

SEVERANCE PLAY

a play

by

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CHARACTERS

- JONATHAN** a middle aged executive, boyish charm, relates to his office staff (at least Elaine & Ginny) more like girlfriends than employees (though not lasciviously). A ladies man with a heart to be prince charming to the women in his life, once “saved” he tends to move on to the next damsel in distress; with malice to none he is unaware of his own character flaws
- GINNY** Secretary/Assistant to Jonathan, several years his junior. Jonathan’s most recent rescue. Ginny works for Jonathan as his secretary/assistant and current girlfriend. She is a textbook definition of an introvert and completely unaware of her own contribution to enabling Jonathan’s psyche, yeah...love kinda does that to you...if this was actually love, but she’s a little too soft spoken to ask.
- ELAINE** Office manager/VP of “stuff”/sales etc. Jonathan’s right hand (aka indispensable)—as many years younger than Jonathan as she is older than Ginny. Elaine is free spirited, and shoots straight from the hip. She has graduated from being Jonathan’s previous love interest and Good Friday to his “a little more than” equal. She stays with him out of a mixed sense of obligation and gratitude and if something were to happen again down the road...well, let’s just say nothing’s of the table (yet).

THE SETTING

A business office in Southern California. Modest at best. With (at least two, if not three) desks. The usual office amenities such as phones, computers and the like; doors leading in from the street as well as other rooms, supply closet, bathroom, other offices etc. There is indeed a separate area prominently placed: A glass conference room, used for presentations and “private” meetings (well, as private as you can get away with where “glass”: walls are concerned.)

THE TIME

The present (not the immediate present but like yesterday or today...you know what I mean.)

“ I think every story should really be a love story at its heart.

At least every play I’ve ever seen. “

- NINA

(The SEAGULL by Anton Chekhov)

A NOTE ON THE NOTATIONS:

1. A slash “ / ” indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is expressed aloud, as an aside or unintentionally.
3. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is not verbalized / MAY be expressed nonverbally.

A CLARIFICATION REGARDING TYPOS:

Nope. They aren't. Did I miss one (or two)?—probably. But for the most part, if you see a typo, such as a word repeated, a grammatical error, lower case or UPPER CASE used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), it was, indeed, intended.

A REMARK ON THE LIES THAT FOLLOW:

There are a good number of lies in the pages that follow. If one was to take these characters at face value of what they say half the play would be lost. The characters here lie to themselves as much as they do each other. Their lies are neither malicious nor Machiavellian in nature; they are almost always made with good intention. As an actor/director myself I so do NOT want to direct from the page nor rewrite the dialogue to support underlying intentions because this play is about the undercurrents and in order to be undercurrents they need to remain under (the dialogue). I have indicated a few of these moments simply to get the ball rolling; I invite you to make the leap and dive in. If you have questions, feel free to ask. Contact me anytime. Also: please note none of the stage directions you'll find here were set by a stage manager following some production's blocking notes, they reflect unspoken dialogue from myself (the playwright), so please, consider them as you would spoken word. Thank you.

SCENE 1

(At rise:

WEDNESDAY AM

A business office. A glass conference room, prominently placed, sits separated out from the rest of the office and desks.¹

JONATHAN, a middle-aged executive in casual business attire is staring at the recently evacuated front door as if watching his money walking away; as GINNY, his younger but not too young secretary/assistant, waits out the uncomfortable silence. But JONATHAN lets the moment linger. GINNY eventually pours him a cup of coffee, preparing it to his taste and sets it down in front of him. She then steps back away, returning to her previous position...waiting. As the scene/play progresses, we may (or may not) recognize that GINNY is a tad OCD and JONATHAN quite willing to overlook these qualities in her; therefore, they are indeed never discussed. Meanwhile JONATHAN takes a drink of the coffee, saying nothing, then sets the coffee back down, still poised to look out the closed door, lost in thought.)

GINNY

I'll...[just get back to my work. I'm here if you need...me...]

(No reply. Nor did she expect one.)

Yeah...

JONATHAN

Any messages?

GINNY

(Without moving to the phone other than to eye ball it for a "message light")

No.

JONATHAN

(Lets this sink in.)

You can switch the phones back on.

1 . In deference to "Bob" who almost always takes things too literally, and owing to the "magic" of theatre, there is no glass in the "glass" walls creating the "glass conference room". This allows us (the audience) to actually hear what may transpire inside the conference room; while those outside the *glass* conference room (aka actors) can not—or will at least *pretend* they can not (aka "acting")—for the benefit of carrying the story forward while allowing the audience (us) in on the fun...OK, enough of these side comments— let us continue on, shall we?)

GINNY
(Moving now:)

Yes...Sir...

JONATHAN
(Still preoccupied:)

Oh, don't give me that shit.

GINNY
(Innocently honest—trying to be supportive:)
You're upset; I'm just giving you space.

JONATHAN
Damned right I'm upset. I've got a right to be upset.

(Pause.)

JONATHAN
There are gonna be some changes around here.

GINNY
Whatever you want.

JONATHAN
We need back up. We need back up for our back up.

GINNY
You're right.

JONATHAN
I need access to all the files. To everybody's files.

GINNY
You got it.

JONATHAN
Are you writing this down?

GINNY
(As she starts to do so.)
Of course.

(GINNY finishes jotting down the notes. There is a pause. She responds by reading them back aloud:)

GINNY

You want back up. You want back up to the back up. You want access to everybody's files.

JONATHAN

I want changes.

GINNY

(Writing it down:)

Changes. Yes.

JONATHAN

And I control the passwords.

GINNY

Passwords controlled: got it.

JONATHAN

Gumby. With an "i"—

GINNY

With an "i".

JONATHAN

—Everybody's the same. I don't care: I want to have access.

GINNY

Access.

JONATHAN

Don't placate me.

GINNY

(She's not:)

I'm not.

JONATHAN

I am not in the mood.

(ELAINE enters, her age fits somewhere between Ginny and Jonathan's, she is also dressed for a casual business meeting but slightly undone, carrying several files and a commuter cup of coffee. She is late and she knows it. The overall lack of response to her arrival suggests:)

ELAINE

You didn't get my message. Fuck.

(Sets down her things onto a desk—hopefully her own. To herself more than anyone else:)

Cops.

JONATHAN

You were stopped by the cops?

(As the scene continues GINNY makes herself more scarce, returning to her own desk and busying herself with paperwork.)

ELAINE

I wish. I have had one hell of a morning. You're not going to belie—How did the meeting go?

JONATHAN

How do you think the meeting went?

ELAINE

(Blurting it out in self-defense:)

I found a head.

JONATHAN

How do you *think*..the meeting went?

ELAINE

We can reschedule.

(Opens her coffee mug and moves to refill it from the coffee pot.)

JONATHAN

No, they won't.

GINNY

Whaddo you mean you found a head?

(Senses Jonathan's disinterest:)

Sorry.

ELAINE

I mean, I found a fuckin' head.

JONATHAN

Give me one reason why I shouldn't fire you right now?

ELAINE

I found a fucking head.

JONATHAN

(To Ginny:)

You want to give us the room for a minute?

GINNY

...Of course.

(GINNY exits to the conference room to clean up.)

ELAINE

You wanna use the conference room?

JONATHAN

Fine. Ginny?

(GINNY changes gears and—after compulsively finishing the task she’s started—vacates the conference room, the three of them taking turns to walk thru the same doorway. JONATHAN closes the door behind them.²)

JONATHAN

(His demeanor slightly switching to an honest concern for Elaine’s well-being:)

Have you been drinking?

ELAINE

One drink. I found a fucking head.

JONATHAN

You’ve already said that.

ELAINE

Hear me out on this: this is not normal for me. I was driving down the stretch of Telegraph, coming the back way ‘cuz there’s less traffic—

JONATHAN

(adjusting himself back to the business at hand:)

You coming to a point?

ELAINE

[Really? You’re going to do that: you’re going to interrupt?...]...I don’t want to start over.

² PLEASE NOTE: that although JONATHAN and ELAINE are in a “separate room” from GINNY; the walls are only glass and any loud remarks will be clearly heard in the next room. And they ALL know this.

JONATHAN

You are so fucking fired.

ELAINE

On the turn right before Gull Canyon, at the foot of this hill I had to swerve [the car] cuz there was something in the road. I don't run over things like other people do. It was a plastic bag like you can still get to put lettuce in at the grocery store AND it was looking at me. So, I stopped the car to see what fuck it was and it was...a head.

JONATHAN

A human head?

ELAINE

Yes.

JONATHAN

Male or female?

ELAINE

I don't know. There was all this blood—so I don't know whether there was lipstick or...there was no facial hair but—I...

(Gathers her composure together as best she can—
continuing where he would want to hear:)

I couldn't get any reception on my fucking phone out in the middle of nowhere but there was one of those Callbox things the highway patrol put out before we all had cell phones and I called..it in and I had to wait for the cops to show up and I asked them to call you and explain what was going on but obviously they didn't; so, I'm a bit of a mess right now and yes, I had a drink, wouldn't you?

(A beat.)

JONATHAN

You are so fucking fired.

ELAINE

You don't believe me?

JONATHAN

[Would you?]

(Pause.)

JONATHAN

That account cost me six figures.

ELAINE

This was not a normal morning.

(Pause.)

ELAINE

I'm going to let you—I'm going to let you calm down...before you decide anything rash here. Because I can back this up. There is a police report with my name on it somewhere. Because this is not shit you just make up like my alarm didn't go off or I had a flat or something.

JONATHAN

Good to know.

ELAINE

Oh, fuck you.

JONATHAN

That's not the way you beg for your job back.

ELAINE

You're serious?

JONATHAN

Do I look like I'm joking?

ELAINE

What a fucking prick.

JONATHAN

Go home.

ELAINE

Bullshit.

(The phone rings. GINNY moves to get to it but not before it rings again:)

JONATHAN

Ginny.

GINNY

On it.

(Into the phone:)

Matterson's Chemicals; this is Ginny speaking, how may I help you? - Just a moment, I'll see if he's / available—

JONATHAN
I'm / not.

ELAINE
We're / in a meeting.

GINNY
—He's in a meeting. Is there anything I can help you with? - They're both in a meeting.

ELAINE
Who / is it?

JONATHAN
She / doesn't work here.

GINNY
Can I put you into his voicemail? - Certainly.

JONATHAN
(Opening the door to get a clear answer:)
Who is it?

GINNY
Dave Piero / from Dow.

JONATHAN
Put him to my voicemail.

GINNY
Yes..sir.

JONATHAN
I swear, if you keep that up, you're next.

(Enough said. GINNY returns to her silent work while JONATHAN returns to the conference room, closing the door behind himself. There is a brief silence.)

ELAINE
So, what exactly happened with Lobero Labs?

JONATHAN
They left.

ELAINE

They'll understand.

JONATHAN

They're not an understanding group of people.

ELAINE

You want me to talk to them?

JONATHAN

They won't believe you. / Hell, I don't believe you.

ELAINE

I can back it up.

JONATHAN

With pictures? 'Cuz you better have pictures with a time stamp. [Because] these people chose us because we promised to overcome setbacks not create them. I didn't have anything. I didn't have files or handouts, power point: nothing. I looked like a fool.

ELAINE

You're not / a f—

JONATHAN

Oh, I know that—Oh, yes I am. For relying on you: that makes me a fool.

ELAINE

I'll get them back. Jesus—

JONATHAN

Yeah, 'cause he's about the only one who could pull off a miracle like this. Why didn't you call?

ELAINE

I didn't have any / reception.

JONATHAN

You called the / police.

ELAINE

On a CallBox. God, I just told you that. And I asked them to call you and they said they would but obviously they didn't. They dropped / the ball.

JONATHAN

You dropped it—it's just like you to blame this on some—You could have left after you called it in.

ELAINE

They asked me not to.
I was in shock.

JONATHAN

You could have left long enough to get reception and make a phone call.

ELAINE

I couldn't / leave.

JONATHAN

Why not?

ELAINE

I / couldn't.

JONATHAN

Why not?

ELAINE

Because it was in the middle of the road. Someone would've run it over.

JONATHAN

You could have moved it.

ELAINE

I wasn't going to touch it.

JONATHAN

It was in a plastic bag.

ELAINE

OH. MY. GOD.

(Pause.)

JONATHAN

(a moment of caring intervention:)

You know what I think? I think you were running late. I think you had too much to drink last night and you followed it with a hair of the dog this morning. You heard about this on the radio and you're just using it to save your fucking job.

ELAINE

I was the one who [called it in]... They have a report with my name on it.

JONATHAN

Go home, Elaine.

ELAINE

Am I still fired?

JONATHAN

Whaddo you think?

ELAINE

I think I'm not leaving here until I know.

JONATHAN

Have it your way.

(He exits the conference room. Starts looking through desk drawers. To Ginny:)

She doesn't leave that room. She doesn't have access to her desk. You got that?

GINNY

Maybe after things calm down.

JONATHAN

(Writing quickly on forms and signing them.)

She had the chance. She didn't leave. She pushed it.

GINNY

If she really found a head...

JONATHAN

[Et tu Brute?]

(Hands Ginny the paperwork—a sincere job offer:)

You want the promotion?

GINNY

Excuse me?

JONATHAN

Serve these. Have her sign them. Get her passwords.

GINNY

...Are you sure about this?

JONATHAN

This has been a long time coming.

GINNY

You two have...history.

JONATHAN

So do you and I. I can hire another her or I can hire another you. It's your call. You want the promotion—consider it a test. Or I can hire another both of you.

(Pause. JONATHAN drops the paperwork on the desk between them. He then gets his car keys out of his coat, picks up the files brought in by Elaine and heads for the front door:)

GINNY

Where are / you going?

JONATHAN

To save an account.

GINNY

How?

(But he's gone. Pause.)

ELAINE

Can I come out now?

(GINNY just stares down at the papers on the desk. Pause. ELAINE quietly opens the conference room door and steps just outside of it.)

ELAINE

Is he gone?

GINNY

(Doing her best to cover her own uneasiness with confrontation—trying to keep from apologizing:)

You're not supposed to leave the conference / room.

ELAINE

Oh, for godsakes, give it a break. I trained *you*, remember?

GINNY

He could come back at any moment.

ELAINE

He's not coming back.

GINNY

He could have left something behind.

ELAINE

Only his dignity.

GINNY

Either way.

ELAINE

Really? OK. We'll play it your way.

(She steps back into the conference room.)

(GINNY follows her in. She struggles a moment: debating whether to close the door or not behind herself.)

ELAINE

(Seated at the center of the table.)

Leave it open. I like the fresh air.

(As GINNY sits down:)

Funny, isn't it? A room made of glass and there are no real windows.

GINNY

(Not looking at her:)

I'm going to need your passwords to your computer.

ELAINE

(Reaching for the paperwork.)

We're doing this, are we?

GINNY

(Pulling the paperwork back.)

And your phone.

ELAINE

It's *my* phone.

GINNY

(Clarifying:)

The password for your phone—for your voicemail.

ELAINE
Pokey.

GINNY
With an “i”?

ELAINE
Whaddo you mean with an “i”?—Of course not with an “i”. E-Y—(well, actually with numbers for the vowels).

GINNY
“P-Zero-K-Three-Y”?

ELAINE
Yeah.

GINNY
(Writing it down:)
Thank you. And that’s the password for...?

ELAINE
Guess.

GINNY
Both, I imagine.

ELAINE
You don’t have to do this, you know.

GINNY
[...It’s not because I want to.]

ELAINE
Then don’t.

GINNY
If I don’t: he’ll fire me too.

ELAINE
Nobody’s getting fired. We’ve got him by the balls, don’t you know that? Take a risk.
We’ve both slept with him.
Oh for god[sakes] don’t pretend you’re [not]—or that you didn’t know.

GINNY
No, I knew...

ELAINE

Or that you're not.

Look, if you want, I can tie you up and make it look like I overpowered you, if you like. We've got zip ties. I'll be gentle.

(GINNY just looks at her as if to ask, "What would that accomplish?")

ELAINE

It's a joke.

(A pause.)

GINNY

Did you really find a head?

ELAINE

...Yeah.

GINNY

I would've thrown up.

ELAINE

I'm not saying I didn't.

GINNY

[Oh my God.]

ELAINE

He'll find out. He'll know the truth then this'll all be behind us.

(The phone rings.)

GINNY

[Sorry, I have to...]

ELAINE

[Of course. Go ahead.]

GINNY

I'll be right back.

ELAINE

(Indicating the conference room phone:)

Phone right there.

GINNY

I may have to look up something.

ELAINE

Do what you gotta do.

(GINNY exits the conference room to answer the phone.
ELAINE remains in the conference room for a moment or
two then allows herself access out to the rest of the office.
She retrieves her coffee.)

GINNY

Hello, Matterson's Chemical; Ginny speaking, how can I— Excuse me? Excuse
me—No. No hablo espan...ol.

(To a dial tone:)

(asshole)

ELAINE

Welcome to America.

GINNY

You're / not—

ELAINE

Lighten up.

(Takes another drink of her coffee as she gathers things
from her own desk:)

So, how're we gonna do this?

GINNY

You know I have to fire you.

ELAINE

Why?

GINNY

Because...

ELAINE

Because you want my job? You have to fire me so you can take my job. Damn
girl, aren't you the shit?

GINNY

...He offered me / the job.

ELAINE

Of course he did.

GINNY

If I don't / fire you—

ELAINE

Then how will you get my job? Right? But what happens when I come back? I take my job back then you just slide back to yours; so: what's the point?

GINNY

Unless he keeps me in your job AND he takes you back and then he'll have to just hire another secretary.

ELAINE

An assistant.

GINNY

Whatever.

ELAINE

There isn't enough business.

GINNY

But like you said, [we have him by the balls]. He gives me the promotion: I keep the promotion.

ELAINE

...I'm starting to like you.

GINNY

(just shy of apologizing:)

So, you see why I have to fire you?

ELAINE

Be my guest. Where do I sign?

GINNY

(Showing her as she finds them:)

Here. Here. And here.

(Utilizing some Post-it© style arrows she begins applying the page flags accordingly.)

ELAINE

(Lengthening it out:)

And what if I don't sign? Am I still fired? If I don't sign.

GINNY

(Trying to stay on task:)

...I would imagine.

ELAINE

You don't know? I've had a real fucked morning. Getting fired is hardly the cherry on the top of it all. You ever seen a dead person? Up close? Part of a dead person?

GINNY

That must've..been [horrible for you.]

ELAINE

(Topping off her coffee, eyeing things about the office as the scene continues:)

It's not something you take sober; I'll tell you that. So, whaddo I get out of it?

GINNY

[What?]

ELAINE

If I sign? Whaddo I get?

GINNY

I...What's coming to you I [suppose].

ELAINE

When?

GINNY

I don't know these things.

ELAINE

You should, you're firing me.

GINNY

Do you know these things?

ELAINE

(Shrugs:)

I've never had to fire me.

GINNY

You know what I mean.

ELAINE

No, I don't think I'm going to sign.

GINNY

Oh, come [on]. You said it your[self], it's just a formality.

ELAINE

Why?

GINNY

Because we've..got him..by the balls.

ELAINE

Oh...Dammit.

GINNY

What?

ELAINE

We were so close. We were so close to having that scene about two women discussing something other than a man.

GINNY

what the hell are you talking about?

ELAINE

You never slipped—not even once?—You know, that test? Some women's lib group came up with it for the movies. If two women can have a scene without discussing a man.

GINNY

You're batshit, you know that?

ELAINE

Maybe.

GINNY

What're you looking for?

ELAINE

Evidence. Evidence that I was here. That I meant something. [That I] made a difference. [That I was] not some head on a platter for you to come along when you just happen to be driving by.

(Stops, pointing at her:)

You would have run it over, right?

GINNY

what?

ELAINE

I stopped. I stayed there so no one...but you, you're the type: you would've run right over it, wouldn't you? Why? To hear it crack or...smoosh?

GINNY

Now you're just being a jerk.

ELAINE

You want my job? You earn it. You gotta get me to sign.
(The challenge:)

Get me to sign.

See? Now we have a scene. Now we have a scene (not about a man).

GINNY

[You're not making any sense:] this isn't a movie.

ELAINE

It could be though—it could be. Didn't you ever want to be in the movies—when you were a kid? Growing up? Didn't you? I know I did. And this...this is just surreal enough...

GINNY

..I know what you're trying to do..

ELAINE

Do you?

GINNY

You're trying to make me bond with you. It's a sales game. Trying to make me think we're friends.

ELAINE

Aren't we?

That hurts.

GINNY

I'm just trying to do my job. I can't afford to lose my [job]. You can afford to lose yours, but I can't afford to lose mine.

ELAINE

Next time try to pull out some tears.

(A slight beat.)

GINNY

Sign the fucking papers.

ELAINE

I don't think so. I'm not feeling it.

(The phone rings. The two women look at each other.
ELAINE nods: "Go ahead". GINNY does so:)

GINNY

Matterson's Chemical, Ginny speaking, how may I help you? - No, she's still here. - Almost done.

ELAINE

Let me talk to him.

(GINNY pushes the paper in front of Elaine. Mouthing "Sign *one*". ELAINE in return brushes her fingers against her thumb on one hand [*indicating cash*] "when do I get paid?")

GINNY

She's a little upset. - Wouldn't you be? - I can't.

ELAINE

Put him on speaker.

(GINNY points to the papers. ELAINE reaches for the phone—GINNY tries to pull it away.)

GINNY

I can't.

(After a short struggle ELAINE presses "speaker".)

JONATHAN (On speaker)

—If I TELL you to let me talk to her, you LET me talk to her. IS SHE THERE OR NOT?

(The women look at each other. Neither answer.)

GINNY

She's still / here.

JONATHAN (On speaker)

Then you—Has she signed?

GINNY
(Looking ELAINE squarely in the eyes.)

Yes.

JONATHAN (On speaker)

...Dammit.

GINNY

What?

JONATHAN (On speaker)

Nothing. No. Good, good—I know that had to be hard for you. Let her cry, I'll talk to her later.

(ELAINE is now going through desk drawers.)

GINNY

Was that head thing for real?

JONATHAN (On speaker)

That's what I wanted to talk to her about but YES, Yes, the damned thing's for real. They're talking about it on the radio.

GINNY

Do they have a name?

JONATHAN (On speaker)

What does that—No: they're not even saying whether it's a male or female yet—just that they're still looking for other body parts—Am I on speaker?

GINNY

Why? What makes / you say—

JONATHAN (On speaker)

Why am I on speaker—She IS there, / isn't she?

GINNY

Jonathan.

JONATHAN (On speaker)

Put her on. Put the bitch on.

ELAINE

Hey. Watch who you're calling a / bitch.

I've got a plan. JONATHAN (On speaker)

I was fired, remember? ELAINE

Forget about that. JONATHAN (On speaker)

I want my money. ELAINE

You'll get your money. JONATHAN (On speaker)

When? ELAINE

When?: whaddo you mean when? JONATHAN (On speaker)

And severance, because you fired me. ELAINE

For cause. JONATHAN (On speaker)

The law states I get paid immediately. Severance, vacation time, holiday and / Bonuses. ELAINE

You quit. JONATHAN (On speaker)

How do / you figure? ELAINE

I'm not going thru this with you right now—BECAUSE I told you to go home. I told you and you didn't. I gave you an order: you refused: it's called involuntary resignation—that's the same as quitting. JONATHAN (On speaker)

I signed your fucking papers and they say you fired me. ELAINE

(GINNY slides her the papers. She signs.)

JONATHAN (On speaker)
 Ginny?
 GINNY
 Yes sir?
 JONATHAN (On speaker)
 Did she sign the papers?
 GINNY
 I have them right here in front of me.
 JONATHAN (On speaker)
 Fuck. When do I have to pay her?
 ELAINE
 (Quoting:)
 “Immediately upon termination.”
 JONATHAN (On speaker)
 Ginny?
 GINNY
 (Already on the computer looking it up on the internet:)
 I’m looking it up.
 ELAINE
 Why did you call?
 JONATHAN (On speaker)
 You don’t work here anymore. I’ll figure it out without you.
 GINNY
 (Picking up the phone—switching off speaker to handset:)
 Jonathan? - She’s right. - I didn’t write the law, I just read it. - How was I
 supposed to stop yo— - Yes. - Yes. - Yes. - I’ll tell her. - I will. - I WILL. - Good
 luck.
 (She hangs up.)
 ELAINE
 Wha’d he say?
 GINNY
 He said he doesn’t need luck.
 (Slight pause.)

GINNY

Be back at the end of the day. Your check will be waiting for you.

(ELAINE just stares at her.)

ELAINE

Fine.

(She starts for the door.)

GINNY

Wha'd you take?

ELAINE

Nothing that wasn't mine.

(And she exits.)

(Slight pause. The phone rings. GINNY answers it.)

GINNY

Matterson's Chemicals. Ginny speaking. How may I help you? - No, he isn't in right now, is there something I can help you with?

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 2

(At rise:

WEDNESDAY PM

The office phone is heard ringing...once, twice...as the lights fade back up almost immediately.

GINNY is still seated at her desk. However, the phone at her ear is a cell phone while the office phone continues to ring. The lights in the office however do not come on. It is after hours and but for GINNY's presence there is no other sign of business as usual. She is lit solely by the light of the computer monitor in front of her, surfing the web. The office phone switches off—during the following:)

GINNY

(Already on the verge of panic, she stifles it down—speaking in hushed tones so as not to be heard beyond the room:)

I swear...It's been three hours and she's still out [there]— — I can't leave. — I can't, I told you— Because — BECAUSE—Of course I've tried to call him, whaddo you think I've been doing? — Don't start. — It's been a great test [thank you very much]. — No, I am *not* online. —Oh shit, they found a hand. — OK, I'm online but I'm not—in a dumpster—no, there's not a picture. — And no, I'm not playing poker. Because I blocked them, thank you very much. I've not been tempted]. Not even. — Because I'm not an idiot. — No, he isn't.—Because you don't understand hi— — He can be quite charming when he wants to. — Yes, I hear exactly what I'm saying. — He is not. — Because, he needs me. — Yes, I'm sure . — Fine, do what you [have to]—if you have to leave: leave—You have to leave, I understand. — No, no: Don't put him the bathroom. — Because last time you did that he ate a bottle of hair / conditioner.

(The phone rings again.)

GINNY

No, that's not him: that's her. — She knows / I'm in here.

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

I know you're in there.

GINNY

My car is still in the parking lot. — Yes, Jonathan rescheduled the presentation. — I know that was hours ago but— — And what would you know about it?

(She travels away from her desk and retreats further into the office; burying herself in the conference room.)

— Yes, I want to go home. — No. — Because I told you.

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

You can run but you can not hide—well, actually you can not run; all you can do is hide—So, what I mean to say is you can hide but you can not run.

GINNY

Fine, put him in the tub but take everything out of it. – He what? – When?

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

I've got all night. All week—Allll weekend. I've got nowhere else to be right now.

GINNY

(Forcing herself to implode rather than explode:)

And you were going to tell me this when? – [Do] you know how much those shoes cost—how did he get into my closet? – What're you doing trying on my things? – Just go. Go. Everybody go home. (God).

(GINNY doesn't move other than hanging up her cell phone. All her focus goes into her breathing; slow and steady and rhythmic..she is possibly experiencing the pangs of a self-induced panic attack.)

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

I've got my phone. And I've got Netflix. One more episode of Breaking Bad³ and then I've really got to reconsider this arrangement.

GINNY

(To no one in particular—perhaps the phone:)

(You owe me.)

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

So, he re-land the account yet? Left you holding the bag? Welcome to my world.

(GINNY continues actively breathing as she starts texting on her phone.)

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)

I'm calling for a pizza. Whaddo you want on your half?

(No reply.)

Be that way: anchovies and pineapple it is.

GINNY

(To her phone as she continues spiraling towards collapse:)

(I am officially on overtime.)

³ "Breaking Bad" is only a place-keeper title...please change this show title as often as you like (in keeping with the character).

(The phone rings. Then suddenly stops. GINNY doesn't respond.)

ELAINE (Offstage/outside the front door)
Sorry, that was me: my bad—misdialed. Last chance to put in your order.

(GINNY continues to focus on her breathing.)

(The lights fade out again.)

SCENE 3

(At rise:
FRIDAY AM

(JONATHAN, dressed for another business day, or perhaps yesterday's business day—because it looks like he's been up all night in his present attire. He is drinking coffee: black, and all but pacing a hole in the floor when ELAINE, also dressed for a new day but with much less attention to her business acumen, enters.)

JONATHAN

Where the hell have you been?

ELAINE

Well, hello to you too; Where's my / money?

JONATHAN

(Tossing it onto the nearest desk:)

Here. Every penny. I need your help.

ELAINE

(Taking the envelope and opening it.)

So, you said.

JONATHAN

It's all there. Please.

ELAINE

Should've held back then.

JONATHAN

I'm serious. That's why I paid you up front. I want you to know I'm serious here. No games. I'm being totally honest with you.

ELAINE

(Looking over the check:)

Anytime a man says he's being totally honest—You didn't sign it.

JONATHAN

Oh, crap, that was a mistake. Seriously. A complete—give it / to me.

ELAINE

Here.

JONATHAN

(As he signs it:)

Here you go. No tricks. Nothing. This just shows you how...

(Giving her back the check... trying to find another way to put it:)

I'm fucked here.

(A beat.)

ELAINE

Well, you did make a new pot of coffee and I wouldn't want that to go to waste.

JONATHAN

Thank you.

(They both are sitting now. A beat.)

JONATHAN

Did you want me to get you some coffee?

ELAINE

Well, it's not going to pour itself.

JONATHAN

Right. Right.

(Crosses to fix her a cup.)

ELAINE

I know I shouldn't be doing this.

JONATHAN

(As he fixes her coffee:)

No, really. Thank you. Thank you.

ELAINE

So, you talked your way into getting Lobero to give you another shot at getting the account back?

JONATHAN

Yeah...fuck that.

ELAINE

I thought that's what you wanted?

JONATHAN

...Yeah...So did I...

ELAINE

So?...What's all the mystery for?

JONATHAN

I told 'em your story.

ELAINE

My...?

JONATHAN

About the head. But I told 'em *I* found it—I told 'em I saw it and—but instead of calling it in—like you did—I...put myself in their place and I knew I had a presentation to make so—I stressed to them how their account came first to me.—

ELAINE

Thank you.

JONATHAN

I—That's not what I'm [saying here: just] hear me out: I told them that finding the head like that threw me off my game, see, because I'm only human after all—and I didn't want to admit to it because—

ELAINE

You're a man.

JONATHAN

[If you say so.] I didn't want to show them my weakness—because I so wanted to sprint ahead to the finish line.

ELAINE

Nobody uses athletic metaphors anymore.

JONATHAN

That's not the point—OK, I get you—so I convinced them to let me have another shot at the presentation.

ELAINE

You *have* my files, whaddo you need from *me*?

JONATHAN

I did good. I was...solid. I had them right there...because...They bought it; right there.

ELAINE

You sold 'em. Good for you. Are you done?

JONATHAN

They bought the *excuse*. I mean they believed I saw the head before you did.

ELAINE

Whaddo you want; a medal?

JONATHAN

I mean they *believed* it.

ELAINE

What-do-you-want-from-me?

(JONATHAN stares at her at a loss for words.)

ELAINE

It turned out to be a woman, you know.

JONATHAN

I know. I know. You want to know how I know?—I know because the police have been questioning me about it for the last twelve hours. Because, if you can tell: I haven't been home. Because it seems if I saw the head before you did—before you called it in—then I was the last to see the head before it was called in. You understand? Which makes me a “person of interest.”

ELAINE

Wow.
Sucks to be you.

JONATHAN

You have to tell them the truth.

ELAINE

...Which is?

JONATHAN

That we were together. You and me drove in together and—we caravanned: we caravanned together and I went to the meeting and you stayed back to do your civic duty and that's when you called it in after we were together and I left you for you to call it in...

ELAINE

...What else?

JONATHAN

What else what?

ELAINE

What aren't you telling me—How did they find out about your story in the first place?

JONATHAN

Some Dudley DoRight from Lobero Labs: I don't know. Somebody told his wife or his...who the hell knows but the police were pretty...serious...

ELAINE

And they let you out?

JONATHAN

Go figure. Maybe they're following me. Maybe they want me to lead them to the rest of the body, hell if I know—Oh My God, do you think they're actually following me?

ELAINE

I'm loving this. Is that wrong?

JONATHAN

Great. Good. I'm glad you're enjoying yourself.

ELAINE

They freeze your assets?

JONATHAN

What?

ELAINE

(Referring to the check:)

This is going to bounce, isn't it?

(A beat.)

JONATHAN

Like a red rubber ball. Everything on the table. Anything you want to ask me: I just need your help.

ELAINE

...Anything?

JONATHAN

Anything.

ELAINE

Oh, this could be fun.

JONATHAN

I am a blank slate.

ELAINE

...Where were you that night?

JONATHAN

...with Ginny.

(ELAINE lets this sink in.)

JONATHAN

And her yappy dog. In my defense we—

(“we” Meaning: Jonathan and Elaine.)

—been over for...before anything ever started between us.

(“us” meaning: Jonathan and Ginny.)

ELAINE

Not like you and me and your wife?

JONATHAN

...No.

ELAINE

And the woman?

JONATHAN

What woman?

ELAINE

The woman without a head?

JONATHAN

Oh my God, I know nothing about that woman. I had never even seen her before /
in my life.

ELAINE

Before?

JONATHAN

They showed me her picture. It was...

It's just...

ELAINE

What else?

“It was just...”?

JONATHAN

We both...*happened* to be at...BUT I *never* saw her there...both of us...were at the same..bar...the night before...

ELAINE

Before...?

JONATHAN

Before: you know. / But separately. I never even saw here there.

ELAINE

Oh. Fuck.

JONATHAN

Because God hates me. And because YOU—because YOU had to stop your car.

ELAINE

What?

JONATHAN

No, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm not—I wasn't going to....I...need...

ELAINE

Groveling is new for you, isn't it?

JONATHAN

I need you to help me: To tell them you were with me at the bar. And then we drove in to work together.

ELAINE

And Ginny-kins?

JONATHAN

What about her?

ELAINE

Why wasn't she with you at the bar?

JONATHAN

She just wasn't.

ELAINE

So, you were "with" Ginny before or after you went to the bar in question?

JONATHAN

Ha-ha: After—what the hell / does that have to do with—

ELAINE

So, Ginny was just a booty call?

JONATHAN

[I'm not going to dignify that with an answer.]

ELAINE

Oh God, you are just pathetic, aren't you?

JONATHAN

You were with me at the bar: that's what I need. Please. So? What are your demands?

ELAINE

No more questions?

JONATHAN

Any questions. Anything at all.

ELAINE

And if you lie to me?

JONATHAN

No lies. My car. My car. You can have my car.

(Clarifying that:)

If I lie you can have my car—Unless...you'd just rather *have* my car?

ELAINE

(Looks into his eyes for a good time before answering:)

You're serious, aren't you?

JONATHAN

I didn't do it, if that's what you're thinking / if that's your first question—

ELAINE

Oh my god, I know you didn't do it. You're all bark and no bite; you couldn't gut a fish / let alone—

JONATHAN

OK, enough of that—no, No, that's good. Remember the camping trip in Mira Vista? Bring that up if the police ask you.

ELAINE

That I had to gut your fish for you? Sure; I'm sure I can just ease that into the conversation. In the first place I have no need to talk to the police again: I made my statement. And if I recant my statement now and tell them yours how does that not make [me] look like the guilty party here?

JONATHAN

Nobody's the guilty party here, that's the point I'm trying to / make.

ELAINE

So just tell them the truth.

JONATHAN

You don't think I tried? Nobody believes the truth. The truth isn't good enough, we need / a lie that's believable.

ELAINE

Well, I'm not telling them I stood around for a half an hour so you can make it on time to the meeting before I called it in. They're going to ask me what I was doing for that half an hour.

JONATHAN

The meeting was at seven.

ELAINE

I told you I was running late.

JONATHAN

A half an hour?

ELAINE

This isn't helping anything.

JONATHAN

You are so fired.

ELAINE

Why do you think I took the back road—Whaddo you keep looking at your watch for? Truth:

JONATHAN

We need to open / up at—

ELAINE

Business as usual?

JONATHAN

I may need to pay for a lawyer, thank you very much.

ELAINE

Ginny? Ginny's coming in. To open up, isn't she?
Ginny, doesn't know?

JONATHAN

She knows...enough.

ELAINE

[But she doesn't know I'm here:] Why don't you want you and me to talk in front of her?

JONATHAN

(Sloughing the thought off:)

...Please.

ELAINE

Why?

JONATHAN

She...She thinks—she thinks you still have a thing for me. Or that I have a thing for you.

ELAINE

She doesn't know she was just a booty call, does she?

JONATHAN

I wouldn't say that.

ELAINE

Wouldn't say she *doesn't know*? Or wouldn't say she *isn't*?

JONATHAN

(Deflecting again:)

I'm in real trouble here.

ELAINE

(“Innocently”):

Why; What did you do?

JONATHAN

NOTHING.

ELAINE

So, tell them that. God, haven't you ever heard "the truth will set you free"?

(But JONATHAN just stares at her.)

Alright, let me get this straight: You want me to help you come up with a lie we can both live with and in return you'll tell me the truth about anything I want to know?

JONATHAN

Well, when you say it like that.

ELAINE

How many questions do I get?

JONATHAN

This isn't a game!

ELAINE

Of course it is.

You little boys with your little lies. Trying to get around the truth so much that when the truth comes up to save you it sounds like the lie your hiding from. You are such sorry excuses for anything.

JONATHAN

I'll double your check.

ELAINE

You have no money; your assets are frozen.

JONATHAN

I have money.

ELAINE

Where?

JONATHAN

...I have it.

ELAINE

That's sounding like a lie. A lie of omission is still a lie.

JONATHAN

...Ask your questions.

(ELAINE takes her time considering all her choices then finally settles on:)

ELAINE

Why do you not want Ginny here while we talk?

(After too long a hesitation, quietly comes the dawn:)

Oh my god, you care about her. don't answer that.

(There is a slightly awkward silence but before either can recover from the direction of their conversation: in walks GINNY, dressed for a new day at the office, carrying a cloth suit bag filled with clothes. GINNY sees ELAINE but before she can comment:)

GINNY

(As she enters:)

I brought / you a change of...

ELAINE

You owe her overtime. She was here till 10...

GINNY

(Keeping her thoughts close to the vest:)

Forty-five.

ELAINE

Ten forty-five the other night. Holding down the fort for you while you...

JONATHAN

...Fine.

GINNY

Fine?

JONATHAN

Fine.

ELAINE

Fine.

JONATHAN

Fine.

GINNY

Fine.

ELAINE

I left at ten fifteen. Why were you still here till ten forty-five?

GINNY

I fell asleep.

ELAINE

She could be fired for sleeping on the job. You have grounds.

JONATHAN

Why are you doing this to me?

GINNY

(What is she doing here?)

ELAINE

Jonathan?

GINNY

Jonathan?

JONATHAN

The truth, fine, the truth:...I don't know. She came here for her check. She came here to help me. She came here to fuck me over: I don't know.

ELAINE

Little bit of each.

GINNY

Yeah...right. Here are your / clothes.

ELAINE

Not like that.

(A slight beat.)

Jonathan is in deep doodoo here. I'm here to / help.

GINNY

She's staying?

ELAINE (Continued:)

(As an afterthought:)

And I'm here for my check.

(Another afterthought:)

And if he gets fucked over in the process, that's just icing on the cake, in'it?

(Repeating her poor grammar ["isn't it"] for his benefit:)

In'it?

(To Ginny:)

Don't worry darling, he's all yours.

ELAINE (Continued:)

(After a sufficient pause for effect:)

So, shall we get to work?

GINNY

What's she talking about?

(The phone rings. GINNY moves to answer it but:)

JONATHAN

Let it go to voicemail.

ELAINE

(Moving into the conference room:)

/ Who is it?

JONATHAN (Continued:)

Let them all go to voicemail.

ELAINE

(Reading the display of the conference room phone...connecting the account to the number:)

Dryer Cosmetics.

JONATHAN

(Considering the information:)

Voice mail.

(Meanwhile ELAINE rolls the whiteboard out of the conference room to set it up in the main office. Throughout the following scene the phone rings intermittently. Two rings and then voicemail picks up. We do not hear the messages. Meanwhile at this point both GINNY and JONATHAN are sitting at opposite desks. Through the following dialogue ELAINE draws a line vertically down the center of the board and a header on each side. **“TRUTH” “LIES”**)

GINNY

What's that for?

ELAINE

Brainstorming.

GINNY

Are you going to tell me what she's doing here—What we're doing here? Have you gotten any sleep?

JONATHAN

(To Ginny referring to Elaine:)

She knows.

GINNY

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

ELAINE

(Handing Ginny the marker:)

Then you can write things down.

(A beat...a bit of a showdown actually but GINNY relents and takes the marker, standing and crossing to the Whiteboard while ELAINE trades places with her at the desk. GINNY considers the headings Elaine has written and then turns back to both Jonathan and Elaine:

GINNY

[What am I looking at?]

ELAINE

[TRUTH:] "Where he was [that night]" and [LIES:] "What he wants people to actually believe"

GINNY takes the information in and, using the white board eraser, wipes off the headings and rewrites the following: A large "T"; above the top line she writes: "TIMELINE"; then in the left and right columns she writes: "A" and "B".)

JONATHAN

(to Elaine:)

(When you say it like that...)

ELAINE

(As GINNY continues writing:)

A rose by any other name.

(A beat.)

Jonathan? We need you to fill in "A".

JONATHAN

We are done with our questions?

ELAINE

We will be asking questions throughout.

GINNY

Why are you still here? Does she still work / here or what?

ELAINE

(Bringing Ginny up to date:)

He made me an offer. I'm going to help him out of his little predicament and he's going to tell us truths. About anything we ask.

JONATHAN

(Clarifying:)

Any/thing—

ELAINE

Anything WE ask.

(Silence: JONATHAN accepts the new terms.)

ELAINE

First we need a timeline of exactly / where you were at—

GINNY

Are you still sleeping with her?

JONATHAN

No.

ELAINE

That's the truth. When did you go to the bar?

JONATHAN

...Nine, maybe quarter of.

GINNY

(Still playing catchup:)

What were you doing at a bar; I thought you were helping your friend Barry move?

JONATHAN

We finished early.

GINNY

He was supposed to go jogging with me and Pepper.

JONATHAN

It's called walking a dog.

GINNY

Together. Did you or did you not help Barry move?

JONATHAN

...No.

GINNY

..What *did* you do?

JONATHAN

I went to watch the game at the bar.

ELAINE

What game?

JONATHAN

What?

ELAINE

What game? What bar? What time did you get there, what time did you leave?
(GINNY holds out the marker for JONATHAN who reluctantly rises to take over at the duties.)

Was it the same bar?

(Meanwhile GINNY has re-erased “B” and, using a new marker quickly rewrites the previous heading: “LIES”.)

ELAINE

Was it the same bar?

JONATHAN

The same bar?

(GINNY completes her edit by changing “A” to “TRUTH ?”.)

ELAINE

The same bar *she* was at?

JONATHAN

No.

GINNY

Who’s “she”?

ELAINE

When did you leave the first bar? And when did you go to the second bar? Were there other / bars?

GINNY

Why did you go to a second bar? And who / is “she”?

JONATHAN

Because Paddy’s waters down their drinks.

(As GINNY writes **PADDY’S** on the white board:)

“She” is the headless woman.

GINNY

What?/

What were you doing at the bar
with the headless woman?

ELAINE

Did you go anywhere between bars?

JONATHAN

She wasn’t headless at the time—And I wasn’t *with* her. I was at the same bar AS
her.

GINNY

You ... were “AS her”?

ELAINE

Did you two need a minute?

GINNY

Yes.

(GINNY crosses into the
conference room, expecting
Jonathan to follow.)

JONATHAN

No.

ELAINE

(Settling into her own desk:)

I’ll have a cigarette.

GINNY

I thought you gave those up.

ELAINE

I like holding it. I’m not gonna—You be in the other room.

(JONATHAN acquiesces, following GINNY into the
conference room, closing the glass door behind them.
ELAINE attempts to actively not listen.)

GINNY

(Quite contained:)

Why were you at a bar with the headless woman and why does *she* [Elaine] know more than me?

JONATHAN

(Actually, quite sincere:)

Babe, I know this is confusing. It's a lot of confusing: I didn't know I was at the bar with the woman who lost her head.

GINNY

Leticia. Her name is Leticia.

JONATHAN

Leticia.

GINNY

I read it online: Leticia Garcia.

ELAINE

(Unable to help from asking:)

Is she an illegal?

GINNY

What does that have to do with anything?

(Slight beat.)

ELAINE

I'm going to go outside and actually have a—one drag. Maybe two.

(And she leaves.)

JONATHAN

Close the / door.

ELAINE

Closing it.

(There is a beat: JONATHAN watches GINNY for a clue as to how to next approach this ... Nothing: he falls back to honesty ...)

JONATHAN

We're gonna get past this—We're gonna get *through* this and we're gonna get past this. I promise you.

GINNY

Why is she here?

JONATHAN

For her check, I told you, I promise; and since she was here—if she can help ...
[Why not use her help?] Right?

(GINNY does not respond.)

JONATHAN

I'm sorry, Babe.

GINNY

[For?]

JONATHAN

[All of it.]

GINNY

You owe me.

JONATHAN

Big time.

GINNY

Not like the last time when that guy from the meeting was trying to spike my
drinks and you just paid him off.

JONATHAN

Nothing like that.

GINNY

Cuz I've been played for a fool before, you know.

JONATHAN

Nobody thinks you're a—nobody's playing you for a fool.

GINNY

(trying to stand up for herself..this is all new to her..she
expands into using the rest of the office in order to feel less
trapped into the moment:)

I ran for class president in my Junior year in High School and Emily Tupelo
posted some pretty ... unflattering pictures of me and her brother Donny ... doing
it in the laundry room and ... she never recovered let me tell you. And she still
lost.

JONATHAN

(Following her out:)

And those pictures were / ... ?

GINNY

Not the point—Don't know why I brought that up—I just ... I'm not going to be made a fool of and if I'm going to take a gamble: It's my gamble and I don't gamble.

JONATHAN

[Anymore.]

GINNY

You need to be a sure thing. I need a sure thing.

JONATHAN

We are a sure thing. We just need to get past this and she [Elaine] can help. OK?

GINNY

...Ok.

JONATHAN

OK.

GINNY

OK.

JONATHAN

OK.

ELAINE

(Entering right on rhythm:)

OK, let's get on with this. Of course I was listening: that's what doors are for. So ... where were we? Right: "where were you?" Between bars: did you go anywhere between bars—Why did you leave—

(Reading the board:)

/—Paddy's?

GINNY

Did you bet on the game?

JONATHAN

...What does this have to do with anything we're / doing here?

GINNY

How much did you bet?
 You want me to be a part: I'm being a part:
 (To Elaine:)
 He has a problem with gambling.

ELAINE

I remember.

GINNY

How much did you lose?

JONATHAN

I..I won, OK? And I wanted a real drink to celebrate; not a watered down excuse for a...

(Gathers his composure:)

I've answered enough questions—FOR NOW—Can we focus on getting me out of this mess for the moment and come back to your “questions” later?

(The two women share a moment.)

ELAINE

No. We will continue to ask questions as we think of them.

GINNY

Because we might forget—we *are* just women, after all.

ELAINE

And once you have your “story” mapped out /...

GINNY

What's to keep you from *not* answering anymore questions?

ELAINE

Because he *needs* me to back up his “story”.

GINNY

He needs *us* to back up his “story”.

ELAINE

He needs *us*.

JONATHAN

I hate you both right now.

ELAINE

Noted. How much did you win?

JONATHAN

...Five grand.

GINNY

Five Grand is either six or seven.

JONATHAN

Who's side are you on?

ELAINE

(Lets this sink in:)

(Hunh.)

JONATHAN

Can we go on now?

ELAINE

Fill in your time line.

JONATHAN

How does this...?

ELAINE

Do it.

(JONATHAN takes a deep breath then fills in the following: to "PADDY's" he edits it to read:

6:00 - PADDY's

8:30 - leave ↑ (Paddy's)

8:45 -)

GINNY

(As he's writing:)

You left the apartment at five.

JONATHAN

What?

GINNY

You left at five. / Where were you—

JONATHAN

I did not. / It was closer to five-fifteen; *maybe*.

GINNY

Where were you from five-fifteen to six?

JONATHAN

I had to get there.

GINNY

Not for forty-five minutes.

ELAINE

She's right. Holes like this are where they / hang you...

JONATHAN

You realize I haven't even gotten to the bar where "she" was at yet?

(And with that he is writing down "**DeMarios**" next to 8:45)

GINNY

Leticia.

JONATHAN

We don't have to give her a name.

GINNY

We at *least* have to give her a name: it's *her* name after all.

ELAINE

We need to fill in the gaps.

JONATHAN

(jesus christ)...

(He squeezes in

"GAS /

EAT /

PEE"

into the space above PADDY's next to a timeline of

"5:15"

which he also squeezes in at the top of the list.)

GINNY

For forty-five minutes?

JONATHAN

(Adds "**WASH CAR**" into the timeline:)

Happy now?

ELAINE

Now you're just making shit up.

JONATHAN

I'm not making anything / up...

ELAINE

You have a receipt?

JONATHAN

No.

ELAINE

Then you're just making shit up.

JONATHAN

(Taking a stand:)

Let's move forward, OK?

ELAINE

How long were you at DeMarios? Truth.

(JONATHAN writes "10:40 - leave DeMarios.")

GINNY

What were you doing there for almost two hours?

JONATHAN

I told you.

GINNY

Collecting?

You have the money on you, right now?

(Again no reply.)

ELAINE

Well, do you?

JONATHAN

No.

ELAINE

Where is it?

GINNY

(Quietly but firmly bringing it up:)

Why did you hire me?

JONATHAN

WHAT?

GINNY

Did you hire me because I was qualified for the job or because you wanted to get into my pants?

JONATHAN

Can we table this for a future / conversation?

ELAINE

Answer her question.

JONATHAN

You were qualified for the job.

GINNY

Oh, I know that.

ELAINE

But what I think she's asking is "*Why* did you *hire* her?"

JONATHAN

(To Elaine: restating the facts:)

We weren't seeing each other at the time. I was divorced.

ELAINE

Because we were seeing each other when you were married.

JONATHAN

That's not my f—That's both of our f—That's nobody's fault.

(To Ginny:)

And I hired you because you were right for the job.

ELAINE

(Moving swiftly back to the timelines:)

So, you left DeMarios at 10:40. And nobody can verify you were there the whole time?

JONATHAN

Would I be asking for your help if they could?

ELAINE

The bartender?

JONATHAN

They changed shifts at ten.

ELAINE

Did one of them come in early? Did the other one stay late?

JONATHAN

They asked them. No help. Can we go on?

ELAINE

Right. What time did you get home?

JONATHAN

(Knowing she knows full well:)

I didn't go home.

ELAINE

Where did you go?

JONATHAN

You know where / I...

ELAINE

What time did he arrive at your place?

GINNY

(oddly embarrassed to admit this:)

The news had just come on. But they hadn't gotten to sports or weather yet...So, it was just after eleven maybe.

ELAINE

And did he stay all night?

(A brief pause.)

GINNY

Yes.

JONATHAN

Thank you.

ELAINE

Did he happen to leave at any point in the night?

GINNY

(beginning to relax more into the conversation:)

Not that I know of.

ELAINE

So, you don't know.

JONATHAN

[Really?]

GINNY

I was asleep but I think I would have known—I'm a light sleeper.

JONATHAN

Are you two through?

ELAINE

What do you need *me* for?

(JONATHAN is at a loss for words.)

Can people put you at DeMarios from 8:45 to 10:40?

GINNY

can we just make that "45"—make it an even two hours?

JONATHAN

Rea[lly]—?

(Makes the change on the whiteboard as he answers Elaine's "who can put you there" question:)

I don't know.

ELAINE

What time did "she" leave?

JONATHAN

I don't know. I didn't know she was there.

GINNY

(trying to be of help:)

Her name is / Leticia.

ELAINE

Got it: When did Leticia leave?

JONATHAN

I don't kn—see, I don't like using her name; it sounds like I know her.

GINNY

Did you know her?

JONATHAN

NO: I didn't even know her name until a moment ago!

ELAINE

When did Leticia leave the bar?

JONATHAN

I told you: I don't know. / Can we please just call her—

ELAINE

We need to know because we need to know if there was time for you to leave with Leticia. Do the deed. Then come back to DeMarios before you said you left at 10:40/45. Who else can put you at the bar?

JONATHAN

(To Elaine:)

YOU. YOU put me at the bar. The people I *was* with at the bar will NOT admit I was with them at the bar because I was collecting on a game, GOT IT?

ELAINE

So, where is the five-six or seven thousand dollars?

JONATHAN

At home in a jar in the kitchen.

GINNY

The empty Skippy Peanut Butter jar?

(He just looks at her—which answers everything.)

I was wondering what that was for. It's six.

ELAINE

His ex-wife was allergic to peanuts.

GINNY

Ohhhh. That explains so much. Her name was Alice, by the way.

ELAINE

I know her name.

JONATHAN

Are we done having fun on my account?

ELAINE

Why is this all such a problem for you? What aren't you telling us?

GINNY

Did you ever love her?

JONATHAN

...What?

GINNY

Do you still?

JONATHAN

What—how is this—?

ELAINE

(Doesn't want to hear the answer--moving back on track:)

What aren't you telling us?

JONATHAN

(He is now the deer in the headlights... There is no way to answer Ginny's question without hurting one if not both of their feelings... And following Elaine's lead would only result in the question being asked again...)

I need to—I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

I'm going to get us some donuts. Or do you want a breakfast? I'm buying.

(Finding anything he can to cover his appearance and putting it on as the dialogue continues:)

ELAINE

What're you doing?

JONATHAN

I need to breathe: *you* had a cigarette.

ELAINE

Two puffs.

JONATHAN

And while I'm gone you two make up your questions. Make a whole list and then I will answer them for you and then we'll get on with what's really important here.

(He drops a pad of paper in front of each of them. To Elaine:)

Bacon, cheese, egg: on a biscuit, no hashbrowns, orange juice.

JONATHAN (Continued:)

(To Ginny:)

Sausage and egg white, no cheese, on whatever they make it on, chocolate milk, ketchup. Hashbrowns?

GINNY

(Considers it:)

No.

JONATHAN

Fine.

(Looking at the phone:)

Somebody check the voicemail.

(Sunglasses on and he's out the door.)

GINNY

You may want to change your shirt—

(But he's gone. A slight beat.)

Man knows how to make an exit.

ELAINE

He should, he's had enough practice at it.

(They both take their pads of paper and consider what to write. ELAINE almost immediately sets her pad aside. GINNY, however, crosses with her pad to the conference room for privacy.)

ELAINE

Really?

(But GINNY continues unheeded.)

ELAINE (Continued:)

You know, if you have questions of me, this would be the time. Hard to do in separate rooms.

GINNY

(Remaining centered on her assignment:)

(No. Not at this time.)

ELAINE

Really?

(ELAINE refills her coffee instead of pursuing the matter any further. GINNY takes the chance:)

GINNY

Why did you come back this morning?

ELAINE

Why do you stay?

GINNY

[Fair point.]

(Slight pause. Coffee filled: ELAINE moves to join GINNY but maybe not any farther than the conference room door:)

ELAINE

I owe him. I've got nothin' else to do. I need the money. Stop me when I'm getting close.

GINNY

I thought those were *your* reasons.

ELAINE

Why would I tell you *my* reasons?

GINNY

To try to get me to like you. Try to get me to back down. A chance to throw me off my game. Stop *me* when *I'm* getting close.

ELAINE

I like the challenge. I was out of work for thirteen months when he gave me a shot when no one else'd hire me. I owe him for that.

GINNY

Why were you out of work for thirteen months?

ELAINE

Everybody was out of work. Or don't you remember?

GINNY

We're *supposed* to go after each other right now, aren't we?

ELAINE

You're catching on. [It's] another sales trick. Like when you go to buy a car and the salesman tells you, "let me go check that with my manager" and then he comes back a few minutes later—just enough time passes to make you uncomfortable but not long enough that you can leave. So, when he comes back out: he's back in control again. And you stop asking stupid questions.

ELAINE (Continued:)

(Tosses her own pad of paper over to Ginny.)

You want to fill ‘em out for both of us?

(Slight pause.)

GINNY

What else?

ELAINE

Whaddo you mean, “What else”?

GINNY

You keep asking *him* that—so, I’m asking *you* the same. Without him here.

ELAINE

Oh my god, you know what he’s doing and you’re doing it anyway.

GINNY

I am not. This is my own question.

ELAINE

And you actually think that. [This is incredible.]

GINNY

Don’t treat me like I’m a little kid.

(ELAINE chooses not to reply—although a response is right at the tip of her lips.)

I am not. You don’t know when to let go. He’s not coming back to you. He left his wife because you and he had an affair and he lost his kid out of it. So, try as you want you will always be the reason he lost his child.

ELAINE

And you are only going to grow older. And there’ll be a younger, newer model right in line to replace you.

GINNY

Younger. Newer. You hear yourself?

ELAINE

I do not like where this conversation is going.

GINNY

Then leave. [You’re not me.]

ELAINE

Honey, I *was* you. You think I'm here for him? Maybe I'm here for you: to rescue / you—

GINNY

From him?

ELAINE

From yourself. And not lose the next five or six prime Real Estate years you've got left. And I need the money. I'm behind in everybody I owe and he knows that so he dangles firing me and does so on a semi-annual basis.

GINNY

I didn't start here yesterday.

ELAINE

So, you know. Truth is: I do owe him. He was there for me when I went through crap with my family. Now I'm there for him. I just don't want you to get caught up in his daily drama which is obviously a little late.

GINNY

Thanks, Mom.

ELAINE

Think nothing of it.

GINNY

Right there with you.

ELAINE

How'd you get so cynical at such a young age?

GINNY

I'm not cynical, I'm [an optimist] a realist.

ELAINE

A pessimist.

GINNY

A realist.

ELAINE

You know they say a pessimist is only an optimist with experience. So, what happened in your past that made you the woman you are today?

GINNY

And now you're doing just what he wanted us to do.

ELAINE

You grab at any chance for real happiness you have, got it? Don't let anything get in the way and don't let road blocks like Jonathan here slow you down.

GINNY

You really should be writing hallmark cards.

ELAINE

OK, let's just get this over with: let's play Queen For A Day. You tell me one sob story that'll wrench out my heart and then I'll do the same.

GINNY

Queen – for – a -...?

ELAINE

It was before any of our time. Just...play

GINNY

[I have no idea what you're talking about,] You go first.

ELAINE

Fine.

GINNY

And winner gets?

ELAINE

A washer-dryer. My brother came out of the closet and my father didn't take it well. My mother and I—He killed himself—my mother and I started to drink.

GINNY

You were living at home / at the—

ELAINE

We were on different coasts. I was an adult—this was maybe ten years ago.

GINNY

Your brother killed himself.

ELAINE

My father killed himself. My brother blames himself but he is still alive and miserable in Seattle. My mother blames me—and I don't know why the fuck that happened—because I moved across country, I guess and she has to have somebody to blame.

GINNY

So, who do you blame?

ELAINE

My father. Long story short I started to drink—I lost my job—took a tail spin. Jonathan hired me even before I sobered up. Helped me; helped me sober up so I owe him. We had an affair. He lost everything. So I owe him. Sucks to be me. Your turn.

GINNY

Why are we doing this again?

(JONATHAN enters with fast food bags and a determined look on his face. Dropping everything to get to a phone.)

ELAINE

And: There he is, right on cue.

JONATHAN

You check the voicemail?

ELAINE

No, we didn't check the voicemail.

JONATHAN

(Dialing to check voicemail:)

Emails?

GINNY

You gave us a task.

JONATHAN

(Listening:)

Jesus. No, no, no, no, no.

(Presses buttons to hear the next voicemail.)

Fuck.

(And the next.)

Fuck.

(And the next.)

Fuck me / royal.

GINNY

You didn't get any ketchup.

ELAINE

(As if this action sums up their previous conversation:)

Because he'll always let you down.

JONATHAN

(Hanging up the phone:)

Shit.

GINNY

What happened?

JONATHAN

Dryer Cosmetics.

GINNY

What about Dryer Cosmetics?

JONATHAN

They had a spill. And now there's a fire and they're blaming us because we didn't answer the phone or their emails asking us how to contain the damned thing.

GINNY

How'd you find out about that?

JONATHAN (Continued:)

(Dialing his own cell phone:)

Now we have to clean it up and dispose of the waste AND I need this right now like a need another hole in the—

(Into the phone:)

Sammy?

(To Ginny:)

They called my cell phone.

(Back to the phone:)

Jonathan. I got a chemical spill that's gone hot at Dryer Cosmetics. – I need you to drop whatever you're doing and get on that right away, will you? – Their number?

(Snaps his fingers—to which GINNY is a step ahead of him on the computer:)

Coming right up.

GINNY

8-0-5—

JONATHAN

8-0-5

GINNY

5-5-5

JONATHAN

5-5-5

GINNY

3-8-2-3. / Texting him the address.

(And now she is texting as she said she would.)

JONATHAN

3-8-2-3. Talk to Daniel. - Thanks, Sammy, I owe you one.

(Hangs up.)

Call Dryer.

(Already dialing another number:)

Fuck this. Just like the old days, hunh?

(Into phone:)

Chuck? - Jonathan Matterson here. - I know. I'm on it. I've got everything covered. - Haz mats? I don't think we have to go there yet, / do you?

ELAINE

(Already on her cell phone—having already dialed:)

[I'm] already on it.

(Into the phone:)

Scott Nettleson, please.

(she erases the whiteboard and prepares for sharing info:)

Matterson Chemicals returning his call. –

GINNY

Whaddo you need me on next?

JONATHAN

Men at the scene—On their way. – You'll know more when I know more.

I'm on with them right now.

ELAINE

Jerry? Where's Scott? -

Fine, of course, I can talk to you—Walk me through what happened.

(She starts writing quickly:

TOULENE)

Where? Where'd this a—

(ELAINE writes **LAB D**)

JONATHAN

(Covering the phone mouthpiece—yet still listening to Scott on the other end:)

Who the fuck knows where LAB D is?

ELAINE

(Focusing on her phone call:)

I'm listening.

(GINNY mans the computer through the following:)

JONATHAN

You bring up excellent points, Chuck. – And that’s why we’re out there.

ELAINE

Good. Good, you did the right thing. How contained is the fire?

(ELAINE writes **OUT**)

JONATHAN

Out. It’s out. The fire is out. Like I said— Of course.

Who was exposed? No one was exposed.

ELAINE

It’s out—that’s good...but—yes, yes, residual smoke. Keep people away.

(Phone rings—GINNY answers it—while still on the computer.)

GINNY

(Now all three of them are on the phone:)

Matterson’s Chemicals, Ginny speaking—how may I help you—Yes, Sammy, / he’s on the phone with the city, right now, / I think.

JONATHAN

Is that Sammy? Let me talk to / him.

ELAINE

Let him in. – Yes, he’s with us.

(JONATHAN passes his phone to ELAINE, who in turn and gives her phone to GINNY.)

JONATHAN

(To Ginny:)

Tell them to let him in.

(To Elaine:)

Chuck.

Sammy? – What the fuck is going on down there?

We don’t need the fire department. Tell them to go away.

Sammy, are you with me? – Put the fire chief on. – Well, put whoever’s looks like they’re in charge there—

(ELAINE writes **JERRY** on the white board)

ELAINE

Chuck. – Chuck, yes, Elaine—Jonathan had to take another call.

You can call them back, Sir, we’ve got everything under / control.

You mean there *was* a fire; there isn’t a fire. – We’ve put it out.

Chuck, can I—just hold on for a moment—

(Takes the phone from Ginny:)

Jerry?

GINNY

Jerry? Ginny here.

Whaddo you mean the fire department won’t let them through?

(To Jonathan:)

They want hazmat certifications.

(She begins to feel herself shutting down [imploding] and focuses on her breathing.)

JONATHAN

Lieutenant? How do you do, Sir.
– Madam, I’m sorry you have a
deep voice—I’m sure I’m not
the first to tell you this— – Yes.
I’m aware— –

ELAINE (Cont.)

Jerry? Are you still there? – Don’t
cry, Jerry. Don’t cry. – I mean,
don’t panic. We are trained. We
can get you thru this—That’s
what you’re paying us for, right?
– Everybody’s out, right? –
Whaddo you...? – I’m sure she’ll
show up.

GINNY

(trying to be of help:)
Can I... You want me to
take one?...

(Elaine writes in BIG LETTERS: **WOMAN MISSING @ ✓ ● C**
[woman missing at checkpoint C])

(There is a sudden moment: everything stops. Then right back on again:)

JONATHAN

Sammy? – What the hell *you*
doin’ back on the phone? – Fine.
– Fine. – What’s it look like from
[where] you are right now? Is
there any smoke? — Then who
the fuck said there was a fire?

ELAINE

Scott—
(Corrects herself:)
Chuck, we’ve got it all—
all under control—
we’ll—Yes, yes, of
course you can stay on,
I’ve just...Please hold.
(she switches phones.)

(Getting no response:

GINNY looks up something
on the internet.)

GINNY

Toulent. Toulent is flammable.
Used in nail polish remover. Can
cause a toxic gas. Purple in color.
What color is the smoke?

ELAINE (Cont.)

What color is the smoke, Jerry?
(Looking to Ginny:)
Green.

JONATHAN

Green? What the fuck is green? – No, not you—Do *you* see any smoke?
(To Elaine:)
They don’t see any smoke.

ELAINE

(Into the phone:)
Is there any smoke or isn’t there?

JONATHAN

No.

ELAINE

(Into the phone:)
Do you see anything purple?

GINNY

(Reading from the internet:)
Green smoke is inv-inv-
invindic—

ELAINE

(Reading over her shoulder:)

Indicative

(Back on phone:)

Jerry, is there a color to the smoke? -

Well, who the hell told you it was green? -

WHAT COLOR IS IT, Jerry? -

WHAT COLOR WAS it? -

Look for yourself.

(ELAINE writes the word as she says it:
WHITE)

ELAINE

WHITE! It was WHITE. - And Mary's there?

(She crosses out "Woman missing ...":)

Oh, thank God. So, everybody's accounted for? - Everybody's safe? -

JONATHAN

(Takes the phone from Elaine:)

Jerry? Jonathan here. - Glad everything's back to normal for you. Good. Good. - That *is* good news.

- You...

Let Sammy do his thing and we will have you back up and running in no time.

(Someone else has taken the phone on the other end:)

You—you know it—Scott? Good to hear your voice. -

Well, it wasn't really touch and go but it can be a scare, I know that. - *Five* times, really? -

I'll look into that. -

And emails, yes, you said so earlier—I will do that. -

Top to bottom, you got it. -

Let's all be happy that nobody—

(He listens to everything trying his best NOT to say anything further.)

(To the phone call Elaine is on:)
(Fuck you, you asshole. Goddamn prick.)

GINNY

—invicative of—

May be indicative of...shit; wrong...I'm not finding anything in Green smoke except for electronic cigarettes.

JONATHAN

As in?

GINNY

As in "Green"—as in healthy for you.

That's on old posting ...

(GINNY quietly struggles another panic attack...she can't help right now...)

(ELAINE writes **SAMMY** on the board as she switches back to the other phone:)

ELAINE

Happy to be of service. - Please note, Chuck, in your report that we were on the scene with answers and help within minutes of your alerting us—

(Hearing Jonathan's tension rise—)

—Just a minute, Chuck—

(Quickly to Ginny as she takes the call from Jonathan:)

Just wrap it up.

(There is a short struggle between the women...GINNY accepts the phone.)

ELAINE

(Into phone

Jonathan was on:)

Scott? - Everything under control now, right? Good—*Yes*, Jerry *was* right on top of things. -

JONATHAN
(And your little dog you rode
in on too.)

(I'll send you the fuckin'
details. Detail this, you peace
of [mutherfuckin shit]) ...

(Picking up the *on hold*
extension—

Into phone:)
Sammy? Do your thing. –
Make us all look good.

ELAINE
I know nobody got hurt this time
and we're all glad of that but I
was thinking, God forbid, there is
a next time: how do we assure you
that your priority becomes our
priority? –
We have a new system we're
working on for preference alerts
and we're putting you right on the
top wrung. - No, of course not, no
extra charge. We're not trying to
Make money on what could have
been a—Aren't we all? - I will
send you all the details.

(ELAINE taps on the
name **SAMMY** on the
whiteboard.

Into phone:)
You'll have them first thing in
the morning. – Hey, Scott, tell
Jerry no more e-cigarettes in
the labs, OK? – I have my
ways.

GINNY
(doing her best to
regain her
composure:)
Hello, me [again]— ...
(Listens as the voice
on the other end of
the phone speaks
endlessly ...)

I will pass that on to him,
sir. –

Reelection?...Of course, sir,
you have our full support. –
I'm not the one to run any
figures by but Jonathan will
be getting back to you on
this, sir. – Thank you, sir. –
As soon as he's free. It's
been a busy morning. Good-
bye, sir . . . And thank you
for using Matterson's
Chemicals.

(Slight Silence. GINNY defends herself:)

GINNY
Habit.
He wants a campaign contribution.

(A beat. JONATHAN starts pace, his adrenalin still
pumping.)

JONATHAN
Fuck, that was great. That was fuckin' too great.

ELAINE
It was close.

GINNY
(slightly unnerved to say the least but always reserved:)
...I have to..use the [bathroom]...I'll be right back.

(GINNY exits, presumably into the restroom. JONATHAN is still moving, he pulls out the change of clothes Ginny has brought for him and starts to change his shirt as ELAINE goes about clearing the whiteboard.)

JONATHAN

That was hot. Wasn't that hot?

ELAINE

That was more than we / needed—

JONATHAN

We are a team. We can do anything we set out mind on. Yes?

ELAINE

If you say so.

JONATHAN

I say so. That was hot.

ELAINE

(Looking back at the whiteboard again:)

...OK...

(But JONATHAN has crossed over to her and attempts to kiss her fully on the mouth. There is an awkward—how're we going to deal with this moment as ELAINE pulls away.)

JONATHAN

What?

ELAINE

What the fuck do you / think you're doing?

JONATHAN

Wasn't that— What?

ELAINE

No.

JONATHAN

No?

ELAINE

No.

No. JONATHAN

No. ELAINE

Sorry. Mixed signals. JONATHAN

No mixed signals. ELAINE

Sure there were. JONATHAN

You got carried away. No mixed signals. ELAINE

Ginny? JONATHAN
(Putting together this must be the reason:)

No mixed signals. ELAINE

Yeah. You're right. You're right. But God, that was hot, wasn't it? JONATHAN

Up until the end. But you always had a problem in that area, didn't you? ELAINE

Hit a man when he's down. JONATHAN

(love to.) ELAINE

(GINNY re-emerges from the restroom.)

He tried to kiss me. ELAINE

I [what]? JONATHAN

ELAINE

Full disclosure. Everything on the table.

JONATHAN

[You bitch.]

(GINNY is silent. There are no words. She gathers her purse.)

JONATHAN

Ginny.

(And she leaves.)

(Pause.)

JONATHAN

[Why?]

(ELAINE shrugs.)

(The pause continues. JONATHAN lets the silence settle in. He goes to clothes and pulls out his change of pants.)

JONATHAN

So, it's just you and me then.

ELAINE

You have your time line.

JONATHAN

(Undoing his belt and fly to change trousers.)

I / need—...

(GINNY returns. She heads straight for her desk and sits down. JONATHAN doesn't change his pants.)

JONATHAN

You forget something?

GINNY

No. I decided not to leave. I'm not going to make it that easy.

ELAINE

Oh, for godsakes, you've got this all so wrong. There is / no "this".

JONATHAN

(Moving back to the whiteboard—refilling in his timeline:)

Back on track here.

ELAINE

You've got your—Leave it alone.

JONATHAN

No, we don't.

ELAINE

What's your problem?

JONATHAN

...Fine. You remember when Alice left?

ELAINE

Yes.

GINNY

His ex-wife.

ELAINE

I know who she is.

JONATHAN

I was in bad shape.

ELAINE

And whose fault was that?

JONATHAN

(Continued:)

And I was gambling. And I got myself into a..pretty deep hole.

GINNY

And?

JONATHAN

And I made a deal. With these people I owed. I traded—I bought off my marker—or whatever the hell they call it now.

(To Ginny:)

A marker / is—

GINNY

I know what a marker is.

JONATHAN

Of course you do.

GINNY

How much?

JONATHAN

Why does it—eighty grand...and change. With a rider.

(Again to Ginny:)

A rider / is—

GINNY

I know what a rider is.

JONATHAN

/ [Of course, right, stupid of me—]

ELAINE

What did you do?

JONATHAN

I let them—a couple of men, I have never seen before or since, bury two oil drums in our dump site. No questions asked.

GINNY

What was in them?

JONATHAN

(Choosing not to repeat “no questions asked”)

[I don't know.] Plausible deniability. So, I can't have anyone looking. I can't have the cops getting a search warrant and looking through my anything. Do you understand? I need—I need an airtight story. I need someone to fill in the gaps so the police don't go looking and stumble onto I don't know what. Capice?

GINNY

And why do you need her here for that?

JONATHAN

Because—and no offense—but she works better under pressure. She comes alive in a panic.

GINNY

And me?

JONATHAN

In a panic you..tend to panic. Not there's anything wrong with that—actually, it's normal.

ELAINE

And I'm not normal?

JONATHAN

Can we focus on me for the moment?

ELAINE

Alright: if I was with you.

(Before he can respond—before either of them can respond:)

AND that's a big "if". If I say I was with you at the bar and become your alibi for all this: Just who's gonna back me up that I was there?

JONATHAN

Now we're talking. Let's run this through.

GINNY

And why were you at the bar with her? And then you come home to me?

JONATHAN

...It is what it is.

GINNY

Why aren't I your back up at the bar? Why her?

JONATHAN

(Coming to her sweetly:)

Because...You don't lie well—I'm sorry, you're honest—that's / what I—

(GINNY slaps him across the face.)

GINNY

Why did you kiss her?

JONATHAN

Can this wait?

(The phone rings. JONATHAN & ELAINE look to see who's calling.)

GINNY

(Not averting her eyes from Jonathan:)

Voice mail.

(Pause. JONATHAN acquiesces: the Call goes to voice mail. The silence continues a moment longer as he forms his response:)

JONATHAN

...I don't want you implicated because...of what she said...

GINNY

What?

JONATHAN

What she said. No one can verify she was at the bar. But that's alright because...she blends in, you see? While you: You would stand out.

ELAINE

This isn't helping.

JONATHAN

Fact is:

(To Elaine:)

You look like half the woman at the bar. No offense: it's a "type".

(To Ginny:)

You look like—someone would remember you were there.

(There is a long silence.)

JONATHAN

(God, I hate my life.)

ELAINE

She's pretty and I'm plain, is that what I'm hearing?

JONATHAN

No. Yes, a little. No. God. This is such a...Not where I want to be right now.

ELAINE

And what *do* you want Jonathan?

JONATHAN

I just want my life back. I want to go back a week and live these last few days over again. But I can't have that, can I?

JONATHAN (Continued:)

(Too calm; to either of them:)

What do you want?

(To Elaine:)

You want to get paid, I know that. I hear you. Everybody wants to get paid. I want to pay you.

(And to Ginny:)

And you? You want me to be that standup guy, I get that.

ELAINE

So, you're telling us this is all about what we want for or from you—So, this is all about you?

JONATHAN

(To Elaine:)

This is all about you, too. What do you want for you?

GINNY

(To Jonathan:)

What do you want?

JONATHAN

I don't want to lose my son any more than I already have.

GINNY

(To Elaine:)

Richard.

ELAINE

I know his name. I know everybody's name.

JONATHAN

I didn't want to name him Richard. Because in Jr. High they're going to call him dick. If he's fat they'll all him big dick and if he's short they'll call him little dick. But either way he's gonna be called dick. But Alice insisted. Alice wouldn't listen to reason. That's when I knew it was over—it was going to be over. That it wasn't going to last.

ELAINE

Baby names?

JONATHAN

And now you two. So...I'm...done for. This must be Karma or something.

GINNY

(Has ventured online and keying in data for a search:)

How long ago were those oil drums placed on the site?

JONATHAN

(Turning to see her on the computer:)

What're you doing?

GINNY

Looking up lye. If they dissolved / the bodies in lye then it should take how long to—

JONATHAN

(Rushing to pull away the keyboard:)

OH MY FUCK NO!!!

GINNY

What're you doing?

ELAINE

You can't.

JONATHAN

You can't look up how to dissolve / a body in lye!

GINNY

I was only / looking up how long it takes for a body to decompose...

JONATHAN

They will come in and take my lap tops!! They are going to look through our search histories.

GINNY

Sorry.

JONATHAN

FUCK!! I can't undo that.

GINNY

Sure you can, you can just clear / the history—

JONATHAN

They can see beyond that, you...Goddamm, / can this get any—?

ELAINE

Back off. She's trying to help you, you idiot. / God knows why.

GINNY

(Looking for a bright side on it:)

Well, now I guess I'm involved, aren't I?

JONATHAN

(Responding to Elaine's comment:)

Try a little less, OK?

GINNY

...OK.

JONATHAN

(Trying to come off softer:)

OK?

GINNY

OK.

ELAINE

OK, OK. Everybody breathe.

(A slight but shared pause.)

GINNY

You need her lie? You need my truth just as much. Without my truth your time from 10:45 to whenever in the morning...

ELAINE

Let's call a truce...and go back to the board.

JONATHAN

Thank you.

ELAINE

I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing it...because I like the challenge. I owe you that—and then we're square. And if you're implicated then I get implicated because I work for you.

(Correcting herself:)

Worked for you. Let's get that settled.

GINNY

How do you know he was even there?

JONATHAN

What?

GINNY

At the bar--/At DeMarios?

ELAINE

He already told them / he was.

GINNY

For the full two hours? No one'll place you? Because maybe you didn't stay the whole time? Maybe you didn't collect on a bet..Maybe you had to pay one?

JONATHAN

Why would I lie at this point / in the day?

GINNY

Because maybe you LOST another bet. You lost and you paid off your marker and collected another five.

JONATHAN

This is ridiculous.

GINNY

Then tell me why no one can vouch for you there?

JONATHAN

You really think I [did this]?

GINNY

Did you?

JONATHAN

You think I am capable...?

GINNY

I don't know. Are you?

JONATHAN

(After Elaine's obvious silence.)

Oh, please.

OK. Good laugh. Ha-ha. Can we get back to—

ELAINE

She has...This is the way the police are gonna ask...

JONATHAN

(Almost pleading:)

You've got to be fucking kidding me.

GINNY

I don't know officer; he has a Gambling problem.

JONATHAN

Don't fuck with me. [Pleeeeeease]

GINNY

And me?

JONATHAN

What?

GINNY

You don't want to lose your son. Were you ever worried about losing me?

JONATHAN

Why are you doing this?

(To Elaine:)

You see what I have to put up with?

ELAINE

Maybe I should go now.

GINNY

And WHY are you helping him? What do you owe him? "Queen-For-A-Day"? He's nobody's grand prize. He met me in GA (Gambler's Anonymous). He dug this hole himself. With his own two hands.

JONATHAN

What if I did? Hunh? Why would I be so stupid as to leave a head in the middle of the road?

GINNY

Carelessness, I guess.

JONATHAN

For her to find it?

GINNY

Maybe it's part of your plan together. You make such a great team.

JONATHAN

So, *we* killed somebody together to make *you* crazy?

ELAINE

Leave me out of this.

JONATHAN

And what if I did it, hunh? I wouldn't think you'd want to piss me of then, do you? Aren't you afraid I might go after either of you next—If I'm this vicious killer—why would you not just run away as far and as fast as you can? If I'm an addict—

GINNY

If? There is no 'If'.

JONATHAN

Then why?

GINNY

For the high. For the thrill of the chase—for the challenge. Because maybe that's what you want!

JONATHAN

So, I went from betting to murder?

GINNY

An addict is an addict.

JONATHAN

Is it?

GINNY

Yes.

JONATHAN

Is it?

GINNY

Yes.

JONATHAN

Am I?

ELAINE

Stop it both of you. My god, do you know how insane you both sound right now?

JONATHAN

(Referring to Elaine:)

Maybe it was her, hunh? Maybe she did it—claimed to find the body as part of her own master / plan.

ELAINE

Hey. / HEY!

GINNY

(responding to Jonathan:)

Don't placate me.

ELAINE

STOP IT! What the FUCK is wrong with you? What he...

(To Jonathan:)

What happened to you? You met her in GA? You met me in AA? You just go trolling? You like playing white knight? What the fuck is wrong with you? What is going on here?

GINNY

You just sell us some bill of goods you think we want to hear?

(A notification alarm/vibration goes off on one or more of their cellphones. GINNY checks her cell phone.)

JONATHAN (Continued:)

I didn't kill anybody!!

ELAINE

That's what he does. It's how he operates.

JONATHAN

How can you / compare—?

ELAINE

It's sales.

JONATHAN

It's all sales, baby.

ELAINE

Who the fuck are you calling, "baby"?

(The company phone rings. Jonathan and Elaine again look to the phone to read who it is; while GINNY's attention is still reading her own cell. GINNY's composure relaxes greatly. Silence. JONATHAN's cell phone rings.)

GINNY

Take it.

JONATHAN
What?

GINNY
Just take it.

JONATHAN
(Looks to see who's calling:)
Oh shit—I better—
(On the phone:)
Hello?

(As JONATHAN listens into the phone, GINNY continues to read...)

GINNY
...He didn't do it.

ELAINE
What?

JONATHAN
(Quietly into the phone:)
What?

GINNY
He didn't do it.

(JONATHAN sits as he listens to the voice on the other end of the phone:)

GINNY
I'm reading it—it's already online. Breaking news: they found the rest of her body. / Leticia—

ELAINE
(Checking on her own cell phone:)
Where?

GINNY
—Garcia. [It was] the bartender at DeMarios. In his apartment. No wonder no one would vouch for him. The guy wouldn't vouch for anybody.

ELAINE
That doesn't make any - - - fine.

GINNY
They're still looking for her left hand.

JONATHAN
Thank you.
(He hangs up the phone.)

GINNY
They found the right.

ELAINE
I remember.
(Silence.)

JONATHAN
They caught him.

ELAINE
Who?

JONATHAN
The guy who did...

ELAINE
We / know.

GINNY
We just read it online.

(There is a long silence. JONATHAN lets it sink in. Both women wait for Jonathan to realize he's been given a second chance.)

ELAINE
So?

GINNY
So?

JONATHAN
"So"?

ELAINE
So, what happens now?

JONATHAN

“What happens now?” I think—I think..we need we need to Celebrate.

ELAINE

Of [course you]...You do that. Without me.

JONATHAN

What—Why—Why not?

ELAINE

I need to go. / You two can—

JONATHAN

Whaddo you mean / “go”? You work here.

ELAINE

No, I don’t. I mean, I need to go.

(Having had her own epiphany:)

I don’t owe you, anymore.

JONATHAN

You didn’t do anything.

ELAINE

Exactly. I *didn’t* do anything. I was under the impression that I—have been operating for years on the thought that I somehow owed you. But I wasn’t the one who broke up your marriage. I didn’t lose you your boy.

JONATHAN

Oh, so, you’re the victim, here.

ELAINE

I’m not a victim. And I’m not a cause. I’m not your cause.

JONATHAN

I’ve just spent twelve hours in a / squad room—

ELAINE

(Another thought:)

And Richard is a fine name by the way. You did this—on your own. You manipulate things...all on your own. Because I let you help me and I let you let me think I was helping you.

(To Ginny:)

You’re the one who needs to run away. I don’t know what Daddy issues or Bride’s Magazines you’ve been reading but this guy is who he is and what he is on his own.

ELAINE (Continued:)

(Holding up the check:)

I will expect the money in the bank to cash this tomorrow...or not...or you can give me your car.

(To both of them before she exits:)

Get some help.

GINNY

(To Elaine before she's gone.)

Elaine.

(She stops.)

What did you take?

ELAINE

[Take?]

GINNY

The day I fired you—the day he fired y—the day he had me fire you?

ELAINE

The day you fired me.

GINNY

From your desk?

JONATHAN

You took something? You take anything from this office and I can withhold your pay till I / get it back.

ELAINE

My one year chip.

(To Jonathan:)

Earn your own.

(And she's gone. Pause.)

JONATHAN

Give her a week, she'll come back.

Can you believe the balls on that girl?

(GINNY just stares at him. JONATHAN watches as she rises and takes up her purse, crosses to the phone nearest him.)

JONATHAN

[What?]

[What?]

GINNY

(Unapologetically and with a new found confidence, she chooses to say:)

[Nothing.]

(GINNY then switches the voicemail back off. She turns choosing not to make a speech and leaves as well.

Pause.

JONATHAN takes in the scene a moment then changes his pants. With one leg in the fresh trousers the phone rings. And a second time as he finishes pulling up his pants.)

JONATHAN

Is anybody going to get that?

(No reply. The phone continues to ring as the lights fade.)

Well?

END

BACKGROUND STUDIES

Yeah, I know. Some people swear by character backgrounds, while some find them tedious and in the worst case can derail a performance into areas never intended by the author.

So, why am I bothering here? Through our initial workshop production (*superbly directed by Brian Robert Harris and featuring Kimberly Demmary [as Elaine], Brian Kolb [as Jonathan], and Maddie Boyd [as Ginny]*) it became clearer to all that these characters were intertwined in presenting themselves falsely to each other and even themselves. I wrote the background studies that follow which helped me (as well as my fellow collaborators) fine tune these folk in how they respond as the play takes its course.

I offer these studies here because...well, why not? Please note there ARE SPOILER ALERTS through the second half of each character profile.

That said. Enjoy the ride.

ELAINE background – and a little of what happens to her arc through the course of the play:

(Please note that the depictions of Jonathan and Ginny here are as seen through Elaine’s eyes)

Forgive me but I jump between third and first person...it’s just what I do...

(I apologize for the typos in advance)

ELAINE’s childhood was cookie cutter Midwest Americana. But that doesn’t mean it wasn’t hard. It does mean, however, that nobody felt sorry for her when she went through hard times. Getting picked in the middle for school sports games. Solid B’s. Puberty at the right age, not early, not late; she blent into the crowd. Always. (Is that a word, “blent”?—it should be); her mind worked like that: lots of free time, going unnoticed—her mind played with words. She watched too much television and picked up a knack for the snappy comeback. Other kids laughed. Even her parents found her mind facile. Who else uses a word like ‘facile’? She never became one of the ‘cool kids’ but she became ‘cool’. She decided to dress the way she wanted to. That was also ‘cool’ but not part of a pack. She got a tattoo but nothing Goth. Elaine was her own girl. Her parents preferred her when she blended in. Her parents would never say blent, “it’s not a word” (although, it IS a word--I looked it up—“archaic or literary past and past participle of blend”..Elaine would know this; she’d take a little joy in holding the trump card...though a little disappointed that she hadn’t coined the word herself in the first place). So, her teenage years and her early twenties were filled with a passive rebellion.

She never went to college, she knew her parents could never afford college, so ELAINE instead of learning a trade, she learned to read people. Reading people and knowing how and what they might react to actually turned out to be a marketable skill. She managed to use her quick wit and fancy double talk to charm herself into a career. Though inside she always felt like a fraud. Not good company for anyone.

And, as so many loners do, she drank. She drank when she moved across country (East) to get away from disapproving Mom and Dad as well as distancing herself from everything else going on in the house. She tried to talk her kid brother into joining her out here on “the other side of the Country” but he didn’t. She knew her brother was gay. Hell, she knew he was gay before her brother knew himself but she waited for him to come out to her about it. She was across country by then. She wanted to tell him to move out before he approached Mom and Dad but she didn’t—she was going to—but he came out to them before she pulled up the courage to face him.

Dad’s response to the news was over the top. Mom’s was denial. Dad wanted to kick him out of the house. Her mother wanted to ‘pray the gay away’. Learning what he had from watching Elaine grow up, her brother started throwing his ‘new lifestyle’ into their parent’s faces. Somehow it didn’t matter that East Coast or West Coast USA was embracing diversity, Idaho was not.

Long story short: Dad couldn’t take the embarrassment, the resentment, the guilt, the failure of having a gay son, so he killed himself.

ELAINE was already drinking by now and her mother blaming her for her father’s choice was all she needed to push her over the edge.

She was alone. More alone than ever before. She moved again. This time to the West Coast (“a change of scene”, right?) But the sun coming up over the water rather than setting into it wasn’t enough of a reboot. She got a DUI. The court required her to go to AA.

She listened. She watched. Once she felt knew the room, she began to share. She spoonfed them the stories she knew they’d want to hear. It became a game. Anyone’s story became the inspiration for her next ‘memory’. I mean, if you’re going to have to go to thirty meetings in thirty days you might as well entertain yourself, right?

And somewhere along the games she met Jonathan.

Jonathan wasn’t like the other ‘woe is me’ sad sacks. Jonathan, was different. He was also there by court order (or so he said...the court in charge could have been his wife), but he was harder to pin down. Challenge Accepted. She asked him to be her sponsor. He agreed. They had late night coffees. She actually started to open up. What she found surprisingly enough was the Jonathan was hard to pin down partly because she felt Jonathan was so much like her. He charmed his way through life. Quick wit. Snappy comebacks. But he had his life under control. His drinking was under control. He was still drinking but it was under control. He listened. He accepted her where she was. He didn’t pretend to be somebody else and he didn’t ask her to be somebody else. In fact, he found her wit and people skills exceptional and he offered her a job at his business. Office and a warehouse. She would help in the office, working on customers the way she worked the AA crowd (but getting paid for it). There was nothing else insinuated. No strings attached. After all, he was married, yes. Never hid it. But he and his wife were emotionally estranged;

living in the same house, but Alice was devoted to being a parent, not a partner. And Elaine could see the toll this was taking on Jonathan but still Jonathan devoted his efforts on Elaine, building her confidence back up, getting her to smile again. And laugh. And ...

... as they say, one thing led to another. They didn't start sleeping together right away. In fact he employed her months before they even went on a first date. Although all those coffee shop chats might have a prelude to their blossoming relationship. But it did happen. And when she fell, she fell hard. She went all in. He tried to go all in. And then...she doesn't know, did they get sloppy or did she just need too much but Alice found out. Alice just needed an excuse. Jonathan and his wife went to couples therapy and yet while they weren't 'officially seeing each other' anymore; Jonathan was there for Elaine to ease her through the transition. Elaine could see that Couples Therapy wasn't going to save the marriage so She waited. She watched. She listened. And she covered any feelings of insecurity with a quick turn of phrase or a joke. She minimized. The bigger the impact something had her life, the more minimalistic she presented herself on the subject. This had always gotten her by before and it would certainly get her through this.

Alice filed for divorce. Alice cited Jonathan to be a poor influence on their son's life (drinking, gambling). Jonathan lost all but visitation rights. The odd weekend had to be begged for. He started going back to AA and also to GA meetings to show the courts he was serious about getting more visitation rights with his son.

ELAINE stopped waiting on Jonathan. But she was good at her job. She dove into that.

Eventually they became work spouses (without benefits). Business was doing good. They needed to bring someone else aboard.

JONATHAN hired GINNY.

He put GINNY under Elaine's wing. ELAINE trained her. She found Ginny to be a bit extreme as introverts go. She could see that Ginny was nowhere near as open as herself. ELAINE would say something, Ginny would not react. But Ginny was catching on. Poor girl might be emotionally stunted but she wasn't dim. She was like a piece of clay waiting to be formed. ELAINE could see what might be the attraction (aside from Ginny's youthful good looks) ... Ginny was a magnet for men wanting to design their own perfect woman. ELAINE could also tell that Jonathan was too simple to realize what he was doing. He was charming Ginny in the same way he charmed her. ELAINE felt sorry for both of them. She watched from sidelines as the relationship between GINNY and JONATHAN grew. And of course, she said nothing, she minimized it all. She was funny, she was acerbic. A piece of her wanted Jonathan back. A piece of her wanted Ginny to wake up to what was going on. A piece of her wanted a drink. Instead she hid behind her wit and her skill to present herself as aloof as can be. She even started buying into her own act.

AND THUS BEGINS THE PLAY.

ELAINE has just been through a horrific experience. Unsettling to say the least. The cops were going to call in to her work, where she would be received with concern and questions, or worst case scenario, with Jonathan running the meeting without her and then she would just jump right in. She's met with neither scenario. She defaults to minimizing the whole event (both the head and the meeting); she doesn't "feel" anything she just relies on her own ready reflexes and displays an aloofness.

JONATHAN notices the alcohol on her and confronts her on this.

To this she responds. She unravels the whole story but only to support its inevitable outcome: "yes, I had a drink, wouldn't you?"

JONATHAN doubles down with his concern and assessment of her situation and leaves to get back the account, firing her in the process (which they both know won't last but it's the game they play).

But Jonathan has left: so, ELAINE gets to be fired by Ginny (what fun...)

GINNY is unprepared and ill prepared to carry out her assignment. GINNY is also doing her best to fake it. Challenge Accepted. ELAINE is going to "be fired" anyway so she might as well have fun with it. Yet, when she sees Ginny actually fumble over whether to keep the door open or closed (a display of Ginny's OCD) ELAINE has empathy for her and gives her a decision (saving Ginny from her own embarrassment). After which ELAINE responds back to Ginny's attempt to keep things professional as a challenge to break thru the girl's false security.

AS the scene progresses ELAINE realizes, no, maybe this is right, maybe this is the time to walk away... before doing so though: she calls Ginny one more time on her bluff: "You would have run it over [because ELAINE wants Ginny to see that the way Ginny's trying to portray herself is coming off callous not professional]"

Maybe it's better this way. But ELAINE decides if she's going to allow herself to be fired: she's GONNA BE PAID This time.

SCENE 2:

Same night. She came back because god knows if she leaves again (without her check) she just may come back altogether and everything will go back as usual. And the merry-g-round will keep on going. No, she will stay until the \$\$\$ arrives (before she has the chance to change her mind) but of course that's not how she presents herself. She hides it all behind her wit and aloofness: minimizing again.

SCENE 3:

She's here for her check. But somewhere, a part of her, is here for Jonathan too. She tells herself she isn't. She knows she shouldn't be. And hell, I'm gonna dress like I want not like I'm out to get a man. In other words, she's in a bit of a struggle with herself still.

"You did make a new pot of coffee" What a feeble justification for staying, right? Of course right.

“I know I shouldn’t be doing this” Like Al Pacino in GodFather 3 : “Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in!”

AS the scene/play unfolds, ELAINE becomes more and more aware of her obligation to herself and how she allowed herself to be used, because bottom line: Jonathan doesn’t even realize what he’s doing (that’s he’s being manipulative).

In the scene between GINNY & ELAINE, ELAINE tries to get GINNY to reveal herself; ELAINE’s purpose in sharing her own story is to set it up so that GINNY will reveal Ginny’s own story and thus give Elaine some material to use in order to help Ginny see the light while still, yes, helping Jonathan because Elaine DOES still feel indebted to him. And, after all, what skills does Elaine have to get a new job after leaving?

In the CHEMICAL SPILL PHONE CALL ELAINE realizes her own skills. Masterfully calming down, she is ALSO taking care of Ginny and Jonathan emotionally: GINNY starts going doe-eyed—shrinking back into herself—during her interaction with Jerry: ELAINE just takes the phone and handles it. JONATHAN starts to show signs of improper business behavior and she just takes the phone and handles it AND turns the client around (upselling him) in the process.

The KISS: Did she want this? She doesn’t know. As he comes in, she realizes: “No..I don’t”. She never truly realized this before.

And yet she still feels the pang of obligation: *not unlike the mob boss’s girlfriend feels when protecting her lover to her mobster boyfriend: “I wanted him to hurt but I didn’t want him dead”*; So, Elaine helps. But far less emotionally involved. Now when she distances herself it’s more of an honest response and not just a cover for her own insecurities.

If there is ever a final moment of clarity it’s in the moment where JONATHAN learns nothing from this ordeal. The only reason ELAINE speaks her speech at the end is to let Jonathan calmly know that THIS TIME is different. THIS TIME I won’t be back. So, of course, one last attempt to reach Ginny, even if you have to insult her to get thru to her—although you maybe do your best to say it as supportive as possible.

You leave this time. This one’s gonna stick.

JONATHAN background – and a little of what happens to his arc through the course of the play:

(Please note that the depictions of Ginny and Elaine here are as seen through Jonathan's eyes...as are depictions of any other character such as his first wife, Alice)

Forgive me but I jump between third and first person...it's just what I do...

(I apologize for the typos in advance)

JONATHAN always thought of himself as special growing up. It wasn't his fault. His parents did it to him. In their eyes, he could do no wrong. He was the apple of their eye. Then siblings came along. His mother's love turned toward the younger, needier members of the family. He didn't know why he felt replaced by his sisters, but not understanding a feeling isn't the same as not having one. Even if he couldn't put a name on it, it was just as much there. His father tried to take up the slack, after all they were the only 'men in the family', and that helped but he still wanted his mother's attention. When the next child (another girl) came along, he could see the same pattern happening with the middle children. JONATHAN tried to follow his father's example and pick up the slack. He waffled between vying for attention and being the attenor. He excelled in school. He charmed his teachers (especially the pretty ones). His sisters however didn't. He'd tutor them: they'd do better. He felt a ping of accomplishment in that. In high school he'd make side money tutoring those..less academically endowed. When they knew they were doing better in school, he could see them coming out of their shells. They were grateful. He was in heaven; "this must be what being a god feels like". He was like Prof Henry Higgins (but like The Rex Harrison version from My Fair Lady not Pygmalion (he wanted to get the girl). Then, when the girl was finally living up to her potential...the challenge was gone and want to or not he would lose interest. Again, this wasn't his fault, he was doing good, he knew that. He was making their lives better. He didn't understand it was a pattern, he just figured he never found the right girl.

Then along came Alice.

They met in college. She was an intellectual, like him, but a little withdrawn, a little into her shell. He was drawn to her. They didn't rush things. They didn't marry right out of college. It took a few years. They were on again/off again. But he kept coming back to her or maybe she kept coming back to him. Her life would start to fall apart and he'd help her pick it back up again. Until they realized, "this is it". "Maybe this is as good as it gets"; and it wasn't bad. He started a business. They started a family. He focused on the business. She focused on the family. They'd stress. He'd drink. He took risks. A little gambling here and there. He wasn't hurting anybody. And after all, Alice, was more focused on being a mother than a partner so, he guessed this was just the natural order of things. He'd been there before but JONATHAN wasn't the type for introspection and analyzing his life, that was women's thinking: JONATHAN was a doer. A fixer. A helper. A man. A men drink. And men go to sports games. And gamble. And why not, he wasn't really needed at home. He wasn't sure what happened or how it happened but he found

himself not wanting to fix Alice anymore (or maybe she was fixed, or maybe the challenge was gone, but Alice was Richard's mother first and foremost—that much was clear, everything else, including Jonathan, came a distant third (Richard holding two spots—both first second). Drinking helped. Till it didn't. Till they ended up in couple's counseling. That was her idea. He didn't need counseling, he'd spent his whole life being the Counselor. To state the obvious, the sessions didn't go too well. They did bring out Alice's concern that Jonathan was spending too much time at the office (but after all, isn't it a man's function to provide for his family?) and she felt he drank too much, it was alright when they were in college but...they're parents now. So...he agreed that when the business could afford it that he would hire someone else on so he could be home more and in the meantime he agreed (if only to show Alice that he was committed to their relationship) to go to AA.

Things got better for a while—and JONATHAN found a new crusade. Being a Sponsor. Helping others. That old switch was flipped back on. He helped people. Helped build them back to their best potential. And if they were women, even better. He didn't cross the line. He had a wife and child. But he flirted with the line. In his head he crossed that line a million times. To quote a line from Harry Chapin, "In my head, all my life, I've been a sinner; and in bed, with just my wife, I'm still a beginner" The next line of that song reads "but tomorrow night...I'm taking that little girl out to dinner". He didn't cross that line.

One of these women was Elaine. ELAINE was different. She was more alive than the usual parade of withdrawn Emily Dickinsons. She had a bit of a bad bone. She would say things...just to say things. She made him laugh. She was going through hell, yes, but...there was something about her...something...she had a potential that he knew was just waiting to be tapped. She was smart. She was witty. She was just in a bad place. She needed a champion. She had people skills. Hiring her would be a win-win situation. Jonathan could enjoy Elaine's company more while satisfying Alice's request that he diversify his work regime.

Elaine proved to be an asset. He relied on her more than he cared to admit. Eventually he crossed the line. Before he knew it he was head over heels in love and a full blown affair.

But Alice wasn't an idiot. Even though it went on too long to really pull out of: he tried to break things off...or better yet...put them on hold. He would try to work it out with Alice. After all, it was his job to be an example to his boy, who was by now in school and starting to choose sides.

The office became: the office. And home became home. Truth is, he couldn't afford to lose Elaine at work. He tried. He fired her several times but always brought her back. She was just better at the job than he was and he wasn't too much of a man to admit it.

But for Alice and for Richard he would try. Alice and he went back to counseling. He broke it off romantically with Elaine and (as was also brought out in Counseling) Alice felt he gambled too much. Granted she was right. He had gotten himself in a hole one time so badly that had to agree to let some Loan Shark bury two sealed oil drums in his dumpsite sight-unseen or just watch his interest grow at an unprecedented and unpayable rate daily.

He went to GA (Gambler's Anonymous).

That's where he met GINNY.

GINNY was probably the biggest challenge he's ever encountered. And a knock—that doesn't hurt. He could see that other men—hell, even a couple women—were just paying Ginny attention in order to coax her into bed. He could understand that. But that wasn't his style. Sure sex with a woman out of his league would be great—but he wasn't that bad looking, she was just...yeah, she was out of his league. The saddest thing, and maybe part of what drew them together, is that she didn't even realize it. They connected. She needed. And he needed to be needed. They'd talk after meetings for hours. He could tell she needed someone to listen. To let her know she was worth listening to. If nothing ever happened physically between then that would be alright. She filled his need to feel like he did when he tutored in high school (like a god..he wouldn't use those words exactly—he probably wouldn't even form that thought but not being able to put a name on a feeling doesn't mean you're not feeling it). What would Ginny be like once he brought her out of her shell? Would she prove to be headstrong and opinionated like Alice?

--Oh, yeah, that fell apart. Counseling didn't work again and Alice filed for Divorce and Custody. All Jonathan got out of it was Supervised Visitation rights...after all, he had a problem with both drinking and gambling)—

Or would Ginny prove to be a firecracker like Elaine? Neither, it seemed. He was betting that Ginny would prove to be—continue to be a little needy. Not clingy but she'd need him. In other words the perfect woman.

This time he wasn't "crossing a line". He was single now. But he didn't push. He just was there for her. And eventually...it happened. Best not to say anything to Elaine though (what she doesn't know won't hurt her, right? And he doesn't want to hurt Elaine...he still cares for her. She's his workwife. And Ginny would be...Ginny could be a relationship.

FAST FORWARD NOW TO THE PLAY

SCENE 1:

A major/potential client has just walked out the door. Walking out with him were upgrades to the warehouse. A new forklift. Downpayment to that house you've been eyeing (and getting out of your "newly-divorced-condo").

This is all her fault. Nope. It's your own fault. If you wanna be a boss, be a boss. It is time to start being a boss. What does that mean? I don't know. GINNY, you should be a secretary now, right? Do things a secretary does. Ohhhhhhh but you're my girlfriend.....ohhhhhhhh but that—again—this is my fault.

ELAINE arrives. She is aloof. She is blaming her own tardiness on someone else...so like her not to take responsibility. Is she testing me? Should I tell her about me and Ginny—this isn't the time, why does my mind even go there? I need to be a boss...why can't I be a boss. I will talk to her in private, she needs that much.

When they are close enough together he notes the bouquet of alcohol: Well, shit; this changes things. Siddown let's discuss it.

And through the conversation he waffles: waffles between losing an account (that honestly, he'd already thought was in the bag), caring about Elaine's wellbeing, his feelings of both his own inadequacy (mixed with a little bit of anger and resentment) and that old yearning to be Elaine's savior (to fix things—that's what men do: they fix things, right?)

He gives Elaine a last chance to leave face a things fresh tomorrow but she stands her ground. Time for some toughlove. And who knows, it might work out, Elaine might leave and then he won't have to tell her about himself and Ginny. Give the Ginny the chance, she could surprise him, if not Elaine'll be back. She always comes back. This'll work. Win-Win. And now it is time to fix things. "Mr. Fixit, exit, stage right".

The phone call:

I have an idea. I am on my way TO the client I don't have time for small talk. I am on a mission!!

SCENE 3:

JONATHAN is out of his comfort zone now. Not that he was comfortable in Scene 1, far from it, he was seriously conflicted, which isn't the same as up shit's creek without a paddle.

His goal. Is to pay off Elaine--call it square and get her to back up his slight distortion of the truth—that they were together when the head was found. Giving him an airtight alibi, after all she already called the sighting in and then the police will leave him alone.

Elaine will then go away—stew for a few days—Ginny will feel better; He will feel better; Elaine will feel better and things can go back to what they were. The plan is so simple.

It starts with ELAINE being late (again).

But it's alright. He'll say his piece, she will be on board, she will go BEFORE Ginny arrives—hopefully directly to the police where she can tell the police, "we've talked—hell, why not? She works for me)—and she needed to clarify her statement that we both stopped when we found the head but I went in and she stayed behind to do the right thing".

...why isn't she cooperating?

Time is an issue here. Before GINNY arrives...

Negotiate? You want to negotiate? Fine, we'll negotiate..but quickly before—Don't ask me about Ginny (I don't want to go there and I don't want to hurt your feelings with answers you don't want to hear and really will only result in heading us a down a rabbit hole..because I do still care for you but [you're fixed now—she's not...it doesn't make sense but that's how it feels—she needs me more) so tikk-tock can we just jump ahead to where you say yes BEFORE--

But GINNY arrives.

OK. Now I know what a GPS must feel like when you've missed your exit: "recalculating, recalcutationg". New gameplan: Tell as little as possible. Play her game of—play their "game" of questions and get them both aboard. Two birds—one stone, this will work.

OK: Good. We're talking about the night. Yes!

Aaaaaaaand GINNY shuffles in with first question and it's personal. Ohhh god...don't want to hurt you, say something that won't hurt feelings. New game plan: Tell them as little as possible / Don't hurt feelings.

He continues to juggle his agenda with their new found agendas, knowing, all the while that time is of the essence: bottom line: the police can NOT look into his properties and unearth his dumpsite.

Elaine seems to be helping and Ginny derailing. This is another reason I didn't want Ginny here. We need to stay focused. But I can't dismiss her because then I lose not only all credibility with the police because GINNY may not vouch for my wherabouts AFTER I left DeMarrios and I need ELAINE because she can be my alibi AT DeMarrios (which can work as well as my alibi for the next morning: a DOUBLE ALKIBI: Yes!!! Two alibis are better than one alibi...and GINNY makes it three..but if I lose either of these women now, I lose everything. And I don't want to lose either woman. GINNY you have to know that. You have to know that ELAINE serves a purpose. Elaine is good for both of us.

"Like the time you payed off the guy at the meetring"...

(You knew about that—I didn't think you knew about that)

But she's on board. So let's try and stay focused now.

"Did you love her" "Do you still?"

That is not a fair question. I can't answer that question. I can't answer either question without hurting one of you. Or both of you. And believe it or not I HONESTLY DON'T WANT TO HURT EITHER OF YOU!!!

(I need a break)

I need to get away. We all need to regroup. I'll get us something to eat. But it has to be fast. Fast—what? Fast; fast—food. I'll get us fast food. I'll go and be right back and we will skip ahead (beyond this question).

RETURNING FROM McDONALDS:

The sky is falling. This is JUST what I need right now.

JONATHAN is usually better at keeping calm in a storm but this storm is happening inside a typhoon. The typhoon is NOT going away. Any moment he has to relax inside this storm: the Typhoon looming breaks in and rains on ONLY him. We have to get through this storm. He forces himself to switch gears. The adrenalin running through his body right now is almost euphoric. As things run like a well oiled machine, he can't help but feel invincible. It's addictive.

It's almost better than sex. Almost. And it's all because of Elaine. She did it. She's wonderful. Workwife hell, she's the whole package, doesn't she feel; it too?

(apparently she doesn't)

GINNY leaves. OK, what now? GPS time 'recalculate'?

GINNY returns. What is going on here?

He is losing them both, individually as well as collectively, not to even mention how much he's losing them on a personal relationship level (they worshipped him for what he did for them before, didn't they?...I'm still that guy—I'll get back to being that guy..we just have to get through *this* first.)

Finally he has to admit to things that will undoubtedly hurt one or both of them. The shallowness of appearances. The existence of evidence that might or might not lead to a murder investigation...a different murder investigation which will inevitably lead to him losing the only relationship he ever had a chance of resolving: the one between himself and his son.

And why is GINNY being so forward now? Where did this backbone (for lack of a better word) come from? This is a new side of her and I don't think it truly is Ginny—it's more of a Ginny's-been-around-Elaine-too-much Ginny. OK, we gotta nip this in the bud: toughlove: simple logic. I couldn't do it because...

Then the phone call comes in from the police.

Exoneration.

What does this mean?

My god, it means we can go back to normal. Back to the way things were.

ELAINE leaves, making a speech, so like Elaine to make a speech. She's standing up for herself, that's good. I support you. He hears nothing she really says, he is empowered by her sense of ownership: he brought that out in her, you know? Before she met him, she was falling apart.

Elaine exits.

JONATHAN can see in Ginny's face that she took whatever it is Elaine said too much to heart: don't worry about it, it's alright. She'll be back (after all, she didn't take my car...that was a joke).

Ginny exits.

Again? Make up your mind. They'll both be back. They need me. Life is good.

GINNY background – and a little of what happens to her arc through the course of the play:

(Please note that the depictions of Jonathan and Elaine here are as seen through Ginny's eyes)

Forgive me but I jump between third and first person...it's just what I do...

(I apologize for the typos in advance)

Growing up Ginny always saw herself as a shy, gangly girl. She did not blossom (by the boy's standards) till in her Junior year in High School.

She was what you would call an introvert. In elementary school, she always felt self-conscious, a wall flower. Some might think she was afraid of her own shadow. She was teased and taunted by the cruel kids, which caused her to climb further into her shell.

She was good at games. Especially cards. No one ever knew what hands she held due to her natural poker face. Her tendency to keep everything hidden turned out to be an excellent way to win at card games. And she likes numbers. They're predictable. They make sense. They have order. They have calm. People don't have calm. She likes calm.

She learned to keep her emotions to herself; this was her safety zone. Then came attention from boys. She was confused. She stayed quiet. No one notices the quiet ones. No one bothers the quiet ones. Except maybe the brother of one of who-she-thought-was-her-friend. Teenage boys tend to take notice their sister's friends. At least Danny Tupelo did. Ginny was flattered and flustered by Donny's attention.

As she got better at cards she learned how to bet. On a dare (that she would later claim was just a joke) Ginny and her few small group of girlfriends all ran for class President in their Junior year in High School. Emily took things a little too far to eliminate the competition. Emily still lost. Ginny lost too. Jimmy Pegins won Junior class President that year. Donny, however, was mortified by his sister's pictures and dumped Ginny from being his girlfriend.

Ginny went back to her card games, back to being the quiet one. She found that mask wore well in playing games. Her 'poker face' was not her but became a badge of courage. She was rewarded in this world for being seclusive.

She escalated but escalation also meant more gambling and more risks.

Of course, as with so many things in life, it all started to cave in on her.

Finally came the intervention from family and friends (including the friends on the phone with her in scene 2) and she landed in GA (Gamblers Anonymous).

There, at GA, she again crawled into her shell She felt alone. She felt a failure.

Eventually she lost almost all of her self-esteem. She returned to her ways of being a wallflower.

Then along came Jonathan. He met her with a cup of coffee. She thought here it comes, Donny Trupelo all over again.

But Jonathan didn't just try to hit on her. Jonathan listened. What he saw in her was a lost soul. He was there for her. He waited, not to pounce, not to coax her out of her shell, but was just...there for her...to come out of her cave she was ready. He didn't make her feel small. He helped her see herself as someone worth something, worth caring about, worth waiting for.

He, unexpectedly, is a gentle man. Sure, he gets frustrated with her but nothing violent, nothing that makes her afraid. He even gets her need for calm. He waits.

Eventually she feels safe with him. He helps her get back on her feet. He gives her a job. And eventually nature takes its course. She feels safe inside her new life. Even at work, where she doesn't really have to deal too much with people. There is Elaine, of course, but not like twenty people or dozens. Other people come in and out from time to time but in the office itself? Just the three of them and three's a good number. It's small. It's safe. Elaine can be a little brass, a little flippant but she isn't mean. She jokes. Ginny senses there was something between Jonathan and Elaine (once) but Jonathan isn't that kind of a guy. He's as gentleman, right? So, whatever it was (at one time) between him and Elaine, it's not anymore; at least Ginny tells herself it isn't. Ginny admires Elaine for being strong. Being confident. Ginny wishes she could be more like Elaine. Elaine is good with people. Jonathan is good with business and Ginny, Ginny is good with numbers, with facts. She can find the information quickly, if it's not in the files, it's online. She knows things: she is the keeper of the information: people's names, account names, sales figures, numbers. She knows details and she knows where/how to get information when needed. She hopes that's good enough.

AND NOW TO THE PLAY:

Her boyfriend (her boss, yes, but boyfriend first—should we formally announce this to the company?—there's only the three of us for the most part..not the guys in the warehouse so they never come by but..should we [announce it?]...I'll wait. Wait for him [Jonathan to say something]...he waited on me, didn't rush me so I'm not gonna rush him. And if I make waves, I could be the one who drowns so...let's not push this...

Where was I?

Oh, oh yeah: Her boyfriend/boss just lost an account. I think he lost the account. He never had the account but he was counting on this account. He acted like this was already was his account...But they left. I want to tell him it's going to be ok but... I want to support him right now but I don't know really how ... we're in the office, someone from the warehouse might come in. Hell, Elaine's due any minute and she might ... get the wrong idea idea—well the right idea but we haven't said anything yet so ... I don't want to embarrass him .. I don't know what to do... or ... say or .. maybe some coffee?

(Gets the coffee) (gives him the coffee) She tells herself: “that was stupid of me—what was I...?” I’ll just give him space. Make herself invisible: defaulting to her safe space.

So, when she’s telling him she’s giving him space, when she echoes his plans back to her, when she calls him “sir”; it’s all to be helpful and supportive.

OVERALL she processes a lot. She internal dialogues far more than anyone else in this play. She speaks only when necessary because her default is to make herself invisible. When she does come out to say something it’s to be helpful or to clear her own thoughts. She is not comfortable standing up for herself. This is new ground for her. When things get chaotic around her she does not join into the fray: she tries at best (at most) to put things back into order (politely—not to rock the boat—so the kids won’t make fun of her). Or she hangs back. She is uncomfortable in the chaos.

In the back of her mind, Ginny knows she needs to move on. She sees that Elaine and Jonathan are better suited for each other. But Jonathan chose her. And he’s been so good for her. And to her. But winning is important. And losing is defeat. She knows it’s a contradiction but losing Jonathan to Elaine...feels like failure. She doesn’t want to fail him. She doesn’t want to fail herself. But coming out of her shell is hard.

SIDENOTE: When GINNY asks the personal questions: “Are you still sleeping with her?” “Why did you hire me?” “Do you still love her?” ... these questions (for the most part) came up in her mind maybe a page ago...she can’t get them out of her mind. When there’s a pause: the slightest of pauses...it may be her only chance to ask her question. She doesn’t know if she really wants to know the truth, after all, “we’ve established he lies by now, right?” Who is this guy? I thought I knew him. I thought I loved him. I thought he loved me.

It is in the midst of the chaos of THE CHEMICAL SCENE PHONE CALL that GINNY comes to face that reality that she doesn’t fit in here. She is futile. She starts on top of it all with providing the phone number and by the end fumbles with useless information about Green smoke and e-cigarettes. (Why is she there? Why does she stay? She provides the answer herself with the last words pertaining to why she ended her final phone call with “thank you for choosing Matterson Chemicals”: Habit.)

This realization prompts her to have to have some alone time. (ELAINE has her alone moment...secluding herself and then hanging out in the parking lot with a cigarette / JONATHAN his with getting OUT into world / GINNY holes herself into a 8’ x 5’ room with a toilet in it.) She looks herself in the mirror here, offstage, maybe for the first time. When she comes back: it is her turn to say “things are going to be different. I (me, Ginny) need things to be different. But of course she is met instead with “he tried to kiss me”: GINNY’s immediate reaction is to default and withdraw: “I can’t be here. I can’t handle this. I can’t...” so she leaves.

But leaving is losing. To her. For all the wrong reasons and maybe the right ones—she doesn’t know but—she comes back. “I am not leaving with my tail between my legs...I am...BETTER than that”, this standing up for herself is rather new to her.

FAST FORWARD TO: the fight: this is also new to her. She is saying things she never has before, she isn’t really listening to Jonathan because she is maybe hearing her own voice outside her head for maybe the first time. It’s a little unnerving but not wrong.

When the **BREAKING NEWS** comes on—she slows down...takes this in. She can't help herself from defaulting to helpful (I think you should take the phone call) because we all backslide from time to time especially at the early stages.

And **WHAT** is **JONATHAN**'s reaction to this all? **GREAT CRISIS AVOIDED. LET'S CELEBRATE. LET THINGS GO BACK TO THE WAY THEY WERE.**

And, of course, a piece of Ginny does. She retreats. But not for long. Ginny doesn't really respond to Elaine's leaving, she'll be back—this is what they (Elaine and Jonathan) do.

She is alone now with Jonathan. **JONATHAN** blusters but he's right "she'll be back". There is no need for a speech. And god knows if she started talking she may talk herself right out of it. She is not running away this timer. She is not leaving Jonathan this time. She is going to step out and move forward with her life. It is time.