

We Will Not Describe the Conversation

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Characters

DANI (Female)

SONYA (Female)

ROSS (Male)

Setting

Early 1990s

Dani's house in a run-down, fictional town in the Midwest. Chicago may only be six hours away, but it's hard to get there. It's hard to ever leave.

A Note on the Memories

During the memory scenes, the character not participating in the memory should still be actively watching and responding to the action of the memory. For example, in a flashback between Dani and Ross, Sonya should not be frozen. She should observe the conversation, respond to it, and take that information with her throughout the rest of the play.

Inspiration

In Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, he delineates a key moment of the novel—when the protagonist's sister, Dunya, and his lover, Sonya, discuss Raskolnikov's crime, murdering an elderly pawnbroker with an axe—in this way, “We will not describe the conversation and the tears of the two girls, and how friendly they became.” This sentence is the inspiration for this play.

/ Indicates overlapping dialogue

Pronunciation Guide

Syzygy: SIZ-i-jee

The middle of the night.

DANI's sits at her kitchen table, reading a section of the paper. A large stack of papers is next to her.

She yawns, checks her watch, and tosses the section onto the ground.

She calls to the pantry.

DANI

Goodnight.

She waits.

DANI

You could respond one of these days, you know. Maybe sing me a little song. It's only polite.

Nothing.

DANI starts to head to bed.

SONYA enters, holding a large bag close to her side. She knocks on the front door urgently, startling DANI.

DANI grabs a baseball bat from a hiding place and creeps towards the door.

SONYA

Hello? Is anyone home? Dani?

DANI

What?

SONYA

Oh good you're still up.

DANI

Who is it?

SONYA

My name is Sonya. I need to speak with you.

DANI

It's the middle of the night. Go away.

SONYA
I know your brother. I know Ross.

DANI puts down the bat and opens the door. SONYA tries to peer into the house.

SONYA
Is he here?

DANI
Who are you?

SONYA
Sonya. Have you heard from him?

DANI
Are you his classmate?

SONYA
His classmate?

DANI
Are you in his PhD program?

SONYA
No.

DANI
How do you know him then?

SONYA
I'm his... girlfriend.

DANI
Girlfriend?

SONYA
Can I come in?

DANI gets out of the way.

SONYA enters. She tries to play it cool, but her eyes scan across the room, searching for something.

SONYA
Are you alone?

What? DANI

I mean, are you married? SONYA

Divorced. DANI

DANI's eyes dart to the baseball bat. SONYA continues to search, trying to make conversation.

I saw your flyers at the library. Dani's Delightful Massages. You must be quite industrious. SONYA

Industrious? DANI

Yes, it means diligent and hard-working. SONYA

I know what it means. DANI

It was the word of the day last Monday. Do you have one of those boards? You know, the ones with the big pictures of feet? SONYA

It's the middle of the night. Is something wrong? DANI

I just wanted to meet you. SONYA

We could meet another time. During the day. DANI

I'm already here. SONYA

Alright. Go ahead, put that thing down. DANI

SONYA clutches the bag closer to her side.

I'm fine. SONYA

It looks heavy. DANI

It's perfect. SONYA

Did Ross / send DANI

It's my birthday. As of a few hours ago. SONYA

Oh. Happy Birthday? DANI

Can I have a drink? SONYA

There's beer in the pantry. DANI

SONYA opens the pantry door, then shuts it quickly.

There's a bird in there. SONYA

I know. DANI

Why do you have a bird in the pantry? SONYA

He likes it in there. DANI

Where's his cage? SONYA

He's not a pet. He used to live outside. DANI

What happened to him? SONYA

DANI
Heart attack, I think.

SONYA
What's he doing in the pantry?

DANI
Recovering.

SONYA
How long has he been in there?

DANI
A while.

SONYA
Is he a robin?

DANI
How should I know?

SONYA
He looks sad. Is he sad?

DANI
He's never mentioned it.

SONYA
He looks sad.

DANI
He may be.

SONYA
Can he fly?

DANI
Not that I've seen.

SONYA
Can he sing?

DANI
Not that I've heard.

DANI retrieves a beer from the pantry and hands it to her.

SONYA sips the warm beer. It's gross, but she tries to hide it.

DANI

How did you two meet?

SONYA

Who?

DANI

You and my brother.

SONYA

Oh. Through my father.

DANI

How is he?

SONYA

Dead.

DANI

What?

SONYA

Oh, sorry, I meant my father.

DANI

Jesus. What the hell. I mean, sorry and everything, but what the hell.

SONYA

Sorry.

DANI

What happened to him?

SONYA

He was hit by a bus.

DANI

Really?

SONYA

Yeah.

DANI

I remember reading your father's obituary.

SONYA

You do?

DANI

It was striking. The language was elevated. I don't think I've ever read an obituary like that before.

SONYA tries to contain a smile.

SONYA

I make sure to actually use the words of the day. That's the only way the definitions truly stay with you, you know. I practice all the time.

DANI

Is that what you do? Are you a writer?

SONYA

I'm a secretary.

You must really love current events.

DANI

They're discontinuing the daily paper. Did you hear about that? Our week becomes a day. A month becomes four days. Our lives condensed, abstracted to things deemed important. So I'm hanging onto these. Because when that happens, I want to remember the days of the week.

And it's not like things don't happen here. People get hit by buses, and there's that whole axe murderer thing. I mean, imagine finding out a week later that there was someone going around chopping up old people.

SONYA

One person. One old person. Also there's TV.

DANI

I don't have a TV. My mother used to hate how parents would put their kids in front of the television all day. She would just put us outside. Lock us outside, really. What a weird thing to do nowadays. Death by axe. So gruesome. Struck the old lady a couple times right in the back of the head, I read. Shattered her skull.

SONYA

(softly)

Three.

DANI

What?

SONYA

Three times. And it was the crown of her head.

DANI

Three seems a bit unnecessary. I'm sure once would have done it, especially with an elderly person. You'd think with these lenient gun laws he'd just shoot her, no need to make it so nasty.

SONYA

Ross's not...he's not in school anymore.

DANI

He graduated?

SONYA

No. He stopped going.

DANI

What happened?

SONYA

The department wasn't supportive of his research.

DANI

Why not?

SONYA

They thought it was derivative and wanted him to switch topics, but Ross was convinced that his work was important. He thought the professors here were just provincial. That they didn't understand his work. He said if he went to a big school in a real city like Chicago that they would understand it and he would be celebrated.

DANI

So he's going to school in Chicago?

SONYA

No. He didn't get in.

DANI

Oh. I get it.

SONYA

You do?

DANI

How much does he need?

SONYA

Money isn't / the issue.

DANI

I have one maybe two hundred bucks, but that's it.

SONYA

That's nice / but

DANI

Hold on a minute. I'm supposed to just hand you over a couple hundred bucks? I don't even know you. You tell him that if he wants the money, he needs to come see me himself.

SONYA

I'm not here about money!

DANI

Well why didn't you say so?

SONYA

I tried.

DANI

You let your boss walk all over you like that?

SONYA

He's very tall. And he has this loud, booming voice.

DANI

So?

SONYA

I don't like that. He's like this giant or ogre or something standing over me all day barking orders. It makes me feel very...

DANI

Dumb?

SONYA

No.

Insignificant?

DANI

No.

SONYA

Slight.

DANI remembers feeling slight.

Ross escaped.

SONYA

Escaped?

DANI

I mean, I lost him. He's missing.

SONYA

Missing? For how long?

DANI

I woke up this morning and he wasn't there.

SONYA

It's only been one day? You had me worried. I'm sure he'll turn up.

SONYA

I don't know. I don't know where he would have gone.

DANI

Did you have a fight?

SONYA hesitates.

DANI

Well he probably just wanted to cool off.

SONYA

So you haven't heard anything from him?

DANI

I haven't heard from my brother in five years.

Right.

SONYA

SONYA debates saying more. She jumps up.

SONYA

I shouldn't have come. It was stupid. You're right. He'll just turn up.

SONYA heads towards the door.

DANI blocks her.

DANI

What's going on?

SONYA

Nothing. Lover's spat, just like you said.

DANI

Did something happen to my brother?

SONYA tries to push past her.

SONYA

Excuse me.

DANI

What's in the bag?

SONYA

It's none of your business.

DANI

What's in the bag?

SONYA

Gym clothes.

DANI

This time of night?

DANI grabs the bag from her. She pulls out bloodstained clothing—a man's shirt and pants, and an axe.

DANI

What did you do?

SONYA
I didn't do anything. They're not mine.

DANI
Whose are they?

SONYA
Ross's.

DANI
What happened to him? Is he hurt? Where is he?

SONYA
He's not hurt.

DANI
Then what is this?

SONYA
He killed that old woman.

ROSS bursts through the door as a ten year old. He cradles
a wounded bird.

ROSS
Look at this!

DANI becomes twelve.

SONYA watches the memory.

He brings the bird over to DANI.

DANI
Ew! Ross, why did you bring that in here?

ROSS
I think it's dying.

DANI
Get it away from me.

ROSS
We have to do something.

DANI
Mom is going to freak out if she sees this!

ROSS
I don't care what Mom does. It's hurt! We have to do something! Dad will know what to do.

Dad! Dad!

Where's Dad?

DANI
He's not here.

ROSS
When will he be back?

DANI
His stuff is gone.

ROSS
What stuff?

DANI
All of it.

ROSS
His clothes?

DANI
Yeah.

ROSS
His records?

DANI
Yeah.

ROSS
His toothbrush?

DANI
Yes, Ross. Everything. He left.

ROSS
Why?

DANI
I don't know.

ROSS
But he's coming back though.

DANI
I don't know.

ROSS shoves the bird towards her.

ROSS
You do something then.

DANI takes the bird. She looks it over. Frowns.

DANI
Turn around.

ROSS
Why?

DANI
Just do it.

ROSS does.

She snaps its neck.

He turns back around.

ROSS
What did you do?

DANI
It was suffering.

ROSS
You killed it!

DANI
I stopped its suffering. It was going to die anyway.

ROSS
You don't know that. We could have taken it to the vet or something.

DANI

It wouldn't have made it. I'm telling you, I did the right thing. You didn't want that bird to suffer, did you? Did you want it to be in pain?

ROSS cradles the bird.

DANI

It's just a bird, Ross.

ROSS

You don't know a thing about it.

ROSS looks out the window. He holds the bird close to his chest.

ROSS

You're such an idiot, Dani. He left that whole pile of wood out there. Look, his axe is just sitting right there. He's going to come back to finish it. You're wrong about everything. You were wrong about the bird, and you're wrong about Dad.

Silence.

DANI finds a dictionary and opens it.

DANI

Saltwort. Do you remember that one?

ROSS doesn't respond.

DANI

I thought you were supposed to be the smartest ten year old in your class.

ROSS

A plant in the goosefoot family, or a strong-smelling coastal shrub.

DANI

That's right.

ROSS

What's the next one?

DANI

Salty. I think that's pretty self-explanatory. Alright, what's next? Salubrious.

ROSS joins her on the couch, holding the bird.

ROSS
Salubrious?

DANI
“Favorable to or promoting health or well-being.”

ROSS leans his head on her shoulder.

DANI
Salutary. “Producing a beneficial effect.” “Promoting health.”

DANI closes the dictionary and rests her head against his.

DANI
“Curative.”

ROSS exits with the bird.

SONYA
He thought he was conducting an experiment.

DANI stops.

DANI
What experiment?

SONYA
He was working on a paper, on a theory. *On Crime: What Differentiates the Extraordinary from the Ordinary*. Are you familiar with the idea?

DANI
What does this have to do with anything?

SONYA
Are you familiar with it or not?

DANI
Vaguely.

SONYA
The theory is that people are divided into two categories: the extraordinary and the ordinary. Ordinary people need to follow the law. They obey the rules, because rules exist, and though they may question them once in a while, overall, they realize that rules are necessary, important, and that we must follow them. But extraordinary people are different. Extraordinary people don't have to follow the law, because they understand its limitations better than ordinary people do. He says that extraordinary people should have

a right to a free conscience when they disobey laws. That they even have a right to commit murder.

DANI

What does this have to do with the old woman?

SONYA

He was testing the theory. He wanted to know if he was an extraordinary person.

ROSS enters. For him, it is a month ago. He sits on the couch.

SONYA transitions to the scene with ROSS.

DANI watches.

SONYA

Aren't you going to ask me about my day?

ROSS

I imagine it didn't go very well.

SONYA

No, it didn't go very well. I swear, one day, I'm going to lose it on my boss. One day I'm just going to kick him right in the balls. Or even better, I'd put a little arsenic in his coffee.

SONYA waits for a response from ROSS.

SONYA

I'm kidding. I'd probably just take my dad's old hunting rifle and shoot him in the face.

ROSS offers a weak smile.

SONYA

I got you something.

SONYA pulls out a cassette.

SONYA

Birdsongs.

ROSS

Oh.

He puts the cassette aside.

SONYA
You don't like it?

ROSS
I like it.

SONYA
Should we listen to it? There are a few tracks of robins on there. I thought maybe it might, you know, it might sound like your / favorite

ROSS
I'm not really into that anymore.

SONYA
What do you mean? Just the other day we talked about maybe going to the aviary this weekend.

ROSS
You talked about it.

SONYA
I thought it'd be fun. We'd go on an adventure. A search. A search for the lost birdsong of your childhood. Come on.

ROSS
The aviary here is garbage.

SONYA
No it's not.

ROSS
It's garbage. I'm not interested.

SONYA
Okay. Fine.

ROSS
You should probably just return it.

SONYA
We should keep it. Just in case you ever feel like / listening

ROSS
Just get rid of it. Okay? It's not going to sound the way I want it to. There's no point.

SONYA

Okay. Fine. I'll return it.

Did you go over to the university today?

ROSS

No.

SONYA

I thought you said you were going to talk to the head of the department.

ROSS

I never agreed to that.

SONYA

You said you'd consider it.

ROSS

I have no interest in going back to an institution that doesn't appreciate me.

SONYA

They would take you back, I bet, if you just altered your theory. I'm sure you could think of something else. Something even better.

ROSS

No.

SONYA

Did you leave the house today?

ROSS

What does it matter?

SONYA

It's been almost a week.

ROSS

So?

SONYA

It's unhealthy. You need fresh air. Are you coming down with something? You look queasy.

ROSS

I'm fine.

SONYA

Something's going on.

ROSS

Just shut up and let me think. Sorry. I. Sorry. I've just been preoccupied.

SONYA

Is it about the rejection from University of Chicago?

ROSS

You read my mail?

SONYA

I didn't think you'd mind. I don't know why you haven't told me. I've been waiting for you to tell me. Is that why you've been upset lately?

ROSS

I'm not upset.

SONYA

We could still go to Chicago, you know. Take a little trip.

ROSS

I have no desire to go to Chicago.

SONYA

You've always wanted to go there.

ROSS

Well I have no desire to go there now.

SONYA

That's stupid, Ross. We should go. We should just get in a car and go. We could go to the top of the Sears Tower.

ROSS

You're scared of heights.

SONYA

I'd do it for you. I hear the view is magnificent.

ROSS

Like you know anyone who's been there.

SONYA

I read about it in the travel section of the library. That reminds me. I saw something there. Something you might like.

She takes out a flyer and hands it to him.

SONYA

Is that your sister? She's a massage therapist, right?

ROSS

A masseuse.

SONYA

I think they prefer the term massage therapist now. So that's her? What? Is everything okay?

ROSS

Her phone number is different.

ROSS shoves the flyer back at her.

SONYA

I thought I'd make an appointment.

ROSS

Why?

SONYA

I'd like to meet her.

ROSS

We don't even talk anymore.

SONYA

Well why did you dedicate your paper to her, if you hate her so much?

ROSS

Sonya. You need to stop badgering me. I don't want to talk about this. Stop talking to me about this.

SONYA

You're sweating.

ROSS

So?

SONYA

You never used to sweat. See, you are getting upset.

ROSS

It's hot.

SONYA

I wake up in the middle of the night and our sheets are soaked.

ROSS

I'm not upset!

SONYA

Stop lying!

ROSS

I'm not lying. I'm just preoccupied.

SONYA

With what?

ROSS

I wasn't going to say this now. I wasn't planning on doing this now.

SONYA

Just tell me.

ROSS

I wanted to do this better. I wanted to explain this better. When you were ready.

SONYA

What is it?

ROSS

Remember, this is for us, this is for our future. I love you.

SONYA perks up, expectedly.

SONYA

I love you too.

ROSS comes over to her and takes her hands.

SONYA

Just do it.

ROSS

I'm trying.

SONYA

Just go ahead and ask me. I'm sorry to ruin it, but I'm so excited!

ROSS

Ask you what?

SONYA

To marry you.

ROSS drops her hands.

SONYA

Oh. Well. This is. Embarrassing. I just thought. The way you looked at me. I know we haven't been together that long, but it's just. You know. Syzygy. Right?

ROSS

Right.

SONYA

There's someone else. Who is she?

ROSS

The old woman in the news. The antique dealer.

SONYA

How old?

ROSS

I don't know. Seventies, maybe.

SONYA

You cheated on me with a seventy year old?

ROSS

Cheated? No. I... tested the theory.

SONYA

How?

ROSS

I tested the theory... on her.

SONYA

What do you mean you tested the theory on her?

ROSS

(convincing himself)

I had to. It was the right thing. It deserved to be tested.

SONYA

What did you do?

ROSS can't respond.

SONYA

What did you do?

Did you... did you... did you kill her?

ROSS nods.

SONYA takes a moment to collect her thoughts.

SONYA

Prove it.

ROSS gathers the axe and clothing. He lays them out in front of her. She looks at them, fascinated.

ROSS exits, leaving the axe and clothing behind.

SONYA transitions to present.

DANI picks up the axe and examines it.

SONYA

Do you recognize it?

DANI

It's my father's. It has his initials engraved on it.

She looks at the clothes, holding up Ross's shirt and pants. An envelope falls to the ground.

DANI

What's that?

SONYA grabs it.

SONYA
It's nothing. It's my birthday letter. From my mom.

SONYA pockets it.

DANI picks up the axe.

DANI
Three times in the skull. It's heavy.

SONYA
What are you doing?

DANI chops the air with the axe.

DANI
One.

She chops the air again.

DANI
Two.

She chops the air a third time.

DANI
Three.

Shattered.

That's not easy.

He must have really wanted to do it.

When did you find out?

SONYA
A month ago.

DANI
A month ago? Where's he been this whole time?

SONYA
With me.

DANI

For a month? Then what happened?

SONYA

He escaped.

DANI

What do you mean he escaped?

SONYA

I wasn't sure what he would do. It was for everyone's protection.

DANI

You locked him up?

SONYA

When you say it like that it sounds...

DANI

You should have called the police. If you were worried about what he would do. You should have called the police.

SONYA

Would you have called the police?

DANI doesn't respond.

SONYA

I've looked everywhere I could think of—the university, the aviary, the park, your mother's grave. I thought maybe he'd come here.

DANI

He hasn't.

SONYA

Can you think of any other place he may be?

DANI

No.

SONYA

So what should we do?

DANI

I don't... I don't know. Look for him, I guess.

SONYA

Where? Where else? I've been looking for him all day.

DANI

I don't know.

She looks out of the window.

DANI

It's too dark now. We won't be able to find him. We should wait until morning.

SONYA

Okay.

DANI

We'll go when it's light.

SONYA

What should we do if we find him?

DANI doesn't have an answer.

SONYA

He dedicated his paper to you. Did you know that? He even thanked you in the acknowledgments.

DANI

So?

SONYA

It's strange. You hadn't spoken in years. You didn't even know he left school.

DANI

What are you getting at?

SONYA

I'm just trying to figure this out.

DANI

This has nothing to do with me.

SONYA

I'm just trying to figure out why he would dedicate it to you if you weren't close.

DANI

I don't know why we're talking about this. So what if he dedicated this stupid paper to me? It doesn't mean anything.

It doesn't make any sense.

SONYA

None of it makes sense. He wasn't acting logically.

DANI

The theory states that extraordinary people can only commit crimes if it is for the good of society. What did this woman do that was so bad? Wasn't she just an antique dealer?

SONYA

He said she was unethical. I guess he sold some things to her once, and he wanted to get them back and she wouldn't let him.

DANI

So that's it? That's all she did?

SONYA

Maybe he just wanted to do it. Sometimes people just want to do bad things and they need an excuse to act.

Do you know anyone like that?

DANI

My ex-husband.

SONYA

Oh.

DANI

I choked Peter once. He had already... he wasn't... the kindest of men. We were arguing and he punched me and I fell into this glass table and it shattered. I was bleeding, everywhere. Across my body, the floor, the table, and he's standing over me, towering over me, like that ogre-giant you were talking about. I look down at my blood and run my fingers through it. I stand up, walk over to him, and shove my hand into his mouth until he starts to choke. He didn't even try to stop me. He just stared at me, watching me do it. Then suddenly he shut his eyes. He shut his eyes, waiting to die, I think, and I took my hand out of his mouth and wiped it off on his shirt.

SONYA

You left after that?

DANI
That's none of your business.

No. Not after that.

ROSS enters and sits down on the couch. It is yesterday.

SONYA spots him.

SONYA
Did you enjoy doing that to him?

DANI doesn't respond.

SONYA transitions to the scene with ROSS.

DANI watches.

ROSS stands up.

SONYA
Where are you going?

ROSS
I thought I'd go for a walk.

SONYA
Sit down.

ROSS
It's been a month. The police have given up. They don't even know it was me.

SONYA
I know what you're capable of.

Say it.

ROSS
Sonya...

SONYA
Say it.

ROSS
Please.

Say you're ordinary.

SONYA

He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

Sit down.

SONYA

ROSS

It's perfectly natural to feel confused. I've thought about it and even extraordinary people can feel confused sometimes.

Shut up.

SONYA

ROSS

It doesn't mean that my theory is wrong.

Shut up.

SONYA

Let's look at the word of the day.

Don't you want to know the word of the day?

ROSS doesn't respond.

SONYA looks at the word of the day.

SONYA

Nonproliferation. What do you think of that?

He stands.

Where are you going?

SONYA

ROSS

I thought I'd go out for the paper.

Sit.

SONYA

He sits.

SONYA
A quick test. Word of the day on Monday?

ROSS
Industrious.

SONYA
Tuesday.

ROSS
Inculcate.

SONYA
Wednesday.

ROSS
Quisling.

SONYA
Thursday.

ROSS
Desiccate.

SONYA
Friday.

ROSS
Sempiternal.

SONYA
Saturday.

Saturday? You don't remember Saturday?

He shakes his head.

SONYA
What was that?

ROSS
No.

SONYA
Didn't I tell you to remember it?

He nods.

SONYA

Answer.

ROSS

Yes. You told me to.

SONYA

Then why didn't you?

ROSS

I tried.

SONYA

I asked you to do one thing.

ROSS

I'm preoccupied.

SONYA

Yes, well. Aren't we all?

He starts to stand.

She glares at him.

He sits down again.

ROSS

Flagitious.

SONYA

What?

ROSS

The word of the day from Saturday. Flagitious.

SONYA

Right, flagitious. What does that mean again?

ROSS

Wicked.

SONYA lets this sink in.

ROSS exits.

SONYA transitions to present.

DANI

Do you think he'd do it again?

SONYA

I don't know. Maybe, but sometimes I doubt he has it in him.

DANI

Why?

SONYA

He changed so much after he did it. He seemed smaller, somehow. Afraid to leave the house. He sweat all of the time. And he would cry when he thought I couldn't hear. He would cry a lot. And I don't think he's slept at all the whole month.

DANI

So he feels guilty.

SONYA

Yes. Or maybe scared.

DANI

Of you?

SONYA

Maybe.

Everyone in my office thinks my name is Samantha. I've worked there for eight years, and I've never corrected them. It's too late now. I've thought about changing my name to Samantha, just to make it easier, but my mother's name was Sonya and I thought that'd be too rude. She did die for me and all. She died during childbirth.

DANI

I didn't think that happened much now.

SONYA

It doesn't.

DANI

But then what about the birthday letter?

SONYA

When she was pregnant she wrote me one hundred letters. One for each of my birthdays. She was optimistic, I guess.

DANI

That's thoughtful.

SONYA

Was your mother thoughtful?

DANI

She was practical.

SONYA

Ross never talked about her.

DANI

Why don't you just quit your job?

SONYA

I'd like to but no one is hiring. You need to have a four-year degree. Everyone in my office has a stupid four-year degree. Even the interns. They're so entitled. Do you have interns?

DANI

No.

SONYA

Don't hire any. They're so entitled. And they don't have any real skills. I have a lot of skills. I've never messed up a food order. Not once. And I'm excellent writer. You said so yourself. That obituary? It stuck out, right? And I didn't even like my dad all that much.

DANI

I'm not much of a writer.

SONYA

I disagree. The mission statement on your flyers is so beautiful. "My goal is to provide my clients with a transcendent relaxation experience—to unleash a little piece of heaven in the mortal body and unify the fragments of our physical being." I liked that last bit, especially.

DANI

Why?

SONYA

You ever hear of Cotard's Syndrome? It's this thing where people think they're dead. Like really think they're dead. This one woman was convinced that she didn't have any teeth and that her insides were all rotting. She would look in the mirror and still not

believe she was alive. I'm not like that exactly. I don't think I'm dead. I just think I'm not fully there. I'm...

DANI

Partial.

SONYA

Partial, yes. You know it?

DANI shrugs.

SONYA

You ever hear of syzygy? It's my favorite word. I don't think I'd ever come across a word with so many y's. S-Y-Z-Y-G-Y. I did some research and found out that Carl Jung, you ever hear of him? Well, anyway, Carl Jung said that syzygy is what he calls "the divine couple." It's the combination of true selves. Anyway, it sounds to me like another word for soulmates.

I just thought, since you were partial too, maybe you would like that word.

DANI

I do. Thank you.

SONYA

Anyway, I liked your mission statement.

DANI

I just wrote what I thought sounded deep. I don't really care about creating transcendent experiences for my clients. I do it for me.

SONYA

What do you mean?

DANI

You've got the client just lying there, right? They're all vulnerable. They have their eyes closed, and they are just letting you touch the most valuable parts of their body. They rest their necks in your hands, and if you wanted to, you could just...

SONYA

What?

DANI

End their lives right then and there. I like being able to do that. And I like that I choose not to.

SONYA

I want to choose not to. I want to choose not to do the wrong thing, just because it makes me feel powerful. I want to choose not to feel like an orphan, even though I'm grown, and there are children in the world who've never known either of their parents. I want to choose not to lock Ross up again, if I even ever find him. But I don't know if I can, because having him there, like that, was the best thing that has ever happened to me. I have never felt so unbelievably real in my life. And I don't know if I can give that up. I don't want to give that up, even though I know I can't do it anymore. Even though I know it makes me less of a person.

I don't know how you stop yourself. I don't how you stop yourself from breaking those necks if you want to so badly.

DANI

I broke a neck once. Ross's bird. And I've regretted it ever since.

SONYA

You did the right thing. It was suffering.

DANI

Maybe. Or maybe I just wanted to. Like how maybe Ross just wanted to kill someone, and he needed an excuse. Or how you wanted to lock him up, but you needed to pretend it was for the greater good. I don't know which it was. Maybe I was doing the right thing, maybe I wasn't. I don't know the difference. I don't even know if it matters, all I know is *that* bird isn't going to die of a broken neck.

SONYA

Is that why you didn't choke Peter, when you could have?

DANI

Maybe.

SONYA

Are you still afraid of him?

DANI

Sometimes.

Yes.

Most of the time.

Were you ever afraid of my brother?

SONYA

Never.

DANI

Why not?

SONYA

He couldn't even touch the axe once he showed it to me. He couldn't pick it up again. So I took it. I took it with me everywhere.

DANI

Why?

SONYA

Because I could. Because he didn't try to stop me. Because it felt good to have something so heavy in my bag.

DANI

That's careless of you.

SONYA

I know.

You knew about the paper?

DANI

When he first wrote it, but that was almost six years ago. I didn't know he'd still be working on it. I thought he would've given up by now.

ROSS enters, carrying a copy of the manuscript. He hands it to DANI.

DANI transitions to six years ago.

SONYA watches.

DANI

This is what you've been working on?

ROSS

I thought you'd be excited. This is just the kind of thing I should be doing if I want to move forward in my career. It deserves to be published.

DANI

No one is going to publish this.

ROSS

Of course they will.

DANI

Shouldn't a good theory be able to be tested? This theory can't be tested.

ROSS

We could find a way to test it.

Think of all of the citations I'll get.

DANI rolls her eyes.

ROSS

Citations are very important in academia.

DANI

I don't care about academia!

ROSS

I know you don't care about academia. That was evident when you dropped out of college.

DANI

We agreed to stop talking about this. You wouldn't have gotten this far if I hadn't dropped out. You wouldn't have had the money to pay for college, let alone grad school.

ROSS

I know and that's why I've decided to pay you back.

DANI

How?

ROSS

I sold a few things.

DANI

What things?

ROSS

Old things.

DANI

Mom's antiques? You sold Mom's antiques? Those were heirlooms. They go back generations and generations. You can't just sell Mom's things! She gave you those for a reason. She didn't want you to sell them.

ROSS

It's just stuff. Now we have money.

He slides a check across the table.

ROSS

Enough for a semester at least. Maybe two.

DANI stares at the check, debates, then pushes it away.

DANI

You leave right now and go give the money back. You get Mom's things back.

ROSS

Just take it.

DANI

No.

ROSS

Why?

DANI

Mom wouldn't have wanted it.

ROSS

Who cares what she wanted? She's dead. And she was wrong, Dani. She was wrong about not wanting you to go to school. You deserve this. You deserve a chance to be more than...

DANI

What?

ROSS

Whatever Peter tells you to be.

DANI

I'm a business owner.

ROSS

You're a masseuse.

DANI

A massage therapist.

ROSS

That's beneath you.

DANI

I like my job. It doesn't even matter.

ROSS

Why? Because we're all going to die anyway? That's what you always say. You've been saying that since I was five years old. You'd steal my Stretch Armstrong, and I'd cry and you'd say, "Get over it. We're all going to die anyways."

DANI

You're still mad about the damn Stretch Armstrong?

ROSS

I'm just making a point.

DANI

What point is that? That I'm a pessimist?

ROSS

That you're a jerk.

DANI

Oh I'm a jerk? What a scary word, Ross. You want to call me a bitch? Do it.

ROSS

No.

DANI

Do it!

ROSS

No!

DANI

It's just a word, Ross. Do it.

ROSS

Fine. You're a bitch!

Happy now? Now that I'm just like Peter.

You're wrong about the theory. It explains everything!

DANI

What does it explain?

ROSS
Dad's extraordinary.

DANI
What?

ROSS
He must be.

DANI
Ross, no. Dad is not extraordinary. That doesn't make sense.

ROSS
He left without feeling any guilt and only extraordinary people can be free of guilt when they do something that seems wrong.

DANI
He left us, Ross. That's it. It doesn't have anything to do / with

ROSS
He left here. Extraordinary people leave here. Ordinary people stay. Ordinary people like Mom stay.

DANI
You should have never written this thing in the first place.

ROSS
Why not?

DANI
You know why.

ROSS
I thanked you. See? I thanked you.

DANI
Let's just drop it. Okay? This theory is riddled with holes anyway.

ROSS mutters under his breath.

DANI
What was that?

ROSS
I was just thinking that is exactly something an ordinary person would say.

A loud clang from the pantry.

ROSS exits.

DANI transitions to present. She opens the pantry door.

SONYA

Is he okay?

DANI

He does this sometimes.

SONYA

Maybe he wants to be let out.

DANI

He just wants to say hi.

SONYA

Perhaps we should leave the door open? Maybe open a window? Just in case.

DANI

He doesn't fly. Besides it's too dark.

SONYA

Well maybe he's healed. We should give him the option at least.

DANI

Fine. He won't like it anyway. I've tried to let him go before and he doesn't want to leave.

SONYA opens the door to the pantry.

The bird starts squawking.

DANI gives her a "told-you" look.

SONYA shuts the door and returns to DANI.

SONYA

Why didn't your mother want you to go to college?

DANI

She didn't think it was practical. She thought it made more sense for me to get married and put all of the financial resources towards my brother. He was always the smart one, the talented one. She thought maybe he could be successful and get us all out of here.

SONYA

I guess she didn't like it here then.

DANI

No. My father talked about going to Chicago. He kept saying that one day he was just going to put us in the car and drive the six hours to start over. My mother loved hearing that. She really wanted to leave.

SONYA

But it never happened?

DANI

We almost did, once, but our car broke down on the highway. We didn't try again. You ever get to Chicago?

SONYA

No. I've been to Iowa, though.

DANI

Did you like it there?

SONYA

It's not too far. But it's hard to get to.

DANI nods.

SONYA

My mother wanted me to go to college. I know because she wrote about it in my eighteenth birthday letter. She gave me this great advice, she always ended her letters with the greatest advice, she said, "Learn a new word everyday." I guess she thought that would help me succeed in college. I never got away for school, though. Not like she wanted me to. I ended up going local. Got my Associates'. It was fine.

DANI

I'm sure she'd still be proud.

SONYA shrugs.

DANI

Why haven't you opened it yet?

SONYA takes the envelope out of her pocket and twiddles it.

ROSS enters. It is a couple months ago. He walks over and kisses SONYA on the head. She transitions back in time.

ROSS

Is your birthday coming up?

SONYA

It's not for a few months. I just like looking at the letters sometimes.

ROSS

She was a very thoughtful woman.

SONYA

She was.

ROSS

How should we celebrate?

SONYA

What?

ROSS

Your birthday.

SONYA

Oh. I've never celebrated my birthday before.

ROSS

Even as a kid?

SONYA

My father didn't really want to celebrate it. Since, you know... she died that day.

ROSS

Well we'll do something special. Anything you want.

SONYA

I just want to spend it with you.

ROSS

We can arrange that.

SONYA smiles.

SONYA

What did you do to celebrate your birthday growing up?

ROSS

My sister would get me a cake. Chocolate with chocolate frosting.

SONYA

Sounds decadent.

ROSS

It was. Do you want me to get you a cake?

SONYA

I don't really like cake.

ROSS

It doesn't have to be chocolate. We could do vanilla. Or red velvet. Or anything you want. Pie, even. Some people do pie.

SONYA

I don't need any of that stuff. I just want to spend it with you.

ROSS

I like the sound of that.

SONYA

How come you never talk about your sister?

ROSS

We don't speak anymore.

SONYA

Why?

ROSS

We just don't.

SONYA

But why? Something must have happened.

ROSS

Some things can remain private, can't they?

You're telling me you don't have secrets?

SONYA

Not from you. Why, do you?

ROSS doesn't respond.

SONYA

So you do. That's alright. I like that you're so mysterious. It's sexy. Just as long as you sit with me on my birthday.

ROSS

I'm happy to sit with you anytime.

SONYA

My mother would have liked you, I think.

ROSS

I hope so.

SONYA

She would've liked you because she just wanted me to be happy, and you make me so happy.

ROSS

You make me happy too.

SONYA

The happiest you've ever been?

ROSS

The happiest I've ever been.

SONYA

The happiest you'll ever be?

ROSS

The happiest I will ever be.

SONYA

Good.

ROSS exits.

SONYA transitions to present.

DANI

I'm sorry he's not here to sit with you.

SONYA puts the letter back in her pocket.

SONYA

What happened between you?

DANI

I'd rather not go into it.

SONYA

What happened between you?

DANI

It doesn't have anything to do with any of this.

SONYA

What happened between you?

DANI

It doesn't have anything to do with the theory or the murder or anything like that.

SONYA

What happened between you?

DANI

It doesn't matter.

SONYA

It matters to me.

DANI

It shouldn't.

SONYA

I need to know.

DANI

It's not relevant.

SONYA

You don't get to tell me what's relevant. You don't get to hide things from me.

DANI

Why not?

SONYA

Because that's not how this works.

DANI

You don't get to decide that.

SONYA

I have told you everything. I have been bare with you.

DANI

That was your choice.

SONYA heads towards the door.

DANI

Where are you going?

SONYA

I'm leaving.

DANI

It's not morning yet.

SONYA

I don't care.

DANI

You can't leave now.

SONYA

There's nothing else to discuss. It's done. It's over.

DANI

We just stopped talking.

SONYA stops.

DANI

That's it. We just stopped talking one day. There was no fight, we didn't drift apart, it wasn't anything like that. We just stopped. I never contacted him and he never contacted me.

SONYA

What was your last conversation?

DANI

I've told you what happened.

SONYA
What was your last conversation?

DANI
Please don't make me.

SONYA turns back towards the door.
DANI
Alright!

DANI transitions to five years ago. She stands at the window.

SONYA watches.

ROSS enters. He puts his hands on DANI's shoulders. She flinches and pulls away.

DANI
Can you do me a favor?

DANI walks over to the bookshelf and finds the dictionary. She hands it to him.

ROSS
Haven't seen this in a while.

DANI
Let's read it.

ROSS
Come on, really?

DANI
Please.

ROSS
Where should we go from?

DANI
Anywhere.

ROSS flips through the pages.

ROSS
Gleam. "A transient appearance of subdued or partly obscured light."

DANI slumps her head on his shoulder.

ROSS

"A trace."

ROSS spots a bruise on her.

ROSS

What happened here?

DANI adjusts her clothes.

ROSS

Did Peter do this?

DANI clears her throat and takes the dictionary from him.

DANI

"To shine with or as if with a subdued steady light or moderate brightness. To appear briefly or faintly."

Silence.

ROSS exits.

DANI transitions to present.

DANI

And that was it.

SONYA

He should have called you. He should have been concerned.

DANI

He should have. Yes.

SONYA

I'm sorry that happened to you. I'm glad it's over now.

DANI nods, halfheartedly.

SONYA

It is over now, isn't it?

I wish Ross had killed him instead.

DANI laughs.

DANI

I've thought that too.

SONYA

What a prick. I wanted him to kill my boss. I even thought about how I wanted him to die. Poison.

DANI

Why poison?

SONYA

The act of drinking the poison is easy. It's clean. But the act of dying from it isn't. That's what I could never understand about what Ross did. It was so grisly. So dirty. There should be a sense of balance, don't you think? Just enough cleanliness and just enough gruesomeness. Otherwise, who are we, really?

DANI

Did you ask him to do it?

SONYA

No.

DANI

Why not?

SONYA

I was planning on it. I was going to ask him one day after work, but as I was leaving this little red haired girl ran past my desk and towards my boss. She catapulted into his arms and he lifted her up to the ceiling. "How's the view up there?" he said to her. She laughed. She wasn't scared at all. I caught myself smiling. He and I exchanged this look like, "isn't this the best thing that has ever happened in the history of all creation."

My father wasn't a good dad. I'm not even sure if he was a good person. But I'm glad no one poisoned him. I still hate my boss, but I don't want him to have a clean but messy death. At least not because of me.

DANI

I'm glad you didn't poison him.

SONYA

Me too. I think I know what you mean about not breaking your clients' necks now. Knowing you can do something, but choosing not to, can be more exhilarating than doing it.

DANI

Why do you think that is?

SONYA

Maybe it's because we know we'll always have the option, but if we do it, then there's nothing to look forward to. If we do it, that's it. We're done. Our lives are finished. You want a drink?

DANI nods.

SONYA walks over to the pantry and opens the door.

SONYA

Where's the bird?

DANI joins her.

DANI

He always sits right there.

SONYA shrieks and runs out of the pantry.

SONYA

He pooped on me!

DANI

How did he get up there?

SONYA

Your bird pooped on me!

DANI

He couldn't have jumped that high.

SONYA

This is what happens when you let wild animals live in your home!

DANI

Oh calm down, it's supposed to be good luck.

DANI starts to wipe her off with a towel, tenderly, then she quickly hands it to her.

DANI

Ross didn't have many friends.

SONYA

Just my father.

DANI
What was that like? Did you ever talk to him about it?

SONYA
Just once.

DANI
When?

SONYA
At my father's funeral.

ROSS enters.

SONYA transitions to a few months ago. She approaches
ROSS, who stands over her father's grave.

DANI watches.

SONYA and ROSS stand quietly for a moment.

SONYA
How did you know my father?

ROSS
He was my friend.

SONYA
Aren't you a bit young to be his friend?

He shrugs.

SONYA
(knowingly)
Oh.

ROSS
What?

SONYA
Nevermind. I get it.

ROSS
What?

SONYA
You met him in...

She drops her voice.

SONYA
A.A.
He laughs.

ROSS
No, no, I met him... well, in a bar, actually.

She laughs. He smiles. They fall silent again.

ROSS
I'm, um, sorry for your loss.

SONYA
Yeah. You too.

ROSS
(honestly)
Thank you.

SONYA
He meant something to you.

ROSS nods.

SONYA
He didn't mean much to most people.

ROSS
That's what he said.

SONYA
He talked about that?

ROSS
Just a bit.

SONYA
What was it you liked about him?

ROSS
He was... kind.

SONYA

He wasn't very kind to me. He was... vulgar. Demanding. He had trouble holding back. Like everything he felt he needed to express. And he needed to do it in the biggest way possible.

ROSS

That wasn't my experience of him. He sat really hunched over, like he was trying to make his body smaller than he was, and when he talked, his voice cracked a little, and he spoke softly.

SONYA

I guess he was like that once. When I was a little girl. He used to sit at the foot of my bed and read me a story, but he couldn't read very well. I think it embarrassed him how bad he was at it. But I made him do it anyway. Even though it embarrassed him so much.

ROSS

Why?

SONYA

I don't know. I think I liked being better than him at something. I shouldn't have done that. It wasn't very kind of me. What would you two talk about?

ROSS

Oh, I don't know. Sports, I guess. He would tell me about the best bars in the town. What was his favorite, again? / O'Rourkes

SONYA

O'Rourkes.

ROSS

Right. And he talked about you.

SONYA

He did? What did he say?

ROSS

He said he had a daughter and that you were at home, probably waiting for him.

SONYA

How often did you hang out?

ROSS

Once.

SONYA

Once? And you consider him a friend?

ROSS
Yes. What?

SONYA
That's a bit weird.

He shrugs.

SONYA
It was that night, wasn't it? The night he got hit by the bus.

He nods.

ROSS
He said he had been gone for a few days.

SONYA
It had been over a week. He'd been on benders before, but he always came home after the weekend.

ROSS
He said he was afraid to go home because he didn't want you to see him the way he was.

SONYA
I've seen him drunk many times before. There's little I haven't seen that man do.

ROSS
Well that night, he didn't want to hurt you.

SONYA
Do you think he... Do you think it was on purpose?

ROSS
I don't know.

SONYA
Was it how they described it on the news?

ROSS
I couldn't look.

SONYA
Why?

ROSS
Why?

SONYA

Yeah, why? Why couldn't you look?

ROSS

I don't know. Because he was my friend, I guess.

SONYA

I think I would have looked.

Kind. It's a simple word.

They exchange smiles.

SONYA

What's your favorite word?

ROSS

I'm not sure.

SONYA

Mine is syzygy.

ROSS

Syzygy?

SONYA

Syzygy. Carl Jung says it's what happens when our true self—who we are without our masks, who we are beneath everything—combines with another true self and becomes complete. Unified. Whole. The combination is divine, he says.

They stand for a moment.

ROSS

Mine's not really a word per se. It was a robin's song.

SONYA

Your favorite word is a bird's chirp?

ROSS

Not a chirp. A song. And not any bird. This one specific bird.

SONYA

Was it a pet?

ROSS

No. It just lived in my backyard growing up.

SONYA

What happened to it?

ROSS

It died.

SONYA

You could get some recordings, you know. Some recordings of robins singing.

ROSS

Thanks, but it's not really the same.

I like your favorite word, too. Would you mind sharing it with me?

SONYA

I'd like that very much.

They hold each other's gaze.

DANI interrupts their memory.

DANI

It wasn't his idea. It was mine.

SONYA transitions to present.

ROSS exits.

SONYA

What?

DANI

It wasn't his idea. I came up with it a few months before he wrote the paper. And as soon as I said it aloud, I knew it wasn't a great theory. I knew it was just me trying to find a way to justify this longing I had, this urge to...

SONYA

Break necks?

DANI

Do bad things. As soon as I said it to him, I knew that's what it was. And I tried to let it die, but Ross loved it. He latched onto it. We would pass people on the street and he'd say, "Do you think that person is extraordinary?" And I played along. Because, how was I supposed to know he'd do this? I thought it was just for fun. I didn't know.

SONYA

Why didn't you stop him when he wrote it?

DANI

I tried to tell him it was a bad idea. I thought he realized that once it kept getting rejected from journals. I thought he had moved on. We never talked about it again.

SONYA

So all of this happened because of your idea?

DANI

I didn't think he would test it! He was never violent until you came along.

SONYA

This has nothing to do with me. Do you think I wanted him to do this?

DANI

You want someone to. You want someone to commit these hideous acts, don't you? You want someone to play out all of the horrific things you dream about.

SONYA

Stop.

DANI

All of the things you don't have the guts to do yourself.

SONYA grabs the axe and raises it over DANI's head. She stops mid-air.

DANI

Do it.

SONYA drops the axe down to her side.

DANI

I knew you wouldn't.

SONYA

I'm sorry. I. I didn't mean to do that.

DANI

It's okay. You stopped yourself. I knew you would stop yourself.

SONYA

Why?

DANI

Because you're the kind of person who doesn't want her life to be over.

Ross made his own choice. He had the choice to stop himself, just like we do, every day, but he didn't.

SONYA

But we could become like him someday.

DANI

We could. Yes.

SONYA

What happens if we do?

DANI

I don't know.

SONYA

I don't want to be like that.

DANI

That's a good place to start.

SONYA

But it might feel so good.

DANI

There are other good feelings.

SONYA

Like what?

DANI

I don't know. Company?

SONYA

Company?

DANI

Having someone to keep you company. That's a good feeling.

Love? Love is a good feeling. So I've heard at least.

Touch. Touch is nice too.

Touch?
SONYA

Sure like,
DANI

She reaches out and holds SONYA's hand.
DANI

Feel good?
SONYA nods.

They let go.
DANI

It's almost morning. We should get going soon.
SONYA

Not yet. Let's just. Sit for a while longer.
DANI

And do what?
SONYA hands her a newspaper and picks one up for herself.

They read.
DANI

They've raised enough money to fix up the aviary. We could go. Maybe. When it's done.
SONYA's face falls.

What? What is it?
DANI

SONYA
"Woman stabs and kills abusive boyfriend after being shoved through a sliding glass door. Peter Landry was murdered by his girlfriend, Claire Pater, after an altercation where he allegedly pushed her through a glass door." Is that?

DANI grabs the paper from her. She scans the article.
DANI

Yes.

She places the paper back on the table, leans back in her chair for a moment, and closes her eyes. She takes a breath. She opens her eyes and places her hand under the table, removing small gun that she has secured underneath.

She continues around the room, removing various weapons from their hiding places—a hammer, a knife, a rope, a frying pan, the baseball bat from earlier, etc.

When she's finished, she stands in the middle of the room, scanning over all of her unused weapons.

DANI

Someone actually did it.

SONYA

Are you okay?

DANI

I'm okay. I'm just... jealous.

SONYA

Jealous?

DANI

That she was able to do it. That she was able to do what I've wanted to do for so long.

SONYA

How would you have done it, if you could?

DANI

I couldn't. I couldn't do it.

SONYA

I know, but if you could. If you were the kind of person who could. What would you do?

DANI

I don't know.

SONYA

It'll make you feel better.

DANI uses the weapons in the room to act out the imagined murder.

DANI

I guess I would have shot him in the legs first, so that he couldn't run. Then I would tie him up. Then I think I would hit him in the head. Maybe with this? Or this? Then I would cut his eyes out so he couldn't look at me that way anymore. And then, I don't know.

She finds the axe and slashes the air three times.

SONYA

Do you feel better now?

DANI

Yes.

SONYA

I knew you would.

DANI

Thank you.

SONYA

I would like to think I would have poisoned Peter for you. I couldn't do it to my boss, but I like to think I could have done it to Peter.

DANI

Your life would be over.

SONYA

Still. I would like to think I would have done it for you.

DANI

I don't think I could kill someone for you. I could... sit with you, though.

SONYA

What?

DANI

While you read your mom's birthday letter.

SONYA

You would do that?

DANI nods.

SONYA

Okay.

DANI sits down next to her. SONYA slowly takes out the letter, opens it carefully, and reads. She closes the letter.

DANI

Well? What was her advice?

SONYA

Find someone to be alone with.

A long moment.

ROSS walks up to the front door in real time. He knocks.

ROSS

Dani?

DANI walks over to the front door and opens it.

He does not see SONYA yet.

ROSS

You moved.

DANI

Yes.

ROSS

What made you decide to leave?

DANI

He broke my massage table. I went downstairs to my massage room one morning and there it was, chopped in half. I didn't even pack my clothes. I just dragged the pieces of the table out of the house and down the road. And that was it.

ROSS

I wish I had helped you carry it.

Is Sonya here?

DANI nods.

ROSS

I thought she might come. Has she told you everything?

DANI nods.

Can I come in? ROSS

DANI lets him in.

SONYA and ROSS hold each other's gaze.

You came back. SONYA

ROSS nods.

Even after everything. SONYA

I said I would sit with you on your birthday. ROSS

Where did you go? SONYA

Chicago. ROSS

What did you do there? SONYA

I went to the top of the Sears Tower and looked down. ROSS

And? SONYA

You were right. It was magnificent. ROSS

His gaze drops to the axe.

I found Dad. ROSS

Where? DANI

Chicago. He's living there now. He made it there. ROSS

DANI

Did you talk to him? What did he say?

ROSS

He said hello. How are you. My you've grown. I don't have time now. I'm busy now. Later. Maybe. Later. Call me. Sometime. I don't have space. Next time. Maybe. You look good. You're grown. You're a man now. Don't say that. Let's just move on. It's time for you to leave. You don't need me. You're grown. Next time. Maybe. I don't have space now. I might have space later. Call me. Later. I'm busy. Now. You're a man. You're a man. You're a man now.

He's not extraordinary.

I don't think I am either.

I'm just less of who I was before. I don't know how to explain it. I'm just...

SONYA

Partial.

ROSS

Yes.

A long moment.

A bird cry from the pantry.

SONYA

Dani has a bird in the pantry.

ROSS

What?

ROSS walks over to the pantry and opens the door.

DANI

He fell out of a tree. I think he had a heart attack.

SONYA

Is it a robin?

DANI

He likes it in there. I don't know why.

ROSS
(to SONYA)

Yes.

DANI
He doesn't sing or anything, but he has a good sense of humor.

ROSS looks at the bird for a long moment.

ROSS
(to DANI)

Thank you.

DANI smiles.

ROSS turns to SONYA.

ROSS
I have something for you. For your birthday.

SONYA
You didn't have to.

ROSS takes out a folded piece of paper.

DANI
What is it?

SONYA reads it, smiles.

SONYA
It's every word of the day since we've known each other.

ROSS
Look at today's.

SONYA
You don't even know the one from today.

ROSS
I picked my own. Look at it.

DANI
What is it?

Syzygy.

SONYA

They sit in silence.

In the pantry, the bird cry turns into a song.

They listen.

The sunlight bursts through the window.

END OF PLAY