

RENEWAL

Written by

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THE CHARACTERS (in order of appearance):

Ed - male, 50, artist and borderline misanthrope.

Kate - female, 30, navigating a break-up.

Eddie - male, 30, friend of Kate and boyfriend of Jen.

Jen - female, 30, Kate's best friend.

Bartender/Officiant - non-descript

Greg - male, 50, renewing vows with his wife, Emily.

Emily - female, also renewing vows, if less enthusiastically.

Mary - female, 50, Ed's ex-wife and old friend of Greg and Emily

THE SCENES:

ACT I

Scene 1 - Ed's apartment and a nearby bar.

Scene 2 - Emily and Greg's living room.

ACT II

Scene 1 - The bar from the previous night

Scene 2 - A field, decorated for a ceremony

Time: The present

ACT I

INT. SMALL, DARK APARTMENT, TODAY

ED, A 50ish man, painfully ordinary, sits alone at his kitchen table as the light in the room gradually increases with the sunrise. He wears a silky robe and slippers. His hair is wild and he scratches his head and his scrubby beard. He stares at his disheveled bed and sketches in a pad. As he sketches, the image of the drawing appears on a screen above the stage. Throughout the play, Ed's sketches are projected in real time as he draws.

On a cramped kitchen counter a coffee machine gurgles as it spits the last of its water into its pot.

The sound wakes KATE, a 30-ish woman who looks out of place in the bed of a man like Ed. She is the opposite of painfully ordinary. Even in her bedraggled state, she should be able to do a lot better than him. She sits up in bed with her eyes closed. Her hair is tangled across her face. She pulls and pushes her hair behind her ears and blinks her blurry eyes. She tries to focus on a room she doesn't recognize, squinting her eyes and stretching her neck.

ED

You want a cup of coffee?

Kate jerks her head toward the sound of Ed's voice and stares at him. She does not like what she sees.

KATE

Oh, fuck.

Kate closes her eyes for a moment and takes a deep breath, trying to piece together how she came to be in this bed. Ed watches her carefully but doesn't make a move.

ED

Coffee?

Kate shakes her head slowly then stops and opens her eyes.

KATE

No. I gotta get out of here.

Kate spots her pants on the floor, jumps out of bed in her underwear, grabs her pants and her shoes and runs into the bathroom.

Ed sets down his sketchpad, gets up, and takes two mugs from a cabinet while the sounds of running water and sighing and groaning come from the bathroom. Kate comes out of the bathroom adjusting her clothes and heads for the front door. Ed moves to cut her off. Kate braces for a fight.

KATE (CONT'D)

Don't do anything stupid.

Ed puts up his hands and backs away. Kate relaxes some.

ED

Sorry. I'm not going to do anything. I wanted to give you something before you go.

Ed backs up toward the table.

KATE

Don't give me money. I'd feel like a whore.

ED

Why would you feel like that? I wasn't going to give you money. But if you need some money to get home...

KATE

(laughs wryly)

Home? Where's that?

Ed steps back to the table and rips a page out of his sketch pad.

ED

I wanted to give you this.

Ed keeps his distance while he reaches out and hands the paper to her. She takes it and looks at it carefully. She looks at Ed as if seeing him for the first time.

KATE

Is this supposed to be me?

ED

Yeah. I drew you while you were sleeping.

Kate looks at the paper again and smiles.

KATE

It's like a beautiful version of me.

Ed laughs.

ED

You are a beautiful version of you.

She looks at him and smiles.

ED (CONT'D)

Look, I feel like I have the advantage on you. Not because I'm bigger and stronger than you. Honestly, in a fight, I'd put my money on you. But I have the advantage of knowing that I know I'm harmless, and you don't. Or you don't remember.

I don't remember, uh...
KATE

Ed.
ED

Yeah, Ed. I don't remember, Ed.
KATE

She reaches her hand toward him.

I'm Kate.
KATE (CONT' D)

He takes her hand and gives it a shake.

ED
I know you are. Kathleen Marie Callahan.

She pulls her hand away suspiciously.

What are you, a stalker?
KATE

He backs up toward the kitchen.

ED
No, Kathleen. I'm no stalker. I'm a talker. And a listener. I listened to you a lot last night. And, apparently unlike you, I remember what I heard. Why don't you sit and have a cup of coffee before you go?

Kate wavers. She looks at the door. She looks at the drawing.

ED (CONT' D)
Like I said, you don't know I'm harmless. But the only way you'll find out is if you let me show you a little kindness. Sit for a little, and I'll help you to remember last night.

She looks at him carefully from head to toe and then grits her teeth.

KATE

Do I want to remember?

ED

I thought it was kind of a nice night.

KATE

Oof. OK.

Kate deflates, walks over to the table and plops down into a seat. Ed heads over to the coffee pot and pours two cups.

ED

Milk and sugar?

KATE

Yes and yes. And lots of both.

Ed prepares the coffee and brings it to the table while Kate flips through his sketch pad. She stops on a page and smiles.

KATE (CONT'D)

I do remember this.

She holds up a picture for him to see. He squints at it and nods.

KATE (CONT'D)

That's me and my friends. They took me out to drown some sorrows.

She talks herself through her blurry memories.

KATE (CONT'D)

You were drawing us. And they left. And I went over to see what you were drawing.

She flips through some more sketches as he brings the coffee to the table and sits.

KATE (CONT'D)

You did a few drawings of me in bed.

ED

Yeah. I don't sleep that much. And it's been a long time since I had something so nice to draw.

She shakes her head and takes a sip of her coffee.

KATE

Mmm. That's good.

She takes a longer sip, sets down her cup, and sighs.

KATE (CONT'D)

(tentatively)

OK, Ed. So...tell me about last night.

INT. BAR - THE PREVIOUS NIGHT

Ed's apartment transforms into a bar. A low hum of bar bantering voices is heard. Ed's bed rolls away and is replaced by a bar. Another small table appears, matching his kitchen table, with three chairs.

Kate's friends - JEN and EDDIE - enter and sit at the table. They are the same age as Kate and are an obvious couple. They enter holding each other and are comfortable leaning close and touching as they talk. They have come for drinks after work and are dressed for a casual office.

A BARTENDER enters with a tray and places three drinks on the table where Jen and Eddie sit.

The bartender replaces Ed's coffee with a cocktail, then he walks behind the bar where he wipes the counter, cuts limes, and cleans glasses as the scene unfolds.

Kate gets up and crosses to the table where Jen and Eddie are sitting. On the way she fixes her hair and clothes to look like she is just beginning a night on the town.

Ed takes off his bathrobe and is dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. He picks up his sketchbook and draws the three of them as they talk.

EDDIE

She can stay with us as long as she wants, Jen. I like having her around.

Jen sees Kate approaching and waves to her.

JEN

(to Eddie)

OK - here she comes.

(to Kate)

There you are! Get over here. Where'd you go this time.

KATE

Just the bathroom.

Kate pulls out a chair and sits down next to Jen. Jen picks up her drink and puts her other arm around Kate. They are both a little drunk, but pleasantly so.

JEN

I want to drink a toast to my friend Kate. Here's to the next chapter of your sweet life. I know it is going to be good, because you're good.

EDDIE

Yes, you are.

They all clink their glasses and drink.

KATE

Thanks, Jen. You too, Eddie. It is some comfort to have friends like you.

JEN

It's good to have a friend like you too, Kate. And because you are such a good friend, and because you are in such a shitty mood, I am going to fix your problem - or your situation, or whatever it is - with your estranged ex- and/or future- boyfriend, Tim. Are you ready?

KATE

Yes, Jen. I am as ready as I will ever be for fixing my problem/slash situation/slash estranged whatever it is.

JEN

Good. Now, the first thing I want you to do, is I want you to forget about Tim for a minute. Forget you ever met him. Forget he was ever born, or you were ever born, and think about something else instead: Think about a number. One trillion. Do you know how much one trillion is?

KATE

It's a lot, right?

EDDIE

It's probably a lot of a lot. Lotsa lots.

JEN

You're both right. Let me put one trillion in perspective for you: A stack of dollar bills worth a trillion dollars would be 60,000 miles high.

EDDIE

(to Kate)

You were right - that is a lot.

Eddie and Kate nod to each other.

JEN

That's ten times higher than Earth's atmosphere. And outside of Earth's atmosphere - 90 million miles away -

EDDIE

Not a trillion miles away.

JEN

Nowhere near a trillion. A mere 90 million miles away, is the sun. And beyond that one there a billion other stars in our galaxy.

EDDIE

Ooh - a billion. Now we're getting closer to a trillion.

JEN

No. Still nowhere near a trillion. And do you guys know how many other galaxies with billions of their own stars there are in the observable universe?

KATE

Observable?

EDDIE

That makes a big difference - observable.

KATE

I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that there are a trillion galaxies in the observable universe.

JEN

Nope. Two trillion. And if you had a spaceship that could travel the speed of light, do you know how long it would take to fly from one end to the other of our one, teenie tiny, two-trillionth-of-the-observable-universe, lonely, little Milky Way Galaxy?

EDDIE

A couple of weeks at least.

JEN

Longer than a couple of weeks, Eddie. Do you want to guess Kate?

Kate squints her eyes to focus on the question.

KATE

What was the question again?

JEN

The question is: How long would it take, at the speed of light

EDDIE

Speedalight.

Eddie makes a flying rocket motion with his hand.

JEN

At the speed of light, how long would it take to get from one end of the Milky Way Galaxy to the other?

KATE

(pointing at Eddie)

Well, I will flank this guy's meager "couple of weeks" and guess it would take five hundred years.

JEN

Closer. But not a lot closer. It would take one hundred thousand years. And that's just to get across one of the two trillion galaxies.

KATE

In the observable universe.

EDDIE

At the speed of light.

JEN

Right. So, what I'm saying is, it doesn't make a lot of sense to get too caught up in anything happening at this time, on this planet. All of our problems - not just yours - are truly insignificant. I know you're going through a tough time, Kate, and it hurts me to see you hurt.

EDDIE

Me too.

KATE

I'm sure it sucks to have your loser friend staying in your apartment.

JEN

You know that's not what I mean. It is no problem to have you living with us.

EDDIE

No.

JEN

I just want you to put it in perspective.

EDDIE

Kate, as far as I'm concerned - we're concerned - you can stay with us as long as you like. Not to dump on my own gender, but I know what assholes men can be.

Eddie looks over at Ed seated at the other table and scowls. Ed stops drawing and sets down his sketchpad. He nods and waves to Eddie who looks away. Ed turns his gaze to Kate who notices his look, then takes a healthy gulp from her drink.

JEN

Unless Tim is right.

EDDIE

You're going to take his side?

KATE

Don't you guys start arguing, please. His side is valid. Maybe we're just different kinds of people.

JEN

He worries that you drink too much. Wouldn't he want to get back together if you cut down on your drinking?

Kate takes another gulp, slams down her glass, then pick it up a little and sets it down gently.

KATE

I don't know.

JEN

Well, let's go home and sleep on it. I think that's enough for me tonight.

EDDIE

Me too. Tomorrow is the big day. The renewal.

KATE

Yeah, that's just what I need: to watch a couple renew their vows after 30 years together.

Jen and Eddie stand up from the table but Kate stays seated.

KATE (CONT'D)

You guys go ahead. I think I'm going to stick around for a while. I'm not tired.

Jen and Eddie share a concerned look.

EDDIE

Why don't you come home with us, Kate? We'll go out tomorrow night, after the ceremony.

KATE

But if I leave now I will never know what possibilities I missed out on tonight, would I?

She puts her hand on Eddie's arm.

KATE (CONT'D)

Thank you, gallant Edward, but I believe I can manage my own life.

Jen pulls Eddie away.

JEN

Have fun, Kate. Try not to make too much noise when you come in.

Kate puts her fingers to her lips.

KATE

You won't even know I'm there.

Jen looks at her friend with concern then smiles tightly.

JEN

I love you, baby.

Kate smiles widely and hums.

KATE

I love you, too. Don't worry about me, Jen. I'm gonna be good. But, before you go, I am curious about one thing.

JEN

What's that?

KATE

What if my love is bigger than all those galaxies?

Jen ponders the question.

JEN

In that case, you can make as much noise as you want when you come in. It'll be good to know you're home safe.

KATE

Thanks, Jen. I'm good.

Jen takes Eddie's arm and they leave.

Kate looks around the bar until her eyes settle on Ed who is busy sketching. She carries her drink over to his table and peers at his drawing. He looks up at her and they share a smile.

KATE (CONT'D)

Do you mind if I sit here?

ED

Nope.

KATE

Nope, you don't mind? Or Nope, you don't want me to sit here?

Ed looks at her more closely and shakes his head.

ED

I don't mind.

He sets down his sketch pad, stands up, and pulls out the chair for her.

ED (CONT' D)

Please, sit.

They sit and stare at each other for a moment. Kate points at the sketch pad and pen.

KATE

I hope I'm not interrupting anything.

Ed picks up his pad and pencil while staring at Kate and starts to do a quick sketch of her. He talks as he draws.

ED

Don't worry. I cannot be interrupted. If there ever was a way to interrupt me, I never found it, and it has long ago retreated into the mists of time.

He looks at her closely as he draws.

ED (CONT' D)

Can I ask you something?

KATE

I won't stop you.

ED

I noticed a couple of your tattoos and I wondered why.

KATE

Why you noticed them?

ED

Why you got them.

KATE

The same reason you grew a beard.

ED

To hide behind?

KATE

No! That's why you grew a beard?

ED

Yeah. Around most people, I like to keep hidden. But not from you. With you, I don't mind being seen.

KATE

That's why I have tattoos: to be seen.

ED

By who?

KATE

Everyone. I want them to see something specific about me. It's like a disinfectant. It lets people see just enough about me to know whether I'm their kind of person or not. It's a shortcut.

ED

A shortcut to a conversation? In place of small talk?

KATE

Something like that. Did you know it only takes 13 milliseconds for our brain to process an image?

ED

Probably a little longer for some of us.

KATE

It's less than the blink of an eye. We're hard-wired to process images. Someone sees an image printed on my skin and makes dozens of assumptions about who I am, most of them close enough to the truth, and then they leave me alone, or talk to me, based on those assumptions.

Ed stares intently at Kate as he draws her. She stares back, curious.

KATE (CONT'D)

What do you see when you look at me?

ED

I see amazing things. I see you - whoever you are - but I also see fireworks going off inside your skull, and clouds inside your heart, and a star that went supernova when Galileo was just a dream to his mother, whose light still shines on our planet through your eyes. Why don't you give me a taste of your story?

KATE

Mine is not very appetizing right now.

ED

Let me be the judge of that.

KATE

I don't want to talk about myself right now.

ED

OK. Tell me about myself then.

KATE

That sounds like more fun. No offense, but you look pretty easy to figure out. I see guys like you everywhere. You are a privileged, straight, white man who is living the easiest of all possible lives. You had every obstacle removed from your path since the day you were born. And when any tiny bump comes on your path, when a relationship requires a little extra work, you blow everything thing up. And you live alone in grotesque self-indulgence.

Ed considers for a moment.

ED

Lucky guess.

Kate smiles. She scrutinizes him as he continues to shift between looking at her and his drawing.

ED (CONT' D)

OK, now you've got me figured out, give me the 15-second version of your life.

KATE

What's the 15-second version of a life?

ED

Not your whole life, just a quick sketch of who you are and what you're doing right now.

KATE

Right now? I...am...sitting in a bar, talking to some weird guy who appears to be doing a drawing of me. How about you give me your story first and let me see if I want you to know mine?

ED

OK. Mine's not terribly tasty either, but here goes:

He takes a sip of his drink before he continues.

ED (CONT' D)

I am an older gentleman...

KATE

How old? And how gentle?

ED

Plenty of both. I'm a lot older and gentler than I used to be, at least. I used to be the kind of person that someone like you would not want to find herself across a table from.

KATE

Why not?

ED

I was...not so gentle back then. If I was this close to an attractive woman like yourself, I would be working very hard on getting you in my bed.

Kate jerks back from the table, bumping it and spilling her drink. They both jump up.

KATE

Shit.

Ed moves his sketchpad out of the path of the liquid, then calls to the bartender.

ED

You got a towel?

The bartender pulls a rag from behind the bar and tosses it to Ed who mops up the drink from the table.

ED (CONT' D)

It's alright. See? Accidents happen.

He sits quickly and she slowly lowers herself into her seat.

KATE

Get me in your bed?

ED

Sorry.

KATE

(sympathetically)

You have to know that's creepy.

ED

Yes. I do. That's why I'm a gentleman now and I apologize for my misbehavior. I'll tell you what: let me buy you a drink and you tell me that 15-second version of your life. Or the three-and-a-half-hour version, while I immortalize your face using only a thin graphite pencil and some good sturdy paper. What do you like?

KATE

Something devotional, I think. Like one of those Renaissance drawings of an angel.

ED

I mean to drink. What do you like to drink?

KATE

Oh. Margarita rocks.

ED

Margarita rocks it is.

Eddie sets down his drawing waves at the bartender who holds his hand to his ear to listen. Ed yells to the bartender.

ED (CONT' D)

Margarita rocks. Two.

Ed holds up two fingers. The bartender nods and gets to work on the drinks. He prepares and brings the drinks as Kate and Ed talk.

Ed picks up his sketchbook and gets back to work.

ED (CONT' D)

So, your story. It helps.

KATE

It helps what?

ED

The drawing. It will make you look more beautiful. The more I know about you, the more layers of beauty I can see, and capture.

KATE

Tell me more about you first. Are you married?

ED

Not anymore.

KATE

Why not?

ED

Because I used to not be a gentleman like I am now.

KATE

Oh, right. You cheated on your wife?

ED

My wife, my son, myself. I cheated everyone. Even the ones I cheated with. Cheating became another word for moving on. I moved on. I had a real problem with monogamy. I cheated on my wife before we even got married. By the time we got married she knew me well enough to know what she was getting into.

KATE

So it's all her fault.

ED

No. Not at all. But I tried monogamy with her. For more than two years after we got married I was faithful to her.

KATE

Two whole years.

ED

More than two years. Almost two and a half. But it didn't work for me. For me, it's like eating the same thing for dinner every night. I love Italian food but sometimes I like to taste a little Chinese, or Mexican, or French.

KATE

You're talking about food, right?

ED

I don't know how someone can deny themselves all the flavors and spices the world has to offer.

KATE

I think it's called sacrifice. That's something people do when they're in love.

ED

I guess so. Sacrifice is another thing I always had trouble with.

KATE

I guess you couldn't just apologize and make things right.

ED

Apparently, there's a limit on how many times you can say 'I'm sorry.' At some point you have to change your behavior or all the apologies in the world don't mean anything.

KATE

And now, the people you love see you as weak and selfish?

ED

Some of them do. But that doesn't matter anymore. The only person whose respect I need now is my own.

KATE

Do you have that?

ED

Some of the time. Most of the time.

The bartender brings their drinks and Ed stops drawing.

ED (CONT' D)

But you have tricked me into revealing my secrets when I was trying to find yours. Can you give me a little of your story now?

Kate takes a drink and throws away her caution.

KATE

I was born Kathleen Marie Callahan.

ED

When?

KATE

I was born just in time to say that I experienced the 20th Century, but not quite early enough to say I remember it well.

ED

And why are you here, tonight, in this place?

KATE

I came here for two reasons. One: I just broke up with my boyfriend. And two: I am invited to a vow renewal ceremony tomorrow for a couple who are celebrating 30 years together.

ED

That's interesting.

KATE

Yeah. Thirty years together. Can you imagine?

ED

I can, because I have an excellent imagination.

KATE

I couldn't do five years. I was closer to 30 months than 30 years.

ED

30 months can feel like 30 years.

KATE

Or 30 minutes.

ED

Yeah. Time is like that, right?

KATE

Relativity. Thanks a lot, Einstein.

ED

But you have known love ?

KATE

Yeah. We loved each other. He was the thing I had been looking for my whole life. We were like two pieces in a gigantic puzzle that fell into place. When we were together, nothing was wrong. And nothing could be wrong, as long as we went through it together. It was so perfect that I kept expecting it to blow up.

ED

And it did.

KATE

And it did. And now, just when I thought everything was right, everything is wrong.

ED

Tell me about him.

Ed picks up his sketchbook and goes back to work.

KATE

His name is Tim. Tim is a nice, normal guy. I don't mean that as a bad thing - normal - it's not bad.

ED

I didn't say it was bad.

KATE

Yeah, but you are definitely not as normal as you look.

ED

Forget about me. Tell me about Tim.

KATE

Right. Tim is the kind of guy who gets upset if his favorite mug is in the dishwasher when he wants it. But he's also the kind of guy who would give you his favorite mug, and if you break it, he would laugh and tell you it was nothing.

ED

Sounds like a nice guy. So why did you break up?

KATE

Because, ...what's your name?

ED

Ed.

KATE

Because, Ed, I am a drunk.

ED

It's honest work, but there's not a lot of future in it.

KATE

I don't know. You look like someone who has made a career of it.

ED

Yeah, but it's a million-to-one shot.

KATE

Anyway, Tim decided it was not a good use of his time to "sit around and watch me destroy myself."

ED

How long were you together?

KATE

We were just coming up on five years when he decided that he didn't want to be with me for another five years, or another five minutes. And he told me to get out. So I did. Now I'm living with my best friend, and her boyfriend, and more than anything in the world I do not want to go back to their place tonight, and hear and see their love, as great as that is, and as happy as I am for them. But I really don't want to see that tonight.

ED

You can stay with me.

KATE

(ignoring his suggestion)

Tell me how your marriage fell apart.

Ed sets down his pencil, looks at her, and takes a drink.

ED

Well, I was happily married.

KATE

Yes, but was she?

ED

I didn't interrupt your story.

KATE

I think you did a number of times, but go ahead.

ED

We had a son. We were happy. Then, I wasn't happy. Not because of the son, who was a great little guy. But I felt the life we built together was not the life I wanted. The obligations I took on were not in sync with my desires. There was a different path that I needed to be on. I knew then, and I know now, that there was only one path I could take that could show me who I can be and what I can accomplish.

KATE

Did you accomplish anything?

ED

Some things. I found a way to get an image in my mind's eye, and transfer it - with color and line and shape and shading - onto a surface where other people could see it and have it sink into their mind's eye.

KATE

Using only a thin graphite pencil and some good sturdy paper.

ED

That's one way. There are a lot of ways to express yourself. Every idea finds its own medium.

KATE

And what do you find?

ED

Fulfillment, I guess. And a kind of insight that people who don't follow the right path never find.

KATE

And what does this great insight tell you about me?

ED

It tells me you don't need my insight. You know everything you need to know but you're hiding your insight from yourself. You know your boyfriend is right when he says you drink too much. But you're a big girl. That's your decision to make.

Ed takes a drink. Kate does too.

ED (CONT'D)

You are at a crossroad. And you are the only one who gets to decide which path to take from here. I picked my path and now I'm a full-blown drunken artist. Pretty much every day I take my consciousness to a place where it gets tricky to know the difference between reality and fantasy.

KATE

I like that place.

ED

I do too. And it makes my work more interesting. But it makes relationships more difficult. Most people don't want to be around a drunk all the time.

KATE

Unless they're drunk too.

ED

No. If they're both drunks they'll just fight. It's better to be alone if you pick that path. You can have short-term relationships that are beautiful and meaningful. But those 30th anniversary kind of relationships are probably not in the cards for people who choose this path. You have clear choices, and sharp angles to turn, on your path ahead. No matter which way you turn. No matter what you decide, your life is now moving in a new direction and it will never turn back.

KATE

Unless I don't decide anything.

ED

If you don't decide, life will make the decision for you. And then you lose your agency. There are moments in every life when we have to make a decision between diverging paths. Each path we choose is a decision not to choose the other path, and we will never know if our decision was the right one, because we can only know how the path we chose turns out. We can't know if the other one would have been better or worse.

Kate leans back in her seat. The alcohol is relaxing her muscles and her mind. She is surprised by how interesting she finds Ed.

KATE

OK. That's some pretty good insight.

ED

Hey, I'm an artist. That's what we do.

KATE

Since you've got your insight machine turned on, here's something else I could use a little help with: Why does it hurt so bad when you love somebody who doesn't love you back?

ED

OK. Well. First, everybody loves differently. One person might seem completely indifferent, even when they are terrified by the intensity of the love they feel. Another person might gush with love over everybody so you don't know what you mean to them. The thing that hurts so bad, is pride.

KATE

It's not pride. In my case, it's not pride. I have none.

ED

Or maybe it's the eternal struggle between love and power. To gain love you have to give up power. You have to surrender, and give up any desire you have to hold power over another person. And to gain power - any kind of power - you have to give up some love.

KATE

In my case it's not a power struggle.

ED

Don't kid yourself. All relationships are power struggles. But I'm just spitballing here.

KATE

I can see that.

ED

How about this: Maybe what hurts is that you made yourself vulnerable. And tender. And so sensitive that the slightest injury causes you incredible pain. Love is like a drug that way: it heightens your senses.

Kate takes a drink and considers his words.

KATE

I want to go home with you.

ED

I want that too.

(calls to bartender)

Can we get the check over here?

Kate takes one last long drink as the bill comes and Ed pays.

She stands up, wobbles a little, and sits back down. She takes a deep breath, braces herself on the table, and stands up more steadily.

ED (CONT' D)

Would it be terribly old-fashioned of me to ask if I can offer you my arm?

KATE

It sure would. But I could use a little old-fashioned tonight.

Kate picks up her drink and finishes it.

KATE (CONT'D)

Do me one favor: if you are a psycho serial killer, get it over with quick. I don't want a drawn-out messy end.

Ed stands up and pulls out his phone, unlocks it with his face, and hands it to her.

ED

Take this. Go through it. Look at anything you want. Photos, texts, social media. Call any of my contacts and ask them for a character reference.

She looks at the phone for a moment then hands it back to him.

KATE

I'm not going to check up on you. Just don't draw it out if you're a serial killer.

ED

It's not like that, Kathleen.

KATE

I believe you. But in case my belief is unfounded...

ED

If your belief is unfounded, you have my solemn word that I will keep it quick.

He holds out his elbow.

ED (CONT'D)

Will you take my arm now, my little Renaissance angel?

She takes his arm and they walk out and then back into his apartment the next day.

The bartender replaces the cocktails with mugs of coffee and pushes the bar away. The bed returns in its place.

Ed puts on his bathrobe and sits at the table. Kate messes her hair and makeup and sits down. She takes a sip of coffee.

ED (CONT' D)

Do you remember any of that?

KATE

Some. Not a lot. Enough, I guess.

She looks over her shoulder at the rumped bed then jerks her thumb over her shoulder at it.

KATE (CONT' D)

And, uh, what happened over there?

ED

Just sleep, Kathleen. Yours.

KATE

That's a relief - no offense.

ED

I wouldn't do anything out of line with you. For all my faults, and they are legion, I wouldn't do that.

She stands abruptly. He moves toward her but keeps a little distance.

KATE

Thanks for giving me some...shelter.

ED

I assure you that it was very much my own pleasure, Kathleen.

KATE

I'm going to go now.

ED

Indeed.

They share an awkward hug and she leaves.

INT. GREG & EMILY'S LIVING ROOM - TODAY

The sun is rising and its light comes up with a warm glow in the living room of Emily and Greg's home. There is a small sofa and a large, well-worn armchair with a small round table next to it. A thick book and a pair of reading glasses sit on the table. A long, low table sits in front of the sofa and on that table are a thick candle and an assortment of remote control devices. A blanket is slung over the back of the sofa.

The walls are lined with bookcases that hold vinyl as well as books.

GREG enters and looks around. He is 48 years old and showing signs of the older man he will soon become. He shuffles across the floor in his slippers. His soft flannel pajamas complete the costume of his retreat into second childhood.

He stops to look in a mirror on the wall. He leans left and right, then points back and forth between the mirror and himself.

GREG

One of us is crooked.

He adjusts the mirror, then steps back and nods his head at the mission accomplished.

He rubs his arms to warm himself and crosses to a thermostat on the wall.

He blinks at it a couple of times, trying to read it and, failing that, picks up the pair of reading glasses from the table and looks again, then adjusts the temperature.

He pulls a selection from the vinyl collection and puts it on a turntable. “Guinnevere” by Crosby, Stills, and Nash plays.

Greg drops into the comfortable chair and picks up the book from the table. He adjusts his reading glasses and flips to the place held by a bookmark.

EMILY enters the room in pajamas that match Greg’s. She is also 48 years old but carries herself with the spirit of a much younger woman. She sees her 30th anniversary, and the upcoming renewal of their vows, as an unwelcome reminder of the passage of time.

Her hair is disheveled and she rubs her eyes, shielding them from the sunrise. Greg looks up from his seat and smiles.

GREG (CONT’ D)

Good morning, Cupcake.

She looks at him with a crooked smile.

EMILY

Ooh, I’m a cupcake.

Greg rises and walks to her. He cups her face in his hands and kisses her.

GREG

Mmm. The luxury of a whole cake in one sweet little cup. Delicious.

Greg holds Emily at arm’s length.

GREG (CONT' D)

You sleep OK?

EMILY

Yeah. Sleeping's fine. It's getting up that's painful.

He gives her shoulder and neck a light rubdown.

GREG

Are you ready for our big night?

She stiffens.

EMILY

I guess.

GREG

You guess? Come on, honey.

Greg holds her hand as he sits on the sofa and pulls her onto his lap.

GREG (CONT' D)

Isn't 30 years together something worth celebrating?

Emily nods and smiles.

EMILY

It is something to celebrate.

She kisses him lightly then stands up.

EMILY (CONT' D)

You know I'm not comfortable with ceremonies.

GREG

I know. Leave it to me. I'll make sure you're comfortable.

EMILY

If anybody can, it's you.

She looks around the room as if she wants something but, not finding it, she looks at Greg. She sits on the arm of the couch.

EMILY (CONT'D)

How long have you been up?

GREG

Not long. Half-hour maybe.

EMILY

What have you been doing?

GREG

I was trying to read but I can't really concentrate. I guess I'm excited for tonight. It's going to be nice to see everybody together again.

EMILY

I am looking forward to seeing Mary. Can you believe it's been almost ten years since we've seen her? Isn't that crazy?

GREG

I didn't think we'd ever go so long without being together.

Emily shakes her head.

EMILY

I wouldn't have thought it was possible.

GREG

It's been even longer since we've seen Ed.

EMILY

Oof. I could keep going with that separation. Why did you invite him?

GREG

Let's not go into that again. He's the one who introduced us. We use to have so much fun together. Besides, if Mary's alright with him coming, nobody else should have a problem with it.

EMILY

I guess. When is she going to be here?

Greg looks at his watch.

GREG

She could be here any time now.

Emily jumps up.

EMILY

Oh! I've got to get dressed. She's going to think I look old.

GREG

Because you wear pajamas?

Emily is running to get dressed but stops to consider the question. She shakes her head.

EMILY

So many reasons.

She runs out of the room.

Ed picks up his book and as he sits to read it, the doorbell rings.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT' D)

That's her!

Greg nods, mouths "obviously", and walks to the door. He takes a breath and adjusts his pajamas.

He opens and MARY enters. At the same age as Emily and Greg, she carries her years as if they are an enemy she must constantly thwart. Her confident attitude shows that she is currently defeating the enemy that she knows will eventually triumph.

She wears jeans and a black leather jacket and has a knapsack slung over her shoulder that she sets on the floor.

Greg and Mary hug and kiss on the cheek. They step back to assess each other and smile.

GREG

You look great, Mary. It's so good to see you.

MARY

You too, Greg. Nice jammies.

GREG

Oh, Mary. If you only knew the tales these jammies could tell.

MARY

Save them for your memoirs. Don't give that shit away for free.

Greg picks up her bag and slings it over his shoulder with a bit of effort.

GREG

What are you smuggling in here?

MARY

Be careful - there's fragile stuff in there. But a woman never divulges her secrets. You know that.

GREG

Actually, I don't. Emily divulges everything, whether I want her to or not.

Mary looks around the room.

MARY

Speaking of whom, where is the little divulger?

GREG

She is in the process of putting herself together. She won't allow herself to be seen in casual sleepwear the way I will.

MARY

She doesn't have your masculine sense of security.

GREG

No, she's not masculine. Which I like in a wife. So, come on in.

Greg leads Mary from the door into the living room. She looks around while he sets her bag next to the sofa.

MARY

You guys look like you're doing OK for yourselves.

GREG

We certainly can't complain. How have you been, Mary?

MARY

Fine, I guess. I'd be doing better if you hadn't invited my dirtbag ex-husband to your renewal.

Greg is stung by her words and shrugs.

GREG

You know, Mare...

MARY

It's OK, I'm just kidding. I'm looking forward to the whole experience.

She touches his arm and they both smile. The years since they've last seen each other compress and the old friendship returns.

MARY (CONT'D)

It's going to be really nice.

GREG

That's what I think. Tell that to Emily. I don't think she's looking forward to it as much as we are.

Emily enters. She wears a flowing blouse, jeans, and sandals.

She wants to look the way she did the last time Mary saw her. She rushes to Mary's side and they hold each other for a moment as Greg looks on happily.

EMILY

It's so good to see you, Mary.

MARY

Same here. You look wonderful, Em. This guy must be treating you right.

EMILY

Probably better than I deserve.

GREG

I sure hope so.

Mary puts a hand on each of them.

MARY

It's so nice to see you guys. It's even nicer to know that love can stand the test of time.

EMILY

It's nice to know that friendship can too.

GREG

And on that heartwarming note I am going to get dressed and give you girls a chance to catch up.

Greg leaves. Emily and Mary sit on the sofa. A heavy silence weighs on Emily as Mary continues to look around the room.

EMILY

So, did you have any trouble finding the place, or getting here, or anything.

Mary looks at Emily and sees her nervousness. Mary touches Emily's arm.

MARY

Relax, Em. You're with a friend.

Emily relaxes and smiles. She eases her way back into a once-familiar relationship that has become strange through distance and time.

EMILY

You always liked me more than I thought you should.

MARY

I always thought we liked each other about the same.

EMILY

That's just it, though. You're so easy to like. Everybody likes you. But I'm weird. Nobody likes me.

MARY

Well, I do. And Greg does too, obviously.

Greg enters, dressed in jeans and T-shirt, carrying an armful of photo albums.

GREG

What do I do too, obviously?

MARY

You like Emily.

GREG

Yes. Yes, I do.

Greg drops the armful of photo albums on the sofa between Emily and Mary.

MARY

What the hell is that?

EMILY

Oh my God. Photo albums.

Emily grabs one and flips through the pages.

MARY

Photo albums? Do they still make them?

EMILY

They do not. I put these together way back when they did.

GREG

Back in the good old days.

EMILY

I don't know how good they were but they did make photo albums in those days. So they were good in that way.

She stops on a picture. Throughout the scene, the photos appear on a screen above the stage.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh, my God. Here's little Eddie. He was, what, like eight here?

Greg leans over the sofa and they all look at the photo together.

GREG

How is little Eddie?

MARY

He's big. He's really big. It's scary how big he is.

EMILY

He must be twenty-what now?

MARY

Twenty-eight.

GREG

Wow.

MARY

And he's pretty serious with this girl, Jen.

EMILY

You like her?

MARY

Oh, Em. If I could have picked the perfect girl for him myself I could not have done better. She's super-smart, and really sweet. She's the daughter I never had.

GREG

Alright you two, I am going out now to pick up my suit for tonight. You wouldn't believe this, Mary, but my best suit needed a little alteration since the last time I wore it.

MARY

Had to let out the crotch?

GREG

Yeah. Let's go with that. I'll see you guys in a bit.

EMILY

Bye, Honey.

Greg waves and exits. Emily picks up the albums and puts them on the table. She leans back on the couch and tries to smile at Mary but can't quite pull it off.

MARY

Are you OK, Em?

EMILY

Yeah. I'm good. Why?

MARY

You don't look happy.

Emily sighs and achieves a slightly more successful attempt at smiling at Mary.

EMILY

I was never happy, Mare. Even when we were young and everyone was happy. I wasn't.

MARY

I remember. But Greg used to make you happy.

EMILY

It's not his fault. Any happiness I have is due to him, but I never knew that giddy feeling that everybody else seems to get sometimes. Even at my happiest, I never felt it. Greg gets it from everywhere - snow storms, TV shows. Even from me.

MARY

Even from you?

EMILY

God knows why, but he loves me a lot.

Mary smiles.

MARY

I know why. In spite of yourself, you're pretty loveable.

EMILY

In spite of everything.

MARY

So I'm going to guess the renewal was his idea.

EMILY

(smiling)

Of course. He thinks it will make me happy.

MARY

But it's not making you happy.

EMILY

Well, it is nice to see old friends. Even, you'll have to forgive me, Ed.

MARY

Ugh. Not Ed.

EMILY

Yes, even Ed. I am looking forward to seeing him. I feel better when there are people around who I am comfortable with. I'm used to being unhappy but unhappy and lonely is too much.

MARY

But you're never alone. You always have Greg with you.

EMILY

Yeah, but by now being with him is like being alone. We're just one person now, so we can be lonely together.

MARY

Still beats being lonely alone, believe me.

EMILY

When Greg first talked about renewing our vows, I thought it would be a nice thing to do, a celebration, a renewal, but like everything else, it just turned into another chore.

MARY

It doesn't have to be a chore, Em.

EMILY

You're right. I know. Greg is so excited.

MARY

That's sweet.

EMILY

It is. But it just makes me feel more pressure to make it a great experience for him. I'll be glad when it's over.

MARY

The vow renewal or your life?

They both laugh.

EMILY

Both, I think.

MARY

Don't talk like that, Em.

EMILY

Why not?

MARY

Because you'll get me depressed. I came here because I thought we could have some fun.

EMILY

We can. We will. I'm sorry.

Mary looks at Emily skeptically.

MARY

Now you're going to put pressure on yourself to make me happy, too.

EMILY

I don't know why I'm not happy. I have no right to be unhappy. I have everything I need and most everything I want.

MARY

Aha! And what are these things you want that you don't have?

EMILY

Just happiness.

MARY

Elusive sensation, isn't it?

EMILY

It's a phantom. Sometimes I wake up in the morning it's there. The sun is shining in and I hear birds in the trees calling back and forth, and every muscle in my body is relaxed. Other times I wake up and I can't say what's wrong, but everything is. There's a useless gloom that I can't shake.

MARY

What does Greg do when you wake up like that?

EMILY

He rubs my back and kisses my neck and tells me he loves me.

MARY

Could be worse.

EMILY

I know. Of course. And I do love him. I still see that guy he was when we were all kids. He still has that weird enthusiasm for life that drew me to him. And it can be infectious. It can help.

MARY

Except when it doesn't.

EMILY

Except when it doesn't.

Emily gets up, too stimulated to sit.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Is this where you thought you'd be at this age?

MARY

No. But I never thought about being 'this age'. Whatever age I'm at has always been more than enough for me. I didn't think about being this age then, any more than I think about being 70 now.

EMILY

I think about being 70.

MARY

That's because you are 70. You've always been 70, even when you were 19.

EMILY

And you'll always be 19, even when you're 70.

MARY

I hope so. It's all just time playing tricks, like it always has, and always will. Each of us chooses to believe what we want about our age. Does Greg do anything more than kiss your neck?

EMILY

Sex?

MARY

Yeah.

EMILY

No. I mean yes, but no, you know?

MARY

No. I don't know.

EMILY

It's like a ritual now. And I don't like ritual. All the pageantry and plumage.

MARY

You never did.

EMILY

I don't think it has anything to do with the sex itself, but it's like everything else I do: I've done it a thousand times.

MARY

Boring?

EMILY

It's not boring, really. It's just...I've seen the sunset a thousand times and it's always beautiful but sometimes I want to see something I haven't seen before.

MARY

Like somebody else's ass in your bed? Be careful what you wish for.

EMILY

No. The last thing I need is another hairy ass in my bed.

MARY

It doesn't have to be a hairy one. There are smooth ones out there too.

EMILY

It's not an ass I need.

MARY

So what is it?

EMILY

It is nothing. It is a ghost. I don't know what I need. I have enough.

MARY

It's not about having enough. It's about having the right thing. A woman roasting in a desert and a woman drowning in a lake both have more than enough of what the other one needs, but they're dying without the thing the other one has.

Emily sits back down. She picks up a photo album and holds it on her lap.

EMILY

I'll tell you something funny.

MARY

Good - I could use something funny.

EMILY

Sitting here with you, and talking about these things, already makes me feel better than I've felt in a long time.

MARY

That's what I'm here for, Em. I came because I want to see you and Greg, but also to mark this milestone with you. I was there when it started, so it's a nice marker for me too. But mostly I came because you're important to me. Not just in the past. The person I am now only exists because of who we were then. And I like the person I am now. And I'm grateful to you, and Greg, and even fucking Ed, for helping to bring this crazy person to life.

EMILY

You're not still as crazy as you were, are you?

MARY

If you've got a bottle of wine in the house, and/or some weed, you'll find out quick enough.

EMILY

We don't keep wine in the house. Greg stopped drinking about six years ago.

MARY

Really? He did look a little healthier than I expected.

EMILY

Yeah. He went too far with it.

MARY

He always was a big partier.

EMILY

It got awful. He had to stop. But we have plenty of weed. That's how Greg deals with not drinking: he's a big pothead now.

MARY

Me too.

EMILY

But I'd feel safer with wine.

MARY

Better the devil you know?

EMILY

I know both devils well enough, which is why I think it's safer, on the day I renew my wedding vows, to avoid hallucinogens.

MARY

It could be more fun.

EMILY

I'm sure it would be. For you.

MARY

And that is the person I'm concerned with here. I actually brought some of both because I didn't know what you'd have. I have some wine in my bag.

EMILY

It might relax me.

Mary gets up and gets a bottle of wine from her bag while Emily gets two wine glasses. Mary untwists the cap and pours two glasses while they talk.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I feel like I'm doing something naughty.

MARY

Good. I think you need some naughty relaxation.

They each take a glass and settle into the sofa. Emily opens a photo album and looks at some pictures. She pats the couch next to her and Mary moves over. Emily splits the album across their laps. They settle into a remembered level of comfort together. They occasionally point and react to specific photos as they talk.

MARY (CONT'D)

My God. How much the world has changed.

EMILY

For better or worse?

MARY

Both. The older you get, the worse it seems. But change is inevitable, so we might as well make the best of it we can.

EMILY

It's not just how *much* things change, though. At some point, the *pace* of change got exhausting for me.

MARY

The world has always changed. The world will always change.

EMILY

Yeah, but it's the tempo. It's hard to keep dancing so fast.

MARY

You try too hard, Em. Give yourself a break.

EMILY

You want to hear something weird?

MARY

Always.

EMILY

Sometimes I feel more connected to people I see on TV than the people around me in real life. It's easier for me to have a relationship with someone I've never met. Just to have a conversation in real life feels like slogging through mud. Not with you, of course.

MARY

Of course.

EMILY

This one is more like floating on a tube down a lazy river.

MARY

That sounds nice.

EMILY

It is nice, Mary. It really is.

Emily points to one of the photos.

EMILY (CONT'D)

There we are at our wedding - you, me, Greg and Ed.

MARY

The memory of that day will stay with me as long as my memory holds out.

Greg enters the room from behind, carrying a garment bag. He opens his mouth to say something but stops to hear what Emily and Mary are talking about. He steps back into the doorway to avoid being seen but stays close enough to hear the conversation.

EMILY

Getting married was such a big deal. I was so scared. I was shaking.

MARY

I remember. But Greg isn't that bad.

Emily softly and affectionately slaps Mary.

EMILY

It wasn't him. I was crazy in love with him. And I still am, with that idiot.

Greg beams.

MARY

So what was so scary?

EMILY

Just the thought of it. The whole thing. Cleaving to your husband. Forsaking all others.

MARY

All those others.

EMILY

There weren't "all those others" but, still. There might have been. What if there was another?

MARY

Like Ed?

EMILY

Don't even mention that.

MARY

Greg never found out about that time with you and Ed, did he?

EMILY

No.

Emily looks at Mary with sudden seriousness.
Greg is curious and confused.

EMILY (CONT'D)

And I would like to keep it that way. Really. If Greg ever found out, it...I don't know what he would do, and I don't want to find out.

MARY

Don't worry. He won't find out from me.

EMILY

If he found out, he would use it as an excuse to start drinking again.

MARY

He never has a drink anymore?

Emily is revolted by the thought.

EMILY

No. God, no.

Emily shakes her head at Mary.

EMILY (CONT'D)

When we were young, I thought it was cute that he liked to party. He was an excitable boy, y'know? But he did make an ass of himself sometimes.

MARY

We all did.

EMILY

Sure. But near the end of his drinking days he became this "thing" I'd never seen before. Lethargic and self-pitying. Even after he stopped drinking, I can't find the old Greg in him anymore.

MARY

Can he find the old Emily?

EMILY

Sure. I'm the same. I always sucked.

MARY

That's true.

EMILY

If he found out about me and Ed, I really do think he would start drinking again, and he would blame me for it. And I would hate him for that. I wouldn't forgive him. And he wouldn't forgive me. That would be the end of us.

MARY

Don't worry, Em. He'll never find out.

Greg fights with himself over whether or not to let the women know he is there but decides against it. He hangs the garment bag on a coat rack and backs out of the room, pulling the door closed silently behind him.

EMILY

Anyway, so much time has gone by, there is no good that could come from telling him now. After you guys got divorced we never saw much of Ed again, so it didn't seem likely to come up. I don't want to hurt you either, sweetie.

MARY

(scoffs)

Hurt me? Nothing about that man can hurt me anymore. I'm no one to talk, seeing as I married him, but I always thought you were too smart to fall for Eddie's shit.

EMILY

You're pretty smart. Why did you fall for it?

MARY

It was the "artist" thing. I thought that it would be more fun to be with him than with a hedge-fund manager, or a lawyer.

EMILY

I get that. When your whole life revolves around paying rent, and feeding yourself, and getting insurance, and then someone gives you something else to think about...

MARY

It's seductive. I know.

EMILY

And I thought sex, and intimacy, would be different with him than it was with Greg. But it was exactly the same. Freakishly similar.

MARY

Now we're back to the new ass in your bed.

EMILY

I prefer an old friend on my couch.

Emily turns back to the photo album and flips a page. She smiles at a particular picture then closes the book and looks away.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Are you dreading seeing Ed?

MARY

No. As crazy as it sounds, and maybe it's just the healing quality of time, or wine, but there is still something I like about him, in spite of everything. Dreading him is like dreading a fried Oreo: it's terrible for you, and completely lacking in nutritional value.

EMILY

You can't make a meal out of him.

MARY

No. But in small portions.

EMILY

And infrequently.

MARY

He can be fun.

EMILY

An indulgence.

MARY

Yeah. Ed is a total indulgence. I have never known a more indulgent person. He is as self-indulgent as anyone I've ever met, but, I will say this for him: he always indulged me too. And everybody, really. Nobody more than himself, but nobody less either.

EMILY

It is going to be nice to have the four of us together again. Maybe nice isn't the right word.

MARY

Weird.

EMILY

Weird is closer. But there is some comfort to me in the thought of us all together again. My God - look at us here.

They both look at a photo and smile.

MARY

So tell me about the renewal vows. Did you and Greg write epic poems of love to each other?

EMILY

Oh, my God. Mary. You wouldn't believe Greg.

MARY

I might.

EMILY

He must have re-written his vows 10 or 20 times but he never lets me look at them so I don't know what's in there.

MARY

That sounds so believable, you wouldn't believe.

They finish one photo album and grab a new one then settle back into the couch with their glasses of wine. After a few moments of looking at photos together, the doorbell rings.

EMILY

Who could that be?

MARY

I think I know.

EMILY

Really? Who?

MARY

You'll see.

Emily gives Mary a curious look then gets up and goes to the door. She opens the door and Eddie and Jen enter.

EMILY

Eddie! My god, you're so big!

Eddie hugs Emily.

EDDIE

Emily, I want you to meet Jen, my fiancé.

EMILY

Fiancé? Jen! Come here.

Emily hugs Jen.

JEN

Hi, Emily. It's nice to meet you. And congratulations on your anniversary.

Mary gets up and joins the group.

EMILY

(to Mary)

You knew about this?

MARY

Yes. Eddie told me he wanted to see you and Greg before the ceremony and share his news.

EDDIE

Where is Greg?

EMILY

He went to pick up his suit. I don't know what's taking him so long.

Eddie looks around and picks up the garment bag from the coat rack.

EDDIE

This suit?

Emily takes the garment bag and looks at it.

EMILY

That's the one. I wonder...Well, come in. Sit down.

Mary, Eddie, and Jen walk to the couch and sit down. Emily stays by the door holding the garment bag.

ACT II

INT. BAR - TODAY

Eddie, Jen, and Kate sit together at a table in the same bar from the night before.

EDDIE

That is so weird about Greg disappearing. On the day he's renewing his vows.

JEN

And his suit was hanging on the rack. Like he must have been there at some point this afternoon, right?

EDDIE

Yeah.

Kate is preoccupied looking at her phone.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Don't you think that's weird, Kate.

Kate drops her phone on the table.

KATE

Yeah. That's weird. I'll be right back.

Kate gets up and walks to the bathroom.

JEN

That's suspicious, right? You think she's acting suspicious?

EDDIE

You don't think she killed Greg do you?

JEN

No. But she is distracted. Look, she left her phone.

EDDIE

You think she killed Greg, don't you?

JEN

Ssh.

Jen looks around suspiciously, then picks up a phone from the table and enters a code to unlock Kate's phone.

EDDIE

What are you doing?

JEN

I'm checking my friend's texts.

EDDIE

You can't do that.

JEN

What kind of friend would I be if I didn't? We don't know where she was or who she was with last night after we left and I want to know. You know what she's been going through.

EDDIE

I do.

JEN

She's got a big heart. That makes her vulnerable. Or maybe you also want to take advantage of her in a vulnerable situation, sleeping under the same roof as you, turning to you for comfort.

Eddie laughs and shakes his head.

EDDIE

You are crazy. I mean it. Really crazy. You're the one invading her privacy.

JEN

Yeah? How crazy is this:

Jen starts reading from the screen of Kate's phone.

JEN (CONT'D)

"I can't stop thinking about you. I need to see you today."

EDDIE

Don't you feel even a little bit dirty reading the intimate messages of your friend?

JEN

That's not the point.

EDDIE

It might be if she comes back and sees you. Let her have her privacy.

Eddie grabs for the phone but Jen pulls it away.

JEN

We're best friends, we don't have any secrets.

EDDIE

Of course you do. Everybody does.

JEN

We don't. Right?

EDDIE

Not that I can think of off-hand but I'm sure we do.

JEN

If Kate had any secrets from me, why would she give me the code to her phone?

EDDIE

Because she figured you might use it in an emergency, or in some helpful situation. Not to spy on her.

JEN

Spy on her? God - what a horrible thing to say. I'm going to do a search on this guy's phone number and find out who he is.

EDDIE

Don't do that.

Eddie tries again, unsuccessfully, to take away the phone. They struggle as she furiously types.

JEN

Leave me alone. Get off me. Don't make me call the bartender. He's in a bad mood today.

The bartender glares. Eddie lets go and holds up his hands for the bartender to see. Jen scrolls through the screen, stares for a moment at the phone, then at Eddie, then back at the phone. She picks up her drink and throws it in Eddie's face. He jumps up.

EDDIE

Hey! What the fuck?

The bartender picks up a baseball bat from under the bar and waves it menacingly at Eddie. Eddie sits down.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(whispering loudly)

What the fuck is your problem?

JEN

Oh, I don't know. You're so innocent aren't you? You are just an innocent guy who would never do anything wrong, would you? But you can't stop thinking about her and you neeeded to see her today.

EDDIE

You are totally unhinged, Jen. What is going on?

She holds the phone up to his face.

JEN

What does that say?

EDDIE

It says Edward Campbell. Why does it say Edward Campbell?

She points an accusing finger in his face.

JEN

Because that's the name of the man who is texting Kate. Unless you know of another Edward Campbell...

Eddie grabs her pointing finger. He gets a sickened look on his face.

EDDIE

Yeah, I know another. You know I'm Edward Campbell, junior.

He lets go of her finger and they both ease back in their seats.

JEN

What?

EDDIE

My asshole dad.

JEN

Oh, my God. Ew.

EDDIE

My asshole dad who was sitting over there at that table last night.

Kate enters from the bathroom to see her friends staring at her phone.

KATE

What are you doing with my phone?

JEN

I'm sorry, honey. I was worried about you and then I got this crazy idea about you and Eddie.

KATE

Me and Eddie?

She looks at Eddie who is wet and bedraggled from the drink that was tossed on him.

KATE (CONT'D)

Yeah, that is crazy.

JEN

He's really not that bad. And I know he likes you.

Kate looks at Eddie.

KATE

You do?

EDDIE

(to Kate)

What's not to like?

(to Jen)

Yes, I like Kate. A lot. But not that way. Not like you. She's a friend. I don't feel the "magic spark" I feel with you.

KATE

Yeah, no magic spark here either, for the record.

JEN

I'm sorry, you guys. I'm not the jealous type. I trust you both, but it was a pretty fucked-up thing to see my boyfriend's name in your messages.

KATE

But you didn't. You couldn't have.

EDDIE

Well, no, because it wasn't me.

KATE

I don't get it.

EDDIE

It was my dad.

KATE

Your what now?

JEN

I was worried about you. You didn't get in until very late last night.

EDDIE

This morning, really.

KATE

Forget about when I got in. What is this about your dad?

EDDIE

He was here last night. Over at that table. Sketching.

KATE

No way. Oh, no. I didn't know. If I knew he was your dad... I really don't see any resemblance.

EDDIE

That is the nicest thing anybody's ever said to me.

KATE

Why didn't anyone tell me? Shit - I asked him to meet me here.

Ed enters and, seeing Kate, waves to her. He starts to walk quickly toward her then stops when he sees Eddie. He approaches slowly.

ED

Hello, Eddie.

EDDIE

Hi, Dad.

KATE

Dad? Then it's true?

Ed nods and puts his hand on Eddie's shoulder. Eddie looks at it with a mix of disgust and familial love. He doesn't push it off.

ED

Yeah. I'm his dad.

KATE

How could you not tell me that?

Kate moves toward Ed aggressively. Ed puts up his hands and backs away from her.

ED

I'm sorry. It never seemed like the right time.

KATE

Any time would have been the right time. Literally any time.

ED

OK. But now you know.

KATE

God! I was in your bed last night.

JEN & ED

(together)

What?!

ED

Yes, OK, but: I wasn't in my bed last night. I stayed in the chair the whole time you were there.

EDDIE

I guess that's something but, God, Dad.

ED

What?

EDDIE

It's just so...awful.

ED

What do you want from me?

EDDIE

You know what I want, Dad? I want it to be my parents renewing their vows tonight. I want to see my parents looking back on 30 years of strong, healthy love. I want you to give me something to live up to.

ED

Until I get to that admirable place, it doesn't mean we can't love each other.

EDDIE

I guess not. But it makes it harder.

ED

Because I do love you. I always have. I always will. Just because I don't always know how to show it doesn't mean I don't feel it.

Just as the ice starts to thaw, Greg enters looking for Ed.

GREG

There you are!

Ed turns to face Greg.

ED

Hey, Greg! Long time no-

Greg walks over to Ed and punches him in the face. Ed falls down. Kate jumps up and gets between them.

KATE

Stop it!

The bartender pulls out the bat, slams it loudly on the bar, then points it at Greg.

BARTENDER

Don't move a fucking muscle.

Ed gets to his feet and holds up his hands. He faces the bartender and pushes the air with his hands to tamp down the tension.

ED

It's OK. I'm sure I deserved it.

BARTENDER

I don't care. Deserve it somewhere else.

Ed turns to Greg

ED

You got it out of your system?

Greg shakes his fist in pain.

GREG

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ED

(to Kate)

It's OK. This is my old friend, Greg. He's renewing his vows tonight.

Greg looks at Kate.

GREG

I'm sorry you had to see that, young lady.

Kate reluctantly sits back down. The bartender looks carefully back and forth between Ed and Greg.

BARTENDER

I don't need that shit in here.

GREG

Yeah. OK. Sorry. It won't happen again.

JEN

Let's get out of here.

Eddie and Jen stand together. Eddie squeezes some of Jen's drink out of his shirt.

EDDIE

(to Jen)

I *could* use a new shirt.

(to Ed)

We're going to go, Dad. We'll see you later.

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT' D)
(to Greg)

Nice to see you, Greg.

Greg just realizes that Eddie and Jen are there.

GREG
Oh, shit. I'm sorry, Eddie. I'll see you at the ceremony later and I will be much better behaved, I promise.

ED
Go ahead. I'll see you later, too. And you Kathleen?

KATE
I'm going.

Eddie, Jen, and Kate leave. Ed walks to the bar and pulls Greg along with him.

ED
(to Greg)
Let me buy you a drink.
(to bartender)
Let me get a margarita rocks.

GREG
(to bartender)
I'll have a club soda with cranberry juice.

Greg turns to Ed.

GREG (CONT' D)
Margarita? That's what you drink?

ED
I hadn't had one in years before last night but I really enjoyed it. I forgot how much I liked the buzz of tequila. It's different from other drinks. It's not like whiskey, wine, or beer. It elevates your feelings instead of smothering them. It taps into transcendence.

Greg turns to the bartender.

GREG

Forget the soda. Make it two margaritas.

The bartender prepares and serves the drinks as they talk.

ED

Really?

GREG

Really.

ED

I heard you stopped drinking years ago.

GREG

I did. I was clean for a long time.

ED

How long?

GREG

Seven years.

ED

That must have been rough.

GREG

Sometimes. Like a lot of things it starts out feeling impossible and ends up feeling inevitable.

ED

When did you start again?

The bartender sets the drinks in front of them. Greg picks up one, looks at it, and takes a gulp.

GREG

Just now.

ED

I don't know if that's a good idea.

GREG

Fuck you.

Ed takes a drink.

ED

So, I am going to assume that you are...I wanna say angry? Specifically, at me?

GREG

Yeah. You can say that.

ED

Because?

GREG

Emily.

ED

Because Emily what? This is some guessing game you got.

GREG

Because I know what happened with you and Emily.

Ed sighs and they both drink.

ED

Jesus, that was a lifetime ago. *And* it didn't mean anything. Especially to her. *And* we were just kids. *And* drunk. *And* bursting with horny hormones. All the usual excuses.

GREG

It isn't usual to me, Ed. OK? It is most unusual.

ED

That was so long ago, Greg. I honest-to-god don't even believe the memory I have of that experience. To look at a moment like that, from so long ago, from the perspective of today, is like trying to read a smoke signal in a hurricane.

Greg takes another gulp. Ed watches then takes another sip from his own.

ED (CONT'D)

So, you want to hear about it?

Greg takes another gulp, finishing his drink, and signals to the bartender for a refill.

GREG

Yeah.

Ed finishes his drink in one long gulp and signals to the bartender for another round for both of them.

ED

OK. Here's the memory. I don't trust it, but it is as close to the truth as I can get.

The refills arrive and Greg and Ed drink them as they talk.

ED (CONT' D)

It was one of those weekends when we went to the Catskills. Phoenicia, I think, or Shandaken, you know those places we used to rent for a week.

GREG

I remember.

ED

Do you remember that the three of you were way more into hiking than I was. I just wanted to sit around and get drunk and stoned and paint the light on the mountains. Well, that one time, Emily twisted her ankle so she wasn't up to hiking. I thought that was a great excuse for me to get out of a stupid hike so I said I'd stay back at the house with her, so she wouldn't have to be alone.

GREG

(scoffs)

So she wouldn't have to be alone.

ED

It wasn't like I was trying to get her alone. I was just trying to get out of a hike.

GREG

So what happened?

ED

So we sat around talking, and drinking, and playing cards. I suggested - as a joke - that we play strip poker. And for whatever reason, she agreed. We were just joking around and I think both of us figured the other one would call it off before it went too far, but...neither of us did. And I'm a pretty good poker player, so I had her down to her panties in no time.

GREG

That's enough.

ED

Yeah. And that's all it was. We both knew it was wrong as soon as it was over but in the heat of the moment things happen. We never did anything again. If anything, me and Em were less friendly after that. We were never really good friends again after that, which kind of sucked.

GREG

Oh, poor Ed. Fucked his friend's wife and then she didn't even want to be friends with him anymore. That must have been tough for you.

ED

Greg: I am not your enemy.

Greg pokes Ed in the chest, pinning him back against the bar.

GREG

You don't get to decide who's my enemy.

The bartender grabs the bat.

BARTENDER

Watch it!

GREG

I'm not going to hit him.

BARTENDER

Nobody better hit nobody.

ED

(to bartender)

Nobody's hitting nobody.

(to Greg)

Let me try this another way. I don't want to be your enemy. We can disagree on some things.

GREG

Like you fucking my wife.

ED

Perfect example. We can disagree on fundamental things. But we can still be friends.

GREG

No. No. You don't get it. I don't want to be your friend. I don't want you to get anywhere near the people I love. I don't want them to get infected with the disease of you.

ED

No offense, Greg, but I think it's you that don't get it. No matter what you do, or I do, the people we love are going to decide for themselves what to think.

GREG

As long as they think that you are a lowlife dirtbag, like I do, I'm OK with it.

Greg stops to take a drink and a hard look at his old friend.

GREG (CONT'D)

You really do look like shit, you know?

ED

That's because I just got punched in the face. Asshole just walked up and viciously attacked me.

GREG

I'm sure you deserved it.

ED

Justification is irrelevant to the point. I'm talking about the negative effect such a thing has on my appearance, which, I'll admit, in the best of times can be a little rough.

GREG

And these are not the best of times.

ED

Not by a long shot.

GREG

Speaking of which, let's get some more tequila.

ED

You sure you don't want to take it a little slower?

GREG

No. I got lost time to make up.

ED

Lost time is lost. You can't make it up..

GREG

Not if you don't try.

(to bartender)

Let me get two shots of tequila down here.

GREG (CONT'D)

I want to get that feeling back, that we had when they were the best of times. There was so much life in our life. Don't you miss that feeling?

ED

I feel pretty much the same as I always have about the life in my life. Maybe that's because, unlike you, I have always lived my life by the pleasure principle: 'If it feels good, do it.'

GREG

Yeah, I know.

The shots come and they down them. Greg motions for a refill on his margarita that comes as they talk.

GREG (CONT'D)

But at some point you have to wonder: If something that you know is going to hurt someone else feels good to you, doesn't that make you a shitty person? I can't imagine doing something I know is going to hurt somebody I love.

ED

I guess I don't think that far ahead when the urge strikes.

GREG

It's not a matter of thinking ahead. It's a matter of knowing the difference between fantasy and reality.

ED

That is really not one of my strengths. I prefer to turn fantasy into reality. You could do the same. For example, you could have sex with someone other than Emily.

GREG

Nah.

ED

No, no. Hear me out. There are a lot of women out there - beautiful, desperate women - who would be willing to have sex with even you. There are women who prefer having sex with a married man. You're housebroken. And they get turned on by the idea of a guy who would rather have sex with them, in spite of the risk, than with his own wife. Also, they don't want a commitment. They just want to have fun, and they like that you are in a compromised position. And they've got the ultimate get out of jail free card. When they're done with you they can say, "go back to your wife."

GREG

No. It would break Emily's heart. That doesn't sound like a good plan to me.

ED

You have money - you could pay a woman to have sex with you.

GREG

I don't pay for sex. I never have.

ED

Don't kid yourself. Payment isn't always about money.

GREG

The only way I know how to pay for sex is with pieces of my heart. And I'd like to keep it that way. Anyway, I can't lie to Emily. Even a lie of omission. I am a terrible liar.

Greg is starting to feel the effect of alcohol for the first time in years.

GREG (CONT'D)

It's been so long since I've been with a woman other than Emily. I wouldn't know what to do.

ED

Of course you would. Nothing has changed since the last time you did it. It's the same as it was a hundred years ago, and ten thousand years ago. Just pick someone you think is cute.

GREG

I don't think that's the problem. It's finding someone who thinks I'm cute.

ED

There are a lot of desperate women out there.

GREG

And where do these women lurk?

ED

Everywhere. I see women lurking everywhere. All the time. You know that girl you just met, Kathleen?

GREG

No, who?

ED

The one who jumped between us when you hit me.

GREG

Her? She's way too young.

ED

I met her last night and we wound up talking for a while, and she's great. Really different. Really smart. Really something else. And I keep thinking about her.

(MORE)

ED (CONT'D)

Even being here with you after all these years, and all this craziness, she's still the thing at the front of my mind. I want to wake up next to her and tell her my dreams and hear about hers.

GREG

What could you find in common with someone so young? Wouldn't it get embarrassing when she wants to do something that isn't "age appropriate" for someone like us?

ED

I don't worry about things like that.

GREG

You don't worry about anything.

ED

People lock themselves into their age the same way they lock themselves into everything else: jobs, marriages, beliefs. She doesn't do that. She takes the day as it comes to her. She likes to have fun.

GREG

Everybody likes to have fun.

ED

Bullshit. Most people are so beaten down by life they're afraid to have fun. They think they'll get punished if they have fun. She doesn't have that fear.

GREG

I guess being with you would be punishment enough for any fun she might have.

Kate enters.

ED

Here she comes now. God, look at her.

They both turn to watch her approach.

ED (CONT'D)

Greg, my old friend, I would like you to meet Kathleen, my new friend.

Greg and Kate shake hands.

GREG

Hello, Kathleen.

KATE

Kate's fine.

GREG

OK, Kate. It's nice to meet you.

KATE

We met before, when you were attacking him.

GREG

Yes. I have fond memories of that.

ED

(to Kate)

Even when he's a bastard, he's polite.

GREG

(to Ed)

Why do you call her Kathleen when she calls herself Kate?

ED

Because I prefer Kathleen.

GREG

And you don't feel like you need to respect a person's pronouns?

ED

Kathleen is a proper noun.

GREG

But the idea is the same.

Kate, who has been studying the two as if she was watching an anthropology documentary, weighs in:

KATE

If anybody cares what I think, I don't mind being called Kathleen.

ED

See?

KATE

(to Greg)

Maybe I remind him of some Kathleen he used to know. Or maybe it's a fantasy name to him. I don't know what weirdness is going on in his head, and I don't care if I'm called Kate or Kathleen or Quasimodo.

GREG

Quasimodo?

KATE

It's just a name.

ED

And you would smell as sweet.

KATE

But, in general, you should respect what people call themselves.

GREG

Agreed.

ED

Yeah. Agreed.

She slaps them both on the shoulders.

KATE

See, boys? You can do it. I think we're making real progress here.

ED

Who are you calling boys?

GREG

Yeah. We are evolved, empathetic men.

KATE

When you're not hitting each other.

GREG

Right. Not then. I want to apologize to you again for that. It was uncharacteristic of me.

ED

See? You can take this guy anywhere.

KATE

He is kind of refreshing, actually.

GREG

You're pretty refreshing yourself.

ED

I told you. She's gorgeous.

KATE

I hate to interrupt any conversation about how gorgeous I am, but

(to Ed)

'your son' would like to speak to you.

ED

Where is Eddie?

KATE

He's next door getting coffee. He wants to tell you something.

ED

I hate to leave you alone with this guy but if you can wait a few minutes I really would like to talk with Eddie.

KATE

OK.

Ed moves toward Kate like he wants to kiss her
but gives her a quick nod instead.

ED

Thanks. Please don't go away. I really want to talk with you too.

KATE

I'll wait a bit.

Ed exits. Kate and Greg share a moment of awkward silence.

KATE (CONT' D)

So. 30 years.

GREG

Yeah.

KATE

Yup.

GREG

Yeah. 30 years. How old are you?

KATE

You're not supposed to ask a woman that.

GREG

Of course. I'm sorry. So how old are you?

KATE

I'm 28.

GREG

28. So you were...negative 2 when we got married.

KATE

You always knew that grade school math would come in handy someday, didn't you?

GREG

I'm old enough to remember when math was one of the three R's.

KATE

I don't even want to know what that means. But there is something I'd like to know, from someone who has been married for 30 years: What is the secret to a long-term relationship?

GREG

Excellent question, Kate. What is the secret to a long-term relationship?

He stares into space and takes a drink. She watches him closely.

KATE

You don't know, do you?

GREG

Honestly, I haven't a clue. I suppose it's different for every happy family, no matter what Tolstoy says.

KATE

I can't tell if you're modest or just stupid, but you must have learned something about making a relationship work if you've been in one for 30 years.

Greg smiles and nods.

GREG

Emily is an easy person for me to be in a relationship with. The thing that makes me happiest in the world is seeing her happiness. So that would be my advice on how to make a long-term relationship work: find someone you want to make happy.

KATE

Do you ever think about what you missed out on, being with just one person?

GREG

We all miss out on one thing or the other. People who don't stay with their first love miss out on something...

Greg struggles for the words to explain his thoughts.

KATE

What?

GREG

Something extraordinary. They miss out on something that's further beyond the realm of ordinary experience than anything I've missed out on.

KATE

Most people don't stay with their first love.

GREG

No. And your first love is different from the others. You figure out, with that person, what love is. You learn what it feels like, and what it takes to keep it alive.

KATE

So what does it take, to keep it alive?

Greg takes another drink.

GREG

Sacrifice. And an appreciation for the sacrifices that they make for you. And forgiveness when their sacrifice falls short.

KATE

There has to be a limit, though. How do you know when you've sacrificed too much?

GREG

You don't. You have to believe that the other person loves you enough that they don't want you to sacrifice too much.

KATE

Sounds complicated.

GREG

It's not. It's simple. You just have to find the right person.

KATE

That's the tricky part.

GREG

Yes. That's the tricky part. So, what about you? Are you married, or otherwise entangled?

KATE

I am not married or otherwise entangled.

GREG

Why not?

KATE

You know something, old man? You ask a lot of personal questions.

GREG

I do that because I'm curious. And confused. You are way too beautiful to be alone, unless you want to be.

KATE

I don't. And beauty is subjective.

GREG

No. It's not. And don't discount the fact that you're a beautiful woman.

KATE

That means nothing.

GREG

It means a lot.

KATE

It's just physical.

GREG

I disagree. I guess you're one of those women who would rather be celebrated for their intellect or accomplishments than their beauty.

KATE

Yeah, I'm one of them. We're also known as "all women."

GREG

But beauty is an accomplishment. You could be exactly the same person, physically, and not be beautiful. You could be ugly if you changed nothing but your demeanor. It's the way you carry yourself and present yourself to the world, your enthusiasms and passions, as well as your sense of fashion, and humor, that make you beautiful.

KATE

If you say so.

GREG

Let me buy you a drink.

KATE

No, thanks. It's not even noon.

GREG

(scoffs)

Noon is so arbitrary.

He finishes his drink and signals for a refill.

KATE

I'll take a ginger ale.

GREG

(to bartender)

And a ginger ale too, please.

(to Kate)

I don't mind telling you that I am looking forward to this drink. It has been years since I've had a drink.

KATE

Really?

GREG

Yeah. Stone cold sober. Are you sure you won't join me? Not to be a pusher, but I would really like you to join me in a drink. Whether it's to spill our guts, or drown our sorrows, or whatever it is we're doing. You'll have to forgive me if I'm a little rusty.

KATE

The old man's anthem. OK. I'll take a drink. Something fizzy. Do you think they'll do a champagne cocktail?

GREG

I will be very disappointed if they won't.

Greg signals to the bartender and gives him the revised order. He turns to Kate with a grin.

GREG (CONT'D)

They'll do it.

KATE

Why do I feel like I'm making a mistake?

GREG

Don't feel that way. I'll let you know when you make a mistake.

The drinks come. Greg takes his and stares at it like an archaeologist with a relic. He looks at Kate then takes a drink.

GREG (CONT'D)

So tell me why you are not entangled.

KATE

OK.

Kate takes a drink.

KATE (CONT'D)

I thought it was because the man I was in love with was too controlling. That he thought he knew better than me what's good for me. But I'm starting to think it's because I bring out the worst in men.

Greg stares at her for a moment.

GREG

You have the saddest face I have ever seen. I was really feeling like shit, but after looking at you I think, 'at least as I'm not as sad as you look.'

KATE

Yup: It's the bring-out-the-worst-in-men thing.

GREG

So you brought out the worst in some guy and then left him when you saw it?

KATE

It was more his idea than mine really. Maybe we weren't meant to be, you know?

GREG

Nothing is meant to be. We're the ones who give things meaning.

KATE

He said I drank too much.

Greg takes a drink.

GREG

Do you?

KATE

Sometimes. I don't know. Even if I do, that's my decision to make.

GREG

Sure. It's also his decision to make if he doesn't want to hang out with a drunk. I've been playing this game since before you were born.

KATE

What game?

GREG

Drinking.

KATE

We're playing drinking games?

GREG

That's exactly what we're doing. And a lot of people don't enjoy the company of people who play these games.

KATE

Everything in moderation.

GREG

Yup.

KATE

That was Tim's motto: Everything In Moderation. He was pretty adventurous sometimes but he never let himself go completely. Maybe even his love for me was moderate. But I miss even that moderate love. It's a horrible thing to know I'm not loved.

Greg laughs. Kate drinks.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's nice that you think my pain is funny.

GREG

Not at all. It's just that you're so completely wrong.

KATE

About what?

GREG

About not being loved. You are loved.

KATE

And you know that because?

GREG

Because you have - and you'll have to indulge an old man here - the glow.

KATE

The glow?

GREG

The glow of love. You have it. And there is only one way to get it. It's not from loving somebody. It's from somebody loving you.

He points a finger at her chest and moves to place it on her heart but stops himself.

GREG (CONT' D)

I've seen the glow in Emily's eyes ever since I fell in love with her. I can always tell when a woman is loved , and you - sweet young woman - you are loved.

KATE

Maybe. But maybe it's not Tim who loves me. Maybe it's your friend, Ed.

Greg makes a disgusted face.

GREG

Eww. Ed? What would a girl like you want with a guy like Ed?

KATE

I'm not a girl, old man.

GREG

I know you're not. And I didn't mean that as an insult. I just think it's best for all concerned if a man my age thinks of a woman your age as a girl. Otherwise, one of them, and I think we both know which one, might get some unhealthy ideas.

KATE

Go ahead, old man. Get some unhealthy ideas. I can take it.

GREG

I bet you can. I don't know if I can.

KATE

Have you ever been with a much younger woman?

GREG

Yes.

KATE

Really?

GREG

Yes. Of course, I was a much younger man at the time.

He holds his glass toward her. They clink their glasses. She has to lean forward and notices the way he avoids looking down her blouse. They drink.

KATE

Why didn't you look?

GREG

What?

KATE

Down my blouse. I leaned over and you didn't look. Most men do.

GREG

I'm sure they do.

KATE

And you wanted to.

Greg tries to deny it and fails.

GREG
I did.

KATE
Why didn't you?

GREG
I'm a married man.

KATE
What does that mean?

GREG
It's when two people make a lifetime commitment.

KATE
Cute. So, why you didn't look when you wanted to?

GREG
There is always a temptation to stare at the beautiful parts of a woman's body but I feel like if I did I might miss out on something else.

KATE
Something better?

GREG
Much better. I might miss the chance to look into the eyes of a beautiful woman as she is looking back into mine. I might see something there that is more intriguing than anything I can see down her blouse or up her skirt.

KATE
Hey - I didn't say anything about looking up my skirt.

GREG
Oops. Now I'm letting my imagination run wild. Sorry. That's rude.

KATE
Rude doesn't stop most men.

GREG
Most men are rude. And most young women think -

KATE

Here is comes.

GREG

And rightly so. I'm not saying they're wrong but they think all old men - at least the straight ones - are lusting after them.

KATE

Rightly so?

GREG

Yes. But all the young straight men are lusting after them too.

KATE

It's just not as creepy.

GREG

Exactly. But I did notice - peripherally - your body, and it is arousing.

KATE

See - now that's rude.

GREG

Really? Sorry.

KATE

It's OK. Don't lose any sleep over it. What is it about old men getting aroused by young women?

He takes a drink and considers the question.

GREG

Young women are like catnip to old men. We get one whiff of a young woman and we make fools of ourselves. Sometimes we wind up screwing up our life, and even worse, all things considered, screwing up the life of some heart-stoppingly gorgeous young woman.

KATE

All things considered.

GREG

Also consider that the young woman will inevitably come to the conclusion that she's getting the shitty end of the stick and walk out. Or, even worse, she'll stay.

KATE

Even worse? Even if she is heart-stoppingly gorgeous?

He looks her up and down hungrily and takes a drink.

GREG

Especially then. And he could never do her justice. No man my age could, no matter what he tells you. An old man with a young woman is grotesque.

KATE

Always?

GREG

Always. Any old man who tells you otherwise is a liar. Or a fool. Probably both. I have been in both situations - old and young - but you've only been in one, so you'll have to take my word for it.

KATE

Hmm. You're a funny guy.

GREG

Thank you.

KATE

It wasn't a compliment.

GREG

Oh. In that case, you're a funny girl too.

KATE

Thanks.

Greg takes another gulp of his drink.

GREG

Now I remember why I love being drunk. What is it about being drunk that makes everything better?

KATE

It puts lipstick on a pig.

GREG

(passionately)

It puts makeup on all the livestock.

He stops to look at her.

GREG (CONT' D)

Ed was right. You are unique. And, if it's not out of line to say so...

KATE

I'm pretty sure it's going to be.

GREG

You might be worth making a fool of myself over.

KATE

Thank you?

Greg stares at Kate for a moment then abruptly moves in to kiss her. She puts her hand on his chest and pushes him away.

KATE (CONT' D)

Whoa! What are you doing?

GREG

Making a mistake.

KATE

Not on me, you're not. Find somebody else to make your mistake on.

Greg leans away from Kate, back against the bar, closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

GREG

I'm sorry. That was stupid. And mean. Now I remember why I hate being drunk.

He opens his eyes and smiles at her.

GREG (CONT' D)

But if I was just a little younger, maybe a lot younger-

KATE

Please. Don't finish that sentence.

GREG

Right you are.

Greg pushes his drink away. He offers his hand to Kate, who shakes it.

GREG (CONT' D)

If I were younger...

KATE

But you're not.

He smiles and shrugs his shoulders.

GREG

...but I'm not.

KATE

And you probably not ever going to be.

GREG

No. Probably not.

Greg pulls some cash from his wallet and throws it on the bar.

GREG (CONT' D)

I have some work to do before tonight's ceremony so I am going to go. Are you staying?

KATE

Yeah. I'll finish my drink and see if the other old man comes back.

Greg bows graciously toward Kate.

GREG

I hope I didn't bother you too much.

KATE

No bother.

GREG

Thank you, sweet woman.

KATE

You are welcome, strange man.

As Greg leaves, Kate settles onto a barstool and nurses her drink for a moment before Ed enters in an excited state and, seeing Kate, makes a beeline for her. He grabs her shoulders from behind and startles her.

ED

They're getting married!

KATE

Who?

ED

Eddie and Jen.

KATE

I know.

ED

You know? Why didn't you tell me.

KATE

I didn't even know you knew them.

ED

Oh, right. But they're getting married. Isn't it exciting? Isn't it romantic? Love is in the air.

Ed looks around.

ED (CONT' D)

Where did Greg go?

KATE

He left.

ED

Did he leave because of me? Were you guys talking about me?

KATE

I don't think so. Maybe a little. He was talking about making mistakes or something like that. It's hard to pay attention too long to somebody like him. Or you. Old men are so boring, you know?

ED

I bet I know where he got off to. I'll go find him later. But thank you for staying.

KATE

I stayed because I want to you to tell me something.

ED

Anything. What?

KATE

Did you kiss me last night?

ED

I did not.

KATE

Why not?

ED

You were drunk. I was drunk. It would have been a sloppy mess. If I am ever lucky enough to kiss you, I want to be as clear-headed as possible when it happens.

KATE

Not to be disagreeable, but I think I would rather be as blurry as possible. There is one thing that I keep coming back to about last night. You said nothing happened when we went back to your place.

ED

Nothing.

KATE

But my pants were on the floor.

ED

Yes, but...

KATE

I'm pretty sure I didn't take them off.

ED

You didn't. No. I did.

KATE

So tell me how you took off my pants and did nothing.

ED

OK. I will.

The bar once again transforms into Ed's apartment. The bartender rolls the bar away and rolls the bed back in.

She takes his arm and they walk to the bed.

ED (CONT'D)

When we got to my place, you were pretty drunk and just about to pass out.

KATE

A predicament you are familiar with?

ED

Only too familiar with it, Kathleen. So I pulled back the sheets and helped you to lie down on the bed.

He supports her back as she surrenders to the force of gravity. She gets herself into a comfortable position, leaning on her elbows, and looks at him watching her.

KATE

And you were tempted.

ED

I thought I should take off your shoes.

He pulls off her shoes and places them on the floor.

KATE

You don't want to soil the sheets.

ED

I wasn't thinking about the sheets. I was thinking about the feet.

KATE

My little feet?

He takes off her socks and tosses them on the floor.

ED

Yes. Your little feet.

She stretches, yawns, and closes her eyes. She lays down.

KATE

So how did my pants end up on the floor?

ED

About that...

He moves closer to her and unfastens her belt. He unbuttons the waist of her pants.

ED (CONT' D)

I thought you might be more comfortable.

KATE

That's so noble of you.

He takes hold of the waist of her pants and slides them over her hips. Then takes hold of the bottom of the legs and pulls them off. He folds the pants and sets them on the floor. He touches her leg. She never opens her eyes.

ED

Forgive me?

KATE

For what? I thought you didn't do anything.

ED

For what I wanted to do.

KATE

It's not my job to police your desire. But, and I don't want to make too big a deal of this, your hand is on my leg.

He takes his hand off her leg and steps back. He covers her with a sheet and blanket. He walks back to the table and sits down. He picks up a pencil and taps it on his sketchbook.

KATE (CONT'D)

Did it feel good? Touching my leg?

ED

I wasn't...Yes. But I wasn't really touching your leg, I just kind of brushed it.

KATE

Brushed or fondled?

ED

It was about halfway between brushed and fondled.

She opens her eyes, sits up, and looks at him.

KATE

You brondled me? In my sleep?

ED

Just your leg. And your belly a little bit. Nothing more than that.

KATE

But you wanted to do more than that.

ED

I did. But not as much as I wanted you to be safe.

KATE

It would have been awful.

ED

I don't know. If we weren't so drunk it could have been...nice.

KATE

But it wouldn't have been. It's like your friend said: grotesque. He said any old man who said different is a liar or a fool, or both.

ED

I'm no liar, Kathleen.

KATE

Are you a fool?

ED

Yes. We are all fools. The biggest fools are the ones who don't realize it.

KATE

Your friend said you wouldn't be able to do me justice.

ED

Greg and I have very different definitions of justice. His justice-meter is a lot more sensitive than mine.

She gets out of bed and puts on her pants,
socks, and shoes as they talk.

KATE

Maybe that's why *he* is celebrating his 30th anniversary and *you* are...not.

ED

That is definitely why. And that is also why it hurts so much to watch you getting dressed.

KATE

There is nothing unjust about getting dressed.

ED

My heart knows that's true. But in my heart it doesn't feel true. It feels like a crime against justice that such a sweet body...

KATE

My sweet body?

ED

That your sweet body is clothed in anything other than my adoration.

KATE

How old are you?

ED

Right now, with you, 25.

KATE

But your body: how old is that?

ED

My body is 48 years old.

KATE

And the way you treat it, it's probably not even a young 48.

ED

Probably not.

She walks over to the table. He opens his sketchbook and starts to look at the drawings in it. She puts her arm around his shoulder and looks with him.

KATE

Then, you gave me a drawing. That one.

He pulls a page out of the sketchbook and hands it to her. She takes it and walks to the door.

KATE (CONT'D)

And then I left.

ED

(sighing)

And then you left.

KATE

I'll see you at the renewal, Ed.

ED

I will be there, Kathleen.

She walks out and he sits for a moment in silence. He opens his sketchbook and picks up his pencil but finds no inspiration. He stares at the wall for a moment then throws his pencil across the room.

EXT. FIELD - TONIGHT

A wooden trellis, draped in white cloth and flowers, stands in an open area between a forest and a few rows of white folding chairs. A large pot of flowers stands on either side of the trellis. The warm glow of a setting sun filters its light onto the trellis. The sun slowly sets through the scene.

The gentle music of a string quartet plays.

The bartender, acting as officiant, enters and takes his place under the arch of the trellis as the guests trickle to their seats.

Emily and Mary enter together, both dressed for the special occasion - Emily in a green dress and Mary in a dark blue one. Emily looks around anxiously and Mary gives her a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

Eddie and Jen enter arm in arm. They are also dressed for the ceremony with Eddie in a shirt and tie and Jen in a nice blouse and skirt.

Mary and Emily embrace Eddie and Jen and exchange brief greetings before all take their seats except for Emily, who stands at the trellis with the officiant.

Kate enters. She stops to say hello to Jen and Eddie.

Emily continues to look around anxiously. Kate approaches her.

KATE

Excuse me. You're Emily?

EMILY

Yes.

KATE

I want to talk to you.

Emily looks at Kate for an instant, then looks past her.

EMILY

I'm sorry. I don't want to be rude but I'm looking for my husband.

KATE

Greg.

Emily looks a little longer at Kate then tries looking past her but Kate moves into her gaze.

EMILY

Yes. Greg. He's supposed to be here and -

KATE

He'll be here.

Emily stops trying to look past Kate and finally sees her.

EMILY

Who are you?

KATE

A friend.

EMILY

A friend?

KATE

Yes. I'm a friend.

EMILY

OK, friend. How do you know Greg is going to be here? I haven't seen or heard from him since this morning.

KATE

I have. And I know he's going to be here because he is totally in love with you. Because there is nowhere he wants to be except with you.

EMILY

How do you...? Who are you?

KATE

I'm Kate. I'm a...friend of the family, I guess. I spent some time with Greg and his friend Ed at a bar this afternoon.

EMILY

Oh, shit. That must have been fun.

KATE

No. It wasn't fun. It was actually better than fun. For as long as I can remember all I've been looking for is fun, because things can turn shitty so easily, you know?

EMILY

I know.

KATE

So I wanted to have as much fun as I can before I get to a place where I can't have fun anymore.

EMILY

I know that place well.

KATE

But something happened to me over the last couple of days that made me realize that some things that are no fun at all can be more fulfilling than the fun things.

Emily relaxes and smiles at Kate.

EMILY

Sounds like you've had an interesting couple of days.

KATE

I have. It sounds to me like you have had an interesting couple of decades.

EMILY

I have.

KATE

Greg talked me about you in a way I don't normally hear men talk about other women. For my whole life, I have had guys after me who I didn't want to be with. And then, I met a guy who I did want to be with. But now he doesn't want to be with me.

EMILY

That's rough.

KATE

But you, and Greg, you have it easy. You each want to be with the other, and there is nothing that you have to do to stay together. To share all your time together.

(MORE)

KATE (CONT'D)

To wake up every morning next to somebody you love. I don't think there is anything better than that.

Emily smiles and nods.

KATE (CONT'D)

So how were you able to do it?

EMILY

What?

KATE

Keep it going for 30 years.

EMILY

I guess it's all about who you do it with. If you knew Greg, you'd know what I mean. He is one of the sweetest people you'll ever meet. So even when things got bad between us - and things always get bad, between two people, don't let anyone tell you otherwise - he found a way to bring order to the chaos when I needed it.

KATE

And what did he get out of it?

Emily considers the question and smiles.

EMILY

He thinks I'm cute. Go figure.

KATE

You are kind of cute.

Emily is looking at Kate with a grateful smile when Greg and Ed enter, staggering slightly. They are wearing matching powder gray morning jackets and top hats. Emily and Kate turn to look at them.

KATE (CONT'D)

What did I tell you?

Greg pours Ed into a seat then walks over to Emily as Kate takes a seat.

GREG

Hello, darling.

EMILY

Are you drunk?

ED

(yelling)

I am!

GREG

(to Ed)

Shut up, Ed.

(to Emily)

No, I'm not. But I was, for a while, earlier today.

Emily looks him over and smiles reluctantly.

EMILY

A morning jacket?

Greg flaps the tails of his jacket.

GREG

Yup.

EMILY

You know it's evening.

GREG

I do. But I like the way I look in it.

EMILY

So do I. Shall we?

They hold hands and walk to the officiant with their backs to the assembled group.

OFFICIANT

Are you ready?

Emily nods.

GREG

We are.

OFFICIANT

Then let's do this.

Emily and Greg, it is an honor to officiate the renewal of your wedding vows. You have been together for 30 years and are still, obviously, in love with each other. So much so that you want to recommit yourselves to the journey you set out on all those years ago. May your love be an inspiration to everyone gathered here to celebrate it with you. And may we all know such love in our lives.

So, unless anyone knows a reason why these two should not renew their vows...

EMILY

You better be quiet back there.

ED

No reason, your excellency!

OFFICIANT

Good. Then let us begin. I don't know if it was decided by the toss of a coin but I was told that Greg will be the opening act. Is that correct?

GREG

That's right.

Greg and Emily turn to face each other. Greg takes a piece of paper from the pocket of his jacket, takes a deep breath, and reads out loud.

GREG (CONT' D)

As the Beatles once sang: "You and I have memories longer than the road that stretches out ahead."

Greg stops and looks at the paper for a moment before ripping it up and tossing the pieces into the air.

GREG (CONT' D)

I worked a long time over what I wanted to say today.

EMILY

You really did.

GREG

But those words already seem out-of-date to me. So I would rather speak from the heart.

He takes a deep breath and pats his chest, then looks at Emily and takes her hands in his.

GREG (CONT' D)

When you and I took our original vows - forsaking all others, till death do us part - we meant them. At least I did.

Crowd laughs/oohs. Greg shoots Emily a smile.

GREG (CONT' D)

We both did. I know that. But, really, we were too young to understand what we were saying. You really have to live a life before you know what it means to devote your life to someone. Forsaking all others. There were a few women over the years who I would rather not have forsaken.

ED

I bet!

GREG

But only a few. And I never met one that I would forsake you for.

Crowd "Aww"s. Greg turns to face them. He still holds one hand with Emily.

GREG (CONT' D)

Today has been a very strange day for me. In a lot of ways. Someone asked me today what the secret is to a long relationship like ours. I'm sure I said something stupid.

Greg looks at Kate.

GREG (CONT' D)

And I'm sorry for the stupid things I said.

KATE

It wasn't all stupid.

GREG

Thank you. Anyway, the question got me thinking about the place of time in a relationship. Emily and I have been together for 30 years...

The crowd applauds.

GREG (CONT' D)

Thanks, but 30 years is just a measure of time; it is no accomplishment. Being with somebody for 30 years can mean nothing. Absolutely nothing. But, for me, spending 30 years with Emily, has meant everything. It still means everything.

Greg and Emily share a smile.

GREG (CONT' D)

Thirty years. My God. When I think about the kid I was when we met, I am so grateful to the weird, naïve guy I was, for the clarity of his vision. And for his good taste in women. Because his heart was young, and tender, and thirsty for something pure and true. He found it in her.

EMILY

Me?

GREG

(to Emily)

Yes, you.

(to the crowd)

This woman, the one I love, is still, after all these years, insecure about my love. Because she doesn't understand that there is only one measure of time when it comes to love, and that is eternity. And eternity can be unmanageable. As counter-intuitive as it might seem, eternity only gets harder to manage the older you get.

Greg turns his attention back to Emily.

GREG (CONT' D)

Do you remember the night - it wasn't the first time we met, but it was the first time we really got to know each other - when we stayed up all night talking? Do you remember what I said to you?

Emily nods.

GREG (CONT' D)

I told you I wanted to go to the end of the line with you. And now that we're closer to that point, the one that seemed so distant back then, I only want it more.

Greg turns his attention to the crowd.

GREG (CONT' D)

I think that when people first meet us, and find out that we have been together since we were young, and that we were each other's first love, they think: that's sweet, but those two the path of least resistance. I don't think that anyone who knows us well thinks we took the easy path.

ED

You didn't make it look easy.

GREG

As is so often the case, the difficult path leads to the greater reward. There are a lot of things in life - most things, maybe - that you have to experience to understand. None of us knows what any other of us is going through.

The one thing, more than any other, that you need to experience to understand, is falling in love. I hope everyone here has, or will, experience that one because it is, by far, the most fantastic experience in life. Another experience, that so few of us get to know, is falling in love when you are young and staying with that love to the end. To wake up one morning in an old person's skin, next to the person you fell in love with when you were a kid, and still being as crazy in love with them as ever. That is an experience that goes beyond luck, or hard work, or even inspiration. It is its own category of experience. It is as close as we get to heaven.

Greg turns to face Emily.

GREG (CONT' D)

And my life with you has been heaven. It has been a dreamlike procession of love. It sounds pretentious, I know, but it's true. That doesn't mean it's always been a smooth ride, because it hasn't. I mean, most of it has, but there have been some bumps along the way. We each get just one shot at life. And it is a very easy thing to mess up.

ED

Tell me about it.

GREG

We have walked a long way on our path together. And I've seen other paths I might have taken. It wasn't always easy to stop myself when I wanted to wander down another one. I know you've seen other paths for yourself, too. But now that we are closer to the end than the beginning of this path together, I know that of all the paths my life could have taken, beginning the day I met you, none of them could have turned out better than this one.

My heart hurts to think of life without you. Even after all these years, every separation, every disagreement, every silent moment that passes without me saying "I love you" feels like a mistake. There are always things that make life worth living, but none mean more to me than finding out what happens next, for you and me.

So I am happy to renew the vow I gave you at the start: I will love you until the day I die. And , if it's possible, I will keep loving you after that.

Greg and Emily kiss gently, then hold each other for a moment. The officiant puts a hand on each of them.

OFFICIANT

Dreamlike procession of love, huh? I would like to say here, for Emily's sake, that Greg is going to be a tough act to follow.

ED

But if anyone can.

OFFICIANT

But if anyone can, it is the woman to whom I now direct your attention. Ladies and gentlemen: Emily.

Emily breaks her embrace with Greg and smiles at him before turning to face the assembled crowd. She looks to Mary who runs up and hands her a few sheets of paper. Emily takes a deep breath.

EMILY

Before I start, I want to say that we found out today that Mary and Ed's boy Eddie is engaged to marry Jen, and we hope to be there for your renewal 30 years from now.

The crowd cheers the engaged couple.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Like Greg, I had some prepared remarks. I won't do anything so dramatic as tearing them up and flinging them in the air, but I also think it's better now to speak from the heart.

Greg mimics ripping paper and throwing it in the air. She looks at the speech she clutches in her hand and drops it to the ground.

EMILY (CONT'D)

When Greg first brought up the idea of us renewing our vows, I had mixed feelings. But as the day got closer my feelings got unmixed. They were all bad. Not because I don't think our love should be celebrated, but because of fear. I see that now. Now that the day is here, I am overwhelmed by humility, and gratitude for the kind of love that Greg - and only Greg - has brought into my life.

Thirty years is a long time to spend with someone, even if you love them, because we all get on each other's nerves sometimes. I get on my own nerves, but I'm stuck with me. I never felt stuck with you.

You and I decided, early on in the game, that we'd only stay together as long as we wanted to. That either of us could break it off at any time, for any reason, even for no reason, because neither of us wanted to be with someone who didn't want to be with us.

GREG

That's right.

EMILY

That's right.

Unlike Greg, I did not grow up in a world where love was the norm. I don't think either of my parents really loved me, or were even capable of love.

Emily puts her head down and stares at the ground. Ed pulls out a sketchpad and draws her. The drawing appears on a screen behind the stage as he works.

EMILY (CONT'D)

So, love was kind of an alien concept to me...

She raises her head and looks at Greg.

EMILY (CONT'D)

...when I met you. And I didn't really know how to love. But you did. And you loved me. You loved me so much. And you told me that if I believed in our love, if I walked that path with you, I would never need to wonder again if there was anybody in the world pulling for me. And I haven't. I have never felt alone again. You let me feel that. You made me feel that. And not only that. You helped me feel other things that I wouldn't have thought possible before we met.

But nobody's perfect. This person who I know the best...this person who I love the most...this person who I vowed my love and my life to, and who I renew that vow to now: he is an asshole.

ED

I knew it!

EMILY

And I am an asshole too. And so is every other person in this glorious place, and on this beautiful planet. We're all assholes. At least sometimes. But you...

She points to Greg with her hands folded in praise.

...you have been less of an asshole than anyone I have ever known.

The crowd "aww"s. Greg takes a bow.

GREG

That's my thing: not being an asshole.

EMILY

Some people think that humility and kindness are signs of weakness in a man, because we live in a world that keeps us blind to the fact that the opposite is true. I knew when I made my original vows, and I know now, that those qualities make you the best man - the best person - I have ever known. You are a great man. Not the kind they build statues to. You're the kind who builds a foundation that's worth putting a statue on. Because, let's face it: most statues get torn down eventually, but to live the one life we get, on a solid foundation, is such an enormous blessing that I sometimes lose sight of the fact that I'm standing on it. On that wonderful foundation of love that you built.

GREG

That we built.

Emily smiles and nods.

EMILY

Greg said that he was asked today what it takes to build a life together with someone for the long haul. Since I have your attention, I'm going to take a crack at it.

Here's my advice: because we are all assholes, sometimes, it is essential to any long-term relationship that we find a way to deal with the asshole in each other.

First, when you are the asshole, admit it. Don't try to hide it or deny it. Own up to it. Learn from it. And make a commitment to yourself that the next time you're an asshole - and, inevitably, there will be a next time - you'll be a different kind of asshole. You won't make that same mistake again. And, most importantly, apologize - apologize sincerely - for the mistake you made. And mean it.

It looks like this:

She looks Greg in the eye.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I am so sorry, Greg.

He touches her cheek. She smiles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

And the flip side of that is this: when the other person is the asshole - and, unfortunately, they will be assholes, too - help them to see their mistake. Help them to understand why it's a mistake. And, if they apologize sincerely, forgive them. Forgive them wholeheartedly. Don't hold a grievance over their head. Don't play games with it. Help them to never want to be an asshole again. Forgive them, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because before you know it, you'll be the one who wants to be forgiven.

I have made mistakes. I have lost my way. I have wondered sometimes if my whole life wasn't a mistake, or a series of mistakes, but there is always that one thing that lets me know, and has let me know for all these years, that my life is not a mistake.

She looks at Greg and they both smile.

The light, which has been growing more orange as the scene unfolds, turns a bright red.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Wow! I want you all to turn around and see this sunset.

The people turn in their seats to look at the sunset and the audience in the theater. They blink and smile in the glowing light.

EMILY (CONT'D)

A ball of fire, sinking behind trees and rocks. Why does that bring us joy every single time we see it? I think I know why now. It's because it is a daily reminder that beauty exists and deserves our attention and gratitude.

The glow fades. The assembled crowd, in their turn, return their attention to Emily.

EMILY (CONT'D)

And when it's over, you know it's not over forever. Just until the next time.

She takes a moment to gather her thoughts. She looks at Kate and smiles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

A new friend reminded me of an old truth today. She told me that I get to wake up every morning next to somebody I love. And she said there's nothing better than that. And she's right. There is nothing better. To look into the eyes of the person I love, and see that he loves me back, gives me exactly what I need to see each morning to know that I can get through that day. And that feeling never gets old. So my vow to you, Greg, is the same one you gave to me and the same one I gave you all those years ago: as long as this heart is beating...

She places her hand over her heart.

EMILY (CONT'D)

...it belongs to you.

Emily and Greg embrace. The officiant cranes his neck around them to see the assembled crowd.

OFFICIANT

I don't think there is much more I can say after that, except congratulations to this beautiful couple.

The assembled crowd clap and wish congratulations.

OFFICIANT (CONT' D)

And, at their request, I invite you all to join us at this most conveniently located establishment.

He points to the door.

OFFICIANT (CONT' D)

Which I happen to own, so I can personally vouch for the quality of food and drinks that we are happy to serve to you. And please eat and drink as much as you possibly can because these guys told me they're picking up the tab.

Greg and Emily break their embrace and nod to the crowd, encouraging them.

EMILY

Yes, please.

Greg puts his arm around Emily's shoulder as they walk away, followed by all of the guests except for Ed and Mary, who stand on opposite sides of the space. Ed closes his sketchpad and sets it on an empty seat.

ED

Well, that was nice.

MARY

It really was. I think those crazy kids just might work out. No thanks to you.

Ed takes a few steps toward Mary who stands still. He stops and takes a good look at her.

ED

That's a nice dress. You look great.

MARY

You look like shit.

ED

Yeah, I been getting that a lot lately. I think people are misremembering what I used to look like. I was never a feast for the eyes.

MARY

I guess not.

ED

When I look in the mirror I see the same face as always, just older.

MARY

Time has not been kind to you.

ED

Time is not one of nature's kindest forces.

MARY

Especially when you spend it the way you do.

Ed takes another step closer. Mary doesn't move.

ED

I must say time has spared you its worst ravages. Maybe it's just one of those things that's different for everybody, like a sense of humor.

MARY

Or a sense of decency.

ED

Or a sense of perspective. You know, Mary, there are moments from our life together that I carry around in my heart, and every once in a while I take one out, and dust it off, and hold it up to the light to get a good look at it. And I see such incredible beauty there.

MARY

There were some beautiful moments, Ed, but they're just memories now. They're not alive anymore for me.

ED

That must be so sad for you.

MARY

It is. But it's true. And truth has its own beauty.

ED

I'm not happy about what happened to us, Mary.

MARY

You aren't happy about anything. That's your problem. You're a drag. A literal drag on my life. And now, after everything that happened, you want credit for being unhappy. You don't deserve it. Credit is something you have to earn. You have to work for it, and you have never worked for anything in your damn life.

ED

I must get some credit for those beautiful moments we created together, no?

Ed makes a sad face and Mary laughs.

ED (CONT'D)

I can still make you laugh.

MARY

You can still make me laugh.

ED

Do you ever wonder what life would be like if we stuck together like Greg and Em?

MARY

I used to. But not for a long time. I don't waste time anymore thinking about impossible things.

ED

No more impossible dreams for you?

MARY

No. I don't need them anymore. I find enough within the realm of possibility to keep me satisfied now.

ED

That's funny. Impossible things are almost all I think about.

MARY

Well, that hasn't changed. And that's right for you, Ed. But not for me. I find the things that interest me now are the ones that are possible. You are no longer one of them.

ED

Is love one of them?

MARY

Some kinds of love are still possible.

ED

You know the kind I'm talking about, though. The kind of love Greg and Em have.

MARY

I don't see that for me right now.

ED

Right now? Right now is all we got, Mare. Everything else is beyond impossible. I still have love in me. I have love to give right now.

MARY

I believe you. But you never loved anyone as much as yourself. The only way you know how to be an artist is to love yourself more than anyone else.

ED

That's not true.

MARY

(skeptically)

No?

ED

The greatest work of art in my life - by far - is what we had at the beginning. It blows the doors off everything else. Everything I created after I met you has you in it. I still think about you every day. Every. Single. Day.

Mary shakes her head with a wry smile.

MARY

You wasted so much of your life.

ED

I've *been* wasted so much of my life, there's a difference. And I don't think any of my life has been wasted. I know so many things now that were inconceivable to me all those years ago. And I understand why you'd think it's too late for us, I do. But I never stopped loving you. Not for one minute.

Mary looks at the sky

MARY

I spent so much time getting over my love for you. And my hate. There is no way I would tear that wound open again after it took so long to heal.

She looks at him.

MARY (CONT' D)

For what?

ED

For love.

MARY

I've seen your love, Ed. You and I have different definitions of the word.

ED

So we're different. And like Em says, we're all assholes sometimes. I know I can be, especially when I'm drunk. But you can be too, especially when I'm sober. So, maybe it's just a matter of finding the right balance.

Ed balances the imaginary scale of his upturned palms. Mary shakes her head.

ED (CONT' D)

Maybe I'm going out on a limb here.

MARY

You go out there. I'll get my saw.

Ed gets down on one knee.

MARY (CONT' D)

Don't. Please don't.

ED

Mary, my dear old...friend...partner...lover...If you want to try again, to give us another chance, I wouldn't say no.

MARY

Then you are even dumber than I thought you were. Do you really think I would let you back into my life?

ED

Isn't there any room for forgiveness in your heart?

MARY

I can forgive you for the love. But I can't forgive you for the hate. I never want to hate anybody like that again, and I don't have to. Nobody can make me. I would rather be alone than feel that again.

Ed considers her words.

ED

So, that's a no?

MARY

Yeah, that's a no.

Ed gets up off his knee and dusts himself off.

ED

Worth a shot.

MARY

Was it though?

ED

Yeah. I would have hated myself later if I hadn't at least taken a shot.

MARY

You know, in the weirdest possible way

ED

You know that's my favorite way.

MARY

It is nice to see you again.

ED

Right back at you, sister.

He starts to move towards her. She takes a step away from him. He stops and steps back.

ED (CONT'D)

You never miss me?

MARY

No. I miss the man you were, and the woman I was, when we were right. That was the best version of me I ever knew. Until you broke her.

ED

For whatever it's worth, I am sorry for hurting you. That's not something I ever wanted to do, or got the slightest pleasure from. And I do hope the road ahead is kind to you.

MARY

We did have a nice ride together once, on that 'road ahead,' didn't we?

ED

Best ride I ever had, Mary. By a long shot.

MARY

Right back at you, brother.

They bow slightly to each other, then Mary walks away to join the others. Ed walks back to his seat and sits down. He picks up his sketchpad and flips it open. He leans his head back in contemplation, then starts drawing the empty trellis until he is swallowed by darkness.

A door opens from the bar into the outdoor space.

Light, and the sound of music and laughter, flow out the door. Mary pops her head into the dark outdoors. She calls to Ed.

MARY (CONT' D)

Hey, Asshole. Are you coming?

Ed sets down his pencil and closes his sketchpad.

ED

Yeah, I'm coming. I'm coming.

He gets up and follows Mary indoors, carrying the sketch pad under his arm. The door closes behind them, shutting out the light. The muffled music continues for a moment, then fades.

END