe. He's staying with Gary's parents in Peoria for the weekend.

JILL

Oh. That's gotta be awkward.

ALEXIA

They're his grandparents.

JILL

I meant for you.

ALEXIA

It's fine. I've gotten used to it.

JILL

Do they still blame you?

ALEXIA

They're real good to Nicky. We can't choose our family.

JILL

But they aren't your family.

ALEXIA

They're my son's family. So they're my family.

JILL

That's a raw deal.

ALEXIA

We aren't exactly a prize catch either.

(They share a little laugh.)

Speaking of which, where's Rick?

JILL

He's in Des Moines for a conference.

ALEXIA

He's still doing the re-enactment thing?

JILL

Sort of. I think he's come to terms with it. He's got a few of the teachers at the school interested and a couple of retirees, but that's about it.

ALEXIA

Why World War I?

JILL

I don't know. Because the Civil War was already taken?

ALEXIA

What is there to re-enact? Digging trenches?

JILL

I don't know. He's driving in tonight after the conference.

ALEXIA

I'm not sure what to say.

JILL

Don't make fun of him when he gets here. It's been really good for him.

ALEXIA

How are you guys?

JILL

Fine.

ALEXIA

You're better at asking questions huh?

JILL

That's why I'm behind the counter.
We're good. You know, there's a routine again.

ALEXIA

People underestimate routine.

JILL

Cally should be in from school later today.

ALEXIA

Yeah? The whole family under one roof.

(Pause. They are both aware of the
family that is not under one roof.)

ALEXIA

This room is like a shrine to 1985.

JILL

It's a little unsettling that Mom left everything the same.
Every time I try to change something she moves it back.

ALEXIA

I feel like we should be dead. It's creepy.

JILL

Maybe she's hoping the Smithsonian will stop by looking for
a replica 1980's bedroom.

ALEXIA

Will you stop?

JILL

What?

ALEXIA

You're making me nervous touching everything.

JILL

I'm just straightening-

ALEXIA

Jill. Can't you just sit still and have a conversation?

(JILL opens ALEX's suitcase.)

JILL

Going back tonight?

ALEXIA

I didn't know what to pack.

JILL

You've got a sweater in here.

ALEXIA

And a hair dryer. And a pair of underwear. And two pairs of socks.

JILL

Jesus Alex.

ALEXIA

Look—

JILL

I know, I know. You're very uncomfortable. Pittsfield is hell and our old house is Satan's lair.

ALEXIA

It's all a bit overwhelming is all.

JILL

Well, don't wait five years to come home next time.

(Pause.)

Why two pairs of socks?

ALEXIA

I panicked.

(They laugh.)

JILL

Did you meet Elijah when you came in?

ALEXIA

Who?

JILL

Elijah. He's been living with Mom for the past few weeks.

ALEXIA

She's got a boyfriend?

JILL

Not exactly. More of a boarder. He's a priest.

ALEXIA

A priest?

JILL

And a deaf mute. I think. Either that or he is one of those monks that don't talk. I think she said he was a deaf mute though.

ALEXIA

Is this a joke? You think she said a deaf mute?

JILL

He's been staying in Cally's room.

ALEXIA

Where does she meet these people?

JILL

She's got a big heart.

ALEXIA

She's got a big something.

JILL

I guess he's here from Greece on some sort of ministry exchange.

ALEXIA

Can't pass up a chance to put up a Greek can she?
How is he a priest?

JILL

I don't know, he went to seminary school or something.

ALEXIA

No, I mean how is he a priest if he's a deaf mute?

JILL

It's not 1920 Alex, he's not a retard.

ALEXIA

Don't priests preach?

JILL

I guess not all of them do.

ALEXIA

I hope I make it through the weekend.

JILL

At least you've got two pairs of socks.

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 2

(HELEN and ELIJAH enter the living room. He is carrying a few grocery bags, which he sets on the couch. HELEN moves back and forth between the kitchen and the living room until everything is put away.)

HELEN

You were right.

(Goes into the kitchen.)

What do you want from me?

I liked the number 4.

(ELIJAH writes something in his notepad. HELEN reenters and he hands it to her.)

HELEN

'Never bet against Rivers.' I pick horses, not trainers. Don't give me that look. You act like Rivers has never had a horse lose a race. That number 4 had the best Beyer rating on the track.

I know, I know, the trainer, the trainer the trainer. Same thing with you every day.

(Kitchen.)

He got pinned to the rail. You know he was the best horse. That third class filly ruined the race.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

(Returns.)

No, he was in the third post. See, you weren't even watching.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

So what? You didn't win anything. It's easy to handicap when you never bet. Anyone can bet in theory. Try putting some money where your mouth is once in awhile and we'll see how good you are. See how good you are when there's something to lose.

(Looking through the groceries.)

HELEN

Oh Elijah, we forgot the lemons. Now how I am going to cook? I guess I'll just have to make the spanakopita now instead.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

Well if you had gotten the lemons we could have had the soup, but you didn't so it's spanakopita. Don't look at me like that. I'm not blaming you. We'll get lemons next time. You're so sensitive sometimes. It'll be good for Alex to have a little spanakopita.

(She takes the remaining groceries to the kitchen and returns.)

HELEN

My Nick always played trainers. And breeders. 'Who birthed him and who raised him, that's what makes a horse.' Reminds me too much of the old world. Seems like something Mussolini would say, hmm? Or good old Georgios - no relation, thank God. That's why I bet speed. It's so pure, so simple, so American. We left Greece to get away from breeding. The fastest should win. I know things don't always work out like they should, what does Nick always say, 'That's why they run the race.' But I like to think that things follow a course...the fastest horse should win a race that is dependent upon being the fastest horse.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

Taxiarchis. It's a small village in the north. He always fought that. Tried to overcompensate for it. We can't all be Athenians eh?, but what's the use? You can't change where you come from, it's who you are. Run, run, run but it's always there. I tell this to Alexia, but what does she care? She moves anyway.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

Ah, you think you are funny. I came to this country for a better life. Not to disown my past or my family. My Nick came here when he was seventeen. We got married the day before he left. Spent fourteen days on a ship as a

stowaway. He snuck on two days before the ship left so that he could get a good seat. That's my Nick. Clever boy, too clever if you know what I mean. After two weeks at sea his boat finally arrives in New York harbor, but they were quarantined because everyone on deck had developed Scarlet Fever. Sent them to Canada instead. Before he left all Nick could talk about was going to New York. New York this, New York that. He made people call him Babe Ruth. True story. He was a few years late for Babe Ruth, but like I said he's from a small town. For three months he only responds to Babe. Oh he was going to turn New York on its head. But what happens? The boat he's hiding on gets redirected to Canada and he's the only healthy one onboard. He makes his way from Montreal to Winnipeg. Why anyone would leave Montreal for Winnipeg is beyond me, but Nick made a lifelong habit of odd choices. So here is this little Greek, from a tiny fishing village living in Winnipeg, Canada. What are the odds? Oh was he in for a shock when November rolled around. Oh, he nearly died that first winter.

(ELIJAH coughs as if to say 'Pick it up.')

HELEN

Don't rush the story. I'm already leaving out big chunks. Nicky was supposed to save up money and send for me. You know I was pregnant when he left. Six months pass I hear nothing. It's a big trip though, so I don't worry. My mother, she worries. Maybe that's why Alexia runs, she takes after her father. One year passes, Alexia is born and still no word from Nicky. My mother spits on his name. I still hold out hope for my Nicky. Two years pass, Alexia is walking, talking but no sign of Nick. My mother insists it's the family curse, spits on his mother's name. I decide that I'm going to find him, the hell with it. My mother spits on me for good luck. I save up my money and set sail for America. My boat goes into New York no problem, go figure. I have a distant relative, Christos, a third cousin that lives in Chicago, so we go there, me and Alexia. This cousin is very big into the racehorses - he bet trainers too, lost a fortune - and he takes me and Alexia to Arlington Park one day. He taught me how to bet, oh he was crazy about the superfecta. A suckers bet, even Alexia knew that, but he let us stay for free so I keep my mouth shut. One day there is a big race, all the big horses are there. The track's sold out. This was when people still go to the

race track. Normal people. I am in the grandstand when who should I see but Nicky. No joke, he is sitting two rows in front of me. Two rows. Oh, you should have heard the excuses - "I was saving money," "I lost my job," blah blah blah. I just picked up his jacket and took him home. I cross an ocean, pick a city based on a relative I never knew existed and find myself two rows behind my missing husband.

(ELIJAH writes.)

HELEN

Not the hand of the Lord my friend. Determination. Oh you should have seen the look on his face. But I talk too much. We have work to do in the kitchen.

(HELEN exits to the kitchen. JILL and ALEXIA enter from their bedroom.)

JILL

(To Elijah.)

Is mom here?

ELIJAH

(Shakes his head 'No.')

JILL

This is my sister Alexia. The one I was telling you about.

ALEXIA

(Very slow and loud.)

Hello. It is very nice to meet you.

JILL

He can read lips. You don't have to scream at him.

(ELIJAH writes.)

ALEXIA

(Reading.)

"Your mother is in the kitchen." Mom's in the kitchen.

JILL

I got it the first time.

(To Elijah.)

Could you tell her Alex is here?

(ELIJAH exits.)

ALEXIA

What the hell is that?

JILL

What?

ALEXIA

He's black? How many black Greeks do you know?

JILL

I don't know.

(HELEN enters.)

HELEN

My baby girl. Come here *kuklaki mou*.

ALEXIA

Hi mom.

(They embrace.)

HELEN

Oh, so good to see you honey. You look a little tired. Let me make you a sandwich.

ALEXIA

How've you been mom?

HELEN

I have been fine. A little of this a little of that. You know how it goes honey.

ALEXIA

You look thin.

HELEN

You look a little heavy honey. You've been eating too many lobsters.

ALEXIA

Thanks mom. Have you been taking your blood pressure medication? What about your blood thinners?

HELEN

She's worse than you.

JILL

You need to go to the doctor. We just worry about you mom.

HELEN

I wonder what that must be like.

JILL

Very funny.

ALEXIA

How's the restaurant?

HELEN

Always the money with you. Jump right into it, no cheese and crackers for you eh?

ALEXIA

I'm just making small talk.

HELEN

It's fine honey, a little slow after the holidays. Jill has it under control. You worry too much. You look tired. Elijah can make you a martini. You want a martini. Elijah? I was at a wedding a few weeks back - that sweaty kid you were so interested in got married to Olivia Markham. I don't like to speak badly of people but you'd think she could lose a few pounds for her wedding. Anyway, they gave me a martini with no olives. What's a martini with no olives? You want a martini honey?

ALEXIA

No thanks mom. How slow is a little slow?

HELEN

Now is not the time to talk shop. And if I remember correctly, you were not so concerned about the restaurant the last time I saw you.

ALEXIA

Don't start mom.

HELEN

You brought it up.

JILL

Mom, give her a break.

HELEN

Fine.

(Long pause.)

ALEXIA

Who is that?

HELEN

Elijah?

ALEXIA

Yes. What the hell is he doing here? Do you know anything about him? What if he's trying to rip you off?

HELEN

Then let him. I don't have much to steal.

ALEXIA

Mom.

JILL

I've been telling her for weeks.

HELEN

Whatever will be honey.

ALEXIA

Is he even orthodox?

HELEN

Catholic honey.

ALEXIA

Oh right, I just assumed that the black Greek deaf mute priest was orthodox, but of course he's Catholic. Mom! Read between the very blatant lines.

HELEN

I'm not too picky when God sends me a sign.

ALEXIA

Oh Jesus.

(Pause.)

HELEN

It's good to see you *kukla*. How are you doing?

ALEXIA

Fine.

HELEN

And how is my little Nicky?

ALEXIA

He's good. He's staying with Gary's parents.

HELEN

He could have come.

ALEXIA

He needs to see Gary's side too mom.

HELEN

Why are you getting so upset?

JILL

When's Cally coming?

HELEN

She should be here soon.

ALEXIA

Has she been helping out at the restaurant?

HELEN

She's 400 miles away honey. She doesn't have time for the restaurant right now.

JILL

Will you drop the restaurant already?

ALEXIA

I know you owe money mom. It isn't forty years ago. You aren't Jimmy Stewart. The town isn't going to rally to save your diner.

HELEN

It's fine. Calliope is bringing her boyfriend, no?

JILL

Frank, yup.

ALEXIA

Have you met him?

HELEN

She's at school sweet-heart. No, today is the first time.

ALEXIA

Bless his soul.

JILL

We aren't that bad.

HELEN

I think we're okay.

ALEXIA

You take some getting used to.

HELEN

I just hope that he avoids the curse.

ALEXIA

Oh Christ mom, enough with the curse talk.

HELEN

The men who marry into this family are cursed. It is what it is. You can chose to believe or no, but that doesn't change the fact that we are cursed. You don't go to church, but it's still there.

ALEXIA

There aren't many Greek orthodox churches in Maine.

HELEN

There aren't many in Pittsfield either.

ALEXIA

There isn't much of anything in Pittsfield.

HELEN

But Maine is a bastion of culture and entertainment?

ALEXIA

I don't want to hear about the curse. Believe whatever you want, that doesn't mean I want to hear about it.

JILL

It's a little silly mom.

HELEN

I would say three men in the ground in America and a dozen more in Greece is not a little silly.

ALEXIA

Save it for the restaurant mom. That kind of old world crap is good for business.

HELEN

You think what happened to Gary was an accident? Or your father? Or—

JILL

There is no curse. Things happen.

ALEXIA

I think he killed himself.

HELEN

And do you know why?

JILL

Mom.

ALEXIA

The curse?

HELEN

Fine. Mock me. But when did they all happen? Hmm? Tuesday. Tuesday is cursed. Constantinople fell on a Tuesday. It has been cursed for the Greeks ever since. Your father, Gary, all of them - Tuesday.

ALEXIA

Can we please not talk about Gary?

JILL

How did you do today?

HELEN

Not so good. A very odd day on the track. Speed, skill, style, nothing seemed to matter. Total luck of the draw. Good, clean, fast track at Arlington today too. Sometimes it all goes up in smoke. Elijah won three races, another two at Pimlico and a couple at Santa Anita - he doesn't bet, but he still won.

ALEXIA

He bets on horses? Come on mom, a deaf mute priest who can make his way around an OTB is a con artist.

HELEN

So what?

ALEXIA

So what? So he could steal from you. Or...take advantage of you.

HELEN

I've been alone nearly fifteen years. It's nice to have him here. If he ends up murdering me, he ends up murdering me.

JILL

I don't think he's going to murder you.

HELEN

Tell that to Alexia. If anyone was going to murder me I'd put my money on her.

ALEXIA

Thanks mom.

HELEN

It's good to have you here. And once Cally gets here all three together again. Too long. Too bad Pericles had to pay the price to get all of my girls under one roof.

ALEXIA

What?

JILL

He was a trooper.

ALEXIA

What do you mean Pericles had to pay the price?

HELEN
Do you not speak English in Maine? He had to die.

ALEXIA
He had to die?

JILL
He died Alex.

ALEXIA
No. You didn't.

HELEN
What?

ALEXIA
You killed him.

JILL
Don't be ridiculous. Mom didn't kill the dog.

HELEN
I think you must be tired from your flight honey.

ALEXIA
No, you killed him to get me to come home.

HELEN
It's been too long.

ALEXIA
See. See that, she didn't deny it.

JILL
Mom?

HELEN
Yes?

JILL
Tell Alex that you didn't kill Pericles.

HELEN
He was an old dog honey.

ALEXIA
I knew it.

JILL

Mom!

HELEN

Well I knew you wouldn't come home to see me. You love that damned dog more than me.

ALEXIA

Mom!

JILL

You killed him?

HELEN

He was blind and old. The vet was going to put him down anyway. I couldn't let him die like that. I wanted him to be at home, with me.

ALEXIA

This is unbelievable. You've really outdone yourself this time mom. I mean really, you murdered our dog? This is the level you go to try and make me feel guilty? I had to leave. Don't you get that? Ever since dad died. And then Gary. And then—

JILL

Alex.

ALEXIA

It was too much. This place. You.

HELEN

The curse.

JILL

Why don't you guys settle down?

ALEXIA

No, Jill, she needs to hear it. You want to know why I don't ever visit? Because of you. That's why. You killed dad. You probably killed Gary and now you've killed Pericles. You just expect us to live out your life but I don't want that.

HELEN

I'm dying.

ALEXIA

What? Are you kidding? God, can I ever win?

JILL

What?

HELEN

I have breast cancer. The doctor said I have a few weeks at most.

JILL

Mom. Mom? Why didn't you tell me sooner?

HELEN

I didn't want to worry you. You have the restaurant, Rick...Artie.

ALEXIA

Mom. You're dying? You should have told us.

HELEN

I am telling you. What's two weeks difference make?

ALEXIA

A whole hell of a lot when it's all you've got left.

JILL

Jesus Mom.

HELEN

That is why Elijah is here.

JILL

How did this happen?

HELEN

Life happens honey.
Maybe if you didn't breastfeed for eighteen months.

JILL

Mom.

HELEN

Honey, I'm kidding. Death does not have to be sad all the time.

JILL

(Almost stoic.)

How can you say that?

(Pause.)

ALEXIA

What kind of treatment are you getting? Have you been doing chemo? Radiation?

HELEN

No honey. It's too late for chemo.

ALEXIA

Has it spread?

HELEN

I don't know. You're making me tired.

ALEXIA

Then have a sandwich.

JILL

You don't know?

ALEXIA

Why haven't you been doing chemo?

HELEN

I don't want to die that way.

JILL

Chemo lets you live.

ALEXIA

Jesus mom. You're still young. You don't have to die.

HELEN

It's my time *kukla*. I'm not afraid.

(Pause.)

Come on girls, I need you to help me with the spanakopita for tonight. I'm too tired to do it alone.

ALEXIA

I need to make a call. I'll be in in a second.

HELEN

Suit yourself.

(HELEN and JILL exit. ALEXIA stays still for a moment letting everything sink in before re-exploring the room. It is all very familiar to her, but she is moving about as if the room is new. She sits on the couch and takes out her cellular phone.)

ALEXIA

God, why can't I get a signal? This place just sucks the energy from everywhere.

(She goes to pick up the house phone and as she does ELIJAH enters. His sleeves are rolled up and he is a bit sweaty from physical labor. ALEXIA doesn't notice him at first as she begins to dial the rotary phone.)

ALEXIA

(Startled. Slamming the phone down.)
Oh, Jesus. You scared me. Sorry. I didn't mean to say Jesus. Not in that way anyway. I love saying Jesus under normal circumstances. Jesus! Woo!
Are you okay? Do you have a fever or something?

(ELIJAH writes.)

ALEXIA

Oh. You were digging the grave. So you're like a package deal then? Dig and bury them.
Do you know that my mother is dying?

(ELIJAH writes. The door bursts open though before ALEXIA can see what is written. CALLY enters, eight months pregnant. FRANK is behind her carrying two bags. He tries to make himself as small as possible.)

CALLY

I'm home!
Alex!

ALEXIA
Jesus fuck Cally! What the hell happened?

CALLY
I'm prrrreeegnnaaant!

ALEXIA
Really?
(To Frank.)
Did you do this?

FRANK
I, uh, no, I'm-

CALLY
Whoa Alex, back off. Frank didn't do anything.

ALEXIA
Who did?

CALLY
Frank.

ALEXIA
You little shit.
(She begins searching the room for an object to bludgeon Frank with and ends up picking up a Daily Racing Form, which she proceeds to use to beat Frank.)
I'm going to murder you.

FRANK
I, didn't, I'm-

CALLY
Alex! Stop. Alex.

ALEXIA
You think you can take advantage of my sister you fuck faced little bastard-

(ELIJAH pulls ALEXIA off of FRANK.)

ALEXIA
Let go of me so help me God!

(ELIJAH holds her at bay.)

ALEXIA

Elijah!

(To Frank.)

Don't think I won't murder you. He sleeps, and when he does I'll find you.

FRANK

Um-

CALLY

Who are you?

ALEXIA

Pregnant little sister, meet mom's deaf mute priest houseguest-

CALLY

Oh right, you're Elijah. Cool. I'm Cally. This is my boyfriend Frank. I'm sorry we had premarital sex.

FRANK

Hi.

ALEXIA

You shut up. Just shut up. I don't want to hear one word from you.

CALLY

You can't talk to him that way.

ALEXIA

I can't? Frank, did you do this?

FRANK

(He looks around unsure if he is allowed to speak.)

Can I?

ALEXIA/CALLY

Yes.

FRANK

Um, yeah, I guess?

ALEXIA
Yeah, you guess?

CALLY
Alex.

FRANK
I, um—

ALEXIA
Okay, shut up again.
(To Cally.)
See? So I'll talk to him however I want.

CALLY
We love each other.

ALEXIA
You think that's enough? You're nineteen.

CALLY
Twenty.

FRANK
I'm, um, eighteen—

ALEXIA
Shut up Frank.

CALLY
You had Nicky when you were like twenty.

ALEXIA
I was twenty six and married.

CALLY
And look how that turned out.

ALEXIA
(Slight pause.)
Does Mom know?
Cally, what the hell is the matter with you?

CALLY
Don't say hell in front of Elijah.

ALEXIA

I could give two fucks what I say in front of Elijah. He can't fucking hear me. Fuck shit hell damn Jesus God damn!

FRANK

Maybe if we all just—

ALEXIA

Shut up! Who said you could talk? It wasn't me. I didn't hear Cally say anything. Old father mutey here's been quiet. So why are you talking?

CALLY

Stop freaking out Alex.

ALEXIA

Stop being such an idiot Cally. What is the matter with you? Do you ever use your brain? You know it's there to make decisions for you. To help you reason and make choices. You knew that right?

CALLY

I thought you'd be happy for me.

ALEXIA

She's going to kill you.

CALLY

No she's not.

ALEXIA

You can't just show up eight months pregnant. What are you thinking?

CALLY

I don't know.

FRANK

(To Cally.)

Is there a bathroom?

CALLY

Just through that door.

ALEXIA

Oh no. You can't use our bathroom.

CALLY

Alex, stop being such a jerk. Go ahead Frank.

ALEXIA

Not one move Frank.

FRANK

Um. I, uh, really need to go?

CALLY

It's like a really long trip.

ALEXIA

Go outside.

CALLY

Alex, stop. Frank, go ahead.

ALEXIA

Frank I swear to God.

(Pause. FRANK looks at everyone in turn. He then looks at the bathroom, before sheepishly going back out through the front door.)

CALLY

Frank!
What the fuck Alex? Sorry Elijah, I don't usually swear.

ALEXIA

No, she usually only gets knocked up.

CALLY

You have no right to send him outside.

ALEXIA

Then bring him back in.

CALLY

Maybe I will. I thought you'd be happy for me. You're my family. You're supposed to support me.

(HELEN and JILL enter.)

CALLY

Mom!

HELEN

Baby! Look at you! How are you feeling?

JILL

What? How did that happen? Cally!

CALLY

It—

JILL

(She grabs the Daily Racing Form and starts beating Cally with it.)

What's the matter with you? What were you thinking? You've only got one year of school left. Oh my God! Cally! I knew we shouldn't have let you go away to school. How did this happen? What are you going to do? Do you know the father? Does he have a job? Cally!...Cally! You've got no money, no job. Cally! What the hell is the matter with you? Why didn't you tell us?

HELEN

Honey, leave her alone. Baby, come here and give me a hug.

ALEXIA

My husband dies and I get a guilt trip. She gets knocked up and it's hugs all around.

HELEN

Honey, it's wonderful news.

JILL

Wonderful news? Mom, she's twenty years old.

HELEN

I was eighteen when I had Alexia.

ALEXIA

It's a different world now mom. You can't have a kid if you don't have a job. Or a husband.

HELEN

She's fine.

ALEXIA

You told her?

Sort of. CALLY

Why didn't you tell me? JILL

Umm— CALLY

Who did this to you? JILL

Frank. CALLY

He's out back taking a leak. ALEXIA

Why is he outside? What kind of people are you sleeping with? JILL

Alex made him go outside. CALLY

I didn't make him— ALEXIA

Mom, you know how she is. CALLY

Can we stop fighting for two minutes please so I can be with my daughters? Elijah, can you go make sure the boy isn't going on the roses? HELEN

(ELIJAH exits. Pause.)

Mom has cancer. ALEXIA

I know. CALLY

You told her? ALEXIA/JILL

HELEN

Girls, it doesn't matter. What matters now is that we are together.

JILL

It matt-

ALEXIA

You've made her the soup haven't you?

HELEN

I'm tired. I'm going to lie down before the service.

JILL

Do you need anything?

HELEN

I'm fine honey. Cally, come lie down with me. You need your rest.

ALEXIA

And you two old hags finish dinner.

HELEN

I didn't call you old.

JILL

Thanks mom.

HELEN

Oh girls. My little *kuklaki mous*. I'm so glad you're here.

(Slight pause.)

I hope you never love anyone as much as I love you.

(HELEN and CALLY exit off to the bedrooms, JILL and ALEXIA after a moment exit off to the kitchen mumbling about Cally's stupidity.)

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 3

(Backyard. The family and ELIJAH are standing around Pericles's grave. RICK, dressed as a German WWI soldier, is there as well. There is a distant silence between him and JILL. It is not necessarily tense, but there is a noticeable lack of closeness between them. There is a very long silence as the family waits for ELIJAH to speak.)

ALEXIA

I don't think he's going to say anything.

HELEN

Of course dear, we were just admiring the sunset and paying our respects.

ALEXIA

Right.

RICK

If I may.

When I first met Jill she warned me about her family.

JILL

Rick-

RICK

She said that her father would quiz me about Greek food and her mother would kill me with kindness. Her older sister Alex wouldn't speak to me and her kid sister Cally would try and get me to play Battleship. Well, that's pretty much how things went, although I'm happy to say that Alex and I are on speaking terms now and that even though she sunk my battleship five million times that first summer, Cally has grown into a beautiful young woman.

ALEXIA

(Coughing.)

Pick it up.

RICK

The one member of the family she didn't tell me about was

Pericles. Pericles made me feel at home in this house. Whenever I had to list the ingredients for spanakopita, or share the latest gossip with Helen, Pericles was there for me. It sounds kind of silly, but Pericles was as much a part of this family as any of the other Papadopoulos's. This family has meant so much to me, and we've gone through so much together - the highest highs and unfortunately the lowest lows. I know that...when Artie...that Pericles was there for me with his tail wagging and a shoulder to lean on. So even though we thought this day would never come, he was already ten when I met him, I'm glad that I knew you Pericles, you were one hell of a dog.

HELEN

Thank you Rick.

ALEXIA

All's quiet on the western front.

JILL

Alex.

ALEXIA

I'm sorry Rick, I had to.

RICK

I would have expected nothing less.

CALLY

Why is there water on the grave?

JILL

So that the dirt will settle.

CALLY

Yeah, but it's like, weird.

ALEXIA

Oh my God.

FRANK

I, um, I thought-

ALEXIA

Frank! You pissed on the grave?

JILL

Jesus Frank.

ALEXIA

What the hell is wrong with you?

FRANK

I thought, um, that it...

CALLY

If you would have let him go inside then he wouldn't have pissed on the grave.

ALEXIA

I thought he would go in the bushes.

RICK

Did I miss something?

JILL

Alex and Cally's boyfriend aren't hitting it off.

RICK

That's shocking.

HELEN

Children. Who knows, maybe it is good luck to urinate on a grave.

ALEXIA

Maybe it'll lift the curse.

HELEN

Perhaps it will.

JILL

Maybe we should head in for something to eat.

ALEXIA

You didn't piss on the food too did you Frank?

CALLY

Leave him alone Alex. God, no wonder Gary killed himself.

(Pause.)

ALEXIA

Excuse me?

RICK

Weather was pretty good for the whole trip down.

CALLY

Nothing.

ALEXIA

How dare you.

RICK

I stopped for gas in Keokuk. That's a fun name to say.

HELEN

Keokuk.

JILL

Keokuk.

(ELIJAH writes "Keokuk" as they all say it. He shows it in turn - he shouldn't stop the flow.)

FRANK

Keo-

ALEXIA

How dare you waltz in here and say that to me. Who do you think you are?

CALLY

I'm sorry. But you're being a real bitch to Frank and I don't think that's fair.

ALEXIA

You don't think that's fair? Well isn't that sweet.

RICK

Gas is cheaper in Iowa, that's why I stopped before I crossed the border.

ALEXIA

I'll tell you what isn't fair. It isn't fair to have your son come home from school and find your husband lying on the bathroom floor covered in blood. It isn't fair to find

out that your mother is dying. It isn't fair to find your dad's brains all over the break room floor at the family restaurant. It isn't fair that my kid won't say two fucking words to me. It isn't fair that Artie isn't here. So don't you tell me what's fair you stupid little brat.

FRANK

Please don't say that.

ALEXIA

Well thanks for that Frank. I almost forgot you had balls. I hope you enjoy sleeping outside tonight.

JILL

Alex.

HELEN

Alexia, honey.

ALEXIA

(She takes out her phone.)

Why can't I get a signal out here? Christ, this place is a black hole.

(ALEXIA exits into the house. CALLY, followed by FRANK exit to the front of the house.)

HELEN

Maybe the world just doesn't want to hear from her for a few days.

RICK

You should have seen the looks I got when I got out of the car in this uniform. Everyone thinks that I'm a Nazi, but they've got the wrong war. It's like The Great War never happened.

JILL

Shut up Rick.

(JILL exits near tears.)

HELEN

The curse.
It's good to have everyone home.

RICK

It's good to be here.

HELEN

You haven't stopped in much lately.

RICK

I've been busy with school. And The Great War Re-enactment Society.

HELEN

Right.

RICK

How are you feeling?

HELEN

Tired, honey.

RICK

You taking the pain medication?

HELEN

I'm tired.

RICK

Boy, can you believe Alex runs a bed and breakfast?

HELEN

She cooks. Never underestimate the power of the kitchen.

RICK

And cleans? And makes beds? And is pleasant to people?

HELEN

Some people are different when they aren't around people who know them.

(Pause.)

RICK

(To Elijah.)

How'd you do today?

(Elijah writes. "I'M SORRY ABOUT YOUR SON.")

RICK

Thank you.

HELEN

I made spanakopita for you honey.

RICK

No soup?

HELEN

Not today sweetheart.

RICK

I'm sorry Helen.

HELEN

I'm sorry too honey. You know, whatever will be.

(Elijah writes.)

HELEN

Probably dear. It's getting dark.

(To Rick. Referring to helping her walk.)

Help me dear.

RICK

Of course.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 4

(Later that night. RICK and JILL are in the living room getting ready for bed. JILL has pulled out the hide-a-bed.)

RICK

The sunset was beautiful.

JILL

Yeah.

RICK

You think Elijah's really Greek?

JILL

Apparently.

RICK

I didn't know there were black Greeks.

JILL

I don't know Rick. Why don't you ask him?
This is silly. I'm sleeping at home.

RICK

I promised your mother. She wants you all under one roof.

JILL

We're two blocks away.

RICK

I know.

JILL

You can stay.

RICK

I promised.
It's just one night.

JILL

Do you want the sheet or the comforter?

RICK

It doesn't matter.

JILL

Pick.

RICK

I don't care. Whichever you don't want.

JILL

God.

RICK

The comforter.

(She tosses the sheet to the floor.)

RICK

Don't you think we should start out in the hide-a-bed?

JILL

No.

RICK

What if somebody comes down for a glass of water?

JILL

There are bathrooms upstairs.

RICK

Who drinks bathroom water?
What if Frank comes in?

JILL

He won't. He's too afraid of Alex.

RICK

Maybe I should join him. At least the car seats recline.

JILL

Maybe you should Rick.

RICK

I'd better stick to the floor. I'm just trying to avoid any questions.

JILL

They all know this couch is uncomfortable. They'll just

think you went to the floor so you could sleep. You're a soldier returning from war, you're used to the ground.

RICK

I don't know.

JILL

Rick.

RICK

Okay. There's just not that much room on the floor with the bed pulled out.

JILL

This isn't going to work.

RICK

I don't want it to. I'm just trying to save you from a scene.

JILL

Oh thank you Rick. Private First Class Rick Morris to the rescue. First a dog eulogy then a heroic hide-a-bed stand.

RICK

I'm just trying to help. Your mother doesn't need this.

JILL

Don't tell me what my mother needs.

(JILL gets into bed. RICK sits at the foot of the bed.)

RICK

I remember the first time I visited you I slept on this couch.

JILL

Is this your high school reunion? Will you stop with the memories?

RICK

I didn't sleep the whole night. I knew you were right above me. I thought that if I listened hard enough I'd be able to hear you breathing. Isn't that silly? I wanted to get up and sneak into your room more than anything. I got to the second step twice. Man, that staircase is loud at three in

the morning. Why is that? Does it make the same noise in the afternoon? So I just lay here all night thinking about you, about us. And what it would be like the next time we came back. You were going to Chicago to meet with an agent. Do you remember that? He loved that series of photos you took of me the first week we met. To be honest it kind of creeped me out that you were taking so many pictures of me. I thought we were going on a date, you know to the movies or something and you just took pictures of me all night. I still look at those pictures every once in awhile.

(Pause.)

I didn't want it to be like this.

JILL

And I did?

RICK

I just don't know what happened. I mean, I know, but you know what I mean.

(Pause.)

JILL

You weren't there Rick.

RICK

I'm right here. I left the conference two days early. And I'm the freakin' president.

JILL

You weren't there.

RICK

I was there the whole time.

JILL

Forget it.

RICK

You're the one who's at that damn restaurant day and night.

JILL

Somebody has to be.

RICK

It's dying. Let it go.

JILL

Great idea Rick. Why don't we just let mom's livelihood go down the drain. Dad's legacy? Who cares?

RICK

You don't.

JILL

I'm not letting it die.

RICK

For who?

JILL

For me.

RICK

You're fighting a losing battle.

JILL

Says the German soldier.

RICK

You're killing yourself. You've sacrificed too much for that place.

JILL

What's that supposed to mean?

RICK

Nothing.

What's it going to take? Hm? You need the bank to lock you out? You need them to take this house? Our house? You need more than your dad blowing his brains out? You need more than our marriage falling apart? What's it going to take for it to sink in?

JILL

Screw you Rick.

RICK

Maybe Alex had the right idea.

JILL

To run away?

RICK

She knew when to get out. You don't owe anyone anything.

JILL

I'm not letting it die.

(Pause.)

JILL

Will you take off that fucking uniform.

RICK

I got here as soon as I could.

JILL

You could have taken five minutes to change clothes.

RICK

Sorry for having a hobby and trying to have some joy in my life.

JILL

Don't.

RICK

Don't blame me for your life.

JILL

Who am I supposed to blame?

RICK

You went home. I stayed at the hospital.

JILL

I needed you at home Rick. I couldn't stay there. I couldn't watch him...

RICK

I couldn't leave him.

JILL

How could you have not changed your clothes?

RICK

I didn't know what to do.

JILL

How could I look at you in those clothes? His blood...Art...How could you have stayed in those clothes?

RICK

I couldn't.

JILL

You never looked me in the eye Rick. Five years. You haven't looked me in the eye.

RICK

That's ridiculous.

JILL

It's not Rick.

RICK

So everything's my fault? Hmm?

JILL

That's not fair.

RICK

Not fair?

JILL

Don't Rick.

RICK

I know you wish it was me.

JILL

Rick.

RICK

I never see you. You're always at the restaurant. What am I supposed to do?

JILL

Fuck you Rick.

RICK

Why won't you look at me? Stop running away.

JILL

Running away?

RICK

Jill.

JILL

You know who I wish was here Rick? Huh? Artie.

RICK

Don't.

JILL

But he's not here, is he Rick?

RICK

Jill.

JILL

And why is that Rick? Hm? Why isn't Artie here?

RICK

Don't say something you'll regret.

JILL

Because you killed him Rick. That's why he isn't here.
Because you killed our son.

(Long pause.)

JILL

Fuck.

RICK

I, um. I'm going to go and check on Frank.

JILL

Rick.

RICK

No.

(RICK exits the house. He does so slowly enough that if Jill wanted to apologize she could, but he doesn't make a big stand. JILL is left alone. ELIJAH enters. He writes something on his pad and hands it to JILL.)

JILL

"I was just getting a glass of water from the kitchen."
Unbelievable.

Could I borrow your pen?

(He hands it to her. She speaks as she
writes.)

Get...the...fuck...out...of...my...house!

(ELIJAH hesitates and then leaves. JILL
struggles to put the hide-a-bed away
but can't get it to go back in. She
eventually slumps to the floor,
sobbing.)

(Lights fade out.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II
SCENE 1

(The next morning. ELIJAH is in the living room. The hide-a-bed is still pulled out but JILL is nowhere to be found. He is looking at the Daily Racing Form.)

(After a few moments the phone starts ringing - there is some sort of light or other visual cue to let him know that it's ringing. ELIJAH looks around but no one is coming. He goes to the stairs and bangs on them a few times, but again no one is coming. On about the fourth or fifth ring he carefully picks up the phone. He mouths "Hello." But barely any noise comes out. There is silence for a few seconds as we can hear the person on the other end calling out "Hello? Mom? Hello?" ELIJAH eventually takes his pen and taps out "Hello" into the receiver. We hear "What the fuck?" from the other end. Just as ELIJAH is about to give up in exasperation, ALEXIA enters from upstairs. ELIJAH nearly flips out from joy and begins frantically gesturing toward the phone.)

ALEXIA

What is this charades? It's too early Elijah.

(He continues pointing at the phone.)

ALEXIA

Fine. One word. Starts with phone. Is it phone?

(He shakes his head "no.")

ALEXIA

Phone call?

(He nods vigorously.)

ALEXIA

What do I win?

(He motions for ALEXIA to come over and puts the phone to her ear.)

ALEXIA

Okay, this is weird.

(The other end says "Hello? What is going on?")

ALEXIA

Nicky! Oh. Sorry Elijah. It's too early.

(Phone - "Elijah?")

He's Yia Yia's deaf mute black Greek Catholic priest friend.

(Phone - "What?")

I'll explain later honey. How's everything at grandma and grandpa's?

(Phone - "Fine.")

Fine. Great. Can I talk to grandma? Nicky? Can I talk to grandma? Hello! Nicky!

(Phone - "She's at work.")

Okay, well have her call this number when she gets home. I can't get any reception on my cell out here so she'll have to call this number. Nicky, where does she have to call?

(Phone - "Your cell.")

No, not my cell-

(Phone - "I'm kidding.")

Are you having a good time?

(Phone - "I guess.")

You guess? What have you been doing? Did grandpa take you out on the river yet? Did you guys go fishing? Catch any big ones?

(Phone - "No.")

Nicky...

(Pause.)

Listen, Nicky, I've got some bad news honey. Yia Yia is sick.

(Phone - silence.)

Nicky? It's going to be okay honey. I'm here and Aunt Jill and Aunty Cally are here and we're all helping her okay? Everything is going to be fine, okay? We all love you very much. I'll be home real soon.

(Phone - silence.)

Your Uncle Rick is dressed like a German soldier from World War One? Does that cheer you up?

(Phone - "No shit?")

Don't swear honey. But yes, no shit. It's pretty funny. I guess nobody else would be the Germans. I'd send you a picture if my mother had the internet.

(Phone - "She doesn't-")

I know, it's pretty unbelievable. Listen honey, I'll be by to pick you up in a few days. Everything is going to be fine.

(Phone - silence.)

Okay, I love you very much and I'll see you soon.

(Phone - "Okay.")

Thanks for calling. Bye honey.

(She hangs up the phone.)

ALEXIA

(To ELIJAH.)

Have you ever heard of privacy?

(Elijah motions to his ears.)

ALEXIA

Oh right, I forgot. But you can read lips-

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

Yes. My son Nicky. He's fourteen now. All things considered he's a good kid. I can't imagine what he's going through. It must be brutal. I try to help him but there's only so much I can do. I just hope it doesn't ruin his life.

Fuck, life's a bitch. Do they teach you that in seminary? Because they should. At least I was an adult. He's just a kid. Fucking Gary. You know he could have just left us, but no, he had to go and kill himself.

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

The curse? You too? How come you aren't telling me it's all part of God's plan? Because that would be a lot more soothing. Bullshit, but soothing.

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

(Reading.)

"I don't know God's plan. I only listen when he talks."

(Normal.)

Are you for real? Because I have to be honest with you, you kind of seem like you're full of it.

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

Okay. Were you born like this?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

No shit. That sucks. How old were you?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

What a coincidence, fourteen. You know you aren't doing yourself any favors in the believability department. So let me guess, you got run over by a tractor?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

I must be psychic. So what, this happened in Greece? Or did you forget that you are from Greece?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

I knew it. So what, you've been here twenty, thirty years?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

You still lied. I don't care if you had to. Isn't that, you know, like not what you are supposed to do? Assuming of course that you are what you say you are.

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

I'm sure you are.

So you could hear at one time, but you were always mute? I'm sorry, I want to believe you. You seem very nice and I'm glad that you've been able to give my mother some company, but I just don't buy it. For one you're black, and I've never ever met a black Greek. What, were you in like a black fraternity or something? Two, you bet the horses, and that just seems totally wrong. Third, you're a deaf mute? Come on. That's the best you could do?

(Elijah writes.)

ALEXIA

(Reading.)

"Sometimes you just have to believe."

And sometimes you don't. Don't worry, everyone else believes you. I won't make a scene. Just tell my mother the truth.

(She starts to exit to the kitchen.)

ALEXIA

Pick Hell's Fire in the second at Keenland. That's a Rivers horse and they never lose at Keenland.

(She exits. Lights fade out.)

SCENE 2

(Later that morning. ALEXIA, JILL and CALLY are in the kitchen making breakfast. ALEXIA has had several mimosas. She isn't drunk, but there is a bit of a carefree attitude rather than an intent to hurt her sisters.)

JILL

(Making eggs.)

You still like 'em over hard?

ALEXIA

Yes.

JILL

Cally, you still scrambled?

CALLY

I'm not hungry.

JILL

You have to eat honey.

CALLY

I'm not feeling too good.

JILL

This will help.

ALEXIA

Jesus Jill, leave the girl alone. She's about to burst, cut her some slack. You remember what it's like.

JILL

She needs energy.

ALEXIA

She needs another mimosa.

(ALEXIA gets up to fix herself another drink.)

JILL

She can't have alcohol.

ALEXIA

It's for me.

JILL

Good to see you still have no sense of responsibility.

CALLY

Maybe I will have some eggs.

ALEXIA

I own my own business and I have a fourteen year old son. How do I have no sense of responsibility?

JILL

Having things doesn't make you responsible.

ALEXIA

Like you should talk.

JILL

I get up at four AM seven days a week to go to the restaurant to keep it open for mom and dad.

ALEXIA

Nobody forced you to work at that stupid restaurant.

JILL

Somebody had to. It built our family. It's all mom has left. It's what dad left us. We can't just let it go. This is what I'm talking about. You have always put yourself first.

ALEXIA

I put myself first? Who worked at that fucking place all through high school so her little sister could do poms? Who put off culinary school for years so her other little sister didn't have to work at the restaurant?

JILL

That was a long time ago Alexia.

ALEXIA

Not that long ago.

JILL

And then things got tough and you ran out.

Guys, will-

CALLY

Butt out Cally.

ALEXIA/JILL

Go check on Frank.

JILL

I'm not going anywhere.

CALLY

Good, don't let her boss you around anymore.

ALEXIA

I don't-

JILL

She doesn't boss me around.

CALLY

You think she'd be pregnant if I was bossing her around?

JILL

Why do you treat it like it's such a bad thing?

CALLY

Because it is a bad thing. You have no idea what you're getting yourself into. You aren't ready for it.

JILL

Settle down Jill.

ALEXIA

Why does everybody keep telling me to settle down? I'm fine.

JILL

Not every kid ends up like Artie.

CALLY

(JILL throws a plate of eggs against the wall. Pause.)

ALEXIA

Were those mine or hers?

(Pause. They all begin to laugh. They are cleaning up during the following.)

CALLY

Do you remember the time dad threw that lamb bone at you and it broke the window?

ALEXIA

Oh god.

JILL

I can't believe mom didn't kill you.

ALEXIA

What? I didn't do anything.

JILL

You were out with, what's his name?

ALEXIA

Peter Manual.

CALLY

The sweaty kid?

ALEXIA

He wasn't that sweaty.

JILL

'Till about four in the morning.

ALEXIA

It would have been nice to get a heads up that dad was waiting for me.

CALLY

We were just there for the show.

JILL

You weren't even alive.

CALLY

So?

ALEXIA

All because he wasn't a Greek. Didn't care that I was out all night or drunk or if I was pregnant.

JILL

And not one of us ended up with a Greek.

ALEXIA

He's probably rolling in his grave. Making Greek chicken to try and sway us.

CALLY

He really loved food.

ALEXIA

Is mom giving you her Avgolemono recipe?

JILL

I don't know.

ALEXIA

She better not take it to the grave.

CALLY

Wasn't that dad's recipe?

ALEXIA

Oh no. That one was all mom.

JILL

I don't think even he knew it.

ALEXIA

It ate him up that she wouldn't tell him.

JILL

Ate him up?

ALEXIA

Shut up.

JILL

I'm sorry you didn't know him as well as us. It's not fair that he did that to you.

ALEXIA

Or us.

JILL

She was just a kid.

ALEXIA

And what were we?

JILL

Adult kids.

CALLY

I knew him. For awhile. I think he was a lot different though when you guys were kids.

ALEXIA

Like hold this poll while I whip you with this belt different? Then yes, he was a little different.

JILL

You had it easy with mom.

ALEXIA

I don't know if anything is easy with mom.

JILL

I'm sorry he did that to you.

CALLY

You don't need to apologize. It's not your fault. It's okay. It's like who I am, you know?

ALEXIA

God, do you realize that if I was you, you'd be my kid instead of my sister?

CALLY

Well, you kind of were like my dad.

ALEXIA

I never threw eggs at you when you got bad grades.

JILL

Or taught her how to cook.

ALEXIA

I was protecting her. Like any good father.

Do you know...why?
CALLY

The curse!
ALEXIA/JILL

Seriously.
CALLY

Dad owed a lot of money and he didn't want us to find out.
ALEXIA

So he killed himself and then the bank came.
JILL

Planning wasn't one of his strong suits.
ALEXIA

A trait he obviously passed on to you Cally.
JILL

We're thinking of naming the baby after mom.
CALLY

It's a girl?
JILL

We don't know yet.
CALLY

Let me guess, if it's a boy you're going to name him Nick?
ALEXIA

We were actually going to name him after you.
CALLY

No shit?
ALEXIA

Well thanks a lot.
JILL

No—
CALLY

JILL

I hate you guys. You know that right? These are my daughters, Alexia, Calliope...and Jill.

ALEXIA

They were going through their assimilation phase. They wanted you to be American.

JILL

Easy for you to say. Alexia.

CALLY

Having a weird name was not easy growing up.

ALEXIA

At least people knew you were a girl. Do you know how many teachers thought I was a boy on the first day of class? How do you think that went over with a room full of seventh graders?

JILL

Being ordinary is no great gift.

(Pause.)

CALLY

Did you hear mom last night?

ALEXIA

Yes.

JILL

What? What happened?

CALLY

She was coughing up a lung.

ALEXIA

How did you not know? She looks terrible.

JILL

Why didn't you?

ALEXIA

I don't see her every day.

JILL

I know.

CALLY

She's always been so thin.

ALEXIA

Not like that.
And how come you didn't tell us?

CALLY

She made me promise.

ALEXIA

So?

JILL

I thought she was just slowing down.

ALEXIA

Has she been at the restaurant?

JILL

Not lately.

ALEXIA

Jill! She practically lived there.

JILL

What do you want me to say? I'm working day and night.

ALEXIA

Why didn't you tell me?

JILL

Why weren't you here?

CALLY

She sounded pretty bad.
I think Elijah was in there with her. I don't think that
guy sleeps.

ALEXIA

You don't buy his story do you?

JILL

I don't know what to think anymore.

CALLY

Why would he lie?

ALEXIA

Let's see, mom is a dying widow that on the surface seems pretty well off. Yeah, I can't think of why anyone would try to scam her.

CALLY

Why are you always so cynical? He's been taking care of her.

JILL

He seems harmless.

ALEXIA

That's the new religious standard - do no harm?

JILL

I don't know. Mom seems to believe in him so it doesn't really matter what we think.

ALEXIA

Whatever, I think he's full of shit.

CALLY

He sat with her all night, so he can't be all bad.

ALEXIA

I didn't get a wink of sleep. Did you?

JILL

(Slight hesitation.)

No.

CALLY

She's really sick.

ALEXIA

I know. And somebody please explain to me why she isn't getting chemo?

CALLY

She doesn't want it.

ALEXIA

Oh okay. What do you mean she doesn't want it? It could save her life.

CALLY

I don't know. She told her doctor that she didn't want to go through chemo or radiation or anything.

ALEXIA

That woman is insane. She's probably eating washcloths or something because that's how they get rid of cancer in Greece.

CALLY

Really?

JILL

What's Frank do?

CALLY

(Proudly.)

He's a sculptor.

ALEXIA

Seriously?

JILL

Wow Cally. You let an eighteen year old "sculptor" knock you up?

CALLY

He's really talented.

JILL

I bet.

CALLY

He is. He's on a full scholarship.

JILL

Are you going to finish school?

CALLY

I only have a year left.

JILL

And what are you going to do with the baby?

CALLY

We can juggle schedules.

JILL

It's a lot of responsibility. How are you both going to go to school and raise a baby? What are you going to do about money?

ALEXIA

Don't.

JILL

What?

ALEXIA

Don't offer to take that baby.

JILL

I wasn't.

ALEXIA

Yes you were. It's her life. She can deal with it.

JILL

That's very sensitive Alex.

CALLY

We'll be fine. Frank's dad is letting us move into his basement.

JILL

And then what?

ALEXIA

Then they have their family in Frank's dad's basement.

CALLY

I don't know.

JILL

Are you going to get married?

CALLY

We've talked about it.

ALEXIA

Don't. He'll end up killing himself.

JILL

Alex.

ALEXIA

Or dressing up like a German soldier.

CALLY

Why German?

JILL

You shouldn't bring the baby into a broken home.

ALEXIA

Wait a good four or five years before you break it. That's always best.

JILL

Alex, can you be serious for five minutes?

ALEXIA

I just don't know if you are the most qualified person to be giving marriage advice.

JILL

And what might that mean?

ALEXIA

You and Rick probably haven't touched each other in five years.

JILL

That is none of your business.

ALEXIA

You know you can get divorced. You don't have to try and save everything.

JILL

That's great advice to give her. Get divorced or wait for your husband to kill himself. Maybe she can just run away. What do you think Alex? You brought two pairs of socks, think you can lend one to Cally?

ALEXIA

I think she should do what's best for her.

JILL

Because nobody else exists, right Alex? Because it's Alex first and everybody else second.

ALEXIA

Jill-

JILL

Do you know what was best for me Alex? Hmm? Do you know what I needed?

ALEXIA

Not everything is black and white.

JILL

Oh yes it is. There's the right thing to do and the Alex thing to do.

ALEXIA

That's not fair.

JILL

Not fair? Well, look who's talking now. Not fair.

CALLY

Jill.

JILL

Can you even imagine what that was like? Is like. To lose everything that you care about? And then you leave? Just like that. I finally need you and you disappear.

CALLY

Guys-

ALEXIA

No, let her go Cally. Let her say what she needs to say so she can stop blaming me for her life.

JILL

Nobody is blaming you for anything.

ALEXIA

I didn't make you work there. I didn't make you give up photography. I did everything I could to help you—

JILL

I didn't give up—

ALEXIA

You were afraid to try.

JILL

Afraid?

ALEXIA

Who got you that meeting with the agent? You know how many favors Gary called in for you to get that meeting? And you blew it off. You did that. That was your choice, not mine.

JILL

I had to go to the restaurant because it's always been me. Someone calls in sick, Jill. Someone quits, Jill. It gets busy, Jill. Doesn't matter what I want, it's always Jill.

ALEXIA

I think it's about you taking responsibility. You have a choice. Go and do it. Nobody is stopping you.

JILL

You think this is about pictures?

ALEXIA

Nobody forced this life on you. You can leave.

JILL

Why is that always your solution?

ALEXIA

Why isn't it ever yours?

JILL

Because you needed to leave? You needed your own kitchen? Couldn't use the money to save the family restaurant, no, you needed a fresh start.

ALEXIA

Are you questioning how I used my dead husband's money? Are you for real?

JILL

I don't care about the money! Don't you get that? Fuck the money. Fuck pictures. It doesn't matter. You left. You selfish bitch. How could you do that to me? How can you justify that to yourself? How is that okay? You think this is about pictures? How can you even show your face.

ALEXIA

I needed to leave.

JILL

And I needed you.

ALEXIA

I'm sorry Jill. But I couldn't.

JILL

Are you gonna stick around for mom's funeral or do you have a plane to catch? Gonna use your inheritance to open a bar in Alaska? You know what? As far as I'm concerned you should have never come back.

(There is a long pause. Nobody makes eye contact. Jill and Alex remain almost motionless - silently continuing their fight as only siblings can. After a few moments CALLY begins clearing the table.)

JILL

Stop.
Stop. Just leave it, Cally.

CALLY

I've got it.

JILL

Cally. Please.

ALEXIA

I'm not going anywhere.

JILL

You can't make up for it.

(JILL begins to leave but is stopped by the sound of a plate crashing - Cally has dropped a plate because the baby is moving.)

CALLY

Whoa!
Whoa!

JILL

Are you okay? Is everything-

CALLY

Whoa!
Did you see that?
Oh man, the hand like just totally scrapped my stomach.
Whoa - there it is again! You can see its fingers.
Here. Feel.

(CALLY takes JILL's hand and puts it on her stomach.)

JILL

Oh my god.

CALLY

Whoa. That's so cool. Did you feel that?

ALEXIA

Can I get in on this or am I still in timeout?

CALLY

Come here.

(They gather around CALLY, each with a hand on her stomach. Jill begins to forgive Alex.)

CALLY

Isn't that amazing? There's like a person inside there.
Like that's sort of me in there. Kind of like a second
chance. That's so creepy and cool at the same time.
Hello!

JILL

Hello!

ALEXIA

Hello baby. Welcome to the fight.

CALLY

That's your Aunt Jill. And your Auntie Alex.

CALLY

We can't wait to meet you.

ALEXIA

(As Helen.)

Don't come on a Tuesday.

JILL

Wait until a Wednesday.

ALEXIA

You have no idea what you are getting yourself into baby.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 3

(The front yard. FRANK, RICK and ELIJAH are outside playing cards. FRANK is a bit fidgety in his chair because he has to use the bathroom.)

RICK

You know, Alex's all bark and no bite. You can go inside if you want.

FRANK

I, um, no. I think I'll wait for things to cool down a bit?

RICK

Maybe you're right. No man should step foot inside that house.

FRANK

Yeah?

RICK

Then go piss in the bushes. You're making me nervous.

FRANK

I'm okay?

RICK

You already pissed on a grave. What's the worst that could happen?

FRANK

I think I'll hold it?

RICK

Suit yourself.

(Showing his cards.)

Three eights.

FRANK

Fold.

RICK

You don't fold now.

FRANK

You won?

(ELIJAH shows his cards. He has three nines.)

RICK

Okay, you're cheating. I'm not one to call out a priest, but that's three times you've had a millimeter better hand than me. I get a full house Jacks over fours, you get Queens over fives. What gives?

(ELIJAH writes.)

FRANK

He says he has a lot of free time.

RICK

Me too.
Listen, kid, do you love that girl?

FRANK

Um, yes?
I'm gonna ask her to marry me.

RICK

Okay. I don't want to be all bitter, grizzled, cynical old guy on you, but...

FRANK

Yeah?

RICK

Never forget how you feel about her right now.

FRANK

Okay?

RICK

And don't let her work at that restaurant.

FRANK

Cally can't cook?

RICK

It's a black hole. It just sucks you and sucks away your

life. Sometimes literally. She cares more about that restaurant than her real life.

FRANK

It's just her escape?

RICK

Thanks Franklin. I didn't know that.

(ELIJAH deals.)

RICK

Give me two.

FRANK

Um, I'll take, um, four?

(Elijah passes out the cards and takes two for himself.)

RICK

Are you sure you don't want to bet? Because you could be cleaning up here?

(Elijah shakes his head "no.")

RICK

Right. You're a man of the cloth.

FRANK

Why do you, um, say it like that?

RICK

Nothing.

(Elijah motions that it is okay for Rick to speak his mind.)

RICK

I just don't have a lot of faith in faith anymore.

FRANK

Why?

RICK

Will you go take a piss?

FRANK
I'm fine?

RICK
It's a long story.
I'd rather not get into it.

FRANK
Is it because of Artie?

RICK
(Shows his cards.)
Two kings.

FRANK
Fold.

RICK
Let me guess, two aces?

(Elijah shows his cards. Two queens.)

RICK
Two Queens? Okay, now I know you're cheating.

FRANK
Do you miss him?

RICK
Excuse me?

FRANK
Your son?

RICK
Do I know you to be asking me that kind of question?

FRANK
I'm sorry? Cally told me about it. My mom and sister died
in a car accident when I was little?

RICK
I'm sorry.

FRANK
I was just a little kid. But like I can see what it did to
my dad?

RICK

It's the little things.

FRANK

My sister was thirteen.

RICK

He was four.

I haven't sneezed since it happened. I know that sounds strange but it's true. He used to sneeze three times in a row, he gets that from me. And I used to hear people sneeze and I'd just lose it, you know, I'm waiting to hear the other two and they never come.

(Elijah writes.)

RICK

Car accident.

FRANK

I was supposed to be with them? But I had a fever that day and my mom made me stay home. She insisted, you know? Like she knew?

RICK

Then why did she go?

FRANK

She had to.

RICK

You two are kind of creeping me out.

FRANK

Sorry? I didn't mean? Maybe that's just the way I remember it. That she saved me.

RICK

I did it.

FRANK

What?

RICK

I was driving the car.

I know she doesn't mean to but Jill blames me. I blame me too.

I was pulling out of the driveway to go to work. Jill was already at the restaurant. I was leaving late because I wasn't feeling well and I had a lesson planning period first hour, so I didn't miss anything. The only time I've ever had first hour lesson planning. He used to stand by the window whenever one of us would leave. It wasn't a sad thing. He just wanted to watch us go. If that makes any sense. He wasn't there. He wasn't in the window. It didn't click at the time. What I wouldn't give to have made the connection then. He was playing out front. Because I was leaving later than usual. And it was spring so it was nice outside. His ball had rolled into the driveway right behind the garage as I was pulling out.

(Pause.)

I just didn't make the connection.

(Elijah puts his arm around Rick and whispers something into his ear.)

FRANK

It wasn't your fault.

RICK

Thanks.

FRANK

Sometimes things just happen.

(Pause.)

I think the re-enactment thing you're doing is really cool?

RICK

Yeah?

FRANK

Yeah.

RICK

We could use a few more Brits.

FRANK

Um...

RICK

Everybody kind of makes fun of me for it. "What you do? Dig holes and sit in them all day?"

FRANK

You can't help what you are passionate about? I, um, I'm a sculptor? And people give me shit about that all the time? But that's like what I do? I'd like love to be a doctor or lawyer or something, but that's not what I want to do, you know? I didn't pick sculpting over something else. I just have always like done it? It's like inside of me?

(Elijah writes.)

FRANK

(Reading.)

"Our duty in life is to feed our soul."

(JILL appears at the front door.)

JILL

My mother wants to see you.

(RICK and ELIJAH get up.)

JILL

Not you. Frank.

FRANK

Me? Are you sure?

JILL

You're the sculptor that got my sister pregnant?

FRANK

Yeah?

JILL

Then it's you.

FRANK

Okay? Is Alex inside?

JILL

Will you come in already?

RICK

It's okay. Helen's not like the rest of them.

(Elijah and Rick give Frank a nudge and a pat on the back. FRANK exits toward the house.)

RICK

Thanks.

(Elijah nods.)

RICK

I still don't believe you. But thanks.

(Slight pause.)

Did she make the soup for you?

(Elijah nods and exits.)

(JILL takes Elijah's seat and her and RICK sit in silence for a moment. He offers his hand and after a moment she takes it.)

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 4

(HELEN's bedroom. She is propped up in bed. She looks noticeably more sickly than before. Her hair is not done and looks thin and scraggly. She has no makeup on to cover up how sallow she looks. She has very little weight to her, as though she could be pushed over by a slight breeze. She is reading the Daily Racing Form. After a moment there is an incredibly soft knock on the door.)

HELEN

Come in Franklin.

FRANK

You, um, wanted to see me?

HELEN

Have you gone to the bathroom yet?

FRANK

I, um, didn't, um.

HELEN

(Handing him her bedpan.)

Use this.

FRANK

I think I'll hold it?

HELEN

It's fine. I don't mind.

FRANK

Thank you. But I'm fine?

HELEN

You look like you're going to burst.

FRANK

Thank you Mrs. Papa-

HELEN

Helen.

FRANK

Mrs. Helen?

HELEN

Suit yourself.

(He places the bedpan on the floor where he stands, afraid to get too close to her.)

HELEN

Smells like rain. Don't you think?

FRANK

I, um, I guess?

HELEN

I love the smell of rain. So pure. Cleansing.

FRANK

I like to, a, I like to sculpt when it, um, rains?

HELEN

You're a serious sculptor?

FRANK

Yes?

HELEN

Are we in Florence? Is it 1555? How are you going to support my daughter? Your child?

FRANK

I, um, can get, I um work nights at a bowling alley?

HELEN

Really? My Nick had a 220 average.

FRANK

I don't bowl?

HELEN

So you are going to sculpt and bowl.

FRANK

I don't bowl?

HELEN

Are you asking me or telling me?

FRANK

Telling you?

HELEN

Walk across the room for me.

FRANK

I'm sorry?

HELEN

I want to see you walk. Walk across the room for me.

FRANK

I, um—

HELEN

I like to see a horse walk before I bet on him. That's why I prefer the track. Nick, Elijah, they like the off-track betting. But I like to see the horse. Something about breathing the same air, being in the same place that tells you something about the horse that you can't get from this form or the television. So walk.

FRANK

I, um, okay?

(He tentatively takes a few steps.)

HELEN

No, no, no, no, no. Go from one end to the other.

(He does so. Again very tentatively.)

HELEN

You walk like an immigrant fresh off the boat. What are you?

FRANK

German. Some Irish. And Croatian. My mom was Polish.

HELEN

Cally told me what happened.
So, you're a mutt. We can't all be purebred, eh?

FRANK

I, guess not?

HELEN

You're name? Is it Polish, German and Croatian?

FRANK

My mom named me after Franklin Roosevelt.

HELEN

Ha! Well you must be destined for greatness then.

FRANK

I don't know, um, I don't think so?

HELEN

Well, if you are his legacy I must teach you to walk like
an American.

FRANK

Um, didn't FDR like not walk?

HELEN

Not physically, but he walked like an American. Confident,
strong - with swagger.

FRANK

Um-

HELEN

If he could walk like an American with no working legs then
you can too.

FRANK

Okay?

HELEN

You want to be a sculptor? Walk like an American. Try
again.

(He does so with a bit more confidence,
but he's still tentative.)

HELEN

Frank. Watch me.

(She begins getting out of bed. It is very difficult for her and she nearly falls several times.)

FRANK

(Tries to help her.)

I don't know if you should be—

HELEN

Shut up Frank. Don't deny a dying woman. You don't want the curse to follow you.

FRANK

The curse?

HELEN

All the men who marry into this family kill themselves. We'll talk about it later honey.

FRANK

What?

HELEN

Here. Watch me.

(She suddenly transforms into a strong and confident woman. She takes purposeful steps. She moves incredibly gracefully. She is light and seductive and confident in her walk.)

HELEN

There.

FRANK

Wow.

HELEN

Help me get back in bed honey.

(He hesitates slightly before going over to her. He holds his arm out to her afraid to initiate contact. She

takes his arm and puts it around her waist.)

HELEN

There you go honey. I won't bite. You have a solid hold. I bet if you weren't so afraid you'd be a good dancer. It's all in the wrists. Strong, firm wrists. I bet sculpting is like dancing. My Nicky would fling me all around - the wrists. Remember that.

(She eventually makes her way back to the bed. FRANK puts the covers back over her legs and hips.)

HELEN

Again.

(He walks again. Better than before, but still not to Helen's liking.)

HELEN

Do not copy me, I am a woman. Remember, you are a man. An American man. Take big steps. Heavy steps. Point your toes forward, you look like a little immigrant duck. Lead with your stomach. All Americans lead with their stomachs.

(He walks. It is solid and confident. He looks like a completely different person. When he is finished he only partly recedes into his old physical persona.)

HELEN

Franklin! Look at you!

FRANK

Thanks.

HELEN

I see why Cally likes you.

FRANK

I like her too. I love her very much.

HELEN

Me too.

FRANK

I'm going to marry her.

HELEN

So what are you waiting for?

FRANK

I, um—

HELEN

I like you Frank. There's something about you that I like. You have such a sadness about you. Sad people are good people. They are loyal. You have fire too. I can see it in there. You must have desire to succeed in this world. It takes desire to admit that you want to be a sculptor to the mother of the girl you knocked up. It takes desire to be a success. Desire to spend fourteen days in steerage and nearly two years in Manitoba to make a better life. It takes desire to find that person. You two, well Cally not so much - such an idiot getting pregnant - you, you are going to be okay, yes? You take care of my baby. You will be the one to break the curse. I have a good feeling about you.

FRANK

Thank you. Helen.

HELEN

Can you do me a favor honey?

FRANK

Sure.

HELEN

Go into my dresser. Top drawer. I want you to have them.

FRANK

(He goes to the dresser and opens the drawer. He takes out a small box.)

I, um, are you sure?

HELEN

Yes. And one more thing?

FRANK

Okay?

HELEN

Tell Jill she's fired and that I'm selling the restaurant.

FRANK

What?

HELEN

I'm selling it.

FRANK

Um, can you write that down? Maybe sign it or something?

HELEN

Remember, you're an American now Frank.

FRANK

Right. But it might be easier—

HELEN

I'm tired *kukla*. Can you get me a glass of water honey?

FRANK

Sure.

HELEN

From the kitchen. I don't want bathroom water.

FRANK

Me either? I'll be back in a minute.

(FRANK exits. HELEN watches him go. She settles herself in the bed. She lets herself slip away. HELEN is dead. A few moments pass. FRANK eventually returns with a glass of water.)

FRANK

I got your—
Mrs. Papadopoulos? Helen?

(He goes to her. He doesn't need to shake her or touch her to know that she's gone. He just knows. He sets the water on the nightstand and fixes her blankets. He looks at her for a moment and then turns to leave the room.)

FRANK

(As he is leaving the room.)

Cally? Jill?

Alex.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 5

(Three days later, after the funeral. ALEXIA and FRANK are in the living room late at night. She is dressed in one of her mother's old dresses. FRANK is wearing a large blazer that that was originally Cally's fathers.)

ALEXIA

You're serious?

FRANK

Yeah, I guess.

ALEXIA

You know what happens?

FRANK

Your mom mentioned it.

ALEXIA

Why are you asking me? Jill's the planner.

FRANK

It was hard enough firing her. Plus you're like the head of the house now.

ALEXIA

Oh, shit.

FRANK

So, do you think, is that okay?

ALEXIA

Why not.

FRANK

I'm sorry about your mom.

ALEX

Thanks.

FRANK

It's the first funeral I've been to since my mom.

ALEXIA

Me too. Well, you know what I mean. Since Gary.

FRANK

I guess.

ALEXIA

You want a sandwich or something?

FRANK

No thanks.

ALEXIA

Nice suit.

FRANK

It's a little big.

ALEXIA

At least yours is from this era. I feel like an idiot in this thing.

FRANK

I think it looks good. You look just like her. Very beautiful.

ALEXIA

Thanks Frank.

You know, you can go to the bathroom if you want.

FRANK

I'm okay.

(Lights fade out.)

SCENE 6

(The next day. Everyone except Helen is in the backyard for a wedding. FRANK and ALEXIA are dressed as in the previous scene. CALLY is in a nice flowing dress. The others are dressed in nice but not formal clothing. JILL has an old camera and is taking photos.)

RICK

It actually doesn't fit too bad.

FRANK

Yeah? I feel like, I'm, um swimming in it.

RICK

Her father was kind of a big guy. You'll fill it out some day.

FRANK

Are you sure this is okay? I mean, you know. It's only been a few days.

RICK

She loved weddings. She liked you.

FRANK

And the rings?
Is his, like, cursed?

RICK

I don't believe in curses.

FRANK

But like Cally's dad, and Alexia's husband and your son—

RICK

I know. I don't believe in curses.
Have you gone to the bathroom yet?

FRANK

I, um—

(On the other side of the yard the three sisters are getting ready.)

ALEXIA
You look beautiful.

CALLY
I don't look too fat?

ALEXIA
You look exceedingly fat.

JILL
In a beautiful way. Come here.
(She groups the sisters together and
snaps a picture of the three of them.)
Are you ready?

CALLY
Yes.
I wish she was still here.

ALEXIA
She is. Don't worry, mom will be around more than you want
her to be.

JILL
Alex.

ALEXIA
What? She will be.
Listen, you know why Gary killed himself?

CALLY
I'm sorry. I was out of line—

ALEXIA
It was my fault. I thought I could save him. I couldn't
save dad, so I'd save Gary. But I couldn't.

JILL
Is this the best advice to—

ALEXIA
Because it was their choice. They were afraid. Frank's not
like that. Well he's insanely afraid, but not where it
matters.

CALLY

Thanks.

ALEXIA

Plus your wedding is being officiated by a deaf mute. And that can't hurt. Not many people can say that.

CALLY

How's that going to work?

ALEXIA

I don't know. But it sure is handy having a priest around.

JILL

Okay. It's time. I love you.

CALLY

I love you too.

ALEXIA

You look beautiful. I'll have a room set up for you whenever you want to take a honeymoon.

(ELIJAH plays some processional music on an old radio that he's brought outside. CALLY begins walking toward FRANK. JILL and ALEXIA hang back.)

JILL

There's soup in the kitchen.

ALEXIA

I can't believe she never made me that soup.

JILL

It's a select club. Maybe I'll stop by and make it for you.

ALEXIA

I'm sorry.
You're doing the right thing.

JILL

I know.

(They follow.)
(Lights fade out.)
THE END