We Will Not Describe the Conversation

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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?

What?

DANI

Oh good you’re still up.

SONYA

Who is it?

DANI

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?

No.

SONYA

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?

SONYA

I mean, are you married?

DANI

Divorced.

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

SONYA

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

DANI

Industrious?

SONYA

Yes, it means diligent and hard-working.

DANI

I know what it means.

SONYA

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?

DANI

It’s the middle of the night. Is something wrong?

SONYA

I just wanted to meet you.

DANI

We could meet another time. During the day.

SONYA

I’m already here.

DANI

Alright. Go ahead, put that thing down.

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.

SONYA

There’s a bird in there.

DANI

I know.

SONYA

Why do you have a bird in the pantry?

DANI

He likes it in there.

SONYA

Where’s his cage?

DANI

He’s not a pet. He used to live outside.

SONYA

What happened to him?
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.

How did you two meet?

Who?

You and my brother.

Oh. Through my father.

How is he?

Dead.

What?

Oh, sorry, I meant my father.

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

Sorry.

What happened to him?

He was hit by a bus.

Really?

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.
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

SONYA

No.

Slight.

DANI remembers feeling slight.

SONYA

Ross escaped.

DANI

Escaped?

SONYA

I mean, I lost him. He’s missing.

DANI

Missing? For how long?

SONYA

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

DANI

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.
SONYA

Right.

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?

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?
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.

That’s right.

ROSS
What’s the next one?

DANI

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.

“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.
I never agreed to that.

ROSS
You said you’d consider it.

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

ROSS
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.

Why?

ROSS
I’d like to meet her.

SONYA
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.

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.

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.

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.

So?

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

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.

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.

Sonya...

ROSS

Say it.

SONYA

Say it.

ROSS

Please.
SONYA

Say you're ordinary.

He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out.

SONYA

Sit down.

ROSS

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

SONYA

Shut up.

ROSS

It doesn't mean that my theory is wrong.

SONYA

Shut up.

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.

SONYA

Where are you going?

ROSS

I thought I'd go out for the paper.

SONYA

Sit.

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
Sempternal.

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.

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.

Yes. Or maybe scared.

SONYA
Of you?

DANI
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 intern. 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.

How?

DANI
I sold a few things.

ROSS
What things?

DANI
Old things.

ROSS
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.

DANI
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.

Why?

ROSS
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

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.

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.

ROSS

What did you do to celebrate your birthday growing up?

SONYA

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.

Why?

SONYA

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.
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.

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’Rourke’s

SONYA
O’Rourke’s.

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.

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.

Stop.

SONYA

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.

Do it.

SONYA drops the axe down to her side.

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.

Why?
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.
SONYA

Sure like,

She reaches out and holds SONYA’s hand.

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.

DANI

What? What is it?

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.

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?

I don't know.

DANI

It'll make you feel better.

SONYA

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.
ROSS

Can I come in?

DANI lets him in.

SONYA and ROSS hold each other’s gaze.

SONYA

You came back.

ROSS nods.

SONYA

Even after everything.

ROSS

I said I would sit with you on your birthday.

SONYA

Where did you go?

ROSS

Chicago.

SONYA

What did you do there?

ROSS

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

SONYA

And?

ROSS

You were right. It was magnificent.

His gaze drops to the axe.

ROSS

I found Dad.

DANI

Where?

ROSS

Chicago. He’s living there now. He made it there.
DANI
Did you talk to him? What did he say?

ROSS

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?
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