Left Out

By Hanna Novak

DRAFT: 10.15.2021

hannaleanovak@gmail.com

CHARACTERS

Esther: *white, twenty-nine*
Ada: *Chinese-American, thirty-four*
Richard: *any ethnicity/race, thirty-seven*
Sheila: *any ethnicity/race, twenty-five*

TIME AND PLACE

New York City: the small living/dining rooms of apartments in East Williamsburg and Midtown Manhattan.

We're on some other side of COVID, which means for this play: many people in New York have been back at work and partying together for at least a year.

Act 1 takes place on a Saturday in early May

Act 2 takes place on a Saturday three weeks later

Act 3 takes place on a Tuesday four months later

NOTES

With the possible exception of Act 1 into Act 2, scene transitions should be very minimal, if they happen at all.

Dialogue moves quickly, but characters are left alone on stage throughout the play, often for a long time.

- A slash (/) indicates an interruption, with the next line immediately following.
- A double slash (//) indicates that the next line should begin, overlapping.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

The combined living and dining room area of a cluttered two-bedroom apartment in East Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It's decorated in a slapdash but cute way: a mixture of retro Craigslist finds – vinyl chairs, a cool lamp – and IKEA furniture. A couch. Lots of books. The kitchen and bathroom are just offstage.

Esther is asleep at the dining room table. She wears a glittery top and mini-skirt.

Ada and Sheila stand in the living room. Ada is in yoga gear and has a nice purse. Sheila wears boxers and an oversized T-shirt. She holds a cup of freshly made coffee.

ADA
You woke up and you found her like this?

SHEILA
Uh-huh.

ADA
Is this kind of behavior// normal?

SHEILA
Kind of behavior?

ADA
For her.
Falling asleep in/

SHEILA
I mean she has a bedroom.// It's down the hall.

ADA
I know she has a bedroom I've been in her bedroom.
I'm just trying to get a read on right now.

SHEILA
Oh.
Well, yeah. I don't really know.
But if I were you/

ADA
If you were me?

SHEILA
I mean, I wouldn't worry about it. If I were you.
Just a Friday night.
Want some?

ADA
I had already.
Thanks.

SHEILA
OK well French press on the counter if you or Esther want some.

ADA
Thank you. I appreciate you letting me in.

SHEILA
It's no problem.

ADA
Sorry about the knocking.

SHEILA
I was up. I was making coffee.

ADA
Right.

(Pause)

SHEILA
Well, I'm going to go back…

ADA
Oh, sure. Of course.

SHEILA
My boyfriend's over.
He's sleeping.

ADA
OK.

SHEILA
So just like…

ADA
Yeah?

SHEILA
Well it's just –
My room's just, like, on the other side of this wall.

ADA
We're only having a chat we won't be loud.

SHEILA
OK, thank you.
My boyfriend. He just –
He works really hard.

Sheila leaves.

Ada goes up to Esther and stares at her for a few moments.

ADA
Esther.
Esther!
(Realizing she might be being too loud)
Hey, Esther.

Ada pokes her.

ESTHER
Hmmm?

ADA
Hiiiiiii.

ESTHER
Oh. Mm.

ADA
How hungover are you?

ESTHER
What?
I'm not. I'm not hungover.
I fell asleep.

ADA
I can see that.
You OK?

ESTHER
I'm fine.

ADA
Late night?

ESTHER
What time is it?

ADA
The time I said I'd meet you at your house.// Later than that, actually.

ESTHER
No, but like –
What time?

ADA
It's ten fifteen.

ESTHER
In the morning?

ADA
Uh, yes.

ESTHER
Oh I haven't been sleeping that long, then.
(Pause)
How did you get in?

ADA
Sheila.

ESTHER
Sheila's already up?

ADA
Yes.

ESTHER
Weird.

ADA
Why is that weird?

ESTHER
I don't know.
She was going kinda hard last night.

ADA
Want some coffee?// I'll go get you some –

ESTHER
I can make it.

ADA
You go clean yourself up in the bathroom.

ESTHER
I can make it.

ADA
Go splash water on your face or something.

ESTHER
Why?

ADA
Your make-up's all fucked up.

ESTHER
So?

ADA
So I'm having trouble pretending like I'm talking to a normal human being.

ESTHER
Normal human beings can have smudgy make-up.
(Pause)
Fine. Whatever. Anything you say.

Esther groggily walks offstage to the bathroom. Ada goes into the kitchen, then returns with a cup of coffee. She waits. Esther returns.

ADA
Here.

ESTHER
Thanks.

ADA
Thank Sheila.

ESTHER
Thank you, Sheila.
You're not having?

ADA
I had already.

ESTHER
You can't have more than one cup of coffee?

ADA
It's bad for my nerves.

ESTHER
Your nerves? That sounds like some yellow wallpaper type shit.

ADA
Also my OB said I should limit my caffeine intake, especially while I'm ovulating.

ESTHER
That's a thing?

ADA
We're just trying everything out. Isolating different variables.

(Pause)

ESTHER
I tried to wipe it all off but I'll just have a shower later.

ADA
You can have a shower now.

ESTHER
No, it's OK.

ADA
Anyway, you got most of it. You look fine.

ESTHER
OK.

ADA
I mean you're dressed like a hooker but otherwise you look like you.

ESTHER
This is how I look a lot of the time.

ADA
On a Saturday morning?

ESTHER
This is from last night.

ADA
Yeah, I know.// Obviously.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
We sort of had a plan, Esther. I mean, no, we had a firm plan. We arranged it. I said:
I have yoga at 8:30 they have a studio in Williamsburg that I've been meaning to check out I could come after?
You texted yes/

ESTHER
I fell asleep.

ADA
I know you fell asleep. I'm the one who woke you up.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
It's not like I've had the energy or time for this after work. And I don't really want to discuss this with you and your friends at some we-love-the-world techno party, either.

ESTHER
Oh my god. That's not even what I do.

ADA
Yeah, well, look at you.
(Pause)
You know, even though it might not appear on paper this way, I'm in the same situation as you are.

ESTHER
Not really.

ADA
Or, like, on the other side of the same situation.
(Pause)
Remember my friend Arlene?

ESTHER
I don't know.

ADA
We went to Michigan together. The kind of stalky, kind of Jewish-looking one?

ESTHER
I don't think so.

ADA
She was at the wedding?
Well, anyway. Me and her and Grace and a few other girls from the WLSA have this group text going. Just like, life updates, men, virtual book club.
So, the other day Arlene texts us saying she's getting rid of a bunch of old clothes, like to donate. And she's like, "Why did none of you tell me I was dressing like a fucking prostitute? In law school?"
And it's true. She did kind of dress like a prostitute.

ESTHER
I didn't have enough time to take a shower and change.

ADA
You don't have to tell me.
I'm your sister not your best friend.

ESTHER
No.// I just misplanned.

ADA
But you're OK, right?

ESTHER
Yeah,// I'm OK.

ADA
I don't have to get Richard and a bunch of his crossfit friends to chase down some wayward soul you met on an app?

ESTHER
No. I just wasn't that into it.
In the end.

ADA
Totally.

ESTHER
OK you're really dismissive.

ADA
What? It doesn't really seem like you're going to go on another date with this person.

ESTHER
I don't know.
First dates aren't always, like, indicative of who a person actually is. Or, like, can be.

ADA
OK, so what does he do?

ESTHER
Why are you assuming it's a guy?

ADA
Well, isn't it?

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
So.

ESTHER
I think he's an engineer.

ADA
What kind of engineer?

ESTHER
I don't know.
Like, a general engineer?

ADA
A general engineer?

ESTHER
He went off on bridges for a bit but I guess I was kind of distracted.

ADA
But, like, you obviously went home with this person.

ESTHER
Darius.

ADA
It seems like you went home and had sex with Darius.

ESTHER
I mean I wasn't sure if I was really that into it but I was also having fun, which was nice. His place was in Lefferts – pretty nice place, like eat-in kitchen and he doesn't have roommates. But I couldn't sleep and I was thinking, I'm lying awake beside this person I hardly know in a neighborhood I never go to, and it's going to be such a bitch to get back here to meet you. Like, a train into Manhattan and then a transfer back to Brooklyn. And what if the trains are all fucked up anyway because it's the weekend? So I got dressed and took a car and left, and I think by that point it was like five in the morning.

ADA
Has he texted you?

ESTHER
I actually don't think I gave him my number.

ADA
Oh, OK.

ESTHER
We met at a bar.

ADA
Well that's like a real way to meet someone. Like, actually being out in the world instead of on your phone.

ESTHER
I think I left my phone in the cab.

ADA
Yeah it's not like I tried calling you fifteen times.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
Do you want to try and find your phone?

ESTHER
It's OK I'll deal with it later.

ADA
What if it's in the cab still?

ESTHER
It's fine.

ADA
OK, Big Girl.

ESTHER
Ada.
I just misplanned.

ADA
I don't really care. At all, actually. I was a little concerned, but I got in.

ESTHER
Yeah, you definitely got in.

ADA
How was it for you?

ESTHER
What?// The sex?

ADA
Reading the will.

ESTHER
Oh. Yeah.
It was weird.

ADA
I think it's a different experience reading it yourself.
Not just, like, knowing what's in it.

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
You did read it, right?

ESTHER
Oh my god, yes.

ADA
OK, I just –
I get that it must be really hard.

ESTHER
It kind of felt like he was coming up from the grave.

ADA
I know.

ESTHER
But, like, speaking in another language, a dead language.

ADA
Legalese.

ESTHER
Yeah. Your language.

ADA
Not really.
I mean, I don't work for individuals, so it's not like I really deal with estate stuff.

ESTHER
Aren't corporations considered people in this country? Like, according to The Supreme Court?

ADA
No.
It's complicated.
Do you have questions for me?

ESTHER
Like about/

ADA
About dad's will.

ESTHER
Can we just keep talking for a bit?

ADA
We are talking.

ESTHER
No, I mean can we talk about other stuff?
Before this stuff.

ADA
I think it's very important for us to talk about this.

ESTHER
I was having this dream when you woke me up.

ADA
I don't want to hear about your dreams.

ESTHER
Oh, come on.

ADA
What?
I don't.
I'm not your husband.

ESTHER
I don't have a husband.

ADA
I know.
Get one and then you can tell him your dreams.

ESTHER
It was about dad.

ADA
Oh, god. Yeah, I don't want to hear about this, Esther.

ESTHER
I was with you and dad.

ADA
Please.

ESTHER
We were all on a bed together.

ADA
OK that's creepy.

ESTHER
And you were trying to cover me and dad with this blanket. But it was a tiny blanket, like for babies. And you were trying to stretch it out to make it fit on top of both of us, but you couldn't.

ADA
OK. Yeah, I don't want to hear about this right now.

ESTHER
And we were really cold.

ADA
Esther?

ESTHER
I told you it's fine. You can just have the stuff.

ADA
The stuff?

ESTHER
You can just give me whatever amount you want to give me, OK? Just whatever you think.

ADA
Esther, I'm going –
You're going to get half.

ESTHER
OK, so what is there to talk about?

ADA
I mean, he left you out entirely.

ESTHER
Yes, I know.

ADA
That's called disinheriting someone.

ESTHER
I know that. You think you have to go to law school in order to know that?

ADA
It's just –
We need to be talking about this.
We can't keep going on not talking about this.

ESTHER
I feel like we just worked it out.

ADA
How?

ESTHER
You're going to give me some of what you got.// That's very nice of you.

ADA
We're going to split it.
And it's not nice. It's what's right.

ESTHER
I'm saying you can decide what's right. It's yours.
I just don't really want to deal with this.

ADA
Oh. You don't want to deal with this?

ESTHER
No, I don't.

ADA
Well, you have to. This is where we are.
And you're a grown-up.

ESTHER
Barely.

ADA
Yes, you are. You're a grown-up. You're getting a PhD and meet strangers at bars and have sex with them.

ESTHER
He asked me if I squirted.

ADA
What?

ESTHER
After we had sex, Darius asked me if I squirted.

ADA
Did you?

ESTHER
I don't know. I don't think so. The sex wasn't that good.
But like, is it still possible to squirt even if it's mediocre sex?

ADA
Maybe I should just come back.

(Pause)

ESTHER
I'm going to go get us some water.

ADA
I don't need water.

ESTHER
Well, I do. I'm thirsty. I'm dehydrated.

Esther leaves for the kitchen.

ADA
(to herself)
Yeah because you're hungover.

(Esther returns. She drinks water.)

OK well um, as the executor, you know, I have access to all dad's papers.
And I found earlier versions of the will.

ESTHER
Ada, I told you I really don't want to talk about this anymore.

ADA
No it's just he amended his will/

ESTHER
Took me out.

ADA
Yes, he took you out a few months before being moved to the –
After all the, his motor skills. And his behavior. It was already happening. He wasn't diagnosed yet but he was obviously, he was obviously not himself.

ESTHER
I mean he was super angry with me.

ADA
Right, but that was very irrational anger.
That was Alzheimer's style anger before we could, like, give it a name.

ESTHER
Why are we even talking about this?
I feel like we just sorted this out.
And I know you have to deal with all this stuff, but/

ADA
I mean, yeah,
As the executor, I do have to have to deal with "this stuff."

ESTHER
Well, I'm sorry you're so busy while I just, like, teach eighteen-year-olds how to write essays on art appreciation and read modern Russian literature for a half a living.

ADA
And I think that's great.

ESTHER
It's just men getting drunk in mystical ways.

ADA
What?

ESTHER
That's 20th Century Russian literature in a nutshell: getting drunk and enlightened.
I keep trying but –

ADA
Esther, please take this seriously.

ESTHER
I am taking this seriously. I'm accepting what's happened.

ADA
You don't necessarily have to accept it.

ESTHER
What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

ADA
This is what I want to talk to you about. You could, you could try and have the will changed in court, you know, if you wanted to pursue that route.

ESTHER
How?

ADA
You could argue that what happened wasn't fair/

ESTHER
Fair?

ADA
Well, it would be more like you taking the position that dad amended the will while he was already sick but wasn't diagnosed yet, which is true. And so, he, you know, took you out not knowing what he was doing. That he was, um, not of sound mind.

ESTHER
That seems pretty fucked up.

ADA
Yeah well but it's true, isn't it?

ESTHER
Who would I even be taking to court? Dead dad?

ADA
No.

ESTHER
I was being rhetorical I know you can't sue a dead person.

ADA
It's not suing. It's contesting a will.

ESTHER
Whatever, if I'm not suing dad's ghost, who am I suing?

ADA
It's not// suing.

ESTHER
Whatever, you know what I mean!

ADA
Technically, you'd be taking me to court.

ESTHER
I'd take you to court?

ADA
Since I got all of it. You could argue that you want, that you're entitled to half. That dad would have actually wanted us to have equal shares, like in older versions of the will.

ESTHER
But that's not what he wanted.

ADA
I mean, did he tell you, "Esther, I'm taking you out of my will because blah blah blah?"

ESTHER
No. But he was mad at me for trying to find her.

ADA
He was sick already. He wasn't thinking properly.

ESTHER
Well, the money's yours now, so you can just give me whatever you want.

ADA
I'm giving you half. Like, after all the expenses come out of the estate for the funeral.

ESTHER
Oh.
Yeah.

ADA
I'm definitely getting cremated. Put me in a twenty-five-dollar urn and I'm good.

ESTHER
That doesn't really sound like you.

ADA
After all this it does.

ESTHER
Was dad's coffin fancy?

ADA
Remember all those crosses engraved into it? They were *hand-engraved* by, like, a band of monks.

ESTHER
Really?

ADA
I mean for the price I paid, they should have been.

ESTHER
Does Rich know about this?

ADA
What? My dying wishes?

ESTHER
You giving me half of the money.

ADA
Yes.

ESTHER
Because technically it's kind of his money too.

ADA
Not really.

ESTHER
I mean you're married.

ADA
I know I'm married, thanks.
This is obviously so fucked up, Esther. He doesn't want me to suffer.

ESTHER
That's good.

ADA
I'm basically crying all the time as it is, like I'll just tear up right in the middle of dinner.
Or we have to turn off a movie because one little thing gets me all freaked out.
I go through all these moods.

ESTHER
I mean your dad just died.

ADA
And stress isn't, like, the biggest turn-on, you know. And then I get even more stressed because I'm like, I'm ovulating why don't I want to do this, I wanted to do this I so wanted this. And we'll go through an entire month, like, having sex twice.

ESTHER
I'm sure you're not –
I'm sure he's understanding.

ADA
I'm going to be working from home again. I told you.

ESTHER
You did.
Good for you.

ADA
It's going to be a temporary, like a trial thing.

ESTHER
That sounds good.

ADA
Lots of people never even transitioned back from remote.
A person on our team lives in Boulder, which isn't even in the same time zone, so.

ESTHER
Sorry you're not getting laid.

ADA
Whatever, I think it's more like an anxiety burden not like my body actually missing it right now.

ESTHER
I feel like I want one fuck that's really just, like, vulgar.

ADA
Ew, what do you mean?

ESTHER
I don't know, just something really surprising.
That'll, like, shock me out of my mind
And then I'll see things differently.

ADA
I don't think sex is that powerful.
I mean love can be that powerful, but/

ESTHER
Ugh. Don't get all sentimental.

ADA
I'm not.
But you probably can't get what you're talking about from a one-night stand.

ESTHER
Yeah. I dunno.
Cute shirt by the way.

ADA
Oh this?
It's just, it's like what I wear to yoga.

ESTHER
Yeah, well. It looks good on you.

ADA
Are you mad at me?

ESTHER
Does it seem like I'm mad at you?

ADA
Like, deep down inside, do you resent me?

ESTHER
Um, I don't think so.

ADA
Because I don't want you to.
Even, like, way farther down the line. When we're old.

ESTHER
I mean I don't know what it's gonna be farther down the line.// Neither do you.

ADA
Well that's why I was just suggesting you could try and get it changed if you wanted to. In court.
If it would make our relationship better in the long run, that would be OK.

ESTHER
How would me taking you to court make things better?

ADA
Just to make things equal.
You know, in the eyes of the law.

ESTHER
I don't care about the eyes of the law.

ADA
The eyes of the law are pretty meaningful.

ESTHER
To you.

ADA
To a lot of people.
It's part of what we have. It's a system.

ESTHER
I don't need a system to sort this out.

ADA
I just wanted to tell you because you probably wouldn't have known otherwise.

ESTHER
Right.

ADA
I talked to an old law school friend. She's with this really good firm in Houston. They deal with the estates of all these big oil tycoons. And she said, just on the basis of what I told her, that the Testamentary Capacity argument might apply.
That's the argument where dad didn't know what he was doing/

ESTHER
Ada, please stop it.

ADA
I could send you her contact info. She's super nice. Said you could totally e-mail her.
//Free of charge, of course.

ESTHER
I don't want to e-mail her.

ADA
Just as, like, a second opinion. You don't have to do anything with it.
I'm sharing her contact with you.

ESTHER
I don't know where my phone is.

ADA
Oh. Yeah.
Well, I'll just e-mail it to you.

ESTHER
Ada. Stop.
I don't want to talk to your friend, OK?

ADA
I just think it's awful. It's, like, so awful. What was dad thinking –
Like, the only solace in this for me is that he had lost his mind already. Which is some really fucked up solace.

ESTHER
I mean, what's done is done, right?

ADA
Is that what they teach you at all those hippie dance cult parties?
To be, like, zen and loving even to people who are cruel?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
Just please recognize I'm affected by this, too.

ESTHER
How?

ADA
I'm getting a pile of dirty, spiteful money.

ESTHER
You're the one making it dirty and spiteful.

ADA
How am I making it// dirty and spiteful?

ESTHER
It's still just money. You could, like, give it away to Save the Children or Feed the Children or whatever.

ADA
You're of no help.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
You're just, like, laying around.

ESTHER
I'm sorry// I fell asleep, OK?

ADA
Stop saying you're sorry.

Sheila, still in boxers and a T-shirt, has been standing there.

SHEILA
Hey.

ESTHER
Oh. Hey, Sheila.
Sorry are we being too loud?

SHEILA
No.
Not really.
The tones of voice sound kind of upsetting but/

ESTHER
Oh, everything's fine.

ADA
Yeah, so sorry to upset you.

SHEILA
I was actually coming to ask if you wouldn't mind me using the kitchen for a bit?

ESTHER
Yeah, of course.

ADA
We're not in the kitchen.

SHEILA
No, I know. I'll just be around.
Making noise.
I'm going to make some biscuits.
You'll both be welcome to –
There'll be lots.

ESTHER
Thank you.

SHEILA
I'm just gonna be cutting out the dough on the table in a few. So I'm sorry if I'll be interrupting!

ESTHER
We can move no prob.

ADA
I should go anyway.

SHEILA
You know, you two look alike.

ADA
Really?

SHEILA
Yeah, totally.
Like, your bone structure.

ADA
We're both adopted.

SHEILA
Oh, um.

ADA
I'm from China.

ESTHER
You don't have to go. We could go to my room.

ADA
I kind of want to be alone right now.

ESTHER
I can walk you out.

ADA
I'm fine.
Thanks for letting me in, Sheila.

SHEILA
Oh, yeah. Totally!

ADA
I guess just text me when you find your phone.

Ada leaves.

(Pause)

SHEILA
You can have some when they're finished.
The biscuits?

ESTHER
Oh. Thanks.

SHEILA
We won't be able to eat them all.
I mean, we better not, right?!
They're best when they're warm, anyway.
It's my mom's recipe: Greek yogurt instead of buttermilk.

ESTHER
I think I'm going to just lie down on the couch for a while and rest my eyes.

SHEILA
Oh. OK.
I'll try not to be that loud.

ESTHER
That's OK, it would be nice to fall asleep to some human noise.

SHEILA
What?

ESTHER
Like, cooking. You cooking.

SHEILA
Oh, OK. Cool! Want me to make a smoothie?

ESTHER
What?

SHEILA
To be extra loud? “Human Noise”?

ESTHER
Oh, yeah.

SHEILA
Want me to grind some coffee beans?
Or have super loud sex?

ESTHER
I mean, you can do whatever.

SHEILA
I’m totally joking.
I’m not going to have super loud sex right now.
(Pause)
I hope I didn’t make your sister leave.

ESTHER
Oh, that had nothing to do with you.

SHEILA
We were just getting hungry and I have this weirdly early shift today.

ESTHER
She’s been in a mood.

SHEILA
I didn’t know you were adopted.

ESTHER
Yeah.

SHEILA
Not that, like, you had to tell me or anything. It’s obviously not something you’re, like, required to tell people.

ESTHER
You know when I went on that road trip last summer?

SHEILA
You mean when you sublet your room to Amanda the Reefer Queen? Yes.

ESTHER
I went to go meet my birth mom.

SHEILA
Oh, wow. That's, that must have been really, like/

ESTHER
She lives in South Carolina in this really small town. There's like two gas stations and a thrift store and this awesome abandoned textiles mill.

SHEILA
I bet that thrift store is super good.

ESTHER
Yeah I got those leather pants// for, like, twenty bucks.

SHEILA
Oh my god of course you did. Those are so hot.

ESTHER
My birth mom's name is Honor.

SHEILA
Woah, that's such an amazing name.

ESTHER
I know, right? Her name is so cool and mine's so, like, conservative.

SHEILA
I don't know, Esther's not really conservative. More old-fashioned maybe, but not conservative.

ESTHER
Yeah, it was definitely not Honor's pick.

SHEILA
Do you remember her?

ESTHER
I was a baby.

SHEILA
Yeah but, like, I dunno. A sense memory or something? I bet that can happen.

ESTHER
No. Or I don't think so.

SHEILA
Yeah or, like, maybe not. I should probably just shut up about things I know nothing about, right?

ESTHER
I hardly even remember my adoptive mom.

SHEILA
Oh.

ESTHER
What did you think of that guy?

SHEILA
What guy?

ESTHER
The guy I went home with.

SHEILA
Oh, yeah he seemed nice.
Like, professional,
but nice.

ESTHER
Yeah.

SHEILA
I mean I didn't really get to talk to him that much.
But obviously that's all for the best cuz you're the one who needed to get *laiiid.*
Plus Brandon would have gotten all jealous.

ESTHER
What, if you just, like, talked to a guy at a bar?

SHEILA
Yeah but, like, he wouldn't express it in words. It's in his eyes. He gets these, like, jealous eyes. They're really annoying.
But that's one of his only faults, so –
Anyway, I think it's really good you're, like, expanding your horizons.
Like, after Jeremy. You were way too good for Jeremy.

ESTHER
I don't know.

SHEILA
He just wasn't your person.

ESTHER
I guess.

SHEILA
Everybody has a person.
That's what I believe.
(Pause)
Anyway, when you wake up, there'll be biscuits.

ESTHER
Thanks.

Sheila leaves for the kitchen. Esther closes her eyes.

SCENE 2

A few hours later. Esther is still asleep on the couch.

Richard enters, wearing track pants and a light, professional-looking sweater.

RICHARD
Esther.
(Pause)
Yo, Esther.
(Pause)
BOO!

ESTHER
Oh, holyfuck what?
Jesus, I thought –

RICHARD
You thought what?

ESTHER
I thought you were someone else.

RICHARD
Who else would I be?

ESTHER
I don't know. A rapist?

RICHARD
It's three o'clock in the afternoon.

ESTHER
So?

RICHARD
So it's Saturday and the sun is shining.
Shouldn't you be out playing with your friends?

ESTHER
OK, I'm not seven.

RICHARD
I'm joking, jeez.
You and your sister. Can't take a joke these days.

ESTHER
How did you get in here?

RICHARD
Your roommate.
Brantley.

ESTHER
Brandon.// He's my roommate's boyfriend.

RICHARD
Right, that sounds right.
I told him who I was and he was like, "Great, cool. Welcome."
I'm like, this is Brooklyn kid.
Don't trust nobody.

ESTHER
Why are you in my house?

RICHARD
Don't I get offered a glass of water or something?

ESTHER
Um, do you want a glass of water?

RICHARD
Sure, why not?
By the way, it smells like a cake in here.

ESTHER
Uh my roommate made biscuits I think?

RICHARD
And I don't get offered a biscuit with my water?

ESTHER
They're not really mine to offer.
But, um, I don't think she would mind.

RICHARD
Nah. I'm vegan before sunset.
Thanks though.

(Pause)

ESTHER
I'm going to/

RICHARD
Great.

(Esther leaves. She returns with a glass of water.)

Thanks.

(Richard drinks.)

Was at the gym. Gotta stay hydrated.
We've been doing this couples challenge where we work out weekend mornings. Then we go hard at dinner. It's, like, pour a little sweat into your day and then there's no guilt when you're pounding the steak and martinis, you know? Tonight, I'm making poached salmon and this potato leek gratin recipe from The Times.

ESTHER
Sounds good.

RICHARD
It will be. You should come over one of these days.
I mean, come over tonight if you want.

ESTHER
I'm kind of busy with school right now.

RICHARD
End-of-semester blues?

ESTHER
Just a lot of grading.

RICHARD
Ever had a gin fizz?

ESTHER
I don't think so.

RICHARD
Egg whites.
It takes a little skill.

ESTHER
Rich you live, like, an hour away.

RICHARD
Yeah, and?

ESTHER
You just decided to stop by?

RICHARD
Yep.

ESTHER
As in, break into my apartment?

RICHARD
I was kindly *let in* to your apartment, thank you very much.

ESTHER
You could have texted me.

RICHARD
I did.

ESTHER
Oh yeah, I lost my phone.

RICHARD
See?

ESTHER
OK so what brings you here?

RICHARD
Ada came home super upset.

ESTHER
Oh.

RICHARD
Yeah she got home and took a bath at, like, noon.
She told me that she came to see you after yoga.

ESTHER
Yeah. She was here.

RICHARD
So, I thought it might be a good idea to come by and offer some help.

ESTHER
I don't really think you can help.

RICHARD
I tend to get less heated.

ESTHER
Less heated?

RICHARD
More objective.

ESTHER
We were just talking.

RICHARD
Well, it seems like the just talking made her really upset.

ESTHER
I mean, it's an upsetting situation.
But it's kind of, like, between Ada and me.

RICHARD
See this?

ESTHER
Yes, Richard. I see your wedding ring.

RICHARD
So? We bound, bitch.
I'm kidding. But like, you know, I'm part of this family, too.

ESTHER
I know.

RICHARD
Legally, I mean.

ESTHER
What is it with you people and the law?

RICHARD
What? Lawyers?
What is it with lawyers and the law?

ESTHER
I guess.

RICHARD
Well, what can you do, black sheep? What can you do?
Esther, I'm just joking around.
It's sort of funny, don't you think: me, Ada, I mean – your dad? You're surrounded by lawyers on all sides.

ESTHER
Yeah. Hilarious.

RICHARD
We're not such bad people to have in your back pocket.

ESTHER
It's just not that cool for you to barge in here and wake me up.

RICHARD
I mean it's concerning that you're sleeping in the middle of the day.

ESTHER
I've just been on a weird schedule.

RICHARD
You mean a depressed person schedule?

ESTHER
No, like, my body's out of sync and I'm really busy schedule.

RICHARD
You want to talk busy?
I'm busy. My work phone:
Bzz bzz bzz no stopping.
And I'm still up at 6:30AM on a Saturday getting ready to haul some ass on the gym floor.

ESTHER
I guess I'm not as disciplined as you.

RICHARD
I know that it's been a shitty time.

ESTHER
Right.

RICHARD
Esther, I was around. I know.

ESTHER
Yeah.

RICHARD
I just want my wife back.

ESTHER
Back from where? I don't think she's, like, stuck in the underworld.

RICHARD
This whole will fuckery's been putting her under a lot of new stress. I tried so hard to convince her to just step down. I mean being an executor is, like, a whole other job when you're dealing with those kinds of assets. You don't have to do it to be a good person.

ESTHER
But my dad wanted her/

RICHARD
Probate can give it to someone else. Someone less emotionally invested.

ESTHER
I thought being emotionally invested was the point.

RICHARD
Look, I'm very sympathetic. I'm a sympathetic party, OK?
He had no fucking idea who I was, either. Might as well have been cousin Christopher.

ESTHER
We don't have a cousin Christopher.

RICHARD
Exactly.
It's like, fuck. Not a graceful way to go. Pretty terrifying honestly. That that kind of mind could just –
And I could be by Ada's side through a lot of it, but there was just no way around how much she had to deal with alone.

ESTHER
I don't need to be blamed if that's// what you came here to do.

RICHARD
I'm not blaming you. But you know who was where when.

ESTHER
I know when I went to South Carolina and when I came back, thanks.

RICHARD
I remember that picture Ada showed me of you smiling on a horse.

ESTHER
Wendy.

RICHARD
Who's Wendy?

ESTHER
My mom's horse's name is Wendy.

RICHARD
Right, well, you looked very happy on Wendy.

ESTHER
I had never been on a horse before.

RICHARD
I know, that's what Ada said. Which, you know, surprised me. You two grew up as such aristocrats.

ESTHER
Not really.

RICHARD
Well, upper crust Connecticut.

ESTHER
You make a lot of money, don't you?

RICHARD
Woah there, Nellie.

ESTHER
I mean, aren't they making you partner or something?

RICHARD
I'm an associate. Some people at the firm are trying to fast-track me, but –
I'm a little young.

ESTHER
I mean that still sounds lucrative.

RICHARD
You think I grew up in rooms filled with, like, plays and dictionaries?
Or had school trips to the Smithsonian?

ESTHER
I don't know.

(Pause)

RICHARD
Ada's a virtuous person.

ESTHER
OK?

RICHARD
Despite everything, she's going to be generous with you.

ESTHER
If you're talking about our dad's money, it's hers now. What she does with it is her decision.

RICHARD
Right. I don't necessarily agree with the decision but you're right.

ESTHER
What, you want to keep all of it?

RICHARD
I mean, we could use it.

ESTHER
I could use it.

RICHARD
You know Ada wants to get a place in Brooklyn? Close to you, that's what she said. I mean most of our friends are out here, but fuck, it's expensive! And the falling apart shitholes you get for the price.
And I'm not raising my prospective kid in some, like, lead-painted crumbling manor. So yeah, we could make use of a sum up front.
We'd still pay for your school.// Make sure you're set up.

ESTHER
I make money from teaching.

RICHARD
Your books, your boys…

ESTHER
I have a stipend.

RICHARD
Oh. Good.
Good for you.

ESTHER
It's small, but –

RICHARD
Well, you've always been an independent soul. I know how much Ada admires you for that. Looks up to you for that.

ESTHER
I don't think she looks up to me.

RICHARD
Oh, sure.
If she didn't, why else would she be so crushed?

ESTHER
I'm not in control of what my dad put in his will.

RICHARD
No, that you're pulling away, receding out of her life towards some woman you hardly know, who would have given you a lot less than you got,// that's for sure.

ESTHER
I'm entitled to know my mom.

RICHARD
Entitled? What is it with you and entitlement? Like, you may have read a lot, but you have no idea how to link your actions and the consequences of your actions.

ESTHER
I accept what's happened.

RICHARD
Your dad didn't want you to get any of that money.

ESTHER
I mean, sure.

RICHARD
He changed his will so that you wouldn't get anything. The proof's in the pudding, know what I mean?

ESTHER
He had dementia.

RICHARD
Yeah, and you left on some soul-searching road trip when his dementia was reaching, like, an apex.

ESTHER
He went into a home.// He was being taken care of.

RICHARD
And who found that home? And who was in charge of payments to the home? And knowing the doctors and the doctors' schedules and the meds and the visits? You know we timed our wedding to "his good hours" so that maybe, maybe he would be lucid enough to have some semblance of what the fuck was going on?

ESTHER
Well, excuse me if I didn't care about accommodating a possessive asshole.

RICHARD
No, you definitely didn't.

ESTHER
I think this will stuff is making you and Ada crazy.
I'm getting nothing, OK?

RICHARD
That's not true, Ada wants to give you half the money.

ESTHER
But it's the leaving out part. You can't just reverse that with money.

RICHARD
Yeah, I mean you should refuse.

ESTHER
What?

RICHARD
You should tell Ada to keep all of it.

ESTHER
But I need it.

RICHARD
For what?

ESTHER
My own stuff.

RICHARD
You don't deserve it. You have not been an equal contributor to, like, the pains of this family.

ESTHER
You don't know anything about the pains of this family.
And anyway, they're not my fault.

RICHARD
Your fault. It's all about you all the time.
You think we don't all, that I don't, have problems?

ESTHER
Of course you do. You can't impregnate my sister.

RICHARD
You're fucked.
You're totally fucked in the head.

ESTHER
Maybe I am.

RICHARD
After the shit I did for you. Shit you hardly know about because you couldn't fucking show up and bear to know, because you were too busy getting drugged up in a trailer with a woman// whose life you just fucking waltzed into.

ESTHER
I don't know what Ada's been telling you but I didn't get drugged up with anyone, OK?

RICHARD
Well, but she does lead kind of a different life, doesn't she?

ESTHER
Different from what?

RICHARD
From your, I don't know, wood-paneled comforts in the academe.

ESTHER
She's poor. Is that what you're trying to say?

RICHARD
You think you're going to fix her life?

ESTHER
No.

RICHARD
Your dad's money is going to pull her out of the pharmaceutical horse farm business or whatever she does? Is that right? And you'll, what, teach her how to read?

ESTHER
Rich, stop.

RICHARD
That impregnate shit was way out of line.

ESTHER
Sorry.

RICHARD
You should be sorry.

ESTHER
I am, yeah. I know how much she wants a kid.

RICHARD
You think I don't?

ESTHER
I don't know.

RICHARD
No, you don't. You don't bother to know.

(Pause)

If you have any conscience at all, you're not going to take that money. Doesn't matter what you said before. Ada keeps all of it. Ada's in charge of all of it. That's what you want.
And you can make your own money and go back to South Carolina or open up some book exchange kava bar in Brooklyn or do whatever it is you want to do when you actually deserve to change your life.

ESTHER
Can you leave?

RICHARD
You know, I've got siblings.
Not a sister. Two brothers. They're out tilling the soil like it's 1899 in bumfuck Nowhere, Ohio. But I get it, that bond. It's not my intention to come between that.

ESTHER
You're not.

End of Act 1.

ACT 2

Saturday three weeks later, at about eight-thirty in the evening. Esther and Sheila's apartment is now Ada and Richard's one-bedroom on one of those quieter side streets of Midtown Manhattan: Chelsea or East 30's. It's small but neat and tasteful. A painting. A gilded mirror.

Ada and Esther are on the couch. Esther has her eyes closed and is holding the newest model of iPhone in its packaging.

ESTHER
It's a rectangle.

ADA
Yes?

ESTHER
I don't know it seems too small to be a book.
(Pause)
Um, it's very smooth?

ADA
OK just open your eyes.

ESTHER
Oh, wow.

ADA
I think of you more as a classic gold than a rose gold.

ESTHER
Wow thanks.

ADA
Now I'm going to text you all the time.

ESTHER
You could have texted me all the time before.

ADA
Yeah, but not iMessage.
Plus, you can't be walking around with that thing anymore. You can hardly see anything on the screen.

Richard enters in an apron. He holds a cocktail.

RICHARD
Oh, Esther got her gift.

ADA
To finishing the end of the semester.

RICHARD
Well, here, here.

ADA
Yay, Esther!

RICHARD
Here, here.

ESTHER
Thanks.

RICHARD
Glad you're not going to see those Baruch College brats for another few months?

ESTHER
I don't know. Some of them were really smart. I might keep in touch with this one older guy.

ADA
Oooooh.

ESTHER
Ew, not like that. He was my student.

RICHARD
Was being the imperative word.

ADA
OK, OK let's not tease.
How's the sauce?

RICHARD
Coming along.

ADA
He swears by four hours simmering time.

RICHARD
Four hours minimum.

ADA
Personally, I think it's excessive.

RICHARD
Reserve all judgment until you've tasted it.

ADA
I don't really care it always comes out amazing. I just mean, like, what's really the discernible difference between a twenty-five-dollar bottle of wine and a thirty-dollar bottle of wine, you know?

ESTHER
I don't know.

RICHARD
So, what do you think, Esther?

ESTHER
Of what?

RICHARD
The phone.

ESTHER
Oh, yeah it's really nice. You guys didn't have to.

ADA
Oh my god yes we did.
Rich, did you see her phone?
Esther, show him your phone.

ESTHER
It's in my bag.

ADA
Is your bag, like, three subway stops away?

Esther awkwardly rummages through her purse and takes out her phone.

RICHARD
I mean yeah that's a busted-ass phone.

ADA
See? You can't be walking around with that.
Oh, but tell Rich about what happened.

ESTHER
What?

ADA
About the woman. In the cab.

ESTHER
Oh, well um a few weeks ago I left my phone in a car.

RICHARD
Uh-huh.

ADA
And I kept calling Esther's number just, you know, to see if anyone would pick up.

ESTHER
Yeah and this woman //who was in the cab –

ADA
She said it was all fucked up because it was on the floor of the cab. People must have stepped on it or something. But still in working condition!
Anyway, she dropped it off with Esther. So sweet. I offered to pay her but/

RICHARD
Good Samaritan.

ADA
I know. Seems so rare these days.

RICHARD
Not in Japan.
In Japan, it's amazing, you could forget your phone or wallet or something, leave it on a table at a bar, come back three days later and it would still be just sitting there. Untouched.

ADA
And have you been going to Japan without me, babe?

RICHARD
I'm friends with a Japanese dude in Compliance.

ADA
Oh. OK.

RICHARD
Remember, like, Fukushima?

ADA
Fuku-what?

RICHARD
Like, ten years ago that massive tsunami followed by a nuclear power plant disaster in Japan? No looting. None.
And after Katrina?
Well, you see my point.

ESTHER
What's your point?

RICHARD
That it's a difference in values, in culture.

ESTHER
That's totally not a fair comparison. It's not about culture it's about governments. The different government responses. And, like, racism.

RICHARD
It is a little about culture, c'mon. Theft is just more acceptable in America.

ADA
No, Esther's right.
You shouldn't make comparisons like that. Katrina's really different than a Japanese nuclear power plant disaster.

RICHARD
I was just trying to point out something interesting. An interesting phenomenon. But, anyway, I guess phone lady proves this country's still got some good and honest people in it.
Esther, another signature cocktail?

ESTHER
Sure.

RICHARD
You still good with the seltz, babe?

ADA
I'm good.

Richard leaves.

Esther is on her busted phone, sending a text.

ADA
He might be going overboard with the whole chef-mixologist hobby.

ESTHER
What?

ADA
He just gets carried away. "Signature cocktail."

ESTHER
You're not drinking?

ADA
Isolating different variables, remember?

ESTHER
Oh, right.

ADA
We never know if this is *the month,* you know? So in case it is, I just don't want to mess around.
We're aiming for a completely substance-free pregnancy.
Like, totally unadulterated, pure, whole-grain.

ESTHER
I mean but it's like –
You're cutting out caffeine *and* alcohol before you're even/

ADA
I can be fun with seltzer, can't I?

ESTHER
Fun-ish.

ADA
Oh, shut up.
You and Rich go ahead. You enjoy yourselves.

ESTHER
I could have just bought myself a new phone.

ADA
Would you have though? As nice as that?

ESTHER
I don't know. Maybe.

ADA
Stop staring at yourself.

ESTHER
What?

ADA
You stare at yourself too much.
We all know you're pretty, so don't worry about it.

ESTHER
I just got distracted. Sorry. But your mirror is, um,
Very stately.

ADA
You've seen it before.

ESTHER
Yeah, but, I don't know. Today it looks bigger somehow.

ADA
It was Rich's grandmother's who, like, mostly raised him so you know,
Pick Your Battles.

ESTHER
Oh no it's nice.

ADA
Oh my god are you kidding? It's hideous. I hate it. And now I'll have to fucking see it all the time.

ESTHER
I think it's good you're going to have a less grueling schedule.

ADA
It'll be just as grueling, but at home.

ESTHER
You can make gourmet lunches.

ADA
Do you want to come over and make me gourmet lunches?

ESTHER
Um, sure.

ADA
Two, three days a week?

ESTHER
I'm not the best cook.

ADA
Oh my god, study group. You could come over and work on your dissertation.

ESTHER
Don't you have to get on conference calls and stuff?

ADA
Yeah, but it's not, like, all the time. It's a lot of quiet work. Reading documents, marking up documents, e-mailing about documents…

ESTHER
Sounds like me.

ADA
Exactly.
Ugh we'd have the cutest WeWork. No boys allowed. Well, until Rich gets home but that's like nine o'clock most nights.

ESTHER
The wire came through.

ADA
Oh, good.

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
I was surprised it was actually a way quicker process than I thought.
Like, I thought it would take way more than a few weeks because of probate, but I don't know I guess it all got worked out sooner.

ESTHER
Cool.

ADA
Another chunk will come to you in a few months.

ESTHER
OK.

ADA
They just have to deal with the investments, which takes longer to liquidate with all the paperwork. I'd guess like six months.

ESTHER
That's fine.

ADA
I don't mind talking about it, for the record.

ESTHER
I know.

ADA
I think you're the one that has the problem talking about it.

ESTHER
I just told you it came through. So, I can obviously talk about it.

ADA
I'll give you a better estimate once I hear back from the bank people on the investments.

ESTHER
No, it's fine this is enough.

ADA
Enough for what?

ESTHER
Oh, um.
Just/

ADA
What? Are you going to get a new apartment? Oh god finally.

ESTHER
I don't know maybe.

ADA
Isn't your roommate's boyfriend over all the time?

ESTHER
I like living with Sheila. And it's a good deal.

ADA
The boyfriend thing would so bother me.
If I was you/

ESTHER
You're not me.

ADA
I'm just saying if I could have a dishwasher/

ESTHER
You do have a dishwasher.

Richard returns with the drinks.

RICHARD
Un seltzer.
Et un gin fizz pour la mademoiselle.

ADA
Merci, cheri.
That's darling in French, right?

RICHARD
Do you have to learn French at school, Esther? Is that, like, a degree requirement?

ESTHER
No.

RICHARD
Because all those Russian aristocrats spoke French, like, a few centuries ago?

ESTHER
It was more of a style thing.

RICHARD
A class thing too, though, right? All those rich people talking in a language the peasants couldn't understand.

ESTHER
Yeah, pretty much.

RICHARD
Assholes.
Well, at least you don't have to learn French. Russian's hard enough I'd imagine.

ADA
It's a lot.
It's very hard work.

ESTHER
That's not really my concentration, anyway. I study 20th Century, like more modern stuff.

ADA
Esther's going to start coming over to work on her dissertation.
I'll need some company now that I won't have Jo at my door every five minutes.

RICHARD
Oh, Jo. What will poor Jo do?

ADA
E-mail me.

ESTHER
Who's Jo?

RICHARD
A little paralegal who thinks Ada's a goddess.

ADA
Rich.

RICHARD
I mean doesn't she show up in the same outfits as you?

ADA
It's not really like I'm wearing hard-to-find vintage numbers at the office. We all use the internet.

RICHARD
Nah, I bet she's, you know, sneaking past your desk, turning over your cardigan so she can see the label.

ADA
Don't be mean.

RICHARD
What? I think it's cute.
You have incredible taste. Who wouldn't want to wear the same cardigans as you?

ADA
Why don't you stop talking now and help Esther set up her phone?

ESTHER
I can just figure it out later.

ADA
He's really good at all the tech stuff.

ESTHER
Aren't these things, like, prized for being intuitive or something?

RICHARD
Well, after years of Android garbage, your brain may need to be rewired.

ADA
Rich!

RICHARD
What? I was kidding!

ESTHER
Is this, like, an Android-free zone or something?

ADA
No, we're not *total* snobs.

RICHARD
Yes.

ADA
Rich, you're so obnoxious.

RICHARD
'Tis why she loves me.

ADA
Oh my god.
Is the pasta even in yet?

RICHARD
Just a little more.

ADA
We're getting hungry.

RICHARD
You can't rush a Bolognese, I'm sorry.

ESTHER
I'm sorry I just have to –

ADA
What?

ESTHER
No, nothing.
I just have to make a call.

ADA
Oh, yeah no prob.
Is everything OK?

ESTHER
Yeah sorry, it's fine.

ADA
Is it that engineer guy?

RICHARD
What engineer guy?// I never heard anything about an engineer guy.

ESTHER
I told you I didn't give him my number.

ADA
Oh, right. I forgot.

Esther's phone rings.

ESTHER
Sorry I'll just be one sec.

ADA
You don't have to leave to take a call.

ESTHER
I'll just be a sec.

Esther leaves.

(Pause)

RICHARD
How you doing?

ADA
I'm good.
I'm having a nice time.

RICHARD
Good.

ADA
Why, do I not seem like I'm having a nice time?

RICHARD
You know, it wouldn't be a misdemeanor if you wanted a glass of wine.

ADA
I don't want a glass of wine.

RICHARD
Montepulciano. Goes great with red sauce.

ADA
Are you trying to peer pressure me?

RICHARD
No I'm trying to instill some *joie de vivre.*

ADA
You're being so over the top tonight with the, like, seven French words you know.

RICHARD
I know and we're having Italian.
But I make you laugh, right?
"Hohn-hohn-hohn-hohn-hohn."

Ada laughs.

ADA
What the fuck was that?

RICHARD
Lisa winds up by mistake in this alternate-reality French class, and all the kids are laughing at her and the teacher's like, "En Français, les enfants," which means// "Speak in French."

ADA
I know what it means.

RICHARD
And then all the kids go *hohn-hohn-hohn-hohn-hohn.*
Not *hah-hah-hah-ha-ha*.

ADA
You're such a nerd.

RICHARD
No I'm not.

ADA
You love *The Simpsons* and, like, contract law. So yeah, you are.

RICHARD
Hey, you said yes.

(Pause)

ADA
I'm worried Esther's really hungry and you're getting her drunk.

RICHARD
I'm not getting her drunk.// We had cheese.

ADA
And that she wouldn't say anything if she was.

RICHARD
We'll eat soon.
I promise, OK? I'll break the four-hour simmering rule for you if you're that hungry.

ADA
I'd appreciate that.

RICHARD
You look really hot in that dress.

ADA
I wonder who could have bought it for me.

RICHARD
The sheen. The sheen makes your eyes shine brighter.

ADA
You are a secret nerd.

(Richard and Ada kiss)

You're going to get cooking goop over that nice dress.

RICHARD
I'll take the apron off.

ADA
Esther's going to come back.

RICHARD
So?

(Pause)

OK, I'll go back to where I belong. Time to wash some escarole!

Richard leaves. Ada waits.
Esther returns.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
Is everything OK?

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
Who was it?

ESTHER
A friend.

ADA
What friend?

ESTHER
Um, a friend. Why do you need to know?

ADA
You just seemed, like, anxious to take the call.

ESTHER
I wasn't anxious.

ADA
Well, you seemed that way.

ESTHER
Everything's fine.

ADA
It just, you know, it can feel like you're hiding stuff from me because you get all secretive when I wouldn't even care if you just took the call here.

ESTHER
You're being controlling.

ADA
What? How am I being controlling?

ESTHER
I can want some privacy and it be, like, no big deal.

ADA
You don't have to lie.

ESTHER
I'm not lying.

ADA
Who was it then?

ESTHER
It was Sheila, OK?
Happy?

ADA
What, did she get locked out of the house or something?

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
Really?

ESTHER
You think I'm lying?

ADA
I don't know.

ESTHER
Why do you even have to know?

ADA
Because you've been acting so fucking weird all night.

ESTHER
How?

ADA
I don't know you just seem really, like, uncomfortable.

ESTHER
It was Sheila. I wasn't lying.

ADA
OK, so what did she want?

ESTHER
Ada!

ADA
If it was Honor/

ESTHER
She's downstairs.

ADA
What? Who?

ESTHER
Sheila. She was supposed to come pick me up after her shift, OK? She's downstairs.

ADA
Why was she coming to pick you up? Do you, like, need a chaperone back to Brooklyn?

ESTHER
We were supposed to meet up with her boyfriend and a few friends later.

ADA
Oh.

ESTHER
I didn't realize dinner would take this long.

ADA
Well, sorry for fucking up your Saturday night plans.

ESTHER
You're not fucking anything up I just assumed we'd eat a little earlier.

ADA
I actually thought you'd appreciate that. It's very European.

ESTHER
No, it's great. I just assumed/

ADA
Pre-game is obligatory dinner at your sister's?

ESTHER
I honestly thought we'd be, like, wrapping up.
And now I see that it was a dumb assumption.

ADA
You can just go if you don't want to be here.

ESTHER
I do want to be here.

ADA
This is just why I was, like, about the court thing. And changing dad's will and stuff.

ESTHER
I mean, you realize that idea was completely insane, right?
Taking you to court would not have made me want to come for dinner, believe me.

(Pause)

ADA
What's Sheila doing?

ESTHER
I don't know probably smoking on some corner.

ADA
Why don't you tell her to come up?

ESTHER
Um, I think that would be really weird.

ADA
I mean if she's downstairs it would be kind of rude not to.

ESTHER
She doesn't know you or Rich.

ADA
So? We can get to know each other.

ESTHER
She'll probably want to be with her boyfriend in Brooklyn.

ADA
It would be nice to get to know someone else in your life.
(Pause)
I might actually surprise you sometimes.

ESTHER
OK.
Fine. I'll ask.

Esther uncomfortably texts on her phone. She and Ada wait. Esther gets a reply.

ADA
So?

ESTHER
One drink.

ADA
Great. I'll tell Rich.

ESTHER
But if this is super awkward it's not my fault.

Ada leaves. Esther texts more. Rich comes out from the kitchen.

RICHARD
She's on the brink of tears.

ESTHER
I'm sorry. It was a miscommunication.

RICHARD
Dinner. One dinner. It's pretty simple. And you can't last an hour without upsetting her.

ESTHER
It's a really fucked up idea to have Sheila come up, OK? She basically coerced me.

RICHARD
She didn't coerce you.

ESTHER
Well, then she, like, majorly guilt-tripped me.
You two are on some giant make-me-feel-like-shit campaign.

RICHARD
You're living your own life, Esther. You can do what you want.

ESTHER
I'm just gonna, I can just go.

RICHARD
Sure, leave.

ESTHER
Great idea you had. This dinner thing.
Why did you want me to come over, anyway? Because you're just so manipulative you actually want us to fight? So that, what? She'll finally wake up to realize how truly unworthy I am? And you'll be there to comfort her and, I don't know, buy her a brownstone? Because I already got the money.

The door buzzer sounds.

ADA (O.S)
I'll get it!

RICHARD
Got it, babe!

Ada returns hurriedly.

Did you not hear me? I got it.

ADA
Oh, I didn't hear you. Thanks.

RICHARD
I'm going to make her a drink.

ADA
Oh great. That's great.

RICHARD
What does your friend drink, Esther?

ESTHER
I don't know. Beer?

RICHARD
We don't have beer.

ESTHER
OK, then. A signature cocktail?

RICHARD
Gin fizz. Comin' up.

Richard leaves.

After a few moments, a knock. Ada opens the door. Sheila is in a lot of make-up.

ADA
Hi, Sheila.

SHEILA
Ugh your lobby. Those orchids. Jealous.
Hey, Esther.

ESTHER
Hey.

ADA
My husband's just getting us a refill on drinks. I hope you like gin.

SHEILA
Yes, love gin.
Eff. I'm sorry. I didn't bring anything. I wasn't expecting/

ADA
Don't worry about it. I know this was a change of plans.

SHEILA
Honestly, I love a change of plans. I, like, pride myself on my plan flexibility.

ADA
That's good. That's a good skill.

SHEILA
It's very useful in New York.

ADA
Come on in. Don't worry about shoes.

SHEILA
Oh, I do –
Actually, um, it's maybe a little weird it's from my work but it's super good. And, like, I haven't touched it.
Do you guys eat shellfish?

ADA
Um, it kind of depends from where but yeah.

Sheila takes a big plastic take-out container from her bag.

SHEILA
It's lobster mac and cheese.

ADA
Wow. I've never heard of that.

SHEILA
No I know it sounds a little gross but it's so good trust me. It's the signature dish at the restaurant where I work.
It's kind of ridiculous it's this fancy mac and cheese place. And, like, upscale comfort foods more generally. But mac and cheese is really their thing.
It's actually just a few blocks away.

ADA
Oh.
Really?

SHEILA
Yeah you should totally stop by sometime. I'll hook you up with free drinks.

ADA
I'm just gonna pop this in the fridge.

Ada leaves.

ESTHER
This is so weird I'm sorry.

SHEILA
No it's not your sister's apartment is so nice.

ESTHER
You don't have to stay for that long.

SHEILA
My asshole manager cut my shift off early, anyway. Surprise, surprise.

ESTHER
I think I'm getting roped into, like, a 10PM dinner.

SHEILA
We have time.

ESTHER
No, I know.
It's just not what I had expected.
Is Brandon OK?

SHEILA
Oh my god don't even worry about him. He's basically lost to another world when he's with his college friends. It's like coding, D&D, Marxism. Oh but there's this one, like, sculptor guy from Eugene. I think you two would, you know, Get Along.

ESTHER
Oh yeah?

SHEILA
And it'd be perfect because he's passing through just for this week.

Richard and Ada enter with drinks.

RICHARD
Gin, lemon, a lil' simple syrup and a special somethin' somethin' you probably won't guess.

SHEILA
Oh my god this looks so professional.

RICHARD
Beaten egg whites.

SHEILA
Wow.

RICHARD
For a whisp of creaminess.
Non-dairy creaminess.

SHEILA
So good.

ADA
He could basically get a side-hustle as a bartender, right?

SHEILA
Totally. You're not having?

RICHARD
I hope you eat meat and gluten.

SHEILA
Oh I ate at work, so really, don't worry about me for food.

RICHARD
There's plenty.
Pleasure to have you.
Cheers.

ADA
He always makes way too much.

SHEILA
Cheers!

RICHARD
So, what are the big plans for tonight?

SHEILA
We're going to this dance party in Bushwick.

RICHARD
Cool.

SHEILA
It is really cool. It happens every month in a different, secret location and the music is amazing. You guys should totally come.

ESTHER
I don't think they want to come.

RICHARD
Hey, now, don't speak for me.

ESTHER
It only gets started, like, after midnight.

RICHARD
I know when these things start I'm familiar with Berlin.

ADA
When were you in Berlin?

RICHARD
I mean, like, I'm familiar with the club culture *of* Berlin.

ADA
I'm not drinking right now, so.

SHEILA
That totally doesn't matter. Just the vibe is cool.

ADA
Right, the vibe.

RICHARD
I love a good vibe.

SHEILA
They have consistently amazing DJs. Like, the music is by far the most important thing. You definitely don't have to be on anything to appreciate it.

ESTHER
Well, honestly, I don't know.

ADA
Yeah somehow I have trouble believing that.

SHEILA
No seriously there's, like, this totally straightedge contingent of the dance community. People associate EDM with K or MDMA or whatever but, like, I think the real, like, beauty of it is just being together, you know? Like, you find this shared joy with all these different people, like a seventy-year old lady by herself on the dance floor. 2AM. Just loving it.

ADA
How do you know she's not on drugs?

SHEILA
Right, I guess I don't.
I'm just saying the community's very mixed.

RICHARD
We're not seventy.

SHEILA
No, totally. It was just an example.

ESTHER
I don't think they'd like it.

ADA
Yeah, it doesn't really sound like our scene.

RICHARD
Oh c'mon, we can try a different scene every now and again.

SHEILA
Especially for Esther's last Saturday night in New York.

ADA
What?

ESTHER
It's not really a big deal.

ADA
What's not a big deal?

SHEILA
It's totally a big deal. Capital B Big. Gotta send her out with a capital B BANG.

ADA
Esther, what?

ESTHER
I'm going back to Watts Mills for a bit.

ADA
Um.
What's a bit?

SHEILA
Did you//
Did they not –

ESTHER
A few months.

ADA
A few months? What are you going to do about school?

ESTHER
I don't know yet.

ADA
So, you're just going to, like, throw away// your degree?

ESTHER
It's not throwing it away. It would just be taking a break.

ADA
Taking a break and doing what?

ESTHER
I don't know, OK? Just spending some more time there.

ADA
You're going to have to work eventually, you know?
Half a million dollars isn't going to pull you through an entire life.

ESTHER
I can just go.

ADA
Of course you can just go.

RICHARD
Hey babe, it's OK.

ESTHER
I just didn't think you'd react that well.

ADA
So you were just going to, what? Like, secretly abscond?

ESTHER
I would have gotten in touch.

RICHARD
Babe, don't freak out.

ADA
I'm not freaking out, I'm upset. Being upset and freaking out isn't the same thing.
When are you leaving?

ESTHER
My flight to Greenville is on Monday.
(Pause)
I don't have to take the iPhone.

ADA
Fuck you.

Ada leaves.

ESTHER
Sheila, do you have a cig?

SHEILA
Oh um, yeah.

RICHARD
That's a bad habit.

ESTHER
Shut up, Richard.

Esther leaves.

(Pause)

SHEILA
I feel like, um,
I'm sorry.

RICHARD
Don't be.

SHEILA
I didn't know you guys, like,
Didn't know?

RICHARD
Do you want another drink?

SHEILA
I'm good. Gotta pace myself. These things are pretty strong.

RICHARD
Yeah. I'm on my third.

SHEILA
I just should moderate since I'll be rolling later.
(Long pause)
I hope Esther's OK.

RICHARD
It's been kind of a hard year.
(Longer pause)
My parents are still alive.
Are yours?

SHEILA
Um. Yeah.

RICHARD
Well, that's good.

(Pause)

SHEILA
My best friend died in college, though.

RICHARD
Oh.

SHEILA
Yeah she got this rare type of blood cancer super young. It's so –
It was so unlucky and the unluckiness is what made it seem really, like, cruel.

RICHARD
Uh-huh.

SHEILA
I got a tattoo of her phone number on the back of my neck, which I think I definitely regret.

RICHARD
Hah.

SHEILA
Maybe that's the kind of stupid thing you do though when you're twenty and, like, shell-shocked. Like, brand yourself with your grief.

(Pause)

RICHARD
I'm going to go stir the pasta sauce and then check on my wife.

SHEILA
Oh, yeah. Sure.

RICHARD
Not that anyone seems hungry anymore.

Richard leaves. Sheila takes slow sips of her drink. She checks her phone, sends a text. Esther returns.

SHEILA
Hey. You OK?

ESTHER
Can we please go?

SHEILA
Is that, like, an OK thing to do?

ESTHER
I don't even care. I just want to leave.

SHEILA
I'm really sorry.

ESTHER
It's fine. I should have told you.

SHEILA
I feel like I just ruined the entire night.

ESTHER
If anything, it just points to how messed up we are if I can't even tell my sister I'm moving to another state.

SHEILA
Well, I'm excited for you.

ESTHER
You're probably just excited that I don't have to get another subletter.

SHEILA
That too.

ESTHER
Are you gonna find a place with Brandon?

SHEILA
I don't know, maybe. We haven't had a really good, deep talk about it yet. Like, if it's exactly the right time to move in together. But when is it *exactly* the right time for anything, you know?

ESTHER
Tell me more on the train.

SHEILA
Did your –

(Pause)

ESTHER
What?

SHEILA
It's not really my business but did your dad leave you half a million dollars?

ESTHER
Yeah.

SHEILA
That's amazing.
I'm just gonna go rinse out my glass.

ESTHER
You can leave it. They have a dishwasher.

SHEILA
This glass doesn't look that dishwasher-friendly.

ESTHER
Please. Let's just go.

SHEILA
Are you sure you want to, like, be out right now?

ESTHER
Yeah, why?

SHEILA
Just checking if you, I don't know, wanted to say bye or something. Or stay longer.

ESTHER
I want to keep drinking and dance with you and maybe fuck that sculptor guy. And then I want to get the fuck out of New York.

End of Act 2.

ACT 3

Four months later, at around ten o'clock at night. The living/dining area of Ada and Richard's apartment. It looks the same as in Act 2, though maybe there are piles of paper and some dirty mugs and glasses on the dining room table. The room is still and empty.

After some time of just being with the room, some sounds from offstage. Then, Ada enters from the kitchen. She looks around.

ADA
Esther?
(a little more loudly)
Esther?

(Pause)

ESTHER
(off-stage)
I'm in the bathroom!

ADA
I actually do have peppermint! Do you want that instead?

ESTHER
(off-stage)
Uh. Sure.

ADA
What?

ESTHER
(off-stage)
Sure!

Ada goes back into the kitchen. After a few moments, Esther enters. She looks plainer, less dressed up. She sits on the couch and waits. Ada returns with two mugs of tea.

ADA
(handing the mug to her)
Here.

ESTHER
Ow, fuck. It's hot.

ADA
What do you want me to do? It's tea.

ESTHER
Just put it on the table.
(Pause)
Thanks.

ADA
If I had known you were coming I would have ordered more take-out.

ESTHER
I had a burger at the airport.

ADA
It's embarrassing I even ate an entire thing of butter chicken by myself.
I'm just glued to that table so what else really am I supposed to do? Cook? I hardly even have time to get up and pee.

ESTHER
Work's been busy?

ADA
Uh have you looked at the place? It's a fucking hurricane in here.

ESTHER
It kind of looks the same.

ADA
Whenever our client is a bank, it's –
I mean it's kind of whatever. I've been through it before. I actually think the I'm-not-gonna-cook-and-clean thing is mostly an act of defiance against the whole totalitarian gourmand program Richard has going on the weekends.
(Pause)
I mean, it's impressive that someone who can handle a giant merger contract has the energy to make, like, multi-step veal braises.

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
Why do you think dad never learned how to cook?
Like, remember one summer he just totally gave up and we had hickory sticks and popsicles for dinner every night because you were so picky?

ESTHER
I was the picky one?

ADA
OK you didn't, like, touch a vegetable until you lost your virginity.

ESTHER
Yeah Rowan Arnolds did really change me.

ADA
God, he was bad news. Didn't he get sent off to boarding school?

ESTHER
I think it was just because his parents were getting divorced.

ADA
Well, dad was really lazy in some departments.

ESTHER
He was mostly a single parent.

ADA
You don't have to make excuses for him.

ESTHER
I'm not. He didn't get remarried after Eileen.

ADA
It's weird that you call her Eileen.
Like, I find it kind of creepy when kids call their parents by their first names.

ESTHER
Well, I don't really remember her so what else/

ADA
Yeah. I know.

ESTHER
My point was he was alone and didn't have any time. He was super busy with work.

ADA
Rich is really busy with work and it's like Michelin-star food comes out of that kitchen.

ESTHER
Well, I guess our childhood wasn't as good as your marriage.
(Pause)
Sorry, I'm just,
I guess I'm just finding it a little weird to be back.

ADA
I told you you can stay here.

ESTHER
I'm going to figure something else out.
I'll get a hotel.

ADA
You're not getting a hotel you live in New York City.

ESTHER
I mean I don't have an apartment in New York City.

ADA
What happened to your old place?

ESTHER
The lease ran out and Sheila and her boyfriend moved into a one-bedroom.

ADA
Where?

ESTHER
I don't know. Somewhere in Brooklyn probably.

ADA
Aren't you two close?

ESTHER
I mean we've texted. I sent her some pictures.

ADA
Will you show me?

ESTHER
What?

ADA
Pictures.
From your, uh, trip.

ESTHER
It's boring. It's mostly, like, food and nature.

ADA
So, what's the plan, then? You're going to avoid telling me about the past four months of your life?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
You text me you're off a plane in New York on a random Tuesday night after barely talking to me.

ESTHER
You didn't exactly reach out either.

ADA
You can stay here/

ESTHER
I'm not going to stay here.

ADA
It's just I've sort of, like, had enough of your avoidance.

ESTHER
Oh, so that's what the hickory sticks popsicle flashback was all about?
You're seeing a therapist now or something?

ADA
Yeah. And she said you sounded very avoidant.

ESTHER
Is there a pill for that?

ADA
I mean, how are you?

ESTHER
I'm fine.

ADA
Then why are you back?

ESTHER
Because I wanted to come back. Do I really need to get interrogated?

ADA
"How are you?" isn't exactly an inflammatory question.

ESTHER
OK you want to see pictures? I'll show you some pictures.

Esther takes out her phone.

ADA
Nice phone.

ESTHER
Samsung. Sorry.

ADA
Yeah, I knew. Your texts showed up green.

ESTHER
Bummer, dude.

ADA
Whatever, I don't care. At least bits of screen aren't, like, shedding onto my couch.

ESTHER
OK so this is the Airbnb I rented.

ADA
Oh my god.

ESTHER
Yeah, nice right?
I read a lot on the porch.

ADA
Wrap-around porch.

ESTHER
Barbecue from this place I'd go to a lot.

ADA
Wait, so you rented an Airbnb for four months?

ESTHER
Yeah.

ADA
Can you even rent an Airbnb for four months?

ESTHER
Yeah, I can attest that you can.

ADA
You didn't stay with Honor?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
OK I just somehow thought/

ESTHER
She doesn't really have space for me. I mean I didn't want to, like, invade.
(Pause)
This is one of the mares Honor's in charge of. Annabelle.

ADA
She looks kinda mangy.
Not that I know anything about horses.

ESTHER
Yeah they're probably gonna retire her after this year.
Oh, that's Ramona. We call her Ramona's Revenge because she's a nasty bitch.

ADA
I'd be nasty too if I spent my whole adult life getting knocked up and peeing into vials.

ESTHER
I thought you wanted to get knocked up.

ADA
Of my own free will. Obviously.

ESTHER
A bunch of animal rights groups are trying to shut down the whole industry, but, like, it's Pfizer, so.
(Scrolling on her phone)
This hill I randomly took a bunch of pictures of in different light.

ADA
Woah woah woah wait who's that?

ESTHER
Nobody.

ADA
Esther!

ESTHER
It's nobody.

ADA
Of course it's somebody he's shirtless.

ESTHER
Can you please give my phone back? This is embarrassing.

ADA
Oh my god he looks really young.

ESTHER
I don't know he's twenty-three.

ADA
I mean that's still a baby compared to you.

ESTHER
Six years apart doesn't seem like that big of a deal.

ADA
Every year in your twenties is basically dog years in, like, emotional growth.
I would know. I'm on the other side.
Can I scroll more or am I gonna get, like, a juvie's dick picks?

ESTHER
Give me my phone back you're being mean.

ADA
Well, then. Tell me.

ESTHER
About what?

ADA
The guy.

ESTHER
Why do you want to hear about my life?

ADA
I always want to hear about your life.

ESTHER
No, you don't.

ADA
I told you I wanted to see pictures. I asked how you were.

ESTHER
Yeah but then you get all scared and judge-y and it just ends up feeling like a chore.

ADA
OK.// Sorry.

ESTHER
This wasn't just a phase, you know?

ADA
What? Shirtless teenager?

ESTHER
Just being there. Spending time there.
So you need to accept that.

ADA
I do accept that.

ESTHER
No, you don't. Why else have we barely talked?

ADA
You know, from my perspective, it's been sort of hard to judge how much you've actually wanted me in your life. In this part of your life.
I'm not mad at you for going.

ESTHER
Really? Because you sort of blew up at me the last time I was in this room.

ADA
I was upset that you didn't tell me you were going back. I didn't know what it meant.

ESTHER
It meant that you don't get it.

ADA
I mean, yeah, I've had some trouble understanding it. If I'm honest.

ESTHER
I went to go spend time with my mom. I don't think it's that complicated.

ADA
It's not like I didn't ever ask myself if I'd do the same if I could. And, like, I decided I'm fine not knowing. Like, I actually prefer not to know.

ESTHER
You're not curious about your parents?

ADA
They're not my parents. I mean, someone had to give birth to me. But they didn't, like, raise me. And even if I could find them, we wouldn't even be able to speak to each other.

ESTHER
They might know English.

ADA
Well, I couldn't even if I wanted to. On my adoption papers, there's just some note from the orphanage about me being found on the side of the road in a frickin' basket. Like some kind of Moses baby.

ESTHER
You totally seem like a Moses baby.

ADA
What does that mean?

ESTHER
I don't know. You have this Chosen quality. You've always been so good at everything.

ADA
Except for lacrosse.

ESTHER
Yeah you fucking suck at lacrosse. Going to those games was embarrassing.

ADA
Being the only Asian kid on the prep school lacrosse team wasn't that fun, either.

ESTHER
Why, you got picked on?

ADA
I don't know. It's kinda hard to say.
This one girl was sort of obsessed with asking me if I believed in God.

ESTHER
That's weird.

ADA
Yeah this girl Isabelle – who was, like, super scrawny but also a really good player, like kind of ferocious – she would ask me if I believed in God in front of the whole team. Like, just me, though. And it kept on happening. And I'd just say yes because I didn't really know what to say and I also thought, like, Christmas? And maybe I did believe in God, you know? But I think it was her way of asking or digging into me or whatever – wanting to test me almost if I was actually, like, American.

ESTHER
Are you mad?

ADA
Trust me. I'm very over high school.

ESTHER
I mean about your adoption.

ADA
Oh. I don't know. Who even knows if that orphanage thing is true. I think the Chinese government just came up with sob stories so that Americans could feel better about the shit-ton of money they were handing over for stolen babies.

ESTHER
I haven't asked her.

ADA
What?

ESTHER
Honor. I haven't asked her why –
I know she was young. She looks young.
It just seems sort of, like, a sensitive topic.

ADA
Maybe. I don't know.
You don't feel like you can ask?

ESTHER
I was worried about, like, offending her.

ADA
Why would you offend her?

ESTHER
Like, maybe she was ashamed of having me or something. Like, she doesn't want to revisit that time.
I don't know. Honestly, it's been kind of hard to get to know her.

ADA
It takes a long time to get to know someone.

ESTHER
Thank you, O Sage One.

ADA
Well, I'm sorry. It just does.
(Pause)
Do you have a picture of her?

ESTHER
Um. Yeah.
(They look at Esther's phone.)
Apparently I'm the spitting image of the guy.
Honor says he's lost to the winds. I don't know if that's code for drugs or if he was part of a motorcycle gang or something.
(Pause)
Anyway, that's basically it.

ADA
I can see it.

ESTHER
Really?

ADA
Yeah, yeah. The… nose-eye relationship.

ESTHER
The nose-eye relationship? You're totally bullshitting me.

ADA
Am not.

ESTHER
Didn't you want to know when you were a kid?

ADA
What?

ESTHER
Didn't you try to picture the face of your mom?

ADA
We had a mom. She died, but –

ESTHER
You know what I mean.

ADA
I can't say it kept me up at night, no/

ESTHER
OK it's not like I was tormented by it. I just mean, like, you had to be curious.

ADA
I don't know I think somehow I knew I was really lucky or something. And I'd just focus my energy on that. Like, landing with a family like that. It's not like I could really fake being their biological daughter like you could.

ESTHER
So what?

ADA
So maybe I had to be good at everything.
You gonna tell me about this guy? I mean he's cute.

ESTHER
I don't think it's gonna last.

ADA
Fun at least?

ESTHER
I mean it kind of took the pressure off.

(Pause)

ADA
Pressure off of/

ESTHER
I was kind of nervous all the time, especially at the beginning but kind of all the time, too. Like, I didn't really know anyone. And he was just… at the Best Buy in Greenville.

ADA
Best Buy is still a thing?

ESTHER
He sold me the Samsung.

ADA
Hot.

ESTHER
And then I was like "hey, wanna come play with my tits after your shift at my Airbnb ranch house?"

ADA
Esther.

ESTHER
Well, it worked.

ADA
So, what's his deal?

ESTHER
He wants to become a doctor.

ADA
Cute.

ESTHER
It's not that cute. He's paying his way through community college with a job at Best Buy.

ADA
And, what? That's, like, torture in your books?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
Rich went to community college.
I mean he killed it and transferred to Ohio State, but –

ESTHER
What about you? How are you?

ADA
I'm fine.

(Pause)

ESTHER
You're fine? That's it?

ADA
Yeah.

ESTHER
You sound like me.

ADA
Well, I got a therapist and froze my eggs.

ESTHER
Woah.

ADA
Yeah, both very expensive. Thanks, dad.

ESTHER
Aren't you and Rich trying?

ADA
I don't know if it counts as trying or even really wanting kids with a person if you don't have sex. And, like, why put all this pressure, biological pressure on our relationship?

ESTHER
You're not old.

ADA
I'm thirty-four. I'm cresting into reproductive decline.
And it's been hard with Rich.

ESTHER
I know.

ADA
No, you don't know.
Like, very hard. Not usual relationships-are-hard hard.

ESTHER
I'm sorry.

ADA
Why didn't you tell me that he threatened you?

ESTHER
He didn't/

ADA
I know he came to your apartment and told you not to take any of dad's money.

ESTHER
It was your money.

ADA
Oh my god stop saying that. Like, stop putting all the, all the onus on me.
I know you wanted it, OK? Don't pretend that you didn't.
Because that's just, like, offensive to my intelligence.

ESTHER
Sorry.

ADA
That night after you left we had this huge blow-out about the will. His man pride had been shot because he felt he wasn't "consulted" enough. And then it just slipped out. That he told you not to take it. That he threatened// you.

ESTHER
He didn't threaten me. He said I wasn't around when dad got really sick, which is basically true.

ADA
Your relationship with dad isn't really his business.

ESTHER
Yeah, well, you did do a lot more. With his, uh, care and stuff. So maybe you deserved more, too.

ADA
I didn't send Rich out on some mission.

ESTHER
I know.

ADA
I iced him out so bad afterwards that he went to stay at a friend's place for a few days. I had, like, terrifying visions of myself as some workaholic divorcee.

ESTHER
//You had a fight. You're not getting divorced.

ADA
Grace gave me this book about Stoking My Inner Fire. It's some, like, reconnecting with your body chakra deep breathing thing. And I'm, like, I don't know how I'm supposed to stoke my inner fire. I'm working sixty hours a week, locked in my apartment because I very stupidly thought that would be good for me when actually it was just a way to avoid hiding in the office bathroom to cry.

(Pause)

My therapist thinks I subconsciously imprisoned myself by asking to work from home.

ESTHER
That seems like kind of a harsh assessment.

ADA
As a way of punishing myself for being left all the money.

ESTHER
You didn't ask for that. You didn't, like, steal it from me.

ADA
I know. We split it.

ESTHER
Right.

ADA
But it didn't really change anything.

ESTHER
What did you expect it to change?

ADA
I thought it would help you.

ESTHER
I got to move down there.

ADA
I thought you'd finish your degree and get a cool adjunct thing in some city we'd never been to or like, get a Fulbright to Russia. And meet someone you loved.

ESTHER
So you thought dad's money would help get me the life you wanted me to have?

ADA
I don't think a job and a long-term relationship is, like, some perverted wish for you.
Not that I have anything against hot shirtless youth.

ESTHER
His name is Allan.

ADA
Right, not saying you don't want a long-term relationship with Allan.
It's just don't you miss school?

ESTHER
I don't know if that's really what I want to be doing. Being an academic and stuff.

ADA
Well, a career change in your late-twenties is, like, basically not even a career change.

ESTHER
I honestly have no idea what I want to do.

ADA
You've got fluent Russian on your resume.

ESTHER
Yeah. Big plus.

ADA
You never know.
(Pause)
If you choose to get married to Allan/

ESTHER
I'm not.

ADA
I'm just saying get a King size bed.
Feeling betrayed by someone in a Queen –
There's just not enough room.

ESTHER
If it's weird for me to be here/

ADA
I texted Rich you were coming.

ESTHER
OK.

ADA
We're doing better now. "Rebuilding Trust."

ESTHER
I'm sorry. That all sounds shitty.

ADA
I wanted to talk to you.

ESTHER
You could have.

ADA
I was afraid you wouldn't pick up or if you did, that whatever you'd say would be somehow disappointing and then, like, you'd feel even farther away.

ESTHER
You always think I'm disappointing.

ADA
You just haven't really been around.

ESTHER
I can still be around and in another state. I don't know if that sounds like some kind of paradox to everyone else but/

ADA
The geographical being around isn't the kind I'm talking about.
I'm not as simple as that.

ESTHER
I wasn't calling you simple. You always assume I'm being critical when I'm totally// not.

ADA
You're unreliable. You can be an unreliable person. And that's disappointing.
That's what I'm trying to say.

(Pause)

ESTHER
OK. But I've sort of had a lot going on.
Not that, like, you haven't also.

ADA
Did something happen to you?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
You coming back all of a sudden. Are you, like, OK?

ESTHER
Yeah. I'm OK.

(Pause)

ADA
Do you want more tea?

ESTHER
Um, sure. You can just re-use my teabag.

Ada takes their mugs and leaves.

Some moments pass. Richard comes home a little drunk, wearing a suit.

RICHARD
Oh. Hi, Esther.

ESTHER
Hi.

RICHARD
Ada texted me you were here. So, you know, I'm not, like,
Surprised Surprised.
I just thought maybe you two would have gone out or something.

ADA (O.S)
Rich?

RICHARD
Hi!

ADA (O.S)
I'm making tea. You want?

RICHARD
No thanks!
(to Esther)
I never want but she's always nice enough to ask.
Can I make you a real drink?

ESTHER
Maybe later.

Ada returns.

ADA
(to Esther)
It's steeping.
(Pause, then to Richard)
You're home late.

RICHARD
I wanted to give the sisters some time.

ADA
Did you get smashed with Greg at Walker's?

RICHARD
No.

ADA
Liar.
I'm going to make up the couch. Esther's staying with us for a bit.

Ada leaves.

ESTHER
Sorry if I'm imposing.
It was sort of impromptu.

RICHARD
What?
Not glad to be here?

ESTHER
No, I'm just not planning to crash on your couch for more than a night.

RICHARD
How long are you in New York for? Are you, like, officially back?

Ada enters with sheets and a blanket.

ADA
Rich, help us. Can you get some of the extra pillows? Bedroom closet way at the top.
(As he's leaving)
You'll probably need the step-ladder thingy.

Richard returns for the step-ladder thingy. Then, he leaves for the bedroom. Ada starts to make the couch into a bed: she tucks a fitted sheet under the couch cushions, puts a duvet down…

ADA
Sorry this isn't a pull-out.

ESTHER
I could really just stay in a hotel.

ADA
Would you stop with the hotel thing?

(Pause)

ESTHER
Nothing terrible happened.
Like, in South Carolina.

ADA
OK. Good.

ESTHER
It's just not, like, the relationship I imagined. Which, I mean, makes total sense.
(Pause)
It's not, like, terrible. Like, maybe it can be something else.

ADA
Does she know you left? And Allan?

ESTHER
No.

ADA
You should probably stop doing that.

ESTHER
I'll tell them.
I just got overwhelmed and, like, really embarrassed.

ADA
Why?

ESTHER
I don't know, for thinking that she could change my life.

Richard enters from the bedroom with a white sheet covering his body. He is a sheet ghost.

RICHARD
(making ghost sounds)
Oooooh.

ADA
Oh my god. Fuck you, Rich. You are terrifying.

RICHARD
What do you mean terrifying? I'm like Casper.
Friendly ghosts only.

ADA
We needed pillows.

RICHARD
Oh c'mon, have some fun. Didn't you do this kind of stuff together? As kids?

ADA
What kind of stuff? Go out for martinis and then/

RICHARD
No, I mean…play. Goof around.

Esther looks at Ada.

ESTHER
Yeah, we did.

End of play.