

THREE WAYS OF LOOKING AT

By Crystal Finn

Characters:

Deborah—Sister to Dee-Dee and Nancy, 72

Dee-Dee—Sister to Deborah and Nancy, 70

Nancy—Sister to Deborah and Dee-Dee 68

Kristen—Nancy's daughter, 37

Gabriel—Dee-Dee's son, 37

Esme—Gabriel's wife, 40

Leo—Nancy's ex-husband and Kristen's Father, late 60's

Mike—Nancy's boyfriend.

Three children off stage or invisible.

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1. DEE-DEE AND NANCY SIT IN A LIVING ROOM WITH WINDOWS. DEE-DEE HOLDS A THICK ENVELOPE IN HER HANDS. NANCY HAS HER EYES CLOSED. A SILENCE. THEN. DEE-DEE CALLS OFF STAGE.

DEE-DEE DEBORAH! DEBORAH!

PAUSE

DEE-DEE DEBORAH!

PAUSE

DEE-DEE DEBORAH! DEBORAH! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

PAUSE

DEE-DEE DEBORAH? DEBORAH!

SILENCE

DEE-DEE DEBO--

NANCY No. No. She can't hear you.

DEE-DEE Shoot.

PAUSE. DEE-DEE GETS UP AND WALKS TO THE WINDOW. SHE WALKS BACK AND SITS. SILENCE. NANCY GETS UP AND WALKS OUT TO THE WINDOW. SHE STAYS AT THE WINDOW AS DEE-DEE LOOKS AT HER.

NANCY Dad died one year ago today. I can't stop seeing his face.

DEE-DEE Our little Daddy.

NANCY It was raining then too. But there were apple buds on the trees. Just like today.

DEE-DEE So little and so sweet, our Daddy.

NANCY I saw the apple buds out the window. Then I dreamed he would die.

DEE-DEE Big *and* little really; big outside, little on the inside.

NANCY I never forgave myself for that.

DEE-DEE Never forgave yourself for what?

NANCY For seeing the buds.

DEE-DEE Oh Nancy, that doesn't even make sense.

NANCY It was an omen.

DEE-DEE DEBORAH????!!!

NANCY She really can't her you.

DEE-DEE How long has it been? Should I go in there?

NANCY No. Don't go in there, she said not to go in there.

NANCY TURNS FROM THE WINDOW. SHE SITS DOWN. A VOICE CALLS OUT THAT SOUNDS FAR AWAY—LIKE IT'S COMING FROM A CAVE.

DEBORAH (OFF) JUST GO AHEAD!

DEE-DEE WHAT!?

DEBORAH (OFF) JUST GO AHEAD WITHOUT ME!

NANCY God, she sounds like she's in a cave.

DEE-DEE WE HAVE TO BE TOGETHER, DEBORAH!

DEBORAH (OFF) OKAY, GO AHEAD.

DEE-DEE NO, I SAID WE HAVE TO ALL BE TOGETHER.

NANCY I suddenly feel like we should have had a lawyer do this.

DEE-DEE DEBORAH, YOU HAVE TO COME OUT SO WE CAN DO THIS TOGETHER!

NANCY Why do we have to do this together? Why do we have to do this at all?

DEE-DEE Daddy would have wanted us to, that's why.

NANCY Daddy is dead. And can you not say *Daddy*? We never called him that one single day in his life.

DEE-DEE I *would* have called him that, if he'd have let me.

NANCY GOES BACK TO THE WINDOW.

NANCY Why did I say buds? Why did I say apple *buds*?

DEE-DEE DEBORAH! IT'S BEEN ALMOST AN HOUR!

NANCY It was apple *blossoms* I saw.

PAUSE

DEE-DEE Nancy, I need to tell you something.

NANCY Okay.

DEE-DEE If it says either one of us can take the house, I want to take the house.

NANCY Why would it say *either one of us* could take the house? That would just be chaos.

DEE-DEE You can come visit.

NANCY I love that house. But it's fine. I can come visit.

DEE-DEE Because, you know, Nancy I'm dying to do the upkeep.

NANCY I said it's fine.

DEE-DEE I'm going to put in a patio, and a fire pit, and a hot tub.

NANCY Not a *hot tub*!

DEE-DEE Heck yes!

NANCY Where would you put it?????!

DEE-DEE Below the back deck.

NANCY Where we eat in the summer!????? Where the apple trees are????!!!!

DEE-DEE DEBORAH!

NANCY Let's just not do this. Let's just forget about it and do it later. Let's do it next year. The buds! Why else would I have thought of them? It's a sign. We should wait till another year passes, I can't bear it.

DEE-DEE CAN WE BRING IT IN TO THE BATHROOM, DEBORAH?

DEBORAH (OFF) NO! NO! DON'T COME IN HERE!

NANCY Or let's just rip it up and when she comes out we will tell her that there was nothing in the envelope. It was empty.

DEE-DEE DEBORAH—DO YOU REMEMBER EVER SEEING APPLE BUDS BEFORE A VISION IN WHICH SOMEONE DIED?

NANCY Don't ask her that.

DEE-DEE She knows about these things.

NANCY This isn't going to be *fun* for her DEE-DEE.

DEBORAH (OFF) JUST OPEN IT.

DEE-DEE DID YOU HEAR ME?

DEBORAH (OFF) YES, GO AHEAD AND OPEN IT.

NANCY She didn't hear you.

DEE-DEE She heard me. I'm opening it.

NANCY Oh, DEE-DEE—

DEE-DEE The kids are waiting.

NANCY Don't DEE-DEE, it's going to—

DEE-DEE TEARS THE ENVELOPE AND TAKES OUT SOME PAPERS. SHE READS.

PAUSE.

PAUSE.

PAUSE.

DEE-DEE Nothing.

NANCY Let me see.

DEE-DEE Nothing.

NANCY Oh God.

DEE-DEE Maybe we should have waited.

NANCY Whose *writing* is that?

DEE-DEE Oh God.

DEBORAH (OFF) ALMOST DONE!

NANCY We knew this was going to happen, and now it has. I'll have to support her.

DEE-DEE You won't have to support her.

NANCY Maybe that's what my dream was about.

DEE-DEE That's not what your dream was about.

NANCY Dad didn't want this.

DEE-DEE Dad wanted what Mom wanted.

NANCY Just because she made some bad choices when she was twenty-five?

DEE-DEE It wasn't just when she was twenty-five, it was her whole life. And her kids!

DEBORAH (OFF) Ready!

NANCY Just shove it back in there and we can pretend that—

DEBORAH COMES OUT OF THE BATHROOM.

DEBORAH Okay. I'm ready.

DEE-DEE You can't keep eating all raw food Deborah, you spend half your day taking a shit.

NANCY She's right, not with those amino acid things.

DEBORAH They're really working though—look at me, I feel great.

DEE-DEE You're disappearing!

NANCY You're very thin, Deborah. Maybe just let me make you some toast.

DEBORAH No, no. I'm feeling really good now. Is it done? Is it open?

SILENCE

NANCY Deborah. This is painful. I don't know why we all had to gather to do this, but now we're here and—

DEE-DEE --to honor Dad, that's why--

NANCY --and we have to just face it together, so this isn't about Dad anymore, it's about us, but the thing you need to know is that we love you and you are still apart of us and the three of us and this family.

DEE-DEE You're not in the will.

NANCY Oh, Deborah.

DEE-DEE You're just...not in there.

NANCY You shouldn't read it—the actual words. It will be painful.

DEBORAH It's okay. I can take it.

NANCY No, Deborah it's too—

DEE-DEE Here.

DEE-DEE HANDS OVER THE PAPERS. DEBORAH READS.

DEBORAH "our daughters.....that the eldest Deborah"...okay, okay...."shall not receive...." yes, yes...."and her abandonment....to the....our life"yes.

SILENCE

DEBORAH Alright. That was their wish. And I honor it.

NANCY It wasn't Dad's wish. He loved you, Deborah.

DEE-DEE Well that's...we just don't know...he did, Deborah. He loved all of us.

PAUSE. NO ONE KNOWS WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO TALK ABOUT.

NANCY You should have seen him at the end. He was like a child.

DEE-DEE He really was. It was like the person he was when he was a young man, before any of us knew him, it was like that person came back.

NANCY Before the war. It's like the *war* went out of him.

DEBORAH Well sure that's what happens.

PAUSE. WHAT TO SAY?

DEBORAH You must have been taking very good care of him then.

DEE-DEE We did. Our Daddy.

NANCY Not really. I was so mean to him. Once I hit him over the head with a pillow.

DEE-DEE He was trying to throw a glass at you!

NANCY Another time he wandered out of the house and slipped on the ice and, you know, he was so strong it took me half an hour to pick him up and get him back in the house and I threw my back out in the process. I was so exhausted I just sat him down and I said: "Dad. You've lived a really long life. You're *one hundred* years old. You've lived an amazing, full, long life and now, don't you think it's time you thought about dying?"

DEBORAH I bet he didn't like that.

DEE-DEE Oh no.

NANCY No, he didn't. He shook his head very slowly from side to side, staring at me like I was a stranger; he never really trusted me after that.

DEBORAH So he didn't change very much then did he?

DEE-DEE He did though! Our little Daddy. He was very, very sweet at the end.

PAUSE

NANCY (BURSTING OUT) Oh Deborah!! What are you going to do?!

DEBORAH The same thing I've been doing.

NANCY But you're old. You take hours to poop. Who will take care of you? You can come live with me.

DEBORAH I'm going to live at the ashram.

NANCY You can't possibly still do that. They make you do chores. They make you cook.

DEBORAH I can still cook.

NANCY Don't you worry about death?

DEBORAH No. Why would I?

NANCY Your kids aren't going to help you.

DEBORAH I don't expect them to.

NANCY STARTS TO CRY. DEE-DEE STARTS TO CRY.

NANCY Why are *you* crying?

DEE-DEE Daddy! *And* Mom!

NANCY I'm not crying for them! I'm crying for *us*.

DEE-DEE Daddy cried only one time. On Thanksgiving.

DEBORAH On Thanksgiving. I remember.

NANCY Oh God, who cares? He was a Tyrant.

DEE-DEE He was TRAUMATIZED!

NANCY *I'm* traumatized.

DEBORAH Dee-Dee—you look just like when you were little when scream like that. Scream like that again.

DEE-DEE TRAUMATIZED!

NANCY Deborah: I don't believe in anything. That's why *I* was crying. Dad is ashes now. He's ashes. How does that happen? How does someone who was a person and a father and a tyrant becoming ashes?

DEBORAH They don't. They don't Nancy.

NANCY But I don't believe that. We're all just ash spread in a lake for the fish to eat.... don't you believe that? In the end? Don't you!?

DEBORAH I believe something *very* different. But if that helps you.

NANCY No it doesn't *help* me! It doesn't *help* me at all!

DEBORAH Well, I don't know what to say, Nancy.

NANCY Is it better than all of this? What you believe? Is that why you are so calm?

DEE-DEE Do you believe your guy will be waiting for you?

DEBORAH In a way, yes.

NANCY I wish I had something like that to believe in: I could sleep, I could breathe. But I can't! I tried.

DEE-DEE Nancy even read your books.

NANCY I read *your* books, I read the bible—I read all kinds of things--

DEE-DEE I mean he's hypnotizing people.....and the sex stuff, but he's a genius, no doubt about that.

DEBORAH Let's not talk about it. We'll just argue.

NANCY I just think there's nothing there in the end. Guy, no guy—I just think it's empty.

PAUSE

DEBORAH You both must think I've wasted my life.

PAUSE

DEBORAH It's okay.

DEE-DEE Chocolate, orgasms, horses: that's what I believe in. Chocolate mousse.

NANCY Nature maybe.

DEE-DEE Bliss. I mean—I just believe in bliss. You Know? So if that’s what you’ve found, Deborah—

DEBORAH Look at you two. So little. So little I could hold you in one hand.

NANCY Cover your ears, Deborah, I’m going to say something you shouldn’t hear.

DEBORAH COVERS HER EARS.

DEE-DEE Masturbating, bubble baths, chocolate fountains.

NANCY Listen: if she stays at the ashram they will take all the money I send her.

DEE-DEE That was just the guy, the guy is dead.

NANCY If the guy is dead then she should get money from the will.

DEE-DEE She hasn’t been here for thirty years! She wasn’t here when we took care of Mom and she wasn’t here for the last *ten* years when we took care of Dad. That was like a full-time job for us. And that was her choice.

NANCY Tell her to come live with me.

DEE-DEE You wouldn’t want *me* to come and live with you, why do you want her to so bad?

NANCY You don’t need a place to live! She’s naïve. She doesn’t know how hard it’s going to be. As soon as she can’t prepare food they will literally kick her to the curb.

DEE-DEE You’re stressed out, Nancy—you need to go for a hike!

DEBORAH Are you done?

DEBORAH UNCOVERS HER EARS

DEE-DEE Nancy wants you to come live with her so she doesn’t feel guilty.

DEBORAH Oh Nancy. That’s very sweet of you. But you’ve already told me that.

DEE-DEE Did you talk to Mike about any of this, Nancy?

NANCY Well, it’s not his house.

DEBORAH Whose Mike?

DEE-DEE Her boyfriend.

DEBORAH Oh! You and Leo aren't together anymore?

NANCY No, Deborah! We split up years ago!!

DEBORAH Oh.

NANCY See this is what I mean!! We're old! We don't remember things. We aren't prepared for what is coming!

DEBORAH Well my medication is pretty good. I do get nauseated sometimes from all that powder but.... it's remarkable what they can do now.

NANCY You've been living on a tropical island for thirty years with no running water so of course it seems remarkable.

DEBORAH It does! And tomatoes! Who knew I was ever going to eat a tomato again.

NANCY I want to tear this up. I suddenly want to tear this whole thing up.

DEBORAH Don't Nancy.

DEE-DEE AHHHCK! No!

NANCY But don't you hate Mom and Dad?!! For what they did to you?!!

DEE-DEE Yes!

NANCY I'm talking to *Deborah!!!* For doing this to you. It's like they erased you.

DEBORAH I forgave them for this a long time ago, Nancy.

NANCY If it was so long ago, then it seems silly that it should still be written into—

DEE-DEE Well, it's too late now.

DEBORAH Nancy, I forgave them for cutting me off because I cut them off too. It was mutual.

DEBORAH THINKS. SHE GIGGLES.

DEBORAH I never forgave them for what they did to *Dee-Dee* though.

DEE-DEE What did they do to me???

DEBORAH Come here, let me hug you. (*she hugs her like a baby*)

DEE-DEE What did they do?

DEBORAH They broke your spirit.

DEE-DEE They did?

NANCY And what about me? What did they do to me?

DEBORAH I don't remember.

DEE-DEE You were perfect Nancy. You NEVER got in trouble.

NANCY That's how they broke my spirit I guess.

DEBORAH It was a wonderful childhood though in some ways. The horses.

NANCY Dad gave us the mountains at least.

DEE-DEE He gave us *everything*.

GABRIEL COMES IN.

GABRIEL Any progress? Who got the money? Is Deborah out?

DEBORAH I'm out.

GABRIEL Tough luck Debby-Debs!

NANCY I told her she could come live with me.

GABRIEL Good for you, Nancy. Mom? Did you get the house? Are we putting in a hot tub?

DEE-DEE Yes, honey!

GABRIEL Fuck yeah. Winter nights, snow is falling, you are looking at the peaks and sitting in hot fucking water. My God. All my dreams are coming true.

NANCY The thought would have never even crossed my MIND to put in a hot tub. People are so different.

DEE-DEE But you have to be a steward of that land! You have to take care of that land, Gabriel! And those mountains! Those will be yours now.

GABRIEL It's my only wish in life. Listen, ladies: Esme made some lunch. And also—we just want to know. We're just in there and we really want to know: who were Grandma and Grandpa. Who were they really? Were they good? I went to my massage therapist last week and had a break down on the table. She told me it's because of Grandpa. Because I have a complex about him and thinking he's a great man. That I am trying to be that and it's making me sick. Making my body sick. And then just now in the kitchen, Kristen agreed; she told me that the idea I have in my head of him is a fantasy. That Grandpa wasn't a great man at all. He just was lucky. And born at the right time. I mean he went to war. So that was awful, but then there was the GI bill which was a real branch to the middle class and he made some money and loved the mountains. But he was awful to his daughters, a terrible father, and Kristen and ESME said I'm a good father so that's *my* legacy and that means I'm actually the greater man, and I just want to know which is true.

DEE-DEE He was wounded.

NANCY Kristen said that?

DEBORAH He has more lives to live. That's what I'll say.

NANCY I'm offering Deborah to come live with me.

GABRIEL Great. You said that already. But what about when you both are too old to look after each other? You ladies are officially next in line, you need to start thinking about these things.

HE LEAVES.

NANCY I'm surprised Kristen said that.

KRISTEN (OFF) Mom? Mom!

NANCY And Leo. I still love him. Isn't that pathetic?

DEBORAH Not at all sweetie.

DEE-DEE You broke *his* spirit.

NANCY That's the meanest thing you've ever said to me.

DEBORAH Give it time. Okay, I have to take my powders. I'm going to the kitchen.

SHE LEAVES.

NANCY That's the meanest thing you've ever said to me.

DEE-DEE I'm just saying I sympathize with him because you criticize me the way you criticized him.

NANCY I'm going for a hike.

DEE-DEE Even though it's raining?

NANCY We hike in every. kind. of. weather. Okay? You're the one who just yelled at me to go on my hike.

DEE-DEE I know and now I don't want you to go.

NANCY LEAVES. DEE-DEE IS ALONE.

DEE-DEE I'm in bliss. I'm really in bliss. I miss my parents. Little Daddy. Strong mama. But life is so full of wonder and beauty and every moment feels like a goddamn gift.

GABRIEL (OFF) MOM, ARE YOU TALKING TO YOURSELF?

DEE-DEE I'M SO HAPPY, HONEY! BRING ME SOME OF THAT BUTTER—I WANT TO DIP MY CRACKER IN IT.

NANCY ALONE. GETTING HER MITTENS ON FOR A HIKE.

NANCY (FAST) I don't want to die. I think about it all the time. And I'm the one who is willing to talk about it the most, the one who is most practical about it. But really I'm the one who is the most scared. Dad? Can you hear me? Sometimes I think you can hear me. Mom, you feel very far away. But Dad. You're still a person. Maybe it was because you were so flawed. There's more to hang on to. More to cling to. Maybe the more flawed you are the harder it is to disappear. I'm a very flawed person. I say that every day. So maybe I will be here for a long time too.

MIKE ENTERS. HE'S ALL SUITED UP FOR A HIKE IN THE RAIN.

MIKE Are you ready?

NANCY Got the leash?

MIKE Oh you want to bring the dog?

NANCY Sure! It will be good for her! She doesn't mind the rain.

MIKE Okay, sounds good to me.

NANCY Leo might stop by for the family dinner. Would that be okay?

MIKE Sure!

NANCY It doesn't bother you?

MIKE Why would it?

NANCY He's my ex-husband.

MIKE I really like Leo.

NANCY Well, I hate him but I guess that doesn't count for anything anymore. Everyone seems to have moved on but me.

MIKE Here's your ear muffs.

THEY LEAVE. DEBORAH ENTERS. SHE SETS UP AN ELABORATE ALTER: BEADS, A PICTURE OF A MAN WEARING A CROWN OF FLOWERS. SHE KNEELS.

DEBORAH Protect my sisters Da. Listen to them. Calm them. They need extra care. They are afraid of so many things they don't need to be afraid of. Give them some time. Thank you for guiding me this morning in the bathroom. Thank you for guiding me and helping me choose to eat that banana this morning. That was the right choice and I am so grateful for your wisdom and for the path. Thank you for--

KRISTEN ENTERS.

KRISTEN Oh, sorry, Deborah. I didn't see you there.

DEBORAH I guess I was invisible for a moment.

KRISTEN Esme and I just wanted to know if you would eat carrots? if we made them?

DEBORAH Oh, carrots! Carrots would be a real treat.

KRISTEN If we did a sort of raw...carrot...mash? Could you mix your powders up with...that?

DEBORAH Oh yes. That sounds wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. And send your daughter in to play when she wants.

KRISTEN Oh, Okay.

DEBORAH Kristen. You know I think she is very special. A very special child.

KRISTEN I think you like her more than my mom does.

DEBORAH I do!

KRISTEN Okay. I think she's outside. I'll tell her to come in.

KRISTEN LEAVES.

DEBORAH This small little child. Do you see her, Da? Do you see what I see? She's not mine but I feel that we know her. (PAUSE) My own grandchildren...they're bitter... that I never knew them. That I left my own children and got written out of the will. What can I say? I should have never been a mother.

A SMALL CHILD WANDERS IN, UNSEEN TO THE AUDIENCE.

DEBORAH There she is. Come here, sweetie. Let me look at you. What a gifted child you are. What beautiful eyes. You never knew my mother. She had eyes like that. She was strong. And my Daddy was strong. And they had three daughters. And I was supposed to be the strong one, and I was—but not for them. Not for their kind. And your poor Aunt and your poor Grandma were left to defend themselves and they didn't have it in them.

THE CHILD MOVES CLOSER.

DEBORAH I will show you his picture if you want to see.

THE CHILD REACHES OUT AN INVISIBLE HAND.

DEBORAH Here.

Do you see him?
You can touch that, if you want.

Do you feel that?

Here. I'm going to give you something. If you like this picture then I have something else for you. It's this bead. You can have it. To play with. Okay? There. And..... And we can wrap some presents for everyone! And give them out before we all go. Okay?! Good!

2. THE FAMILY SITTING TO EAT. NANCY TAKING HER HIKING MITTENS OFF.

NANCY Five miles only.

GABRIEL Only?! I can't walk one mile—my toes swell up.

DEE-DEE Oh, Nancy you're so strong.

MIKE We did twenty on Monday, this is nothing.

GABRIEL And I'm young! You guys are old!

NANCY Is Leo here?

GABRIEL He called—he said he wasn't coming after all.

NANCY Of course.

DEE-DEE Too bad—I miss Leo!

MIKE He's a funny guy, // Leo.

ESME (SERVING FOOD) Here's the chicken Verde, here's potatoes, here's this sauce from the tomatoes in the garden, here's this sort of herbed zucchini thing, here's tortillas I just made, here's some bread Kristen made, here's steak GABRIEL made and here's some raw, ground carrots with cumin seeds for Deborah. And here's wine.

EVERYONE Oh my god/Delicious/look at this! Jesus it's beautiful.

KRISTEN (SITTING DOWN) You know I always get so mad at Paul for not complimenting my food and it's because in our family everyone basically has an orgasm before they've even taken a bite.

DEE-DEE THAT'S TRUE!!!

NANCY I don't.

ESME And here's some habanero honey for the steak.

DEE-DEE Esme, you are a *goddess*! Gabriel you married a *goddess*.

GABRIEL I know.

MIKE Well, good—I'm starving. I guess I still feel hungry from those twenty // miles Monday.

DEE-DEE (ORGASMIC) HOLY SHIT THIS STEAK ESME. OH MY GOD. OH GOD. OHHHH.

KRISTEN Wow. It's the best meat I think I've ever tasted in my life, actually.

ESME Well, this is a special occasion.

PAUSE

ESME How is everyone feeling? Do you still want to read the will out-loud as a kind of ceremony or is that sort of--

GABRIEL I don't think we need to do that anymore.

NANCY No, we don't need to do that anymore.

DEE-DEE Deborah got nothing. So....

DEBORAH No, we don't need to read it. I read it, I read it and I think everyone else who needs to read it has also read it.

NANCY And I told her she can come live with me.

DEE-DEE Basically: Nancy gets some money and we're taking the house.

NANCY But Deborah can come live with me. If she wants.

GABRIEL And we're putting in a hot tub.

ESME Amazing.

KRISTEN Oh and we get some wood sculptures or something.

GABRIEL Oh yeah—and those.

ESME The ones of the ducks? I *love* those.

KRISTEN I don't really know what they are.

DEE-DEE They're Canadian geese.

GABRIEL Who knew?

ESME I always loved those things. Okay. So you read it.

GABRIEL I read it. I mean—I skimmed the part about the ducks but—

KRISTEN I don't need to read it, Mom read it.

ESME What about Michael and Caleb? Have they read it?

PAUSE

DEE-DEE We didn't think of them.

ESME How could you not think of them?

PAUSE

DEE-DEE Well there's not that much money.

NANCY I thought of them but not in a way that I feel obligated toward them.

GABRIEL Okay. Bold, Nancy.

NANCY Sorry, it's true.

DEE-DEE This is what Mom wanted.

NANCY I feel like my duty is to *Deborah*. That's it. Not her kids. That's why I told her she can come live with me.

GABRIEL Gotcha.

ESME You don't think this will devastate them?

DEBORAH It's true they will be hurt. But there have been greater hurts in their life.

NANCY They don't have to take care of Deborah at least. When she dies. They won't *owe* her anything.

GABRIEL Does it say that?

NANCY No, of course not. But it's implied---I mean, that's the implication. No offense Deborah.

DEBORAH I probably shouldn't have been a mother.....

PAUSE

ESME Well...you're great with *our* kids.

GABRIEL I mean *look* at them! Deborah has them all over there with tiny hammers or something. They've been busy for hours.

DEBORAH They're cracking acorns, that's all. We're gonna make acorn cookies. A friend at the ashram taught me how.

DEE-DEE Deborah was a great teacher you guys. She was a *teacher*. And she was smarter than any of us.

NANCY That's true.

DEBORAH Oh you guys. You don't know anything.

DEBORAH LAUGHS. THEN SHE CHOKES A LITTLE.

GABRIEL Water?

DEBORAH Thank you—just a little...

ESME Is it the carrots?

KRSITEN Should we mash them more? We can--

DEBORAH No, the carrots are Incredible. Just *incredible*.

A SOUND IN THE DRIVEWAY.

NANCY Is that a motorcycle in the driveway? Leo *is* here. God Damnit.

DEBORAH Does he ride a motorcycle??? God, I remember Leo when he was just a hippie with long hair.

DEE-DEE Dad sure couldn't stand him.

DEBORAH He couldn't stand any of them.

KRISTEN I hate this part.

GABRIEL Tio Leonardo!

LEO ENTERS.

LEO Gabrielito! Primo! Come here, give me a kiss, Esmelina, give me a kiss. Where's my Granddaughter? Dee-Dee has the butter dish. Mike, nice to see you. Who's that? Whoa.

DEBORAH Hi Leo.

LEO Deborah—you're looking a little pale.

DEBORAH (LAUGHING) I know. I know. And You look skinny Leo.

LEO I only eat animal fat and coffee now.

DEE-DEE WOOHOOO!

LEO No chocolate and no wine and no pot.

DEE-DEE Oh boo—that's no fun.

LEO psychedelics once a week.

DEE-DEE Yipppeeeee.

KRISTEN Hi Dad.

LEO Hi!

ESME Have a seat Leo.

LEO Okay.

ESME Take a plate.

KRISTEN Dad you're getting dirt everywhere.

LEO Chicken *okay*, meat, *okay*—what is this, ground carrots?

DEE-DEE For Deborah.

LEO Deborah! living in the fast lane.

DEBORAH (LAUGHING) I know.

LEO I haven't seen you in ten years.

DEBORAH Many years.

NANCY Leo—you have to call if you are going to stop by.

LEO I did.

NANCY But that was yesterday. To tell me that you were coming. Then you called to say you weren't coming. Now you are here. You need to call.

MIKE It's okay, Nancy. We're happy you're here, Leo.

LEO I lost my hearing aid that's why. But I promise next time to call. So did you read the will, or burn a fire or something—spread the ashes? What are we doing?

NANCY None of those things. We aren't doing anything.

GABRIEL I mean we can still build a fire, I'm always down for a // ceremonial fire.

DEE-DEE LEO. I'm glad you came. It's wonderful to see you. And it's *important* you came because you *were* in the will!!

LEO Alright, Grandpa Bob, what are we talking?

DEE-DEE Dad left you his fishing rods and his old tackle boxes. After we eat maybe you could open them.

PAUSE

LEO I respect that move. He knows I don't fish and never have. But there's a symbolism to it that I like. The fish hook. The bait. The lure. It's all in there somewhere. Okay. Great. A tackle box! What about money, no money?

NANCY No money.

LEO Okay. Well, didn't waste time with that. Glad I still have a whole plate of chicken to eat. That's okay. And how did Nancy make out? Nance?

NANCY I'm not going to tell you that.

LEO How much was there?

NANCY I'm not telling you that.

GABRIEL Not that much. Frankly, I was sort of expecting a little more.

LEO No secret chest buried up there in the mountains?

NANCY No.

DEBORAH I didn't get any money so I don't know how much there is.

GABRIEL Babs was a no go.

LEO Shit, Debby you and me together.

NANCY My parents gave us money all the TIME over the years, Leo, and you were never grateful!!! Deborah is grateful and she got nothing.

DEBORAH I wouldn't say grateful, just neutral.

LEO But she lived in Fiji. She didn't have to *see* them. I had to *see* them.

GABRIEL That's a fair point. Deborah lived in Fiji.

DEBORAH I didn't even know you guys got divorced.

LEO Shit, out of the loop Deborah, that happened years ago.

DEBORAH How come?

LEO Nancy went off her anti-depressants.

NANCY Leo started growing weed.

LEO Which reminds me, Kristen—all my money actually *is* buried in a chest in the ground. And I've been meaning to show you where the spot is in case I die.

KRISTEN Great.

GABRIEL Fun!

LEO No, I feel great not getting any money. I really do feel great to be out of it all.

DEE-DEE Do you want to see the paper?

ESME Dee-Dee, no—he doesn't need to see the paper.

LEO No, I believe you. I believe you. Where are the kids? Where is that girl of mine? I'm gonna say hi. Save that plate for me.

HE JUMPS UP. HE DOESN'T WANT TO LOOK AT THE PAPER.

ESME/ They're pounding acorns.
KRISTEN

LEO BOUNDS OFF TO GO SEE THE KIDS.

PAUSE.

DEBORAH Leo. Wow.

ESME He looks good.

DEE-DEE (EATING) I could eat this steak all day. ALL DAY! Can I smear it on my body? Would that be too much?

ESME Do it Dee-Dee.

GABRIEL You deserve it, mom.

NANCY I want to tear it up, the will. Or burn it. Let's burn it and start from scratch. We all are equal. Deborah. Leo. Everyone who ever was impacted by those two people who were our parents in any way should get an equal //share of the money.

DEE-DEE No! No, Nancy! NO!

NANCY Even Leo. I don't care!

MIKE It really seems like he doesn't mind.

DEE-DEE It's a legally binding document, you could go to jail!

DEBORAH I'm really not worried about it, Nancy.

NANCY Well I am! I am! As usual I am the only one worried. No one else has to worry because they know Nancy will do all the worrying! I'm going to go outside and lie down for a minute.

DEBORAH Good idea.

MIKE It's pretty wet out there.

DEE-DEE I want to come!

MIKE It's pretty damp. It's actually drizzling still.

GABRIEL Just let em go. It will be good for them.

DEBORAH I'll go too. That's a good idea. The garden is really beautiful by the way Mike.

MIKE Thank you, Deborah.

DEE-DEE I'm bringing my steak!

THE SISTERS LEAVE.

PAUSE. KRISTEN SPEAKS SORT OF TO HERSELF AND SORT OF TO THE AUDIENCE.

KRISTEN Ugh. I can't stand it when they're in the same room. It makes me feel like a little kid.

MIKE Sure, I get it.

KRISTEN Oh, sorry—I forgot you were still here Mike.

MIKE That's okay.

A KID CRIES FROM OFF STAGE.

KRISTEN Crap. I should—

ESME No, it's fine—I can—

KRISTEN No, no—I will, you just cooked all day.

GABRIEL I can go.

MIKE I'll go. I'll get the kids.

KRISTEN Oh. okay.

MIKE Then I'll take a nap.

ESME Thanks Mike.

GABRIEL Rad. Thank you *Mike*.

HE LEAVES.

KRISTEN Is it weird that he gets along with my Dad?

GABRIEL He gets along with everyone.

ESME He wants more of a role I think.

KRISTEN In what? The family?

GABRIEL No, he's fine. I think he really likes the amount of role he has.

KRISTEN Yeah, he's fine. Plus, he has all that weather-watching he has to do.

GABRIEL Right, that takes up a lot of time. Cause you gotta do your outdoor weather-watching, you know, on your hikes, then you gotta come home and do all your indoor weather-watching, on the old weather channel—

KRISTEN Right, and then you gotta compare the real-time weather-watching with--

ESME Can I stop you both? Before we go down whatever bit this is? I think we should call Michael and Caleb. So they aren't left in the dark for too long.

GABRIEL Well, / don't want to call them.

KRISTEN Oh, God, no, I don't want to do that.

ESME Then I'll do it. It will be better coming from me anyway.

ESME LEAVES.

KRISTEN Is she mad?

GABRIEL Who Esme? No, no. She's not mad.

GABRIEL PATS KRISTEN'S HANDS. THEY CLASP HANDS FOR A MOMENT.

KRISTEN Is it really so bad? What Deborah did? Leaving her kids. They were, what? Twelve? There was a time I wanted to leave. Last year. It only lasted a couple of weeks but I really just...wanted to get out of there. I wanted to not be with my child or myself and just go off to some artist colony or something and sleep with strangers and write essays. I guess I *didn't*. Is that the point?

GABRIEL Well, the particulars here are important. You wanted to get away for a while. That's normal. You wanted your life to be something different for a moment: Normal. You wanted to have casual sex with maybe some random but still presumable NORMAL person, NOT some gross, greasy guy from Queens who got famous because he gave people a bunch of LSD and fled to Fiji when they pressed charges for sexual abuse and changed his name to Bubba Free John.

KRISTEN That was just the first name. Why are gurus always so greasy?

GABRIEL So greasy!!!! So greasy and so ugly.

KRISTEN Like that guy actually thought it would be a good idea to let his gut hang out in some toga and // like

GABRIEL Like rub coconut oil all over his belly—

KRISTEN To make it extra shiny!

GABRIEL And people would fuck him.

KRISTEN And they did!

GABRIEL THEY DID!

KRISTEN IT WORKED!

GABRIEL THE GROSSER YOU ARE THE MORE FOLLOWERS YOU WILL HAVE!

KRISTEN FUCK ME I AM DISGUSTING!

GABRIEL FUCK ME ALL THE TIME AND BY THE WAY YOU CAN'T FUCK EACHOTHER!

KRISTEN YOU'RE ALL CELEBATE! EXCEPT ME BECAUSE I AM CLEARLY THE CHOSEN ONE BECAUSE I AM SO GROSS AND DISGUSTING.

GABRIEL At least Jesus wasn't gross.

KRISTEN No, it's really true. Jesus took very good care of himself.

GABRIEL Man it's such a fucking trip.

PAUSE

KRISTEN Except some of their teachings are really amazing.

GABRIEL I know, I know! Look at Deborah. She's transcended, man! She's fucking *found* it.

KRISTEN Maybe that's why I wanted to leave. I wanted, for like, two weeks, to find something more powerful than myself, and even my kid. Because if you find that you're really set.

GABRIEL Totally set.

PAUSE

GABRIEL I'm never gonna find that. I don't know for sure but I don't know if I'm ever gonna find that.

LEO ENTERS.

LEO Here's the acorn flour. That was some serious grinding.

GABRIEL Deborah does not fuck around.

LEO No, she put those kids to work.

KRISTEN (CALLING) CLAIRE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? JONAH!

GABRIEL No man, that's one thing you learn living in a cult—you learn to fucking work.

LEO Oh yeah. You know how to get some shit done living in a cult.

GABRIEL Hey, KIDS! KNOCK IT OFF!

LEO I was gonna give them a ride on the motorcycle.

GABRIEL Go for// it.

KRISTEN No!!!!

LEO LOOSEN UP, KRISTEN!

KRISTEN No! No way!

GABRIEL Actually I better check with ESME before I let you do that.

ESME ENTERS.

ESME Well, that's done.

GABRIEL How are they?

ESME In pain. It's like a link has been broken.

LEO Who is this, Michael and Caleb? Oh please it's just money, they're fine.

GABRIEL They're gonna be fine.

LEO I'm the one that's an old man.

ESME Oh! Is this the acorn flour? I'll put it in the blender. Oh, you know what? Your mom's blender is really weak, like it doesn't really..... I don't think it could even do this job. Maybe...okay what I'll do is I'll just toast this in a pan, and then have the kids grind it again into, like, a finer powder.....and then we can--

GABRIEL BOYS! HEY! GO OUTSIDE. HEY—DON'T--

GABRIEL RUNS OUT.

ESME Yeah, just like a finer powder. (CALLING TO GABRIEL) Tell them to get those baskets and collect the rest when they come in!

SHE LEAVES FOR THE KITCHEN. LEO AND KRISTEN ALONE. _THEY ARE SILENT.

KRISTEN I have that book for you. Remind me to give it to you before we leave.

SILENCE. HE MAY NOT HAVE HEARD HER.

LEO This was really good. Me coming for lunch, seeing everyone. Mom seemed really good with it.

KRISTEN I didn't notice that.

LEO I like Mike!

KRISTEN He likes you.

SILENCE

KRISTEN Did I tell you I read Borges? I had never read Borges and I finally read Borges.

LEO I'm trying to think what....which of the stories I have gotten to...okay...yeah.

KRISTEN All this time, all these years: Bolano, Cortazar, Zambra; and then you read Borges and you realize it was all just *him!* Everyone was just doing their version of *him*.

LEO "The Aleph?" Right. I think I was up on Pond Farm and Marguerite had a copy of "The Aleph." God *she* was a reader.

KRISTEN This last play I was in my character always talked about Borges and then when the play closed I realized I had actually never read Borges so I read every story he wrote and suddenly everything made sense. Everything in my life. *Everything*. Everything in that play too, but it was too late for that. It had already closed.

LEO I've been reading Lawrence. Man. He was---I mean he was a weirdo. But *so*—

KRISTEN Oh huh huh. *The Rainbow* or whatever. Yeah I read that. // *So emotional*.

LEO Just some of the---and you know he was living off in--

KRISTEN Yeah.

SILENCE

LEO Well, Deborah seems really good.

KRISTEN You don't think she looks frail?

LEO Maybe she doesn't look good, I really didn't think about it. I mean, I haven't really thought about her in over a decade.

HE LAUGHS. THEY BOTH LAUGH.

KRISTEN Yeah.

SILENCE.

LEO I should go. Okay. You wanna swim in the morning, before you leave?

KRISTEN Ummm... //yeah, yes, okay.

LEO Perfect. Perfect. One last swim. One last swim before you leave.

HE LEAVES. KRISTEN IS ALONE. SHE SEES SOMETHING. IT'S THE OUTLINE OF SOMETHING SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.

KRISTEN Claire? What are you wearing?

NOTHING.

KRISTEN Oh, that's not you. Who is that? What? Is that a—whose wearing that...oh shit. I'm just talking to myself. I'm just....

SILENCE. THE OUTLINE IS GONE.

KRISTEN What?

SILENCE. KRISTEN SITS. THE OUTSIDE DOOR OPENS AND DEE-DEE AND NANCY COME IN. THEY HAVE THEIR SHIRTS OFF AND ARE JUST IN THEIR BRAS. THEIR HAIR IS WET.

DEE-DEE Deborah!

NANCY Is she in the bathroom?

KRISTEN No.

NANCY Where did she go?

KRISTEN I didn't see her.

NANCY She just came // in.

DEE-DEE (CALLING) You left your scarf outside, Deb!

KRISTEN Mom, put a towel on—you guys are gonna freeze. Here Dee-Dee.

DEE-DEE We like it.

NANCY It feels good actually.

DEE-DEE We needed a good, hard cry.

NANCY I don't even know what I'm crying for. Where did she go?

DEE-DEE She has to mix her powders.

NANCY God, it's constant. No wonder she doesn't want to eat anything.

DEE-DEE Deborah?! Are you upstairs?

DEBORAH ENTERS FROM A DIFFERENT PLACE ENTIRELY. SHE IS NOT WET. HER HAIR IS DRY.

DEE-DEE There you are? Where did you go?

NANCY We have your scarf.

DEBORAH I just had to come in to go to the bathroom. I'm feeling better now though.

KRISTEN (CONFUSED) Oh—I didn't see you come in.

NANCY Why don't you just think about switching over to the pills?

DEBORAH I might, I might. Kristen? Do we have any bananas?

KRISTEN Probably. Do you want one in a bowl?

KRISTEN LEAVES FOR THE KITCHEN.

DEBORAH (CALLING) Just mashed with a fork—then I can add my powders to it.

DEE-DEE Here Nancy—take this robe.

NANCY I'm fine—I like it. I like feeling the air.

DEBORAH I like it too. That was a beautiful rainstorm.

THE SISTERS, WET AND DRY. THEY COME TOGETHER AND PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER. THEY CLOSE THEIR EYES. DEBORAH OPENS HER EYES AND WATCHES THEM.

3. LATE THAT NIGHT. AROUND THE CANDLES. ESME IS LEADING A COMMUNAL PRAYER.

ESME Great spirit. On this night, please hear our prayers. This is a night where we think about Grandpa Bob. We think about his journey on this earth and we give thanks for all that his work has left us and given us. We pray that he is well on his way, safely and peacefully out of this world and into the next. We think of him on this day, the anniversary of his death and the opening of his material possessions. We are grateful for those tangible things. Those things are real. They come from his work—his hard work—

NANCY --and mom's hard work, really--

ESME --and his persistence and his frugality and his dedication to his family. We also give thanks for the intangible things he has left behind. The tradition of honesty. The dedication to family. The love of nature. The blessings of the home, the hearth. These mountains.

GABRIEL Aho.

ESME I am especially humbled by your spirit tonight Grandpa Bob. I never dreamed that I would know a family so loving and so forgiving and so warm. I have been let into the family that you created and I say thanks for that every day.

DEE-DEE We love you Esme.

ESME These three beautiful and powerful women are your legacy—

NANCY --crones, we're crones. // We're old crones—

ESME --and your grandchildren: Gabriel and Kristen. And Michael and Caleb...who are here in our thoughts. We will work, Great Spirit to do whatever we must to repair the broken link in the family chain so that they too will always be a part of what you left us. Thank you. We are eternally grateful.

GABRIEL (BOWING OR SOMETHING) Aho, aho.

SILENCE

DEE-DEE (CRYING) That was beautiful, Honey.

NANCY I don't agree with everything in there but, yes, that was so beautiful ESME.

SILENCE

KRISTEN I still don't really feel like I knew him. It's funny. I just remember his grip being too strong.

NANCY We didn't really *want* you to know him.

DEE-DEE Oh you guys! If you could read the letters he wrote to mom during the war. If you just read those, you would know him! They are the most tender, loving, SENSUAL letters you will ever read in your life.

NANCY They are, they really are.

DEBORAH I was one month old when he left for the war and he was still that person. He came back when I was four and he was completely changed.

NANCY Have you ever thought, Deborah.....that maybe you joined the group because you wanted an authority figure in your life to replace Dad?

PAUSE

DEBORAH Sure. Sure. I've *thought* that.

DEE-DEE You've got to read the letters, Gabriel! So you KNOW what kind of man he really was. That's what you wanted to know! That's what you said you wanted to know—then read those letters, and you will see.

ESME I keep telling Gabriel he is the man Grandpa was *before* the war. He's already the man he's supposed to be.

DEE-DEE Yes! Exactly honey. *Exactly!*

GABRIEL I don't know though—Grandpa after the war was pretty successful. He made some really good life decisions. I don't know.

DEBORAH Those first four years I was raised by Mom and Grandma. Did you know that? I was lucky really. He came to visit but it was still happy.

NANCY Well, it wasn't until the last year of the war that he changed. He was an officer and he was commanding a regiment—I don't know how many men, hundreds of men—but he was in charge of them all.

DEE-DEE This was the only time I ever saw him cry.

DEBORAH Thanksgiving.

NANCY And when their ship got hit off the coast he told his men to jump off into the water. They were maybe half a mile from shore and were getting hit. They weren't navy men. But they were coming on a ship to provide reinforcements and they got hit. He told his men to jump. So they did. And they all drowned. Their equipment was too heavy. And they drowned. He never forgave himself for that.

THE LIGHTS CHANGE. NANCY STEPS FORWARD.

NANCY (FAST AGAIN, PANIC) I know that dying is simply a process of letting go of all the memories and people that have made up the so-called things in your life. And I know there might be some joy in that. What I wonder about a lot is which will be the last things I give up. Because those things are essentially what give your life any meaning at all. I think for me, when I die the last things I will give up will be: Leo, even though I hate him. And Dee-Dee even though we will never understand each other. My granddaughter who I love, even though I feel I don't know her. And then there will be left my daughter and the mountains. My daughter is the only thing I really gave to the world. The only thing I cared for and nurtured. And the mountains are the closest thing to a God I have ever believed in. If there is any place I might go in the afterlife it would be mountains, since I feel at peace there and feel greater than myself. In a way those last two things represent the opposing forces of a life. My daughter is my blood and my life and my joy. But she will one day die also. And then what will be left? Perhaps the mountains are the one thing I will *not* have to let go of before I die. Perhaps they *are* letting go *itself*. Perhaps they exist as a spiritual realm already. Or perhaps not. And they are just a pile of rocks. And the reason I find them so beautiful is because I have a daughter I think about and who tells me I am "I" who loves mountains.

NANCY RETURNS TO THE ROOM.

NANCY But he was very lucky. He had such a lucky life.

SILENCE. A KID FROM THE OTHER ROOM CALLS OUT: "MAMA."

KRISTEN LEAVES. SHE COMES BACK WITH A BUNDLE OF BLANKETS AND A SLEEPING KID WHO WE DON'T SEE. DEBORAH LAUGHS. SHE GIGGLES.

NANCY What Deb?

DEBORAH Oh I'm thinking. Thinking about Dad. Becoming like a baby again. That was because of you two. You two took care of him. You returned him to his natural state—the person he was deep down. You know that's the greatest gift you can

give a person. You let them become vulnerable to the world. You *both* did that. You did such a good job.

PAUSE

NANCY It's true. We were good daughters. We were dutiful daughters.

DEE-DEE Yeah—for about five years at the end of his life we were really good daughters.

SILENCE

DEBORAH What did Michael and Caleb say, Esme? When you called them?

SILENCE. HOW DID SHE KNOW ESME CALLED? ESME IS GATHERING THE CANDLES. SHE BLOWS THEM OUT SLOWLY. FINALLY.

ESME They were sad.....
They were hurt.

They said they felt like, ummmm.....like a chain had been broken.

PAUSE

DEBORAH Because of me?

ESME Yes. But they love you.

DEBORAH I need to talk to them. I need to explain to them that I should never have been a mother.

ESME I don't know if that is....what they would want to hear right now.

KRISTEN It's not about the money, it's about what the money symbolizes. Which I—

GABRIEL It's okay if it *is* about the money. They have a right to be // angry.

NANCY Of course it's about the money—they had 30 years to be mad at Deborah and this is when they choose to—

KRISTEN It's symbolic, Mom.

NANCY Oh please.

GABRIEL Money is powerful. Money is its own force that—

DEE-DEE God, Nancy—you are so mean.

NANCY *I'm* mean??

DEE-DEE See.

NANCY Never mind.

SILENCE

ESME There was one thing they wanted to know. That I told them I would ask all three of you.....

KRISTEN ROCKS THE SLEEPING BUNDLE.

ESME They wanted to know if when Grandma wrote the Will, before she died, if Grandma and Grandpa thought that Michael and Caleb, were still involved in the....in the group. And that's maybe why Grandma didn't want any money by-passing Deborah and going to the...to the guru or—

NANCY No, no—that's //not why.

DEE-DEE No. Definitely not.

DEBORAH Well, that is true. Of course they were in the group. They will always be in the group.

DEE-DEE I don't think //Mom thought that.

NANCY Oh Deborah, that's not true.

DEBORAH Of course it is.

DEE-DEE No, for mom it was just simpler than that. She had *three* daughters, and one left. So then there were *two*.

NANCY Deborah: Michael and Caleb don't believe in what you believe anymore. They stopped believing in it a long time ago.

DEBORAH These are things you don't know about, NANCY.

NANCY No, I *do* know because I've *talked* to them.

DEBORAH You don't know, Nancy--

NANCY We've talked for hours about these things. We have for years. All those holidays when you were gone we were the ones here who talked to them. When they were trying to hold their lives together, when— Michael and his girls and....and Caleb....Caleb has renounced the entire THING Deborah, he started going to therapy, he has denounced it.

DEBORAH That's what he says.

NANCY He removed all the photos of the guru from his house!

DEBORAH Don't...you don't...yes, well that was very painful, that part.

DEE-DEE He broke up with Sadie, Deborah!

KRISTEN (TO DEE-DEE) Shhhhh.

NANCY He broke up with Sadie. And we love Sadie.

ESME We all love Sadie.

DEBORAH He didn't break up with Sadie.

NANCY He told her: I can't be with someone who believes in that man anymore. I can't! That's what he said. She was going to be celibate, Deborah!

DEBORAH Well there may be some changes happening soon about that.

NANCY With what?

DEBORAH A lot of people inside the community have found that the young people who are devotees are much....how do I say this...they can...they have more capacity to be in line with the teachings and to also be in relationships.

DEE-DEE Oh, well that's convenient.

NANCY Okay.

DEBORAH So Sadie may not have to worry about that as much.

NANCY Well that is for Sadie to figure out but Caleb has already made his choice.

DEBORAH That's not a choice, Nancy. That's not a choice he has.

NANCY Of course it's a choice he has, he made it!

ESME Nancy.

DEBORAH There are things you don't know about.

NANCY Well, sure! Of course there are, there are always things—

DEBORAH Things we don't know about. None of us. Things that are greater than anything you are talking about. You don't know about them. Okay?

SILENCE

NANCY I can't think of anything more violent than telling your own child they are not who they are *telling* you they are.

SILENCE

KRISTEN It's just hard Deborah because the logic gets really circular—like if you say you don't believe in the guru anymore, that's only because you haven't fully accepted the guru so what you need to do is soften your heart and accept the guru. But what if you don't want to? What if Caleb doesn't want to. // Doesn't that count? Isn't he a person?

DEBORAH Let's not argue about it, Nancy. Let's not argue.

NANCY Kristen—you don't need to get involved.

DEBORAH We don't need to argue.

KRISTEN Sorry, it just seems like really problematic—the logic. Like there is no logical way to—

NANCY You're right. Let's not argue about it. You're right.

THE LIGHTS CHANGE. DEE-DEE COMES CENTER. EVERYONE WATCHES HER AND LISTENS.

DEE-DEE What I want to do at the end is walk out from my house and wander into the back forest below the peak. It will have to be winter and it will have to be cold. I will still have to be able to walk so remember that part. I will walk out at midnight. I will be alone. I won't be afraid. I'll just say, shit, it's time to go. And I will walk out into the night and lie down under a tree until I get hypothermia and pass out. Come find me in the morning and get my body and cremate me and

spread me where mom and dad are at Gold lake. Global Warming could really fuck with this plan so you'll have to wait it out for a cold day. But that's it.

GABRIEL Got it. Got it right here, mom.

SHIFT BACK TO THE ROOM.

DEBORAH I have to get my powders. And then I'm going to do something and I don't want anyone to be frightened. But there is this thing I have that I put on my head for light therapy. It lights up with blue lights and the lights gently pulsate my brain and it helps the neurons.

NANCY The doctor gave you this?

ESME It sounds lovely.

DEBORAH It's from a clinical trial in New Zealand. I think it really helps.

DEBORAH GETS HER POWDERS AND MIXES THEM. THEN SHE TAKES OUT THE BLUE LIGHT HELMET AND PUTS IT ON. ESME BLOWS OUT ALL THE CANDLES. THE LIGHT PULSATES IN THE DARK. THEY ALL WATCH.

4. THE NEXT MORNING. NANCY AND LEO STAND IN THE DOORWAY.

LEO It should give you less to worry about at least.

NANCY It does.

LEO Good. Have you had fun with Claire? Has it been a good trip?

NANCY It has. She won't remember me much when she goes but—

LEO She's a funny kid.

NANCY She reminds me of me when I was little. Which I guess is hard for me.

LEO Everything was always hard for you, Nancy.

NANCY Oh yes, well that's what you get to say. Kristen says you aren't drinking.

LEO Keto.

NANCY I thought it was maybe Zena's influence.

LEO She doesn't have much influence. *You had far* more influence.

NANCY Well, obviously not.

LEO No, no. We had the real deal. No one could have lasted longer with either one of us.

NANCY Then why didn't we?

LEO How's Deborah? I wanted to tell her about the Keto diet. It's used to treat Parkinson's.

NANCY Oh she has a whole regimen. These amino acids and a light helmet thing and it's actually worked well for her. It all seems pretty gradual.

LEO Gradual is not *my* goal. Just so you know. Just in case you are ever in the position to have any authority over that.

NANCY I don't know why I would be. I'm sorry about the will.

LEO I'm very happy about it. I feel finally free. Or something. Anyway, I hated your Dad.

NANCY He actually loved you, by the end. Isn't that funny? When I told him we were getting divorced he felt bad for you. And said, of course. He said: three daughters, and not one of them a success.

LEO I think we should just change partners every seven years.

NANCY Well that's not what my parents thought. That's not what we thought.

LEO I really like Mike.

SILENCE

KRISTEN ENTERS IN A BATHING SUIT.

KRISTEN Ready? Let's go.

LEO Why are you always trying to rush me out of here?

KRISTEN I'm not, I'm—I thought we were going.

NANCY I'm going for a hike. Deborah has Claire.

KRISTEN Give her those pancakes if she asks, before you go.

NANCY She's already had three.

KRISTEN I know. I'm saying I don't care if she has more.

NANCY Well....

KRISTEN Fine—do whatever you want. She might throw a fit and then just you'll have to figure it out.

NANCY I didn't say she *shouldn't* have more, I was just telling you how many she's had.

KRISTEN Fine, fine. I can't have this conversation right now.

LEO Okay, well, the garden looks nice by the way, NANCY—I like what you did with the—

KRISTEN Oh my God, I can't—it's just really awful for me to be in the same room with both of you, especially in this house, so can we just *go*, Dad, *please*.

DAD Well alright. Nancy...

NANCY Bye.

THEY LEAVE. NANCY IS ALONE. SOUNDS OF LAUGHTER. NANCY TURNS TOWARD THE AUDIENCE LIKE SHE MIGHT SAY SOMETHING, BUT SHE IS INTERRUPTED BY DEBORAH, WHO COMES IN HOLDING UP A BOOK.

DEBORAH I just read this book to Claire and it's the funniest thing I HAVE EVER READ!

NANCY Judy Blume?

DEBORAH Incredible. Come listen to a chapter. Claire! I know! Ha ha ha! Yes, I hear you!

WE DON'T HEAR ANYTHING.

DEBORAH Do you hear her quoting it?

NANCY You've read that book before, you just don't remember.

DEBORAH No, I would remember this! It's the funniest thing I've ever read. I can't believe it's for children. And she understands it all. She even gets the jokes. She's a remarkable child.

NANCY Yes.

PAUSE

DEBORAH You don't think so?

NANCY She's a little spoiled.

DEBORAH She's shy like you were. That's what you don't like.

NANCY It doesn't give you any advantages in life, being shy.

DEBORAH She's shy but she's not meek. You were meek. But the reason you were meek is because you were afraid. And she's not afraid. She has no reason to be afraid. She will go through life unafraid.

NANCY That's not possible. But yes—she will certainly have more confidence than I did.

DEBORAH Oh, Nancy.

DEBORAH LAUGHS.

NANCY See?

SILENCE

NANCY Are you really not afraid? Really, truly?

DEBORAH I don't know.

NANCY Why don't you come live with me? We can help each other.

DEBORAH You have your life. You have a boyfriend. You have friends.

NANCY I don't really have friends. I have groups. Hiking group. Walking group. Snowshoeing group. I've thought that I could move East. To be near Kristen. But what would I do? I need nature. Nature is the only thing that makes me content. It is the closest thing to a religion that I have.

DEBORAH I don't want to interrupt that. And I have my own life. My prayer. My offerings. My preparation. I need that. I am very busy right now with all of that.

SILENCE

NANCY I'll help you out. Okay? With some money or....I'll help when I can.

DEBORAH I know. I appreciate it. But You won't need to.

NANCY You're my sister. I don't....you know...Dee--Dee is angry at you, or pretends to be anyway. But I don't feel that way. I don't care that much about it. You know? I mean, I didn't think about you for years. You didn't even know Kristen when she was little. But it never made me angry. I was too busy worrying about my own life. And now, my wanting to help....it's not out of closeness, it's out of...duty. Because you are my sister. What difference would it have made if you had stayed? Maybe none. We might have hated each other. And the fact is that I do love you now. You're one of the easiest people to be around I've ever known. We fought last night but that's not really a fight.

DEBORAH No.

NANCY So I would want you to come and stay. It's out of duty but it's also out of love.

DEBORAH And what's the difference really?

NANCY Well Exactly. And that's why we understand each other. We understand each other better than Dee-Dee and I ever could.

DEBORAH Thank you, Nancy. I don't need to come. I won't need to. *I promise.* But I will never forget that you offered.

SILENCE

NANCY Let me mash you something.

DEBORAH No, I'll do it. Just bring me a pear. Oh God, listen to her calling, she is just desperate for me to finish this story.

NANCY I don't hear anything, Deborah. Are you sure you aren't alone in there?

DEBORAH Bring the pear into us in the bedroom, before your hike. COMING! YES I KNOW! ISN'T IT!??

DEBORAH EXITS. NANCY LISTENS. SHE DOESN'T HEAR WHAT DEBORAH IS RESPONDING TO. NANCY TURNS OUT AGAIN TO TALK BUT AS SHE IS ABOUT TO SPEAK KRISTEN COMES ON AND STANDS IN FRONT OF HER. NANCY LEAVES.

5. KRISTEN ALONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAKE.

KRISTEN (SPEAKING TO US) I came here last summer to swim and had a religious moment in the water. In this very spot. Paul and I had hiked to the top of this peak and I wanted to show him how the lake looks like an infinity pool off the cliffs. I wanted to swim out to the middle so I took off my clothes and plunged in and the water was colder than any water I had ever been in before. The sides of the lake still had ice clinging to some of the rocks and the water had turned the ice turquoise. The water was turquoise too. It looked like you were swimming in a tropical ocean it was that clear and blue-green, except it was ice-cold. I swam out very fast to this spot and I felt so good in my arms and I looked down at my own body through the water. I could see me legs effortlessly keeping me afloat and my feet and my body against the blue. I decided in that moment I wanted my ashes scattered in this exact spot, when I die. I had never felt more sure about anything in my life. I felt at total peace with what had come before in my life and whatever would follow. Now I am here again this year and I don't feel any of that. The place doesn't seem that magical. The water is low, the shore is dusty. The whole place looks sort of barren and sad. I see my Dad on a rock. In the sun. I'm calling his name. He can't hear me. He has his hearing aids out. I cry whenever I think of him. Why is that? I love him and I know I will never be able to tell him that with words. Is that why? Everyone has someone like that in their life. So hopefully he knows that he is that person for me. Why else would he look so happy right now?

SHE WAVES AT HIM.

He can't see me.
He's looking but he can't see me.
Oh. He sees me.
He sees me.

DEBORAH IS REVEALED. SHE'S IN THE WATER FOR A MOMENT TOO. KRISTEN SEES HER. THEN SHE'S GONE.

6. DEBORAH WITH THE INVISIBLE CHILD.

DEBORAH Good. Yes. Put your thumb on the ribbon. Keep it there while I tie this bow. See? I know, it is tricky.....ha ha, well you have the right kind of fingers for it.....I know just like Fudge! Claire.....I want to tell you something. Are you listening. Let's put the present down.....okay.....now you don't need to look at me but just

listen.....Very soon I'm going to disappear. I already have begun the process. So.....I don't want you to worry if you don't see me again. Okay? Because you *will* be seeing me. Just in a different way. You may have to look harder for me, or in different places. But you will find me. My own children will not want to look for me right away. And my own grandchildren can't. My sisters are too old. And your mother has to look after you, so she won't see me. But I think you could. You might find me in a little cobweb somewhere. Or in a small piece of sugar. You may see me in many places at once. If that happens don't be frightened. You can talk to me. And you can name me Deborah, though I won't respond to that name. And if you meet someone in your life that does not have my name and does not look like me but you think it is me anyway—say my name. Say my name while I am asleep. And from deep inside another body I will hear you. Will you do that for me? You may be the only one, who can do that for me.

Thank you.

You're a good girl.

Do you still have that bead?

Good. Keep it safe.

Now we will give this one to your Mama when she gets back from the lake.

DEBORAH SITS DOWN TO REST. SHE WATCHES THE INVISIBLE CHILD. SHE FINGERS A SPECIAL NECKLACE. SHE LOOKS AT HER ALTER WITH HER GURU. SHE IS BOTH IN THE WATER AND OUT.

7. DEE-DEE AND GABRIEL AND ESME LYING IN THE SUN, EYES CLOSED. THEY REPEAT A MANTRA.

ESME/

GABRIEL Ommmm rama, Ommmmm rama, Ommmmm rama
 Ommmmm rama, Ommmmm rama, Ommmmm rama.

KRISTEN ENTERS. SHE WATCHES FOR A TINY MOMENT. GABRIEL SEES HER.

KRISTEN We're leaving pretty soon.

GABRIEL Good swim?

KRISTEN Yes. The water's low.

GABRIEL Get Claire, come lie down with us.

KRISTEN She's packing with Deborah. They're up in the attic, I think. It's some secret. She loves her, It's so funny.

KRISTEN LIES DOWN WITH THEM.

KRISTEN I don't want to go.

DEE-DEE Stay.

KRISTEN I don't want to stay either.

ESME You can just lie here for a bit.

THEY LIE IN THE SUN.

DEE-DEE I'm in bliss. I'm really, really in bliss.

GABRIEL We love you Mama. We love you, we love you. Have I told you that today?

DEE-DEE Yes! You have! I love you too, honey.

GABRIEL SNUGGLES AND HUGS DEE-DEE. KRISTEN WATCHES.

GABRIEL Thank you for the hot tub Mama Dee-Dee. I had a dream about it last night, did I tell you?

DEE-DEE No! What was it?

ESME He was swimming and every time he swam it got bigger and bigger.

GABRIEL It was a magical hot tub. By the end of my dream it was like a lake.

DEE-DEE (CRYING) Oh honey!!

GABRIEL If that's not a sign I don't know what is.

KRISTEN What do you think it's a sign for?

GABRIEL Infinite life? I don't know.

ESME Gratitude. Our gratitude.

GABRIEL Infinite life, infinite gratitude.

KRISTEN I'll miss those lakes.

8. KRISTEN AND CLAIRE PREPARING TO DEPART

ESME You don't want to take the acorn cookies with you?

KRISTEN No! No! You // take them.

GABRIEL These are YOUR COOKIES Kristen! Don't back out now!

KRISTEN I WON'T GET THESE THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY! Bye.

GABRIEL Bye. I love you. I love you, K?

KRISTEN Bye. I love you. Love you Cousin.

DEE-DEE Bye honey.

NANCY I feel like I didn't see you at all. Or spend any time with you.

KRISTEN You will. I love you. Bye, mom.

DEE-DEE Where's Deborah? Deborah! Kristen is leaving, come say bye.

KRISTEN Bye Mike. Thanks for putting up with us.

MIKE Anytime. Here.

KRISTEN What's this?

MIKE Oh it's some pressed flowers—for //Claire, I um—

NANCY Where is Deborah?

DEE-DEE She's taking a shit.

ESME No, She's not in there I checked.

NANCY Deborah!

ESME Is she outside?

KRISTEN Claire wants to see her. (TALKING TO CHILD) It's okay. I know.

GABRIEL Deborah!

DEE-DEE She was just here.

KRISTEN (TO CHILD) It's okay sweetie she's coming. She'll be here.

NANCY Does Leo have the car seat?

KRISTEN Yeah. Okay, Dad's here. We have to go.

INVISIBLE CHILD DOESN'T WANT TO GO. SHE STARTS WALKING TOWARD THE BEDROOMS.

KRISTEN Sweetie come back, we have to go. Come on.

LEO SWINGS IN.

LEO I remembered the car seat, do I get a prize?

KRISTEN Come on, sweetie.

LEO Hi NANCY.

NANCY Hi. Good swim?

LEO Perfect swim. *Beautiful* swim.

ESME Sweetie you have to go!

DEE-DEE Oh, Leo—the tackle box!

LEO Ack! No! No, keep it Dee-Dee! I don't want it!

ESME You have to go to your Mama now, sweetie.

DEE-DEE You're missing out, Leo!

LEO No, your Dad probably cursed some fish eggs in there! I don't want em!

CHILD IS CRYING. KRISTEN PICKS HER UP IN A BLANKET.

KRISTEN (TO CHILD) What bead? What? I don't know honey, we probably packed it. Okay. I've got you. Okay. We're really going now. No, we have to! Okay, guys sorry I think I should just make a dash for it.

HUGGING, KISSING. LOVE YOU'S. BAGS. SHE LEAVES WITH THE CHILD.

LEO Bye, Nancy.

NANCY Bye.

KRISTEN Bye!

THEY ARE GONE.

NANCY Why does he say bye like that to me?

LONG SILENCE.

NANCY I'm talking about Leo.

ESME We know, honey. You still love him, it's okay.

NANCY Oh God. When they are here I just find things wrong with it all. And when they are gone I am so sad.

ESME It's almost summer anyway. They'll be back.

GABRIEL THE COOKIES! Damn it! Ha ha. Fuck. Oh well.

ESME The kids are in the back Gabriel—can you--?

GABRIEL Yeah, yeah—no, I'm going.

GABRIEL DASHES OUT.

MIKE I should....Nancy. I'll be in the kitchen if you ladies need anything.

NANCY Oh, Mike. I didn't...I didn't mean that about...I...

MIKE It's okay. I'll just....

HE EXITS.

NANCY Shoot.

ESME Are you okay? You both look tired.

NANCY Oh no. More than usual?

DEE-DEE We're old.

ESME No! That's not what I meant.

GABRIEL (OFF) ESME!

ESME It's all going to be okay. You are good sisters....And good mothers. I'M COMING.

DEE-DEE Oh Esme, thank you honey.

NANCY Well—we're good enough mothers.

SHE LEAVES. DEE-DEE AND NANCY ARE LEFT. IT'S JUST THE TWO OF THEM. NANCY LOOKS AWAY OUT AT THE WINDOW AGAIN.

DEE-DEE Well....

NANCY You were in the dream also Dee-Dee. I don't remember what you looked like but you were in it. We all were. And the buds had snow on them, or at least some kind of frost. But that isn't unusual for the mountains in Spring. So I didn't take it to mean anything significant at all. And maybe it wasn't.

DEE-DEE No. Maybe it wasn't anything significant at all.

SOMETHING INVISIBLE WALKS THROUGH. THEY FEEL IT PASS. THEY WATCH IT GO BY. IT IS DEBORAH'S SPIRIT, LEAVING THE WORLD. DEE-DEE AND NANCY UNDERSTAND. THEY HOLD HANDS. THEY HOLD EACH OTHER.

DEE-DEE Oh Nancy. Nancy. My sister.

NANCY My sister.

DEE-DEE Are you still here?

NANCY I'm here.

DEE-DEE Do you promise, do you promise?

NANCY I promise.

THE END.